



# Gold Hill Mesa Commercial Area Conditions Survey

City of Colorado Springs, Colorado

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**Prepared for:**

Colorado Springs Urban Renewal Authority  
City of Colorado Springs City Council

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## Conditions Survey

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# Gold Hill Mesa Commercial Area

## Conditions Survey

City of Colorado Springs, Colorado

### 1.0 Introduction

The following report, the Gold Hill Mesa Commercial Area Conditions Survey (the "**Survey**") was prepared for the Colorado Springs Urban Renewal Authority (CSURA) and Colorado Springs City Council (the "**City Council**") in November 2014. The purpose of this work was to analyze conditions within a defined Study Area (also referred to here as "**the Survey Area**" or "**the Area**") in order to determine whether factors contributing to blight are present and whether the Area may, therefore, be considered eligible as an urban renewal area under the provisions of the Colorado Urban Renewal Law.

The Survey Area includes parcels generally located in the southwestern portion of the city, and specifically in the southeast quadrant of U.S. Highway 24 and South 21st Street within the existing Gold Hill Mesa Urban Renewal Area, as reflected in **Figure 1**. That urban renewal area, established by the Colorado Springs City Council in 2004, was created in an effort to mitigate impacts associated with a former gold processing facility within the property, known as the Golden Cycle Mill. The mill operated from 1906 to 1949 and processed approximately fifteen million tons of ore from Cripple Creek and Victor area gold mines. An environmental assessment was performed during the early part of this century, under the State of Colorado's Voluntary Cleanup Program (VCP). The results of that assessment identified the presence of several heavy metals in the soils, yet concluded that the site could accommodate a mix of residential and commercial uses if the soil were stabilized and a "cap" placed over it.

Since formation of the Gold Hill Mesa Urban Renewal Area, development has been limited to construction of the Gold Hill Mesa traditional neighborhood community, located south of the existing Villa de Mesa condominium development. While planned for, no commercial construction has occurred, but is now being aggressively pursued for development within the Survey Area. Given the amount of time that has passed (10 years) since the original urban renewal area was created, and significant changes in the real estate industry, many the result of a "great recession" that occurred between 2008 and 2012 and impacted real estate markets locally, regionally and nationally, the

Figure 1: Survey Area Boundaries



property owners are requesting that parcels within the Survey Area be removed from the existing area and relocated within a new urban renewal area to be referred to as Gold Hill Mesa Commercial Area. Whereas property owners and business concerns within the its boundaries have requested inclusion in an urban renewal area, thereby making it a "voluntary district," they waived their right to receive notice that the Survey was commencing.

This Gold Hill Mesa Commercial Area Conditions Survey represents a necessary step in the determination of blight and establishment of an urban renewal area with the intent of addressing the conditions outlined herein. As such, it is also an important step in advancing goals set out in the community's comprehensive planning documents, specifically those related to infill development and redevelopment.

Establishment of an urban renewal plan 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" (as defined by the Act) within its boundaries.

## 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. In reality, 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) 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, dilapidation, deterioration, defective design, physical construction, or faulty or inadequate facilities;*
- (j) Environmental contamination of buildings or property;*
- (k.5) 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 any, 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 documentation as to the presence 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 a proposed urban renewal area in order for it to be considered “blighted”. In addition, a given factor need not be present on each and every parcel or structure in order to be considered, but rather, only needs to be present 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<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 (I) above, this threshold may be reduced to the presence of *one* blighting factor in cases where no owners of property or other business interest within its boundaries objects to inclusion in an urban renewal area. This Factor (I) applies in this instance whereas the Area's owners and business interests requested inclusion in an urban renewal area. Despite the statutorily allowable lower threshold (presence of one factor), every effort was made to identify all factors that are present and impacting properties within the Area boundaries.

With this understanding, this Gold Hill Mesa Commercial Area Conditions Survey offers conclusions regarding the presence of qualifying conditions in the Survey Area; however, the Colorado Springs City Council will make a final determination as to whether they are sufficient in number and magnitude to constitute a finding of “blight” under Colorado Urban Renewal Law.

### **3.0 Study Methodology**

Ricker|Cunningham personnel conducted field investigations during the month of November in 2014, for the purpose of documenting conditions within the categories of blight listed above and described in greater detail below. Pertinent Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data was obtained from Colorado Springs Utilities and the City of Colorado Springs, discussions held with City Staff, and materials reviewed, all of which informed the conclusions presented 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 inform the survey process, the report's authors, Ricker|Cunningham, used a checklist of more specific categories of blighting conditions, developed from completion of more than 75 similar surveys for more than 35 communities in Colorado and other western states.

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

**(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 deterioration or absence of the following:

- Roof
- Walls fascia board and soffit
- Foundation
- Gutters and downspouts
- Exterior finish
- Windows and doors
- Stairways and fire escapes
- Mechanical equipment
- Loading areas
- Fences, walls and gates
- Other 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 for health, safety, welfare or sound development. Sub-categories include inadequate or elevated:

- Vehicular access
- Internal circulation
- Driveway definitions and curb cuts
- Parking layout
- Traffic accident history

**(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. Sub-categories include inadequate or unsafe:

- Lot shape or layout



- Vehicular access - parcels with poor access are usually found to have both category (b) and (c) present
- Lot size

**(d) Unsanitary or unsafe conditions**

This factor is said to be present when safety hazards and conditions are likely to have adverse effects on the health or welfare of persons in the area due to problems with a lack of infrastructure. Sub-categories include the presence of:

- Poorly lit or unlit areas
- Cracked or uneven sidewalks
- Hazardous contaminants
- Poor drainage
- Flood hazards
- Steep slopes
- Unscreened trash or mechanical equipment
- Pedestrian safety issues
- High crime incidence
- Lack of fire protection
- Vagrants, vandalism and graffiti

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

This factor is related to factor (a), and said to be present when land and/or structures have been either damaged or neglected. Sub-categories include the presence of, deteriorating or lack of:

- Billboards
- Signage
- Poorly maintained properties, streets, and other public improvements
- Trash, debris and weeds
- Parking surfaces, curbs and gutters
- Landscaping

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

This factor represents the combination of two formerly separate factors. To that end, it is said to be present when the topography is incompatible with development (hilly, sloped, etc.) or properties are lacking complete public infrastructure. Sub-categories include the presence of, deteriorating or lack of:

- Slopes or unusual terrain
- Street pavement
- Curb and gutter
- Street lighting
- Overhead utilities
- Sidewalks
- Roads
- Water and sewer service
- Storm water quality and drainage improvements

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

This factor is said to be present when there are 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) Existence of conditions that endanger life or property by fire or other causes**

This factor is said to be present when site and / or building maintenance or use issues exist that may threaten site users. This factor also includes potential threats from fire or other causes. Sub-categories include the presence of:

- Fire safety problems
- Hazardous contaminants
- High frequency of crime
- Floodplain and flood hazards

**(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 said to be present when primary improvements, specifically those described in the context of factors (a) and (d) above, as well as property, poses a danger to the extent that habitation and/or daily use is considered unsafe. Sub-categories include the presence or lack of:

- Hazardous contaminants
- Fire safety infrastructure
- Unsafe building facilities
- All of the factors listed under (h) above

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

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

- Hazardous contaminants

**(k.5) 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 is said to be present when properties or their improvements are underutilized; or, there is a disproportionate amount of public service being provided. For instance, properties generating frequent calls for police or fire service or code enforcement often require more than their share of services. Sub-categories include the presence of:

- High frequency of fire calls
- High crime incidence

- Site and building underutilization
- All of the factors listed under (d) and (h) above

#### 4.0 Survey Area History

The Survey Area includes 16 legal parcels and adjacent rights-of-way comprising approximately 70 acres (parcel acres). As reflected in **Figure 2**, parcels in the Area are zoned PBC (Planned Business Center), with the remainder of parcels in the larger Gold Hill Mesa Urban Renewal Area zoned TND (Traditional Neighborhood Development). These designations allow for a higher density mix of uses including residential, retail and office. Although both zones encourage mixed land uses, the PBC zoning emphasizes commercial uses while the TND zoning emphasizes residential. **Figure 3** illustrates parcel ownership which includes Golden Cycle Investments LLC and Gold Hill Mesa Metro District No. 1, both Colorado Springs-based entities.

Although all of the subject properties are vacant and unimproved, the Area is surrounded by existing uses including the Villa de Mesa condominium development and Gold Hill Mesa traditional neighborhood development, along with a large concrete smokestack, leftover from previous mining related activities. Established residential neighborhoods are also located west and east of the Area, fronting the western edge of South 21st Street and eastern border of the existing urban renewal area. Several commercial facilities front the eastern edge of South 21st Street including a vacant bank building, restaurant, 7-11 anchored retail center, and Advanced Auto Parts store. A free-standing commercial operation offering sporting goods and supplies is located due north of the Area along the northern edge of U.S. Highway 24.

#### 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 report that, within the Survey Area, there are physical conditions sufficient to meet criteria established in the Act as "blighting factors." Specifically, eight of the possible 11 blight factors were found to be present including:

Figure 2: Zoning Classifications Map



Figure 3: Property Ownership Map



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; h) existence of conditions that endanger life or property by fire or other causes; j) environmental contamination of buildings or property; and, k.5) substantial physical underutilization or vacancy of sites, buildings, or other improvements. Each of these is described in greater detail below.

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

Predominance of defective or inadequate street layout can be considered present when existing roads are insufficient to meet the needs of existing or planned land uses (as determined by existing zoning) within an area (capacity), there is a lack of streets, or the streets that are in place are deteriorating or substandard. All three of these conditions exist either within or surrounding the Survey Area. Despite a zoning classification of PBC (Planned Business Center), there are no roads or supporting infrastructure improvements within the Area, or larger Gold Hill Mesa Urban Renewal Area, with the exception of those serving the Gold Hill Mesa neighborhood. The lack of internal streets has left numerous parcels without the Area's boundaries without access - direct or indirect.

Among the streets surrounding the Survey Area, both U.S. Highway 24 and South 21st Street lack appropriate accommodations for non-vehicular movement. South 21st Street shows signs of pavement degradation, and lacks curbs, gutters and sidewalks. While sidewalks are present in the vicinity of the existing commercial uses near the intersection of South 21st Street and South Highway 24, they are incomplete and were not constructed to municipal standards. Lighting within the roadways is minimal, and combined with ill-defined curb cuts and the hilly terrain, makes access to the Area challenging. Based on a review of the City's 2012 (5-year) Capital Improvement Plan and 2012 City Budget, improvements to South 21st Street were identified as an unfunded "high priority capital project." Specifically, the City desires to widen the street to four lanes from U.S. Highway 24 south to Lower Gold Camp Road, and complete supporting improvements for safe vehicular and non-vehicular movement.

Experience has shown that inadequate or ill-defined streets can contribute to an unsafe environment that can result in a high frequency of adverse traffic

incidents. According to the Colorado Springs Police Department, there were 875 traffic accidents in the vicinity of the Survey Area, between January 2014 and January 2015, the highest category of incidents among property damage, violent crimes, proactive policing and disorderly conduct calls, and noise complaints. Of these traffic incidents, the majority appear to have occurred within South 21st Street.

According to the Colorado Springs Police Department, in 2011, the last year for which data was available, there were 8,646 traffic accidents in the city as a whole (responded to by Springs' Police). Whereas the number of all incidents in the Area appears to have remained fairly constant over the last decade, traffic-related occurrences in the vicinity of the Area represent roughly 10 percent of the city total. **Table 1** provides an overview of police incidents in the vicinity of the Survey Area between 2004 and 2011 based on information available from the City of Colorado Springs Police Department (annual reports 2004 through 2011).

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

In addition to limited access to and within the Area, other parcel-related conditions which negatively impact the ability of properties within its boundaries to develop include size and shape. As evidenced in **Figure 1**, several properties are either too small or too irregular in shape to be developed to City-standards without being part of a larger assemblage. Size relative to zoning is a particular concern whereas site coverage, density, and parking ratios are dictated by use, irrespective of parcel size, thereby rendering some properties economically "useless." Similarly, many of those parcels with an irregular shape also suffer from a significant lack of utility, rendering them unmarketable. A parcel with limited usefulness due to shape is one that when developed leaves substantial portions either under-utilized or with limited access or visibility.

While small and irregular shaped residential lots are not uncommon, particularly in established urban neighborhoods, they are less concerning than commercial lots in a similar environment with the same condition. Commercial properties that lack either access and / or visibility have less value than those with access and visibility. Those that are further hampered by inadequate size and / or shape are even less valuable and many instances unmarketable. Commercial parcels in the



**Table 1**  
**Gold Hill Mesa Commercial Area - Police Incidents**

Offense	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	% Chg 04-11
Homicide	1	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	
Sex Offense - Force	3	8	5	8	3	6	4	6	
Robbery	7	2	3	10	2	6	3	4	
Aggravated Assault	17	16	15	15	15	13	13	12	
Burglary	70	75	61	66	44	39	48	32	
Theft - Larceny	238	206	190	149	125	121	197	187	
Theft - Motor Vehicle	30	34	26	22	16	20	29	28	
Arson	2	2	2	1	0	0	1	5	
Simple Assault	26	25	26	27	29	30	33	25	
Intimidation	4	1	1	0	1	5	1	6	
Forgery	29	27	17	11	10	7	6	4	
Fraud	55	45	43	58	47	34	36	33	
Embezzlement	1	2	1	0	2	0	2	1	
Stolen Property	3	6	4	2	1	4	4	0	
Vandalism	82	77	71	64	53	45	56	44	
Weapons Violation	5	1	4	3	3	2	5	5	
Prostitution	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Sex Offense - Non-Force	0	0	0	10	2	1	2	2	
Narcotics	23	35	26	34	29	26	21	18	
Gambling	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	
Kidnapping	3	3	2	5	1	1	4	3	
Extortion	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Pornography	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	
Bribery	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>566</b>	<b>499</b>	<b>485</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>466</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>-30.83%</b>
Bad Checks	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Peeping Tom	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Family Offenses	3	5	1	3	3	3	5	6	
DUI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Liquor Laws	2	0	0	1	3	4	2	2	
Disorderly Conduct	1	0	2	3	4	2	3	0	
Trespass	2	2	4	3	4	2	2	8	
Other	41	37	41	52	35	51	46	38	
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>5.88%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>651</b>	<b>610</b>	<b>547</b>	<b>547</b>	<b>433</b>	<b>423</b>	<b>524</b>	<b>469</b>	<b>-27.96%</b>

Source: City of Colorado Springs Police Department Annual Reports 2004 through 2011; and, Ricker|Cunningham.

Area suffer from most if not all of these conditions and will require a significant amount of infrastructure investment to overcome these obstacles.

**d) Unsanitary or unsafe conditions**

Multiple factors were identified that contribute to unsafe conditions in the Survey Area among them, insufficient improvements for vehicular and non-vehicular

movement due to inadequate streets and limited, if any, accommodations for pedestrians or bicycles; coupled with a hilly terrain and ill-defined access points. In addition to these, there are known environmental contaminants in the Area, due to past mining efforts and resulting waste. More details regarding environmental hazards are presented in the context of Factor (j) below.

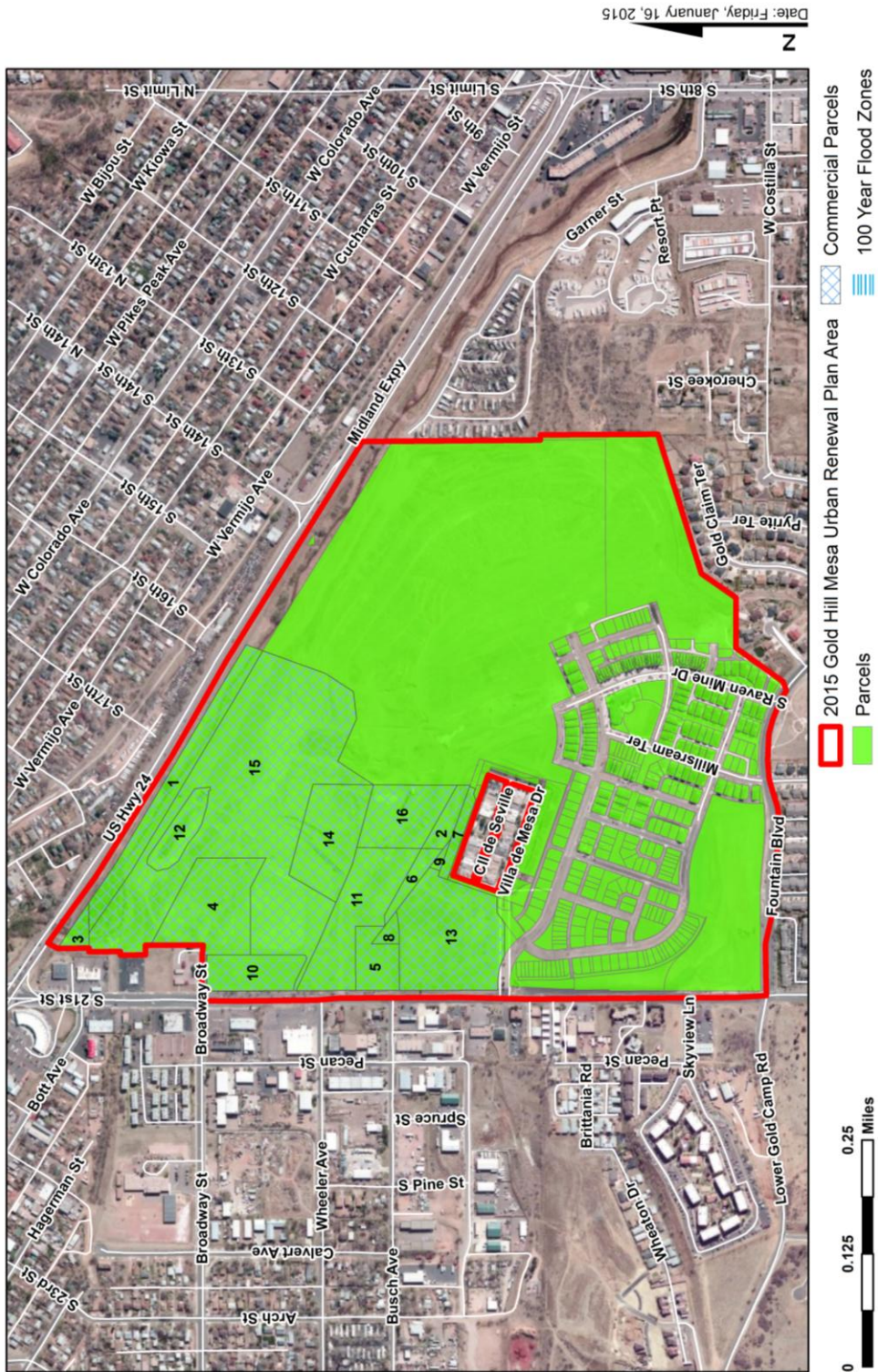
Other conditions considered in the context of this factor include steep slopes, which have already been identified, and the presence of a flood zone, high levels of criminal activity, and a lack of fire protection equipment. Despite the Area's proximity to Fountain Creek, located along its northern boundary (as depicted in **Figure 4**), no parcels in the Area are known to be impacted by a 100-year flood zone. With regard to criminal activity, according to the Colorado Springs Police Department, the number of criminal incidents in the Area between 2004 and 2011 appears to have remained fairly constant, if not declining. Finally, no information was available regarding fire protection equipment in the Area, which is not unusual since all of the subject parcels are vacant and unimproved.

Conditions observed that while not unsafe are unsanitary, yet contributing to an overall appearance of neglect and considered in the context of this factor, include the presence of weeds, unscreened trash, and numerous incidents of remnant infrastructure including concrete blocks, fencing materials and building foundations.

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

In the context of developed properties, this Factor (e) deterioration of site or other improvements, generally considers the absence or condition of parking, landscaping, and / or signage, improvements expected within commercial properties. Whereas parcels in the Survey Area are vacant and unimproved, conditions considered relate more to the overall appearance of parcels, and whether they are being maintained or neglected. Based on visual inspections, and as reported above, there are numerous instances of weeds, unscreened trash, and remnant infrastructure. Further, it is obvious that this was once the site of significant mining and dumping operations.

Figure 4: 100 Year Flood Zone Map



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

Grade changes and slopes on potentially developable properties are considered a "blighting condition" under the Act whereas they necessitate costly improvements such as retaining walls, drainage improvements, fill or dirt, and reinforced foundations. In addition, steep slopes can negatively impair a site's visibility (value) and limit its usefulness as measured by total developable acres. The topography of the properties in the Area is dominated by the deposition of the gold tailings. Large channels have been formed through erosion of the hillside toward Fountain Creek. The site drains from the southwest to the northeast with elevations varying from 6250 to 6000 feet above sea level. The top of the hill is relatively flat with slopes varying from 0.5% to 5.0%. The hill slopes steeply towards Fountain Creek at varying degrees from 10.0% to 25.0%. The steep slopes and soil properties have contributed to a large amount of erosion on the face of the hill. Deep cuts into the hillside are readily visible from U.S. Highway 24. As such, the Area exhibits unusual topography in all but a few parcels. While the most severe slopes can be found around the sides of a mesa feature (visible in the aerial), most of the other parcels share at least some irregularity of terrain that serves to constrain development.

Inadequate infrastructure, the second condition considered in the context of this factor, can mean either a lack of infrastructure or limits on the capacity of the infrastructure that exists. The exception being the presence of overhead utilities which, while often present and allowed on and within municipal parcels, are considered a visual and functional condition which contributes to an overall appearance of blight. Overhead utilities are visible within the Survey Area, particularly along its northern border.

Based on the author's familiarity with the Area since they prepared the survey for the original Gold Hill Mesa Urban Renewal Area, it is known that all major utilities are available to properties within the Area from adjacent rights-of-way, but that no improvements existing within the Area's parcels. In order to make parcels within the Area available for development, infrastructure and utility lines will have to be brought into the Area.

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

Factors that threaten site users which were either observed or identified in the Survey Area include all of those conditions previously discussed and including inadequate infrastructure for non-vehicular movement, the impact of its terrain on a suboptimal road system, and the presence of hazardous waste. Properties under the oversight of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are discussed under Factor (j) below.

**(j) Environmental contamination of buildings and properties**

A review of materials published by the State of Colorado on behalf of the Federal Government related to properties that are presently under the oversight of the EPA, revealed that there are two locations under review within the existing Gold Hill Mesa Urban Renewal Area, one of which is within the Survey Area. **Figure 5** illustrates their location.

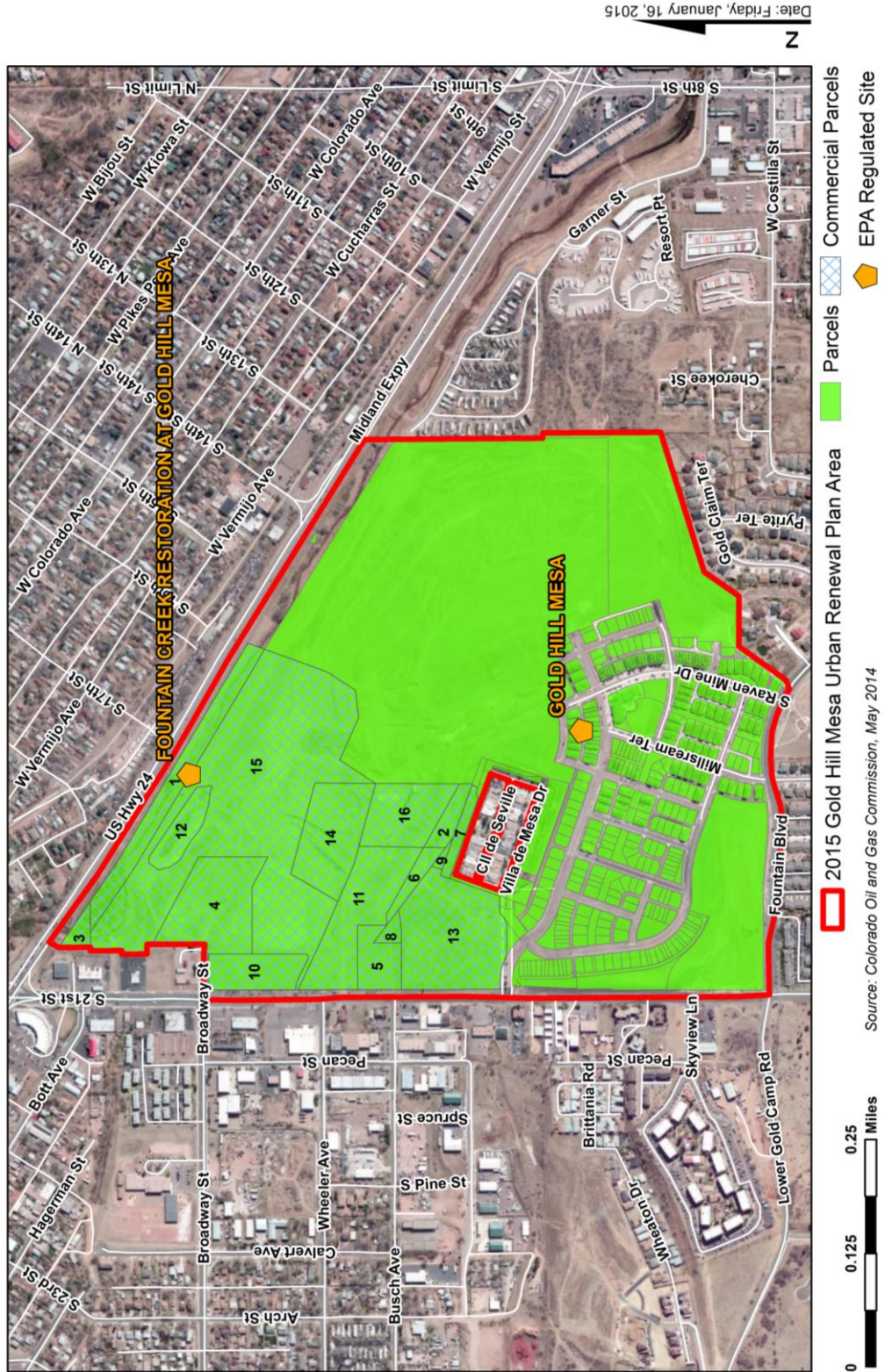
Properties within the Area and larger urban renewal area are impacted by environmental contamination stemming from the accumulation of tailings from the ore refinement process that took place at the Golden Cycle Mill from 1905 to 1949. Specifically, both lead and arsenic have been detected in the soils.

Environmental studies suggest that health risks from accidental exposure (via ingestion, inhalation, and skin contact) to these contaminants is limited, even for potential residents and site construction workers. However, the risk of wind-borne erosion, groundwater seepage into Fountain Creek, and unknown long-term health effects have made this contamination a concern for neighborhoods and local officials alike.

**(k.5) 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**

Whereas the state statute defines this factor as including either high levels of municipal services or underutilization or vacancy of properties or buildings, Ricker|Cunningham investigated both conditions. With regard to criminal incidents, as discussed under Factor (b) above, police incidents in the vicinity of

Figure 5: Facilities Subject to EPA Oversight



the Area appear to have declined slightly over the past few years. While traffic-related occurrences could be thought to command a slightly disproportionate share of services and resources compared to other locations within the city, they are not being considered here. However, what is being considered is the unimproved condition of properties within the Survey Area boundaries. While the balance of properties within the existing Gold Hill Mesa Urban Renewal Area are developed or developing, parcels within the Survey Area remain vacant. Further, a review of aerial photography for the western half of the Colorado Springs Metropolitan Area highlights how developed this portion of the city is, with the exception of properties in the Area, making them an obvious opportunity for infill development. While less than favorable market conditions have contributed to the delay in attracting commercial operators, the larger factor has likely been the presence of adverse conditions, many of which have been sited herein.

## **6.0 Summary of Factors**

Table 2 summarizes the findings across all surveyed parcels. As explained earlier in this report, it is not legally necessary for *every* factor to be present in an area being considered for an urban renewal designation, in order for it to be found “blighted”. In addition, a given factor need not be present on each and every parcel or within each and every structure (if any) to be counted, but rather, only needs to be present somewhere in the area as a whole. As shown, eight of the 11 total possible factors were found, to some extent, within the Survey Area. Additionally, all eight factors (as discussed earlier) were present to a degree that appeared likely to have a significantly negative impact on the public’s safety and welfare and impede the Area’s ability to achieve sound growth and attract quality development.

**Table 2**  
**Gold Hill Mesa Commercial Area - Summary of Findings**

<b>Blight Qualifying Factor</b>	<b>Present Total Survey Area</b>
(a)	
(b)	<b>x</b>
(c)	<b>x</b>
(d)	<b>x</b>
(e)	<b>x</b>
(f)	<b>x</b>
(g)	
(h)	<b>x</b>
(i)	
(j)	<b>x</b>
(k5)	<b>x</b>
<b>Total Factors</b>	<b>8</b>

Source: Ricker|Cunningham.