



Arapahoe County

5334 South Prince Street
Littleton, CO 80120
303-795-4630
Relay Colorado 711

Board Summary Report

File #: 26-082

Agenda Date: 2/9/2026

Agenda #:

To: Board of County Commissioners

Through: Gini Pingnot, Director, Open Spaces

Prepared By:

Michele Frishman, Grants and Acquisitions Manager, Open Spaces

Presenter: Sandra Bottoms, Grants and Acquisitions Administrator, Open Spaces; City of Aurora; High Line Canal Conservancy

Subject:

1:30 PM *Joint Project Request for Laredo Elementary Outdoor Classroom & Crossing

Purpose and Request:

The City of Aurora and the High Line Canal Conservancy will present a joint project request to support the design and construction of the Laredo Elementary Outdoor Classroom & Crossing project. Open Spaces staff and the Open Space and Trails Advisory Board (OSTAB) support the project and request that the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) award \$270,000 in High Line Canal Working Group funds to the City of Aurora.

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

Background and Discussion: In 2023, OSTAB recommended and the BOCC approved setting aside \$4 million of Open Space Acquisition and Development funds to support projects originating from the High Line Canal Working Group through 2028. The working group pledge was envisioned to support various High Line Canal joint projects such as natural resources restoration and new park and trail amenities to improve the user experience. The funding is also contributing to the development of the Natural Resource Management Plan and the Stormwater Transition and Management Plan for the High Line Canal, as well as other needs. To date, approximately \$2.4 million of the working group pledge remains available.

Aurora and the Conservancy are working in collaboration to plan and construct several projects along the northeast segment of the High Line Canal, which includes some of the state's most diverse communities and under-resourced neighborhoods. These projects include the Laredo Elementary Outdoor Classroom & Crossing project on the County's High Line Canal property south of Colfax Avenue in Aurora. The project would include improvements requested by the local community, such as an outdoor classroom space with a shade structure and seating, which can also serve as a rest stop for trail users; an improved path to access the High Line Canal from the adjacent neighborhood; natural resource restoration; and new wayfinding and interpretive signage. These improvements are expected to provide an inviting place for a largely underserved population in north Aurora to spend time outdoors and learn about the natural environment, as well as to improve habitat for wildlife.

Aurora and the Conservancy would be responsible for maintaining the various project elements.

Aurora has requested that the County contribute \$270,000 toward the project, which is half of the total project cost of \$540,000. Open Spaces requires at least a 50-percent match for joint project funding. Aurora and the Conservancy would provide the matching funds of \$270,000 through a grant they received from Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) in 2024. Because GOCO required the Conservancy to partner with a local government in order to meet its funding eligibility requirements, Arapahoe County co-signed the grant agreement; however, the County is not the recipient of any GOCO grant funds nor is it responsible for implementing any of the GOCO-funded projects.

Alternatives: Approve, modify, or deny the proposed recommendation.

Fiscal Impact: \$270,000 in High Line Canal Working Group funds, which reside in the Open Space Acquisition and Development Fund. The fund balance exceeds this amount.

Alignment with Strategic Implementation Strategies: The attached framework helps Arapahoe County institutionalize values-based, transparent decision-making, documenting how we make decisions and carry out actions to achieve the county's strategic plan.

Staff Recommendation: Staff recommend that the BOCC award \$270,000 in High Line Canal Working Group funds to the City of Aurora to support the Laredo Elementary Outdoor Classroom & Crossing project.

Concurrence: OSTAB concurred with the staff recommendation at its meeting on December 1, 2025.