

**CITY PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA**  
**January 21 2020**

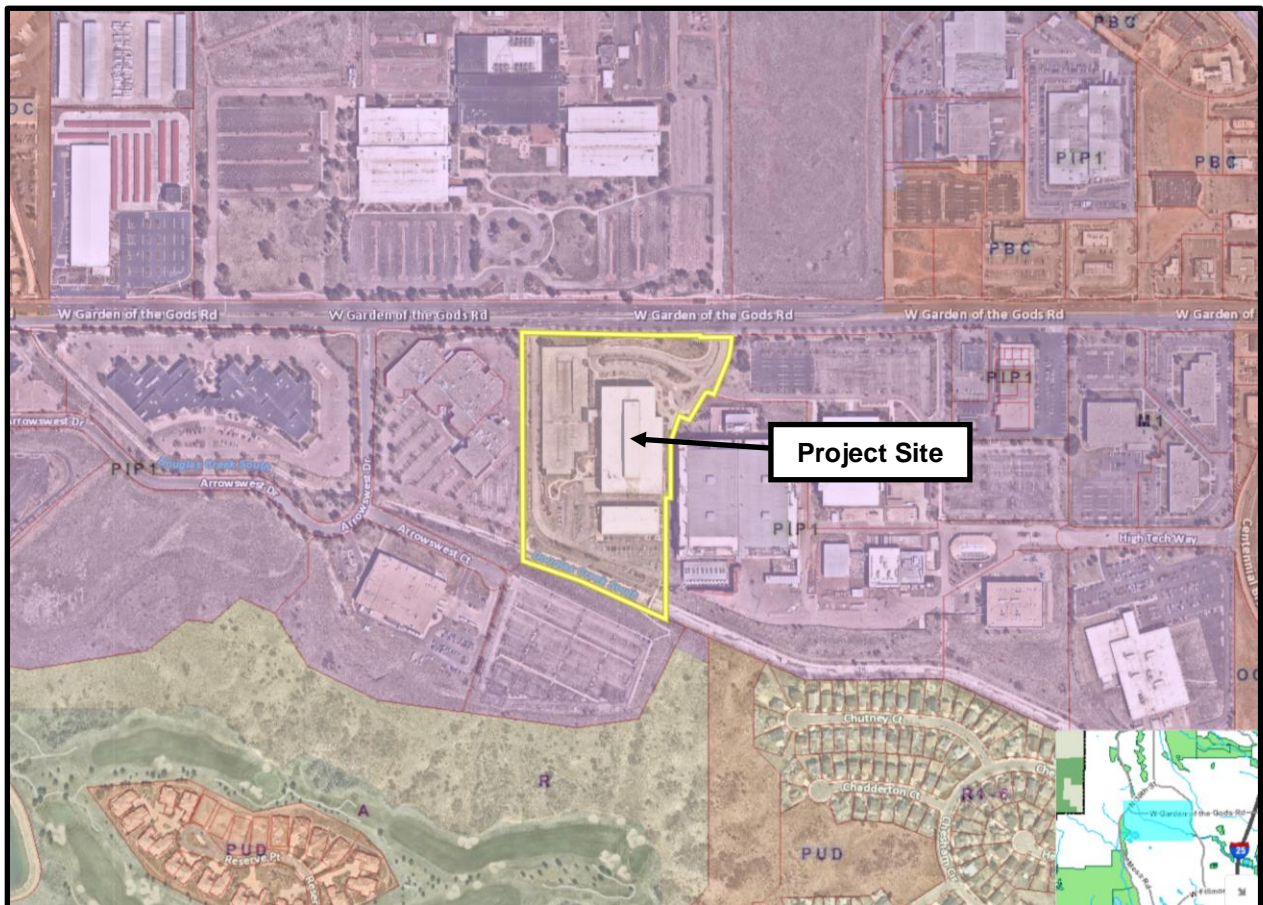
**STAFF: DANIEL SEXTON**

**FILE NO:**  
**CPC UV 20-00154 – QUASI-JUDICIAL**

**PROJECT: EL PASO COUNTY CITIZENS CENTER**

**OWNER/DEVELOPER: EL PASO COUNTY**

**CONSULTANT: SPECTRUM, INC.**



### **PROJECT SUMMARY:**

1. Project Description: The project includes an application for a use variance development plan for the El Paso County Citizens Service Center located at 1645 West Garden of the Gods Road. The project is herein referred to as “El Paso County Citizens Center”. The use variance development plan will allow a 32 square foot double-sided electronic message center sign. **(see “Use Variance Development Plan” attachment)**
2. Applicant’s Project Statement: **(see “Project Statement” attachment)**
3. Planning and Development Team’s Recommendation: City Planning staff recommends approval of the application as proposed.

### **BACKGROUND:**

1. Site Address: The property is addressed as 1645 West Garden of the Gods Road.
2. Existing Zoning/Land Use: The property is zoned PIP-1 (Planned Industrial Park) and is vacant.
3. Surrounding Zoning/Land Use:  
North: PIP-1 (Planned Industrial Park) and is industrially developed.  
East: PIP-1 (Planned Industrial Park) and is industrially developed.  
South: PIP-1 (Planned Industrial Park) and is industrially developed.  
West: PIP-1 (Planned Industrial Park) and is commercially developed.
4. PlanCOS Vision: According to the PlanCOS Vision Map **(see “PlanCOS Vision Map” attachment)**, the project site is identified as a Mature/Redeveloping Activity Center.
5. Annexation: The property was annexed into the City under the Mesa Addition #2 plat (July 1, 1971; ordinance unknown).
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 under Lot 1 of Corporate Ridge Filing No. 1.
8. Zoning Enforcement Action: None.
9. Physical Characteristics: The project site is fully developed and gradually slopes to the south.

### **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 48 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 did not receive any comments on the 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. Commenting agencies included Colorado Springs Utilities, City Engineering, City Traffic, and Council of Neighborhood Organizations (CONO). All comments received from the review agencies have been addressed.

### **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 EL Paso County Citizens Center project (**see “Use Variance Development Plan” attachment**) is for a 32 square foot double-sided electronic message center sign located at the entrance to the El Paso County Citizens Service Center at 1645 West Garden of the Gods Road. As proposed, the free-standing directory sign will consist of a fabricated metal cabinet with an upper static acrylic message face and a lower LED illuminated changeable message board. City Planning staff notes that according to City Code Section 7.4.405 *Definitions – Electronic Message Center (EMC)*, an EMC is “A sign that is capable of displaying words, symbols, figures or images that can be electronically or mechanically changed by remote or automatic means.” This use variance application is necessary, as City Code Section 7.4.409 *Sign Types and Criteria by Sign Category*, does not permit EMC signs for civic land uses.

While not precedent setting, City Planning staff notes that similar use variance/warrant applications have been approved by the City Planning Commission and Downtown Review Board for EMC signs in recent years on other properties with civic land uses (i.e. Palmer High School). When considering whether the proposed sign was permissible, City Planning staff considered the review criteria of multiple sections of City Code, such as City Code Section 7.5.502(E) *Development Plan Review Criteria*, City Code Section 7.4.409(B)(3) *Additional Criteria For Major Sign Types*, and City Code Section 7.5.803(B) *Criteria For Granting A Use Variance*. Specifically, staff finds the request meets the three review criteria for a use variance to be granted:

- Exceptional or Extraordinary Circumstances or Conditions Applicable to the Property – The property is located along a developed stretch of West Garden of the Gods Road with limited vehicular access drives and intersections. The proposed placement for the EMC sign will afford visitors with wayfinding information before entering the property and maneuvering information once on-site.
- Preservation and Enjoyment of the Property – The proposed EMC sign will enhance experience and relay of information to employees and visitors of the El Paso County Citizens Service Center.
- Public Welfare or Convenience nor Injurious to the Property or Improvements of Other Owners – The proposed EMC will benefit employees and visitors of the El Paso County Citizens Service Center as well as adjacent properties. As designed and developed, the properties within the Corporate Ridge Filing No. 1 subdivision utilize a shared access drive/easement. The proposed sign will provide improved wayfinding and help to elevate unintended use of adjacent properties.

The reasoning outlined above reinforces why this project will be a good for the functionality of the El Paso County Citizens Service Center and surrounding area. City Planning staff finds that the proposed plan, as stipulated, is in conformance with the authorizations for a use variance for a sign that is otherwise not permitted on the civically developed property, 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 applications have 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 within a Mature/Redeveloping Activity Center. (**see “PlanCOS Vision Map” attachment**) The El Paso County Citizens Center project is consistent with one of the core values of PlanCOS, which reinforces the importance of place-making by

encouraging attractive and visible spaces. A “Big Idea” from Chapter 3, entitled “Be a City of Places”, has Goal UP-1 that states:

*“Enrich the texture and livability of the city as a tapestry of unique, vibrant, and walkable places.”*

A policy for this goal further speaks to “*Locate and design new and repurposed civic facilities to make them highly visible focal points that express quality design, permanence, importance, and community identity.*”

For the reasons provided in this overall staff report, City Planning staff finds that this proposal is in substantially 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 that the El Paso County Citizens Center project to be complimentary and supportive of the surrounding area, which contains several electronic message signs. 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(B)., the overall area impacts of the project were analyzed.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

**CPC UV 20-00154 – USE VARIANCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

Approve the use variance development for the El Paso County Citizens Center, based upon the findings that the request meets the review criteria for establishing a development plan, as set forth in City Code Section 7.5.502(E), the review criteria for granting an Electronic Message Center sign, as set forth in City Code Section 7.4.409(B)(3), and the review criteria for granting a Use Variance, as set forth in City Code Section 7.5.803(B).