



# Ivywild Neighborhood

## Conditions Survey

Colorado Springs, Colorado

Surveyed and Submitted March 2011

### Prepared for:

Colorado Springs Urban Renewal Authority (CSURA)  
Colorado Springs City Council

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## Conditions Survey

City of Colorado Springs, Colorado

### 1.0 Introduction

The following report, the *Ivywild Neighborhood Conditions Survey* was prepared for the Colorado Springs Urban Renewal Authority and Colorado Springs City Council in March 2011. The purpose of this work was to analyze conditions within a defined Survey Area (also referred to here as “the Area”) located within the City of Colorado Springs, Colorado and El Paso County, Colorado, in order to determine whether factors contributing to blight are present and whether it is; therefore, eligible as an urban renewal area under the provisions of the Colorado Urban Renewal Law.

The Area includes parcels within the Ivywild Neighborhood and public rights-of-way adjacent to that boundary. Geographically, it is situated in the southwest quadrant of Interstate 25 (I-25) and South Nevada Avenue (U.S. 85 / 87), in the vicinity of a tributary of Fountain Creek. See Figure 1 on the following page. All property owners of record were notified that the Survey was being conducted.

This Ivywild Neighborhood Conditions Survey represents a necessary step in the determination of blight and establishment of an urban renewal area with the intent of addressing the problems outlined herein. As such, it is also an important step in advancing community goals set out in the City’s comprehensive planning documents specifically related to infill development and property reinvestment.

Establishment of an urban renewal area, after a declaration of blight, will allow the City of Colorado Springs, through its urban renewal authority, to use designated powers to

assist in the mitigation of blighting conditions on properties and improvement of infrastructure within its boundaries.

**Figure 1: Survey Area**



## 2.0 Definition of Blight

A determination of blight is a cumulative conclusion based on the presence of several physical, environmental, and social factors defined by state law. Indeed, blight is often

attributable to a multiplicity of conditions, which, in combination, tend to contribute to the phenomenon of deterioration of an area. For purposes of this Survey, the definition of a blighted area is based upon the definition articulated in the Colorado Urban Renewal Law, as follows:

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

- (a) Slum, deteriorated, or deteriorating structures;*
- (b) Predominance of defective or inadequate street layout;*
- (c) Faulty lot layout in relation to size, adequacy, accessibility, or usefulness;*
- (d) Unsanitary or unsafe conditions;*
- (e) Deterioration of site or other improvements;*
- (f) Unusual topography or inadequate public improvements or utilities;*
- (g) Defective or unusual conditions of title rendering the title non-marketable;*
- (h) The existence of conditions that endanger life or property by fire or other causes;*
- (i) Buildings that are unsafe or unhealthy for persons to live or work in because of building code violations, dilapidations, deterioration, defective design, physical construction, or faulty or inadequate facilities;*
- (j) Environmental contamination of buildings or property;*
- (k.5) The existence of health, safety, or welfare factors requiring high levels of municipal services or substantial physical underutilization or vacancy of sites, buildings, or other improvements;*
- (l) If there is no objection of such property owner or owners and the tenant or tenants of such owner or owners, if an, to the inclusion of such property in an urban renewal area, “blighted area” also means an area that, in its present condition and use and, by reason of the presence of any one of the factors specified in paragraphs (a) to (k.5) of this*

*subsection (2), substantially impairs or arrests the sound growth of the municipality, retards the provision of housing accommodations, or constitutes an economic or social liability, and is a menace to the public health, safety, morals or welfare. For purposes of this paragraph (1), the fact that an owner of an interest in such property does not object to the inclusion of such property in the urban renewal area does not mean that the owner has waived any rights of such owner in connection with laws governing condemnation.*

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

While the conclusion of whether an area constitutes a legally “blighted area” is a determination left to municipal legislative bodies, this Survey provides a detailed documentation of the aforementioned physical, environmental and social factors as they exist within the boundaries defined herein. Note: It is not legally necessary for every factor to be present in an area in order for it to be considered “blighted”. In addition, a given factor need not be present on each and every parcel or building to be counted, but must be found somewhere in the Area as a whole. In other words, the presence of one or more well-maintained, non-blighted buildings or parcels does not necessarily preclude a finding of blight for a larger area in which blighting factors are present elsewhere<sup>1</sup>. Rather, an area qualifies as blighted when *four* or more factors are present (or *five* factors, in cases where the use of eminent domain is anticipated). As explained in item (l) above, this threshold may be reduced to the presence of *one* blighting factor in cases where no property owners in the Area object to inclusion in an urban renewal area.

With this understanding, the *Ivywild Neighborhood Conditions Survey* presents an overview of factors within the Area sufficient to make a determination of blight. The “Summary of Findings” (below) provides conclusions regarding the analysis and presence of qualifying conditions in key areas; however, the Colorado Springs City

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<sup>1</sup> While not clearly addressed in Colorado Urban Renewal law, this interpretation has been favored by the courts.

Council will make a final determination as to whether the Survey Area constitutes a “blighted area” under Colorado Urban Renewal Law.

### **3.0 Study Methodology**

Ricker|Cunningham personnel conducted two separate field investigations in March of 2011 for the purpose of documenting conditions within the categories of blight shown above. Pertinent Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data from the El Paso County Assessor and City of Colorado Springs were also obtained and subsequently analyzed. Finally, discussions with City of Colorado Springs staff, CSURA representatives, the project developer and developers’ designers were conducted and collectively the results of these efforts are discussed herein.

Whereas the 11 factors listed in the Urban Renewal Law (see Section 2.0 of this report) contain few specific details or quantitative benchmarks to guide the conditions survey process, Ricker|Cunningham has developed a checklist of more specific categories of blighting conditions within each statutory factor to aid in the identification and characterization of blight factors. This checklist has been used in over 40 urban renewal conditions surveys for dozens of municipalities across Colorado and the Rocky Mountain West.

#### **(a) Slum, deteriorated, or deteriorating structures**

This factor is said to be present when the physical condition of structures in the area present specific life-safety concerns. Sub-categories include:

- Roof deterioration/damage
- Wall, fascia board and soffit deterioration/damage
- Foundation problems (can also be inferred from subsidence)
- Gutter/downspouts: deterioration or absence

- Exterior finish deterioration (i.e. peeling or badly faded paint, crumbling stucco, cracked masonry, etc.)
- Window and/or door deterioration/damage
- Stairway/fire escape deterioration/damage
- Mechanical equipment (problems with or damage to major mechanical elements of primary structure)
- Loading areas: damage/deterioration
- Fence/wall/gate damage or deterioration
- Other structures: deterioration to significant non-primary structures

**(b) Predominance of defective or inadequate street layout**

This factor is said to be present when the layout (or non-existence) of streets or roads creates problems impacting health, safety, welfare or sound development.

Sub-categories include:

- Vehicular access: ingress and/or egress options for automobile traffic are unsafe or significantly inconvenient for visitor or customers
- Internal circulation: non-public, internal roadways or driveways are unsafe, significantly inconvenient or present safety problems relative to their interaction with public roads
- Driveway definitions/curb cuts: unsafe or significantly inconvenient
- Parking layout substandard: causing safety or access problems
- Traffic accident history: (when data is available), disproportionate share of reported vehicular accidents

**(c) Faulty lot layout in relation to size, adequacy, accessibility, or usefulness**

This factor is said to be present when lot size or configuration inhibits or is likely to inhibit sound development. It includes the following sub-categories:

- Faulty lot shape or layout: narrow, triangular, split, and other shapes incompatible with most land uses. Can include parcels that are blocked from direct vehicular access by other parcels.
- Vehicular access unsafe or significantly inconvenient. Because access involves the interplay between lots and roadways, parcels with poor access are usually found to have both category (b) and (c) present.
- Inadequate lot size. This can depend on the context (i.e. downtown and/or historical environments can often develop successfully with smaller lots, whereas suburban locales are expected to have larger parcels available for development)

#### **(d) Unsanitary or unsafe conditions**

This factor recognizes both safety hazards and conditions likely to have adverse effects on health or welfare due to problems with cleanliness. Sub-categories include:

- Poorly lit or unlit areas
- Cracked or uneven sidewalks
- Hazardous contaminants
- Poor drainage
- Flood hazard: substantially within a 100-yr floodplain, according to FEMA
- Grading/steep slopes: terrain that presents a safety hazard due
- Unscreened trash or mechanical equipment: openly accessible dumpsters (note: this is scored as a safety problem under this statutory factor even if not a municipal code violation) or potentially dangerous mechanical equipment
- Pedestrian safety issues: often related to other blight factors, this sub-category is present when pedestrian and cyclists face a clear danger from sidewalk problems, lack of crosswalks/crossing lights, fast-moving traffic, etc.

- High crime incidence: (when data available), usually defined as an area with a disproportionate share of police calls for service
- Vagrants/vandalism/graffiti: while usually not a direct safety threat, can be indicative of unsafe urban environments

**(e) Deterioration of site or other improvements**

This factor is related to factor (a), but focuses more on land and/or minor structures, and includes damage, negligence or use of the following:

- Signage problems: deteriorating, damaged
- Neglected or poorly maintained properties
- Trash/Debris/Weeds
- Parking surface deterioration/damage
- Lack of landscaping: reserved for properties with an expectation of landscaping (due to zoning or context) but with none (or landscaping that has become neglected)

**(f) Unusual topography or inadequate public improvements or utilities**

This factor represents the combination of two formerly separate blight factors. It can indicate topography incompatible with development (hilly, sloped, etc.) or properties lacking complete public infrastructure. Sub-categories include:

- Slopes or unusual terrain
- Street pavement deterioration or absence
- Curb and gutter deterioration or absence
- Street lighting inadequate, damaged or missing
- Overhead utilities in place (considered obsolete relative to underground utilities)

- Lack of sidewalks (or significant damage)
- Water/Sewer service: missing or in need of repair/replacement
- Storm sewer/drainage missing or damaged

**(g) Defective or unusual conditions of title rendering the title non-marketable**

This factor covers problems with the marketability of property titles, including unusual restrictions, unclear ownership, etc. Due to the expense of title searches, this blight factor is typically not examined unless developers or land owners provide documentation of known problematic title issues. (No sub-categories).

**(h) The existence of conditions that endanger life or property by fire or other causes**

This factor covers site, building, maintenance or use issues that may threaten site users or site improvements due to fire or other causes. Sub-categories include:

- Fire safety problems: identified through fire code violation data (where available), discussions with fire department personnel, or evidence of recent fires
- Hazardous contaminants: an “other cause” posing danger to life/property
- High crime incidence (note: included in other factors)
- Floodplain/flood hazard (note: included in other factors)

**(i) Buildings that are unsafe or unhealthy for persons to live or work in because of building code violations, dilapidations, deterioration, defective design, physical construction, or faulty or inadequate facilities**

This factor is related to primary improvements, specifically those described in the context of factors (a) and (d) above, as well as property when it poses a danger to

the extent that habitation and/or daily use is considered unsafe specifically due to problems with the design or condition of the structures. Sub-categories include:

- Hazardous contaminants
- High crime index
- Building/facilities unsafe: this determination is best made through interior inspection but can be obvious with outside observation in some cases.

**(j) Environmental contamination of buildings or property**

This factor is related to the presence of chemical or biological contamination. Unlike category (i) above, this factor can be said to exist even when such contamination is not a direct health hazard, so long as it causes other problems (i.e. inhibits development). Sub-categories include:

- Hazardous contaminants

**(k.5) The existence of health, safety, or welfare factors requiring high levels of municipal services or substantial physical underutilization or vacancy of sites, buildings, or other improvements**

This factor, recently added, addresses properties with two often unrelated conditions -- underutilization and high municipal service requirements. Properties generating frequent calls for police, code enforcement or fire service can be said to require more than their share of municipal services. Sites with vacant land or unoccupied buildings can be considered underutilized. Sub-categories include:

- High fire call volume
- High crime incidence (reflected in police calls for service)
- Site underutilization (vacant land or buildings more than 20 percent vacant)

Although each of the Area's four legal parcels were observed in the field for this Survey, the findings are presented here generally consider the assemblage as a whole, given the singular ownership and lack of meaningful physical divisions among parcels.

#### 4.0 Survey Area Facts

The overall Survey Area consists of eight legal parcels comprising approximately 5.51 acres and rights-of-way. Parcels range in size from approximately 0.15 acres to just over 2.52 acres, as shown in Table 1 below. Improvements in the area include a mix of single family (rental) detached residential, commercial and institutional uses – school and church. A tributary of Fountain Creek traverses the area, creating a deep gully located adjacent to several of the commercial and institutional land uses. Structures range in age from a late 1800's to early 1900's construction, with a few built between 1950 and 1970. There is evidence of recent redevelopment activity along South Tejon Street and a mix of poorly to well-maintained residential parcels.

**Table 1: Survey Area Parcels**

Parcel No.	Owner Name	Site Address	Year Built	Land Area	Improvement
6419309021	Danablu LLC	1626 South Tejon Street	1964	38,909 sf	church
6430201026	Sharon and Daniel Robertson	1701 South Tejon Street	1915	14,105 sf	salon
6430201022	Fonseca 94 LLC	1645 South Tejon Street	1951	29,673 sf	restaurant / brewery
6419314018	Old #23 LLC	1629 - 1631 South Tejon Street	1909	17,314 sf	residential / commercial
6430202003	U-Haul Real Estate Co.	1644 South Tejon Street	1956	16,389 sf	truck rentals
6419309017	1605 Yellow LLC	1605 South Cascade Avenue	1899	7,000 sf	sf house
6419309020	1609 Blue Corner LLC	1609 South Cascade Avenue	1904	6,700 sf	sf house
6419313001	School District 11	1604 South Cascade Avenue	1916	2.52 ac	school

## 5.0 Summary of Findings

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

**It is the conclusion of this Survey that, within the Area described in this report, there are adverse physical conditions sufficient to meet criteria established in the Statute as "blighting factors."** As described herein, there are 9 of 11 blight factors present including: a) slum, deteriorated, or deteriorating structures; b) predominance of defective or inadequate street layout; c) faulty lot layout in relation to size, adequacy, accessibility, or usefulness; d) unsanitary or unsafe conditions; e) deterioration of site or other improvements; f) unusual topography or inadequate public improvements or utilities; g) defective or unusual conditions of title rendering the title un-marketable (alley easement); h) The existence of conditions that endanger life or property by fire or other causes; and, i) buildings that are unsafe or unhealthy for persons to live or work in.

### **(a) Slum, deteriorated, or deteriorating structures;**

No interior inspections were conducted as part of this Survey, but close external observations indicate that among the structures present within the Area, all suffer from various levels of deterioration and/or damage. The fascia of the Korean Presbyterian Church has peeling paint, and its foundation is heaving where it meets its stoop. There are cracks in the sidewalk servicing its main entrance and the fence located along its southern edge is broken, potentially allowing for pedestrians to fall into a gulch that accommodates a tributary of Fountain Creek.

The Salon, Brewery and Restaurant are all located in older structures that have been retrofitted to accommodate their current use. While the Salon building is generally in good condition, particularly considering its age (1915), the west facing exterior wall of the Brewery has a significant dent in it. Paint on the exterior of the Restaurant portion of the Brewery / Restaurant building is cracked and peeling. Some mechanical equipment located outside of this building is not enclosed and shows signs of rust. A fence located along the north side of the Restaurant parking lot is damaged, creating the same hazard that exists on the Church property since the Fountain Creek gully borders both properties.

The exterior walls of the U-Haul sales office have peeling paint, and its foundation is crumbling. Whereas the roofs of the commercial structures appear in reasonable condition (although all were inspected from the right-of-way), the roofs of the single family dwelling units appear to need repair.

The Ivywild School exhibits signs of break-ins or attempted break-ins. A fence around an exterior stairwell that leads to the school's basement is broken and the school's western wall is cracked.

**(b) Predominance of defective or inadequate street layout;**

Roadway infrastructure in the Area is aged and incomplete. Several roads, including East and West Navajo Streets, Dorchester Drive, and South Cascade Avenue have curbs and gutters on one side of the street, but not on the other. Sidewalks are also incomplete and driveways are frequently unpaved and informal without curb definition. Among the commercial parcels, most if not all appeared underserved for parking and lots are frequently irregular in shape and without stripping or definition.

**(c) Faulty lot layout in relation to size, adequacy, accessibility, or usefulness;**

Because poor vehicular access is also a characteristic of faulty lots, the Area suffers from this blight factor for the reasons explained under (b), above. The two single family residential lots are comparatively small, yet typical of older urban neighborhoods. The alley serving the rear of these lots is in poor condition and would have difficulty accommodating emergency vehicles. The Salon and U-Haul parcels are triangular in shape, being at the corner of a five point intersection, making portions of these lots unusable for anything other than storage and / or open space. The parcel located north of the Blue Star Restaurant is long and located adjacent to the gully that accommodates a Fountain Creek tributary, making the rear of the property inaccessible. Whereas this property is host to a commercial operation, the lack of access to all portions of the property is a limiting factor.

**(d) Unsanitary or unsafe conditions;**

A number of unsafe or unsanitary conditions were observed among the subject properties. Many of these conditions, outlined below, are exacerbated by either a lack of, or damaged fencing. The most obvious unsafe condition exists among properties located adjacent to the Fountain Creek tributary. Steep slopes and limited protections invite the potential for pedestrian accidents. Inconsistent outdoor lighting can be found throughout the Area, making properties vulnerable to unlawful activity, as evidenced by the numerous break-in attempts on the school property. Graffiti and trash are evident on all of the properties, except for the commercial parcels located on South Tejon Street. A one percent annual (100-year) flood hazard zone impacts a portion of the school property, Korean Church and commercial property located north of the Blue Star Restaurant. Less obvious, and not visible, is the fact that none of the existing structures in the Area are sprinklered for fire protection.

**(e) Deterioration of site or other improvements;**

Sites in the Area include a mix of maintained and moderately maintained commercial properties. While the institutional properties are generally cared for, the school property is abandoned making it a target for vandalism and trash. Parking surfaces are cracking and landscaping is limited. Among the landscaped areas that exist, most have nothing more than un-kept patches of grass that are infested with weeds. Site conditions, in general, are not conducive to sale and/or redevelopment of the Area.

**(f) Unusual topography or inadequate public improvements or utilities;**

While the majority of properties in the Survey Area are relatively flat, there is a steep slope, supported by a retaining wall, located behind the school. The gully that traverses the Survey Area from northeast to southwest has created extremely steep slopes along the centrally located parcels.

While all of the roadways located in and adjacent to the Survey Area are paved, the alley behind the single family homes is a mix of paving and dirt and all surfaces are cracked and in need of repair. Curbs, gutters and sidewalks are inconsistent throughout the Survey Area, as are street lights, particularly in the rear of the buildings.

While the Area is served by telephone and electric utilities, these are conveyed by overhead utility poles --generally considered a functional and aesthetic detriment to site development. According to City officials, the water, sewer and storm sewer infrastructure is reportedly sufficient to meet the needs of existing users, and any future redevelopments. Street widths on all of the roadways other than South Tejon Street are insufficient (24 feet) to accommodate on-street parking (28 feet); something the City will require if additional redevelopment occurs. Vehicular access problems listed under factor (a) also represent deficiencies in public improvements within the Area.

**(g) Defective or unusual conditions of title rendering the title non-marketable;**

The original Ivywild School building was built in 1916. Subsequent additions were made in 1951 and 1953. Both additions were built over an area platted as an alley. Since the building, as constructed, currently rests in the area that is identified as an alley, it is unusable and must be vacated in order to redevelop the School site for other uses.

**(h) The existence of conditions that endanger life or property by fire or other causes;**

According to fire officials for the City of Colorado Springs, none of the existing structures in the Survey Area are sprinklered, and as such, are considered unsafe.

FEMA issued flood maps (Map ID 08041C0737F) were examined for the Area, indicating that a 100-year (1 percent annual) flood hazard zone impacts all of the properties located near and / or adjacent to the Fountain Creek tributary including a small portion of the School property, the Korean Church, U-Haul property and commercial parcel located north of the Blue Star Restaurant. This represents an endangerment to property and (to a lesser extent) life from this “other cause.”

**(i) Buildings that are unsafe or unhealthy for persons to live or work in because of building code violations, dilapidations, deterioration, defective design, physical construction, or faulty or inadequate facilities;**

While the School property is vacant, all of the other existing structures are occupied. Although in various states of disrepair, the single factor making these buildings unsafe is the lack of fire protection.

Table 2 summarizes the findings across all surveyed parcels. As shown, *nine* factors of the 11 total possible factors were found, to some extent, within the Survey Area. In this case, all nine factors (as discussed earlier) were present to a degree that appeared likely to have a significantly negative impact on safety, welfare and/or sound development.

- (a) Slum, deteriorated, or deteriorating structures;
- (b) Predominance of defective or inadequate street layout;
- (c) Faulty lot layout in relation to size, adequacy, accessibility, or usefulness;
- (d) Unsanitary or unsafe conditions;
- (e) Deterioration of site or other improvements;
- (f) Unusual topography or inadequate public improvements or utilities;
- (g) Defective or unusual conditions of title rendering the title non-marketable;
- (h) The existence of conditions that endanger life or property by fire or other causes;
- (i) Buildings that are unsafe or unhealthy for persons to live or work in because of building code violations, dilapidations, deterioration, defective design, physical construction, or faulty or inadequate facilities;

**Table 2**  
**Ivywild Neighborhood Conditions Survey - Summary of Findings**

Blight Qualifying Factor	Present
a	X
b	X
c	X
d	X
e	X
f	X
g	X
h	X
i	X
j	
k.5	



## Appendix i

### **Photo Inventory**













Appendix ii

## **Field Inventory**





Appendix iii

## **Factor Maps**



















