INTRODUCTION
PROJECT PURPOSE

City Council adopted the Stadium District Master Plan (SDMP) on June 17th, 2019. The plan was prepared over a 13-month period that included extensive public outreach and engagement. The plan identified the opportunity to create a new, mixed-use neighborhood destination on the southern portion of the Metropolitan Football Stadium District’s (MFSD) property and adjacent areas currently occupied by surface parking used only during games and special events. The SDMP, Decatur-Federal Station Area Plan, Blueprint Denver, and other City Council adopted plans outline a bold vision for the MFSD property and strategies to implement this vision. Given the community’s desire for new development in this underutilized area to address their needs – including housing, jobs, and recreation – the implementation of these plans have become a priority to capitalize on the momentum from the recent planning process and the property owner’s ability and desire to transform this area.

PROJECT SCOPE

This Interim Framework Report summarizes the effort led by the Department of Community Planning and Development (CPD) to implement the SDMP and other relevant city plans that apply to the MFSD property and adjacent areas. CPD is utilizing the SDMP’s recommendations and strategies to inform the scope of the implementation work. This document focuses on the regulatory tools needed to implement the SDMP to advance towards future site development.

The goal of this project is to ensure that regulatory tools are applied in a manner that is in alignment with SDMP policies. The geographic scope of this project varies by regulatory approval, but generally aligns with the SDMP boundaries. CPD is working with the property owner, area residents, business owners, and neighborhood representatives to build upon previous planning efforts, test options, and develop a regulatory framework that can be implemented and will promote high-quality development that is feasible. This work will involve evaluating all relevant aspects of the project, including building form, height, uses, and street-level design characteristics, and using the outcomes to generate the content of new or updated regulatory tools.

This document addresses the following topics:

- Anticipated community engagement process
- Existing planning and regulatory context
- Objectives and strategies for required regulatory approvals to implement the SDMP

Project Area

The project area is generally aligned with the SDMP area boundary. In some cases, regulatory tools will only apply to the MFSD property.
**PROJECT SCHEDULE**

CPD is conducting research, analysis, and public outreach to confirm and prioritize the key regulatory recommendations from the SDMP. 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 Q4 of 2020 as shown in the project timeline.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION</td>
<td>8 months (November 2019 - June 2020)</td>
<td>Summarize relevant plan guidance (Stadium District Master Plan, Blueprint, etc.) Evaluate existing rules and regulations to identify conflicts and inconsistencies between them and plan policies Develop a framework and approach for proposed changes, as well as test options for creating new rules and regulations</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. DRAFTING</td>
<td>4 months (June - September 2020)</td>
<td>Draft a detailed framework for updated or new rules and regulations, including draft text amendments and new design standards and guidelines</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. ADOPTION PROCESS</td>
<td>3 months (September - November 2020)</td>
<td>CPD will lead the text amendment through the adoption process with Planning Board and City Council CPD will adopt design standards and guidelines</td>
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*Project schedule may change depending on outcomes from each phase*

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

**Advisory Committee**

The project is guided by an Advisory Committee, which consists of a broad and diverse group of stakeholders that were a part of the SDMP planning process. The Advisory Committee will assist City staff with evaluation of issues associated with implementing the recommendations of the SDMP and refining the approach for updates to regulatory tools. All meetings are open to the public. Visit [www.denvergov.org/stadiumdistrict](http://www.denvergov.org/stadiumdistrict) for meeting updates.

**Community Information Meeting**

As part of the Large Development Review (LDR) process that is summarized in the Project Framework section, the project developer/property owner is required to host a community information meeting. At this meeting, the developer must share their development concept, its relationship to adopted plans, and any next steps that would be open to public comment. The Community Information Meeting for this project was held on November 20, 2019. Materials presented at that meeting are available on the project’s webpage.

**Community Open Houses**

Community open houses will be led by City staff and provide an opportunity for members of the public to review key project documents and provide feedback. They will be scheduled to coincide with project milestones, including issue identification, evaluation of alternative solutions, and review of proposed regulatory changes. Visit [www.denvergov.org/stadiumdistrict](http://www.denvergov.org/stadiumdistrict) for meeting updates.

**Other Opportunities for Participation**

The Stadium District Master Plan Regulatory Implementation project will include a range of opportunities for engagement, including:

- **Webpage** – The project webpage will provide project updates and information on project events, meeting materials, and community feedback. Visit [www.denvergov.org/stadiumdistrict](http://www.denvergov.org/stadiumdistrict)
- **Online Survey(s)** – Online surveys may be used to gather information regarding proposed zoning and design tools.
- **Focused Meeting(s)** – City staff are available to meet with community members and other stakeholders as needed.
- **Public Hearings** – In the final phase of the project, the Denver Planning Board and City Council will evaluate the rezoning and proposed text amendments to the DZC during public hearings. A public meeting will also be scheduled for the Design Standards and Guidelines (DSG) that are adopted as CPD Rules and Regulations.
PROJECT BACKGROUND & CONTEXT
EXISTING PLANNING CONTEXT

City Council adopted citywide and neighborhood-specific plans articulate the vision and objectives for neighborhood development throughout Denver. The City uses plan guidance to inform implementation efforts, such as regulatory updates, that shape the character of future development. The adopted plans summarized below provide guidance for the regulatory processes set forth in this document. The Federal Boulevard Corridor Plan, South Platte Corridor Study, and Transit Oriented Strategic Plan are not City Council adopted plans, but they still contain important policies and recommendations.

Comprehensive Plan 2040
This plan sets the overall vision for Denver. It directs planning efforts to build on the city’s legacy of high-quality urban design and stable, attractive neighborhoods. Comprehensive Plan 2040 notes that the Denver Zoning Code is an evolving document that will continue to be revised to promote a built environment with greater overall design integrity. All other citywide and neighborhood plans created by CPD are adopted as amendments to the Comprehensive Plan 2040.

Blueprint Denver
This plan builds upon the Comprehensive Plan 2040 with recommendations specifically focused on citywide land use and transportation. It establishes a hierarchy of Neighborhood Contexts, Future Places, and Street Types as elements of a complete neighborhood.

The Stadium District is identified as part of the Urban Center Context, meaning that it should exhibit a high mix of uses with larger scale multi-story mixed-use buildings typically located close to the street. It also should have high levels of multimodal connectivity and feature a range of flexible outdoor spaces and plazas.

The Future Places for the Stadium District area include Community Corridors, Regional Center, Community Center, and High Residential area. The Community Corridors are anticipated to include a mix of residential, employment, and retail uses that highlight spaces and uses that allow people to engage in social activities and entertainment, such as shopping and dining. Regional and Community Centers typically provide a balance of residential and employment in the form of a dynamic environment of residential, dining, entertainment and shopping, that incorporates a diverse set of employment options. The area should be highly accessible by a variety of transportation options, with pedestrian and bicycle movement to, from, and within the centers being essential. High Residential Areas, although predominately residential, also include a variety of embedded uses needed for a complete neighborhood, such as schools, recreation, and nodes of commercial/retail uses. This is especially true given the potential scale of buildings within the High category and the neighborhood’s location adjacent to Downtown.

Street Types in the neighborhood include Mixed-Use streets. Given the intensity of uses surrounding Mixed-Use street types, the street primarily prioritizes the movement of and experience for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users. Wide sidewalks, plaza-like amenity zones, bike lanes, cafe seating areas, green infrastructure, and transit-focused amenities all add to the safety and quality of the pedestrian experience.

Additional guidance within Blueprint Denver encourages the creation of incentives to increase density in exchange for desired outcomes (such as affordable housing or open space), especially in Downtown and transit-rich areas. In addition, it encourages future tools that will ensure active, pedestrian-oriented environments and exceptional design outcomes in key Centers and Corridors and help preserve the distinctive features that contribute to the established character of an area.

Decatur-Federal Station Area Plan
This plan establishes a long-range vision and guiding principles for the development and future of the Decatur-Federal Station area within the Sun Valley neighborhood. The elements of this plan direct the community toward a vision for a celebrated, connected, innovative, and healthy Station Area.

Auraria West Station Area Plan
This plan articulates near and long-term goals, issues, and recommendations for the future of the Auraria West Station Area. The station is located east of I-25 and north of Colfax Avenue and serves the Auraria Higher Education Campus.

Federal Boulevard Corridor Plan
This plan identifies the opportunities and challenges to achieving the vision of Federal Boulevard becoming a multimodal and high-capacity corridor that supports and celebrates diverse and local businesses, residents, cultures, natural resources and community. The plan provides a framework for implementing long-term visions for the future of Federal Boulevard as well as short-term projects that will transform the corridor, while building support for long-term recommendations and interim projects that work toward achieving the vision for the corridor.

South Platte Corridor Study
An EPA Brownfields Area-wide Planning grant was awarded to the City and County of Denver, in Partnership with the Greenway Foundation and the Colorado Brownfields Foundation. This funding
allowed for the extensive study of the potential cleanup and reuse of river-oriented development and neighborhood revitalization along the urbanized South Platte River corridor.

**Housing an Inclusive Denver**

This plan was created by the Office of Economic Development and describes the City’s approach to affordable housing over the next five years (2018-2023). It outlines several recommendations that focus on preserving the affordability and quality of Denver’s existing housing stock and opportunities to add new affordable housing units. Most importantly, it identifies that there must be equitable and accessible options for residents throughout the housing and income continuum, meaning that a range of unit types, sizes, pricing levels, and tenure (for sale and for rent) must be available.

**Transit Oriented Development Strategic Plan**

This plan was created to guide the critical City-led actions needed for successful TOD in Denver. The plan uses the policies, goals, and strategies from multiple departments to focus these efforts into a concise work program for the City and to guide public and private investments at rail stations. The Decatur-Federal station is identified as an Urban Center typology with an entertainment overlay, which can be described as: mixed-use, high density, grid and alley block pattern, high pedestrian activity, and multimodal with major destinations incorporated.

**Stadium District Master Plan**

This plan establishes a long-range vision and guiding principles for the development and future of the southern portion of the Metropolitan Football Stadium District and adjacent areas. The Stadium District Master Plan builds on the visions, recommendations, and strategies detailed in the Decatur-Federal Station Area Plan and provides more detailed guidance for the plan area. While both plans apply to the Stadium District Master Plan area, where strategies and recommendations are conflicting, the more detailed guidance of this plan should take precedence. This plan provides the most specific guidance related to the vision and character for the area and the plan’s framework is based upon the three elements of a complete neighborhood:

- Land Use & Built Form
- Mobility
- Quality-of-Life Infrastructure

Each section has more detailed recommendations and strategies that identify and prioritize policies and projects that can be implemented to achieve the vision of the plan.
EXISTING REGULATORY CONTEXT

Zoning

The properties around the edges of the SDMP boundary are zoned C-MX-5 or C-MX-8. The majority of the area that is potentially developable today is MFSO property. The existing zoning of that area is C-MU-30, which is an old code, Former Chapter 59, zone district. This zoning has been in place since 1999. The city updated its zoning code in 2010, which is now the Denver Zoning Code (DZC). Areas throughout the city with custom zoning retained zone districts that are tied to Former Chapter 59. The subject site has custom zoning through the waivers summarized below. C-MU-30 is a mixed-use zone district that allows a wide range of commercial, office, retail, industrial, and residential uses. The waivers described below limit building heights.

Waiver

The subject site’s waiver (see Ordinance 956, Series 1999) is the custom zoning element that carries the same regulatory weight as the base zone district. This waiver includes, but is not limited to, the following items:

• Allowed primary land uses by parcel both “by right” and requiring special review.
• Allowed temporary uses (e.g. special events) by parcel.
• Height limits for the stadium and telecommunications facilities (note: both these facilities are exempt from the view plane ordinance described below that restricts building heights).
• A height limit of 75 feet for all other structures.
• A minimum requirement for 7,000 parking spaces on specific parcels serving the stadium, or as designated on a “Special Plan for Location of Off-Street Parking” (see discussion of how parking will be addressed in Infrastructure Master Plan section below).
• A requirement for a Public Art Implementation Plan.
• Language addressing the required traffic and parking management plans.

Decatur Federal General Development Plan (GDP)

The subject site is in the 210.75-acre Decatur-Federal GDP that was approved in 2014. The GDP sets forth a master framework for land use, infrastructure, and open space. GDPs are not adopted by City Council, they are approved by the Development Review Committee (DRC) and administrative body that includes the directors of Community Planning and Development (CPD), Parks and Recreation (DPR), and Department of Transportation & Infrastructure (DOTI). GDPs act as a conceptual framework to guide future site development. To learn about the Decatur-Federal GDP, please visit the link below: [https://www.denvergov.org/content/dam/denvergov/Portals/646/documents/planning/Plans/Decatur_Federal_GDP.pdf](https://www.denvergov.org/content/dam/denvergov/Portals/646/documents/planning/Plans/Decatur_Federal_GDP.pdf)
Old City Hall View Plane

The subject site is within the Old City Hall view plane set forth in Denver Revised Municipal Code (DRMC) Article IV, Section 10-59.5. This view plane is one of fourteen view planes. Ten of the view planes, including the Old City Hall view plane, are designed to protect mountain views from certain vantage points. The reference point is the location of the original city hall at the southwest corner of 14th Street and Larimer Street that is currently a surface parking lot. The building height limitations depend on the distance from the reference point, with increased height allowed as the building is located farther from the reference point. The reference point is measured as elevation above mean sea level. Proposed building heights would vary depending on adjustments in the finished grade on which the buildings are located, and no part can project up into the defined view plane. This applies even in cases where a building straddles an elevation. Any part of a structure that is within the view plane is subject to the height limitation.

The NFL football stadium and telecommunications facilities are exempted from the height requirements of the view plane. Auraria Higher Education Center (AHEC) is state-owned land and does not have to comply with city building height restrictions. This has resulted in some of AHEC’s buildings being substantially taller than the allowed view plane height limitations and actually block the intended view from the origin.
PROJECT FRAMEWORK
LARGE DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

The Large Development Review (LDR) process establishes the regulatory framework expected of new developments to stay consistent with plan recommendations. The outcome of the LDR is a written framework agreed upon by multiple city agencies that coordinates the infrastructure improvements, development requirements, and other regulations that apply to the entire area proposed for future development. This framework will govern city review of sites within this area as it develops over time. CPD will be evaluating all land use, development, and design issues to ensure the right tools are being used to address plan consistency.

PROJECT TIMELINE & ASSOCIATED PROCESSES

Below are the associated processes and regulatory tools that have been identified in the framework and will be coordinated moving forward. City staff will lead community engagement efforts related to updated or new regulatory tools, which includes possible text amendments and Design Standards and Guidelines (DSG). Some of the processes below will be initiated and/or influenced by the applicant, and these processes are the rezoning, the infrastructure master plan (IMP), and the development agreement (DA). Keep in mind there are City-led efforts and applicant-led efforts that may or may not occur at the same time and that the schedule outlined below is subject to change.
Text Amendment (City)

Text amendments are City Council adopted updates to the DZC. They can be initiated when changes need to be made to the DZC to better implement plan policies and achieve higher-quality development.

Existing zone districts that could be applied to the site would not fully address SDMP policies related to buildings and urban design. As a result, City staff anticipates applying a design overlay with any rezoning. The city’s design overlays are set forth in DZC Article 9. Recently adopted design overlay districts have addressed many of the design and land use elements recommended by the SDMP, including but not limited to street level activation, transparency, upper story mass reduction, and parking reductions in proximity to transit. As a result, City staff anticipates utilizing an existing design overlay and modifying it through a DZC text amendment.

Text Amendment Objectives

- Ensure that SDMP policies related to design and land use are addressed in a design overlay, where lacking in the base zone district and not appropriate to address in Design Standards and Guidelines (DSG).
- Ensure that SDMP policies related to building height is addressed in a new zone district that allows for additional building height, while also encouraging a variety of building shape and form.
- Address building massing through the design overlay and new zone district.

Proposed Text Amendment Summary

- Modify an existing design overlay for general applicability to the SDMP area.
- Create a new zone district to accommodate taller buildings.

Rezoning (Applicant)

A rezoning is a public process that changes the rules for land use and types of buildings permitted (including building heights) on a given property by changing its zone district. The city uses the criteria set forth in Denver Zoning Code (DZC) Section 12.4.10 to evaluate rezonings. Specifically, the rezoning must be found consistent with City Council adopted plans. The Existing Planning Context section above summarizes the applicable adopted plans for this area, as well as additional relevant city plans.

City staff evaluate rezoning requests and make a recommendation to Planning Board at a public hearing, where Planning Board then makes a recommendation to City Council. City Council is the decision-making authority on rezoning requests.

City staff will work with potential applicants to determine the zone districts that best implement SDMP policies for consideration by stakeholders, Planning Board, and City Council at public hearings. Existing base zone districts are deficient in addressing SDMP policies. Therefore, a rezoning request would need to utilize a base zone district and the new design overlay. Rezonings leading to future development would also be subject to Design Standards and Guidelines (DSG) when that development occurs.

Rezoning Objectives

- Determine the appropriate zone districts that implement SDMP policies, particularly for land uses and building heights.
- Ensure that any deficiencies in the selected zone districts related to design, land use, or other SDMP policies are addressed through other regulatory tools that may include application of a design overlay and DSG.

Proposed Rezoning Summary

- Individual property owners may rezone to Urban Center neighborhood context base zone districts (including the new zone district that addresses taller buildings), with building heights calibrated to address SDMP policies (see policies 1.2-1.6).
- Application of a design overlay across the entire subject site, utilizing a modified design overlay.
Design Standards and Guidelines (City)

Zoning provides quantitative requirements to ensure proper placement, height, bulk, and use of structures throughout the city. In addition to zoning, there are designated design review districts that have design standards and guidelines (DSG). In these districts, development is also reviewed using DSG to help ensure compatibility with a special context or to promote unique design objectives. The creation and application of DSG were recommended in the Stadium District Master Plan to ensure high-quality design and a great public realm.

In addition to the standards regulated through the zone districts, there will be much more detailed DSG to guide the future character of buildings, signs, streets, and public spaces. DSG are adopted internally by CPD as Rules and Regulations and do not require City Council approval. The DSG will include Intent Statements, Standards, and Guidelines to direct the nature of the physical and visual environments created by development. City staff will use the DSG to conduct design reviews as part of the permit review process. The DSG may provide guidance on certain zoning standard alternatives that can be interpreted by City staff where an allowed deviation may occur. The Zoning Administrator would have authority to approve an alternative standard that is recommended by City staff. The DSG should be aligned with any Text Amendments to address a variety of building and urban design issues and to ensure appropriate timing of approval for both the DSG and Text Amendment.

Infrastructure Master Plan (Applicant)

The Infrastructure Master Plan (IMP) provides a framework for major infrastructure needs, such as roads, stormwater, wastewater, open space, and environmental remediation, that will be required for the area to develop in the future. The IMP is considered a technical site planning process that establishes horizontal development systems and must be found consistent with the SDMP. The IMP is created through a coordinated approach involving the applicant (Metropolitan Football Stadium District) and several internal and external agencies including Department of Transportation & Infrastructure, Parks and Recreation, Denver Water, and others. This process is being led by CPD Development Services and will inform many of the primary elements of the Development Agreement. Future Site Development Plans will still be required as part of the more detailed permit review process.

Development Agreement(s) (City/Applicant)

A Development Agreement (DA) is a negotiated legally binding contract between the City and a developer/property owner. Typically, a DA occurs when a project moves through a city process, such as a rezoning, to ensure there are commitments in place for public improvements, amenities, or mitigations that contribute to the City and community’s goals. This kind of agreement focuses on conditions or commitments beyond standard City requirements and may also address project phasing and timing of public improvements.

A DA between the city and rezoning applicant will be used to agree upon a framework for additional commitments that will be provided, which are aligned with current policies, but cannot be achieved through other regulatory tools. The DA will bind the applicant to potentially provide certain community benefits in exchange for the increased development entitlement allowed through the applied zone districts, and will include items such as: project phasing, pedestrian/multimodal connections, roads, Transportation Demand Management (TDM) plan, green infrastructure, parks and open space, river enhancements, and affordable housing. This DA should be finalized prior to, or concurrently with approval of any rezoning.

View Plane (City)

The Stadium District Master Plan (SDMP), Downtown Area Plan Amendment for the Central Platte Valley-Auraria District (DAPA), Blueprint Denver, and the Transit-Oriented Development Strategic Plan contain policies to allow for greater building heights in select locations that are currently restricted by the Old City Hall view plane. Both the SDMP and DAPA have recommendations that outline strategies to address conflicts associated with the Old City Hall view plane height restrictions. The strategies include, but may not be limited to, amending the view plane or repealing the view plane. The building heights and/or intensities are recommended to ensure a complete neighborhood and opportunities to live, work, and play can be achieved. A certain level of density is needed for the uses outlined in the plans to function and thrive. With more allowed building heights and intensities, there is more opportunity to achieve community benefits, like affordable housing and parks. Without being able to achieve certain building heights or intensities, many recommendations within the plans will not be able to be achieved and, therefore, the vision of the area will not be fulfilled.

Since the view plane encompasses an area larger than the SDMP site and has broader policy implications, CPD will lead an effort to evaluate the effectiveness of the view plane, especially when new tools are in place that may better regulate building form, mass, height, and design quality.

Decatur-Federal General Development Plan (GDP) (Applicant)

It has determined there will be no need to amend the GDP Future development will have to comply with open space requirements identified in the DZC for large developments through the LDR process.