



Board Summary Report

Date: July 28, 2020

To: Board of County Commissioners

Through: Shannon Carter, Open Spaces Department Director

From: Brett Collins, Grants and Acquisitions Manager

Subject: City of Aurora – Laredo Highline Access and Awareness Improvements Joint Project Application

Request and Recommendation:

Open Spaces staff and the Open Space Trails Advisory Board (OSTAB) recommends the Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) approve the expenditure of \$180,000 in Open Space Acquisition and Development funding for access and awareness improvements to the High Line Canal Trail. Please see the attached Joint Projects Application for details.

This Joint Project request was heard and approved by the BoCC at a study session on July 7, 2020.

Background:

The Conservancy with unprecedented intergovernmental collaboration completed The Plan for the High Line Canal (The Plan) in 2019. The Plan prioritizes over 100 capital projects, future enhancements, stewardship, and protections based on the needs and vision of the region’s residents and partner agencies. The Plan recommends significant investment in diverse communities along the trail, prioritizing Denver, and Aurora for a large proportion of enhancements. The Canal is underutilized in these communities and will require investments to reach its full potential as a recreational resource. The Plan specifically identifies improvements needed in the Highline Laredo neighborhood that the local community members requested during the outreach process.

The Conservancy, in partnership with Aurora, has secured \$180,000 in funding from the Colorado Health Foundation for improvements in the Laredo Highline neighborhood to remove barriers to using the High Line Canal Trail for recreation and as a catalyst for community health.

Links to Align Arapahoe:

Service First

Increased customer service by improving the experience for trail users in the area and expanded community engagement by direct collaboration with the residents and schools.

Fiscal Responsibility

Promotes responsible spending by leveraging County funding with partner agencies to optimize the use of resources.

Quality of Life

The project will provide improved access to the High Line Canal Trail, increase user safety, and promote physical health to vulnerable populations.

Discussion:

This project will have five key deliverables: a pedestrian bridge, wayfinding/interpretive signs, natural elements placed along the trail, trail activity markings, and community leader’s engagement. The pedestrian bridge will connect neighborhood residents to the Canal, where there is currently a well-worn social path through the Canal itself. The signs will provide wayfinding and interpretive information to neighborhood residents, implementing a portion of the Canal-wide sign package. Natural elements will focus on relocating downed cottonwood trees to the neighborhood, providing visual interest and a connection to the Canal’s historic tree canopy that is quickly disappearing in north Aurora. Trail activity markings will encourage users to explore more of the Canal, promoting walking and biking as a source of recreation and community health. Finally, the Conservancy will continue to lead community engagement, working with community leaders to increase awareness and use of the Canal in the neighborhood. This engagement will be critical as the Conservancy hopes to secure future funding to implement activation improvements in the neighborhood in close partnership with the community.

Aurora, in partnership with the Conservancy, is requesting \$180,000 in Joint Project Funds to construct the Laredo Highline Access and Awareness Improvements to match the \$180,000 in funding from the Colorado Health Foundation. The funds will be used for design and construction of the proposed improvements. The investment would represent the first effort to advance community-informed improvements since the completion of The Plan for the High Line Canal.

Aurora has met the requirements for a Joint Project Application, and if funding is approved, the proposed design and construction will take place between August 2020 and April 2021. Aurora will maintain the new improvements through its recreational lease with Denver Water.

Alternatives:

Approve, modify, or deny the Joint Project Application funding request.

Fiscal Impact:

Arapahoe County Open Spaces Acquisition and Development funds pledged to the High Line Canal Working Group in the amount of \$180,000 will be used to match the applicant’s funding. The fund balance exceeds this amount.

Concurrence:

OSTAB recommended the Laredo Highline Access and Awareness Improvements Joint Project Application for BoCC approval on June 22, 2020. Please see the attached motion and vote.

Attorney Comments:

None

Reviewed By:

Brett Collins, Grants and Acquisitions Manager
Shannon Carter, Open Spaces, and Intergovernmental Relations Director
Tiffanie Bleau, Assistant County Attorney
Todd Weaver, Director of Finance

Attachments:

Application-Laredo Highline Joint Project 6.16.20

OSTAB-Rec Laredo Highline Joint Project 6.22.20

RESOLUTION NO. _____ It was moved by Commissioner _____ and duly seconded by Commissioner _____ to approve a request for funding in the amount of \$180,000 in Open Space Acquisition and Trails funds for the Laredo Highline Access and Awareness Improvements Project, contingent on the contribution of matching funds and the execution of an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) between Arapahoe County and the City of Aurora as presented to the Board of County Commissioners on this date.

The vote was:

Commissioner Baker, ; Commissioner Conti, ; Commissioner Holen, ; Commissioner Jackson, ; Commissioner Sharpe, .

The Chair declared the motion carried and so ordered.