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Development-review group expands downtown purview

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A group initially formed to review a controversial development on Speer Boulevard has expanded its focus to a seven-block strip along downtown's prime gateway.

The group was asked to establish guidelines for developer Buzz Geller's proposed 31-story condominium tower at 14th Street and Speer in Denver's Lower Downtown.

Geller got the site as part of a land swap in which Mayor John Hickenlooper's administration gave up prime land near 14th and Speer in exchange for property it needed for a new justice complex.

Now the group, which includes architects, city officials, area residents and Geller's team, would like to establish a special review district bounded by Wewatta Street to the north, 14th to the east, Larimer Street to the south and Speer to the west.

Cherry Creek will be the focus of the district's development, and pedestrian walks will connect it with downtown, LoDo, Larimer Square and the Auraria campus.

Geller's property and city-owned property across the street on Walnut are critical to the plan's success because Cherry Creek bisects both sites.

The sites also have historic significance, which the group would like acknowledged. Denver's first city hall, newspaper and jail were located there.

Ultimately, the group wants to incorporate the principles established for the special review district into other plans that are in the works, including the Auraria master plan and the Downtown Area Plan.

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