

INTRODUCTION

The City and County of Denver's adopted plans outline an overarching community-informed vision for Denver. These plans can cover a small area (such as a multi-acre property to be redeveloped or the blocks surrounding a transit station), a group of neighborhoods, or the entire city. Each plan is the result of an extensive, collaborative public process, involving residents, business owners, community organizations, and other stakeholders.

Community engagement during a rezoning process is not intended to re-evaluate adopted plans or to discuss specific development projects. Rather, it is meant to ensure neighbors and stakeholders are aware of the possible outcomes of a proposed zone district. An understanding of how those outcomes are consistent with the community's vision as expressed in our adopted plans can help make for a smooth rezoning process. This document provides guidance for engagement but is not exhaustive. You are encouraged to be creative in engaging the community.

The intent of community engagement during the rezoning process is to:

1. Provide early notice that a rezoning is being proposed.
2. Explain how the proposal implements the community's vision and adopted plans.
3. Provide opportunities for neighbors to talk with the applicant about the rezoning request.

Outreach and engagement should strive to reach community members who have traditionally been left out of public processes. You should choose strategies based on the demographics and equity issues in the neighborhood, such as providing childcare and interpretation services at neighborhood meetings.

REQUIRED OUTREACH

You are required to provide documentation of outreach conducted before you submit your application and should stay in touch with the community throughout the process. Minimum requirements are outlined below, but most successful applications go beyond what is listed. You should document your outreach using the template provided and include a narrative summary. Minimum pre-application requirements:

1. Flyers or letters to the immediately adjacent properties
2. Contact the applicable City Council office
3. Contact the applicable Registered Neighborhood Organizations
4. Documentation of engagement
 - Narrative
 - Documentation of date(s) and method(s)

WHO SHOULD BE ENGAGED?

City Council

To ensure a fair and impartial public hearing, City Council members do not interact with people who have had their applications checked and accepted as complete. However, you should contact City Council members *before* submitting your application. City Council members can help identify neighborhood concerns and important community organizations, and they can often provide additional insight about a property. A rezoning application must show that you have contacted the City Council member who represents the district where the proposed rezoning is located.

Community Organizations

Registered Neighborhood Organizations (RNO)

RNOs are groups of residents and property owners within a neighborhood who meet regularly and whose information is kept on file with the city’s Community Planning and Development Department. RNOs receive notices from the city during the rezoning process. They can also facilitate conversations between community members and rezoning applicants, distribute information to their members, take official positions on proposed rezonings and submit letters of support or opposition.

We recommend reaching out to RNOs to offer to attend a meeting to present information about the rezoning application. The planner assigned to your case will provide a list of RNOs active near your application. You can also use the map at [DenverGov.org/RNO](https://denvergov.org/RNO) to determine which groups’ boundary areas contain the address of the proposed rezoning. If you are having difficulty getting in touch with an RNO, staff or City Council offices can often help make contact.

Other Community Organizations

Some neighborhoods have other community organizations who are active and interested in rezoning applications. These may include business improvement districts or other tax-funded entities, nonprofits who serve specific populations within the community, business associations or other groups that are not registered with the city. City staff and City Council offices can help identify important community groups that should be contacted during the rezoning process. These groups often hold meetings at which an applicant can present about the project and can help distribute information. Community groups are also welcome to submit a comment letter, which is another important indicator of community sentiment.

Adjacent neighbors

All tenants and property owners within 200 feet of a rezoning and within city limits will be formally notified by Community Planning and Development when an application is submitted and before the Planning Board public hearing. These neighbors are often keenly interested in how nearby properties are used and evolve over time. Reaching out to both neighboring residents/tenants and property owners before submitting an application can help build trust and often leads to less contentious public hearings. If you are proposing to rezone a building that is currently occupied, it is especially important to conduct outreach to those tenants who you could be displacing.

OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT METHODS

If your application prompts substantial community interest or could cause a significant change to the neighborhood, outreach beyond the minimum requirement is strongly recommended. Before you submit your application, you should pursue multiple outreach methods that are appropriate for the scale of the rezoning request and the surrounding neighborhood. The planner assigned to your case can advise you on best practices. The applicable City Council office may also have suggestions.

Outreach materials should be written in plain language and generally contain the following information:

- Current zone district
- Proposed zone district
- Types of uses allowed by proposed zone district
- Building forms and heights allowed in the proposed zone district
- Percent of housing required to be affordable, per Mandatory Affordable Housing requirements
- Reason for the rezoning
- How to provide comments

Printed materials

Method	Description
Flyers, Posters, and Yard Signs	Deliver flyers to neighbors or post at community gathering places such as libraries, schools, recreation centers, and churches. Place yard signs in visible areas and request use of business storefronts for posters.
Direct mail	Mail postcards or newsletters to neighbors providing more details about your application.
Door-to-door canvassing	Walk door-to-door throughout the neighborhood to talk directly to residents.
Other	Distribute door hangers, place newspaper ads, or other materials.

Digital/electronic materials

Method	Description
Project website	Create and share a website with information about the application and rezoning process that is maintained and regularly updated. A public commenting function and the ability to sign up for updates is encouraged.
Newsletter and social media	Provide a shareable written summary or social media content that neighborhood organizations or council offices can post or email to their memberships.
Other	Send text messages, publish in digital news outlets, or other methods.

In-person and virtual engagement



Method	Description
Focus group	Focus groups should be intentionally composed of diverse residents and representatives of community organizations and businesses, as appropriate. They can provide a small group setting for the applicant and community to better understand each other.
Site walk	An on-site tour with community members can help people learn more about the area and help you hear from neighborhood residents.
Community meeting	Large platforms offer an opportunity for community members to learn more about a rezoning application. They can be virtual or in-person. It is best practice to provide childcare, interpretation services, and to hold meetings when most convenient for community members.
Drop-in office hours	Specified times at which community members can meet one-on-one or in small groups with you to have their questions answered, express concerns, and provide input. Office hours could be held online or at a nearby business, community center, or other venue near the site.
“Pop-Up” events near site	Create spaces to meet people where they are and provide brief opportunities to share information about the rezoning application. These can include small meetings held in community establishments (restaurants/coffee shops, parks, places of worship, schools or recreation centers, grocery stores, and during pre-existing community gatherings and events).
Stakeholder interviews	Meetings with individual or small groups of stakeholders to provide information and understand key neighborhood issues.

MEDIATION

The City and County of Denver offers mediation as a free service. Staff recommend that applicants consider mediation when they are aware of opposition to their rezoning application and/or would benefit from third-party facilitation of community discussions.

AGREEMENTS

In some cases, you might consider entering into a formal agreement with community representatives. In Denver, property developers/owners can enter into legally binding agreements that address specific topics related to the development. The three types of agreements are summarized below using language from Denver’s “An Introduction to Community Benefit Agreements and Other Types of Agreements.” Additional details about these agreements can be found in the original document:

https://www.denvergov.org/files/assets/public/v/1/economic-development/documents/neighborhoods/communitybenefitsagreement_onepager.pdf

Good Neighbor Agreement (GNA)

A Good Neighbor Agreement (GNA) is an agreement between a neighborhood organization, like a Registered Neighborhood Organization (RNO), and a developer, property owner, or operator of a new project or business, such as a liquor/ marijuana establishment. This kind of agreement typically focuses on the relationship between immediate neighbors and a project’s physical impacts.

Community Benefits Agreement (CBA)

A Community Benefit Agreement (CBA) is an agreement between a community organization and a developer or property owner of a new project. CBAs are an opportunity for neighbors to work together with development projects to make sure the community's priorities are reflected. The city is not directly involved in this type of agreement. These agreements empower community organizations and developers or property owners to approach each other with creative solutions outside of city government processes. CBAs are a newer tool in Denver but have been successful in other cities. Please reference the resources section in this pamphlet for additional information.

Development Agreement (DA)

A Development Agreement (DA) is an agreement between the city and the developer or property owner addressing infrastructure and other public improvements or amenities that contribute to the city and community's goals. Development Agreements focus on project phasing of standard city requirements and timing of public improvements and are generally used for large-scale projects.

LANGUAGE ACCESS

Community Planning and Development (CPD) is committed to equitably serving all people in the community, including Limited English Proficient (LEP) persons. It is the policy of CPD to take every reasonable step to ensure accurate, timely, and effective communication to all persons regardless of national origin or primary language. LEP rezoning applicants have the right to request oral and written language assistance services in your primary language, sign language interpretation, real-time captioning via CART, or disability-related accommodations, if needed. These services will be provided free of charge.

All applicants are also encouraged to ensure community members can access outreach materials in their own languages. City staff and council offices can assist applicants in identifying translation and interpretation needs in the community but do not provide these services for applicant outreach. The map [linked here](#) can help identify which languages are spoken in neighborhoods across Denver.

DOCUMENTATION AND SUBMITTAL

To be considered complete, your application must include documentation of the outreach and engagement conducted during the pre-application phase. Documentation should detail the types of outreach completed, dates, a thorough description of the outreach and engagement that includes conversations, comments, or responses received. The narrative should also explain what efforts were taken to reach traditionally underrepresented community members. Documentation of outreach done after the application is submitted should be provided during the application review process.

EQUITY ANALYSIS

CPD staff will identify rezoning applications in neighborhoods vulnerable to displacement to conduct a formal equity analysis that applicants will be required to respond to.