



Street Level Active Use Overlay FAQs

Creating Active, Thriving Main Streets

What is the problem?

Denver's 2010 zoning code update established "Main Street" (MS) and "Mixed Use" (MX) zoning along Tennyson. This reflected its history as a commercial corridor of small, independent retail that draws visitors from around the region. Tennyson, like many of Denver's early neighborhoods and commercial corridors, grew off of streetcar lines. These historic areas show a pattern of small lots and pedestrian-friendly design suitable for strolling to and from streetcar stops. The 2010 zoning reflected the Berkeley community's desired to maintain and enhance this commercial character while also making room for new residential density that would support businesses.

Unfortunately, since then, long-standing main streets like Tennyson have experienced a loss of commercial space to new development that is 100% residential. This has happened for several reasons. Firstly, there is a huge market demand for housing. Secondly, building 100% residential is less complicated and less risky for developers than building mixed-use developments. Lastly, the Denver zoning code allows buildings in Mixed Use (MX) or Main Street (MS) zones to be 100% residential.

The office of Councilwoman Sandoval has been working with Berkeley Regis United Neighbors (BRUN) on a zoning overlay that would close the 100% residential loophole and ensure these streets continue to be thriving commercial districts.

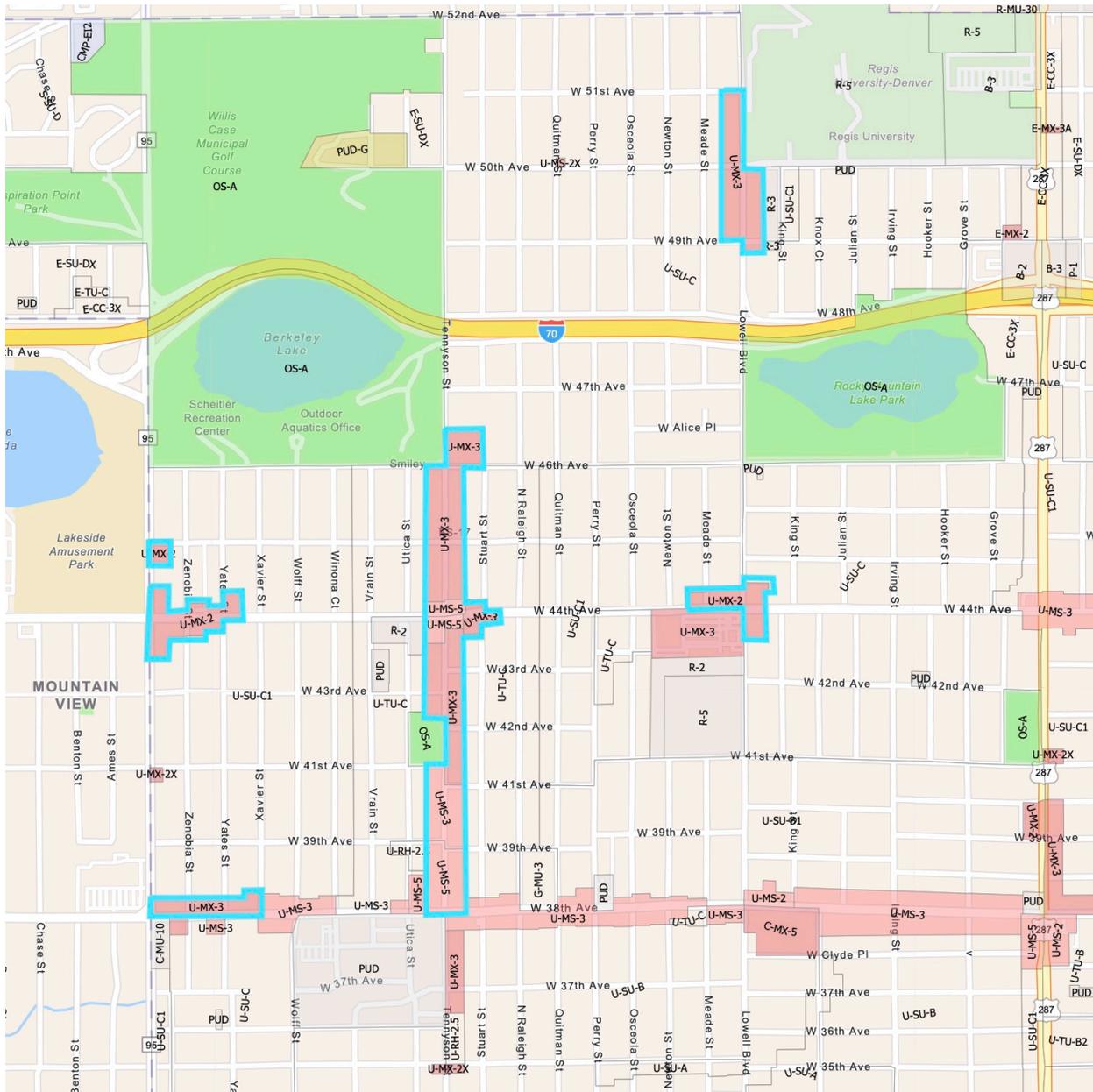
What is in the overlay and how does it work?

An overlay applies extra rules on top of the existing zoning of an area. This overlay proposal has four main elements. These were created after analyzing the historic patterns of streetcar commercial corridors:

1. Excludes dwelling units from the first 15 feet of depth along most of the ground floor facing the primary street. (Only applies to lots 37.5 feet or wider in zones districts over two stories).
2. When a dwelling unit is on the ground floor, requires a setback for a patio, porch or deck or other type of usable outdoor space. This setback doesn't apply to a lobby or entryway for upper-story residences.
3. Eliminates or reduces the design elements that can substitute for actual windows on the ground floor.
4. Gives flexibility for buildings to be set back further from the sidewalk in order to create courtyards and outdoor seating (rather than taking up space in the sidewalk for seating).



Map of proposed overlay areas:



 = Proposed area



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COUNCILWOMAN DISTRICT 1

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What else is the City doing about this issue?

This overlay is being carried by Councilwoman Sandoval in partnership with BRUN. However, the loss of commercial space to residential development is not unique to Berkeley Regis or District 1. There are other streetcar corridors such as South Pearl and Santa Fe that are also looking at this issue. Community Planning and Development is working to coordinate these efforts and put forward a solution that could apply across Denver.

How can I give feedback?

Stay tuned to BRUN and Councilwoman Sandoval's websites and Facebook pages for updates!

Please email districtone@denvergov.org to directly share any comments or suggestions.