

**DOWNTOWN REVIEW BOARD AGENDA
SEPTEMBER 30, 2020**

STAFF: RYAN TEFERTILLER

**FILE NO:
AR DP 20-00383 – QUASI-JUDICIAL**

PROJECT: ELAN PIKES PEAK

OWNER: US BANCORP CTR AND PIKES PEAK POST 4051 VFW

DEVELOPER: GREYSTAR DEVELOPMENT CENTRAL LLC

CONSULTANT: KIMLEY-HORN



PROJECT SUMMARY:

1. Project Description: The subject application was submitted to allow construction of a 6-story, 321 unit apartment building. The 2.5 acre site is located on the northeast corner of N. Washatch Ave. and E. Pikes Peak Ave. and is zone FBZ-T2A (Form-Based Zone – Transition Sector 2A). The site is currently occupied by a one-story bank building with multiple drive-through lanes as well as a 2-story civic building occupied by the local chapter of the VFW. **(FIGURE 1)**
2. Applicant's Project Statement: **(FIGURE 2)**
3. Planning and Development Team's Recommendation: **Approval of the application with technical modifications.**

BACKGROUND:

1. Site Address: 410 and 430 E. Pikes Peak Ave. together with 17 N. Wahsatch Ave.
2. Existing Zoning/Land Use: FBZ-T2A (Form-Based Zone – Transition Sector 2A) **(FIGURE 3)**
3. Surrounding Zoning/Land Use:
 - North: FBZ-T2A / multi-family residential and office uses
 - South: FBZ-CEN and FBZ-T1 / mixed use, commercial (brewery), and office uses
 - East: FBZ-T2A / office and commercial uses
 - West: FBZ-CEN / commercial and office uses
4. PlanCOS Vision: Downtown Activity Center
5. Annexation: Town of Colorado Springs (1872)
6. Master Plan/Designated Master Plan Land Use: Experience Downtown Master Plan (2016) / Activity Center Mixed Use
7. Subdivision: Addition No. 1 to Town of Colorado Springs (1873) – replat in process under administrative review (Elan Subdivision Filing No. 1)
8. Zoning Enforcement Action: None
9. Physical Characteristics: The majority of the site is relatively flat, but the northeastern portion slopes downward with the low point roughly 10 feet lower than the rest of the site. The site includes two existing buildings which would be removed to allow construction.

STAKEHOLDER PROCESS AND INVOLVEMENT: The stakeholder involvement for this application has been extensive. Posters were displayed on the site and over 250 postcards were mailed to surrounding property owners when the application was first submitted to the City. Two virtual stakeholders meetings were organized and held in July during the internal review phase of this project. The first meeting was held specifically for owners and residents within the City Walk Lofts building directly north of the subject property. The second meeting was geared more toward other residents and property owners of the area, however, a few City Walk residents also attended. Between 10 and 20 stakeholders participated in both meetings. Both meetings were used as an opportunity for the developer and project architects to provide more detailed information about the project including design, traffic, parking, construction schedule, and likely rental rates. Additionally, participants were able to ask questions of the applicant and City Staff as well as express input or concerns about the project.

The site was posted and posters displayed multiple times during the review process. These notices included information on how to review the plans as well as the date, time, and location of the public meetings as well as the Downtown Review Board hearing. Staff has received numerous emails from stakeholders regarding the project, all of which are included as **FIGURE 4** of this staff report. Any additional formal communications received by Staff just prior to the hearing will be made available at the hearing. While some stakeholders offered support for the proposed project (e.g. Downtown Partnership Staff), most expressed some concern. The most common concerns were traffic in the alley, architecture, and view-impacts from the adjacent residential building to the north. The applicant has worked diligently to address these concerns through significant project modifications. Specifically, an internal ramp was added to the parking structure to reduce dependency on the alley, and the building design, architecture and materials were significantly changed on the north side of the building.

The application was reviewed by all standard City agencies including, Public Works, Traffic Engineering, Colorado Springs Utilities, Water Resource Engineering, the Parking Enterprise, Real Estate Services,

Parks and Recreation, and others. All reviews support the project; any remaining technical concerns are included as Technical Modifications at the end of this report.

ANALYSIS OF REVIEW CRITERIA/MAJOR ISSUES/COMPREHENSIVE PLAN & MASTER PLAN CONFORMANCE:

1. Background

The proposed project spans three parcels on the northeastern corner of E. Pikes Peak Ave. and N. Wahsatch Ave. The property is currently occupied by a small bank building with 5-lanes of drive-through (built in 1977), a two-story civic building occupied by the local chapter of the VFW (built in 1963), and large areas of surface parking. In addition to the Pikes Peak and Wahsatch right-of-ways to the south and west of the site, there is a public alley that connects N. Wahsatch to N. Corona St. north of the primary site (the smallest parcel sits north of the alley). The area around the site is transitional area between the core of Downtown to west and southwest and the Shooks Run Neighborhood to the east and northeast. Adjacent land uses range from a 12-story condo building immediately north of the site, to a 3-story office building immediately east, to 1-story single-family homes to the northeast.

2. Review Criteria / Design & Development Issues:

a. Project Details

Should the project be approved, the existing structures on the site would be demolished to make way for the proposed 6-story, 321 unit apartment building. The proposed building spans the width of the property from Wahsatch to within 10 feet of the eastern property line. While the plan includes a roughly 7,500 square foot parcel north of the alley, no new buildings are proposed there (it will be developed as a dog park with below-grade stormwater improvements). The proposed building includes a 359 stall enclosed parking structure occupying the majority of the basement level and ground level of the building. Access to the parking structure is gained from Pikes Peak Ave., Wahsatch Ave. as well as the alley to the north.

The proposed building includes multiple courtyard amenity areas on the second level of the building (roof of the ground level). In addition to providing resident-serving amenities (e.g. pool, grills, game area, landscaping, lounge areas, etc.), the courtyards allow all upper level units to have improved views, balconies and access to light and air. The building uses a variety of materials and colors to break up the large mass and provide interest to the viewer. Considerable effort has been made to improve the aesthetics of the north-facing elevation to minimize impact on neighbors to the north.

b. Form-Based Code

The Downtown Colorado Springs Form-Based Code implements physical standards that result in the development of a pedestrian-friendly, high-density, mixed use area. New buildings are required to be constructed in close proximity to the sidewalk and building facades must include high levels of glazing to maximize pedestrian interest. The proposed building is closely aligned with the basic Form-Based Code standards.

One Standard that deserves additional discussion, however, is building height. The subject property is within the FBZ-T2A Sector which limits building height to 4 stories. However, Section 3 of the Code allows the use of "Density Bonus Points" to add an additional 2 stories to allow buildings to be as tall as 6 stories in the T2 Sectors. The concept of Density Bonuses was established in the Code to allow limited increases in building height in exchange for "the provision of socially beneficial building elements." The proposed project includes a wide range of elements that earn more than enough density bonus points to allow a 6-story building; examples include: alley improvements; market rate housing units; high efficiency water fixtures; underground parking; and bike storage. In total, the project qualifies for 83 density bonus points where only 5 points are needed for the two additional stories.

c. Analysis

The proposed apartment project is the biggest to be proposed within Downtown Colorado Springs. While bigger, and certainly taller, buildings exist Downtown, the proposed project with 321 apartment units will be a significant step forward in adding residents to our urban core. Those residents will be more likely to eat, drink and shop downtown creating a huge benefit to local businesses. Furthermore, urban residents make employers more likely to locate (or stay) downtown as nearby, high-quality housing is extremely desirable to members of the work-force. Additional urban housing opportunities has been one of the primary goals of the Downtown Master Plan for decades. Specifically, the Experience Downtown Master Plan (2016) includes the creation of a “diverse and inclusive place to live, integrated with adjacent neighborhoods” as one of the 8 primary plan goals.

While the project will surely benefit downtown through the creation of significant new housing opportunities, it must still be evaluated using the required Form-Based Code Standards. The building is considered an “apartment building” which is permitted in the T2B Sector. As previously mentioned the building has nearly 100% lot coverage over the primary parcel. Portions of the building abut both front property lines (Pikes Peak and Wahsatch) while the building adjacent to the southwest corner of the site is pushed back roughly 15 feet (which is the maximum setback for an apartment building). While there is no new construction planned for the northern parcel, and hence no building envelopes to comply with, the parcel is being improved as a private dog park which will provide open-space for residents and their pets as well as interest to pedestrians walking along Wahsatch.

The building uses both Stoop and Storefront frontage types given the presence of street level residential units along Pikes Peak as well as resident common spaces along Wahsatch. Both portions of the public-facing building façade meet the FBC’s minimum glazing requirements.

The project includes an enclosed parking structure for residents. The structure includes 359 parking stalls (including 8 ADA stalls) for the 321 apartment units. At a ratio of over 1.1 stalls per unit, the parking requirement within Section 2.6 of the Form-Based Code is easily met. In addition to structured resident parking, the site benefits from ample adjacent on-street parking. Counting only half of the public stalls within the Pikes Peak medial still totals an additional 27 stalls for guests or other visitors to the project.

The proposed plan also provided details for public improvements along the south and west side of the project. New hardscapes and landscape improvements are proposed for the amenity zones on Pikes Peak and Wahsatch. New street trees, shrubs, and perennials are proposed for the generous amenity zone along Pikes Peak as well as the activity zone between the proposed building and the Wahsatch sidewalk. Bike racks, benches, dog waste stations, and paver areas are all proposed around the site’s perimeter as well. Lastly, the proposed dog park north of the alley is noteworthy. The area will be fence and improved with breeze. Dog agility obstacles, benches, additional dog waste stations and even a dog water station are proposed within the area.

The key standard that deserves attention from the DRB is building height. When the Form-Based Zone was initially drafted, some stakeholders requested height limits at the edges of the zone that would provide a transition from the Central Sector where there is no limit on building height to the surrounding areas outside of the Form-Based Zone where most buildings are one or two stories in height. As such the Transition 1 and Transition 2 Sectors were established on the edges of Downtown, specifically, along the N. Tejon corridor, as well as the northeast and southeast edges of the zone. The subject property is zoned FBZ-T2B, which limits the height of most buildings to 4-stories. However, project proponents can utilize Section 3 of the Code to earn Density Bonus points and increase building height to 6 stories.

As discussed above, Density Bonus points can be earned when a project includes “socially beneficial building elements.” The proposed project includes a wide range of elements that earn more than enough density bonus points to allow a 6-story building; examples include: alley

improvements; market rate housing units; high efficiency water fixtures; underground parking; and bike storage. In total, the project qualifies for 83 density bonus points where only 5 points are needed for the two additional stories.

Under the current Code, Density Bonus points can only be awarded by the Downtown Review Board. The DRB must verify that the required number of Density Bonus actions are reflected on the development plan and that the additional building height is justified. The DRB hearing is also an opportunity for stakeholders to provide input to the Board whether they are supportive or have concerns about the proposal.

d. Technical Issues

The development plan for this project has gone through three rounds of City review (initial submittal and two resubmittals). While some technical issues remain, the vast majority of initial comments have been fully resolved. The primary issues that must still be modified before final approval include: revision to the project drainage report and drainage related details on the development plan; finalize utility studies supporting the project; complete minor updates to the project traffic study; and to update the development plan to support the subdivision plat and the status of the public alley to the north. City Staff is confident that all these issues can be resolved without any major changes to the plan presented to the Downtown Review Board.

3. Conformance with the City Comprehensive Plan:

The proposed apartment project is consistent with a number of provisions within the City's Comprehensive Plan. The new residential units will help establish Downtown as a vibrant neighborhood in addition to the economic and cultural heart of the City. The proposed improvements will transform largely vacant and auto-oriented properties into high density designs with significant public improvements and placemaking. This is an outstanding example of an infill project that will benefit the surrounding area as well as the City as a whole. The project has over 500 feet of frontage along Pikes Peak which is a critical bike route connecting the center of downtown to the Legacy Loop and Shooks Run trail system; the new residents will help populate this multi-modal route with users and activity. The proposed project is well aligned with nearly every goal of PlanCOS.

4. Conformance with the Area's Master Plan:

The subject property falls within the 2016 Experience Downtown Master Plan. The proposed use, building and density are all well aligned with the Plan. The project adheres to many of the 8 primary plan goals, including: Goal 1 – Economic and Cultural Heart of the Region; Goal 2 – Diverse and Inclusive Place to Live, Integrated with Adjacent Neighborhoods; Goal 4 – A Place for Healthy and Active Lifestyles; Goal 5 – A Walkable and Bike-Friendly Center Connected Through Safe and Accessible Multi-Modal Networks; and Goal 6 – A Leader in Innovative Urban Design and Sustainability.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Item No: 4 CPC DP 20-00383 – ELAN PIKES PEAK

Approve the Elan Pikes Peak form-based zone development plan with two additional stories through Density Bonus provisions, based upon the finding that the application complies with the Standards in Section 2 and Density Bonuses requirements in Section 3 of Form-Based Code, subject to compliance with the following conditions of approval and technical plan modifications:

Technical and Informational Modifications to the Form-Based Zone Development Plan:

1. Gain acceptance of the project's drainage report and update the development plan to reflect compliance with the necessary stormwater standards.
2. Gain approval of the necessary utility reports including the Hydraulic Grade Line study and the Wastewater Facilities Master Report.
3. Revise the Traffic Impact Analysis to meet the final minor review comments from the City's Traffic Engineers.
4. Add the speed line of sight to the project's access points on the plan.
5. Update the development plan to reflect the current status of the alley north of the site.