
WOLF RANCH PARK MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT – PARK SYSTEM

PROJECT STATEMENT

DECEMBER 20, 2018

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Nor'wood Development Group has proposed a Major Amendment (Amendment) to the Wolf Ranch Park Master Plan. The Amendment provides an opportunity to ensure the master plan remains current with a variety of housing types, market conditions and establishes a framework for building a community with a robust park system that meets the vision of the Colorado Springs Park System Master Plan and the requirements of the Parkland Dedication Ordinance. A key component of the major amendment is a new comprehensive park system of interconnected community parks, neighborhood parks, trails and open spaces to better serve new and existing residents. The proposed changes to the park system are primarily focused on the north and easterly portions of the master plan and the central core area of the plan.

The proposed Wolf Ranch Master Plan area is projected to include a maximum of 7,404 residential units at full buildout. Originally approved in 2001, the Master Plan is partially implemented with 2,867 existing residential units. These existing units are afforded park service through West Creek Park (existing city park) and several existing private neighborhood parks and pocket parks, constructed and maintained by the Old Ranch Metropolitan District (District). To enhance services for current residents and meet the needs of future residents, the City Parkland Dedication Ordinance (PLDO) requires dedication of parkland within the Wolf Ranch Master Plan area in the amount of 154.75 acres (based upon existing residential units and average projected densities in proposed development areas). To meet this requirement, the proposed master plan amendment includes: 61.90 acres of proposed community park land; 48.66 acres of existing and proposed neighborhood and pocket park land; and 191.08 acres of existing and proposed open space and trail corridors.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

A key component of the Wolf Ranch Major Master Plan Amendment is a comprehensive update to the parks, trails and open space system within the Wolf Ranch Master Plan area. The proposed Major Amendment lays the foundation for a future integrated park system of interconnected parks, trails, and natural open spaces. This systematic approach to park planning seeks to maximize residents' access to a broad range of unique park spaces and recreational opportunities by strategically distributing community and neighborhood park amenities along natural waterways, undulating topography and existing stands of vegetation. The community park and neighborhood parks are no longer functioning as isolated green spaces or "postage stamps" within the development areas, but rather serve as the common link between neighborhoods.

The master plan amendment proposes a system of interconnected, developed community park areas, neighborhood pocket parks, open spaces and trails as follows:

Community Park: Strategically located in the center of Wolf Ranch, a 120.44-acre linear community park will serve as the future hub of active and passive recreation for the area. Modeled after Monument Valley Park, the proposed Wolf Ranch community park is comprised of 61.90 acres of developed active recreation areas and 58.58 acres of open space interconnected with an extensive trail system. The north end of the proposed community park is anchored by the existing lake and the southern end by the confluence of Cottonwood Creek and the Cottonwood Trail. The provision of a community park within the Wolf Ranch Master Plan is consistent with the 2014 Colorado Springs Park System Master Plan, providing park facilities for both Wolf Ranch residents and the broader community.

Neighborhood Pocket Parks: A series of six neighborhood pocket parks, interconnected by trails, provides direct park access from neighborhoods. These parks are strategically located to minimize walking distance from neighborhoods. Collectively, the interconnected pocket parks provide a broad range of recreational opportunities to meet neighborhood needs.

Trails: An extensive trail system is proposed throughout the Wolf Ranch Master Plan area offering loop opportunities within Wolf Ranch as well as connections to the City-wide trail system via the Cottonwood Trail and Cordera Trails. Segments of the proposed trail system also help advance the City-wide “Ring the Springs” trail as envisioned in the 2014 Colorado Springs Park System Master Plan. On a neighborhood scale, the proposed trails are located to provide important pedestrian connections between park elements, schools and neighborhoods.

Open Space: Proposed open spaces throughout the Wolf Ranch Master Plan area serve multiple purposes including: trail routes, wildlife habitat and corridors, natural areas, passive recreation opportunities, stormwater quality areas, scenic areas and more. The open space areas are aligned with unique topographical features and provide opportunities to preserve upland and riparian vegetation. The areas proposed for open space are identified for conservation in the 2104 Park System Master Plan.

In developing the concept for the Wolf Ranch Master Plan Amendment, the Project Team drew inspiration from historic Monument Valley Park. This beloved linear park, oriented along Monument Creek, is experienced by park users as a sequence of park amenities, linked by trails and natural areas. The park is heavily used, offers a wide range of recreational opportunities, and yet it feels appropriately scaled to fit within the adjacent neighborhood context. The team analyzed the spatial qualities and linear progression of developed, active community park spaces and natural areas within Monument Valley Park, all interconnected by the Pikes Peak Greenway Trail and the Legacy Loop.

The developed portions of Monument Valley Park range in size from two to twenty acres and are spaced at approximately 1/2-mile increments along Monument Creek. The sequencing of natural areas between the developed park nodes provides transition between active spaces, resulting in an expansive park experience that affords excellent active and passive recreation opportunities. The distribution of these park elements in a linear fashion has several advantages. The linear park design offers greater opportunity for the development of multiple access points resulting in direct pedestrian access from adjacent neighborhoods, resulting in more residents within a five-minute walking distance or quarter mile of recreational opportunities. The dispersal of smaller high activity uses minimizes concentrations of traffic and expansive parking lots so that these typical community park impacts are not concentrated in any neighborhood areas.

Park Land Suitability Analysis:

The proposed community park nodes, neighborhood pocket parks, trail and open space areas have been evaluated for suitability in accordance with the Park System Master Plan recommendations.

Suitability for Community Park Facilities:

Each of the proposed community park sites has been evaluated for potential park facility development. The park facilities suggested below are based upon site suitability and park development potential to demonstrate the range of park facilities that could be developed at these locations. A separate public park master plan and community engagement process for each park site will need to be conducted in the future to establish and determine specific facility recommendations.

The largest node of park development is a 30-acre community park, just south of Briargate Parkway which includes the 11-acre lake. It offers water recreation related opportunities and community gathering space. Water related activities such as fishing and non-motorized watercraft will likely be permitted. A wide range of recreation related concession opportunities are being explored such as pavilion space for paddle boats, paddle boards or mountain bike rental. Additional community gathering space exists adjacent to the lake that could accommodate activities such as a farmer's market, food vendors, and other programmed activities. The sloping contours south of the lake provide opportunity for a sledding hill. The flatter area at the base of the dam provides opportunities for sporting events, an amphitheater or performance shell. Additional park amenities might include an dog park, a plaza overlook, playground areas or other uses that might arise out of a later design effort for the park. To the east of this park node is 43.56 acres of proposed Residential D (8.00-11.99 Dc/AC) or 522 units.

The central most proposed developed community park node is 4.5 acres and borders Wolf Village Drive, a Residential Collector. To the west are existing residences and to the east is proposed 68.40 acres of Residential C (3.5-7.99 Du/AC) or 546 units. A connector between the

neighborhoods and nodes of community parks, this park node offers opportunities for a trail crossing over the creek and a gateway to the open space system surrounding it. Wayfinding opportunities exist to direct residents to the trail system, neighborhoods, and the larger park nodes to the north and south.

The proposed 23.1-acre park node, just north of Research Parkway offers a flatter area for multi-use fields for recreation and sporting events. A portion of the site is perched higher with undulating topography. This topography creates a unique opportunity for a bike pump track, mountain bike challenge course or a climbing and observation tower if desirable within the community. Other recreation opportunities exist such as an adventure playground and trail connections to the overall hiking and bike trail system. To the east of this park node is 24.97 acres of proposed Residential C/D (3.50-11.99 Du/AC) or 299 units. The location provides adequate buffering from the lights, noise and traffic typically associated with community parks- especially for evening ball games or community wide events. Issues associated with park users parking in residential areas would be very limited.

The southernmost developed community park node is 4.3 acres. This site provides gentle topography and excellent views and is suitable for developing a variety of park facilities. The School District 20 K-12 campus, located immediately to the east affords potential partnership and shared use opportunities. These opportunities may include shared parking, shared sports field use, trail connections, etc. To the north of the proposed park node is 18.84 acres of proposed Residential D (8.00-11.99 Du/AC) or 225 units.

Vehicular Access:

The proposed Park System provides excellent vehicular access to both community park destinations and pedestrian access to neighborhood pocket parks and trails. Vehicular access to the proposed community park nodes is via 2 principal arterials, Research Parkway and Briargate Parkway. Access to neighborhood pocket parks is via neighborhood streets, pedestrian sidewalks, and interconnected trails.

Pedestrian/Trail Access:

Pedestrian/trail access to the proposed community park site is via the planned Cottonwood Creek Trail and Research Boulevard Trail. Distribution of the community park nodes along the central open space and integrated trail network provide convenient and direct access to neighborhoods. All proposed neighborhood pocket parks are also connected to the overall trail system, providing a series of trail loop opportunities within the Wolf Ranch development.

Current Uses:

The proposed community park nodes and neighborhood pocket park locations are currently vacant and largely undisturbed. Grading has occurred in some area to provide development infrastructure such as stormwater quality improvements and utility infrastructure. The proposed lake is recently completed, and portions of the trail along the west side of the central open space / community park area have been constructed.

Vegetation and Soils:

Vegetation and Soils: The proposed community park site is comprised of native grasses and limited shrubs. The adjacent open spaces include riparian corridors. Soils are predominantly sandy and acceptable for park development.

Topography:

The proposed community park nodes consist of relatively flat and undulating topography. The sites are well suited to accommodate active sports fields and open turf areas as well as recreation activities that take advantage of undulating areas. Areas adjacent to the community park sites include bluffs that could be preserved in the open spaces, which can provide an opportunity for overlook viewing spots in the community parks.

Natural features particular to the area region exist in the community park system. A noteworthy natural feature includes the scenic bluffs and ridges that in some instances appear almost canyon-like. Portions of the park system appear flat, but right along the ridges of the channel in certain areas are the bluffs' significant topography depressions, which creates interest and enhances the overall park and trail experience. Opportunity for preservation in these areas is key, especially for trail alignment and spaces for overlooks and interpretive nodes. These overlook viewing spots into the bluffs give way for "eco" area hotspots, a place for habitat, flora and fauna viewing with interpretive signage about the area vegetation, topography, geology and wildlife.

Utility Connections:

The proposed community park nodes and neighborhood pocket parks will be served by future utility extensions made available at the time of adjacent development.

Views and Scenic Quality:

The proposed community parks nodes all present excellent views predominantly to the west and south. The proposed site includes bluffs in the adjacent open spaces that offer superior views. There are opportunities in the proposed community park for future overlook viewing spots into the bluffs and "eco" area hotspots for habitat viewing and interpretive signage about the area topography, geology and wildlife.

Responsibility for Park Development and Park Maintenance:

In accordance with the currently approved Wolf Ranch Master Plan, the City is responsible for building and maintaining three neighborhood parks (comprising approximately 15 acres) and building and maintaining the community park (comprising approximately 25 acres). All other parkland within the Wolf Ranch development is the responsibility of the District. As the details of the proposed system get finalized, it is anticipated that this sharing of construction and maintenance activities will be similar.

Parkland Dedication Ordinance Compliance:

In accordance with current park policy and PLDO, requirements at the master plan level are based upon the number of existing residential units and the average density of each planned residential area. Based upon these calculations, approximately 5,891 units (existing and proposed) will be developed at a density less than 8 units per acre requiring parkland dedication of 0.02325 acres per unit or 136.98 acres. Approximately 1,077 units (proposed) will be developed at a density greater than 8 units per acre requiring parkland dedication of 0.01650 acres per unit or 17.78 acres. The total parkland dedication requirement for the Wolf Ranch Master Plan area is projected to be 154.75 acres.

Parkland Dedication Requirements						
Residential Land Use	AC	Range of Density (Du/AC)	Average Density (Du/AC)	Residential Units	AC Req'd per Unit	Req'd. Park AC
Implemented Area (Existing)	801.24	3.29	3.29	2867	.02325	66.66
Residential B	306.33	2.00-3.49	2.75	842	.02325	19.59
Residential C	321.39	3.50-7.99	5.75	1848	.02325	42.97
Residential C/D	43.09	3.50-11.99	7.75	334	.02325	7.76
Residential D	76.10	8.00-11.99	10.00	761	.01650	12.56
Residential E	17.10	12.00-24.99	18.50	316	.01650	5.22
Total Residential Units				6969		
Parkland Dedication Requirement						154.75

To meet the PLDO requirement, the proposed master plan amendment includes a park system comprised of 301.64 acres, categorized as follows: 61.90 acres of proposed community parkland; 48.66 acres of existing and proposed neighborhood and pocket parkland; and 191.08 acres of existing and proposed open space and trail corridors. Based upon 100% credit for developed park land and 30% credit for open space and trail corridors, the proposed master plan amendment includes 167.89 acres of PLDO Credit; thereby satisfying the PLDO requirement.

Proposed Park System and Credit Allocation			
Residential Land Use	AC	Percent of Credit (%)	PLDO Credit
Community Park (Proposed)	61.90	100%	61.90
Neighborhood Park (Existing)	29.84	100%	29.84
Pocket Park (Proposed)	14.38	100%	14.38
Pocket Park (Existing)	4.44	100%	4.44
Open Space (Proposed)	155.45	30%	46.64
Open Space (Existing)	35.63	30%	10.69
Total PLDO Credit			167.89