Meeting Objectives:
- Review draft site and building design guidelines
- Review draft description of the proposed design review process for Arapahoe Square
- Review and discuss draft mapping of zone districts in Arapahoe Square

Task Force Members in Attendance: Councilman Albus Brooks, Dick Farley, Amy Harmon, Judy Schneider, Joel Noble, Chris Smith, Craig Supplee, Bill Windsor, Howard Witkin; Not in Attendance: Brad Boyle, John Desmond, Patrick Guinness, Joe Lear, Tracy Winchester

CPD Staff: Abe Barge, Analiese Hock, Sarah Showalter, Samantha Suter; Facilitator: Mike Hughes

Observers: Larry Bell, Jesse Golumb (Trammel Crow Residential), Eileen Feltman, David Tagieff, and Deter Wall

I. Review of Draft Design Standards and Guidelines for Task Force Input

Presentation and Discussion
Staff summarized objectives and format for design standards and guidelines before summarizing draft versions of the Introduction, Chapters 1-2 and Chapter 5 of the proposed design standards and guidelines for Arapahoe Square. Throughout the presentation, staff paused to ask the task force for feedback on key topics.

Guiding Principles
Q: Where did the guiding principles come from?
A: The principles are based on Northeast Downtown Neighborhoods Plan objectives and earlier task force discussion. The principles are closely inter-related (i.e., human scale building design supports a cohesive context and development of a stronger sense of place).

Open Space Discussion
- Surprise about how much emphasis there is on open space. We've been trying to define the street and ensure an urban context. Being overly encouraging of open space might result in building setbacks or other features that take activity off the street
- Zoning code build-to requirements require a relatively urban frontage, so there may not be an over emphasis on open space when both zoning and the design standards and guidelines (DSG) are considered
- Design standards and guidelines do not specifically require a large amount of open space; they are primarily intended to address the quality of any open space that is provided voluntarily
- Open space is a key topic for site design
- Design related to urban street edges is largely addressed in the building design chapter
- There is a need for more downtown parks and open space; DSG could help encourage more green space in an area where density is increasing
- Encouraging more trees and plantings may not be sustainable considering watering requirements and potential tree root impacts on the streetscape
- CSU and the Native Plant Society of Colorado have programs that we could rely on to encourage sustainable plantings.
- Staff will add a sidebar with a link to the planting programs
• Houston provides a good example of street plantings that are not as traditional and encourage people to explore
• Many existing open spaces do not feel safe. We need to address lighting
• The DSG emphasize open space lighting and activation
• More emphasis should be placed on the quality and activation of design within open spaces. It is particularly important to ensure that open spaces aren’t just a “notch” in the wall, but a larger, more activated space
• The DSG currently say open space should be near an entry and have one activated side (at least), but more could be added, including suggested open space dimensions
• Security gates may be provided that are locked overnight
Q: The DSG seem overly focused on open space located along the street frontage (the glossary defines open space as a type of “Enhanced Setback.”) Do the DSG discourage other open space such as upper story terraces?
A: No - The DSG can be expanded to clarify that other types of open space are acceptable

Bicycle Parking Discussion
• We need to require more bike parking in Arapahoe Square, especially since we are considering zero parking requirements
• Two U frames per building does not encourage multi-modal transportation
• Staff are pursuing grant funding to conduct a citywide study of heightened bike requirements
• The Department of Public Works has launched a program to provide free or low cost bike racks to applicants
• The DSG should more strongly emphasize bike parking located along bike paths and near active uses

Mechanical and Service Areas Discussion
• We should be thinking about activation of alleys, not just use as a service area
• Security issues may mean that alleys in other parts of downtown are more likely to develop into usable spaces than those in Arapahoe Square, but DSG can provide general guidance for activation and think ahead to the future of Arapahoe Square
• Alley dumpsters often provide beds for the homeless; they should be located within the building
• The DSG should go beyond “locate to the rear” and address character and security
• Staff will explore additional guidance for service area security

Building Design Topics
• The guiding principles for building design are not equally applicable across Arapahoe Square
• There has never been an urban design plan for the area
• There should be more differentiation by subarea
• Human scale is very appropriate in some areas, but innovation may trump human scale in some other areas
• Why limit creativity in some areas where the possibilities should be wide open?
• Masonry is more appropriate in some areas (Park Avenue, 21st and Curtis?) than others
• The word “eclectic” is not right for this district; it’s not innovative or traditional; we should be promoting innovation in context
Q: Does it really make sense to say that horizontal articulation should line up with adjacent buildings if we are confident that the adjacent building is likely to be removed and the site redeveloped?
A: In some cases the Design Advisory Board may recognize that a neighboring building is not likely to stay and is not relevant, or an applicant may suggest an innovative approach that is consistent with the intent statements.

Building Materials Discussion
- We shouldn’t get too specific about materials in order to leave the option open for creative applications
- The draft DSG does not require a percentage of masonry on the façade as required by the existing DSG
- It may no longer make sense to require masonry everywhere, but that was a tool that has been used to good effect in past design review
- Perhaps masonry still makes sense for special places and moments?
- The concept of using small modules that resemble masonry should be strengthened in the draft DSG as guidelines
- It will be important to get this right
- We will have an opportunity to gather specific guidance for 21st Street (including whether masonry should be required) through the 21st Street urban design plan process, but we may struggle to determine specific guidance for other subareas
- Possible areas to encourage more masonry include historic district edges and 21st Street

Q: Where did the language about not using concrete fiberboard come from?
A: Urban designers on City staff
- The draft DSG say it shall not be used for more than 50% of primary façade material - It can still be used as an accent
- There are some newer more high-quality fiberboard materials and applications, but it is still not appropriate as a primary façade material

Historic District Transitions
Q: The biggest concern is inappropriate building facades facing towards the historic district across the alley - do the DSG speak to this?
A: The DSG will encourage four-sided design adjacent to historic districts
Q: Will the DSG read as limiting height adjacent to historic districts?
A: No, the zoning will control height; The DSG are not intended to limit height adjacent to historic districts
Q: How would the draft standard about visible structured parking adjacent to a historic district work?
A: On a façade facing a contributing building (across an alley), visible structured parking could be no taller than the contributing building, even if that building was only two stories tall
- Even though there are only two individual landmark buildings in Arapahoe Square, there are many more that are worth saving
- We should indicate which buildings these are
- This is a tricky topic; ideally, all the buildings we are hoping to save should be designated as historic (non-designated buildings still go through a process to determine if they are eligible for demolition before they could be demolished)

Design Review Process - Design Advisory Board
Q: How would the notification work?
A: RNOs and property owners within 200’ would be notified of any Design Advisory Board meeting with a project on the agenda
- This notification idea seems like a good middle ground
II. Update on the Progress of the 21st Street Urban Design Plan

Presentation
Staff provided an update on the progress of the concurrent 21st Street Urban design Plan, including identified subareas, such as a more active festival zone close to Coors Field and more passive green areas towards Benedict Fountain Park.

Discussion
- The bike route on 21st should indicate the existing bike trail on the north side of Coors Field
- After 15 years, people still don’t know that line is there

III. Review Draft Mapping of Zone Districts in and Around Arapahoe Square

Presentation
Staff summarized the scope of zone district mapping considerations for Arapahoe Square and indicated the primary objective for zone district mapping is to implement the recommendations of the Northeast Downtown Neighborhoods Plan. Staff described proposed boundaries for the new D-AS zone districts that the task force has been discussing as well as proposed mapping for areas outside of Arapahoe Square that are currently mapped as D-AS (zone districts that are already drafted within the DZC, such as C-MX-12, are proposed for these areas). Staff highlighted areas where development potential would differ most from existing to new zoning and summarized the boundaries of the design review area where the DSG will apply.

General Mapping/Zoning Discussion
- It may be an issue that industrial uses will not be permitted in these zones
- The new electric tuk tuk manufacturing operation would like to stay in Denver, but can’t find good space
- This is a good conversation to have at a citywide level, especially as the update to Blueprint Denver gets underway

Q: Why aren’t taller buildings allowed along the full length of Broadway?
A: Early task force meetings addressed this issue but moved on after noting that the Northeast Downtown Neighborhoods Plan did not recommend taller building heights on the full length of Broadway

Discussion - Mapping the New D-AS Zone Districts
- The strategy to draw the boundary between the lower and taller height D-AS districts near the middle of the block between 21st and 22nd is good
- Projects in River North demonstrate that there could sometimes be a problem with a building constructed on a lot with differing height limits from one side to the other
- Projects are being successfully designed where mid-block height boundaries existing in Cherry Creek
- The Northeast Downtown Neighborhoods Plan recommends a mid-block boundary to maintain the same height limits on both sides of 21st and 22nd
- Drawing the boundary 2/3 of the way through the block means that only one smaller parcel would be divided between the two height districts. Many of the blocks have large parcels or parcel assemblages that include most of a block face
- Drawing the boundary 2/3rds of the way through the block rather than right down the middle seems to go against Northeast Downtown Neighborhoods Plan recommendations
The plan says that the boundary should be somewhere between 21st and 22nd, but the exact position should be determined through a form-based zoning study (what we are doing now).

Q: Why don’t we draw the boundary right down the middle and jog around the odd shaped parcels at Broadway and any small parcels that would be split?

A: Staff reviewed this option but it looked like drawing the boundary in a straight-line 2/3rds of the way through the block solved more problems; in addition, parcel boundaries often change so there is hesitancy to base major zoning boundaries on the existing parcel configuration.

Proposed zoning would be more restrictive than existing zoning in some parts of Arapahoe Square, especially considering that the market demands 1 to 1.5 parking spaces per residential unit, which may make it hard to wrap parking or do upper story setbacks on tall parking structures.

Proposed zoning in Arapahoe Square is less restrictive, especially considering that it does not include a maximum floor area ratio (FAR).

Staff offered to work through these calculations with any task force member who wants to see the calculation that demonstrates that the proposed zoning is, generally, an up-zoning throughout Arapahoe Square.

**Discussion - Mapping of Zone Districts in the Curtis Park Neighborhood for Areas Currently Zoned as D-AS**

- The recommendation for Curtis Park northwest of Champa seems like a significant downzoning.
- It is a residential area, but with a wide diversity of development including the Greyhound Bus yard and print shop.
- We are consistently up-zoning most of the area, so it may not make sense to lower the height limits in the northernmost part of Curtis Park.
- Zoning for northernmost area should be studied more or set aside.
- We should have more conversations with the landowners.
- Recommended zoning in the portion of Curtis Park closer to California Street looks good (the area is already redeveloping, and the property owners are ok with the proposed mapping).

**Discussion - Mapping of Zone Districts Along Ballpark Historic District Boundary**

- Building heights near the Ballpark boundary may be an issue.
- It doesn’t seem like the Ballpark Neighborhood was clearly represented during development of the Northeast Downtown Neighborhoods Plan.
- It could make sense to ‘dog-leg’ the proposed D-AS-8/12+ district to the southwest along Lawrence to provide more of a height transition.
- At the next task force meeting, staff will present more detailed evaluation of heights along the Ballpark boundary.

**Discussion - Mapping of Zone Districts Along Clements Historic District Boundary**

- It seems important to create a transition along the edge of the Clements Historic District.
- This is a vulnerable neighborhood.
- It could be shocking to see a 20-30 story building next to a 3-5 story building.
- With large projects proposed on the southeast side of Welton, it will be important to address this transition.
- The transition should be handled by the design standards and guidelines because design is a bigger issue for those in the Clements District than height.
The effect of 8, 12 and 20 story buildings may not be very different when viewed from the neighborhood, and the higher residential density in Arapahoe Square may be a good thing for the neighborhood.

City staff is not proposing that setbacks be required along the historic edge, however, it will be important to address design in the DSG.

IV. Next Steps

The Task Force will return to the discussion of the mapping at the December meeting when they review the draft of the complete DSG and map. The next meeting will take place on December 9th 3:00-6:00 - Stout Street Health Center, Education Room, 2130 Stout Street.