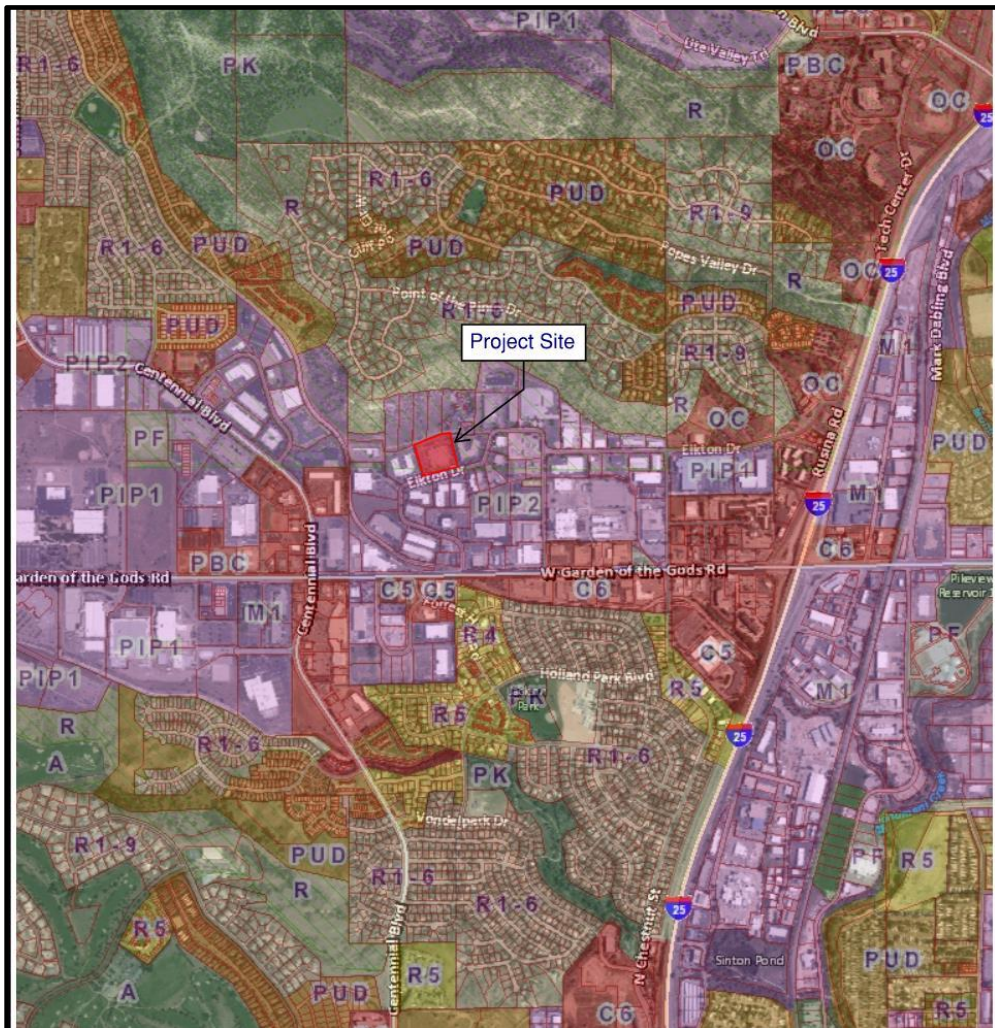


CITY PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA  
March 17, 2022

STAFF: WILLIAM GRAY

FILE NO:  
CPC UV 22-00020 – QUASI-JUDICIAL

PROJECT: AMERICAN MEDICAL RESPONSE OF COLORADO, INC  
OWNER: JDB ELKTON, LLC  
DEVELOPER: AMERICAN MEDICAL RESPONSE, INC.  
CONSULTANT: TORGERSON DESIGN PARTNERS, LLC



## **PROJECT SUMMARY:**

1. Project Description: The project includes an application for a use variance development plan consisting of 4.35 acres of land located at 980 Elkton Drive. The project is herein referred to as “American Medical Response”. The use variance request would allow for the conversion of a currently developed manufacturing building into an administrative and safety services use in a PIP 2/HS (Planned Industrial Park with Hillside Overlay) zone district (**see “Use Variance Development Plan” attachment**). The proposed use variance development plan illustrates the layout for the proposed use on the property.
2. Applicant’s Project Statement: (**see “Project Statement” attachment**)
3. Planning and Development Team’s Recommendation: City Planning staff recommends approval of the application with conditions of approval.

## **BACKGROUND:**

1. Site Address: The property associated with this project is located at 980 Elkton Drive (**see “Vicinity Map” attachment**).
2. Existing Zoning/Land Use: The property is zoned PIP-2/HS (Planned Industrial Park with Hillside Overlay) and is developed with an existing commercial building (the former use of the building was manufacturing for SRAM, a bicycle component manufacturer).
3. Surrounding Zoning/Land Use:  
North: PIP-2/HS (Planned Industrial Park with Hillside Overlay) and is undeveloped, vacant lots.  
South: PIP-2 (Planned Industrial Park) and is developed with warehousing and distribution.  
East: PIP-2/HS (Planned Industrial Park with Hillside Overlay) and is developed with warehousing and distribution.  
West: PIP-2/HS (Planned Industrial Park with Hillside Overlay) and is developed with warehousing and distribution and general offices.
4. PlanCOS Vision: According to the PlanCOS Vision Map (**see “PlanCOS Vision Map” attachment**), the project site is identified as an Established Suburban Neighborhood and is proximate to a Mature/Redeveloping Activity Center (Garden of the Gods Boulevard).
5. Annexation: The property was annexed into the City under the Pope’s Bluff Addition (November 9, 1965; Ordinance No. 3223)
6. Master Plan/Designated Master Plan Land Use: The project site is not part of a master planned area.
7. Subdivision: The property is platted as Lot 1, Block 1 of Deluxe Corp, Subdivision Filing No. 1.
8. Zoning Enforcement Action: None
9. Physical Characteristics: The project site is developed. Improvements include an existing building, asphalt paved private drives and parking and landscaping.

## **STAKEHOLDER PROCESS AND INVOLVEMENT:**

The public notification process consisted of providing notice to surrounding homeowners’ associations and adjacent property owners within 1,000 feet of the site, which included the mailing of postcards to 50 property owners on two occasions: during the internal review and prior to the Planning Commission hearing. The site was also posted during the two occasions noted above. City Planning staff received no public comment regarding this project.

Staff input is outlined in the following sections of this report. Staff sent copies of the plan set and supporting documentation to the standard internal and external review agencies for comments. The review agencies for this project included, Colorado Springs Utilities, City Engineering, City Traffic, City Fire, City SWENT, City Parks, Council of Neighborhood Organizations (CONO) and City Police. None of the review agencies issued comments regarding the proposed application.

An approved Drainage Letter and Geologic Hazard Study Waiver are required with the application. The project as it is proposed is primarily an interior remodel. There is a small 3,000 square feet addition to be constructed on the northwest corner of the building that will have a minor impact to drainage. The site qualifies for a Geologic Hazard Study Waiver because it does not exhibit geologic characteristics to require a full study. Both City Engineering and SWENT have agreed that the review and approval of these required documents will not affect the design and layout of the proposed project.

## **ANALYSIS OF REVIEW CRITERIA/MAJOR ISSUES/COMPREHENSIVE PLAN & MASTER PLAN CONFORMANCE:**

### **1. Review Criteria / Design & Development Issues:**

#### **a. Application Summary**

##### **i. Use Variance Development Plan:**

The submitted Use Variance Development Plan for the American Medical Response (“AMR”) project proposes an administrative and safety services use on a site 4.35 acres in size and zoned PIP-2/HS (Planned Industrial Park with Hillside Overlay) (**see “Use Variance Development Plan” attachment**).

AMR is a medical transportation company in the United States that provides and manages community-based medical transportation services, including emergency, non-emergency and managed transportation, rotary and fixed-wing air ambulance services, and disaster response. Here in Colorado Spring, El Paso County and five (5) surrounding counties AMR provides emergency and non-emergency medical transport services. This site will serve as the regional headquarters and base of operation for the emergency services it provides in the Pikes Peak Region. Uses at the site include, management and administrative functions, training and education services, fleet maintenance and it is also where crews start and end their work shifts. The site is not an ambulance dispatch location.

Under the land use definitions in city’s zoning code, AMR’s facility falls under the definition of “Administrative and Safety Services”, which is defined as “Governmental offices providing administrative clerical or public contact services, public safety and emergency services that deal directly with the citizen, together with incidental storage and maintenance of necessary vehicles. Typical uses include Federal, State, County, and City offices along with police and fire protection services and emergency medical and ambulance services.” An administrative and safety services use type is a use that is not permitted in the PIP-2 (Planned Industrial Park) zone district, pursuant to City Code Section 7.3.203. Therefore, for the proposed use to be established at this location a use variance development plan is required.

In addition, to establishing that the use is permitted at this site, the project also involves an interior remodel of 33,000 square feet of the existing building and construction of a new 3,000 square feet fleet maintenance addition to provide the necessary space and layout for the proposed administrative and safety services use to be operated by AMR. The remaining 20,000 square feet of building is to remain as it is currently designed for a general office use.

Existing site improvements include a shared access drive from Elkton Drive, internal parking and drive aisles, trash enclosure and landscaping. These existing

improvements are suited for the proposed use, in terms of access, parking, landscaping that serves to both screen the property and provides an aesthetic street frontage, and trash services with some minor exceptions. The parking area will be modified to allow ambulances and other service vehicles to safely enter and exit the vehicle maintenance portion of the building and fencing will be added to provide both screening and security for the ambulances (**see “Use Variance Development Plan” attachment**).

When considering whether the proposed use should be permitted in the PIP 2 (Planned Industrial Park) zone district, City Planning staff evaluated the request in terms of the three review criteria for granting a use variance as set forth in City Code Section 7.5.803(B)(1-3) *Criteria For Granting A Use Variance*:

- *Exceptional or Extraordinary Circumstances or Conditions Applicable to the Property:*

The Elkton Drive corridor is comprised mainly of the PIP-2 (Planned Industrial Park) zone district. The administrative and safety services use, as proposed, is compatible and suited for the industrial use types of the previously referenced zone district and the variety of commercial, industrial, and manufacturing uses in the Elkton Drive corridor (**see “Context Map” attachment**). Additionally, the administrative and safety services use is permitted only in the PF (Public Facility) zone district, and there is very little PF (Public Facility) zoned properties within the City. The building and its location make it well-suited for the proposed use. To this final point, the PIP-2 (Planned Industrial Park) zone district is proposed to be changed to BP (Business Park) zone district with the forthcoming rewrite of the City Code, Chapter 7, *Planning, Development and Building*. With this change, the administrative and safety services use is also changing and will be known as Public Safety Services use, which is a permitted use in the proposed BP (Business Park) zone district.

- *Preservation and Enjoyment of the Property:*

The repurposing of the commercial building with the proposed administrative and safety service use will enhance the area and community at large. It will also assist AMR to better meet the contracted emergency and non-emergency medical transport services that they provide to the City of Colorado Springs, El Paso County, the Air Force Academy and five (5) surrounding counties.

- *Public Welfare or Convenience nor Injurious to the Property or Improvements of Other Owners:*

The proposed administrative and safety services use will be a benefit to the city as well as the surrounding community. As proposed, all operations will occur on-site and within the current building. The exception to this is the parking of off-duty ambulances. However, these vehicles will be screened from the public street. Off-site impacts due to noise or traffic are not anticipated to occur, as the Applicant has programmed the business to operate under all applicable City Code requirements. By example, the site is not an emergency dispatch location for the services that AMR provides. It is only their base of operation.

The reasonings outlined above reinforce why this proposal will be good for the immediate neighborhood and surrounding area. City Planning staff finds that the proposed plan, as stipulated, is in conformance with the authorizations for a use

variance for an administrative and safety services use that is otherwise not permitted on a property industrially zoned, as set forth in City Code 7.5.803(A).

City Planning staff finds that the project addresses all the applicable review criteria set forth in City Code.

2. Conformance with the City Comprehensive Plan:

The project application has been evaluated for conformance with the City's current comprehensive plan (herein referred to as "PlanCOS"), adopted in January 2019. According to PlanCOS, the project site is identified as an Established Suburban Neighborhood and is proximate to a Mature/Redeveloping Activity Center (Garden of the Gods Boulevard) (**see "PlanCOS Vision Map" attachment**). The AMR project is consistent with one of the core values of PlanCOS, which reinforces the importance of encouraging infill development proposals. One of the "Big Ideas" in the Vibrant Neighborhood Chapter 2 of PlanCOS is entitled "Embrace Creative Infill, Adaptation and Land Use Change", which has goal VN-3 that states:

*"Through neighborhood plans, associations, and partnerships, empower neighborhoods to reinvest in order to create community, vibrancy, and to address their specific vision and needs."*

To do this, PlanCOS suggests, *"New development should focus on safe connections into and within these neighborhoods."*

A "Big Idea" from Chapter 4, entitled "Embrace Sustainability", has Goal TE-4 that states:

*"Focus on productively developing and redeveloping areas already in, nearby, or surrounded by the city in order to preserve open spaces, maximize investments in existing infrastructure, limit future maintenance costs, and reduce the impacts of disinvestment in blighted areas."*

A policy for this goal further reinforces that development should *"Prioritize development within the existing City boundaries and built environment (not in the periphery)."*

Adaptive and responsive land use change is one of the core values of PlanCOS. On balance with this perspective, City Planning staff has determined that the project's land use, location and site design meet the overall intent of this idea.

For the reasons provided in this overall staff report, City Planning staff finds that this infill development proposal and its associated application to be in substantial conformance with PlanCOS and its guidance.

3. Conformance with the Area's Master Plan:

The project site is not part of a master planned area. City Planning staff finds the AMR project to be complimentary and supportive of the surrounding area, which contains a mix of commercial and industrial uses (**see "Context Map" attachment**). City Planning staff analyzed the overall impact of the project through consideration of the use variance development plan and the review criteria for authorizing a use variance, as set forth in City Code Section 7.5.803.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

**CPC UV 22-00020 – Use Variance Development Plan**

Recommend approval to Planning Commission a Use Variance Development Plan for the American Medical Response project, based upon the findings that the Use Variance meets the review criteria for granting a use variance, as set forth in City Code Section 7.5.803(B) and the development plan review criteria, as set forth in City Code Section 7.5.502(E) with the following conditions of approval:

1. Drainage letter approved by City's Stormwater Enterprise.

2. Geologic Hazard Study Waiver approved by City's Engineering Development Review and Planning and Community Development.