



Legislation Text

File #: 22-645, **Version:** 1

To: Board of County Commissioners

Through: Shannon Carter, Open Spaces Department, Director

Prepared By:
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Subject:
Arcadia Park Project Funding Request

Purpose and Request:

The Board of County Commissioners is requested to adopt a resolution approving the expenditure of \$4,000,00.00 from the Open Spaces Acquisitions and Development Fund or a blend of available Cash in Lieu and/or Arapahoe County Recreation District Funds for construction of Arcadia Park in the Four Square Mile community.

Background and Discussion: In 2020, DHI Communities submitted a pre-submittal letter of intent to the Planning Division for the Arcadia development located 9495 E. Florida Ave. in unincorporated Arapahoe County. This project proposed to redevelop the 32.2 acres parcel on what is now the Potter's House Church. The project proposes a 3-story multifamily and paired-home community will include approximately 345 rental apartment units, 168 2-story for-sale paired-homes, and a park on the northern end of the property that will be dedicated to the County upon substantial completion and approval. The future land use designation of this 32.2-acre property has been identified in Arapahoe County's Four Square Mile Sub-Area Plan as "multifamily". DHI Communities approached Open Space staff to discuss a partnership that would result in the park being constructed at the same time as the residential construction.

Standard practice for Open Spaces would be to accept ownership of the land set aside for the park and once staff resources are available, Open Spaces would go through the planning, design and construction process for the park. Open Spaces was open to this partnership because, if the project were to be approved by the County, the park would be an amenity to the community sooner than later and the planning and design process would take less time, money, and staff resources because through the partnership, Norris Design is performing most of the planning and design work and was already under contract with DHI Communities.

Open Spaces staff worked with the DHI Communities and their consultant Norris Design to conduct extensive public outreach and engagement to develop a final conceptual plan for the park. Three public meetings were held, and three public surveys were conducted during the five-month public engagement period, which lasted from December 2021 to April 2022. Open Spaces advertised the meetings and surveys through social media, the County Line newsletter, the Nextdoor app, and by mailing approximately 5000 post cards to residents in the community nearest the proposed park. There were over 350 engagement points from the community through the public input process to develop the final conceptual plan for the park. In general, the public outreach indicated that residents wanted a more natural park feel that was family friendly and did not include active

recreation amenities like sports courts. The top amenities that the community desired were outdoor fitness stations, trails, flexible-use fields, park shelters and a public plaza, a dog off leash area, a community garden, a winter sledding area, and dedicated parking for the park.

The final park concept (attached) includes many of the passive recreation elements that we heard from the community during the public engagement effort and in past public engagement processes from Longs Pine Grove, Cheyenne-Arapaho Park, and in the Four Square Mile Recreation Needs and Opportunities Study. Amenities in the western portion of the park include separate dog off-leash areas for high activity and low activity dogs, multiple shade shelters, a central entry plaza/gathering area, a playground separated into areas for younger and older kids, fitness stations, large and small flexible turf fields, and a location for a future community garden. Amenities in the eastern portion of the park include trails, winter sledding hill, and seating areas. A landscape buffer will be included on the northern side of the park and on street parking dedicated to the park will be located along the southern portion of the park. Not only will this park serve the residents north of Florida Ave., but it will also serve the whole Four Square Mile community.

The project will enhance community vitality and will expand outdoor recreation opportunities closer to home by providing both structured and natural play areas for kids to get exercise and use their imagination, trails for residents to explore nature and get exercise, opportunities for dog owners to socialize at the off-leash parks, a gathering area that can host family or community events, and help increase equitable access for the Four-Square Miles residents by providing additional recreation amenities and increasing the walkability of the community. This project will help implement the findings for the 2015 Four Square Mile Recreation Needs and Opportunities Study. Several key recommendations that this park will address are providing an off-leash dog park, increasing walkability to parks, filling gaps in public access to park in the community, and potentially providing a second community garden in the community. In addition, this project is supported by the 2021 Open Spaces Master Plan, specifically the first objective which is to provide equitable access to nature with a priority on filling urban park gaps and improving access to nature and outdoor recreation opportunities.

The next step in this process to develop a park improvement agreement with DHI Communities that outlines how and when the park will be dedicated to the County and each parties' roles and responsibilities during construction of the park. This park is part of DHI Communities' land use approval process for the Arcadia development, so Open Spaces will not have to go through a separate Location and Extent process with the Planning Division. In addition, the design is being done as part of the overall residential project design. This means Open Spaces will not have to hire a landscape architect via the Purchasing Division's RFP process to prepare construction drawings. In addition, once DHI Communities secures all final land use approvals and permits, they will secure a contractor to start and manage construction of the park. This is anticipated in early/mid 2023.

Alternatives: Delay, modify, or deny funding. No alternatives are being proposed at this time. Denying or delaying the funding request would mean that this park would not be built at this time. The County would still receive the land for a future park but due to current staff commitments, construction of an additional park to serve the Four Square Mile community would not happen in the unforeseeable future.

Fiscal Impact: This project is expected to cost \$3,909,277.14, however, Open Spaces is requesting the approval of \$4,000,000.00 because this project is expected to begin in nine to twelve months, and staff expects escalation in construction costs during that time. The County OS Sales Tax support for this project for \$4,000,000 will come from the Open Space Acquisition and Development fund or a blend of available Cash in Lieu Funds and/or Arapahoe County Recreation District Funds. The fund balance exceeds this amount.

Alignment with Strategic Plan:

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

Concurrence: This item was recommended by OSTAB for BoCC approval on August 22, 2022, and the Board of County Commissioners recommended project approved in a study session on October 11, 2022. During the study session, four Board of County Commissioners voted in favor, and one voted against approval of the project.

Resolution: Attached is a copy of the draft resolution.