

PROJECT STATEMENT

Re: Colorado Springs Food Rescue, TSN # 6420302006

February 6, 2020

Request:

Colorado Springs Food Rescue proposes “The Hillside Hub,” a neighborhood food center. The applicant requests approval of the following applications:

1. A Use Variance to allow the proposed neighborhood food center, which falls under the Social Service Center land use, within the existing M-2 (Heavy Industrial) zone district.

Location:

The project is located at the end of the cul-de-sac at 1090 S. Institute Street, in the Hillside Neighborhood of Colorado Springs. The 3.46-acre parcel is currently vacant. To the northwest of the property is an existing church, to the northeast of the property is an existing multifamily development, to the west, south and east are industrial uses, including a recycle center and a wholesale distributor of construction materials.



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3461 Ringsby Court, #125
Denver, Colorado 80216
720.413.9691

Colorado Springs Office:
2727 N. Cascade Avenue, #160
Colorado Springs, CO 80907
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Project Description:

The proposed development encompasses just under 1 acre of disturbance area. The existing slopes on the south side of the property are to remain undisturbed.

There are two proposed buildings on the site. The main building, or the “Hub,” is a 3,400 square foot multiuse building including offices for CSFR’s staff, meeting rooms, and gathering space. The second building is a 3,057 square foot greenhouse to be constructed as a second phase of the development.

There is a proposed asphalt parking lot to the north of the two buildings, with a total of 15 parking spaces, including 1 ADA accessible space. The church to the northwest of the site, Relevant Word Ministries, has agreed to allow CSFR to use 15 parking spaces in their parking lot on Mondays through Fridays, including bus parking. A letter from RWM is included in the submittal. A total of 22 parking spaces are required per City code, and a total of 30 spaces are provided between the church’s spaces and the proposed parking lot on-site. There is a proposed gravel path that connects the proposed parking lot to the existing parking lot on the church’s property, which enhances pedestrian connectivity between the sites.

CSFR will rent no more than 15 of the southern-most Relevant Word Ministries parking spaces at any given time. The use for the spaces is limited to Mondays through Fridays 8 am to 8 pm upon completion of the Hillside Hub. Specific use examples include:

- School field trips: Usage of two school-bus sized spaces.
- Harvest Celebration event (once annually): Usage of all 15 spaces by cars
- Community education workshops: CSFR's workshops will happen bi-monthly on weekdays, and do not intend to have more than 25 participants per workshop. This would mean usage of no more than 10 allotted spaces from RWM.
- Community volunteering events in garden: CSFR's workshops will happen bi-monthly on weekdays during summer months, and do not intend to have more than 25 participants per volunteer session. This would mean usage of no more than 10 allotted spaces from RWM.
- RWM's use of parking lot:
 - The predominant use of the parking lot occurs during RWM's service hours. This includes Sundays at 10AM & 3PM, in which the space is expected to be full, and during the Tuesday 9:30AM devotional service, in which only 10-15 spaces on the northern end of the parking lot are used.

There is an area on the south side of the proposed parking lot that is to be designated for bus and/or food truck parking for events. Busses and trucks will parallel park in this space, with plenty of room for typical vehicles to maneuver around the parking lot. Bike parking is provided near the entrance to the main building, as well as near the greenhouse.

There is a proposed patio and outdoor kitchen on the west side of the main building for events and gatherings, situated to take advantage of the mountain views to the west. A small patio is also proposed between the main building and the greenhouse.

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The eastern portion of the site is designated for farming and composting operations. The Haseya Garden is an indigenous healing garden that is programmed in partnership with the Haseya Advocate Program. The Community Learning Farm will be a space for group workshops and educational programs. The Compost Park will include a drop-off center for food scraps, leaves and wood mulch. The composting operation will include hot compost and a worm hut. Two shipping containers are proposed for the storage of compost supplies and materials. Within the compost park will be a demonstration and activity area for community education programs. A wood fence is proposed around the perimeter of the garden and composting areas.

There is a 15' landscape buffer provided on the northeast property boundary between the existing multifamily development and CSFR's development. Internal and motor vehicle landscape requirements are met per the City's requirements.

Since the development is under 1 acre of disturbance area, no detention facility is required. See included Drainage Letter for detailed information.

Please reference the attached Hillside Executive Summary as well as the Hillside Hub Proposal for more detailed information on the programming for the site.

Use Variance Review Criteria:

- 1. That there are exceptional or extraordinary circumstances or conditions applicable to the property involved or to the intended use of the property that do not apply generally to the property or class of uses in the same zone so that a denial of the petition would result in undue property loss; and*
- 2. That such variance is necessary for the preservation and enjoyment of a property right of the petitioner; and also,*
- 3. That such variance will not be detrimental to the public welfare or convenience nor injurious to the property or improvements of other owners of property.*

The proposed use variance will not be detrimental to the public welfare. The Hillside Hub will provide a neighborhood and City-wide destination for educational farming, local food production and compost drop-off and pick-up. CSFR has collaborated with the Hillside neighborhood for years and the surrounding neighbors are supportive and excited about the project.

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HILLSIDE HUB NEIGHBORHOOD FOOD CENTER EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

The mission of Colorado Springs Food Rescue (CSFR) is to cultivate a healthy, equitable food system in the greater Colorado Springs community. In short, CSFR believes in building healthier neighborhoods by way of a healthier food system. CSFR's mission is accomplished through integrating community-led programs & social enterprises that increase fresh food access, education, and growing on a neighborhood-based level. One of CSFR's key partners is the Hillside neighborhood. CSFR has an active volunteer base of 300+ people, has rescued over \$5 million of healthy groceries since founding, and serves 13,000+ unduplicated people each year.

CSFR has partnered with Hillside neighborhood for the past three years in the development of community-driven "Healthy Food Distribution" programs. The first program began at Relevant Word Ministries & Hillside Community Center in February 2017, in which multiple community members came together to create a no-cost grocery program entitled "The Hillside Hub". CSFR's Director of Programs Patience Kabwasa has worked with the Hillside neighborhood for over 14 years through managing the Relevant Word Ministries' "Soul Cafe" social enterprise as well as the church's community garden.

In 2017, the Lane, Bloom, Edmondson, Dakota & RNR Foundations invested in CSFR's organizational capacity building, leading to the creation of numerous new programs (e.g. Fresh Food Connect, The "Farmacy" & FLY (Food systems Leadership for Youth)) as well as the creation of Cultivate 2020, the 2018-2020 Strategic Plan. Cultivate 2020 highlights mandates for the continued neighborhood-based integration of CSFR's programs in healthy food access, education and production.

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Concurrently to the aforementioned investment in CSFR's capacity building, strategic planning and pilot programs, the John E. & Margaret L. Lane Foundation informed CSFR of their ownership of a 3.47 acre vacant parcel of land (1090 S. Institute street) located directly adjacent to Relevant Word Ministries in the Hillside neighborhood. The Lane Foundation soon thereafter drafted a contract to donate the property as an in-kind donation of \$354,000.

CSFR has acquired 1090 S. Institute property for the purpose of constructing The Hillside Hub, a community-driven food center. The mission of the Hillside Hub is to cultivate a community-operated space where neighbors grow, cook, learn about, access, and advocate for fresh food. This will be accomplished through a multi-phased approach of activating the property with an income-generating 4-season urban farm, an income-generating compost drop-off center, an educational community farm, a community events & workshop space, and CSFR's administrative offices.



OVERVIEW OF SERVICES

Production Farm

Commercial food production will be rooted in both outdoor growing, hoop house growing, and a solar-passive greenhouse that grows leafy greens & culinary herbs for distribution throughout both the Hillside neighborhood and Colorado Springs. The greenhouse will allow for year-round fresh food production & demonstration.

The production will serve as a social enterprise, providing locally grown food, work and volunteer opportunities in food production and sales, as well as educational programming designed to engage community members in activities related to growing and preparing their own food.. It will also provide a community gathering place where community members can witness and participate in all the stages of the food value chain from compost to seed to table to compost.

CSFR is entering the local food industry as a local producer in response to the need identified by community members, as well as the opportunity presented by the donated land. It is a decision that presents great opportunity, as well as many potential challenges and risks. Entering the local food market as a producer without the burden of capital start-up cost associated with land procurement, and with the support of many funders for building out the farm, puts CSFR in a good position to take advantage of the growing demand for fresh, local produce, as well as provide educational and volunteer opportunities related to food production and preparation.

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Community Learning Farm & Compost Drop-Off Center

CSFR will partner with Hillside neighborhood gardener-volunteers, community volunteer groups, Pikes Peak Urban Gardens, Pikes Peak Permaculture, Haseya Advocate Program, and the Hillside Community Center to create a “community learning farm”. This farm will act as a space for group service-learning workshops and experiential education opportunities, and will eventually include beehives, annual/perennial food growing, chickens, and a demonstration composter.

The primary demographic utilizing the community learning farm as school field trip groups, community volunteer groups, Hillside residents, and FLY interns/employees. The community learning farm will be overseen by the Farm Manager, and CSFR will seek support from UCCS / Colorado College summer interns to assist in its’ management.

The space will also include a ‘compost drop-off’ center through CSFR’s composting social enterprise, Soil Cycle. Soil Cycle already has 150 member-customers, and will have the capacity to grow to 270 members through the drop-off center.



+120 SOIL CYCLE MEMBERS



Community Workshops & Events Space

Located at the southern edge of the Hillside neighborhood on top of a hill, 1090 S. Institute offers one of the most spectacular views of the Pikes Peak mountains and Colorado Springs west of I-25. CSFR envisions leveraging this unique, inspiring placement for the purpose of renting out the property for special community events, neighborhood-based fairs, nonprofit symposiums, town halls, cooking classes, and educational workshops.

Despite increasing interest in urban gardening & food systems health, Colorado Springs residents (and southeast residents in particular) do not have an accessible, equitable venue to learn about food justice, urban gardening, beekeeping, sustainable garden design, and culturally-informed cooking.

Low-Cost & No-Cost Healthy Food Distribution

Low-cost & No-cost fresh food access will be accomplished within the 3,000 square foot Community Gathering Space, to be activated in Q3 2020. CSFR's weekly Hillside no-cost grocery program will be moved to the Hillside Hub in Q3 2020, and through a partnership with Care and Share Food Bank of Southern Colorado, is expected to have the capacity of supporting 700 unduplicated families.

As of October 2018, CSFR launched the "Hub Club" local food buying club with neighborhood residents. Through this program, CSFR purchases bulk regionally-sourced fresh produce, and sells it at a wholesale rate through a weekly pick-up. CSFR is a registered SNAP retailer through the USDA, and is approved during the 2019 season as a Double Up Bucks retailer. With the construction of the 3,000 sq. foot gathering space, CSFR will expand the Hub Club Buying Club to serve 50 families, and move to Hub location in Q3 2020.



**700 FAMILIES
SUPPORTED**



Partnerships with Workforce Development Training

CSFR has spoken with representatives from TwoCor, LifeSkills High School, Community Prep School, & Atlas Preparatory School about integrating students into commercial food production operations for the purposes of gaining workforce development training.

Moreover, in April 2018 CSFR was part of a group (officiated by Relevant Word Ministries) awarded an innovative funding opportunity aimed at reducing incarceration in southeast Colorado Springs. Entitled "Transforming Safety Colorado", this opportunity "reinvests \$4 million a year in savings from parole reforms to create a three-year pilot in N Aurora and SE Colorado Springs to fund small business lending and a community grant program". CSFR will be partnering with multiple community partners to create job training opportunities at The Hub.

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CSFR Administrative Offices

After the Phase III construction, CSFR will be able to move all administrative offices to the 1090 S. Institute property. Similar to Denver-based organizations such as The GrowHaus and Re:Vision, having administrative offices on the programmatic site will allow for a seamless connection between programs and core staff. With an eventual estimated monthly office expense of \$1,000 by 2020 (current monthly office expense if \$835), CSFR stands to save \$12,000 annually by moving offices to the 1090 S. Institute Street property. Owning a piece of property represents a unique opportunity for CSFR to save on administrative costs and invest in its future.

Indigenous Healing Garden

The Haseya Advocate Program is “a native-specific advocacy program working to address violence against Native women. Haseya’s vision is that every American Indian/Alaska Native woman will be treated with respect, honored as a sacred being, and have a safe and peaceful life”. Haseya has been engaged with CSFR through providing educational cooking opportunities at CSFR’s no-cost grocery programs, offering guidance and advice on the Hillside Hub project, & bolstering CSFR’s relationships the Native/Indigenous community. Haseya is in charge of managing half of the Community Learning Farm garden area as Colorado Springs’ first Indigenous Healing Garden. Between 2019-2020, 50 Native women participating in Haseya’s Advocate program & 200 Native families (through the Title VI program) will have participated in programming in the Indigenous Healing Garden.

