

# West Area Plan Steering Committee Meeting #12



Date and Time: Thursday, August 20, 2020, 6-7:30pm  
Location: Virtual – Microsoft Teams

---

## Attendees

### STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS (PRESENT)

Jeanne Granville	Jaime Aguilar
Sean Brady	Mo McCanna
Kaye Kavanagh	Kory Whitaker

### ELECTED OFFICIALS/COUNCIL DISTRICT AIDE

Councilwoman Jamie Torres, District 3	Daisy Rocha-Vasquez, District 3
Ben Chavez,	
Melissa Mejia, District 1	

### COMMUNITY PLANNING PROJECT TEAM

Eugene Howard	Sung Han
Becca Dierschow	Mondi Mason (DDPHE)
Sayre Brennan	Megan Miles (WDRC)
Valerie Herrera	
Beth Vogelsang, OV	

### SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKERS

Abe Barge - Principal City Planner, Residential Infill Design Quality  
Analiese Hock - Principal City Planner, Affordable Housing Zoning Incentive

### Other Guests:

Adriana Lopez  
Elizabeth Walsh  
Heidi Newhart  
JoAnn Phillips

## Meeting Summary

1. WELCOME
2. AGENDA FOR THE EVENING

Tonight, the Steering Committee will be hearing about two different projects the City of Denver is currently working on around residential infill design quality and affordable housing incentives, both of which will make proposals to change the Zoning Code.

Zoning Background – what issues are these programs trying to address:

Zoning establishes permitted building forms and permitted uses and includes the ‘building envelope’. Does not dictate what happens on a lot, just sets the general guardrails around the lot. Does not address design of public amenities like parks and streets.

Zoning regulations have historically perpetuated inequality in Denver and the US, by disallowing certain groups from living in areas. Single family zoning arose from redlining map – only allowing SFZ in areas that were populated by white homeowners while allowing density and industrial uses in historically redlined areas, home to primarily people of color.

Both projects are aimed at helping Denver’s housing needs:

- Stabilizing residents at risk of involuntary displacement
- Creating affordable housing
- Promote equitable housing access
- Preserve affordability and housing quality

These projects came out of conversations from Blueprint Denver, where access to affordable housing and equitable development emerged as key goals for Denverites across the city

### Residential Infill Design Quality – 2020 - 2022

Just getting started - will explore zoning updates that:

1. Lift existing bans on housing choice, that will allow for: duplexes, row homes, ADUs
2. Honor cultural and design heritage of neighborhoods, by ensuring design of new infill housing is sensitive to context
3. Protect existing residents while also protecting neighborhood heritage (protect the people and the buildings)

### Implementing key recommendations from Blueprint Denver:

- Diversify housing choice through expansion of ADU
- Incentivize the preservation and reuse of existing smaller homes
- Ensure residential neighborhoods retain their unique character as infill occurs
- Ensure neighborhoods have equal access to design quality tools (Currently wealthy neighborhoods can pursue design overlays etc.)

### Timeline:

2020 - project kick off, education

2021 - Define issues, explore alternatives

2022 - work with public to identify alternatives, take to city council

### Key Topics:

- Not proposing a boiler plate design overlay for the whole city, but are looking at ways to make overlays more accessible
- Will change the building envelope - may include characteristics like front porches, gable/pitched roof,
- Will look at adding different housing types (beyond single family) - duplexes, ADUs, etc.
- Will look at affordable housing requirements

### Affordable Housing Zoning Incentive – 2019-2021

1. Primarily focused on Income-restricted Affordability
2. Encourage the creation of affordable and mixed-income housing, especially in transit-rich areas
3. Less about financial incentives, more about zoning incentives

### Timeline:

Currently meeting with stakeholders, looking at alternatives

Fall 2020 - confirm incentive strategy, with stakeholders, community

Spring 2021, write zoning code update, take through

### Key Topics:

Robust options for incentive zoning. Allow developers to break through the building 'envelope' when developers are providing affordability. Could be greater height standards, fewer parking requirements, etc.

### Criteria for Success:

- Equity - is the incentive system improving access for groups that have been previously excluded Improving access to opportunity Expand housing and jobs diversity. Reduce vulnerability to involuntary displacement
- Market Reality
- Clear expectations
- Accountability – how will the city enforce the affordability requirements?

### Questions and Comments from the SC:

Q: Will the design quality project consider existing (historic) character?

A: Absolutely - For the Residential Infill Project, we want to consider the valued characteristics of neighborhoods regardless of whether they are formally designated as 'historic' (I'd certainly say much of Barnum could reasonably be described as historic)

Q: Is CPD moving away from exchanging height restriction for what I think is limited affordable housing numbers? More like 40% affordable units with more like 60% AMI or lower?

A: That's a big topic of discussion in the affordable housing zoning incentive project, so I'm sure Analiese can elaborate.

-The people pay for the improvement and infrastructure costs of transit stations thru bonds we have passed and that the benefits should come back to the people before it is given to the developer.

-Affordable Housing - it would be helpful if the proformas that are being developed by the Housing Work Group could be shared with this group so there is a better idea of what it takes to achieve affordable units without subsidy and how various incentives can get to affordability.

-At some point that is appropriate I would love to hear more about what happens in the Transit and Mobility review of these projects, does that include smaller or larger infill?

Q: Are preference policies workable with fair housing requirements?

A: Can be difficult to create a preference policy that does not violate fair housing policies. Would need to be carefully crafted to ensure non-discrimination.

-Feels like a lot of incentivizing for the developer, is Denver short of people who want to develop here?

Q: Affordable Question: When we're talking infill. Affordable to just live in or buy?

A: Affordable for both sale and rental

Q: Why isn't the city just requiring affordable housing?

A: Colorado State laws constraint the policies that Denver can enact

1981 - Colorado prohibits rent control

2000 - Telluride decision - inclusionary policies on rental housing is rent control. Affordability requirements can only apply to **for sale** housing

How does the West Area Plan plug into this?

-The West Area Plan will update "Future Places" map in Blueprint Denver (which will impact future zoning decisions)

-Input from SC can impact strategy updates to city wide plan

- Will help inform refinements to: Building heights, building forms, land use, transition areas in the West area

Outreach

Aiming to get broader participation than usual - looking outside RNOs, workshop etc.

Q: is there consultation available for RNOs who are being approached by developers who want to rezone? We don't have a plan, they don't have a plan to follow, but both have their own agendas. What happens before there is formal policy?

A:

- Work with Council people - they provide guidance to developers about wishes and desires of community, so be in contact with your council person!
- Most developments going through the rezoning process will now follow the WAP - they are on a similar timeline
- Blueprint Denver is the overarching policy, can always fall back on that. Has many principles around equity, affordability and design.

-Kind of about applying equity...How do you or WE look at the red lining history along with the Vulnerability Displacement when you talk about infill for areas with some of the highest of displacement Denver.

Q: In addition to the incentives around height, might permission to build a tandem house or and ADU be conditioned on affordability?

A: Yes, is part of conversation, but smaller housing is still expensive to build. Ultimately want a system that is useful and can be used. Don't want a tool that is never used.

- Also, don't want increased density of units by right to lead to speculation and property tax issues

Q: Since the timing of all these initiatives overlay, how can the NPI West plan complement the work you are doing / starting to do in a plan that will most likely be complete prior to your initiatives being complete?

A: Three plans will be working well together - the zoning incentive plans and the West area plan will shape each other with the anticipation of the zoning incentive plan coming on line to help implement the West area vision