Community Planning and Development
Planning Services

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TO: Denver Planning Board
FROM: Tony Lechuga, Senior City Planner
DATE: April 30, 2025
RE: Official Zoning Map Amendment Application #2024I-00106

Staff Report and Recommendation

Based on the criteria for review in the Denver Zoning Code, Staff recommends approval for Application #2024I-00019.

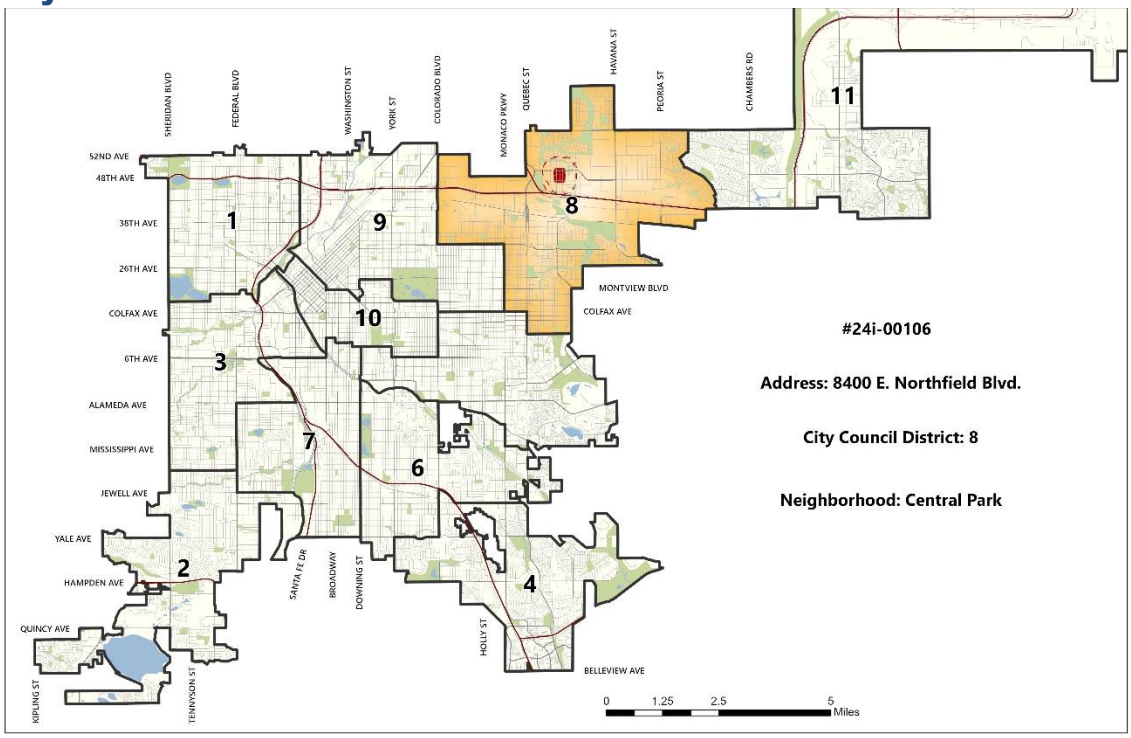
Request for Rezoning

Address:	8430 Northfield Boulevard
Neighborhood/Council District and CM:	Central Park / Council District 8, Councilwoman Lewis
RNOs:	Central Park United Neighbors (CPUN); Montbello 2020; Opportunity Corridor Coalition of United Residents; Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation (INC)
Area of Property:	~16 acres
Current Zoning:	C-MU-20 with Waivers
Proposed Zoning:	C-MX-5 and C-MX-8
Property Owner(s):	SCP Northfield, LLC
Owner Representative:	Cory Rutz, Otten Johnson Robinson Neff & Ragonetti, PC

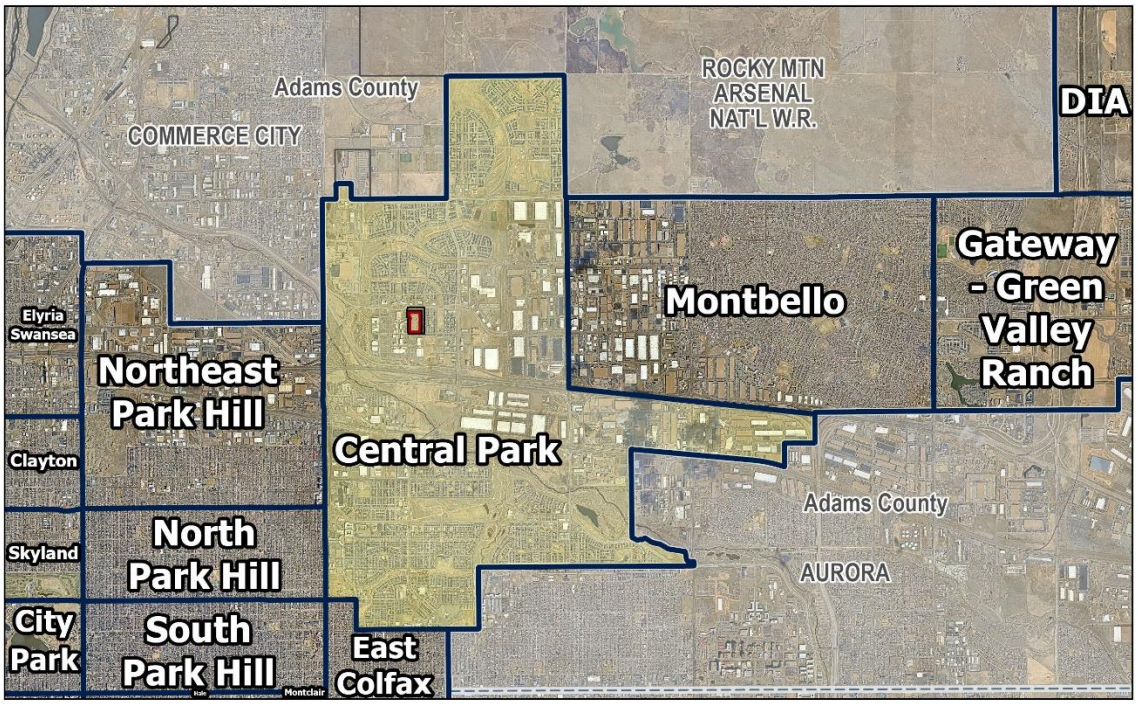
Summary of Rezoning Request

- The site is located in the Central Park Neighborhood. The site is slightly more than 16 acres located in the northeast corner of the larger Shops at Northfield property. The site is bound by Northfield Boulevard to the north, N. Willow Street to the east, Eat 47th Avenue to the south, and Verbena Street to the west. There is a private unnamed street running north-south through the property and East 48th Avenue running east-west through the property.
- The site contains a 1 story commercial/retail building of about 21,000 square feet but is otherwise vacant or surface parking.
- The property owner is requesting a change in the zoning classification to align the properties' zoning with recommendations from the City's adopted plans and allow for denser development than would otherwise be allowed in the current Former Chapter 59 zone district.
- The requested C-MX-5 and -8 zone districts are Urban Center- Mixed-Use districts with allowed heights up to 5 and 8 stories. The mixed-use districts are intended to create mixed, diverse neighborhoods that enhance the convenience, ease, and enjoyment of walking, shopping, and public gathering. Further details of the requested zone district(s) can be found in the proposed zone district section of the staff report (below) and in Article 7 of the Denver Zoning Code (DZC).

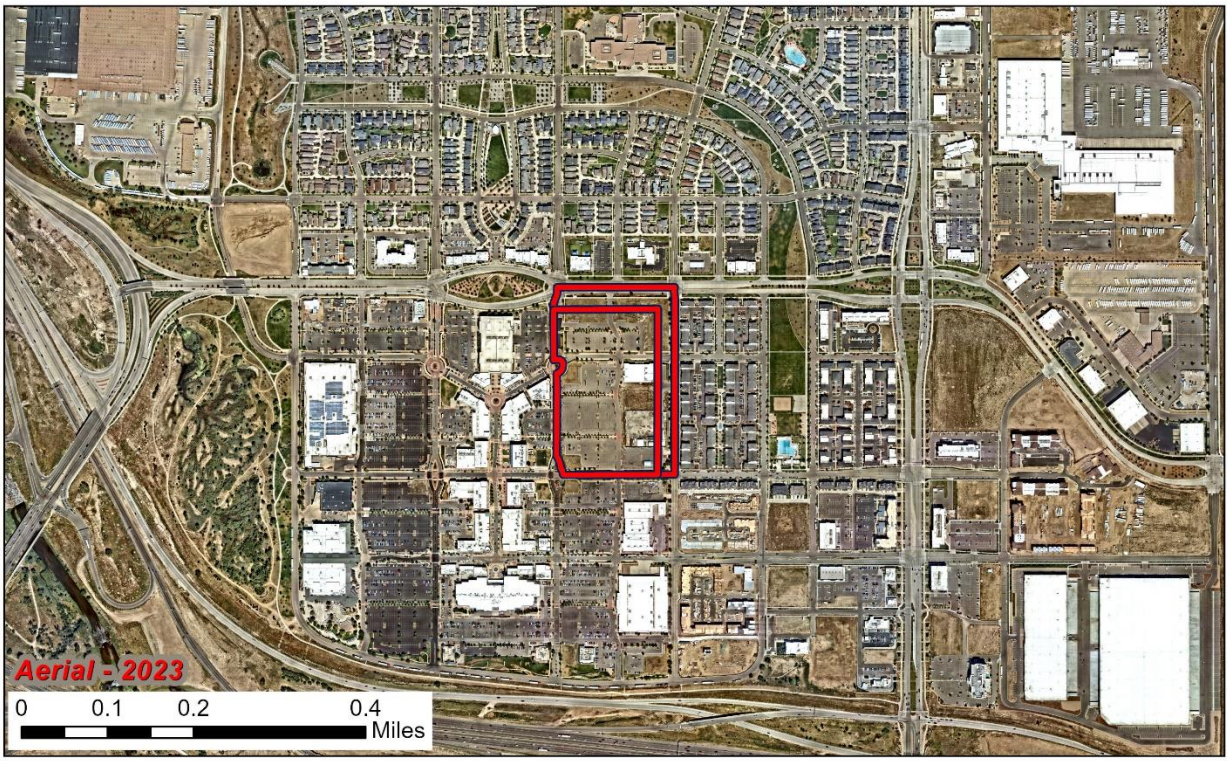
City Location



Neighborhood Location



Existing Context



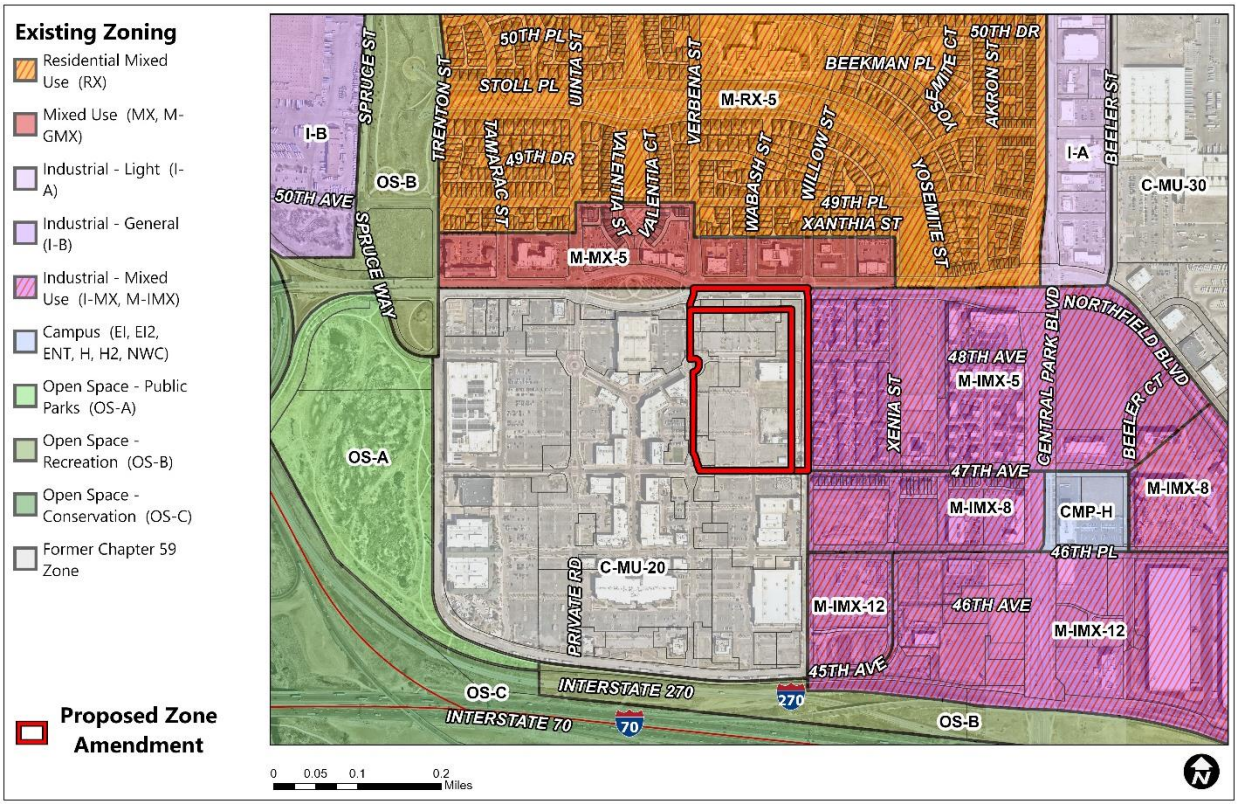
The site is located in the Central Park Neighborhood. The site is slightly more than 16 acres located in the northeast corner of the larger Shops at Northfield property. The larger Shops at Northfield is a Planned Building Group which includes around 90 acres of land roughly bound by Northfield Boulevard to the north, Willow Street to the east, Interstate 70 to the south, and Quebec Street to the west. The property is comprised of some large regional retail establishments including Target, Bass Pro Shop, Harkins Theater, other smaller commercial/retail properties, and more than half the entire area is surface parking. The rezoning site is bound by Northfield Boulevard to the north, Willow Street to the east, Eat 47th Avenue to the south, and Verbena Street to the west. There is a private unnamed street running north-south through the property and East 48th Avenue running east-west through the property. The site contains a 1 story commercial/retail building of about 21,000 square feet but is otherwise vacant or surface parking. Immediately to the east of the site is 3 story multi-unit residential. The area is well served in terms of schools, open space, and commercial/retail options.

The subject site is served by the RTD 88, 42, and 65 RTD bus lines. The 42 bus runs east-west from Central Park Station to Green Valley Ranch. The 88 bus runs north-south between Central Park Station and Commerce City. The 65 bus runs north-south between Northfield High School and the Southmoor Station along Hampden Avenue. The RTD A Line's Central Park Station is about 1.2 miles to the south.

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	C-MU-20 with Waivers	Commercial/retail	1 story, 21,000 sf, brick commercial property and surface parking	Existing grid of blocks of a typical size in this neighborhood. Lots within the Shops at Northfield are large, comprised largely of regional retail. Most streets through the site are private and the area does not contain alleys.
North	M-MX-5	Commercial/retail & Public/Quasi-public	1 story standalone emergency room; 1 story daycare both with large setbacks	
East	M-IMX-5	Multi-unit Residential	3 story apartment buildings built at the street line with surface parking interior to the site	
South	C-MU-20 with Waivers	Commercial/retail	1 story, brick commercial/retail comprised of four tenants with large setbacks and surface parking	
West	CMU-20 with Waivers	Commercial/retail	2 story, brick commercial/retail with large setbacks and surface parking	

1. Existing Zoning



The current zoning on the site is C-MU-20, a Commercial Mixed-Use district, with Waivers. It allows for a wide range of commercial and residential uses, including multi-family uses, along with limited industrial uses with the expectation that residential uses shall be buffered from nonresidential uses. The size of development is regulated by a maximum gross floor area is equal to one times the area of the zone lot, also knowns as an Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 1. The waivers included in the zoning do two things: 1) allowing an additional use by right of "vehicle, equipment sales, leasing, service, rental; and 2) waiving the right to Permitted Signs contained in Section 59-315.

2. Planned Building Group

The site is part of a Planned Buildings Group (PBG) that includes all of the larger Shops at Northfield property. The applicant has been in discussions with Community Planning and Development on the process of amending the PBG.

3. Urban Design Standards & Guidelines (DSGs)

The Central Park Urban Design Standards & Guidelines, adopted in 1999 and updated in 2021, will continue to apply to the site should the rezoning be approved. These DSGs proved rules and regulations to further a community of mixed-use neighborhoods, combining traditional patterns of development with new forms of building, transportation, open space, and urban systems complimentary to the surrounding community.

4. Large Development Review (LDR)

In 2024, this application was reviewed by the Development Review Committee (DRC) to determine if the proposal would be subject to the Large Development Review (LDR) process outlined in Section 12.4.12 of the Denver Zoning Code (DZC) and require the creation of a Large Development Framework (LDF). The Development Review Committee (DRC) determined that LDR would not be applicable to this site for the following reasons:

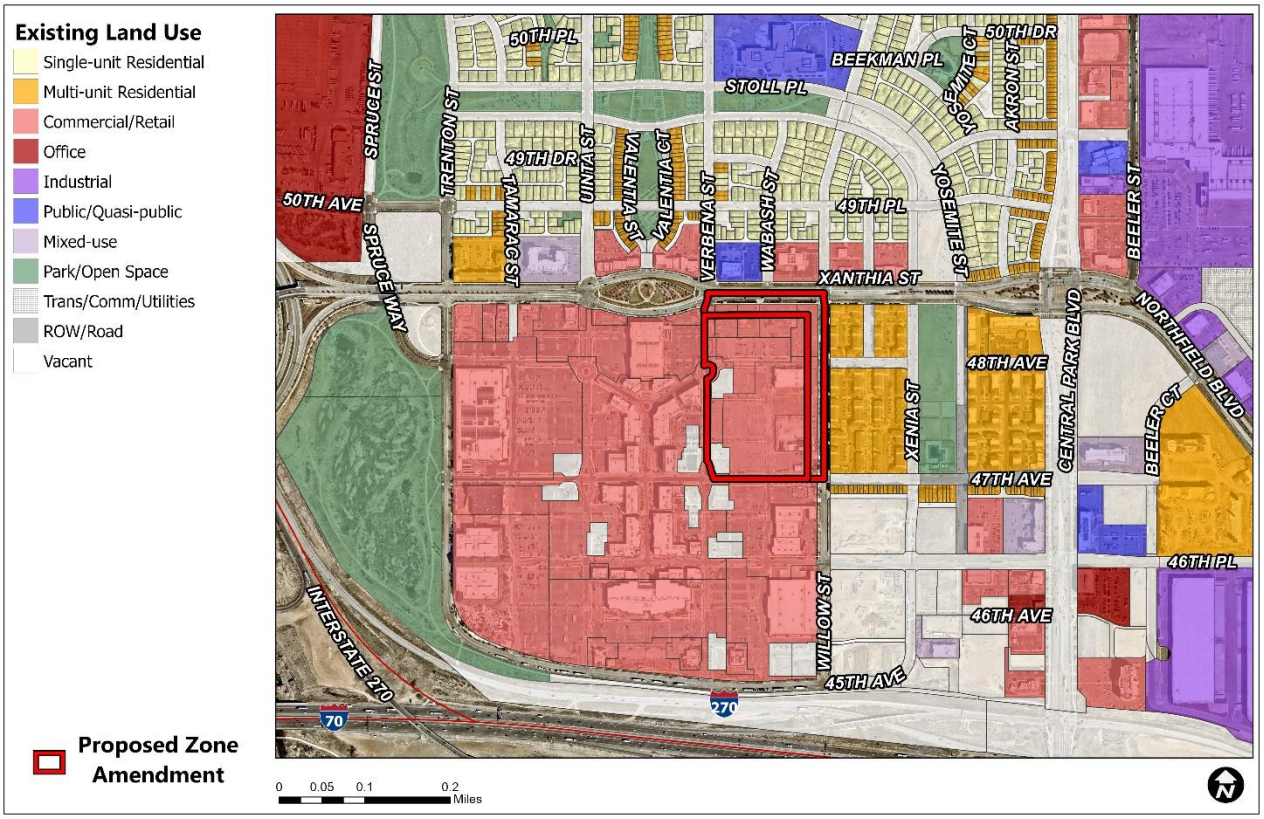
1. No area plan recommends use of LDR for this site. The Central Park Neighborhood Plan and early planning for the area offer adequate guidance for mixed-use development on this site.
2. The site is part of a General Development Plan that allows for mixed-use development o this site.
3. A street grid and associate utilities were anticipated with the original development and further improvements can be captured at the time of site development plan review.

The city has been working with the applicant team to conduct a high-level vision plan for the larger Shops at Northfield site. Much of the area is occupied by anchor tenants with long-term leases and transitions on those sites to similarly proposed higher density mixed-use could be decades away.

5. High Impact Development Compliance Plan (HIDCP)

The applicant has negotiated a High Impact Development Compliance Plan with the Department of Housing Stability (HOST) as required by both the size of the rezoning area and the use of Metropolitan District financing within the broader Central Park area. The HIDCP states that at least 10% of the total number of units within the project would be income-restricted to households earning no more than 60% of the area median income for a minimum of 99 years. Also, at least 30% of the total number of units would include at least 2 bedrooms. The income restricted units must be constructed and marketed concurrently with the non-income-restricted units. The HIDCP removes the fee-in-lieu option, thus requiring the income-restricted units be built on-stie.

6. Existing Land Use Map

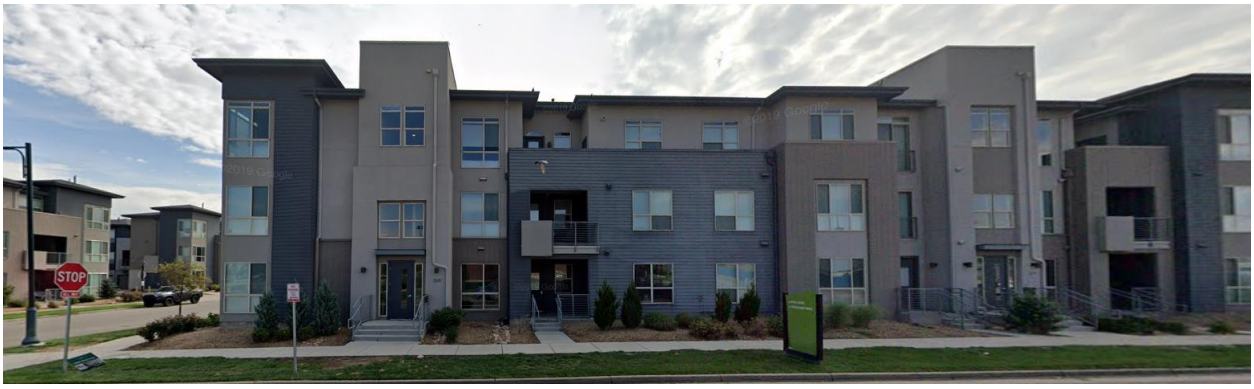


7. Existing Building Form and Scale (all photos from Google Maps)

Aerial view of the subject property, looking north.

View of the subject property from 47th Avenue, looking north.

View of the subject property from Northfield Boulevard, looking south.



View of the property to the east across Willow Street, looking east.

View of the property to the south across 47th Avenue, looking south

View of the property to the west across Verbena Street, looking west.

View of the property to the west across Verbena Street, looking west.

View of the property to the north across Northfield Boulevard, looking north.

Proposed Zoning

The applicant is requesting to rezone to C-MX-5 and C-MX-8, which stands for Urban Center Neighborhood Context – Residential Mixed Use – 5 stories maximum height or 8 stories maximum height and. C-MX-5 applies to areas served primarily by collector or arterial streets where a building scale of 1 to 5 stories is desired (see DZC 7.2.2.2.B). C-MX-8 applies to areas served primarily by arterial streets where a building scale of 2 to 8 stories is desired (see DZC 7.2.2.2.C). The Mixed-Use zone districts are intended to promote safe, active, and pedestrian-scaled, diverse areas with building forms that clearly define and activate the public street edge. (DZC 7.2.2.1). Further details of the proposed zone districts can be found in Article 7 of the Denver Zoning Code (DZC). The applicant is requesting C-MX-5 on narrow portions of the site fronting on Northfield Boulevard and Willow Street, and C-MX-8 on the rest of the site. The subject site is adjacent to a 5-story district to the east and north with other nearby districts allowing heights of 8 and 12 stories.

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

Design Standards	C-MU-20 with Waivers (Existing)	C-MX-5 (Proposed)	C-MX-8 (Proposed)
Primary Building Forms Allowed	N/A	Town House, Drive Thru Services, Drive Thru Restaurant, General, Shopfront	Town House, Drive Thru Services, Drive Thru Restaurant, General, Shopfront
Height in Stories / Feet (max) *	Building floor area cannot exceed the site area.	5 stories/70’ – Town House Form 5 stories/70’ – General/Shopfront Form	5 stories/70’ – Town House Form 8 stories/110’ – General/Shopfront Form
Primary Street Build-To Percentage (min)	N/A	70% General 75% Shopfront/Townhouse	70% General 75% Shopfront/Townhouse
Primary Street Build-To Ranges (min/max)	N/A	10’/15’- Town House Form 0’/10’ – General/Shopfront Form	10’/15’- Town House Form 0’/10’ – General/Shopfront Form
Primary Street Setbacks (min)	10’	10’ – Town House Form 0’ – General/Shopfront Form	10’ – Town House Form 0’ – General/Shopfront Form
Side Street Setbacks (min)	3’	7.5’ – Town House Form 0’ – General/Shopfront Form	7.5’ – Town House Form 0’ – General/Shopfront Form

*The C-MX-5 district allows incentive heights up to 7 Stories and 95 feet with the provision of enhanced affordable housing. However, the HIDCP removes the option to achieve the enhanced affordable housing incentive.
*The C-MX-8 district allows incentive heights up to 12 Stories and 150 feet with the provision of enhanced affordable housing. However, the HIDCP removes the option to achieve the enhanced affordable housing incentive.

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 Response

Asset Management: Approved – No Comments

Denver Public Schools: Approved – No Response

Department of Public Health and Environment: Approved – No Comments

Denver Parks and Recreation: Approved – No Response

Department of Transportation and Infrastructure – R.O.W.- City Surveyor: Approved – No Comments

Development Services – Project Coordination: Approved – No Response

Development Services - Fire Protection: Approve Rezoning Only – Will require additional information at Site Plan Review

Development Services – Transportation: Approved – No Response

Development Services- Wastewater: Approved – No Response

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:	**01/10/25**
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:	**04/22/25**
Planning Board public hearing:	**05/07/25**
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 (10) working days before the meeting:	**04/29/25**
Land Use, Transportation, and Infrastructure Committee of the City Council:	**05/13/25** (tentative)
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:	**06/09/25** (tentative)
City Council Public Hearing:	**06/30/25** (tentative)

- **Public Outreach and Input**
  - **Registered Neighborhood Organizations (RNOs)**
    As of the date of this staff report, we have received no letters from RNOs.

  - **General Public Comments**
    As of the date of this staff report, we have received 19 letters from the public.

- 1 letter did not express support or opposition but noted they didn't think the neighborhood needed more apartments but rather more commercial. The proposed zone districts would allow for the development of commercial uses.
- 1 letter expressed support for the rezoning. They noted the closure of several businesses in the Shops at Northfield property and how additional residential density could support existing and future businesses.
- 17 letters expressed opposition to the rezoning. They expressed concerns around increased traffic, lack of necessary infrastructure, impact on school seats, and views. Many comments expressed a desire for a grocery store in in the area. While many of the comments reference 1,500 residential units, the rezoning is approval of a zone district and the appropriateness of the infrastructure to accommodate residential density would be analyzed at the time of site development. Additionally, the city has no mechanism by which to require a private property owner to build a grocery store on their property.

Criteria for Review / Staff Evaluation

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

DZC Section 12.4.10.7

1. Consistency with Adopted Plans
2. Public Interest
3. Consistency with Neighborhood Context Description, Zone District Purpose and Intent Statements

1. Consistency with Adopted Plans

The following adopted plans apply to this property:

- *Denver Comprehensive Plan 2040* (2019)
- *Blueprint Denver* (2019)
- *Central Park Development Plan* (1995)

Denver Comprehensive Plan 2040

The proposed rezoning is consistent with many of the adopted *Denver Comprehensive Plan 2040* strategies, which are organized by vision element.

The proposed rezoning would allow for denser mixed-use development, including a diversity of housing options for various income ranges as required by the HIDCP, consistent with the following strategies in the Equitable, Affordable, and Inclusive vision element:

- Goal 1, Strategy A – Increase development of housing units close to transit and mixed-use developments (p. 28).
- Goal 1, Strategy B – Ensure neighborhoods offer a mix of housing types and services for a diverse population (p. 28).
- Goal 2, Strategy A – Create a greater mix of housing options in every neighborhood for all individuals and families (p. 28).
- Goal 3, Strategy B – Use land use regulations to enable and encourage the private development of affordable, missing middle and mixed-income housing, especially where close to transit (p. 28).

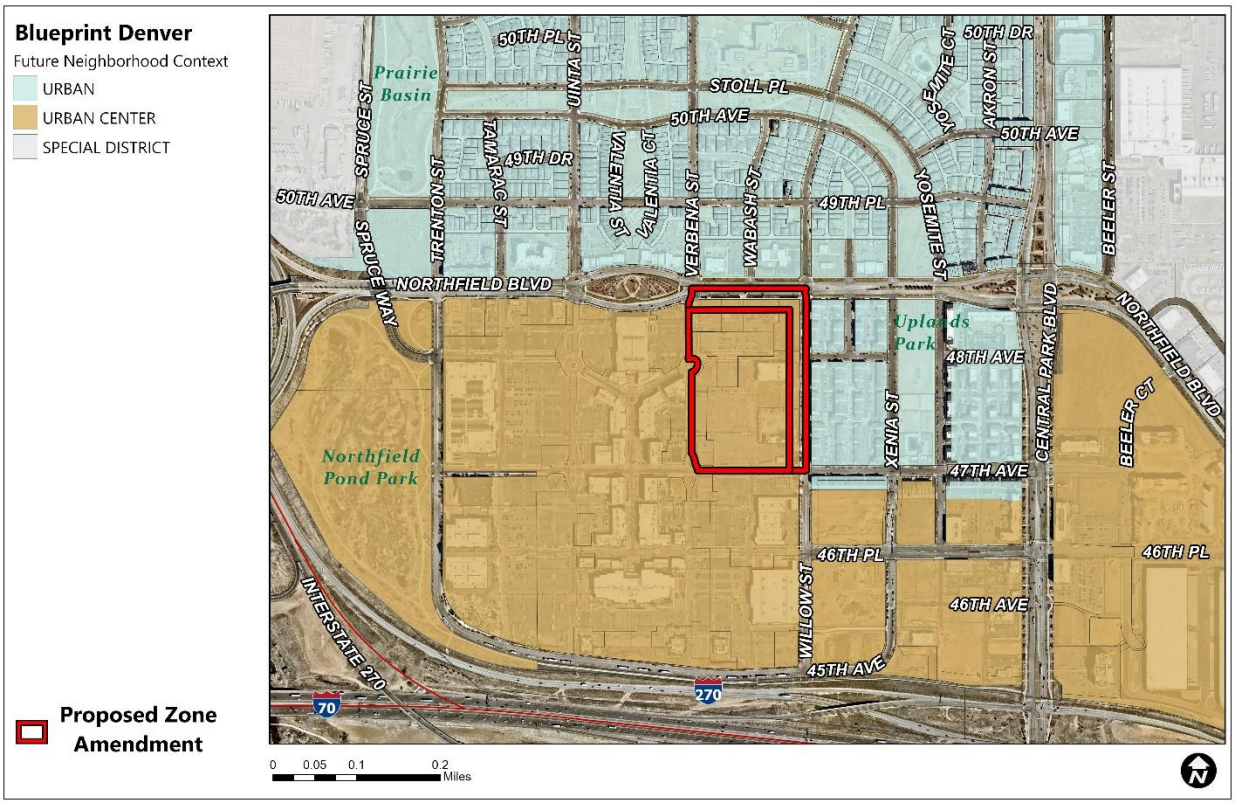
The proposed map amendment would allow for compatible infill development in an established neighborhood with connections to shopping, parks, schools, and transit, consistent with the following strategies from the Strong and Authentic Neighborhoods vision element:

- Goal 1, Strategy A – Build a network of well-connected, vibrant, mixed-use centers and corridors (p. 34).
- Goal 1, Strategy D – Encourage quality infill development that is consistent with the surrounding neighborhood and offers opportunities for increased amenities (p. 34).

Blueprint Denver

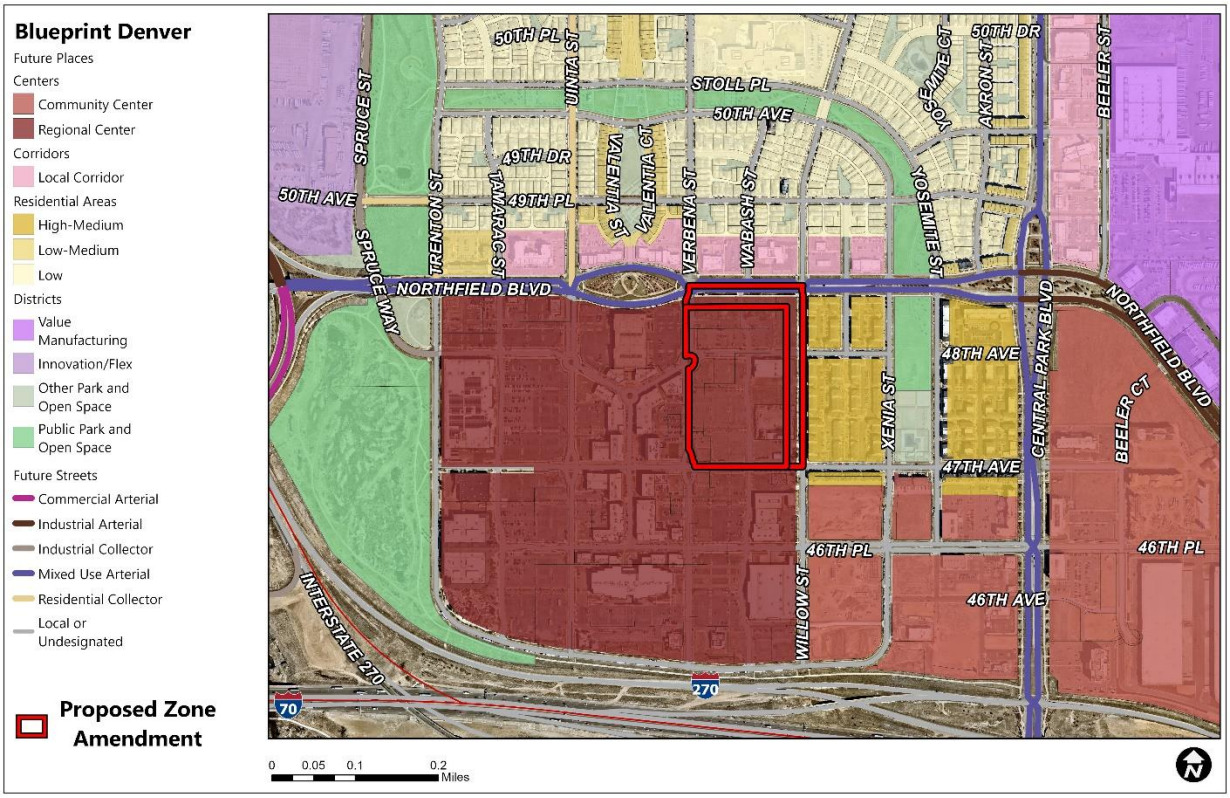
Blueprint Denver was adopted in 2019 as a supplement to *Comprehensive Plan 2040* and establishes an integrated framework for the city's land use and transportation decisions. *Blueprint Denver* identifies the subject property as part of a Regional Center place within the Urban Center Neighborhood Context and provides guidance from 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 property is shown on the context map as within the Urban Center Neighborhood Context, which is used to guide appropriate zone districts (p. 66). *Blueprint Denver* describes the land use and built form of the Urban Center Neighborhood Context as follows: "Urban center neighborhoods are dense and vibrant areas that support residents and visitors. This context contains high intensity residential and significant employment areas. Development typically contains a high mix of uses, with good street activation and connectivity. Residents living in this context are well served by high-capacity transit and have access to ample amenities and entertainment options" (p. 251). The proposed rezoning is appropriate and consistent with the Urban Center context plan direction.

Blueprint Denver **Future Places**



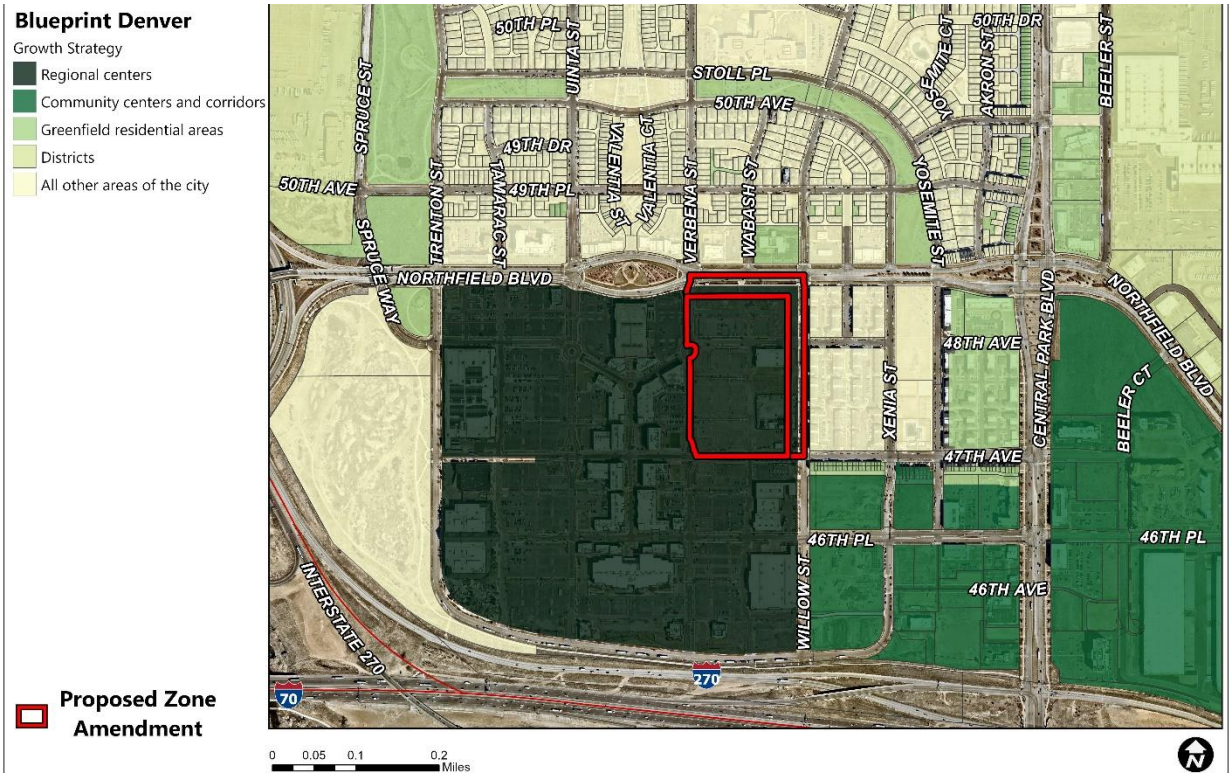
The Future Places Map shows the subject property as part of a Regional Center. *Blueprint Denver* describes the aspirational characteristics of Regional Centers in the Urban Center context as, "office, retail, eating and drinking establishments, commercial services, and multi-unit residential use" with the "widest customer draw of all places with a 24/7 live, work, and play environment attractive to locals and visitors" (p. 256). Regional Centers are further described as having a "high degree of urbanism paired with a strong pedestrian realm. Continuous building frontages and district streetscape elements that define the public realm. Tall building heights are common and transitions to adjacent places are minimal except when close to lower scale residential places" (p. 256). The proposed C-MX-5 and -8 districts provide a wide range and mix of uses with a high degree of urbanism.

Blueprint Denver **Streets**

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 Northfield Boulevard as a Mixed-Use Arterial Future Street Type, described as a "Varied mix of uses including retail, office, residential and restaurants. Buildings are pedestrian-oriented, typically multi-story, usually with high building coverage with a shallow front setback" (p. 159). Because C-MX-8 and C-MX-5 enables a wide range of residential, quasi-public uses, and commercial uses, the proposed district is consistent with the plan direction for this location and is appropriate along the existing mixed-use arterial street. Section 7.2.2.2.C. of the DZC also indicates that "C-MX-8 applies to areas

or intersections served primarily by arterial streets" and Section 7.2.2.2.B. of the DZC also indicates that "C-MX-5 applies to areas or intersections served primarily by collector or arterial streets." The proposed rezoning is appropriate and consistent with the Urban Center context plan direction, as it will allow for redevelopment of an appropriately scaled mixed use node along a mixed-use arterial street and embedded in a moderate residential area.

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 a Regional Center. Regional Centers are anticipated to see around "30% of new housing growth and 50% of new employment growth by 2040" (p. 51). Focusing growth in centers and corridors helps to provide a variety of housing, jobs and entertainment options within a comfortable distance to all Denverites and is a key element of building complete neighborhoods throughout Denver (p. 49). The proposed map amendment will focus mixed-use growth to a Regional Center where it has been determined to be most appropriate.

***Blueprint Denver* Strategies**

Blueprint Denver also includes narrative goals to help further the city's land use goals. This rezoning helps achieve a number of those goals including:

- Land Use & Built Form: General
  - Policy 1, Strategy A – Use zoning and land use regulations to encourage higher-density, mixed-use development in transit-rich areas including Regional Centers (p. 72).
  - Policy 3, Strategy A – Rezone properties from the Former Chapter 59 zoning code so that the entire city is covered by the DAC, including continuing to incentivize owners to come out of the old code (p. 73).
- Land Use & Built Form, Housing
  - Policy 6, Strategy A – Incentivize affordable housing through zoning, especially in regional centers (p. 85).
  - Policy 7 – Expand family-friendly housing throughout the city (p. 85).
  - Policy 8, Strategy A – Capture 80% of new housing growth in Regional Centers. Align high-density residential areas near regional centers to support housing growth near major job centers.
- Land Use & Built Form: Economics
  - Policy 1 – Capture 90 percent of job growth in regional centers, community centers and corridors, certain districts and high-intensity residential areas in downtown and urban center contexts (p. 90).

Climate

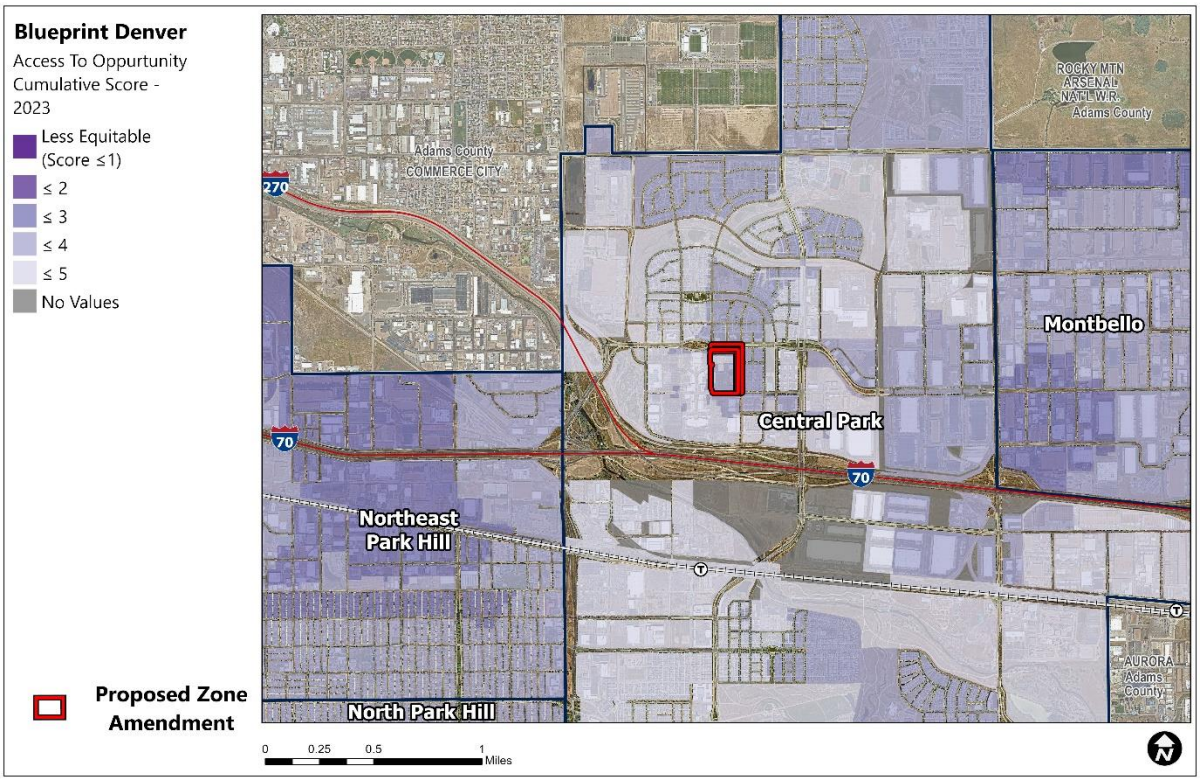
This rezoning supports the city's goals to reduce climate impacts by enabling additional housing on a vacant lot where infrastructure already exists. Because many transportation options are available these areas are less auto dependent, which can reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transportation. Also, multi-unit buildings, if constructed on this site, are more energy efficient than low density residential development types. This energy efficiency will advance Denver's goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from buildings, which contribute to a warming climate.

Equity

Blueprint Denver contains numerous strategies to capture new housing growth in transit-rich Regional Centers such as the subject site (pp. 72, 85, and 86). *Blueprint Denver* recommends capturing about 90 percent of new job growth Regional Centers and other high intensity residential districts downtown and in urban centers (pp. 90, 92, and 93). This is achieved through the implementation of our plan guidance to allow high-density residential, office, and commercial at this site.

Blueprint Denver contains three equity concepts to help guide change to benefit everyone. Each equity concept has associated measurements that help inform implementation actions through large rezonings along with other implementation actions. Given the size of the subject site an equity analysis was conducted at the LDR applicability stage and is included in this staff report.

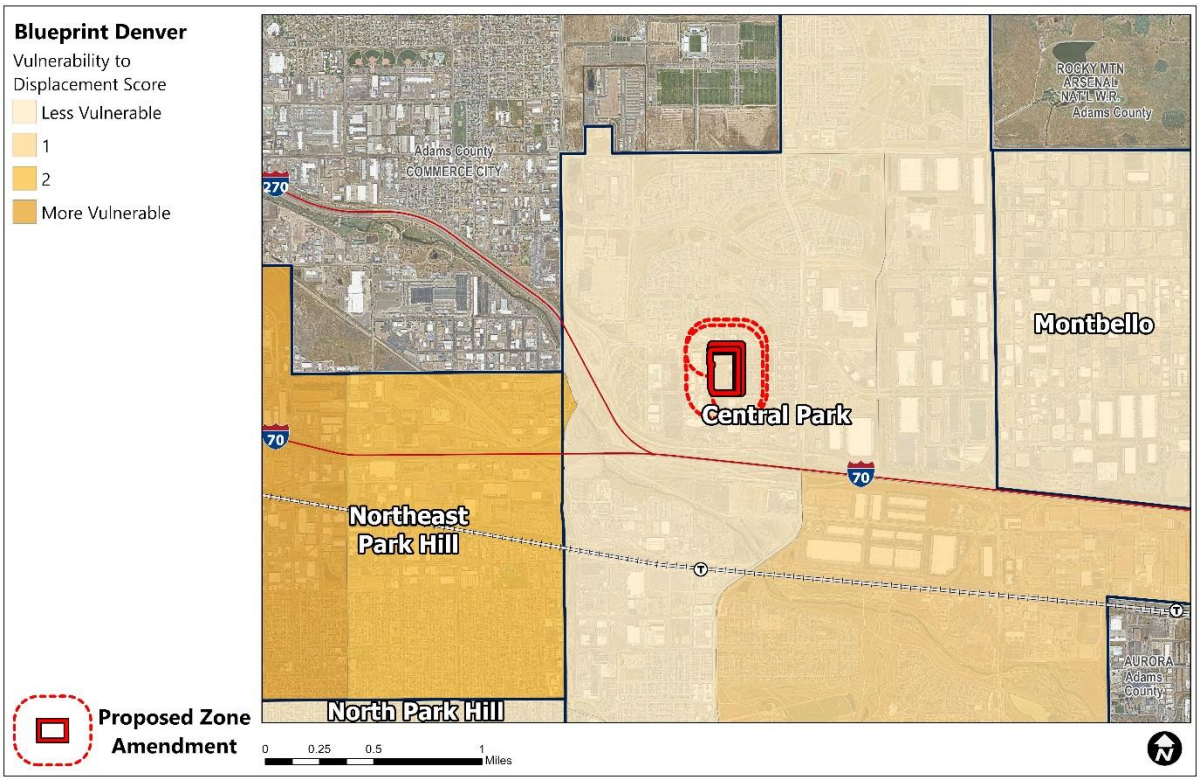
I. Access to Opportunity



The subject property is in an area with high 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. These scores are related to access to fresh foods and increased child obesity.

The proposed district will allow for a mix of uses, thereby increasing the opportunity for access to retail, housing and services. The applicant mentioned they anticipate bringing new residents of diverse incomes into a neighborhood with high access to opportunity.

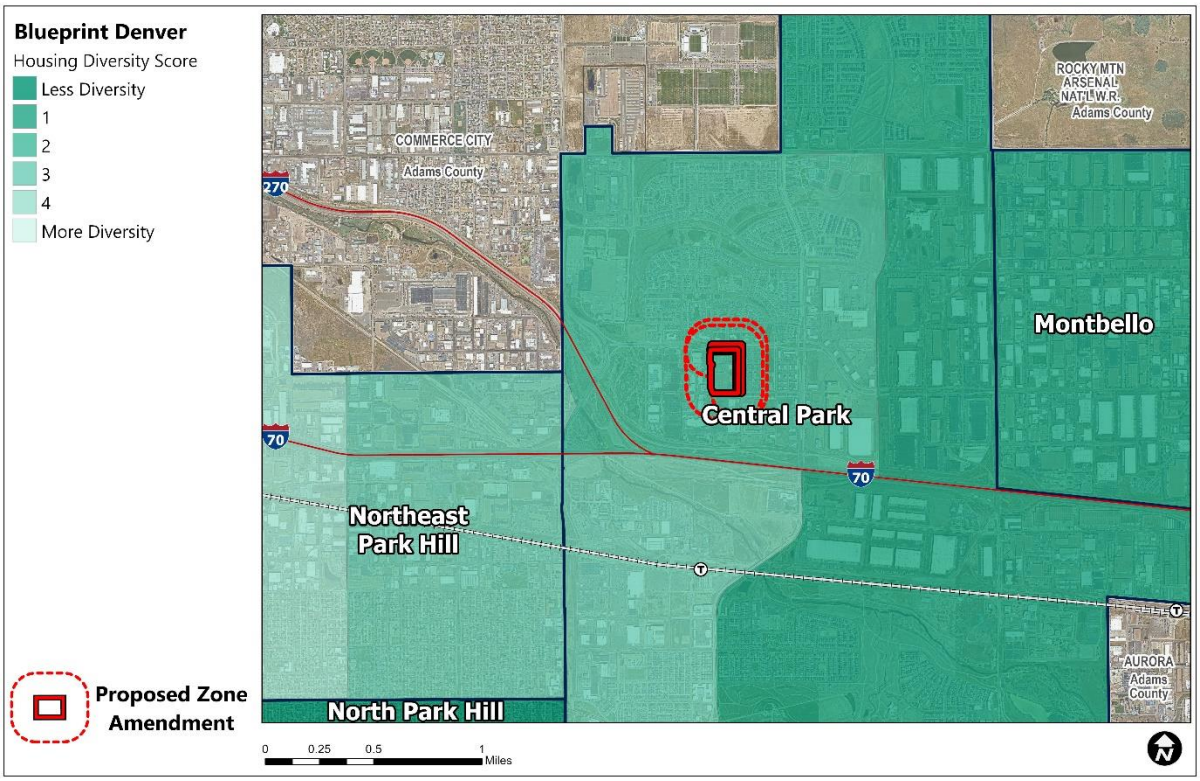
II. Vulnerability to Involuntary Displacement



The subject property is in an area that has low vulnerability to involuntary displacement. The basis for measuring vulnerability to involuntary displacement is through the vulnerability to displacement index developed by Denver's 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. The subject area scored as less vulnerable to displacement in all three categories.

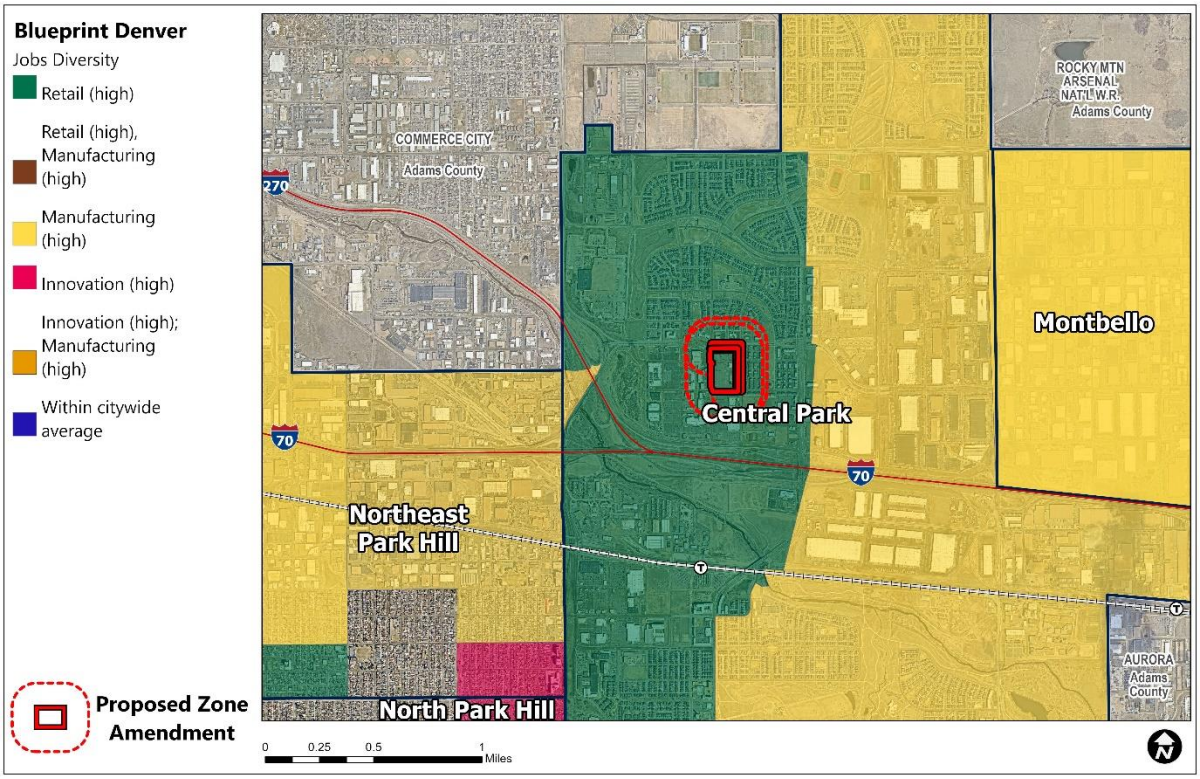
The proposed district will allow for a mix of uses, including multi-unit residential, which will increase housing opportunities in the area. The applicant noted they have negotiated a HIDCP with HOST and so will be increasing the number of income restricted units throughout the neighborhood.

III. Expanding Housing and Jobs Diversity



The subject property is in an area that has a moderate housing diversity. 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 subject area is not diverse in terms of owners to renters and housing cost. In areas with any level of housing diversity it is important to increase the number of affordable housing units alongside natural growth in market-rate housing and provide programs for individuals to access these units.

The proposed district will allow for a mix of uses, including multi-unit residential, which will increase housing opportunities in the area. The applicant noted they are planning to build multi-unit residential and they have negotiated a HIDCP with HOST and so will be increasing the number of income restricted units throughout the neighborhood.



The map above shows the mix of jobs in areas of the city (dominant industry depicted by color) with a greater emphasis on retail jobs in this area of Central Park. The site is adjacent to areas of high concentration of manufacturing jobs.

The proposed district could enable residents with different incomes and education levels to live in a neighborhood with greater access to a variety of jobs and lead to wealth-building opportunities. The proposed zone district also allows for a mix of uses, including office and retails, that provide the opportunity to contribute to diversifying jobs in the area.

Central Park Development Plan **(1995)**

The *Central Park Development Plan* pre-dated the overall development of the Central Park neighborhood and included some land use recommendations that were inevitably not built as envisioned. However, most of the key development recommendations, including identifying this area as a town center, have been developed to-date. More specifically, this property is in what was envisioned as District VI and VII, the Sand Hills Neighborhood which contemplated a mixed residential/employment zone and town center with significant outdoor amenities. The proposed map amendment would facilitate mixed-use development with the potential for dense housing and commercial/retail options which advance the plan vision for this area.

2. Public Interest

The proposed official map amendment furthers the public interest through implementation of the city's adopted land use plans. Additionally, the proposed map amendment would further the City's climate and equity goals.

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

The requested zone districts are within the Urban Center Neighborhood Context which generally consists of multi-unit residential and mixed-use commercial strips and commercial centers (DZC 7.1.1). Within this context, the Mixed-Use Zone Districts are intended to promote safe, active, pedestrian-scaled, diverse areas through the use of building forms that clearly define and activate the public realm (DZC 7.2.2.1). The C-MX-8 and C-MX-5 zone district applies to areas or intersections served primarily by collector or arterial streets where a building scale of 1 to 5 and 2 to 8 stories is desired (DZC 7.2.2.2.B and 7.2.2.2.C).

The requested rezoning is consistent with the neighborhood context description, zone district purpose and intent, as the requested zoning is intended to provide for mixed use development at a maximum height of 5 and 8 stories.

Attachments

1. Application
2. Public Comments
3. Public Engagement Outline