



TO: City Council
FROM: James Van Hooser, Senior City Planner
DATE: December 17, 2020
RE: Official Zoning Map Amendment Application #2020I-00074

Staff Report and Recommendation

Based on the criteria for review in the Denver Zoning Code, Staff recommends City Council **approve** application #2020I-00074.

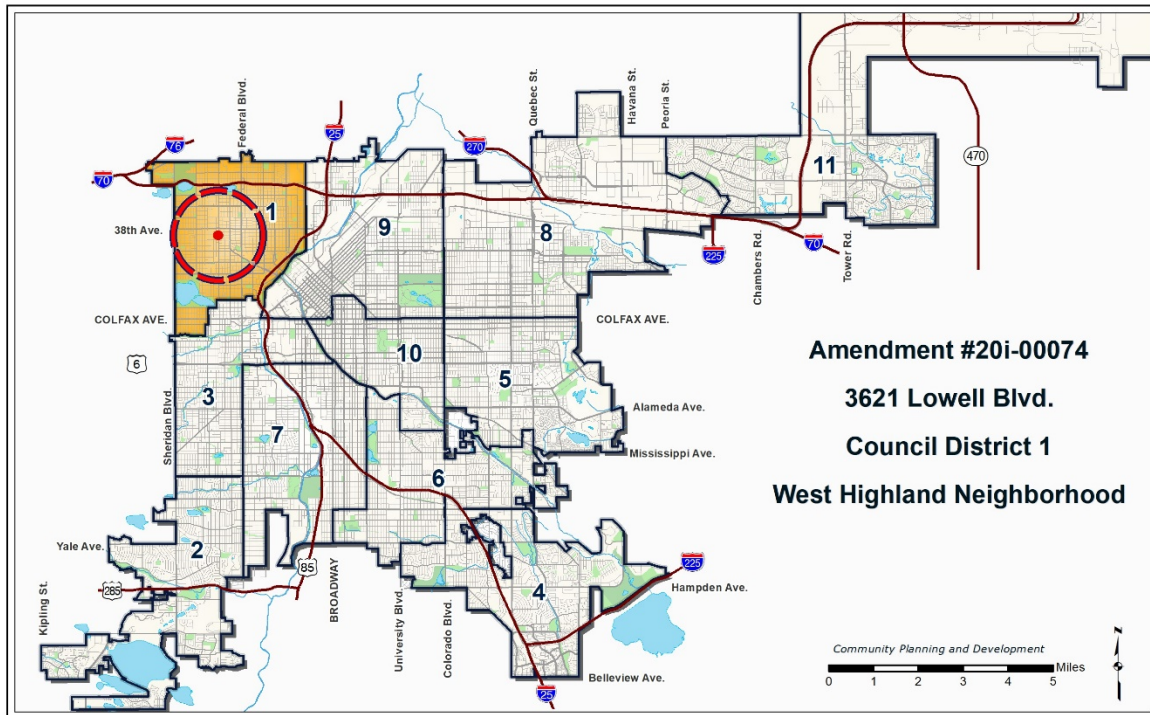
Request for Rezoning

Address: 3621 Lowell Boulevard
Neighborhood/Council District and CM: West Highland / Council District 1, CM Sandoval
RNOs: West 38th Avenue Neighborhood Association, Inter-Neighborhood cooperation (INC), West Highland Neighborhood Association
Area of Property: 4,690 square feet or 0.06 acres
Current Zoning: U-SU-B
Proposed Zoning: U-SU-B1
Property Owner(s): Geoffrey and Beth Gallinger
Owner Representative: None

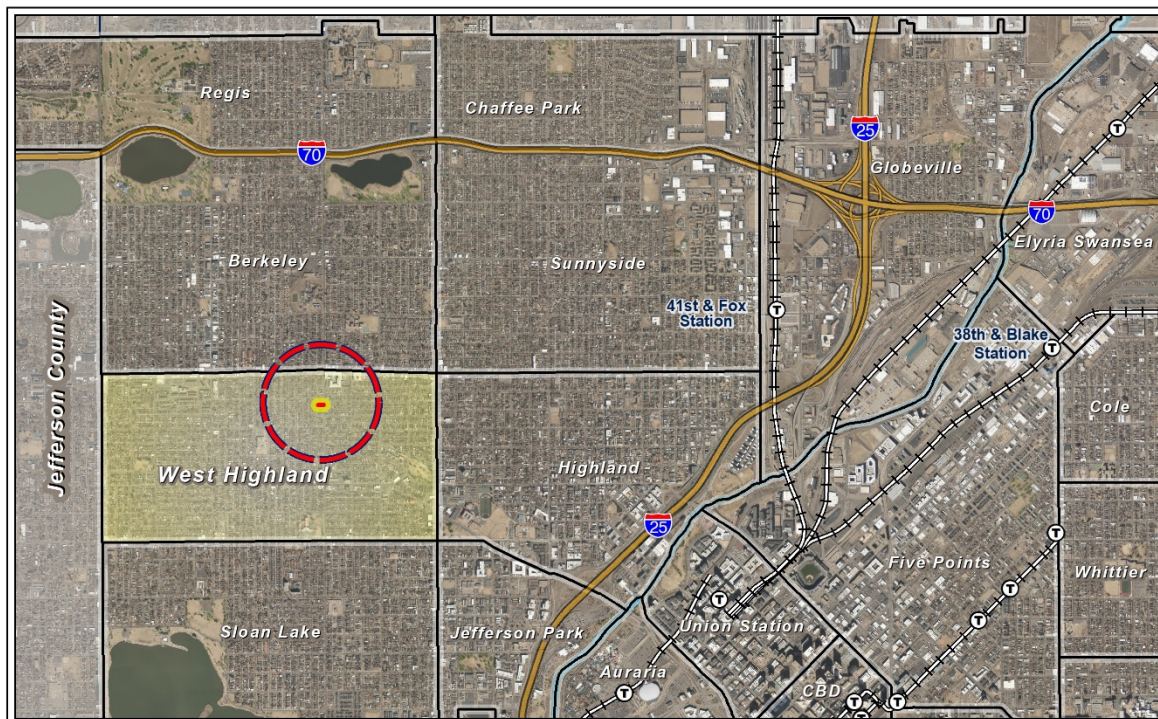
Summary of Rezoning Request

- The subject property contains a single-unit dwelling and a detached garage and is located between 36th Avenue and 37th Avenue, along North Lowell Boulevard.
- The property owner is proposing to rezone the property to allow an accessory dwelling unit.
- The proposed U-SU-B1, **U**rbane, **S**ingle-**U**nit, **B1** district allows urban houses and detached accessory dwelling units in the rear yard with a minimum zone lot area of 4,500 square feet. The zone district is intended for use in the Urban Neighborhood Context which is characterized by single-unit and two-unit uses. Single-unit residential uses are typically located along local and arterial streets and structures are usually the Urban House building form. The maximum height of the Urban House building form is 30 to 35 feet for the front 65% of the zone lot, 17 to 19 feet in the rear 35% of the zone lot. The Detached Accessory Dwelling Unit form can be a maximum height of 24 feet. Further details of the requested zone district can be found in the proposed zone district section of the staff report (below) and in Article 5 of the Denver Zoning Code (DZC).

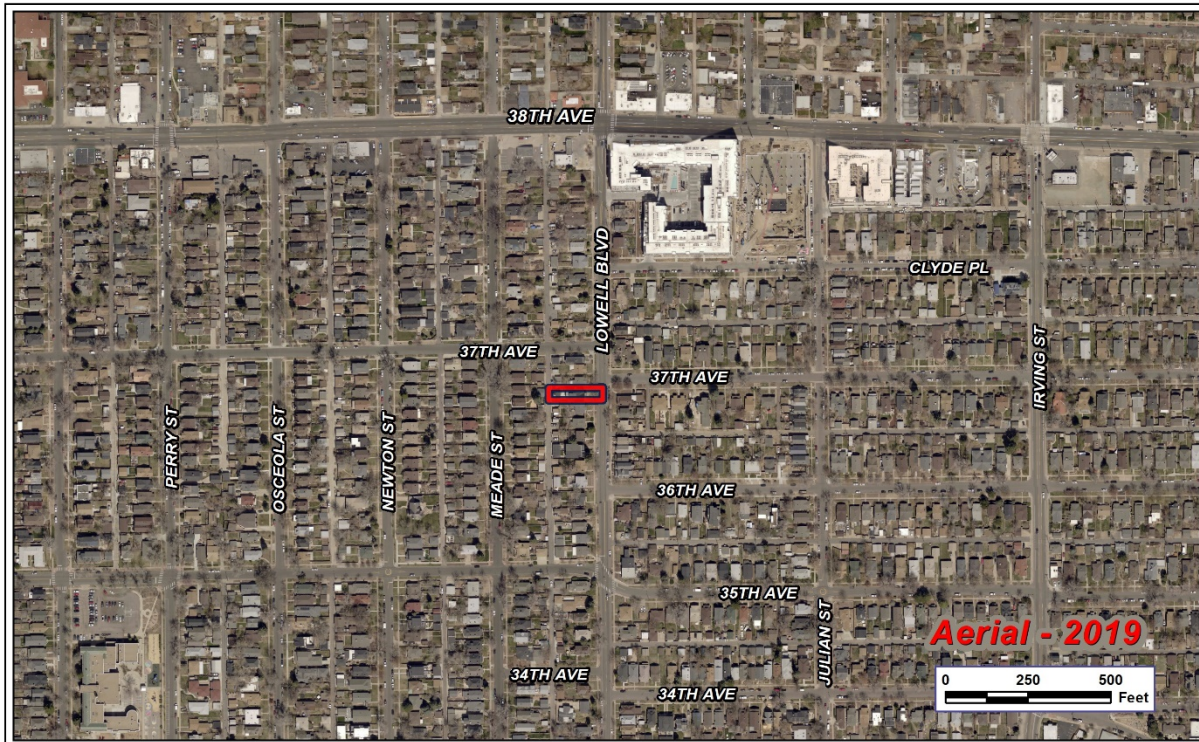
City Location



Neighborhood Location – West Highland Neighborhood



Existing Context

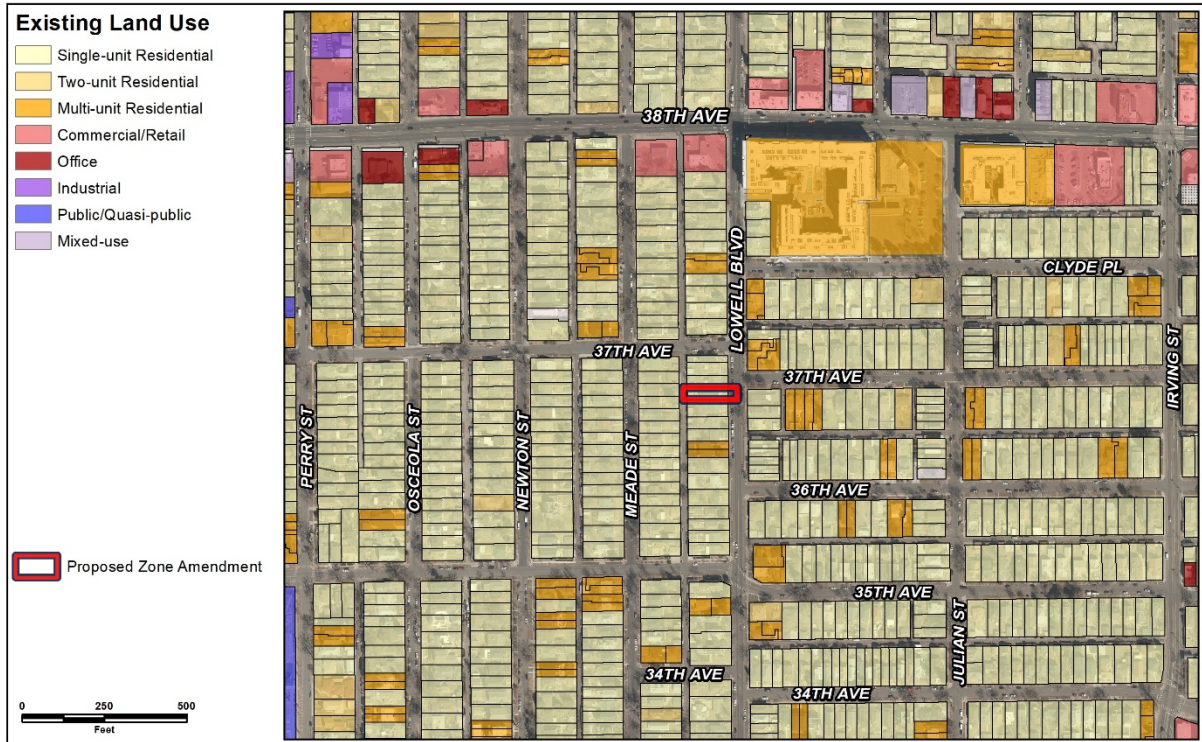


The subject property is in the West Highland Neighborhood, which is characterized primarily by single-unit and two-unit residential uses with several multi-unit residential uses in the vicinity. Generally, there is a pattern of rectangular blocks in a street grid pattern with alley access. The subject property is in the middle of the block on Lowell Boulevard, between 36th Avenue and 37th Avenue. The route 38 bus stops on 38th Avenue one block north of the site. There is also bus service four blocks east on Federal Blvd. 38th Avenue is a commercial corridor within walking distance, and the neighborhood is served by Edison Elementary School.

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

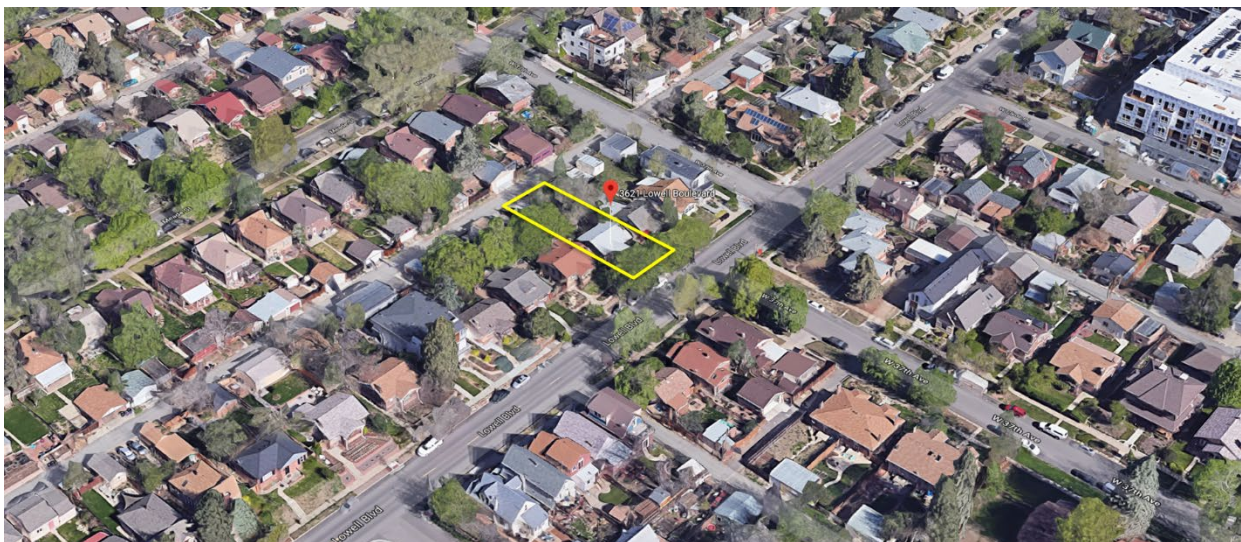
	Existing Zoning	Existing Land Use	Existing Building Form/Scale	Existing Block, Lot, Street Pattern
Site	U-SU-B	Single-unit Residential	1 ½-story Residence	Generally regular grid of streets. Block sizes and shapes are consistent and rectangular; the block orientation is different on the other side of Lowell Blvd. Detached sidewalks with tree lawns and existing alleys. Garages and on-street vehicle parking.
North	U-SU-B	Single-unit Residential	1-story Residence	
South	U-SU-B	Single-unit Residential	1-story Residence	
East	U-SU-B	Single-unit Residential	1-story Residence	
West	U-SU-B	Single-unit Residential	1-story Residence	

2. Existing Land Use Map



3. Existing Building Form and Scale

(Image source for all photos: Google Maps)



Aerial view of the site



View of the property, looking west



View of a neighboring property to the north, looking west.



View of a neighboring property to the south, looking west

Proposed Zoning

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

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

Design Standards	U-SU-B (Existing)	U-SU-B1 (Proposed)
Primary Building Forms Allowed	Urban House	Urban House
Maximum Height in Stories/Feet, Front 65% of Zone Lot*	2.5 stories / 30 feet	2.5 stories / 30 feet
Maximum Height in Stories/Feet, Rear 35% of Zone Lot*	1 story / 17 feet	1 story / 17 feet
DADU Maximum Height in Stories / Feet	DADUs not permitted	1.5 stories / 24 feet
Zone Lot Size (Min.)	4,500 square feet	4,500 square feet
Zone Lot Width (Min.)	35 feet	35 feet
Primary Street Block Sensitive Setback Required / If not (Min.)	Yes / 20 feet	Yes / 20 feet
Side Street Setback (Min.) *	5 feet	5 feet
Side Interior Setback (Min.) *	3' feet one side / 10' min combined	3' feet one side / 10' min combined
Rear Setback, Alley / No Alley	12 feet / 20 feet	12 feet / 20 feet
Building Coverage per Zone Lot including all accessory structures (Max.), not including exceptions	37.5 %	37.5%
Detached Accessory Building Forms Allowed	Detached Garage, Other Detached Accessory Structures	Detached Accessory Dwelling Unit, Detached Garage, Other Detached Accessory Structures

*Based on subject property with width of 37.5 feet

Summary of City Agency Referral Comments

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

Assessor: Approved – No Comments.

Asset Management: Approved – See Comments Below:

1. Approved for rezoning to U-SU-B1 to allow a detached additional dwelling unit

Development Services-Fire: Approved – No Comments.

Denver Public Schools: Approved – No Response.

Development Services - Project Coordination: Approved – See Comments Below:

1. Detached garage (assuming this is an intended ADU) does not meet required setbacks for Detached ADUs

Development Services - Wastewater: Approved – See Comments Below:

1. No objection to rezone. A building permit and Sewer Use and Drainage Permit (SUDP) will be required for the conversion. Sanitary service line must be independent of existing residence, or a Covenant will be required. Contact WastewaterPermits@DenverGov.Org with any questions

DOTI – Development Engineering Services: Approved – No Response.

Parks and Recreation: Approved – No Comments.

Public Health and Environment: Approved – No Comments.

Public Works – City Surveyor: Approved – No Comments.

Public Review Process

	Date
CPD informational notice of receipt of the rezoning application to all affected members of City Council, registered neighborhood organizations, and property owners:	8/23/2020
Property legally posted for a period of 15 days and CPD written notice of the Planning Board public hearing sent to all affected members of City Council, registered neighborhood organizations, and property owners:	10/6/2020
Planning Board public hearing <i>Unanimously recommended approval</i>	10/21/2020
CPD written notice of the Land Use, Transportation and Infrastructure Committee meeting sent to all affected members of City Council and registered neighborhood organizations, at least ten working days before the meeting:	10/13/2020

Land Use, Transportation and Infrastructure Committee of the City Council:	10/27/2020
Property legally posted for a period of 21 days and CPD notice of the City Council public hearing sent to all affected members of City Council and registered neighborhood organizations:	11/30/2020
City Council Public Hearing:	12/21/2020

- **Registered Neighborhood Organizations (RNOs)**
 - To date, staff has received no letters from Registered Neighborhood Organizations.
- **Other Public Comment**
 - To date, staff has received no letters from the public.

Criteria for Review / Staff Evaluation

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

DZC Section 12.4.10.7

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

DZC Section 12.4.10.8

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

1. Consistency with Adopted Plans

The following adopted plans apply to this application:

- Denver Comprehensive Plan 2040 (2019)
- Blueprint Denver (2019)
- Housing an Inclusive Denver (2018)

Denver Comprehensive Plan 2040

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

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

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

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

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

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

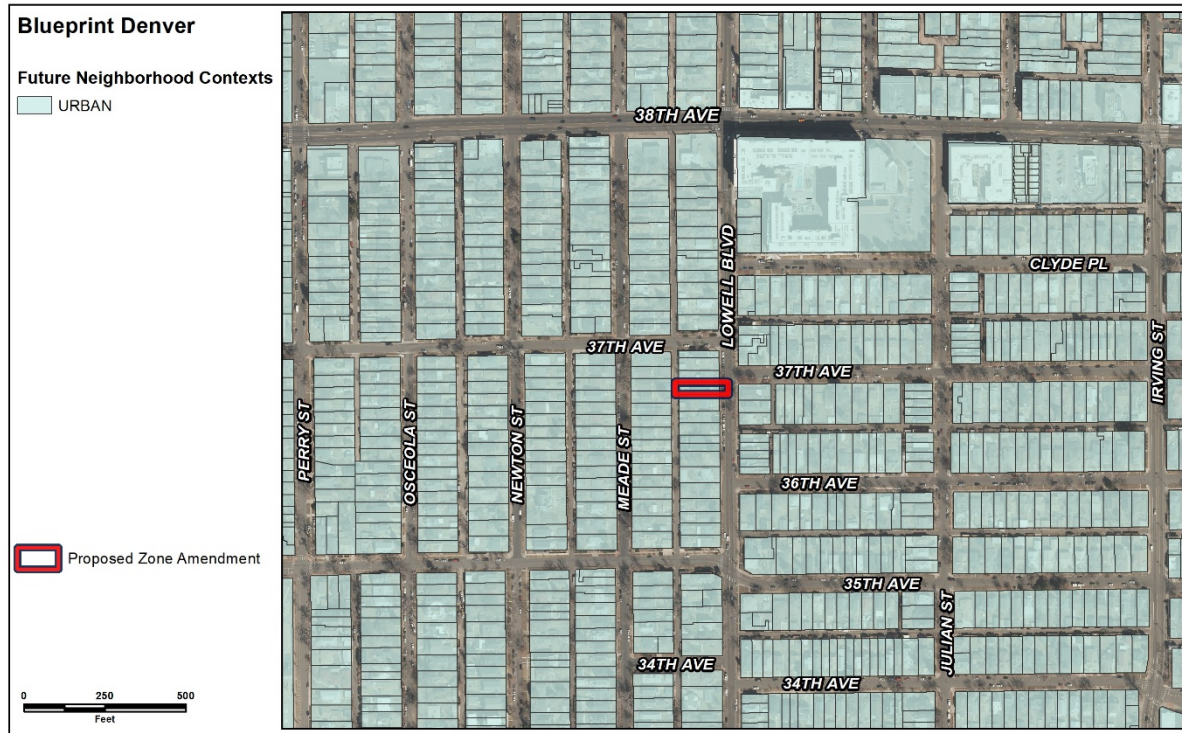
The proposed map amendment will allow an additional housing unit on the site of an existing home where infrastructure and services such as water, stormwater, and streets already exist. This allows Denver to grow responsibly and promotes land conservation.

Because it implements the strategies cited above, the rezoning is consistent with *Comprehensive Plan 2040*.

Blueprint Denver

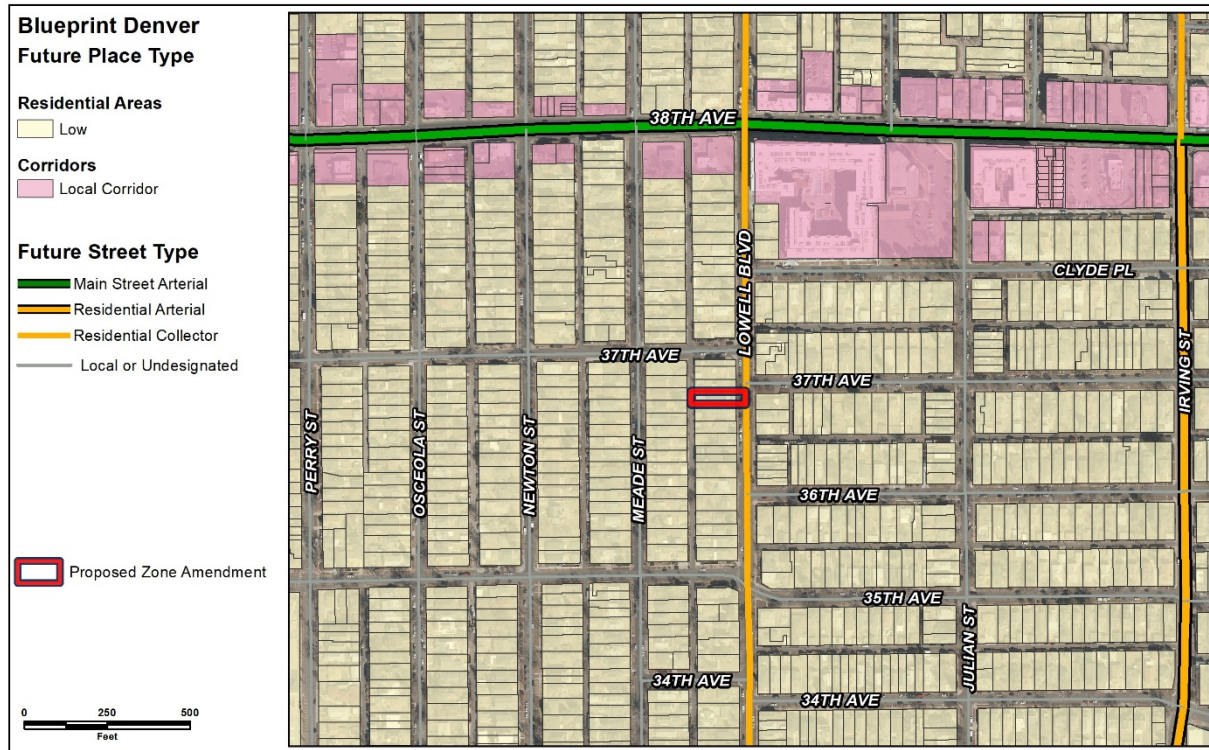
Blueprint Denver was adopted in 2019 as a supplement to *Comprehensive Plan 2040* and establishes an integrated framework for the city's land use and transportation decisions. *Blueprint Denver* identifies the subject property as part of a Low Residential place within the Urban Neighborhood Context and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

Blueprint Denver Future Neighborhood Context



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

Blueprint Denver Future Places

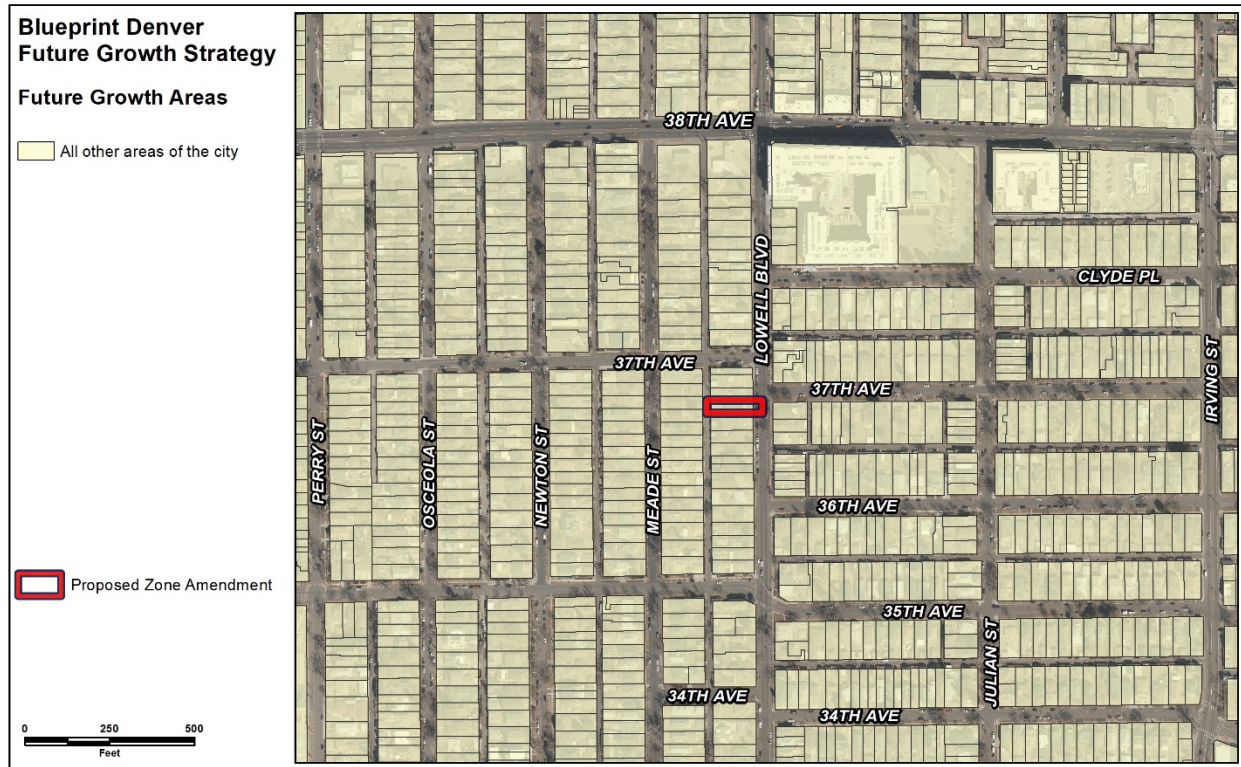


The subject site is designated within a Low Residential future place type on the *Blueprint Denver* Future Places map. This place type is “predominately single and two-unit uses on smaller lots. Accessory dwelling units and duplexes are appropriate and can be thoughtfully integrated where compatible,”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

Blueprint Denver Street Types

In *Blueprint Denver*, Future Street Types work in concert with the Future Places to evaluate the appropriate intensity of adjacent development (p. 67). *Blueprint Denver* classifies Lowell Blvd as a Residential Collector, which serves “primarily residential uses, but may also include schools, civic uses, parks, small retail nodes and other similar uses.” (p. 160). The proposed U-SU-B1 district is consistent with this street type because it allows for residential and accessory uses.

Blueprint Denver Growth Strategy



Blueprint Denver's growth strategy map is a version of the future places map, showing the aspiration for distributing future growth in Denver (p. 51). The subject property is part of the "All other areas of the city" growth area. These areas anticipate experiencing around 20% of new housing growth and 10% of new employment growth by 2040 (p. 51). This growth area contains "mostly residential areas with embedded local centers and corridors (that) take a smaller amount of growth intended to strengthen the existing character of our neighborhoods" (p. 49). The proposed U-SU-B1 zone district allowing an ADU is appropriate in this growth area as it will minimally contribute to development intensity in the neighborhood while maintaining the area's single-family residential character.

Blueprint Denver Strategies

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

- Housing Policy 4 Strategy E: "A citywide approach to enable ADUs is preferred. Until a holistic approach is in place, individual rezonings to enable ADUs in all residential areas, specifically where proximate to transit, are appropriate. Unless there is a neighborhood plan supporting ADUs, rezonings should be small in area in order to minimize impacts to the surrounding residential area." (p. 84).
- Housing Policy 5: "Remove barriers to constructing accessory dwelling units and create context-sensitive form standards." (p. 84).

In this case, the requested rezoning is a single lot in a residential area less than one-quarter mile from a bus stop. This rezoning to an ADU zone district will have minimal impacts on the character of the surrounding neighborhood and is consistent with Blueprint Denver recommendations. In addition, the rezoning of the subject property will remove the prohibition on the construction of an accessory dwelling unit.

Housing an Inclusive Denver (2018)

Adopted in 2018, *Housing an Inclusive Denver* was not adopted as a supplement to *Denver Comprehensive Plan 2040* but was still adopted by City Council and can be considered relevant to the review criteria for this map amendment. The Plan includes citywide guidance for using *Blueprint Denver* to reduce regulatory barriers to development of accessory dwelling units; however, some of its recommendations can be applied to individual map amendments that propose allowing an accessory dwelling unit. For this case, the following plan goals are applicable:

Legislative and Regulatory Priorities, 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.”

Attainable Homeownership, Recommendation 1: “Promote programs that help households maintain their existing homes. The City and its partners should target existing homeowner rehabilitation programs to residents in vulnerable neighborhoods, promote financial literacy education for prospective and existing homeowners, and promote the development of accessory dwelling units as a wealth-building tool for low and moderate-income homeowners.”

The proposed map amendment to U-SU-B1 is consistent with these *Housing an Inclusive Denver* recommendations because it will expand the availability and allow the development of an accessory dwelling unit at this site.

2. Uniformity of District Regulations and Restrictions

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

3. Public Health, Safety and General Welfare

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

4. Justifying Circumstance

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

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

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

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

According to DZC Section 5.2.2.1, General Purpose, the intent of the residential zone districts is to "promote and protect residential neighborhoods within the character of the Urban neighborhood context." Further, "the regulations provide certainty to property owners, developers, and neighborhoods about the limits of what is allowed in a residentially-zoned area. These regulations are also intended to reinforce desired development patterns in existing neighborhoods while accommodating reinvestment."

The specific intent of the U-SU-B1 zone district is "a single unit district allowing urban houses and detached accessory dwelling units with a minimum zone lot area of 4,500 square feet. Blocks typically have a consistent pattern of 37.5-foot-wide lots. Setbacks and lot coverage standards accommodate front and side yards similar to U-SU-B but allowing a detached accessory dwelling unit building form in

the rear yard” (DZC Section 5.2.2.2.H.) The subject site is in an area where Urban houses and 37.5-foot wide lots are common. The site at 3621 Lowell Blvd is 4,690 square feet with a width of 37.5 feet. The adopted plan direction recommends allowing detached accessory dwelling units. Therefore, rezoning this site would be consistent with the general purpose and the specific intent of the zone district.

Attachments

1. Application