DOWNTOWN COLORADO SPRINGS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

COLORADO SPRINGS OLYMPIC CITY USA

MAY 2026

ELEVATE DOWNTOWN COLORADO SPRINGS



Image Sources:
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I

Image Source: Pioneers Museum

Introduction

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The Introduction explains the setting and provides context and background for the Plan of Development and Downtown Plan.

Overview

Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X, and Boomers are driving a resurgence in Downtown living. Skilled talent is in high demand, prompting both start-ups and established businesses to locate in the compact urban centers that their employees prefer. Transit and infrastructure improvements are helping revitalize historic districts, create more walkable and bikeable destinations, and foster more engaging and healthy Downtown environments. These circumstances, alongside newly adopted plans and recent reports, development progress, new/enhanced public amenities, and more, have contributed to an updated Downtown context.

This Plan builds upon the themes of progression and success pushed forward from the previous two Downtown Plans (*Imagine Downtown Colorado Springs,* 2009, and *Experience Downtown Colorado Springs*, 2016). No longer "imagining" a great Downtown, residents, visitors, businesses, artists, and students are consistently "experiencing" it daily and dreaming of what can be elevated next to create a world-class Downtown. For this reason, the updated Plans are now called the *Elevate Downtown Colorado Springs Plan of Development* and *Elevate Downtown Plan*.

The intention of this plan is to guide future investment within Downtown Colorado Springs. It is a reference point for the community, the DDA, and the City to prioritize changes over time based on technical analysis and community feedback.

Setting

For the purposes of these plans, **Downtown is the land use plan area defined by the boundary of the Downtown Development Authority (DDA).** For the purposes of this report, the "Downtown" boundary is generally bounded on the north by Colorado College (Cache la Poudre Street); on the east by the Shooks Run section of the Legacy Loop and Weber St; on the south by the Lowell Neighborhood, Fountain Boulevard, and the freight rail tracks; and on the west by Cascade Avenue, the Monument Creek Trail section of the Legacy Loop and Interstate 25, and the Drake property/Conejos Street. See Figure 1.1 for a more detailed view of the DDA boundary.

Downtown Colorado Springs' geographic location and spectacular physical setting have played a major role in shaping its history. **Location and setting also serve as important drivers for its future development.** Although many towns and cities in Colorado were settled by miners and ranchers, Colorado Springs' appeal was climate and culture. Looming over the city is Pikes Peak, which inspired Katharine Lee Bates' penning of "America the Beautiful." By 1918, Colorado Springs was renowned as a destination, with both the Antlers and Broadmoor hotels serving tourists from around the world. At an elevation of 6,035 feet, the area became a health-oriented destination where thousands of people came to relieve their tuberculosis in the dry mountain air.

Colorado Springs is known as a tourist destination due to its **natural beauty, proximity to outdoor recreation, and a culture of adventure** that still attracts visitors from around the world. The city features nearly 19,000 acres of parkland and 268 miles of trails that include renowned attractions like Garden of the Gods. Averaging 247 days of sunshine per year contributes to Colorado Springs' tourist charm, but also to its status as a great place to live.

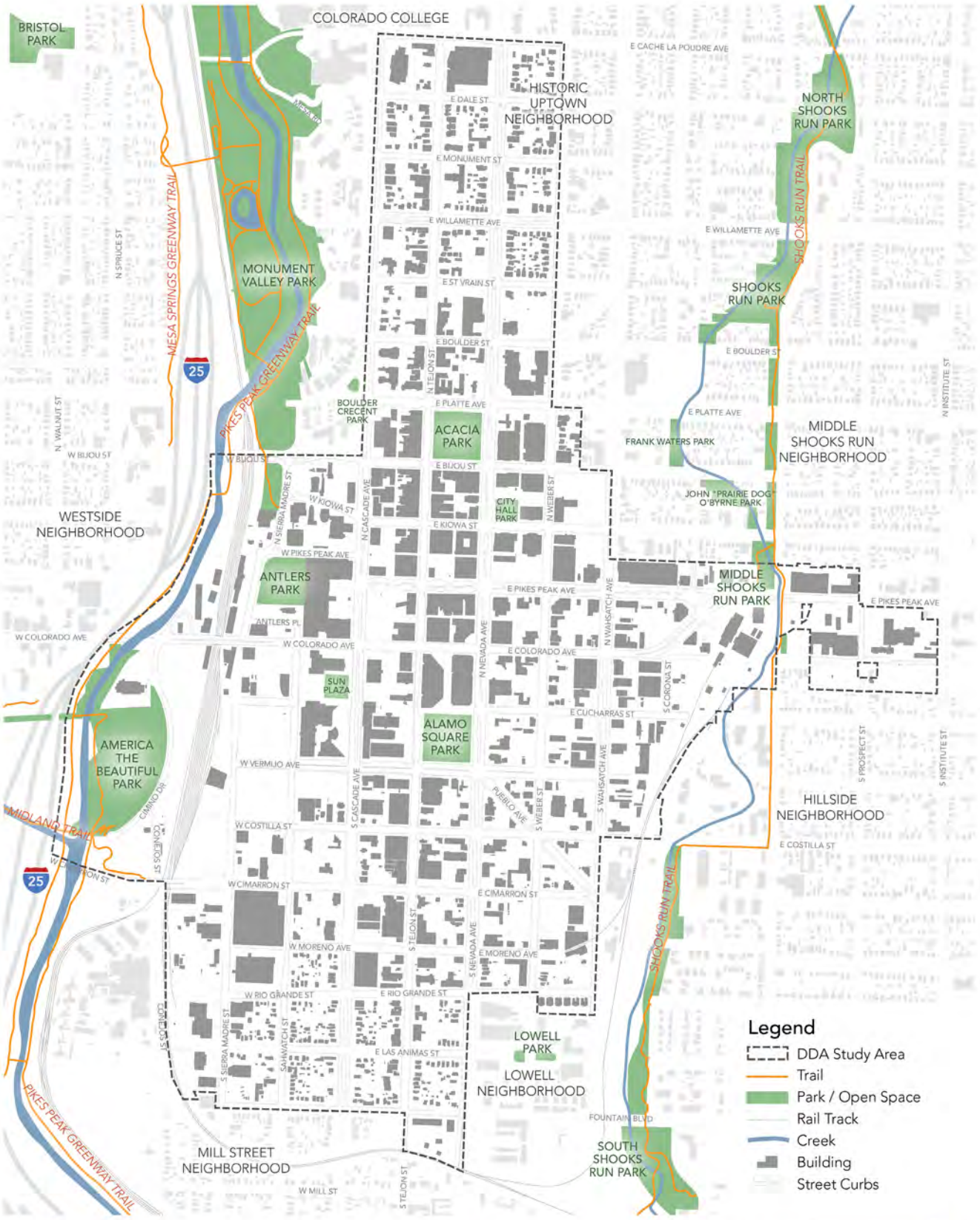


Figure 1.1 | Downtown Basemap

COLORADO'S FRONT RANGE AND THE COLORADO SPRINGS AREA

Situated 70 miles south of Denver, a two-hour drive from the skiing and outdoor recreation found in Summit and Chaffee counties, and easily accessible by car with an airport that is growing substantially, Colorado Springs sits in a **strategic position at the center of Colorado's Front Range** (Figure 1.2). Despite its proximity and similarities to other Front Range area communities, the city has been shaped by distinct demographic, cultural, and economic conditions that continue to define its development and market opportunities.

Colorado Springs is the seat of El Paso County, the state's second most populous county (Figure 1.3). With a land area of approximately 202 square miles and a 2023 population estimate of 488,664, it is the **state's largest city in land mass and the second largest city in population** (according to Census data: ACS 2023 1-year). The city's population density of approximately 2,421 people per square mile is significantly lower than Denver's (4,681 per square mile), but similar to other Front Range cities such as Fort Collins (2,977) or Pueblo (1,966). Since 2010, Colorado Springs' Metro Statistical Area, a larger statistical geography encompassing El Paso County and Teller County, increased by 19%, reaching a population of 768,832 in 2023.

As home to the U.S. Air Force Academy, Fort Carson, Peterson Space Force Base, and other installations, **Colorado Springs' demographics and economy are strongly influenced by the military and defense industries**. Military installations represent four of the top five public sector employers locally, although the bases lie outside city limits. According to the U.S. Army's Fort Carson Fact Sheet from March 2022, Fort Carson boasts over 26,000 active-duty military service members, plus over 48,000 civilian employees, family members, reserve members, and contractors. Fifty-seven percent of service members and their families live off-post. Peterson has a population of over 22,000, including active-duty military service members, reservists, family members, and civilians as well as over 23,000 military retirees. The Air Force Academy has over 4,000 current cadets.

Education is a significant influence in Colorado Springs, and it is regularly **ranked among the top 20 most educated cities in America.** El Paso County has 17 public school districts, the most of any county in Colorado. Downtown sits within Colorado Springs School District 11, which has 58 schools, one of which is located in the Downtown core, William J. Palmer High School. Higher education is particularly important in the city; Colorado Springs has five 4-year colleges and universities (Colorado College, University of Colorado-Colorado Springs, Air Force Academy, Pikes Peak State College, and Colorado Technical University) with an estimated student population of 46,946 students in 2023. Colorado College, which is located on the northern edge of Downtown, enrolls approximately 2,200 students per year. Additionally, Colorado Springs is home to Pikes Peak State College, with its Downtown Campus enrolling 1,440 full-time students in the 2023/24 academic year.

Finally, tourism is a major driver of Colorado Springs' economy, and it is the third largest employment sector in the region. In 2024, the Pikes Peak Region attracted nearly 25.5 million visitors and generated approximately $3.1 billion in spending. That same year, Downtown Colorado Springs attracted 12.3 million visitors with numerous attractions including the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum (USOPM), the Pikes Peak Center for Performing Arts, the Fine Arts Center at Colorado College, Weidner Field, and Ed Robson Arena. Downtown Colorado Springs generated $472 million in spending last year and provides a wide variety of dining options with the largest concentration of independent restaurants in all of Southern Colorado. The area is a State-designated Creative District offering shopping, museums, parks, festival, and events.



The U.S. military and defense industries are major employers in the Colorado Springs area.

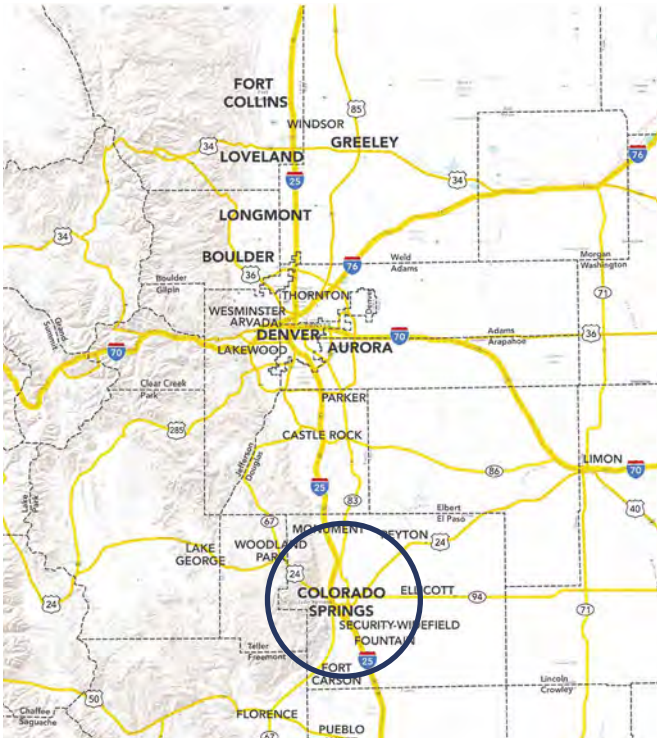


Figure 1.2 | Front Range Context



Figure 1.3 | Colorado Springs Area

DOWNTOWN COLORADO SPRINGS

At just over one square mile in size, Downtown serves not only the citizens of Colorado Springs but also functions as a **regional employment, retail, and entertainment center,** catering to nearby towns and cities. Downtown is a primary destination for residents of the city and is bordered by numerous established and emerging neighborhoods such as the Old North End, Historic Uptown, Middle Shooks Run, Lowell, Mill Street, Hillside, Ivywild, and the Westside. These neighborhoods, as well as nearby neighborhoods such as Gold Hill Mesa and the Broadmoor area, turn frequently to Downtown for employment, dining, shopping, and cultural experiences. The Legacy Loop, a nearly 10-mile ring of trails and parks, encircles the Downtown plan area and serves as a unifying feature that links many adjacent neighborhoods to the city center. Several portions of the Legacy Loop also connect to regional trails that tie Downtown to the rest of the city and support its role as an important organizing element surrounding the core.

According to a 2024 study, *The Value of Downtowns: Comparisons* conducted by the International Downtown Association (IDA), Downtown Colorado Springs is home to 11% of citywide jobs and 1% of citywide residents within just 0.9% of the city's land area. Downtown's employment has been growing in recent years - up 14% since 2002. Additionally, Downtown has added new developments that accommodate renewed residential growth and new residents. **Downtown is establishing a robust residential population, now estimated at over 4,900 including a recent jump of over 500 new residents from 2021 to 2022 alone, and is bucking the trend of declining employment among emerging downtowns nationwide.**



Downtown's growth continues to support its robust creative economy.



The Alpine Bank Tower is the tallest office tower Downtown with over 220,000 square feet.



Figure 1.4 | Downtown Plan Area

1800s

1871 General Palmer's crew drives the first stake at the intersection of Pikes Peak and Cascade avenues

1871 Acacia Place and Alamo Square are deeded to the public

1874 Colorado College is founded

1883 The first Antlers Hotel opens

1893 Katharine Lee Bates, staying at the Antlers Hotel, writes "America the Beautiful" after descending from Pikes Peak

1897 The Payne Chapel A.M.E. (African Methodist Episcopal) Church is built on Weber Street and Pueblo Avenue to serve the African American community

1898 The Great Fire levels the business area, including the first Antlers Hotel

1900-1930

1901 Winfield Scott Stratton purchases a street car company and creates a 41-mile transit system

1901 The second Antlers Hotel opens

1903 The El Paso County Courthouse opens its new building in Alamo Square

1907 Monument Valley Park opens

1923 Electric traffic lights are installed at major intersections

1923 City Auditorium is constructed

1930-1970

1932 The last electric trolley car is removed from city streets

1936 Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center opens

1960 I-25 opens along Downtown's western boundary

1965 The second Antlers Hotel is demolished

1967 The Chase Stone Center, a complex including the third Antlers Hotel, the Holly Sugar Building, and retail shops, is finished

1970-2000

1971 The first Downtown Plan is issued

1978 The Olympic Training Center moves its headquarters to Colorado Springs

1979 The Pioneers Museum opens in the renovated El Paso County Courthouse after the Pikes Peak Landmarks Council lobbies for the building's preservation

1982 The 2,000-seat Pikes Peak Center for the Performing Arts opens

1992 The Downtown Action Plan is completed

1997 Downtown Partnership, Community Ventures, and Downtown Inc., are founded

1998 Art on the Street is founded

Figure 1.5 | The Evolution of Downtown Colorado Springs

2000 Lowell, a 58-acre mixed-use urban renewal project in the southeast corner of Downtown, is under way

2001 Uncle Wilber Fountain opens in Acacia Park

2002 The Pikes Peak Greenway is completed

2004 America the Beautiful Park opens

2006 Imagine Downtown planning begins

2000–2010

2007 The Fine Arts Center unveils its $28.4-million, 48,000-square-foot renovation and expansion

2007 The Julie Penrose Fountain is completed at America the Beautiful Park

2007 The Downtown Development Authority is founded

2008 Tejon Street is converted from one-way to two-way traffic

2008 Colorado College opens the Edith Kinney Gaylord Cornerstone Center for the Arts

2009 Adoption of the Downtown Form-Based Code and Imagine Downtown Master Plan

2010 The United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee moves its headquarters to Downtown Colorado Springs

2013 Through the State of Colorado Regional Tourism Act (RTA), an estimated $120 million in tax increment financing is approved to develop four projects coined 'City for Champions,' including the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum and a Sports and Events Center in Downtown

2015 Site preparation begins for the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum

2010–2020

2016 Blue Dot Place, the first for-rent apartment project built in the core since 1960, is completed and leased

2018 Greenway Flats apartments open for people experiencing homelessness

2018-20 Legacy Loop improvements completed, including Uintah Street Underpass, trail construction from Popcycle Bridge south to Fontenero Legacy Loop Trailhead, trail renovation at Shooks Run at Patty Jewett Junction

2020 Start of the COVID-19 Pandemic

2020 The Downtown Historic Parks Master Plan is adopted

2020 U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum opens

2021 Weidner Field and Ed Robson Arena open

2021 Pedestrian bridge connecting America the Beautiful Park with Downtown opens

2021-22 Major project development occurs, such as Hyatt Place, Kinship Landing, AdAmAn Alley, Acacia Park playground, and Antlers Park Dog Park

2020s

2024-25 Legacy Loop trail improvements completed, including Mesa Road, Cascade, and Nevada underpasses; new trail segment and pedestrian bridge at Mesa Creek Confluence; new Rock Island trail segment from Pikes Peak Greenway to Shooks Run; new trail at West Pikes Peak Greenway and utility undergrounding; and extended trail and enhanced trail crossing at Uintah Street

2025 3,075 residential units completed and 51 under construction

Context

AREA HISTORY

In 1871, General William Jackson Palmer laid out the City of Colorado Springs at the confluence of Monument and Fountain creeks, driving the first stake for Pikes Peak Avenue directly in line with the summit of Pikes Peak. He set in motion the aspirations, perseverance, and civic pride that created the unique place that is now Downtown Colorado Springs.

The community has since grown far beyond its original boundaries into over 200 square miles, but Downtown remains the urban center and true heart of Colorado Springs. Since Palmer's day, there have been many private and public efforts to carry on and add to his legacy, each responding to the challenges and demands of a particular time. Many have begun with the recognition of Downtown's importance to the City's image, identity, and sense of place. Today, the citizens of Colorado Springs have come to realize that the vitality and future prosperity of a modern city requires that Downtown enliven the entire community and foster civic pride.

A unified vision for the future of Downtown Colorado Springs only comes with critical analysis and acknowledgment of the past. This practice helps build trust, ensures equity and justice, leads to better decision-making, supports long-term resilience, and promotes healing and reconciliation. Like many other cities, Colorado Springs has some history of negative land planning include redlining, racial covenants, and displacement, and the lessons learned from these practices should be considered as decisions and guidance for change occurs throughout the city.

One of the most poignant examples with the Downtown boundary includes the history of America the Beautiful Park, which was once home to the Conejos Neighborhood — a small and vibrant working-class community made up largely of ethnic minority families. The neighborhood, established in the late 1800s, suffered from public disinvestment over the next century, and the City initiated consolidated buyouts of family homes starting in the 1990s. The ideas and plans for this park came from past planning efforts that continue to inform future land use and green spaces in and around Downtown, including the 1992 *Downtown Action Plan* and the *Pikes Peak Greenway Master Plan*. A decade later, the neighborhood was razed to make way for the park. This displacement has left lasting scars, and the Chadbourn Spanish Gospel Mission stands as the last remaining structure from the original neighborhood. While America the Beautiful Park stands as a testament to modern development and public space, accompanied by the world-class U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum, it is essential to acknowledge the history of the Conejos neighborhood to ensure a more inclusive future of at-risk communities today.



Source: *Colorado Public Radio*

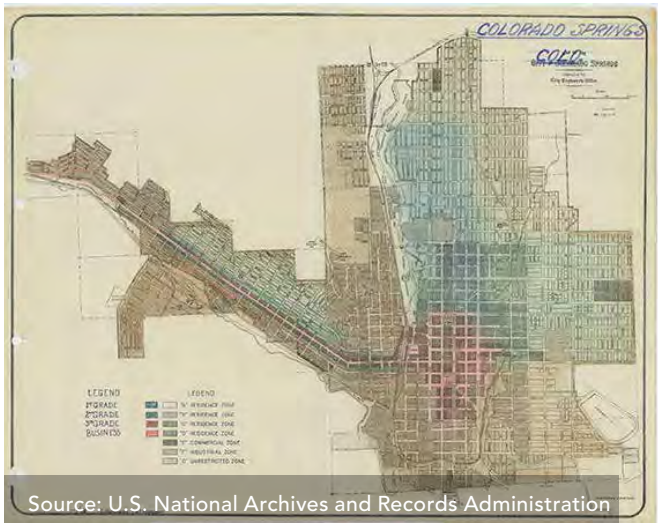
America the Beautiful Park was once the Conejos district, roughly between Colorado Avenue and Mill Street.

The Federal Home Owner's Loan Corporation (HOLC) Residential Security Map also had longlasting impacts on Downtown. This map, also known as redlining, categorized neighborhoods in the 1930s based on their perceived risk for investment and housing loans. The color of the neighborhoods, blue meaning "desirable" and red meaning "high risk", was influenced by the communities' racial and ethnic compositions. For example, Old North End was shaded blue and the Hillside, Mill Street, and Conejos neighborhoods were all shaded red. Despite real estate loan discrimination being outlawed in 1968 by the Fair Housing Act, we still see lasting economic and social impacts on these communities today.

The lasting impacts of redlining also contribute to disparities in homeownership amongst racial groups, which is one of the main ways to secure housing stability and generational wealth. The 2019 Census reported that the median household wealth in the City of Colorado Springs of white families was $139,000 compared to $12,780 for Black families and $19,990 for Hispanic/Latino/a families. The same Census report also found that a homeowner's median net worth is 80 times higher than a renter's.

Recognizing and understanding the impacts of racial housing policies in Downtown Colorado Springs is essential for developing equitable recommendations within this Plan and future planning efforts. The DDA is committed to investing in marginalized neighborhoods, acknowledging sensitive past injustices, and seeks to support future development that benefits all residents and celebrates cultural heritage.

When discussing land and land use, it is important to note that a lot of land in the American West once belonged to Native peoples before the founding of the modern city of Colorado Springs. Specifically, this land is the homeland of the Ute Tribe and was also frequented by the Cheyenne, Arapaho, and more than 45 other tribes, who established deep spiritual and symbolic connections to the area. During the Colorado Gold Rush in the late 1850s, settlers quickly encroached on existing treaties and took over the land, forming the seeds of the city and the Downtown known today. Downtown Colorado Springs acknowledges its Native heritage in a number of meaningful ways, including public art, official proclamations, and cultural programming. As planning efforts continue to influence land use, development, and the commodification of land and natural resources, it will be important to revisit and respect the historic origins of the land and consider what's next for the spiritual, cultural, ecological, and personal relationships linked to them.



Source: U.S. National Archives and Records Administration

A draft map commissioned in 1936 by the federally sponsored Home Owners Loan Corporation.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

In November 2010, the citizens of Colorado Springs voted to change the form of City government from a council-manager to a council-mayor ("strong mayor") structure. Today, the Mayor serves as the executive branch and City Council serves as the legislative body for the City, overseeing land use and serving as board of directors of the Colorado Springs Utilities.

The City Council has nine members, six of whom each represent one of six equally populated districts; the remaining three members are elected "at-large." Downtown is located entirely within District 3. The City is also the County seat for El Paso County and the Board of County Commissioners is made up of five people representing defined districts.

DISTRICTS AND FINANCIAL TOOLS

Downtown is served by a number of special districts, urban renewal areas, and other public tools to support the task of catalyzing redevelopment in the urban core to level the playing field for the higher costs associated with urban infill.

- The **Downtown Development Authority (DDA)** has the authority through its plan of development to engage in various activities and financing to support economic and physical development within the DDA boundary. These activities include facilitating grants, technical support, business recruitment, improvements to the public realm, marketing, guidance through City processes, property purchase, and direct support of development within the Downtown area, among other tasks. The work of the DDA is funded through a mill levy and the ability to use Tax Increment Financing (TIF) on properties within the Downtown area.
- The **Greater Downtown Colorado Springs Business Improvement District (BID)** is currently managed by the Downtown Partnership and ensures that Downtown provides an urban environment that is clean, engaging, welcoming, and walkable through a mill levy assessed on Downtown properties within the district.

  Four Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) exist Downtown including:

  - Greater Downtown Colorado Springs BID
  - Park Union BID
  - Gazette St. Francis (GSF) BID
  - Catalyst Campus BID



The three-phase, mixed-use development occurring in CityGate 2.0 — a designated urban renewal district — will provide over 1,000 new residences.

- The **Colorado Springs Urban Renewal Authority (CSURA)** has authorized nine Urban Renewal Areas (URAs) within and adjacent to Downtown, including:
    - Tejon and Costilla: 2018 – 2043
    - Museum and Park: 2018 – 2043
    - CityGate 2.0: 2023 – 2048
    - Southwest Downtown: 2001 – 2026
    - City Auditorium: 2006 – 2031
    - ONE VeLa: 2024 – 2049
    - Bristow Lowell: 2024 – 2049
    - South Nevada Avenue: 2015 – 2040
    - Ivywild: 2011 – 2036
    - Upcoming: Moreno and Cascade

The CSURA supports projects that supply public benefit, provide quality sustainable places, create jobs, promote public art, offer affordable housing, and raise the standard of development in Colorado Springs through tax increment financing tools. Downtown is also influenced by two other nearby districts: Gold Hill Mesa west across I-25 and Union Printers Home east of Downtown.

The City for Champions projects are CSURA-supported projects that will create billions of dollars in economic impact over the next 30 years. Four projects spawned five venues, three of which are Downtown- Weidner Field, the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum, and Ed Robson Arena.

MARKET CONDITIONS

Area Employment

Greater Downtown (defined as zip code 80903) includes approximately 21,000 jobs, accounting for just over 8% of citywide employment. Downtown has a concentration of government employment with over 70% of the City's Public Administration jobs located Downtown. This industry represents federal, state, and local government agencies and accounts for 22% of all jobs Downtown. Other top employment sectors include Health Care, Professional and Technical Services, Hotel and Restaurant, and Education. Most of the top employment sectors are also the fastest growing with significant job growth since 2010.

Employment contributes significantly to Downtown's occupied square footage and daytime population. Greater Downtown's employee-to-household ratio of 4 to 1 indicates a healthy jobs-to-housing balance, although most of these housing units are located outside of the DDA boundary in the surrounding neighborhoods.



The Plaza of the Rockies along Tejon Avenue hosts a combined 450,000 square feet of office space in the north and south towers.

Residential

Downtown residents are older on average than citywide, this can be attributed to a greater presence of residents over 50 years old and a much lower presence of children. Downtown also has a larger than average concentration of young adults (ages 20 to 29), which is typical of downtown areas in other cities. In 2022, approximately 4% of Downtown workers live in the city core. Downtown consists of over 4,900 residents, with the growth attributed to new housing developments in the urban core. Downtown now has 3,075 residential units, of which over 80% have been built since 2015, including 1,006 units in 2024, and 712 in 2025. In addition, there are 51 units under construction as of August 2025.

Office

The Downtown office market consists of 5.1 million square feet of space, representing over 17% of the citywide office inventory. Class A office, the highest quality and most desirable type of commercial property, currently accounts for less than 20% of the office inventory in Downtown, which is an indicator of the age and quality of the office spaces in Downtown. Downtown averages lower vacancy rates and slightly higher rental rates per square foot compared to the rest of the city. Downtown Colorado Springs experienced fewer impacts on office vacancy and values caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and shifts to remote/hybrid work than other peer cities. Office-worker traffic and overall visitation to Downtown are approaching pre-pandemic levels and there is only a 9.5% office vacancy rate in Downtown. Downtown has experienced no new office development since 2010. Employers and commercial brokers interviewed felt there is demand for new Class A office space to attract out-of-state and Denver-based companies. There is at least one new office building approved/entitled that could support this demand.

Retail

The Downtown retail market consists of 1.7 million square feet of retail space and is unique with mostly locally owned stores, restaurants, and services. Shoppers are attracted to multiple retail nodes including North and South Tejon Streets, which offer local businesses, outdoor restaurant seating, and walkable streets. As of 2024, Downtown has higher vacancy and lease rates than the rest of the city. This is the first time that has occurred in over a decade. The overall amount of retail space in Downtown has remained approximately the same over the past decade as newer retail spaces have replaced older, outmoded spaces that were demolished or converted to other uses. The presence of food and beverage businesses has grown in the recent past as the majority of newer businesses in Downtown have been restaurants and bars. Downtown businesses and stakeholders reported that it is challenging for new and local retailers to afford retail space Downtown, but it is a desirable location for businesses with proven benefits and support resources.



Source: Google Maps

Popular restaurants and bars are featured in the Trolley Block along Tejon and Moreno Avenue.

Background

HISTORY OF DOWNTOWN PLANS

Planning for a vibrant Downtown is a continual process. Colorado Springs has engaged in such efforts for at least 40 years, yielding many notable changes and achievements.

1970s

The first Downtown Plan, issued in 1971, reflected the community's desire to sustain the area's prominence while suburban sprawl took the city center farther away from the original town site. However, the Plan did not serve as a rallying point for community decisions on important public improvements in the Downtown, despite the completion of several of the urban renewal projects outlined in its pages. Further, the 1971 Plan did not provide a context within which individual development decisions could be evaluated.

1980s and 1990s

During the 1980s, the need for a more coordinated, dynamic approach to developing and improving Downtown was raised repeatedly by citizens and elected officials in the community. This public concern sprang from several sources, and worries included economic vitality, the physical quality of both public and private realms, and the need for new tools to aid in achieving Downtown goals. The result of this realization was the *Downtown Action Plan* (DAP), formally adopted as the Master Plan for Downtown in 1992. The DAP organized the Downtown into distinct districts and set forth specific economic and land use recommendations for each of those areas.

2000s

In 2005 – 2006, Downtown Partnership, in conjunction with the City, undertook a planning process called *Imagine Downtown*. This process served to create a fresh vision for the future of Downtown Colorado Springs. *Imagine Downtown* engaged more than 400 stakeholders in informational sessions, work groups, and focus groups, eventually determining a vision for Downtown and a broad set of numerous goals.

In 2006, a primary goal of the *Imagine Downtown Plan* was accomplished: approval from taxpayers in the District for the creation and funding of a Downtown Development Authority (DDA). In 2007, City Council approved the Imagine Downtown Plan as the official Plan of Development for the DDA as required by Colorado law. That same year, work began on a land use master plan that established clear land use objectives and a framework for physical development to take shape, while aligning with the vision of the *Imagine Downtown Plan*. In 2009, the resulting *Imagine Downtown Master Plan* and Form-Based Code were adopted by City Council.

2010s and 2020s

In the past decade or so, the Downtown Development Authority and the City have engaged with the creation of a number of pivotal plans. In 2016, they spearheaded the planning process for *Experience Downtown Colorado Springs*, on which this Plan is largely based. The City has separately embarked on a number of major planning milestones, including a comprehensive plan update, *PlanCOS*, completed in 2023 that continues to largely guide land use and investment across Colorado Springs.

Planning Process

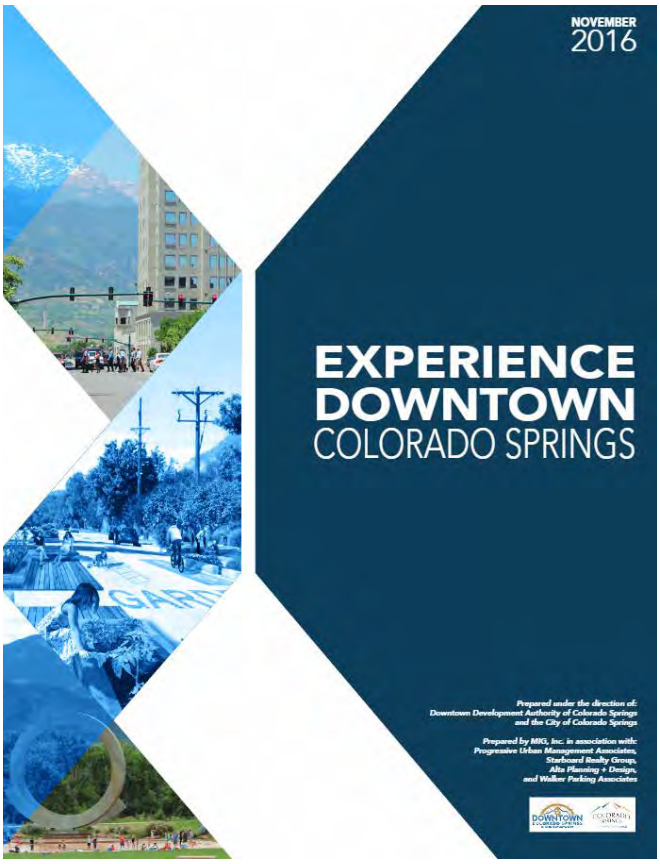
THE NEED FOR UPDATED PLANS

Since the last *Experience Downtown Plan,* adopted in 2016, many of the objectives and recommendations have been met, including adding over a thousand residential units and entertainment and community gathering spaces such as Weidner Field. With significant growth comes the need for additional planning to accommodate future decades of Downtown development.

Since *Experience Downtown Colorado Springs* was adopted, the Downtown pipeline of completed and slated investment grew from $600 million to almost $2.5 billion; three new anchor attractions opened– Weidner Field, Ed Robson Arena, and the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum; hotel rooms more than doubled; the Trolley Block was transformed; PikeRide and the ZEB launched; UCCS opened a Downtown campus; the Legacy Loop substantially expanded; and more.



The *Imagine Downtown Colorado Springs Master Plan*, completed in 2009.



The *Experience Downtown Colorado Springs Master Plan*, completed in 2016.

As population projections go up, Downtown navigates post-pandemic needs, and Colorado Springs begins to implement *PlanCOS* (2023), an updated Downtown Plan is necessary to guide the investment and implementation of future projects. Downtown is an important driver for the city, particularly driving economic vitality. The success and attractiveness of the city center brings value to all of Colorado Springs and the wider Pikes Peak Region.

In the winter of 2024, the Board of Directors of the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) authorized an update to the *Experience Downtown Plan of Development* and *Experience Downtown Master Plan* to further its vision by:

- Updating and consolidating the vision and action items to reflect current community needs;
- Updating specific tactics and more deeply addressing public spaces, access, and mobility;
- Considering the roles of utilities, infrastructure, community, and culture;
- Integrating findings of numerous community plans; and
- Producing compelling materials that highlight investment opportunities, catalytic projects, and market-based tools in Downtown Colorado Springs.

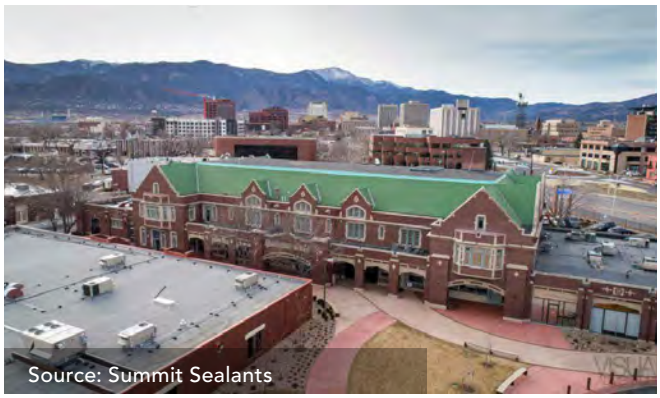

Source: Downtown Partnership

The historic Trolley Block project transformed previous warehouse buildings into a vibrant mixed-use district.



Source: PikeRide

PikeRide is a nonprofit electric bike share that now operates Downtown as well as Old Colorado City and Manitou Springs, offering residents and visitors affordable micromobility options.


Source: Summit Sealants

Catalyst Campus added new tenants and properties over the last decade.

PLAN OUTREACH AND INPUTS

The *2009 Imagine Downtown* and *2016 Experience Downtown Plans* put forth a vision supported by a process that included hundreds of stakeholders. The *2025 Elevate Downtown Pla*n further expanded public engagement through a robust outreach process that captured input from residents, property and business owners, subject matter experts, advocates, and decision-makers. Throughout this process, the project team was able to collect thousands of data points from residents, visitors, and employees in and around the Downtown area. This Plan was crafted using the input gathered via channels below:

- Review of more than a dozen recent City and regional plans;
- Three partner strategy meetings;
- Sixteen focus group meetings;
- Two community surveys with over 2,200 participants total;
- Two in-person community events;
- Three pop-up touchpoints;
- Draft plan online public review with almost 1,000 views and 80 comments;
- Promotion through social media, newsletters, and direct email;
- Regular review and input provided by the DDA Board and staff;
- City staff input from a wide range of agencies including Planning, Public Works, Colorado Springs Utilities, Stormwater, Parks and Cultural Services, Mountain Metro, and others; and
- Review and input from the Downtown Review Board, Planning Commission, and City Council.



Coffee Chat Community Event, May 8, 2025.



First Friday Pop-Up, August 1, 2025.



Walk and Talk Community Event, May 8, 2025.

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*

Implementation: Who and How

Downtown Colorado Springs is poised to enter an exciting new era. Established and emerging local retail and dining spots, vibrant nearby neighborhoods, and close ties to outdoor recreation opportunities all bolster Downtown's traditional role as the City's business and cultural center.

This Plan positions the city center to build upon this strong base and leverage new projects, trends, and emerging preferences including the forthcoming Park Union Development, groundbreaking of the ONE VeLa building, the Palmer High School renovations, and more.

In response to the leadership from the Downtown family of organizations and the City's Urban Planning Division, the following organizations and divisions are called to work collaboratively in support of this Plan, and incorporate the strategies into their annual work plans and long-range planning efforts.



The Acacia Park playground was completed in 2022 as a result of the Downtown Historic Parks Plan.

Key Partners:

- City of Colorado Springs and its departments
- El Paso County
- Downtown Partnership and its family of organizations
- Colorado Springs Utilities
- Colorado Springs Urban Renewal Authority
- Private businesses, developers, and investors
- Colorado Springs Regional Business Alliance (CSRBA)
- Pikes Peak Regional Building Department (PPRBD)
- Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments (PPACG)
- State of Colorado and its departments
- Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT)
- Hey Neighbor (formally CONO)
- Cultural Office of the Pikes Peak Region (COPPR)
- Neighborhood groups and associations within and adjacent to Downtown
- Visit Colorado Springs
- Advocacy groups and associations
- Downtown residents

The updated *Plan of Development* serves as the official development plan for the Downtown Development Authority. The Board and staff of the DDA, working alongside staff of the City's Urban Planning Division, shall annually review the Plan goals and action steps and determine near- and mid-term tactics that further their implementation.

The Downtown Plan document serves as the land use plan for Downtown. It guides City staff and Downtown stakeholders in improvements of streets, parks, trails, gateways, mobility, parking, and public space.

New opportunities and challenges will undoubtedly arise over the next decade, which will necessitate that specific actions be reviewed, reconsidered, and augmented.

Implementing the plans will require sustained participation and coordination among public and private stakeholders. Fortunately, the planning process involved many stakeholders who are engaged, committed, and ready to move on key action items. The successful outcome of these initial actions will be instrumental in demonstrating early progress toward the overall vision and will be important to maintaining momentum as implementation continues over the next decade. The public should remain apprised of implementation progress via existing DDA channels such as the website, newsletters, and social media.

Implementation should also consider past community engagement, particularly feedback that informed the Action Steps explored in greater detail in the following chapter. Throughout the planning process, five Goals were crafted and refined with community input, and the Action Steps are nested under each Goal. In Summer 2025, hundreds of community members prioritized the Action Steps for the next 10 years. To the right are the top-choice priorities for each of the five Goals. The *Plan of Development* explores these Goals and Action Steps in greater detail.

PRIORITY ACTION STEPS BY GOAL

Goal #1: The Heart of the Pikes Peak Region

- Position Downtown as the destination to stay, shop, dine, work, innovate, and be entertained day and night.
- Empower local retailers with tools, capital, and expertise
- Champion Downtown as the heartbeat of startups and creative enterprise

Goal #2: The Region's Most Vibrant and Welcoming Neighborhood

- Strengthen and sustain a Clean and Safe program
- Diversify housing types and options including ownership
- Provide a full-service grocer and other amenities for the Downtown neighborhood

Goal #3: Peak Urban Life with Unmatched Access to Nature

- Bring Downtown's public spaces to life with safety and year-round activation
- Activate the waterfronts and complete the Legacy Loop
- Tell the story of Downtown as the place where urban energy meets Colorado adventure

Goal #4: Culture Powered by Creativity and Sport

- Celebrate and elevate Downtown's arts, culture, and iconic destinations
- Strengthen Downtown's creative economy
- Activate Downtown around sports, from local leagues to world-class competition

Goal #5: Urban Design Shaped for Humans

- Activate Downtown with seamless transit and active travel options
- Make Downtown streets safer and more accessible for all modes of travel
- Promote connected sidewalks and active ground floors



Image Source: David Lauer Photography

DOWNTOWN COLORADO SPRINGS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

COLORADO SPRINGS OLYMPIC CITY USA

MAY 2026





ELEVATE DOWNTOWN COLORADO SPRINGS PLAN OF DEVELOPMENT

Volume 1

Image Sources:
Downtown Partnership
Visit Colorado Springs

Prepared under the direction of:
Downtown Development Authority of Colorado Springs
and the City of Colorado Springs

MIG

Prepared by MIG, Inc., in association with:
Economic & Planning Systems
and Consor



Image Source: The Independence Center on Google Maps

Assets, Opportunities, and Challenges

Overview
Assets
Challenges
Opportunities

chapter 1

Overview

This Plan is an update to the *Experience Downtown Plan*, adopted and approved by the Colorado Springs City Council in 2016. Many of the recommendations from the 2016 *Experience Downtown Plan* have been achieved over the last decade; most notably a substantial uptick in housing development, the opening of the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum, Ed Robson Arena, and Weidner Field. It provides updated guidance as to the goals to be achieved within the plan area boundaries and the strategies that the Downtown Development Authority will use to implement them.

This Plan does not update, change, or modify the boundaries of the Colorado Springs Downtown Development Area or the authorization for tax increment financing contained in the original *Imagine Downtown Plan*. The base year certified for the original *Experience Downtown Plan* shall remain the base year for the purposes of calculating incremental tax revenues.



The Skate in the Park Ice Rink transforms Acacia Park each winter.



The Culture Corridor banners hung throughout Downtown feature individuals who have contributed to the rich culture of the region.

Assets

Recent achievements, along with the area's inherent natural beauty and historic assets, combine to create a strong foundation for increased activity and investment in the city center. Renewed housing activity, vibrant local neighborhoods, and creative local businesses are **key ingredients to make Downtown a magnet for investment and talent.** Specific assets include:

Urban lifestyle within the great outdoors

The density of Downtown Colorado Springs allows for an urban lifestyle with amenities within a walkable environment. Central to Downtown's draw is the opportunity to access five unique parks and the nearly completed Legacy Loop trail system, while also being near urban amenities such as local businesses, restaurants, and entertainment. The Legacy Loop provides opportunities to enjoy walking, running, and biking in a natural environment just steps from Downtown and adjacent waterways. It also connects to adjacent regional trails such as Midland Trail, Pikes Peak Greenway Trail, Shooks Run Trail, and Fountain Creek Regional Trail. Downtown also provides a myriad of incredible views of Pikes Peak, the defining natural feature of the city.

Entertainment and local business destination

Some major components of what makes Downtown a regional destination are the variety of entertainment venues, small businesses, museums such as the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum and Pioneers Museum, and events such as First Fridays and Pride Fest. The community enjoys the prevalence of small, local businesses with diverse and unique offerings, which are central to the rich culture and feel. Recent developments such as Weidner Field and Ed Robson Arena have brought additional activation to the area, which has sparked investment into creating additional gathering spaces. Robson Arena has sold out nearly every Colorado College Tiger Hockey game and hosted other major events that have brought large crowds into Downtown, including the International Jump Rope Championships in 2023. Weidner Field is a top destination that brings residents and visitors Downtown with Switchbacks FC soccer matches, summer concerts drawing national tours and A-list talent, and community events.



Colorado Springs has a wealth of recreational resources accessible to the core of Downtown, such as the Pikes Peak Greenway Trail.

Diverse and historic neighborhoods

Downtown is the center of the City's dense urban activity, but it has managed to grow and develop in a manner that successfully retained the single-family residential character in neighborhoods surrounding Downtown. These neighborhoods, each with their own distinct character and relationship to the core, provide a strong foundation for the culture of active urban living that is taking hold through new residential development in Downtown. Home to a wide range of residents, neighborhoods in the greater city center provide a diverse and active community that supports Downtown and wants to see it grow.



The Old North End neighborhood offers historic architecture, homes, and public realm elements that contribute to the character and charm of Downtown.

Recent residential development

Downtown has been successful in growing the housing supply and increasing the number of residents living Downtown. Since 2015, over 2,500 housing units have been completed including 92 affordable or attainable units, with an additional 51 affordable units under construction at Artspace, plus 219 affordable units in developments immediately adjacent to Downtown. This has brought more families and young, professional-aged residents Downtown. From 2010 to 2024, the percentage of Downtown residents in the 25 to 39 age group increased from 26% to 33%. Household sizes have increased since 2010 and family households are growing at a higher average annual rate than non-family households. This significant increase in residential development is activating Downtown and supporting the economic vitality of the area.

Pedestrian-prioritized spaces

Pedestrians continue to be a priority in Downtown Colorado Springs, as shown by streetscape improvements on over 35 block faces since 2016 through a combination of public and private investment. There have also been intersection improvements, new medians, a pedestrian-only street along Moreno Avenue, and alley improvements including AdAmAn Alley, and lighting in three other alleyways. The City is working on the first phase of enhancements to historic Tejon Street with expected completion in 2026. These provide exciting opportunities and precedent for gathering and moving safely Downtown.

Extensive micromobility network

Since 2016, the City of Colorado Springs has added bike lanes along Tejon Street, Sierra Madre Street, Costilla Street, Pikes Peak Avenue, Cascade Avenue, and Weber Street. PikeRide also offers electric bike share rentals at 25 stations Downtown and Lime scooter rentals served over 35,000 unique riders Downtown in 2024. This extensive multimodal network complements Downtown's walkability and allows residents and visitors efficient options for moving between destinations and neighborhoods without having to get in a car and find vehicle parking. There are opportunities to better connect the on-street micromobility network with off-street trails surrounding Downtown.

Creative community and the arts

Downtown Colorado Springs was designated as a certified creative district in 2014, among the first in the state to receive this recognition. The Downtown Partnership continues to cultivate public art, placemaking projects, and cultural programs as important amenities and attractions. The Art on the Streets program celebrated its 27th year in 2025, and the First Friday program offers unique opportunities for local retailers, artists, and musicians to showcase their work. AdAmAn Alley, the most ambitious placemaking project undertaken by Downtown Partnership, spans a city block and has been recognized with awards for excellence from International Downtown Association, American Public Works Association Colorado, Downtown Colorado, Inc., and Historic Preservation Alliance of Colorado Springs. Revel, a long-table dinner and art party held in the alley, won an award for excellence from Downtown Colorado, Inc.



Source: Switchbacks

Weidner Field, home of the Switchbacks, draws thousands of visitors each season, uniting the Colorado Springs community and drawing broader audiences Downtown.

Flourishing sports economy

Colorado Springs now celebrates its brand as Olympic City USA, home to the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee headquarters, the largest of three Olympic training centers in the country, and more than 20 national governing bodies of sport. The opening of the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum solidified the reputation as the center of Olympic and athletic activity and has created valuable momentum for new investment and development across Downtown. Events and activities in and around the Museum, such as the City's Downtown SummerFest, Olympic/Paralympic Hall of Fame Festival, and 2024 Paris Olympic celebrations have drawn thousands of visitors to the city center. The popularity of Weidner Field and Ed Robson Arena catalyzes the development and additional public realm improvements enhance the pedestrian and visitor experiences in and around these venues. There are opportunities to further invest and promote the centrality of sports and gathering within Downtown.

Challenges

Downtown Colorado Springs will face growing pains over the next 10 years, including common challenges seen across the country today. Ensuring all Downtown residents, visitors, and employees feel supported through adequate housing and amenity options will be at the forefront of future development considerations.

Provide a variety of housing choices

Housing development has increased extensively in Downtown in the last decade, but recent and future development and housing inventory will need to continue to provide both volume and diversity of housing types. Since 2010, the growth in renter-occupied units outpaced owner-occupied units and in the past decade, only 18 for-sale multifamily units (Bijou Lofts & Pikes Peak Lofts) were delivered compared to nearly 2,000 multifamily rental units. Additionally, recently constructed apartment properties Downtown command high rents that may create affordability challenges for residents. Thin margins for new construction make development of all housing types, especially workforce and affordable housing, more challenging without supportive partnerships and resources. State construction defect laws and several successful lawsuits against condo developers have made condo development difficult throughout the state. Construction insurance costs and the risk of lawsuits have made condos difficult to feasibly build, except for luxury products in select areas of the state (e.g., Cherry Creek in Denver, luxury ski resort areas). Support for development of for-sale housing through reimbursement agreements likely needs to be significantly greater than for-rent developments to address feasibility gaps. Recently adopted legislation by the State is aimed at reducing costs and risks for developers and may lead to more condo development, which could be a focus of the DDA to support housing diversity.


Source: Visit Colorado Springs


Source: Mae on Cascade

Downtown will have a strong mix of new and established housing options.

Impact of Tax-Exempt Parcels on Downtown Funding

It is a challenge for the Downtown Colorado Springs BID and DDA that a significant number of parcels within the downtown area are tax-exempt, because these properties do not contribute to the property-based revenues that fund essential BID and DDA programs. With a substantial portion of land off the tax rolls, the burden of financing improvements, maintenance, and activation falls more heavily on the remaining taxable property owners. This limits the organizations' ability to invest in infrastructure, public space enhancements, and economic development at the scale needed to support a thriving Downtown.

Attracting and retaining a diverse workforce

Highly skilled workers from across the country are preferring vibrant, walkable, and bikeable environments as well as access to urban amenities and housing options. Companies are also requiring new office building products to suit their needs and the cost of development in Downtown is greater. Shifts to remote and hybrid work schedules have decreased overall office development demand, which puts greater pressure to have attractive sites for office uses. However, the margins of construction make office development increasingly difficult, especially if not built for specific users. Having market-appropriate office space options, a variety of housing and amenity types, and a vibrant and entrepreneurial culture will be key to attracting a committed and talented workforce moving forward.


Source: City of Colorado Springs

Downtown has maintained high rates of in-office attendance through and after the pandemic. Additional office products and amenities to support those high rates will be crucial going forward.

Enhancing public transportation options and efficiency

Public transit in Colorado Springs, including Downtown, is challenging due to low density patterns and limited demand. While Downtown serves as a major employment center, much of the population lives outside of a transit service area, making transportation to Downtown and the demand for parking a major challenge. Continued work to identify a multimodal transportation center Downtown could be catalytic to increased transportation options and ridership. The ZEB, launched in 2022, is a free Downtown circulator shuttle that makes frequent stops. When fully staffed and operational, this is a hugely successful transportation model and a step in the right direction for expanding public transportation in and around Downtown. Lauded by users across the Downtown area, sustainable funding for the service must be secured.



Source: *Colorado Springs Gazette*

Buses are the main form of public transportation Downtown. An opportunity for a relocated, modern, and urban transit center is on the docket for future development Downtown.

Reinvesting in key anchors and community-serving facilities

Some key historic anchors and community-serving facilities, such as the City Auditorium, the Antlers Hotel and Conference Space, the Acacia Park Bandshell, and Kimball's Peak Three Theater need additional attention to be preserved and celebrated as part of Downtown's form and cultural heritage, and to better contribute to the Downtown economy and community. Downtown has and will face challenges with funding, redevelopment, and usage with these sites.

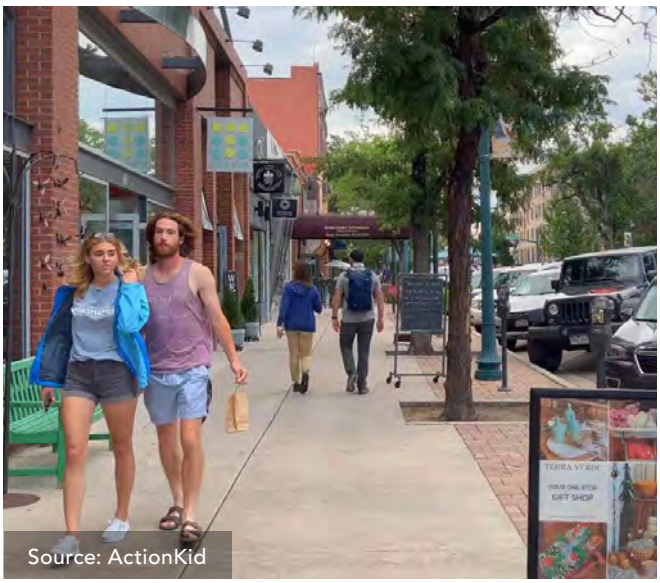
Ensuring safe and clean public spaces

Ensuring clean and safe public spaces throughout Downtown Colorado Springs is a challenge due to various factors such as increased foot traffic and population, pollution and litter, and limited resources for maintenance. Increasing pressure on infrastructure will require increased maintenance and management of public spaces as well as additional solutions for waste disposal, clear and frequent signage, and community involvement such as neighborhood cleanups and outreach. Public spaces such as sidewalks, plazas, and parks should be safe and clean spaces for everyone to utilize and public restrooms need to be provided in Downtown.



Source: Downtown Partnership

Lulu's Downtown is a music and arts venue Downtown. Supporting the reopening and reprogramming of other theaters and venues will support the creative and entertainment economy.



Source: ActionKid

A clean and safe sidewalk and public realm supports the health of all users and draws neighbors Downtown.

Growing pains and maintaining community character

Downtown Colorado Springs has a unique small-town feel that is loved and embraced by residents and visitors alike. At the same time, it is also one of the fastest growing cities in the country. With Downtown being the city's center for density, there are housing, commercial, infrastructure, and public service needs that will need to be addressed in order to meet demands well into the future. Balancing thoughtful growth with community character maintenance will need to be a priority as Downtown continues to evolve and change.

Competing market demands

Colorado Springs is experiencing significant growth, leading to additional commercial, housing, and mixed-use developments across the city. As the central hub for higher-density housing, historic and cultural offerings, flourishing parks, and a diverse array of office and local retail options, Downtown remains the focal point of additional development to meet the needs of a quickly growing population. Additional development outside of Downtown, although supported, may run the risk of competition and should be monitored closely and collaboratively moving forward.

Costs of Development

The cost of development Downtown is significant and multi-faceted. Notably, the developer typically bears the cost of infrastructure needs up to a certain point, including electrical infrastructure. In addition to on-site electrical needs, the developer also bears the cost of relocating or undergrounding services in the alley or street.



The slated ONE VeLa apartment will soon become the tallest building in Colorado Springs, adding 400 new homes and multiple ground-floor commercial spaces.

Opportunities

Amenitizing the Downtown neighborhood

Recent residential growth means that Downtown has become more of a neighborhood to a growing number of residents, in addition to being a regional hub. This urban neighborhood should provide a high quality of life and accessibility that contributes to making Downtown a great place to live. Key amenities identified as important to bring Downtown include a full-service grocery store, pharmacy, daycares, gyms, and other daily services.

Unifying an approach to homelessness

Downtown Colorado Springs has some of the largest and most expansive resources for homelessness in the country with the recently constructed Springs Rescue Mission campus, a one-stop-shop for wraparound services, permanent supportive housing, pet care, a place to rest, and more. The Rescue Mission is closely tied to other resources such as Catholic Charities and The Place. In addition, the City of Colorado Springs recently completed the *Homeless Response Action Plan* that is intended to increase homeless prevention and response efforts. Homelessness is a problem with many facets and cannot be left to the responsibility of service providers alone. As Colorado Springs emerges as a world-class city, there is an opportunity to take a holistic, partnered, and unified approach to supporting unhoused neighbors via a coordinated community strategy in building on the existing Continuum of Care.

Pursuing community preservation strategies for businesses and residents

It's important that local businesses and residents are supported as Downtown continues to grow and evolve over time. The DDA can monitor key indicators of potential displacement impacts on residents and businesses, pursuing programmatic solutions to support neighborhood stability. The heightened appeal of Downtown will only increase cost pressures on existing businesses and residents, which is an indication of Downtown's success but makes preventing displacement more challenging. Proactive efforts can help create a supportive environment before pressures are too great to overcome. Currently the DDA offers several opportunities to help Downtown businesses modernize and be competitive, such as the Loan Program for Tenant Ownership, Retail Incentive Grant, Building Enhancement Grant, and more.



Streetcar520

Advance Downtown as an innovation and educational hub

Several key catalytic projects surrounding education are on the horizon Downtown, including the Palmer High School redesign and the expansion of UCCS's Downtown campus. With Pikes Peak State College and Colorado College also in close proximity, Downtown has the opportunity to provide expansive educational offerings and integrate student life into the community. This creates space for not only intergenerational activities but also for innovation in workforce development, entrepreneurial initiatives, and collaborative partnerships between the Downtown business community and educational institutions. As UCCS grows Downtown with the Weidner Norwood Center for Real Estate and Property Management, they will continue to create an academic and innovation district while supporting demand for additional amenities, student housing, and economic collaborations.

Integrating the waterfront, trails, and parks

Connection to nature and the great outdoors is immensely valuable to Colorado Springs residents. As Downtown continues to urbanize, there is an opportunity to keep the value of green space and recreation front of mind. With thoughtful design, as imagined in *CreekCOS*, the waterfront areas along Fountain and Monument creeks could be an activated and bustling area for visitors and residents alike. In addition, there is opportunity for the beloved Legacy Loop to connect to various Downtown amenities. Finally, the DDA and City should consider the implementation and construction of smaller green spaces in the form of activated pocket parks to accommodate residential and visitorship growth.

Investing in public realm and multimodal infrastructure

An opportunity for the City and DDA to improve Downtown is by addressing the public realm and aging multimodal infrastructure such as filling sidewalk gaps, best practices in the built form (e.g., grade-separated bike lanes) and investing in public space upgrades (such as benches and seating, lighting, public art, bike facilities, etc.). Downtown can become more multimodal-friendly by continuing to link the bike, trail, and transit networks and implementing the *ConnectCOS* (2023) plan recommendations that will help to better connect Downtown with the larger Colorado Springs community.



UCCS Downtown and other educational institutions offer unique opportunities for better integration into the broader fabric of Downtown.

Promoting tourism in support of the Downtown economy

Downtown tourism can be increased by offering a variety of accommodations including a unique, small-scale boutique hotel and a renovated or new full-service hotel with larger meeting spaces to attract large events and conferences. In addition, Downtown can increase the number of attractions by supporting reinvestment in historic buildings including Kimball's Peak Three Theater and City Auditorium. Through investment and rehabilitation, these attractions can be restored and reclaimed as valuable assets that attract residents and visitors. Other attractions such as botanic gardens can provide a variation of indoor and outdoor activities. Public art can also be an attractor for visitors to Downtown. It will be pivotal to work closely with the City to implement the recommendations of *PublicArtCOS*. Lastly, all of Downtown's cultural assets should be integrated into a comprehensive marketing plan to support a unified vision for attracting and enhancing tourism in the area.



The Denver Botanic Gardens draw over one million visitors every year.

Targeted investment in northern Downtown

The growing resident base and strong visitation numbers Downtown present opportunities for new businesses to locate and grow. However, there have been no new offices, or retail space, constructed north of Colorado Avenue since 2010. The majority of recent development has occurred in the southern areas of Downtown. With adjacency to the Colorado College campus and interconnectedness to urban trails and established neighborhoods, there are opportunities to increase investment throughout the northern portion of Downtown.

Positioning the public realm for future development

Some major new developments are anticipated Downtown such as ONE VeLa and CityGate. While some of these will occur within this Plan's horizon (about 10 years), some will not. Either way, there is an opportunity to envision opportunities to connect Downtown's public realm to these future development sites, ensuring consistent, walkable access and creating a cohesive pedestrian experience between destinations.



Kinship Landing is one of the many new hotel developments in the past decade accommodating an uptick in tourism.

Vision Framework

Overview
Vision
Goals and Action Steps

Private economic efforts must work alongside public-sector investments, and every endeavor must operate in concert to bring about a bright and prosperous future.

chapter 2

Overview

The vision and goals define how Downtown Colorado Springs wants to be looking five, 10, 20 years into the future. The vision synthesizes and reflects the dreams of hundreds of community members for Downtown. The goals guide future action items—recommendations to implement this Plan.

Vision

The vision framework builds on, consolidates, and adapts the vision of the 2016 *Experience Downtown Plan of Development*, continuing the momentum of past investments and accomplishments while incorporating the aspirations, needs, and values of today's community. The vision reaffirms the key role that Downtown plays in the city's overall quality of life. **To achieve the desired vision, this Plan must be forward thinking and dynamic to account for future market trends.** The success of the city center depends in part on its ability to **be proactive and capitalize on this increased focus** to revitalize and improve Downtown.

Redevelopment and transformation will not necessarily proceed in an easily discernible, linear fashion. Rather, it will often be recognizable in **multiple efforts occurring simultaneously and synergistically.** Public efforts must work alongside private efforts, and every endeavor must operate in concert to bring about a bright and prosperous future.

Goals and Action Steps

The following goals are adapted from the previous plan's goals and vision framework, providing continuity and a link with the past, while also looking to the future. Building upon the consolidated vision statement, the **goals were developed in collaboration with community and business leaders, Downtown neighbors, and other community members**. The goals describe how Downtown will look, feel, and function in the near future. Each goal contains targeted, tactical action steps to advance it toward realization.

2016 EXPERIENCE DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN VALUES

- **Welcoming**
- **Vibrant**
- **Connected**
- **Walkable**
- **Anchored**
- **Innovative**
- **Entrepreneurial**
- **Valued**

Downtown Colorado Springs is the **vibrant and inclusive heart of our community**, where local history and culture seamlessly blend with a high-quality, modern urban lifestyle. It serves as a thriving **hub for entrepreneurship and creativity, showcasing civic services, commerce, innovation, and entertainment.** These achievements are made possible through successful **public-private partnerships** that drive sustainable growth and shared prosperity. With a commitment to **equity, health, and sustainability**, Downtown offers a dynamic environment where extensive amenities and destinations are **safely and seamlessly connected through walkable streets and inviting public spaces**. Downtown is a great place to do business, a safe place to call home, and an exciting location for visitors.

Downtown is the vibrant and inclusive heart of our community—where history, culture, and nature meet modern urban living. A hub of creativity, commerce, and civic life, it thrives through strong partnerships that foster sustainability, equity, and shared prosperity.

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

5 Urban Design Shaped for Humans

4 Culture Powered by Creativity and Sport

1 THE HEART OF THE PIKES PEAK REGION

Action Steps:

- **Position Downtown as the destination to stay, shop, dine, work, innovate, and be entertained day and night.**
- **Empower local retailers with tools, capital, and expertise**
- **Champion Downtown as the heartbeat of startups and creative enterprise**
- Advocate for a flagship events venue
- Amplify awareness of development resources and incentives
- Forge strong ties with local educational institutions and uplift the next generation of the Downtown workforce
- Invest in the public realm around existing destinations shaping identifiable neighborhoods
- Position Downtown as the hub of Civic connection
- Brand Downtown as a place of belonging

2 THE REGION'S MOST VIBRANT AND WELCOMING NEIGHBORHOOD

Action Steps:

- **Strengthen and sustain a Clean and Safe program**
- **Diversify housing types and options including ownership**
- **Provide a full-service grocer and other amenities for the Downtown neighborhood**
- Provide Downtown with a public restroom
- Attract a broader mix of residents to Downtown
- Coordinate care for Downtown's most vulnerable
- Support people staying in their neighborhoods over time

3 PEAK URBAN LIFE WITH UNMATCHED ACCESS TO NATURE

Action Steps:

- **Bring Downtown's public spaces to life with safety and year-round activation**
- **Activate the waterfronts and complete the Legacy Loop**
- **Tell the story of Downtown as the place where urban energy meets Colorado adventure**
- Transform underutilized spaces into inviting public spaces
- Accelerate momentum on the redevelopment of the Martin Drake Power Plant site
- Expand Downtown's tree canopy for comfort, shade, and vitality
- Leverage scenic views through activation

4 CULTURE POWERED BY CREATIVITY AND SPORT

Action Steps:

- **Celebrate and elevate Downtown's arts, culture, and iconic destinations**
- **Strengthen Downtown's creative economy**
- **Activate Downtown around sports, from local leagues to world-class competition**
- Bring streets to life with events, pop-ups, and shared experiences
- Integrate public art into streets, plazas, and urban design
- Celebrate and preserve Downtown's heritage
- Unlock Downtown's next alley transformation
- Host Downtown-defining festivals

5 URBAN DESIGN SHAPED FOR HUMANS

Action Steps:

- **Activate Downtown with seamless transit and active travel options**
- **Make Downtown streets safer and more accessible for all modes of travel**
- **Promote connected sidewalks and active ground floors**
- Optimize parking and curb management systems
- Make alleys more pedestrian friendly
- Promote distinct district identities during streetscape upgrades
- Champion clear signage and intuitive navigation throughout Downtown

GOAL 1



THE HEART OF THE PIKES PEAK REGION

ACTION STEPS

- Position Downtown as a premier destination for visitors, workers, and residents by enhancing hotels, retail, restaurants, and workplaces; expanding creative and pop-up spaces and markets; supporting unique, first-to-market experiences; and fostering safe, exciting, and vibrant daytime and nighttime activities.
- Provide tools, capital access, and technical support to ensure the long-term health and viability of local and small retail businesses that add to the unique and vibrant character of Downtown.
- Position Downtown as the prime location for start-ups, entrepreneurial activity, and coworking hubs to create places where new ideas flourish.
- Explore the feasibility of developing a signature events venue to position Downtown as a leading destination for year-round business, events, and tourism.
- Leverage and provide better information on the vast array of resources available (e.g., local, state, and federal tax credit programs) for business and development in the Downtown area.
- Strengthen and expand partnerships between Downtown businesses and local schools—including Colorado College, Pikes Peak State College, University of Colorado-Colorado Springs, and Palmer High School—by integrating these institutions into Downtown's fabric and creating career pathways, internships, and workforce development opportunities that harness local talent.
- Enhance access to Downtown destinations like Weidner Field and the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum through high-quality public infrastructure, streetscape improvements, public art, and clear branding to create distinctive, identifiable neighborhoods and districts.
- Celebrate Downtown as the natural gathering place for civic life and public expression. Elevate the City, County, and CSU as core Civic partners in Downtown's future and consider opportunities to consolidate and/or co-locate facilities. Expand and explore the potential for updated or additional Civic assets/anchors such as a federal courthouse, regional public safety center, or workforce training hub, to be located Downtown
- Brand Downtown as a place of belonging- a welcoming and central heart of Colorado Springs where everyone feels seen, connected, and proud to participate in its evolution.

GOAL 2



THE REGION'S MOST VIBRANT AND WELCOMING NEIGHBORHOOD

ACTION STEPS

- Continue to monitor and refine the offerings of a safety, ambassador, and outreach program through the "Clean and Safe" pilot program to better support all people visiting and living Downtown. Develop a sustainable, long-term model to transition the pilot into a permanent, well-resourced program that ensures a welcoming, safe, and vibrant Downtown for everyone.
- Promote diverse Downtown housing through policies and development that support live-work spaces, workforce and affordable housing, and ownership opportunities—delivering at least 200 new for-sale units over the next decade, with 10% designated as attainable or workforce housing.
- Plan for and incentivize additional amenities that make Downtown a great place to live and work, such as a full-service grocery store, parks, trails, daycares, gyms, pharmacy, convenience stores, and other daily services.
- Provide all members of the Downtown community and visitors with a public restroom option, located in an accessible public area with clear signage and consistent maintenance.
- Attract and welcome new households with a range of cultural amenities and connection to local businesses to expand the population and broaden the mix of who calls Downtown home.
- Work with local partners and prioritize engagement to ensure a comprehensive approach to year-round shelter space, emergency shelter options, permanent supportive housing options, and associated wraparound services that effectively transition people out of homelessness.
- Work with partners to support neighborhood stability and community preservation to help existing residents in and around Downtown stay in their neighborhoods over time.

GOAL 3

PEAK URBAN LIFE WITH UNMATCHED ACCESS TO NATURE

ACTION STEPS

- Ensure Downtown parks and public spaces are clean, safe, and welcoming for all through proactive placemaking and year-round activation such as interactive art installations and one-of-a-kind events.
- Advance the COS Creek Plan and complete the final segment of the Legacy Loop to seamlessly connect Monument and Fountain Creek waterfronts into Downtown with safe, accessible pathways, wayfinding, public art, and community amenities.
- Brand Downtown as a vibrant urban community with quick access to world class outdoor recreation, and prioritize easy and safe mobility options to connect Downtown with natural amenities.
- Explore opportunities to implement pocket parks, mini plazas, and public parklets in vacant areas, underutilized parking spaces, and alleyways
- Accelerate the redevelopment progress on the Martin Drake Power Plant site to support a waterfront community that includes mixed-use buildings, recreational opportunities, and connectivity.
- Ensure an adequate tree canopy along downtown streets and public spaces to minimize the urban heat island effect. Plant 1,000 new trees in the Downtown core by expanding existing programs and development requirements.
- Capitalize on the beautiful mountain views through advocacy for the activation of rooftops, patios, parks, and other public spaces.

GOAL 4



CULTURE POWERED BY CREATIVITY AND SPORT

ACTION STEPS

- Celebrate and strengthen Downtown's unique identity by leveraging key anchor institutions such as the Pikes Peak Center for the Performing Arts, the Fine Arts Center, the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Museum, Ed Robson Arena, Weidner Field, etc. Support sustainable activation for key assets like City Auditorium and Kimball's Peak Three Theater. Foster opportunities for office growth, training and wellness, events, expanded and enhanced branding, and unique visitor experiences at the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic museum to frame it as a defining Downtown anchor.
- Build on Downtown's certified Creative District status by supporting creative industries, visual and performing arts, local culinary talent, and community events that celebrate our unique culture—fostering a vibrant creative economy that attracts artists and sustains creative businesses.
- Celebrate and foster the growing culture and economy of athletics at all levels- from youth, to collegiate, to professional, to Olympic.
- Create additional opportunities for streetscape activation, pop-ups, and events to promote community gathering, safety, and Downtown pride.
- Incorporate additional public art into urban design and planning, following guidance from industry best practices and aligning with the Cultural Plan for the Pikes Peak Region.
- Celebrate and preserve the richness of historic structures and culture in Downtown, including places of worship, cultural sites, and storytelling elements.
- Explore opportunities for establishing new signature festivals through partnerships. Potential impactful projects could include large-scale immersive art, music, and technology festivals.

GOAL 5



URBAN DESIGN SHAPED FOR HUMANS

ACTION STEPS

- Advocate for Downtown serving as a mobility hub with access to new and expanding community and regional transit and active transportation options including a new transit center and Front Range Passenger Rail.
- Enhance multimodal access and safety for pedestrians and cyclists Downtown by expanding and improving sidewalks and bike lanes, upgrading conventional and buffered lanes to protected facilities where possible, and strengthening connectivity and safety especially across major corridors.
- Work towards a better connected pedestrian experience Downtown by ensuring new development considers urban design features that promote ground floor activation.
- Support the implementation of the Parking and Curb Management Plan (2025) regarding the assessment, pricing, facilities, and technology for parking and curbsides Downtown.
- Use material enhancements, outdoor dining, public art, street lighting, and activations to transform underutilized alleys adjacent to existing retail and residential uses to increase pedestrian friendliness, attract visitors, and create a vibrant fabric of unique Downtown spaces.
- Enhance streetscape upgrades in a coordinated matter for distinct district identities through the use of intentional paving patterns, materials, furnishings, signage, art, and plantings.
- Facilitate and implement a future signage and wayfinding plan for the Downtown neighborhood to create a cohesive, informative, and useful layout of directional elements.



Image Source: Mabry Campbell Photos

DDA Boundary Description and Amendments

Overview

chapter 3

Overview

This Plan does not update, change, or modify the boundaries of the Colorado Springs Downtown Development Area, or the authorization for tax increment financing contained in the *Experience Downtown Plan*. The base year certified for the original Imagine Downtown Plan shall remain the base year for the purposes of calculating incremental tax revenues.

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION FOR THE ELEVATE DOWNTOWN PLAN OF DEVELOPMENT

The Downtown Plan area for Downtown Colorado Springs is located within the city limits of the City of Colorado Springs, County of El Paso, Colorado, in an area whose boundaries are described as follows: These boundaries describe the "plan of development and the "plan of development area" under the Downtown Development Authority Statute. All boundary lines are assumed to lie on the centerlines of the identified streets and alleys, with the exception of highway and railroad rights-of-way. All references to reception numbers or to book and page numbers refer to documents recorded with the El Paso County Clerk and Recorder's Office.

The Point of Beginning is at the intersection of the centerline of Cache La Poudre Street West and Cascade Avenue North; thence,

- East on Cache La Poudre West to the intersection with North Weber Street, thence
- South on North Weber Street to the intersection with Platte Avenue East, thence
- East on Platte Avenue East to the intersection with Bijou Court, thence
- South on Bijou Court to the intersection with Bijou Street East, thence
- East on Bijou Street East to the intersection with Wahsatch Avenue North, thence
- South on Wahsatch Avenue North to the intersection with the East/West alley between Kiowa Street East and Pikes Peak Avenue East, thence
- East on said alley South of Kiowa Street East to the intersection with Prospect Street North, thence
- South on Prospect Street to the intersection with Pikes Peak Avenue, thence
- East on Pikes Peak Avenue to the intersection with Institute Street South, thence
- Institute Street South to the intersection with the East/West alley between Colorado Avenue East and Cuchurras Street East, thence
- West on said alley to the Northeast corner of the property described in a deed recorded at Reception #099014966, thence
- West on the North property line of the property described in a deed recorded at Reception #204075634 to the Northwest corner of the property described in a deed recorded at Reception #204075634, thence
- South along the West property line of the property described in a deed recorded at Reception #204075634 to the Northwest corner of the property described in a deed recorded at Reception #099014966, thence
- South along the West property line of the property described in a deed recorded at Reception #099014966 to the intersection of the North property line of the property described in a deed recorded at Book 6335, Page 8, thence



Figure 3.1 | DDA Boundaries

- West on the North property line of the property described in a deed recorded at Book 6335, Page 8 to the Northwest Corner of the property described in a deed recorded at Book 6335, Page 8, thence
- Following along the Westerly property line of the property described in a deed recorded at Book 6335, Page 8 to the intersection with Costilla Street East, thence
- West on Costilla Street East to the intersection with Wahsatch Avenue South, thence
- South on Wahsatch Avenue South to the intersection with Rio Grande Street East, thence
- West on Rio Grande Street East to the intersection with Nevada Avenue South, thence
- South on Nevada Ave South to the intersection with the East boundary of the Denver & Rio Grande Railway Right-of-Way, thence
- Northwesterly on the East line of the Denver & Rio Grande Railway Right-of-Way to the intersection with Tejon Street South, thence
- North on Tejon Street South to the intersection of Fountain Blvd. West, thence
- West on Fountain Blvd. West to the intersection of the property described in a deed recorded at Reception #98054628, thence
- North along the Easterly boundary of said property to the Northeast corner of property described in a deed recorded at Reception #98054628, thence
- West along the Northerly boundary of the property described in a deed recorded at Reception #98054628 to the Northwest corner of the property described in a deed recorded at Reception #98054628, thence
- South along the Westerly boundary of the property described in a deed recorded at Reception #98054628 to a point along the Northerly boundary of said property, thence
- Westerly along the Northerly boundary of the property described in a deed recorded at Reception #98054628 to the intersection of the East Boundary of the Denver & Rio Grande Railway Right-of-Way, thence
- Northwesterly on the East boundary of the Denver & Rio Grande Railway Right-of-Way to the intersection with Cimarron Street West, thence
- West on Cimarron Street West to the East boundary of the Interstate 25 Highway Right-of-Way line, thence
- North along the East Right-of-Way line of the Interstate 25 Highway Right-of-Way to the intersection of Bijou Street West, thence
- East on Bijou Street West to the intersection of Cascade Avenue North, thence
- North along Cascade Avenue North to the Point of Beginning at the intersection of the centerline of Cache La Poudre West and Cascade Avenue North.

Colorado Springs City Council amended Ordinance No. 07-15 on March 12, 2015, by the adoption of Ordinance No. 15-20 to re-describe the Colorado Springs Downtown Development Authority so as to include certain additional property as follows: 825 E. Pikes Peak Ave.; 0 S. Institute St.; 30 S. Prospect St.; 704-720 E. Colorado Ave.; 731 E. Colorado Ave.; 737 E. Colorado Ave.; 749 E. Colorado Ave.; 727 E. Pikes Peak Ave.; 735 E. Pikes Peak Ave.; 730 E. Pikes Peak Ave.; 745 E. Pikes Peak Ave.; 749 E. Pikes Peak Ave.; 107 2. Prospect St.; 715 E. Pikes Peak Ave.; and 710-750 E. Pikes Peak Ave.

Such properties are represented by parcel numbers: 64172-21-9022; 64172-19-005; 64172-19-004; 64172-19-003; 64172-19-002; 64172-19-001; 64163-03-036; 64173-03-032; 64173-03-038; 64172-19-017; 64172-18-002; 64172-18-004; 64173-02-035; 64173-02-010; and 64172-16-039.

Tax Increment Financing

Overview

Tools and Recommendations

chapter 4

Overview

As noted in Chapter 3, this *Downtown Plan of Development* is an update to the *Experience Downtown Plan*, adopted and approved by the Colorado Springs City Council in November 2016. It provides updated guidance as to the goals to be achieved within the Plan area boundaries, and compels and authorizes the Colorado Springs Downtown Development Authority to use its tax increment financing authority to implement them. This Plan does not update, change, or modify the boundaries of the Colorado Springs Downtown Development Area, or the authorization for tax increment financing contained in the original Imagine Downtown Plan. The base year certified for the original Imagine Downtown Plan shall remain the base year for the purposes of calculating incremental tax revenues.

Tax Increment Financing

(1) The Downtown Plan of Development contemplates that a primary method of financing for development projects shall be the use of property tax increment financing as provided in §31-25-807(3), Colorado Revised Statutes.

(2) Certain areas within the boundaries of the Authority are also designated as "urban renewal areas" under Part 1 of Article 25 of Title 31 C.R.S. (the "Urban Renewal Law"). Such areas, therefore, are also subject to tax increment financing authorization pursuant to the Urban Renewal Law.

Such urban renewal areas which are subject to tax increment financing authorization pursuant to the Urban Renewal Law shall be considered to be excluded from the tax increment financing area of the Authority until the expiration of such tax increment authorization pursuant to the Urban Renewal Law.

(3) Therefore, tax increment financing for property tax for the Authority shall not include the following as recorded by the El Paso County Clerk and Recorder:

1. Southwest Downtown Urban Renewal Plan area effective December 31, 2001 by Resolutions 133-01 and 198-24;
2. City Auditorium Block Urban Renewal Plan area effective December 31, 2006 by Resolution 11-06;
3. Museum and Park Urban Renewal Plan area effective December 11, 2018 by Resolution 161-18;
4. Tejon & Costilla Urban Renewal Plan area effective March 14, 2023 by Resolution 163-18;
5. CityGate 2.0 Urban Renewal Plan area by Resolution 38-23;
6. One VeLa Urban Renewal Plan area by Resolution 199-24.

The urban renewal areas shall be eligible for inclusion in a plan or plans of development of the Authority which provide for tax increment financing as authorized by Section 31-25-807 (3) Colorado Revised Statutes for property tax, when such areas are no longer subject to tax increment financing authorization for property tax under the Urban Renewal Law. At such time, no formal action of the City or Authority shall be required in order for the Authority to begin receiving incremental tax revenues from these areas; however, the Authority shall provide notice to the County Assessor upon such an occurrence.

(4) Except as herein noted and as the Authority may legally provide otherwise, all taxes levied after the effective date of approval of the original Imagine Downtown Plan by the City Council of the City of Colorado Springs upon taxable property each year or levied by or for the benefit of any public body each year within the boundaries of the original Imagine Downtown Plan and certain property included by Ordinance No.

07-15 and Ordinance No. 15-20 as set forth in chapter 3 of the Downtown Plan of Development, the "plan of development area," but excluding "urban renewal areas" described in paragraph number (3), hereinafter called the "taxable property area" shall be divided for the 30-year period as set forth in the original Imagine Downtown Plan as follows:

(5) That portion of the taxes which are produced by the levy at the rate fixed each year by or for each such public body upon the valuation for assessment of taxable property within the taxable property area last certified prior to the effective date of approval by the Colorado Springs City Council of the original Imagine Downtown Plan, or, as to an area later added to the boundaries of the plan of development area, the effective date of the modification of the Downtown Plan of Development, shall be paid into the funds of each such public body as are all other taxes collected by or for said public body.

(6) That portion of said property taxes within the taxable property area in excess of such amount shall be allocated to and, when collected, paid into a special fund of the City of Colorado Springs, unless otherwise agreed to by the City of Colorado Springs and the Authority, for the payment of the principal of, the interest on, and any premiums due in connection with the bonds of, loans or advances to, or indebtedness incurred by, whether funded, refunded, assumed, or otherwise, by the City of Colorado Springs for financing or refinancing, in whole or in part, a development project within the boundaries of the Downtown Plan of Development as set forth in chapter 3. Unless and until the total valuation for assessment of the taxable property within the taxable property area exceeds the base valuation for assessment of the taxable property within the taxable property area, as provided in paragraph (5), all of the taxes levied upon the taxable property within the taxable property area in such boundary area shall be paid into the funds of the respective public bodies unless otherwise agreed to between the Authority, the City, or other public body. When such bonds, loans, advances, and indebtedness, if any, including interest thereon and any premiums due in connection therewith, and including any refunding securities therefor, have been paid, all taxes upon the taxable property within the taxable property area shall be paid into the funds of the respective public bodies.

(7) As used in this chapter 4, "taxes" shall include, but not be limited to, all levies authorized to be made on an ad valorem basis upon real and personal property; but nothing in this chapter 4 shall be construed to require any public body to levy taxes.

(8) Unless and until the total property tax collections in the taxable property area exceed the base year property tax collections in the taxable property area, as provided herein, all such property tax collections shall be paid into the funds of the appropriate public body. The Authority reserves the right to enter into agreements with select taxing jurisdictions relative to allocation of incremental tax revenues.

(9) The Authority and the City or other public body may, by agreement, provide for the method, amounts, and other procedures by which increments shall be allocated and paid to the Authority pursuant to the provisions of the Downtown Plan of Development and as allowed by law.

(10) The adoption of the Downtown Plan shall be deemed the continuation of a provision that taxes, if any, upon taxable property in the taxable property area, shall be divided among the Authority and various taxing entities for the same 30-year period as set forth in section IX of the Imagine Downtown Plan subject to any agreements between the Authority and El Paso County, the City of Colorado Springs School District 11, or other public body.

Tools and Recommendations

Property TIF is the main revenue source for the DDA and is used to support Downtown development through TIF reimbursement agreements, and fund programs and capital projects. The Colorado Springs Downtown Development Authority 30-year time horizon expires in 2037, which is essentially the end of the plan horizon for this Downtown plan update. During the remaining 10 to 11 years of the district, actions must be taken to extend the district if the community wants to continue the use of DDA tools and the services provided.

The DDA has the ability to extend the time horizon of the district and use of TIF in 20-year extension. In the 20-year extension period, the portion of tax increment eligible to the DDA decreases to 50% unless otherwise negotiated with each tax district. The property tax base is also reset, which limits the amount of TIF potential. In the first 10 years of extension, the base year is moved forward 10 years. For the Colorado Springs DDA, the base year would adjust from the current year of 2007 to 2017. In the last 10 years of extension, the base year would move forward one year annually.

DISTRICT EXTENSION

The following recommendations outline next steps and strategy considerations to extend the DDA for an additional 20 years.

1. Extend the district for another 20 years beginning as early as 2027.

- Requires approval of extension by City Council.
- There is flexibility in gaining approval anytime within 10 years of the district expiration. It is recommended to begin the process as soon as possible taking into account the political environment to strategically plan for the extension.
- The reset of the tax increment base valuation in 2017 is not tremendously impactful on future increment generation, which makes it advantageous to continue.
- The DDA is able to expand its boundary by property owner petition at any time regardless of extension decision, and the expansion of the plan horizon presents the opportunity to consider large scale redevelopment projects adjacent to the current boundary that would benefit from DDA tools and resources.
- The DDA Board must expand by two members to include one from the County and one from the School District.

2. Develop an extension strategy for the district that includes a timeline for when to seek approval, goals for tax increment sharing outcomes, identification of continuation/extension of any existing funding/grant agreements, and an approach to engaging the El Paso County assessor.

The extension of the district will require approval from the Colorado Springs City Council. To prepare for City Council approval, the following process needs to be completed in advance.

- Obtain Board direction on desired sharing agreements with taxing agencies.
- Notably, there is the option for the DDA to pledge future tax increment funds from the extension period to existing reimbursement agreements that will not be fulfilled by 2037. This is not typical but should be considered for the extension strategy.
- Determine if there are any major boundary adjustments that are desired/possible before or after the extension period and consider their impact on approval, base valuation, and revenue potential.
- Negotiate with taxing districts where greater than 50% of increment is desired. EPS recommends that the DDA seeks to continue the existing share percentages with the City, El Paso County, and School District 11.
- Develop a City Council approval timeline.
- After City Council approval is obtained or more than two years in advance of district expiration, begin discussions with the El Paso County Assessor to determine the approach to base valuation and increment calculation that will be taken and seek initial estimates of potential revenues for the first 10 years of the extension. Advocate for valuation approaches that maximize potential increment.

FUNDING STRATEGIES AND PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

The following funding strategies and priority initiative recommendations were identified for the DDA through the end of its current 30-year timeframe in 2037. These include action-oriented recommendations to best allocate the forecasted TIF revenue and dedicated mill levy to support development, programs, and projects that achieve the DDA's goals.

3. Continue to support new development through TIF sharing agreements. Set limitations on percent of tax increment with higher available percentages for desired projects.

The use of the DDA's tax increment to support development projects has been impactful and should continue. The residential market in Downtown has started to find its footing and the need for subsidies for multifamily residential projects may not be as substantial as it was in the past (not withstanding current the current lending environment). The following considerations for TIF agreements were identified:

- Limit agreements to 50% or less share of TIF collected from current participating entities for most projects including multifamily residential projects. Consider greater contributions for target projects. Potential options include:
  - Class A office building
  - Grocery store
  - Mixed-income housing projects
  - For-sale residential projects
- Limit the potential tax increment sharing amount to be based on the potential increment that can be generated from project completion to the end of the 30-year tax increment period (2037).

- Consider providing upfront funding through a bond or budget reserves versus the current reimbursement approach to increase the impact of TIF can have on projects through 2037. The upfront contribution to the project will then be repaid by future TIF revenue.
- Continue with the current approach to evaluate TIF projects but consider upfront funding versus annual reimbursements for priority projects. Also, in the development agreement deny the ability for the developer to seek revaluation, at least to a specified minimum, by the County Assessor to protect the estimated TIF generation.

4. Seek use of sales and/or lodging tax increment for desired retail/hospitality projects in Downtown.

The DDA could explore an agreement with the City to dedicate sales tax increment generated in the district to support DDA efforts. Getting the City to approve of dedicating all increment may be challenge. Alternatively, the DDA could seek to work with the City to use sales or lodging tax revenue sharing as an incentive to attract desired uses to Downtown.

5. Explore bonding the remaining unpledged tax increment through the end of the 30-year TIF clock to create more flexibility for use of increment and not limit use in final years of the district.

Bonding the estimated unpledged tax increment through 2037 can allow the DDA to utilize this increment in more creative ways and for a greater diversity of projects than having to base investments off annual budgets. In the last few years of the TIF clock, there is the potential that increment generated may be harder to invest in projects if there are adverse economic conditions, major capital projects are not ready to be built, or other unforeseen circumstances. Bonding the revenue stream can provide greater control on maximizing the use and impact of increment. Issuing a bond for the unpledged TIF revenue from 2027 to 2037 is estimated to generate $9.0 to $10.0 million in proceeds available to fund projects as needed. This amount of debt is well below the debt capacity limit of $90.0 million. The DDA can use this funding as it currently does for development support, grant programs, and capital improvements. The potential benefits of creating a pool of funds for use today are:

- Provide upfront grants for development projects, which may be more valuable than annual reimbursement with the limited time remaining on the current TIF clock.
- Option to provide more funding towards priority projects and grants in a single year than otherwise capable of.
- More flexibility with how and when the funding is applied.

This benefits should be strategically considered against the trade offs of:

- The cost of bonding reduces the total amount available due to the cost of issuance and interest payments.
- Dedication of bond proceeds to larger projects may limit the ability for the DDA to react to unexpected requests over time or to increase funding for grant programs that may warrant additional funding.

6. Consider dedicating a portion of annual tax increment revenues for capital improvement projects.

There are number of public improvements that have been identified in the plan that could benefit from funding support. A dedicated capital improvement fund could be created through the use of tax increment to support these projects through annual or multi-year improvement packages instead of annual ad-hoc project support. It is recommended to dedicate 25% to 30% of TIF to capital improvement projects through 2037.

7. Reconfigure existing grant programs to focus on priorities identified in the plan.

The DDA currently offers seven or more grant/loan programs. Some of these programs either are not as relevant or could be rolled into other programs with broad use definition/criteria. Recommendations for changes include:

Changes to Current Programs

- Expand the current Building Enhancement Grant Program to be more inclusive of different investment types including 1) renovation and conversion of ground floor commercial spaces to support smaller store formats, 2) sidewalk/property greening and beautification improvements, 3) building structural and efficiency improvements and 4) tenant/use conversion projects.
    - Target the program towards building owners who are creating new storefronts through division and reconfiguration of ground floor spaces to orient to adjacent public spaces and enhanced alleyways with increased grant amounts or prioritization of funding.
- Continue to provide retail incentive grant program to support attraction of new businesses to existing spaces.
- Continuing to provide the DDA Tenant Ownership Loan Program to support businesses with purchasing their own commercial space and/or building through low-cost loans.
- Establish partnerships with other organizations to supplement or provide additional funding to programs offered. For example, through a partnership with the Colorado Springs Urban Renewal Authority a match or additional funding could be available to support projects that enhance economic development Downtown.

Potential New Programs:

- Supporting the conversion of old, outdated office and commercial spaces to new and more vibrant uses (e.g., experiential retail) through grants/loans provided by the DDA and Urban Renewal Authority and through other sources such as State and Federal Historic Tax Credits.
- Establishing a program in collaboration with the City of Colorado Springs to mitigate impacts of public infrastructure construction projects on adjacent businesses, including construction information campaigns, accessible business access, marketing/reward programs, art integration within construction barricades, and other actions to mitigate impacts of access and visibility for businesses.
- Continuing to implement the Clean and Safe Pilot Program. Consider using a portion of the dedicated 5.0 mills to fund ongoing clean and safe programs. Explore agreements with non-taxable property owners to contribute to clean and safe services through voluntary agreements.

8. Identify potential growth areas for DDA boundary expansion.

The DDA can proactively identify areas for future inclusion in the district boundary that can benefit from DDA programs and resources. These are likely areas adjacent or near Downtown that lack investment or are identified for redevelopment. For example, areas may include the Drake Power Plant and Transit Mix. The property tax increment generated from the development of these sites should outweigh the increase in the tax base. The expansion process is simple and done through a petition by the property owner and approval by City Council.

It is recommended to encourage properties to opt-in to the DDA that fit the following criteria:

- Are planned to for redevelopment or reinvestment,
- Have potential to generate additional tax increment for the district,
- Are located adjacent to the current boundary or are in close proximity and can be connected to the district via public right of way
- Are interested in and can benefit from services offered provided by the DDA and Downtown Partnership
- Can benefit from financial support to make redevelopment possible,
- And/or have historically lacked investment or investment is needed to address blight or hazardous conditions.

DOWNTOWN COLORADO SPRINGS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

COLORADO SPRINGS OLYMPIC CITY USA

MAY 2026





ELEVATE DOWNTOWN COLORADO SPRINGS PLAN

Volume 2

Image Sources:

Pedestrians: Downtown Partnership
Weidner Field: Downtown Partnership
City Auditorium: Stephanie Rivera/Colorado Public Radio
CSFAC: Phillip Spears

Prepared under the direction of:
Downtown Development Authority of Colorado Springs
and the City of Colorado Springs

MIG

Prepared by MIG, Inc., in association with:
Economic & Planning Systems
and Consor



Image Source: Homes.com

Land Use and Character

Highlights

Smart development decisions are key drivers of Downtown's continued success. This Plan will enhance the core's ability to attract and retain a critical mass of businesses and residents supporting a range of amenities by advocating for **density, mixed-use buildings, housing opportunities, employment opportunities, and highlighting Downtown's unique character.**

Planning for near- and long-term redevelopment opportunities allows the Downtown community to **leverage catalytic developments that can have positive ripple effects, promote growth and change, and ensure that the Downtown fabric is seamlessly connected** through public spaces and multimodal investments.

Strategic identification and assessment of the core's near- and mid-term **Catalytic Sites** helps the City of Colorado Springs, the DDA, and other partners anticipate key redevelopment opportunities and plan the **investments** needed to support and activate them.

Overview

Historic Context

Existing Land Use

Districts and Gateways

Density

Catalytic Sites and Big Ideas

1 chapter

Overview

Traditionally, land use has been the basis of most City and smaller area plans. To this day the location, intensity, and variety of uses continue to be crucial components of urban planning. Most cities around the country continue to employ a traditional model of regulating and separating residential, commercial, and industrial development with the goal of eliminating or reducing the proximity of conflicting uses.

However, many municipalities — including Colorado Springs — have embraced the idea that such strict separation of uses is oftentimes no longer necessary. Vibrant, safe, and interesting places are created when a mix of appropriate uses is encouraged. In recent years, this greater development flexibility, paired with growing market demand for density in Downtown areas, has strengthened the fiscal, environmental, mobility, and social benefits for many cities, residents, and businesses nationwide.

This section reviews the historic context of land use in Colorado Springs and summarizes the existing patterns Downtown. Key implications of this current pattern are examined to better understand how the actual uses that are found Downtown contribute to unique districts with distinct character. Key gateway locations and additional strategies are identified to better define these districts and contribute to Downtown's identity. The impacts and benefits of density and building heights are explored from a visual, economic, and activation perspective. Finally, key catalytic sites are identified and discussed with respect to their importance to the evolving land uses in Downtown.

Historic Context

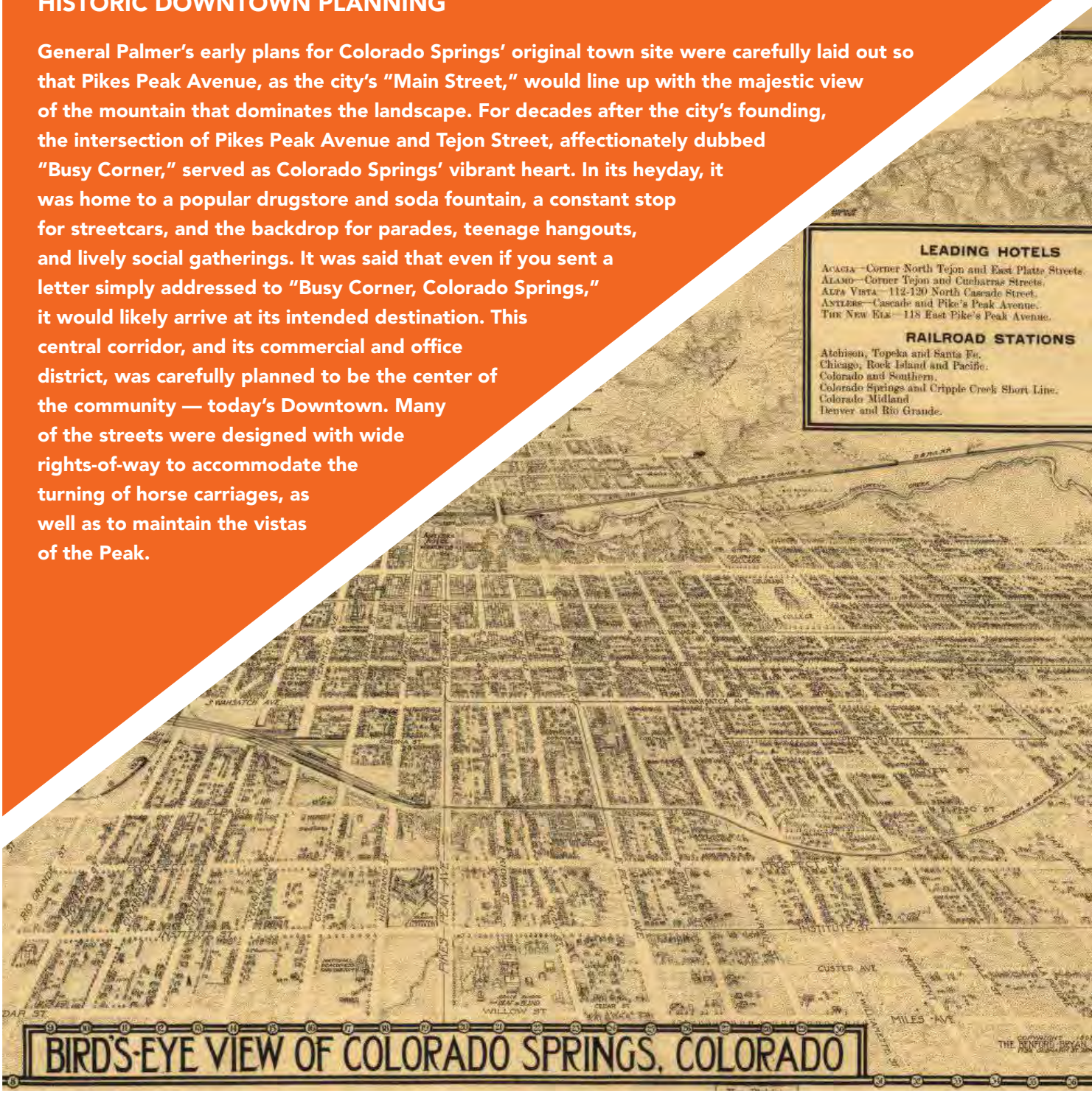
From its founding Colorado Springs has been relatively compact, focused largely on Downtown and adjacent neighborhoods until the 1950s. However, much like the rest of the country following World War II, the city's urban form changed drastically with the new dominance of personal automobiles. These automobiles facilitated a development pattern that was much more sprawling, establishing a suburban-oriented landscape.

These changes and patterns were far-reaching, still predominant and dictating land use and character into the early 21st century. As large residential planned developments built new neighborhoods, drawing the population gradually farther away from the city center, employment and retail uses followed. While Downtown remained a center of business and government activity, much of the new growth and energy shifted toward these expanding dispersed residential areas. National retailers followed these new rooftops in suburban markets, while smaller, locally-owned businesses continued to form the foundation of Downtown retail and hospitality. This trend has persisted to date; however, national and local trends have shifted in recent years toward acceptance and investment in both urban and suburban markets.

Downtown is the densest area of housing and commercial land use in the greater Colorado Springs metro area and continues to provide a range of housing types and price points, culturally diverse spaces, the creation and activation of green space, safe connections and routes to schools, and other elements of the built environment to support wellbeing.

HISTORIC DOWNTOWN PLANNING

General Palmer's early plans for Colorado Springs' original town site were carefully laid out so that Pikes Peak Avenue, as the city's "Main Street," would line up with the majestic view of the mountain that dominates the landscape. For decades after the city's founding, the intersection of Pikes Peak Avenue and Tejon Street, affectionately dubbed "Busy Corner," served as Colorado Springs' vibrant heart. In its heyday, it was home to a popular drugstore and soda fountain, a constant stop for streetcars, and the backdrop for parades, teenage hangouts, and lively social gatherings. It was said that even if you sent a letter simply addressed to "Busy Corner, Colorado Springs," it would likely arrive at its intended destination. This central corridor, and its commercial and office district, was carefully planned to be the center of the community — today's Downtown. Many of the streets were designed with wide rights-of-way to accommodate the turning of horse carriages, as well as to maintain the vistas of the Peak.



Bird's-eye rendering of Colorado Springs' grid system, 1909.

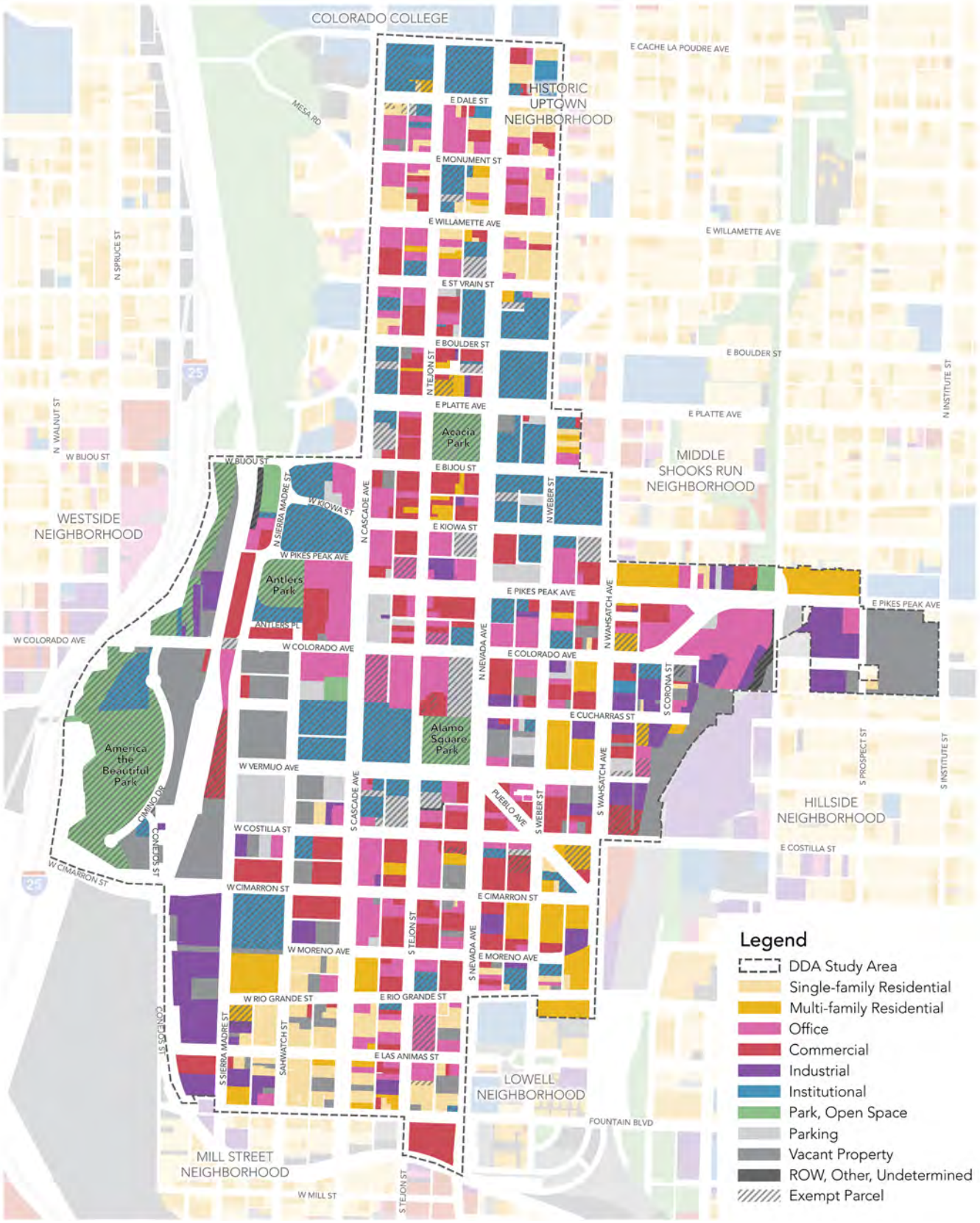


Figure 1.1 | Downtown Land Use (2025)

Existing Land Use

While Downtown now operates under a form-based code that allows for mixed-use development, current land uses are distributed as follows:

Office, commercial, hotel, and other employment uses comprise most of the land area and are especially concentrated in the historic core.

Residential uses continue to be the northern and southern portions of Downtown, but have also begun to disperse through the south central and east central portions. More specifically, there is an influx of high-density residential use along the Weber/Wahsatch corridor, particularly south of Colorado Ave. Downtown borders, and at times, includes portions of several neighborhoods including Historic Uptown, Middle Shooks Run, Lowell, Hillside, and Mill Street.

Minimal **industrial** uses are found on the periphery of Downtown's boundaries. Particularly southwest of Weidner Field and just east of the plan area along the rail tracks south of Catalyst Campus. Industrial uses have reduced as parcels are redeveloped.

Government uses (e.g., City and County buildings) are found in the core of Downtown.

Other institutional uses, such as **educational and faith facilities**, are concentrated in the northern portion of Downtown.

Arts and cultural destinations are primarily located in the central area of Downtown with the exception of the McAllister House Museum, the Fine Arts Center at Colorado College, and the Money Museum.

Parks and outdoor recreation uses are located throughout and surrounding Downtown, with the original parks envisioned by General Palmer complemented by America the Beautiful Park and the Legacy Loop trail system which runs through Monument Valley Park on the west and Shooks Run on the east. Parks are primarily clustered in central Downtown with the northern and southern neighborhoods in closer proximity to greenways than parks.

Entertainment destinations are distributed throughout Downtown, including Ed Robson Arena on the north side of Downtown at Colorado College and Weidner Field on the south side of Downtown.



Downtown Colorado Springs and the Front Range seen from above.

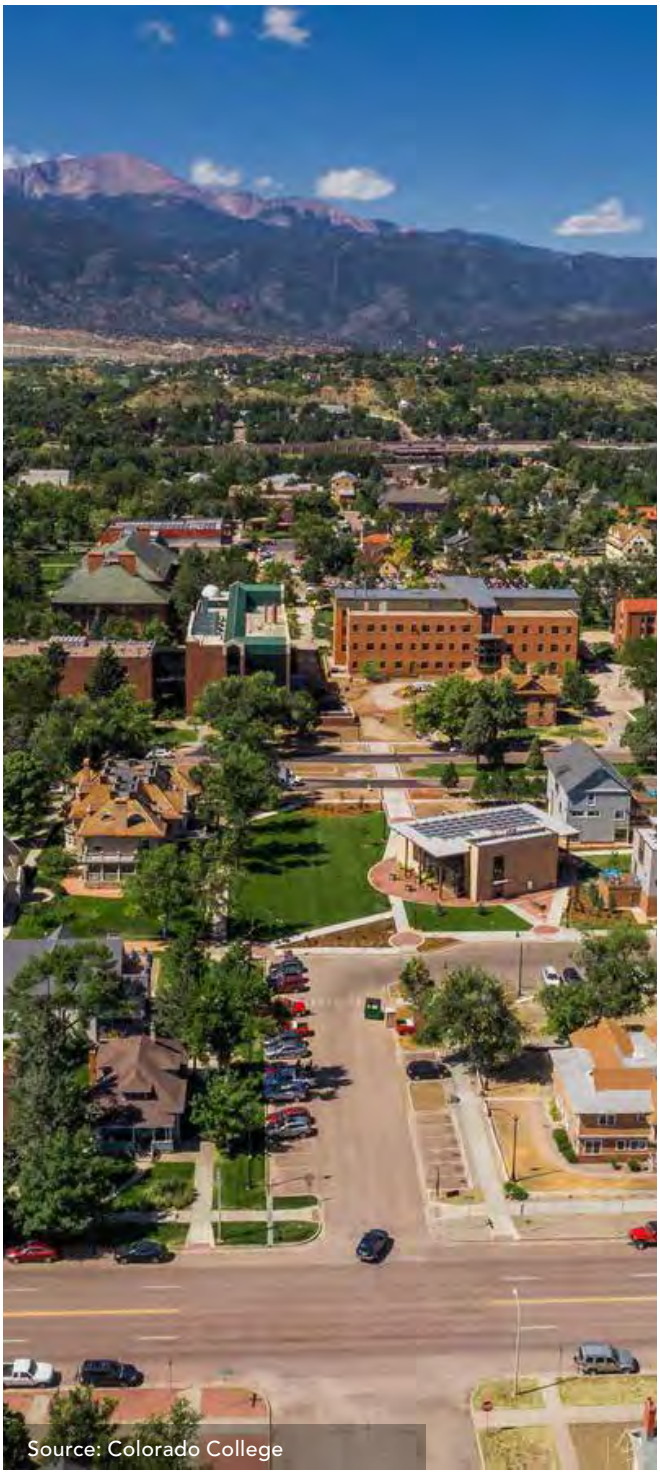
VACANT LAND

Within the 686-acre DDA boundary, 7.4% (50.8 acres) of the land is vacant parcels, 3.2% (22 acres) is surface parking lots, and 40% (247.4 acres) is street rights-of-way, as shown on the Downtown Vacancies, Parking, and Years Built map (Figure 1.2). Thus, over 50% of the plan area is either underdeveloped, mostly dedicated to the automobile, or both. Collectively, these underutilized assets pose significant challenges to fostering good urban design and an intimate, walkable core. However, they also represent a significant opportunity for Downtown to transform itself with a thriving critical mass of residents and employees, an array of public spaces and amenities, and streetscapes that are alive with a range of uses and activities.

Large clusters of vacant land Downtown are located primarily in two areas: first, on the west side between Colorado Avenue, Cascade Avenue, Cimarron Street, and America the Beautiful Park; and second, on the east side between Cucharras Street, Costilla Street, and the rail line. There are interspersed individual vacant parcels between the Mill Street and Lowell Neighborhoods, as well as along Wahsatch and Nevada Avenues. Darker grey parcels on the map show where vacant land has recently been developed, mostly on the southern half of Downtown.

INSTITUTIONS AND DESTINATIONS

Downtown Colorado Springs is the cultural center of the city. This is supported by 11 major arts and culture institutions primarily in the Central Core and North End. Four educational institutions (high school and higher education) contribute to Downtown's vibrancy. Sports destinations, parks, and public amenities are concentrated around America the Beautiful Park, Weidner Field, Acacia Park, and Colorado College.



Colorado College's lush campus sits in the northern end of Downtown.

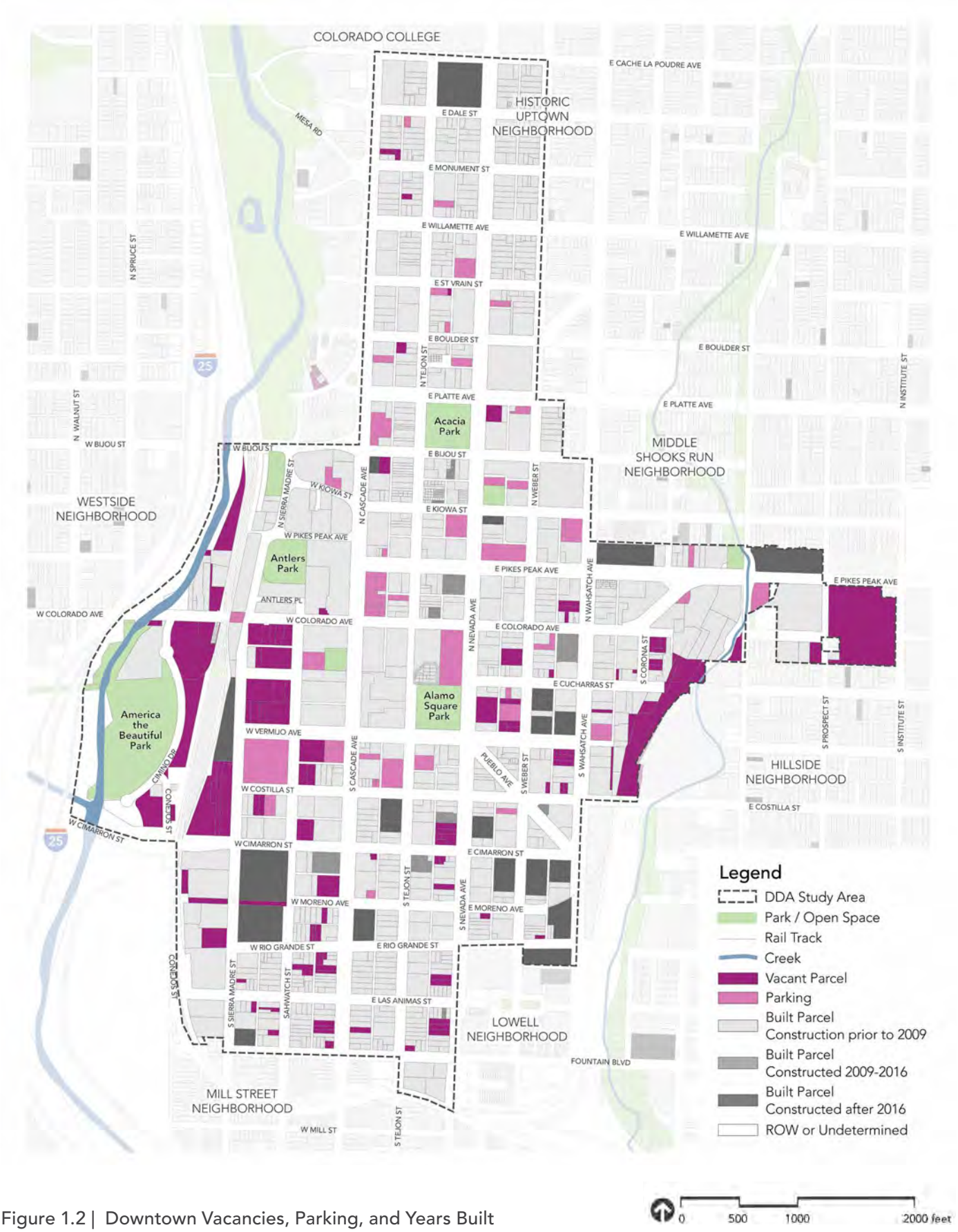


Figure 1.2 | Downtown Vacancies, Parking, and Years Built

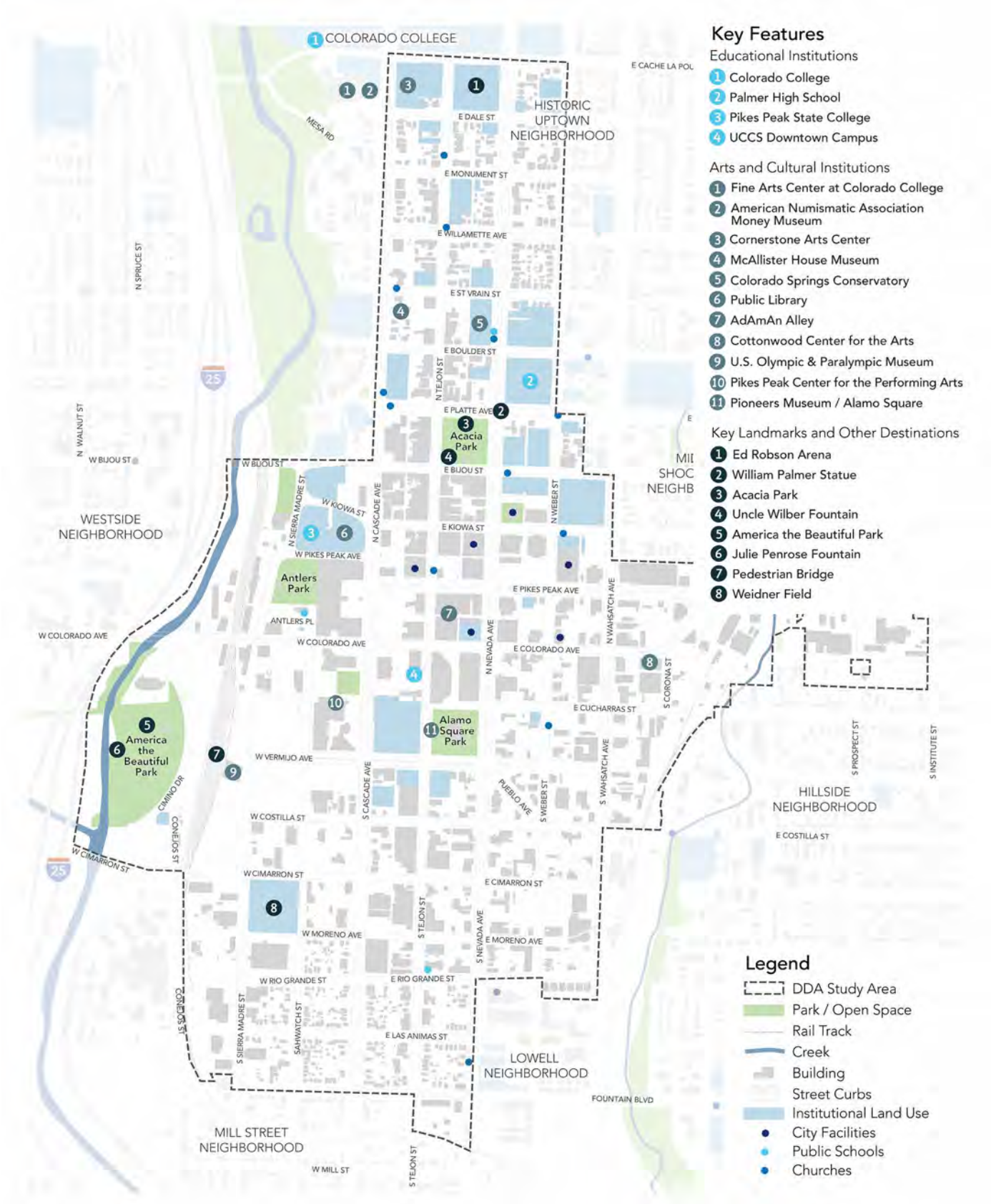


Figure 1.3 | Downtown Institutions, Arts, and Destinations

Districts and Gateways

DISTRICTS

In combination with innovative land use strategies, urban design should help foster the character that differentiates the various neighborhoods and districts within the city center. The distinctive qualities of each Downtown district should be reinforced through recognizable aesthetic treatments to infrastructure and streetscape design. The Gateways and Districts map (see Figure 1.4) delineates five such areas, each with a distinctive character and function in the context of Downtown.

The districts and their distinct boundaries provide a framework for the City and its partners to prioritize and implement improvements throughout Downtown. To residents, employees, and visitors, the districts themselves are more malleable. Boundaries are not indicated on the ground and perceptions of where a change in character takes place can differ. Nonetheless, these areas each have an identifiable character based on their location, uses, and anchor institutions. Beyond these differences and unique identities, the districts' most important role in Downtown is their collective diversity and character, distinct from the rest of the city.

The sections below describe the five districts, providing an illustrative snapshot of the primary uses, activities, and desired ambiance for each area.

City Center

The City Center is the historic core of Downtown Colorado Springs, its geographic and cultural center, and the most established district in terms of identity. As Downtown's primary activity zone, the City Center invites people of all ages and backgrounds to walk its streets, experience its many amenities, and contribute to its dynamic energy. From early mornings to late evenings and weekdays to weekends, the district buzzes with a rhythm that reflects the diversity of its workers, residents, and visitors.

Throughout the day the district transforms with mornings, bringing professionals and entrepreneurs into co-working spaces and coffee shops, while lunchtime draws a crowd to casual eateries. In the afternoons, tourists and residents explore museums and civic spaces, while others linger in local shops and gathering places. Evenings offer another layer of vibrancy as art lovers explore galleries, running clubs take to the streets, and diners gather at a wide array of locally-owned restaurants. As night falls, people flock to live music, dance clubs, and performances at venues such as Lulu's Downtown. Weekends bring leisurely exploration as shoppers browse boutiques and churchgoers gather for services before the brunch crowd fills breakfast eateries.

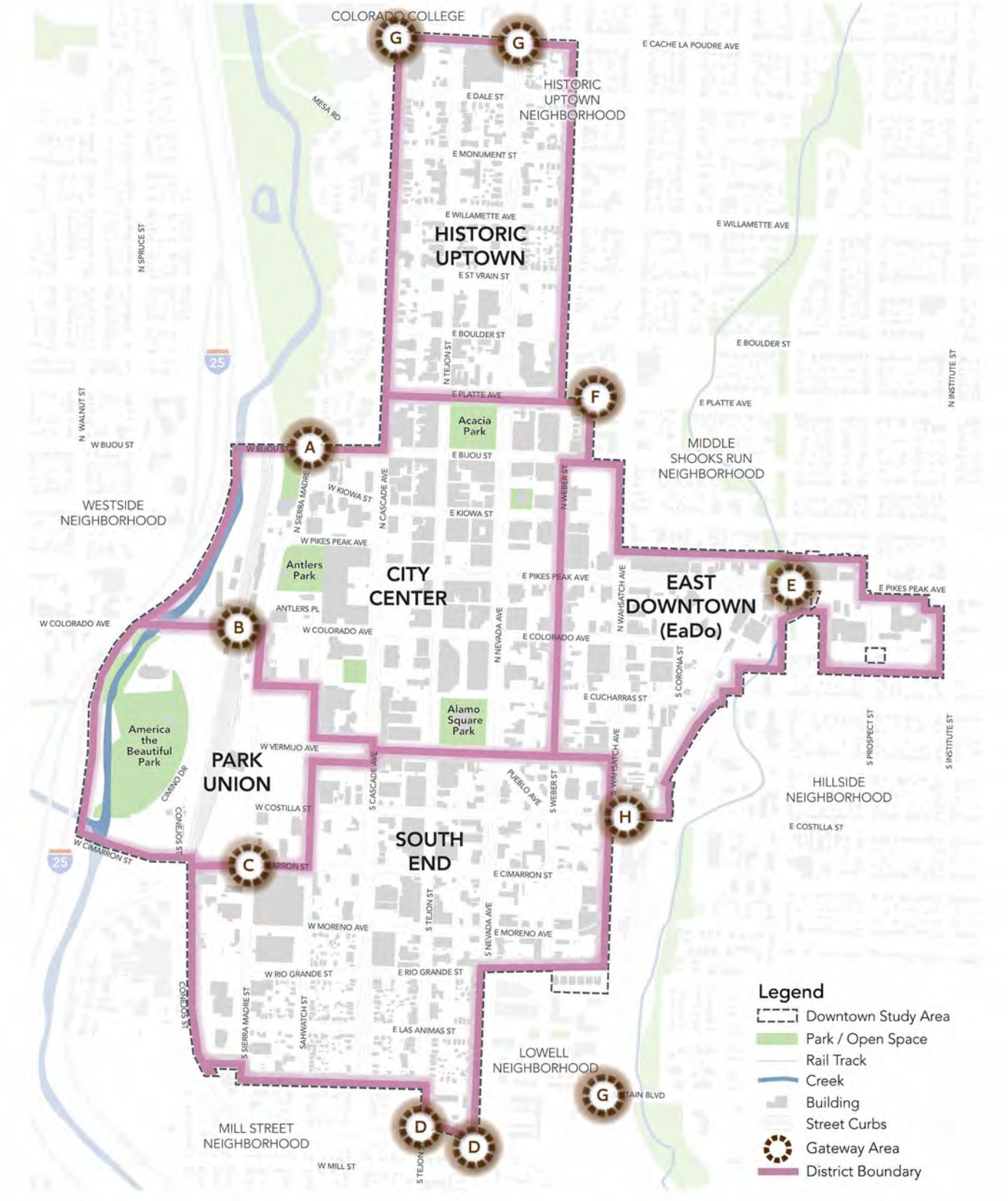


Figure 1.4 | Gateways and Districts

Architecturally, the City Center is a compelling mix of eras and uses. Anchored visually by the iconic cupola of the Pioneers Museum, once the El Paso County Courthouse, the district's built environment reflects its longstanding civic and commercial importance. Historic churches and preserved brick storefronts stand alongside office buildings, loft apartments, co-working hubs, and the more utilitarian structures of local government. Yet, reinvention is part of the City Center's ethos: an old movie theater is now a climbing gym, a former mining stock exchange has become a boutique hotel, and adaptive reuse projects continue to shape the district's evolution.

For tourists, the City Center provides a comfortable range of options for overnight stays, entertainment, and education. This district includes most of the city's hotels as well as the most options for shopping, dining, and museums within just a few blocks of one another. The Antlers Hotel, Mining Exchange, Hilton Garden Inn, Kinship Landing, Element by Westin, Springhill Suites, and Hyatt Place provide a large range of overnight price points and sit just steps from popular eateries, shops, and events Downtown.

The City Center is also home to all three of Downtown's historic parks, key components to General Palmer's vision of an interconnected system of parks to enhance urban life in Colorado Springs. The City approved a master plan for these parks in 2020 to both preserve their historic nature while also adapting them to modern community needs. Acacia Park offers an iconic green space with a bandshell, Ninja Warrior–style climbing structure, playground, a seasonal outdoor ice skating rink, Uncle Wilber Fountain, and a visitor hub. As of 2024, Antlers Park is home to an ADA-accessible dog park with dual play zones to separate large and small dogs, play features, and a water station. Alamo Square Park is home to the Pioneers Museum and features a gazebo, sculptures, flowerbeds, and hosts many events including the seasonal food truck program. According to an analysis from the Trust for Public Land in a report on the economic benefits of parks and recreation in Colorado Springs, residential property value — for single-family and multifamily properties alike — increases by an average of 5% from proximity (defined as within 500–2,000 feet) to a well-maintained park. The value of these green spaces, when maintained, is vital not just for wellbeing but also for enhanced economic vitality. Layered with a strong sense of place and constantly animated by its people, the City Center is both a destination and a crossroads, where community, commerce, and culture meet in the most walkable and engaging environment Downtown has to offer.



Source: Paul Sableman

The Daniels Loft Building on North Tejon was constructed in the early 1880s for the Colorado Springs Furniture Company.

Historic Uptown

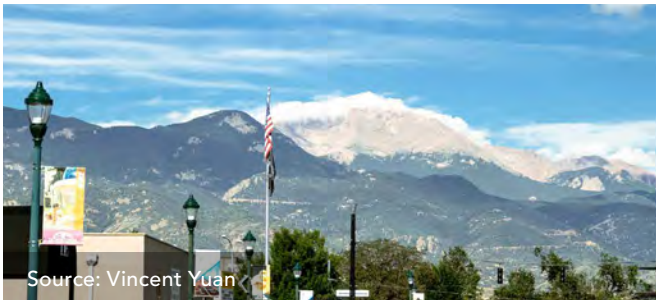
Historic Uptown forms a vital connection between the core of Downtown Colorado Springs and the picturesque campus of Colorado College. Defined by its blend of historic charm, academic energy, and cultural richness, the district is both a transition to a well-established neighborhood and a gateway that links major institutions with a unique character of its own. Its identity is shaped by walkable streets, mature trees, landscaped medians, and a mix of uses that serve college students, families, professionals, tourists, and residents alike.

At the heart of the district is North Tejon Street, a student-friendly corridor brimming with local flavor. Within a short walk from the Colorado College campus, students and visitors find casual Italian eateries, pizza places, coffeehouses, and quirky retail shops nestled among salons and small offices. Off Tejon, quiet side streets are lined with a mix of grand historic homes, bed and breakfasts, modest residences, and professional offices, many converted to house students and visitors. This layering of uses contributes to Historic Uptown's comfortable, lived-in feel, where neighbors know each other and the daily rhythm is shaped by campus life, small business activity, neighborhood routines, and community interaction.

Public spaces throughout the district reflect its traditional and natural setting. The southern edge of Colorado College along Cache La Poudre Street showcases recently updated landscaping that sets a tone for the area favoring open lawns, native plantings, and inviting pedestrian areas. These public spaces reinforce Historic Uptown's identity as a welcoming, people-oriented district that feels both classic and comfortable.

The district is also home to Palmer High School, a longstanding educational anchor whose students contribute to the daily vibrancy of the neighborhood. Their presence helps create a multigenerational dynamic that complements the nearby college community and surrounding residential fabric.

Cultural institutions further define Historic Uptown's identity. The Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, overlooking Monument Valley Park, serves as a cultural anchor with its exhibitions, performances, and community programming, complemented by the beloved Bemis Art School. Nearby, the American Numismatic Association Money Museum, and the Edith Kinney Gaylord Cornerstone Arts Center enrich the area with opportunities for creative and intellectual exploration. On warm afternoons, students gather on the quad, infusing the district with youthful energy. Opened in 2021, Ed Robson Arena, a state-of-the-



East Platte Avenue



Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center

art ice hockey venue for Colorado College, draws year-round events and visitors to the neighborhood, supporting local businesses and adding to the area's vibrancy.

Altogether, Historic Uptown is a district of connection between town and gown, art and daily life, tradition and evolution. It is a place where history and youth meet beneath a canopy of trees, where quiet neighborhoods support cultural exploration and expression, and where the everyday is elevated by the artistic, the academic, and the enduring charm of place.



General William Jackson Palmer statue at Palmer High School.

South End

The South End is one of Downtown Colorado Springs' most eclectic and evolving districts. It is a place where historic charm meets creative reinvention, and where residential, commercial, and light industrial uses intersect. Just south of Vermijo Street, the district is experiencing a steady revival. Weidner Field, surrounded by new housing and walkable infrastructure, serves as a major destination and anchor for the district's growing identity. The pedestrian plaza along the former Moreno Avenue between Weidner Field and Phase 1 of Experience at Epicenter added dramatic landscaping, a water feature, and new pedestrian pathways, replacing a traditional road and parking. Phases 2 and 3 of Experience at Epicenter are expected to continue to provide new pedestrian plazas with potential for future connection to the Drake Site owned by Colorado Springs Utilities. Significant visitor parking is provided in parking garages beneath each phase of Experience at Epicenter to provide adequate parking for the stadium and future retail and commercial uses on the street level of the buildings.

This district is home to a quirky mix of historic and rejuvenated industrial, commercial, and residential properties. Converted residences along Tejon Street and Cascade Avenue house professional offices and the occasional restaurant. Warehouses and other industrial buildings have been adapted for retail and hospitality uses, while modern developments introduce new life and energy to the neighborhood. The area has undergone a clear revival, though many redevelopment opportunities remain, particularly for housing, as a new, cohesive neighborhood begins to take shape. The Trolley Block stands out as a prime example of adaptive re-use in this area — a former trolley car garage and workshop turned into one of Downtown's busiest food, beverage, and retail destinations.

The primary residential character of the district's west side can be found around South Cascade Avenue and Sahwatch Street, where rows of modest cottages and bungalows are arranged with consistent setbacks. Landscaped medians and mature trees provide a generous green canopy along Cascade and other streets, though streetscape design remains inconsistent in many areas. Clusters of new apartment buildings are emerging along South Nevada Avenue and Costilla Street on the district's east side, with underdeveloped lots offering further opportunity for a mix of residential product types.

Although parts of the district have changed dramatically, the area has maintained key elements of its historic character. A notable example is the Colorado Springs Day Nursery, which has served families of all backgrounds since 1923. This beloved community institution continues to provide important resident-serving amenities and reinforces the district's human scale.

New retail activity is emerging along Costilla and South Tejon Streets, including breweries, restaurants, salons, banks, and other activating businesses. These complement the district's evolving mix of residents and office workers and contribute to a neighborhood that is increasingly vibrant, walkable, and diverse.



The Trolley Block transformed former trolley warehouses into a vibrant mixed-use district.

East Downtown (EaDo)

East Downtown (EaDo) is one of Downtown Colorado Springs' most promising and transformational districts. It is an area where adaptive reuse, creative energy, and strategic redevelopment converge. Positioned between the City Center and Memorial Park, EaDo is evolving into a mixed-use neighborhood that balances employment, residential life, and the arts. Recent momentum has solidified its identity as a district rooted in innovation, with a strong focus on revitalizing underutilized spaces and celebrating its proximity to natural assets like Shooks Run.

Over the past few years, EaDo has welcomed eight new multifamily and mixed-use developments, contributing to a growing residential base that is vital for establishing a vibrant, lived-in district. At the same time, developments such as the Catalyst Campus and the Philanthropy Collective have brought cutting-edge commercial and technology-focused uses into historic structures, preserving architectural character while infusing new energy and purpose and creating space for collaboration across philanthropic organizations. The former Santa Fe Depot is now the centerpiece of the Catalyst Campus, a hub for aerospace, cybersecurity, and defense companies, offering co-working, office, and educational space. This innovative reuse of a historic site signals the district's unique identity: future-oriented but deeply rooted in place.

Directly across Shooks Run from Catalyst lies a 14-acre redevelopment opportunity that includes the former Gazette newspaper building and the vacant St. Francis Hospital, alongside four large industrial buildings. These significant land and architectural assets offer the potential for a complementary urban campus or innovation corridor that could anchor the eastern edge of Downtown. Though the precise synergies between these properties are still emerging, their scale and

legacy create a foundation for catalytic reinvestment that can drive broader economic activity throughout EaDo.

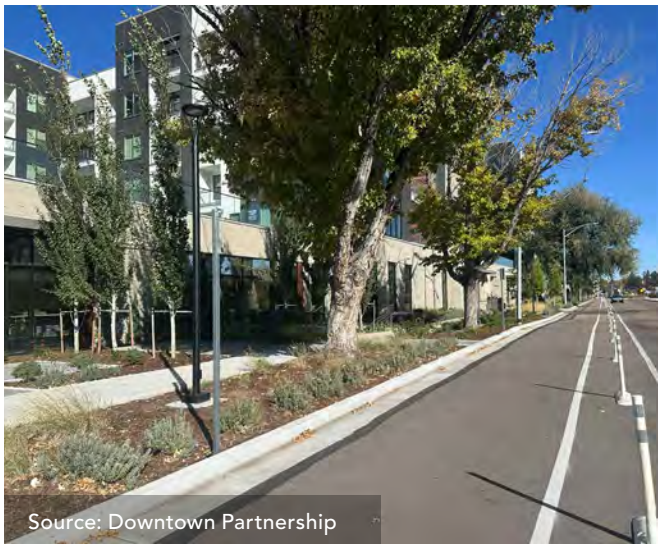
The district's creative spirit is visible not only in major developments but also in the daily life of the neighborhood. Murals and public art activate the streetscape, while local creative industry tenants including the Cottonwood Center for the Arts add texture and authenticity. These uses help define EaDo as a cultural edge of Downtown, where artistic expression, innovation, and urban living coexist.

Architecturally, EaDo is characterized by its juxtaposition of historic assets, former industrial buildings, and emerging contemporary buildings. The area's underutilized parcels, many of which are large and strategically located, provide flexibility for infill and redevelopment that can support a mix of uses while enhancing connections to surrounding districts. Continued residential development, such as 333Eco, Avian, VIM, Fiona, and the Plaza at Pikes Peak, collectively representing over 1,100 units, helps anchor this transformation by creating a stable population base essential for fostering active streets and neighborhood vitality.

EaDo's emerging identity is one of transition and possibility. As Downtown Colorado Springs grows, this district offers the rare opportunity to shape a new kind of neighborhood — one that is dynamic, creative, and connected by building on its existing assets, embracing innovation, and fostering a strong sense of place through thoughtful public space design and meaningful reuse.



Source: Downtown Partnership


Source: Downtown Partnership

The streetscape improvements along the Fiona Apartments includes protected bike lanes, separated sidewalks, and urban greening.

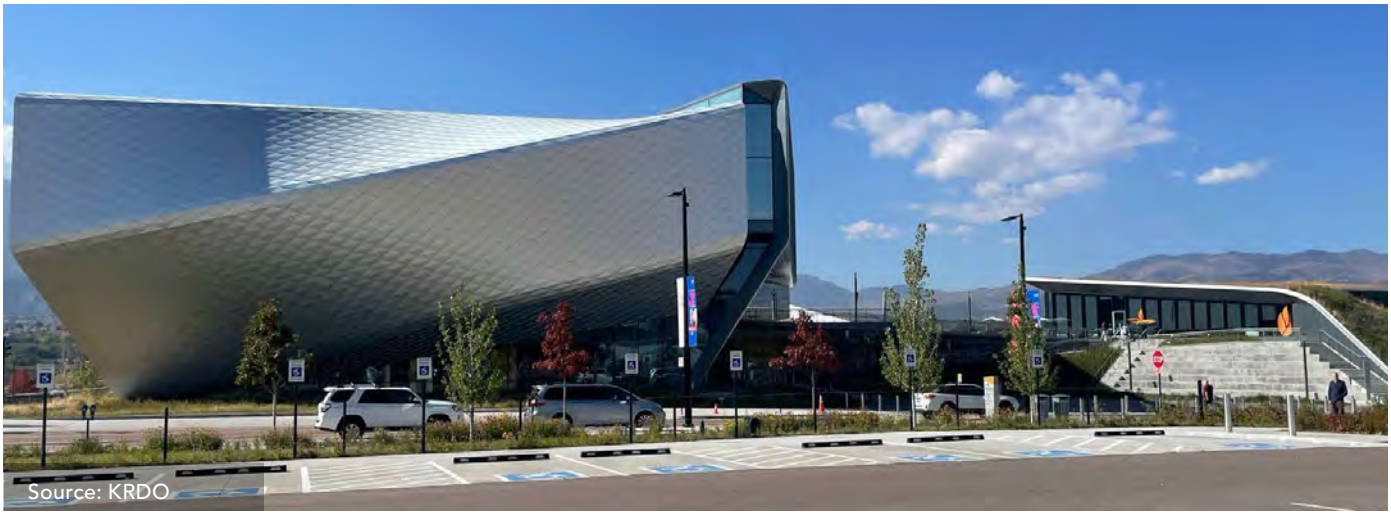
Park Union

The Park Union district has rapidly transformed through major investments and destinations, including the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum and the new pedestrian bridge to America the Beautiful Park. Future streetscape improvements will help shape the aesthetic for a vibrant, mixed-use district just blocks from the Downtown core. In the coming years, Park Union is poised for continued catalytic development, where remaining underutilized and vacant sites will give way to dense urban growth.

Linked to the Downtown core by Vermijo and Sierra Madre Streets, the district has significant potential to build on recent public investment and become a signature Downtown destination. The district's civic heart is anchored by the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum, a nationally recognized landmark and cultural anchor, and by America the Beautiful Park, which offers regional green space and dramatic views of Pikes Peak. The pedestrian bridge unites these two assets, reinforcing the district's identity as a place shaped by movement, sport, and natural beauty.

The availability of large sites and consolidated land ownership positions Park Union for coordinated development that complements its civic and recreational assets. Many mid-sized cities (e.g., Columbus, Oklahoma City, Charlotte, El Paso, and Minneapolis) have used stadiums and similar facilities as successful tools for economic development and downtown revitalization.

The effort to revitalize Park Union represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to convert a long-underutilized segment of the city into a thriving urban neighborhood. Planned mixed-use developments near the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum and further south at CityGate will add residents, businesses, and momentum to this evolving district, bringing new life and energy to the southern edge of Downtown. In addition, considering the parcel just south of the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum as the preferred location for the Front Range Passenger Rail Station will create a comprehensive opportunity to establish a regional-based transportation hub including rail, bus, and micromobility services for tourists, commuters, and residents alike.



The U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum on Sierra Madre Street is unique in being one of the most accessible and interactive museums in the world.

GATEWAYS

In recent years, a series of gateway improvements have been implemented around Downtown Colorado Springs to strengthen its urban identity. These enhancements aim to set the tone for the Downtown experience, providing a sense of arrival for both visitors and residents and elevating the quality and character of the streetscape. By creating a distinct sense of place at key entrances, the gateways help define the arrival experience into Downtown. Strategically located along major arterial roads and high-traffic corridors, these gateways welcome travelers approaching from every direction. Each gateway is identified in the Districts and Gateways map.

Each gateway includes distinct features tailored to its location, with variations in design, scale, and visibility based on surrounding context and traveler frequency. The following matrix outlines the primary improvement categories prioritized for investment and enhancement across all gateway sites: signage, landscape, hardscape, lighting, public art, and mobility infrastructure. Most gateways are in early stages of development, with many elements listed as 'Not Started.' Notably, the eastern gateway at Pikes Peak Avenue has completed signage, robust landscaping, and a mural with sarape-style blending of colors and designs that represent different cultures.

The northern gateways (Monument/Nevada and Monument/Cascade) and the Nevada southern gateway (Nevada and Rio Grande) have completed landscape and lit signage.

Signage has also been placed at all the western and Tejon southern gateways. The Colorado Avenue western gateway also features the 320-foot Conejos Mural, the largest community-led mural project in the city representing both the historic Conejos neighborhood and the living community with a presence and future in the city.

Conversely, the eastern gateway at Platte remains largely undeveloped, with no progress on signage, lighting, or infrastructure improvements. Mobility infrastructure, such as bike lanes, is either partially implemented or not started in most areas, with suggestions still under review in some cases.

Prior efforts also included small wayfinding signs at the north and south edges of Downtown on Tejon and on the Colorado Avenue bridge. Unfortunately, the materials did not weather well and have since been removed.

Gateways Inventory

While the existing pylon gateway structures in Colorado Springs provide visibility, they fall short of delivering a truly iconic monument or art piece that represents the city's identity on a broader scale. Major cities across the world have successfully established such landmarks—Denver has its Blue Mustang, Chicago has The Bean (Cloud Gate), St. Louis is defined by the Gateway Arch, San Francisco by the Golden Gate Bridge. While Colorado Springs may be smaller in size, it is a rapidly growing city with strong potential to create a signature feature that could elevate its national presence. A bold, recognizable artwork or structure could serve not only as a visual landmark but also as a powerful economic driver, attracting tourism and reinforcing the city's image. This monument could bridge historic areas like Old Colorado City with the modern development of Downtown to the east, uniting both sides through a shared sense of place. With future improvements to the Cimarron gateway and upgrades to America the Beautiful Park, the striking design and architecture of the adjacent U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum and pedestrian bridge could serve as this icon. Visible from both Interstate 25 and Highway 24

GATEWAY LEGEND	GATEWAY IMAGE	GATEWAYS	SIGNAGE	LANDSCAPE	HARDSCAPE	LIGHTING	PUBLIC ART	MOBILITY INFRA-STRUCTURE
WESTERN GATEWAYS								
A		Bijou/Kiowa Street	Lit Large Pylon	Complete	N/A	Not Started	Not Started	Suggestions from Platte Ave. Study
B		Colorado Avenue	Single Tower Pylon — not electrified	N/A	N/A	Not Started	Conejos Mural	Partial bike Lanes
C		Cimarron Street	Lit Large Pylon Sign	Not Started	Not Started	Completed	Not Started	Bike path connection to Greenway
SOUTHERN GATEWAYS								
D		Tejon Street	Wall Sign	Not Started	Not Started	Not Started	Not Started	Partial Bike Lanes
		Nevada Street	Lit Monument Sign	Complete	N/A	Completed	Not Started	Not Started
EASTERN GATEWAYS								
E		Pikes Peak Avenue	Large Pylon Sign	Complete	Complete	Completed	New Horizons Mural	Partial Bike Lanes
F		Platte Avenue	Monument Sign — not electrified	Not Started	Not Started	Not Started	Not Started	Not Started
NORTHERN GATEWAYS								
G		Monument/ Nevada	Lit Monument Sign	Complete	Complete	Completed	Not Started	Not Started
		Monument / Cascade	Lit Monument Sign	Complete	Complete	Completed	In-Progress	Not Started

Figure 1.5 | Gateways Inventory. Letters refer to gateway locations on Figure 1.4 on page 48

(Cimarron Street), this area could act as a beacon and point of orientation, offering both residents and visitors a lasting impression of what makes Colorado Springs unique. Westward views from U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum and America the Beautiful Park feature panoramic views of the Front Range and Pikes Peak with the Julie Penrose Fountain further emphasizing the iconic nature of this area.

The gateways located at Platte Avenue, Cimarron Street, Bijou Street, and Nevada Avenue serve as critical entry points that shape first impressions and connect the city's neighborhoods to its urban core. Each of these gateways is situated along a major arterial corridor and channels high volumes of traffic from various directions, including regional thoroughfares like I-25, Highway 24, and Powers Boulevard. Their strategic locations make them major gateways into Downtown, not only for motorists but also increasingly for pedestrians, cyclists, and public transit users as surrounding areas grow and evolve with more urban, people-oriented development.

Collectively, these gateways present significant opportunities for transformation. Proposed improvements across all three locations focus on enhancing visibility, safety, and sense of place. Key strategies include the installation of more prominent and well-lit signage, expanded and upgraded landscaping, and the integration of public art to visually mark the transition into Downtown. Pedestrian-scale lighting, wayfinding signage, and ADA-compliant infrastructure are recommended to support multimodal use and ensure safe, inviting access for all users. In areas like Platte Avenue, adjustments to oversized traffic lanes will allow for sidewalk expansions and streetscape enhancements that promote a more walkable, urban environment. Similarly, the Cimarron Street gateway, adjacent to America the Beautiful Park and a potential future rail station, offers the chance to establish a landmark monument and improve trail connectivity that links into the broader Downtown network. At the Rio Grande and Nevada gateway, further enhancement of public transit nodes and intersection design will strengthen its role as a lively and accessible urban threshold.



Source: *Uncover Colorado*

Gateway welcomes visitors on the corner of Monument Street and Cascade Avenue.

Priority Improvements

Overall, these gateway improvements aim not only to beautify and modernize entry points but also to create distinct, memorable experiences that reflect the identity of Downtown, merging functionality, safety, and placemaking to welcome all who enter. In addition to the enhancements to gateway-specific locations, DDA and the City should explore opportunities to implement more comprehensive and geographically dispersed wayfinding using weather-tested materials.

1 East Gateway of Platte Avenue (F)

Platte Avenue is designated as an Urban Greenway and serves as a major transportation corridor, as shown in the Mobility Framework Map. It functions as a key gateway into the City Center from nearby neighborhoods such as Knob Hill, Park Hill, and Eastborough, and the major neighborhoods along the Powers corridor. Given its importance, this gateway would benefit from the installation of a prominent pylon sign and could further benefit from broader landscape features along the median and roadside laterals to soften the corridor and enhance its visual appeal. The addition of illuminated signage and pedestrian-scale street lighting would greatly improve nighttime visibility and contribute to a stronger sense of identity. Complementing these enhancements, a mural on the east retaining wall leading into Downtown could serve as a striking visual marker, creating a meaningful sense of arrival and reinforcing the character of that particular gateway. A strategic opportunity exists to expand the sidewalk and reduce the oversized 22-foot-wide right lane on the westbound direction into Downtown. This adjustment would help create a more walkable and urban-scale streetscape that aligns with the character of East Platte Avenue just beyond Wahsatch Avenue. Furthermore, with a nearby school in the area, reducing vehicle speeds and enhancing pedestrian infrastructure would significantly improve safety for students and support a more cohesive, human-centered gateway into Downtown.

2 West Gateway of Cimarron Street (C)

Cimarron Street serves as a major transportation corridor, channeling traffic from both the north and south via I-25 and US Highway 24. While the current gateway design primarily caters to automobile traffic and vehicular visibility, the ongoing development of adjacent Downtown areas and the emergence of pedestrian-oriented land uses calls for significant upgrades to support safe, multimodal infrastructure. The proximity to America the Beautiful Park and the potential future passenger rail station offer key opportunities for improved trail connectivity, setting the foundation for a more multimodal-friendly gateway experience.

This gateway would greatly benefit from enhanced landscaping along the westbound side of Cimarron Street, especially where the new pedestrian trail links to and from America the Beautiful Park. A planted buffer between the roadway and the trail, combined with a protective railing, would significantly improve safety and comfort for pedestrians and cyclists. Additional features such as pedestrian-scale wayfinding signage could orient users and enhance the functionality of the space.

Given its high visibility from I-25, the park, and parts of Downtown, this location is ideal for a bold, iconic statement piece. Adjacent to the gateway, a large-scale art sculpture or monument that reflects the identity of Colorado Springs could serve as a powerful visual anchor and create a memorable sense of arrival. Incorporating elements such as dynamic lighting and design features that echo the language of America the Beautiful Park—such as natural materials and scenic overlooks—would further reinforce the gateway's role.

3 South Gateway of Nevada Avenue (D)

This gateway, located at the intersection of East Rio Grande Street and South Nevada Avenue, serves as a key entry point for traffic arriving from both the northern and southern regions via I-25. As one of Colorado Springs' primary arterial roads, Nevada Avenue plays a significant role in citywide connectivity.

Recent improvements at the intersection, such as upgraded hardscape, ADA-compliant ramps, and signalized pedestrian crossings, contribute to a more urbanized and pedestrian-friendly environment. However, the gateway sign positioned in the northern median of South Nevada Avenue feels somewhat disconnected from the broader intersection improvements. Incorporating artistic elements into the crosswalks could create a sense of cohesion while linking the gateway signage to nearby multimodal infrastructure.

In addition, the large retaining walls on the east and west side of Nevada Ave at Fountain Blvd offer an opportunity for a mural treatment to mark the transition into Downtown and anticipate the existing gateway signage to the north.

4 East Gateway of Fountain Boulevard (G)

A proposed gateway feature along the east end of Downtown's Fountain Boulevard would serve as a distinct entry point from the adjacent Hillside neighborhood to the east. Fountain Boulevard currently dead-ends before Nevada Avenue, meaning direct access into Downtown will follow a northern route on Wahsatch Avenue along South Shooks Run Park. Creating a pedestrian-friendly streetscape along Wasatch, including the extension of a separated sidewalk along the eastern side of the street. To create safer and more inviting access for all modes of transportation, this is also an opportunity for bike lanes and pedestrian safety enhancements such as bulb-out crossings or chicanes.

This quiet and largely residential corner of Downtown could benefit from a gateway that enhances the character with complementary public art installations. Looking west, the intersection of Wasatch Avenue and Fountain Boulevard frames key views of the mountains and skyline, which can provide inspiration for artistic gateway elements or guidance for gateway height.

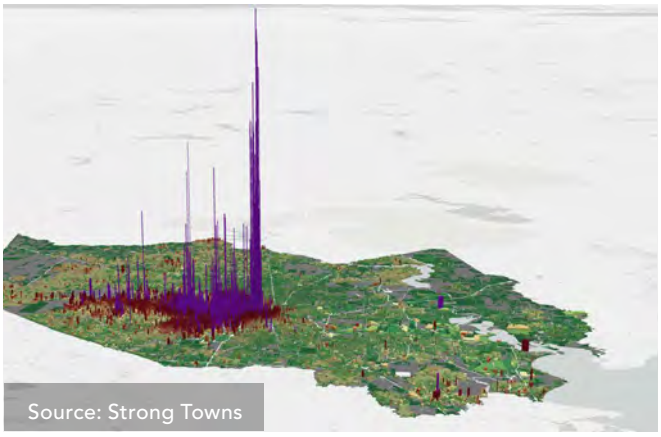
5 East Gateway on Costilla (H)

Costilla Street presents a key gateway opportunity that has the potential to strengthen connections in and out of Downtown while enhancing the corridor's identity and sense of place over time. Costilla is currently both a residential garden street and an active transportation street. As an east-west route, it links Downtown's adjacent neighborhoods to major destinations such as the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Museum just a block north and Kinship Landing a half-block south. Costilla has the potential to become welcoming and memorable Downtown entry experience on the east side- the abandoned overhead rail bridge at Costilla Street and Wasatch Avenue is anticipated to be removed or refurbished, presenting a unique opportunity for a historic gateway element. Because Costilla Street sits within the heart of Downtown, coordinated signage and wayfinding mat benefit streetscape or art additions. Elevating Costilla Street's design with improved pedestrian crossings, bicycle infrastructure, and public art paired with wayfinding elements can promote a strong sense of place for entering Downtown.

Density

DENSITY BENEFITS

Urban density is an integral factor in shaping the economic, environmental, and social health of cities. In an era marked by strained municipal budgets, aging infrastructure, and the urgent need for climate resilience, dense mixed-use development is an impactful element of a holistic solution. Concentrating people, businesses, and public services within a smaller geographic footprint can achieve a higher return on public investment, foster more vibrant and diverse economies, and reduce the fiscal burden associated with sprawl. Research shows that dense development generates significantly more tax revenue per acre, makes more efficient use of existing infrastructure, and supports more job creation and innovation compared to low-density alternatives. From downtowns to walkable mixed-use neighborhoods, the case for density is not just about aesthetics or lifestyle, it is rooted in hard numbers and measurable outcomes. Cities that embrace density are better positioned to remain financially solvent, sustainable, and competitive in the 21st century. Following are several examples of how vertical density can benefit cities.



The graphic above shows land value per acre. The highest land values exist in the densest parts of the city, shown here in Harris County, Texas.

Boosting Economic Productivity

Growing urban centers have leveraged investments in transit, biking, and walking, while allowing more dense development in more parts of the city to attract skilled workers and stimulate economic growth. Denser areas mean there is more foot traffic and a larger customer base for small businesses. With a larger customer pool, businesses can specialize with creative, independent, and niche offerings. This also creates more economic stability because a broader mix of businesses and customers ensures economies can weather downturns.

Maximizing Tax Revenue per Acre

Dense, mixed-use developments significantly outperform low-density suburban models in generating tax revenue per acre. For instance, a redeveloped downtown department store in Asheville, North Carolina, yields over $600,000 per acre in property taxes, compared to approximately $6,500 from a 34-acre Walmart. Similarly, a six-story building in downtown Raleigh, North Carolina, produces 50 times more property tax per acre than the average Walmart store. A study in Madison, Wisconsin, found that compact development scenarios generated $4,534 per acre in annual net fiscal impact, compared to $1,286 per acre for lower-density scenarios. These examples underscore how compact, vertical development can vastly enhance municipal revenues.

Infrastructure Efficiency and Cost Savings

Higher-density development typically leads to substantial savings in infrastructure and public service costs. Nationally, compact development patterns can save municipalities an average of 38% on upfront infrastructure costs and 10% on annual public service expenses. These savings stem from reduced requirements for roads, utilities, and services spread over a smaller, more concentrated area. In addition, public transportation is favorable to increased density and tends to reduce the need and desire for expanded parking facilities.

Social Benefits

Urban density often encourages stronger, more equitable communities by improving access to the amenities needed for daily life, promoting social interaction, and increasing diverse housing options. Dense, walkable neighborhoods reduce everyday reliance on cars, making it easier for people of all incomes, ages, and abilities to access jobs, schools, healthcare, groceries, and other essential services. These neighborhoods also encourage physical activity through more regular walking trips and civic engagement, contributing to improved public health and social gathering. Studies show that compact urban environments are associated with lower traffic fatality rates, better mental wellbeing, and stronger civic and neighborhood ties, especially when public spaces and diverse housing types are included.

Elevating Innovation

Research shows that dense urban areas support vibrant knowledge economies, with higher rates of innovation and patent activity. Density fosters economic productivity by creating agglomeration effects—where businesses and workers benefit from proximity. Research indicates that doubling employment density can increase worker productivity by 6%.

Environmental and Health Benefits

Dense urban environments contribute to environmental sustainability by reducing per capita energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. For example, residents of Manhattan have the lowest per capita carbon footprint of all Americans. Compact living arrangements decrease reliance on private vehicles and dense urban environments are more walkable, bikeable, and transit-supportive, requiring shorter and fewer vehicle trips. Multifamily residential buildings support energy-efficient building practices and benefit from decreased energy costs and use far less water than single-family homes in a sprawling suburban environment. Additionally, urban density allows for more efficient use of green spaces through more continuous use and activation of these spaces, while they also help to enhance air quality and mitigate urban heat island effects. Urban density also allows for the preservation of open and undeveloped greenspace elsewhere by reducing the demand for housing. These environmental benefits also have clear public health impacts: reduced air pollution leads to lower rates of asthma and cardiovascular disease, while walkable, transit-oriented neighborhoods promote physical activity helping to reduce obesity and related chronic conditions. Dense urban areas also tend to have fewer traffic-related injuries and fatalities and offer better access to healthcare and other amenities.

Economic Value from Density

CITY	POPULATION	ZONING OR DENSITY STRATEGY	NOTABLE PROJECTS / AREAS	KEY ECONOMIC OUTCOMES
Salt Lake City, UT	210,000	Upzoning near transit lines, TOD incentives	The Exchange, Liberty Sky	Concentrated growth, improved transit ROI, stronger downtown resident market.
Spokane, WA	230,609	Removed downtown building height limits, multifamily tax exemption	Centennial Rise, Falls Tower	Spur development, fast-growing tech industry, significant public/private investment.
Buffalo, NY	275,000	Permitted vertical mixed-use redevelopment in core areas	Canalside, LECOM Harborcenter	Increased tourism revenue, downtown revitalization, stronger tax base.
Minneapolis, MN	425,000	Eliminated single-family zoning, encouraged mid-rise	Uptown, Midtown, University District	Broader housing choice, increased land value, more tax-efficient land use.
Raleigh, NC	482,000	Downtown density bonuses, eased height restrictions	The Dillon, 301 Hillsborough	Higher tax productivity per acre, increased housing and commercial activity downtown.
Denver, CO	729,019	No height restrictions in much of Downtown	Block 162, 1900 Lawrence, Block 176 Towers, Upton Residences	Increased residential population, stronger tax base, significant private investment.

Figure 1.6 | Economic Value from Density

COLORADO SPRINGS POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Colorado Springs has strategic form-based code in Downtown, unlocking significant economic value and other benefits through increased density. By permitting vertical growth, the City has been able to accommodate more residents and businesses within the same footprint, boosting tax revenues and revitalizing Downtown. The **Economic Value from Density** table (Figure 1.6) illustrates some other large and mid-size cities that have gained economic value from allowing increased height and density.

DENSITY CONSIDERATIONS

Although increasing density will be critical for the economic and social development of Downtown, there are additional design considerations that must be taken into account to ensure a safe and comfortable environment that supports the area's unique character. If the development of taller buildings happens rapidly along narrow streets, there can be concern for an urban canyon, which can cause particularly darker areas, colder temperatures, and windy walks for pedestrians, especially in a climate such as the Springs'. Fortunately, Colorado Springs has particularly wide right-of-ways, or street and sidewalk widths, which mitigates the building height concerns and allows for more air and light at the ground level. In addition, Downtown's relationship to the surrounding landscape is a defining part of its appeal. Through careful and thoughtful densification, development can create more opportunities for people to experience mountain vistas—whether through intentional building orientation or elevated public spaces that invite people to gather and take in the setting.

BUILDING HEIGHTS

Density in Downtown Colorado Springs continues to increase as multifamily, mixed-use, and office mid-rise and tower developments are built. While this approach brings numerous benefits, as outlined in the previous section, a narrow band of feedback has focused on preserving mountain views. These isolated concerns should be considered within the broader context of the significant advantages that increased density provides.

Building height and form is regulated by the City's form-based code. Current regulations include market-driven heights in the Central Sector (dark red), up to 10 stories in the Corridor Sector (orange), up to six stories in Transition Sector 1 (pink), and up to four stories in Transition Sector 2 (yellow). More about Form-Based Code considerations can be found in the Public Realm chapter.

There are three new developments currently approved for the Central Sector of Downtown, including the Catbird Hotel (86' tall), 30 West (170' tall), and ONE VeLa (312' tall). The following graphics show the approximate heights of these buildings and how they complement the Downtown skyline.


One VeLa
~ 312 ft
435 Sahwatch
~ 170 ft
Catbird
~ 86 ft


The Gazette
745
435 Sahwatch
~ 170 ft
One VeLa
~ 312 ft



Figure 1.7 | Bird's-eye view of Downtown with new Central Sector buildings.



Figure 1.8 | View showing new Central Sector buildings in skyline from Pikes Peak Avenue and Prospect Street.

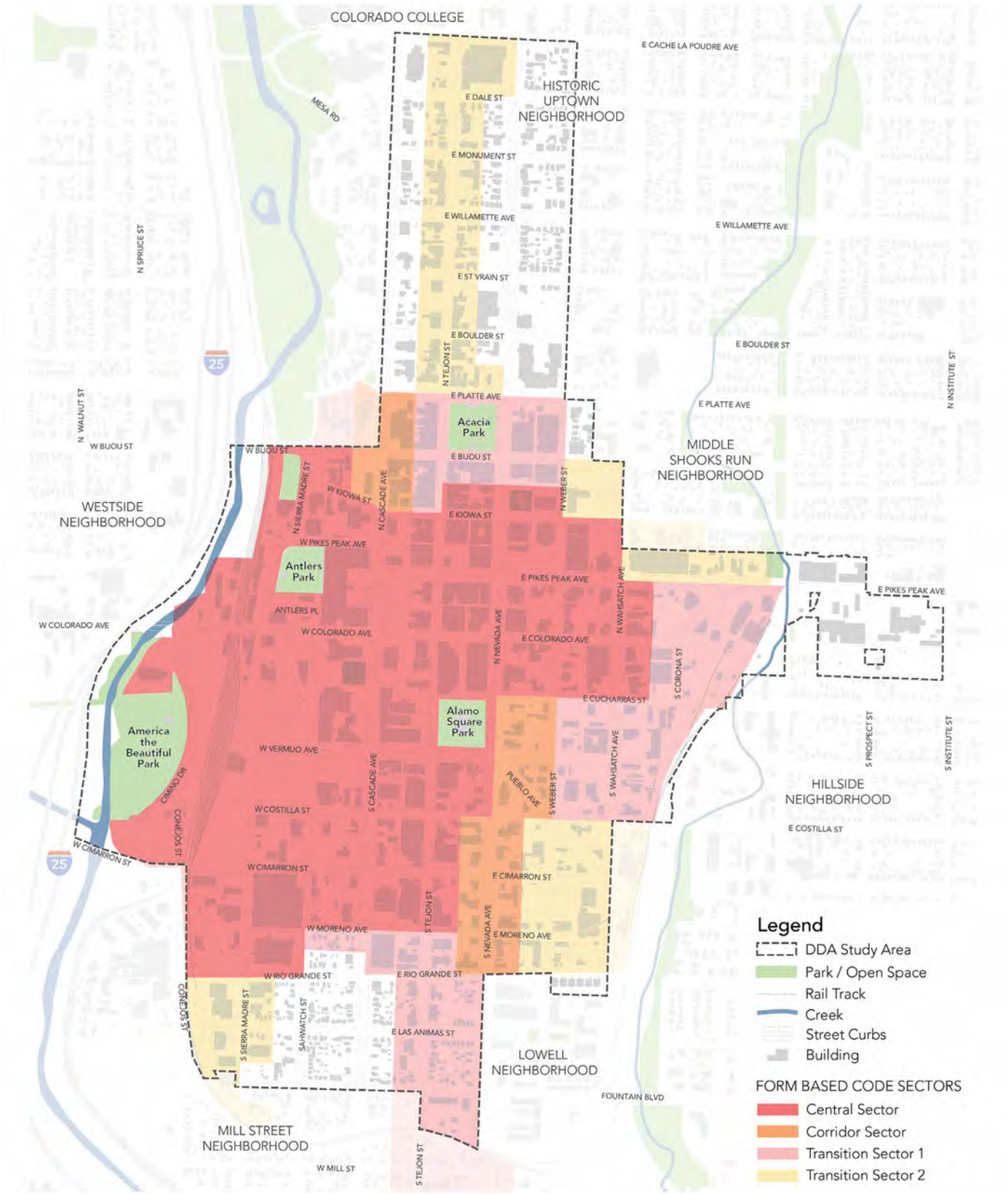


Figure 1.9 | Downtown Colorado Springs Form-Based Code Sectors

Community Preservation and Inclusive Growth

The DDA's role in supporting community preservation is delicate and complex, as the increase of property values is central to its mission to ensure growth and prosperity Downtown. The DDA can have a role in ensuring that Downtown remains accessible to those who already live there and can provide a number of mechanisms of support such as:

- Supporting the expansion of affordable and diverse housing options, with a focus on ensuring that current Downtown residents, especially those at risk of being priced out, can remain in the community.
- Promoting upward economic mobility for residents by advocating for additional employment options and workforce development. This may include investment in additional education and job training opportunities, especially in partnership with the Palmer High School renovation and programmatic integration of students across Downtown's academic institutions.
- Supporting residents' ability to walk, bike, or use accessible transit, recognizing that proximity to jobs, services, and amenities plays a key role in overall cost of living.
- Working in collaboration with the City and nonprofit partners to improve and expand tenant resources and services.
- Seeking and pursuing partnerships with a Community Land Trust (CLT) to foster equitable and affordable housing. This could include identifying specific vacant parcels and leveraging resources for the DDA to acquire properties and sell to a CLT at a reduced cost to provide affordable housing and community-serving spaces. Both organizations can build on strong existing partnerships with developers, lenders, and community organizations to bring the necessary funding and resources to fruition.
- Advocating for policies that allow for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) or separated units that may share a common wall or floor (such as a basement unit with its own entrance), which can promote inter-generational living and enhance affordability through cost sharing and providing property owners with the potential to generate long- or short-term rental income.
- Advocating for increased density, especially in zones that allow for mid- and high-rise development.
- Supporting policies that do not place significant restrictions on the number of unrelated individuals that may inhabit or sub-lease a residential property.
- Promoting policies that discourage the over-proliferation of residences used solely for short-term rentals or institutional ownership of short-term rentals.



Source: *Colorado Springs Gazette*



Source: *Colorado Springs Gazette*

The Mill Street Neighborhood has long faced displacement pressures as new development arises.

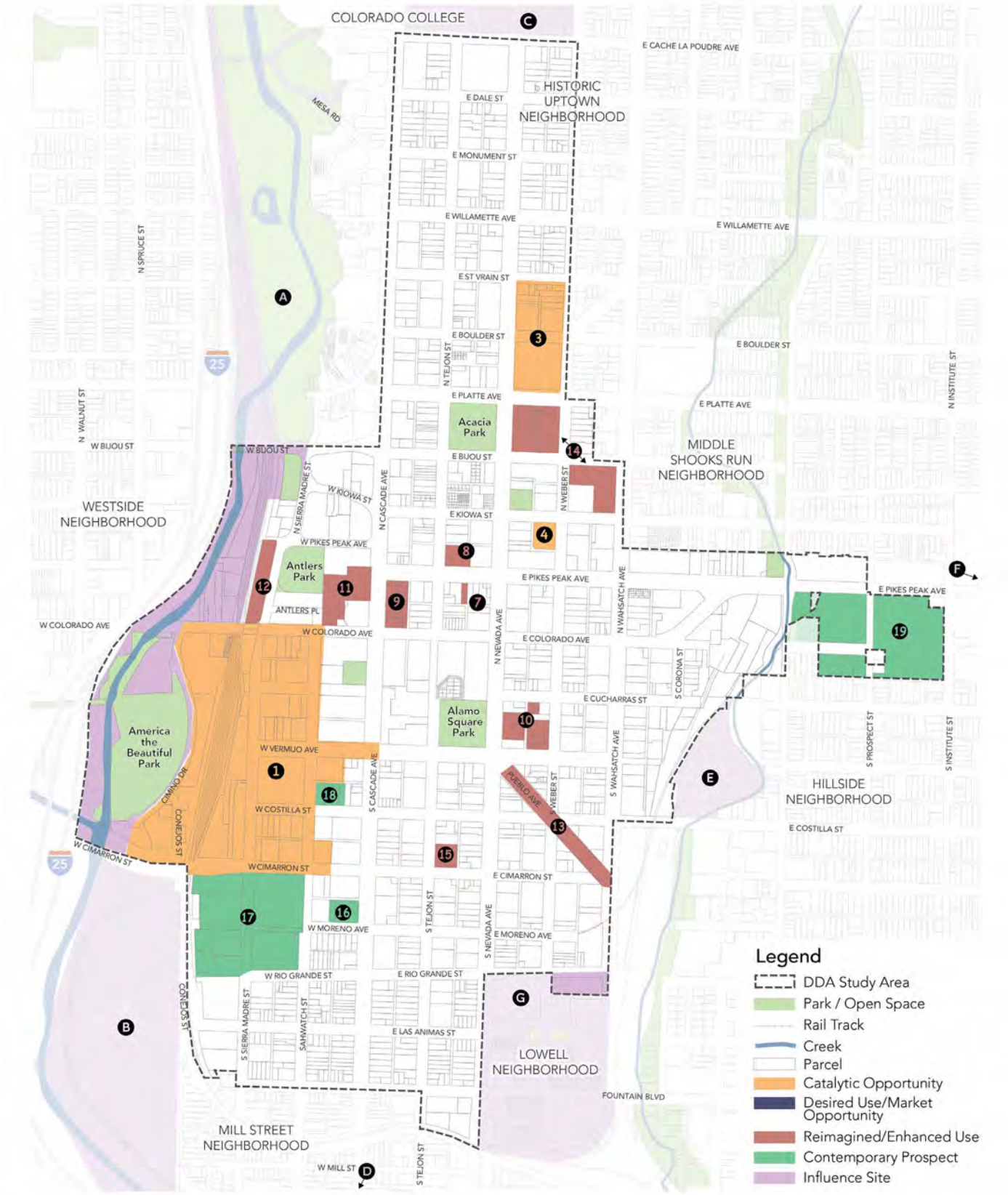


Figure 1.10 | DDA & Influence Sites

DDA & Influence Sites

Catalytic Opportunity

1. Park Union
2. Transit Center*
3. Palmer High School
4. City Auditorium

Desired Use/Market Opportunity

5. Full-Service Grocery Store*
6. Convention/Conference Center & Hotel*

Reimagined/Enhanced Use

7. Kimball's Peak Three Theater
8. Parking Lot and Existing Buildings on Tejon and Pikes Peak Avenue
9. Parking Lot on Cascade Avenue between Pikes Peak and Colorado Avenues
10. Block on Nevada Avenue between Cucharras Street and Vermijo Avenues
11. Antlers Hotel and Plaza
12. Denver and Rio Grande Train Depot
13. Pueblo Avenue Diagonal Street
14. Church Properties/YMCA Expansion
15. 421 S Tejon St.

Contemporary Prospect

16. Catbird Hotel & Attainable Housing
17. Citygate
18. OneVeLa
19. Gazette and St. Francis Hospital & Surrounding Sites

**No location identified*

Influence Sites

- Monument and Fountain Creek Corridors
- Drake Power Plant
- Colorado College Development
- Springs Rescue Mission
- Transit Mix
- Union Printers Home
- Lowell Neighborhood



Source: *Springsmag*

Outside Kimball's Peak Three Theater in 2018


Source: YMCA of the Pikes Peak Region

Downtown YMCA on Nevada Avenue

Catalytic Sites and Big Ideas

Downtown's future land use is influenced by a number of key catalytic development opportunities. Finite market demand and investment capacity dictate that only a certain number of catalytic projects will be built in the core during each market cycle. However, while these sites capture today's development expectations and desires, there is always a possibility that new sites and priorities will arise in the next development cycle. This section captures development opportunities at the current point in time.

The opportunities are a mixture of site-specific projects as well as non-locational ideas that could positively impact Downtown's economic conditions, visitor and resident experience, connectivity, quality of life, and public realm vitality. Ideas and opportunity sites are organized into the following five categories:

CATALYTIC OPPORTUNITIES (4 SITES)

These projects are proposed or conceptual projects or sites within the DDA's boundaries with the potential to have a major, catalytic impact on Downtown Colorado Springs.

DESIRED USE/MARKET OPPORTUNITIES (2 USES)

These opportunities are non-site-specific projects that have been identified as necessary or desired uses, or improvements that if realized could be catalytic and stimulate the economic vitality of Downtown Colorado Springs.

REIMAGINED/ENHANCED USE SITES (9 SITES)

These sites are comprised of parcels, or a collection of parcels, that are currently underutilized and present an opportunity for redevelopment. For most of these sites, no definitive plan has been identified or proposed for the site.

CONTEMPORARY PROSPECTS (4 SITES)

These projects are currently being developed (meaning they are in various phases of approval, funding, or construction). These projects are noted for context related to Downtown's current conditions since future efforts should work in tandem with these projects.

INFLUENCE SITES (7 SITES)

Influence sites are proposed or conceptual projects currently outside of DDA boundaries that can have a major impact on the DDA. Some of these sites have the potential to be incorporated into the DDA's jurisdiction in the future.



Source: USOPM

The U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum anchors the Park Union District.

CATALYTIC OPPORTUNITIES

1. Park Union

The Park Union District, anchored by the U.S Olympic & Paralympic Museum, is targeted to revitalize the southwest Downtown area by creating a dense mixed-use hub. The Vermijo Avenue streetscape improvements and the Park Union Bridge both serve as placemaking elements and physical connections into the area. There are more Park Union improvements and activations on the horizon, including hosting additional community events and hospitality, residential, and office space developments. These investments provide an opportunity for innovative and sustainable development through the use of resilient materials, stormwater infrastructure, and a close look at the development's carbon footprint.

The overall goal for Park Union is to create a walkable, 18-hour neighborhood with about 4,000 residential units; 1.0 million square feet of new office space; 650 to 700 hotel rooms; and ground-floor retail. About $60 million in infrastructure has been completed thus far, including the Park Union Bridge, streetscape improvements, and demolition of existing buildings on underutilized parcels to prepare for future growth. Near-term projects include:

- 30 West office building (30 W. Cimarron St) with 187,185 square feet of Class A office space; 4,500 square feet of ground-floor restaurant space; and various amenities on-site including rooftop lounge, shared conference center, fitness center, golf simulator, and indoor bike storage.
- Residences at Park Union (125 Cimino Dr.) with 126 multifamily residential units (a mix of for-sale and rental).
- An upper-upscale full-service hotel with 350–450 rooms and 50,000 to 60,000 square feet of meeting space.
- A potential site for a future grocery store at the corner of Cimarron Street and Sierra Madre Street.

The Park Union project is an ambitious effort that will take many years, and likely several market cycles, to fully develop. Additional analysis was completed to provide an estimated timeline for potential build out of the project and identification of financial feasibility barriers that may slow its development.

DEMAND

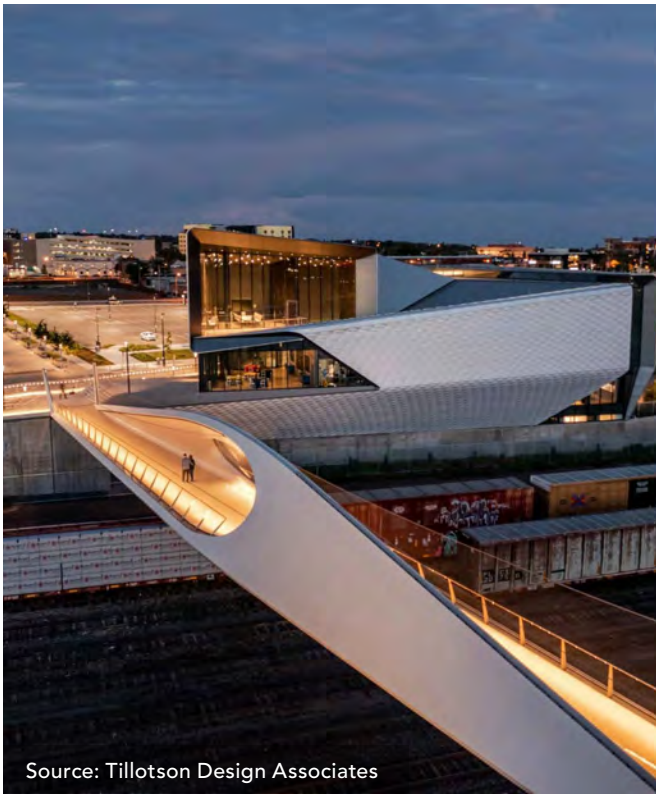
The remainder of Park Union is estimated to build out over a 10- to 20-year timeframe. Development activity will likely increase in the next three to five years as market conditions improve and current active and planned development in Downtown is absorbed by the market. The estimated demand for each major use is explored below:

Residential

Downtown has seen a significant uptick in residential growth in recent years. Notably, from 2020 to 2025 Q3, Downtown gained over 2,200 housing units. There is still a significant amount of active and planned residential development in Downtown with 51 units under construction (Artspace) and 1,178 units planned (ONE VeLa and Experience at Epicenter Phase II at CityGate). The proposed 4,000 units in Park Union are estimated to take a 15-year period to build out based on the rate of housing development in Downtown and the city over the past 10 years.

Per the International Downtown Associations' 2024 report, Downtown Colorado Springs is currently home to just shy of 5,000 residents with an average of about 2.5 residents per unit. Given Downtown's growth in residential units to 3,075 in 2025, Downtown should grow to 6,000 to 8,000 residents once these units are fully leased and stabilized, if the average

number of residents per unit remains steady. The IDA report classifies Downtown Colorado Springs as an 'emerging-tier' Downtown with a middle-of-the-pack number of residents. If Downtown grows to 6,000 to 8,000 residents with the potential to grow further as Park Union is developed, it would be on the middle to high end of the 'emerging tier' when evaluating number of residents — similar in size or larger than Grand Rapids, Little Rock, and Oklahoma City.



The U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum's pedestrian bridge helps make it one of the most accessible museums in the world.

Office

Due to the tight office market in Downtown Colorado Springs, the COVID-19 pandemic had a smaller impact on office vacancies and values compared to other peer cities. Downtown's office worker traffic is approaching pre-pandemic levels and current office vacancies are low at 7.8% compared to 11.3% citywide.

Urban cores are also experiencing demand for high-quality spaces offering a range of amenities in walkable locations, as seen in Downtown Denver. Class A office in Downtown Colorado Springs currently accounts for less than 30% of the office inventory, which is an indicator of the age and quality of the office spaces currently available. Class A office development in Downtown Colorado Springs has been very limited — the last Class A office space constructed was the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee Building, inaugurated in 2009. Prior to this, only two Class A office buildings have been built Downtown since 1989 — the Conover Building (1999) and south tower of the Plaza of the Rockies (2001). Downtown Colorado Springs has notable unmet demand for Class A office space that can attract out-of-state and Denver-based companies, which makes it a unique opportunity for additional office development.

Given the lack of recent office development Downtown and shifts in national trends, projecting the timing and scale of Park Union's office build out is difficult. Feasibility depends on more than demand alone. Financing, construction costs, and tenant commitments all play major roles. Large projects often require anchor tenants to secure funding and mitigate risk, which can delay new development. High construction costs for Class A space also require rental rates above what the Downtown market currently supports. Average office rents Downtown are $17.89 per square foot, while newer projects, built since 2015, achieve $27.00

or more per square foot. Comparable projects in Downtown Denver command $35–$40 per square foot.

The proposed 1.0 million square feet of office space in Park Union is expected to develop over a decade-plus period, alongside residential growth. Its success will depend on securing major tenants, build-to-suit opportunities, and conditions that support higher rental rates. Ultimately, Park Union tenants would benefit from proximity to Downtown's amenities, including public transit, restaurants, retail, entertainment, and a walkable urban environment.

Hotel

The Downtown hotel market has become a strong submarket over the past 15 years, from just 414 rooms across 4 properties in 2010 to 1,193 rooms across 11 properties by 2024. Downtown now consistently outperforms the citywide averages for average daily rate (ADR) and revenue per available room (RevPAR) (averaging 12.8% higher than citywide for the last five years), meaning Downtown has become a desirable place for visitors to stay. Even with the increased inventory from new developments, market indicators of demand have remained strong showing that Downtown is a desired destination for additional hotel development. Park Union's proposed 650 to 700 hotel rooms will add significantly to the current inventory of just over 1,100 rooms Downtown. Considering this magnitude of rooms planned, it is likely those rooms will take 10 to 15 years to fully be built based on the rate of hotel development in Downtown since 2010.

Development Feasibility Impact on Project Build Out

Various factors influence development feasibility, including construction/labor costs, achievable rental rates/sale prices, interest rates, and state and national economic conditions. Post–COVID-19 pandemic, construction and labor costs have increased significantly and more recently, interest rates have increased significantly due to inflation. The result has been a more challenging environment for financing contemporary development in Downtown than had been experienced during the period from 2017 to 2023. A cyclical pattern to development activity is normal for downtown areas, and large projects like Park Union must adjust absorption expectations and development plans as a result. It is anticipated that Park Union will move forward with its initial projects, such as 30 West and Residences at Park Union when market conditions improve. Tracking rental and vacancy rates, as well as broader economic conditions, can help provide insight into the potential for further investment. Park Union is within the Museum and Park Urban Renewal Area that was established in 2018. The DDA, CSURA, and City should maintain communication with project developers to determine if adjustments to plans are needed or if various public support programs (e.g., URA development agreement, restarting TIF-clock) may need to be refined to match changing market conditions.

2.Transit Center

A new transit center would provide a central hub for connections to Mountain Metro Transit, Greyhound, Bustang, Downtown shuttles, taxis, ride-hailing, and micromobility options such as bikes and scooters — creating an accessible, all-in-one location for diverse transportation needs. Upper floors could accommodate parking along with retail, housing, and office uses, adding vibrancy and integrating the project into Downtown's fabric.

Key goals for the site include a seamless mobility hub that supports all modes of travel, enhanced experience for riders and staff, an inviting environment that attracts new transit users, and activation through complementary uses. Achieving this vision will require ongoing conversations and partnerships to prioritize transit access and improve residents' connections to jobs and amenities across the metro area. While several Downtown sites have been studied over the past decade, the City is now actively evaluating new options.

3. Palmer High School

Palmer High School, the oldest educational institution in the city and the only high school Downtown, is undergoing a transformative renovation. Palmer High, named after the City's founder General William Palmer, is the flagship school for the district and hosts the oldest International Baccalaureate (IB) educational program in the region. Palmer's significant renovation comes as an exciting change to the campus, but also to the fabric of Downtown. As the renovations take place, the school will begin to physically and programmatically integrate in and throughout Downtown. Downtown should help facilitate the vision of integrating Palmer students, families, and staff with the Downtown community through opportunities for partnership with employment, training, housing, childcare, and more.

The physical redevelopment of Palmer High School will be the first step in this approach to integrate education and collaboration Downtown. Phase 1 construction broke ground in 2025. With an investment of nearly $100 million, it is slated for completion in 2028 and includes the construction of a new four-story academic building, demolition of the technology wing, and restoration of the main historic structure. Additional phases include athletic department additions with a full-size football field and track, baseball diamond, softball diamond, concession stand, and tennis courts. These later phases will catalyze long-term redevelopment potential. The expansion should connect with adjacent potential redevelopments including the YMCA block and the First Presbyterian properties.

4. City Auditorium

The City Auditorium building, located at 221 E. Kiowa St., was built in 1923 and was once one of Downtown's most notable and central gathering places. Historically, City Auditorium hosted City meetings, public forums, political rallies, and civic celebrations as well as touring theaters, ballets, and symphonies. As a once primary part of the Colorado Springs community for gathering, civic pride, and economic impact, the Auditorium poses a major opportunity to breathe life into Downtown's future.

In 2025, Alternative Venue Alliance (AVA) was selected as the Auditorium's new tenant and will invest funds into the $17.0 million of deferred maintenance and capital improvements as "in-kind" lease payments. The City will maintain ownership and lease to AVA on a five-year lease term with four additional five-year renewal options to give AVA a maximum of 25 years to recoup their investments into the building. AVA is implementing the City's vision of reactivating the site

for the community and using the building as it was originally intended. The 28,300-square-foot auditorium will be restored as a venue for concerts, festivals, and events that will be a destination for residents and visitors as well as bring new vibrancy to Downtown with a consistent schedule of events and evening activation.

The auditorium is located within the City Auditorium Block Urban Renewal Area that was established in 2006. At some point, it would be beneficial to transfer the property to AVA (moving it from public to private ownership) to generate TIF revenue to support additional improvement needs. This exciting new partnership will allow for the auditorium to be renovated and used again.

DESIRED USE/MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

5. Full-Service Grocery Store

The growth of people living in Downtown Colorado Springs in recent years has increased demand for more resident-serving businesses and amenities. The need for a grocery store (and pharmacy) to serve residents of Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods has been consistently identified in outreach efforts and conversations with Downtown residents, employees, and visitors. The attraction of a grocery store is a major catalyst to support continued growth. A grocer would provide residents, workers, and visitors with convenient access to fresh food and daily amenities without needing to travel outside of Downtown. This lessens the impact of vehicle-centric travel Downtown, supports better walkability, and simply makes Downtown living more practical and appealing to all.

GROCERY STORE DEMAND ANALYSIS

Downtown does not currently have a traditional, national, full-service grocery store. The closest options for Downtown residents are over a mile outside the city center, including along Nevada Avenue south of I-25 (Natural Grocers, Sprouts, and Safeway), north of Downtown near Penrose Hospital (Safeway), or to the northeast and northwest along Uintah Street (Safeway and King Soopers). There are some smaller grocery and convenience stores that offer fresh foods and groceries near Downtown, including the Bread & Butter Neighborhood Market and The Warehouse Urban Grocer, which is anticipated to open in 2026. However, most residents must leave their neighborhoods and cross major transportation routes to access a full-service grocery store.

The area within the Downtown Development Authority boundary has approximately 3,200 households currently and the greater Downtown area (80903 zip code) has just over 8,000 households. Collectively, the greater Downtown area may have sufficient households to support a grocery store. However, a grocery store typically has a trade area within two miles of the store, and specialty grocery, such as Trader Joe's, is more selective with a larger trade area of five-miles. The existing proximate stores likely capture Downtown's current demand and may inhibit further attraction.

Based on recent growth trends and planned development, the continued expansion of residential uses Downtown could add as many as 4,500 to 5,000 new households over the next 10 years. This growth of the household base will present the opportunity for a Downtown grocery store over the next 10 years, as demand for grocery sales and supportable square feet are estimated to be sufficient to support a store even with the surrounding competition.

POTENTIAL GROCERS

King Soopers is the largest and most active grocery chain in the state, and its locations are further from Downtown than competing stores (Safeway, Sprouts, and Natural Grocers). King Soopers has an urban format store in Downtown Denver that includes 46,475 square feet and is located in a mixed-use building. There may be interest in developing a similar store in Downtown Colorado Springs, although recently King Soopers has been developing larger format stores.

Trader Joe's and Whole Foods Market each have a northern Colorado Springs location and may be interested in an opportunity Downtown. As mentioned above, Sprouts and Natural Grocers, who both have footprints conducive to downtown areas, have recently located near Downtown making them more challenging chains to attract.

Other potential options are smaller, regional chain grocers (e.g., Clark's Market or Marczyk) or individually owned stores. However, these are more difficult to target and attract because they have greater risks of failure.



Source: Lowney Architecture

Sprouts with an outdoor public space in Oakland, CA.

SITE NEEDS

Typical Size Trends and Site Size Estimates

In recent years, many successful grocery store chains have reduced their building footprint or shifted towards smaller-format stores, particularly in urban contexts. For example, Whole Foods, which typically average around 40,000 square feet, recently announced a new quick-shop grocery store format ranging from 7,000 to 14,000 square feet, which is currently only in New York City. Sprouts, which previously occupied spaces averaging 32,000 square feet, recently announced a reduced footprint (20,000 to 25,000 square feet) for new stores. Figure 1.11 shows the average sizes of various grocery store chains.

Based on research of existing stores in Colorado and site selection data from the retailers, the likely minimum site size for each concept in Downtown Colorado Springs is estimated below. The standard block size in Downtown is 3.67 acres, which can support a small-format store and urban store in a mixed-use building.

- Small-format grocery stores, which would range in 10,000 to 20,000 square feet in size, would require a site that is at least one acre in size.
- A traditional grocery store that is 40,000 square feet or larger typically requires a site that is at least four acres based on required parking and comparable projects.
- Grocery stores built in mixed-use buildings with structured parking may require less land, but there is increased complexity to these projects and they require stronger financial conditions to be viable. Examples include the new Whole Foods and King Soopers built in the Denver Union

Station redevelopment — each located in mixed-use buildings on a two-acre site. This could be an option for a grocery store within the central sector of Downtown that is parking exempt.

Typical Site Selection Criteria

While grocery stores each have unique approaches to site selection, some key factors grocers look at when determining where to locate include:

- Adequate site size/characteristics and parking spaces, if applicable
  - Frontage requirements
  - Signalized intersections
  - Number of parking spaces
- Residential population density, foot and vehicular

GROCERY STORE TYPE	TYPICAL SIZE SQ. FT.
Small-format	
Whole Foods Market Daily Shop	10,000
Natural Grocers	10,000
Trader Joe's	15,000
Aldi	18,000
Sprouts	23,000
Average	**15,200**
Traditional	
Whole Foods	40,000
Safeway	47,000
King Soopers	65,000
Average	**50,667**

Source: Economic & Planning Systems

Figure 1.11 | Grocery Stores, Building Size, and Land Acreage

	POPULATION DENSITY	DEMOGRAPHIC & MARKET CONTEXT	ACCESSIBILITY
Whole Foods	Typically, 200,000 people or more in a 20-minute drive time; Must be located in a high traffic area (foot and/or vehicle)	Large number of college-educated residents	Abundant parking available for exclusive use; Easy access from roadways, signal intersection; Excellent visibility, directly off of the street
Aldi	Dense trade area population within 3 miles; Daily traffic count in excess of 20,000 vehicles per day	Sites located in community and regional shopping districts with convenient access to population	Minimum of 95 dedicated parking spaces; Signalized, full access intersection preferred; Sites located in community and regional shopping districts with convenient access to population

Figure 1.12 | Example Grocery Store Site Selection Criteria

traffic, and demographics
    - Education, income, etc.
    - Daily vehicular traffic counts
- Visibility and accessibility to major roads or public transit
- Existence of competitive stores within or near the store's trade area (typically the trade area is a two-mile radius from the store location)

Potential Downtown Sites

There are potential sites in Downtown Colorado Springs that are suitable for a grocery store (either small format or traditional). Criteria used to identify these sites includes:

- Vacant or underutilized parcel(s)
- Approximately 1.5 acres or larger
- Located along major corridors that have connectivity to I-25 (to the west or south) and/or provide connectivity to neighborhoods to the east.

Nine potential sites were identified in the map below, including three sites within Park Union.

GROCERY STORE INCENTIVE OPTIONS

Financial incentives may be necessary to attract a grocery to Downtown, including developer support in order to sign a grocer as a tenant, or support directly to a grocer. Potential incentive tools to consider utilizing include:

- **Tax Increment Financing:** The use of a tax increment to support a project is possible through both the DDA and the Colorado Springs URA. The Colorado Springs URA has the ability to provide a greater portion of total tax increment generated by a grocery store than the DDA, and may be a more powerful option. The property tax revenue generated by the project is the potential tax increment that can be used as an incentive. Additionally, the use of a sales tax increment, from the City's sales tax, is also possible through CSURA.
- **Sales Tax Shareback:** For commercial projects generating sales taxes, the DDA could help facilitate the City agreeing to rebate a portion of the incremental sales tax generated by the project for a specified number of years up to a maximum cap. The maximum amount of funding is also typically determined through a "but for" analysis and is generally limited to a max percent of the sales taxes generated on an annual basis. Colorado Springs does not tax unprepared foods, so a significant portion of sales generated by a grocery store would not be taxable, limiting the total sales tax that could be generated.
- **Public Improvement Fee:** A public improvement fee (PIF) is a fee based on sales transactions imposed by a private development entity within its boundaries and used for funding improvements. The fee resembles a sales tax, but it is an additional charge over and above the required state and local sales taxes. In some cases, a PIF (implemented with the City's involvement) replaces a portion of the local sales tax. This is referred to as a credit PIF. These PIFs have most often been used on major regional destination retail projects, but are increasingly being used on smaller specialty projects. They are less commonly used in locally-oriented retail projects (e.g., grocery store) where an additional charge on top of the sales tax rate may present a competitive disadvantage.

6. Convention/Conference Center and Hotel

Colorado Springs tourism is a major economic driver for the region. In 2024, the region attracted 25.5 million visitors who generated $3.1 billion in spending. Visitation for conferences and conventions is a major component of the City's tourism economy which in turn supports local businesses, increases transit ridership, and contributes to an active and connected city. Visit Colorado Springs estimates that conventions generate an annual economic impact of over $70 million and

Site Size	Ownership	Current Land Use
❶ 4.4 acres	Single owner	Vacant
❷ 3.5 acres	Single owner	Vacant/Commercial
❸ 3.5 acres	Multiple owners	Vacant/Commercial
❹ 1.7 acres	Single owner	Parking lot
❺ 1.4 acres	Single owner	Parking lot
❻ 3.7 acres	Single owner	Institution/Parking Lot
❼ 3.5 acres	Multiple owners	Vacant/Commercial
❽ 6.0 acres	Single Owner	Vacant/Commercial
❾ 3.2 acres	Single Owner	Commercial

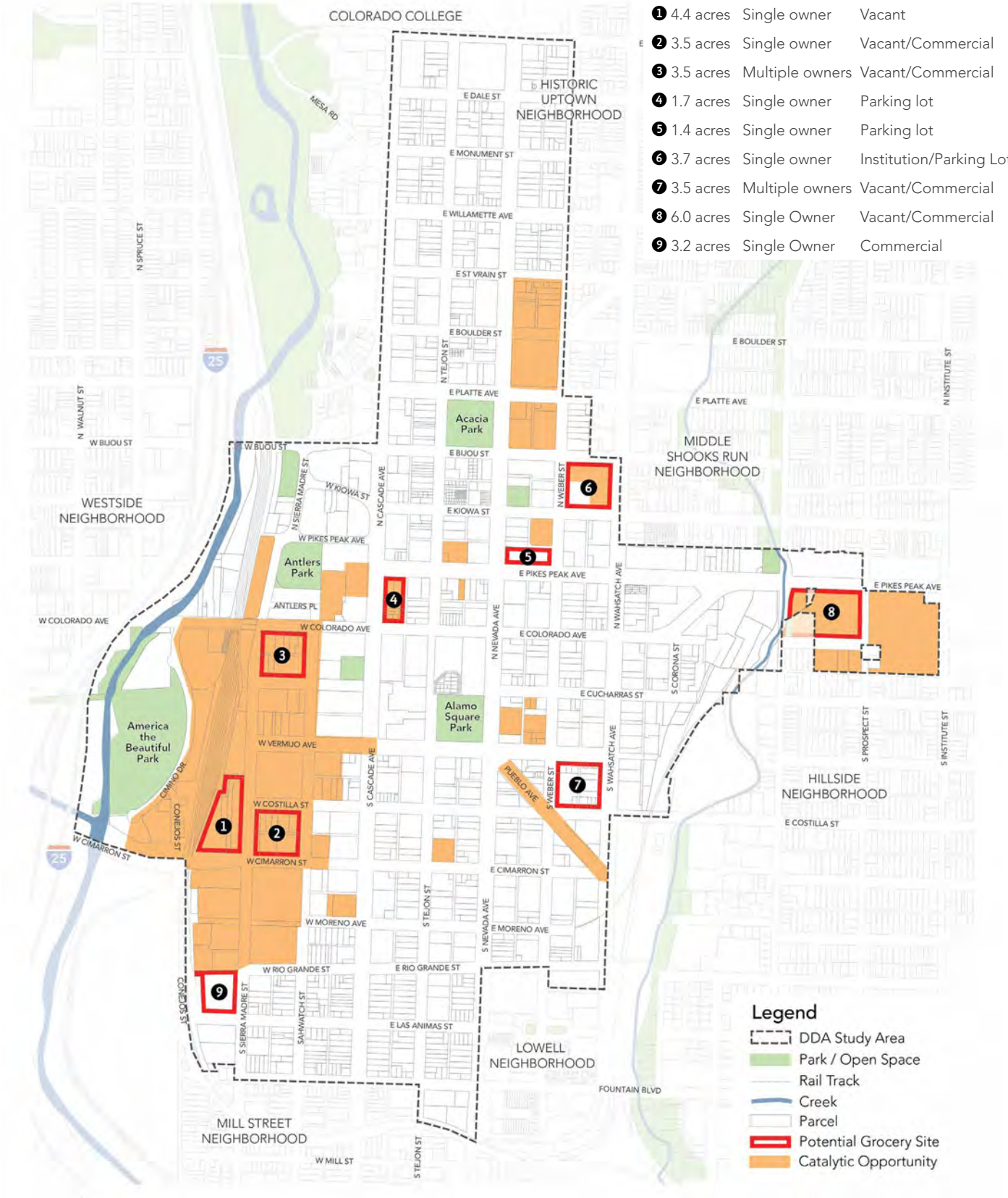


Figure 1.13 | Potential Grocery Sites

generate over a half a million visitor trips to the region each year.

Currently, the Convention Center at The Broadmoor is the largest facility in the region with 200,000 square feet of meeting space, although it is constrained by resort seasonality and pricing. In addition to the Convention Center, there are a couple of larger event venues that can host large conventions or trade shows, the Norris-Penrose Event Center and Colorado Springs Event Center, which have spaces as large as 50,000 square feet and are over 90,000 square feet in size. In addition to these large venues, there are approximately 10 other facilities in the City with over 10,000 square feet of space that can host smaller conferences or conventions. These facilities range typically from 10,000 to 30,000 square feet with large main ballrooms that are 7,000 to 12,000 square feet in size. Most often these conference facilities are part of a hotel or resort that support the meeting spaces. Most of these facilities are in the southwestern portion of the city near the Broadmoor and other major regional tourist destinations (e.g., Garden of the Gods, World Arena). There are a few larger facilities located on the northern edge of the city, including the newly opened Hotel Polaris at the gates of the Air Force Academy, which has 26,000 square feet of meeting space.

Downtown is a major contributor to the attraction and support of convention and conference activities with a hotel room inventory of over 1,100 rooms, several visitor attractions, and the largest concentration of independent restaurants in Southern Colorado. However, the area does not host many of the major convention and conference venues in the city. Even more broadly, Colorado Springs is one of the few top 50 cities, without a major convention center or large-scale downtown event facility. The Antlers, a 273-room hotel, has the most meeting space Downtown (approximately 24,000 square feet) but is aging and in need of reinvestment. Planning, building, funding, or financing a convention center, with or without a hotel or other ancillary structures, would require a vote of Colorado Springs residents as specified in the City Charter provision 11-70, which was a stipulation included as part of the efforts to create the Colorado Springs Convention Center at the Broadmoor.

Given the inventory of spaces elsewhere, there is not currently demand or need for a large convention hall in Downtown, but there is likely demand over the next 10 years for a conference center hotel. To continue to increase visitation Downtown, attraction of a hotel with conference center space and support for reinvestment in the Antlers facilities are needed. Current hotel revenue and occupancy data indicate support for more hotels in Downtown. The conference centers in the hotels/resorts near Downtown are all aging and there may be opportunity to provide a new, urban option for conferences wanting to locate in a Downtown environment. The existing facilities in the region typically have approximately 300 rooms and offer around 20,000 to 30,000 square feet of meeting space. Larger facilities are often 500 to 600 rooms in size with an equivalent or greater amount of meeting space. Plans for the Park Union development include a hotel/conference center of this size.

RE-IMAGINED/ENHANCED USE SITES

7. Kimball's Peak Three Theater

Downtown has an opportunity to increase the number of attractions and entertainment facilities by supporting reinvestment in historic buildings that serve as valuable assets, including Kimball's Peak Three Theater. Located at 115 E. Pikes Peak Ave., Kimball's is a historic and iconic Downtown landmark that unfortunately closed in 2023. Before its closure, Kimball's was a movie house and community gathering space, hosting film festivals and premieres, independent and foreign films, and community events such as lectures and fundraisers tied to film screenings. Kimball's closing left no movie theaters Downtown and restoring the theater would fill this void, along with providing a historic and culturally significant space for social gathering and community connection. There are significant remediation and construction costs needed for the theater to be upgraded and turned into a more multipurpose event and performance space. Support will be needed for reinvestment and to address building rehabilitation costs when an interested operator and viable business model are identified.



Source: uncovercolorado.com

Kimball's Peak Three Theater

8. Parking Lot and Existing Building on Tejon Street and Pikes Peak Avenue

The parking lot on the northeast corner of Tejon Street and Pikes Peak Avenue occupies prime real estate in the City Center district. Known as Historic Busy Corner, higher intensity development on this site will activate one of the key intersections Downtown and fill a key gap in the pedestrian realm on one of Downtown's signature streets. The existing building on the southwest corner of this site, built in 1962, is likely to be demolished in the coming years to allow for the full redevelopment of the site. Redevelopment should include new vertical mixed-use building with ground-floor activation, an improved pedestrian realm, and stacked structured parking could be developed.

9. Parking Lot on Cascade Avenue between Pikes Peak and Colorado avenues

This half-block parking lot is located across Cascade Avenue from the Antlers Hotel, Alpine Bank building, and First Bank Tower. The lot is about 1.7 acres and is steps from one of the more vibrant blocks of Tejon Street and two of its most important intersections at Pikes Peak and Colorado avenues. The site has immense potential to develop a full range of uses given its location in the heart of Downtown along a key neighborhood street. Residential, office, commercial, and hospitality uses could all coexist and thrive on this key site. Redevelopment should include two new vertical mixed-use buildings with ground-floor activation, structured parking, and a mid-block pedestrian connection could be developed.

10. Block on Nevada Avenue between Cucharras Street and Vermijo Avenue

This block on Nevada Avenue, across from Alamo Square Park and the Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum, is an excellent strategic redevelopment opportunity. This block includes a church but consists primarily of large surface parking lots and large vacant buildings. Redevelopment of this block would fill in and activate a significant area linking the City Center to the South End and East Downtown districts. This site also is located at the intersection of proposed Active Transportation Priority Streets on Weber and Cucharras streets, and the planned continuation of the Vermijo streetscape improvements. Public realm improvements will provide safe and comfortable non-motorized transportation movement within the City Center. Residential and mixed-use development would bring vibrancy to the area throughout the day. Specific attention should be paid to the streetscape and pedestrian crossings around the site, but particularly along Nevada Avenue and connecting to the park. The size and prominent position of this block means that it has immense potential to set the tone for other blocks along Nevada Avenue and the transition between the City Center and East Downtown district. Future redevelopment should include vertical mixed-use buildings with ground-floor activation, stacked structured parking, and public open spaces could be developed on this site.



Figure 1.14 | Conceptual Site Improvements



Figure 1.15 | Conceptual Site Improvements



Enhanced public realm along an active ground floor commercial environment.



Glenarm Plaza in Denver.



Engaging ground floor interface with the public realm.



Sacramento's West Capitol Avenue enhanced mid-block crossing and public realm.

11. Antlers Hotel and Plaza

The original Antlers Hotel that opened in 1883 burned down and was rebuilt in 1901. That structure was demolished in the 1960s and redeveloped into the Antlers, Wyndham. At the corner of Cascade and Colorado avenues, the Antlers is centrally located Downtown. While ideas for redeveloping the aging hotel have been proposed in the past, the property still operates as a hotel and has the most meeting space of any Downtown hotel. Renovations to the adjacent plaza could improve the public realm and pedestrian experience and provide more public outdoor space in the City Center. The graphic below shows conceptual improvements to the plaza space and adjacent intersection, including the addition of shade trees and landscaping, unique paving for designated vehicle and pedestrian lanes, and a more distinct entrance to the building.



Figure 1.16 | Existing Plaza



Figure 1.17 | Conceptual Improvements

12. Denver and Rio Grande Train Depot

Built in 1887, the building served as a depot for passenger and freight on the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad until 1971. Its Late Victorian/Queen Anne architectural style and location make it a significant catalytic opportunity for Downtown. The notable use of the depot and its location adjacent to the Antlers Hotel and Park meant it served as the City's original visitor gateway with important historic significance. Located just steps from the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum and Monument Valley Park on Sierra Madre Street, the Pikes Peak State College Downtown Campus, and Penrose Library on Cascade Avenue, the site offers opportunities for a mix of uses, as it has at various times since it was first developed. The site can also be improved for a safe and connected pedestrian and micromobility experience as it is situated along an active and signature street. It is currently automobile-oriented, with a strip-mall-style parking arrangement and no marked crossings between the development and the park.

The graphic below shows conceptual improvements to public space in front of the depot building, a flexible Sierra Madre Street, additional envisioned park improvements, and infill development.



Figure 1.18 | Existing Site



Figure 1.19 | Conceptual Improvements

13. Pueblo Avenue Diagonal Street

Pueblo Avenue from Vermijo Avenue to Cimarron Street is unique in its diagonal orientation and streetscape design. The current right-of-way is approximately 110 feet wide with two bays of diagonal parking down the center and detached sidewalks. Each of the two blocks is about 600 feet long with no dedicated crossings mid-block. These blocks currently have some development facing the street and some development backing onto the street. The existing development is also intermittent, with parking and vacant sites interspersed with buildings. The unique design of these blocks presents an equally unique opportunity for enhanced placemaking through infill development and streetscape improvements. The graphic below shows conceptual improvements to the street, including active building frontages, infill development, a mid-block crossing, and pedestrian realm amenities.



Figure 1.20 | Existing Site



Figure 1.21 | Conceptual Improvements

14. Church Properties/YMCA Expansion

The planned expansion of the Downtown YMCA and redevelopment of nearby buildings and parking lots operated by First Presbyterian Church southeast of Bijou and Weber streets could transform these two important Downtown blocks. Located off Platte Avenue, the development is a gateway into Downtown from the growing eastern population. Conceptual plans and ideas for the expansion include enhanced and updated services and facilities for YMCA members, a health care component on-site, senior housing and community services, and potentially a charter school. Most importantly, the renovated facility will serve as a great amenity and attraction available to existing and future Downtown residents. The YMCA expansion will bring new activity adjacent to Acacia Park, and both projects will leverage access to the Active Transportation Priority Streets proposed on Weber and Bijou streets. Future public-private partnerships could help fund and bring innovative ideas to this project.

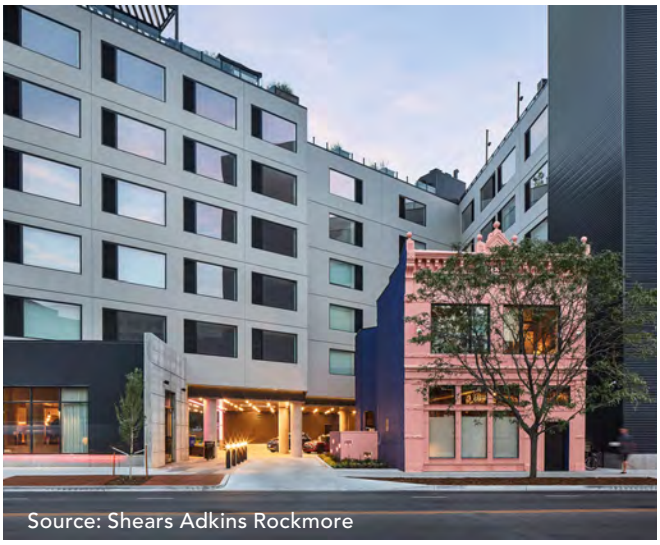
15. 421 S. Tejon St

Currently serving low-density commercial use within Downtown's central sector, this roughly one-acre site at the northeast corner of South Tejon and East Cimarron streets could be redeveloped into a higher-density mixed-use property. The adjacent vacant parcels offer the potential for a large footprint along a major transportation corridor into Downtown that also fronts the placemaking Tejon Street. The block is an opportunity to better connect the City Center to newer developments and activity centers in the South End.

CONTEMPORARY PROSPECTS

16. Catbird Hotel & Attainable Housing

The Catbird Hotel will be located at the northwest corner of Moreno and Cascade Avenues. The development will include about 181 hotel rooms; 6,175 square feet of event space; a lobby; restaurant and bar; and public parking. The project includes significant streetscape improvements along both street frontages for fluid connectivity to adjacent developments and districts Downtown. Additionally, the parcels on the southeast corner of the same block are slated for a future attainable housing development expected to serve households earning 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI).



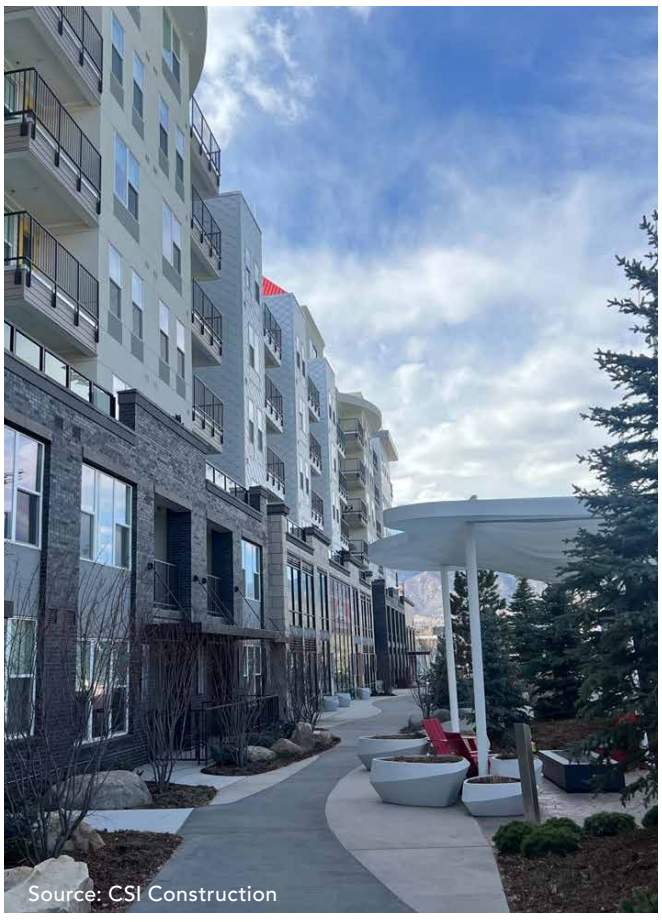
The Catbird Hotel in Denver's River North neighborhood.

17. CityGate

One of the premier mixed-use infill opportunities in Downtown, **CityGate** is a 16-acre, four-block site on the south side of Cimarron Street between Sahwatch Street and the railroad line. Weidner Field, an 8,000-seat soccer stadium and event venue is located on the southeastern block of Cimarron and Sierra Madre streets. Weidner Field is a City for Champions project that used Colorado Regional Tourism Act incentives for economic development. The remaining three blocks are the CityGate 2.0 Urban Renewal Area that will include mixed-use development with a total of approximately 1,180 multifamily units; 37,000 square feet of ground-floor retail; and over 2,000 public and private parking spaces, known as **Experience at Epicenter**. Phase one of Experience at Epicenter is located directly south of Weidner Field with 400 multifamily units and 12,000 square feet of ground-floor retail and restaurant space. While the residential units are complete, the 12,000 square feet of retail and restaurant space is only partially leased and represents significant opportunity for the area. Currently, only one of the ground-floor spaces is leased to a tenant — a restaurant / pub. The remaining spaces are core-and-shell only. Phase one also includes a pedestrian promenade in the vacated **Moreno Avenue** right-of-way between Weidner Field and Experience at Epicenter with outdoor seating, dramatic landscaping and water features, and public art. Phase two is currently under entitlement review and will include 361 residential units and 12,500 square feet of ground-floor retail space.



The first completed phase of the Experience at Epicenter Apartments.



Pedestrian promenade at Moreno Plaza.

18. ONE VeLa

ONE VeLa is a residential development slated for the northeast corner of Costilla and Sahwatch streets on a roughly 1.1-acre site. The project will include 400 units in a 27-story tower with over 8,000 square feet of ground-floor retail. The proposed development includes 40 attainable units for households with incomes at 100% of the Area Median Income or below. The site will have structured parking with 48 spaces dedicated to public use. Established as an urban renewal area in 2024, this is a major milestone in Downtown's growth as the first large mixed-income housing project and first high-rise residential development. It will add to Downtown's vibrancy and housing options and spark reinvestment and public realm revitalization in adjacent blocks.





Figure 1.22 | ONE VeLa renderings

19. Gazette and St. Francis Hospital and Surrounding Sites

These two sites, located along either side of Prospect Street south of Pikes Peak Avenue, provide unparalleled views of the City Center and Pikes Peak, as well as easy access to the Shooks Run Trail (part of the Legacy Loop) and East Downtown. The former Gazette building has an industrial aesthetic and large central spaces somewhat uncommon in Downtown, while some buildings on the former St. Francis Hospital site provide historic ambiance. The sites offer distinct redevelopment opportunities in close proximity to each other and to the core, with market potential for residents, resident-serving amenities, retail, office, and artisan manufacturing. The envisioned redevelopment would require around $30–$40 million in infrastructure costs and is anticipated to be a long-term process, occurring after the completion of other major projects Downtown.



View from key development sites.

INFLUENCE SITES

A. Monument and Fountain Creek Corridors

Improvements along the Fountain and Monument Creek corridors, located west and south of Downtown, are envisioned and outlined in the *COS Creek Plan*. The *Creek Plan* vision is to create corridors that have rich environmental values, celebrates the natural beauty and function of the creeks, promotes economic development, creates a sense of place, and provides recreational and educational opportunities. In addition, the redesign and refurbishment of the creeks and waterfronts will encourage additional development and neighborhood connections in Downtown.

B. Drake Power Plant

The future redevelopment of the Drake Power Plant site, located west of Conejos Street, directly outside DDA boundaries, represents a once-in-a-century opportunity. In a monumental decision made by the Board of the Colorado Springs Utilities, after nearly a century of electric generation, the coal power plant shut down in 2022, 13 years ahead of schedule, with demolition beginning in 2023 and completed in 2024. Several factors pushed the acceleration of the decommissioning, include meeting State-required emission reductions and the high maintenance cost of running the aging facility. To help facilitate the energy transition, six gas turbines were installed along the western frontage of the site near the substation. A 2023 visioning study was conducted by the Downtown Partnership and the Legacy Institute to develop a vision and values to assist decision-makers in planning future land use for the Drake Power Plant site. The effort included case studies, alternatives analysis, and community engagement. While transformation of the site that dominates southwest Downtown would help knit together key

Downtown assets including the Legacy Loop, America the Beautiful Park, the CityGate redevelopment, and the existing Mill Street Neighborhood, full mitigation of the property alone would cost upwards of $300 million. That level of investment would likely require significant federal funding to redevelop and transform the site and some of its structures into a landmark destination in Downtown. Timing and planning of such transformation would need to account for both the useful life of the gas turbines and the need to retain the substation close to the Downtown footprint. Near-term opportunities include collaborating with Colorado Springs Utilities to make the site more aesthetically pleasing, given its prime visibility from the interstate and the Cimarron gateway into Downtown.

C. Colorado College Development

Most of the Colorado College campus is located just north of Downtown, although Colorado College continues to be considered an essential part of the Downtown fabric. As part of the 2015 campus master plan, Ed Robson Arena was constructed in 2021. The arena is multipurpose with a comprehensive sports-medicine facility, flexible floor space that can host ice-based events, seating for 3,400 attendees, and administrative space. The Ed Robson Arena is a premier destination for Colorado College Division 1 sports and Olympic partner events. It serves as a gateway to Downtown along with the Edith Kinney Gaylord Cornerstone Arts Center and a destination that attracts visitors from outside the Pikes Peak region. Colorado College has opportunity for coordination and better linkages with the core of Downtown to the south. Additionally, the Active Transportation Priority Streets designation of Cascade, Weber and Cache La Poudre streets is vital for traffic calming, better connectivity of the campus to the Downtown core, and safer pedestrian and bike access throughout the greater campus area.

D. Springs Rescue Mission

Located just south of the Downtown plan area and adjacent to the southern end of the Legacy Loop lies the Springs Rescue Mission campus, which serves people experiencing homelessness with a shelter, transitional housing, and other supportive wraparound services. Springs Rescue Mission's campus expansion, beginning in 2015, included 450 year-round shelter beds; a daytime resource center with laundry services, showers, and health resources; a 185-seat kitchen and dining hall; a welcome center; and permanent supportive housing. While the many human service agencies within the greater Downtown area provide a range of much needed services to the community, increasing youth, family, low-barrier shelter services, and respite services will be critical elements going forward. A keen focus of this site should be its integration into the surrounding neighborhood and facilitating transitions to permanent employment and housing.



Springs Rescue Mission

E. Transit Mix

Located along the Legacy Loop in Shooks Run corridor north of Costilla Street and west of El Paso Street, the Transit Mix Concrete Company site on the east side of Downtown is a potential redevelopment location adjacent to the plan area. Although the site currently continues with regular Transit Mix operations, focused planning efforts should begin to assess the site's integration into the Downtown fabric, including its impact on access to the Legacy Loop and adjacency to neighborhoods such as Hillside, as well as its connection to Catalyst Campus and other catalytic sites on the east side of Downtown.

The *Envision Shooks Run Facilities Master Plan* presents two alternative concepts for redeveloping the Transit Mix concrete plant site and its surrounding area. **Option 1** creates a highly connected multimodal street and trail network. It introduces a new public crossing at Cucharras Street and extends South Corona Street to strengthen the Downtown street grid west of Shooks Run. This option maximizes access through and across the site, integrating an urban promenade along both sides of Shooks Run, continuous stream-level trails with grade-separated crossings, and multiple new or improved bridges. The channel itself would be realigned and enhanced with water recirculation, drop structures, retaining walls, and park extensions, creating strong visual and physical connections between mixed-use development and the creek.

Option 2 retains the same creek and channel improvements as Option 1 but reduces the street network to allow for a larger, cohesive "campus-style" redevelopment. In this alternative, the Cucharras Street crossing and portions of the grid west of the creek are omitted, allowing for a more consolidated development. Public access to the greenway and trail connections are essential, but vehicle and pedestrian links to the surrounding street network are fewer, concentrating activity within the redevelopment site rather than dispersing it across multiple locations.

In both concepts, the plan envisions the Transit Mix property transforming into a vibrant mixed-use district anchored by an urban streamside promenade. Each alternative promotes strong pedestrian and bicycle connections between Downtown Colorado Springs, Memorial Park, and surrounding neighborhoods.



Figure 1.23 | Conceptual Improvements from the Shooks Run Facilities Master Plan



Figure 1.24 | Conceptual Improvements from the Shooks Run Facilities Master Plan

F. Union Printers Home

The historic legacy of the Union Printers Home site is being carried forth through the rebranded Printers Hill, which will blend adaptive reuse of the buildings with new construction to create a hotel, food hall, residential opportunities, cultural spaces, and retail. This exciting new development will feature pedestrian plazas and integrated green spaces to create a truly comprehensive 26-acre neighborhood about a mile from Downtown. The over 130-year-old Union Printers Home (UPH) was purchased by UPH Partners in 2021 and is intended for redevelopment with a master planning process currently underway and the creation of a new urban renewal plan area. The redevelopment, which will include three phases, intends to provide a residential and experiential district anchored around the large and refurbished historic Union Printers building. Phase 1 is estimated to include 945 residential units; 150,000 square feet of office/health space; 58,000 square feet of civic space; and 93,000 square feet of retail space. The Union Printers Home building is slated to be converted into a boutique hotel with 200 rooms, a spa, pool, and event space. The goal is to create a mixed-use neighborhood that celebrates history, encourages innovation, and reinforces a sense of place. Supporting and enhancing connectivity and mobility improvements to and from Downtown will be vital moving forward, especially along Pikes Peak Avenue, to ensure ease of access between the rich amenities of Downtown and Printers Hill.

G. Lowell Neighborhood

Encompassing 58 acres surrounding the historic Lowell School, the Lowell Neighborhood represents a unique and historically centered new-urbanist neighborhood in the heart of the city. Originally approved as an Urban Renewal Area in 1988, the Lowell Neighborhood has experienced the most new growth of any neighborhood adjacent to Downtown in decades, providing hundreds of residential units over its 25-year life. The neighborhood is generally bound by Rio Grande Street to the north, Nevada Avenue to the west, the railroad tracks to the south, and Shooks Run to the east. Due primarily to market downturns, the area's redevelopment is not completed, and several acres still exist for new development. Lowell is an integral part of Downtown, despite being just outside the plan area boundaries, and should be treated with similar priority to core sites. The Bristow-Lowell URA is underway with two phases of residential development. Phase 1, Bristow House, will include 185 units and Phase 2, Lowell Commons, will include 185 to 205 units. All units in both phases will be attainable for households earning between 70% to 110% of AMI. Sumner House, which was completed in 2024, includes 95 housing units for residents earning 30 to 60% of the



The Lowell School was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1983.

Economic Vitality

Highlights

Supporting **small business** will benefit the overall health and vibrancy of Downtown. Creative and local businesses are what make Downtown Colorado Springs a great place to live and visit.

Many **major employers** are attracted to Colorado Springs. The Downtown core should position itself to support this growth with Class A office space, amenities, and housing.

Tourism can support businesses and increase the use of public spaces, cultural events, and entertainment venues Downtown. As tourism grows, ensure the parallel growth of diverse accommodations and amenities.

As Downtown grows, diverse and **attainable housing** types and culturally relevant amenities and businesses will be pivotal to ensure that people can stay in their homes.

Overview

Small Business Support

Employer and Employee Attraction/Retention

Tourism/Visitation

Resident Support

2 chapter

Overview

Economic vitality is the capacity of a community to sustain and grow a healthy, diverse economy that supports businesses, attracts investment, provides employment opportunities, and enhances quality of life for residents and visitors.

Downtown Colorado Springs is home to a diverse mix of businesses, attractions, and institutions. The greater Downtown area (80903 zip code) also hosts over 31,000 jobs, 20,000 of which are located within the Downtown Development Authority boundary. Downtown's economy is multifaceted with:

- Major corporate headquarters and large public institutions, providing a large, year-round employment base;
- A vibrant concentration of small, locally-owned businesses including over 70 independent retailers and over 130 food and beverage establishments;
- Several cultural, entertainment, and sports attractions aid Downtown in drawing over 12 million visitors annually from nearly 2 million unique visitors; and
- A growing resident base that is generating a growing demand for new businesses to support their everyday needs.

Sustaining Downtown's economic vitality requires ongoing support, investment, and attention across multiple areas. Within the Downtown context, four primary categories define economic vitality: small business support, employer and employee attraction and retention, tourism and visitation, and resident support.



Source: Downtown Partnership

The Ed Robson Arena draws thousands of visitors each year.

Small Business Support

Small businesses are the backbone of Downtown. The majority of Downtown businesses are considered "small" with roughly 60% employing five or fewer people. These small businesses represent a wide spectrum of industries from businesses in office-oriented sectors including professional services, finance, insurance, and real estate, to retail, food and beverage, and service businesses.

Small businesses occupy a variety of buildings and spaces throughout Downtown. Ensuring access to suitable, affordable, and attractive workspaces is a key component to support existing small businesses and attract future businesses.

Common challenges identified through the planning process for these businesses include availability of small commercial spaces, impacts of rising rental rates, and access to capital to support reinvestment and expansion. Strategies to support a wide variety of affordable commercial spaces to support small businesses Downtown include:

- Expanding the current Building Enhancement Grant Program (which focuses on exterior improvements) to include renovation and conversion of ground-floor commercial spaces to support smaller store formats and sidewalk/property greening and beautification improvements. Focus on supporting projects that create new storefronts that orient to adjacent public spaces and enhanced alleyways through greater grant amounts or prioritizing funding these types of projects.
- Supporting the adaptive reuse of outdated office and commercial spaces to new, more vibrant uses through grants/loans/TIF provided by the DDA and Urban Renewal Authority and through other sources such as State and Federal Historic Tax Credits.
- Continuing to use the DDA Tenant Ownership Loan Program to support businesses with purchasing their own commercial space and/or building through low-cost loans, and where possible, identify and inventory suitable businesses and properties willing and able to use the program.
- Assisting small businesses by providing educational and informational resources to help them leverage State and federal resources including loans through the Small Business Administration, financing programs offered through local Community Development Finance Institutions and New Market Tax Credits, Enterprise Zone tax credits, and Opportunity Zone tax incentives.
- Identifying gaps in Downtown's business mix and working with commercial brokers to connect prospective tenants to vacant spaces. These efforts should include preservation of valuable tenant finishes (e.g., grease traps, venting hoods) and continuing to utilize the retail incentive program to attract desired retailers, restaurants, and service providers.
- Expanding the existing Downtown Pop-Up Shop Program to year-round in collaboration with building owners and commercial brokers to encourage temporary storefront activations in vacant spaces to support small businesses such as startups/entrepreneurs and artists while enlivening the public realm.
- Exploring possibilities for expanding program funding to assist property owners in making buildings habitable in exchange for participation in pop-up shop program to enhance activation and mitigate vacancies.
- Establishing a program in collaboration with the City of Colorado Springs to mitigate impacts of public infrastructure construction projects on adjacent businesses, including construction information campaigns, accessible business access, marketing/reward programs, and art integration within construction barricades to increase visibility for businesses during construction.

- Continuing to provide support and advocate for Downtown businesses through support programs such as the emergency relief grant program and through regular interaction and outreach to address emerging issues and needs.
- Exploring possibilities for DDA ownership of retail or food and beverage properties located in prime areas to use as retail or chef incubation spaces, or space for a year-round pop-up program.
- Offering staff-led and partner trainings and talks on relevant topics including marketing best practices, business trends, real estate and leasing information, disaster preparedness and mitigation, etc.
- Providing quarterly market reports to help businesses, developers, and investors stay informed on Downtown economic trends.

Employer and Employee Attraction & Retention

Downtown is a major employment center in the region and an attractive location for businesses to locate. Increasingly, employers are seeking locations that are:

- Central to a diverse and well-educated workforce,
- Well-connected with transportation and mobility options, and
- Within a close proximity to vibrant areas with a mix of retail, service, educational, and housing options.

Downtown is well-suited to attract large employers given its existing assets. The Pikes Peak Region's competitive strengths in defense, aerospace, cybersecurity, health care, and sports present the opportunity to target employers in these industries. However, these sectors often have locational and building design needs that are unique. This can include enhanced security/access and infrastructure which can complicate attraction and new development.

While most city centers experienced a significant decrease in daytime workers during the pandemic, Downtown Colorado Springs has bounced back much quicker than other peer cities. Downtown's daily worker visits are currently at nearly 90% of the pre-pandemic level and the office vacancy rate is lower than the citywide average (7.8%). This continued daytime vibrancy is a helpful factor in the attraction of additional employers. Having clusters of similar businesses, such as at Catalyst Campus, help spur innovation and further business formation, building on the region's target industries and driving further demand. Despite the strong bounce back of the employment base in Downtown, increased visitation, and growing residential base, Downtown has not attracted significant new office developments in recent years. Strategies to support Downtown as a desired destination for major employers and businesses in the region's target industries include:

- Incentivizing the development of modern, Class A office space to support business attraction through use of tax increment financing (TIF), urban renewal, business personal property tax incentives and State job growth tax credit incentives.
- Promoting Downtown's 'Enterprise Zone' designation, which allows businesses and start-ups to claim significant tax deductions and rebates for investment and job growth.
- Continuing to support innovation and business incubation through developments such as the Catalyst Campus and through partnerships with major employers such as the Department of Defense, USOPC, and educational institutions (e.g., Colorado College, UCCS, PPSC, and Palmer High School).
- Working with Colorado Springs Chamber/EDC to promote Downtown to prospective employers.
- Promoting Downtown as a great place to work with ample daytime amenities for employees through mobility and parking support programs, wellness programs/events (e.g., free yoga in a plaza), networking and workday events (e.g., weekly food truck meet ups), and Downtown worker perk programs (e.g., store discounts).
- Working with the Colorado Springs Chamber & EDC and Colorado College to provide employee support programs, such as Hello Colorado Springs, to attract and support young professionals in Downtown, including networking events, job/career fairs, and team-building opportunities.
- Creating, in collaboration with the Colorado Springs Chamber and EDC, a 'Downtown pitch book' to use with site selectors and business prospects.
- Identifying opportunities for Downtown businesses to work with the Pikes Peak Workforce Center, Peak Education, and other Downtown educational institutions to provide on-the-job training, employee development, and mentorship/internship opportunities.
- Strategically using DDA funds to incentivize new jobs or the relocation of jobs to Downtown, specifically tailored to jobs that require full or partial in-person presence at a Downtown office and are at or above El Paso County median wages.
- Advocating for legislation at the local and State level that supports Downtown's primary employers and small businesses.

Tourism and Visitation

Downtown Colorado Springs is a major visitor destination that attracts millions of new and repeat visitors annually. Furthermore, Downtown has a growing number of cultural, entertainment, and sports attractions providing new experiences for those visitors. Weidner Field, Ed Robson Arena, and the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum are recently constructed major sporting venues and sports-related destinations that have added tremendously to the Downtown sports culture since 2016. These newer attractions have contributed greatly to the vitality of the area and are supporting a growing hotel room base that totals over 1,100 rooms. Additionally, Downtown is centrally located for visitors to access the surrounding attractions in the larger Pikes Peak Region. Downtown also holds several annual events that attract a diverse array of visitors from local residents to international travelers. This includes the Pikes Peak International Hill Climb Fan Fest, First Friday Artwalks, and the Festival of Lights Parade.

However, there are additional assets and attractions that can further increase visitation and tourism activity:

- A greater diversity of lodging options (e.g., more boutique luxury options, hotel spas, hotels with larger room blocks) could also attract visitors that choose to stay outside of Downtown when visiting the region.
- Activation of the Monument and Fountain Creek waterfronts could spur recreation tourism (e.g., recreation trails, water access).
- While Downtown has a handful of venues for live music, there are limited options for music and performing arts. Efforts to support vacant or underutilized venues could help build a critical mass and add to the diversity of talent and activation coming to Downtown.

Strategies to support Downtown Colorado Springs as a world-renowned destination for sports, entertainment, and culture include:

- Continuing to support the development of diverse lodging options using incentive programs such as DDA tax increment financing (TIF) and Urban Renewal TIF agreements.
- Growing the capacity for meetings and events by supporting reinvestment in existing event spaces and the attraction of a new hotel and conference center (see the Catalytic Sites and Big Ideas section for more information).
- Continuing to support efforts to host events and festivals that draw more people Downtown through Creative District efforts and the Signature Events Grant.
- Promoting Downtown as a welcoming location for visitors with disabilities and investing in infrastructure and amenities that support differently-abled visitors by implementing ADA transition plans, supporting building improvements to increase ADA access, and providing wayfinding/navigation tools for vision- and hearing-impaired visitors.



Visitors participating in the Parade of Nations immersive experience at the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum.

- Supporting reinvestment in existing theaters and arts venues and the development of a new venue to increase the inventory of available spaces for music and performing arts through use of grant funding and tax abatement programs.
- Continuing to implement the Clean and Safe Pilot Program and associated lessons learned to ensure Downtown is providing an environment that welcomes all visitors and has a positive reputation for cleanliness, health, and safety.



Source: Working Fusion


Source: Working Fusion

We Fortify's Working Fusion tiny home village was completed in 2022.

Neighborhoodification

Downtown is an attractive neighborhood thanks in part to the thousands of new for-rent, residential units over the past decade. Growing Downtown as a mixed-use place is a major element of a worker attraction and retention strategy, and a large, diverse resident base in and around Downtown is essential to long-term economic vitality and business growth. New residents add to both the customer and employee base for existing businesses in Downtown and also spur demand for new businesses that provide 24/7 activation and don't just serve daytime employees and tourists. These new businesses and amenities are necessary to make Downtown living more attractive and accessible to a wider range of people. Strategies to support Downtown as a vibrant urban neighborhood with services and amenities to support all types of residents include collaborating with economic development partners to provide incentives for:

- Housing projects with greater incentives for missing housing options (e.g., for sale and mixed income).
- Attracting a full-service grocery store to Downtown.
- Attracting a pharmacy and other retailers that provide everyday retail goods/services (e.g., cleaning products and toothpaste)
- Encouraging and supporting the incorporation of amenities such as childcare, plazas, green spaces, space for mobility options (e.g., bike parking, transportation services), health and fitness opportunities, and others into new development projects.
- Supporting local and statewide legislation that meaningfully improves the 'construction defects' environment in Colorado to support more for-sale housing projects and urban density and standing against legislation that would be onerous to development.

See "Community Preservation and Inclusive Growth" in the Land Use chapter for more recommendations for supporting local residents.



Image Source: U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum

Parks, Trails, and Waterways

Highlights

Ongoing evaluation and revitalization of the city center's parks will keep them **vibrant and well-loved** by both residents and visitors. Each Downtown park contributes in its own unique way, and together they provide recreational opportunities that serve a wide variety of users.

Future opportunities should be identified and pursued, such as closing gaps in parks with added recreation and green space, and expanding Downtown's **recreational offerings** to reflect evolving trends

Since the last plan update, there have been significant enhancements to the **Legacy Loop.** However, completing the final southeastern link is a top priority. This will not only enhance one of Downtown's greatest assets but also increase connections to destinations and activities throughout the core.

Downtown is fortunate to have **creeks and waterways,** but they remain underutilized. The *COS Creek Plan*, released in 2022, prioritizes a range of projects designed to enhance recreation, boost economic vitality, and restore environmental health throughout the Downtown area.

Integrating Trail-Oriented Development (TrOD) along the Legacy Loop and other multi-use trails will better connect residential and commercial areas, enhance mobility, support local businesses, and encourage healthier lifestyles.

Overview

Downtown Parks

Other Park Opportunities

The Legacy Loop Trail System

Waterways

Trail-Oriented Development

3 chapter

Overview

Colorado Springs' connection to and celebration of the natural environment is ingrained in the origins and very fabric of the city. Beyond its incomparable views of Pikes Peak, Downtown's most tangible connection to this history and beauty is through its parks and trails.

Parks are known for their health and recreational benefits but also provide significant economic benefits. Colorado Springs' parks certainly provide a huge appeal to tourists, and a study from the Trust for Public Lands determined that proximity to parks raised residential land values by over $1.1 billion citywide, generating about $3.75 million in additional tax revenue. As Downtown continues to develop new residential opportunities, proximity to America the Beautiful Park, Acacia Park, and other green spaces can boost the value of this development by 5%, according to the same study. Additional economic benefits include stormwater infiltration, carbon sequestration, sales-tax generation from sporting goods equipment, and reduction in healthcare costs due to physical activity.

This section addresses the Legacy Loop and discusses how the role of Downtown parks can be expanded to better serve both residents and visitors. As new development and density influence the area, it is important to rethink the scale and variety of parks and gathering spaces available in the core. It is also critical to more proactively address access to the great asset of Downtown's adjacent waterways.

The Legacy Loop Trail enhancements and the parks and greenways that nearly encircle the city center are unique assets for residents and visitors alike, and an attractive amenity to employers and investors in Downtown. Historic Acacia, Alamo, and Antlers parks punctuate the core's urban grid, while America the Beautiful Park creates an amazing backdrop to the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum. Monument Valley Park serves as a historic amenity and contains the Pikes Peak Greenway Trail that leads south to Dorchester Park as part of the Legacy Loop, with Shooks Run Trail rounding the eastern edge leading to South Shooks Run Park. A short distance east of Downtown are the amenities of Prospect Lake and Memorial Park.

Completing missing trail links and better connecting Downtown to the Loop are key imperatives of this Plan. In concert with existing recreational and open space assets, these improvements will support numerous goals of this Plan, including becoming the cultural and civic heart of the region, supporting and enjoying the natural environment through recreational opportunities, and supporting urban design for walkability, connection, and inclusion.



The Legacy Loop trail is a valuable asset in all seasons.

Downtown Parks

Downtown parks provide recreational and gathering opportunities amongst old established trees, open green areas, and manicured landscaping. There are three main City parks within Downtown, including Acacia Park, America the Beautiful Park, and Antlers Park. In addition, Alamo Square Park provides a landscaped plaza surrounding the Pioneers Museum, and Monument Valley Park, Dorchester Park, and South Shooks Run Park connect into Downtown via trail connections. Furthermore, Memorial Park, home to Prospect Lake, is a regional park that is easily accessible from Downtown by walking, biking, or transit.

As a guide for this Plan, the *Downtown Historic Parks Master Plan* and the 2014 *Colorado Springs Park System Master Plan* discuss strong support for Downtown revitalization and infill as a key opportunity for future improvement in the system. The City of Colorado Springs is currently working on an update to the *Park System Master Plan*. As Downtown continues to grow and redevelop, there will be a need to reimagine existing parks while also creating new opportunities for recreation, gathering, and play, ranging from amenity-rich trails and pop-up activities, to community gardens and informal gathering spaces. Additionally, the *Colorado Springs Park System Master Plan* identifies a very high proportion of residents who enjoy the city's recreation and outdoor opportunities and utilize parks to hold special events to promote tourism.

The City's Department of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services should continue to promote Downtown as the city's premier place for unique and cutting-edge park experiences. Examples include maintaining immersive playscapes for kids, and spaces for dogs and owners, creating a sense of respite in the urban core, and integrating cultural experiences through special events and seasonal programming. The following summarizes the existing character and future opportunities for Downtown's primary parks.

ACACIA PARK

Acacia Park serves as one of the centers of activity and recreation Downtown and continues to be used by a diverse audience. Its proximity to the retail core of Tejon Street increases its visibility to Downtown visitors and solidifies its role as a major site for events. In 2020, the City adopted the *Downtown Historic Parks Master Plan* for Acacia Park. In addition to the recently installed interactive all-age play area primary site, improvements in the future should include:

- Incorporating a new visitor center with a stone seating area
- Including permanent food stalls and a dining area amongst trees
- Adding artificial turf amphitheater seating
- Preserving key site features such as Uncle Wilber Fountain and Bandshell, while identifying ways to adaptively upgrade the Bandshell with modern sound and light systems to enhance visual art and musical experiences on stage
- Incorporating permeable paving, new park lighting, and fun seating.

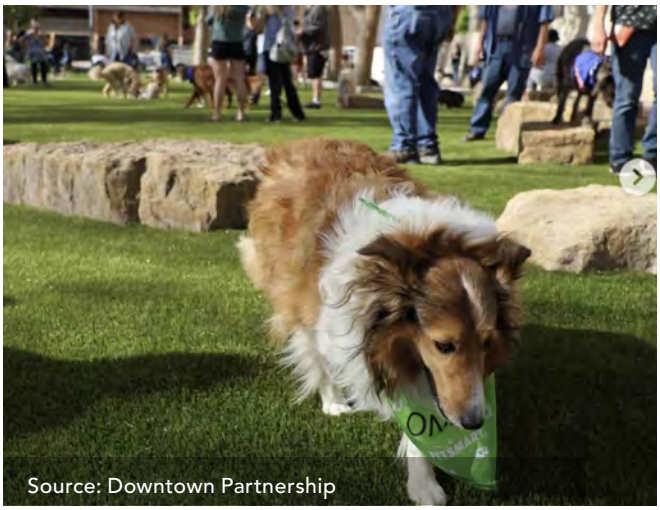


The newly installed all-ages play area at Acacia Park is already a popular feature of the park.

ANTLERS PARK

Antlers Park, once a prominent site for train passengers disembarking at the Denver & Rio Grande Train Station across Sierra Madre Street, has become one of the least activated green spaces Downtown. Hidden from most of the core by the Antlers Hotel to the east, the park has seen little active use among its giant historic shade trees. However, with the recent opening of an off-leash dog park and new businesses in the adjacent historic depot, Antlers Park has seen some reactivation. As a part of the *Downtown Historic Parks Master Plan*, further key improvements could provide more activation:

- Incorporating an ADA-accessible tree canopy walk
- Incorporating a shaded lawn area to host informal picnics or be transformed to program events (i.e., markets, outdoor theater)
- Incorporating a public garden plaza and promenade
- Including a playground that incorporates nature play elements and signature play features, adding large boulder climbing walls
- Installing vertical vegetation and public art on publicly owned parking garage wall
- A public festival street to cooperatively function with the public park plaza space


Source: Downtown Partnership

The 2024 opening of Antlers Park Dog Park brought Downtown's first dog park, and with it came many two- and four-legged visitors.

AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL PARK

America the Beautiful Park lives up to its name, with majestic views of Pikes Peak and a combination of manicured and natural areas, including interactive art features, the iconic Julie Penrose Fountain, play elements, and the confluence of Monument and Fountain creeks. The newly constructed pedestrian bridge near the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum allows easy access to the park from Downtown for pedestrians and micromobility users alike. The reconstruction at the Interstate 25 and Cimarron interchange included new multimodal trail connections, making the park well-connected north and south along the Pikes Peak Greenway, west along the Midland Trail into Old Colorado City, and east into Downtown. Equally important, America the Beautiful is highly visible along the Interstate 25 corridor, emphasizing the park as an iconic element of Downtown.

Although iconic and well-connected via trails, the park sits between a railroad and an interstate with limited street access and limited parking for special events. This can cause access issues during large events, such as races. This must be taken into account and planned for when programming the space. Development of adjacent vacant parcels should, as a key element, improve access to the park. Additionally, new development could activate key park boundaries with compatible uses such as park side eateries or ice cream shops. The *COS Creek Plan* also provides guidance for the areas in and around America the Beautiful Park to facilitate the activation and integration of the creekfront and the park.

These future recommendations include:

- Creating a River Beach that offers direct access from the park to the creek
- Incorporating restrooms, changing areas, and public spaces such as plazas
- Activating the existing lawns with festivals and events
- Considering new pedestrian bridges over the creek to unite the east and west neighborhoods
- Creating a terraced lawn to facilitate confluence access
- Expanding river access terraces to create creekside seating and watersports viewing



Source: Visit Colorado Springs

The Julie Penrose Fountain at America the Beautiful Park is a landmark of Colorado Springs.

Other Park Opportunities

ALAMO SQUARE PARK

Alamo Square Park provides visitors with historic features, elegant landscaping, and hardscaped surfaces that surround the Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum. Although centrally located, the park does not see near the amount of impromptu visitors as Acacia Park, likely due to its passive programming and less active elements, including gazebos, gardens, and sculptures, as well as the surplus of adjacent civic land uses that do not draw consistent foot traffic. However, it is a popular park for several annual events. The park has much to celebrate given its historic significance as the home to the Pioneers Museum. In addition to the recent historic gazebo rehabilitation project, the *Downtown Historic Parks Master Plan* identifies the following key improvements aimed at hosting more events in the park:

- A formal civic stage with flanking accessibility ramps and renovated stairs
- Expanded civic plaza space including a paved labyrinth called, "Story of Us"
- Newly planted shade trees and revived planting beds
- A "City Porch" area with café tables, seating, flexible food truck parking stalls, and a light walk with traditional amenities



The renovated historic gazebo outside the El Paso County Courthouse.

PARK ACCESS

Prior to enjoying the qualities of any park, residents need to be able to safely and easily get there. The park access analysis identifies areas currently served and unserved by existing parks. The following map illustrates areas served within a 5-minute walk (1/4 mile) and 10-minute walk (1/2 mile—national standard) to City parks with facilities and amenities (excluding greenways and open spaces). The park access analysis considers the actual paths of travel to parks by including street and trail networks. The analysis methodology also factors in physical barriers such as railroads, disconnected street networks, highways, flood channels, and river corridors that limit accessibility.

The result of the analysis reveals areas that are currently unserved by City parks. Overall, Downtown residents are well-served, with no gaps within a 10-minute walking distance of a City park. Residential areas in the northeast and the southwest have gaps within a 5-minute walking distance of a City park and should be prioritized for future park and recreation opportunities.

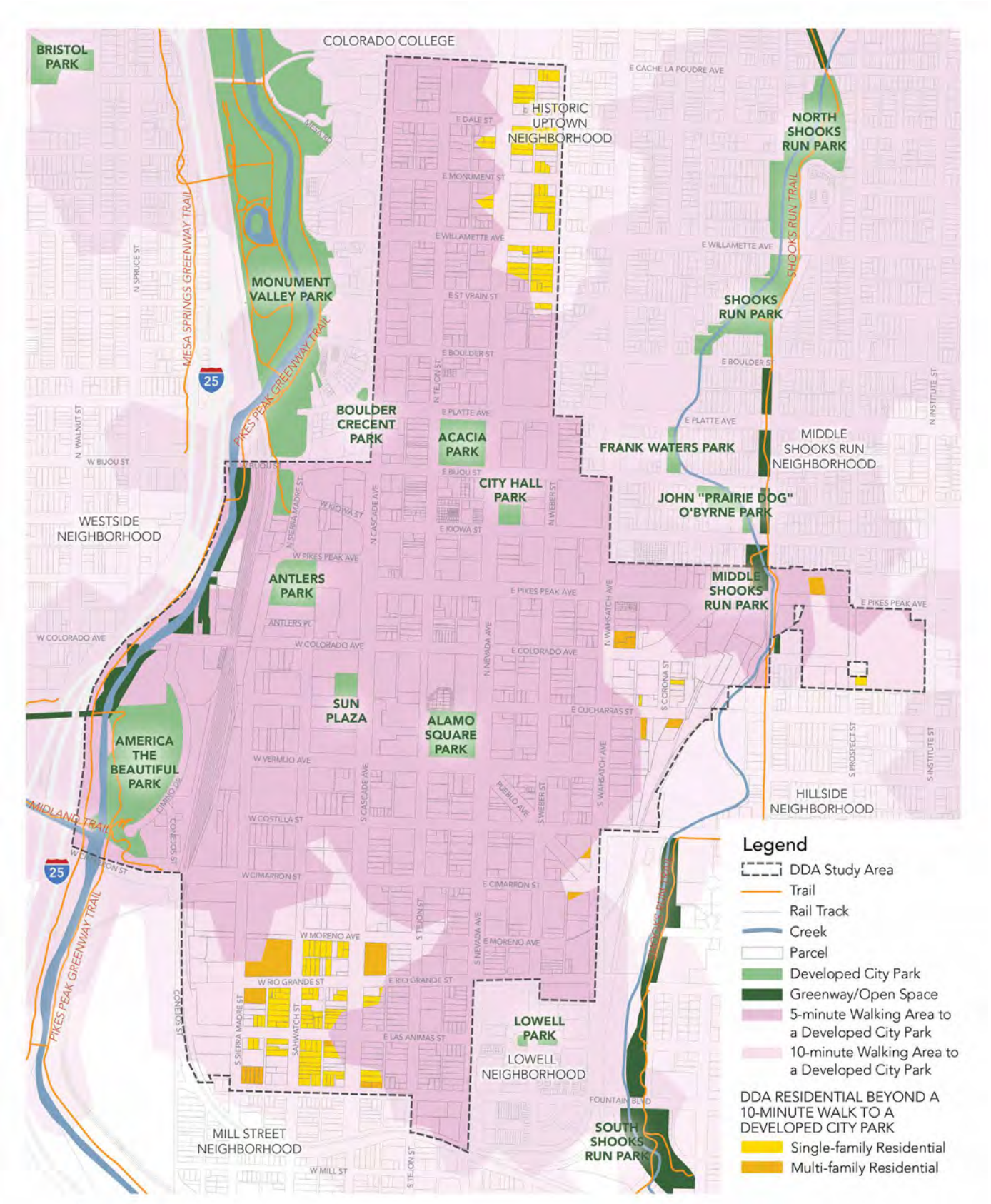


Figure 3.1 | Downtown Park Access and Residential Gaps

POCKET PARKS/PLAZAS

To help fill park gaps, pocket parks or plazas could provide low-cost recreation and green space opportunities. Pocket Parks are small sites, typically less than one acre, which provide green space, passive social space, and in some cases, a small-scale recreation feature. Plazas are small parks with hardscape and green space that provide social gathering opportunities in urban and commercial areas.



Previously a car-centric street, Moreno Avenue has been transformed into a pedestrian plaza.



Example pedestrian plaza features that influenced design of Moreno pedestrian promenade.

PARK IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

Respite

New and existing Downtown parks and public spaces should incorporate various styles of shade features, including trees, shelters, umbrellas, sails, and lattices to support community health and add to the character of the site.

Unique styles of seating in parks, in addition to traditional picnic tables and benches, will enhance opportunities for social gatherings. Long tables, movable chairs, Adirondack chairs, seat walls, and quiet "respite" areas along trails are recommended.



Long seating options provide new opportunities for socializing.



Unique park seating options.

Active Recreation

A variety of active recreation opportunities should be provided in Downtown parks to support community health, fitness, and diverse cultural needs. New trends include the provision of futsal, pickleball, disc golf, bocce ball, badminton, table tennis, sepak takraw, tai chi, tricycle and big wheel tracks, bike pump tracks, fitness equipment, and other features, in addition to more traditional sports fields and courts.

New trends in park design favor diversifying play opportunities to include playable art, pop-up play spaces, nature play elements, colorful safety surfacing, unique climbers, sand and water play, added topography, and universal play elements.



Sepak takraw



Pickleball

PLACE MANAGEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT

A significant part of ensuring that Downtown residents and visitors can use and enjoy parks is ensuring adequate maintenance and upkeep. To maintain a highly functioning park system with an iconic image, Downtown's parks should be maintained at a high level, so that facilities and amenities are updated and repaired regularly. This can be accomplished by coordination between public funds (City), DDA investment, private donations, and nonprofit contributions. Further, amenities that are well used, e.g., a dog park, can allude to the need for additional space or enhanced space for that use.

Currently, the BID and City partner to maintain and enhance Downtown. Within the BID boundaries, the BID provides daily cleanup, landscaping, and minor snow removal in public spaces (outside of parks). The City oversees baseline public works services, including maintenance and operations of parks, medians, and traffic infrastructure. In parks, City responsibilities include mowing, watering, landscaping, trash collection, and ensuring park safety and accessibility.

While the BID already provides enhanced services Downtown, including daily litter cleanup, landscaping, power washing, and minor snow removal, they could broaden their role by expanding the area where they provide litter pickup, seasonal plantings, and decorative lighting. However, these improvements would require additional investment.

The Legacy Loop Trail System

Downtown and its surrounding neighborhoods are woven together by a natural greenway and trail system, known as the Legacy Loop (see Figure 3.2). The system consists of existing parks and trails that expand along Monument Creek, Fountain Creek, and Shooks Run. Connecting these natural assets in a loop surrounding Downtown has been a vision of the community since its founding. The City's 2014 *Park System Master Plan* notes that expanding the urban trail system is a top priority and the 2012 *Urban Land Institute Advisory Services Panel Report* also stressed the importance of prioritizing the completion of this key Downtown asset.

The Legacy Loop serves as a crucial gateway into Downtown; thus, its cleanliness, safety, and ongoing upkeep is crucial to Downtown's image. General Palmer, who dedicated thousands of acres to the city for parks and open space, supported this notion of a "Park Ring" around the city (now Downtown). Legacy Loop's approximately 10 miles of trail is activated with commuters and visitors for jogging, biking, special events, sports leagues, exploring, or just strolling. However, a major gap remains at the Loop's southeastern corner where Shooks Run Trail is intended to connect to the Pikes Peak Greenway. Additionally, new and improved facilities and updated infrastructure are needed to improve the mobility and comfort of the trail. While completion of the Legacy Loop remains a top priority of this Plan, numerous improvements have been accomplished since the last *Experience Downtown Plan* in 2016.



Source: Downtown Partnership

Legacy Loop

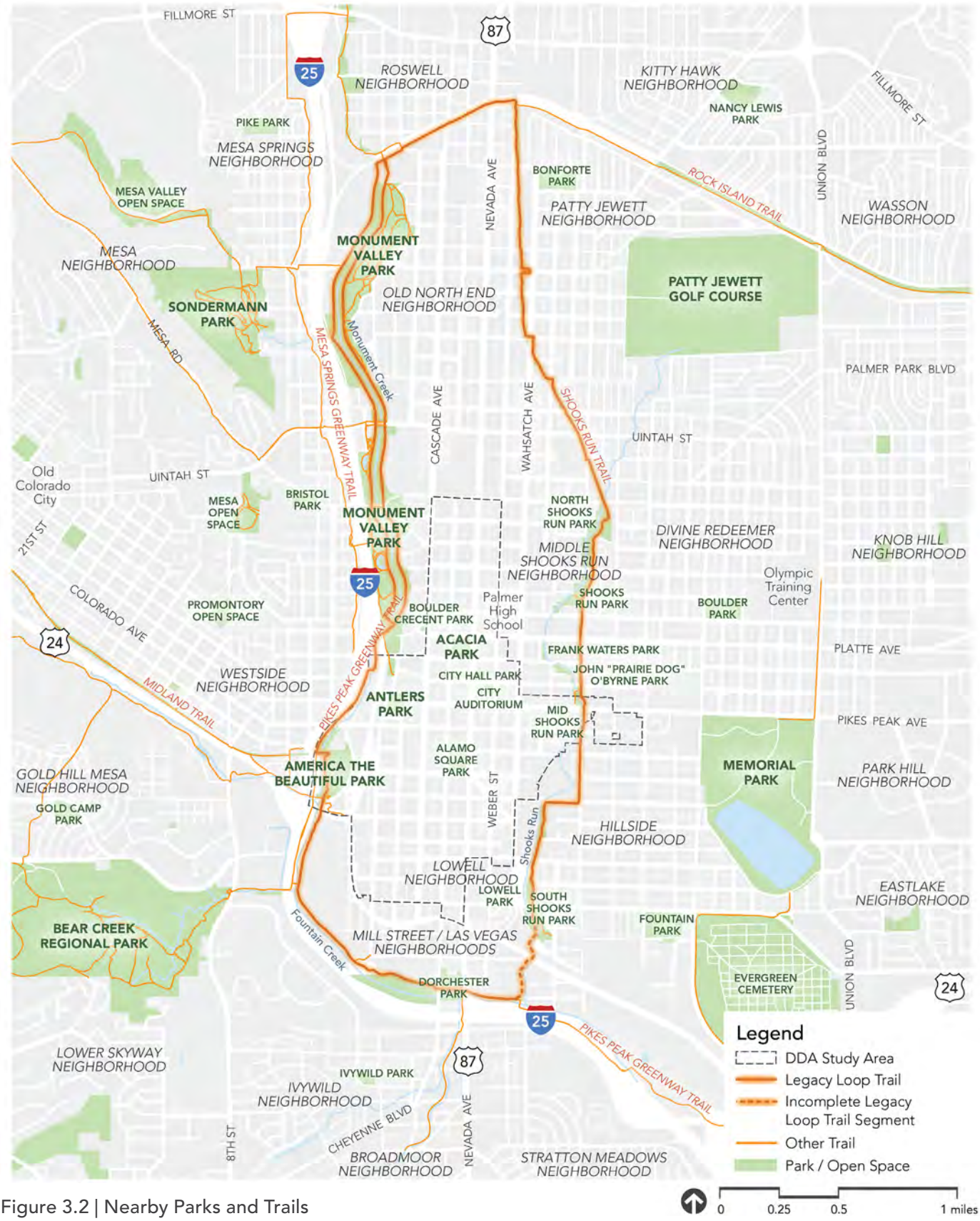


Figure 3.2 | Nearby Parks and Trails

- **Mesa Underpass (2025)**: The underpass improvement includes the installation of a pedestrian ramp with underpass access at the east side of Mesa Road for the Pikes Peak Greenway Trail. As part of the Monument Creek Stabilization Project led by Colorado Springs Utilities, this underpass provides expanded trail access, and recreational access to the creek, as well as access for utility maintenance.
- **Shooks Run Trail Crossing at Uintah Street (2025)**: A new signal synchronized with the existing traffic light will allow trail users to cross Uintah at the historic alignment.
- **Pedestrian Bridge (2024)**: A new 90-foot pedestrian bridge connected the southern portion of America the Beautiful Park over Monument Creek to the Pikes Peak Greenway and the Midland Trail.
- **Rock Island Trail Extension (2024**): Construction of Rock Island Trail from Van Buren Street to Templeton Gap was completed, including underpasses at Nevada and Cascade avenues, and connectivity to the Shooks Run Trail. This included 1.25 miles of new trail as part of the Legacy Loop.
- **Trail Easement (2020)**: A trail easement was secured as an extension of Shooks Run Trail for future trail development at the Concrete Couch site at El Paso and Boulder streets.
- **Uintah Street Underpass (2019)**: On the Uintah Street western side, an underpass was constructed on Legacy Loop, allowing pedestrians and cyclists to continue under Uintah Street without encountering motor vehicles, similar to the underpass on the east side.
- **Legacy Loop Plaza (2018)**: A plaza space was completed along the Pikes Peak Greenway with trailhead parking and landscaping, as well as future capacity for restrooms facilities, shade structures, wayfinding, and art elements.
- **Mesa Creek Crossing (2024):** This project involved the installation of a pedestrian bridge to span the Mesa Creek Confluence on the Pikes Peak Greenway, which enabled more accessible use and continued 800 feet of trail construction.
- **West Pikes Peak Greenway (Mesa Creek to Mesa Road) (2023–2024):** Following the undergrounding of overhead utilities in partnership with Colorado Springs Utilities, approximately half a mile of urban trail was constructed on the west side of the Pikes Peak Greenway, addressing a gap in the system.

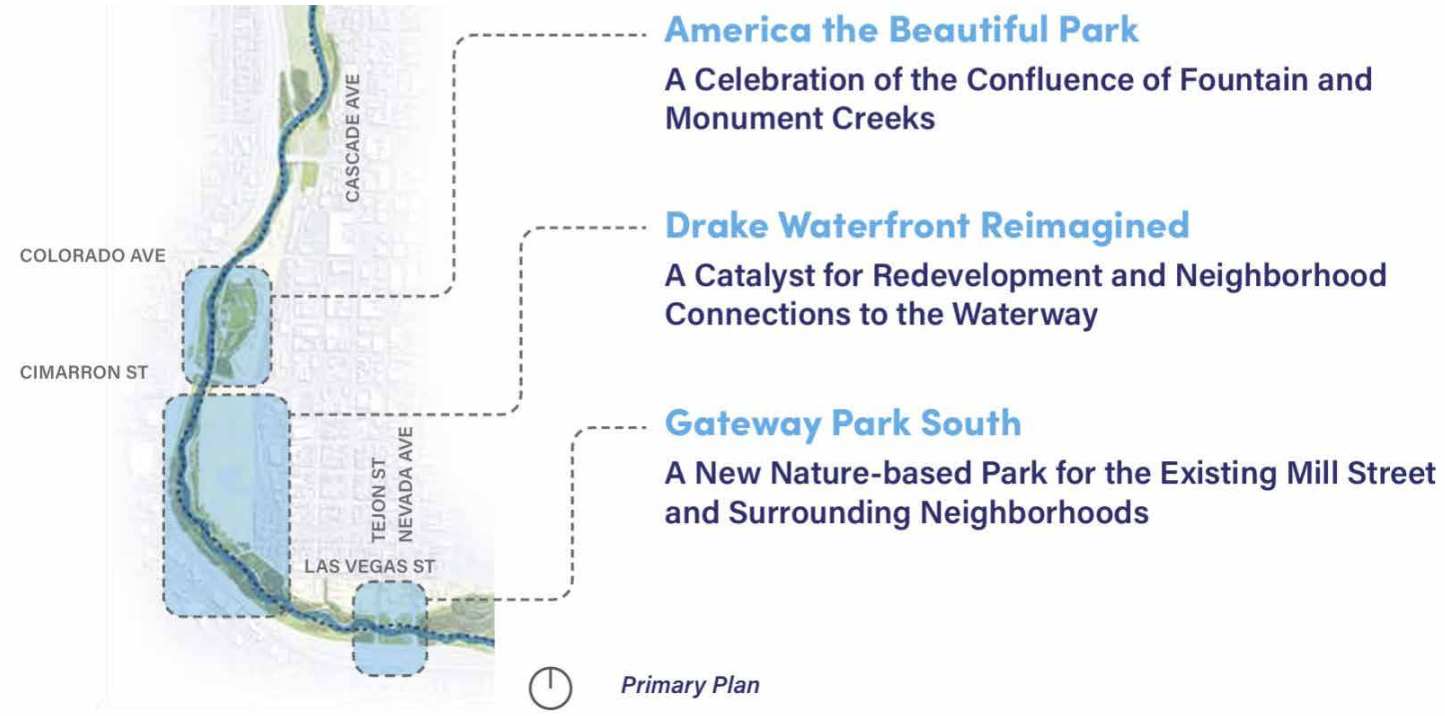
This suite of projects represents a major achievement for Downtown and greater Colorado Springs, moving one step closer to completing the Legacy Loop. Addressing the remaining connectivity gap at the southern end of the system is still a top priority for future planning and funding opportunities.

In 2017, the *Envision Shooks Run Plan* was completed, determining multimodal transportation and drainage infrastructure improvements along the 4-mile corridor, which makes up the eastern portion of the Legacy Loop. Implementation would be transformative for the corridor and address facility and infrastructure improvements.

Beyond connectivity, Legacy Loops character and navigability should be strengthened through cohesive signage and furniture while recognizing and preserving the ecological resources along the greenway and waterways. Additionally, connectivity from the trails and waterways to and from the core should be enhanced by a series of urban and neighborhood greenways.

Waterways

Although many of Downtown's waterways are currently difficult to access, there are great opportunities to emulate the success of other Front Range cities. Denver, Boulder, Pueblo, and Fort Collins have embraced their local streams and rivers by enhancing safe access and integrating them into the fabric of their cities. In 2023, Colorado Springs embarked on a planning effort to achieve similar results. The *COS Creek Plan* lays out a comprehensive strategy to enhance and expand recreation opportunities, promote economic vitality, and restore environmental qualities for the Fountain Creek Watershed with a specific focus on segments of the Monument and Fountain creeks adjacent to Downtown; recommendations are summarized as follows.



The *COS Creek Plan* includes three sites in the Downtown area: America the Beautiful Park, Drake Waterfront, and Gateway Park South.

NEW AND REVITALIZED WATERFRONT

The *COS Creek Plan* is immensely important to Colorado Springs, especially within and around the Downtown area. It establishes a long and overdue turning point for implementable plans, finally establishing a concrete and comprehensive vision for actionable change along Monument and Fountain creeks. The complete project will be a revitalizing anchor for Downtown and the identity of the City. The southern end of the *COS Creek Plan*'s purview is defined by a new linear park with multiple recreational opportunities for the existing Mill Street and adjacent neighborhoods. Visions for each park are summarized as follows:

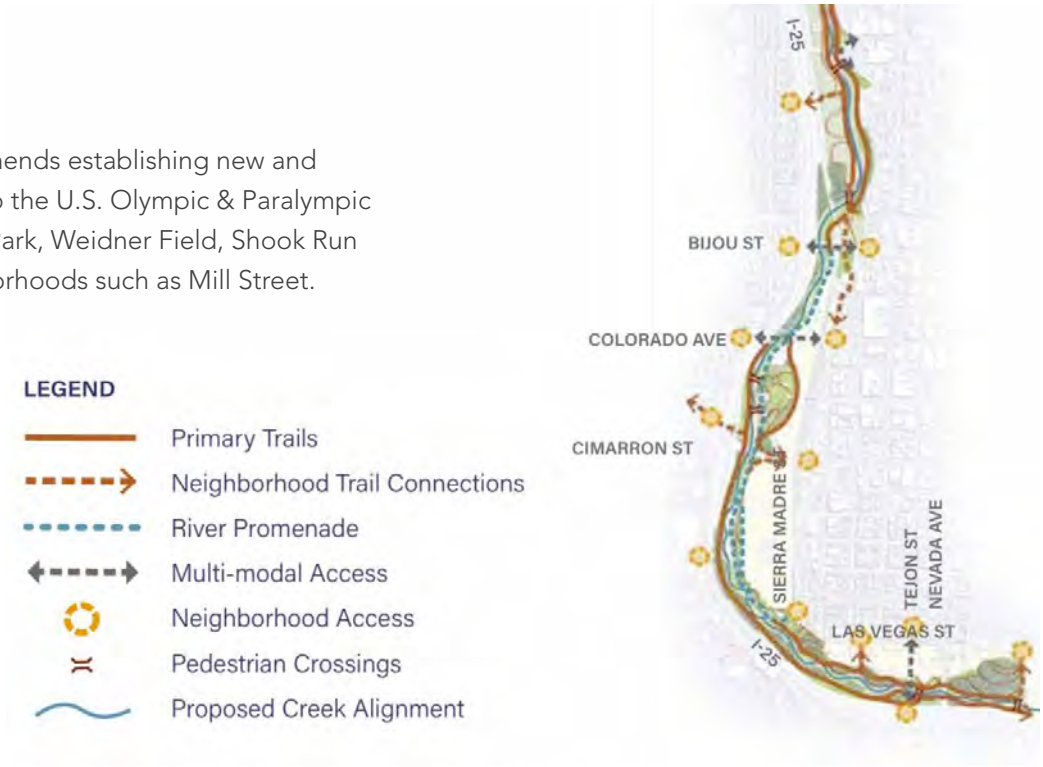
- America the Beautiful Park: Restoring Monument Creek's primary access for paddle sports, tubing, and enjoyment of its natural qualities. Short-term project (5 years).
- Drake Waterfront Reimagined: Utilize Fountain Creek for paddle sports, tubing, and informal water play. This includes a series of riffles, small drops, and pools framed by terraces and groves. Long-term project (20+ years).
- Gateway Park South: Create a new linear park in the Fountain Creek corridor with the potential for nature and water-based recreation. This includes revitalizing Dorchester Park, given it is a gathering place and gateway to Downtown.



A diagram from the *COS Creek Plan* explains how creek improvements can improve the environment and the community around it.

TRAIL CONNECTIONS

The *COS Creek Plan* recommends establishing new and improved trail connections to the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum, Monument Valley Park, Weidner Field, Shook Run Trail, and Downtown neighborhoods such as Mill Street.



REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The *COS Creek Plan* highlights the following redevelopment opportunities:

- Improve connectivity to neighborhoods both within and across the watershed.
- Enhance accessibility to green infrastructure improvements not seen in the corridor.
- Facilitate access to Downtown in support of key City for Champions projects and other economic vitality projects.
- Reflect the cultural and artistic interests of Colorado Springs.
- Add options for multimodal connections to Downtown and historic neighborhoods.

See pages 121 to 124 for more opportunities regarding trail-oriented development.



AREA-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Looking closer at Monument Valley Park, recommendations from the *COS Creek Plan* include:

- Aligning the western levee closer to the highway.
- Creating informal trails, expanding the railroad bridge, and realigning the pedestrian bridge to improve connectivity to the waterfront.
- Focusing on water quality in and around the park by reclaiming underused land and treating run-off.

Additional recommendations and guidance from the *COS Creek Plan* for the Old Depot Area, Tejon Street's southern gateway, and Shooks Run's connection to Monument Creek include:

- Repurposing and redeveloping the industrial area between the Old Depot and Monument Creek.
- Creating better connections via pedestrian, trail networks, and promenades.
- Supporting water quality, treatment, and floodplain management.
- Enhancing riparian habitat, education, and recreational opportunities.



Source: Forgotten Colorado

The *COS Creek Plan* recommends environmental remediations and pedestrian improvements to Monument Valley Park.

Trail-Oriented Development

Trail-Oriented Development (TrOD) integrates multi-use trails with residential and commercial development. By clustering mixed-use development with multimodal places, the intent of TrOD is to improve the area's mobility, strengthen businesses, and promote healthier lifestyles. Given the envisioned trail and redevelopment areas along Monument and Fountain Creeks (as identified in the *COS Creek Plan*) and along Shooks Run (as envisioned in the Envision Shooks Run Corridor Facilities Master Plan), opportunities for TrOD throughout Downtown Colorado Springs are numerous including major emphasis on the Legacy Loop. These opportunities are summarized as follows:



Source: *Central Indiana Trail-Oriented Development Study*

Trail-Oriented Development (TrOD) along the Museum Reach, a pathway in San Antonio, Texas.

MONUMENT CREEK

- Old Depot Area
  - Redevelop industrial area between the Old Depot and Monument Creek with new vehicular access, expanded parking, and an outdoor gathering area for arts festival or beer garden.
  - Build a pedestrian promenade over Monument Creek and under Colorado Ave, connecting to America the Beautiful Park.
- America the Beautiful Park
  - Redevelop vacant and underutilized parcels east of the park.
  - Encourage private investment to utilize the park and creek.
  - Build a terraced lawn with creek access to invite visitors.
- Drake Waterfront
  - Build a river beach and access terraces to invite visitors to the waterfront.
  - Create a flexible sloped lawn and stepped seating area that dedicates space to socialize and recreate.
  - Establish a pedestrian promenade, new pedestrian bridge, and plaza connecting new areas to existing trails.
  - Promote future development with a new roadway connecting to existing neighborhoods.
- Tejon Street's Southern Gateway
  - Promote future development that utilizes the park and creek.
  - Build a river beach and access terraces to invite visitors to the waterfront.
  - Create a flexible sloped lawn and plaza with shaded seating for events, socializing, and recreating.
- Throughout
  - Integrate public art to create a cohesive art line/art trail and integrate wayfinding to facilitate a cohesive experience.

SHOOKS RUN

- Establish a continuous, grade-separated multi-use trail along the Shooks Run channel.
- Develop new park trails and trail connections to surrounding neighborhoods and new development.
- Incorporate street-level promenades, urban waterfront parks, and parks with expanded programs and activities.
- Build new pedestrian and bicycle bridges:
  - Rio Grande Street
  - Cimarron Street
  - South of Vermijo Avenue (connected with the urban park)
  - Colorado Avenue
  - St. Vrain Street (with trailhead parking)
  - Bijou Street
- Improve roadways at Fountain Boulevard and Costilla Street to include features designed to enhance mobility.



Trail-oriented development in Carmel, Indiana.

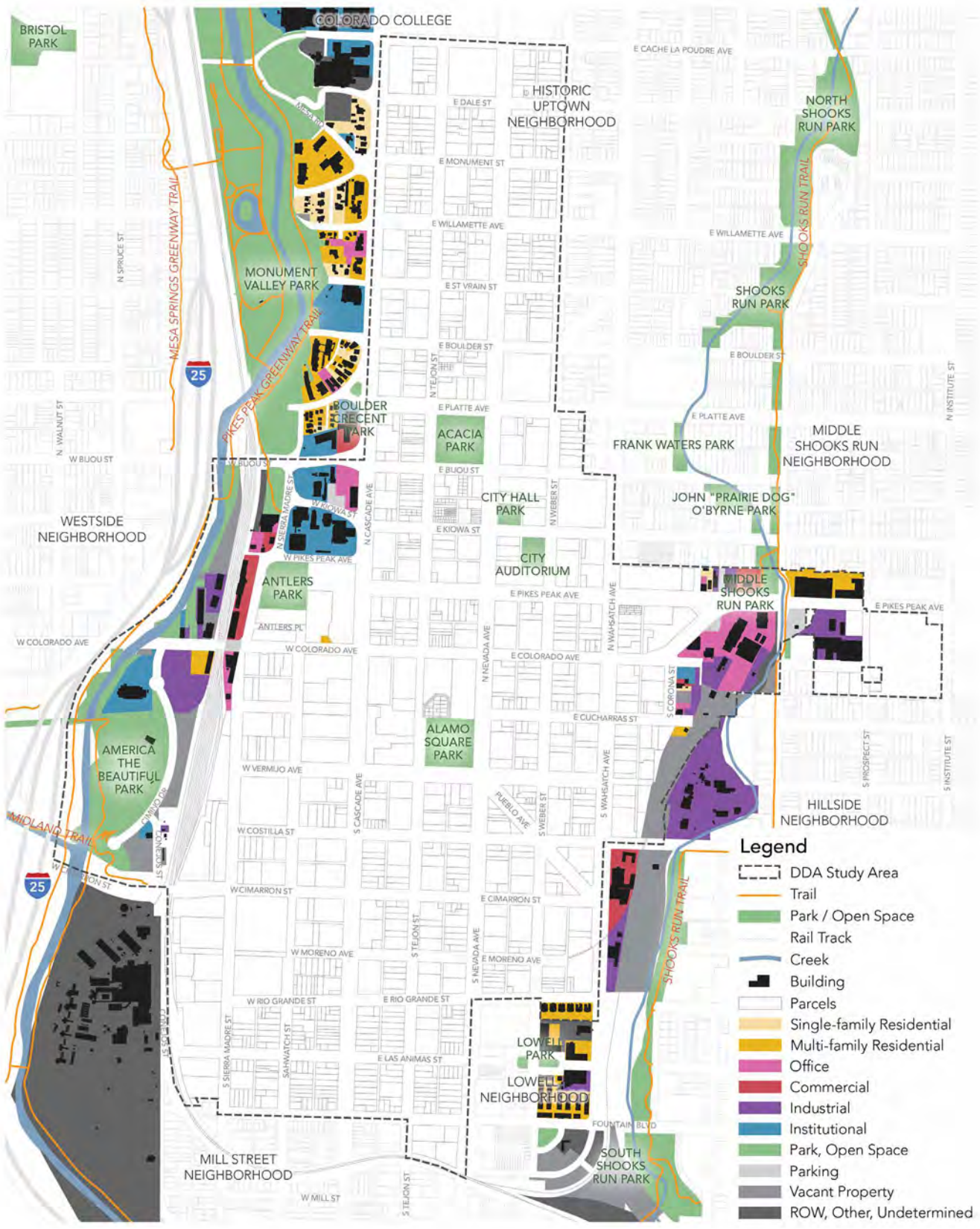


Figure 3.3 | Potential Trail-Oriented Development Sites

In summary, underutilized land use adjacent to Monument and Fountain creeks and Shooks Run could support further redevelopment opportunities in surrounding underutilized properties. As shown in the map below, vacant and underutilized parcels (such as surface parking lots) may be redeveloped to support TrOD and waterfront activation. While there are opportunities to redevelop vacant parcels adjacent to Monument Creek near America the Beautiful Park, there is greater opportunity to redevelop vacant and underutilized property near Shooks Run. TrOD opportunities and best practices for redevelopment include:



Source: *The Right Path: A Trail-Oriented Development Primer*, Houston-Galveston Area Council

Core Public House, one of many examples of successful TrOD along the Razorback Greenway in northwest Arkansas.

- Establish a mix of uses to best support TrOD, ensuring the area is most active with people there at most times of day and throughout the week. Appropriate uses may include higher-density residential, commercial, retail, office, entertainment, civic, institutional, and public open space.
- Orient building frontages towards the multimodal trail corridor and urban public spaces such as the plaza and parks.
- Connect various destinations along the Legacy Loop to potential bike-oriented retail, gyms, and other business and amenity types that may be directly relevant for trail users.
- Activate the ground floor of buildings with highly visible entrances oriented towards and within a visual proximity of the trail but also consider a public-facing entrance towards adjacent streets and/or parking areas.
- Establish setbacks to ensure adequate space for pedestrians and amenities.
- Design landscaping to provide shade and rest opportunities, be aesthetically pleasing, contribute to the trail's identity, break up large façades, and separate pedestrian and vehicular spaces.
- Incorporate public art to reflect the character of the surrounding area and fit within the context of the neighborhood.
- Establish urban plazas with unique site furniture and play opportunities in conjunction with trail development, creating walkable, well-articulated spaces.

Mobility Network

Highlights

All Downtown streets should be safe, accessible, and comfortable for walking, biking, and other forms of mobility. Streets that are not prioritized as part of this Plan's tactical mobility framework should still meet baseline minimum standards until they can be prioritized for more enhanced upgrades.

Placemaking Streets are designed to support more diverse, active, and welcoming public spaces, while creating safer, more convenient mobility options for everyone traveling Downtown.

Safety countermeasures can be used to improve safety throughout Downtown.

Active Transportation Priority Streets connect users from the Legacy Loop to the Downtown core and circulate residents and visitors within the city center.

Enhanced regional and local transit are critical aspects of creating improved mobility options for Downtown and other city residents.

The City Parking Enterprise and the County parking services must **balance operational needs with other important objectives** including urban design, economic development, and improved multimodal access.

Overview

Mobility Framework

Placemaking Streets

Intersections and Safety Improvements

Active Transportation

Transit

Vehicle Parking

4 chapter

Overview

Although Downtown has begun the process of creating more robust pedestrian and multimodal networks, much work remains. A focus on forward-thinking mobility and parking is a critical aspect of this tactical update. A balanced approach seeks to bolster active transportation and public transit as key modes for traveling to and within Downtown, while maintaining navigability and operations for cars.

Mobility and parking issues affect the experience of every resident and visitor to the city core and are crucial components of the important goal of successfully developing more housing and mixed-use density. This section addresses the hierarchy, function, and character of Downtown streets; the role of transit; and parking considerations. Additional concepts are identified to better connect Downtown to the Legacy Loop, enhance trails and parks, embrace Fountain and Monument Creeks, and create more livable and memorable urban spaces.

Mobility Framework

A focus on Downtown mobility is supported by the *2050 Long Range Transportation Plan* adopted by the Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments (PPACG) in 2025. It identifies critical regional multimodal corridors, i.e., routes that provide multimodal infrastructure and/or fixed transit lines, many of which connect to Downtown. These corridors include Interstate 25, Colorado Avenue, Cascade Avenue, Kiowa Street, Nevada Avenue, Cimarron Street, Uintah Street, Wahsatch Avenue, and Pikes Peak Avenue.

One noteworthy characteristic of nearly all of Downtown's major corridors is their large street widths. At either 100 feet or 140 feet, these rights-of-way are far wider than those in most downtowns. While multiple travel lanes are requisite for primary automobile routes such as Nevada Avenue (the main north–south corridor through Downtown) and major arterials connecting to I-25, for many other streets in the city center, the excess street width is an opportunity to provide more welcoming public space and safe multimodal infrastructure.

Street types are generally grouped into classes, or systems, according to the travel service that they intend to provide. The U.S. Department of Transportation classifies streets as follows:

- **Local Street** - Consists of all roads not defined as arterials or collectors; primarily provides access to land with little or no through movement.
- **Collector Street** - Provides a less highly developed level of service at a lower speed for shorter distances by collecting traffic from local roads and connecting them with arterials.
- **Arterial Street** - Provides the highest level of service at the greatest speed for the longest uninterrupted distance, with some degree of access control.

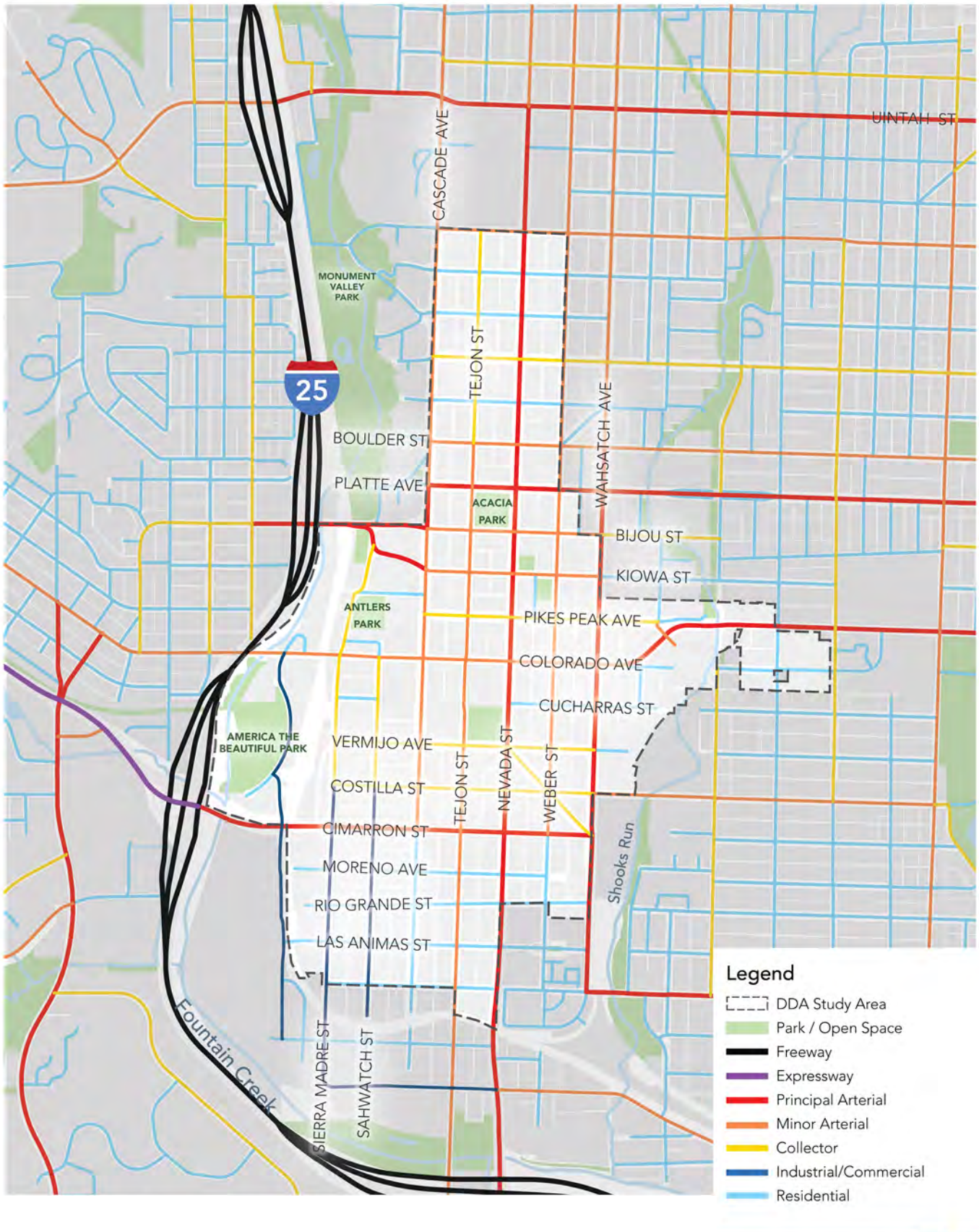


Figure 4.1 | Functional Classification of Downtown Streets

Streets in Downtown Colorado Springs are classified primarily as local streets and collector streets. Arterial streets exist Downtown, but should be limited to minor arterials, establishing safe streetscapes and comfortable spaces for non-vehicular travel. This would require Nevada and Wahsatch to be re-classified from major arterials to minor arterials. Cimmaron Street and Platte Avenue are also classified as principal arterials, as well as the segments of Kiowa and Bijou streets west of Cascade Avenue. Downtown speed limits should be posted at the lower end of existing ranges, and lanes should be narrowed to an urban scale. Though general street classifications are defined above, more detailed explanations establish Downtown's mobility framework.

The mobility framework for this Plan is described below and illustrated in Figure 4.2. Key streets are identified and categorized based on their potential character and functional role within the system. This typology addresses:

- **Placemaking Streets such as Signature Streets, Activity Streets, and Downtown Alleyways** focus on providing a great walkable environment Downtown that supports key retail, entertainment, and employment nodes;
- **Active Transportation Priority Streets** create major walking, biking, and micromobility routes through the core and provide connectivity to the Legacy Loop. They can also help address stormwater management with innovative green infrastructure strategies that preserve or re-create natural landscape features, maximize pervious surfaces, and emphasize control and treatment of water as close to the source as possible; and
- **Residential Garden Streets** are designed with lush landscaping and traffic-calming features to create an extension of the neighborhood's livable, outdoor space.

All street types in Downtown should have safe and comfortable access for walking, biking, and other non-vehicular modes of travel, as well as being accessible to individuals using wheel chairs, delivering supplies, pushing strollers, etc. However, not all Downtown streets are classified as part of the mobility framework. Rather, this framework identifies the Downtown streets that are short- to medium-term tactical priorities for creating an even more robust multimodal network for moving people throughout Downtown and connecting them to trail systems and Downtown destinations. Once these priority projects are completed, the remaining Downtown streets should be evaluated, categorized, and prioritized for enhanced multimodal access in alignment with future development patterns and emerging connectivity needs.

This Plan's emphasis on safe multimodal travel is reflected in the *City's Bicycle Master Plan*, which envisions a healthy and vibrant Colorado Springs, where bicycling is one of many transportation options for a large portion of the population and where a well-connected and well-maintained network of urban trails, singletrack, and on-street infrastructure offers a bicycling experience for present and future generations that is safe, convenient, and fun for getting around, exercising, or getting away.

New street designs Downtown should account for the capacity of all travel modes rather than just automobiles. Many of the street types in this Mobility Framework should be designed to reduce excessive automobile speeds and be more sensitive to surrounding land use context. Finally, Downtown street guidelines emphasize seizing opportunities to reallocate street right-of-way to provide wider sidewalks, safe multimodal facilities, green spaces, and natural stormwater infrastructure. The following list illustrates additional considerations and standards that should inform the design of Downtown streets moving forward.

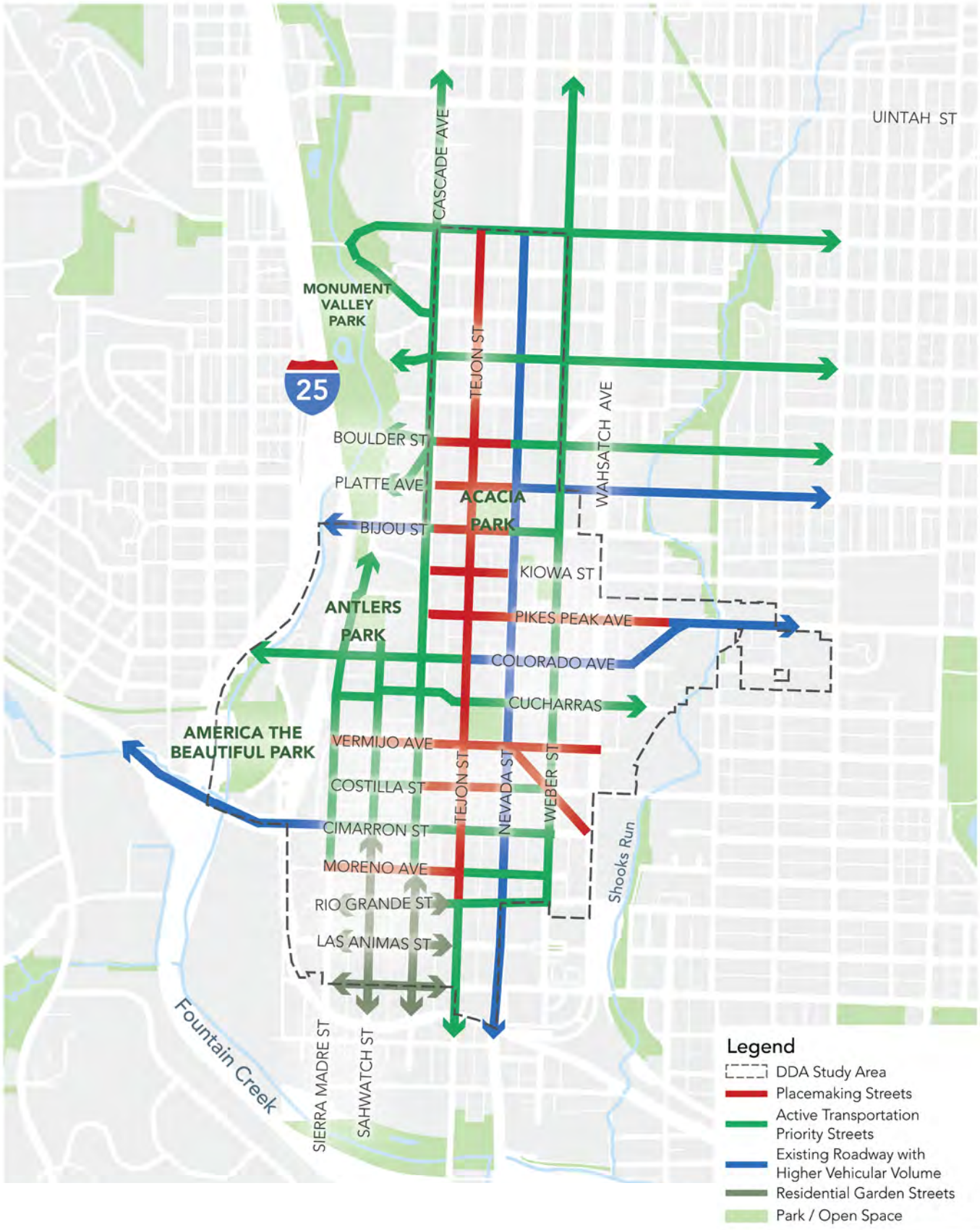
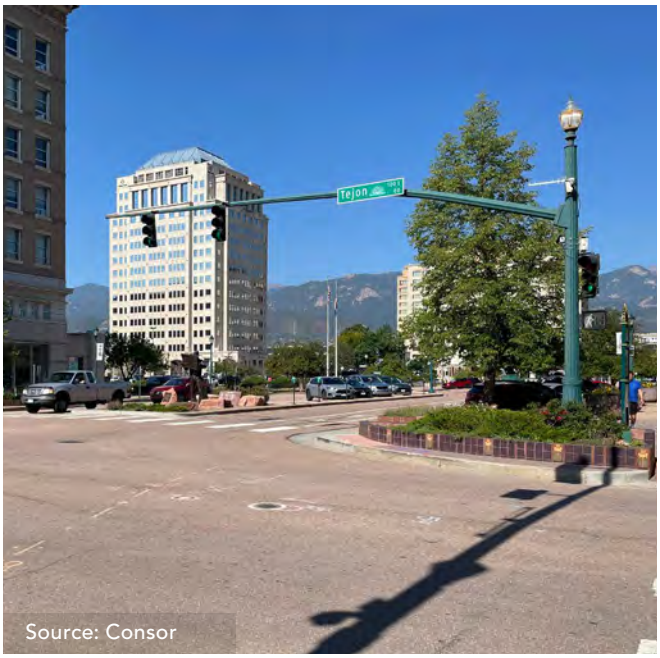


Figure 4.2 | Street Types

- Intersections should be designed to minimize inter-modal conflicts, slow the speed of automobiles (and in some cases, bicyclists), and maximize the visibility, safety, and comfort of pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Narrower travel lanes, parallel parking, alternate paving materials, signage, medians, and mid-block curb extensions can encourage drivers to use lower speeds Downtown. Alternate paving materials can increase visibility at crossings and may slow traffic at these locations.
- Space in streets and intersections that is not needed for the efficient movement of automobiles should be reclaimed to create safer environments for pedestrians, micromobility users, and transit riders.
- New and redesigned streets and intersections should take advantage of opportunities to reduce the amount of pavement and other impervious surfaces, integrating sustainable stormwater management practices where possible.
- Pedestrian priority areas should provide amenities that enhance the safety, comfort, and enjoyment of walkers, such as public art, street trees and landscaping, street furniture, and easily legible wayfinding.



Green conflict markings at a trail crossing on Van Buren Street.



Street trees and landscaping at the intersection of Tejon Street and Pikes Peak Avenue.



Amenities and gathering spaces along placemaking streets can attract and support retail and office users as shown in Noe Valley in San Francisco.

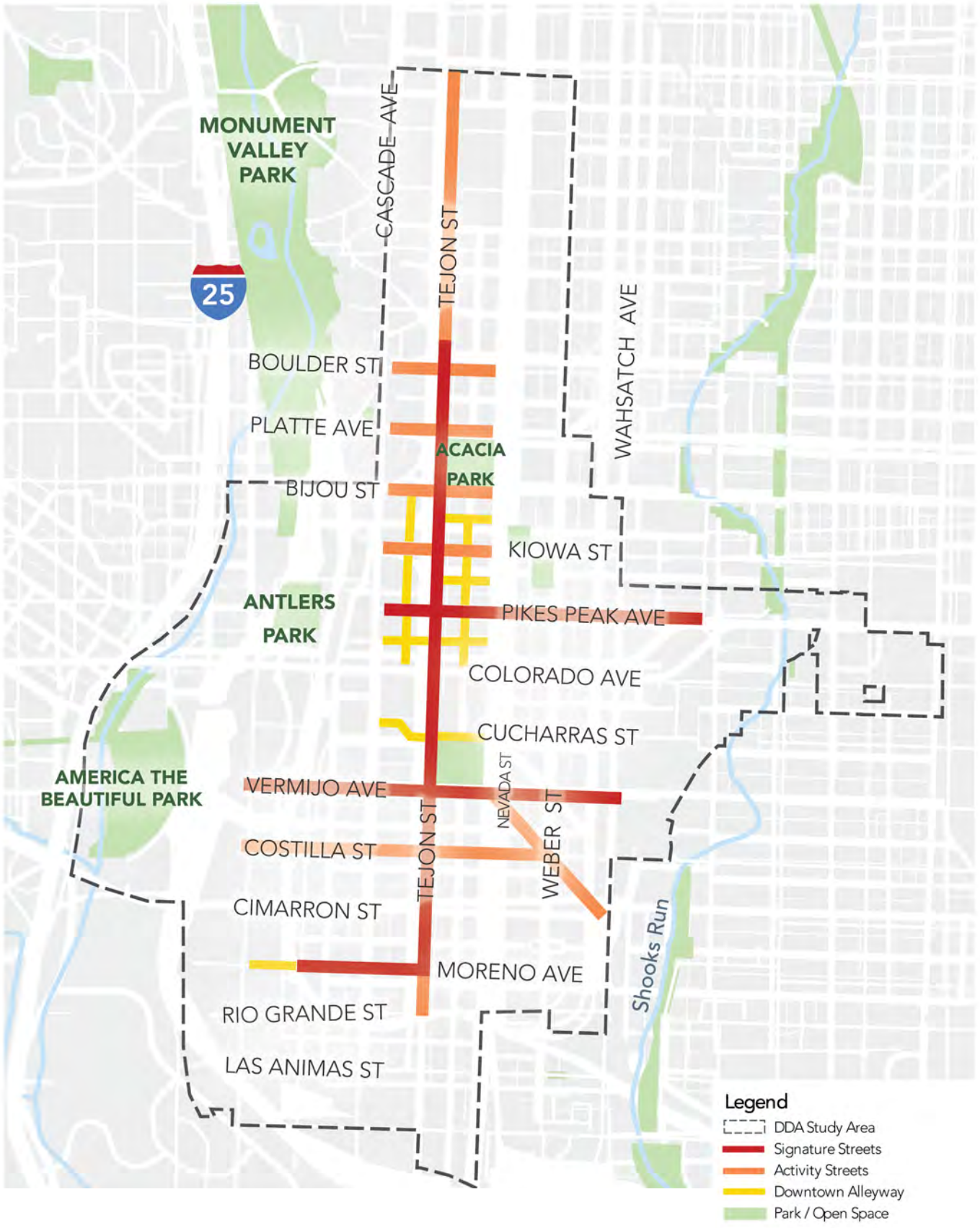


Figure 4.3 | Placemaking Streets

Placemaking Streets

SIGNATURE STREETS

Pedestrian activity with thriving retail, restaurant, and entertainment currently exists on Tejon Street between St. Vrain Street and Moreno Avenue. The Pikes Peak Avenue intersection at Tejon Street is especially characteristic of Downtown's signature streetscape and recently received pedestrian-focused improvements. By identifying Pikes Peak Avenue and Tejon Street as "spines," the mobility framework symbolically identifies the importance of these two Signature Streets to Downtown (See Figure 4.3). While it does not possess the activity levels of Tejon Street today, developing more street-level activity along Pikes Peak Avenue from "depot to depot" is a priority for connecting and revitalizing Downtown.

These key segments of Tejon Street and Pikes Peak Avenue set a precedent for Downtown's character. Serving as major walking corridors and retail attractors, these corridors are characterized by wide sidewalks; sidewalk patio dining; adjacent retail and entertainment activities; and streetscape design features such as enhanced street crossings, low-level pedestrian lighting, ornamental landscaping, pedestrian benches, and public art. Tejon Street was recently the subject of a revitalization project to expand and standardize patio spaces, widen sidewalks, add infrastructure to support the healthy growth of trees, enhance lighting, and incorporate other amenities. Street parking was preserved and new delivery zones were added to reduce conflicts on the street.

Though many Downtown streets should strive to have similar characteristics to these segments, Vermijo Avenue is primed to become a Signature Street. From Sierra Madre Street to Nevada Avenue, Vermijo Avenue has transformed into a rich gathering space by repurposing vehicle lanes in conjunction with the construction of the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum (which opened in July 2020) that serves as the street's western anchor. This first phase incorporates curbless street design, high-quality materials, and signature streetscape features to facilitate significant connection and interaction with the museum plaza. The design also highlights sustainable stormwater management practices within the public realm and streetscape.

Vermijo Avenue is positioned to become the newest antenna of Downtown's Signature Streets, connecting America the Beautiful Park and the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum to the growing foot traffic from Weber Street. Park Union is also the potential future site of a Front Range Passenger Rail station, which would bring significant additional activity to the area.

Defining Signature Streets Streetscape Elements

- Require inclusion of a great breadth of site furnishings within a defined palette;
- Encourage pedestrian gathering spaces;
- Require enhanced hardscape features;
- Require installation of landscape elements in raised beds;
- Encourage incorporation of space-saving on-street parking; and
- Require distinguished and consistent public signage that is accessible and legible for a variety of users.



Figure 4.4 | Existing: Typical Signature Street Example



Figure 4.5 | Proposed: Typical Signature Street Example

ACTIVITY STREETS

Several streets are identified in the mobility framework as a sub-type of placemaking streets, ideally suited to leveraging and expanding the pedestrian and retail orientation (see Figure 4.3). These segments should include components such as social gathering spaces, wayfinding features, mobility and access for all abilities, and designated places with capacity for events and programming. Activity Streets generally have less concentrated retail and entertainment activities in comparison to Signature Streets. Suggested pedestrian and retail-oriented extensions from the Signature Streets, defined as Activity Streets, include:

- Tejon Street north of St. Vrain Street to the Colorado College campus;
- Tejon Street south of Vermijo Avenue to Rio Grande Street;
- Boulder Street, Platte Avenue, Bijou Street, and Kiowa Street between Nevada and Cascade Avenues;
- Pikes Peak Avenue from Nevada Avenue to Corona Street;
- Costilla Street from Sierra Madre to Wahsatch Street; and
- Pueblo Avenue from Costilla Street to Vermijo Avenue.

These street segments build on what's working well along Tejon Street and Pikes Peak Avenue and respond to potential developments in areas like the South End, EaDo, and Park Union. The emphasis on north Tejon Street as a placemaking street supports Colorado College's mixed-use development with student services, retail, and Ed Robson Arena and will continue to support future developments in the campus area.

Activity Streets can support considerable commercial activities and residential uses but generally have less concentrated retail and entertainment activities in comparison to the Signature Streets. Street-level office use fills approximately 60 to 70% of the buildings on the blocks north of Acacia Park and along Colorado and Pikes Peak avenues as mixed-use development accelerates in those areas. Increased access for Downtown workers to a more accessible and connected pedestrian network will further support the retail and entertainment uses along the Activity and Signature Streets.

Pueblo Avenue is currently an underutilized two-block diagonal street southeast of the Pioneers Museum between Nevada Avenue and Wahsatch Street. It is primarily used for daytime employee parking and has several small businesses, but it is not heavily used for traffic circulation. Pedestrian islands with curb extensions were installed at each entrance to Pueblo Avenue to increase safety and improve the pedestrian experience. Several factors support its potential use as an activity street with a plaza and market. As an activity street, one or both blocks could be activated for discrete regularly occurring markets and small events, or be used in conjunction with Vermijo Avenue (and even Sierra Madre Street) to create a combined festival, plaza, or market space for larger events. Its central location is close to several catalytic development sites and is at the nexus of the City Center, East End, and South End districts.

Defining Activity Streets Streetscape Elements

- Include site furnishings within a defined palette, but at a lower density than those found on Signature Streets;
- Encourage some pedestrian gathering spaces;
- Encourage enhanced hardscape features;
- Encourage installation of landscape elements;
- Encourage installation of a median with landscape elements
- Encourage parallel street parking; and
- Require distinguished and consistent public signage including wayfinding, especially as people navigate toward attractions located on Signature Streets.



Figure 4.6 | Existing: Typical Activity Street Example



Figure 4.7 | Proposed: Typical Activity Street Example

DOWNTOWN ALLEYWAYS

Many of Downtown's alleys can be utilized to create alternative routes to and from destinations and parking facilities. Activating alleys for pedestrian use creates a finer-grained feeling of movement and access in the core. The alleys can also become welcoming spaces in their own right, inspiring secondary store entrances, outdoor dining opportunities, venues for public art and murals, event spaces, and informal gathering areas. All these uses activate the alleys, creating safer and more inviting areas for pedestrian activity, as well as greater variety and opportunity for retail and hospitality businesses.

A successful example of this is AdAmAn Alley, which runs east to west between Nevada Avenue and Tejon Street and north to south between Pikes Peak and Colorado avenues. The alley was enhanced with elements such as public art, murals, and gateway features with new textured and colored concrete surfaces, traffic-protected entrances, and waste consolidation. Now a welcoming place for pedestrians, the area has served as an event space in its own right with both primary and secondary business entrances year-round.

Alleys typically serve important functions for adjacent businesses such as waste disposal, deliveries, and off-street parking access. Depending on the space available in the alleyway, dumpsters can be consolidated and screened to separate them from pedestrian gathering spaces, and the design can allow shared use between delivery vehicles and pedestrians. In some circumstances, deliveries could be moved to appropriately designated areas on the street as long as other on-street facilities like bike lanes are not impacted.

Major Downtown alleys are the top priority for conversion and adaptation given their centralized locations and ability to facilitate mobility and retail activity in the city center. However, alleys in other parts of the core should be considered for future improvements and programming as opportunities arise. When significant redevelopment occurs on a majority of a city block, these alley enhancements should be incorporated as part of the overall development plan.

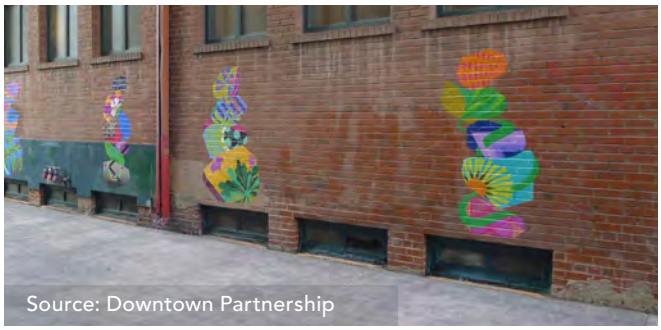
Defining Alleyways Elements

- Encourage addition of appropriate site furnishings and pedestrian lighting;
- Create conditional pedestrian gathering spaces;
- Require accessible paving material and underground utilities;
- Provide conditional landscape elements;
- Encourage parking structure access; and
- Require identity and wayfinding signage.



Source: Springsmag

Gateway sign expressing the AdAmAn Alley's identity.


Source: Downtown Partnership

Public art within the AdAmAn Alley.

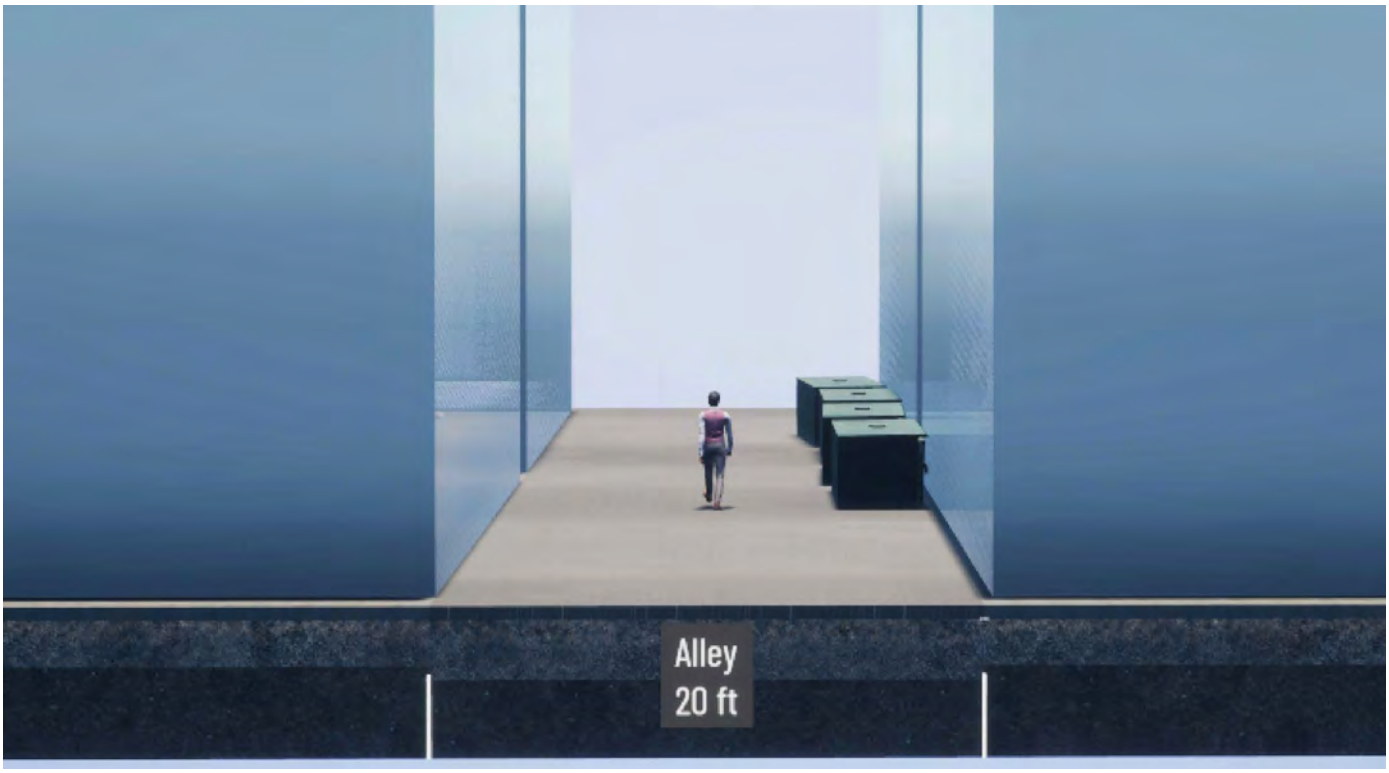


Figure 4.8 | Existing: Typical Downtown Alleyway Example



Figure 4.9 | Proposed: Typical Downtown Alleyway Example

RESIDENTIAL GARDEN STREETS

Streets in the Mill Street Neighborhood south of Cimarron Street have wide rights-of-way and low amounts of pass-through automobile traffic. Therefore, streets such as Sahwatch Avenue, Rio Grande Street, and Las Animas Street (Figure 4.2) have the potential of supporting a range of improvements such as gardens, small park spaces, green infrastructure, wayfinding features, and places for gathering and play. These features will combine to strengthen neighborhood image and identity and utilize the excess right-of-way to create spaces for living rather than just driving. Figures 4.10 and 4.11 illustrate this type of transformation on Sahwatch Street. These unique Residential Garden Streets will provide amenities that increase the distinctiveness of the neighborhood and attract new residents. This area is primarily a single-family residential neighborhood, but adjacent catalytic sites should encourage more residential and mixed-use growth in coming years. Many of these improvements can be implemented incrementally and customized to fit the needs and desires of the local residents, both existing and future. One important customization is the consideration of a more arid climate in Colorado Springs. Water-wise or xeriscape planting is recommended to lessen the burden of irrigation.

Defining Residential Garden Streets Streetscape Elements

- Encourage pedestrian gathering spaces;
- Require standard width accessible sidewalks;
- Encourage landscape improvements;
- Support bicycle infrastructure or road-sharing;
- Provide conditional on-street parking options; and
- Display wayfinding and identity signage as needed.



Community gardens are a key distinguishing amenity of Residential Garden Streets as shown in Whiteaker, Eugene.



Low Impact Development (LID) infrastructure adds beauty, stormwater mitigation, and water quality improvements to neighborhood streets as shown in Portland, Oregon.



Figure 4.10 | Existing: Typical Residential Garden Street Example



Figure 4.11 | Proposed: Typical Residential Garden Street Example

Intersection and Safety Improvements

Even one death or serious injury taking place in Downtown is unacceptable. Traffic violence is not inevitable and can be prevented. In 2023, Colorado Springs began to develop its Traffic Safety Action Plan (SAP) funded by a Federal Safe Streets For All (SS4A) Grant. The plan is scheduled for completion and adoption in early 2026. The SAP will contain an analysis of crash patterns in the city and identify systemic improvements and specific projects to improve safety. The launch of the SAP will also incorporate public education on traffic safety and create a public data dashboard.

Crashes involving pedestrians, bicycles, and micromobility users are a concern of downtowns everywhere. Downtown Colorado Springs has many amenities, destinations, and locations that generate pedestrian and non-vehicular traffic with parks, restaurants, museums, and cultural sites drawing visitors, students, workers, and residents alike. Between 2014 and 2023, there were 225 collisions involving a pedestrian or cyclist within the DDA boundary. Of these, six people were struck by a motorist and killed while walking or biking Downtown and 20 other people suffered an incapacitating injury after a motorist struck them while walking or biking Downtown.

Of the 26 severe crashes, 17 are described as taking place in an intersection or as an intersection-related crash. These crashes took place in 12 Downtown intersections. The following five intersections had more than one severe crash:

- Kiowa Street and Nevada Avenue
- Kiowa Street and Tejon Street
- Cascade Avenue and Bijou Street
- Platte Avenue and Tejon Street
- Nevada Avenue and Cimarron Street

See Figure 4.12 for a map of these streets and crash locations.

Three of the five locations listed above are along one-way streets with three lanes of through traffic (Kiowa and Bijou). The three crashes at Nevada and Cimarron all involved cars making left turns.

Several Downtown streets have multiple wide lanes and direct connections to interstate ramps — characteristics that encourage high speeds. Speed feedback signs, flashing speed limit signs such as those often deployed in school zones, and/or speed cameras could help alleviate some of these issues without relying on direct enforcement by police. Speed cameras could also be equipped with noise cameras to reduce the number of loud vehicles.

SAFETY COUNTERMEASURES

The absence of crashes does not necessarily suggest the presence of safety. Some roads with high volumes and speeds, especially with vehicles coming off the Interstate, may be perceived as unsafe. The result can be people avoiding them altogether, either by choosing a different route, replacing a trip that could have been completed by bike or on foot with driving, or abandoning the trip altogether. Areas with a documented crash history should be addressed with safety countermeasures, but so can areas with characteristics that lead to a perception of risk.

High Priority Areas

KIOWA AND BIJOU STREETS

Kiowa and Bijou streets currently operate as a one-way couplet to efficiently move cars into and out of Downtown. Crash data shows that eight severe pedestrian and bicycle crashes occurred on Kiowa and Bijou street's one-way segments, representing almost a third of all severe pedestrian and bicycle crashes Downtown between 2014 and 2023. The prior plan



Figure 4.12 | Existing Roadways with Higher Volumes and Severe Pedestrian and Bicycle Crashes

recommended converting to two-way traffic flow east of Cascade Avenue, but further technical review in the *Platte Avenue Corridor Study* found such a conversion would create insurmountable traffic operation challenges. However, traffic volumes indicated that two through lanes would be sufficient. Therefore, reallocating some right-of-way to expand the pedestrian realm and provide multimodal infrastructure on Bijou and Kiowa streets will make them viable for supporting businesses, enhancing public places, and increasing safety on Downtown streets.

Further analysis is needed to determine countermeasures to prevent pedestrian and bicycle collisions at intersections where these collisions have taken place, such as Bijou Street and Cascade Avenue, Kiowa Street and Cascade Avenue, Kiowa and Tejon streets, Kiowa Street and Nevada Avenue, and Kiowa Street and Wahsatch Avenue. Lane reductions that include the shortening of crossing distances may help, but there may be additional interventions to further enhance safety.

PLATTE AVENUE

The Platte Avenue Corridor Study recommends adding curb extensions to the intersection of Platte Avenue and Tejon Street, where collisions with pedestrians and micromobility users have occurred. This would decrease crossing distances around all four legs of the intersection and decrease the speed with which vehicles could make right turns around each corner. Further analysis may suggest additional interventions such as adding a leading pedestrian interval or other countermeasures.

COLORADO AVENUE

Additional analysis should be conducted on Colorado Avenue at its intersections with Sahwatch Street, Cascade Avenue, Tejon Street, and Nevada Avenue, where collisions with non-motorized road users have occurred.

CIMARRON STREET

As a connection between Downtown and I-25, high speeds have been noted along Cimarron Street, contributing to a feeling of peril experienced by non-motorized users crossing or moving along the corridor. Crash data indicates unsafe conditions, with four serious crashes occurring along the corridor, including three at Nevada Avenue. Further analysis is needed to identify appropriate countermeasures to balance access to and from the Interstate and the needs of pedestrians and micromobility users. These could include speed feedback signs, reduced posted speed limit to 25mph, and speed/noise cameras. Since all three collisions at Nevada Avenue and Cimarron Street involved left-turning vehicles, adding a leading pedestrian interval, pedestrian-only phase, or fully protecting the left turn could help prevent future collisions.

Additionally, adding a multi-use path to one side of Cimarron Street could provide a safe place for pedestrians, bicycles, and micromobility users to use it without being exposed to fast-moving traffic exiting or entering I-25. As this area continues to develop and more events take place nearby at Weidner Field, more foot traffic is expected, justifying the installation of such a path.

COMPREHENSIVE SAFETY COUNTERMEASURES FOR DOWNTOWN

- Leading pedestrian interval to provide pedestrians a head start in crosswalks before vehicles receive a green light and/or pedestrian-only phases.
- Roadway reconfigurations including lane narrowing and lane reduction.
- The addition of bicycle lanes and markings wherever bike lanes traverse an intersection.
- Elements that enhance the visibility of crosswalks.
- Enhanced mid-block crosswalks such as Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFBs) and Pedestrian Hybrid Beacons.
- Installation of speed safety cameras.
- Making left turns completely protected without a permissive phase.
- Installation of raised crosswalks and/or pedestrian refuge islands.
- Minimizing corner radii (e.g., make turns tighter) to limit turning speeds and reduce crossing distances.
- Timing signal progression to encourage lower speeds.
- Curbside elements such as street trees or on-street parking.



Pedestrian hybrid beacon across the northbound lanes of Nevada Avenue.



Curb extension reducing turning radius at Tejon and Dale streets.



Mid-block crossing with elements that make it more visible and curb extensions to reduce crossing distance on Cache la Poudre Street.

Active Transportation

Active Transportation Streets include mobility infrastructure that prioritizes walking but also extends to bikes, e-bikes, scooters, roller skates, skateboards, unicycles, and other forms of non-vehicular transportation.

As Downtown's residential sector has added thousands of new units, more residents are now living within walking or biking distance of their jobs and daily activities. According to Placer.ai, as of August 2025, 19% of Downtown residents reported that they walked to work, 13.3% worked from home, 2.6% used public transportation, 1.9% biked, and 0.8% used another form of micromobility. Only 56% of Downtown residents reported that they drove to work alone. Further, 16.3% of Downtown households reported that they do not own a vehicle at all and 57.4% only own one vehicle. For comparison, in Cordera, a Colorado Springs suburban neighborhood, 68.7% of households reported owning two or more vehicles. As technology and development continue to change commuting patterns, Downtown must better provide for all forms of mobility and active transportation.

Colorado Springs is planning on updating its 2018 *Bike Master Plan* as it aims for a gold recognition by the League of American Bicyclists. This plan aims to complement these efforts to increase infrastructure for active transportation and connectivity to the citywide network, offering residents more transportation options when accessing Downtown and recreation amenities.

BIKE FACILITIES

Protected bicycle facilities can be built either at street level or sidewalk level. Designated bike facilities through Downtown should be designed to create safe environments by slowing automobile traffic and expanding connections to neighborhoods, local destinations, trails, and parks, including the Legacy Loop discussed in Chapter 2. Active transportation streets include sensible repurposing of the roadway to allow for the provision of dedicated, preferably protected bike lanes and safe transitions at intersections. These facilities should provide a consistent block-by-block experience along a route, and always include treatments such as pavement markings to mark conflict areas. Off-street paths, protected bike lanes, traditional bike lanes, and shared-lane markings all exist Downtown and are necessary to create a complete network. However, facilities that offer the highest degree of comfort (i.e., protected and well-marked) attract the most and widest variety of users in age, ability, and confidence. Connectivity to the Legacy Loop trail should be prioritized when building future high-comfort facilities.



Bus bulb combined with bike lane on Rio Grande Street.

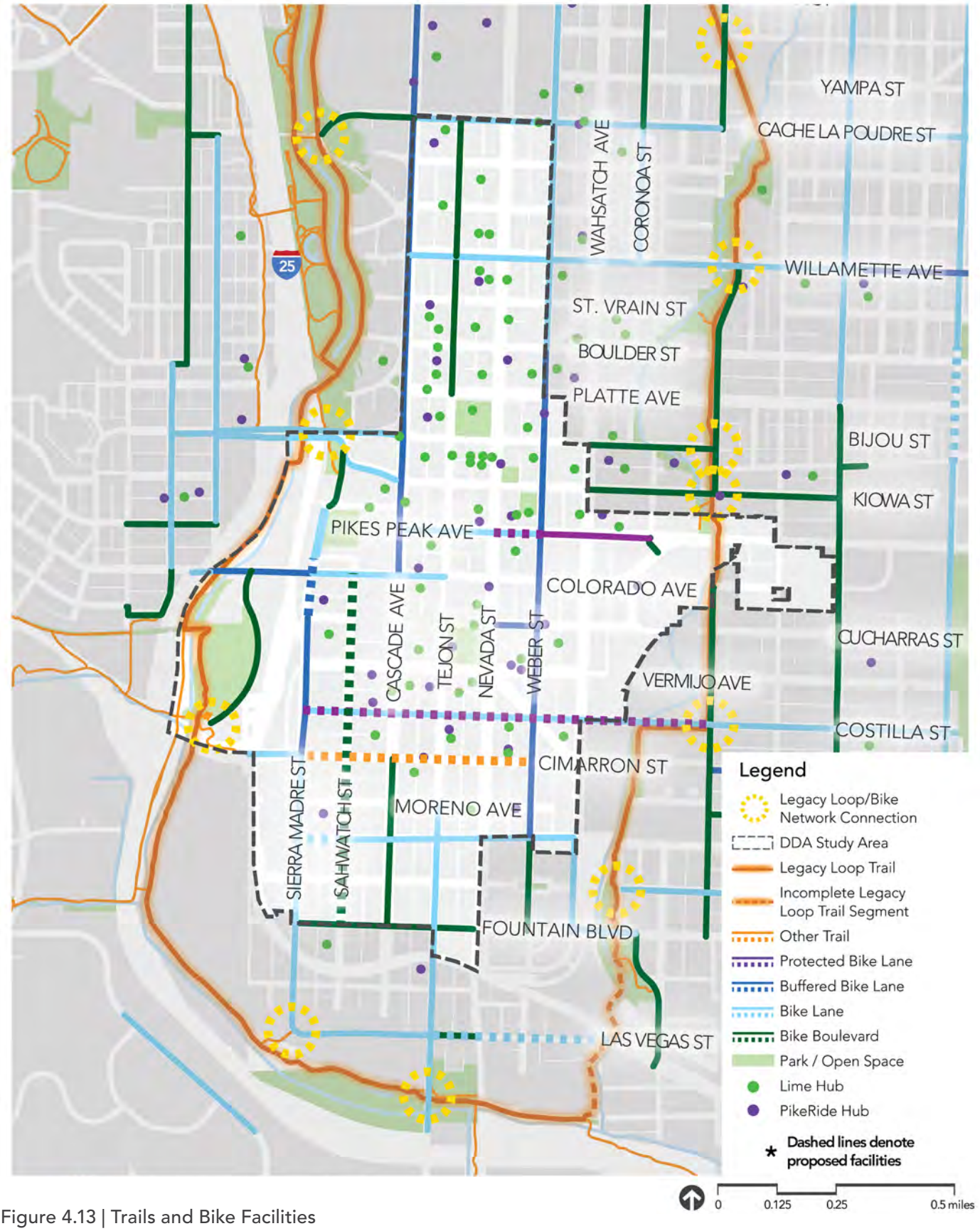


Figure 4.13 | Trails and Bike Facilities

Other design considerations include:

- Colored pavement should be used to help create visibility and awareness.
- If a protected bike lane exists at transit stops, the transit stops and waiting area should be located between the protected bike lane and the street.
- Special care must be taken in designing intersections involving protected bike lanes, particularly as related to the turning movements of automobiles. Conflict markings in intersections can alert drivers to the paths of bikes and micromobility users across intersections, a dedicated bike phase and bike-specific signals can allow bikes and micromobility users to clear the intersection before cars turn or travel through the intersection. Prohibiting right turns on red and protecting left turns can further enhance safety for motorized and non-motorized users alike.
- On-street parking should be discouraged near intersections or driveways to ensure adequate visibility.
- Striping for dedicated bike lanes should often be continued through complicated intersections.
- Where dedicated bike lanes run past on-street parking, a buffer of sufficient width between the parked cars and bike lanes must be provided to prevent dooring crashes.
- When possible, provide bike signals with a dedicated bike phase at signalized intersections, or provide bike lanes that run to the left of dedicated automobile right-turn lanes to avoid potential conflicts with turning vehicles.

In order to complete a fully connected network of bike facilities, the following gaps remain to be filled:

- Add intersection markings along the Cascade Avenue corridor to guide users of the buffered bike lane through each signalized intersection.
- Extend Cascade Avenue south to Cimarron Street.
- Add missing segment of Sierra Madre Street bike lane between Cucharras Street and Antlers Park.
- Extend S. Tejon Street Bike Lane to Cucharras Street and add intersection markings.
- Add buffer and/or vertical protection to existing bike lanes on Costilla Street to improve connection to Shooks Run Trail on east Costilla Street and enhance safety.
- Add vertical protection to Pikes Peak Avenue bike lane between Nevada Avenue and Weber Street next to the Post Office.
- Extend Las Vegas Street bike lane to future Legacy Loop Trail segment on the southeast corner of the Loop. In segments where there is not room for an on-street bicycle facility, bicycles can be directed to the sidewalk or the street can be marked for shared use.
- Extend Fontanero Street bike lane west to complete the connection to Legacy Loop (at Monument Valley Park).
- Add multi-use path to one side of Cimarron Street between Sierra Madre and Weber streets.
- Mark Sahwatch Avenue as a bike boulevard from Colorado Avenue to Fountain Boulevard and add wayfinding elements.



Figure 4.14 | Existing: Typical Active Transportation Priority Street Example



Figure 4.15 | Proposed: Typical Active Transportation Priority Street Example

MOBILITY HUBS

A mobility hub is a location where different modes of transportation (public transit, cars, bikes, scooters, etc.) integrate, allowing for seamless and quick transitions from one mode to another. Existing transit stations make excellent sites for mobility hubs. New mobility hubs can be created and a future transit center should integrate all modes. For instance, a user may drive to a park-and-ride or get dropped off via a ride share service, hop on a bus, exit at another mobility hub, and complete their trip using a PikeRide bicycle. Another user may arrive at the station via bus and then grab a scooter to complete their trip.

Mobility hubs are a key statewide strategy identified by the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) to help improve regional bus service. CDOT's concept takes the traditional park-and-ride model and transforms it to include more modes of transportation and amenities to create a welcoming and accommodating environment for all users.

Some potential locations for mobility hubs include:

- The north and south loop of the ZEB shuttle, near Ed Robson Arena, Weidner Field, and the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum areas
- The future site of the Downtown Transit Center
- The future site of the Front Range Passenger Rail Station
- Ground floors of existing public parking garages (along street edge)

SIDEWALK GAPS

Pedestrians and other vulnerable road users rely on sidewalks to safely traverse Downtown. Detached sidewalks at least six feet in width provide the most comfort and ease of use. Attached sidewalks expose pedestrians directly to the noise, exhaust, and rumble of passing traffic, which causes discomfort and poses a potential safety risk, especially for young children. On sidewalks narrower than six feet, pedestrians lack the space to navigate past and around one another, and strollers and wheelchairs may not be able to use the sidewalk at all, forcing them into the street, onto a different route, or to abandon their trip. Sidewalk gaps also pose a significant barrier to access for these users, creating dead-ends that force people to backtrack or take risks to traverse areas with rough terrain, to cross at areas with no protection, or to use the street. Segments without sidewalks pose the largest barrier to those with disabilities that effect mobility or vision.

Colorado Springs is Olympic City USA, with Downtown serving as the home to the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum and headquarters. Providing high-quality, accessible sidewalks throughout Downtown should be a high priority. While most Downtown blocks have detached sidewalks around all four sides, as can be seen in the Attached, Detached, and Missing Sidewalks map (Figure 4.17), gaps remain. An incomplete sidewalk network is especially evident in the southwestern area of Downtown near the Olympic & Paralympic Museum and Weidner Field along Sierra Madre Street, Sahwatch Street, and others.

Some busy streets, where sidewalks are most uncomfortable due to fast-moving and high-volume traffic, have attached sidewalks in many or some segments, including significant portions of Colorado Avenue and a few portions of Weber Street and Nevada Avenue.

While the Attached, Detached, and Missing Sidewalks map identifies a majority of the Downtown sidewalk network as complete, not all sidewalks are accessible. Uneven surfaces, steep slopes, missing ramps, obstructions, and general degradation can be found throughout the network. Regular assessment is necessary to identify where infrastructure needs maintenance or replacement to make this network traversable for all. This is especially important as new development occurs along corridors that have seen historically lighter volumes prior to redevelopment. Some high-priority corridors include:

- Half block on the east side of Tejon Street between Costilla and Cimarron streets.
- Half block on the south side of Colorado Avenue between Wahsatch Avenue and Weber Street.
- South side of Colorado Avenue between Weber Street and Nevada Avenue.
- North side of Colorado Avenue between Wahsatch Avenue and Weber Street.
- East side of Tejon Street between Cimarron Street and Moreno Avenue.
- South side of Pikes Peak Avenue between Nevada Avenue and Weber Street.
- East side of Nevada Avenue between Kiowa Street and Pikes Peak Avenue.
- Half block on the north side of Pikes Peak Avenue between Wahsatch Avenue and Weber Street.
- North side block of Pikes Peak Avenue between Weber Street and Nevada Avenue.
- East side of Cascade Avenue between Pikes Peak and Colorado avenues.



Temporarily blocked sidewalks force people to take risks even where a detached sidewalk exists.



Figure 4.16 | Cross-section depicting a detached sidewalk six feet in width, the preferred configuration

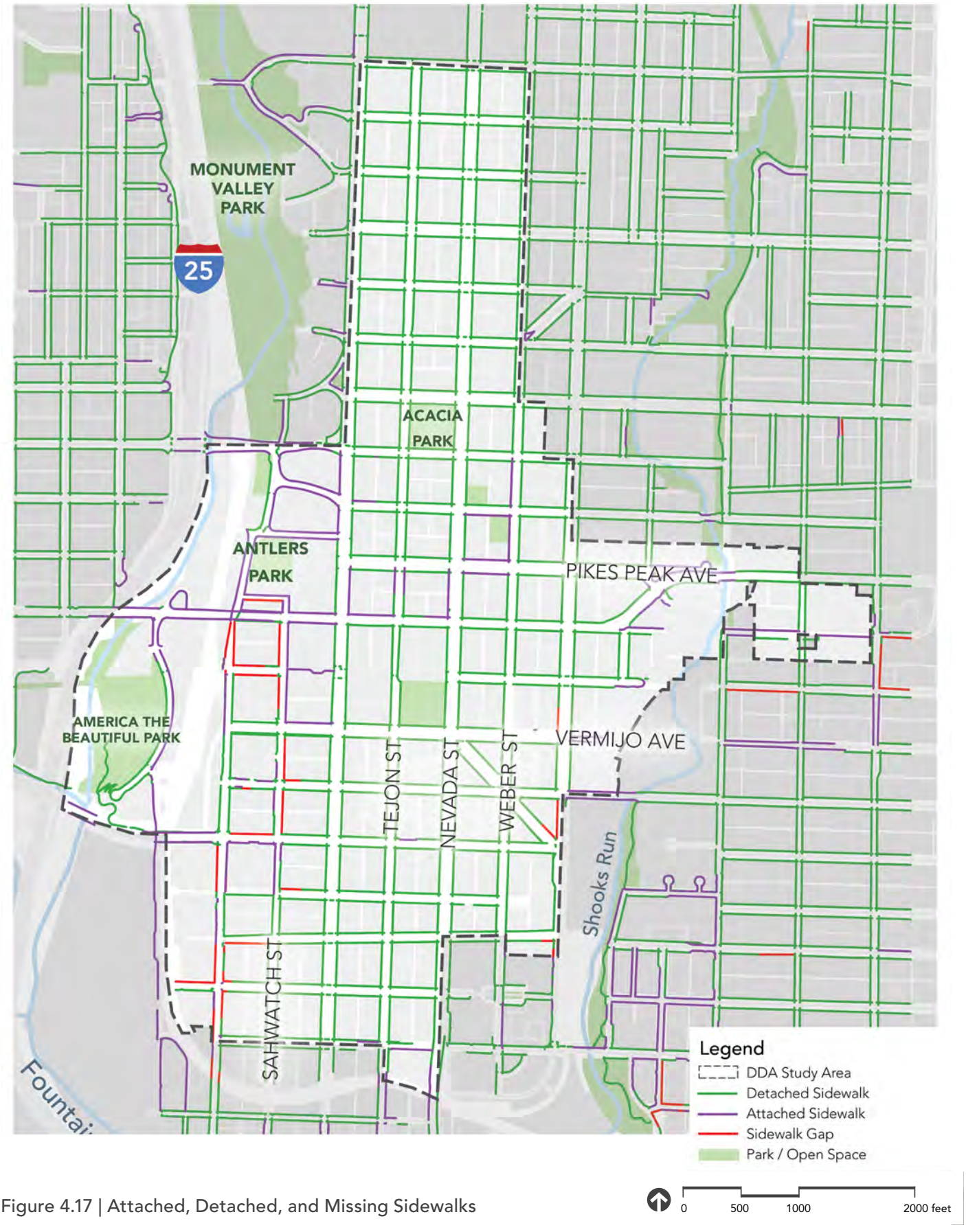


Figure 4.17 | Attached, Detached, and Missing Sidewalks

SHARED MICROMOBILITY

Downtown Colorado Springs launched a bikeshare system in June of 2018. Since then, PikeRide's service area has expanded to include surrounding neighborhoods, Old Colorado City, and Manitou Springs. PikeRide now provides rides for thousands of unique riders every year with 300 electric bikes and over 90 hubs.

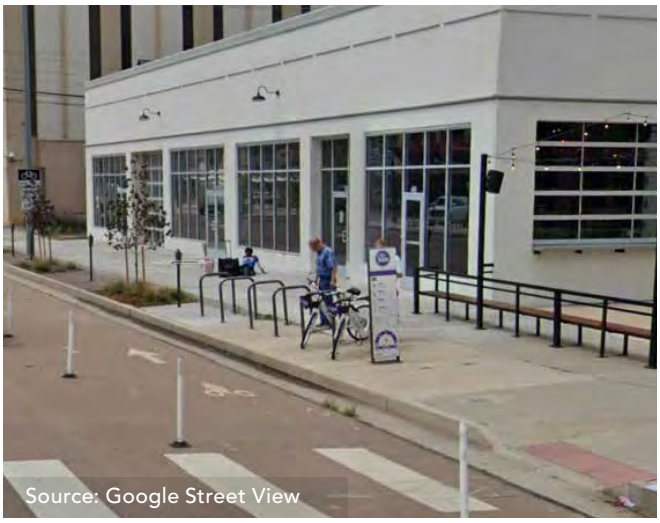
In early 2021, Colorado Springs put out a request for proposals to select a provider for an e-scooter share program. Today Lime operates throughout Downtown with significant reach to surrounding neighborhoods. In 2024 alone, Lime served 60,000 unique riders over 260,000 trips in Colorado Springs, most of which were used for commuting, entertainment, and shopping. In Downtown Colorado Springs, there are 135 "Lime Hubs," dedicated, marked areas to park Lime devices out of the way of pedestrians and vehicles.

These micromobility options help address first-and-last mile connection problems by giving transit riders, and others, an option to quickly cover short distances. To encourage micromobility use, a fully connected network of high-comfort facilities should be prioritized with micromobility parking located near transit stops and near intersections to discourage vehicular parking that impedes visibility.

MICROMOBILITY PARKING

Micromobility parking should be approached as systematically as automobile parking. Designated areas should be distributed within the streetscape and available — at a minimum — every block within Downtown to provide easy and safe access for residents, employees, and visitors. One of the primary advantages of traveling Downtown via micromobility is parking very close to the desired destination. In addition, creating a micromobility parking design standard can allow for quicker implementation based on dimensions and items in the right-of-way. Setting a standard bike rack and scooter parking will ensure consistency and ease of use.

Designated micromobility parking areas can be combined with Colorado Springs' curbside management plan. Increasing visibility at intersections for motorists and pedestrians by moving street parking further from the intersection not only increases safety, but can also allow for the curb space created to be utilized for micromobility parking areas.



PikeRide station on Wahsatch Street and Pikes Peak Avenue, near a bus stop.

Transit

Mountain Metropolitan Transit (MMT), a department within the City of Colorado Springs, provides and operates local bus transit services (See Figure 4.19), and long-range transportation efforts are led by the Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments (PPACG). The operation of local public transportation service is a particular challenge in Colorado Springs due to limited funding that is spread thin across the city's sprawling footprint. Improved transit options and increased transit utilization are crucial aspects of developing an urban center easily accessible via both regional and local service. This section examines existing service and planned improvements to and within Downtown, regional transit options, and potential implications of the ongoing transit station relocation study.

DOWNTOWN SERVICE

Future plans for transit improvements that serve the goal of greater connectivity should include an eventual shift to more of a grid system citywide. A number of stakeholder sessions for the 2050 Regional Transit Plan discussed the feasibility of transitioning the current multi-hub route structure to such a grid-based network. Though the plan identifies improving service hours and frequencies as a key action, it predicts that the degree of service increases proposed would still operate more effectively through its current multi-hub route structure for the time being.

The introduction of the ZEB shuttle in 2022 realized a goal from the prior plan to launch a frequent-stop and fare-free circulator Downtown. The ZEB runs along Tejon Street between Cache La Poudre Street to the north and Rio Grande Street to the south, serving popular destinations such as Colorado College, Ed Robson Arena, Weidner Field, Pioneers Museum, and the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Museum. While the route was initially launched with grant funding, securing sustainable funding will be essential to maintain operations and ensure consistent service levels (such as frequency). In addition, exploring more inviting vehicle options—ones that attract riders and operate quietly—could enhance the rider experience while preserving a comfortable pedestrian atmosphere in the core. A key theme in the 2050 Regional Transit Plan was to improve connectivity to Downtown Colorado Springs for all modes of transportation and allow visitors and residents to seamlessly transition between them.



Figure 4.18 | Map of ZEB Service Downtown as of 2025

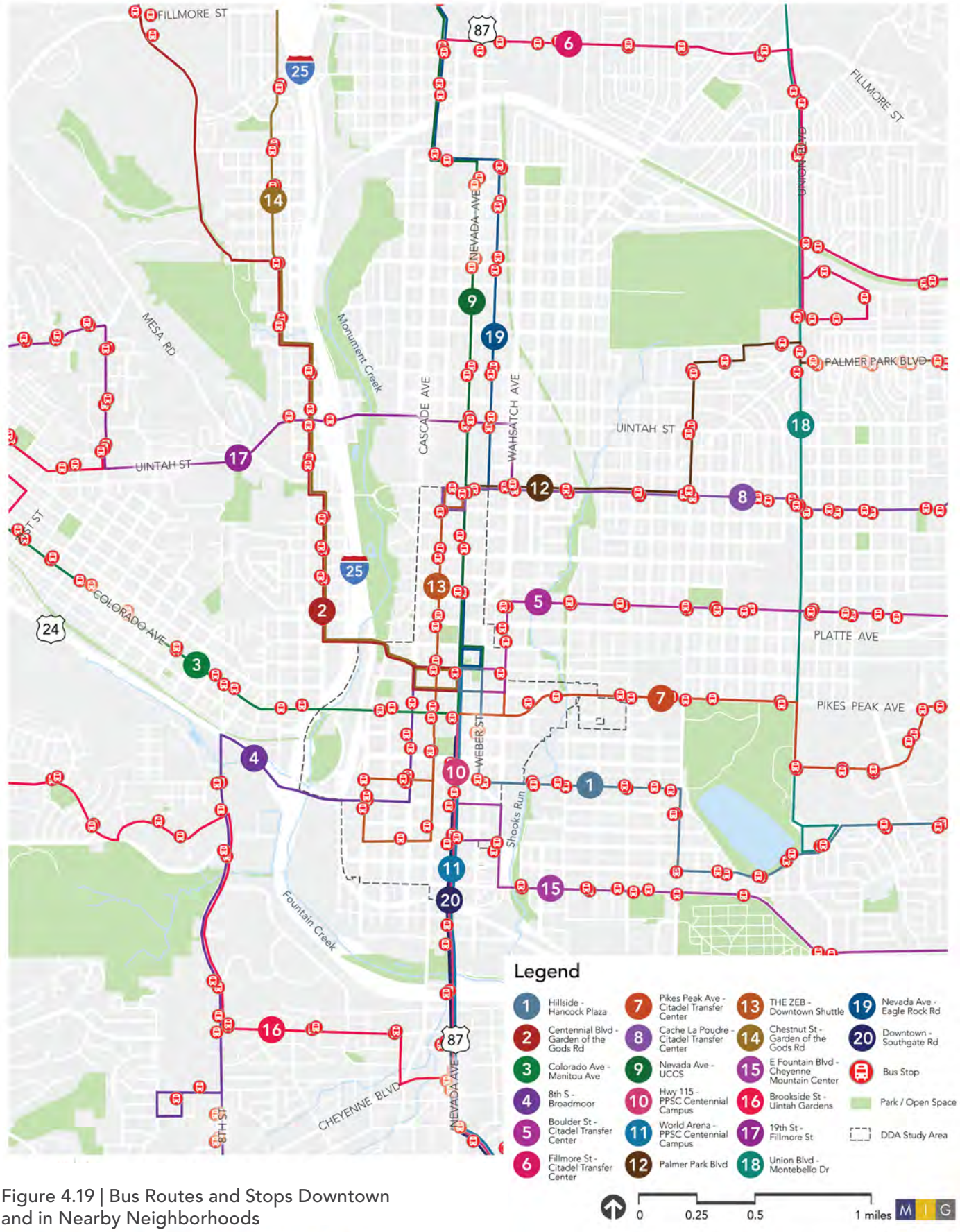


Figure 4.19 | Bus Routes and Stops Downtown and in Nearby Neighborhoods

LOCAL SERVICE

Mountain Metropolitan Transit (MMT) operates as a division of the City's Public Works department. Fixed-route bus service spans the majority of Colorado Springs' city limits with 33 routes, one terminal, three other transfer centers, and over 900 bus stops. Ridership on MMT's fixed-route service was on an upward growth trend from 2013–2019. During that time, ridership increased by an average of 3% per year. Like many agencies, MMT experienced a drop in ridership due to the COVID-19 pandemic. MMT's 2023 ridership was 2.87 million boardings, which is roughly 89% of 2019 ridership.

MMT also operates Metro Mobility, a federally required paratransit service for individuals with disabilities who, as a result of their disability, are unable to use the fixed-route bus service some or all of the time, and the Metro Rides Alternative Commuting program which offers carpool and school-pool matching, vans for vanpooling and vanpool coordination, and other programs aimed at decreasing the proportion of single-occupancy vehicle (SOV) trips.

MMT's *2050 Regional Transit Plan*, published in 2025, expands coverage, identifies future improvement corridors, addresses regional connectivity, and supports future economic growth. It includes both a cost-constrained and unconstrained vision that outlines how MMT and the region can address future mobility needs. Additional funding will be necessary to implement the vision included with the plan. The vision includes innovative mobility zones, enhanced bus service, new crosstown routes, new fixed routes, improved service frequency, improved service span, and capital infrastructure. In addition, additional transit efforts should prioritize connecting Downtown to major local attractions such as Garden of the Gods, Pikes Peak, and others.

Maintain Focus on the Existing Service Area

Many public transportation providers nationwide face a dilemma: provide fast, efficient, and cheap service even where sparse and sprawled land use development patterns do not support the provision of transit. MMT's service spans a huge region and providing the best service possible on its existing network to grow ridership substantially before expanding to new service areas is a priority. However, services can be expanded into new areas of the city and region as opportunities arise and could include alternative service models such as on-demand transportation.

Improve Service Hours, Frequencies, and Reliability

Much of MMT's service operates on 30- to 60-minute frequencies and focuses on work trips that take place on what is considered a typical schedule, Monday to Friday, nine to five. However, MMT has found success in increasing frequencies to 15 minutes on key corridors, one of which is between Downtown and Hancock Plaza and another along Boulder Street. However, not all work schedules operate within 'typical' hours, with many people, including the Downtown hospitality workforce, working weekends, evenings, split-shifts, and other off-hour schedules, emphasizing the importance of including more evening and weekend hours.



Source: Downtown Partnership

The Zeb

Improve User Experience and Access

This theme reflects MMT's commitment to improving user experience by providing real-time journey information, making purchasing a ticket easier, improving first- and last-mile connections, providing a comfortable place to wait for the bus, and other considerations. Enhancing the user experience will remove barriers that prevent new riders from adopting transit into their mobility routine.

Plan for Innovations

MMT just kicked off an alternative transportation services study to investigate alternative transportation services. This study will investigate new/emerging technologies and seek more cost-effective solutions for transportation services.

Downtown Transit Station Relocation Study

In 2017, the *Downtown Transit Station Relocation Study* was completed to identify a location for a new, modern multimodal transportation facility in the Downtown core. Work is ongoing and progress continues to be made toward the goals identified in the study addressing Downtown's transit needs.



MAX Intermodal Center in Birmingham, AL, an example of the type of vibrant and functional transit center Downtown Colorado Springs could build in the future.

The current station located at Kiowa Streets and Nevada Avenue is outdated with constraints on space limiting the opportunity for redevelopment. A new station should address these challenges in the following ways:

- Increase capacity so more transit lines could be added in the future
- Make connections to other modes easier
- Improve ADA access and speed up boarding times
- Minimize conflicts between pedestrian and vehicle flow in the station area
- Provide amenities to transit riders in an inviting, vibrant space



An MMT bus unloading passengers at the existing Downtown Transit Center.



The new transit center location should be within close proximity to shopping, restaurants, and other amenities.

REGIONAL SERVICE

Existing and planned regional transit service falls short of providing Colorado Springs with needed connectivity to the Denver metropolitan area and its expanding FasTracks system. Currently, regional bus service from Colorado Springs is provided by Bustang, a CDOT-funded regional carrier with routes to Denver, Fort Collins, Trinidad, Grand Junction, Sterling, Craig, and many other destinations across the state. Bustang has three stops in Colorado Springs, one of which is located at the Downtown transit center. However, there are a number of challenges associated with use of the Bustang system. Service is infrequent and limited to 12 buses Monday–Friday between 5 a.m. and 5 p.m., about one per hour. Access is limited for local transit users, as no local route serves the Downtown terminal before 6 a.m. for the 5 a.m. and 5:55 a.m. Denver-bound Bustang. Current departure times serve Colorado Springs to Denver commutes, but not Denver to Colorado Springs commutes with the first Bustang arriving from Denver at 9:40 a.m. If Denver to Colorado Springs service was to be improved, ridership demand would be expected to increase. Additionally, with limited stops in South Denver and none in the Tech Center, Bustang may not be an option for commuters working in those areas. Bustang service is also more limited on the weekends with half as many trips on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays. The *2020 Statewide Transit Plan* states that Bustang will continue to work toward a goal of offering hourly service every day on the I-70 and I-25 corridors. Privately operated intercity bus services offer another option for travelers. Greyhound offers two trips from Colorado Springs to Denver each morning, and two trips the reverse direction each evening.

The East Central Council of Local Governments (ECCOG) also operates The Outback Express, a scheduled, demand-responsive system offering rides to Colorado Springs from rural areas in Cheyenne, Elbert, Kit Carson, and Lincoln counties.

Envida Cares, a nonprofit, also operates transportation services for the disabled, older adults, economically disadvantaged, and the general public in the Colorado Springs area, including two fixed-route lines in eastern El Paso County, and non-emergency medical transportation service into the city from Teller and Park Counties.

Examining future options for improved and more regular long-range transit connections is a crucial imperative for better linking Downtown Colorado Springs into the regional system, in particular the Regional Transportation District (RTD). Linking Downtown to regional attractions is also a priority.

Colorado Springs is within the Front Range Passenger Rail (FRPR) District that aims to run passenger rail service between Pueblo and Fort Collins with a vision to eventually expand service into Wyoming and New Mexico. Colorado Springs completed the *Passenger Rail Station Location Study* in 2022, concluding that America the Beautiful Park was the strongest candidate for a future FRPR station. The FRPR district is currently developing its *Service Development Plan*, due in 2026.

In MMT's *Regional Transit Plan*, seven corridors were identified as enhanced transit corridors (ETCs). ETCs are defined as corridors that provide higher levels of service as well as improved amenities. Pertinent to Downtown, these include North and South Nevada Avenue, Platte Avenue, and Colorado Avenue.



Figure 4.20 | Concept map of the America the Beautiful Park Station Area created by HDR for the *Passenger Rail Station Location Study*

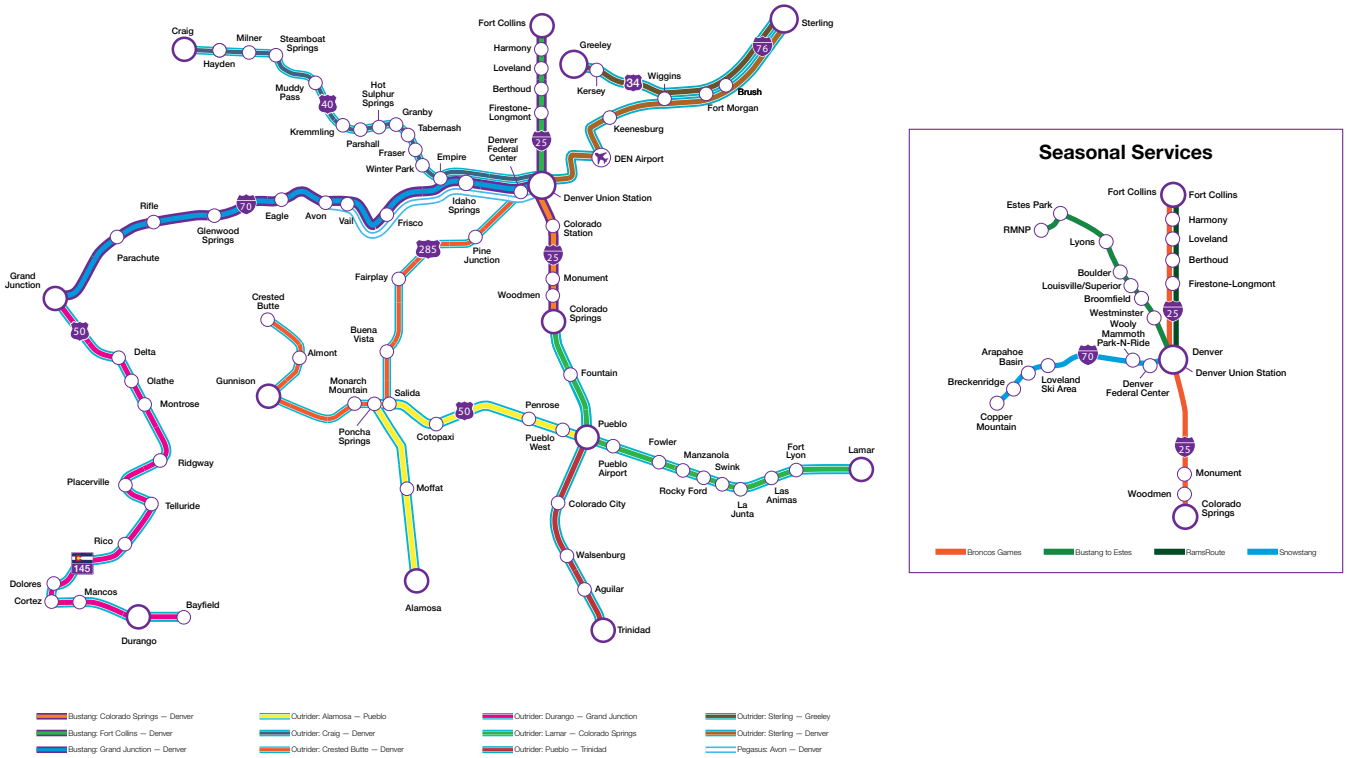


Figure 4.21 | Map showing the full breadth of current Bustang service across the state

Vehicle Parking

In Spring 2025, Colorado Springs completed the *Parking and Curb Management Pla*n. The report outlines four guiding principles for Colorado Springs moving forward:

- Actively Manage the Curbside
- Increase Off-Street Parking Productivity
- Embrace and Leverage Technology
- Create a Comprehensive Customer Experience

These strategies, combined with services such as the ZEB shuttle, bike share and micromobility programs, and an overall effort to increase walkability, have helped improve access in and around Downtown.

Downtown and the City should collaborate to prioritize block faces for new streetscaping. Criteria for consideration should include:

- Accessibility and safety concerns
- Pedestrian activity or future growth in pedestrian activity
- Pedestrian network connectivity
- Aesthetic improvements
- Maintenance responsibility
- Projects are determined for the following year and included in the City's budget.

Much of Downtown Colorado Springs is parking exempt, which allows projects to develop without creating an unnecessary surplus of parking. In this context, parking is often provided by both the public sector and the private sector, assuming parking rates are high enough to justify the costs of privately managed public parking.

COLORADO SPRINGS PUBLIC PARKING: EXISTING SYSTEM

Public parking in Colorado Springs is operated as an enterprise, a self-sustaining government-owned business that by code must receive at least 75% of its annual non-debt revenue from nongovernment sources. The Parking Enterprise collects revenue that can, in turn, be used to provide planning, development, improvement, and beautification for parking structures and parking related facilities. The Parking Enterprise is an asset and a tool to Downtown revitalization that can be used to achieve public goals, manage the parking system in a way that supports urban planning and design objectives, and be a resource for public-private partnerships in development of catalytic sites and priority uses.

Public parking within the city center consists of off-street structured facilities, as well as metered and time-limited on-street spaces. The three public parking structures owned by the City comprise roughly 38% of the total off-street parking supply in Downtown, so the City is a significant, but not the primary, provider of structured parking. However, the Parking Enterprise is the only provider of metered on-street parking spaces. Hourly rates at metered spaces in the Downtown vary based on zone, $1.50/hour in the most central Gold Zone, $1.25/hour in the Silver Zone, and $1.00/hour in the Bronze Zone.

Several other Downtown parking garages are owned and managed by private entities such as office buildings, as well as by El Paso County. Greater efficiencies may be possible within the parking system if the City can partner with the County and other private parking owners to offer excess parking for public use. This can be accomplished through programs and policies that encourage private participation in the parking market and by the City

taking the lead in setting parking rates at a high enough price point that the private market can compete.

One of the key factors influencing future growth in Downtown is parking availability. The current parking supply reflects capacity for Downtown to absorb additional vehicles as the city grows. The *2025 Parking and Curb Management Report* recommends further study in the South End. Most developments for entertainment include on-site parking but may not meet demand during large events.

As Downtown grows and faces new demands, the Parking Enterprise must continue to balance operational needs with other City objectives, including urban design, economic development, and improved multimodal access. In addition to strategic management partnerships, supplying public parking to a private project can serve as an economic development incentive and excellent example of public-private partnership. Historically, the Parking Enterprise has participated in these partnerships in the past and such partnerships should continue to be used as a tool for attracting more investment into Downtown.



Figure 4.22 | Downtown Parking Inventory from the ***2025 Parking and Curb Management Plan***

PUBLIC PARKING PRICING

The price of public parking in Downtown should generally be competitive with that of the private market. If public pricing is too low, it limits the potential for maximized revenue and public benefit in the form of investment in improved streetscapes and additional parking when and where needed. Pricing the public parking system too high will discourage use of the system and loss of customers to the private market, or discourage visits to Downtown altogether. Regular evaluation and inflation of parking pricing is encouraged in order to maintain a competitive advantage and support the rising cost of operating the system, particularly as the system grows into new areas or provides new infrastructure. Public parking rates are currently set by City Council, while hours are set administratively by Enterprise staff; flexibility to adjust rates would enable the Parking Enterprise to operate in a more market-driven manner.

The Parking Enterprise should continue to price on-street metered spaces and structured garage spaces to meet different goals. On-street meters generally should be priced higher and with shorter lengths of stay to stimulate turnover and encourage use of garages. Parking garages should generally be priced more affordably per hour to encourage long-term or all-day use. An exception to the general rule of pricing



Source: Consor

Convenient and efficient Downtown parking supports local businesses.

on-street meters to promote turnover may be along certain neighborhood streets, where vehicles parked for longer duration help provide a consistent buffer for protected bicycle lanes. Furthermore, accommodations for low-emission vehicles, electric vehicles, car sharing, and carpooling should be integrated into the system.

PARKING TECHNOLOGY

New parking technologies have transformed parking management in recent years. Near-term technology investments and improvements should prioritize providing consistent payment methods and enhancing ease of use. All meters can accept credit cards and visitors can also choose to pay using a mobile phone app. Consideration should be given to options such as kiosks or signage with QR codes to achieve street design goals and lower maintenance costs.



Source: Precise ParkLink

Advanced parking technology options.



Image Source: KCBX

Public Realm and Urban Design

Highlights

Future code revisions should **balance** the desire for compact urban form, densities that **support a range of businesses and urban amenities**, and a connected, **pedestrian-friendly environment**.

Encouragement of **shared public spaces and increased ground-floor activation** opportunities will enhance feelings of comfort, safety, and enjoyment for all visitors.

Developing a comprehensive and equitable vision for **tree canopy and urban greening** will help mitigate the urban heat island effect.

Careful planning and **management of public spaces** will unify Downtown's look and feel while still providing opportunities to distinguish and differentiate the core's unique districts.

Overview

Form-Based Code

Public Space

Enhancing District Identity

5 chapter

Overview

Great design can unite the look and feel of adjacent land uses; stimulate private development that engages the public realm; and create streets and other public spaces at a human scale that invite people to gather and move about the city. Public spaces are the connective tissue among the other physical elements described in this plan. Strong urban design can help link the buildings, gateways, streets, parks, and trails in safe, comfortable, creative and engaging ways.

Efforts to update the Form-Based Code, a type of zoning regulation that dictates how Downtown looks, feels, and relates to other elements in the built environment, were begun in 2025. The Code is an important tool for the future of Downtown, as it reinforces the walkable places, strengthens community character, and provides opportunities for cohesive development.

In combination with intentional land use strategies, urban design should help foster the character that differentiates the various neighborhoods and districts within the city center, as well as between Downtown and the rest of Colorado Springs. The design of new and renovated buildings must focus on the activation of ground floors and the relationship of buildings to adjacent and nearby streets. The thoughtful design and maintenance of public roadsides, urban landscape, street furniture, public parks and plazas, public art, and signage are all elements that impact public space.

This chapter discusses and provides considerations for the near-term update to the Form-Based Code and recommendations for Downtown urban design character and public realm environment.

Form-Based Code

The establishment of a Form-Based Code is one of the milestone achievements resulting from the *Imagine Downtown Master Plan*. Adopted in 2009, with minor updates in 2012 and code changes in 2016, the Code encourages compact, mixed-use, and pedestrian-friendly revitalization efforts in a delineated City Center district (see Figure 5.1 for the geographic extent covered by the Form-Based Code zone). It is a key element in the City's vision to promote economic vitality, sustainable growth, and a better quality of life. Unlike traditional zoning that regulates primarily by use, the Form-Based Code focuses on directing high quality urban form to coordinate a variety of complementary uses around attractive streetscapes and public spaces.

This section outlines the regulatory basis for the Form-Based Code and discusses the geographic sectors used to administer guidelines and standards in different parts of the city center. As the Code will be under review in the near-term, this section also identifies considerations or adjustments to best achieve the goals of the Downtown development plan.

REGULATORY BASIS FOR THE CODE

The Code is legally established through zoning ordinance 09-83 and 12-23 and its enabling legislation found in Section 7.2.307 of the City Codes. The Downtown Review Board (DRB) was established concurrently with the Form-Based Code. This board has the authority to approve, conditionally approve, or deny projects that require greater flexibility for specific standards. The DRB operates similarly to a traditional "board of adjustments," granting warrants from specific standards and making other discretionary decisions.

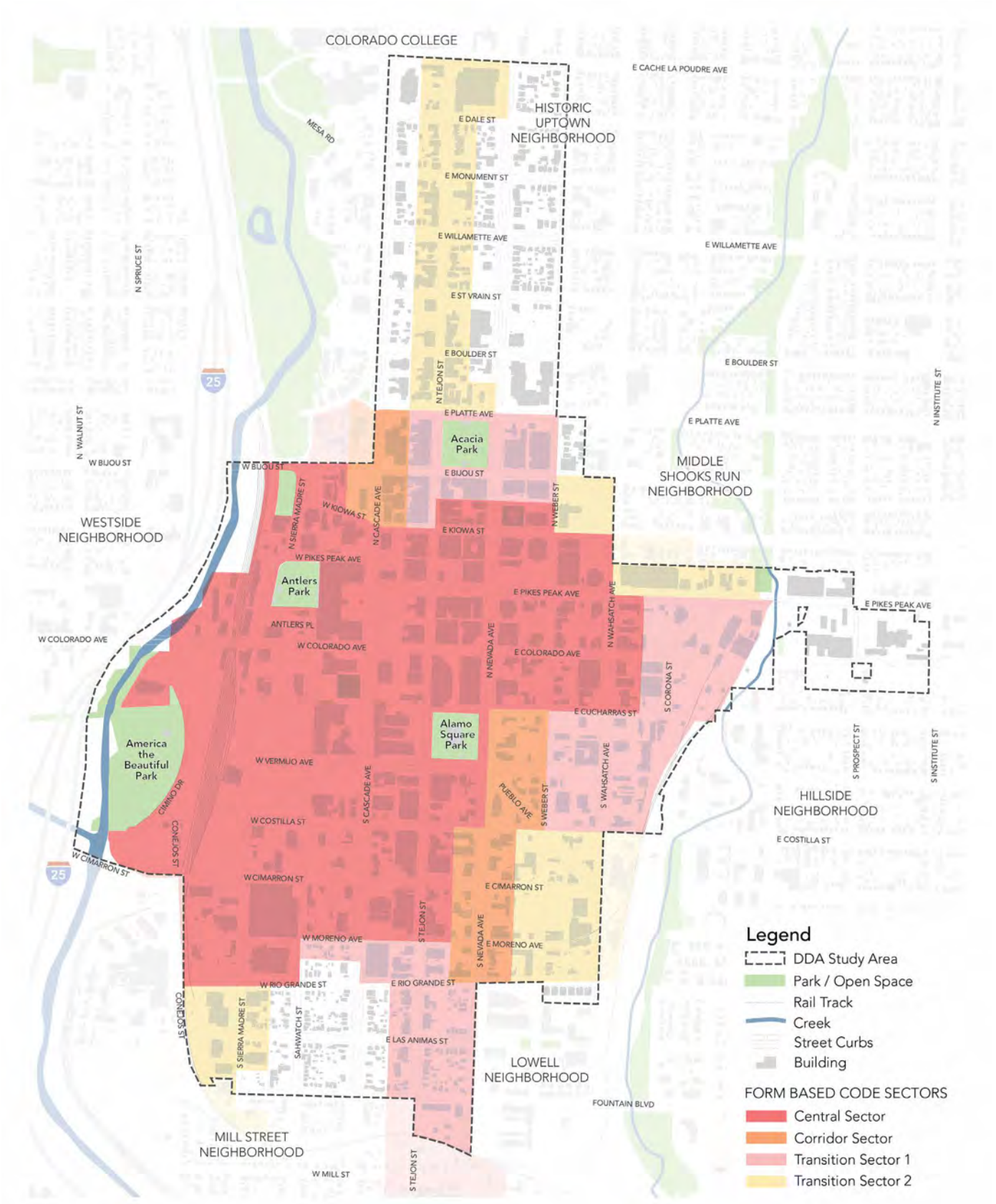


Figure 5.1 | Downtown Form-Based Code Sectors

SECTORS

Downtown is divided into four sectors to guide the application of the Code. Specific standards are correlated with specific sectors, which are represented on the Form-Based Code Sectors Map (Figure 5.1). Some parts of the Downtown plan area are not covered by the Form-Based Code, including areas in the eastern part of Downtown zoned General Industrial, Light Industrial, Mixed-Use Large, or various Residential Uses. Additionally, the Form-Based Code District extends beyond the plan area boundary to the south, encompassing critical gateways at South Nevada Avenue and South Tejon Street.

The Form-Based Code sectors do not directly align with the districts in this plan. In particular, the Central Sector of the Form-Based Code covers a significant portion of the Downtown plan area and overlaps the City Center, Park Union, South End, and East Downtown districts. The lack of alignment between the districts and the Form-Based Zoning (FBZ) sectors could cause concern for implementing zoning modifications that can effectuate district-wide change; however, because the district sectors in this plan are primarily meant to guide public realm improvements and facilitate a "sense of place," their discrepancy is not inherently problematic. Each sector is detailed as follows.

Central Sector

The Central Sector encompasses the majority of the Downtown Form-Based Code zone and geographically represents the heart of Downtown. The primary goal for the Central Sector is to increase Downtown density, create an iconic skyline, and establish a high-quality pedestrian environment at the street level. The Central Sector has a two-story height minimum, encouraging increased building densities both horizontally and vertically. Mixed use is encouraged with the desire for commercial uses (retail, restaurant, entertainment, and office) on the first level of most buildings, and residential, lodging, and office uses on the upper levels. The Central Sector does not require specific parking standards, both to encourage a multimodal environment that is not solely dependent on the car and also respond to market demands for parking.

Corridor Sector

The Corridor Sector is found in two distinct areas: along several blocks of South Nevada Avenue and along two blocks of North Cascade Avenue near the Kiowa Street and Bijou Street entrance from I-25. While these areas aren't envisioned to support the density of the Central Sector, a unique set of standards was developed to reflect the importance of these areas as gateways and to address the appropriate height and intensity of developed land along the significantly wide rights-of-way on Nevada and Cascade avenues (each approximately 140' wide).

Transition 1 and Transition 2 Sectors

The Transition Sectors surround much of the Central Sector in order to provide an area of transition from high-density land uses to lower-density residential and mixed uses in surrounding neighborhoods. These sectors allow a variety of non-residential uses and a mix of housing types at medium to low intensities and densities.

OBJECTIVES OF THE CODE

The Form-Based Code specifies building standards that promote a high-quality, pedestrian-oriented public realm that encourages activation of the space for the comfort and safety of all users. The Code provides standards that require the design of new buildings to support the density, street-level activation, visual interest, and engaging public spaces demanded by Downtown residents, employees, and visitors. The Code standards are organized into several categories, including building type, frontages, uses, parking, block standards, public spaces, and signage.



Source: *Colorado Springs Gazette*

Code standards impact public realm elements like signage, parking, and block standards.

Specifically, the Code outlines regulatory guidelines and standards to:

- Create a predictable investment environment for development.
- Remove barriers to revitalize Downtown.
- Promote a mix of uses including retail, office, residential, institutional, and others.
- Establish transitions from the core to the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Clearly communicate the physical requirements and expectations of development through simple language and easily understood graphics.
- Implement a review and approval process that is efficient and effective in approving projects that meet the Code's requirements.
- Promote new development that respects the historic building fabric, as well as the natural environment, and enhances the pedestrian experience.
- Establish a coordinated streetscape plan including street trees, public art, and appropriate street furnishings.
- Accommodate the changing uses of buildings while maintaining the integrity and viability of the public realm, with an emphasis on intermodal transportation options and pedestrian linkages and orientation.
- Implement the goals, objectives, and strategies of the Downtown Development Authority and its Plan of Development to revitalize and improve Downtown.

FORM-BASED CODE CONSIDERATIONS

Design provisions are outlined in the Code to achieve the objectives listed above. Initially following the inception of the Code in 2009, development was limited in part due to the sluggish growth during the recession. More recently, since the adoption of the 2016 *Experience Downtown Plan*, there has been a tremendous amount of build out in the Downtown area with additional housing, commercial and retail spaces, office spaces, and entertainment and sports venues.

Draft code changes are currently being reviewed by the City Attorney's Office and additional changes will come after legal review and this Plan.

Use Category Updates

The focus of Form-Based Code is the form, massing, and location of buildings and public spaces. However, the Code does specify a few prohibited and conditional uses in the Form-Based sectors to promote "a balanced and desirable collection of varied uses" and to support the goal of increased residential uses Downtown. Limited refinements should be considered to ensure efficacy of the code and consider new or changing industries, businesses with different types of liquor licenses such as breweries, different types of manufacturing, and others that may still be emerging. Creating more clarity around conditional and prohibited use will inform future businesses and investors of the area's priorities.

First, the Code should more carefully define "Mixed-Use Buildings" and include a specific requirement that a minimum percentage of building ground-floors are occupied by active uses, understanding the constraints with the encouragement of podium parking.

Code adjustments should also be considered to allow a new light industrial use category as a conditional use in the Form Based Zone to better accommodate the potential for artisan manufacturing and maker spaces. There are opportunities for small-scale light industrial and artisan manufacturing, flexible and collaborative co-working spaces, and non-traditional office formats often favored by entrepreneurial and innovation-based businesses. In some cases, these uses may find suitable spaces in existing older buildings around the periphery of the Downtown core. There also may be opportunities to replicate this product type through creative construction of low-rise, open floorplate, light industrial concepts and through conversions and subdivisions of existing Class B and C office properties. Each of these potential opportunities should be supported and encouraged with this suggested zoning use change.

Downtown Architecture Considerations

Many aspects of well-articulated ground floors and building façades are covered by the Code. Several revisions will further enhance its effectiveness in creating the type of activated ground-floor streets, sidewalks, and public spaces desired in Downtown. Expanded discussion of ground-floor activation opportunities is explored further in this chapter.

Design guidelines should more clearly encourage creative and eclectic design and architectural diversity and variety. In addition, options for active ground-floor uses will be improved by blurring the lines between interior and exterior spaces by encouraging operable walls, functional garage doors, and other architectural or design features. Guidelines should expand on

the importance of prominent entrances, orienting entrances on all active street faces, and celebrating corner entrances. High-quality, human-scaled materials will further enhance the pedestrian realm.

Sustainable design principles that inspire active and passive solar design in new and renovated buildings, climatically sensitive design such as entrance vestibules, and rainwater catchment and Low Impact Development techniques that can serve as beautiful, functional, and interactive design elements should be encouraged. Section 4.1 of the Code on Architectural Guidelines already addresses stepbacks and transitions, two critical elements often used to ensure proper shade to sun ratios. Further details and guidelines could be provided specifying the importance of solar access in public rights-of-way for added pedestrian comfort.

Some critiques of recent high-rise development include the lack of interesting and architectural building façades on upper floors. The Code update should further address the architectural design standards of upper floors as density increases Downtown, enhancing building façades and orientation above the ground level to ensure more building articulation and a better Downtown skyline.



Source: *Archpaper*

One River North in Denver awes and inspires with a unique building façade inspired by gardens, canyons, and waterfalls.

Public Realm

Streets and sidewalks are the primary areas where people experience the public realm and its relationship to buildings. Design principles that help create comfortable, human-scaled outdoor "rooms" improve the public realm. The Code calls for active uses on ground floors and a higher proportion of doors, windows, and outdoor seating options to help increase the safety and comfort of pedestrians while simultaneously improving the look and feel of the buildings themselves. Encouraging uses such as outdoor dining contributes to the feeling of activity and safety on streets.

Revisions should consider the introduction of an "activation zone" between the building edge and the pedestrian way that encourages ground-floor commercial and residential tenants to utilize the space just outside their entrance for outdoor seating, display of goods, and other elements such as umbrellas, tables, and plantings. This can be achieved by intentional encroachment and use of the wide rights-of-way for greater amenity zone activation, helping create more room for activation space along the building frontage.

Additionally, adjusting requirements for glazing and fenestration percentages, providing more specific design solutions for additional pedestrian-friendly alleyways, revising building stepback transition requirements, modifying design guidelines for drive-through lanes – longer term – considering parking maximums will all enhance the Code's efficacy in providing the type of streets and public spaces described and called for in this Plan.

Another consideration within the existing Form-Based Code that impacts the overall public realm is the approval and enforcement of warrants and interim uses, which are formal requests for specific design or land use variances that except the existing code for a limited amount of time. To ensure the appropriate timing of these interim uses don't slip through the cracks and their time limits are enforced, the City should explore options to use a digital tracking log and make it publically accessibly to increase accountability and transparency. This is especially important when large parcels such as parking lots are utilizing interim use permits.

Finally, as the Form-Based Code is updated, special consideration should be taken to potentially expand the existing boundaries of the code to ensure all of the Downtown is included.



Ground-floor activation zones are opportunities for restaurants or commercial spaces to provide outdoor seating, lighting, and signage, offering an engaging pedestrian experience. Sunnyvale, CA.

Public Space

Good public spaces are perceived as safe, comfortable, and welcoming. Therefore, design is integral to how people will use public space, or whether the space will even be used at all. Both the public and private sectors have important roles to play in creating activated, well-used public spaces. Though a space may be part of the public realm, adjacent buildings help shape its character, use, and design. A cohesive transition and relationship between public and private built forms has the ability to help establish strong public spaces.

The following list includes general principles outlining public and private enhancements to improve Downtown's public spaces.

PUBLIC SPACE ENHANCEMENTS

- Provide opportunities for outdoor dining, public art, street furnishings, information booths, vendors, play elements, mobility amenities, and landscaping.
- Enhance street safety through lane reductions, reduced lane widths, and crossing improvements like raised pedestrian crossings or bulb-outs.
- Revise vehicular zone requirements to reallocate roadway space for multimodal infrastructure and amenities.
- Improve alleyways to serve as pedestrian-friendly spaces and connections.
- Modify design guidelines for drive-through lanes and driveways to consolidate commercial driveways.
- Establish parking maximums to limit the amount of Downtown deactivated by parking.
- Enhance Downtown's image by planting more trees and other vegetation.
- Activate and/or screen the edges of new and existing parking structures and surface lots.
- Enhance neighborhood identity through consistent and creative branding efforts.
- Improve and enhance nighttime pedestrian safety through additional streetscape lighting.
- Create more spaces for pedestrians to stop, rest, and spend time along streetscapes through comfortable seating and rest options.
- Ensure clean sidewalks and meet a variety of needs by increasing the number of trash receptacles and incorporating public recycling.
- Evaluate parking kiosks to replace single-space meters to increase sidewalk space for other uses

GROUND-FLOOR ACTIVATION

Vibrant places are made of more than just foot traffic and job counts — they are intentionally and thoughtfully designed to attract a variety of people through a mix of uses and design solutions. These design solutions are usually most focused within the public realm through streetscaping, façade improvements, and activity on the ground floor, known as ground-floor activation.

Active uses on ground floors, and a higher proportion of doors, windows, and outdoor seating options, all increase the safety and comfort of pedestrians and improve the look and feel of the buildings themselves. Encouraging uses such as outdoor dining contributes to the feeling of activity and safety on streets. Ground floors should be well-designed to showcase restaurants, shops, resident entrances and patios, and active office spaces. These spaces must work symbiotically with the surrounding sidewalks and public spaces to provide experiences that are active, engaging, safe, and comfortable. Curating and managing ground-floor spaces with façade easements, promoting temporary uses in vacant lots and storefronts, assisting longer-term tenants with retail strategy, and wrapping un-activated façades with temporary murals and artwork are all strategies for improving and activating adjacent public spaces.

Ground-floor activation encourages interesting, lively, and welcoming spaces for pedestrians through many different means, including:

- Encouraging visual interest through architectural features.
- Providing pedestrian- and micromobility-oriented amenities.
- Curating a sense of creativity and/or identity through art, programming, streetscaping, and wayfinding.
- Encouraging active uses at street level, such as dining or displaying goods, and providing opportunities to stop and engage, such as bike racks, information kiosks, or even games.
- Bridging the gap between public and private spaces and encouraging interaction through window transparency, operable walls, functional garage doors, and entrances oriented toward pedestrian spaces.
- Promoting visible uses on ground floors, including more transparency through doors and windows and by providing outdoor seating options.
- Introducing an "activation zone" that encourages space outside of commercial entrances for outdoor seating, plantings, art, and other amenities.

Where a blank brick wall feels imposing and impersonal, a mural-covered wall invites attention and creates a sense of place. Similarly, a vacant storefront inherently feels unsafe and unsettling, but a window displaying goods, even when closed, suggests presence of community. Much of the engagement related to this Plan noted a feeling of "gaps" when walking from one location to another in the city. Residents often mentioned feeling that there was limited activation, business frontage, and comfortable sidewalks. Ground-floor activation strategies are pivotal to alleviating this sense of emptiness that can exist along a street and create a more cohesive pedestrian experience and vibrant Downtown neighborhood.



Figure 5.2 | Existing Site

A vacant building and blank façade contribute to lacking a "sense of place," where residents and visitors are not encouraged to engage with the space and there is no pedestrian activity.



Figure 5.3 | Conceptual Improvements

A vacant and underutilized building frontage is transformed with multiple community-serving uses, creating transparency, comfortable amenities, and elements to draw pedestrians into an activated space. The public realm is inviting and functional with loading zones for easy pick-up and drop-off, pedestrian-scale lighting, shade structures, parklets for resting and dining, and wall murals.



Figure 5.4 | Existing Site

This parking structure, blank wall, and bare sidewalk represents a "gap" in the pedestrian experience.



Figure 5.5 | Conceptual Improvements

An existing parking garage is reimagined at the street level with mobility hub elements that are oriented towards pedestrians and micromobility users. Elements that enhance the space include building transparency, pick-up/drop-off zones, indoor and outdoor scooter and bike parking, planters and trees for shade and beautification, and artistic façade improvements.

ROOFTOPS

The views of Pikes Peak and the surrounding mountains can be experienced throughout Downtown, bringing a vital sense of closeness, and pride for, the outdoors. As Downtown grows over time to adapt and serve additional visitors and residents, this Plan aims to provide opportunities for all people to enjoy the beautiful views of the natural landscape and find meaningful spaces for gathering.

One way to build additional public space and provide opportunities to enjoy the spectacular mountain views is to activate upper building floors. The activation of open-air upper floors and rooftops can greatly enhance the vibrancy of an area and create new destinations Downtown. Rooftop decks and patios provide a second level of activated space, even if private. Just as the views from the rooftop enrich user experience, the visibility of rooftop activity from the street below contributes to a more dynamic and engaging public realm.

There are currently many spaces with rooftop activity Downtown, most of which are privately owned and located in areas of newer development, particularly higher-density residential and mixed-use buildings. A few restaurants and bars also provide highly visible dining space on upper levels. Hotels and office buildings could benefit from activated rooftop space to attract users looking for quiet resting places or places to socialize throughout the day. Given Colorado's variable weather conditions, rooftop spaces should incorporate flexible shelter options for sudden rain, wind, and hail, as well as shade or warming/cooling stations for hot and cold days. While rooftops are usually considered semi-private spaces, they hold potential to serve as accessible public areas, including parks or flexible venues for events and gatherings.

Even when access is limited, such as rooftop patios serving restaurant patrons, these spaces can still contribute meaningfully to Downtown's vibrancy. The visibility and audibility of rooftop activity from the street level activates otherwise enclosed areas, creating a sense of connection between those above and pedestrians below. This is particularly valuable during evening hours, when foot traffic declines, as the presence of lighting, conversation, and visible activity can enhance perceptions of safety and draw interest to the surrounding area.

One such example is Atomic Cowboy at South Tejon Street and East Moreno Avenue, which offers both ground floor and second-floor rooftop dining. Others include the Mae apartments on Cascade Avenue that provide a large second-floor, west-facing deck from which users can enjoy unobstructed mountain views while swimming or socializing; 333 ECO Apartments on Wahsatch Avenue that provides much of the same; the Lumen8 Rooftop Social on the roof of the dual-branded Marriott, the Springhill Suites and Element by Westin, which serves customers on the eighth floor, providing covered and heated seating spaces; and more.



Atomic Cowboy's rooftop provides mountain views.

Access to rooftops and upper-story outdoor spaces is, of course, limited by building architecture and private ownership/visitor access. However, the opportunity to expand public space upward could be provided through publicly owned spaces, such as rooftop parklets and green spaces. Like traditional parks, a publicly owned rooftop space could provide freely accessible viewing areas, retreats, and gathering spaces, but could do so with the additional benefit of vertical activation.

Truly-public rooftop and upper-floor public space precedents are not common, but they offer an infill alternative that could benefit an entire block. Likely reasons that public rooftops may not be well-tested may include access, which is often limited by a building's overall opening hours (external stairs or other access points could address this issue), and liability and safety concerns regarding building heights or limited visibility (which can be addressed through management, creative programming, and design features).

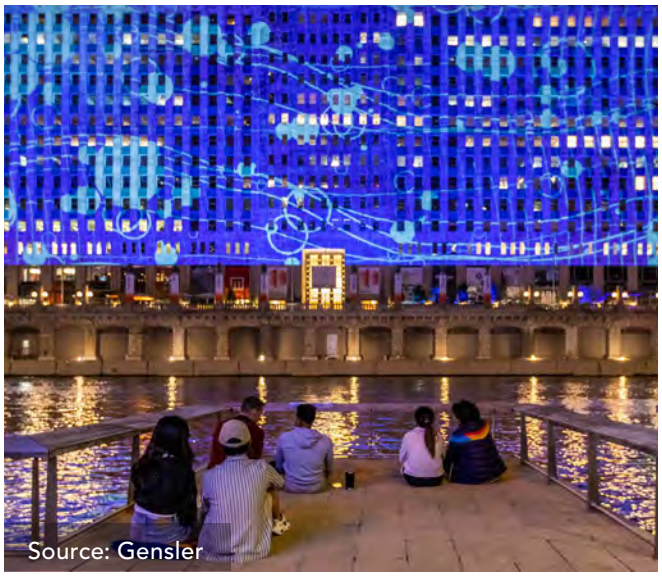


The Backyard on Blake courtyard and commercial spaces in Denver, CO, provide a publicly accessible rooftop available for everyone. It also hosts an urban garden and occasional events.

PEDESTRIAN LIGHTING AND NIGHTTIME DESIGN

Although much of the activity Downtown is while the sun is out, a good Downtown also considers the impacts and potential of nighttime activation and improvements to promote such activity and pedestrian comfort all times of the year. Thriving and vibrant nighttime activation such as bright and interactive art, events, or open businesses provides the community with economic, social, and cultural benefits including increased jobs and economic activity. Downtown should provide spaces and activities that are welcoming to all visitors and address barriers through lighting improvements, art installations, and the continued development of nighttime destinations and activities.

Existing and successful nighttime activation Downtown includes AdAmAn Alley, which provides features such as public art, upgraded pavement, and pedestrian-scale lighting. The project transformed an underutilized space by creating a unique destination. In the evenings, AdAmAn Alley is lit by overhead string lights, which provide adequate sightlines to improve feelings of safety, and timed LED 'fireworks' shows spark interest and curiosity. The alley also features murals and unique paving. This strategy can be applied strategically throughout Downtown to provide higher-trafficked pedestrian areas with placemaking and lighting elements to provide warm and welcoming environments in activated alleys, across storefronts, and along the right-of-way. Other elements can promote an inviting, exciting, and safe atmosphere at night, such as texture, sound, and even scent. The more crowded a street is at night with increased sounds and sights, the more pedestrians will feel both safe and awake.



Public art installations can combine light, movement, and color to activate nighttime spaces and draw more pedestrians. Art on the Mart, Chicago, IL.



Platte Street Plaza in Denver sits adjacent to a loud highway but feels calm, serene, and safe with under- and over-head lighting, seating options, variation in paving, and public art — all visible and easily navigable at night.

NIGHTTIME DESTINATIONS AND ENTERTAINMENT

Encouraging nighttime destinations such as nightlife, live entertainment, and cultural venues helps to activate Downtown by extending the hours of activity beyond the traditional workday and creating a dynamic, 24/7 atmosphere. Music venues, theaters, seasonal activations, and community and cultural events draw people into the city center after dark, increasing foot traffic and making the area feel lively and safe. This steady flow of visitors supports local businesses, attracts investment, and strengthens the sense of Downtown as the community's gathering place. By offering diverse options for different ages and interests, nighttime destinations ensure that Downtown remains vibrant, inclusive, and economically resilient well after the sun sets.

Night markets can also play a powerful role. They offer a mix of food vendors, artisans, performers, and cultural experiences that showcase local talent and entrepreneurship, making Downtown feel vibrant and inclusive. By encouraging foot traffic and providing a safe, engaging space for social connection, night markets support nearby businesses, extend the hours of economic activity, and foster a sense of community pride. They can also serve as a low-barrier entry point for small businesses to test ideas and grow, further fueling Downtown's long-term vitality.

Tools like Common Consumption Areas (CCAs), designated zones that allow pedestrians to move freely within a designated plaza or block with a wine, beer, or other drink purchased at an establishment within the CCA, can help lower barriers to public activation during evening and night hours. Assisting local restaurants, bars, and retail stores in navigating the 'red tape' in creating these CCAs, and the 'promotional associations' required to administer them, can be crucial to the establishment and long-term viability of these zones. Certain areas of Downtown are more prime for this design than others. The Trolley Block, with its numerous restaurants, bars, and entertainment options in a compact, single-block footprint, could be an ideal opportunity for a CCA. CCAs should be relatively compact, safe for pedestrians, and well-furnished with lighting, trash receptacles, and public furniture to ensure their use and cleanliness.



Ophelia's Electric Soapbox in Denver is a small and versatile music and events venue.



Denver's Dairy Block alley hosts a nighttime bazaar.

URBAN GREENING

A healthy and robust tree canopy is essential to the vitality and livability of Downtown Colorado Springs. Trees provide countless benefits by offering shade, improving air quality, managing stormwater runoff, sequestering carbon, and increasing the surrounding property values. Beyond these benefits, trees also enhance the aesthetic character of Downtown, making it more inviting for pedestrians, improving residents' mental health, and encouraging foot traffic that benefits businesses.

Another key benefit is the reduction of the urban heat island effect. The urban heat island effect occurs when certain areas of a city are hotter than the average temperature of the city as a whole, typically due to the prominence of impermeable surfaces like asphalt, concrete, and dense collections of buildings. These areas absorb and retain heat at a higher rate than materials like trees, grass, and other natural groundcover. There is a significant increase in urban heat island effects across Downtown. Increasing street trees, park space, and green infrastructure will help mitigate the harmful effects of rising temperatures for residents and visitors Downtown.

As seen in Figure 5.6, Downtown Colorado Springs has notably less tree canopy (12.5% tree coverage) than other parts of the city (16% tree coverage). This, coupled with buildings and large swaths of impervious surfaces (such as surface parking lots), increases the urban heat island effect significantly. The most trees in Downtown are seen clearly in the residential neighborhoods in Historic Uptown and South End, whereas the City Center is lacking.

To promote tree growth in densely populated urban spaces, it is recommended to install soil cells. Soil cells come in a variety of shapes, sizes, and configurations. Due to the compartmentalization of soil cells, it makes it easy to access, relocate, and accommodate existing and proposed utilities, while still providing ample soil volume for greater tree growth. Soil cells are great to place in areas with limited Public Access Route (PAR) space due to the uncompacted soil underneath the sidewalk supported by soil cells. Soil cells allow for faster tree growth to help minimize the heat island effect sooner. It is necessary to ensure proper installation and maintenance of irrigation, as it is more difficult to access the irrigation once the soil cells are constructed. It will be important to be sure that the irrigation teams involved with the installation of tree watering are familiar with soil cell products.

The DDA has a Tree Canopy Grant Program to supplement or match funds for properties within the DDA boundary to contribute to a robust tree canopy by planting additional street trees in the public right-of-way. Applicants must have an existing and adequate planting area, be owners or tenants within the DDA, and agree to the City's approved list of street trees. This program and the environmental benefits from additional tree canopy will continue to help the pedestrian experience, stimulate economic vitality, and help achieve the goals of this Plan.

However, a comprehensive planting plan with clear goals for future tree canopy is critical to the success and equitable implementation of trees Downtown. Assessing and updating the current canopy data would provide a better assessment of existing and future canopy needs. Tree canopy should be prioritized for expansion in developments within current hot spots Downtown and in areas lacking shade. Additional opportunities for increased tree canopy include working with the City to adopt a policy that requires new developments to implement and maintain street trees.

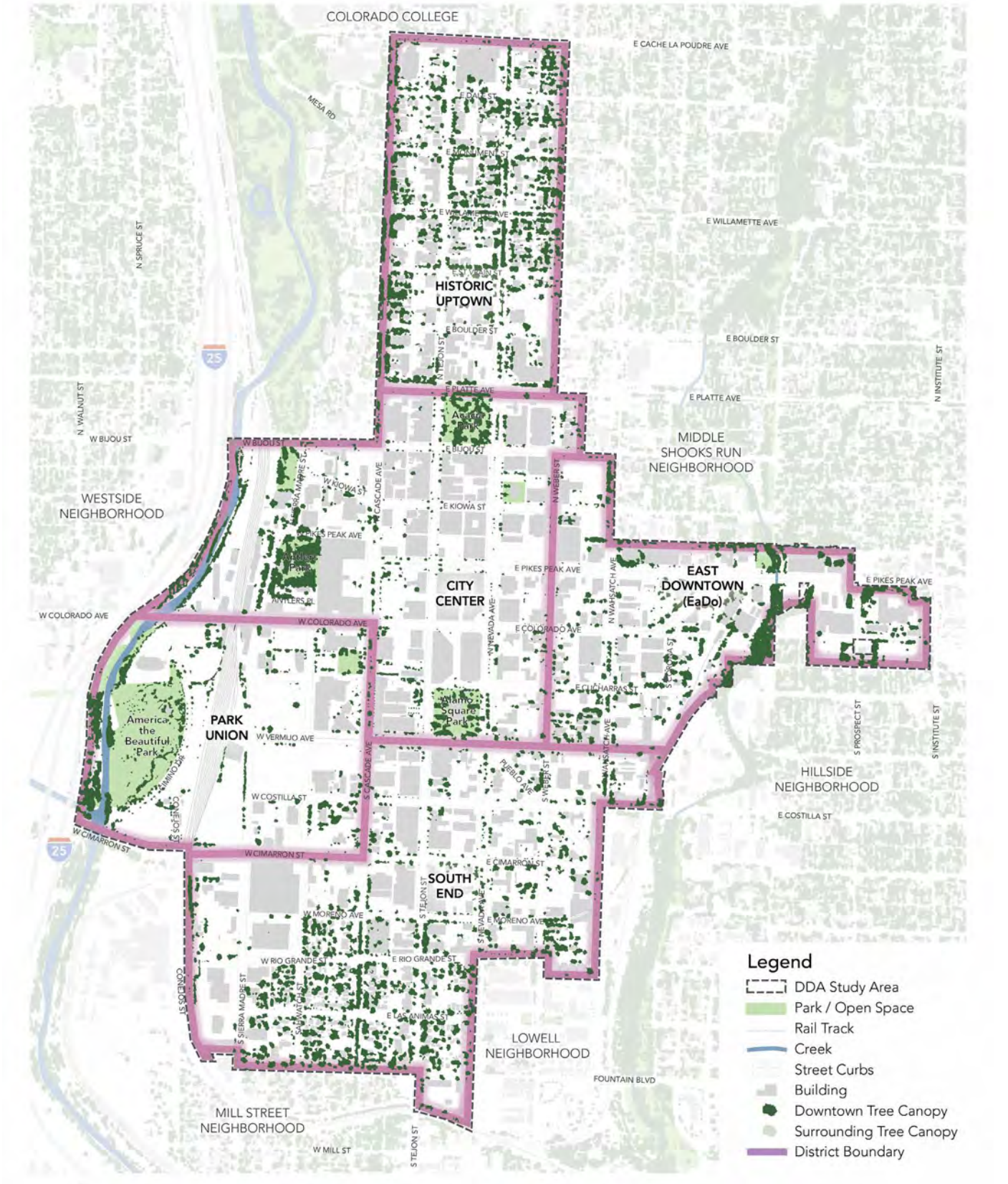
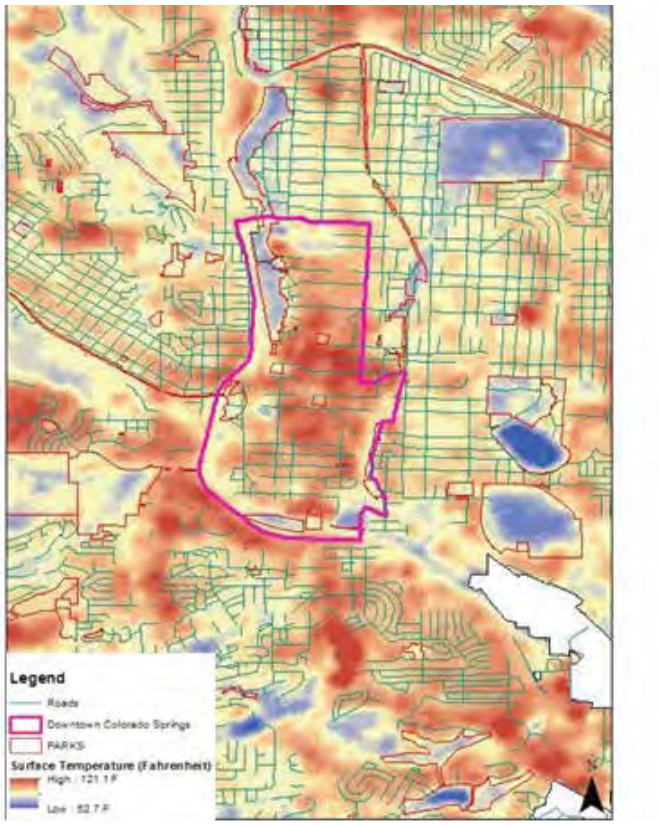


Figure 5.6 | Tree Canopy Coverage



The 2019 Climate Vulnerability and Response Assessment for Colorado Springs shows the increased surface temperature in and around the Downtown area.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Improving climate resiliency benefits Downtown's long-term sustainability and wellbeing by adapting infrastructure to withstand extreme weather conditions, reduce strain on resources, and support economic activity and community investment. The integration of climate-resilient design through low-impact development and green infrastructure requirements can contribute to Downtown's overall wellbeing, increasing attractiveness and appeal.

Green infrastructure elements contribute to a wide range of environmental, community, and economic benefits. Environmental benefits include improved water and air quality through capture and absorption, reduced localized flooding through slowing stormwater flow, reduced the heat island effect by shading man-made surfaces, and improved habitat connectivity by providing vegetated areas in urban environments. Additional benefits include improved community health and wellbeing through vegetation and green spaces and reduced water infrastructure costs by increasing infiltration and reducing runoff volumes.

Low-impact development and green infrastructure design for arid and semi-arid climates includes "living roofs" or "eco roofs," rain gardens, bioswales and bioretention cells, and porous pavements, all of which help capture, filter, and slow down rainwater. This in turn helps reduce demand on stormwater infrastructure and should be explored in partnership with future development. Solutions can be tested or piloted for feasibility using adaptable design variations and pilot programs, determining what methods work best for Downtown.



Soil cell installation along Tejon Street

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Historic preservation refers to the process and prioritization of restoring older structures, preserving original architectural details, adapting existing historic buildings for new uses (adaptive reuse), and ensuring that new development respects the historic character of Downtown. This is essential for the culture, success, and beauty of the area. Preserving and adapting historic buildings such as the DeGraff, Hibbard, and Carlton buildings, City Hall, and City Auditorium, among others, will help maintain Downtown's unique character, cultural identity, and architectural legacy. It will also support the economic vitality of Downtown by attracting tourism, encouraging additional investment, and fostering local pride. The Trolley Block, for example, is an award-winning example of adaptive re-use, simultaneously preserving the City's historic trolley car garages while re-activating the block with vibrant day- and night-time activity through a healthy mix of office, retail, entertainment, and food/beverage uses. As Downtown continues to modernize, protecting and featuring the historic fabric will be pivotal to ensuring progress that protects local history and cultural identity. Identifying and inventorying Downtown's historically significant assets can guide investment and redevelopment decisions.



Bioswales are simple landscaping features that blend seamlessly into a streetscape or sidewalk to provide natural stormwater infrastructure by creating a vegetated area to soak in stormwater.

Historic Medians

Historic medians are the planted areas in the middle sections of the wider streets in Downtown Colorado Springs, notably along Nevada, Cascade, and Wahsatch avenues. They currently hold trees, turf grass, and occasionally landscaped native plantings. These medians were implemented in the early 19th century before roads were paved to minimize airborne dirt and dust from horse and carriage travel. Charles Mulford Robinson, a renowned planner of the early 20th century, recommended the expansion of these planted medians for the purpose of beautification.

These present-day medians represent some of the historic character, especially in the northern sections of Downtown leading into Historic Uptown, where the medians are prevalent along residential streets. They represent early efforts to enhance the beauty, livability, and greening of Downtown, largely led by residents and supported by early city planners and City founder General William Jackson Palmer. As Downtown continues to adapt to future uses and needs, alterations to remove or reconfigure existing historic medians may arise. In this case, it is recommended that the initiating department create an assessment of circumstances to submit to the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services Advisory Board. In addition, future considerations for the historic medians should include native and water-wise plantings.



Source: MIG

A historic median along North Nevada Avenue hosts additional urban greening, mature trees, and Downtown Colorado Springs gateway elements.

Enhancing District Identity

The distinctive qualities of each Downtown area should be reinforced through the addition of recognizable public space elements. For each district, this section encapsulates the character profile provided in Chapter 1 to help identify a theme or approach that the public space improvements should build. Though each district is distinct in character, a blending of identified elements and themes should be established on urban and neighborhood greenways, streetscapes, and rights-of-way. The following descriptions were informed by the *Streetscape Plan Design Standards*.

HISTORIC UPTOWN

Historic Uptown's identity and character is anchored by the architecture and public realm design of Colorado College. 20th century buildings, wide sidewalks, mature street trees, and historic medians create an inviting and residential atmosphere as the streets transition into the City Center. A cohesive visual identity through public realm updates should consider brick façades, historic detailing, pedestrian-scale lighting, and consistent streetscape elements. These elements include black acorn-style lighting, red standard brick hardscapes, and black street furniture such as bike racks, benches, and trash cans.

CITY CENTER

As noted in the 2016 *Experience Downtown Master Plan*, the City Center area is the most established in terms of district identity. The overall look and feel of the public realm has taken shape over the years through improvements and investments to the streetscape. Any future improvements should follow the lead of existing elements including the color palette and furnishing typologies.

EAST DOWNTOWN (EADO)

EaDo has recently seen significant investment and redevelopment with large multifamily housing projects that have contributed to streetscape upgrades. These developments, in combination with other streetscape projects, has provided an emerging bold, contemporary, and semi-industrial aesthetic that contrasts and complements the nearby historic elements of the City Center and Historic Uptown. Streetscape elements should include grey concrete, semi-industrial and black street lighting, and black street furniture.



Source: Downtown Partnership

Streetscape elements along the Trolley Block include signage, bike racks, seating areas, and plantings.

PARK UNION

The Park Union District is poised to go through an exciting and gradual development transition with upcoming Park Union housing and commercial development. The area is currently anchored by the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum and Experience at Epicenter Apartments, of which the surrounding streetscape improvements have shaped and defined the look of the public realm. These streets feature a combination of natural, industrial, and sleek modern elements, as well as significant landscaped elements and tree lawns. Curbless transitions, lower-level street lighting, and removable bollards are also noticeable in the pedestrian-oriented streets such as Vermijo and Moreno avenues. Hardscape treatments should maintain the City-standard concrete with black industrial-style street lighting and silver pedestrian lighting, bike racks, benches, and trash cans.



Source: Downtown Partnership

The streetscape along the Fiona apartments includes grey paving, benches, trash recepticals, and more.

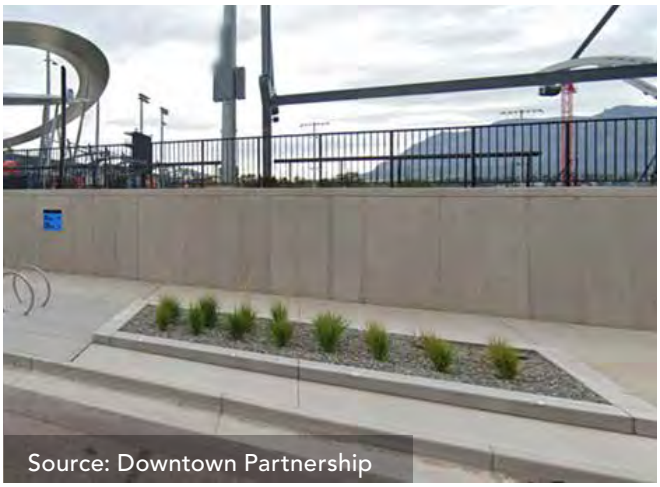


Source: Google Maps

Streetscape planters and lighting along Cimarron Street.

SOUTH END

The South End has a similar visual identity as Historic Uptown, calling for consistency with historic façades and streetscape elements, red brick, black acorn-style street lighting, and black bike racks, benches, and trash cans.



Sleek, silver, and dark streetscape elements along the northern perimeter of Weidner Field, across Cimarron Street from the Park Union area.



Sleek, silver, and dark streetscape elements in the Park Union area.

Community and Culture

Highlights

The most important part of any urban place isn't its building, it's **the people**. Residents, visitors, and employees give Downtown its character through their **culture, community connections, work, and creativity**. Their ideas and interactions drive **economic growth, community development, cultural vibrancy, and social equity**. Without them, Downtown is simply a collection of structures.

This plan celebrates the **tight-knit relationships, neighborly atmosphere, and historic spaces** of Downtown Colorado Springs, while supporting its evolution as a **dynamic, opportunity-filled place**. It emphasizes strategies to keep Downtown **engaged, connected, and inclusive** for all who live, work, or spend time here.

Overview

Public Art and Creative Economy

Events and Activation

Housing and Homelessness

Public Safety

6 chapter

Overview

Culture and community in Downtown are expressed through public art, creative industry, events, and programming. This is a primary element of focus for the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) and Downtown Partnership.

Public art should strengthen community identity and showcase creativity, while expanding on the current collection with vision and funding resources aligned with the recommendations of the *City of Colorado Springs Public Art Master Plan* and the *Cultural Plan* for the Pikes Peak Region. Innovation and energy are also bolstered by a robust creative sector, which is essential to Downtown's singular culture.

Events and space activations bring energy and purpose to public areas, encourage people to spend time Downtown, strengthen community ties, support local businesses, and improve perceptions of safety. As Colorado Springs grows, it will be vital to offer new experiences that foster connections among a more diverse and expanding population. These experiences encourage spending more time Downtown, further developing the community fabric, supporting local businesses, and promoting public safety.

Perception of safe conditions varies widely across the broader Colorado Springs community. A successful Downtown requires creating safe environments for all people and addressing the root causes of safety concerns—such as limited access to housing, health care, and economic opportunity.

Housing and homelessness have emerged as persistent and urgent concerns throughout this planning process. Homelessness takes many forms and it is often the result of breakdowns within a complex web of interconnected systems that include housing instability, cycles of trauma, and economic hardship, sometimes compounded by health challenges and limited social support. Addressing homelessness requires coordinated, compassionate, and systems-level solutions.



Source: *Springsmag*

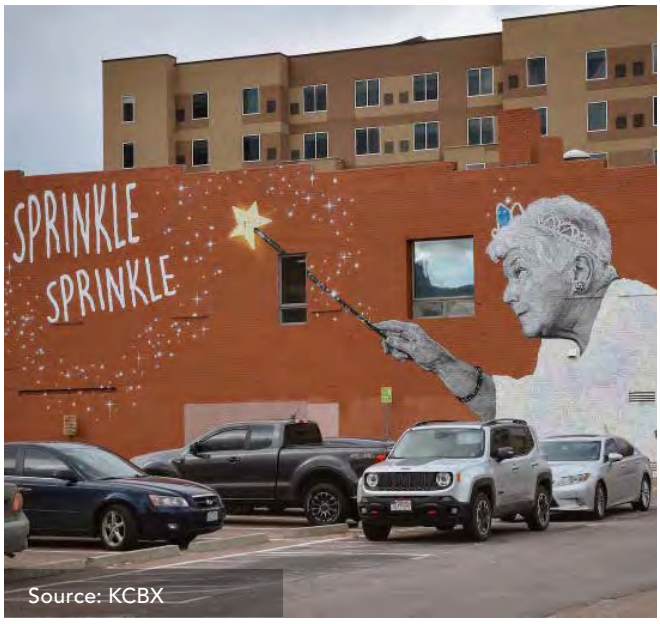
Colorado Springs Pride is celebrated every June.

Public Art and Creative Economy

Downtown is one of two State-certified Creative Districts in the Pikes Peak region (certification is administered by Colorado Creative Industries, a department of the State Office of Economic Development and International Trade). This certification recognizes the vital role of arts and culture in enhancing the economic and civic capital of communities, supporting workforce attraction and retention, and improving quality of life for visitors and residents. Downtown Creative District programs strengthen a community identity rooted in arts, culture, innovation, wellness, and wellbeing.

Colorado Springs' public art enhances the City's reputation as a cultural destination and strengthens its creative economy. Signature Creative District programs include Art on the Streets, ArtSpot, and the Pikes Peak Avenue Cultural Corridor. Downtown is home to over 50 permanent artworks, representing most of the public art citywide (most of which were donated to the City through Art on the Streets). From the "Purple Coneflowers" sculpture near City Hall to the iconic "Take Back the Power" mural on Pikes Peak Avenue, investment in public art reinforces Downtown as the cultural heart of the city. The AdAmAn Alley placemaking project is a prime example of how public art can be used to tell a unique regional story while addressing critical infrastructure needs and making pedestrian enhancements.

While public art is essential to a vibrant built environment, the people and businesses that make up Downtown's creative ecosystem are equally critical to a city center that is an appealing place to live, visit, and conduct business. Downtown is home to both major art institutions and performance venues (such as the Fine Arts Center and Pikes Peak Center for Performing Arts), large arts and arts education organizations, smaller local galleries and venues, and other creative



Source: KCBX

Wall murals around Downtown can create visual appeal and vibrancy to an otherwise blank space.


Source: Colorado Public Radio

Sculpture "Doom Scroll" by artist Chad La Fever.

businesses (design and architecture studios, boutiques with artisan goods, etc.). Collectively, these entities provide opportunities for local creatives, produce a diverse series of cultural events, and contribute energy and innovation to Downtown.

Recommendations in this Plan considered wide-reaching community input, stakeholder focus groups with arts and entertainment experts, and the guidance of both the *2020 Public Art Master Plan* and the *Arts Vision 2030 Cultural Plan* for the Pikes Peak Region.

Colorado Springs is currently experiencing rapid development. While there are many positive aspects to this growth, it also poses a displacement risk to the independent creative businesses and organizations that give Downtown its unique character. It is important to continue to recognize Downtown as an area of cultural significance, supporting the small businesses that constitute the fabric of the local scene and provide a rich spectrum of exhibits and events. Downtown can support local creatives by providing opportunities for them to grow and encouraging collaboration between artists, businesses, and educational institutions.

Efforts to take on more ambitious placemaking projects and integrate public art into City initiatives will require identifying new strategies to expand funding mechanisms—an investment that will continue to enhance community identity, boost cultural tourism, and create a more vibrant atmosphere throughout Downtown. Working with City planning and developers to encourage integration of public art into new developments will also be an important tactic.

To build on existing placemaking strengths and continue to support the creative economy, this Plan recommends:

- Expanding the range and themes of public art.
- Integrating art into everyday streetscape infrastructure (e.g., crosswalks, light poles, and benches).
- Increasing opportunities for local creatives and those who belong to underrepresented demographics.
- Encouraging playful, interactive, and community-created works.
- Growing the number of rotating and seasonal installations.
- Advocating for critical infrastructure that supports the growth of the creative sector (such as venues and exhibition spaces, professional development opportunities, and affordable studio space).

As Downtown continues to grow, it is important that future projects consider meaningful community engagement, impact on adjacent neighborhoods, and ties to the cultural heritage of current and past residents. Microgrants, residencies, and open calls can help emerging artists contribute.



Trust Oasis, a pop-up arts experience blends colorful fiber arts and public seating in Pittsburgh, PA.

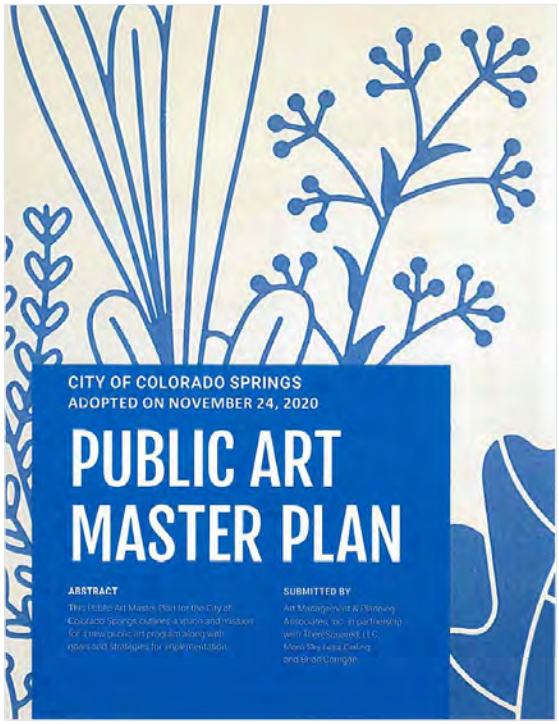
PREVIOUS PLANNING EFFORTS

This Plan aims to build upon previous planning efforts that may influence the successful implementation of Downtown arts, culture, and events. The following recommendations are items from the *Public Art Master Plan* and the *Cultural Plan* for the Pikes Peak Region that are relevant to Downtown Colorado Springs:

1. Establish an annual summit. This is an opportunity for creative groups to share accomplishments, assess where there are still gaps, and discuss partnering on cross-regional collaboration. The focus should be on sharing and advancing Arts Vision 2030 as a community.
2. Forge greater cross-sector relationships between the arts and other regional sectors (e.g., healthcare, business, development, government, and military) to ensure that the creative sector is relevant and leveraged as an asset to advance regional goals.
3. Consolidate and expand professional development workshops and classes for artists and creatives.
4. Continue to assess the specific needs of local artists to determine which programs are most needed and effective.
5. Advocate for a Lodging and Automobile Rental Tax (LART) increase with a dedicated percentage for the creative sector in Colorado Springs.
6. Develop specialized rosters of qualified artists to encourage contractors, developers, business/building owners, and event planners to hire more local artists and creatives.
7. Identify needs for performance venues and exhibition spaces (permanent or temporary/DIY) and advocate for future development.



Adopted in 2021, *Arts Vision 2030* sets goals for the entire Pikes Peak Region.



Adopted in 2020, the *Public Art Master Plan* faces implementation challenges.

Events and Activation



Source: Downtown Colorado Springs

The Pikes Peak Pride Festival draws thousands from across the state.

Events and public space activations are central to Downtown's vibrancy, economic success, and social connection. Downtown hosts activities year-round, including First Friday Art Walks, themed promotions like the Haute Chocolate Hop and Costume Crawl, and seasonal events such as character strolls, sidewalk sales, and Small Business Saturday to drive foot traffic to retailers and restaurants.

Community partners add further richness with events like Pikes Peak Pride Fest, Food Truck Tuesdays in Alamo Park, and Fan Fest for the Pikes Peak International Hill Climb. Cultural venues such as the Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum, Fine Arts Center, Pikes Peak Center for Performing Arts, and U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum offer performances, exhibitions, and experiences that anchor Downtown's cultural identity. While not currently programmed, there is also a new energy behind re-activating the historic City Auditorium that once hosted everything from orchestras, ballet, Shakespearean plays, boxing matches, political rallies, circuses, and even roller derby.

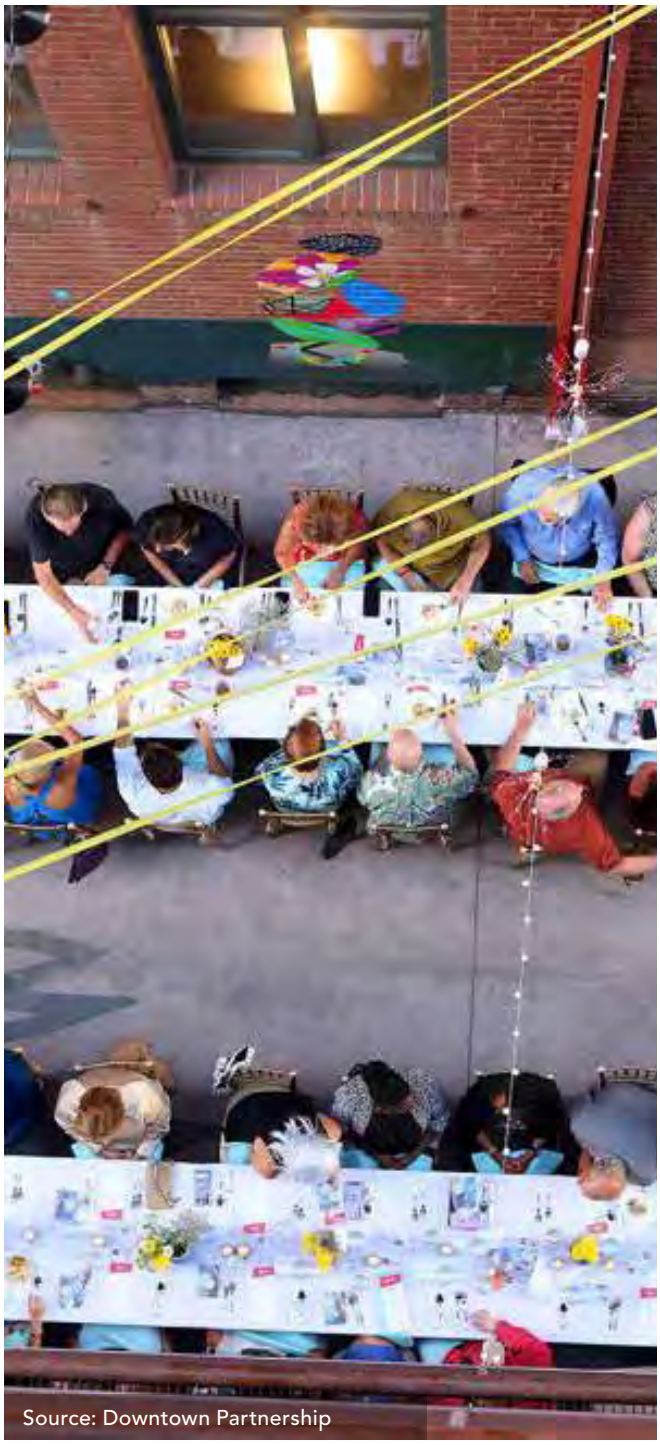
Despite the success and frequency of existing events and activations, population growth and development will continue to supply a demand for a broader spectrum of activities across Downtown's different neighborhoods.

Downtown Colorado Springs has made significant strides in shaping its identity through public art, cultural events, and community engagement. In addition to exploring new spaces, the next step is to develop a coordinated approach that brings together local institutions, artists, small businesses, and cultural

leaders to create new events, expand access to the arts, and activate underutilized spaces. Some of the ways to foster partnerships and expand programming include:

- Partnering with nonprofits, cultural institutions, schools, and arts councils to co-create events.
- Leveraging existing venues for community-driven programming.
- Supporting resident- and artist-led initiatives with microgrants or technical help.
- Introducing more wellness activities, culinary events, multicultural festivals, competitive cook-offs, and music showcases.

These partnerships can expand opportunities to engage a broader range of artists and bring greater diversity to local public art and events and can lead to co-hosted pop-up exhibitions, art walks, and collaborative showcases in both indoor and underutilized public outdoor spaces. Cultural and historical institutions such as the Pioneers Museum can help expand exhibitions showcasing different narratives of historic significance and cultural diversity. Partnerships with theater and event programs at local schools or colleges for student exhibits, critiques, and installations can allow community members of all ages to participate. Such events can be held in small businesses and galleries, dedicated events and arts spaces, or throughout public spaces in the Downtown area. Large-scale events can draw national talent and attention to Downtown, serving a broad-cross section of the community with new offerings to expand the reach and inclusiveness. Additional partnerships with broader institutions such as the Cultural Office of the Pikes Peak Region (COPPR) could also help event activation in Downtown's most prominent public spaces like America the Beautiful Park.



Attendees at the Revel Urban Arts Party dine in AdAmAn Alley

Housing and Homelessness

Rising housing costs, healthcare expenses, and stagnant wages have fueled instability and homelessness across demographics in urban areas nationwide, including Downtown Colorado Springs. Research from the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless has shown that the overwhelming majority of unhoused individuals would accept housing if available, and many health or substance use challenges arise from, not before, housing instability. Each person carries a unique story and approaching this situation with compassion includes recognizing the dignity of every individual with commitment to solutions that offer not just services but also belonging, support, and humanity.

PAST AND ONGOING EFFORTS

In 2024, the City of Colorado Springs released the *Homelessness Response Action Plan*. This comprehensive plan provides 60 strategies across five major categories related to homelessness in Colorado Springs, including cleanup and enforcement, street outreach and shelter, employment, housing and supportive services, and collaboration and public communication. Key actions recommended in the plan include expanding the Homeless Outreach Program run by the Colorado Springs Fire Department, enhancing street outreach efforts, expanding access to affordable and supportive housing, bolstering mental health partnerships across the city, growing the WorkCOS employment program, designing and implementing public awareness and educational campaigns, and establishing a regional coordination approach.

In June 2025, the Downtown Partnership launched a Clean and Safe Pilot Program to complement these efforts with ambassadors, outreach personnel, and supplemental security. These pillars of the program will provide information to those experiencing homelessness on existing services and resources, as well as assist them in gaining access to these resources. The pilot program is expected to provide recommendations informed by the data collected throughout the pilot.

ADDITIONAL EFFORTS

The DDA is a key advocate for addressing these issues in the Downtown environment given that the impact on businesses and visitors is significant and visible. However, programmatic recommendations should be implemented with other organizational and government partners, existing service providers, and the Pikes Peak Continuum of Care. This collaboration will help ensure systems-level coordination and alignment on purpose and program, rather than isolated and disjointed approaches.

Those experiencing homelessness deserve access to ample wraparound services and opportunities for a range of affordable and attainable housing options. Additional opportunities for economic and social support include:

- Ensuring adequate public restrooms.
- Partnering with organizations to run mobile medical or quality-of-life services.
- Sponsoring a messaging program to increase social connectivity.
- Deploying proactive street outreach teams that are unarmed, ununiformed, and trained in trauma-informed care.

For Downtown to combat the stigma and stereotyping by those witnessing visible homelessness, there can be efforts to build social infrastructure. These include:

- Leveraging educational opportunities and marketing campaigns to debunk myths.
- Providing facts about homelessness to humanize the issue.

- Facilitating internal staff training for the Downtown Partnership to ensure coordinated and value-driven decision-making.
- Working with local businesses to build rapport with houseless neighbors.

Finally, one of the primary root causes of homelessness is a lack of affordable and attainable housing. While Downtown alone will not be able to overcome this large-scale challenge, it can contribute to a positive conclusion. One option could include leveraging some percentage of TIF funds to support expanded affordable housing development. These funds can be used to provide gap financing to close development funding gaps, land banking for affordable housing developments, or fiscally supporting affordable housing developers or organizations. Downtown could also partner with the City of Colorado Springs to explore expanding affordable housing requirements or incentivizing private developers to include more affordable units within larger market-rate housing developments.

PUBLIC RESTROOMS

There are not currently any consistently open, accessible public restrooms in Downtown Colorado Springs. Community outreach throughout this planning process has consistently highlighted the need for a public restroom in high-traffic areas. Downtown visitors, workers, and residents often rely on store and restaurant purchases—or access through office and hotel lobbies—for restrooms, limiting overall accessibility. As Colorado Springs continues to grow and invest in vibrant public spaces, the addition of well-designed, permanent public restrooms is a critical component of a welcoming urban environment. Further coordination and planning will be required to establish funding sources for this project and operations, maintenance, and enforcement responsibilities. Public restrooms should serve all Downtown visitors and enable them to stay in the area longer. Drawing on best practices from peer communities and industry standards, the following recommendations guide the planning, siting, and maintenance of these essential facilities.

Strategic Placement

Public restrooms should be located in high-need, high-traffic areas such as walkable corridors, community parks, trailheads, and transit stops. Restrooms should be highly visible to the public to enhance safety and ease accessibility for pedestrians, cyclists, individuals with disabilities, and families with children. To facilitate a cost-effective construction process, the location should take into consideration existing water, sewer, and electrical infrastructure.

Maintenance and Operations

A consistent and proactive maintenance approach is essential for providing clean, approachable spaces for the community. Some best practices include daily cleaning schedules with posted maintenance logs, staff training in safety protocols, sanitation, customer service, and protocols for quick response to damage or vandalism. A quick response system can be supported by public reporting tools like QR codes or hotline call service posts. Finally, hours of operations should balance accessibility with safety so that the amenities can serve all residents and those who rely on public infrastructure equitably. Some communities require a small fee to use the restroom to contribute to the cost of maintenance and cleaning.

Public Safety

Public safety requires a balance of prevention, design, community engagement, and responsive enforcement. While it intersects with homelessness, each issue needs distinct strategies.

When it comes to public safety there are multiple options for programmatic approaches in Downtown Colorado Springs. One of these is being implemented through the Clean and Safe Pilot Program (launched in Summer 2025). This program includes private supplemental security, ambassadors, and outreach services. This follows the example of many cities across the U.S. who have found success in small-scale relationship-building with disruption in public spaces. It will be critical to gather data and insights from the Downtown Partnership's Clean and Safe Pilot Program to ensure its success and longevity in providing a safe and comfortable environment for all.

When thinking about public safety as it relates to risk of crime, one of the most powerful disruptors to the typical cycle of crime is by supporting approaches that focus on accountability, repair, and rebuilding trust which can be done in coordination other partners. Downtown can play a strong role in supporting practices such as:

- Peer mediation, community conferencing, and repair agreements in schools and local businesses.
- Youth engagement through schools and local organizations.
- Capacity building, funding opportunities, or technical assistance for tenant associations for neighborhood patrols, safety training, and advocacy.

Public space activation can also be a powerful tool for increasing public safety Downtown. This can be done by creating spaces that foster neighborly connection, trust, and a shared sense of belonging and responsibility for public space. Gathering for cultural celebrations, art walks, markets, or festivals activates public spaces and signals their worth as inclusive and welcoming environments. This encourages meeting people you wouldn't interact with otherwise, reducing isolation, and creating positive social interactions within the public realm. Events can also encourage a sense of community ownership and stewardship as "eyes on the street" where safety is grounded in mutual respect, visibility, and a collective presence.

Thoughtful urban design can also be a powerful tool for increasing public safety. Well-lit pathways, clear sightlines, wayfinding, and inviting public spaces can all contribute to positive perceptions of safety by allowing for navigation ease and natural observation. Smart design of public spaces that allow for passive and active gathering, rest, and play can also encourage positive social behavior and collective responsibility. Design can also be beneficial when it considers who feels welcome within a space. This requires incorporating diverse community input, cultural expression, inclusive amenities, and basic services.

Finally, law enforcement can support the safety of Downtown by adopting an even stronger community-centered and proactive approach for support and enforcement. Law enforcement should rapidly respond to illegal and harmful activities Downtown. However, enforcement authorities should also focus on relationship-building with those who work and dwell Downtown, coordinate with other entities when responding to vulnerable populations, and participate in events and other activities Downtown. Opportunities for integrating law enforcement throughout the Downtown in a supportive and trauma-informed way can improve both realities and perceptions of safety for all.

Infrastructure and Utilities

Highlights

A high-functioning and resilient Downtown relies on a solid foundation of infrastructure, utilities, and public services. There are sufficient gas, water, wastewater, and electrical utilities that are ready to support additional development and growth, with opportunities for improvement as Downtown grows, including targeted public WiFi accessibility, increasing EV charging stations, and undergrounding overhead utility lines. In addition to the creation of a *Downtown Area Drainage Master Plan*, a range of opportunities may be explored to enhance **stormwater management** Downtown. **Public services** Downtown will likely require moderate expansion in police, fire, and schools over the next few decades which will require increased investment and funding.

Overview

Electrical Utilities

Stormwater Infrastructure

Public Services

7 chapter

Overview

Beyond community aspirations and development opportunities, infrastructure realities are often a key consideration when envisioning change in a community. New developments can increase population density and trigger utility capacity upgrades and additional public services like fire stations and schools. Fortunately, Downtown Colorado Springs is well-equipped to handle additional density with existing infrastructure and processes, with opportunities for upgrades and additions. These are essential services that contribute greatly to making Downtown a safe, functional, and enriching place. Although Downtown is already dominated by impermeable surfaces, new development and streetscape projects offer opportunities to improve stormwater management. Since stormwater and utility upgrade requirements can pose challenges to development, coordinated City and DDA planning and investment will be important to mitigate these challenges. This section explores impacts to infrastructure and how to enhance both utilities and public services Downtown to support the community's needs and streamline development. Water, wastewater, and gas utilities are not examined in this plan because current infrastructure assessments indicate that these systems possess adequate capacity to support anticipated future development. Existing facilities are able to meet projected demand without requiring significant upgrades or expansions in the near term, making a detailed analysis unnecessary at this stage.

Electrical Utilities

Downtown has a well-planned electric grid and sufficient resources to support higher density in partnership with developers. Specific upgrades and additions could enhance Downtown and position it for anticipated needs well into the future."

FIBER AND PUBLIC WIFI

A dark fiber backbone is currently being installed throughout the city, which will provide high-speed broadband access in Downtown, with some residents (e.g., near Weidner Field) already having access.

Public WiFi in Downtown can provide many benefits like promoting remote work or studying in public spaces or small businesses. It can enhance accessibility for international visitors by providing internet access outside of accommodations, further bridging the digital divide and supporting public safety infrastructure. A public WiFi system can support Downtown residents, visitors, and businesses while helping to attract new development and economic activity. Cities like Austin, San José, Philadelphia, and Chattanooga have implemented public WiFi in their downtowns or even citywide, often focusing on parks, cultural venues, targeted kiosks, festivals, and affordable housing developments. When exploring and developing a system, security, privacy, installation costs, usage limits, and signal strength should be taken into consideration.

ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING

Colorado has been the nation's leader in EV adoption and EVs have accounted for over 20% of new vehicle sales in recent years, according to the Colorado Energy Office, with over 161,000 on the road in Colorado as of 2024. Electric vehicle (EV) charging stations should be provided across Downtown to support the use of these vehicles as they become more common across the country and in Colorado. Providing charging stations can draw visitors to the area to spend time patronizing shops and restaurants while their vehicles charge. As shown in Figure 7.1 on the next page, the City of Colorado Springs already offers EV charging infrastructure in all three Downtown parking garages, including Tesla supercharging at the Cascade & Bijou garage. There are three other charging stations Downtown and another just north of Downtown at Colorado College. These are generally well-distributed across Downtown. However, their locations are not well-marketed and as demand increases, they should be monitored for capacity.

In 2023, Colorado enacted a law that requires that new or renovated commercial buildings over 25,000 square feet and residential buildings with over three units must meet certain voltages and quantities of EV readiness standards with their electrical receptacles. This will impact private development Downtown and offers the opportunity to leverage resources to meet the new requirements.

UNDERGROUNDING OVERHEAD UTILITY LINES

Utility undergrounding is an ongoing effort in Downtown Colorado Springs, including some major projects like AdAmAn Alley. High-voltage transmission lines, which are typically overhead, will have portions underground to enhance the street-level experience. Since the 1980s, the City has required undergrounding of distribution lines with new development, and costs are typically split 50/50 between developers and Colorado Springs Utilities. Contributing to the financing gap of undergrounding utilities is something Downtown could consider in order to incentivize new, aesthetically pleasing development.

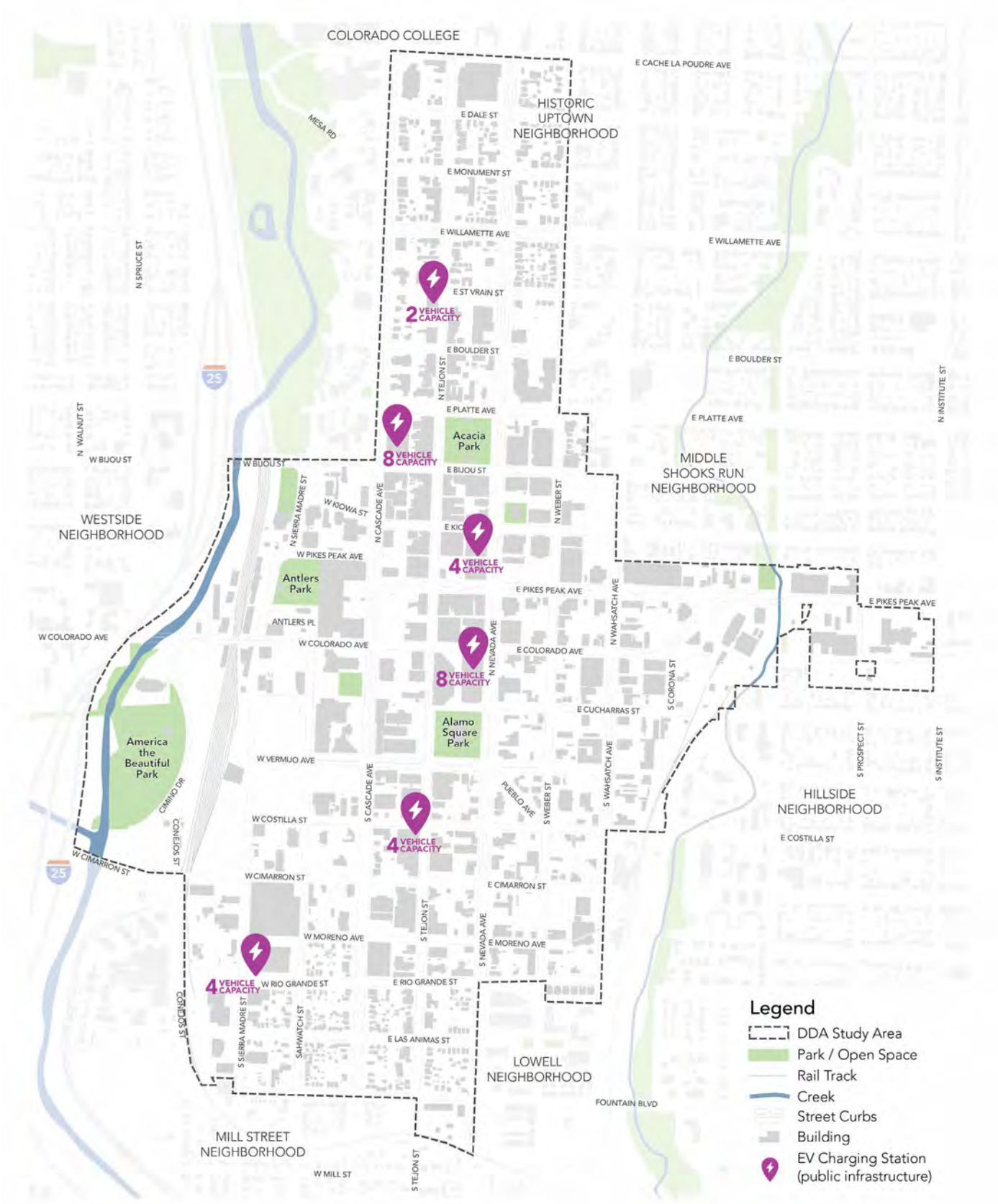


Figure 7.1 | Existing Public EV Charging Stations

Stormwater Infrastructure

Good urban stormwater infrastructure begins with a strong understanding of the natural environment and the surrounding physical context. Downtown Colorado Springs is situated between Monument Creek to the west, which flows into Fountain Creek to the south, and Shooks Run Creek to the east, which flows north to south. Cascade Avenue forms approximately the ridge line between drainage basins with runoff typically draining east or west at the intersecting streets. The surfaces of Tejon Street and Nevada Avenue carry most of the basin runoff through, or past, Downtown. For this reason, water quality from Downtown runoff is particularly important.

The City of Colorado Springs has adopted a Four-Step Process for new developments that disturb an acre or more, or that disturb less than one acre but are part of a larger plan of development. The focus is to reduce runoff volume, ensure proper treatment and control release of runoff to protect water quality, stabilize drainageways to prevent erosion and safeguard natural channels, and implement long-term controls to manage pollutants at the source. Current requirements include, but are not limited to the following:

- All new developments and redevelopments are required to address stormwater quality for post-construction conditions (PCMs) and during construction (CCMs).
- Sanitary sewage systems that overflow or bypass untreated sewage into surface streams are not permitted.
- Detention facilities shall be provided and may include a combination of storage elements in regard to Flood Control Volume, Excess Urban Runoff Volume, Water Quality Capture Volume, and initial surcharge Volume.
- The full spectrum approach shall be implemented as the standard detention approach.
- On-site detention shall not be allowed when a master plan including detention has been approved.
- Rooftop and underground detention for flood control are prohibited.

In the context of Downtown redevelopment, where space is highly constrained, drainage compliance can become a barrier to otherwise feasible projects. This is primarily due to the storage volume requirements of detention criteria. As the *Drainage Criteria Manual* (DCM) pertains to the whole of Colorado Springs, it is recommended that a Downtown-area drainage master plan be prepared to identify opportunities and constraints specific to the Downtown area. The drainage master plan may also consider funding mechanisms for capital drainage improvements and compare cost to individual compliance.



Underwater stormwater detention facilities can be space-saving and prevent flooding in dense downtowns.

A range of opportunities may be explored to potentially lessen barriers to stormwater compliance in Downtown. These include:

- Considering a reduction of detention requirements to only account for the change between existing and proposed conditions, rather than historic undeveloped conditions. Due to the high level of impervious surface that has existed within Downtown for the last several decades, existing conditions may have reached a state of relative equilibrium.
- Upsizing and installing piped stormwater conveyance systems to correct for some areas in the Downtown that lack an underground stormwater conveyance system.
- Upsizing or installing conveyance for a 100-year storm could allow detention to be waived if findings from existing and proposed conditions show that receiving streams can adequately accommodate the flows.
- Evaluating the feasibility of regional detention facilities, e.g., either centralized end-of-pipe facilities at a stream-fronting open space or distributed green infrastructure within the public rights-of-way that could be designed to offset this use in private redevelopment areas.
- Considering predetermined exemption mapping to reduce the review burden of individual projects. This works by providing mapping products of pre-approved variances such as where reduced flow control requirements are determined to be warranted or where underground PCMs are warranted due to density.

Public Services

FIRE

One concern voiced by the community regarding density and redesigned streets is effective access by the fire department. Infrastructure design should take into account the needs of emergency services. Fire departments typically manage these environments through a combination of strategic planning, specialized equipment, access management, building codes, and coordination with other agencies. Some of the specialized equipment may include aerial ladder and tower trucks, as well as standpipe systems that serve as built-in firefighting water delivery systems. The Colorado Springs Fire Department (CSFD) actively tracks new development and provides regulation through code administration, site plan and construction review, fire suppression system requirements, water supply requirements, building access, sprinkler systems, and more, handling any appeals or variances through a Fire Board. The community should understand that Downtown is not at a higher risk of fire emergencies due to the existing infrastructure, convenient proximity, street network connectivity, and fire department capacity. Additionally, because Downtown lies outside the Wildland Urban Interface, the risk of brush or forest fires impacting the area is low. Currently, the Downtown fire station is located at 29 S. Weber Street.

POLICE

The Colorado Springs Police Department (CSPD) monitors their own capacity when it comes to officers, stations, and other resources. This is adjusted over time in response to a growing population and changing needs. Cities of similar size tend to have about 1.8 officers per 1,000 residents. As of 2025, CSPD has 805 officers (authorized to have 839 officers), which is a ratio of 1.6 for every 1,000 residents. Existing police stations Downtown include the CSPD headquarters at 705 S. Nevada St. and the El Paso County Sheriff's Office at 27 E. Vermijo St. Additional information relative to the police can be found in the Community and Culture chapter.

SCHOOLS

Colorado Springs School District 11 covers Downtown and includes five schools within or near the DDA boundary—Steele, Taylor, and Columbia Elementary Schools; North Middle School; and William J. Palmer High School. Also located in or near Downtown are Spacious Skies Charter School, Early Connections Learning Centers, Pikes Peak Academy, Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind, and Community Prep School. Higher Education Institutions include Colorado College, UCCS Downtown, and the Downtown location of Pikes Peak State College. As Downtown continues to grow, the addition of new schools will be triggered by enrollment growth, overcrowding, significant housing developments, equity and access, or facilities conditions.



Source: Colorado Springs Gazette

Palmer High School renovations have begun, marking a new era for collaboration and opportunity for students and the broader Downtown area.

COLLABORATION FOR SUCCESSFUL DEVELOPMENT

Early notice of upcoming development is essential to maintaining ongoing coordination between development partners. The Downtown Partnership, alongside stakeholders like Colorado Springs Utilities, the City, Pikes Peak Regional Building Department, and the Colorado Springs Chamber of Commerce and EDC, sits on a 'Construction and Redevelopment Task Force' that meets to discuss vital projects and prevent inter-departmental or inter-organizational delays in permitting and entitlements. The City also provides a 'Rapid Response Program' for qualifying economic development and construction projects to speed up the entitlements process and provide a concierge-like experience to developers and businesses. Such collaboration should be encouraged, as reducing "time to market" can give Downtown and Colorado Springs a significant competitive advantage over other jurisdictions.



Image Source: Phillip Spears Photography