



**DENVER**  
THE MILE HIGH CITY

Denver Planning Board  
Kenneth Ho, Chair

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**TO: Mary Beth Susman  
President, City Council**

**FROM: Kenneth Ho  
Chair, Denver Planning Board**

**CC: Tracy Huggins  
Executive Director, Denver Urban Renewal Authority**

**DATE: July 19, 2013**

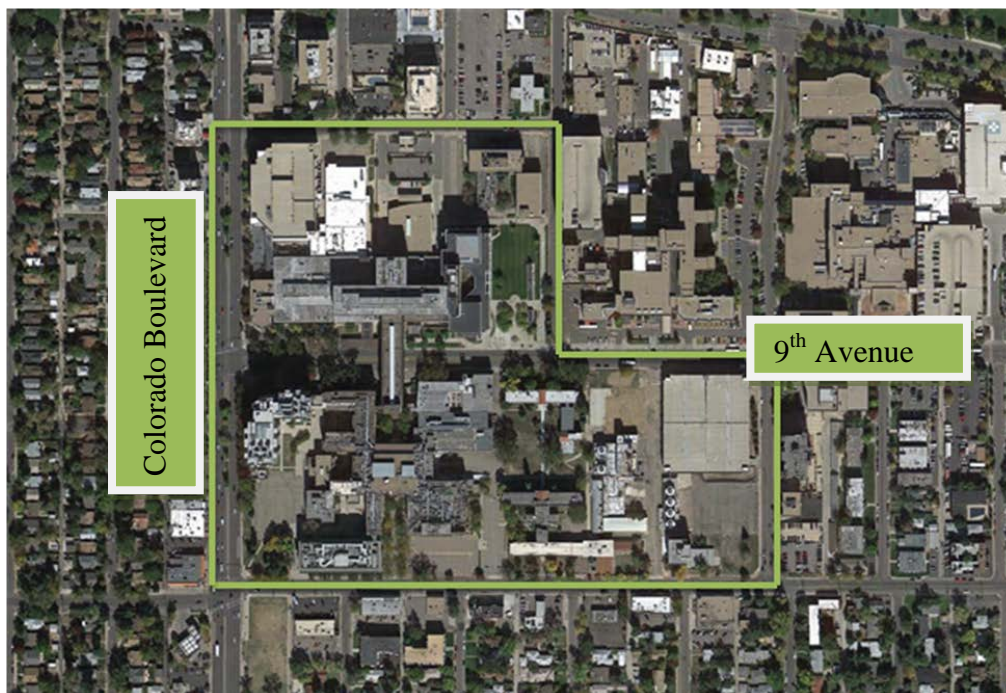
**RE: Approval of the 9<sup>th</sup> and Colorado Urban Redevelopment Plan**

### Planning Board Finding

The Denver Planning Board is pleased to forward its finding to City Council that the 9<sup>th</sup> and Colorado Urban Renewal Plan conforms with the Denver Comprehensive Plan 2000 and all related supplements. This finding is required by the Colorado Revised Statutes, Sec. 31-25-107(2). In addition, the Planning Board finds that the 9<sup>th</sup> and Colorado Urban Redevelopment Plan conforms to the approved 9<sup>th</sup> and Colorado General Development Plan and Urban Design Standards and Guidelines. Planning Board made its findings, by unanimous (10-0) vote, at its regular meeting on June 19, 2013.

### 9<sup>th</sup> and Colorado Urban Redevelopment Area

The Denver Urban Renewal Authority prepared the proposed Urban Redevelopment Plan, which describes the framework for certain urban renewal projects and other authorized undertakings in a proposed 9<sup>th</sup> and Colorado Urban Redevelopment Area, depicted on the map below:



The Urban Redevelopment Area is located on the former campus of the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center in the vicinity of East 9th Avenue and Colorado Boulevard, and approximately 3 miles southeast of Downtown Denver's Central Business District. The Urban Redevelopment Area measures approximately 41 acres immediately east of Colorado Boulevard and bounded by East 11th Avenue on the north and East 8th Avenue on the south. The Urban Redevelopment Area was occupied by the University of Colorado's medical campus, formerly named the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center, for approximately 85 years prior to its closure in 2009.

The largest adjacent users to the campus are the Veteran Affairs Eastern Colorado Health System campus and the Rose Medical Center campus, both to the immediate east. The remainder of the nearby surrounding community to the north, south, and west is primarily comprised of single family residences, but also includes a mix of smaller private medical facilities, high-rise condominium buildings, apartments, and smaller commercial retail businesses.

A conditions study (referred to in state statute as a "blight study") was finalized in May 2013. The study identified one or more blight factors present on all of the blocks within the Urban Redevelopment Area.

### **9<sup>th</sup> and Colorado Urban Redevelopment Plan**

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The proposed Urban Redevelopment Plan establishes the Urban Redevelopment Area for 9<sup>th</sup> and Colorado. 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 surroundings. More specifically, the Urban Redevelopment Plan seeks to encourage a pedestrian-friendly environment, high and moderate density development where appropriate, a mix of land uses and commercial development opportunities, and reuse of existing buildings including historic preservation and adaptive reuse.

The 9<sup>th</sup> and Colorado Urban Redevelopment Plan authorizes the use of both Sales Tax and Property Tax Increment Finance (TIF), and establishes the first of what is expected to be multiple TIF areas. The first "Phase 1" TIF area will be authorized for property tax increment only, and will encompass proposed multi-unit residential development located on the east end of the Urban Redevelopment Area bounded by Clermont Street, 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue, a new extended Bellaire Street, and 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Future TIF areas will be separately evaluated and approved by the City Council.

The Urban Redevelopment Plan does not specify specific urban renewal projects for any areas outside the Phase 1 TIF area. All future individual projects seeking to use TIF after Phase 1 will be separately evaluated and, if found to be appropriate, the Urban Redevelopment Plan will be amended to include such projects.

## **Planning Board Authority**

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Colorado Revised Statutes, Section 35-25-107(2), requires the Denver Planning Board to determine whether a proposed urban renewal plan conforms to the City's comprehensive plan.

## **Comprehensive Plan Conformity**

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The Denver Planning Board finds that the proposed 9<sup>th</sup> and Colorado Urban Redevelopment Plan conforms to the Denver Comprehensive Plan and its applicable supplements, as described in more detail below.

### Denver Comprehensive Plan (2000)

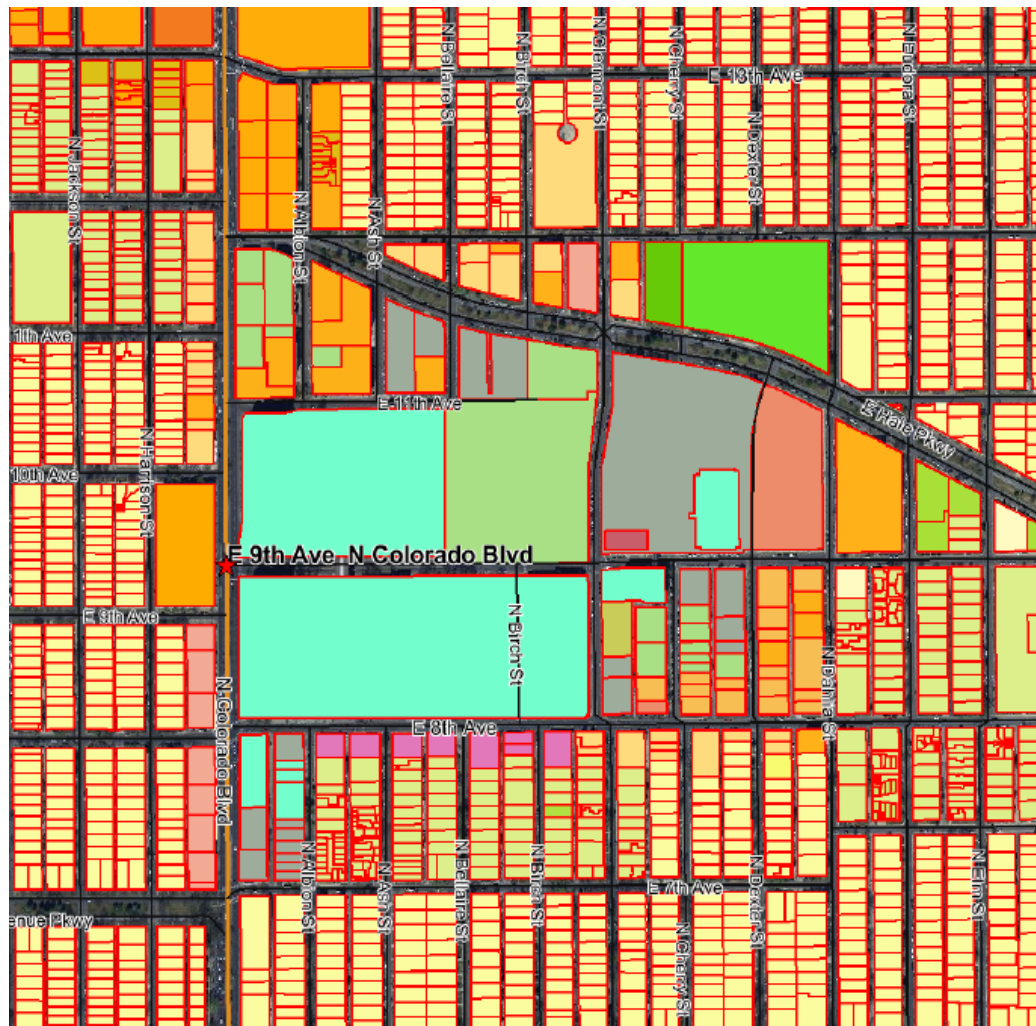
Denver's Comprehensive Plan 2000 contains numerous objectives and policies relevant to the redevelopment of the 9<sup>th</sup> and Colorado Urban Redevelopment Area. The Planning Board finds that the Urban Redevelopment Plan conforms to Comprehensive Plan 2000 by furthering several city-wide objectives, policies and actions in the plan, including (with reference to Comprehensive Plan 2000):

- 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)
- Promote the development of sustainable communities and centers of activity where shopping, jobs, recreation and schools are accessible by multiple forms of transportation, providing opportunities for people to live where they work. (Environmental Sustainability Strategy 4-A, Page 41)
- Encourage development of housing that meets the increasingly diverse needs of Denver's present and future residents. (Land Use Strategy 1-H, Page 58)
- 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)
- Identify and enhance existing focal points in neighborhoods, and encourage the development of such focal points where none exist. (Land Use Strategy 3-D, Page 60)
- Encourage mixed-use, transit-oriented development that makes effective use of existing transportation infrastructure, supports transit stations, increases transit patronage, reduces impact on the environment, and encourages vibrant urban centers and neighborhoods. (Land Use Strategy 4-A, Page 60)
- Ensure that land-use policies and decisions support a variety of mobility choices, including light rail, buses, paratransit, walking, and bicycling, as well as convenient access for people with disabilities. (Land Use Strategy 4-B, Page 60)
- Promote transit-oriented development (TOD) as an urban design framework for urban centers and development areas. Development at transit stations should provide both higher ridership to the transit system and viability and walkability in the area. (Mobility Strategy 3-B, Page 77).

- Continue to promote mixed-use development, which enables people to live near work, retail, and services. (Mobility Strategy 4-E, Page 78)
- Determine the potential for transit-oriented development at public transit stations, and encourage such opportunities whenever possible. (Mobility Strategy 5-D, Page 79)
- Identify community design and development issues, and target specific concerns with appropriate controls and incentives. (Legacies Strategy 2-C, Page 98)
- Invest in public infrastructure and amenities strategically to promote community identity and attract development. (Design Excellence Strategy 1-E, Page 98)
- Identify areas in which increased density and new uses are desirable and can be accommodated. (Legacies Strategy 3-A, Page 99)
- Create regulations and incentives that encourage high-quality, mixed-use development at densities that will support Denver’s diverse housing needs and public transportation alternatives. (Legacies Strategy 3-B, Page 99)
- Preserve, enhance and extend the pattern and character of the primary street system, including the prevailing grid, interconnected parkways, detached sidewalks and tree lawns. (Compact Urban Development Strategy 4-A, Page 99)
- Focus incentives and design controls on private development fronting major new, existing, and historic roadway corridors, including parkways, boulevards, and avenues citywide. Specifically recognize and address significant intersections and gateways to the city. (Legacies Strategy 4-B, Page 99)
- Integrate sufficient open space and recreational amenities, including small urban parks, into large-scale development plans. (Park and Recreation Strategy 9-B, Page 102)
- Support mixed-use development consistent with the goals of the Comprehensive Plan’s land-use and mobility strategies. (Housing Strategy 6-A, Page 117)
- Continue to support mixed-income housing development that includes affordable rental and for-purchase housing for lower-income, entry-level, and service employees, especially in Downtown and along transit lines. (Housing Strategy 6-B, Page 117)
- Identify and capitalize on opportunities to develop housing along transit lines. (Housing Strategy 6-E, Page 118)
- Continue to strengthen and, where necessary, revitalize Denver’s commercial corridors, such as East and West Colfax, Broadway, Colorado Boulevard, East Evans, and South Federal. (Develop Denver’s Business Centers Strategy 4-B, Page 135)
- 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)
- Ensure high-quality urban design in neighborhoods by strengthening their connections to urban centers and reinforce Denver’s unifying design features such as street trees in the tree lawns. (Neighborhood Strategy 1-D, Page 150).
- Ensure that development provides for mixed uses, allowing people of all income levels the opportunity to find housing near their jobs or find jobs near their homes. (Metropolitan Cooperation Strategy 2-D, Page 216)

Blueprint Denver (2002)

Blueprint Denver, Denver’s integrated land use and transportation plan adopted by the City Council in 2002, identifies the 9<sup>th</sup> and Colorado Urban Redevelopment Area as an “Area of Stability,” with a future land use recommendation of “campus.” See Blueprint Denver map below. While the Blueprint Denver designations of Area of Stability and campus land use remain applicable to the Urban Redevelopment Area, Blueprint Denver explicitly states that an Area of Stability may accommodate new development and redevelopment and, further, that Areas of Change and Areas of Stability are not mutually exclusive. Blueprint Denver recognizes that even in stable neighborhoods, there often are areas that will benefit from reinvestment and change. In fact, Blueprint Denver anticipates “reinvestment areas” within Areas of Stability that would benefit from substantial reinvestment through infill and redevelopment. Given the departure of the CU medical and hospital campus, leaving behind 18 vacant buildings on an approximately 30-acre campus with substantial challenges to reuse and redevelopment, the Urban Redevelopment Area is arguably one of those Blueprint-envisioned areas for significant change and reinvestment within an otherwise stable area.



Map Date: July 14, 2010  
Community Planning and Development

Blueprint Denver provides guidance for what redevelopment of the Urban Redevelopment Area should accomplish: the citywide plan endorses the creation of high-density, transit supportive, pedestrian oriented, mixed-use “Town Centers” or “Urban Centers” to accommodate projected employment and resident growth in Denver over the next 20 years. Blueprint Denver also provides guiding principles for redevelopment of the Urban Redevelopment Area, which is surrounded on the north and south by plan-designated stable, residential neighborhoods. The overarching guiding principles for Areas of Stability in Blueprint Denver (p. 14) help guide new projects adjacent to stable neighborhoods:

- Respect valued development patterns
- Respect valued attributes of the area
- Respect adjoining property
- Expand transportation choice
- Minimize traffic impacts on neighborhood streets
- Respect environmental quality

Based on the above analysis, the Denver Planning Board finds that the Urban Redevelopment Plan conforms to the guiding principles of Blueprint Denver by envisioning redevelopment of the area into an urban, mixed use activity center that will serve the needs of all the surrounding neighborhoods and provide a much-desired community focal point, while respecting the character of surrounding lower-scale commercial and residential areas. Additionally, the URA is adjacent to multiple RTD bus routes along Colorado Boulevard, East 9th Avenue, and East 8th Avenue and therefore redevelopment within the Urban Redevelopment Area supports Blueprint Denver’s guiding principal of expanding transportation choice by locating new development near existing transit lines and services.

#### Colorado Boulevard Healthcare District Plan (March 1998)

The Colorado Boulevard Healthcare District Plan (“CBHD Plan”) adopted by the City Council in March 1998, includes the entire area covered by the Urban Redevelopment Plan. The CBHD plan did not foresee the departure of the University of Colorado medical school and hospital. Nevertheless, the CBHD plan provides several design and development goals and objectives still relevant today, including:

- Maintain and improve the livability of the surrounding area as an urban, mixed use neighborhood with a vital residential base and strong neighborhood-serving business.
- Mitigate the off-site parking and/or automobile traffic related to the mobility of employees, patients, and visitors in the district.
- Improve the physical appearance of the district.
- Within the district, larger buildings should be concentrated in the center of large sites, gradually decreasing in mass and height toward the site boundaries.
- The scale and buffering of new development should respect the character of buildings across the street.

The Denver Planning Board finds that the Urban Redevelopment Plan implements the vision and meets the objectives adopted in the CBHD Plan. The Urban Redevelopment Plan will facilitate redevelopment of the site into an urban, mixed-use activity center that will serve the needs of all

the surrounding neighborhoods and provide a much-desired community focal point. The Urban Redevelopment Plan and future redevelopment's compliance with city rules and regulations will also achieve the objective to retain the character of surrounding residential areas by stepping down building height and mass at the area's boundaries.

### **Conformance with 9th and Colorado General Development Plan and Urban Design Standards and Guidelines**

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State statutes do not require a planning board to find that proposed urban renewal plans conform to a municipality's planning and zoning tools other than its comprehensive plan. However, in Denver, there is a hierarchy of such tools that supports the Planning Board's further analysis beyond conformity to Comprehensive Plan 2000. In Denver, a General Development Plan ("GDP"), authorized by Denver Zoning Code Section 12.4.12, establishes a framework for future land use and development and resulting public infrastructure within a specific area. A GDP identifies issues and the development's relationship with significant public infrastructure improvements, such as major multi-modal facilities and connections thereto, major utility facilities, and publicly accessible parks and open spaces. An approved GDP provides a master plan for coordinating development, infrastructure improvements, and regulatory decisions as development proceeds within the subject area.

In 2009, the Development Review Committee<sup>1</sup> approved a general development plan under authority of Former Chapter 59 to guide redevelopment of the 9<sup>th</sup> and Colorado Urban Redevelopment Area. The Development Review Committee approved a major amendment to the GDP in January 2012, which was followed by the CPD manager's approval of the 9<sup>th</sup> and Colorado Urban Design Standards and Guidelines in late summer 2012.<sup>2</sup> (The general development plan and the 9<sup>th</sup> and Colorado Urban Design Standards and Guidelines are collectively referred to as the "GDP").

The Denver Planning Board finds that redevelopment of the Urban Redevelopment Plan will conform to the planning vision and urban design objectives approved in the GDP. The GDP envisions creation of an urban center within the 9<sup>th</sup> and Colorado Urban Redevelopment Area through integration of a mix of housing, commercial uses, and publicly accessible and useable open spaces. More specifically, the Urban Redevelopment Plan's objectives are consistent with the following GDP objectives:

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<sup>1</sup> The Development Review Committee ("DRC") is comprised of the managers of the Public Works, Parks and Recreation, and Community Planning and Development departments of the City of Denver. Under applicable zoning rules in Former Chapter 59, the 2009 GDP did not get reviewed by either the Denver Planning Board or the City Council prior to the DRC's final approval. However, CPD staff did present an overview of the GDP to both bodies as background information essential to their respective recommendation/decision on several rezoning applications for the 9<sup>th</sup> and Colorado area that followed on the heels of the GDP's approval.

<sup>2</sup> Because the GDP was originally approved under Former Chapter 59, and lands within the GDP area are all zoned under Former Chapter 59, the major amendment to the GDP in 2012 was processed according to Former Chapter 59. That procedure provides for DRC final decision, and does not require Planning Board or City Council review or action. However, the Planning Board did play a formal role in the review of the 9<sup>th</sup> and Colorado Urban Design Standards and Guidelines, which helps implement the GDP. As part of the Planning Board's review of the proposed Design Standards and Guidelines, CPD staff presented background and an overview of the GDP amendment.

- Create a neighborhood that integrates multiple uses, including commercial, office, retail, hotel, live-work possibilities, residential, public services, and appropriate public spaces.
- Establish a hierarchy and network of corridors that provides safe and comfortable routes for pedestrians, bicycle, and automobile traffic.
- Coordinate the overall plan, building massing, and connectivity together with design elements to create a desirable, unique environment which encourages a variety of activities including: strolling, sitting, conversing, relaxing, and interacting.
- Introduce Denver’s street grid into the site and provide streets with unique image and character, creating a walkable district planned as a cohesive development hosting a variety of activities.
- Develop open spaces to serve multiple needs.
- Enhance the Nurses’ Dormitory Lawn as open space.
- Provide a broad mix of housing types, densities and price ranges (including affordable housing).
- Create a unique, distinctive, and identifiable development that establishes and promotes connectivity and access across neighborhoods.
- Development should encourage the guiding principles from Blueprint Denver such as land use that provides a variety of transportation alternatives, access to mass transit, a variety of employment opportunities, multimodal streets, an Urban Center area, and parks and open space that preserve existing vegetation and trees.

### **Final Denver Planning Board Findings**

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Based on the CPD staff report, testimony presented, and board deliberations at its June 19<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Denver Planning Board finds the proposed 9<sup>th</sup> and Colorado Urban Redevelopment Plan conforms to the Denver Comprehensive Plan and its applicable supplements, as well as the 9<sup>th</sup> and Colorado General Development Plan and Urban Design Standards and Guidelines.