

MAJOR CHANGE FOR RED ROCKS ON THE HORIZON: PUBLIC INPUT NEEDED

September 2015 Introduction to the Issues

**For Information, call: Steve Good, Friends of Red Rocks,
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WHAT: Red Rocks Park and Amphitheatre is the premier Denver Mountain Park, owned and loved by Denver residents for decades. Public comment is sought on the most recent proposal for the park.

The non-profit, Colorado Music Hall of Fame, presented by Comfort Dental, has proposed a 7,000 square foot building to house their collection be built at Red Rocks Park, adjacent to the Trading Post. The Hall of Fame currently has exhibits in the Trading Post and in 2014 the Denver Parks and Recreation Manager approved the concept for a new building. Funds to build the Hall of Fame would be raised privately and the collection managed by the non-profit. The building would be owned and maintained by the City. The City realized that approval had preceded any public input or review process and, consequently, has put the concept on hold until a process is completed. Those meetings are anticipated this fall 2015.

BACKGROUND: The geologic formations, landscape, and natural acoustics of Red Rocks has attracted visitors for over 100 years. Denver purchased the park in 1920-30 and built the renowned Amphitheatre in the 1930s. Red Rocks Park, Amphitheatre, and CCC Camp received national recognition July 2015 when it was designated by the Department of the Interior as a National Historic Landmark. The Amphitheatre and the Trading Post building also are local Denver Historic Landmarks, with oversight from the Denver Landmark Preservation Commission. Parks and Recreation manages the entire designated park, while Arts and Venues manages the Amphitheatre and its events. Arts and Venues also oversees a vendor contract for the Visitor's Center and for the Trading Post.

ISSUES: A Colorado Music Hall of Fame would honor and archive the work of Colorado musicians, most of whom have performed at Red Rocks Amphitheatre. It could hold events for new inductees and other musical occasions and has a historical and symbolic association with Red Rocks and the Morrison area. The initial issue for public discussion and careful analysis is whether the location adjacent to the Trading Post or within Red Rocks Park is appropriate. However, a discussion of only location would ignore three primary issues raised by the Hall of Fame proposal that have complex park and policy implications beyond Red Rocks. They all deserve extensive public and city policy debate.

1. **Green Space.** With green and open space always a premium, when is it appropriate to build a new building in an established park? For example: would a new recreation building ever be acceptable in an established park, at the loss of considerable open space? Is the loss of landscape and view at Red Rocks warranted for the Hall of Fame? What guidelines and policies guide the city in making these decisions?
2. **Historic Preservation.** When a park is historic and is honored and protected for its historic character and special features, when is it appropriate to make any major change?

The Trading Post, built in 1929, is a Denver Historic Landmark, with its garden and outstanding views to the rocks behind the building a highlight of the park. The entire park is a National Historic Landmark. Even incremental changes can build over time to the point that a place loses its character. What criteria and policies guide the city in making these decisions, in accommodating change while protecting what is special? What should happen at Red Rocks?

3. **Use of City Land.** Building a new city building for park purposes on park or city land is a complex decision in itself. And, the City may contract with a non-profit partner to help fill empty city-owned buildings and provide public programs. But, providing city, and especially park land, as a building site for a non-city organization (and not for direct park purposes) is a precedence-setting departure. Building in response to a request from a specific organization raises questions of policy, favoritism, and process. Corporate association with a non-profit organization raises further issues. How should these policy issues impact the decisions at Red Rocks?

The Friends of Red Rocks and other Red Rocks advocates are encouraging wide public discussion of the proposed Colorado Music Hall of Fame. What would the impact of this building be on Red Rocks and what are its wider implications for Denver's parks throughout the city? Please participate in the discussion. Denver Parks and Recreation will be hosting public input on the proposed Colorado Music Hall of Fame. www.denvergov.org