

Laredo Elementary Outdoor Classroom & Crossing

Joint Project Application

City of Aurora

Ms. Nicole Ankeney

15151 E. Alameda Pkwy. Ste. 3600
Aurora, CO 80012

nankeney@auroragov.org
O: 303-326-8947

Application Form

Application Summary

Grant Category*

Select One:

Joint Project

Primary Contact Information*

Please provide information for the primary contact for this project in the following format.

Agency:

Name:

Title:

Telephone:

Email:

City of Aurora Parks, Recreation & Open Space Department

Curtis Bish

Principal Planner

303-739-7131

cbish@auroragov.org

Project Type*

Select One:

- **Trail Project:** Trail/trailhead construction or improvement, including stream/road crossings and trailhead amenities (such as parking, restrooms or shelters)
- **Site Improvement Project:** New construction, improvement, repair, or replacement of passive outdoor recreation amenities
- **Acquisition Project:** Eligible projects include fee simple acquisition of land for public open space or trails; acquisition of buffer land; acquisition of a conservation easement; and/or acquisition of water rights
- **Other Project:** Other allowable projects include stream/habitat restoration, natural re-vegetation, and water quality improvement

Site Improvement Project

Project Title*

Laredo Elementary Outdoor Classroom & Crossing

Project Address

High Line Canal east of Laredo Street

Project Location*

Select all that apply:

Aurora

GPS Coordinates (Latitude in Decimal Degrees)*

Example: Dove Valley Regional Park

Latitude: 39.577303

39.736579

GPS Coordinates (Longitude in Decimal Degrees)*

Example: Dove Valley Regional Park

Longitude: -104.828850

-104.798010

Grant Request Amount*

\$270,000.00

Cash Match Amount*

\$270,000.00

Total Project Amount*

Total project amount includes grant request and cash match only. Please do not include in-kind match.

\$540,000.00

Cash Match Percentage*

Calculate cash match as % of total project cost.

50

Project Partners

List partner agencies if applicable.

High Line Canal Conservancy

Executive Summary*

Highlight key points of your proposal, such as project description, components, deliverables, need, goals, beneficiaries, planning, etc.

The City of Aurora has partnered with the High Line Canal Conservancy, Arapahoe County Open Spaces and all of the jurisdictions along the High Line Canal to plan for the Canal's future as a recreational and ecological resources. The result, the Plan for the High Line Canal (The Plan), has identified and prioritized projects that will enhance the user experience on the trail through improved access, awareness connectivity and activation. The Plan prioritizes improvements in Aurora and Northeast Denver where the Canal connects diverse communities and is still significantly underutilized compared to other reaches of the trail. This project will implement community priorities from the Plan in Aurora, establishing outdoor classroom space that will also serve as a pause place for trail users. The project will improve access from the neighborhood, enhance the natural resources and add seating, wayfinding and interpretive signage.

After completing a community-centered design process in 2023 to develop the plan for improvements in this area, the High Line Canal Conservancy (Conservancy) successfully procured funding from Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) focused on improvements in north Aurora that activate the trail and connect communities to nature. The neighborhoods along the Canal in north Aurora are 40% Latino, 20% African American and 5% percent Asian American. The median household income in these areas is \$41,000 per year, less than half of the median household income of the Denver Metro Area as a whole. The City of Aurora's and the Conservancy's interest, with support from The Colorado Health Foundation, is in removing barriers to using the trail for recreation and positioning the Canal as a catalyst of community health. Aurora PROS is requesting funds from ACOS to match these private funds raised by the Conservancy to implement these critical projects and invest in these north Aurora neighborhoods.

This project will have several key deliverables: establishing an outdoor classroom with a shade structure and seating that will connect students at Laredo Elementary School to the Canal and the outdoors. A path will be added, separating users from the regional trail. Replacing the existing, aging, pedestrian bridge will improve access and accessibility to the Canal from the neighborhood. Natural resource restoration will focus on planting along the Canal, adding shade for trail users and habitat for wildlife. Seating will improve user comfort and accessibility while connecting trail users to the natural open space. The series of signs will provide wayfinding and interpretive information to neighborhood residents and trail users. The goals of the project are to increase use of the trail through improved access and awareness while improving safety, community health and the ecological health of the Canal.

Authorized Signature

Certification and Authorized Signature Form*

Please attach completed Certification and Authorized Signature Form as a PDF document. Form must be signed by highest authority in agency or authorized individual. *Staff will email you the form.*

Please name your file as follows: *Applicant_CertificationandAuthorizedSignatureForm.pdf*

SIGNED Laredo_Certification and Authorized Signature Form.pdf

Project Timeline

Project Timeline Form*

Please attach completed Project Timeline Form as a PDF document. *Staff will email you the form.*

Please name your file as follows: *Applicant_TimelineForm.pdf*

Aurora PROS Laredo Timeline Form.pdf

Project Budget

Budget Forms*

Please attach completed Summary Budget Form and Detailed Expense Budget Form as a single PDF document. *Staff will email you the form.*

Please name your file as follows: *Applicant_BudgetForms.pdf*

AuroraPROS Laredo BudgetForm.pdf

Project Narrative

Question 1*

Describe the project goals, scope, expected results, and deliverables. Discuss the current condition of the project site and what improvements, if any, are proposed and why. Discuss how this project preserves open space, improves access to the outdoors, creates connectivity, and/or provides educational opportunities.

The goals of the project are to increase use of the trail through improved access and awareness, improve community health and enhance the ecological health of the Canal. This project will have several key deliverables, all of which are prioritized in The Plan: an outdoor classroom with a shade structure and seating that will connect students at Laredo Elementary School to the Canal. A soft surface path will be added, enhancing connectivity to the school and separating trail users from the regional trail. Replacing the pedestrian bridge will improve access and accessibility to the Canal from the neighborhood. Natural resource restoration will focus on shrub and tree planting along the Canal, adding shade for trail users and habitat for wildlife. Seating will improve user comfort and accessibility while connecting trail users to the natural open space. The series of signs will provide wayfinding and interpretive information to neighborhood residents, implementing a portion of the Canal-wide sign package. The goals of the project are to increase use of the trail through improved access and awareness while improving community health and the ecological health of the Canal.

The current pedestrian bridge in this location is unsafe and not universally accessible, creating a barrier for neighborhood residents to safely access the Canal and the elementary school. Replacing this pedestrian bridge with a land crossing will advance equitable access while piloting a new approach to accessible access

points that will be less expensive than a traditional pedestrian bridge and establish important precedent for the City of Aurora. Planting around the project site will improve the user experience along the Canal while supporting the ecological health of the corridor. Interpretive signage will create educational opportunities for trail users, connecting the community to the unique history of the Canal and the natural environment.

Question 2*

Describe the community/neighborhood and user groups the project will serve. Discuss the type of users (children, families, seniors, etc.), and estimate the number of users that will benefit annually. How did you arrive at this estimate? *Include up to five community support letters in the Attachments section. Support letters should come from users, working groups, community members, volunteers, schools, etc. Letters should be dated within the last six months.*

The north Aurora neighborhoods along the Canal are predominantly Latino and African American and the project will actively work to engage these communities in enhancing and activating the Canal. There are two schools in the neighborhood where this project site is located that serve low-income, diverse populations that are representative of their neighborhood. Hinkley High School has a rate of 72.4% free and reduced lunch and 94% of students are non-white. Laredo Elementary school has a rate of 84.9% free and reduced lunch and 91% of students are non-white. Engagement with these schools has been a critical component of the Conservancy's community engagement that has sought to empower the community and ensure a feeling of ownership in the neighborhood for the Canal. Moving these projects into implementation is critical to ensure that the community members who have been involved in public engagement processes can see these improvements come to life. Access improvements will create valuable opportunities to provide safe routes to school and partnerships with these educational institutions will be essential to catalyzing use of the Canal. There are other indicators of barriers to accessing health and wellness resources in this community as 20% of neighbors speak English less than very well and 22.6% do not have a high school diploma.

User counts performed by the Conservancy in north Aurora have recorded just 3-12 users per hour, though anecdotally these numbers increase before and after school. For comparison, user counts in the Canal's southern suburbs have consistently recorded 50-100 users per hour during peak use. Based on these user counts, assuming the average 7.5 users per hour in the neighborhood and extrapolating for the year, 32,850 total users would benefit from awareness and activation improvements in north Aurora. The Laredo Highline neighborhood is home to more than 6,300 residents living in over 2,200 households and these neighborhood residents will experience the greatest benefit.

Question 3*

Discuss the need and urgency for this project and why it is a priority. Was the project prioritized in a master plan or other planning document (including County Comprehensive Plan, County Open Space Master Plan, etc.), an independent community planning process, a working group, etc.? Is this part of a larger phased project? What opportunities will be lost if this project is not funded now?

This project was identified and prioritized in The Plan for the High Line Canal, a plan that has been endorsed by Aurora, Arapahoe County and the Conservancy. The project was requested by local community members during a robust outreach process that informed both the High Line Canal Community Vision Plan (Vision Plan) and The Plan for the High Line Canal (The Plan). The Plan recommends significant investment in diverse communities along the trail, prioritizing Denver and Aurora for a large proportion of enhancements. The Canal is underutilized in these communities and will require investments to reach its full potential as a recreational resource. The designs that have been developed were cocreated with community members through robust community engagement efforts in 2023 and the community is eager to see these improvements come to life.

The Plan recommends a series of Community Activation Zones, areas of the Canal where investments are needed to increase use of the trail as a community resource and catalyst for improved community health. The Plan states the goal of Community Activation Zones as: Increase health, wellness and active uses by providing activation through the addition of nature play, gathering spaces, exercise stations or other activation types as identified in the Design Guidelines. Neighborhoods for these zones are called out explicitly in The Plan and focus on low-income and diverse communities where the Canal is underutilized. These investments will improve the user experience along the Canal and have the potential to improve community health in some of the most diverse communities in the region. The Conservancy's design process was supported by a private foundation and their share of implementation funds have been secured from GOCO, leveraging philanthropy to enhance the Canal in the Northeast.

This investment would represent one of the first efforts to construct community-informed improvements since completion of The Plan. If this project is not funded now, it will stymie momentum in achieving the level of investment in Aurora that is recommended in The Plan. Implementing all of the recommendations in The Plan in Aurora will require significant support from private sources, Arapahoe County Open Spaces and federal funding for transportation improvements. Demonstrating success will help the Conservancy continue to raise funds and show members of the community that progress is being made. These improvements will be further leveraged by the development of an underpass at the Canal's western crossing of Colfax. This \$12M project, funded with federal dollars in addition to matching funds from Arapahoe County and Adams County, will provide a critical connection for trail users to connect along the Canal in north Aurora and utilize these improvement zones.

Question 4*

Summarize any planning completed prior to submitting this Joint Project proposal. Is design and engineering complete? Does the project necessitate a zoning change? List any permits that need to be obtained and status of obtaining those permits (Federal 404, County or City, Storm Water Drainage, etc.).

The master plan for these projects was developed in 2023 through a community-centered design process. Since that time, the Conservancy and Aurora PROS have progressed designs to 95% and the plans have gone through two reviews with the City of Aurora, Arapahoe County and Denver Water. The plans have been submitted to the City of Aurora AMANDA review process to progress through their review before Aurora can put the projects out to bid and start construction. The final approval for the project will come from Arapahoe County and Denver Water who will grant a license for these improvements that approve the plans and formalize Aurora PROS commitment to maintenance. The consultant team is working through final comments with reviewers and are confident that all issues will be resolved.

Question 5*

Describe the timeframe needed to complete the project. Discuss the agency's capacity to complete the project, including project management, resources, and experience implementing similar projects.

The goal is to complete this project by the third quarter of 2027. The City of Aurora will be responsible for putting the project out to bid and hiring a construction contractor. The Conservancy will support project management in three ways: staff time dedicated by the Conservancy's Project Manager, a construction administration contract with the landscape architecture firm that has developed the plans and an outside project management firm that will be hired by the Conservancy to support Aurora PROS with construction oversight and administration. Aurora PROS has extensive experience completing park and trail improvements and the Conservancy's Project Manager and Chief Operating Officer have extensive experience overseeing construction projects in other capacities.

The Conservancy will also be responsible for the development of interpretive sign content as well as the fabrication and installation of interpretive signs. The Conservancy has engaged a consultant team to complete a Canal-wide Interpretive Plan and this team will develop interpretive signage for this site within this Canal-wide effort.

Question 6*

Summarize any efforts to obtain public input, disseminate information to the public, develop partnerships, and garner community support for this project. List the stakeholders that are involved. Discuss any known or anticipated opposition to this project and how this will be addressed. *Include letters, petitions, news articles, or other documents evidencing opposition in the Attachments section.*

The development of The Plan for the High Line Canal included engagement with over 5,000 residents across the region, providing far-reaching input about ways to enhance the Canal. Aurora PROS partnered with Arapahoe County Open Spaces and the High Line Canal Conservancy to develop both the Community Vision Plan and The Plan. Improved access to the Canal as one of the most important themes in The Plan and the Northeast reaches of the Canal highly prioritized activation and amenities.

Since 2019, the Conservancy piloted a collaborative and community-centered approach to engagement that, in recent years, has been replicated across the Northeast to cultivate meaningful involvement of local youth and their families, community leaders, and partner organizations that represent the diverse populations of the Northeast. Deep community engagement through the community-centered design approach ensures that all communities along the Canal engage in and co-lead the design of trail enhancements by establishing a community feedback structure that cultivates local leadership and decision-making.

Public engagement for the Laredo Elementary site improvements has occurred at two scales: a comprehensive effort across the northeast reach of the High Line Canal and site-specific engagement tied to the Laredo Highline neighborhood.

Overall Engagement

Outreach efforts for the Conservancy's GOCO-funded north Aurora initiative have reached over 55,000 people via postcards, social media, newsletters, and other channels. Formal feedback was received from more than 770 individuals through surveys and polls, and 305 people were engaged in person at community events. A wide range of inclusive tactics were used to gather feedback and build support, including:

- Community events such as public walks, nature play days, pop-ups, and ice cream socials
- Tabling along the Canal trail and at community events
- Surveys (physical and digital)
- On-trail signage linking to survey questions
- Public input walks
- Neighborhood canvassing and flyering
- Postcard mailings
- Guidance from the Northeast Advisory Committee

Partners have included local schools (specifically, Laredo Elementary School), libraries, rec centers, and places of worship, as well as organizations including Environmental Learning for Kids, Girl Trek, Groundwork Denver, Metro Denver Nature Alliance, Outdoor Afro, Promotores Verdes, Sand Creek Greenway, Spirit of the Sun, YES Coalition, and Mile High Youth Corps.

Feedback showed significant support for Canal improvements, especially for shade, seating, and safer access—top priorities in the Laredo Highline neighborhood.

Laredo Elementary Site-Specific Engagement

Engagement around the Laredo Elementary Site Improvements has been extensive and sustained across multiple years, deepening relationships with the school community, neighborhood families, and educators while ensuring that the design reflects community priorities. This site represents one of the most impactful opportunities for connecting young people and families to the Canal through both physical improvements and long-term engagement. Highlights of engagement efforts since 2019 are listed below:

- In 2019, the Conservancy partnered with the Aurora Nature Center, a local artist, and the library to host a family-friendly event featuring a “story walk” along the Canal near Laredo Elementary.
- Conservancy staff tabled at parent-teacher conference nights, holding direct conversations with teachers and staff about how they use the trail with students.
- Hosted the Laredo Highline Public Input Walk, where families and neighbors shared priorities specific to the Laredo site.
- Held well-attended ice cream socials at the school to gather informal input and raise awareness about the Canal improvements.
- Parent meetings and one-on-one conversations with school leadership provided input on access and safety priorities.
- The Conservancy now serves on the Aurora Public Schools Design Advisory Group for Laredo’s upcoming school redevelopment, ensuring the Canal and open space improvements align with school plans.
- In 2025, NE Committee members engaged with 3rd and 4th graders to contribute to a nearby art project along the Canal.

This consistent, multi-year engagement effort—combined with deep partnerships with school staff—has generated strong enthusiasm and ownership among stakeholders. The design reflects input from both families and educators, with no known opposition to the proposed improvements.

Question 7*

How much of your planned cash match is secured? If applicable, what are your plans for raising additional funds? Describe cash and in-kind match partnerships established for the project. Explain if partnerships were not possible or necessary for this project. *Include partner support letters in the Attachments section and include match from partners on the Budget Forms. Joint Project recipients are responsible for project cost overruns.*

All matching funds have been secured from the Conservancy’s GOCO grant, including construction funding, interpretive signage design, fabrication and installation as well as funding for contracted construction oversight and construction administration. The Conservancy’s GOCO grant will also support Conservancy staff time and project management being contributed to the project in-kind. The Conservancy has also invested significant funds raised from a private foundation in staff time to manage the design and community engagement process as well as design costs associated with advancing the designs to 95%.

Question 8*

Describe any scenic, historic, or cultural values associated with the project site. Will they be preserved or restored? Discuss specific natural resources at the site (including habitat, water, wildlife, and vegetation) and impacts to these resources as a result of this project. If applicable, discuss environmental sustainability benefits of this project (such as energy or water conservation, water quality improvement, etc.).

The High Line Canal has significant historic value as a remnant of Aurora’s agricultural heritage. The project will preserve the historic High Line Canal channel while providing opportunities to educate the local community about the Canal’s history and its importance to the growth of Aurora. The Canal also forms important habitat for wildlife and vegetation, providing a green spine for animals to move throughout the city. Natural resource restoration will enhance habitat for birds, insects, and small mammals while installation of a side path will limit the disruption of vegetation in the Canal channel.

Question 9*

Discuss ownership and legal access at the proposed project site. Detail any third-party rights, easements, or other encumbrances that exist.

Arapahoe County owns this portion of the High Line Canal and, jointly with Denver Water, will need to license these improvements. Maintenance of the trail corridor will be performed by Aurora PROS through a recreational lease agreement. PROS has also committed to maintenance of the new improvements through a funding agreement with the Conservancy. Access to the site will be coordinated with Arapahoe County and Denver Water.

Question 10*

Describe long-term plans for maintaining the project. Who will be responsible for maintenance? Estimate annual costs to maintain the site, and explain how maintaining this project site affects your agency's budget.

Aurora PROS will be responsible for maintenance of the site improvements and the Conservancy will be responsible for maintaining signage and benches. The site improvements maintenance cost will be considered and included in the annual operating budget. The Conservancy estimates that bench and sign maintenance will cost approximately \$200 per year for inspection and graffiti removal. These signs are a part of a significant sign package being installed across the Canal and represent a small percentage of the overall sign package implementation.

Question 11*

If applicable, describe how this project will address inclusivity per Americans with Disabilities Act guidelines.

Aurora PROS is committed to universal design and ensuring that site improvements are inclusive of people of all abilities. The High Line Canal can be a great resource for people of varied abilities, as the trail has very little slope and the concrete path provides a high level of accessibility. Additional site amenities, such as natural elements, signage, neighborhood access, and seating will all be inclusive and compliant with ADA guidelines.

Question 12*

If successful in obtaining Joint Project funding, how will the agency use this project to inform citizens about the value of the Arapahoe County Open Space Sales and Use Tax? Discuss plans for public outreach, signage, celebration, dedication, etc. *You are required to inform the County of any press about the project and any related events (ribbon cutting ceremonies, etc.). Additionally, acknowledgement of County support must be included in any press about the project.*

This project will acknowledge the value of the Arapahoe County Open Space Sales and Use Tax in several ways and highlight the County's key role as the owner of the Canal. All outreach and engagement materials will recognize Aurora PROS, Arapahoe County Open Spaces, and the High Line Canal Conservancy. Temporary signage promoting improvements in the neighborhood will recognize all three partners and permanent signage installed along the Canal as part of the project will similarly include logos for all three partners. A ribbon cutting ceremony will be held upon completion of the project and Arapahoe County Open Spaces will have the opportunity to play a central role in the event.

Attachments

Attachment 1: Evidence of Support from Highest Authority*

Please attach evidence of support from the agency's highest authority (official letter or resolution) as a PDF document. At a minimum, this document must include: project title, amount of grant funds requested, statement that matching funds are secured and/or efforts to secure funds are underway (include the amount of matching funds committed), and certification that the project will be open to the public or serve a public purpose upon completion. *A sample resolution is available on the Open Space website.*

Please name your file as follows: *Applicant_SupportfromHighestAuthority.pdf*

SIGNED Laredo_Applicant_SupportHighestAuthority.pdf

Attachment 2: Evidence of Community Support

Please attach letters of support from users, working groups, community members, volunteers, schools, etc. (maximum of 5) as a single PDF document. Letters should be dated within the last 6 months.

Please name your file as follows: *Applicant_CommunitySupport.pdf*

Aurora PROS Laredo_CommunitySupport.pdf

Attachment 3: Documentation of Opposition

Please attach documentation of opposition as a single PDF document. If there is no known opposition to this project, please attach a page stating that this section is not applicable.

Please name your file as follows: *Applicant_Opposition.pdf*

Aurora PROS Laredo Opposition.pdf

Attachment 4: Evidence of Commitment from Project Partners

Please attach evidence of commitment from project partners (such as partner support letters or commitment to provide cash/in-kind match) as a single PDF document. There is no maximum allowable number of partner support letters. If there are no partners for this project, please attach a page stating that this section is not applicable.

Please name your file as follows: *Applicant_PartnerCommitments.pdf*

Aurora PROS Laredo_Partner Support.docx.pdf

Attachment 5: Primary Project Photo*

Please attach one high resolution photo in JPG format. Please choose the photo that provides the best overall representation of your project. This photo will be used for presentations and/or publications.

Please name your file as follows: *Applicant_PrimaryPhoto.jpg*
Aurora PROS Laredo Photo.pdf

Attachment 6: Photos

Please attach photos of existing conditions at the project site (including captions) as a single PDF document. Include conceptual drawings if applicable.

Please name your file as follows: *Applicant_Photos.pdf*
Aurora PROS Laredo photos.pdf

Attachment 7: Maps*

Please attach a site map and a vicinity map as a single PDF document.

Please name your file as follows: *Applicant_Maps.pdf*
Aurora PROS Laredo maps.pdf

Attachment 8: Other Attachments

Please attach additional supporting documentation (news article, cost estimate, appraisal, title commitment, etc.) as a single PDF document.

Please name your file as follows: *Applicant_OtherAttachments.pdf*
Laredo_Engagement Summary_2023-2024.pdf

Confirmation

Please click the "I Agree" button below to certify that your application is complete and ready to submit. Once submitted, applications are final and cannot be returned.*

I agree

File Attachment Summary

Applicant File Uploads

- SIGNED Laredo_Certification and Authorized Signature Form.pdf
- Aurora PROS Laredo Timeline Form.pdf
- AuroraPROS Laredo BudgetForm.pdf
- SIGNED Laredo_Applicant_SupportHighestAuthority.pdf
- Aurora PROS Laredo_CommunitySupport.pdf
- Aurora PROS Laredo Opposition.pdf
- Aurora PROS Laredo_Partner Support.docx.pdf
- Aurora PROS Laredo Photo.pdf
- Aurora PROS Laredo photos.pdf
- Aurora PROS Laredo maps.pdf
- Laredo_Engagement Summary_2023-2024.pdf



Certification and Authorized Signature Form

Please attach this form to grant and joint project applications submitted through the Arapahoe County Open Spaces Online Grant Portal.

By signing this form, I certify that:

- The information included in this application is true to the best of my knowledge.
- If funded, the applicant commits to completing the proposed project.
- If funded, the applicant accepts responsibility for any cost overruns necessary to complete the project.
- If funded, the completed project will be open to the public or will otherwise serve a public purpose.
- If funded, the applicant agrees to maintain the completed project site or to continue its maintenance agreement with a partner agency as outlined in the application.
- I am authorized to sign on behalf of the applicant.

Authorized Signature (highest authority in agency or authorized individual)

11/05/2025

Date

Jason Batchelor, City Manager, City of Aurora, CO

Printed Name and Title

Laredo Elementary Outdoor Classroom & Crossing

Grant Project or Joint Project Name

Applicant: _____ City of Aurora _____

Project Title: _Laredo Outdoor Classroom and Crossing



Joint Project Timeline Form

Use the sample timeline below as a guide to complete your proposed project timeline. Rows or columns may be added as necessary to include any milestones specific to your project. Timeline must be detailed, realistic, and coincide with details provided in the narrative portion of the grant application. Timeline must conclude within two years of project start date.

Task	2026											2027					
	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
Grant Award Notification																	
IGA Executed/Project Start Date																	
Project Bid Award(s)																	
Construction																	
Grand Opening																	
Final Report																	

Summary Budget Form - STANDARD Grants (25% minimum cash match)

Source of Funds	Date Funds Secured	Grant Request	Cash Match	Total Project Funds
Arapahoe County Open Spaces Grant		\$270,000		\$270,000
Applicant Cash Match	4/14/2025		\$133,000	\$133,000
High Line Canal Conservancy Partner Match	3/15/2024		\$137,000	\$137,000
Totals		\$270,000	\$270,000	\$540,000

MATCH REQUIREMENTS	Total Project Cost:	\$540,000.00
	Cash Match % Required:	50%
	Required Cash Match Amount	\$270,000.00
	Project Cash Match Budgeted:	\$270,000.00
	<i>Minimum Met? Y or N</i>	

Applicant: Aurora Parks, Recreation and Open Space

Project Title: Laredo Elementary Outdoor Classroom & Crossing

** Please do not include in-kind match on the Budget Forms. Describe in-kind match in the budget narrative and project narrative.*

DETAILED EXPENSE WORKSHEET

[illegible]

Applicant: Aurora Parks, Recreation and Open Space	Project Title: Laredo Elementary Outdoor Classroom & Crossing	Date: 5/12/25
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November 5, 2025

Arapahoe County Open Spaces
Open Space and Trails Advisory Board
6934 S Lima St, Unit A
Centennial, CO 80112

Re: Joint Project Grant Application 2025

Dear Arapahoe County Open Spaces and OSTAB Members:

Please accept this letter of commitment on behalf of the City of Aurora for support of the Laredo Elementary Outdoor Classroom & Crossing joint project grant application. This project will replace a non-accessible Canal crossing from Memphis St., create an amenity side trail and shaded outdoor classroom with interpretive signage as a space for Laredo Elementary students as well as trail users to learn about the history of the Canal and the environment, with enhanced native plantings throughout.

Aurora is requesting \$270,000 in grant funds from the Arapahoe County Open Space Tax program. The City has a secured cash match of \$133,000 comprised of Great Outdoor Colorado Centennial grant funds in partnership with the High Line Canal Conservancy who have also brought \$137,000 in funding. The City will be responsible for any cost overruns. Maintenance and care of the facility will be managed as part of our ongoing maintenance budget.

If awarded, an intergovernmental agreement between the City of Aurora and Arapahoe County will be required along with a city council resolution. Grant reports will be authorized by the Director of Parks, Recreation and Open Space.

By approving this grant application for \$270,000, the Arapahoe County Open Space and Trails Advisory Board will contribute to the enhanced trail access and amenity area. The trail is currently and will remain open to the public. Thank you for your on-going support of our parks, open space and trail system.

Sincerely,

Jason Batchelor
City Manager

May 13, 2025

Arapahoe County Open Spaces
6934 S Lima St.
Centennial, CO 80112

RE: Joint Project Grant Support for High Line Canal Projects in North Aurora

Dear Arapahoe County Open Spaces,

On behalf of the High Line Canal Northeast Community Committee, we are writing in strong support of the joint project grant applications submitted by the High Line Canal Conservancy and the City of Aurora for the Granby Ditch Overlook, Laredo Elementary Outdoor Classroom, and Triple Creek Trailhead Site Improvements.

Our committee represents over 15 neighborhoods in Northeast Denver, Aurora, and unincorporated Arapahoe County. Formed in 2022, we serve as a trusted bridge between the High Line Canal Conservancy and our communities—ensuring that trail improvements are shaped by local voices and benefit those historically underrepresented in outdoor spaces. These three projects are direct results of an inclusive, community-centered design process. As members of the committee, we've played an active role in shaping the priorities and designs for these sites. Each project reflects our collective vision to activate the Canal as a safe, healthy, and accessible green space for our youth, families, and elders:

- Granby Ditch Overlook will transform a part of the trail into a natural refuge with interpretive signage, natural seating, and plantings.
- Laredo Elementary Outdoor Classroom will connect students and neighbors to the Canal through a shade structure, safe crossings, and meaningful educational opportunities.
- Triple Creek Trailhead Site Improvements will deliver long-awaited enhancements to a key regional access point, including natural elements, bike skills features, and interpretation.

Together, these projects address the priorities we've consistently elevated: safe access, ecological restoration, cultural interpretation, and joyful use of the Canal for all. They advance equity in public space and demonstrate how public-private partnerships can meet the needs of communities who have been historically underserved.

We are grateful for Arapahoe County Open Spaces' past support and urge you to invest in these community-backed projects. They will deliver visible, lasting impact for the neighborhoods we call home.

Sincerely,

The High Line Canal Northeast Community Committee

Leslie Brown

Calvin Ann Evans

Nelson Holland

Debi Hunter Holen

Cynthia Armendáriz-Maxwell

Laura Morales

Adolfo Romero

Vanessa Salinas

May 15, 2025
Arapahoe County Open Spaces
6934 S Lima St.
Centennial, CO 80112

RE: Letter of Support for Laredo Elementary Outdoor Classroom Project

Dear Arapahoe County Open Spaces,

I am writing to express my full support for the proposed improvements along the High Line Canal adjacent to our campus, specifically the creation of an outdoor classroom and trail access improvements as part of the Laredo Elementary Site Improvements Project.

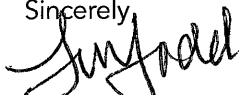
Our school is preparing for a long-anticipated renovation that will significantly enhance our facilities and educational environment. As we reimagine our physical campus, we are equally committed to embracing the incredible natural resource that exists just beyond our playground—the High Line Canal. The opportunity to connect our students more directly and safely to this unique green space is transformative.

The proposed outdoor classroom, shade structure, improved trail access, and interpretive signage are more than just amenities. They represent a powerful extension of our learning environment. We envision our students using the outdoor classroom for science and environmental studies, reading, and physical activity. The improvements will also create safer, more engaging routes to school for students who walk or bike. These enhancements align with our mission to support the whole child—academically, socially, and emotionally.

The High Line Canal Conservancy has engaged our school community in meaningful conversations about how these improvements can best serve our students and families. We are proud to be a partner in this work and excited to see the plans moving toward implementation.

We strongly urge your support of this timely and essential project. The trail improvements will be a lasting investment in our students, our community, and the future of public education connected to the outdoors.

Sincerely,



Jennie Todd

Laredo Elementary School

July 14, 2025

Arapahoe County Open Spaces
6934 S Lima St.
Centennial, CO 80112

RE: Letter of Support for High Line Canal Projects in North Aurora

Dear Grant Committee,

I have lived in Aurora for twenty-five years and it was just last year (2024) that I learned about an amazing trail right in my back yard! Through the nonprofit, GirlTrek that centers the health and wellness of Black women, I committed to walking the whole 71 mile trail that is the High Line Canal. This was done in fifteen segments, once per week. Despite being in pain with a return ACL, I joined the challenge! We started in April and finished in September.

That experience was not only transformational, it helped me save my life! The segments fed my mind, body and soul! I had already endeavored to make 2024 the year of change. I was overweight, not in the best shape (despite being an avid softball player), taking a few prescription medications, working through generational trauma, tired of being heavy, and determined to gain strength and forego ACL surgery again. The High Line Canal Trail was exactly what my body needed! By the time we finished, I had lost 25 pounds, my legs were stronger, and my mind was clearer! I became more motivated to go to the gym more often, I started weight training twice a week in February and by the time we finished, I was in the gym three times per week! I continued to lose fat and gain muscle. Now, I walk every chance I get and formed my own GirlTrek walking crew!

I want to support the High Line Canal in any way I can because I hope to share my life-changing experience with others who may need this type of therapeutic, empowering experience. I wish I had known about this beautiful trail before. I hope to make it known to more people.

Martha Lugo, M.A. (she/her/ella – Afro-Indigenous woman)

Bilingual ASSET Program Specialist II

Boulder County Family and Children Services

Member: Bargaining Committee – Boulder County Employees Union
Union Steward: Boulder County Employees Union

515 Coffman St.
Longmont, CO 80501

720-884-6402 (call/text)
mlugo@bouldercounty.org



HIGH LINE CANAL
CONSERVANCY

TO: Arapahoe County Open Spaces

FROM: High Line Canal Conservancy

DATE: November 10, 2025

SUBJECT: Letter of No Opposition – Laredo Outdoor Classroom and Crossing

The Laredo Outdoor Classroom and Crossing project is supported by the neighborhood and Laredo Elementary Community. Ongoing public outreach and engagement has occurred since 2019 to keep the community informed and invested in the goals of the site. The Conservancy has not received any known opposition, nor been apprised of any by Aurora PROS or other entities.

Sincerely,

Josh Phillips, Senior Director of Planning and Implementation
High Line Canal Conservancy

Documentation of Opposition



ARAPAHOE COUNTY
OPEN SPACES



TO: Arapahoe County Open Spaces
FROM: High Line Canal Conservancy
Amy Daley, Chief Finance and Administrative Officer
DATE: November 11, 2025

SUBJECT: Support for the Laredo Outdoor Classroom and Crossing

The Conservancy is partnering with Aurora Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces (Aurora PROS) on design and construction of the Laredo Outdoor Classroom and Crossing. The Conservancy has secured \$270,000 from Great Outdoors Colorado and private donations for the project as described in the joint project request. The Conservancy will spend \$61,000 on project design and engineering to prepare documents for bidding. A funding agreement, signed by both parties, has been executed to transfer \$193,000 to Aurora PROS for project construction. An additional \$16,000 has been allocated for Construction Project Management.

The opportunity to further enhance the High Line Canal in North Aurora is an exciting opportunity for the Conservancy and Aurora PROS. We appreciate the consideration of Arapahoe County Open Spaces to support the implementation of this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Amy Daley".

Amy Daley, Chief Financial and Administrative Officer
High Line Canal Conservancy





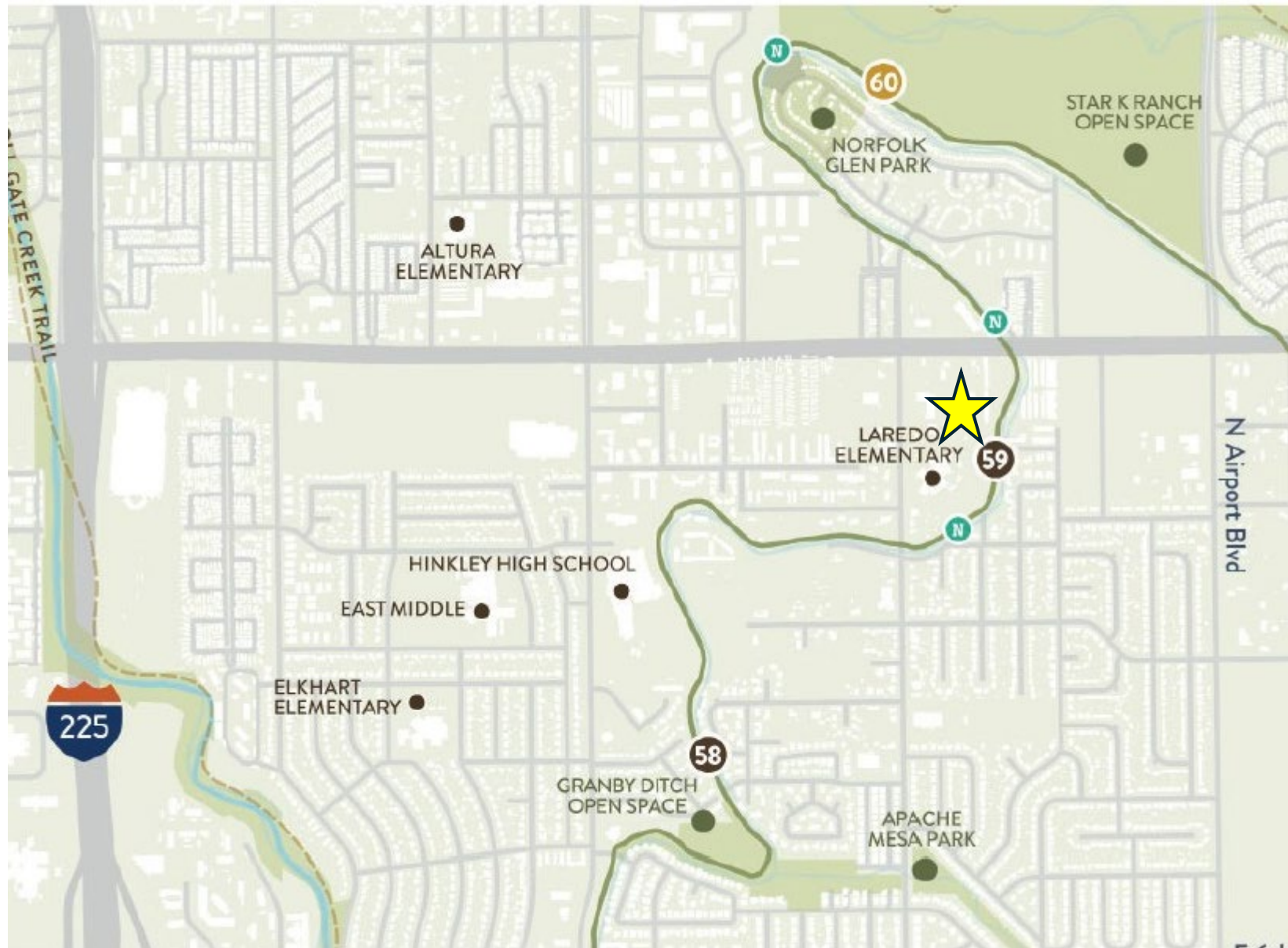
Existing pedestrian bridge from neighborhood



Outdoor classroom site



Outdoor Classroom Concept Plans



Laredo Outdoor Classroom and Crossing-Vicinity Map



Laredo Outdoor Classroom and Crossing Site Map

Speak Up for the Canal

High Line Canal Northeast Community Engagement, 2016 - 2024



ENGAGEMENT TIMELINE

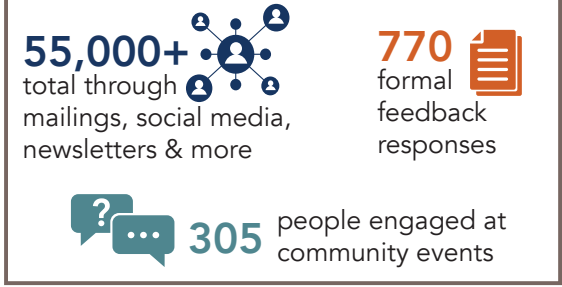


TOTAL REACH



2022-2024 NORTH AURORA

FEEDBACK REACH



WHAT ELSE WE HEARD

- Prioritize wayfinding signage
- More bathrooms and trash cans
- Maintenance of grass and vegetation along the trail
- Trees are desired for shade
- Safer trail access and connectivity needed at Colfax Ave. intersections & Airport Blvd.
- Improved crossings needed at most access points
- Concerns about personal safety & use of Canal for camping
- Prevent unauthorized vehicles on the trail
- Excitement for new and improved neighborhood access points

KEY TAKEAWAYS

NATURE + NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Water

Natural Vegetation/Habitat/Plants & Trees

"Maintain the natural setting with cottonwoods and the wildlife corridor!"

SAFETY + CONNECTIVITY

"I feel safe when the trail is far from any stress and I know my kids can run free. And I don't feel safe when the trail comes to a street and there are not stop signs or pedestrian light that makes it safe for us to cross."

Access + Parking

RECREATIONAL + EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Signage

Gathering Spaces

Play Areas

"I know that there are a few areas where the school uses the High Line Canal and the property around it for education and for kids to be able to get outside and play."

ACCESS, AWARENESS + ACCESSIBILITY

Shade

Benches + Seating

Signage

Access

Parking

Restrooms

"A big reason that I love the trail is because in most places that I've been on the trail there is a dirt or crusher-fined jogging path next to the paved path. So wherever the trail is going to be built out in the future, or wherever that enhancement could be made, to continue having both a paved and a dirt or gravel surface would be awesome."

STEWARDSHIP + MAINTENANCE

"More community cleanups and trash pickups."

Natural Vegetation/Habitat/Plants & Trees

Water