



Legislation Text

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An informational presentation updating the City Council on the Neighborhood Planning Program and the Southeast Strong Community Plan

(Legislative)

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Summary:

An informational presentation updating the City Council on the Southeast Strong Community Plan and the Neighborhood/Community Planning Program. This presentation will provide an overview of program's work to select a consultant, kick off a second neighborhood plan ("Plan 3A") for a portion of western Colorado Springs, and recent coordination with CONO. This presentation will also dive into the efforts of the Southeast Strong Community Plan's Steering Committee, chaired by Councilor Avila, over the past year and other active efforts to support the Southeast Strong Community Plan and prepare it for Council adoption.

Background:

PlanCOS, Colorado Springs' comprehensive plan, states small area land use plans are essential for implementation of the PlanCOS vision. PlanCOS sets the overall vision and framework, but neighborhood plans are necessary to apply this larger vision in a practical manner by creating an avenue for planning and implementation at scale that can address the unique characteristics and needs of different sub-areas of the city. As a direct recommendation from PlanCOS, the Neighborhood Planning Program is now underway and manages the creation and implementation of these "community plans."

The City of Colorado Springs' Comprehensive Planning Division of the City Planning Department divided the city into twelve community planning areas, generally dividing each City Council district in half. Comprehensive Planning staff are currently drafting language for the Southeast Strong Community Plan which is identified as plan area 4A in the attached map (**see "Community Plan Boundary Map" attachment**). Note that these initial boundaries are subject to refinement and that the alpha-numeric designations are placeholders, prior to community-generated naming and branding.

Community plans will be land-use centered but will also address other related topics such as transportation planning, economic development, public safety, housing, and homelessness as appropriate and contain site-specific, neighborhood-specific recommendations which are coordinated with the applicable City Department or agency. All community plans will be organized around the six Vision Themes established by PlanCOS-Vibrant Neighborhoods, Unique Places, Renowned Culture,

Strong Connections, Thriving Economy, and Majestic Landscapes. To help ensure the neighborhood planning process is equitable across the city, the process and final documents should be relatively consistent across community plans.

In order to expedite the production of community plans, \$200,000 total was allotted between 2021 and 2022's City budget to hire a land use and planning consultant. A Request For Proposals (RFP) was published, and staff awarded the on-call contract to MIG, a national planning firm, following a competitive ranking and interview process. With the assistance of MIG, the Neighborhood Planning Program is actively kicking off a second community plan for area "3A." In July 2021, staff presented a list of high, medium, and low priority plan areas to City Council. Priority was established using datasets that identify different levels of planning need (**see "Plan Area Priority Matrix" attachment**). According to this matrix, plan areas 1B, 3A, 4A, 4B, 5A, and 5B (**refer to the "Community Plan Boundary Map" attachment**) are of the highest priority with Plan 3A receiving the highest score. Plan 3A contains the neighborhoods generally known as:

- Mesa Springs-west of I-25 and south of Fillmore Road
- Mesa-west of the Mesa Springs neighborhood and south of Fillmore Road
- Westside-west of I-25 and north of Highway 24
- Old Colorado City-northwest of the Westside neighborhood and north of Highway 24
- Gold Hill Mesa-west of I-25 and south of Highway 24
- Midland-West of the Gold Hill Mesa neighborhood and south of Highway 24
- Lower Skyway-South of the Gold Hill Mesa neighborhood and Cheyenne Road
- Ivywild-South of I-25 and downtown Colorado Springs
- Stratton Meadows-Southwest of I-25 and north of Lake Avenue

The Neighborhood/Community Planning Program is collaborating closely with CONO and intends to utilize CONO's newly established Neighborhood Network Board, in conjunction with the City Council representative(s), as the 'steering committee' for "Plan 3A." The Neighborhood Network Board will ensure a resident-lead process and provide valuable expertise and lived experiences applicable to subject neighborhoods. Members of Neighborhood Network Boards must graduate from CONO's Neighborhood University program-a 10-week curriculum on Colorado Springs and El Paso County civics and neighborhood empowerment. Staff presents the Neighborhood Planning Program and the role of Neighborhood Network Boards in the community plan process early in the curriculum.

The Neighborhood Planning Program kicked off the inaugural community plan, to later be named Southeast Strong, in mid-2020. Since that time, a Steering Committee, chaired by Councilor Avila, was formed and has met to discuss key topics for southeast Colorado Springs including economic development, health equity, transportation planning and traffic safety, parks and trails, and land use. However, during the first meeting of the Steering Committee, one thing was clear-Southeast Colorado Springs has "plan and survey-fatigue" and is tired of explaining what they want in their neighborhoods. These sentiments influenced all components of the Southeast Strong Community Plan. For instance, in lieu of a typical public input survey at the plan's kick off, staff gathered resident responses from the 80910 and 80916 zip code within most surveys issued by the City in the last five years. This included responses from PlanCOS, HomeCOS, ConnectCOS, Safer Roads Southeast, COSBikes!, Mountain Metro ridership surveys, Public Art Master plan, Tree Canopy Assessment, and from the Southeast Economic Vitality Leadership group. This also included survey responses from partner agencies like Solid Rock Community Development Corporation.

Due to data showing a significant life expectancy disparity between residents of southeast Colorado Springs and residents of other neighborhoods and reports of a significant urban heat island in southeast Colorado Springs, in 2021, staff hired a consultant to produce a health assessment of the Southeast Strong plan area. This assessment measured datasets that could be factors leading to a lower life expectancy as well as factors that generate an urban heat island effect. The data within this health assessment compared the plan area to other areas of Colorado Springs using the city's average within a particular dataset as the baseline. While some datasets lead to some not-so-surprising deductions, others lead to noteworthy and thought-provoking conversation regarding data versus reality and lived experience. Specifics are included in the presentation. Overall, this health assessment is considered "money well-spent" due to its role in shifting certain discussions and honing in the plan's direction in a meaningful way.

Inspired by the Mill Street Neighborhood Plan, the Southeast Strong Community Plan will also tackle property crime hotspots by looking at how CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) principles could discourage future crimes in those locations. As of last month, staff has contracted with the Quad Innovation Alliance to produce a "Design Out Crime" location-based report for the plan area. CPTED strategies may include improving lighting, trimming vegetation, increasing the perception of surveillance, or increasing a sense of place and pride of ownership. This report will be produced with guidance from CSPD's CPTED officers within both the Sand Creek and Gold Hill Divisions. Staff expects recommendations from the Quad's report to be wrapped into the Southeast Strong Community Plan.

Currently, staff is drafting plan language based on feedback from resident's responses to previous surveys, Steering Committee meetings, Councilor Avila, and conversations with City Departments and agencies. Staff is anticipating this draft will be ready for public review in mid-2022. During this time, staff will also engage with the public on what the draft plan got right, got wrong, or may be missing.

Previous Council Action:

N/A

Financial Implications:

N/A

City Council Appointed Board/Commission/Committee Recommendation:

N/A

Stakeholder Process:

N/A

Alternatives:

N/A

Proposed Motion:

N/A

N/A