Colorado Springs City Council

COLORADO SPRINGS
OLYMPIC CITY USA

January 2019- April 2020

Report to the Citizens

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IN REVIEW

(Note: This Annual Report to the Citizens covers January 2019- April 2020)

Colorado Springs City Council has gone through change, not only change after the April 2019 At-Large election, but changing the City in positive ways as we continue to prepare for the future during this pivotal time of growth. City Council created new important legislation to make our City safer, protect zoning regulations, and oversee viable area growth. This was arguably the most important year any City Council has undertaken for land-use issues; with monumental decisions impacting affordable housing, the City for Champions (C4C) projects, and final approval of the City's Comprehensive Plan (PlanCOS).

The strength of our local government continues to grow through the collaborative efforts between City Council and Mayor John Suthers. This incredible relationship spurred another smooth budget process and new Strategic Plans for both branches of government that work hand-in-hand.

City Council and Mayor John Suthers at the City's Swearing-In Ceremony on April 16, 2019

NEW (AND FAMILIAR) FACES ON COUNCIL

On April 16, 2019 Council Members Tom Strand and Bill Murray were sworn in for a second term, and new Council Member Wayne Williams swore his oath to the City. The three Council Members serve as At-Large Members that represent the entire City. After the swearing-in ceremony, Council voted Richard Skorman as President, and Tom Strand as President Pro Tempore. Council also voted for Chair and Vice Chair of the Colorado Springs Utilities Board of Directors, selecting Jill Gaebler as Chair and Wayne Williams as Vice Chair.

Swearing-In Ceremony at the Pioneers Museum

Left to Right: Wayne Williams, Tom Strand and Bill Murray at Swearing-In Ceremony

Mayor John Suthers speaking at Swearing-In Ceremony

The six District Council Members and outgoing Council Member Merv Bennett watch the Swearing-In Ceremony

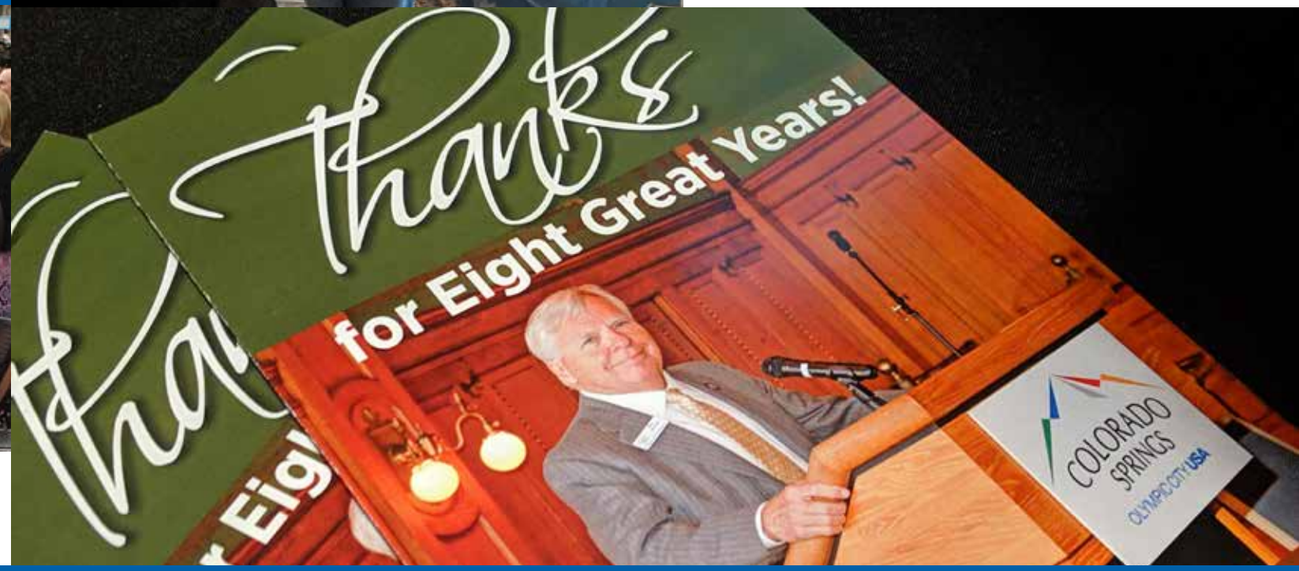
New Council Member Wayne Williams served on the El Paso County Board of County Commissioners (2003-2011), and he was elected as the El Paso County Clerk and Recorder (2011-2015) before being elected as Colorado's Secretary of State (2015-2019).

"I'm grateful for this opportunity," said Williams during a short speech after joining City Council, "We're doing some great things in the City of Colorado Springs, I look forward in joining the eight members of Council and the Mayor and continuing that progress."

Wayne Williams giving a short speech at the Swearing-In Ceremony

Saying Farewell

Council Member Merv Bennett was term limited after serving on Council for eight years. In April 2019, City Council held a farewell party for Bennett to thank him for his service to the City. Bennett said he was "honored to serve as President Pro Tem and then President of City Council," and spoke highly of Council's strong relationship with the Mayor's Office. "If we continue to work as partners, we can accomplish any issue that comes before us," he said.



BY THE NUMBERS

76
Proclamations

174
Resolutions adopted by City Council

123
Board Appointments

18
Town Halls

121
Ordinances passed by City Council and signed by Mayor Suthers

CITY BUDGET

Consent Calendar

After minor changes to the 2020 Annual Budget at the City Council Budget Markup Work Session, the City Budget passed unanimously via the Consent Calendar for the third year in a row. The budget continues to be the prime example of collaboration between City Council and the Mayor's Office. The 2020 General Fund budget is $331.1 million, which is $23 million or 7.5 percent more than the 2019 budget.

Highlights

The City's Budget Committee comprised of four Council Members (Bill Murray, Andres Pico, Don Knight, and Tom Strand) and representatives from the Administrative Branch (Mayor's Office, Finance Department, and City Attorney's Office) meet frequently as part of the collaborative effort to create a fair and balanced City budget.

2020 Budget Highlights include:

$4.4 million of increased funding for 20 sworn Police positions and eight sworn Fire positions and equipment

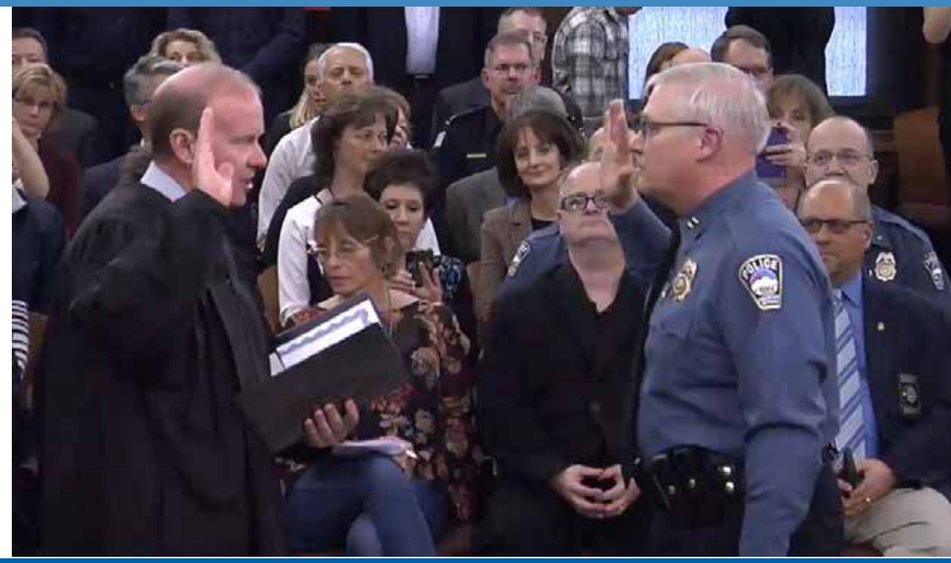
$1.4 million of continued funding for the City's Americans with Disabilities Act improvement programs

$500,000 of funding to support shelter bed operations for people experiencing homelessness

$1 million for a new aerial ladder truck for the Fire Department

$9.65 million to keep Police and Fire sworn positions at market average, and increases in civilian compensation to keep-up with market averages

Other highlights include increased funding for parks maintenance and watering, City fleet replacement, Mountain Metro Transit, and continued extra support for Information Technology core infrastructure and cybersecurity improvements.



Chief of Police Vince Niski sworn-in at February 26, 2019 City Council Meeting

LEGISLATIVE ADVANCEMENTS

City Council's main workload pertains to land use items, but their job as the legislative branch of our City's government doesn't stop with zoning. Since the beginning of 2019, City Council passed multiple pieces of legislation to enhance safety and protect neighborhoods.

Short Term Rental Regulations

In 2018, City Council put a permit system in place for Short Term Rentals (STR). The permit establishes ground rules for STR owners and ensures payment of LART (Lodgers and Automobile Rental Tax).

In 2019, after extensive input at public meetings and online, Council decided to amend the original STR ordinance with stronger regulations.

Ordinance Amendments

- Owner occupied STRs allowed in single family zones
- Non-Owner occupied not allowed in R-1 single family zones
- Future STR permits must have 500' buffer
- Maximum occupancy of an STR is limited to two people per bedroom, plus an additional two occupants for the entire unit. Max total not to exceed 15 people.

For more information visit: coloradosprings.gov/str

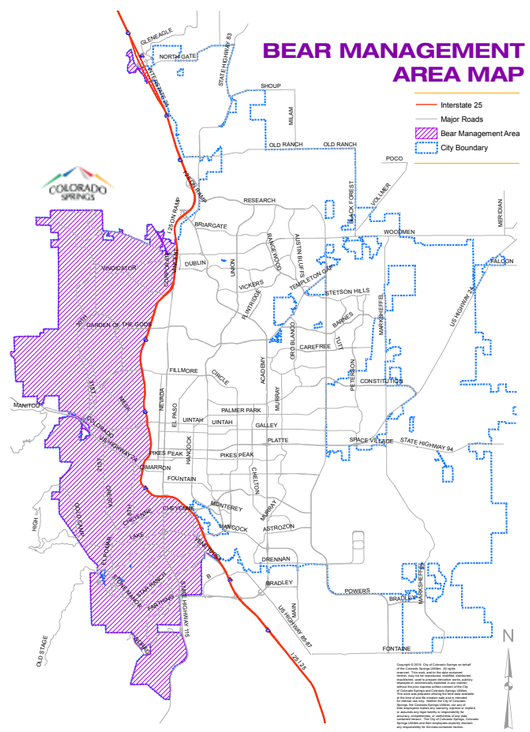
Recreational Vehicle parking amendment

City Council Members worked closely with local organizations to find the best solution to an issue of increased recreational vehicle (RV) parking on City streets. An amendment was passed March 26, 2019 extending regulations to prohibit RV parking on all streets, alleys, public roadways, or other public right of ways. The amendment passed after Council Members postponed the final vote to work with local nonprofits to remediate any impact this would have on people that would be parked illegally under the new legislation.

Bear Management Area

November saw two ordinances by City Council aimed to decrease the amount of human-bear interactions on the Westside. Council adopted the "Bear Management Area Map," which includes most areas within the city limits west of I-25. Residents and businesses in the Bear Management Area must secure their trash within a functioning bear-resistant waste container or within a secured structure at all times.

City Council Members Don Knight and Richard Skorman's districts are the ones impacted by the Bear Management Area. Before a vote took place, the Council Members held two town halls to discuss the proposed changes with the public.



AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROJECTS

City Council is committed to adding more affordable housing units throughout the City as Colorado Springs continues to grow (see City Council's 2020-2024 Strategic Plan on pg. 17). The Mayor has a goal of 1,000 affordable units per year. Council helps the City hit that goal through approving affordable planned unit developments (when a company invests their own money in affordable housing) or aiding construction through government funding.

To kick off 2020, Council unanimously approved the City's Community Development Division's Five Year Consolidated Plan. The plan lays groundwork for the near future by identifying grant money and investment opportunities for housing projects. While this plan looks to the future, the Community Development Division has already been green-lighting affordable housing projects with help from City Council.

One exciting project is a "tiny home" development called Working Fusion at Mill Street in downtown. Council approved an 18-unit tiny home community designed to provide affordable housing and resources to young people between 18-29 years old.

Rendering of "Working Fusion" affordable housing project

In addition to grant money, recent projects have been made possible through Private Activity Bonds (PAB) from the State. Each year the City is allocated PABs with three options: use the PABs for affordable housing projects in the City, allocate the PABs to El Paso County, or return unused to the State.

July 2019: Council approved a portion of the City's PABs to break ground on the *Atrium at Austin Bluffs*, a 54-unit senior affordable housing project at Austin Bluffs and Templeton Gap.

February 2020: Council approved to issue $21 million in PABs to finance construction of the *Draper Commons* affordable housing project. This will add 280 units and is located at Fountain and Wahsatch.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES over 2020-2024

1

3,075 households

receiving some sort of affordable housing—through homeownership, preservation, or rental assistance.

2

15,000 people

sheltered and counseled at low-barrier shelters.

3

25,000 people

receiving critical assistance from our local service pro-viders.

4

37,500 people

benefitting from expanded public infrastructure and improved accessibility of public facilities.

5

5 businesses

grown and supported by direct financial assistance.

DECISIONS IMPACTING THE CITY

Jan19
PlanCOS, the City's long-term Comprehensive Planning Document, is approved by Council

Feb-Mar19
United States Air Force Visitors Center project; annexation and approval for True North Commons shopping, lodging, and restaurant development area

Mar19
Recreational Vehicle parked on roadways ordinance amendment

May19
Denied an appeal to allow Broadmoor expansion for a permanent exhibition hall

Jun19
City Council 2020-2024 Strategic Plan

Aug19
Refers 2B (parks TABOR retention of $7 million) and 2C (road improvements) to November 2019 ballot

Sept19
Approval for next steps to connect Powers to I-25

Oct19
Bear Management Ordinances

Nov19
2020 City Budget via consent calendar

Final stadium land use plan and partial right-of-way transfer for Downtown Stadium

Approval of the City's first "Entertainment District" in downtown allowing a common consumption area of food and alcohol

Approved Trails and Open Spaces (TOPS) purchase of $3.1 million for land in Corral Bluffs (the area was recently linked to historic fossil discoveries dating back 66 million years)

Dec19
Short Term Rental Ordinance amendments approved

Final approval for Robson Arena on Colorado College campus

Historic Preservation Plan approved

Jan20
Unanimous approval to sell six acres for $1.7 million in Peak Innovation Park near the airport to build two hotels

Land-use approval to build 427-unit community at the former Nazarene Bible College campus which is part of a Federal Opportunity Zone

Feb20
Authorizes Southwest Downtown Business Improvement District to issue $50 million in bonds to finance improvements in the area of downtown where the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Museum will be the centerpiece

BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

To apply for a Board or Commission visit: www.coloradosprings.gov/boards

City Council Boards/Commissions

- Active Transportation Advisory Committee
- Airport Advisory Committee
- Audit Committee
- Citizens' Transportation Advisory Board
- City/County Drainage Board
- City Investment Advisory Committee
- City Planning Commission
- Civil Service Commission Commission on Aging
- Development Review Enterprise Customer Advisory Committee
- Downtown Development Authority
- Downtown Review Board
- Fire Board of Appeals
- Food Policy Advisory Board
- Historic Preservation Board
- Human Relations Commission
- Independent Ethics Commission
- Initiative Review Committee
- Lodgers and Automobile Rental Tax Citizens' Advisory Committee
- Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Advisory Board
- Pikes Peak Library District Board
- Public Art Commission
- Public Safety Sales Tax Oversight Committee
- Regional Building Commission Committees
- TOPS Working Committee (Trails and Open Space)

Mayor's Boards/Commissions

- Colorado Springs Health Foundation
- Urban Renewal Authority
- Colorado Springs Housing Authority

City Of Colorado Springs Special Improvement Maintenance Districts

- Briargate SIMD
- Colorado Avenue Gateway SIMD
- Nor'wood SIMD
- Old Colorado City SIMD
- Platte Avenue SIMD
- Stetson Hills SIMD
- Woodstone SIMD

THE PEOPLE'S HOUSE

City Hall is referred to as "the People's House." That not only means the physical building is open to the public, but your elected leaders on City Council are some of the most accessible government officials.

In the Community

City Council has held 18 large public meetings since the beginning of 2019, including Council District Town Halls, public feedback meetings about Short Term Rentals and separate meetings about Accessory Dwelling Units, Briargate SIMD, and information sessions on the Bear Management Area. Council Members also attend luncheons, neighborhood meetings, city employee events, award ceremonies and political gatherings.

Tour City Hall

Want to know more about one of the City's most historic buildings? Reach out to City Council Staff and we'll be happy to take groups or individuals on a tour!

New Times for Council Meetings

After multiple City Council Work Sessions and Regular Meetings ran into the evening hours, City Council decided to make a permanent change to start meetings at 10 a.m. instead of 1 p.m.

Other Duties as assigned

In addition to serving on City Council, the Council Members serve as the Colorado Springs Utilities Board. Council Members also serve as liaisons to the City's 35 boards, commissions, and committees. In addition to these City specific roles, City Council has representation on regional boards including the Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments (PPACG), Pikes Peak Rural Transportation Authority (PPRTA), and the Pikes Peak Regional Building Department (PPRBD) Regional Building Commission.

First Amendment Rights

City Hall also serves as a gathering space for protests or other events where people congregate to recognize a certain topic. City Council meetings are open to the public, and the Citizen Discussion portion of Regular City Council Meetings allows the public to speak about any topic not on that day's Council Agenda.

Request a Council Member

City Council Members also take time to speak with students taking tours of City Hall and to visit schools throughout Colorado Springs to teach students about local government. If you would like a tour of City Hall or want a Council Member to speak at a school or community event, please reach out to Ted Skroback, City Council Communications Specialist, at 719-385-5482 or tskroback@springsgov.com.

Making Improvements

Historic City Hall underwent enhancements to continue improving ADA accessibility, overall security, and updated technology.

In May 2019, metal detectors were added to City Hall entrances to ensure safety for our elected officials, City Staff, and the public.

Facilities completely overhauled the Southeast entrance to City Hall (the main entrance because of ADA accessibility). The update is not only for stylistic reasons, but comes with better accessibility and security.

In 2020, an overhaul of technical equipment inside Council Chambers will improve Council meeting broadcasts and enhance the experience for people attending Council meetings.

New ADA signage, remodeled bathrooms, and an ADA podium in Council Chambers make City Hall one of the most accessible historic public buildings in the country.

COLORADO SPRINGS UTILITIES BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Colorado Springs City Council members also serve as the Colorado Springs Utilities Board of Directors. Under the Board's guidance, our community-owned utility made many significant achievements in 2019. Some highlights:

Renewable energy portfolio expansion and announced plans for storage project

Colorado Springs Utilities (Springs Utilities) is committed to providing resilient, reliable and cost-effective energy that is environmentally sustainable. In partnership with NextEra Energy Resources, LLC, the utility brought on the Grazing Yak Solar Project. This 35-megawatt solar project will produce enough renewable energy to power about 13,000 homes annually.

The utility also announced it entered negotiations for the Pike Solar and Storage Project, it's first utility-scale solar and battery project. This project will consist of 150 megawatts of new solar generation plus a 25-megawatt energy storage. At this time, it is the largest energy storage facility announced in Colorado.

Enhanced partnerships with local military installations

Springs Utilities understands the Pikes Peak area military installations are critical to our national security and to our state and local economies. In 2019, the utility explored several significant partnership opportunities with the military installations to enhance energy resiliency and mission assurance with the local installations and Army/Air Force headquarters.

Water treatment plant upgrade

Significant progress continues in upgrading the Phillip H. Tollefson Water Treatment Plant. This includes the replacement of aging pretreatment facilities, chemical systems and instrumentation and controls. These upgrades enable compliance with Board Policies, the Safe Drinking Water Act and other drinking water regulations and allow for the use of highly variable local water sources that will be critical for our community supplying its future water needs. The project is scheduled for completion in late 2020.

Critical utility services to at-risk customers

Project COPE (Citizens Option to Provide Energy) provided $1,042,613 in utilities payment assistance to 2,637 households. Project COPE was created by Springs Utilities more than 30 years ago to assist customers at risk of losing utilities services due to personal or family crises. The program is funded by donations from individuals, foundations and businesses and Springs Utilities matches these donations up to $500,000 annually.

2019 Line Workers Rodeo

In March, the American Public Power Association's Lineworkers Rodeo was held in Colorado Springs. With 115 employee volunteers on hand, the event brought in more than 1,000 competitors and spectators, generating an estimated $1 million for the local economy. Teams from across the country competed for top honors in their field.

Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI)

With Automated Meter Reading system nearing its end-of-life, Springs Utilities signed a contract with Landis+Gyr in July to connect 590,000 new electric, natural gas and water meters to an integrated network management and data collection system over a multi-year period. AMI is the core of a smart utility and will create new opportunities to help customers better manage their services in the future.

Increased credit rating from AA to AA+

Amid change, increasing regulations and industry flux, Springs Utilities improved its financial stability. Standard & Poor's upgraded the utility's credit rating from AA to AA+. This strong rating is indicative of the utility's resilient operational and financial characteristics. The increased credit score will lead to improved investor interest in bonds and lower interest rates when new bonds are issued. Ultimately, this improved rating benefits its customers.

New Energy Vision

With robust public input, in June of 2019, the Utilities Board approved a new Energy Vision statement: "Provide resilient, reliable and cost-effective energy that is environmentally sustainable, reduces our carbon footprint and uses proven state-of-the-art technologies to enhance our quality of life for generations to come." Work began to develop supporting goals for the Energy Vision through the Electric and Natural Gas Integrated Resource Planning process. These plans will become the roadmap for meeting the energy needs of our community over the next 30 years.

Smart home technologies in 2019 Parade of Homes

Springs Utilities partnered with Classic Homes for the 2019 Parade of Homes to illustrate how smart technology and solar energy, battery storage and electric vehicle systems may impact future energy operations. The home also utilized energy and water efficient appliances, components, and irrigation equipment that the public was able to view and learn more about.

Partnering with forest agencies to invest $15 million in watershed restoration

Springs Utilities, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service Rocky Mountain Region and Colorado State Forest Service announced plans to invest $16 million, over a five-year period, in forest and watershed restoration projects. These projects will occur on more than 11,000 acres in Springs Utilities' critical watersheds located on the White River and Pike-San Isabel National Forests. The Forest Service Rocky Mountain Region and Springs Utilities have been in partnership since 2013, and together, have reduced the risk of catastrophic wildfire, restored forests impacted by wildfire, and minimized erosion and sedimentation in reservoirs to over 12,000 acres of National Forest System lands.

Pikes Peak Children's Water Festival

Springs Utilities participated in the third annual Pikes Peak Children's Water Festival. More than 800 District 11 fourth graders learned the importance of protecting our community's water resources and tips to use water wisely, including: watering according to season, taking advantage of the utility's rebates on irrigation equipment and visiting the Conservation and Environmental Center to see examples of water-wise landscapes.

Enhanced safety training program

Springs Utilities' Safety Department collaborated with the University of Springs Utilities to develop a training program and to identify hazards, conduct pre-job meetings and make field observations. These measures have made the workplace even safer, which is one of the organizations' top priorities. The utility also increased its joint training efforts with the Colorado Springs Fire Department to provide safety training and simulation for electric field staff.

Capital project management improvements

The System Planning and Projects Division was established as part of the new CEO's vision for the future of the organization. The most significant task for the new division is the management of the capital projects. Using the annual operating financial plan as a guide, they ensured all funds were carefully invested in the right projects at the right time for infrastructure improvements. The target was to be within 2% on $156.7 million. The utility ended the year within 0.9%. This process will benefit the utility's customers as it continues to replace, upgrade, expand or enhance its four-service infrastructure.

Striving to be a good financial steward, Springs Utilities also created an internal team to identify saving opportunities across the utility, focusing on Operations and Maintenance efficiencies and process improvements, proving to be very successful.

CITY COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN (2020-2024)

The City of Colorado Springs City Council has specific initiatives and measures of success that align with the Citywide Strategic Plan goals. Each of the City Council initiatives and measures can also be found throughout the Citywide Strategic Plan in the specified *Initiatives and Performance Measures* section:
Coloradosprings.gov/budget/page/strategic-plan

City Council Objective	Citywide Strategic Plan Goal
Regional Collaboration	**Building Community & Collaborative Relationships**
Partner with local governments and regional agencies in order to share knowledge and increase efficiencies in the Pikes Peak Region	
Conduct an annual meeting with County Commissioners, and quarterly meetings between City Council and County Commissioner leadership **Continue** coordination between the City of Colorado Springs and Colorado Springs Utilities for Public Works and Streets projects with a reduction in duplicative street repairs **Continue** engagement with military installations through community opportunities such as Military Affairs Council with the Chamber of Commerce and the Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments, and establish a Council Member as the military affairs liaison to increase direct communication with military installations **Organize** an annual meet and greet program with regional municipal partners including Manitou Springs, Fountain, Pueblo, Monument, etc. and attempt to identify areas of mutual concern	
Communication	**Building Community & Collaborative Relationships**
Increase communication with constituents at all levels of interaction in order to promote a culture of civic engagement	
Develop a Constituent Response Specialist position to increase responsiveness and consistency in public messaging **Increase** methods of communication to constituents through opportunities such as town halls, policy briefs, email announcements, social media messaging, etc. **Develop** a Civics 101 training for new City employees to explain the role of City Council, the legislative process and methods of civic engagement **Increase** the value of Boards and Commissions with an emphasis on action items and annual reporting requirements to City Council **Increase** methods and frequency of communication between Executive staff and City Council through quarterly reports and staff planning lunch updates	
Safe and Resilient Communities	**Building Community & Collaborative Relationships**
Identify legislative opportunities to enhance long range objectives with meaningful impacts	
Support the City's financial resiliency through work with Executive staff to develop a budgetary resiliency plan and associated metrics **Support** Public Safety initiatives through funding and the annual budget process **Encourage** connectivity across the city through innovative approaches to transportation solutions **Increase** public awareness and encourage legislation that proactively supports issues of affordable housing and homelessness **Increase** public awareness and support around issues of the Urban Tree Canopy and Wildland Urban interface	
PlanCOS	**Promoting Job Creation**
Facilitate the implementation of the City's Comprehensive Plan, Plan COS	
Support the Executive Branch's hiring of a Planning and Land Use consultant to review and provide recommendations on City Code Chapter 7 **Actively participate** in thoughtful discussion and drafting of legislation related to PlanCOS and other planning priorities **Incentivize** developers to build in underserved areas of Colorado Springs, such as the Southeast, and support general infill policies and programs through development of URA criteria **Work** with the Planning Department to develop a more complete and comprehensive understanding of the process of Special Districts, including GIS map visualizations and debt issuance overview	

Colorado Springs City Council

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To find out what Council District you live in visit:
www.coloradosprings.gov/city-council-districts

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Should it include different or additional information?

Let us know your thoughts! Contact Communications at 719.385.5482.

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