

Adaptive Reuse Program: Project Overview

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In conjunction with East and East Central Area Plans effort, the Department of Community Planning and Development for the City and County of Denver has initiated a project to study the potential to promote adaptive reuse of properties in the Colfax corridor. By promoting reuse of the existing building stock that contributes to the eclectic and unique character of the corridor, the program will help support retention of small businesses and keep the memories of the past alive, while accommodating new, compatible businesses and development.

In the draft plan recommendations for the East and East Central Area Plans, a series of recommendations incorporate adaptive reuse components including “establishing an adaptive reuse ordinance that eliminates existing barriers to reusing structures.” This recommendation mentions issues related to public right-of-way improvements and parking requirements, as well as regulations in health, fire, and building codes. In some cases, flexibility may already be available, but owners are not aware of this, but there also may be opportunities to offer additional flexibility while respecting the public benefit and protective goals that these regulations seek to achieve. In addition to studying regulations, the adaptive reuse project also will consider how incentives might play a role, where technical assistance to property owners might be useful, and how the program can be efficiently administered.

The project focuses on finding ways to facilitate the reuse of a wide variety of property types: Some are small buildings on constrained sites where redevelopment in the near future is unlikely and need improvement to be vital parts of the neighborhood. In other cases, small buildings exist on larger lots where retaining the existing structure may be feasible,



Illegal Pete's is a recent example of a successful adaptive reuse project along the Colfax corridor.

while also accommodating new infill elsewhere on the property. In yet other scenarios, only minor improvements may be planned, such as façade renovations, landscaping, or changes in use. With this range of scenarios, the project explores a variety of tools to accommodate reuse.

The project begins with interviewing property owners, business owners, developers and staff in various departments and agencies. The objective is to gain a better understanding of the wide array of adaptive reuse challenges that currently exist, learn from success stories and identify where flexibility may be applied in existing codes and regulations.

After the interviews, existing conditions will be summarized in a report. Then, a strategy for the adaptive reuse program will be developed which will include case studies to illustrate the impacts of potential improvements. The strategy also will include recommendations for incentives, technical assistance and administration of the program. Finally, a user's handbook will be produced for property owners, business owners and developers to use when planning adaptive reuse projects. The project will be completed by mid-February 2020.

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Renovations for an adaptive reuse of the former Meineke shop are expected to begin soon.



A former autobody repair shop is now home to three separate businesses, including a restaurant and brewery. Outdoor spaces are also an important aspect of the adaptive reuse of this building.