

Considering Climate in a Rezoning Application

INTRODUCTION

The city's adopted plans can be used to review a rezoning with an environmental resilience lens. Enabling land use changes through rezoning is only one response to climate change. Many mitigation and adaptation measures will be required in response to climate change. This document highlights plan guidance related to the environmentally resilient vision element in *Comprehensive Plan 2024* and *Blueprint Denver*, provides an example of how it relates to rezonings, and ends with a list of questions that could be asked during the rezoning process.

PLAN GUIDANCE

Denver's citywide adopted plans, *Comprehensive Plan 2040* and *Blueprint Denver*, holistically incorporate environmental resilience through many vision elements, goals, and policies. These concepts are also embedded in the city's growth strategy and implemented by the future places map. Because the land use maps in *Blueprint Denver* were developed to advance the climate goals of *Comprehensive Plan 2040*, rezonings that are consistent with these maps can be generally understood to advance Denver's climate goals. However, there are additional policies and goals in the plans that can also be used to evaluate a rezoning request as it relates to environmental resilience. The sections below highlight plan guidance relevant to the climate and environment.

CLIMATE IN ADOPTED PLANS

Comprehensive Plan 2040

Comprehensive Plan 2040 contains the vision element "Environmentally Resilient", which describes a future Denver that is a thriving, sustainable city connected to nature and resilient to climate change. The plan includes goals related to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, preparing for climate change, improving air quality, and expanding green infrastructure.

Vision Element and Goals

Vision Element, Environmentally Resilient. "Denver is a thriving, sustainable city connected to nature and resilient to climate change." (p. 14)

Environmentally Resilient, Goal 1. Mitigate climate impact by significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Environmentally Resilient, Goal 2. Prepare for and adapt to climate change.

Environmentally Resilient, Goal 3. Conserve water and use it more efficiently.

Environmentally Resilient, Goal 4. Enhance and protect the South Platte River.

Environmentally Resilient, Goal 9. Protect and improve air quality.

Blueprint Denver:

Blueprint Denver states that reversing the city's contribution to climate change is critical and that how we plan the city can help reduce Denver's drain on resources and reduce its carbon footprint. This commitment should act as an over-arching guide (p. 27).

Further, the development pattern described in *Blueprint Denver* focuses on strategic infill locations linked with strong transportation options, where housing needs are met with a wide range of options. This growth strategy will reduce water use, improve public health indicators such as air quality, and preserve more open space— making Denver better prepared to face the effects of climate change. (p. 49)

Policies:

Land Use & Built Form Policy 01. Promote and anticipate planned growth in major centers and corridors and key residential areas connected by rail service and transit priority streets.

Land Use & Built Form Policy 02. Incentivize or require efficient development of land, especially in transit-rich areas.

Quality of Life Infrastructure Policy 02. Protect and expand Denver’s tree canopy on both public and private property. Includes recommendation to require tree planting and irrigation requirements for new development on private property. (p.119)

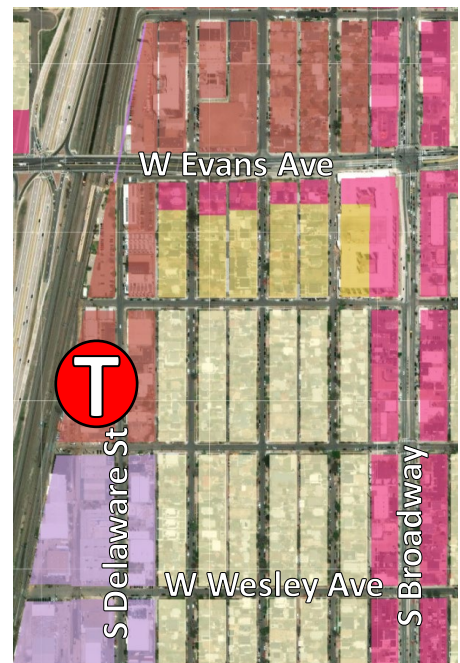
Quality of Life Infrastructure Policy 04. Promote environmentally-friendly development strategies in the public and private realms. Includes green infrastructure and tree canopy recommendations for incentives and requirements, limiting impervious surfaces, preserving existing trees in the public ROW. (p. 121)

Example:

The example below demonstrates how a rezoning can improve environmental resilience simply by following the land use vision outlined in Blueprint Denver.

The image on the right shows the area between the Evans Light Rail station and the South Broadway corridor. The adopted plans recommend an increase in residential and mixed-use density (pink and red colors) in certain locations surrounding these amenities.

- Rezoning consistent with this guidance supports the city’s goals to reduce climate impacts by enabling additional density near transit and the Broadway corridor. New dwelling units in these areas tend to be less auto-dependent, reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transportation, and will benefit from energy-efficient multi-unit buildings.



How to Apply Climate Concepts to Rezoning

Denver City Council, Planning Board, city staff, and the community can use the themes in this document and the questions below in evaluating a rezoning's consistency with the Comprehensive Plan 2040 and Blueprint Denver through an environmental resilience lens. This list is not all-inclusive. The questions guide how adopted plans can be applied to rezoning decisions.

Climate Concepts

- What plan concepts and policies related to climate will potentially be advanced by approval of the rezoning?
- What plan concepts and policies related to climate will potentially **not** be advanced by approval of the rezoning?

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions, reducing water use, and improving air quality

- Would this rezoning allow more people to live close to transit?
- Would this rezoning allow for neighborhood amenities or contribute to a complete neighborhood?
- Does this rezoning allow more dwelling units where infrastructure is already in place?
- Would this rezoning allow more people to live within walking, rolling, or biking distance to destinations, businesses, or other amenities?

Heat island mitigation

- Would this rezoning allow for the redevelopment of surface parking lots?
- Would this rezoning allow for redevelopment that is consistent with Denver's Green Buildings Ordinance and other landscaping, roofing and paving guidelines that can reduce heat absorption?