Cherry Creek North
Character Analysis Study
May 01, 2012
Mass + Scale

Building forms, their size and the composition of these building blocks define our urban environment.
1st Avenue + Clayton Lane

Stepping of building heights creates a layering of masses and variety of scales
- Max building heights - 11 stories
- Physical stepping creates visual interest
- Similar materials, but used in a variety of applications creates a rich composition
Detroit Street + 2nd Avenue

The one and one half story buildings heights are out of scale with the width of the street, creating an unattractive composition - urban planning standards suggest that buildings defining a street are to be 1 - 1.5 times as tall as the street is wide. This model shows building heights that are low and the street is wide, reflecting a suburban model.
- Pedestrians observe and experience the 1st 15'-30' of the vertical space above the ground plane.
- The upper levels of buildings taller than 2 stories are not typically experienced or noticed by pedestrians, especially if the pedestrian domain is unified and animated with landscape, signage and retail displays.
- Stepping back of upper levels will often eliminate the perceived mass of a taller building.
Mass + Scale Observations

• Proportions of building heights to street width is important in creating an inviting urban neighborhood.

• Layering of building heights creates an attractive urban fabric.

• Clearly defined ‘base, middle, and top’ are important architectural elements of visually appealing + comfortable urban neighborhoods.

• Pedestrian’s experience the 1st 15’-30’ of a building’s height, especially if the pedestrian domain is unified + animated with landscape, signage, + retail displays.

• Stepping back of upper floors on taller buildings eliminates the perceived mass of taller buildings from a pedestrian’s perspective.
Store Fronts

Critical street edge component - Interface between pedestrian + retail requires easily understood compositional elements
Contemporary use of materials yet creates a composition that is well defined and understandable

- Entry doorway is clearly defined
- Strong display areas visible from pedestrian domain as well as from street
- Interesting screening of upper space frames display windows
Detroit Street

- Split level store fronts and display of retail items are not visible from street level
- Store fronts and displays are not visible by motorists or pedestrians.
• Skillfully articulated
• Architecture defines - base, middle, + top elements clearly.
• Although store front windows are large, their mass is softened with a series of mullions. Top of windows have a strong terminus with architectural mass.
Store Fronts
Observations

- Store fronts need to be at street level.
- Ideally, displays can be seen by pedestrians as well as from vehicles.
- Store fronts create the transition between verticality of buildings and horizontal plane of pedestrians + vehicles.
Pedestrian Scale

Creating outdoor definition with "walls, floors, + ceiling"
Steele Street

Street trees, umbrellas, + awnings define the ‘ceiling’ of this outdoor space resulting in a very comfortable and human scaled outdoor space. Sidewalk, lawn, and street define the “floor”. Building + terrace walls, combined with tree trunks define the “walls” of the pedestrian domain.

- Great layering of walls, floors, + ceilings
- Visually rich + inviting
3rd Avenue

- Scale is too small - “ceiling” (awnings) are too low
- "Flooring" of the outdoor space is at different levels and is confusing
- Edge of the pedestrian space is not defined - feels exposed.

Urban Form

Challenged

Pedestrian Scale
Architectural elements and signage suggest a sense of enclosure (ceiling) richly detailed and finely textured paving creates an attractive ‘floor’. Street trees and buildings define the ‘walls’ of the pedestrian domain providing a comfortable scale.
Comfortable pedestrian scaled outdoor spaces are defined by "Walls", "Floors", and "Ceilings" that relate to our human form, provide a sense of enclosure and define a series of outdoor rooms.
Visual Cohesiveness

Encouraging pedestrians to wander and explore this district – from one visual event to another.
Steele Street

• Attractive rhythm of buildings, planters, trees, and paving.
• Pedestrian scale is nicely defined with awnings and planters.
• Encourages a pedestrian to move further along the street.
• Repetitious elements are soothing and put us at ease.

Visual Cohesiveness
St. Paul Street

- Significant void due to lack of buildings or architectural features.
- Parking lot is not an attractive definition of pedestrian space.
- Lack of visual focal point at the end of street discourages a pedestrian to wander and explore.
- Lack of a strong visual definition suggests that the active/interesting district ends.

Visual Cohesiveness
2nd Avenue + Clayton Lane

- Corners are articulated and creates visual interest.
- Buildings have a strong visual terminus and utilize a simple palette of materials.
- Understandable and comforting composition encourages one to wander and explore.

Visual Cohesiveness
Observations

• Visitors are wary of exploring new areas that they do not readily understand, that are not visually inviting.
• Cohesiveness of an urban area, is critical to convey a sense of safety and friendliness.
• Surface parking lots, disheveled buildings, empty store fronts send the wrong message and discourage exploring.
Outdoor Use

Why we love living here. Outdoor gathering areas can be used 12 months/year.
3rd Avenue

- Exceptional mix of pedestrian scale, visual cohesiveness as well as formal + informal outdoor seating.
- Light railing and plants create a thin barrier between restaurant patron and the public. Encourages people watching while enjoying a meal.
- Sun spot catches the sun throughout the day.

Outdoor Use
Although a little too narrow ("Life begins at 16 - indicates a minimum size for outdoor terrace) the "North" restaurant patio is popular during good weather.

Outdoor seating animates the street.
2nd Avenue + Fillmore Street

• Exceptional sun pocket attracts a constant stream of customers. South-West exposure extends usable season.
2nd Avenue + St. Paul Street

- Sun pocket catches morning sun.
- Tables, chairs and umbrellas are inviting.
- Adjacent streetscape walls provide spontaneous seating.
Outdoor Use Observations

- Sun pockets (SE, S, SW exposure) encourage outdoor uses.
- "Life begins at 16" - Terraces 16' or wider are most attractive/usable.
- Multiple seating options (chairs, walls, planters) encourages areas to gather.
- Direct western exposure can be hot and may require shading.
LANDSCAPE

What makes Cherry Creek North special—
The art + garden district of Denver.
3rd Avenue + St. Paul Street

- Rich mix of mature trees, shrubs, annuals, benches, seating walls, sculpture, and paving creates a wonderful composition that encourages us to visit and stay a while.
- Beautiful annual plantings create an inviting and festive atmosphere during summer months.
Mature trees with various layers of understory plants creates an attractive composition.

Mature canopy trees provide the definition of "wall" with its trunk and "ceiling" with its branching canopy.

Shade trees vs. smaller flowering trees grow to allow views of storefronts and signage. Smaller flowering trees never grow tall enough to frame the shops and outdoor spaces, instead blocking views and cluttering pedestrian spaces.
Wonderful seasonal interest with mix of trees, shrubs + annuals.
Contemporary planter compliments the adjacent, permanent planters.
Clayton Street

• Rich variety of year-round and seasonal textures.
• Dense swaths of plantings creates a gardenesque setting that feels like it has always been there.
• Art is creatively integrated into composition, providing an unexpected and delightful surprise.
LANDSCAPE OBSERVATIONS

- Landscape creates a humanizing scale and provides interesting pedestrian scaled textures throughout the year.
- Landscape often defines critical portions of the outdoor rooms that are so important in defining pedestrian scaled environments.
  - "Floors" – Low to medium height plantings
  - "Walls" – Planters, tree trunks, masses of shrubs + perennials
  - "Ceilings" – Tree canopies
- Plantings, especially mature canopy trees, visually soften and diminish the scale of taller buildings.
- Use of small flowering trees should be discouraged unless they are in a courtyard, away from heavy pedestrian traffic.
- Canopy/shade trees should be used for their scale and contribution to creating a viable retail and pedestrian environment.