

3. Neighborhood Planning Program

Effective and viable small area and neighborhood land use plans are essential for implementation of the PlanCOS vision. PlanCOS sets the overall vision and framework, but neighborhood plans are necessary to apply this larger vision in a practical manner. They allow planning and implementation at scale that can address the unique characteristics and needs of different areas of the city.

Colorado Springs has accumulated a daunting backlog of neighborhoods that either have no active land use master plan or with plans in excess of 20 years old. This is the result of the fact that very few new or updated plans have been adopted in the past two decades, and because large parts of the city have transitioned into more established and matures neighborhoods during this same period.

A key recommendation of PlanCOS is that Colorado Springs needs to become more proactive and intentional about neighborhood planning. Because neighborhood planning is an inherently time consuming and a resource intensive process, the City cannot afford to create new and updated plans for all areas with a need, particularly if the processes used to create them are drawn out and expensive.

An overall and long term goal of PlanCOS is that every neighborhood in the city has an active and up-to-date neighborhood or land use master plan. Given the current backlog and the ongoing reality of limited City resources, PlanCOS recommends two primary strategies to best use the resources that do become available:

1. **Prioritized Neighborhood Planning Areas.** Collaboratively create and adopt a citywide list of the highest priority neighborhoods in need of a new or updated plan. Neighborhoods that are at-risk, distressed, or disadvantaged as determined by established criteria should be prioritized. Update the list every five years.
1. **Neighborhood Planning Template.** Create, adopt, and implement a template to include a replicable process that can be used for the creation of new and amended plans along with an agreed-upon standardized format for organization and content areas for neighborhood plans.

1. Prioritized Neighborhood Planning Areas

Process for Prioritizing Neighborhood Plans

The process of creating a citywide list and map of the highest priorities would include analysis of the most relevant factors in coordination with applicable staff citywide neighborhood advocacy groups. Recommendations would be considered by senior City staff, reviewed by the Planning Commission, and periodically endorse by City Council. Actual programming for plans would be contingent on annual budget appropriations, other potential funding sources and available in-house staff resources.

Relevant Factors for Choosing Priorities

A combination of one and likely several of the following factors are expected to be relevant in identifying Prioritized Neighborhood Planning Areas:

- Lack of an existing active neighborhood or land use master plan
- An existing neighborhood plan that is effectively and functionally out of date, based on experience
- Neighborhoods experiencing or expected to be impacted by substantial land use activity and change, particularly if decisions have been controversial
- Neighborhoods with identified community development needs



2. Neighborhood Planning Template

Purpose and Need for a Neighborhood Planning Template

The creation and use of a reasonably systematized and standardized process and format for new and updated neighborhood plans is expected to reduce the time and resources needed to complete each plan, and also result in more complete, effective and useful plans.

Process Standardization

The expected outcomes of incorporating some standardization into the neighborhood planning process include reducing the time and cost necessary to complete each plan. An agreed-upon overall process should also foster citizen participation by reducing the amount of time and resources necessary to create and agree upon a unique process for each individual plan. This reduces uncertainty among participants and should allow for a greater relative allocation of resources toward productive stakeholder input including identifying needs and proposing recommendations and solutions.

Format Standardization

The development and implementation of a “template” outline and format for new and revised neighborhood plans should reduce both the cost of preparing plans, and the uncertainty of participants in the process. With more standardized formats, some of the basic content of the plan could be pre-populated and participants could focus more on responding to the data, contributing to content in each section, and recommending actions and priorities. A template neighborhood plan would better assure all relevant topics and citywide priority areas are addressed, as applicable for the particular neighborhood. These topic areas would include goals and priorities aligned with PlanCOS. Additionally, a more standardized template would be more efficient to access and use for property owners, developers, staff, and decision makers, because relevant information would be easier to find.

Process for Creating and Adopting a Neighborhood Plan Template

The process for creating and adopting a model process and plan would begin with City staff but include a full spectrum of stakeholder input including from citywide neighborhood advocacy groups and the development community. The template would be reviewed by the Planning Commission and endorsed by City Council. Ongoing modifications would be proposed based on experience.

Use of the Template Process and Format

The purpose of the template process and format is to optimize the productivity and results of neighborhood planning and not to impose a strict “one size fits all” approach or set of assumed and preconceived policies and priorities on each individual neighborhood. The intent is to establish a level of certainty, predictability, and consistency with citywide goals and priorities, while allowing participants and the city the freedom to address the particular circumstances, needs and priorities of each neighborhood in innovative and creative ways. The expectation is that these process and format templates will be used for plans supported by outside consultants as well as those that are staffed primarily by City personnel. They should also be effective in those neighborhood planning efforts involving higher levels of resident participation in plan creation.