

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Jessica Garrow, Long Range Planner
Ben Gagnon, Special Projects Planner
Chris Bendon, Community Development Director

DATE OF MEMO: November 18, 2011

MEETING DATE: November 29, 2011, 5pm, Council Chambers

RE: Review of 2011 Aspen Area Community Plan

REQUEST OF COUNCIL: No action is requested at this time. This is the fourth of six work sessions to review the 2011 AACP. This meeting focuses on reviewing the West of Castle Creek Chapter.

REVIEW SCHEDULE: There are two additional work sessions scheduled:

- Dec 5: Review Managing Growth for Community & Economic Sustainability and Housing chapters.
- Dec 6: Review Managing Growth for Community & Economic Sustainability and Housing chapters. Wrap up.

First reading is tentatively scheduled at Council on December 12, and second readings are tentatively scheduled for January 9th and 23rd.

REVIEW OF AACP CHAPTERS: Each chapter review is organized in the following format:

1. Overview of the chapter's main concepts and policy direction.
2. Review the evolution of the chapter's major policies and themes over the past three years.
3. Highlight changes the P&Zs have made to the chapter since Council received the August 15th draft.
4. Staff recommendation on changes to the chapter. Each chapter will be attached to the work session memo and staff changes will be incorporated into them using track changes.

West of Castle Creek Corridor:

1. The West of Castle Creek Corridor chapter is a new chapter to the AACP. It covers the area on Highway 82 from the Castle Creek Bridge to the end of the UGB (by the airport). The chapter addresses issues ranging from land use to scenic considerations to transportation. The chapter calls for a future county Master Plan for the area.
2. This chapter has remained consistent throughout the P&Z's review.

3. The P&Zs made some language changes related to future annexations in the area. The P&Z recommended that no annexations occur until a master plan for the area is completed by the Pitkin County P&Z and revised zoning based on that plan is in place.
4. Staff has no suggested changes to the chapter. Council may want to discuss the master plan process and how annexations play into that. Staff will present a draft outline of the master plan process at the meeting.

Attachments:

Exhibit A: West of Castle Creek Corridor Chapter

West of Castle Creek Corridor



Vision

The West of Castle Creek Corridor area should provide a transition from the rural expanses of Pitkin County to the urbanized atmosphere of downtown Aspen. The area should feature separate and recognizable nodes of unique uses and functions, and maintain a land use pattern and scenic quality along the Highway corridor that creates a distinct series of visual experiences that signal arrival to the Aspen Area.

Philosophy

The success of the West of Castle Creek Corridor area relies on enhancing our transportation system and a comprehensive planning effort that strives to maintain a distinct and memorable arrival experience. We are committed to including all of these goals in a comprehensive land use Master Plan for the West of Castle Creek Area as a follow-up to the adoption of the AACP.

Critical to the success of the West of Castle Creek Corridor area and the entire Aspen Area is improving our transportation system. A seamless connection between the City of Aspen and the West of Castle Creek Area can be achieved by improving transit services, integrating bike and pedestrian paths, implementing innovative Transportation Demand Management concepts and potential physical improvements to the Entrance to Aspen between the roundabout and 7th and Main.

The West of Castle Creek Corridor area is the "gateway" to Aspen, providing both the physical entrance to Aspen and the transition from a rural landscape to the more urban townsite. The visual experience of this gateway corridor is of critical importance, and the many different views of our natural surroundings are paramount when it comes to future planning. Density, size and scale of the built environment must complement rather than detract from the natural setting. We should preserve and prioritize views of ski areas and open space in order to maintain the transitional character of the area.

The West of Castle Creek Corridor area is home to a variety of important uses that define the gateway experience - the airport, a community college, a local business center, a ski area, Community Workforce Housing (CWH), and golf courses - all of which are irreplaceable uses in our community. Each use is different in character and purpose, representing distinct, physically separated nodes of activity.

To maintain these separate and distinct uses, planning for this area should support a well-defined visual pattern and a defined set of prescribed and limited uses for each node. This area should not become an urbanized tunnel like corridor, with repetitive development and the feeling of "sameness" that define the worst kind of urban sprawl.

It is important to define and maintain the relationship between the West of Castle Creek Corridor area and Aspen, with the core of Aspen remaining the primary commercial center for tourism, employment, goods and services. While convenience and land cost may encourage increased development in the West of Castle Creek Corridor, putting pressure on unique and important uses, development should be limited to existing nodes in order to maintain undeveloped spaces between them.

The Airport Business Center (ABC) should remain a business service and limited light industrial area for Aspen residents and businesses.

The ABC should include basic commercial services for residents that reduce the need for unplanned trips into Aspen. The Base of Buttermilk should continue to function as a vital recreational and lodging component of the Aspen resort community.

We are committed to developing a West of Castle Creek Corridor Land Use Master Plan that incorporates all aspects of this philosophy. The Master Plan will address appropriate zoning designations for this area. We recommend no annexations in the West of Castle Creek Corridor area prior to the adoption of the revised zoning contemplated in this plan.

What's Changed Since 2000

The last decade has seen substantial activity in the West of Castle Creek Corridor area.

Facility improvements include the Aspen/Pitkin Animal Shelter, constructed in 2005 and the North 40 Aspen Fire District Station, constructed in 2009 to ensure that emergencies within the district outside of the Aspen core could be readily served. With respect to transportation, the Airport extended the runway to 1,000 feet in length to better accommodate existing air service, and bus-only lanes were constructed from the Airport to the round-about to ease traffic congestion on Highway 82 as it enters Aspen. As part of an overall plan to improve transit service in the region, the Roaring Fork Transit Authority completed planning for a Bus Rapid Transit program which will include improvements to bus stations at Buttermilk and at the ABC. Given the high level of auto and pedestrian and bicycle traffic in the area, plans were initiated for development of safe pedestrian access across Highway 82 in at least one location in the vicinity of the ABC.

To help ensure that traffic continues to flow as efficiently as possible given anticipated improvements in the area, Pitkin County initiated a Highway 82 access control plan study in conjunction with the Colorado Department of Transportation to determine the best location for intersections and turning movements along Highway 82 from the round-about to Owl Creek Road. The Stapleton Lot, located adjacent to Buttermilk Ski Area is jointly owned by Pitkin County and CDOT. It was acquired for the purpose of scenic corridor and open space preservation; to facilitate use of public transportation; for the potential of a transit station or multi-modal facility; parking for recreational users; and for access to public lands.

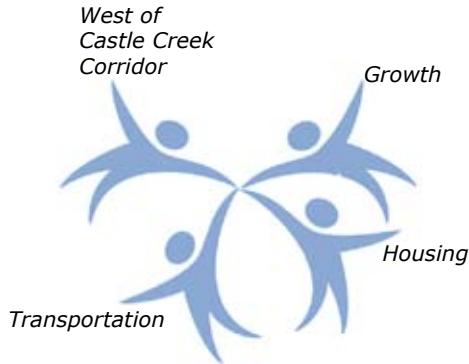
The area continues to provide a somewhat less expensive alternative to land prices in Aspen, which has resulted in the purchase of lands for, and the development of, Community Workforce Housing in close proximity to Aspen. The first phase of Burlingame Community Workforce Housing was built in 2006. The City of Aspen purchased and annexed the Harbert Lumber Yard with the intent of building Community Workforce Housing. Also, a new and expanded grocery store opened to meet demands of the growing local resident population in the immediate vicinity of the Business Center and in nearby Burlingame.



The West of Castle Creek Corridor is located from the round-about to the end of the UGB on Highway 82. It includes all parcels of land in proximity to the highway right-of-way.

What's New in the 2011 AACP

As development in the West of Castle Creek Corridor area continues to evolve, so too has the desire to balance and better define its role as the entrance to Aspen, and as it related to the Aspen core. The West of Castle Creek Corridor chapter is new in the 2011 Plan. Though aspects of this area were addressed in broad terms in previous Aspen Area Community Plans, this new chapter provides a framework for direction as we move forward, and recognizes the need to follow up with a subsequent Master Plan for the area to provide more detailed direction.



Linkages

The new West of Castle Creek Corridor Master Plan will seek to identify and balance a wide range of factors that contribute to the success of the area, including air and ground transportation, preventing sprawl, retaining scenic views, important institutional and commercial uses, recreational opportunities that include a ski area and trail system, Community Workforce Housing, a positive "gateway" experience and protecting the natural environment. Also critical to this planning effort is understanding and addressing how this area relates to the Aspen core.

West of Castle Creek Corridor Policies

Policy Categories

I. LAND USE

I.1. Planning for the West of Castle Creek Corridor area should support a well-defined visual and functional pattern for a series of distinctly different “nodes” of activity supporting limited uses that are physically separated by open space.

Community Goal

II. SCENIC

II.1. The density, size and scale of all new development and redevelopment in the West of Castle Creek Corridor area should maintain and, if possible, enhance the views of the natural environment seen as one travels through this portion of the Highway 82 corridor.

Community Goal

III. TRANSPORTATION

III.1. Improve the convenience, reliability, comfort, affordability, safety, capacity, and quality of experience of transit services and improve efficiency and coordination between all related aspects of transportation in the West of Castle Creek Corridor area.

*Community Goal,
Collaborative Initiative*

III.2. Ensure safe and efficient pedestrian and bike connections exist within the West of Castle Creek Corridor area and connect the area to the downtown Aspen.

*Community Goal,
Collaborative Initiative*

West of Castle Creek Corridor Implementation Steps

I. LAND USE

I.1. Planning for the West of Castle Creek Corridor area should support a well-defined and functional visual pattern for a series of distinctly different “nodes” of activity supporting limited uses that are physically separated by open space. (Community Goal)

I.1.a Create a comprehensive Land Use Master Plan and Future Land Use Map for the West of Castle Creek Corridor that ensures planning in the area is coordinated and recognizes the need for improved transportation services in the corridor before significant growth is allowed to occur in the area. The Master Plan should preserve uses, while allowing for upgrades to existing uses to maintain their functionality, vitality and longevity. (I – P)

I.1.b Amend City and County Land Use Codes to implement the findings of the Land Use Master Plan. (LT – P)

I.1.c Amend City and County zoning in the area to discourage additional development of new free-market single family and duplex homes in the Highway 82 Corridor. (I – P)

I.1.d Explore the creation of joint City and County Design Standards for the area that reflect the diversity of uses within the nodes in the corridor. (LT – P)

I.1.e Ensure zoning reflects and will maintain the existing use mix and balance at the Airport Business Center. (I - P)

I.1.f Maintain the Buttermilk/Inn at Aspen area as a lodge/ski/recreation area. (I – P)

I.1.g Ensure any redevelopment of the Inn at Aspen and the Base of Buttermilk is coordinated in terms of pedestrian and vehicular connectivity, mass transit, utilities, etc. (LT - P)

I.1.h Ensure that the Airport Master Plan limits uses at the Airport site to transportation and supporting uses rather than expanding into lodging and other non-airport uses. (I - P)

I.1.i Identify “pockets” of land or parcels within the West of Castle Creek area that should remain as open space buffers between activity nodes, and zone as appropriate. (I – P)

I.1.j Create a master sign plan for pedestrian and vehicle traffic for the West of Castle Creek area to facilitate user-friendly access and circulation for residents and visitors, and coordinate the sign plan with other signage in the UGB. (I – P)

II. SCENIC

II.1. The density, size and scale of new all development and redevelopment in the West of Castle Creek Corridor area should maintain and, if possible, enhance the views of the natural environment seen as one travels through this portion of the Highway 82 corridor. (Community Goal)

II.1.a Visual modeling should be undertaken for the West of Castle Creek Corridor to provide a baseline for the existing visual aspects of bulk, height, density, setbacks, land use patterns, and scenic view-corridors worthy of protection. This should provide a basis for amending the City and County Land Use Codes, as necessary, to guide and/or regulate the visual aspects of future development and redevelopment in the area. (I - P)

II.1.b Amend the City and County Land Use Code as necessary to require development and redevelopment to utilize existing topography such as natural ridges and hills to screen development. Large landforms, earthmoving and landscaping to create continuous man-made visual barriers to screen developments should not be relied upon to allow development in visually prominent areas. (LT - P)

II.1.c Update Pitkin County lighting regulations to specifically address a limitation on glare from exterior and interior lighting associated with new development viewed from the Highway 82 corridor. (LT - P)

II.1.d Maintain the 200 foot setback from Highway 82 at the Airport Business Center and the 100 foot setback in the rest of the corridor. (LT - P)

II.1.e Update the City's Annexation Plan and Land Use Code, as needed, to ensure annexation agreements maintain the setbacks along the corridor. (LT - P)

II.1.f Evaluate and update the City and County Land Use Codes as needed to maintain scenic view corridors from Highway 82. Explore creation of new scenic viewplanes along Highway 82. (LT - P)

III. TRANSPORTATION

III.1. Improve the convenience, reliability, comfort, affordability, safety, capacity and quality of experience of transit services and improve efficiency and coordination between all related aspects of transportation in the West of Castle Creek Corridor area. (Community Goal, Collaborative Initiative)

III.1.a Create a comprehensive transportation Master Plan for the West of Castle Creek Corridor based on, but not limited to, existing planning efforts, including the Entrance to Aspen Record of Decision, a Highway 82 access control plan study and RFTA's Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) program. The purpose of such a plan is to coordinate and improve all aspects of auto, air, transit, parking and trail function in the context of planned development or redevelopment of activity nodes in the corridor. (I - T, RFTA, PW, A)

III.1.b Obtain updated data regarding daily traffic levels, including volume and time of day, between the edge of the Urban Growth Boundary (Airport area) and the Castle Creek bridge. (I - T, PW)

III.1.c Complete and implement a Highway 82 access control plan study to ensure that design and location of intersections, access and signalization facilitate, rather than impede, the highway's status and function as the main, year-round access to and from Aspen. As a part of that Plan, improve the safety of the signalized intersection at the entrance to the Aspen Business Center and ensure that the location of signalized intersections support effective mode transfers from transit to Park and Ride facilities. (I - PW, CDOT)

III.1.d Determine the parking need in the ABC, with an emphasis on encouraging transit and trails as preferred modes of transportation where possible. Develop and implement a plan to accommodate needed parking on individual parcels and streets within the ABC. (I - PW)

III.1.e Explore the creation of a transportation district in the West of Castle Creek Area to ensure that development pays its proportional share of transportation improvements in the corridor. (LT - T, PW)

III.1.f Create a transit shuttle in the West of Castle Creek corridor, connecting the City of Aspen to Burlingame, Truscott, BMC, the Airport Business Center and North 40. (I - RFTA, T, PW)

III.1.g Coordinate the location of RFTA BRT stations at Buttermilk and at the Pitkin County Airport with safe pedestrian access across Highway 82. (I - RFTA, PW)

III.1.h Explore options for enhancing the transition between transportation modes at Park and Ride locations that would improve the quality of the transit experience. As one option, consider a frequent shuttle from Park and Ride locations. (I - RFTA)

III.2. Ensure safe and efficient pedestrian and bike connections exist within the West of Castle Creek Corridor area and connect the area to downtown Aspen. (Community Goal, Collaborative Initiative)

III.2.a. Explore and implement funding options for building a safe pedestrian crossing on Highway 82 at the Airport Business Center. As one option, consider a grade-separated crossing, with preference for an underpass. (LT - A, CDOT, RFTA, ABC Group, City Manager, County Manager)

III.2.b. Connect all West of Castle Creek residential development within walking or bicycling distance by trail to the Airport Business Center. (LT- P, P/OS)

III.2.c. Improve trail connections from the Airport Business Center and the immediate environs to the Highway 82 bike path, the Roaring Fork River and to the Down Valley area. (LT - P, P//OS)

III.2.d. Improve pedestrian safety and circulation within the Airport Business Center. (I - PW)

III.2.e. Improve summer and winter pedestrian access from the Airport Business Center, North 40 and Colorado Mountain College to RFTA bus stops on Highway 82. (I - PW)