

DOWNTOWN REVIEW BOARD AGENDA

STAFF: CATHERINE DUARTE

October 18, 2018

FILE NO:

CPC MP 18-00113 – LEGISLATIVE

PROJECT: MILL STREET NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

APPLICANT: CITY OF COLORADO SPRINGS - COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIVISION



PROJECT SUMMARY:

1. Project Description: A new master plan initiated by the City of Colorado Springs Community Development Division replacing the 2003 Mill Street Preservation Plan and expanding the Plan's geographic scope south of downtown from Rio Grande Street and

Moreno Avenue to I-25, between Conejos Street and Nevada Avenue. The final draft of the plan is included as **Figure 1**.

2. Planning and Development Team's Recommendation: Approval of the application with minor technical modifications.

BACKGROUND:

1. Site Address: The plan includes 441 parcels within the Mill Street neighborhood south of downtown Colorado Springs, with about 800 residents and over 200 businesses.
2. Existing Zoning/Land Use: The plan includes a number of zone districts including: FBZ-COR, FBZ-T1, FBZ-CEN, C5, C6, PUD, R2, OR, M1, PF, and PK. Current land use and zoning maps can be found on pages 18 and 19 of the plan.
3. Surrounding Zoning/Land Use:
North: FBZ-CEN
South: C6
East: PF (Police Station), PUD (Lowell), OC, FBZ-T1
West: PF (Drake Power Plant)
4. Comprehensive Plan/Designated 2020 Land Use: Regional Center, Candidate Open Space (south side of West Las Vegas Street), Existing Park Land or Open Space.
5. Annexation:
 - a. Town of Colorado Springs, 1872
 - b. Dorchester Park Addition, 1966
6. Master Plan/Designated Master Plan Land Use:
 - a. Mill Street Neighborhood Plan (2003)
 - b. Imagine Downtown Master Plan (2009)
 - c. Experience Downtown Master Plan (2016)
7. Subdivision: The plan area includes a number of subdivisions
8. Zoning Enforcement Action: No major enforcement actions currently exist; there have been minor zoning or code violations on individual properties within the plan area in the past.
9. Physical Characteristics: The neighborhood is mostly flat, with some of the southern end in the Fountain Creek floodplain. The area is bisected by the rail line, creating major infrastructural barriers to vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian traffic.

STAKEHOLDER PROCESS AND INVOLVEMENT:

The participatory planning process for this plan has been going on for the last ten months. Community members and other stakeholders have had opportunities to share their visions and concerns about the neighborhood, weigh in on project themes, and help guide the recommendations via meetings, surveys, holiday parties, email, listening sessions, interviews, and open houses. Community engagement focused on a four-tiered approach: reach out, listen, engage and share.

Low attendance at meetings that impact the neighborhood, such as the Neighborhood Association meetings, made it clear that traditional outreach and communication methods would not be effective.

Throughout November 2017, the project team began by conducting community listening sessions to engage residents, homeowners, employees and businesses owners at locations throughout the Mill Street neighborhood. These sessions were topical in nature, covering Neighborhood Historic Preservation; Economic Development and Local Business; Affordable Housing; Neighborhood Safety; Parks, Trails and Open Space; and Arts and Culture.

In December 2017, the project team launched a community-wide, public survey. The survey offered an opportunity to weigh in on 12 key questions shaping the future of the Mill Street Neighborhood. Outreach for the survey included social media, door-to-door outreach and postcards. Nearly all of the business owners received a personal visit from a member of the project team and many residents were visited by Christmas carolers. In total, there were 78 responses to the survey, roughly 10% of the area's resident population. Nine local stakeholders, including residents, major property owners, business owners and developers, were then interviewed one-on-one to better understand the conditions in the neighborhood and any planned changes.

With initial themes and recommendations in development, the planning team engaged an implementation team in small group discussions. The team includes City employees, residents, business owners and subject matter experts. In March 2018, the planning team hosted a public meeting at the Hillside Community Center. Over 70 people attended. The presentation included initial findings and live polling questions to provide further quantitative feedback on themes and draft recommendations. The session ended with an open house where attendees socialized, shared ideas and participated in visual preference surveys.

Then in May 2018, the planning team released the 90% draft to solicit comments about the plan. The plan was available for approximately five weeks. Physical copies were at various locations in and surrounding the neighborhood and online. Planning staff held two review sessions for the neighborhood. In June, the team received lots of comments, questions, and edits from dozens of stakeholders and went back to revisions.

During that time, the C4C stadium and arena locations were made public and the planning team had to reassess the boundaries and make sure the plan properly addressed the coming stadium. This draft was posted and shared with the neighborhood on September 18. The project website analytics show that this plan draft has been downloaded over 300 times. The project website has hosted over 1,100 visitors since March of 2018, the date of the first big, general plan meeting.

There is broad support for the Plan from a broad range of stakeholders in the area, including from the Mill Street Neighborhood Association. However, there are also a small number of stakeholders that do not agree to the new plan boundaries for fears that the plan inhibits their ability for future development. The plan is not a prohibitive tool, but rather a guiding tool. **FIGURE 2** is a compilation of comments received at the 90% plan draft stage. A complete log of all comments from the 90% draft through the present draft will be compiled for the Planning Commission meeting, as the public was given until October 5 to submit comments and letters.

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

The Plan covers a wide range of community conditions and issues, as well as related goals and strategies. However, the following items were the focus of considerable discussion and debate, as well as some disagreement among stakeholders.

Boundaries

The Mill Street Neighborhood Plan does not put forward any zoning changes. The stakeholders felt the current mix of uses can adequately absorb growth while maintaining the scale and historic character of the neighborhood. This may change in years to come as industrial uses

begin to move elsewhere, opening up land for reuse. The proposed plan, however, does expand its borders from the previous plan approved in 2003. This is for several reasons:

1. “Year built” maps and archival records show that the area bound by the proposed boundaries was built and behaved as a single neighborhood until later in the 20th century, after the establishment of the Drake Power Plant. **(FIGURE 3)**
2. Door to door canvassing revealed that most residents north of Fountain couldn’t name their neighborhood, yet shared the same history, fears, concerns, and hopes as their neighbors south of Fountain.
3. Organizing for shared goals, such as increased safety, affordability, connectivity, and historic preservation, can be done more efficiently with more residents and stakeholders.

The study area established during the public engagement period has changed twice. The initial northern boundary extended to Cimarron until surveys and interviews revealed that Cimarron was very much a regional thoroughfare and did not share many common issues or goals with the Mill Street neighborhood. The northern boundary was then moved to Moreno, where many small-scale residential properties begin, and presented in the 90% plan draft. This summer, after the five-week review period closed, the planning team (along with the public) learned about the downtown soccer stadium location, spurring extensive internal discussions between Community Development, Economic Development, Urban Renewal Authority, and Planning staff. The URA Citygate area was taken out of the Mill Street Neighborhood Plan due to conflicting goals of scale, use, and funding mechanisms. The plan presented today is the first draft showing these new boundaries.

Homeless Service Expansion

The planning process brought the north and south ends of the area together for neighborhood dialog and activities, revealing that the whole neighborhood is unified in its frustration by secondary effects of a growing homeless population and expanded services in the downtown. There is disagreement about what the right style and level of intervention is, but there is agreement about the problem. The action plan section of the Mill Street Neighborhood Plan lays out strategies to maintain and increase this collaboration by providing organizational assistance, communication platform sharing, funds for activities, and assistance in the pursuit of dialog with the area homeless service providers and law enforcement about sustainable solutions.

The failure to arrive at an executed Good Neighbor Agreement between the Mill Street Neighborhood Association and the Springs Rescue Mission in 2016 was due to concerns of legal consequences, but continued communication and assistance from other public stakeholders can help residents and property owners achieve safety and stability and help service providers with the tools they need to shelter and house those who need it. The plan lays out steps and funding sources for accomplishing this.

Affordability and Displacement

The Mill Street neighborhood is one of the last truly affordable areas in the city, though this feature is quickly diminishing. Some of the city’s most vulnerable live in this neighborhood – there are greater shares of renters, people with disabilities, low-income residents, and residents over 60 in this neighborhood than in the City as a whole. Zoning for affordability is difficult; a subsidized home and market rate home often fall under the same land use category. The neighborhood currently accommodates shelters, transitional housing, and soon permanent supportive housing through planned unit developments (PUDs) and the Form Based Zone (FBZ), making the interest in future mixed use, mixed income projects compatible with the current diverse land use plan. The neighborhood aims to achieve and maintain more

affordability through programs (like land trusts, homebuyer programs, and federal funds like CDBG and HOME) and policies (accessory dwelling unit ordinance and landlord incentives).

While the plan addresses many tensions that exist in downtown Colorado Springs – the tension between revitalization and inclusion, affordability and historic preservation, density and character – the planning team took cautious steps to avoid contradicting existing plans by including feedback and concerns from agency managers and staff overseeing those existing plans.

Staff Analysis

As a neighborhood that overlaps with the downtown area, the Downtown Review Board must find that this master plan substantially complies with the following criteria:

- A. Comprehensive Plan - The master plan promotes a development pattern characterizing a mix of mutually supportive and integrated residential and nonresidential land uses with a network of interconnected streets and good pedestrian and bicycle connections.
- B. Land Use Relationships – The master plan promotes a development pattern characterizing a mix of mutually supportive and integrated residential and nonresidential land uses with a network of interconnected streets and good pedestrian and bicycle connections.
- C. Public Facilities - The master plan conforms to the most recently adopted Colorado Springs parks, recreation and trails master plan.
- D. Transportation - land use master plan is consistent with the adopted intermodal transportation plan. Conformity with the intermodal transportation plan is evidence of compliance with State and local air quality implementation and maintenance plans.
- E. Environment - The land use master plan preserves significant natural site features and view corridors. The Colorado Springs open space plan shall be consulted in identifying these features.
- F. Fiscal - fiscal impact analysis and existing infrastructure capacity and service levels are used as a basis for determining impacts attributable to the master plan. City costs related to infrastructure and service levels shall be determined for a ten (10) year time horizon for only the appropriate municipal funds.

The Community Development staff finds that the updated Mill Street Neighborhood Plan is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, as well as with its upcoming replacement, PlanCOS. The Comprehensive Plan supports the empowerment of neighborhoods to identify their own boundaries and provide direction to protect, enhance, and revitalize. PlanCOS, while still in queue for approval in late 2018, also supports neighborhood planning and prioritizes the updating of outdated plans in mature parts of the city.

As previously mentioned, the Mill Street plan complies with criterion B as it recognizes the potential and flexibility of the Form Based Code in creating the necessary density and mix of living and working space in a quintessential downtown neighborhood. The decision to keep the core of the neighborhood as R2 also speaks to the importance of preserving historic structures and the existing scale – both assets named as highly valuable in both the Mill Street listening sessions and in the Experience Downtown plan - where appropriate. The decision to expand the boundaries also enables the corridor businesses to weigh in on neighborhood issues, while also making organizational and business assistance resources available to them. Residents also reported that their top concern regarding connectivity was the condition of the neighborhood sidewalks. In response to this concern, the plan prioritizes strengthening the network of accessible streets, safe crossings, and good pedestrian and bicycle connections by pledging public infrastructure funds and interdepartmental and interagency collaboration.

For Criterion C, Dorchester Park and the Legacy Loop trail presented major issues of safety to the neighborhood. At the March public meeting, staff consulted with Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services before conducting a live poll of options for the future of Dorchester Park. Forty-six percent of the neighbors were interested in exploring new park purposes, while 26% wanted to repair and maintain Dorchester's current features and the remaining 23% did not feel it needed to remain a park. The plan proposes action to improve the neighborhood's open space network through major investments in cleanup and programming, as well as through programming possibilities of vacant lots and the streetscape.

Regarding Criterion D, while the plan does not make any recommendations that will affect Mountain Metro's routes, stops, or practices, it does recommend steps to increase ridership and neighborhood stewardship. In visioning future land use post-Drake decommissioning, the "What If?" maps paint possible scenarios using two finalist downtown locations of the Mountain Metro Downtown Transit Relocation Study (2016). The plan also recommends traffic calming strategies – echoing those of the Experience Downtown Plan – such as bulb-outs, rain gardens, crosswalks and street trees.

Criterion E is a sizeable component of the plan, as it envisions neighborhood resilience in the shadow of a coal fired plant, an interstate highway, light industry and a railroad. The public engagement results show that the creek and trail system are highly valued assets to the neighborhood. In addition to cleaning and maintaining those assets, the neighborhood plan looks long-term at encouraging sustainable incoming development to replace and surround the power plant, while looking short-term at monitoring air, water, and noise pollution. Trails and Open Space Commission leadership were consulted along the way from the listening session stage through draft development.

A formal fiscal impact analysis has been difficult to conduct during this process, but the action plan portion of the plan was designed with cost and capacity in mind. Many of the recommendations are citizen-led initiatives with City and other leaders providing organizational assistance. For City-led and funded projects, the plan begins with exploratory projects that cost nothing but marginal staff time in order to collaborate on already planned projects (such as Legacy Loop signage or the railroad underpass projects) or to build a case for long-term capital projects (like a hypothetical, refurbished Dorchester Park).

The Community Development Division has earmarked \$250,000 of CDBG Public Facilities and Infrastructure funds to tackle immediate infrastructure needs over the next year, while additional HUD entitlement funds will be made available for subsequent needs on a competitive basis, such as economic redevelopment assistance, housing rehabilitation, rental assistance, affordable housing, street outreach and shelter assistance for the local providers, and other public facility needs.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Item No: 6.A. CPC MP 18-00113 - Mill Street Neighborhood Plan

Recommend approval to the City Council the Mill Street Neighborhood Plan, based upon the finding that the plan complies with the master plan review criteria in City Code Section 7.5.408, once the technical and/or informational plan modifications are made:

Technical and Informational Modifications to the Master Plan Amendment:

1. Add public safety data from CSPD

2. Add final public comment summary log to Appendix
3. Correct the “Areas of Change” map on Page 24 to correctly identify the location and size of the Blue Dot Place development.
4. Correct the text to restore the missing text at the end of the “Pedestrian Realm” section on page 26.
5. Adjust the call out leaders on the Parks and Open Space map on page 28 to better align with the map graphics.