



Arapahoe County

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Board Summary Report

File #: 25-397

Agenda Date: 7/22/2025

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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:

2025 Open Space Grant Awards

Purpose and Request:

Open Spaces staff will present recommendations regarding the 2025 Open Space grant awards and request approval by the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) of funding for eight standard grants, two small grants, and one planning grant totaling \$4,825,280 as presented on the attached 2025 Open Space Grants ranking sheet (Exhibit A). The BOCC heard this item in a study session on July 7, 2025.

Background and Discussion: In accordance with the Arapahoe County Open Space Resolution, 12% of Open Space Sales and Use Tax revenue is invested in Arapahoe County communities through a grants program. Each year, incorporated municipalities and special districts that provide outdoor recreation services are invited to submit proposals for eligible open space, park, and trail projects. An evaluation team made up of Open Space and Trails Advisory Board (OSTAB) members and County staff review the grant applications and make recommendations to OSTAB and the BOCC regarding the approval, conditional approval, or denial of each application. Since 2005, the program has invested more than \$62 million in grant funding in 294 projects throughout the County.

In September 2024, the BOCC approved an allocation of \$5.5 million for the 2025 grant cycle.

This year, six agencies submitted a total of 11 grant proposals (eight standard grants, two small grants, and one

planning grant) requesting a total of \$4,825,280, with total matching funds of nearly \$12.7 million.

After an initial staff review to confirm eligibility, a team of evaluators consisting of five OSTAB members and five County staff members reviewed the applications, participated in site visits and evaluator meetings, and ranked the grant proposals. Ranking criteria included project scope, need and urgency, matching funds provided, user benefits, the applicant's ability to complete the project on time and within budget, community support, and the applicant's capacity to maintain the completed project site. The results are provided on the attached 2025 Open Space Grants ranking sheet (Exhibit A).

Out of ten evaluators, two individuals did not recommend the City of Littleton's Jackass Hill Park project for funding, and one individual did not recommend the City of Aurora's Utah Park project for funding. The remaining evaluators chose to rank these projects, so both projects were included in the evaluation team's funding recommendation.

Staff presented the evaluation team's recommendation to OSTAB at its June 23, 2025, meeting. After receiving public comment and discussing the funding recommendations, OSTAB voted to recommend approval of all the projects except for the City of Littleton's Jackass Hill Park project.

During discussion in the study session on July 7, 2025, the BOCC directed staff to present all submitted grant applications at the July 22, 2025, business meeting in anticipation of receiving further public comment on the Jackass Hill Park project.

Staff recommends funding grants for the following 11 projects, totaling \$4,825,280:

Standard Grants:

- \$600,000 to South Suburban Park and Recreation District for Cornerstone Park Improvements Phase II Construction
- \$500,000 to City of Englewood for Centennial Park Trail Enhancements
- \$600,000 to South Suburban Park and Recreation District for Milliken Park Improvements
- \$600,000 to City of Littleton for Powers Park Improvements
- \$600,000 to City of Aurora for Side Creek Park Renovation
- \$600,000 to City of Littleton for Jackass Hill Park
- \$510,000 to City of Greenwood Village for Carson Park Restroom Construction
- \$600,000 to City of Aurora for Utah Park Tennis Courts and Lighting Replacement

Small Grants:

- \$24,800 to Strasburg Metropolitan Park and Recreation District for Lyons Park Trees and Trains
- \$65,480 to Strasburg Metropolitan Park and Recreation District for Comanche Crossing Museum Safety and Security

Planning Grant:

- \$125,000 to South Suburban Park and Recreation District for Ridgeview Park Redevelopment Project

Of note, this year's grant applicants have committed more than 70% of the total project costs in local matching funds.

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: The Board has the following options:

- 1) Fund eight standard grants, two small grants, and one planning grant totaling \$4,825,280 as recommended by the evaluation team and presented on the attached 2025 Open Space Grants ranking sheet (Exhibit A).
- 2) Fund seven standard grants, two small grants, and one planning grant totaling \$4,225,280 as recommended by OSTAB and presented on the attached 2025 Open Space Grants ranking sheet (Exhibit A). This alternative does not include the City of Littleton's Jackass Hill Park project.
- 3) Approval or denial of each grant project.

Alignment with Strategic Plan:

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

Staff Recommendation: Fund eight standard grants, two small grants, and one planning grant totaling \$4,825,280 as presented on the attached 2025 Open Space Grants ranking sheet (Exhibit A).

Concurrence: N/A.

Resolution: Staff has provided two resolution options based on the recommended motion and alternative motions provided.