

MEMORANDUM

TO: Waverly Klaw, DOLA
Karen Berchtold and Wade Burkholder, City of Manitou Springs
FROM: Matt Goebel and Tareq Wafaie, Clarion Associates
DATE: July 27, 2017
RE: Manitou Springs – Planning Tools Scope of Work

The Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) and Clarion Associates have been working with the City to identify appropriate land use planning tools to develop and/or update that are directly related to reducing risk to natural hazards. This technical assistance effort is funded by DOLA as part of a *Planning for Hazards Implementation* pilot project. The city established a working group of subject matter experts, and DOLA and the consulting team facilitated two works sessions since May 2017. During the most recent work session on July 13, city staff and the project team (DOLA and its consultants) conducted a prioritization exercise by which the working group identified the following four planning tools (out of seven planning tools evaluated) for the city's consideration:

- **Hazard overlay district(s)**
- **Site plan and subdivision review procedures**
- **Stream buffers/setbacks**
- **Wildland-urban interface (WUI) code integration**

The remainder of this memorandum summarizes the prioritization process and provides essential background information on each of the recommended planning tools.

Work Session 2 (Prioritization Process) Summary

City staff and the project team discussed seven potential planning tools with the working group. In addition to the list above, the team also discussed density bonuses, updates to the landscaping regulations, and site-specific assessments. Each tool was described in detail and the team identified specifics on why the tool would be appropriate for Manitou, including any special considerations. The project team then engaged the working group in the prioritization exercise, by which each planning tool was evaluated against the following six criteria:

- **Effective risk reduction.** Is the tool effective at reducing risk?
- **Alignment with community goals.** Does the tool align with Plan Manitou and other city policies?
- **Benefits vs. costs to the community.** Do the benefits of using such tool outweigh potential costs?
- **Administrative capability.** Does staff have capacity to administer and/or enforce the tool?
- **Political and public support.** Is it likely that the community would be in support of such tool?
- **Community equity.** Would such tool impose burden on certain populations or geographic areas?



Based on the prioritization exercise, which included lengthy discussion from the working group and the project team, the four potential planning tools mentioned at the beginning of this memo should be considered further for implementation in Manitou: hazard overlay district(s), site plan/subdivision review procedures, stream buffers/setbacks, and WUI code integration. A description of each tool is provided below, including why each tool was recommended for Manitou.

Hazards Overlay District(s)

Description: Generally, overlay zones are used to apply area-specific regulations or conditions that would not otherwise apply elsewhere in the city (even if within the same base zoning district). The overlay applies additional standards “on top” of the underlying standards for a particular area such as the wildland-urban interface, on steep slopes, or within the floodplain. For more:

<https://www.planningforhazards.com/overlay-zoning>

Why in Manitou? A hazard overlay could effectively reduce risk to multiple hazards, including flood, geologic hazards, and wildfire. Because the city already has a hazard overlay in place, the concept would not be a departure from current the current planning and zoning framework. Manitou already has established baseline standards such as the hillside low-density residential district standards and the geologic hazards plan and report requirements for major development plans. Developing a hazard overlay could build on those existing standards to accommodate other hazards as appropriate. The hazard overlay could be developed either as a multi-hazard approach (with distinct overlay districts for each hazard), or with a single focus on a specific hazard (for example, establishing standards for wildfire mitigation and applying that to wildland-urban interface areas within the “overlay” area).

Site Plan/Subdivision Review Procedures

Description: Review procedures ensure that staff has adequate information to properly evaluate development proposals against the city’s standards and criteria for approval. The procedures are a fundamental component of effectively administering a zoning and subdivision ordinance. One example of enhanced procedures is a more substantial review of development activities for properties within the wildland-urban interface or within a designated floodplain or geologic hazard area. For more:

<https://www.planningforhazards.com/improving-site-development-standards> and

<https://www.planningforhazards.com/application-submittal-requirements>

Why in Manitou? Manitou’s current system of distinguishing major projects from minor projects is good. Major development applications are required to include a geologic hazards plan and report; however, the procedures are silent when it comes to addressing issues related to other natural hazards. City staff has already drafted initial proposed updates to development review procedures, and those initial ideas can be further improved to include a more robust program for identifying potential hazard conditions and then ensuring adequate mitigation is provided as part of the approval process for various development application types. Building on staff’s momentum, the project team could potentially make improvements not only to submittal requirements, but also establish clear approval criteria (with possible additional criteria within hazard areas).

Stream Buffers/Setbacks

Description: Stream buffers define areas along a watercourse to be protected from development. Such standards can be adopted as fixed-width setbacks or as a sliding scale by which more intense uses require further setbacks than less intense uses. For more: <https://www.planningforhazards.com/stream-buffers-and-setbacks>

Why in Manitou? Stream buffers can help ensure that development in opportunity areas are not at odds with riparian protection and floodplain management. Stream buffers could be established beyond the existing floodplain regulations to prevent certain types of development within critical riparian areas. We understand that there is a current effort underway to develop a master plan and potential regulations (through a streamside overlay) to address streamside conditions and stormwater management in and around Manitou Springs. Building on existing momentum of that separate master plan project allows coordination with subject matter experts currently vested in the issue including cross-jurisdictional and interdepartmental collaboration opportunities to inform edits to the zoning and subdivision regulations for stream buffers.

Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) Code Integration

Description: The International Wildland-Urban Interface Code (“WUI Code”) was developed by the International Code Council (ICC) and is a member of the International Code Family. The WUI Code is a model code for local consideration that addresses structure density and location; building materials and construction; vegetation management; emergency vehicle access; water supply; and fire protection. A WUI code works in conjunction with other codes such as land use, building, and fire codes. For Manitou, rather than adopting a stand-alone WUI code, the project team recommends integrating only the essential elements throughout the zoning and subdivision regulations. For more: <https://www.planningforhazards.com/wildland-urban-interface-code-wui-code>.

Why in Manitou? Although wildfire is one of the largest threats to the community, the city has few standards addressing wildfire in the zoning and subdivision regulations. Integrating essential elements of the model WUI code would not only address future development, but also existing development through landscaping, defensible space, and use-specific regulations.

Next Steps

City staff will hold a meeting with DOLA and its consultants in August to prepare a detailed scope of work with specific tasks and a timeline for completion of planning implementation tools. Given the available resources for this project, the team may be able to make limited edits to multiple existing planning tools in Manitou or can go further in depth with fewer tools. Although each tool would provide great value based on their individual merits, the city should consider approaches that efficiently accomplish multiple objectives and how some of the planning tools could work together. For example, a hazard overlay district could be a mechanism for identifying where enhanced stream setback standards or wildland-urban interface regulations would apply.