

Facts Are Disputable

In response to statements in the June issue by Sandy Robnett and Blair Taylor, both members of Save Open Space Denver.

In her letter to the editor, Robnett claims “indisputable facts” related to the conservation easement [on the Park Hill Golf Course land]. Unfortunately, those would be better characterized as opinions. All the words matter in agreements and while SOS chooses to focus on the words that support their inflexible position, the conservation easement states that no use of the land shall be permitted that would be a detriment to the existence and operation of an 18-hole regulation length golf course and driving range.

Supporting the easement means you are supporting the land as a golf course. I believe we can do more with this property. I understand SOS interprets the agreement differently and that’s why your “indisputable facts” are actually in dispute. That is also why we believe there needs to be a more inclusive community conversation about the future of the land – yet SOS opposes even having a planning process. SOS has gone so far as proposing a ballot initiative to put the future of the golf course to a citywide vote without any planning. SOS should not silence the voices of the local neighborhood with a citywide ballot initiative.

Westside Investment Partners has already committed to at least 60 acres of park on the property, the size of 79 football fields. Combined with existing stormwater land, the park would be the size of nearby Cheesman Park. However, the reasons we can’t just build a park go far beyond just economic. With respect to Ms. Taylor, green gentrification is such a big issue that there is an entire field of study around Parks-Related Anti-Displacement Strategies (PRADS).

It is well understood that parks need to be combined with additional diverse housing choices, job creation/training and community engagement strategies to avoid gentrification.

To learn more about green gentrification, start with this National Recreation and Parks Association article on the subject: [nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2019/december/greening-without-gentrification/](https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2019/december/greening-without-gentrification/).

It is more important than ever to look at land use policies with an equity lens, especially in majority minority communities such as Northeast Park Hill. Our city has changed a lot in the 20-plus years since the easement was negotiated. We are awakening to inequities that structures like zoning and privilege have created.

As the landowner, we believe that we can do better than a golf course in that location. Westside supports a civil, transparent community process that helps achieve an equitable outcome and we hope you join us.

Kenneth Ho, Stapleton

Note: The author is a principal in Westside Development Partners, which hopes to develop the Park Hill Golf Course land.