

# Colorado Springs ReToolCOS Project

## General Planning Project Honor Award

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In January 2019, City Council adopted PlanCOS, Colorado Springs' Comprehensive Plan. This 2019 APA Colorado Honor award-winning Plan was successful thanks to the 5,000+ participants who established the vision and goals for the future of Colorado Springs. To further PlanCOS, six directives were established, one being the complete revision of the existing Zoning & Subdivision Ordinance, known as the RetoolCOS project, to provide the technical backing to further PlanCOS. As a result of the project, a Unified Development Code (UDC) was adopted by the City Council in early 2023.

The Colorado Springs Zoning & Subdivision Ordinance had not been comprehensively reworked in several decades. Unfortunately, the Euclidean-type zoning and suburban dimensional standards that had been carried forward over the decades created separations of uses throughout the City and in some cases, limitations to development. New concepts were proposed through the RetoolCOS project that were not only reflective of the need for regulatory language to support what was established in PlanCOS but flexibility for more creative development and housing opportunities.

While Staff recognized the opportunity for change to residential zoning, several housing proponents further expressed the dire need, focused on revising standards to address inequities with residential zoning as it impacted housing affordability and attainability. Early in the RetoolCOS project, project staff drafted language that would permit varied housing types in existing residential zone districts for purposes of flexibility, including duplexes, expansion of ADU allowances, and the reduction of minimum setbacks and lot sizes. Concepts were presented in a City Council update and due to counter opposition expressed at public hearings, project staff was directed to scrap the ideas.

Acknowledging a need for change was too important to ignore, the project timeline was paused to brainstorm solutions, resulting in the creation of the Residential Flex Districts, or R-Flex Districts, allowing for varied housing types within the same development as long as defined densities are met. While no properties prior to the adoption of the UDC would have an R-Flex designation applied, applicants and property owners now have the option to request the rezoning for both new developments and converting existing PUDs for better predictability of permitted uses and dimensional standards as it would not have to be recreated, project-by-project. Densities and dimensional standards were inspired by existing developments, ensuring compatibility with future R-Flex zoning requests. The three new Districts include –

- R-Flex Low – Up to 6 dwelling units (DUs) per acre, reflective of a typical “single-family” zone district.
- R-Flex Medium – Between 5 DUs/acre and 16 DUs/acre, similar to most of the PUD (now PDZ) developments in the past several years.
- R-Flex High – Between 15 DUs/acre and 30 DUs/acre.

Beyond the above-mentioned goals, the R-Flex Zone Districts intend to limit the need for requesting future PDZ as the need for an established “hard zoned” residential district that are reflective of current development trends now exist for applicants to request. More importantly, being able to provide a mix of housing types developments by right aims at more options, thus better housing affordability and attainability.