

Introduction

Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to guide the physical growth of the city to the year 2020. In doing so, the Comprehensive Plan serves as a long-range vision of what we want our city to become, as a tool for making decisions about how that vision should be achieved, and as a specific program of action for reaching our stated objectives. As a long-range vision, the Plan sets forth the values we want to realize as the city changes over the next 20 years and ties those values to the physical development and shaping of the community. It also presents an official policy framework and mapped context for making incremental decisions regarding land development issues. Finally, the Plan outlines the strategies and steps the community can follow to make it a reality.

Why the Plan Was Developed

The last comprehensive plan for Colorado Springs was adopted in 1991. Since then, the city and the region have experienced significant growth and change. Emerging from a period of economic recession into one of sustained growth, the city has added approximately 70,000 new residents with thousands of new jobs and new homes, hundreds of thousands of square feet of new commercial, office, and industrial buildings, and thousands of acres of newly developed land.

Institutional Changes

By itself this new growth would have been enough to prompt a major revision and update of the 1991 Comprehensive Plan. However, other factors also came into play. They included the tax limitation amendment to the State Constitution known as TABOR, major changes in the municipal funding of capital improvements, changes in the structure of municipal government, and new community-based planning efforts. TABOR imposed a cap on the amount of revenue that the City government can collect and retain in any given year, putting a fiscal restraint on the City's ability to respond to the new demands generated by growth. In 1991 the passage of a City Charter amendment phased out the dedicated sales tax for capital improvements funding, making it necessary to find new ways to pay for both the backlog of unfunded improvements and the improvements needed to serve new growth. Also in 1991, another charter amendment created a City Council-appointed Director of Utilities, thereby removing Colorado Springs Utilities from direct management by the city manager. This change gave Utilities a more market-driven business focus. In the face of tax limitations and heavy demand for increased levels of service, the City Council initiated a new strategic planning process. The Strategic Plan clearly identifies priorities in budgetary decisions and the work program for the fiscal year. Growth management and a new comprehensive plan have received strong emphasis in the Strategic Plan. In 1996, the community also responded to the pressures of new growth with a citizen-driven planning effort called the Springs Community Action Plan. This effort produced several recommendations for addressing land use, development, and design issues.

Altogether, sustained growth, fiscal limitations, increased demands for service and capital improvements, and new public priorities have driven the need for a new comprehensive plan for Colorado Springs. A revision to the City's Comprehensive Plan would have been in order as a matter of course due to the length of time since the last plan was adopted. In this case, the need was particularly acute because of the magnitude of change the community has experienced in the 1990's.

Context for Community Growth: Land Demand

This plan is based on growth projections to the year 2020. Using a moderate population growth forecast, Colorado Springs could be expected to gain approximately 130,000 persons and 70,000 jobs. This amount would maintain the current condition, where approximately 70 percent of the growth in El Paso County is located inside the city limits.

Using current development characteristics such as residential densities and square footage of space per employee, the amount of land needed to accommodate projected growth was calculated at

approximately 12,000 acres of residential land; 3,000 acres of land for commercial, office and industrial uses; and 5,000 acres for schools, parks and other related uses, for a total of approximately 20,000 acres.

At present, Colorado Springs contains about 186 square miles of land area, of which about 100 square miles are developed. After subtracting out floodplains and environmentally constrained areas, projected growth would consume about one-half of the current vacant and developable land in the city. If current development patterns hold, the majority of this growth will be in the city's northeast area. However, it is expected that the remaining developable land in the foothills west of I-25 will be absorbed during this period.

Opportunities for physical growth of the city through annexation will be limited and will be primarily in the area between the Northgate Master Plan and Highway 83 on the city's north side. Lower density development in El Paso County, often occurring in conjunction with provision of services through special districts, makes it highly unlikely that the city will have opportunities for aggressive annexation, such as existed in the 1980's.

Context for Community Growth: Infrastructure and Service Demand

The need for infrastructure and major capital facilities to serve anticipated growth was also calculated. This analysis examined demand for major water and wastewater capital facilities, stormwater improvements, schools, major roads, parks, and public safety (police and fire) using current standards, and estimated a total demand for approximately \$2.44 billion in new facilities.

Context for Community Growth: Costs and Revenues

In order to understand the ability of the city to provide services as growth continues, a fiscal analysis was conducted. The analysis consisted of two parts: a projection of future revenues from growth, given the current financial parameters in place; and an assessment of costs for capital facilities, plus operational costs to maintain current levels of service. This analysis showed funding gaps for both capital and operating costs over the period to 2020, and underscores the need to explore and evaluate new tools to help address the demands for facilities and services generated as a product of community growth.

Major Issues Addressed by the Plan

This Plan is based on the concept that how the City deals with its growth issues will be more effective in improving our quality of life than any attempts to slow down or stop growth. The city has significant room to grow, and so our challenge is to improve the character of physical development, while protecting and preserving the natural features of the city's setting. Major issues thus correspond to the subjects of the Plan's chapters.

1. Develop a coordinated land use pattern that efficiently uses land by encouraging mixed-use activity centers rather than segregated land uses.
2. Recognize the central importance of all neighborhoods.
3. Create opportunities for travel modes that can reduce the rate of growth in automobile use.
4. Evaluate effective tools for assessing the fiscal impact of development.
5. Continually improve the community's stewardship of its natural setting.
6. Strengthen the quality of development's visual character and appearance.
7. Maintain a citywide context or perspective as an integral part of incremental land use decision making.

How the Plan Was Developed

Comprehensive Plan 2000 has been a collaborative effort by citizen volunteers, City staff, the general public, neighborhood organizations, consultants, and public officials to fashion a reliable guide for growth as Colorado Springs moves into the new millennium.

In September of 1997, the City Council appointed a Citizens Steering Committee composed of fifteen members to make recommendations for an updated and revised Comprehensive Plan. Committee members were drawn from a broad spectrum of the community, with representatives from neighborhood, business, and development industry organizations as well as individuals with extensive experience and civic involvement. Supported by the staff of the City's Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Unit and a team of technical consultants, the Committee set out to build a foundation for the revised Comprehensive Plan. This foundation consisted of a review of the goals, policies, objectives and recommendations contained in existing planning documents, an evaluation of current conditions in the city, and an assessment of where the community is headed.

The Committee then undertook an intensive formulation of new policies for the Plan. In conjunction with these new policies, the Committee also developed a mapped framework for future land uses in the city through the year 2020, as well as a vision for the growth of the community over the next twenty years.

This work was reviewed and commented on in a series of public workshops and forums. Two community-wide workshops were initially held in September 1998. A full public review of the first draft of the Plan was also conducted in three public forums held during March and May of 2000. The last of these forums was sponsored by the Council of Neighbors and Organizations and broadcast live with subsequent rebroadcasts on the City's cable television channel.

Throughout the development of the Plan, citizens were provided with several avenues to contribute to the work in progress. All committee meetings were publicly announced beforehand and were open to the public. A portion of each meeting was reserved for citizen comment. A web page was maintained on the City's web site during the course of the project with all major work products available for review. Periodic newsletters were sent out, keeping individuals and organizations informed of the Plan's status. Numerous presentations were made to the City Council, City Planning Commission, as well as neighborhood, civic, and industry groups. A statistically valid citizen survey was also conducted on Comprehensive Plan issues in January and February of 2000.

In June 2000 the draft Comprehensive Plan was presented to City Council. During the last half of the year City Council held a series of five work sessions to discuss the draft document.

In addition to the consultant team, City Planning staff were also assisted by a technical advisory committee made up of representatives from other City operations, El Paso County, the Pikes Peak Council of Governments, public school districts, federal installations, and other government agencies.

The Organization of the Plan

Comprehensive Plan 2000 represents a significant update and revision of the City's 1991 Comprehensive Plan. The 1991 Plan was a pure policy document with no mapped elements. It contained a total of seventeen separate chapters, each with its own set of goals and policies. The 2000 Plan has pared back the number of policy chapters to seven, with a stronger emphasis on land development issues, plan implementation, and mapping. It includes both a Vision Map and a 2020 Land Use Map as integral components of the Plan. The plan text and maps are intended to be used in a complementary fashion; neither should be relied on exclusively in evaluating development proposals.

At the front of Comprehensive Plan 2000 is the Vision Statement. The Vision Map, which is generalized and conceptual in nature, appears at the end of this chapter. These present in outline the future Colorado Springs that the Plan is intended to achieve.

The Plan is then organized into the following policy chapter headings, each containing sets of objectives, policies, and strategies and supporting maps:

- I. Land Use
- II. Neighborhoods
- III. Transportation
- IV. Community Infrastructure and Services
- V. Natural Environment
- VI. Community Character and Appearance
- VII. 2020 Land Use Map

Objectives are, in essence, goal statements, in that they represent a desired result. Policies represent a more focused statement of action to achieve an objective. Strategies represent specific steps and frequently identify tools or techniques that should be developed.

The Plan concludes with a separate chapter devoted to its implementation. The Implementation Chapter contains recommendations for City code revisions as well as programs and procedures necessary to implement the Plan. It also identifies a mechanism for measuring the Plan's progress and a process for monitoring its success on an annual basis.

How to Use the Plan

The Comprehensive Plan is intended to be used by City Council, City Planning Commission, all other City Boards and Commissions, and the various groups and units of the City Administration in making decisions relating to public and private development. It is also intended to be used by citizens, property owners, and corporate entities that are affected by those decisions or who participate in the decision making process.

Nothing set forth in the Comprehensive Plan shall prohibit the City Council, all City boards and commissions, the various City groups, units and officials, after considering the Plan, from deviating from the policies set forth in the Comprehensive Plan where circumstances warrant in making decision affecting specific property.

The Vision Statement and Map can be used to gauge decisions against the spirit and intent of the Plan.

The policy chapters are to be consulted during the land use planning and development process by all parties involved in order to evaluate specific proposals, whether public or private.

The Implementation Chapter is both a work program and a tool for tracking year by year how the plan is being carried out.

Plan Summary

The Vision Statement that prefaces this document contains eleven major bullets, which characterize the aspirations for our community. These are discussed below.

The vision is based on preserving, protecting, and sustaining the best characteristics of our built and natural environment, on effectively addressing our community needs, and on giving positive direction to the changes and growth we can anticipate.

Our Community Envisions a Colorado Springs:

- That is the most liveable city on the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains.
- That respects its heritage and natural setting.
- That projects a highly attractive image and protects its unique character and scenic beauty.
- That provides an incomparable system of open spaces, natural areas, and greenways.

Preservation of the natural setting is the cornerstone for this plan. In recent years the city has adopted an Open Space Plan, and has voted to commit financial resources to the preservation of open space and significant natural features. In constructing the policies and maps, this community objective has assumed a central role. Concern for environmental considerations is reflected in all chapters of the Plan.

- That is truly a city of neighborhoods with affordable housing, walkable destinations, convenient parks, and quality schools.
- That encourages innovation and creativity in development and the creation of an aesthetically appealing community.
- That successfully integrates the uses and activities that meet the daily needs of residents, including housing, shops, work places, schools, parks, and civic facilities.

As a community that has grown dramatically in the second half of the twentieth century, Colorado Springs has a land use pattern that is oriented toward the automobile. Like many cities, we are beginning to see that at a cumulative level, the freedom the automobile brings can be the source of congestion on the roads, and deterioration of our neighborhoods. This plan places significant emphasis on creating opportunities for development to foster activity centers- mixed-use areas that are compatible, convenient, and attractive.

- That has a transportation system with a high degree of efficiency, mobility, accessibility, connectivity, and a range of real choices for traveling between destinations within the community,
- That is equitable and fiscally responsible in providing, maintaining, and upgrading services and infrastructure,
- That supports the economic health of the community by maintaining a strong environment for business and education,

This plan places significant emphasis on maintaining high quality in the provision of infrastructure and public services. The overall quality of the community depends on how well it functions providing safe and well maintained public facilities, and ensuring that public services are able to keep pace with demands placed on them. This result turns on an understanding of costs and an understanding of the need for all to equitably participate in paying those costs.

- That works proactively with other communities to create and maintain a high quality of life in the Pikes Peak Region.

The Comprehensive Plan recognizes that Colorado Springs is not an island. Therefore, the plan calls for continual communication and collaboration with El Paso County and other jurisdictions in addressing regional growth and development issues.

Vision Map Summary

The 2020 Comprehensive Plan includes a Vision Map depicting the community' aspirations for Colorado Springs. This is the first time a citywide vision map has been prepared for Colorado Springs.

Vision Map Purpose

The Vision Map indicates desirable outcomes, without defining the exact boundaries, corridors or land uses needed to achieve those outcomes. The Vision Map and 2020 Land Use Map share a foundation derived from the Open Space Plan. The Open Space Plan outlines a framework for conservation of our open space resources. The Vision Map also defines communities of neighborhoods, each containing a unique mix of land uses. Regional and community parks anchor each community planning area. Activity Centers provide substantial shopping opportunities as well as supportive employment and residential development. More detailed visioning and planning can be done for each community planning area or for the neighborhoods within them.

Map Designations

The Vision Map clarifies how and where development might happen. Vacant land identifies opportunities for new growth. Environmentally constrained lands show where extra care is needed when planning development. Major connectors delineate major travel routes throughout the city, joining communities and concentrations of activity. High capacity mass transit corridors indicate opportunities for light rail or bus service. Additional study is needed to firmly identify the appropriate corridors and the best form of mass transit for Colorado Springs.

The Vision Map portrays generalized locations of future land use. Regional Centers anticipate high concentrations of mixed-use development serving regional needs. Activity Corridors represent areas of concentrated linear mixed-use development. Employment Centers are highly focused areas of employment and employment supportive uses. Activity Center icons show community oriented retail and supportive mixed-use centers. Redevelopment icons show generalized opportunities for future redevelopment within the next 20 years. Colleges and institutions of higher learning are also identified.

Vision Map Objectives, Policies and Strategies

Objective VM 1: *The Vision Map is a Guide*

Use the Vision Map as a guide for future land use and other planning by the City, developers and citizens. The Vision Map indicates desirable outcomes, without defining the exact boundaries, corridors or land uses needed to achieve those outcomes.

Policy VM 101: *Incorporate Vision Map in City Decisions*

Consider the Vision Map as part of the context for City decision making.

Strategy VM 101a: *Incorporate Vision Map in City Strategic and Capital Planning*

Utilize the Vision Map to achieve long range objectives such as mass transit. Initiate further studies to identify detailed strategies to achieve visionary outcomes identified on the Vision Map. The City's Strategic Plan and other plans will reflect goals and objectives identified on the Vision Map.

Strategy VM 101b: *Identify Aspirations for Community Planning Areas*

Complete aspiration statements for each community planning area. Work with the neighborhoods and communities to define aspiration statements. Utilize aspiration statements to define community and neighborhood values, goals, objectives, issues and needs and to achieve Vision Map outcomes.

Strategy VM 101c: *Pursue Community and Neighborhood Planning*

Initiate community and neighborhood planning to achieve goals and objectives of community planning areas. Implement community and neighborhood plans, including zoning, capital facilities, transportation and parks initiatives. Identify community planning values, goals, objectives, issues and needs.

Strategy VM 101d: *City Decision-Making*

Utilize the Vision Map to review land use proposals, city wide system plans, facility master plans, and land use master plans.

Strategy VM 101e: *Vision Map Update*

Incorporate review, analysis and updating of the Vision Map in the annual Comprehensive Plan report to City Council.