



# **City of Colorado Springs 2008 Strategic Plan**

Adopted August 14, 2007

# City of Colorado Springs 2008 Strategic Plan

City Council adopted its first three-year municipal government strategic plan in early 1997. The plan set priorities for resource allocation, established policy guidelines, and provided governance direction.

In May 2000, City Council adopted its second strategic plan, Direction 2000, which was followed for the four years, 2000 through 2003. In the fall of 2003, the City initiated a strategic planning process which resulted in the 2004-2009 Strategic Action Plan. The plan was updated and reprioritized for 2005, 2006, and 2007.

For 2008, City Council completed a more comprehensive review of the strategic plan to tighten the focus of the plan to address the major strategic issues or challenges confronting the City in the next five years.

The City Charter requires City Council to maintain a strategic plan prioritizing City goals and establishing measurable outcomes. It also states that the plan shall include the Comprehensive Plan and a five-year capital improvements plan.

Therefore the City's Strategic Plan is guided by City Council's Vision and has three components as outlined below. City departments align program plans and budget requests with the goals and strategies contained in all three components of the Strategic Plan.

**Vision:**  
***Colorado Springs - the community of choice for  
living, working and leisure***

**The Comprehensive Plan** guides the physical growth and development of the city. It details objectives, policies and strategies as they relate to land use, neighborhoods, transportation, community infrastructure and services, the natural environment, and community character and appearance. The City prepares an annual report to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Plan.

**The Five-Year Capital Improvements Program and Needs Assessment** compiles a vision of current capital improvements in the city and an assessment of needs in the future. The plan contains four components: the current year's capital improvements program (CIP) budget, a long range plan for funded CIP projects, a prioritized list of unfunded projects needed over the next five years, and a financing plan. The five-year capital improvements plan is reevaluated each year and adopted by City Council in January.

**The Strategic Prioritized Goals** specifically address the major issues or challenges confronting the City in the next five years. Organizations are strategic when they think, act and influence in ways that effectively promote the organization's enduring success.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Center for Creative Leadership

## The Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan is defined as: “A statement in words, maps, illustrations or other media of communication setting forth assumptions, objectives, definitions, policies and recommendations to guide public and private development of land within the jurisdiction of the City and consideration of other issues which enhance community character and improve the quality of life of its citizens.” Adopted by ordinance in March of 2001, the Plan guides development of land by applying community objectives in the evaluation of land development proposals. Existing and planned public utilities, public improvements, natural conditions, matters of community character and quality of life were taken into consideration when establishing the Comprehensive Plan. Relevant decision makers, such as the City Council, City Planning Commission and City Departments are responsible for knowing its content when making decisions.

The status of the Comprehensive Plan is specified in the adopting ordinance and in Council’s legislative declaration contained in the City Code. In essence, the ordinance designates the Comprehensive Plan as an official planning document of the City for all land development decisions. The Plan, however, remains advisory. Section 7.1.109 of the City Code addresses its legal status:

The contents of the Comprehensive Plan are designed to serve as a guide in the public and private development of land and as such are not binding upon the City when making specific land use decisions.

The primary way in which the Comprehensive Plan is implemented is through specific land use decisions that meet the requirements of the Zoning Code and the Subdivision Code, both of which are required to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan policies and to implement them. (See sections 7.2.104 and 7.7.102 B.1. and F of the City Code.)

The purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is primarily “to set forth the desired sequence, patterns, and characteristics of future land development and its probable environmental, economic, and social consequences”. It is also intended to provide a statement of the programs necessary to achieve that future land development pattern.

The Comprehensive Plan includes a variety of Land Use Master Plans and Citywide System Plans, such as the Intermodal Transportation Plan; the Parks, Recreation, and Trails Master Plan; and the Downtown Action Plan.

The Comprehensive Plan is advisory for specific land use decisions and its areas of consideration are quite broad. In addition to the public and private development of land, the Plan includes the correlation, integration, and coordination of natural conditions, public improvements, public utilities, public investments, community character, and quality of life into land development decisions. The Comprehensive Plan is, in fact, the only officially adopted planning document that strives to coordinate the characteristics and consequences of land development within the city. Its use is mandated by section 7.1.111 of the City Code as follows:

The City Council, all City boards and commissions, the various City groups, departments, divisions, enterprises and officials shall be responsible for knowing the contents of the Comprehensive Plan and shall consider the relevant policies set forth in the Comprehensive Plan prior to making decisions.

## Five-Year Capital Improvements Program and Needs Assessment

This Five-Year Capital Improvements Program and Needs Assessment is intended to compile a vision of current capital improvements in the City of Colorado Springs, and an assessment of future needs. The plan includes four components: the current year's budget, a multi-year forecast of current funding sources, the prioritization of the high priority unfunded capital improvement needs facing the city and a financing plan. City staff utilize criteria specified in the Comprehensive Plan to build a foundation for prioritizing the unfunded projects, and each project falls within the Strategic Prioritized Goals established by City Council.

The Five-Year Capital Improvements Program and Needs Assessment consists of *four* basic components:

1. The Annual Capital Improvements Program (CIP) Budget
  - Unrestricted funds typically go toward financial commitments; mandates; infrastructure maintenance; and local grant match funds.
  - Restricted funds generally go toward public safety projects; parks development and maintenance; transportation improvements, and bicycle and trail improvements.
2. Long range plan for funded CIP projects
  - Includes a five-year financial forecast using the current year's CIP Budget as its base and estimates funding into future years.
  - Long range funding plans for specific funding sources involving CIP projects are included, such as the Public Safety Sales Tax (PSST), Pikes Peak Rural Transportation Authority (PPRTA), and the Stormwater Enterprise.
3. A prioritized list of unfunded projects needed over the next five years
  - Each year, City staff identifies and establish a prioritized list of outstanding unfunded needs.
  - When funding becomes available through other means, the projects are removed from the list. The last plan included a total of 127 unfunded projects totaling \$322.4 million, of which 44 are high priority projects totaling \$117.4 million.
4. A financing plan
  - The financing plan includes a number of funding options for City Council to consider.
  - The plan includes consideration of certificates of participation, various tax increases, fee increases, and bonded debt options.

## Strategic Prioritized Goals

City Council identified *five* Strategic Prioritized Goals for this 2008 five-year Strategic Plan. These goals address the challenges confronting the community and recognize the valuable community and city assets that can be utilized to successfully meet those challenges.

For a consistent understanding, following are definitions of terms used in the plan.

### **Elements:**

***Prioritized Goals*** identify what the City strives to achieve to realize Council's vision.

***Assumptions*** state fact and predictions based upon institutional knowledge and analysis that affect the development of strategies.

***Strategies*** describe broadly how the City plans to achieve its strategic goals over the term of the plan.

***Priority Projects/Initiatives*** describe more specifically how the City plans to achieve its goals in the near term (1-2 years).

***Key Indicators*** are outcome measurement tools. At the end of 2007, the City will measure and determine baselines for key indicators and will measure again at the end of 2008 to report annual change and measure progress.

### **Other terms:**

***Core Services*** are public safety, construction and maintenance of infrastructure and land use development.

***City Infrastructure*** is the physical system of roads, bridges, sidewalks, and drainage facilities.

***Internal Infrastructure*** is infrastructure used by the City in the provision of municipal services, for example, fleet management, information technology, facilities, office services, radio services, telecommunications etc.

***Quality of Life*** is an all inclusive term that includes economic prosperity, an affordable home, gainful employment, clean air and water, quality healthcare, safe and attractive neighborhoods and working environments, ample educational and recreational opportunities, convenient transportation systems, and an active and diverse community which is rich in art and cultural amenities.

# Strategic Prioritized Goals

## 1. CITY SERVICES

*Develop and implement fiscal sustainability policies to support core services that proactively ensure the health, safety and welfare of our citizens; attract, develop, and retain a high performing municipal workforce; and fund internal infrastructure needs.*

## 2. SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

*Encourage and make effective use of infill, mixed use, traditional neighborhood development and redevelopment as well as employment centers to take advantage of infrastructure and transportation systems, maximize efficiencies in providing City services, and retain retail services within city limits.*

## 3. ECONOMIC VITALITY

*Through collaboration and partnership with City enterprises, other public entities, private entities, and the military, support economic development efforts that attract, retain and create quality jobs to ensure a diverse economic base, a resilient and growing City tax base, and thriving neighborhoods.*

## 4. QUALITY OF LIFE

*Maximize resources that provide quality of life City services and programs, including adherence to the aforementioned City Services, Sustainable Growth and Economic Vitality Goals; enhancing conveniences for our citizens; preserving environmental resources including our natural landscape; and providing the art, cultural and recreational amenities befitting the size and geographic location of Colorado Springs.*

## 5. CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

*Fully realize the talents and positive contributions of non-profits, private and public entities, the military, civic leaders, political leaders, and engaged citizens to develop a shared sense of community and help achieve Council's vision.*

# STRATEGIC PRIORITIZED GOALS

## 1. CITY SERVICES

*Develop and implement fiscal sustainability policies to support core services that proactively ensure the health, safety and welfare of our citizens; attract, develop, and retain a high performing municipal workforce; and fund internal infrastructure needs.*

### Assumptions

- The City faces significant fiscal challenges with its continued dependence on sales tax revenue, policies affecting future tax revenue, revenue limitations due to TABOR, and increasing labor, benefit, and operating costs.
- The City has significant unfunded internal infrastructure liabilities.
- Combined revenue streams from Public Safety Sales Tax (PSST), Pikes Peak Rural Transportation Authority (PPRTA), Stormwater Enterprise (SWENT) and the City's General Fund are not sufficient to address all city infrastructure and operating funding needs at their highest level.
- During the City's annual budget process funding of core services will remain the priority.
- Federal grants will remain stable or decline.
- The community will continue to demand and the City will strive to provide exceptional municipal services.

### Strategies

- To address long-term fiscal sustainability, the City will form a Sustainable Funding Committee consisting of citizens and business leaders who will work with the senior management of the City to help develop a long-range *Sustainable Funding Plan*. The committee will consider long-term revenue streams, financial liabilities and service models.
- In the near-term, the City will refine and clarify its financial management policies, debt management policies and budget policies.
- Through the City's annual budget process, the City will address budgetary constraints by reevaluating the level and mix of services and proposing strategic solutions that may include revenue enhancements, privatization of services and asset shedding.
- The City will implement employment policies and practices that will enhance its ability to attract, reward and retain top talent.

### Priority Project/Initiative

- The Sustainable Funding Committee and senior management of the City will develop a *Sustainable Funding Plan* for the long term sustainable financing of the City's infrastructure, facilities, and services.

### Key Indicators

- Biennial Issues Survey results – department job performance, meeting expectations, trust in City government
- Departmental annual reviews – including satisfaction with City services measured annually by a number of individual departments
- Establishment of a Sustainable Funding Committee and commencement of work on the *Sustainable Funding Plan* by March 31, 2008
- Measure City's ability to achieve and maintain the median level of employee compensation and benefits based on comparable size cities

## 2. SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

*Encourage and make effective use of infill, mixed use, traditional neighborhood development and redevelopment as well as employment centers to take advantage of infrastructure and transportation systems, maximize efficiencies in providing City services, and retain retail services within city limits.*

### Assumptions

- Land use and density mix in new and existing neighborhoods helps sustainability.
- Increased densities and growth within the city will positively affect retail sales and revenue required to support City services.
- There are real and perceived incentives to develop on the perimeter of the city and outside the city limits.
- The City can provide incentives to encourage development in targeted areas of the city which could positively impact citizen quality of life, public safety, and the City budget.

### Strategies

- The City will identify and proactively support redevelopment of areas of the city that are at risk.
- The City will promote innovative forms of development, including mixed use, traditional neighborhood development, and planned unit development.
- The City will develop strategies and implement a program to encourage, retain, and revitalize retail development within the City.

### Priority Projects/Initiatives

- In conjunction with Colorado Springs Utilities, the City will research, develop and propose incentives for in-fill and redevelopment.
- The City will develop strategies to identify the long-term maintenance costs associated with annexations and new development.
- In conjunction with El Paso County, the City will commence a revision and update of the 1985 Cooperative Planning Agreement, including an assessment of the fiscal impact to both City and County resulting public policies which affect the location of growth.

### Key Indicators

- Percent increase in new in-fill development and redevelopment approvals and building permits
- Track utilization of mixed-use and traditional neighborhood design zoning tools that encourage density mix, mix of residential and commercial uses, and a pedestrian-oriented development pattern
- Development of strategies to encourage in-fill and promote mixed use developments
- Track growth patterns inside and outside the City, and in cooperation with El Paso County and the Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments (PPACG), by June 30, 2008 commence a revision and update of the 1985 Cooperative Planning Agreement, including the possible development of locational strategies for urban and suburban growth which would result in a positive fiscal impact to both City and County



### 3. ECONOMIC VITALITY

*Through collaboration and partnership with City enterprises, other public entities, private entities, and the military, support economic development efforts that attract, retain and create quality jobs to ensure a diverse economic base, a resilient and growing City tax base, and thriving neighborhoods.*

#### Assumptions

- Other public and private entities should lead primary employer attraction and retention efforts.
- Colorado Springs will be more resilient to economic downturns if it has a diverse economic base.
- Community arts, culture and recreational opportunities are valued by current citizens, are important criteria considered by prospective employers and attract tourists to the region.
- Tourism is vital to the city's economic health.
- Geographic disbursement of employment centers throughout the city will improve citizens' quality of life.

#### Strategies

- The City will take a leadership role in identifying target areas of the city for economic development efforts including retail revitalization.
- City Council and City leadership will increase involvement with community groups like the Chamber of Commerce and other chambers, Colorado Springs Economic Development Corporation (EDC) and the Housing and Building Association (HBA).
- The Colorado Springs Airport will develop and market the Airport Business Park to strengthen the financial position of the Airport and create economic activity in southeast Colorado Springs.
- The Colorado Springs Airport will continually strive to attract and maintain the highest possible level of commercial air service.
- In conjunction with Colorado Springs Utilities, the City will research, develop and propose an Economic Development incentives plan.
- The City will work closely with military leadership to better serve the military community and to incorporate military members and their families into the local community.

#### Priority Project/Initiative

- Develop City Economic Development Strategies that identify community economic development efforts, clarify the City's partnerships and establish baselines against which the City can measure success.

#### Key Indicators

- Number of new primary employers as a result of recruitment activities
- Employment and retail growth in targeted areas of the city
- Air service levels compared to similar-sized markets (# seats available, # non-stops, average ticket price)
- Housing Indicators, for example:
  - Median housing cost comparisons to median income
  - Percent of households able to purchase median priced home
  - Track military housing needs and ability of the City to provide for those needs.
- Establishment of an Economic Development Committee with representatives from Colorado Springs Utilities and EDC and commencement of work on the development of an incentive plan and broader Economic Development Strategies by March 31, 2008

## 4. QUALITY OF LIFE

*Maximize resources that provide quality of life City services and programs, including adherence to the aforementioned City Services, Sustainable Growth and Economic Vitality Goals; enhancing conveniences for our citizens; preserving environmental resources including our natural landscape; and providing the art, cultural and recreational amenities befitting the size and geographic location of Colorado Springs.*

### Assumptions

- *Quality of Life* is an all inclusive term that includes economic prosperity, an affordable home, gainful employment, clean air and water, quality healthcare, safe and attractive neighborhoods and working environments, ample educational and recreational opportunities, convenient transportation systems, and an active and diverse community which is rich in art and cultural amenities.
- As such, *Quality of Life* crosses over all Strategic Plan goals and strategies, but in particular those unique characteristics which make Colorado Springs a desirable place to live and work.
- Support of the arts not only enhances quality of life, it is an investment in the community's economic well-being.
- The arts foster vibrant neighborhoods, and urban revitalization. The arts bridge ethnic and cultural divides and build community identity, inclusion and pride.
- The community has the resources, talent and desire to sustain and in some areas, improve the well-being of its citizens.

### Strategies

- The City will collaborate and partner with other local organizations to support local arts and culture, provide a full range of recreational opportunities, provide opportunities for intergenerational activities, and provide for full employment opportunities.
- The City will promote sustainable environmental policies and practices.
- The City will foster a community that recognizes the value of ethnic and cultural diversity.
- The City will collaborate with the Housing Authority, the Colorado Springs Urban Renewal Authority and other non-profit housing agencies to develop funding strategies and incentives for affordable housing.
- City Council and City leadership will increase involvement with local school districts to promote cooperation and synergies that will benefit community-wide K-12 education.

### Priority Projects/Initiatives

- In cooperation with Fort Carson, the PPACG and Springs Utilities, the City will identify and promote sustainable environmental and energy policies and practices.
- The City will provide support to the Fountain Creek Vision Task Force, an ongoing regional effort to prepare a long term visioning plan for the improvement, public education and enjoyment of Fountain Creek.
- The City will provide support and resources to the arts community with the intention of developing a self-supporting arts and cultural environment.

### Key Indicators

- Miles of bicycle paths, pedestrian trails, transit facilities and routes, and other alternative transportation amenities constructed over the preceding year
- *Improved* park land per 1,000 residents and number of recreation programs including senior programs
- Development of sustainable environmental policies and measure their success against other cities of comparable size
- Number of community events held in public spaces
- Participation in the United Way Quality of Life Indicator Initiative and incorporation of measures in annual progress reports

### 5. CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

*Fully realize the talents and positive contributions of non-profits, private and public entities, the military, civic leaders, political leaders, and engaged citizens to develop a shared sense of community and help achieve Council's vision.*

#### Assumptions

- There is an active element of the community that is engaged in local governance issues and an element that through outreach efforts can be engaged.
- Greater engagement of the military community would benefit military members and the community at large.
- A shared community vision will promote a greater sense of community.
- Citizens in the community are willing to give both financial resources and time to enhance the social and physical attractiveness of Colorado Springs.
- As a growing and diverse city, the "Community" of Colorado Springs is comprised of a network of smaller communities. The City can act as a hub in the networking of these communities.

#### Strategies

- The City will promote community events and activities that foster civic engagement and inclusion.
- The City will provide a leadership role in defining the smaller communities within the greater "city Community".
- The City will provide encouragement and leadership to coalitions in the community.
- The City will provide opportunities for and will proactively work to engage citizens to volunteer time assisting government in meeting the social needs of the community.
- The City will provide community project opportunities where citizens can engage in activities that enhance the use and attractiveness of the Pikes Peak Region.
- The City will continue to provide open government access for its citizens with the continuation of newsletters, Channel 18 cable television, Citizens Academy, Community Action Teams, and other citizen out-reach programs.
- The City will develop effective tools to communicate with citizens on progress made toward achieving City Council's strategic goals.
- The City will link partnership interests and will develop messages and appropriate tools to develop and communicate a shared sense of community.

#### Key Indicators

- Biennial Citizen Survey Results – measure participation in community events
- Number of community events held in public spaces
- Number of volunteer opportunities and volunteer hours
- Monetary value of citizen volunteer hours
- Percent of registered voters voting
- Number of "hits" on the City web-site
- Participation at citizen out-reach programs