

**Woodmen Valley Chapel
Downtown Campus
16 E Platte Ave**

**Use Variance Application
Coffee Shop**

Project Statement / Land Use Statement

June 24, 2026

Owner:
Woodmen Valley Chapel

Applicant:
YOW Architects



Owner / Applicant Information

Owner:	Woodmen Valley Chapel
Contact Person:	Mike Milan
Email:	mike.malan@woodmenvalley.org
Telephone No.:	(719) 388-4923

Property Tax Schedule

TSN: 6418202002

Legal Description

S 10 FT OF LOT 8, LOTS 9 TO 16 INC BLK 51 COLO SPGS

Current Zoning and Use

R-5 Zone - Religious Institution

Application Request

YOW Architects on behalf of Woodmen Valley Chapel, requests approval of the following applications:

1. Approval of a **Use Variance** for a Coffee Shop Use in an R-5 Zone District

Location

The existing building is located in the Center of Downtown Colorado Springs at the corner of Platte Avenue and North Cascade Avenue. The building is 1 Block to the West of Acacia Park and 6 blocks South of Colorado College.

EXISTING CHURCH
16 E PLATTE AVENUE



Context

The Original church building was built in 1935 as the home of First Christian Church, 1969 the gymnasium was built to connect the 1929 Alden Manor apartments to the North, which First Christian Church purchased and converted to classrooms in 1953. **In 2024 Woodmen Valley Chapel purchased and renovated the building** to serve as their permanent Downtown Colorado Springs Campus.

The property is currently zoned **R5 - Multi-Family High** where Religious Institutions are a Permitted Use within the residential zone district. (Land uses are as indicated in [Table 7.3.2-A](#) , Base and NNA-O District Use Table)



Project Description

We respectfully request approval of a **Use Variance** to allow for a **Coffee Shop** to occupy the first floor of the northeast 3-story wing of the existing building. The proposed Coffee Shop would occupy approximately 1,600 square feet of the 41,000 square foot building. As an R-5 zoned property, Religious Institutions and Accessory Uses to a Religious Institutions are permitted uses by right in the R-5 zone. Coffee Shops (i.e. restaurants in the zoning code), that are a principal use, are not listed as a permitted use in the R-5 Zone. This application seeks approval of a **Use Variance to permit a Coffee Shop as a 2nd Principal Use in the existing church building at 16 E Platte.**

Woodmen Valley Chapel currently has three campuses in Colorado Springs, in addition to the newest downtown campus. Each of the three other campuses has a coffee shop on site which serves coffee during church services and throughout the week. **The coffee shops serve as an integral component to Woodmen Valley Chapel's mission to Gather, Connect, Grow and Contribute.** The vision for WVC's downtown campus is to open a coffee shop with a storefront entry off Cascade Avenue that would serve as a gathering place for the church community, while also creating a neighborhood coffee shop that is open to the broader downtown community. While a church coffee shop located entirely within the building could be considered an accessory use to the church and permitted accordingly, Woodmen Valley Chapel is seeking to provide a full-service coffee shop that functions both as an accessory use to the church and as a second principal use within the existing building. The proposed coffee shop is intended to activate the street frontage, invite community interaction, and provide a welcoming gathering space consistent with the walkable downtown context, while remaining aligned with Woodmen Valley Chapel's vision and mission.

This unique downtown location that is 1 block from Tejon Street and 6 blocks south of Colorado College will allow for a coffee shop to operate independently as a neighborhood-serving business while also serving the church. **This dual function is central to the request for a use variance, as the applicant is seeking approval to allow the coffee shop as a principal use in the R-5 zone district while maintaining the church as the primary and predominant use of the property.**

Project Justification for a Use Variance

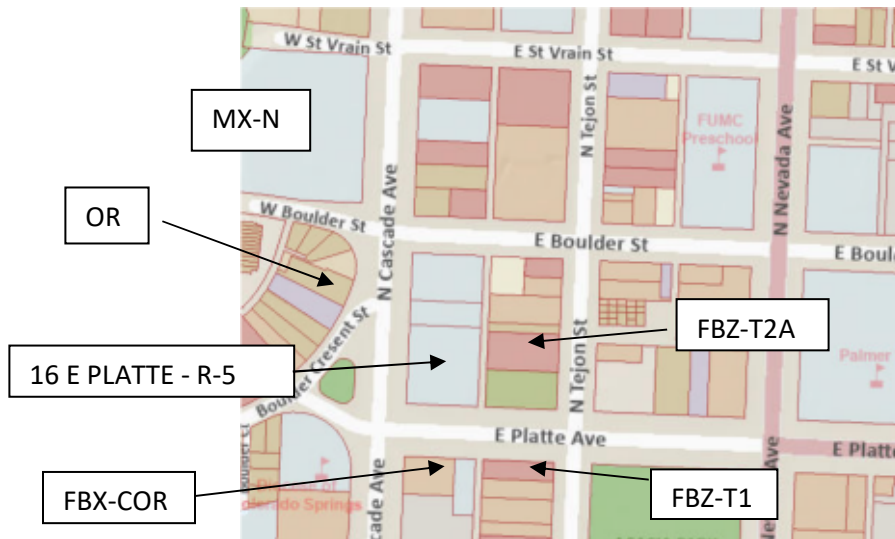
Use Variance Review Criteria

That there are exceptional or extraordinary circumstances or conditions applicable to the property involved or to the intended use of the property that do not apply generally to the property or class of uses in the same zone so that a denial of the Use Variance would result in undue property loss and not solely a mere inconvenience or financial disadvantage

The existing property zoning is unique within downtown Colorado Springs, in that all surrounding properties are zoned differently. Adjacent zoning includes FBZ-T2A to the east, FBZ-T1 and FBZ-COR to the south, O.R. to the west, and MX-N to the northwest. This spot zoning resulted from the site's location within a transitional area between the Downtown Core and the residential zones north of the property. Although the site is zoned R-5, there are no residential properties located along Cascade Avenue or Tejon Street between Platte Avenue and Boulder Street. The surrounding properties are developed with commercial, mixed-use, and high density uses consistent with downtown zoning districts. As such, the R-5 zoning designation is not necessarily reflective of the established land-use pattern or the character of the

surrounding area.

While the R-5 zoning designation does permit a Religious Institution use, it is not consistent with the zoning of neighboring properties and imposes more restrictive use limitations than those applied to adjacent parcels. This inconsistency results in an undue loss of property rights when compared to similarly situated properties in the immediate vicinity, where a broader range of uses is permitted and actively established.



Conditional Use request vs. Rezoning the property

Based on discussions with City Planning staff, there are two procedural options available to accommodate the proposed coffee shop use: rezoning the property to a commercial or form-based zone consistent with nearby properties, or pursuing a Conditional Use Variance for the specific coffee shop use. During the recent UDC zoning map update, City Planning staff evaluated this property and elected not to reclassify it into the FBZ district. Staff indicated that the existing historic church building provides significant value at this prominent downtown corner and contributes to the established character of Downtown Colorado Springs. Rezoning the property to a more permissive commercial or FBZ district could create the potential for future redevelopment of the site in a manner that may not preserve the existing church building or its unique contribution to the downtown context. By retaining the R-5 zoning designation, the City preserved the institutional character of the property while maintaining appropriate limits on future land-use intensity. Woodmen Valley Chapel agrees that maintaining the existing R-5 zoning is the most appropriate long-term approach for the property. A Conditional Use Variance provides a more focused and site-specific mechanism to allow the proposed coffee shop use while preserving the underlying zoning framework, the continued predominance of the church use, and the historic and civic character of this important downtown site.

Compliance with 7.5.527.B.2.c Use Variance –

2. A use Variance is not available for....c....A use of a higher intensity and less restriction than what is permitted in the established zone district of the subject property'

The request is consistent with the intent and limitations of Section 7.5.527.B.2.c of the City Code. The proposed coffee shop does not constitute a higher-intensity or less-restricted use than the existing religious institution presently permitted on the property. During active worship services and church programming, the existing religious institution generates a greater concentration of activity, parking

demand, and pedestrian movement than the proposed coffee shop is anticipated to generate during normal operations. By comparison, the coffee shop is intended to operate as a low-intensity, sit-down, neighborhood-serving use, with activity generally occurring outside of peak church service periods. As a result, the proposed use is expected to remain subordinate in intensity to the primary church use, minimize operational conflicts, and maintain compatibility with the surrounding downtown and neighborhood context.

That the Use Variance is necessary for the preservation and enjoyment of a property right of the and if not approved, the property or structure cannot yield any beneficial use

The requested Use Variance is necessary for the reasonable preservation and enjoyment of the property. While the applicant could elect to re-zone the property to match the adjacent property FBZ zoning, the R-5 zone sufficiently satisfies the intended use of a Religious Intuition. The proposed Coffee Shop would provide an informal gathering space for the church congregation, supporting fellowship, dialogue, and community building. These functions are integral to the Woodmen Valley Chapel's core values to Gather, Connect, Grow and Contribute. A use variance to allow a Coffee Shop within the building is necessary for church to broaden the use of the structure and enhance the surrounding community.

That the Use Variance will not be detrimental to the public welfare or convenience nor injurious to the property or improvements of other owners of property;

Granting the Use Variance will not be detrimental to the public welfare or convenience, nor will it be injurious to neighboring properties or improvements. The coffee shop use would serve both congregation members and the neighboring community, fostering positive public interaction and a sense of community. Given the churches' location adjacent to the FBZ district and its adjacency to Colorado College as well as Palmer High School, a Public Coffee Shop will create a positive impact on the neighborhood and the greater Downtown Area.

Traffic

The proposed coffee shop within the church building is intended to operate as a traditional sit-down coffee shop and community gathering space. The use is not proposed as a quick-service, high-turnover model, nor does the application include a drive-through component or other auto-oriented service model. Customer activity is anticipated to be lower-intensity and generally consistent with a neighborhood-serving destination that supports informal gathering, conversation, and community interaction. Based on these operational characteristics, the proposed coffee shop is not expected to generate a level of traffic or vehicle circulation that would create adverse impacts to traffic on Cascade Avenue, neighboring properties, or the general public welfare.

That the hardship is not the result of the applicant's own actions

The hardship prompting this request is not the result of any action taken by the applicant. The church has not altered the zoning of the property nor taken steps that created the need for this variance. The hardship arises solely from the application of current zoning regulations to an existing institutional use located adjacent to a more permissive zoning district.

That because of these conditions, the application of the UDC prohibition on the requested use on the subject property would effectively prohibit or unreasonably restrict the use of the property; and

Strict application of the UDC prohibition on the requested use would unreasonably restrict the use of the property. Prohibiting a coffee shop use would limit the ability of the existing religious institution to effectively serve both its congregation and the broader community. Coffee shops have become a common and widely accepted component of modern church campuses, serving as important community-oriented amenities that foster connection, support neighborhood activation, and contribute positively to surrounding areas. By not allowing a coffee shop on the property, the church would be unnecessarily constrained in its ability to fully utilize the site in a manner consistent with contemporary ministry practices.

Woodmen Valley Chapel's established ministry model relies heavily on providing a low-barrier "front door" to the community. Coffee shops are not merely incidental amenities, but rather a key component of how Woodmen operationalizes its **Connect** and **Gather** values across its campuses. They are intentionally designed to welcome individuals who may not yet participate in weekend services or formal programming. **Restricting the coffee shop to an internally facing use would prevent Woodmen from operating this campus in a manner consistent with its other locations and would substantially impair its ability to carry out a core aspect of its ministry at this site.** As such, the requested use variance is necessary to ensure the property can be used in a reasonable and functional manner consistent with both the organization's mission and the evolving role of religious institutions within the community.

That the Use Variance is not being requested primarily to avoid the time or expense of complying with UDC standards generally applicable to similar properties and development.

The Use Variance is not being requested to avoid the time or expense of complying with UDC standards applicable to similar properties or developments. The applicant remains committed to meeting all applicable development, operational, and design standards. The variance request is solely related to the specific proposed use of a Coffee Shop which is uniquely restricted in this zone.

Coffee Shop Use – Site Specific Details

ACCESS

The primary access to the proposed coffee shop will be from a new entry door on the West side of the building. A new ADA compliant ramp will be added to provide an accessible egress path from the public right of way.



Proposed Coffee Shop Entry Location.

NEW ENTRY DOOR AND STOREFRONT TO BE ADDED

PARKING

On site parking is provided in the parking lot to the north of the building (319 Cascade Ave) which is owned by Woodmen Valley Chapel. There are (31) available parking spaces in the North Parking as well as (6) parking spaces on the southeast corner of the site, of which (5) are marked accessible parking spaces. There are (8) metered parking spaces along Cascade Ave and (3) metered parking spaces along Platte Ave. In addition to the onsite parking, Woodmen Valley Chapel has a parking agreement with the property owner at 420 N Cascade Avenue to rent the parking lot during Sunday Church Service.

Section **7.4.1002.A.3** permits an exemption from additional parking requirements where a proposed modification does not result in a 15% or greater increase in required parking. Based on the proposed scope, the calculated parking demand remains below this threshold, and no additional parking is required.

On Site Parking Requirements (See image below for parking areas for Sunday services):

Church Requirements: 280 Seats in the Sanctuary @ a ratio of 1 parking space per 6 seats

$$280/6 = 47 \text{ Required Spaces}$$

Coffee Shop: 1,600 square feet at a ratio of 1:300 GFA (table 7.4.10A)

$$1,600 \text{ sf} / 300 = 6 \text{ Parking Spaces}$$

Total cumulative required spaces = 53 Parking Spaces

Original Use required = 47 parking spaces

Net increase = 13% (which is below the 15% threshold established under section 7.4.1002.A.3).

Total spaces available On Site: 37 spaces (5 ADA)

Total Metered Street Parking Spaces = 11

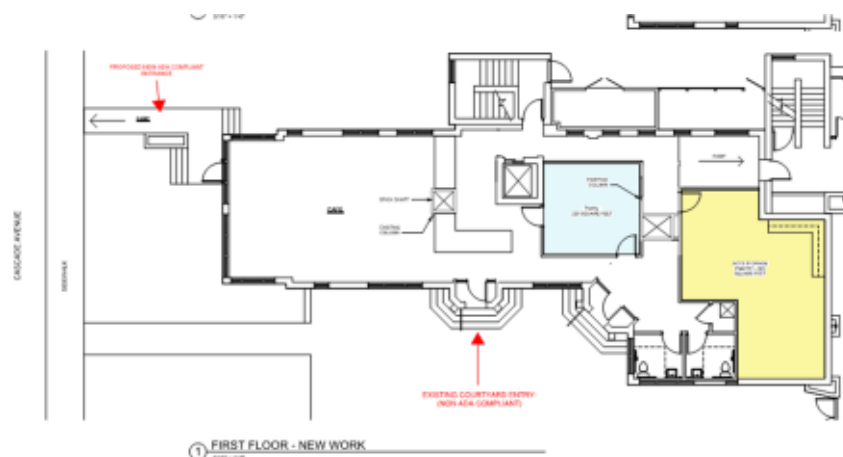
Total Parking Spaces Available = 48 Parking Spaces Available.

Per the Parking Requirements outlined, there is sufficient parking on site for the church use and the additional required parking for the proposed Coffee Shop Use. In addition to the on-site parking, Woodmen Valley Chapel rents the parking lot at 420 N Cascade Avenue during Sunday service, which fully satisfies the parking requirements for the Church and Coffee Shop.



EXTERIOR IMPROVEMENTS

To facilitate the establishment of a new coffee shop within the existing building, the project proposes the construction of an ADA-compliant access ramp, a small associated patio area, and the installation of a new exterior entry door along the western façade. These improvements are intended to provide code-compliant accessibility, establish a dedicated street-oriented entrance for the coffee shop use, and enhance tenant visibility and identity. No additional exterior façade modifications are proposed.



SIGNAGE

The proposed coffee shop will include building-mounted signage oriented toward Cascade Avenue, located on the three-story portion of the building at the first-floor level. All proposed signage associated with the coffee shop will be designed in compliance with the Colorado Springs Sign Code and will be submitted for separate review and approval at the appropriate stage of the project.

WATER & WASTE WATER

The existing building is currently served by Colorado Springs Utilities (CSU) for both domestic water and wastewater services. The existing domestic water service and meter are adequately sized to accommodate the proposed coffee shop use, and no modifications to the domestic water line or meter are anticipated.

The proposed coffee shop use will require the installation of a grease interceptor connected to the existing wastewater service. Any necessary modifications to the wastewater infrastructure to accommodate the grease interceptor will be designed and submitted to Colorado Springs Utilities for review and approval at the appropriate stage of the project.

QUALIFIED OPPORTUNITY ZONE

The property is located within a Qualified Opportunity Zone established under the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, which is intended to encourage investment and economic development in targeted areas. The proposed Coffee Shop use introduces a taxable commercial component within an otherwise tax-exempt property, thereby contributing to the local tax base. This added tax revenue supports continued investment in public infrastructure and amenities, aligning with broader goals for downtown vitality and long-term economic sustainability.

Conclusion

The proposed Use Variance application to permit a coffee shop at 16 E. Platte Avenue represents an appropriate and compatible use for the site and would be a positive addition to the Church building and to Downtown Colorado Springs. Although the property is zoned R-5, there are no existing residential uses on the block, and the surrounding context is predominantly commercial in character. As such, the proposed commercial use is more consistent with the existing land use pattern than the residential uses permitted under the current R-5 zoning designation.

The proposed coffee shop would function as an accessible and welcoming destination for both nearby residents and the broader downtown community, supporting social interaction and community engagement. In addition, the use would allow Woodmen Valley Chapel to extend its welcoming presence beyond traditional religious activities by providing a community-oriented gathering space open to the public.

The project would also contribute to downtown vitality by activating the prominent corner of Cascade Avenue and Platte Avenue by introducing a walkable, neighborhood-serving amenity. As detailed in the project narrative, the proposed Use Variance satisfies the applicable Use Variance criteria outlined in the Unified Development Code (UDC).