



# Arapahoe County

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## Board Summary Report

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**File #:** 25-539

**Agenda Date:** 10/14/2025

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**To:** Board of County Commissioners

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

**Prepared By:**  
Michele Frishman, Grants and Acquisitions Manager, Open Spaces

**Presenter:** Michele Frishman, Grants and Acquisitions Manager, Open Spaces

**Subject:**  
1:45 PM \*Request from City of Aurora to Increase Percentage of Open Space Shareback Proceeds Spent on Maintenance

**Purpose and Request:**

Open Spaces staff will present a request from the City of Aurora to increase the percentage of open space shareback proceeds that the City can spend on maintenance needs in a given year.

**Alignment with Strategic Plan:** Good Governance - Understand and respond to community needs, interests, and values.

**Background and Discussion:** Every year, 50% of the revenue the County receives from the open space sales and use tax is provided to 12 municipalities throughout the County through Open Spaces' shareback program. Each municipality has an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) with the County that addresses the shareback program requirements.

The municipalities that receive shareback proceeds may spend them on any of the purposes authorized by the County's open space resolution, Resolution No. 21-263. However, the resolution limits the percentage of shareback proceeds that may be spent on maintenance costs: "Further, an incorporated municipality may use up to the percentage of its Shareback Funds designated in the IGA with the Board of County Commissioners, which designated percentage shall be at least 20% of the annual allocation, to maintain existing or new open space properties, trails, neighborhood and regional parks, and sports fields." Municipalities are not required to spend as much as the permitted percentage on maintenance, but they cannot exceed it. By limiting the amount of shareback proceeds that can be spent on maintenance, the County ensures that the municipalities continue to look for new ways to add and/or improve parks, recreation, and open space in their communities.

In 2022, after voter approval of the current open space resolution, Open Spaces entered into updated IGAs with the shareback recipients that cap maintenance spending at 20%. However, we also informed the municipalities that they could request an increase of the maintenance percentage above 20%, as permitted by the updated resolution. For instance, a municipality might find over time that its maintenance costs have increased due to the acquisition of additional properties, higher usage of parks and trails, a growing workforce, higher costs for equipment and supplies, and more.

Additionally, since the County's 2024 acquisition of a large portion of the High Line Canal, Open Spaces staff have engaged in conversations with the adjoining jurisdictions about taking on additional maintenance responsibilities for the property. We have encouraged them to consider using more of their shareback proceeds to support that work.

Open Spaces recently received its first request from a municipality to increase its shareback maintenance percentage. The City of Aurora has requested raising its maintenance cap to 24% in 2026 and 27% in 2027, based on anticipated increased costs including hiring more maintenance staff, adding contracted services for new City properties, and purchasing a new utility vehicle, some of which will be needed because Aurora expects to take on more High Line Canal responsibilities starting in 2027. See the attached request form in which Aurora calculated and described its maintenance needs.

All shareback recipients are required to report to Open Spaces how they spent their shareback proceeds during the previous calendar year. In recent years, Aurora has been nearing its 20% maintenance cap - spending close to 18% each year on maintenance costs. It anticipates higher ongoing costs beginning next year that would exceed the current 20% cap. Therefore, Open Spaces staff agree that Aurora should be able to spend more than the current 20%, and we recommend raising the cap to 27% starting in 2026. Rather than increasing the percentage incrementally over the next two years and amending Aurora's shareback IGA twice, we recommend moving to the higher requested percentage at this time. We would amend the City's shareback IGA to change the current 20% cap to 27% starting in 2026. Again, Aurora would not be required to spend 27% of its shareback proceeds on maintenance, but it could not exceed that level in a given year. Furthermore, Aurora has acknowledged that no shareback funds may be spent outside of Arapahoe County.

**Alternatives:** Approve, modify, or deny the requested increase.

**Fiscal Impact:** There is no fiscal impact, as the amount the City of Aurora receives in open space shareback proceeds will not change as a result of this request.

**Alignment with Strategic Implementation Strategies:** N/A

**Staff Recommendation:** Staff recommends increasing the percentage of open space shareback proceeds the City of Aurora can spend on maintenance needs in a given year to 27%, starting in 2026.

**Concurrence:** N/A