

# PLANNING MATTERS



American Planning Association  
Colorado Chapter  
Making Great Communities Happen

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## Healthy Planning News from the Tri County Health Department

Elizabeth Kay Marchetti, AICP

*Built Environment Policy Coordinator, Tri-County Health Dept*

Over the past several years, collaboration between public health and community planning professionals has increased; both groups are bringing attention to the link between public health and the built environment. Back in 2003 APA teamed up with the National Association of City and County Health Officials (NACCHO) to strengthen the connection between community design, planning, and public health. Whether it is the [Planning for Healthy Places with Health Impact Assessments Online Course](#) or the [Jargon Fact Sheet](#) (both developed by APA and NAACHO and meant to create a common language and practice between the two professions) the collaboration is going in new directions to advance the concepts of healthy eating and active living.

Evidence of this is the Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW) Initiative grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, of which Tri-County Health Department (TCHD) is one of fifty recipients. This Federal grant supports local health departments' efforts to work with local governments to implement policy, systems, and environmental changes that support healthy eating and active living; TCHD took this opportunity to bring city planners onto its staff to advance this work. In addition, some of TCHD's grant funds were distributed among ten local governments and one library district to assist those entities in completing a wide range of community planning activities. (See the press release below for summaries of each community grantee effort.)

TCHD has been in the vanguard of local health departments that recognized the broad link between built environment and public health. For years it has focused its work with local planning agencies both on protecting the public from environmental hazards and on pro-

*continued, page 2*

### ***APA Colorado receives National APA Award for***

### ***“Outstanding Outreach to the Community”***

*APA National will recognize APA Colorado's work through PIC with the Karen B. Smith Chapter Award for “Outstanding Outreach to the Community,” to be presented at the April 2011 APA National Conference in Boston.*

*To our Chapter, to the PIC Board, past and present, and everyone who has been involved through the years –*

**CONGRATULATIONS!**

*For more information on PIC, see story on page 8*

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## Healthy Planning News, continued

moting community designs that encourage healthy behaviors. TCHD is using the grant to expand its Land Use Program service and has assembled a CPPW grant team that includes four planners with long-range planning, urban design, landscape architecture, policy development, community outreach and organizing skills. This planning team is reaching out to TCHD's jurisdictions by offering assistance with community planning efforts that have the potential to improve residents' access to healthy food and a wide range of physical activity and transportation choices.

TCHD's model of bringing on planning professionals is being closely watched by the public health community. As planners and public health professionals share more knowledge and assist each other in reaching goals related to healthy eating and active living, it may become common practice for local health departments to include community planners in their ranks.

Here is the press release that announced TCHD's sub grants and provides brief summaries of all the community grantee planning efforts.

### **Tri-County Health Department issues \$3 million in grants to school districts and local governments to promote healthy eating and active living**

Tri-County Health Department has issued nearly \$3 million in grants to local governments and school districts across Adams, Arapahoe and Douglas Counties to support policy, systems and environmental change to promote healthy eating and active living. These funds are part of the \$10.5 million, two-year grant that Tri-County received as part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' *Communities Putting Prevention to Work* initiative (CPPW), which is funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

"The work supported by these community grants will benefit people of all ages. The focus on policy, systems and environmental change is the most effective way to achieve sustainable, population-wide impact," states Richard L. Vogt, MD, Executive Director of Tri-County Health Department.

"The ultimate goal of these projects is to prevent cancer, heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, and other chronic diseases from occurring in the first place. And prevention is always more effective and cost-efficient than treatment," added Vogt.

Fourteen school districts in Adams, Arapahoe and Douglas Counties were provided funding to hire District Grant Coordinators for the duration of the CPPW grant. These Coordinators will implement the following strategies district-wide, which were selected by the school district superintendents, in partnership with Tri-County Health Department, from strategies provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

Increase and promote healthy food choices, and/or restrict unhealthy food choices; Increase non-food or healthy food related classroom rewards or parties; and Increase weekly physical activity

"We are talking about changes such as providing healthier choices in vending machines or a few extra minutes of recess in honor of a birthday, instead of cupcakes," explained Patty Boyd, CPPW Program Manager at Tri-County Health Department. "Small changes can make a big difference, if they are implemented system-wide," she added.

In addition to funding for the school districts, thirteen local governments were awarded grants for a variety of projects that will create sustainable policy, systems or environmental change to promote

## Healthy Planning News, continued

healthy eating and physical activity in their communities. Brief descriptions of the grants awarded are as follows:

**Adams County Parks and Community Resources** - Renovate an existing community garden area adjacent to the Adams County Head Start (ACHS) Sunshine Center and facilitate gardening by children, parents and community volunteers.

**City of Aurora** - Update the City's 1998 Bicycle Plan, expanding and building upon recommendations of the Northwest Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan and incentivize a grocer to offer fresh produce in a neighborhood where access to fresh produce is limited.

**Town of Bennett** - Create walking infrastructure at the Community Center through a walking perimeter trail; provide accompanying signage; update the Comprehensive Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan and stripe a portion of the Town's streets leading to the school to provide a safe section for children and adults to walk or bicycle safely; install signage.

**City of Commerce City** - Develop a comprehensive city-wide Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan and install way-finding signage for bicyclists and pedestrians.

**Douglas County** - Develop two agriculture demonstration orchards (Lowell Ranch and Hidden Mesa Open Space) that exhibit a variety of high nutritional value fruits and nuts that can be grown in Douglas County at various agricultural scales and install interpretive signage at demonstration orchards to encourage residents to select healthful, locally-grown foods.

**City of Englewood** - Identify ways to redesign key corridors with pedestrian-oriented infrastructure and amenities to encourage pedestrian movements between and throughout Downtown and Medical Districts and conduct a follow-up to the City's 2004 Master Bicycle Plan by providing a citywide comprehensive bicycle route and trail system that will connect to trails in adjacent municipalities and the region. Also, purchase and install route multilingual signage and misc bicycle infrastructure.

**City of Englewood Parks and Recreation** - Develop two community gardens with the City of Englewood located at Charles Hay Elementary School and Clayton Elementary School.

**City of Glendale** - Provide city residents and users of the regional trail system opportunities for recreational and functional walking, bicycling and other forms of physical activity by creating a trail connection across Cherry Creek joining city pathways to the regional trail/park system.

**City of Littleton** - Develop a Comprehensive Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan for the City; install improvements on a prioritized basis to begin implementation of the Bicycle and Ped Master Plan

**Rangeview Library District** - Develop, construct, organize and plant two community gardens, one each at the Commerce City and Perl Mack Libraries.

**City of Sheridan** - Establish connectivity to a local and regional trail/path network, identifying additional park/open space development opportunities.

**City of Thornton/Mapleton School District** - Purchase play equipment and install playground for York International School to serve the school's younger children (K-6) and families in the surrounding area and install program signage in Spanish and translate promotional materials into Spanish to encourage playground usage by Hispanic residents.

**City of Thornton** - Conduct a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) that focuses on improving access to physical activity and nutritious foods among the residents population in the South Thornton Revitalization (STaR) area.

"These projects will create change that will endure and have lasting impact long after the grant period is over," explained Vogt. "We are happy to have the opportunity to work in partnership with our communities, and provide the resources to make these important changes happen," he added. To learn more about *Communities Putting Prevention to Work*, visit [www.hhs.gov/recovery](http://www.hhs.gov/recovery) and [www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/recovery](http://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/recovery).

## President's Message: Planning - Something for Everyone

Susan Wood, AICP



As all planners know, planning ranges in focus from the broad and far-reaching to the detailed and technical. APA Colorado members run the full gamut from public to private, Federal to local government, international firms to one-person shops, long-range planning to development review, master planning to site planning, environmental and transportation planning to economic planning, and many others. The list goes on...

This quarter, our newsletter focuses on health and the built environment, a topic which is both detailed and far-reaching and never more timely than now. Planning for health has been sitting on the radar screen for some years, but is now making strides toward greater recognition and emphasis. With additional focus from non-planning sources such as Eric Schlosser, an investigative journalist and the author of *Fast Food Nation*, and the programs put forward by First Lady, Michelle Obama, the awareness of available food choices and our environment relative to food sources has been greatly enhanced.

In recognition of the role planners can play in health, in 2006, at the National Conference in San Antonio, APA discussed food system issues, a component of planning for health. From that discussion, in 2007, APA completed and adopted a "Policy Guide on Community and Regional Food Planning." The purpose of these policies is to guide planners in considering food systems and health as they plan for their communities. This guide includes policies regarding food, but also policies that address obesity and the built environment. Thus, the awareness of the link between health and the built environment has continued to grow - check it out: <http://www.planning.org/policy/guides/adopted/food.htm>

Further recognizing the range of interests in our profession, and consistent with our adopted Strategic Plan, we are continuing our efforts to partner with allied professional organizations both to share knowledge on various topics and to provide opportunities that foster collaboration.

Some upcoming important events to mark on your calendars are:

"Ninth Annual Spring Transportation Symposium"

Friday, April 8, 2011, Denver, Colorado

This year marks the first year that APA Colorado is joining with the Colorado/Wyoming Section of ITE, the Colorado Chapter of WTS, the Rocky Mountain Chapter of the Intelligent Transportation Society, the American Council of Engineering Companies of Colorado, the and American Society of Civil Engineers Colorado Section, to host this symposium.

It is a significant opportunity to work with allied groups and provides a venue for the discussion of land use and transportation. In addition to land use and transportation policies, among the potential topics to be explored are transit-oriented development, complete streets, pedestrian/bicycle design, transit planning, and others. Registration details coming soon to the APA Colorado website.

"APA Colorado June Symposium and Awards Reception"

June 2011, Denver, Colorado

This mini conference will offer an opportunity for Colorado planners to celebrate our 2011 Award winners and earn some extra CM credit. Details, call for sessions and awards applications will be coming via e-mail, and will also be posted on the APA Colorado website.

## President's Message, continued

*"Western Planner – APA Four Corners Conference 2011"*

September 11 – 14, 2011, Santa Fe, NM

This conference is the result of collaborative efforts of APA New Mexico, Colorado, Arizona, and Utah, and Western Planning Resources. It promises to be a once-in-a-decade event and has all the makings of a great success.

The huge response to the call for speakers and the sessions selected both from Colorado and throughout the West will result in a program representative of current events that is both robust and well-rounded. Coupling an excellent program with the ambiance, cuisine, and culture of Santa Fe, and the camaraderie of meeting with planners from Colorado and throughout the West, will make for a great conference. Stay tuned for registration information.

Here's hoping to see you at these events! Please mark your calendars and join us! Remember to check the APA Colorado website from time-to-time to stay up-to-date on these and other upcoming events.

## APA Colorado Service Project

The Chapter is embarking on a grand new adventure – a service project where members can volunteer their time and expertise in a way that gives back to a Colorado community. The first effort involves a partnership with the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) and the City of Monte Vista. On February 25<sup>th</sup>, the teams will join forces to conduct a pedestrian safety assessment of select paths and routes in Monte Vista. Three professionals including Don Reimer with Chaffee County, Phil Greenwald with the City of Longmont and Mike Hussey with Nolte Engineering will staff the Service Team. They will be joined teams from DOLA and the City, which will include Monte Vista community leaders. The service day will include reviewing background information, collecting data through a walking audit, disseminating that information then developing a framework for a final product. The Service Teams efforts will extend to include the creation of a final product suited to the needs of Monte Vista.



This first service project is a great example of how volunteers and partnerships can make good things happen. Providing APA Colorado members with opportunities to volunteer is a worthwhile effort that the Chapter hopes to replicate again. If you have ideas or want to get involved in a future service project, please contact Outreach Committee members (Jeff Walker at [Jeffrey.A.Walker@xcelenergy.com](mailto:Jeffrey.A.Walker@xcelenergy.com), Jessica Osborne at [josborne@smtpgate.dphe.state.co.us](mailto:josborne@smtpgate.dphe.state.co.us), or Chris Kulick at [chrisk@townofbreckenridge.com](mailto:chrisk@townofbreckenridge.com)).



## News from the 2011 Legislative Session

Coral Cosway, AICP

*APA Colorado Legislative Committee Co-Chair*

The Colorado General Assembly convened on January 12th, officially kicking-off the 2011 legislative session. The Legislative Committee is hard at work reviewing bills, and this work will continue through the end of the session.

Bills on a variety of planning-related topics are introduced each session. As we did last year, the Committee is prioritizing which bills we discuss using the 2010 Legislative Survey results as a guide. Thank you to the members who shared their thoughts with the Committee by filling out the survey! Bills on any topic that appeared on the survey will be reviewed by the Committee. They are being prioritized based on the answers provided to survey question #1. That question asked respondents to rank nearly 20 planning topics from most important to least important (the topics listed were ones identified by respondents of the 2009 survey). The answers to that question yielded the following results. Topics are listed from most important to least important:

- TABOR
- Transportation
- Comprehensive plans
- Economic development
- 35-acre rule
- Regional cooperative planning
- Water issues
- Special districts
- Sustainability
- Annexation
- Eminent domain
- Urban renewal
- Revenue sharing
- Environmental issues (other than climate change)
- Climate change
- Minerals/mining
- Home rule cities

Other issues mentioned on the survey included medical marijuana, retrofitting old subdivisions, and expanding planning to consider a broader range of issues (e.g., walkability, food access, etc.), among others.

The Legislative Committee is meeting every two weeks to discuss pending bills. For meeting times and locations, visit the Committee's web page at <http://www.apacolorado.org/content/legislative-committee>. Any member of APA Colorado can participate in Committee meetings – if planning policy interests you, please join us! Also, if you're interested in receiving regular updates on the bills the

With the advent of the 2011 session of the Colorado Legislature, we have a new Legislative Committee Co-Chair. Joining Coral Cosway, who has been steering the efforts of the Committee as Co-Chair for almost two years, is Kyle Dalton. Kyle is a planner with the City and County of Denver (as part of his job responsibilities, he reviews all pertinent bills introduced in the Legislature). Prior to that time, Kyle worked for La Plata County in Durango. His contributions to the Committee, both while in Durango and since moving to Denver, have been invaluable.

As we welcome Kyle, we also say a huge thank you to Gil McNeish, who after serving as Co-Chair for the past 6 years, is taking a much-deserved break! Gil has offered, as time permits, to provide us with insight and legal expertise, which we greatly appreciate. Gil, as an expert land use attorney with Grimshaw & Harring, has contributed in countless ways to the efforts of the Legislative Committee. Most recently, Gil, together with Larry Berkowitz, also with Grimshaw & Harring, prepared an amicus brief for the US Supreme Court regarding the Boulder County RLUIPA case. For this effort, as well as many others through the years, we cannot say thank you enough for all of the contributions, past, present, and future.

## Legislative News, continued

Committee is tracking, you can add your email address to the legislative listserv. You can find a link to request your name be added to the listserv on the Committee's web page.

The APA Colorado Legislative Committee represents you! If you cannot participate in committee meetings, but would like to provide input on planning-related bills, please feel free to do so! Contact me anytime at [ccosway@comcast.net](mailto:ccosway@comcast.net).

### PLANNERS DAY ON THE HILL March 23, 2011

Join the Legislative Committee for an informative morning and a chance to meet with your own State Legislators. Modeled on the National Planners Day on the Hill, APA Colorado members will get the basics on impending legislation and make appointments to speak with State House and Senate leaders.



Don't miss the chance to educate policy makers on land use planning, it effects your job everyday! Afterwards, get back together for lunch and a tour of the Capitol. Contact Coral for more details and to RSVP [ccosway@comcast.net](mailto:ccosway@comcast.net).


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## What's Your P.I.C?

*What do you really know about the Planners Institute of Colorado?*

Shelia Booth

*Vice President of External Affairs, APA Colorado and PIC*



If you're like me, PIC is an acronym that you may have seen in the newsletter or possibly in an email, but you never knew...what it actually stood for. In our busy lives, researching every acronym we run across can simply take too much time and effort. In an attempt to educate my fellow APA Colorado members, I'll summarize some of the important and basic facts about the Planners Institute of Colorado (PIC).

- PIC is a non-profit organization established for the purpose of creating and managing an educational training program for real estate and other allied professionals.
- PIC was created in 2005 by members of APA Colorado, led by Graham Billingsley, FAICP, and given a start up loan from the Chapter.
- PIC partnered with VanEd, a leading online educator, and has produced twelve courses for realtors, one course available to appraisers, and four approved for AICP CM - free, for one more year, to APA Colorado professional members.

So, what does this mean to you?

Have you ever met with a homeowner who complained that, "the realtor told me the area behind my house was zoned for parks." Or, have you had to inform a business owner that the property he now leases is not zoned for his type of business only to have him exclaim that his realtor told him it was? Have you had difficulty explaining subdivision, access or other planning processes to realtors? [This is where PIC steps in.](#)

The intent of PIC is to educate allied professions; courses such as The Planning Process, Principles of Subdivision & Zoning, Transportation Planning and Land Surveying & Platting Issues are designed to give realtors and other allied professionals a short but informative view of planning terms and requirements.

In short, PIC is here to help us help them, which ultimately helps us. So, the next time you meet with a realtor at the planning counter tell them about PIC. Encourage them to take one, or all of the PIC courses. They can even become PIC certified if they complete the certification course and add this distinction to their business cards and marketing materials. Who doesn't like to add acronyms to the end of their name?

PIC is a great tool for planners and realtors not just in Colorado, but throughout the nation. The PIC Board hopes to market this product to other state APA chapters and markets the AICP CM courses to planners around the country. Look through the website for some further info at [www.theplanninginstitute.org](http://www.theplanninginstitute.org). Take a class yourself! Feel free to give the PIC Board some feedback and suggestions. But above all else, get the word out. It's your PIC.



## Denver's Healthy People

# Denver **Healthy Food Access** Initiative



The Denver Healthy People Program (DHP) of the Denver Department of Environmental Health is pleased to announce a new partnership with The Food Trust, funded by the Colorado Health Foundation, to find innovative ways for encouraging healthy food retail development in Denver. The goal is to eliminate “food deserts” and increase access to grocery stores for all of Denver’s residents. The effort will be based on successes across the country that have been led by The Food Trust.

The Healthy Food Initiative will establish the Denver Healthy Food Stakeholder’s Group, a team of leaders representing grocery retail, city departments and community organizations which will develop a set of policy recommendations designed to create a positive environment for supermarket development in needed areas of Denver. It will then facilitate implementation of policy recommendations via multi-sector collaboration.

This grant grew out of DHP efforts in Park Hill through its Park Hill Thriving Communities program and from work in other neighborhoods of North Denver, where community members advocated for closer grocery stores. The Initiative will work with North Denver communities to support these efforts over the next three years.

Obesity has severe health consequences: diabetes, heart disease, depression, diet related deaths. Indeed, the National Institutes of Medicine reports that the children of today may be the first generation to have a shorter life-span than their parents. In 2006 only 45% of Denver’s adults were at a healthy body weight. While Colorado and Denver fare better than the rest of the Nation, our rates would have been considered average just ten years ago.

Environmental factors play a key role in the obesity epidemic. Generally, people who have access to supermarkets tend to have healthier diets and lower rates of chronic illness. If people can’t access healthy food, they’re probably not going to eat it! Research indicates that low-income communities have fewer supermarkets than higher income areas. This lack of access to healthy food options results in higher obesity rates. Denver also has these ‘food deserts’, where affordable, healthy options are scarce. Increasing the number of supermarkets in areas where they are currently unavailable is a way to increase access to healthy foods, particularly for economically disadvantaged populations. According to a University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Public Health study, fruit and vegetable consumption increased by 32 percent for each additional supermarket built in underserved communities with high African American populations.

Building grocery stores not only promotes healthier eating, but also offers economic benefits by creating jobs in our neediest neighborhoods. Through its Fresh Food Financing Initiative, Pennsylvania opened 78 new stores, resulting in 3700 permanent, new jobs.

All of Denver’s residents should have access to affordable, health food. The city is committed to supporting healthy food retail expansion for not only the health benefits, but from an economic standpoint.

## Current Events

For more info go to [www.apacolorado.org](http://www.apacolorado.org)

# SAVE THE DATE!!!!

## WESTERN PLANNER/FOUR CORNERS CONFERENCE 2011

Santa Fe, New Mexico

September 11th-14th, 2011

At the historic La Fonda Hotel on the Plaza

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### THE NEXT WEST: 20TH ANNIVERSARY LAND USE CONFERENCE



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# Current Events

For more info go to [www.apacolorado.org](http://www.apacolorado.org)

## COLORADO PLANNERS SYMPOSIUM & AWARDS RECEPTION

June 9-10, 2011  
Denver CO

Two full days of training, mobile workshops, and the APA Colorado Awards Reception.



### Southwest Regional Training

Chris Hawkins is soliciting topics for a Spring Planners Training in Durango.

Contact Chris with your ideas or to make sure you are on the email list to receive SW Updates.

[chawkins@mtnvillage.org](mailto:chawkins@mtnvillage.org)

SAVE THE DATE:  
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## News about the Denver Zoning Code

Jeff Walker

*Xcel Energy & Denver Planning Commissioner*

My role in creating Denver's new zoning code is done. The process for the new zoning code began, in earnest, in spring 2009 with a series of briefings to Denver planning Board. It began in practice on my first day behind the dais in 2004. Denver's planning manager, Peter Park, explained that the zoning code would have to be re-written, because it had become a document riddled with favors instead of a document of solid land use policy. The example he gave was of the allowable and forbidden activities concerning lawn mower blades. Priceless.

My take is planning staff got the message in 2007 that Denver's Planning Board was hesitant taking on large-scale rezonings. That message was conveyed during a few multi-property rezonings that sought to implement certain recommendations of Blueprint Denver, a Comprehensive Plan supplement adopted in 2002. The recommendations were that parts of Congress Park, West Highland, Sloan's Lake and West Washington Park be rezoned to single family residential or, in the case of Congress Park, to a lower-density residential zone district.

For those unfamiliar with Blueprint Denver, it was a novel land use plan when adopted by Denver City Council in 2002. It was novel because it tied land use recommendations and transportation infrastructure. My experience as a planning director, working for a metropolitan planning organization, Colorado Department of Transportation and a few other jobs, led me to believe that most planners believed the two aspects had a master/servant relationship. The federal money for highways in the 1990s flowed like wine at Kozlowski's birthday party and the money for land use planning trickled like a leaky faucet. Transportation planners and traffic engineers called the shots on where interchanges would go, often following the lead of the real estate developers. I've seen hundred-acre developments placed at arterial intersections without dedicated turn lanes; new freeways - or tollways - built in locations where only prairie dogs dared to tread. Blueprint Denver changed the game by analyzing infrastructure to determine appropriate land uses.

Through the summer of 2009 Denver's Community Development and Planning staff competed with members of Congress for crowds. Healthcare town hall meetings got more attention but the new code meetings were more productive. I attended at least ten new code meetings and didn't see one tri-cornered hat or groups outraged citizens shouting at each other. I did see Sharpie markers furiously moving on maps and people asking questions and staff taking notes. Lots and lots of notes. Nobody in my hearing range complained of the government taking property rights or interfering where it didn't belong. Some questions were property specific, some were very general, some people asked about language and mapping that wasn't clear. Every resident or business owner with whom I talked seemed to understand that they were considering the first of several drafts.

Denver – the residents and the city staff - set out to create a new form-based zoning code that captured the physical appeal of its older established (and pricier) pre-war neighborhoods while supporting its more affordable neighborhoods and allowing manageable creativity to flourish in both.

I confess, I spent much more time reading the code than looking at the map. Knowing that I would never understand the nuances of each neighborhood or block, I decided to let the people who live in the neighborhoods describe the nuances to me. And they did, and I understood.

One clear example was a group of property owners and residents in Denver's historic Five Points neighborhood, northeast of downtown. The light rail line hugs the curb through the neighborhood business district. The sidewalk seems ample for the number of pedestrians and sk8ers I usually see. However, the property owners explained that outdoor seating and outdoor displays would not be possible under the then-proposed zone district with the 18-inch maximum setback. "Good catch," I thought as they explained that a zone district with a deeper setback would be preferable. The ultimate fix was to allow that zone district a more generous setback that kept

## Denver Zoning, continued

the well-defined street edge, but did not require as narrow a setback.

Another example is the Elyria-Swansea neighborhood, due north of downtown and north of I-70. A sizable chunk of the neighborhood is zoned for heavy industrial uses. Blue Print Denver identifies it as fit for residential use. Several residential units are sprinkled within the industrial zone district. Some residents were concerned that they were being ignored by planning staff because the new zoning map kept a sizable chunk of the neighborhood industrial. Other zoning language changes made prior to the adoption of the new zoning code allowed existing non-conforming uses to continue and be rebuilt if removed – even if voluntarily removed. The rub is the active industrial uses which do not have the same privileges as residential uses. Ssssssoooooo – since Denver doesn't really want to hamstring treasured industrial uses, the thought was to let the industrial uses leave in their own time, and when residential developers saw enough demand, they would step up and ask for zoning changes to residential uses.

Other issues that came up worth a mention are solar access; density; commercial building transparency requirements with respect to setbacks; neighborhood character; parking; street edge; and, parks.

The deadline for adoption was pushed back three times. The original plan was to have the plan adopted by city council in December 2009. Didn't happen. Next two dates...doesn't matter because it didn't happen. Finally, in June 2010 city council adopted the new zoning code and map. The delays were worth it in spades. More residents, property owners and business operators were heard; refinements to the code were made without the expense of having to be individually routed through planning board and city council; and the icing on the cake: approximately 40 people gave comments at the public hearings for planning board and city council - most of the comments were favorable to the new code and map. All of the comments I heard were complimentary to the staff.

I think the process was successful. I think that because planning department staff knew the code inside and out, backwards and forwards, top to bottom. Not everyone is pleased with the new code, that's to be expected, but I didn't hear a disparaging word about the quality of the staff's work.

The take-aways that I think are valuable to all planning commissioners:

- Give the public several opportunities to give input – and then give three more;

- Understand the goals of the comprehensive plan and its supplements. Not every goal has to be implemented at once or at the first opportunity;

- The goals of the comprehensive plan might change as they're implemented and sometimes a plan update can be in order

- Understand there are several good solutions to a problem – the planning commissioner's might not be one of them

- No matter how thoroughly the planning commissioner reads the drafts of the code, staff will always understand them better, but that also means that staff can be too familiar with the document. ASK!

- City council members can be good friends and better enemies. Council has different considerations so don't confuse a planning commission's job with council's job.

Nothing is perfect. Nothing is guaranteed. Text amendments were made to the new code weeks after council adopted it. Then more text amendments were made. Then the full implementation was postponed. But it's all good, Denver is a growing city full of ideas. I think it would be a shame if a document as carefully prepared as the zoning code were thought of as “good enough.”





# APA Colorado Board

Are you interested in serving on the Board?  
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about the 2011 elections.

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