



Legislation Text

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A resolution adopting the Colorado Springs Park System Master Plan (years 2015-2025)

From:

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Summary:

The Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department (PR&CS) has been engaged in a robust public process to develop a new Park System Master Plan for the City of Colorado Springs. A final draft Park System Master Plan has been developed for review and discussion. A summary of the draft plan recommendations, along with a summary of comments received from the public and stakeholders, will be presented to Colorado Springs City Council for consideration.

Previous Council Action:

N/A

Background:

The Park System Master Plan will serve as a comprehensive update of the existing 2000-2010 Parks, Recreation and Trails Master Plan and the 1997 Colorado Springs Open Space Plan. Approved in 2000, the 2000-2010 Parks, Recreation and Trails Master Plan served as a guide for the development of parks, trails and recreation facilities throughout the last decade. The Colorado Springs Open Space Plan was created in 1997 and was last updated in 2003. Since the development of the Open Space Plan, numerous open space candidates have been acquired through the Trails, Open Space and Parks (TOPS) Program. Numerous changes in our local economy, shifting demographics, new funding outlooks, recent recreation trends and a renewed emphasis on sustainability demand an update of the Master Plan(s) to meet our current challenges and future opportunities.

Development of a new Master Plan was recommended by the Colorado Springs Parks Solutions Team, the Colorado Springs Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and the Colorado Springs City Council to establish an overall direction for the department that emphasizes long term sustainability.

To guide the planning process, the Parks Department engaged the services of a nationally recognized park master planning firm, led by Design Workshop. Early in the process a Task Force, consisting of key stakeholders, and Technical Team, consisting of subject matter experts, were assembled to help guide and inform the process. The planning team spent months interviewing, researching, and comprehensively analyzing the existing park system, operations, revenue streams, and expenses. This analysis included a broad array of evaluation such as geographic analysis of parkland distribution, demographic concentrations, and facility service areas. A comprehensive

operational analysis included evaluation of current operational processes, staffing, outsourcing, revenue and expenses, partnerships and grants, volunteerism, etc. This evaluation identified issues and opportunities to be addressed in the master plan.

Throughout the public and stakeholder engagement process, a large variety of community topics were discussed. As a result of this process, their issues of greatest concern have become the focus of this Master Plan update. It is essential that PR&CS, along with community partners, address these issues over the next 10 years, in order to maintain and enhance the park system. The following is a summary of the issues (not in order of importance):

1. Insufficient and uncertain funding,
2. Park structures and facilities in poor condition,
3. Natural and historic resource conservation, restoration and management needs,
4. Gaps in the trail system,
5. Some parks are loved to death (over used),
6. Flood, fire and drought impacts,
7. Lack of public awareness about the importance of parks, trails and open space,
8. High cost of water for park maintenance,
9. Safety concerns and the need for park rule enforcement, and
10. Priorities and values of community members need to be determined.

The Park System Master Plan is intended to be visionary and its aspirations are ambitious. Many of the recommendations identified in the plan are challenging to implement and will require great effort and time to accomplish. However, a number of factors and opportunities set the stage for this plan to be successful:

1. High rate of resident recreation and outdoor activity,
2. Beautiful scenery and high quality natural areas,
3. Well-rounded historic parks system,
4. High rate of volunteerism and community-based parks stewardship,
5. TOPS program successes,
6. Parks and special events used as a means to promote tourism,
7. A strong vision for a 'City of Champions' and support for downtown revitalization,
8. Use of drainage ways for trail connections,
9. Future city growth and redevelopment potential, and
10. Community excitement for a new parks, recreation, trails, open space and cultural services approach.

The vision for the Park System Master Plan update focuses on the big ideas and new approaches for the parks and open space system that will help Colorado Springs thrive and continually improve the quality of life for residents. The following summarizes the general concepts contained in the vision (see Chapter 4 Master Plan):

Face our financial challenges and secure diverse funding sources over the next 10 years to ensure resilience.

Demonstrate our worthiness to be called 'Champions of the Outdoors', by providing world-class recreation opportunities and acting as stewards of the natural environment. Enhance the uniqueness of the city's recreation offerings by providing opportunities for adventure and recreation challenges.

Expand mountain and nature-based recreation opportunities.

Link trails to complete connections between recreation hubs.

Address deferred maintenance and needed improvements to maintain our parks and recreation assets and legacy.

Strengthen safety and security and address flood, fire and drought issues.

Fill in the gaps in the current open space ring. Enhance the value of existing open space land assets by expanding conservation to the high quality natural lands surrounding them.

Create greenway opportunities for urban open space and trails.

Address population growth and changing demographics with new parks, services and recreation opportunities.

Provide year-round recreation opportunities to encourage community health and wellness for all residents.

Recognize the value and purpose of the arts, history and civic pride.

Promote and enhance tourism opportunities in parks and recreational areas.

Financial Implications:

N/A

Board/Commission Recommendation:

The TOPS Working Committee recommended approval of the Park System Master Plan on September 3, 2014. The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board recommended approval of the plan on September 11, 2014.

Stakeholder Process:

The public involvement process has provided numerous opportunities for community and stakeholder involvement. A series of round table discussions was attended by 77 individual stakeholders. These discussions focused on identification of issues and challenges that the Master Plan and Parks Department must address for success. A statistically valid survey was conducted that reached out to 1,500 residents throughout Colorado Springs. The 252 responses provided a +or- accuracy of 6% and identified community needs, desires and hopes for park services in Colorado Springs. Over 300 individuals participated in a public meeting and voiced their preferences on park issues through key pad polling and identified priorities on maps while working in small groups. An online survey garnered more than 1500 responses from individuals throughout the community and surrounding region. The valuable input received through these community outreach efforts provided the foundation for issue identification and recommendations within the Master Plan.

Alternatives:

N/A

Proposed Motion:

A motion to approve the resolution adopting the Colorado Springs Park System Master Plan (Years 2015-2015).

N/A