Meeting Objectives:
- Ensure that the draft zoning and DSG are ready for public review
- Receive task force direction on zone district mapping in Curtis Park
- Prepare for public discussion and adoption process

Task Force Members in Attendance: Councilman Albus Brooks, John Desmond, Dick Farley, Patrick Guinness, Amy Harmon, Joel Noble, Joe Lear, Judy Schneider, Chris Smith, Craig Supplee, Tracy Winchester, Bill Windsor, Howard Witkin; CPD Staff: Abe Barge, Analiese Hock, Andy Rutz, Sarah Showalter, Samantha Suter; Facilitator: Mike Hughes

Observers: Larry & Nancy Bell (property owners), Sue Glassmacher (Curtis Park Neighbors), Adam Perkins (Downtown Denver Partnership), Keith Andrews (resident), Eileen Feltman (Curtis Park Neighbors), David Tagieff, Victor Ceasar, Corey Rutz (Otten Johnson), Anne Lindsay (Golden Triangle Association) and Robert Schmid

I. Overall Zoning & Design Review System

Design Review Board Discussion

- Design review board membership - it is important that the selection is open to the wide area of downtown neighborhood - Welton Street, Five Points, Curtis Park, Ballpark, etc. and not narrowly limited to a narrowly defined area of the central business district
- Staff confirmed that the draft is intended to reflect the wider area

Design review process - Creating the early check in with the DAB - a very good idea

Flexibility

- The goal of flexibility should be reiterated throughout the document.
- Reiterate it every chapter, or at every exception
- The task force agreed that the draft should highlight this key principle more frequently
- Staff agreed to add additional language regarding flexibility near the beginning of each chapter of the DSG.

II. Building Form & Height Tools

Heights Discussion

The task force revisited the approach to heights. The discussion included the following:

- The city’s approach to heights at 38th and Blake is a useful example - relying on bonuses to create the outcome we want
- This draft does the same thing that the code at 38th and Blake does - heights are linked to how parking is handled
- Use the higher heights for the name in the code - 12 and 20
- The base levels should be should 8 and 12 rather than 8 and 16
- This creates a greater incentive
• For office, we have created a system that will promote density
• Our goal was to create a high-density area - we may not be promoting sufficient density in residential projects, particularly in the lower-height area
• Lenders will expect parking; if we factor in those numbers, that will translate into less residential square footage than the existing code would have produced on the lower side
• The testing demonstrated that wrapping the parking with active use left enough footprint to do parking - this incentive is the right one
• Knowing that wrapped parking will work, we should make the incentive greater by lowering the base in the higher area - starting the incentive at 12 stories
• Wrapping the parking will be expensive
• Remember, the buildings will be measured in feet, not stories
• The task force agreed to keep the names (12 and 20) and to make the base heights 8 and 12 so that the incentive for wrapping the parking is a significant incentive.
• Staff agreed to implement the height incentive adjustment in the proposed zoning.

Parking

• The discussion of wrapped parking as part of the height incentive led to additional discussion of parking
• Perhaps we should have parking maximum to send the message that the city is changing, that younger people aren’t buying cars in large numbers and that in the future, this will be a transit-oriented area
• We should encourage people to build less parking
• If we do, in the near term, the areas around Arapahoe Square will absorb the parking
• Active use on the 2nd and 3rd floors is essential - we don’t want parking facing the street on these floors
• We should do more to promote shared parking
• We should be rewarding builders for building less parking than they are likely to build today
• We could require that parking has to be able to be converted to another use
• A parking maximum makes sense if it’s all of downtown
• This discussion could lead to changes that would apply to all of the downtown zone districts and could be bundled with other changes
• Staff agreed to add DSG language to encourage structured parking that is designed for conversion to other uses, as well as parking spaces for vehicle share services. Staff also agreed to consider incentives or requirements related to the provision of less on-site parking (in addition to incentives built in to the proposed building form system for Arapahoe Square) when considering wider Downtown Zoning.

Transition to Historic Districts

• It is important that the code specify that the alley-facing façade is treated as a front façade when facing a historic district
• For upper floors (above the second), treat the building it just like the front - the rhythm of openings should carry down through the parking structure, same material. It’s not just a screen, it’s more traditional
• It shouldn’t stop the third floor
• A full façade if you are facing a historic district
• The district has a value and we should protect it; the integrity of the district is what we want to protect
• Important that we aren’t creating blank walls facing the districts
• Don’t want to put those who are advocating for the historic districts to have to deal with this case-by-case
• Staff agreed to strengthen draft DSG language regarding treatment of alley-facing facades adjacent to historic district (requirements for such facades will have similar to those for primary street-facing facades).

Additional Focus on Transitions between Arapahoe Square and Historic Districts - Uses, Connections

• The intent language could be stronger as it refers to the connection between Arapahoe Square and its surroundings
• We need to encourage connection and integration where projects may cross the boundary between D-AS-12+ and D-AS-20+ districts.
• Staff agreed to revise intent statements in both the proposed zoning and DSG to promote connectivity and integrated design across zone district boundaries.

III. Tools to Promote a Pedestrian-oriented Neighborhood

Streetscape

• Streetscape needs another look - street activation is essential - we have to ensure that we are getting a high quality pedestrian realm
• Can we create incentives for streetscape design?
• When the Public Works Department prioritizes pedestrians as much as we do automobiles, then we will get the streetscape we want
• Public Works has become more progressive on these questions
• Lighting on the buildings is an important element
• CPD should have more of a role in directing the quality of the public realm
• Part of the problem with activation is this - if there is no setback, you won’t get residential on the ground floor - it’s too close to the sidewalk and residents are uncomfortable - feel that people can look into their homes
• And if we only have retail, until things develop, we will have empty spaces on the ground floor
• The task force did not make specific changes to the draft - we will revisit this question in the final meeting after the public review of the draft

Café Seating

• The streetscape section should make it clear that cafes and enclosures at the street level have to preserve the pedestrian way and should not reduce the sidewalk too much and should not push the pedestrian too close to traffic - Section 4.18
• Agree that we need to define the limits to keep a viable sidewalk
• Staff agreed to strengthen streetscape design language to better ensure that pedestrians are not placed near moving traffic.
Building Materials
- The task force discussed the appropriateness of stucco - it is often improperly applied, but may be appropriate if properly finished and detailed.
- We will discuss material standards again after the public review draft.
- Staff agreed to review building material standards.

IV. Tools to Promote Context Sensitive Design

Context Sensitive Design
- 21st Street - need to give more attention to auto-oriented access - a port cohere on 21st should not be allowed, for example
- Are we doing enough to encourage publically accessible open space?
- Making a deeper setback on 21st - we need to reconcile the idea of the gateway corners and the setbacks so that we’re sure about whether we’re getting a desirable condition on 21st
- We will revisit design guidance for 21st Street in the final meeting after the public review draft.
- Staff agreed to review additional language to encourage open space on 21st.

V. Review of Zone District Mapping

Curtis Park
- Staff take direction from the plan in making their recommendation for mapping the areas zoned D-AS in Curtis Park
- Curtis Park’s registered neighborhood organization is asking that the task force consider alternatives to the heights in the plan
- The area could remain D-AS or could be rezoned to a height higher than the plan indicates
- In any event, the neighborhood needs to give more attention to the area and consider what could work in the area
- The task force has options - recommend what the staff recommends or make a recommendation that follows the Curtis Park request
- This needs more time - during the public review and in the final task force meeting
- The public review draft can go forward showing the map stepping down to 3 stories; or show a higher height
- The planning process didn’t move into to all of the details that we may need to think through
- A key element of the neighborhood’s request is to reopen the plan and amend it
- We need to think about what we communicate and how we communicate it to the public
- The clearest way to address this is to show the heights as the staff has mapped it and flag it so that the public review can consider it and so that we can consider it at the final meeting
- The task force agreed that the draft map will be 3 stories and that they will flag the site so that the public and the task force can consider the options
- Staff agreed to note the Curtis Park height question on the proposed zone district map.
VI. Task Force Role Moving Forward

- The items that the task force did not discuss fully will be on the agenda for the final meeting along with the reaction during public review
- In the meantime, the task force should continue to review the draft
- The task force agreed to a deadline of February 10 for individual review and comment
- Request to the task force members: please attend the March 9th public open house if you can
- The final task force meeting will take place in late March