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Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation

August 13, 2015

Mayor Michael B. Hancock
Members of Denver City Council
Scott Gilmore, Acting Executive Director, Denver Parks and Recreation
Members of the Parks Advisory Board
City and County of Denver

Re: Resolution Regarding Designating Denver's Parks

Dear Mayor Hancock, Members of City Council, Mr. Gilmore and the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board:

Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation, Denver's association of Registered Neighborhood Organizations (RNOs) from neighborhoods throughout Denver is celebrating its 40th Anniversary this year. Founded in 1975, INC's mission is to advocate for Denver citizens by bringing together, informing and empowering Denver neighborhood organizations to actively engage in addressing city issues.

At the August 8, 2015 meeting of Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation, delegates from member RNOs voted unanimously by a vote of 27 in favor to adopt the following *Resolution Regarding Designating Denver's Parks*, and to forward it to the Mayor, members of City Council, the Parks and Recreation Department, and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board.

In 2013 INC, at the request of then Denver Parks Manager, Laurie Dannemiller, appointed a group of citizens to consult and work with the Parks and Recreation Department regarding the park designation process. INC looks forward to continuing that effort in the future.

Citizens of Denver care passionately about our parks. It is therefore no surprise that the City's recent park designation process has met with almost universal support. Indeed, citizens support the process so much that the Resolution calls for allocating additional funding to speed things up in order to complete the park designation process by the end of 2017, and also to focus the process on gulches, drainage ways, and other areas of our city that provide trail and greenway connections to large geographic areas.

Resolution Regarding Designating Denver's Parks

WHEREAS, Section 2.4.5 of Denver's City Charter provides in its entirety that:

Without the approval of a majority of those registered electors voting in an election held by the City and County of Denver, no park or portion of any park belonging to the City as of December 31, 1955, shall be sold or leased at any time, and no land acquired by the City after December 31, 1955, that is designated a park by ordinance shall be sold or leased at any time, provided, however, that property in parks may be leased for park

purposes to concessionaires, to charitable or nonprofit organizations, or to governmental jurisdictions. All such leases shall require the approval of Council as provided for in Article III of this Charter. No land acquired by the City after December 31, 1955, shall be deemed a park unless specifically designated a park by ordinance. (Emphasis added)

WHEREAS, the real property exchange finalized in April 2013 between the City and County of Denver and Denver Public Schools involving land that most citizens thought was a part of Hentzell Park brought to the public's attention that much of Denver's park land had not been "designated" a park by ordinance pursuant to Section 2.4.5, and therefore was subject to disposal without a vote of the people. At the beginning of 2013 only about 68% of Denver's park system was "designated."

WHEREAS, to address this problem, in 2013 Denver's Parks and Recreation Department began a review of Denver's park system with the goal of proposing to Council specific parks for designation. (INC appointed a committee of five individuals to consult with the City on this review process.) Round 1 of such ordinances was enacted in 2013; Rounds 2, 3, 4 and 5 in 2014; and the most recent Round (# 6) is expected to be brought forward soon (August / September 2015). If enacted, Round 6 will designate only 87 additional acres of park land divided among 6 parks, and is likely to be the only Round brought forward in 2015.

WHEREAS, while the effort to date is laudable, for many citizens the pace of new park land designation has been too slow.

WHEREAS, the slow pace of designation can be partially attributed to the complexity of some park designations, and also the need for additional City staff and resources. For example, because of the City's desire for a metes and bounds legal description, designation of Lakewood Gulch Park (which is included in Round 6 and totals over 52 acres in size) has required considerable survey and title work to accomplish. Similar parks located in gulches and drainages, such as Weir Gulch Park, Sanderson Gulch Park, and Harvard Gulch Park are currently only partially designated and will also require considerable effort to survey.

WHEREAS, the number of Denver parks still lacking designation is large. According to the City's most recent list of designated parks, 22 of Denver's parks are only "partially designated," while 27 of our parks are completely undesignated yet deemed by the City to be "candidates for designation." At the current pace of designation (only 6 parks in 2015), it may take several more years to designate these parks.

WHEREAS, there are also 35 parks that the City considers to be "Not Eligible" for designation. While some of these parks are likely to have legitimate reasons why they cannot be designated (for example, Diamond Hill Promenade, which is adjacent to I-25 and located on right-of-way owned by CDOT), others appear to be potentially eligible for designation if political and management issues internal to the City can be resolved (for example, Northfield Pond Park, which is over 33 acres in size but reported to be considered "owned" by Denver Public Works).

WHEREAS, Denver Parks and Recreation needs additional funding in order to devote more staff and resources to the designation process. This is in order to fully designate in a more timely manner the 49 parks acknowledged by the City as being "Eligible" for designation, and also to carefully review the 35 parks categorized as "Not Eligible" in order to ensure that potential park designations are not overlooked.

WHEREAS, the park designation process needs to be prioritized in order to focus on areas that will have the greatest impact, such as lengthy gulches and drainage ways that touch on many areas of Denver.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, THAT INTER NEIGHBORHOOD COOPERATION ASKS MAYOR HANCOCK, DENVER CITY COUNCIL, AND THE PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT TO DO THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION REGARDING DESIGNATING DENVER'S PARKS:

Allocate additional funding to Denver Parks and Recreation for more staff and resources in order to complete the park designation process by the end of 2017. Prioritize the next phase of the park designation process to focus on gulches, drainage ways, and other areas of the City that provide trail and greenway connections to large geographic areas. This would include Weir Gulch Park, Sanderson Gulch Park, Harvard Gulch Park, and parks along the South Platte River and Westerly Creek.

Thank you for your attention and consideration of this important public policy issue.

Respectfully submitted by:



President, INC