



April 30, 2019

Dear Happy Haynes, City Council members, and Parks and Recreation Advisory Board members,

We are writing on behalf of the Denver Streets Partnership to offer recommendations on the allocation of the new funding available for parks and open space thanks to Denver voters who passed the 2018 Ballot Measure 2A, in addition to 6-Year Capital Improvement Plan funding.

The Denver Streets Partnership (DSP) is a coalition of community organizations advocating for people-friendly streets in Denver. On people-friendly streets, walking, biking, and transit are the first choice of transportation for all people regardless of age, income ability, and race. People-friendly streets are more than just layers of concrete and asphalt. They are living conduits that connect us to jobs, schools, services and amenities, and they enable everyone to participate in and benefit from Denver's growth.

The new funding available for parks and open space presents a valuable opportunity to further the goals of not only the Denver Game Plan, but also the Denver Moves suite of plans, by funding projects that serve to both enhance the park system and access, and provide healthy, safe transportation options throughout Denver. Streets comprise the majority of open space in our city, and can provide many of the benefits associated with parks including shade trees and other greenery, stormwater management, recreation opportunities, and inviting public gathering places. Conversely, Denver's parks are an important component of Denver's overall transportation network, particularly for people traveling on foot or by bike.

To achieve these joint benefits for parks and mobility, we recommend allocating a portion of the new tax funding and/or Capital Improvement Plan funding to the following projects. In keeping with the Denver Game Plan guiding principle to "*Ensure equity in the distribution of parks and park resources and programming so that all residents have the opportunity to improve their personal health and well-being,*" this funding should be distributed to prioritize investments in neighborhoods with the highest unmet needs.

- **Construction of new sidewalks and off-street trails through parks.** While many parks have internal walking loops, they often lack direct paths that allow people to walk or bike through parks to access transit or other daily destinations. The absence of sidewalks is particularly noticeable along the periphery of parks adjacent to busy streets, creating a safety hazard for people walking. The Denver Moves Pedestrians & Trails plan identifies and prioritizes missing sidewalks, as well as missing segments of Denver's off-street trail network.

- **Construction of new connections and crossings to parks and trails.** The Denver Game Plan establishes the goal of ensuring all neighborhoods have a park within a 10 minute walk. This goal can only be achieved if people can safely walk into the park. In many cases, parks are bounded by busy arterial streets, with few designated crossings for people on foot or bike. The Denver Moves Pedestrians & Trails plan identifies the high priority connections and crossings that are needed to provide safe access to Denver's parks and trails system. An additional area of concern not specifically identified in the Denver Moves Pedestrians & Trails Plan are safe ways to cross Speer Boulevard after exiting the Cherry Creek Trail.
- **Improved wayfinding, safety lighting, and automated counters on off-street trails.** Currently, very little signage is located on Denver's off-street trail system, particularly for people who are using these trails for transportation purposes to access specific destinations. Improved wayfinding on these trails will remove a barrier that prevents many people from choosing healthy, active transportation options to get around Denver. Lighting on Denver's key multi-use paths such as the Cherry Creek Trail and South Platte Trail is also key need to ensure the safety of trail users at night. Many women do not currently feel safe using these paths to bike home in the evening. Automated counters will help the City understand the changes in bicycle traffic over time and publicize the popularity of some of Denver's most popular amenities. In particular, a permanent bike counter should be installed on the Cherry Creek Trail.
- **Planting and maintenance of street trees and other green infrastructure along major transit corridors** (current and planned) identified in the Denver Moves Transit Plan. Every transit rider is a pedestrian at some point in their trip, and trees and greenery are an essential component of a pedestrian-friendly street environment. Trees provide shade, create a buffer between the sidewalk and the street, and calm traffic by encouraging slower speeds. Yet most of Denver's major transit corridors lack trees and greenery.
- **Creation of "shared streets"** that prioritize people walking and biking over vehicular access, and have a strong park-like character. High priority shared streets projects include the 5280 Loop in downtown Denver, the 303 Artway in northeast Denver, and the Via Verde in southwest Denver.
- **Creation of singletrack bike trails** within existing parks to increase recreation opportunities for local residents.
- **Creation of a family-friendly recreational bike park in Northeast Denver.** Currently Denver's bike parks are located in West Denver. There is a need for a family and event-friendly bike park in Green Valley Ranch or Montbello, or in proximity to the Denver Airport's open spaces areas. Low-income families in this area have fewer safe recreational options as their neighborhoods have lacked well-maintained routes to parks, roads, bike lanes, and sidewalks. Creating a family friendly bike-park can only function as a venue for youth and family mountain biking or cyclocross events but improve the quality of life for people in neighborhoods left behind.
- **Buildout of the trail network to connect to Denver International Airport.** This commitment will increase non-SOV and recreational options for residents and visitors and help make DIA earn distinction as a world-famous bike-friendly airport.

- **ADA features to ensure parks are accessible to people with disabilities**, including power charging stations for devices such as electric wheelchairs and accessible restrooms.

The Denver Streets Partnership looks forward to actively partnering with Denver Parks and Recreation on implementing these projects that will improve the quality of life for Denverites in multiple ways.

If you have any questions about these recommendations, please contact Piep van Heuven at [piep@bicyclecolorado.org](mailto:piep@bicyclecolorado.org) or 303-514-8389.

Thank you for your consideration,

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