

Statement Regarding the Treatment of the Park Hill Golf Course Land in the Draft Blueprint Denver Document

The draft Blueprint Denver document improperly identifies the 155-acre Park Hill Golf Course land variously as a “low-medium residential area” and “Urban Edge” land. The “Places” map on pages 126-127 improperly identifies the land as a “low-medium residential area.” The “Neighborhood Contexts” map on pages 148-149 and the “Urban Edge” map on pages 190-191 improperly identify the land as “Urban Edge.” The definition “low-medium residential area” obviously is a residential land use characterization and the definition “Urban Edge” is a mixed residential and commercial land use characterization.

This treatment of the Park Hill Golf Course land is improper for several reasons including the following:

The Park Hill Golf Course Land Is Protected by a Perpetual Open Space Conservation Easement

The Park Hill Golf Course land is protected by the perpetual open space conservation easement that the city purchased on November 4, 1997 from the George W. Clayton Trust (“Clayton”) in exchange for \$2 million. The stated purpose of the open space conservation easement is “to vest a real property interest in (the city) that provides for the conservation of the Golf Course Land as open space....” Therefore, Clayton in perpetuity relinquished its right to develop the Park Hill Golf Course land in exchange for this \$2 million payment. The open space conservation easement was recorded at Reception No. 9700159758. Although the open space conservation easement was subsequently released in accordance with the agency agreement entered into between the city and Clayton on October 13, 2000, the agency agreement provides that--upon its termination either on October 13, 2099 or upon Clayton’s earlier decision to terminate it—Clayton is obligated to re-grant the open space conservation easement to the city. Under the terms of the agency agreement, Clayton holds title to the Park Hill Golf Course land “as agent of the City, to hold for the benefit of the citizens of the City and the general public....” The agency agreement was recorded on December 1, 2000 at Reception No. 2000175267.

Currently Operated as a Golf Course, the Park Hill Golf Course Land Is Zoned OS-B (Open Space-Recreation)

The Park Hill Golf Course land is zoned OS-B (Open Space-Recreation). The land is currently leased to a private golf course operator that recently exercised its option to renew its lease for five years through December 31, 2023. The operator has an option to renew its lease for an additional five years through December 31, 2028.

The Draft Blueprint Denver Classifications for the Park Hill Golf Course Land Conflict with the Draft Comprehensive Plan 2040 and the Draft Game Plan for a Healthy City and Denver’s Critical Need to Protect and Expand Open Space and Parks

Characterization of the Park Hill Golf Course land variously as a “low-medium residential area” and “Urban Edge” land diametrically conflicts with the draft Comprehensive Plan 2040 and the draft Game Plan for a Healthy City which thoroughly and powerfully document Denver’s critical need to protect and expand open space and parks:

- As Mayor Hancock stated on October 3, 2017, “(i)n a city nearing 700,000 people it’s never been more important to protect, preserve and grow our parks and recreational opportunities.”
- “Rapid climate change...is an increasing problem for our city.... Without significant action, our city could experience infrastructure damage, drought and constrained water supply, reduced tree canopy,

large power outages during hot summer months, lower air quality and higher rates of asthma, and loss of water quality and aquatic life.” (Comprehensive Plan, 51)

- The environment is changing. “Environmental issues of climate change in Denver are complex and multifaceted, from too much heat to too little water in some areas, and too much water in others. Today, the Denver region is experiencing an increase in temperatures, more storms with flooding, and longer periods of drought. Future summers are predicted to be hotter, with an average high of 96 degrees—more like summers in far south Texas today.” (Game Plan, page 26)
- Denver is at an acute turning point. “Cities can no longer plan for or describe parks, open spaces, urban forests, and recreation centers, as singular amenities—the ‘nice-to-haves’ as [DPR] Director Happy Haynes described it. Rather, they are essential factors of community-building that have demonstrated their transformative value on the health and vitality of communities across America.” (Game Plan, page 21)
- Parks are not keeping up with growth. “From 2010-2016 the city experienced an 11% growth while park space only grew by 1%. Denver’s park access of 9 acres per thousand residents is well below the national average of 13.” (Game Plan, page 12)
- The urban forest is threatened. “Denver’s urban tree forest canopy is one of the lowest in ranked cities and every 1 in 6 trees are threatened by the Emerald Ash Borer.” (Game Plan, page 13)
- Obesity is rising. “Nearly 1 in 6 children is obese and 52% of Denver’s residential parcels are not within a 10 minute walk of a playground.” (Game Plan, page 13)
- Citizens have limited access to nature. “Many neighborhoods do not have walking access to places to experience nature....” (Game Plan, page 13)
- Parks, recreation, and the urban forest are vital infrastructure to our city’s health. “Trees and vegetation in our parks as well as along our parkways and streets help clean the air we breathe and provide shade that decreases the cooling load on our energy infrastructure during our hot months. Our parks and urban forests hold, clean, and infiltrate stormwater, decreasing the load on our storm sewer system.... Investment in parks and recreation infrastructure has a positive ripple effect of benefits throughout our city.” (Game Plan, page 14)
- The city’s Year 2040 Goal 6 of the “Environmentally Resilient Vision Element” is to “protect and expand Denver’s green infrastructure network.” This goal includes the following: “recognize parks, public space, trees and plants as vital elements of green infrastructure and ensure that the provision of these elements keeps pace with Denver’s growth;” “maintain and expand the citywide tree canopy;” and “preserve and enhance the city’s system of parkland and adapt park landscapes to be more climate and heat resistant.” (Comprehensive Plan, 54)
- The city’s Year 2040 Goal 1 of the “Healthy and Active Vision Element” is to “create and enhance environments that support physical activity and healthy living.” This goal includes the following: “recognize parks, recreation and the urban forest as vital components of a complete community” and “design safe public spaces and recreational areas.” (Comprehensive Plan, 58)
- The land immediately west of the Park Hill Golf Course across Colorado Boulevard is identified both as an area of change that is expected to convert to new uses and as one of the “highest priority areas for new parks and access to open space.” (Game Plan, pages 139, 163-165) Additionally, the North Park

Hill area is identified as a “moderate-need neighborhood with significant areas lacking walkable park access.” (Game Plan, page 165)

Changes Need to be Made to Draft Blueprint Denver Document Regarding the Land Use Characterization of the Park Hill Golf Course Land

The following changes must be made in the draft Blueprint Denver document regarding the land use characterization of the Park Hill Golf Course land:

- (1) On the “Places” map (pages 126-127): the yellow color code for the Park Hill Golf Course land should be deleted and replaced with some shade of a new “Districts” green color code with a “Districts” legend such as “Significant Privately-Owned and Public Open Space.” The same color code and legend would be appropriate for (a) other similar private golf course properties such as the Cherry Creek Country Club, the Pinehurst Country Club, the Denver Country Club, and the Bear Creek Golf Club, (b) city-owned golf courses, and (c) significant city-owned park and open space land that is not identified by DPR as “Regional Park” land. [NOTE: The current light green and dark green color coding on the “Places” map needs to be revisited and corrected to insure consistency and completeness]
- (2) On the “Districts” explanatory pages (pages 132-133) and on any other pages where the “Regional Park” icon might appear in the document (such as page 263): the color code for a “Regional Park” should be changed to the shade of green (dark green?) used to identify “Regional Park” land on the revised “Places” map.
- (3) On the “Districts” explanatory pages (pages 132-133): a new “Districts” category needs to be added to provide a “short, high-level summary” regarding the new “District” explained in (1) above with a title of something such as “Significant Privately-Owned and Public Open Space.”
- (4) On the “Districts at a glance” pages (pages 262-263): a new icon needs to be added for the new “District” explained in (1) above with a title of something such as “Significant Privately-Owned and Public Open Space.”
- (5) On the “Districts” map (pages 264-265): (a) the color code on the legend for “Regional Park” land should be changed to the shade of green (dark green?) used for identifying “Regional Park” land on the revised “Places” map, (b) a new legend and color code need to be added for the new “District” explained in (1) above with a title of something such as “Significant Privately-Owned and Public Open Space,” and (c) the land included in new “District” explained in (1) above with a title of something such as “Significant Privately-Owned and Public Open Space” must be identified on the map with the new color code.
- (6) A new detailed explanation needs to be added to Section 6.7 regarding the new “District” explained in (1) above with a title of something such as “Significant Privately-Owned and Public Open Space.”
- (7) On the “Neighborhood Contexts” chart (pages 146-147): the “Quality of Life” definition for “Districts” should be changed to read as follows: “A range of parks and quasi-public and private outdoor spaces with flexible open space and hardscaped plazas. Varies greatly by place and use.”
- (8) On the “Neighborhood Contexts” map (pages 148-149): the “Urban Edge” color code for the Park Hill Golf Course land should be deleted and changed to the “District” color code.
- (9) On the “Urban Edge Places” map (pages 190-191): (a) the yellow color code for the Park Hill Golf Course land should be deleted and changed to the “District” color code and (b) other changes need to be made to assure that all “District” property is correctly identified with the “District” color code.