D-GT ZONING AND DESIGN GUIDELINES

GOLDEN TRIANGLE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN
REGULATORY IMPLEMENTATION

ZONING FRAMEWORK & ALTERNATIVES
INTERIM REPORT 2

JANUARY 13, 2020
INTRODUCTION
PROJECT SCOPE
The existing zoning in the Golden Triangle was originally adopted in 1994 and was not updated to the new form- and context-based system in 2010, largely due to a lack of recent neighborhood policy guidance to help guide the changes. With the adoption of the Golden Triangle Neighborhood Plan and similar regulatory implementation efforts in Arapahoe Square and CPV-Auraria, this area of Downtown is now poised to build on these successes and establish a more current system of zoning and design standards and guidelines.

The Golden Triangle Neighborhood Plan was an 18-month public process that culminated in the adoption of a small area plan in late 2014. The plan area was bordered by Colfax Avenue on the north, Speer Boulevard on the south and west, and the Broadway/Lincoln couplet on the east. The community vision described in the plan speaks to an eclectic, connected, creative, and livable neighborhood.

Several strategies are recommended to address this vision and they include making specific regulatory revisions to the existing zoning and design standards and guidelines (DSG). Denver’s Department of Community Planning and Development (CPD) is working with area residents, business owners, and neighborhood representatives to utilize these recommendations and update the zoning and design standards for Denver’s Golden Triangle neighborhood. CPD will be evaluating all relevant zoning aspects including building form, height, uses, and street-level design characteristics to implement the recommendations of the Golden Triangle Neighborhood Plan.

PROJECT PURPOSE
To update the Downtown Golden Triangle (D-GT) zoning and applicable design standards and guidelines to implement the recommendations adopted in the Golden Triangle Neighborhood Plan.

PROJECT AREA
Although the Golden Triangle Neighborhood Plan area was bound by Colfax, Speer, and Broadway/Lincoln, this project will be focused only on the portion of the plan area with the D-GT zoning classification as illustrated below.

PROJECT SCHEDULE
CPD is conducting research, analysis, and public outreach to confirm and prioritize the key regulatory recommendations from the Neighborhood Plan. An evaluation of various zoning and design-related tools to address these objectives will follow and ultimately lead to proposed text amendments to the Denver Zoning Code and adoption of CPD Rules and Regulations. The project is anticipated to be completed in mid-2020.
NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN OBJECTIVES

The Golden Triangle Neighborhood Plan includes many recommendations and strategies to improve the built environment and pedestrian experience within the Golden Triangle. It was determined to be too difficult to evaluate each of these individually, so they have been summarized into 12 objectives and organized into three fundamental categories.

A. LAND USE

The Land Use category includes objectives related to the way buildings/properties are used and how those uses are organized throughout the neighborhood.

1. Encourage a range of land uses and development types
2. Highlight certain streets with different use patterns
3. Promote a broad range of housing opportunities
4. Evaluate minimum parking requirements

B. BUILDING TYPE/FORM

Building Type/Form objectives relate to the scale and physical character of buildings. They address the overall size and shape of new buildings and their relationship to existing buildings.

5. Encourage a diverse range of building forms
6. Continue to allow current building height
7. Ensure building mass is compatible with adjacent buildings
8. Encourage protection/reuse of existing buildings

C. STREET LEVEL EXPERIENCE

Street Level Experience includes objectives that address the environment created at the street level and experienced by the pedestrian.

9. Promote a high-quality pedestrian experience
10. Ensure building design considers pedestrian scale and comfort
11. Encourage provision of privately-owned public gathering spaces
12. Improve activity and visual characteristics of parking

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

This Zoning Framework and Alternatives Interim Report is intended to describe the range of zoning and design tools to address the objectives articulated in the Golden Triangle Neighborhood Plan. The report will also present a preliminary evaluation of these alternatives based on public feedback gathered thus far.

The Preferred Strategy Interim Report to be released in early 2020 will summarize the final approach to revise the D-GT zoning and DSG.

For more information about the planning context influencing the project and existing D-GT zoning and DSG, please refer to the Existing Conditions and Project Framework Interim Report released in July 2019 and available on the project website.

The Golden Triangle is the next step in the process to create more consistent and coordinated zoning and design review processes for all of Downtown.
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Community engagement in this project includes a Zoning Advisory Committee, community open houses, a public adoption process, and a range of other opportunities for participation. Each phase of the project will use an iterative stakeholder engagement approach to identify issues and select strategies to address the recommendations of the plan and propose updates to the D-GT zoning and DSG:

- City staff will conduct research and generate initial content
- Zoning Advisory Committee will review and refine materials
- Wider community will provide additional feedback to City staff and the committee

ZONING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

CPD has convened a Zoning Advisory Committee to assist City staff with an evaluation of issues associated with implementing the recommendations of the neighborhood plan and refining specific zoning text amendments and DSG updates to address these issues. The 16-member advisory committee represents community and other stakeholder interests, including residents, property owners, Registered Neighborhood Organization (RNO) representatives, City Council and Planning Board members, developers, and design professional to help ensure an inclusive public process.

Up to eight advisory committee meetings, occurring every other month, are anticipated throughout this project. Early in the process, meetings will focus on confirming the plan recommendations and defining outstanding issues. The task force will then explore alternative zoning and design solutions and recommend specific strategies for updating the Denver Zoning Code. All meetings are open to the public. Visit www.denvergov.org/goldentriangle for the latest meeting information.

COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSES

Community open houses provide an opportunity for members of the public to review key project documents and provide feedback to the Zoning Advisory Committee and City staff. They will be scheduled to coincide with project milestones, including issue identification, evaluation of alternative design solutions, and review of the proposed updates to the Denver Zoning Code.

Visit www.denvergov.org/goldentriangle for information on upcoming open house events.

OTHER OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTICIPATION

The Golden Triangle Regulatory Implementation project will include a range of community outreach opportunities in addition to regularly-scheduled public advisory committee meetings. Key opportunities will include:

- **Presentations to neighborhood organizations or others.** Upon request, City staff will attend scheduled neighborhood organization meetings to present the project, answer questions and obtain feedback. City staff will also provide updates to the Zoning and Planning Committee (ZAP) of Inter Neighborhood Cooperation (INC).
- **Office hours/one-on-one sessions.** In later phases of this project, City staff will schedule sessions for individual residents or other stakeholders to drop-in and discuss project recommendations.
- **Public hearings.** In the final phase of the project, the Denver Planning Board and City Council will review, and potentially adopt, proposed text amendments to the Denver Zoning Code. A public hearing will also be scheduled for the DSG that are adopted as department Rules and Regulations. Members of the public may sign up to speak at these public hearings.
- **Online survey(s).** City staff will work with the advisory committee to determine whether additional tools, such as an online survey, would be appropriate to gather information regarding proposed zoning and design tools.
- **Website.** The project website will provide updated information on project events, meeting materials, community feedback, and proposed updates to the zoning and DSG.
EXISTING ZONING TOOLS
CURRENTLY USED ZONING AND DESIGN TOOLS

The following pages provide a summary of alternative tools that could potentially be used to address the objectives from the Golden Triangle Neighborhood Plan. Many of the tools may support several objectives, but have been organized according to the most relevant topic. All of the examples are currently in use within the Denver Zoning Code (DZC) or adopted Design Standards and Guidelines (DSG). The tools summarized below are not an exhaustive list and do not represent every possible solution. New tools may also be developed as part of this process.

A. LAND USE

1. ENCOURAGE A RANGE OF LAND USES AND DEVELOPMENT TYPES

Mixed Use Zoning

Denver’s Downtown, Main Street, and Mixed Use zone districts, including the Golden Triangle (D-GT), allow the widest range of uses.

- Zoning does not dictate the location or amount of different uses, rather it allows for a mix of uses to exist within the same building or on adjacent parcels.
- Provides maximum flexibility to respond to different market and economic conditions over time.

2. HIGHLIGHT CERTAIN STREETS WITH DIFFERENT USE PATTERNS

Non-Residential Use Requirement

Requires non-residential uses at the street level for a portion of the building.

- Example: A building that is 100% residential in character (i.e., townhomes, multi-unit dwelling, etc.) would not be allowed where this standard applies.
- Relatively new tool that applies only in a few zone districts and often only to projects over a certain size.

Key Streets

- In the Central Platte Valley - Auraria (D-CPV) zone districts, the non-residential use requirement noted above is only applied to certain streets, usually referred to as a Key Street.
- Key Streets are used in some DSG to apply specific design requirements.

GUIDE TO THE KEY STREETS IN ARAPAHOE SQUARE

EXISTING & FUTURE CONDITIONS ON THE KEY STREETS

21st Street

This Key Street serves as the primary west-east pedestrian and bicycle connection through Arapahoe Square from Coors Field in the Clements Historic District. The 2011 Northeast Downtown Neighborhood Plan recommends making 21st Street into a focal point and community gathering space for Northeast Downtown neighborhoods. A subsequent urban design plan builds on this concept to envision 21st as a highly active, park-like street. The character of 21st Street will vary, it traverses Arapahoe Square.

- From the Bellyank Historic District (Way between Larimer and Lawrence) to Broadway, 21st Street will transition from a highly active commercial street that combines bicycle and pedestrian activity near Coors Field and Bellyank Historic District, through the active Gateway Center of Arapahoe Square and Broadway.
- From Broadway to the Clements Historic District, 21st Street will provide the transition to the lower scale residential neighborhood.

3.01 Street scape designs on 21st Street shall promote implementation of the 21st Street Urban Design Plan. See “21st Street Urban Design Plan” on page 56 for more information.

3.02 Design elements shall be used to identify Gateway Corridors along 21st Street. Appropriate elements include:
- Locating iconic building elements at the corner (note that the Upper Level Setback alternative is preferred) for flexible building massing
- Identifying Gateways at the corner
- Identifying iconic building elements with a change in materials or wall plane
- Designing Street Level setbacks with significant transparency on the Street Level

3.03 This Key Street shall be treated as a primary pedestrian area.
- 21st Street along South of Arapahoe Square shall be provided as a primary pedestrian area.
- Design Standards & Guidelines (DSG) are provided on page 56 for more information.

3.04 Ribbons along 21st Street for parking, mowing, or drop off areas shall not be provided.
- See “21st Street” on page 56 for additional information.

3.05 The Street Level setback to 21st Street from the Bellyank Historic District, the Clements Historic District and the Golden Triangle shall be designed primarily by Highly Active Uses.

- Highly Active Uses include, but are not limited to:
  - Retail stores
  - Restaurants and cafes
  - Indoor arts and culture
  - Building additions and amenities
  - Arts and culture facilities
  - Street level uses that will not be considered as Highly Active Uses.

- Residential units built on the existing building in a residential and residential (Sentinel) unit (Residential units have a public strip facing streets onto 21st Street)
  - Light warehousing
  - Balcony
  - Parking spaces and sidewalks

3.06 Lesser Street Parcels along 21st Street between the Bellyank Historic District and Broadway shall provide the development of “highly active” uses shall be allowed to reflect the highly active uses.
- Appropriate materials include, but are not limited to:
  - Brick
  - Stone and Terra Cotta

3.07 Residential frontages along 21st Street from Broadway to the Clements Historic District shall provide a transition between adjacent walkable and private residences.
- Use one or more transitional features, such as:
  - A landscape-paved setback
  - Open Space such as courtyards
  - A landscaped or retail ground plane area

3.08 Alternative: Upper Level Setback
- Designs allowed by the Denver Zoning Code along 21st Street shall provide a total setback surface area equal to or greater than, the following setbacks.
- A landscape-paved setback
- A setback shall vary in depth from zero to 30 feet.
- Areas that are set back more than 30 feet do not apply towards the total setback surface area.
- Use of the upper setback alternative shall not result in a discontinuous setback length out of 80 feet.
- If the primary street setback is an “Highly Active” setback, the setback shall not be less than 80 feet.
- See “Upper Level Setback Alternative for Street Parcels on 21st Street” on page 56 for more information.

Example pages from the Arapahoe Square DSG highlighting Key Streets and specific design-related items that apply.

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6 | Existing Zoning Tools
3. PROMOTE A BROAD RANGE OF HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES

Residential Floor Area Premium

D-GT and some other Downtown zone districts offer a premium for additional floor area within a building for the provision of residential uses.

- Encourages more residential uses in Downtown to support the area as a 24-hour neighborhood, rather than a daytime employment center.
- Additional premiums in some districts are also available for moderately-priced or affordable housing.

Affordable Housing Incentives

Encourages greater amount of affordable housing than would be required by the typical citywide standard by allowing an increased height limit (and thus development potential).

- Example: Zoning establishes a base height (for example 5 stories in the D-CPV district). If a project is developed at or below the base height, then no additional affordable housing requirements apply. To develop above the base height and up to a specified maximum, additional affordable housing requirements must be met.
- Currently incorporated into the 38th and Blake Incentive Overlay and D-CPV zone districts.

Example: 5 Story Base Height, 12 Story Total Height (residential)

This example shows how an affordable housing incentive works within the D-CPV districts. A 5-story project may be allowed to reach 12 stories (or greater in some areas) if additional affordable housing requirements are met.
4. EVALUATE MINIMUM PARKING REQUIREMENTS

No Minimum Parking Required

D-GT, Lower Downtown, and one other rarely used district are the only districts in the Downtown context that require projects to provide a minimum amount of parking for each use.

- Example: In the D-GT district every project must provide at least 0.75 parking spaces per residential unit and 1.25 parking spaces per 1000 square feet of office use.
- Results in a significant amount of space dedicated to vehicles that must be incorporated into the building or a surface lot, greatly expanding the bulk and footprint of the development.
- Requirements may restrict the ability to deliver larger more complex projects due to high land values and cost to build structured parking.
- Minimum parking requirements were eliminated in other Downtown districts because the area has the greatest transit connectivity and density of uses.

Parking Maximum

Parking maximums work in reverse from a minimum parking ratio and instead place a cap on the amount of parking that can be provided for a specific use.

- Example: In the D-CPV districts, a project may not provide more than 1.25 spaces per 1000 square feet of office use (note this is the same ratio as the minimum required in D-GT).
- Goal is to reduce the number of large parking garages/ lots and encourage the use of transit, bicycling, walking and other travel modes.
- Limits the need for oversized roads with large traffic capacity and shifts the focus to the pedestrian and public realm.

Minimum Bicycle Parking

All Downtown zone districts require a minimum amount of bicycle parking for each use.

- D-CPV districts have increased minimum ratios (about 2x) to further encourage the use of bicycles for transportation purposes around Downtown.

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**Example Minimum Vehicle Parking and Bicycle Parking Ratios for Various Uses within the Downtown Context**
B. BUILDING TYPE/FORM

5. ENCOURAGE A DIVERSE RANGE OF BUILDING FORMS

Building Forms
DZC is a form-based code meaning it uses a series of building forms to regulate the overall scale and intensity of development in various areas.

- Each building form has a different set of standards and requirements that apply.
- Building form standards represent the maximum threedimensional volume that a project can occupy.
- A variety of different building types/sizes can be accommodated within the same building form.

Point Tower
Specific building form that allows the tallest buildings in exchange for limitations on the size and spacing of the tower.

- Typically comprised of a podium (up to a specified height) and tower portion where size and spacing requirements apply.

Mass Reduction
Limits large bulky buildings that have a tendency to cast shadows, block views, and create an imposing and uninviting pedestrian environment.

- Establishes a system of reductions to shape buildings and generally reduce their size as they get taller.

Mass reduction requires a percentage of the gross floor area within a range of stories to be eliminated. The area of mass reduction may be configured in a number of different ways. In most cases, the percentage reduction increases as the building height increases. For example, stories 3-5 may only require a 10% reduction, whereas stories 13-16 may require a 30% reduction.
**Floor Area Ratio**

Maximum floor area ratio (FAR) is a zoning limitation that controls the overall intensity of an individual project, but allows flexibility in the way the floor area is shaped.

- Calculated as the ratio of the gross floor area of the building (total area of all stories) in comparison to the area of the zone lot.
- Does not exist in most of the city, but is used in some Downtown zone districts including D-GT.
- Floor area dedicated to vehicle parking is typically not included in the calculation of FAR, however in the D-CPV zone districts this exemption was changed and all floor area is included.
- It is important to allow a generous height limit so the floor area can be shaped in different ways without the possibility of filling the entire volume with a large and bulky building.

A building may be configured in many different ways and maintain the same floor area ratio (top example). In the D-GT zone district, the area used for parking (shown in purple) is not included in the calculation of floor area ratio which can result in large bulky buildings filling the entire 175-foot height limit.

**DSG Influence on Building Massing**

DSG and the design review process are able to address more qualitative and context-specific decisions related to building form and massing, including but not limited to:

- Including a discrete step in the design review process that is specifically focused on site design and building massing.
- Requiring breaks and pedestrian connections for frontages longer than a specified distance
- Ensuring in facade plane, upper story setback height, or materials at specified lengths.
- Clearly delineating lower and upper stories through massing shifts and architectural elements
- Encouraging proportional lower story height depending on width of the street.

DSG can build upon the framework established by zoning to influence the overall massing and form of proposed projects on a site-by-site basis.
6. CONTINUE TO ALLOW CURRENT BUILDING HEIGHT

Height Limits
The DZC includes height limits for most zone districts although there are some districts and building forms that have no height limit.

- Example: D-GT has a maximum height of 175 feet and is also restricted by FAR.
- Most of the Downtown Core (D-C) does not have a height limit and is limited by FAR alone.
- Point Tower form in the D-CPV districts does not have height limit, however the Point Tower form in Arapahoe Square has a height limit of either 250 or 375 feet depending on location.

Height Incentives
As noted above in the Affordable Housing Incentive and Point Tower sections, there are several instances where taller building heights are allowed and encouraged in exchange for certain community benefits or design characteristics.

- Example: In Arapahoe Square, a building may qualify for an additional 40–100 feet if 65% of any above-ground parking is located it behind an active use.

7. ENSURE BUILDING MASS IS COMPATIBLE WITH ADJACENT BUILDINGS

Protected Districts
The term protected district generally refers to smaller scale residential zone districts within the city.

- Additional height limitations apply to create appropriate transitions in scale where more intense districts abut protected districts.

Historic Landmarks
A similar approach to create appropriate transitions can also be applied to Denver Historic Landmarks or Districts.

- Typically addressed in DSG rather than zoning to provide flexibility for specific circumstances and changes over time.
- Often require coordination between facade design and more qualitative standards and do not regulate height or massing.

Special Contexts & Building Forms

Historic Transitions

2.84 Facade Adjacent to a Historic Resource shall incorporate design features consistent with the design standards and guidelines for Primary Street-facing Facades.

Such features include:
- Articulation consistent with design standards and guidelines on pages 36-37.
- Upper story transparency consistent with the design standards and guidelines for "Windows & Transparency" on pages 43-44.

See Standard 2.89 on page 52 for structured parking Facades.

2.85 A Facade Adjacent to a Historic Resource shall incorporate a minimum of 60% Masonry on the Lower Story Facade and a minimum of 30% Masonry on the Upper Story Facade.

Appropriate Masonry materials include:
- Brick
- Stone and Terra cotta
- *Not including window, transom glass and door areas. The Upper Stories of a Point Tower are excepted.

2.86 Where Masonry is not used, a Facade Adjacent to a Historic Resource shall meet the building material standards and guidelines for Primary Street-facing Facades.

Adjusting height limits near protected districts can create an appropriate scale transition to smaller buildings (top). DSG can incorporate more qualitative standards to coordinate transitions to historic properties (above).
8. ENCOURAGE PROTECTION/REUSE OF EXISTING BUILDINGS

Floor Area Premiums

Similar to the floor area premiums for providing housing described earlier, there are also premiums related to the rehabilitation of historic structures.

- Premium offered in D-GT is limited only to structures that are approved as Denver Historic Landmarks and does not apply to non-designated structures that may otherwise add interest to the neighborhood.

Transfer of Undeveloped Floor Area

Some FAR systems accommodate the ability to transfer or trade undeveloped floor area between properties.

- Provides owner’s of property that may be restricted in some way or contain a historic structure to realize similar economic value by selling unused floor area to another property.
- Has been used in Lower Downtown to recognize the value of historic properties and give a financial benefit in exchange for their protection and rehabilitation.
- City does not participate in the market for or pricing of undeveloped floor area
- Transfers are private transactions documented through the individual title of each property rather than through a centralized tracking or banking system.

Minimum Parking Exemptions

Intended to encourage the preservation of smaller lots and buildings.

- Example: Projects that reuse existing buildings on lots smaller than 6,250 square feet (approximately 50 feet by 125 feet) are exempt from minimum parking requirements.

Historic Landmark Designation

The most direct and effective way to protect existing buildings that meet certain criteria is to designate them, or an entire district, as a Denver Historic Landmark. Landmark structures and districts protect the historic, architectural, geographic, and cultural identity of Denver’s buildings and neighborhoods.
C. STREET LEVEL EXPERIENCE

Many of the items discussed above are primarily addressed through zoning standards and limitations. Objectives described under Street Level Experience are where the combination of zoning and DSG can be most powerful. This is the area where most people will experience buildings and their interface with the public realm. Zoning provides an initial quantitative framework and then DSG can address more qualitative, nuanced, and site-specific elements.

9. PROMOTE A HIGH-QUALITY PEDESTRIAN EXPERIENCE

Setbacks

STREET LEVEL SETBACK

Most Downtown and other high intensity zone districts do not require a minimum setback from the front property line.

- Creates a consistent streetwall close to the sidewalk that engages the pedestrian with active uses.
- Has also caused situations where exterior cafe seating or retail areas encroach into the public right-of-way, creating narrow and uncomfortable pedestrian spaces.
- Some recently updated zone districts have incorporated a setback requirement to provide space for these types of outdoor uses that add vibrancy to the public realm.
- Example: Cherry Creek North districts (CCN) require a setback of at least 5 feet. D-CPV districts require a minimum 2-foot setback across the entire property and at least 5 feet for 50% of the frontage.

RESIDENTIAL USE SETBACK

A residential use setback applies to individual street level residential units to provide space for an appropriate transition between the sidewalk and adjacent residential use.

- Requires an enhanced setback (typically 7 feet) to provide space for a patio, stoop, landscaping, and other transition features.
Build-To

The build-to requirement is an important requirement, especially in Downtown and more intense districts. It works almost in reverse of a setback and requires a portion of the street level of the building to be within a specified distance of the front property line.

- Example: the current D-GT zoning requires 65% of the frontage to be within 5 feet of the property boundary.
- More recently updated zone districts include a more generous range for the building to be located (0-15 feet) to allow more design flexibility and accommodate outdoor seating or open space areas.

Transparency

The DZC requires a minimum level of transparency, or glass windows, at the street level in essentially all zone districts and building forms.

- Downtown and other high intensity districts have the highest required percentages of transparency.
- Some areas incorporate transparency requirements above the street level through associated DSG and design review.

Active Use

Most zone districts include a minimum active use requirement that is associated with the build-to standard.

- In higher intensity districts, typically 100% of the street level portion that is meeting the build-to requirement (usually 60-70%) must contain active uses as defined in the DZC.

Pedestrian Entrances

Zoning requires at least one pedestrian entrance to face the street for all buildings.

- Street level residential units are required to have individual entrances.
- DSG can add more direction on the quality and character of these building elements.

Street-facing Units

Zoning now requires street level residential units adjacent to the street to be oriented to that street, eliminating the sideways-facing “slot home” configuration.

The DZC requires a minimum percentage of transparency on the street level facade facing a street. Many DSG are incorporating additional standards for the upper stories and facades facing alleys.
10. ENSURE BUILDING DESIGN CONSIDERS PEDESTRIAN SCALE AND COMFORT

Upper Story Setback

An upper story setback works in a similar way to a street level setback in that a portion of the building must be located a minimum distance from the property boundary.

- Useful tool to help to break down the overall scale and mass of the building experienced from the sidewalk and public realm.
- In some areas, an upper story setback is required above 5 or 8 stories.
- Setbacks may apply to the entire frontage or only a portion of the building (typically 65%).
- Helps create space for exterior balconies and other facade elements that add architectural interest.
- DSG can be used to accommodate alternative configurations of the setback to provide flexibility for creative designs.

DSG Influence on Facade Design and Activation

DSG’s address the possibility of buildings having multiple frontages, including alleyways, and ensuring that the design of the facade is cohesive and well-detailed with texture and depth that provides a sense of human scale.

- Requiring architectural design details and articulation, as well as guidance regarding awnings, signage, building entries, and facade lighting.
- Limiting blank and unarticulated facade walls to 25 feet and extending architectural treatments at least 50 feet into alleyways.
- Encouraging active-alleyways to have similar levels of activity and design quality as primary streets.

Upper story setbacks help break down the overall scale of the building and create a more comfortable pedestrian experience by reducing the perception of building height from the street level.
11. ENCOURAGE PROVISION OF PRIVately-OWNED PUBLIC GATHERING SPACES

Private Open Space

A very important objective to address through zoning and DSG is the creation of small gathering spaces for the community. While zoning will not be able to identify and secure a large publicly-owned park, it may be effective in requiring projects, especially larger developments, to provide smaller open space at the ground level.

- Private open space is defined as being privately-owned, but publicly accessible at least during business hours.
- Areas must be directly connected to the street and meet minimum size and dimension thresholds.
- Example: In the 38th and Blake Design Overlay district, provision of private open space is an allowed alternative to meeting the mass reduction standards. In D-CPV districts, private open space (5% of the lot area) is required for projects on lots greater than 50,000 square feet or 250 feet in width.
- DSG provide much more detailed design direction on the quality and character of these spaces and their relationship to adjacent uses.

3.88 Open Spaces shall be fronted with Highly Active Uses on at least one side of the Open Space.

Highly Active Uses include, but are not limited to:
1. Retail storefronts
2. Restaurants and cafes
3. Building lobbies and building amenity areas
4. Recreation facilities
5. Arts, cultural or civic facilities

3.90 Enhanced Commercial Setback and Open Space areas shall be designed to provide pedestrian comfort.

Appropriate techniques include:
1. Access to sun and shade
2. Benches, trash receptacles and other furnishings
3. Pedestrian-scaled lighting
4. Trees and landscaping

3.92 Paving in Enhanced Commercial Setback and Open Space areas shall incorporate a variety of finishes, patterns, and detailing to distinguish different use areas and contribute to the Human Scale of the Public Realm.

Zoning can be used to require new projects that meet certain criteria to provide publicly accessible open space areas. However, it is important to have corresponding DSG like the example above to ensure these areas are thoughtfully designed.
12. IMPROVE ACTIVITY AND VISUAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PARKING

Limitation on Visible Parking

Some zone districts have standards to limit the visibility of above-ground structured parking. In some cases, this is simply required and in others it may be part of a height incentive system.

- Visibility and impact of parking can be reduced by wrapping the structure with active uses or fully enclosing the structure into the building architecture.
- Zoning standard typically requires at least 65% of the facade to be fronted by active use.
- DSG can be used to ensure the remaining area is still integrated into the architectural design of the facade.

Surface Parking Landscape Requirements

- DZC requires landscape and buffering requirements for surface parking lots in D-GT including street tree planting, tree lawns, decorative screening, and additional landscaping equal to 5% of the lot area.
- Standards are not retroactive and only apply to new surface parking lots that are created (not existing lots).

DSG can be used to ensure visible structured parking shares the same design language as the rest of the architecture or is fully integrated and enclosed by the building facade.

In some locations, parking structures must be wrapped by active uses to limit their visibility and impact on the public realm.
PRELIMINARY EVALUATION
ZONING FRAMEWORK PROCESS

CITY STAFF EVALUATION & REFINEMENT

Staff studied the Golden Triangle Neighborhood Plan in detail and summarized a set of fundamental zoning strategies for preliminary review by the Advisory Committee and community. The strategies were described and tested through various presentations, surveys, and activities at community open houses and Advisory Committee meetings.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE REVIEW

The Advisory Committee met multiple times to review various aspects of the preliminary zoning framework. They provided comments on the relative priorities and effectiveness of the zoning tools, ultimately helping staff tailor the presentation and activities for the community open house meeting to focus on meaningful feedback.

COMMUNITY REVIEW

The second community open house included a participatory survey and a “Development Values” activity to understand two important questions relative to future changes in the neighborhood. First, what was the physical character of new development that neighborhood residents, business owners, property owners, and visitors were comfortable with (i.e., height, massing, etc.). Second, what neighborhood priorities were most important for future projects to provide back to the area in exchange for larger development capacity. The community open house was followed by another public survey posted to the project website to solicit feedback from a wider audience.

CRITERIA TO EVALUATE SUCCESSFUL SOLUTIONS

Solutions that are incorporated into the updated zoning and design guidelines should balance multiple community objectives. City staff and the Advisory Committee will use the five criteria outlined below to evaluate draft alternatives to help determine the preferred strategy.

1. CONSISTENCY

Proposed solutions should produce outcomes that are consistent with the vision established by the Golden Triangle Neighborhood Plan and other adopted plan guidance. The updates to the zoning and design guidelines should directly address one or more of the 12 key objectives.

2. EFFECTIVENESS

Proposed solutions that address more than one of the 12 key objectives will be preferred over those that are specific to only one aspect, whenever possible. Where multiple solutions could address one of the objectives, the tool that is the least complex and most directly addresses the identified issue will be preferred over a tool that may be more complicated or result in unintended wider effects.

3. VARIETY

Proposed solutions should support the desire for an eclectic neighborhood that exhibits a variety of building sizes, shapes, ages, types, and forms. Solutions should allow for, or even encourage, creative design options within individual sites, among neighboring properties, and across the entire area.

4. FLEXIBILITY

Proposed solutions should allow property owners and developers to adapt to changing market dynamics and maintain flexibility to promote designs that can relate to different conditions within the neighborhood. The desire for flexible solutions should be carefully balanced with a need for predictable outcomes as described below.

5. PREDICTABILITY

Proposed solutions should result in predictable, clear, outcomes for all stakeholders. It is important to note that Predictability is not equivalent to sameness or repetition (see Variety above). It means that property owners should be able to predict the likely outcome of an approval process if they follow the regulations, City staff should be able to consistently interpret regulations, and neighborhoods should have a reasonable understanding of the character of development that can occur. Requirements that clearly implement Denver Zoning Code intent statements, building forms and zone districts, support predictable development outcomes.
COMMUNITY REVIEW OUTCOMES

SURVEY RESULTS

Staff asked four questions to multiple groups over the last few months including:

- 16-member Advisory Committee (September 25–October 2),
- Approximately 50 attendees at Community Open House #2 (September 25),
- The general public through Online Survey #2 (October 7–22) which received approximately 175 responses.

When reviewing the results of the surveys, a strong sense of consistency across each of these groups was revealed.

**Question 1**

*Would you support the use of a range of building forms (including the Point Tower) that are tailored to different conditions to encourage a mix of project types and sizes?*

The first question addressed the basic characteristic of shaping building form which can be regulated through height and massing. The current D-GT zoning utilizes one system for all projects whereby buildings follow the same maximum height standard and limitation on the overall development capacity, regardless of their lot size. The preliminary framework that was posed to the survey respondents was to instead use a suite of varied “building forms,” each with slightly different standards and/or apply under different conditions. Using multiple forms can be especially useful when addressing varying conditions such as building height, design requirements, lot sizes, etc. In response to earlier public input, the proposed set of forms includes a Point Tower building form. This form would enable buildings with a limited base height (typically 3-5 stories) and significant restrictions on floorplate sizes above the base to help preserve sunlight and sky access on the street and between buildings.

The responses show a clear preference for using multiple forms to support an eclectic neighborhood with a variety of different buildings, rather than a single-form system.
Question 2

Some strategies to reduce the visual impacts of parking are listed below. Which do you think will be most effective (choose up to 2)?

The second question addressed previous input that indicated parking lots and structures were having a negative visual effect on the neighborhood. Research into recent development trends showed nearly all projects built over the last 15 years were providing many more parking spaces than were required by current zoning rules. In addition, the existing zoning and design guidelines were insufficient to address the architectural quality of these parking areas and their relationship to the public street. As a result, there were now several very large parking structures with inactive blank walls creating undesirable conditions in the neighborhood. The question posed to survey respondents included a number of different tools to address the oversized nature of parking areas within new developments.

Many felt that the most effective tools would be to eliminate minimum parking requirements to make shared parking options more feasible and hide parking behind active uses in buildings. In addition, many voted to limit the amount of parking allowed in each project.
**Question 3**

*If an existing building is protected, how much change would you be comfortable with if it were renovated or improved (choose up to 2)?*

Question Three addressed the desire to protect and maintain existing buildings in the neighborhood to perpetuate the varied and eclectic nature of the built environment that exists today. Many properties of significant character that represent the architectural and cultural history of Golden Triangle are not designated as Historic Landmark structures. The current zoning rules include some provisions to support preservation of designated buildings, but there are limited tools available to protect or encourage reuse of existing non-designated buildings. To determine how current buildings might be preserved in the future, it was useful to understand what amount of change neighborhood residents, business owners, and visitors would be willing to accept if these structures were re-purposed.

While, there is still support for preserving the visual integrity of Historic Landmark buildings, there was a recognition that some design and development flexibility may be necessary to expand protection to include more existing structures.
Question 4

Similar to the current rules, do you think larger projects should be required to do something special (choose up to 2)?

The current D-GT zoning includes a system where projects are limited to a base amount of development capacity, but can qualify for additional rights through various premiums including market-rate residential uses, public art, and affordable housing. While the existing base/premium system with many options works well in concept, it has been less effective in practice. Rather than providing a variety of benefits, it has resulted in almost exclusive use of the market-rate residential premium over the last 15-20 year, which did help achieve the policy goal at the time to encourage more residential housing in the downtown area. The final question was intended to better understand how the community felt now about the role that larger projects can have in the delivery of neighborhood benefits and priorities.

The responses to this question show that the framework of a base/premium system is still desired. In addition, it reveals that larger projects should provide something back to the neighborhood (such as affordable housing or open space), be slender in form to preserve sunlight and views, and/or help protect an existing smaller-scale building.
COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE #2 ACTIVITY – “DEVELOPMENT VALUES”

Building upon the input from the community and recommendations from the Neighborhood Plan, an activity was used at the Community Open House to explore how different attendees would propose to “develop” new projects in the neighborhood. Five tables participated in the exercise and had the opportunity to build 10-12 new buildings. The table members could choose to use one of three different building forms (Type A, B, or C) for each project.

Type A projects were smaller and did not offer any community benefits in return. Type B were slightly larger and would provide two benefits. Finally, Type C represented the Point Tower form and would result in four benefits being returned to the neighborhood. The same building type could be used as often as desired and benefits could also be selected an unlimited number of times. The benefits that could be selected with the Type B and C projects were:

- Enhance Street Level Activity
- Public Gathering Space
- Range of Housing Options
- Protect an Existing Building
- Wild Card (players could write in their own benefit)

The results after tallying the five game boards were as follows:

- 58% of all projects played at all tables were Type B or C resulting in an overall ratio of 1.8 benefits per project
- At least 40% of the projects played at each table were the larger Type B or C
- At least two Point Towers (Type C) were played at each table
- 4 of 5 tables used a mix of all three Types (the other table used Type A and C only)
- Enhanced Street Level Activity and Public Gathering Space were the benefits selected most often
- Public Art was the most frequent Wild Card
- Public Gathering Space benefits and the highest density of projects were clustered in the center of the neighborhood near Acoma and Bannock Streets

In summary, there was a clear indication that larger projects were acceptable to the participants at all tables, especially when those projects could offer enhanced activity and public space opportunities at the street. Additionally, most tables used a mix of all project types, ranging from small to large, which reinforces the recommendations of the Neighborhood Plan to support an eclectic Golden Triangle.
As noted above, five important criteria are proposed to evaluate potential zoning and design guidelines updates. These criteria reflect upon the 12 key objectives prioritized by the Golden Triangle Neighborhood Plan and help identify the regulatory changes that best implement those recommendations. The following pages present a preliminary evaluation of several zoning tools and alternatives as related to the five criteria:

1. **Consistency** – Is the tool consistent with the Neighborhood Plan?
2. **Effectiveness** – Does the tool address more than one plan objective?
3. **Variety** – Does the tool encourage variety in use/form and support an eclectic neighborhood?
4. **Flexibility** – Is the tool flexible to adapt to different site and market conditions?
5. **Predictability** – Does the tool result in predictable outcomes, administration, and interpretation (but not result in repetition)?

The evaluation key is as follows:

- **Strongly Meets Criteria**
- **Meets Criteria**
- **Does Not Meet Criteria**

*Note, numbers included under the Effectiveness column reference back to the 12 key objectives from the Golden Triangle Neighborhood Plan.*

Note the following abbreviations apply:
- **AS** = Arapahoe Square (D-AS-12+/20+)
- **CPV** = CPV-Auraria (D-CPV-T/R/C)
- **D** = Downtown context zone districts
- **D-C** = Downtown Core
- **D-GT** = Golden Triangle
- **RiNo** = River North Design Overlay (DO-7)
### EVALUATION CRITERIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ZONING/DESIGN TOOL</th>
<th>Consistency</th>
<th>Effectiveness</th>
<th>Variety</th>
<th>Flexibility</th>
<th>Predictability</th>
<th>Used in DZC</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ZONE DISTRICTS AND BUILDING FORMS</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Use a single zone district for the entire neighborhood</td>
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<tr>
<td>Utilize different building forms to address various lot sizes, building sizes, and massing requirements</td>
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<td>Include a Point Tower option</td>
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<td>AS, CPV</td>
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<tr>
<td>Set height limit similar to existing for typical buildings (~175-200 feet)</td>
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<td>Set height limit for Point Tower taller than existing to make it an equivalent option</td>
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<td>Use multiple zone districts to distinguish different areas within the neighborhood</td>
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<td>Use a single building envelope similar to the existing zoning for all future projects</td>
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<td>Set height limit for Point Tower similar to existing (~175-200 feet)</td>
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<td>Use FAR to limit overall bulk allowed within a slightly taller building envelope</td>
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<td>Use an Upper Story Setback to break down the scale of taller buildings at the street level</td>
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<td>Use Mass Reduction to shape taller buildings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Limit Point Tower floor plate sizes and require minimum spacing</td>
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<td>Use height limit as the only tool to limit overall bulk and scale (ie, no FAR or other massing limitations)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Allow Point Towers to be close together (ie, no minimum spacing)</td>
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### EVALUATION CRITERIA

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>ZONING/DESIGN TOOL</th>
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<th>Variety</th>
<th>Flexibility</th>
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<td>Provide a narrow setback to create space for better public/private transitions but still maintain a strong streetwall</td>
<td>9, 10</td>
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<td>Require an increased setback for residential units at the street level</td>
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<td>Increase the Build-To range to allow more flexibility for outdoor seating/spaces</td>
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<td>Limit the visibility and improve the activation of parking on upper floors</td>
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<td>Require Active Uses on the street level</td>
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<td>Require Non-Residential Active Uses at the street level in certain circumstances (key areas/streets, larger projects, etc.)</td>
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<td>Require publicly-accessible open space at the street level in certain circumstances (key areas/streets, larger projects, etc.)</td>
<td>2, 9, 10, 11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Require a generous setback between the building and property line</td>
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<td>not in higher intensity areas</td>
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<td>Maintain the existing narrow Build-To range</td>
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<td>Allow parking to be exposed to the street with minimal screening</td>
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<td>Require Non-Residential Active Uses at the street level for all projects</td>
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<td>Require publicly-accessible open space at the street level for all projects</td>
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<td>Consistency</td>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>Variety</td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eliminate minimum parking requirements to remove barriers to alternative and/or shared parking options</td>
<td>4, 12</td>
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<td>Include parking in FAR calculations to better manage the amount and location of parking within individual projects</td>
<td>4, 5, 7, 10, 12</td>
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<td>Maintain existing parking requirements</td>
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<td>Maintain existing exemption of parking area in FAR calculations</td>
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<td><strong>DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY AND INCENTIVES</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Use FAR to establish maximum development capacity</td>
<td>1, 5, 7</td>
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<td>D-C</td>
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<tr>
<td>Require larger projects to provide additional neighborhood benefits</td>
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<td>D-GT, D-C</td>
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<td>Prioritize a few important neighborhood benefits that, if provided, can increase development capacity</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 5, 8</td>
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<td>Explore more flexible standards and development capacity to support the feasibility of building on smaller lots</td>
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<td>Encourage a greater diversity of housing opportunities in the neighborhood</td>
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<tr>
<td>Encourage the protection and reuse of existing buildings (especially smaller scale)</td>
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<td>D, GT, D-C</td>
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<tr>
<td>Utilize height to establish maximum development capacity</td>
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<td>Allow maximum development capacity for all properties without additional requirements</td>
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<td>Allow a large variety of potential incentives to increase development capacity</td>
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NEXT STEPS

Based on the feedback gathered from internal and external outreach, staff will refine the approach for updates to the D-GT zoning and design standards and guidelines. The preferred alternative will include much more detail regarding proposed building forms, specific standards, and development incentives. Additional Advisory Committee meetings are scheduled for January, March, and May. A third Community Open House and online survey are anticipated to occur in late February or early March to present the draft preferred alternative and gather additional input to influence the final zoning framework. City staff will then draft the revised language for the Denver Zoning Code. The public will have the opportunity to review the draft text a minimum of 30 days prior to the first Public Hearing at the Denver Planning Board. A second Public Hearing will be available during the City Council adoption process. Please refer to the project schedule in the previous Existing Conditions & Project Framework Interim Report available on the project website (www.denvergov.org/goldentriangle).