

**STAFF REPORT  
Regular Agenda**

**PC Hearing Date:** August 10, 2011

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**10-104936CH                      Revisions to the South Jefferson County Community Plan**

**Case Name:** South Plains Area Plan

**Applicant:** Jefferson County

**Location:** Jefferson County

**Purpose:**                      **To revise and update the South Jefferson County Community Plan as a new South Plains Area Plan Chapter of the Comprehensive Master Plan (CMP).**

**Case Manager:** Alan Tiefenbach

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**BACKGROUND/UNIQUE INFORMATION:**

On January 27, 2010, the Jefferson County Planning Commission adopted the Jefferson County Comprehensive Master Plan (CMP). A primary goal of creating this CMP was to integrate all of the community plans into a single, comprehensive document. This was designed to be done in phases. The first phase was to create the general CMP. The second phase (currently underway) is to “roll in” all the existing community plans into the CMP. The Community Plans are to become Area Plans that are comprised of area specific policies, while relying on the CMP for policies that apply to the entire County.

In order to reduce redundancies between the Plans, the plains community plans were compared against each other as well as the policies in the CMP. Each policy in each community plan was categorized as one of the following:

- The policy is duplicative with policies in the CMP and will be removed from the local area plan.
- The policy is not duplicative, but can be applied to the entire county, so the CMP will be modified to include the policy.
- The policy is specific to the plan area and will remain with the Area Plan.
- The policy is no longer needed and has been deleted.

The South Jefferson County Community Plan and the C-470 Corridor Plan (which addresses the C-470 corridor in the South Jefferson County Area) were chosen to be the first plans updated and consolidated. These two Plans now comprise the proposed South Plains Area Plan.

**COMMUNITY NOTIFICATION:**

Staff has held 7 community meetings for which as many as 600 notification letters have been mailed for a single meeting. Attendance has ranged from 5 to 25 people. The primary areas of concern have been west of C-470 between Bowles Ave and Belleview Ave. Staff has worked with community members in the area, and at present, staff is only aware of one remaining area where there could be some concern – several parcels directly adjacent to C-470, north of Bowles Avenue, and southeast of the Bergen Reservoirs, which were originally recommended for residential. Staff is recommending these properties for Office and Light Industrial. These parcels can be reviewed in the attached C-470/Bowles Activity Center map.

Prior to the Planning Commission hearing, notification letters were mailed to 91 citizens who requested notification as interested parties, 86 homeowner's associations in or near the South Plains Area, and more than 150 departmental agencies, outside agencies, umbrella groups, and municipalities. In addition, all information regarding the Plan update has been posted on a South Jefferson County Community Plan website. Notification of the hearing before the Planning Commission was published in the High Timber Times and the Golden Transcript.

### **SUMMARY OF COMMENTS:**

Staff received responses from Arapahoe County, the City of Lakewood, Bergen Ditch Company, Fine Line Consulting, development representatives with Urban Frontier, Bear Creek Development Corporation, and Dunton Commercial, and several citizens.

1. Arapahoe County: No comments.
2. City of Lakewood: Mentioned a trail connection was missing from the Open Space and Trails Map.

*Staff Response: This connection was added.*

3. Bergen Ditch Company: Voiced concerns in regard to the proximity of Office and Light Industrial (O/LI) uses within the C-470/Bowles Activity Center to the Bergen Reservoirs. Commented on the need for the County to recognize and preserve the integrity of existing ditch systems.

*Staff Response: Concerns regarding the proximity of the O/LI were based on an outdated map. Newest maps now reflect the property adjacent to reservoirs proposed for inclusion into Sub-area G, which is recommended for low density residential. In regard to the ditches, the ditches are owned and controlled by private entities.*

4. Fine Line Consulting: Doug Reed commented on conflicts between the C-470 Plan recommending "employment type" uses for all properties located within one mile C-470 versus the recommendations (often residential) of the South Jefferson County Community Plan. Mr. Reed also had concerns in regard to some of the general design policies of the existing Plan (such as "preserve the views of the mountain backdrop"). He also supported the inclusion of residential within certain commercial centers.

*Staff Response: If the proposed plan is approved, the C-470 Plan and the South Jefferson County Community Plan will be merged together, eliminating inconsistencies. General design policies have been removed and are being considered with the Comprehensive Master Plan update; design recommendations now only apply to specific and pertinent areas. In addition, as will be discussed below, the introduction of mixed use is a key element of the proposed South Plains Plan.*

5. Urban Frontier, Bear Creek Development, and Dunton Commercial: Numerous suggestions were presented to staff, and staff and the developers worked together diligently. Staff believes these development companies support the Plan.
6. Citizen Comments: Several citizens have been very active and have provided comprehensive review letters to staff. Comments have included the proliferation of lighted signage and policies to eliminate it, suggestions for trail alignments, opposition to a parcel at the NW corner of Belleview Avenue and Quincy Avenue (Maxwell Ranch) being included in the new Belleview Activity Center as Office and Light Industrial, opposition to several properties directly adjacent to and west of C-470 being recommended for Office and Light Industrial, emphasis on the need to protect the visual corridors associated with the Hogback, opposition to "connectivity between adjacent neighborhoods", requests for clarification on the definition of "clustering" additional clarification in regard to levels of intensity of commercial uses within the Belleview Activity Center north of Belleview Avenue, and recommendations for "urban agriculture, especially in the Fehringer Ranch Activity Center.

*Staff Response: There are several policies in both the proposed South Plains Area Plan and the updated Comprehensive Master Plan which recommend for lighted signage to be directed away from residential uses. All recommended trail alignments have been considered, and all but one has been incorporated into the Open Space Map or into policy recommendations. There are policies to protect view corridors in sensitive locations such as activity centers west of C-470. Definitions for “clustering” are being proposed in the revised Comprehensive Master Plan, as well as being considered for inclusion into the Zoning Resolution. Staff has also considered and no longer recommends expansion of the Belleview Activity Center to include the Maxwell Ranch. Also, there is refined language in Policy Number 4 of the Belleview Activity Center section in regard to transition of commercial uses to residential.*

*Staff still recommends the properties at the northwest quadrant of C-470 and Bowles (directly west of C-470) as Office and Light Industrial rather than the present recommendation of residential (see C-470/Bowles Activity Center Map). Because of their high visibility, direct access from C-470 via a major interchange, and adjacency to C-470, staff believes these properties are more suited for commercial and not residential uses. Staff does not agree with the recommendation to remove references regarding providing connectivity between adjacent residential neighborhoods and would prefer this matter be reviewed on a case by case scenario. Finally, staff supports exploring locations for “urban agriculture” but not within Fehring Ranch, which is recommended and already zoned for commercial uses.*

*Other than repeated opposition to lighted signage from the same individual, staff has received no additional opposition with the most recent draft of the Plan.*

#### **SUMMARY OF PROPOSED CHANGES:**

**The vast majority of the land within the Plan Area is not proposed for any changes to recommended land uses other than what is presently developed and/or recommended by the existing community plan.** Nearly all changes are in regard to introducing walkable and mixed use concepts (described in the mixed use section below) into existing commercial centers, and proposed redevelopment and growth strategies for commercial centers. Some Activity Centers have reduced in size; this is because staff is recommending adjustment of the boundaries to remove properties that contain development that is not consistent with Activity Center intensities (i.e. low density single family).

Staff notes there are two areas proposed for addition into the Plan which presently lie within the purview of the *General Land Use Plan* (GLUP); these areas are the northwest quadrant of Kipling Street and Morrison Road, and the southwest quadrant of Wadsworth Boulevard and Jewell Avenue. (The GLUP is intended for dissolution when all Plans have been integrated into the CMP.)

The key revisions of the proposed South Plains Area Plan can be best summarized in three parts:

- 1) Land Use Map;
- 2) Mixed Use Development; and,
- 3) Neighborhood Centers.

#### 1. Land Use Maps:

The proposed South Plains Area Plan centers on its Land Use Recommendations Map. This map was created based upon development as it presently exists and where and what future development should occur.

Although there are already land use recommendation maps within the Central and North Plains Community Plans, a land use map does not exist in the current South Jefferson County Community Plan.

Other than several Activity Center Maps which exist in the C-470 Corridor Plan, and parcel specific maps in the existing South Jefferson County Community Plan, the existing Plan recommends “compatibility with surrounding uses be demonstrated” and that “Projects should be done in concert

with the community to ensure compatibility with surrounding uses”. Also, other than some density recommendations in select subareas, it otherwise recommends a density of 1 dwelling unit per 5 acres throughout the Plan Area without regard to the specific neighborhoods.

This is problematic for Developer, Homeowner and Decision Maker. It offers little predictability in regard to what types of development are supported in which locations, where growth should occur, or – depending on whether you are the property owner wanting to subdivide several new parcels, or the adjacent neighbors who do not want any additional density – leads to more risk, greater subjectivity, and lengthier land use processes to eliminate all possible negative scenarios. It fails to consider which areas are most appropriate for new development, and which areas to preserve

- a. Depending upon existing development and existing neighborhoods, the proposed Land Use Map recommends development intensities appropriate to the specific locations.
  - i. The highest commercial intensities are recommended within Activity Centers; the lowest intensities are recommended in or adjacent to existing residential neighborhoods.
- b. Existing residential densities were mapped. The Land Use Map recommends densities based upon the existing neighborhood character and most appropriate areas for growth.
- c. Activity Center Maps have been created. Several of these maps were created using existing maps from the C-470 Corridor Plan; several others were created in Activity Centers that had not previously been mapped. These maps are mostly consistent with Activity Center maps from the C-470 Corridor Plan or policy recommendations in the existing South Jefferson County Community Plan, with the exception that a “mixed use” component has been introduced in certain areas.

\* Please note that the proposed *South Plains Area Plan* addresses levels of commercial intensity with three new definitions: Limited Commercial, Neighborhood Commercial, and Large Scale Commercial. These new definitions have been added to this Area Plan’s appendix. If the revised Comprehensive Master Plan, which contains these definitions in its glossary, is approved prior to this Area Plan, these definitions can be removed from the Area Plan’s appendix.

## 2. Mixed Use

Nationally, developments are trending toward mixed use. These are projects that allow a multifamily residential component above commercial uses, and in some instances, at ground level as well. The idea is to introduce people into a development to support the commercial uses, and allow them to work, shop, play, and live in the same location. Mixed use developments will become increasingly more important as people live longer and become unable to drive, as cheap land becomes scarce, and as fuel prices continue to increase. The draft South Plains Area Plan addresses mixed uses in several ways:

- a. Multifamily residential has been incorporated into specific portions of Activity Centers, depending on the character of the center (i.e. Ken Caryl Activity Center is more of an office center, Southwest Plaza is more of a retail center) and the importance of retaining commercial-only recommendations.
- b. Multifamily residential is proposed as an integral component of Neighborhood Centers (described in the next section).
- c. There are general “mixed use” areas recommended in the Plan, mostly in or near arterial intersections. In some areas residential is recommended only above commercial uses, in other areas it is recommended as an “either/or” scenario when future development patterns are uncertain. This is to allow flexibility with market conditions.

### 3. Neighborhood Centers

Although the term “Neighborhood Center” is mentioned (once) in the existing Plan, the draft South Plains Area Plan builds on the concept.

In the proposed South Plains Area Plan, Neighborhood Centers are intended to be neighborhood shopping areas that also serve as community focal points. They are smaller in scale than Activity Centers, oriented toward the adjacent community and pedestrians rather than the automobile, accommodate neighborhood civic functions, should be designed to serve the day-to-day needs of the immediate surrounding neighborhood, are priority areas to target redevelopment transit and pedestrian improvements, and provide higher density housing. They are intended to be woven into, rather than segregated from, the surrounding community. Also, they are intended to allow more development, market flexibility, and efficient use of the land than traditional development. In addition, the Neighborhood Center section of the Plan outlines specific incentives that can be explored to facilitate Neighborhood Center development.

As stated earlier in this report, the recommended land uses in this proposed Area Plan are for the most part consistent with the recommendations of the existing community plan. Of course there are some areas that do have different land use recommendations and some of the noticeable areas of change within the Area Plan are listed below:

- A recommendation for Office and Light Industrial Uses has been included at the southwestern portion of the C-470/Bowles Activity Center (adjacent and west of C-470) where low density residential is presently recommended.
- Land use recommendations have been provided that consider the current zoning at Fehringer Ranch while emphasizing primary job creating uses.
- More flexibility has been allowed for residential uses within the Southwest Plaza Activity Center to accommodate the “Urban Center” type development identified by Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG).
- Residential density recommendations more closely reflect existing densities and development patterns of specific neighborhoods, while at the same time considering where additional density should occur.
- Minimum lot sizes have been recommended in residential “special character” areas where recommendations do not present exist.
- The inclusion of a new “Bear Creek” special character area.

#### **FINDINGS/RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**Staff recommends that the Planning Commission finds that:**

- 1. Adequate publication of public notice has been provided for the hearings before the Planning Commission;**
- 2. The hearings before the Planning Commission were extensive and complete and that all pertinent facts, matters, and issues have been submitted and considered, and all interested parties heard;**
- 3. The South Plains Area section of the Comprehensive Master Plan adequately addresses the problems and concerns raised in the public hearings by interested parties;**
- 4. The adoption of the South Plains Area section of the Comprehensive Master Plan is in the best interest of the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of Jefferson County.**

**And;**

**Staff recommends that the Planning Commission APPROVE Case #10-104936CH with the**

**following conditions:**

- 1. Revisions to the South Plains Area section of the Comprehensive Master Plan in accordance with the red-marked print dated August 10, 2011.**

**And;**

**Staff recommends that the Planning Commission grant staff the authority to revise the Plan for the limited purposes of formatting the Plan (which shall include the ability to add photographs of scenery, wildlife or other objects as staff views appropriate to give visual interest to the various chapters) and correcting any typographical errors and any other non-substantive changes to the Plan staff deem necessary prior to final publication of the Plan.**

COMMENTS PREPARED BY:

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Alan Tiefenbach, Planner  
July 21, 2011