

CITY AND COUNTY OF DENVER

ARAPAHOE SQUARE / B-8A

DESIGN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES



APRIL 15, 1998



City and County of Denver

Approved and Adopted:

William H. Hornby Date

William H. Hornby
Chair, Denver Planning Board

ARAPAHOE SQUARE - THE VISION

The Arapaho Square (B-8A) district, located between the Central Business District, Lower Downtown, Coors Field, and Curtis Park, will, through redevelopment, reknit northeast downtown into a cohesive urban area.

As envisioned in the Northeast Downtown Plan, redevelopment of the B-8A will support a mix of uses. New developments will provide support services for downtown, housing opportunities for a range of incomes, and extend the street life from the downtown core into the surrounding area. The redevelopment of the B-8A will help to create new jobs, attract new residents, support additional neighborhood retail opportunities and services and provide new amenities for the community.

When asked to describe their vision of new developments in the B-8A, landowners, residents, and neighbors said the following at a public meeting: *New construction in the B-8A should provide a transition from the surrounding lower scale neighborhoods to the high-rise scale of downtown. The B-8A area should be pedestrian "friendly" and should provide street-level activities such as shopping and restaurants to encourage walking in the area. New construction should fit "contextually" into the area utilizing "human scale" design and materials.*

Characteristics to avoid that were specifically mentioned included the following: *Large expanses of unbroken stucco planes, stark buildings with sharp angles, and "cold and boring" walks along flat windowless walks. Parking should be carefully designed to minimize its impact on the urban environment and all parking structures should have ground floor retail.*

In addition to achieving the objectives outlined by the neighborhood, these Guidelines should result in developments that are supportive of each other and produce the desired characteristics of an "urban" neighborhood. Design Guidelines also assist the City and County of Denver to ensure that new construction contributes to the vibrancy and quality of the downtown environment.

The Denver Comprehensive Plan states *as Denver residents, we want our city to be even more livable in the future, and we want our city to be even more beautiful.* Design guidelines are one of the tools that will assist the City in reaching this goal.



The Bayly Lofts are located in the B-8A.



16th Street in Lower Downtown is typical of the pedestrian active environment envisioned in Arapahoe Square.

The Arapahoe Square (B-8A) Design Standards and Guidelines address the quality of the urban environment, recognizing that it is ultimately formed by countless individual, private creative decisions. It is the intent of this document to inform those decisions so that they contribute to the following development objectives:

1. The creation of a pedestrian-oriented urban environment that emphasizes architectural and urban design principles of human scale, visual interest and contextual response to the building site; and
2. The development of quality structures that contribute to the long-term economic and social vitality of the City and County of Denver.

There are two sections to this document: **Design Standards and Guidelines** and **Procedures for Design Review**. The review procedures are intended to be clear and precise, yet flexible enough to satisfy project development schedules and design intentions. The applicant or designer using this document should be familiar with the procedures for design review before referring to the Standards and Guidelines.

Design review is mandatory for new projects in the Arapahoe Square (B-8A) Zone and for existing structures when the valuation of renovation exceeds fifty percent of the replacement cost of the existing structure excluding land cost. The goals, objectives and requirements of design review are listed under three headings for each review issue: Intent, Standards and Guidelines. Descriptions for each are as follows:

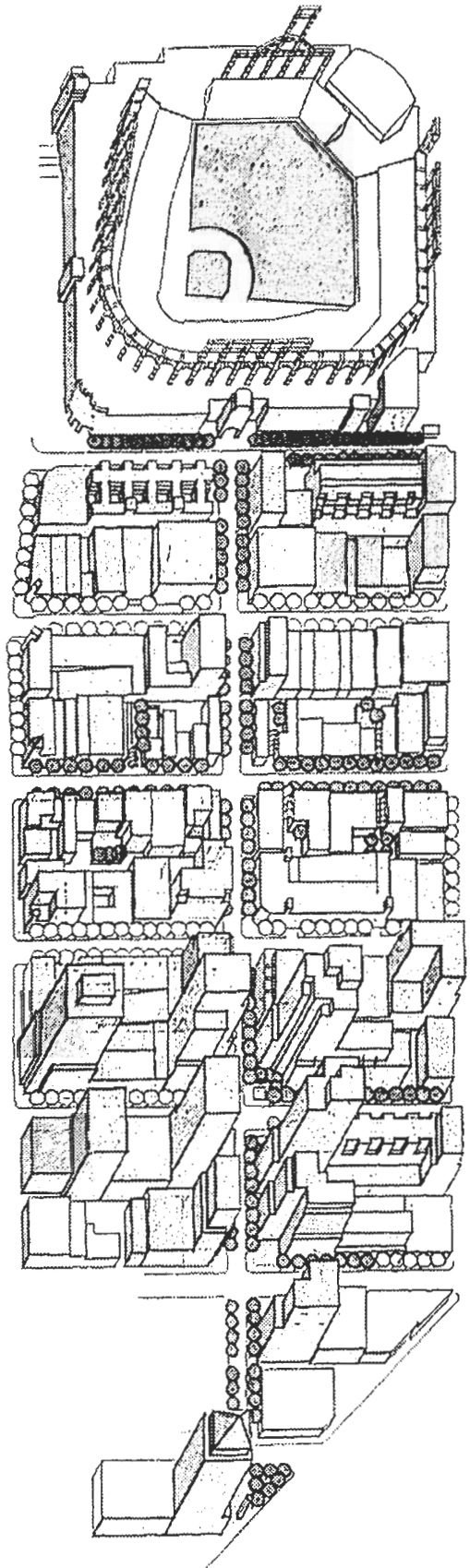
Intent

Intent statements are provided to define the goals which the standards and guidelines have been created to achieve. In circumstances where the appropriateness or applicability of a standard or guideline is in question or under negotiation, the intent statement will serve to provide additional direction.

Standards

Design standards provide specific direction based on the stated intent. Standards use the terms "shall" to indicate that compliance is required unless it can be demonstrated that an acceptable alternative meets one or more of the following conditions:

- an alternative better achieves the stated intent;
- the intent which the standard was created to address will not be achieved by application of the standard in a particular circumstance; or
- unique site factors make the standard impractical or cost prohibitive.



Conceptual development along 21st Street

Guidelines

Design guidelines reinforce the objectives defined by the intent statements. Guidelines use the term “should” to denote that they are considered relevant to achieving the stated intent, and will be pertinent to the review process but will not be required for approval. Guidelines will, however, be strongly considered when there is a request to waive a related standard.

Design Standards and Guidelines are authorized by the Zoning Ordinance of the City and County of Denver and are to be used in conjunction with that ordinance under which they apply. The Standards and Guidelines address Sec. 59-400(9)(1) of the City Zoning Ordinance.

SITE ACCESS

Intent

- To minimize vehicular and pedestrian conflicts within a given block in order to improve and support the district as a walkable neighborhood.
- To minimize curb cuts and driveways thereby maximizing a continuous building "wall" adjacent to the street.

Standards

NOTE: All curb cuts are subject to City Traffic Engineering approval.

- Developments having street frontage for 2/3 or more of the long side of a block may have a maximum of two curb cuts along the street.
- Those developments having street frontage for less than 2/3 of the block shall have the minimum number of curb-cuts necessary to provide access to the property.

Guidelines

- Driveways should be oriented 90 degrees to the street.
- Minimize the visibility of parking and driveway surfaces from the public right-of-way.
- Minimize the number of curb cuts to reduce conflicts between pedestrians and automobiles.

PARKING

Intent

- To minimize the visual impact of parking on the streetscape and the pedestrian experience.
- To minimize the conflict between active, pedestrian-oriented uses and surface parking.
- To increase pedestrian activity in the neighborhood by locating commercial uses at the street-level of parking garages.

Surface Parking Lots

Standards

- All surface parking shall be located at the rear or side of the site in order to minimize gaps in the street wall. The preferred location shall be at the rear.
- If the building site is a corner lot, the building footprint shall occupy the corner with parking located away from the corner.
- Low walls or screens (3' minimum) and landscaping shall be used to screen parking that is adjacent to the street front.
- No parking shall be permitted in the front setback.

Surface Parking Lots

Guidelines

- Upper building floors should be continued over parking access drives to maintain continuity of building facades along the street frontage.

Parking Structures

Standards

- Parking structures with street-oriented frontage shall provide the opportunity for leasable commercial space for not less than 50% of the ground level frontage.
- Facades of parking structures that front the street must satisfy all standards described under Building Facades later in these guidelines.
- Facade openings which face any public right of way or open space shall be vertically and horizontally aligned with no exposed ramps and the floors fronting on such facades shall be level.
- Parking structures shall be designed to minimize the view of all parked cars and internal light sources from the adjacent public right-of-way or public open space for the full height of the structure



New parking structure in LoDo which reinforces the street edge and the pedestrian friendliness of the area.

Parking Structures

Guidelines

- The span and proportions of openings (excluding entry door) in the facade of the parking structure should be similar to those of windows on adjacent buildings.
- Parking structures should utilize materials and architectural detailing found in the primary development being served.

LOADING AND SERVICE AREA**Intent**

- To reduce the impact of these activities on the appearance of the neighborhood.
- To minimize the negative impacts of service areas on pedestrian circulation, public streets, and adjoining property.

Standards

- Service areas shall be located so that their function is not readily visible from or disruptive to the street space.
- Loading docks and/or service areas shall be incorporated into building architecture.
- Service areas not incorporated into building architecture shall be screened from view of all public streets.

Guidelines

- Refuse storage and pick-up areas should be combined with other service and loading areas whenever possible.

PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY IMPROVEMENTS

- Streetscaping is addressed in the Northeast Downtown Neighborhood Plan. New construction should follow the recommendations of the Neighborhood Plan and subsequent policy requirements.

BUILDING LOCATION /ORIENTATION**Building Placement****Intent**

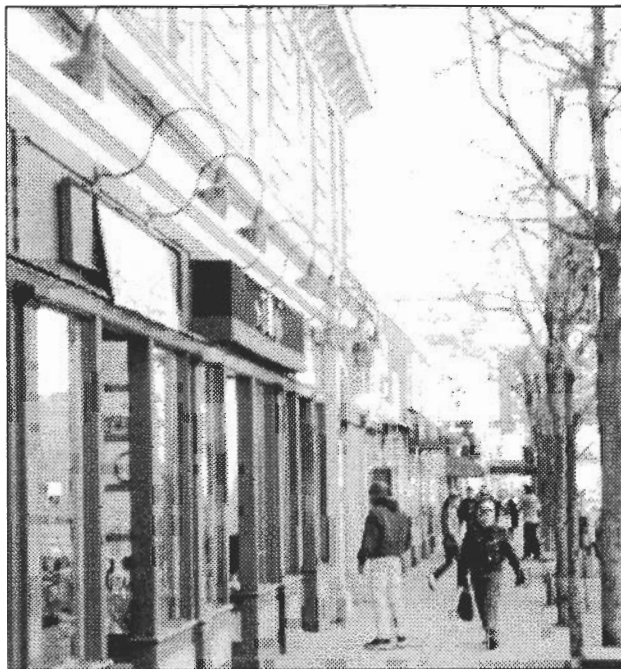
- To reinforce the urban characteristics of buildings and structures that define the street space.
- To promote development of buildings that encourage pedestrian activity through the incorporation of pedestrian-oriented uses at the ground level street frontage.

Standards

- No less than 65% of the building facade within the lower 80' shall be oriented parallel to the street on which it fronts.
- The ground floor area of those portions of buildings conforming to build-to-street orientation requirements shall be occupied by active commercial or residential uses.
- Buildings with drive-through uses, where permitted, shall locate the building adjacent to the street front and locate drive-through lanes, menu/order boards and service windows away from street frontage.

Guidelines

- The majority of the street-oriented frontage of any building should be occupied by active uses that are visually and physically accessible from the street.
- Buildings should be designed so that the majority of the building mass aligns with the sidewalk and street.
- Automotive-oriented uses should be located in a manner that supports the desired urban pedestrian-oriented characteristics of the B-8A.



Ground floors with active commercial uses.

Build-To-Line/Zone**Intent**

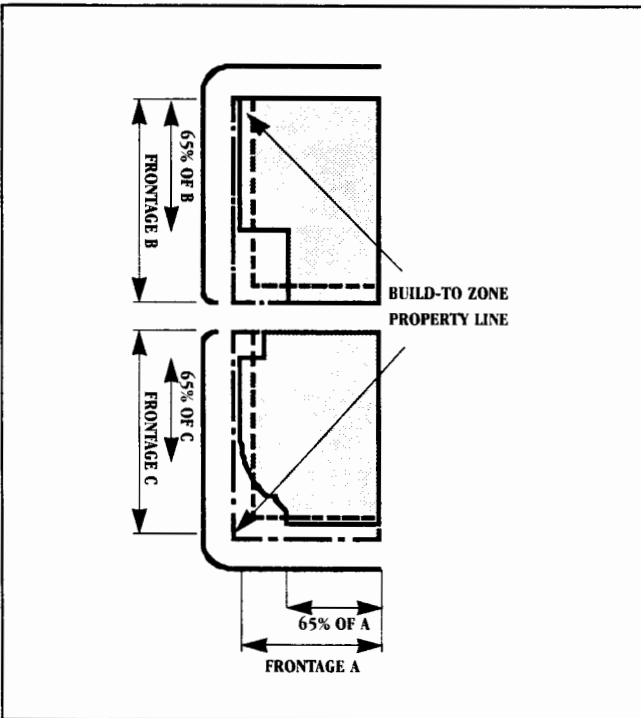
- To define and contain the street space, thereby concentrating and reinforcing pedestrian activity and creating a sense of the street as "place."
- To create a continuous street wall.
- To frame the mountain vistas (along the named streets) to the west.
- To frame the vistas to downtown and to Coors Field.

Standards

- Buildings shall be built at, or within 10' of the property line adjoining the street for no less than 65% of each zone lot frontage (see illustration p.3).

Guidelines

- New construction should create a strong and attractive street edge close to the sidewalk.
- If the building does not occupy 65% of the zone lot, the build-to requirement may be met with the use of a screen wall and other landscaping elements.



This illustrates the requirement for placing 65% of the building facade at the built-to-line.

BUILDING FORM - MASSING

Intent

- To moderate scale changes between adjacent buildings, and to integrate new construction into the context of lower-scale buildings through variation in form and mass that reflects adjacent architecture.
- To relate new development to existing historic buildings in order to respect the historic character of the existing buildings.
- To create buildings which are "sculpted" to reduce the overall appearance of mass.
- To provide light and air through increased sky exposure to the public streets.

Standards

- Tall buildings adjacent to lower structures shall establish scale relationships with the neighboring buildings through methods such as: horizontal alignment of architectural features and fenestration, similar proportions, similar use of materials and step-backs that reflect the height of the lower structure.

Guidelines

- When new development is larger in height and mass than the existing context, building mass shall be varied through changes in wall plane and building height to deflect possible tunnel effects and to increase sunlight access to the street, particularly along numbered streets.
- Ground floor and frontage in mixed-use developments should be distinguished from residential facades through such methods as height, material, detail, percentage of glazing, etc., and may be used to establish a strong building base or street-level corners.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE STREET

Intent

- To enhance the activity and function of the public streets by orientating primary building entries to the street.
- To reinforce the occurrence of pedestrian activity and circulation along the street by creating as many external, street-oriented entries as possible to ground floor, pedestrian-active uses.

Standards

- All buildings shall provide at least one primary building entry oriented directly to a public street.
- All pedestrian-active uses with street-level, exterior exposure shall provide at least one direct pedestrian entry from the street.

Guidelines

- Entries to ground floor pedestrian-active uses and building lobbies should be emphasized through changes in plan, differentiation in material and/or color, greater level of detail and enhanced lighting.
- Each building should have one or more clearly identifiable "front doors" that address the street for each street-facing facade.
- Street-level commercial space should be at the same elevation as the public sidewalk to promote easy access.
- Entries recessed within the building mass shall be excluded from the build-to requirements.

- Street-level residential floors should be elevated a few steps above the level of the public sidewalk to promote privacy.

BUILDING FACADES

Walls - Architectural Scaling Elements

Intent

- To avoid large areas of undifferentiated or blank building facades.
- To create a comfortably scaled and thoughtfully detailed urban environment through the use of well-designed architectural forms and details.
- To provide for the comfort and interest of the pedestrian environment through the provision of human-scaled architectural character.

Standards

- Each building facade oriented to the public street shall include architectural scaling patterns that incorporate three or more of the following elements:
 - √ Expressions of building structural elements such as floors (banding, belt courses, etc., not less than 1' deep and 4" wide), columns (pilasters, piers, etc., not less than 4" deep and 1' wide), and foundations (water tables, rustication);
 - √ Patterns of windows and door openings that provide surface variation through change of plane (not less than 4" deep) and/or the use of sills, lintels, mullions, and other scale-providing elements;
 - √ Change in color;
 - √ Change in texture;
 - √ Change in material, module or pattern;
 - √ Patterns of architectural ornament integral to the building facade.
 - Architectural scaling patterns shall occur both horizontally and vertically.
- Note: Glazed areas will not be considered valid changes in material, color or texture.

Guidelines

- Architectural scaling elements should be used to break down the appearance of large building facades into architectural patterns and component building forms. Variation in building scaling may include changes in wall plane or height and may relate to primary building entries, important corners or other significant architectural features.
- Scaling elements should be integral to the building form and construction, not a thinly applied facade.
- Variation in building scaling and detail should relate to the 25-foot width of the typical lot and to the pedestrian-oriented uses along the street.

Surface Variation

Intent

- To create facades that accentuate the visual interest created by the interplay of light and shadows with the building's surface.
- To avoid large expanses of undifferentiated building facade.
- To provide reveals and/or changes in surface texture that contribute to the visual interest of the facade.

Standards

- Each change of material shall involve a minimum 1-1/2" variation in wall plane. Reveals shall be not less than 1" deep and 1" wide.

Guidelines

- Material changes should occur at inside corners or be delineated by a specific transitional detail such as a belt course, cap, or reveal.



New construction in a historic structure in the Arapahoe Square (B-8A) illustrates the use of architectural scaling elements and recessed planes.

MATERIALS**Intent**

- To reinforce the masonry traditions of Denver and its regional architecture.
- To encourage human-scaled buildings through the use of smaller material modules.
- To ensure the consistent use of high quality materials appropriate to the urban environment.

Standards

- Not less than 70% of all facades (not including door and window areas) facing public streets shall be constructed of masonry materials defined as: brick, stone, terra cotta, architectural precast, cast stone, architectural concrete masonry units, and prefabricated brick panels.

Guidelines

- Stucco and EIFS (Exterior Insulating Finish Systems) are discouraged. EIFS should never be used as an exterior cladding on a building ground floor facade.
- All building materials should be selected with the objectives of quality and durability in the urban context as well as to produce a positive effect on the pedestrian environment through such qualities as scale, color, and texture.
- Carefully detailed combinations of materials should be used to reinforce architectural scaling requirements (see - Architectural Scaling Elements - Page 4).
- Colors used on large areas of building facades should be natural earth tones to respect Denver's tradition of masonry construction.
- Architectural metals, cast-in-place concrete, architectural concrete masonry units, tile, glass, and glass block systems, among others, are acceptable materials when properly finished and detailed.

GLASS-TO-WALL RATIO**Intent**

- To require transparent and open lower floor facades that insure the visibility of pedestrian active uses, and provide a lighter, more detailed and human-scaled architectural expression along the sidewalk.
- To require a more solid wall with a pattern of individual windows at the upper floors in order to provide greater variety of scale through fenestration patterns, architectural elements, surface relief, texture, and materials.

Standards

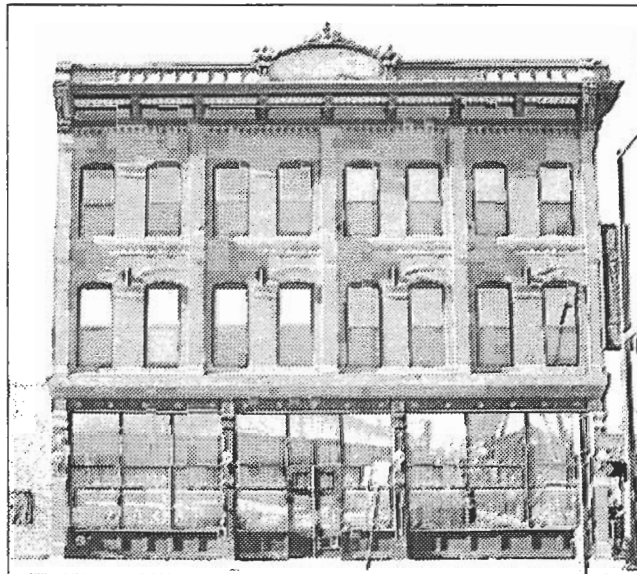
- Not less than 60% of the ground floor facade shall be made of transparent materials, or otherwise designed to allow pedestrians to view activities inside the building or displays related to these activities.
- Between 25% and 60% of the upper floor facade and above shall be transparent glazing (up to 80 feet).

Guidelines

- For mixed-use developments, a variety of glass-to-wall ratios that reflect the different uses within a building are strongly encouraged. Typically, this is characterized by a lower glass-to-wall ratio for residential uses and a higher glass-to-wall ratio for commercial uses. Second floor mezzanine levels may conform to either standard.
- Portions of a building facade that must restrict glazing for functional reasons must conform to the architectural scaling standards (page 4).

WINDOWS - GLAZING TRANSPARENCY**Intent**

- To require the use of clear glass in commercial as well as residential applications, to ensure visibility of pedestrian-oriented uses and to avoid the glare of reflective glass.



The Paris Hotel is an example of masonry construction traditionally found in Denver. It also illustrates the typical glass-to-wall ratio and pedestrian "friendly" ground level development.

Standards

- Clear glass shall have an exterior reflectance rating not to exceed .20.
- No reflective coating shall be on the exterior surface of the glass.

Guidelines

- Clear, "Low E," or slightly tinted glazing should be used to ensure the visibility of pedestrian-oriented commercial uses.
- Minimal use of opaque glass is acceptable to continue glazing patterns in areas where screening of structures and utilities is required.
- All glazing should be recessed and subdivided by systems of framing and mullions to reinforce architectural scaling requirements.

ROOF/MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT**Intent**

- To integrate all building systems within a complete architectural form.
- To increase the visual interest of the downtown skyline.

Standards

- All rooftop building systems shall be incorporated into the building form in a manner integral to the building architecture.
- All roof mounted mechanical, electrical, and telecommunication systems shall be screened from view of surrounding streets and structures.

Guidelines

- Roof form should relate to the context in which it is viewed in terms of height, proportions, form, and materials, whether the context is surrounding buildings of similar scale or, in the case of a high-rise tower, the context of the city skyline.
- Flat roofs are discouraged on structures that are above 80' high

BALCONIES**Intent**

- To maintain open sight lines along the public right-of-way.

Standards

- Balconies and terraces shall be incorporated into vertical and horizontal shifts in building massing wherever possible to avoid building faces that are dominated by cantilevered balcony projections.

Guidelines

- Cantilevered balconies should be designed to appear as unobtrusive and transparent as possible. They should compliment the overall architecture. Their use should be minimized on street-facing facades.

BUILDING SECURITY BARS/ SECURITY FENCING**Intent**

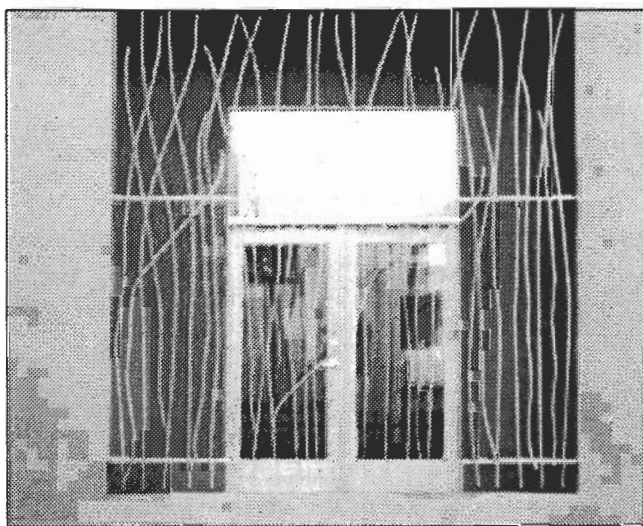
- To promote the perception of the Arapahoe Square (B-8A) area as a safe neighborhood.

Standards

- Chain link and razor wire fencing shall not be visible from the public right-of-way.

Guidelines

- When security bars are used, they should be installed on the interior (behind the glass).
- Limited use of exterior security bars may be appropriate if they are designed in a sculptural manner that belies their function.
- Security fencing shall be accomplished with iron railing.
- Iron pickets should be installed in a neutral position, vertical to the ground plan, no portion of the picket should point toward, or away from, the public right-of-way.



Security bars designed in a sculptural manner.

PROCEDURES FOR DESIGN REVIEW

Design review is initiated with a Schematic Design Pre-Submittal conference. Additional review occurs at the Schematic and Design Development phases.

Schematic Design Phase

- (a) Pre-Submittal Conference.** Prior to filing a Schematic Design Phase Submittal, the applicant and the Planning Office shall have a pre-submittal conference to discuss the submittal and the schematic design phase review process.
- (b) Schematic Design Phase Submittal.** A Schematic Design Phase Submittal shall be filed directly with the Planning Office by the owner or agent of the owner of the property involved and shall contain such information and documentation as prescribed in the Rules and Regulations.
- (c) Notice.** Zoning Administration shall send notice of the Schematic Design Phase Submittal to all neighborhood organizations registered pursuant to Section 41-19 of the Revised Municipal Code whose boundaries are within two hundred (200) feet of the property involved not later than five (5) days after it receives the completed submittal.
- (d) Review for Consistency.** Within thirty (30) days of the Schematic Design Phase Submittal, the Director of Planning shall review the submittal to determine if the submittal is generally consistent with the criteria established in the *Arapahoe Square (B-8A) Design Manual* and to identify additional design issues to be addressed in the Design Development Phase. This time frame may be extended by agreement of the applicant and the Director of Planning.

Design Development Phase

- (a) Pre-Application Conference.** Prior to filing an application for Design Development Phase review, the applicant and the Planning Office shall have a preapplication conference to discuss the application and the Design Development Phase review process.
- (b) Application for Design Development Phase Review.** All applications for review of the Design Development Phase review shall be filed with the Department of Zoning Administration by the owner or agent of the owner of the property involved and shall contain such information and documentation as prescribed in the Procedures for Design Review. All applications for review of the Design Development

Phase shall be reviewed for completeness by the Department of Zoning Administration and, if found to be complete, shall be forwarded to the Planning Office.

- (c) Notice.** The Planning Office shall send notice of receipt of the completed application to the applicant and to neighborhood organizations registered pursuant to Section 41-9 of the Revised Municipal Code whose boundaries are within two hundred (200) feet of the property involved not later than five (5) days after it receives the completed application.
- (d) Planning Office Evaluation.** The Director of Planning shall evaluate the application based on criteria established in the *Arapahoe Square (B-8A) Design Manual* and prepare a recommendation to approve, approve with conditions, or deny the application not later than thirty (30) days after receiving the completed application. The time frame may be extended by mutual consent of the applicant and Director of Planning. The Planning Office shall send notice of the recommendation to the Planning Board, the applicant and the above described neighborhood organizations.
- (e) Planning Board Public Meeting.** The Planning Board shall hold a public meeting to review the application based on the criteria established in the *Arapahoe Square (B-8A) Design Manual* and the recommendation of the Director of Planning not later than sixty (60) days after the Planning Office receives the completed application. This time frame may be extended by agreement of the applicant and the Planning Board Chair. The Planning Office shall send notice of the meeting to the applicant and to the above described neighborhood organization at least fifteen (15) days prior to the meeting. The Planning Board shall prepare a final recommendation to approve, approve with conditions, or deny the Design Development Phase applications and shall forward its recommendation to the Zoning Administrator not later than fifteen (15) days after the meeting.
- (f) Action by Zoning Administrator.** The Zoning Administrator shall approve, approve with conditions or deny the Design Development Phase application after viewing the recommendation of the Planning Board.

No structure subject to design review shall be erected, altered, used or occupied except in conformity with the decision of the Zoning Administrator.

Design review consultation with staff may be requested by the applicant at any point in the development process as required to provide direction on specific issues.

The review process may be delayed during any project review phase by the incomplete submittal of required review documentation. Review may also be delayed at the request of the developer at any time.

Submission Requirements

The applicant must submit design documents appropriate to the phase and level of project development at the time review is requested. Sufficient information is required at each design phase in order to fully evaluate all relevant issues. The list below identifies minimally acceptable design information required in order to initiate and complete review for each phase.

Pre-Design Conference

- Project Program indicating building areas and uses
- Project Site description including photos of the surrounding context.

Schematic (Concept) Design

- Site and Context Plan (immediately adjacent properties)
- Building Floor Plans
- Building Elevations
- Building Sections
- All items under Pre-Design

Design Development

- Landscape Plan
- Detailed Floor Plans
- Building Sections
- Architectural facade details and treatments
- Building Materials Schedule (a sample board may be requested)
- All items under Schematic (Concept) Design

Construction/Permitting

- Final construction documents for project
- All items under Design Development

Amendments

No amendments to the Design Standards may be approved until (i) the proposed amendments have been reviewed by the Planning Office and the Planning Office has forwarded its comments to the Planning Board, and (ii) the Planning Board has complied with all requirements of Chapter 2, Article VI, of the Revised Municipal Code Concerning Notice and Public Hearings.

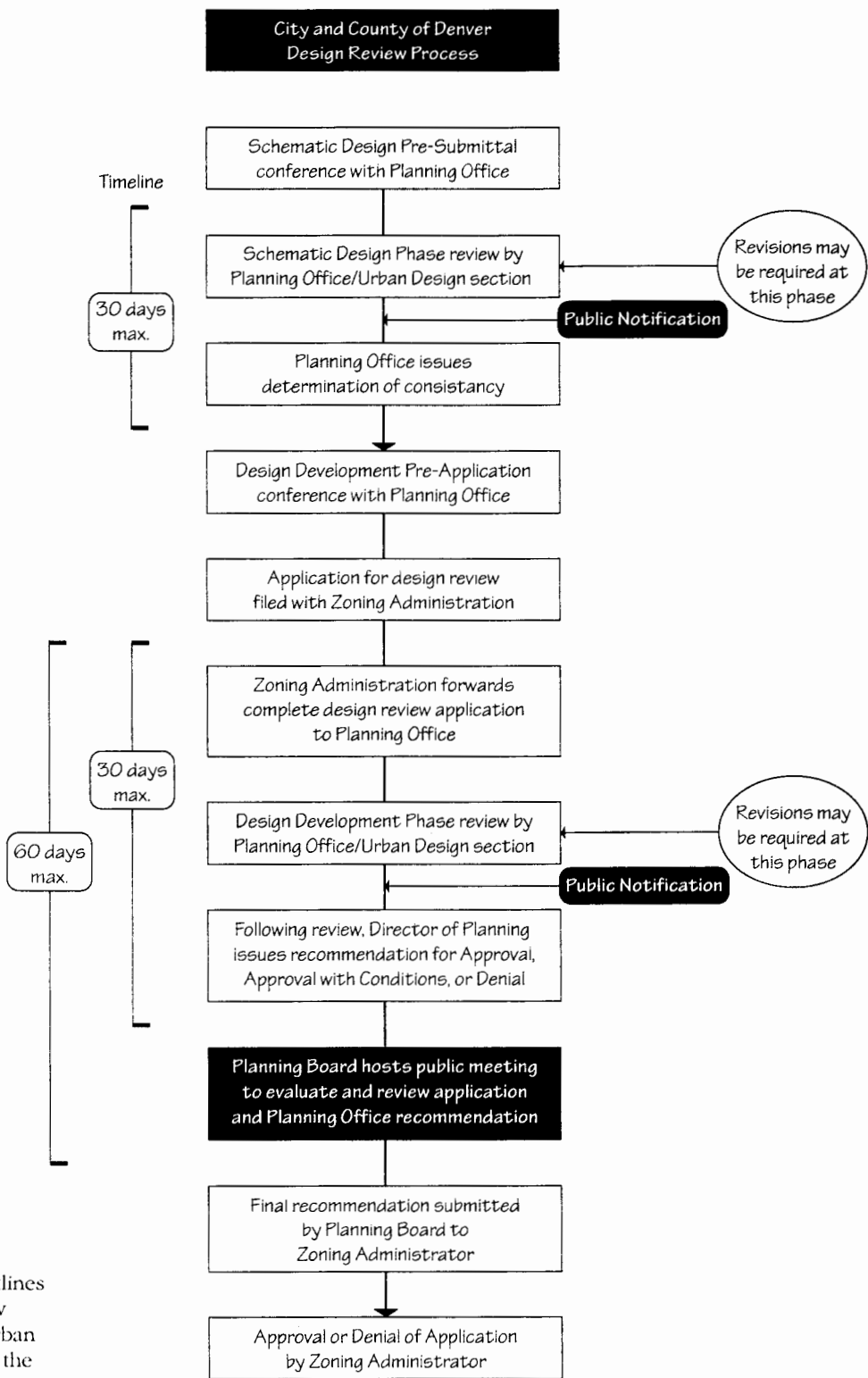
Modifications

If it becomes impossible or impractical to complete construction of a structure or a multiple structure project substantially in accordance with design consistency determinations or approvals obtained pursuant to the Design Review Process, the owner of such structure or project shall notify the Zoning Administrator of such impossibility or impracticality and shall submit to the Zoning Administrator an alternative design that is as close as reasonably possible to the approved design. The Zoning Administrator shall refer such proposed alternative design to the Director of Planning within fifteen (15) days. The Director of Planning shall treat such referral as a new application.

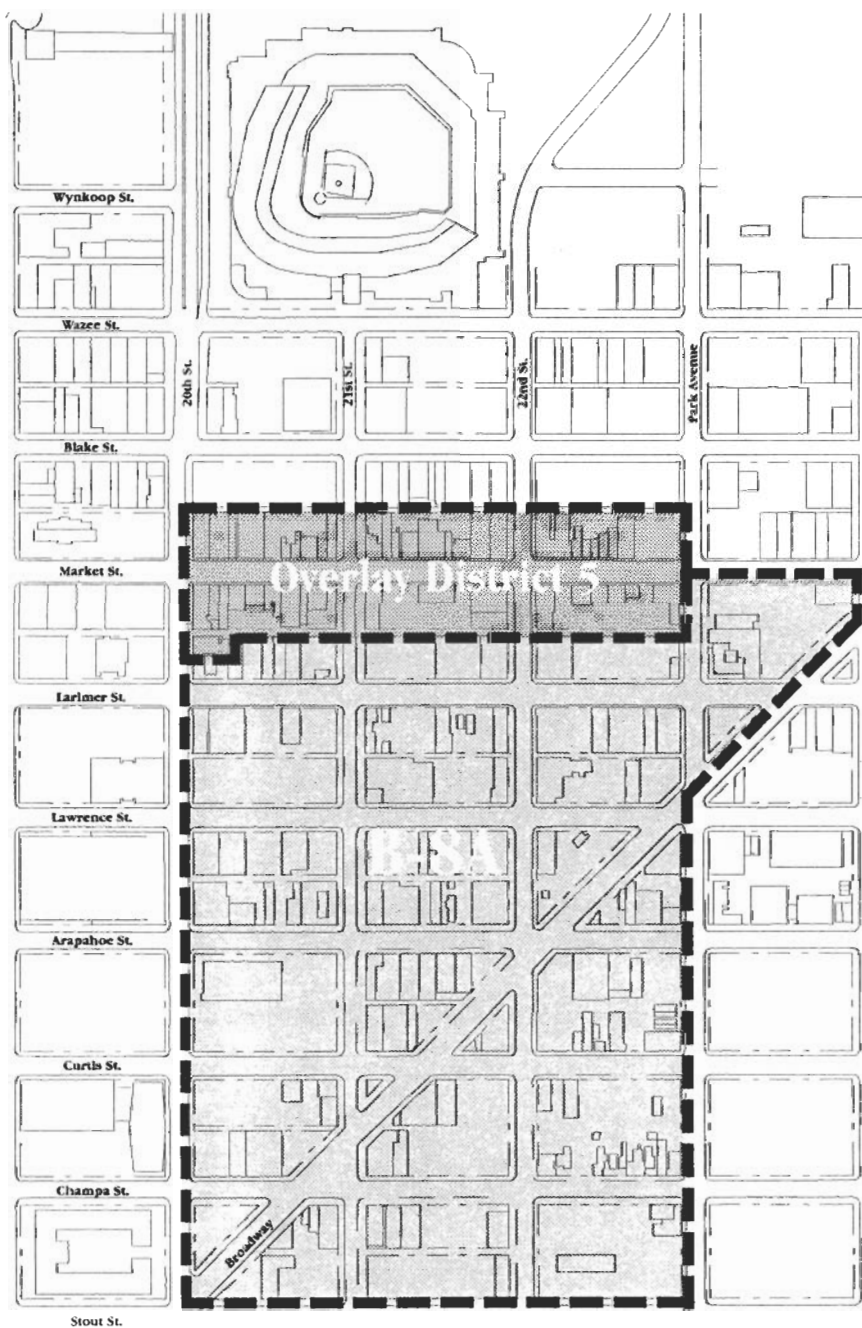
Planning Board Appeal Process

If a design is not approved, the Applicant may revise and resubmit, or appeal to the Planning Board.

Decisions of the Planning Board may be appealed as outlined in the *Rules of Procedure* of the Planning Board. Appeals may be initiated by any party (e.g., neighboring property owners, Registered Neighborhood Organizations, etc., within a 200 foot radius) and must specify the grounds upon which the relief is claimed. Please refer to the Planning Board *Rules of Procedure* for a full explanation of requirements.



• This flowchart outlines the Design Review process for the Urban Design Section of the Planning and Development Office. Additional development review is required by other city agencies.



MAP OF B-8A