



TO: Denver Planning Board
FROM: Francisca Penafiel, Associate City Planner
DATE: July 28, 2021
RE: Official Zoning Map Amendment Application #2021I-00043

Staff Report and Recommendation

Based on the criteria for review in the Denver Zoning Code, Staff recommends approval for Application #2021I-00043.

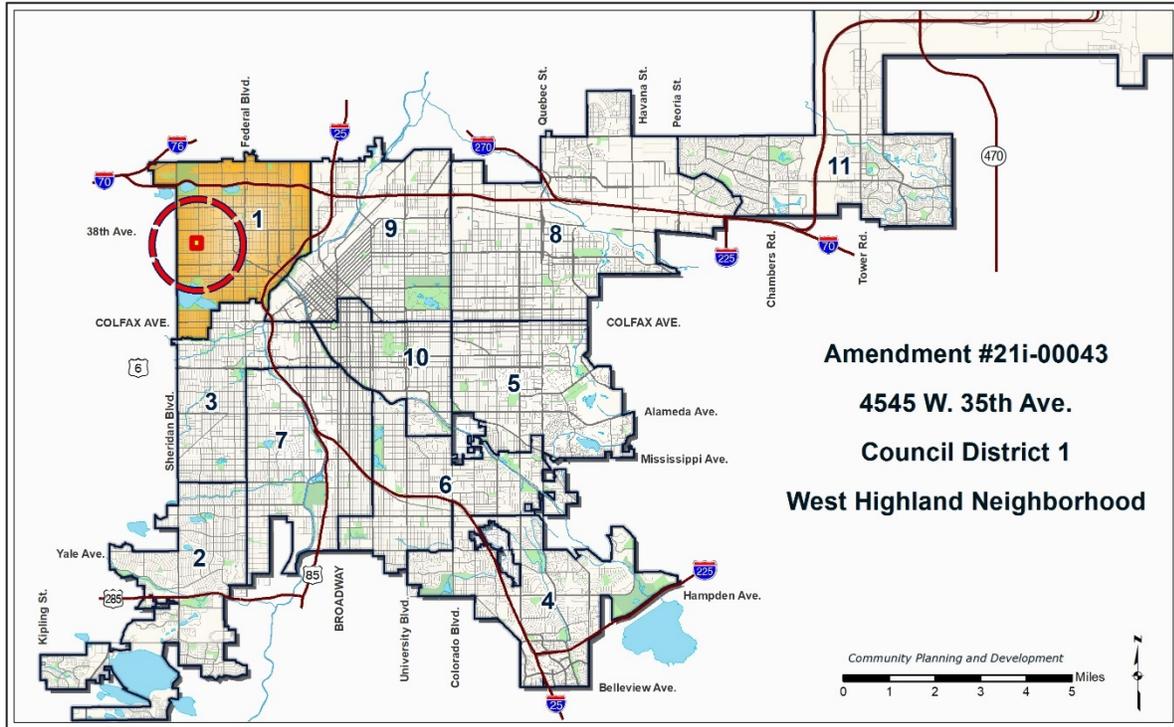
Request for Rezoning

Address: 4545 W. 35th Ave.
Neighborhood/Council District: West Highland / Council District 1 – Amanda Sandoval
RNOs: Neighborhood Coalition of Denver, Inc., Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation (INC), West Highland Neighborhood Association, District 1 Neighborhood Coalition
Area of Property: 5,800 square feet or 0.13 acres
Current Zoning: U-SU-B
Proposed Zoning: U-SU-B1
Property Owner(s): 4545 Cliffedge LLC
Owner Representative: Nate Boyer

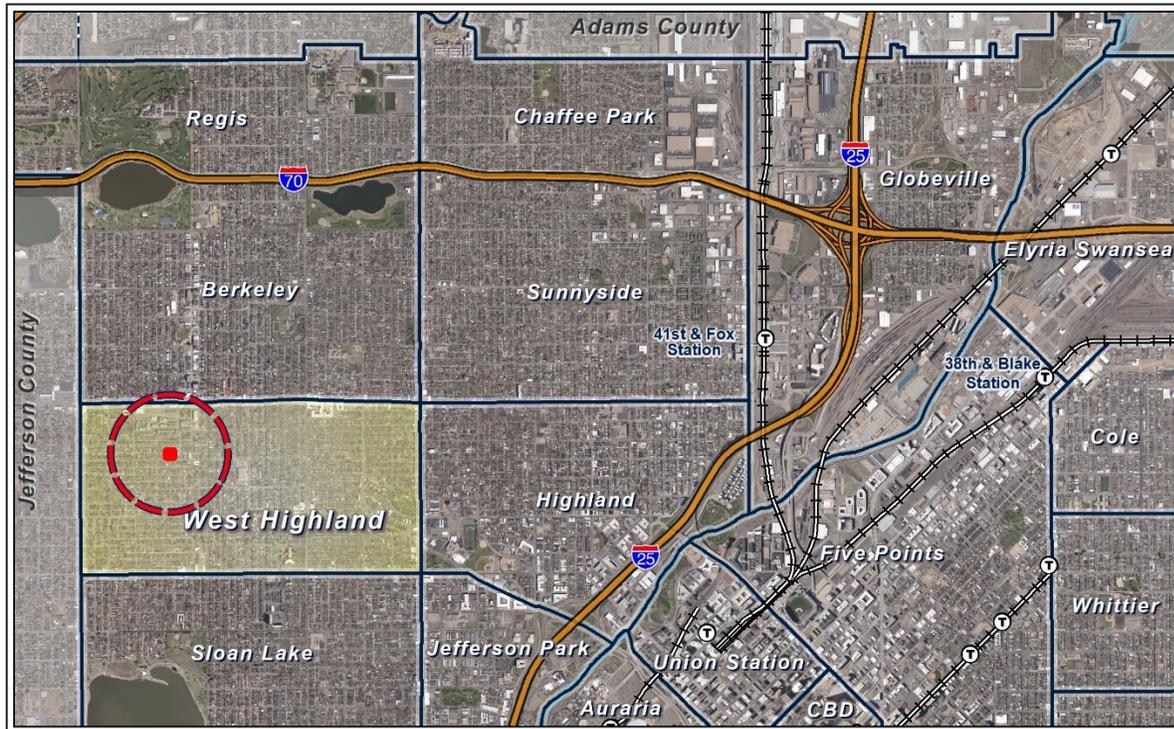
Summary of Rezoning Request

- The subject property contains a single-unit home built in 1896 located mid-block between North Vrain Street and North Utica Street, along West 35th Avenue.
- The property owner is proposing to rezone the property to allow an accessory dwelling unit.
- The proposed U-SU-B1, **Urban, Single-Unit, B1** (4,500 square feet minimum zone lot size allowing accessory dwelling units (ADUs)), zone district is intended for use in the Urban Neighborhood Context which is characterized by single-unit and two-unit uses. Single-unit residential uses are typically located along local and arterial streets and structures are usually the Urban House building form. The maximum height of the Urban House building form is 30 to 35 feet for the front 65% of the zone lot, 17 to 19 feet in the rear 35% of the zone lot. The Detached Accessory Dwelling Unit form can be a maximum height of 24 feet. Further details of the requested zone district can be found in the proposed zone district section of the staff report (below) and in Article 5 of the Denver Zoning Code (DZC).

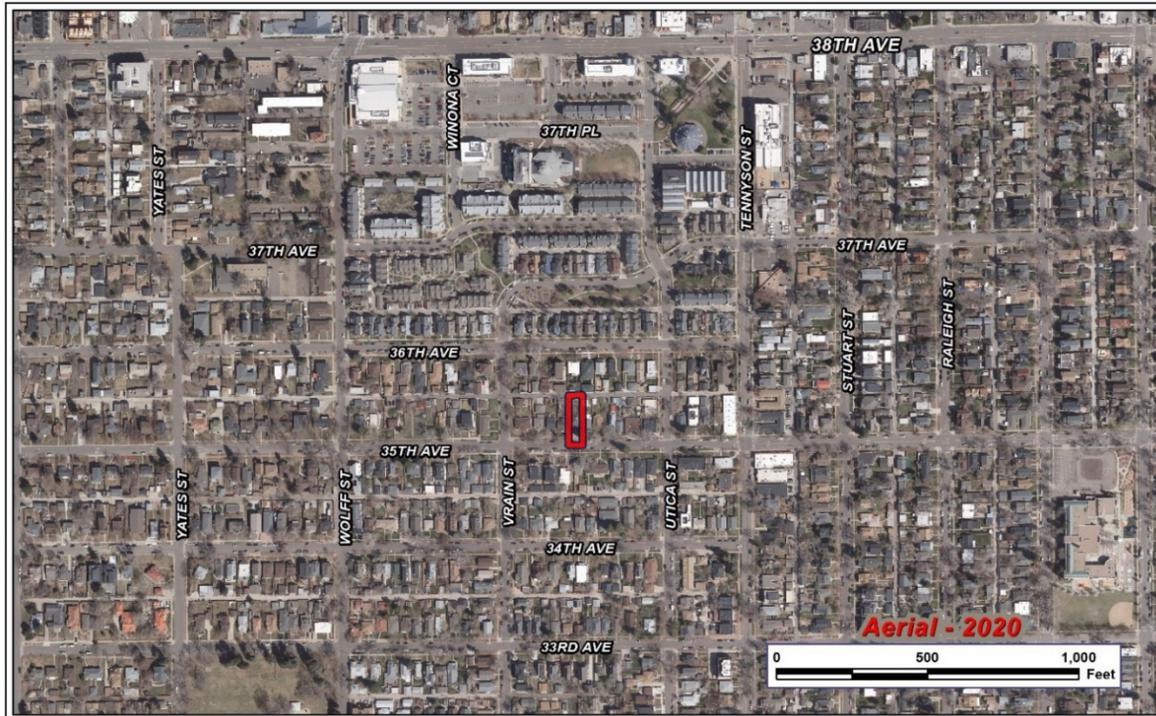
City Location



Neighborhood Location – West Highland



1. Existing Context

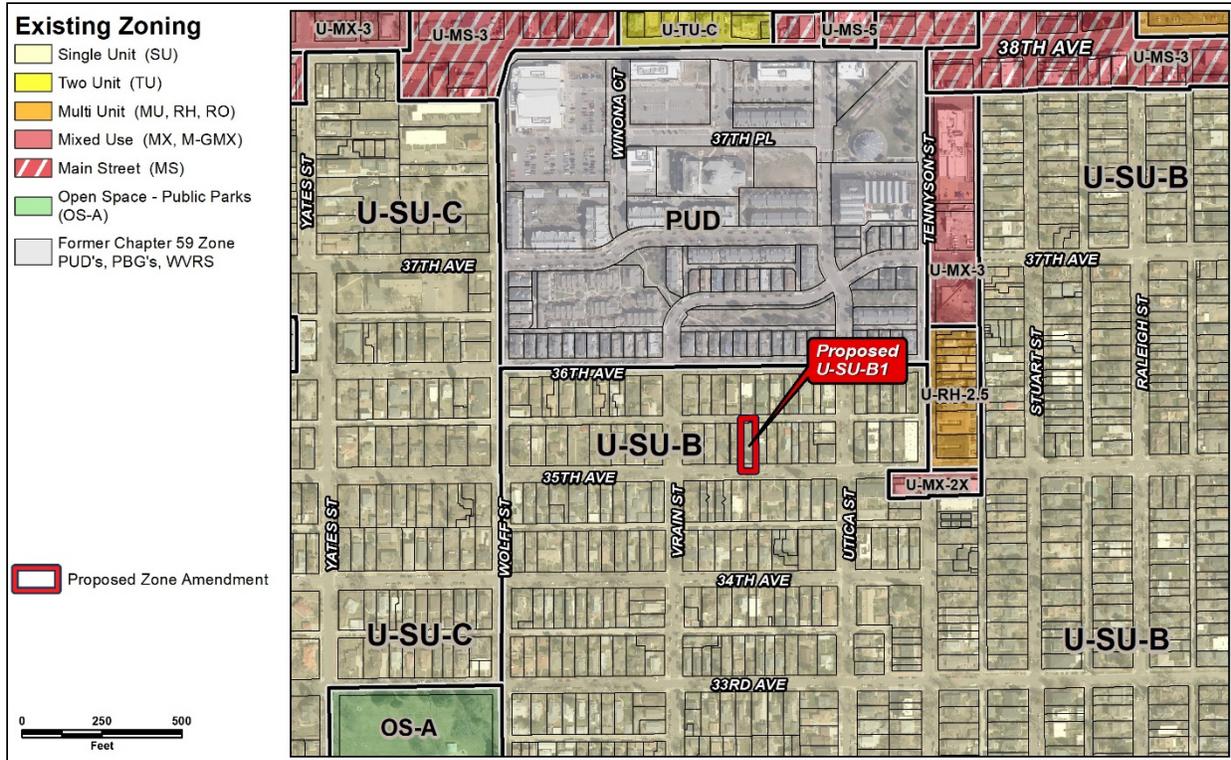


The subject property is in the West Highland statistical neighborhood, which is characterized mostly by single-unit and two-unit residential uses with some multi-unit residential and commercial/retail uses along West 38th Avenue and North Tennyson Street. Generally, there is a pattern of rectangular blocks in a street grid pattern with alley access. Edison Elementary School only a few blocks east, serves the neighborhood. The subject property is in the middle of the block on West 35th Avenue, between North Vrain Street and North Utica Street and just walking distance from West 38th Avenue, a commercial corridor where RTD bus route 38 runs east-west. West 35th Avenue is designated as neighborhood bikeway.

The following table summarizes the existing context proximate to the subject site:

	Existing Zoning	Existing Land Use	Existing Building Form/Scale	Existing Block, Lot, Street Pattern
Site	U-SU-B	Single-unit Residential	1-story bungalow with no garage and open backyard to the alley	Generally regular grid of streets; Block sizes and shapes are consistent and rectangular. Detached sidewalks with tree lawns and existing alleys. Garages and on-street vehicle parking.
North	U-SU-B	Single-unit Residential	1-story brick house with consistent front setback	
South	U-SU-B	Single-unit Residential	1-story house with detached garage and alley access	
East	U-SU-B	Single-unit Residential	1 ½ -story house with detached garage and alley access	
West	U-SU-B	Row House	1-story brick bungalow with detached garage and alley access	

2. Existing Zoning



The U-SU-B zone district is a single-unit district allowing only the Urban House primary building form on a minimum zone lot of 4,500 square feet. The maximum allowed height is 2.5 stories or 30 to 35 feet in the front 65% of the zone lot, 1 story and 17 to 19 feet in the rear 35% of the zone lot. It allows two accessory structure forms: Detached Garage and Other Detached Accessory Structure with a maximum height of 15 to 17 feet. The intent of the district is to promote and protect residential neighborhoods within the character of the Urban Neighborhood Context.

3. Existing Land Use Map



4. Existing Building Form and Scale (all images from Google Maps)



View of the subject property, looking north.



View of the subject property's alley access.



View of the property to the north (other side of the alley), looking south.



View of the property to the south (other side of W. 35th Ave.), looking south.

Proposed Zoning

U-SU-B1 is a single unit zone district with a minimum zone lot of 4,500 square feet that allows only an Urban House primary building form. A variety of residential and civic uses are permitted as primary uses in the U-SU-B1 district. Compared to the U-SU-B district, U-SU-B1 introduces the accessory dwelling unit use and Detached Accessory Dwelling Unit (DADU) building form. The Detached Accessory Dwelling Unit building form has a maximum height of 1.5 stories or 24 feet. A bulk plane that raises 10 feet vertically from the side interior or side street zone lot line, then slopes 45 degrees also applies to the DADU building form. This form also allows an exemption from the 37.5% building coverage standard allowing the lesser of 50% or 500 square feet. For zone lots smaller than 6,000 square feet the ADU building footprint may be a maximum of 650 square feet.

The primary building forms allowed in the existing zone district and the proposed zone district are summarized below.

Design Standards	U-SU-B (Existing)	U-SU-B1 (Proposed)
Primary Building Forms Allowed	Urban House	Urban House
Maximum Height in Stories/Feet, Front 65% of Zone Lot*	2.5 stories / 30 feet	2.5 stories / 30 feet
Maximum Height in Stories/Feet, Rear 35% of Zone Lot*	1 story / 17 feet	1 story / 17 feet
DADU Maximum Height in Stories/Feet	DADUs not permitted	1.5 stories / 24 feet
Zone Lot (Min.)	4,500 square feet	4,500 square feet
Zone Lot Width (Min.)	37.5 feet	37.5 feet
Primary Street Block Sensitive Setback Required / If not	Yes / 20 feet	Yes / 20 feet
Side Street Setback (Min.) *	5 feet	5 feet
Side Interior Setback (Min.) *	5 feet	5 feet
Rear Alley / No Alley	12 feet / 20 feet	12 feet / 20 feet
Building Coverage per Zone Lot including all accessory structures (Max.), not including exceptions	37.5 %	37.5%
Detached Accessory Building Forms Allowed	Detached Garage, Other Detached Accessory Structures	Detached Accessory Dwelling Unit, Detached Garage, Other Detached Accessory Structures

*Based on subject property width of 45 feet

Summary of City Agency Referral Comments

As part of the DZC review process, the rezoning application is referred to potentially affected city agencies and departments for comment. A summary of agency referral responses follows:

Assessor: Approved – No Response.

Asset Management: Approved – No Response.

Development Services - Fire: Approved – No Comments

Denver Public Schools: Approved – No Response.

Development Services - Project Coordination: Approved – No Comments.

Development Services - Transportation: Approved – No Comments.

Development Services - Wastewater: Approved – See Comments Below.

There is no objection to the rezone to allow an ADU. Upon rezoning applicant will need to obtain a building permit. Independent sanitary service lines may be required, historical drainage paths must be maintained. Current sanitary service line is connected to alley to north. Replacement of service being built over will be required. Approval of this rezone on behalf of Wastewater does not state, or imply, public storm/sanitary infrastructure can, or cannot, support the proposed zoning. Commitment to serve proposed structure will be based on permit issuance.

Parks and Recreation: Approved – No Response.

Public Health and Environment: Approved – No Comments.

Public Works – City Surveyor: Approved – No Comments

Public Review Process

	Date
CPD informational notice of receipt of the rezoning application to all affected members of City Council, registered neighborhood organizations, and property owners:	05/28/2021
Property legally posted for a period of 15 days and CPD written notice of the Planning Board public hearing sent to all affected members of City Council, registered neighborhood organizations, and property owners:	07/28/2021
Planning Board public hearing:	08/04/2021
CPD written notice of the Land Use, Transportation and Infrastructure Committee meeting sent to all affected members of City Council and registered neighborhood organizations, at least ten working days before the meeting:	07/27/2021
Land Use, Transportation and Infrastructure Committee of the City Council:	08/10/2021 (tentative)
Property legally posted for a period of 21 days and CPD notice of the City Council public hearing sent to all affected members of City Council and registered neighborhood organizations:	04/19/2021 (tentative)
City Council Public Hearing:	09/27/2021 (tentative)

- **Registered Neighborhood Organizations (RNOs)**
 - To date, staff has not received comment letters from Registered Neighborhood Organizations.
- **Other Public Comment**
 - To date, staff has not received letters from the public.

Criteria for Review / Staff Evaluation

The criteria for review of this rezoning application are found in DZC, Sections 12.4.10.7 and 12.4.10.8, as follows:

DZC Section 12.4.10.7

1. Consistency with Adopted Plans
2. Uniformity of District Regulations and Restrictions
3. Public Health, Safety and General Welfare

DZC Section 12.4.10.8

1. Justifying Circumstances
2. Consistency with Neighborhood Context Description, Zone District Purpose and Intent Statements

1. Consistency with Adopted Plans

The following adopted plans apply to this application:

- Denver Comprehensive Plan 2040 (2019)
- Blueprint Denver (2019)

Denver Comprehensive Plan 2040

The proposed rezoning is consistent with many of the adopted *Denver Comprehensive Plan 2040* strategies, including:

- Equitable, Affordable and Inclusive Goal 2, Strategy A – *Create a greater mix of housing options in every neighborhood for all individuals and families* (p. 28).

U-SU-B1 allows for an additional dwelling unit that is accessory to the primary single-unit dwelling use and introduces a new housing type to a largely single-unit neighborhood. Accessory dwelling units can provide housing for individuals or families with different incomes, ages, and needs compatible with the single-unit homes that currently dominate the West Highland neighborhood.

- Strong and Authentic Neighborhoods Goal 1, Strategy B – *Ensure neighborhoods offer a mix of housing types and services for a diverse population* (p. 34).

The proposed rezoning would allow infill development appropriate for the surrounding neighborhood that broadens the range of housing types available.

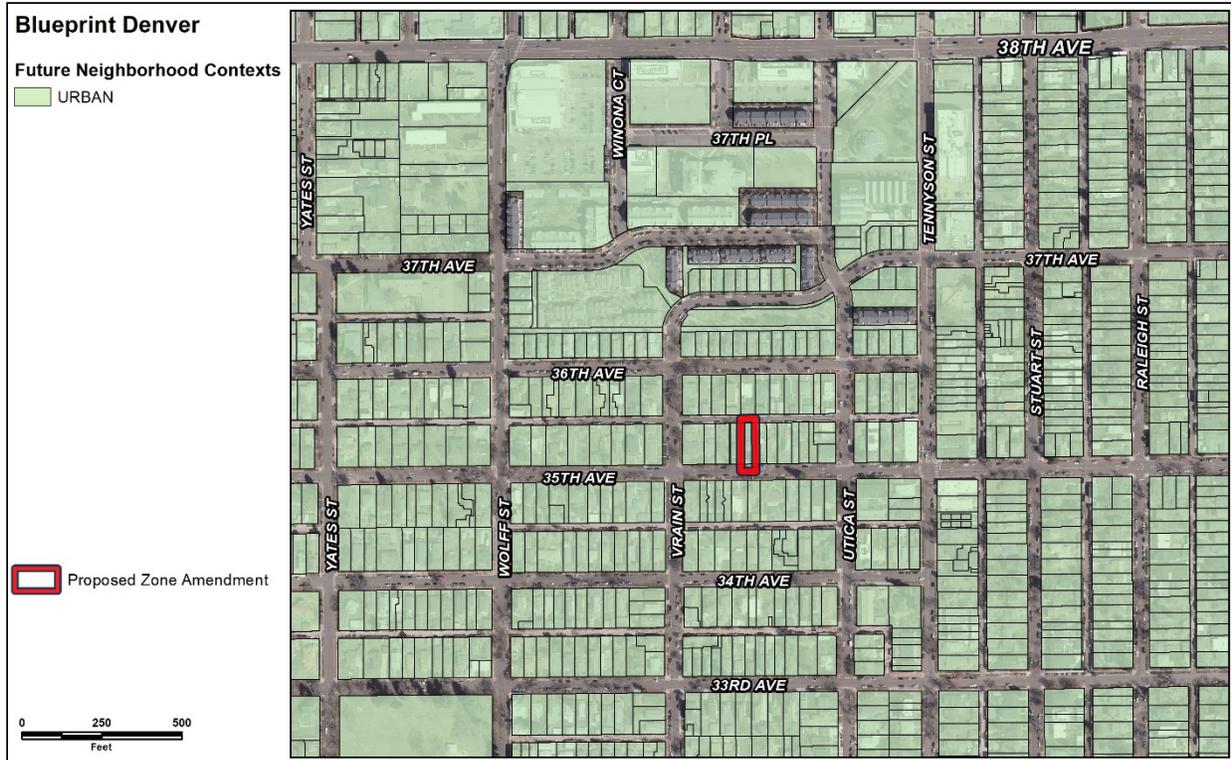
- Environmentally Resilient Goal 8, Strategy A – *Promote infill development where infrastructure and services are already in place* (p. 54).

The proposed map amendment will allow an additional housing unit on the site of an existing home where infrastructure and services such as water, stormwater, and streets already exist. This allows Denver to grow responsibly and promotes land conservation.

Blueprint Denver

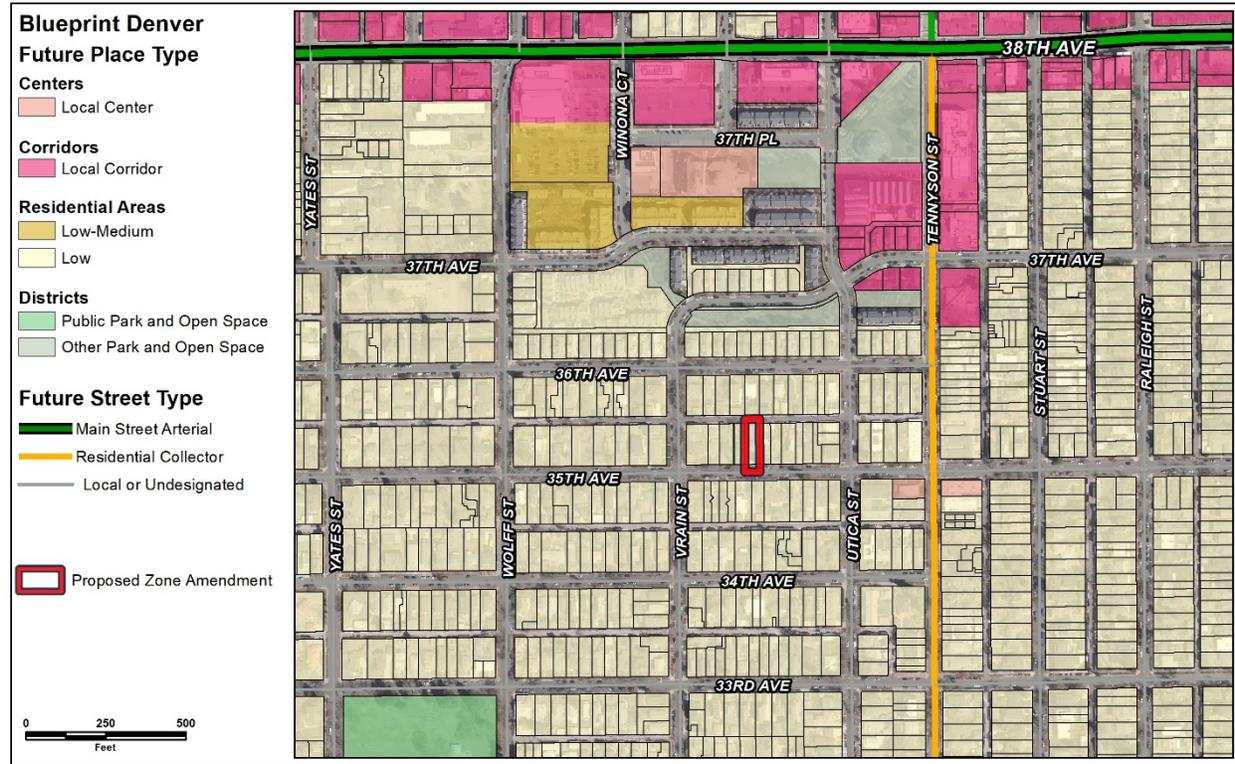
Blueprint Denver was adopted in 2019 as a supplement to *Comprehensive Plan 2040* and establishes an integrated framework for the city’s land use and transportation decisions. *Blueprint Denver* identifies the subject property as part of a Low Residential place within the Urban Neighborhood Context and provides guidance on the future growth strategy for the city.

Blueprint Denver Future Neighborhood Context



In *Blueprint Denver*, future neighborhood contexts are used to help understand differences between land use, built form, and mobility at a high scale, between neighborhoods. The subject site is shown on the context map as Urban neighborhood context, the description of which is used to guide appropriate zone districts (p. 66). The Urban neighborhood context is described as containing “small multi-unit residential and low-intensity mixed-use buildings typically embedded in single-unit and two-unit residential areas” with grid block patterns and alley access (p. 222). U-SU-B1 is a zone district within the Urban neighborhood context and is “intended to promote and protect residential neighborhoods within the character of the Urban Neighborhood Context” and “the building form standards, design standards and uses work together to promote desirable residential areas” (DZC 5.2.2.1). U-SU-B1 is consistent with the Blueprint future neighborhood context of Urban because it will promote the residential character by allowing single-unit residential uses with a low-scale accessory dwelling unit that will be compatible with the existing residential area.

Blueprint Denver Future Places

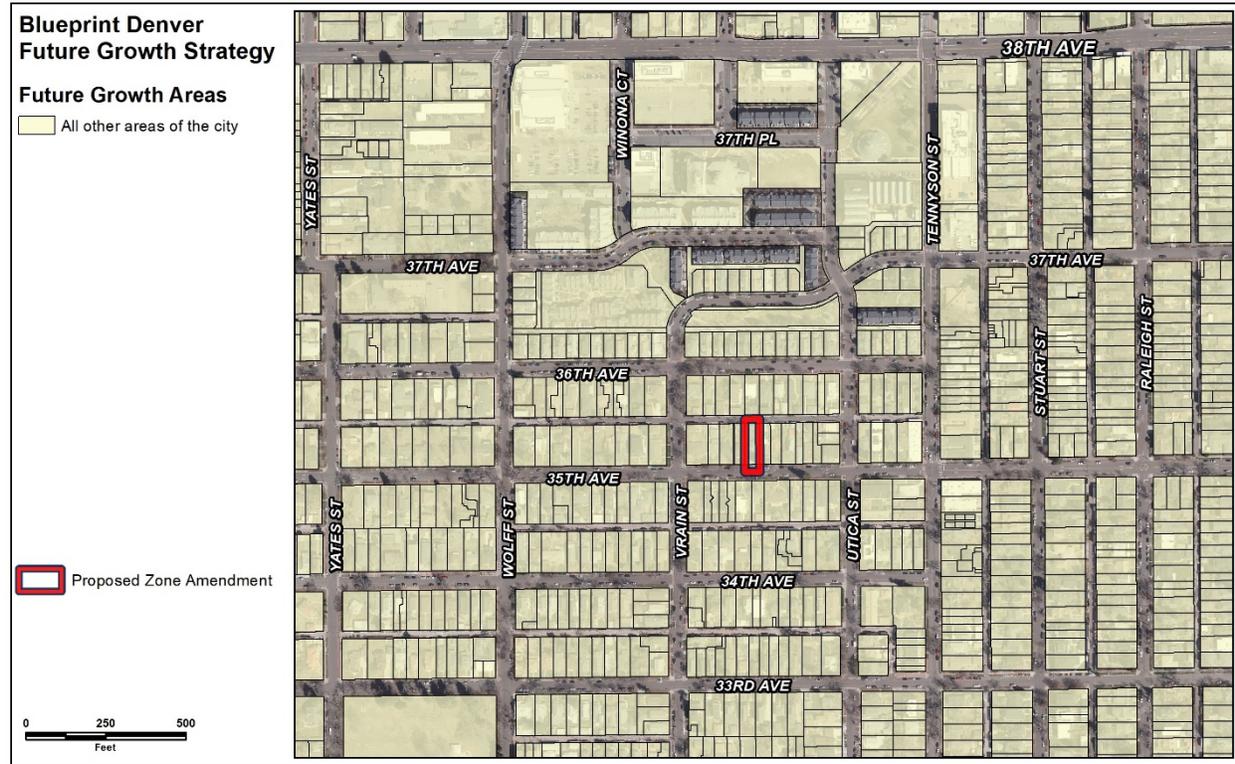


The subject site is designated within a Low Residential future place type on the *Blueprint Denver* Future Places map. This place type is “predominately single- and two-unit uses on smaller lots. Accessory dwelling units and duplexes are appropriate and can be thoughtfully integrated where compatible,” and “building heights are generally up to 2.5 stories in height” (p. 230). The U-SU-B1 is a single unit residential district that allows for an additional dwelling unit accessory to an established single-family home, which is consistent with the Low Residential future place type description. It allows the Urban House building form, which has a maximum height of 2.5 stories, also consistent with the future places map.

Blueprint Denver Street Types

In *Blueprint Denver*, street types work together with the future place to evaluate the appropriateness of the intensity of the adjacent development (p. 67). *Blueprint Denver* classifies Emerson Street as a Local or Undesignated Future Street Type, which “can vary in their land uses and are found in all neighborhood contexts. They are most often characterized by residential uses.” (p. 161). The proposed U-SU-B1 district is consistent with this description because it allows for residential and some civic uses.

Blueprint Denver Growth Strategy



Blueprint Denver’s growth strategy map is a version of the future places map, showing the aspiration for distributing future growth in Denver (p. 51). The subject property is part of the “All other areas of the city” growth area. These areas anticipate experiencing around 20% of new housing growth and 10% of new employment growth by 2040 (p. 51). This growth area is “mostly residential areas with embedded local centers and corridors, take a smaller amount of growth intended to strengthen the existing character of our neighborhoods” (p. 49). The proposed map amendment to U-SU-B1 will allow low-intensity growth to the number of households in this area by allowing an accessory dwelling unit.

Blueprint Denver Strategies

Blueprint Denver provides additional recommendations related to rezoning to allow for ADUs.

- Policy 4 Strategy E - *A citywide approach to enable ADUs is preferred. Until a holistic approach is in place, individual rezonings to enable ADUs in all residential areas, specifically where proximate to transit, are appropriate. Unless there is a neighborhood plan supporting ADUs, rezonings should be small in area in order to minimize impacts to the surrounding residential area* (p. 84). In this case, the requested rezoning is a single lot in a residential area within a few blocks of two bus routes. This rezoning to an ADU zone district will have minimal impacts on the surrounding neighborhood and is consistent with *Blueprint* recommendations.

2. Uniformity of District Regulations and Restrictions

The proposed rezoning to U-SU-B1 will result in the uniform application of zone district building form, use and design regulations.

3. Public Health, Safety and General Welfare

The proposed official map amendment furthers the public health, safety, and general welfare of the city through implementation of the city's adopted land use plan which recommends "the expansion of accessory dwelling units throughout all residential areas" (p. 84). The proposed rezoning would also provide the benefit of an additional housing unit that is compatibly integrated into the surrounding neighborhood.

4. Justifying Circumstance

The application identifies the adoption of *Blueprint Denver* as the Justifying Circumstance under DZC Section 12.4.10.8.A.4, "Since the date of the approval of the existing Zone District, there has been a change to such as degree that the proposed rezoning is in the public interest. Such a change may include: Changed or changing conditions in a particular area, or in the city generally; or a city adopted plan; or that the city adopted the Denver Zoning Code and the property retained Former Chapter 59 zoning."

As discussed above, *Blueprint Denver* specifically recommends the city diversify housing choice through the expansion of accessory dwelling units throughout all residential areas. The plan was adopted after the date of approval of the existing zone district. Therefore, this is an appropriate justifying circumstance for the proposed rezoning.

5. Consistency with Neighborhood Context Description, Zone District Purpose and Intent Statements

The requested U-SU-B1 zone district is within the Urban Neighborhood Context. The neighborhood context is "primarily characterized by single-unit and two-unit residential uses" and "single-unit residential structures are typically the Urban House building form" (DZC, Division 5.1). These areas consist of "regular pattern of block shapes" and "a consistent presence of alleys" (DZC, Division 5.1). The West Highland neighborhood consists of mostly single and two-unit residential uses in rectangular blocks with alley access. The proposed rezoning to U-SU-B1 is consistent with the neighborhood context description.

The general purpose of residential zone districts in this context is to promote and protect residential neighborhoods within the character of the Urban Neighborhood Context (DZC Section 5.2.2.1). The building form standards, design standards, and uses work together to promote desirable residential areas. Common residential characteristics are recognized but variation is accommodated. The proposed U-SU-B1 district is consistent with the context description and the zone district general purpose because

it will help preserve the existing single-unit use, form, and streetscape of the immediate area while allowing a small-scale ADU in the rear yard.

The specific intent of the U-SU-B1 zone district is “a single unit district allowing urban houses and detached accessory dwelling units with a minimum zone lot area of 4,500 square feet. Blocks typically have a consistent pattern of 37.5-foot-wide lots. Setbacks and lot coverage standards accommodate front and side yards similar to U-SU-B but allowing a detached accessory dwelling unit building form in the rear yard” (DZC 5.2.2.2.H.) The subject site is in an area where Urban houses and 45-foot wide lots are common. The site at 4545 West 35th Avenue is 5,800 square feet with a width of 45 feet. The adopted plan direction recommends allowing detached accessory dwelling units. Therefore, rezoning this site would be consistent with the specific intent of the zone district.

Attachments

1. Application