



City of Colorado Springs

Regional Development
Center (Hearing Room)
2880 International Circle

Meeting Minutes - Draft Downtown Review Board

Tuesday, October 7, 2025

9:00 AM

2880 International Circle, 2nd Floor, Hearing Room

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Present: 6 - Board Member Nolette, Board Member Coats, Board Member Hensler, Board Member Lord, Board Member Sokol and Board Member Luciano

Absent: 3 - Board Member Kuosman, Board Member Friesema and Board Member Mikulas

2. Changes to Agenda/Postponements

3. Communications

Ryan Tefertiller - Urban Planning Manager

Ryan Tefertiller, Urban Planning Manager, congratulated Chair Lord for his recent Lifetime Achievement Award that was conveyed by Mayor Yemi.

Mr. Tefertiller welcomed Harrison Sokol as a new Downtown Review Board member, representing the Middle Shooks Run neighborhood, and who has been also very involved in Downtown projects.

Mr. Tefertiller recognized Board member Luciano for being reappointed to her second term to the Downtown Review Board.

Mr. Tefertiller said he sent a draft of the 2026 work plan for the Board's review and will be accepting any suggestions. He said he hopes the Master Plan and Form Based Code would be ready for review by the first third of 2026. He said the primary task and one of the goals of the Board is to review applications as they come in.

Mr. Tefertiller said there will be one item for discussion in November and asked the board members to confirm their attendance with staff.

Chair Lord thanked Mr. Tefertiller for his words and said it has been a pleasure to work alongside.

4. Approval of the Minutes

4.A. [DRB 2300](#) Minutes for the September 2, 2025, Downtown Review Board Meeting

Presenter:

Bobby Mikulas, Downtown Review Board, Acting Chair

Attachments: [DRB Minutes 9.2.25 Draft](#)

Motion by Board Member Luciano, seconded by Board Member Nolette, that this Minutes be accepted Motion to approve the September 2, 2025, Downtown Review Board Meeting.

The motion passed by a vote of 5-0-1-3.

Aye: 5 - Board Member Nolette, Board Member Coats, Board Member Hensler, Board Member Lord and Board Member Luciano

Absent: 3 - Board Member Kuosman, Board Member Friesema and Board Member Mikulas

Abstain: 1 - Board Member Sokol

5. Consent Calendar

6. Items Called Off Consent Calendar

7. Unfinished Business

8. New Business

9. Presentations

Experience Downtown Plan

9.A. [DRB 2301](#) Update to the Experience Downtown Plan

Council District # 3

Presenter:

Mark De La Torre, Director of Denver Area Operations, MIG, Inc.

Elly Schaefer, Senior Project Manager, MIG, Inc.

Austin Wilson-Bradley, Director of Economic Development,
Downtown Partnership

Ryan Tefertiller, Urban Planning Manager, Planning Department

Ryan Tefertiller, Urban Planning Manager, said the update to the 2016 Experience Downtown Plan has been ongoing through this year, and since its start, many of the priorities, actions and goals have been accomplished or need updating. He said the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) funded the update to the plan and brought on MIG Planning Consultants to work on this effort. He said he is communicating closely with other City departments to make sure they agree with the proposed language. Mr. Tefertiller said this will be

presented at City Council work session on October 27th and at that time a public draft of the plan is expected to go out and allow for public comment. He said the plan will implement those comments and produce a final draft to be presented before the DRB to provide a recommendation to City Planning Commission and will ultimately go to City Council for adoption.

Austin Wilson-Bradley, Director of Economic Development, Downtown Partnership, said Downtown Colorado Springs has become more active, accessible and livable. He said since the Experience Downtown Plan was adopted in 2016, there has been more than 2.5 billion dollars of investments in housing, new destinations like Weidner Field, Ed Robson Arena and the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Museum. Mr. Wilson-Bradley said as the community continues to grow and evolve, the new Elevate Downtown plan builds upon the foundational work of the 2009 Imagine Downtown vision and the 2016 Experience Downtown master plan. He said this update captures current momentum while planning for future generations, shaped by robust community engagement, including input from over 2,200 survey participants, 16 focus groups, and numerous public events, where the result is a forward-thinking, actionable strategy that reflects a shared vision prioritizing public space, mobility, urban density, and inclusive housing.

Mark De La Torre, Director of Denver Area Operations, MIG, Inc. presented the Elevate Downtown Plan Update and said they focused on two areas, the plan of development and the Master Plan. He said it is a flexible guide for land use and mobility, that builds on previous efforts, including the DDA participation, and is supported by a strong technical foundation. He said community engagement has been central to the process, and, since January, the team held focus groups with downtown residents, nearby neighborhoods, schools, libraries, employers, arts and culture groups, small businesses, and more, which has helped shape the direction of the plan. Mr. De La Torre said they have used tools as surveys, conversations, pop-up ads promoted through the newsletter, social media and handouts.

Mr. De La Torre said some priority takeaways are support for small businesses, increased activation, key downtown institutions and expanded transportation. He said these efforts are part of a long-term, three-phase planning process that began with the "Imagine Downtown" initiative in 2005, followed by "Experience Downtown" in 2016, and now continues with this latest update. Mr. De La Torre said the current plan includes two main components: the Plan of Development (Volume One) and the Downtown Plan. The first component outlines the vision, assets, challenges, and opportunities for downtown, along with updated boundaries and tax financing strategies. He said the Downtown Plan retains much of the original structure and introduces new concept areas to reflect changes in community needs, infrastructure, utilities, and economic vitality.

Mr. De La Torre said the update is designed to reflect the positive changes seen over the past decade. He said the vision remains focused on a vibrant, walkable downtown that supports both residents and visitors, celebrates local culture, and encourages mixed-use development. He said Downtown is seen as a neighborhood, with housing growth and evolving boundaries playing a major role in shaping its future, while preserving the natural environment, enhancing connectivity, and honoring the unique history of Colorado Springs.

Mr. De La Torre said many core assets of downtown Colorado Springs remain strong, including access to the outdoors, entertainment, business hubs, and historic neighborhoods; however, significant changes have occurred over the past decade, most notably, in residential development. He said for the first time in 60 years, downtown has seen the addition of over 2,000 housing units. He said another major asset is the growing sports economy, originally centered around Olympic City USA, it has expanded with new facilities like Weidner Field and the downtown stadium, in partnership with higher education institutions.

Mr. De La Torre said as a challenge, there is the need for more diverse housing options to serve different income levels and family sizes. He said growth has brought positive change, but it also comes with growing pains such as maintaining community character and managing cleanliness and safety. He said opportunities lie in treating downtown as a true neighborhood for both new and long-time residents; this includes supporting those who live, work, and visit the area, while also addressing homelessness through a unified, citywide approach. He said there is potential for stronger partnerships with universities and better connections to trails and parks, reinforcing downtown's role as a vibrant, accessible hub for learning, recreation, and community life.

Elly Schaefer, Senior Project Manager, MIG, Inc., said the updated downtown plan focuses on priority topics identified through community and stakeholder feedback, with a major emphasis on supporting small businesses by expanding DDA programs, improving storefronts, activating vacant parcels, and curating a diverse tenant mix. She said the plan also promotes walkability and mobility through better street design, safer crossings, bike connections to the Legacy Loop, and expanded micro-mobility options like scooters and mobility hubs. Ms. Schaefer said arts and culture are supported through public art initiatives, creative venue advocacy, and expanded community-driven events; safety and cleanliness are addressed through the continuation of the clean and safe pilot program, public space activation, crime prevention design, and stronger community-law enforcement relationships. She said public restrooms are also being considered, with strategies for placement, design, and maintenance.

Ms. Schaefer said homelessness is a big issue, and the plan encourages

collaboration between Downtown Partnership, the city, service providers, and the Pikes Peak Continuum of Care, as well as social infrastructure, education, and support tools for businesses and staff. She said affordable housing is another priority, with attention to income diversity. She said there is public concern about building height and density, and the plan includes visualizations and design guidelines to balance growth with the downtown skyline and mountain views. She said 26 opportunity sites have been identified, ranging from catalytic projects to market-ready developments. She said a full-service grocery store is a top community request; a demand analysis is being done to identify possible grocers, and nine potential sites have been evaluated for feasibility. She said the plan outlines five main goals, each with a top priority: supporting small businesses, enhancing neighborhood amenities, ensuring a clean and safe environment, strengthening creative identity, and improving mobility connections. She said they will be presenting the update to City Council on October 27th, opening a public review period, and finalizing the plan for adoption early next year.

Board members' Comments

Chair Lord said that regarding heights there has been an effort to establish some items to enhance the design of higher buildings. Chair Lord said there might be development opportunities at the Union Printers Home as well as on the north corridor. Chair Lord asked if there are any possibilities of the DDA expanding the boundaries in the future. Mr. Wilson-Bradley said influence sites near downtown include the Ivywild neighborhood, South Nevada corridor, and the Union Printers Home. He said these areas are both opportunities and challenges, potentially complementing downtown development while also introducing competition; for example, the Union Printers site includes plans for mixed-use development with office space, which highlights the need for more Class A office space downtown. Mr. Wilson-Bradley said the updated plan includes a goal to develop 100,000 square feet of new Class A office space in the downtown core, and the DDA is exploring incentives to support this effort. He said the plan also considers future boundary expansions and outlines strategies for the DDA as it approaches its 2037 expiration date, including the possibility of extending its boundaries for another 20 years. He said the DDA worked with EPS to produce an economic analysis that provides detailed data to guide decisions around boundary expansion and market readiness. Mr. De La Torre said they are considering the 26 influential sites they identified to understand how downtown can grow in a competitive manner.

Board member Sokol said newer buildings might not have any kind of diversity of use along the street level, limiting street vitality; and newer buildings continue to replace the older ones. Board member Sokol asked if those issues are

addressed in this plan. Ms. Schaefer said the plan addresses both, supporting small-format storefronts by funding both exterior renovations and interior changes, such as dividing large spaces and creating new entrances, making ground floors more inviting for small businesses, and this is also mentioned in the form-based code updates. Ms. Schaefer said, to blend old and new buildings, the plan focuses on districts and recognizes the unique character of different downtown districts; some areas, like start-up towns, feature more historic structures, while the central core includes newer developments, protecting historic buildings and exploring adaptive reuse opportunities where possible. Mr. De La Torre said they will coordinate with Mr. Tefertiller to make sure the vertical experience and how people move along the street are addressed in the code. Mr. Wilson-Bradley said an important point is the collaboration between the board, the Downtown Partnership, and other agencies in shaping future development. He said older residential buildings have appealing facades but limited public interaction at street level and lack active ground-floor spaces. He said the DRB is encouraging retail opportunities, restaurants and small businesses on the ground floor to have a more interactive public experience.

Chair Lord asked if they are looking into future mobility and transportation. Mr. Wilson-Bradley said the plan does consider future transit, such as connecting the front range passenger rail around parking areas, and future rail hubs connecting Colorado Springs to Denver. Mr. Tefertiller said Volume II of the Plan has a section called Catalytic and Influence Sites that mentions the downtown transit center, and the Mobility chapter also talks about the need for a multi-modal transit hub.

Chair Lord said he is pleased to see the plan talking about affordable housing; however, applicants usually request higher buildings for this. Chair Lord said the Governor might mandate certain things for affordable housing around transportation hubs. Chair Lord said affordable housing within the DDA boundaries might get parking exceptions. Chair Lord asked if some of these aspects can be included in the document to incentivize developers to work on these projects. Mr. Wilson-Bradley said the DDA has been attuned to providing affordable housing, where developers received full tax increment financing (TIF) reimbursements for residential projects, but as more housing was built, that rate dropped to about 40%; though, developers who commit to affordable housing, either fully or with a set percentage of units for households earning 40-100% of area median income, can qualify for higher reimbursements, potentially up to 80-90%. He said the Artspace Affordable Housing complex, currently under construction, will add 51 affordable units downtown by next year. He said it is also important to have for-sale housing, noting that state-level construction defect laws make it difficult to build ownership units, so the DDA is exploring ways to incentivize both affordable rentals and for-sale housing, for

residents to have long-term options beyond renting.

Mr. Tefertiller said the updates to the form-based code have been on hold while the Elevate Downtown master plan was developed, and moving forward, the code updates will be aligned with the new plan, and some elements may be revised based on its final content. He said a key change involves improving the density bonus system to better incentivize the creation of truly affordable housing, since the current system offers modest rewards and is often bypassed. He said the goal is to make affordable housing bonuses more attractive and effective. Mr. Tefertiller said additional updates may include changes to parking standards to ensure compliance with state laws related to housing, mobility, and transit. He said today's discussion is about the Elevate plan, but the form-based code updates will be revisited in the coming months, with both efforts potentially adopted together in the spring by the Planning Commission and City Council.

Ms. Schaefer said the plan also mentions potential new strategies of where the DDA could look at community land trusts or other forms of land banking to set aside land for affordable housing.

Board member Luciano said she likes the idea of having a mix of affordable and market rate housing. Board member Luciano said she did not see information about South Tejon where the railroad crosses, given that it is a challenge for development and she asked what the thoughts are on the area. Mr. Wilson-Bradley said they value mixed-income housing for fostering inclusive communities. He said South Tejon area is outside the DDA boundaries, but the plan considers nearby areas as influence sites, especially for connecting the Legacy Loop and exploring future boundary expansions. He said the plan pays close attention to adjoining neighborhoods south and east of downtown, integrating recreation, connectivity, and development opportunities. Ms. Schaefer said they do identify that specific location as a key gateway into downtown, and they recommend more improvements to that streetscape. Mr. Tefertiller said the One Vela project does include a 10% affordable housing component, which was a requirement from urban renewal, and that same model can be used by the DDA within their boundaries for their tiff funding.

Mr. Tefertiller said, once finalized, he will make the draft available to the DRB for their input. He said the draft will be presented at Work Session on October 27th.

Board member Coats said the DDA was looking into this draft in a very detailed fashion, putting a lot of thought and discussion into it to provide a big report.

Ethics Training

9.B. [DRB 2302](#) Annual Ethics Training

Presenter:

Young Shin, City Attorney's Office

Young Shin, City Attorney's Office, presented the annual Ethics Training. He said the City Code of Ethics was passed in April 2007 and encouraged the Board members to familiarize themselves with Chapter 1, Article 3, as is important for their role. He said they are covered individuals, and he is available to provide them with advisory opinions about future actions when needed and suggested that all communication be in writing.

Mr. Shin presented the gift policy, its exceptions and who they involve. He also discussed the conflict of interests and when they should be disclosed and be a reason for recusal. He said meetings with a quorum or three or more members of a public body, shall be considered public meetings open to the public and will need the appropriate notice.

10. Adjourn