

**CITY OF BOULDER
PLANNING BOARD AGENDA ITEM**

MEETING DATE: April 1, 2010

AGENDA TITLE: Public hearing and consideration of a recommendation to City Council on the proposed approach to the following items:

1. Additions to the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines for the interface areas and the area south of Canyon.
2. Zone changes to the Downtown-3 (DT-3) district and the Downtown-5 (DT-5) district.
3. Additional criteria for the residential floor area ratio (FAR) bonus in the downtown zone districts.
4. Changes in the by-right height in the downtown zone districts.
5. Elimination of below grade floor area from the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) calculation in the downtown zone districts.
6. Additional criteria for height modifications city-wide.

REQUESTING DEPARTMENT:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The purpose of this agenda item is for the Planning Board to consider recommendations to City Council on the proposed urban design vision for the South of Canyon Area and associated changes to the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines, the residential floor area ratio (FAR) bonus downtown, the city-wide height modification criteria, and two code changes in the downtown zone districts. The options presented in the attached report (**Attachment A**) are in response to City Council direction from December 2008 and from

further discussion on the Planning Department's work program at Council's 2009 retreat .
The current Downtown Urban Design Guidelines may be found online at:
<http://www.bouldercolorado.gov/files/PDS/historicpres/pdfs/ddguidelines.pdf>

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

At the December 2 and 16, 2008 City Council meetings, City Council passed several motions relating to development downtown and height modifications city-wide. Following is a summary of the Council direction in *italics* with the corresponding staff recommendations.

A. Vision and Design Guidelines

Council Direction: Update the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines for the interface areas and the area south of Canyon Boulevard, including strengthening and clarifying the vision and criteria in the Guidelines and developing additional graphic examples to illustrate appropriate scale, bulk, and open space.

Staff Recommendations:

Amend the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines (Guidelines) for the area south of Canyon Boulevard and the downtown interface areas to achieve and reinforce the following:

1. Create a setback along the south side of Canyon Boulevard at 78 feet from the centerline, with a double row of trees planted in the ground (not over parking).
2. Set back any 4th story 20 feet from a public right-of-way.
3. Upgrade the intersections of Canyon Boulevard at 14th, 15th, 16th & 17th Streets with distinctive pedestrian crosswalk pavement treatments, similar to the one at Canyon and 13th Street, including pedestrian refuge islands in the median where possible.
4. Establish on-street bike lanes on Canyon Boulevard.
5. Create a continuous east-west multi-use path connection along the North Boulder & Farmer's ditch corridor from 14th to 17th Streets, extending the existing path from 13th Street.
6. Create additional green spaces and public plazas along the ditch, connected to the multi-use path.
7. Establish an improved streetscape on 15th Street including first floor retail uses to support 15th Street as a vibrant shopping street.
8. Incorporate the on-street conceptual improvements for expanded bus loading areas along Canyon Boulevard and 14th Street in a manner that minimizes transfer walking distances for transit riders.
9. Identify interface areas wherever downtown zones are adjacent to residential zone districts.
10. Establish three stories maximum in interface areas.

B. Floor Area Ratios

Council Direction: Revise the land use code to better align requirements for the interface areas and the area south of Canyon Boulevard with the Downtown Urban

Design Guidelines including changes to the bulk standards to reduce the allowable floor area ratio (FAR) in selective zone districts.

Staff Recommendations:

- Rezone the two half blocks of Downtown-3 (DT-3) (2.7 FAR) in the existing interface area along Spruce Street from 14th to 16th Streets to DT-4 (2.2 FAR).
- Rezone the existing DT-5 area south of Canyon (2.7 FAR) to a redesigned DT-3 (with a base FAR of 2.0).

C. Design Review Process

Council Direction: *Consider how review bodies such as the Downtown Design Advisory Board (DDAB) and the Planning Board may better coordinate their analysis of proposed downtown projects. This may entail the development of a short evaluation report card listing the relevant guidelines and code requirements as a common means of communication.*

Staff Recommendations:

Staff will present these recommendations and Planning Board's comments at the next DDAB meeting.

- DDAB should continue the process of summarizing its comments based on the Guidelines, but instead of an ex-officio Planning Board member attending DDAB meetings, a member of DDAB would present its summary recommendations at the relevant Planning Board meeting and be available to answer questions from Planning Board.
- Consider a different trigger (instead of dollar amount) for DDAB review of projects outside of the historic district.

D. Community Benefit for FAR Bonus

Council Direction: *Draft an ordinance that would permit the residential FAR bonus to remain intact conditioned on public benefit and to include a definition of public benefit to aid reviewing bodies.*

Staff Recommendation:

Include the following as community benefit options for the review of developments requesting a residential FAR bonus:

- Provide additional 10 percent permanently affordable housing benefit on the residential bonus floor area; or
- Adopt a maximum unit size of 1000 square feet for any dwelling units resulting from the FAR bonus; or
- Meet the additional community benefit criteria for a height modification (see below).

E. By-Right Height and Below-Grade FAR

Staff Recommendation:

While not included in the initial Council direction for this project, the process of clarifying the urban design vision for the area south of Canyon and accompanying

analysis identified two potential code changes that staff is including as part of the project recommendations:

- Change the by-right height from 35 to 38 feet in the downtown zone districts;
- Eliminate the below-grade floor area from the calculation of the FAR in the downtown zones.

F. Community Benefit for Height Modifications City-wide

Council Direction: Develop code changes to require projects receiving height modifications pursuant to Section 9-2-14 of the Boulder Revised Code to provide an overall benefit to the community. Develop a process and schedule to identify options for changing the conditions under which height modifications can be granted.

Staff Recommendation:

- Work with existing requirements for additional open space for a height modification request; but add guidelines to ensure that the additional open space provided is configured and designed to ensure meaningful public benefit.

The City Council December 2 and 16, 2008 memos that provided the background information on the downtown are included in **Attachment B**.

PUBLIC INPUT:

Staff held an interdepartmental staff workshop to review all the information about the south of Canyon area followed by half-day design charrette with property and business owners in the area south of Canyon. The charrette was attended by approximately 12 owners. The purpose of the charrette was to identify key design considerations and details for the area. In addition, staff held several conversations with residents in the adjacent neighborhood, and met twice with the Downtown Boulder Inc (DBI) policy committee. Summaries of those meetings are included in the report in **Attachment A**.

Following Planning Board recommendations, staff will hold a larger public meeting with the residents of the Goss/ Grove neighborhood association.

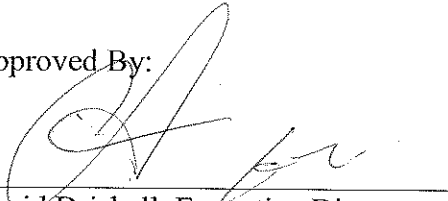
ANALYSIS:

The analysis of these options is included in the report on the Downtown included in **Attachment A**.

NEXT STEPS:

Staff will take the attached report to City Council in June, along with the summary of Planning Board's recommendations and meeting minutes, a summary of the Downtown Design Advisory Board's (DDAB) comments, and a summary of input from the Goss/Grove neighborhood meeting. Based on the direction from City Council, staff will draft proposed code language and design guidelines for consideration by Planning Board and City Council.

Approved By:



David Driskell, Executive Director
Department of Community Planning and Sustainability

ATTACHMENTS:

- A: Downtown Report
- B. City Council Memos from December 2 and December 16, 2008 on the Downtown.