Hello,
I’m Rob Haigh, an associate city planner and member of the Advancing Equity in Rezoning project team.
During this presentation, we’re going to take a deeper dive into zoning to ensure that we’re all on the same page as we begin to talk about the rezoning process.
So, what will we cover today? There will be three main components of this presentation:
1. We will start with defining Zoning and the Denver Zoning Code
2. We will discuss the things that zoning regulates
3. Then we will discuss how Zoning works in Denver
What is Zoning?

- Zoning refers to the laws, rules, and regulations that govern how property can be used in different geographic areas known as “Zone Districts”
- Each Zone District has different rules for how property can be used and developed.

To start, let's look at the definition of Zoning.
- Zoning refers to the laws, rules, and regulations that govern how property can be used in different geographic areas known as Zone Districts.
- Each Zone District has different rules for how property can be used and developed.
- The map on the right is an aerial image of northern Denver with different colors defining different zone districts.
- The yellow and straw colors are residential zones, the red areas are mixed use zones, and the purple areas have industrial zoning.
• Lets talk about the work that CPD does in order to put zoning into context
• Our work can be broken down into two types.
• First is the planning work. Our department works with the community to create different types of plans.
• These are citywide, neighborhood, and small area plans.
• These are all policy documents that set the vision and framework under which future decisions are made.
• The second type of work is our regulatory work.
• This includes creating and updating rules and regulations that inform land use or development.
• These rules and regulations also include the processes for development, including rezoning, which is the focus of this project.
• Following this regulatory work, development proposals are reviewed against these regulatory tools to ensure that development proceeds in conformance with the city’s vision.
Let’s talk a bit about how we got our current zoning.

In 1956 the city of Denver adopted the Former Chapter 59 zoning.

Then in 2010, the Denver Zoning Code was adopted to more accurately reflect the vision expressed in our citywide plans.

The Denver Zoning Code provides more predictability of outcomes, including building height and permitted uses.

When the new code was adopted, most properties within the city were rezoned to zone districts in the new code.

However, some properties were not rezoned into the new code, and this is because they had site-specific custom elements and there was no like-for-like to make a transition from Former Chapter 59 zoning to a zone district in the Denver Zoning Code.

This project will focus on a change to the Denver Zoning Code, however, since any rezoning in the city will result in a Denver Zoning Code zone district, all rezonings will be subject to these changes.
There are two main components of zoning.

The first component is the zoning code, which has written text identifying all the rules, or requirements, for each zone district.

As a reminder, each Zone District has different rules for how property can be used and developed.

The second component is a map that identifies the location of each zone district.

The map on the right shows different colors for different zone districts.

So, let’s put this together as an example.

If you had property in Denver and wanted to find out your zoning, you would need to first look at the zoning map to see what zone district applies to your property.

Then you would be able to find your zone district in the zoning code and look up the rules, or requirements, for your property.
What Does Zoning Regulate?

- Lot Size
- Structures
- Uses
- Parking
- Landscaping
- Signage
- Processes
- Definitions
- Grading

Now you know how zoning is applied to a property, let’s talk about what zoning regulates.

- It regulates the minimum lot size, width and depth.
What Does Zoning Regulate?

- It regulates the number of structures, or buildings, that are allowed, as well as standards including height and general location.
What Does Zoning Regulate?

- It regulates uses allowed on properties.
What Does Zoning Regulate?

- It regulates parking requirements, such as the number of spaces or the location of parking.
What Does Zoning Regulate?

- It regulates landscaping requirements.
What Does Zoning Regulate?

- It regulates signage on a property.
- For example, there are rules for how many signs and the types of signs that are allowed.
• The zoning code establishes processes and review procedures, including the rezoning process.
What Does Zoning Regulate?

- Lot Size
- Structures
- Uses
- Parking
- Landscaping
- Signage
- Processes
- Definitions

Grading

- Zoning also controls grading and earthwork.
What Does Zoning Regulate?

- Lot Size
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- And lastly, the zoning code has a section with definitions of words used throughout the code to help establish common language.
So, we have talked about what zoning is and what it regulates.
Now let’s talk about how the Denver Zoning Code works.
The Code is first organized into different neighborhood contexts.
Neighborhood contexts are defined areas of the city that differ from one another based on the existing and desired characteristics of the area.
Within each neighborhood context, there are three main components.
The first component is the zone districts.
There is a menu of different zone districts, such as single-unit residential or mixed-use, in each neighborhood context.
The second component is the design standards.
The design standards define the types of buildings allowed and regulate building features that include their height and location.
The third component is the rules for uses and parking.
Let’s now talk about why we have different neighborhood contexts and what they are.
Neighborhood Contexts

- The map on the right is from our citywide land use and transportation plan, Blueprint Denver.
- This map shows the **Future** neighborhood contexts from the plan, but the contexts are the same and the locations align fairly closely with the current neighborhood contexts.
- Each neighborhood context includes areas with similar existing and desired character of development or development patterns.
- For example, the suburban neighborhood context typically has houses on large lots with no alleys.
- While the Urban neighborhood context has houses on smaller lots, closer together, with rectangular blocks and alleys.
- Defining different neighborhood contexts helps to organize the city into areas that should have different requirements from one another.
- Within each neighborhood context, there are a variety of zone districts.
- Those zone districts have requirements that respond to the development patterns seen in the neighborhood context.
• Here is an example of what we mean by how the existing character, or development patterns inform the neighborhood contexts.
• These images show photos and aerial views of the suburban and urban neighborhood contexts.
• Notice the difference in development patterns between the two?
• The urban neighborhood context has more density, smaller lots, straight streets and rectangular blocks with alleys.
• The suburban Neighborhood context is less dense, has larger lots, with curving streets and no alleys.
• The Denver Zoning Code’s neighborhood contexts help zoning rules respond to the difference in character.
I’ve given examples of the neighborhood contexts, and now, here are the six main neighborhood contexts that show up in the zoning code.

starting from the suburban neighborhood context, the Neighborhood contexts typically become more urban and more dense.
• In addition to the 6 neighborhood contexts on the previous slide, The Denver Zoning Code also has Special Contexts and Districts.
• Special Contexts and Districts are those that need to be treated differently due to specialized uses, forms, regulations and/or procedures.
• Special Contexts and Districts have a different zone district naming convention described within each Division.
Zone District Naming

What does U-RH-2.5 mean?

- We covered what a neighborhood context is.
- Now let’s talk about how zone districts are identified within the neighborhood context.
- Remember this map that shows different zone districts?
- You might be asking yourself what do all these letters and numbers mean?!
- What does U-RH-2.5 mean?
- So, let me explain!
Zone District Naming

- Let’s decode those numbers and letters.
- The first letter in any zone district identifies the neighborhood context.
- Then, within each neighborhood context, there are different dominant building forms or characters such as single unit or Mixed-Use. These also have letters that represent their name.
- Finally, there are minimum zone lot size requirements or maximum height limitations that have a number or letter that represents the number of stories or minimum lot size.
### Zone District Naming

**U-RH-2.5**

- **Neighborhood Context**
  - S – Suburban
  - E – Urban Edge
  - U – Urban
  - G – General Urban
  - C – Urban Center
  - D – Downtown

- **Building Form or Character**
  - SU – Single Unit
  - TU – Two Unit
  - RH – Row House
  - MU – Multi Unit
  - RO – Residential Office
  - RX – Residential Mixed Use
  - CC – Commercial Corridor
  - MX – Mixed Use
  - MS – Main Street

- **Minimum Lot Size or Maximum Height (Sq. Ft.)**
  - A – 3,000
  - B – 4,500
  - C – 5,500
  - D – 6,000
  - E – 7,000
  - F – 8,500
  - G – 9,000
  - H – 10,000
  - I – 12,000
  - 2.5 – 2.5 stories
  - 3 – 3 stories
  - 4 – 4 stories
  - 5 – 5 stories
  - 6 – 6 stories
  - 7 – 7 stories
  - 8 – 8 stories
  - Etc.

### Let’s talk through the example of U-RH-2.5.
- The ‘U’ means it is within the Urban neighborhood context.
- The ‘RH’ means it has the row house dominant building form and character.
- The ‘2.5’ means that there is a maximum height of two and a half stories that are allowed.
- This is an example of a zone district from the Urban Neighborhood Context.
- Each context has a menu of different zone districts within it.

### Lets look at another example, C-MX-8.
- This zone district is within the Urban Center Neighborhood Context.
- It has a mixed use dominant building form or character, and has a maximum allowed height of 8 stories.
Let’s talk about some of the main components of regulations within each zone district. Design Standards.

Each zone district includes a menu of building forms, or types of buildings.

Each building form has a set of standards that control things such as the height of the building, how far it needs to be setback from the street, or the amount of transparency at the street level.

These building form standards sometimes differ between zone districts.

The Building Form table on the right shows the Urban neighborhood context, the zone districts within that context, the building forms, and identifies the building forms that are allowed in each zone district.
Building Forms: Clarity and Flexibility

• Provide clarity to how properties can be developed
  • Height, mass, arrangement of dwellings, etc.
• Allow for flexibility in architecture

There are building form illustrations in the Denver Zoning Code that are intended to show just one example of a building form and how it meets typical heights and characteristics, which contribute to a consistent context for the neighborhood.
• The standards for building forms do not control specific shapes, roof styles, or architectural styles of buildings.
• In the end, the goal of zoning isn’t to dictate the design of buildings.
• The goal is to allow a variety of outcomes while ensuring certain standards are met.
Let’s move on to one of the last main components of each zone district. Uses, Parking, and Limitations.

As we have discussed, each neighborhood context has a menu of zone districts. These zone districts are broken down into two main categories.

Residential zone districts allow for primarily residential uses, with some incidental uses – like institutional, community, and public service uses – as well as uses accessory to a residential use.

The U-RH-2.5 zone district is a residential zone district.
The second category of zone districts are the Commercial Mixed Use Zone Districts.

These zone districts allow for a greater mix of uses.

They allow for commercial, retail, and business uses, and also permit residential uses.

These zone districts do not require a mix of uses, and a development in one of these districts could be solely residential or non-residential.
Within each Neighborhood Context chapter, there is a table showing uses that are permitted in each zone district, their parking requirements, and a reference to any limitations of that use. Uses are organized into Use Categories, and each use has a specific parking requirement. The center portion of the table indicates whether a use is allowed in a certain zone district. This column also tells us if there are limitations on that use described in another section of the code, and which process is required to establish the use. For example, most uses shown here have an “L-ZP” designation. That means these are Permitted Uses with Limitations, and a Zoning Permit Review would be required to establish the use. Lastly, the far right-hand column shows the section where any applicable limitations can be found.