

Quick Facts

Applicant

The Downtown Partnership, CEO Chelsea Gondeck

Consultant

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

Address / Location

Downtown Colorado Springs

Site Area

Roughly 1 square mile

Proposed Land Use

Mixed Land Use

Applicable Code

Unified Development Code (UDC)

Council District

3

Project Summary

The Elevate Downtown Plan is an update to the Experience Downtown Plan which was approved by City Council in 2016. The Plan is made up of two volumes: Volume 1 is the Plan of Development for the Downtown Development Authority; while Volume 2 is the Neighborhood Plan (previously referred to as a Master Plan) that provides guidance to City Staff, property owners, downtown advocates, residents, and all community members that have interest in the condition of Downtown Colorado Springs.

File Number	Application Type	Decision Type
NPLN-26-0001	Neighborhood Plan and Plan of Development	Legislative

Background

Prior Land-Use History and Applicable Actions

<i>Action</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Date</i>
Annexation	Town of Colorado Springs	1872
Subdivision	Numerous	Numerous
Master Plan	Experience Downtown Plan	2016
Prior Enforcement Action	NA	NA

Site History

Downtown Colorado Springs was first developed in the 1870s when the original town plat was established and recorded. There have been numerous iterations of planning documents relevant to Downtown Colorado Springs throughout our City's 150-year history. The most notably modern planning documents include: The Downtown Plan (1971), The Downtown Action Plan (1992), The Imagine Downtown Plan (2007/2009), and the Experience Downtown Plan (2016).

Applicable Code

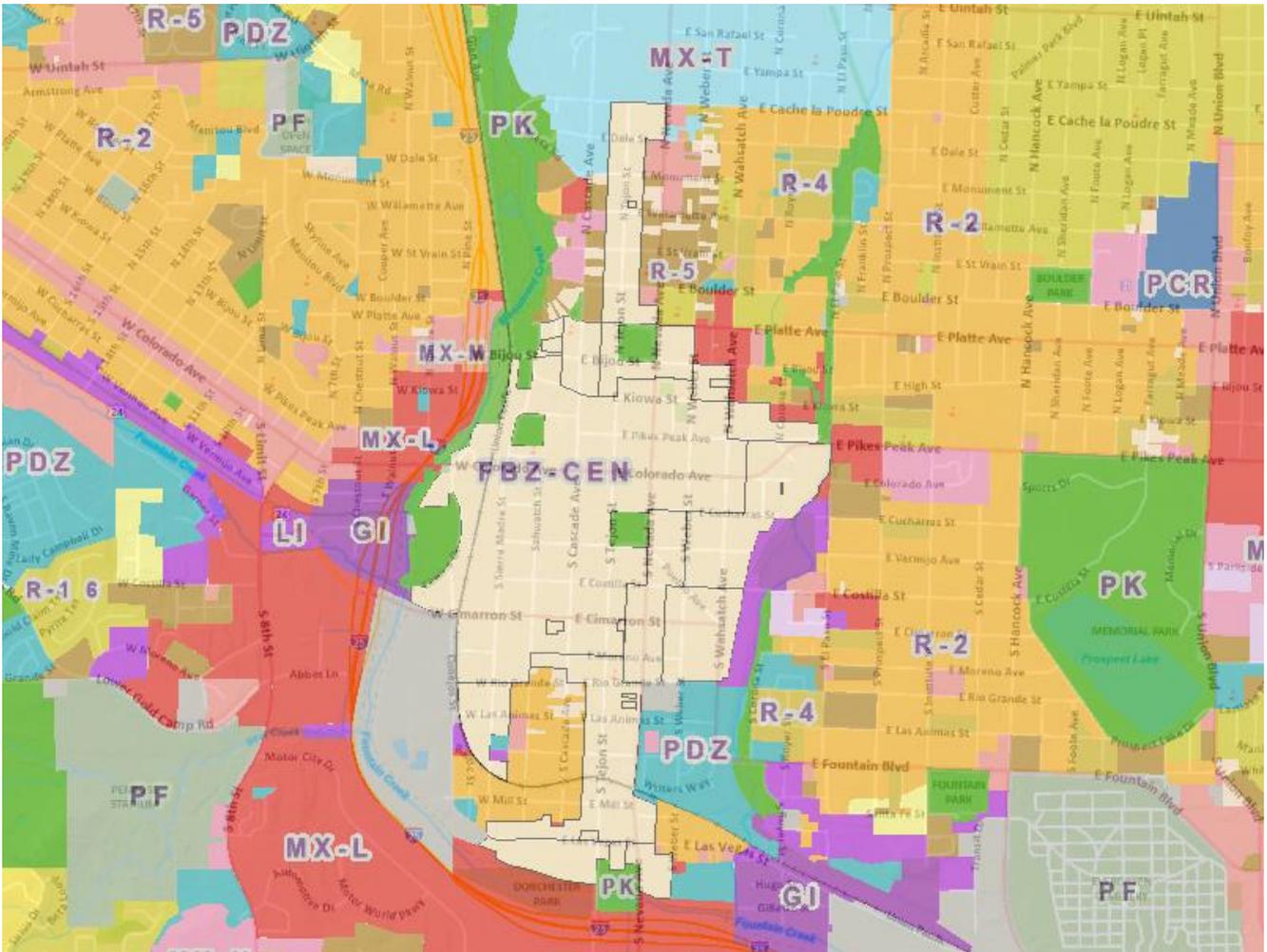
The subject application was reviewed under the Unified Development Code. All subsequent references within this report that are made to "the Code" and related sections are references to the Unified Development Code.

Surrounding Zoning and Land Use

Adjacent Property Existing Conditions

	<i>Zoning</i>	<i>Existing Use</i>	<i>Special Conditions</i>
North	Various	Residential, Commercial, Institutional, and others	Colorado College, Historic Uptown, and Old North End Neighborhoods
West	Various	Residential, Commercial, Institutional, Industrial, & others	Fountain & Monument Creeks, I-25, Drake site; Near Westside Neighborhoods
South	Various	Residential, Commercial, Institutional, and others	Fountain Creek, I-25, Mill Street Neighborhood, S. Nevada corridor
East	Various	Residential, Commercial, Institutional, and others	Shooks Run, Mid-Shooks and Hillside Neighborhoods, Memorial Park

Zoning Map



Stakeholder Involvement

Public Notice

Public Notice Occurrences (Poster / Postcards)	None; public engagement was addressed in a variety of ways described below
Postcard Mailing Radius	NA
Number of Postcards Mailed	NA
Number of Comments Received	Significant – see below

Public Engagement

Public engagement for the drafting and refinement of the Elevate Downtown Plan was significant. The effort to update the Downtown Plan began in early 2025, with community engagement kicking off shortly thereafter. Communication out to stakeholders and opportunities for stakeholders to provide input to the project team included: digital outreach through a project website and social media; multiple community partner and focus group meetings; two community surveys with over 2,200 participants; two in-person community events; three pop-up tables at downtown events (e.g. First Friday Artwalk and Food Truck Tuesday); and publication of draft documents online with public comment ability (almost 1,000 views and 80 comments). Additionally, Planning Staff, together with the project team, made multiple public presentations during the drafting period to the Downtown Review Board, City Planning Commission, and City Council regarding the effort, initial issues, goals, strategies, and action steps and how stakeholders can participate in the project.

Public input to the plan spanned a wide range of issues and perspectives. Common issues raised by community members included: homelessness; mobility options; need for residential supporting amenities (e.g. full-service grocer); affordable housing; parking management; economic development; walkability; and others.

Timeline of Review

Initial Submittal Date	The final draft of the plan was issued in February of 2026; a formal record (NPLN-26-0001) was created shortly thereafter
Number of Review Cycles	1 formal review, but City Agencies reviewed initial drafts with minimal feedback in mid-2025
Item Ready for Agenda	February 2026

Agency Review

Traffic Engineering

City Traffic Engineers and Public Works Staff participated in topic-specific focus group discussions and reviewed preliminary drafts of the Plan; input was incorporated into the final draft.

Parks

City Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services Staff participated in topic-specific focus group discussions and reviewed preliminary drafts of the Plan; input was incorporated into the final draft.

SWENT

SWENT Staff participated in topic-specific focus group discussions and reviewed preliminary drafts of the Plan; input was incorporated into the final draft.

Colorado Springs Utilities

CSU Staff participated in topic-specific focus group discussions and reviewed preliminary drafts of the Plan; input was incorporated into the final draft.

Neighborhood Plan

Summary of Application

Downtown Colorado Springs has a long history of land use planning. Beginning in the early 1970s, the City has formally drafted, reviewed, and/or approved planning documents to help guide land use, infrastructure, and investment decisions within the heart of the City. While many elements of downtown have remained largely unchanged over the last 150 years (e.g. the downtown grid street network is largely the same as it was when initially platted in the 1870s), other elements

and issues are continuously evolving and the City needs to be responsive and even proactive to continue to bring success to Downtown.

The Elevate Plan is considered a strategic update to the 2016 Experience Downtown Plan. While the Experience Plan is just less than a decade old, many of the goals, strategies, and action steps within the Plan have been completed or achieved. Additionally, new issues and priorities have arisen based on recent changes and investments. For example, the Experience Plan emphasized the need to add new residential options Downtown as there had been very few new multi-family projects Downtown in the previous decades. However, Downtown has added nearly 3,000 new residential units over the last 15 years including just over 1,000 units in 2024 and over 700 units in 2025. This illustrates how a priority in 2016 (support new residential development) has evolved to current day priorities (provide supportive uses for Downtown residents).

The Elevate Plan is made up of two Volumes. Volume 1 is the State mandated “Plan of Development” that must be approved for any Downtown Development Authority (DDA) within Colorado. This element of the Elevate Plan discusses Downtown assets, opportunities, and challenges, it establishes a vision framework as well as five goals and related action steps, and it covers a number of legal and financial topics associated with DDAs, most important of which is the ability to utilize Tax Increment Financing (TIF). The five primary goals are described as:

1. The Heart of the Pikes Peak Region
2. The Region’s Most Vibrant and Welcoming Neighborhood
3. Peak Urban Life with Unmatched access to Nature
4. Culture Powered by Creativity and Sport
5. Urban Design Shaped for Humans



The Plan provides multiple Action Steps for each of the five goals. Action Steps are intended to be targeted, tactical actions that advance efforts toward goal realization. See pages 18 through 25 of the Plan for details on the Vision, the 5 Plan Goals, and the numerous Action Steps.

The Plan's second Volume addresses more traditional land use issues and was previously referred to as the "master plan" though that term is no longer used in City Code and is being phased out in most professional planning-circles. Volume 2 covers issues including: land use character; economic vitality; parks, trails, and waterways; mobility; the public realm and urban design; community and culture; infrastructure and utilities; and others. Each chapter within Volume 2 includes an overview then provides information and direction for issues and actions that deserve resources and attention to implement the Plan goals.

Three of the chapters in the Plan's second volume were not included in the 2016 Experience Downtown Plan, including: Economic Vitality; Community & Culture; and Infrastructure & Utilities. While the 2016 Plan discussed many of these issues, the new Plan provides more focused and detailed discussion.

The following is a general overview of each chapter within Volume 2 of the Elevate Plan:

Chapter 1 – Land Use and Character

- The chapter begins with an overview and historic context of Downtown.
- Existing land uses, including the location and proportion of vacant land, are discussed.
- The Plan provides information regarding the various districts across the Plan area as well as the gateways located at the edges of downtown. District boundaries are refined relative to the 2016 Plan and information is provided regarding efforts to date on Gateway enhancements as well as additional recommended efforts.
- The Plan provides discussion of urban density, including the benefits and considerations for a high density urban center. This portion of the chapter includes case studies of peer communities and their key economic outcomes. It also includes some discussion of building heights, zoning standards, and the visibility of tall buildings from outside of downtown.
- Lastly, this chapter includes analysis of Downtown's catalytic sites and "big ideas". One example of a "big idea" that has significant discussion in the plan is desire and opportunity for a full-service grocery store downtown.

Chapter 2 – Economic Vitality

- The chapter begins with an overview of the role that Downtown plays in the City's economic environment including many of the unique assets that the area provides.
- There is discussion of the prominent role that small businesses play in Downtown as well as various challenges and opportunities to continued small business success.
- Discussion is also provided on the topic of employer and employee attraction and retention.
- The Plan provides information on the role that tourism plays Downtown as well as additional assets and attractions that could continue growth in the City's tourism industry.
- Lastly, this chapter provides information about the growing role of Downtown as a neighborhood and how increased residential presence downtown leads to more opportunity for economic growth.

Chapter 3 – Parks, Trails, and Waterways

- An overview of the City's urban park and trail network is provided as well as discussion of the benefits that they provide to urban living and Downtown's economy.

- Descriptions and possible improvements to Downtown’s primary parks, including Acacia Park, Antlers Park, America the Beautiful Park, and Alamo Square Park.
- Additional park opportunities, such as improved park access and pocket parks, are discussed, and recommendations are provided regarding park improvement and place management strategies.
- This chapter also includes significant discussion of the Legacy Loop trail system, past successes, and remaining challenges.
- Information and recommendations are provided on the role that waterways, including Monument Creek, Fountain Creek, and Shooks Run, can provide to Downtown. This portion of the chapter is closely aligned with the recently completed CreekCOS Plan.
- Lastly, this chapter discusses the concept of “trail oriented development” and significant opportunities on the edges of Downtown for new projects that would benefit from direct trail access and improve the area’s mobility, strengthen businesses opportunity, and promote healthy lifestyles.

Chapter 4 – Mobility Network

- After an introductory overview of mobility issues Downtown, this chapter begins by describing the existing mobility framework which includes local streets, collector streets, and arterial streets as well as “placemaking streets,” “active transportation streets,” and “residential garden streets.” Specific characteristics, opportunities, and recommendations are provided for all urban street types.
- This chapter also provides information and recommendations regarding intersection and safety improvements that will benefit Downtown drivers, pedestrians, and multi-mobilists alike.
- Active transportation is discussed providing information on bike, scooter, and pedestrian facilities including opportunities for mobility hubs and areas where sidewalk gaps should be addressed.
- Transit and its role in connecting Downtown to the rest of the community is also analyzed. Issues such as service enhancements, improved user experience, and efforts to establish a new Downtown transit station are all considered.
- This chapter also provides significant discussion of vehicle parking, including the existing system, pricing considerations, and opportunities to use emerging technology to maximize this public resource.

Chapter 5 – Public Realm and Urban Design

- Chapter 5 begins with an overview but then provides discussion detailed discussion of the Downtown Form-Based Code, it’s structure, objectives, and future considerations for improvement.
- The Chapter then provides information on the importance of public spaces and consideration for improvement. Specific topics covered include: ground-floor activation; rooftop uses; lighting and nighttime design considerations; urban greening; and historic preservation.
- Lastly, this chapter provides guidance on opportunities and strategies to enhance district identity to create unique and loved areas within the broader Downtown neighborhood.

Chapter 6 – Community and Culture

- This chapter provides background and recommendations on the existing creative economy downtown including a robust public art program.
- Events and activation are covered as ways to increase vibrancy, increase economic success, and improve social connections.
- Chapter 6 also provides discussion of the issues of housing and homelessness as well as public safety, all of which are critical to a successful and vibrant Downtown. The issue of public restrooms Downtown is also covered in this section of the Plan.

Chapter 7 – Infrastructure and Utilities

- The final chapter of Volume 2 provides information on existing infrastructure, especially utilities, Downtown.
- Specific information is provided regarding the Downtown electrical grid and specific topics like fiber/wifi, electrical vehicle charging facilities, and undergrounding overhead utility lines.
- Stormwater infrastructure and needs for regional solutions and alternative funding mechanisms are also discussed.
- Lastly, this chapter discusses a range of public services such as Fire, Police, and Schools that are all necessary for a successful Downtown.

At over 250 pages long, the Plan is comprehensive and covers a wide range of diverse topics. While Downtown is growing and evolving quickly (hence the need to update the 2016 Experience Downtown Plan after only 10 years), Planning Staff is confident that the Elevate Downtown Plan provides recommendations and strategies to bring continued success to our community for years to come.

Application Review Criteria

The Elevate Downtown Plan was processed as a “neighborhood plan” and an element of the City’s Comprehensive Plan - PlanCOS. The proposed Plan was evaluated for conformance with the general “Purpose” of the Unified Development Code found in Section 7.1.103, which is to:

- A. Promote health, safety, and general welfare of the public;
- B. Protect private property from adjacent nuisances such as incompatible uses and noise;
- C. Implement the Colorado Springs Comprehensive Plan;
- D. Establish the orderly subdivision of land;
- E. Ensure the logical growth of the City's physical elements;
- F. Encourage adequate multi-modal transportation facilities;
- G. Promote opportunities for affordable and attainable housing throughout the City; and
- H. Facilitate adequate provision of utilities, schools, parks, and other public infrastructure services.
- I. Enhance the quality, diversity, and safety of neighborhoods by encouraging pride and investment.

The Plan was also evaluated using the UDC’s Legislative Declaration found in Section 7.5.706.A which reads: “The City Council hereby finds, determines and declares that it is in the public interest that there be a Comprehensive Plan to promote the public health, safety and general welfare, to improve the physical environment of the City as a setting for human activities; to evaluate the social and economic effects of land development; to formulate, determine, and implement community values, policies, standards and objectives; to consider the effect on community financial capabilities, public, and private investments; and to consider the effect on the environment when making land development decisions.”

Lastly, the Plan was evaluated for consistency with relevant guiding plans and PlanCOS itself (see below).

After evaluation of the Elevate Downtown Plan, Staff finds that the Plan is consistent with the Purpose of the Zoning Code as well as the Code’s legislative declaration and is supported by PlanCOS and relevant guiding plans.

Compliance with Relevant Guiding Plans

The Elevate Downtown Plan includes an introductory section titled “Planning Process” that provides background on how the Plan was drafted, how community input was solicited and incorporated, and other information that was considered

when writing the Plan. Specifically, the subsection titled “Integrated Plans” lists all the previously drafted and/or adopted plans and studies that were considered.

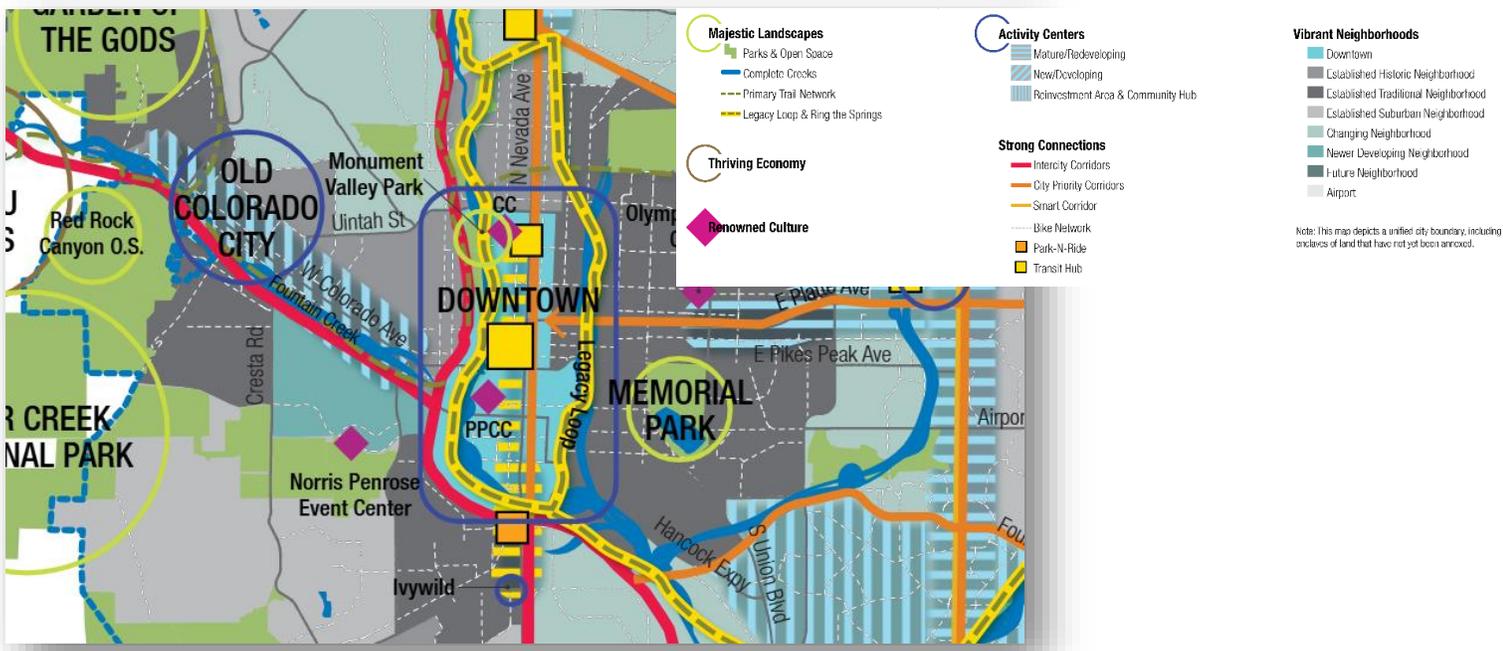
INTEGRATED PLANS

This Plan integrates the findings and recommendations of numerous completed and ongoing community plans and initiatives. Our thanks go to the hundreds of community stakeholders lending voice to these plans:

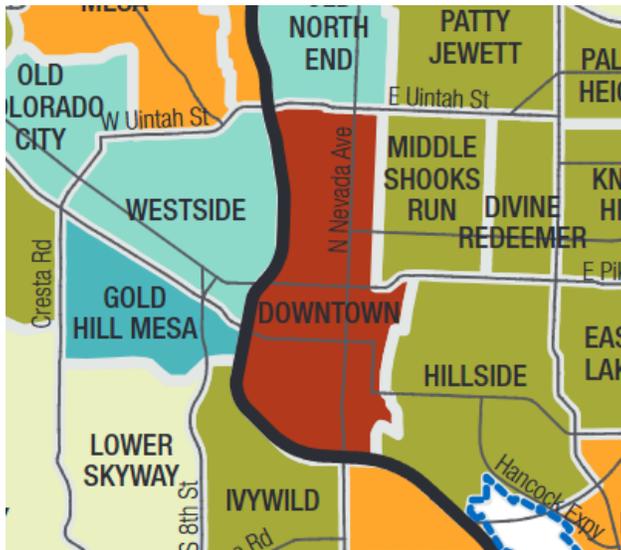
- Experience Downtown Colorado Springs Plan of Development and Master Plan, 2016
- Comparative Analysis of Downtown Colorado Springs, International Downtown Association Report, 2024
- State of Downtown Report, 2024
- State of Downtown Report, 2025
- Downtown Annual Report to the Community, 2023
- Downtown Colorado Springs Form-Based Code, 2009
- Colorado Springs Strategic Plan, 2024 – 2028
- PlanCOS, 2023
- ConnectCOS, 2023
- HomeCOS, 2020
- Colorado Springs Homelessness Response Plan, 2025
- Platte Avenue Corridor Study, 2024
- Envision Shooks Run Corridor Facilities Master Plan, 2017
- Historic Downtown Parks Master Plan, 2020
- Mill Street Neighborhood Plan, 2019
- 2045 Regional Transit Specialized Transportation Plans, 2020
- City of Colorado Springs Parks Master Plan, 2014
- City of Colorado Springs Parks Master Plan Update, ongoing
- CreekCOS, 2023
- Reimagining the Drake Power Plant: A Community Visioning Project, 2023
- Front Range Passenger Rail Service Development Plan, ongoing
- Colorado Springs Parking and Curb Management Plan, 2025
- The Evolution of Historic Medians in Colorado Springs, 1996
- City of Colorado Springs Public Art Master Plan, 2020
- Arts Vision 2030: The Cultural Plan for the Pikes Peak Region, 2021
- Colorado Springs Downtown Partnership Community Conversations, 2025
- Colorado Springs 2050 Regional Transit Plan, 2025

Compliance with PlanCOS

PlanCOS Vision



The Elevate Downtown Plan covers a roughly 1 square mile area within the PlanCOS Vision Map’s “Downtown” Vibrant Neighborhood. The Map also illustrates a number of key Vision characteristics within the Elevate Downtown Plan boundary including: The Legacy Loop, multiple Renowned Culture institutions, multiple Strong Connection facilities, Majestic Landscapes and trail networks, and others.



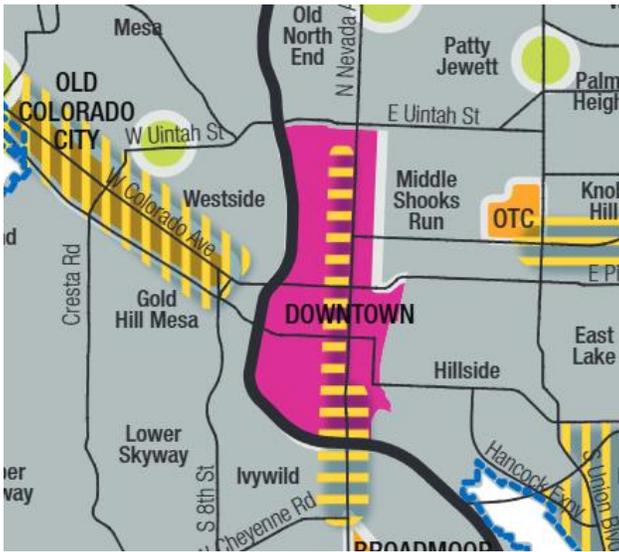
Predominant Typology

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

Vibrant Neighborhoods

The Elevate Downtown Plan is consistent with a number of Goals, Policies, and Strategies within the Vibrant Neighborhoods Chapter including:

- Goal VN-2: Strive for a diversity of housing types, styles, and price points distributed throughout our city through a combination of supportive development standards, community partnerships, and appropriate zoning and density that is adaptable to market demands and housing needs.
- Goal VN-3: Through neighborhood plans, associations, and partnerships, empower neighborhoods to reinvest in order to create community, vibrancy, and to address their specific vision and needs.
- Strategy VN-3.A-5: Update plans and City Code to encourage a blend of uses that positively affect neighborhoods.
- Strategy VN-3.B-3: Encourage walkable civic, retail, and community gathering places as design elements within neighborhood centers.



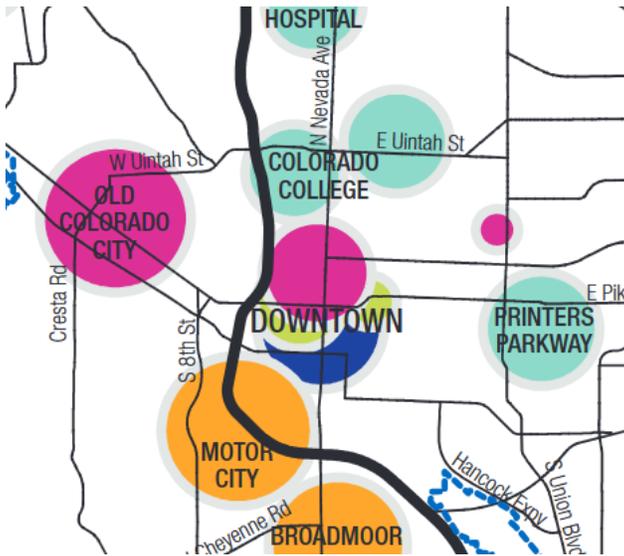
Predominant Typology

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

Unique Places

The Elevate Downtown Plan is consistent with a number of Goals, Policies, and Strategies within the Unique Places Chapter including:

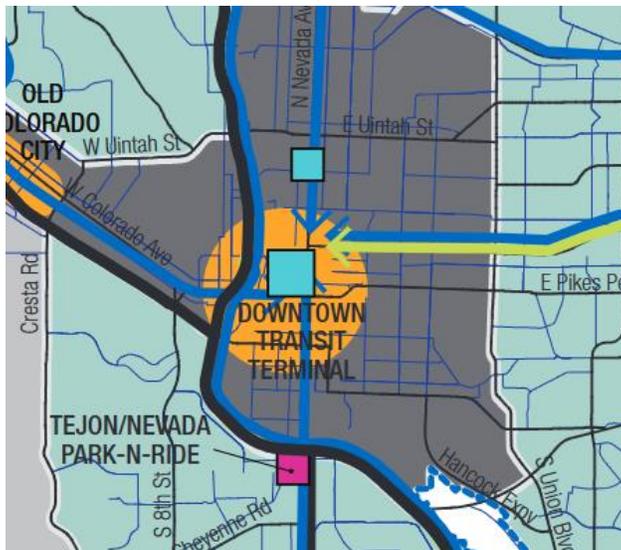
- Goal UP-2: Embrace thoughtful, targeted, and forward-thinking changes in land use, infill, reinvestment, and redevelopment to respond to shifts in demographics, technology, and the market.
- Policy UP-2.A: Support infill and land use investment throughout the mature and developed areas of the city.
- Strategy UP-2.A-1: Encourage the development or redevelopment of vacant properties in the core area of the city by using a combination of incentives, rezoning, and creative design solutions.
- Goal UP-3: Continue to grow and support Downtown as an inclusive, mixed use, cultural, and economic heart of the region.
- Policy UP-3.A: Proactively participate and invest in the development of Downtown as the city's premier urban activity center.



Thriving Economy

The Elevate Downtown Plan is consistent with a number of Goals, Policies, and Strategies within the Thriving Economy Chapter including:

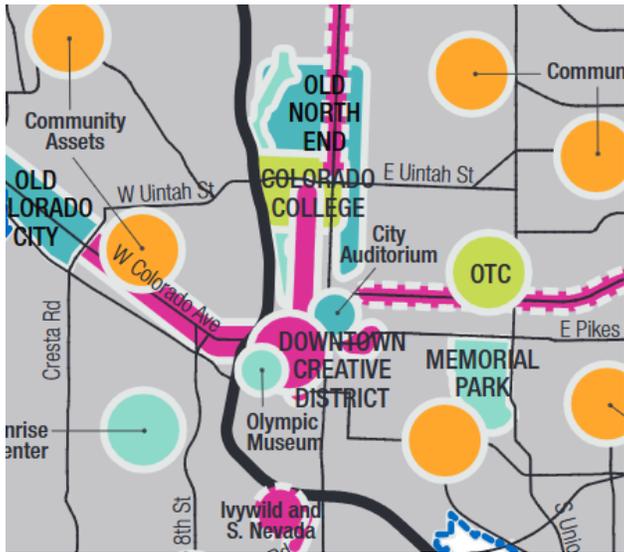
- Strategy TE-1.A-3: Prioritize Downtown redevelopment to establish it as the region’s employment center, hub of commerce, governing, innovation, tourism, entertainment, art and culture.
- Strategy TE-1.B-4: Ensure sports, recreation, and outdoors-related venues and facilities are walkable and well-connected through wayfinding, connectivity, and other streetscape enhancements.
- Strategy TE-2.C-1: Prioritize redevelopment and activation in Downtown and other urban activity centers in order to establish or enhance economic development.
- Strategy TE-4.A-2: Ensure land use regulations allow for increased density in areas identified for this, including Downtown, activity centers, and urban corridors.



Strong Connections

The Elevate Downtown Plan is consistent with a number of Goals, Policies, and Strategies within the Strong Connections Chapter including:

- Policy SC-1.A: Plan for and implement transportation projects for the overall mobility of people and to manage the impacts of cars on our built environment.
- Policy SC-1.F: Maximize multimodal transportation options serving the Downtown area to reduce the need for individual car ownership and use by visitors, residents, and employees.
- Strategy SC-1.F-1: Consistent with City-adopted plans, repurpose identified wide rights-of-way of Urban Core Streets (Typology 1) to provide and enhance non-motorized travel in the Downtown area.
- Policy SC-2.A: Systematically support and encourage the density and design needed to support this network beginning with Downtown, key corridors, activity centers, and trip generators.



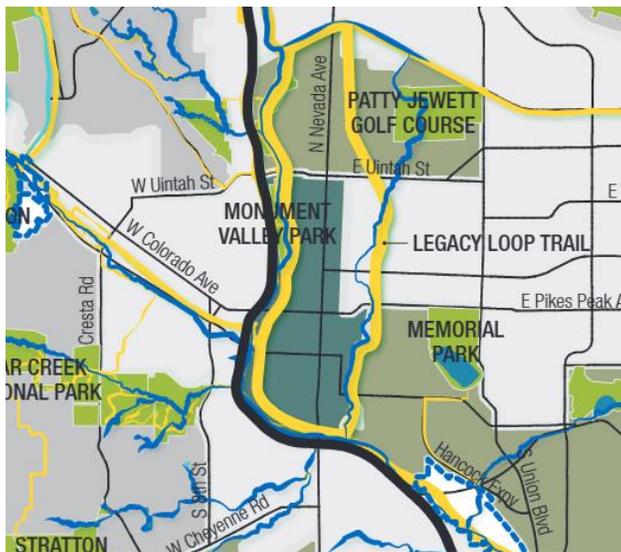
Predominant Typology

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

Renowned Culture

The Elevate Downtown Plan is consistent with a number of Goals, Policies, and Strategies within the Renowned Culture Chapter including:

- Goal RC-2: Add to, enhance, and promote Colorado Springs’ institutions, attractions, and community assets integral to our local culture and civic pride.
- Policy RC-3.A: Integrate arts, culture, and education as part of the planning process.
- Policy RC-3.B: Reinforce Downtown as an historic, cultural, and entertainment center of the community and the region.
- Strategy RC-3.B-2: Encourage the establishment of more and improved arts, education, and cultural opportunities in and near Downtown.
- Strategy RC-3.D-1: Expand the Art in the Streets program and partner with local arts organizations to install additional public art features within public properties, including parks, greenways, and medians.



Predominant Typology

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

Majestic Landscapes

The Elevate Downtown Plan is consistent with a number of Goals, Policies, and Strategies within the Majestic Landscapes Chapter including:

- Goal ML-1: Provide for accessible, safe, engaging, and sustainable parks and open space systems and facilities for all city residents and visitors.
- Strategy ML-2.A-1: Invest public safety resources necessary to allow a safe experience in the city’s parks, recreation and open space system, and encourage use and activation of park facilities throughout their hours of operation.
- Goal ML-3: Optimize the shared use of our waterways as corridors for wildlife, recreation, stormwater conveyance, non-motorized transportation, utilities, and as natural areas and assets of the environment.
- Strategy ML-4.C-1: Coordinate with Colorado Springs Utilities on the decommissioning of the Drake Power Plant and replacement power..

Statement of Compliance

NPLN-26-0001 – Elevate Downtown Plan

After evaluation of the Elevate Downtown Plan, Staff finds that the Plan is consistent with the Purpose of the Zoning Code as well as the Code's legislative declaration and is supported by PlanCOS and relevant guiding plans.