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Project Statement

February 14, 2024

City of Colorado Springs
Planning and Development Department
Attn: Gabe Sevigny, Planning Supervisor
30 S. Nevada Avenue, Suite 701
Colorado Springs, CO 80903

Re: Pioneer Technology & Arts Academy (PTAA) – Map Amendment (Rezoning) Project Statement

To the City of Colorado Springs Planning and Development Department,

Please accept this document as the Project Statement for the Map Amendment (Rezoning) application pursuant to the Map Amendment (Rezoning) Application Submittal Checklist for the Pioneer Technology & Arts Academy (PTAA) project.

Project Overview

This request for approval of a zoning map amendment rezoning of a 13.99-acre property from RR-5 (Residential Rural) El Paso County zoning to MX-M, Mixed-Use Medium Scale, City of Colorado Springs zoning concurrent with annexation. The site is proposed to be developed as a new 800 student Pioneer Technology & Arts Academy (PTAA) charter school serving as a secondary school for grades 6 through 12. The owner of the property, which is SSS Education Corp., is proposing to develop a Science, Technology, Engineering, Art & Math (STEAM) charter school known as Pioneer Technology & Arts Academy (PTAA) on the site. More specifically, the school site is anticipated to include the following:

- A 47,000 square-foot charter school building serving 800 students within grades 6 through 12
- A 23,600 square-foot detached gymnasium
- Two onsite parking lots totaling 155 parking spaces
- Pick up and drop off drive aisles,
- A small 10,000 square-foot outdoor play area adjacent to the charter school building, and
- One onsite full spectrum water quality and detention facilities.

An existing PTAA primary/elementary charter school located at the southwest corner of Peterson Road and Dublin Boulevard is proposed to be the primary feeder school to the proposed secondary school.

The site is currently part of an existing County enclave and is located southeast of the Marksheffel Road and Stetson Hills Boulevard intersection along the east side of Marksheffel Road. The property is adjacent to vacant land to the north zoned RR-5 (Residential Rural) which is within the same County enclave as the subject site and vacant land to the east located within the City of Colorado Springs, which zoned PDZ, Planned Development Zone, as part of the overall Banning Lewis Ranch development. The property located to the south, which is also within the same County enclave as the subject site, includes an existing RV storage and self-storage facility and is currently zoned CC (Commercial Community) by El Paso County. Across Marksheffel Road to the west is the Eastview Estates single-family detached neighborhood which is zoned R-1 6, Single-Family Medium. See Exhibit 1 below for current City zoning in the area.

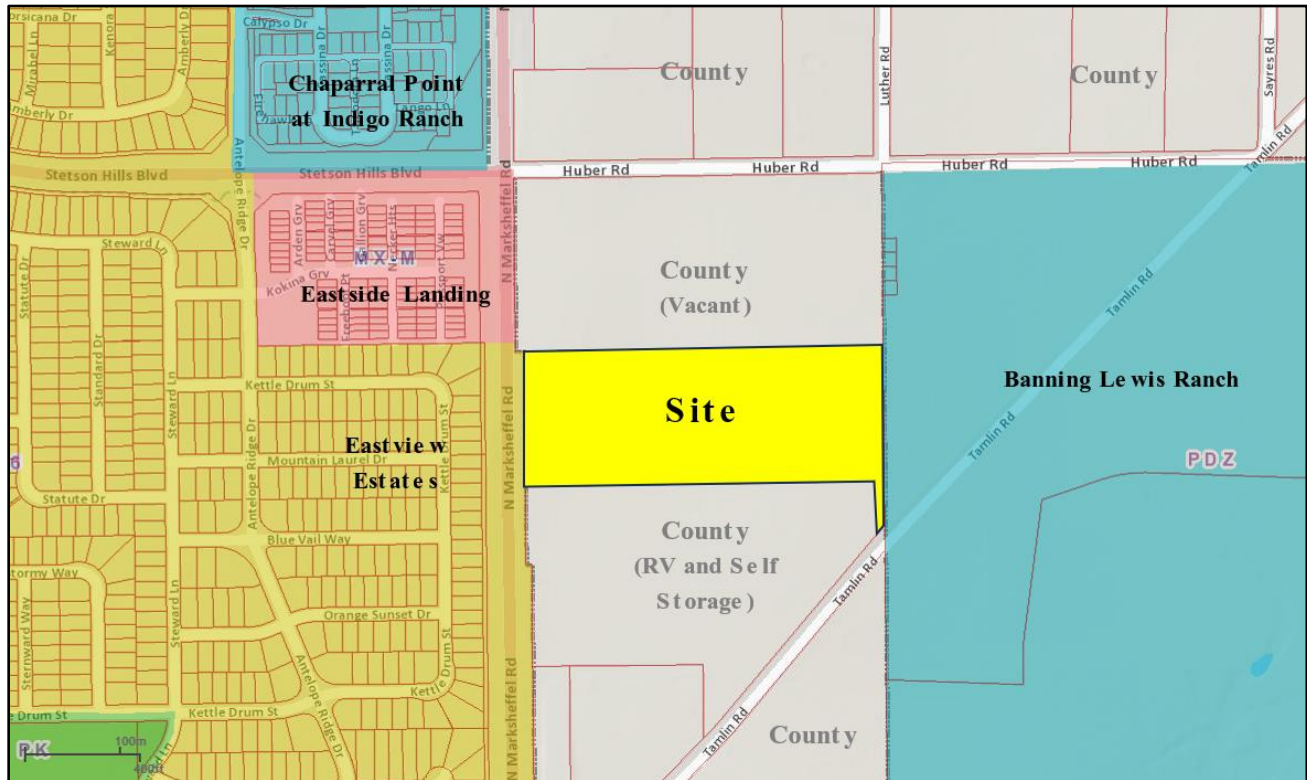


Exhibit 1. Map of Existing City Zoning and Development in the Vicinity of the PTAA Site

As mentioned above, the PTAA site is part of an enclave of County land surrounded by properties that are already within the incorporated boundaries of the City of Colorado Springs (see Exhibit 2 below). The site is currently vacant and is encumbered by relatively large utility easements, particularly along the western portion of the property near Marksheffel Road.

The site is currently vacant and is generally comprised of open areas of native vegetation. The western portion of the property slopes from north-northeast to south-southwest generally towards Marksheffel Road and the eastern portion of the property slopes from north-northwest to south-southeast generally towards Tamlin Road. The property is located in the upper reaches of the East Fork of Sand Creek drainage basin, which ultimately drains into Sand Creek approximately seven (7) miles to the south near the Academy Boulevard and East Fountain Boulevard intersection. The western portion

ZONING MAP AMENDMENT (REZONING) APPROVAL CRITERIA

Please see below for an analysis of compliance of the PTAA zoning map amendment (rezoning) application with the City of Colorado Springs Unified Development Code (UDC), specifically the Zoning Map Amendment Approval Criteria as outlined in Section 7.5.704.D of the UDC.

- a. The proposed rezoning is consistent with the goals and policies of the Colorado Springs Comprehensive Plan, with other plans and policies adopted by the City Council; and with the purpose statement of the proposed zone district(s).**

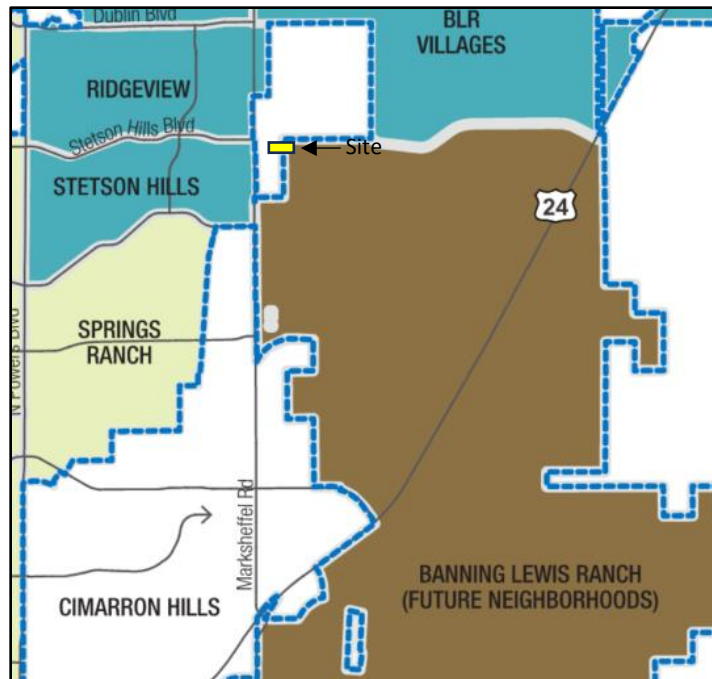
The City of Colorado Springs comprehensive plan, Plan COS (2019), is the primary document used to guide land development decisions particularly with respect to Zoning Map Amendments (Rezoning). Consistency with the Plan is paramount when considering a variety of land use applications, including rezoning applications. Please note that elements of the City's comprehensive plan have been included and addressed throughout this Project Statement to allow for more appropriate application of the Plan to topical considerations (e.g., transportation, use-to-use compatibility, etc.). Those discussions are also included by reference into this section, as appropriate.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Vision Map included in Chapter 1 of Plan COS identifies the areas nearest to where the proposed PTAA charter school is located as being within the Vibrant Neighborhood designations known as "Newer Developing Neighborhood" and "Future Neighborhood." Chapter 2 of the Plan further describes these designations which are also analyzed below for consistency with the proposed PTAA charter school.

CHAPTER 2: VIBRANT NEIGHBORHOODS

Chapter 2 of PlanCOS emphasizes the importance of strong neighborhood and recognizes that the "strength of a neighborhood's identity, values, and positive attributes extend beyond traditional residential areas and can benefit the overall character of the city." There is no current Neighborhood Typology applicable to the site since the PTAA charter school site is currently within unincorporated El Paso County; however, the two closest typologies are "Newer Developing Neighborhood", which includes Stetson Hills located across Marksheffel Road to the west, and "Future Neighborhood", which includes the undeveloped portion of Banning Lewis Ranch located immediately to the east (see below).



The typologies feature recommendations that stress the importance of including school sites and similar “gathering places” within neighborhoods. Chapter 2 goes on to support school uses through adoption of Strategies VN-3.A-7 and VN-3.B-1, which respectively call for the City to ***“Encourage neighborhood plans and initiatives that reflect neighborhood identity and a built environment supporting residents of all age ranges and abilities”*** and to ***“Encourage neighborhood and school partnerships...”***

The proposed PTAA charter school will be an asset to the nearby neighborhoods and to the community as a whole by providing an educational option in the northeastern area of the City for secondary-aged children and as a community gathering area for all residents connected to students attending the school.

CHAPTER 4: THRIVING ECONOMY

This Chapter of PlanCOS identifies “Cornerstone Institutions” as one of the main economic typologies. While the designation of “Cornerstone Institutions” is primarily reserved for larger educational institutions such as Colorado College, University of Colorado – Colorado Springs, and the U.S. Air Force Academy, it bears acknowledging that Plan COS places a strong importance on educational facilities in general. More specifically, the Plan places even greater importance on creating ***“new talent.”*** STEM and STEAM schools across the country are primarily focus on enhancing our skilled workforce through a stronger emphasis on technology and applied sciences, which are fundamental to developing “new talent” within our own community rather than relying on inward migration of new talent into our community. The Plan even goes on to encourage ***“continue investment in...collaborative approaches to meet workforce needs...”*** which supports PTAA programming aimed at developing STEAM skills to increase technical development, training, and participation in a variety of workforce sectors.

The goal statement for Typology 2, which is referred to in the Plan as “Spinoffs and Startups” echoes many of these same directives. The goal is to **“become increasingly competitive at business and worker attraction in medium and high-wage jobs by supporting the creation of environments that attract them and allow them to thrive.”** The concept of “worker attraction” should also presumably be extended to “worker retention” where local employees, who have developed the technical skills necessary to fill open “high-wage” positions, are kept in the region and are able to thrive in such environments. Many of the skills sought by some of the top employers in the region are initially introduced and developed in young students at school just like PTAA. Although PTAA may not necessarily be a “Spinoff or Startup” under the description of Plan COS, its potential impact on such employers in the future could be very real.

The same can be said for PTAA’s potential impact on Typology 5, Industry Icons, the goal of which is to **“maintain and grow diversified primary employment and manufacturing economy that attracts investment and provides a variety of jobs and opportunities for the local workforce.”** This goal reads as though it was specifically drafted in support of the technical programs and daily hands on training being provided at PTAA, which is proposed to enhance the local workforce, including in more technical subjects such as engineering, that ultimately stand to benefit our local manufacturing economy.

CHAPTER 5: STRONG CONNECTIONS

The “connections” detailed in this chapter extend well beyond traditional discussions revolving around the automobile. This chapter emphasizes the importance of considering all connected infrastructure, including utilities, stormwater facilities, multi-modal transportation corridors, and infrastructure needed to advance smart technologies and communications. Although the Strong Connections Framework map on p. 94 of the Plan does not specifically identify a smart corridor or multi-modal corridor along Marksheffel Road, it does identify nearby Powers Boulevard and a planned corridor through Banning Lewis Ranch as being Smart Corridors. The planned development of the PTAA charter school will allow for easy access into and out of the site using a single directional flow of pick up and drop off lanes with appropriate on-site vehicle stacking without creating traffic congestion on nearby arterial streets such as Marksheffel Road and Stetson Hills Boulevard.

CHAPTER 6: RENOWNED CULTURE

This chapter opens by expressing the “Importance of Culture” and specifically emphasized the meaningful impact existing and new development can have on culture in the form of the built environment by stating the following:

“The built environment of Colorado Springs can be an expression of our distinctive culture. For our arts, culture, **and education** to continue to flourish, we will need places that support their incubation, growth, and celebration throughout the community. Our architecture, public art, parks, wide boulevards, museums, performance and **educational institutions**, historic areas, and public gathering places all help define the collective sense of place for our growing and diversifying citizenry.” (emphasis added)

The PTAA charter school is a perfect example of how this citation can come to life; it represents our ever growing educational system in the City while also helping to establish a new sense of place in a growing area of the City and in an incrementally annexed County enclave.

Typology 2, Community Assets, as described in this Chapter, includes schools and other similar institutions that help define the sense of place for many of our existing neighborhoods. The “Attributes and Recommendations” of this Typology include:

- Provide Lifelong Learning Opportunities
- Increase Connections with Surrounding Neighborhoods
- Offer Space for Creative Expression
- Serves as a Focal Point of Unique Places
- Encourage Community Engagement

These qualities are almost universally found within both primary and secondary schools, such as the existing PTAA elementary school at Dublin Boulevard and the Peterson Road and the proposed PTAA secondary school. Schools add to the depth of resources in a community and in many ways anchor the neighborhood by offering public gathering events and engagement opportunities, which is further emphasized in the typology goal, which is to **“increase access and foster thriving arts, education, and cultural organizations and resources at all levels and throughout the city.”**

Under the section titled “Strengthen Our Educational Resources” (p. 129), Goal RC-6 of Plan COS calls for the City to:

“Strengthen and diversity the range of educational and lifelong learning opportunities and resources in Colorado Springs.”

The Plan, through Policy RC-6.B, to state that the City should “Support a network of public resources, ***schools***, community centers and other Community Assets ***that address the city’s educational and training needs and also function as a place for community activity.***” The proposed rezoning would allow for the development of the site as a STEAM charter school, which would enhance the City’s inventory of educational institutions help address the city’s educational and training needs for all of its residents.

ConnectCOS as an Element of the City’s Comprehensive Plan

The City’s master transportation plan, ConnectCOS, is the guiding comprehensive planning document regarding existing and planned transportation corridors. The Plan identifies Marksheffel Road, which is located along the western property line of the subject property, as being a Principal Arterial, Truck Route, and as a Primary Bike/Pedestrian Route. The Plan also shows Marksheffel Road as a Enhanced Transit corridor on the Transit Vision Network map. The City recently assumed control and maintenance of Marksheffel Road from El Paso County. In addition, widening and safety improvements to Marksheffel Road are currently being constructed in this area. No additional improvements are being proposed or requested by the City at this time.

City of Colorado Springs Parks System Master Plan

The City’s Parks Master Plan identifies the area in which the subject property is located as being with the 5 Mile Service Area, which means that the property is within 5 miles of a Community or Regional Park, which appears to be Coleman Park. The Plan also shows the area as being just outside of a ¼ mile walking distance to the nearest neighborhood park, but likely within a ½ mile walking distance of the same park (this property is not clearly mapped on the Plan due to it being currently being within

unincorporated El Paso County). The Plan does not depict any existing Urban or County trails in the immediate area of the subject property but it does identify a Proposed Urban Trail east-west alignment located approximately 0.12 miles to the north along Huber Road (which is an extension of the existing trail along Stetson Hills Boulevard) extending further to the east into the Banning Lewis Ranch development. No other parks or trails are planned in the immediate area at this time.

2. The rezoning will not be detrimental to the public interest, health, safety, convenience, or general welfare.

The proposed rezoning and associated development plan depict a plan for developing a charter school on the property, which will supplement the existing educational resources within School District No. 49 and in this area of the City. The school is intended to fill an education-based need in the area and, like most school sites, is expected to serve as a community gathering location, thus providing a benefit to the general welfare of the citizens of the City.

3. The location of the lands in the zoning map area being amended are appropriate for the purposes of the proposed zone district(s).

A geological hazards report waiver will be submitted concurrent with the development plan due to the absence of any potentially hazardous geological conditions on the site.

A drainage report has also been submitted with the application identifying that any potential impacts associated with stormwater runoff can be adequately mitigated with the development of City-approved designs and construction of appropriate drainage infrastructure.

Colorado Springs Utilities has confirmed that the proposed development can be served by water, wastewater, electric, and natural gas infrastructure. Off-site improvements to some of the existing infrastructure will be required in conjunction with the construction of the proposed school.

4. If the application proposes to rezone a small area of land, the application demonstrates that the size, scale, height density, and multimodal traffic impacts of the proposed rezoning are compatible with surrounding development or can be made compatible with surrounding development through approval conditions.

The area proposed to be rezoned is approximately 13.99 acres. The associated development plan demonstrates compatibility with the surrounding development, including the commercial development to the south, the residential development to the west, and the vacant properties located to the north and east in terms of size, scale, height, and density. The development of the site follows standard practices for the design and construction of a school site including institutional-type architecture and significant setbacks to allow for vehicular access and parking, pick up and drop off aisle, and open space areas for student recreation.

5. If the application proposes to rezone a relatively small area of land, the application demonstrates that the change in zoning will not create significant dislocations of tenants or occupants of the property, or that any impacts are outweighed by other public benefits or progress toward other

Colorado Springs Comprehensive Plan goals that would be achieved by approval of the application.

The area to be developed is 13.99 acres, which is relatively small. However, the site is currently vacant (undeveloped); therefore, there are no existing tenants or occupants of the property.

- 6. If a Land Use Plan or amendment to a Land Use Plan accompanies the application, the Land Use Plan or amendment complies with the applicable criteria in in Subsection 7.5.514C.3 (Land Use Plan Criteria).**

See the Land Use Plan under concurrent review.

- 7. The application is consistent with any approved Concept Plans in the area for which the map is being amended or includes or is accompanied by a provision that approved Concept Plans that have been classified as implemented do not have to be amended in order to be considered consistent with an amended zoning map.**

There are no previously approved Concept Plans for the area proposed to be rezoned.

- 8. If the application is for creation of an ADS-O district, the approval criteria applicable to the creation of the text of the ADS-O district in Section 7.2.607D.47.5.702 (Decision) shall also apply to consideration of the zoning map amendment required to create or amend the boundaries of the ADS-O district.**

The rezoning application is not for the creation of an ADS-O district.

- 9. If rezoning to a PDZ district, the proposed PDZ district provides significant community amenities or other benefits, as determined by the Manager, that promote the achievement of Colorado Springs Comprehensive Plan goals and would not otherwise be required of the applicant under this UDC or other City or governmental regulations.**

The rezoning application does not include a request for PDZ zoning.

- 10. Complies with the additional standards of the base zone district where the property is located (see Article 7.2 (Zone Districts)) or in an overlay district that applies to the property (see Part 7.2.6 (Overlay Districts)).**

The application complies with the base zone district as depicted on the concurrently submitted development plan.