

ADVANCING EQUITY IN REZONING PHASE I & II COMMUNITY OUTREACH SUMMARY

The Advancing Equity in Rezoning Project

The Advancing Equity in Rezoning (AEIR) project began in late 2021, and the first community task force meeting was held in early 2022. The AEIR project aims to improve transparency and equity within the rezoning process, consider the impact of rezonings on neighboring residents and properties, and explore how rezonings can lead to more equitable outcomes that better serve all community members. Such outcomes could include improving access to open space, public transportation, housing and employment opportunities. During the first two phases of this project, participants were able to learn about the project, understand the rezoning process, help to establish the project's identified objectives and issues, provide feedback and insights, ask questions, and speak with city planners. The feedback directly informed the issues identified, as further outlined in the Issue Identification Report. Public input opportunities will continue to be available throughout the project. The information presented in this summary provides an overview of the outreach and engagement that was conducted in the first two phases of the Advancing Equity in Rezoning Project.

Phase I (November 2021 – February 2022)

During the project's launch in Phase I, public engagement helped create a shared understanding of the project and process, its parameters, and began to identify issues and opportunities for the project to address.

Phase II (March 2022 – April 2022)

In Phase II of the project, public engagement helped evaluate background and peer city research, further defined the issues and opportunities, and confirmed the problem identification statements.

Outreach Overview

Through the first two phases of the Advancing Equity in Rezoning project, the following outreach was conducted:

- 4 Task Force Meetings
- 5 Focus Group Meetings
- 1 Community Meeting
- 1 Community Survey
- 3 Newsletters
- Intentional Engagement
- Other Organization Meetings

Key Feedback Themes

Feedback received during the first two phases of the AEIR project was used to develop the general problem statements and identify specific issues within the rezoning process. As city staff evaluated Denver's current rezoning process, developed the project objectives, and refined them based on input from the task force, focus groups, and community responses, the key feedback themes developed into the project's problem statements. These problem statements generally fall into one of five categories described below. Additional details about the issue identification process and the specific problems identified can be found in the *Advancing Equity in Rezoning Issue Identification Report*.

Public Awareness

- Required public notice for rezonings is not sufficiently accessible or equitable.
- Review criteria and process are difficult to understand.
- Translation and interpretation is inadequate.
- Notification may not reach affected stakeholders in a community.

Consideration of Public Input

- Public engagement requirements for rezonings are insufficient or unclear.
- The role of public input in the decision-making process for rezonings is unclear.
- The timing and format of public hearings for rezonings are inequitable and inaccessible to some stakeholders.

Process for Applicants

- The rezoning process is the same regardless of location or scale of the request. It is complex and time-consuming, even for proposals that clearly meet the review criteria and/or are smaller rezonings
- The application process for a rezoning is not accessible or understandable to many applicants.
- Process steps and potential outcomes are not clear to applicants.

Review Criteria

- The review criteria do not identify how public input is used.
- The review criteria do not clearly consider equity impacts.
- The review criteria are unclear or vague.

Equitable Outcomes

- Equity analysis of rezonings is inconsistently applied.
- Rezoning results in a wide range of possible outcomes for a property, making potential impacts unpredictable.
- It is difficult for applicants to make commitments at the time of rezoning.
- Rezoning fees are inequitable.
- Relying primarily on applicant-driven rezonings to implement plans can lead to inequitable outcomes.

Community Task Force Meetings

The [Advancing Equity in Rezoning Community Task Force](#) is a group of individuals that was assembled in January 2022 and includes 25 members from a broad spectrum of people with a variety of perspectives and experiences. The task force assists city staff by providing feedback and helping to develop strategies to modernize the existing rezoning process and criteria. In the first two phases, this taskforce was instrumental in developing the draft issues and goals. All meetings are conducted remotely and are open to the public.

- **January 12, 2022** – Welcome and Introduction to the project
- **January 26, 2022** – Optional Task Force Orientation
- **February 23, 2022** – City’s Equity Work and Task Force Roles
- **March 23, 2022** – Rezoning Trends, Draft Issues and Goals

Videos, presentations, notes, and agendas for each meeting are available on the [city’s website](#).

Focus Group Meetings

The first two phases included five topic-based focus groups. The first two focus groups were held in January and included individuals who had expressed interest in participating in the project through the online interest form that was advertised in Fall 2021. The next three focus group meetings were advertised through intentional outreach to organizations, prior rezoning applicants, community members previously involved in rezonings, City Council offices, and through the newsletter and project website. Individuals could select which meeting was most relevant for their experience with the rezoning process.

- **January 27, 2022 – (7 participants)** The first focus group was made up of individuals who expressed interest in the AEIR project through the online interest form, and included a mix of community members, applicants, and land use professionals.
- **January 27, 2022 – (12 participants)** The second focus group was also made up of individuals who expressed interest in the AEIR project through the online interest form, and included a mix of community members, applicants, and land use professionals.
- **April 12, 2022 – (8 participants)** The third focus group included individuals who have experienced challenges and barriers as a community member during the rezoning process.
- **April 13, 2022 – (5 participants)** The fourth focus group included individuals who have experienced challenges and barriers as an applicant during the rezoning process.
- **April 19, 2022 – (6 participants)** The fifth focus group meeting included individuals with experience participating in the rezoning process to discuss their successes and opportunities.

The meeting notes from each focus group meeting are available on the [project website](#).

Community Meetings

The first two phases included one virtual community meeting that provided information about the project, solicited feedback on the draft issues and goals, and allowed time for questions.

Community meeting participants were generally supportive of the draft issues proposed. There was conversation about Registered Neighborhood Organizations and their role in rezonings and consideration of what will create equity in the rezoning process. Participants also expressed a range of other concerns, including other issues related to equity outside of the rezoning process, environmental issues, and general issues about zone districts.

- **April 5, 2022**

Complete meeting video, presentation, meeting notes and agenda are available on the [city's website](#).

Community Survey

A community survey was distributed to supplement the first community meeting. The survey requested feedback on the project's draft issues and goals and was distributed through the project newsletter (subscriber count of 429 as of July 2022). The survey was also distributed through social media posts and was shared with registered neighborhood organizations and city council offices to further disseminate. The survey was available online through the end of May.

The survey was completed by 167 individuals.

- 48 percent of respondents agreed that we have identified the main issues the project should address,
- 26 percent of respondents disagreed that we have identified the main issues the project should address, and
- 25 percent of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that we have identified the main issues the project should address.
- The comments in the survey generally support the identified issues.

A summary document for the community survey is available on the [city's website](#).

Newsletters

Newsletters were distributed at three points during the first two phases of the Advancing Equity in Rezoning project. The newsletter has a subscriber count of 429 as of July 2022 and is distributed to raise awareness of the project, advertise upcoming events, and request feedback on the project progress.

- January 4, 2022 – [Project Updates in the New Year](#)
- March 16, 2022 – [You're Invited: Community Meeting on April 5](#)
- May 9, 2022 – [Do We Have It Right?](#)

Intentional Engagement

Intentional community engagement was performed to increase the involvement of historically underrepresented communities, including neighborhoods vulnerable to displacement. Overall, over 60 individuals and 20 organizations were invited to participate via one-on-one conversations, focus groups, or larger community meetings.

Additionally, the project team performed targeted neighborhood engagement with residents who had first-hand experience with a rezoning in the Elyria-Swansea and Five Points neighborhoods. 13 residents talked with the team, and their comments informed the issue identification report.

Key themes from intentional engagement included:

- Property owners aren't required to redevelop the site immediately after rezoning, creating issues for neighbors (e.g., squatters, theft, etc.)
- Community members attend meetings and provide feedback, but there is little understanding of how feedback was used, which can create distrust in the process.
- The rezoning process needs more accountability measures and clear communication (i.e. less jargon) to ensure rezoning process is inclusive.

Other Meetings

The project team also met with several local organizations and community groups during the Phases 1 and 2 to discuss the project and hear feedback. Two meetings were held after April 2022, but are included in the summary below as they also discussed issue identification.

Inter Neighborhood Cooperation (INC) – March 26, 2022

The planning team attended the INC Zoning and Planning Committee meeting on March 26, 2022 to introduce the project and gather initial input. There were 15 people in attendance. Key feedback themes included:

- Ensuring that community members are engaged in the process
- Better defining equity through this process
- Improving opportunities for residents to partner with staff and developers to create equitable outcomes (e.g., GES Coalition examples)
- Explore tailoring the process based on the type of rezoning (e.g., smaller applicants and homeowners need more help navigating the process)
- Better ways to sign up for notifications
- More assistance for community members so they can understand and effectively participate

Planning Board information Item - April 20, 2022

Staff attended the Planning Board meeting to present an overview and introduction to the project. Planning Board asked questions and provided preliminary feedback. Key themes from the feedback include:

- Recommend further exploration of which metrics and measurements are used in the equity analysis
- Explore providing a system for a city-provided advocate for applicants during the rezoning process.
- Provide more clarity on the goal of the project and how we will measure how the process is more equitable
- There are equity issues in requiring individual homeowners to complete rezonings

- Rezoning tend to be more difficult in neighborhoods that more resources, regardless of how rezoning implements an adopted plan. This can result in less rezonings in those neighborhoods and more rezonings in more vulnerable neighborhoods, which is inequitable. Legislative rezonings to implement an area plan that occur immediately following an area plan would result in more equitable rezoning practices.
- Planning Board requested time during a work session to provide further input on the project

Home Builders Association of Metro Denver (HBA) – May 5, 2022

The planning team attended the HBA’s task force meeting to share information about the project, including draft issues. Some members commented that any updates to the rezoning process should be evaluated to ensure they don’t have the unintended consequence of stifling the production of more housing units in Denver.

Anti-Displacement Policy Network – June 8, 2022

The Anti-Displacement Policy Network (ADPN) is hosted by the Denver Economic Development and Opportunity’s Neighborhood Equity and Stabilization Team (NEST). It includes community members, nonprofit organizations, and policy experts who are focused on improving equity in Denver. The planning team attended the ADPN meeting to share information about project, including draft issues, and gather input from the group. Key feedback themes included:

- Need to address power dynamics within the Advancing Equity in Rezoning task force meetings in order to elevate underrepresented voices
- Consider notification at the pre-application stage so that neighborhoods can get involved early
- Ensure the equity analysis focuses on the key data points and can truly make an impact
- Rezoning process should be easier in neighborhoods of opportunity/privilege, while focusing the additional engagement and equity analysis in vulnerable neighborhoods.

City Staff Meetings

The AEIR project team met with city staff in CPD and other city departments who are involved in the rezoning process.

Who was Involved – Demographic Summary

CPD recognizes the importance of engaging diverse and traditionally underrepresented communities in the creation of plans and implementation tools that best serve Denver’s residents. Inclusive and effective participation and community engagement is vital for the success of the AEIR project. The demographic information below summarizes the participation in the first two phases of the AEIR project, for those engagement events/meetings where participants were asked to respond to optional demographic questions. This includes the task force, focus groups, community meeting, and online surveys.

Ethnicity	
White	56%
Black or African American	6%
Hispanic, Latino/Latina/Latinx, or Spanish	9%
Asian	5%
Multi-racial	9%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1%
American Indian or Alaska Native	3%
Prefer to not Answer	12%

Gender		Age	
Male	48%	19-34	22%
Female	43%	35-44	24%
Prefer to Not Answer	9%	45-54	15%
		55-64	14%
		65-74	10%
		75 and Older	3%
		Prefer not to Answer	11%

Tenure		Household Income	
Own	80%	\$25,000-\$49,999	7%
Rent	14%	\$50,000-\$99,999	25%
Prefer not to Answer	7%	\$100,000-\$159,999	19%
		\$150,000-\$199,999	14%
		\$200,000 or more	14%
		Prefer not to Answer	20%