



THE CITY OF ASPEN CIVIC MASTER PLAN

Adopted by the Aspen City Council in December 2006



To remember Aspen's history is to recognize a heritage of innovation – Aspen is always at a crossroads that has never been encountered.

– Civic Master Plan Advisory Group



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Preamble

The Aspen community has a rich history of generating powerful ideas that are well ahead of their time – and an equally compelling history of individual passion, energy and risk-taking that broke new ground, and created a one-of-a-kind community.

From the Goethe Bicentennial to the Aspen Institute and Aspen Music Festival, from the campaign to establish unparalleled Wilderness Areas to the seeding of a wide range of now-vital arts institutions, the Aspen Idea took hold and defined the community as a model for innovation – a community that dreams bigger and reaches further to create a unique sense of place.

If imitation is the ultimate flattery, then other mountain communities have steadily and relentlessly paid Aspen the highest respect. As others have tried to re-create the model, Aspen continues to reinvent itself.

Our powerful resort environment has sometimes overwhelmed a sense of local community, and the City of Aspen has responded over the years by adopting an ambitious set of civic obligations.

Aspen was the first mountain resort to establish a major affordable housing program, and the first to establish a sales tax for child care. We've subsidized The Thrift Shop and local arts groups, and found a way to help redevelop locally-serving businesses in the downtown area.

To remember Aspen's history is to recognize a heritage of innovation – Aspen is always at a crossroads that has never been encountered. We need to find out what's going on in the city's trajectory, and should – once again – have a clear intention to do new things first. Aspen is about memory and prophecy.

In the Civic Master Plan process, we have used the 2000 Aspen Area Community Plan and eight Core Principles as a guiding compass. If we can implement goals and principles at many sites around the Civic Core, we can realize a cascading series of seemingly small steps that add up to great strides.

We can take steps to overcome the pedestrian barrier that our Main Street has become; we can create a new and pedestrian-friendly Galena Street Extension that invites people to Galena Plaza and Rio Grande Park; we can revitalize the

un-used open space at Galena Plaza; we can help find a new home for the Aspen Art Museum in the downtown that reaffirms our identity as a leader in the arts; we can expand the popular Thrift Shop; we can renovate our downtown Fire Station to improve public safety and maintain the invaluable culture of the Aspen Volunteer Fire Department.

We can strike a balance to reach a myriad of goals. We are now learning that projects such as Obermeyer Place can preserve locally-serving businesses and bring affordable housing to the downtown area. We can create a respectful edge which frames the beautiful picture that is Rio Grande Park and bring complementary uses to the Park; we can clean storm water and re-create the riparian environment along the Roaring Fork River with streams & waterfalls; we can retain the traditional civic functions of local government in the downtown and maintain a year-round feeling within a powerful resort environment; we can explore the possibilities for the Wheeler Parcel that show the community is alive and evolving – and continuing to celebrate its core identity as a center for arts and culture.

As the Civic Master Plan Advisory Group has applied its Core Principles to one site after another – grounded in the Aspen Area Community Plan – it has steadily built a larger vision. The Advisory Group has explored numerous ways for the community and the City of Aspen to live up to its civic obligations: To maintain a world-class resort *and* a healthy year-round community.

“We hope the Civic Master Plan will become a powerful hybrid – not just a spoken philosophy, and not just a brick and mortar exercise, but a working vision and a strategy in progress.” — **Civic Master Plan Advisory Group.**

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Purpose

The Civic Master Plan provides guidance for the future use of publicly-owned properties between Aspen Mountain and the Roaring Fork River. The Civic Master Plan Advisory Group relied upon the 2000 Aspen Area Community Plan, and eight “Core Principles” to generate and adopt numerous findings and recommendations.

The Civic Master Plan attempts to sketch out a series of memorable places – and ultimately paints a “big picture” for the civic core of Aspen that is intended to be greater than the sum of its parts. Future land use applications for any site evaluated in the Civic Master Plan must demonstrate “consistency” with the Civic Master Plan, pursuant to Section 26.100.104(A) of the City of Aspen Municipal Code.

The Civic Master Plan Advisory Group

The people who have served as members of the Civic Master Plan Advisory Group (CMPAG) represent a wide array of government agencies, non-profit groups and locally-serving businesses. To understand why this particular mix of groups was chosen to generate the Civic Master Plan, it's important to briefly explore the meaning of the word civic.

Civ-ic

Latin: *civicus*, derived from *civis*, meaning "townsman" or citizen.

1. Relating to the government of a town or city.
2. Relating to the duties and obligations of belonging to a community; civic pride.

The first definition of civic, above, is the strict definition, relating only to the functions of local government, and the functions and duties of citizens within that government.

Historically, those civic functions have been located in Aspen's urban core, including the Courthouse, the original City Hall on Durant Street, the Fire Station on Hopkins Street – and Armory Hall on Galena Street, which became City Hall in the 1950s.

After Aspen became a world class ski resort in the second half of the 20th century, the downtown sprouted lodges, condos and shops that cater to tourists – but the functions

of local government, the courts and public safety remained in the heart of the downtown.

While those who live here may take them for granted, the presence of these buildings and the activity that surrounds them has become an important part of the community's year-round character. Many communities build a "glass box" outside of town and call it a Civic Center. In Aspen, those civic functions are integrated into the downtown, retaining the traditional elements of a small community within a powerful resort environment.

But there is a broader meaning of the word civic, as found in the second definition: "The duties and obligations of belonging to a community; civic pride."

Over many years, the Aspen community has created a unique set of civic obligations – the City and the County have steadily taken on responsibilities beyond simply processing building permits and dog licenses.

In a very general sense, this unique set of civic obligations are intended to maintain a healthy year-round community and a world-class resort at the same time.

Over the years, the City has bought and operated the Wheeler Opera House; provided low-cost space to a wide range of arts and cultural groups; provided low-cost space

to the Aspen Chamber Resort Association and the Visitor Center; subsidized affordable housing and daycare; provided low-cost space to The Thrift Shop; entered into a public-private partnership to redevelop space for locally-serving non-retail businesses; and established public parks & pedestrian paths. And this is only a partial list.

The Civic Master Plan was generated by a 24-member Advisory Group made up of local organizations that represent many of these different interests. The overriding goal was to ensure that all of these interests remain healthy and capable of continuing to play the vital roles they play in forming and preserving the identity of the Aspen community – to live up to the civic obligations the City has established for itself.

The Civic Master Plan was based on a representative committee process: Each CMPAG member provided updates to the board and/or constituents they represented, and subsequently brought feedback to the CMPAG as a whole. This representative process literally encompassed hundreds of people as part of the development of the Civic Master Plan.

In addition to the members of the CMPAG that represented specific groups, there were seven citizens-at-large who served as members: Charles Cunniffe, Pat Fallin, Jackie Kasabach, Bill Lipsey, Sue Smedstad, Bennett Bramson and Stan Clauson.



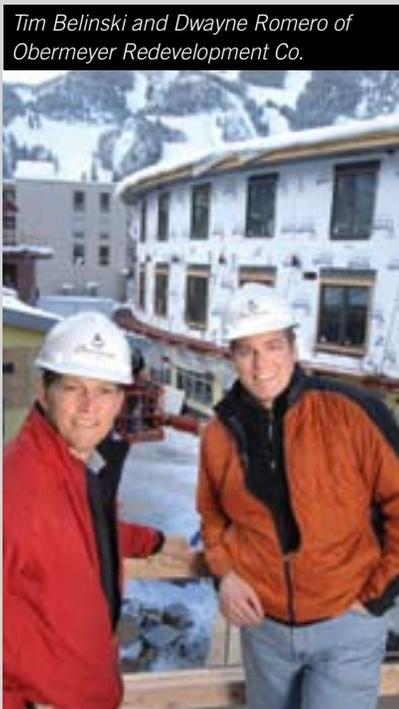
Helen Klanderud, Mayor of Aspen



*John Rowland,
Aspen Planning & Zoning Commission*



*Brian Pettet,
Pitkin County*



*Tim Belinski and Dwayne Romero of
Obermeyer Redevelopment Co.*



*Heidi Zuckerman Jacobson,
Aspen Art Museum*



*Blake Fitch, City of Aspen Parking
Operations Manager*



David McClendon, Theatre Aspen



Kathy Chandler, Pitkin County Library

The Civic Master Plan As Catalyst

Starting in 2000, the Civic Master Plan process was lengthy and unpredictable. Each organization had a different vision, schedule and financial capability. Each site had unique assets and liabilities. Issues of timing sometimes created delays in the work of the Advisory Group.

Perhaps most importantly, the CMPAG recognized early on that it could not simply *tell* any given organization what it should do. Instead, the CMPAG steadily grew into a valuable role – as a catalyst. During its six-year tenure, the CMPAG grew skilled at creating the context for organizations to make informed decisions.

One of the most valuable elements of the Civic Master Plan was its ability to spawn important civic projects almost from the very beginning. It has been a living plan – a work in progress.

Not long after the CMPAG adopted its Core Principles in 2000, the Advisory Group offered its input to the Aspen Consolidated Sanitation District (ACSD) Master Plan, for its headquarters property on N. Mill Street. In 2005, when the City Council approved the ACSD Master Plan, it reflected the CMPAG’s input regarding bike/pedestrian paths and the restoration of natural grades along the Roaring Fork River.

In 2001, the CMPAG identified the Obermeyer Place area not only as a dilapidated neighborhood badly in need of renovation and redesign – but as a non-retail, locally-serving business

park that was critically important to preserve as part of Aspen’s year-round community. In addition, the CMPAG found that due to the low rents inherent in this non-retail business park, a public-private partnership would be needed if a renovation project were to proceed. By simply providing this context, the CMPAG acted as a catalyst for the City of Aspen and Obermeyer Redevelopment Co. to form a public-private partnership that resulted in the construction of Obermeyer Place.

Similarly, the CMPAG focused on the need for an expanded and more visible Visitor Center, and staff outreach resulted in an opportunity for the City to gain free space for a new Visitor Center on Main Street. Although a public referendum ultimately defeated this proposal, the CMPAG again acted as a catalyst, and helped create a unique opportunity for the civic core.

In 2005, the CMPAG recommended an information-gathering effort entitled the Arts Sector Facilities Analysis to help answer the question: Is a new shared-use arts facility needed in Aspen? Again, this represented a catalytic effort by the CMPAG.

Rather than establishing philosophical guidance – which is already provided by the Aspen Area Community Plan – the CMPAG has been a working group, using its Core Principles to focus on a wide range of actual sites in the civic core. And this document is intended to be a living and working document, continuing to provide important context for informed decision-making in the future.



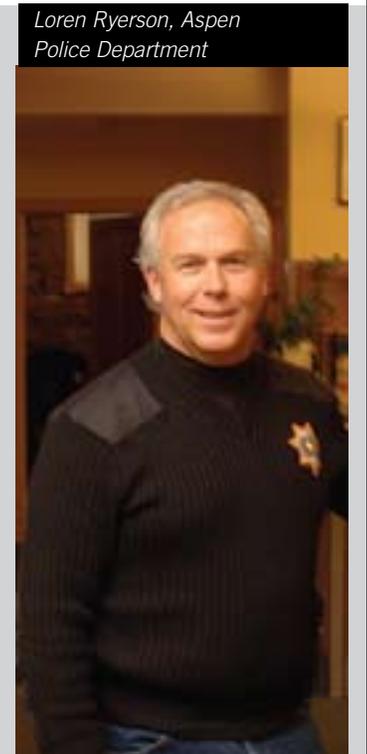
Darryl Grob, Aspen Fire Protection District



Gram Slaton, Wheeler Opera House



Lisa Consiglio, Aspen Writers Foundation



Loren Ryerson, Aspen Police Department



Debbie Braun, Aspen Chamber Resort Association



Lynda McCarthy, The Thrift Shop



Laura Thielen, Aspen Filmfest



Citizen representatives were (l. to r.) Charles Cunniffe, Jackie Kasabach, Bill Lipsey, Sue Smedstad and Bennett Bramson. Stan Clauson not pictured.



Don Bird, Pitkin County Jail

Implementation of the Civic Master Plan

Regulatory Application

On Dec. 11, 2006, the Aspen City Council passed Ordinance No. 46, Series of 2006, approving the Civic Master Plan.

Pursuant to Section 26.100.104 and Section 26.100.104(A) of the Aspen Municipal Code, the Civic Master Plan is a regulatory document that requires future land use applications for any site evaluated in the Civic Master Plan to demonstrate “consistency” with its findings and recommendations. If a land use application cannot demonstrate consistency with the findings and recommendations, the application must demonstrate consistency with the eight Core Principles, and the relevant portions of the Aspen Area Community Plan cited in the Civic Master Plan.

How to Read the Document

In each of the five sections, the reader will find a summary that includes a reference to relevant portions of the 2000 Aspen Area Community Plan.

Geography

The Civic Master Plan focused on the civic core – from Aspen Mountain to the Roaring Fork River. Within that region, two sub-areas emerged – north of Main Street, and south of Main Street.

South of Main Street, the focus was on those vital civic buildings such as the Fire Station, the Wheeler Opera House and the Wheeler Parcel. With most of the urban, compact downtown already built and largely following the principles of sound urban design, the CMPAG spent a great deal of time on the area north of Main Street.

Historically, the City of Aspen treated the land along the Roaring Fork River no differently than most other American cities and towns treated their riverfronts – it

Following the summary are two or more sub-sections that address specific sites. These sub-sections reference the relevant Core Principles relied upon by the CMPAG. The findings and recommendations for each site are embedded into the narrative, along with photographs and renderings.

In these sub-sections, the report often says, “**the CMPAG found that ...**” This refers to a finding, which is a statement based on Core Principles that was adopted by the CMPAG.

In the sub-sections, the report often says, “**The CMPAG recommended that ...**” This refers to a recommendation that was adopted by the CMPAG.

Instead of prescribing only one use for each site, the Civic Master Plan may identify a range of appropriate uses. The findings and recommendations in the Civic Master Plan may also indicate priorities for various sites that can be found in the main narrative. When multiple uses are identified, the reader will find a NOTE ON MULTIPLE USES.

was an industrial zone, including an old dump. Over the last several decades it has been rehabilitated, largely with Rio Grande Park and associated pedestrian/bike trails through the river corridor.

Beginning with the Aspen Consolidated Sanitation District headquarters site and Obermeyer Place, the CMPAG discovered there are further steps that can be taken to create memorable places in this important area between Main Street and the Roaring Fork River.

A 19th-century view of the Rio Grande Railroad terminal area in what is now Rio Grande Park.



Civic Master Plan Core Principles

1 Civic & Arts/Cultural uses belong in the heart of town. Many communities develop a “big glass box” on the outskirts of town surrounded by parking and a drainage feature and call it their Civic Center. Aspen has the fortune of an integrated civic core in the heart of downtown and the substantial community character that has resulted. This planning effort builds on that tradition.

2 Mixed-use buildings and mixed-use areas create vibrant, memorable places. Single-use buildings, depending upon their use, can have periods of little activity. Repeated on a large scale, whole single-use areas can see little activity. Civic Centers dominated by government institutions, for example, are vacant during weekends. Integrating complimentary uses can result in a more active and more interesting environment.

3 Focus on Creating Great People Places. Great public places give identity to cities and instill a sense of pride in the community. These public places become the backdrop for social interaction, memorable experiences, and can be a source of energy for the district.

4 Affordable Housing and Affordable Commercial space ensures viability of civic functions and vitality of town. Each decision concerning civic institutions should involve a discussion about affordable housing and the long-term viability of the institution. Affordable Commercial space addresses the continued viability of the local economy and contributes to a vital mix of uses. Housing has the ability to increase vitality of an area and of the public spaces throughout the civic area.

5 Civic planning must address the need for parking while not inducing additional traffic. The ability for the City to facilitate the convenient conversion of the driver to the pedestrian is extremely valuable to the character of the Civic area. Ignoring the various parking demands may result in extra traffic from cars circling the area and visitor frustration.

6 Partnerships among and between the public and private sectors can be very advantageous in achieving civic goals. Private enterprise may significantly extend the public’s ability to reach public goals. While each circumstance needs to be individually considered, the possibility of “win-win” scenarios are worth exploring.

7 Pedestrian orientation creates connections between neighborhoods. The design, programming, and implementation of civic projects should focus on the pedestrian quality of the district. Connections to and through the district should be enhanced.

8 Arts and Culture is an intrinsic asset. The pursuit of excellence in the arts and culture is an integral part of Aspen’s historical character. The display and presentation of arts and cultural events is a core element of Aspen’s identity as a unique community in a competitive resort environment, and Aspen should build upon this intrinsic asset at every opportunity. A sustained cultivation of the arts and culture in Aspen will further enrich the Aspen community, reinforce its international profile and strengthen its economy over the long-term.

SECTION I: LOCALLY SERVING, LOCALLY OWNED BUSINESS

Summary

This section focuses on a sector of the business community that has steadily drained out of the City of Aspen, often to the Aspen Airport Business Center, but also further downvalley.

These are the painting contractors, auto repair shops, glass repair, landscaping firms and commercial bakeries – non-retail service businesses that are often owned by local people and tend to serve either local people or other local businesses.

Certainly, some of these businesses may serve tourists, but they are largely locally serving.

Within the civic core, there are only two non-retail small business parks remaining – they are located in two Service/Commercial/Industrial (SCI) Zone Districts. One is at Obermeyer Place, which is now being completed. The other is described as “SCI West” in this document. SCI West is located on N. Mill Street between Puppy Smith St. and the bridge over the Roaring Fork River. This parcel of land is the only privately owned property that is evaluated in the Civic Master Plan.

In addition to the SCI Zone District, the Land Use Code offers a second zone district for locally serving businesses: The Neighborhood Commercial Zone District. This district allows for retail stores, restaurants and other uses, but only those intended to serve the neighborhood area. Retail stores targeting the tourist population are

not permitted. Obermeyer Place includes a small piece of Neighborhood Commercial zoning, closest to Rio Grande Park.

SECTION ONE WILL REVIEW THE FOLLOWING THREE SITES:

- + Obermeyer Place
- + The SCI West parcel
- + The City-Owned Parking Lots at Rio Grande Place



Eddie Liebowitz, owner of Ski Service Center / Board Werks, will be located at Obermeyer Place in the Service/Commercial/Industrial Zone District.



ASPEN AREA COMMUNITY PLAN

Encourage a more balanced permanent community.

Local ownership of business helps maintain our community's unusual character, tends to return more money to the local economy, and provides additional opportunities for upward mobility of working people.

Locally serving businesses ... should be supported because they make commerce more convenient and strengthen the local economy by causing transactions to take place in the community that otherwise would take place elsewhere.

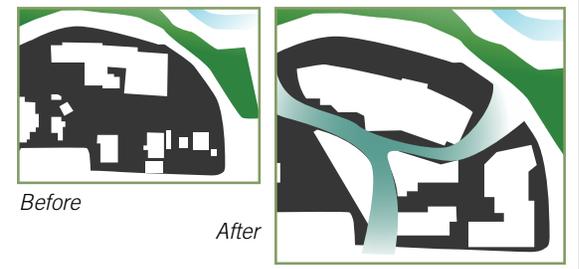
Obermeyer Place

When the Civic Master Plan Phase I Report was issued in 2001, the Obermeyer and adjacent properties featured a haphazard street and parking layout interrupted by a series of dilapidated buildings. The Phase I Report described the area as a pedestrian barrier between Main Street and Rio Grande Park. Because the relatively low rents in the SCI Zone District would not be able to finance a major redevelopment, the Phase I Report suggested a public/private partnership that could provide a number of public benefits. In 2001, CMPAG member Bill Lipsey met informally with city staff and Klaus Obermeyer. All parties recognized a set of shared goals for the Obermeyer property and neighboring SCI-zoned properties.



Pedestrian-only walkways in the interior of Obermeyer Place.

Obermeyer Place, before & after: The renderings at right show how the five new buildings at Obermeyer Place create a distinct “positive” interior space, which establishes strong pedestrian routes. At the same time, the buildings relate directly to Rio Grande Place and to Rio Grande Park, creating a well-defined “edge” between the urban block and the park.



In April 2002, the City Council voted to form the Obermeyer Place Task Force, made up of citizens and a variety of stakeholders. The Task Force worked with City staff and Obermeyer's planning and architectural team to design a project via a public/private partnership. In April 2003, the City Council unanimously approved the redevelopment project, which included:

- the redevelopment of 38,000 square feet of SCI space;
- two levels of underground parking (including 20 spaces for City use);
- a series of pedestrian ways, including a connection between Main Street and Rio Grande Park;
- 22 free-market residential units;
- 22 deed-restricted affordable housing units.

Obermeyer Place is a strong example of designing “urban edges.” The redevelopment created “positive” interior space via the lay-out and the shape of five buildings on the site; it created clear pedestrian pathways both internally and through the site (between Main Street and Rio Grande Park); and it created a defined edge for Rio Grande Place. This well-defined edge creates a stronger identity for both the urban site on one side and for the adjacent Rio Grande Park and riverside trail.

Of course, Obermeyer Place is not only about shapes and layout – the mixed uses at the sites will create a sense of vitality, filling the ground-level pedestrian walkways with people, and creating the kinds of interactions that make for a distinct and interesting neighborhood.



RELEVANT CORE PRINCIPLES

- Mixed-use buildings and mixed-use areas create active, vibrant and memorable places.
- Affordable Housing and Affordable Commercial space ensures the viability of civic functions and vitality of town.
- Civic planning must address the need for parking while not inducing additional traffic.
- Partnerships between and among the public and private sectors can be very advantageous in achieving public goals.

SECTION I: LOCALLY SERVING, LOCALLY OWNED BUSINESS

SCI West

The SCI West parcel is located on N. Mill Street, between Puppy Smith St. and the bridge over the Roaring Fork River. It is home to dozens of non-retail, service-oriented businesses including a landscaping firm, a stone and tile business, an interior lighting design studio and a consignment shop.

The property is privately owned and its condition is similar in several ways to the former Obermeyer Place property: The placement of the buildings, interior roads and parking areas is somewhat haphazard, the relationship to N. Mill Street is not well defined and the pedestrian experience is subpar.

The SCI West parcel is located on sloping land, which may mitigate the impacts of additional building height and may allow for underground parking as well. **The CMPAG found that,** “The Obermeyer Place project was a successful public/private partnership that could be used as a model for redevelopment at SCI West.”

The CMPAG recommended that, “City staff should hold discussions with property owners in the SCI West area to determine if there is interest in a redevelopment project, using Obermeyer Place as a model. Public benefits identified by the CMPAG could include:

- the renovation of SCI space
- underground parking
- pedestrian links
- affordable housing
- aesthetic improvements

Looking up N. Mill Street, with SCI West at right.



Inside SCI West, looking toward N. Mill St.



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City-Owned Parking Lots

At the intersection of Rio Grande Place and N. Mill Street, the CMPAG examined the future potential of the City-Owned Parking Lots in front of the Aspen Chamber Resort Association and Community Banks buildings.

The CMPAG found that the City-owned parking lots currently serve as “an unraveled edge that does not clearly demarcate the end of an urban block and the beginning of a public park.”

The CMPAG also found that this site may be ideal for uses defined in the Neighborhood Commercial Zone District, including retail stores intended to serve the neighborhood. A tourist-oriented retail store would not be allowed in this district.

The CMPAG found that, “Neighborhood Commercial (NC) zoning is a rare commercial use in the City of Aspen and is primarily intended to serve the local, year-round population. Neighborhood Commercial uses tend to be successful in areas that locals frequent, including the North Mill Street corridor.” In addition, the 2002 EPS Housing Study rated this site #1 out of 11 sites for the development of affordable housing, largely because of reduced costs due to City ownership and because of its walk-to-work potential.

The CMPAG recommended a mixed-use project with Neighborhood Commercial uses on the ground floor and affordable housing on upper floors.

The CMPAG also found that there is no “compelling need” to develop the parking lots in the short-term, adding that the replacement of the short-term parking now provided on the site would need to be addressed as part of any future development.

NOTE ON MULTIPLE USES: The CMPAG has identified more than one potential use for this site. In Section II, the CMPAG identified a shared-use arts facility as a potential use, if it is determined that such a facility is needed.



While Rio Grande Park contributes to a positive pedestrian experience along Rio Grande Place, the presence of parking lots on the other side of the street detracts from that experience.



The CMPAG found that the City-owned parking lot in the foreground currently serves as “an unraveled edge that does not clearly demarcate the end of an urban block and the beginning of a public park.”



RELEVANT CORE PRINCIPLES

- Mixed-use buildings and mixed-use areas create active, vibrant and memorable places.
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SECTION II: THE ARTS IN ASPEN

Summary

A variety of recent reports, studies and initiatives regarding the arts sector in Aspen represent a rare opportunity to improve the function of the Aspen arts community as a whole.

“The Economic Impact of the Arts on Aspen and Snowmass,” prepared for the Red Brick Center for the Arts in July 2004 found that the direct expenditures of arts groups and their audiences totaled \$53.1 million in 2003 – approximately 1/3 of the value of construction in the City of Aspen that same year.

According to three separate surveys conducted since 2004, an overwhelming majority of people indicated that arts and cultural events in Aspen play a critical role in their decision-making process.

Arts and culture influenced or greatly influenced decision to visit Aspen (summer) = **83%**

Arts and culture influenced or greatly influenced decision to visit Aspen (winter) = **68%**

PitCo 2nd homeowners who believe arts and culture are important or very important = **69%**

PitCo 2nd homeowners who intend to increase the use of their property = **61%**

PitCo 2nd homeowners who intend to retire here = **14%**

SECTION II REVIEWS THE FOLLOWING TOPICS:

- + The Wheeler Opera House
- + The potential for development of the Wheeler Parcel
- + The potential for a new arts facility in Aspen
- + The potential relocation of the Aspen Art Museum to a downtown location



ASPEN AREA COMMUNITY PLAN

Arts, culture, and education are acknowledged as essential to Aspen’s thriving year-round economy, its vibrant international profile, and its future as a unique place to live, work, and learn.

Ensure the provision of public facilities and services to sustain arts, culture and education in the community.

*Poet Christopher Merrill, Aspen Writer’s Foundation
Aspen Summer Words 2003*



The Wheeler Opera House

PRESERVING CHARACTER,
CELEBRATING VITALITY

The CMPAG found that, “As a signature historic building, the Wheeler Opera House engages people by creating a powerful sense of character that reflects Aspen’s roots and history.

“As the city’s focal point for arts and culture, the Wheeler conveys an equal sense that the community is alive and evolving, and continues to celebrate its core identity as a center for arts and culture.”

The CMPAG recommended the following concepts to build upon the character and vitality of the Wheeler Opera House:

- The use of temporary banners on the Wheeler Opera House that enhance the historic nature of the building, create a sense of vitality and celebrate upcoming events.

- The installation of a modest lighting array on the Wheeler building to call attention to the historic structure at night, and celebrate its iconic status.

- The continuation of commercial uses, and/or support for future commercial uses adjacent to the Wheeler that contribute to the vitality of the area both during the day and at night.

- Improvements to public spaces around the Wheeler, including sidewalks, streets and the pedestrian mall, which enhance the pedestrian experience.



RELEVANT CORE PRINCIPLES

- Focus on creating ‘great people places.’
- Improving pedestrian orientation.
- Arts and culture is an intrinsic asset.



The Wheeler Opera House

Future of the Wheeler Parcel

The Wheeler Opera House staff and Board of Directors are currently working on a 21st Century Master Plan, which includes a needs assessment of arts organizations regarding their use of the Wheeler.

In 2005, **The CMPAG recommended that** City staff generate an “Arts Sector Facilities Analysis to gather information on the space/seasonal needs of local arts organizations, and the existing supply/capacity of performing arts venues.”

This effort was coordinated with Wheeler staff, and began with a survey of local arts groups and event producers to evaluate existing arts facilities and explore the need for a new facility. The survey was completed in February 2006, and showed a relatively low score regarding the “availability” of existing arts venues: 60 out of 100.

The Wheeler Opera House hired arts consultant Michael Strong to complete the Arts Sector Facilities Analysis, which included the following statement: “Any plans to expand the Wheeler into the ‘Wheeler Parcel’ should only be done in conjunction with a comprehensive plan for exploring all possible redesign and expansion of the existing facility, and with an eye towards partnerships that will severely limit or eliminate the threat of significant dark periods for all of its performance and usage spaces.”

In addition to studying the needs of arts groups, the Wheeler’s 21st Century Master Plan will also examine potential development on the Wheeler Parcel; a vacant 3,000 square foot City-owned lot located directly adjacent to the Wheeler Opera House.

In 2005, **the CMPAG found that**, “A downtown location for arts-related events and activities tends to reinforce Aspen’s identity as a center for arts and culture, and tends to make such events more economically viable.”

The CMPAG recommended that the development of the Wheeler Parcel should:

- Accommodate as many additional needs of the local arts community as possible.
- Improve the operational function of the Wheeler Opera House.
- Contribute to improvements in the daytime administrative office and box office.
- Contribute to the Wheeler’s ability to present more live performances and to improvements in production capabilities.

The CMPAG found that, “Future development at the Wheeler Parcel may increase operational flexibility and the number of annual productions at the Wheeler Opera House. Increased production capability could add a new element to the upcoming Arts Sector Facility Analysis.”

If there is determined to be a need for a new performing arts facility, that need may be met – at least in part – by potential development of the Wheeler Parcel.



The CMPAG recommended that, “In the event that a new shared-use facility is deemed necessary, the Civic Master Plan Core Principles should be used as guidelines to evaluate proposed locations.”



RELEVANT CORE PRINCIPLES

- Civic and arts/cultural uses belong in the heart of town.
- Mixed-use buildings and mixed-use areas create vibrant, memorable places.
- Focus on creating ‘great people places.’
- Partnerships among and between the public and private sectors can be very advantageous in achieving civic goals.
- Arts and culture is an intrinsic asset.

Potential New Arts Facility Galena Plaza & Rio Grande Place Location

As part of the Civic Master Plan process, at least three local non-profit arts groups with representatives on the CMPAG expressed interest in a new, shared-use performing arts facility. The three groups were Theatre Aspen, Aspen Filmfest and the Aspen Writers Foundation. Informal discussions with other arts groups and event producers showed potential interest in a new downtown arts facility.

During the Civic Master Plan process, the CMPAG discussed the potential of locating a performing arts facility between Rio Grande Place and Galena Plaza.

Civic Master Plan consultant and architect Gilbert Sanchez conducted a feasibility study and found there was adequate space and structural capability to locate a performing arts venue with at least one theatre as well as classrooms and offices in this location.

The CMPAG recommended that, “The north edge of Galena Plaza be considered in the future for a shared-use arts facility, with the bulk of the building extending down to Rio Grande Place, pending the outcome of the Arts Sector Facilities Analysis.”

The CMPAG found that “Future development at the Wheeler Parcel may increase operational flexibility and the number of annual productions at the Wheeler Opera House. Increased production capability could add a new element to the Arts Sector Facility Analysis.”

(Toward the end of the Civic Master Plan process in 2006, the three arts groups mentioned above stopped pursuing a new performing arts center at the Galena Plaza/Rio Grande place site, and Theatre Aspen began focusing on replacing its existing tent.)

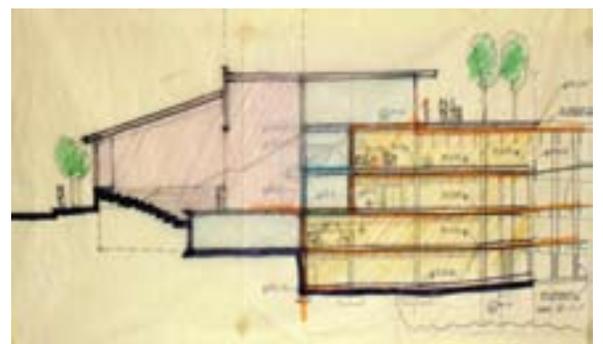
NOTE ON MULTIPLE USES: A potential performing arts facility on a portion of the City-owned parking lots along Rio Grande Place is one option for the parking lot site. Another option is for Neighborhood Commercial uses and affordable housing. (See Section I).

A performing arts facility at the north edge of Galena Plaza is one option for this site. **The CMPAG recommended that**, “If a shared-use arts facility is not constructed at Galena Plaza/Rio Grande Place, a one-story building at the north edge of Galena Plaza could be a welcoming and interactive destination point that capitalizes on the vista, creates vitality and could feature a range of civic and/or cultural uses.”

The CMPAG further recommended that either a shared Public Meeting Hall or a future Visitors Center would be an “appropriate” use for the north edge of Galena Plaza.



“Bubble map” showing potential art center between Galena Plaza and Rio Grande Place.



A sectional rendering of a potential arts facility. Rio Grande Place is at left; Galena Plaza at top right. Existing garage in yellow.

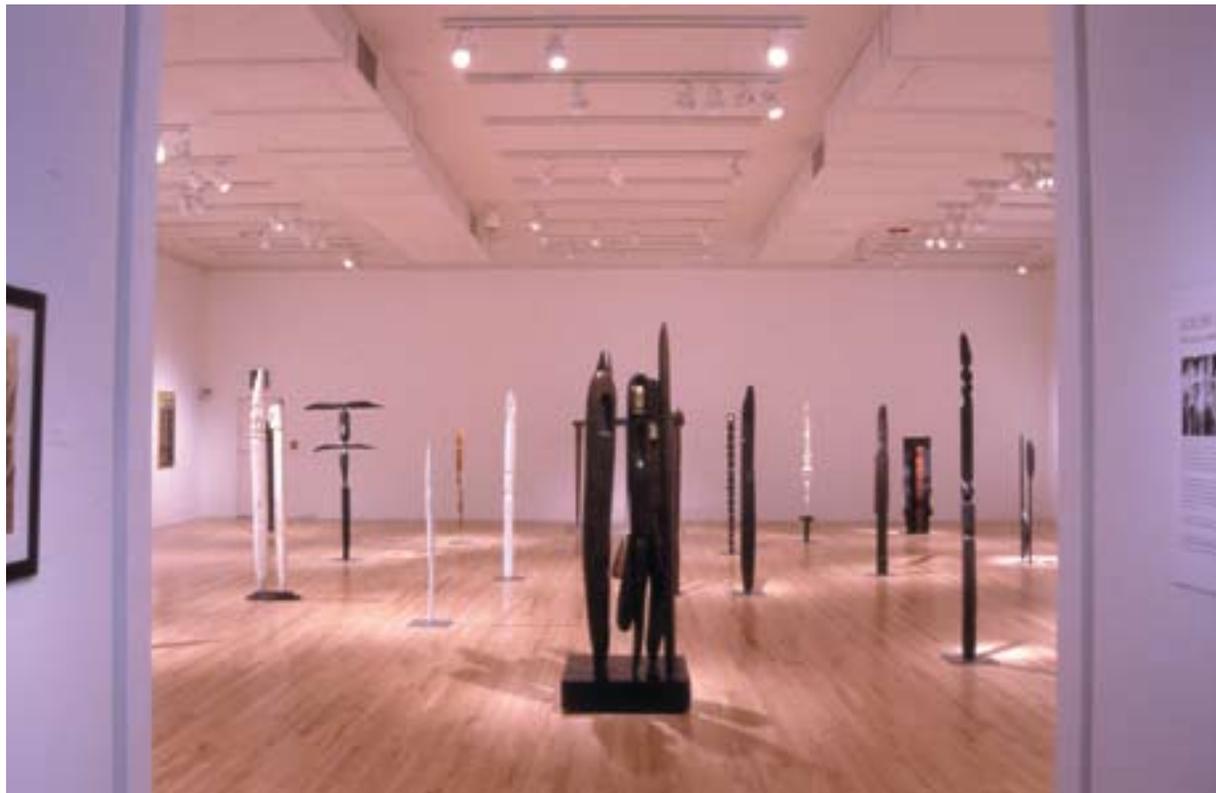


RELEVANT CORE PRINCIPLES

- Civic and arts/cultural uses belong in the heart of town.
- Mixed-use buildings and mixed-use areas create vibrant, memorable places.
- Focus on creating ‘great people places.’
- Civic planning must address need for parking while not inducing additional traffic.
- Partnerships among and between the public and private sectors can be very advantageous in achieving civic goals.
- Arts and culture is an intrinsic asset.

The Aspen Art Museum

An exhibition at the Aspen Art Museum from December 2002 to February 2003; Louise Bourgeois: The Early Work.



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- Arts and culture is an intrinsic asset.

The Aspen Art Museum has been contemplating a major expansion for several years.

An expansion would allow for a substantially larger exhibition space, an expanded lobby and reception area, space for classrooms, a larger bookstore and food services such as a small café.

All of these amenities would help bring the Aspen Art Museum into a more competitive position with its peer institutions regarding its ability to attract world-class exhibits.

The Aspen Art Museum staff and Board of Trustees have explored locations in or close to the downtown, including publicly-owned and privately-owned sites. A downtown location would allow for the design of a new “signature” building that could result in a stronger identity and international profile for the Aspen Art Museum.

The Civic Master Plan Phase I Report stated in 2001 that the museum “should be relocated to, or in, downtown Aspen.”

In 2005, **the CMPAG made the following recommendation:** “The CMPAG supports the Aspen Art Museum’s exploration of downtown locations in collaboration with the City of Aspen.”

The CMPAG recommended that, “If the Zupancis property is not used for civic purposes, the site would be appropriate for arts and cultural uses or a mixed-use building with affordable housing.” (See Section III regarding the recommended civic uses for the Zupancis Property.)

The CMPAG recommended that, “If a shared-use performing arts facility is not constructed at Galena Plaza/Rio Grande Place, a building at the north edge of Galena Plaza could be a welcoming and interactive destination point that capitalizes on the vista, creates vitality and could feature a range of civic and/or cultural uses.”

The CMPAG recommended that, “the former Youth Center building be considered for renovation or replacement in the future. A new or renovated building could be a welcom-

ing and interactive destination point that capitalizes on the vista, creates vitality and could include mixed uses and/or a range of civic and/or cultural uses.”

The CMPAG has also recognized that a downtown site may not be viable, and that the Art Museum may seek to expand at its current site.

When the Art Museum was exploring the potential of expanding at its current site in 2003, **the CMPAG recommended** the implementation of various pedestrian improvements to increase the viability of the current Art Museum site. The CMPAG reiterated its support for a range of pedestrian improvements to encourage more movement between the downtown and the Roaring Fork River/Art Museum site. These improved pedestrian movements are fully outline in Section V, including:

- The implementation of the N. Mill Street corridor redesign, to improve aesthetics in the area and to encourage pedestrian movement;

- The implementation of the Rio Grande Master Plan, including aesthetic improvements and pedestrian amenities;

- The implementation of pedestrian improvements in conjunction with the future redevelopment of the Zupancis Property, Galena Plaza and the City-owned parking lots to improve the north-south movement of pedestrians.

The CMPAG also anticipated possible future uses of the Aspen Art Museum site, if the Art Museum relinquishes its lease in the future.

The CMPAG recommended that if the Art Museum relinquishes its lease in the future, the City “should identify a new use that allows for public interaction; that builds on the intrinsic assets of the site and the building; and that recognizes the challenges of the site.



The Aspen Art Museum in winter.

SECTION III: LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Summary

“Aspen was a traditional mining town that ultimately evolved into a resort, and the traditional functions of a small municipality still remain in the heart of the downtown.” — **CMPAG Finding.**

As discussed in the introduction of this report, this statement is one of the key elements of the Civic Master Plan. **The CMPAG went on to make the following finding,** “As noted in Core Principle #1, a primary goal of the Civic Master Plan process is to build upon the intrinsic asset of a civic core that remains integrated into downtown Aspen.”

Core Principle #1 (at right) is at the heart of the “Local Government” section, and is the guiding philosophical position of the CMPAG today and for the future. The upcoming narrative explores the need for local government offices and public meeting space, but also examines some non-traditional civic functions such as The Thrift Shop and the Visitors Center.

SECTION III REVIEWS THE FOLLOWING TOPICS:

- + Space Needs
- + Shared Meeting Hall
- + Zupancis Property
- + Former Youth Center
- + Aspen Fire Protection District Headquarters Station & Thrift Shop
- + Pitkin County Library
- + Visitors Center
- + Aspen Sanitation District Office & Housing



CORE PRINCIPLE #1

Civic and arts/cultural uses belong in the heart of town. Many communities develop a “big glass box” on the outskirts of town surrounded by parking and a drainage feature and call it their Civic Center. Aspen has the fortune of an integrated civic core in the heart of downtown and the substantial community character that has resulted. This planning effort builds on that tradition.

Space Needs & Current Planning Efforts:

Pitkin County & The City of Aspen

In recent years, both the City of Aspen and Pitkin County have remodeled and renovated the interior of their primary office buildings (City Hall and the County Plaza Building), continually creating smaller offices for staff. In some cases, staff are working out of what used to be closets. At the same time, both the City and County have moved staff and some departments to other locations due to a lack of space. This creates inefficiencies both internally and with regard to customer service.

In 2005, Pitkin County began a Facility Feasibility Study, led by county staff and RNL Design of Denver. Questions

to be answered were: 1) Does the County need a new facility? 2) If so, where should it be located?; and 3) Assuming that some county agencies will be split up, where should each county agency be located?

Also in 2005, **The CMPAG found that,** “The City of Aspen’s space limitations require a long-term solution to ensure quality service.” In early 2006, the City of Aspen began to coordinate with Pitkin County to explore a possible shared facility.

Shared Civic Meeting Hall

Providing adequate offices for the City of Aspen and Pitkin County was not the only space issue discussed by the CMPAG.

The CMPAG made the following findings:

1. The existing meeting space for the City of Aspen and Pitkin County is not adequate.
2. The design of meeting space currently used by the City and the County do not reflect the importance of the discussions, debates and decisions being made.
3. A City-County Meeting Hall is an appropriate shared use, considering the existing need and the similar purpose of the use. A shared Meeting Hall would avoid a duplication of costs.

4. A Civic Meeting Hall should be close to downtown government offices, adjacent to outdoor public space and at a prominent site that conveys a sense of significance.
5. A Civic Meeting Hall should be designed so that it can be available for a variety of uses by the general public as well as government meetings.
6. Logistical issues between the City and the County regarding a shared Meeting Hall will need to be addressed.

The CMPAG recommended that, “As part of the collaboration between the City of Aspen and Pitkin County regarding civic space needs, the City and County should identify an appropriate downtown space and design a shared-use Meeting Hall, considering the following Desired Elements:

- Inspirational
- Design of space should reflect the importance of discussions and decisions made there
- Dignity afforded to the public
- Elevate the debate
- Flexibility
- Appropriate technology”

Considering the fourth finding (above), **the CMPAG recommended** the following sites as “appropriate for a Meeting Hall”:

- The former Youth Center
- The north edge of Galena Plaza
- The Zupancis Property



A civic meeting hall in Washington State.

The CMPAG also recommended that “a meeting room could be located on the ground level of the library expansion, to allow for public access to the meeting room at any time, and to increase the use and vitality of Galena Plaza.

NOTE ON MULTIPLE USES: The former Youth Center, the north edge of Galena Plaza and the Zupancis property are sites that have been recommended for more than one possible future use.

Former Youth Center

- Appropriate for a Visitors Center
- Appropriate for a range of civic and/or cultural uses

North Edge of Galena Plaza

- Appropriate for a Visitors Center
- Appropriate for a range of civic and/or cultural uses

Zupancis Property

- Priority for a civic building
- Arts and cultural uses as second priority
- Mixed uses and affordable housing as third priority



The CMPAG found that a meeting hall should be “adjacent to outdoor public space and at a prominent site that conveys a sense of significance.” This is a view of Rio Grande Park.

Zupancis Property

At left is the County Plaza Building; at center is the Zupancis Property. View is from across Main Street.



In 2000, at the beginning of the Civic Master Plan process, all local government agencies conducted space needs studies. Both the Aspen Fire Protection District (AFPD) and Pitkin County identified a significant need for additional space, with the City of Aspen also identifying a need for additional space.

In 2001, the City of Aspen bought a 27,500 square-foot lot called the Zupancis Property, directly adjacent to the County Plaza Building on Main Street. The City informally gave the AFPD the first option to buy the property for a new Headquarters Station – while also recognizing Pitkin County’s space needs.

In 2005, the AFPD and the City of Aspen jointly announced that the AFPD Headquarters Station would remain at its current location on Hopkins Street. Also in 2005, Pitkin County began a Facility Feasibility Study and expressed an interest in the Zupancis Property.

In December 2005, **The CMPAG recommended that**, “the City of Aspen collaborate with Pitkin County during the Facility Feasibility Analysis process in order to review and evaluate the scope of potential civic uses at the Zupancis property.”

NOTE ON MULTIPLE USES: The CMPAG further recommended that, “If the Zupancis property is not used for civic purposes, the site would be appropriate for arts and cultural uses or a mixed-use building with affordable housing.”

The wording in these two recommendations shows that the CMPAG’s priority for the Zupancis Property is for a civic use, with a specific focus on a City-County facility. In March 2006, the Aspen City Council and Pitkin County Board of County Commissioners directed staff to collaborate in order to explore the use of the Zupancis Property for a joint civic facility.

The Nature of a Civic Building

The CMPAG conducted an exercise in 2005 to identify the elements that a new civic building should include. They are:

- Humanistic
- Inclusive
- Inviting
- Welcoming
- Inspirational
- Functional
- Easy to navigate
- Customer oriented
- Contains civic symbols
- Handicapped accessibility
- General accessibility
- Approachable
- Sense of pride
- Community spirit
- Projects professionalism
- Reflects professionalism

Relocating County Offices Out of Town

The Pitkin County Facility Feasibility Analysis has generated an alternative option that would locate a substantial amount of County offices just west of the Aspen Airport Business Center, along Highway 82.

The CMPAG found that, “Removing civic functions from the downtown will tend to reduce the kind of community character that still makes the core of Aspen a ‘traditional’ downtown, surrounded by a resort environment.”

The CMPAG also found that, “The City of Aspen and Pitkin County have a long history of considering both

quantitative measurements and qualitative elements in their decision-making processes – both function and character are important in shaping the future.”

The CMPAG recommended that, “the Pitkin County Facility Feasibility Analysis consider qualitative elements as well as quantitative measurements. For example, in addition to measuring the quantity and length of car trips and the cost of land and construction, the study should consider the qualitative impacts of various alternatives on the character of the civic core in downtown Aspen.”

Former Youth Center

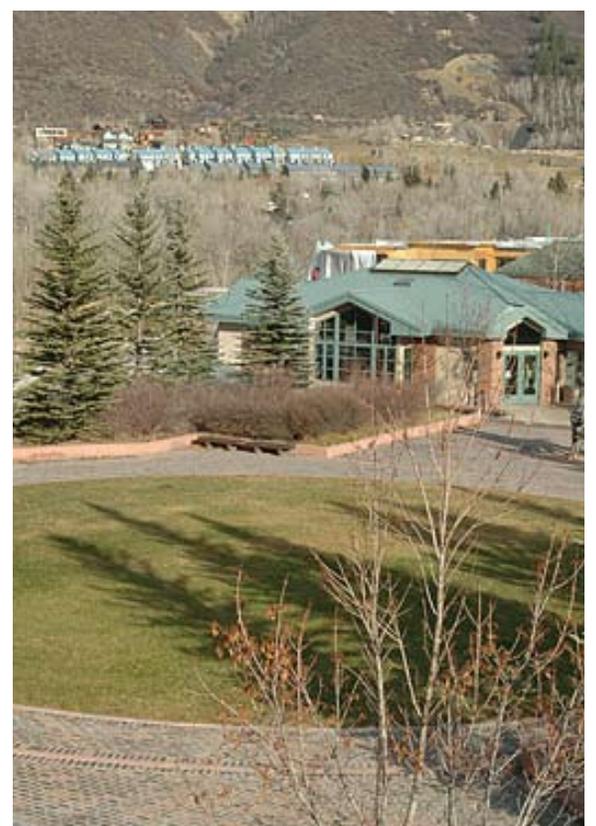
The former Youth Center is a City-owned building that currently houses City employees, including the Asset Management Department and the GIS Department – with meeting space on the top floor. (The ground floor is leased as a restaurant.)

The CMPAG found that, “The former Youth Center building was designed as a Youth Center and is relatively inflexible in accommodating new uses. The future renovation or replacement of this building could allow for new uses that could increase vitality at Galena Plaza. The size of the building was limited by funds available, and a future structure could be larger, if funds are available to address engineering issues related to topography.”

The CMPAG recommended that, “the City of Aspen collaborate with Pitkin County with regard to the Facility Feasibility Analysis process in order to review and evaluate the scope of potential civic uses in the downtown area, including but not limited to the Zupancis property and the former Youth Center.”

Although the joint City Council-County Commissioners vote in March 2006 did not request that the former Youth Center be explored as a joint civic facility, one of the options generated by the Pitkin County Facility Feasibility Analysis in January 2006 included the former Youth Center as a potential County building site.

NOTE ON MULTIPLE USES: The CMPAG also recommended that, “A new or renovated Youth Center building could be a welcoming and interactive destination point that capitalizes on the vista, creates vitality and could include mixed uses and/or a range of civic and/or cultural uses.” The CMPAG further recommended that both a Public Meeting Hall or a Visitors Center were “appropriate” uses for the former Youth Center.



The former Youth Center, top right, the east edge of Galena Plaza.

Aspen Fire Protection District
Headquarters Station

Volunteers sort donations at The Thrift Shop.



The Thrift Shop

For many years, The Thrift Shop has been interested in expanding to include a second floor, based on the consistent high volume of business it enjoys. The Thrift Shop currently re-distributes a substantial amount of clothing to other groups, such as The Salvation Army, because it has no room for additional displays. By adding a second floor, The Thrift Shop could keep a much larger inventory on-site, and believes it could substantially increase its business – and the amount it donates to local non-profits and for student scholarships. The project to replace the fire station includes replacing The Thrift Shop building, and adding a second floor.

A current view (above) of the Fire Station and The Thrift Shop, at right.

In 2005, the Aspen Fire Protection District (AFPD) and the City of Aspen agreed to conclude their joint planning efforts regarding the potential relocation of the AFPD Headquarters Station from Hopkins Street to the Zupancis Property on Main Street.

In March 2006, the City Council approved a conceptual plan to replace the Hopkins Street Station and approved a new 40-year lease. When this document went to press in February 2008, the Council was scheduled to consider final approval.

The CMPAG found that, “The civic nature and iconic quality of the Aspen Volunteer Fire Department – and its location in the downtown core – is an immeasurable asset to both the year-round community and visitors.” **The CMPAG recommended that,** “during the design process for the renovation of the Hopkins Street Headquarters Stations, the AFPD should consider:

- The civic nature and central location of the building;
- The iconic quality of the AFPD and its members;
- The value of pedestrian and public interaction.

The CMPAG found that:

- The Thrift Shop is an Aspen institution that provides an important service for lower income residents and workers that no one else provides, while donating proceeds to local non-profits and student scholarships.
- The central location of The Thrift Shop supports its overall mission, as many of its customers use public transit.
- The Thrift Shop relies on subsidized rent and could not carry out its mission if it had to pay retail rental rates.
- The simultaneous renovation of the AFPD Headquarters Station and The Thrift Shop is an opportunity to create a vibrant mixed-use area.

Below is an architectural rendering of a new Headquarters Station at the existing Hopkins Street site for the Aspen Fire Protection District and The Thrift Shop. This rendering, by Studio B Architects, was scheduled for final approval by City Council in March 2008.



Visitors Center

Following the November 2004 ballot election that defeated the proposal to relocate the Visitor Center to the Galena/Main intersection, no further discussions regarding a new location have taken place.

Although the Aspen Chamber Resort Association signed a five-year lease with the City in 2005 for its current site on Rio Grande Place, several problems remain. **The CMPAG found that:**

- The constrained office space and lack of basic amenities remain challenges at the existing Visitor Center.
- The lack of visibility, lack of wayfinding and inconvenient location of the existing Visitor Center remain major obstacles to providing optimal services to visitors.

In addition, **The CMPAG found that,** “An optimal location for a Visitor Center would be close to parking and the downtown, and recommended that appropriate sites for a Visitor Center include:

- The former Youth Center
- The north edge of Galena Plaza

NOTE ON MULTIPLE USES: The former Youth Center and the north edge of Galena Plaza are sites that have been recommended for more than one possible future use.

Former Youth Center

- Appropriate for a Shared Meeting Hall
- Appropriate for a range of civic and/or cultural uses

North Edge of Galena Plaza

- Appropriate for a Shared Meeting Hall
- Appropriate for a Performing Arts Facility
- Appropriate for a range of civic and/or cultural uses



The Aspen Chamber Resort Association Visitor Center on Rio Grande Place.

Pitkin County Library

When the Rio Grande Garage was built in the mid-1990s, the City of Aspen and Pitkin County exchanged land at the Galena Plaza site.

Part of that agreement set aside 44-feet of land to the east of the library – into Galena Plaza – for a future library expansion.

The Pitkin County Library had not planned to expand for 5-10 years, but the Board of Directors has expressed concern that if the roof of the garage is replaced in the next several years, the library may need to coordinate the installation of additional support pillars to accommodate future expansion.

The CMPAG recommended that, “Staff representatives of the Pitkin County Library, Pitkin County and the City of Aspen meet to discuss the Library’s short-term infrastructure planning and long-term facility goals, and identify an appropriate public review process that will address both short-term and long-term goals.”

The CMPAG supports an expansion of the Pitkin County Library to the east, **and recommended that** “the design of the building be coordinated with other built edges around Galena Plaza, to the extent possible.”

The CMPAG also recommended that “a meeting room be located on the ground level of the library expansion, to allow for public access to the meeting room at any time, and to increase the use and vitality of Galena Plaza.”



The Pitkin County Library on N. Mill Street.

Aspen Sanitation District Office and Housing

The Aspen Consolidated Sanitation District (ACSD) agreed in 2002 to consider Civic Master Plan Core Principles as it drafted a Master Plan. The CMPAG endorsed the Sanitation District Master Plan in May 2003. The Sanitation District Master Plan was approved, with conditions, by City Council in 2005.

The ACSD is a quasi-municipal organization responsible for wastewater treatment for Aspen’s urban area. It is located on a 3.8-acre property at the base of N. Mill Street. The property includes a 400-foot stretch of the Roaring Fork River and section of the Rio Grande Trail. It is adjacent to the Aspen Center for Environmental Studies (ACES) property.

The existing condition of the District’s river corridor features a series of man-made berms on the south side of the

public river trail, as well as non-native plants. The north side of the trail, directly adjacent to the river, is a more natural riparian environment.

The District’s Master Plan would establish a sense of continuity on both sides, removing the berms, planting native grasses and reaffirming the elements of an open, natural river corridor on both sides of the trail.

There are currently nine affordable housing units on the site, with the District Master Plan calling for a total of 14 units.

The area between a series of proposed new townhouse units and the river corridor would feature a lowered stormwater retention area, including native plantings. This aesthetic buffer zone ranges from 120 feet to 180 feet, greatly exceeding the city’s 100-foot stream margin requirement.

This rendering shows the Master Plan for the Aspen Consolidated Sanitation District site, located at the base of N. Mill Street.



SECTION IV: PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

Summary

As part of its focus on the area north of Main Street, the CMPAG examined two public open spaces: Rio Grande Park and Galena Plaza.

There is a fundamental difference between rural open space and urban open space. Urban parks or plazas are not just about the open space itself, but about the borders that define them – including quality streets, and the buildings and uses surrounding the open space.

The public open space contributes to the identity of the buildings around it, and the surrounding buildings contribute to the identity of the public open space.

For both Rio Grande Park and Galena Plaza, the CMPAG made findings and recommendations intended to better define these important public open spaces by creating stronger edges. That could mean improved bordering streets, pedestrian ways and/or built edges.

Wagner Park, with the Mountain Chalet in the background.



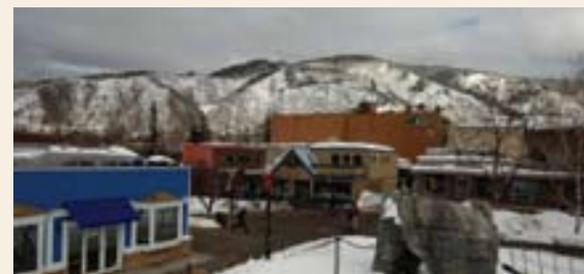
In the picture above, the Mountain Chalet creates a border, or built edge, that helps define Wagner Park, while creating a varied and interesting visual experience for pedestrians walking on Durant. Pedestrian pathways and buildings also create an edge for Wagner Park at its northeast corner, as shown at right.

Imagine if instead of the Mountain Chalet, or instead of the pedestrian malls, there was a parking lot next to Wagner Park. This would significantly alter the identity of the Park. Today, this is the case for Rio Grande Park, where a City-owned parking lot forms one of the important and prominent boundaries of the park.

THIS SECTION REVIEWS THE FOLLOWING TOPICS:

- + Improved edges around Rio Grande Park & Galena Plaza
- + Future uses surrounding Galena Plaza & Rio Grande Park
- + Internal improvements to Rio Grande Park

The northeast corner of Wagner Park.



ASPEN AREA COMMUNITY PLAN

'There is widespread agreement that open space is vital to Aspen's sense of itself. ... The natural environment is one of the community's greatest assets and the reason many people choose to visit or make the Aspen area their home.'

Rio Grande Park

Urban Edges

A beautiful picture deserves an attractive frame.

The CMPAG found that, "In the downtown area south of Main Street, both urban blocks and public parks have clearly defined edges and are easily recognizable. ... Creating a clear edge and demarcation between urban blocks and public parks is a widely recognized and sound urban design concept."

When the Civic Master Plan process began in 2000, the series of buildings at what is now Obermeyer Place reflected an unraveled southeast edge for Rio Grande Place and Rio Grande Park. The buildings and parking areas were located on the site in a haphazard manner, with no defined interior space and little relationship to the street or the park.

At the southwest edge of Rio Grande Park, **The CMPAG found that**, "the City-owned parking lots along Rio Grande Place are an unraveled edge that do not clearly demarcate the end of an urban block and the beginning of a public park." Would the Aspen community tolerate a parking lot next to Wagner Park?

Finally, the west edge of Rio Grande Park is bordered by a relatively thin sidewalk along N. Mill Street, with a minimal buffer between pedestrians and the busy traffic along the street. Again, this does not represent a strong edge or border for the park.

The CMPAG made a series of findings and recommendations that would better define these three edges of Rio Grande Park.



Southeast Edge

The design and placement of the new buildings at Obermeyer Place create a stronger and more defined southeast edge to Rio Grande Park. The park contributes to the identity of the buildings, and the curving building fronts respect the street and park edge and contribute to the identity of the park – much like the frame around a picture. In addition, the interior pedestrian routes and descending stairs at Obermeyer Place lead directly to the Park.

Southwest Edge

The CMPAG recommended various potential uses for the City-owned parking lots that would establish a demarcated southwest edge for Rio Grande Park, creating a visually compelling and inviting pedestrian experience in this area. Potential uses include an Arts Center (See Section II), or Neighborhood Commercial uses with affordable housing on upper floors (See Section I).

Conceptual rendering of N. Mill St. redesign.



The West Edge

An urban-park edge does not have to be a building. For example, the hard-scaped pedestrian walkway just to the west of Wagner Park creates an interesting and defined edge. **The CMPAG found that** a redesign of N. Mill Street could include "... a larger buffer between pedestrians and traffic that will increase safety and improve the pedestrian experience and visual aesthetic of the area." A wider sidewalk area treated with landscaping would form a more visually interesting border to the west edge of Rio Grande Park.

Galena Plaza

Urban Edges



Galena Plaza on a typical afternoon. This public open space is not well used.

The Galena Plaza site played a critical role in the formation of the Civic Master Plan process: While a leak in the roof of the Rio Grande Parking Garage demanded attention, a clear consensus was emerging that the plaza was a failed public space.

After extensive discussion, **the CMPAG reached a consensus** to maintain open space at the center of the plaza, while supporting “built edges” that would frame the open space and introduce new uses to the site – increasing the vitality and enjoyment of the plaza.

The West Edge

The CMPAG supports an expansion of the Pitkin County Library, and found that, “in combination with other new ‘built edges’ the library expansion would contribute to a vibrant and memorable mixed-use area.”

The library expansion was anticipated as part of a transfer of land between the City and the County in 1995 (See Section III).

The CMPAG recommended, “that the design of the building be coordinated with other built edges around Galena Plaza, to the extent possible.”



The North Edge

The CMPAG found that, “A built north edge, with a medium-high intensity use, would increase vitality at Galena Plaza.”

Preliminary engineering studies have shown that the Rio Grande Garage could support a one-story building without the need for any additional pillars or support structures inside the garage.

The CMPAG recommended that, “the north edge of Galena Plaza be considered in the future for a shared-use arts facility, with the bulk of the building extending down to Rio Grande Place, pending the outcome of the Arts Sector Facilities Analysis (please see Section II). However, the CMPAG anticipated that a new arts facility may not become a reality.

In Section III (Local Government), **The CMPAG recommended that** the north edge of Galena Plaza is an “appropriate site” for a Visitor Center or a shared Public Meeting Hall.

But the CMPAG did not rule out other uses, and also recommended that, “If a shared-use arts facility is not constructed at Galena Plaza/Rio Grande Place, a building at the north edge of Galena Plaza could be a welcoming and interactive destination point that capitalizes on the vista, creates vitality and could feature a range of civic and/or cultural uses.”

The East Edge

Today, the east edge of Galena Plaza is largely open, with the exception of the former Youth Center building at the northeast corner, and the stairwell/elevator feature.

The CMPAG recommended that, “The former Youth Center building be considered for renovation or replacement in the future. A new or renovated building could be a welcoming and interactive destination point that capitalizes on the vista, creates vitality and could include mixed uses and/or a range of civic and/or cultural uses.”

The CMPAG also recommended that the east built edge should extend “to the existing stairwell/elevator feature, and feature compelling architectural elements intended to draw pedestrians across Main Street.”

Open Space

During its deliberations, the CMPAG considered simply building over the entire Galena Plaza site. However, the CMPAG ultimately reached a strong consensus that what is now a failed public space could become a vital and interesting public space.

The CMPAG recommended that, “In conjunction with future built edges at Galena Plaza, the open space at the center of Galena Plaza should be designed to animate the site in relation to new uses.”

Pedestrian Movement

The CMPAG recommended that, “the design of a dramatically improved pedestrian way from Main Street, through the Galena St. Extension, Galena Plaza and stairway down to and through Rio Grande Park.”

Please see Section V (Pedestrian Movement) for more information on the CMPAG’s findings and recommendations for a pedestrian route through Galena Plaza.

Short-Term Planning

Although the CMPAG supports future “built edges” for Galena Plaza, these structures may not be built in the near future. Therefore, **the CMPAG made several “short-term recommendations,” as follows:**

- As part of the garage roof repair and replacement, the design of the new Galena Plaza use materials that are easily removed in the future, especially in areas anticipated for built edges.



- The Parks Department should work with the Asset Management and Parking departments to design an interim open space use for Galena Plaza that is consistent with the values and philosophy of the Aspen community, to be implemented following the replacement of the garage roof.
- The City should consider methods for accommodating tents at Galena Plaza as part of the replacement of the garage roof, to increase vitality at the site (see rendering above).
- As part of planning for the garage roof repair, City staff should explore potential infrastructure improvements related to future uses, especially along potential built edges.

Rio Grande Park Internal Improvements

In 2001, the CMPAG reviewed the Rio Grande Park Master Plan, which sought to implement new federally-mandated drainage and water quality improvements in an aesthetic and environmentally sensitive manner.

Today, untreated storm water runs into a series of brackish ponds in the Park, and then into the Roaring Fork River.

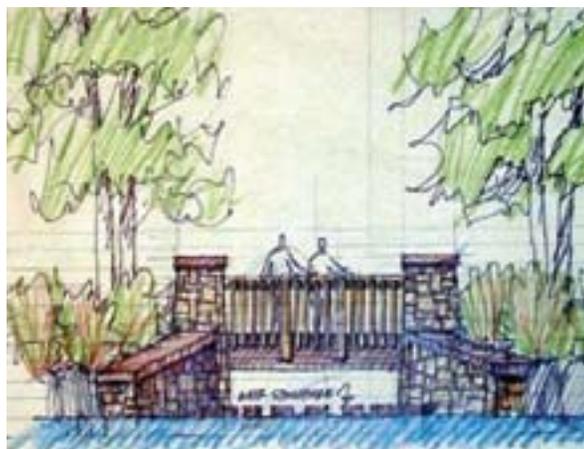
The new design would treat the storm water in underground “vaults,” and then release the treated water into the Roaring Fork River through water quality outlet structures that have been designed as “park architecture.”

The playing field would be slightly lowered, providing descending edges where people can sit on the bank to watch sporting events.

The plan also featured the development of more formal entryways for various sub-areas of the park.

The character intent of the wetland ponds will be riparian, similar to the backwaters and low areas within the Roaring Fork River meanders prior to mining and town development in the late 1800s.

The CMPAG endorsed the Rio Grande Park Master Plan in 2001.



This rendering shows a new pedestrian bridge as part of the new riparian area planned at Rio Grande Park.

This rendering shows a proposed entrance to the John Denver Sanctuary.



Creating Urban Edges



The corner of Hyman and Monarch illustrates the concept of the urban edge in a grid layout.

Towards the end of the Civic Master Plan process, after the CMPAG had evaluated more than a dozen sites, a theme emerged regarding the creation of “urban edges.” Although the CMPAG did not formally adopt this as a Core Principle, the Group supported the concept of creating urban edges at several critical sites. The concept is perhaps best described in the book *Pattern Language*, which is paraphrased here:

- Buildings are not merely placed into the outdoors, they actually shape the outdoors.
- Buildings create two fundamentally different kinds of outdoor space: negative space and positive space.
- Outdoor space is negative when it is shapeless, the residue left behind when buildings are haphazardly placed on the land.
- An outdoor space is positive when the buildings around it create a distinct and definite shape, as definite as the shape of a room.

- People feel comfortable in spaces which are “positive” and tend to use these spaces; people feel relatively uncomfortable in spaces which are “negative” and such spaces tend to remain unused.

For example, the downtown core of urban blocks created a defined grid – “a distinct and definite shape” – where people feel comfortable walking the sidewalks.

In cities across the modern world, successful downtowns often feature a piazza or a town square – these features form a distinct shape where people tend to gather.

Another important element of such spaces is an easily recognizable entrance and exit, creating a path through the space, from one side to another.

These concepts were utilized by the CMPAG during its review of Galena Plaza, the City-Owned Parking Lots, Rio Grande Park and other sites.

This public square, in Gaithersburg, Maryland, is an example of a successful urban open space. The buildings contribute to the identity of the park, and the park contributes to the identity of the buildings. Also, there is a clear pedestrian route into and out of the park, at right.



SECTION V: PEDESTRIAN MOVEMENT

Summary

Previous sections have included recommendations on pedestrian and bike paths connected to specific sites.

This section is intended to paint the “big picture,” showing how pedestrian/bike paths at different sites combine together to improve pedestrian movement in the civic core. The overall focus is improving pedestrian movement between the downtown, across Main Street and down to Rio Grande Park and the Roaring Fork River corridor.

A theme running throughout this section is the need to establish pedestrian routes that are both clearly visible and inviting to pedestrians.



PEDESTRIAN ROUTES

- + Obermeyer Place Route
- + Galena Plaza Route
- + N Mill Street Route

The Big Picture

The CMPAG recommended that the piecemeal recommendations in the Civic Master Plan should be collected and outlined in a Pedestrian Connections Map that shows existing conditions, and proposed pedestrian connections included in various sub-area master plans and in CMPAC recommendations.”



ASPEN AREA COMMUNITY PLAN

Aspen’s future should be one in which the automobile plays a smaller role in people’s everyday lives. Other modes of travel should be made as safe and convenient as possible to facilitate that goal. ... the level of investment in ... more and better bikeways and walkways should increase.

Main Street As Barrier

Pedestrians scurry across Main Street traffic.



The CMPAG found that Main Street itself is “intimidating to pedestrians and has become a barrier to north-south pedestrian movement.”

The CMPAC recommended that the City of Aspen work with the Colorado Department of Transportation to explore design changes to Main Street to make it more pedestrian friendly, including but not limited to:

- Stamped/colored concrete x-walks
- Raised x-walks
- Bulb-outs
- Refuge Islands

In addition to addressing Main Street itself, the Civic Master Plan calls for physical improvements that would create three visible and inviting pedestrian routes across Main Street to Rio Grande Park and beyond: The Obermeyer Place Route, the Galena Plaza Route and the N. Mill Street Route.

Obermeyer Place Route

Viewed from the south side of Main Street and Hunter Street, there are no visual cues that suggest a pedestrian route to Rio Grande Park. In past years, a limited number of locals used a narrow alley just west of the Concept 600 building to get to the Obermeyer/Smith/Galen properties, which were a jumble of buildings and parking lots with no obvious pedestrian route to Rio Grande Park.

As part of the redevelopment of Obermeyer Place, a 10-foot easement was established, starting on Main Street and running along the east edge of the Zupancis Property. The easement joins up with a clear pedestrian-only route through Obermeyer Place and into Rio Grande Park.

The CMPAG recommended that, “the easement established as part of the Obermeyer Place approval be used to improve north-south pedestrian movement between Main Street, Obermeyer Place and Rio Grande Park.”



The crescent building at Obermeyer Place forms a border of the pedestrian route between Main Street and Rio Grande Park.

SECTION V: PEDESTRIAN MOVEMENT

Galena Plaza Route

Viewed from Main Street and Galena, the Galena Street Extension is not visually inviting to pedestrians – there is little indication that this is a pedestrian route.

The CMPAG recommended, “the design of a dramatically improved pedestrian way from Main Street, through the Galena St. Extension, Galena Plaza and stairway down to and through Rio Grande Park.”

One of the primary visual barriers to pedestrian movement from Main Street and Galena Street through the Galena St. Extension is the extensive parking of public safety vehicles on the Galena St. Extension. If another location is found for these emergency response vehicles, there would be a strong opportunity to transform the Galena Street Extension into a more pedestrian-friendly area.



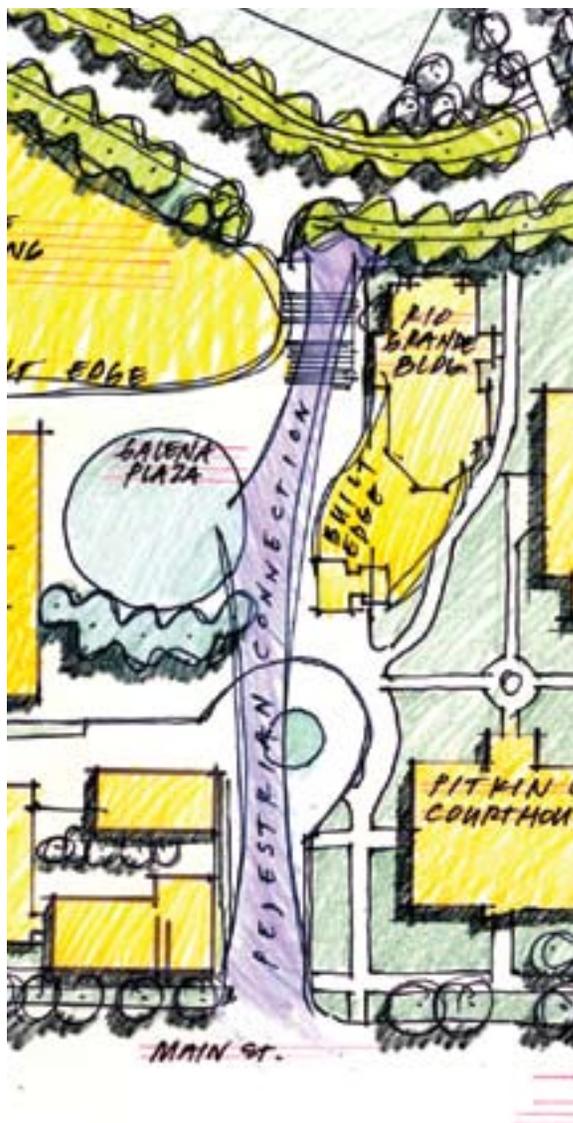
Sidewalk on the east side of the Galena St. Extension.



View of the Galena St. Extension from across Main St.

In Section III of this report, **The CMPAG recommended that** the City and County collaborate to “review and evaluate the scope of civic uses at the Zupancis Property.” One advantage of the Zupancis Property is the opportunity for extensive underground parking, which could accommodate public safety vehicles. If emergency response vehicles can be accommodated underground at the Zupancis Property, this could allow the Galena Street Ext. to be redesigned as a pedestrian-only area, with the exception of the Galena Street shuttle. This could “dramatically improve the pedestrian way from Main Street through the Galena Street Extension ...”

With regard to creating visible and inviting pedestrian routes, **The CMPAG also recommended that**, “The design of buildings within the civic core should incorporate elements that are inviting and welcoming, and enhance the quality of the pedestrian experience.”



This “bubble map” shows an extended east edge, at right, including an improved stairwell/elevator feature to attract pedestrians to Galena Plaza and the Park. This rendering also shows a potential building at the north edge of the plaza.

At the east edge of Galena Plaza, the CMPAG specifically cited an opportunity to make the design of buildings a method of inviting pedestrians through the Plaza.

The CMPAG recommended that, “In conjunction with the future renovation or replacement of the former Youth Center, the CMPAG recommends that the east edge of Galena Plaza be considered in the future as a built edge, extending to the existing stairwell/elevator feature, and including compelling architectural elements intended to draw pedestrians across Main Street.”

A future one-story building at the north edge of Galena Plaza might also serve as an architecturally compelling visual element that could draw pedestrians into Galena Plaza. **The CMPAG recommended that**, “... a building at the north edge of Galena Plaza could be a welcoming and interactive destination point that capitalizes on the vista (and) creates vitality ...”



The existing stairs at Galena Plaza.

Another key element of the pedestrian route through Galena Plaza is the stairway down to Rio Grande Park. **The CMPAG recommended** “a dramatically improved pedestrian way from Main Street, through the Galena St. Extension, Galena Plaza and stairway down to and through Rio Grande Park.

The existing pedestrian experience along the sidewalk next to the City-owned parking lots is less than welcoming. Referring to this area, **The CMPAG found that**, “Creating a clear edge and demarcation between urban blocks and public parks is a widely recognized and sound urban design concept.”

Replacing these parking lots with an urban edge would create a more visible and inviting pedestrian experience that would serve as an important link between Galena Plaza and N. Mill Street.



This photo shows a pedestrian perspective, walking along Rio Grande Plaza, with Rio Grande Park on the right and the City-owned parking lots to the left.



“Every fine street ... is one that invites leisurely, safe walking. It sounds simple and basically it is. There have to be walkways that permit people to walk at varying paces, including most importantly a leisurely pace, with neither a sense of crowding nor of being alone, and that are safe, primarily from vehicles.”

- From *Great Streets*, Allan B. Jacobs

SECTION V: PEDESTRIAN MOVEMENT

N. Mill Street Route

Another method of improving the north-south pedestrian experience is the redesign of N. Mill Street, from Mill Street to the Aspen Art Museum.

The CMPAG found that, “Providing a larger buffer between pedestrians and traffic will increase safety, and improve the pedestrian experience and visual esthetic of the area. These changes will encourage more pedestrian use, and improve conditions for events and public/private sector users located in this area of town.”

The CMPAG recommended that, “City Council direct relevant public agencies and private parties to collaboratively generate a proposal to design, fund and implement a plan for the improvement of North Mill St., to focus on the following:

- A wider buffer between pedestrians and traffic for the purpose of improving the pedestrian experience, consistent with Aspen’s historical streetscape pattern;
- Accommodating existing traffic flow;
- Improving safety for pedestrians and vehicles;
- Coordination with the local pedestrian-bikeway system;
- Improving the visual aesthetic of the area.

The SCI West site shows a poor relationship with pedestrians and N. Mill Street. As part of its review of the SCI West site (please see Section I), the CMPAG recommended an improved pedestrian experience for this site.

Ultimately, this may be achieved as part of a redesign of N. Mill Street, or as part of a redevelopment of the SCI West site.



This conceptual rendering illustrates one method of establishing a larger pedestrian buffer on N. Mill St.



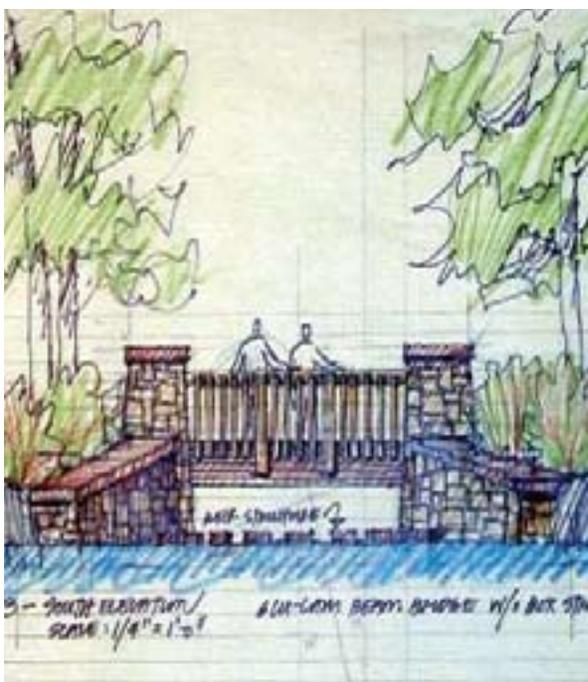
Looking up N. Mill Street, with SCI West at right. This is not an inviting pedestrian route.



A pedestrian navigates N. Mill St. next to the SCI West site.

Pedestrian Movement in Rio Grande Park

Another element of encouraging pedestrian movement between downtown and the Roaring Fork River are the improvements planned inside Rio Grande Park, as described in Section IV. The Rio Grande Park Master Plan includes more formal and visually compelling entryways to different portions of the Park, including the John Denver Sanctuary. Pedestrian amenities in relation to the new ponds and waterfalls will also contribute to an improved visual aesthetic and will invite pedestrians to move throughout the Park.



A rendering of a pedestrian bridge and water feature planned for Rio Grande Park.

Downtown Pedestrian Improvements

South of Main Street, **The CMPAG recommended that** the City revisit the Downtown Enhanced Pedestrian Plan.

The CMPAG found that, “Only one phase of a multi-phase DEPP strategy has been implemented, and that two of the 8 Goals of the DEPP, adopted by City Council Resolution in 1997 were:

- To make the downtown core more pedestrian-friendly and minimize the sense that automobiles dominate the downtown area.

- To take greater advantage of opportunities for the utilization of alleys and pocket parks for pedestrian circulation, social interaction and commercial activity.

The CMPAG recommended that City staff conduct a feedback analysis on the outcome of the Phase I DEPP implementation, and present findings to P&Z and City Council to determine if further phases of the DEPP should be implemented.

Wayfinding

In addition to physical improvements to the pedestrian and bike system in the civic core, the CMPAG also focused on wayfinding and signage issues.

The CMPAG found that, “There is an important balance to be struck between providing adequate signage for visitors and cluttering streets and paths with too many signs. There is an important balance to be struck between maintaining a sense of experience and discovery for visitors versus creating confusion regarding important destinations through lack of signage.”

The CMPAG found that, “Although Aspen and Pitkin County maintain an excellent regional pedestrian and bike-way system, there is a lack of wayfinding signage directing visitors within the civic core to these outlying amenities.”

The CMPAG also found that, “In some cases, existing wayfinding signage appears to be inadequate. Some of the brown signs at Main Street intersections simply state the existence of various destinations without indicating where they are located. A sign on the Rio Grande Trail indicates the direction of Basalt, but does not mention the Aspen Art Museum.”

The CMPAG found enough evidence to suggest that a more comprehensive evaluation of wayfinding would be useful. **The CMPAG recommended,** “that the City of Aspen work with relevant partners, such as the CCLC, Parks & Rec and Pitkin County Open Space & Trails to comprehensively review existing wayfinding conditions and make recommendations regarding improvements, considering the CMP Findings, and utilizing the CMP Pedestrian Connections Map and other relevant mapping documents.”



A close-up of the sign at Main & Mill, which does not indicate the location of destinations.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special thanks to all the people who have worked so diligently on the Civic Master Plan.



CIVIC MASTER PLAN ADVISORY GROUP

Current & Alternate Members

Tim Belinski/Dwayne Romero – Obermeyer Place
Don Bird – Pitkin County Jail
Bennett Bramson - Citizen
Deb Braun – Aspen Chamber Resort Association
Cathy Chandler – Pitkin County Library
Stan Clauson - Citizen
Lisa Consiglio – Aspen Writers' Foundation
Charles Cunniffe – Citizen
Pat Fallin – Concept 600
Blake Fitch/Tim Ware – City Parking Department
Darryl Grob – Aspen Fire Protection District
Jackie Kasabach – Citizen
Helen Kalin Klanderud – Mayor

Sue Kolbe/Lynda McCarthy – The Thrift Shop
Bill Lipsey - Citizen
Susan Marx - Citizen
Lynda McCarthy – The Thrift Shop
David McClendon – Theatre Aspen
Brian Pettet – Pitkin County
John Rowland – Aspen Planning
and Zoning Commission
Loren Ryerson – City of Aspen Police Department
Gram Slaton – Wheeler Opera House
Sue Smedstad – Citizen
Laura Thielen – Aspen Filmfest
Heidi Zuckerman Jacobson – Aspen Art Museum

Former Members

Harley Baldwin - Citizen
Tom Bracewell – Aspen Consolidated
Sanitation District
Jon Busch – Commercial Core & Lodging Commission
Roger Haneman – Planning and Zoning Commission
Carole Hershey – Aspen Chamber Resort Association
Mary Ann Igna – Aspen Art Museum
Bert Myrin – Planning and Zoning Commission
Alan Osburn – Aspen Theatre in the Park
Dean Sobel – Aspen Art Museum
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Ben Gagnon – Special Projects Planner,
Community Development

Resolution No. 31 Recommendation of Approval by Aspen Planning and Zoning Commission · November 21, 2006 · Page 1 of 2

**RESOLUTION NO. 31
(SERIES OF 2006)**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF ASPEN PLANNING AND ZONING
COMMISSION RECOMMENDING THAT CITY COUNCIL ADOPT THE CIVIC
MASTER PLAN, CITY OF ASPEN, PITKIN COUNTY, COLORADO.**

WHEREAS, the Aspen City Council in June 2000 initiated the Civic Master Plan process to provide guidance for future development in the Civic Core of the City of Aspen, and appointed members to the Civic Master Plan Advisory Group; and,

WHEREAS, the Civic Master Plan Advisory Group consists of representatives of various local organizations and agencies that are located in the Civic Core of the City of Aspen, and has held numerous meetings; and,

WHEREAS, upon review of the Draft Civic Master Plan, the Community Development Department and the 25-member Civic Master Plan Advisory Group recommended adoption of the Draft Civic Master Plan in June 2006; and,

WHEREAS, a copy of the 20-page Draft Civic Master Plan was inserted in the Aspen Daily News and posted on the City website in August 2006 as part of a public feedback process; and,

WHEREAS, the Aspen Planning and Zoning Commission has the responsibility to review comprehensive plans or any supplemental plans, guidelines or documents, pursuant to Section 26.212.010(R); and

WHEREAS, during a duly noticed public hearing on October 24, 2006, the Planning and Zoning Commission reviewed and considered the development proposal under the applicable provisions of the Municipal Code as identified herein, and continued the public hearing to November 14, 2006; and

WHEREAS, during a duly noticed public hearing on November 14, 2006, the Planning and Zoning Commission opened the public hearing and continued it until November 21, 2006; and

WHEREAS, during a duly noticed public hearing on November 21, 2006, the Planning and Zoning Commission reviewed and considered the development proposal under the applicable provisions of the Municipal Code as identified herein, and recommended by a vote of 5-1 that City Council adopt the Civic Master Plan, with conditions; and,

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE CITY OF ASPEN
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT THE ASPEN
CITY COUNCIL ADOPT THE CIVIC MASTER PLAN:**

Section 1: Adoption of the Civic Master Plan

Pursuant to the procedures and standards set forth in Section 26.104.030 of the Aspen Municipal Code, the Planning and Zoning Commission recommends that the City Council adopt the Civic Master Plan as a regulatory document.

Resolution No. 31 Recommendation of Approval by Aspen Planning and Zoning Commission · November 21, 2006 · Page 2 of 2

Section 2: Relationship to the Aspen Area Community Plan

- a) Pursuant to Section 26.104.030, the Aspen Area Community Plan was utilized as a guiding document for the adoption of eight (8) Core Principles contained in the Civic Master Plan, as well as the findings and recommendations contained in the Civic Master Plan. Specific reference to portions of the AACP are made in each section of the Civic Master Plan.
- b) When applicants are required to show consistency with the Aspen Area Community Plan under Title 26 of the Aspen Municipal Code, applicants are also required to show consistency with the Civic Master Plan.

Section 3: Regulatory application of the Civic Master Plan

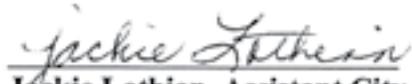
- a) Pursuant to Section 26.104.030, the Civic Master Plan shall be considered a regulatory document. Planning and development initiatives for land use entitlement on the parcels identified in the Civic Master Plan shall demonstrate consistency with the findings and recommendations in the Civic Master Plan. Planning and development initiatives for land use entitlement on the parcels identified in the Civic Master Plan unable to demonstrate consistency with the findings and recommendations of the Civic Master Plan must demonstrate that the conceptual plan and/or development proposal is consistent with the eight (8) Core Principles contained in the Civic Master Plan, and the portions of the Aspen Area Community Plan referenced in the Civic Master Plan.
- b) Upon adoption, the Civic Master Plan shall supercede the City of Aspen Rio Grande Master Plan of 1993.

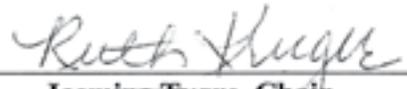
Section 4: Planning and Zoning Commission conditions of recommendation to City Council

During its review and consideration of the Civic Master Plan, the Planning and Zoning Commission included two (2) conditions as part of its recommendation to City Council; these conditions were intended to be added to the Civic Master Plan:

- a) Like uses should be clustered with like uses whenever possible.
- b) The enhancement of existing conditions should be permitted.

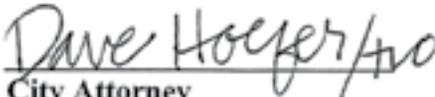
Attest:


Jackie Lothian, Assistant City Clerk


Jasmine Tygre, Chair
Ruth Kruger

FINALLY, adopted, passed and approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission this 21st day of November, 2006.

Approved as to form:


City Attorney

Ordinance No. 46 Approval of Aspen City Council · December 11, 2006 · Page 1 of 4

**ORDINANCE NO. 46
(SERIES OF 2006)**

**AN ORDINANCE OF THE ASPEN CITY COUNCIL ADOPTING THE CIVIC
MASTER PLAN, CITY OF ASPEN, PITKIN COUNTY, COLORADO.**

WHEREAS, the Aspen City Council in June 2000 initiated the Civic Master Plan process to provide guidance for future development in the Civic Core of the City of Aspen, and appointed members to the Civic Master Plan Advisory Group; and,

WHEREAS, the Civic Master Plan Advisory Group consists of representatives of various local organizations and agencies that are located in the Civic Core of the City of Aspen, and has held numerous meetings; and,

WHEREAS, upon review of the Draft Civic Master Plan, the Community Development Department and the 25-member Civic Master Plan Advisory Group recommend adoption of the Draft Civic Master Plan in June 2006; and,

WHEREAS, a copy of the 20-page Draft Civic Master Plan was inserted in the Aspen Daily News and posted on the City website in August 2006 as part of a public feedback process; and,

WHEREAS, the Aspen Planning and Zoning Commission has the responsibility to review comprehensive plans or any supplemental plans, guidelines or documents, pursuant to Section 26.212.010(R); and

WHEREAS, during a duly noticed public hearing on November 21, 2006, the Planning and Zoning Commission reviewed and considered the development proposal under the applicable provisions of the Municipal Code as identified herein and recommended pursuant to Resolution No. 31, Series of 2006, by a vote of 5-1 that City Council adopt the Civic Master Plan with conditions; and,

WHEREAS, the Aspen City Council has reviewed and considered the Draft Civic Master Plan under Section 26.104.030 and Section 26.208.010(I) of the Municipal Code as identified herein, has reviewed and considered the recommendation of the Planning and Zoning Commission, the Community Development Director, the applicable referral agencies, and has taken and considered public comment at a public hearing; and,

WHEREAS, during a duly noticed public hearing on December 11, 2006, the Aspen City Council reviewed the proposal and approved Ordinance No. 46, Series of 2006, by a 4-1 vote, approving with conditions the Civic Master Plan; and,

WHEREAS, the City Council finds that the Civic Master Plan meets or exceeds all applicable standards and that the approval of the Civic Master Plan, with conditions, is consistent with the goals and elements of the Aspen Area Community Plan; and,

WHEREAS, the City Council finds that this Ordinance furthers and is necessary for the promotion of public health, safety, and welfare.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED THAT THE ASPEN CITY COUNCIL ADOPTS THE CIVIC MASTER PLAN:

Section 1: Adoption of the Civic Master Plan

Pursuant to the procedures set forth in Section 26.208.010(I) **City Council powers and duties** of the Aspen Municipal Code, the City Council adopts the Civic Master Plan as a regulatory document.

Section 2: Relationship to the Aspen Area Community Plan

- a) Pursuant to Section 26.104.030, the 2000 Aspen Area Community Plan was utilized for the adoption of eight (8) Core Principles contained in the Civic Master Plan, as well as the findings and recommendations contained in the Civic Master Plan. Specific references to portions of the AACP are made in each section of the Civic Master Plan.
- b) When land use applications are required to demonstrate consistency with the Aspen Area Community Plan under Title 26 of the Aspen Municipal Code, land use applications shall also be required to demonstrate consistency with the Civic Master Plan.

Section 3: Regulatory application of the Civic Master Plan

- a) Pursuant to Section 26.104.030, the Civic Master Plan shall be considered a regulatory document. Planning and development initiatives for land use entitlement on the parcels identified in the Civic Master Plan shall demonstrate consistency with the findings and recommendations in the Civic Master Plan. Planning and development initiatives for land use entitlement on the parcels identified in the Civic Master Plan unable to demonstrate consistency with the findings and recommendations of the Civic Master Plan must demonstrate that the conceptual plan and/or development proposal is consistent with the eight (8) Core Principles contained in the Civic Master Plan, and the portions of the Aspen Area Community Plan referenced in the relevant section(s) of the Civic Master Plan.
- b) Upon adoption, the Civic Master Plan shall supercede the City of Aspen Rio Grande Master Plan of 1993.

Section 4: Code Amendment

Section 26.104.030 of the Aspen Municipal Code, which section relates to the "Comprehensive Community Plan and other Plans, Guidelines or Documents," is hereby amended as follows, to read:

Section 26.104.030, Comprehensive Community Plan and Other Plans, Guidelines, or Documents.

The city shall from time to time adopt and update a comprehensive community plan (known as the Aspen Area Community Plan or AACP) which shall establish and project the city's land use and development planning philosophy, goals, and policies. The comprehensive community plan shall be broad in scope, and serve as a guide to all land use development and planning. The plan shall encourage and incorporate regional

Ordinance No. 46 Approval of Aspen City Council · December 11, 2006 · Page 3 of 4

planning as well as land use development cooperation and coordination between the city and neighboring communities and jurisdictions.

From time to time the city may re-adopt, amend, extend, or add to its comprehensive community plan, or carry any part of its subject matter into greater detail through the development of supplemental plans, guidelines, or documents. Within the text of these plans, guidelines, or documents it shall be de-scribed how the material shall be used in relation to the AACP, land use development, and planning. Specifically, there shall be a determination of whether the document shall be used as a guiding or regulatory document. The document shall be adopted by resolution or ordinance, as provided in Chapter 26.200, Administration – Decision Making Bodies.

Before the adoption of a plan or any such part, amendment, extension, or addition by an adopting body, at least one (1) public hearing shall be conducted, notice of the time and place of which shall be given by one (1) publication in a newspaper of general circulation in the city as outlined in Section 26.304.060 E.3.a., Publication of notice. (Ord. No. 50-a, 2005 §1)

Section 26.104.030(A) Civic Master Plan. The Civic Master Plan, adopted per Ordinance No. 46, Series of 2006, shall be considered a regulatory document. Planning and development initiatives for land use entitlement on the parcels identified in the Civic Master Plan shall demonstrate consistency with the findings and recommendations in the Civic Master Plan. Planning and development initiatives for land use entitlement on the parcels identified in the Civic Master Plan unable to demonstrate consistency with the findings and recommendations of the Civic Master Plan must demonstrate that the conceptual plan and/or development proposal is consistent with the eight (8) Core Principles contained in the Civic Master Plan, and the portions of the Aspen Area Community Plan referenced in the relevant section(s) of the Civic Master Plan.

Section 5:

This Ordinance shall not affect any existing litigation and shall not operate as an abatement of any action or proceeding now pending under or by virtue of the ordinances repealed or amended as herein provided, and the same shall be conducted and concluded under such prior ordinances.

Section 6:

If any section, subsection, sentence, clause, phrase, or portion of this ordinance is for any reason held invalid or unconstitutional in a court of competent jurisdiction, such portion shall be deemed a separate, distinct and independent provision and shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions thereof.

Section 7:

A public hearing was opened on the 11th day of December, 2006, at 5:00 PM in City Council Chambers, Aspen City Hall, Aspen, Colorado, fifteen (15) days prior to which hearing a public notice of the same was published in a newspaper of general circulation within the City of Aspen.

Ordinance No. 46 Approval of Aspen City Council · December 11, 2006 · Page 4 of 4

INTRODUCED, READ AND ORDERED PUBLISHED as provided by law, by the City Council of the City of Aspen on this 27th day of November, 2006.

Attest:


Kathryn Koch, City Clerk


Helen Kalin Klanderud, Mayor

FINALLY, adopted, passed and approved by the Aspen City Council this 11th day of December, 2006.

Attest:


Kathryn Koch, City Clerk


Helen Kalin Klanderud, Mayor

Approved as to form:


City Attorney



THE CITY OF ASPEN CIVIC MASTER PLAN

APPENDIX

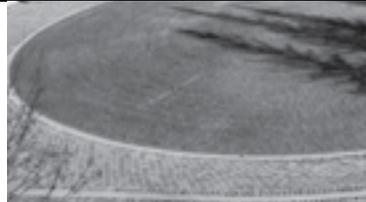


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The following document contains historical and other background information on sites and topics reviewed by the Civic Master Plan Advisory Group. The Table of Contents tracks with the five sections in the main Civic Master Plan document.

How to Read the Appendix

In each of the five sections, the reader will find a summary that includes a reference to relevant portions of the 2000 Aspen Area Community Plan. Each topic in this document includes up to eight (8) sections:

- STATUS:** This section provides the latest information on the topic, as of December 2006.
- ORGANIZATION:** This section identifies the organization(s) relevant to the topic.
- SITE:** This section describes the site or sites that were reviewed.
- VISION:** This section includes information generated by the Phase I Civic Master Plan Report, issued in May 2001, and outlines the goals of relevant organizations.
- RIO GRANDE MASTER PLAN:** This section reviews any recommendations for this site in the Rio Grande Master Plan 1993. Not all sites in the Civic Master Plan were reviewed as part of the Rio Grande Master Plan (RGMP).
- RELEVANT CORE PRINCIPLES:** This section identifies the Core Principles relevant to the topic.
- FINDINGS:** This section lists the Findings made by the Civic Master Plan Advisory Group (CMPAG). At the end of each finding, the relevant Core Principle(s) may be noted.
- RECOMMENDATIONS:** This section lists the Recommendations made by the Civic Master Plan Advisory Group (CMPAG). At the end of each finding, the relevant Core Principle(s) may be noted.

Obermeyer Place

STATUS: Obermeyer Place is entitled, and construction was completed in fall 2006.

SITE: At the time the CMP Phase I Report was issued in May 2001, the Obermeyer Place site consisted of four adjacent private properties bordering Rio Grande Place, Spring Street and Bleeker Street, as well as four small City-owned properties directly adjacent to Rio Grande Place.

In spring 2002, the Obermeyer Redevelopment Company purchased the Bass Building, adjoining the Obermeyer property, and reached agreement with two other adjacent landowners, Bill Murphy and Galen Smith, to pursue a public/private redevelopment project. As part of the COWOP project approval, the City is leasing its holdings to Obermeyer at a nominal rate in exchange for 20 underground parking spaces in the new project. The City also holds a 10-foot easement along the edge of the Zupancis property, to be developed as a pedestrian access from Main Street to the project.

ORGANIZATIONS: Obermeyer Redevelopment Company; City of Aspen.

VISION: The genesis of the Obermeyer Place redevelopment project was a set of shared goals: The City of Aspen and Klaus Obermeyer found themselves aligned in a vision to revitalize one of the last small business parks in the city.

The CMP Phase I Report's Physical Analysis section identified some of the potential public benefits of redevelopment in Service/Commercial/Industrial (SCI) Zone Districts, including the SCI zone that encompassed the Obermeyer property and adjacent properties:

- "Increased and revitalized SCI space."
- "Reinvestment in an area that has not experienced capital improvement."
- "Parking in excess of required that could be used to augment the parking garage for municipal vehicles, or to serve as 'remote' parking for infill projects."
- "Resolution of (city) ownership discrepancies ... "

RIO GRANDE MASTER PLAN: The RGMP Site B map (p. 13) shows City-owned land to the north and east of the "Bass/Obermeyer Building" as purchased with 7th Penny Transportation Funds. The RGMP identifies the small piece of city-owned land directly east of the Obermeyer building along Rio Grande Place as a site for "Essential Community Facilities."

Under "Recommended Land Use/Activities," the RGMP states that, "Publicly-owned land adjacent to the Obermeyer building may also be considered for the location of essential community oriented services."

Under, "Recommended Action Plan Summary for Site B," the RGMP states that, "The City should continue negotiations with the property owners of the Bass/Obermeyer building to settle the use of the publicly-owned land that is adjacent to the building and being used by customers and tenants of that building."

Through the COWOP entitlement, these small city-owned parcels were traded to Obermeyer Redevelopment Co. in exchange for underground parking spaces to be used for municipal purposes, and to open up space in the Rio Grande Parking Garage for public use.

RELEVANT CORE PRINCIPLES:

2. Mixed-use buildings and mixed-use areas create vibrant, memorable places
4. Affordable Housing and Affordable Commercial space ensures viability of civic functions and vitality of town
5. Civic planning must address need for parking while not inducing additional traffic
6. Public-private partnerships can be very advantageous in achieving public goals.

Subsequent to the publication of the 2001 CMP Phase I Report, CCMPAC member and 2000 Aspen Area Community Plan Oversight Committee member Bill Lipsey met informally with city staff and Klaus Obermeyer. Both parties recognized a set of shared goals for the Obermeyer property and surrounding SCI-zoned properties, and initial conceptual plans were developed.

In April 2002, the City Council voted to form the Obermeyer Place COWOP Task Force, made up of citizens and a variety of stakeholders. The Task Force worked with City staff and Obermeyer's planning and architectural team to design a project via a public/private partnership. In April 2003, the City Council unanimously approved the redevelopment project, which featured the redevelopment of 38,000 square feet of SCI space, a nominal amount of square footage of Neighborhood Commercial (NC) space, surface parking, two levels of underground parking (including 20 space for City use), a series of pedestrian ways, 21 free market units and 21 deed restricted units. Findings/Recommendations: The Obermeyer Place project was proceeding through the COWOP process by the time the CMPAG began generating draft findings and recommendations. There are no draft findings or recommendations for this site.

SCI West

STATUS: This site was discussed by the CMPAG as a possible site for an Obermeyer Place-type redevelopment of SCI space.

SITE: SCI West is a Service Commercial Industrial Zone District located on N. Mill Street, just north of the Puppy Smith Street intersection. The SCI Zone District allows for service-oriented commercial business, with a limited amount of retail space.

ORGANIZATIONS: Private property owners, City of Aspen.

VISION: The Physical Analysis section of the CMP Phase I Report states that the "parcels west of Mill Street primarily house traditional SCI businesses and have significant development potential. These parcels also sit on sloping land and appear to have potential for underground parking."

"Due to the ... limited lease rates expected for SCI space, significant redevelopment by the private sector is unlikely in the SCI District. There is however, the possibility to establish "win-win" public/private partnerships that achieve community goals."

RELEVANT CORE PRINCIPLES:

2. Mixed-use buildings and mixed-use areas create active, vibrant and memorable places.
4. Affordable Housing and Affordable Commercial space ensures the viability of civic functions and vitality of town.
6. Public-private, public-public and private-private partnerships can be very advantageous in achieving public goals.

FINDINGS:

1. The Obermeyer Place project achieved a myriad of public benefits, including the renovation of SCI space, the provision of affordable housing, underground parking and pedestrian links, and a dramatic aesthetic improvement to properties adjacent to Rio Grande Park. (CP#2, CP#4, CP#6)
2. The Obermeyer Place project was a successful public/private partnership that grew out of the Civic Master Plan and its Core Principles, and could be used as a model for redevelopment at SCI West. (CP#2, CP#4, CP#6)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. City staff should hold discussions with property owners in the SCI West area to determine if there is interest in a redevelopment project, using Obermeyer Place as a model. Public benefits could include:
 - The renovation of SCI space
 - Underground parking
 - Pedestrian links
 - Affordable housing
 - Aesthetic improvements

City Owned Parking Lot

STATUS: This area is utilized as short-term parking and as a staging area for special events in Rio Grande Park.

SITE: The parking lot north of the Community Banks and Rio Grande Parking Garage buildings are owned by the City. The parking lots were designed in a non-standard configuration.

ORGANIZATION: The City of Aspen owns the property, and has the ability to move forward with planning at this site in the short-term, mid-term or long-term.

VISION: The CMP Phase I Report / Opportunities Map lists the following potential uses:

- Mixed Use: Neighborhood Commercial/Gov. Offices / Aff. Housing;
- Arts Facility – Performance Venue;
- Ancillary Arts facility functions (could be part of mixed-use building).

The CMP Phase I Report Physical Analysis – “Urban Edge” subsection states, “Both the river/park open space and downtown would gain from a stronger edge to the built environment. The current transition area between these two distinct areas consists of surface parking and outdoor storage that creates an unraveled characteristic. New mixed-use infill buildings at ... the corner of Rio Grande and Mill St. (currently a City parking lot) ... would better define the character of both urban and open space.”

The 2002 Aspen Affordable Housing Strategic Plan identified this site for infill affordable housing. City Council has talked about the potential for Service/Commercial/Industrial or Neighborhood Commercial uses on the first floor.

RIO GRANDE MASTER PLAN: The RGMP Site B map (p. 13) shows the parking lots were purchased with 7th Penny Transportation Funds. Under “Goals,” the RGMP says: “Satisfy transportation related needs first when considering the use of Site B.”

The RGMP does not recommend any uses aside from the existing parking lot. All maps in the RGMP show the parking lots as unchanged, including the “Scenario Maps” in Appendix A. The parking lots were to be located between the future “Transportation Center” (now the ACRA Office/Visitor Center) and the future “Regional Rail Facility” (now the playing field at Rio Grande Park.)

RELEVANT CORE PRINCIPLES:

1. Mixed-use buildings and mixed-use areas create vibrant, memorable places.
2. Focus on creating great people places.
3. Affordable Housing and Affordable Commercial space ensures viability of civic functions and vitality of town.
4. Civic planning must address need for parking while not inducing additional traffic.
5. Public-private partnerships can be very advantageous in achieving public goals.
6. Improved pedestrian orientation.

FINDINGS:

1. In the downtown area south of Main Street, both urban blocks and public parks have clearly defined edges and are easily recognizable. In contrast, the City-owned parking lots along Rio Grande Place are an unraveled edge that do not clearly demarcate the end of an urban block and the beginning of a public park. (CP #2, CP #3, CP #7)
2. Creating a clear edge and demarcation between urban blocks and public parks is a widely recognized and sound urban design concept. (CP #2, CP #3)
3. Neighborhood Commercial (NC) zoning is a rare commercial use in the City of Aspen and is primarily intended to serve the local, year-round population. Neighborhood Commercial uses tend to be successful in areas that locals frequent, including the North Mill Street corridor. (CP #2, CP #3, CP #4, CP #6)

4. Infill affordable housing is a rare and valuable commodity that decreases traffic congestion by creating walk-to-work opportunities, and creates year-round vitality in the downtown area. (CP #2, CP #3, CP #4)
5. Using a wide range of criteria, the 2002 EPS Housing Study rated this site #1 for the development of affordable housing. (CP #2, CP #3, CP #4)
6. If a building that includes the north edge of Galena Plaza, and descending to Rio Grande Place is not constructed, the urban/park edge can be defined through development of stand-alone buildings along Rio Grande Place. (CP #2, CP #3, CP #4)
7. If development occurs on the City-owned parking lots, the need for short-term parking must be addressed. (CP #5)
8. The parking lots along Rio Grande Place and North Mill Street are owned by the City, and there is no compelling need to develop them in the short-term.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The CMPAG supports the urban design concept of establishing a clear edge or demarcation between urban blocks and public parks, reinforcing the identity of both the urban area and the park.
2. The CMPAG supports Neighborhood Commercial uses and affordable housing in the area where city-owned parking lots currently exist along Rio Grande Place. The CMPAC does not support the development of free market housing on this city-owned property.

The Arts In Aspen: Painting The Big Picture

STATUS: During the Civic Master Plan process, the CMPAG recognized that some arts groups in Aspen had identified space needs, ranging from performing arts space to space for educational programming. During work sessions on the Civic Master Plan, the City Council expressed conceptual support for a new shared-use arts facility, while asking for additional information gathering.

The CMPAG explored the potential of a new performing arts facility, with a one-story building at the north edge of Galena Plaza, and the bulk of the building along Rio Grande Place.

The CMPAG also identified the Wheeler Parcel as a potential location for performing arts and/or rehearsal/educational space. In November 2006, the local performing arts groups that had expressed interest in the Galena Plaza/Rio Grande Place site were more focused on the Wheeler Parcel. Theatre aspen was focused on upgrading the tent in Rio Grande Park.

Staff has undertaken the Arts Sector Facilities Analysis, as recommended by the CMPAG, to evaluate the need for a new arts facility. Staff suggests that a range of reports, including ongoing studies, be considered as part this analysis, including:

- The 2005 Wheeler Opera House Organizational Audit.
- The Wheeler 21st Century Master Plan, which includes a needs assessment of arts organizations as relates to their use of the Wheeler.
- The Snowmass Village Cultural Arts Assessment Study by Webb Management Services Inc. in 2003, which contains extensive research on the regional arts industry and suggests there is additional capacity for performing arts in the Aspen area.
- “The Arts in Aspen: Do We Need More Space?” by consultant Michael Strong in 2006, which includes various pros and cons for developing additional arts sector space. This study was commissioned by the Wheeler Opera House.

- “The Economic Impact of the Arts on Aspen and Snowmass” report in 2004 has helped to characterize the important role of the arts in the local economy.
- “The Economic and Social Impact of Second Homes in Four Mountain Resort Counties of Colorado” of 2005 illustrates that second homeowners are strong supporters of the arts.

SITES: Galena Plaza/Rio Grande Place; Wheeler Parcel.

ORGANIZATIONS: Range of arts groups and venue managers.

VISION: The 2000 Aspen Area Community Plan devoted one of its eight chapters to Arts, Culture & Education. The Philosophy of this chapter in the AACP stated: “Walter Paepcke’s vision created an enlightened community in which arts, culture, and education provide essential cornerstones of our lifestyle, character, and economy. Today, these cornerstones are increasingly vital to the uniqueness of our community and to our economic and spiritual well being. Therefore, arts, culture, and education are acknowledged as essential to Aspen’s thriving year-round economy, its vibrant international profile, and its future as a unique place to live, work, and learn.”

The staff and consulting team believe that this “Painting the Big Picture” approach represents a necessary step in answering the question posed by Downtown Consultants Henry Beer & Ford Frick during their meeting with the CMPAG in January 2004:

- “What does Aspen have in its DNA that could be manifested in a ‘Center’? What is Aspen’s intrinsic asset that can be built upon?”

RIO GRANDE MASTER PLAN: The RGMP Site B map (p. 13) shows that the north edge of Galena Plaza and the parking lots where an arts facility may be located were purchased with 7th Penny Transportation Funds. Under “Goals,” the RGMP says: “Satisfy transportation related needs first when considering the use of Site B.”

The RGMP does not recommend any new or different uses for Galena Plaza or the existing parking lot. All maps in the RGMP show Galena Plaza and the parking lots as unchanged, including the “Scenario Maps” in Appendix A. None of the RGMP maps identify Galena Plaza with any text, and do not show or discuss any recommended use for Galena Plaza in the map or text. The Scenario Maps show that the parking lots were to be located between the future “Transportation Center” (now the ACRA Office/Visitor Center) and the future “Regional Rail Facility” (now the playing field at Rio Grande Park.)

FINDINGS:

1. The fact that a variety of reports, studies and initiatives regarding the arts sector in Aspen have either been recently completed or are ongoing represents a rare opportunity to improve the function of the Aspen arts community as a whole. These reports, studies and initiatives include: the Organizational Audit, the 21st Century Master Plan and the Marketing Plan for the Wheeler Opera House; the internal strategic goals of at least three local arts groups to explore a new facility; four supporting studies (Arts Economic Impact/Second Homes/ACRA Summer Survey/Aspen Retail Analysis); the Arts, Culture & Education section of the AACP; and the report and recommendations of the Civic Master Plan Advisory Group. (CP#6, CP#8)
2. Gathering information on inventory/capacity of performing arts venues and space/seasonal needs of local arts groups for the purpose of supporting a collaborative effort to better coordinate the use of existing facilities and explore the need for a new facility could be very advantageous in achieving civic goals. (CP#6, CP#8)
3. Considering the CMP’s #1 Core Principle of locating civic and arts/cultural facilities in the downtown area, a qualitative approach is important for decision-making rather than merely a quantitative needs-to-inventory matching exercise. A downtown location for arts-related events and activities tends to reinforce Aspen’s identity as a center for arts and culture, and tends to make such events more economically viable. (CP#1, CP#8)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Considering the information and reports outlined in this section, the CMPAG recommends that City staff should coordinate an in-house effort – the Arts Sector Facility Analysis -- to gather information on the space/seasonal needs of local arts organizations, and the existing supply/capacity of performing arts venues.
2. City staff should initiate a Task Force made up of representatives of arts groups and venues, in order to:
 - Review the space + seasonal needs of local arts groups;
 - Review the supply + capacity of performing arts venues;
 - Evaluate potential upgrades of existing performance arts venues;
 - Evaluate the need for a new shared-use arts facility;
 - Outline a collaborative process to coordinate the events and activities of local arts organizations + venues.
 - If a facilitator and/or consultant is hired, the City and participants should share the costs.
3. The CMPAG recommends that the Task Force consider qualitative elements such as venue location, as well as quantitative measurements, such as matching arts programs to adequate venues.
4. In the event that a new shared-use facility is deemed necessary, the CMPAG recommends that the CMP Core Principles be used as guidelines to evaluate proposed locations.

Wheeler Opera House + Parcel

STATUS: The Wheeler Opera House and City staff may explore the potential for a Wheeler COWOP regarding the future development of the Wheeler Parcel.

SITE: The Wheeler Opera House was built in 1889 and is located at the corner of Mill St. and Hyman Ave. It is a City of Aspen Historic Landmark and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. After the City of Aspen purchased the Wheeler from the Paepcke Family, the City financed an extensive renovation in 1984, returning it to its original Victorian character. The first floor of the building houses the box office, an ACRA visitor desk and two retail tenants.

The parcel of land owned by the City of Aspen directly adjacent to the Wheeler Opera House — the “Wheeler Parcel” — is a 6,000 square-foot lot with a bench and aspen trees along the street and a parking area and waste storage toward the alley.

ORGANIZATION: The Wheeler Opera House has an appointed advisory Board of Directors, and is a department of the City of Aspen.

VISION: In the CMP Phase I Report, the Facilities Analysis section stated that future operations of the Wheeler could benefit from ancillary facilities such as rehearsal space, meeting space, storage, and adequate office space, and identifies the Wheeler Parcel as a logical location for these uses.

In addition, the Foundation Map and Opportunities Map explored other alternatives, and identified various potential functions for the Wheeler Parcel, including:

- An opportunity for development / expansion of an arts facility
- Mixed Use: Retail & ancillary arts functions & affordable housing
- Visitors Center & ACRA offices

In 2002, the City Council decided to set aside the Wheeler Parcel for the exclusive future use of the Wheeler Opera House.

RELEVANT CORE PRINCIPLES:

1. Civic uses, and arts and cultural uses, belong in heart of town.
2. Mixed-use buildings and mixed-use areas create memorable places.
3. Creating great “people places” will build vitality.
6. Public-private partnerships can be advantageous in achieving public goals.
7. Improving pedestrian orientation.
8. The pursuit of excellence in the arts...

FINDINGS:

1. As a signature historic building, the Wheeler Opera House engages people by creating a powerful sense of character that reflects Aspen’s roots and history. As the city’s focal point for arts and culture, the Wheeler conveys an equal sense that the community is alive and evolving, and continues to celebrate its core identity as a center for arts and culture. (CP #1 CP #7 CP #8)
2. The Wheeler Opera House is a natural destination and point of orientation for visitors and locals alike.
3. The view from the Wheeler Opera House towards Wagner Park and Aspen Mountain is a valuable resource and is protected in the City of Aspen Land Use Code.
4. The Wheeler Opera House enjoys a dedicated and healthy funding stream from the RETT.
5. Future development at the Wheeler Parcel may increase operational flexibility and the number of annual productions at the Wheeler Opera House. Increased production capability could add a new element to the upcoming Arts Sector Facility Analysis. (CP #8)
6. The Wheeler Opera House building itself, the neighboring commercial uses and the public spaces surrounding the building are critical resources that have an impact on the movement of people between the Wheeler and the commercial core, and the vitality and vibrancy of the neighborhood. (CP #2, CP #3, CP #6, CP #7, CP #8)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The CMPAG supports the ongoing public process regarding the future use of the Wheeler Parcel.
2. The CMPAG recommends that future uses at the Wheeler Parcel should:
 - Accommodate as many additional needs of the local arts community as possible.
 - Improve the operational function of the Wheeler Opera House;
 - Contribute to improvements in the daytime administrative office and box office;
 - Contribute to the Wheeler’s ability to present more live performances and to improvements in production capabilities. (CP #2)
3. The CMPAG supports concepts for maintaining and/or enhancing the Wheeler Opera House building, adjacent commercial uses and the public spaces surrounding the Wheeler in order to contribute to the vitality of the area, such as:
 - The use of temporary banners on the Wheeler Opera House that enhance the historic nature of the building, create a sense of vitality and celebrate upcoming events.
 - The installation of a modest lighting array on the Wheeler building to call attention to the historic structure at night, and celebrate its iconic status.

- The continuation of commercial uses, and/or support for future commercial uses adjacent to the Wheeler that contribute to the vitality of the area both during the day and at night.
- Improvements to public spaces around the Wheeler, including sidewalks, streets and the pedestrian mall, which enhance the pedestrian experience.

Aspen Art Museum

STATUS: The Aspen Art Museum Board hired Executive Director Heidi Zuckerman Jacobson in 2005, and is continuing to evaluate its options regarding a long-term location.

ORGANIZATION: Founded in 1979, the Aspen Art Museum (AAM) is a non-profit institution governed by a board directors, with a staff of eleven. AAM is recognized internationally for presenting outstanding exhibitions with a particular emphasis on contemporary art. The museum offers year-round programming, including art workshops for children, teens and adults, free public lectures, docent tours, site rentals, special events, and members’ art trips. AAM offers a variety of memberships. The website address is www.aspenartmuseum.org.

SITE: The AAM building is located in a riparian area along the Roaring Fork River, with vehicular access from Mill Street to the small museum parking lot, and pedestrian access from city sidewalks and the Rio Grande Trail. The building is a City of Aspen Historic Landmark.

In 1888, the structure that currently houses the AAM was built as the Hunter Creek Power Plant, drawing on hydroelectric power generated at Hunter Creek, and serving as headquarters of the Roaring Fork Electric Light and Power Company. In the early 1900s, operations were consolidated at the Castle Creek Power Plant, and the Mill St. building was later used as a warehouse for Holy Cross Electric. By voter mandate in 1976, the City of Aspen acquired the building, and the AAM opened at the site in 1979. A “sprung floor” allowing for dance uses was installed in the early 1980s, and still remains in place.

The AAM is currently operating under a 30-year lease for \$10 per year; the lease expires in 2029.

VISION: As part of the CMP process, the AAM generated a Facility Needs Assessment in 2001, and found that a major expansion would allow the AAM to pursue the following opportunities:

- A larger exhibition space
- An expanded lobby and reception area
- Offering food services, including a café, and other amenities that are typically offered in peer institutions
- A larger bookstore
- Consolidating the 60 art classes at the AAM site

The Facility Needs Assessment stated that the Museum is located on the “wrong side of Main Street,” and also noted that an “in-town” location could result in increased attendance and more vitality for the downtown core. The CMP Phase I Report/ Foundation Map stated that the AAM “should be relocated to, or in, downtown Aspen.”

In August 2005, new Executive Director Heidi Zuckerman Jacobson began serving as the AAM’s representative on the CMPAC. At the August 31 CMPAC meeting, she stated that the Board of Directors and National Council now support the exploration of a downtown site for the AAM.

RELEVANT CORE PRINCIPLES:

1. Civic and arts uses belong in the heart of town.
2. Focus on creating great people places.
3. Civic planning must address the need for parking while not inducing additional traffic.
4. Public-private partnerships can be very advantageous in achieving public goals.
5. Pursue excellence in the arts.

FINDINGS:

1. The Aspen Art Museum holds a lease for its current site through 2029. If the Aspen Art Museum decides to relinquish the lease, the City would have an opportunity to identify a new user for a unique public property.
2. The site features the following assets:
 - The serenity and beauty of a river-side, park setting
 - The environmental significance of a river-side setting
 - The AAM is located on a regional pedestrian-bikeway system
 - A building listed on the National Register of Historic Places
 - Spacious interior rooms with high ceilings
 - A spacious lawn for summer uses that could complement interior uses.
- The site poses the following challenges:
 - Parking limitations are a challenge to the viability of major events, especially in winter; and can have an adverse impact on the neighborhood with regard to safety and access.
 - The historic designation of the building requires a regulatory process regarding new building on-site.
 - The floodplain and environmental issues are challenges to significant building expansion.
 - The location at the north edge of the civic core is a challenge for wayfinding.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The CMPAG supports the Aspen Art Museum's exploration of downtown locations in collaboration with the City of Aspen.
2. If the Aspen Art Museum relinquishes its lease in the future, the City should identify a new use that:
 - Allows for public interaction
 - Builds on the intrinsic assets of the site and the building
 - Recognizes the challenges of the site.

City of Aspen / City Hall

STATUS: In recent years, the space limitations at City Hall have resulted in the relocation of some departments to other sites, including the Yellow Brick School, the former Youth Center, the Zupancis Property and a private office building above Asie Restaurant. Some offices in City Hall have been further divided into smaller spaces to accommodate staff.

SITE: The City of Aspen offices are mostly located in City Hall, on Galena Street, with some functions located in the former Youth Center, the Yellow Brick School, the City Parking Garage, the Golf Course, the Aspen Recreation Center (ARC), the Zupancis Property and offices above Asie Restaurant on Main Street.

ORGANIZATIONS: City of Aspen.

VISION: The Phase I Report / Facility Analysis of 2001 stated that, "The facility is currently at, or beyond, its reasonable capacity." The Facility Analysis noted that meeting space is insufficient, short- and long-term file storage is accommodated throughout the building, and many work stations have been retrofitted to accommodate two or three employees.

In addition, the Facility Analysis stated that, "Many City Departments have already experienced difficulty staffing positions due to lack of physical space. This may affect expected levels of service. The City's space limitations require a long-term solution to ensure quality service."

RELEVANT CORE PRINCIPLES:

1. Civic and arts/cultural uses belong in heart of town.
2. Civic planning must address the need for parking while not inducing additional traffic.
3. Public-private, public-public and private-private partnerships can be very advantageous in achieving public goals.

FINDINGS:

1. Aspen was a town that eventually evolved into a resort, meaning that the typical functions of a small municipality still remain in the heart of the downtown. (CP #1)
2. As noted in Core Principle #1, the goal of the Civic Master Plan process is to build upon the intrinsic asset of a civic core that remains integrated into downtown Aspen. (CP #1)
3. The City of Aspen's space limitations require a long-term solution to ensure quality service.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The CMPAG recommends that any additional office space for the City of Aspen be located in the downtown area.
2. The CMPAC recommends that the City of Aspen collaborate with Pitkin County with regard to the Facility Feasibility Analysis process in order to review and evaluate the scope of potential civic uses in the downtown area, including but not limited to the Zupancis property and the former Youth Center.

Pitkin County, Various Offices

STATUS: Pitkin County began a comprehensive Facility Feasibility Study in 2005, led by county staff and RNL Design of Denver. The goal of the process is to craft a strategy for improved operational efficiency and customer service efficiency.

Questions to be answered are: 1) Do we need a new facility? 2) If so, where should it be located?; and 3) Assuming that some county agencies will be split up, where should each county agency be located? The study included substantial public outreach and public process, including a survey regarding customer service needs.

In summer 2006, the Board of County Commissioners made a threshold decision to expand its offices in the downtown area, adjacent to existing County facilities in the Courthouse and the Plaza 1 Building.

In October 2006, the Board of County Commissioners and City Council directed staff in a work session to begin the process of establishing a public process that encompasses an area between the Zupancic Property to the east and the Library to the west. This process is intended to explore potential civic buildings for city and county government as well as a potential library expansion, replacement of the garage roof at Galena Plaza and other potential users.

SITE: Pitkin County Government operates from several different buildings located throughout the County, including the Courthouse Plaza Building (County Administration), Library, Courthouse, Jail, Health & Human Services, Public Works, Fleet, Airport, Senior Center, Landfill and two departments are located in other buildings (one in Aspen City Hall and another in the Town of Basalt).

ORGANIZATIONS: Pitkin County.

VISION: The 2001 CMP Phase I Report Facility Analysis describes the working conditions at some, but not all County buildings:

- County Plaza Building: The work environment for the Commissioners and the County Attorney are “crowded.”
- County Plaza Building: The Aspen/Pitkin Housing Authority is “extremely crowded.” [Pitkin County is responsible for the space needs of the Housing Authority.]
- Courthouse: The working environment for the County Assessor, District Attorney, County Treasurer and Probation are “very crowded.”
- Courthouse: The court facilities on the second floor are “slowly being outgrown.” [Pitkin County is responsible for the space needs of the 21st Judicial District.]

The Pitkin County Facility Feasibility Analysis of 2005 was intended create a 20-year strategic plan that will include an analysis of:

- Current and future County space requirements;
- Efficient interconnections between departments;
- Various alternatives for facility locations;
- Financial implications for each alternative.

Through a decision-making process that includes extensive public participation, the study will culminate in choosing a preferred alternative for facilities and an action plan for implementation. Among the goals of the study are:

- To reflect and support the County’s unique requirements, goals, culture, philosophy and community;
- To fit within the timeframe and budget parameters of the County;
- To create a living plan that will be a guide through on-going change over time;
- To ensure that recommendations arrived at through the planning process are trusted and embraced by county residents.

RELEVANT CORE PRINCIPLES:

1. Civic and arts/cultural uses belong in the heart of town.
2. Civic planning must address need for parking while not inducing additional traffic.
3. Public-private, public-public and private-private partnerships can be very advantageous in achieving public goals.
4. Improving pedestrian orientation.

FINDINGS:

1. Aspen was a traditional mining town that ultimately evolved into a resort, and the typical functions of a small municipality still remain in the heart of the downtown. (CP #1)
2. As noted in Core Principle #1, a primary goal of the Civic Master Plan process is to build upon the intrinsic asset of a civic core that remains integrated into downtown Aspen. (CP #1)
3. Removing civic functions from the downtown will tend to reduce the kind of community character that still makes the core of Aspen a “traditional” downtown, surrounded by a resort environment. (CP #1)
4. The City of Aspen and Pitkin County have a long history of considering both quantitative measurements and qualitative elements in their decision-making processes – both function and character are important in shaping the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The CMPAG recommends that the Pitkin County Facility Feasibility Analysis consider qualitative elements as well as quantitative measurements. For example, in addition to measuring the quantity and length of car trips and the cost of land and construction, the study should consider the qualitative impacts of various alternatives on the character of the civic core in downtown Aspen.
2. The CMPAG recommends that the City of Aspen collaborate with Pitkin County with regard to the Facility Feasibility Analysis process in order to review and evaluate the scope of potential civic uses in the downtown area, including but not limited to the Zupancic property and the former Youth Center.

Public Meeting Hall

STATUS: In 2005, the CMPAC broached this topic, as part of discussions regarding new civic spaces.

SITE: The primary meeting space for the City of Aspen is the Council Chambers, which is used by City Council, the Planning and Zoning Commission, the Historic Preservation Commission, the Board of Adjustment, the Municipal Court and for meetings of City employees. The Council Chambers is currently the subject of a study to improve the function of the space for public meetings, including improvements in audio, sight lines, and orientation of the Council, presenters and the public. The adjacent smaller Sister Cities Room is also used by a wide range of groups. Lack of availability of both these rooms is not unusual, and boards, committees and City employees use alternate sites such as the Rio Grande Meeting Room, the Fire Station Conference Room and the Pitkin County Library Meeting Room. The Phase I Report / Facility Analysis of 2001 stated that, “meeting space is insufficient ...”

The Pitkin County Board of Commissioners and other County boards, committees and groups currently use the Conference Room on the 1st floor of the County Plaza Building. The Phase I Report Facility Analysis described this room as “a marginal conference room for public forums. The size and configuration makes it difficult to hold effective meetings, especially when the meetings exceed 20 members of the public.” The Conference Room is heavily used throughout the day and evening, and County boards, committees and groups also use the Pitkin County Library Meeting Room and the small former County Commissioners Meeting Room, on the 1st floor of the Courthouse.

ORGANIZATIONS: City of Aspen, Pitkin County.

VISION: The Phase I Report Facility Analysis stated that, “an additional meeting room is a significant community need.” The Phase I Report Function Analysis states that, “a large capacity meeting facility ... should be centrally located and be able to accommodate approximately 100 people ... The space should be able to accommodate a variety of meeting types and incorporate the latest technological capabilities ... “ The Phase I Opportunities Map identified the north edge of Galena Plaza and the former Youth Center as potential sites for a Meeting Hall.

RELEVANT CORE PRINCIPLES:

1. Civic uses belong in heart of town
2. Mixed-use buildings and mixed-use areas create memorable places.

FINDINGS:

1. The existing meeting space for the City of Aspen and Pitkin County is not adequate.
2. The design of meeting space currently used by the City and the County do not reflect the importance of the discussions, debates and decisions being made.
3. A City-County Meeting Hall is an appropriate shared use, considering the existing need and the similar purpose of the use. A shared Meeting Hall would avoid a duplication of costs.
4. A Civic Meeting Hall should be close to downtown government offices, adjacent to outdoor public space and at a prominent site that conveys a sense of significance.
5. A Civic Meeting Hall should be designed so that it can be available for a variety of uses by the general public as well as government meetings.
6. Logistical issues between the City and the County regarding a shared Meeting Hall will need to be addressed.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. As part of the collaboration between the City of Aspen and Pitkin County regarding civic space needs, the City and County should identify an appropriate downtown space and design a shared-use Meeting Hall, considering the following Desired Elements:
 - Inspirational
 - Design of space should reflect the importance of discussions/decisions made there
 - Dignity afforded to the public
 - Elevate the debate
 - Flexibility
 - Appropriate technology
2. Appropriate sites for a Meeting Hall include:
 - The former Youth Center
 - The north edge of Galena Plaza
 - The Zupancis Property

Zupancis Property

STATUS: In August 2005, the City of Aspen and the Aspen Fire Protection District agreed to end the joint planning process that had focused on Zupancis Property as the home for a new AFD Headquarters Station. The City is currently leasing the site to the Obermeyer Redevelopment Co., which is sub-leasing to its SCI tenants while Obermeyer Place is under construction.

In July 2005, Pitkin County began a Facility Feasibility Analysis that is expected to generate a 20-year strategic plan. The Zupancis property is one of the sites to be assessed as part of the study.

In October 2006, the Board of County Commissioners and City Council directed staff in a work session to begin the process of establishing a public process that encompasses an area between the Zupancis Property to the east and the Library to the west.

This process is intended to explore potential civic buildings for city and county government as well as a potential library expansion, replacement of the garage roof at Galena Plaza and other potential users.

SITE: 540 East Main Street, next to the County Plaza Building. The property includes historic cabins at the back end of the property. The topography of the site allows for underground parking, and a link to underground parking at Obermeyer Place.

ORGANIZATION: The City of Aspen purchased this property in 2001 using general funds.

VISION: The CMP Phase I / Opportunities Map identified the Zupancis property as a potential Fire Station, Mixed Use Building or to be used in combination with the adjacent County Plaza building for a larger civic project.

In past discussions, non-profit groups such as Theatre Aspen and the Aspen Art Museum had expressed some interest in the Zupancis parcel.

RELEVANT CORE PRINCIPLES:

1. Civic and arts & cultural uses belong in the heart of town.
2. Focus on creating great people places.
3. Affordable Housing and Affordable Commercial space ensures the viability of civic functions and vitality of town.
4. Civic planning must address need for parking while not inducing additional traffic.
5. Public-private partnerships can be very advantageous in achieving public goals.
6. Improve pedestrian orientation.

FINDINGS:

1. Aspen was a traditional mining town that ultimately evolved into a resort, and the traditional functions of a small municipality still remain in the heart of the downtown.
2. As noted in Core Principle #1, a primary goal of the Civic Master Plan process is to build upon the intrinsic asset of a civic core that remains integrated into downtown Aspen.
3. Both Pitkin County and the City of Aspen are experiencing space needs.
4. The Zupancis Property has the potential to establish and improve north-south pedestrian connections from Main Street to Obermeyer Place and Rio Grande Park, as well as east-west connections between Obermeyer Place and Galena Plaza.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The CMPAC recommends that the City of Aspen collaborate with Pitkin County during the Facility Feasibility Analysis process in order to review and evaluate the scope of potential civic uses at the Zupancis property.
2. If the Zupancis property is not used for civic purposes, the site would be appropriate for arts and cultural uses or a mixed-use building with affordable housing.
3. The CMPAC recommends that the easement established as part of the Obermeyer Place approval be used to improve north-south pedestrian movement between Main Street, Obermeyer Place and Rio Grande Park.

Former Youth Center

STATUS: The former Youth Center currently houses City employees, including the GIS Department, and several employees from the Asset Management Department and Community Development Department -- -- with meeting space on the top floor. (The ground floor is leased as a restaurant.)

Although the joint City Council-County Commissioners vote in March 2006 did not request that the former Youth Center be explored as a joint civic facility, one of the options generated by the Pitkin County Facility Feasibility Analysis in January 2006 included the former Youth Center as a potential County building site.

SITE: The former Youth Center is at the northeast edge of Galena Plaza, descending down to Rio Grande Place. It was used as a Youth Center until 2003, when the Aspen Recreation Center opened adjacent to the public school complex on Maroon Creek Road.

ORGANIZATION: The City of Aspen owns this site.

VISION: The CMP Phase I / Opportunities Map identified the former Youth Center as a potential location for “high traffic” government departments such as Housing, Building, Police/Sheriff, and/or a Meeting Hall, ACRA offices, Visitor Center.

RELEVANT CORE PRINCIPLES:

1. Civic and arts & cultural uses belong in the heart of town.
2. Focus on creating great people places.
3. Civic planning must address need for parking while not inducing additional traffic.
4. Public-private partnerships can be very advantageous in achieving public goals.
5. Mixed-use buildings create memorable places
6. Improve pedestrian orientation.

FINDINGS:

1. The former Youth Center building was designed as a Youth Center and is relatively inflexible in accommodating new uses. The future renovation or replacement of this building could allow for new uses that could increase vitality at Galena Plaza. The size of the building was limited by funds available, and a future structure could be larger, if funds are available to address engineering issues related to topography.
2. A built east edge as part of a potential future renovation or replacement of the former Youth Center, extending to and encompassing the existing elevator/stairwell features, could increase vitality at Galena Plaza through new uses, and draw pedestrians across Main Street through the use of compelling architectural elements. (CP#1, #3, #7)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The CMPAG recommends that the former Youth Center building be considered for renovation or replacement in the future. A new or renovated building could be a welcoming and interactive destination point that capitalizes on the vista, creates vitality and could include mixed uses and/or a range of civic and/or cultural uses.
2. In conjunction with the future renovation or replacement of the former Youth Center, the CMPAG recommends that the east edge of Galena Plaza be considered in the future as a built edge, extending to the existing stairwell/elevator feature, and including compelling architectural elements intended to draw pedestrians across Main Street.
3. The City of Aspen (should) collaborate with Pitkin County with regard to the Facility Feasibility Analysis process in order to review and evaluate the scope of potential civic uses in the downtown area, including but not limited to the Zupancis property and the former Youth Center. ”
4. Appropriate sites for a Visitor Center include: the former Youth Center
5. Appropriate sites for a Public Meeting Hall include: the former Youth Center.

Visitor Center

STATUS: Following the November 2004 ballot election that defeated the proposal to relocate the Visitor Center to the Galena/Main intersection, no further discussions regarding a new location have taken place. In 2005, the Aspen Chamber Resort Association signed a five-year lease with the City for its current site.

Site: The Visitor Center is located on Rio Grande Place, next to ACRA offices.
Organizations: City of Aspen and ACRA.

VISION: The CMP Phase I Report/Facility Analysis states that “constrained space limits the daily operation of ACRA and the location is not convenient for visiting guests. ACRA serves a high number of visitors and lacks basic amenities such as public restrooms.”

The Aspen Retail Analysis (the Frick & Beer Report) identified a relocated and revamped visitor center as a pressing need: “The current Visitors Center is difficult to find and too far from the downtown ... What is most important is that the center’s location, appearance and operations all signal the community’s genuine appreciation for guests, and that the center assist visitors in accessing and understanding the downtown.”

The Phase I Report/Opportunities Map identified several potential sites for a Visitor Center, including the Hines/Hills buildings at Main St., and the Galena St. Ext., the first floor of the Wheeler Opera House, the Wheeler parcel, the former Youth Center building and Galena Plaza. Of those sites, Hines/Hills was rejected by voters; the Wheeler Opera House was determined to be appropriate only for a satellite Visitor Center; and the Wheeler Parcel was reserved for uses related to the Wheeler Opera House. The sites remaining are the former Youth Center building and Galena Plaza. However, the Visitor Center COWOP did review and evaluate a longer list of potential sites.

RELEVANT CORE PRINCIPLES:

1. Civic and arts uses belong in heart of town.
2. Mixed-use buildings and mixed-use areas create vibrant, memorable places.
3. Focus on creating great people places.
4. Civic planning must address need for parking while not inducing additional traffic.
5. Public-private partnerships can be very advantageous in achieving public goals.
6. Improving pedestrian orientation.

FINDINGS:

1. The constrained office space and lack of basic amenities remain challenges at the existing Visitor Center.
2. The lack of visibility, lack of wayfinding and inconvenient location of the existing Visitor Center remain major obstacles to providing optimal services to visitors. (CP#3, #7)
3. An optimal location for a Visitor Center would be close to parking and the downtown. (CP#1, #5, #7)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Appropriate sites for a Visitor Center could include:
 - the former Youth Center
 - the north edge of Galena Plaza
2. The CMPAG recommends that the Visitor Center and ACRA offices be co-located, and could be part of a mixed-use building.
3. The CMPAG recommends that if ACRA begins a search for a new Visitor Center site, the evaluation of sites under the 2004 Visitor Center COWOP process be used as a resource.

Pitkin County Library

STATUS: Although the Pitkin County Library has an easement to expand approximately 44-feet eastward onto Galena Plaza, there are no immediate plans for expansion. However, the library wants to insure a potential expansion in the future as the Civic Master Plan focuses on this area.

SITE: The Library is located between N. Mill Street and Galena Plaza.

ORGANIZATIONS: Pitkin County Library.

VISION: The CMP Phase I Report/Facility Analysis states that if the library wishes to expand eastward, the Rio Grande Parking Garage cannot sustain “increased loads associated with library stacks” without pillars that extend into the garage below. The library has funded plans that show the number and location of pillars in the garage necessary to sustain bookweight as part of the expansion. City staff has held preliminary meetings with the Library Board to discuss the potential for shifting programming inside the library so that the expansion does not include extensive library stacks.

RELEVANT CORE PRINCIPLES:

1. Civic and arts uses belong in heart of town.
2. Mixed-use buildings and mixed-use areas create vibrant, memorable places.
3. Focus on creating great people places.
4. Civic planning must address need for parking while not inducing additional traffic.
5. Improving pedestrian orientation.

FINDINGS:

1. An expansion of the Pitkin County Library is appropriate for this downtown site, and in combination with other new built “edges” at Galena Plaza would contribute to a vibrant and memorable mixed-use area. (CP#1, #2, #3)
2. A ground-level meeting room as part of the library expansion would allow for public access to the meeting room at any time, and would increase the use and vitality of Galena Plaza. (CP#1, #2, #3)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The CMPAG recommends that staff representatives of the Pitkin County Library, Pitkin County and the City of Aspen meet to discuss the Library’s short-term infrastructure planning and long-term facility goals, and identify an appropriate public review process that will address both short-term and long-term goals.
2. The CMPAG supports an expansion of the Pitkin County Library, to the east. The CMPAC recommends that the design of the building be coordinated with other built edges around Galena Plaza, to the extent possible.
3. The CMPAG recommends that a meeting room be located on the ground level of the library expansion, to allow for public access to the meeting room at any time, and to increase the use.

Aspen Fire Protection District

STATUS: In August 2005, the City of Aspen and the Aspen Fire Protection District agreed to end the joint planning process that had focused on Zupancis Property as the home for a new AFPD Headquarters Station. The Aspen Fire Protection District is currently engaged in a COWOP process regarding the replacement of the Fire Station on Hopkins Street.

SITE: The Aspen Fire Protection District has been located on Hopkins Street since 1961, and has served as the Headquarters Station for all District functions. In conjunction with outlying satellite facilities, the Headquarters Station has served as the base for all Aspen Volunteer Fire Department operations. The AFPD leases this site from the City for a nominal fee, with the lease contract extending through 2021.

ORGANIZATION: The Aspen Fire Protection District was established in 1953 by an election of voters within the proposed district boundaries. It is an independent government district, funded primarily by a property tax levy and operated by an elected Board of Directors.

VISION: The CMP Phase I Report/Foundation Map stated that, “The Fire District will outgrow the current facility (not the location) in the near future,” and stated that the Hopkins St. site represents an, “Opportunity for a redeveloped fire station or a cultural facility.”

After the City Council purchased the Zupancis site on Main Street, the Fire District established a Headquarters Station Steering Committee, which issued a final report in Sept. 2003. While the committee voted 10-7 in favor of relocating to the Zupancis site, the vote did not reach the 2/3 majority required by the recommendation process. Not long after the vote, the AFPD began to focus on a more fundamental, District-wide redistribution of equipment and apparatus. The AFPD located a parcel adjacent to the North 40 development at the Aspen Airport Business Center, and determined that it could accommodate a substation that could address the longstanding problem of ensuring rapid response to the populated area west of the City. Adequate response time from the downtown station across the Castle Creek Bridge during commuting hours has been a major AFPD concern.

At the same time, this potential redistribution of equipment and apparatus reduced the need for a significantly larger Headquarters Station in the downtown. Although the Headquarters Station Steering Committee did not reach agreement regarding relocation to the Zupancis Parcel, the committee unanimously agreed that if the Zupancis relocation did not occur, the Hopkins Street site required renovation.

While the AFPD is engaged in a COWOP process for the Hopkins Street station, construction has begun on the new sub-station at the Aspen Airport Business Center.

RELEVANT CORE PRINCIPLES:

1. Civic and arts & cultural uses belong in the heart of town.
3. Focus on creating great people places.
6. Public-private partnerships can be very advantageous in achieving public goals.

FINDINGS:

1. The civic nature and iconic quality of the Aspen Volunteer Fire Department – and its location in the downtown core -- is an immeasurable asset to both the year-round community and visitors.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The CMPAC recommends that during the design process for the renovation of the Hopkins Street Headquarters Stations, the AFPD considers:
 - The civic nature and central location of the building;
 - The iconic quality of the Aspen Volunteer Fire Department and its members;
 - The value of pedestrian + public interaction.

The Thrift Shop

STATUS: The Thrift Shop is currently engaged in a COWOP process with the Aspen Fire Protection District to build a second floor.

SITE: The Thrift Shop is located on Hopkins Street, adjacent to the AFPD Headquarters Station. The Thrift Shop leases its space from the AFPD for a nominal amount per year.

There is approximately 1,000 square-feet of space on the 1st floor, and 1,000 s.f. in the basement, which is used partly for storage. The location in the downtown core is ideal, as many clients use public transit. The original Thrift Shop was located on Main Street, moved to S. Mill Street and moved to its current location in the early 1980s.

ORGANIZATION: The Thrift Shop was established as a non-profit in 1949, and is run by a 5-member Board of Directors. There are approximately 80 volunteers that put in more than 10,000 hours per year; all happen to be women. There are no paid employees. In 2004, The Thrift Shop donated \$270,000 to local non-profits as well as college scholarships for those who embody the spirit of volunteerism. The Thrift Shop also regularly donates materials to Indian reservations, Good Will Industries, the Salvation Army and disaster relief efforts. The mission of The Thrift Shop is to make affordable clothing available to the community; it is a high-volume business that is open from 9:30 am - 4 pm six days a week. The Thrift Shop accepts clean clothing in good condition, preferable in-season, as well as small household appliances in working order, in-season sporting equipment, artwork and toys.

VISION: For many years, The Thrift Shop has been interested in expanding, based on the consistent high volume of business it enjoys. The Thrift Shop currently re-distributes a substantial amount of clothing to other groups, such as The Salvation Army, because it has no room for additional displays. By adding a second floor, The Thrift Shop could keep a much larger inventory on-site, and believes it could substantially increase its business -- and the amount it donates to local non-profits and students.

RELEVANT CORE PRINCIPLES:

2. Mixed-use buildings and mixed-use areas create vibrant, memorable places.
4. Affordable Housing and Affordable Commercial space ensures viability of civic functions and vitality of town.
5. Civic planning must address need for parking while not inducing additional traffic.
6. Partnerships can be very advantageous in achieving civic goals.

FINDINGS:

1. The Thrift Shop is an Aspen institution that provides an important service for lower income residents and workers that no one else provides – while supporting local non-profits and students. (CP#4)
2. The central location of The Thrift Shop supports its overall mission, as many of its customers use public transit. (CP #5)
3. The Thrift Shop relies on subsidized rent and could not carry out its mission if it had to pay retail rental rates.
4. The simultaneous renovation of the AFPD Headquarters Station and The Thrift Shop is an opportunity to create a vibrant mixed-use area. (CP #2)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The CMPAC recommends that The Thrift Shop remain in the downtown core, and remain a subsidized use.
2. The CMPAC supports the expansion of The Thrift Shop.

Aspen Sanitation District Offices

STATUS: The Aspen Sanitation District agreed in 2002 to consider Civic Master Plan Core Principles as it drafted a Master Plan. The CMPAG endorsed the Sanitation District Master Plan in May 2003. The Sanitation District Master Plan was subsequently approved by City Council.

ORGANIZATION: The Aspen Consolidated Sanitation District is a quasi-municipal organization, governed by an elected Board of Directors. The Sanitation District is responsible for wastewater treatment for Aspen's urban area.

SITE: The administrative offices of the Aspen Consolidated Sanitation District are located on the district's 3.8-acre property along North Mill Street, which includes nine affordable housing units and a 400-foot stretch of the Roaring Fork River and section of the Rio Grande Trail. The property is adjacent to the Aspen Center for Environmental Studies (ACES) property.

VISION: The CCMP Phase I Report Facility Analysis states that, "The Sanitation District's interest in this planning effort is to accommodate their future needs in an adopted master plan, thereby reducing or eliminating the necessity for land-use review on each expansion."

The existing condition of the District's river corridor features a series of man-made berms on the south side of the public river trail, as well as non-native plants. The north side of the trail, directly adjacent to the river, is a more natural riparian environment. The District's Master Plan would establish a sense of continuity on both sides, removing the berms, planting native grasses and reaffirming the elements of an open, natural river corridor on both sides of the trail.

The plan includes a new section of public trail running south to north, roughly perpendicular to Mill Street.

There are currently nine affordable housing units on the site, with the District Master Plan calling for a total of 16 units.

The area between a series of proposed new townhouse units and the river corridor would feature a lowered stormwater retention area, including native plantings. This aesthetic buffer zone ranges from 120 feet to 180 feet, greatly exceeding the city's 100-foot stream margin requirement.

The District Master Plan was presented to the CMPAG in 2003, to positive response.

RELEVANT CORE PRINCIPLES:

2. Mixed-use buildings and mixed-use areas create vibrant, memorable places.
4. Affordable Housing and Affordable Commercial space ensures viability of civic functions and vitality of town.

FINDINGS/RECOMMENDATIONS: The District Master Plan was presented to the CMPAG in 2003, before the CMPAG made findings and recommendations. However, the CMPAG and ACSD officials met and discussed the Master Plan and the CMPAG informally endorsed the Master Plan.

Rio Grande Park

STATUS: The planning, design and engineering phases for the Rio Grande Park Master Plan are complete. The CMPAG and City Council both endorsed the Rio Grande Park Master Plan.

ORGANIZATION: The City of Aspen owns and manages the park, Pitkin County operates the recycling facility, Theatre Aspen operates within the park with a lease from the City.

SITE: North of Rio Grande Place to the Roaring Fork River. The 7-acre Park includes an active recreational field, the City's skate board park, a basketball court, a recycling facility, snowmelt facility, the John Denver Sanctuary, and the Theater Aspen tent. The field is also used to stage special events such as Jazz Aspen, winter polo, and Aspen Rotary's Ducky Derby.

VISION: The CMP Phase I Report encouraged the retention of the playing fields, accommodation of federally-mandated drainage and water quality improvements in an aesthetic and environmentally sensitive manner, development of more formal entryways, and the removal or upgrading of the recycle/snowmelt complex.

The Phase I Report also stated that the recycling facility needs to be located close to the Commercial Core to remain effective and suggested either an enclosed facility or a curb-side pick-up system. A joint City/County staff task force evaluated alternate sites for the facility and recommended the facility remain in its current location. The Obermeyer Redevelopment Company is currently leasing the land for commercial tenants displaced by the construction of Obermeyer Place. A Recycling Center COWOP recommended a partial enclosure and roof in 2006, but this proposal was the subject of a referendum in November 2006, which rejected the COWOP proposal.

The Rio Grande Park Master Plan calls for the Park and Jenny Adair Wetlands area open space areas to function as "water quality detention facilities" for the Aspen Mountain watershed. The design was developed by a consulting water engineer, the City's Engineering Department, the City's Parks and Recreation Department and a citizen task force.

The water quality detention features designed for the Rio Grande Park include a series of wetland ponds and a re-graded playing field. Stored stormwater would be slowly released into the Roaring Fork River through water quality outlet structures that have been designed as "park architecture."

The character intent of the wetland ponds will be riparian, similar to the backwaters and low areas within the Roaring Fork River meanders prior to mining and town development in the late 1800s.

RIO GRANDE MASTER PLAN: Considerable achievements have been accomplished that were set forth as action items in the 1993 RGMP. The riverwalk and kayak course were completed, an alternate location for the snowdump was found and the snowmelter was relocated to the recycling facility, additional pedestrian paths replaced the vehicular access to the park, better access and handicapped parking were provided for Theatre in the Park, bins for recycling were provided and the basketball court and skateboard park were developed.

The RGMP Site B map (p. 13) shows the parking lots along Rio Grande Place adjacent to the southwest edge of the Park were purchased with 7th Penny Transportation Funds. Under "Goals," the RGMP says: "Satisfy transportation related needs first when considering the use of Site B."

The RGMP does not recommend any uses aside from the existing parking lot, All maps in the RGMP show the parking lots as unchanged, including the "Scenario Maps" in Appendix A. The parking lots were to be located between the future "Transportation Center" (now the ACRA Office/Visitor Center) and the future "Regional Rail Facility" (now the playing field at Rio Grande Park.)

The 1993 RGMP does not address the future use of land along N. Mill Street, along the western edge of the Park.

RELEVANT CORE PRINCIPLES:

3. Focus on creating great people places
7. Improved pedestrian orientation

FINDINGS: (The Rio Grande Park Master Plan was presented to the CMPAG in 2003, before the CMPAG generated findings. However, the CMPAG informally endorsed the Rio Grande Master Plan in 2003, and subsequently adopted findings related to establishing improved “edges to the southwest edge and west edge of the Park, listed below.)

1. In the downtown area south of Main Street, both urban blocks and public parks have clearly defined edges and are easily recognizable. In contrast, the City-owned parking lots along Rio Grande Place are an unraveled edge that do not clearly demarcate the end of an urban block and the beginning of a public park. (CP #2, CP #3, CP #7)
2. Creating a clear edge and demarcation between urban blocks and public parks is a widely recognized and sound urban design concept. (CP #2, CP #3)
3. Providing a larger buffer between pedestrians and traffic (on N. Mill Street) will increase safety, and improve the pedestrian experience and visual esthetic of the area. These changes will encourage more pedestrian use, and improve conditions for events and public/private sector users located in this area of town. (CP#3, CP#7)

RECOMMENDATIONS: (The Rio Grande Park Master Plan was presented to the CMPAG in 2003, before the CMPAG generated recommendations. However, the CMPAG informally endorsed the Rio Grande Master Plan in 2003, and subsequently adopted recommendations related to establishing improved “edges to the southwest edge and west edge of the Park, listed below.)

1. The CMPAC supports the urban design concept of establishing a clear edge or demarcation between urban blocks and public parks, reinforcing the identity of both the urban area and the park.
2. The CMPAG recommends that City Council direct relevant public agencies and private parties to collaboratively generate a proposal to design, fund and implement a plan for the improvement of North Mill St., to focus on the following:
 - A wider buffer between pedestrians and traffic for the purpose of improving the pedestrian experience, consistent with Aspen’s historical streetscape pattern;
 - Accommodating existing traffic flow;
 - Improving safety for pedestrians and vehicles;
 - Coordination with the local pedestrian-bikeway system;
 - Improving the visual aesthetic of the area.

Galena Plaza

STATUS:

The Galena Plaza site played a critical role in the formation of the Civic Master Plan (CMP) process: While a leak in the roof of the Rio Grande Parking Garage demanded attention, a clear consensus was emerging that the plaza was a failed public space. The goal was to find a way to re-energize the plaza and coordinate the solution with the repair of the roof.

An engineering consultant has recently determined that the roof must be repaired by the spring/summer of 2008, or serious structural problems will result. At the same time, recent in-house discussions have revealed that the repair of the roof can go forward at any time, with construction atop the plaza proceeding at a later date without a substantial duplication of costs.

The CMPAG reached a consensus that creating modest built “edges” that introduce new uses to the site will increase the use and enjoyment of the open space that will be retained at the center of the plaza.

SITE: Galena Plaza is located between the Pitkin County Library and the Courthouse at the terminus of the Galena St. Extension. It was constructed in 1989, serving as a roof section of the Rio Grande Parking Garage and as a public gathering place.

ORGANIZATIONS: The City owns this property. The northeast portion of the plaza was purchased with 7th Penny Transportation funds; the southwest portion of the plaza was acquired via land trade with the County. The Pitkin County Library holds an easement for a future expansion at the west end of the plaza.

VISION: The CMP Phase I Report/Foundation Map stated that drainage problems must be addressed, while noting an opportunity for the plaza to become “an interesting public place” that “encourages pedestrians to cross Main Street.”

The CMP Phase I Report Physical Analysis section states that, “this public space does not have a presence on Main Street, or strong pedestrian circulation routes running through it, nor does it benefit from enlivened architectural edges. As a result, the space is somewhat disappointing and does not function as a quality public place. This public space is of paramount importance in the Civic planning effort. Initially limited to curing drainage problems, the ‘fix’ for this ailing public space could create a very interesting and successful public place ... “

RIO GRANDE MASTER PLAN: Although Galena Plaza is shown as part of Site B in the 1993 RGMP, there are no recommendations for the use of this site. Under “Goals,” the RGMP states, “Satisfy transportation related needs first when considering the use of Site B.”

RELEVANT CORE PRINCIPLES:

1. Civic and arts uses belong in heart of town.
2. Mixed-use buildings and mixed-use areas create memorable places.
3. Focus on great people places.
4. Affordable Housing and Affordable Commercial space ensures the viability of civic functions and vitality of town.
5. Civic planning must address need for parking while not inducing additional traffic.
6. Public-private partnerships can be very advantageous in achieving public goals.
7. Improving pedestrian orientation.
8. The pursuit of excellence in the arts.

FINDINGS:

1. The repair and replacement of the roof of the Rio Grande Parking Garage is needed to avoid further damage to the structure and costs to the City. (CP#5)
2. The use of easily replaceable materials on Galena Plaza will reduce the cost of future construction on the site. (CP#1, #2, #3)
3. The accommodation of tents at Galena Plaza as part of an interim open space solution could increase vitality at the site. (CP#1, #2, #3, #6, #7, #8)
4. The groundplane at the center of Galena Plaza is an opportunity to animate the site in relation to future built edges.
5. An expansion of the Pitkin County Library is appropriate for this downtown site, and in combination with other new built “edges” at Galena Plaza would contribute to a vibrant and memorable mixed-use area. (CP#1, #2, #3)
6. A ground-level meeting room as part of the library expansion would allow for public access to the meeting room at any time, and would increase the use and vitality of Galena Plaza. (CP#1, #2, #3)
7. A built north edge, with a medium-high intensity use, would increase vitality at Galena Plaza. (CP-ALL)
8. The former Youth Center building was designed as a Youth Center and is relatively inflexible in accommodating new uses. The future renovation or replacement of this building could allow for new uses that could increase vitality at Galena Plaza. The size of the building was limited by funds available, and a future structure could be larger, if funds are available to address engineering issues related to topography.
9. A built east edge as part of a potential future renovation or replacement of the former Youth Center, extending to and encompassing the existing elevator/stairwell features, could increase vitality at Galena Plaza through new uses, and draw pedestrians across Main Street through the use of compelling architectural elements. (CP#1, #3, #7)
10. A dramatically improved pedestrian way from Main Street, through the Galena St. Extension, Galena Plaza and the stairway down to and through Rio Grande Park will help form a connection between the downtown and the north side of Main Street. (CP#7)

SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The CMPAG supports the repair of the roof of the Rio Grande Parking Garage as soon as possible.
2. The CMPAG recommends that as part of the garage roof repair and replacement, the design of the new Galena Plaza use materials that are easily removed in the future, especially in areas anticipated for built edges.
3. The CMPAG recommends that the Parks Department work with the Asset Management and Parking departments to design an interim open space use for Galena Plaza that is consistent with the values and philosophy of the Aspen community, to be implemented following the replacement of the garage roof.
4. The CMPAG recommends that the City consider methods for accommodating tents at Galena Plaza as part of the replacement of the garage roof, to increase vitality at the site.
5. As part of planning for the garage roof repair, the CMPAG recommends that City staff explore potential infrastructure improvements related to future uses, especially along potential built edges.
6. The CMPAG recommends that staff representatives of the Pitkin County Library, Pitkin County and the City of Aspen meet to discuss the Library’s short-term infrastructure planning and long-term facility goals, and identify an appropriate public review process that will address both short-term and long-term goals.

LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS:

7. The CMPAG supports an expansion of the Pitkin County Library, to the east. The CMPAC recommends that the design of the building be coordinated with other built edges around Galena Plaza, to the extent possible.
8. The CMPAG recommends that a meeting room be located on the ground level of the library expansion, to allow for public access to the meeting room at any time, and to increase the use and vitality of Galena Plaza.
9. The CMPAG recommends that the north edge of Galena Plaza be considered in the future for a shared-use arts facility, with the bulk of the building extending down to Rio Grande Place, pending the outcome of the Arts Sector Facilities Analysis. (Please see section titled: Arts in Aspen: Painting the Big Picture.)
10. If a shared-use arts facility is not constructed at Galena Plaza/Rio Grande Place, a building at the north edge of Galena Plaza could be a welcoming and interactive destination point that capitalizes on the vista, creates vitality and could feature a range of civic and/or cultural uses.
11. The CMPAG recommends that the former Youth Center building be considered for renovation or replacement in the future. A new or renovated building could be a welcoming and interactive destination point that capitalizes on the vista, creates vitality and could include mixed uses and/or a range of civic and/or cultural uses.
12. In conjunction with the future renovation or replacement of the former Youth Center, the CMPAG recommends that the east edge of Galena Plaza be considered in the future as a built edge, extending to the existing stairwell/elevator feature, and including compelling architectural elements intended to draw pedestrians across Main Street.
13. In conjunction with future built edges at Galena Plaza, the CMPAG recommends the design of a dramatically improved pedestrian way from Main Street, through the Galena St. Extension, Galena Plaza and stairway down to and through Rio Grande Park.
14. In conjunction with future built edges at Galena Plaza, the CMPAG recommends that the open space at the center of Galena Plaza be designed to animate the site in relation to new uses.

Pedestrian Movement

STATUS: Improving pedestrian connections is one of the Civic Master Plan’s Core Principles.

SITE: Pedestrian circulation is a combination of City sidewalks, pedestrian & bicycle trails, bicycle routes on City streets, the pedestrian mall, City parks, informal pedestrian routes, City/County/U.S. government pedestrian & bicycle trails, and the linkage areas between any and all of these areas.

ORGANIZATION: The City of Aspen Community Development Department, working with elected officials, is primarily responsible for planning for an improved pedestrian experience. Planning is implemented in every land use project at both the private and public level.

Public improvements are also the general responsibility of the City Engineer and the Asset Management Department.

VISION: The CMP Phase I Report Function Analysis-Pedestrian/Bicycle subsection states that, “A component of the Civic Master Planning efforts is to provide useful connections to the existing pedestrian and bicycle system. There are also unique opportunities to improve the quality of pedestrian links to fulfill other goals, such as the vitality of public spaces. Pedestrian paths through Rio Grande Park, along both sides of the Park and crossing North Mill Street, through Galena Plaza, through the SCI East area, and crossing Main Street have been identified as those opportunities.” In addition, the Physical Analysis section of the CMP Phase I Report identified various areas that could benefit from improved conditions for pedestrians, including Mill Street, Main Street and Rio Grande Park.

Since 2001, CMPAC has adopted draft findings and recommendations that address many of the areas identified in the Phase I Report. Also during that time, pedestrian links have been an important element of sites reviewed by the CMPAG and subsequently entitled or endorsed by City Council, such as Obermeyer Place, the Rio Grande Park Master Plan and the Aspen Sanitation District Master Plan. Staff and the consulting team expect to rely on these existing plans as well as CMPAG recommendations to create a pedestrian connections map.

RELEVANT CORE PRINCIPLES:

3. Creating great people places.
5. Civic planning must address need for parking while not inducing additional traffic.
7. An effective pedestrian and bicycling system creates vitality and supports the goal of limiting automobile traffic in the City of Aspen.

MAIN STREET FINDINGS: Main Street is intimidating to pedestrians, and has become a barrier to north-south pedestrian movement.

MAIN STREET RECOMMENDATIONS: The CMPAC recommends that the City of Aspen work with CDOT to explore design changes to Main Street to make it more pedestrian friendly, including but not limited to:

- Stamped/colored concrete x-walks
- Raised x-walks
- Bulb-outs
- Refuge Islands

BUILDING DESIGN FINDINGS: The design of buildings can either enhance or detract the visibility and accessibility of pedestrian routes.

BUILDING DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS: The design of buildings within the civic core should incorporate elements that are inviting and welcoming, and enhance the quality of the pedestrian experience.

DOWNTOWN ENHANCEMENT & PEDESTRIAN PLAN (DEPP) FINDINGS:

1. Only one phase of a multi-phase DEPP strategy has been implemented.
2. Two of the 8 Goals of the DEPP, adopted by City Council Resolution in 1997 were:
 - To make the downtown core more pedestrian-friendly and minimize the sense that automobiles dominate the downtown area.
 - To take greater advantage of opportunities for the utilization of alleys and pocket parks for pedestrian circulation, social interaction and commercial activity.

DOWNTOWN ENHANCEMENT & PEDESTRIAN PLAN (DEPP)

RECOMMENDATIONS: The CMPAC recommends that City staff conduct a feedback analysis on the outcome of the Phase I DEPP implementation, and present findings to P&Z and City Council to determine if further phases of the DEPP should be implemented.

CIVIC MASTER PLAN PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS MAP FINDINGS:

The Civic Master Plan encompasses many sub-areas within the civic core that include unbuilt pedestrian elements as part of endorsed master plans (i.e. Rio Grande Park Master Plan, DEPP) -- or within CMP findings and recommendations.

CIVIC MASTER PLAN PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS MAP

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The CMPAG recommends that staff and the consulting team draft a Pedestrian Connections Map that shows existing conditions, proposed pedestrian connections included in various sub-area master plans and in CMPAG recommendations.
2. The CMPAG recommends that as sites and sub-areas within the civic core are redesigned and redeveloped, the CMP Pedestrian Connections Map be consulted in order to ensure pedestrian connectivity within the civic core.

North Mill Street Corridor

STATUS: The CMPAC reached consensus to redesign Mill Street by improving the pedestrian experience while preserving the operational function of the road. This proposed conceptual redesign was generated by DHM Design in coordination with City Engineer Nick Adeh and Police Chief Loren Ryerson.

SITE: North Mill Street, from Main Street to the Aspen Art Museum.

ORGANIZATION: City of Aspen. Adjacent property owners would need to be involved in the development of specific designs, as well as emergency service providers.

VISION: In the Foundation Plan: Non-Location-Specific Elements in the CMP Phase I Report, there is a goal to “Improve access to remote facilities by improving the walking experience.”

The Physical Analysis section of the CMP Phase I Report states that, “It is uncomfortable for pedestrians to walk along Mill Street and dangerous for pedestrians to cross. Traffic-calming measures are needed to improve the Mill Street environment. Street trees, improved sidewalks and clearly defined crosswalks at intersections are important.” The proposed Mill Street redesign intends to accommodate existing traffic flow while providing a wider buffer between pedestrians and the street.

RELEVANT CORE PRINCIPLES:

3. Focus on Creating Great People Places.
7. Improve Pedestrian Orientation.

FINDINGS:

1. Providing a larger buffer between pedestrians and traffic will increase safety, and improve the pedestrian experience and visual esthetic of the area. These changes will encourage more pedestrian use, and improve conditions for events and public/private sector users located in this area of town. (CP#3, CP#7)
2. Preliminary design work and discussion under the CMP process have resulted in a consensus that the goals of a wider buffer zone for pedestrians and the accommodation of existing traffic flow can both be achieved. (CP#3, CP#7)
3. Preliminary design work and discussion have brought to light various details that need to be addressed and various issues that must be resolved, and these tasks are best handled by relevant public agencies in a design process. (CP#3, CP#7)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

2. The CMPAG recommends that City Council direct relevant public agencies and private parties to collaboratively generate a proposal to design, fund and implement a plan for the improvement of North Mill St., to focus on the following:
 - A wider buffer between pedestrians and traffic for the purpose of improving the pedestrian experience, consistent with Aspen’s historical streetscape pattern;
 - Accommodate existing traffic flow;
 - Improve safety for pedestrians and vehicles;
 - Coordinate with the local pedestrian-bikeway system;
 - Improve the visual aesthetic of the area.
3. The CMPAG recommends that initial work by the CMP consulting team and advisory group, including draft designs and points of concern, be utilized as part of project design and review.

Wayfinding

STATUS: N/A.

SITE: City right-of-way areas.

ORGANIZATION: The City of Aspen owns right of way areas within the civic core.

VISION: The CMP Phase I Report Function Analysis section states that:

“Aspen and the institutions in the civic planning area could substantially benefit by providing better directions and information to first-time visitors. Arriving at the Mill and Main intersection, visiting drivers are typically attracted to Aspen Mountain and the activity of the Commercial Core and instinctively proceed south. Mill Street terminates at the pedestrian mall and the driver turns west on Hyman Ave. Where the driver feels the initial stages of being lost, stops at the big building, and goes inside to ask for directions. As a result, the ACRA has staffed an information booth in the first floor of the Wheeler Opera House. A comprehensive way-finding program in combination with a true visitor center could address this necessary visitor function in a better manner.”

Since 2001, the City has installed additional signs on Main Street, directing vehicles to the Rio Grande Parking Garage and Visitor Center.

In the spring of 2006, the City plans to replace the existing manned information booth on the pedestrian mall at Cooper and Galena, and install an additional unmanned kiosk that advertises special events.

RELEVANT CORE PRINCIPLES:

3. Focus on Creating Great People Places.
5. Civic planning must address need for parking while not inducing additional traffic.
7. Improve Pedestrian Orientation.

FINDINGS:

1. There is an important balance to be struck between providing adequate signage for visitors and cluttering streets and paths with too many signs. There is an important balance to be struck between maintaining a sense of experience and discovery for visitors versus creating confusion regarding important destinations through lack of signage.
2. Although Aspen and Pitkin County maintain an excellent regional pedestrian and bikeway system, there is a lack of wayfinding signage directing visitors within the civic core to these outlying amenities.
3. In some cases, existing wayfinding signage appears to be inadequate. Some of the brown signs at Main Street intersections simply state the existence of various destinations without indicating where they are located. A sign on the Rio Grande Trail indicates the direction of Basalt, but does not mention the Aspen Art Museum.

RECOMMENDATION:

The CMPAG recommends that the City of Aspen work with relevant partners, such as the Commercial Core & Lodging Commission, City Parks & Recreation and Pitkin County Open Space & Trails to comprehensively review existing wayfinding conditions and make recommendations regarding improvements, considering the CMP Findings, utilizing the CMP Pedestrian Connections Map and other relevant mapping documents.