



TO: Denver City Council
FROM: Kristofer Johnson, Principal City Planner
DATE: July 15, 2021
RE: Text Amendment to the Denver Zoning Code (as amended through July 1, 2021) to update the Downtown Golden Triangle (D-GT) zone district (CB 21-0635)
- AND -
Amendment to the Denver Revised Municipal Code, Chapter 27, Article VI to establish affordable housing incentives for the D-GT zone district (CB-21-0636)

Staff Report and Recommendation

1. Denver Zoning Code Text Amendment

Based on the review criteria for text amendments stated in Denver Zoning Code Section 12.4.11 (Text Amendment), CPD staff recommend approval of the text amendment to the Denver Zoning Code to update the Downtown Golden Triangle zone district (CB 21-0635).

2. Denver Revised Municipal Code Amendment

Department of Housing Stability (HOST) and CPD staff recommend approval of the amendment to the Denver Revised Municipal Code, Chapter 27, Article VI, to establish affordable housing incentives for the Downtown Golden Triangle zone district (CB 21-0636).

Summary and Purpose

The existing zoning in the Golden Triangle was originally adopted in 1994 and was not updated to the new form- and context-based Denver Zoning Code in 2010, largely due to a lack of recent neighborhood policy guidance to help guide the changes. The Golden Triangle Neighborhood Plan was completed in 2014 and established a vision for the area bordered by Colfax Avenue on the north, Speer Boulevard on the south and west, and Broadway/Lincoln on the east as an eclectic, connected, creative, and livable neighborhood. With the adoption of the Golden Triangle Neighborhood Plan and similar recent regulatory implementation efforts in Arapahoe Square and Central Platte Valley-Auraria, this area of Downtown is now poised to build on these successes and move into a more current system of zoning and design review.

To implement the objectives of the Golden Triangle Neighborhood Plan, Blueprint Denver, and other adopted plans, City Councilmember Chris Hinds (Council District 10) is sponsoring a text amendment to the Denver Zoning Code (DZC) to update the Downtown Golden Triangle (D-GT) zone district. In addition, associated revisions to Denver Revised Municipal Code (DRMC), Chapter 27, are proposed to establish affordable housing incentives and updates to the urban design standards and guidelines are planned as Community Planning and Development rules and regulations.

1. **Update Zoning Standards (DZC Text Amendment):** The existing D-GT zone district will be revised to modernize outdated code standards from 1994 and apply more current approaches. The proposed zoning standards are tailored to the size of projects to ensure

- development of small lots is more flexible and not disproportionately affected. The proposed zoning includes enhanced standards for street level setbacks, ground floor active uses, open space, visibility of parking structures, and building shaping to create an active and human-scaled experience at the street.
2. **Establish Affordable Housing Incentives (DRMC Amendment):** Similar to the 38th and Blake Station Area Incentive Overlay district (IO-1) and D-CPV zone districts, the proposed updates would establish a base threshold in D-GT. Square footage above this threshold would be required to meet increased affordable housing standards consistent with adopted policy objectives. The affordable housing requirements associated with use of incentive floor area in the D-GT zone districts would be included in an amendment to the Chapter 27, Article VI of the Denver Revised Municipal Code, as summarized below.
 3. **Update Design Standards and Guidelines and Design Review Process:** The proposed text amendment would expand the existing Downtown Design Advisory Board by two additional resident members and bring projects in D-GT under their review alongside projects in D-CPV-T/R/C and D-AS-12+/20+. The existing urban design standards and guidelines that apply to each area will be combined into a single Downtown Urban Design Standards and Guidelines document and be adopted separately as CPD rules and regulations.

The D-GT regulatory update represents a comprehensive and balanced approach to improve the design quality, mix of uses, and pedestrian experience within this important area of downtown Denver. Specifically, the updated zoning standards and other associated changes address 12 key objectives identified in the Golden Triangle Neighborhood Plan and through the public process over the last two years.

Land Use & Development: *The way buildings and properties are used and how those uses are organized throughout the neighborhood.*

1. Encourage a range of land uses and development types
2. Highlight certain streets with different use patterns
3. Promote a broad range of housing opportunities
4. Evaluate minimum parking requirements

Building Form & Type: *The overall scale and physical character of buildings and their relationship to the surrounding context.*

5. Encourage a diverse range of building forms
6. Continue to allow current building height
7. Ensure building mass is compatible with adjacent buildings
8. Encourage protection/reuse of existing buildings

Street Level Experience: *The active environment created at the street level and experienced by the pedestrian.*

9. Promote a high-quality pedestrian experience
10. Ensure building design considers pedestrian scale and comfort
11. Encourage provision of privately-owned public gathering spaces
12. Improve the activity and visual characteristics of parking structures

Summary of Proposed Updates

Building Forms and Height

One of the most fundamental proposed updates is to utilize a range of building forms and apply different rules as projects increase in scale rather than the current "one size fits all" approach where the same rules apply to all projects. Specifically, various street level and upper story massing standards will be applied as the width of the site increases. The proposed zoning also introduces the Point Tower building form that offers a taller height limit in exchange for strict limitations on the building size above 5 stories.

When determining the appropriate height limit for each building form, it was important to consider the existing scale of the neighborhood, anticipated growth in the area, and flexibility to successfully shape the allowed building floor area. A height limit that is too low will result in overly bulky buildings and limits that are too tall pose a risk to the existing character of the area and its relationship to the core of downtown. The proposed height limits strike a balance between the current height limit and allowing modest increases for projects that contribute back to the neighborhood through incentives, or utilize the more restrictive Point Tower format.

- Proposed General Form Height Limit = 200 feet (250 feet for projects exceeding base FAR)
- Proposed Point Tower Height Limit = 250 feet (325 feet for projects exceeding base FAR)

Floor Area Ratio and Incentives

Maximum floor area ratio (FAR) is a zoning limitation that controls the overall floor area of an individual project, but allows flexibility in the way the floor area is shaped. It is calculated as the ratio of the gross floor area of the building (total floor area of all stories) divided by the area of the zone lot. Currently any above-ground floor area that is dedicated to parking is not included in the calculation of FAR. The proposed zoning update will change this exemption and include all above-ground floor area, therefore the allowed FAR in the proposed zoning is greater than current limits.

- Proposed Standard = Include all above-ground floor area in FAR calculations
- Proposed FAR = Base FAR = 8.0 and Maximum FAR = 15.0*

** To qualify for additional FAR above the base, a project must meet the minimum standards for affordable housing and/or utilize floor area from a Landmark historic structure.*

Floor area incentives encourage additional density above the base FAR in exchange for support of citywide and neighborhood priorities. Many different options for incentives have been considered throughout the process. However, incentive programs that have too many choices can be ineffective and create "winners and losers" among the options. In addition, zoning can apply standards for items like open space and public art and does not need to rely simply on encouraging these types of outcomes through incentives. In the proposed zoning for D-GT, a project may qualify for additional floor area by meeting minimum criteria for:

1. Providing affordable housing units/fees per the rules established in DRMC Chapter 27
2. Utilizing undeveloped floor area from or renovating a designated historic Landmark*

** Note, both undeveloped floor area from a historic Landmark and bonus floor area for rehabilitation of a historic Landmark may be used on-site or sold/transferred to other locations within D-GT*

Building Shaping

Shaping larger buildings was an important recommendation in the Golden Triangle Neighborhood Plan and was a primary comment from stakeholders received during the process. The proposed

zoning includes several form-based standards to work in concert with FAR and the design review process to better “shape the clay” and reduce the scale of larger projects along the street.

Proposed upper story setbacks will help break down taller buildings and create a more comfortable building height that typically ranges from 3-5 stories along the street. There is flexibility built into the standard to avoid a monotonous datum line that applies to all projects and promote the variety in architectural form that the neighborhood desires. Incremental mass reduction standards establish a system of reductions to shape buildings and generally reduce their size as they get taller.

Parking Outcomes

Downtown zone districts in Denver typically have no minimum parking requirement, however, the current D-GT zoning requires all projects to provide parking for each use. This creates a barrier for buildings with large parking garages to offer public parking, or a shared arrangement with a neighboring property, because that minimum requirement must always be reserved for the existing uses on site. The result is many large parking structures are underutilized and have empty spaces that are not allowed to be made available to others. Parking requirements also create a challenge for redevelopment of smaller properties where a multi-story parking garage is infeasible. This often leads to a developer assembling several smaller adjacent lots into one very large parcel that can more easily accommodate the required parking area.

As noted above, the proposed update removes the exemption for above-ground parking area in the FAR calculation and to complement this approach, the current minimum parking requirement is also proposed to be removed. This will remove barriers to more efficient use of parking through public access and shared parking agreements.

The proposed zoning also includes a limitation on visible parking standard to require projects on large lots to wrap above-ground parking structures with active uses facing the street. This adds activity to building facades, places more “eyes on the street” than a typical parking structure, and screens the view of large parking areas from the public realm.

Street Level Activity and Design

Feedback gathered from stakeholders throughout the process consistently prioritized a desire for an enhanced pedestrian experience, commercially oriented uses at the ground floor, and opportunities for public gathering spaces. The proposed changes address these comments in multiple ways. As noted above, there are new standards to help break down the scale of larger buildings adjacent to the street to create a more comfortable human-scale experience and allow more sun and sky to reach the sidewalk. In addition, the following standards directly relate to the quality and activity present at the street level.

- More flexible build-to range to enable buildings to shift away from the sidewalk and create space for outdoor dining, retail spillover, and landscape
- Increased setbacks, street-facing entrances, and entry features such as porches or stoops for ground floor residential units to improve the transition between the public realm and private residential homes
- Small, but meaningful, publicly-accessible open space requirements for larger lots to create areas that complement indoor uses and provide additional space for trees and landscape

- Modest nonresidential active use requirements focused on key commercial corridors identified in the Golden Triangle Neighborhood Plan such as Broadway, Bannock Street, and 11th Avenue
- New allowances for alternative compliance by providing public art and the ability to substitute open space for nonresidential active use requirements, and vice-versa

Related DRMC Amendment for Projects that Exceed Base FAR in D-GT

City Councilmember Chris Hinds, with HOST and CPD support, is also sponsoring a related amendment to the DRMC to revise Chapter 27, Article VI 'Incentives for Affordable Housing' to include specific affordable housing requirements for structures building above the specified base FAR. For policy consistency and administrative efficiency, affordable housing requirements within the proposed revised DRMC Chapter 27, Article VI will continue to extensively cross-reference existing affordable housing requirements. The cross-references create links between Article VI and Article V 'Dedicated Funding for Affordable Housing' to relate proposed incentive requirements to formulas and procedures related to Denver's Affordable Housing Linkage Fee.

Similar to the existing standards for the 38th and Blake Station Area Incentive Overlay (IO-1) and D-CPV zone districts, DRMC affordable housing standards to build above the base FAR in the D-GT district would require construction of affordable housing units for residential projects (more than 50% residential use) and would require either construction of affordable housing units or payment of increased linkage fees for nonresidential projects (less than 50% residential use). Above the base FAR, citywide requirements would apply plus additional requirements based on a 4x multiple of the fee and 'build alternative' (affordable housing unit) formulas already included in the citywide linkage fee system. The affordable housing units in a rental residential project would be affordable to individuals and families earning 60% Area Median Income (AMI), and for-sale affordable housing units may be provided at 80% AMI. This means that structures in the D-GT zone district exceeding base FAR and taking advantage of increased FAR and height allowances would make a greater contribution towards affordable housing than structures built in other areas of the city, consistent with adopted policy recommendations.

A detailed summary of the proposed DRMC Chapter 27, Article VI affordable housing requirements associated with the proposed D-GT updates is attached to this staff report.

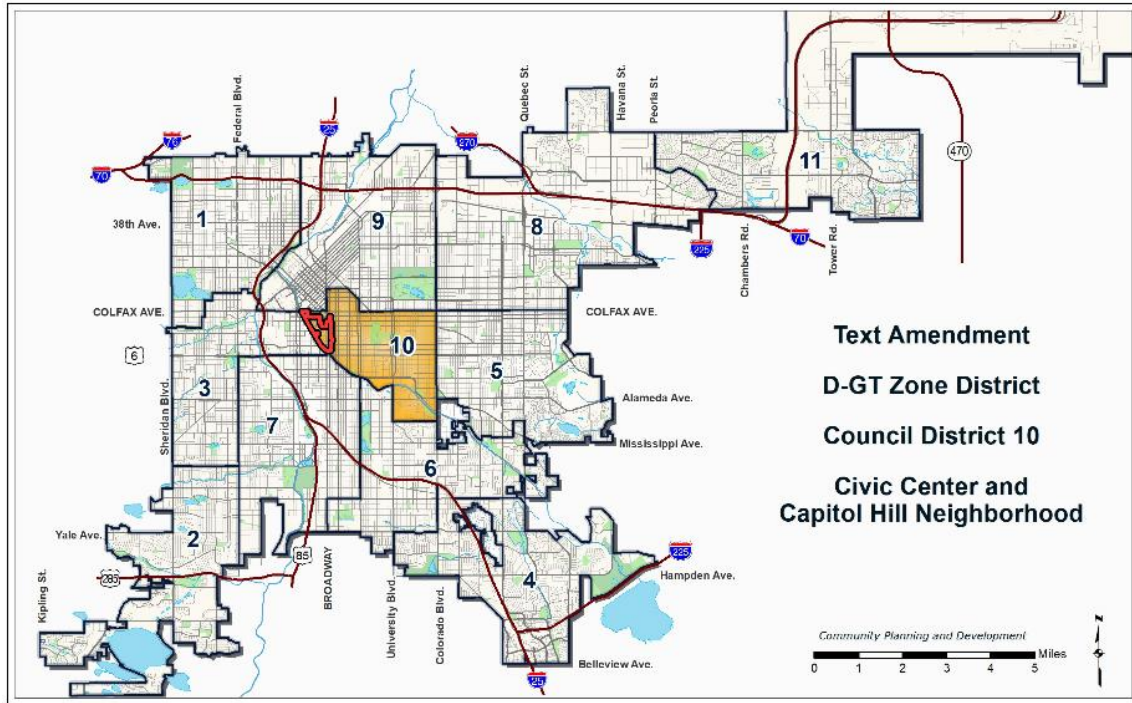
Note that on-going efforts at the state and citywide level to address housing affordability will ultimately result in a more robust and comprehensive approach that will replace the current proposed system to the D-GT zone district.

Large Development Review

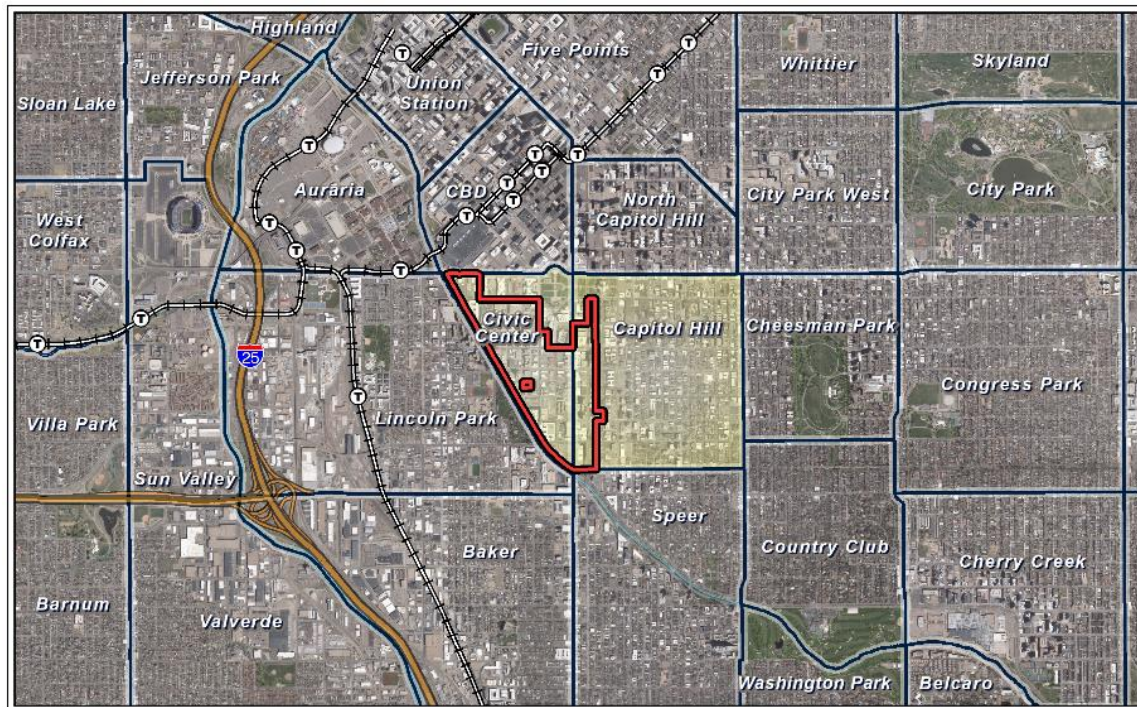
The applicability of the large development review process is defined by DZC Section 12.4.12.2. There is no specific development concept associated with the proposed text amendment, no adopted plan recommends use of the LDR process for this proposal, no infrastructure network or system improvements are anticipated, and no existing general development plan needs to be amended. Therefore, although the area affected by the text amendment is larger than 5 acres, large development review is not applicable.

Context

Council district location map



Neighborhood map



Public Process

	Date
Coordination with Golden Triangle Zoning Update Advisory Committee, Golden Triangle Creative District RNO, Downtown Denver Partnership, and other stakeholders	Mar 2019 – on-going
Phase 1: Plan Guidance, Existing Conditions, and Problem ID Community Open House #1 Public Survey #1 (closed) Interim Report #1: Project Framework and Existing Conditions	6/12/2019 7/1/2019 7/9/2019
Phase 2: Zoning Alternatives Community Open House #2 Public Survey #2 (closed) Planning Board Information Item #1 Interim Report #2: Zoning Framework and Alternatives	9/25/2019 10/22/2019 11/06/2019 1/13/2020
Phase 3: Preliminary Preferred Zoning Framework Community Open House #3 Planning Board Information Item #2 Public Survey #3 (closed)	3/18/2020 4/15/2020 4/28/2020
Phase 4: Preferred Zoning Strategy Interim Report #3: Preferred Zoning Strategy LUTI Information Item Planning Board Information Item #3 Public Survey #4 (closed)	2/16/2021 3/2/2021 3/3/2021 3/25/2021
Draft text amendment available for public review	4/1/2021 – 4/30/2021
CPD informational notice of draft text amendment for public review to all City Council members and registered neighborhood organizations	4/5/2021
Presentation to Inter-Neighborhood Coordination Zoning and Planning Committee	4/24/2021
CPD written and published notice of the Planning Board public hearing sent to all City Council members and registered neighborhood organizations	5/4/2021
Planning Board public hearing	5/19/2021
CPD written notice of the Land Use, Transportation and Infrastructure Committee meeting sent to all City Council members and registered neighborhood organizations	5/25/2021
Land Use, Transportation and Infrastructure Committee of the City Council	6/8/2021

CPD written and published notice of the City Council public hearing sent to all City Council members and registered neighborhood organizations	6/28/2021
City Council Public Hearing	7/19/2021

RNO Comments

As of the date of this staff report, one formal comment from the Morgan’s Historic District RNO was received citing concerns about protecting views from Cheesman Park.

Public Comments

As of the date of this staff report, CPD has received six comments voicing overall support of the zoning update citing a productive stakeholder process, excitement about enhanced design outcomes and improved implementation of adopted plans and the Denver Zoning Code.

Three comments in opposition were received with concerns regarding building height, people experiencing homelessness, property taxes, and a lack of a grand vision that addresses streets and public spaces in addition to private development.

Seven comments were received that neither directly supported or opposed, but offered specific feedback on desired changes to the draft zoning text. These suggested changes included raising the base FAR to 10.0, increased building height on both General and Point Tower forms to more easily maximize FAR on all lots, more flexibility on the limitation on visible parking standard, more flexibility on Point Tower standards, removing the nonresidential active use standard, ensuring the Golden Triangle Creative District urban design committee remains involved and has a dedicated seat on the Downtown Design Advisory Board, request for more time to review and test the proposed zoning updates, and request for more time/flexibility for the review of pipeline projects under the old zoning code .

Planning Board

The Denver Planning Board held a public hearing on May 19, 2021, and voted (8-1) to recommend approval of the proposed text amendment. There was one speaker in opposition at the public hearing.

Criteria for Review and Staff Evaluation for DZC Text Amendment

The criteria for review of this text amendment are found in DZC, Section 12.4.11. These criteria are summarized as follows:

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

1. Consistency with Adopted Plans

The following adopted plans apply to this text amendment:

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

- Golden Triangle Neighborhood Plan (2014)
- Downtown Area Plan (2007)
- Civic Center District Plan (2005)
- East Central Area Plan (2020)
- Housing an Inclusive Denver (2018)

Denver Comprehensive Plan 2040 (2019)

The proposed text amendment will further *Comprehensive Plan 2040's* Equitable, Affordable and Inclusive goals. The text amendment enhances the existing zoning standards to better promote pedestrian-oriented design, nonresidential uses in embedded the neighborhood, publicly-accessible open space, public art, and housing that is more affordable.

- Equitable, Affordable and Inclusive Goal 1, to: Ensure all Denver residents have safe, convenient and affordable access to basic services and a variety of amenities.
 - Strategy A – Increase development of housing units close to transit and mixed-use developments. (p. 28)
 - Strategy C – Improve equitable access to resources that improve quality of life, including cultural and natural amenities, health care, education, parks, recreation, nutritious food and the arts. (p. 28)
- Equitable, Affordable and Inclusive Goal 2, to: Build housing as a continuum to serve residents across a range of incomes, ages and needs.
 - Strategy A – Create a greater mix of housing options in every neighborhood for all individuals and families. (p. 28)
- Equitable, Affordable and Inclusive Goal 3, to: Develop housing that is affordable to residents of all income levels.
 - Strategy B - Use land use regulations to incentivize the private development of affordable, missing middle, and mixed income housing". (p.28)

The updated zoning standards in the text amendment also apply directly to the Strong and Authentic Neighborhoods vision element goals to create a city of complete neighborhoods, enhance neighborhoods through high-quality urban design, and ensure every neighborhood is economically strong and dynamic. The updated zoning creates a more level playing field for a mix of uses (rather than only residential) and includes support for preservation of historic structures and flexibility for smaller infill development that is consistent with traditional patterns.

- Strong and Authentic Neighborhoods Goal 1, to: Create a city of complete neighborhoods.
 - Strategy A – Build a network of well-connected, vibrant, mixed-use, centers and corridors. (p. 34)
 - Strategy D – Encourage quality infill development that is consistent with the surrounding neighborhood and offers opportunities for increased amenities. (p. 34)
- Strong and Authentic Neighborhoods, Goal 2, to: Enhance Denver's neighborhoods through high-quality urban design.
 - 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, to: Preserve the authenticity of Denver's neighborhoods and celebrate our history, architecture and culture. (p.34)

- Strong and Authentic Neighborhoods Goal 4, to: Ensure every neighborhood is economically strong and dynamic.
 - Strategy A – Grow and support neighborhood-serving businesses. (p. 35)
- Strong and Authentic Neighborhoods, Goal 7, to: Leverage the arts and support creative placemaking to strengthen community. (p.35)

The Economically Diverse and Vibrant goal to sustain and grow Denver’s local neighborhood businesses will be supported by the requirement for projects on larger lots to provide nonresidential space at the street level. This will increase the amount of commercial space in these areas, ultimately enhancing the availability, and ideally affordability, of space for new businesses, startups and small retailers.

- Economically Diverse and Vibrant, Goal 3, to: Sustain and grow Denver’s local neighborhood businesses.
 - Strategy A – Promote small, locally-owned businesses and restaurants that reflect the unique character of Denver. (p. 46)

The text amendment also addresses the Environmentally Resilient goals to grow responsibly by contributing to the mixed-use character of neighborhoods. This encourages nearby residents to obtain goods and services locally, thereby reducing their overall footprint and potential impact on transportation infrastructure.

- Environmentally Resilient, Goal 8, to: Clean our soils, conserve land and grow responsibly (p. 54)
 - Strategy B – Encourage mixed-use communities where residents can live, work, and play in their own neighborhoods. (p. 54)

The Healthy and Active vision to ensure Denver is a city of safe, accessible and healthy communities is addressed by requirements for projects on larger lots to provide publicly-accessible open space at the street level that serves as a bridge between the sidewalk and active interior uses.

- Healthy and Active, Goal 1, to: Create and enhance environments that support physical activity and healthy living.
 - Strategy C – Design safe public spaces and recreational areas to serve people of all ages and backgrounds. (p. 54)

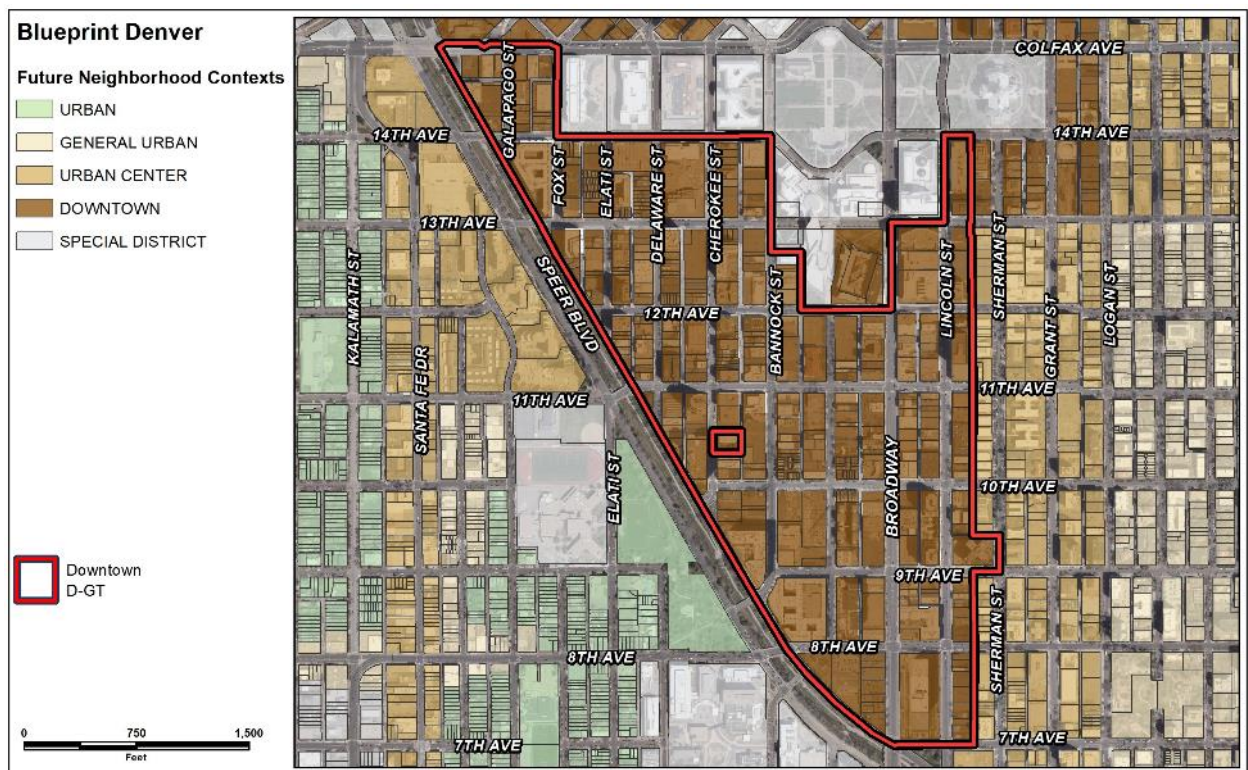
Blueprint Denver (2019)

Blueprint Denver is Denver’s citywide, long range, land use and transportation plan, adopted by City Council in 2019 as a supplement to *Comprehensive Plan 2040*. The area addressed by the proposed text amendment is identified as Community Corridor and High Residential future places within the Downtown neighborhood context. The proposed zoning updates will promote development that supports the complete neighborhood and transportation network vision in *Blueprint Denver*, including neighborhood context, place, street type and growth guidance.

Blueprint Denver Future Neighborhood Context

The Downtown neighborhood context predominantly contains the highest mix of uses in the city including multi-unit residential, commercial, office, civic and institutional. Block patterns are generally regular with perpendicular and diagonal streets and large mixed-use buildings are located close to the street. It also features a range of flexible outdoor spaces, hardscaped plazas, and the greatest level of multimodal connectivity. (p. 137)

The zoning updates proposed for the D-GT district are consistent with the Blueprint future neighborhood context of Downtown because they will promote an even greater mix of uses, publicly-accessible open spaces, and pedestrian-oriented streets that are compatible with the intensity of this downtown neighborhood.



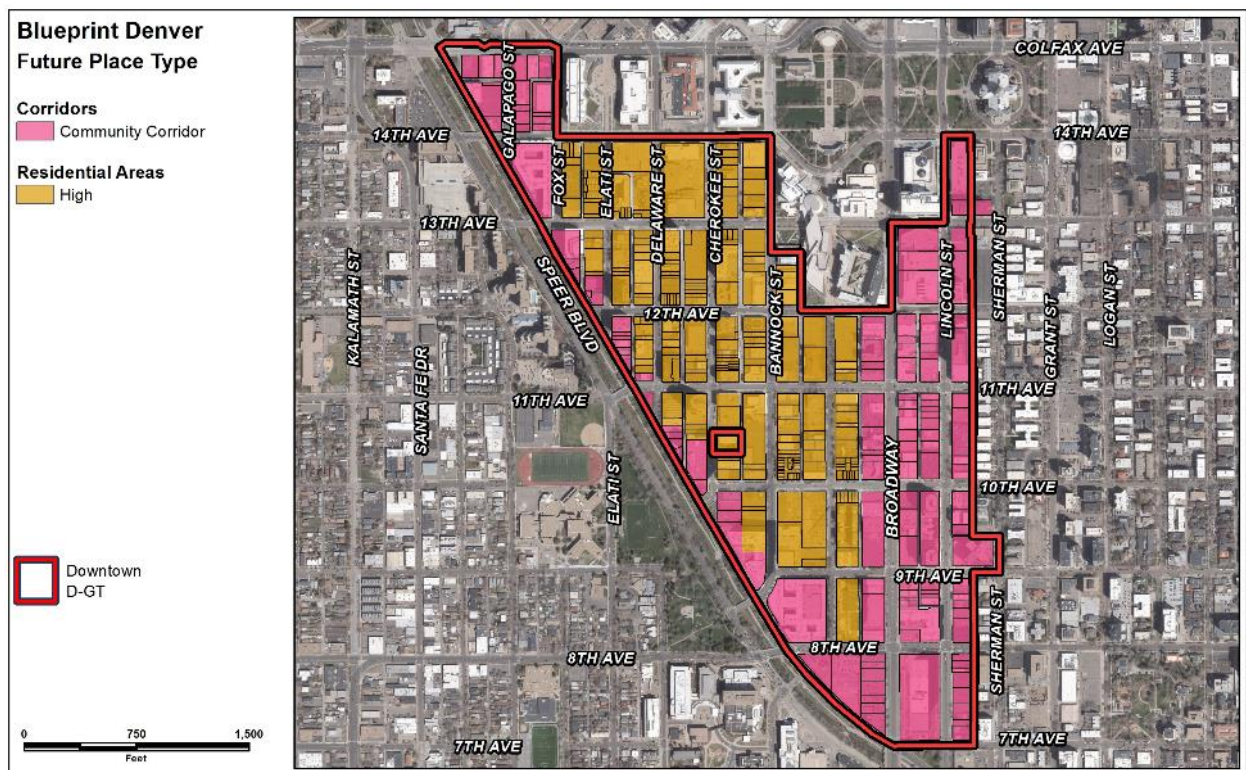
Blueprint Denver Future Places

The D-GT zone district area is designated as Community Corridor and High Residential in the *Blueprint Denver Future Places* map.

The Community Corridor should provide a mix of office, commercial, and residential uses that draw local residents and people from surrounding neighborhoods and other parts of the city. Buildings need to offer a significant degree of street activation that provides an active interface with the street. Public plazas and gathering spaces are found throughout the corridor. These spaces should be flexible to benefit different types of users and activities through the year and are connected by a consistent canopy of street trees. (p. 272)

High Residential areas have a high mix of uses throughout and are distinguished from Downtown regional center area by uses being slightly more dominated by multi-unit residential. They are the most intense and have the greatest heights of residential areas. Pedestrians are given the highest priority with consolidated parking in structures or short-term parking on the street to support local businesses and activities. (p. 274)

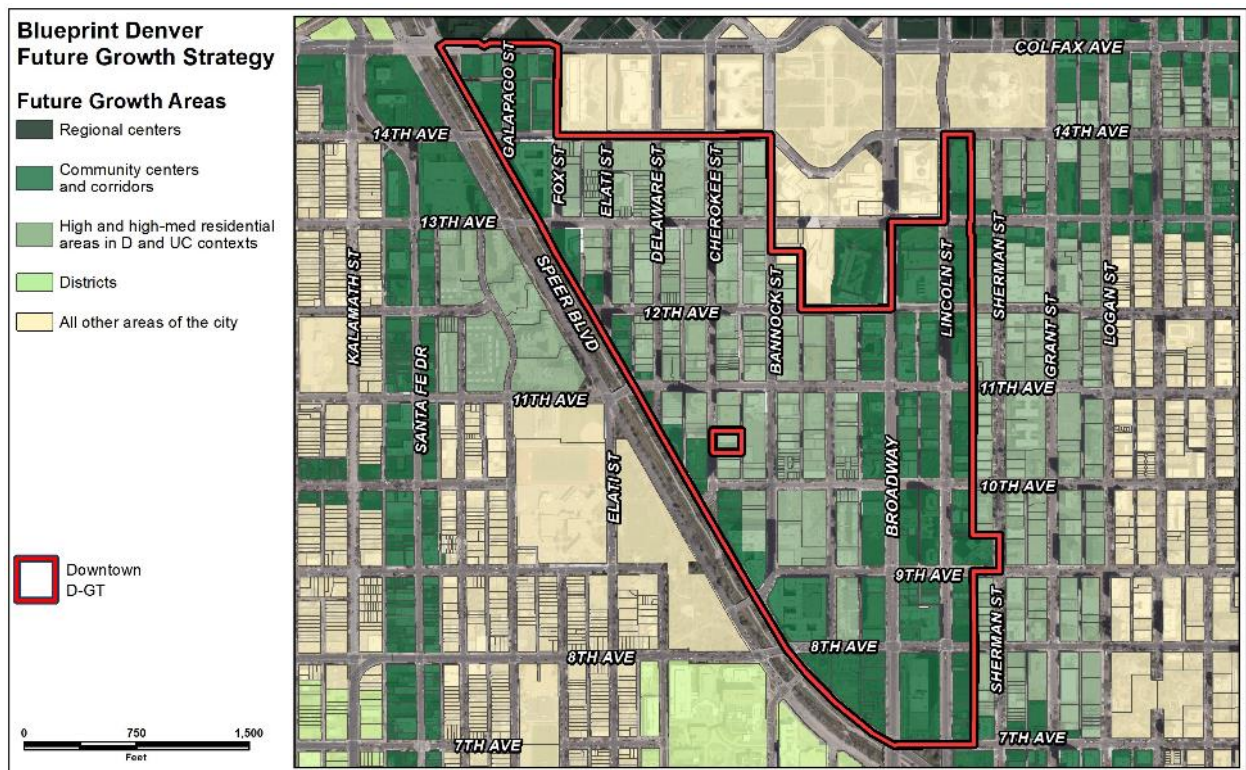
The zoning updates proposed for D-GT further promote the creation of a broad mix of uses including office, commercial, and residential alongside street level retail and services. The FAR and height limits support the on-going development of multi-unit residential projects to offer homes at both market rate and affordable prices. The design standards that apply to shape larger buildings helps contribute to a comfortable pedestrian experience and are bolstered by the street level expectations for active uses, residential setbacks, open space, and public art.



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 D-GT zone district contains "Community Center & Corridors" and "High & High-Medium Residential Areas in Downtown and Urban Center Contexts" future growth areas. Community Centers & Corridors anticipate experiencing 25% of new housing growth and 20% of new employment growth by 2040 (p. 51). The High & High-Medium Residential Areas in Downtown and Urban Center Contexts areas expect to accommodate 15% of new housing growth and 5% of new employment growth by 2040 (p. 51).

The proposed zoning updates ensure that *both* housing growth and employment growth can occur, rather than prioritizing multi-unit residential as occurs within the existing zoning. The ability to build more floor area than the existing zoning is proposed to meet these growth expectations but is balanced by enhanced standards for building shaping and street level activity.



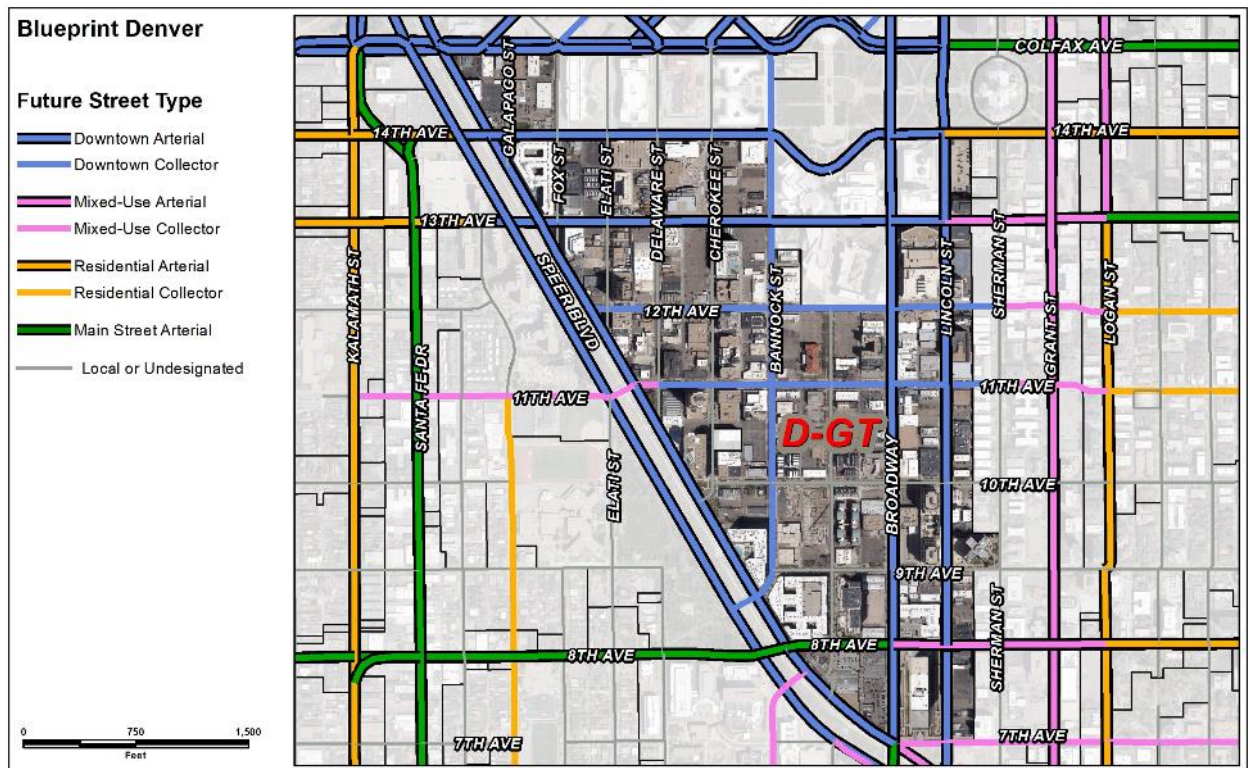
Blueprint Denver Future Street Types

In *Blueprint Denver*, future street types work in concert with future places to evaluate the appropriateness of the intensity of the adjacent development (p. 67).

There are three Future Street Types present in the D-GT area including Downtown Arterials, Downtown Collectors, and Local Streets. Downtown streets are characterized by the most intense land uses including hotels, street level retail and office, and mixed-use residential towers. They are pedestrian-oriented with narrow setbacks, street trees, planters, public plazas, and café seating.

All streets within the D-GT area are also indicated as “Pedestrian Enhanced Areas” in *Blueprint Denver* which specifically focus on enhancing the pedestrian experience, including widening the pedestrian right of way (p. 171). There are several “Bicycle Priority” streets including most of the east-west Avenues, Broadway, Speer Boulevard, Bannock Street, and Delaware Street. Broadway and Lincoln street are also identified as “Transit Priority” streets as high-capacity transit corridors.

The enhanced zoning standards included in the text amendment will contribute higher levels of active uses and open space along these key corridors that combine multi-modal mobility and dense, urban living.



Blueprint Denver Recommendations and Strategies

The proposed D-GT zoning amendments, and associated DRMC and DSG updates, directly address numerous recommendations in Blueprint Denver to support:

- An Equitable City – Planning for equity and guiding change to benefit everyone
- A City of Complete Neighborhoods and Networks – Connecting Denverites to all of their daily needs
- An Evolving City – A measured, common-sense approach to where growth should go and how it should fit in

Land Use and Built Form Recommendations

LU and Built Form: General 01 (p 72) - Promote and anticipate planned growth in major centers and corridors and key residential areas connected by rail service and transit priority streets.

- A. Use zoning and land use regulations to encourage higher-density, mixed-use development in transit-rich areas including:
 - Regional centers and community centers
 - Community corridors where transit priority streets are planned
 - High and medium-high residential areas in the downtown and urban center contexts.

LU and Built Form: General 02 (p 72) - Incentivize or require efficient development of land, especially in transit-rich areas.

- C. Allow increased density in exchange for desired outcomes, such as affordable housing, especially in transit-rich areas.
- D. Incentivize redevelopment of opportunity sites such as downtown surface parking lots.
- E. In historic areas, balance efficiency with preservation through strategies that encourage the reuse of structures.

LU and Built Form: General 03 (p 73) – Ensure the Denver Zoning Code continues to respond to the needs of the city, while remaining modern and flexible.

- A. Rezone properties from the Former Chapter 59 zoning code so that the entire city is covered by the DZC, including continuing to incentivize owners to come out of the old code. (note, while D-GT is not within Former Chapter 59, the underlying standards were not updated as part of the Denver Zoning Code adoption in 2010)

LU and Built Form: General 11 (p 79) - Implement plan recommendations through city-led legislative rezonings and text amendments

- A. Use text amendments combined with map amendments to apply strategies recommended by Blueprint Denver at the effective, area appropriate scale. Text amendments and large legislative rezonings should be guided by the equity concepts and maps in Chapter 2.
- C. Use a robust and inclusive community input process to inform city-led rezonings and zoning code text amendments.

LU and Built Form: Housing 06 (p 85) - Increase the development of affordable housing and mixed-income housing, particularly in areas near transit, services and amenities.

- A. Incentivize affordable housing through zoning, especially in regional centers, community centers and community corridors adjacent to transit. Incentives for affordable housing are

particularly important for areas that score high in Vulnerability to Displacement and score low in Housing Diversity.

LU and Built Form: Housing 08 (p 86) - Capture 80 percent of new housing growth in regional centers, community centers and corridors, high-intensity residential areas, greenfield residential areas, innovation flex districts and university campus districts.

- A. Align high-density residential areas near regional centers to support housing growth near major job centers with access to transit priority streets.
- C. Ensure land use regulations, small area plans and major transit investments support desired growth areas.
- D. Advance housing affordability recommendations from this plan and Housing an Inclusive Denver to ensure new units include units affordable to a range of income levels.
- E. In order to capture 25 percent of housing growth within the downtown neighborhood context that contains the largest regional center and the highest intensity residential areas:
 - Study and implement zoning incentives and other tools to attract high-density mixed-use development downtown, especially for vacant and underutilized land.
 - Create incentives for a wide variety of housing options to be included in new developments.
 - Work with partners and the downtown community to build a livable city core with attractive amenities for residents and families.

LU and Built Form: Economics 02 (p 90) - Improve equitable access to employment areas throughout the city to ensure all residents can connect to employment opportunities.

- B. Promote and incentivize the development of affordable and family-friendly housing, as well as a full range of job opportunities, in and near regional centers, community centers and community corridors.

LU and Built Form: Economics 06 (p 93) - Ensure Denver and its neighborhoods have a vibrant and authentic retail and hospitality marketplace meeting the full range of experiences and goods demanded by residents and visitors.

LU and Built Form: Design Quality and Preservation 03 (p 102) - Create exceptional design outcomes in key centers and corridors.

- A. In high-profile areas of the city where a large share of growth is expected, such as downtown and regional centers, use a tool such as area-specific design standards and guidelines to be administered by a design review board.
- E. Revise the zoning code to provide standards for new mixed-use development that better responds to the surrounding context. Standards to examine for improvement include build-to ranges, transparency minimums, lot coverage, and entry features.
- G. Study and implement zoning code changes to create buildings with greater massing variability especially in more intense areas like the urban center context
- J. Implement tools to define appropriate building size and spacing requirements, particularly in areas where tall buildings are allowed.

- K. Identify important mixed-use historic structures and encourage their continued use or adaptive reuse.

LU and Built Form: Design Quality and Preservation 04 (p 103) - Ensure an active and pedestrian-friendly environment that provides a true mixed-use character in centers and corridors.

- C. In downtown and urban center contexts, consider extending active use and transparency requirements above the street level to additional street-facing stories to create a more active street frontage.

Mobility Recommendations

Mobility 01 (p 108) - Encourage mode-shift — more trips by walking and rolling, biking and transit — through efficient land use and infrastructure improvements.

- E. Promote mixed-use development in all centers and corridors.

Mobility 02 (p 108) - Align the impacts of private development with transportation infrastructure and promote development that creates walkable, transit-friendly communities.

- C. For centers and corridors downtown and in the urban center contexts, where access to transit is high, study and implement maximums for off-street parking in private development to encourage the use of alternative modes of transportation.

Mobility 03 (p 109) - On all streets, prioritize people walking and rolling over other modes of transportation.

- C. Ensure that café seating in the public right-of way provides ample and high-quality space for pedestrians and streetscaping, especially in areas with high pedestrian volumes.

Quality of Life Infrastructure Recommendations

QoLI 01 (p 118) – Expand tools and regulations to ensure high-quality parks and outdoor public spaces keep pace with Denver’s growth.

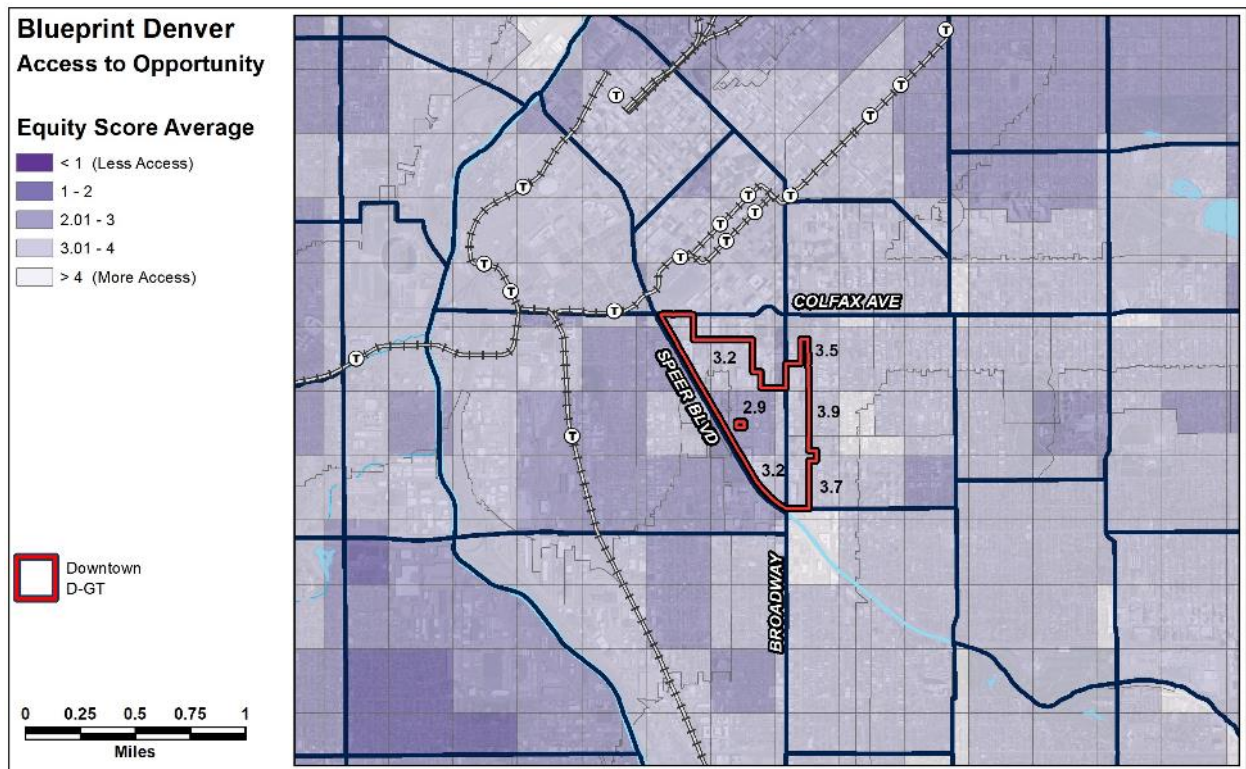
- B. Evaluate the need to increase requirements and/or create incentives for publicly accessible outdoor space for mid- and large-scale developments in centers, corridors and districts.
- C. Develop standards and guidelines around privately owned outdoor spaces to ensure public accessibility, great design and features to respond to culture of the local community. Examine the need to tailor standards and guidelines based on context and/or place.

Blueprint Denver Equity Concepts

Blueprint Denver contains three equity concepts to help guide change to benefit Denver residents and visitors. Each equity concept has associated measurements to help inform considerations for large-scale city-led map amendments along with other implementation actions.

Access to Opportunity

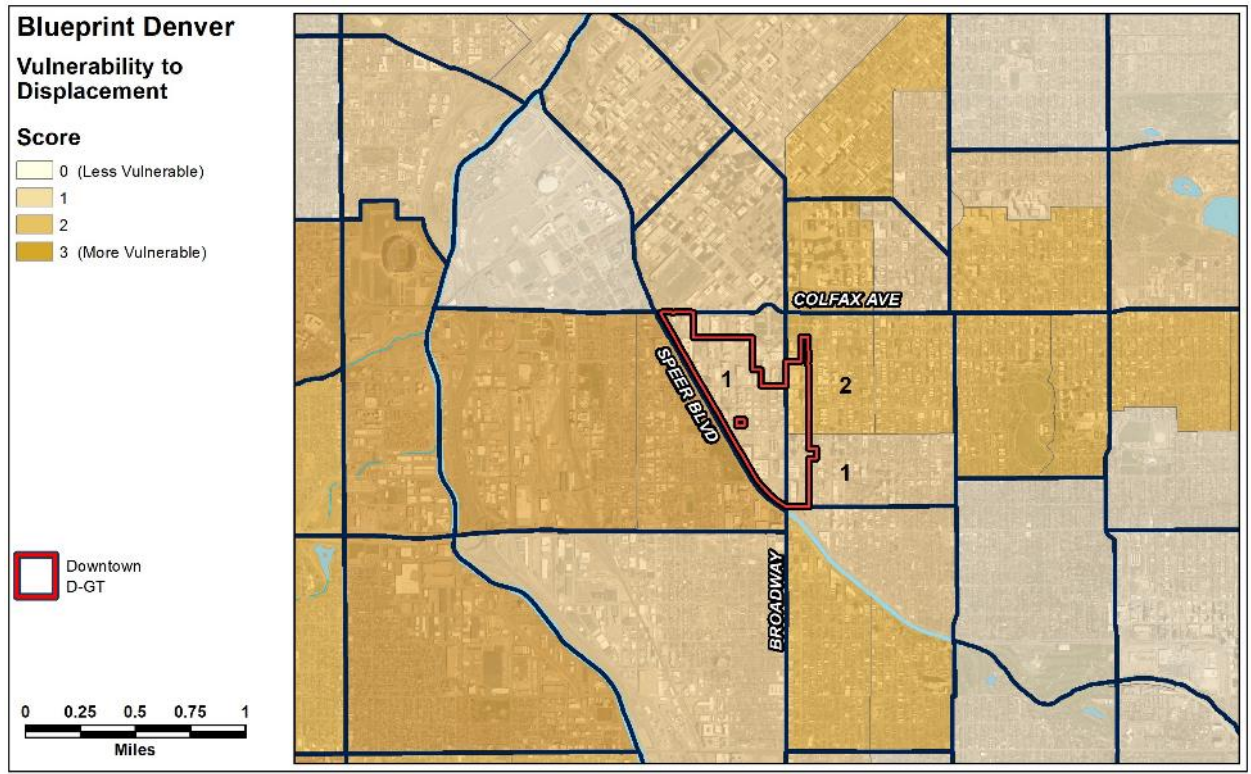
The basis for measuring access to opportunity is a composite of the neighborhood equity index developed by Denver’s Department of Public Health and Environment, proximity to high-capacity and frequent transit, and access to centers and corridors. Access to opportunity helps us to consider if we are making progress towards achieving the vision for complete neighborhoods across the city.



Overall, the D-GT area has higher than average access to opportunity due to close proximity to transit, mixed-use centers and corridors, and parks. The proposed zoning updates will further increase access to opportunity by encouraging walkability in the area and ensuring that new development on large lots includes nonresidential uses that can contribute to jobs, services and amenities. Staff finds that this rezoning application will have a net positive impact on the area’s access to opportunity.

Vulnerability to Displacement

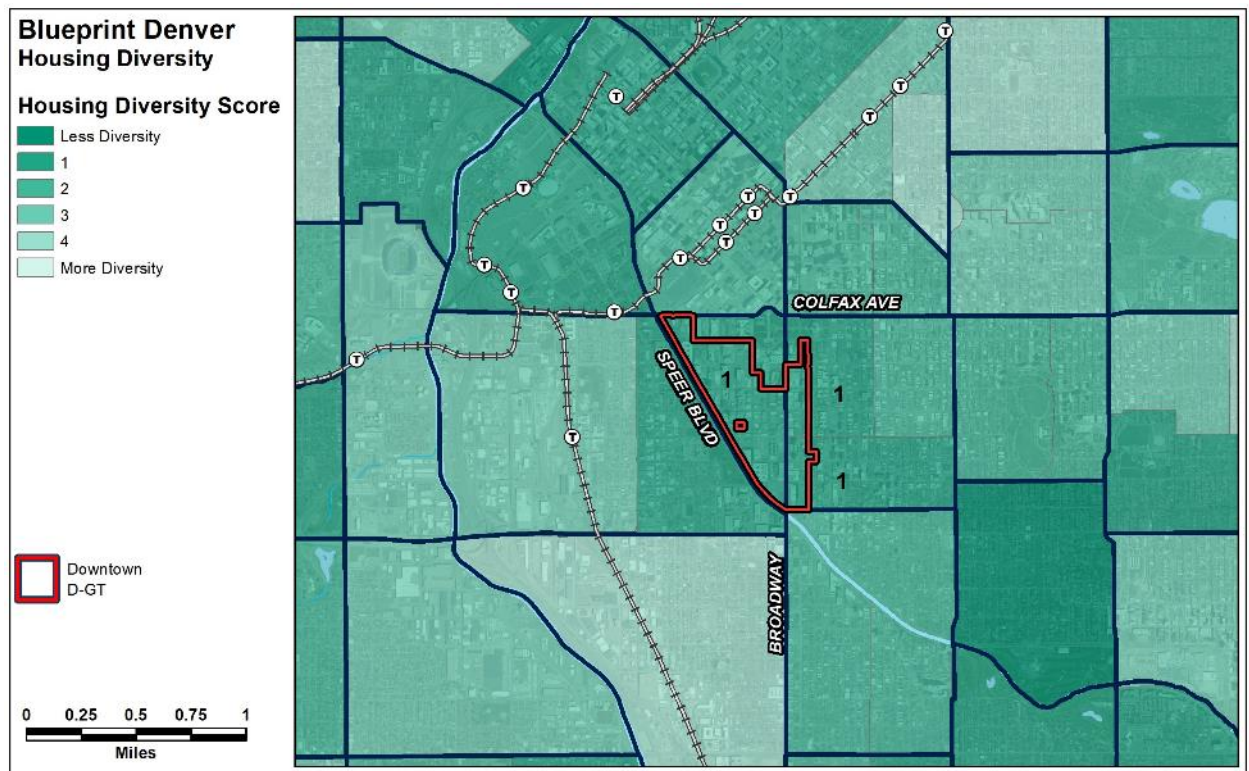
The basis for measuring vulnerability to displacement is the vulnerability to displacement index developed by the Denver Economic Development and Opportunity office. This combines data from median household income, percentage of people who rent housing, and percent of population with less than a college degree. This concept is used to stabilize “residents and businesses who are vulnerable to involuntary displacement due to increasing property values and rents” (p. 30).



The D-GT zone district area is relatively less vulnerable to displacement than other areas of the city due to higher than average educational attainment and median income. The D-GT zoning update is not anticipated to significantly impact the metrics associated with vulnerability to displacement. However, by ensuring nonresidential space continues to be offered in new large developments, this could reduce vulnerability of local businesses to displacement by making space more available and affordable. Staff finds that this rezoning will not have a negative impact on this measurement and that housing and businesses will not be displaced as a result.

Expanding Housing and Jobs Diversity

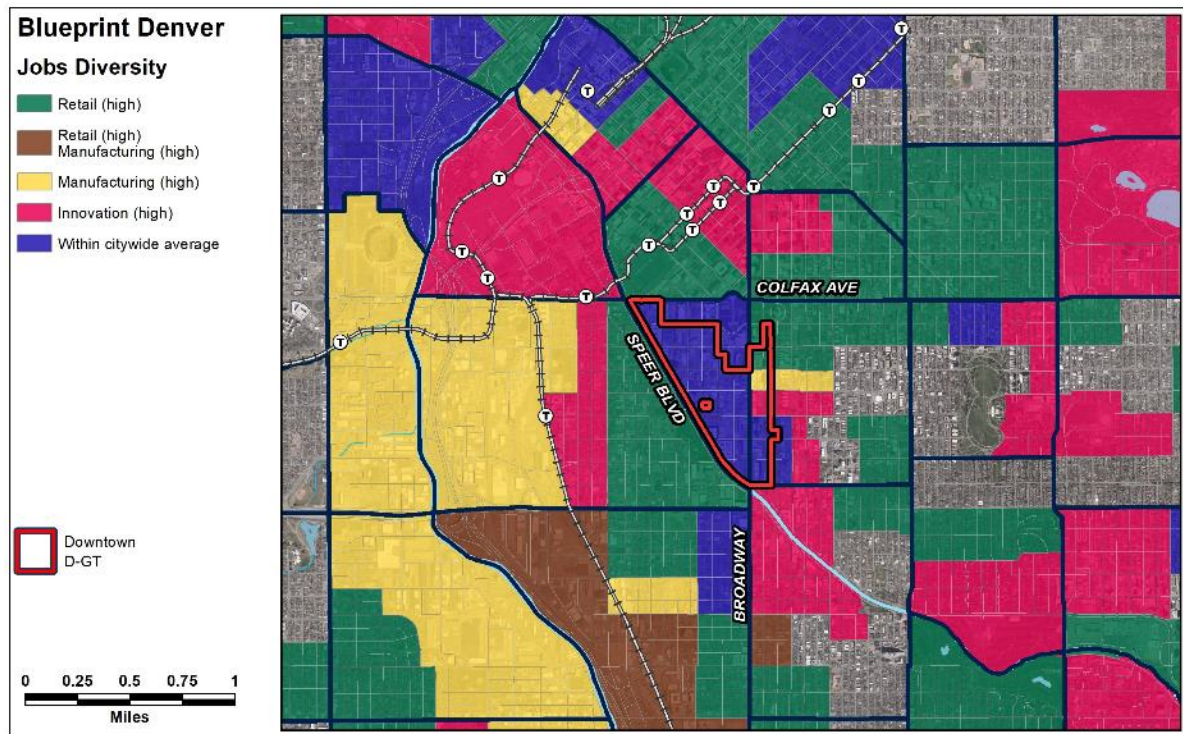
As a *Blueprint Denver* Equity Concept, housing diversity refers to an area being able to offer residents a variety of housing options to accommodate households of different ages, sizes and incomes. The housing diversity map combines census tract-level data measuring the percentage of middle-density housing (housing with 2-19 units), home size diversity, ownership vs. rental, housing costs and the number of income-restricted units.



The D-GT district is challenged by Housing Diversity and ranks very low in comparison to other areas of the city due to a lack of missing middle housing options, a high percentage of renters vs. owners, smaller unit sizes, and high housing costs.

The zoning update is likely to improve this metric by incorporating affordable housing requirements for projects that exceed a base size threshold. To access additional incentive floor area, residential projects must meet increased standards for providing more affordable units, whereas nonresidential projects have the option of paying additional linkage fees. The proposed increase in allowed density enables the ability to provide more units overall which serves to address the issue from the supply side, whereas the enhanced requirements for affordable housing further supports the creation of more affordable units in this downtown location. Staff finds that the proposed text amendment will have a positive impact and improve housing diversity in the D-GT area.

Access to a range of quality jobs enables people of different incomes and education levels to find employment and wealth building opportunities. To measure jobs diversity, the City staff look at the number of jobs available and how the variety of these jobs compares to the variety of jobs citywide.



The D-GT zone district is within the citywide average in terms of job density, but has many fewer jobs relative to other areas of downtown. The proposed rezoning is likely to have a positive impact on job diversity in the neighborhood by creating a level playing field for both residential and nonresidential projects to achieve greater floor area than currently allowed. Additionally, nonresidential uses in large projects on key streets may increase the potential for small, local businesses and other employment opportunities. Staff finds that the text amendment will have a positive impact on the area's jobs diversity.

Golden Triangle Neighborhood Plan (2014)

As noted in the summary above, the D-GT regulatory update represents a comprehensive and balanced approach to improve the design quality, mix of uses, and pedestrian experience within this important area of downtown Denver. The process revolved around the recommendations and direction provided by the Golden Triangle Neighborhood Plan. As different zoning tools were conceived and discussed, they were evaluated for their applicability to the 12 key objectives identified in the Plan (noted above in the summary). Those objectives were developed through careful analysis of the many policies and strategies documented in the Golden Triangle Neighborhood Plan. While many other recommendations in the plan will be addressed through other on-going efforts, the following were most closely related to regulatory changes that can be

implemented through amendments to the DZC, DRMC, and applicable urban design standards and guidelines.

Eclectic GT A1. An Urban Mosaic (p. 36)

Goal: Continue and enhance the patchwork of diverse land uses, places and spaces that provide creative energy, a distinctive neighborhood identity, and vibrant street activity.

- A1a. Maintain zoning that allows for a range of land use types, thereby encouraging a variety of development types.
- A1b. Encourage and support development that fosters a broad range of housing opportunities for existing and new residents.

Eclectic GT A2. Contextual Design (p. 37-39)

Goal: Promote redevelopment that brings new residents and activities to the neighborhood while reinforcing its eclectic design context and pedestrian-oriented character.

- A2a. Update the zoning and design guidelines to promote a high-quality pedestrian experience.
 - Implement tools to promote pedestrian-friendly street level design, including transparency, consistent build-to requirements for buildings, entrance location, façade articulation and height at the sidewalk edge.
 - Encourage the provision of privately owned public gathering spaces that are designed to be actively used while highlighting pedestrian connections, primary building entrances, public art, stops on an established Arts and Culture Trail, or views to historic and civic buildings.
 - Require pedestrian-active uses, such as retail, restaurants, and galleries, at the ground level of new development.
- A2b. Update the zoning and design guidelines to ensure that the height and overall mass of new development preserves the neighborhood’s design context and is compatible with adjacent, smaller-scale buildings.
 - Continue to allow a maximum building height of 16-18 stories throughout the Golden Triangle.
 - Introduce a range of options, including upper-story setbacks and façade articulation tools, to ensure that the overall building mass of new development is compatible with the existing diverse range of building scales.
 - Implement tools to preserve access to views and sunlight, such as upper-story mass reduction
- A2c. Encourage the reuse of existing buildings to preserve the neighborhood’s varied design context while providing affordable opportunities for startup businesses, galleries, artists and new residents.
 - Analyze the effectiveness of Transfer of Development Rights (TDR), a tool in the existing zoning, and consider how it or a similar tool could be utilized in the updated zoning to encourage the reuse of existing structures.
- A2d. Promote preservation of the Golden Triangle’s diverse historic resources to maintain neighborhood identity.
 - Consider exceptions to zoning requirements, such as building height or mass reduction, for projects that include preservation of historic structures.

- A2e. Transition the D-GT zone district to the Denver Zoning Code context- and form-based approach to streamline the development process and increase predictability.
 - Organize updated zoning by building form.
 - Allow a diverse range of building forms and standards to support the neighborhood's eclectic design context.
 - Shift current floor area ratio (FAR) regulations to form-based tools
 - Adjust height measurement to be consistent with the 2010 Denver Zoning Code, which measures the height of a building from the elevation of its site, as opposed to the current D-GT zone district, which measures building height from the elevation of Broadway.
 - Consider transitioning existing floor area ratio premiums to updated form-based zoning incentives for affordable housing, public art, and/or arts, entertainment, and cultural facilities. The updated zoning should also consider tools to encourage the provision of privately-owned public spaces on private property.
- A2f. Update the existing design guidelines to help shape new development that is consistent with the plan vision.
 - Identify where the existing design guidelines do not adequately promote current design objectives, ensuring that the guidelines build on new form-based tools.
 - Coordinate the design guidelines with updated zoning regulations.
 - Illustrate development strategies that are consistent with plan objectives, such as incorporating existing buildings into new development or creating strong pedestrian connections.
 - Provide context-sensitive design guidance for neighborhood subareas such as the Broadway/Lincoln Avenue frontage, the southern tip of the neighborhood and the neighborhood core.

Livable GT D1. Connected Open Spaces (p. 82-83)

Goal: Create an interconnected network of open spaces, many of which will be privately owned and maintained, linked by attractive, green and navigable streets and paths.

- D1b. Foster the development of small, intimate spaces throughout the Golden Triangle that are privately owned and/or maintained.

Implementation (p. 96)

- *Regulatory Actions and Policy Strategies*
Regulatory and policy strategies are a critical first step in creating an effective pathway to positive change over time.

“Aligning and updating the Golden Triangle’s existing regulations with the Denver Zoning Code’s context-based and form-based approach is an important first implementation step. This will help increase predictability and ensure building form requirements that clarify and support the neighborhood’s design context. The updated D-GT zoning would remain in the Downtown Neighborhood Context in the Denver Zoning Code ...

An important goal for the new zoning should be to ensure the continued stewardship of the Golden Triangle’s diverse historic resources and to maintain neighborhood identity. Regulatory tools that encourage and enable the reuse of existing buildings, such as parking reductions and the Transfer of

Development Rights (TDR), should be evaluated as effective means for preserving the neighborhood's varied design context while providing affordable opportunities for startup businesses, galleries, artists and new residents. The updated zoning should also explore tools to encourage the provision of privately-owned public gathering spaces, such as parklets and plazas, as part of new development."

Denver Downtown Area Plan 2007

The Denver Downtown Area Plan is a tool to help community leaders, decisionmakers, and citizens build upon Downtown's assets and guide future development to reflect the community's vision of a livable, healthy, sustainable and vibrant Downtown.

The proposed text amendment is consistent with the recommendations of this plan by enabling more robust design standards, supporting public art, activating streets with vibrant uses, providing affordable housing, and promoting the preservation of historic places throughout Golden Triangle.

A. A Prosperous City (p. 17)

A1e. Cultivate arts and culture as key economic drivers

- *Retain and expand the clusters of world-class arts, cultural, and performance facilities in Downtown*
- *Establish connections to emerging arts districts such as Santa Fe, Five Points, Golden Triangle and River North (RiNo)*

A1g. 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 the past 150 years

B. A Walkable City (p. 22)

B1b. Require ground floor active uses throughout Downtown through changes to zoning and design guidelines

C. A Diverse City (p. 28)

C1b. Create regulatory incentives that encourage a more diverse array of housing options

D. A Distinctive City (p. 33)

D1a. Use features such as transit stations, changes in the grid, terminating vistas, grand boulevards, character of existing buildings, and relationships to adjacent districts and neighborhoods to influence district form including the intensity of development, height of buildings, ground floor activity, and mix of uses. Enact zoning and design guidelines to realize desired district character.

- Identify mid- and high-rise building forms that promote intense use while maintaining a pleasant street environment with light, views, and visual interest

D1b. Use distinctive ground floor retail, other active uses, and the street environment to reinforce district identity

D1c. Retain and reuse historic buildings to fortify the distinct identity of districts

D1e. Prepare and update adopted plans for district areas (e.g. Golden Triangle Neighborhood Plan, Central Platte Valley Plan and Northeast Downtown Plan) to reflect changing character and other planning issues

Recommendations in the Downtown Area Plan that are specific to Golden Triangle are primarily addressed via the revised Downtown Urban Design Standards and Guidelines that will apply to the area. Many of the strategies in the Golden Triangle section are also related to other improvements in the right-of-way, parks, and other aspects not directly regulated by the Denver Zoning Code.

Civic Center District Plan 2005

The Civic Center District Plan is intended to promote patterns of land use, urban design, circulation and services that contribute to the economic, social and physical health, safety and welfare of the people who live, work, shop and recreate in the district. While most of the Civic Center District Plan applies to areas outside the D-GT zone district, there are portions of overlap and transition along the northern end of the district near 13th Avenue and 14th Avenue.

The proposed text amendment is consistent with this plan because it will help achieve some of the goals envisioned for the transition areas identified between Civic Center and adjacent areas.

Goals and Principles:

- Neighborhood and civic character as a high-density, mixed-use urban area should be protected, enhanced and extended to new development.
- The area should be pedestrian-friendly through safe mobility, strong connections and interesting destinations
- Parking should be located conveniently to destinations and not disrupt the urban character of the district. Structured parking with active ground floor uses, especially retail, helps establish pedestrian-friendly streets.

Land Use Goals for the Civic Center District

- Preserve and reuse the architecturally and historically significant structures and features in the Civic Center District.
- Reinforce Retail Areas: Concentrate regional destination retail on the 16th Street Mall and Broadway. Encourage neighborhood and accessory retail throughout the Transition Area, especially as part of residential or office mixed use developments. Bannock Street should develop as the Golden Triangle neighborhood's retail 'main street' to complement the Acoma Avenue of the Arts on the next block.

East Central Area Plan 2020

While the East Central Area Plan encompasses 6 neighborhoods including City Park, Congress Park, City Park West, Cheesman Park, North Capitol Hill and Capitol Hill, it only overlaps with Golden Triangle on the most western side of the Capitol Hill subarea, where Broadway and Lincoln run south from Colfax Avenue. Capitol Hill key opportunities include (p. 183):

- Quality Infill – Direct growth to appropriate areas and redevelop vacant or underutilized properties with improved design guidelines. See Policy CH-L1 and Policy CH-L2.

- Broadway/Lincoln Corridor – Ensure growth along the corridor serves as an effective transition to Capitol Hill while benefiting from mobility improvements. See Policy CH-L3 and Policy CH-M1.

Capitol Hill recommendations:

Advance recommendations from the Golden Triangle Neighborhood Plan for the Broadway/Lincoln corridor

The East-Central Area Plan replaces the Golden Triangle Neighborhood Plan of 2014 within Capitol Hill, however recommendations that are still relevant to the area west of the alley between Lincoln Street and Sherman Street are carried forward by the plan (p. 186-187).

- A. Update the D-GT zone district and Golden Triangle design guidelines to ensure that the height and overall mass of new development preserves the neighborhood’s design context and is compatible with adjacent, smaller-scale buildings and promotes a high-quality pedestrian experience.
 1. Continue to allow a maximum building height of 16 stories along Broadway and Lincoln Street. *(staff note, the Botanic Garden Cheesman Park view plane extends over this area to the centerline of Broadway and would limit building heights to approximately 16 stories even though proposed height limits are taller in some cases)*
- B. Enhance the current configuration of the Broadway/ Lincoln couplet by introducing new streetscapes, “parklet” spaces, enhancements and mobility improvements that create a unified Grand Boulevard.

Housing an Inclusive Denver (2018)

Housing an Inclusive Denver is an important adopted plan as it relates to the proposed increases in overall density for the area that can be accessed by meeting increased affordable housing standards. The proposed text amendment for D-GT represents a meaningful step towards a more equitable and affordable city for this relatively small geographic location. On-going efforts at the state and citywide level to address housing affordability will ultimately result in a more robust and comprehensive system that will replace the current proposed amendments in D-GT.

Core Goals (p. 7)

Create affordable housing in vulnerable areas and in areas of opportunity by focusing on production that considers specific neighborhood conditions, including areas vulnerable to displacement and neighborhoods that have strong amenities such as transit, jobs, high quality education and health care.

Legislative and Regulatory Priorities (p. 9, 47-50)

Recommendation 2: Expand and strengthen land-use regulations for affordable and mixed-income housing. Through Blueprint Denver and supplemental implementation actions such as zoning modifications, the City should support land-use regulations that incentivize affordable and mixed-use housing, including expanding the development of accessory dwelling units.

Key Actions (p. 50):

- Implement and evaluate success of a proposed incentive overlay for building heights at the 38th and Blake transit station and explore expanding the program to other areas where increased density may be appropriate, such as near transit.

2. Public Health, Safety and General Welfare

The City of Denver has adopted multiple plans in the interest of public health, safety and the general welfare including Comprehensive Plan 2040, Blueprint Denver, Golden Triangle Neighborhood Plan, and Housing an Inclusive Denver. As described in detail above, the text amendment contributes to the goals, policies and strategies in these City plans, and through implementation furthers the health, safety and welfare of the City.

In addition, the proposed text amendment adds to the general public health, safety and welfare of Golden Triangle residents, employees, and visitors by implementing enhanced design standards that reinforce the desired character of a walkable, pedestrian-scaled, downtown mixed-use neighborhood that offers ground floor active uses, arts and culture, open space, employment, and housing opportunities. It has been shown that pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use areas can contribute to increased physical activity¹, greater community engagement², and mental health³.

(1) Ewing, R., and R. Cervero, 2010. (2) Putnam, 2000. (3) Lund, 2002. Per *Making Healthy Places: Designing and Building for Health, Well-being, and Sustainability*. Ed. Andrew L Dannenberg, Howard Frumkin, and Richard J. Jackson, Island Press, 2011.

3. Uniformity of District Regulations and Restrictions

This text amendment will result in uniform regulations applicable to all new development within the Downtown Golden Triangle zone district. The text amendment also furthers the goals of bringing the D-GT district into the modern Denver Zoning Code and moving towards all of Denver under one code with consistent and uniform regulations across various zone districts. No waivers and conditions are requested.

CPD Recommendation

Denver Zoning Code Text Amendment

Based on the review criteria for text amendments stated in Denver Zoning Code Section 12.4.11 (Text Amendment), CPD staff recommend approval of the text amendment to the Denver Zoning Code to update the Downtown Golden Triangle zone district (CB 21-0635).

Denver Revised Municipal Code Amendment

HOST and CPD staff recommend approval of the amendment to the Denver Revised Municipal Code, Chapter 27, Article VI, to establish affordable housing incentives for the Downtown Golden Triangle zone district (CB 21-0636).

Attachments

1. Markup draft of DZC text amendment
2. Filed 'clean' draft of DZC text amendment
3. Filed draft of DRMC amendment
4. Summary of proposed affordable housing incentives for the D-GT zone district
5. Summary of updates to design standards and guidelines and design review process
6. RNO and public comments/letters