

# **National Western Center Zoning Strategy Report - Stage 1**

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*Prepared by the City and County of Denver  
Community Planning & Development Department  
1.31.2019*



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This document is a preliminary strategy for zoning amendments for the National Western Center (NWC). It is intended to facilitate stakeholder feedback on a preliminary direction before preparation of technical zoning amendment text and mapping. It focuses only on zoning strategies applicable to private property (not the public right-of-way), but it does consider the vision and planned function of public rights-of-way and how adjacent development relates. The recommendations in this report were informed by the 2015 NWC Master Plan, the Elyria-Swansea Neighborhoods Plan, the Globeville Neighborhood Plan, Blueprint Denver and more recent Campus Placemaking efforts led by the Mayor's Office of the National Western Center (NWCO).

### ***NWC Background***

With adoption of the 2015 Master Plan and funding for infrastructure, construction and site improvements in place, vertical development on the campus is anticipated to begin as early as late 2019. In advance of this, Denver's Community Planning and Development Department is preparing zoning amendments by which all future projects will be reviewed and permitted.

### ***Zoning vs. Design Standards and Guidelines***

This document focuses solely on topics anticipated to be addressed in the Denver Zoning Code (DZC), but was developed with an understanding that a comprehensive set of Design Standards and Guidelines will be developed and used in the review and permitting of projects by the City. The role of zoning and design standards and guidelines is described below.

- **Zoning.** The DZC implements the city's vision for the future of Denver, by calibrating regulations for structures, uses and parking by neighborhood context. The DZC identifies prescriptive parameters that must be met by development prior to approval by city staff.
- **Design Standards and Guidelines (DSG).** DSG are used by the City & County of Denver to set clear expectations for design quality for certain areas. DSG are more flexible than zoning in that they focus on establishing the design intent for development-related topics, but allow greater flexibility in how a project may comply. DSG are still regulatory requirements, but a project can meet requirements in any number of ways if the project is consistent with the overall intent.

### **Strategy Report Content**

The Zoning Strategy consists of three components:

- Executive Summary (separate document). The Executive Summary summarizes the key components of the NWC Zoning Strategy in a concise and non-technical format.
- Strategy Report (this document). This Strategy Report establishes a preliminary intent and strategy for the NWC zoning amendments at a campus-wide level and for different sub-districts. It recommends draft zone districts and a regulatory strategy for each. It is intended for readers that want to understand the zoning strategy at a qualitative level.
- Technical Appendix (separate document). The Technical Appendix provides draft zoning standards for a variety of land use and urban design topics. This section is consistent with the intent and direction in the Strategy Report, but drills down to a technical level. It includes preliminary quantitative requirements for site and building design, as well as recommendations for permitted and prohibited land uses. This section is intended for readers that want to understand the potential impacts of the zoning recommendations on project design.

Please note that the images in this document are intended to illustrate very specific aspects of the Zoning Strategy. In some cases, there may be elements of an image that are inconsistent with the vision for the campus. Please consult the image's caption to clarify the intent.



### ***Two-Stage Rezoning Approach***

This Strategy Report focuses on the first “stage” of a two-stage rezoning effort. All NWC properties identified on Figure 1 will be rezoned, but Stage 1 of the NWC zoning amendments will occur first. Stage 1 will establish new zone districts and requirements for campus properties west of the BNSF rail tracks. The area to be rezoned in Stage 1 includes Phases 1 and 2 of campus development as described in numerous reports prepared by NWCO. The area east of the rail tracks, commonly referred to as the “Triangle”, will be rezoned in Stage 2 in a process similar to that conducted for Stage 1 and will include coordination with the CAC, community members and other stakeholders.

The level of design and engineering for the Triangle is significantly behind that which has occurred for NWC Phases 1 and 2. In the coming months, NWCO will conduct extensive analysis to better understand the “on the ground” opportunities and constraints associated with the Triangle properties and propose innovative solutions. Once this work is complete, stakeholders, community members, NWCO and planners with the City and County of Denver will be better positioned to consider specific zoning strategies and recommendations. More information about transportation infrastructure, potential uses, urban design and streetscape character will provide a robust foundation for considering zoning changes in the Triangle.

Please note that some properties in the Triangle were rezoned to the Campus-National Western Center (CMP-NWC) zone district in 2015 (see [denvergov.org/maps/map/zoning](http://denvergov.org/maps/map/zoning)). The height, siting, design, land use and parking regulations of this existing CMP-NWC zone district will continue to apply to these properties until zoning for the Triangle is amended in Stage 2. However, some overarching zoning regulations in the DZC apply to all NWC properties regardless of location. If these types of zoning regulations are amended during Stage 1, they will also impact the previously rezoned Triangle properties. These types of zoning amendments are anticipated to be limited, however any such changes will be identified for the CAC, stakeholders, Planning Board and City Council in the next steps of the Stage 1 effort.

### ***McDonald Farms Property***

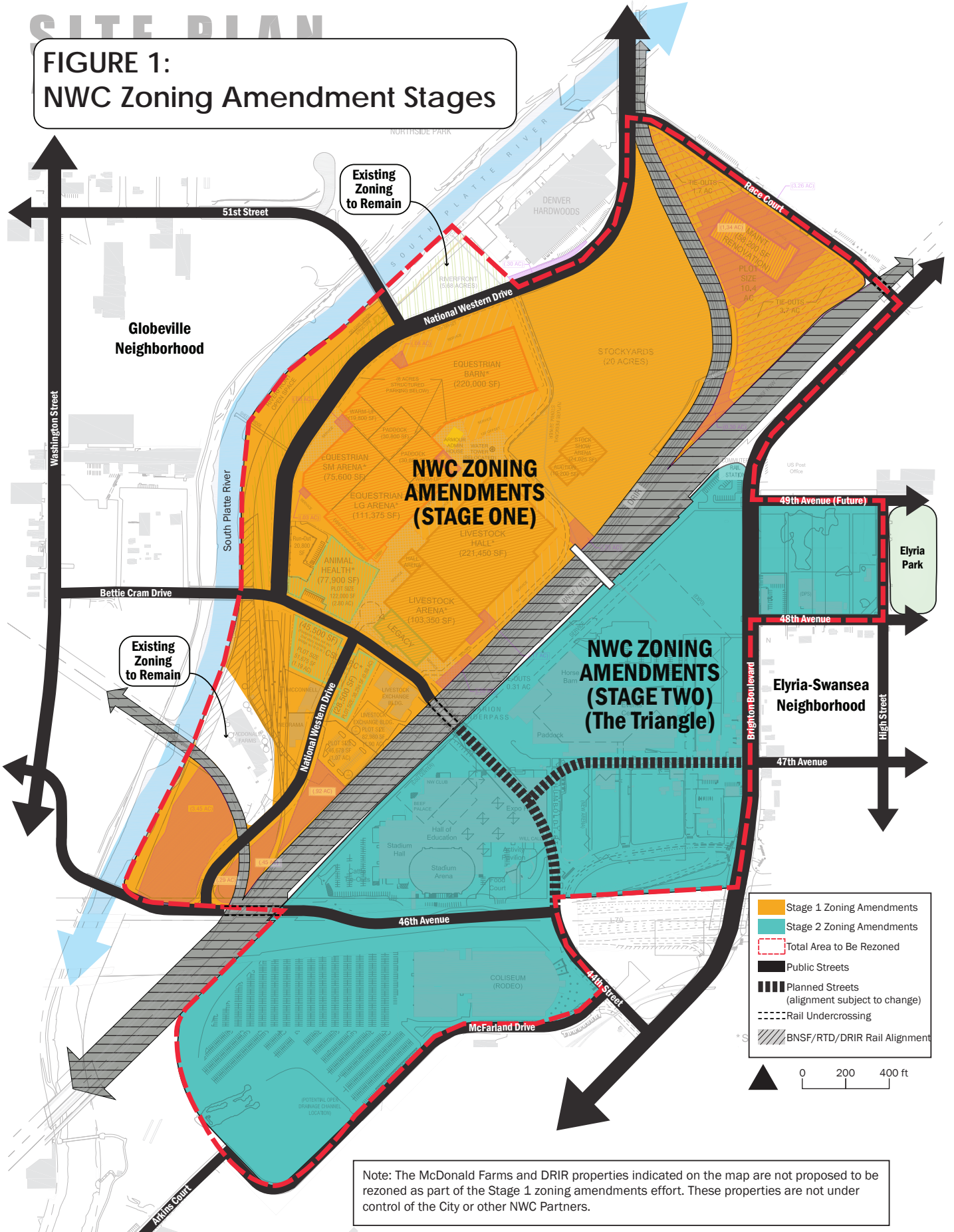
As noted on Figure 1, the McDonald Farms property located in the southwest part of the campus will not be rezoned as part of this effort. Their business operations require industrial and heavy commercial activities that are anticipated to be prohibited in the new campus zoning. Rezoning this property would make their operations a non-conforming use since it would be inconsistent with anticipated new zoning. This would limit their ability to expand their operations if desired. Maintaining the existing zoning for this property avoids this potential conflict.

### ***Denver Rock Island Railroad (DRIR) Property***

As noted on Figure 1, a DRIR property located in the northwest part of the campus will not be rezoned as part of this effort. The City does not yet have ownership of this property. As such, it is planned to be rezoned in Stage 2 or thereafter.

# SITE PLAN

**FIGURE 1:  
NWC Zoning Amendment Stages**





## A. Overarching Zoning Amendments Approach

This section identifies a high-level approach for the NWC zoning amendments. It is a baseline for the recommendations that follow.

### 1. Draw Guidance from Adopted Plans

The zoning amendments will be guided by adopted plans, including the NWC Master Plan, Elyria & Swansea Neighborhoods Plan and Globeville Neighborhood Plan. These documents provide specific guidance for the properties anticipated to be rezoned and their surrounding context.

### 2. Focus on Topics Where Predictability is Desired

The prescriptive nature of zoning provides predictability to applicants, zoning administrators and community members. As such, zoning amendments should focus on those topics where the desired minimum requirement is clear. DSG should be utilized for topics where more flexibility is needed.

### 3. Recognize the Varying Contexts Across the Campus

The NWC is envisioned as a cohesive campus made up of areas of widely varying character and activities. A series of distinct zone districts are needed to respond adequately to the unique programming requirements, neighborhood integration/connectivity objectives, natural features and contextual factors at play.

### 4. Ensure Compatibility with Adjacent Neighborhoods

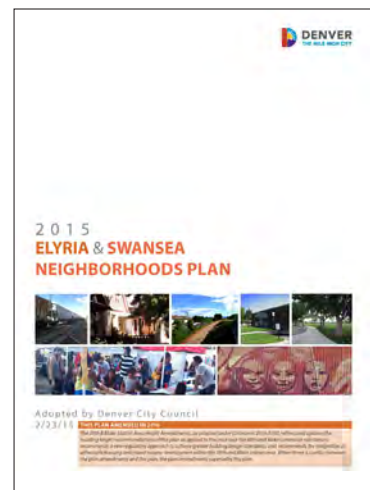
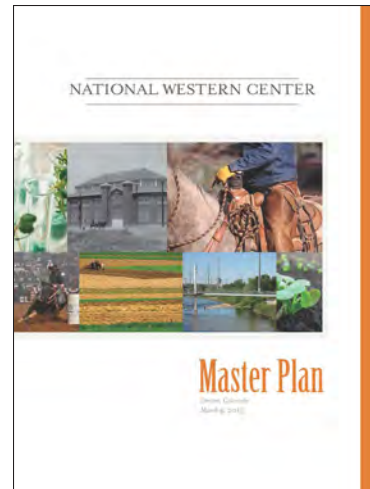
Zoning must consider impacts to and compatibility with Elyria-Swansea and Globeville. Regulations related to building scale, lighting, signage and other topics will be carefully crafted to maximize neighborhood benefits and minimize potential negative impacts.

### 5. Facilitate an Interconnected Campus with Great Streets

The NWC Master Plan envisions a campus nested within the adjacent neighborhoods. As an urban campus, the NWC has a responsibility to improve connectivity and the mobility experience at the neighborhood, local and regional level. While zoning does not dictate the design of roadways, sidewalks or other circulation facilities, it does address building and site edges that impact streetscape character. Zoning should ensure development enhances the experience of public circulation facilities and spaces in the right-of-way. The edges of development adjacent to neighborhood-connecting streets, such as Bettie Cram Drive and parts of National Western Drive that connect to planned bridges over the South Platte River, should be prioritized as indicated in Figure 2.

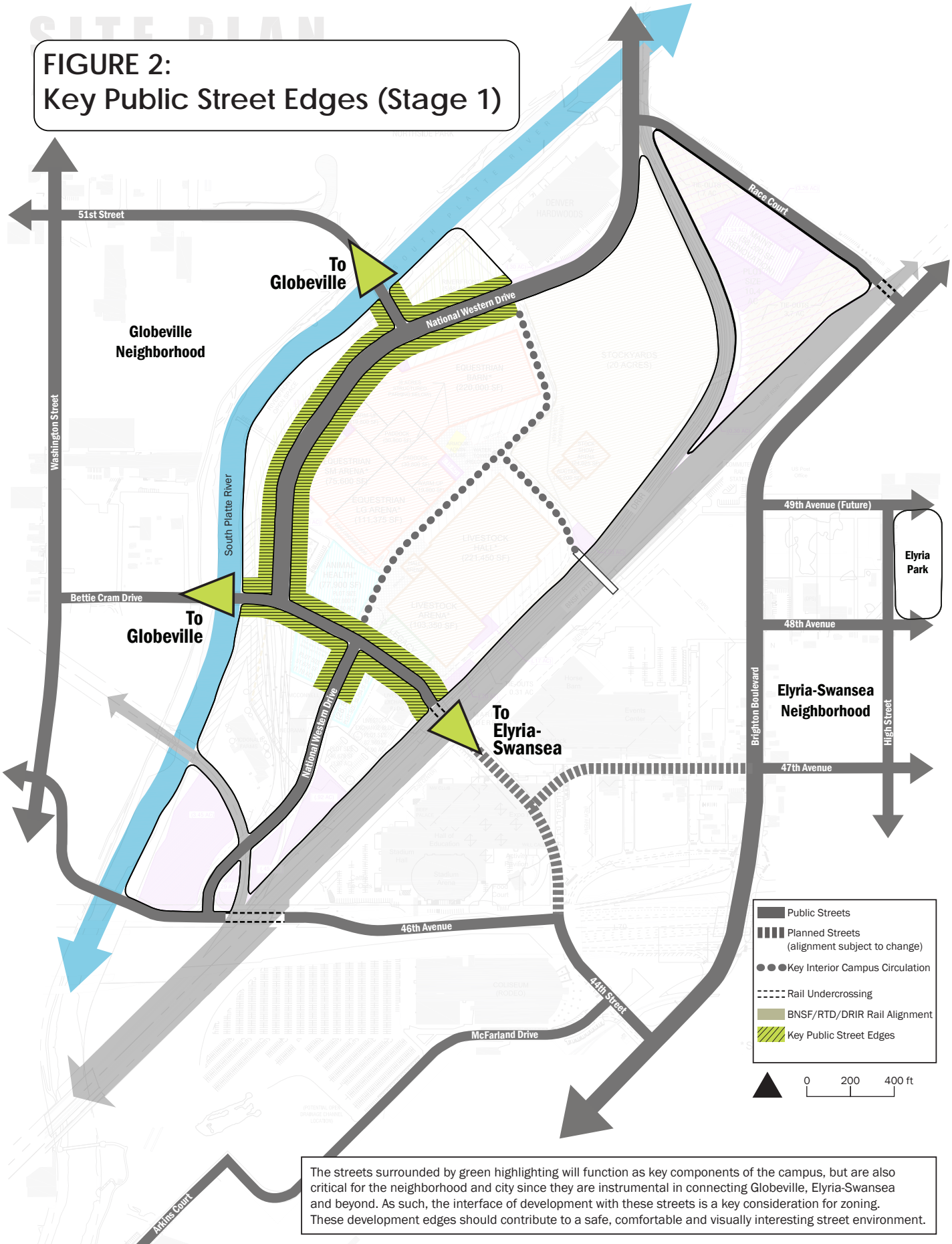
### 6. Engage and Respect the South Platte River

The NWC Master Plan envisions enhanced access to the South Platte River, enhancement of riparian habitat and engagement of this environmental feature. Zoning should include measures to ensure compatibility with the river and preserve opportunities to maximize it as a campus and neighborhood amenity. River-adjacent land uses, site features and buildings should all take steps to engage and respect the South Platte River. Special zoning requirements are proposed for the river edges identified on Figure 3.



# SITE PLAN

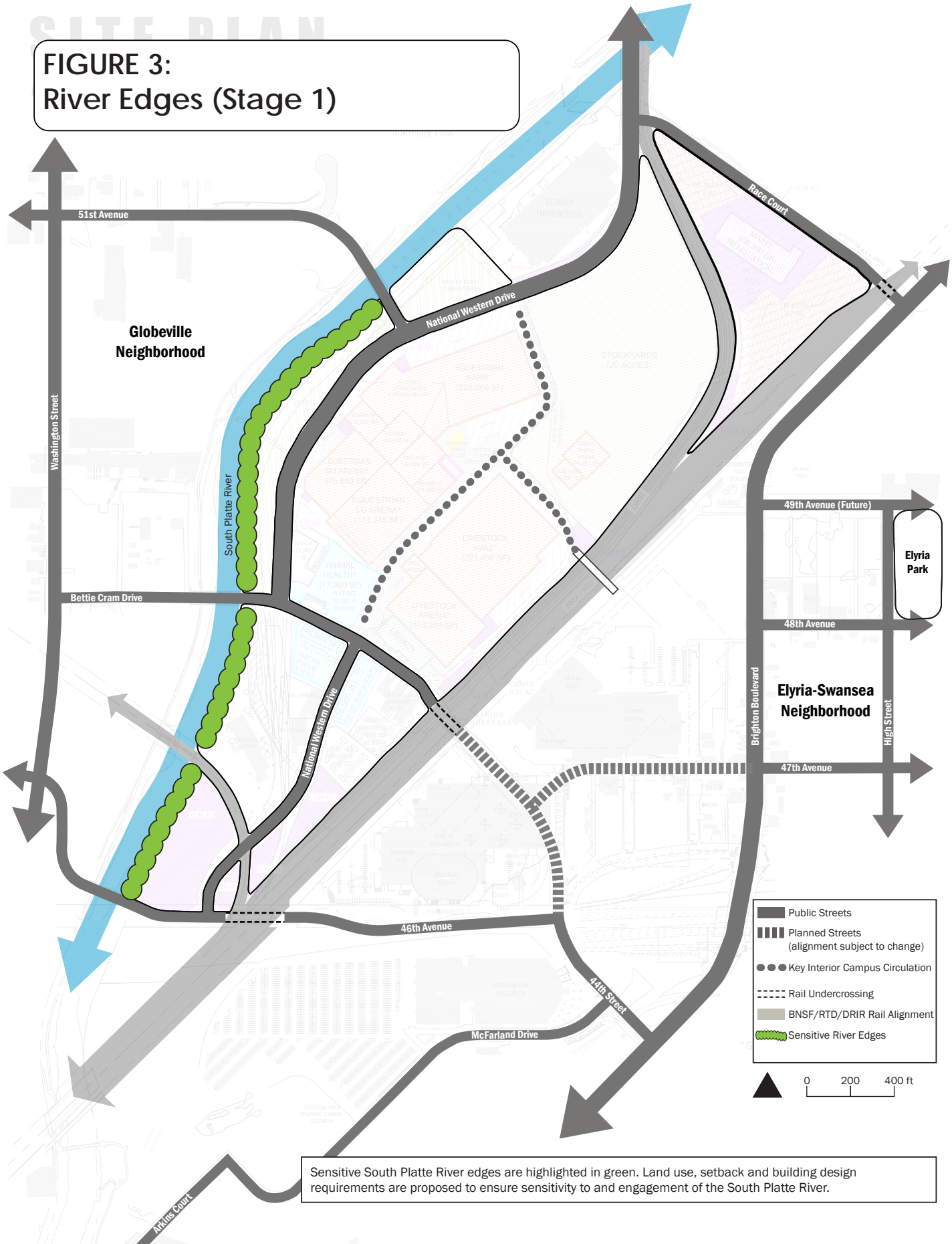
**FIGURE 2:  
Key Public Street Edges (Stage 1)**



The streets surrounded by green highlighting will function as key components of the campus, but are also critical for the neighborhood and city since they are instrumental in connecting Globeville, Elyria-Swansea and beyond. As such, the interface of development with these streets is a key consideration for zoning. These development edges should contribute to a safe, comfortable and visually interesting street environment.

# SITE PLAN

**FIGURE 3:  
River Edges (Stage 1)**



Sensitive South Platte River edges are highlighted in green. Land use, setback and building design requirements are proposed to ensure sensitivity to and engagement of the South Platte River.

## **B. Draft Zone Districts Overview**

The NWC programming is planned to vary widely from maintenance facilities and energy regeneration utilities to livestock yards to state-of-the-art research facilities. A “one-size-fits-all” approach to zoning is inappropriate. Rather, a series of unique zone districts that reflect planned uses, urban design objectives and contextual factors is needed. This section identifies draft zone districts and the fundamental intent for each. Draft zone districts are mapped in Figure 4.

Note the recommended zone districts utilize “working names” for ease of review. Final zone district designations will use lettering and numbering abbreviations per DZC conventions.

### **1. Bettie Cram/Main Street**

This zone district will be the geographic and cultural epicenter of campus. Medium floorplate buildings will house a variety of indoor uses. Development will contribute to an excellent pedestrian experience along Bettie Cram and National Western Drives. This means contributing to safe, comfortable and interesting neighborhood connectivity through the heart of campus. This area will provide critical pedestrian entry points to site interiors. Programming in this area is more permanent as compared to other districts, with several key anchor facilities planned.

### **2. General Campus**

This zone district is intended to accommodate a wide range of unique uses that support the activities of the National Western Stock Show and other regular events throughout the year in highly flexible, large floorplate buildings. Large arenas, barns, livestock halls and structured parking are all anticipated here. A wide range of outdoor and service activities will be accommodated by flexible plaza spaces and loading areas, including some spaces where access is restricted during special events. Development will contribute to a safe, comfortable and visually interesting experience along National Western Drive, which is a key neighborhood connector.

### **3. Outdoor Intensive**

This zone district is intended to accommodate the widest variety of uses on campus, including short- and long-term outdoor uses alongside complementary enclosed uses. This will also be home to the Stockyards, which will accommodate livestock and provide flexible space for small and large-scale outdoor events. This zone district will be home to “back-of-the-house” activities that are required for the campus to operate successfully. Outdoor storage of maintenance vehicles, energy-generating utilities and materials storage will all occur here alongside cattle tie-out areas and livestock pens. Complementary enclosed campus uses may include artist studios, professional offices, utility buildings or light industrial facilities. Streets flanking properties in this district will meet their service requirements while establishing comfortable and safe pedestrian routes. Given the functional requirements of roadways in this zone district, zoning must build in flexibility for the design of sites and buildings adjacent to the street.

### **4. Riverfront**

This zone district is intended to accommodate passive open space, programmed activity nodes, pedestrian circulation, natural riparian habitat and formal green and plaza spaces. It will accommodate small format, low scale buildings intended to activate the area and support programmed outdoor functions. Education facilities, community-oriented programming and eating/drinking establishments are all appropriate. Public art and interpretive features will enrich the experience here. The Riverfront zone district must facilitate safe and direct access to the South Platte River and serve as an amenity for users of the NWC and the surrounding neighborhoods. Where buildings are constructed in this district, they should be visually subordinate to the open space amenity and establish a strong visual and physical relationship to National Western Drive and the South Platte River.





## **C. Key Zoning Topics Addressed by District**

This section identifies and defines key land use, parking and design variables anticipated to be addressed in the NWC zoning. It is intended to clarify how the DZC regulates each key zoning variable and serve as a reference for reviewing specific zoning recommendations in this document and its accompanying Technical Appendix.

### ***Land Use***

The DZC establishes regulations for uses on a property. The Code defines land use as the “purpose for which land or structures thereon is designed, arranged or intended to be occupied or used, or for which it is occupied, maintained, rented or leased.” The DZC establishes an extensive list of uses, and then indicates whether each use is permitted, permitted with limitations or prohibited.

### ***Required Parking***

The DZC sometimes establishes minimum parking requirements for specific land uses. This is typically established as the number of off-street parking spaces required per a unit of measurement. For example, a commercial use may require a minimum number of off-street spaces per 1,000 square feet of floor area. Required parking can also be determined based on number of occupants, dwelling units or employees.

### ***Building Placement Relative to the Street***

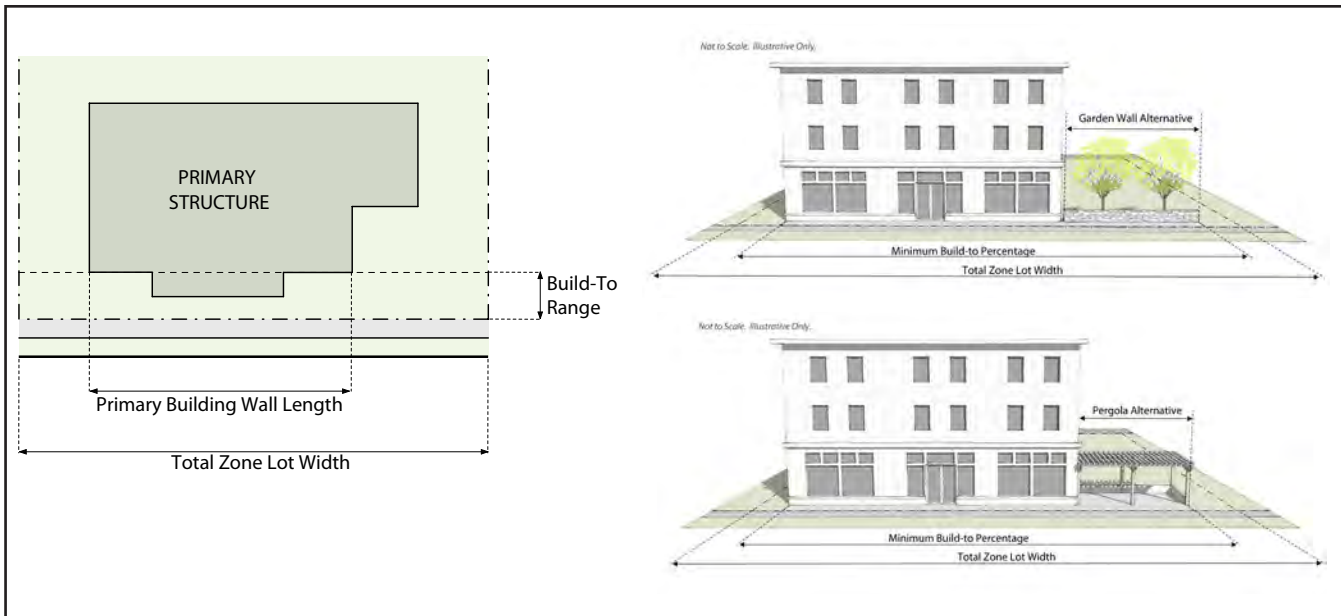
The DZC addresses the placement of a building as it relates to a public street in two ways. First, the DZC establishes minimum setbacks from street zone lot lines (or zone lot lines that establish the edge of a public street right-of-way). In some cases, the DZC treats the South Platte River as a “street” for the purposes of establishing zoning requirements for adjacent development. Second, and only in some areas, the DZC establishes build-to requirements. These requirements establish a distance from the street zone lot line, within which a minimum percentage of building wall must be placed. The intent is to ensure that a building “lines” the street, thereby framing the public street space and providing a sense of enclosure that enhances walkability and pedestrian comfort. As shown in Figure 5, the build-to requirement is a percentage of the total zone lot width at the zone lot line abutting the street right-of-way along which a building edge must be placed. The DZC sometimes allows alternatives for a specified percentage of the build-to requirement to allow greater flexibility in meeting the intent.

### ***Side Interior and Rear Setbacks***

The DZC establishes minimum setbacks of buildings from interior property lines, such as the side interior or rear lot lines. These setbacks are intended to provide adequate separation of buildings from adjacent properties to preserve light access, mitigate operational impacts and promote privacy.

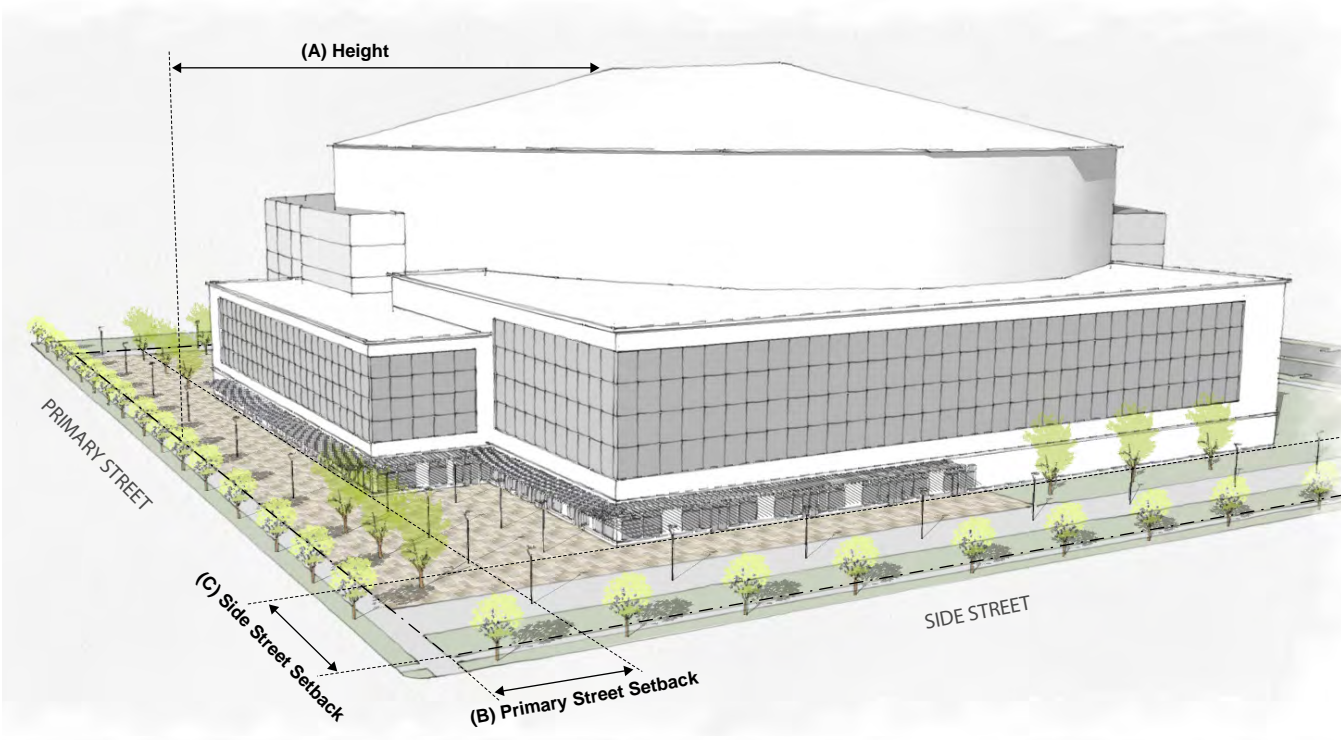
### ***Maximum Building Height***

The DZC establishes overall maximum building heights for structures. As shown in Figure 6, this is typically measured from the average original grade of a site (base plane) to the highest point on the structure. Exceptions to the maximum building height are typically granted for architectural elements, screened mechanical equipment and other similar targeted features.



**Figure 5: Build-To Requirement and Build-To Requirement Alternatives.**

Build-to requirements establish a distance from the street zone lot line within which a minimum percentage of building wall must be placed, as shown in the images above. A development may use build-to requirement alternatives, such as garden walls or open space to meet a portion of the build-to requirements.



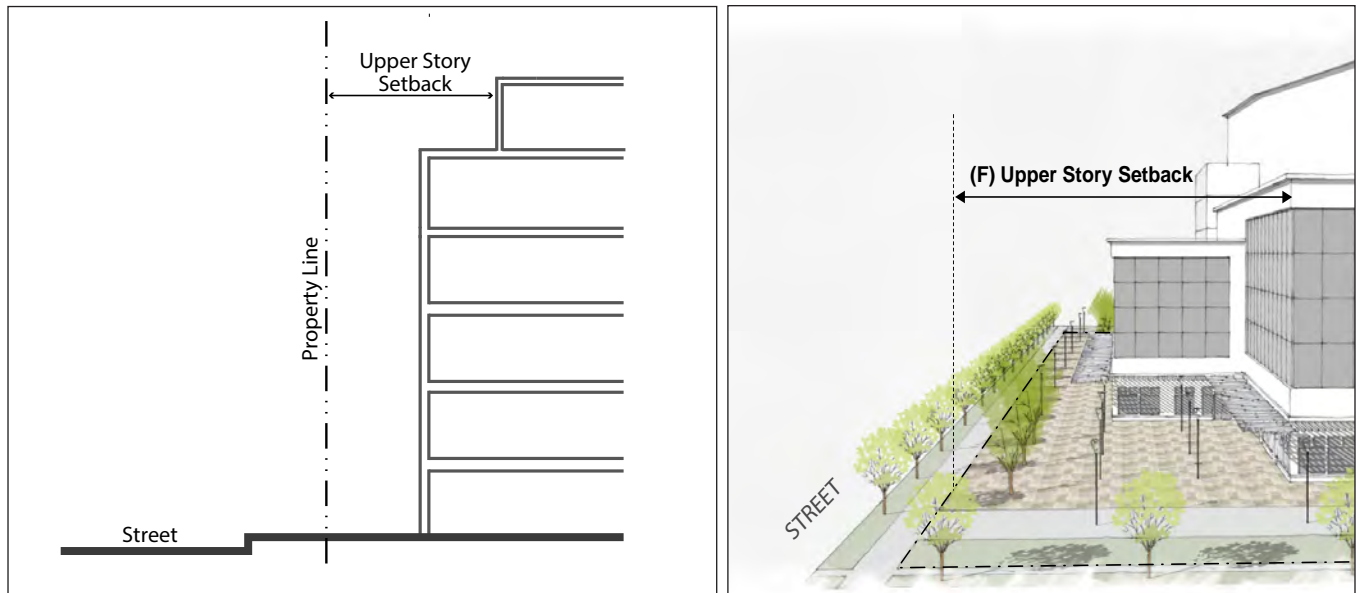
**Figure 6: Street Zone Lot Line Setbacks and Maximum Building Height.**

Maximum building height standards establish the overall maximum building height allowed. Street zone lot line setbacks establish the minimum distance a building must be set back from zone lot line along a public street right-of-way, or a river edge when it is treated as a “street” for the purposes of zoning.



### Upper Story Setback

The DZC sometimes establishes an additional minimum setback from a zone lot line for an upper portion of a building façade. When applied to a street zone lot line, the intent is to establish a desired scale along the street that is lower than the overall maximum height permitted for a building.

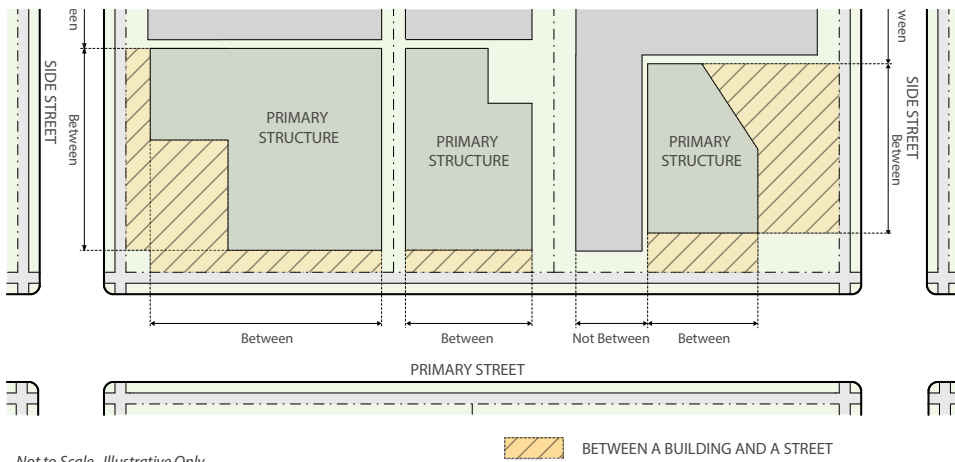


Upper story setback requirements establish an additional minimum setback from the street zone lot line for an upper portion of a building facade. An upper story setback is diagrammed in cross section on the upper left. The diagram at the upper right shows one way an upper story setback could be provided for a large arena building along a street. The photo shows an upper story setback provided above the building's second story.



**Surface and Structured Parking Location**

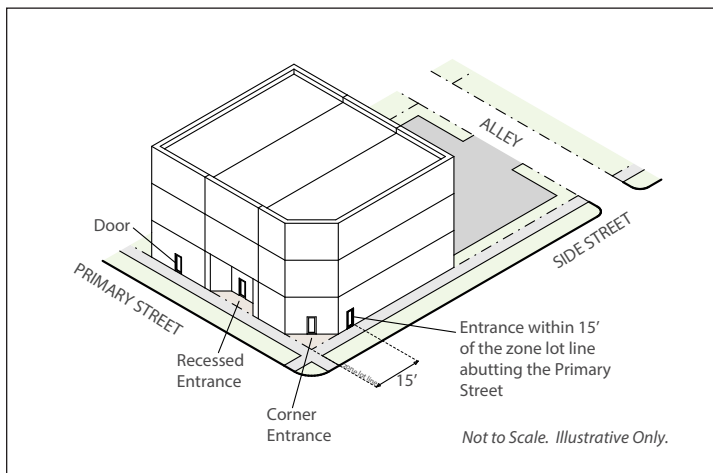
The DZC sometimes regulates the location of unenclosed surface parking lots relative to buildings and the street. As shown in the diagram below, the DZC may prohibit a surface parking lot between a building and a public street, but allow one to the side or rear of a building. The intent is to reduce the visual impact of surface parking on the street experience and strengthen the physical and visual relationship between the street and a building. In some cases, the South Platte River is defined as a “street” for the purposes of zoning, which allows for parking to be prohibited between a building and the river. For the NWC, this Zoning Strategy also recommends establishing strategic regulations that would prohibit surface or structure parking at any location within a specified proximity of Bettie Cram Drive.



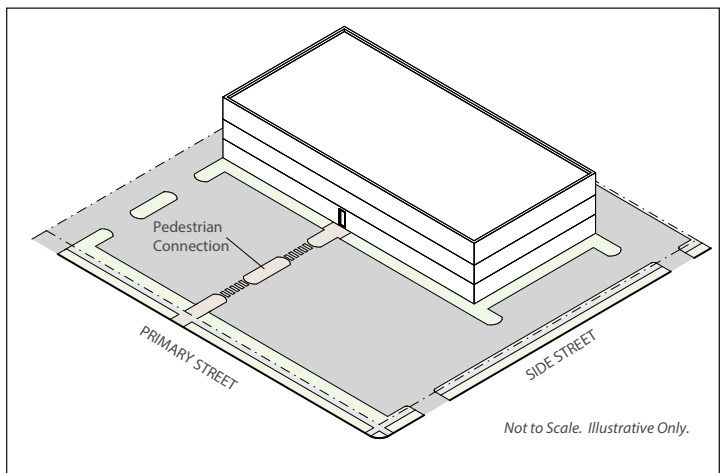
Not to Scale. Illustrative Only.

**Pedestrian Access**

The DZC often requires some type of physical connection between a public street and the primary uses within a building. The intent is to strengthen the visual and physical connection between the building and the street and to provide street level visual interest. The Code requires different types of pedestrian access based on the desired and/or anticipated level of pedestrian activity and the vision for streetscape character.



Entrance.



Pedestrian Connection.

### Transparency and Transparency Alternatives

The DZC sets street level building design requirements to help ensure a building enhances the street experience. Windows, or transparency, on the ground floor are a proven technique for providing visual interest along a street. The DZC often establishes a minimum linear percentage of windows that must be used on a street facing façade. Since windows are not always feasible based on site or building design constraints, the DZC allows features other than windows to be used to meet part of the transparency requirement. Alternatives include display cases, public art, landscape features and other features that provide visual interest as shown in the graphics and images below. In some cases, the South Platte River is defined as a “street” for the purposes of zoning, which enables an ability to require a building façade that faces the river to include transparency.



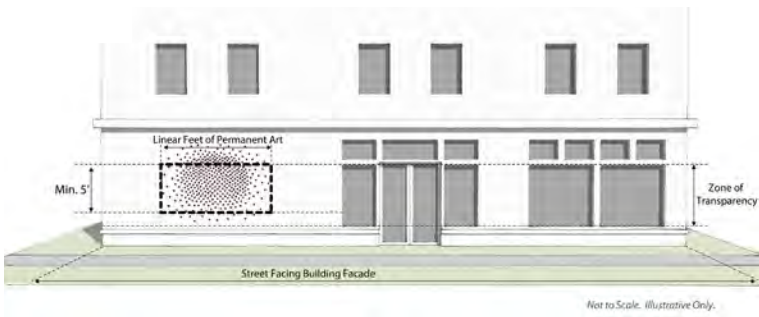
Transparency.



Transparency Alternative: Display Cases



Transparency Alternative: ATM Machines



Transparency Alternative: Permanent Art



\*Green Screen, Vertical Scaling Elements, and Change in Wall Plane create a system of wall design elements.  
Transparency Alternative: Wall Design Elements



**Street Level Active Uses**

The DZC sometimes requires specific uses adjacent to the street to animate and enliven it. Street level active uses are those that invite high-intensity customer, visitor or resident interactions throughout the day and night that substantially contribute to the activation, economic vitality and safety of a district. When applied, street level active use requirements specify uses that must be provided within the portion of a building that satisfies a build-to requirement (see “Building Placement Relative to the Street” above).

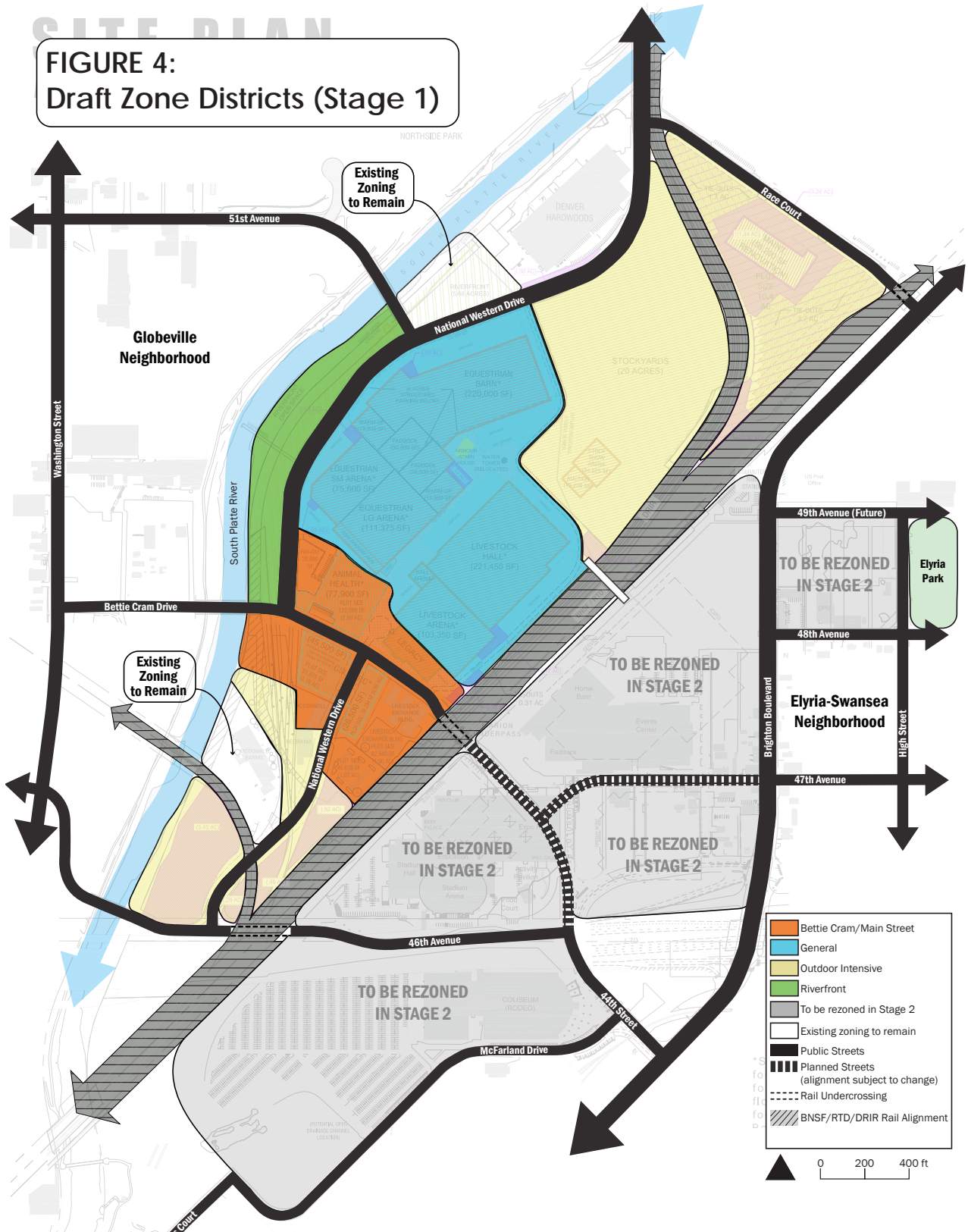


Retail storefronts (left) and office lobbies (right) are examples of street level active uses.



## D. District-Specific Zoning Strategy

This section establishes an intent and strategy for addressing the key zoning topics described in Section C for each recommended zone district. Please see the Technical Appendix for more specific zoning recommendations by District.



# 1 BETTIE CRAM/MAIN STREET DISTRICT

## 1. Bettie Cram/Main Street District

The recommendations in this section apply to areas identified as Bettie Cram/Main Street on Figure 4.

### Land Use

#### Intent

- Promote a wide range of indoor uses that contribute to an active campus center, such as research, education, temporary dormitory housing, museums, ground floor eating/drinking establishments, animal-related health services, professional offices and publicly accessible plaza spaces.
- Encourage uses that support a safe, comfortable and visually interesting street environment along Bettie Cram Drive.

#### Recommended Zoning Approach

- Permit a wide range of enclosed uses to accommodate diverse programming and innovation activities.
- Limit intensive outdoor uses, such as materials storage and stand-alone surface parking lots, that could impact the Bettie Cram Drive experience adversely.



Targeted land uses in the Bettie Cram/Main Street District include a wide range of activity-generating campus activities, including research, education and student housing.

# BETTIE CRAM/MAIN STREET DISTRICT 1

## ***Required Parking***

### *Intent*

- Allow campus operators to supply parking flexibly to meet programmatic needs.

### *Recommended Zoning Approach*

- Do not impose minimum parking requirements or maximum parking limits.

## ***Building Placement Relative to the Street***

### *Intent*

- Promote buildings sited closely to Bettie Cram and National Western Drives.
- Ensure that buildings and other design features physically frame and enclose Bettie Cram and National Western Drives to enhance pedestrian comfort.

### *Recommended Zoning Approach*

- Do not require that a building be set back from a street zone lot line.
- Establish “build-to requirements” that require a street facing building façade to be placed within a specified (narrow) distance from the street zone lot line for a minimum percentage of the street zone lot line frontage.
- Allow a limited portion of the build-to requirement to be met through alternatives, such as permanent outdoor open space.



*Ensure that buildings and other design features physically frame and enclose Bettie Cram and National Western Drives to enhance pedestrian comfort.*

## ***Side, Rear and Riverfront Setbacks***

### *Intent*

- Promote flexibility for setbacks within site interiors to meet operational and programming requirements.
- Ensure buildings adjacent to the South Platte River are set back sufficiently to allow for riverfront outdoor amenities and to sensitively transition to the river.

### *Recommended Zoning Approach*

- Do not require a building to be set back from a rear or side interior lot line.
- Require a building to be generously set back from a riverfront zone lot line.



# 1 BETTIE CRAM/MAIN STREET DISTRICT

## **Maximum Building Height**

### Intent

- Ensure building heights that are compatible in scale with surrounding neighborhoods.
- Maintain privacy and visual character within surrounding neighborhoods.
- Promote flexibility in building heights to meet programmatic needs.

## **Recommended Zoning Approach**

- Permit buildings up to 150 feet.
- Allow limited encroachments to exceed the maximum building height for special architectural elements, mechanical equipment and other targeted features.

## **Surface and Structured Parking Location**

### Intent

- Ensure that surface and structured parking areas are not sited near or visible from Bettie Cram Drive.
- Minimize the visual impact of surface parking on National Western Drive.
- Minimize the visual impact of surface parking on the South Platte River edge.
- Minimize conflicts between vehicles and other travel modes, including pedestrians and cyclists.
- Strengthen the visual and physical connection between Bettie Cram Drive, National Western Drive and the riverfront to adjacent buildings.
- Ensure a limited amount of strategically located parking can be provided to meet operational and programmatic needs.

## **Recommended Zoning Approach**

- Prohibit a surface parking area between a building and a street zone lot line.
- Prohibit a surface parking area between a building and the South Platte River.
- Prohibit surface and structured parking within 100 feet of Bettie Cram Drive unless it is located adjacent to the future edge of the BNSF/RTD/DRIR rail tracks.
- Allow a surface parking area to the side or rear of a building along National Western Drive.



*Minimize the visual impact of parking on Bettie Cram Drive. Prohibit surface parking between a building and the street, and prohibit any parking (structured or surface) within 100 feet of Bettie Cram Drive.*

# BETTIE CRAM/MAIN STREET DISTRICT 1



## ***Pedestrian Access***

### ***Intent***

- Ensure a strong visual and physical connection between Bettie Cram and National Western Drives and buildings along these streets.
- Provide street level visual interest.

### ***Recommended Zoning Approach***

- Require a building to include a publicly-accessible entrance that faces and physically connects to the street.



## ***Transparency and Transparency Alternatives***

### ***Intent***

- Provide street level visual interest along Bettie Cram and National Western Drives.
- Provide visual interest on a building façade that faces the South Platte River.
- Promote flexibility in how street level interest is provided.

### ***Recommended Zoning Approach***

- Require a minimum level of transparency (windows) on the ground floor of a street-facing or river-facing building façade.
- Allow alternative treatments for a limited amount of the transparency requirement, such as display cases, permanent public art or other visually interesting design features. Allow a more limited percentage of transparency alternatives for a building façade that faces Bettie Cram Drive.

*Require a minimum level of transparency on the ground floor of a street-facing or river-facing building facade. Allow alternative treatments, like the permanent public art shown here, to count toward a limited amount of the transparency requirement.*



## ***Active Use***

### ***Intent***

- Ensure interior building programming is located to generate pedestrian activity on Bettie Cram Drive.

### ***Recommended Zoning Approach***

- Require active uses, such as building lobbies, offices or cafés, for portions of the building that are located close to Bettie Cram Drive.
- Ensure that the active use is required to be provided for a significant building depth (minimum of 30 feet) for a building abutting Bettie Cram Drive.



*Require active uses, such as lobbies or offices, for portions of the building that are located close to Bettie Cram Drive.*



## 2 GENERAL CAMPUS DISTRICT

### 2. General District

The recommendations in this section apply to areas identified as General on Figure 4.

#### Land Use

##### Intent

- Promote a wide range of fully enclosed, partially enclosed and outdoor uses with a focus on large multi-use event space, structured parking and service activities.
- Promote publicly accessible outdoor plaza space.

##### Recommended Zoning Approach

- Permit a wide range of indoor and outdoor primary uses.
- Limit permanent intensive outdoor uses, such as materials storage, vehicular service/repair and contractor yards.
- Permit a wide range of temporary and accessory uses to allow for flexible use of outdoor spaces.



Targeted land uses in the General District include enclosed livestock- and equestrian-related activities, structured parking and service activities.

## GENERAL CAMPUS DISTRICT 2

### **Required Parking**

#### Intent

- Allow campus operators to supply parking flexibly to meet programmatic needs.

#### Recommended Zoning Approach

- Do not impose minimum parking requirements or maximum parking limits.

### **Building Placement Relative to the Street**

#### Intent

- Promote buildings sited close to National Western Drive.
- Ensure that buildings and other design features physically frame and enclose National Western Drive to enhance pedestrian comfort.

#### Recommended Zoning Approach

- Do not require that a building be set back from a street zone lot line.
- Establish “build-to requirements” that require a street facing building façade to be placed within a specified (narrow) distance from the street zone lot line for a minimum percentage of the street zone lot line width.
- Allow a portion of the build-to requirement to be met through alternatives, such as permanent outdoor seating, garden walls or other design features.

### **Side and Rear Setbacks**

#### Intent

- Promote flexibility for setbacks within site interiors to meet public space, operational and programming requirements.

#### Recommended Zoning Approach

- Do not require that a building be set back from a rear or side interior lot line.

### **Maximum Building Height**

#### Intent

- Ensure building heights that are compatible in scale with surrounding neighborhoods.
- Maintain privacy and visual character within surrounding neighborhoods.
- Promote flexibility in building heights to meet operational and programmatic needs.

#### Recommended Zoning Approach

- Allow buildings up to 150 feet.
- Allow limited encroachments to exceed the maximum building height for special architectural elements, mechanical equipment and other targeted features.



*Promote flexibility in building heights to meet unique operational and programmatic requirements.*

## 2 GENERAL CAMPUS DISTRICT

### **Upper Story Setback**

#### Intent

- Enhance compatibility in scale with the proposed Riverfront District.
- Transition downward in scale toward National Western Drive and the Riverfront District.
- Maintain a moderate street wall height along National Western Drive.

#### Recommended Zoning Approach

- Require an increased setback from National Western Drive for components of a building that are taller than 5 stories.

### **Surface Parking Location**

#### Intent

- Minimize the visual impact of surface parking on National Western Drive
- Minimize conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians.
- Strengthen the visual and physical connection between National Western Drive and adjacent buildings.

#### Recommended Zoning Approach

- Prohibit a surface parking area between a building and a street zone lot line.
- Allow a surface parking area to the side or rear of a building.

### **Pedestrian Access**

#### Intent

- Ensure there is a strong visual and physical connection between National Western Drive and buildings along these streets.
- Provide street level visual interest.

#### Recommended Zoning Approach

- Require a building to include a publicly-accessible entrance that faces and physically connects to the street.

### **Active Use**

#### Intent

- Ensure that a building adjacent to National Western Drive is designed to allow for future conversion to an active use.

#### Recommended Zoning Approach

- Require a minimum ground floor height (floor-to-ceiling) of nine feet for a building abutting National Western Drive.



*Pedestrian entries help establish a visual and physical connection between the street and an adjacent building, as shown here on a parking structure.*



# OUTDOOR INTENSIVE DISTRICT 3

## 3. Outdoor Intensive

The recommendations in this section apply to areas identified as Outdoor Intensive on Figure 4.

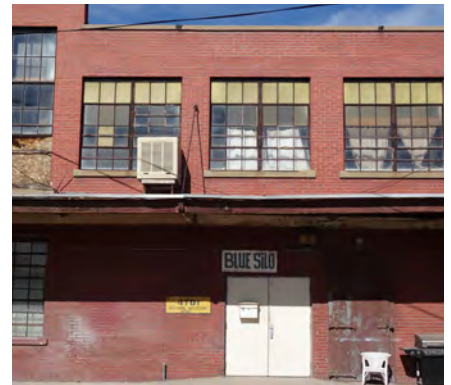
### Land Use

#### Intent

- Promote a very wide range of indoor and outdoor uses, including intensive outdoor activities and utilitarian functions that are essential to efficient and safe campus operations.
- Ensure that uses immediately adjacent to the riverfront are compatible with and sensitive to this natural amenity.

#### Recommended Zoning Approach

- Permit a very wide range unenclosed primary uses, including high impact activities like above-ground utilities, outdoor livestock keeping and materials storage.
- Permit arenas and other event spaces
- Permit a very wide range of enclosed primary uses related to maintenance and operations, such as maintenance facilities, wash racks and vehicle service operations.
- Permit event spaces like arenas and auction halls in support of the Stock Show.
- Permit a very wide range of enclosed primary uses that are complementary to the campus, such as research facilities, artist studios, professional offices, light industrial activities and eating/drinking establishments.
- Permit a very wide range of temporary and accessory uses to facilitate flexible use of outdoor areas for events, such as car shows and concerts.
- Prohibit industrial or other heavy commercial activities within close proximity to the South Platte River edge.



Targeted land uses in the Outdoor Intensive District include a wide range of unenclosed primary uses and enclosed primary uses complementary to the campus.

## 3 OUTDOOR INTENSIVE DISTRICT

### **Required Parking**

#### Intent

- Allow campus operators to supply parking flexibly to meet programmatic needs.

#### Recommended Zoning Approach

- Do not impose minimum parking requirements or maximum parking limits.

### **Building Placement Relative to the Street**

#### Intent

- Promote the flexible placement of buildings relative to the street.
- Minimize the visual impact uses of utilitarian structures on National Western Drive, 46th Avenue and Race Court.

#### Recommended Zoning Approach

- Require that buildings be set back a moderate distance from a street zone lot line.



*Promote the flexible placement of buildings relative to the street in the Outdoor Intensive District. This building is set back from the street and surrounded by service access routes to meet functional requirements.*

### **Side, Rear and Riverfront Setbacks**

#### Intent

- Promote flexibility for setbacks within site interiors to meet operational and programming requirements.
- Ensure buildings adjacent to the South Platte River are sited to allow space for riverfront outdoor amenities and sensitively transition to the river.

#### Recommended Zoning Approach

- Do not require that a building be set back from a rear or side interior lot line.
- Require a building to be generously set back from a riverfront zone lot line.

# OUTDOOR INTENSIVE DISTRICT **3**



*Promote flexibility in building heights to meet operational and programmatic requirements.*

## **Maximum Building Height**

### Intent

- Ensure building heights that are compatible in scale with surrounding neighborhoods.
- Maintain privacy and visual character within surrounding neighborhoods.
- Promote flexibility in building heights to meet operational and programmatic needs.

### Recommended Zoning Approach

- Allow buildings up to 150 feet.
- Allow limited encroachments to exceed the maximum building height for special architectural elements, mechanical equipment and other targeted features.

## **Surface Parking Location**

### Intent

- Promote flexible placement of surface parking to meet utilitarian and service needs that ensure safe and efficient campus operations.
- Reduce the visual impact of surface parking on National Western Drive and Race Court.

### Recommended Zoning Approach

- Allow a surface parking area to be located flexibly in relation to a building and street.
- Maintain existing surface parking lot screening requirements in the DZC.



*Promote flexible placement of surface parking to meet utilitarian and service needs and ensure safe and efficient campus operations.*

## 3 OUTDOOR INTENSIVE DISTRICT

### ***Pedestrian Access***

#### ***Intent***

- Ensure a strong visual and physical connection between Race Court and National Western Drive and buildings along these streets.
- Provide street level visual interest.

#### ***Recommended Zoning Approach***

- Require a clear, obvious publicly accessible connection between a street and the primary uses within a building.

### ***Transparency and Transparency Alternatives***

#### ***Intent***

- Provide visual interest on a building façade that faces the South Platte River.
- Promote flexibility in how visual interest is provided.

#### ***Recommended Zoning Approach***

- Require a minimum level of transparency (windows) on the ground floor of a river-facing building façade.
- Allow alternative treatments for a limited amount of the transparency requirement, such as display cases, permanent public art or other visually interesting design features.



# RIVERFRONT DISTRICT 4

## 4. Riverfront District

The recommendations in this section apply to areas identified as Riverfront on Figure 4.

### Land Use

#### Intent

- Promote a range of outdoor active recreational and passive open space, as well as natural areas.
- Preserve the potential to activate open space with limited uses that are compatible with open space and natural areas.
- Ensure the area is reserved primarily for an outdoor open space amenity for the campus and neighborhood.
- Discourage surface parking to ensure sensitivity and compatibility with this natural area.

#### Recommended Zoning Approach

- Permit a wide range of outdoor open space amenity uses.
- Permit a narrow range of enclosed uses, such as education, community facilities, retail and eating/drinking establishments.
- Permit a narrow range of temporary uses to support special events.
- Prohibit surface parking as a primary use.



Targeted land uses in the Riverfront District include a variety of natural and programmed open space, as well as limited land uses to help activate it.



## 4 RIVERFRONT DISTRICT

### **Required Parking**

#### Intent

- Allow campus operators to supply limited accessory parking to meet programmatic needs.

#### Recommended Zoning Approach

- Do not impose minimum parking requirements or maximum parking limits.

### **Building Placement Relative to the Street**

#### Intent

- Promote placement of buildings that ensure a building is visually subordinate to the open space itself.

#### Recommended Zoning Approach

- Require that a building be set back a moderate distance from National Western Drive.

### **Side, Rear and Riverfront Setbacks**

#### Intent

- Promote placement of buildings that ensure a building is visually subordinate to the open space itself.
- Ensure buildings adjacent to the South Platte River are set back sufficiently for accessible riverfront outdoor amenities and to sensitively transition to the river.

#### Recommended Zoning Approach

- Require that a building be set back moderately from a rear or side interior lot line.
- Require that a building to be generously set back from a riverfront zone lot line.

### **Maximum Building Height**

#### Intent

- Ensure buildings are visually subordinate to the open space feature itself.
- Ensure buildings are scaled to promote sensitivity to the river.
- Promote views to the South Platte River and the mountains to the east.

#### Recommended Zoning Approach

- Permit a building up to 40 feet.
- Allow for limited encroachments to exceed the maximum building height for special architectural elements, mechanical equipment and other targeted features.

## ***Surface Parking Location***

### *Intent*

- Minimize the visual impact of surface parking on National Western Drive and the South Platte river edge.
- Minimize conflicts between vehicles and other travel modes, including pedestrians and cyclists.
- Strengthen the visual connection between National Western Drive and adjacent buildings.

### *Recommended Zoning Approach*

- Prohibit a surface parking area between a building and a street zone lot line.
- Prohibit a surface parking area between a building and the South Platte River.
- Allow a surface parking area to the side of a building.

## ***Pedestrian Access***

### *Intent*

- Ensure there is a strong visual and physical connection between National Western Drive and buildings in the Riverfront District.

### *Recommended Zoning Approach*

- Require a building to include a publicly-accessible entrance that faces and physically connects to the street.

## ***Transparency and Transparency Alternatives***

### *Intent*

- Provide street level visual interest along National Western Drive.
- Provide visual interest on a building façade that faces the South Platte River.
- Promote flexibility in how street level interest is provided.

### *Recommended Zoning Approach*

- Require a minimum level of transparency (windows) on the ground floor of street-facing or river-facing building façade.
- Permit alternative treatments for a limited amount of the transparency requirement, such as display cases, landscape treatments or public art.

## E. Signs

This section provides a zoning strategy for signs and special lighting elements. It is intended to support a coordinated program of state-of-the-art signage for the NWC campus that is functional, visually interesting and compatible with adjacent neighborhoods.

### 1. Maintain Existing Sign Regulations for Permitted Signs

The DZC includes a section addressing signs in areas currently zoned Campus-National Western Center (CMP-NWC). These sign regulations should be expanded to apply campus-wide for all the districts described in this Strategy Report. The existing sign regulations address sign content, types, number, physical area, height and other topics. Please see the Campus Zone Districts Sign Standards in Section 10.10.7 of the DZC for details.

### Sign Types Recommended to be Permitted By-Right



Window Sign



Wall Sign



Projecting Sign



Ground Sign



Arcade Sign

## ***2. Allow Additional Flexibility for Innovative and Higher Quality Signage with Preparation of a District Sign Plan***

In keeping with campus objectives for innovation and urban design, it is proposed that zoning amendments establish a mechanism through which greater flexibility is allowed than would be allowed under Section 10.10.7. This flexibility would be allowed in exchange for a higher level of material durability, creativity, visual coordination and design quality. Approval of signs that do not meet the baseline requirements of DZC Section 10.10.7 would be allowed with preparation and approval of a District Sign Plan.

The intent of the District Sign Plan mechanism is to permit greater flexibility in the scale, type, location, and other characteristics of signs than are allowed within a baseline zoning district provided that certain criteria and standards for quality are met. Preparation and approval of a tailored District Sign Plan must be consistent with stipulations identified in the Code.

To permit the District Sign Plan option, a new section should be added to Division 10.10 of the DZCC along with conforming amendments to other applicable sections (such as 10.10.20). The new section would establish the intent, potential flexibility, review process and design criteria that would be required for the District Sign Plan.

## ***3. Establish Clear Design Criteria for District Sign Plan***

In exchange for the flexibility granted, a District Sign Plan must meet review criteria that ensure impacts of such allowances are adequately addressed and/or mitigated. District Sign Plans typically require a greater commitment to quality, public involvement, transitions at sensitive edges and other factors. Criteria for a District Sign Plan will be drafted alongside the code amendment language as a subsequent project step, but are anticipated to ensure that:

- Exciting, iconographic and inventive signs and special lighting elements are encouraged to distinguish the campus from other parts of Denver.
- Signage creates excitement and anticipation for residents, employees and visitors.
- Signage exhibits design excellence and sensitivity to the existing or planned character of the campus.
- Signage assists in attracting employers and visitors.
- Signage is established as a coordinated program.
- Material adverse impacts of signs and special lighting elements on nearby residential uses or structures are mitigated.
- Signage is not visually overwhelming when viewed from residential areas or major roadways.

## ***4. Promote Flexibility for a Wide Range of Coordinated and Innovative Signage***

Zoning amendments should allow for greater flexibility to a degree to be specified for the following sign related topics.



**Sign Types Potentially Allowed with Preparation and Approval of a District Sign Plan**



*Flashing Sign*



*Outdoor Advertising Device*



*Animated Sign*



*Marquee Sign*



*Roof Sign*



*Special Lighting Element*



*Projecting Signs (located away from entrance)*



### ***Sign Types and Special Lighting Elements***

Provide flexibility in the types of signs permitted to allow the following with an approved District Sign Plan:

- **Flashing Sign.** A flashing sign is defined as any sign, either stationary or animated, which exhibits any change in: natural or artificial light or color effects; text; pictures or any other form of message more frequently than once per hour by any means whatsoever. This sign type is currently prohibited in the CMP-NWC zone district.
- **Outdoor General Advertising Device.** An outdoor general advertising device is a sign relating to products, services or uses not on the same zone lot. This sign content is currently prohibited in the CMP-NWC zone district.
- **Animated Sign.** A sign or part of a sign which changes physical position by any movement or rotation.
- **Projecting Sign (where there is no direct building access at the Street Level).** A sign or graphic, other than a wall sign, that is attached to and projects from the wall, soffit, or eave of a building, is not in the same plane as the wall, soffit or eave to which it is attached and identifies a use within that building; but for which there is no direct street access on the Street Level at the sign location.
- **Roof Sign.** (1) a sign attached to the roof of a building in which the sign projects above the Roof Line of a building, or (2) a sign attached to an exterior wall or Parapet Wall in which the sign extends above the lowest height of the parapet wall.
- **Special Lighting Element.** Special Lighting Elements means, where a lighting source and the illuminated surface or medium are located in the same district, the illumination of:
  - The outside surface of any building, structure, part of any building or structure or
  - Any water, mist, fog, smoke, or other surface, material, medium or substrate located outdoors

**Maximum Sign Number**

There are currently limits placed on the number of signs that may be permitted on a zone lot. Limits on sign number are based on street frontage and/or the number of users along a street frontage. Zoning amendments should permit flexibility for the maximum number of signs allowed with preparation of a District Sign Plan.

**Maximum Sign Height Above Grade**

Section 10.10.7 of the DZC places limits on a sign's height above grade. The specific limits vary based on sign type. Wall and window signs are not permitted to extend beyond the roof line of the building to which the sign is attached, where roof line is defined as the highest point on any building or structure where an exterior wall or parapet wall encloses roof or floor area, including floor area provided for housing mechanical equipment. Projecting signs may be no higher than 15 feet above the sidewalk or Street Level finished floor level, whichever is higher. Zoning amendments should permit flexibility related to maximum sign height above grade with preparation of a District Sign Plan provided they do not extend beyond maximum building heights.

**Sign Location**

Section 10.10.7 of the DZC prohibits projecting signs that project more than five feet from a building. It also prohibits all signs from being placed within a required setback area. Zoning amendments should permit flexibility for these two requirements with preparation of a District Sign Plan.

## **F. Next Steps**

The following steps will occur following this Strategy Report.

- **Outreach and Input on Zoning Strategy Report.** This document will be circulated to the CAC, stakeholders, NWCO and the broader community for input and feedback.
- **Draft Zoning Amendments.** Based on feedback received on this Report, Denver's Community Planning & Development Division will prepare technical zoning amendment language for public review.
- **Planning Board Draft Zoning Amendments.** Based on feedback received on the Draft Zoning Amendments, Denver's Community Planning & Development Division will prepare a second draft of the zoning amendments for Planning Board review. The City Council Land Use, Transportation and Infrastructure Committee (LUTI) and the City Council will also review the document prior to adoption.
- **City Council Adoption Hearing.** The zoning amendments will be received and potentially adopted by the City Council.
- **Stage 2 Zoning Amendments.** At a future date to be determined, CPD will conduct a similar public process to complete zoning amendments for the Triangle properties east of the BNSF rail tracks.