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

CURRENTLY USED ZONING AND DESIGN TOOLS

The following pages provide a summary of alternative tools that could potentially be used to address these objectives. 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 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.

Non-Residential Use Requirement

- 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

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Key Streets are used in some DSG to apply specific design requirements.
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)

Elsewhere in City

Citywide (stories 1-12)
Linkage Fee Option: $279,000

OR
Build Alternative Units: 3 units

Total: 3 units
(1.7% of approx. 180 total units)

D-CPV Districts

Affordable Units Required

Incentive (stories 6-12)
Build Alternative Units: 11 units

Citywide (stories 1-12)
Build Alternative Units: 3 units

Total: 14 units
(7.8% of approx. 180 total units)

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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<td>D-C, D-TD, D-CV, D-AS-12+/20+, D-CPV-T/R/C Districts have no minimum vehicle parking requirement. D-CPV-T/R/C maximum vehicle parking requirements are provided in Section 8.4.3.1.5. D-C, T-TD, D-CV bicycle parking requirements are provided in Section 8.3.1.5. D-LD vehicle parking requirements are provided in Section 8.4.4.4.</td>
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<td>(% Required Spaces in Enclosed Facility / % Required Spaces in Fixed Facility)</td>
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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 three-dimensional 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 behind an active use.

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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.

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### Special Contexts & Building Forms

#### Historic Transitions

#### DESIGN STANDARDS

**2.84A 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.

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.

Design Guidelines

3.89 Street Level residential uses on the South Platte Riverfront, shall incorporate an Enhanced Residential Setback or Open Space to provide a semi-private transition zone.

Appropriate techniques include:

a. Vertical grade separations
b. Stoops, porches, and patios
c. Seating areas
d. Landscaping

While zoning can establish a requirement for setbacks, it is important to also utilize DSG to direct the character and quality of these areas. DSG offer guidance on the materials, organization, and relationship of these spaces to adjacent interior uses.
**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.
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:
- a. Retail storefronts
- b. Restaurants and cafes
- c. Building lobbies and building amenity areas
- d. Recreation facilities
- e. Arts, cultural or civic facilities

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

Appropriate techniques include:
- a. Access to sun and shade
- b. Benches, trash receptacles and other furnishings
- c. Pedestrian-scaled lighting
- d. 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).

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

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.