

**CORTEZ CITY COUNCIL  
WORK SESSION  
TUESDAY, AUGUST 26, 2025**

1. The Workshop was called to order at 5:30 p.m., in the City Council Chambers. Councilmembers present included: Mayor Rachel Medina, Mayor Pro-tem Dennis Spruell, Robert Dobry, Matthew Keefauver, Bill Lewis, April Randle, and Lydia DeHaven. Staff members present included: Community and Economic Development Director Rachael Marchbanks, Community and Economic Development Specialist Helen West, City Planner Jason Armstrong, Finance Director Randy Bailey, City Manager Drew Sanders, City Attorney Patrick Coleman, and City Clerk Danielle Wells.
2. Guest Presenter Andrew Arnold, CEO of Pioneer Development Company from Durango presented information on Tax Increment Financing & Urban Renewal Authorities which are tools for revitalization and economic development within the City. These tools help to financially bridge the gap between public and private sectors helping to create partnerships that better serve communities. Development today is harder and more expensive due to high costs, strict regulations, and long timelines. Cities face growing challenges like rising housing prices, limited job opportunities outside urban centers, tight budgets, and community resistance to new projects. To tackle these issues, cities can use tools like Urban Renewal Authorities (URAs) and Urban Renewal Plans (URPs). These are local programs that help improve rundown areas by investing in infrastructure and encouraging development. URAs are focused on revitalizing “blighted” zones using funding tools like grants, loans, donations, and especially Tax Increment Financing (TIF). TIF works like a savings plan: it uses future tax revenue from new development to pay for improvements today, but only if the project succeeds. Creating a URA involves several steps: identifying areas that need help, surveying conditions, planning goals, and getting approval from City Council. The plan must show how it aligns with the city’s long-term vision and how it will affect things like property and sales taxes. Stakeholders—like school boards, fire departments, and county officials—need to be involved early, since each new plan requires fresh negotiations. URAs can support both local and outside developers, but projects must be big enough (usually over \$7 million) to qualify for certain funding options. Smaller projects can still benefit through reimbursement agreements. The goal is to guide development in a way that benefits the community, without needing to raise taxes. If the development doesn’t happen, the money doesn’t exist—so the risk stays with the developer. To form a URA board, a petition must be signed by 25 registered voters, followed by a public hearing and submission to the state. Once the board is in place, it can start identifying new areas for renewal and help the community grow in a thoughtful, sustainable way. City staff recommended South Broadway, the Cortez Airport, and the Brownfields project as areas that could benefit from an URA. These tools can help incentivize and partner with development, rather than only relying on regulations to help direct growth.
3. Natural Medicine and Marijuana Draft Ordinance Discussion was presented by City Attorney Patrick Coleman. The Natural Medicine discussion focused on refining items from the last meeting. Key updates include reducing the required distance from 1,500 to 1,000 feet and changing the measurement method to a “crow flies” approach, consistent with potential new marijuana distance regulations. Responsibility for driving-related rules will be placed on treatment facilities rather than patients. Additional changes include adding “Hospital PUD” to place regulation, removing redundant language, and revising Section 13 to replace assumptions with a commitment to follow state-recommended practices and laws. In Section 14, language will clarify that crime reporting relates to purchasing treatment, not natural medicine. For building code and signage (Section 10), pricing and sales specials will be prohibited, with wording adapted from marijuana signage rules. With these revisions, the proposal will be ready for Council’s first reading at the next meeting.

The discussion on marijuana buffer regulation changes includes reducing the buffer distance to 1,000 feet, adding grandfathering provisions, and incorporating signage limits with a ban on sales and

promotional advertising. Council brought up the possibility of merging the medical and retail marijuana codes, however City Attorney Colman noted merging them would be difficult.

The regular workshop was adjourned at 7:07 p.m.

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Rachel B. Medina, Mayor

ATTEST:

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Danielle Wells, City Clerk