



## Board Summary Report

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**File #:** 24-621

**Agenda Date:** 11/12/2024

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**To:** Board of County Commissioners

**Through:** Gini Pingnot, Director, Open Spaces

**Prepared By:**

Sandra Bottoms, Grants Administrator, Open Spaces

**Presenter:** Sandra Bottoms, Grants Administrator, Open Spaces

**Subject:**

2:30 PM \*High Line Canal Stewardship Grants - Funding Recommendations

**Purpose and Request:**

Open Spaces staff will present the OSTAB/staff joint recommendation regarding the High Line Canal Stewardship Grants pilot program and request BOCC consideration of the recommendation to fund four grants totaling \$925,734.

**Background and Discussion:** Arapahoe County acquired 45 miles of the High Line Canal in June 2024, including portions in Arapahoe, Adams, and Denver counties. As a result of the acquisition, projects on County-owned portions of the High Line Canal are no longer eligible for the regular open space grant program. However, the County, the High Line Canal Conservancy (Conservancy), and the municipalities and special districts that care for the property recognize the need to improve its condition. To help meet this need, Open Spaces offered a pilot grant program this year to fund High Line Canal stewardship projects in Arapahoe County, including major tree pruning, hazard tree and invasive species removal, tree and shrub planting, seeding for native plants and wildflowers, irrigation, and trail resurfacing and replacement. The projects must be completed by the end of 2026.

In November 2023, the BOCC approved an allocation of \$1 million from the grants fund for the pilot program. Applications for the program were due in August 2024.

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Four agencies submitted grant proposals requesting a total of \$925,734. Matching funds were not required, however, all applicants committed matching funds ranging from 10% to 67% of the total project cost. The total match commitment was \$784,500 (46% of the overall total project cost of \$1,710,234).

Open Spaces staff recruited a team of peer evaluators consisting of one representative from each eligible grantee that is a member of the High Line Canal Collaborative (the cities of Aurora, Centennial, Cherry Hills Village, Greenwood Village, and Littleton, and South Suburban Park and Recreation District). Peer evaluators, two County staff members, OSTAB's liaison to the High Line Canal Collaborative, and a representative from the Conservancy reviewed the applications, discussed them as a group, and collectively made funding recommendations. Considerations included scope, goals, and expected results of the project; current condition of the project area; project timeline; and impacts to future maintenance needs in the project area.

Based on these criteria, the quality of applications, and funding availability, evaluators recommended all applications for funding. Grant awards are recommended for the following projects:

- \$343,000 to City of Centennial for High Line Canal Hazard Tree Mitigation
- \$49,734 to City of Cherry Hills Village for Trail Resurfacing in Cherry Hills Village
- \$300,000 to City of Greenwood Village for High Line Canal Irrigation System
- \$233,000 to City of Littleton for High Line Canal Irrigated Tree Planting Pilot

Funded projects will undergo additional review by the County (Open Spaces, Public Works and Development), the Conservancy, and Denver Water to ensure that the proposed work aligns with long-term goals for the property and does not conflict with the conservation easement or reserved rights. Additionally, each grantee will be required to enter into a funding agreement and obtain appropriate authorization from the County to complete the project on its property.

**Fiscal Impact:** 12% of annual revenue from the Arapahoe County Open Space Sales and Use Tax is dedicated to the grants program pursuant to the County Open Space Resolution. The fund balance exceeds the recommended awards.

**Alternatives:** Approval, conditional approval, or denial of each grant project.

**Alignment with Strategic Plan:**

- Be fiscally sustainable
- Provide essential and mandated service
- Be community focused

**Staff Recommendation:** Based on evaluator feedback and funding availability, the team recommends funding all four proposals totaling \$925,734. The unspent allocation of \$74,266 will remain in the grants fund.

**Concurrence:** On October 28, 2024, the Open Space and Trails Advisory Board (OSTAB) and Open Spaces staff made a joint recommendation to the BOCC to fund four projects totaling \$925,734 (attached).