

Report: Roads breaking down

Panel recommends stricter standards for building streets

Street rules

City administrators have the authority to impose the new rules. During the past decade, the city's street network grew by about 300 miles, while the road repair budget fell by 25 percent. Experts say streets shouldn't need repaving for up to 15 years.

By Pam Zubeck
The Gazette

Colorado Springs should beef up its rules for building streets, according to a report that calls for forcing developers to guarantee the roads they build.

The move to buttress regulations to make streets more durable is expected to draw opposition from the development community.

The Housing and Building Association of Colorado Springs declined to comment on the report. But HBA members who served on a city committee researching the issue oppose stiffer rules.

Following a yearlong study, the committee, composed of four development representatives and five city staffers, is calling for:

- Lengthening the warranty period from one year to up to three years.
- Requiring contractors to post bonds for the duration of the warranty period for up to 25 percent of a street's value. Now, the city releases bonds when the one-year warranty period begins — before any damage may be revealed.
- Making developers conduct ad-

ditional soil samples to assure the ground is solid after utility lines are laid and before pavement is applied. This would prevent the pavement from dipping and allowing water to pool and cause premature deterioration, city officials said.

At issue are rules governing how developers build roads in new subdivisions.

The changes stem from the city's concern that poorly built streets are increasing maintenance costs at a time when the city is trying to stretch its road repair dollars.

During the past decade, the city's street network grew by roughly 300 miles, or 28 percent, while its road repair budget fell by 25 percent. City officials began to notice new streets needed maintenance too soon. Experts say streets shouldn't need repaving for up to 15 years.

Last year, a computer analysis showed one in every 30 streets accepted by the city from 1990 to mid-2000 has needed major repairs within an average of four years. The cost has approached \$500,000.

"The committee agrees that the street failures that were studied did

not result from inadequate standards but from substandard construction," the report states.

City Engineer Gary Haynes said the revisions would make subdivision regulations consistent with the city's rules for city-hired contractors on projects such as widening streets and installing storm sewers.

"In my view, it's pretty standard business," Haynes said.

Haynes supports extending the warranty period and retaining the contractor's bond until the street proves it's built to last.

"We need to have the financial ability to make repairs if a contractor completely defaults or refuses to make repairs," Haynes said. "Now we don't hold any financial assurances during the warranty period."

Fred Gibson, development manager for Classic Communities who served on the committee, took issue with the idea of a longer warranty.

"If I did my job properly and it looks good, then I'm not willing to extend this warranty another year to take over other responsibilities that may happen from somebody else's actions," Gibson said.