

Planning Commission

Meeting Minutes

November 13, 2025

City Hall, Council Chambers

749 Main Street

6:30 PM

Call to Order – Chair **Brauneis** called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

Roll Call was taken, and the following members were present:

Commission Members Present: Steve Brauneis, Chair
Debra Baskett, Vice Chair
Cullen Choi, Secretary
Jennifer Hunt
Jonathan Mihaly
Jeff Moline

Commission Members Absent: David Bangs

Staff Members Present: Rob Zuccaro, Director of Community
Development
Emily Cline-Gibson, Planner II
Iris Belensky, Arts & Special Events Program
Manager

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion to approve the agenda was moved by **Moline**, seconded by **Baskett**, and adopted by voice vote.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

Meeting minutes for September 25, 2025 and October 9, 2025 were approved unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

None were heard.

PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS – NEW BUSINESS

- a. **Louisville Center for the Arts Sign** (CONTINUED FROM 10/9/25)– Resolution 16, Series 2025 with a recommendation to City Council for a PUD amendment to allow a new sign for the Louisville Center for the Arts located at 801 Grant Ave.

Staff Presentation:

Planner Emily Cline-Gibson presented a request for Resolution 16, Series 2025, seeking approval of the first amendment to the Memory Square PUD to allow a new freestanding sign with an electronic message panel at the Louisville Center for the Arts at 801 Grant Avenue. The previous sign was destroyed in a 2024 storm, and the proposed replacement—approximately 5 feet tall and 7.7 feet wide with a 1.3-by-6-foot electronic panel—would display City-managed programming, hours, and emergency information. The sign would be installed near the prior location but moved back to meet the current 8-foot setback requirement, and it complies with all applicable sign code and PUD standards, including limits on illumination, transition types, dimming, malfunction controls, and residential lighting restrictions. Staff found the electronic panel well-integrated into the sign design, consistent with city signage, and capable of meeting all technical criteria through its software controls, and therefore recommended approval of the resolution with no conditions.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommended approval of Resolution 16, Series 2025 with a recommendation to City Council for a PUD amendment to allow a new sign for the Louisville Center for the Arts located at 801 Grant Ave.

Commissioner Questions of Staff:

Mihaly asked whether the proposed 0.3-foot-candle illumination level matches what is used on similar digital signs in town, especially those at schools, and whether the white text shown in the example could be changed to a less intense color such as red.

Cline-Gibson explained that they do not know the illumination levels of school digital signs because schools are exempt from city zoning and their signs were installed without city oversight.

Hunt sought confirmation that the sign would comply with the requirement to turn off illumination after 11 p.m. or 30 minutes after building closure.

Cline-Gibson confirmed that the sign would have to comply with those requirements.

Belensky added that the text color on the electronic panel can be changed to

whatever Planning Commission or City Council recommends and noted that they would address operating hours further in their presentation.

Applicant Presentation:

Belensky explained that the Louisville Center for the Arts is a heavily used and culturally significant facility—booked for over 330 days this year and similarly busy next year—yet most of the diverse programming hosted by small local organizations is not visible to the public because those groups lack access to city communication channels. She described the proposed electronic sign as the most accessible, sustainable, and economical way to inform residents about daily activities, rental opportunities, and the breadth of cultural events occurring at the Art Center. Belensky emphasized that the sign's design is sensitive to the historic building and the calm nature of Memory Square Park, and she assured commissioners that it would operate conservatively: displaying only static text, using dimming controls, avoiding bright or abrasive colors, remaining off between roughly 8 p.m. and 8 a.m., and adhering to all sign code limits. She concluded that the sign would enhance public awareness without adding light pollution or disrupting the park's character.

Commissioner Questions of Applicant:

Baskett asked whether traffic or passerby counts exist for the area.

Belensky responded that no specific numbers are available but noted it is one of the most heavily used pedestrian areas downtown.

Mihaly asked if the dimming function is fully automated with no human control needed.

Belensky confirmed that the dimming is entirely automatic and responds to environmental conditions.

Choi asked about the display technology used for the sign.

Cline-Gibson said the software is Ignite OPX but did not have hardware details.

Belensky added that Artcraft Sign Company manufactures the city's signs.

Brauneis asked how many households or passersby might see the sign.

Belensky replied that only homes on the immediate block would have direct visibility and that no pedestrian or vehicle count data exists.

Hunt asked whether the sign is one-sided with an open back.

Belensky confirmed that it is one-sided.

Choi asked for more detailed hardware specifications.

Belensky said they can obtain those details from the sign company.

Choi asked about the visibility range and viewing angle of the display.

Belensky said visibility would be similar to BVSD school signs and that the color and temperature are fully tunable.

Moline asked about historic preservation review of the sign.

Cline-Gibson explained that the building is landmarked, but the site is not, so no HPC review was required.

Belensky added that HPC did approve the electrical connection needed for the sign.

Brauneis asked about annual electricity costs or carbon impact.

Belensky said they did not have numbers but noted the sign is considered energy-efficient by the manufacturer.

Mihaly asked how much time the digital sign saves compared to changing manual letterboard signs.

Belensky said the time savings would be significant because schedules can be pre-programmed and updates follow event schedules.

Choi asked whether the purpose of the digital sign is day-to-day adaptability rather than visual brightness.

Belensky confirmed this and said the intent is non-abrasive messaging that avoids conflicts with temporary signs.

Brauneis asked whether a designated bulletin board for organizations was considered.

Belensky said printing costs make that option less practical than a digital sign.

Zuccaro added that private organizations cannot legally post their own yard signs and that without a digital sign the city would not have capacity to display all daily programming.

Choi asked how emergency messages would be integrated.

Belensky explained that the sign is updated through an app and that staff would manually add any emergency messages .

Public Comment:

JR Ketlesen expressed support for the proposed electronic sign at the Center for the Arts, noting that although he was initially skeptical, he finds the design tasteful and effective for promoting events. He emphasized that many cultural programs at the Art Center lack visible signage today, leaving residents unaware of what is

happening, and said the new sign would help highlight ongoing performances, city events, and potentially even rental availability, which could boost revenue. Ketlesen added that the area receives significant foot traffic during summer programming and pool use, making the sign especially valuable, and concluded that the sign would be a positive addition for both the Art Center and the community.

Jim Hollestelle who has lived across from Memory Square Park for 23 years spoke in opposition to the proposed electronic sign, arguing that very few people would naturally see it because the surrounding streets carry limited traffic and the location sits on a small, lightly traveled intersection. He expressed concern that the city has not replaced the previous damaged sign for nearly a year, questioning the practicality of investing in a more complex sign that will require ongoing maintenance, power, and operational effort. He also felt the electronic sign would be aesthetically incompatible with the historic 19th-century Art Center and the character of the park, comparing its appearance to commercial signage and calling the proposal unnecessary, wasteful, and visually intrusive.

Conny Pontasch spoke strongly against the proposed electronic sign, arguing that it would detract from the historic 1894 schoolhouse building and clash with the residential character of the neighborhood. She described the sign as unattractive, non-era-appropriate, and unnecessary given that theater and arts organizations already maintain online information, and she praised the existing handmade placards on the rose trellises as more fitting, artistic, and minimally light-polluting. She questioned why an electronic sign should be placed in this location when similar signs are not used at other cultural facilities in town and emphasized that Grant and Spruce are not major thoroughfares, making the sign's impact minimal. She also expressed concern that the sign would be illuminated year-round and visible from many windows of her home and others nearby, concluding with clear opposition to its approval.

Keith Keller spoke in opposition to the electronic sign, stating that it would not be compatible with the historic character of the surrounding structures. He described the Arts Center as a prominent historic building and expressed a desire to preserve its existing appearance. While acknowledging the applicant's need to advertise events, he urged that it be done in a way that does not detract from the historic nature of the building or the neighborhood.

Applicant Response:

Belensky clarified that the previous sign had not been replaced for nearly a year because staff had been working through the design process, gathering quotes, and navigating scheduling delays—including a postponed Planning Commission

hearing—rather than intentionally leaving the sign unrepaired.

Staff Response:

Cline-Gibson clarified that the sign would not be illuminated 24 hours a day, noting that the city's sign code requires it to be turned off at minimum between 11 p.m. and 7 a.m.

Choi asked whether “illumination” referred to external lighting versus the sign emitting its own light.

Cline-Gibson confirmed that the electronic display itself would be shut off during required hours.

Zuccaro also added that while the sign code sets minimum illumination limits, the PUD could include additional restrictions to formally require the operating practices the applicant described, rather than relying solely on staff discretion.

Commissioner Discussion:

Hunt expressed appreciation for the presentations and said the sign's low light levels, automatic dimming, and similarity to school signs eased concerns. Supported adding PUD conditions such as an 8 p.m. shutoff or alternative text colors to minimize nighttime impact. Acknowledged historic sensitivity but noted the area already includes modern elements like the pool. Felt the sign would help inform the public about programming and stated they would vote yes with limitations.

Choi that the electronic panel would dynamically adjust brightness via photo cells to stay at or below 0.3 foot-candles above ambient, and shared context that exit signs are around 5 foot-candles and confirmed the PUD can include additional restrictions consistent with the applicant's stated operating intentions.

Brauneis questioned whether enough people would see the sign to make it effective and suggested such signage might make more sense at the rec center. Felt the neighborhood's residential character made this location less suitable.

Moline questioned whether effectiveness is within the commission's purview and said historic preservation hinges on successful reuse, and a sign might support that goal. They felt the design is consistent with other city signage and stated they were leaning toward support.

Hunt agreed with concerns about applying standards consistently and noted that for-profit applicants adjacent to neighborhoods would be treated differently, but that the Art Center is a public facility, which changes the context.

Mihaly said the Art Center is already a strong example of successful historic reuse. They personally opposed the sign but acknowledged it meets the technical criteria; argued there is a significant void in the code regarding electronic signs near historic buildings. Stated they would vote no for that reason.

Baskett said they would also vote no.

Brauneis also opposed the sign, feeling it does not enhance the city or neighborhood and that organizations have managed without it. Questioned whether it would achieve its intended goals.

Mihaly felt increased community awareness could be pursued through other, more effective venues. Emphasized concerns about placing a digital sign directly in a residential neighborhood.

Choi discussed the difference between personal dislike of the sign and the commission's responsibility to evaluate based on criteria rather than personal preference. Noted that even traditional lit signs could be more visually intrusive than the proposed 0.3-foot-candle electronic panel. Supported the value of emergency communications and leaned toward support but acknowledged difficulty.

Brauneis said that this application is different because the city—not a private business—is the applicant. Felt that distinction affects how to weigh the public benefit.

Hunt compared the proposal to school electronic signs, which exist in residential neighborhoods and are not perceived as intrusive. Questioned how this sign is substantively different.

Mihaly said they would vote no, stating that despite technical compliance, the code is inadequate for this situation and needs revision before such signs are approved.

Brauneis said they would vote no due to location, energy use concerns, and the broad availability of digital communication alternatives. Felt the downsides outweighed the benefits.

Choi said they would vote yes, viewing the sign as consistent with other modern updates to the park and emphasizing its potential value for emergency messaging and public safety.

Motion to approve Resolution 16, Series 2025 with a condition that the text color be

matched to the most prevalent color temperature and formally restricted operating hours was moved by **Moline** and seconded by **Choi**. There was a 3 to 3 vote. Commissioner Bangs' vote will be required as the tie breaker. **Moline** moved to continue the issue to the next meeting, December 11, 2025, seconded by **Choi** and adopted by a voice vote.

- b. **Redtail Ridge Wastewater Lift Station** – Resolution 17, Series 2025 with a recommendation to City Council for a Planned Unit Development (PUD) request to allow construction of a 1,031 square foot lift station to address wastewater for the future Redtail Ridge development.

Staff Presentation:

Cline-Gibson presented a proposal for a wastewater lift station at 1020 Rock Crest Drive, serving the entire Redtail Ridge development. The project includes a 1,031-square-foot equipment building, screened mechanical equipment, maintenance access, and adjacent trail connections. Two waivers are requested: allowing metal siding as a primary exterior material and permitting minor light spill (0.1–0.5 foot-candles) into the adjacent lot. Staff finds both waivers reasonable, notes the project meets all other commercial design and PUD standards.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommended approval of Resolution 17, Series 2025 with no conditions.

Commissioner Questions of Staff:

Moline asked the applicant to review landscaping and drainage to prevent stormwater runoff from creating maintenance issues or hazards on the trail.

Cline-Gibson said Public Works had approved the drainage plan but she would bring the concern back to them.

Choi asked about the generator's fuel tank type and whether it could be permitted in a severe non-attainment air quality zone.

Cline-Gibson said she did not have that information and would follow up but noted that the applicant would be able to address the generator question shortly.

Brauneis urged minimizing light spill and asked whether dark-sky-friendly lighting strategies—such as lighting from the outside inward—had been discussed.

Cline-Gibson said those strategies had not been discussed but she could ask the applicant about them.

Commissioner Questions of Applicant:

Franzen explained that the generator used a diesel belly tank sized for 24 hours of

operation and said he could provide the exact generator size later.

Choi asked for the generator's size, which the applicant did not know immediately.

Brauneis asked about options to reduce light spill, and the applicant said they could explore full cut-off fixtures aimed back toward the building and possibly mounting west-side lights on the screen wall. **Brauneis** further noted that minimizing spill would be best practice given the 12-foot encroachment and encouraged those adjustments.

Choi confirmed that the lift station and generator would be transferred to the City and that the generator would fall under the City's air emissions permit, which the applicant affirmed.

Public Comment:

None were heard.

Staff Response:

Staff had no additional response.

Applicant Response:

The applicant had no additional response.

Commissioner Discussion:

Moline said they supported the application and were nearly ready to make a motion.

Choi expressed strong support as well.

Brauneis supported the project but suggested adding a condition requiring Public Works to evaluate lighting with the goal of achieving zero light trespass.

Baskett voiced support and agreed with adding the light-spill condition.

Mihaly also supported the application and endorsed the lighting condition.

Hunt echoed the support, noted agreement with the condition, and remarked that the lift station design was impressively attractive given its visibility.

Motion to approve Resolution 17, Series 2025 with a condition that the lighting plan will be amended to remove light spill was made by **Moline** and seconded by

Baskett. The motion was adopted by a vote of 6 to 0.

- c. **Louisville Mill Site Redevelopment** – Resolution 18, Series 2025 with a recommendation to City Council for a Planned Unit Development (PUD) Amendment request for an Outdoor Eating and Drinking Establishment and Mobile Food Court at 500-544 Front Street.

Choi recused himself from this resolution due to a conflict of interest.

Staff Presentation:

Zuccaro explained that the request is for a PUD amendment and special review use at the historic Louisville Mills grain elevator site to enable a first-phase activation focused on the elevator lot and front lot, including restoration of the grain elevator (with a small rear “boxcar” addition, reconstructed boardwalk and porte cochère), creation of an outdoor bar and mobile food court with three food truck pads, a stage, and associated outdoor seating and lighting, plus 24 on-site parking spaces and shared parking arrangements. He reviewed the long public-investment history in the property, prior but now-expired PUD approvals, and the existing conservation “no-build” easement intended to preserve public view corridors, noting staff’s conclusion that the low, transparent food court improvements can fit within that easement while materially maintaining those views and helping make the challenging site viable. He stated the proposal complies with the Downtown Design Handbook (general, transition-area, and historic-building standards), downtown’s reduced and flexible parking rules, and the criteria for both PUDs and special review uses, with hours, amplified-music cutoffs, and decorative-light shutoff times tailored to the surrounding neighborhoods. He summarized requested waivers from CB zoning standards (setbacks and lot coverage) as modest and supportable in context and recommended approval with two conditions: obtaining a Historic Preservation Commission alteration certificate and resolving remaining drainage comments before City Council, while dropping an earlier condition that would have required full civil construction plans prior to Council since those will instead be handled at building permit.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommended approval of Resolution 18, Series 2025 with two conditions. One condition being applicant obtainment of an Alteration Certificate from the Historic Preservation Commission and the other being applicant revision of PUD plans and Drainage Report to address outstanding Public Works comments related to drainage infrastructure.

Commissioner Questions of Staff:

Baskett asked whether the interior of the grain elevator would be used and what it would contain.

Zuccaro confirmed it would be used as a bar and noted that interior floor plans are included in the packet, with more detail to come from the applicant.

Mihaly asked where the historic accessory building being relocated to the northwest corner was coming from.

Zuccaro said it would be moved from the Warnberg Farm and that the applicant could provide additional details.

Mihaly also asked for clarification on how many food-truck pads were included, noting only two were clearly visible in one image

Zuccaro confirmed there are three pads and pointed out their locations on the SRU plan.

Applicant Presentation:

The applicant team—longtime Louisville and Boulder County residents and business owners—described their plan to “reactivate” the historic grain elevator site as the Grainyard, a locally run bar and outdoor gathering space anchored by the restored elevator. They explained that the interior of the elevator would house a bar while preserving and showcasing historic wood structure and equipment, with a small “boxcar” rear addition for restrooms and back-of-house functions, and a seasonal tap house created by relocating and restoring the historic Warberg granary. Outside, they proposed a landscaped courtyard with three electrically powered food-truck pads (no generators), a small low platform for ambient music rather than concert-level events, fire pits, and play space, emphasizing sensitivity to nearby homes, adherence to sound and lighting limits, and efforts to create a welcoming neighborhood hangout. They outlined a parking strategy that includes 24 new spaces on-site, shared parking with neighboring properties, existing nearby public and on-street parking, and hoped for collaboration with the city to add more spaces along the rail line, plus incentives for patrons who walk or bike. The original grain-elevator developer and a neighboring property owner recounted the long, costly history of stabilizing and preserving the building and expressed strong support for finally activating the site, while also raising concern about how required electrical upgrades and transformer requirements might affect costs and access for adjacent properties, asking the city and Xcel to work toward a fair solution.

Commissioner Questions of Applicant:

Mihaly asked whether the mobile food-truck pads required water, drainage, or gray-water connections in addition to electrical power.

Zuccaro responded that the pads require only electrical hookups and that food trucks are not required to be hard-plumbed.

Brauneis asked the applicant how the food trucks would operate, whether they would rotate and what the envisioned model was.

The **applicant** explained that the intention is to rotate trucks to provide ongoing variety and that operational ideas such as coordinating local delivery from nearby restaurants are also being explored.

Mihaly sought confirmation that the pads are strictly electric from an infrastructure standpoint.

The applicant confirmed this, adding that the seasonal tap house will have plumbing available for limited needs like filling water buckets, but the pads themselves will not have permanent plumbing.

Public Comment:

Caranci said he strongly supported activating the grain elevator and small business generally but was very concerned about unknown costs from Xcel's required electrical and transformer upgrades that could heavily impact his adjacent properties. He stated he was rescinding his previously signed support letters and asked that the project be put on hold until those costs were clarified, but after staff explained that nothing could advance without his future authorization, he agreed to let the hearing proceed while keeping his concerns on the record.

Horst said he was very excited about the proposal, noting that grain elevators are difficult to repurpose and this building has been unused for too long. He believed the project would boost all downtown businesses, help fill empty spaces, attract families, and urged the commission to approve it.

Baker explained that she lives directly across from the site and moved there for Louisville's downtown vibrancy, coming to the meeting mainly worried about lighting, noise, and hours. After hearing the proposal and comparing it to the considerate operations of nearby Crystal Springs, she said she supported the project despite some skepticism about food trucks and urged approval, saying downtown is struggling and needs this activation.

Muckle said he had been deeply involved in the original purchase and preservation of the grain elevator and considers it one of the most historic buildings in town. He argued that the best way to preserve historic structures is to give them an active, vibrant use, praised the project for doing exactly that, and encouraged approval.

Reed spoke as a business owner, Chamber of Commerce leader, and nearby resident, emphasizing that the commission's role is to apply the rules and that staff has recommended approval. He highlighted the addition of 24 on-site parking

spaces, the benefit of activating a long-empty historic building, the value of outdoor “third spaces” for families, and the importance of supporting local investors who bring vibrancy to downtown, urging the commission not to miss this opportunity.

Ramos described his own recent, ultimately unsuccessful effort to create a historic rail-themed project nearby and said ventures like this grain elevator proposal, backed by local owners willing to take major risks, are rare and hard-fought. He argued that if the community doesn’t rally behind such locally driven projects, only large outside developers will shape Louisville’s future, and he strongly urged support for this project as a huge win for downtown and for preserving the city’s character and history.

Applicant Response:

The applicant expressed relief and gratitude that the project had finally reached this stage, saying it had been a long time coming. He stated confidence that the team could resolve the outstanding electrical and transformer issues with Randy and Xcel, and that they would be able to move the project forward to City Council as planned. He thanked the commission for hearing the proposal and said he looked forward to their deliberation.

Staff Response:

Staff had no additional response.

Commissioner Discussion:

Mihaly said he strongly supported the project, found the setbacks and lot-coverage waivers reasonable, and especially appreciated the addition of 24 parking spaces that were not required but significantly strengthened the proposal.

Hunt thanked staff and the applicants for their thorough work, praised the historical context and local involvement, and said the proposal felt like an authentic, community-driven project that she was excited to support.

Baskett called it a great project, emphasizing that local ownership and investment would ensure it is carried through successfully, and stated she would vote in favor.

Moline praised the collaborative effort among applicants, neighbors, and the city, reflected on having seen the site come before the commission in the past, and said community testimony demonstrated how important the grain elevator is. He expressed strong enthusiasm for moving the project forward.

Brauneis also voiced full support, noting the site has awaited activation for decades and commending past city leaders for preserving the structure rather than

demolishing it, saying the community is fortunate to still have it and to now see a viable plan for its reuse.

Motion to approve Resolution 18, Series 2025 with the two conditions as amended made by **Baskett** and seconded by **Mihaly**. The motion was adopted by a vote of 6 to 0.

PLANNING COMMISSION COMMENTS

None were heard.

STAFF COMMENTS

Zuccaro mentioned that there may need to be an overflow meeting in December and dates will be polled around that.

Zuccaro additionally reminded commissioners that the comprehensive plan discussion is planned for December.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn was moved by **Moline**, seconded by **Brauneis**, and adopted by voice vote.

The Commission adjourned at 9:42PM.