

**EL PASO**  **COUNTY**  
**COLORADO**

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PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
CRAIG DOSSEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**TO: El Paso County Planning Commission  
Brian Risley, Chair**

**FROM: Mark Gebhart, Deputy Director  
Craig Dossey, Executive Director**

**RE: MP-21-001 Adoption of Your El Paso Master Plan as the Master Plan  
for El Paso County, replacing previously adopted County Master  
Plan elements**

**Commissioner District: All**

First Planning Commission Hearing Date:	5/05/2021
Second Planning Commission Hearing Date:	5/26/2021
Board of County Commissioners Hearing Date:	N/A

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The El Paso County Planning and Community Development Department (PCD) requests adoption of Your El Paso Master Plan as the El Paso County Master Plan for physical development of the County, pursuant to C.R.S. § 30-28-106. This Master Plan repeals and/or replaces the existing Policy Plan, Small Area Plans, and Sketch Plans as detailed in the attached Resolution as Master Plan elements but retains the existing Topical Elements and the Drainage Basin Master Plans as elements of the Master Plan. The Master Plan area includes all land within El Paso County located outside the incorporated municipalities and includes the accompanying maps, plats, charts, and descriptive and explanatory matter. The Master Plan is an advisory document to guide growth, development, and land use decisions throughout the County. This is the first of two Planning Commission hearings scheduled for this item. The second public hearing is scheduled for May 26, 2021. A public review copy of the draft Your El Paso Master Plan has been available for public review since March 9, 2021 with the Implementation Chapter available beginning on March 26, 2021. The hearing-based version was developed after public and review agency comments were completed and has been available on the PCD and the County web sites and in the PCD electronic file management system, EDARP, which is available to the public for review, since April 23, 2021.

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Below are the respective website addresses:

- <https://www.elpasoco.com/>
- <https://planningdevelopment.elpasoco.com/>
- <https://epcdevplanreview.com/Public/ProjectDetails/171653>
- <https://elpaso-hlplanning.hub.arcgis.com/>

**A. REQUEST/AUTHORIZATION**

**Request:** Adoption of Your El Paso Master Plan (PCD File No: MP-21-001) as the Master Plan for El Paso County.

**B. EFFECT OF APPROVAL OF AN AMENDMENT TO THE MASTER PLAN**

Colorado Revised Statute C.R.S. § 30-28-106 et. seq. provides that it is the duty of the Planning Commission to make and adopt the County Master Plan. The Statute requires careful studies to be made prior to plan adoption. The planning process for the master plan began in January 2019 and members of the Planning Commission have been involved throughout the process.

If adopted by the Planning Commission, Your El Paso Master Plan will become the principal El Paso County Master Plan while retaining the existing Topical Elements of the Master Plan and the Drainage Basin Master Plans while deleting as a master plan element the Policy Plan, Small Area Plans, and certain Sketch Plans as detailed in the attached Resolution. Previously, the El Paso County Master Plan consisted of the Policy Plan (1998) and ten Small Area Plans (1977 to 2008), seven Topical Elements, 20 Drainage Basin Plans, and 21 Sketch Plans, and the accompanying maps, plats, charts, and descriptive and explanatory matter.

The Policy Plan established broad goals and policies to serve as the framework for decision making regarding the development of the County and was intended to address growth assumptions through the year 2020. The small area plans date from 1977 to 2008 and are generally considered out of date. Your El Paso Master Plan replaces these documents with a more comprehensive and coordinated County-wide approach to planning, intended to last the community for the next 20-30 years. Prior to 1986, some sketch plans could amend the Master Plan. Staff has analyzed each of the identified sketch plans and has determined that these sketch plans are now primarily implemented through establishment of zoning or have been annexed and can now be deleted.

The County Master Plan is legally considered to be advisory only. The review criteria for many of the land use applications processed by the Planning and Community Development Department include a requirement that the application

be in conformance, general conformance, or consistent with the Master Plan. Your El Paso Master Plan will be utilized to evaluate and inform development proposals and land use and 1041 permit applications; be a foundation for revising or developing regulations; coordinate regional and local initiatives; inform Capital Improvement Programs and Budget initiatives; identify additional studies and future action steps; and be an information source for policy makers and citizens.

**C. APPLICABLE RESOLUTIONS**

Approval                      Page 3 (attached)  
Disapproval                  Page 4

**D. GENERAL LOCATION**

Your El Paso Master Plan encompasses all of the unincorporated areas of El Paso County, and has a direct relationship to Federal, State, and Military Installation land and includes the land surrounding those installations, but does not set land use directives within the military installations.

**E. BACKGROUND**

**What is required by Colorado Revised Statute?**

Counties are authorized to prepare comprehensive plans as a long-range guiding document for a community to achieve its vision and goals. The Planning Commission is charged with preparing the master plan. The comprehensive plan (or master plan) provides the policy framework for regulatory tools like zoning, subdivision regulations, annexations, and other policies. A comprehensive plan promotes the community's vision, goals, objectives, and policies, establishes a process for orderly growth and development, addresses both current and long-term needs, and provides for a balance between the natural and built environment. (See C.R.S. § 30-28-106) Elements addressed in a comprehensive plan (master plan) may include: recreation and tourism (required by state statutes), transportation, land use, economic development, affordable housing, environment, parks and open space, natural and cultural resources, hazards, capital improvements, water supply and conservation, efficiency in government, sustainability, energy, and urban design. The statutory basis regarding master plans is included as an attachment.

**What does the current Master Plan include?**

The previous county wide master plan for the county was the 1990 Land Use Plan prepared by the Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments and adopted by

the County in 1970. Small area plans amended this plan until it was replaced by the El Paso County Land Use Policy Plan, A Guide to the Future (a.k.a., Policy Plan) adopted in 1998. The Policy Plan was intended to address growth projections through 2020.

Specifically, the current master plan comprises the following elements:

- 1) El Paso County Land Use Policy Plan, A Guide to the Future (a.k.a., Policy Plan) (1998)
- 2) Small Area Plans (See Master Plan map)
  - a. Woodmen Valley Land Use Plan (1977)
  - b. Ute Pass Comprehensive Plan (1982)
  - c. Highway 94 Comprehensive Plan (2003)
  - d. Black Forest Preservation Plan Update (1987)
  - e. South Central Comprehensive Plan (1988)
  - f. Ellicott Comprehensive Plan (1989)
  - g. Southwestern (Highway 115) Comprehensive Plan (1990)
  - h. Falcon Peyton Comprehensive Plan (2008)
  - i. Midland-Fountain Creek Parkway Corridor Plan (1989)
  - j. Tri Lakes Comprehensive Plan (1999)
- 3) Topical Elements
  - a. Extraction of Commercial Mineral Deposits (1996)
  - b. Major Transportation Corridors Plan (2016)
  - c. Wildlife Habitat Maps and Descriptors (1996)
  - d. Municipal Airport Plan Part 150 Study (2006)
  - e. Meadow Lake Airport Study (1982/1990)
  - f. Parks Master Plan (2013)
  - g. Water Master Plan (2018)
- 4) Drainage Basin Plans and Studies (20)
- 5) Sketch Plans that amended the Master Plan between the years of 1982 and 1986 (21)

The Policy Plan has reached the intended period of growth assumptions, the community has experienced substantial growth since it was prepared, additional areas of the County have been zoned, and the various small area plans have become largely outdated. It is for these reasons that El Paso County initiated this master plan process in late 2018 as an effort to better understand the

present and projected future conditions and to replace these now outdated documents. The El Paso County Water Master Plan (2018) helped identify water limitations and evaluated growth areas providing background to one of the most importance considerations regarding planning for the future. The intent of Your El Paso Master Plan was to create a new comprehensive plan by combining and updating the previous and somewhat outdated and compartmentalized small area plans, addressing issues that may have not been considered in those plans, to include areas where there were previously no small area plans, and connect everything together in a new way of thinking which considered the relationship of one property to another. It was determined early in the development of the Request for Proposals (RFP) that it was not realistic to update each of the small areas plans from both a time and a cost function, while also continuing to leave large areas of the County without a small area plan. Since starting this planning processes, many circumstances have changed including recent municipal annexations, open space acquisitions, adoption or implementation of municipal master plans, growth dynamics, and of course the impacts and challenges of a global pandemic.

### **Development of this Plan**

The RFP for development of this Master Plan was issued in 2018 and Houseal-Lavigne was selected as the contractor and began work in early 2019. The understanding and approach to develop the Master Plan is included as an attachment and framed the whole process.

The Board of County Commissioners approved the bylaws of the Master Plan Advisory Committee (MPAC) and initially appointed the following members to the MPAC:

Andrea Barlow  
Tom Bailey, Planning Commission representative  
Becky Fuller  
Doug Stimple  
Phil Thomas  
Mark Volcheff  
Ryan Wanner  
Sarah Brittain Jack  
Matt Carroll  
Sharon Friedman, Planning Commission alternate

Over time, Sharon Friedman resigned from the Planning Commission and Tim Trowbridge was appointed to the Advisory Committee as the Planning Commission alternate. Becky Fuller and Sarah Brittan-Jack were subsequently appointed to the Planning Commission, and Sarah Brittan-Jack then resigned from the Master Plan Advisory Committee.

The BoCC approved bylaws also provided that liaison members could be appointed. The following individuals served as liaison members:

Randy Case, Water Master Plan/Groundwater Study  
Victoria Chavez, Major Transportation Corridors Plan  
Lonnie Inzer, Office of Emergency Management/Hazard Mitigation Plan  
Crystal LaTier, El Paso County Economic Development Office  
Brian Potts/Ann Werner, PPACG Joint Land Use Committee  
Julia Sands de Melendez, Parks Advisory Board  
Ross Williams, Community Services Department, Parks Master Plan  
Steve Mack, IT Department, Broadband Master Plan

Throughout the master planning process, Tracey Garcia, PCD Executive Assistant, provided staff support for all advisory committee meetings and Lauren Tostenson of the Public Information Office and other PIO staff provided support for presentations, recording, advertisements, press releases, web support and publications. Twenty-three (23) advisory committee meetings were held, culminating with a recommendation that the draft Your El Paso Master Plan, with revisions, be forwarded to the Planning Commission for adoption. The MPAC reviewed all the goals and policies of the Policy Plan and the small area plans.

A website was established on the PCD main page and served as the forum for outreach, information collection, meeting announcements, distribution of agendas, minutes, videos, and other related documents. Brochures and business card announcements of meetings were distributed widely, including presentations to groups and at a booth at the El Paso County Fair. Advertisements and newspaper articles frequently mentioned the master plan process, a sample of which are attached.

The Planning Commission was substantially involved in the development of the master plan. Several Planning Commission members served on the MPAC, and frequent updates were provided to the Planning Commission. Report items and presentations were also provided to the Board of the County Commissioners.

Development of this Plan occurred during the Covid-19 global pandemic, which challenged the consultant, County staff, review agencies, and public in the completion of the project.

### **What does this Plan include?**

The process of developing the Plan was first to identify what the existing conditions consist of (Existing Conditions Report) and then to identify the Key Areas of the County that have a unique identity. Areas of Change were developed and mapped, recognizing those areas that are currently experiencing change or are expected to change due to development or a change of character. Placetypes were then developed and mapped. The placetype planning method classifies specific areas based upon defining character, scale, form, and function. The background developed with these maps and descriptors then became the focus of the Implementation Chapter, including the Principles, Goals, Objectives, and Strategies within the Chapter as developed through the MPAC review and comment process in order to guide the County well into the future.

### **What will this Plan be used for?**

The County Master Plan is legally considered to be advisory only. The review criteria for many of the land use applications processed by the PCD in accordance with the Land Development Code (2020) include a requirement that the application shall be in conformance, general conformance, or consistent with the El Paso County Master Plan. Your El Paso Master Plan will be utilized to evaluate and inform development proposals and land use activities and 1041 Permit applications; be a foundation for revising or developing regulations; coordinate regional and local initiatives; inform CIP and budget initiatives; identify additional studies and future action steps; and be an information source for policy makers and citizens.

## **F. STATUS OF MAJOR ISSUES**

Participation in the final survey identified that many residents in the Black Forest area have concerns with planning boundaries, potential annexation, the large lot placetype classification, a request for a unique designation for Black Forest, and the implementation aspects in the master plan. Other growth concerns related to traffic and water supply were identified by County residents. A summary form of the final survey is attached.

## **G. APPROVAL CRITERIA**

### **1. EL PASO COUNTY MASTER PLAN CONSISTENCY AND POLICY PLAN COMPLIANCE**

Not applicable since this plan becomes the Master Plan and replaces the Policy Plan.

### **2. COMPLIANCE WITH COUNTY PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES**

The procedures performed in completion of the Master Plan are consistent with documented County policies and guidelines. Notice to neighboring jurisdictions has been provided in accordance with statute and notice to military bases was provided in conformance with C.R.S. § 29-20-105.6. Additionally, several planners from the military installations located within the County participated in the process of developing the Plan through attendance at Master Plan Advisory Committee meetings, submittal of comments, or through other interactions with County staff. All review entities participating in the PCD EDARP system were provided review opportunities.

Certifications to the municipal planning commissions and to the Board of County Commissioners are required after adoption of Your El Paso Master Plan by the Planning Commission.

### **3. OTHER FACTORS**

C.R.S. § 30-28-106 et. seq. govern adoption of a county master plan. The statute allows the Planning Commission to adopt new or amended County Master Plans “in whole or in parts”. El Paso County previously had broken its Master Plan adoption efforts into a Policy Plan, sub-area plans, and topical elements.

Your El Paso Master Plan supersedes and replaces the Policy Plan, the individual small area plans, and those previously identified sketch plans which had previously amended the County Master Plan.

## **H. PUBLIC COMMENT AND NOTICE**

The public was invited to engage at each phase in development of Your El Paso Master Plan. The initial phase utilized online and post card surveys, media and press releases, poster and flyer distribution, advertising, use of the online applications Nextdoor and Facebook, and emails to interested individuals. The El Paso County Public Information Office was instrumental in the public involvement process. In addition, throughout the process presentations regarding the status

of Your El Paso Master Plan have occurred at public meetings and stakeholder meetings, including the Planning Commission, the Board of County Commissioners, neighborhood groups, and the Colorado Springs Housing and Building Association (HBA). Information regarding Your El Paso Master Plan has been provided continuously on the PCD website, and periodically on the County's main website.

In addition to these public meeting, the draft Plan (except Chapter 14, Implementation) has been available through the PCD website (EDARP) for review agencies and the public from March 9, 2021 to April 9, 2021. The Implementation Chapter was published March 26, 2021 and used the goals, policies, and strategies developed in the draft plan and compiled those into an Action Matrix. The updated draft plan dated April 23, 2021 will remain on the web page through the Planning Commission hearing process. All review entities participating in the EDARP system were provided review opportunities.

Public information regarding Your El Paso Master Plan was developed and distributed through the Public Information Office and included newspaper advertisements in three weekly newspapers and two monthly newspapers for the final action by the Planning Commission.

Legal Notice for the both Planning Commission hearings was published in the *El Paso County Advertiser and News* on April 21, 2021.

Notice related to the Master Plan was provided to the military installation commanding officer and the flying mission commanding officer, or their designees, and representatives of the installations were involved with the advisory committee process. The military installations also were provided referrals through EDARP on March 9 and March 26 and submitted comments on the impact the proposed changes may have on the missions of the military installations.

The draft Plan (April 23 Version) is available for public review online at: <https://epcdevplanreview.com/Public/ProjectDetails/171653> and <https://elpaso-hlplanning.hub.arcgis.com/> and in the Planning and Community Development and the Board of County Commissioners offices.

Additional certifications are required after adoption by the Planning Commission.

## **I. STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends adoption of Your El Paso Master Plan with the following conditions and notations:

### **CONDITIONS**

1. C.R.S. 30-28-109 requires the Planning Commission to certify a copy of the Master Plan, or any adopted part or amendment thereof or addition thereto, to the Board of County Commissioners and to the Planning Commission of all municipalities in the County. The Planning Commission's action to amend the Master Plan shall not be considered final until a minimum of ten (10) complete sets of the final documents are provided and such documents are certified by the Chairman of the County Planning Commission and distributed as required by law.
2. Upon adoption by the El Paso County Planning Commission, the effect of this document is adoption of Your El Paso Master Plan as the Master Plan for El Paso County, which replaces the previous Policy Plan, Small Area Plans, and Sketch Plans, while retaining the Topical Elements and the Drainage Basin Plans. If there are any conflicts with this Plan and the Topical Elements, this Plan controls except where the topical element identifies otherwise.

### **NOTATIONS**

1. Certification of the documents to the municipalities within the County pursuant to Condition No. 1 above is determined to be satisfied upon transmittal of summary information and maps along with a clear description of the locations where the complete documents are available for inspection, along with an offer to provide a given municipality a complete copy of the documents if requested. The transmittal may be in the form of a digital copy.
2. In approval of this document, it is understood that minor editorial and formatting changes will be made in conjunction with the final publication process. These modifications may include pagination, correction of typographical errors, clarifications, insertion of photographs, insertion of references and/or corrections to factual information, or inclusion of comments and modifications associated with the Planning Commission hearings. In no case will substantive changes be made to the text without reconsideration by the Planning Commission.

**J. ATTACHMENTS**

Statutory Citations

Optional and Required Elements of a County Master Plan

Zoning Map and Dates

Small Area Plan Maps

Advisory Committee Bylaws

Project Plan (Understanding and Approach)

Initial Public Outreach

Advisory Committee Review of Plans Sample

Recent Municipality Plans

Review Comments for Draft Plan

Public Comments for Draft Plan (New comments received after posting will be provided at hearing)

Newspaper Articles Regarding the Master Plan

Legal Notice

Draft Resolution for Approval