

Site Review Criteria Update

Summary of Proposed Changes

Background

Staff has been working on updates to the Site Review criteria as part of the Community Benefit project since 2018. Phase Two of that project includes considering additional community benefits in exchange for additional height and/or density in projects, updating the city's Site Review criteria to be more in line with city policies, and making the criteria more streamlined and the development review process more predictable for developers, neighbors, review bodies, and staff.

This document summarizes the proposed amendments. Draft code text and detailed information and analysis of the amendments can be found in the memo.

Public and Stakeholder Input

There have been ongoing opportunities for public feedback on the Community Benefit project through in-person and virtual open house meetings, focus groups with the development community and neighborhoods, specific meetings with stakeholders, segments on Channel 8 news, and Be Heard Boulder questionnaires. Stakeholders and interested residents have been notified of the status of the project and updates have been included in the Planning Newsletter. The feedback that has been received throughout the project has helped to shape the draft code text summarized here.

Project Goals and Objectives

Identify other aspects of the Site Review criteria to further city goals and create more predictability in projects.

Determine additional design standards for projects requesting a height modification.

Identify incentives to address the community economic, social and environmental objectives of the comprehensive plan.

Existing Criteria Structure

14 pages of ordinance text

9-2-14(h)(1) - Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan

9-2-14(h)(2) - Site Design

- (A) Open Space
- (B) Open Space in Mixed-Use Projects
- (E) Landscaping
- (D) Circulation
- (E) Parking
- (F) Building Design, Livability, and Relationship to the Existing or Proposed Surrounding Area
- (G) Solar Siting and Construction
- (H) Additional Criteria for Poles Above the Permitted Height
- (I) Land Use Intensity Modifications
- (J) Additional Criteria for Floor Area Ratio Increase for Buildings in the BR-1 District
- (K) Additional Criteria for Parking Reductions
- (L) Additional Criteria for Off-Site Parking

Proposed Criteria Structure

16 pages of ordinance text, with graphics

9-2-14(h)(1) - Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan

- (A) Land Use Map
- (B) Subcommunity and Area Plans and Design Guidelines
- (C) Energy Conservation and Building Life Cycle Impact Carbon Reduction
- (D) Community Design and Edges
- (E) Historic or Cultural Resources
- (F) Housing and Unit Diversity
- (G) Environmental Preservation

9-2-14(h)(2) - Site Design

- (A) Access, Transportation and Mobility
- (B) Open Space
- (C) Landscaping
- (D) Public Realm and Building Locations

9-2-14(h)(3) - Building Design

- (A) Building Materials
- (B) Window and Balcony Requirements
- (C) Building Detailing

9-2-14(h)(4) - Building Design, Massing and Height Requirements for Buildings Proposed Above the Zoning District Permitted Height and/or Maximum Floor Area

9-2-14(h)(5) - Alternative Compliance for Site and Building Design Standards

9-2-14(h)(6) - Additional Criteria for Poles Above the Permitted Height

9-2-14(h)(7) - Land Use Intensity and Height Modifications

- (A) Land Use Intensity and Density Modifications with Open Space Reduction
- (B) Land Use Intensity and Density Modifications with Height Bonus

9-2-14(h)(8) - Additional Criteria for Parking Reductions

9-2-14(h)(9) - Additional Criteria for Off-Site Parking

Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan

Intent: To ensure consistency with the goals and policies of the BVCP and other adopted plans of the community.

Consistency with specific policies of the BVCP

Replaces current language about consistency “on balance” with the policies of the BVCP with specific criteria furthering policies on:

Energy conservation and building life-cycle impact carbon reduction

Requires that large projects meet at least one of three options to conserve energy and reduce carbon impact.

Enhanced design

Moves existing criterion about gateway sites creating a sense of entry to the community, which is currently in the building design section, up to this section.

Historic or cultural resources

Adds new criteria regarding the protection of significant buildings on site.

Housing diversity and bedroom unit types

Includes new criteria specifying a minimum number of housing types and bedroom unit types for some projects.

Environmental preservation

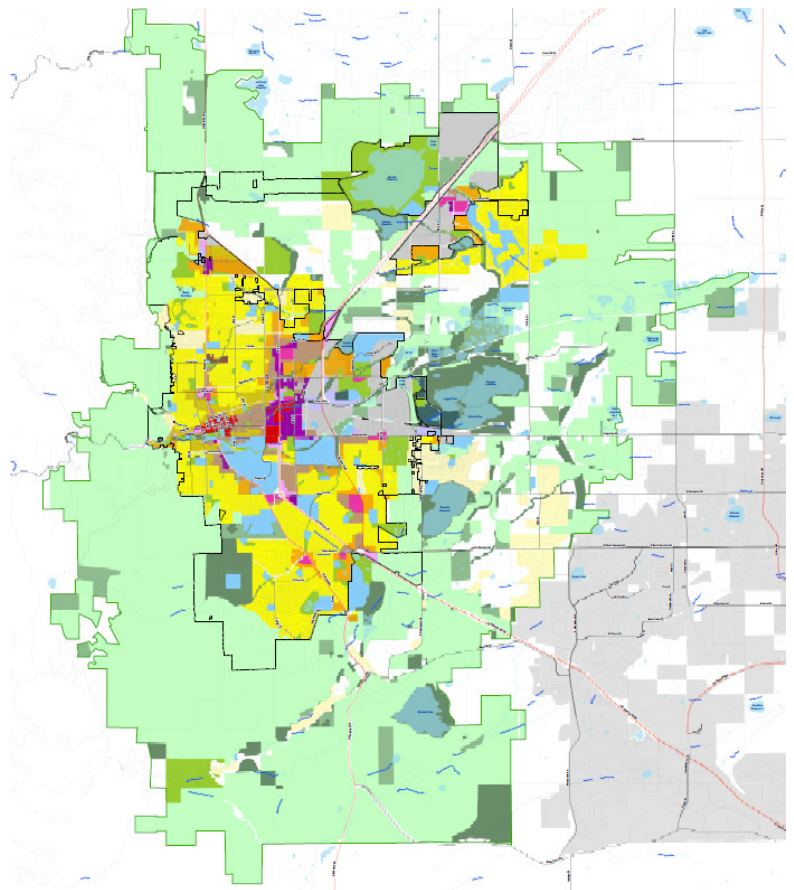
Updates an existing site review criterion about preservation of natural resources and moves it up to this policy-related section.

Density and economic feasibility

Simplifies existing BVCP criteria language with respect to density and replaces with clear language that refers to consistency with the BVCP land use map. Removes criterion regarding consideration of the economic feasibility of implementation techniques.

Consistency with adopted plans and design guidelines

Updates criteria ensuring consistency with adopted area plans or design guidelines.



Site Design

Intent: Projects should preserve and enhance the community's unique sense of place through creative design that respects historic character, relationship to the natural environment, multi-modal transportation connectivity and its physical setting.

Access, Transportation, and Mobility

Intent: The project efficiently accommodates all modes of travel, emphasizes pedestrian and bicycle use over motor vehicle use, and reduces motor vehicle miles traveled.

- Consolidates existing redundant parking and circulation criteria into this new section.
- Updates language to better reflect the city's commitment to multi-modal transportation solutions, encouraging modes other than the vehicle, and more clearly states expectations regarding connectivity.

Open Space

Intent: Open space shall be designed to create an attractive site plan and promote use.

- Removes redundant criteria about open space.
- Adds more objective and specific criteria to indicate the required level of open space quality.
- Establishes new thresholds for when active recreation and/or courtyard spaces are required.
- Increases specificity regarding buffering between higher and lower intensity uses, rather than the currently vague "providing relief to density" language.



Landscaping

Intent: Landscaping shall exceed by-right standards, contribute to an attractive site plan, and conserve water.

- Adds specificity that planting quantities must exceed minimum requirements by at least 15 percent, rather than currently vague language.
- Updates criteria to set clear expectations for design quality, including hardscape materials, conserving water, and incorporating bioswales.

Public Realm and Building Locations

Intent: Building facades shall orient to the public realm, which includes public streets, plazas, sidewalks, paths and natural features.

- Replaces currently vague language about "human scale," "attractive streetscape," and "pedestrian interest" with this new section requiring defined building entries along streetscapes every 50 feet.
- Emphasizes the expectation that buildings should be oriented to the street instead of parking areas in many contexts.
- Incorporates requirements for screening of operational features with design elements to mitigate negative visual impacts.
- Updates existing vague language about blocking views with a criterion that sets expectations for maintaining prominent views of the mountains.

Building Design

Intent: To ensure high-quality, enduring architecture and simplicity in design.

Overall, these changes replace the highly subjective and vague criteria on building design with more specific requirements for building design quality. These have primarily been drawn from tested elements of the Form-Based Code that staff and the design community have been found to be successful.

Building Materials

Intent: To ensure buildings are attractive, well-designed, and are composed of long-lasting materials to give a sense of permanency.

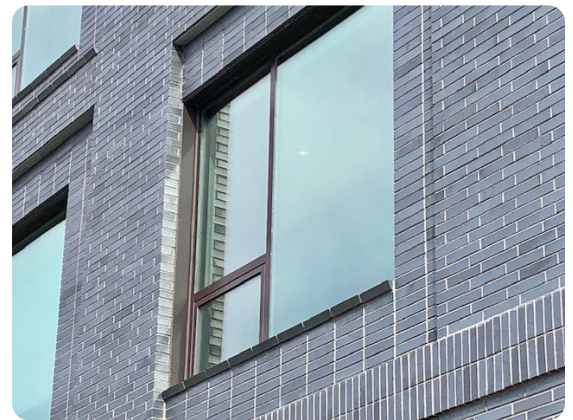
- Specifies a minimum percentage of high-quality building materials, defines which materials qualify, and sets a maximum number of primary building materials to be used on a building.
- Requires that building material transitions may only occur away from public-facing facades and within interior corners.
- Requires acoustic studies for certain buildings close to areas with exterior transportation noise.
- Clarifies expectations to conceal appurtenances.
- Incorporates new criteria requiring building design to draw from or improve upon the character of the surrounding area.



Window and Balcony Requirements

Intent: To ensure an appropriate amount of window transparency, avoid blank walls, contribute to visual interest on building facades and ensure well-designed balconies on larger projects where more balconies are common.

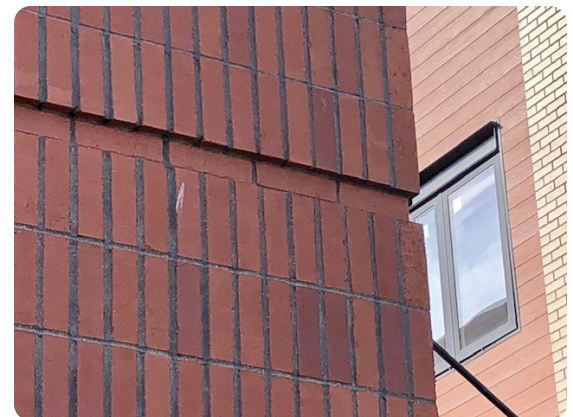
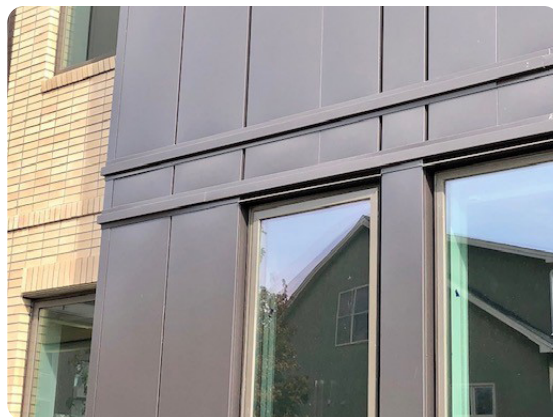
- Specifies minimum transparency requirements per floor at a minimum of 20%, and 75% on the ground floor in certain zoning districts.
- Sets a standard for maximum length of 15 feet for blank walls.
- Requires a two-inch recess for glass of windows to create shadow lines and contribute to wall detailing.
- Establishes new balcony requirements for larger buildings to integrate balconies into the design of the building and require finished platforms.



Building Detailing

Intent: The following requirements apply to all building facades facing a public right-of-way or common open space to encourage visual interest and simplicity in design.

- Adds new requirements for expression lines on certain buildings to add visual interest.
- Incorporates new criteria requiring building detail elements to draw from or improve upon the character of the surrounding area.



Requirements When Proposing Additional Height or Floor Area Ratio

Intent: Ensure high quality, appropriately sized buildings that are compatible with the context and of a design that is attractive, but simple with a discernable base, middle and top.

Additional Building Design Requirements

- Requires horizontal and vertical expression lines incorporated within specific distances on the building.

Special Building Massing, Height and Siting Requirements

- Specifies a maximum length along a public right-of-way, and requirements for façade variation.
- Incorporates specific criteria to ensure consistency with the anticipated or the existing context for taller buildings in the area.

Roof Cap Types

- Outlines design requirements for pitched, parapet, and flat roof cap types.



Alternative Compliance

With more prescriptive performance standards integrated into the criteria for more predictability, there is also a need for some flexibility as the regulations may not be appropriate or practical in all scenarios. This new option allows some modification from the Site Review requirements, where a project meets certain criteria. Alternative compliance is only available for site and building design standards. A summary of the criteria that need to be met to obtain alternative compliance is below.

Compatibility with existing character or character in established design guidelines or plans for the area.

Human scale, pedestrian-oriented building design and placement.

Functional, accessible, and high-quality landscaping.

Consistency with the purpose of Site Review.

Meets one of the following specific criteria:

- Innovative approach to meeting BVCP policies
- Impracticality of the standard due to certain conditions
- Specific standards for amendments or minor amendments for previously approved projects