



Staff Report

Meeting Date: August 17, 2021

Planner: Elizabeth Kay Marchetti, Senior Planner

APPLICATION SUMMARY:

Project Name: Santa Fe Park Metropolitan Districts Nos. 1-4

Case Number: METRO21-0001

Application type: Metro District

Location: 7951 S. Santa Fe Drive, Littleton, CO 80120

Size of Property: 77.558 acres

Zoning: PD-R/PD-C

Applicant: Ms. Megan Murphy, Esq. for Toll Brothers

**Applicant's
Representative:** Ms. Megan Murphy, Esq.

Owner: Santa Fe Park LLC

Applicant Request: Approval of the Service Plan for Santa Fe Park Metropolitan Districts Nos. 1-4

PROCESS:

➤ Metropolitan District (decision by city council)

A Metropolitan District calls for a Legislative decision.

Legislative decisions involve policy choices that apply to a broad class of landowners. Information gathered at public hearings, from informal conversations with citizens and others, from memoranda prepared by City staff, and from other sources, may be used in deliberation. Legislative bodies are not required to be impartial, only to grant fairness in the procedure.

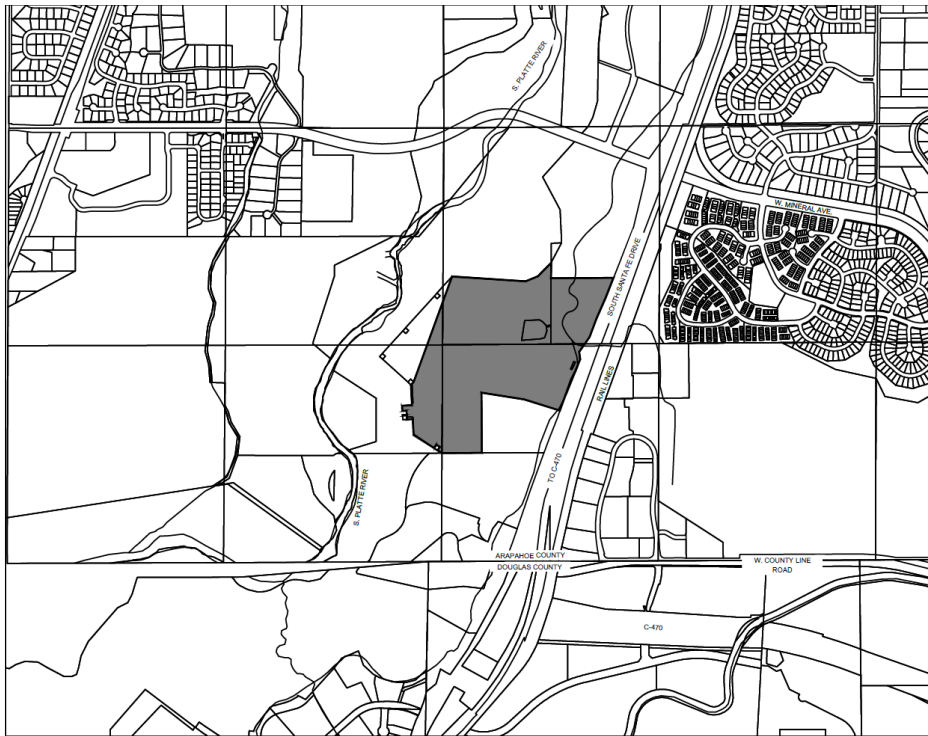
The city council decision must consider the relevant goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan, and the City of Littleton Policy for Reviewing Service Plans For Metropolitan Districts.

Following the Metropolitan District, the next step is for the applicant to file “papers of intent” with the State of Colorado and then hold an election in November of 2021 to appoint members to the

governing boards of the four metro districts.

LOCATION:

The site, shown in a dark gray shading, is located at 7951 and 7875 S Santa Fe Drive on the west side of the Santa Fe Drive.



(Image: Map with a dark gray shape representing the approximately 77.55-acre area where the proposed metropolitan districts would operate.)

BACKGROUND:

Timeline

9/27/21 Application submitted for a Metropolitan District

APPLICATION DETAILS:

The request is to receive approval of a resolution, which approves the Service Plan for Santa Fe Park Metropolitan Districts Nos. 1-4.

CRITERIA & STAFF ANALYSIS:

City of Littleton Policy for Reviewing Service Plans for Metropolitan Districts (Policy)

Section 2.A.1: "...will evaluate and assess a District proposal's consistency with this Policy and the (Comprehensive) Plan goals and objectives more broadly."

Service Plan - The Service Plan for the four Districts is consistent with the Policy because it establishes the Districts' powers and purpose while articulating district/developer infrastructure costs. The Service Plan is also consistent with the Policy because it establishes a mill levy rate for both debt

and operations and maintenance. However, the total proposed fifty-two (52) mills is higher than the limit established by the Policy because of the twelve (12) proposed mills for the operation and maintenance of the regional improvements. The forty (40) mills limit on the public improvements is in compliance with the Policy.

The proposed service plan also sets the debt repayment term of the Districts which does not exceed the limits established by the Policy. The Service Plan includes a forecasted period of buildout, the proposed timeline for Districts' formation, and a summary of the current development status for the 77.55 acres (+/-) being proposed for development, all of which comply with the Policy.

Proposed Improvements-Regional - The proposed Regional Improvements include the engineering, design, and construction of:

1. A ten (10) foot wide regional trail within a fifty (50) foot wide landscaped buffer along the entire western and northern border of the site, which includes an at-grade crossing of the re-aligned Dad Clark Gulch for pedestrians and cyclists at the north boundary of the site; and
2. Fencing along the entire western, and part of the northern, boundary and appropriate landscaping within the fifty (50) foot wide buffer, which protects and aligns with South Platte Park management goals; and
3. Platte River Parkway (PRP), which extends north to south through the entire site and includes a twelve (12) foot wide shared-use path to accommodate pedestrians and cyclists; and
4. E. Phillips Avenue, which provides the main entry to the site and connects Santa Fe Drive to the new Platte River Parkway; and
5. A re-routed and undergrounded Englewood City Ditch, which delivers water to Denver's Washington Park and City Park and achieves the City of Englewood's goal of undergrounding this important water infrastructure; and
6. A replica of the old barn on the site, which incorporates as much reclaimed, original material as possible from the original barn along with interpretative signage, plaques, photos of the original bar, and plentiful seating; and
7. A parking lot with landscaping and lighting to serve the replica barn and the central park south of the parking lot; and
8. Improvements to the Mineral Avenue and Santa Fe Drive intersection.

Items #1, 2, 5, 6, 7, and the twelve (12) foot wide shared-use path, all go beyond the requirements of the zoning and subdivision regulations. The realignment and undergrounding of the Englewood City Ditch implements an important regional goal by ensuring the viability of that historic water infrastructure. The Englewood City Ditch originates in the Chatfield Reservoir and carries water of the South Platte River through Littleton and Englewood, to fill the lakes in Denver's Washington Park and City Park.

The design and construction of the twelve (12) foot wide shared-use path along PRP's entire length ensures the creation of an important north-south "complete street." PRP's design ensures easy access by residents and visitors to the light rail station and regional bicycle and pedestrian trails. The design supports regional goals around locating new housing and employment within proximity of transit stations.

The 10' wide regional trail creates an important regional trail connection outside of South Platte Park and is a significant amenity for the residents and visitors to the site. It provides convenient access to South Platte Park and becomes a key north-south bicycle/pedestrian travel way through the property, which is expected to be continued through the land to the north sometime in the future.

The ten (10) foot wide trail is within a carefully curated, fifty (50) foot wide landscape buffer, which will be planted with material according to the requirements of South Suburban Park and Recreation District (SSPRD). The fencing along the western boundary of this buffer meets the requirements of SSPRD and effectively limits access to South Platte Park in keeping with the park's management plan.

The replica barn will be a gathering space available for use by the public and not just the residents and visitors of the potential neighborhood. The shade, seating, and proximity to the proposed central park will enable large group gatherings in an area of the city that's not been possible in the past. The ten (10) foot wide regional trail connects to this new amenity, making it easily accessible by pedestrians and cyclists as well as autos. The associated parking lot enables large group gatherings at both the replica barn and the proposed central park.

Proposed Improvements-Public The proposed Public Improvements include the engineering, design, and construction of:

1. Water, sanitary, and storm lines and sewers within Platte River Parkway and E. Phillips Ave.; and
2. The realigned, landscaped, and fenced Dad Clark Gulch; and
3. Curb, gutter, sidewalk, storm sewer, signage, and traffic lights for the intersection of E. Phillips Ave. and Santa Fe Drive; and
4. The central park and it's landscaping; and
5. The water, storm water, curb, gutter, sidewalk, roadway, and signage for the street from PRP to the neighborhood security gate; and
6. Streets, streetlights, and two storm-water management ponds within Parcels H & I of the Santa Fe Park South Planned Development; and
7. The bridge and its abutments on PRP that will span the Dad Clark Gulch; and
8. Grading, landscaping, a storm water pond, and drainage channel in Parcel J of the Santa Fe Park South Planned Development; and
9. Water, sanitary sewer, storm sewer, curb, gutter, sidewalk, roadway and striping, signage, streetlights, storm water pond, and landscaping of the Mixed-Use District #3

Metropolitan District Management - The applicant has indicated that the Districts will be managed by The Management Trust, which is responsible for operating other Districts in six other states and three within the Denver Metropolitan Area.

Implementation of the Comprehensive Plan - The Service Plan supports the following Comprehensive Plan Goals and Policies:

L&C GI: *A land use allocation and pattern that supports and promotes Littleton's pride in, and reputation for, quality neighborhoods and an abundance of parks and preserved open space.*

The proposed neighborhood is an efficient use of land which provides a grid street network

and ensures its walkability via an extensive system of sidewalks and off-street trails. The proposed neighborhood includes three new parks and several open space tracts that offer passive and active recreational amenities to new residents and the public. The proposed community creatively uses 40% of open space within the District's boundaries.

***L&C P5:** Manage land use patterns near Littleton's many parks, trails, greenways, and open spaces to: protect their ecological functions; prevent physical and other impactful encroachments; maintain public access; and preserve their overall quality and value – especially where public green spaces contribute to neighborhood character and enhance business park and other commercial settings.*

The proposed neighborhood abuts South Platte Park (SPP), along its western border. The neighborhood includes a fifty (50) foot wide buffer along the entire western border, which includes intentionally selected plants and trees that will compliment and enhance the natural environment established by SPP. The fencing along the entire western border, as required by SSPRD, will ensure that domesticated animals and people are kept out of SSP, except at the one location allowed by SSPRD at the southern edge of the neighborhood. The buffer and fencing effectively maintain the character of SPP while enhancing the new neighborhood and creating a high-quality transition edge between the SPP and the new development.

***H&N G5:** Housing that supports choice in mobility and investments in transportation infrastructure. – and –*

***H&N P4:** Encourage mixed-use development proposals that include a residential component, especially where this will support retail viability and transit ridership, place residents near education and local employment options, and provide living options for seniors and others close to transit, parks, and shopping, medical, and other services.*

The proposed neighborhood locates 260 new homes within slightly more than ½ mile of the Mineral Avenue light rail station. The twelve (12) foot shared use path along PRP supports cycling and walking as viable transportation choices to reach the light rail station. The main entrance proposed for the neighborhood is from Santa Fe Drive and there is easy access to major arterials and regional highways such as W. Mineral Avenue and C-470.

The nearest shopping is Aspen Grove, the most significant tax revenue generator for the city. The proposed neighborhood locates new residents in proximity to Aspen Grove making it accessible by walking, biking, or driving. This location also allows convenient access by residents to local employment centers within the cities of Littleton, Centennial, Englewood, and unincorporated Douglas and Jefferson Counties.

***I&S G1:** Well-maintained water, wastewater, and storm drainage infrastructure that serves the needs of Littleton residents and businesses while minimizing adverse impacts on the environment. -and-*

***I&S P4:** Be a prepared and resilient community with City infrastructure and services that can recover quickly from the effects of severe weather and natural hazards, and which manages growth and development to reduce risks.*

The re-alignment of the Dad Clark Gulch represents a new, landscaped, open space amenity for the neighborhood and the public. An option would have been to underground the gulch and instead the proposed design allows any flows to occur at grade and within a landscaped natural environment useable by wildlife. Again, the plant material along the bottom and on the banks of the gulch was selected to support a wetland environment. Its design ensures the sustainability of the city by ensuring

that downstream lands, property, and people are protected in the event of a 100-year flood event.

The new water, storm water, and waste-water infrastructure is engineered and will be constructed to meet Southwest Metropolitan Water and Sanitation Districts' standards. That infrastructure, combined with several storm water ponds, adequately serve the residents and visitors to the site, ensure the resilience of the proposed neighborhood, and do so while minimizing impacts on the natural environment.

***TMP G 4:** Contribute to our economic prosperity while maintaining and enhancing our community's character.*

There are approximately 14,000 linear feet of walks and trails that are five (5) feet wide or greater within the proposed neighborhood. The roadway, trail, sidewalk, and shared-use path combine to provide easy access by new residents and visitors to the Mineral Light Rail Station, shopping destinations, employment centers, and educational opportunities. The new infrastructure supports new townhomes, which provide a housing choice in the city for which there is significant demand. The architectural and landscape designs create contemporary, beautiful neighborhoods and inviting, comfortable public spaces which complement this architecturally diverse city.

***HART G 1:** Preserved and enhanced public green spaces that provide access to nature, widespread opportunities for recreation and play close to home, and continuous greenway connections within and through the city. – and –*

***HART G4:** A healthy community with convenient access to recreational facilities and programming and outdoor fitness activities. – and –*

***HART G2:** Continued protection and promotion of Littleton's heritage, especially where it is tangibly visible in historic architecture, designated districts and landmarks, and distinctive neighborhoods and buildings.*

The proposed central park with its elaborate gardens and shade trees along with the two smaller parks and their playgrounds, seating, and shade trees combine with smaller open space tracts to offer new, enhanced green spaces for the public. The proposed neighborhood trails also provide convenient access for 260 new homes to those parks and walking paths within SPP and a regional trail that connects significant greenways and trails throughout the metro region.

The new parks, playgrounds, neighborhood sidewalk and trail network, regional trail, and proximity to SPP makes it easy for residents and visitors to walk and bicycle every day as a transportation or recreation choice. This design, enabled by the infrastructure, makes the health choice the easy choice.

Although the old barn on the property is neither a local nor a national historic landmark, the Districts are committed to preserving its legacy to the greatest extent possible. The structural analysis of the barn determined that the barn and its frame can't be moved without completely reconstructing the frame, which is prohibitively expensive. The District is proposing to construct a replica of the barn in a location that is easier for the public to access on a regular basis. The barn's proposed location just north of the intersection of Philips Avenue and PRP ensures convenient parking and allows for direct bike and pedestrian connections to the barn.

The District is proposing to carefully deconstruct the old barn and salvage as much re-usable materials as possible. The salvaged materials will be incorporated into the replica barn and photos and interpretive signage will be included in the barn's interior design, paying homage to the barn's and city's agricultural history.

The replica barn will be conveniently located and will have seating and picnic tables, which combined with nearby central park and pocket parks, could accommodate gatherings of 100+ people.

***S&D G4:** Roadway corridors that fulfill their primary transportation functions for drivers, pedestrians, cyclists, and public transit while advancing the community's economic development, housing, and aesthetic interests.*

The proposed improvements of PRP and Philips Avenue offer “complete street” cross sections that safely accommodate all modes of travel. The medians and tree lawns of these roads are landscaped with trees and plant material that creates inviting, comfortable outdoor spaces for visitors and travelers. Providing a safe travel environment for people increases the likelihood that area residents will walk or bike to use the nearby transit. These roads connect to a major state highway (HWY 85) and offer quick access to Colorado C-470, which represents a wide range of travel choices to people desiring to shop, get to work, go to school, and recreate; all of which supports the local and regional economy.

Section 2.A.2: “...will evaluate a District’s debt capacity and servicing ability.”

The Developer has provided a Financial Plan in the Service Plan that includes estimates of timing and values of buildout of the proposed development and the resulting Assessed Value. The Assessed Value is multiplied by the proposed mill levies of forty-eight (48) for debt (38 for the general debt mills and 10 for the regional) on both residential and commercial development. A forty (40) year repayment term is proposed. These combine to display the ability of the proposed Districts to service debt and to cover the proposed costs of public improvements.

The debt structure modeled by DA Davidson, an underwriter with specialty in special district financing, is typical of metro district bond structures within the State of Colorado.

The Financial Plan also includes an Operations Projection, which is a model of how much 4 mills (2 mills for the general fund to operate the districts and 2 mills for operating the regional improvements) generates in revenue, without a calculation of how much operations are projected to cost. There are no other revenues modeled to cover operations of public improvements.

Section 2.A.3: “...will be evaluated by City Staff against this Policy and the City’s ‘Model Service Plan,’ ...with any areas of difference being identified, evaluated and reported to City Council.”

The proposed Service Plan substantially meets the requirements of the City’s Policy and the Model Service Plan. The one difference is the proposed mill levies.

The City’s Policy limits the Maximum Mill Levy to 40 mills for both debt service and operations and maintenance of Public Improvements, with a limit of no more than half (20 mills) allowed to be used for operations and maintenance. The proposed Service Plan complies with this requirement, however additional mill levies are proposed to cover Regional Improvements.

The proposed additional 10 mills for debt service and 2 mills for operations and maintenance of the Regional Improvements, brings the total Maximum Mill Levy to 52 mills. The cost to construct Regional Improvements represents approximately 24% of the total capital costs. The additional

Regional Improvements' 12 mills represents approximately 23% of the total 52 mills. Therefore, the proposed additional mill levy is proportional to the cost to construct the Regional Improvements.

NEIGHBORHOOD OUTREACH & PUBLIC NOTICE:

The applicant did not conduct a neighborhood outreach meeting specific to the Metro District request as this is not a required development review component for a Metropolitan District. Mailed public notice of the Metropolitan District proposal was sent to all fee title owners of real property within the boundaries of the proposed Districts and of any future inclusion area. Notice of this hearing was also published once in a newspaper of general circulation in the city more than thirty (30) days before this hearing.

OUTSIDE REFERRAL AGENCIES:

Of the seventeen referral agencies to which this request was referred only South Suburban Parks and Recreation District (SSPRD), Southwest Metropolitan Water and Sanitation District (SMWSD), and South Metro Fire Rescue District (SMFR) provided feedback requiring a response. The comments from SMWSD and SSPRD were regarding the need to execute an Overlapping Services Agreement (Agreement) and an Overlapping Consent Resolution (Resolution), respectively, between the Districts and those agencies. The Districts, and not those agencies, will install and deliver to SMWSD water and sanitation improvements and will install parks, trails, and recreation services and operate and maintain the same within the Districts' boundaries.

SMFR requested a technical change to the language referring to their agency in the draft intergovernmental agreement between the City and the Districts, which change was made.

The Agreement between the Districts and SSPRD was approved by the SSPRD Board on August 11, 2021. The Resolution between the Districts and SMWSD is expected to be approved by the SMWSD Board on August 27, 2021.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Based on staff's analysis, the proposed Metropolitan District complies with the pertinent goals and policies of the city's comprehensive plan and with the "City of Littleton Policy for Reviewing Service Plans for Metropolitan Districts." Therefore, staff recommends approval of Resolution 27-2021, which approves the Service Plan for Santa Fe Park Metropolitan District Nos. 1-4.

Links:

"City of Littleton Policy for Reviewing Service Plan for Metropolitan Districts:"

<https://www.littletongov.org/home/showpublisheddocument?id=26159>

"Envision Littleton Comprehensive Plan:"

<https://www.littletongov.org/home/showpublisheddocument?id=21312>