



BETH-EL MENNONITE CHURCH ZONE CHANGE

Planning Commission August 13, 2025

Staff Report by Case Planner: Molly O'Brien



Quick Facts

Applicant

Brooke Grangard

Property Owner

Beth-El Mennonite Church

Address / Location

4625 Ranch Dr

TSN(s)

6321402023

Zoning and Overlays

Current: PDZ/CR HS-O

Proposed: PDZ/CR HS-O

Site Area

9.93 acres

Proposed Land Use

Child Daycare Center, Large

Applicable Code

UDC

Project Summary

Zone change and development plan modification to amend the established conditions of record associated with the PDZ zoning to allow a preschool to be co-located with an existing religious institution.

File Number	Application Type	Decision Type
ZONE-25-0014	Zone Change	Quasi-Judicial
PDZD-25-0020	Minor Modification	Quasi-Judicial

Background

Prior Land-Use History and Applicable Actions

Action	Name	Date
Annexation	North Colorado Springs Addition #1	1969
Subdivision	Garden Ranch Estates	1972
Zone Change	Conditions of Record Established	2003
Development Plan	Beth-El Mennonite Church Development Plan	2004
Nonuse Variance	Allowed 80 square feet of wall signage where 40 was the maximum permitted.	2009

Site History

The site was originally developed in the early 2000s with a religious institution use. During initial stages of review, the proposed use was religious institution and housing. There was a significant amount of neighborhood opposition to this proposal, with the major concern centering on the loss of the vacant land immediately adjacent to Union Meadows Open Space. Following the results of several neighborhood meetings and public hearings on the matter, conditions of record were established in association with the zoning to limit the potential use of the property to only a religious institution. Please see Attachment 1 - Ordinance 03-18. Another condition of record states that any change of use or site changes would require additional review and approval from both City Planning Commission and City Council.

Applicable Code

The subject applications were submitted after the implementation date (06/05/2023) of the ReTool project. The subject applications were reviewed under the Unified Development Code. All subsequent references within this report that are made to “the Code” and related sections are references to the Unified Development Code.

Surrounding Zoning and Land Use

Adjacent Property Existing Conditions

	<i>Zoning</i>	<i>Existing Use</i>	<i>Special Conditions</i>
North	R-5	Multi-Family Residential	None
West	PDZ	Multi-Family Residential	None
South	PK	Open Space	Union Meadows Open Space
East	R1-6	Single-Family Residential	Hillside Overlay

Zoning Map



Stakeholder Involvement

Public Notice

Public Notice Occurrences (Poster / Postcards)	Initial Submittal / Prior to Planning Commission Hearing
Postcard Mailing Radius	1000'
Number of Postcards Mailed	265
Number of Comments Received	2

Public Engagement

Staff received several calls and emails from neighborhood stakeholders with questions regarding the project and concerns about whether the open space would be disturbed. After discussing the project and learning that there is no construction proposed, no stakeholders had any comments or concerns that they wished to add to the project record in support or opposition. Staff included the email correspondence (Attachment 2 – Public Comment) for further clarity.

Timeline of Review

Initial Submittal Date	May 20, 2025
Number of Review Cycles	3

Agency Review

Traffic Engineering

City Traffic Engineering reviewed the application and had no concerns. The church is accessed from Ranch Dr, which is a collector street that directly connects to Union Blvd, a principal arterial.

City Engineering

City Engineering had minor technical comments that have been resolved.

Colorado Springs Fire Department

CSFD had minor technical comments that have been resolved.

Colorado Springs Utilities

CSU had minor technical comments that have been resolved.

Hillside Reviewer

City Planning's hillside reviewer had no concerns about the proposal from a hillside perspective.

Landscape

Landscape Architect staff had no comments.

Licensed Surveyor

The City's licensed surveyor staff provided technical corrections and confirmed that the correct site area should be 9.93 acres due to a tract that was originally platted as part of the subject property and then conveyed to a nearby residential property owner in 2003. The area of 10.17 acres listed in the prior zone change (Ord. 03-18) is believed to be erroneous, as the property transfer had already occurred at the time of the zone change. Please see Attachment 3 - Exhibits A and B.

CSPD

CSPD had no comments.

CDI Fees

The change of use triggers Citywide Development Impact (CDI) fee assessment, which has been provided by the program manager.

Zone Change

Summary of Application

The applicant proposes a half-day preschool use inside the existing church facilities. No construction is proposed, and the religious institution would continue to operate normally. The preschool would serve up to 25 children between three and five years of age and would operate on weekday mornings during the school year from 8:45 AM to 12:30 PM (Attachment 4 – Project Statement).

The conditions of record for this site restrict potential uses and dimensional standards, as well as establish a procedure for modifying the site in any way. These conditions of record are established via ordinance (please see Attachment 1 – Ordinance 03-18) and are attached to the zoning for the site. Any changes to conditions of record must be approved by the City Council via ordinance. In addition, the site is zoned PDZ (Planned Development Zone), meaning that permitted uses must be laid out in the establishing document for the zone district and approved by City Council regardless.

The conditions of record for this site are as follows:

1. That the use be limited to a Religious Institution (church) only, without accessory housing or a non-public parochial school facilities (except for Sunday school, vacation bible school, and other similar educational classes).
2. That the maximum building height be no greater than 35' and maximum total building size of 23,000 square feet.
3. Any proposed change of use would require a change of zoning and an amended development plan to reviewed and approved by the City Planning Commission and City Council.
4. A conservation easement shall be placed upon the northern portion of this parcel to prohibit future development.

The first condition limits the potential uses to religious institution only. Because the site is a PDZ and not a “hard zone,” all permitted uses must be explicitly established in the guiding documents for the zone district.

This application proposes altering Condition 1 to add “Child Daycare Center, Large,” to the permitted uses allowed onsite. Per the federal Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA), local zoning jurisdictions are required to permit certain accessory land uses in association with religious land uses. Because the proposed preschool is not directly associated with church operations and would be a separate entity co-located within the same building, this proposal is not subject to RLUIPA requirements and a zone change is required.

Additionally, Condition 3 is redundant under UDC standards, as a change of use in PDZ zoning would require the adoption of an ordinance and City Council approval regardless. If significant changes to the site were proposed in conjunction with a use change, staff would process the development plan modification as a public hearing item alongside the zone change application allowing for CPC and City Council review and approval. **Staff recommends the removal of Condition 3 due to its redundancy.**

Finally, Condition 4 appears to have been erroneous, as the section of the property that was intended to be protected was not the north side, but in fact the east side, in the highly vegetated hillside area that is immediately adjacent to the single-family residences in the Garden Ranch neighborhood. There is now a two-acre conservation easement placed on this portion of the property, as can be seen in Attachment 6 – Minor Modification. **Staff recommends modifying Condition 4 to clarify the correct location of the conservation easement and the area intended to be protected from future development.**

The proposed conditions of record for this site *as modified* would read:

1. That the uses be limited to a Religious Institution and Child Daycare Center, Large.
2. That the maximum building height be no greater than 35' and maximum total building size of 23,000 square feet.
3. A conservation easement shall remain on the eastern portion of this parcel to prohibit future development.

Application Review Criteria

UDC Section 7.5.704.D, Zone Map Amendment

An application for a Zone Map Amendment shall be subject to the following criteria for approval:

1. *The proposed rezoning is consistent with the goals and policies of the Colorado Springs Comprehensive Plan, with other plans and policies adopted by the City Council; and with the purpose statement of the proposed zone district(s).*

The proposed application is consistent with PlanCOS.

2. *The rezoning will not be detrimental to the public interest, health, safety, convenience, or general welfare.*

The proposed application will not be detrimental to public interest, health, safety, convenience, or general welfare.

3. *The location of the lands in the zoning map area being amended are appropriate for the purposes of the proposed zone district(s).*

The property being rezoned is appropriate for the proposed zone district and use.

4. *If the application proposes to rezone a small area of land, the application demonstrates that the size, scale, height density, and multimodal traffic impacts of the proposed rezoning are compatible with surrounding development or can be made compatible with surrounding development through approval conditions.*

The application has demonstrated that the proposed area of rezoning is compatible with surrounding development.

5. *If the application proposes to rezone a relatively small area of land, the application demonstrates that the change in zoning will not create significant dislocations of tenants or occupants of the property, or that any impacts are outweighed by other public benefits or progress toward other Colorado Springs Comprehensive Plan goals that would be achieved by approval of the application.*

The application to rezone does not create any dislocation of tenants or occupants.

6. *If a Land Use Plan or amendment to a Land Use Plan accompanies the application, the Land Use Plan or amendment complies with the applicable criteria in Subsection 7.5.514C.3 (Land Use Plan Criteria).*

Not applicable.

7. *The application is consistent with any approved Concept Plans in the area for which the map is being amended or includes or is accompanied by a provision that the approved Concept Plans have been classified as implemented and do not have to be amended to be considered consistent with an amended zoning map.*

There is no concept plan or master plan for this area.

8. *If the application is for creation of an ADS-O district, the approval criteria applicable to the creation of the text of the ADS-O district in Section 7.2.607D.47.5.702 (Decision) shall also apply to consideration of the zoning map amendment required to create or amend the boundaries of the ADS-O district.*

Not applicable.

9. *If rezoning to a PDZ district, the proposed PDZ district provides significant community amenities or other benefits, as determined by the Manager, that promote the achievement of Colorado Springs Comprehensive Plan goals and would not otherwise be required of the applicant under this UDC or other City or government regulations.*

The PDZ zoning has already been established. This amendment would simply modify the conditions of record.

10. *Complies with the additional standards of the base zone district where the property is located (see Article 7.2 (Zone Districts)) or in an overlay district that applies to the property (see Part 7.2.6 (Overlay Districts)).*

The base zone district is PDZ. Additional standards for this zone district are typically established through each individual PDZ zoning decision. Any other applicable standards have been met.

UDC Section 7.3.302.A, Adult or Child Day Care Center

The following are use-specific standards for a child daycare center use type:

1. *This use shall be located on a collector street with direct access to a Major or Minor arterial roadway and shall meet all requisite state and City licensure requirements.*

This use is located on Ranch Dr, a collector street with direct access to Union Blvd, a principal arterial roadway.

2. *In the A or R-E zone districts, an Adult or Child Day Care Center, Small shall only be permitted as accessory to a principal residential use.*

Not applicable.

3. *In the A zone district, an Adult or Child Day Care Center, Large shall only be permitted as accessory to a principal residential use.*

Not applicable.

4. *This use shall provide the minimum square footage of indoor and outdoor space pursuant to state requirements. No part of the required outdoor space shall be situated within any front building setback. The required outdoor space shall be screened from adjacent residential properties when necessary to reduce play area sounds.*

Per the applicant's project statement (Attachment 4), 810 square feet of indoor classroom will be provide to accommodate up to 25 children, or approximately 32 square feet per child. This meets the minimum state requirement of providing at least 30 square feet of indoor space per preschool-aged child. Additionally, the applicant intends to provide 4,750 square feet of outdoor play space, which meets and exceeds the minimum state requirement of at least 75 square feet per child at 190 square feet per child provided. The applicant states in Attachment 4 that no part of the required outdoor space shall be situated in any front building setback, and the required outdoor space will be screened if necessary to reduce play area sounds. As the applicant mentions, there is a two-acre conservation easement with mature evergreen trees to the east of the church between the play area and the adjacent residential zone district that serves as a buffer between the subject site and nearby properties. "It is physically separated from nearby residential areas and bordered by open space, making it an ideal location for this type of use with minimal impact on surrounding properties," (Attachment 5). This criterion has been met.

After evaluation of the zone change, the application meets the review criteria.

Minor Modification

Summary of Application

Although the applicant originally submitted a zone change with land use statement, the conditions of record on the zoning required that a development plan modification be reviewed concurrently as part of the public hearing process. As a result, the minor modification is the supporting document for the zone change, not the land use statement. Although it is no longer a required supporting document for this application, staff included the land use statement (Attachment 5) for additional context as to how the proposed use is compatible with the area. This minor modification amends the previously approved Beth-El Mennonite Church development plan, which was approved in 2003 and has not been amended since apart from a 2009 nonuse variance to allow a

greater square footage of wall signage than was typically permitted. The only changes depicted on the minor modification involve the use change and the updated parking requirements.

UDC Section 7.5.516.D, Modification of Approved Applications Criteria for Approval

Minor Modification: A Minor Modification may be approved if the Manager determines that the request:

- a. Complies with the provisions of this UDC and all applicable City regulations;*

Staff has determined that the application complies with the provisions of the UDC and all applicable City regulations.

- b. Is consistent with any conditions in the approval or permit proposed to be modified; and*

The minor modification will be consistent with the intent of the previous approval conditions if the zone change application is approved.

- c. Does not create more adverse impacts on surrounding properties than the development approval or permit proposed to be modified.*

No adverse impacts have been identified. Per Attachment 4 (Project Statement), “The preschool will operate during weekday morning hours, minimizing traffic and noise during peak residential times.”

Compliance with Development Standards

Development Standard	Required	Provided
Parking – Religious Institution	56	99
Parking – Child Daycare Center, Large	3	20

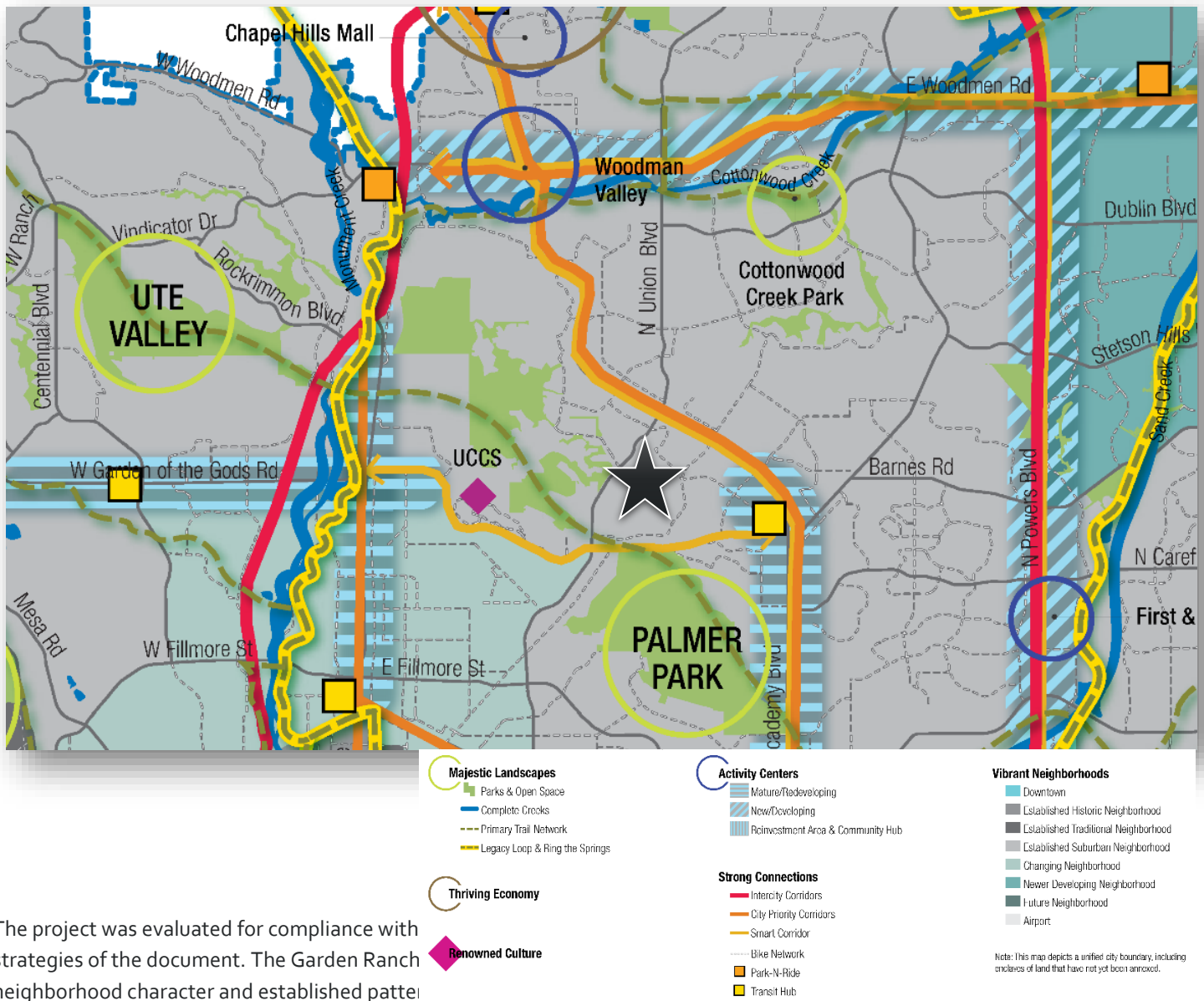
Compliance with Relevant Guiding Plans and Overlays

There are no relevant guiding plans in place for this area. The proposal was evaluated for compliance with the Hillside Overlay requirements and was found by staff to be in compliance.

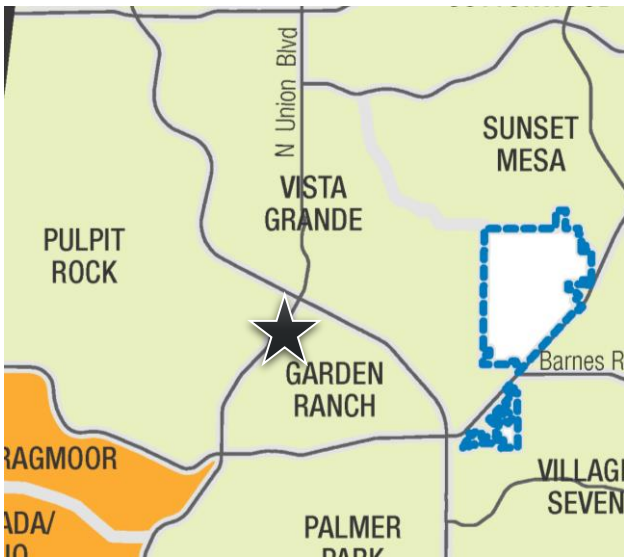
After evaluation of the minor modification, the application meets the review criteria.

Compliance with PlanCOS

PlanCOS Vision



The project was evaluated for compliance with strategies of the document. The Garden Ranch neighborhood character and established patterns of compatibility with adjacent uses and overall impact. A childcare use of this scale is compatible with the existing religious institution use, and its placement on the periphery of a residential neighborhood would be appropriate given the potential benefits for local families. PlanCOS emphasizes the importance of mixed-use development and infill where possible, and given that the existing facilities will be used with no construction needed, potential adverse impacts to the community are mitigated.

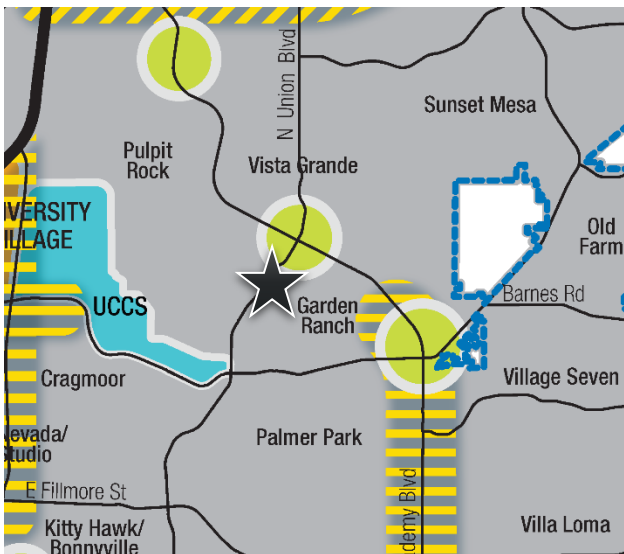


Predominant Typology

- | | |
|---|--|
| Downtown | Established Traditional Neighborhood |
| Newer Developing Neighborhood | Established Suburban Neighborhood |
| Changing Neighborhood | Airport |
| Established Historic Neighborhood | Future Neighborhood |

Vibrant Neighborhoods

PlanCOS states the goal of the established suburban neighborhood typology is to, *"recognize, support, and enhance the existing character of these neighborhoods, while supporting their ongoing investment and improved adaptation."* The proposed preschool use is appropriate for the context of the existing neighborhood and would support the enhancement of the neighborhood character. This also aligns with Policy VN-3.E, *"Encourage and support the integration of mixed-use development in neighborhoods."*



Predominant Typology

- | | |
|--|---|
| Neighborhood Centers | Mature/Redeveloping Corridors |
| Community Activity Centers | New/Developing Corridors |
| Entertainment and Commercial Centers | Reinvestment Area and Community Hub |
| Regional Employment and Activity Centers | |
| Downtown | |

Unique Places

The subject site is part of the "Neighborhood Center" typology according to the PlanCOS Vision Map, on the edge of a community activity center. The "Neighborhood Center" typology functions to describe lower-intensity areas where services primarily benefit local residents and a variety of amenities should be encouraged, while "Community Activity Centers" are defined as *"places that serve the day-to-day needs of subareas of the city and their surrounding neighborhoods. These places may be anchored by uses such as grocery stores and supporting public, private, and non-profit service establishments."* A childcare center use is compatible with both predominant typologies. Furthermore, a childcare use co-located within an existing religious institution aligns with Strategy UP-2.A-4: *"Actively support ongoing and potential infill projects, employ problem-solving approaches and continue to implement process improvements in support of infill and redevelopment,"* as it addresses a community need without requiring significant redevelopment and provides additional purpose for a gathering place that may not be continuously utilized throughout the week due to the limited needs of the religious institution.

Statement of Compliance

ZONE-25-0014 – Beth-El Mennonite Church Zone Change

After evaluation of the zone change, the application meets the review criteria.

PDZD-25-0020 – Beth-El Mennonite Church Minor Modification

After evaluation of the minor modification, the application meets the review criteria.