

December 24, 2013

To Joelle Greenland AICP

From Jessie Clay at 8411 Garfield Way and horses at 78<sup>th</sup> and Steele Streets, phone 303-286-0337

REPLY TO WELBY PLAN

You've asked for input from Welby residents. I have no hope that my input will redirect the clamor for progress away from my home and my horse stable. All I can do is speak from the heart and tell you what Welby means to me – the way it is. I moved my home from a trailer park that I lived in for 12 years while I saved money to move to Riverdale Farm. I moved to Riverdale Farm in 1994. The initial attraction was that even living at a poverty level, by careful budgeting and the use of money from my mother's death, I managed to move my 1971 home onto what was no more than a plot of dirt. But the surprise was discovering that Welby had remained (in my immediate area) somehow untouched by progress. So when I looked at your future plans, my heart sank when I saw the parcel of land where I keep my horses, highlighted as future development. I've been waking up at night and laying awake, thinking of my future with dread. So this is my story, my plea. I'm just one person, but I represent many. I'm the type of person you may never see here again, if Welby ends up as planned.

If plans go through, I will lose my stable. You may be asking why I just don't find another place. I do not believe there is another place within an hour that properly cares for horses. Progress has eliminated everyplace like mine.

This area was once considered prime agriculture. All the things that made it so, are still here - the land, the access to highways. The need for farm land hasn't diminished. Why the rush to build? Why can't Welby remain the treasure it already is? This location is the absolute best for horses that I've seen. It's well located and the riding along the river is safe – away from traffic and beautiful. I've seen people trailering their horses in. Even though it seemed to be ignored, horses contribute a great amount to the economy. Just not enough, right?

With progress, Steele Street will eventually be widened. And when Steele Street changes, there will be more traffic and noise. I hate to think of pulling out of Riverdale Farm onto such a street. From what I understand, Riverdale Farm is financially responsible for a section of Steele Street widening. Since the HOA here obviously has not managed to save any money, I assume everyone will be hit with a special assessment. There are many retired and disabled people living here and that may drive them out of their homes. I may be one of those to lose my home. Or possibly down the road, Adams County will decide Riverdale Farm is premium land and useful for a shopping center, or nicer homes. Even though we each own our own land, we poor people wouldn't be able to put up much of a fight. And no sympathy, I'm sure. They're trailers, just move them. But many, like mine have been built onto and are no longer moveable. And move where? I had planned on living here until my death. Everything I have is in my little home and the horse stable. If that happens I will feel like I was only the temporary tenant of the land, caring for it while the value increases and others benefit from my forced departure.

So is it all about the horses? No, it's about so much more. The horses. And land. And people like me, trying to scratch out an existence in a little stable on the corner of a Welby road. The heart of Welby in more ways than one. So I'm only one person. But I'm the kind of person who will never exist again, not in this part of Welby. All so people can have their curbs and fancy concrete dividers. If people want that, why wouldn't they just be in a place that already is like that? Drive out the horses, the wild life and you've got what everyone else has. Nothing in my opinion. Forcing me out, will also leave other horses homeless. I have people who care about their horses the same way I do. It's important that you put a face on this. For the life of me, I can't imagine why you would take such a beautiful and unique area and change it so radically. It's almost like the mentality is – open land? Wild life? Kill it. Cover it up. Why, other than tax revenue?

What makes Welby so special?

One day while I was driving home recently from the stable (in my only vehicle – a full sized 1976 Blazer), just north of the railroad crossing a squirrel suddenly shot out from the side of the road. I slowed of course. I'd seen the squirrel run right in front of the truck and not appear again. So I was going very slow. From the sky, a huge redtail hawk suddenly dropped down. I swear to you his wingspan was the width of the truck. He was suspended over my hood as I drove. What seemed like seconds later, he flapped his wings and disappeared. Suddenly the squirrel ran from in front of the truck and into the tall grass. Believe it or not, the squirrel had used the safety of my truck to get away from the hawk. That is Welby. It will not happen on Federal Blvd. I see the same hawk often. He flies over the stable and often rests in the tree along the road. And he is as big as I remember him.

I attended the first meeting here. That night I came down with a high fever and chills and was later told by two doctors that I probably had leukemia. I didn't, but I was sick for several months. I did not have high speed internet, so I was one of the people who were uninformed and fell through the cracks. There are actually a large number of senior and disabled people in Riverdale Farm who do not have access to the internet, or even a computer. But I spoke often to a person who had attended all the meetings and he told me that it was hopeless. The county had already decided what was going to happen. He quit going to the meetings. So I'm sorry. I'm feeling hopeless too.

So here is my story. Maybe it will help you put a face on it.

The Prices, (the land is for sale) who own horses and mules, live just south of our trailer park. Further down, is Harriet Brown with her many horses. On the west side of Steele, the Bakers lived on 25 acres and had horses and children and grandchildren who were active in gymkhana. All the shelves in their home were filled with trophies. Driving down Steele Street, you'd see horses on both sides, standing in green pastures and three small hay pastures. Jim Baker did custom plowing and hay baling until his death. Several horses were kept on the corner of 78<sup>th</sup> and Steele.

I was married when I moved into Riverdale Farm, to a carpenter, who could build and repair absolutely anything. This allowed us to put steel siding on our home, a steel pitched roof and surround our now beautiful little home with a fancy picket fence, grape arbors and brick walk ways. And flowers – lots of flowers and several trees, two of them apple trees. And raspberry, blueberry bushes and grape vines.

I never minded that Steele Street didn't have curbs or streetlights. Instead, we had hawks and rabbits and coyotes. Once I saw a beaver on Niver bridge. And often a kingfisher, who waiting patiently watching the water. And several times I saw an eagle flying over the stable. And once while he stood on a sand bank in the middle of the river. When winter storms came, the vapor of the river made it look like the river was smoking. All the trees and grasses became glittering sparkles of ice. Once at night, I stopped to enjoy the moon. It was so full and heavy I didn't see how it could remain in the sky. Wispy clouds floated over it occasionally. It was so beautiful that I'll never forget it as long as I live. I called this little part of Welby, the land that time forgot.

I'd been keeping my one horse Shiloh at a location 45 minutes away. After being there several years, I was asked to leave by the next weekend. The reason being that the owner had bought a race horse, just had him gelded and was concerned that my horse being a mare, might cause a problem. I'd had Shiloh since she was a two year old and been in several stables, being forced to leave each one because the care was so bad. Sometimes she wouldn't be fed for days at a time. One stable didn't believe "city" horses needed a fresh supply of water. So all the horses were forced to drink out of a mostly dry creek with the banks powdered in natural alkaline. As Shiloh's health began to fail from the water, I looked for yet another stable. I was at several stables, and all but one, had serious care issues. The one good one, located on 60 acres was driven out by Boulder for development.

You can't imagine the struggle and sacrifices I made to keep my horse. She was 18 years old when I lost her to a freak accident at the vet's after she had a fairly minor surgery. You might be wondering at this point, why I would make a horse just a high priority. Or how someone like me ever ended up with a horse. When I was 30, my mother died. With that money I paid off my trailer, and sold her 1965 Mustang. I was also working at Ball Aerospace. Not a great job money wise. But I reasoned that with the home paid off, I could just manage a horse. During the summer I sometimes

hitchhiked the 25 miles to work to save gas money. I happily made daily sacrifices because Shiloh was my highest priority.

I'd always been the family throwback. It appears that the Sioux Native American Indian side had come out in me and skipped my brother. He was a journalist, I was a cowgirl. The only thing I wanted in life was a horse of my own. One day as a small child I'd taken my brand new tricycle for a spin, parked it along the river where I'd be sure to find it again, and set out on foot. Somehow I'd lost my shoes and by the time a stranger found me, my socks were so covered with goat head burrs that I couldn't walk. My brother has told me this story several times. When the kindly lady took me to her home and repeatedly asked me my name, my only answer, over and over was Jessie Cowgirl. I suppose that since there weren't many lost cowgirls wandering around that part of town, I was returned to my grandmother within a short time. The bike was never found.

When I was told to move from the stable with no notice, I stopped by the Bakers with the horses and horse property on the west side of Steele Street. I begged them to take me in until they finally gave in. They'd tried taking in boarders before and had terrible results. So Shiloh found herself, for the first time, free to roam and run. Things were going well and I convinced my husband to buy a horse. We named him Rio. He was a large, sorrel gelding who'd been a working cow horse. Out of ignorance, my husband tried to ride him over the railroad trestle that runs behind the pasture. Rio fell through the slats of the trestle, one leg at a time, struggling to stand on solid footing and finally just giving up, waiting. I was riding Shiloh and had refused to follow him so we were on the ground. Both horses were screaming in fear and panic. When I looked, I could see that plywood had been set along the edge of the trestle and told my husband the only thing he could do was encourage Rio to get to the wood. It took a tremendous amount of effort for Rio to heave himself up and take a step at a time, falling through the slats over and over. But he did reach the edge. He stood trembling and sweating, all four legs bloodied. We realized after, that all the shoes that had been put on a couple of days earlier had been pulled off in Rio's struggle. I turned Shiloh away and we raced back along the track and then to Steele Street and to the Bakers. They piled in a pick-up truck, raced across the pasture and cut the fence down with bolt cutters to bring Rio in through the back. He could barely walk and required surgery. I was the one who nursed him to health. Walking him daily as the vet instructed, increasing the time and finally riding him bareback through the pasture until he'd recovered. It took about 6 months.

We were with the Bakers for years and then the owner sold the property to Mike Jeffries who said his goal was buying every property on Steele and turning it into industry. The Bakers had lived there for almost 30 years. They bought property up north. Mike Jeffries got this wish on this property – it's all warehouses. In the meantime the stable at 78<sup>th</sup> and Steele had been vacant for a couple of years. Fred Yamashita owned (owns) it. When the man who leased from him for 20 some years, quit, Fred had let it sit vacant. I spoke to Fred and an agreement was made. The stable was mine to use. It was 2 acres with broken down fencing and sheds, weeds that grew to the height of my chin, no water and no electricity. But it was heaven to me. It was August of 1998. Sixteen years ago. My husband and I worked at it every single day. We had a dump truck come in and haul off several loads of rubbish. Jim Baker cut down the weeds. Shiloh and Rio were brought in. The field behind the stable was hay and Jim cut it and baled it and sold it to us. We stored it for our first winter. He told us how to put a steel drum in the 400 gallon stock tank so we could build fires to keep the water from freezing. The water came through 300 feet of hoses from across the street. My savings were gone. I had worked so hard I went through a pair of leather gloves about once a month. My hands toughened so much I didn't need gloves. When I cut myself, often on the old barbed wire we were removing, I bled into the dirt and felt very satisfied, knowing this was as it should be. Finally, after a lifetime of searching, the horses were finally safe and under my care.

Years later, despite all the odds, I had held out. I've been divorced and lived alone for 13 years. I've worked the stable mostly by myself. I found a well on the property and paid for the well permit. At first I used generators to water the horses. The generators were stolen. I saved and paid the expense of bringing electricity to the stable. So along with water, I could finally use stock tank heaters. I had gone through record breaking weather. One day we had almost three feet of snow overnight. Severe cold. Droughts that drove up the cost of hay. And still I hung on. I'd already lost Shiloh. Then one day Rio, who colicked often, was rushed to surgery for a life saving operation. I had my horse back with the hopes that he would be healthy in the future. But he continued to colic. The reason was unknown. A year later, I held his head as the vet injected him to euthanize him. Rio had colicked so badly there was no saving him. I'd found him on the ground, cast against the wall of the loafing shed, sweating and in agony. I tied ropes around his legs and managed to turn him over. Being Rio, always willing to do whatever I asked, he staggered slowly to the parking area where it would

be easier for the renderer to pick him up. His head was heavy in my arms as I held him for the vet. The vet said to me softly, "You can let go of him now." When I did and stepped back, Rio fell to the ground. I hope you never have to hear the sound of a lifeless horse falling. Rio, who had been so alive and spirited and beautiful the day before was suddenly gone. And the little stable seems to still have Rio there. I still have his picture on the dresser, I still think of him often and I still miss him terribly.

It was hard, but I bought another horse, Doc. I was warned that Doc was headshy, but guaranteed physically sound. The consignment sellers were relieved that I had purchased him and impressed that he would let me touch his face. They told me he hated men in black hats. I have had Doc for almost 12 years now. He will be 22 in the spring and I will be 62. The average life span for a horse is 20 – 25. Doc has tried very hard to overcome the trauma he experienced before me. When I bought him, he had a gash between his ears and a rope burn on his neck. His tongue had been bitten. When I gave him his first vaccination, he broke into a sweat and stood trembling, too frightened to disobey me. He was impossible to catch. I spent hours each day, working with him until he finally trusted me enough to let me halter him. He threw me once early on. Doc will still spook and run if you move your hand too suddenly. For years, it was dangerous to simply walk into his stall as he might panic and run you down trying to get out.

Horses can tell their stories if you listen. So Doc has told me his story. He came to me with excellent breeding, and advanced training, sold at half price because of his head shy issues. Doc will do anything in the world to please me. His only problem was bucking. I'm thinking he bucked a man off. Who later grabbed his reins to hold him in place and beat him over the head. The bit would have cut his tongue. The rope burn on his neck was because Doc became uncatchable and dangerous. A ruined horse, he was roped and run through the auction.

Doc is spoiled now. He loves to drink coffee. He rarely bucks with me, sometimes just in good spirits. He will do almost anything I ask of him, including longing without a rope. He comes when I call him. I ride him with no bit, just a light hackamore or a halter. He has arthritis and back pain. So do I. I have to line him up to a stump to get in the saddle. That's the most embarrassing thing about age. But he understands and scoots right over, stopping so the stirrup is exactly where it needs to be. Doc loves me like no other horse ever has. And I'm the only person he trusts, other than Becky, who has her horse with me. But the problem with Doc is, he will not do well if he has to be moved. He cannot be kept in a stall. He would panic and hurt someone. I also cannot afford a barn with a stall. He is too old to be put out in a pasture, exposed to the weather and unable to defend himself from aggressive horses. I had always planned to keep Doc until his last day. But his last day may be sooner than intended if the stable is taken away and I have no place to take Doc.

The other people who keep their horses on the corner feel just as strongly about them as I do Doc. People have made sacrifices to purchase and care for their horses. I had always planned on Becky taking over the stable when I was no longer able to.

So that's my input.

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And 78<sup>th</sup> and Steele Streets, Welby