



TO: Denver City Council
FROM: Brad Buchanan, Manager
DATE: September 15, 2016
RE: **38th & Blake Station Area Height Amendments – Staff Report and Recommendation**

Community Planning and Development is pleased to submit the final draft of the 38th & Blake Station Area Height Amendments to the Denver City Council.

The Denver Planning Board unanimously approved the plan amendments at its regular meeting on August 17, 2016 as a supplement to the Denver Comprehensive Plan 2000. The Planning Board approved the plan amendments based on compliance with the three established criteria for supplements to the Comprehensive Plan:

1. Consistency with the Denver Comprehensive Plan and applicable supplements
2. Inclusive public process
3. Long-term view

The City Council Land Use and Transportation committee approved the plan for filing on August 30, 2016.

Following a brief overview of the proposed plan amendments, this staff report outlines compliance with the three established criteria for plan adoption/amendment, and concludes with the staff recommendation.

Overview of Plan Amendments

Five small area plans – the River North Area Plan (2003), the 38th & Blake Station Area Plan (2009), the Northeast Downtown Neighborhoods Plan (2011), the Globeville Neighborhood Plan (2014), and the Elyria & Swansea Neighborhoods Plan (2015) – converge within the half-mile area surrounding the new 38th & Blake commuter rail station. The goals and recommendations for building height vary among the plans, making the City’s vision unclear.

The 38th and Blake Station Area Height Amendments (referenced as “plan amendments”) amend five overlapping plans in the station area to clarify the vision for building height. Based on extensive public feedback, the plan amendments generally propose greater building heights than recommended in existing plans to support transit oriented development in the station area. Increased building heights would be combined with specific requirements for increased design quality and integration of affordable housing. Guidance is provided to ensure that areas are not rezoned to utilize the increased maximum heights recommended by the plan amendments until specific tools are adopted to promote greater design quality and integration of affordable housing.

1 - Plan Consistency

Denver Comprehensive Plan 2000

Environmental Sustainability Chapter

Objective 2: Ensure environmental stewardship of natural resources, taking into account the entire ecosystem, not just human needs. Preventing pollution will be the action of first choice in accomplishing this objective.

2-F – Conserve land by:

- Promoting infill development within Denver at sites where services and infrastructure are already in place.
- Designing mixed-use communities and reducing sprawl, so that residents can live, work and play within their own neighborhoods.
- Creating more density at transit nodes.
- Sharing parking at activity centers.
- Protecting natural corridors, wetlands and floodplains from the encroachment of development.
- Encouraging the redevelopment of brownfields.

Land Use Chapter

Objective 3: Preserve and enhance the individuality, diversity and livability of Denver's neighborhoods and expand the vitality of Denver's business centers

3-A – Complete neighborhood and area plans for parts of Denver where development or redevelopment is likely or desirable.

3-B – Encourage quality infill development that is consistent with the character of the surrounding neighborhood, that offers opportunities for increased density and more amenities, and that broadens the variety of compatible uses.

Objective 4: Ensure that Denver's [plans] and regulatory system support the development of a clean, efficient and innovative transportation system that meets Denver's future economic and mobility needs.

4-A - Encourage mixed-use, transit-oriented development that makes effective use of existing transportation infrastructure . . . increases transit patronage, reduces impact on the environment, and encourages vibrant urban centers and neighborhoods.

4-B—Ensure that land-use policies and decisions support a variety of mobility choices including light rail, buses, paratransit, walking and bicycling, as well as convenient access for people with disabilities.

Mobility Chapter

Objective 1: Provide Denver's diverse residents, workers and visitors with a choice of transportation modes that are safe and convenient.

1-B - Promote public transit, both bus and rail, as a safe, attractive and convenient choice for people who might otherwise drive to employment, education, cultural, shopping or other destinations.

1-C - Identify areas throughout the city where transportation policies should reflect pedestrian priorities. These include areas such as schools, child-care centers, civic institutions, business centers, shopping districts and parks.

Objective 7: Address neighborhood transportation issues in a manner that balances overall mobility with neighborhood integrity.

Objective 8: Provide safe and convenient facilities to encourage bicycling and walking for commuting, recreation and other trips.

8-A—Ensure safe and convenient access and accommodation of bicycle riders, pedestrians and transit riders.

Denver's Legacies Chapter

Objective 3: Incorporate visionary urban design principles into new development patterns to achieve a higher concentration and more diverse mix of housing, employment and transportation options in identified areas of the city.

Objective 5: Preserve Denver's historic resources.

Economic Activity Chapter

Objective 5: Support the creation and growth of neighborhood businesses that enhance the vitality and quality of life in their communities.

Neighborhoods Chapter

Objective 1: Strengthen the positive attributes and distinctive character of each neighborhood to help sustain Denver as a healthy, vital city.

Objective 3: Make neighborhoods clean and safe places that inspire community pride, where residents and visitors feel secure and comfortable.

Housing Chapter

Objective 3: Build partnerships with other government agencies and nonprofit organizations to creatively deliver increased housing assistance

3-I Support the development of affordable housing using a variety of public finance mechanisms.

Objective 6: Encourage mixed-use, mixed-income housing development in Denver's core area and along transit lines.

6-B Continue to support mixed-income housing development that includes affordable rental and for-purchase housing for lower-income, entry-level and service employees, especially in Downtown and along transit lines.

6-C Encourage mixed-income rental housing with financing that allows both market-rate and subsidized units of equal quality in the same development.

6-E Identify and capitalize on opportunities to develop housing along transit lines.

6-F In forums such as the Metro Mayor's Caucus and the Denver Regional Council of Governments, promote discussion and a regional commitment to goals for mixed-income and mixed-use housing development along transit lines.

Blueprint Denver (2002)

Key Concepts:

- All areas of Denver are either an Area of Stability or Change, or on a continuum from change to stability
- Direct growth to places that will benefit from an infusion of activity, population and investment
- Character preservation, reinvestment and limited growth are the primary concerns for stable residential neighborhoods
- Regulations should encourage development with standards for appropriately located density
- Smart growth connects residents to transit, jobs and centers of activity, and increases housing and employment opportunities

Guiding Principles: Areas of Change

- Contribute to urban design vision
- Respect valued attributes of area
- Expand transportation choice
- Improve environmental quality

Civic Responsibilities of Small Area Plans

- Affordable housing
- Transportation system integrity
- Transit oriented development
- Community facilities
- Consistency with adopted plans

Strategic Transportation Plan (2008)

Vision

A great city is livable for all of its citizens now and in the future. The Strategic Transportation Plan (STP) creates a multimodal transportation system to support a livable, connected and sustainable city.

- Multimodal
 - Safe pedestrian linkages
 - Comprehensive bicycle system
 - Dependable transit options
 - Efficient and well-maintained infrastructure
- Safe, Efficient, Reliable
 - Connected multimodal system
 - Safe transportation network
 - Manage congestion
 - Accessible to all

Innovation

- A transformative approach to transportation.
- Plans for travel sheds, not just travel corridors.
- Move people, not just vehicles.
- Does not grow Denver's road footprint.

Strategy

- Maintenance and efficiency are fundamental to our current transportation system, followed by improvements and planning for future transportation.
- A balance of behavioral, physical and operational recommendations are included.
- The result is a comprehensive plan for each travel shed.

River North Neighborhood Plan (2003)

Station Area Vision

Create a compact, mixed use, pedestrian-friendly transit oriented development (TOD) within the 38th and Blake station area. Encourage a compatible mix of uses within the potential TOD district including residential, retail, office industrial and civic uses.

Goals

- Encourage the maximum viable density for new development on land that is within a quarter mile of the station area.
- A range of housing options, including development of affordable housing in the TOD district.
- Possible urban design standards and guidelines

38th & Blake Station Area Plan (2009)

Station Area Vision

Rich Mix of Choices: Provide housing, employment transportation and shopping choices for people of all ages, household types, incomes and lifestyles.

Goals

- Transit Oriented Development (TOD) offers a framework to building communities with a sense of place that offer living and transportation options that area accessible to people with a wide range of incomes.
- Provide housing and transportation choices, urban green spaces, accessible recreation and cultural attractions, and policies and incentives that promote mixed-use neighborhoods for the benefit of everyone.

Northeast Downtown Neighborhood Plan (2011)

Station Area Vision

Encourage investment by attracting new businesses, supporting the growth of existing businesses, encouraging the reuse of existing structures, attracting new development and increasing housing opportunities. Housing development opportunities should expand the range of housing types and price ranges.

Goals

- Improve connections in River North between Northeast Downtown and the South Platte River corridor.
- In areas of stability, retaining the existing housing stock and reinforcing existing character through appropriate new development should continue.
- In areas of change, a wider variety of multiple unit building forms should be encouraged as part of these mixed-use neighborhoods.
- Future zoning should support varied residential forms and remove barriers to promote products that serve households at different socioeconomic levels. Adding more housing is important to forwarding the plan vision.

Globeville Neighborhood Plan (2014)

Station Area Vision

Globeville is a neighborhood where diverse land uses are present and are located such that the needs of residents, businesses, and industry are met equitably. The neighborhood has a complete and accessible system of parks that encourages physical activity, social interaction, and environmental responsibility. Residential and employment opportunities are diverse and accessible with services in place to support the wellbeing of the local population.

Goals

- Maintain stable industrial and employment areas within Globeville while enhancing compatibility with nearby residential and non-industrial uses.
- Maintain the presence of industry within the neighborhood while implementing design-based strategies to make it more compatible with adjacent residential uses.
- In areas recommended for Mixed Use Concept Land Use, Promote the use of design elements that link the building directly to the street environment, such as ground story activation, transparent window openings, and doorways at the street.
- Allow a mix of uses within the area and within individual buildings.
- Make use of streetscape elements that reinforce urban character and promote high levels of walking and bicycles use, such as wide sidewalks, bicycle racks, public trash cans, and tree wells.

Elyria and Swansea Neighborhoods Plan (2015)

Station Area Vision

This plan reinforces recommendations from the adopted 38th and Blake Station Area plan (2010) while updating recommendations related to land use and building heights area within the statistical Elyria and Swansea neighborhood.

Goals

- Encourage investment in new housing to expand the total number of residences and to provide for a diversity of housing types to bring more people of all ages and income levels into the neighborhood.
- Future commuter rail stations, the National Western Center and I-70 investments will likely attract a variety of commercial and mixed use development to Elyria and Swansea. New industrial users should be cleaner and more productive in terms of offering more employment, broadening the tax base and increasing the number of exportable goods and services.
- To improve compatibility between residential and more intensive industrial areas, development between these uses should be consistent with the Industrial Mixed-Use land use designation.
- Encourage investment in higher density housing, services, and employment opportunities near rail stations to provide for a diverse population with safe and convenient pedestrian access to rail transit.

The proposed 38th and Blake Station Area Height Amendments is consistent with the Denver Comprehensive Plan and relevant amendments and supplements.

2 - Inclusive Public Process

Recommendations included in the **38th and Blake Station Area Height Amendments** are based on extensive public input. Key elements of the public process included:

- **Planning Process Steering Committee.** The steering committee for the plan amendment process included Councilman Albus Brooks and representative from each of the five neighborhoods that converge on the station area. The committee met regularly to oversee plan development.
- **Targeted Community Outreach.** CPD staff attended meetings the Cole, Curtis Park and River North neighborhood organizations to provide information on the planning process and solicit input.
- **Public Meetings.** The planning process featured a series of four meetings to seek input and guidance from the general public:
 - Kickoff Meeting and Public Input Session – February 10th, 2016
 - Exploring Alternatives – March 12th, 2016
 - Review & Refine a Preferred Alternative – April 26th, 2016
 - Presentation and Review of draft plan amendment – May 24th, 2016
- **Communication.**
 - Project information, draft content, and announcements were posted to the project web site at www.denvergov.org/38blake
 - Email updates were sent to the plan’s contact list to announce upcoming meetings

The 38th & Blake Station Area Height Amendments was developed through an inclusive public process.

3. Long-Term View

The **38th & Blake Station Area Height Amendments** establish a framework that will guide change in the area for the next 20+ years. The recommendations are based on a long-term vision that will take many years to achieve.

The 38th & Blake Station Area Height Amendments have an appropriate long-term perspective.

Staff Recommendation: Based on the findings that the plan is consistent with the Denver Comprehensive Plan and applicable supplements, that an inclusive public process was utilized, and that the plan includes a long-term view, staff recommends **City Council adoption of the plan amendments.**

Attachments

- **Attachment A: 38th & Blake Station Area Height Amendments** – September 15, 2016
- **Attachment B: Letters of Support**
 - Curtis Park Neighbors RNO, August 15, 2016
 - United Community Action Neighborhood (UCAN), August 16, 2016
 - River North Business Improvement District, August 17, 2016
 - Cole Neighborhood Association RNO, August 17, 2016



38th & Blake Station Area Height Amendments

SEPTEMBER 15, 2016



Acknowledgements

MAYOR MICHAEL B. HANCOCK

DENVER CITY COUNCIL

District 1 - Rafael Espinoza

District 2 - Kevin Flynn

District 3 - Paul D. Lopez

District 4 - Kendra Black

District 5 - Mary Beth Susman

District 6 - Paul Kashmann

District 7 - Jolon Clark (President Pro Tem)

District 8 - Chris Herndon

District 9 - Albus Brooks (President)

District 10 - Wayne New

District 11 - Christopher Herndon

At-Large- Robin Kniech

At-Large - Deborah Ortega

DENVER PLANNING BOARD

Jim Bershof

Ignacio Correa-Ortiz

Don Elliott

Renee Martinez-Stone

Joel Noble, Vice Chair

Susan Pearce

Frank Schultz

Chris Smith

Susan Stanton

Arleen Taniwaki

Julie Underdahl, Chair

THE 38th & BLAKE PLAN AMENDMENT STEERING COMMITTEE:

Special thanks to the dedicated volunteer committee of residents, business owners, property owners, and advocates.

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Brad Buchanan, Executive Director

Caryn Champine, Planning Services Director

Steve Nalley, Neighborhood Planning Supervisor

Tim Watkins, Senior City Planner (Project Manager)

Mallory Bettag, Planning Team

Abe Barge, Planning Team

Samantha Danforth, Planning Team

Josh Palmeri, Planning Team

Jeff Brasel, Planning Team

NORTH DENVER CORNERSTONE COLLABORATIVE

Anna Jones, Director

Todd Wenskoski, Deputy Project Manager

Chris Proud, Parks Project Manager II

PUBLIC WORKS

Jose Cornejo, Executive Director

Emily Gloeckner, Director of Policy and Planning

OFFICE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Paul Washington, Executive Director

Louis Kolker

PARKS AND RECREATION

Happy Haynes, Executive Director

Mark Tabor, Parks Planning Supervisor

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Bob McDonald, Executive Director

Gene Hook

Gretchen Armijo

CONSULTANT VISUALIZATION SUPPORT

Chase Mullen, MIG / Vizhen3D

COVER PHOTO

Andy Cross / The Denver Post

Table of Contents

Introduction.....1
Planning Process2
Planning Context.....5
Recommendations6
Moving Forward11



Introduction

The 38th & Blake Station opened as the first commuter rail stop from Downtown Denver to the Denver International Airport (DIA) along the University of Colorado A Line in April 2016. This station area lies within the North Denver Cornerstone Collaborative (NDCC) study area and along the I-70 and commuter rail corridor to DIA that has been named the “Corridor of Opportunity” for growth and investment in Denver. Access to high capacity public transit as part of a regional rail and bus transit system is a catalyst for transit oriented development (TOD) within the station area. TOD offers the opportunity for many people to live and work near transit, and to reduce reliance on single-occupant vehicle travel for a healthier and more vibrant community.

PURPOSE OF PLAN AMENDMENT

Five small area plans – the River North Area Plan (2003), the 38th & Blake Station Area Plan (2009), the Northeast Downtown Neighborhoods Plan (2011), the Globeville Neighborhood Plan (2014), and the Elyria & Swansea Neighborhoods Plan (2015) – converge within the half-mile area surrounding the 38th & Blake Station.

These plans provide a unified and collective land use vision for TOD within the station area, and supporting mobility recommendations. However, the goals and recommendations relating to building heights varies in each plan, making the City’s vision of the Station Area in relation to building heights unclear. This has created uncertainty for stakeholders, residents, and City officials regarding rezoning and planning for future development. This plan amendment aims to capture the benefits of density while minimizing or mitigating undesirable consequences and externalities.

The recommendations in this plan amendment refine and update the existing five neighborhood and area plans with a focus on building heights, to achieve the following benefits:

- Make clear the vision for building height,
- Respond to changing conditions and public investment affecting the 38th & Blake Station Area and the surrounding NDCC area, and
- Support appropriate and desired growth patterns, including building form standards, and mixed income housing opportunities associated with greater density and height within the overall 38th & Blake Station Area.



1933 aerial image showing the convergence of Downing, Blake, Lafayette and 38th Streets near the Union Pacific rail corridor.

Planning Process



The plan amendment process included four public meetings, in addition to visits to various neighborhood organization meetings.



This plan amendment incorporates and responds to public input that was collected throughout the project planning process, beginning with a public kickoff meeting in February of 2016. Feedback related to the desired station area vision suggested ways to achieve that vision, including building heights and other contributing factors. The City collected input from residents, business and property owners, and other interested participants. The public conversation progressed through a series of four public meetings, as well as eight steering committee meetings, and other neighborhood outreach efforts. This holistic planning approach was established to comprehensively examine contributing factors that relate to and inform the conversation about building-heights and the desired characteristics of a TOD community.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

A multi-tiered strategy for involving stakeholders ensured that many perspectives were considered throughout the planning process. Public input informed the identification of key issues as well as concepts and plan recommendations for addressing the key issues. Public engagement efforts included:

- **Plan Website:** A plan website was established at the beginning of the planning process to provide updates and important plan resources to the general public and to provide additional opportunity for public participation.
- **North Denver Cornerstone Collaborative:** A monthly e-mail newsletter was sent to a growing contact list, including latest NDCC information and project updates. City Staff also attended and provided project information at NDCC quarterly town hall meetings.
- **Denver Planning Board:** City staff briefed Planning Board throughout the planning process. Planning Board votes to approve the plan amendment following a public hearing.
- **Denver City Council:** City Councilmember Albus Brooks (District 9) provided critical leadership and guidance throughout the planning process. A City Council public hearing and vote finalizes the planning process.
- **Steering Committee:** The project was guided by a steering committee comprised of stakeholders within the plan area and surrounding community. Committee members represented neighborhoods that intersect within the study area including River North (RiNo), Curtis Park, Cole, Globeville, Elyria and Swansea neighborhoods.
- **Public Meetings:** Four public meetings were held to obtain valuable input from community members throughout the planning process. The meetings included staff presentations, keypad polling questionnaires, worksheets, visual preference material, informal expert panel discussion sessions, public discussion, open house viewing sessions, and mapping exercises and reporting. Spanish-language interpreters were made available for all public meetings.

- **Additional Neighborhood Meetings:** Staff attended a variety of existing neighborhood meetings throughout the planning process to report general information regarding project progress and findings and to answer questions and further collect community input.

SYNOPSIS OF NEIGHBORHOOD INPUT

Building heights and how heights related to desired character, mobility choices and quality of life were the primary focus of the planning process, including height tapering from the station platform, massing and general shaping of urban form. Some of the input received reinforces recommendations found in the existing plans, while some input encourages new policy objectives for the station area. Major themes of public input included:

- Taller building heights are appropriate to promote transit oriented development that provides neighborhood services and discourages vehicle use. Where heights are greater than those recommended in previous plans, development should provide community benefits including integrated affordable housing within the station area.
- Potential negative impacts such as traffic congestion, parking impacts to nearby residential areas, bike/ped conflicts and noise / intensity levels should be addressed proactively with appropriate design standards, mobility investments and growth management strategies.
- The tallest buildings and greatest density is most appropriate near the station platform, with appropriate height transitions from the platform to established residential areas.
- Special consideration along the South Platte River for conserving light, air, views, access to the river, and enhancing the pedestrian experience.
- As density of the area increases, incorporating a higher level of design is desired to enhance quality of life and community livability for the station area, and was established as a condition for increasing maximum building heights within the study area.
- Important possible design elements in the public realm include street trees, public art, seating, and green infrastructure to enhance and create an inviting and walkable TOD environment.
- Integrating a full range of housing types and price points was identified as a high priority to support the rapidly growing need for workforce, mixed-income, and affordable housing. New affordable housing units within the area was raised as a condition for increasing maximum building-heights within the study area.
- Encouraging infrastructure upgrades, open space, and multi-modal transportation improvements as recommended in existing neighborhood plans in order to encourage a less auto-dependent TOD community.
- Exploring opportunities to engage the RiNo Art District to integrate art throughout the area



12. A. Current Plan(s)



12. B. Alternative 1 – Moderate Increase



12. C. Alternative 2 – Greater Increase



The public engagement process included a visual evaluation of potential building height alternatives as viewed from key locations.

- Integrating existing structures, buildings or other noteworthy features into new development projects is a desired outcome of increasing building heights, and intended to provide incentive to preserve existing community fabric.

As a result of creative dialog, the height goals, which are provided as recommendations in this plan amendment, reflect innovative solutions that focus on the human scale for community enhancement and livability. Height is looked at holistically with other critical urban design and healthy living principles, such as encouraging walkability, transit use, access to amenities and integrating affordability into housing and employment.

COORDINATION WITH CONCURRENT PLANNING EFFORTS / PROJECTS:

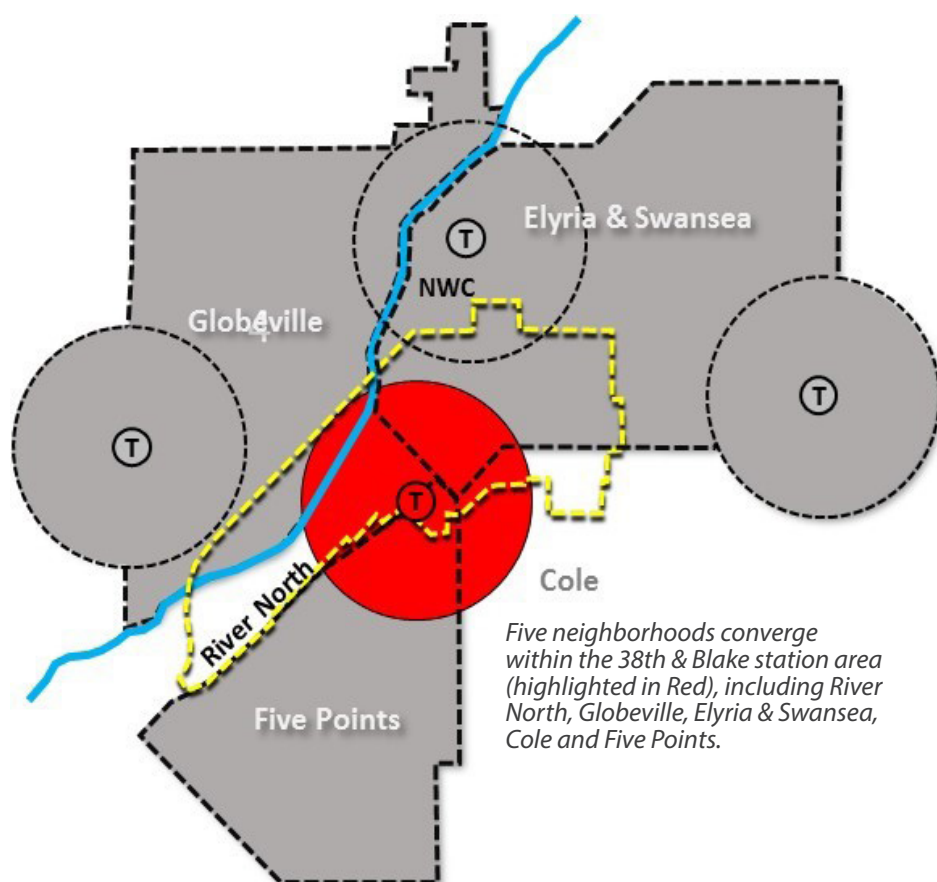
During this planning process, there were several related planning efforts underway within or adjacent to the station area. The planning team coordinated with each of these efforts to ensure consistency:

- Brighton Boulevard Design and Reconstruction
- National Western Center Planning and Implementation
- Platte to Park Hill: Stormwater Systems
- North Denver Cornerstone Collaborative - Master Mobility Study

Planning Context

Denver Comprehensive Plan 2000 provides the vision for the entire City. Citywide and small area plans are adopted as supplements to the Comprehensive Plan to provide additional direction for a certain topic or area. This plan amendment reinforces the existing land use, mobility, and development visions within the existing adopted plans while it refines and updates the City's building height vision, and conditions for increasing building height (public benefits) for this area. This plan updates five existing small area plans as referenced below. Where there is conflict between this plan amendment and existing plans, this plan amendment supersedes existing plans.

- River North Neighborhood Plan (2003)
- 38th & Blake Station Area Plan (2009)
- Northeast Downtown Neighborhoods Plan (2011)
- Globeville Neighborhood Plan (2014)
- Elyria & Swansea Neighborhoods Plan (2015)



Right: Early 20th Century brick warehouse buildings along 40th Ave. were once served by rail spurs from the Union Pacific Railway.



Recommendations



1. PROMOTE TALLER BUILDING HEIGHTS TO SUPPORT TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT THAT PROVIDES COMMUNITY BENEFITS AND INCORPORATES APPROPRIATE HEIGHT TRANSITIONS BETWEEN STABLE RESIDENTIAL AREAS (AREAS OF STABILITY) AND INFILL OR REDEVELOPMENT AREAS (AREAS OF CHANGE).

Intent: To encourage building densities that support transit while providing community benefits and height transitions from the station platform to the surrounding residential and mixed-use areas.

- Allow taller building heights than those recommended by previous plans, particularly near the station platform.
- Establish greater building height along Brighton Blvd in close proximity to the station platform.
- Ensure that development that benefits from taller building heights than those recommended by previous plans provides community benefits, including integrated affordable housing within the station area.
- Provide a building height transition from the station platform to preserve and relate to the lower scale single-family character in the Cole Neighborhood.
- Provide a building height transition from the station platform to relate to the lower scale mixed-use and residential character in the Curtis Park Neighborhood.
- Provide a height transition between 44th Ave and I-70 at Washington Street, to relate to the lower scale single-family residential character.

See the Future Maximum Building Heights Map on the next page for more information.



A building height transition should be provided from the station platform to preserve and relate to the lower scale single-family character in the Cole Neighborhood.

Future Maximum Building Heights Map

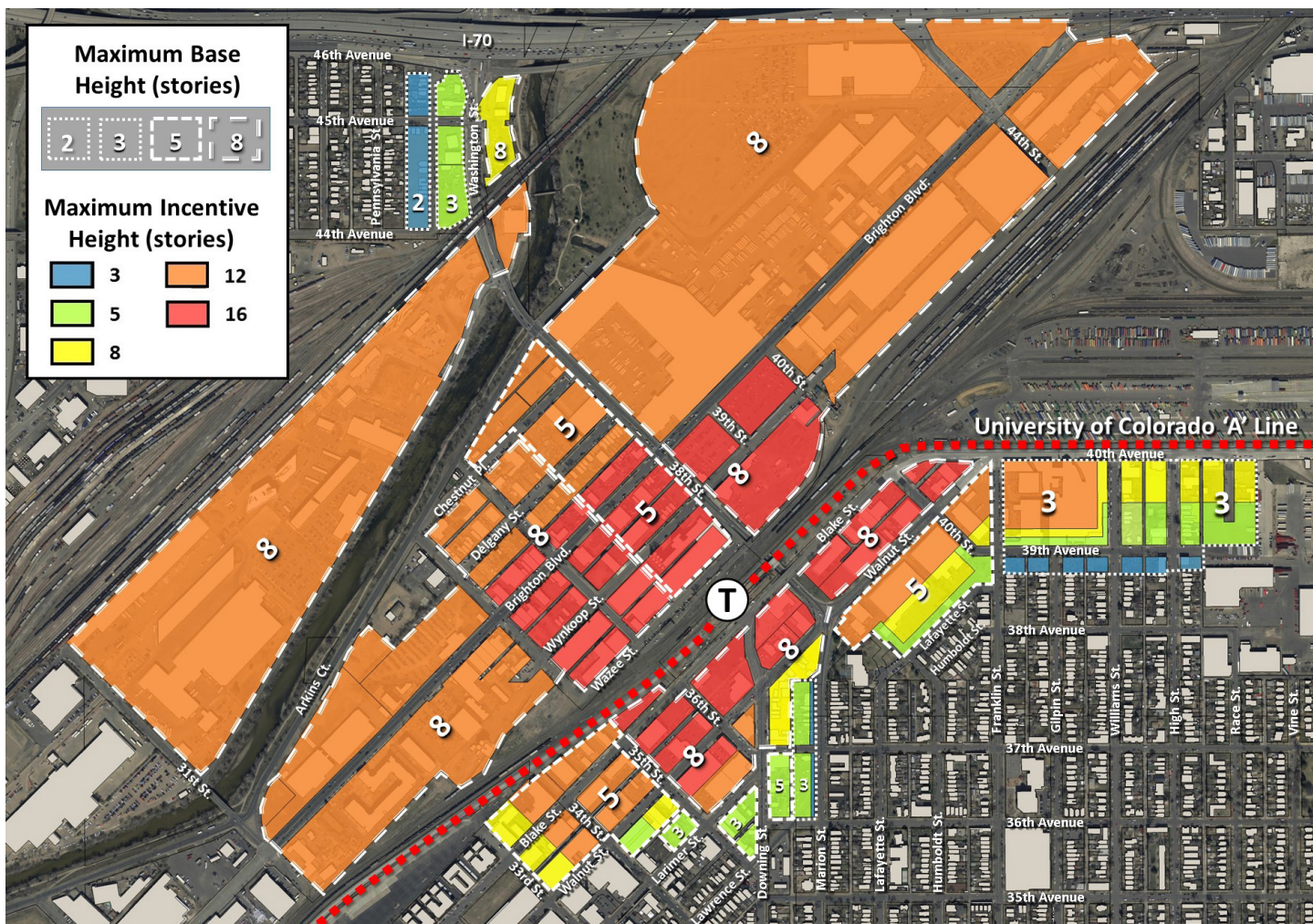
The map below illustrates appropriate maximum building heights, and provides a Maximum Base Height and a Maximum Incentive Height throughout the Plan area. It will be used to inform amendments to Denver’s official zoning map to apply zone districts or overlay zone districts with appropriate maximum height limits and associated requirements.

- Maximum Base Height.** This is the maximum height based on review of recommendations from previously adopted plans. Zoning map amendments that would allow these base heights are appropriate prior to adoption of tools to implement requirements for higher design quality and integrated affordable housing (see “F.1 Regulatory and Policy Strategies” on page 11 for more information on implementation tools).
- Maximum Incentive Height.** This is an increased maximum height as a density bonus to deliver specific community benefits within the station area such as higher design quality (see Recommendation 2 on page 8) and integration of affordable housing (see Recommendation 4 on page 10). Regulations, such as zoning map amendments that would allow these increased maximum heights are not appropriate until tools have been adopted to further define specific community benefits, to be implemented through incentive requirements for higher design quality, and station area affordable housing (see “F.1 Regulatory and Policy Strategies” on page 11 for more information on implementation tools).

Neighborhood Input

As described in “Synopsis of Neighborhood Input” on page 3, many participants in the public involvement process indicated that taller building heights are appropriate to promote transit oriented development in the Plan area. However, participants also indicated that development that exceeds heights recommended by previous plans should provide community benefits, including high-quality design and integrated affordable housing.

The Maximum Incentive Height described at left reflects taller building heights that are appropriate as an incentive for specific community benefits.



Recommendations

New Union Square Neighborhood building at 17th St. & Wewatta. Image Source: denver-cityscape.com



2. ADOPT A NEW REGULATORY APPROACH TO ENSURE GREATER DESIGN QUALITY THROUGHOUT THE STATION AREA.

Intent: To provide new design regulations for improved design, to positively contribute to the adjacent public realm, and to achieve the following desired qualities:

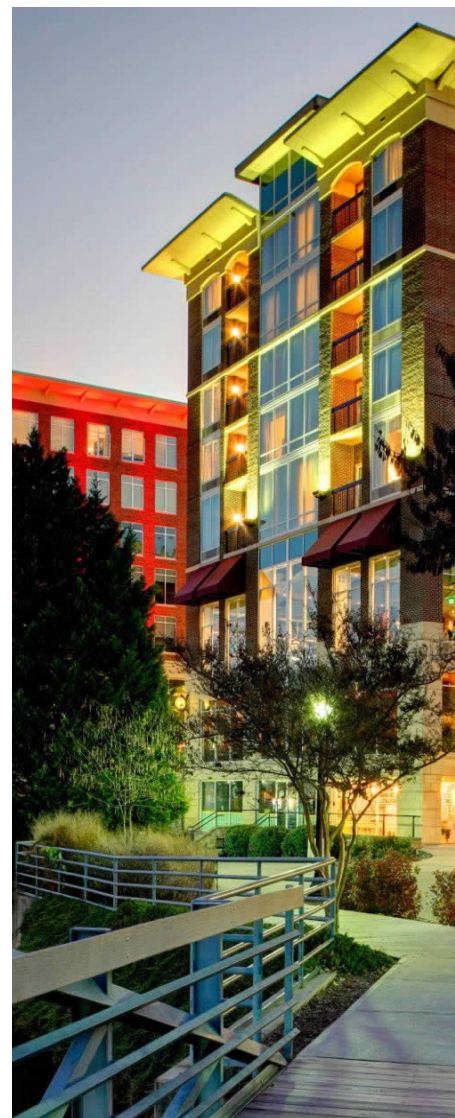
- An active, walkable, and vibrant public realm
 - Development sensitivity to daylight, views, and air
 - Pedestrian-scaled details and entrances to address streets, promenades, and existing open spaces for neighborhood vibrancy
 - Minimize the visual and physical impacts of parking
 - Creation of quality pedestrian spaces such as pocket plazas, pedestrian corridors, and other gathering spaces
 - Provision of services and amenities for the community
 - Integration of existing buildings into new development
- Establish a comfortable pedestrian scale and reduce building massing for more daylight, views, and air for taller buildings while considering surrounding context. This transition may be accomplished through variations in building-height, upper story setbacks, or other mass and scale alternatives.
 - Mitigate visual and physical impacts of parking and capitalize on the multitude of multi-modal public investments connecting the station area to the region. Explore opportunities, such as screening parking with active uses, no parking minimums, and other parking best practices where multi-modal choices are readily available.



3. ESTABLISH THE RIVER CORRIDOR AS AN AMENITY AND RESOURCE, WITH COMFORTABLE PEDESTRIAN SCALE AND EYES ON THE RIVER FOR SAFETY AND VIBRANCY.

Intent: To create an active riverfront experience while creating visual interest and variety, and allowing for sufficient light, views, and air along the river corridor.

- Encourage design regulations that create variety and interest through varied building forms along the river, and design approaches to maximize daylight and views to the river. Similar to Recommendation 2, this river edge treatment can be achieved through exploring a variety of design tools to implement this recommendation.
- Require new development to front or address the South Platte Riverfront, just as primary streets and pedestrian corridors are required to be addressed by new development with engaging pedestrian entrances and active ground uses.
- With eyes on the promenade, evening lighting, and other well programmed outdoor spaces, the promenade can be a vibrant place that encourages gathering while providing a sense of safety and security.
- Encourage pedestrian-scaled elements between the public realm and adjoining development, pocket plazas or quality pedestrian-accessible outdoor / open spaces, upper story setbacks, and a variety of heights and building forms.



Riverfront development in Greenville, NC. Photo Source: hamptoninnandsuites-greenville.com

Concept of future riverfront development fronting Arkins Court Promenade next to the South Platte River.

Depiction of riverfront development in Greenville, NC. Image Source: Cooper Carry

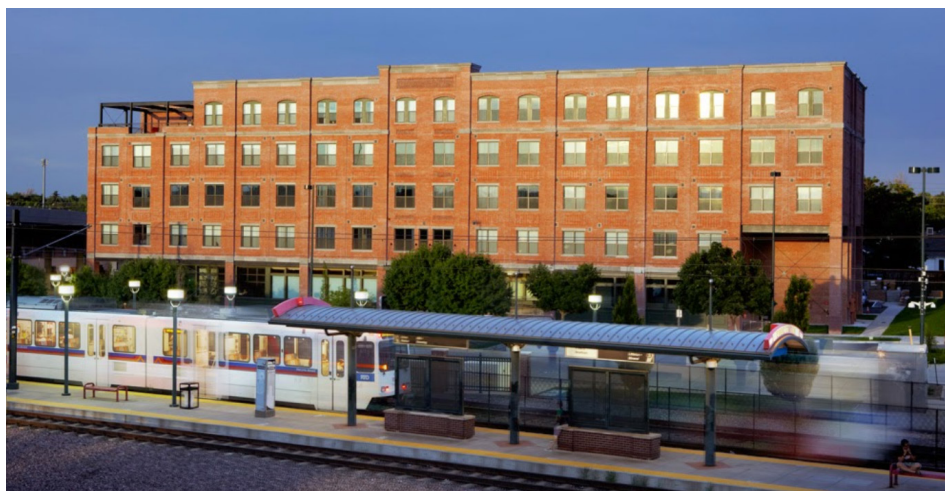


A Denver Housing Authority affordable housing building at 10th & Osage. Photo Source: Housingplusblog.com

4. ADOPT A NEW REGULATORY APPROACH TO INTEGRATE AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND MIXED INCOME DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE 38TH AND BLAKE STATION AREA.

Intent: To encourage integration of affordability within the station area to generate more square footage and to locate more affordable housing units within walking distance of the 38th & Blake Station.

- Provide a regulatory framework for integration of housing affordability within the station area by providing certain density incentives, or a density bonus to achieve the Maximum Incentive Height shown on the Future Maximum Building Heights Map.
- Encourage partnership between City and private development to achieve goals related to affordable housing.
- Coordinate with city-wide affordable housing funding efforts.



The University of Colorado A Line opened in April 2016. Photo Source: Andy Cross / The Denver Post

Moving Forward

REALIZING THE VISION

This Plan Amendment sets forth a refined vision for building heights within the 38th & Blake Station Area, and contains recommendations that define regulatory steps to achieve that vision. Plan implementation takes place over many years and is the result of large and small actions by the public sector and the private sector, sometimes in partnership. It's understood that the future will bring unforeseen opportunities and challenges. The recommendations in this Plan Amendment are intended to provide direction for future actions en route to achieving the refined vision for building heights.

TYPES OF IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES

Blueprint Denver identifies three types of implementation activities: regulatory/policy, public investment, and partnerships. These activities focus on public sector actions, many of which create a positive environment that enables actions by other groups, such as property owners, developers, neighborhood organizations, districts or homeowners. While public actions can help set the stage, in most cases it is private action (such as constructing new buildings and houses, opening new businesses, and attracting new residents) that are the most critical elements to achieving a plan's vision.

F.1 REGULATORY AND POLICY STRATEGIES

Regulatory and policy strategies change City codes or regulations to affect desired outcomes. Typical examples include Denver Zoning Code text and map amendments, and Parks and Recreation requirements regarding open space and plantings.

Regulatory and Policy Implementation Priorities for the 38th & Blake Station Area:

- Develop regulatory tools, such as a Design Overlay District, to implement recommendations for greater design quality throughout the station area. Zoning map amendments that would allow the Maximum Incentive Height illustrated on the "Future Maximum Building Heights Map" on page 7 are not appropriate prior to adoption of tools to implement requirements for higher design quality. See Recommendation 2 on page 8 for more information.
- Regulatory tools to implement greater design qual-

ity should apply throughout the station area regardless of underlying zone district.

- Develop regulatory tools to require affordable housing within the station area that utilize the increased Maximum Incentive Height illustrated on the "Future Maximum Building Heights Map" on page 7. Zoning map amendments that would allow the Maximum Incentive Height illustrated on the map are not appropriate until specific tools have been adopted to implement requirements for affordable housing. Note that the process to develop regulatory tools for affordable housing may result in tools that relate to future citywide requirements or do not apply to all projects in the Plan area. See Recommendation 4 on page 10 for more information.
- Adopt zoning map amendments to rezone properties within the 38th & Blake study area, consistent with the height and regulatory recommendations of this plan.

F.2 PUBLIC INVESTMENT STRATEGIES

Public Investment Strategies are those involving public funding of public infrastructure. Examples include public investment in street reconstruction, bike lane installation, new transit lines, park improvements, or new or expanded recreation centers. The City takes the lead in designing, constructing, and funding these projects and may use a variety of public funding sources such as the annual Capital Improvements Program, bond funds, or state or federal grant programs.

Public Investment Implementation Priorities for the 38th & Blake Station Area:

- Continue to leverage public investments to implement infrastructure, sidewalks, bike facilities, open space, and other multi-modal transportation recommendations from existing plans, in order to encourage a less auto-dependent TOD community.

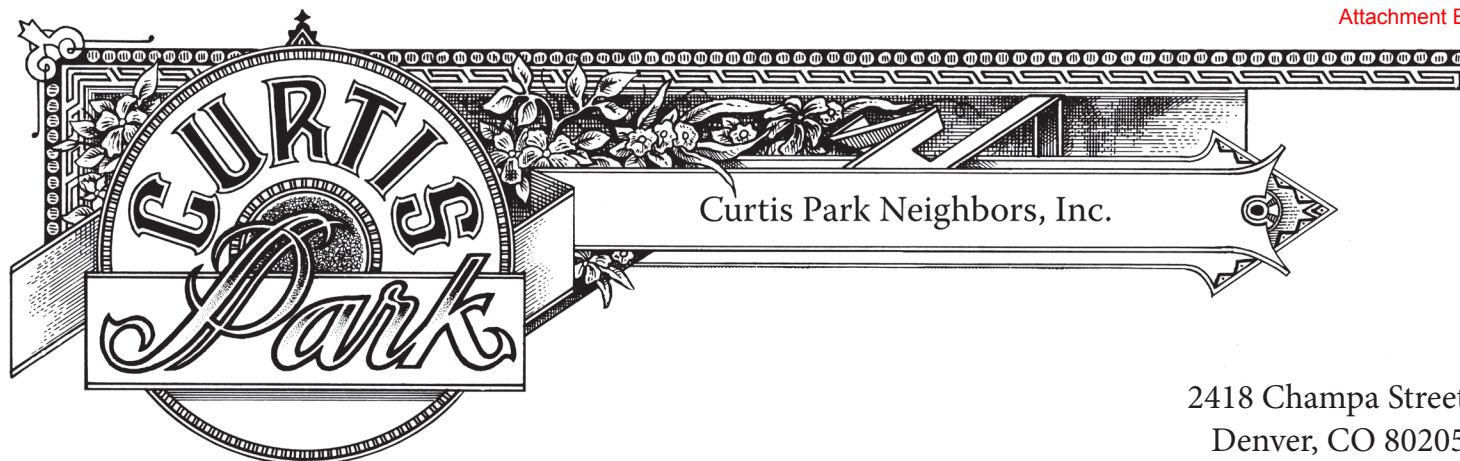
F.3 PARTNERSHIP STRATEGIES

Partnership Strategies represent the most diverse category of implementation activities. Public-private partnership (PPP or P3) activity has expanded greatly in recent years and has gone well beyond its roots of public subsidies of private development projects. Increasingly,

public-private partnerships are being used to fund infrastructure projects. Denver Union Station and RTD's East and North Metro commuter rail lines are among the largest P3 projects in the country. Another local example is the reconstruction of 14th St. in Downtown Denver using a combination of City bond funds and a property-owner approved General Improvement District.

Partnership Implementation Priorities for the 38th & Blake Station Area:

- Work with non-profit housing partners, Denver Office of Economic Development, and other potential financing entities to create new affordable and mixed income housing units in the neighborhoods.
- Work with registered neighborhood organizations, including the RiNo Art District to continue implementation of recommendations from other plans, and to bring about positive impacts from new investment within the station area for surrounding neighborhoods.



2418 Champa Street
Denver, CO 80205

August 15, 2016

Denver City Council and Denver Planning Board
1437 Bannock Street, Denver, CO 80202

Curtis Park Neighbors Supports 38th and Blake Height Amendment

Curtis Park Neighbors (CPN), the primary active Registered Neighborhood Organization in the Curtis Park area within the Five Points statistical neighborhood, supports the draft 38th and Blake Height Amendment document entering the approval and adoption process at Planning Board this week.

This novel plan amendment will clarify conflicting height recommendations in the area near the 38th/Blake commuter rail station found in the *Northeast Downtown Neighborhoods Plan*, the *38th/Blake Station Area Plan*, and several other Denver planning documents. The process for developing these amendments involved many months of public meetings and steering committee meetings with representatives from all area neighborhoods. In addition, we thank Community Planning and Development for attending our CPN monthly neighborhood meeting to provide a clear and informative presentation on this topic as the recommendations were nearing consensus, allowing extended time for questions and answers. The new height recommendations continue to step down towards Curtis Park as called for in existing plans, while taking better advantage of transit-oriented development opportunities.

Crucially, this amendment accurately captures the input from the public which consistently called for both improved design criteria for the area and a requirement that additional heights near the station be provided only in exchange for actual provision of affordable housing. We understand that forthcoming Design Overlay and zoning incentive approach regarding affordable housing will be required before rezoning to the incentive heights will be approved.

This position was adopted at the regularly scheduled and noticed CPN Board of Directors meeting on August 15, 2016, by a vote of 8 in favor, 1 opposed, and no abstentions.


John Hayden
President, Curtis Park Neighbors

From: [armando payan](#)
To: [Watkins, Tim - Community Planning and Development](#); [Lois Brink](#); [John Prosser](#); [Brooks, Albus - City Council District 9](#)
Subject: Letter of Support for Comprehensive Plan Amendment 38th and Blake Station Area Plan Height Amendments
Date: Tuesday, August 16, 2016 11:19:01 AM

As President of United Community Action Neighborhood (UCAN) a registered neighborhood organization of the City and County of Denver which represents the Neighborhoods of Globeville, Elyria, and Swansea. It is indeed a pleasure to write this letter of support on behalf of the Amendment mentioned above. Our neighborhood focus is in line with the three areas:

- 1) High Quality Building Design-We believe that having good quality design will compliment the schools in our neighborhoods by business and organizations being more involved academically and financially to support the two Elementary Schools Garden Place Academy and Swansea Elementary School. This design will also aid in bringing much needed services and goods that currently are not present such as a **Grocery Store**, a **Full Service Medical Clinic**, **Full Financial Services such as Banking, etc**
- 2) South Platte River-For our community the interactive water front where students can learn from biology experiments, nature walks , eco-settings, Seniors can enjoy the park scenery, walks, community engage centers etc.
- 3) Public Infrastructure Multi-Modal Transportation-Again for our community to helps curb the cost of ownership of a car is tremendous. The more opportunities we have to public transportation, the cost of living becomes more

affordable via transportation. Thus helping us as residents become more effective members of the social fabric of our society.

Therefore, please give the utmost attention and consideration for adopting the above Amendments.



Dear Denver Planning Board:

As the representatives of the RiNo neighborhood, we are writing to express our support for the 38th and Blake Station Area Height Amendment process and ask that you accept the amendments proposed.

RiNo has been a leader alongside Councilman Albus Brooks and other neighborhoods in exploring an increase in density around the recently opened 38th and Blake Street commuter rail station. Our focus has been on creating a path to allow development to happen in a way that does not harm our neighborhood fabric, but rather contributes to it and connects our neighborhoods for all users.

We feel the process to come to this point has been well thought-out, inclusive and transparent and has helped to educate our neighborhoods on both the impacts and opportunities associated with increasing density while giving them a voice in shaping the outcomes based upon what is most critical to each of us.

The preferred approach, which you are being asked to support today, supports a vision for the 38th and Blake Street area that includes higher density as well as a vibrant and walkable transit-oriented development (TOD) station area. The proposed plan amendments are also in line with Blueprint Denver as well as previously adopted area plans. We believe the increased density, which push beyond the height limits set by previous plans, will provide a number of community benefits for RiNo and surrounding areas, including but not limited to:

- Density that is appropriate for a TOD area and that will accommodate the growth of both Denver and our neighborhood
- Higher quality building design that supports taller buildings while ensuring it is at a scale that is comfortable for pedestrians, improving the overall public realm experience
- Supporting uses and design features that encourage walking and bicycling over use of the automobile
- Ground level active uses that can supporting the continued growth of retail, restaurant and creative spaces to serve the neighborhood
- Mass reduction of buildings that provide for increased light and air even as density increases
- Minimizing parking visibility and impacts

Additionally, the RiNo neighborhood feels it is critical to integrate on-site affordability within the station area and that the opportunities to increase density for developers should provide some requirement that the increase accommodate affordable housing opportunities for the growing workforce and creative community that is needed city-wide but also within our quickly changing neighborhood. We believe that the growth of a diverse and mixed-income district like ours is critical and that putting this affordable housing near the station area is particularly important because it also will ideally have the added effect of reducing reliability on automobile travel.

Finally, the amendments provide for critical investments and improvements to the entire RiNo neighborhood which will support the station area as well as connectivity to it. This includes putting a focus on the South Platte River and the creation of an active and vibrant riverfront experience with buildings and pedestrian amenities. The additional improvements to the public realm which we feel are essential to achieve a walkable TOD area with less automobile use include:

- Converting Downing and Marion to 2-Way streets
- Addressing the 38th & Blake Underpass
- Adding bike lanes and facilities
- Completing pedestrian / bike connections between parks and river

We look forward to working alongside the City of Denver to implement the proposed amendments, and we hope you will support this process too.

Regards,

RiNo's Executive Committee

Andrew Feinstein, RiNo Art District Co-Chair (also RiNo Business Improvement District)

Chandler Romeo, RiNo Art District Co-Chair

Justin Croft, RiNo Business Improvement District Chair (also RiNo Art District)

Anne Hayes, RiNo General Improvement District Chair (also RiNo Art District)

Jamie Licko, RiNo Executive Director

CC:

Rexford Brown, RiNo Art District

Jonathan Kaplan, RiNo Art District, RiNo General Improvement District

Jill Hadley Hooper, RiNo Art District

Tracy Weil, RiNo Art District, RiNo Business Improvement District, RiNo General Improvement District

Cayce Goldberg, RiNo Art District

Vicki Sterling, RiNo Art District

Jonathan Power, RiNo Art District

Gina D'Ambrosio, RiNo Art District

Jonathan Lamb, RiNo Art District

Sonia Danielsen, RiNo Art District, RiNo Business Improvement District

Tai Beldock, RiNo Business Improvement District

Bryan Slekes, RiNo Business Improvement District

Mike Mancarella, RiNo Business Improvement District

Josh Fine, RiNo Business Improvement District

Ari Stutz, RiNo Business Improvement District

Jason Winkler, RiNo General Improvement District

Larry Burgess, RiNo general Improvement District

Chris Woldum, RiNo General Improvement District

Tom Gordon, RiNo General Improvement District

Roberto Eaton, RiNo General Improvement District

Karen Good, RiNo General Improvement District

Bernard Hurley, RiNo General Improvement District

Cole Neighborhood Association

Cole, Denver | coledenver.com | board@coledenver.com

August 17, 2016

Denver Planning Board
Community Planning & Development | City and County of Denver
720.865.2932 Phone | tim.watkins@denvergov.org

Denver Planning Board:

This is a letter from the Cole Neighborhood Association (herein referred to as “CNA”) on behalf of our members and our residents.

First and foremost, we would like to thank and commend the 38th & Blake project managers for what has been an inclusive, transparent, and thoughtful process of engagement with our neighborhood concerning the height amendments at the 38th and Blake transit station area. As an organization we have heard from our members and neighbors that this process (in stark contrast to other initiatives currently in motion in and around our neighborhood) has been thoughtful and inclusive of continuous feedback. We would like to express our thanks to Tim Watkins for coming to several Cole meetings to answer questions and engage in dialogue about the project.

We, as a neighborhood, are in support of the proposed plan to amend heights at the 38th and Blake transit station area under the conditions that; 1) the design overlay and forthcoming affordable housing components of the plan are adopted and 2) that Cole receives support from the city in conducting a parking study in the Cole Neighborhood to mitigate the negative effects of increased building heights and density on residential parking in Cole. As an organization we have discussed the proposed changes to the 38th and Blake transit area with our membership and our neighbors and encouraged attendance at all related public meetings; the largest piece of feedback we heard from our neighbors is the concern about parking “spill-over” from the transit area onto residential streets. The CNA has requested a parking study from the Denver Transportation & Mobility Department to potentially add permitted and / or restricted parking areas where necessary and we ask that the city support this request.

Additionally, we would like to reiterate some public feedback / requests that are not explicitly inside the final draft plan that are of particular importance to Cole and our surrounding communities – as heard from our membership;

- Addressing the 38th & Blake Underpass and the massive bottlenecks it creates in our neighborhood
- Adding additional public greenspace throughout the 38th and Blake Transit Station Area
- Adding bike lanes and bike facilities to encourage multi-modal transportation in and around the 38th & Blake Transit Station Area
- Completing pedestrian and bike connections between Cole Neighborhood parks and the South Platte River
- Converting Downing and Marion to 2-Way streets to re-establish Marion as residential street

Please don't hesitate to reach out to the CNA Executive Board directly with any additional feedback or questions at board@coledenver.com. Thank you for your help and your consideration around this project.

Sincerely,

Cole Neighborhood Association