infill

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN SUPPLEMENT

City of Colorado Springs

17 December 2015 | DRAFT

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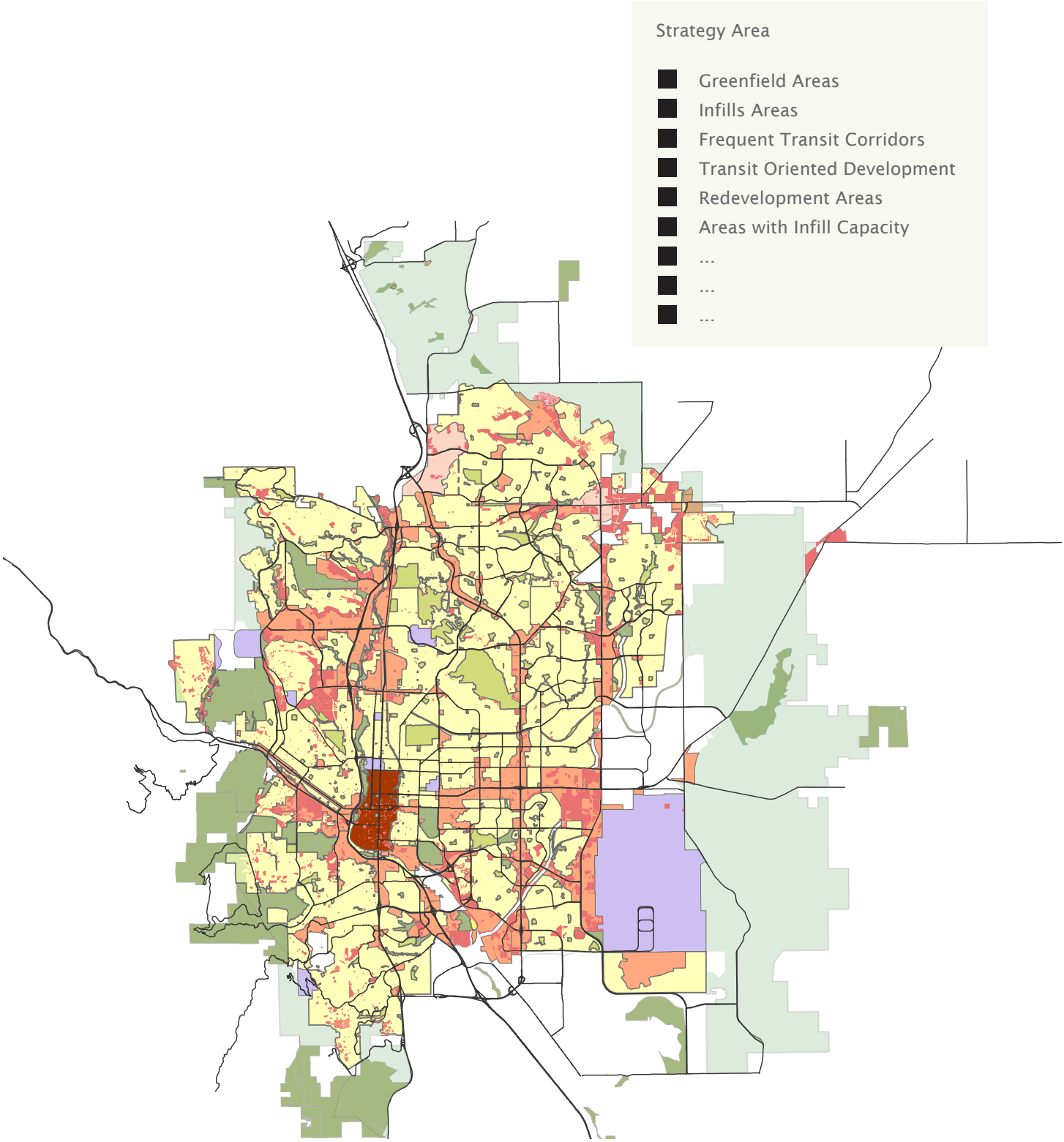


Figure 1 Depiction of the vision and framework of the infill plan. (All of the boundaries and depictions are generalized and subject to revision and updates.)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INFILL VISION, DEFINITION AND FOCUS

The City of Colorado Springs envisions a community that continually reinvests in its mature areas so they remain vital and desirable places that contribute to fiscal sustainability and quality of life for all of the city's residents and visitors. We further envision a particular infill focus on the downtown, older arterial corridors and in the retention and creation of unique and special places throughout the established areas of the city.

INFILL IS BROADLY DEFINED AS THE DEVELOPMENT, REDEVELOPMENT, MAJOR RENOVATION AND/OR ADAPTIVE RE-USE OF PROPERTIES OR BUILDINGS IN THE OLDER AND LARGELY DEVELOPED AREAS OF THE CITY.

The terms "infill" and "redevelopment" are purposefully overlapped and intermingled in this definition and in this plan to emphasize the critical role that land use change and adaptation plays alongside the "filling in" of available vacant land capacity.

The terms greenfield or greenfield development are used extensively throughout this chapter and are intended to generally refer to development occurring in newer and/or peripheral areas of the city. Figure 1 provides a generalized depiction of greenfield areas as of 2015. The term greenfield and the areas it encompasses cannot be precisely defined. The development of large vacant properties is considered infill and not greenfield development provided those areas are largely surrounded by pre-1980 development. Examples of large vacant infill areas include the Gold Hill Mesa, Spring Creek, and Airport Business Park developments. The vision and definition are intentionally broad, encompassing and aspirational. Achievement of the vision will require an ongoing, strategic and purposeful focus, as further articulated in the following chapter.

Adaptive re-use captializes on under utilized space.

INFILL AND REDEVELOPMENT ARE ESSENTIAL TO THE CITY'S LONG-TERM FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY AND TO ITS OVERALL VIBRANCY, LIVABILITY, AND QUALITY OF LIFE

In the 65 years from 1950 to 2015, the population of our city has increased nearly tenfold; from 45,472 then to almost 450,000 today. While some mature areas have aged gracefully, others have deteriorated or are experiencing substantial socio-economic and market-driven land use changes. The impacts of these changes are particularly evident along and near aging arterial corridors such as Nevada Avenue and Academy Boulevard. City government, its enterprises, and its facilities and services exist to serve the needs of its residents and property owners. If mature areas are not supported, the quality of life of many of our citizens will be diminished.

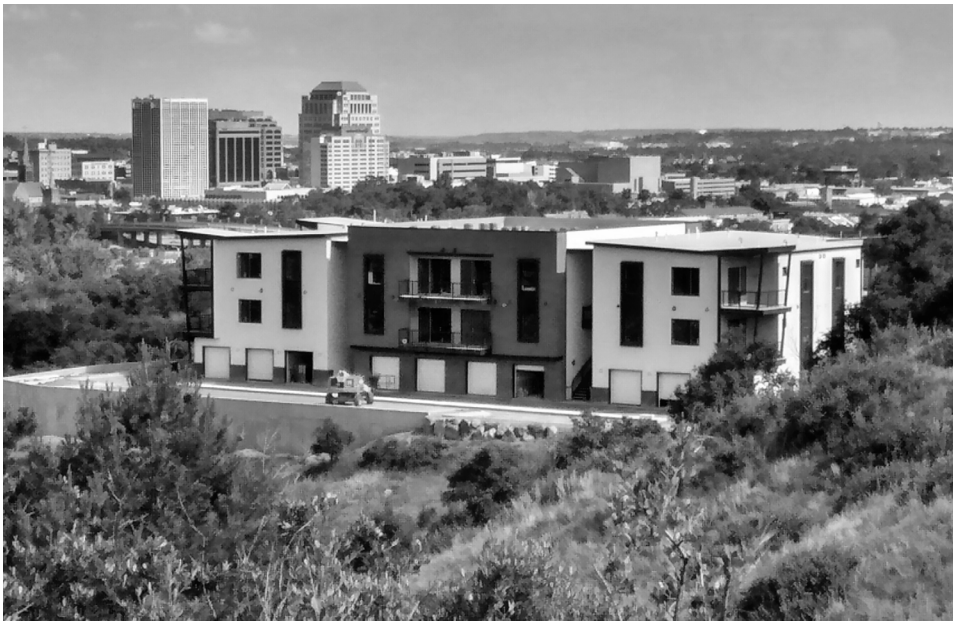
The city has a great deal of capacity to accept infill; this includes over 7,000 acres of vacant developable land in core areas along with substantial already-developed properties available for redevelopment. In addition to land capacity, trends demonstrate a market for walkable neighborhoods, robust transit, and accessibility to the urban core as primary attractors for both Millennial and Baby Boomer generations.

There is a fiscal sustainability imperative and a significant economic argument to supporting infill. The city, its tax and ratepayers, the business community, and its residential property owners have all invested in mature areas, and have a stake in the efficient use of this land and infrastructure. If public facilities such as streets, parks, and utilities infrastructure are not used to the full capacity (due in part to low-density) taxpayers and ratepayers pay the cost of the inefficiency. Infill allows for city services to improve due to increasing efficiencies such as police and fire response times and transit frequency. The inverse of reinvestment is "blight". Blight has associated costs and results in depreciated investment value.

THE CITY'S ROLE IN INFILL IS IMPORTANT AND ESSENTIAL

Since the demand for infill and redevelopment is projected to increase, the community should proactively prepare for it. There are a variety of public policies, plans, regulations, places, facilities, services and systems that need to be aligned to address both the infill that is happening and the additional or enhanced activity the city desires. Ultimately, most development decisions are based in market demand. However, the city, through our electorate and staff, holds a significant role and stake in whether and how these decisions occur.

The Gabion showcases high density housing within walking and cycling distance of downtown.



The city and its enterprises own, and to various degrees maintain, over one quarter of all the property within our city limits. How the city invests in, uses, maintains, administers and regulates this property will have a significant impact on private land use choices. The city also has an undeniable role in the regulation of land use, the administration of zoning, the development of policies and procedures impacting the development process, and in the enforcement of standards that have been established to maintain beauty and quality of life for its citizens. The city can take actions that profoundly impact infill and redevelopment options on private property. Finally, the city has a variety of more discretionary programmatic and funding options and incentives that can be used to promote and encourage infill.

INFILL IS NOT A ZERO SUM GAME

The support of a growing role for infill does not mean "either or" denial of the continued role and importance of development in "greenfield" areas of the city. Infill is not simply about reallocating a fixed amount of land use and development demand between greenfield and core areas. There is an "added value" component. Ongoing and strategic support for infill and redevelopment is expected to increase the overall marketability of the city and region for land and economic development investment.

Density is important, but so are land use mix, design, connectivity, and integration.

Increases in housing and employment density are an assumed and implicit benefit of this infill and redevelopment vision and strategy. However, density in the absence of quality land use mix, design, connectivity and integration will not achieve the desired results.

Infill and redevelopment proposals and activities do not always increase density. However, infill projects that deserve the most attention often do. Density that is location and context sensitive and is well connected with the public realm will generally result in better quality of life and will enhance viability of catalytic impact. These density aspects can create challenges with compatibility and capacity but can also create opportunities for markets, livability, place-making, and land use efficiency.

Similarly, infill and redevelopment projects do not always need to involve mixed use in order to qualify as infill. In some contexts it may be neither logical nor appropriate to assume there should be a mixed use component associated with every infill and redevelopment project. However, one goal and assumption of this plan is that the mixing, integration, connectivity and orientation of uses toward the public realm supports quality of life for the community, and projects that include mixed use therefore deserve greater attention.

How the city invests in, uses, maintains, administers and regulates its property will have a significant impact on private land use choices

4

Transit and downtown are foundational and essential

ROBOST TRANSIT IS INTEGRAL TO SUPPORTING INFILL

Integral to the city's infill and redevelopment vision is an evolution and progression toward a more robust transit system which serves both need and choice-based customers. As the 41st most populated city in the US, we must be able to compete with the majority of similarly sized cities that provide greater transportation options, particularly in the form of urban rail or bus rapid transit systems.

The support of transit, especially in the form of development adjacent to the highest frequency transit corridors, improves transportation options within the community and also demonstrates a level of service certainty that is necessary for transit oriented development (TOD). Although not all infill and redevelopment can and should be defined and measured in relationship to being transit supportive, this should be an elemental consideration for project prioritization.

DOWNTOWN STRATEGY IS FUNDATIONAL TO INFILL

Greater downtown Colorado Springs must be considered a community cornerstone from the perspective of infill policy. It needs to function as the economic, cultural, and political center of the region. Nationwide experience demonstrates that cities that possess more vibrant downtowns attract more community and economic development and contribute to a richer overall quality of life. Cities with the most vibrant downtowns attract more infill, achieve greater density, and are fiscally more sustainable due to efficient land use. Visions and plans are already in place for downtown, but policies and strategies should be put into place to greatly encourage revitalization of the downtown core as a means of catalyzing infill and economic development throughout the community.

PRIORITY AREAS AND USES ARE ESSENTIAL TO THE EXECUTION OF THIS PLAN

Prioritizing resource allocation to specific areas and uses allows for more fiscally sustainable investment and addresses market gaps where revitalization that provides some greater benefit to the community may not otherwise occur unless the city takes an active role.

Priority areas and uses also permit ease of marketing to investors and greater ability to measure the success of infill policies, actions and investments. Priority areas include gateways, high frequency transit corridors, and those mature neighborhoods with supportive conditions for revitalization. Priority uses include catalytic projects, mixed use, higher density and transit-supportive projects and projects that convert the land to new and/or intensified uses (see Figure 1).

PURPOSE

This plan has the following intent and purposes:

1. Augment and support the balance of the existing 2001 Comprehensive Plan and its 2020 Land Use Map by providing additional focus, policy and strategic direction concerning infill and redevelopment

2. Recommend specific and actionable city-initiated priorities and strategies to promote infill and redevelopment throughout the mature areas of the city

The plan will augment and support the 2001 Comprehensive Plan, and also recommend new actions

This chapter has been created in acknowledgment and in consideration of the existing 2001 Comprehensive Plan and its incorporated elements (including publicly and privately initiated master plans). However, the balance of the comprehensive plan has not been modified or revised directly in conjunction with the process of creating this chapter.

Therefore, the intent and expectation for the use of this document is that the entire comprehensive plan and its applicable incorporated elements will continue to be used holistically as an advisory guide for city policy, legislative, quasi-judicial, administrative, and procedural decisions related to land-use and other matters applicable to the comprehensive plan.

Plaza of the Rockies brings stronger street level presence to downtown.

DOCUMENT USE: GUIDANCE FOR PLANNERS AND DEVELOPERS

This section provides additional and focused policy guidance for the use of this plan in the review of and decisions made on development applications in infill areas. These types of applications include but are not limited to annexations within mature areas, master plans, zone changes, conditional uses, use and non-use variances, concept plans and development plans. This guidance should be applied in association with the balance of the comprehensive plan and its referenced elements, as applicable and feasible. This policy guidance is not intended to introduce additional discretion on the part of staff or hearing bodies for uses and applications that are clearly consistent with prior approvals, existing zoning and development standards. Property owners and developers are encouraged to voluntarily apply the guiding principles and plan goals as a means of contributing towards the broader infill vision, even if specific approvals or incentives are not being sought.

PROJECT APPROVALS, RELIEF, AND INCENTIVE ELIGIBILITY:

- Infill projects seeking approval or consideration of zoning changes should generally be supported if they advance the overall infill and redevelopment principles, goals and outcomes included in this document and can be accommodated within the context of the site, its surrounding conditions, and reasonably available infrastructure and service capacity.

- Administrative relief from standards and submittal requirements for infill projects and applications should be reasonably granted in cases where the benefit of strict

Integration of transportation and infill is showcased through extended and diversified transit options.

application of the requirement is outweighed by the advantages of relief from the requirement, considering impacts to the project, the adjacent properties and the community.

- To be eligible for special city incentives such as tax sharing agreements, possible relief from usual and customary fees and charges and infrastructure requirements, infill projects should clearly demonstrate a high degree of overall consistency with the plan goals and should be located in a prioritized reinvestment area or possess a priority use.

- Use and density transitions, as well as buffer treatments should be incorporated where appropriate and feasible to address site conditions. However, transitions and buffers should not be employed to overly limit the use and feasibility of infill sites, and should only be required in circumstances where the benefits to the surrounding properties and the community are clear and compelling.

DESIGN AND LOCATION CONSIDERATIONS:

Context-appropriate increases in density and changes in land use should be supported, particularly in identified infill priority areas such as the downtown, economic opportunity zones and high frequency transit corridors.

- Projects should be located and designed to support integration, mixing and connectivity of land uses within their surrounding areas and neighborhoods.

- Projects should be located and designed to support the long-term viability of the neighborhoods they affect with input from neighbors.

- Projects should be located and designed to enhance the viability of multi-modal transportation options including transit use, cycling and walking.

- Use and density transitions, as well as buffer treatments should be incorporated where appropriate and feasible to address site conditions. However, transitions and buffers should not be employed to overly limit the use and feasibility of infill sites, and should only be required in circumstances where the benefits to the surrounding properties and the community are clear and compelling.

PLAN SUCCESS

The successful use of this plan will require upholding the following supportive conditions:

ASSIGN AND OPTIMIZE RESOURCES

Without the allocation and optimization of dedicated staff time, financial resources, and political will to support the role of infill and facilitate policy changes, this plan will not be met with success.

TAKE NEAR TERM ACTION ON PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations have been developed to address point-in-time issues that deserve near term assessment and action. Any recommendation that aligns with the guiding principles, and accomplishes a substantial number of the plan goals, should be met with swift action for the success of the plan.

TAKE ACTIVE ROLE IN PROMOTION OF INFILL OPPORTUNITIES

The city should be actively involved in the promotion of infill development opportunities in Colorado Springs through effective means of external communication. This communication should be aimed towards developers and investors, both inside and outside of the region, and in close partnership with support organizations. As long as personal favoritism is avoided, the city should comprehensively provide an inventory of potential infill sites and serve as a clearinghouse for infill opportunities to encourage new investment.

Similarly, the city should proactively identify and engage with the owners of “difficult” properties with the intent of determining whether there are any barriers or impediments to development that can be reasonably addressed by the city or its enterprises. Available incentives should be marketed and the zones can be used for catalytic improvement under existing ownership or through new investment. This should include collaborating on solutions for beneficial use of difficult development or redevelopment areas and parcels.

MEASURE AND TRACK PROGRESS

Infill trends and infill strategies are both long term propositions. Therefore, ongoing measurement and progress reporting is essential. This reporting should include measurements of actual infill development activity as well as progress made in the implementation of specific recommendations in the Infill Action Plan. Annual reporting is recommended. This should be kept simple, with an emphasis on being informative, honestly tracking trends and progress, and moving forward with a continuing and responsive strategy.

UPHOLD SUPPORTING CONDITIONS

[Intro sentence]

- a city governance and service philosophy that is open to adaptation, business opportunities and land use change;
- support of economic development and jobs – if the overall local economy is not sufficiently robust, there will be a limited market for new development anywhere;
- provision of a safe and secure environment for all areas of the city;
- convenient access to schools in mature neighborhoods, and continual support of a superb public education system in Colorado Springs;
- provision and maintenance of quality infrastructure including complete streets and parks;
- ongoing neighborhood and business engagement in community issues;
- provide adequate support services to neighborhoods;
- adequate enforcement of codes and regulations, and maintenance of community infrastructure and services in mature areas. Continued ability to rely on existing zoning on a parcel by parcel basis;
- maintenance of effort for

Artist's rendering of 2015 proposed Olympic Museum slated to bring an added half million visitors into downtown per year.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Create benefit, remove barriers and minimize risk

In general, all policies and actions recommended by this plan were developed with the following principles in mind. These same principles should also be used as the basis for prioritization and decision making around infill and redevelopment related city policies moving forward.

CREATES COMMUNITY BENEFIT

A policy or action which contributes to the well-being of the citizens and visitors of Colorado Springs. This includes, but is not limited to, enhancing neighborhood livability, creating better connectivity through multiple modes of transportation, creating better connectedness with the natural environment, enhancing choice and quality of life, and beautifying the built environment.

REMOVES BARRIERS TO INFILL DEVELOPMENT

A policy or action which makes development of infill projects more feasible in comparison to greenfield development, leveling the playing field so that development within the existing city boundaries is just as easy, if not easier than building on the periphery.

The Machine Shop's adaptive re-use building creates space for innovators across professions.

MINIMIZES INFILL INVESTMENT RISK

A policy or action which creates greater clarity in the regulatory system, allowing for development to occur with clear understanding of what is required, what infrastructure and developments are funded and designated to occur in an area, and whether an area is prioritized for redevelopment and eligible for specific incentives.

PLAN GOALS

As logical and appropriate, the following goals should be used to evaluate the value of and priority for city-initiated actions or public-private partnerships. These goals should also be used as part of the justification of the use and allocation of special city incentives for private and non-profit development.

Density achieves context-sensitive increases in density

Priority use advances quality land use mix, design, connectivity and integration to achieve desired results

Connectivity contributes to multimodal viability allowing for a range of choices for traveling between destinations in the community

Economic stimulus catalyzes further development and/or contributes to primary employment

Fiscal efficiency effectively utilizes existing infrastructure, enabling the city to maintain growth while providing and maintaining higher levels of service

Community pride and perception contributes to the perception of greater safety, security, and attractiveness of the community for both residents and visitors

Reinvestment in priority areas drives development in the downtown and along mature arterial corridors, aiming to take advantage of the city's existing capacity and development potential and reflect a more dense urban environment

Support of neighborhoods and placemaking encourages better integration between neighborhoods and their adjoining communities for a more interconnected and livable city

Blight relief addresses substantial redevelopment need in areas or sites experiencing blight or sites that are vacant/underutilized, areas with excess parking capacity and other sites that present an opportunity for conversion to new and/or Intensified uses

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The following is a broad summary of policies and actions recommended by the committe. The policies and actions contained herein are organized by area of influence and characterized by how they meet the plan goals. Recommendations are intended to highlight key elements but are not all-inclusive. While a given recommendation may not individually relate to all three of the guiding principles, each is reflective of at least one of the guiding principles: creating community benefit, removing barriers to infill, and minimizing infill investment risk.

A separate Action Plan is intended to serve as a living and dynamic implementation document for this plan

The Infill and Redevelopment Action Plan is a separate yet complementary document with more detailed, timing-specific and directly actionable recommendations. The action plan is intended to serve as a living and dynamic implementation document to be regularly updated and managed by city staff consistent with strategic direction from city council. As the action plan is modified and adapted over time in response to progress, decisions, and availability of resources, the changes should be consistent with and further the guiding principles and plan goals outlined herein.

1 - NEIGHBORHOODS

As addressed throughout this chapter, infill and redevelopment sites often have more complexity and challenges based on the established and mature nature of the surrounding neighborhoods. The public process can, and often does, take longer in these areas, resulting in higher processing and/or financing costs for the developer. In respect to the value of the neighborhood process, it is suggested that the city explore options for enhanced neighborhood services delivery and pursue actions like:

- develop and pilot a replicable process for small area and neighborhood plans, with neighborhood input, to include the establishment or amendment of development standards;
- revise the appeals process and development plan criteria and standards in city code.

2 - SUPPORTIVE ZONING

With the exception of downtown zoning and parking regulations, city development requirements have a suburban and/or greenfield orientation and do not always adapt well to more mature areas. In addition to support for zone change requests that promote context sensitive infill and redevelopment – including mixed use, density and adaptive re-use, the recommendations are to:

- revise development standards and the zoning code to include more infill-supportive standards and relief from "suburban" standards;
- revise and extend the downtown form-based code (FBZ) plan and consider additional targeted use of FBZ;
- pursue strategic infill-supportive zoning improvements related to use by right, accessory dwelling units and transit oriented development.

3 - ROLE OF UTILITIES

New development in mature areas may have one or more site-specific characteristics that discourage development, often related to utilities. To proactively offset the burden of aging utilities and smooth the process overall, the recommendations generally refer to:

- alignment of capital improvements and upgrade standards;
- open access to data fees, charges and potential fee deferral or waiver programs;
- partnership with strategic teams, including UPAC (Utilities Policy Advisory Committee) to address priority areas and issues;
- align utility fees to support infill development (e.g. eliminate reconnect fees).

4 - PRIVATE AND PUBLIC PROPERTY CARE AND MAINTENANCE (INCLUDING PARKS)

Broadly defined, the "blight" associated with a number of mature areas of the city can act as a significant barrier to redevelopment, especially if there a concern with a negative cycle of disinvestment leading to reduced market opportunities. Conversely, blighted areas – with their typically diminished property values – can provide great opportunities for reinvestment if there is an actual or expected positive trajectory (often preceded by proactive investment to address blight in the public realm.) Recommendations, therefore, are concerned with:

- proactive and effective code enforcement;
- cost effective maintenance of existing infrastructure including streetscape adoption and management;
- restructure city park fees to be responsive to infill development needs.

5 - TRANSPORTATION INCLUDING TRANSIT

Colorado Springs plans for a multi-modal transportation system including a well-functioning fixed route transit system and a Complete Streets approach, though much of our land use policy to date has favored the use of cars. In an effort to elevate transportation policy to align with, and in some cases catalyze, infill development, the recommendations are to:

- modify the Engineering Criteria Manual to be more conducive to infill-related density and multimodal access and deemphasize congestion concerns (e.g. reduce requirement for traffic impact studies);
- modify and strategically waive suburban access and parking standards for infill projects and leverage the Downtown Parking Enterprise for redevelopment potential;
- focus services and investments in high frequency transit corridors.

Transportation, including transit, can be an infill catalyst

6 - PRIORTIZATION AND INCENTIVES

Prioritized attention and investments are essential

Traditionally, the city has had a "level playing field" approach and has not directly or comprehensively established priority redevelopment areas. Because prioritized investment is more fiscally sustainable and incentives provide for greater impact potential, this plan recommends the:

- alignment of capital improvement plans and infill priorities whenever possible;
- support and prioritization of downtown planning and implementation efforts;
- analysis and visioning for high priority corridors including, but not limited to, North and South Nevada Ave and South and Central Academy Blvd;
- extension of the strategic use of city incentives, fee waivers and Rapid Response to high value infill projects and specific land uses that best achieve the plan goals;
- consideration of public-private investment in complementary infrastructure, in cases of extraordinary incentives, to capitalize on opportunities for mutual benefit.
- locate and orient major city service facilities to maximize location efficiency;
- similar location decisions for other non-city catalytic and institutional projects such as hospitals, government and university buildings and event and sports venues.

AFTERWORD

This chapter has been recommended by an Infill Steering Committee created under the auspices of City Council and supported by the City and Colorado Springs' Utilities staff. Committee membership included City Council and Planning Commission representatives along with members from the development, neighborhood and business communities. The committee met and worked throughout late 2014 and all of 2015 on this process, chapter and associated action plan. Prior to formulating recommendations, the committee invited input and presentations from a wide variety of stakeholders and city staff. Members also toured infill projects, including several in the Denver metropolitan area, and sponsored a well-attended interactive community forum. An archive of the process, including committee meeting notes agendas, and other documents, is available on the city website.

A result of high density building is increased opportunity for improtu socializing.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Catalyst or catalytic project: a public or private project that is timed and located with an expectation that it will serve as a particularly crucial and effective encouragement for additional development in infill areas.

Chapter: this chapter of the City of Colorado Springs Comprehensive Plan, also referred to as the City of Colorado Springs Infill and Redevelopment Plan. Supplement?

Code Enforcement: need to figure out whether we need to define what is and is not being addressed?

Comprehensive Plan: the City of Colorado Springs Comprehensive Plan in its entirety, including all of its constituent elements as it and they may be amended from time to time.

Community Benefit: one or a combination of significant benefits of an infill project associated with its special contributions to the public realm and identified community needs with examples including enhancements of infrastructure or increased affordability of housing, all as ultimately determined by City Council.

Context appropriate or context sensitive: land use development or redevelopment that may vary from surrounding development in use and density but which is also sensitive to site conditions and neighboring uses with respect to factors including but not limited to topography, natural systems and hazards, infrastructure and service capacity, and integration with surrounding uses.

Greenfield: newer developed or developing areas of the city located in association with its periphery as generally depicted in Figure 1 and the development within these areas, regardless of the presence of absence of neighboring development.

High frequency transit corridors: primary transit corridors as identified in the Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments 2040 Transit Plan that support greater land use intensification and connections between key regional destinations, and targets them for improved span of transit service and frequencies.

High value infill projects: infill projects that are catalytic in nature or that can be expected to contribute substantially to a large majority of all the goals outlined in this chapter.

Location efficiency: is a method of placing uses in close proximity to supporting uses, such as major city services near transit, jobs, housing, and other services. The intent is to reduce travel distances between uses as well as the need for other related resources.

Robust transit: a transit system designed and operated with frequent service, along with a facilities and amenities of a quality, permanence, visibility and multi-modal accessibility sufficient to provide an incentive for transit-oriented development and related investments. Such a system may or may not include fixed guideway or Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) elements.

Traffic impact studies (TIS): the project-specific studies and analyses of this name required in association with development applications as currently addressed in Section III of the city's Engineering Criteria Manual.

Transit-oriented development (TOD): higher density and often mixed use residential, commercial and institutional development located, designed, and oriented to maximize access to public transportation and to encourage transit ridership. TOD development is ordinarily located within ¼ to ½ mile of a robust transit system station or stop.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

City Council

Merv Bennett, *President, At Large*
Jill Gaebler, *President Pro-tem*
Don Knight, *District 1*
Larry Bagley, *District 2*
Keith King, *District 3*
Helen Collins, *District 4*
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Numerous community members, city staff and agency representatives added value to this process in the form of ideas, information and direct assistance. Some, but not all of these individuals and groups are listed here:

Craig Blewitt, *Transit Services Manager*
Matt Bingman, *Planning Technician*
Ralph Braden, *Nor'wood Development*
Bill Cherrier, *Colorado Springs Utilities CFO*
Bob Cope, *Senior Business Climate Specialist, City Economic Vitality*
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Thomas Wasinger, *City Code Enforcement Manager*
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Peter Wysocki, *AICP, Planning and Community Development Director*