



## Meeting Minutes - Draft City Planning Commission

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Wednesday, April 8, 2026

9:00 AM

2880 International Cir., 2nd Floor, Hearing Room

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- 8.A. [NPLN-26-00](#) Approval of the Elevate Downtown Neighborhood Plan, an update to the  
[01](#) 2016 Experience Downtown Land Use Master Plan.

(Legislative)

Located in Council District 3

Presenter:

Ryan Tefertiller, Urban Planning Manager, City Planning Department  
Kevin Walker, Planning Director, City Planning Department

**Attachments:** [Elevate Downtown Plan CPC Staff Report 040826](#)  
[2026-ElevateDowntownPlan-PublicDraft-Reduced](#)  
[DRB Minutes 3.3.26 Draft](#)  
[Elevate Downtown Staff Presentation CityCouncil 052626](#)  
[2026-Final Downtown Plan Presentation](#)

Commissioner Slattery and Chair Hensler disclosed that they currently serve on the Downtown Partnership board, however, their roles do not create a conflict of interest and affirmed they could evaluate the Elevate Downtown Plan objectively.

Ryan Tefertiller, Urban Planning Manager, explained that the plan area matches the Downtown Development Authority's one-square-mile boundary and is largely governed by the City's Form-Based Code. He noted that Elevate Downtown is processed as a Neighborhood Plan and serves both strategic and regulatory functions. Like the previous plan, it includes two volumes: a state-required Plan of Development outlining the use of DDA tax increment financing, and a broader neighborhood plan guiding land use, design, mobility, economic development, public spaces, infrastructure, and cultural identity.

He highlighted that the new plan replaces the 2016 document's eight-goal framework with a single vision statement and five integrated goals supported by updated strategies. Engagement efforts included extensive focus groups, interviews, surveys, and pop-up outreach, reaching a wide range of downtown stakeholders. More than 2,000

survey responses and strong online participation indicated that earlier engagement had already captured most community priorities.

Public themes consistently centered on safety and cleanliness, support for small businesses, amenities for a growing residential population, mobility options, activation of public spaces, housing affordability, and compassionate approaches to homelessness while maintaining usable public spaces. Mr. Tefertiller emphasized that all City departments participated to ensure technical alignment and feasibility.

Mr. Tefertiller concluded that Elevate Downtown aligns closely with PlanCOS principles, particularly around urban centers, mixed-use development, walkability, economic vitality, cultural identity, and reinvestment, as well as with transportation, creek, trail, and long-range mobility plans.

### **Applicant's presentation**

Chelsea Gondeck, CEO of the Downtown Partnership, celebrated the milestone, noting it reflects more than a year of collaboration among MIG consultants, DDA and city staff, volunteers, and community members. She explained that the plan was updated ahead of the typical cycle due to significant post-pandemic shifts in downtown's economic, social, and mobility patterns. She emphasized downtown's dual role as an economic center and a neighborhood of roughly 5,000 residents, and highlighted the plan's five guiding themes: vibrancy, safety, economic diversity, place identity, and equitable access.

Elly Schaefer, Senior Project Manager with MIG, outlined the year-long engagement process, which included focus groups with a wide range of stakeholders and an online survey with more than 2,000 responses. She noted that public input consistently raised issues such as walkability, traffic safety, small business support, housing and homelessness, public restrooms, activation of public spaces, and arts and culture opportunities.

Reviewing Volume 1, Ms. Schaefer summarized downtown's assets-historic character, trail and creek access, a growing residential base, arts and entertainment, and proximity to recreation-as well as challenges, including infill feasibility, limited neighborhood-support retail, safety and cleanliness concerns, traffic conflicts, workforce retention, and funding constraints tied to tax-exempt properties.

For Volume 2, she outlined the plan's five goals, which focus on positioning downtown as the region's heart, enhancing livability, embracing its identity as an "urban gateway to nature," strengthening civic and cultural life, and shaping the built environment around walkability, transit, and human-centered design.

Ms. Schaefer then highlighted major plan components: a refined land-use and character framework; updated height transition strategies; 26 catalytic opportunity sites; new gateway concepts; small-business and workforce strategies; and a mobility framework introducing new street typologies and safety improvements. She also detailed parks and open-space priorities, cultural initiatives, and new chapters addressing homelessness, housing, public restrooms, safety, and urban services. She concluded with recommendations for infrastructure, including fiber expansion, EV charging, drainage strategies, and potential underground utility opportunities.

### **Public Comments**

Samuel Clark, Chair of the Downtown Development Authority and Executive Director of the Pikes Peak Real Estate Foundation, highlighted the extensive outreach that informed the plan, noting the unusually high level of community participation through focus groups, surveys, and public events. He emphasized that the plan reflects both community priorities and economic realities, describing it as a practical framework that will help guide public-private investment downtown.

Diane Bridges, Vice President of the Historic Uptown neighborhood and Chair of the Historic Neighborhoods Partnership, expressed appreciation for the plan's broad scope and the responsiveness of staff and consultants throughout the process. She noted that residents felt their feedback was genuinely considered and that the plan thoughtfully addresses recurring neighborhood concerns, such as safety, walkability, and maintaining downtown's cultural identity, while still encouraging growth.

### **Commissioners' Comments and Discussion**

Commissioners expressed appreciation for the depth of the planning effort and the clarity of the final document. Several commented positively on the extensive public engagement and the way the plan integrates land use, mobility, and public realm goals. Commissioners

asked staff and the consultant team to elaborate on how comparable cities were selected for benchmarking; the consultant clarified that cities such as Salt Lake City, Spokane, Buffalo, Minneapolis, Raleigh, and Denver were used for studying density, urban design, and economic performance, and noted that these comparisons appear in the plan's analysis section.

Commissioners emphasized the importance of the plan aligning with existing form-based zoning and supporting predictable review processes for future development. Staff confirmed that the Downtown Review Board, Planning Department, and Downtown Partnership will continue close coordination to ensure consistency between policy guidance and project-level decisions.

Commissioner Gigiano raised concerns about the pace and scale of potential future downtown development and the pressure that added density could place on municipal services and public facilities. Commissioner Gigiano voted in opposition.

**Motion by Commissioner Robbins, seconded by Commissioner Clements, to recommend approval to City Council the Elevate Downtown Plan. The motion passed by a vote of 6-1-0-1.**

**Aye:** 6 - Chair Hensler, Commissioner Slattery, Commissioner Robbins, Commissioner Clements, Commissioner Willoughby and Commissioner Case

**No:** 1 - Commissioner Gigiano

**Absent:** 1 - Commissioner Cecil