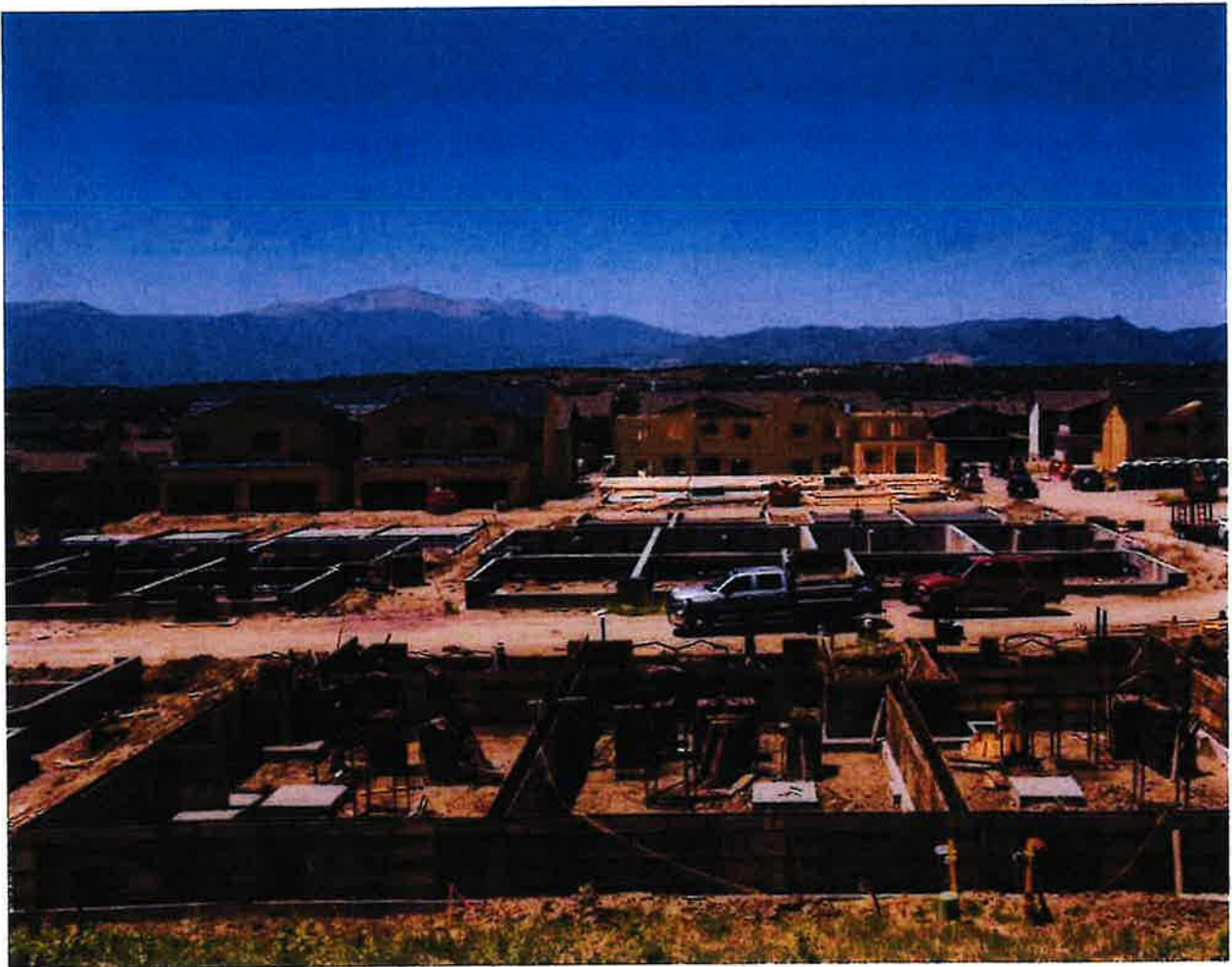


https://gazette.com/premium/with-hundreds-of-thousands-of-new-residents-expected-el-paso-county-identifies-areas-of-growth/article_da6b198c-c22e-11ea-b5d3-abae5d342379.html

With hundreds of thousands of new residents expected, El Paso County identifies areas of growth

By Mary Shinn mary.shinn@gazette.com

Jul 12, 2020



Construction of the Eastside Landing Townhomes being built by Rockwood Homes on the east side of Colorado Marksheffel Road and Stetson Hills Boulevard on Friday, July 10, 2020. El Paso County is planning for hundreds of new residents to move in during the coming decades and expects many of the new homes, shops and other development east of Colorado Springs. (Chancey Bush/ The Gazette)

Chancey Bush The Gazette

El Paso County is planning for hundreds of thousands of new residents to move in during the coming decades and expects many of the new homes, shops and other development to flow east of Colorado Springs.

The areas of new growth and property that can expect transformation have been identified in a draft master plan the county expects will guide development for 20 years. The plan is nearing completion after a year and half of work and the county is seeking feedback on areas identified for growth, said Craig Dossey, executive director of the county's Planning and Community Development Department.

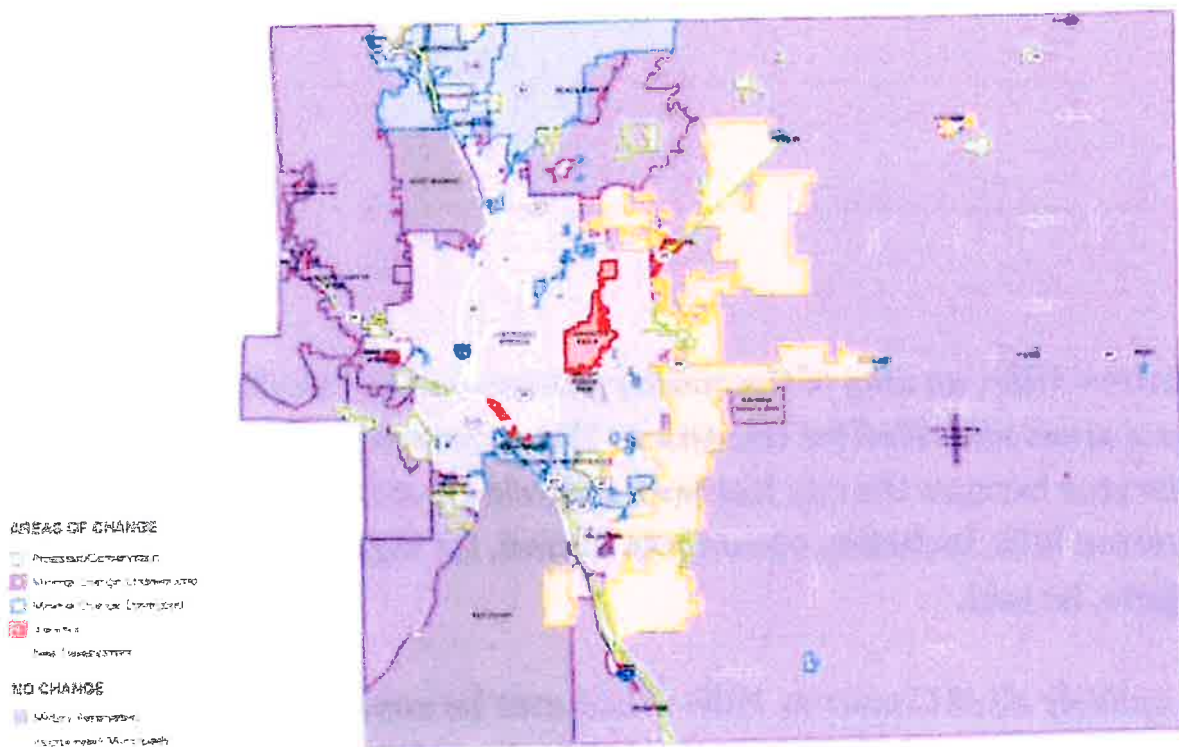
The county needs to prepare for growth because the population of El Paso County, including Colorado Springs, is projected to grow from about 720,400 residents to 973,000 in 2040, according to the Colorado Demography Office.

“We know it's important to have a plan for our future,” Dossey said.

A draft map of areas of change in the county shows most new development going east of Colorado Springs along major transportation corridors such as Colorado Highway 94 and U.S. Highway 24. Growth along Highway 94 could be likely in the coming years particularly if Schriever Air Force Base is selected as the permanent home for U.S. Space Command, Dossey said.

A link to an interactive version of the Areas of Change map can be found [HERE](#).

AREAS OF CHANGE



El Paso County expects much of the growth and change in the county to east of Colorado Springs. Growth is also expected south of Fountain.

Courtesy El Paso County

Some of these areas of growth could be annexed into Colorado Springs and Fountain as they fall within three miles of the municipalities' boundaries. The county has not calculated how big the areas of growth are all together,

but they slated large unsubdivided properties for growth. Sections of the county already subdivided into smaller ranchettes are not anticipated to see major growth, Dossey said.

The map also defines areas of transition that are likely to redevelop. For example, some older commercial areas could become residential and single family housing areas could become multifamily.

Cimarron Hills, an area of the county surrounded by the city, is one of the largest areas identified for transition. The county expects growth and change in the area because the city has been annexing northern portions of Cimarron hills, including vacant lots of land, for higher density residential projects, he said.

It's unlikely all of Cimarron Hills would ever be annexed into the city because it wasn't developed to city standards and the Cherokee Metro District, not the city, provides water and sewer to the area, he said.

The county did not map areas for potential new industrial businesses, but the staff does recognize the need to identify where industrial businesses can locate and the master plan will include an analysis of appropriate locations, Dossey said.

For example, more heavy industrial businesses could locate near Pikes Peak

International Raceway where they could be served by a railroad, he said.

The county is taking feedback on the Areas of Change map and will be accepting comments on the master plan until it is approved by the El Paso County Planning Commission late this year or early next year, Dossey said.

The county has struggled to get feedback on its master plan since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, in part because it has been unable to hold any public meetings and residents have been focused on other issues, he said.

The last two questionnaires put out by the county on the master plan drew less than 30 responses, according to a presentation given during the planning commission this week.

“It’s probably the toughest time in the history of planning to get input on something,” Dossey said.

Contact the writer at mary.shinn@gazette.com or (719) 429-9264.

MORE INFORMATION



Colorado Springs home prices and sales soar, record high set

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Mary Shinn

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What will El Paso County be like in 2040? New master plan almost ready for review.

Breeanna Jent breeanna.jent@gazette.com

Jan 28, 2021



Cars drive along Stetson Hills Boulevard through neighborhoods in eastern Colorado Springs in this file photo from March 28, 2017. A new El Paso County Master Plan will guide development across the county for 20 years, and the county needs to prepare for growth because its population is expected to grow from around 720,400 residents to more than 953,000 in 2040, data show. (Christian Murdock/The Gazette)

Christian Murdock, The Gazette file

El Paso County residents can soon review and comment on a proposed master plan expected to guide local development for 20 years as the county prepares to pack in another 200,000 people.

The plan is in its final steps of completion after roughly two years of work, El Paso County Planning and Community Development Director Craig Dossey and representatives from design firm Houseal-Lavigne Associates told the Master Plan

Advisory Committee Thursday. County officials are expected to complete their review of the proposal by Monday before the advisory committee evaluates a revised version of the plan in early February.

📄 With hundreds of thousands of new residents expected, El Paso County identifies areas of growth

Members of a liaison group who attended previous meetings to discuss the master plan will also receive a draft before it is made public, Dossey said. He said the liaison group was disbanded at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic because meeting on a regional scale was rendered “impossible.”

Once the plan is revised to include staff and committee comments, the county will release the revised plan to residents for review in March. The advisory committee could make changes to the plan based on public feedback, Houseal-Lavigne cofounder and urban planner John Houseal said.

The completed plan is expected to be adopted in May, said Sean Tapia, a planner with Houseal-Lavigne.

In late February, a video providing more information on the master plan and what it means for residents will be posted to the Planning and Community Department’s EPC Engage webpage, Dossey said.

“The video is just recognizing that this is a lot,” Dossey said. “... We want to bring it down to a human level so it’s consumable by the general public.”

The nearly 140-page draft plan will be 14 chapters long, outlining what planners called its “key components,” including a vision for the community, land use, housing and communities, economic development, transportation and mobility, community facilities, infrastructure, military installations, recreation and tourism, community health, environment, resiliency, and hazard mitigation.

📄 Colorado Springs' construction industry hit boom times in 2020, despite pandemic

There are a lot of graphics, a lot of photographs, a lot of text (and a) lot of tables,” Houseal said. “... It covers a really wide range of topics in the county.”

Thirteen of its chapters are drafted, Houseal said. The final chapter, which will outline all recommendations across each category in a “matrix-style” format, will be drafted after staff and the advisory committee have reviewed and vetted each recommendation in the document.

The master plan is an advisory text that will guide the county planning commission, board of commissioners and other county staff when they evaluate land development applications, Dossey and Houseal said.

“It is not a deciding factor. It is not regulation, but it’s meant to be sort of a long-play to help guide incremental decision making,” Houseal said.

The county needs to prepare for growth because its population is expected to grow from around 720,400 residents to more than 953,000 in 2040, data from the Colorado Demography Office show.

The master plan could affect other master planning across the county, Dossey said.

“Even though it’s advisory, that’s not to say that it doesn’t have teeth,” he said. “... It has impacts in so many places and so many different ways moving forward, not just with our department, but with other departments as well as outside entities like (Colorado Springs). We’ve identified areas of growth. Development conceivably could occur in the county and then get annexed into the city. What we show in terms of density and change I think necessarily has to impact how the municipalities are also looking at growth.”

📄 Colorado Springs City Council splits on allowing homebuilders to dedicate less parkland to the city

To follow the El Paso County Master Plan process, visit elpaso-hlplanning.hub.arcgis.com. For more on the Planning and Community Development Department’s EPC Engage initiative, visit planningdevelopment.elpasoco.com/epcengage.

MORE INFORMATION



El Paso County looking for resident input on road safety concerns

Breeanna Jent
Reporter

Breeanna Jent covers El Paso County government. She previously worked as the editorial assistant for the Pikes Peak Newspapers and joined their sister paper, The Gazette, in 2020.

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Top Stories

By **Scott Harrison**March 10, 2021 6:44 pm Published [March 10, 2021](#) 11:25 am

El Paso County updating master plan to prepare for 250,000 population increase through 2050



EL PASO COUNTY, Colo. (KRDO) -- It's been 30 years since El Paso County updated its master plan to manage future growth, so officials are working to finalize their latest plan this spring.



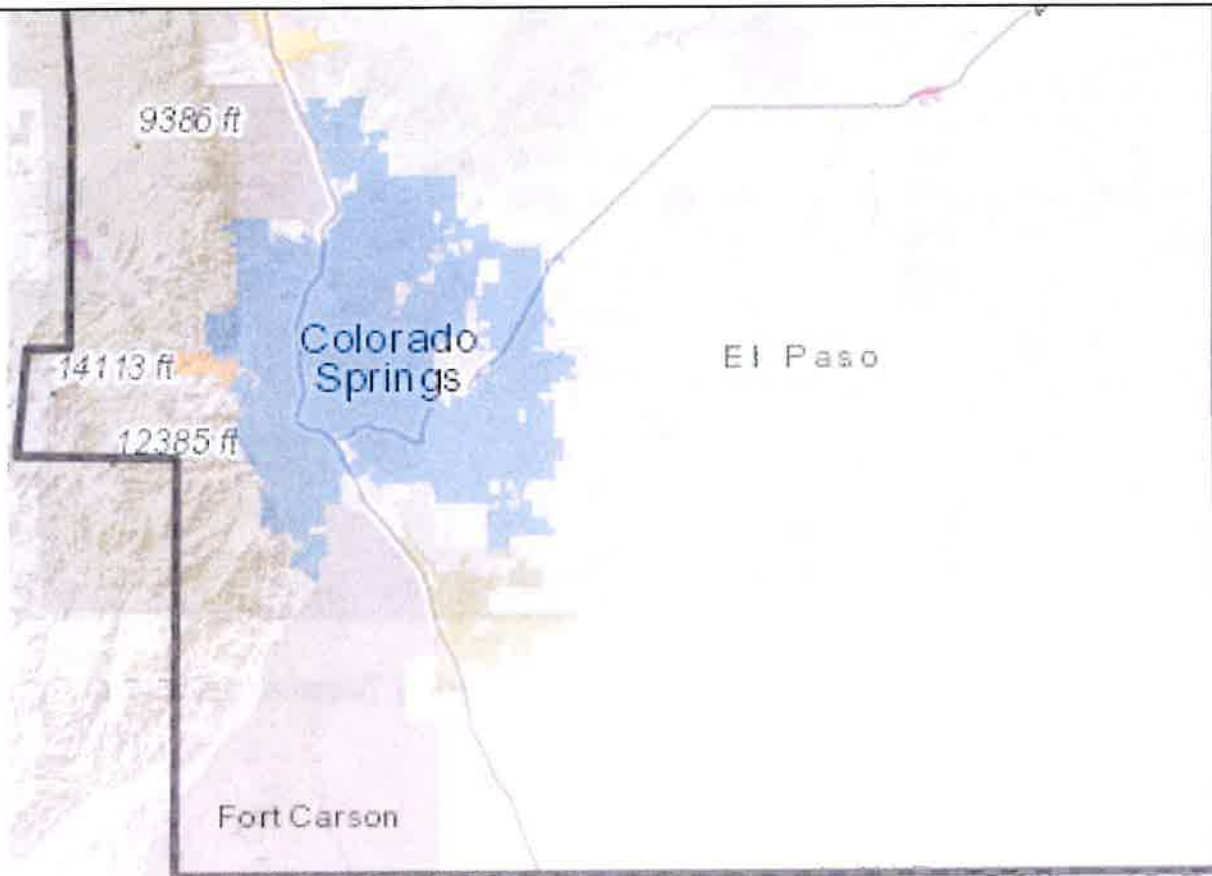
The effort has a fair sense of urgency because the county expects 250,000 people to move in during the next 30 years -- raising the population from 951,000 to 1.2 million.

"We know it (population increase) is coming," said Craig Dossey, the county's executive director of planning and community development. "We need to be ready for it."

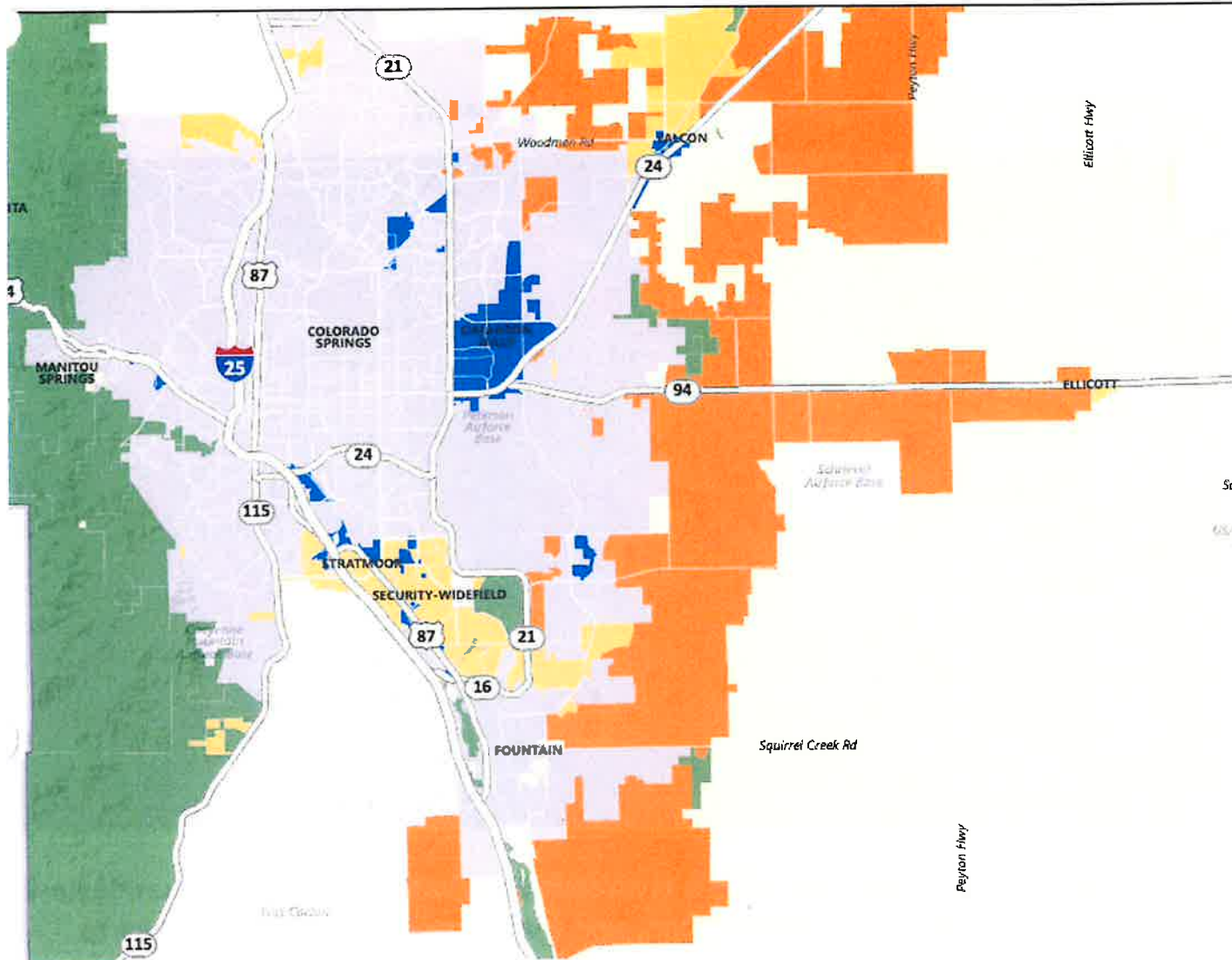


Dossey presented the first draft of the master plan during Tuesday's Board of Commissioners meeting.

"The plan will help guide growth and development in the County over the next 10 to 20 years," he said during the hourlong presentation.



A surprising revelation from the presentation was that the projected growth -- most of it on the eastern side of the county -- will settle in just 10% of the county but could bring countywide implications.



"Most of that growth will occur in areas that are likely to be annexed into the city of Colorado Springs," Dossey said. "That's why it's important for us to agree on annexation issues with the city, and we're already working on that."

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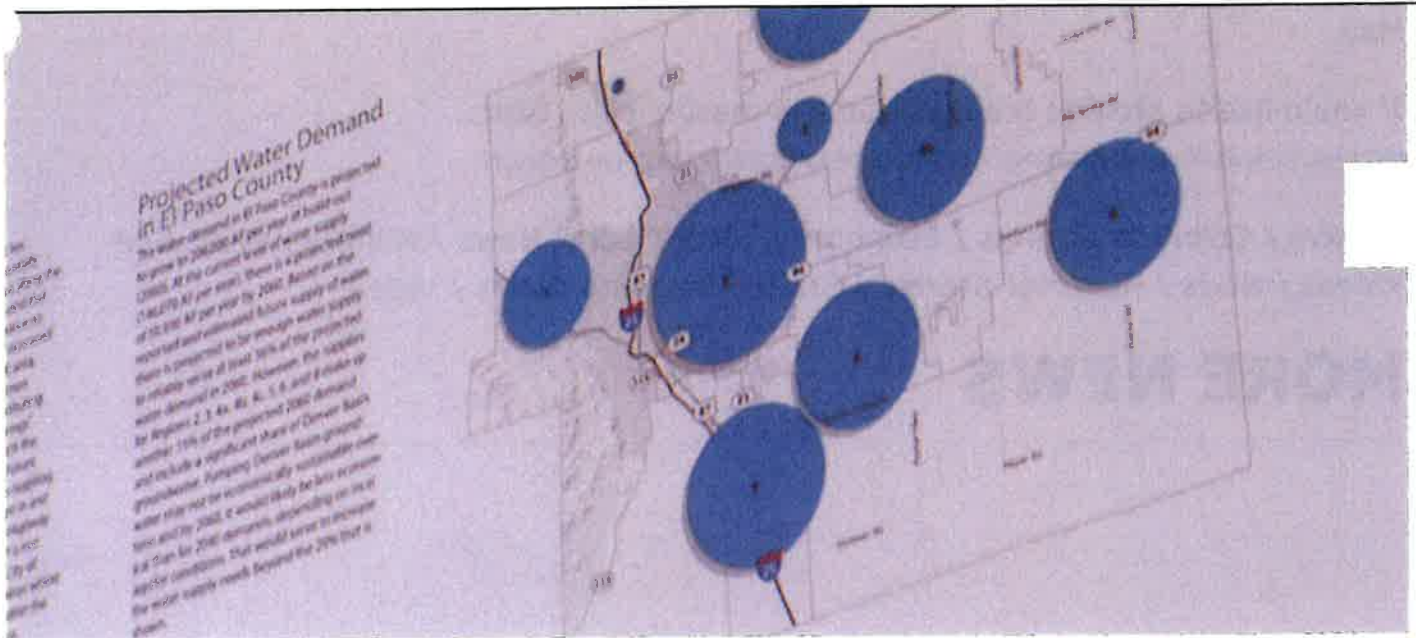
The demand for water is expected to increase significantly.



"I'm concerned about that," said Board President Stan VanderWerf. "Communities are going to have to obtain more water rights, and that's not easy to do. You'd like to have them now, but it can take years to get them."

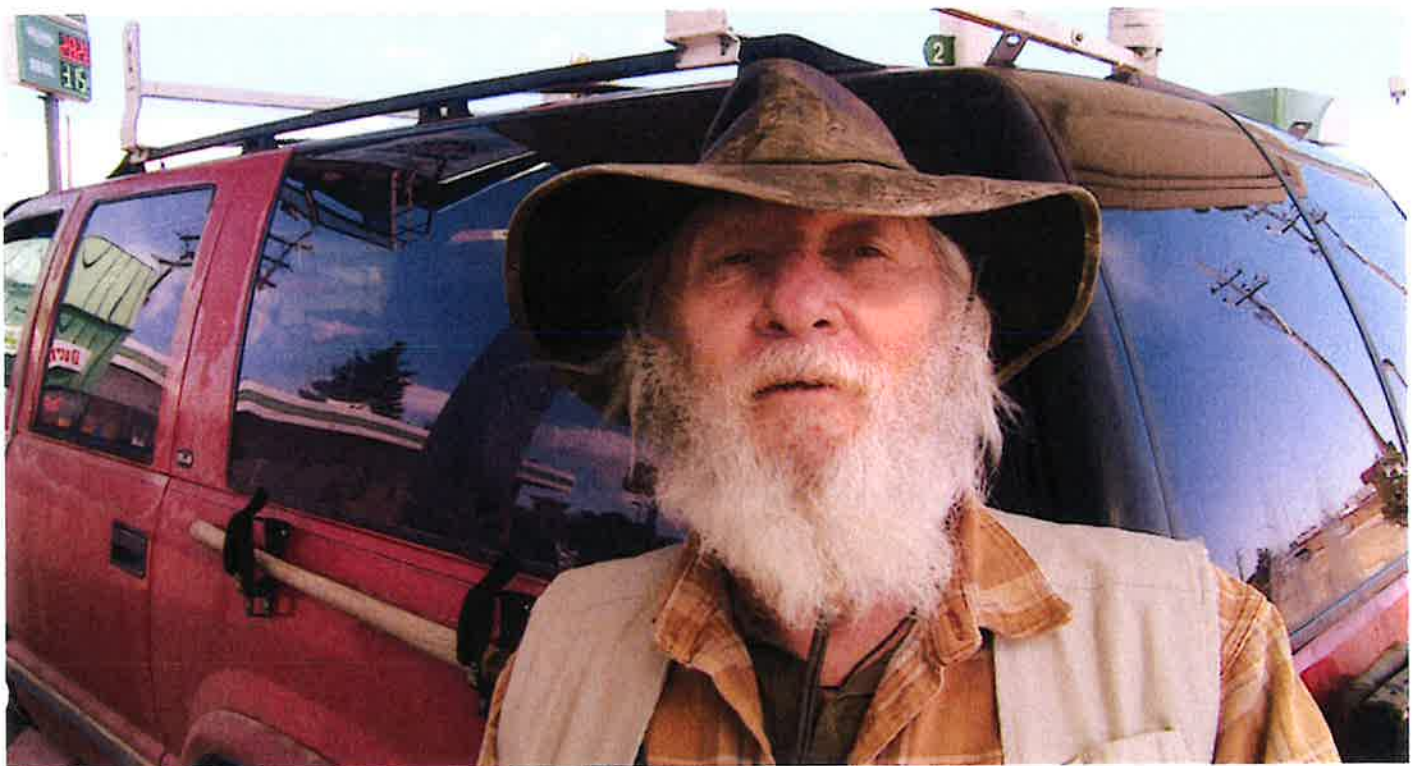
Commissioner Longinos Gonzalez asked if the amount of water in underground aquifers that provide water can be measured regularly before they become dangerously low.

Other challenges of the plan include addressing the county's many school districts and including military installations, which weren't part of the original plan.



Many county residents said that they're not pleased about future population growth because they believe too many people already live here.

"The commissioners have waited too long to address this," said Richie Martin. "The infrastructure, the traffic, the water, the sewage, the waste, just on and on. It's awfully difficult to accommodate that many more people."





Watch

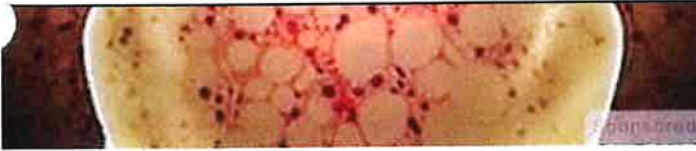


May.

If you'd like to provide feedback on the master plan, visit:
<https://elpaso.hlplanning.com/pages/draft-plan-outreach>.

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Drink 1 Cup Of This Before Bed & Watch Fat Melt



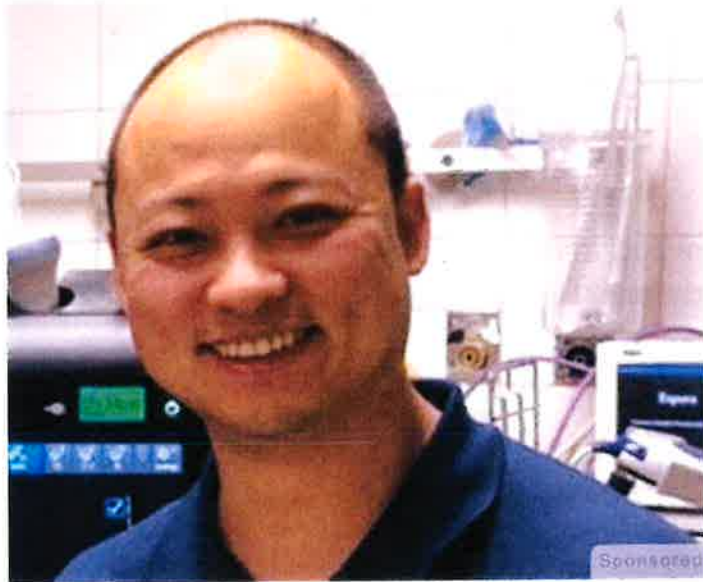
1 Cup Before Bed Will Burns Belly Fat Overnight



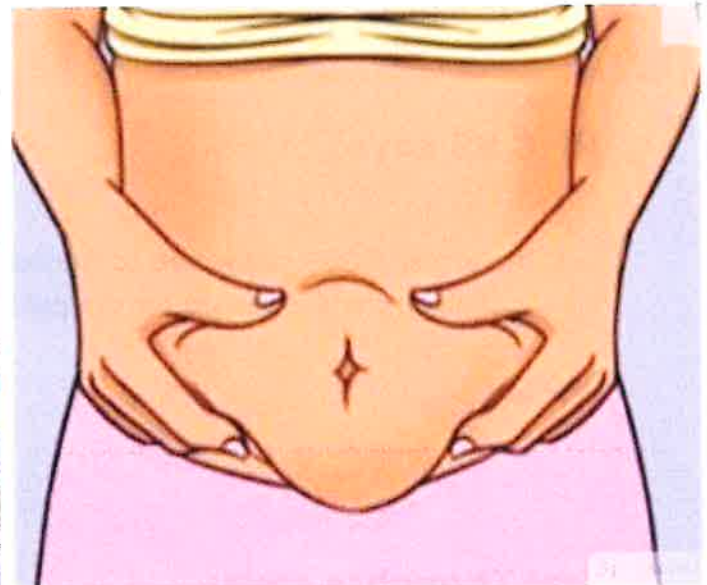
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1/2 Cup Of This (Before Bed) Eats Your Belly Fat Like Crazy!



Try This (Tonight) And Body Fat Melts Away

COMMENTS

17 Comments

Fcn2.0 says:

March 10, 2021 at 11:51 am

but of course they do not tell the public where to give input. They get just a few of their friends to give the opinion they need to have to pass personal legislation

[Log in to Reply](#)

RMC SS says:

March 11, 2021 at 10:22 am

Yes, the article DOES say where to provide input. It's the last paragraph of the article, which provides the url for the public's feedback.

[Log in to Reply](#)

Viral Thoughts says:

March 10, 2021 at 12:14 pm

They know that the biggest growth is on the east side. That is why the swindeled voters into giving away 35million of our PPRTA money to the gap project in DOUGLAS COUNTY!!!!!!!!!!

[Log in to Reply](#)

Growth to the East. Where else would it go? We have national forest to the west, Air Force Academy to the northwest, Fort Carson on the southwest. No way to go but easterly. If they are worried about water maybe they should not allow the growth.

[Log in to Reply](#)

soco says:

March 10, 2021 at 6:21 pm

I'm confused. 921,000 people to 1.2Million? We currently have 721,000 pop. county wide so if you add 250k to that you get 970k. Did I read something wrong or can KRDO not add?

[Log in to Reply](#)

RMC SS says:

March 11, 2021 at 10:37 am

Where is the 725K figure come from that you are referencing? That number is nowhere in the article. If you are referring to the 720K+ figure listed by Wikipedia as of 2019, that is an estimate by the Census Bureau. We'll have a better number once the Census Bureau publishes their official figures from the 2020 census.

Either way, an additional 250K increase in the area's population will be a HUGE hit in all of our resources, starting with water. The SDS won't provide enough water for this much growth, maybe half of it at best.

[Log in to Reply](#)

skippy says:

March 10, 2021 at 8:00 pm

Where are they going to get the water?where are they going to work? Retail and shopping malls ?

[Log in to Reply](#)

water will be the biggest issue/problem.

[Log in to Reply](#)

AnotherMindlessZealot says:

March 11, 2021 at 11:34 am

It is always good to look forward to develop a plan for the future.

Step #1 Fix our 1980's infrastructure(Roads, bridges, electrical, water, sewage, internet, public services(DHS, Police, Fire, EMS, Etc.), Etc.) and bring it up to the 2020's.

Step #2 Once step one is completed, look at what can be done for the city to increase growth for the 2050's.

[Log in to Reply](#)

NoShillZone says:

March 11, 2021 at 12:30 pm

I thought the 1 billion dollars SDS (Southern Delivery System) project was going to handle our future water needs.

...

Has it turned out to be functionally a pipe to nowhere? Embarrassing and disgraceful if that is the case.

[Log in to Reply](#)

RMC SS says:

March 11, 2021 at 3:14 pm

SDS was built primarily to handle the Banning Lewis expansion. This current projection is almost double what BL is expected to have.

[Log in to Reply](#)

NoShillZone says:

March 11, 2021 at 3:36 pm

NoShillZone says:

March 11, 2021 at 12:49 pm

Sounds like too many problems and costs, just scrap the whole thing to focus on preserving and improving the quality of what is left of the county.

...

Other than for those who profit from population sprawl there is no upside for the majority of residents in El Paso County.

[Log in to Reply](#)

kidosee says:

March 11, 2021 at 1:01 pm

I agree! If they froze construction our home values would probably double in 5 years! You'd really have bidding wars!

[Log in to Reply](#)

RMC SS says:

March 11, 2021 at 3:37 pm

In order for any government to preserve and improve the QoL of their constituents, there has to be a sufficient and reliable revenue stream, something that the good folks of this county are loathe to part with or provide. One must remember that there are Federal, State, and Judicially mandated issues that absolutely MUST be funded before any other projects can receive monies. Some of these mandated issues come with funding from the mandating agency, but many others don't. Voters in 1992 took away local and State government abilities to adequately fund any "rainy day" funds (thank you, TABOR)[sarcasm off] which could be used to address these upcoming problems.

[Log in to Reply](#)

NoShillZone says:

[Log in to Reply](#)

COS Realityville says:

March 11, 2021 at 9:13 pm

Any chance they can build this up in Denver; or maybe even do so much good for Pueblo; or Trinidad?

What we are getting here is an increase in middle-class poverty. There, called it what it is becoming. Middle-class poverty. Colorado Springs. Sad.

[Log in to Reply](#)

Leave a Reply

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El Paso County's new master plan now ready for review

Breeanna Jent breeanna.jent@gazette.com

Mar 11, 2021



A home under construction in February in the Bent Grass area northeast of Colorado Springs illustrates the furious pace of building in El Paso County. The county's population is projected to grow from roughly 720,400 residents to about 953,700 in 2040, and could hit more than 1 million people by 2045, data from the Colorado Demography Office show.

RICH LADEN, THE GAZETTE

After more than two years of work, El Paso County this week released the first draft of its new master plan, expected to guide local development for the next 20 to 30 years as the county plans to pack in hundreds of thousands of new residents in the coming decades.

County planners will use the new master plan as a basis for future strategic plans, water projects, military facilities, major roadway infrastructure projects, utility projects and more, county planner Nina Ruiz explained in an informational video about the master plan posted to the EPC Community engage website, the county's public-facing information series.

Colorado Springs Utilities plans for hotter, drier weather and more residents

The plan will also help the county prepare for an explosion of growth and determine what “appropriate growth looks like,” El Paso County Planning and Community Development Executive Director Craig Dossey told county commissioners this week.

The county's population, including Colorado Springs, is projected to grow from roughly 720,400 residents to about 953,700 in 2040 — and could hit more than 1 million people by 2045, according to the Colorado Demography Office.

“Why this is so crucial is managing that growth in a way that puts El Paso County where they need to be in a few decades while maintaining and protecting what is most cherished: the environment, the character, the unique sense of place that El Paso County is,” said John Houseal, co-founder of design firm Houseal-Lavigne Associates, who partnered with the county to develop the new plan.

Through April 9, residents can review and comment on the draft proposed plan on the project website, elpaso-hlplanning.hub.arcgis.com. Residents can also find details on the planning process, important dates, informational videos, the public adoption process and how else to get involved.

The completed plan will be 14 chapters long, outlining what planners called its “key components,” including a vision for the community, land use, housing and communities, economic development, transportation and mobility, community facilities, infrastructure, military installations, recreation and tourism, community health, environment, resiliency and hazard mitigation.

Thirteen of its chapters are drafted, Houseal said. The final chapter, which will outline all recommendations across each category in a “matrix-style” format, will be drafted after county staff and the Master Plan Advisory Committee have reviewed and vetted each recommendation in the document.

Areas of growth and property that can expect transformation have also been identified in the plan and the county expects many of the new homes, shops and other development to flow east of Colorado Springs.

☞ Southwest begins service to Colorado Springs: Long time coming

A draft map of areas of change in the county shows most new development going east of Colorado Springs along major transportation corridors such as Colorado 94 and U.S. 24. It also defines areas of transition that are likely to redevelop, like some older commercial areas that could become residential and single-family housing areas that could become multifamily.

When the public comment period closes, the draft plan will be updated and presented to the El Paso County Planning Commission at its May 5 and May 26 meetings, planners said. The meetings are open to the public and begin at 1 p.m.

They are livestreamed on the El Paso County Facebook page (@ElPasoCountyCO).

The new master plan is anticipated to be adopted in May, Dossey said, and will go into effect immediately after.

MORE INFORMATION



With hundreds of thousands of new residents expected, El Paso County identifies areas of growth

Colorado Springs is not Aspen: New 'workforce housing fund' provides incentive for more attainable living

El Paso County to host virtual meeting on new master plan this month

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El Paso County approves new annexation agreement with Colorado Springs

New annexation agreement could prevent enclaves, protect groundwater

New stop signs going up at Black Forest intersection as part of safety enhancements

Black Forest residents express concerns about new county master plan

Breeanna Jent

Reporter

Breeanna Jent covers El Paso County government. She previously worked as the editorial assistant for the Pikes Peak Newspapers and joined their sister paper, The Gazette, in 2020.

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El Paso County to host virtual meeting on new master plan this month

Breeanna Jent breeanna.jent@gazette.com

Mar 19, 2021



Construction of the Eastside Landing Townhomes continue being built by Rockwood Homes on the east side of Colorado Sp near Marksheffel Road and Stetson Hills Boulevard in

July. El Paso County is planning for hundreds of thousands of new residents to move in during the coming decades and expect many of the new homes, shops and other development to flow east of Colorado Springs.

Chancey Bush, The Gazette

Residents wanting to learn more about El Paso County's newest draft master plan can do so at a virtual presentation this month.

Members of the county Planning and Community Development department and planning commission will join representatives with design firm Houseal-Lavigne Associates to present the plan in a webinar on March 31 from 6-7 p.m. Residents can register online at register.gotowebinar.com/register/4740628359694702096.

 **El Paso County's new master plan now ready for review**

Officials released the first draft of the new countywide master plan last week. It is expected to guide local development for the next 20 to 30 years as the county prepares to pack in more than 200,000 additional people over the coming decades.

During the webinar, residents “will get an overview of the whole plan, particularly the land use chapter,” El Paso County Planning and Community Development Executive Director Craig Dossey said Friday. “We’ll talk about what people can expect in the plan for growth and what that means” for the county, he said.

Attendees will also learn about the plan's other key components, including a vision for the community, housing and communities, economic development, transportation and mobility, community facilities, infrastructure, military installations, recreation and tourism, community health, environment, resiliency and hazard mitigation.

📄 With hundreds of thousands of new residents expected, El Paso County identifies areas of growth

Through April 9, residents can review and comment on the draft proposed plan on the project website, elpaso-hlplanning.hub.arcgis.com. Details on the planning process, important dates, informational videos, the public adoption process and information on how else to get involved are also on the website.

After the public comment period closes, the draft plan will be updated and presented to the El Paso County Planning Commission at its May 5 and May 26 meetings, planners have previously said. The meetings are open to the public and begin at 1 p.m. They are livestreamed on the El Paso County Facebook page (@ElPasoCountyCO).

The county planning commission is anticipated to adopt the new master plan in May, and it will go into effect immediately after.

MORE INFORMATION



Controversial apartments, businesses in Colorado Springs closer to reality

Second office project planned in Colorado Springs Airport business park

Colorado Springs is not Aspen: New 'workforce housing fund' provides incentive for more attainable living

Breeanna Jent
Reporter

https://gazette.com/news/colorado-springs-city-council-lauds-move-toward-regional-planning/article_bc78cc84-8b6a-11eb-ac49-d3bcac8455ad.html

Colorado Springs City Council lauds move toward regional planning

By Mary Shinn mary.shinn@gazette.com

Mar 22, 2021



Colorado Springs City Council and El Paso County are on the road to better regional planning for growth that would encourage highly dense neighborhoods outside the city to develop to city standards so they could be more easily annexed in the future.

gazette file

Sidewalks and gutters could become more common in neighborhoods outside city limits as Colorado Springs and El Paso County work to encourage dense new development to build to city standards.

The higher building standards could allow those neighborhoods to more easily annex into city limits and receive city services, such as water, in the future, said Peter Wysocki, planning and development director for the city.

The city and county expect to encourage the tighter building standards through a new intergovernmental agreement and comprehensive annexation plan that are in the works.

The intergovernmental agreement would get the city involved in discussions about future developments that could come into city limits at some point early and encourage development so that it could more easily be annexed, Wysocki said.

When developments don't meet city standards, as with Cimarron Hills, they can become county enclaves surrounded by the city but not receiving city services.

The agreement is a move toward better regional planning that is meant to be collaborative not adversarial, city officials said.

"It allows for a more sustainable regional community going forward," Councilman Dave Geislinger said.

The Colorado Springs City Council on Monday lauded the draft intergovernmental agreement as a step in the right direction ,particularly because county neighborhoods may need to hook up to city water in the coming decades as groundwater supplies diminish.

"I am ecstatic that this type of agreement is finally being done," Councilman Wayne Williams said.

City officials noted property owners would not be forced to annex land into the city through the agreement. But it would ensure city officials talk with developers building neighborhoods to the same density as city neighborhoods outside city limits about eventual annexation, Wysocki said.

The new annexation plan will cover properties within three miles of the Colorado Springs limits and is expected to align with the areas of change the county outlined in its new master plan, he said.

"We are not proposing anything the county already has not been contemplating," Williams said.

Contact the writer at mary.shinn@gazette.com or (719) 429-9264.

MORE INFORMATION



El Paso County's new master plan now ready for review

With hundreds of thousands of new residents expected, El Paso County identifies areas of growth

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New annexation agreement could prevent enclaves, protect groundwater

Mary Shinn

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El Paso County approves new annexation agreement with Colorado Springs

Breeanna Jent breeanna.jent@gazette.com

Mar 31, 2021



El Paso County and the City of Colorado Springs are one step closer in a move toward regional planning. County commissioners on Tuesday, March 30, 2021 approved a new agreement intended to pave the way for dense new development to more easily be annexed into city limits. (Rich Laden/The Gazette file)

Rich Laden/The Gazette file

El Paso County commissioners unanimously approved a new agreement with Colorado Springs that will encourage tighter building standards in unincorporated areas and is intended to pave the way for dense new development to be more easily annexed into the city.

“This (intergovernmental agreement) represents a very important first step to better collaborating and addressing future annexations in El Paso County,” Steven Klaffky, senior assistant county attorney, said Tuesday.

City planning and development director Peter Wysocki said during a city council workshop last week the higher building standards could make sidewalks and gutters more common in neighborhoods outside city limits. It could also allow those neighborhoods to be more easily annexed and receive city services such as water.

As part of the agreement, Colorado Springs officials will develop a comprehensive annexation plan to include its policies for annexations and will cover properties within three miles of city limits, Klaffky said.

📄 With hundreds of thousands of new residents expected, El Paso County identifies areas of growth

The annexation plan will include a map showing unincorporated areas likely to experience urban-level development that are or may be suitable for annexation. The map will also show areas less likely to experience urban development and less suitable for annexation; enclaves surrounded by the city but not receiving services; and other areas.

The county will use the annexation plan when reviewing development applications within the the area of planning interest, the draft agreement states.

“If the development application is for commercial, industrial or mixed uses, residential subdivisions with lots smaller than 2 1/2 acres, or any proposed subdivision that will be served by either a central water or sanitary sewer system, the county will encourage developers to contact the city to discuss possible annexation, Klaffky said.

The agreement does not force property owners to annex into the city, Colorado Springs officials said last week. But it will allow the county to have more of a voice in the process, said Craig Dossey, executive director of the county's Planning and Community Development Department.

“State statute is written to favor annexation by cities and really gives the county no seat at the table,” he said. “That’s very archaic, and maybe rightly so, to try to get development on central services in municipalities. But we’re an urbanized county.”

📄 El Paso County assessor to host virtual town halls explaining property reappraisals for taxes

That urbanization changes “the dynamics substantively when there’s already a lot of infrastructure in place when the city gets to a point of considering an annexation,” Commissioner Stan VanderWerf said. “That’s something that is really different than maybe when the statute was originally written.”

The Colorado Springs City Council is expected to consider the agreement for adoption at a meeting next month. City Council agendas are available online at coloradosprings.gov/city-council. If the city approves the agreement, it will go into effect immediately, Klaffky said.

“We are the fastest growing county in the state, and we have a need to work better, more efficiently and more effectively not only with the City of Colorado Springs, but with Monument and Fountain as we transfer roads back and forth and projects back and forth,” Commissioner Holly Williams said.

Dossey said he intends to try and develop similar types of agreements with other municipalities in the county.

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Breeanna Jent

Reporter

Breeanna Jent covers El Paso County government. She previously worked as the editorial assistant for the Pikes Peak Newspapers and joined their sister paper, The Gazette, in 2020.

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New annexation agreement could prevent enclaves, protect groundwater

Mary Shinn & Breeanna Jent The Gazette
Apr 3, 2021



A construction crew works on a home in February in the Bent Grass development, in unincorporated Falcon outside Colorado Springs.

Rich Laden, The Gazette

Surrounded by the city, but not a part of it, the 18,000 people who live in Cimarron Hills are on their own when it comes to fire protection, water and sewer services — a situation Colorado Springs and El Paso County would like to prevent through a new agreement to manage annexations together.

Without city services, Cimarron Hills, a six-square mile enclave, has to pay its own way. Most recently, the community bonded a new \$43 million reverse osmosis wastewater treatment plant to meet state standards for water quality, said Steven Hasbrouck, Cherokee Metro District board president. The new plant increased user bills by \$5.43 per month, he said.

The metro district broke ground on the new wastewater treatment plant in January and it is just the latest challenge faced by the enclave, Hasbrouck said. In the late 2000s, the district had to pay top dollar for water from Colorado Springs Utilities because of a legal disagreement over the district's water in the Upper Black Squirrel Creek Basin.

"Water and wastewater, those are the most basic tenets of civilization. Without those, you don't have civilization," Hasbrouck said.

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Water is also central to the new annexation agreement reached by the city and county. Both would like to see dense urban-level development hook up to city water, rather than have more developments drilling into the diminishing Denver aquifer.

"We are starting to see some substantial groundwater declines over the last 10 to 20 years," said Patrick Wells, general manager with Colorado Springs Utilities Water Resources and Demand Management. Some locations have seen water levels decline 20 to 50 feet per year, according to a Utilities presentation.

If new developments get hooked up to city water it can also help protect the supply for existing wells, said City Councilman Wayne Williams.

Through the new annexation agreement, officials also aim to encourage logical development on the city's edges up to three miles from the city's boundary. The city would rather not see small ranchettes on the city's boundaries that dense development would then leapfrog over, said Peter Wysocki, city planning and development director.

"We are going to encourage much more systematic growth," Colorado Springs Mayor John Suthers said.

Both city and county officials will talk with developers proposing dense neighborhoods in the county under the new agreement, and those who are good candidates for annexation and interested in it will be required to put in city infrastructure, such as curbs, gutters and sidewalks. Colorado Springs will not be forcing anyone to annex.

For the city, it makes more sense to annex more residential development than it did even just five years ago because rooftops can generate more revenue. The city can now collect sales taxes on online orders and following a change to the Gallagher Amendment approved by voters in November, homes will generate more property taxes over time, Suthers said.

The improved planning process will also ensure infrastructure changes hands in a logical fashion.

El Paso County Planning and Community Development Executive Director Craig Dossey said under current annexation rules, mapping out areas proposed for annexation doesn't always take into consideration roads and other infrastructure. In some cases, this means the land is absorbed into city limits while the county remains responsible for maintaining the infrastructure around it.

"This (agreement) creates the opportunity for the city and county to discuss these things earlier on," Dossey said. "Having an eye toward the future in the area of planning and development is necessary. It allows two entities to join forces and make development much more intentional and much more collaborative."

The higher development standards are not expected to drive up costs to builders because the county already has fairly high standards for dense development, said Kyle Campbell, a member of the Housing and Building Association's Public Policy Council and a private consultant with civil engineering firm Classic Consulting.

Plans for more than 1,600 homes approved east of Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado Springs

"Urban county development has curbs and gutters, sidewalks, inlets," he said. "It's very similar to the city's urban standards."

Reliable city water to a subdivision is also likely to be an important selling point for buyers, even if meeting city standards is more expensive, Suthers said.

For city Utilities, serving the projected population growth over the coming decades means acquiring 41,000 acre feet of additional water annually through conservation water reuse, agriculture leases and additional water supply from the two major rivers outside the area, according to its 50-year plan.

So far, Utilities has kept up with the growth in recent years, aided by resident conservation efforts, Wells said.

As the city considers new annexations, water will be a key consideration, Williams said.

"It does no one any good to annex areas if we cannot provide the water to them," he said.

📄 Colorado Springs Utilities plans for hotter, drier weather and more residents

As for Cimarron Hills, it too is expanding its water and wastewater service territory outside its boundaries to growing areas, even as its footprint shrinks and the city annexes commercial properties on its boundaries, said Larry Keleher, a Cherokee Metro District board member.

"We are just a little island and we're constantly shrinking," he said.

It's likely only a matter of time, before the city annexes Cimarron Hills as well, he said.

MORE INFORMATION



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Proposed new master plan for El Paso County: Problems and questions | Cronin & Loevy

Tom Cronin and Bob Loevy
Apr 5, 2021



A view of Downtown Colorado Springs in front of Pikes Peak in the winter.

erick4x4

The proposed new El Paso County master plan is now awaiting adoption by the county commissioners. The planning process involved a thoughtful review of present conditions in the county, which includes the city of Colorado Springs.

The planning consultants preparing the plan, Houseal Lavigne Associates, issued an existing conditions report on planning challenges facing the county.

El Paso County is big geographically. Oblong in shape, it is 85 miles east-to-west and 42 miles north-to-south. It is roughly the size of the state of Delaware, with a population estimated at about 725,000.

The western half of the county contains Pikes Peak and its surrounding Rocky Mountain foothills as well as the city of Colorado Springs, several major military installations, and a scattering of suburbs outside Colorado Springs. The eastern half of the county is high prairie mainly devoted to agriculture.

Thirty percent of El Paso County is government-owned land. Of the county's 2,130 square miles, 285 square miles are owned by the state and 325 square miles by the U.S. government. Apart from the many military installations, most of the Colorado and U.S. lands are open space and parks, such as Pike National Forest.

Two-thirds of the population of El Paso County resides in Colorado Springs. There are eight other smaller cities and towns (the largest is Fountain — the smallest is Ramah). The remaining county residents, just under 200,000 persons, live in what is called “unincorporated El Paso County.”

A lot of people thus live in Unincorporated El Paso County. We capitalize it because, if they were to become a city, these folks would comprise the fourth largest city in Colorado, right behind Aurora and more populous than Fort Collins or Lakewood.

We draw attention to Unincorporated El Paso County because its citizens will be the ones most affected by the new El Paso County master plan. The five El Paso County commissioners are in effect their local government. Colorado Springs and the eight other incorporated cities in the county have their own planning procedures and master plans. The almost 200,000 persons who live in Unincorporated El Paso County, however, are the ones who will live day to day under the new El Paso County master plan.

The existing conditions report notes that there are three thickly populated areas in Unincorporated El Paso County that are highly suburbanized: (1) Woodmoor, the Black Forest, and Gleneagle in the northern part of the county, (2) the Falcon area out U.S. 24, and (3) Security and Widefield south of Colorado Springs.

The plan makes the point that sidewalks can be found in Unincorporated El Paso County only in Gleneagle (part), Falcon (part), Security and Widefield, and Cimarron Hills (a large enclave surrounded by the city of Colorado Springs located north of Peterson Air Force Base).

In these few citified places in Unincorporated El Paso County, the county sheriff provides the local police force.

The new master plan makes clear that a major cause for concern in Unincorporated El Paso County is the 5-acre ranchettes, or large lot homes, that are being developed on former agricultural lands, particularly on the eastern plains near Falcon, Peyton and Ellicott. This sort of low-density residential housing is also found near the Tri-Lakes area, Black Forest, and Rancho Colorado (on the southern border with Pueblo County).

The big problem with “ranchurbia” is that most of these homes rely on wells for water and septic systems for wastewater treatment. In those 5-acre-lot projects that have local water systems, the local water systems also are dependent on wells. Many of these large lot homes are surrounded by big lawns that require a great deal of water for irrigation.

The starkest fact in the master plan is that, if ranchette development in Unincorporated El Paso County continues at present rates, there will be a 55,000-acre-foot gap in the county water supply by 2060. An acre-foot is an acre of water 1-foot deep. Another way to see it is, if construction in ranchurbia continues as now, only 56 percent of the demand for residential water will be met by 2060.

Surveys conducted by the master planning consultants found large numbers of residents living in ranchettes to be worried about their wells running dry and the huge expenses involved in drilling deeper wells.

The master plan hints at where the needed water for large lot homes in the county might come from: “Collaboration between municipalities and unincorporated areas of the county will be vital to meeting future water supply needs.” Likely translation: Colorado Springs will have to find the water. But how, where, and who will pay for it are the questions.

In El Paso County, only Colorado Springs Utilities has the water sources in the Rocky Mountains and the water transporting and storing infrastructure to meet the future water requirements of large numbers of 5-acre ranchettes in Unincorporated El Paso County.

Colorado Springs and El Paso County are working on an agreement that would entitle some county residents to city water, but only within 3 miles of the current boundaries of the city.

Other challenges in Unincorporated El Paso County include the need for families living in 5-acre ranchettes to drive long distances roundtrip to purchase groceries, gasoline, go to the movies, and find other basic services.

Moreover, in these highly dispersed communities, it can be a long wait for police (sheriff's deputies) or firefighters (often volunteers) to get to the property.

The master planners conducted surveys and focus groups that found some support for initiating a program to preserve major portions of the agricultural lands in eastern El Paso County before they all turn into 5-acre ranchettes.

Sections of the El Paso County Master Plan will have to provide creative future solutions to these many problems. Stay tuned.

Tom Cronin and Bob Loevy write on Colorado and national political issues.

MORE INFORMATION

https://gazette.com/government/updating-and-revising-the-el-paso-county-master-plan-is-a-necessity-cronin-loevy/article_c7cbd7a6-9d45-11eb-ac80-8b177d7f474b.html

Updating and revising the El Paso County Master Plan is a necessity | Cronin & Loevy

Tom Cronin and Bob Loevy
Apr 18, 2021



A view of Downtown Colorado Springs in front of Pikes Peak in the winter.

erick4x4

Most people around here are not especially pleased that our county will probably double in size over the next couple of generations. Building our own Pikes Peak regional wall is not an option. But updating and revising our El Paso County Master

Plan is an option and a necessity.

The recently proposed master plan, prepared by planning consultants, speaks to long range problems in El Paso County such as potentially inadequate water supply, the need for higher population densities in newly developing areas, the necessity to widen and otherwise improve major roadways, citizen requests for more police patrols, etc.

As we have emphasized, most of these problems occur in the unincorporated parts of El Paso County that are not served by a city government (particularly Colorado Springs). Over 200,000 people live in these unincorporated areas, which are generally underserved in terms of governmental services.

Implementing the new master plan will rest mainly with the five El Paso County commissioners. They set policy for the county Planning Department, appoint the county Planning Commission, and will, at a future date, vote on adopting the new master plan as official county policy.

One problem is that two-thirds of the voters who elect the county commissioners live in Colorado Springs. Most of these voters live far away from unincorporated El Paso County, have most of their governmental needs taken care of by the city government, and either do not know about or care much about the problems in the unincorporated areas.

That reduces the pressure on the county commissioners to act creatively on behalf of the master plan.

Another problem is that El Paso County is a strongly Republican county. Republican candidates for county commissioner are routinely elected to office in general elections. Democrats have little or no chance of winning. The result is that El Paso County commissioners are elected in Republican primary elections rather than general elections. The electorates in Republican Party primaries tend to be small in number and more fiscally conservative than average citizens of El Paso County.

And that is a problem for the master plan. Republicans tend to get elected by promising “less government” and “lower taxes.” Yet an adequate response to the master plan is going to require more county government activity and raising taxes to pay for those activities.

Getting more water. Widening roads. Hiring more police. These programs require increasing taxes and, maybe, borrowing money. U.S. Senator Henry Clay, of the Whig Party in the mid-1800s, called such projects “internal improvements” and strongly supported them.

El Paso County’s five county commissioners need to rise above some of the traditional local Republican Party principles and take the steps necessary to solve the major problems presented by the El Paso County master plan. After all, aside from party affiliation, the county commissioners are the local government for unincorporated El Paso County.

Though contemporary Freedom Caucus and tea party partisans are inclined to oppose serious investments in planning and infrastructure, there are plenty of Republican, or Republican-leaning, leadership models in American and Colorado

history that recognized the vital role government has in keeping America competitive and livable .

Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton, a Federalist, set an early example with his plans for taxation and manufacturing policies. Henry Clay's "internal improvements" included dredging deeper harbors and digging canals. Abraham Lincoln, the first Republican president, championed transcontinental railroads and the Homestead and Morrill (land grant colleges) acts. Republican President Teddy Roosevelt modernized the U.S. Navy and strongly supported the National Parks. Republican President Dwight D. Eisenhower's Interstate Highway System cost a lot of money yet has proved invaluable.

Colorado Republican Governor Bill Owens wisely backed investments in highway construction — especially in the Denver Tech Center corridor southeast of Denver. Colorado Springs Mayor John Suthers has backed initiatives to keep our roads safe and upgrade the city's infrastructure.

And then there is this problem. Unincorporated El Paso County, for the most part, is characterized by low-density housing developments, many of them featuring five-acre lot ranchettes. Cities crowded with both people and automobiles, and other urban problems, seem far away to these people. Many of them comprise the most loyal Republican voters in the county. Although they would be the biggest beneficiaries of implementing the El Paso County Master Plan, many of these residents of unincorporated El Paso County will overlook their future needs and oppose the increased government and raised taxes suggested in the master plan.

Finally, the El Paso County Master Plan calls on the existing municipalities in the county, particularly the city of Colorado Springs, to help unincorporated El Paso County solve its problems. Municipal help will particularly be needed where water problems are concerned. Citizens of Colorado Springs should heed this call and make a joint effort to simultaneously improve life in both the city and unincorporated El Paso County.

Master plans, when not backed strongly by the relevant elected officials, tend to sit on the shelf and gather dust. Let's not let that happen to the newly proposed El Paso County Master Plan.

We do not want to imply that we agree with everything recommended in the proposed county master plan. Yet there are many sensible and important recommendations. People who care about this beautiful region and its future should read the plan — available at this internet site, elpaso-hiplanning.hub.aregis.com. Share your views with El Paso County Commissioners at, bocc.elpasoco.com.

Tom Cronin and Bob Loevy write regularly about Colorado and American politics.

MORE INFORMATION



🔑 Proposed new master plan for El Paso County: Problems and questions | Cronin & Loevy

https://gazette.com/premium/black-forest-residents-express-concerns-about-new-county-master-plan/article_e55ba9c6-9ee0-11eb-a1a0-db83159b302f.html

Black Forest residents express concerns about new county master plan

Breeanna Jent breeanna.jent@gazette.com

Apr 19, 2021



A home under construction in the Cathedral Pines development in Black Forest is shown in May 2007.
the Gazette file

A group of residents in Black Forest are worried that the current draft of the new El Paso County Master Plan does not address their concerns about increased density in the forest, which they say would pose higher wildfire hazards and could strain water supply.

Much of Black Forest was identified in the draft plan as a “large lot residential” area, one of 12 different place-types that classify specific areas of the county based on their character, scale, form and function.

The “large lot residential” place-type “consists almost entirely of residential development and acts as the transition between ‘rural’ and ‘suburban residential’ areas,” the plan states.

The plan currently suggests a minimum lot size of 2 1/2 acres within the forest’s timbered areas, but the Friends of the Black Forest are requesting county planners change the minimum lot size to 5 acres, arguing denser development there presents fire, water and wildlife concerns.

El Paso County's new master plan now ready for review

“If you’re building two times the density, there’s going to be more water demand,” said Terry Stokka, treasurer of the Friends of the Black Forest. “Fire danger is very real. That’s going to be almost double the traffic, almost double the trees that are cut and almost double the wildlife that’s going to be chased away.”

Furthermore, there is already a precedent in Black Forest for 5-acre lots, Stokka said. That guidance was laid out in the Black Forest Preservation Plan, a small area plan created in 1974 to help direct development in the forest. When the El Paso County Master Plan is formally adopted, it will supersede the Black Forest Preservation Plan.

“It’s an advisory plan, it’s not directive,” Stokka said. “But the statement that says in the timbered area lots should be no less than 5 acres per lot, that doesn’t sound very advisory to us.”

But El Paso County planning officials said the master plan isn’t attempting to change existing zoning.

“The minimum lot size may be 2 1/2 acres, but the plan says new development must be compatible with existing development,” El Paso County Planning and Community Development Executive Director Craig Dossey said. “We aren’t saying that we’re going to go down to 2 1/2-acre lots all across Black Forest. This plan creates better expectations for those areas.”

But Stokka said compatibility between developments must be better distinguished.

As defined in part by the El Paso County Land Development Code, “Compatibility does not mean ‘the same as.’ Rather, compatibility refers to the sensitivity of the proposed use, activity or design in maintaining the character of existing development within the vicinity.”

“Compatibility is only a concept. We’re saying we have to have some numbers in here that will say what the rules are. We can’t just have concepts,” Stokka said.

Dossey said compatibility between developments has more to do with how to transition to new development, while zoning laws “set a firm line on lot sizes.”

“How big a building can be, how tall a building can be, how wide and how deep lots can be, that’s more of a discussion of zoning,” he said.

📄 With hundreds of thousands of new residents expected, El Paso County identifies areas of growth

Stokka said he was concerned that if the new El Paso County Master Plan didn't specify 5-acre lot minimums in Black Forest it would pave the way for denser development there. In the past, he said, the county has sometimes ignored the Black Forest Preservation Plan's guidance for 5-acre lots when approving new developments like Cathedral Pines and Sanctuary in the Pines.

"There are examples where densities were higher, but it's a trade-off because we get bumper areas," Dossey said.

One compromise would be more clustered development in Black Forest, Stokka and Dossey said.

Incorporating the concept of "overall density" in Black Forest would mean the average parcel size or density is kept at or above a determined threshold, the Black Forest Preservation Plan states. Developers could then "cluster" lots or structures on only a portion of the property, leaving more open space. Clustered developments would share utilities like water and wastewater services, depending on the subdivision or area of the county, according to the draft master plan.

"If you encourage conservation design, typically what comes with it are more well thought out covenants" that restrict "undesirable" development, Dossey said.

Clustering "leaves a lot more open space and undeveloped forest, and that, to us, is good," Stokka said.

A second concern among members of the Friends of the Black Forest was that Flying Horse North in northern Colorado Springs was identified in the draft county master plan as an area with “potential for annexation.”

“This is no more a potential for annexation than any other area, and furthermore, it is over a mile from the nearest city limits,” Stokka wrote in a March 24 memo sharing the group’s input on the plan. He worried if Flying Horse North was annexed it might lead to portions of Black Forest, which is adjacent to the development, being annexed into Colorado Springs.

The county does not control annexation, even with a new intergovernmental agreement recently approved by the county and the City of Colorado Springs meant to help guide growth near the city boundaries and help protect the county's groundwater, Dossey said.

New annexation agreement could prevent enclaves, protect groundwater

“That designation came from a map provided to us from Colorado Springs,” he said. “Far be it for us to say that it’s wrong. We want to map similarly. But (annexation is) a decision the property owner and Colorado Springs would have to reach.”

The public comment period on the master plan closed earlier this month, and the Master Plan Advisory Committee could still implement changes to the draft based on community feedback before the county planning commission gives its stamp of approval, Dossey said.

County planners and representatives with design firm Houseal-Lavigne Associates will revise the draft according to the advisory committee’s recommendations. The county plans to publish the revised document by April 29, El Paso County Planning and Community Development Deputy Director Mark Gebhart told planning commissioners Thursday.

The revised document will be the version the planning commission will consider for approval during two special meetings at 9 a.m. on May 5 and May 26, Gebhart said. There will be opportunities for public comment.

More Information

The El Paso County Planning Commission will review the draft El Paso County Master Plan and consider it for approval at two special meetings on May 5 and May 26. The meetings will begin at 9 a.m.

Residents can watch and participate in the meetings remotely on the county's website at elpasoco.com/news-information-channel or on the county Facebook page at facebook.com/ElPasoCountyCo.

Residents can also attend the meetings in person at Centennial Hall, 200 S. Cascade Ave., Colorado Springs.

Meeting agendas are available on the El Paso County website, agendasuite.org/iip/elpaso.

Those who want to provide testimony on an item being heard by the Planning Commission should email Tracey Garcia at traceygarcia@elpasoco.com or contact her at (719) 520-7940 with your name and best phone number to be reached at. Include any documents you would like provided to the hearing body as part of the official records. Note: New exhibits are not permitted via email the day of the hearing. All exhibits must be emailed to Garcia no later than one day prior to each of the above listed hearings.

Breeanna Jent
Reporter



Getting to know your school district (more on D 49 page) D 49 security strategies

By Leslie Sheley

In 2000, Congress passed a law called The Children's Internet Protection Act. This law requires federally funded libraries and schools to block or filter internet access to pictures and material that are "obscene, child pornography, or harmful to minors" on computers used by students under 17 years of age.

David Watson, safety and security director at El Paso County School District 49, said the district not only implements that law, which is the minimum requirement for schools to provide, but also contracts with a service to monitor for threats, mental health concerns, bullying and harassment issues. He said every student has a district Gmail address and Google account using their student ID number; the program is designed to perform regular safety sweeps through the students' school emails and Google documents.

their children. "The school district cares deeply about the mental, social and emotional well-being of our students, and this service helps provide that extra layer of protection," Watson said.

School counselors continue to work with the students despite the past year of online education by calling them at home to do interventions as needed, he said. The counselors have a good rapport with the students and address the issue student by student; they might send an email with a warning or call to speak to the parent and then the student about their behavior.

The district safety team consists of the school principals, school counselors, assistant principals, Watson and his three safety and security specialists, as well as Psychologist Dr. Kim Boyd, director of community care.

The beauty of the earth in Colorado: Earth Day is April 22 — see inside for "earthy" quotes and an article on harmful plastics. Photo by Sheryl Lamber.

senior leaders will be taking a hard look at it and deciding how to go forward and what it will look like if we continue to do the 24/7 monitoring," Watson said.

D 49 also has a School Resource Officer Program, or SRO — law enforcement officers contracted through the Colorado Springs Police Department and the El Paso County Sheriff's Office to provide a duly sworn law enforcement officer in the schools. Watson said two officers from the Colorado Springs Police Department are assigned to Sand Creek High School and Vista Ridge High School; they help serve the middle and elementary schools as needed and provide consultations to the school teams.

The El Paso County Sheriff's Office provides three officers: one at Falcon High School, one at the Falcon Middle School Campus (including Bennet Ranch Elementary) and one at Horizon Middle School. Watson said it has been a successful program. They are looking at how they can also strengthen and provide those services at the elementary school level.

He said there is a nationwide push, including areas of Colorado, to eliminate the SRO program because of tensions with law enforcement in certain parts of the country. "We have some really good law enforcement officers assigned to our schools that deeply care about the students and the safety mission," Watson said. The law enforcement officers are seen by the students as confidants, counselors and mediators; they have developed good professional relationships with the students. D 49 participates in a poll called the Cultural Compass Survey. Year after year, the poll indicates the students feel safe going to an SRO with a problem.

Watson said D 49 has a great leadership model that supports safety and security. He said they will continue to look into strengthening the SRO program and to implementing innovative safety and security strategies throughout the district. "D 49 is fully committed to the safety and security mission, and we believe in the SRO program," he said. "We will continue the program and strengthen our amazing relationships with our law enforcement partners."

Update to the EPC Master Plan

By Leslie Sheley

The El Paso County Planning and Community Development Department and Heusatz Lavigne Associates (consultants), have been working for more than two years to develop a plan — the El Paso County Master Plan — to guide the growth and development of the county.

In the video, "El Paso County Community Engage: Get to Know the El Paso County Master Plan," Mark Gebhart, deputy director of EPC Planning and Community Development, said the plan is meant to provide strategies to allow for orderly growth and development, to promote the communities' ideas, goals, objectives and policies, to address current and long-range needs and to balance the natural environment versus man-made. He said they have worked alongside stakeholders, county partners and residents to prepare this plan.

Gebhart said El Paso County is estimated to have a population of one million people by the year 2050; an increase of 250,000 people. He said the master plan is the county's way of ensuring that infrastructure, the availability of water, the natural environment and a mix of land uses and residential housing types are considered as development moves forward.

Nina Ruiz, planning manager with the EPC planning department, said in the video, "El Paso County presently reviews proposals for new development based on over 50 master planning elements, which are out of date and creates a disjointed plan for the county." She said the master plan will create one document, which will guide development and regulations. The Black Forest Preservation Plan and the Falcon/Peyton Comprehensive Plan will no longer exist.

EPC Planning and Development stated in a news release that when this comprehensive document is approved by the El Paso County Planning Commission, it will replace the El Paso County Policy Plan and the numerous small area plans dating back to the 1970s.

In an email, Gebhart encouraged the public, especially residents of unincorporated El Paso County, to provide feedback on the draft master plan, available through April 9. After the public comment period closes on April 9, the draft plan will be updated and presented to the El Paso County Planning Commission for adoption at their May 5 and May 26 hearings. The plan is expected to be finalized by the end of May this year.

The public may participate at each one of the Planning Commission hearings. Visit: <https://elpaso-hlplanning.hub.arcgis.com/>

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INSIDE

Law enforcement (school resource officers) are seen by the students as confidants, counselors and mediators; they have developed good professional relationships with the students. D 49 participates in a poll called the Cultural Compass Survey. Year after year, the poll indicates the students feel safe going to an SRO with a problem.

Watson said the program is set up to look for certain key words; for example, if someone types in depression or does a search for weapons, the system will alert the district. He said D 49 has had situations where students were not in a good place with their mental health, and D 49 was able to provide timely interventions as well as social and emotional support.

He said these types of programs aren't without false positives; sometimes, they get an alert that turns out to be a legitimate school assignment. Watson said that isn't necessarily a bad thing because they might decide to monitor the student depending on the tone and wording of the assignment to make sure there isn't some sort of underlying need or issue that needs to be addressed.

The parent community is aware of the program; the students; however, might know or not, he said. Parents can choose to receive email alerts and receive activity reports on

"When you add in everyone on the safety team, it's a wraparound service; we work and communicate with each other to make sure the student is served and taken care of," he said.

D 49 also provides an additional layer of support, called 24 alert. Watson said with the 24/7 monitoring, if a student writes something at 1 a.m. about wanting to hurt herself or others, the real time sweep will pick it up. If the program thinks it is critical enough, they place a phone call to the district online staff, which is Watson and his partner David Pratt, senior safety and security specialist. The system will send an email of the excerpt, a text to tell them they sent an email and if it is critical, they place a call. "That's a 24 alert," Watson said. At that point, they reach out to the parent and/or to law enforcement for a welfare check of the home, although many times, these issues can be mitigated by a phone call to the parent.

He said D 49 is in the process of deciding whether to continue the 24 alert service. "The

WE WANT YOUR INPUT
 — ON THE —
EL PASO COUNTY DRAFT MASTER PLAN

El Paso County is excited to release its first draft of the County Master Plan, and **we want YOUR input!**

The public can review the draft plan and provide comments via the project website. Visit the www.ElPasoCo.com home page for a link to the Master Plan Draft and more details.

Comments due by April 9, 2021.

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El Paso Board of County Commissioners, March 2, 9, and 16:

County seeks public comment on draft Master Plan
By Helen Walklett

The draft county Master Plan was presented to the El Paso Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) in March as the county released the initial draft for public feedback. Also in March, the commissioners approved the memorandum of understanding (MOU) for the 2021 Black Forest slash and mulch program.

Comments sought on draft Master Plan

At its March 9 meeting, the BOCC received a presentation on the county's draft Master Plan from consultants Houseal Lavigne Associates and Planning and Community Development staff as the document was launched for public review and comment.

Craig Dossey, executive director, Planning and Community Developing, said, "We have master plan documents that are 30-something years old that we still rely on when we're presenting land use applications to you all. Obviously, these documents are out of date so an update, as we've talked about in the past, was well overdue. So this is an exciting time. This is a moment where we have the first initial draft, and it is just that, it is a draft, not the final version, that we are ready to give you an overview on but also to release to the public. We are soliciting comments and review from the public because we want to make sure that this document really serves as a voice for all of the residents, business owners, the leaders of El Paso County."

Dossey emphasized that the plan would be the first to look at the county as a whole. The plan will guide local development for the next 20 to 30 years.

The 150-page document is available for review on county's website at <https://elpaso.hplanning.com/pages/draft-plan-outreach>. The county is asking for comments by April 9. An updated draft will then be reviewed by the county Planning Commission at a first hearing scheduled for May 5. It is hoped that the plan will be adopted at a second hearing on May 26.

