

Academy Great Streets Progress Report



Photo Courtesy of Deerfield Hills Community Center & Sprayground Facebook page (July 2015)

Draft May 25, 2017



Empty Sam's Club (March 2017)



Atlas Prep Students (Photo Courtesy of Brittney Stroh)



Cyclist on S. Academy Blvd. (March 2017)

O V E R V I E W

South Academy Boulevard was highlighted as an area for revitalization in 2007. In 2011, the Colorado Springs City Council approved the *Academy Boulevard Corridor Great Streets Plan (Academy Plan)* which outlined opportunities and challenges facing the area. This progress report looks at what has been accomplished and the tasks and challenges that still lie ahead.

The subject area is approximately 12-square miles stretching from Mairland Road on the north and Proby Parkway on the south and extending one mile on either side of Academy Boulevard (see map on page 2).

The *Academy Plan* is an adopted element of the city's Comprehensive Plan as well as the Intermodal Transportation Plan (ITP) with the goal of transforming the South Academy Corridor into a Great Street embodying the following characteristics:



Bus stop near Kum & Go on Hancock and Academy (March 2017)

CHARACTERISTICS OF A GREAT STREET

REPRESENTATIVE OF THEIR PLACES

They reflect the neighborhood through which they pass with a scale and design appropriate to the character of the bordering properties and land uses.

CONTRIBUTE TO THE CITY'S ECONOMIC VITALITY

A Great Street is more than a transportation channel. It is a destination promoting commerce and adding to property values, which empowers the local economy.

FUNCTIONALLY COMPLETE

They support balanced mobility. Transit, walking, bicycling, personal motor vehicles, and freight movement are all accounted for on Great Streets. However, their balance may vary depending of the function of the street.

FACILITATE PLACE MAKING

Great Streets are memorable and interesting. Unique attributes such as pocket parks, attractive intersections and corners, or simple active street life help to define an area.

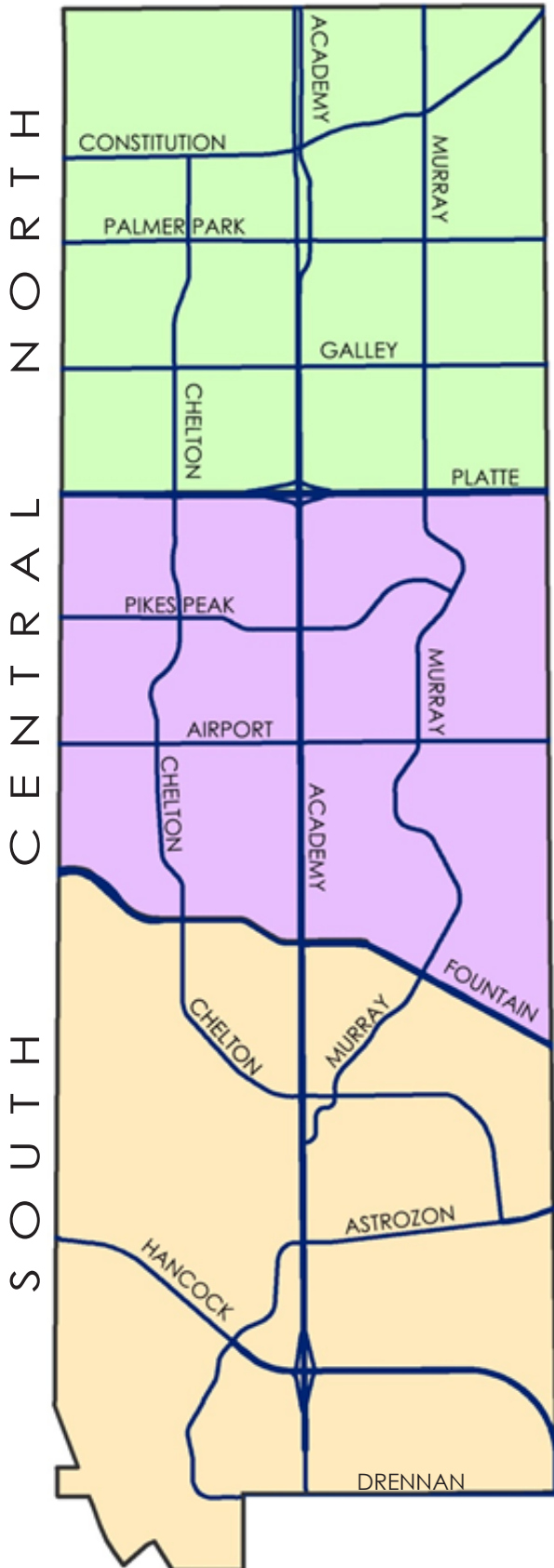
ALLOW PEOPLE TO WALK COMFORTABLY & SAFELY

The pedestrian environment compliments the street organically by being both safe and inviting.

ENHANCE THE NATURAL LANDSCAPE

A Great Street incorporates functional design with natural aesthetic. Generous provision of street trees and other plantings as well as an application of modern storm water management practices enrich the overall feel of the street.

C O N T E N T S



To assess our progress since the Academy Plan was approved, the City of Colorado Springs Planning Division examined the study area through 3 lenses: Complete Streets, Community Measures, and Economic Vitality. We also have chosen to highlight four key places within the planning area: Citadel Mall, Atlas Prep Charter School, Deerfield Hills Community Center, and Rustic Hills Shopping Center.

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Urban Land Use (ULI) Building Healthy Places Workshop Report: South Academy Corridor Colorado Springs

COMPLETE STREETS

ACADEMY AS A DESTINATION

Accessibility and connectivity are important for a robust corridor. In the long term this “Complete Streets Measure” focuses on strengthening multi-modal transportation. However, it is recognized that the Academy Boulevard area is auto dependent and incremental change will take time. One measure of vitality of the corridor is “busyness”, which translates into automotive trips. To a degree, the goal for this corridor is to first attract and retain traffic within the corridor as a destination. Put another way, it takes a certain amount of

intensity and potential congestion to create the conditions necessary to support a multi-modal transportation system.

Since the inception of this project, the multimodal transportation system has improved but the aforementioned “automobile business/measure of vitality” has fallen short. Moving forward we must celebrate the improvements but keep the goals that have yet to be accomplished at the forefront of our minds.

AUTOMOBILES

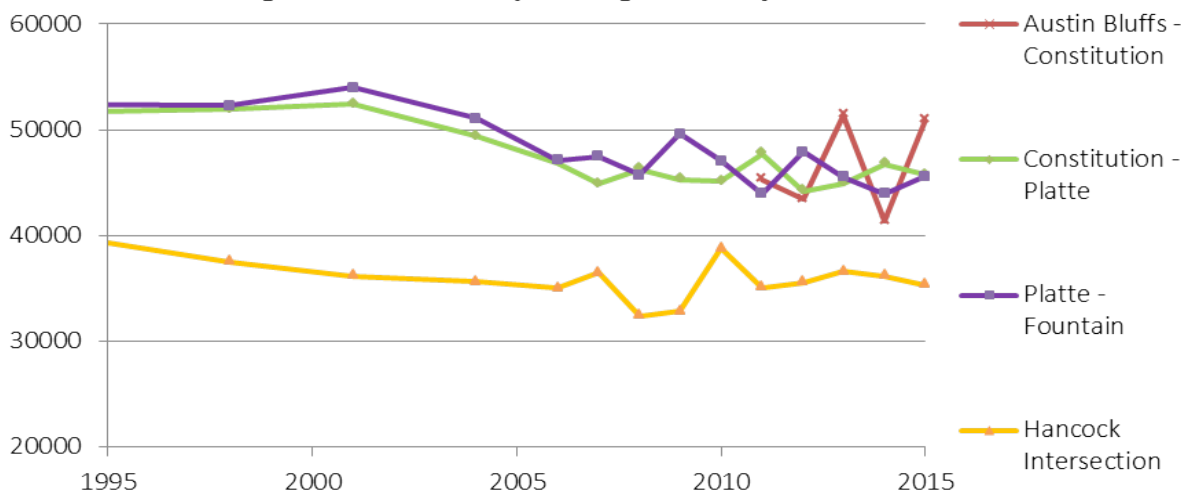
As previously discussed, Academy Blvd. must prove itself to be a fruitful auto destination before multi-modal transportation can be more fully addressed. The past two decades have shown a decrease in automobile traffic since the overall peak in the early 2000’s. However, the southernmost portion of the planning area (between Fountain and Milton E. Proby) is shown to be gradually increasing as more amenities make their way into that area.

counts are not enough to necessitate more drastic multimodal measures. These numbers must go up before we can see progress.

Shown in red is north of Constitution to Austin Bluffs. It represents the northernmost portion of the planning area combined with a major intersection outside it, Academy Blvd. and Austin Bluffs Pkwy. The Austin Bluffs area is seeing some reinvestment in their retail spaces and overall lower vacancy rates compared to the planning area. On average, the traffic counts are higher than the majority of Academy Blvd. Low traffic counts could be attributed to road construction projects that often result in lane closures.

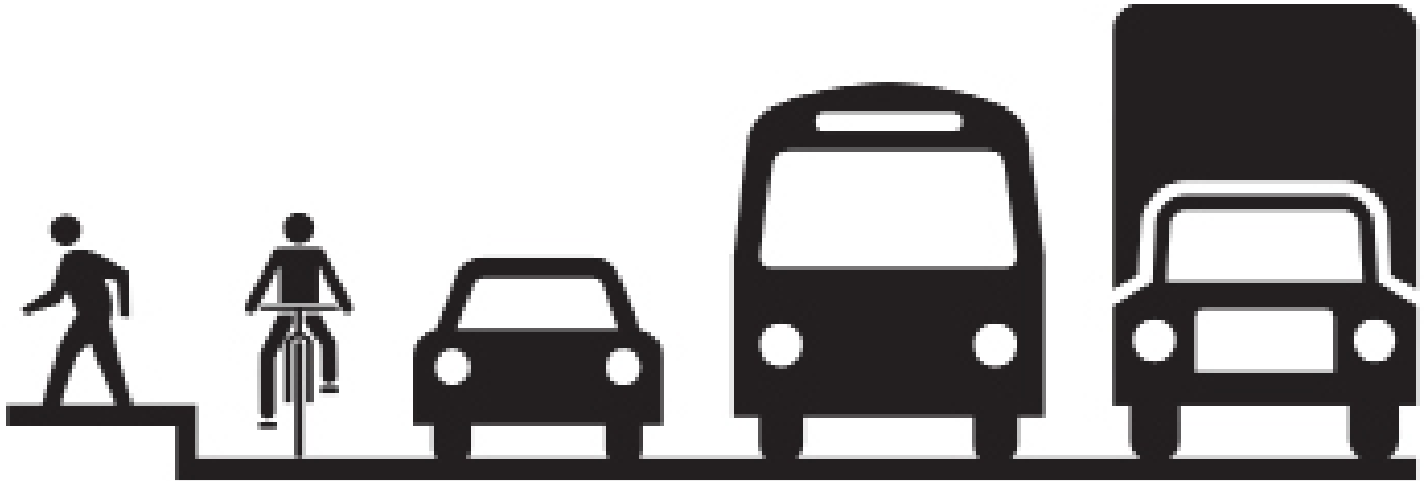
It will be beneficial to consider ways to increase traffic through the corridor to create the congestion that can serve as a case for a more diverse transit options. Although the most utilized bus routes fall within this area, their ridership

Average Automobile Trips Along Academy Blvd.



Recent data courtesy of Principal Transportation Planner, Tim Roberts, 2017
In the case of multiple traffic counts for the same year, one was chosen at random.

COMPLETE STREETS



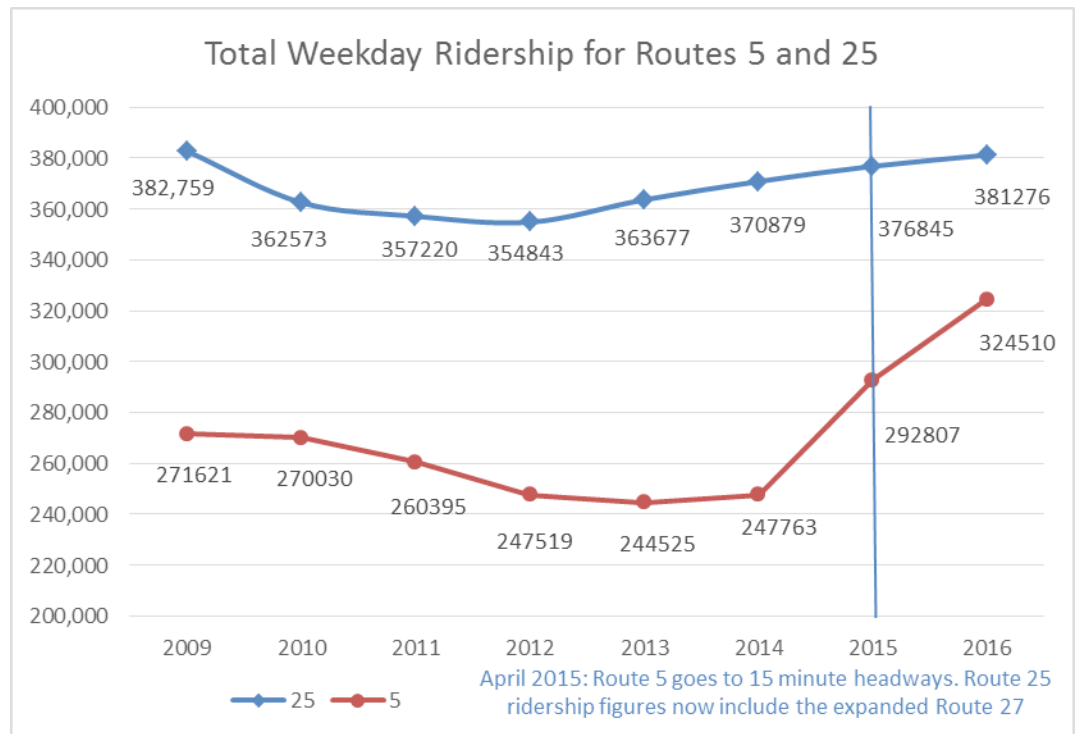
M E T R O B U S

Second in popularity to the personal automobile is the bus and this mode has grown stronger in recent years. The planning area is serviced by two of the most utilized routes in the city, bus routes 5 and 25. Bus Route 5 connects the Planning Area to Downtown and is the busiest route in the region (measured by trips per hour of service). In order to better serve riders, Route 5 increased its frequency from 30 to 15 minute intervals during peak hours in April of 2015. Today the route operates on 15 minute headways on weekdays from 6:15 a.m. to 6:45 p.m. From 7:15 p.m. to 9:15 p.m. the route operates on 60 minute headways.

Route 25 used to travel between Pikes Peak Community College's Centennial Campus and the northern mall, Chapel Hills and had the highest total riders of any route. In April 2015, the route was extended and split into two sections with one traveling south and the other north of the Citadel Mall Transfer Center. Bus route 25 travels north connecting

Citadel Mall and Voyager Parkway while Route 27 travels south connecting PPCC's Centennial Campus to the Citadel Mall Transfer.

Both changes to the bus routes have had positive effects on ridership figures as illustrated below. By October 1, 2017, Route 25 will also start operating on 15-minute headways during weekday daytime hours. If the increased headways result in a ridership spike similar to those seen in Route 5, it could serve as a basis for argument for increased transit options in the future.



Data courtesy of Mountain Metro Transit Planning Supervisor, Brian Vitulli, 2017

COMPLETE STREETS

BICYCLES

Being 6 lanes wide, Academy Blvd. is not the most bicycle friendly. While bike lanes have been added throughout the area over the years, crossing Academy by bike remains a significant challenge that should be addressed as we continue to move forward.



PEDESTRIANS

Although automobiles prevail along Academy Blvd., pedestrian activity and connectivity must be fostered to fulfill our goals of the Great Streets Plan. For this report we look at pedestrian activity at 3 key intersections along Academy Blvd.: Palmer Park, Galley, and Hancock. The following figure shows average hourly crosswalk activations for these 3 intersections over time. It should be noted that each year the numbers have been collected from different months (early August, late September, late January, and late February respectively) and the data could come from any combination of days of the week. As we move forward in reports on Academy Measures we hope to assemble more consistent data and as we do so, these early

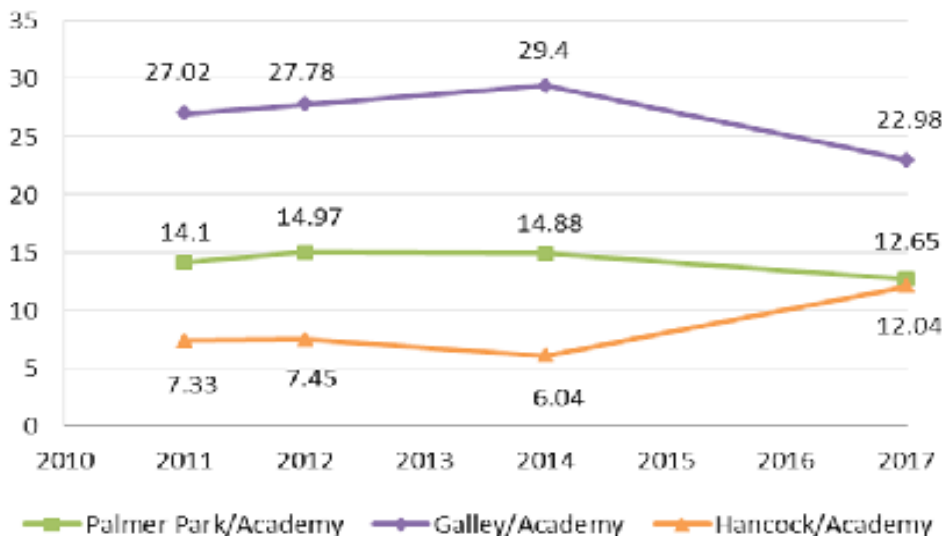
anomalies will become more normalized.

Academy and Galley is the “most active” intersection although its rates have fallen from 29.4 activations per hour in 2014 to 22.98 in 2017. This intersection is more pedestrian friendly with connecting activities and uses on all four corners. However, more amenities have been lost rather than added since 2014, potentially accounting for the drop in pedestrian activity.

Palmer Park and Academy has remained rather stagnant in pedestrian traffic through time suffering from a slight drop since 2014 (14.88 to 12.65). This may be caused by increasing retail vacancy rates in the Rustic Hills Mall.

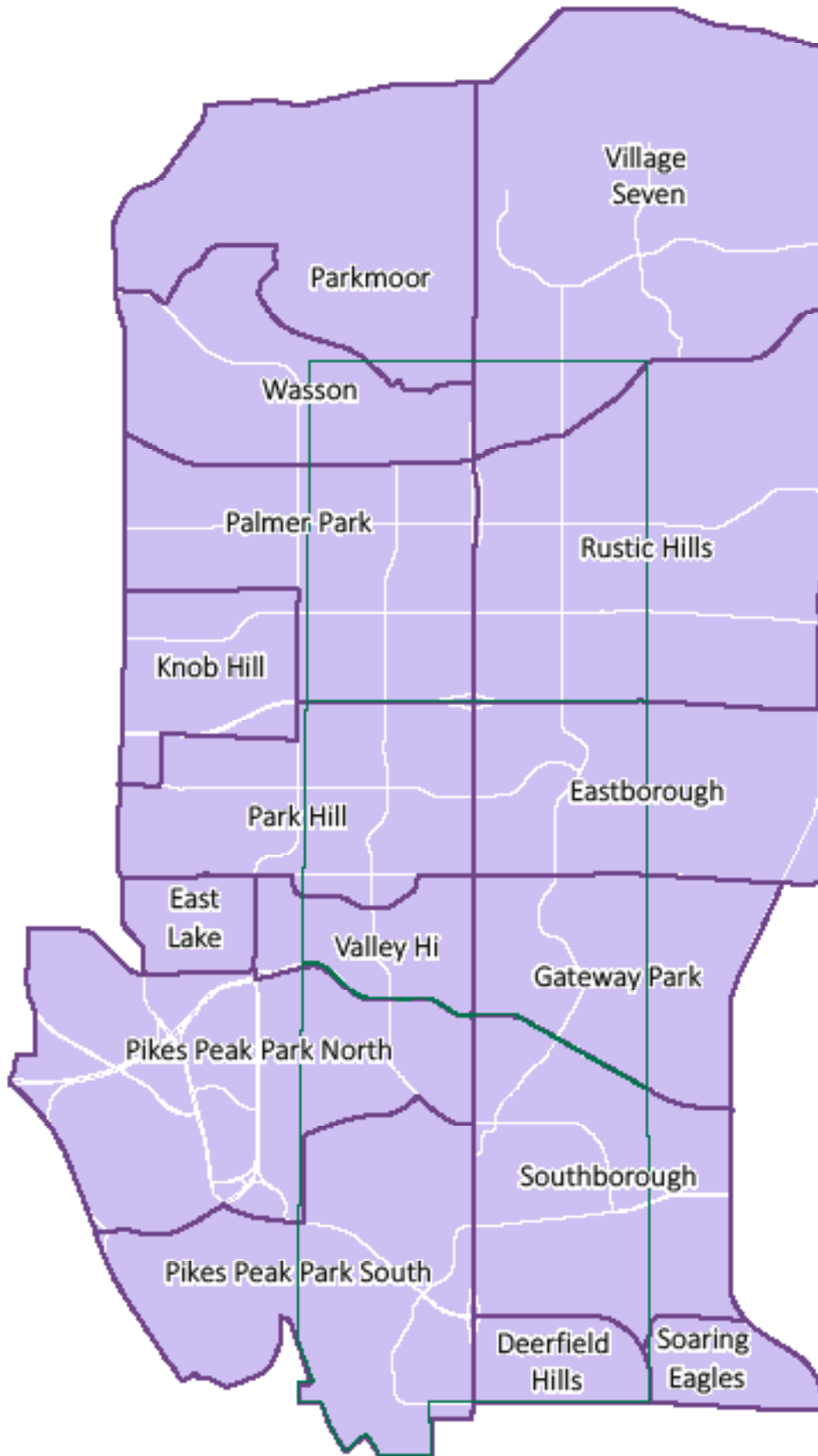
Since 2014, a number of businesses and other uses have been added to the Hancock/Academy intersection including several restaurants. Pedestrian activations have nearly doubled since 2014 from 6.04 to 12.04. Although it has not yet surpassed Galley or Palmer Park it will not be surprising if it does, especially once the first phase of intersection improvements is completed.

Average Pedestrian Activations Per Hour



COMPLETE STREETS

NEIGHBORHOODS & WALKABILITY



The Academy planning area intersects with roughly 15 defined neighborhoods with Academy Blvd. acting as the east/west dividing boundary. Walkscore.com examines resident's ability to navigate their neighborhood with different modes of transit and assigns a score out of 100. However, the boundaries on the website are not the same as the official boundaries as shown to the left. Thus, some neighborhoods are combined or absent entirely from the walk score table on the following page.

Walkscore.com defines the Palmer Park/Knob Hill area as the 5th "most walkable" in the city, meaning that it is within close enough proximity to grocery stores and transit routes so residents do not need to rely solely on a personal car. Meanwhile, Soaring Eagles and Southborough (south of Astrozon), are listed as the least walkable for the planning area. This is due to a lack of bike lanes and proximity to amenities such as restaurants, bars, coffee shops, and grocery stores.

These figures do not address perceived safety or quality of the pedestrian experience. They simply look at how far a pedestrian can travel in five minutes and how many amenities they will encounter along the way.

COMPLETE STREETS NEIGHBORHOOD WALKSCORE SUMMARY

NEIGHBORHOOD	RANK IN THE CITY	WALK SCORE	TRANSIT SCORE	BIKE SCORE	TOTAL SCORE
KNOB HILL / PALMER PARK	5	55	34	54	143
PARK HILL / VALLEY HI	9	48	32	46	126
EASTBOROUGH	15	43	26	47	116
PIKES PEAK PARK (NORTH&SOUTH)	16	41	29	45	115
DEERFIELD HILLS	17	40	29	51	120
RUSTIC HILLS	21	38	26	50	114
GATEWAY PARK/ SOUTHBOROUGH (NORTH OF ASTROZON)	23	38	23	53	114
SOARING EAGLES/ SOUTHBOROUGH (SOUTH OF ASTROZON)	35	30	22	39	91

Data Collected from Walkscore.com

FUNDED PROJECTS & FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

In July of 2016 a detailed Academy Boulevard/ Hancock Expressway Planning and Environmental Linkages Study (PEL) was completed for the Academy Boulevard/ Hancock Expressway intersection. This study involved a great deal of community and business owner input and resulted in recommendations for additional access, improved safety, enhance non-motorized facilities, and a future transit center.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) funding in the amount of approximately \$2.5 Million has been approved for a first phase project that will add an access location south of Hancock Expy. and include sidewalk improvements. This project is expected to occur in 2021 or 2022.

Funding is available through Pikes Peak Rural Transportation Authority (PPRTA) for an "A" list project to reconstruct major segments of Academy Blvd. in the corridor. Approximately \$20 Million in funding will be expended between 2017 and

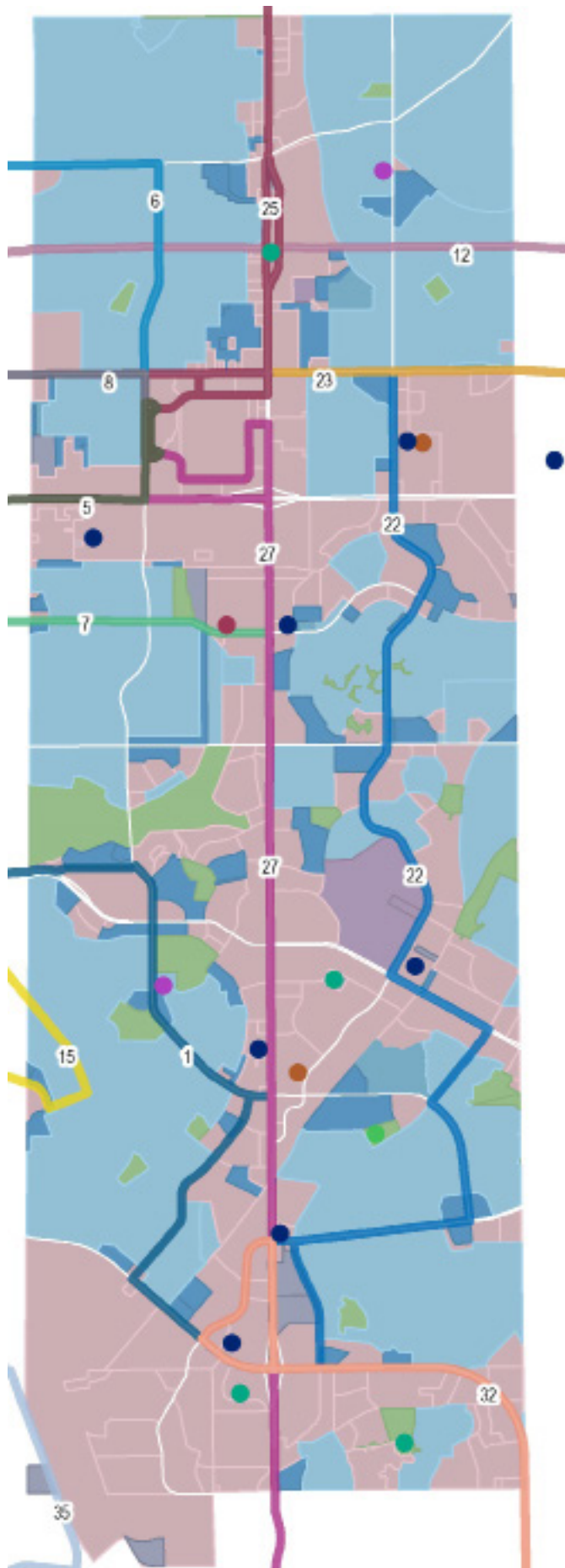
2024, in accordance with voter direction. There is some potential for this project and funding to be "leveraged" with other funding in order to provide associated improvement beyond replacing the existing road base and asphalt.

OTHER OPPORTUNITIES REQUIRING FUTURE FUNDING

- Relocation of Citadel Mall transit center to Academy Blvd.
- Possible new transit hub on SW corner of Hancock Expy. and Academy Blvd.
- Possible direct access connection between Citadel Mall and Citadel Crossing
- Study to reconsider design options for Academy/Fountain Blvd. interchange/intersection
- Improvement of Academy/Wentworth Street intersection (to enhance access to closed Sam's Club)

COMMUNITY MEASURES

ACCESSIBILITY TO COMMUNITY FACILITIES BY BUS



A community needs public spaces and facilities to host events as well as be able to access fresh food by way of a grocery store, all preferably without the need for a personal car. This map shows the relationships between community facilities, public transit, and neighborhoods.

Residential parcels are symbolized in blue and are spread throughout the planning area. "Grocery stores", symbolized by navy blue dots, include ethnic markets such as, "Carniceria Leonela," and, "Springs Korean Market," as well as Walmart, Safeway, and King Soopers. The dot located outside of the planning area represents the, "Asian Pacific Market", which provides an extensive selection of fresh produce along with specialty goods. Overall, the Academy planning area has been called a "food swamp", meaning that fast food is readily available while access to fresh produce is limited.

The Northern portion of the Academy planning area is the most limited in options of public park space and access to community facilities including grocery stores.

As discussed on page 5, pedestrian activations for Academy Blvd. and Hancock Expy. in the southern portion of the planning area had been historically low until this year when they doubled. This is largely related to the recent increase in facilities. While the southern portion of the planning area houses the most community facilities, transit does not seem to efficiently connect them. Contrastly, transit seems to have a positive relationship to most grocery stores within the area.

While the central area does not have a public library the two North/South lines that pass through (Bus Routes 22 and 27) do connect to the two public libraries in the planning area. That being said, the central area is less connected by public transit than in the north and south and is especially lacking east/west connectivity.

COMMUNITY MEASURES

STATUS OF NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATIONS

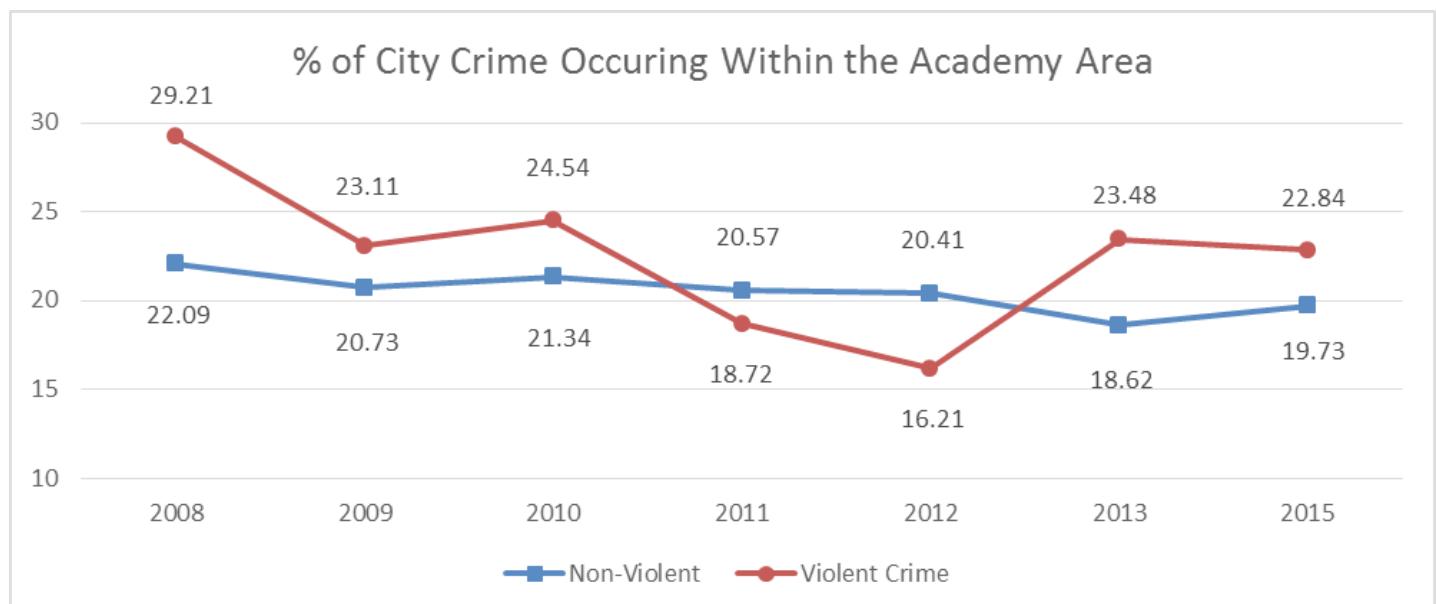
Status	Description	Known Neighborhood Organizations
"VERY ACTIVE"	The organization meets on a regular basis and implements significant policies within their domain. Rustic Hills, for example, was able to implement a community-wide trash contract.	Deerfield Hills, Park Hill, Rustic Hills, Soaring Eagles HOA, Georgetown HOA, Fountain and Chelton Partnership, Coachman TOA, and Villa Condo's.
"ACTIVE"	They meet on a regular basis without implementing significant policies.	Crestline Heights HOA, Platte Avenue Business HOA, and Five Fountains.
"INFREQUENTLY ACTIVE"	Deviates from regularly scheduled meetings. Does not implement significant policies.	Executive Park 2 COA, Esperanza Village, Murray Heights TOA, Audubon Spring HOA, The Heights POA, Indian Ridge TOA, Valley Hi OA, La Serena, Association of Owners at Satellite Apts., Satellite TOA, Lakewood TOA, Townhomes at Windjammer Pt., 15th Fairway TOA, Spring Lane TOA, Shannon Green COA, Chelsea Sun, Firefly COA. Hunting Meadows CA, Sierra Springs HOA, Lexington Village COA, Dove Creek HOA, Sunstone, La Jolla Park TOA, Pinehurst Bluffs HOA, and Bridlewood Bluffs HOA.
"NO LONGER MEETING"	An organization was established in the past but is no longer meeting.	Pride of the Park, Pikes Peak HOA, and Palmer Park South.
"UNKNOWN STATUS"	We do not have enough information to determine an activity level.	Silver Hawk at Hancock HOA, Mazatlán Circle Owners Association, Henry Park HOA, Wildflower Neighborhood, and Spring Lane HOA.

Information courtesy of Council of Neighbors & Organizations (CONO)

CRIME RATES

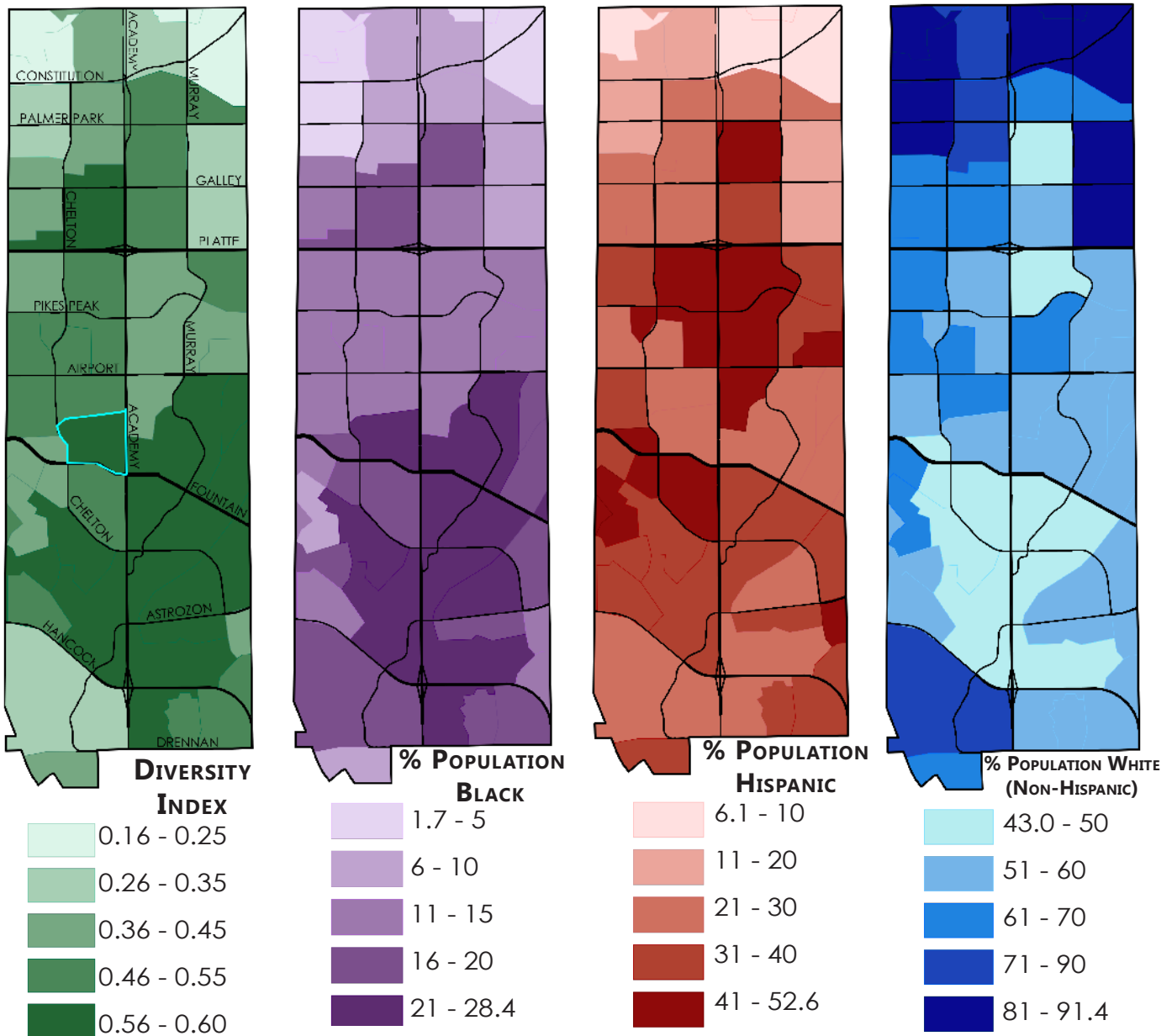
While the planning area accounts for about 12% of the city's population, it experiences 20.5% of the city's crime (as measured by calls for service that resulted in a case report for the year of 2015). All percentages are lower in 2015 than they were in 2008 when the area contributed to nearly 30% of

all violent crime in the city. That being said, Academy does not have the most crime in the city. Other areas such as the Westside still contribute to a substantial amount of crime within Colorado Springs. However, Academy still carries stigma regarding crime rates regardless of their decline since 2008.



COMMUNITY MEASURES

DEMOGRAPHICS



The Academy corridor is home to some of the most diverse neighborhoods in the City. A diversity index is often used to measure the how much “diversity” or “variety” is in a given group. It expresses the probability that two individuals chosen at random will be of different ethnic groups. Thus, an area with a diversity index of “0” means that all individuals are of the same ethnic identity. The most diverse parcel in all of El Paso County is North of Fountain Blvd. between Chelton and Academy with a diversity index of .5969. In contrast, the parcel with the lowest diversity index is in the Broadmoor with a diversity index

of .0666. Top left is a map of the Diversity Index of the Academy area with the most diverse parcel highlighted in blue.

The three maps on the right show the percentages of specific ethnicities in each census tract. While the diversity index takes into account Asian, Hawaiian, and American Indian populations into account, the populations within the area are <6%, <2%, and <3% respectively. Given that combined they account for no more than 10% of any individual census tract they have not been mapped individually.

COMMUNITY MEASURES

HIGH SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

There are two high schools in the study area:

Sierra Harrison District 2
 Mitchell Colorado Springs District 11

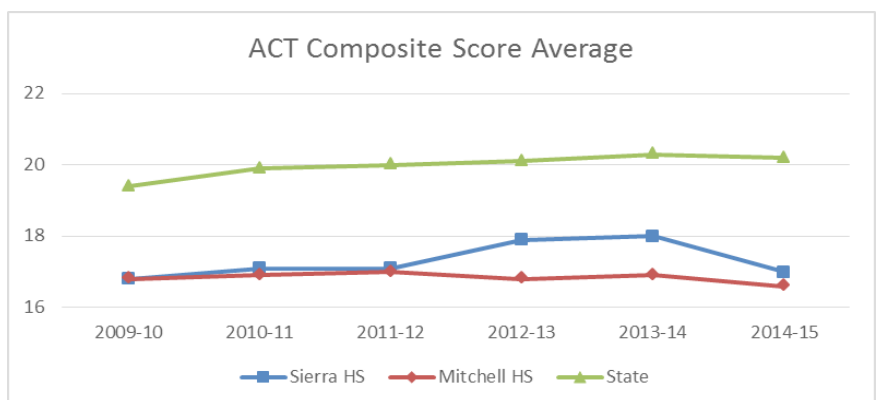
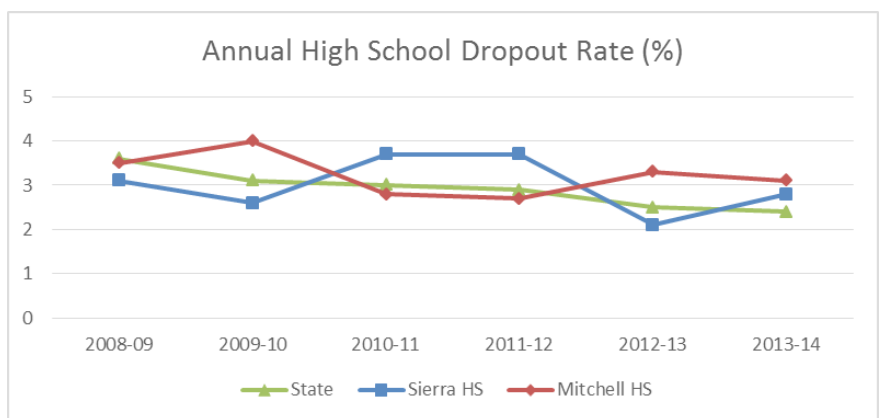
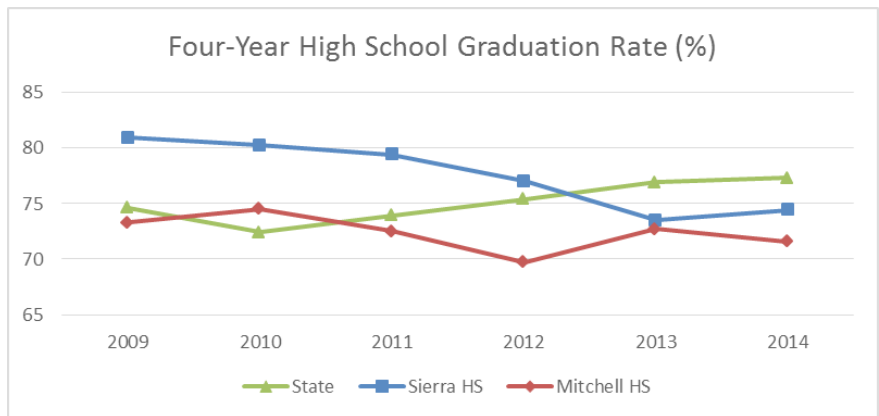
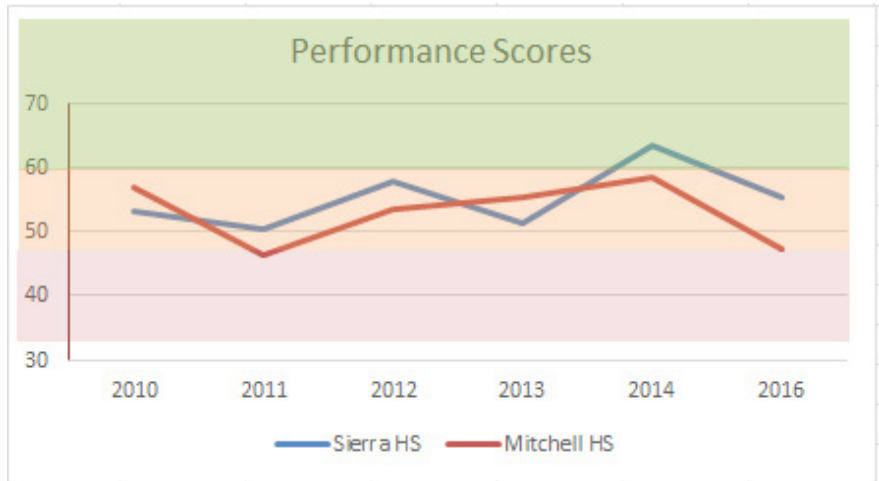
The Colorado Department of Education annually ranks all districts and schools within a performance framework of 100 points. From these values schools are placed into one of four categories:

- 60+ being "At Performance",
- 47-59 "Improvement Plan",
- 34-46 "Priority Improvement",
- <33 "Turnaround"

(These numbers are as of 2014 and apply to the bulk of the data shown. In 2016 the values were changed to 53+, 42-52, 34-<41, and <33 respectively).

From 2010-2016 both Sierra and Mitchell have fallen between 46.2(Mitchell 2011) and 63.6 (Sierra 2014) with average scores being 55.3 for Sierra and 53 for Mitchell. The two schools have been consistently marked in an improvement zone. The graph to the top right illustrates this with "at performance" in green, "improvement plan" in orange, and "priority improvement" in red. Mitchell was marked as "Priority Improvement" in 2016 due to a drop in testing participation.

Over the past six years both schools have had dropout rates relatively higher than the state average, lower graduation rates, and lower ACT scores as illustrated by the charts to the right.



Data obtained through the Colorado Department of Education website. For more information visit: <https://www.cde.state.co.us/schoolview>

COMMUNITY MEASURES



THE BUILD HEALTH CHALLENGE: COLORADO SPRINGS PROJECT ACCESS

In July 2015 the YMCA of the Pikes Peak Region, in partnership with Penrose-St. Francis Health Services and El Paso County Public Health, was awarded funding focusing on “building meaningful partnerships among hospitals, health systems, and community-based organizations to facilitate Bold, Upstream, Integrated, Local, and Data-Driven approaches to community health equity (BUILD). That effort, titled Project ACCESS (Assessment and Community Collaboration to Engage and Strengthen Southeast Colorado Springs), works with residents and local partners to leverage resources and reduce barriers that cause inequities in the health and wellbeing for residents in Southeast Colorado Springs.

Through resident leadership development, Project ACCESS empowers residents to change policies and bring needed services to the area to improve health outcomes for current and future generations. Project ACCESS conducted over 3,000 community interviews to identify what residents of Southeast saw as their greatest barriers to health and wellness. With 23% of the Southeast Springs population living under the Federal Poverty Line and many relying on the unreliable and infrequent public transportation in the area, the need to locate vital social services like SNAP, WIC, and Medicaid offices in the Southeast emerged as

a widespread community need. Through the process, a strong partnership emerged with Harrison School District Two. El Paso County Public Health and Harrison School District Two have entered into a lease agreement at \$1 per year, for a term of 5 years (with the option to renew) to expand services for our Women, Infants, Children (WIC) program. This will be a satellite office with bilingual educators and registered dietitian supervisors to accommodate clients within our Southeast Colorado Springs community. Community space will be available to hold meetings or gatherings. Currently, the nearest access to Women, Infants, Children (WIC) services is at the Citizen Services Center on West Garden of the Gods Road and could take over two hours to get to by public transit. There is another satellite WIC office located in Fountain.

Additionally, two American Diabetes Association (ADA) classes have now been placed in mostly Spanish-speaking neighborhoods in the Southeast at Deerfield Hills Community Center & Panorama Middle School. Over 100 women have since signed up for a year-long ADA nutrition course and free weekly Zumba classes through this partnership.

Summary provided by Healthy Environment Planner, Aubrey Day and Public Health Planner, Mina Leibert, 2017

COMMUNITY MEASURES

COMMUNITY HEALTH PROJECTS

EL POMAR RISE GRANT

The area recently received another grant with funding from the El Pomar Foundation, called RISE (Resilient, Inspired, Strong and Engaged), with the mission of enhancing Southeast Colorado Springs from within through citizen-led change. El Paso County Public Health (EPCPH) facilitated the planning process in partnership with the Colorado Springs Black Chamber of Commerce, the Council of Neighbors and Organizations (CONO) and the YMCA of the Pikes Peak Region and a coalition of 50 partner organizations. Resident leaders were selected to participate on the Steering Committee and provide guidance and accountability for the priority objectives. The effort over the next several years includes objectives aimed at reaching outcomes in five areas of capital: Cultural Capital – Connecting people; Social Capital – Connecting people to resources; Built Capital – Connecting people to places; Human Capital – Connecting people to opportunity; and Financial Capital – Connecting people to potential.

Information on grant programs provided by Julie Slivka of BUILD/RISE, 2017.



Free Zumba Class Sponsored by BUILD (Photo Courtesy of Julie Slivka)

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

There are also plans in the works for a place-based “hub” that will foster community cohesion and serve as a convenient and safe space for all to gather. The idea is to provide a space where residents can meet for clubs, games, workshops, town halls, life skills courses, as well as exercise and wellness classes. It will provide information and opportunities for residents to engage with their community, meet neighbors, and stay active. The hub will house organizations and groups that look to engage and improve the community, and provide meeting place for new coalitions and advocacy groups. The hub will be jointly occupied, and may feature a food pantry, clinic, computers, a kitchen for community potlucks, and space for workshops and meetings.

Pikes Peak Library District (PPLD) has been focusing on empowering entrepreneurship and wellness by supplying libraries with tools such as sewing machines, recording studios, and 3D printers. The Sand Creek Library currently offers classes on a variety of classes sewing, painting, and guitar. By the end of 2017, a Makerspace will be added to the library. This space will have 3D printers, laser cutters, a fleet of sewing machines and many other tools to spark creativity and imagination. A Recording Studio is also being built. This will allow for area residents to explore music and sound engineering. PPLD’s hope is that this will be our focal point for audio recording, hopefully drawing users to Sand Creek (and Southeast Colorado Springs) from all over PPLD’s service area.

Information on Library services provided by Library Manager, Abby Simpson, 2017.



Harrison Students took a fieldtrip to CU Denver (Photo Courtesy of Julie Slivka)

COMMUNITY HEALTH PROJECTS: JUSTICE REINVESTMENT CRIME PREVENTION INITIATIVE

On May 10, 2017 Colorado State Legislature unanimously passed House Bill 1326 with the goal to prevent crime and promote public safety by providing funding for strategies such as economic development, academic achievement of youth, direct service, and family support in two pilot communities (Southeast Colorado Springs and Aurora) that are experiencing both higher rates of victimization and involvement in the criminal justice system.

This bill will create a place-based pilot program to provide funding to support a multi-strategy crime prevention plan focused on funding strategies that can improve the quality of life and opportunity in communities.

The Denver Foundation is willing to serve as the grant intermediary and neutral project manager to utilize their existing expertise and experience in grant making and ensure fiscal accountability and fidelity to the intent of the legislation. The Denver Foundation is also willing to assist the two local stakeholder groups with facilitation, evidence-based practice research, and data collection/evaluation design should the local stakeholder groups be interested in that type of support.

- The target is a minimum of \$3 million per community and that state funding would be committed for at least a couple of years.
- Funding for this crime prevention pilot project would come from parole-related reforms to reduce recidivism and thereby create savings in the Department of Corrections budget.
- Local community stakeholder groups made up of local elected officials, community/faith leaders, business leaders, service providers, and educators will be empowered to develop the crime prevention plan and budget.

Permissible uses of the funding will be flexible to allow local communities to identify local crime prevention priorities but the frame work will require a focus on:

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

Funding will be allocated to the local Community Development Financial Institution or other designated lending institution for loans to create or expand small businesses and promote entrepreneurship.

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT:

To improve school performance/readiness, high school graduation rates, and college enrollment/retention.

COMMUNITY-BASED DIRECT SERVICES:

To expand availability of community-based services or programs that would help strengthen families, provide community-based victim services, behavioral health services or other priority service needs.

NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT:

To address gaps related to housing, transportation, recreation or other community infrastructure needs.

DATA COLLECTION AND EVALUATION:

Each neighborhood plan will be required to have a data collection and evaluation mechanism to measure outcomes and impact.

Summary of bill provided by Executive Director of the Colorado Springs Urban Renewal Authority, Jariah Walker, 2017.

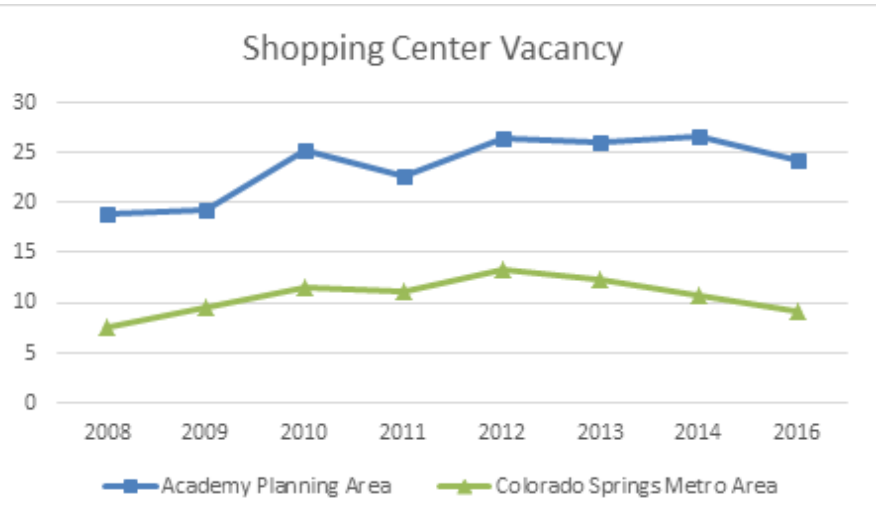
For more information visit

<http://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb17-1326>

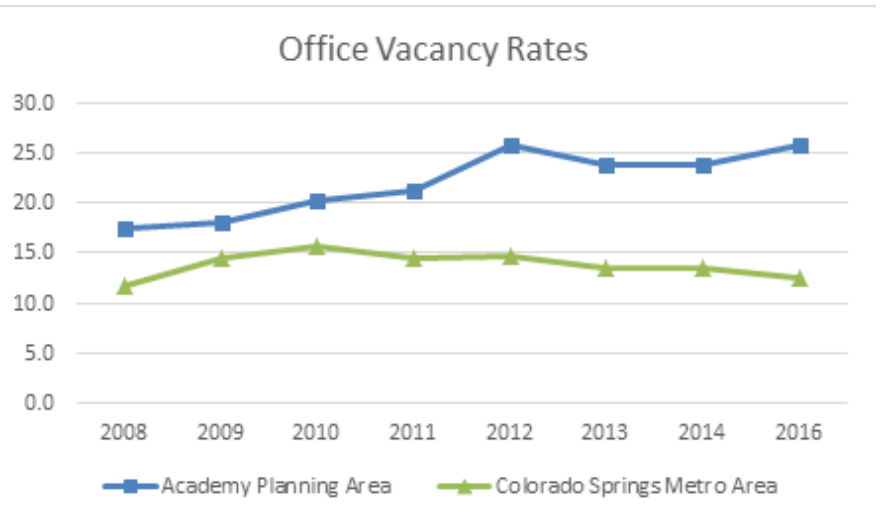
ECONOMIC VITALITY MEASURES

VACANCY RATES SUMMARY

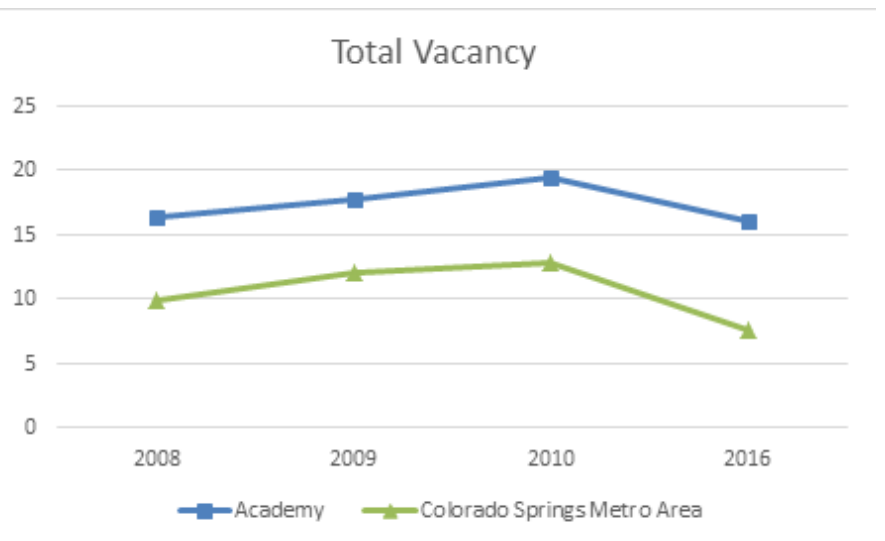
Business vacancy rates reveal how appropriately land use and infrastructure align with market-driven forces. Business vacancy rates track the faith that businesses have in the Planning Area as a place for conducting business. For the Academy corridor, shopping center vacancies have paralleled a pattern similar to the larger Colorado Springs Metro Area over the past eight years (2008-2016). However, they have done so at rates 13% higher (on average) than those of the greater metro area.



Office space vacancy rates in the area have not shown the same trend. They have increased while the Colorado Springs metro area's numbers have decreased. As of 2016, office vacancy rates were 13.5% higher than the Colorado Springs metro area and on an upward trend while the metro area's rates have been decreasing since their "peak" in 2010.



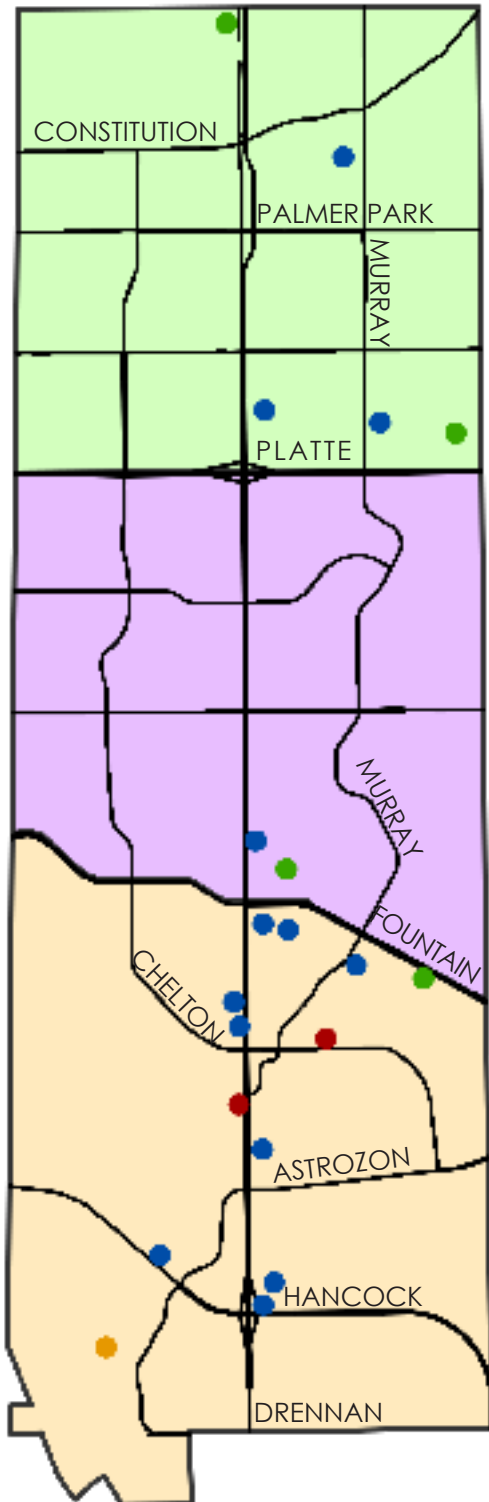
As of 2016, both Shopping Center and Office Space vacancy rates are over double that of the Colorado Springs metro area. While total vacancy has fallen considerably since 2010, the Academy Corridor is still over double the rates for the greater metro area with those rates being 16% and 7.6% respectively.



Data compiled by Turner Commercial Research, all figures are for the end of the second quarter for each year

ECONOMIC VITALITY MEASURES

I N F I L L



- COMPLETED
- APPROVED
- APPLICATION IN REVIEW
- PRE APPLICATION

Infill aims to “fill in” the gaps of the urban fabric. The following is a list of infill projects completed in recent years as well as upcoming and pending projects (list current as of early spring 2017).

COMPLETED

Vacant land development projects

- Wal-Mart Neighborhood Market (665 N. Murray Blvd.)
- “Sierra Springs” 78 single family residential units (384 Sierra Glen Pl.)
- Wal-Mart Neighborhood Market (1622 S. Academy Blvd.)
- Taco Bell and Kum and Go (2935 Hancock Expy.)

Repurposing or Redevelopment Projects

- Irving Middle school repurposed into Global Village Charter School (1702 N. Murray Blvd.)
- Strip mall vacancy redeveloped into Lowe’s at Citadel Crossing (701-801 N. Academy Blvd.)
- Vacant commercial office building repurposed into Atlas Prep Charter School (1450 Academy Park Loop)
- “Bently Commons Apartments” affordable housing (2610 Bently Pt.)
- Goodwill Warehouse (2855 S. Academy Blvd.)
- Relocation of Silver Key Senior Living (1605 – 1655 S. Murray Blvd.)
- Colorado Car Connections Commercial Auto (1794 S. Academy Blvd.)
- Honda Dealership (1103 Academy Park Loop)
- Nissan Dealership (3909 E. Fountain Blvd.)

APPROVED

- Kum and Go, Mini Storage Facility and Carl’s Jr. to be developed on vacant land (3700 Maizeland Rd.)
- Vacant land to be developed into offices (712 Clark Pl.)
- Vacant land to be developed into Sand Creek Police Substation (Academy Park Loop)
- Vacant land to be developed into apartment units (1715 Torin Pt.)

APPLICATION IN REVIEW

- Redevelopment project “Alpine Lumber Co.” indoor/outdoor lumber storage yard with administration office (Drennan Loop)

PRE APPLICATION

- Vacant land to be developed into Cherry Tree Apartments adjacent to Sand Creek (1975 S. Chelton Rd.)
- Vacant land to be developed into a hamburger stand (2154 S. Academy Blvd.)

ECONOMIC VITALITY MEASURES

ACTIVITY SUMMARY

Planned **Kum & Go**, **Carl's Jr.**, and **Personal Storage Units**.

Long time vacant space filled by **Gold's Gym**. Maintains decent level of activity.

Former **Macy's** at Citadel Mall remains empty.

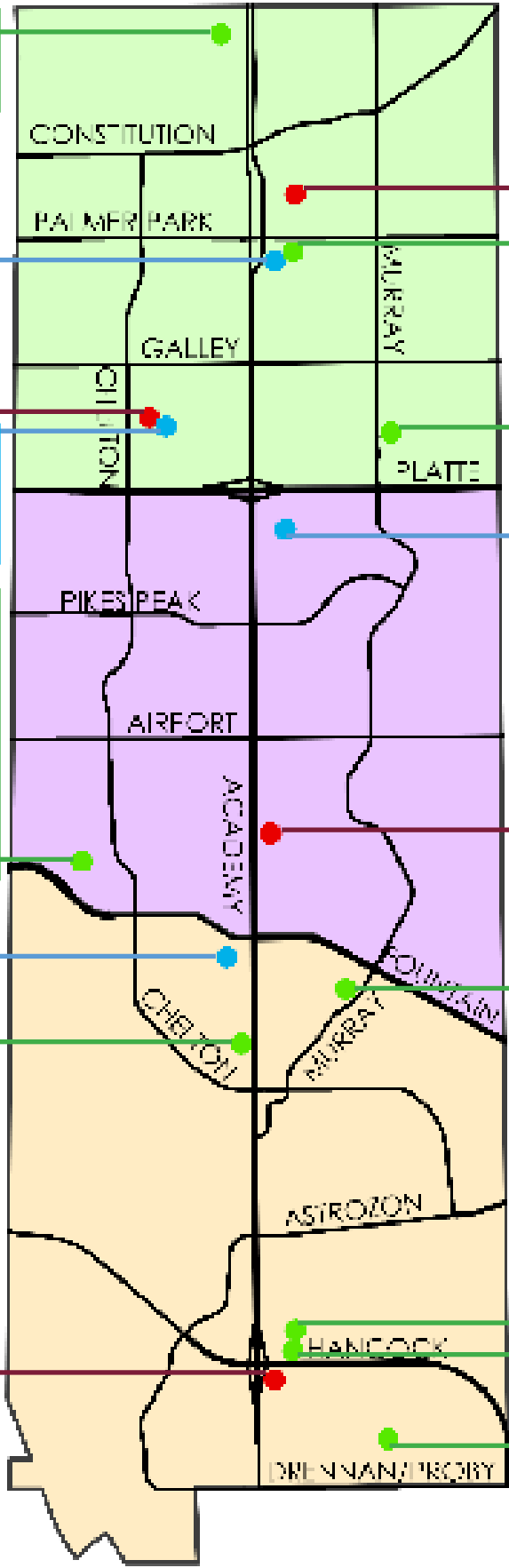
JCPenney will remain open despite announcing closure of 138 stores nationwide.

Harrison School District 2 donated a building to the El Paso County Health Department to serve as a **WIC clinic**, a **satellite office for Pikes Peak Work Force Center**, and possibly a **health clinic**.

Post Office remains open in spite of announcement to close its doors.

Vacant lot was developed into a **Neighborhood Walmart** creating food choices in what was previously considered to be a food desert.

Mission Trace remains a challenging, largely vacant shopping center.



Rustic Hills North remains mostly vacant.

Entertainment center **WhirlyBall** takes on a \$2.5 million remodel on a 30,000-square-foot space in Rustic Hills Shopping Mall.

Long-time vacant space in Murray Square Shopping Mall now occupied by a **Neighborhood Wal-mart**.

Former Target and Garden Ridge is now occupied by "home decor superstore", **At Home**

Former **Sams Club** remains empty.

Atlas Prep continues to be a successful example of adaptive re-use benefiting the community at large.

Goodwill has repurposed a former big-box building for distribution and outlet retail.

Kum & Go and **Taco bell** occupy a once vacant corner.

Deerfield Hills Community Center expanded their space to better serve their growing community.

H I L I G H T E D P L A C E S

THE CITADEL

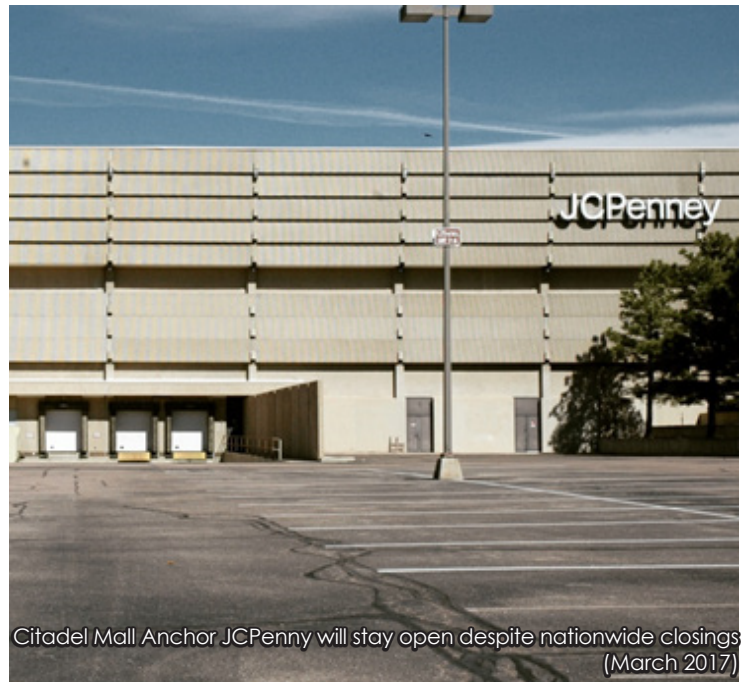
The Citadel Mall is a classic example of traditional shopping mall design, a design which is fading as it struggles to compete with shifting consumer spending habits. The conventional mall is typically anchored by big-box department stores while the inner, smaller spaces are occupied by secondary retail establishments. The big-boxes usually handle the bulk of consumer spending and help keep the smaller stores afloat. However, that is not quite the case for Citadel Mall. The former Macy's location (pictured top right) remains empty since closing in 2009. In 2015, Dillard's has vacated two of the three floors it once occupied and has converted to a clearance center that operates with closeout sales. This being said, The JCPenney location will remain open despite the planned closure of 140 of its stores around the nation (announced February 2017). Furthermore, the inner spaces of Citadel Mall are less retail-dominated featuring uses like the Celebration Place (children's art gallery and maker space), Fun4Kidz (indoor playground), and Epic VR (virtual reality arcade). The Mall has also been launching campaigns to increase weekday patron activity (i.e. Free Treat Tuesday).

The Citadel also serves as the eastern Metro Bus transit hub adjacent to the still closed Macy's (pictured bottom right). This is not an optimal location for the transit station since it is isolated from both Academy Blvd. In the future it would be beneficial to move the transit station closer to Academy Blvd. to better serve the public and increase connectivity.

In the meantime, Citadel Mall is an interesting case. It is a large space with ample parking and good bus connectivity. It has tremendous potential if approached from a different perspective. How could the Citadel Mall become an asset to S. Academy Blvd.? Perhaps it could have a redesigned façade that is more outwardly facing along with integrated adaptive re-use? It could be rebranded as a community gathering space. This report is not intended to make strong suggestions, but does introduce some options of what can, and should, we do with this space?



Citadel Mall Anchor has remained empty since Macy's closed in 2009 (March 2017)



Citadel Mall Anchor JCPenney will stay open despite nationwide closings (March 2017)



Citadel Mall Eastern Metro Bus Transit Hub is isolated from Academy (March 2017)



DEERFIELD HILLS COMMUNITY CENTER

The office and retail vacancy rates remain much higher for the Academy planning area than the rest of the Colorado Springs Metro Area. One way to adapt to these circumstances is to reimagine the problem spaces in order to better serve the surrounding community.

Charter school Atlas Prep took the vacancies as an opportunity. Their building (1602 S. Murray Blvd.) was originally office space used by an American aerospace and defense corporation, *General Dynamics*, until they relocated. By 2012, plans were underway to transform the vacant building into a learning environment. This has proven to be very successful.

There are many opportunities for projects similar to this along Academy Blvd. Effective spatial reimagining increases authenticity and communal stake in the built environment as well as growing community and setting the stage for re-investment.

Ivywild is an example of this concept from another area of the City, a Colorado Springs elementary school that has been converted into mixed-use community space. Atlas Prep High School was an office space converted to a high-school and its middle school location is a converted strip mall. By reimagining spaces, a community becomes more vested in them. This idea should be at the forefront of our minds as we contemplate the future of the South Academy Corridor.



Deerfield Hills Summer Picnic Photo Courtesy of Jody Derington (July 2016)

Deerfield Hills Community Center is arguably the most successful community facility in the area, serving over 70,000 people annually in the southeast part of Colorado Springs. In fall of 2016 the building was expanded to better serve growing community needs.

The center offers after-school programs for elementary and teenage students as well as a free water "spray ground" open during the summer months. Additionally, the community center offers space for rent for family reunions and neighborhood meetings. They cultivate a community garden on site and partner with Colorado Springs Food Rescue for "Food Fridays" to feed those in need. They will be holding their Neighborhood Block Party on August 12 providing free food, activities and resources for members of the community.



Vacant office space on Academy Blvd. is now used as a charter school, Atlas Prep. Demonstrating the positive impact of adaptive reuse (March 2017)



Deerfield Hills Grand Re-Opening Photo Courtesy of Jody Derington (October 2016)

H I L I G H T E D P L A C E S

R U S T I C H I L L S

The physical appearance and condition of the built environment has the power to enhance or inhibit the corridor as a viable place to live, work, play, or shop. As previously discussed, Atlas Prep is an example of a positive impact of the built environment. The predominantly vacant Rustic Hills North Shopping Center (former home to an Albertson's and Long's Drugs) is a prime example of a deteriorating built environment in the area.

The site is offset from Academy Blvd. located behind the Antique Market Place and Musashi Grill (both still in business). The low visibility from the Academy corridor likely hurts business and may contribute to why the site has remained largely vacant. However, its offset from the traffic could be a tremendous asset to a future developer. The site is large and holds incredible potential for a future mixed-use space. As shown by the map on page 9, the area is in need of a grocery store which could act as the anchor of a future development.

Across Palmer Park Boulevard, to the south of Rustic Hills North, is the Rustic Hills Shopping Center once occupied by *Hobby Lobby*, *Tj Maxx* and *Ross*. The center has been largely empty for the last few years. In March 2016, Whirly Ball, an Illinois-based entertainment company, requested a liquor license for the empty space. They are set to open summer of 2017 offering, "craft beer, cocktails, a chef driven menu, bowling, special events and private parties", in addition to their signature sport, Whirly ball, that incorporates elements of basketball, lacrosse, and bumper cars. This is a very positive sign for the area and is the first new business to occupy the space since Gold's Gym filled the western reach of the shopping center in 2013. It will bring job opportunities to the area.



What the !#\$% is WHIRLYBALL?

THE EXHILARATING SPORT OF WHIRLYBALL COMBINES LACROSSE, HOCKEY, BASKETBALL & BUMPER CARS IN A GAME OF SKILL COUPLED WITH A TOUCH OF CHANCE

COCKTAILS - CRAFT BEER - CHEF DRIVEN MENU - WHIRLYBALL BOWLING - SPECIAL EVENTS - CORPORATE EVENTS - PRIVATE PARTIES

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CONCLUDING REMARKS

COMPLETE STREETS MEASURES

While North/South bus connectivity is strengthening, East/West connectivity is still lacking. The area is not very walkable and some areas lack sidewalks altogether. Bikeability remains a challenge with very few bike lanes and designated bike paths available. Automobile traffic counts show a decrease or leveling off of traffic throughout the planning area. Academy must be framed as a viable destination to increase traffic of all modes.

COMMUNITY MEASURES

Health projects and partnering organizations are mobilizing members of the community to strengthen the area. While crime rates are still high per capita, they have decreased since 2008. The reputation of the area has yet to reflect this reality. Sierra and Mitchell High Schools are both underperforming. Mitchell was rated "Priority Improvement" in 2016. This could mean a swift shift in performance in the coming years. This area includes some of the most diverse Census blocks in all of El Paso County. Diversity is a tremendous asset to the area. Creating citywide events celebrating diversity to take place within the planning area could establish more of a draw and potentially spur economic development.

ECONOMIC VITALITY MEASURES

Many big box anchor retail stores remain vacant along Academy Boulevard as consumer spending habits continue to shift. This provides Academy Blvd. with a unique opportunity to focus on adaptive re-use to reimagine spaces to better benefit the growing community.

HIGHLIGHTED PLACES

CITADEL MALL

While Citadel Mall is not necessarily thriving, it is staying afloat. The possibility of relocating the eastern bus transfer station along Academy Blvd. could have a negative effect on the Mall. A stronger auto/

pedestrian connection between Citadel Mall and the Citadel Crossing Shopping Center would boost overall traffic between them.

ATLAS PREP CHARTER SCHOOL

Atlas Prep is a strong example of adaptive re-use serving the community. Hopefully, its example will inspire future innovations with the many commercial and office vacancies in the area. This educational institution also serves as a viable alternative to the other public schools in the area, and could foster a culture of further educational innovation on the part of alleducational providers.

DEERFIELD HILLS COMMUNITY CENTER

Deerfield Hills Community Center continues to grow and reach more families within the communi-



Deerfield Hills Spray Ground Photo Courtesy of Jody Derington

ty providing a meeting place and array of family resources. It currently serves over 70,000 people each year in the area, and will continue to be a valued asset.

RUSTIC HILLS SHOPPING CENTER

While the southern portion of Rustic Hills shows promise with the incoming "Whirly Ball" entertainment center, the northern center is challenging to say the least. It remains

largely vacant while its infrastructure continues to deteriorate. Something will need to be done to address this center within coming years.

OVERALL

The Academy Planning Area remains challenging yet promising. Diverse communities and opportunities for adaptive re-use can increase place identity for this section of the city. While there is much work to be done, Colorado Springs continues to grow. Reinvestment in the Southeast is important to strengthening the City as a whole.