## Chapter 6 - Community Character/Appearance

The character and appearance of Colorado Springs are a function of several key elements of the community. The basic element is the city's natural setting at the foot of Pikes Peak. This setting captures many of the defining characteristics of the Pikes Peak Region: foothills, canyons, rock formations, views, streams, forests, grasslands and plains. In addition to its scenic beauty, the natural setting offers residents a range of diverse environments in which to live, work, and play. It also points up the importance of maintaining a positive relationship between the natural environment and the man-made environment.

The corollary to the city's natural setting is its heritage and historic legacy. The city's historic buildings, neighborhoods, and districts form the foundation of the community's identity. However, this legacy is not static or fixed in one time period, but has been evolving as the city has grown. The city's heritage is now made up of several distinct periods and embodied by diverse areas. They are unique aspects of the city's character and identity that need to be respected, reflected, and added to by new growth.

Another important element of the community's character and appearance is its streets. They are the major public spaces and the conduits though which most residents experience the city. The quality of their design, their visual character, and their relationship to adjoining uses and areas make a major contribution to the community's image.

Finally, the character and appearance of the city in the future will depend largely on the design of new development, including infill, redevelopment, new neighborhoods, and new commercial and employment centers. The future design of the city needs to address how new neighborhoods and activity centers are laid out, how different uses and activities are integrated and relate to one another, and how new development is fit into an established context.

### Definitions

Design Guidelines: Written statements, explanatory material, graphic renderings and/or photographs which are intended to inform property owners and the public of specific examples of techniques and materials appropriate to achieve the stated standards.

Design Standards: Written statements adopted in the Zoning Code by City Council that set forth criteria, goals or objectives for the design of particular areas, systems and elements of the city and how they relate to one other.

### Related Planning Documents
- Colorado Springs Beautification Plan
- Colorado Springs Open Space Plan
- Design Guidelines for the North Weber/Wahsatch Historic District
- Historic Preservation Plan
- North End Historic District Design Guidelines

### Built Environment and Natural Setting

**FIGURE 8 - Comp Plan Chap 6**

<u>Objective CCA 1</u>: *Maintain a Positive Relationship between the Built Environment and the Natural Setting*
Colorado Springs is a uniquely identifiable community due to its spectacular natural setting at the base of Pikes Peak. One of the greatest challenges facing the community is to develop a city worthy of that setting. Thoughtful design and enhancement of the community's civic buildings, public and private places, residential areas, gateways, and streets strengthen the community's identity and convey a positive visual image. Colorado Springs will maintain a positive relationship between its built environment and its natural setting and scenic qualities.

<u>Policy CCA 101</u>: *Preserve the Character of the Community's Natural Setting*
Preserve and enhance the character of the community through design that maintains views to the Front Range and other significant landmarks and integrates natural features into the land use pattern.

<u>Strategy CCA 101a</u>: *Achieve Consistency between the Open Space Plan, the Land Use Map and Individual Master Plans*
Require open space areas and preservation areas in individual master plans to be generally consistent with the Open Space Plan and the 2020 Land Use Map.

<u>Strategy CCA 101b</u>: *Protect Significant Views*
Protect views and view sheds of significant natural features, including stream corridors, prominent landforms and the foothills. Utilize a combination of incentives, acquisition where appropriate, and regulations such as height controls, site location criteria, and design standards.

<u>Strategy CCA 101c</u>: *Support Efforts to Protect and Enhance the Mountain Backdrop*
Support public and private efforts to protect, enhance, and restore the scenic and environmental quality of the mountain backdrop.

<u>Strategy CCA 101d</u>: *Develop Drainage Design Standards*
Develop and adopt drainage design criteria to ensure that site drainage can be accomplished in a manner that minimizes site disturbance and negative impacts on natural site features. Site drainage should serve as an amenity that is incorporated into the overall landscape design of a site.

<u>Strategy CCA 101e</u>: *Protect Regional Parks, Recreational Trails, and Public Open Spaces from the Negative Impacts of Adjacent Development*
Develop design standards and guidelines to mitigate the potential negative visual and environmental impacts of adjacent development and public improvements on natural areas, open space, regional parks and trails.

<u>Strategy CCA 101f</u>: *Protect Views from Public Places in Residential Areas*
Identify and protect designated view sheds and view corridors from public places, such as parks, in residential developments.

<u>Policy CCA 102</u>: *Use the Natural Environment to Shape the City's Form*
Conserve, manage, and use natural features, greenways and other aspects of an open space network to shape the form of the city.

**FIGURE 8 - Comp Plan Chap 6**

Strategy CCA 102a: *Provide Access between Built Areas and the Natural Environment*
Provide access from neighborhoods and activity centers to trails and open space areas.

Strategy CCA 102b: *Spatially Define Developed Areas with Natural Features*
Use natural features to spatially define and separate developed areas and connect them with open space corridors.

Strategy CCA 102c: *Revise the Planned Unit Development Zoning District*
Revise the Planned Unit Development Zoning District to include design guidelines for preserving and managing open space in the layout of subdivisions and sites.

Strategy CCA 102d: *Revise Subdivision Regulations*
Revise the subdivision regulations to provide more flexibility for the preservation and management of open space. Include provisions for minimizing terrain disturbance and impacts on natural features and for restoring disturbed areas.

## Streets

Objective CCA 2: *Quality Designed Streets*
City streets make up a significant portion of the public realm, and their design and appearance are major contributors to the character of Colorado Springs. Public streets can enhance the community's overall identity and image through thoughtful, quality design.

Policy CCA 201: *Develop a Streetscape Design Plan*
Design streets in a manner that is both visually appealing and addresses the functional aspects of safety, public infrastructure. and the transportation system. Shade trees, medians and parkways, a variety of landscape materials and colors, and other amenities will be included in the streetscape as appropriate to arterial, collector, and residential street classifications.

Strategy CCA 201a: *Develop Streetscape Design Standards*
Develop more visually appealing, pedestrian-attractive streets with shade trees, medians, and detached sidewalks, as appropriate, with particular emphasis on the neighborhood feel of residential streets, including consideration of narrower street standards. Design standards need to accommodate the range of facilities (utilities, transit, pedestrian facilities, etc.) as well as all modes of transportation.

Strategy CCA 201b: *Revise Subdivision Regulations*
Revise the subdivision regulations to require that developments consider the appearance of adjacent streets. Land uses adjacent to streets will contribute to the streetscape with regards to height, bulk, scale, continuity, and setback. Avoid double-frontage lots that orient the rear of lots towards the street and create walled or fenced streetscapes.

Strategy CCA 201c: *Revise the Sign Ordinance to Reduce Sign Clutter*
Revise the sign ordinance to reduce the proliferation of signs in commercial zones, particularly in activity centers and along major transportation corridors.

**FIGURE 8 - Comp Plan Chap 6**

Policy CCA 202: *Improve Major Transportation Corridors*
Major transportation corridors will be designed or redeveloped to enhance the appearance of the community, support multi-modal use, and create continuity in the relationship of land uses to the public right-of-way.

Strategy CCA 202a: *Establish Design Standards for Major Corridors*
Establish design standards for new and redeveloped major transportation corridors that support and address various transportation modes, as well as land uses, setbacks, public improvements, access, signage, landscaping, buffering and building appearance.

**Unique Areas**

Objective CCA 3: *Improve the Character of Individual Areas and Elements of the City*
Colorado Springs is made up of individual and unique areas and elements that contribute to the overall character and identity of the City. The man-made counterpart to the City's natural setting is its historic character and legacy. This legacy is continually evolving and being created anew in the City's diverse areas. It is important that the appearance and character of these individual areas, old and new, are preserved and enhanced in order to maintain their individuality and to ensure the overall character of the city is upheld. Defining and improving the image of individual areas and elements will enhance the City's overall character and appearance and reinforce its unique identity.

Policy CCA 301: *Foster the Character of Individual Areas and Elements within the Community*
The City will help to define and foster the unique character, image, and identity of individual areas and elements within the community.

Strategy CCA 301a: *Develop Design Standards and Guidelines for Land Use Designations*
Develop design standards and guidelines that apply generally to the land use designations on the 2020 Land Use Map. Treat the land use designations as types of places, including neighborhoods, community activity centers, commercial and employment centers, regional centers, and corridors, each with its own general standards for function and appearance.

Strategy CCA 301b: *Develop Design Guidelines for Neighborhoods*
Develop design standards and guidelines for the development of new neighborhoods to include consideration of access points, street patterns, traffic patterns, pedestrian connections, and design and location of neighborhood centers. Work with residents and property owners of existing neighborhoods to develop neighborhood-specific design guidelines.

Strategy CCA 301c: *Promote Downtown*
Promote downtown as the historic core of the community and the center for commerce and cultural activities. Continue to work with property owners and civic organizations to implement the Downtown Action Plan and build a vibrant mixed-use district.

Strategy CCA 301d: *Include Management and Maintenance Requirements in Design Guidelines*
Design guidelines for individual areas and elements within the community will identify the associated management and maintenance requirements for implementing specific improvements.

**FIGURE 8 - Comp Plan Chap 6**

Policy CCA 302: *Protect Historical and Cultural Resources*
Buildings, districts, and sites of historical, cultural, archaeological, paleontological or architectural importance will be identified and protected.

Strategy CCA 302a: *Protect Historical and Cultural Resources*
Survey important historic and cultural resources. Designate significant structures/districts for preservation. Apply demolition control and preservation standards.

Strategy CCA 302b: *Protect Historic Neighborhoods*
Work with neighborhood organizations to designate neighborhoods as historic districts and apply the appropriate preservation standards.

## Mixed Uses

Objective CCA 4: *Integrate Different Land Uses*
The separation of land uses that exists in Colorado Springs increases the reliance on the automobile and detracts from the dynamic urban setting. Integrating land uses increases the opportunities for various modes of travel and contributes to a more interesting and appealing land use pattern. Colorado Springs will encourage new development to integrate a diversity of land uses.

Policy CCA 401: *Support Mixed Land Uses*
The City will encourage design that supports mixed land uses and promotes compatibility, accessibility, and appropriate transitions between uses that vary in intensity and scale.

Strategy CCA 401a: *Develop Mixed-use Design Standards and Guidelines*
Develop design standards and guidelines for mixed-use development. Include elements that facilitate a smooth transition between uses of differing intensities, including landscaping, density gradients, and spatial separation utilizing streets, trails and open space corridors. Mixed-use design standards and guidelines will apply to infill and redevelopment projects as well.

Strategy CCA 401b: *Design Mixed-use to Provide Significant Benefits*
Design mixed-use development, including infill and redevelopment, to provide significant benefits to the surrounding area.

Strategy CCA 401c: *Develop Design Standards and Guidelines for Signage in Activity Centers*
Develop design standards and guidelines for signage in activity centers, including neighborhood centers, community activity centers, and commercial, employment, and regional centers.

## Public Places

Objective CCA 5: *Design of Public Spaces*
Public spaces and civic buildings are often prominent features in the urban setting and contribute to the character and appearance of a community. The design and location of public spaces and civic buildings will serve as focal points to structure the layout and design of private uses.

**FIGURE 8 - Comp Plan Chap 6**

<u>Policy CCA 501</u>: *Support Enhanced Civic Design*
Place civic facilities, such as community buildings, government offices, recreation centers, post offices, libraries, and schools, in central locations, and make them highly visible focal points. The urban design and architectural quality will express quality design, permanence, importance, community identity, and sensitivity to climate.

<u>Strategy CCA 501a</u>: *Identify Sites for Civic Facilities*
Identify prominent sites in newly developing areas that are suitable for civic facilities, and negotiate with property owners for the dedication or sale of such sites for potential government use.

<u>Strategy 501b</u>: *Locate and Design Public Places to Give Quality, Identity, and Focus to the Community*
Locate and design public spaces and civic facilities to set a standard in quality design, to provide a focal point and meeting place, and to express community identity within the context of the surrounding private development.

## Compatibility

<u>Objective CCA 6</u>: *Fit New Development into the Character of the Surrounding Area*
Often the overall character of a new development is not realized until the project is completed. This can lead to unintended impacts and incompatible development. Applicants for new developments need to clearly identify how their projects will fit into the character of the surrounding area and the community as a whole with respect to height, scale, bulk, massing, roof forms, signage, overall site design, pedestrian and vehicular access, and relation to the public right-of-way.

<u>Policy CCA 601</u>: *New Development Will be Compatible with the Surrounding Area*
New developments will be compatible with the surrounding land uses and will complement the character and appearance of adjacent land uses.

<u>Strategy CCA 601a</u>: *Require New Developments to Provide a Description of Project Character*
Development plans will include a description and visual depiction of the existing or planned physical context and character of the proposed development, including preliminary architectural design, natural features, transportation systems, and functional and visual impacts. In addition, development plans will demonstrate conformance with the intent of the applicable design standards and guidelines, as they are adapted to the specific site and context.

**FIGURE 8 - Comp Plan Chap 6**