



TO: Denver Planning Board
FROM: Analiese Hock, Programmatic Plan Implementation Supervisor
DATE: August 8, 2023
RE: 3015 East Colfax Avenue Urban Redevelopment Plan Amendment

Staff Report and Recommendation

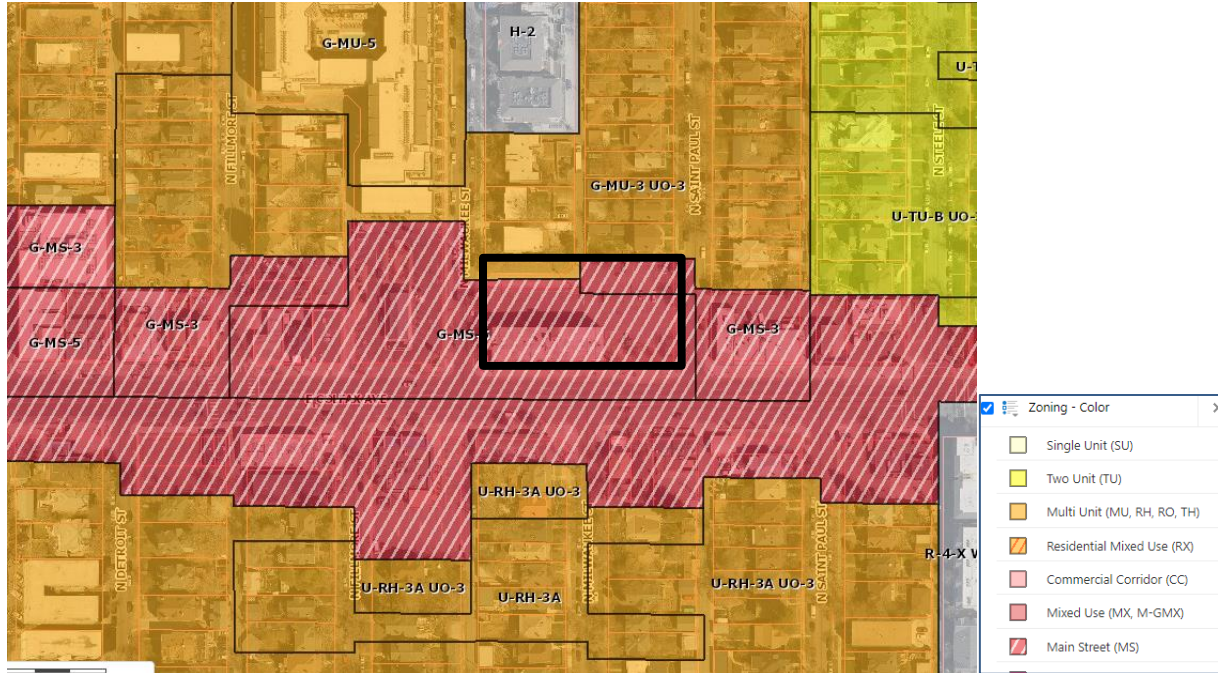
Colorado law charges Denver’s Planning Board with reviewing an amendment and reinstatement to the urban renewal plan and making a recommendation as to its conformity with the Comprehensive Plan (Colorado Revised Statutes Title 31 Government Municipal § 31-25-107(2)). Community Planning and Development staff finds that the proposed 3015 E. Colfax Ave. Urban Redevelopment Plan conforms to Denver’s Comprehensive Plan and applicable supplements and recommends that the Planning Board take formal action at its August 16th 2023, meeting to make this finding.



Background

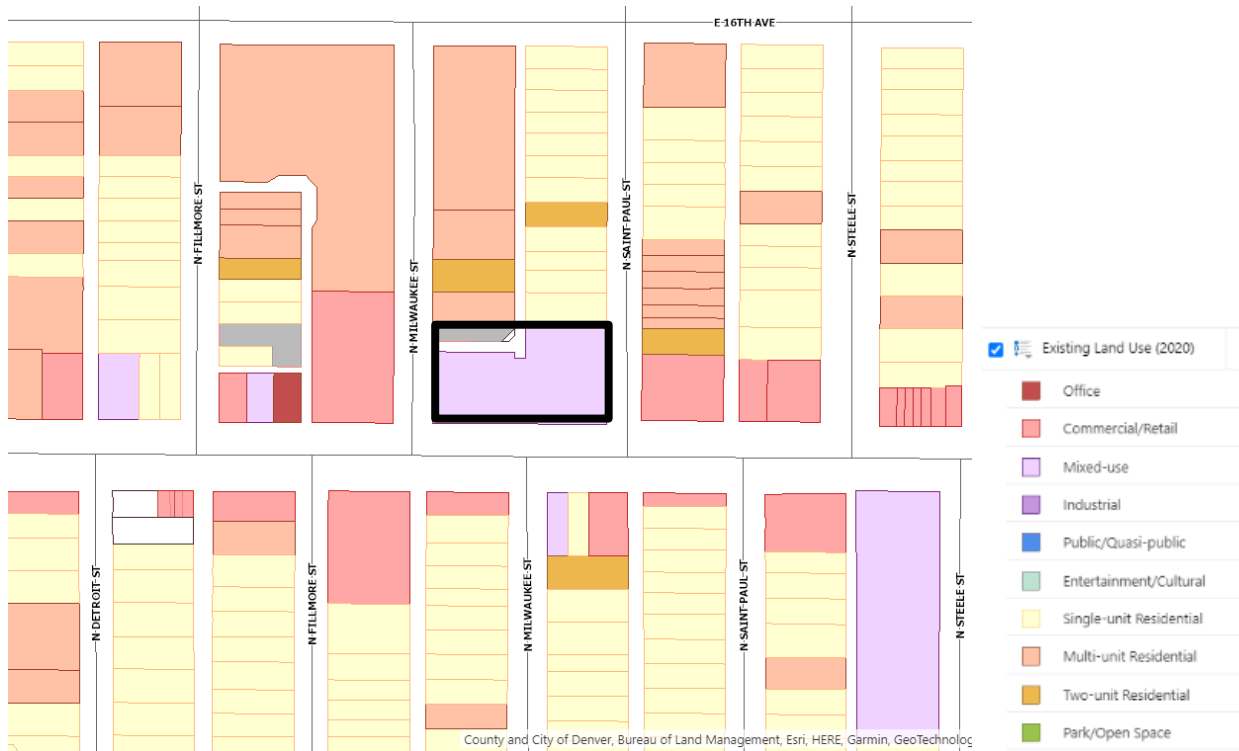
The Urban Redevelopment Area is approximately 37,000 square feet located in the City Park statistical neighborhood.

Existing Zoning



The subject site is currently zoned G-MS-5, which is **General Urban – Main Street – 5-stories maximum**. The zone district allows a mix of uses that promote safe, active and pedestrian-scaled commercial streets through the use of building forms that clearly define and activate the public street edge.

Existing Land Uses



There is a mixture of land uses and building forms in the area. Commercial, residential, and mixed-use buildings are generally low rise with some mid and high rise to the north. The subject site is currently a 4-story motel surrounded with surface parking to the north and east.

A conditions study (referred to in state statute as a “blight study”) was conducted in June 2020. The study found that there are four blight factors present, constituting the proposed URA as a “blighted area.”

Urban Redevelopment Plan

The proposed Urban Redevelopment Plan (URP) establishes the 3015 E. Colfax Ave. Urban Redevelopment Area. The Urban Redevelopment Plan is intended to promote complete and equitable neighborhoods through the following objectives:

1. To eliminate the present factors which contribute to the blight in the Urban Redevelopment Area. Such blighting factors are detrimental to the community and limit the development potential of the surrounding area.
2. To renew and improve the character and environment of the Urban Redevelopment Area and its surroundings by preventing or ameliorating economic, physical and environmental deterioration.
3. To encourage the reuse of existing buildings where appropriate, including historic preservation and adaptive reuse.
4. To protect and enhance the character of structures designated for historic preservation.
5. To promote a diverse, sustainable neighborhood economy, including mixed use and commercial development opportunities within the Urban Redevelopment Area.
6. To assist the City in cultivating complete and inclusive neighborhoods.
7. To encourage land use patterns within the Urban Redevelopment Area and its environs where pedestrians are safe and welcome.
8. To improve the economy of the City by stabilizing and upgrading property values.
9. To achieve goals as outlined in adopted City Plans.

The proposed URP would facilitate the rehabilitation of the existing structures on the property and the construction of a building on the existing parking lot. The project is planned to contain:

- A 54-room hotel
- Lobby bar
- Ground floor restaurant

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 East Central Area Plan.

Comprehensive Plan 2040

CPD staff finds that the amended Urban Redevelopment Plan conforms to Comprehensive Plan 2040 by furthering several city-wide objectives, policies and actions in the plan, including the following under the Equitable, Affordable, and Inclusive vision element:

The development contemplated by the amended URP would advance several strategies under the Strong and Authentic Neighborhoods vision element:

- *Strong and Authentic Neighborhoods Goal 1, Strategy A* – Build a network of well connected, vibrant, mixed-use centers and corridors (p. 34).
- *Strong and Authentic Neighborhoods Goal 1, Strategy C* – Ensure neighborhoods are safe, accessible, and well-connected for all modes (p. 34).
- *Strong and Authentic Neighborhoods Goal 1, Strategy D* – Encourage quality infill development that is consistent with the surrounding neighborhoods and offers opportunities for increased amenities (p. 34).
- *Strong and Authentic Neighborhoods Goal 2, Strategy C* – Create people-oriented places that embrace community character with thoughtful transitions, aspirational design and an engaging public realm (p. 34).
- *Strong and Authentic Neighborhoods Goal 3, Strategy B* – Continue the city’s commitment to existing historic districts and landmarks and increase public awareness of the benefits of historic preservation through education and outreach (p. 34).
- *Strong and Authentic Neighborhoods Goal 3, Strategy E* – Support the stewardship and reuse of existing buildings, including city properties (p. 34).

The following strategy under the Connected, Safe, and Accessible vision element would also be advanced by the amended URP:

- *Connected, Safe and Accessible Places Goal 8, Strategy B* – Promote transit-oriented development and encourage high density development, including affordable housing near transit to support ridership (p. 42).

In addition, the URP would help advance the following strategies of the Economically Diverse and Vibrant vision element:

- *Economically Diverse and Vibrant Goal 1, Strategy C* – Support business development and grow the talent necessary to compete in the global economy (p. 46).
- *Economically Diverse and Vibrant Goal 2, Strategy A* – Broaden the tax base with a focus on fiscal activity that is resilient to change over time (p. 46).
- *Economically Diverse and Vibrant Goal 3, Strategy A* – Promote small, locally-owned businesses and restaurants that reflect the unique character of Denver. (p.47)

- *Economically Diverse and Vibrant Goal 4, Strategy C* – Encourage businesses to work with local workforce training and education organizations to better prepare residents for job and career opportunities (p. 47).
- *Economically Diverse and Vibrant Goal 7, Strategy C* - Accelerate Denver’s economic vitality through arts, culture and creativity. Grow public-private partnerships and create tools to support creative businesses and job creation.

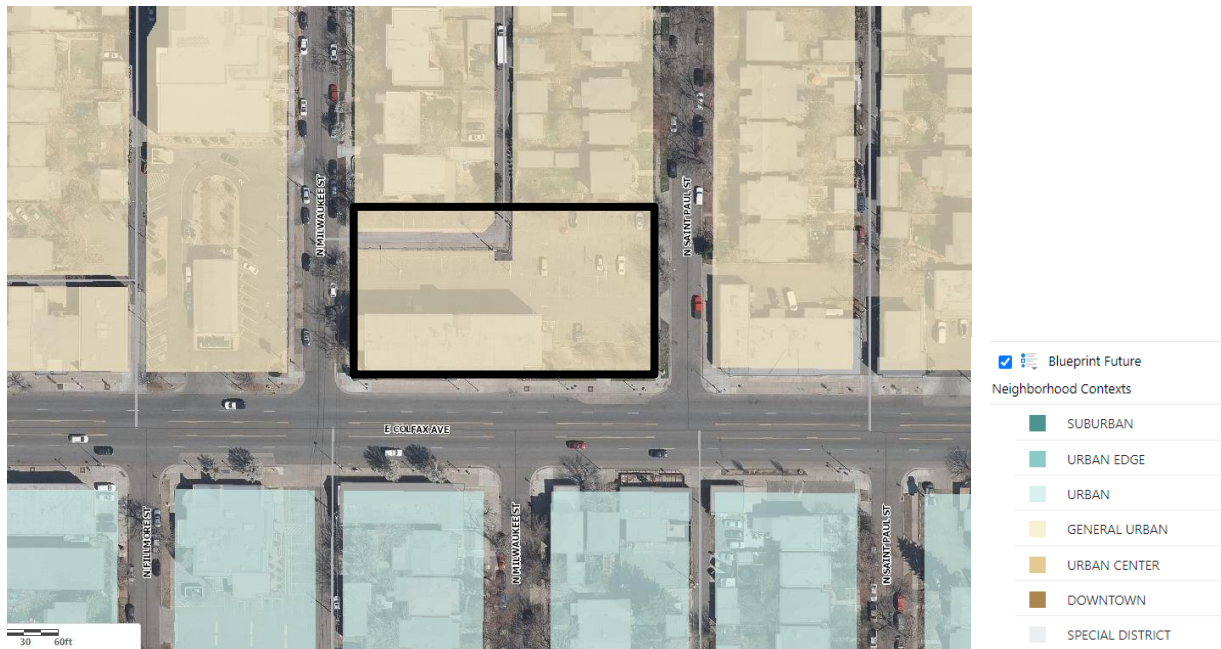
Finally, the following strategies of the Environmentally Resilient vision element would be advanced by the URP:

- *Environmentally Resilient Goal 7, Strategy C* – Prioritize the reuse of existing buildings and explore incentives to salvage or reuse materials from demolished structures (p. 54).
- *Environmentally Resilient Goal 8, Strategy A* – Promote infill development where infrastructure and services are already in place (p.54).
- *Environmentally Resilient Goal 8, Strategy B* – Encourage mixed-use communities where residents can live, work and play in their own neighborhoods (p. 54).
- *Environmentally Resilient Goal 9, Strategy B* – Improve Denver’s air by reducing the use of single-occupancy vehicles, advancing renewable energy sources, expanding the use of transit, promoting innovative and alternative technologies and supporting mixed-use, walkable neighborhoods (p. 54).

Blueprint Denver (2019)

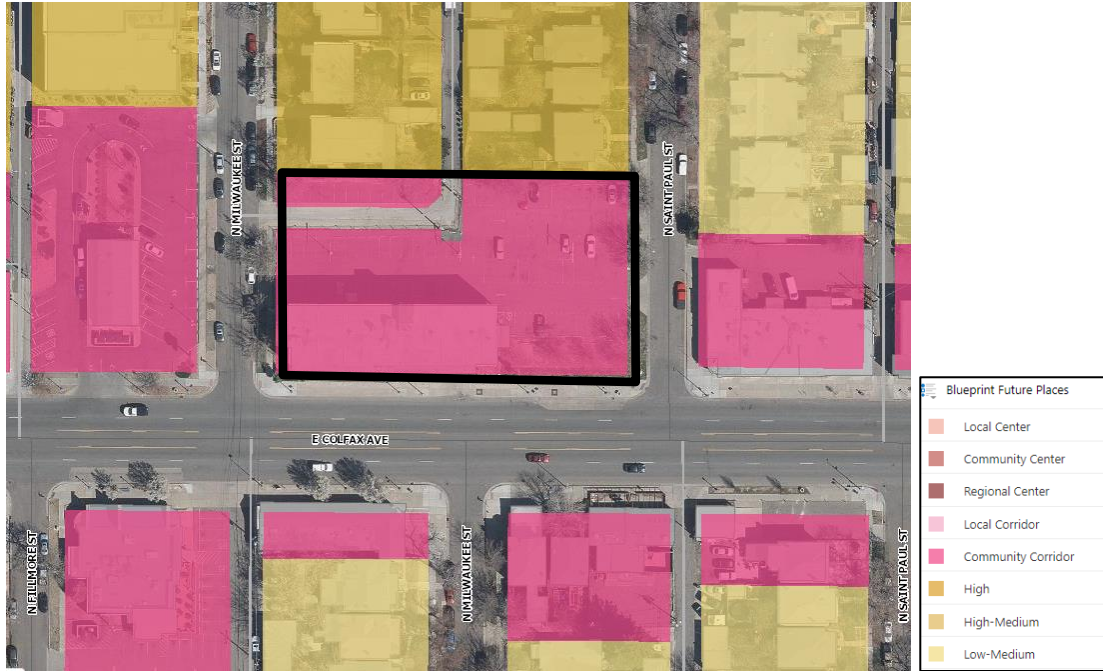
Blueprint Denver is Denver’s citywide, 20-year land use and transportation plan. It was adopted by City Council in 2019 as a supplement to Comprehensive Plan 2040. The plan calls for an inclusive, equitable city through complete neighborhoods and transportation networks and a strategic growth strategy that focuses growth in key areas. The proposed URP will promote development that supports the complete neighborhood and transportation network vision in Blueprint Denver, including neighborhood context, place, street type and growth guidance. In addition, the proposed URP furthers several recommendations as described below.

Neighborhood Context



The proposed URA is within the General Urban neighborhood context. Blueprint Denver describes General Urban as “vibrant places with proximity to Denver’s major centers like Downtown and Cherry Creek. Homes in this context vary from multi-unit complexes to compact single-unit homes. Development should be sensitive to the existing neighborhood character and offer residents a mix of uses, with good street activation and connectivity. Residents living in this context are well served by transit and enjoy access to abundant amenities and entertainment options.” (p. 236).

Future Places

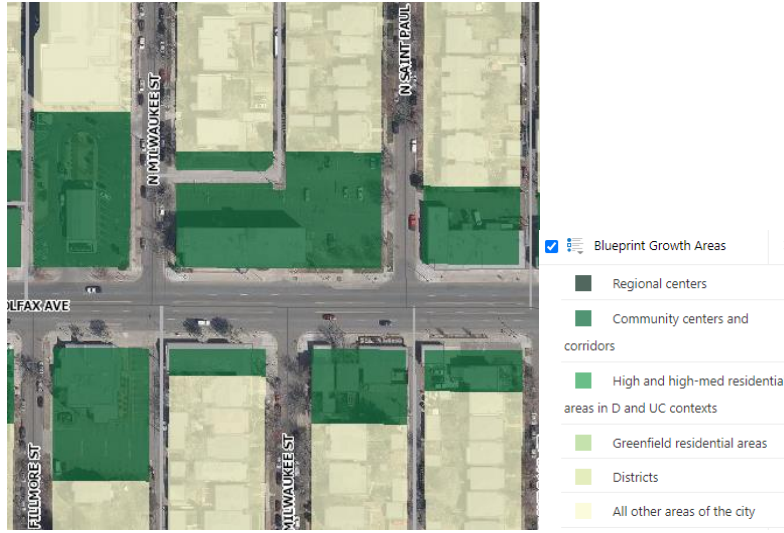


The proposed URA is designated as Community Corridor which is intended to include “some mix of office, commercial and residential uses. A wide customer draw both of local residents from surrounding neighborhoods and from other parts of the city. Activity levels during different times of the day will vary depending on the type and mix of uses” (p. 245).

Future Street Type

Blueprint Denver designates Colfax as a Main Street Arterial. Arterials are designed for the highest amount of through movement and the lowest degree of property access (p. 154). Main streets are characterized by a mix of uses including retail, services and restaurants, as well as residential. Buildings are pedestrian-oriented, with little front setback, (p. 158).

Growth Strategy



Blueprint Denver designates the property as a Community Corridor in the General Urban context. Collectively throughout the City, Community Centers and Corridors in the General Urban Context are anticipated to see 25% of new housing growth and 20% of new employment growth by 2040 (p. 50-51). The proposed URP will promote the development of jobs within the proposed URA, consistent with the Blueprint Denver growth strategy.

Equity

Blueprint Denver includes three major equity concepts to consider for future policies and investments. Integrating these concepts into planning and implementation will help to create a more equitable Denver. The concepts include improving access to opportunity, reducing vulnerability to displacement, and expanding housing and jobs diversity (p. 30). The data used to evaluate these concepts are collected and analyzed at the census tract or neighborhood level and are therefore difficult to apply to specific development proposals such as this one. However, it is still important to consider the equity impacts of programs like URAs.

The proposed 3015 E. Colfax URA will facilitate investment in the Colfax Corridor, creating additional jobs and preserving historic resources. The scale of the investment, however, is not expected to have a significant impact on the equity measures of the neighborhood and the city at large.

Other recommendations furthered by the proposed URP

Blueprint Denver provides policy recommendations and strategies to create complete neighborhoods and networks, guide future growth, and promote equitable development. The proposed URP will further many of these recommendations, including the following (with reference to Blueprint Denver):

- *Land Use & Built Form: General, Policy 1:* Promote and anticipate planned growth in major centers and corridors and key residential areas connected by high- and medium- capacity transit corridors (p. 72).
- *Land Use & Built Form: General, Policy 2:* Incentivize or require efficient development of land, especially in transit-rich areas (p. 72).

- *Strategy E*: In historic areas, balance efficiency with preservation through strategies that encourage the reuse of structures.
- *Land Use & Built Form: Economics, Policy 6*: Ensure Denver its neighborhoods have a vibrant and authentic retail and hospitality marketplace meeting full range of experiences and goods demanded by residents and visitors (p. 93).
- *Land Use & Built Form: Design Quality & Preservation, Policy 2*: Ensure residential neighborhoods retain their unique character as infill development occurs (p. 99).
 - *Strategy I*: Promote incentives to preserve the reuse of historic buildings and the unique historic features of Denver’s neighborhoods.
- *Land Use & Built Form: Design Quality & Preservation, Policy 3*: Create exceptional design outcomes in key centers and corridors (p. 102).
 - *Strategy K*: Identify important mixed-use historic structures and encourage their continued use or adaptive reuse.
- *Land Use & Built Form: Design Quality & Preservation, Policy 6*: Incentivize the preservation of structures and features that contribute to the established character of an area, even if they are not designated as landmarks or historic districts (p. 104).
- *Mobility, Policy 1*: Encourage Mode shift - more trips by walking, rolling, biking, and transit - through efficient land use and infrastructure improvements (p. 108).
- *Mobility, Policy 2*: Align the impacts of private development with transportation infrastructure and promote development that creates walkable, transit-friendly communities (p. 108).
- *Quality of Life Infrastructure, Policy 10*: Work with public and private partners to improve access to shops, restaurants, entertainment, civic uses, services and a variety of daily needs for all Denver residents (p.124).

East Central Area Plan (2020)

The Urban Redevelopment Area is located in the City Park neighborhood, one of the six neighborhoods included in the East Central Area Plan boundary along with the Capitol Hill, Cheesman Park, City Park West, Congress Park and North Capitol Hill neighborhoods. The East Central Area Plan was adopted in 2020 with the purpose of refining the citywide guidance included in the Comprehensive Plan and Blueprint Denver for the smaller six-neighborhood area. The East Central Area Plan outlines detailed long-term visions for economic activity, land use, urban design, housing, mobility and parks within the six-neighborhood area

Future Places

Consistent with Blueprint Denver, the East Central Plan designates the proposed URA as a Community Corridor. (see pg. 7 for description)

Other recommendations furthered by the proposed URP

- Policy L8: Encourage high-quality design and character preservation in Centers and Corridors. (pg. 44).
- Policy C-L5: Discourage low utilization of land and auto-oriented uses along Colfax. (pg.261)

CPD Staff Recommendation

Based on the analysis presented in this staff report, CPD staff recommends that the Planning Board find the proposed 3015 E. Colfax Ave. Amended Urban Redevelopment Plan to be in conformance with the Denver Comprehensive Plan and its applicable supplements.

Attachments

1. Proposed Urban Redevelopment Plan