

**CITY OF BOULDER
PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD AGENDA ITEM**

MEETING DATE: July 22, 2013

AGENDA TITLE: Public Hearing and Consideration of a Motion to Approve the Concept Plan for Mesa Memorial Park.

PRESENTERS:

Kirk Kincannon, CPRP, Director, Parks and Recreation
Alice Guthrie, Recreation Superintendent
Jeff Dillon, Parks and Planning Superintendent
Abbie Poniatowski, Senior Business Manager
Jeff Haley, Planning Manager

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The purpose of this item is for the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (PRAB) to consider a motion to approve the final Concept Plan for Mesa Memorial Park (MMP) as developed through extensive neighborhood engagement and support. The concept plan for MMP is based on input from the community during neighborhood meetings that were conducted in 2008 as well as the recent planning process that occurred in 2012 and 2013 when funds were reallocated for the park development. Additional MMP planning process documents can be found at www.boulderparks-rec.org.

The planning process for MMP began in 2008 and MMP was initially scheduled for development in 2009 when funding was reallocated to other higher priority projects due to the economic downturn. In 2012, funding was identified once again for the development of MMP and the planning and development process was initiated with the neighborhood.

Once the final Concept Plan is approved by the PRAB the project will then go into the city's standard review and permitting process and construction anticipated in early 2014.

Key Issue Identification: Street trees within the right-of-way along Hartford Drive. At the June PRAB meeting a neighbor shared thoughts about the street trees proposed along Hartford Drive and the concern that the trees might block views of the mountains as well as solar access to the homes across the street. On July 1st, staff met with several neighbors to listen to the issues that were raised by a few neighbors and explain the background and decision making process. The concept plan for the park has been designed in accordance with the City's development codes and design standards as well

as typical park design guidelines. The proposed tree locations have been revised slightly so as not to impact adjacent neighbors while balancing the compliance with development codes.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Suggested Motion Language:

Staff requests PRAB consideration of this matter and action in the form of the following motion:

Motion to approve the Mesa Memorial Concept Plan as presented by staff.

CITY COUNCIL, BOARD AND COMMISSION FEEDBACK:

At the June 24 PRAB meeting, staff presented a discussion item to explain the history of the Mesa Memorial Park planning process and extensive community outreach that has occurred over the past few years. PRAB members indicated an appreciation and acknowledgement of the thorough neighborhood outreach and commended staff on an excellent process.

COUNCIL FILTER IMPACTS

Economic: The development of MMP will provide enhanced and diverse active recreation opportunities for the neighborhood that will contribute to the economic vitality of the city of Boulder. The development of parks positively affects property values and in turn increases vitality of the community by attracting residents and business.

Environmental: The development of MMP will incorporate a multitude of low impact and sustainable design and construction practices. Some of the practices that can be implemented in the design include: water conservation techniques in the landscape, sustainable design and maintenance practices. In addition, parks help mitigate increased stormwater runoff, heat islands and other environmental factors that face our community.

Social: The planned program elements for MMP are designed to keep users engaged in a wide range of active recreational activities that are appropriate for a pocket park. The park will not only provide opportunities for neighbors to meet those in their community but also allow them to feel comfortable interacting with each other in a safe and aesthetic setting.

OTHER IMPACTS:

Fiscal: Based on the current program elements, the anticipated initial development costs of MMP are estimated to be in the range of \$515,000 dollars. Once the construction documents are completed, a more specific cost estimate will be developed. The ongoing operations and maintenance of the park are estimated to be \$12,000 per year based on the average O&M cost per acre of similar parks within Boulder.

Staff time: The development of the concept plan for MMP was part of the department's current work plan.

PUBLIC FEEDBACK:

In the fall of 2008, the city began preparation of conceptual design options for the park. The first neighborhood meeting was held on October 2, 2008. Questions posed to the attendees (12 people attended) included:

- “What kinds of amenities should the park have?”
- “What should the character of the park be?” and;
- “What are the biggest challenges to overcome?”

With this preliminary neighborhood input, two conceptual alternatives were prepared and posted on the city's website. A second neighborhood meeting was held on December 10, 2008 to review the two conceptual alternatives.

There have been three community meetings for neighborhood comments in 2012. Each meeting notification was included in the department e-mail blast of more than 15,000 subscribers as well a more personalized message to the growing neighborhood e-mail list of 42. Notification postcards were sent to 435 residents and signs were posted on the future park site. Local schools, churches and apartment buildings received flyers for common areas. Bear Creek Elementary School also included notification in their digital school newsletter announcing the park design workshop invitation for kids and adults.

An average of 35 community members was present for each meeting, although 50+ community members of all ages joined us for the design workshop held on May 9th 2012. This workshop was a hands-on opportunity for everyone from children to seniors to design what they wanted the park to look like by tracing, drawing, cutting, pasting and presenting their very own park plans. The PLAY Boulder Foundation, Growing Up Boulder (a University of Colorado group dedicated to getting kids involved in municipal activities) and CU Environmental Design students joined Parks and Recreation staff to make this meeting a resounding success. (See Attachment I: Workshop Photos and Attachment J: Workshop Article)

All of the information collected at the meetings and workshops were verified by a community survey. 33 of the 42 community members signed up for the e-mail list answered the questions.

The design feedback is summarized in the final concept plan approved by the community at the July 25th 2012 meeting. The top five needs defined by the community were climbing features, shade structures, benches, and a community gathering areas.

Two additional community fundraising committee meetings were co-hosted by PLAY Boulder Foundation and Parks and Recreation Staff. The intention of the foundation is to partner with the department and the community to target additional fundraising dollars

and create a community build project based around the shade structure, and assemble volunteer projects to leverage current funding as well as build community and ownership around the park. Currently, the neighborhood has committed to volunteering during the park construction as opportunities arise.

ANALYSIS:

The land for the Mesa Memorial pocket park was acquired by the city of Boulder in 1989 from the adjacent Mesa Memorial Baptist Church. It is located on west Table Mesa Drive, between Yale and Hartford and is approximately 1.7 acres, including a natural drainage on the northeast edge of the park (See Attachment A). The project site is located within the Table Mesa neighborhood, which has a total population of 6737 within a one-quarter mile (estimated from 2000 Census of 6547 with average Boulder population increase of 2.9%). Of those residents, 1624 are under the age of 18. The Table Mesa neighborhood is an average Boulder neighborhood with a household income of \$51,779. The future park site is surrounded by single and multi-family homes in the low to moderate-income range, a public library, two elementary schools, and a retirement community. This tight knit neighborhood has rallied together to form a committee to push for the development of this park. They are willing to volunteer time and financial resources in support of this much anticipated project.

Parkland Level of Service Needs

Mesa Memorial Park is listed as a priority in the 2006 Parks and Recreation Master Plan as one of the four new pocket parks to be developed in the Fiscally Constrained Plan. Two of the four identified parks have been developed in the last six years leaving Mesa Memorial as the highest priority new park for development.

Currently, the closest playground available, while school is in session, requires crossing a major road and a fairly intense incline for a small child or parent pushing a stroller. Families in the neighborhood have shared that they currently get in the car and drive to a playground that is often more than 2 miles away. Since they are already in the car, they drive further to their favorite parks.

Open space and natural areas are not safely within walking distance, requiring transportation. Mesa Memorial is an opportunity by encouraging an experiential interaction with nature. The park's designated Nature Play area will provide a safe experiential opportunity.

This project will serve local schools as a destination for short educational fieldtrips to engage with nature and learn from the interpretive signage, native plants, and animal prints. Future park renovations will include place-based learning. This project will also help serve the recreational needs of the local retirement community. The activity director at the Meridian Retirement Community leads regular activities that will include excursions to Mesa Memorial Park giving the residents the opportunity to be outside as part of a group activity or visit individually without the requirement of a vehicle.

Environmental Education / Nature Play

Environmental education will be an integral part of this new park. The natural sloping topography and long-range view of the mountains from the park have inspired a location based education model.

Varied levels of unstructured learning and activity will be accessible to all ages. The highest level of unstructured learning, or Nature Play, happens in the watershed that runs along the east side of the park that will be left in a natural state with heavier vegetation and a very small amount of water running through it seasonally.

Unique natural transition spaces will be created between traditional play areas. The transition spaces will include natural elements such as tall grasses, a series of small boulders to provide the opportunity to touch and feel natural elements while being easily supervised.

Concept Plan

The Concept Plan for Mesa Memorial Park began in 2008 with 2 community input meetings and a presentation of the final concept plan presented to Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (PRAB). In 2009, the funding was reallocated at that time and the development of Mesa Memorial Park was put on hold. In 2011, the neighborhood rallied together and approached PRAB requesting that the park be included in the 2012 budget and was included in the 2012-2013 budget.

The Concept Plan for Mesa Memorial Park includes the following amenities (See Attachment A):

1. *Traditional Play Equipment* – The community developed plan for the park provides for one ADA (American with Disabilities Act) traditional play areas that will accommodate the active play values of climbing, spinning, sliding, adventure and socializing as prioritized at the community design workshop. One area will be constructed to the standard age ranges from 2-5 year olds.
2. *Natural Play Areas* – Natural play areas provide the opportunity to manipulate, discover, explore, touch, feel and hear the natural environment. These opportunities are accommodated through large natural boulders placed throughout the park, tall natural grasses formed into vegetation rooms and areas of the park left in a natural state as encouragement for exploration. In addition, targeted landscape areas provide multiple textures and colors to attract butterflies, birds and other wildlife for children to discover.
3. *Informal Gathering Area* - The small informal gathering area will provide a space that consists of 6 large seating boulders placed in a semi-circle for gatherings such as boy or girl scout troop meetings, a place for parents to gather while the kids play and an area for the local musicians to share their music with their neighbors.

The boulders will overlook the play areas while providing the best view in the park of the iconic Flatirons.

4. *Wildlife and Riparian Corridor* - The existing park site contains an ephemeral creek which doubles as a healthy and active wildlife and riparian corridor. The development of the park will provide for the enhancement of this area by removing non-native vegetation and invasive species as well as providing supplemental plantings of riparian species such as willow, cottonwood and some upland species along the banks. A 200 linear foot raised stone path will meander through this corridor to invite children into the area for un-scripted exploration.
5. *Multi-Use Field* – The development of the park will include a multi-use field that will allow for informal, non-programmed field activities such as Frisbee, baseball, soccer, football, kite flying, dog walking, etc. The field will be irrigated bluegrass turf and mowed to an appropriate standard that will accommodate the multiple uses.
6. *Picnic Area* - The plan for the park includes a passive recreation area that will include four picnic tables to accommodate 24-36 park users to enjoy family meals or spending time with neighbors. The picnic area is located at the north end of the park away from the busy Table Mesa Drive. The area will be a combination of native grass, shade trees, mulched landscape areas and concrete pads for the tables to be secured. The area will also be ADA accessible.
7. *Site Furnishings* - One park sign, six benches, two trashcans, and six bike racks are the typical amenities provided. Four additional benches with backs will be placed around the perimeter of the park at the request of the neighbors to accommodate the more passive activities of older community members.
8. *Landscaping* - The landscaping will include low water planting as well as educational demonstration of native plantings and trees common in this life zone. The north side of the park will include a variety of plants to attract butterflies, birds and other small wildlife. The south side of the park will include a combination of shrubs and trees densely populated to create natural border along Table Mesa as a buffer between the park and the busy road.

Future Development Opportunities

In addition to the amenities listed above, several features and amenities were desired by the community and included in a grant application to Great Outdoors Colorado for funding above and beyond the funding the department currently has budgeted for the project. If additional funding is identified by the City or neighborhood fundraising, these items could be built within the park in future phases.

- *Additional Play Structure* – an additional structure to accommodate older children ranging in ages from 5-12.

- *Skate/Bike Features* - A small informal skate/bike area accommodating three to four users at a time will consist of a grinding rail, a short wall and a shallow bowl for beginner to intermediate skate and bike users.
- *Shade Structure* - The development of the park will include one 16' x 16' universally accessible shade structure to be located adjacent to the traditional play areas. The typical shade shelter with posts and a roof will be made of steel and wood on a concrete pad. It will allow for two accessible picnic tables seating 16-20 people. The shelter will have one light for security and safety when the park is closed.
- *Environmental Education* – Four interpretive signs will be installed reinforcing the place-based ecological lesson of life zones including topography, wildlife and plant communities (where applicable). The signs will be printed graphics on panels and secured to metal frames that are embedded into a concrete footer. Stamped concrete and related vegetation will reinforce the educational message in a tactile form.

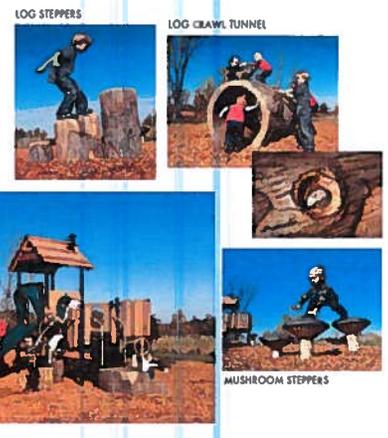
ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A: Concept Plan



LEGEND

- LARGE SHADE TREE
- ORNAMENTAL TREE
- EVERGREEN TREE
- SHRUBS
- SOD
- BUFFALO GRASS
- UNDISTURBED AREA
- NATIVE SEED MIX
- POURED IN PLACE PLAYGROUND SURFACING



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CITY OF BOULDER
 Parks & Recreation

MESA MEMORIAL PARK
 BOULDER, COLORADO

Number	Date	Issue
1	08/07/2018	Initial Issue

Prepared by: _____
 Title: _____
 Date: _____
 Drawn by: _____
 Checked by: _____
 Approved by: _____

Overall Site Plan

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