

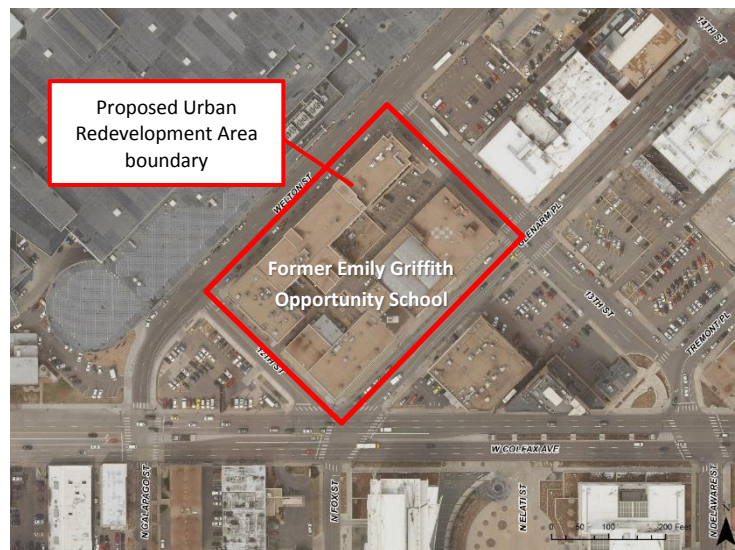
**TO:** Denver City Council  
**FROM:** Julie Underdahl, Chair, Denver Planning Board  
**CC:** Tracy Huggins, Executive Director, Denver Urban Renewal Authority  
**DATE:** July 20, 2017  
**RE:** Proposed Emily Griffith Opportunity School Urban Redevelopment Plan

### Planning Board Finding

The Denver Planning Board is pleased to forward its finding to City Council that the proposed Emily Griffith Opportunity School Urban Redevelopment Plan conforms with Denver Comprehensive Plan 2000 and its applicable supplements. This finding is required by the Colorado Revised Statutes, Sec. 31-25-107(2). Planning Board made its finding by unanimous vote at its regular meeting on July 19, 2017.

### Background

The proposed Urban Redevelopment Area (URA) is a one-block area in Downtown Denver bounded by Welton Street to the northwest, 13<sup>th</sup> Street to the northeast, Glenarm Place to the southeast, and 12th Street to the southwest. The proposed URA is comprised of approximately 106,400 square feet (2.44 acres). The area is zoned D-C UO-1 (Downtown Core with a Use Overlay for Adult Uses). A portion of the proposed URA is also within a Mountain View Plane from the State Capitol and is subject to height restrictions.



Proposed Urban Redevelopment Area

The proposed URA encompasses the site of the former Emily Griffith Opportunity School, a Denver Public School that opened in 1916. The vocational school was named for Emily Griffith (1868-1947), a local teacher who advocated that persons of all ages and races should have the opportunity to learn and better themselves. The school was expanded several times and continued to operate at this location until its programs were relocated to 1860 Lincoln Street beginning in 2013. Since relocating, the buildings have remained vacant. In May 2016, the Emily Griffith Opportunity School was designated historic at the local level and restrictions were placed on the amount and nature of the possible redevelopment. Most of the structure fronting on Welton Street must be retained, and set-backs were established for new development to ensure that the appearance and massing of the Welton Street building are preserved. Any future redevelopment on the site will be subject to the Design

Standards and Guidelines adopted by Denver City Council with the designation and must be approved by the Landmark Preservation Commission.

A conditions study (referred to in state statute as a “blight study”) was completed in June 2017. The study found that there are six blight factors present, constituting the URA as a “blighted area.”

### **Urban Redevelopment Plan**

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The proposed Urban Redevelopment Plan (URP) establishes the Urban Redevelopment Area for the Emily Griffith Opportunity School. The general objectives of the plan are to reduce or eliminate blighted conditions and to stimulate the growth and development of the Urban Redevelopment Area and its environs.

The URP is modeled after the Saint Anthony Urban Redevelopment Plan in that it authorizes a Tax Increment Finance (TIF) area but does not identify projects to be financed with TIF at this time. Future individual projects will be evaluated and, if found to be appropriate, the plan will be amended to add the project to the URP.

### **Planning Board Authority**

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Colorado Revised Statutes 31-25-107(2) requires that a jurisdiction’s planning board or commission make a finding that a proposed urban renewal plan conforms with the jurisdiction’s comprehensive plan.

### **Analysis of Comprehensive Plan Conformity**

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At the July 19 Planning Board meeting CPD staff recommended that the proposed Urban Redevelopment Plan conforms with the adopted plans that apply to the area, including Denver Comprehensive Plan 2000, Blueprint Denver (2002), and the Downtown Area Plan (2007). See the attached Planning Board staff report for details.

### **The Final Denver Planning Board Finding**

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Based on the CPD staff report and board deliberations at its July 19, 2017 meeting, the Denver Planning Board finds that the proposed Emily Griffith Opportunity School Urban Redevelopment Plan conforms with the Denver Comprehensive Plan and its applicable supplements.

### **Attachments**

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1. CPD Planning Board staff report



**TO:** Denver Planning Board  
**FROM:** Elizabeth Weigle, Senior City Planner  
**DATE:** July 11, 2017  
**RE:** Emily Griffith Opportunity School Urban Redevelopment Plan

## **Staff Report and Recommendation**

Colorado law charges Denver's Planning Board with reviewing an urban renewal plan and making a recommendation as to its conformity with the Comprehensive Plan (Colorado Revised Statutes Title 31 Government Municipal § 31-25-107(2)). Community Planning and Development staff finds that the proposed Emily Griffith Opportunity School Urban Redevelopment Plan conforms to Denver's Comprehensive Plan and applicable supplements and recommends that the Planning Board take formal action at its July 19, 2017 meeting to make this finding.

## **Background**

The proposed Urban Redevelopment Area (URA) is a one-block area in Downtown Denver bounded by Welton Street to the northwest, 13<sup>th</sup> Street to the northeast, Glenarm Place to the southeast, and 12th Street to the southwest. The URA is comprised of approximately 106,400 square feet (2.44 acres). The area is zoned D-C UO-1 (Downtown Core with a Use Overlay for Adult Uses). A portion of the URA is also within a Mountain View Plane from the State Capitol and is subject to height restrictions.

The URA includes the former Emily Griffith Opportunity School, a Denver Public School that opened in 1916. The vocational school was named for Emily Griffith (1868-1947), a local teacher who advocated that persons of all ages and races should have the opportunity to learn and better themselves. The school was expanded several times and continued to operate at this location until its programs were relocated to 1860 Lincoln Street beginning in 2013. Since relocating, the buildings have remained vacant. In May 2016, the Emily Griffith Opportunity School was designated historic at the local level and restrictions were placed on the amount and nature of the possible redevelopment. Most of the structure fronting on Welton Street must be retained, and set-backs were established for new development to ensure that the appearance and massing of the Welton Street building are preserved. Any future redevelopment on the site will be subject to the Design Standards and Guidelines adopted by Denver City Council with the designation and must be approved by the Landmark Preservation Commission.

A conditions study (referred to in state statute as a "blight study") was completed in June 2017. The study found that there are six blight factors present, constituting the URA as a "blighted area."

Proposed Emily Griffith Opportunity School Urban Redevelopment Plan

July 11, 2017

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Proposed Urban Redevelopment Area



Proposed Urban Redevelopment Area, View from Welton Street and 12th Street looking northeast (Source: Google Streetview)



Proposed Urban Redevelopment Area, View from Glenarm Place and 13<sup>th</sup> Street looking northwest (Source: Google Streetview)

## Urban Redevelopment Plan

The proposed Urban Redevelopment Plan (URP) establishes the Urban Redevelopment Area for the Emily Griffith Opportunity School. The general objectives of the plan are to reduce or eliminate blighted conditions and to stimulate the growth and development of the Urban Redevelopment Area and its environs.

The URP is modeled after the Saint Anthony Urban Redevelopment Plan in that it authorizes a Tax Increment Finance (TIF) area but does not identify projects to be financed with TIF at this time. Future individual projects will be evaluated and, if found to be appropriate, the plan will be amended to add the project to the URP.

## Planning Board Authority

Colorado Revised Statutes 31-25-107(2) requires that a jurisdiction's planning board or commission make a finding that a proposed urban renewal plan conforms with the jurisdiction's comprehensive plan. DURA then conveys the Planning Board finding to City Council.

## Analysis of the Comprehensive Plan Conformity

CPD staff finds that the proposed Urban Redevelopment Plan conforms to the Denver Comprehensive Plan and its applicable supplements, Blueprint Denver and the Downtown Area Plan, as described in detail below.

### Denver Comprehensive Plan (2000)

CPD staff finds that the Urban Redevelopment Plan conforms to Comprehensive Plan 2000 by furthering several city-wide objectives, policies and actions in the plan, including the following (with reference to Comprehensive Plan 2000):

- Conserve raw materials by promoting efforts to adapt existing buildings for new uses, rather than destroying them (Environmental Sustainability Strategy, 2-E, Page 39);
- Conserve land by promoting infill development within Denver at sites where service and infrastructure are already in place, by designing mixed-use communities and reducing sprawl, and by creating more density at transit nodes (Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2-F, Page 39);
- Provide market-based incentives and tax incentives to encourage sustainable development (Environmental Sustainability Strategy, 3-D, Page 41);
- 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 (Land Use Strategy, 3-B, Page 60);
- Promote standards and incentives for design that enhance the quality and character of the city, including the preservation of significant historic structures and features (Legacies Strategy, 1-B, Page 98);
- Preserve Denver’s architectural and design legacies while allowing new ones to evolve (Legacies Strategy, 1-C, Page 98);
- Identify areas in which increased density and new uses are desirable and can be accommodated (Legacies Strategy, 3-A, page 99);
- Leverage City resources to protect Denver’s Landmarks and eligible historic buildings and to avoid their demolition (Legacies Strategy, 6-D, Page 101);
- Ensure Downtown’s future as Denver’s preeminent center for business, tourism, and entertainment, including through continued support of the reuse of historic buildings in and around Downtown (Economic Activity Strategy, 4-A, Page 134); and
- Use public-private partnerships to facilitate development and redevelopment projects that advance the City’s goals and objectives. When appropriate, take advantage of the Denver Urban Renewal Authority’s powers and experience. (Economic Activity Strategy, 4-C, Page 136).

#### Blueprint Denver (2002)

Blueprint Denver, Denver’s integrated land use and transportation plan adopted by City Council in 2002, identifies the Urban Redevelopment Area as being located within an “Area of Change” with the concept land use of “Downtown.”

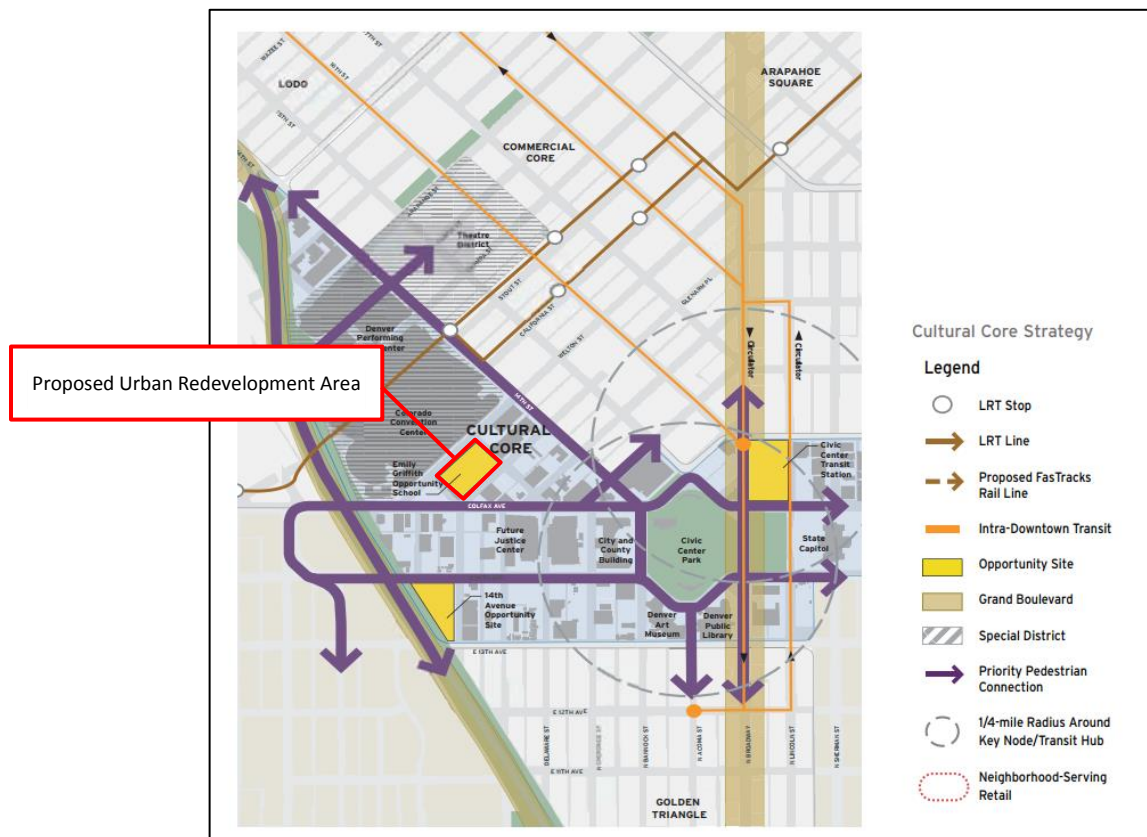
Regarding Areas of Change, Blueprint Denver states, “The purpose of Areas of Change is to channel growth to where it will be beneficial and can best improve access to jobs, housing, and services with fewer and shorter auto trips. Areas of Change are parts of the city where most people agree that development or redevelopment would be beneficial” (page 127). It further goes on to state that “a major goal is to increase economic activity in the area to benefit existing residents and businesses, and where necessary, provide the stimulus to redevelop” (page 127).

Blueprint Denver recognizes Downtown as “the centerpiece of the City and region with the highest intensity of uses in Colorado” (page 39). Blueprint Denver further states that Downtown “has the most intense land-use development and transportation systems,” and the vision is to “to continue more of the same types of high quality office, hotel, retail, residential and mixed-use development” (page 234). The Urban Redevelopment Plan is consistent with the intent and vision for Areas of Change and the Downtown concept land use.

Downtown Area Plan (2007)

The Downtown Area Plan identifies several strategies and objectives to serve as a “tool to help community leaders, decision makers, and citizens build upon Downtown’s assets and guide future development” (page 1). The long-term vision seeks to “achieve a vibrant, economically healthy, growing and vital downtown through a sustained effort in each of these elements: Prosperous, Walkable, Diverse, Distinctive and Green” (page 12).

As specified within the Downtown Area Plan, the Urban Redevelopment Area is located within the Cultural Core. The Cultural Core is generally defined in the Downtown Area Plan as the area encompassing the Convention Center, Denver Performing Arts Center, Civic Center Park, Denver Public Library, Denver Art Museum, Denver Public Library, and various municipal and government buildings along 14<sup>th</sup> Street extending south to 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Lincoln Street to the east. A key recommendation identified in the plan calls for the creation of a “mixed-use, public-private development that includes the Emily Griffith Opportunity School and other complementary uses” (page 45). Though the Emily Griffith Opportunity School moved to another location, the Urban Redevelopment Plan is consistent with the recommendation for mixed-use development in this area.



Cultural Core Strategy, Downtown Area Plan (2007)

In addition, the Urban Redevelopment Plan is consistent with the following goals and policies outlined in the plan (with references to Downtown Area Plan):

- Preserve, reuse, and reinvest in historic buildings and places throughout Downtown. These buildings and places demonstrate to future generations Denver's pre-eminence as a western city over 150 years (A Prosperous City Vision Element A1g, Page 17);
- Retain and reuse historic buildings to fortify the district identity of districts (A Distinctive City Vision Element D1c, Page 33); and
- Develop a Downtown-wide strategy to reduce resource consumption, especially energy, water and materials, and to reduce greenhouse gas emission through encouraging the reuse of existing building to retain embedded energy (A Green City Vision Element E3a, Page 39).

### **CPD Staff Recommendation**

Based on the analysis presented in this staff report, CPD staff recommends that the Planning Board find the proposed Emily Griffith Opportunity School Urban Redevelopment Plan to be in conformance with the Denver Comprehensive Plan and its applicable supplements.

### **Attachments**

1. Planning Board Memorandum
2. Proposed Urban Redevelopment Plan