



City of Colorado Springs

Regional Development
Center (Hearing Room)
2880 International Circle

Meeting Minutes - Draft City Planning Commission

Wednesday, December 10, 2025

9:00 AM

2880 International Cir., 2nd Floor, Hearing Room

[ZONE-25-0026](#) An Ordinance to amend the zoning map of the City of Colorado Springs pertaining to approximately 8.27 acres located within the two blocks bound by North Nevada Avenue, East St. Vrain Street, North Weber Street, and East Platte Avenue 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). (1st Reading and setting the public hearing date for March 10, 2026). (Quasi-Judicial)

Related Files: ZONE-25-0026, SUBD-25-0076, LUPL-25-0012

Located in Council District 3

Presenter:

Ryan Tefertiller, Planning Manager, City Planning Department
Kevin Walker, Planning Director, City Planning Department

Commissioner Hensler said she has connections to the item and the applicant. She said her firm is working with D11 on a separate project and it does not impact her ability to make a fair and impartial decision on the Palmer High School application. Commissioner Hensler said she sits on the Downtown Partnership Board of Directors, an organization that has seen presentations on the Palmer High School proposal and has had a high level of discussion around the project over the last few months. She said those presentations and conversations have not constituted information beyond what has been publicly available, nor does she feel that any of the engagements or presentations equal an ex parte communication and that she can render an impartial and fair decision based on the information that's being presented to me today. Commissioner Hensler said she is also the City Planning Commission representation liaison to the Downtown Review Board, a body that oversees the Downtown Form Based Code and weighed in on this issue on November. 4th, 2025. Commissioner Hensler said while it rendered a decision on the item in November, that decision does not necessarily carry forward as her decision today. Commissioner Hensler said she will be making her decisions on these items based on the application and the presentation that I see today.

Commissioner Slattery said her employer does business with School District 11 but is not associated in any way with the Palmer project and she sits on the

Downtown Partnership Board as a new member. Commissioner Slattery said they have not taken a vote on this item and has only seen publicly available information and feels that she can be fair and impartial and make decisions based on the information at the hearing presented today.

Ryan Tefertiller, Urban Planning Manager, presented the application for the Palmer Highschool Redevelopment project. The site is located on the northeast edge of downtown and covers roughly two square blocks bound by Nevada, Platte, Weber and St. Vrain and it is just over eight acres in size. Mr. Tefertiller said the project includes three applications: a zone change, right-of- away vacation and a land use plan. He said the applications were submitted in order to support the proposed renovation and significant improvements to the existing Palmer High School campus. A key element of the project is the closure of Boulder Street between Nevada and Weber, which would create a consolidated campus and allow future phase improvements to span the two blocks and those would likely include the creation of a new track and field and recreational facility on the site.

Mr. Tefertiller said it is noteworthy to remind the Commission of the unique situation in that this is a public school project, and public schools are granted significant authority by the State of Colorado to advance the educational needs and purposes of the State of Colorado's youth. He said building permits are reviewed by Regional Building, but they do so as a State certified reviewer on behalf of the State. He said the zoning office, which is an arm of the Planning Department does not review building permits for public school projects. However, the project includes a right-of-away vacation, which is City controlled land so the School District needs full approval and support from the City, specifically from City Council whose is the entity that has the authority to vacate public right-of-away for the proposed project The District has worked closely with City staff to forward the necessary entitlement applications. He said there has been significant stakeholder involvement for this project and there has been formal public notice on three occasions at time of submittal, prior to the Downtown Review board meeting and prior to the Planning Commission hearing. Around two dozen emails and letters both in support and opposition were received. Other emails were forwarded to the Planning Commission as well. The e-mails and communications from individuals, property owners, residents, business owners in the area as well as several communications from form organizations, including the Downtown Partnership, Historic Uptown Neighborhood Association, Colorado Springs Chamber, EDC and the YMCA.

Mr. Tefertiller said in addition to the standard public notice process, the project included several other opportunities for public participation. A steering committee was created made up of a wide range of stakeholder groups, numerous public open houses held at the school throughout 2025 to allow

stakeholders, interested residents, property owners to learn about the project and influence the design and improvements that are being proposed. Meetings were held with student groups, alumni groups, faculty and businesses. The project was heard at the Downtown Review Board last month. Mr. Tefertiller highlighted a few of the key issues that were raised and discussed by stakeholders and in many events were incorporated into the project. Palmer High School, previously known as Colorado Springs High School, is the longest standing high school or educational institution in the city of Colorado Springs at almost 150 years old. He said there is a very active and notable alumni association that participated significantly in the process of developing the project, while honoring the school's traditions.

Mr. Tefertiller said there was significant stakeholder input on the proposed vacation of east Boulder Street, a minor arterial, which is a community asset that people use for transportation purposes. The proposed vacation allows for consolidate campus allowing students to have the full 8.5 plus acres to utilize without having to cross a busy public street. The project includes a land use plan illustrates the removal of four structures along the south side of Saint Vrain. Stakeholder input was heard regarding the value of that historic district. District 11 and Palmer High School have promised to be incorporated and integrated with Downtown Colorado Springs and utilize downtown businesses for job training, internships and other types of partnerships to integrate the students into the heart of the Downtown Urban Community. City agency review was done, and the vast majority of the comments and technical modifications have been resolved. Mr. Tefertiller said the majority of the discussions taking place are with Traffic Engineering and Public Works regarding the vacation of Boulder street. Traffic studies were done with the temporary closures of Boulder street and largely the impacts were modest and acceptable and did not create any failures of the intersections. He spoke on the three conditions of approval regarding the district to coordinate with the City regarding elements related to the Boulder vacation. He said the plan does comply with PlanCOS. Mr. Tefertiller shared slides on the zone change, Boulder vacation, land use plan and the application review criteria.

Commissioner Questions

Chair Casey asked if the vacation right-of-way, if approved would take place during which phase. Mr. Tefertiller said if approved it would become effective immediately.

Applicant's Presentation

Chris Lieber, NES, representing the project team, presented the application for the Palmer High School Project. Mr. Lieber said the project has been shaped

by the community for the community and they have had community meetings, focus groups and outreach events. He said they have presented to the Downtown Review Board and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board. Mr. Lieber invited Jessica Wise to talk about the vision of the project.

Jessica Wise, Executive Director of Engagement for School District 11, presented on behalf of the school district. Ms. Wise said the original discussion was regarding air conditioning. The current building was dedicated in 1940 and as such does not have air conditioning. The third floor is uninhabitable due to the extreme heat in the summer. She said the discussion pivoted quickly because it is not a facilities issue and Palmer High School is not a typical high school; it is a civic institution and the heart of Colorado Springs.

Ms. Wise presented slides to show original structure and the vision of the school for today and future needs. She said they have had conversations of the last year and a half of how they can educate students safely and successfully having a modern downtown high school. They identified six guiding priorities that consist of academic excellence and IB (I belong) philosophy, community engagement, arts and cultural enrichment, athletics, health and well-being, preservation of history and tradition and a healthy and high-performance building. Ms. Wise said District 11 is funding the project with 100 million dollars in the form of a COP and not through taxpayers. Ms. Wise highlighted in detail the guiding priorities with student safety being their highest priority. She said student safety is their imperative and importantly prioritizing safety does not mean disengaging from downtown, it means engaging it differently. Ms. Wise spoke in detail about the plan for the area to be a modern learning space to include internships, working with businesses and organizations who can support student learning.

Doug Abernethy, Principal, RTA Architects spoke about the Master Plan and provided slides for context. The Master Plan showed the various phases for the project and future buildings. He said the master plan still gives the ability for pedestrian access across the campus and for bike circulation. Mr. Abernethy said there are three key components, the Courtyard Heart project to include the bell that the students ring for their freshman year and when they graduate. Second, the connected campus with Boulder street and third, the multipurpose field. He said there will be an entrance on Weber street.

Chris Lieber, NES spoke on the applications for the project, the Land Use Plan, Re-zone and the Vacation of the Boulder street right-of-way. He said they will be submitted a Re-plat for the property to clean up the historic land use entitlement issues. Mr. Lieber said there were various reviews looking at the existing Master Plans in the community. Key considerations were student and pedestrian safety, traffic studies, parking, zoning compatibility, emergency

access, St. Vrain properties and detours during construction. Mr. Lieber presented phases 1A, 1B and Phase 2 of the Land Use Plan. He said phase 1A is currently economic the building and is already under construction. Phase 1B could begin as early as 2028 or 2029 and the phase 2 timeline is not yet determined and depends on additional funding. He showed the existing and phased parking usages. He said today there are approximately 80 staff members and there are 62 student passes issued and the anticipating parking needs are about 250 spaces. He said there are additional parking spaces in the surrounding churches and adjacent properties owners.

Mr. Lieber said the Historic Uptown Neighborhood has raised concerns about the four buildings that were acquired recently by the district, specifically for this project. They are located on the north end of the lot and sit just inside of the boundaries and the Weber street and Wahsatch avenue residential district. He said the properties are not located within a Historic Overlay District, this is important to note as properties within the City that fall within an overlay district are subject to the Historic Preservation Committee Authority. He said the District has a right to relocate or remove the homes and they completed a historic evaluation and inventory to understand the history of the buildings. The footprint underneath the units is needed to fulfil the proposed Master Plan.

Mr. Lieber spoke on the Re-zone of the application. He said the proposed re-zone is for an FBZ-T2A which will facilitate the design flexibility and creativity necessary to achieve a comprehensive renovation and consolidation of the Palmer Highschool campus. He said the FBZ zone has extensive requirements which require appropriate building facades, streetscapes and pedestrian improvements. Mr. Lieber spoke on the right-of-way vacation. He said the City has consistently said yes to interrupt the grid system for three different purposes, parks, hospitals and education. He said the early city builders saw the value of connected campuses for Penrose Colorado College, Memorial Hospital, School for the Deaf and Blind and prioritize those land uses over the grid system. Mr. Lieber provided slides on other high school campuses ranging in 24 to 50 acres. He said there have been considerations and recommendations for traffic and the surrounding intersections continued to function at acceptable levels of service. He said closing Boulder street and having a connected campus would result in improved pedestrian safety. Mr. Lieber said conversations have been had about the possibility of providing pedestrian access through the center of the site and the district has provided a letter of intent to the City that clearly identifies their intent to engage in that.

Mr. Lieber spoke on the review criteria for the right-of-way. He said the criteria states that the right-of -way is no longer needed for public transportation purposes. The traffic studies clearly indicate that the one block segment a boulder is not necessary or requirement for vehicular circulation and they were

able to maintain acceptable level of service at intersections. He said student safety is needed and a connected campus. He said District 11 provided a letter of intent to follow the conditions of the approval. He said if in the future the school is no longer there or in function, there would be an attempt to transfer the right-of-way back to the City.

Public Comments

MJ Benenati, Director of Government Affairs, Chamber and EDC, spoke in support of the project. Mr. Benenati said at the Chamber, they do not endorse specific development projects, but they do speak often on the merits of development and the merits of having a strong Downtown, which begins with high quality education outcomes and the physical spaces that they can all be proud of representing our city. He said the future workforce are the students at Palmer High, D11 and all of the districts. If they do not invest in them, they will not be ready for the careers of the future here in our own home region. He said they must prepare them for the jobs of tomorrow and that starts with high-quality learning facilities. This project meets the requirements for the changes per the code and will leave a positive impact in the community for decades. Mr. Benenati said they strongly recommend that the project moves forward.

Austin Wilson, Director of Economic Development, Downtown Partnership and Downtown Development Authority spoke in support of the project. He said the partnership strongly supports the proposed development plan, including the zone change and vacation of East Boulder between Newark and data and Weber. The redevelopment of the historic Palmer High School building represents a catalytic opportunity for downtown primarily to enhance the quality of education and student life at Palmer High School, also serving to enhance downtown appeal to future residents, improve infrastructure, enhance streetscapes in both for safety. He said a recent Newmark study showed the community strengths and shortcomings and the findings of the study highlighted the need to better educate and train the students of Colorado Springs for 21st Century workforce. The vacation of east Boulder Street between Nevada and Weber significantly enhances on campus security and the safety for students. The traffic study highlighted by NES analyze both existing traffic volumes and forecasted 2030, volumes and found at the redistribution of traffic created by this vacation does not cause significant queueing and would allow all signalized intersections in the area to maintain acceptable levels of service. Mr. Wilson said the partnership believes that the development plan is complementary to the surrounding uses, and the neighborhood considers the existing historic buildings and conditions while still creating modern, world class academic center. The plan also enhances the public pedestrian experience with the coordinated streetscape plan and upgrades to the pedestrian realm. The

development plan will enhance Downtown's appeal to young professionals and families as they continue to invest in and build out our residential portfolio and provide other catalytic opportunities at adjacent sites in areas and you need to further investment in Downtown. He said they strongly endorse the development plan and welcome investment in Downtown's educational resources and built environment.

Daniel Way, resident of the Middle Shooks Run Neighborhood, spoke in support of the project. Mr. Way said he supports the investment in Palmer High School, and the plan will strengthen downtown and his neighborhood. He said the 100 million-dollar investment will modernize Palmer High School regardless of today's outcome. He said if Boulder street is vacated, to include an enforceable condition requiring a permanent, non-exclusive public pedestrian easement or equivalent instrument through the campus. He said the condition supports the intent of the UDC and preserves the integrity of the Downtown pedestrian network and the long-term public interest. Mr. Way said that Boulder street is still needed for public transportation as it is a part of the downtown grid network. He said the historic block rhythm has guided 150 years of downtown development, and it is foundational to urban legibility and vitality. Comparable institutions in the same urban contexts show that unified campuses public and public connectivity are not contradictory. He said Colorado College preserves public walkways through their campus. North Middle School maintains public access across its grounds. Even Weidner field at City Gate retained pedestrian movement through vacated right-of-way. Mr. Way said the local presidents demonstrate the community share value of maintaining pedestrian access within significant institutional civic projects. He said the only element of Palmer's proposal that requires full right of way vacation is to build a 400-meter practice track. He said Palmer already has access to the regulation track at Garry Berry Stadium and they plan to retain Erbs field. Mr. Way said all this can be achieved with a public pedestrian only Boulder street. Finally, the elevate downtown plan identifies Boulder Street as an activity street intended to enhance the pedestrian experience a mid-block pedestrian easement is fully align with the designation and with the mobility placemaking and connectivity goals of the downtown master plan.

Celeste Martin, a resident of the area, spoke in support of the project. Ms. Martin said she supports the closure due to traffic, student safety, carpool lane limitations, and security in the event of an emergency. She said the future of Palmer Highschool has a unique IB program, dedicated staff and faculty and the facility should reflect dedication and vision for the future. She said they have a unique opportunity to elevate the campus and provide space to accommodate a growing population. Combining the properties will give the campus a presence in the community. Ms. Martin said this will provide new opportunities both for the school and the community to host gatherings and events as well as provide

flexibility to adapt to future needs. The long-term benefits to the closure of the section of Boulder street will serve the school, the students and community very well.

Dennis Moore, Lead Security at Palmer High School, spoke in support of the project. Mr. Moore said he has been at Palmer Highschool for 20 years. He said closing Boulder street would definitely benefit his job, his team, the school and the students. He said it is very unsafe traveling on foot Downtown, and they have roughly 1200-1500 kids out and about all day. Mr. Moore has seen students and teachers get hit and if Boulder went away that would help with safety and security.

Eva Tappitake, Sophomore and Vice-president of Student Council at Palmer Highschool spoke in support of the project. Ms. Tappitake said she is a student athlete and runs varsity track and cross country. She said closing Boulder street opens up many possibilities to improve the athletic facilities as Palmer does not have a standard track and field. She said the track and field team has to commute to Garry Berry Stadium as well as track, lacrosse, soccer and the softball team are not able to practice on the Palmer campus, and they have to travel to UCCS. She said other D11 students do not need to travel and have facilities on campus. She said Palmer Highschool has a long legacy of athletic and academic success and closing Boulder street would provide a great opportunity to give Palmer the new athletic facilities that future students.

Willa Kalmanowitz, Sophomore and Treasurer of the Student Council and Editor of the school newspaper at Palmer Highschool spoke in support of the project. Ms. Kalmanowitz said she is in support of the closure of Boulder street as it will make the school safer for the students. She said because they are downtown, safety should be a higher priority than other schools in residential areas due to the many extra risks. She said they have four times the number of lockdowns as other high schools simply due to the location. She said due to the separation of the buildings their safety is worse than other schools. Ms. Kalmanowitz said closing Boulder street will make prioritizing safety easier and more efficient as it is easier and faster to lock down the connected building rather than multiple buildings. She said having multiple buildings adds additional pressure on administration and security when a situation requires their assistance. She said students might get stuck in the gym or miss class as they cannot leave the building if there is a security matter outside. She said being Downtown, they should embrace their location, but also make sure the school is not interrupted or distrusted as the two should be able to coexist without sacrificing education inconvenience for students.

Brooklyn Barnett, Sophomore and Student Council representative at Palmer High School, spoke in support of the project. Ms. Barnett said she is in support

of closing Boulder street due to pedestrian safety. She said there are many risks while walking out of the gym and crossing the streets, drivers are often not cognizant to the students crossing the roads and have come close to hitting students. She said there is often unhoused population lining the path students take to get to class. Ms. Barnett said by connecting the athletic facilities, it would make it easier to monitor students leaving campus. She said walking out to the gym takes time out of class, and bringing the athletic facilities up to the main building and closing Boulder street would take less time out of learning. Avani Stack, Junior, Varsity Softball Captain and Student Council member at Palmer Highschool spoke in support of the project. Ms. Stack said she is in support of the Boulder street closure as having a closed campus opens more opportunities for community. She said because the campus is so spread out, most of the students are too focused on being able to get from point A to Point B in a timely manner. She said with a closed campus, students can focus more on the people around them. Closing Boulder street opens up a large area that can be used for multiple different community activities such as sports spaces, potential outdoor learning environments, social spots for lunch or free periods. It will benefit the average student and the athletes and bring them closer together. The sports community can focus less on navigating to different parts of the City and feel at home in Palmer's own sports facilities.

Judy Owsley, President of the CHSH partner Alumni Association, spoke in support. Ms. Owsley said she has been involved in the Palmer renovation projects since very early in the process. She said she was impressed with the systematic and thorough way that the design team dedicated a full year to collecting vast amounts of information from alumni, students, parents, staff of the school, neighboring business owners and any citizen who was interested. She said the leaders of the design team spoke at the meetings of the alumni association, showed plans, explained the process and answered questions. Ms. Owsley said the most concern for the alumni is the preservation of the historical character of the school. It has been a fixture in Colorado Springs for 150 years. She said the design team has made sure that the most cherished pieces of their history will be maintained. One potentially positive aspect is that the campus will become safer as students will no longer need to cross two busy streets to get to the gym and the small practice field that has a square track. Palmer will have a full-size track and field for practice gym classes and the full range of sporting events. Ms. Owsley said they are located right in the heart of the Colorado Springs Downtown community, and the updated Palmer High School will enhance the Downtown Master Plan, and the students will continue to benefit.

Krista Burke, Principal at Palmer Highschool spoke in support of the project. Ms. Burke said Palmer High School is an IB world school where the community of lifelong learners who thrive, cultivate opportunities and diverse perspectives

through applied innovative learning in the heart of Downtown Colorado Springs. She said she supports the right-of-way vacation at Boulder street and the Land Use Plan. She the decision is far more than a facilities change. It is a critical investment in student safety, campus cohesion in the long-term success of Palmer Highschool. Ms. Burke said safety must always come first and hundreds of students currently walk over a city block and two busy streets to get to their PE, health classes, assemblies and athletic practices outside of school hours. She said closing Boulder street would eliminate some concerns for safety, giving them a secure unified campus where learning can happen without the constant concern of navigating active traffic. She said connecting two of the City blocks will allow them to reimagine how the campus can serve students by creating outdoor learning areas, collaborative spaces and environments that support the kind of increase based hands-on learning that defines the IB experience. Ms. Burke said those spaces will help students think creatively, work together and engage more deeply with their education. A unified campus will strengthen the school culture when students can move freely and safely between buildings, they feel more connected to each other to their academics, to their teachers and the programs that make up our unique. She said clubs, athletics, arts and academic teams will be able to have easier access to shared resources, encouraging collaboration and inclusivity across the school. They emphasize global perspectives, interdisciplinary learning and community engagement. A connected campus gives them the flexibility to host exhibitions service projects and events that reflect these values. It also enhances their ability to partner with organizations throughout Downtown Colorado Springs. The closer of Boulder street will allow them to create a safer, more collaborative and more innovative learning environment that aligns with who they are and who they aspire to be.

Written public comments were distributed to the Commissioner from Mike McMiernan as he was unable to stay for the duration of the meeting.

Ron Elstun, a graduate from Palmer High School in 1970, spoke in support of the project. Mr. Elstun said he is in favor of the Boulder street closure and would like to see a new track be added. He said several family members went to Palmer Highschool that would benefit from the remodel.

Mariah Osborn, a resident of the area, spoke in opposition to the project. Ms. Osborn said she is a former teacher and parent of a high schooler and is opposition of phases 1B and 2. She said the project team says that this renovation prioritizes investing in education, however the renovations do not fully meet that goal. Ms. Osborn said she strongly supports evidence-based investment and educational improvements at Palmer and believes the campus changes are at the expense of public streets and historic homes. None of the changes will invest evidence-based improvements as students face education

by increasing teacher salaries, student support educational materials, family engagement, mental health resources or decreasing poverty. She said the project team has not involved the concerns of neighbors or nearby businesses outside of the minimum required radius. Three national registered historic homes on St. Vrain are in the Weber-Wasatch Historic District and are slated for demolition in December 2025. She said D11 spent millions purchasing the homes after threatening the owners with eminent domain and they forced out tenants whose leases had terminated during the holidays without relocation support when there is a housing shortage and volatile economy. Ms. Osborn said she is asking for the board to hold until an independently funded preservation alternatives report and mitigation plan are completed and made public and stakeholders have had a chance to review and respond. She said the traffic study that D11 privately funded is a major conflict of interest. She said Boulder street was built and maintained by taxpayers and asked how the taxpayers will be compensated for the handover Boulder street to D11. Ms. Osborn said it is a main thoroughfare for emergency responses, and they have been pushed into the neighborhood. This has resulted in her quality of sleep, safety and daily living being affected. She asked for an independent traffic and emergency access study to be done to include the Memorial Central's Emergency response teams and taxpayers' involvement.

Cheryl Brown, President of the Historic Uptown Neighborhood, spoke in opposition of the project. Ms. Brown said the re-zone is not necessary as all schools in Colorado Springs are residential. State law exempts schools from local zoning requirements so there is no need to change the zoning. She said the district could keep the site residential without altering the plans and maintaining residential zoning is more compatible with the adjacent residential neighborhood. Ms. Brown said this could set a precedent for future commercial encroachment, putting pressure on the National Register Historic District neighborhood over time. She said the vacation of Boulder street is an important public east-west corridor between the neighborhoods and provides safer, more predictable traffic flow. Platte Avenue is less suitable for drivers turning left on Nevada, forcing them to use un-signalized intersections. Ms. Brown said they must weigh in on how many students will benefit from a proposed practice track against how many citizens rely on the roadway every single day. The number of daily commuters, emergency vehicles, neighborhood residents and local businesses affected by this close or far exceeds the number of individuals who would use a practice track. Ms. Brown said D11 wants to destroy the houses near Palmer as D11 is not in the business of rental homes, but District 2 is. She said D2 has homes that house 10-20 people and destroying the homes takes away the opportunity to offer affordable housing for their teachers.

Jeff Hodges, a resident of the area, spoke in opposition to the project. Mr. Hodges said the non-signalized intersection has experienced two traffic

fatalities in the last three years and numerous major accidents. He said the two intersections east are also non signalized and urged a professional non-biased traffic study be done before increasing the stress on the vulnerable intersections. He said student safety is important, but the safety of the entire neighborhood needs to be examined. He said the closure of Boulder is primarily for athletic facilities and adds extreme of stress on intersections that are already experiencing traffic fatalities and major accidents.

Tim Scanlon, a City resident, previously worked in the City's comprehensive plan division a historian, spoke in opposition to the project. Mr. Scanlon said both his children graduated from Palmer and he fully supports phase 1A and Palmer Highschool has embarked on an ambitious effort to transform an aging and increasingly obsolete facility into something that is a model for learning for the next 50 years and beyond. He said he is unhappy with phase 1B, specifically Boulder street and the elimination of three residences in the National Registered Historic District. Mr. Scanlon said the National Register is America's official list of historic places determined to worthy of preservation. He said the Weber-Wasatch listed in August 1985 remains uniquely significant as it is the best intact, middle-class residential neighborhood in the City as noted is the uniformity of scale density and placement, which gives the district the visual cohesiveness. He said removing these buildings opens a wide gap in the southern boundary and the potential effects of form base owning on Weber-Wasatch we should encourage re-investment of the historic districts, not the development or clearance. He said the school district owns this building and they will ultimately decide their fate. Mr. Scanlon said his second concern in the street vacation of Boulder. He said use of the space as an athletic track which is a dramatic change in access and appearance, narrowing general municipal use to educational use. He said phase 1A is intended to rehab Palmer for another 50-75 years but asked what happens after that as right-of-way vacation is permanent. Mr. Scanlon said Boulder is essential and he opposes the vacation or Boulder could close and retain the right-of-way or an interim use agreement between the City and the school district could be negotiated.

Applicant's Rebuttal

Mr. Lieber said he addressed several of the items during the presentation; however, he emphasized that the traffic studies were done by FHU and thoroughly reviewed by City Engineering. He said there were many conversations with City staff to evaluate quality and integrity of the intersections. Mr. Lieber said the school district and has provided a letter of intent that will ultimately become an IGA and will identify the method and means by which if the school district should not need the right-of-way in the future there would be an avenue for that right of way to be restored. He said from a safety perspective,

there are shared values around being able to provide pedestrian access and that form of transportation through the corridor could be accommodated while still maintaining public safety. Mr. Lieber said the evaluation of the buildings in the Weber-Wasatch area has indicated, independently, none of the buildings and structures on their own would qualify for the National Historic Registry that the value is overall in the Weber-Wasatch district. He said the reason for the removal of the homes goes well beyond the suggestion of it just to support the practice track.

Commissioners' Comments

Chair Casey thanked the public and the students for making comments on the item. Chair Casey said the City Attorney's office had comments.

Sara Brewen, City Attorney's office, said there is clarification needed regarding what can legally be included in the IGA. She said there has been a proposal to include a reverter clause and that is not legally possible. She said with an IGA, they could agree to allow the district to use the property for a particular period of time. Once a vacation is approved, it becomes private property. Therefore, it becomes the property of the district in the IGA is not the vehicle through which they can agree to give back the property. Ms. Brewen said an IGA would not be able to include a requirement that could gift it back or sell it back to the City. She said they can recommend conditions to City Council on the vacation that are legally permissible.

Chair Casey said there can be conservation easements where property is allowed to be used for something else and if no longer has that use it is allowed to come back and asked if that was applicable in this instance. Ms. Brewen said no, a conservation easement would have to be addressed separately and in this case is the application is to vacate the street, which means the City would relinquish its ownership of the right-of-away and it would become private property of District 11.

Commissioner Slattery asked if condition 3 of the proposed motions would not hold up as a valid condition should probably not be considered by the board to put into our motion. Ms. Brewen said it cannot be a part of an IGA, the IGA agreement cannot contain that term. Ms. Brewen said language could be used in the IGA granting authorization to use the property for specific period of time, however, because there is a real estate interest that is being passed through the approval of the vacation making it private property, they cannot force district 11 through an IGA agreement to give it back to the City. Commissioner Slattery asked if an IGA could enforce public pedestrian or bicycle access through a property where the right-of-way vacation has been granted. Ms. Brewen said yes, there could be an agreement between the parties to create a public egress,

but that would be over private property.

Chair Casey asked if it would be similar to a utility easement for pedestrians. Ms. Brewen said it operates similarly.

Commissioner Cecil asked why a skyway or aerial walkway was not considered as it might make it easier to secure and address the traffic concerns. Mr. Abernethy said they did look at an overhead pedestrian condition over the top of the right-of-away, however as the program evolved and the feedback from the community, it became apparent that there are other multiple uses that need to be addressed on the consolidated campus. He said by elevating the walkway a lot of cities have started to go away from those because having less pedestrians on the streetscape erodes public safety. He said there is about 60,000 feet of programs that are going to be executed in phase 2. There is an instructional need for the closure of Boulder for phase 2 which will have 1100 students moving back and forth between phase 1 and phase 2 building. He said one of the concepts that is used in urban planning and the design of the school is called crime prevention through environmental design. This establishes perimeters of security in the building where the first perimeter is the block itself and then pedestrian access. He said the way the building is designed, they have the ability to compartmentalize the building down. Commissioner Cecil said she has been in other cities with a mega block, creating new defense ability concerns when it comes to a lockdown situation and the ability for the whole campus to be shut down and asked if someone could speak to the emergency response. Mr. Abernethy said they worked with district security and first responders about access through the courtyard and the vacated right-of- away to provide access for both fire and first responders on the campus. Commissioner Cecil asked how they will be able to drive up to the area. Mr. Abernethy said there is a protocol in place that the district works with first responders both internally with their security team and externally with the Fire Department and the Police to respond to events on campus.

Commissioner Willoughby asked if they could speak on the recommendations of the traffic study. Lyle DeVries, Principal, Felsburg, Holt and Ullevig (FHU), said there is a change to the patterns that would increase some of the turning movements at the Platte and Nevada intersection. He said Platte avenue could function with the reduced number of travel lanes if that intersection were to remain signalized. He said if there was still an interest in making it a roundabout, that would put some constraints on Platte avenue travel lanes.

Commissioner Slattery asked about the parking needs from the athletic facilities coming on site and are they for practice, competition and community members at the location. Commissioner asked what the vision is for Erbs field. Commissioner Slattery asked about public access, pedestrian and bicycle if it

will remain on campus and how that would function as a cohesive pedestrian friendly, cohabitation. Mr. Lieber said the majority of the onsite parking today occurs on the north end of the site. He said with phase 1A the existing parking largely remains as it is now. He said phase 1B would relocate a significant amount of the parking to the north. Mr. Lieber spoke on the slides pertaining to parking. He said in phase 2, the athletic facility would come online and there is a significant amount of available space within a two-block radius. He said there is intent to enter into agreements that would allow for additional parking in surrounding churches and businesses. He said they spoke with City parking enterprise, and their suggestion was to look at this from an incremental approach. Mr. Lieber suggested if it would make sense for this part of downtown to invest in public parking garage. Their response was perhaps someday, but they are nowhere near that kind of demand. He said they are maximizing their parking with phase 1B.

Commissioner Slattery asked if the demand from the education institution would be more on weekdays and Saturdays and if that is factored into the parking assessment. Mr. Lieber said yes. He said that the district has been clear that there is no intent for the multi-use field and track to replace Garry Berry and it will not be built with extensive stands.

Commissioner Cecil asked Mr. Lieber to explain whether or not the district has an obligation to provide secure parking facilities to students or for their staff. Mr. Lieber said he would defer to the district, but they do a permit parking program to ensure specific spaces for students, teachers and staff.

Chair Casey asked if the current parking areas have security, cameras or lighting. Dennis Moore, security lead at Palmer Highschool said yes, there are camera in the parking lots and they are monitored 24/7. Chair Casey asked if that is a requirement from District 11. Mr. Moore said it is not a requirement.

Commissioner Slattery said they need to address Erbs field and the future of pedestrian and bicycle access. Mr. Abernethy said there a couple of components that are being displaced through the master plan. He said public access across the property would be signed appropriately in order for pedestrians to go through or use the property. He said when schools are not in session, before after school and in the summertime, there would be easy access through that. The district would maintain that property but would be access and appropriate signage for them to circulate through the property and pedestrian and bike.

Commissioner Slattery asked how that would work while school is in session. Mr. Abernethy that is where some nuances would need to be worked out.

Chair Casey asked if they envision gates. Mr. Abernethy said if they go into

lockdown they envision a vehicular barrier so that only first responders that were getting onto the property. He said in the event of a full lockdown they would need gates on the site at the full build secure the whole campus, however, that it is down the road on phase 2 and is not contemplated until additional funding is available. Chair Casey said if there is a lot of pedestrian access, people are going to stop, and how do they envision the security protocols to work. Mr. Abernethy said security protocols go into place for the district's security where they sweep the building, go into lockdown, identify the threat and the security team would clear the pedestrians and lock the building down.

Ms. Wise said regarding Erbs field, if the plan gets to the phase where they are discussing a baseball diamond on the property, it would be the very last part of the plan, secondly, it would not be for daily activities. She said the gym and track are used most often by students traveling all day throughout the day. Every student has a period of health classes, PE classes and other random classes down at Erbs field, that traffic would move up to the connected campus. A potential baseball diamond would be for a very limited number students and only for after-school activities. Ms. Wise said they are still in discussions about pedestrian access.

Commissioner Willoughby asked about the Historic Preservation component saying that the houses are not listed specifically on the historic register, however the Weber-Wasatch Historic District is on the register and asked if the Planning Department could explain the nuance of that. Mr. Tefertiller said there are multiple levels of historic recognition at the State and Federal level and individual properties, structures, even pieces of infrastructure can be individually recognized on the Federal or State Register as historic elements. He said these three homes as individual structures have not been registered on either the State or Federal register. They are a part of the Weber-Wasatch Historic District which is comprised of a couple of hundred homes and around 10 blocks. He said the homes in that geographic area together represent a point in time, type of architecture, certain level of maintenance and preservation that together as a district have been included on the National Register. Mr. Tefertiller said it is separate from the City of Colorado Springs, Historic Preservation overlay, which is a zoning designation that is applied to neighborhoods, specifically the Old North End Neighborhood as well as to individual properties. He said anything with the Historic Preservation Overlay has an additional level of process, requirements and standards to demolish a building, build additions, or significantly modify a building. If there is a Historic Preservation Overlay, it requires a public hearing at the historic Preservation Board where they evaluate that request based on a wide range of its criteria and standards.

Commissioner Cecil asked for an explanation on how the leases for those

homes were terminated. Ms. Wise said the information being discussed is on the Palmer home renovation website and said the district acquired the homes in April and June of 2025 and had a very clear conversation with the tenants of those buildings that they would allow them to see out the rest of their leases. She said most of the leases will expire on December 31st and they have a few that may extend past that time. She said they have not received any negative responses to the termination of the leases. Ms. Wise corrected a statement made by Ms. Osborne that the district does not have a scheduled demolition date of the homes and in fact, a report states that they are still in conversation to see what the potential options for the homes, or a relocation process. Commissioner Cecil asked if they mean physically relocating someone. Ms. Wise said no, they mean the whole home. She said the district has been very transparent that they are not interested in making any profit from the homes and whomever is interested may have these homes for a dollar to move them to another part of the neighborhood. Commissioner Cecil said affordability is crucial and downtown is only getting more expensive.

Commissioner Hensler asked if funding does not occur for some of the future phases, does the vacation of Nevada go by the wayside and would they revisit the idea of a bridge or other use. Todd Frisbie, City Traffic Engineering said they did receive a traffic study, reviewed it and worked with the applicant on the contents of the study, and they were satisfied with it. Commissioner Hensler asked about the impacts on traffic from eliminating kids from Platte going down to Erbs field. Mr. Frisbie said one of the critical intersections for safety is Platte and Wasatch and some drivers are not paying attention and if they can remove some of the daily need of students or any pedestrian having to cross at that intersection, they can reduce your risk and have improved safety. Commissioner Hensler said if Boulder Street vacation is not approved then what does that do to the plan and how does it effect the future phases. Brandon Comfort, Deputy Superintendent and Chief Financial Officer said he will not obligate their board of education and how they will spend funding, however, they will be providing adequate funding to fund phase 1B when it becomes available. He said phase 2 will require the will of the voters.

Mr. Tefertiller said he and City Attorney Sara Brewen were reviewing condition 3 on the right-of-way vacation. He said an IGA is not absolutely certain and the conditions of approval are intentionally to discuss an agreement between the City and the School District. He said they are negotiating and working through a letter of intent to understand the details in the agreement. He said the intent is to have an agreement in place where the District agrees to offer what used to be Bolder right-of-away back to the City if Palmer no longer exists in the future. Mr. Tefertiller said condition number three is still applicable.

Commissioner Cecil said one of the public speakers mentions that many of the

schools are in residential zones and suggested that the zoning change was not necessary and asked if this could be explained. Mr. Tefertiller said the comment was made that no other High schools or Middle schools in the City use anything other than residential zone districts and that is false. He said a number of schools are A zone, agricultural zone and there are others that are in commercial or industrial zone districts. He said when they began discussions with the School District, it became obvious that a zone change was necessary and that is because they hope to submit a subdivision plat to create one lot for the entire campus as one platted lot cannot have multiple zone districts. He said there are a range of considerations and use what uses are allowed in the zone districts, the development standards like setbacks, building height and lot coverage. The development standards associated with the transition sector of the form-based codes are quite reasonable and support what the school is trying to do as far as their density, height and scale. They also have standards for public space, frontage design, etcetera that create an interesting and pedestrian-friendly environment. The district and staff agree that the form-based zone was the appropriate zone district for the property.

Chair Casey said there was a public comment whether that would invite or allow for commercial use or if the school wanted to use it for other uses and asked if there are other uses by right in the zone. Mr. Tefertiller said form-based on is intentionally a mixed-use zone and the form-based zone allows a wide range of commercial, civic, entertainment, residential office uses all within the zone. He said 75-100 years from now, should the school district sell the property, it would still have the form-based zone, and a range of uses could occupy the buildings or establish new buildings on the site, according to the form-based zone. He said this is an urban environment and they are looking as a transition into the adjacent residential areas. Mr. Tefertiller said phase 2 of the plan calls for an athletic recreation type building on the north part of the site and there has been dialogue with service providers like the YMCA or other recreational entities that may be co-located on the site within the same buildings there together. He said there could be other uses on the 8.2 acres that are not just for D11 Palmer, there could be a partnership with other non-district users.

Commissioner Slattery asked if the PPA, RTA funded Platte Avenue improvements been scheduled and asked if that was a fair condition of approval to put on the district if their plan is to move forward with a track and field and make safety happen earlier. Mr. Frisbee said Platt Avenue project is a 10 year program and they should start to see construction in 2030 or 2031.

Commissioner Slattery asked if the application was approved today, would the design phase for 2030 adjust to incorporate the Boulder street closure and would it be detrimental to the success of Platte Avenue's reconstruction. Mr. Frisbee said the Boulder street close would not change their plan. The program

is funded pay as you go. Commissioner Slattery said given what they have heard today about intentions on schedule and the completion of the track and field portion 1B being completed prior to the Platte Avenue reconstruction, would the design phase incorporate other solutions for interim detours. Mr. Frisbee said they do not know what the conditions will be like in the future, but they would address the need for detours at the time of construction.

Chair Casey asked if it is possible that condition number two might not be feasible. Mr. Frisbee said that it is possible.

Commissioner Hensler said requesting collaboration is an unenforceable condition and in their experience, they should not be making decisions about items in front of them based on things that are proposed and undefined in the future. Mr. Tefertiller said the condition is intentionally vague and does not apply only to the Boulder right-of-way between Weber and Nevada. He said there may be other pieces of District owned property in the area of the Platte improvement project that could be beneficial to the City's project. Commissioner Slattery said it is a condition of approval on the vacation right away and it is requesting public egress during construction.

Chair Casey said the language for condition number two is different than other motions.

Commissioner Hensler said their purview is to focus on Boulder street and does it meet the criteria.

Commissioner Willoughby asked if "collaborate" is language that can hold up because "collaborate" is a vague term. Ms. Brewen said for the purposes of an IGA, the City can enter into an agreement to collaborate, but "collaborate" is subjective.

Commissioner Slattery said regarding the zone change and form-base zone, she finds it to be compatible and is in support of the zone change. She said it offers an urban style that will enhance and connect Palmer High School and the academic campus to the urban environment. Commissioner Slattery said regarding the right-of-way, pedestrian safety, creating a cohesive campus community asset and taking vehicular traffic outside of the campus will outweigh people discovering new routes of traffic. Commissioner Slattery said the language on the conditions of approval where the agreement between the City and D11 shall require D11 to allow public egress over the property if the space is not used for construction or permanent school district activities does not feel like the right language. Commissioner Slattery said allowing access for other people to enter into a school district campus is not safe. Commissioner Slattery proposed changing the conditions of approval to allow public access when classes are not in session or where it is compatible with student safety. Commissioner Slattery said the requests for PPA/RTA egress do not make

sense with the timelines and proposed to strike the condition. Commissioner Slattery said she is ok with leaving in the ownership of the right-of-way in condition number three. Commissioner Slattery said the land use plan is good.

Commissioner Hensler said significant change comes with significant discomfort and said she cannot get over the discomfort she feel when she sees teens with undeveloped prefrontal cortex walking the streets downtown to get to their classes at Erbs field in contrast to closing one small section of one street that will greatly increase safety security and educational accessibility for those very same students. Commissioner Hensler said the team has shown a lot of ingenuity and innovation trying to get this done. She said for a Downtown Urban Campus, the form-based zoning really applies and makes the most sense and unifying all the lots. Commissioner Hensler said she is not in favor of allowing pedestrian access to a school campus in an era where school shootings and violence continue to occur in our country. Commissioner Hensler said it makes the most sense to close the campus to allow for the vacation and allow the campus to be closed and to enhance security through that. Commissioner Hensler said she is not concerned about condition number three and is ok with leaving it as written and is in favor of the land use plan as shown.

Commissioner Gigiano said she agrees with the other Commissioners about pedestrian access and said that there are safety concerns on both sides but making it a closed campus is safer without pedestrian access.

Commissioner Robbins said he agrees and there should not be access to the public and closing Boulder will make safety easier to handle and this is a great thing for the City of Colorado Springs.

Commissioner Cecil said she agrees and unifying the parcels makes total sense to change this form-based and my opinion rather than leaving it residential to deal with all the setback issues. Commissioner Cecil said she is a bit hesitant about the vacation, but she does like the land use plan. Commissioner Cecil said she enjoys diversity and configurations of streets, and it feel like this promotes the sort of variation of what PlanCOS envisions, however, it can cause trouble as each of the prior commentators brought up. Commissioner Cecil said there is not another way to achieve the size of track without approving the vacation and overall, the land use plan makes a lot of sense. Commissioner Cecil said she will be voting in favor and striking out the second recommended condition.

Commissioner Willoughby said she is in favor of what the other commissioners have said and is not concerned about going to form-based code and inviting commercial establishments as the school has been around 150 years. Commissioner Willoughby said regarding the Historic Preservation it is always

a bummer to see historic houses go away but does not think it is compromising the integrity of that historic district. Commissioner Willoughby said she is in favor of the comments from Commissioner Slattery said regarding pedestrian access.

Commissioner Slattery said that integration of school and community is so important and saying that nobody can use it any point would be detrimental and there should be an agreement about hours of usage and would like to think that it is the intention of the district to allow community access because it is best thing for the community and the district. Commissioner Slattery asked the Commissioners if they would like see an agreement between the City and the School District to allow public access and does that need to be a condition of the right-of-way vacation approval.

Chair Casey said the applications for the zone change, land use plan and public vacation right-of-way criteria are all met. Chair Casey said he agrees with Commissioner Slattery.

Commissioner Robbins said he does not agree with the public access of the space after hours and should not be accessed for homeless to camp out overnight as it is a campus for the students and families.

Motion by Commissioner Cecil, seconded by Commissioner Slattery, to Recommend approval to City Council the Zoning Map Amendment of 8.27 acres for the two blocks bound by N. Nevada Ave, E. St. Vrain St., N. Weber St., and E. Platte Ave. 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) based on the findings that the change of zone criteria in Section 7.5.704.D. of City Code are met.

The motion passed unanimously.

Aye: 8 - Vice Chair Hensler, Commissioner Cecil, Commissioner Slattery, Commissioner Robbins, Chair Casey, Commissioner Clements, Commissioner Gigiano and Commissioner Willoughby

- 8.C.** [SUBD-25-0076](#) An Ordinance vacating a portion of the public right-of-way known as East Boulder Street consisting of approximately 0.92 acres located between N. Nevada Ave. and N. Weber St. (1st Reading only to set the public hearing date for March 10, 2026).
(Quasi-Judicial)

Related Files: ZONE-25-0026, SUBD-25-0076, LUPL-25-0012

Located in Council District 3

Presenter:

Ryan Tefertiller, Planning Manager, City Planning Department
Kevin Walker, Planning Director, City Planning Department

Motion by Commissioner Slattery, seconded by Commissioner Cecil, to Recommend approval to City Council the vacation of public right-of-way known as East Boulder Street consisting of approximately 0.92 acres located between N. Nevada Ave. and N. Weber St. based on the findings that the vacation criteria in Section 7.5.522.C.5.b. of City Code are met 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 pedestrian and non-vehicular access over the property during off-school hours where the school safety is not compromised.**
- 2. 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.**

The motion passed by a vote of 7-1-0-0.

Aye: 7 - Vice Chair Hensler, Commissioner Cecil, Commissioner Slattery, Chair Casey, Commissioner Clements, Commissioner Gigiano and Commissioner Willoughby

No: 1 - Commissioner Robbins

- 8.D.** [LUPL-25-001](#)
[2](#) Establishment of the District 11 Palmer High School Land Use Plan for proposed civic uses consisting of 8.27 acres located on the two blocks bound by N. Nevada Ave, E. St. Vrain St., N. Weber St., and E. Platte Ave.
(Quasi-Judicial)

Located in Council District 3

Presenter:

Ryan Tefertiller, Urban Planning Manager, City Planning Department
Kevin Walker, Planning Director, City Planning Department

Motion by Commissioner Slattery, seconded by Commissioner Cecil, to Recommend approval to City Council the Palmer High School Land Use Plan consisting of 8.27 acres for the two blocks bound by N. Nevada Ave, E. St. Vrain St., N. Weber St., and E. Platte Ave. based on the findings that the land use plan criteria in Section 7.5.514.C.3. of City Code are met.

The motion passed unanimously.

Aye: 8 - Vice Chair Hensler, Commissioner Cecil, Commissioner Slattery, Commissioner Robbins, Chair Casey, Commissioner Clements, Commissioner Gigiano and Commissioner Willoughby