

Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services

PR&CS Administration, 1401 Recreation Way, Colorado Springs, CO 80905



Agenda TOPS Working Committee

Wednesday, December 6, 2023

7:30 a.m.

1401 Recreation Way

How to call in to the meeting for citizens:

Please dial +1 (720) 617-3426 Conference ID: 494 055 957#

How to comment:

- *For Citizen Discussion concerning items that are not on the agenda please email your comments to PRCS-TOPSWorkingCommittee-SMB@coloradosprings.gov in advance of the meeting.*
- *For Agenda Items - Before the meeting, those who wish to comment should submit their name, telephone number, and the topic or agenda item for comment to PRCS-TOPSWorkingCommittee-SMB@coloradosprings.gov. If you are a participant in Microsoft TEAMS please use the chat function to indicate you would like to comment. If you have joined the meeting via conference call, please listen for your opportunity to comment. You will be called upon to comment using the last four digits of your telephone number. Please limit your comment to three minutes.*

Agenda Preview

Board Chair

Announcements

Staff and Committee

Approval of Minutes

Committee

Citizen Discussion

Citizens

Action Items

Presentation Items

Bluestem Prairie Open Space Project
TOPS CIP Projects Update

Lonna Thelen
Lonna Thelen

Citizen Discussion

Citizens

Executive Session

Caitlin Moldenhauer

In accord with City Charter art. III, § 3-60(d) and its incorporated Colorado Open Meetings Act, C.R.S. § 24-6-402(4)(a), (b) and (e), the TOPS Working Committee, in Open Session, is to determine whether it will hold a Closed Executive Session. The issue to be discussed involves consultation with the City Attorney, discussing strategy for negotiations and instructing negotiators regarding future potential Parks real estate acquisitions.

The Chair shall poll the TOPS Working Committee members, and, upon consent of two-thirds of the members present,

may conduct a Closed Executive Session. In the event any Committee member is participating electronically or telephonically in the Closed Executive Session, each Committee member participating in the Closed Executive Session shall affirmatively state for the record that no other member of the public not authorized to participate in the Closed Executive Session is present or able to hear the matters discussed as part of the Closed Executive Session. If consent to the Closed Executive Session is not given, the item may be discussed in Open Session or withdrawn from consideration.

Adjournment

BLUESTEM PRAIRIE OPEN SPACE

Drainage Improvements



12/6/23

Lonna Thelen – TOPS Manager

SITE LOCATION

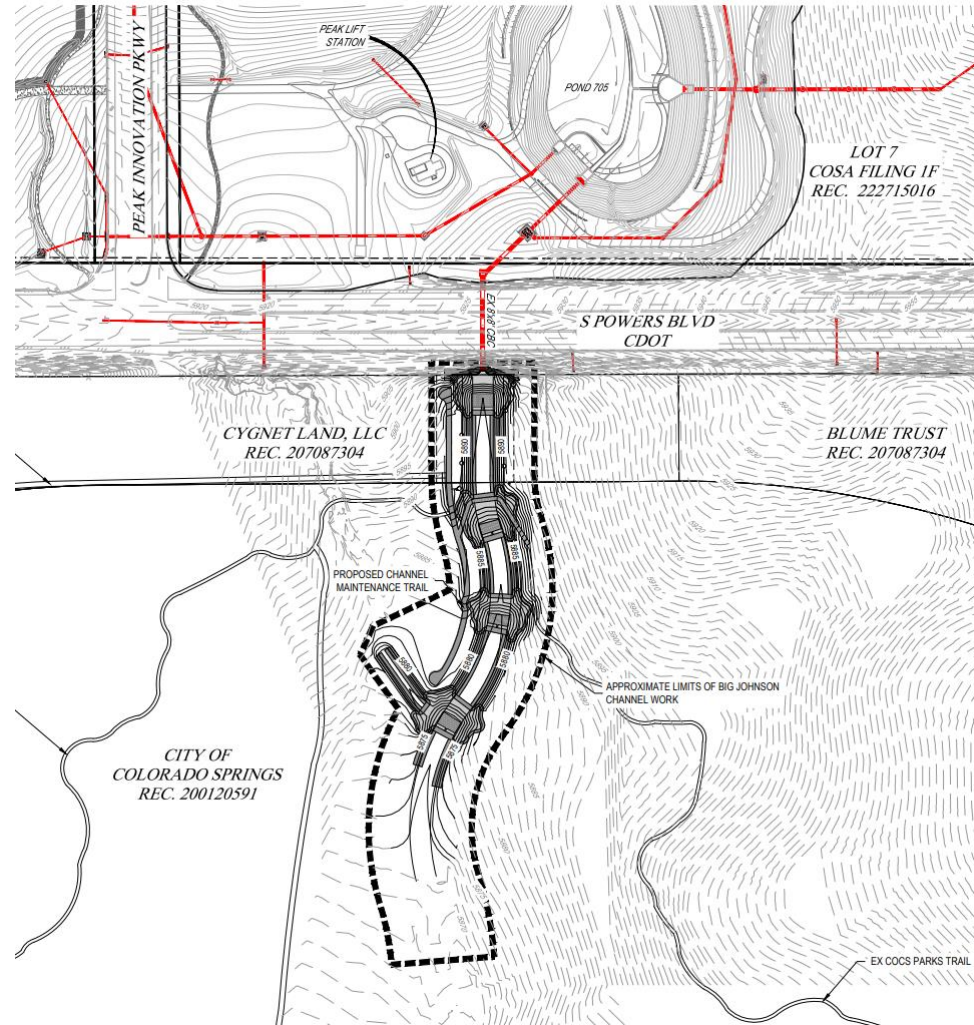


EXISTING CONDITIONS



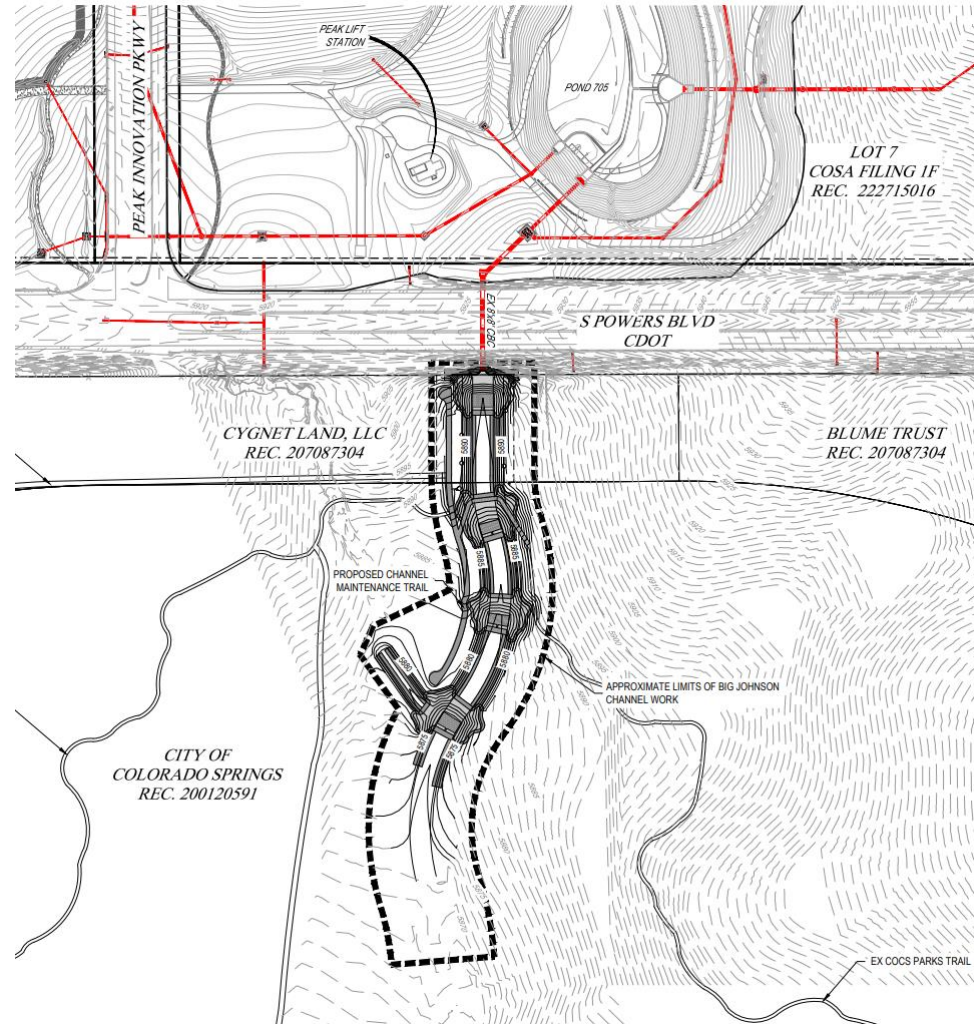
PROPOSAL

- Drainage improvements for the drainage channel.
- Re-grade and stabilize channel
- Create a flattened low slope
- Wider channel bottom
- Multiple sculpted concrete drop structures



REVIEW CONCERNS

- Preserve the resource
- Sculpted concrete drop structure to blend into surroundings
- Accommodate existing trail crossing
- Limited impact for construction and long term maintenance



PALMER LAND CONSERVANCY



- The property contains a conservation easement held by Palmer Land Conservancy
- Palmer Land Conservancy is supportive of the project to improve the existing drainage conditions.

QUESTIONS?



**COLORADO SPRINGS ADDRESS**

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Colorado Springs, CO 80903
719-632-3236

PUEBLO ADDRESS

121 W. City Center Dr, Ste 200D
Pueblo, CO 81003
719-941-9909

MAILING ADDRESS

P.O. Box 1281
Colorado Springs, CO 80901

November 27, 2023

Lonna Thelen, Parks Development and Design Manager
David Deitemeyer, Senior Landscape Architect
City of Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services
1401 Recreation Way
Colorado Springs, CO 80905

Dear Lonna and David:

Thank you for meeting with me on Tuesday, November 21, 2023. I write to convey Palmer Land Conservancy's discretionary approval of drainage improvements to the Bluestem Prairie Open Space that will be constructed under the authority of the Colorado Springs Airport. Palmer finds that these improvements are consistent with the Deed of Conservation Easement ("Easement") and the 2016 Bluestem Prairie Open Space Management Plan. Specifically, those improvements are to include:

- Construction of drainage stabilization structures along the main drainage in Bluestem Prairie Open Space and temporary bypass trail for Meadowlark Loop

The Airport's request for approval states that the intention is to protect and preserve the land by reducing the stormwater flows originating from the Colorado Springs Airport business park known as Peak Innovation Park. The Meadowlark Loop crosses this large drainage just south of Powers Boulevard, and the drainage is heavily incised. Palmer approved construction of the Meadowlark Loop in 2020, and the trail has been successful in attracting mountain bikers, hikers and equestrians to the Open Space and discouraging social and rogue trails. Two separate attempted crossings have washed out, one in May 2020 and the other in May 2023.

On June 28, 2023, Palmer staff visited the property to inspect the existing Meadowlark Loop and the new trail alignment with you. Due to the heavy rains that the Colorado Springs area experienced in May 2023, the drainage crossing was in bad shape with significant erosion. The crossing was nearly impassable due to the damage, much worse even than the photo you had previously provided to us. Several mountain bikers were observed using the Meadowlark Loop. The Meadowlark Loop would cross the drainage on one of the armored structures to be installed by the Airport, which will help prevent future erosion and washouts. The proposed trail will not be paved or otherwise covered by concrete, asphalt, or other paving material.

We understand that the City Parks Department has negotiated the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Airport. The MOU will require the Airport to maintain the drainage improvements and access the area for construction and maintenance with the minimum possible impact to the land. The MOU will also contain a dispute resolution clause that will enable the City to enforce it. Please provide us with a copy of the MOU for our records when it has been fully executed.



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We understand that the City staff has some concerns about a second area to the west of the proposed drainage improvements which might be impacted by development of the business park. Palmer will make a note of this concern and instruct our monitors to keep a close eye on this area during our annual monitoring visits. Please send us a shapefile of the area in question so that we can include it in our monitoring software.

We understand that the Airport will also be required to treat any noxious weeds introduced to the site through construction. The Airport will hire a revegetation contractor who will treat any noxious weeds and revegetate disturbed areas with an appropriate native seed mix.

The Meadowlark Loop is a popular biking trail and we understand that the City plans to provide a temporary bypass for the trail during construction of the drainage improvements. The City's intent is to limit the amount of time that the trails is closed to the maximum extent possible, and we find that such a temporary bypass would be consistent with the conservation and recreation values associated with the Bluestem Prairie Open Space.

Recreational trails are identified as one of the central conservation values protected by the Deed of Conservation Easement encumbering the Bluestem Prairie Open Space property. The Conservation Easement notes that the Bluestem property presents a unique opportunity to "provide the people with open space, to protect wildlife habitat, and to protect a grassland ecosystem." The March 2016 Bluestem Prairie Open Space Management Plan identifies the goal of managing trails and visitor use facilities to provide a high-quality recreation experience while protecting natural resource values. The Management Plan envisions the completion of trail maintenance and improvement projects to provide visitors with a clear and positive experience on designated trails. The property appears to be managed in accordance with an approved land management plan as required by the Easement. Palmer finds that the proposed drainage improvements and temporary bypass are "reasonably necessary for, and otherwise consistent with the management of the Property by the City for open space purposes in a manner which preserves and protects the Property's Conservation Values."

We understand that the Airport intends to seek the Trails, Open Space and Parks Working Committee's approval of the drainage improvements at its December 7 meeting, and then seek the Colorado Springs Park and Recreation and Cultural Services Advisory Board's approval at its December 14 meeting. The Airport will go before the Planning Commission and City Council early next year with construction slated to commence in the Spring. We find that this public process is consistent with the conservation values protected by the conservation easement encumbering the Open Space.

The Airport would be responsible for all costs of constructing and maintaining the drainage improvements in the future. The improvements are intended to benefit the Open Space's conservation and recreation values by addressing an existing problem. The Parks Department will avoid having to pay for some improvements to the Meadowlark Loop because the Airport will be paying for them and maintaining them. For these reasons, Palmer exercises



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its authority to approve the request to construct the drainage improvements at the Open Space and create a temporary bypass for the Meadowlark Loop in order to limit the amount of time the trail is closed due to construction.

Palmer Land Conservancy appreciates the opportunity to approve this win-win-win outcome for the Bluestem Prairie Open Space, the Parks Department and the Airport and is pleased to approve its implementation. Please let us know when the improvements have been approved by the other interested parties and construction is scheduled to commence. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Stephen D. Harris".

Stephen D. Harris
Land Stewardship Director

COLORADO SPRINGS PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

TOPS WORKING COMMITTEE

Date: December 6, 2023

Item Number: Presentation Item #1

Item Name: Bluestem Prairie Drainage Improvements

SUMMARY:

The City of Colorado Springs Airport is requesting approval to proceed with a proposed project to improve the drainage conditions for the downstream drainage channel southeast of Peak Innovation Parkway and Powers Boulevard. The Colorado Springs Airport Pond 705 is north of Powers Boulevard and connects to Bluestem Prairie Open Space via a downstream outlet culvert. The existing drainage channel south of Powers Boulevard in Bluestem Prairie Open Space has experienced severe erosion due to the lack of drainage infrastructure and channel stabilization. The City of Colorado Springs Airport proposes to improve the existing drainage infrastructure on the Bluestem Prairie Open Space to create a stabilized channel, this improvement includes a flattened low slope, wider channel bottom with soil riprap and multiple concrete drop structures.

BACKGROUND:

The existing Big Johnson Channel serves as the downstream drainage way for a large portion the Colorado Springs Airport Business Park. The channel is located between Powers Boulevard and Big Johnson Reservoir. The channel currently collects stormwater from an 8'x8' box culvert that runs under Powers Boulevard with no dissipation or stabilization. The lack of existing infrastructure to handle stormwater has caused erosion and cuts of six feet through the property and damaged the existing park trail system.

The subject parcel is 646.94 acres of land that was acquired with TOPS funds in 2000. The parcel consists of open space with a trail system. The existing drainage channel runs north to south where it eventually flattens out and opens to a spread-out drainageway before entering the Big Johnson Reservoir.

The current concern is erosion at the outfall of the box culvert is significant and if left alone it will worsen without improvements to stabilize this area. Recently, the channel has experienced cuts of four to six feet approximately 900' downstream of the culvert. The cuts will continue to erode and migrate due to the sandy soils in this area if not addressed.

The Peak Innovation Park is currently developing upstream of the existing drainage channel. Pond 705 is a part of the Peak Innovation Park COSA Filing 1F, Lot 7 and is currently under development. The pond was designed to capture and treat stormwater from future development in Peak Innovation Park in this drainage basin. The new pond will release stormwater through the existing 8'x8' box culvert at an equal or lesser rate than historic conditions.

To ensure a stable drainage channel on the Bluestem Prairie Open Space the City of Colorado Springs Airport is proposing to improve the drainage channel. The proposed improvements include re-grading the existing channel downstream of the City of Colorado Springs Airport to a full width low slope constructed channel lined with soil riprap and four full width sculpted concrete drop structures vegetated to reduce future erosion potential. Per Chapter 12, Section 1.6.2.2 and Table 12-1 of the Colorado Springs Drainage Criteria Manual, a constructed channel is to provide flood flow conveyance and shall be used when upstream drainage basins have already been

significantly altered or are expected to be in the future and should utilize revegetation with stabilized linings and full width drop structures. In addition to the proposed drainage improvements, maintenance access will be required along the stabilized channel for access and maintenance to be completed following completion of construction. The maintenance access will be provided by a combination of the existing park trail system and the proposed trails associated with the channel improvements along the west side of channel. Access will be controlled and minimal to ensure limited disruption of the open space.

During the initial planning phases of the project the staff made recommendations to enhance the natural aesthetics and improve the open space trail system connectivity by including the use of sculpted concrete for all drop structures and creating a trail crossing of the channel over the top of one of the drop structures. Both recommendations were followed as the drop structures have been changed from boulder drop structures to be sculpted concrete and trail improvements have been proposed in addition to providing a channel crossing over the top of one of the drop structures.

The Bluestem Prairie Open Space has a conservation easement held by the Palmer Land Conservancy. Staff coordinated the review of the proposed drainage improvements with the Palmer Land Conservancy to ensure that their conservation principles were met with the improvements. A letter has been provided from the Palmer Land Conservancy and is included as Exhibit A.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The City of Colorado Springs Airport through Peak Metro District Number 2 will provide the funds necessary to design, permit and construct the proposed improvements.

BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

ALTERNATIVE:

Deny the request for drainage improvements, on the 646.94-acre TOPS Open Space parcel in Bluestem Open Space.

RECOMMENDATION:

Approval of the City of Colorado Springs Airport's request for improvements to the drainage infrastructure on the 646.94-acre Bluestem Prairie Open Space TOPS property. The proposed improvements include re-grading the existing channel downstream of the City of Colorado Springs Airport to a full width low slope constructed channel lined with soil riprap and four full width sculpted concrete drop structures vegetated to reduce future erosion potential.

PROPOSED MOTION:

Approval of the City of Colorado Springs Airport's request for improvements to the drainage infrastructure on the 646.94-acre Bluestem Prairie Open Space TOPS property. The proposed improvements include re-grading the existing channel downstream of the City of Colorado Springs Airport to a full width low slope constructed channel lined with soil riprap and four full width sculpted concrete drop structures vegetated to reduce future erosion potential.

Attachments:

Power Point Presentation

2023 TOPS CIP PROJECT UPDATE



12/6/23

Lonna Thelen – TOPS Manager

2023 TOPS TRAILS, PARKS AND OPEN SPACE



2023 TOPS TRAILS



Proposed Trails Category CIP Project List	
Chamberlain Trail	\$ 250,000
Greenways @ Sand Creek Park Bridge	\$ 250,000
Legacy Loop-South Railroad Bridge Replacement	\$ 1,800,000
Total Proposed 2023 Trails CIP Projects	\$ 2,300,000

CHAMBERLIN TRAIL



- ❖ Project overview – Focus area
Cheyenne Canyon to Fisher’s Canyon
Open Space and portions of Upper
Skyway Chamberlin Trail.
- ❖ Project cost - \$250,000
- ❖ Project status –
 - ❖ 2023 work included feasibility
study to mark boundary lines and
prepare for design from Fisher’s
Canyon through Broadmoor
easement.
 - ❖ 2024 goal to leverage existing
funds with grants and other
options to prepare for future
construction.

GREENWAYS AT SANDCREEK BRIDGE



- ❖ Project overview – Bridge design and purchase for Sand Creek.
- ❖ Project cost - \$250,000
- ❖ Project status –
 - ❖ Bridge is currently in design
 - ❖ Bid for installation to go out in early 2024

LEGACY LOOP RAILROAD BRIDGE REPLACEMENT



- ❖ Project overview – \$1.8 million in parks contribution toward federal grant in conjunction with Public Works to replace 3 railroad bridges – Nevada, Tejon and Shooks Run. Shooks Run included a trail underpass.
- ❖ Project cost - \$1.8 million
- ❖ Project status –
 - ❖ Grant application was unsuccessful.
 - ❖ Next steps - consider other alternatives to complete the Legacy Loop trail connection through grants and/or partnerships.

2023 TOPS PARKS



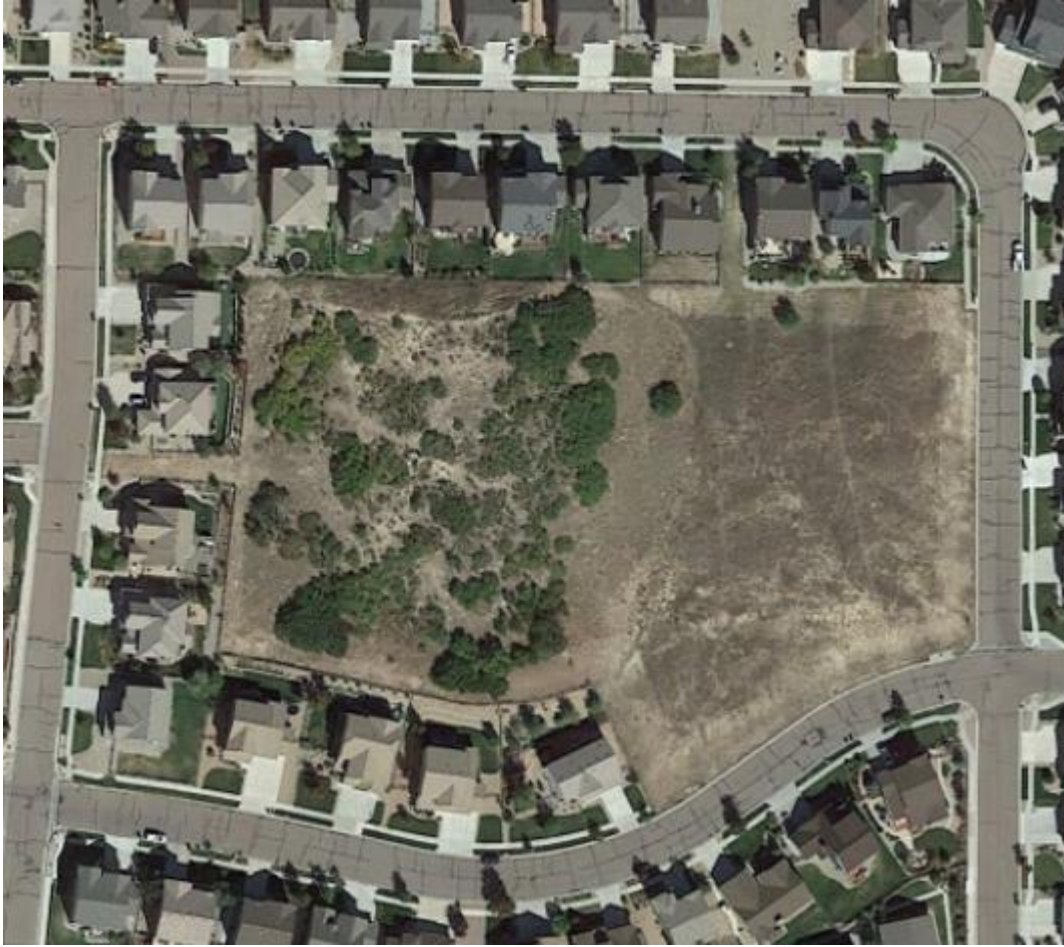
Parks CIP Projects	
Boulder Park Landscaping	\$ 30,000
Grey Hawk Park Master Plan	\$ 200,000
Memorial Park Irrigation-West Prospect Lake	\$ 200,000
Oak Meadows Park Playground Replacement	\$ 200,000
Total Parks CIP Projects	\$ 800,000

BOULDER PARK LANDSCAPE



- ❖ Project overview – new plantings in beds around sport court and addition of 5 trees through Forestry. Updated irrigation, re-seeding and mulch.
- ❖ Project cost - \$30,000
- ❖ Project status - Completed in 2023.

GREYHAWK PARK MASTER PLAN



- ❖ Project overview – 2023 Master Planning Process for new park.
- ❖ Project cost - \$200,000
- ❖ Project status –
 - ❖ Public outreach to neighborhood including two public meetings and one future public meeting
 - ❖ finalizing details of design and final neighborhood meeting.
 - ❖ Presentation to TOPS planned for early 2024.
 - ❖ Preparation of final design and construction documents in spring of 2024.

MEMORIAL PARK IRRIGATION



- ❖ Project overview – new irrigation system and native grasses planting including a reduction of turf
- ❖ Project cost - \$200,000
- ❖ Project status - Completed in 2023.

OAK MEADOWS PLAYGROUND

- ❖ Project overview – replace 20-year-old playgrounds
- ❖ Project cost - \$200,000
- ❖ Project status –
 - ❖ Playground vendor is under contract and staff has partnered with ADA for a parking lot fix and accessible route.
 - ❖ Final coordination with the neighborhood to determine fund raising amounts for additional play features finalizing early 2024
 - ❖ Early 2024 order playground equipment and install by summer 2024



2023 TOPS OPEN SPACE



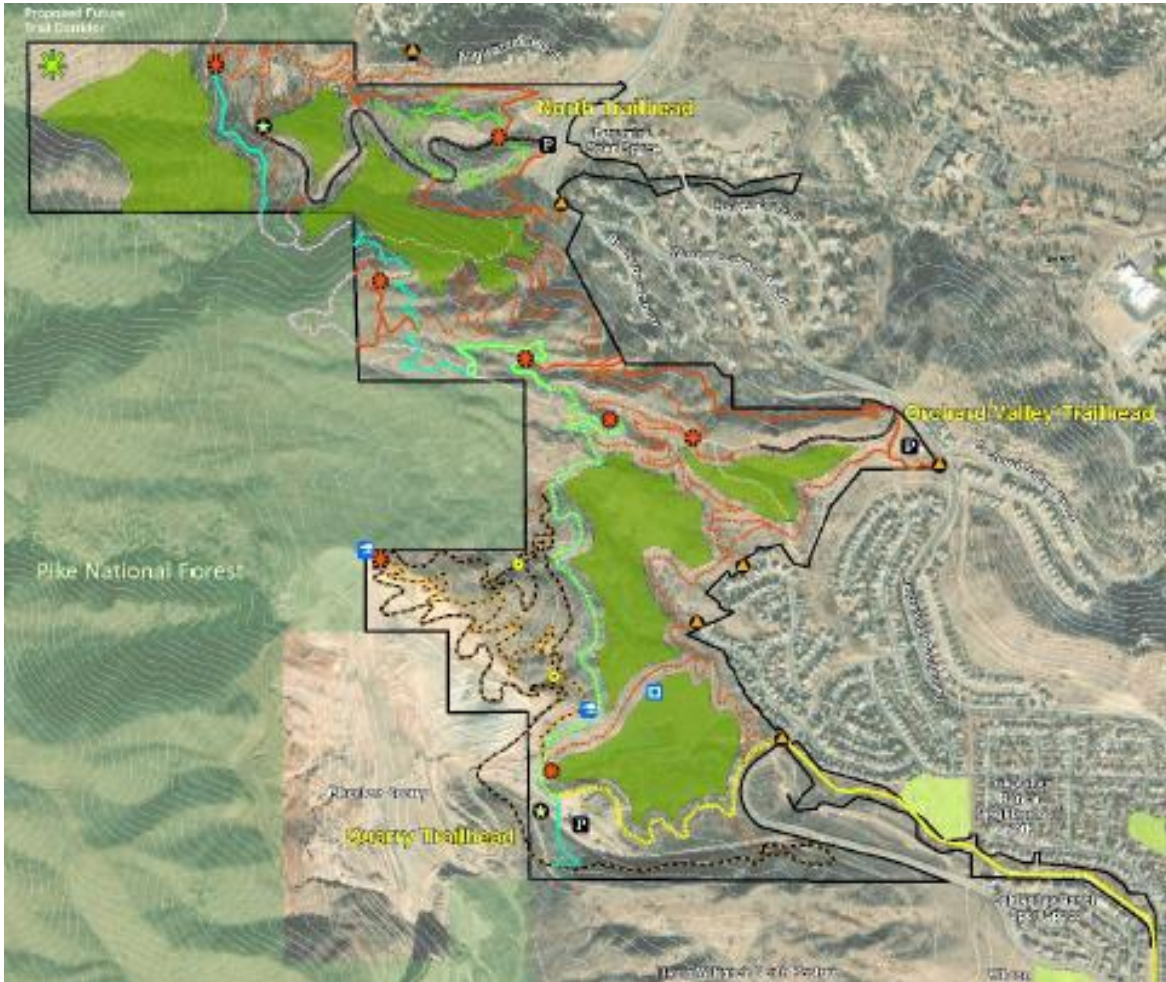
Open Space CIP Projects	
Black Canyon Open Space Snyder Quarry Reclamation	\$ 450,000
Blodgett/Pikeview Open Space Master & Management Plan	\$ 250,000
Corral Bluffs Open Space Cultural Study	\$ 100,000
Total Open Space Projects	\$ 800,000

BLACK CANYON OPEN SPACE



- ❖ Project overview – commencement of reclamation of quarry in Black Canyon Open Space
- ❖ Project cost - \$450,000
- ❖ Project status –
 - ❖ Contracted with engineer for production of drawings to finalize calculations of quantities for bids
 - ❖ On-site work to begin in 2024

BLODGETT OPEN SPACE MASTER PLAN



- ❖ Project overview – Open Space Master Plan
- ❖ Project cost - \$250,000
- ❖ Project status –
 - ❖ Robust public process
 - ❖ Final review of documents in December and January
 - ❖ Review by TOPS Working Committee March & April 2024

CORRAL BLUFFS OPEN SPACE CULTURAL STUDY



- ❖ Project overview – Open Space Cultural Study to identify cultural resources
- ❖ Project cost - \$100,000
- ❖ Project status –
 - ❖ Cultural study has been completed
 - ❖ Identification of 53 cultural resources onsite including 15 eligible resources
 - ❖ Study outlines indigenous cultures that used the land and historic sites.
 - ❖ This study will be used as a guide for future studies.

QUESTIONS?

