

AGENDA

JOINT WORK SESSION CITY OF ASPEN PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSIONS & PITKIN COUNTY PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION

**Sister Cities Room
Aspen, Colorado**

February 23, 2010

4:30 PM WORKSESSION

1. Review of the Aspen Area Community Plan update
 - a. General Process Review (see email from County P&Z)
 - b. Review Historic Preservation

7:30 PM ADJOURN WORKSESSION

MEMORANDUM

TO: City of Aspen Planning and Zoning Commission;
Pitkin County Planning and Zoning Commission

FROM: Ben Gagnon, City Special Projects Planner
Jessica Garrow, City Long Range Planner
Ellen Sassano, County Long Range Planner

THRU: Chris Bendon, City Community Development Director
Cindy Houben, County Community Development Director

DATE OF MEMO: February 18, 2010

MEETING DATE: February 23, 4:30pm in Sister Cities

RE: Historic Preservation

SUMMARY OF LAST MEETING: The P&Zs met on February 9th, and completed the review of the Housing Chapter. They asked staff to provide a copy of the Historic Preservation Video to watch prior to the Feb 23rd meeting. A DVD of the video is attached to this memo – please return these to Jessica Garrow when you are finished with them.

BACKGROUND: The 1993 AACP included a chapter on “Design Quality and Historic Preservation,” but the chapter focused more on design and less on preservation policies. The 2000 Plan separated the two topics, and included detailed Philosophy, Policy, and Goal statements.

Because the topic of Historic Preservation has been the focus of extensive public policy debate during the last three years, there is a great deal of information available to review. However, it’s important to begin this topic with a “philosophical” discussion, as the P&Zs have done for all other chapters. It’s critical to start by answering the fundamental question of why historic preservation is important before moving into specific public policy directions.

PURPOSE & BACKGROUND OF ASPEN HISTORIC PRESERVATION: Historic Preservation is the act of preserving a community’s heritage and passing it down to future generations. It is about retaining the visual capability of *telling all the chapters of our story*. In the City of Aspen, the effort to preserve historic buildings actually pre-dates the effort to establish an affordable housing program.

In 1972, a group called the Save the Victorians Committee led a grass roots effort that resulted in the formation of the Commercial Core Historic District in 1974, and the Main Street Historic District in 1976. Today, there is general agreement that our Victorian-style architecture should be preserved -- but it should be recognized that this question was widely debated here and across the country in the 1960s and ‘70s, and many fine examples were lost to redevelopment.

The city currently has 280 properties that are designated historic, with the overwhelming majority built in the 19th century. Only a handful of designated structures were built in the last 100 years.

As time goes on, new and more recent eras of history have been examined, such as post-war European-style Chalets related to the onset of the ski resort, and Modernism cultivated by the Aspen Institute. Perspectives about what is “historic” change over time. Which buildings should be preserved, and how to preserve them, are complex issues that have resulted in ongoing community discussion.

That discussion was jump-started in December 2006, when the City Council established an emergency moratorium on building permits in the Commercial Core Zone District, while staff researched options on preserving the interiors of historically designated buildings. During the moratorium, the owners of the Red Onion negotiated an agreement with the City that required the historic restoration of the interior. In December 2008, the City Council lifted the moratorium without taking specific action on the issue of requiring historic interiors to be preserved.

In the face of ongoing residential redevelopment pressure, City Council approved an emergency ordinance in July 2007 that required all buildings over 30 years old to be reviewed for historic integrity before receiving a building permit or demolition permit. Local residents objected to the requirement – particularly the uncertainty created by the new legislation – and Council adopted a revised ordinance in late 2007.

The revised ordinance identified a list of 53 properties that cannot receive a building or demolition permit until a 90-day period has elapsed, during which the city negotiates with the property owner regarding the economic and community benefits of historic designation. If the property owner still wants to move forward with alterations or demolition, they may proceed after the 90-day period has elapsed. The revised ordinance was intended as a temporary measure while a Historic Preservation Task Force was established to explore a wide range of issues related to the historic preservation program, and make recommendations to the HPC and City Council.

In June 2008, the city released a 28-minute documentary titled “A Fragile Heritage: Aspen’s Historic Preservation Debate.” The documentary focused on the complex issues surrounding historic preservation, and also relied on local architects to explain the architectural styles of different historical periods in Aspen’s history.

In October 2009, the 21-member Historic Preservation Task Force issued a series of recommendations to City Council. Since October, staff has begun working with the Council to implement the recommendations. In summary, the recommendations involve adopting a new method of evaluating post-war architecture so that only the very best examples could be preserved on an involuntary basis, while incentives could help preserve others voluntarily. Staff will continue to work on generating new historical “context papers” with outside help, as well as new criteria and evaluation tools. No final decisions on the method for preserving post-war

structures have been made, but progress is ongoing. At the same time, economic conditions have temporarily “cooled” this issue, as redevelopment pressure has eased during the last two years.

PITKIN COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION: In 2006, Pitkin County passed a significant revision to the Land Use Code providing for the protection of the important historic properties that exist in the urban growth boundary area and throughout the County. These code provisions have been successful in encouraging preservation, relying primarily on voluntary designations. In 2008 the county completed work on a Historic Preservation Handbook, which includes background information on the history of the county, a description of the incentives available to historic property owners and a listing of good preservation practices.

THE AACP: WHAT SHOULD WE CARRY FORWARD? Given the design focus of the 1993 AACP, there are no outwardly apparent policies to bring forward. It will be helpful to use the 2000 AACP Intent and Philosophy statements as a way to get a general discussion going. Some of the key statements from the 2000 AACP include:

Philosophy: “Aspen’s distinctive history is irreplaceable, whether it be the late 19th century miners’ cottages, the Bauhaus buildings introduced by architect Herbert Bayer, or the faux chalets built by ski instructors in the 1950s and 1960s. Aspen is not a great example of a mining camp; the architectural context is much more varied.”

Philosophy: “Decades of economic booms and busts have brought significant changes and periods of redevelopment to Aspen. This opportunity for constant revitalization of our town must be directed in ways that continually enrich Aspen rather than challenge its heritage.”

Philosophy: “While the overall goal of protecting individual sites or the historic character of a larger area are foremost, the preservation process must be one of reason and balance, predictability and economic fairness.”

Policy: “Retain and support an eclectic mix of historical structures in our community.”

HPC Resource Expert Comments: City staff met with the Historic Preservation Commission on February 10th to review the AACP update process. The group provided staff with information that they recommend be included in the update to the AACP. They also reviewed the sentences that are included above and suggested changes. Commissioner Jason Lasser volunteered to be the group’s representative to the P&Z, and will attend the P&Z meetings as a “resource expert.” City HP staff will also attend as “resource experts.” The following is a summary of the HPC’s discussion:

- The HPC discussed the fact that 12% of all the parcels of land in Aspen have a Historic Landmark Designation, so it is important to ensure that these resources are preserved and treated with care. The HPC’s standards are high, and they don’t want a legacy of lost opportunities or regrettable decisions.
- The board emphasized that they want the HP process to be user friendly, and would like language included in the plan related to the general preservation process. They want to

be approachable and collaborative, and they want their design review input to be productive and make projects better.

- The group emphasized that new development should respect historic mass, scale, and proportions. While creativity should be encouraged, additions and new buildings need to be sensitive to the existing and historic building pattern.
- The 2000 AACP included a few words that the HPC believes need to be eliminated in the update. These include the word “copytecture” because most people reading the plan will not know what it means, and the word “eclectic” when describing our built environment.
- The HPC wanted to eliminate the word “economic” in relation to fairness. Specifically, they liked the following sentence from Philosophy, but wanted “economic” eliminated: “While the overall goal of protecting individual sites or the historic character of a larger area are foremost, the preservation process must be one of reason and balance, predictability and ~~economic~~ fairness.”
- The HPC believes that the preservation of historic interiors is important and should be included in the update. They see preservation of significant interiors (that are publically accessible) as a benefit to the community because it would create continuity in understanding the history of Aspen’s built environment, inside and out. In some instances, it’s important to preserve not just a shell or façade, but more extensive original building fabric. They agree that undertaking a survey of historic interiors is needed and also recognize that there are a very small number of interiors that have potential interior significance.
- There should be a clearer connection in the plan between preservation and environmental quality. This could include a discussion about the environmental value of retaining, adapting, retrofitting historic buildings rather than scraping and replacing, as well as acknowledging the inherent energy efficiency of many historic structures and how they can be viably improved where needed. It would be good to do a little myth-busting.
- The group liked the following sentence in Philosophy, but recommends rewording the reference to a mining camp. They felt it unnecessarily undercut the importance of our mining heritage: “Aspen’s distinctive history is irreplaceable, whether it be the late 19th century miners’ cottages, the Bauhaus buildings introduced by architect Herbert Bayer, or the faux chalets built by ski instructors in the 1950s and 1960s. ~~Aspen is not a great example of a mining camp; the~~ Aspen’s architectural context is ~~much more~~ quite varied.”

PUBLIC FEEDBACK: A review of public feedback shows that Historic Preservation is important to the community. At the Community Vision (clicker) Meetings, 79% agreed/strongly agreed that Historic Preservation “is important to me.”

The randomly-mailed Community Survey showed that 50% of voters and 49% of local homeowners rated Historic Preservation as important, although second homeowners weighed in

at 65%. As indicated in the table below, voters and full-time homeowners believe the Historic Preservation effort is slightly exceeding their expectations.

Historic Preservation				
	Voter List	Full Time Homeowners	Second Homeowners	All Homeowners
Importance of topic	50%	49%	65%	55%
Assessment of topic	57%	53%	61%	56%

Note: Survey uses a scale of 1-5, 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest. The figures above add the results of those who chose 4 or 5.

It’s important to recognize that Historic Preservation was a high profile issue during the 18 months before this feedback was taken, and the Historic Preservation Task Force was just beginning to meet on the subject. This makes the value of the public feedback regarding “assessment” or performance somewhat questionable.

Post War Preservation

The question of whether and how to preserve post-World War II properties has been a matter of debate in the community over the last 10 years. The Community Survey showed relatively little support for the need to reach a “consensus” on protecting Post-War buildings.

	Full time Homeowner	Second Homeowner	ALL Homeowners	VOTER LIST
Support of reaching consensus on Post-War Preservation	33%	48%	39%	35%

Survey uses a scale of 1-5, 1 being the lowest and 5 the highest. The figures above add the results of those who chose 4 or 5.

Presented with a different question and more specific choices, participants at the Community Vision (clicker) Meetings showed considerably more support for the preservation of Post-War buildings.

When asked if “it is important to preserve structures from Aspen’s Post-War history, such as European chalets, and modernism,” 19% of participants stated “Yes, it’s important for our history,” and 37% of participants stated “Yes, but only the most superb buildings.” A total of 23% stated “No, I’m not convinced yet,” while only 19% of participants unequivocally stated, “No, we’ve preserved enough.”

The 2008 “Fragile Heritage” documentary included footage of Victorian, Modernist and Chalet buildings as well as educational commentary from local architects. More than 120 community members who watched the documentary were asked in a follow-up survey if the Modernist and Chalet styles of architecture were worth preserving. A total of 71% indicated support for the preservation of Modernist buildings and 68% supported the preservation of Chalet styles.

Interior Preservation

At the Community Vision (clicker) Meetings, participants were provided background on this complex issue, stating that interior preservation would not apply to private residences, and would only apply to publically accessible buildings that are already historically designated.

However, there was no clear direction from participants on this issue. 47% of participants felt that “interiors that truly reflect the time period they were built should be designated,” while 53% thought “the City should not be in the business of designating the inside of buildings, even if they are publically accessible.”

LINKS TO OTHER TOPICS: Staff has also outlined some linkages between topics that might come up during the P&Z’s discussion of Historic Preservation.

Sustaining the Aspen Idea: This is a new topic in the update of the 2000 AACP, and is meant to focus largely on Arts and Culture, while recognizing the uniqueness of the Aspen Idea’s conception of balancing mind, body and spirit. The Aspen Idea emerged in the Post-War era and some remaining buildings reflect what was happening in Aspen during this time period.

Environmental Quality: The Historic Preservation Commission guidelines currently accommodate renovations to buildings that can increase energy efficiency, while allowing for the protection of architectural features and elements.

Economics: Historic Preservation is important to the economic sustainability of Aspen as a resort. Heritage Tourism is an acknowledged element of attracting visitors.

ATTACHMENTS:

Exhibit A: Large Community Meetings, Keypad Question Results

Exhibit B: Community Survey Results

Exhibit C: 2000 AACP Historic Preservation Chapter

Exhibit D: Review Schedule

Exhibit A: Large Community Meeting Results, Historic Preservation Questions

32.) Historic preservation is important to me (Select one)

Strongly agree
 Agree
 Disagree
 Strongly disagree
 I don't know enough to have an opinion

	Responses (percent) (count)	
Strongly agree	37.14%	155
Agree	42.43%	177
Disagree	12.12%	51
Strongly disagree	7.80%	33
I don't know enough to have an opinion	0.51%	2
Totals	100%	418

33.) Historic preservation is vital to Aspen as a community, and as a taxpayer I would be willing to support it through a new dedicated public fund. (Select one)

Strongly agree
 Agree
 Disagree
 Strongly disagree
 I don't know enough to have an opinion
 This does not matter to me

	Responses (percent) (count)	
Strongly agree	10.54%	43
Agree	26.84%	110
Disagree	24.05%	99
Strongly disagree	29.43%	121
I don't know enough to have an opinion	7.61%	31
This does not matter to me	1.50%	6
Totals	100%	410

34.) In order to illustrate Aspen's history, I think it is important to preserve structures from Aspen's Post-War history, such as European chalets, and modernism. (Select one)

Yes, it's important for our history.
 Yes, but only the most superb buildings.
 No, I'm not convinced yet.
 No, we've preserved enough.
 I don't know enough to have an opinion.
 This does not matter to me.

	Responses (percent) (count)	
Yes, it's important for our history.	19.28%	80
Yes, but only the most superb buildings.	36.58%	153
No, I'm not convinced yet.	22.52%	94
No, we've preserved enough.	19.15%	80
I don't know enough to have an opinion.	2.23%	9
This does not matter to me.	0.24%	1
Totals	100%	417

35.) In terms of the interiors of historic publicly accessible buildings, which best describes your position: (Select one)

I believe that interiors that truly reflect the time period they were built should be designated.

I do not believe the City should be in the business of designating the inside of buildings, even if they are publicly accessible. Exterior preservation is good enough.

	Responses (percent) (count)	
I believe that interiors that truly reflect the time period they were built should be designated.	46.92%	192
I do not believe the City should be in the business of designating the inside of buildings, even if they are publicly accessible. Exterior preservation is good enough.	53.08%	217
Totals	100%	409

Exhibit B: Community Survey Results, Historic Preservation

Historic Preservation				
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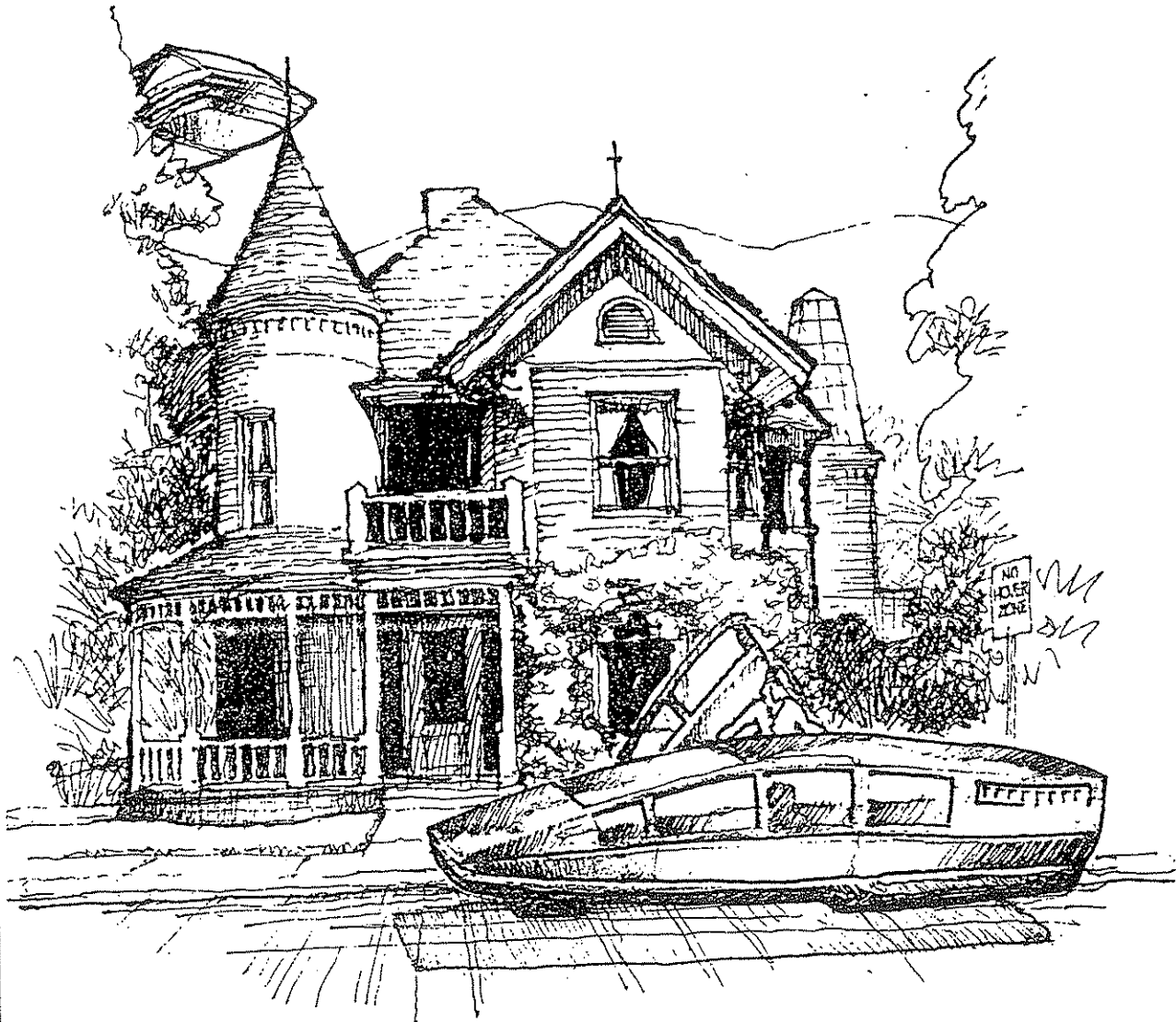
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Historic Preservation



NOTE. renderings depict old and new
or future aspects of the community.



Historic Preservation



Intent

♦ Preserve Aspen's irreplaceable historic resources.

Philosophy

The mission of the preservation community is based on two interlocking convictions: a desire to safeguard a broad representation of our region's cultural, natural, and historical treasures; and, the belief that by promoting appreciation of our history we maintain a "sense of place" and a sense of community while strengthening our local economy through tourism. The wealth of buildings, traditions, and stories that one generation leaves to the next are inherited assets. The purpose for encouraging preservation is to protect those assets for the enjoyment of present and future generations.

Aspen's distinctive history is irreplaceable whether it be the late nineteenth-century miners' cottages, the Bauhaus buildings introduced by architect Herbert Bayer, or the faux-chalets built by ski instructors in the 1950's and 60's. Aspen is not a great example of a mining camp; the architectural context is much more varied. Our heritage also includes a rich intellectual, recreational, and social history. Our town's unique character is what attracts visitors and residents to our community. We must continue to build on what we have by authentically preserving historic structures and creating thoughtful new buildings that encourage and shape that feeling of historical continuity. Every marker of community spirit brings us closer together.

Aspen should strive to be a lively and viable resort community, not a theme park tourist

destination. We recognize that the travel and tourism industry is a powerhouse for economic growth and that the development and marketing of tourism is necessary to sustain our local economy and way of life. Decades of economic booms and busts have brought significant changes and periods of redevelopment to Aspen. This opportunity for constant revitalization of our town must be directed in ways that continually enrich Aspen rather than challenge its heritage. We must consider what we hope to pass on to future generations. A historically significant building torn down is an asset destroyed, whereas a building that is respectfully restored continues its useful life.

While the overall goal of protecting individual historic sites or the historic character of a larger area are foremost, the preservation process must be one of reason and balance, predictability, and economic fairness. The importance of historic preservation may not at first be apparent to members of the community who are struggling to earn a living or to those who are new to the community. It is possible, however, to let history inform all levels of development through sensitivity to scale. Many land use policies that have been implemented defy the traditional development pattern in Aspen. We encourage returning to higher density development within the city limits where appropriate.

To promote and perpetuate historic preservation and to protect and preserve Aspen's distinctive cultural heritage, we must assist those involved to understand Aspen's history and its current vision of itself. We must raise community awareness through education and communication. A community united and firmly grounded in local circumstances can accomplish much.

Policies

- Retain and support an eclectic mix of historical structures in our community.
- Provide support and education for the preservation of historic resources.
- Ensure that the rules and regulations regarding development and historic preservation in our community create projects that are consistent with our broader community goals.

Goals

- A. Create a more vibrant town with appropriate mixed uses and a variety of building sizes. Allow historic patterns to inform new development throughout town.
- B. Work to improve the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) review process.
- C. Do not approve “copyecture” solutions. Encourage sensitive additions and talk

about compatibility in terms of “sympathetic, subservient, and contextual.”

- D. Refine the Historic Preservation review process to make decisions less subjective.
- E. Improve compliance with the recommendations and “Conditions of Approval” of the mandatory review process.
- F. Protect all buildings and sites of historic significance.
- G. Improve communication, education, and advocacy for historic preservation, and create better tools to accomplish this goal. Raise community awareness of the importance of preserving our local history and of the value of having a Historic Preservation Commission.
- H. Maintain and add innovative ways to make preservation work in Aspen, such as the historic landmark lot split.



2010 P&Z Review Schedule for AACP

All AACP meetings are listed below. The half-day meetings are underlined and italicized.

- Tuesday, January 26, 4:30pm – 7:30pm in Sister Cities –**Housing**
- ***Thursday, February 4, 8:30am – 12noon in Rio Grande – Housing***
- Tuesday, February 9, 4:30pm – 7:30pm in the Rio Grande meeting room – **Housing, Historic Preservation**
- Tuesday, February 23, 4:30pm – 7:30pm in Sister Cities – **Historic Preservation**
- Tuesday, March 9, 4:30pm – 7:30pm in the Rio Grande meeting room – **Historic Preservation**
- ***Thursday, March 11, 8:30am – 12noon in Plaza 1 – Transportation***
- Tuesday, March 23, 4:30pm – 7:30pm in Sister Cities - **Transportation**
- Tuesday, March 30, 4:30pm – 7:30pm in Sister Cities – **Transportation**
- Tuesday, April 13, 4:30pm – 7:30pm in the Rio Grande meeting room – **Transportation, AABC**
- Tuesday, April 27, 4:30pm – 7:30pm in Sister Cities –**AABC**
- ***Thursday, May 6, 8:30am – 12noon in Rio Grande – AABC***
- Tuesday, May 11, 4:30pm – 7:30pm in the Rio Grande meeting room – **AABC**
- Tuesday, May 25, 4:30pm – 7:30pm in Sister Cities - **AABC**
- Tuesday, June 8, 4:30pm – 7:30pm in the Rio Grande meeting room – **Lifelong Aspenite**
- ***Thursday, June 17th, 8:30am – 12noon in Council Chambers – Lifelong Aspenite***
- Tuesday, June 22, 4:30pm – 7:30pm in Sister Cities – **Lifelong Aspenite, Parks**
- Tuesday, June 29, 4:30pm – 7:30pm in Sister Cities – **Parks**
- ***Thursday, July 8, 8:30am – 12noon in Rio Grande – Review***
- Tuesday, July 13, 4:30pm – 7:30pm in the Rio Grande meeting room – **Review of Document**
- Tuesday, July 27, 4:30pm – 7:30pm in Sister Cities – **Review of Document**