



May 17, 2013

Dear Mr. Ambrose,

Thank you for your letter of May 5th regarding the Denver Parks and Recreation Department's effort to continue the designation process of our eligible parks. As you state, this is a laborious and costly effort, yet one we believe is important to the long-term protection of our invaluable park assets.

As you mentioned, we completed the first round of designations in April 2013, adding 58 acres to the list of designated park acres. Our goal is to have all park properties that are eligible, designated by the conclusion of 2015.

We have over 60 parcels we believe could be eligible for designation, and another group that are either not owned by the City or have other barriers to designation which need review and confirmation. Each one of these dedications takes on average 25-30 hours of technical staff review. The staff person assigned to this work has other full-time duties within the department but will devote all available time to this effort to reach our goal. Additionally, a majority of the work is reviewed by the City Attorney's Office so we are dependent upon them to work in partnership with their available time.

DPR and INC both agree that the public has great interest in the designation of our remaining inventory. My hesitation with an attempt to enter into a grand public meeting effort with each neighborhood association adjacent to a candidate park is that we simply do not have the capacity among our staff to succeed at this effort; nor do I believe that it will achieve an improved outcome towards what is an effort widely supported by RNO's and citizens, but one that simply takes an abundance of technical staff time. My point is that I think we all know more dedicated park land is the goal, and a successful effort will be in getting parks dedicated sooner, rather than moving forward with a plan that layers time on the process and delays our efforts, when little or no opposition exists.

Rather, I am developing an alternative outreach plan:

- I will attend an INC monthly meeting to talk to your membership and Executive Board about the dedication process and provide specific lists of our planned designations. I will also talk through the technical efforts and financial investment that must go into each designation ordinance (title research, negotiation of encumbrance agreements, possible vacation of unused alleys/streets, legal surveys) so your board has a understanding of the amount of work our one staff member has to produce to prepare a parcel for designation. I will bring the staff member responsible for the majority of this work to serve as the technical expert for any and all questions the INC board may have. As an aside, we mentioned many times that we completed the first group relatively quickly because they were either new parks with title work complete and accurate, or ones with less hurdles. We've prioritized our lists based upon the complexity so we can get the uncomplicated parks designated first.
- Next, I am suggesting that you provide us with a list of 5-7 names of individuals who are interested in this topic willing to serve on an ongoing steering committee. These individuals will meet with our staff on a regular basis as we work through our lists, to provide valuable input into how we prioritize the process of designations, as well as learn about what barriers exist to certain properties we believe are ineligible.
- This group will report out after each steering committee meeting to the INC; INC-PARC; and in partnership with DPR, the respective neighborhood associations via email. In essence this means INC and INC-PARC is informed, and the respective RNO's are informed about pending designations prior to proposing the parks to DPRAB.
- DPR will create a webpage that serves as the clearing house for all pending designation information so the public who may be invested in this topic, but one who may not be connected with INC, can gather information.

And of course, the meetings at DPRAB, City Council Committee and ultimately the full City Council will be added to this public process - providing three more opportunities for public review.

The designation of parks is not without a cost to the department. At the minimum, each park that is proposed to be designated needs a title search completed at a cost of \$500. In addition to that, if there are any boundary or land use issues related to the parcel, a survey needs to be completed. Depending on the size and issues related to the parcel, the estimated cost of the survey could vary between \$3,000 and \$5,000. Of the parcels that are slated to be designated in the Summer 2013 timeframe, at least three will need surveys completed. The estimated hard cost of completing the title searches and surveys for the second round of designations is around \$20,000. As we continue to designate more complex parcels in 2014-2015 more of the parcels will need survey work, increasing the cost of moving the designations forward. Our estimated cost to designate approximately 60 parcels is over \$200,000. We accept this as a cost to the City but want to be completely transparent that there are financial limitations on how many designations we can complete at one time.

Lastly, I would like to correct the statement by Scott Gilmore quoted as: "It is anticipated that perhaps as much as 10% of the park system might not qualify for various reasons. Those reasons included possible perceived 'problems' such as title or ownership issues, utility easements, and pending or anticipated plans for making/expanding non-park uses within the park." My understanding is that Scott was referring to roads or rights of ways when he said "non-park uses." For the record, there are no plans for expanding any existing non-park uses within Denver parks and no new non-park uses are permitted within parks under Charter section 2.4.5, whether the parks are designated or not, except that Charter section 2.4.7 does allow, following a process set out in Article V of Chapter 39 of the Denver Revised Municipal Code, for historic structures located in parks to be utilized for compatible non-parks uses when approved by both the Manager and City Council.

Again, thank you for your shared interest in furthering the park designation process and I look forward to hearing from you regarding my proposed attendance at an upcoming INC monthly meeting.

Sincerely,



Lauri Dannemiller

Manager

Denver Parks and Recreation

cc: Janice Sinden, Chief of Staff
Keith Pryor, DPRAB President and all DPRAB members
Scott Gilmore, Deputy Manager of Parks
Greg Neitzke, Parks Planning
Denver City Council President Mary Beth Susman and Denver City Council
Jeff Steinberg, Director of Real Estate