

FISHERS CANYON OPEN SPACE MASTER AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

City Council Appeal Hearing

June 24, 2025

Britt Haley

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TOPS Senior Program Administrator



Parks Presentation Agenda

Project Overview

- Review Criteria
- Fishers Canyon Open Space
- Master and Management Process Plan

Appeal Discussion

- Addressing concerns in the appeal.

Conclusion

- Staff Recommendation



COLORADO SPRINGS' PARKS



- ❑ Colorado Springs offers incredible parks, recreation and cultural service opportunities
- ❑ Essential for promoting physical activity, social interaction, and overall well-being
- ❑ Our parks system also enhances the quality of life for our residents by generating local jobs and business opportunities, making a significant impact on the Colorado Springs economy.



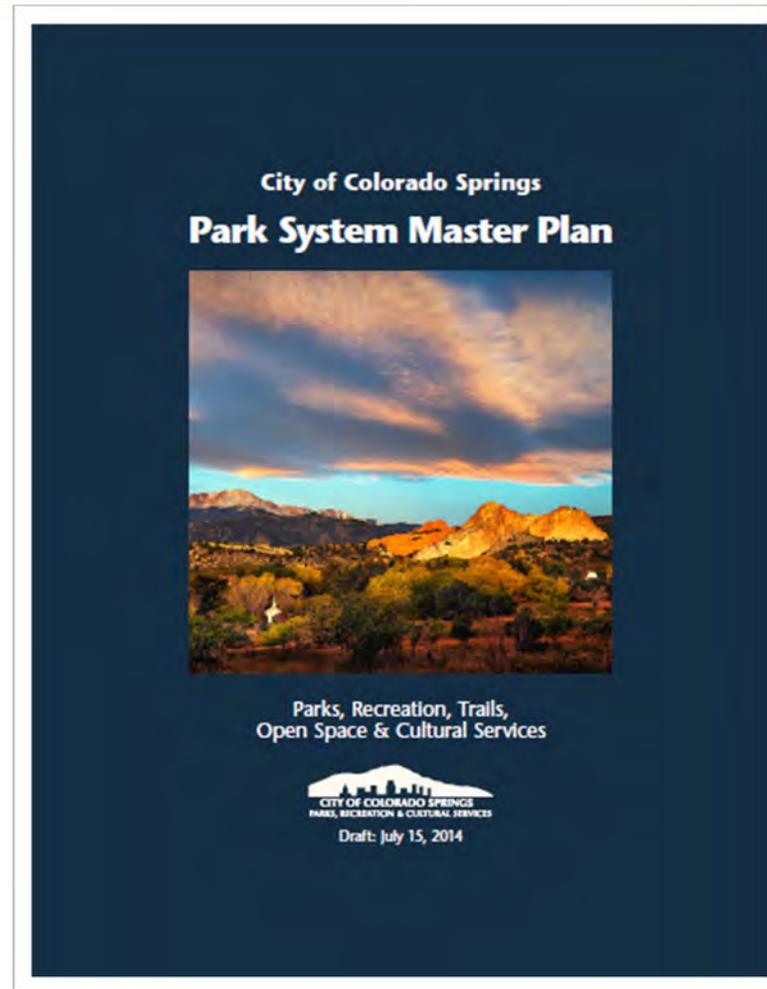
COLORADO SPRINGS PARK SYSTEM MASTER PLAN



2014 Park System Master plan guides the community vision of our Parks, Trails and Open Spaces

Open space – parcel of land set aside to retain land, water, vegetation, historic, cultural, and aesthetic features in their natural or primarily natural state.

These areas provide wildlife habitat, help share healthy growth, maintain scenic vistas, and provide recreational opportunities for the community.



REVIEW CRITERIA

Open Space Master Plan Review Criteria

- ❑ *2014 Parks System Master Plan*
- ❑ *TOPS Ordinance*
- ❑ *4.1.106.F: Conservation of new open space lands shall be related to resource management including, but not limited to, water improvements (irrigation, domestic use and recreational use), preservation enhancements (fences, wetlands and wildlife habitat improvements), and passive recreational uses, such as trail, trailhead parking and other access improvements, and restrooms.*
- ❑ *Sustainable Public Access with a balance of recreation and natural resource preservation*
- ❑ *Stewardship of the resources*

MASTER PLAN THEMES

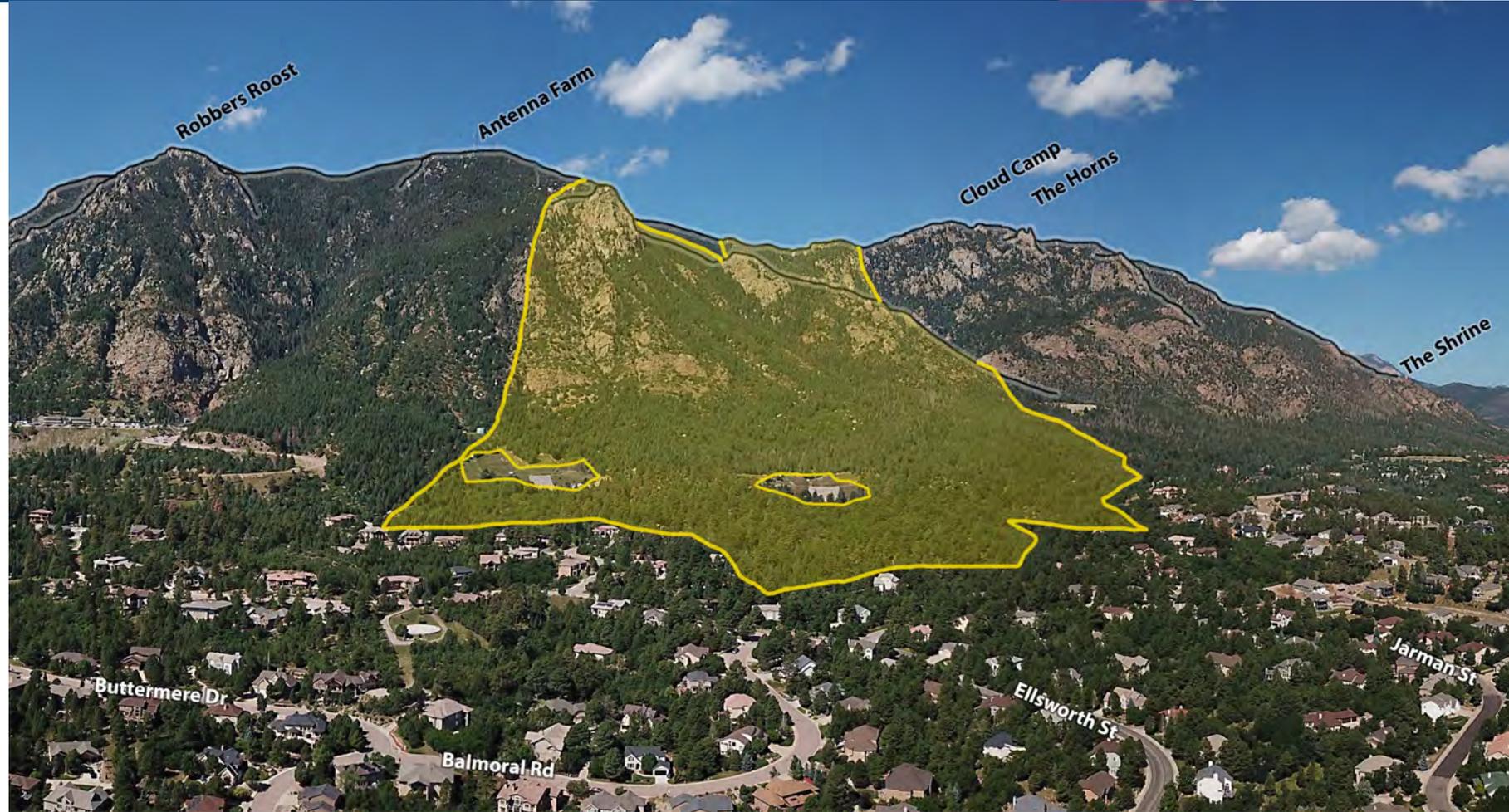
The Master Plan recommendations reflect community values captured from the public engagement process, evaluation of current operations, analysis of existing facilities and policies, and consideration of trends. These recommendations have been organized under seven core themes, which guide the future parks, recreation, trails and cultural services actions and decision-making for the next 10 years.

The Park System Master Plan recommendations are organized around **7** key themes:

- ➔  **Take Care of What We Have**
-  **Diversify Financial Strategies, including New Methods of Funding**
- ➔  **Broaden, Enhance and Promote Recreation Opportunities**
- ➔  **Continue Open Space Conservation in Advance of Development**
- ➔  **Build our Community with the Understanding that Parks, Open Space and Trails Create Great Neighborhoods**
- ➔  **Manage Parks for Better Usability and Greater Enjoyment**
-  **Enhance and Formulate Strong and Broad Partnerships**

PROPERTY OVERVIEW

- ❑ Located on the east slopes of Cheyenne Mountain in SW Colorado Springs
- ❑ 343 acres TOPS acquired open space
- ❑ Within City of Colorado Springs Boundary
- ❑ Zoned PDZ, future rezone to PK
- ❑ Significant high-value natural and cultural resources
- ❑ Provides landscape-scale conservation and access to local, state and federal lands
- ❑ 2,500' of elevation change
- ❑ 2.25 miles of user-created illegal trails





Fishers Canyon Open Space Acquisition Timeline

- ❑ 2019-21 – Partnership with The Conservation Fund to preserve property
- ❑ Fall 2021 – TOPS recommend approval of acquisition
- ❑ Fall 2021 – Paks Advisory Board recommended approval of acquisition
- ❑ Fall 2021 – City Council approval of phase 1 acquisition (258 acres)
- ❑ Spring 2022 – City Council approval of phase 2 acquisition (85 acres)
- ❑ Fall 2022 to Spring 2023 – Fire Mitigation project (89.5 acres)
- ❑ Fall 2023 – Master Plan process commences

Investment in Fishers Canyon Open Space

- ❑ Real Estate Process: \$4,250,000
- ❑ Fuels Mitigation: \$510,000 (TABOR and TOPS)
- ❑ Master Planning: \$250,000

Grant Awards for Fishers Canyon Open Space

- ❑ Land Water Conservation Fund: \$1,250,000
- ❑ Noxious Weed management: \$33,300
- ❑ CO Strategic Wildfire Action Program (2025): \$177,700



Master and Management Process and Plan

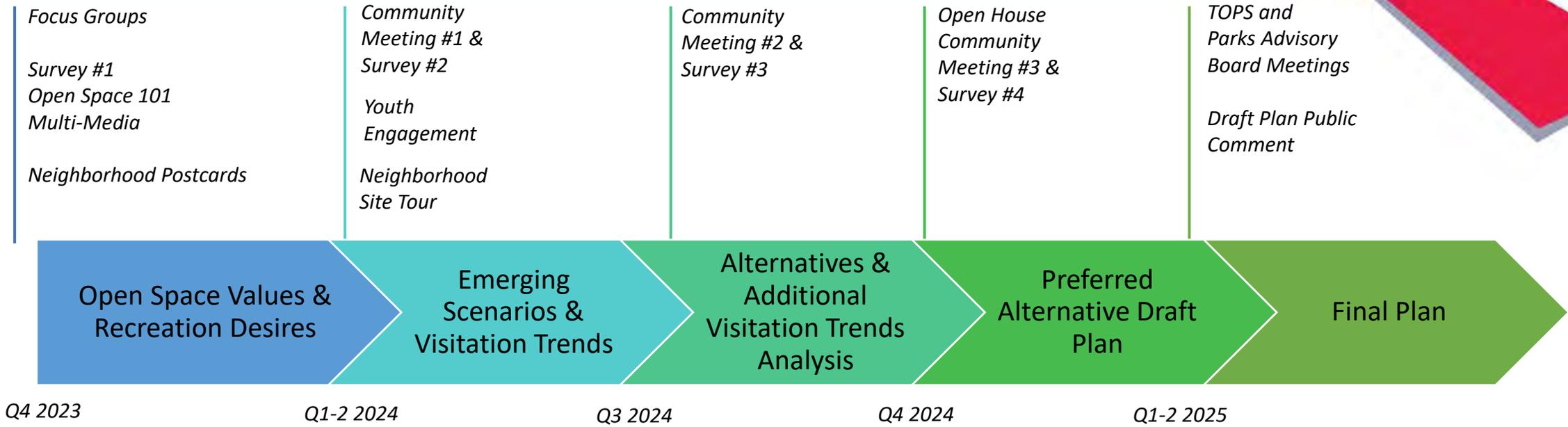


PURPOSE OF MASTER AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

- ❑ Establish a new **comprehensive long-range plan** (15-20 years) for Fishers Canyon Open Space on how the public will use the property
- ❑ **Balance** current and future recreational needs of the community with conservation of resources
- ❑ Establish expectations based on **resource assessment, Parks' experience, and community values**
- ❑ Sets clear open space **goals and priorities** for resource and recreation management
- ❑ Address **public access, habitat protection, resource management, public safety, and neighborhood concerns**



Engagement Phases

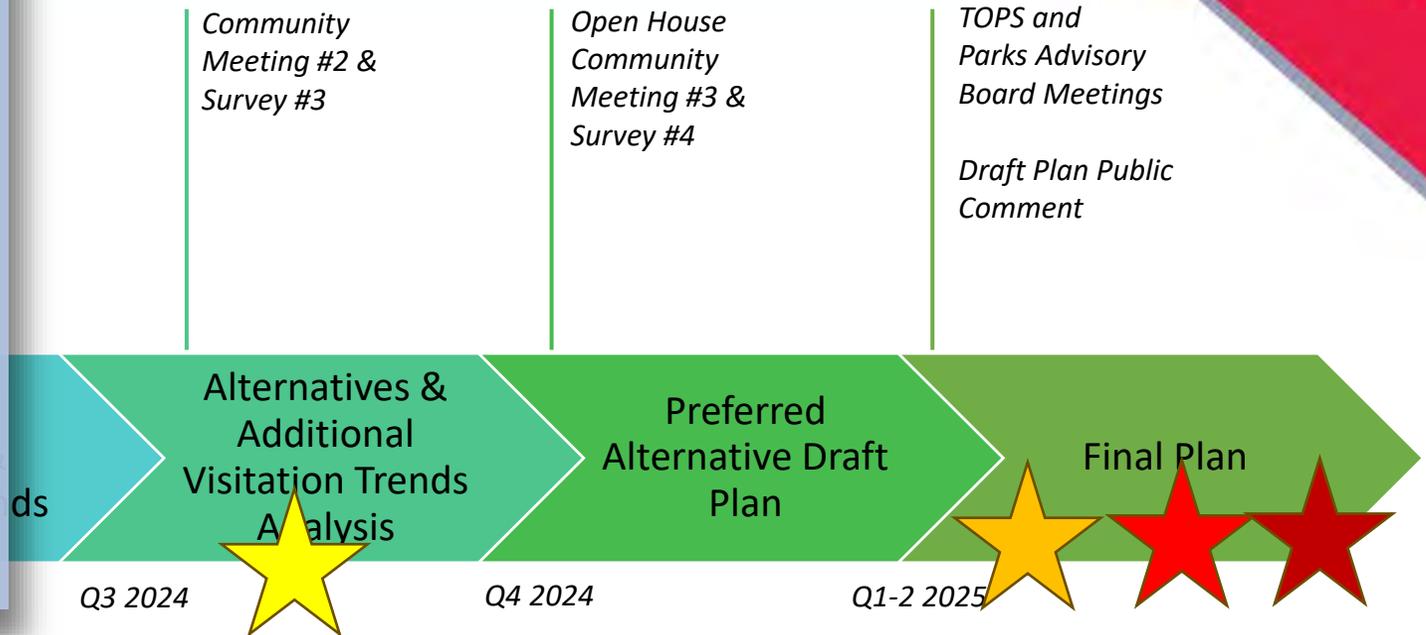


20-month Master Plan Process

Additional Engagement Opportunities



- August 2024 ★
 - Added four neighborhood site tours
 - More than 70 neighbor attendees
- March 2025 ★
 - Open public comment at both TOPS and PAB's presentation
- April 2025 ★
 - Second presentation to TOPS and PAB
 - Open public comment at both meetings
- May 2025 ★
 - Additional neighborhood site tour



Robust engagement

- We appreciate community's time and effort to provide input on Fishers Canyon Open Space
- Grateful for the community sharing their ideas, thoughts, and concerns
- Acknowledge differing of opinions and the plan represents balanced approach
- The community's feedback shaped the Plan
- Addresses many of the concerns with solutions. Plan actively mitigates risks and adapts over time.



By the Numbers

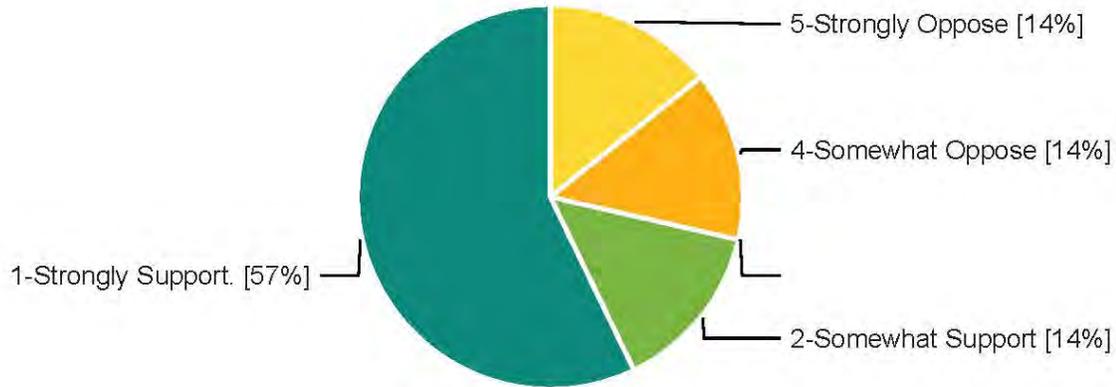
- 2,600 + citizen engagement
- Stakeholder engagement throughout
- 21 public meetings
- 4 online surveys,
- 5 neighborhood site tours
- 10+ individual meetings with neighbors and stakeholders

Engagement Findings: Draft Plan

Survey #4 Results: Community Level of Support for the Draft Trail and Trailhead Plan

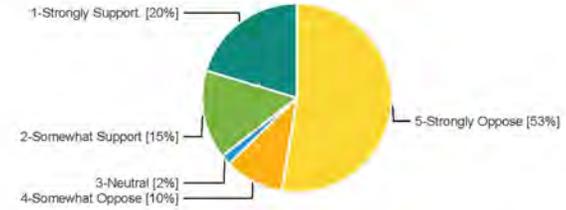


Full Community Results

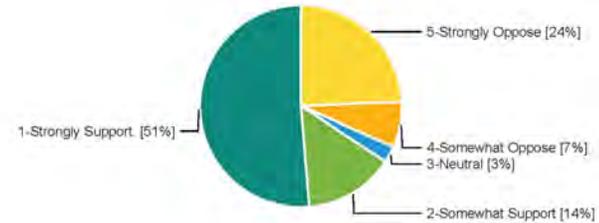


■ 5-Strongly Oppose
 ■ 4-Somewhat Oppose
 ■ 3-Neutral
 ■ 2-Somewhat Support
 ■ 1-Strongly Support

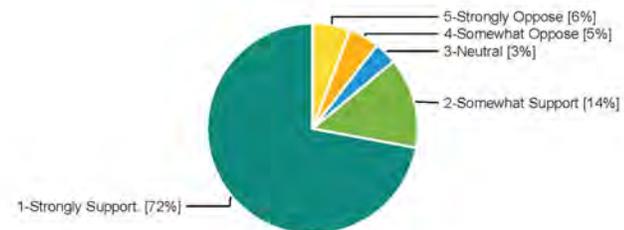
Spires ONLY Neighborhood Results



Broadmoor Resort Community ONLY Neighborhood Results



Community Results Outside of BRC and Spires Neighborhood



MASTER AND MANAGEMENT PLAN OVERVIEW

Expand and Enhance Wildlife Habitat Areas

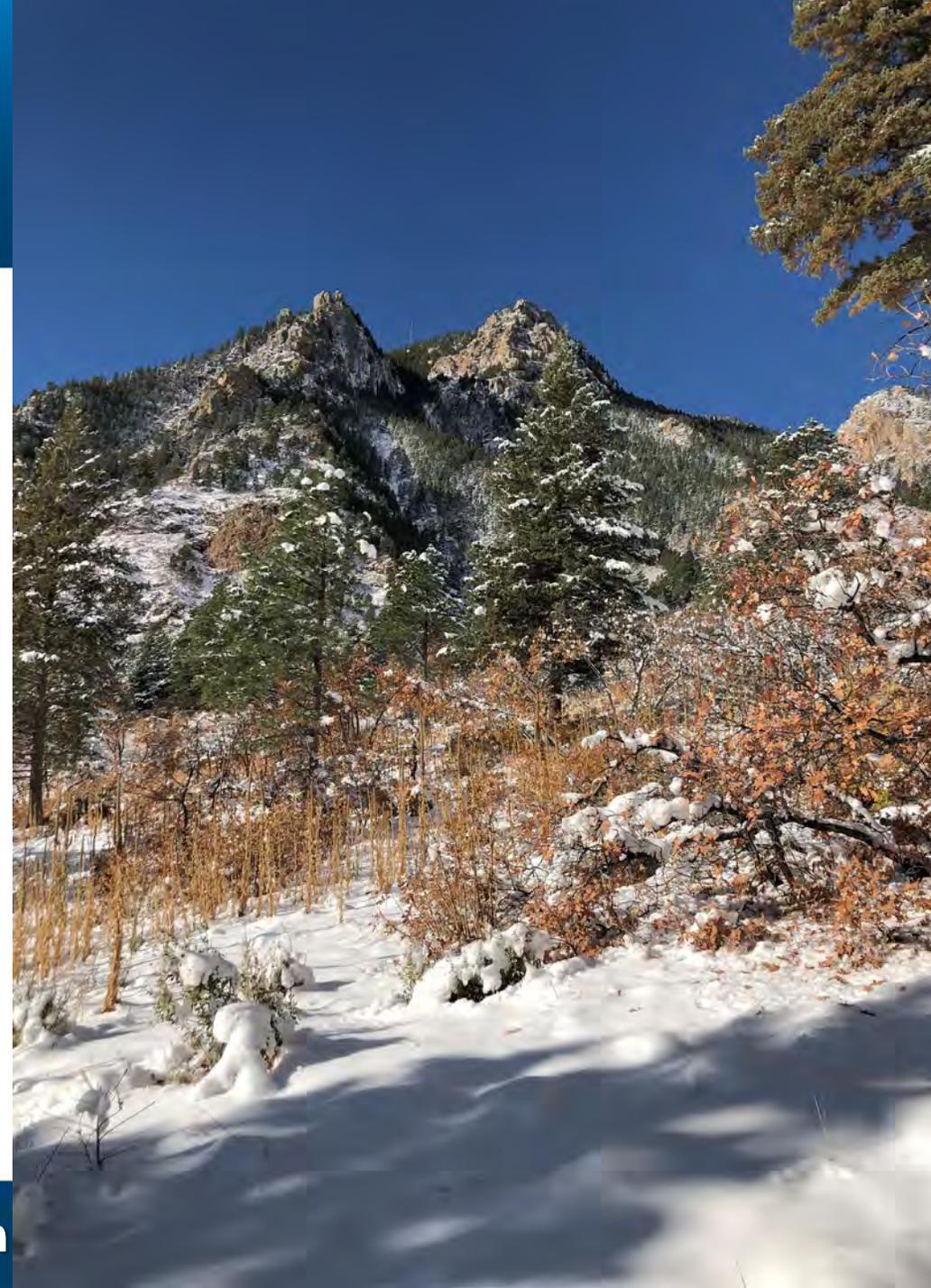
- Manage users with strategically planned trail system
- Expand habitat areas and promote wildlife corridors
- Promote preservation of habitat areas through Natural Preservation Areas (66% of the site / 227+ acres)
- Protect critical and sensitive ecosystems

Establish a Sustainable Trail System

- 9-10 miles master planned trail
- Multiuse trails, hiking only trail, accessible trails
- Rock Climbing, bouldering and picnic opportunities
- Three open space access points (1 at Wellfleet, 2 off-site)

Establish Trailhead Infrastructure

- 2 trailhead parking areas
- Phased parking approach
- Adaptive range of 69 to 110 spots
- Horse trailer parking
- Overnight gate closures



Approved Master Plan Map

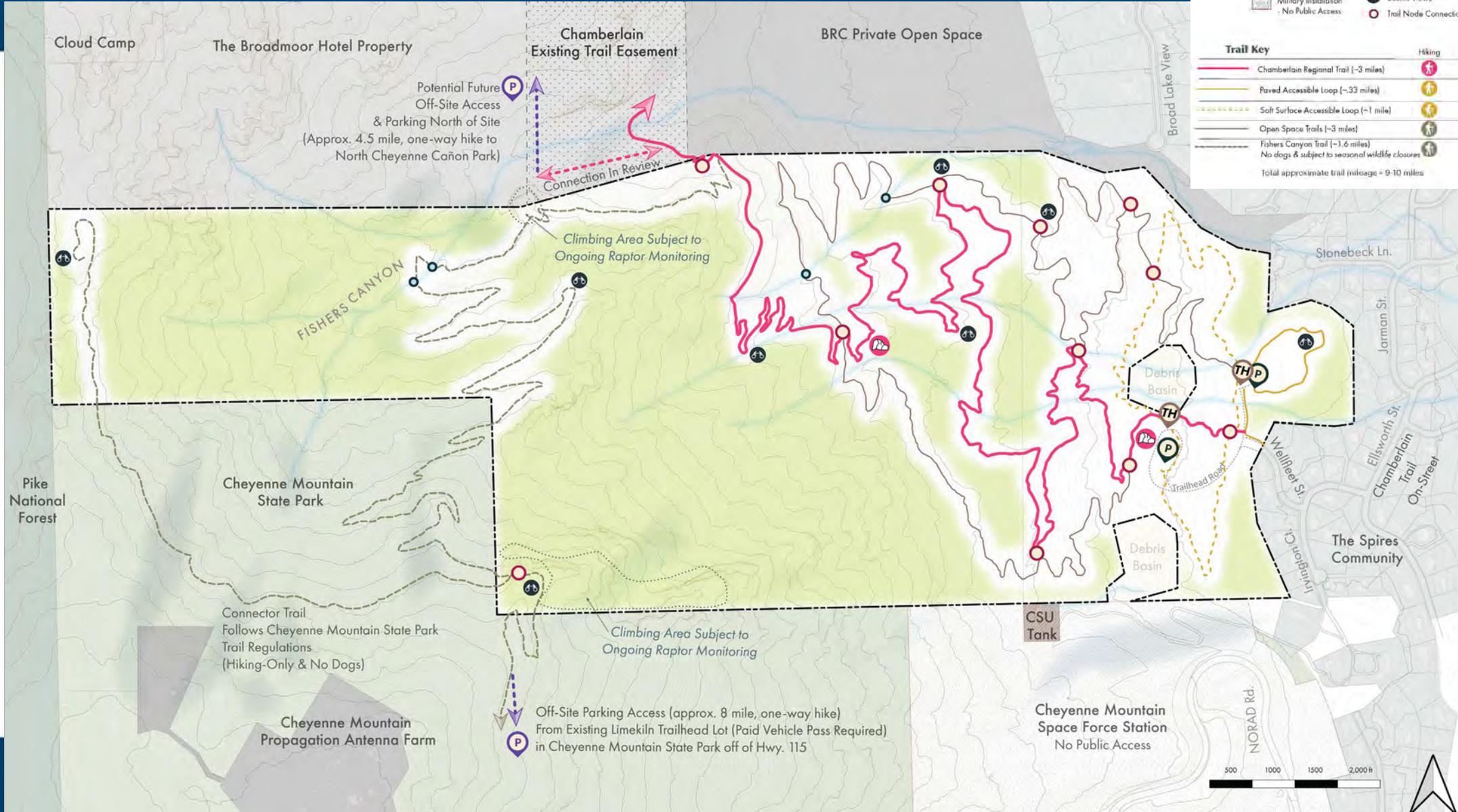
Master Plan Map Legend

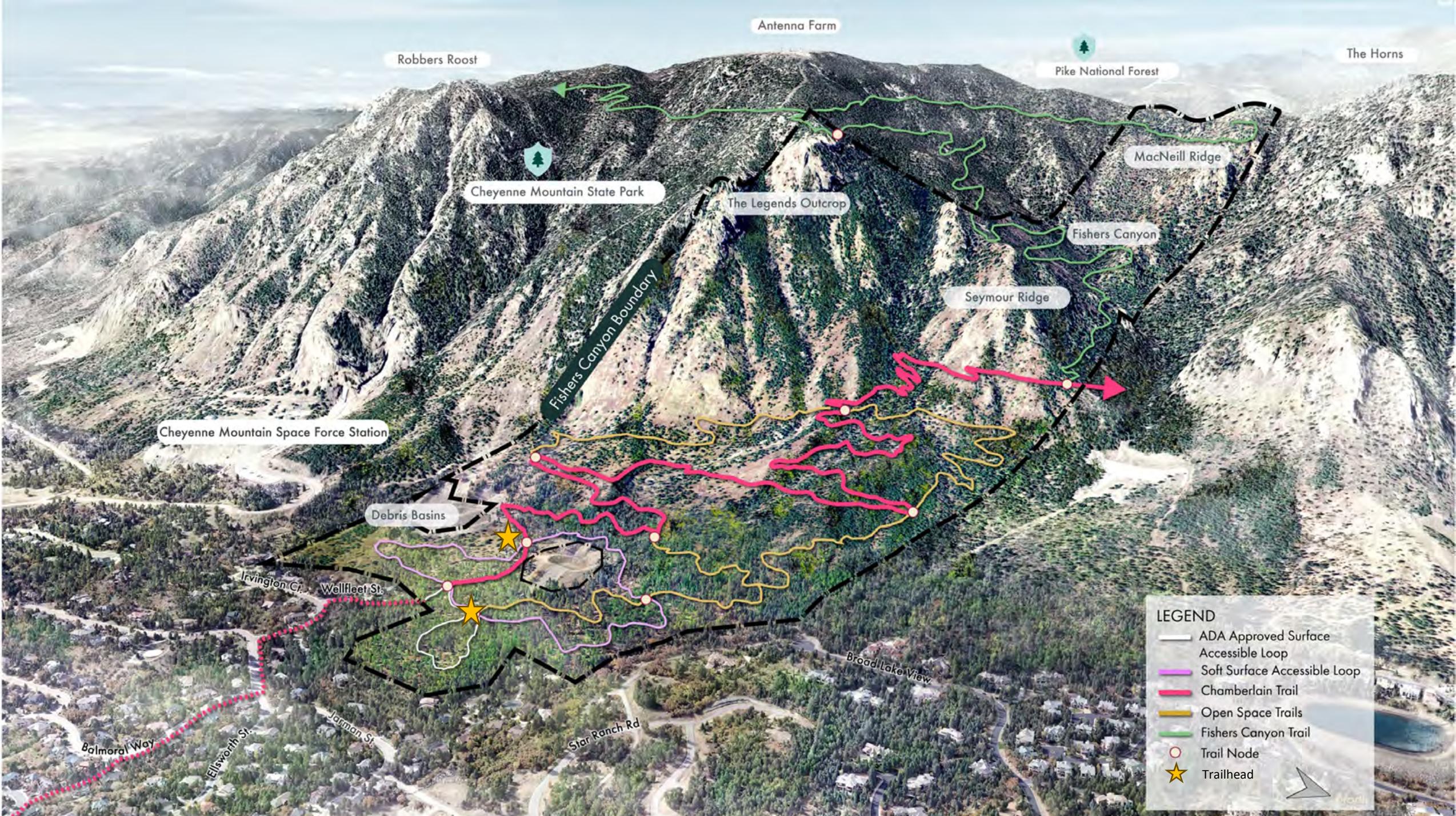
- Property Line
- Chamberlain Existing Trail Easement
- Private Property
- Military Installation - No Public Access
- Existing Drainages
- Natural Preservation Area Drainage Crossings (4)
- Natural Preservation Area (66% of site / ~227 acres)
- Scenic Views
- Trail Node Connections (10)
- Trailheads (2)
- On-Site Parking (69-1 TD spots)
- Off-Site Dispersed Access (2 points)
- Bouldering Opportunity
- Rock Climbing Opportunity

Trail Key

	Hiking	Biking	Horse	On-Leash Dogs	Accessible (2-5% slope)
Chamberlain Regional Trail (-3 miles)					
Paved Accessible Loop (-.33 miles)					
Soft Surface Accessible Loop (-1 mile)					
Open Space Trails (-3 miles)					
Fishers Canyon Trail (-1.6 miles) No dogs & subject to seasonal wildlife closures					

Total approximate trail mileage = 9-10 miles





Robbers Roost

Antenna Farm

Pike National Forest

The Horns

Cheyenne Mountain State Park

The Legends Outcrop

MacNeill Ridge

Fishers Canyon

Seymour Ridge

Fishers Canyon Boundary

Cheyenne Mountain Space Force Station

Debris Basins

Irvington Ct.

Wellfleet St.

Broad Lake View

Balmoreal Way

Ellsworth St.

Jarman St.

Star Ranch Rd

LEGEND

- ADA Approved Surface
- Accessible Loop
- Soft Surface Accessible Loop
- Chamberlain Trail
- Open Space Trails
- Fishers Canyon Trail
- Trail Node
- ★ Trailhead



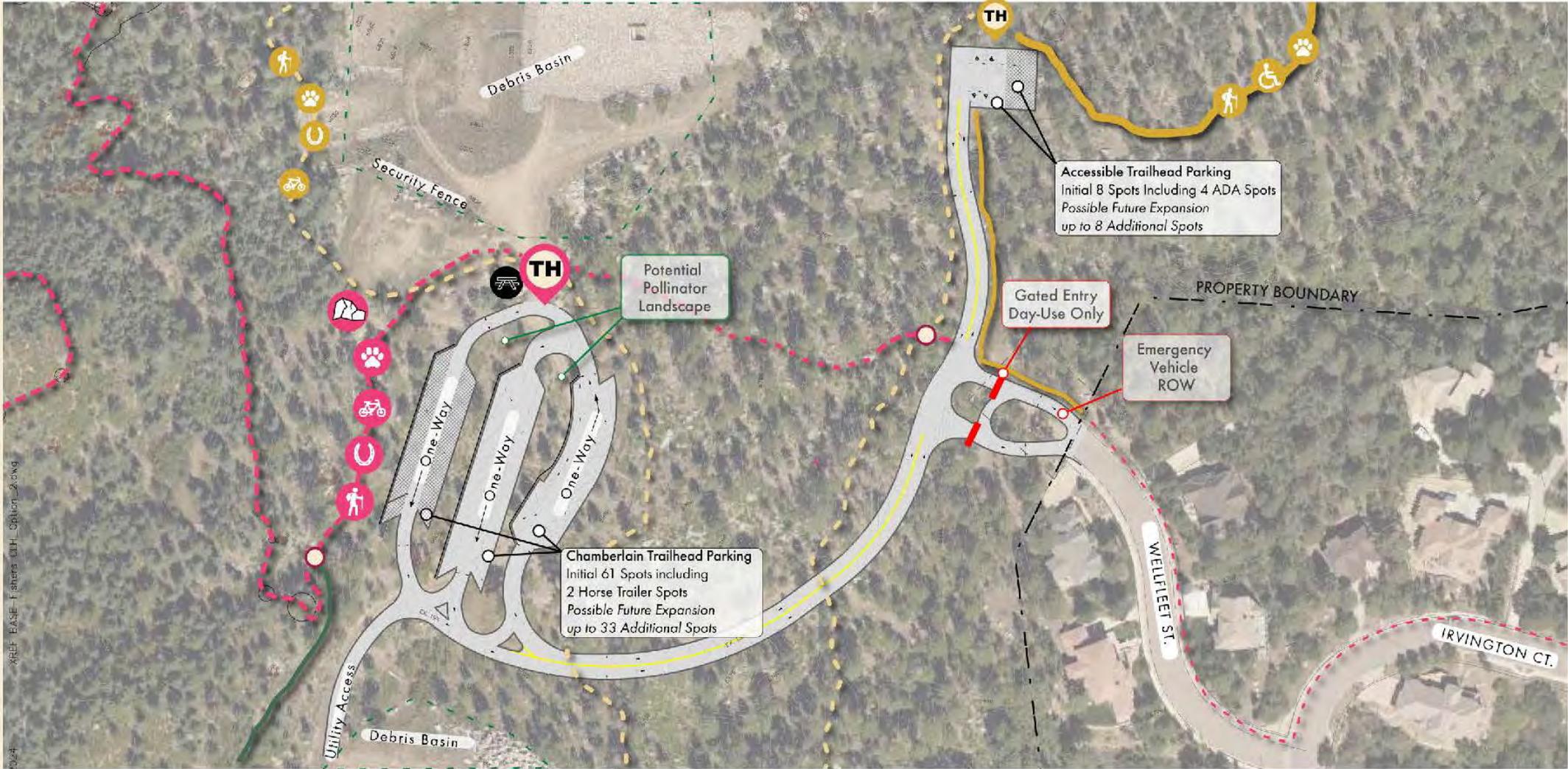
LEGEND

- Hiking
- On-leash Dogs
- Bouldering Opportunity
- Biking
- Horse
- Proposed Picnicking Area

- Chamberlain Trail (~3 miles)
- Paved Accessible Trail (~.33 miles)
- Soft Surface Accessible Loop (~1 mile)
Accessible (2- 5% slope)

- Potential Trailhead Plaza
Permissible Uses:
Restroom, waste receptacle, signage kiosk,
Picnic tables and benches.

- Possible Future Parking Expansion

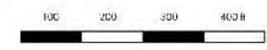


FISHERS CANYON OPEN SPACE

Preferred Trailhead Concept Road and Parking Plan

Adaptive Parking Range: Initial 69 Spots | Possible Future Expansion Up To 110 Spots*
 *If more parking is needed, PRCS will initiate a public engagement process (format to be determined by PRCS leadership).

City of Colorado Springs
 Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services
 Consultant Team: Studio Campo, GEI, Atkins
 January 22, 2024

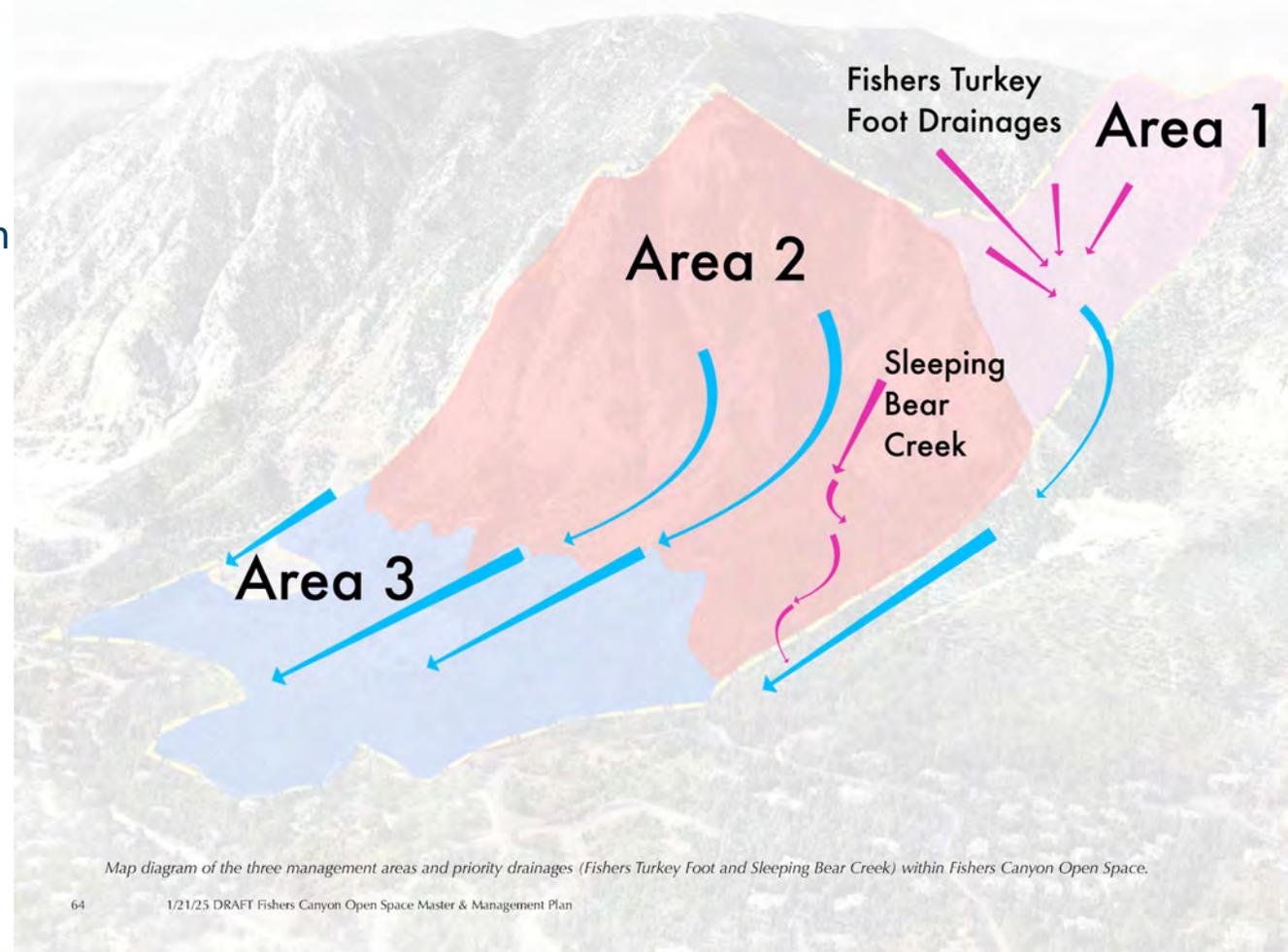


Management Plan

Holistic and Adaptative Management Approach

- Balance of public access while conserving cultural and natural resources
- Habitat enhancement, resource protection and forest health
- Infrastructure management, visitation management, priorities
- Adapt to changing conditions, impact and trends

- | | | | |
|---|------------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| ✓ | Visitation Management | ✓ | Noxious Weed Control |
| ✓ | Trailhead Management | ✓ | Drainage and Water Quality |
| ✓ | Trail Management | ✓ | Wildlife Management |
| ✓ | Cultural Resource Protection | ✓ | Design Guidelines |
| ✓ | Wildfire Resilience | ✓ | Implementation Priorities |
| ✓ | Forest Health Management | ✓ | Cost estimates |



Approval Process



TOPS Working Committee May 7th, 2025

A motion to recommend approval and adoption of the Fishers Canyon Open Space Master and Management Plan as presented

Passed 9-0

Parks Advisory Board May 8th, 2025

A motion to approve and adopt the Fishers Canyon Open Space Master and Management Plan as presented with a modification of the text to in which Fishers Canyon Trail and MacNeill Ridge Trail may allow mountain biking when regional trail connections are established

Passed 9-0



Appeal Claims

Fishers Canyon Open Space Master and Management Plan



Summary From Appeal



Appeal Claim

TOPS and Parks Advisory Board approval was premature until community safety concerns are fully and comprehensively addressed in a revised “Recreation master plan”

Appeal Themes:

- Public Process
- Open Space Access
- Traffic and Evacuation
- Visitation Management
- Omissions to the Plan
- Funding, Priorities and Implementation
- Fire and Mitigation

Claim: Neighborhood voices were excluded at the May 8th Parks Advisory Board meeting due to a faulty public hearing phone number.

“Recreational Master Plan” in current form is premature

Counterpoint: The city held multiple meetings, surveys, and site visits to gather input, ensuring extensive community participation throughout the 20-month process.

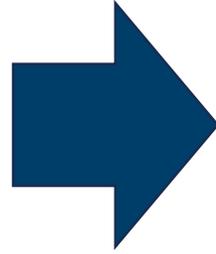


- Technical issue was unfortunate, but Parks Advisory Board allowed time to connect with a neighbor which allowed call-in comment.
- Extensive opportunities for public to share feedback including additional neighbor site tours (5 total), 1 on 1 meetings, a second month of presentations added at TOPS Working Committee and Parks Advisory Board meetings with public comment was welcomed at all TOPS Working Committee and Parks Advisory Board meetings. (Master Plan page (p) 41-51)
- Public comment was available via email to the project team and the TOPS Working Committee and Parks Advisory Board at any time in the process (Appendix M)



Claim: The Wellfleet cul-de-sac violates the city's 750-foot rule for fire access.

Counterpoint: The 750-foot rule is for Subdivision Plat and DOES NOT apply to a Parks Department Open Space Master Plan.



Unified Development Code (UDC) Chapter 7 (7.5.515.B.2.c) Development Plan is not required in connection Public parks in which a Park Master Plan has been or will be reviewed by the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services Department

- Fishers Canyon Open Space is a city owned property following Parks Process per **Chapter 4**

Parking Lot Placement and design – Locations were vetted with neighbors during the neighborhood site tours and considered during into the master plan. (p36)

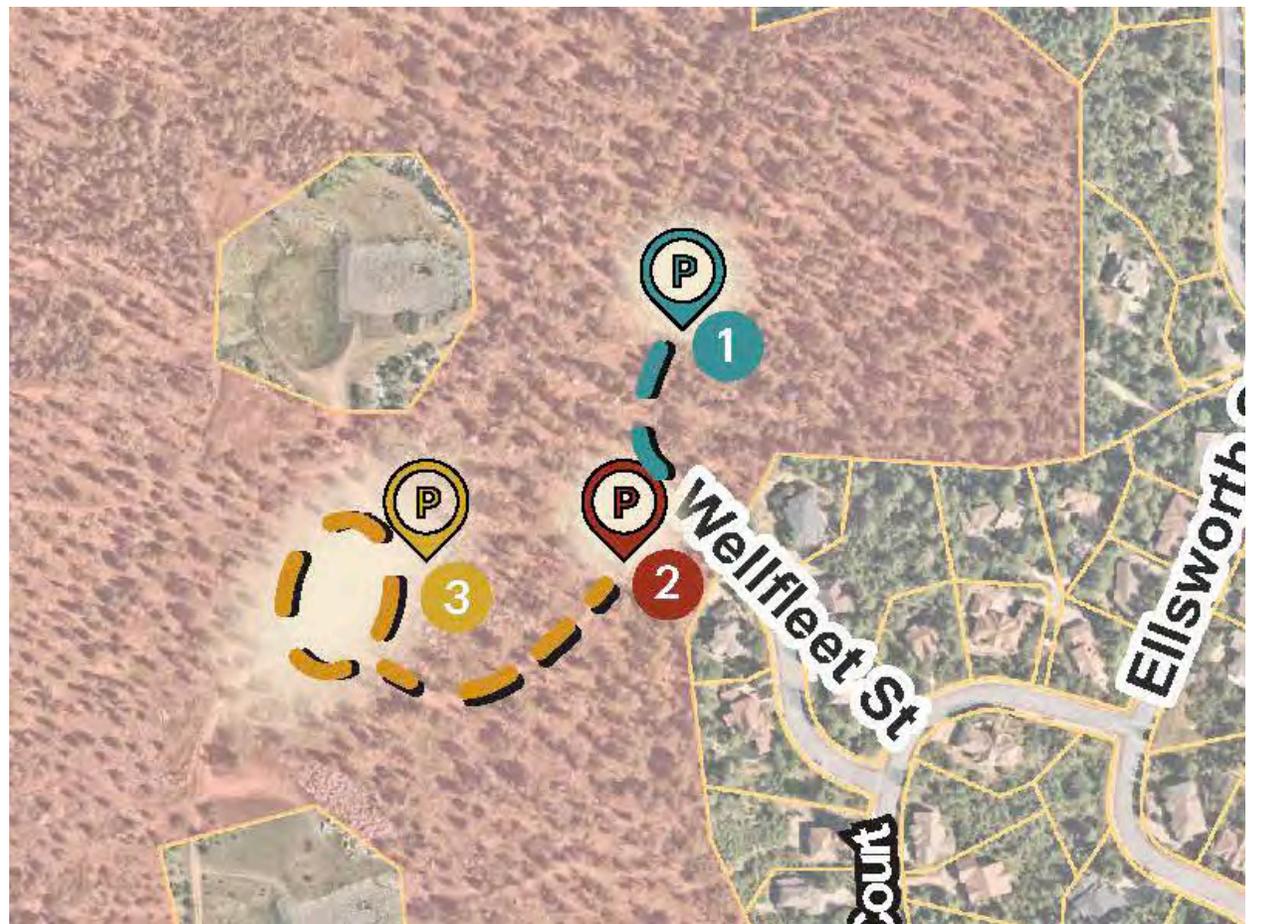
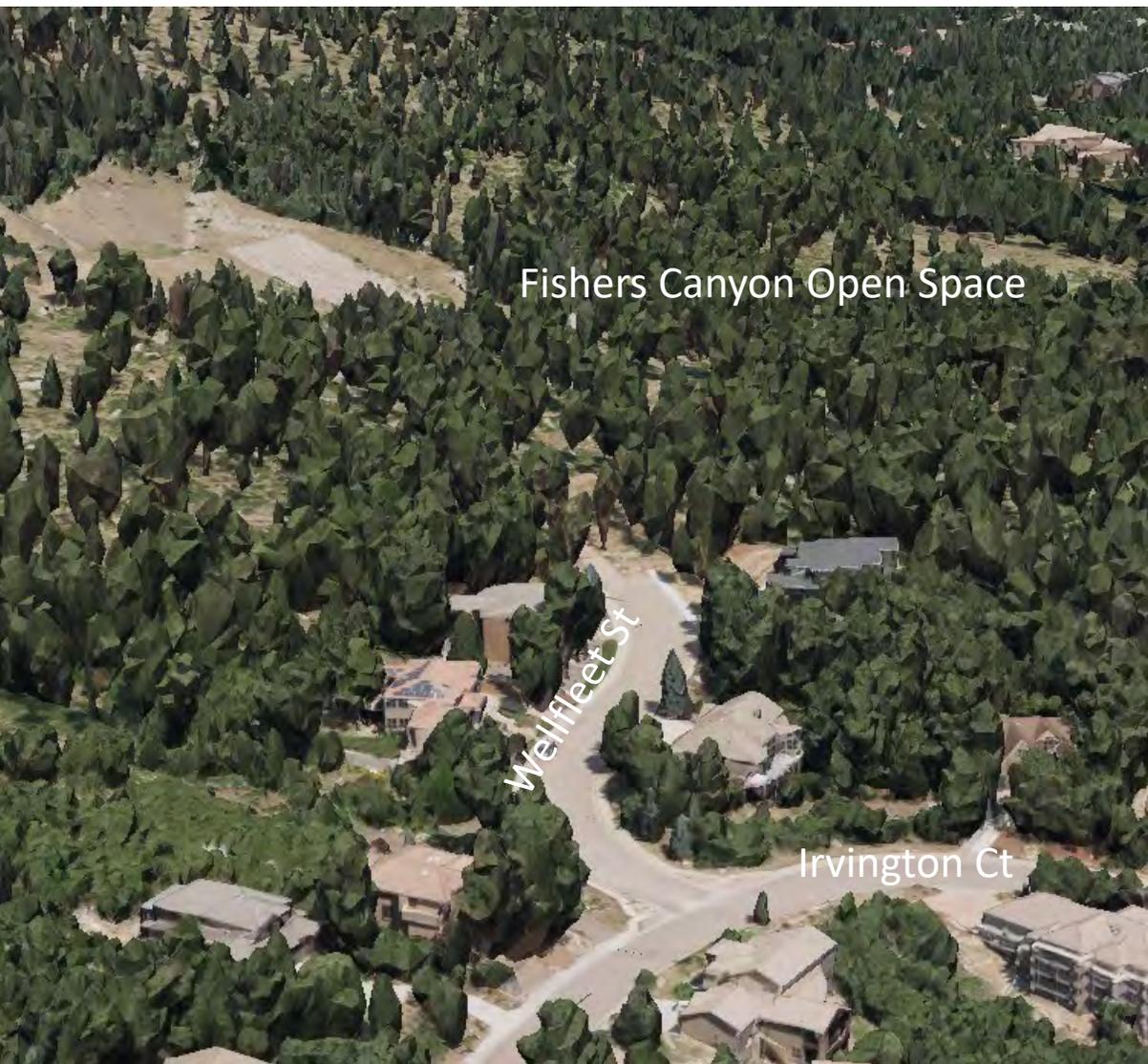
- A cul-de-sac with fire truck turn around will be provided at the open space entrance – a length of 560 feet. (p63)
- The park road and larger parking lot will be navigable for fire engines (p63)

Access Points - Plan includes additional pedestrian access points into open space (p55, 57, 61)



OPEN SPACE ACCESS





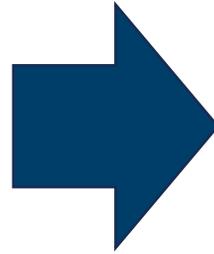
Q8 - Which parking option would you prefer? Reference image on page 3 of engagement report for option location and conceptual sections.

70 Responses



Claim: No alternative fire protection access exists, leading to congestion during an emergency. The evacuation study fails to account for delays from Phase 2 parking lot improvements.

Counterpoint: The planning process included a traffic impact analysis, evacuation modeling, and access coordination with emergency responders. Traffic studies show only minor delays (seconds), even in worst-case scenarios.

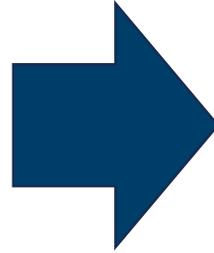


Fire Evacuation

- Concerns about traffic and emergency evacuation have been fully examined. Evacuation modeling confirms the existing road network can accommodate emergency response needs even with the full build-out of the parking lot at 110 cars
- The team used Synchro software to assess the outcome of evacuating all residential properties in the neighborhood with the addition of the Fishers Canyon parking lot **at full capacity.**
- The analysis showed **minor additional vehicular delays** at the local intersections with the additional traffic from Fishers Canyon compared to base conditions without the Open Space traffic. The neighborhood intersections remained at capacity, with only minor changes to the LOS during the evacuation.
- Therefore, it is likely that **the Fishers Canyon added vehicles would not significantly impact evacuations** out of the Spires neighborhood. It is possible that further downstream, such as near Highway 115, that there could be capacity issues in the case of a large-scale evacuation, but that would occur regardless of the Fishers Canyon traffic.(Traffic Impact Analysis – Appendix A p23)
- Collaboration with other agencies for evacuation planning (p70,78)
- Align goals with Colorado Springs Community Wildfire Protection Plan (p78)

Claim: No alternative fire protection access exists, leading to congestion during an emergency. The evacuation study fails to account for delays from Phase 2 parking lot improvements.

Counterpoint: The planning process included a traffic impact analysis, evacuation modeling, and access coordination with emergency responders. Traffic studies show only minor delays (seconds), even in worst-case scenarios.



Traffic Impacts

- Seasonal considerations for use of trailhead and open space. Use of parking lot is highly variable based on weather, time, season, conditions and day of week
- Traffic study by consultant shows increase in daily trips, **without** impacting level of service in neighborhood (Traffic Impact Analysis – Appendix A p22)
- Plan explores other pedestrian access points to reduce reliance on vehicle access (p56).
- Plan recommends continued **collaboration** with CSFD, CSPD, Pikes Peak Regional Office of Emergency Management regarding emergency response (p78-79)
- Coordination with Traffic Engineering for traffic management solutions in the Right of Way (p56, 70)

Adaptive Strategies

- Master Plan includes a phased approach on parking lot implementation. Phase 1 provides up to 69 parking space. Allows Parks to start small with implementation and monitor for issues (p56, 70)
- Parking expansion is contingent on demand and will be reviewed before implementation of phase 2, ensuring adaptive traffic management strategies.
- Fishers Canyon Open Space may be Temporarily closed due to weather conditions and/or emergencies (p70-71)



Claim: Insufficient planning and steps regarding visitation management which will result in dire consequences impacting neighborhood safety and welfare.

Counterpoint: Plan provides extensive recommendations on Visitor Management with a focus on the three pillars of land management (Engineering, Education and Enforcement) and adaptive strategies



- **Engineering** – Strategic site design of improvements and land management tools to promote legal use of parking lots and trails (p56, 70, 72).
- Collaboration with Traffic Engineering for public roadway management (p56, 70)
- **Education** – Soft enforcement with park rangers, use of signage, social media campaign and creation of friend’s group (p70, 71, 81, 82, 85, 86)
- **Enforcement** – Collaboration with Colorado Parks and Wildlife and “Conservation Patrols” with Colorado Springs Police Department (p70-71, 72, 74)
- Explore parks wide discussion on enforcement capability of PRCS Park Rangers (p74)
- **Adaptive Management** - Master and Management Plan allows of adaptive strategies to remain flexible to address issues that may arise for use, impact and access. Includes a phased implementation of the trailhead (p56-59, 63, 70-87)

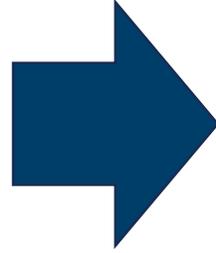


Claim: Master Plan omits several issues raised by homeowners

Counterpoint: Master plan covers a wide spectrum of concerns and mitigates when possible; not all concerns can be addressed or match specific individuals' requests or “demands”



Boundary Line –Open space to right (mitigated area)



Homeowners Insurance – This level of detail are not part of a master plan not in Parks Purview but understand the concerns

- Insurance coverage and premiums can be complex with multiple variables beyond proximity to open space. Location of homes in Wildland Urban Interface area significant contributor
- Fishers Canyon Open Space enhances opportunities for fuels management, improved first responder access, and opportunities for added fire hydrant(s) which may have positive impact on the neighborhood (p78-81)

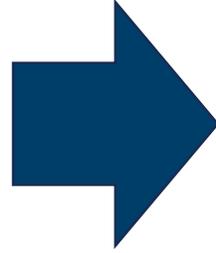
Open Space hours – Parks seeks to maintain consistent hours for practical access to our public lands. Fishers Canyon open space hours were slightly modified from standard park hours from 5am to 9pm, year-round (p70) but will not be changed from Dawn to Dusk

Ranger presence and enforcement – Plan guides assignment of Park Ranger point of contract, collaboration with CSPD for “Conservation Patrols”, explore efforts to add enforcement add enforcement authority to PRCS Rangers (p70-74)

- Acknowledge staffing resources are stretched thin across the Parks
- Parks has sufficient Ranger Staff to conduct operations at Fishers Canyon Open Space just as they do at all other open spaces

Claim: Master Plan omits several issues raised by homeowners

Counterpoint: Master plan covers a wide spectrum of concerns and mitigates when possible; not all concerns can be addressed or match specific individuals' requests or "demands"



Wildlife study and movement

- Conservation of wildlife and their habitat is a crucial role of master plan (p30-32)
- 66% of open space is natural preservation areas, promoting wildlife habitat and unimpacted areas of open space (p59,61).
- Fishers Canyon Trail seasonal closures and dog-restricted with adaptive management strategies in open space to favor natural resources over access (p58, 86-87)
- Site designs, trails plan and design guidelines were strategically planned to be in harmony with the natural setting (p58-59,71,74,76,86-87)

Stormwater Management

- This plan reflects an Open Space Master Plan, not a Development Plan or construction plan
- Finalized construction plans must comply with COS Development Engineering Review to ensure the 4-Step process is met regarding stormwater control ensuring compliance with current regulations and standards. All development, whether private or public, must meet City guidelines to be approved (Drainage Criteria Manual).
- Master Plan provides recommendations to incorporate best management practices for stormwater management at the trailhead (P72) and provides guidance on protecting Drainages and Water Quality (P84-85)

Claim: “Operation Plan” fails to set funding priorities and commitments for implementation

Counterpoint: Master plan provides vision on how Parks will improve and managed the property over the next 15-20 years.



- Plan established a phased approach for implementation based on available funding and external grant opportunities and awards
- Provides priorities for implementation to achieve sustainable public access while protecting resources (p97-99)

Site Improvement Specifics raised

- Fire hydrants – Consideration of hydrant based on protecting open space, CSFD operations during emergency and Colorado Springs Utilities engineering guidance (p78)
- Rapid response – This is part of FSFD and CSPD operations and is frequently reviewed but not part of master plan
- Wayfinding –Signage and visitor wayfinding will be incorporated into the open space. Sufficient infrastructure is planned to accommodate evacuation of the trailhead (p70, 72, 74)
- Master plan shows the vision of the enhancements and management of the open space for public access. More refined designs are completed during the construction phase (p72, 97-99)



Priorities focus on establishing sustainable public access with necessary infrastructure, monitoring and management (p97-103)

- High Priorities
- Medium Priorities
- Low Priorities
- Flexible to changing priorities and funding



2025/26 Projects

- Fuels Mitigation Project
- Project Funding Identification
- Trail Planning and Design
- Wildlife Monitoring/MSO Survey year 2
- Trailhead Planning and Design
- Visitor Amenities implementation
- Goal to provide public access

Estimated Implementation Costs

- Site Improvements [\$1,875,502]
- Parking Phase 1 – 69 stalls [\$3,320,000]
- Weed Management [\$106,800]
- Design, Engineering, Contingency [\$2,624,639]
- Total Estimate \$7,926,941

Claim: The plan fails to list Fire Marshal's recommendations

Counterpoint: The master plan provides recommendations related to wildfire resilient management strategies to reduce risk of catastrophic fires, sustain the natural areas and protect communities.



Management Related

- Collaboration with other agencies on fire mitigation, vegetation management, evacuation (p78-79)
- Explore opportunities for adding resource protection infrastructure, including but not limited to fire hydrants and sensors (technologies) (p78-79)
- Plan allows for proactive closure of open space at times of emergencies and/or weather-related concerns (extreme fire danger) (p71, 78)
- Additional forest health planning and adaptive management strategies to address changes, issues and use impacts (p78-81)

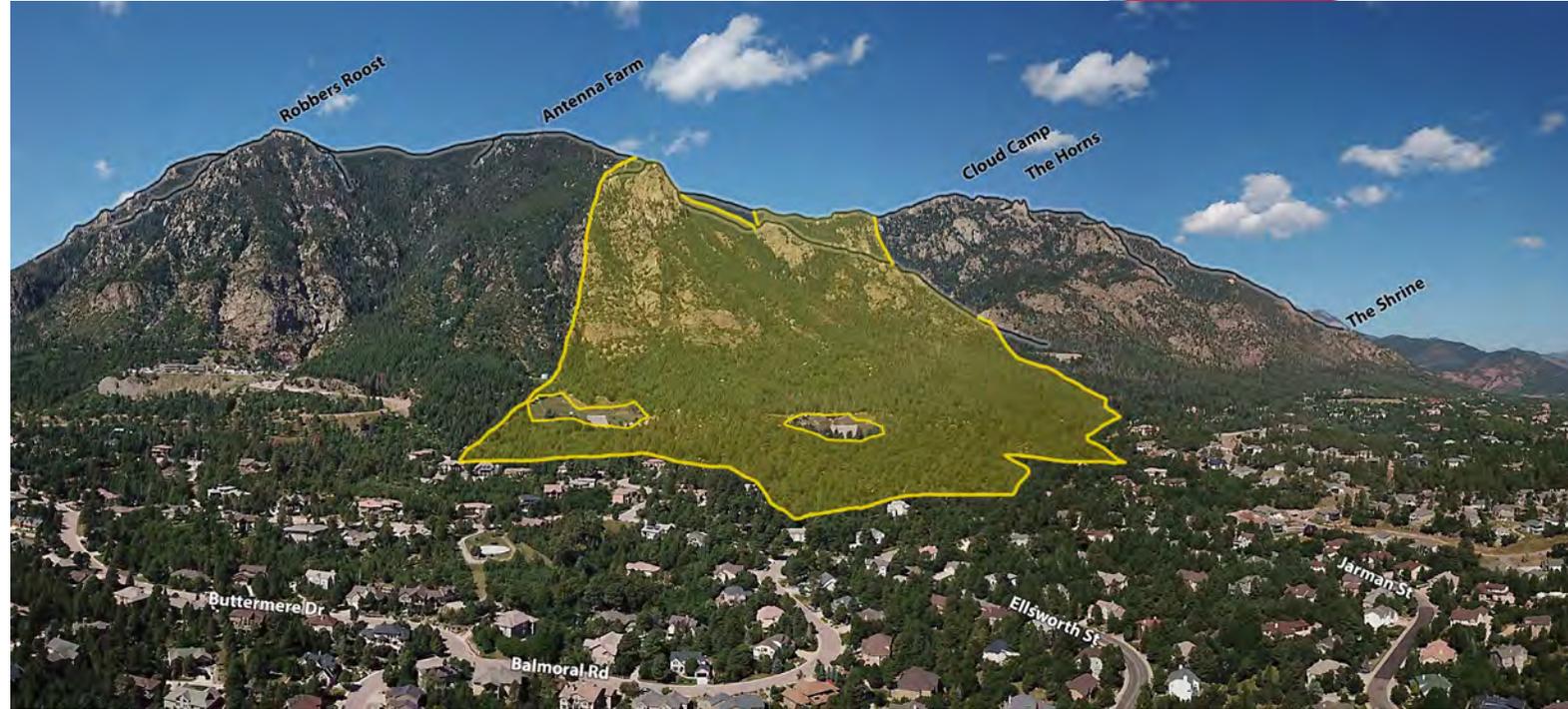
Site Improvements

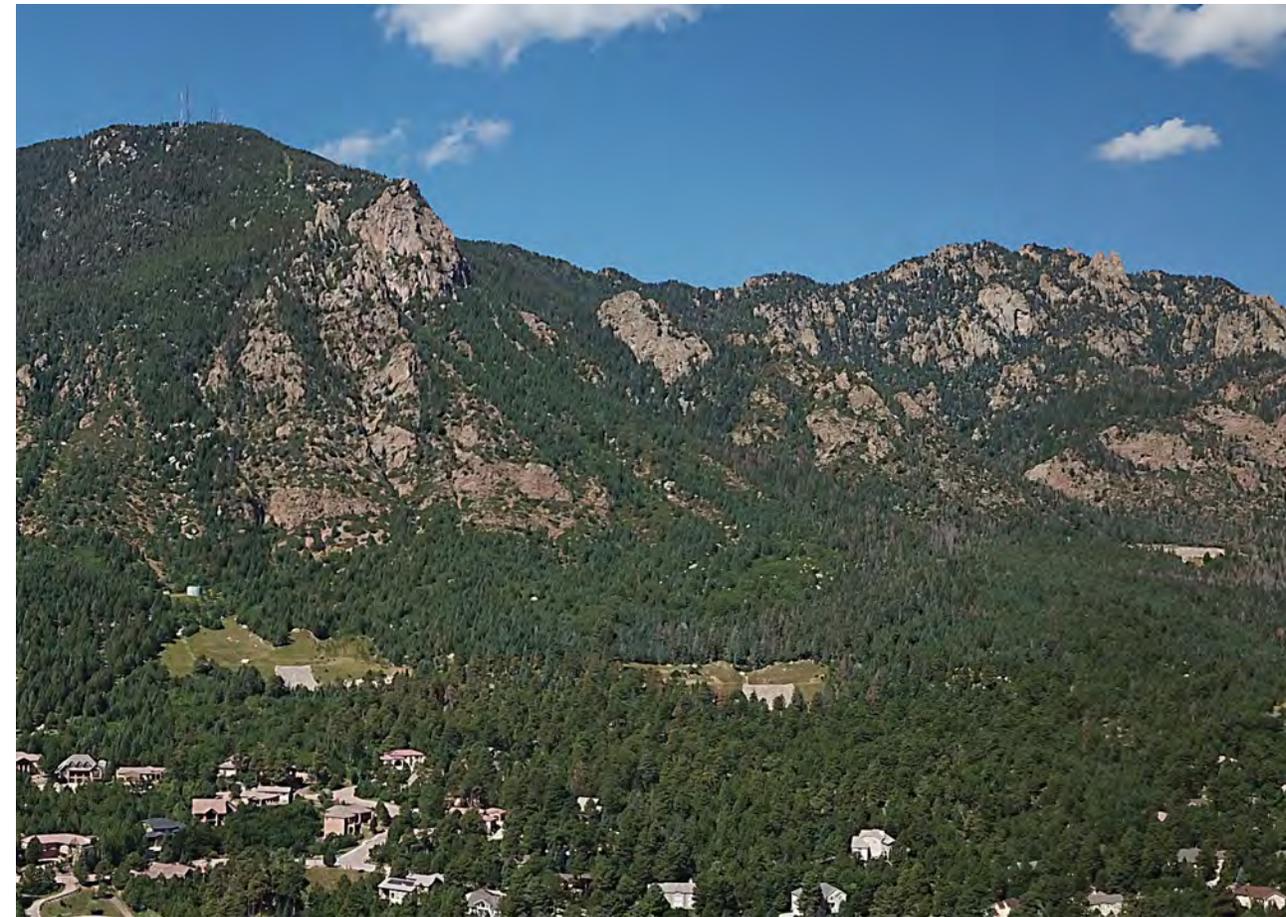
- Incorporate emergency access route along eastern portion of open space (existing 2-track)
- Establish sustainable trail system to improved access and possible fuels break (p74, 78)
- Enhance signage and education at trailheads (p70-72, 74)
- Ongoing Mitigation to reduce risk of catastrophic fires (p78-81)



FIRE DEPARTMENTS COMMENTS

- Public use of an open space – Pros and Cons for public access
- Open Space closures during emergencies
- Fire Hydrants and Fire/smoke Technologies within open space
- Tactics for Wildfire response and structure protection
- Preplanning for Emergencies
- Fuels Mitigation and Sharing the Responsibility
- Neighborhood Evacuation
- Mutual Aid for Fire Response (Local and State Response)





Pre-Mitigation 2021



Post-Mitigation 2024 – 89.5 Acres

MITIGATION





Completed Fire Mitigation

Completed Fire Mitigation

Before and after along eastern boundary



Pre-Mitigation 2021

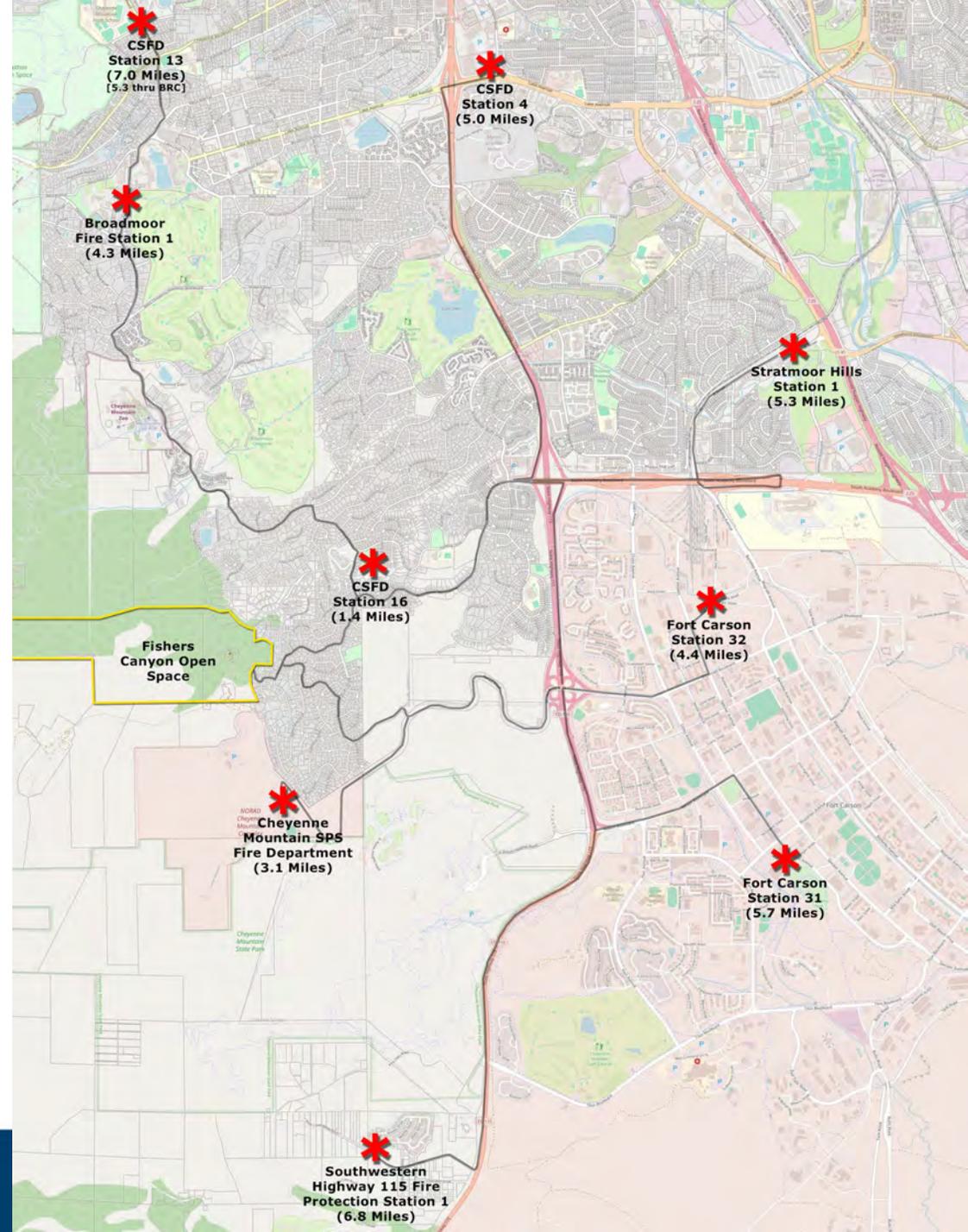
Post-Mitigation 2024

MITIGATION

Adjacent Fire Stations

- CSFD Station 16
- CSFD Station 4
- CSFD Station 13
- Broadmoor Fire Protection District (Station 1)
- Broadmoor Wildland Team
- CSU – Catamount Wildland Fire Team
- Cheyenne Mountain Fire and Emergency Services (Station 1 and Station 2)
- Fort Carson Fire and Emergency Services (Station 31 and 32)
- Stratmoor Hills Fire
- Southwestern Highway 115 Fire Protection

Other resources (State) can be ordered as needed and can include additional crews, equipment and aerial operations





Conclusion

Fishers Canyon Open Space Master and Management Plan



Staff Recommendation

- ❑ Staff recommends denial of the appeal
- ❑ Appeal does not present compelling grounds for reversal
- ❑ Plan provides broader public benefit
- ❑ Balances conservation, recreation, and neighborhood concerns responsibly
- ❑ Meets the review criteria of the 2014 Parks System Master Plan and the TOPS Ordinance
- ❑ Deny the appeal, thus upholding the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Advisory Board's adoption of the Fishers Canyon Open Space Master and Management Plan, based upon the findings that the Fishers Canyon Open Space Master and Management Plan meets the criteria for the 2014 Park System Master Plan and the purposes of the TOPS Ordinance set forth in City Code Section 4.6.101.





Thank You!

Fishers Canyon Open Space Master and Management Plan

