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Arapahoe County awards Open Space grants to 13 local agencies *Nearly \$4 million in grants will fund playground, sports fields and trail improvements*

Littleton, CO – Nearly \$4 million in Open Space grants awarded last month by the Arapahoe County Board of County Commissioners will fulfill a Make-a-Wish request for an accessible playground in Aurora, upgrade the only public park in Byers, replace a 25-year-old playground in Englewood and build a new park adjacent to a Habitat for Humanity community in Sheridan. These projects along with 10 others were awarded grants for the 2018 Open Space grant cycle.

“We are leading the state and country in the quality of projects we are supporting with the Open Space Grant Program,” said Commissioner Bill Holen, District 5. “These projects will improve the quality of life for citizens throughout the County.”

Grantees include the Cities of Aurora, Sheridan, Littleton, Englewood, Glendale, Greenwood Village, Centennial, as well as South Suburban Park and Recreation District, Arapahoe Park and Recreation District, Byers Park and Recreation District, Strasburg Metropolitan Park and Recreation District, Town of Bennett and Dove Valley Metropolitan District. The grant awards will be leveraged with more than \$2 million in cash match from the grantees for a total investment of more than \$6 million in local communities.

The Open Space Grant Program is funded using 12 percent of the annual revenue generated by Arapahoe County’s quarter-of-a-cent Open Space Sales and Use Tax. Cities, towns, and outdoor recreation-oriented special districts within Arapahoe County may apply for the competitive program, which is intended to support high quality projects that address urgent local needs for parks, trails and open space. With the addition of the 2018 grant awards, the Open Space Grant Program has supported more than 200 projects since 2005.

The top-ranked project was submitted by the City of Aurora for \$450,000 to construct a new, fully accessible playground providing play and learning experiences for kids of all abilities through sound, color, texture and movement in the Red-Tailed Hawk Park. The project was initiated through a wish with the Make-A-Wish Foundation. The local Rotary Club raised \$100,000 to assist with the project, but additional funds were needed to build the playground that will provide side-by-side and interaction between kids of all abilities and challenges. This will be the first playground of its kind in Aurora.

The Byers Park and Recreation District will use their grant of \$326,604 to renovate the only public park in Byers. Renovations will include grading and drainage work, a new playground, and a new picnic shelter.

The City of Englewood will use their grant of \$293,700 to replace the 25-year-old playground at Jason Park. Englewood will work with local artists to recycle the existing playground equipment into outdoor art.

The City of Sheridan's \$322,500 grant will allow residents of the Sheridan Square Habitat for Humanity housing development and surrounding neighborhoods to enjoy the new Sheridan Square Park with play equipment, basketball court, turf area and park amenities.

A grant for \$500,000 to South Suburban Park and Recreation District will replace a 50-year-old shelter and restroom at Progress Park located in Littleton. The restroom is an important stop along the Big Dry Creek Trail. The grant also will include the installation of new playground equipment at the park.

South Suburban was also awarded a \$500,000 grant to replace 40-year-old tennis courts at Sheridan Community Park with eight new pickleball courts and two new tennis courts. Pickleball courts are a highly request amenity throughout the County.

Arapahoe Park and Recreation District will use their \$273,075 grant for the construction of a trail through Stanford Hills Open Space, providing a bicycle and pedestrian connection from the Saddle Rock Ridge neighborhood to two nearby schools, Thunder Ridge Middle School and Eaglecrest High School.

The Town of Bennett will use their grant of \$89,825 for new picnic tables, benches, landscaping and site furnishings at Bennett Regional Park and Open Space. Strasburg Metropolitan Park and Recreation District will use their \$100,000 grant for a full renovation of Lyons Park and enhancement of the railroad monument in the park. The renovations will include a new playground, picnic shelter, and other amenities.

In addition to the standard and small grant awards, two planning grant awards were approved for Dove Valley Metropolitan District and the City of Centennial. Both grants will assist with the development of additional east-west trail connections, a major need identified in the County's recent Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan.

The City of Centennial was awarded a \$100,000 to help develop a continuous 17-mile east-west bike and pedestrian route across the City providing improved access to several trails and parks including Centennial Civic Center Park, Cherry Creek State Park and Cherry Creek Valley Ecological Park.

Dove Valley's \$54,200 grant will support design and engineering for missing segments of the East Fremont Avenue Trail that will eventually provide an off-street bike and pedestrian route from the Lone Tree Creek Trail to Jordan Road.

For more information about these projects or the Open Spaces Grant program, please visit <http://arapahoegov.com/1720/Open-Spaces>.

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