

Location and Extent Case Study: Arapahoe County Sheriff Substation

The Board of County Commissioners (BOCC), at a study session on July 16, 2024, reviewing proposed changes to the Land Development Code for Location and Extent (L and E) reviews, requested that staff provide a case study illustrating how the proposed changes would have affected a previous project. This report uses a project of the Arapahoe County Sheriff's Department for a new substation within the Four Square Mile neighborhood. After a brief description of the proposed project, the report presents an assessment of how the review of this project would have been conducted under the proposed changes for the Location and Extent process.

Case number LE18-003 was a request for a location and extent review from the Sheriff's Department submitted to the Planning Division in 2018 and considered by the Arapahoe County Planning Commission (PC) at a public hearing on August 9, 2018. The Sheriff's Department had proposed converting a former adult daycare facility into a substation to serve the Four Square Mile neighborhood. The facility was located at 1641 South Parker Road. As described in the staff report to the PC, the changes to the site would include:

- New accessory building (~ 260 sq. ft.)
- Accessible ramps
- New perimeter fence and gate
- Site lighting
- Detention Pond
- Additional landscaping, and
- Grading, asphalt paving, and striping of the parking lot

No external changes would be made to the main building with internal renovations to accommodate sheriff deputies during shift changes.

Following the public hearing, the PC approved the project, and it is now being used as a substation.

Likely effects of proposed changes to L and E process

Appeal of Denial

In this case, the PC did not deny the request. If they had voted to deny, the applicant could have appealed that decision to the Board of County Commissioners, since it was a County-funded project. One of the proposed changes to the L and E process is required by Colorado Statute C.R.S. §§ 30-28-110, et seq. For any project denied by the PC, the PC is required by statute to provide a summary of the project and the reasons for the denial to the BOCC, regardless of the applicant requesting BOCC review. This requirement is not described in the current L and E regulations but is identified in the proposed revision.

Fee waiver

After some consideration, both planning and engineering review fees were waived since this was a County-financed project. It should be clarified in the L and E guidance that fees are waived for projects financed from the general fund and may be for projects using other funds as directed by the BOCC. Required application submittals

The applicant was required to provide the following documents:

1. Proposed land development plan
2. Grading, Erosion, and Sediment Control Plans and Report
3. Construction Plans
4. Traffic Impact Study
5. Drainage Study
6. Operations and Maintenance Manual

The proposed changes to the L and E process would allow staff to eliminate several of these items from the submittal, including the Grading, Erosion, and Sediment plan, the traffic impact study, and the drainage study. In addition, detailed construction plans are not needed to determine if the location of the substation is appropriate.

A review of the files for LE18-003 indicates that several of these items were, in fact, not required but that decision was not made until after the applicant had already incurred the preparation costs. The intent is that the revised review process will highlight the optional items so that the staff can decide on the necessity of special studies during the pre-submittal meeting. The applicant would save the cost of preparing such items. (Although some of these reports may be required later in order to obtain a building permit.)

The original submittal of the substation L and E application included 65 pages for the construction plans, a two-page traffic impact statement with a waiver request, a 51-page drainage study (for a 0.5-acre site), and an 11-page operations and maintenance manual for a stormwater detention pond on site.

By the time the final application was submitted, the submittal package had been reduced to less than 15 pages.

The proposed revised L and E process would clarify the level of detail for project submittals and explain this clearly at the pre-submittal meeting.

The changes proposed to the Development Application Manual (DAM) include staff flexibility regarding the topographic interval for plan documents. The DAM currently requires two-foot contours. The Substation documents used both 1-foot and 5-foot contours. I did not find any notes from the staff about this difference. Under the proposed changes, staff would have the flexibility to accept contours like those used in the case study.

Conclusion

This case study used a relatively simple project but demonstrated the problem that initially too much material was submitted by the applicant. The revised application and review process would reduce the amount of detail required by the applicants. In the case study, the staff did encourage the applicant to provide less detail, but this did not occur until after several rounds of review. By

providing flexibility and simplification in the review process, which would be explained at the earliest pre-submittal meeting, this would save applicants time and money and also staff time.