

**City and County of Denver  
Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (PRAB)  
FY 2019/20**

**Guiding Principles for Budget Allocations**

PRAB strongly encourages the Parks and Recreation Department hereafter referred to as “Department” to allocate funds to benefit all Denver citizens, with emphasis on the principles of sustainability and achieving equitable access to recreation services, parks, open space and trail systems for all members of our community. The Department should invest in the future by acquiring open space to increase natural areas, wildlife habitat, and other elements of green infrastructure.

PRAB urges the Department to reflect the “additive spirit” of the 2018 Measure 2A funding as well as the Game Plan for a Healthy City with clear principles and tangible projects which are visible to everyone.

**Long Term Objectives**

PRAB supports the Department efforts to adjust to the changing demographics of the entire Front Range. The dramatic increase in population, needs and demands of an aging population, children and youth, and evolving growth patterns in the city have increased staff requirements, types of programming, and level of service demanded by residents of all ages.

Specifically, we support the efforts to identify and acquire new park land with emphasis towards enhancing recreation, open space access, and overall connectivity/mobility. Apply the ‘10 minute-walk’ standard throughout the city. The trail system is one of the most well used and supported components of the recreation system, one that can and should provide a wide variety of convenient, safe and affordable exercise options for people of all ages and abilities. PRAB encourages strategic acquisitions and expansion of existing networks consistent with the protection and expansion of multi-use trail development.

Moreover, PRAB encourages the development of partnerships with regional agencies, governments, and non-traditional partnership arrangements. In addition to trail connectivity development, we see the pursuit of additional partnerships (e.g., DPS, CDOT, neighboring counties, utilities) for shared use arrangements within the existing infrastructure as an important extension of open space and recreational opportunities, especially as it relates to our Mountain Parks.

PRAB advocates for more coordinated efforts across city departments to expand public access to open space, parks and/or park features and the extension of the urban tree canopy. Efforts such as the new Large Development Review process and use of green infrastructure planning/practices are strongly encouraged. Denver’s urban tree canopy, parks and open space “development” has not kept pace with the rest of Denver’s recent development. This is not sustainable in the face of climate change and we believe the Green Roof Initiative is evidence of the will of Denver citizens to seek impact restrictions and other mechanisms to require streetscape standards and other elements promoting healthy communities and conservation. PRAB also advocates for expanding this to a broader base to include the level of single lot development.

Further, PRAB commends the Department for continuing to expand the ways in which we use parks, open space and golf courses beyond traditional arrangements, such as the Overland Music Festival, trail development associated with the City Park redesign, the 39th Ave Greenway and Open Channel and Nature Play at the Dustin Redd Playground.

PRAB encourages continued investment in staffing and resources in the Mountain Park system to facilitate expansion of integrated programming for recreation, education, environmental awareness and a stronger connection to nature as well increased marketing and promotion of the Mountain Parks. We applaud the partnerships developed with HistoriCorps at the CCC Camp and the development of multi-modal transportation options to access the range of experiences available outside of the traditional urban setting.

PRAB supports the Department investment in technology to enhance the user experience including cameras and alarms to ensure safety and protect assets, Wi-Fi to assist recreation centers competing in the marketplace, and collection of data to assist in monitoring, evaluating, and improving services. PRAB is supportive of efforts to invest in and hire staff to provide targeted programming for seniors and youth, increasing ranger services that include more and also full time positions to meet the demands of increased users and addressing pay scale restrictions for part-time and on-call staff knowing this negatively impacts the ability to provide programs and service to our fellow citizens. PRAB advocates for additional resources for the programs dedicated to conservation and environmental sustainability, especially those with goals to increase, maintain and diversify the tree canopy as much as is possible with species appropriate to our climate and addressing the inequity in tree canopy in many low income communities in Denver. We advocate for a Department that is mindful of climate change, limits to water resources, and the need/desire to offset heat island effects from increased urban density and the overall well-being of its residents.

#### **Capital Improvements and Maintenance of Assets**

While commending the initial focus Measure 2A funds by following the Game Plan on acquisition of open space, PRAB encourages the Department to use Measure 2A funding to also address the deferred maintenance backlog as a matter of fiscal responsibility; however Bond funding must not be solely utilized to 'catch up' on deferred maintenance obligations.

PRAB again emphasizes that new capital projects consider sustainable operating and maintenance cost funding for the life of the facility being financed. Completed and sustainable projects including signage and other amenities are desirable. Permanent restroom facilities throughout the City and Mountain Park systems are desirable when practical.

#### **Revenue Goals and Spending Authority**

PRAB commends the Department plan to use a cost allocation method and community outreach/marketing to ensure public transparency and accountability, especially as it applies to Measure 2A funding and as outlined in the Game Plan.

PRAB commends Department efforts to establish fee revenues commensurate with other communities across the Metro area. Permit fees should also be fitted to a cost recovery model and increased incrementally on a regular basis to avoid the negative impact of large fee increases on citizens. We encourage staff to use benchmarks and cost recovery analysis to inform their decisions about fees, as long as this does not negatively impact general principals of access and equity. PRAB continues to advocate for Base Plus Budget Funding to address providing same level of service plus change requests and expansion of service inevitabilities.

PRAB continues to encourage the Department to seek innovative ways to generate outside funding through developing partnerships with local businesses and organizations, neighboring counties and exploring strategies for additional revenue intended to supplement, not supplant budgeted initiatives. Measure 2A funded projects qualifying for matching grant opportunities should be emphasized.