Colorado Springs Utilities
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City of Colorado Springs
Planning and Development
30 S. Nevada Ave. Suite 701
Colorado Springs, CO 80903

March 26, 2024

Re: Application No. ZONE-23-0028

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to community concerns and statements that were provided during the initial rezoning application for the Central Bluffs substation. Please see the subjects and responses below.

- Property Values/Siting
    - Locating a new substation within an already established area is very challenging. The unique operational and space requirements for a new substation drastically limited our options within a part of Colorado Springs that is already well established and developed. Our goal is to provide a solution that strikes a balance between neighborhood preservation and electric system reliability. We are not aware that the values of Colorado Springs properties have decreased or will decrease due solely to their proximity to a substation.
    - After an extensive evaluation of the project needs and potential sites, we selected the site near Austin Bluffs Parkway and Goldenrod Drive because it was the most operationally and economically compatible option. Each site was evaluated for community impact, electrical system reliability, and its ability to transmit and distribute long-term, dependable energy. Other considerations included operational compatibility, flexibility, cost and accessibility. Other sites were rejected due to significant operational and neighborhood impacts due to limited access, project economics, small parcel sizes, design challenges and distance from existing infrastructure. The selected site is adjacent to an existing high voltage transmission corridor, provides multiple access points and provides enough space for current and future technology. The new substation will connect to the existing electrical feeds currently served by the three aging stations that will be retired.
- Quiet/ Noise
    - Based on a preliminary evaluation, noise will be below the state and local decibel thresholds of 50 dB measured 25-ft from the substation property line. Comparatively, a washing machine has a decibel output of about 70 dB. We expect the substation will produce less noise than the existing commercial development.
    - We plan to construct a wall that is at least eight feet tall around the Central Bluffs substation site. The wall is planned to match the colors of existing aesthetics, such as the wall at Austin Bluffs Pkwy. and Union Blvd.

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- There are complexities to designing an accurate sound study such as study location, traffic patterns, etc. that would make the results prior to the project ineffective. Utilities design will comply with all noise ordinances.
- Prior to demolition activities, area customers will be notified.

- Light Pollution
  - We expect the substation will produce less light than the existing commercial development. There will be minimal light used at this site unless emergency repairs are required at night.
- Traffic/ Lane Closures/ Large trucks constantly coming in and out)
  - Traffic and construction plans have not been finalized yet. Our standard practice is to focus on neighborhood safety, commuter safety and to minimize impacts on properties during and after construction. Every effort will be made to ensure residential construction traffic is kept to a minimum. Access to the site will be primarily at Austin Bluffs Pwky. and the area entrance at the corner of Austin Bluffs Pkwy. and Goldenrod Dr. We expect that once construction is completed the substation will produce less traffic than the existing commercial development.
- Wooded Area/bmx biking/ bicycle jumps/open space/trails/ natural space/community park/Bridge between Palmer Park, Grant Park and the State-owned Hoodoos/pathway to reach grant park and the school/trees/ nature/ building on a floodway/dog walks/paths
  - We are planning to limit the encroachment of the substation to only as far north as is necessary leaving the majority of the wooded lot undisturbed. Please see the planned substation footprint image below:

*Yellow area represents the substation footprint including a perimeter wall which may be revised based on final design.

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  - We are still considering options to maintain the trail and ramps, as we understand this is important to the community. We will have more information when we submit the development plan on the proposed plan for the trail and ramps. We intend on keeping as much healthy vegetation as possible and will only remove trees that are necessary for the project.
  - The project design will follow industry standard practices and local requirements regarding site drainage, erosion potential, soil stability, and other geotechnical considerations. This design process will include proper survey and soil sampling to support engineering and demonstrate compliance with the City's streamside overlay and floodplain development requirements.
- Wildlife/Birds/Nesting/Migration Patterns
  - We will only remove trees that are necessary for the project. Utilities has a well-developed raptor protection program. Prior to construction, a nesting survey will be performed. Under the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act, trees that have nests usually cannot be removed during the nesting season.
  - Who is performing the wildlife studies, and the timeline of the study remains to be determined. Once the study is complete, we are happy to share the results with our customers.
- EMF/ Health Risks/Concerns
  - To ensure the safety of neighboring customers, we will be performing an EMF study that is expected to be complete in April. The Colorado limit for EMF at the edge of a project Right of Way is 150 mG. For some context, please note electromagnetic fields six inches from common home appliances are: vacuum cleaner 300 mG; microwave 200 mG and garbage disposal 80 mG. We do not expect the results of the study to exceed the State EMF limits.
- Aesthetics/consider both low-profile designs/additional concrete barriers to decrease sound and potentially harmful EMF radiation/fencing and extensive landscaping/eyesore/ unsightly
  - Visual impacts will be offset by an 8-foot wall (or taller) and surrounding landscape features. The exact height of the wall and landscaping features will not be known until the design is complete.
  - We plan to construct a wall that is at least eight feet tall around the Central Bluffs substation site. For comparison, the existing Templeton substation, located in Palmer Park near Austin Bluffs Parkway, currently has a short masonry retaining wall around it coupled with a chain link fence (approximately 8' tall) with barbed wire.
  - Each substation has different geotechnical requirements and mitigation efforts for view and noise impacts, and security measures.
  - The material of the wall is not yet determined, but will be designed to blend in with the surrounding area as much as possible.
  - The project will be reviewed for compliance with landscaping requirements by the City of Colorado Springs.
- Safety (industrial accident, harmful to people)/ kids in the neighborhood/ Fire risk (downed power lines causing a wildfire to the open space)
  - We are passionately committed to safety of the public, our employees and our contractors. Safety plans will be laid out in advance of demolition and construction to ensure compliance to our safety standards.

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  - Steel monopoles on concrete pier foundations will be used to/from this substation. Typical pole heights range from 70-100 feet above ground. Substation wires will be overhead. There are already existing overhead transmission lines near the project site.
  - This substation will not increase the fire risk.
- Construction concerns (road closures, noise, debris removal, large dangerous trucks operating on streets
  - Traffic and construction plans have not been finalized yet, but our standard practice is to focus on neighborhood safety, commuter safety and to minimize impacts on properties during and after construction. The project will be managed in accordance with permit and regulatory requirements, including noise and dust. Work hours are typically 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays, though we will be more certain of the work hours closer to construction. Weather and other factors may affect this schedule. We will comply with the City of Colorado Springs' noise ordinance during and after construction.
- Soil Integrity/Damage to foundations as lines are run (neighbor's example) – Soil reports
  - Substation wires will be overhead primarily for cost reasons and to minimize disruption to the surrounding neighborhood. There are already existing overhead transmission lines near the project site.
- Vagrants, Homeless people
  - The substation site will be fenced and secured during demolition, construction and operation. Our security team carefully monitors all of our facilities.
- Why can't you put it across street up against Palmer Park/expand to already-built area.
  - Ideally, the least impactful solution for consolidating the aging substations would be to expand the Templeton substation, which is adjacent to Palmer Park and geographically right in the middle of the two aging substations. After conducting extensive research, it was determined that this location could not be expanded as a result of the Palmer Deed restrictions recorded against the property. An expansion of the Templeton station would violate the deed restrictions which stipulate that if its provisions were broken the land would revert back to General Palmer's heirs.
- Environmental impact studies
  - The Environmental Assessment is complete. No negative environmental impacts were found in the area where the substation footprint will be.
- Upkeep of landscaping
  - We take pride in our facilities and take great care of them. Landscaping will be maintained for both aesthetics and for safety.
- Utility Rates
  - We have been planning for this project and there will be no rate increases as a direct result of this project. We feel it is the most responsible way to invest our customers' rate dollars in enhancing electric reliability to their homes and businesses, while planning ahead to create an electric grid ready for future technologies.
- Project has grown and possibly tripled in some size
  - The parcels we purchased and the substation footprint have not changed since this site was selected.

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- Demolishing businesses and homes
    - This site required the acquisition of seven parcels (four commercial, two residential, and one vacant parcel). We worked with property owners and tenants on purchasing and relocation in accordance with all local and federal rules and regulations.
- Mid-block pedestrian signal crossing Austin Bluffs Parkway between Goldenrod and Brenner
    - This concern is best addressed by the City of Colorado Springs Traffic Engineering department.
- Substation footprint, map of the exact footprint of the substation and the wall
    - The substation design is still in process.

Sincerely,

Steven Gaeta

Steven Gaeta, Project Manager

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