DENVER
THE MILE HIGH CITY

Cherry Creek North Design Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

Date/Time of the meeting:	**Thursday, September 19, 2024, 8:00 AM**
Members Present:	William (Will) Coffield (Chair), Blake Mourer (Vice chair), David Morris, Ignacio Correa-Ortiz, Laurel Raines, Brian Klipp (Advisory Board Member), Liza McInroy
CPD Staff:	Olga Mikhailova (Ex-officio), Sarah Kaplan, Matthew Bossler, Abe Barge,

Design Review / Meeting Minutes:

Meeting Opened	8:00 AM

Design Development Review(s):

Cherry Creek North/West Urban Desing Standards and Guidelines Amendment	The Board continued its discussion on the proposed amendment to the Cherry Creek North Urban Design Standards and Guidelines to incorporate standards related to the new sub-area known as Cherry Creek West. **Public Comments:** Amy Cara, representing East-West Partners, noted their availability to discuss aspects of the proposed design, including trees over structure, the shared garage, and other design elements and they are open to questions. **Staff Presentation:** Matthew Bossler noted the agenda includes discussing 3 key items that were not addressed in the previous session: 1. **Below-Grade Parking and Trees**: Exploring the relationship between underground parking garages and trees placed above them. 2. **Transparency Standards**: Reviewing various transparency standards and addressing concerns raised about these requirements. 3. **Landscape and Tree Best Practices**: Discussing additional landscape and tree guidelines recommended by Laurel in an IMP document, relevant to UDSGS. At the beginning of the discussion, it was noted that during the last session, the Board raised the question of how deep the active use should be. The decision was to align this depth with the current Denver Zoning Code requirement of 15 feet.

Regarding the tree planting and garage parking structure. The Board reminded that comments were submitted to the city on how tree planting can be accommodated in coordination with the below-grade garage. The proposal involves providing designated a tree-planting corridor and zones.

The Board's main concern is that trees planted over the garage roof may not thrive long-term due to potential roof failure, which could eventually necessitate tree removal. An improvement suggested was to design the garage with cut-out sections for planting directly on grade, enhancing the project's durability and supporting tree longevity in public spaces. Additionally, it was noted that this area receives the most sunlight, an important factor for tree health.

Staff noted that discussions with the Office of City Forestry and Development Services have highlighted that technical approaches to improving tree health and longevity evolve over time. It is expected that during project reviews City Forestry will collaborate with the applicant team and landscape architects to ensure best practices are implemented. More specifically:

1. Public Right-of-Way: Emphasized that City Forestry holds review and approval authority over tree plantings in public rights-of-way, including areas designated by deed or easement, such as along 1st Ave.
2. Private Streets and Open Spaces: City Forestry's review authority also extends to tree plantings within private streets and publicly accessible open spaces on the site, following precedent from similar large development projects.

The review will focus on tree selection, soil volume, and spacing between root growth areas and structured parking. City Forestry's role is essential in ensuring that technical expertise and current standards are applied to maintain tree health and longevity in these areas.

In discussing tree planting in relation to the below-grade garage, the goal was emphasized to find design solutions that prevent the garage structure from interfering with designated tree planting zones. A suggestion was made to design the garage in a way that allows for contiguous areas with cut-out sections, enabling planting directly on grade. This would be a significant improvement to the project over time. Even if it is not possible to achieve this for all planting zones, providing some areas for tree planting would be better than none at all.

A public comment was made suggesting that DOTI should allow for a simpler process to integrate structural soil cells into the street design.

The main idea the Board conveyed to the city is that there are two large public areas, each with a full parking deck underneath. The Board emphasized that while ornamental trees, which may need to be replaced after 25 years, are acceptable, the primary focus should be on ensuring the longevity of larger, deciduous trees, such as oak trees. These trees should be planned with long-term viability in mind. The Board highlighted the need for a thoughtful interpretation of this vision, ensuring enough clarity for both the city and

developer so that the concept is maintained over time. A key concern was that as ownership and development teams change, the original vision could be lost. The Board noted that this collective memory has been lost repeatedly over decades, underscoring the importance of safeguarding the long-term goals. Additionally, the Board noted that the standards should not dictate to developers and architects exactly how to implement the vision, but rather provide guidance. The design should be flexible and adaptable to various conditions, including the layout of the parking deck.

In discussing the transparency standards, reflectivity and glazing types to be used, the Board highlighted the challenges of dealing with reflectivity issues. Buildings that incorporate curtain walls often become highly reflective, and with several large buildings planned for the Cherry Creek West area, the Board emphasized the need to provide technical information to minimize reflectivity. The Board stressed the importance of ensuring a pragmatic understanding between the applicant, the city, and the Design Advisory Board regarding the specific limits of reflectivity.

One key takeaway from the discussion is that energy code expectations are continually increasing, which can make it more challenging to meet technical transparency requirements, particularly with regard to reflectance values. However, the Board also noted that increased transparency is important, especially on the ground floor, and also on the second and third floors, as these areas are within view of street-level users.

The Board further clarified that while there are well-developed standards in place for ground floor transparency, and they have seen success with incorporating low lead glazing, the real challenge lies in achieving the desired transparency above ground level. This remains a key area of difficulty.

Amy Cara noted that there is a balance between energy and sustainability goals and managing reflectivity, but she believes everyone shares the same overall objective.

It was discussed that best practices and specific technical characteristics for glazing may be added as an appendix to the UDSG.

A Board member shared that there are three main concerns related to the proposed development. One of these concerns is the reflectivity of curtain wall buildings. It was noted that from the general public's perspective, issues such as reflectivity, heat, and the harshness of the building are crucial. While economic construction is important, the Board emphasized that architects and engineers should be expected to address these issues, rather than simply accepting a design with all curtain walls and glazing that meets the energy code without considering the broader environmental and aesthetic impact.

Building upon this comment, the discussion shifted to the impact of energy codes on plant life and the livability of spaces. Chris Dunn was attending the meeting and he noted that energy codes continue to encourage, and even demand, more reflective materials. This was observed in the Financial House project, where reflective glass made it nearly impossible for anything other than the hardiest plants to survive, creating an uncomfortable space.

	The Board stressed that while meeting energy codes is important, it should not come at the cost of outdoor livability. They emphasized that the livability of these spaces should take precedence over simply adding more reflectivity to glass as an easy solution. At the conclusion of the meeting, the city provided clarification on the process for approving the proposed UDSG Amendment. The public draft will be posted for review and comment, and after the public hearing is held, the UDSG can be approved. The amendment will become effective once signed by the city attorney and the executive director of CPD. Adjustments can be made at any point in the process, even after the public draft is posted. The city will consider any significant feedback received during the public hearing before finalizing the amendment. The Board expressed appreciation for the opportunity to be part of the amendment process.
	The meeting adjourned at 9:07AM.