

AGENDA MEMO

Board Agenda item # _____

Session Date: June 6, 2017
Session: Consent Agenda
Agenda title: Progress Park Master Plan

Initiated by

Steve White, Park Planner II

Proposed Action

For Approval

Executive Summary

Progress Park, a 23.36 acre park owned by the City of Littleton and managed by South Suburban, was originally developed in 1968 with the construction of a shelter and restrooms. Construction was phased over many years, and current amenities include: athletic fields, parking lot, Big Dry Creek Trail, bridges, playground, pond, etc. Due to age and condition resulting from heavy use, improvements to the park are needed. South Suburban and the City of Littleton recognized this need and in 2015 jointly applied for and received an Arapahoe County Open Space Grant to update the master plan for Progress Park.

Staff contracted with Architerra Group, a landscape architecture firm in Littleton, to assist with developing the plan. Public input meetings were held, and additional input was provided by Littleton and South Suburban staff. The attached proposed Final Master Plan has been prepared based on the combined received input, and will be presented for approval to the Board and Littleton City Council's at separate meetings. Proposed improvements to Progress Park include: re-orientated ball fields, formalized parking along Hickory St, realignment of the existing parking lot, new playground equipment and surfacing, large reservable shelter, 2 smaller shelters, central plaza area, realignment of Big Dry Creek Trail, creek access for water play, water quality improvements at the existing pond, discovery trail along Big Dry Creek, formalize neighborhood connections, pedestrian connection to Cornerstone Park, and entry features to improve identity.

The proposed update of Progress Park is supported by the 2017 South Suburban Park and Recreation District Master Plan, the 2016 Littleton Parks, Recreation and Trails Master Plan, and the 2014 South Suburban Park and Recreation District Gold Medal Citizen's Committee Report. The proposed improvements

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would be phased over time, with the first phase (shelter, restroom and possibly a playground) being constructed in 2018 if funding is secured.

Comments received during the City of Littleton and South Suburban joint study session meeting held on May 23 have been used to prepare the proposed Final Master Plan for approval by the Board of Directors.

Discussion

Progress Park is located at 5100 S. Hickory St. in Littleton. West Bellevue Ave. borders the park on the north, and located to the west is S. Hickory St. Cornerstone Park is located to the west, and Englewood's Bellevue Park is located to the north. Progress Park currently has 2 ball fields, 1 multi-purpose field, 1 large reservable shelter (33 person capacity), pond with fishing pier, small playground (swing set and climbing boulder), and a flush restroom. Big Dry Creek Trail follows Big Dry Creek through the park providing a regional connection to Mary Carter Greenway to the west and the High Line Canal to the east. The existing parking lot at the park entrance on S. Huron St. currently provides 68 parking spaces. Additional informal parking can be found along S. Hickory St.

The development of Progress Park happened over multiple decades with the latest renovation being completed in the early 2000's. Existing amenities in the park no longer provide the level of service needed by today's park users. The need for a master plan update was identified in 2014. Littleton and South Suburban partnered on a planning grant application to Arapahoe County Open Space, and was awarded the grant in 2015.

Details

The master plan process began with Architerra Group meeting with South Suburban staff to discuss the maintenance and programming needs in the park. The shelter, restroom and parking were identified as high priority items needing improvement within Progress Park.

Public input meetings were held at Buck Recreation Center on two separate occasions to receive comments from neighborhood residents and park users about what they would like to see improved at Progress Park. The first public input meeting was held on Thursday May 5, 2016 with 6 people in attendance. The second input meeting was held on Thursday June 9, 2016 with 4 people in attendance.

Progress Park is surrounded by multifamily residences and this fact was highlighted in the comments received at the input meetings. Area residents treat Progress Park as their backyard and would like to see that concept carried into the master plan. Public input also highlighted the need for additional parking, improved access to the park, a connection to Cornerstone Park, a larger nature themed playground, and creek access or opportunities for water play.

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From June 1-9, 2016, an online survey was placed on the Open Littleton website for residents to provide feedback. The questions in the survey mirrored the conversation that took place at Buck Recreation Center during the first input meeting. 21 responses were collected from the survey. The playground, picnic shelters, creek access and restroom were the top 4 items identified by Littleton residents as needing improvements.

Architerra used the information received via the public input meetings and online survey to generate two concept plans for Littleton and South Suburban staff discussion. Concept A looked at updating the parks amenities while leaving the existing infrastructure and circulation patterns in place. Concept B was a fresh look at the park using a clean slate. After reviewing the two concepts staff worked with Architerra to marry the ideas into the proposed Preliminary Master Plan. See attached.

The need for South Suburban to program the athletic fields and the desire to have this park be a backyard for residents drove the layout of the master plan. The core of the park revolves around the ball field complex and the central plaza. The relocation of the 2 ball fields, multi-purpose field, the large reservable shelter, new restroom building, and a new nature themed playground form the core of the park and central plaza. This relocation into a central space helps give the park an identity both staff and the public requested, and allows for a single accessible route to most of the park amenities.

Replacing and updating the existing reservable large shelter and restroom is a primary goal of Phase I construction, tentatively scheduled for 2018 based on available funding. The reservable large group shelter is used annually for organizational gatherings and families for reunions. Public input recommended additional small shelters that could be used for daily drop in use. The appropriate locations for additional shelters would be at the playground and at the creekside seating. The playground enlargement will include ADA compliant nature themed play equipment with separate play areas for 2-5 year old children as well as 5-12 year old children. The existing restroom will be replaced with new ADA compliant building placed outside the floodplain.

The re-orientation of the ball fields will accomplish two things. Home plate of each field will be closer to the central plaza area of Progress Park. This helps strengthen the sense of place and park identity while simultaneously allowing for larger outfields to be utilized. Ball fields will have covered dugouts, improved spectator seating, and an accessible route.

Relocation of Big Dry Creek Trail to the northern portion of the park will alleviate any competing activities from using the same space. Moving BDC Trail will promote the central plaza ball field complex identity to take shape. Furthering the identity of Progress Park wayfinding signage will be incorporated into the park. Creating a hierarchy of entry markers will allow the user to know what park they are in and where in that park they are.

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Neighboring residents use habit paths to enter the park from the multi-family housing surrounding the park. Improved access was supported by public input and the surrounding community wanting to see Progress Park serve as their backyard. The preliminary master plan calls for formalizing these connections to District standards. Improvements to the habit paths will improve safety and accessibility to the park.

The existing fishing pier and pond are hidden gems of Progress Park and provide opportunities for water play and discovery for children. Adjacent to the playground there is creekside seating planned which will provide access to the water. A nature discovery trail follows Big Dry Creek through the riparian vegetation and through the improved pond area. The discovery trail, creek access for water play, and open lawn spaces feed the concept of the backyard, allowing for non-programmed active and passive recreational opportunities.

The need for additional parking is a goal of this master plan and it provides for 196 planned parking spaces up from 68 existing parking spaces available today. By realigning the existing parking lot off Huron St. the District can add 32 additional parking spaces. Informal parking currently occurs along Hickory St using the gravel shoulder. By formalizing this parking the existing behaviors of park users is maintained while providing a safer pull in parking situation. Integrated into the parking spaces on Hickory St will be a crosswalk providing pedestrian connection to Cornerstone Park. The planned connection will be ADA compliant from the parking on Hickory St into Cornerstone Park.

The park currently lacks a pedestrian entry point near the northern ball field. Based on comments received at the City of Littleton and South Suburban Joint Study Session meeting, the master plan shows a future connection to Progress Park along Bellevue Ave, on the northern boundary of the park.

This final master plan responds to the needs of staff and of the public. As projects are phased into construction, the impact on the park will be positive and provide new opportunities for park users in the future.

Past Actions

Staff Kick Off Meeting – March 1, 2016

Public Input Meeting #1 – May 5, 2016

Public Input Meeting #2 – June 9, 2016

Open Littleton Online Survey – June 1, 2016 – June 9, 2016

Review Concepts with Littleton Staff - October 4, 2016

South Suburban Board of Directors Study Session – October 26, 2016

Public Input Meeting Conceptual Master Plan #3 - November 23, 2016

City of Littleton & South Suburban Joint Study Session – May 23, 2017

City of Littleton City Council – June 6, 2017

Other committees/actions

Support for the project is demonstrated in the following adopted documents:

2017 South Suburban Park and Recreation District Master Plan - Meets 3 of the 4 Guiding Principles: Quality First, Enrich Wellness, and Connection to Nature. Also meets 3 of the Top Ten Opportunities by improving a community park and multi-purpose fields, renewing a playground, and updating trail connections and signage.

2016 Littleton Parks, Recreation and Trails Master Plan - Objective 2.1: Maintain existing facilities. Objective 4.1: Improve or increase amenities at existing parks where appropriate (specifically Progress Park playground, trailhead and wayfinding signage is list in need of improvement). Objective 4.2: Add or improve trails and trail connectivity, increase or add water access to river and ponds. Objective 4.5: Comply with ADA accessibility.

2014 South Suburban Park and Recreation District Gold Medal Citizen's Committee Report - Parks Goal 1: Take care of existing parks, playgrounds, shelters, etc. Parks Goal 3: Upgrades and improvement in existing parks (specifically restrooms) will increase their attractiveness and make them more user friendly. Playgrounds and Park Shelters Goal 1: Park shelters provide an opportunity for revenue, as well as enhance park and playground experiences.

Next Steps

Based upon input received from the Board of Directors and City Council at the May 23 Study Session, a proposed Final Master Plan has been developed. Should the Board and Council adopt the Final Master Plan, a Phase I project will be developed including the restroom, large shelter and possibly the playground - dependent on the amount of funding secured.

South Suburban and Littleton have appropriated \$200,000 each for this project in the 2017 Budget. Additional funds are needed to construct a Phase I project. South Suburban will apply for a \$450,000 Active Outdoor Recreation Grant from Arapahoe County in August. Grant awards will be announced in December. This will bring the total budget to \$850,000, which is sufficient for the restroom and shelter. Additional funds may be requested from Littleton and South Suburban's 2018 capital budgets for an overall budget of \$1,300,000, which would allow the playground to be funded.

If we are unsuccessful in receiving the Active Outdoor Recreation Grant, South Suburban will apply for an Arapahoe County Standard Grant in February 2018. These grants are announced in June 2018. It is anticipated a Phase I construction project will start in summer 2018.

Financial Details

Finances	Amount	Description	Budget line item #
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Revenue:	\$60,000.00	Arapahoe County Open Space Planning Grant	22-30-41-954-6855
	\$3,000.00	South Suburban	
	\$3,000.00	City of Littleton	
	\$66,000.00	TOTAL REVENUE	
Expenses:	\$62,279.50	Architerra Group	
	\$62,279.50	TOTAL EXPENSES	
Summary:	\$66,000.00	Total Revenue	
	-\$62,279.50	Less Total Expenses	
	\$3,720.50	REMAINING BALANCE	

Ongoing maintenance costs estimate

None.

Legal Counsel Review

None.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends the Board adopt the resolution to approve the proposed Final Master Plan for Progress Park. The proposed plan is consistent with South Suburban's 2017 Master Plan, the City of Littleton's 2016 master plan, and the 2014 Gold Medal Citizen's Committee Report. South Suburban and Littleton have each earmarked \$200,000 for a Phase I project in their 2017 budgets. Staff will apply for a grant from Arapahoe County to leverage additional funds for this project.

Proposed Motion

"I move to adopt the resolution to approve Final Master Plan for Progress Park."

Attachments list

Progress Park Final Master Plan

spw