
We, the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, recommend to the Executive Director the following for 2020 and 2021:

Due to the Covid-19 crisis, we recommend immediately and indefinitely:

1. **An immediate increase in funding for rangers, maintenance, and sanitary facilities (e.g., hand-washing stations and restrooms) on DPR land including parks, trails and parkways. Evaluate and establish protocols and potential safety measures that consider any additional health and safety procedures (e.g., equipment cleaning, etc.).**

See response #3

2. **To the extent feasible in the new 'environment' of the future, in principle, the department should extend and expand access and use of recreation centers and other park resources.**

See response #3

3. **Maximize access as financially and as safely possible pursuant to the impacts of COVID.**

As I'm sure you are all aware, the City is experiencing an unprecedented reduction in general fund revenues as a result of the COVID crisis. Current estimates are that the shortfall in the City budget will be \$226 million in 2020 and \$160 million in 2021. In order to meet this challenge, the City is utilizing some reserves and taking other city-wide actions such as implementing a committee to review all requests to fill positions, mandatory furloughs and reductions in capital projects. These actions, however, are not sufficient to close the gap. As a result, all city agencies are being asked to submit reduction proposals. Parks and Recreation's targets are 7.5% for 2020 and 11.6% for 2021. While we are still working on our reduction proposals and do not yet know which will be accepted, it is certain that we will experience a significant budget reduction in both years which will have a noticeable impact on service delivery to the public. Any expansion will need to be offset by further reductions. As a result, we do not anticipate having the ability to expand any services (i.e. rangers, recreation center hours, etc.) in the 2021 budget. The condition of the 2022 budget will depend on the nature and speed of the recovery from the COVID economic impacts. As there are 2020 and 2021 budget reductions due to the Covid-19 pandemic there has been a hold placed on vacant positions and significant reduction in on-call hiring related to park maintenance.

Public restrooms: *Will remain closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. We have placed port-o-lets and hand washing stations throughout our parks system. The links below are where the facilities are located:*

Port-o-lets: *Will remain open and maintained at current locations*

<https://www.denvergov.org/content/denvergov/en/covid-19/recovery-guidance/handwashing---disinfecting.html>

Hand washing stations: *Will remain open and maintained at current locations*

<https://www.denvergov.org/content/denvergov/en/covid-19/recovery-guidance/handwashing---disinfecting.html>

Redeployment Update: *Since mid-March we have asked DPR employees to perform duties outside of their normal job classification to support emergency operations and fill critical needs. In total 253 DPR staff have been redeployed to cover 6 assignments:*

- *Child Care: 3 centers for children of medical staff and first responders – **41 children registered***
- *Shelter Transportation: Transporting vulnerable residents to emergency shelters and respite rooms – **more than 750 total trips***
- *Shelter Meal Delivery: picking up 3 meals/day at the salvation army and delivering to shelters – **more than 78,000 meals delivered***
- *Meal Programs: Provide dinner to kids and families in need at 18 rec centers across the city – **more than 45,000 grab and go dinners served***
- *Parks Patrol: Inform and educate residents to encourage compliance in parks and at golf courses – **more than 50,000 citizen contacts***
- *PPE Collection: Collect and inventory donations of homemade masks, PPE, and cleaning supplies*

The redeployments have not been easy and many of them we were figuring out the operations and duties in real time. But our DPR employee stepped up to get the job done as usual. We are proud of their flexibility and commitment to serving the community.

4. **Consideration of access to our municipal golf courses for pedestrian use of the paved golf cart trails.**

Revenue generation is essential for the Golf Enterprise Fund since it does not receive any general fund support. The Fund must cover all of its expenses with the revenue it generates. Closure of the courses to golfers in order to allow access to the general public would reduce revenue and cause the Enterprise Fund to go into a negative cash position given the financial challenges created by the COVID closures. The alternative, sharing use between golfers and the general public, is not possible since it would create significant safety issues.

5. **Pursuit of the purchase of the Park Hill Golf Course open space at current market value using the unspent funds from 2019 158-2A tax collections (\$26.565 million). We understand that this would be a departure from our earlier recommendations; we feel that the current economic conditions and our current cash-rich position enable us to acquire this land and we see it as a very important addition to our park system. Our intention is to recommend the purchase of this land and to recommend its preservation as zoned open space (OS). The land's use, whether as a golf course and/or other recreational uses, should be determined through the regular DPR public outreach process after the land is acquired.**

Denver Parks and Recreation (DPR) is very interested in owning, developing, preserving and/or maintaining a significant amount of acreage at what is today the Park Hill Golf Course property. DPR has long advocated for additional park land in this park-desert neighborhood. We believe that everyone's best interests will be served by allowing a robust, community-focused planning effort that will consider multiple outcomes and community benefits including affordable housing, community serving retail, additional local job opportunities, and open space and recreational opportunities.

Should open space be one of the community's preferred outcomes, as we hope and anticipate it will be, there are many avenues available to the Department to secure this land, some of which could convey property at no cost to the Department. DPR is currently seeking a number of acquisitions across Denver to protect valuable wildlife habitat and trail corridors, to provide parks in park-desert neighborhoods, and to improve/expand existing parks in high-need neighborhoods. These acquisitions, if and when secured, would take up the majority of the existing funds currently available for acquisition.

We believe there is a way to continue to seek our current list of high value acquisitions, some of which we have been trying to acquire for over 15 years, while we stay involved in the Park Hill Golf Course discussions to ensure that open space is a key part of the solution to this upcoming land use process. If a full acquisition were the outcome of a community process, DPR will have the flexibility and the resources to commit to this level of purchase at that time.

DPR pledges to remain engaged as this process gets underway and to be an advocate for substantial open space, if not outright preservation of the golf course.

- 6. Achieve and implement a pilot cooperative relationship with DPS for the purpose of developing a significant amenity and/or property access consistent with Game Plan's goal of ten-minute accessibility.**

DPR and DPS have a long-standing cooperative agreement for shared facility usage. The current agreement allows DPR priority usage for DPS fields/facilities and DPS priority usage of DPR fields/facilities. The relationship extends beyond shared facility usage, DPR runs many afterschool programs in DPS facilities throughout the school year. We have collaborated on many CIP over the years. Here a few examples of our partnerships.

- MY Denver Data Share Agreement
- Summer Scholars program run by DPR
- Northfield Shared Athletics complex
- Harvey Park Parking lot Bond project
- Carla Madison/East High School agreement
- Shared staffing for programs

- 7. DPR should maintain the current closure of streets within parks and DPR should immediately convene a stakeholder group to determine whether these streets are candidates for permanent or temporary/special event (e.g. Cheesman Park's car-free Sundays) closure.**

At this time Parks is maintaining a majority of the street and parking lot closures throughout our Parks system. We are having to adjust to address ADA access issue at some parks by either adding ADA parking or opening some small parking lots at smaller parks. These adjustments are being highlighted on park maps and posted on the City of Denver website.

- 8. Significant increase in management methods and consistent communication and community engagement regarding wildlife management.**

DPR has dramatically increased its professional wildlife management of all wildlife species since hiring Vicki Vargas Madrid, Denver's wildlife ecologist five years ago. Vicki has a long career managing wildlife in Colorado through her work as a District Wildlife Manager with Colorado Parks and Wildlife and now with Denver Parks and Recreation. On a daily basis, Vicki responds to numerous calls, concerns and reports of wildlife in our city. She has worked on managing beaver populations along our gulches, creeks and waterways, she has worked with community members to learn how to co-exist with coyotes by creating coyote crews in neighborhoods with coyote-human conflicts, she responds to concerns from individuals about wildlife such as bats and racoons having rabies and she has the challenging job of managing rodent populations such as rats that inhabit our parks and open spaces and can cause serious health related concerns.

Along with managing the geese population of Denver, there is another wildlife species that the department manages that can be quite contentious. DPR manages prairie dogs in our open spaces and parks. They are considered a keystone wildlife species which means that many other species of wildlife depend on them to survive. Snakes, burrowing owls and other species use their burrows as homes. Coyotes, badgers, black footed ferrets, hawks and eagles utilize prairie dogs as a major food source. As a department we manage prairie dogs to try a maintain populations that do not negatively impact the habitat or damage the more traditional aspects of our parks. An example of that would be prairie dogs populations spreading into athletic fields where we have youth sports. This is a human-wildlife conflict. When necessary DPR will utilize a method of lethal control which is a PERC machine which uses carbon monoxide to eliminate the prairie dogs. To minimize the use of this method, DPR staff has recently been trained in a passive prairie dog relocation method. Pam Wanek, the founder and owner of Prairie Preserves, LLC has trained DPR staff in this passive relocation method on the First Creek Open Space prior to the coming expansion of 56th Ave. This has been a great collaboration in which DPR listened to the concerns of the Prairie Dog Coalition of the Humane Society and we implemented a compromise to help manage the prairie dogs on this property.

9. **Channel 8 broadcast (audio or audio/visual) of PRAB meetings, possibly through use of existing facilities (such as the Parr-Widener Room).**

Channel 8 is only funded to produce and broadcast basic city meetings such as council and committee meetings. For all other city content, they lean on agencies to cover the production cost. It is estimated that it would cost an average of \$1,200 per PRAB meeting to produce and broadcast. The program director for Channel 8 would need to approve the addition of PRAB meetings to the program calendar.

10. **Equitable investment is a priority of the PRAB Board and should serve as a measuring stick for projects.**

In the last 5 years, Denver Parks & Recreation has made significant strides to ensure that equity is used throughout the department to drive decision-making and future investments. DPR is committed to investing in neighborhoods which have been historically underserved, have received less investment by DPR and have populations in higher need of park resources. The goal is to provide park access, quality amenities and recreation opportunities to people and neighborhoods that currently do not have them. To help move the needle, DPR has intentionally integrated equity into the Game Plan for a Healthy City, the 20 year strategic plan for the department; the 5-year investment framework for the recently approved park tax; and has increased the usage of data to inform decision-making. In addition, as part of the Mayor's Division of Equity and Social Innovation, DPR addresses how budget proposals promote or impact equity goals.

Game Plan: DPR took a two-pronged approach when addressing equity in the Game Plan. It intentionally integrated equity into various strategies throughout the plan but it also identified two specific equity strategies that will drive how DPR plans to Reinvest" in Denver Park and Recreation's resources and people.

- 4.1: Identify and implement strategies to achieve level-of-service targets for facilities and programming to ensure equity.
- 4.2: Identify and focus park and programmatic resources in underserved neighborhood

Park Tax Investment Framework: Equity is the driving principle guiding plans for investment of the Legacy Fund, along with partnership, sustainability, accountability and transparency.

Data: To better understand a baseline and targets, DPR has invested time to better capture and analyze data. DPR has one of the most comprehensive equity mapping tools. This equity map has influenced budget request for recreation programming, capital investments, deferred maintenance, bond priorities, etc.

Mayor's Race and Social Justice Initiative: With every budget proposal, DPR complete the following questions. This further ensures that equity is considered in funding priorities:

- How does your budgetary adjustment directly benefit or impact one or more of the following? Explain and check who it impacts.
 - a) Older Adults
 - b) People with disabilities
 - c) Historically marginalized communities
 - d) Under-resourced communities (Minority/Women and/or Disadvantaged Businesses)
- Please identify the neighborhood(s) most impacted by your request, or impact to City employees.
- What could be the unintended consequences to the budgetary adjustment?

11. **Feasibility studies for restoration of historic structures or features (e.g., Sloan's Lake Boathouse, Berkeley Park Boathouse, downtown trolley).**

DPR is in the midst of inventorying and assessing our system-wide DPR historic resources including structures, monuments, statues, fountains, gardens, and other features. The documentation effort is an important first phase of knowing the scope and scale of the important historic features and landscapes we manage and continuing to protect them for the future. It also is about noting important historic features and landscapes that have not been previously designated or documented, but potentially should be added for their legacy and cultural value.