



Ute Valley Park Master and Management Plan

City of Colorado Springs
Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department

12 March 2015





Ute Valley Park Master and Management Plan

prepared by



Tapis Associates, Inc.
Kezziah Watkins
ERO Resources Corporation
Wilson & Company
Donley & Associates, Inc.

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Acknowledgements

The original portion of Ute Valley Park was donated to the City in 1969. Over the decades, additional parcels have been dedicated and acquired through the City of Colorado Springs' Parkland Dedication Ordinance, expanding it to 338 acres. In 2013, the City of Colorado Springs purchased 200 acres of the Hewlett-Packard property.

The Ute Valley Park Master and Management Plan is a cooperative agreement between the community and the City of Colorado Springs. This community-created plan will guide the future of this spectacular public open space.

We acknowledge and are thankful for the committed participation and engagement of the diverse citizen participants. All participants gave valuable input through many public meetings and reviews with the consultant team and the city staff. Their thoughtful ideas have informed and shaped this plan.

We acknowledge and are also thankful to The Friends of Ute Valley Park. They provided invaluable information that has helped shape this Master Plan.

Friends of Ute Valley Park Board:

Dan Woods, Friends of UVP, President, Friends of Ute Valley Park
Nick Cirincione, Larry, DeWitt, Phill Emmert, Dave Grossman, Bruce Hutchison, Kris Kaltenbacher, Frank Self, Christine Thomas, Dave Ward

The Ute Valley Park Master and Management Plan was reviewed and endorsed by the Palmer Land Trust's Stewardship Committee on 04 February 2015. The Plan was recommended for approval on 04 March 2015 by the City of Colorado Springs Trails, Open Space and Parks (TOPS) Working Committee and approved on 12 March 2015 by the City of Colorado Springs Parks and Recreation Advisory Board. We wish to acknowledge their attentive consideration, and support of the plan.

TOPS Working Committee:

Ian Kalmanowitz, Chair
James (Jim) Rees, Vice Chair
Jason Alwine, Philip J. (PJ) Anderson, Lee Milner, Jeff Mohrmann, Kirk Samelson, Leslie Thomas, Becky Wegner, Cathy Grossman, Sarah Musick

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board:

Jackie Hilaire, Chair
Gary Feffer, Vice-Chair
Charles Castle, Scot Hume, Ron Ilgen, Alex Johnson, Mina Liebert, John Maynard, Hank Scarangella, Bob Lally, Jason Rupinski

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City Staff

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Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Staff:

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Once again, we wish to acknowledge all the citizens who committed time and effort to provide input in the public meetings and work sessions. Their feedback was extremely helpful in ensuring that we addressed the needs of the property and the community.

Sincerely,

Karen Palus
City of Colorado Springs

Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Director

Executive Summary

In 1969, Ute Valley Park was donated to the City. Over the decades, additional parcels have been dedicated and acquired through the City's Parkland Dedication Ordinance, expanding it to 338 acres. A master plan for the original portion of Ute Valley Park was completed in 1991. In 2013, 200 acres of the Hewlett-Packard property was purchased with a combination of private funding, a Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) (Lottery) grant and Colorado Springs' Trails Open Space and Parks sales tax (TOPS) funding. These properties contain significant natural, historical and cultural resources that merit protection and preservation. Heavily used by neighbors and the community, visitors enjoy a variety of activities including hiking, dog-walking, mountain biking, sight-seeing and quiet reflection.

The City determined that natural resource management and public access could be most effectively balanced by managing Ute Valley Park and the adjacent portion of the Rockrimmon Open Space as one property. The Ute Valley Park Master and Management Plan is a cooperative agreement between the community and the City of Colorado Springs. This community-created plan will guide the future of this spectacular public open space.

Planning and Public Process

Public participation was integral to the Ute Valley Park Master and Management Plan development. The process was designed and facilitated to surface and resolve issues and conflicts; to conduct a transparent process that is open, inviting, and comfortable for all; to provide a range of options for public participation; to create an informed public by presenting and providing access to data and findings; to develop a plan that combines the "lived" experience of residents with the technical expertise of City staff and the consultant team; and to go beyond soliciting public opinion and strive instead for developing



informed public judgment through information and deliberation so that process results are responsive, responsible, and politically-supportable.

Throughout the public process, technical evaluation and expertise was applied so sound information could be provided to and used by planning participants as the basis for discussion and recommendations. The planning process included fifteen *Meetings in a Box* and five public meetings to discuss the issues, challenges, opportunities and possibilities for Ute Valley Park. With a hands-on activity during each meeting, the public participants had an opportunity to hear technical information and provide feedback on how that information was incorporated into the overall Master and Management Plan. Over 150 citizens participated during the master plan process; although not all requests could be accommodated, the planning team listened to and addressed all suggestions that were voiced within the context of the established "Guiding Principles."

Master Plan

Research, data and existing conditions were collected and documented to inform the plan. A variety of methods were used by the consultant team's professional specialists to collect data including numerous site visits, stakeholder interviews, onsite surveys, and review of previous resource studies.

An inventory and analysis of existing conditions was conducted as part of the planning process for Ute Valley Park. The purpose of these investigations was to extend the body of knowledge on which planning decisions could be based. The existing conditions inventory and site assessment can be broadly grouped into three categories: Physical Resources, Biological and Cultural Resources, and Management and Social Influences. The Physical Resources series includes topography, soils and geology. The natural environment, as well as historical and archeological resources are covered in the Biological and Cultural Resources series. The Management and Social influences series includes ordinance, deed and policy restrictions, and constructed features.

The master plan for Ute Valley Park envisions an area that offers all people the opportunity to experience this unique and beautiful place. The focus is on providing access through a variety of multi-use trails and the support facilities needed to serve them. Trails throughout the site have been planned to accommodate a wide range of abilities and interests, and to offer a variety of experiences that will make multiple visits to the Park worthwhile. Trailheads, wayfinding nodes, erosion control features and a maintenance support facility have also been identified and located on the site.

Management Plan

This Ute Valley Park Master and Management Plan accurately represents the interrelationship between the two plans. In addition, this management plan benefits from the public engagement process and the input gathered as part of the master and management planning process.

Shaped by the Guiding principles, the Ute Valley Park Management Plan emphasizes natural and cultural resource protection and restoration, while accommodating sustainable recreational and interpretive opportunities. The conservation easements mandate additional stewardship of the property via annual monitoring and reporting of the conservation values by the Palmer Land Trust.

The Ute Valley Park Master and Management Plan is a cooperative agreement between the community and the City of Colorado Springs. This community-created plan will guide the future of this beloved public park.





Introduction

Nestled in the neighborhoods of northwest Colorado Springs, Ute Valley Park offers vistas, geological features and destination-level trails, all readily accessible to outdoor enthusiasts in surrounding neighborhoods and throughout the city. The rocky-forested hogback formations are an integral part of the Colorado Springs backdrop, a place of important historical, environmental, scenic and recreational value. The Master and Management Plan is a cooperative agreement between the community and the City of Colorado Springs and will guide future uses, development and management of this cherished public park and open space.

Background

The location and setting of Colorado Springs distinguishes it from all other cities in the world. It is immediately identifiable by the mountain backdrop, punctuated by Pikes Peak. This is a landscape that is deeply embraced by the people of Colorado Springs, who cherish its beauty and majesty. Within this context lies Ute Valley Park.

The original portion of Ute Valley Park was donated to the City in 1969. Over the decades, additional parcels have been dedicated and acquired through the City's Parkland Dedication Ordinance, expanding it to 338 acres. A master plan for the original portion of Ute Valley Park was completed in 1991. In 2013, 200 acres of the Hewlett-Packard property was purchased with a combination of private funding, a Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) (Lottery) grant and Colorado Springs' Trails Open Space and Parks sales tax (TOPS) funding. This purchase would not have been possible without the private funding provided by the Trust for Public Land and the Friends of Ute Valley Park. Ute Valley Park is both a Regional Park and an Open Space. Because of this mixed classification, from this time forth the property shall be referred to as Ute Valley Park. Special requirements pertaining to discrete land parcels are specified throughout this document.

Ute Valley Park is home to diverse wildlife and vegetation and is rich in archeological features. There is an existing trailhead along Vindicator Drive and several small informal trailheads within the adjacent neighborhoods. Within the park, numerous trails, both approved and rogue, are present. The recent TOPS acquisition area is subject to a conservation easement that mandates long-term protection of natural resources on the property while supporting the value of public recreation.

Ute Valley Park (including the newly acquired parcel) is owned by the City of Colorado Springs and managed by the City's Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department.

The department is legally responsible for design, maintenance, operations and management of all resources within Ute Valley Park. The Department collaborates with the Friends of Ute Valley Park under a Memorandum of Understanding Agreement. Under guidance from the City, the Friends' assist with basic maintenance, volunteer coordination; supporting education efforts; engaging in advocacy; and fundraising.

Reason for the 2015 Master and Management Plan

Between 2013 and 2015 the City fulfilled the community's desire to extend Ute Valley Park by preserving a portion of the Hewlett-Packard property as open space. The City determined that natural resource management and public access could be most effectively balanced by managing the properties as one property; it was also decided that the name of the combined properties would be Ute Valley Park. The City of Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department hired the Tapis Associates Team to prepare this Master and Management Plan. This Master Plan is intended to cohesively guide future site development of the original park site, the newly acquired Hewlett-Packard property and the adjacent, but separate, portion of the Rockrimmon Open Space. The Management Plan establishes recommendations for preservation and protection of high value resources, restoration of damaged resources, and the management of all natural resources and developed facilities.

Surrounded by the City's suburban neighborhoods, Ute Valley Park's high visitation and lack of citizen awareness has led to overuse, placing natural resource and community values at risk. Because of this, creation of a Master and Management Plan for Ute Valley Park that is visionary, yet practical and fiscally responsible, is of critical importance. This Master and Management Plan balances resource sustainability with access and the aspirations of the community. It reflects a complete and nuanced understanding of the property, park users and uses, features and capacities, and gives voice to, and listens to, stakeholders.

Opportunities for recreation and public access to the park are balanced with potential impacts on the natural and cultural resources, continuous high volume use and maintenance and management capacity. The Ute Valley Park Master and Management Plan responds to these opportunities and challenges in ways that truly reflect the values, character, and interests that are unique to the surrounding neighborhood and wider community.

Master and Management Plan Organizational Overview

The Ute Valley Park Master and Management Plan, while jointly developed, are organized separately to ease use and clarity.

Within the Master Plan, the extensive public participation process and resulting guiding principles are fully presented in *Section II: Summary of Planning and Public Process*. Natural Resource research findings and assessment along with cultural and social influences are documented, mapped and assessed in *Section III: Existing Conditions and Site Assessment*. *Section IV: Master Plan Recommendations* contains recommendations for trailheads and trails, wayfinding, interpretive opportunities, educational opportunities, as well as recommendations for coordinating with other agencies and groups to enhance access and connectivity. Section V outlines *Design Guidelines*. The Master Plan concludes with *Section VI: Regulation and Policy Recommendations* covering special events, legal arrangements, rules of use and enforcement.

The first section of the Management Plan overviews the purpose and role of the management plan. The second section outlines natural, wildlife and cultural resource preservation, restoration, and management; it is titled *Section II: Natural and Cultural Resource Management and Protection*. *Section III: Perimeter Management* addresses unique conditions where the neighborhoods interface with the park. Trail maintenance, management and signage are covered in *Section IV: Trail System Sustainability and Management*. *Section V: Implementation Priorities* concludes with implementation priorities.

An *Appendix*, containing pertinent supporting documents and all public input received during this master planning process, completes this document.

Small Group Instructions

Task #7
Your second group task is called "Who's the Most Important Factor?"

Following a discussion by your group, you should be able to identify the most important factor for each of the three factors. To show your choice, please take a single number on the continuum from 1 to 10. Circle '1' or '10' at either end of the continuum. Circling '1' indicates your group's reasons for your group's rating below.



Summary of Planning and Public Process

Consistent with the values and practices of the Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department and of the Tapis Associates team, public participation played a central role in the development of the Ute Valley Park Master and Management Plan. Responses received through the public participation process guided the decision process and will help ensure the City's ability to successfully implement the Plan. All summary and verbatim responses received through the process may be found in *Appendices A-F*.

Project Givens

The following represent non-negotiable responsibilities of the Department which served as parameters for the decision-making process:

- The City's Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department is legally responsible for design, maintenance, operations and management of all resources for Ute Valley Park.
- The newly-acquired portion of the Park is subject to the requirements and restrictions of the Trails, Open Space and Parks (TOPS) Ordinance. All elements of the Master and Management Plan must conform to the Colorado Springs Parks Rules and Regulations Ordinances.
- The planning process will respect the terms and conditions of existing utility easements, sign easements, and the conservation easement. The conservation easement currently applies only to the portions acquired through the TOPS program.
- In accordance with the Plat and Development Plan, the City is responsible for road improvements along Ute Valley Road, including construction of a roundabout southwest of Rockrimmon Boulevard.
- There will be a new Ute Valley Trail which will connect to the regional trail system in accordance with the 2010 Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan (and in accordance with the 2014 Park System Master Plan adopted during this planning process).
- Implementation of the Master Plan will occur as funding allows.
- Many groups and individuals are interested in and encouraged to help develop the best possible Master and Management Plan; all voices will be equal in the decision-making process.
- The recommended Master and Management Plan will be presented to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board for approval.

Process Goals

The public participation process was designed and conducted in a manner to accomplish the following goals:

- To surface and resolve issues and conflicts;
- To conduct a transparent process that is open, inviting, and comfortable for all;
- To provide a range of options for public participation;
- To develop a plan that combines the "lived" experience of residents with the technical expertise of City staff and the consultant team;
- To assist in the development of public judgment by providing information about the Park and conducting a process that encourages community deliberation; and
- To produce a Master and Management Plan that is both responsible and responsive to the community.



Process Roles

There were a number of “players” who served important roles in developing this Master and Management Plan.

Certainly the **community** played a critical role by identifying their hopes for and concerns about the short- and long-term future of this well-loved and well-used park. They also provided valuable guidance as various park elements were considered, options were narrowed, and the final Master and Management Plan came into focus.

The **Resource Advisory Group** provided an invaluable interface between the community and technical perspectives. The planning team worked closely with the Group made up of representatives from City advisory bodies, from the Palmer Land Trust, Trust for Public Land, and from the Friends of Ute Valley Park, as well as natural resource experts retained by the City. At key points in the process, the Resource Advisory Group served the following roles:

- Provided advice on resource conditions within Ute Valley Park;
- Reviewed and advised the Planning Team on possible Plan approaches based on knowledge gained through the site analysis and community process; and
- Participated in the community process to develop the Master and Management Plan.



The **Planning Team** (Team) was comprised of staff from the Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department and members of the Tapis Associates Team (Consultant Team). The Consultant Team’s role included the design and oversight of the community involvement process, providing community support to encourage participation and transparency in the process, and the review and use of results of that process in the Recommended Master and Management Plan. Consultant Team members also coordinated the work of the Resource Advisory Group. At the project outset, the Team identified the non-negotiable elements of the Master and Management Plan and communicated those through the Project Givens. A critical role of Consultant Team was the initial assessment of conditions on the Park property; they then used their professional expertise and applied “best practices” in developing possible approaches for the Master and Management Plan for review by the Resource Advisory Group and the community.

A valuable project “people-power” role was played by the Friends of Ute Valley Park with the organization’s willingness to provide volunteers to conduct parking surveys and on-site user surveys early on in the process. The Friends assumed responsibility for recruiting the majority of hosts for the Meetings-in-Box held during the first few months of the public participation process and installed in-park postings prior to each public meeting.

Each of the roles played an integral part in the success of this planning effort. The time, attention and guidance provided by every single “player” is acknowledged and very much appreciated.

Process Steps

The public participation steps described below alternate between conducting technical analysis, guided by the City staff, consultant team and Resource Advisory Group, and gathering the hopes, concerns, interests, and ideas of individuals and groups who care about Ute Valley Park. Each step informed the next and the focus topics moved from broad to specific.

Assess Existing Park Conditions – June - September 2014

The Tapis Team and resource experts gathered and analyzed information about the property for review by City staff and the Resource Advisory Group. This information was also presented to the community and included:

- City of Colorado Springs' policies impacting the properties;
- physical resources;
- biological and cultural resources including high value resource areas;
- management and social influences; and
- the extensive social/rogue trail network.

Identify Issues – June - September 2014

In order to provide a range of options for public involvement, the following initial engagement methods were used to solicit the community's issues of interest and concern about the park:

- A total of 14 citizen-hosted Meetings-in-a-Box (MIB): MIBs were hosted by volunteers who each invited 12-15 people of their choice to their home for a gathering to discuss Ute Valley Park. Meeting hosts were recruited by the Friends of Ute Valley Park and the Planning Team. All hosts were provided with a box which contained informational handouts about the park and park policies, a meeting discussion guide, and group and individual response forms. In addition, one public MIB was hosted by the Planning Team on August 12 and approximately 35 people attended. In all, some 150 MIB participants discussed and completed group and individual response forms. The forms asked groups to identify elements of the park which they believe are most important to keep, those elements they would like to see changed, and what they would like the Master and Management Plan to accomplish.

How responses were used: Meeting responses were summarized into a draft list of Master and Management Plan Issues and a set of draft Guiding Principles for the planning process. Results can be found in Appendix A.



Our Guiding Principles

The following principles were drawn from consistent responses received from the Park user intercept surveys and from the group and individual responses submitted from the Meetings-in-a-Box. They are intended to serve as guideposts as we work together to develop the Ute Valley Park Master and Management Plan.

Preserve and Protect the Park's Natural Character:

- Maintain the rustic nature
- Preserve the natural beauty
- Keep the feel of wilderness
- As good stewards, preserve the Park for future generations

Manage the Trail System:

- Develop a well-defined and well-maintained trail system
- Meet a variety of users' needs
- Connect to the regional trail system

Manage and Sustain the Park

- Implement the Master and Management Plan
- Develop and implement a maintenance plan
- Manage and mitigate erosion throughout the Park
- Manage vegetative growth to mitigate fire danger without dramatically changing the Park
- Enforce Park rules
- Create a safe Park where all users can get along
- Anticipate and manage increased use
- Provide adequate parking

Involve the Public:

- Solicit and value public input
- Support the Park with volunteers and partnerships

- On-site surveys: users and parking. The Friends of Ute Valley Park assisted with the planning and public process effort by providing volunteers during June and July to conduct on-site intercept surveys of 136 park users. The surveys generally focused on how people used the Park, their observations about the park's condition, and concerns or ideas they had for the Master and Management Plan. Friends' volunteers also assisted in conducting an on-site survey of parking facilities, counting cars in parking areas in Ute Valley Park every hour for nine days during the month of July. Results can be found in Appendix B.

How responses were used: Responses to the user survey helped guide development of the draft Master and Management Plan Issues List and the draft Guiding Principles. Results of the parking survey analysis were presented at the first Community Workshop and were considered in assessing current and future parking needs.

- Community workshop: a workshop was held on the evening of September 23 at Eagleview Middle School. Attended by approximately 130 people, the workshop first focused on providing information gathered from the community to-date in the planning process, including the Draft List of Issues (on the next page) and the Draft Guiding Principles (to the left). Workshop participants were asked to review and respond to both. The bulk of the meeting focused on presenting information gathered by the Consultant Team about the park itself, followed by a mapping exercise which asked participants to work in 15 small groups with a "kit of parts" to indicate their preferences about park trails and other park features. Results can be found in Appendix C.

How responses were used: The Master Plan and Management Plan List of Issues and the Guiding Principles were finalized, based on workshop responses. The 15 maps generated by participant groups were used by the consultant team in its development of possible master plan approaches.

The Issues Summary can be found on the following page.

Ute Valley Park Master and Management Plan

Note: This list of issues was derived from the group and individual responses from the Meetings-in-a-Box and from the responses from the Park intercept survey.

Issues Summary

Trails:

- * Variety
- * Uses
- * Social/rogue trails
- * Connectivity
- * Width
- * Erosion and maintenance

Keep Park's Natural/"Wild" Character

Park Maintenance:

- * Erosion and water run-off
- * Sustainability of natural resource
- * Weeds
- * Trash

Dogs:

- * Leash regulations
- * Off-leash area/dog park
- * Waste clean-up

Signage:

- * Route-finding
- * Trail maps/rating/etiquette
- * Interpretive information, e.g. historical and geological

Park Management

- * Enforcement of Park regulations
- * Education of users

Parking and Access:

- * Availability of parking
- * Park entry points and access routes

Park Uses:

- * Recreational uses
- * User conflicts

Development:

- * Porta-potties, trash cans, dog waste sacks at trailheads
- * Benches along trails
- * Lights
- * Pavilion

Fire Mitigation/Forest Health Management

Lights

Develop Possible Approaches – September - October 2014

- Guided by the responses to the initial community outreach methods, by the community-adopted Guiding Principles, and by their knowledge of planning principles and the park itself, consultant team members prepared a Draft Baseline Master Plan for the park which included a proposed park trail system and visitor support facilities. An Expanded Alternatives Master Plan with seven additional park features was also developed. Both plans were reviewed by Department staff and Resource Advisory Group.

Review and Respond to Possible Approaches – November 2014

- Community workshop: A workshop was held on the evening of November 12 at Eagleview Middle School and attended by approximately 65 people. The purposes of the meeting were three-fold: 1) to review with the participants the results of the September 23 workshop; 2) to present the draft Baseline Master and Expanded Alternatives Master Plans based on the September workshop responses and technical analysis; and 3) to solicit participants' response to the draft Baseline and Alternative Plans. Participants worked in 10 small groups and were first asked to review the draft Baseline Master Plan and identify any significant concerns that they would consider to be "fatal flaws" of the draft Plan and to then provide a small group rating of support for each of the seven features contained in the Expanded Alternatives Master Plan. Results can be found in Appendix D.

How responses were used: The consultant team used the workshop participants' responses to make adjustments and additions to the Baseline Master Plan in preparation of the Draft Master Plan.

Prepare Draft Master and Management Plan – November 2014 - January 2015

- The consultant team prepared a Revised Expanded Alternatives Master Plan which was reviewed by the Department staff and Resource Advisory Committee. The consultant team also prepared a Draft Master and Management Plan which was reviewed with Department staff.

Review Draft Master and Management Plan – January 2015

- In mid-January the Draft Master and Management Plan was placed on the City's website for public review and comment.
- On January 27, a community open house was held at Eagleview Middle School for review and response to the Draft Plan. Participants were asked to provide general comments on the Draft Plan and to provide specific responses to the proposed alignment of the regional trail through the park. Results can be found in Appendices E and F.

How responses were used: Both online and open house responses were compiled and used to guide preparation of the Recommended Master and Management Plan.

Prepare and Approve the Final Master and Management Plan – February - March 2015

- The Recommended Master and Management Plan was presented to the TOPS Working Committee at a public meeting on 04 February 2015.
- The Recommended Master and Management Plan was presented to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board for formal review during a public meeting on 12 February 2015. The Board (**approved the plan**) during public meeting on 12 March 2015.



Existing Conditions and Site Assessment

An inventory and analysis of existing conditions was conducted as part of the planning process for Ute Valley Park. The assessments extended the body of knowledge on which planning decisions could be based. The data assembled for the Ute Valley Park parcels in the 1991 master planning process was reassessed and extended to include the Hewlett-Packard parcels and the adjacent Rockrimmon Open Space. The site analysis provides a holistic understanding of how the land came to exist in its present state and condition, as well as the historic, physical, biological, cultural, management, and social contexts in which it is situated. This information allows decisions to be made in ways that will protect the natural and cultural resources and preserve the conditions that make Ute Valley Park unique and desirable as a public amenity.

Methodology

The existing conditions inventory and site assessment at Ute Valley Park can be broadly grouped into three categories: Physical Resources, Biological and Cultural Resources, and Management and Social Influences. The Physical Resources series includes topography, soils and geology. The natural environment, as well as paleontological and archeological resources are covered in the Biological and Cultural Resources series. The Management and Social Influences series includes ordinance, deed and policy restrictions, and constructed features.

The Physical Resources, Biological and Cultural Resources and Management and Social Influences series were evaluated by the consultant team and reviewed by the Department staff. Each of the three series was evaluated individually since their inherent information was considered separately by the decision-makers and the public. For example, high value ecological resources were considered under different decision processes than property use restrictions which are mandated by funding sources. The overlay maps compiled for each of the three categories illustrate and delineate areas that would be sensitive to or be negatively impacted by human activity. Information from additional studies, provided by the City, was considered during the process.

History

Ute Valley Park is assembled from multiple properties--the original portion of the park was donated to the City in 1969. Over the decades, additional parcels have been dedicated and acquired through the City's Parkland Dedication Ordinance, growing it to 338 acres. In 2013, 200 acres of the Hewlett-Packard property were purchased with a combination of private funding, a Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO)(Lottery) grant and Colorado Springs' Trails, Open Space and Parks sales tax (TOPS) funding and added to the park. To cohesively guide development and management, the adjacent portion of the Rockrimmon Open Space is included in this Master and Management Plan. Together these properties preserve mountain viewshed, plant and animal habitat, geological and cultural history, and recreational opportunities for area residents. While the paleontological and archeological resources were well researched and documented during the 1991 and 2015 master plan processes, the recent history of the park property is not well documented.

The modern history of Ute Valley Park largely parallels the history of the surrounding natural and human communities. From the earliest human habitation to modern times, Ute Valley Park's topography and vegetation have provided humans with abundant wildlife, diverse and fruitful plants, and recreational opportunities. Archaeological, paleontological, and forest history findings are covered in more detail under *Biological and Cultural Resources* in this section.

Early and Historic Native American Habitation

Ute Valley Park lies along the Colorado Front Range Foothills Transition Zone. Archaeological investigations in the Denver area reveal that the foothills transition zone presented an advantageous situation for prehistoric use and is known to have had prehistoric occupations extending from the Early Archaic period. Although Paleo Indian sites are known in Colorado, on the Plains as well as in the intermountain area, no Paleo Indian sites have been well documented in the area (Halasi 1980).

The Ute Indians were the first explorers, settlers, and inhabitants of the Pikes Peak Region (Mehls 1984; Chaussee 2006). Evidence of the spiritual importance this area held for the Ute is present in the proliferation of culturally scarred, or "prayer trees" documented near Stratton Open Space (Chaussee 2006; Kaelin 2003), in Red Rock Open Space, as well as within Ute Valley Park (Snyder 2014). The Ute Indians traveled and hunted on the property; this is supported by lithic scatter and various isolated artifacts found during the site investigations of this Master Plan. Pikes Peak is traditionally known as Tava or "sun" in the Ute language and the band surrounding the mountain was known as the Tabeguache, "People of the Sun Mountain" before they were relocated to the western slope of Colorado in 1868. Once moved to the western slope, the Tabeguache were known as the Uncompahgre. Under the Ute Agreement of 1880, the Tabeguache were removed from Colorado altogether, relocated to a reservation in Utah (Kaelin and Pikes Peak Historical Society 2008).

Additional Information

Additional history on the region and the Ute Valley Park property is available from the following sources:

1991 Ute Valley Park Master Development Plan and Program. Voorman Property Acquisition by Judith Ann Halasi, Colorado Preservation Office, June 1980.

Autobee, Robert and Deborah Dobson-Brown, 2003, Colorado State Roads and Highways. National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Submission. Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation; Colorado Historical Society.

Chaussee, Michael, 2006 "History of Jones Park and the Colorful Characters that Pioneered the Cheyenne Canyon, Colorado Springs, Colorado." Available at: <http://actionmatrix.com/History/html/JonesPark.htm>. Last Accessed: December 11, 2013,

Clark, Bonnie J. . 1999. Protohistoric Stage. *Colorado Prehistory: A Context for the Platte River Basin*, by K.P. Gilmore, M. Tate, M. L. Chenault, B. Clark, T. McBride, and M. Wood, pp. 309-336. Colorado Council of Professional Archaeologists, Denver.

Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum
215 S Tejon Street, Colorado Springs.
www.cspm.org

Halasi Judith A, 1980, EP.LG.R54. Voorman Property Acquisition (Addition to Rockrimmon Park) Colorado Springs, El Paso County, Colorado. Colorado Preservation Office for the City of Colorado Springs.

Kaelin, Celinda Reynolds and the Pikes Peak Historical Society, 2008, *American Indians of the Pikes Peak Region*. Images of America.

Kelso, Tass, 2014 Ute Valley Park Plant Communities & Vegetation Patterns, Department of Biology, Colorado College

Snyder, Steve, 2014, Ute Valley Park Management Plan and Cultural Resources Preliminary Report

Mehls, Steven F., 1984 Colorado Mountains Historic Context. Colorado Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation.

Monahan, Sherry, 2002, Images of Pikes Peak Adventure, Communities, and Lifestyles. Electronic document, http://books.google.com/books?id=h_uquJzGGl8C&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false, accessed January 10, 2012.

Noel, Thomas J., 2006, "The Arapaho Camp." *Mile High City*. electronic document http://208.42.235.74/aboutdenver/history_narrative_1.asp, accessed October 15, 2012.

Old Colorado City Historical Society History Center
1 S 24th Street, Colorado Springs.
www.occhs.org

Historic Settlement

Although historic settlement of the region began prior to the 1850s, it was the Colorado Gold Rush beginning in 1858 that brought large numbers of people to the then Kansas Territory (Clark 1999). While the Pikes Peak area pulled in \$18 million in gold (Monahan 2002), profitable claims were few and far between and by 1860, the Colorado Gold Rush was all but extinguished. The deflation of the boom left many miners abandoned in the new Colorado Territory in 1861. While it was the gold rush that brought settlers to Colorado, it was the Homestead Act of 1862 that kept them here. The first settlements in the 1860s included open range cattle ranches and the estate of General Palmer at Glen Eyrie. Although early homesteaders established smaller farms, these were generally not successful. There was also limited surface and subsurface mining of coal. By the early 1900's most of the land transactions were related to coal mining although there were still a few farms. From 1913 Golden Cycle Corporation held most of the land from Pikeview to Woodmen Valley. Tunnels ran north and west from the shaft at Pikeview through most of the area south of Woodmen Road (Halasi 1980).

As development of Colorado continued, the necessity for reliable transit routes between burgeoning settlements became increasingly apparent. Near the end of the 19th century, vast networks of stagecoach lines and wagon roads began proliferating throughout the plains, foothills, and mountain passes of Colorado (Autobee and Dobson-Brown 2003). One stage road ran up the present Centennial Boulevard (then called Douglass Ranch Road and later Wilson Road) and then turned east around the northern edge of Popes Bluffs along the approximate alignment of the present Vindicator Drive defining the northern edge of the park. As early as 1864 a weekly mail coach ran along this route from Denver to Pueblo and back by way of Colorado City (Halasi 1980).

The increased settlement of the mountain areas catalyzed by the gold rush and the Homestead Act led to conflicts with the Utes for whom the region was home. A series of treaties and negotiations began, and as noted above, by the 1880s the land controlled by the Utes was greatly reduced and they were relocated to reservations (Mehls 1984).

Recent Development

Development of the Popes Bluffs and Woodmen Valley area followed a pattern typical of other areas in the Pikes Peak Region. The Modern Woodmen of America established a tuberculosis sanatorium in Woodmen Valley in 1909 that became a major health center by the 1920's. With the rise of new medical treatment of tuberculosis, the sanatorium was abandoned in 1947. The next owner willed this sanatorium to the Sisters of St. Francis Seraph in 1954. With the growth of Colorado Springs and the establishment of the Air Force Academy north of Woodmen Valley, the area became valuable for suburban development (Halasi 1980).

Ute Valley Park exhibits cultural resources associated with the prehistoric and historic contexts of the Ute, the mining boom, the homesteading, ranching, and settling of the Pikes Peak area, and the consequential development of transportation.

Physical Resources

Slope, Aspect, Elevation, Drainage Ways, Soils and Geology are included in the Physical Resources series. These characteristics are considered for their significance to the Master and Management Plan. Each characteristic is inventoried and assessed by both its existing resource condition and attributes, and each characteristic is mapped using available information and field verified by the consultant team. The physical resources are briefly described along with their influence on Master and Management Plan decisions. The Physical Resources Overlay Map, at the end of this section, summarizes the six characteristics that influence Master and Management Plan decisions on a map unit basis. Individual resource maps are located in Appendix G.

Slope

The park is generally defined by the steep ridge on the western edge, the ridges extending eastward from it and the main west-east drainage that is periodically deeply incised. Geology, soils and erosive actions directly determine the topography and slopes. Slope influences preservation, restoration methods, trail and trailhead locations, construction methods, and forest health management strategies.

Aspect

Aspect is the direction a particular piece of land faces. The many valleys and ridges create land with diverse aspect throughout Ute Valley Park. Land having a particular aspect - facing a particular direction - is subject to the influences of that exposure. For this analysis, shadows on the north facing slopes are based on solar azimuth of 45 degrees from north. The alignment and appropriate grade of trails and trailheads located on the north aspect required more careful consideration. With regard to user experience and sustainable design, northern exposure is cool in the summer, but holds moisture, snow and ice in the winter, creating hazardous trail conditions that often lead to trail widening and braiding.

Elevation

Like the slope, elevation is also directly determined by geology. From the high point of 6,680' along the western most boundaries to the low point of 6,200' to the east along Tech Center Drive, Ute Valley Park ranges 480 vertical feet. Elevation influences resource preservation, restoration methods, trail and trailhead locations, and construction methods. While elevation is an important consideration for site-specific design, the elevation map units do not specifically influence general Master and Management Plan decisions.

Drainage Ways

The generally east-west-oriented ridges along with piped stormwater from adjacent developments drain into the central drainage – all draining east into Monument Valley Creek. Drainage ways are sensitive to erosion and sedimentation both naturally occurring and that caused by human disturbance. The preliminary stormwater assessment of the main drainage channel identified areas of active erosion and areas of relative stability. Active-erosion areas threaten trails, natural and cultural resources, and pose potential user safety concerns. The stormwater assessment is located in Appendix J. Restoration of natural hydrological flows throughout the property, and rehabilitation and protection of the natural drainage ways influence Master and Management Plan decisions.

Soils

Soil matrices represented in Ute Valley Park are typical of the area. All the park's soils are rated "hazard for erosion" and "severely limited" for trail construction due to slope, drainage characteristics and surface erosion by the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, El Paso County Soil Survey. Soil characteristics are uniform throughout the site. The erosive quality of the soil should be considered during trail layout, construction and maintenance. Soils are an important consideration for site-specific design, attention to the highly erosive soil characteristic should be considered in all activities and development causing soil disturbance.

Geology

Ute Valley Park's most striking aspect from a distance is the long Middle Sandstone Ridge of the Laramie Formation which forms the rocky western ridge well known to northern Colorado Springs residents. The main drainage and the perimeter meadows are comprised of Alluvial and Colluvial, and Undivided (Holocene). Opportunities exist for interpretation in the rocky ridges. Although dramatic and defining, geology informs the planning and management on a site-specific basis, not by map units.

Physical Resource Overlay Map

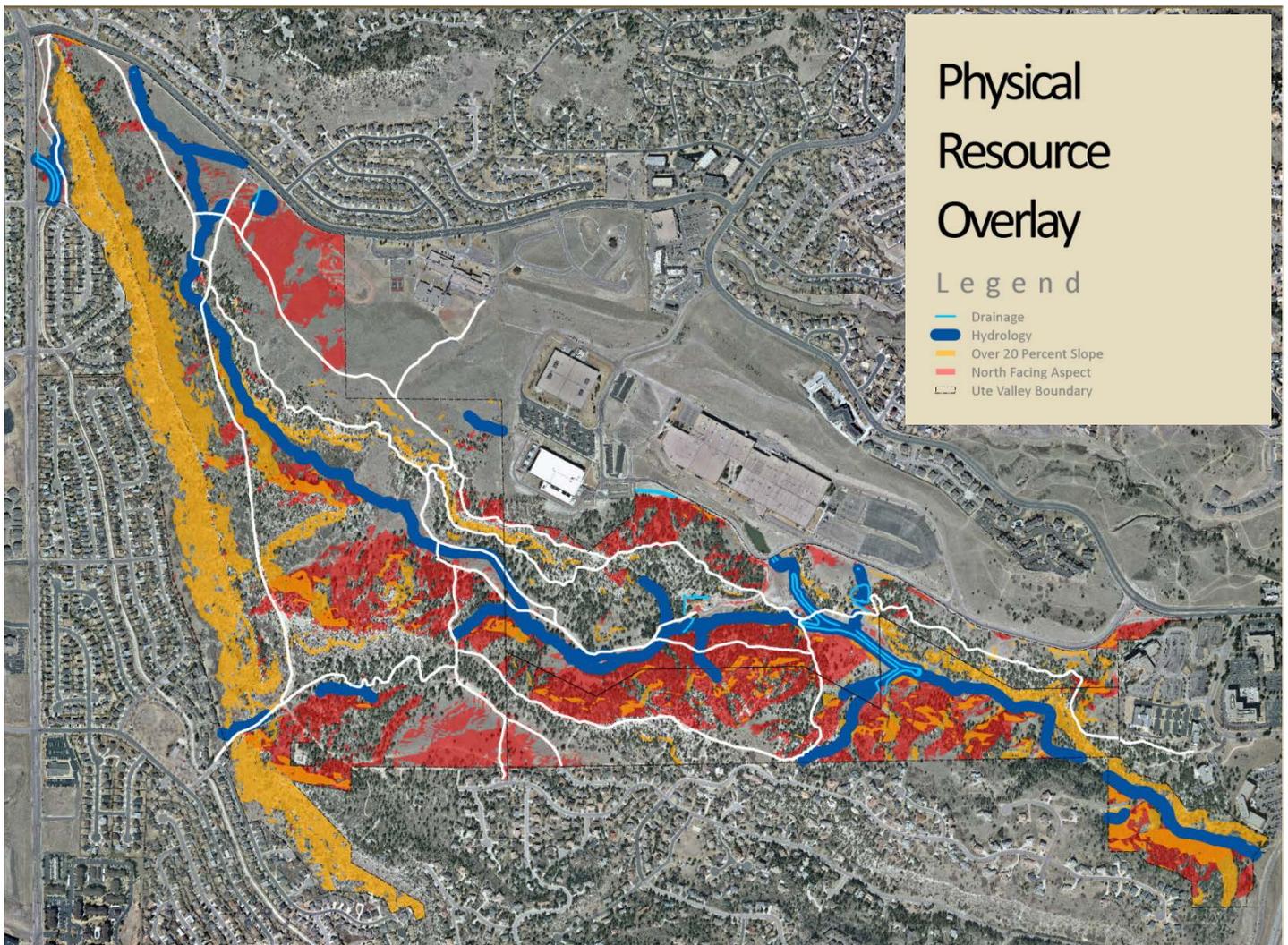
The Physical Resource Overlay map summarizes the findings that most impact Master and Management Plan decisions. These include:

- Riparian Zones - hydrology and drainages - 100' corridor (50' on each side)
- Slopes over 20%
- Aspect - north facing

Not included in this overlay because they are not informative on a map unit basis:

- Elevation
- Soils
- Geology

This overlay, in conjunction with the Biological and Cultural Resource Overlay and the Management and Social Influences Overlay, guided decisions throughout the planning process.



Biological and Cultural Resources

Forest and Vegetation, Wildlife and Habitat, and Paleontology and Archeology are included in the Biological and Cultural Resources series. Each characteristic is inventoried and assessed by both its existing resource condition and attribute, and each characteristic is mapped using available information and field verified by the consultant team. The biological and cultural resources are briefly described along with their influence on Master and Management Plan decisions. The Biological and Cultural Resources Overlay Map, at the end of this section, synthesizes the four characteristics that influence Master and Management Plan decisions on a map unit basis. Individual resource maps and data is located in Appendix H.

Forest and Vegetation

Vegetation in Ute Valley Park is dominated by a Ponderosa pine- Gambel oak woodland community interspersed with grassland meadows and shrub communities. These communities are described in detail in the vegetation report (Colorado College 2014) and the baseline inventories (ERO 2013 and ERO 2014), and are summarized as follows:

- **Ponderosa Pine-Gambel Oak Woodland** – Open woodland dominated by ponderosa pine with a scattered understory of Gambel oak thickets, and occasional patches of mountain mahogany, chokecherry, and Rocky Mountain juniper. The sparse understory includes grasses such as blue grama, mountain muhly, and Indian rice grass.
- **Mountain Shrub/mixed shrub-conifer Woodlands** – These communities are found along the hogback ridge in the northwest portion of the park, and are dominated by Gambel oak, three-leaf sumac, and mountain mahogany interspersed with pinyon pine and Rocky Mountain juniper. The northern extent transitions into an increased prevalence of ponderosa pine and three-leaf sumac. The understory consists of small shrubs, cactus, and grasses such as little bluestem, Indian rice grass, needlegrass, blue grama, and western wheat grass.
- **Alkaline Grassland Community** – The large open grassland in the north-central portion of the property consists of native grasses such as blue grama, western wheat grass, low shrubs such as saltbush and winterfat, and occasional woody shrubs such as Rocky Mountain juniper, three leaf sumac, rabbitbrush, and wild rose.
- **Xeric Grassland** – Two xeric grassland communities are found in the park, one in the large sage-dominated meadow along the southern boundary, and a smaller (yucca-dominated) area near the northwest corner. Common native grass species include needle and thread grass, green needlegrass, Canada wild rye, blue grama, and Junegrass. The larger area on the southern border is also dominated by fringed sage.
- **Wetland/Riparian** – A small cattail-dominated wetland is found adjacent to the Vindicator Drive trailhead, and riparian vegetation is found intermittently along the main drainage through the park. The narrow riparian corridor in the western portion of the park is dominated by a mix of native and non-native willows, plains cottonwood, three leaf sumac, wild rose, and upland trees such as ponderosa pine and juniper. Invasive Russian olive and Siberian elm are found throughout the riparian area, as well as noxious weeds such as Canada thistle and toadflax.
- **Others** – Other communities occurring in small patches in the park include Douglas fir-Juniper Woodland, Mountain Mahogany-Grasslands, Brome-dominated Grassland, and Disturbed Grasslands.

Wildlife and Habitat

Ute Valley Park provides habitat to a variety of wildlife species that are typical of the plains-foothill transitional zone of the region. Common mammals include mule deer, coyote, black bear, grey fox, red fox, ground squirrel, western harvest mouse, and cottontail rabbit. Common bird species include red-tailed hawk, wild turkey, great horned owl, various woodpeckers and grassland songbirds. Common reptiles such as bull snake, prairie rattlesnake, and various lizards can be found in the park, while amphibians are less common.

The park does not contain suitable habitat for any federally threatened and endangered wildlife species, including the Mexican spotted owl and Preble's meadow jumping mouse.

Habitat Condition

The park currently has an extensive network of trails, including designated trails, well-designed undesignated rogue trails, and poorly designed or poorly located rogue trails. While this existing system of trails provides extensive recreational access opportunities, it also results in disturbance and fragmentation of wildlife habitat in the park.

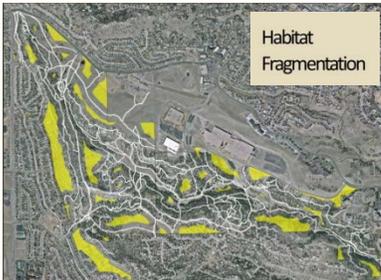
A habitat fragmentation analysis conducted for this plan illustrates the extent of fragmentation to the left. (A larger version of this map is located in Appendix H.). As shown on the map, few areas of habitat are currently unfragmented, leaving very little undisturbed habitat for wildlife to thrive. This demonstrates an opportunity for this planning process to reconfigure trails and recreation access in a way that reduces fragmentation and improves wildlife habitat value by establishing several large blocks of undisturbed habitat. Conversely, the current level of disturbance, if not reduced or corrected, would greatly diminish value of the park to wildlife over the long term, ultimately resulting in the abandonment of the park by some species. More information on habitat fragmentation and the impacts of trails and recreation is presented in the Management Plan.

High Value Habitat Areas

Ute Valley Park contains several areas that are considered high value habitats, based on the following attributes:

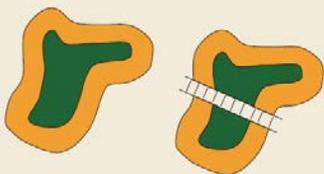
- Contain habitat types that are unusual within Ute Valley Park (such as riparian and grassland communities)
- Contain habitat types that are known to potentially support specialized plants or wildlife (i.e., hogback ridge and riparian corridor)
- Areas that are relatively undisturbed

These areas are shown on the Biological and Cultural Resource Overlay map at the end of this section. These high value habitat areas are some of the best opportunities to improve the quality and function of wildlife habitat by protecting contiguous undisturbed areas from disturbance and fragmentation. While these areas are *not* absolute avoidance areas for trails and access, they are areas where habitat conservation should be given a greater level of consideration.



Habitat Fragmentation

Many wildlife species depend on large, intact blocks of interior habitat for feeding, resting, breeding, and overall survival. Physical disturbances such as trails and roads can fragment interior habitat areas, making them less useful to wildlife. In addition, the presence of humans and dogs along trails can expand that impact (within about 50 meters of a trail) by disturbing or startling wildlife. Over time, these impacts diminish the value of habitats to wildlife, resulting in abandonment of the area by some species. These impacts can be mitigated by establishing and protecting large, intact blocks of undisturbed habitat within the park.



Cultural Resources

The Ute Valley Park contains cultural resources associated with the prehistoric and historic contexts of the Ute, the mining boom, homesteading, ranching, and settling of the Pikes Peak area, and the consequential development of transportation. A historical summary is located at the beginning of this section.

Cultural Resource Inventories

In 2014, archaeologist Steve Snyder completed the Ute Valley Park Management Plan and Cultural Resources Preliminary Report which included the results of a cultural resource survey conducted in Ute Valley in 1980 by archaeologists on staff with the Colorado Preservation Office as well as the results of a survey conducted by Snyder and volunteer members of the Colorado Archaeological Society and local residents from February through April 2014.

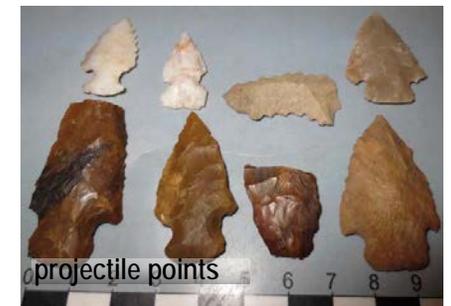
The 1980 survey resulted in the documentation of 5 sites (including three historic sites and two prehistoric resources) and 6 prehistoric isolated finds (Halasi 1980). Snyder's 2014 survey resulted in the identification of 11 areas of concentrated cultural activity containing over 1,000 artifacts and features, however no resources were assigned Smithsonian trinomial site numbers by the Colorado Office of Archaeology and Historic Places (OAHP) and were not evaluated for their eligibility for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). All cultural resources referenced below were identified by either the 1980 or 2014 cultural resource surveys; no additional fieldwork has been conducted.

Significant Cultural Resources

The most notable cultural resources, with the greatest potential of providing additional significant information about the prehistoric and historic use of Ute Valley Park, include the following:

- Open camps, diagnostic projectile points and tools, and lithic scatters such as those described in Areas 5, 6, and 7 in Appendix H.
- Cultural modified trees and stone circles that represent significant areas of cultural activity.
- Intact historic resources associated with coal mining (5EP86 or Area 11), the Denver to Pueblo Stage Coach Road (5EP96), and the Reed Ranch (Area 8) that could provide the most significant information concerning the development of not only the Popes Bluff and Ute Valley area, but the Pikes Peak region as a whole.

Due to the prevalence of artifact collection and disturbance of both prehistoric and historic resources in the park, any site that is found to be in place and undisturbed will prove to be the most significant.



Biological and Cultural Resource Overlay Map

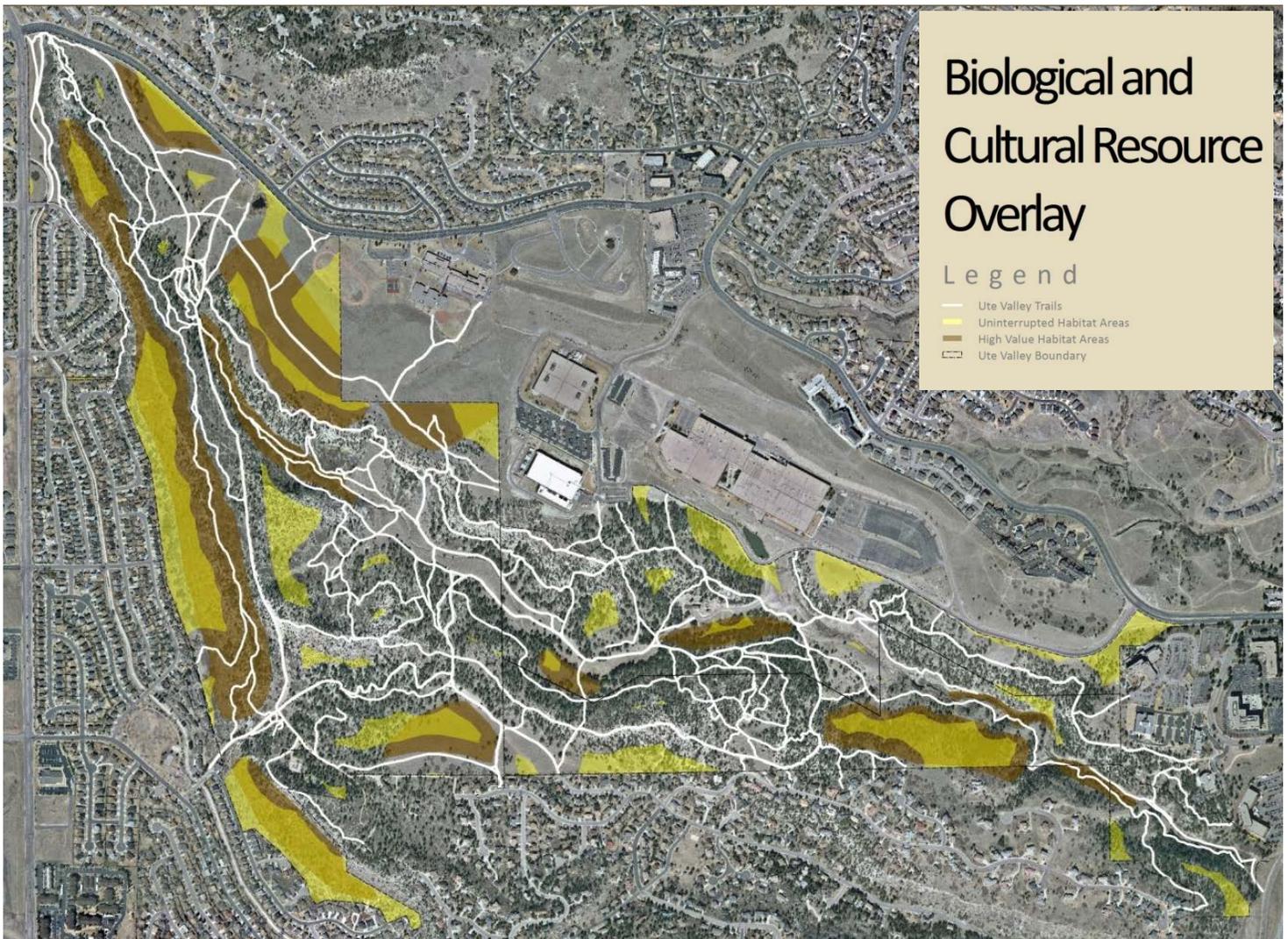
The Biological and Cultural Resource Overlay map summarizes the findings that most impact Master and Management Plan decisions. These include:

- Uninterrupted Habitat Areas
- High Value Habitat Areas

Not included in this overlay because they are not informative on a map unit basis:

- Forest and Vegetation Communities
- Archeological and Paleontological sites are considered although not mapped in order to protect the sites for future generations.

This overlay in conjunction with the Physical Resource Overlay and the Management and Social Influences Overlay guided decisions throughout the planning process.



Management and Social Influences

Parcel Restrictions, Departmental Practices, City Ordinances and Practices, Pond, Trailheads and Parking, Existing Trails, and Trail System Concepts are included in the Management and Social Influences series. Each characteristic is inventoried and assessed and each characteristic is mapped using available information and verified by the consultant team. The Management and Social Influence are briefly described along with their impact on Master and Management Plan decisions. The Management and Social Influences Overlay Map at the end of this section summarizes the six characteristics that influence Master and Management Plan decisions on a map unit basis. Individual resource maps and data is located in Appendix I; intercept and parking survey results are located in Appendix B.

Parcel Restrictions

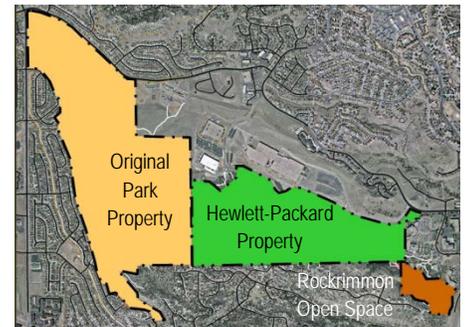
The original portion of Ute Valley Park was donated to the City in 1969. Over the decades, additional portions have been dedicated and acquired through the City's Parkland Dedication Ordinance growing it to 338 acres. A master plan for the original portion of Ute Valley Park was completed in 1991. This area is shown in gold on the map to the right. In 2013, 200 acres of the Hewlett-Packard property (green) was purchased with a combination of private funding, a Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) (Lottery) grant and Colorado Springs' Trails, Open Space and Parks sales tax (TOPS) funding. This purchase would not have been possible without the private funding provided by the Trust for Public Land and the Friends of Ute Valley Park. As with many of the City's recently acquired properties, utilizing GOCO funding stipulates a Conservation Easement be placed on the property to protect its conservation values. These conservation values include:

- natural, open space, aesthetic, cultural, ecological and environmental resources and characteristics;
- natural wildlife and wildlife habitats; and
- scenic character of the local landscape and scenic enjoyment.

The purpose of the Conservation Easement is to assure that the property will be retained forever predominantly in its natural condition and be available for public outdoor recreation and education.

Conservation easements influence preservation, conservation, restoration methods, location of facilities, and management strategies. The Palmer Land Trust reviews compliance with the stipulations of the Conservation Easement annually. Only the 200-acre property acquired utilizing GOCO funds is protected by a conservation easement at the time of this master plan.

Utility easements currently exist within the park. The easement traversing the drainage bottom on the east end of the park will be partially abandoned once the new line is installed and commissioned as part of the D.E.C. (Digital Equipment Corporation) Development Plan. As part of the purchase agreement, with Hewitt-Packard, a new sanitary line will be constructed in the park along Ute Valley Road and connect into Rockrimmon Boulevard. Hewitt-Packard will be responsible for construction of this new line. The sanitary sewer to remain extends through the adjacent Rockrimmon Open Space (brown). Both the Conservation Easement and the D.E.C. Development Plan are located in Appendix I.



Timeline for Ute Valley Park Extension Acquisition

- TOPS Working Committee: Recommended approval on June 26, 2013
- Parks and Recreation Advisory Board: Recommended approval on July 11, 2013
- City Council Informal Agenda: July 22, 2013 (presentation)
- City Council Formal Agenda: July 23, 2013 and August 13, 2013
- Trust for Public Lands Board of Directors Approval – July 2013
- Private Fundraising for phase I through August 28, 2013
- Apply for second GOCO Grant in mid-August 2013
- Phase I closing: August 28, 2013
- Public Master Plan / Management Plan Process: 2014-2015
- Phase II closing: January 31, 2015 (subject to City Council appropriation)
- TOPS Working Committee review February 4, 2015
- Parks and Recreation Advisory Board approval on March 12, 2015
- Master Plan Implementation: ongoing as funding is available.

Departmental Policies, Practices and Supporting Documents

Ute Valley Park is owned by the City of Colorado Springs and managed by the City's Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department. According to City Code, the Parks Director can promulgate park rules – not every rule and regulation is found in City Code. City of Colorado Spring Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services departmental policies and practices are specifically aimed to protect and manage the system's parks and open spaces. Departmental policies and practices include: Passive Recreation Criteria, multi-use trail philosophy, and the Trail Etiquette yield protocol. Supporting documents for Ute Valley Park include the 2014 Park System Master Plan. The Department must also comply with federal and state regulations such as Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the OPDMD-ADA (Other Powered Driven Mobility Device). Departmental policies and practices influence trail and facility design, allowable activities, rules of use, enforcement, fundraising opportunities, and management strategies.

City Ordinances and Practices

City of Colorado Spring ordinances govern activities and behavior in the park. These include: hours of operation, damage to park property and resources, rock climbing and bouldering, non-motorized trail designation, and domestic animals. It is the practice of the City that all revenues from activities, reservations, and special event permits, that are generated and paid directly to the City on City properties, are put into the City's General Fund. Changes to this practice would require approval by the Department Director, Mayor and City Council. City ordinances and policies influence rules of use, enforcement, fundraising opportunities and management strategies.

Pond

The pond near the Vindicator Drive trailhead has and will continue to follow its natural course without human intervention. At the time of this master plan, most of the pond area is collecting sediment and supporting vegetation.

Trailheads and Parking

Park visitors arrive at Ute Valley Park primarily by foot, bicycle and vehicle. A parking survey was conducted to assess the parking use patterns and potential parking needs. The survey, developed by the consultant team, was conducted in the field by the Friends of Ute Valley Park over nine days during July 2014. The survey included parking counts at the Vindicator Trailhead and two other areas often utilized for parking by park visitors. The parking count data suggests:

- Peak vehicular access generally occurs from 8:00 am to noon on weekends and 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm on weekdays.
- The main parking lot at the Vindicator Trailhead exceeds full capacity during peak weekend usage.
- The parking resource at Eagleview Middle School is not widely utilized by park users so access is not a priority.
- The on-street parking at Piñon Park is consistently around 50% capacity for both weekdays and weekends.
- Available parking is a public concern.

The Friends of Ute Valley Park also conducted an intercept survey via interviews in June and July 2014. This survey inquired about use patterns and quality of experience. Most of the use patterns and all of the quality of experience results are summarized on page III.12 in *Existing Trails*. According to the intercept survey, most visitors arrive at the park by vehicle at the Vindicator Trailhead, although a recognized bias was introduced by the survey volunteers' location. With the caveat that this is not a statistically accurate survey, the trailhead related use pattern data suggests:

- Visitors predominantly access Ute Valley Park by vehicle and park at the Vindicator Trailhead. Forty percent of the 136 individuals interviewed entered the park by a trail connection.
- Trailhead or neighborhood connection access in order of usage frequency is the Vindicator Trailhead, Popes Valley Neighborhood accesses, Golden Hills Road and Hewlett-Packard.

Although the Vindicator Trailhead is occasionally at capacity, the weekend parking survey determined this is not an all-day condition. It, along with the entire public involvement process, identified use patterns that will guide trailhead and parking facility development. Accommodating additional parking facilities near the Vindicator Trailhead will be re-evaluated after the new trailhead on Ute Valley Road is in use and any stormwater detention for resource protection is defined. The full parking survey and intercept survey results are located in Appendix B.

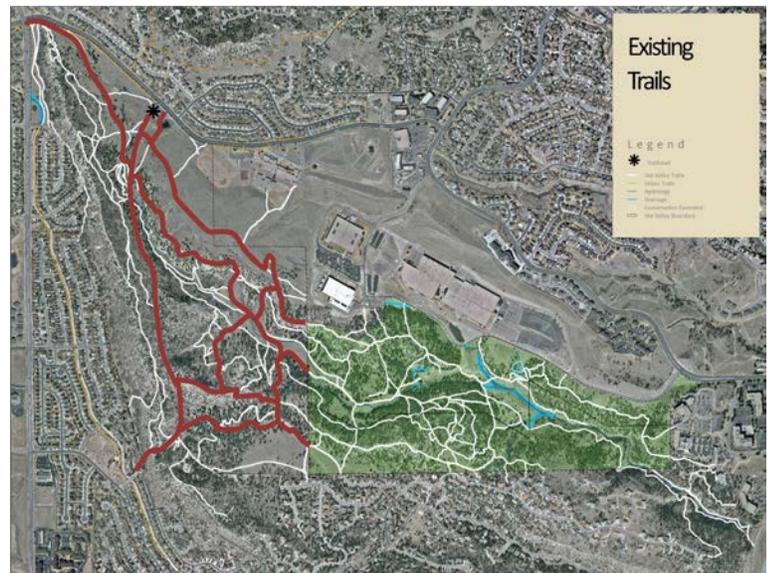
Existing Trails

The Ute Valley Park trail system is a highly valued and popular amenity. Two surveys evaluated the existing trail system; a user patterns and experience survey, and a physical conditions survey were both conducted in the summer of 2014. As mentioned previously, the Friends of Ute Valley Park conducted intercept surveys via interview. This intercept survey inquired about use patterns and quality of experience. With the caveat that this is not a statistically accurate survey and was administered by volunteers not stationed uniformly or proportionally around the park, the use pattern and quality of experience data suggests:

- Visitors enjoy the trails and are concerned with natural resource damage caused by trail erosion, trail widening and continually developing rogue trails.
- Visitors participate in a wide range of activities including, but not limited to: hiking/walking; mountain biking; running; dog-walking; photography; bouldering; and seeking a quiet place.
- Over-crowding and conflict with other users was mentioned 11 times in 136 park visitor surveys.
- The most common visitation frequency is three or more times per week representing 40% of the visitors; another 23% visit the park at least once per week.
- Trail condition and maintenance is the public's primary concern.

Ute Valley Park contains numerous multi-use trail options. Trails vary greatly in character and level of physical challenge. A field survey of the trail system's physical condition, completed by the consultant team, recorded and mapped the trail conditions. The findings and subsequent evaluation suggests:

- Despite numerous trail options, unsustainable, rogue trails continue to be established. Rogue trails are easily established on the sparsely vegetated and highly erosive soils by off-trail visitor's footsteps or tracks. Trail users follow the faint 'new path' and within three or four passes, a rogue trail is established. Rogue trails are a concern for ecosystem resource protection as well as trail system maintenance. The map to the right indicates the currently mapped rogue trail web (white) in context with the 1991 master planned trails (maroon).
- Sparse vegetation, lack of barriers, poor drainage and poor soils side-by-side walking and dogs on and off leash lead to and exacerbate trail widening.
- Sustainable new trail alignments will receive better acceptance when provided in conjunction with conscientious trail closure.
- Future maintenance solutions should be formulated to consider the effects of changes on all park users
- The field survey identified numerous trail sections exhibiting established and progressing erosion, trail entrenchment, trail widening, or trail braiding.



It is critical to establish the condition of the existing trail system in order to plan for the future ecosystem resource protection as well as preservation of the open space users' experience. Unsustainable substandard trail conditions, including erosion, entrenchment, widening, and braiding, degrade the natural ecosystem resource as well as detract from the trail user experience. A well-designed trail system enhances resource protection by controlling habitat fragmentation, soil surface disturbance, and sedimentation. It also provides access for resource management.

A well-designed trail system also enhances trail user experience by providing access through the property's unique natural resources, providing a wayfinding and interpretive system to direct people around the property, and providing safe conditions for multiple users in keeping with the City's multi-use trail philosophy. The full intercept survey and results is located in the Appendix B.

20-40' widened
hiker-only trail in
original park
property



multi-use rogue
trail widening
and braiding in
conservation
easement



rogue downhill
mountain bike
area



Trail System Concepts

When evaluating the Ute Valley Park trail system, it is helpful to consider the big picture components that tie this trail system to this particular property and provide the basis for considering trail system options in the Master Plan. These existing components include interconnected looping trail options; desirable destinations; trailheads with parking; and key trail connections within the park and to adjoining trails and neighborhoods. These components are designed in concert with slope and soils with special consideration given to intact ecosystems, creating uninterrupted resource areas, meadows, drainage ways and riparian areas.

A trail system is necessary to protect natural resources in moderate to heavily used natural areas. The proliferation of rogue trails in Ute Valley Park supports the need for a designated trail system. With the large number of users, even the few people who disregard designated trails damage the natural resources. While the public process revealed a few preferences to wander off-trail, in a heavily-used area such as Ute Valley Park, a dispersal

strategy for off-trail hiking (as is sometimes employed in remote backcountry areas) is not feasible and would result in significant resource degradation. Ute Valley Park is not a lightly accessed remote area; it is a popular, heavily used, urban-interface park. The erosion, sediment loading, wildlife disturbance, and destruction of vegetation easily observed along multiple off-trail wandering routes are proof that the land cannot support off-trail travel at current high visitation and use levels.

A well-designed trail system balances use and conservation. Additionally, it concentrates use in resilient areas while providing sustainable, maintainable access and connectivity. This balance enhances trail user experience.

Along with providing access to the property's natural beauty, this system already connects with the Douglas Creek Trail. At the east end, the system will connect to the Pikes Peak Greenway Trail via a new at-grade crossing to the north side of Rockrimmon Boulevard and the existing railroad underpass.



Management and Social Influences Overlay Map

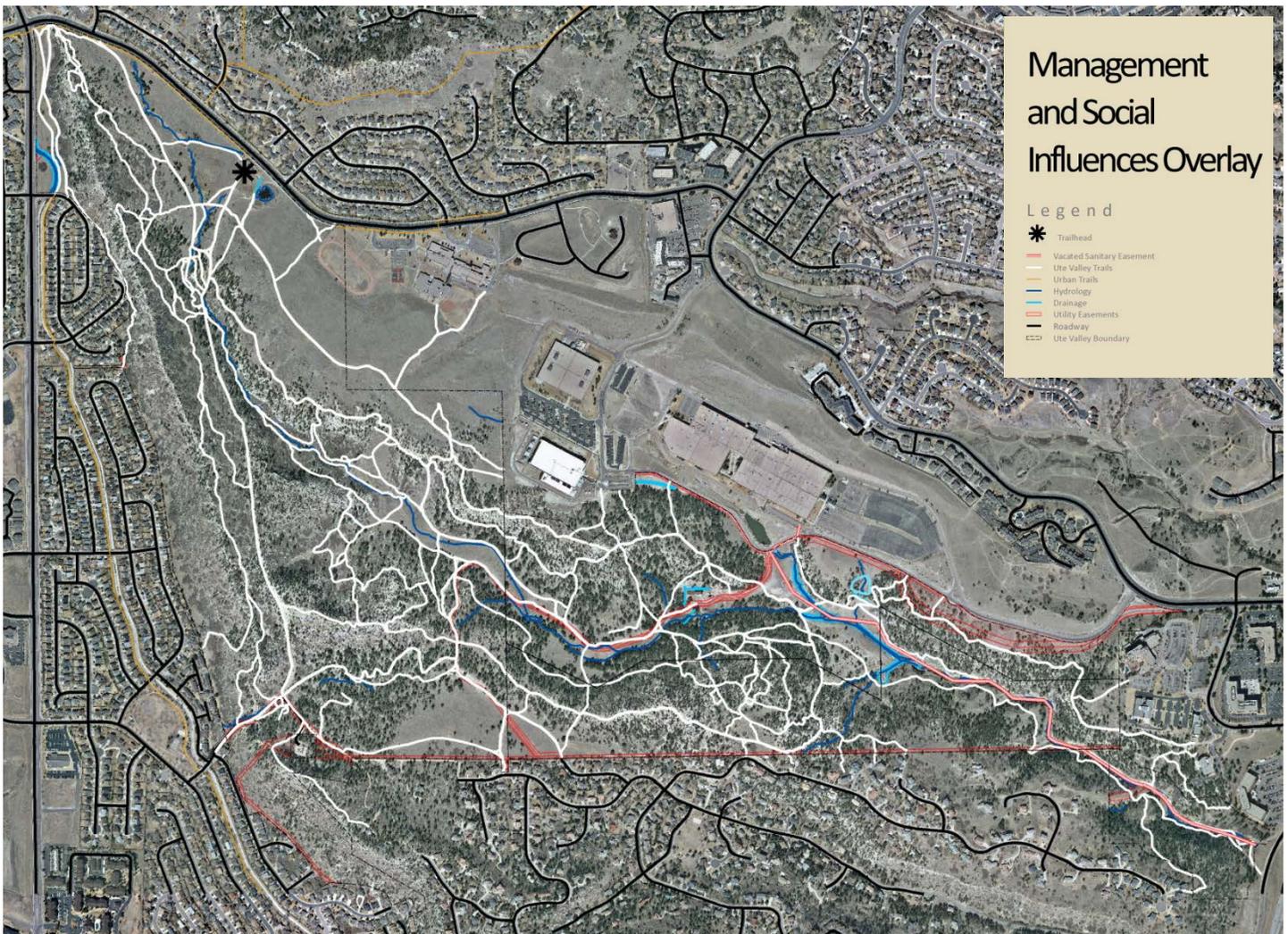
The Management and Social Influences Overlay map summarizes the findings that most impact Master and Management Plan decisions. These include:

- Utility Easements
- Trailheads and Parking
- Existing Trail System

Not included in this overlay because they are not informative on a map unit basis:

- Parcel Restrictions
- Departmental Policies, Practices and Supporting Documents
- City Ordinances and Practices

This overlay in conjunction with the Physical Resource Overlay and the Biological and Cultural Resources Overlay guided decisions throughout the planning process.





Site Development Recommendations

This plan envisions Ute Valley Park as an area that offers all people the opportunity to experience this unique and beautiful place. The focus is on providing access through a variety of multi-use trails and limited facilities needed to serve them. Parking areas, trailheads and neighborhood connections are located around the perimeter. Multi-use trails are planned to accommodate a wide range of abilities and interests, and to offer a variety of experiences that will make multiple visits to Ute Valley Park worthwhile.

Program Areas

During the planning process, the community voiced its strong desire to retain the natural undeveloped character of Ute Valley Park. For this reason, concentrated development is limited to a small maintenance facility, the existing bouldering area and stormwater detention aimed at controlling park erosion. Within the Master Plan these are identified as Program Areas. The Program Area descriptions are below; their locations are indicated on the master plan map on page 39.

Bouldering Area

The proposed bouldering area is indicated on the Master Plan map near the neighborhood connection adjacent to Piñon Valley Park. Site impacts will be monitored by the City and addressed, if necessary, by limiting access or joint maintenance agreements with the climbing community. Each climber's safety is his/her own responsibility. Bouldering is an inherently dangerous activity; participants accept full responsibility for their own safety and risk.

Park Maintenance Facility

To address the need for trail maintenance equipment that is easily accessible to the park, a future park maintenance facility is being proposed near the utility station on the western boundary. This facility will allow volunteers and crews to be more efficient with their time, as they implement the Master and Management Plan objectives. At the time of this Master Plan there is no proposed funding for this facility.

This facility will consist of a small maintenance building or shed to accommodate tool storage for volunteer groups and, if needed, a small area for equipment and storage. This facility will be designed according to environmentally-friendly design principles appropriate to the open space context and will be located to minimize visual impacts on the park and adjacent residences. The exterior of the facility will make use of natural earth-tones to visually fit with the open space context. If needed, native landscape plantings will be used to provide a visual buffer.

Erosion Protection and Restoration

The main drainage channel in the park represents a significant natural asset but also has associated liabilities. While areas of the channel appear to be stable, some portions of the channel are eroding at a rapid rate. The erosion of natural channels generally accelerates as incised portions of the channel deepen and widen and thus carry larger portions of the flow that was once spread over a broad floodplain. The following concepts appear to have merit for additional study as potential solutions for mitigating erosion of the channel and mitigating further natural and cultural resource damage. It may be found that these solutions should be applied in combination or individually for the most effective results. Areas of the channel and segment references that the potential solutions appear to be best suited for are indicated on the map on page 31.

Stormwater Detention

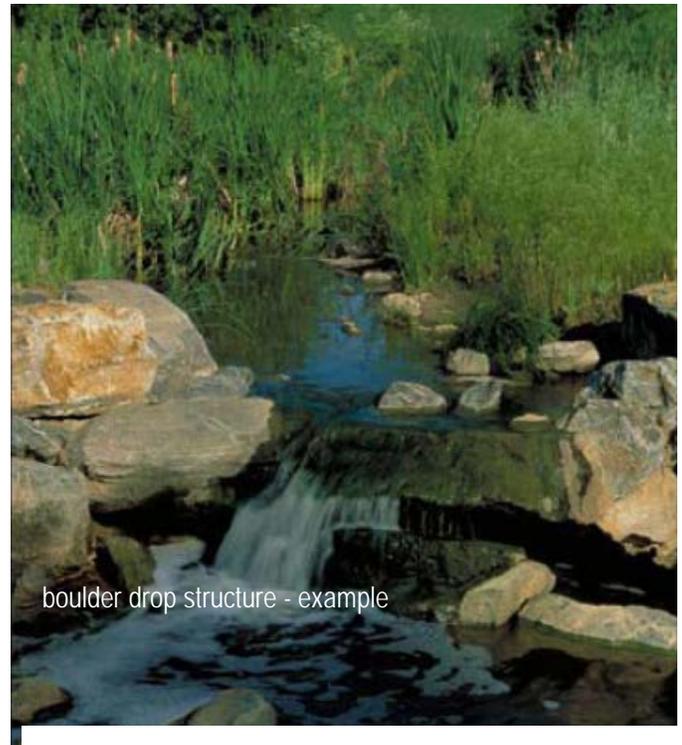
The construction of a detention pond "on-line of the channel" near the Vindicator Trailhead could mitigate downstream erosion by reducing the impact of frequent runoff from off-site developed areas. A detention pond that is designed to control flow rates from frequent to less frequent events to resemble pre-development flow rates could help to reduce the rate of downstream erosion, as well as protect and reduce the scale of downstream erosion mitigation solutions. The design and construction of a detention pond should be done in a manner that minimizes impacts to the park with low embankment heights. Embankment heights less than 10 high are recommended.

Drop Structures

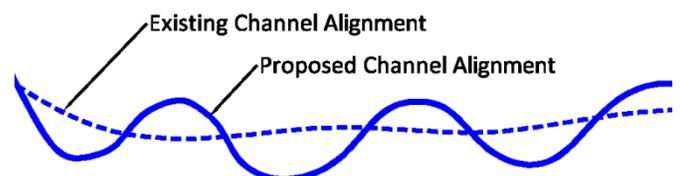
Drop structures are vertical or near vertical, erosion resistant steps constructed in a streambed to facilitate flatter upstream or downstream channel bed slopes. This results in slower flow velocities and decreased erosive force on the channel bed. There are areas of the channel through the park where the use of drop structures coupled with grading modifications could be used to restore or maintain the channel's connection to its floodplain. Within Ute Valley Park, drop structures should be designed with natural rock boulders that blend well with the parks natural features. Careful consideration should be given to sizing the low flow channel such that frequent flows are maintained in it while larger infrequent flows are allowed to spread out and be conveyed over the adjacent floodplain.

Increase Channel Length and Sinuosity

Increasing sinuosity results in increasing the length of a channel while maintaining the same difference in elevation between its end points. This decreases the steepness of the channel bed and the potential for it to erode. It is difficult to implement this type of treatment in many locations due to the fact that the adjacent land slopes fairly steeply to the edges of the channel. However there appears to be potential for this along a portion of Segment 3 due to the relatively flat and broad nature of the valley floor there. While it is expected that the most successful implementation of increased sinuosity in Segment 3 would include mass re-grading of the valley floor to provide a sinuous channel and floodplain, some success may be achieved by filling the existing channel and excavating a relatively small sinuous low flow channel meandering across the existing floodplain.



boulder drop structure - example



increased channel length and sinuosity diagram

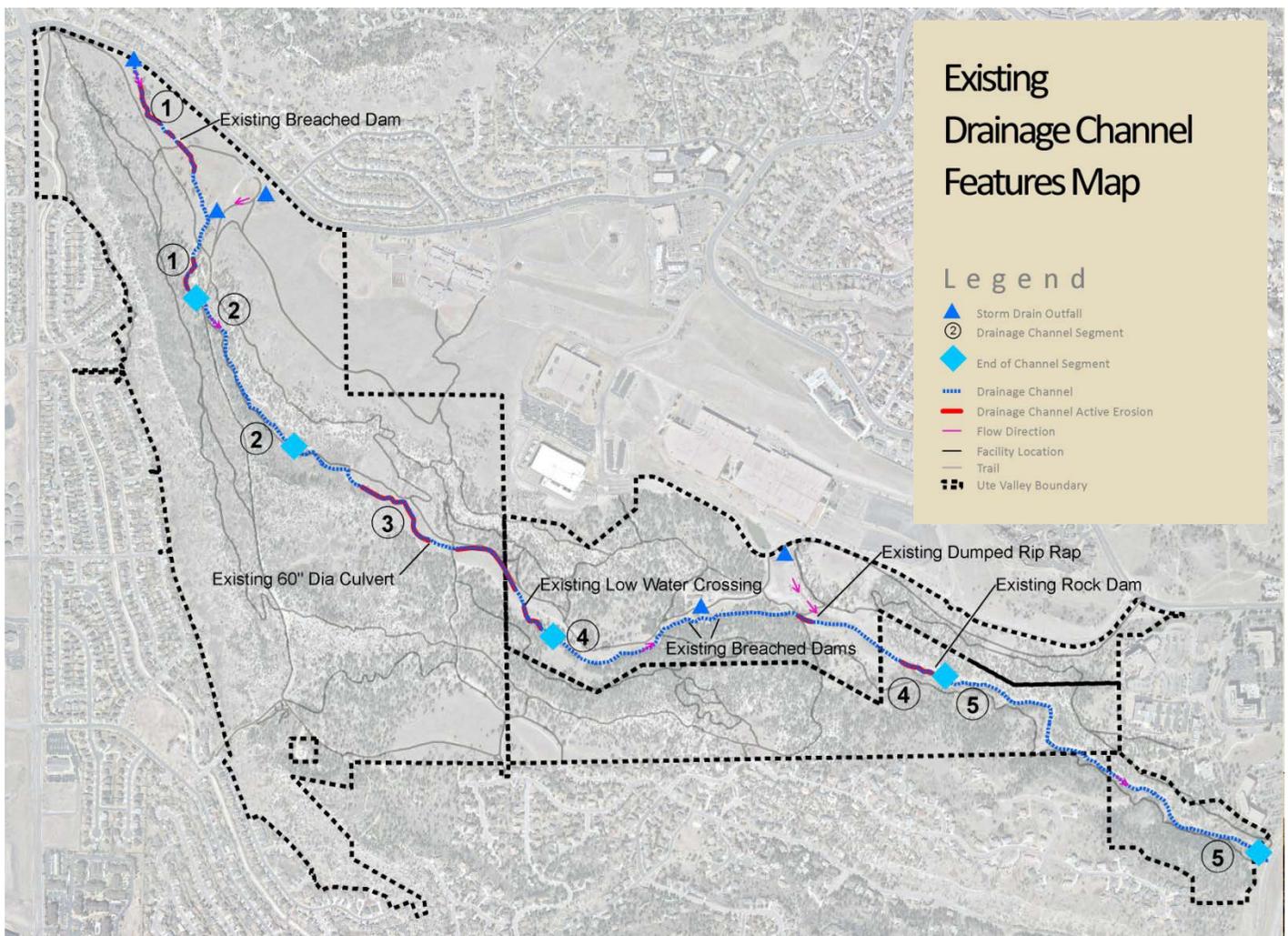
Light Armoring of the Low Flow Channel

In areas where the watercourse exists as a very minor low flow channel which is well connected to the adjacent floodplain, simply armoring the minor channel with small soil filled riprap where erosion is occurring may be successful, and be less expensive and easier to implement than other possible solutions. Planting the soil filled riprap with location-appropriate vegetation could add stability to the treatment as well as help to conceal the rock.

Recommendations

The above described treatments will require more detailed study before design and implementation. The potential effects on upstream and downstream segments should be considered before implementing treatment in a given area of the channel as stabilizing one section may have a destabilizing effect elsewhere. Keys to successful management of a natural channel system are frequent monitoring and quick action to mitigate when active problematic erosion is observed.

A detailed hydrologic and hydraulic analysis and mitigation planning effort for the primary channel that runs through the park should be performed as soon as funds become available. The study should evaluate the effectiveness, cost and park compatibility of possible channel erosion mitigation measures and develop concepts plans for the most feasible measures for the various segments of the channel. The study should evaluate the channel in a holistic manner in consideration of the Park's Master and Management Plan, should identify a logical phasing plan that addresses the most critical problems first and should be reviewed with the Palmer Land Trust. Additional information, conceptual mapping of recommendations and details regarding the Park's main drainage channel are located in Appendix J.



Trail System

The primary recreational feature at Ute Valley Park is the non-motorized multi-use trail system. It is the Park's defining and organizing element. The trail system is designed to accommodate conditions identified by the public in the master planning process and the natural systems discussed in *Section III: Existing Conditions and Site Assessment*. The considerations include:

- Balance a wide range of visitor abilities and recreational interests. Visitor recreation activities vary by individuals' interests, physical capabilities and the intensity of the activity. They range from walkers seeking solitude, to families biking together, to competition-level trail runners, to expert mountain bikers;
- Preserve and protect the natural qualities and cultural resources of the land;
- Provide a variety of trail experiences;
- Integrate interpretive opportunities;
- Facilitate access to the larger regional trail system and recreational opportunities; and
- Retain access for natural resource and forest management.

In general, the goal of the trail system is preserving the natural qualities of the land while providing varied access through a network of non-motorized trails. With this in mind, the following recommendations emerged to organize trails into a system that serves the various (and sometimes contradictory) desires of the public while upholding the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department's resource protection goals.

Key Considerations in Evaluating Trail System Alternatives

The key considerations in evaluating trail system alternatives are grounded in the Guiding Principles developed and adopted by the public participants early in the master plan process. The Guiding Principles serve as our agreed-upon litmus test for evaluating alternative approaches through the master planning process.

Multi-Use Trails

The concept of multi-use trails is strongly supported by the public and a key tenet in the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department's philosophy. The Ute Valley Park trail system will be open to all legitimate user groups. The proposed trail along the upper riparian corridor which, due to the anticipated context-sensitive trail detailing (step-stone stream crossings), will be most suitable for pedestrians.

The appropriateness of a particular trail for a particular use (hiking, running, cycling) is dependent on each individual's skill and experience level. Because of this, mandating or designating particular uses on individual trails is not recommended. All trails are rated by difficulty in a classification system similar to that used for skiing and discussed later in this section.

Our Guiding Principles

The following principles were drawn from consistent responses received from the Park user intercept surveys and from the group and individual responses submitted from the Meetings-in-a-Box. They are intended to serve as guideposts as we work together to develop the Ute Valley Park Master and Management Plan.

Preserve and Protect the Park's Natural Character:

- Maintain the rustic nature
- Preserve the natural beauty
- Keep the feel of wilderness
- As good stewards, preserve the Park for future generations

Manage the Trail System:

- Develop a well-defined and well-maintained trail system
- Meet a variety of users' needs
- Connect to the regional trail system

Manage and Sustain the Park

- Implement the Master and Management Plan
- Develop and implement a maintenance plan
- Manage and mitigate erosion throughout the Park
- Manage vegetative growth to mitigate fire danger without dramatically changing the Park
- Enforce Park rules
- Create a safe Park where all users can get along
- Anticipate and manage increased use
- Provide adequate parking

Involve the Public:

- Solicit and value public input
- Support the Park with volunteers and partnerships

Natural and Cultural Resources

Protecting and sustaining the park's natural and cultural resources is strongly supported by the public and mandated by the Conservation Easements and TOPS Ordinance. The site assessment identified High Value Habitat areas that represent the most intact ecosystems on the property. The trail system design requires special consideration to minimize disturbance and maintain narrow tread width in these areas.

Trail Experience

Trail experience is each individual trail user's subconscious interaction with the environment that thoughtful trail design enhances. This means each consideration during trail design and construction should aim to:

- Make the trail fun and rejuvenating;
- Provide passageway - not simply a transportation route;
- Provide compatibility for various trail user types – hikers, cyclists, elderly, children, and physically-challenged individuals;
- Integrate with the land, vegetation, ecosystems and wildlife;
- Interact with the environment; and
- Stimulate inquisitiveness with views and interesting features that create opportunities for self-guided interpretation without signs.

Two key components affect trail user experience. The first is *trail flow and rhythm*.

Together, flow and rhythm are key components for trails popular with runners, cyclists and equestrians. The experience of travelling along a trail where one turn leads to the next, oncoming obstacles and trail traffic are visible, and one rise leads to a similar descent not only create enjoyable trail, but also create a more durable trail while reducing excessive cycling speeds and associated conflict with other trail users. The Ute Valley Park terrain presents opportunities for physically and technically challenging trails. How each user group navigates these challenging trails - differences in speed, preferences for up or down hill travel, users' eye level and its impact on seeing other trail users ahead - all need to be taken into consideration during trail design and maintenance.

The second component is *visual separation*. Trail users should be able to enjoy the natural environment and natural vistas without viewing the surrounding development or nearby trails. While trail users anticipate interacting with cars, signage, and support facilities at trailheads and major crossings, the backcountry experience is compromised when trail users are continually exposed to residences, utilities and signage. The property lends itself to a reclusive escape while embedded in the northwest commercial and residential neighborhoods - this is both its beauty and its uniqueness.

Both trail design components, trail flow and visual separation, are typically accommodated by thoughtful trail design and maintenance. The physical and topographical diversity of this property allows both of these trail experience components to be achieved.

Sustainable Trails

Trail sustainability requires consideration of and attention to protection of the natural and cultural resources, trail safety, long-term durability, construction cost, structural integrity, social behavior and maintenance. Compliance with and proper execution of consistent design and construction standards that reduce entrenching, braiding, erosion and sediment loading, will best ensure durable, safe, sustainable trails. This is the recommended approach for the majority of the trail system.

Ute Valley Park trails are recommended to remain at a slope of less than 33% of the existing cross slope with a maximum slope of 10% - preferably less than 8% - (except for designated challenging trails) with the proper outslope to facilitate drainage. Coupled with proper alignment, aspect orientation, grade reversals, and construction techniques, the majority of the trails will be sustainable for generations.

In contrast, the planning process revealed strong public desire to retain and develop several existing steep and challenging trail segments for the unique trail experiences they provide. In order to balance resource protection with the desire for public access, only challenging trails with limited impact on the natural and cultural resources identified in *Section III: Existing Conditions and Site Assessment* are included in the plan. Steep challenging segments will initially require a significant number of stabilization structures and braiding route closure and restoration; the challenging segments also commit the City to continual, ongoing maintenance into the future. Challenging trail segments are included in both the Blue or Black trail categories in the Master Plan.



Less often considered components of trail sustainability are contextual trail design and construction knowledge, fiscal resources and manpower resources. These components often lead to a "pay now," with a big effort to install a sustainable trail design, or "pay later" incrementally and continually into the future with ongoing maintenance and resource degradation. Individual volunteer groups getting their members out for an after-work trail effort tend to focus on incremental maintenance or re-construction. Collaborative projects, pooling numerous groups' knowledge and manpower resources, offer an exciting opportunity to make the leap to a "pay now" focus resulting in physically sustainable solutions to resolve challenging areas.

Non-System Trail Closure

The Ute Valley Park trail system design considers and balances many factors including physical resources, natural and cultural resources, management and social influences and public input. The development and acceptance of non-system rogue trails undermine this process. All trails (rogue or otherwise) not in the approved trail system are recommended to be closed. Techniques for trail closure can be found in *Section V: Design Guidelines*.

Trail System Components - Trailheads, Neighborhood Connections, Wayfinding Nodes, Transitions and Trails

Trailheads with parking, neighborhood connections, wayfinding nodes, transitions and trails make up the Ute Valley Park trail system. Each is described in detail below.

Trailheads with Parking

The public master plan process identified three (3) trailheads with parking locations. From the data and input gathered, improving facilities at all trailheads, and an additional trailhead with parking and facilities on the parks' eastern portion are recommended. Within the Ute Valley Park Master Plan the term trailhead will be limited to "trailheads with parking;" neighborhood connections and access points via the regional trail system (without parking facilities) are discussed within the *Trails* portion below.

Trailheads are visitors' first experience at the park and should reflect the qualities of Ute Valley Park and the City's park system while providing facilities to enhance each visitor's experience. All trailhead areas are to be implemented according to environmentally-friendly design principles. Parking areas are to be paved or un-paved with delineated spaces to maximize parking lot efficiency while minimizing parking lot size. Design principles include the harvesting of stormwater runoff and native landscape plantings that integrate the trailhead parking areas into the surrounding park context. All parking areas will be designed to encourage pedestrian and bicycle movements. Each trailhead shall be designed to provide ADA access to the trail system.

The trailheads are indicated on the Master Plan map and each trailhead's recommended visitor support facilities are indicated in the table below.

Trailhead location	parking facilities***	restrooms**	waste and recycling	pet waste station	rules of use and trail map	seating	interpretive signage
Vindicator Trailhead	16 space + 1H*	X	X	X	X	X	X
Ute Valley Road Trailhead	20-40 spaces +	X	X	X	X	X	X
Tech Center Drive Trailhead	3-5 spaces	X	X	X	X	-	-

* Re-evaluated additional parking facilities at the Vindicator Trailhead after the new trailhead on Ute Valley Road is in use and the stormwater study is completed. H indicates handicap parking space..

** Restrooms may be port-a-let facilities, public full service restrooms or composting toilet facilities.

*** Because of the park's size, it is not anticipated as an equestrian destination.

Neighborhood Connections

The public master plan process identified seven designated neighborhood connections. While not considered fully-equipped trailheads, neighborhood connections provide limited visitor support facilities and should reflect the qualities of Ute Valley Park and the City's park system. All neighborhood connection areas are to be implemented according to environmentally-friendly design principles. Facilities should be selected and tailored to each connection and may include waste containers, pet-waste stations, rules of use and trail map signage and seating.

Wayfinding Nodes

The Ute Valley Park trail system offers a range of trail difficulty levels on numerous interconnected trails over varied terrain. The system can be challenging to navigate for frequent users and overwhelming for new visitors. For this reason, Wayfinding Nodes are proposed at five (5) key trail intersections. Wayfinding nodes may include a trail system map, interpretive signage and a bench. Optimally, trail maps should contain a "you are here" notation, trail names and the trail etiquette triangle; node signs may possibly include additional etiquette notation such as "Trails are intended to be enjoyed by all users. Trail users are expected to be in control at all times, which means properly yielding to slower uses and users." Signs and benches will conform to *Section V: Design Guidelines*. Wayfinding node locations are designated on the master plan.

Transitions at Key Trail Intersections

Key trail intersections and transition zones are the segments along the trail that provide physical and visual clues for users to slow down when approaching roadways, trail intersections, and wayfinding nodes. Examples for design of visual and physical clues can be found in *Section V: Design Guidelines*.



Trails

The trail system addresses all the conditions identified during the site assessment and public process as well as the design objectives listed at the beginning of this section. To accommodate a variety of experiences, the trail design offers a range of trail difficulty levels interconnected into a series of loops wherever possible. The overall trail organization is *by degree of difficulty* and utilizes a system similar to that used for skiing. Coloradoans are familiar with this system and understand it intuitively. The specific criteria for each type of trail are detailed in *Section V: Design Guidelines*.

While many visitors currently access the park from the trailheads with parking and neighborhood connections, the 2014 Colorado Springs Park System Master Plan calls for connectivity through the park to the regional trail system. The west-connection to the Douglas Creek Trail and the east-connection to the Pikes Peak Greenway Trail provide an important transportation link in Colorado Springs' non-motorized trail system. The Ute Valley Regional Trail traverses the central valley of the property to link the northwest portion of Colorado Springs to the regional trail system. Interconnected park trail loops return to the central valley. A new loop extending to the eastern boundary of the adjacent Rockrimmon Open Space creates the longest proposed trail loop.

The following recommendations, resulting from the public process, reflect how Ute Valley Park is currently used and will influence the way it is preserved and enjoyed in the future. They include recommendations for negotiating future trail access, regional connectivity, and management recommendations involving coordination with volunteer groups and other agencies.

Regional Connectivity

- Pursue safe trail connections with Colorado Springs Public Works Department to the regional Pikes Peak Greenway Trail and the Foothills Trail.
- Pursue and identify the "Park to Peak Connector" trail identified in the 2014 Colorado Springs Park System Master Plan
- Continue coordination with public transportation providers on improved connectivity.

Trail Standards

- Continue annual review of potential projects with volunteer groups to identify problem areas and reroutes, and to set priorities.
- Continue monitoring activity impact on park resources in partnership with volunteer groups to identify changes needed to conserve resources.
- Pursue system-wide single-track trail standards in partnership with stakeholders. These standards should consider but not be limited to general intent, design parameters, trail design process, construction details, and trail maintenance.
- Future maintenance solutions should consider the effects of changes on all legitimate park users. Any changes affecting these legitimate uses should be properly communicated to the public.
- Reduce trail/access road width to 8' on access roads requiring vehicle traffic for emergency access or utility maintenance. Remove debris.
- Reduce trail/old road width to trail width designated in *Section V: Design Guidelines* on trail/old roads no longer requiring vehicle traffic. Meander tread within old roadbed. Remove debris.
- Follow well-tested trail construction standards for trail system construction and maintenance until system wide standards are adopted. Suggested standards are noted in *Section V: Design Guidelines*.

Interpretive and Educational Opportunities

Ute Valley Park contains unique natural and cultural resources. These are opportunities for interpretation, educational programs and research. The public discourse in this master plan process often turned towards interpretive and educational opportunities. Most of the historical and archaeological resources in the park are relatively unknown and invisible to the general public – an attribute that affords them the greatest level of protection from vandalism and theft. However, there is a rich cultural history of the park that could be better conveyed to the visiting public without endangering individual sites. This can be achieved through the development and installation of interpretive displays. Below are the ideas and concepts discussed.

Signage system design recommendations are in the *Section V: Design Guidelines*.

Interpretative and Educational Suggestions

- Consider interpretive themes including:
 - Geologic features and Soils
 - Prehistoric use of the park – discussing the interesting artifacts and sites that have been identified (lithic scatter, cultural trees, stone circles, etc.) and their context
 - Historic Denver to Pueblo Stage Coach Road – Where it was in the park and where it is seen now
 - Historic Reed Ranch – Where it is, what it was, and what it means for the area's history
 - Wildlife and high value habitat areas
 - Ongoing natural resource restoration, forest health and fire mitigation
 - Views
 - Plant communities and historic uses of plants (edible, wildlife uses, textile dye, introduced or native)
- Educate visitors about non-system rogue trail closures. Content may include graphic illustrations, resource values, resource damage caused by a foot fall, and direction to, and advantages of, the designated route.
- Expand interpretive signage and map guides for possible themed trails: geology, history, natural resource management
- Provide docents and guided hikes.
- Provide park rangers with the dual responsibilities of resource information and rule enforcement.
- Engage and train volunteers to engage owners regarding leashed dogs.
- Engage volunteers to research and document recent history including owners, their uses of the property, land transactions and their relationship to region's history.

Wayfinding, Trail Etiquette and Safety Suggestions

- Provide wayfinding signs including trail maps, trail length, distance to key destinations and difficulty level.
- Provide information on ADA access.
- Provide information on possible wildlife encounters.
- Provide educational signage addressing trail etiquette including:
 - Leave No Trace Outdoor Ethic
 - Trail etiquette and yielding right-of-way for passage
 - Dog etiquette, including on-leash and pet waste cleanup and pet waste bag dispensers

General

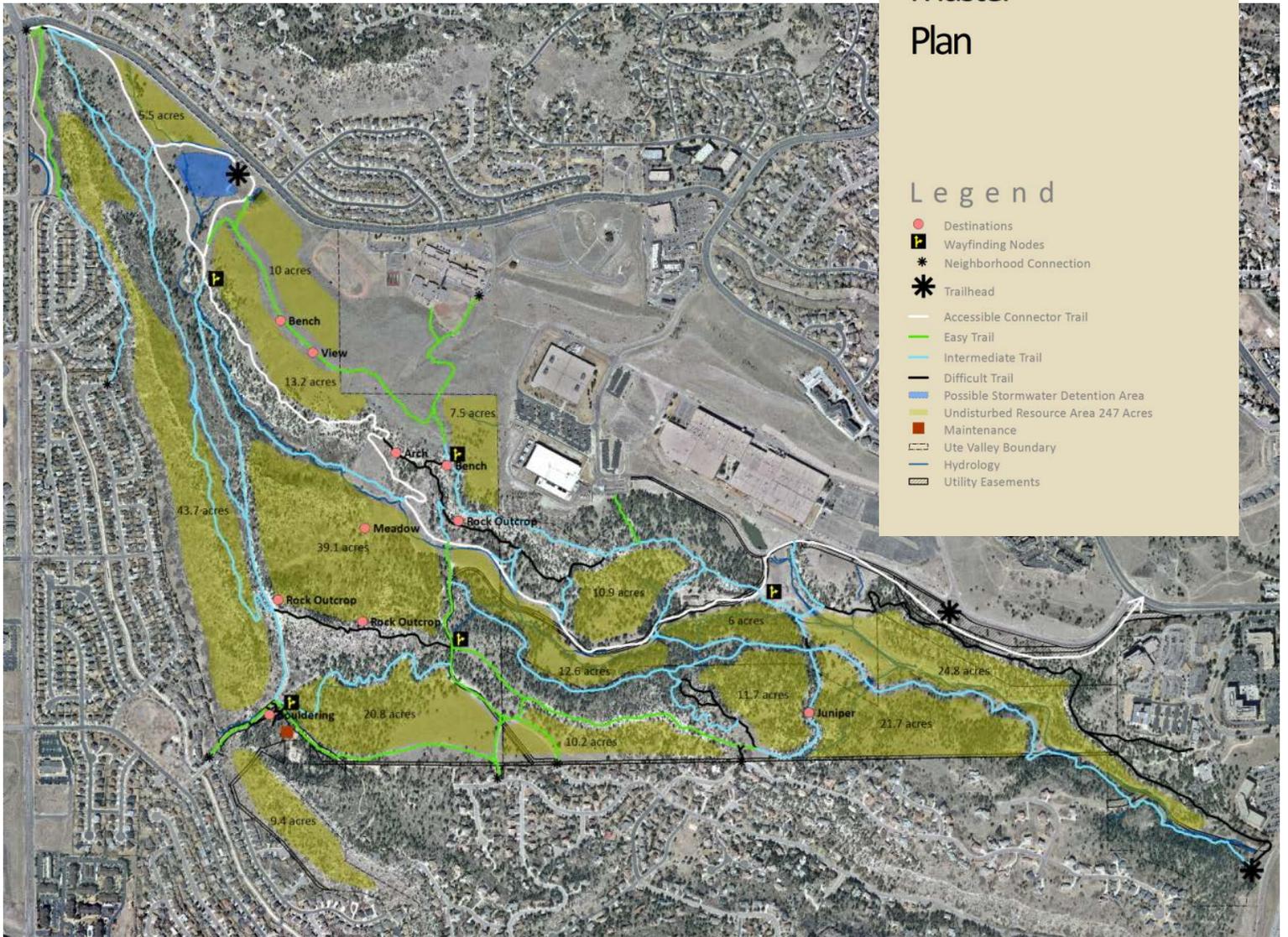
- Consider new and emerging technologies for interactively communicating interpretive and educational information. The advantages of new technologies must be weighed against the reality that total reliance on QR codes and smart phone technology excludes some trail users, thus making printed informational signs necessary.

Ute Valley Park Master Plan

Master Plan

Legend

- Destinations
- P Wayfinding Nodes
- * Neighborhood Connection
- * Trailhead
- Accessible Connector Trail
- Easy Trail
- Intermediate Trail
- Difficult Trail
- Possible Stormwater Detention Area
- Undisturbed Resource Area 247 Acres
- Maintenance
- Ute Valley Boundary
- Hydrology
- Utility Easements



Appendix L contains 11x17 maps of the Master Plan and the Trail System Management Plan



Design Guidelines

The Design Guidelines assure a sense of visual beauty, harmony and functionality throughout the park and trail system and amongst parks in the City of Colorado Springs Parks System. These guidelines are intended to encourage future park design decisions that are compatible with the natural character of Ute Valley Park. They focus on creating sustainable trails and integrated trail improvements. All aspects aim to enhance the trail users' enjoyment of the natural environment, without undue interruption, while blending with this unique and beautiful place.

The following photos highlight prevalent characteristics of Ute Valley Park. They will guide the themes, colors and materials used in park features.

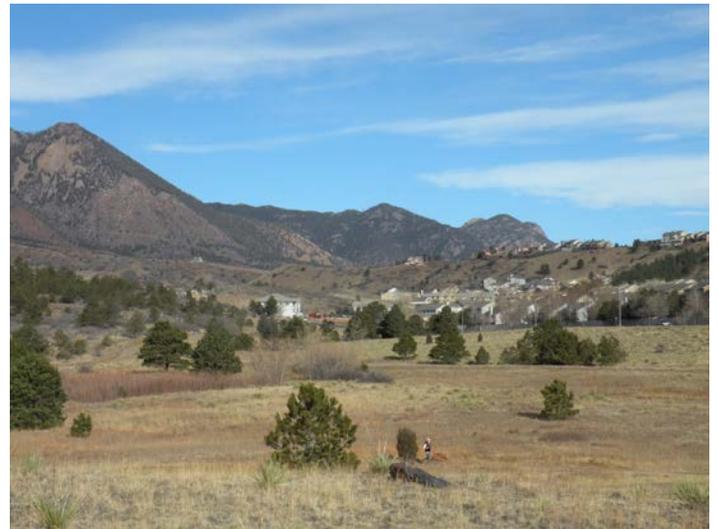




photo by Linda Michel Watkins



photo by Charles Sale

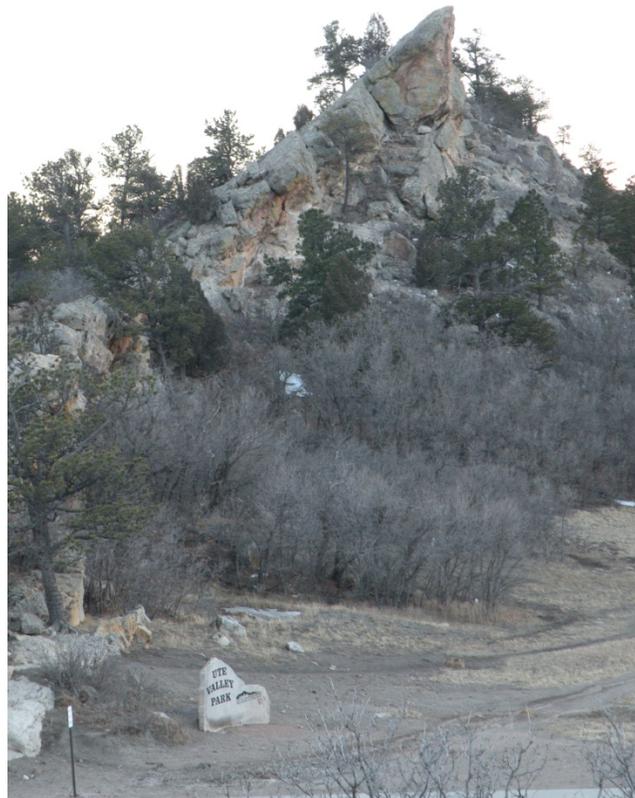
Signs, furnishings and other features can be designed to reflect a combination the colors, forms and materials that draw upon the natural rock outcroppings and open meadows. The following sections provide examples and suggestions of how this might be represented.



Site and Feature Guidelines

Park Entry

The Ute Valley Park identification sign at the corner of Vindicator Drive and Centennial Boulevard and at the Pinecliff neighborhood connection at Popes Valley are complete at the time on this Master Plan. Entry signs similar to this are appropriate at the Vindicator Trailhead and near the proposed Ute Valley Road Trailhead. Supplemental native plantings may be incorporated with these welcoming gateway features.

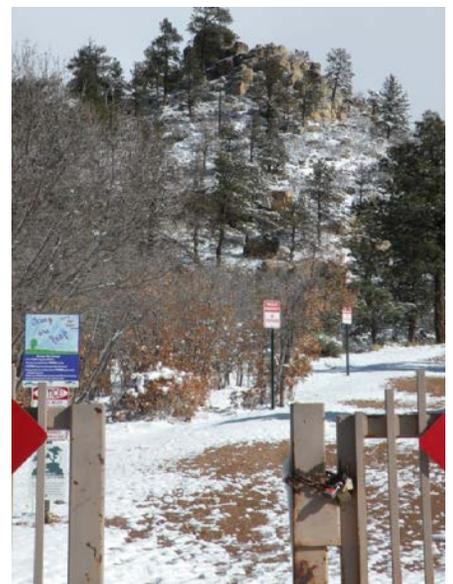


Signage

Signage should conform with the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services standard sign guidelines. Signage is anticipated to be located primarily at park trailheads and neighborhood connections in this master plan. Maps may be set to complement smaller scale interpretive and educational specific signage at wayfinding nodes designated in the Master Plan. It is recommended that the Parks Department pursue a cohesive signage standard to address recognition of partners and funding sources on appropriate signage in an uncluttered format.

Signage messaging and placement should consider:

- Locating wayfinding maps at trailheads, key neighborhood access points to the trail system, and wayfinding nodes at major trail system intersections/junctions. The Ute Valley Park trail system offers a range of trail difficulty levels on numerous interconnected trails over varied terrain. The extensive trail system can be challenging to navigate for frequent users and overwhelming for new visitors. For this reason, trail maps are recommended at the above stated locations.



Pursue Department standard for diverse trailhead signage and facility needs

Optimally, trail maps should contain a "you are here" notation, trail names and the trail etiquette triangle; signs may possibly include additional etiquette notation such as *"Trails are intended to be enjoyed by all users. Trail users are expected to be in control at all times, which means properly yielding to slower uses and users."*

- Combining sign messages to minimize number of signs to alleviate concerns of too many signs affecting the natural experience.
- Concentrating signs to alleviate dispersed locations affecting the natural experience.
- Designing low profile small surface area interpretive, educational and trail identification signage for low visual impact.
- Including safety related sign message pertaining to potential wildlife encounters (mountain lions, bears and rattlesnakes) and additional parking resources at trailheads and key access points.
- Crafting sign messaging to reach a broad range of users including, but not limited to, written text, universal symbols, and smart phone technology (including QR codes). Advantages of integrating new technologies include reducing size of individual signs, ability to communicate detailed information and ability to update information. Total reliance on QR codes and smart phone technology excludes some park users, so an alternative method for obtaining information is recommended.

The signage will be implemented according to environmentally friendly design principles including: consideration of stormwater runoff, the protections and incorporation of the native landscape plantings, and the use of natural materials and proportions that blend into the surrounding context.



Combined text and QR code messaging



Artful QR code design integrating graphic communication



Creative signage interactive options for seeing impaired and all users

Walls, Culverts and Erosion Control Structures

Rock structures will be needed in areas of steep slope or where erosion problems may occur. Walls, culverts and erosion control structures may consist of mortared or dry-set pieces of random-sized stone. Structures may terminate at end/slab boulders or in a stepped-down form. Stone color should reflect the adjacent in-situ rock; this may be rusty-brown, grey, cream/gold or dark grey/brown depending on the location.

The use of stone representing the nearest in-situ rock whether in large slabs or laid up in walls, is encouraged. Horizontal elements should be in the earth-tone rust to brown color.

Benches and Furnishings

Informal park seating may consist of locally quarried block stone in areas adjacent to stone formations and at trailheads and peeled logs in forested or open meadow areas.

The stone benches should be constructed in the style shown in the photograph on this page. All bench seats should range between 16-20" in height. Benches in open meadows should be backless so as not to disrupt the open view. Multiple benches may be appropriate at trailheads; trailhead benches will be located by the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services design staff. Single benches are appropriate at wayfinding nodes which are shown on the master plan.

All donation benches shall conform to the designs shown in the photographs to the right and be sited at designated trailheads or the locations indicated in this master plan. All specific positioning of donor benches will be determined on-site by park staff. All donor bench plaque language must be approved by park staff. Donated benches currently existing in the park will remain until maintenance is required; at that time they will be removed and replaced in conformance with the Master and Management Plan.

Other site furnishings shall be located in close proximity to trailheads and may include trash receptacles, bike racks, and other objects. Whenever possible, these should incorporate stone into the design; however, it will not be feasible to do this in all instances. These features can be constructed of metal, painted to match the metal elements of the site structures.

Forest green, sage-green and brown may be used as accent colors, representing the vegetation on the site, and serving as a complement to the cream, rusty-brown and dark grey hues found in the stone. However, these colors should be used consistently, meaning that all of the forest greens should be the same color. "Near matches" of these colors should not be used.



Planting in Disturbed Areas

This section addresses planting at trailheads and entry signs and supplements the plant materials and methodologies for ecosystem restoration and management located in the *Section II: Natural and Cultural Resource Management and Protection* in the Management Plan.

Plants that are native to Ute Valley Park should be used in revegetation, restoration and landscaping at the trailheads, entry signs and disturbed areas.

Soil structure is always disturbed and often destroyed by previous or new construction and by compaction from visitor traffic and disturbances. Best management practices (BMPs) should be followed during construction to minimize weed establishment. Understanding the soils and hydrology of the site, and their impacts on selecting suitable plant species is essential. Site preparation is key, including the removal of weed species, grading, drainage and soil preparation/amendments to promote the growth of seeds and plants.

Plants should be used to replicate existing natural conditions; supplemental watering may be needed to assure success around heavy-used trailheads. This means that plants normally found in the lowlands and canyon bottoms should be used for disturbed areas in the low-land of Ute Valley Park. Cottonwoods, Three-leaf Sumac, Gambel Oak and Ponderosa Pine are examples of these species. Upland trailheads in the eastern portion of the site should be planted with species normally found in those locations, such as Gambel Oak, Mountain Mahogany, and mixed grasses. Trees such as Ponderosa Pine, Pinyon Pine, One-seed Juniper, and Douglas Fir should be used only in locations where they would be naturally found, and not in open areas where grasslands predominate.



Trail Hierarchy Types

A system similar to that used for skiing has been adapted for trail classifications to indicate degree of difficulty. Coloradoans are familiar with this system and understand it intuitively. Trails are classified as easy, intermediate, difficult or connector. A color designation for each class matches the system used for ski slopes: green for easy, blue for intermediate, and black for difficult. The color white is assigned for the connector trails. The specific criteria for each type of trail are on the following pages.

White - Accessible Connector Trails

3.1 miles

Accessible connector trails provide wide-widths and smooth surfaces at relatively low degrees of slope and will avoid steps or other obstacles. Sustained slopes less than 5% and up to 8% with required landing/rest areas will be maintained along the alignment, wherever possible, or as designated by the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board's Regulatory Negotiations Committee on Accessibility Guidelines for Outdoor Developed Areas, most recent report. When possible, the intent is to construct these trails in compliance with the more stringent standards of the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA). White trails require minimal attentiveness to negotiate.

- o Typical width from 5' to 8'
- o Smooth surface without obstructions
- o The Ute Valley Trail, which traverses the site from Vindicator/Centennial intersection to the Ute Valley Road/Rockrimmon intersection, will be soft surface with no shoulders and typically 8' wide (City's Tier 3 standards). Small vehicle access along Ute Valley Trail is desired for emergency and maintenance access.



Green - Beginner Trails

3.2 miles

These are trails that offer narrow to wide widths and smooth surfaces with minimal obstacles at relatively low grades. Green trails require minimal attentiveness to negotiate.

- Sustained slopes less than 5% with short sections up to 10%
- Typical width from 18" to 3'
- Smooth surface without obstructions

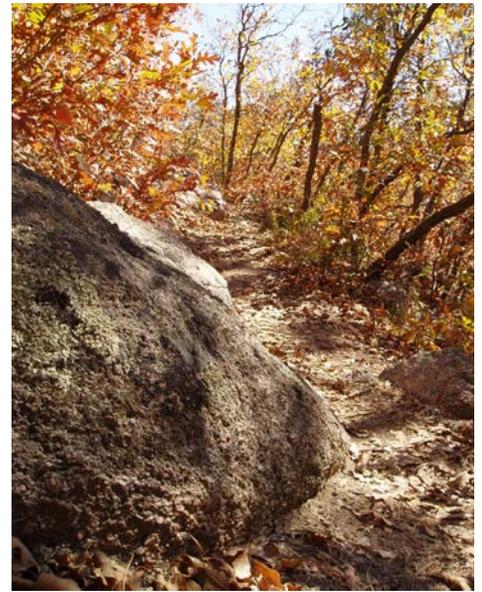


Blue - Intermediate Trails

7.6 miles

Intermediate trails may be narrower than the green trails and may have frequent challenges. Qualifiers - obstacles which demonstrate the level of difficulty that will be encountered along the trail segment and consistent with the blue designation - should be designed into the trails at every connection with a green trail classification. Blue trails require attentiveness to negotiate.

- Sustained slopes range from 0 – 10%. Sustained grades on intermediate trails should not exceed 10%, except for short distances up to 12%.
- Typical width from 18" to 30"
- Variable surface – Occasional obstacles including steps, water diversions, dips, roots, rocks, etc.





Black - Difficult Trails

2.6 miles

Difficult trails provide a more challenging experience, including steeper grades, rougher surfaces, more frequent challenges and narrow widths. Trails may contain obstacles such as frequent water diversions, steps, switchbacks, and roots or exposed rocks on their surface. Black trails may include recommended bike dismount sections and optional "chicken" lines, which are easier for trail users to negotiate. Qualifiers - obstacles which demonstrate the level of difficulty that will be encountered along the trail segment and consistent with the blue designation - should be designed into the trails at every connection with a green or blue trail classification.

- Sustained slopes range from 0-12% except for short distances up to 15%
- Downhill mountain biking trails are anticipated to sustain over 15% slope
- Typical width from 12"-2'
- Rough to variable surface – Frequent obstacles including steps, water diversions, roots, rocks, etc.



Non-System Trail Closure

The Ute Valley Park trail system designed considers and strives to balance many factors, including physical resources, natural and cultural resources, management capacity, and social influences and the public input during this master planning process. The development and acceptance of non-system rogue trails undermine this process.

Intentional trail closure techniques will be required in this heavily used park. The photo to the right shows the lack of success of less intentional techniques. Ute Valley Park currently has an extensive network of undesignated rogue trails. Some are in good condition and will be integrated into the designated trails system, some are faint paths that will disappear over time. Others are problematic and need to be actively closed and restored. All trails not in the approved trail system (or subsequent management decisions) are rogue trails and should be managed according to the following guidelines.



All Closures

- Observe and collect information about why the rogue trail is occurring. If conditions on alternative approved routes are the cause, correct them.
- Observe conditions on the rogue trail.
- When appropriate and within the Master Plan, strategically plan and construct reroutes concurrent with the closing of old trails.
- When rerouting system trails, make the commitment to solve the whole problem area. For the closure of the original trail to be successful, it is essential to provide a smooth transition between existing and new trail sections. Create alignments which effectively discourage creation and use of rogue trails

Active Closure

Several heavily-used rogue trails are in poor locations and are contributing to erosion and degrading other resources. These trails need to be actively closed and restored:

- Construct a new trail providing the desired access or experience *prior to* closing the existing rogue trail
- Stabilize existing tread with constructed check dams (wood and/or rock) and drains to shed and slow water, reduce erosion, and accumulate topsoil
- Obliterate the closed trail tread to soften the soil, discourage continued future use, and promote revegetation
- Cover the obliterated tread with biodegradable erosion control matting (in select locations) and natural materials such as rocks and woody debris
- Seed the area with native grasses to promote revegetation
- Monitor the closed trail for erosion, vegetation establishment, and noxious weeds
- For popular rogue trails, install temporary or permanent fencing to clearly direct users away from the closed trail. See fencing recommendations in *Section IV: Trails System Sustainability and Management* in the Management Plan

Passive Closure

Many rogue trails originate as game trails, are faint, sparsely used and do not cause substantial erosion or resource management concerns. In these cases, most users will easily adapt to new trails providing desired experiences and passive closure is appropriate:

- Construct new trails to provide the desired access and experiences
- Lightly scarify the tread surface to reduce compaction and facilitate revegetation
- Randomly place rocks, woody plant material, and other natural-looking materials in the trail tread to obstruct and discourage travel, promote revegetation, and hide it from users
- Allow natural vegetation to re-establish over time

Successful trail closure and the resulting resource protection require the commitment of resources, knowledge and manpower. Major sections of unsustainable trail and major recommended trail reroutes are indicated on the Trail System Management Plan located in Appendix L.

Existing Trail Restoration

In several cases, existing rogue trails are recommended to be designated and integrated into the park trail system. Some of these trails will likely require some work to ensure long-term function and sustainability, such as the following:

- Restore and maintain trails to the standards established by the difficulty level (white, green, blue, black) established in the Master Plan
- Installation of drainage dips in strategic locations
- Excavation of the outer/lower berm along the trail to ensure adequate width and sheet or cross-trail drainage
- Short reroutes or tread reconstruction to fix steep or otherwise problematic segments



Transitions at Key Trail Intersections

Transition zones at key trail intersections provide physical and visual clues for trail users to slow down when approaching roadways, trail intersections, and wayfinding nodes.

Some transition signals occur naturally on the trail, but many require intentional design choices and/or construction. Trail conditions that slow speeds include concentrated trail obstacles, curves in the trail, narrowing trail corridor, uphill grades and vegetation.

The transitions at key trail intersections will be implemented according to environmentally friendly design principles including: the utilization of stormwater runoff, the incorporation of the native landscape plantings, and the use of natural materials and proportions that blend into the surrounding context.

Pinch Points

Pinch Points (also referred to as chokes) are trail corridor constrictions that align directly with the trail edge. Pinch points are an effective and natural-looking trail design tool to minimize excessive trail widening and to manage bike speeds. The high-use, erosive soils and naturally sparse vegetation have contributed to ever widening trails in Ute Valley Park, with some widening to 40 feet. Existing trails with naturally occurring pinch points are not widening, because they provide frequent opportunities to channel trail users onto the intended trail tread. As a speed and conflict management tool, pinch points encourage riders to slow down to navigate a tight or more challenging-looking trail feature. Pinch points are effective only when they occur regularly along the trail alignment. Site observation during this study suggests that in Ute

- pinch points should be installed at strategic locations where trail widening or excessive speeds are a known or potential problem
- pinch points located every 100-300 linear feet deter side-by-side walking and keep all trail users on the trail tread
- large boulders set in the earth, standing trees, thick shrubs, large tree trunks and fencing are effective pinch point materials
- branches, mulch, small rocks and medium size dead fall are not effective pinch points and do not keep users on the tread



- pinch points should be constructed of natural materials and proportions that blend into the surrounding context
- Trail corridor clearing should be carefully planned to retain trees, branches, and features that serve as pinch points and discourage trail widening.

Resources

For more information on many of the above topics, the following technical resources are recommended:

Trail Construction and Maintenance Notebook. 2007 Edition. USDA Forest Service Technology and Development Program in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration. <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/fspubs/07232806/index.htm>.

Trail Solutions: IMBA's Guide to Building Sweet Singletrack. 2004. International Mountain Bicycling Association. <http://www.imba.com/catalog/book-trail-solutions>.

Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation Trails 2000-2010 Master Plan Chapter 5. <http://www.springsgov.com/Page.aspx?navid=3593>.

Equestrian Design Guidebook for Trails, Trailheads, and Campgrounds, USFS & USDOT <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/fspubs/07232816/index.htm>

Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado (VOC) Trail Design Handbook, most recent edition



Regulation and Policy Recommendations

Ute Valley Park is owned by the City of Colorado Springs and managed by the City's Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department. The City of Colorado Springs City Code and the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department's policies and practices are specifically intended to protect and manage the system's parks and open spaces. The master plan process aimed to identify areas of concern and solicit specific recommendations to refine the City regulations and policies to further protect the natural resource and visitor experience at Ute Valley Park.

Legal Arrangements

To achieve optimal community trail connections within Ute Valley Park, public access across several adjacent private properties is needed. Discussion has been initiated and private property owners are in discussions/negotiations with the City at the time of this writing.

Recommendations:

- Pursue Revocable Permits to allow public access with properties in the eastern portion of the park .
- Pursue an agreement with School District 20 to secure a sustainable trail access from the eastern edge of the school property and establish maintenance responsibility for the school's access road to the fenced track facility that is located on park property.

Departmental Policies, Practices and Supporting Documents

According to City Code, the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Director can promulgate park rules – not every rule and regulation must be found in City Code. Departmental policies and practices are specifically aimed to protect and manage the system's parks and open spaces.

Departmental policies and practices include: Passive Recreation Criteria for special events, multi-use trail philosophy, and the Trail Etiquette yield protocol. Supporting documents include the 2014 Park System Master Plan. The Department must also comply with federal and state regulations such as Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Other-Powered Driven Mobility Device (OPDMD-ADA).

Several areas that would benefit from Departmental guidance were identified in the Master Plan process. They are listed in the recommendations below.

Recommendations:

- Develop a written, multi-use trail philosophy to guide future master plans.
- Pursue developing system-wide trail design and maintenance standards.
- Develop departmental administration guidelines for bouldering.
- Develop departmental criteria defining donation bench qualifications, on-site locating procedures, installation, costs, and funding.

This Master Plan identifies donation bench locations, number of benches and site appropriate materials.

Enforcement

Although adequate and appropriate rules of use are in place, the natural resources and visitor experience are degraded by non-compliant visitors. The key is consistent enforcement. It is recognized that appropriate, fiscally sustainable and implementable recommendations will require a collaborative intra-departmental and funding approach. With this in mind, the public identified the areas of enforcement concern and possible enforcement solutions listed below.

Areas of Enforcement Concern

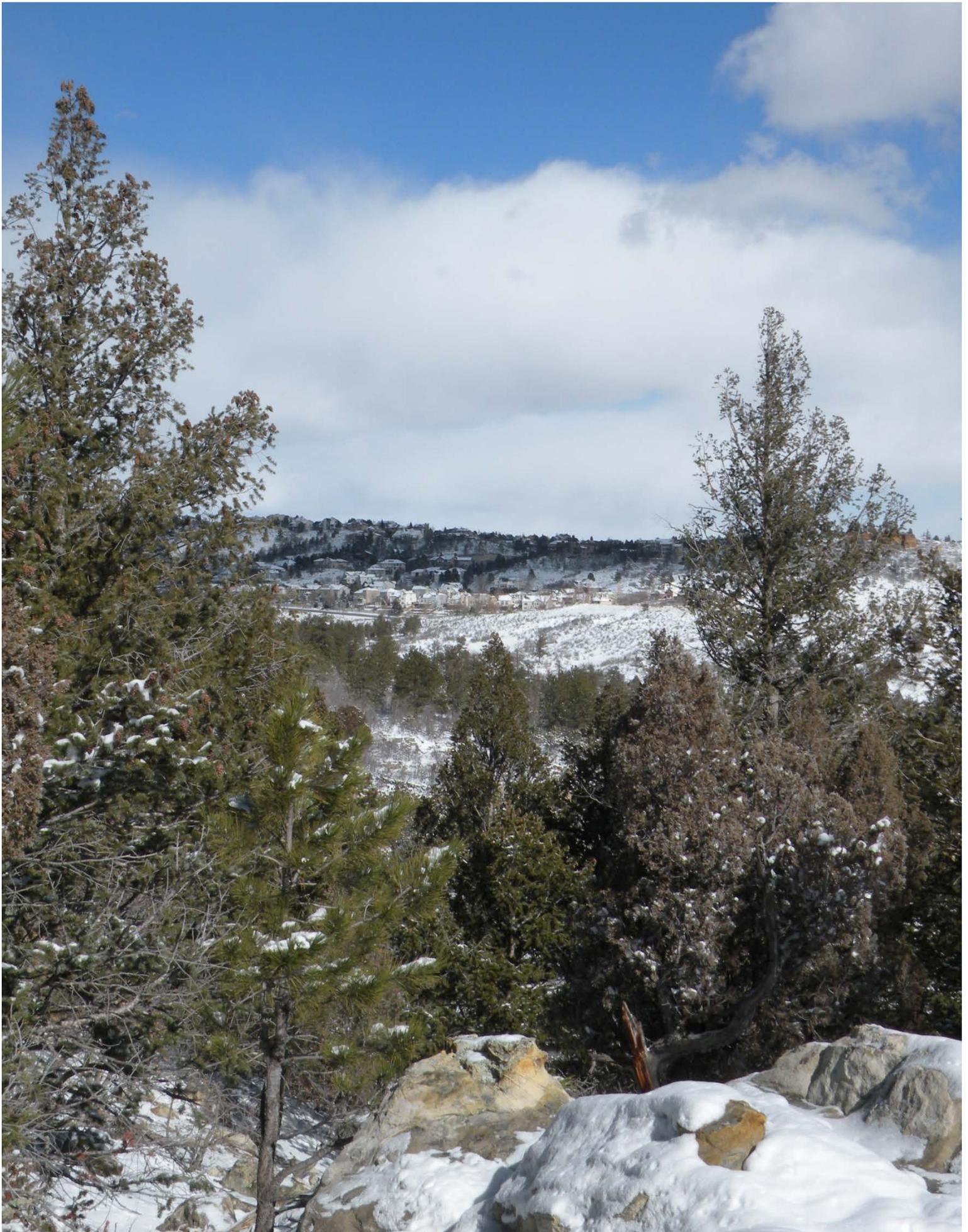
- Dog waste
- Widespread use of Ute Valley Park as an unleashed dog property
- Trail closures ignored
- Litter
- Parking lot security
- Damaging and collecting from archeological, paleontological and historic sites
- Off-trail travel
- Lack of on-site enforcement

Possible Enforcement Solutions

- Educate visitors about rogue/social trail closures. Content may include: graphic illustrations, resource values, resource damage caused by a foot fall, and directional signs to the designated route describing its advantages.
- Provide educational signage addressing "Leave No Trace" Outdoor Ethic.
- Engage and train volunteers to address the unleashed dog problem.
- Continue to work with The Humane Society and other animal control organizations to address dog off-leash and uncollected waste issues.
 - The Humane Society has a free public service card from the American Dog Owners Association: "Ten reasons for leashing your dog."
- Citizen concern regarding dogs off-leash surfaced early in the planning process. Participants expressed both support for on-leash and off-leash policies; the participant input verbatims are included in the Appendices. Domestic animal control (dog on-leash) is a citywide governance issue. Management practices and enforcement in Park properties and throughout the City follow current City Ordinances 9.9.301 and 9.9.302 pertaining to domestic animals. Should the City ordinance be revised and funding allocated for implementation, the Parks Department may modify dog leash management in Ute Valley Park within the parameters of the revised ordinance.
- Pursue sustainable allocation of limited funds for consistent ranger or enforcement officer presence.
- Provide park enforcement on weekdays, weekends and other times of peak visitation.

Recommendations:

- Work collaboratively with the Colorado Springs Police Department to enforce rules and regulations within the park.
- Pursue implementable strategies resulting in consistent rule enforcement in Ute Valley Park.



Introduction to the Management Plan

Our Guiding Principles

The following principles were drawn from consistent responses received from the Park user intercept surveys and from the group and individual responses submitted from the Meetings-in-a-Box. They are intended to serve as guideposts as we work together to develop the Ute Valley Park Master and Management Plan.

Preserve and Protect the Park's Natural Character:

- Maintain the rustic nature
- Preserve the natural beauty
- Keep the feel of wilderness
- As good stewards, preserve the Park for future generations

Manage the Trail System:

- Develop a well-defined and well-maintained trail system
- Meet a variety of users' needs
- Connect to the regional trail system

Manage and Sustain the Park

- Implement the Master and Management Plan
- Develop and implement a maintenance plan
- Manage and mitigate erosion throughout the Park
- Manage vegetative growth to mitigate fire danger without dramatically changing the Park
- Enforce Park rules
- Create a safe Park where all users can get along
- Anticipate and manage increased use
- Provide adequate parking

Involve the Public:

- Solicit and value public input
- Support the Park with volunteers and partnerships

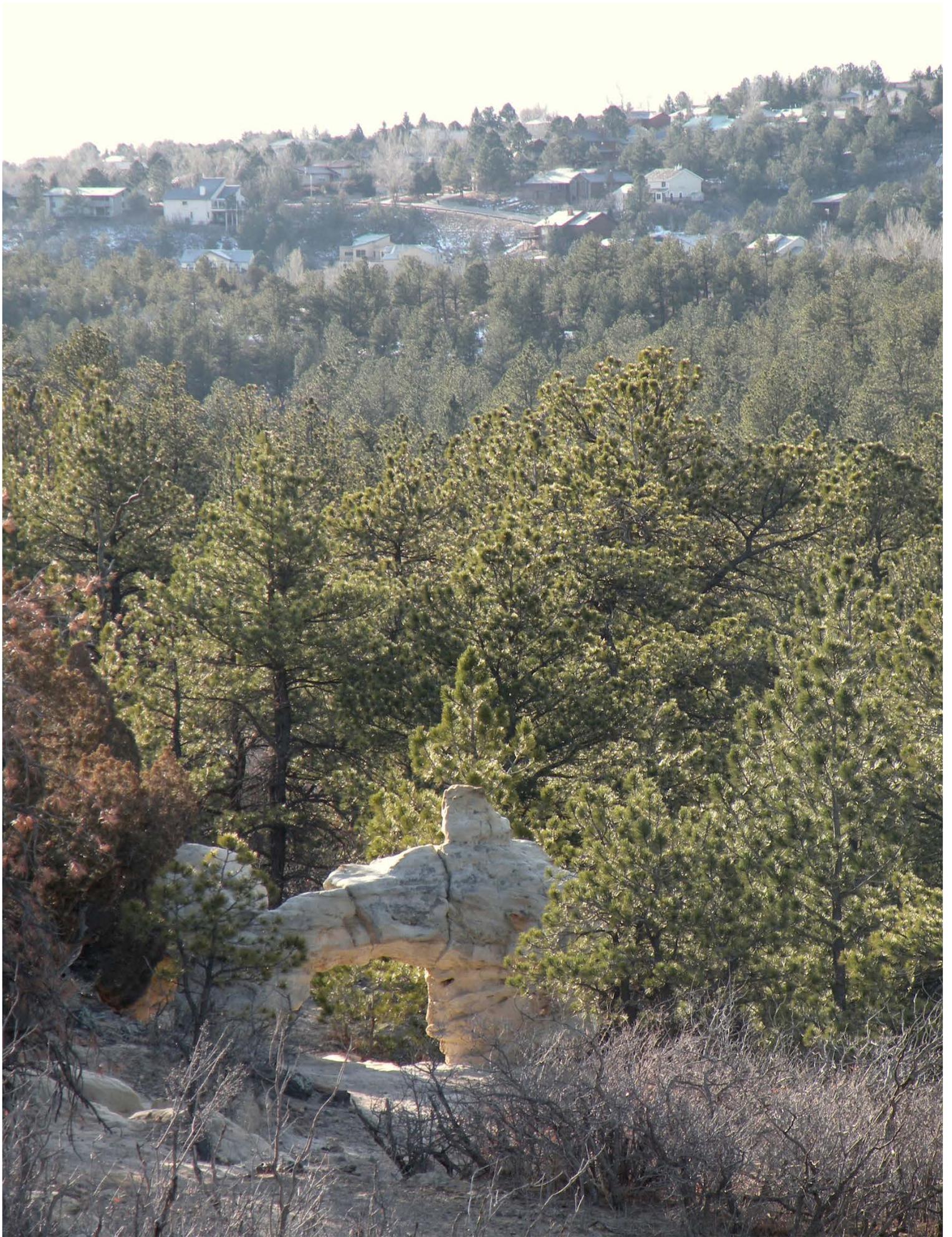
The Ute Valley Park Master and Management Plan represents the continued commitment by the Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department to simultaneously develop the master plan and management plan for these properties. This joint document improves the resulting plans by capitalizing on the close relationship between the two plans. In addition, this management plan benefits from the public engagement process and the input gathered as part of the Master and Management Planning process.

Key Considerations in developing the Management Plan

The management plan is grounded in the Guiding Principles developed and adopted by the public participants early in the planning process. The Guiding Principles serve as our agreed-upon litmus test for evaluating alternative approaches through the planning process.

Informed by the Guiding Principles, the Ute Valley Park Management Plan emphasizes natural and cultural resource protection and restoration, while accommodating sustainable recreational and interpretive opportunities. The conservation easement mandates additional stewardship of the property through annual monitoring and reporting of the conservation values by the Palmer Land Trust; copies of the conservation easement can be found in Appendix I.

Ultimately, the Ute Valley Park Master and Management Plan aims to protect the property for future generations.



Natural and Cultural Resource Management and Protection

Vegetation Management

The primary objectives for native vegetation management in Ute Valley Park are to protect and improve the quality and function of native plant communities and wildlife habitat. The primary areas of management consideration include the following:

- Weed management
- Restoration
- Wildlife and habitat protection
- Forest health management

Weed Management

Despite the location and high levels of public use in Ute Valley Park, the incidence of noxious weed infestations is relatively small. However, multiple noxious weed species and patches do exist and need to be aggressively managed and contained to prevent their proliferation throughout the park. It is not practical or effective to attempt to control all non-native species at once, so it is important to prioritize weed management efforts based on the species present, the size and location of infestations, and legal mandates.

The Colorado Noxious Weed Act classifies noxious weeds into three lists: List A Species are designated for eradication, List B Species are targeted for weed management efforts to stop their continued spread, and List C Species should be managed by effective weed management approaches based on local government priorities. Six noxious weed species are known to occur within Ute Valley Park (ERO 2013, 2014; CO College 2014).

List A Weed Species

- Myrtle spurge (*Euphorbia myrsinites*) – Found on the hillside above homes along south west edge of the property. (Likely introduced from a domestic garden).

List B Weed Species

- Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) – Found along the main drainage and riparian zone.
- Russian olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*) – Found along the main drainage and riparian zone.
- Yellow toadflax (*Linaria vulgaris*) – Found throughout the mountain shrub and grassland areas. Dalmatian toadflax is also likely found on the site
- Knapweed (*Centaurea* sp.) – Found scattered throughout the park.

List C Weed Species

- Cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) – Found throughout the park.

Other non-listed non-native species identified in the park include tumbleweed/Russian thistle (*Salsola* sp. and *Kochia* sp.), smooth brome (*Bromus inermis*), and Siberian elm (*Ulmus pumila*) (Colorado College 2014).

Integrated Weed Management

An integrated weed management program will strategically use any combination of the following tools:

Approach	Description
Mechanical	Physical removal by mowing, mulching, tilling, prescribed burning, grazing or hand pulling
Cultural	Enhancement of the native plant community using fertility management or re-vegetation
Biological	Releasing a weed's native natural enemies using insects, grazing animals or disease
Chemical	Destroying weeds by utilizing herbicides in a manner that targets only the intended species

Proactive prevention of weed establishment is the most successful and cost-effective weed management tool. Vigorous and consistent prevention reduces the opportunities for dispersal of noxious weeds which, in turn, minimizes the need for future control actions. Important principles to prevent weed establishment include the following:

- Minimize new disturbances from trails and facilities;
- Actively restore and revegetate closed trails and unused disturbance sites;
- Wash construction or maintenance equipment before moving from weedy areas to weed-free areas;
- Monitor both new disturbances and restored areas for new weed infestations.

Weed Management Priorities

Recognizing that limited resources are available to control weeds, a strategic approach to prioritizing weed management should focus on long-term prevention and reduction of weeds in Ute Valley Park.

High priorities for weed management include:

- Eradicate myrtle spurge infestation in southwest corner of the park; conduct outreach to neighboring landowners to prevent future reintroductions;
- Target and control weed infestations within or adjacent to the riparian corridor or native meadow areas;
- Target and control small, isolated infestations that are less established and are easier to eradicate;
- Monitor and control weeds that occur along trails or other disturbed sites, including new trail construction, reclaimed trails, and forest management areas.

Lower priorities for weed management include:

- Large, well-established infestations;
- Sporadic and widely-distributed weed occurrences (e.g., cheatgrass or dispersed toadflax);
- Naturalized species that are not aggressive or provide secondary wildlife habitat (e.g., Siberian elm);
- Species confined to disturbed areas;
- Species that are easier to control than others.

Routine monitoring of weeds is a critical component of a long-term weed management plan. Monitoring should focus on existing trails and roads, closed trails or reclaimed sites, and sensitive habitats.

Restoration

The primary purposes of restoration are to promote native vegetation communities, enhance habitat, prevent weed infestation, stabilize soil and control erosion, and improve aesthetics. Before restoration efforts are initiated, it is important to understand the physical characteristics of the landscape (e.g., slope, aspect, soil texture, organic material content, and depth of water table) and ensure that these conditions will provide a suitable planting medium for the desired vegetative community. The investment of time and money into site preparation is essential to restoration success.

Active restoration of degraded areas will become a priority at Ute Valley Park. The Vindicator Trailhead area, the central valley and ever-widening trails throughout the park are high priorities for active and strategic restoration. Future construction efforts to mitigate erosion in the main drainage channel and to construct the regional Ute Valley Trail, have the potential to heavily disturb areas of natural vegetation. These and future heavily disturbed areas are at risk for invasion by Russian thistle and other weeds. Restoration of the native mixed grass in these areas is recommended as a priority for implementation. Restoration efforts now will set the ecological conditions so the land can truly evolve through the stages of natural plant succession.

Key guidelines for grassland restoration include the following:

- Understand the soils and hydrology of the site and select plant species suitable to these conditions.
- Site preparation is key, including the removal of weed species and soil bed preparation. Determine if slow-release organic soil amendments are needed to promote the growth of the selected native seedlings.
- Initiate grassland revegetation with early successional grass species (those that grow quickly on recently disturbed sites) supplemented by perennial and annual forbs and late successional species.
- Biodegradable revegetation mats, wattles, or weed-free mulch can help encourage revegetation by reducing erosion, retaining soil moisture, and protecting seedlings – particularly on steeper slopes or in high-traffic areas.
- Once grasses are established, mowing, or managed grazing are management tools that can be used to stimulate growth and manage weeds. Mowing should be timed to cut down weeds but allow desired native forbs and grasses to flower.
- Continue volunteer group partnerships to monitor park resources and activity impact, and to make recommendations and implement changes needed to conserve park resources.

Wildlife and Habitat Protection

Ute Valley Park is a popular destination for hiking, mountain biking, dog walking, and running. These activities provide a broad range of benefits to visitors, including enjoyment of solitude and natural quiet, opportunities for exercise and physical challenge, opportunities to observe wildlife and learn about the environment, and opportunities to enjoy the outdoors with friends and family.

However, all forms of outdoor recreation in the natural environment inherently result in localized impacts to wildlife due to human disturbance, habitat fragmentation, and the potential introduction of non-native species and predators (e.g., dogs). It is the objective of this plan and the ongoing management of Ute Valley Park to provide meaningful and diverse opportunities for outdoor recreation while minimizing the impacts of those activities.

Impacts of Trails and Recreation

The following general concepts about trail impacts can be drawn from scientific studies (see sidebar) on the impacts of trails and recreation on wildlife:

- Trails and recreation sites have a “zone of influence” within which human disturbance may alter the wildlife’s behavior. The effects will vary by species and individual animal, and can range from no effect, to interruption of activity, to flight, or to abandonment of nesting or foraging sites.
- In urbanized or high-use areas, some animals may become habituated to predictable and recurrent use of trail corridors, reducing their sensitivity to human use.
- The zone of influence can range from between 30 and 100 meters or more, and is generally greater in open terrain than in wooded areas. Considering the urban context, wooded terrain, and high visitor use in Ute Valley Park, a distance of 50 meters was used for this planning process.
- There is little difference in the wildlife’s response to disturbance from hikers and mountain bikers.

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Wildlife Habitat Protection Guidelines

As described in the Existing Conditions and Site Assessment section, Ute Valley Park currently has an extensive network of designated and undesignated rogue trails, and the habitat is highly fragmented, with few remaining undisturbed areas for wildlife. Recognizing the conflicting objectives of recreation access and habitat conservation, many of the following guidelines can be useful in trail planning and ongoing management decisions.

- Provide reasonable and enjoyable trail experiences and connections in appropriate locations to minimize the proliferation of rogue trails.
- Use thoughtful and creative planning to establish a high-quality trail system that minimizes redundant and unnecessary trails.
- Avoid new fragmentation of large, undisturbed blocks of habitat and use strategic trail closures to expand habitat areas.
- Actively close and restore unwanted or unsustainable trails after new trails and connections are established. Do not add trails without these concurrent closures.
- Retain a variety of undisturbed habitat types to provide a refuge for a variety of wildlife species.
- Maintain visual or physical barriers (e.g., thick vegetation, rock outcrops, or fencing) between trail corridors and habitat areas.
- In compliance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), areas planned for habitat disturbing activities (e.g., tree removal or grading) should be surveyed for active bird nest and/or conducted in the non-breeding season (August through February).

There are frequently trade-offs between competing habitat values (e.g., new habitat disturbances may be necessary to avoid more sensitive areas), or between habitat values and other management priorities (e.g., new disturbances to make existing trails more sustainable or functional). Each situation should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

These guidelines were integrated into this master planning process and the trail alignments recommended for implementation. However, it is still important to integrate resource sensitivity principles into the final design, construction, and long-term management.

Forest Health Management

Introduction

Forest management is used to address woodlands (communities dominated by trees and shrubs). However, any such management must be conducted with other community types (e.g., grasslands and riparian) and issues (e.g., noxious weeds and social trails) in mind. In Ute Valley Park, the principal woodland communities (which have been described previously in the Master Plan and vegetation report) are highlighted below with some context specific to forest management considerations.

- **Ponderosa Pine/Gambel Oak.** These woodlands dominate the forest community in Ute Valley Park. The vegetative structure of the woodlands makes them attractive to and valuable for wildlife.
- **Gambel Oak/Mountain Mahogany.** Tall, dense stands of Gambel oak provide valuable cover for wildlife; however, they may provide poor forage and suppress the growth of forbs and grasses. The fire return intervals in Gambel oak range from less than 30 years to 100 years, and the condition of shrub stands reflect this variability.
- **Douglas Fir/Juniper.** This forested area represents a distinct community and is limited in size due to specific microclimate. The community adds variability in vegetation structure and associated wildlife species.

Forest Management Issues

Potential forest management issues associated with Ute Valley Park include fire, forest disease, noxious weeds, as well as several others.

- **Fire.** The impacts of fire exclusion specific to the landscape in which Ute Valley Park is in include a buildup of fuels and reductions in biodiversity and ecosystem health to varying degrees. In examining recent large fires, it would appear fire is determined to reintroduce itself to the area, regardless of management decisions.
- **Disease.** Dwarf mistletoe in ponderosa pine is present. Dwarf mistletoe is typically more abundant today than it was in the 1800s when its spread was controlled by fire and an open stand structure.
- **Noxious weeds.** Noxious weeds present in or adjacent to areas that may be subject for prescriptive treatments include Russian olive and Siberian elm in the riparian zone, cheatgrass in open areas, toadflax in shrublands, and myrtle spurge in adjacent landscaped areas.
- **Other.** Additional forest management issues associated with Ute Valley Park include aesthetics, cultural resources, adjacent land use (including defensible space), drought, erodible soils, and social trail development.

Objectives

The following integrated forest management objectives are based on the anticipated (primarily recreational) values of Ute Valley Park:

- In partnership with nearby residents, create and maintain adequate wildfire-defensible space for all structures adjacent to Ute Valley Park.
- Mitigate the high wildfire hazards by strategically locating fuel reduction projects.
- Improve forest health by renewing potential decadent stand conditions. Decadent stands are qualitatively described as stands that have more dead or down stems than living stems.

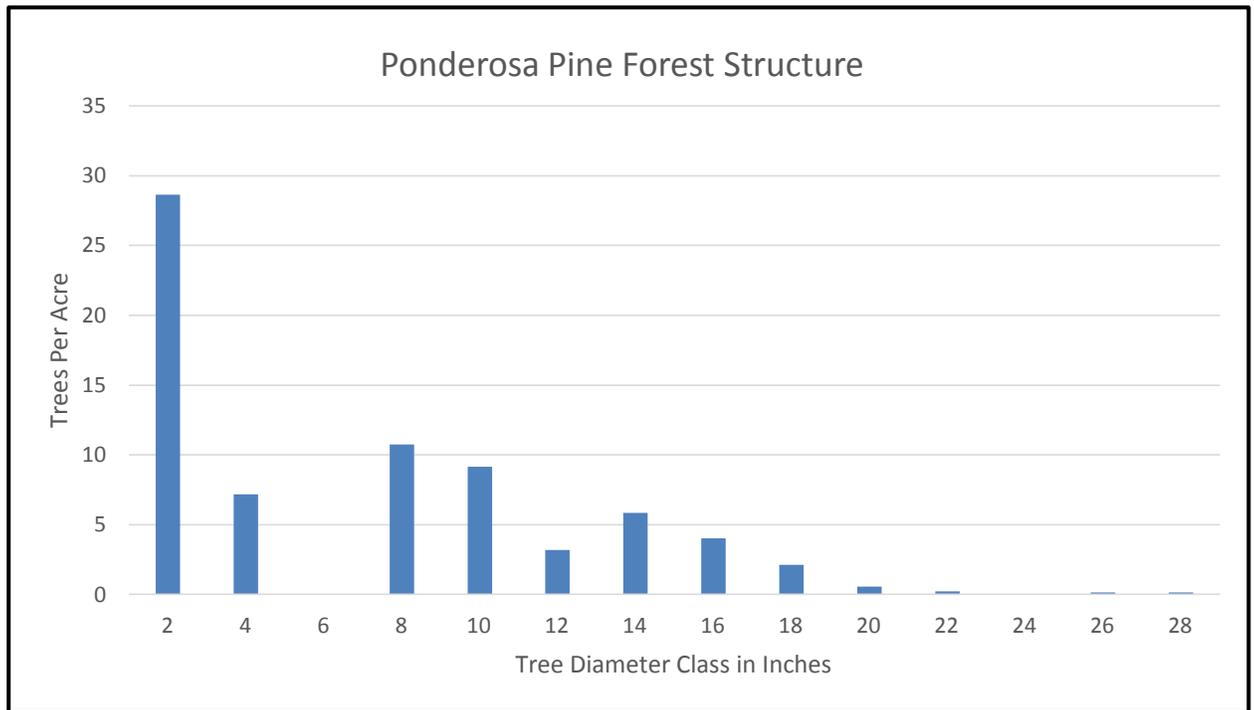
Forest Evaluation

Forest Stand Conditions

A warm, dry Ponderosa Pine/Gambel Oak woodland dominates the majority of Ute Valley Park. The woodland is intermixed with scattered juniper (*Juniperus scopulorum*), patches of mountain mahogany (*Cercocarpus montanus*), and mature scrub oak (*Quercus gambelii*). Mountain muhly (*Muhlenbergia montana*), blue grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*), and yucca (*Yucca glauca*) are common understory components.

Current tree age and diameter distributions in Ute Valley Park reflect impacts from two post-settlement factors – extensive logging and uncontrolled fires in the mid-1800s, which dramatically reduced the extent of forests, especially old-growth stands. The impacts of logging and fires were especially pronounced in the readily accessible Front Range slopes and other low-elevation areas that include Ute Valley Park.

Based on a limited sampling of trees in the Ponderosa Pine/Gambel Oak woodland, stand density (basal area), estimated using variable radius plot (VRP) sampling, on Ute Valley Park is 32 square feet per acre. Average tree heights range between 30 and 45 feet. Trees surveyed on the property tend to be about 8 to 14 inches in diameter at breast height (dbh). Tree ages from Ute Valley Park were determined from cores taken at breast height (4.5 feet from the base of the tree) and ring counted in the field. Generally trees in Ute Valley Park are young (i.e., less than 120 years old). Ring counts do not account for missing or false rings in the ring series and may miss smaller rings in the count, but were considered adequate for the purposes of this analysis.



Summary of Insects and Diseases

Ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir trees in Ute Valley Park are susceptible to two species of mistletoe (*Arceuthobium vaginatum* and *A. douglasii*, respectively). Based on the preliminary assessment of Ute Valley Park, dwarf mistletoe is present in ponderosa pine. Dwarf mistletoe is a parasitic plant that will make the host tree less vigorous and extremely stressed, and thereby more susceptible to insects and diseases. For example, opportunistic species of bark beetles may attack the weakened tree. This, in turn, may generate an outbreak population that infests larger area of the immediate stand or area forest.

In the long term, mistletoe can eventually kill its host tree and the rain of mistletoe seed from the infected overstory thwarts regeneration under the canopy. Ultimately, this results in an interruption or cessation of the natural regeneration in the forest stand in the location of the mistletoe. Dwarf mistletoes are not quick killers, so long-term management options are feasible.

In most conifer species, the severity of dwarf mistletoe is quantified using the Six-Class Dwarf Mistletoe Rating (DMR) System developed by Hawksworth (1977). A tree's crown is divided into thirds and each third is rated. If less than 50 percent of the branches are infected in that third, the rating is 1. If more than 50 percent are infected, it is 2. If there are no visible infections, that third of the crown gets a 0. The ratings of each third are added to get a total rating. The system should be utilized as an initial step in determining the extent of disease treatment in Ute Valley Park.

Wildfire Evaluation

The wildfire evaluation for the property is based on: 1) a review of wildfire hazard mapping prepared by the Colorado State Forest Service; and 2) a site visit to confirm the nature of vegetative fuels and slope. Vegetative fuels include living and dead vegetation materials. The amount of heat energy released during a wildfire is defined by the amount,

arrangement, and rate of combustion of the vegetative fuels. Slope is defined as the upward or downward incline or slant of the terrain. All other variables being equal, a fire traveling upslope will move faster and have longer flames than a fire traveling on flat terrain—a fire on a 30 percent slope can produce flames twice the length and travel as much as one and one half times as fast as a fire on flat ground. The wildfire hazard follows below. It should be noted that additional factors such as all aspects of weather and the history of wildfires also provide a valuable dimension for assessment. These factors are not included in this evaluation.

Fuels

Fuels on the property are generally characterized by a ponderosa pine forest. This forest is intermixed with scattered juniper, patches of shrubs, and open grass areas with some low levels of dead and down woody debris.

Topography

Elevations on the property range from about 6,300 to 6,700 feet. A ridge along the west side dominates topography on the Ute Valley Park. Slopes on Ute Valley Park are moderately steep in some areas and greater than 30 percent at times.

Wildfire Hazard

The hazard class of Ute Valley Park is B (Moderate Hazard) based on the vegetation (fuels) and expected fire behavior. Characteristics of the wildfire hazard on Ute Valley Park include:

- A medium density conifer stand;
- Surface fuels consisting mainly of a herbaceous layer and leaf litter and or duff layer;
- Some patches of conifer reproduction, shrub thickets, and dead wood; and
- Steep slopes in several areas.

The expected fire behavior would include intermittent flare-ups occurring above treetops and short- and medium-range spotting.

Wildfire Risk

While forest management treatments will reduce the potential for wildfire within Ute Valley Park, it should not be assumed that these treatments will be sufficient in abating the effects of any wildfire that should originate inside or outside of Ute Valley Park. Two major factors affecting the spread of a wildfire are wind speeds and the steep slopes that are part of the geographic and scenic features of Ute Valley Park. Steep slopes, when evaluated as part of the wildfire hazard, are a negative attribute that cannot be modified in any manner. Secondly, catastrophic or stand replacement wildfires are part of the ecology of the area.

No matter what mitigation steps are taken, this risk will always exist and manifest itself over time.

Ute Valley Park represents a very small fraction of the acreage on the west side of Colorado Springs that is classified as being in the "Red Zone." Extreme fire conditions may overwhelm treated acres, barely providing a barrier to the fire spread. Considering this context, Ute Valley Park may potentially suffer the effects of a catastrophic wildfire in spite of the best wildfire mitigation activities.

Wildfire Threat

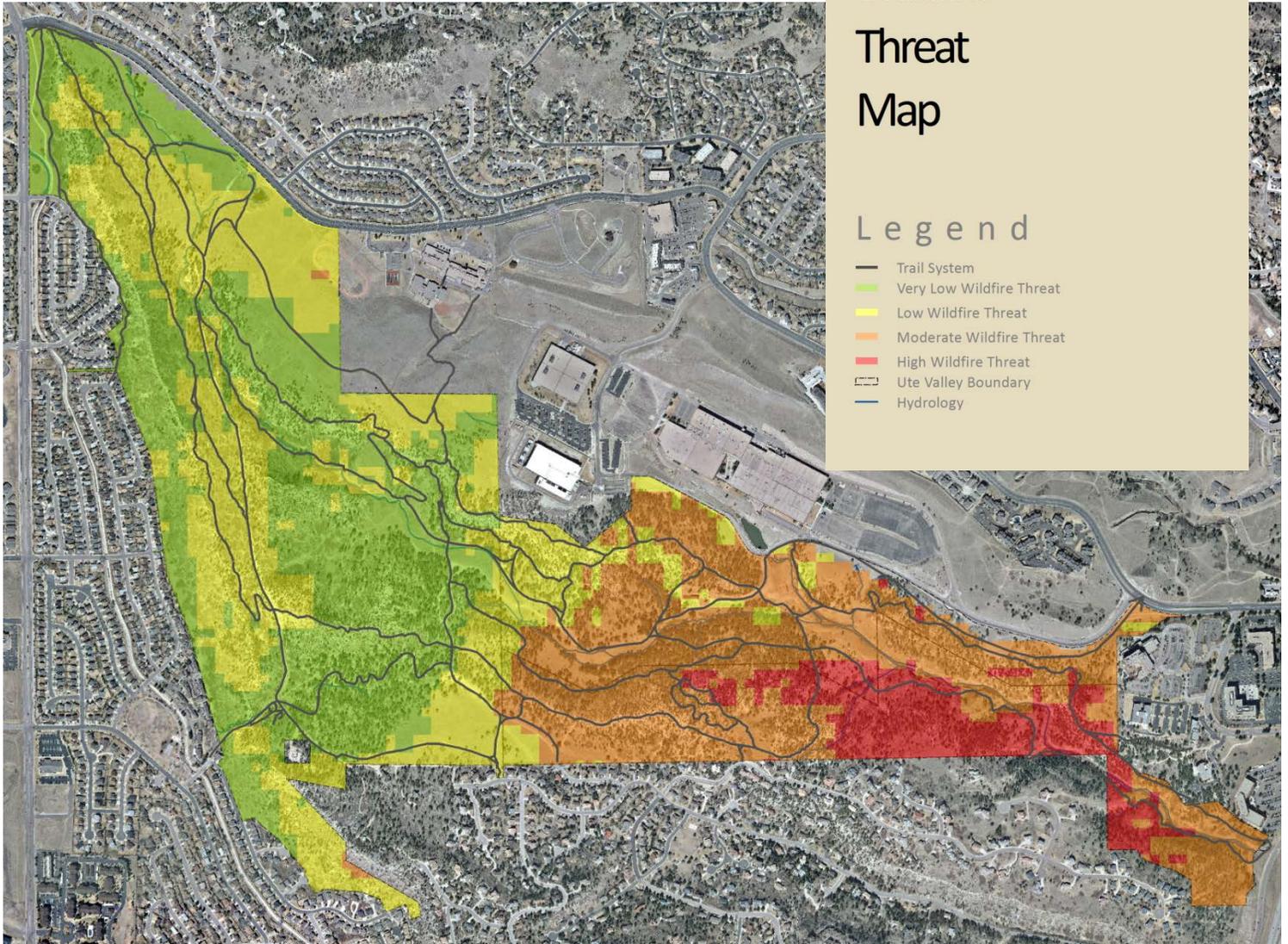
The Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) developed a Colorado Wildfire Risk Assessment Summary Reporting Tool. The tool allows users of the Professional Viewer application of the Colorado Wildfire Risk Assessment (Colorado WRA) web portal to define a specific project area and generate information for the area. Wildfire threat was reviewed for Ute Valley Park (CSFS 2015).

Wildfire threat is the likelihood of an acre burning. Threat is derived by combining a number of landscape characteristics including surface fuels and canopy fuels, resultant fire behavior, historical fire occurrence, percentile weather derived from historical weather observations, and terrain conditions. The measure of wildfire threat used in the Colorado WRA is called Fire Threat Index (FTI). FTI combines the probability of an acre igniting (Fire Occurrence) and the expected final fire size based on rate of spread in four weather percentile categories.

Wildfire threat in Ute Valley Park ranges from very low on the west side to high on the east side (see map on following page - Wildfire Threat Map).

Wildfire Threat Map

Represents the likelihood of an acre burning



Management Recommendations

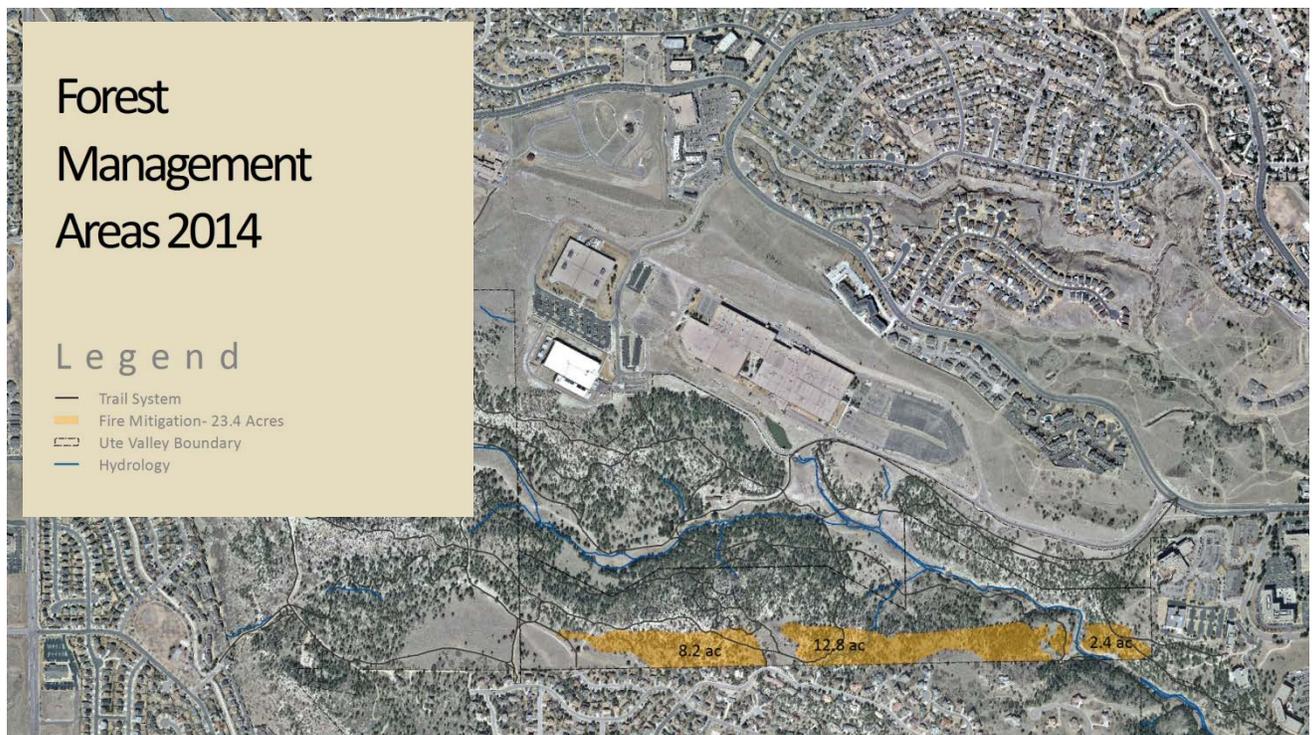
Wildfire Defensible Space

Several factors outlined in the sections above determine the need for fuelbreaks on surrounding property related to forest characteristics on Ute Valley Park, including, but not limited to: (1) wildfire hazard; (2) slope; (3) topography; and (4) adjacent forested subdivisions. A fuelbreak is an easily accessible strip of land of varying width in which fuel density is reduced, thus improving fire control opportunities. The stand is thinned, and remaining trees are pruned to remove ladder fuels. Brush, heavy ground fuels, snags, and dead trees are disposed of and an open, park-like appearance is established. Fuelbreak establishment should adhere to the guidelines established by the CSFS (Dennis 2003).

Fuelbreaks should be established in conjunction with the subdivisions immediately west and south of Ute Valley Park. Some areas on the south side of Ute Valley Park were treated in 2014 (see the map below - Forest Management Areas (2014)). These projects were successful in achieving the City's goals for wildfire mitigation and forest management, and have been supported by neighbors and the community.

Fuelbreak specifications for areas are as follows:

- Minimum 300-foot width, 150 each side of access roads.
- Minimum 10-foot spacing between the edges of tree crowns.
- Removal of trees that are suppressed, diseased, deformed, damaged, or of low vigor.
- Removal of all ladder fuels.
- Removal or proper disposal of all slash.



Implementation of fuelbreak work should be planned relative to residences adjacent to Ute Valley Park and based on zones established by the CSFS (Dennis 2003). In general, Zone 1 is an area of maximum treatment extending a minimum of 15 feet from the outside edge of a structure; Zone 2 is an area of fuel reduction extending 75 to 125 feet from the structure; and Zone 3 is an area of traditional forest management of no particular size. These management recommendations assume that Zone 1 will be landscaped while Zones 2 and 3 will remain in a relatively natural state. Any implementation activities for a given zone apply for all inner zones. For example, implementation activities for Zone 3 apply (at a minimum) to Zones 1 and 2. City staff will plan and implement additional treatment areas in the future.

Recommendations

- Conduct an assessment of defensible space in association with the adjoining neighborhood on the west side of Ute Valley Park.
- Assist residents with recommendations for defensible space creation on their property adjacent to Ute Valley Park.

Disease Treatment

The dwarf mistletoe infestation in Ute Valley Park should be mapped in detail and treated. Pruning and removing trees is the best management measure available to reduce or eliminate dwarf mistletoe infestations. Trees that are severely infected or those with only a few live branches should be removed. The parasite can be removed from lightly infected trees by pruning off all infected branches. The entire branch at the branch collar near the trunk should be pruned. Mistletoe shoots die as soon as the tree branch is cut. Therefore, burning the removed branches is not necessary. Disposal of pruned materials should be based on the objectives of reducing the wildfire hazard and maintaining the aesthetic values of Ute Valley Park. Acceptable disposal methods of slash resulting from mistletoe removal are chipping, hauling, or piling and burning with adequate snow cover.

Recommendations

- Complete a detailed mapping of dwarf mistletoe on Ute Valley Park. This effort could be accomplished with volunteers and recreation-type GPS units.
- Following completion of the detailed mapping, treat dwarf mistletoe on Ute Valley Park using the guidelines provided.

Gambel Oak Thinning

Areas of Gambel Oak with mountain mahogany and skunkbrush occur throughout Ute Valley Park. As stated previously, the fire return intervals in Gambel Oak communities range from less than 30 years to about 100 years, and the condition of shrub stands reflect this variability. Through the absence of fire, Gambel Oak stands have grown decadent and reached heights of 12 to 18 feet in some instances. Through age, frost kill, and drought stress, these stands have built up a large dead component and constitute a wildfire concern in terms of fuel loading. At the same time, dense thickets help limit the spread of social/rogue trails, which are quite extensive in Ute Valley Park.

While tall, dense stands of Gambel Oak provide valuable cover for wildlife, they may provide poor forage and suppress the growth of forbs and grasses. Top killing of Gambel Oak and other shrub species typically promote vegetative sprouting. As such, mechanical or prescribed fire treatments alone, while insufficient to eradicate shrub stands, can serve to convert the stands to a more productive forage type and less hazardous fuel.

Application of prescribed fire in Ute Valley Park's shrub fuels is problematic and highly unlikely. Under conditions that will support the desired treatment goals, fire behavior may prove difficult to contain. Given the overall continuity of the shrub fuels and the proximity of dense residential development, prescribed fire is not recommended; mechanical treatments are the preferred methods in the brush fuels at this time. Areas for Gambel oak treatment should be selected to:

- Create defensible space adjacent to and in conjunction with residential property while providing for aesthetics.
- Create defensible space around significant cultural resources.
- Maintain oak thickets in strategic locations (e.g., along ridges and associated slopes) to inhibit social trail development.
- Initiate pilot projects for larger scale oak brush treatment.
- Treat oak brush, linking grasslands to create defensible fuel profiles.

As Gambel oak and other shrubby species will aggressively re-sprout, it may be necessary to consider using herbicides in high priority areas where re-growth is not desired. Widespread herbicide application to treated areas is not likely feasible due to aesthetics, ecosystem function, and cost. However in areas where fuel breaks and defensible space are the priority, then prevention and/or minimization of regrowth should be considered to keep fuels from becoming dense again. Application of Garlon® or equivalent herbicide to recently (within 30 minutes) cut stumps is recommended to prevent aggressive resprouting. Oak brush and other stands will regrow over time, but maintenance of already thinned stands will be considerably less intensive of work when compared to initial thinning and removal of large amounts of dead material. Some stands may need some pruning and

treatment every 5 to 10 years.

The openings in thinned Gambel oak stands should quickly become established with native grasses, forbs and oak suckers, but also possibly noxious weeds. Weed treatment in these areas should be anticipated. Reseeding should not be needed, as native vegetation suitable to these areas should reestablish themselves within 3 to 5 years.

Recommendations

- Based on the completed defensible space assessment, treat oak brush along the western boundary of Ute Valley Park.
- Refrain from oak brush treatment on the eastern slope of the steep ridge on the west side of Ute Valley Park. Oak thickets on the slope inhibit social trail development.

Ponderosa Pine Management

The ponderosa pine forests along the Front Range of Colorado have a history of varied fire size, severity, and frequency. Throughout these forests, fire size has been found to range from one tree to landscape scale and from low severity to stand replacing fire behavior. Composite mean fire return intervals in these forest types range from 13 to over 40 years. In general, however, lower elevation ponderosa pine and south facing slopes are more prone to low severity surface fire, while high intensity burning and crown activity is more likely to occur at higher elevations and on northern exposures.

Based on a limited sampling of trees in the Ponderosa Pine/Gambel Oak woodland, extensive thinning is not recommended. Areas of ponderosa pine treatment should be selected to:

- Remove small understory trees.
- Remove competing trees and other vegetation around prominent (e.g., seed) trees.
- Address trail development including limiting social trail development and facilitating closure.
- Consider the erosion hazard of soils and impacts to native vegetation.

Similar to Gambel oak thinning, forest openings should quickly become established with native grasses and forbs, but are also likely to attract noxious weeds. Weed treatment in these areas should be anticipated.

Recommendations

- Focus additional ponderosa pine treatments within the Rockrimmon Open Space portion of the planning area.
- Complete a noxious weed assessment in areas on the south side of Ute Valley Park that were treated in 2014. Incorporate findings into future forest treatments and conduct noxious weed management as necessary.

Russian Olive and Siberian Elm Management

Russian olive and Siberian elm are woody species found along the riparian corridor on Ute Valley Park. These invasive species should be removed to promote native vegetation and ecosystem health. Control of seedlings and sprouts can be hand-pulled when the soil is moist. Once either species becomes firmly established, the most effective control method is the cut-stump herbicide treatment. This method is both labor-intensive and expensive, but can be highly effective (good kill rate if applied correctly), and is more target-specific than foliar applications of herbicide. The stump-cut method consists of the following steps: 1) cut stems within 2 inches of the ground surface; 2) apply herbicide (glyphosate or triclopyr) within a few minutes of cutting; 3) cut and treat the entire circumference of the stem cambium; and 4) treat any resprouted foliage between 4 to 12 months after the initial treatment.

References

Dennis, F.C., 2003. Creating Wildfire-Defensible Zones. Bulletin No. 6.302. Colorado State University Cooperative Extension Service.

Hawksworth, Frank G. 1977. The 6-class dwarf mistletoe rating system. General Technical Report RM-48. USDA Forest Service Rocky Mountain Forest and Range Experiment Station, Fort Collins, CO. 7p

Glyphosate needs to be applied carefully as it will kill everything including grasses; triclopyr will not kill grasses. Timing for management should be late summer or fall for the initial treatment. Timing for a follow-up herbicide application (if needed) is especially effective just after first flush (leaf out) during the spring immediately following an initial treatment. The timing is such that the tree (i.e., now a stump) has drawn on its stored reserves to create new stems and leaves. This depletion of reserves weakens the tree's ability to thwart the herbicide's mode-of-action or overall manner in which a herbicide affects a plant at the tissue or cellular level.

Recommendations

- Remove all Russian olive along the riparian corridor within two years of adoption of the Ute Valley Park Master and Management Plan.
- Remove Siberian elm as time and resources permit.

Archaeological Resource Protection

Ute Valley Park contains a high density of historical and archaeological resources that are an important asset for the community and may contribute to our understanding of the natural and cultural history of the region. To the typical visitor, however, these resources and their value is unknown and unseen. Ute Valley Park contains limited paleontological resources. Artifacts found within the park have been limited to vegetation fossils.

Management Guidelines

The management objective for these resources is to continue to protect the many sites and resources within the park, while improving the public's knowledge and understanding of these resources through non-consumptive interpretation. To achieve these objectives, some of the following guidelines should be considered:

- Minimize direct identification or interpretation of archeological sites and resources. These are best protected in place by being relatively unknown to the public.
- Evaluate trails for cultural material that may be adversely affected by existing routes and recreational traffic. Mitigate adverse effects as appropriate.
- Pursue grants to allow and encourage ongoing research by qualified scientists to further identify and better understand the resources, their management, and their protection.
- Monitor all known sites on a routine basis to identify resource degradation, vandalism, or new research or interpretive opportunities.
- Develop interpretive signs at trailheads providing a narrative of the history of the area to inform the public on valuable cultural resources as well as cultural material lost or damaged by collection and looting.
- Consult with local tribal groups on the protection and treatment of culturally modified trees, stone circles, and rock art as these resources may potentially be considered sacred to federally-recognized tribes.
- Formally document and research the most significant resources within the park by completing appropriate OAHF forms and securing official determinations of eligibility for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).
- Conduct a full Class III archaeological survey of the Ute Valley Park to identify, revisit, and evaluate cultural resources for their eligibility for listing on the NRHP.
- Monitor former mine sites for subsidence and erosion to manage public safety and historical resource protection.

Project Planning and Implementation

The implementation of this master plan will include many ground-disturbing projects, including trail construction and closures, trailhead construction, drainage improvements, and forest management. As these projects are planned and implemented, the following management practices should be considered to minimize impacts to cultural and archaeological resources:

- Avoid known cultural resources to the greatest degree possible.
- Employ monitoring in known or suspected areas of cultural material to ensure projects do not inadvertently damage or destroy previously unidentified features or subsurface cultural material.

It should be noted that without a federal nexus (e.g., federal funding or approval), future projects will not legally require compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (as amended 1966, NHPA). Until the involvement of a federal nexus, all cultural resource management is considered due diligence and best practices, and the City is not obligated to complete cultural resource studies, surveys or reports.

Interpretive Themes and Guidelines

Most of the historical and archaeological resources in the park are relatively unknown and invisible to the general public – an attribute that affords them the greatest level of protection from vandalism and theft. However, there is a rich cultural history of the park that could be better conveyed to the visiting public without endangering individual sites. Interpretive theme suggestions are included in *Section IV: Site Development Recommendations - Interpretative and Educational Opportunities*.



Perimeter Management

Two areas of concern, perimeter fencing and erosion and debris deposits, at or just outside the park boundaries were identified in the Master Plan process. The City's Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department diligently strives to be a "good neighbor" and identified a path toward resolution and solutions to the areas of concern. They are listed in the recommendations below.

Perimeter Fences

System-wide, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services staff utilizes fencing as a management tool to define or protect park users and/or natural and cultural resources. Parks does not install or utilize fencing solely to define park boundaries and generally removes perimeter fencing located on park property when resources allow.

At Ute Valley Park, numerous fence segments line the park boundary and many are in disrepair. Based on a visual inspection it is assumed the perimeter fencing within the Piñon Valley neighborhood along the western property line is privately owned and maintained. At the time of this writing, the perimeter fencing segments of concern are located at the Pine Cliff neighborhood along the southern property line.

Recommendations:

- Conduct a land survey to identify the location of the fence either on public property or private property. This survey can augment the encroachment survey conducted as part of the recent Hewlett-Packard land purchase;
- Notify each property owner of the City's intention to remove the fence segments on park property;
- Consider offering to remove fencing just inside private property to create a uniform non-fenced perimeter;
- Promptly remove fence on park property(both above and below grade);
- Properly dispose of fence segments;
- Restore disturbed excavation, grading and native vegetation within the park in areas disturbed by fence removal.

Erosion and Debris Deposits

Several neighbors along the western boundary of the park experience runoff and sediment deposition during and after intense rainstorms. The deposition accumulates in private yards and onto Rendezvous Trail, a public street. Homeowner "fixes" and some private property improvements increase flow onto adjacent properties. Currently the City assists with public street clean up, however all parties desire a sustainable, long-term solution. The following step-by-step protocol is suggested.

Recommendations:

- Review the development's approved Drainage Plan to ensure current conditions comply with development plan requirements. Adjacent property Development Plan Drainage Plans can be found in Appendix K;
- Consider consulting via a neighborhood meeting to explain and encourage compliance with the approved Drainage Plan;
- Design and reconstruct the trail leading from the neighborhood connection on Pemberton Way north to the Centennial/Vindicator intersection;
- Address any concentrated runoff from the trail during this reconstruction;
- Re-visit areas after properties are in compliance with the development's approved Drainage Plan to observe if parkland mitigation would be beneficial;
- If deemed beneficial, aggressively deter public and pet access on park property uphill from areas of concern. Consider informational/educational signage to explain purpose of closure along with fencing to deter access;
- Once public access is eliminated, restore native vegetation uphill from areas of concern;
- Advocate for Ute Valley Park to be part of the City's Stormwater priorities list.

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Trail System Sustainability and Management

Sustainability may be simply defined as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” A more explicit definition of sustainability is “a condition of existence which enables the present generation of humans and other species to enjoy social wellbeing, a vibrant economy, and a healthy environment, and to experience fulfillment, beauty and joy, without compromising the ability of future generations of humans and other species to enjoy the same.”¹

Land stewards and managers want to be careful that efforts do not have unintended consequences on the very things those efforts aim to protect. The following list of considerations is intended for use by the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department and user group representatives to guide long-term and short-term sustainable trail system management decisions.

¹ Arizona Policy Choices, "Sustainability For Arizona, The Issue of Our Age" (Morrison Institute for Public Policy, 2007)



Recommended considerations leading to sustainable trail system decisions

- Follow the Guiding Principles that serve as the foundation of this Management Plan.
- Prioritize closures, reroutes and trail stabilization on system and rogue trails crossing high value habitat areas mapped as part of this Master Plan. Close all trails (rogue or otherwise) not in the approved trail system.
- Consider the benefits of trail work dispersed throughout the property versus annual focus on one defined area.
- Pursue construction of new trails or trail re-routes only when the associated intentional trail closure manpower and resource commitment is in place and closure/restoration work is scheduled. This will avoid extensive resource disruption and the construction of new trails (resource disruption) without the associated resource restoration.
- Comply with the procedures identified during the "Relationship Building Process" in early 2012 for establishing shared goals between the City and user group representatives.
- Consider trail closures during times trail conditions exist when visitor use causes damage and widening.
- Utilize fencing to establish and maintain some closures. Locate long sections that extend from natural barrier to natural barrier (stone, topography or dense vegetation). Fencing may be used to block access that is: unsafe (along gullies); unlawful (private property); along well established rogue trails; in open areas with little topography; and to protect natural and cultural resources.

Non-System Trail Closure

The Ute Valley Park trail system is designed with consideration for and balance of many factors, including physical resources, natural and cultural resources, management and social influences and the public input during this master planning process. The development and acceptance of non-system rogue trails undermine this process.

All trails not in the approved trail system are rogue trails and should be managed according to the guidelines for intentional trail closure techniques found in *Section V: Design Guidelines*.

Successful trail closure and the resulting resource protection require the commitment of resources, knowledge and manpower.

Fencing

Successful implementation of this plan will require the installation of fencing in some locations to manage users, minimize future rogue trails, and protect restored and revegetated areas. Fencing must extend fully between two site obstacles such as a large rock outcrop or dense vegetation. Several general fencing types are recommended for different situations.

Post and Rail Fence

Post and rail wood fencing should be used in locations where a visually attractive barrier is necessary to keep people on designated trails and delineate the limit of appropriate access. For example, this type of fencing may be suitable where the boundary between developed land uses and natural settings is encountered. They are semi-permanent installations that require vehicle and equipment access and suitable soils for setting posts in the ground. They should be designed and constructed from materials that are consistent with the overall aesthetic of the park. Split rail fencing has not proven to be successful in Colorado Springs' open spaces and parks.

Buck-and-Rail Fence

Buck-and-rail fences are rustic, free-standing A-frame fences that are constructed out of rough-hewn logs or lumber, and are appropriate for establishing a barrier to restrict access to closed trails or areas. They can be easily constructed on-site and do not need to be set in the ground, and are therefore appropriate for locations that cross solid rock. Because they do not require excavation and post hole digging, buck-and-rail fence can be installed farther from roads and vehicle access with adequate volunteer labor. While they are rustic in character, buck-and-rail fences are visible from a distance and should be planned and used with consideration of their visual impact on the landscape. Buck and rail type fencing creates a formidable obstacle that is difficult to climb over and is easy for volunteers to install as it does not require fence postholes.

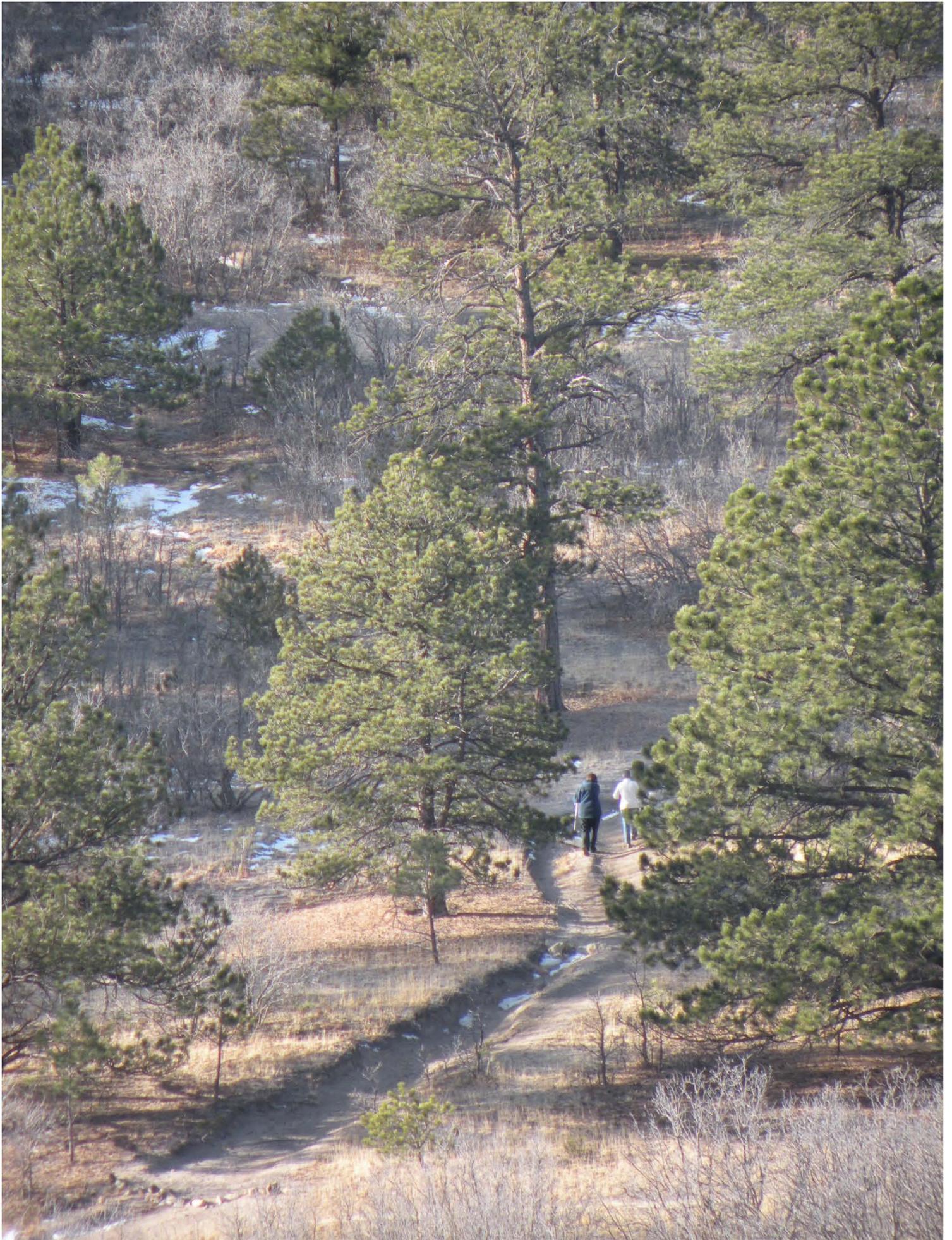


Woven Wire Fence

Installation of woven wire agricultural fencing is an inexpensive, utilitarian approach to closing and restricting access to specific trails or areas. The benefits are that wire fences are relatively simple to install, materials are easily transported to the site, and they are not visible from a distance. Woven wire fences are not passable by small ground travelling wildlife and are less visually attractive than other fencing options, so they should be used sparingly and for short distances.

High tensile wire fencing

High tensile wire fencing is similar to traditional barbed wire fencing, without the barbs, and can be useful in locations where a continuous barrier is necessary to prevent encroachment or protect resources. The benefits are that wire fences are relatively simple to install, materials are easily transported to the site, and they are not visible from a distance. This style also allows easy passage of wildlife (as long as the top wire is less than 42 inches from the ground).



Implementation Priorities

Our Guiding Principles

The following principles were drawn from consistent responses received from the Park user intercept surveys and from the group and individual responses submitted from the Meetings-in-a-Box. They are intended to serve as guideposts as we work together to develop the Ute Valley Park Master and Management Plan.

Preserve and Protect the Park's Natural Character:

- Maintain the rustic nature
- Preserve the natural beauty
- Keep the feel of wilderness
- As good stewards, preserve the Park for future generations

Manage the Trail System:

- Develop a well-defined and well-maintained trail system
- Meet a variety of users' needs
- Connect to the regional trail system

Manage and Sustain the Park

- Implement the Master and Management Plan
- Develop and implement a maintenance plan
- Manage and mitigate erosion throughout the Park
- Manage vegetative growth to mitigate fire danger without dramatically changing the Park
- Enforce Park rules
- Create a safe Park where all users can get along
- Anticipate and manage increased use
- Provide adequate parking

Involve the Public:

- Solicit and value public input
- Support the Park with volunteers and partnerships

This Master Plan provides a blueprint for the long-term form and function of a high quality trails system. Prioritizing implementation of this plan will require thoughtful, strategic consideration of individual trail system components to make the most efficient use of existing financial and human resources. This plan preserves flexibility for the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department to take advantage of funding and partnering opportunities as they arise.

As the Master and Management Plan is implemented, land stewards and managers must be careful that efforts do not have unintended consequences on the very things those efforts aim to protect. The following list of considerations is intended for use by the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department and user groups' representatives to guide long-term and short-term implementation priority decisions.

Recommended considerations for determining implementation priorities

- Follow the Guiding Principles that serve as the foundation of this Master and Management Plan.
- Consider prioritizing work that protects natural or cultural resource areas. These are mapped as part of this Master Plan.
- Remain flexible with annual and long-term priorities in order to optimize resource and partnering opportunities that may arise.
- Consider the benefits of work dispersed throughout the property versus an annual focus on one defined area.
- Pursue construction of new facilities and trails only when the associated manpower and resource commitment is in place for resource protection, further study (as needed) and associated restoration.
- Consider recommendations from the conservation easements' annual monitoring report by the Palmer Land Trust for implementation priority.
- Comply with the Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department's procedures for establishing shared annual priorities between the City and user group representatives. Consider expanding this to longer-term implementation priorities.

Ute Valley Park Implementation Priorities for 2015-2016

In order to initiate Master Plan implementation in 2015, the following high priority projects are identified. High priority projects are those that can be successfully completed now, can be completed with existing resources, can provide immediate benefits to Ute Valley Park visitors, and/or address an immediate resource concern. The projects are "paired" so that a new or restored trail is opened in conjunction with closure of corresponding unsustainable alignments.

High Priority Projects

- **Stormwater Planning** - Initiate funding solicitation for detailed comprehensive Stormwater Study of the central drainage for stabilization, restoration and erosion control. The channel's hydrology and hydraulics need to be assessed to ensure drainage improvements adequately stabilize the channel and withstand the anticipated flows. The recommendations from this planning should be reviewed with the Palmer Land Trust regarding impacts and improved conditions of the drainage in the conservation easement. This planning work also ensures the regional trail improvements are protected from erosion and undermining.
Legal Agreements - Initiate all access agreements
- **New Eastern Loop and Conservation Area**
Planning Coordination - Stormwater solution to stabilize/restore the side channel gullies. Complete revocable access agreements for private properties. Trail Design. Migratory Bird Survey (time of year dependent)
New Eastern Trail Loop to Tech Center Drive - Provide all park users something new right at the start. By significantly increasing the park's trail mileage, this loop begins to spread people out in preparation for resource restoration and trail closures elsewhere.
Establish largest Undisturbed Habitat Area - Initiate the largest and most aggressive trail closure/habitat conservation effort in the central area of the original Park property. Get started soon and set the tone with users when the Master Plan is in recent memory.
- **Challenging Downhill Bike Trails and Area Restoration**
Planning Coordination - Develop a plan for the design, construction, management, and maintenance of 1-3 downhill-oriented challenging trails where designated in the Master Plan. It is suggested that the plan include partnerships/buy-in from biking community. Trail Design. User group engagement (suggested). Migratory Bird Survey (time of year dependent).
Build Sustainable Challenging Downhill Bike Trails - Provide technical riders a new riding venue on 2-3 sustainable, technically challenging downhill-oriented trails. A multi-use uphill return route is anticipated.
Restore unauthorized downhill area - Initiate extensive trail obliteration, re-vegetation, and fencing. This area needs to be cleaned up, restored, and aggressively protected or it will continue to deteriorate over time.

- **New Riparian Trail, New Regional Trail and Area Restoration**

Planning Coordination - Incorporate the channel stabilization, restoration and erosion control solutions established by the comprehensive Stormwater Study with the Regional Trail design. If the Stormwater Study is not complete, consider constructing the northern section of the Regional Trail and designating the corridor multi-use. Trail Design. Migratory Bird Survey (time of year dependent).

New Riparian Trail - Provide a unique intimate experience along the creek corridor. Connecting the trail through will minimize off-trail wanderings. This will provide a new experience and mitigate closures from regional trail construction/disturbance.

New Regional Trail - Provide regional trail connection between the Foothills Trail and the Pikes Peak Greenway Trail along the existing grade-friendly trail corridor. Narrow and restore widened existing trail tread to 6-8'. Restore previously denuded areas requiring heavy construction and disturbance in switchback zones. Include restoration and re-vegetation within trail construction.

Restore rogue trails, widened trails, and disturbed areas - Aggressively close and restore numerous rogue trails emanating from the widened hiking trail corridor. This area is already and will be heavily disturbed, so it is a good opportunity to wrap restoration into the Regional Trail project.

- **Western Ridgeline Trail and Meadow Restoration**

Planning Coordination - Develop a plan that accommodates possible future stormwater detention. Trail Design. Migratory Bird Survey (time of year dependent).

Improve existing Ridgeline Trails - Improve connections with reroutes between existing sustainable trail segments to establish one trail for all users traversing the ridgeline. This makes the most of existing, good trails and sets up the next round of closures. Significant "bang for the buck" by getting a fair amount of new trail circulation out of minimal reroutes.

Restore meadow surrounding the Vindicator Trailhead and unsustainable routes to the ridge. - Initiate extensive trail closures, re-vegetation, educational signage and fencing in the web of rogue trails south of the trailhead and leading to and on the ridgeline.

- **Ute Valley Road, Roundabout and Trailhead Construction**

Planning Coordination - Develop a plan that accommodates regional trail connections along with the development plan requirements. Regional Trail Design. Migratory Bird Survey (time of year dependent).

New Regional Trail - Provide regional trail connection between the central valley of the park and the Pikes Peak Greenway Trail. Include restoration and revegetation within trail road and trailhead construction.

Restore rogue trails, widened trails, and disturbed areas - Aggressively close and restore numerous rogue trails emanating from the existing trail corridors to the new trailhead location. Restore all disturbed areas.

The Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services staff will ultimately determine the projects to implement with consideration of funding opportunities, partnering opportunities, and available staff resources.

Medium Priority Projects

Medium priority trail projects are those that are generally smaller and require less planning coordination, but do not provide the 'Bang for the Buck" of the high priority projects. The City may consider medium priority projects if the planning coordination, partnerships or funding opportunities are difficult to overcome for all the high priority projects. If partnering funds become available for a medium priority project, it could be addressed before a high priority projects.

- Neighborhood connection, trail reroute and trail closure to Eagleview Middle School
- Ridgeline Trail - southern segment reroutes, connections and closures
- Interpretive signage
- Tech Center Drive Trailhead
- Trail connections to the central valley
- Existing trail restoration, minor reroutes and closures
- Unmapped rogue trail closure
- Forest management
- Further historic and archeological study
- Additional recommendations within this Master and Management Plan

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