



524 S CASCADE
Downtown Review Board - March 4, 2025

Staff Report by Case Planner: Ryan Tefertiller, Planning Manager



Quick Facts

Applicant/Property Owner

DDJ No. 1, LLC

Developer

DDJ No. 1, LLC

Consultant

Classic Consulting Engineers & Surveyors, LLC

Address / Location

524 S. Cascade Ave.

TSNs

6418320019

Zoning

FBZ-CEN (Form Based Zone – Central Sector)

Site Area

0.88 acres

Proposed Land Use

Mixed Use Building

Applicable Code

Downtown Colorado Springs
 Form-Based Code

Project Summary

A Form-Based Zone Development Plan with Building Envelope and Glazing Warrants for a 7-story and adjacent 2-story guest house on a 0.88 acre, FBZ-CEN (Form-Based Zone – Central Sector) zoned site located on the northwest corner of S. Cascade Ave. and W. Moreno Ave.

File Number	Application Type	Decision Type
FBZN-24-0013	FBZ Development Plan	Quasi-Judicial

Background

Prior Land-Use History and Applicable Actions

<i>Action</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Date</i>
Annexation	Town of Colorado Springs	1872
Subdivision	Colorado Springs Addition No. 1	1873
Master Plan	Experience Downtown Master Plan	2016
Prior Enforcement Action	N/A	N/A

Site History

The site under review is located at the northwest corner of S. Cascade Ave. and W. Moreno Ave. roughly mid-way between Weidner Stadium to the west and the “Trolley Block” area of S. Tejon St. to the east. The property is roughly 0.88 acres in size and is part of Addition No. 1 to the Town of Colorado Springs platted in 1873; a new subdivision (the “524 S. Cascade Subdivision”) is currently being reviewed administratively to establish two lots, one for each of the two proposed buildings. The property currently includes a vacant one-story commercial building constructed in 1972. The site and the surrounding area are within the Downtown Form-Based Zone (2009) and the Experience Downtown Master Plan (2016) both of which were adopted by City Council after extensive public participation processes.

Applicable Code

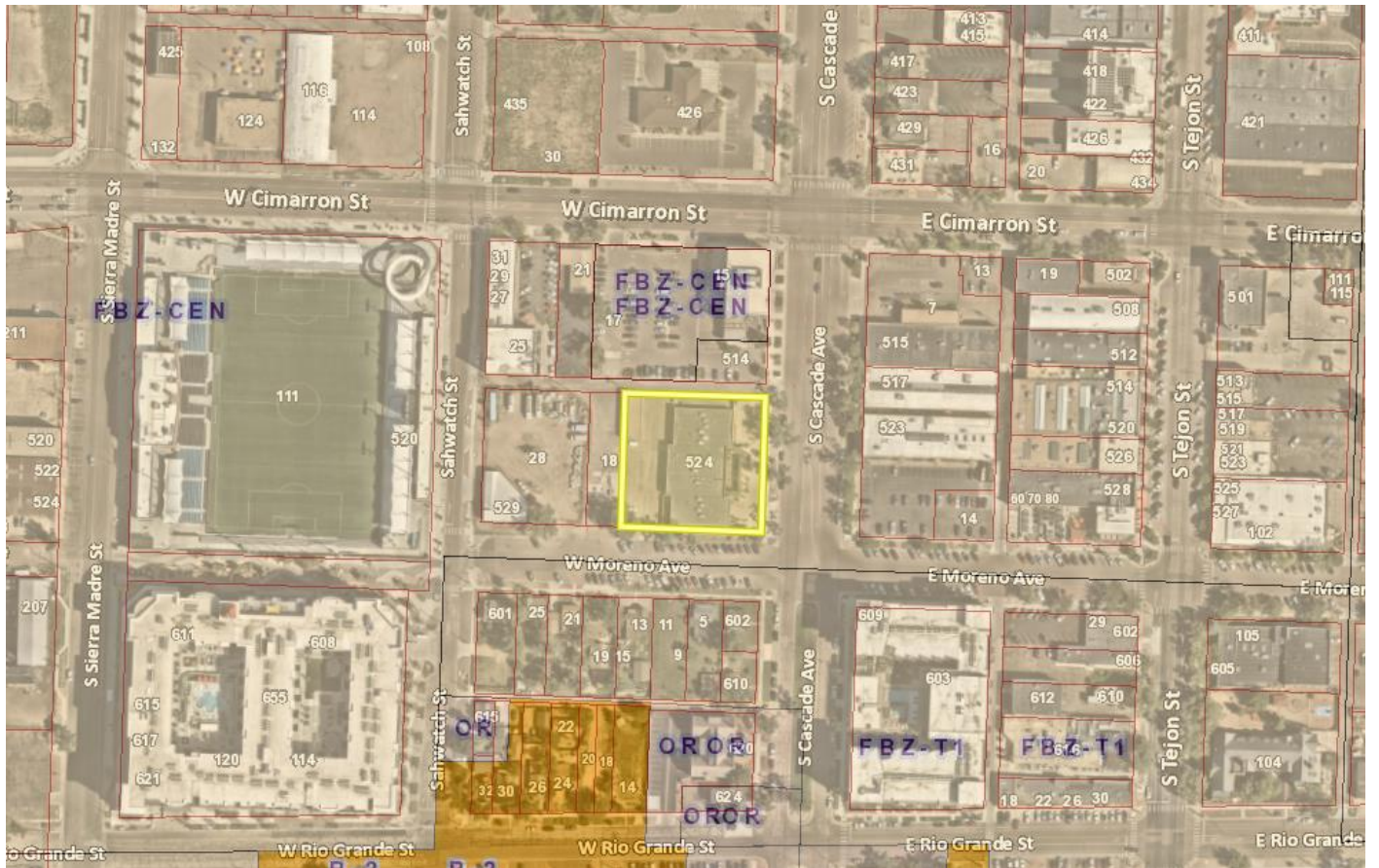
The subject application is within the boundaries of the Form-Based Zone which requires zoning action within these boundaries to be reviewed under the Form-Based Code.

Surrounding Zoning and Land Use

Adjacent Property Existing Conditions

	<i>Zoning</i>	<i>Existing Use</i>	<i>Special Conditions</i>
North	FBZ-CEN	Office	N/A
West	FBZ-CEN	Industrial	Acorn Petroleum Fueling
South	FBZ-T1	Residential	N/A
East	FBZ-CEN	Office & Commercial	N/A

Zoning Map (see “Attachment 1-Zoning Map”)



Stakeholder Involvement

Public Notice

Public Notice Occurrences (Poster / Postcards)	2 times (Internal Review/Prior to Downtown Review Board Public Hearing)
Postcard Mailing Radius	1,000'
Number of Postcards Mailed	143 with each public notice occurrence
Number of Comments Received	Approximately five. Staff received three written comments during the internal review period and spoke with 1 other stakeholder specifically about the proposed project.

Public Engagement

Planning Staff adhered to City Code and procedures for public notice during the formal review of this application. All written stakeholder comments that have been directed to Planning Staff prior to completion of this report are included as “Attachment 2 – Stakeholder Comments”. Concerns from stakeholders include parking and bulk/scale issues.

Timeline of Review

Initial Submittal Date	10/15/2024
Number of Review Cycles	3
Item(s) Ready for Agenda	City Staff determined that this item would be ready for the March 4, 2025 Downtown Review Board meeting shortly after revised plans were reviewed on January 23, 2025.

Agency Review

SWENT

The project's drainage report has gone through three rounds of review and is ready for final acceptance.

Traffic

Colorado Springs Traffic reviewers had no comments on the development plan. A Traffic Impact Study was not required.

Colorado Springs Utilities

Colorado Springs Utilities' reviewers issued a number of minor technical comments on the proposed development plan. All CSU issues have been resolved on the development plan.

School District 11

No comments received.

Fire

Colorado Springs Fire Department had no review comments on the development plan.

Planning

Urban Planning Staff has been working closely with the applicant to ensure that the project meets all applicable development standards as well as the Form-Based Code's design guidelines and the intent of the Experience Downtown Master Plan. After numerous discussions with the applicant and three rounds of review, Staff has determined that once the two Warrants described below are issued by the Downtown Review Board, the plan will be ready for final approval.

Form-Based Zone Development Plan

Summary of Application

The proposed project includes a 7-story Mixed Use building which will include 180 guest rooms, 25 private off-street parking stalls, and significant guest amenity areas, as well as a two-story guest house along W. Moreno Ave. which can be reserved and utilized similar to a traditional guest room at the hotel and which has access to all the on-site hotel amenities (see "**Attachment 3 – Project Statement**" and "**Attachment 4 - FBZ Development Plan**").

The subject property is located in the southwestern part of Downtown Colorado Springs. It is just east of the Weidner Field project, across the street from the The Mae on Cascade (a 184 unit apartment building completed in 2020), and just west of the South Tejon corridor including the Trolley Block redevelopment efforts. This area of Downtown has seen significant growth and investment in recent years and has established itself as a popular southern node of activity Downtown. The site is also in close proximity to the norther edge of the Mill Street neighborhood, a unique single-family and two-family neighborhood that provides unique and valuable work force housing within walking distance of tens of thousands of urban jobs.

The subject property and many of the surrounding area have been zoned FBZ-CEN (Form-Based Zone – Central Sector) since City Council adoption of the Downtown Colorado Springs Form-Based Code in 2009. The Form-Based Code implements physical standards that result in the development of a pedestrian-friendly, high-density, mixed-use area. New buildings are required to be constructed in close proximity to the sidewalk and building facades must include high levels of glazing to maximize pedestrian interest. Parking requirements are reduced or even eliminated compared to other zone districts due to the area’s walkability and the presence of publicly available on-street and off-street parking options.

The Downtown Form-Based Zone is divided into a number of Sectors, each of which have specific standards. The subject property is within the Central Sector. Key standards that are applicable to the Central Sector include: building envelope standards which require new buildings to be constructed adjacent to the front property lines; a requirement for at least 60% glazing at street-level along the front building façades; parking exemption; and no maximum building height. These standards were intentional to encourage and support high-density, pedestrian friendly development in the heart of the City’s urban core.

The Form-Based Code is structured to allow administrative review and approval of development applications that are shown to meet all quantifiable standards described in Section 2 of the regulating plan. Projects that require relief from a standard must request a “warrant” that can only be approved after a public hearing at the Downtown Review Board. All projects are encouraged to also comply with urban design guidelines described in Section 4 of the regulating plan. The code’s design guidelines cover issues that are more difficult to quantify but are still important to ensure high-quality urban development. Any decision of the Downtown Review Board can be appealed to City Council for final action.

There are many aspects of the proposed project that are well aligned with the standards of the Form-Based Code. The proposed Mixed Use building is pushed east on the site to abut S. Cascade Ave., the primary frontage on the site. An attractive and architecturally interesting building facing east will be visible to downtown users along Tejon as they look west toward the mountain backdrop. The street level frontage along Cascade is designed with a high proportion of glazing creating an interesting pedestrian environment for those walking along Cascade. The primary building is designed in an “L” shape to take advantage of western and southern views for hotel guests and to create a private courtyard area at ground level for guest amenities. The project’s accessory structure, a two-story “guest house” located on the southwestern portion of the site, has a unique and interesting design intended to create a transition between the proposed hotel and the smaller building forms to the south of Moreno.

The design and placement of the two structures creates a courtyard area along a portion of the Moreno Ave. frontage. The total Moreno frontage is roughly 200’ wide, and approximately 80’ of that does not include a building adjacent to the Moreno sidewalk creating proposed courtyard area. The courtyard is enclosed by a 13-foot tall “breezblock” wall along the Moreno right-of-way that provides some level of privacy and security for hotel guests but also provides porosity and interest through the fact that each block within the wall is hollow allowing a pedestrian on the Moreno sidewalk to see into the courtyard area.

The proposed design does not fully comply with two different Form-Based Code standards: Building Envelopes; and Frontage Design (i.e. Percent Glazing).

Application Standards, Guidelines, and Review Criteria

Projects within the Form-Based Zone can be reviewed and approved administratively if all quantifiable standards within Section 2 of the Code are met. If relief from a standard (or multiple standards) is needed, then a Warrant must be considered by the Downtown Review Board at a public hearing. All projects are encouraged to comply with Section 4,

Design Guidelines, of the Form-Based Code, though compliance with the Guidelines is one of the review criteria for the granting of a Warrant.

After thorough review, Planning Staff has determined that Warrants are necessary for the following development standards from Section 2 of the Form-Based Code.

Standard 2.3.3 – Building Envelopes. The proposed building is considered a “Mixed-Use Building” in that it is a multi-story non-residential building. Mixed Use Buildings on a corner lot in the Central Sector are required to be located adjacent to the front property line of both public-facing sides of the building; the Code does provide an allowance for “minor articulation” of the front façade(s) to allow texture and ensure the building foundation is located on private property. The proposed buildings are located within a foot of both the south and east sides of the site. However, a roughly 80’ wide stretch of the site’s Moreno frontage has a 34’ setback establishing a courtyard area for guest amenities. While the courtyard is enclosed with a 13’ high screenwall creating some perception of a building frontage, Staff has consistently taken the position that a screenwall can not be used in lieu of a building in order to comply with Building Envelope standards. Staff does find that the proposed screenwall is well designed, has porosity and texture, and will be interesting and aesthetically pleasing when viewed from the adjacent public realm.

Standard 2.4 – Frontages. The proposed buildings utilize a Shopfront frontage type, which according to Section 2.4.7. of the Form-Based Code must have no less than 60% glazing. While the south-facing portion of the 7-story hotel building is well glazed, the south-facing portion of the proposed guest house has limited glazing and does not meet the 60% threshold. The proposed design of the guest house is unique and interesting and blends residential character with the commercial design of the larger hotel building to the north and east. The limited glazing also provides additional privacy for users of the guest house. Staff finds that proposed design, included the reduced glazing along the Moreno side of the project is reasonable and is consistent with the intent of the Form-Based Code and Downtown Master Plan.

Standard 2.8 - Public Spaces. The proposed plan illustrates significant public improvements along the Cascade side of the project including new wide 9.5’ wide sidewalk and significant amenity zone improvements including landscaping, hardscaping, street furnishings and lighting. However, the plan does not illustrate typical public space improvements along the Moreno side of the project. Instead, the following note is included: “Improvements along Moreno Avenue are part of a larger Moreno Avenue streetscape design effort (by others). Prior to building permit issuance on Lot 1 and Lot 2, full public street improvement sureties for the direct frontage will be posted reflecting the anticipated design effort for the corridor at that time (new curb & gutter, sidewalk, lighting, etc.). All public improvement work along Lot 1 and Lot 2 frontage to be completed prior to CO.” Essentially, this note was included after significant dialog between the City and the applicant. All parties agree that a high-quality and continuous streetscape design for the Moreno corridor public improvements is important for the future of this area. Moreno connects the Weidner Field area and perhaps as many as 1,000 residential units (or maybe even more one day) to the S. Tejon commercial area. All parties desire that the streetscape design be high quality, safe, attractive, and easily maintained. The proposed note, and deferment of Moreno streetscape design, allows for the applicant to move their project forward through the entitlement process while also putting adequate thought and resources into the streetscape design. Staff concluded that the proposed note was acceptable and that no additional Warrant was necessary to accommodate the proposed approach.

Section 5.4 – Warrant Criteria. The consideration of a Warrant must be evaluated using the criteria in Section 5.4 of the Code. The required criteria include:

5.4.3.1 Is the requested warrant consistent with the intent of the form-based code?

5.4.3.2 Is the requested warrant, as well as the project, consistent with Section 4 – Design Guidelines of the form-based code?

5.4.3.3 Is the requested warrant reasonable due to the proposed project’s exceptional civic or environmental design?

5.4.3.4 Is the requested warrant consistent with the Downtown Master Plan?

5.4.3.5 Is the requested warrant consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan?

As described above, the design of the proposed project was thoughtfully done in concert with Planning Staff to ensure that the intent of the Code is met and the project creates an interesting and attractive design. Staff also finds that some aspects of the proposed design could be considered "exceptional civic or environmental design" through the use of unique and high-quality materials and design elements.

Section 4 of the Form-Based Code includes a number of design guidelines. These address issues that are more difficult to quantify and while are important, full compliance is strongly recommended, and is utilized as a review component for all projects that require a Warrant.. The design guidelines are broken into two categories: architectural and site design.

Architectural Guidelines. The Form-Based Code includes six specific architectural guidelines, a number of which are applicable to the proposed project. The proposed project includes high quality architectural detail through the use of building materials, textures, and patterns. These improvements are included on both the east facing and south facing sides of the buildings, as is required for corner properties. The project includes multiple pedestrian access points along the southern and eastern edges of the site creating activity along both Cascade and Moreno.

Site Design. The Form-Based Code includes seven specific site design guidelines, some of which are applicable to the proposed project. Specifically, the project's services such as trash enclosures, loading docks, and HVAC equipment are properly located and screened from the public realm. Additionally, the project's parking is located within the building and is accessed from the public alley along the north side of the project as opposed to directly from Cascade or Moreno. Additionally, the plan illustrates high quality public space improvements along the Cascade side of the project that are consistent with the Hardscape Elements design guidelines.

After Significant review, Planning Staff has determined that the project is substantially compliant with the applicable design guidelines of the Form-Based Code.

Planning Context

In addition to the standards and guidelines discussed above, Planning Staff also considered the project relative to the Experience Downtown Master Plan and the City's Comprehensive Plan.

Experience Downtown Master Plan (2016) – There are numerous provisions of the Experience Downtown Master Plan that support the proposed project. The project will bolster Downtown Colorado Springs as the economic heart of the region by adding 180 rooms of lodging in the southern portion of Downtown Colorado Springs. The site's proximity to Weidner Field, the South Tejon Corridor, and America the Beautiful Park and the Fountain Creek trail system is ideal for residents and guest to take advantage of our natural setting and support their healthy and active lifestyles. Bringing more visitors downtown will also help support multimodal improvements in the area, including future bike lanes on Cascade immediately east of the site.

PlanCOS (2019) – Just as the Experience Downtown supports the proposed project, so too does PlanCOS, the City's Comprehensive Plan adopted by City Council in 2019. At the highest level, the Plan's Vision Map (see "**Attachment 5 – PlanCOS Vision Map**") illustrates the site's context within the Downtown Activity Center, with proximity to transit services, complete creeks, renowned culture, and within the Downtown Vibrant Neighborhood. There are countless Goals, Policies, and Strategies within PlanCOS that directly support the project including:

- Strategy UP-1.A-5: Design urban activity centers to encourage walkability.
- 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.
- 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.
- Policy UP-4.B: Within unique centers, incorporate density and mixed uses along with higher standards of design, attention to the public realm, and design for multimodal access including transit.
- Policy UP-5.A: Actively evaluate plans for existing, new, and redeveloping urban places and corridors from the perspective of fiscal and environmental sustainability.
- Policy UP-5.B: Encourage cost-effective development that promotes the wise use of resources.
- Strategy TE-1.A-3: Prioritize Downtown redevelopment to establish it as the region's employment center, hub of commerce, governing, innovation, tourism, entertainment, art and culture.
- Policy TE-2.C: Enhance the physical environment by creating new amenities that help attract and retain new businesses and residents.
- Strategy TE-2.C-1: Prioritize redevelopment and activation in Downtown and other urban activity centers in order to establish or enhance economic development.
- Goal TE-4: Focus on productively developing and redeveloping areas already in, nearby, or surrounded by the city in order to preserve open spaces, maximize investments in existing infrastructure, limit future maintenance costs, and reduce the impacts of disinvestment in blighted areas.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Policy RC-2.B: Promote existing and new arts and cultural hubs, venues, and focal points as elements of activity centers throughout the city.
- Policy RC-3.B: Reinforce Downtown as an historic, cultural, and entertainment center of the community and the region.
- Policy RC-3.F: Support creative placemaking and environments for artistic expression within Creative Districts and Corridors.
- Strategy ML-2.C-3: Maximize opportunities for citywide and non-exclusive access to linear and linked open space systems with convenient non-motorized connection.
- Strategy ML-2.C-7: Encourage new development and redevelopment to occur near existing parks and open spaces to increase their access to and use by the public.

After close consideration Planning Staff has determined that the proposed project is highly consistent with PlanCOS.

Statement of Compliance

FBZN-24-0013

City Planning Staff has reviewed the Form-Based Development Plan for 524 S. Cascade and finds that the application meets the development standards and design guidelines as set forth in Form-Based Code Sections 2 and 4 as well as the Warrant criteria found in Section 5.4.3. of the Code.

