

Appendix 1: Interview and Focus Group Notes

Overview

An original Interview/Focus Group list was created by Matt Mayberry and Kendall Peterson of AMPA. The list was narrowed to the top 10 interviews with the idea that more could be added later on as needed. These are informal notes from these conversations and interviews.

Interview: Tom Strand, City Council at Large, PAC Rep for 4 years

Highlights from CM Tom Strand Interview 9/14/19

- Lots going on for the 2021 election; 3 seats are up on council, and 3 more possible. Change is inevitable. City is growing. When he first moved here the city was older, more conservative and smaller (130k) and now projections show they will be at 460k and 500k very soon.
- “Public art is a part of the community.”
- “Arts are Critical for COS.”
- The arts are not generational, everyone is engaged, Gen X, Millennials, etc.
- He is on the Visit COS board, and he is really interested in the way the arts can help COS with economic development goals. Recently went on a “headhunting trip” for the Visit COS group. They said that the folks who are considering COS biz dev consider available land, education levels, available workforce, but also stuff that is more ephemeral. One of the attendees mentioned a business that expanded because of the beautiful landscaping in that city. “Wouldn’t it be great if a business opens a plant here in COS because of its public art?” The idea being if we make the city beautiful and business will follow. If we can show that there is a return on your investment, tax increases will not be as hard.
- Challenge is funding. October and November are budget decisions. Times have been good in COS, so they have more money to spend. Sales tax is up, LART is up.
- “We are at the point where we need to dedicate funds to sustain the arts in COS.” “We need to protect the arts and lock in our priorities for future generations.” We need “dedicated funding” for arts so we are not so reliant on the donations and philanthropist donors.
- He said he would support an ask for funding in the next budget cycle. The question is how much? He mentioned \$2 million? If we could dedicate a pot of funds for a couple of years, he would support it.
- He would support a staff position, not a FTE but maybe a .5 FTE?
- Would like to see us focus projects in Downtown and Old Colorado City.

Interview: Yolanda Avila, City Council District 4 (SE)

Highlights from CW Avila Interview 7/2/19

- She runs the “Best District” which is the “most diverse area in all of Colorado.” They have been coming together as one lately, and they are very strong. After being “looked over” for 30 years. She feels there is momentum.
- Art is a priority in her community. She shared a story about dancing in a folklorico group when she was a kid. She would dance with boys and girls in Acacia Park and at the State Fair.
- Art is important to everyone in her district; “Everyone is creative, and everyone has a creative flair.” Not just visual arts, but music and dance and painting and sculpture too. She states that the arts were probably not “top of mind for them” but she knows that it is important.
- They just did a big transportation project on the Circle Drive Bridge and the high schoolers wanted a big mural for the bridge. She says it has been a challenge to find a funding source to fund that mural.
- She feels her district is way behind in getting the funding they need for creative projects and other things. They have been “passed over” for a long time. She would like our plan to find a way to spread arts projects throughout the city. She wants the district to decide what is needed in their district.
- There are no “arts districts” in her area, but she wants a place where people could connect and engage in the singing, dancing and the arts. She is “dreaming” of that place.
- She believes that the arts are key to having a cultural identity and her district would love to express that identity.
- She was supportive of a “Percent for Art” program, and also including more greening/parks etc in her district. She encouraged us to pursue a tax for the arts.
- She stated that she was very skeptical whether the City would fund an FTE for the arts.
- She says the Mayor in COS is very powerful, City Council is not.
- She mentioned that she is the only Democrat on Council, but there are two who are “unaffiliated,” and the rest are all Republicans. She said that passing “progressive” legislation is hard. Perhaps the arts are considered to be more of a progressive goal?
- When I asked whether COS compares itself to any other city (or aspired to emulate other cities) she said that COS is such a unique place that was impossible. She said it is such a rural feeling in COS, but becoming not so rural. She said COS wants people to come here, fly out of our airport, but really, it retains its rural feel and roots.

Interview: David Geislinger, City Council District 2, PAC member for 3 months

Highlights from Interview 11/13/2019

- Appointed to the PAC three months ago. Impressed with the group, it is a microcosm of the City.
- He represents District 2. The northeast part of the city, most affluent, geographically and culturally separated from the rest of the City.
- The PAC is hampered by its mission, nothing much to do. PAMP will give them energy. COS has an opportunity with the PAMP, usually it stays within its “comfort zone.”

- A tax raise of any kind would be a hard sell for his district. It would take some work to get them there. Smaller projects that they might see downtown would be a good way to get them “okay” with the idea.
- Downtown is more energized with a new stadium and hockey arena. Downtown will be a destination place and people from his district might be attracted to come out more.
- COS has an emerging identity. “Who do we want to grow up to be?”
- People in his district and generally in COS are historically reactionary and very conservative. They will oppose raising taxes for anything. Right now they are having to make the case for Parks and Parks maintenance, only once it has become a problem. They agree to funding things once it gets critical. Not proactive.
- He suggests gradual changes, He would love to see an arts tax like the SCFD, but doubts that it would ever pass. We discussed the tax that just passed in Manitou, and that even though it is an “arts oriented city” only passed by 4 votes. A temporary renewable tax might be possible eventually.
- To sell the idea of taxes going to the arts, we have to get energy and start bringing the arts scene to life. We need the current arts scene to become more visible, marketed and obvious, to COS residents. Bring it out into the open. Need people to see and understand that “Art is a part of who we are” make it more visible and bigger.
- There are a lot of blank slates (walls) for murals, just that could help connect people through the arts.
- The PAC needs to be empowered to do more. Make it easier to make a mural, fewer restrictions on the performances downtown or in parks. What are we doing with the decrepit auditorium downtown? How do we make what we have more visible.
- County has some amazing world class pieces in its collection and they are hidden. Paintings are in the Centennial Hall that are by a 1940’s painter. Not many know of them.
- Soccer stadium plans include a sculpture out of polished stainless (orb/globe) like “the Bean” in Chicago. The developer has included it in his plan.
- There is an emerging cultural and generational divide. Things are changing. Be aware that the city can have a strong negative reaction to things. Reactive, it is something for us to be aware of.
- Sesquicentennial is a great idea to make a transcendent project.
- Geislinger buys the economic development argument and empowerment of artists, but in the end he thinks it comes down to the fact that art can be “transcendent” and a “legacy for the City”. “The Globe theater might have been a place that promoted artists and theatre was an economic generator, but the lasting part of that will always be the plays that were written. The art is the legacy”
- “What will they have to look at from our City 150 years from now?”

Focus Group: Developer Forum, 9/16/2019

Participants:

Chris Jenkins from Nor’Wood Developers

Aaron Ewton, Atlas Restaurant Group

Joe Neibor, Neibor Development (S. Tejon)

Kevin Butcher, RE

Jim (DBS) doing a Marriott Hotel downtown; University village

Greg Sarbano, Wiedner Apartments downtown; new Stadium on Cimarron

Laura Newman, Stadium

Darcy McLanson, CSIS, Blu Dot Art

Meeting Highlights:

- Artwork can be an identity for the community. Developers think that unique architecture could also be promoted more. Better design is key.
- Chris (Nor'Wood) "We love art" it creates discussion, it can be a means of wayfinding, tiny moments.
- There is no reason the built environment can't be just as beautiful as the outdoors.
- Places to put art? Irmahoe, County Courthouse, Gateway to the Museum (preserve the sightlines) Wolf Ranch, 1st and Main (entry way), Don't just focus on Downtown/Old Colorado City. Art to reflect the neighborhood's character.
- Other location have been left behind:
 - Parks; Southeast, East
 - Wayfinding; sense of place and pride
 - Legacy Loop/Santa Fe Trail
 - Waterways? Activate?
 - Monument valley trail? Keep it natural?
 - Popcicle Bridge
 - Water feature, like Confluence in Denver
- Cities change; Generations Change; "Show that it is an investment for the community."
- Developer requirements would not be good; promotions only.
- Use LART Grants
- Look at Tulsa Artist Fellowship (from website). Provides housing and spaces for artists.

Focue Group: CONO Neighborhood Representative Forum; 9.19.19

Participants:

Trina Bivens: Marketing

Sara Vaas: COO

Nomer: Muralist

Louise Conner: Mid Shooks Run

Dale Nesmith: Briargate North

Nancy: Aronodale

Anthony Carlson: Community engagement

Richard Strasbaugh:

Meeting Highlights:

- Most of the group members come from older established residential neighborhoods. They DO think there is momentum for more arts in the City at this point. They do think

public funding will be a battle, but if we find additional matching funds that will make it an easier investment.

- Nancy would not like to see art in the natural areas, like Cottonwood trail. Avoid natural areas, keep them natural.
- Anthony says to look at the D-11 School districts, esp Harrison. They just got 180 million to get schools updated. New construction. Involve communities and have art at the schools.
- Anthony states that the LART Tax ask is a “NO BRAINER”
- More art in the close to downtown areas.
- Richard likes the idea of artwork at I-25 Woodman entrance/gateway to the city. It is ugly right now, especially as you drive through. These are the only things that people see as they drive through on I-25. Make the entrances more beautiful.
- What about the branding of the Olympic City? We are committed to the branding now. How do we evolve the Olympic Values more broadly to COS overall? Courage, bravery, hard work, strength. It could be a unifying feature of the City.
- Encourage Developers to make lower cost housing for artists.
- Make the northeast/north part of the city “prettier.”
- Anthony thought we should make the art projects more community-generated. Look at a model where the communities come up with projects and they then get funded by the City. (Rather than the other way around, where the city has the funding and the turn to the community to come up with a project.) Let the communities decide on what they need/want in their neighborhoods.

Focus Group: Art on the Streets Board Members, August 16, 2019

Participants:

Matt Mayberry

Claire Swinford

Susan Edmonson

Andrea

Valerie

- Manitou Springs just passed a law requiring Public Art in their Urban Renewal projects. (look into this, can't find the article)
- The Mayor's office will support Public Art eventually. The sesquicentennial for COS is in 2021, so there will be lots of celebratory events.
- We have to concentrate on the benefit to the public, economic impact.
- Pent up energy in arts communities. We need to avoid a situation where the arts community starts to go at it alone, saying “screw it”. In those cases, the artists are not getting paid and the art is not as great.
- People right now can apply for LART Grant Funds: Applications are in Spring for the following year.
- Grow the incentives that we give developers; encouragement of developer input in the public art participation. It is written into the URA plans to do this already. They are

advised to include public art projects in URA projects. Provide consultants to help with this.

- Staff: City Employee is needed. Partly funding by transit, parks, community engagement. All should contribute. The person needs to be a mix of “fine artist/arts person and municipal specialist.”
- Public/Private funding as an intermediary. Matching funds for public funding makes it hurt less.
- PAC, they are a rubber stamp organization. They only respond when people have a donation or want to create art on public property. They don’t have an important role. Consider disband then re-create the PAC when there is a need. Create an interim group to handle the donations, but until there is public funding, they don’t need to exist. There are a “bazillion advisory committees” and they don’t have a purpose.
- Hurdles? Public funding, land-use patterns. Where to put art? No place to put it. Could the art be more integrated? Multimillion dollar projects being done without art. Suggested looking at the new Stadium for great art.

Focus Group: Knob Hill Artists

Participants:

PAES; muralist and on PAC

Muji: muralist

Brian Elyo: architect; former military

Meeting Highlights:

- Knob Hill = five total, musicians and artists; PAES is on PAC now, he is eager to shake things up.
- Knob Hill neighborhood, Platte between union and Circle. About 2 years old; Applying for a 501 c.3. Brian is the “leader”. They started the 420 Jamboree (50+ artists); Knob Hill: they turned a downtrodden neighborhood into a cleaned-up place. They used lights and murals in problem areas. Turned it into a great place. 45 murals.
- Pride Mural, crosswalk. They just did it, called the media in, then they were helped to do it “properly.”
- Complains that the City has no money and no policy; They need a public art supervisor, someone to provide guidance.
- Young people, energy, mom and pop shops. They embrace the culture. Paes states that COS reminds him of San Antonio.
- They would like to see art everywhere; every wall. They would like free walls. Walls behind Nissan Dealership.
- Special improvement districts where it is easier to make art.

Interview: Kim Palomka, Artist and former PAC Member; 9/28/19

Highlights:

- He was on the City Council in Australia; Did a lot of public art in AUS.
- Disappointed in COS.

- Murals are a cheap way of making the city “softer”; Could there be more projection-based projects?
- He is muralist; He is not on the PAC any more, but will continue to come to meetings. He was chair of PAC in 2007 and has been on it since 2006.
- “America the Beautiful Park” funding came from private donors, no funds to fix it. Parks and rec are working on it now. Julie Penrose Park, funded by El Pomar. Not owned by the City.
- Time to get positive, and see how there is an upsurge in interest in the arts.
- “What the hell is the PAC doing?” advisors to council, only when they are gifted works of art. They are supposed to be promoting the works of the City, but they are a rubber stamp. They had one year where the Chair cancelled 6 consecutive meetings. Nothing was coming in.
- In the old days, arts and theatre etc. were included. But that was before CoPPER and Downtown BID. They have taken over those duties.
- Arts commissioners are not trained and they are not passionate about public art. There is no transparency and people are on it as a resume builder. Tells me that Brian Elyo used to be a commissioner. He talked about taking the PAC away from the City
- Downtown Partnership is the “real arts commission” they should suggest who should run the show. They can be the interim PAC. Claire Swinford is really the PAC manager.
- Cultural Services is just the historic stuff. Just the artifacts.
- They need someone on staff to handle the new commissions and specifically engage the PAC. They need to pay someone for a staff position.
- Need a public art program at the airport; at this point he takes people from DEN, that airport is the first impression for people coming to the city. Only going to be getting busier. They have a bunch of displays that the public can’t even see. They need to up their game.

Interview: Planning Staff 5/4/19

Ryan Tefertiller

Carl Schueler

Paige

Highlights:

- First we need to figure out what we mean by Public Art. Is it just stuff in public right of way, or art that is on private development, on Urban Renewal sites, etc?
- Hope that the plan is consistent with the Plan COS, also there is a Regional Cultural Plan coming up through COPPER.
- There are two ways to encourage art in private developments (currently) relief from a standard (murals or wall art) to get away from form based standards. Look at BlueDot 210.
- In the form-based area, you can get a density bonus/height points for putting in public art.
- The Vision chapter (6) exists because of the leadership of Jim Rowton, and Cathy Liu (sp?).

- The development community said they would support the “culture” part of the plan, as long as they can control what goes on in their own developments (ie. no requirements).