



ThunderVillage

Conditions Survey

Pueblo, Colorado

November 2007

Prepared for:

Pueblo Urban Renewal Authority
Pueblo, Colorado City Council

Prepared by:

Leland Consulting Group (LCG)



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1.0 Introduction

The following report, the *Thunder Village (Site) Conditions Survey*, was prepared for the Urban Renewal Authority of Pueblo and completed in October 2007. The purpose of this work was to analyze conditions within a defined Study Area (the Area) located within the City of Pueblo, Pueblo County, in order to determine whether factors contributing to blight are present and whether it is, therefore, eligible as an urban renewal area under the provisions of Colorado State Statute. The boundaries of the Area are generally defined as an area on both sides of State Highway 47 (University Boulevard) on the south, Baculite Mesa Road on the east, the north section line of section 16 on the north, and the eastern boundary of Colorado State University at Pueblo on the west. Area boundaries are described in Section 2.1 of this report.

Establishment of an urban renewal area will allow the City of Pueblo, through its urban renewal entity, to use designated powers to assist in the redevelopment of properties and improvements within its boundaries.

1.1 Definition of Blight

This study represents an important step towards achieving goals set out in the City's master planning documents specifically related to redevelopment and reinvestment. In addition, it is the first step in the process to determine if the Area qualifies as a "blighted area" eligible for urban renewal. A determination of blight is a cumulative conclusion based on the presence of several physical, environmental, and social factors defined by state law. Indeed, blight is attributable to a multiplicity of conditions, which, in combination, tend to accelerate the phenomenon of deterioration of an area. For purposes of this study, the definition of a blighted area is premised upon the definition articulated in the Colorado Urban Renewal Law, as follows:



“Blighted area” means an area that, in its present condition and use and, by reason of the presence of at least four of the following factors, substantially impairs or arrests the sound growth of the municipality, retards the provision of housing accommodations, or constitutes an economic or social liability, and is a menace to the public health, safety, morals, or welfare:

- (a) Slum, deteriorated, or deteriorating structures;*
- (b) Predominance of defective or inadequate street layout;*
- (c) Faulty lot layout in relation to size, adequacy, accessibility, or usefulness;*
- (d) Unsanitary or unsafe conditions;*
- (e) Deterioration of site or other improvements;*
- (f) Unusual topography or inadequate public improvements or utilities;*
- (g) Defective or unusual conditions of title rendering the title non-marketable;*
- (h) The existence of conditions that endanger life or property by fire or other causes;*
- (i) Buildings that are unsafe or unhealthy for persons to live or work in because of building code violations, dilapidation, deterioration, defective design, physical construction, or faulty or inadequate facilities;*
- (j) Environmental contamination of buildings or property;*
- (k.5) The existence of health, safety, or welfare factors requiring high levels of municipal services or substantial physical underutilization or vacancy of sites, buildings, or other improvements;*
- (l) If there is no objection of such property owner or owners and the tenant or tenants of such owner or owners, if an, to the inclusion of such property in an urban renewal area, “blighted area” also means an area that, in its present condition and use and, by reason of the presence of any one of the factors specified in paragraphs (a) to (k.5) of this subsection (2), substantially impairs or arrests the sound growth of the municipality, retards the provision of housing accommodations, or constitutes an economic or social liability, and is a menace to the public health, safety, morals or welfare. For purposes of this paragraph (1), the fact that an owner of an interest in such property does not object to the inclusion of such property in the urban renewal area does not mean that the owner has waived any rights of such owner in connection with laws governing condemnation.*

Source: Colorado Revised Statute 31-25-103(2).

According to state law, it is not necessary for every condition of blight to be present in an area in order for it to be eligible for urban renewal status. Rather, an area qualifies as blighted when four or more conditions are present (or five conditions, in cases where the use of eminent domain is anticipated). In addition, conditions need not be present on



each parcel, but must be found somewhere in the Area as a whole. With this understanding, the *Thunder Village (Site) Conditions Survey* presents an overview of conditions within the Area sufficient to make a determination of blight. The “Summary of Findings” presented in the last section provides conclusions regarding the analysis and presence of blight in key areas; however, the Pueblo City Council will make a final determination of blight based on the extent to which conditions constitute a liability for the Area.

1.2 Study Methodology

Leland Consulting Group (LCG) personnel conducted field investigations in October 2007 for the purpose of documenting conditions within the categories of blight set out in the state statute. Pertinent Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data was obtained from Pueblo County and subsequently analyzed by Leland Consulting Group. Additional information was obtained through interviews with property owners, local officials, as well as other experts on local and regional market conditions.

1.3 Report Format

The *Thunder Village (Site) Conditions Survey* is presented in four sections and an Appendix. Section 1.0 presents an overview of the project, a definition of “blight,” and the study methodology. Section 2.0 presents a description of the Area and an overview of existing conditions. Section 3.0 defines the primary categories of blight and documents conditions which are present within each category. Section 4.0 summarizes the findings from the research.



2.0 Area Overview and Description

2.1 Area Description

As described above, this report presents a summary of conditions in an area generally defined as along both sides of State Highway 47 (University Boulevard) on the south, Baculite Mesa Road on the east, the north section line of section 16 on the north, and the eastern boundary of Colorado State University at Pueblo (CSUP) on the west. The area comprises the majority of Section 16, the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of section 21, a small portion in the NE corner of section 20, and a small portion in the SE corner of Section 17, all within Pueblo County and within the City of Pueblo. It is surrounded by the CSUP campus on the west, the Walking Stick Golf Course and neighborhood beyond the campus, a single family neighborhood south of State Highway 47 on the south, and vacant land north and east. The Area contains 20 parcels and 7 ownership entities with a total of approximately 828 acres (including any streets or rights-of-way).

2.2 Area Context

The Area contains a mix of convenience store, storage units, vacant parcels, and roads. Zoning within the Area includes R-2 (single family residential), R-5 (multi-family residential and office) B-4 (regional business district), S-1 (Governmental Use District), and PUD (Belmont Place Planned Unit Development). These designations require improvements such as: off-street parking, paved loading and road access ways, appropriate lighting, “tightly” fenced outdoor storage areas, and roads consistent with Roadway Classification Design Standards. Although the study area has been annexed to the City for a relatively long time, the lack of streets, utilities, adequate access, and topographical problems have prevented the orderly development of the study area.

Surrounding uses are generally institutional in nature and transitions into single family residential uses further west and south. Storage facilities are located along the southern portion of State Highway 47.



3.0 Determination of Area Conditions

Significant findings of the *Thunder Village (Site) Conditions Survey* are presented in the discussion which follows. These findings are based on a review of documents and reports, interviews, field surveys, and analyses conducted during October of 2007. Properties, along with public improvements adjacent to the properties, were evaluated and deficiencies noted. As previously explained, the purpose of this study was to determine whether conditions of blight, as defined by the Colorado State Statute, exist in the Area. The principal categories reported here, as outlined in the statute, include: site conditions; unusual topography; inadequate public improvements; and underutilization of sites.

Site Conditions

The evaluation of site conditions is divided into four categories according to the definition of blight: b) defective or inadequate street layout; c) faulty lot layout; d) unsanitary or unsafe conditions; and e) deterioration of site or other improvements. Representative conditions among each category of site deterioration are described as follows:

Condition (b): Defective or Inadequate Street Layout - Conditions typically associated with defective street layout include poor vehicular access and/or internal circulation; substandard driveway definition and parking layout (e.g. lack of curb cuts, awkward entrance and exit points); offset or irregular intersections; and, substandard or non-existent pedestrian circulation.

Condition (c): Faulty Lot Layout - Conditions typically associated with faulty lot layout include faulty lot shape and/or layout and inadequate lot size. Poor access is also considered to be an indicator of faulty lot layout.



Condition (d): Unsanitary or Unsafe Conditions – Conditions typically considered unsanitary or unsafe include: inadequate fire protection and lack of access for emergency vehicles.

Condition (e): Deterioration of Site or Other Improvements – Site conditions typically considered to be substandard or undesirable include: the presence of billboards, neglected properties, and unscreened trash or mechanical storage areas; deterioration of parking surfaces; lack of landscaping; and, other general site maintenance problems.

Each of these conditions of blight, as they apply to the Area, is discussed separately in the following paragraphs.

Defective or Inadequate Street Layout

Issues impacting street layout include an overall lack of connection by roadways between parcels within the Area. Access to parcels north and east is not available to automobiles since there are no physical roadway improvements. The roads that are available and built to City standards are concentrated in the southern portion of the Area from State Highway 47. Baculite Mesa Road which generally provides access to the eastern portion of the Project is a prescriptive right roadway which does not have a legally identified right-of-way and bisects a portion of section 16 creating an unusable parcel of land. Baculite Mesa Road is unpaved and portions of the Road are within unincorporated Pueblo County and portions are within the City of Pueblo. Access to the eastern portion of the project area is from the unimproved Baculite Mesa Road is in unincorporated Pueblo County. Access too much of the western portions of project area is from the Colorado State University – Pueblo private roadway network. These roads provide a secondary emergency access to the project area, and are not constructed to City standards. This situation has resulted in a defective and inadequate street layout on the eastern boundary of the project area. On the western side, there is lack of access to streets on the campus of Colorado State University-Pueblo (CSUP). Streets within the



CSUP campus are not public streets. They are narrow and the lack of access from the east creates difficulties for emergency vehicles.

Faulty Lot Layout

Lot layout is also deemed to be faulty if the configuration relative to the street is contrary to what allows for development. Lot shape is considered faulty if the shape is unusual to the extent that it deters or constrains (re-) development options. As there are few, if any (depending on the location) streets providing access to properties within the Area, more than 85 percent of the acreage suffers from this condition. Lot shape also impacts the improvement potential of the area as several parcels are long and / or interior to any potential future street alignment. An out parcel with the project area has not been annexed into the City of Pueblo and the configuration and location of this out parcel contributes to faulty lot layout in the study area.

Poor access, a condition related to poor lot layout, is discussed in the subsection above under *Defective or Inadequate Street Layout*, and is also indicative of faulty lot layout.

Unsanitary or Unsafe Conditions

Unsafe or unsanitary conditions impacting properties are primarily related to drainage, grading / steep slopes, unscreened trash, and the lack of physical improvements that would otherwise be associated with the properties' zoning designations. Much of the open fields on the south and west properties are covered with trash and debris which has resulted in historic illegal dumping within the project area. Unscreened scrap metal and mechanical equipment can also be found in numerous locations. Nearly all outdoor spaces, except those located adjacent to the University campus, are poorly lit or (more commonly) not lighted at all. Finally, there are no sidewalks and pedestrian pathways anywhere with the Area.



Since only a small portion of the Area is impacted by a floodplain, this factor was not considered to have a blighting impact.

Deterioration of Site and Other Improvements

Like the factor above, unsanitary or unsafe conditions, issues impacting properties are primarily related to unscreened trash and debris, and the lack of physical improvements that would otherwise be associated with the properties' zoning designations including parking surfaces and landscaping. As would be expected with a large open field, there are no paved parking areas. However, where improvements exist, there is deteriorating fencing, weeds, and litter. There is limited, if any, landscaping, a basic improvement associated with R-2, R-5 and B-4 zoned properties.

3.1 Unusual Topography / Inadequate Public Improvements

Unusual topography is considered to exist on parcels with steep slopes or undulating terrain. A large portion of the study area is adversely impacted by the east Dry Creek Arroyo and related network of related arroyos that generally ~~which~~ traverses the Area from north to south. This condition is considered a significant barrier to the orderly development of the area.

The condition of inadequate public improvements is said to exist in areas with deteriorating street surfaces or no street pavement, overhead utilities, a lack of sidewalks, inadequate street lighting, and/or a lack of water and sewer service. Public improvements such as sidewalks, street lighting, street pavement, curb & gutter, and storm drainage are lacking throughout the subject property.

3.2 Endangerment from Fire or Other Conditions

Danger to life or property from fire is said, in this analysis, to exist in residential and non-residential structures that lack sprinkler systems. Endangerment from fire or other



conditions is also said to exist, when there is the risk of flooding on parcels that lie within a 100-year floodplain. The Area does not intersect any known 100-yr. flood hazard zones and since there are no structures, it is not impacted by this condition. A wildfire hazard, that could threaten the CSUP campus, exists within the project area. Lack of roadway access and fire hydrants limit the City's ability to fight a wild fire within the project area.

3.3 Underutilized Sites

Areas characterized by "substantial physical underutilization or vacancy of sites, buildings, or other improvements" including vacant lots, parcels with vacant structures, or parcels for which the value of its improvement is disproportionately small relative to the land value are also considered to have a "blighting" impact. The site is clearly underutilized, as evidenced by the barriers to development described herein in all of its quadrants.

4.0 Summary of Findings

The presence of blight that "*...substantially impairs or arrests the sound growth of the municipality, retards the provision of housing accommodations, or constitutes an economic or social liability, and is a menace to the public health, safety, morals, or welfare...*" [Colorado Revised Statute 31-25-103(2)]

It is the conclusion of this survey that, within the Area described in this report, there is the presence of adverse physical conditions sufficient to meet criteria established in the state statute, particularly given the parcel zoning classifications of R-2, R-5 and B-4 and the associated expectation of certain improvement levels. Although some portions of the Area are in adequate or sound condition (such as the south entrance to the CSUP campus), there exist inadequate and substandard conditions throughout the Area as a whole, which could lead the legislative body to a finding that this area is blighted. The conclusion of this Survey is based on the following summary of qualifying conditions found in the Area and described in this report. 7 of the 11 possible qualifying blight



conditions specified by the state statute were found in the Area. Table 1 summarizes blight qualifying conditions present in the Area.

LCG did not perform a title search on any properties within the Area; therefore Condition G (defective or unusual title rendering property unmarketable) was not identified.

**Table 1
Thunder Village (Site) Conditions Survey - Summary of Findings**

	Blight Qualifying Conditions										
	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)	(h)	(i)	(j)	(k.5)
Area	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	n.a.	yes	no	no	yes

Source: Leland Consulting Group.

- (a) *Slum, deteriorated, or deteriorating structures;*
- (b) *Predominance of defective or inadequate street layout;*
- (c) *Faulty lot layout in relation to size, adequacy, accessibility, or usefulness;*
- (d) *Unsanitary or unsafe conditions;*
- (e) *Deterioration of site or other improvements;*
- (f) *Unusual topography or inadequate public improvements or utilities;*
- (g) *Defective or unusual conditions of title rendering the title non-marketable;*
- (h) *The existence of conditions that endanger life or property by fire or other causes;*
- (i) *Buildings that are unsafe or unhealthy for persons to live or work in because of building code violations, dilapidations, deterioration, defective design, physical construction, or faulty or inadequate facilities;*
- (j) *Environmental contamination of buildings or property;*
- (k.5) *The existence of health, safety, or welfare factors requiring high levels of municipal services or substantial physical underutilization or vacancy of sites, buildings, or other improvements.*