



SCHOOL DISTRICT 11 – PALMER HIGH SCHOOL

Planning Commission December 10, 2025

Staff Report by Case Planner: Ryan Tefertiller



Quick Facts

Applicant

N.E.S. Inc.

Property Owner

School District 11

Address / Location

301 N. Nevada Ave.

TSN(s)

6418103001, 6407427022, -021, -020, -019, -012, -011, -009, -008, -006, -005, -002, & -001

Zoning and Overlays

Current: R-1 6, R-5, & OR

Proposed: FBZ-T2A

Site Area

8.27 acres

Proposed Land Use

Civic / School

Applicable Code

UDC and FBC

Council District

District 3

Project Summary

School District 11 has initiated three applications in support of the Palmer High School Renovation Project: a zone change from R-1 6 / R-5 / OR (Single-Family Medium, Multi-Family High, and Office Residential) to FBZ-T2A (Form-Based Zone – Transition Sector 2A); the vacation of the E. Boulder St. right-of-way between N. Nevada Ave. and N. Weber St.; and a Land Use Plan illustrating conceptual improvements over a three phase project. The applications support a \$100 million reinvestment in the City’s first/original public school.

File Number	Application Type	Decision Type
ZONE-25-0026	Zone Change	Quasi-Judicial
SUBD-25-0076	ROW Vacation	Legislative
LUPL-25-0012	Land Use Plan	Quasi-Judicial

Key Exhibits for this project include:

- Attachment 1 – Palmer HS Project Statement
- Attachment 2 – Palmer HS Zone Change Legal Description
- Attachment 3 – Palmer HS Zone Change Exhibit
- Attachment 4 – Boulder ROW Vacation Plat
- Attachment 5 – Palmer High School Land Use Plan

Background

Prior Land-Use History and Applicable Actions

<i>Action</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Date</i>
Annexation	Town of Colorado Springs	1871
Subdivision	Town of Colorado Springs	1871
Master Plan	Experience Downtown Plan	2016
Prior Enforcement Action	None	N/A

Site History

Palmer High School, previously known as Colorado Springs High School, was the first permanent school in Colorado Springs, opening in 1875. The original school was located at Bijou and Cascade, a few blocks southwest of the current campus. The original building was severely damaged by a fire in 1890 and was replaced by a new facility on the northwest corner of Platte and Weber (a portion of the existing campus) in 1893. This building operated until a new building was constructed on the site in 1939. Numerous additions have taken place to the 1939 building, most notably in 1970, 2000, and 2008.

The 8+ acres that are included within the proposed zone change and land use plan have been assembled over a wide period of time. While the properties south of Boulder have been owned by the School District for nearly 100 years, additional properties have been acquired more recently. The Auxiliary Gym building was built on the northeast corner of Nevada and Boulder in 1970 and it included a tunnel under Boulder St. to connect the new gym to the rest of the buildings south of Boulder. As recently as this past summer, the District has acquired four properties along the north edge of the project site, all fronting on E. St. Vrain St. While those properties are not critical for phase 1A of the plan, they are necessary in order to implement certain elements of phase 1B (e.g. the athletic field and track) as well as later phases of campus build-out.

Applicable Code

The subject applications were submitted in mid-2025 and are reviewed under the Unified Development Code. However, the project includes a request to establish the site within the Downtown Form-Based Zone (FBZ) which is subject to the 2009 Downtown Form-Based Code (aka the Downtown Regulating Plan). Should the zone change application be approved by City Council, additional applications for the project will be reviewed under the Downtown Form-Based Code. Lastly, as a public school project, School District 11 is entitled to additional rights per Article 32 (School District Boards – Powers and Duties) of Title 32 (Education) of State Statutes. As such, public school districts can obtain building permits for new construction directly from the State of Colorado or from local authorities who are “pre-qualified” by the State to issue permits on their behalf.

Surrounding Zoning and Land Use

Adjacent Property Existing Conditions

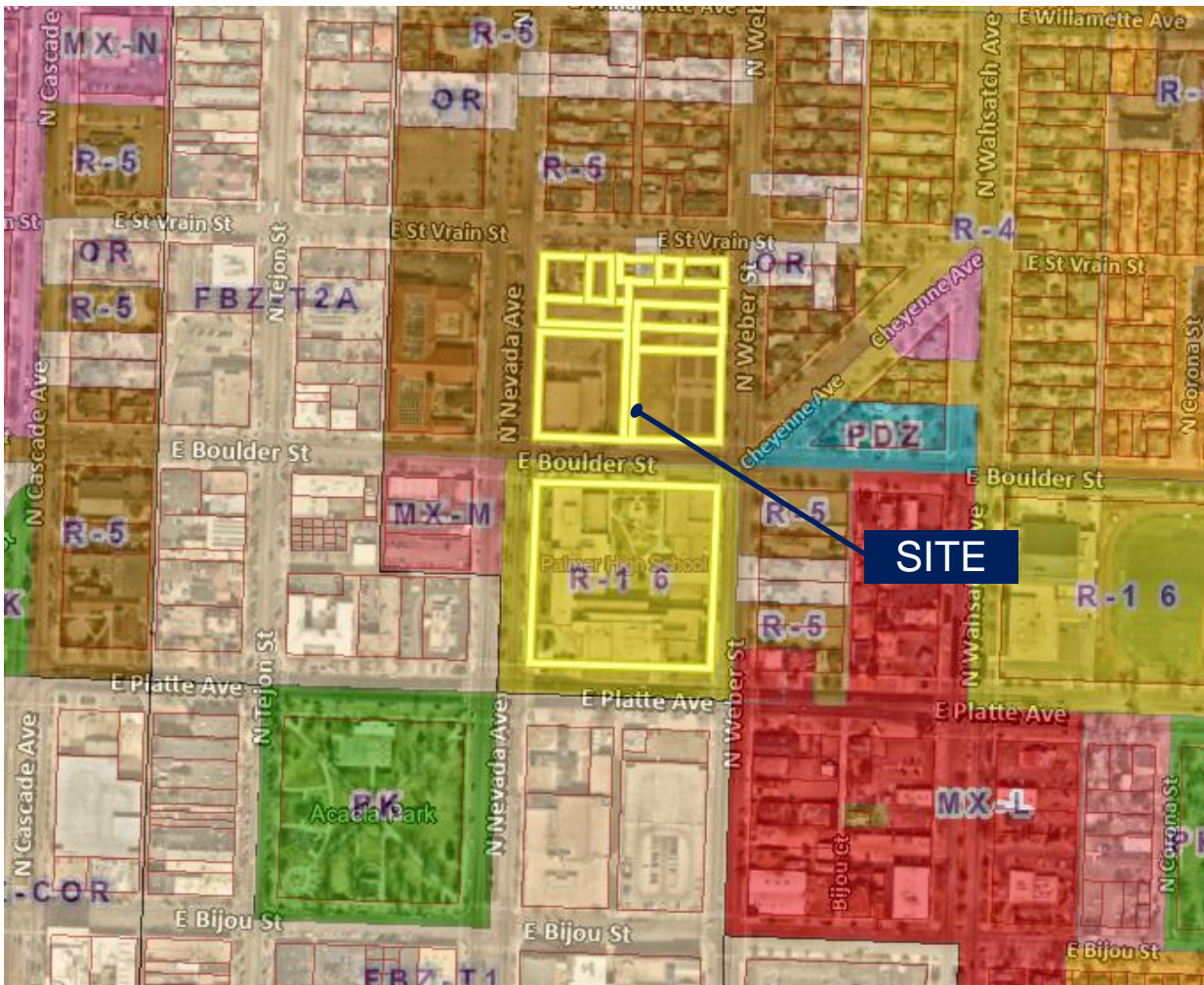
Zoning

Existing Use

Special Conditions

North	R-5 (Multi-Family High)	Single-Family & Multi-Family Residential, Office
West	FBZ-T2A (Form-Based Zone – Transition Sector 2A), MX-M (Mixed-Use Medium Scale), and Institution R-5 (Multi-Family High)	Commercial, Service, and Religious
South	FBZ-T1 (Form-Based Zone – Transition Sector 1)	Commercial, Vacant, and Civic (YMCA and Parking Structure)
East	OR (Office Residential), R-5 (Multi-Family High), PDZ (Planned Development Zone), and MX-L (Mixed-Use Large Scale)	Single-Family & Multi-Family Residential, Religious Institution, Office, Surface Parking, and Commercial

Zoning Map



See Attachment 6 - Zoning Map for additional detail

Public Notice

Public Notice Occurrences (Poster / Postcards)	Formal public notices (postcards and posters) were sent and posted at the time of application submittal (June 2025) as well as prior to the November 4 th Downtown Review Board hearing. Postcards will be sent and posters posted prior to all future public hearings
Postcard Mailing Radius	1,000 feet
Number of Postcards Mailed	309 postcards mailed on each occasion.
Number of Comments Received	Planning staff has received approximately 20 formal communications (emails and letters) from stakeholders regarding the applications (Attachment 7 – Consolidated Stakeholder Input Palmer HS project). Input included those in opposition, in support, and those that seem somewhat supportive of the overall concept but feel strongly that certain project elements (e.g. closure of Boulder to public use, or removal of the St. Vrain residential structures) should be modified. See Attachment 8 – Palmer HS Stakeholder Responses for the applicant's formal response to many of the issues and concerns raised by stakeholders.

Public Engagement

Public engagement for the Palmer High School project has been significant. In late 2024, shortly after the District 11 School Board formally announced funding for the project, the project team convened the Palmer High School Renovation Steering Committee. The Committee was made up of school leadership, faculty, students, alumni, parents, community members, City representatives, and the design team. Committee members were able to provide input on project design alternatives and were expected to facilitate communication between the Committee and the stakeholders that they represent. The Committee met 6 to 8 times through late 2024 and early 2025. See Attachment 9 – Palmer HS Renovation Steering Committee document for more information.

The project team also organized a number of public open houses where stakeholders could learn more about the project and provide input to the project team. At least four public meetings were held between the fall of 2024 and spring of 2025.

The project team also held a series of stakeholder specific listening sessions with students, faculty, and alumni to answer questions and hear input to the project design. Additionally, the team met with key stakeholder groups regarding the proposal to close Boulder St. between Weber and Nevada. Specific conversations also took place with City Traffic, Downtown Partnership and local businesses, and with Memorial Hospital and their ambulance providers due to their presence roughly one mile to the east along Boulder St. and their use of the public road for emergency service response.

The District's outreach to stakeholders via social media, e-newsletters, emails, and direct mailings are also noteworthy. In total, the applicant indicates that the project has had over 40,000 "touch points" through all forms of outreach and participation.

Lastly, this project has already completed two public hearings: one at the Parks Advisory Board specific to changes to the historic median on N. Nevada Ave. and one at the Downtown Review Board for recommendations on the three applications. Only one public comment was made at Parks Board; the stakeholder sought a condition of approval to utilize native grasses as opposed to turf grass in the enlarged median. At the November 4th Downtown Review Board

three community members spoke in support of the applications while three stakeholders spoke in opposition of the project. See attached draft minutes from the Downtown Review Board public hearing for more detailed summary of the meeting discussion.

Timeline of Review

Initial Submittal Date	June 17, 2025
Number of Review Cycles	3
Items Ready for Agenda	Ready to place on public hearing agendas on October 9, 2025

Agency Review

Public Works and City Engineering Review of Traffic Impact Study

The City's Traffic Engineers have worked closely with the applicant's team, including their traffic engineers, on the need for traffic analysis for the project, including specific analysis of the proposed vacation of Boulder St. between Nevada and Weber. The initial application submittal included a traffic study that projected the impact of vehicles being displaced from E. Boulder St. once the ROW was vacated (refer to Attachment 10 – Palmer HS April 2025 Traffic Study). That study was updated in September of 2025 to incorporate data collected after the temporary closure of E. Boulder was initiated over the summer (refer to Attachment 11 – Palmer HS Traffic Study Update). The updated study utilized real data, not modeling, to evaluate impacts on adjacent roadways and intersections. That said, the following comment remains effective from Public Works staff review:

The Public Works Department understands the application for a Vacation Plat for Boulder Street supports the proposed zoning and land use applications for the Palmer HS Renovation Project but it is subjective if the proposed vacation meets the criteria established in Code Section 7.5.522.C.5. The Code criteria states "the right of way is no longer needed for public transportation purposes."

To that criteria, Public Works has considered the following:

- **Operational Changes at Southbound Nevada Avenue:** The current closure of Boulder Street has had minimal impact on the southbound left turn from Nevada Avenue to Platte Avenue. Traffic counts at the Platte/Nevada intersection were conducted to compare conditions before and after the closure of Boulder Street between Nevada Avenue and Weber Street. Results showed a 5- to 6-second increase in delay, with the Level of Service (LOS: an operational rating where A represents the best performance and F the worst) shifting from LOS B to LOS C. The projected impact over the next five years is expected to remain the same.
- **Limits Detours Planned Platte Avenue Construction:** The City, through a voter-approved Pikes Peak Rural Transportation Authority (PPRTA) project, plans to complete improvements on Platte Avenue between Wahsatch Avenue and Circle Drive within the next few years. During construction, Platte Avenue between Wahsatch Avenue and Institution Street is expected to be closed, with Boulder Street serving as the primary east-west detour route.
- **Conflict with Platte Avenue Corridor Study Solution:** The Platte Avenue Corridor Study recommended solution would reconfigure Platte Avenue between Tejon Street and Weber Street to a narrower street section with enhanced pedestrian improvements. The Study also developed a solution that proposes converting Platte Avenue and Boulder Street (between Wahsatch and Circle) into a one-way couplet to enhance east-west mobility in central Colorado Springs. This transformation would support higher vehicular capacity, a dedicated transit guideway, and protected bike lanes. The closure of Boulder Street between Nevada Avenue and Weber Street could impact implementation of either solution identified in the Study.
- **Increased Traffic on Platte Avenue:** With Boulder Street closed, most displaced traffic will be redirected to Platte Avenue, increasing daily traffic volumes by 500 to 750 vehicles per day, over the existing 12,700 vehicles daily. The Platte/Wahsatch intersection remains at a LOS C with or without the Boulder Street closure.
- **Disruption of the Downtown Grid System:** The established street grid supports intuitive navigation and organic traffic dispersion. The closure of Boulder Street would concentrate traffic on adjacent streets and increase

congestion. The street grid also encourages walking and biking by offering short, direct connections between residential areas and destinations along Tejon Street.

Should City Council approve the Vacation Plat, the following conditions should be added:

- An agreement between the City of Colorado Springs and School District 11 shall be entered into that requires School District 11 to allow public egress over the property if the space is unused for construction or permanent School District 11 activities.
- Request that D11 collaborate with the City to provide public egress during construction of the PPRTA-fund Platte Avenue Improvements (Wahsatch to Circle) project.
- An agreement between the City of Colorado Springs and School District 11 shall be entered into that requires School District 11 to return ownership to the City of Colorado Springs, should the district choose to dispose of the property.

School District

No comments received (District 11 is the property owner and developer).

Parks

Parks Department Staff commented on the fact that CDI fees would be calculated at time of development plan. Additionally, Parks Staff determined that the proposed closure of E. Boulder St. between N. Nevada Ave. and N. Weber St., and the requirement by Traffic Engineering to remove the southbound Nevada to eastbound Boulder left turn pocket, would trigger the need for Parks Advisory Board (PAB) approval of a physical change to Nevada's historic median. Specifically, the median would be enlarged since the left turn pocket would no longer be necessary. An initial presentation on this change was provided to the PAB on October 9, 2025 while formal action was taken at the Board's November 13, 2025 meeting. While there was some discussion among the Board members about the preferred ground plane treatment of the new median area, the Board ultimately unanimously approved the changes as proposed with turf grass to match the rest of the median.

SWENT

A few minor technical comments regarding stormwater infrastructure were provided for the project. However, the SWENT reviewer also noted that School District 11 has their own MS4 permit through the State of Colorado and is not subject to our local MS4 requirements.

Colorado Springs Utilities

Colorado Springs Utilities (CSU) Staff's primary comment was that more detailed analysis and comments would be provided on the project's development plan (as opposed to the Land Use Plan discussed here). However, CSU Staff is requiring that the proposed vacation plat and ordinance be updated to document reservation of public utility easements for any existing utility infrastructure within the area to be vacated.

Pikes Peak Regional Building Department and the State of Colorado

As a public school project, District 11 has a number of rights and abilities for the proposed project that are not available typical private property owners or developers. As stated above School District 11 is entitled to additional rights per Article 32 (School District Boards – Powers and Duties) of Title 32 (Education) of State Statutes. As such, public school districts can obtain building permits for new construction directly from the State of Colorado or from local authorities who are "pre-qualified" by the State to issue permits on their behalf. While the State does not have authority to act on the proposed vacation of public right-of-way, Planning Department staff are not routed building permit applications for public school construction on School District land; and as long as applicable building codes are met, the permits are issued regardless of zoning or entitlement status.

Summary of Application

The Palmer High School project includes a request to rezone the 8+ acre site from R-1 6 (Single-Family – Medium), R-5 (Multi-Family High) and OR (Office Residential) to FBZ-T2A (Form-Based Zone – Transition Sector 2A). The applicant's project statement (see Attachment 1 - Palmer HS Project Statement) includes significant discussion of the zoning on the site and the surrounding area, and how the proposed zone supports the project and is consistent with uses and development patterns in the area. This project is relatively unique relative to typical Downtown Review Board actions in that the DRB is only making a recommendation and does not have direct approval authority for any of the three applications under review. After the Downtown Review Board's recommendation, the project will be heard next by the City's Planning Commission; this is due to the Commission's responsibility for all other zone districts besides the Form-Based Zone and for their role in offering recommendations to Council on ROW vacations. Both Downtown Review Board and City Planning Commission recommendations will ultimately be forwarded to City Council for final action.

The proposed project includes a change of zone request for a few reasons. First, the City's subdivision code restricts building permits to wholly platted lots; future submittal of a subdivision plat to establish the full 8+ acre site as one lot is anticipated. The City's Unified Development Code (UDC) requires that each lot have only one zone designation so the site's three zoning designations today must be consolidated to one designation in order to support future platting. While the applicant and Planning Staff considered a range of potential zone districts for the site (schools are permitted in most Mixed Use districts and allowed via a conditional use permit in all residential zones), use of the Downtown Form-Based Zone was ultimately determined to be the best option for the site.

The FBZ already exists to the south and west of the campus (refer to Attachment 6 - Zoning Map) so the extension of the of the existing FBZ area is logical. While expansion of the existing residential zone districts together with a conditional use permit may be favored by some (refer to Attachment 7 – Consolidated Stakeholder Input), the development standards for those zones (e.g. setbacks, building height, lot coverage, etc.) do not support the proposed school design nor are they consistent with existing development patterns in the area. Conversely, the FBZ-T2A zone requires development that is consistent with the City's urban core while also respecting the transitional context of the site with single family uses to the north and northeast of the campus. That said, the proposed construction will need relief from a couple Form-Based standards given the unique nature of the civic building.

Application Review Criteria

UDC Section 7.5.704.D

The Unified Development Code (UDC) requires evaluation of the following criteria for any proposed change of zone:

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 project, as well as the proposed FBZ-T2A zone designation, is consistent with the PlanCOS as well as with the 2016 Experience Downtown Plan; see below for more detailed analysis of plan compliance.

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

The subject applications were initiated to support a \$100 million investment to significantly improve Palmer High School. The proposed work will create a modern learning environment, representing a significant improvement to current learning conditions at the facility. Significant public participation in the project helped ensure that the proposed design reflects the public interest, health, safety, convenience and general welfare. The proposed closure of E. Boulder St. will create a consolidated campus improving student safety in a number of ways.

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 subject site is located immediately adjacent to the northeastern edge of the current Form-Based Zone; the proposed district is a logical extension of the zone. Use of the T2A transitional sector designation will limit building height and uses to respect the context of the site and the medium density residential uses to the north and northeast.

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.

N/A – the proposed zone district covers more than 8 acres and is not considered “a small area of land” especially in the downtown urban context.

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.

N/A – the proposed zone district covers more than 8 acres and is not considered “a small area of land” especially in the downtown urban context. It should be noted that the proposed land use plan does illustrate future removal of 4 residential structures at the north edge of the site. While the acquisition and removal of those structures does result in some displacement, it is minor in light of the size of the project.

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).

The associated land use plan does comply with the required criteria; see below for additional analysis.

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 approved Concept Plans that have been classified as implemented do not have to be amended in order to be considered consistent with an amended zoning map.

There are no approved concept plans applicable to the site.

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.

N/A

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 governmental regulations.

N/A

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 proposed district complies with the standards of the Form-Based Zone. No overlay zones are proposed for the site.

After evaluation of the Palmer High School zone change, Staff finds that the application meets the review criteria.

Compliance with Relevant Guiding Plans and Overlays

As stated above, the proposed zone is consistent with the Vision, Goals, and Action Steps of the 2016 Experience Downtown Plan. The following are goals and action steps that are closely aligned with the project:

- Action Step: Form deeper engagement partnerships with Colorado College, Pikes Peak Community College, and University of Colorado – Colorado Springs to better connect students with Downtown opportunities for learning, living, shopping, dining, culture, fun and employment. *While Palmer High School isn’t specifically mentioned, it should be considered similarly with the other educational institutions specifically named here.*
- Goal: Diverse and Inclusive Place to Live, Integrated with Adjacent Neighborhoods – Downtown’s neighborhoods are thriving places providing housing and amenities for people and families of all cultures, ages and incomes. Efforts are made to preserve existing neighborhood character while encouraging residential growth, focusing on building a greater density of residents within the core and surrounding neighborhoods. New and modified residential development includes workforce and affordable housing. Public transit, employment opportunities, schools, shopping and parks are conveniently located within walking distance.

- Land Use Chapter – Institutional – Institutional areas are varied in use types, all different but integral to Downtown’s flow of visitors throughout the day. These areas are associated with Colorado College, Palmer High School, City Auditorium, the Pikes Peak Center for the Performing Arts and the Pioneers Museum. Because the buildings associated with these areas are generally considered prominent public landmarks – many frequented by out-of-area visitors and pedestrian trips – it is important that they are integrated into the urban fabric with high-quality streetscape design, prominence of wayfinding signage, and flanked by welcoming public spaces.

SUBD-25-0076 - ROW Vacation of E. Boulder St.

Summary of Application

The Palmer High School project includes the proposal to vacate the right-of-way for E. Boulder St. between N. Nevada Ave. and N. Weber St. to connect and integrate their northern block to their southern block. This stretch of ROW is 100 feet wide and extends 400 feet from east to west. The existing roadway accommodates vehicle, multi-modal, and pedestrian traffic on the northeastern edge of Downtown. While Boulder St. extends eastward roughly 2 miles before connecting with E. Platte Ave. just west of Circle Dr., the roadway essentially terminates two blocks to the west at N. Cascade Ave. (it dead ends roughly 300 feet west of Cascade).

The proposal to vacate this block of Boulder is largely related to two factors: 1) to create a “connected campus” where the number of students who need to cross active roads is significantly reduced thereby reducing pedestrian/vehicle conflicts; and 2) to allow the relocation of the school’s track and athletic field (for football, soccer, lacrosse, and others) from the Erps Field site east of N. Wahsatch Ave. to the primary campus between N. Nevada Ave. and N. Weber St.

While the proposed project includes the conversion of the Boulder ROW into a pedestrian plaza that is absent of the vehicular traffic present today, the vacated ROW is to continue serving multiple public purposes. Specifically, public utility easement will be retained to protect and allow maintenance of below grade utility infrastructure. Additionally, the area will be accessible to emergency service providers (e.g. Fire Department apparatus) via removable bollards to ensure adequate hose-reach to all portions of existing and proposed buildings.

Application Review Criteria

UDC Section 7.5.522.C.5.b

b. The City Council shall approve the Vacation Plat, or approve it with conditions, by adoption of an ordinance, or shall deny the Vacation Plat. City Council shall approve the application only if it complies with the following criteria:

- (1) The right-of-way is no longer needed for public transportation purposes;

Significant City analysis was conducted in the Public Works and City Planning Departments to evaluate this criterion. Much of the information provided above in the “Public Works and City Engineering Review of the Traffic Impact Study” section of this report is directly related to this ROW vacation criteria. Public Works Staff have described 5 specific considerations related to this criterion and concluded that it is subjective whether the proposed vacation meets the criterion. However, Public Works Staff have identified three conditions that should be implemented if City Council decides to approve the vacation.

- (2) The vacation will not adversely impact use of the right-of-way for public utility and/or drainage purposes;

The proposed ROW vacation ordinance will include language retaining utility and drainage easements across the ROW. The District will be eligible to vacate a portion of those easements at a later date. The City will review easement vacation requests administratively to ensure that all necessary public infrastructure is protected and able to adequately maintained.

- (3) The vacation will not adversely impact the uniform width of the remaining portions of the public right-of-way along the block frontage for which vacation is sought;

The proposed vacation applies to the entire width of public ROW (100 feet) for the full block length (400 feet) between N. Nevada Ave. and N. Weber St. Should the vacation be approved, the remaining ROW in the area will be uniform.

(4) Access to lots or properties surrounding the public right-of-way will not be adversely affected; and

All properties that front the area of ROW proposed for vacation are owned by School District 11 and can be accessed from adjacent public ROW including N. Nevada Ave., E. St. Vrain, N. Weber St., and E. Platte Ave. The School District intends to plat the site into one lot should the vacation be approved.

(5) The vacation is consistent with the purpose of this UDC.

The stated purpose of the UDC (Section 7.1.130) is to “A. Promote health, safety, and general welfare of the public; B. Protect private property from adjacent nuisances such as incompatible uses and noise; C. Implement the Colorado Springs Comprehensive Plan; D. Establish the orderly subdivision of land; E. Ensure the logical growth of the City’s physical elements; F. Encourage adequate multi-modal transportation facilities; G. Promote opportunities for affordable and attainable housing throughout the City; H. Facilitate adequate provision of utilities, schools, parks, and other public infrastructure services; and I. Enhance the quality, diversity, and safety of neighborhoods by encouraging pride and investment.” The proposed vacation request is consistent with the purpose of the UDC in that the consolidation of the existing school campus into one block will improve the school’s learning environment, improve student safety, and fulfil a number of elements of PlanCOS. While the closure of this block of E. Boulder St. will force drivers, pedestrians, and users of various forms of micro-mobility to use alternative routes, the applicant’s traffic study finds that existing infrastructure can accommodate users safely and adequately.

Following evaluation of the E. Boulder Street Right-of-Way vacation request, Staff determined that the application meets four of the five review criteria. Compliance with Criterion #1, which addresses whether the Right-of-Way is 'needed' for public transportation purposes, is considered subjective. However, if conditions are applied to the vacation request, this criterion could be met or its intent preserved.

Compliance with Relevant Guiding Plans and Overlays

Multiple plans were consulted when evaluating the proposed ROW vacation. In addition to the Experience Downtown Plan discussed in the zone change section of this report (see above) staff also consulted the 2024 Platte Ave. Corridor Study. While the scope of that study is broad, covering approximately 7 miles of roadway extending east beyond Powers Blvd., the Plan does include opportunities that would be affected by the proposed ROW vacation. Specifically, the Plan includes an alternative that would convert Platte Ave. and Boulder St. into a one-way couplet, and closure of Boulder St. between N. Nevada Ave. and N. Weber St. could affect the operation and effectiveness of this option. Additionally, the Plan includes options for future improvements at E. Platte Ave. and N. El Paso St. While changes to the Boulder ROW don't directly affect the designs or post-construction operation of the Platte and El Paso intersection, construction of the new intersection will likely result in the full closure of the roadway and use of Boulder as an alternative route during construction may be beneficial to travelers heading into or out of Downtown.

Another City Plan that was consulted when evaluating this project was the 2017 Envision Shooks Run (ESR) Plan. Specifically, the ESR Plan includes two scenarios for that segment of Shooks Run that runs between E. Boulder St. and E. Platte Ave. under Erps Field. “Option 2” describes a scenario where the Erps Field track and sports facilities are consolidated with other areas of the campus allowing Shooks Run to be “daylighted” from the existing underground culvert. In addition to providing stormwater and ecological benefits, this option would allow for improved trail and open space connectivity in the area. This option is not likely feasible unless E. Boulder St. between N. Nevada Ave. and N. Weber St. is vacated allowing the athletic fields to be relocated spanning what is now public right-of-way.

LUPL-25-0012 - Land Use Plan for Palmer High School

Summary of Application

The Palmer High School Land Use Plan illustrates general concepts for future use and building construction across the 8+ acre site. The Plan includes three graphics that illustrate various stages of development. Phase 1A show the immediate improvement plans including construction of a new east wing of the school and significant interior remodel work to better utilize existing building space. It also illustrates expanded open spaces within the existing courtyard area, along the vacated Boulder St. alignment, and along the north edge of the site abutting E. St. Vrain St. This sheet of the plan also illustrates modifications to parking (both on-street and off-street), bus loading areas, and student drop off areas on the periphery of the site.

Phase 1B of the Land Use Plan illustrates the removal of the auxiliary gym on the northeast corner of N. Nevada Ave. and E. Boulder St. and the development of a new and improved athletic field and track that from the north edge of the school's courtyard northward to E. St. Vrain. Use of the new track and field will be primarily for gym classes and sport team practices; teams will still use the shared D 11 facilities at Garry Berry Stadium for games. Phase 1B of the plan also illustrates repurposing areas to the north and east of the field for open space and surface parking, as well as modest expansion of the building at the southeast corner of the site (northwest corner of E. Platte Ave. and N. Weber St.).

The final phase of the land use plan, phase 2, illustrates a significant new civic building along the east edge of the site spanning from St. Vrain southward to the Boulder St. alignment. According to the applicant's project statement, this significant addition to the site would be the schools new internal athletic complex and will presumably include a new gym and pool facility. An additional, smaller, civic building is shown at the northwest corner of the site (southeast corner of N. Nevada Ave. and E. St. Vrain St.).

One aspect of the Land Use Plan that has been discussed with some stakeholder groups, is the proposal to remove or demolish the four residential structures that currently front E. St. Vrain St. at the north edge of the site. These structures were all built between 1894 and 1905. The three structures on the east half of the block are within the North Weber/Wahsatch Historic District. While these properties are not restricted by the City's Historic Preservation Overlay, they are subject to the "Design Guidelines for North Weber/Wahsatch Historic District" published in December of 1990. Although there are no formal prohibitions to demolishing or removing structures from a Historic District, some stakeholders have been vocal that the buildings should remain in place as they contribute to the overall quality of the District (refer to Attachment 7 - Consolidated Stakeholder Input Palmer HS project 102125). While the future of the structures has not been finalized, the proposed Land Use Plan does show the area where they currently sit as being repurposed for other buildings and uses.

Application Review Criteria

UDC Section 7.5.514.C.3.

3. Land Use Plan Criteria: If the Land Use Plan is submitted in connection with an application to establish a zone district or to change zone district boundaries shall be reviewed based on the following criteria:

- a. Consistency with the Colorado Springs Comprehensive Plan and other plans and policies adopted by City Council;

The proposed land use plan is largely consistent with PlanCOS as well as other plans and policies adopted by Council. See the sections above for discussion of how the project relates to the Experience Downtown Plan, the Platte Avenue Corridor Study, and the Envision Shooks Run Plan. See below for analysis regarding PlanCOS.

- b. Consistency with development standards the zone district in which the property is located, or would be located after a requested zone district change;

The proposed project includes an application to change the zoning from existing residential and office/residential districts to the Downtown Form-Based Zone (FBZ). A FBZ Development Plan application was submitted a few weeks after the initial series of submittals were made. The Development Plan is being reviewed under the assumption that the proposed FBZ designation will be approved by Council. The proposed land use plan as well as the separate development illustrate compliance with most FBZ standards and guidelines including: use, building type, and building height. However, the

development also describes four “warrants” that are needed as part of the development plan approval; this include: building envelope, parking, block standards, and public space design. All proposed warrants are reasonable given the unique conditions of the use, campus, and proposed improvements. While most FBZ development plans can be reviewed administratively, the proposed warrants will require future action from the Downtown Review Board.

- c. Compatibility with the land uses and development intensities surrounding the property;

The vast majority of the project site has been owned by District 11 and has operated as a high school for decades. While the proposed land use plan illustrates new building forms, especially along the eastern edge of the site, the use itself has operated compatibly in the neighborhood for years. That’s not to say that there aren’t impacts in the area – traffic, loading, noise, parking, and other issues from the high school use surely affect surrounding businesses and residents. And while the proposed land use plan illustrates the relocation of the athletic fields from the Erps Field area east of Wahsatch to the western portion of the subject property along N. Nevada Ave., and phase 2 of the plan illustrates a new athletic complex on the northern portion of the site, it is not expected that these plan elements will create additional impact or hardship to surrounding properties.

- d. Impacts of the permitted or requested uses, appropriate to the type of development, the neighborhood, and the community;

The proposed project is intended to improve Palmer High School from an aging mish mash of connected buildings built over the last 80+ years to a new modern (in function, not architecture) education facility. The District envisions the new Palmer High School to be the finest school in the District, if not the entire Pikes Peak region. The school is intended to be integrated into the Downtown environment with community partnerships and hands on learning opportunities. The District’s investment in Palmer High School is a signal to the community that Downtown and the neighborhoods on the edge of Downtown are worthy of investment and that District 11 students should have every opportunity available to them. The consolidated campus will allow for an improved learning and athletic environment and will improve student safety by reducing the frequency of students having to cross public streets between periods.

- e. Adequacy of proposed ingress/egress points and traffic circulation, both on and off the site;

The proposed access points, circulation patterns, and parent/bus drop off zones have been reviewed by the City’s Traffic Engineers and been found adequate. The details of parking lot design and loading zones are articulated on the associated development plan.

- f. Capacity of the existing streets, utilities, parks, schools, and other public facilities to serve the proposed development;

The existing public facilities necessary to serve the existing and improved Palmer High School are adequate. Existing infrastructure including utilities, roads, parks and other public spaces, and pedestrian / multi-modal facilities are all currently present at the school site and in the surrounding area. The new and improved facility is not expected to result in significant increases student population or traffic volumes. Phase 2 construction could increase the number of users present on the site depending on future community partnerships that could share the facility. However, the proposed density of structures and users are consistent with urban density already present in the surrounding area, especially those located within the Form-Based Zone to the south and west.

- g. Promotion of transitions in height, intensity, or character between proposed non-residential or mixed-use development and nearby low-density residential zone districts.

The site is largely surrounded by commercial and civic uses, especially to the west, south, and southeast. The residential properties to the north and northeast are generally smaller lots (4,000 to 5,000 square feet in size) of middle density. The proposed land use plan illustrates the larger building masses (largely 2- to 4-stories in height) along the east edge of the campus. The existing 3-story building along the southern and southwestern portions of the site will largely remain as they exist today.

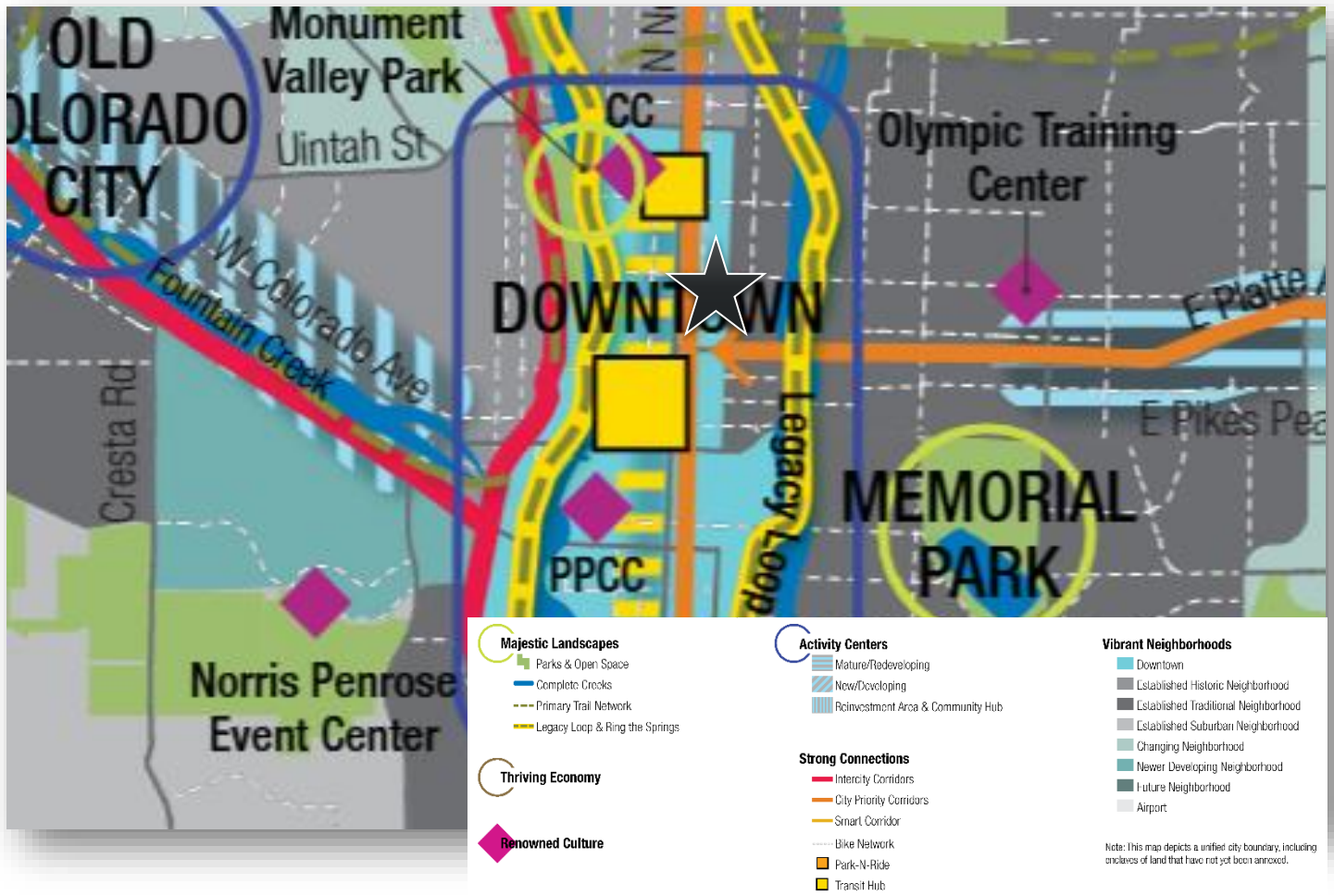
After evaluation of the Land Use Plan, Staff finds that the application meets the review criteria.

Compliance with Relevant Guiding Plans and Overlays

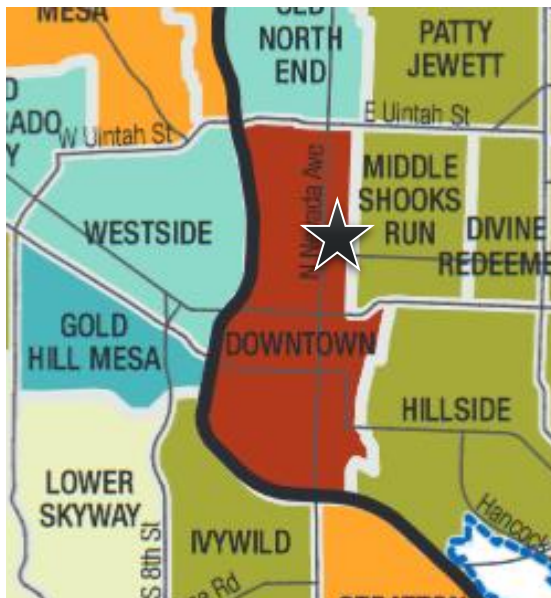
See previous sections of this report for analysis regarding a number of relevant plans and studies.

Compliance with PlanCOS

PlanCOS Vision



The proposed Palmer High School project was evaluated for conformance with the City’s current comprehensive plan (herein referred to as “PlanCOS”), adopted in January 2019. According to PlanCOS, the project site is within the Downtown Activity Center, along two City Priority Corridors, within close proximity to a major Transit Hub, and on the edge of the Downtown Neighborhood and an Established Traditional Neighborhood. The Palmer High School campus is well positioned in Downtown Colorado among many of the City’s largest employers and most successful small businesses, as well as countless opportunities for students to become integrated into local vocational training and cultural resources that will enhance their education.



Predominant Typology

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

Vibrant Neighborhoods

The Palmer High School campus falls within the Downtown Neighborhood just west of the Middle Shooks Run Neighborhood. The proposed project represents a significant investment in the City’s original school. This commitment to having top rated education Downtown is consistent with a number of Goals, Policies, and Strategies, including:

Policy VN-3.A: Preserve and enhance the physical elements that define a neighborhood’s character.

Strategy VN-3.B-1: Encourage neighborhood and school partnerships to coordinate joint use of school facilities.

Policy VN-3.D: Create strong neighborhood identity through the inclusion and integration of arts and culture

Policy VN-3.E: Encourage and support the integration of mixed-use development in neighborhoods.



Predominant Typology

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

Unique Places

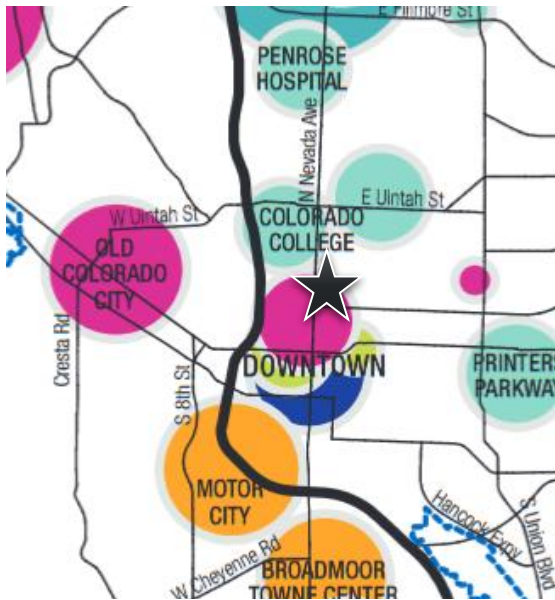
The Palmer High School campus falls within the Downtown Typology along a Mature/Redevelopment Corridor. The proposed project is consistent with a number of Unique Places Goals, Policies, and Strategies, including:

Goal UP-1: Enrich the texture and livability of the city as a tapestry of unique, vibrant, and walkable places.

Policy UP-1.C: Locate and design new and repurposed civic facilities to make them highly visible focal points that express quality design, permanence, importance, and community identity.

Goal UP-2: Embrace thoughtful, targeted, and forward-thinking changes in land use, infill, reinvestment, and redevelopment to respond to shifts in demographics, technology, and the market.

Goal UP-3: Continue to grow and support Downtown as an inclusive, mixed use, cultural, and economic heart of the region.



Thriving Economy

The Palmer High School campus falls within three different typologies that all intersect in Downtown Colorado Springs; this include: the Experience Economy Typology, the Spinoffs and Startups Typology, and the Cornerstone Institutions Typology. The proposed project is consistent with a number of Thriving Economies Goals, Policies, and Strategies, including:

Strategy TE-1.A-3: Prioritize Downtown redevelopment to establish it as the region’s employment center, hub of commerce, governing, innovation, tourism, entertainment, art and culture.

Policy TE-1.D: Enhance our Cornerstone Institutions (Typology 1) campuses, while also integrating them into the surrounding community.

Strategy TE-2.B-5: Partner with the K-12 school system, technical and community colleges, and universities on physical plans that support workforce training opportunities for jobs in sectors with the greatest need and growth potential, such as skilled nursing.

Strategy TE-2.C-1: Prioritize redevelopment and activation in Downtown and other urban activity centers in order to establish or enhance economic development



Strong Connections

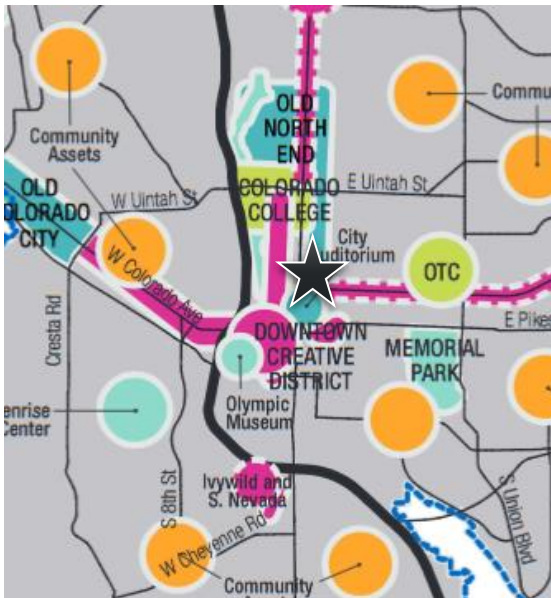
The Palmer High School campus is located within the Urban Core Streets Typology as well as within a Major Destination Area. It is also located along multiple Multimodal Corridors and a Smart Corridor. The proposed project was analyzed using a number of Strong Connections Goals, Policies, and Strategies, including:

Strategy SC-1.A-2: Focus attention on increasing multimodal east-west transportation capacity.

Policy SC-1.D: Establish and maintain convenient multimodal connections between neighborhoods, local destinations, employment and activity centers, and Downtown.

Strategy SC-1.G-5: Retrofit Urban Core Streets (Typology 1) to focus predominantly on increasing connectivity and multimodal utility while maintaining their needed capacity.

Strategy SC-1.G-8: Design safe pedestrian crossings along major arterials that are coordinated with transit stop locations.



Predominant Typology

- Defining Institutions
- Historic Districts
- Creative Districts and Corridors
- Cultural and Tourist Attractions
- Community Assets
- Pop-Up Culture

Renowned Culture

The Palmer High School campus is located within the Downtown Creative District and within close proximity to multiple Historic Districts and Cultural and Tourist Attractions. The proposed project is consistent with a number of Renowned Culture Goals, Policies, and Strategies, including:

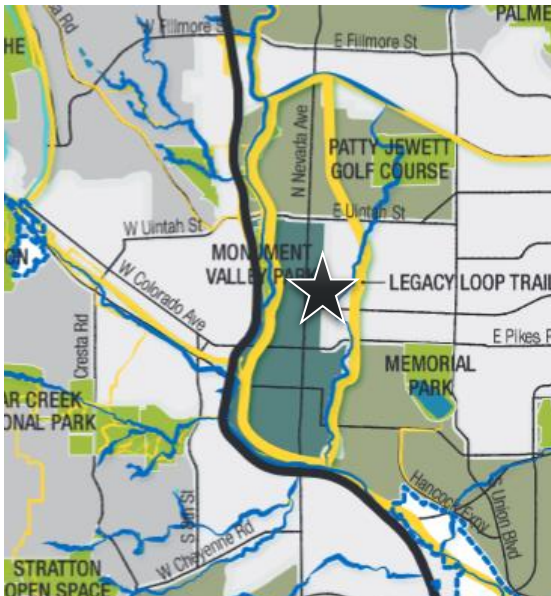
Goal RC-2: Add to, enhance, and promote Colorado Springs' institutions, attractions, and community assets integral to our local culture and civic pride.

Strategy RC-3.A-2: Encourage incorporation of arts, culture, and educational elements as part of privately initiated land use master plans through flexibility in code requirements.

Policy RC-3.B: Reinforce Downtown as an historic, cultural, and entertainment center of the community and the region.

Strategy RC-3.B-2: Encourage the establishment of more and improved arts, education, and cultural opportunities in and near Downtown.

Strategy RC-6.A-1: Partner with the city's institutions of higher learning on their plans for growth, adaptation, and reinvestment.



Predominant Typology

- Neighborhood Greenspace
- Sports and Active Recreation
- Natural Resources and Regional Recreation
- Community Education Landscapes
- Trails and Connections
- Major Trail Corridors
- Complete Urban Creeks
- Complete Greenways

Majestic Landscapes

The Palmer High School campus is located within the Downtown area and Neighborhood Greenspace Typology. The campus is in close proximity to the Shooks Run Trail Corridor. The project is supported by the following Goals, Policies, and Strategies:

Goal ML-3: Optimize the shared use of our waterways as corridors for wildlife, recreation, stormwater conveyance, non-motorized transportation, utilities, and as natural areas and assets of the environment.

Policy ML-4.D: Cultivate an ethic of environmental stewardship and landscape health through community education and engagement.

Statements of Compliance

ZONE-25-0026 – Palmer High School Rezone to FBZ

After evaluation of the zone change application from R-1 6 / R-5 / OR (Single-Family Medium, Multi-Family High, and Office Residential) to FBZ-T2A (Form-Based Zone – Transition Sector 2A) Staff has determined that the application meets the review criteria in Section 7.5.704.D. of City Code.

SUBD-25-0076 – Boulder St. ROW Vacation

After evaluation of the proposed Boulder St. ROW vacation, Staff determined that the application could meet the review criteria outlined in City Code Section 7.5.522.C.5.b, provided the following Conditions of Approval are applied:

Conditions of Approval:

1. An agreement between the City of Colorado Springs and School District 11 shall be entered into that requires School District 11 to allow public egress over the property if the space is unused for construction or permanent School District 11 activities.
2. Request that D11 collaborate with the City to provide public egress during construction of the PPRTA-fund Platte Avenue Improvements (Wahsatch to Circle) project.
3. An agreement between the City of Colorado Springs and School District 11 shall be entered into that requires School District 11 to return ownership to the City of Colorado Springs, should the district choose to dispose of the property.

LUPL-25-0012 – Palmer High School Land Use Plan

After evaluation of the Palmer High School Land Use Plan Staff has determined that the application meets the review criteria in Section 7.5.514.C.3. of City Code.