

STAFF REPORT
September 22, 2016

No. 16CA005 - Amendment to the Comprehensive Plan by adopting the Downtown Area Master Plan (Final) **ITEM 9**

GENERAL INFORMATION:

APPLICANT	City of Rapid City
PROPERTY OWNER	N/A
REQUEST	No. 16CA005 - Amendment to the Comprehensive Plan by adopting the Downtown Area Master Plan (Final)
LOCATION	Generally West Boulevard to East Boulevard and the South Dakota School of Mines; South Street to North Street and the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center
REVIEWED BY	Sarah Hanzel

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approving the Amendment (Final) to the adopted *Plan Rapid City* Comprehensive Plan.

GENERAL COMMENTS: The formation of this plan has been guided by an extensive public engagement process including site visits, interviews with downtown stakeholders, focus groups, an online survey, public open houses, and a design workshop. The resulting draft plan is comprised of 5 core values for downtown, 9 action plan areas, and over 60 recommendations to guide improvements downtown over the next 5 – 7 year period. The action plan includes projects identified in other planning efforts, as well as many new ideas. The action plan identifies both quick wins that can be accomplished with relatively low time/expense in the near term and more ambitious projects to pursue in the longer term. The implementation chapter identifies sources of funding and strategies to measure the progress of plan implementation. The planning process also resulted in the creation of a market assessment, design guidelines, and an assessment of regulatory (zoning) revisions in order to implement the community's vision downtown. The public was invited to comment on the draft plan until August 5th at noon. Three open houses were held at the Journey Museum and Learning Center to collect public comment on the plan.

Following the public review period, several revisions, mostly minor, were made to the Downtown Area Master Plan:

- The planning boundary was expanded to include the Journey Museum and Learning Center.
- In response to feedback from Historic Preservation stakeholders and West Boulevard neighborhood residents, additional language was included regarding protection, preservation, and adaptive re-use opportunities for historic structures.
- Several comments were incorporated in the Action Plan to address the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center's role in the downtown area.
- Additional implementation alternatives as options to administer the proposed Design Guidelines were incorporated.

STAFF REPORT
September 22, 2016

No. 16CA005 - Amendment to the Comprehensive Plan by adopting the Downtown Area Master Plan (Final) ITEM 9

- The Fire Department submitted a Fire and Life Safety Memo that is attached in Appendix G.
- An analysis of the zoning code as it pertains to housing was attached in Appendix H.
- Other grammatical/formatting and minor wording changes were made throughout the Plan that did not result in substantive changes.
- A summary of public comments with the consultant team's responses are included in Appendix I.

STAFF REVIEW: *Plan Rapid City*, the adopted Comprehensive Plan, is a framework within which development and rezoning proposals are measured and evaluated, and is intended to guide the orderly growth of the community. The Downtown Plan supplements *Plan Rapid City* and its goals and objectives for moving Rapid City forward. In order for the plans to remain viable and to keep pace with a changing market place, periodic adjustments to reflect changing conditions will be required.

Staff has reviewed this proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment for conformance with the six criteria for review of Comprehensive Plan Amendments established in Section 2.60.160(D). A summary of the Staff findings are outlined below:

1. *Whether the proposed change is consistent with the policies and overall intent of the comprehensive plan.*

The downtown master plan project is a directive from Comprehensive Plan goal LC-4.1A "Develop a plan and accompanying strategy for the areas east and north of the downtown core, building on the recommendations of the Downtown Master Plan (1991) the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology Master Plan and the planned expansion of the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center." Furthermore the Downtown Master Plan addresses several other aspects of Principle LC-4 "Sustaining a Vibrant Downtown Center." For example, the Downtown Plan identifies recommendations for diversification of uses, neighborhood transitions, public art, programming/events, parking strategy, targeted infill/redevelopment, and multimodal connections.

2. *Whether the proposed change is warranted by changed conditions within the neighborhood surrounding and including the subject property.*

The downtown area in Rapid City has seen vast improvements over the last several years. The conversion of Main Street Square from a surface parking lot to a community gathering space and the construction of the Memorial Park Promenade, are two examples of the reinvestment in the community's core. Other changing conditions include the westward movement of the South Dakota School of Mines towards downtown through student housing projects, and the emergence of startup entrepreneurial businesses in the area sometimes referred to as East of Fifth. Other market forces, such as the need for a variety of urban housing formats, and the need for modern, flexible office space to support a growing start up community, represent other changing conditions within the neighborhoods served by the Downtown Plan.

STAFF REPORT
September 22, 2016

No. 16CA005 - Amendment to the Comprehensive Plan by adopting the Downtown Area Master Plan (Final) **ITEM 9**

3. *Whether and the extent to which the proposed amendment is compatible with existing and proposed uses surrounding the subject land.*

The Downtown Plan recommends expanding upon some uses in the downtown area. For example, the planning process identified a need for additional housing units, flexible office spaces, and “maker space” in the downtown area. Some recommendations encourage amending existing policies in order for the City to respond to current market conditions. These recommendations are consistent with the Comprehensive Planning directive to encourage a broader mix of uses, explore options to reduce barriers to property reuse and investment.

4. *Whether and the extent to which the proposed amendment would adversely affect the environment, services, facilities, and transportation.*

Adoption of the proposed amendment would not appear to adversely affect the environment, services, facilities, or transportation. The Downtown Plan encourages improvements to the street and trail network that would make more options for safe and convenient mobility, such as transit use, walking, and biking, available to the community. Recommendations for changes to the built environment, such as street configuration, and supported by an analysis of traffic counts and other safety considerations.

5. *Whether and the extent to which the proposed amendment would result in a logical and orderly development pattern.*

The Downtown Plan establishes a planning framework to encourage orderly and logical growth. Two districts, the innovation and historic core district, are identified to help guide the compatible character of development. In addition, a Development Framework and Public Framework illustrate opportunities and best practices for place types, redevelopment sites, street types, public spaces, and gateways.

6. *Whether and the extent to which the proposed amendment adversely affects any other part of the city, or creates any direct or indirect adverse effects.*

No direct or indirect adverse effects of adopting the proposed amendment have been identified. The Downtown Plan aims to elevate the economic, environmental, and experiential aspects of downtown for the betterment of the entire City.

Since this Plan amendment is being sponsored by the Planning Commission, there are no sign posting or notification requirements. To date, staff has not received any inquiries regarding the proposed amendment.

Staff recommends that the Amendment to the Comprehensive Plan, *Plan Rapid City*, to adopt the **Final** Downtown Area Master Plan be approved.