



B: PUBLIC INPUT

OVERVIEW

Chapter Outline:

Overview

Public Open House Meetings

Steering Committee Meetings

Stakeholder Interviews

On-Line Public Comment

Public input was one of the most important planning elements of the Arapahoe County Open Space Master Plan. Public input was gathered through several different means, including three public open house meetings, three meetings with a stakeholder steering committee, on-line comment form, three public information newsletters, multiple e-newsletter updates, press releases, and a statistically valid survey. Flyers were distributed to project partners and throughout the planning process to encourage attendance at public open house meetings. This diverse assortment of public information and input offered the representatives and citizens of Arapahoe County opportunity to contribute to the Plan’s development.

PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE MEETINGS

Three meetings were held throughout the course of this planning process.

Figure A.1: Bill Neumann (blue shirt) assists County residents with the public input maps at the South Metro Chamber public open house workshop.



Public Open House 1: South Metro Chamber of Commerce

The first public open house workshop for the Arapahoe County Open Space Master Plan was held on October 6, 2009 at the South Metro Denver Chamber of Commerce in Centennial, Colorado. The open house was structured as a “drop-in” style meeting, where citizens could stop by at any time during a four hour block of time to meet with County staff and the consultant to review materials and have input into the planning process.

A five-station room set up was used during the open house. Station # 1 was a sign-in table that also offered background materials about the open space program and the project newsletter. Station # 2 was a Powerpoint presentation that provided background information about the program and described the master planning process. Station # 3 provided maps and recent accomplishments of the open space program. Station # 4 featured maps of that defined current elements of the open space program. At this station, participants were encouraged to record comments on maps. Station # 5 included a public comment form.

Approximately 50 citizens signed in and attended the open house - a very successful turn out for the event. Many of the attendees participated in the open house for more than an hour and took time to engage in all of the stations. The vast majority of comments on the maps were related to specific alignment and routes of trails through neighborhoods, missing gaps in existing trails and the desire for new public parks. One neighborhood representative expressed concern for an existing golf course that might be considered for future urban infill and development.

A public comment form was made available for workshop participants to fill out. This opinion survey is not statistically valid, however the results are important to understand how residents feel about the program. The results of the opinion survey are summarized as follows. The majority of participants who filled in the survey were residents of Centennial. A majority of participants felt that "natural resource protection" was the most important element of the Open Space Action Plan. The top three activities within open space included: wildlife viewing, walking and biking, and connecting with nature. Given \$100 to spend on the open space program, respondents felt that the majority of funds should be used to protect habitat for wildlife, purchase land for open space preservation and preserve agriculture and ranch lands. Respondents stated that they prefer to use trails for hiking, biking, and wildlife watching. They also felt that the most important function of open space was to protect wildlife habitat and improve public health.



Figure A.2: Gary Pratt (printed shirt), a member of OSTAB, provides an overview of the open space system at the Byers public open house workshop.

Public Open House 2: Byers High School

The second public open house workshop for the Arapahoe County Open Space Master Plan was held on November 19, 2009 at the Byers High School in Byers, Colorado. The open house was structured as a "drop-in" style meeting, where citizens could stop by at any time during a four hour block of time to meet with

County staff and the consultant to review materials and have input into the planning process. The same five station layout used in open house # 1 was employed in open house # 2.

Approximately 53 citizens signed in and attended the open house - a very successful turn out for this workshop in rural Arapahoe County. The vast majority of attendees were from Byers, Strasburg, Deer Trail and Watkins. Some attendees were from Bennett and Aurora.

Attendees had the opportunity to record comments directly on maps provided by the consultant. The majority of comments on the maps were related to the need for more publically accessible trails in the eastern part of Arapahoe County, particularly along some of the major east-west roadway corridors and north-south along Kiowah and Bijou creeks. Other comments included the need to protect wildlife habitat corridors and an interest in seeing a range of public parks developed in the eastern third of the county.

A public comment form was made available for workshop participants to fill out. This opinion survey is not statistically valid, however the results are important to understand how rural Arapahoe residents feel about the open space program. The results of the opinion survey are summarized as follows. The majority of participants who filled in the survey were residents of Byers and Strasburg. A majority of participants felt that all types of parks (school, regional, local) and countywide trails were the most important elements of the Open Space Action Plan. The top three activities within open space included: walking and biking, viewing wildlife, and having access to parks. Given \$100 to spend on the open space program, respondents felt that the majority of funds should be used to preserve water quality, protect wildlife habitat, preserve agricultural lands and develop an interconnected trail system. Respondents stated that they prefer to use trails for hiking, biking, and horseback riding. They also felt that the most important function of open space was for water resource protection, to protect wildlife habitat and improve public health.

Public Open House # 3: Arapahoe County CentrePoint Building

The third and final public open house workshop for the Arapahoe County Open Space Master Plan was held on March 23, 2010 at the Arapahoe County CentrePoint Plaza in Aurora, Colorado. The open house was structured as a "drop-in" style meeting, where citizens could stop by at any time during a four hour block of time to meet with County staff and the consultant to review materials and have input into the planning process.

Approximately 30 citizens braved a March snowstorm and attended the open house. The vast majority of attendees were from Aurora. Attendees had the opportunity to view the final master plan recommendations, record comments directly on maps provided by the consultant and fill out a public comment form. The majority of comments on the maps were related to the need for more trails, particularly along the E-470 corridor. Other comments included the need to protect open space and provide more parks in developed and developing areas of the County, specifically around the Western Arapahoe Conservation District and the Heather Ridge Metro

District golf course.

A public comment form was made available for workshop participants to fill out. This opinion survey is not statistically valid, however the results are important to understand how Arapahoe County residents feel about the open space program. The results of the opinion survey are summarized as follows. The majority of participants who filled in the survey were residents of Aurora. A majority of participants felt



Figure A.3: OSTAB member Ellen Belef answers questions about the draft open space plan during the third public open house workshop.

that open space is a valued asset for the County and that more undeveloped open space is needed to meet current and future needs of County residents. Respondents felt that open space in Eastern Arapahoe County was important to protect and conserve. They also listed the Heather Ridge Metro District golf course as an important resource to protect. Respondents would like to see new greenways and trails developed along Murphy Creek, Sand Creek, Triple Creek and Cherry Creek from the Skatepark to Parker, Colorado. Top priorities for open space protection should include Bijou Creek, the Lowery Range and land around the Western Arapahoe Conservation District.

STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Three meetings were held throughout the course of this planning process with a specially appointed “steering” committee, which was comprised of invited stakeholders.



Figure A.4: County Commissioner Susan Beckman (facing audience) welcomes members of the master plan steering committee at their first workshop.

Steering Committee Meeting # 1: Cherry Creek State Park Marina

The first meeting of the Arapahoe County Open Space Master Plan Steering Committee was held at the Cherry Creek State Park Marina on September 23, 2009. Attendance for the meeting was outstanding, as representatives from many of the invited local governments, non-profit groups and allied state and federal agencies attended. A total of 54 invited steering committee members attended the meeting.

The meeting began with a welcome and introduction by Arapahoe County Board of County Commissioners Chair Susan Beckman, who also shared background, history and accomplishments of the program with the attendees. Commissioner Beckman emphasized that the work of the Steering Committee was about looking forward and helping the County define the future of the open space program.

Bob Toll, Open Space Program Manager, presented factual information about the program, addressing how sales tax funds have been distributed and describing the purposes of the program as defined by the Open Space Resolution. Chuck Flink, President of Greenways Incorporated and lead consultant for the Master Plan, presented the role of the steering committee, described the master plan work program and timeline and defined a starting point for the future of the open space program.

During Mr. Flink's presentation, he introduced a 100-year vision statement for the open space program for further consideration and discussion. The vision statement presented was: *"A well managed high quality open space and trail system within walking distance of every neighborhood and within easy access of every rural community in Arapahoe County."*

Mr. Flink added that another way to express and consider the vision for open space would be to consider goal and value statements for Arapahoe County that define the quality of life for residents. This can be defined as:

Healthy Lands

- Stewardship of highly valued lands
- Land protection via conservation strategies
- Sustainable management and maintenance
- Diversity of conserved open space properties

Healthy People

- Quality and safe public access
- Passive and active recreation uses
- Public health & fitness benefits
- High level of citizen participation & ownership

Healthy Communities

- Connectivity & accessibility

- Vibrant economy
- Improved property values
- County of choice for businesses, retirement & families

Finally, Mr. Flink presented “themes” can be used as a starting point for defining specific objectives of the open space program. The County open space staff and consultant provided a set of themes as a starting point for this discussion, as follows:

- Diversity: balance, something for everyone
- Connectivity: trails close-to-home and work resources
- Partnerships: joint projects, grants, programs
- Leadership: operate an innovative program
- Environment: grasslands, riparian landscapes, watersheds, neighborhoods
- Experience: health, safety, education
- Sustainability: stable funding, renewal of resolution

During Mr. Flink’s presentation, Jean Swartz, with Jefferson County Open Space, asked four questions: 1) What is the purpose of the Steering Committee?; 2) What is the goal of the Open Space Plan?; 3) Who is the audience for the Plan?; and 4) What has the Open Space Program promised to the citizens of the County? Mr. Flink responded that the role of the steering committee is to serve as a “sounding board” for both the Program staff and consultant. Mr. Flink added that the steering committee offers one of ten methods employed to obtain input and feedback for developing the Plan. Flink stated that the Plan is intended to guide the future actions of the Open Space Program. The audience of the Plan is the citizens of Arapahoe County, and that the Plan will be a workbook, used by the Program staff, OSTAB and County Commissioners to implement recommendations. The Open Space program is defined by the Open Space Resolution passed by voters in 2003, so the promises made to the citizens are begin carried out in accordance with the terms of the resolution.

Three statements emerged from Mr. Flink’s presentation and the Steering Committee was divided into three breakout subgroups to discuss these questions and provide input to the master plan process. The results of these questions, by subgroup, is provided below and on the following pages. This information is being used to help shape the vision, mission, goals and conceptual framework for the Arapahoe County Open Space master plan and program.

Steering Committee: Subgroup A – Robert Searns & Bryn Searns facilitators

Question # 1: What are your thoughts about the Vision Statement as proposed? What changes would you recommend?

- vision statement is too narrow – it needs to be broadened (sports history, heritage sports)
- wow factor is needed in vision statement

- breadth but lack of depth (historical, cultural richness)
- it is more than about “walking distance” too limiting for a vision statement, also it does not seem realistic for a county as large as Arapahoe
- Vision statement language is too bureaucratic (e.g. “well managed”). Could be more descriptive with graphic communication of goals and plans
- diverse and generational connection with the landscape is needed
- appeal to the citizens of the county with the vision statement
- lots of anxiety of related to the issue of maintenance – how is this addressed in vision statement.
- diversity, quality of life, honor, past and future, trust, generation, accessibility, recreation, heritage, citizens, preserve, protect – these are words to incorporate into the vision statement
- also, visible, fund, personal outdoor experience, space for play, adventure, unique, healthy, fun, connect, maintain, leadership, stewardship, connectivity.

Question # 2: What are your thoughts about the Open Space Themes as defined? What other themes are important to consider for the program?

- Need to build trust and communication with citizens
- Input from Arapahoe County citizens needed
- More destinations should be defined
- Volunteer and stewardship
- Have fun

Question # 3: What is the most important future accomplishment of the Arapahoe County Parks, Open Space and Trails Program?

- Open Space experiences
- Protection of open space
- Preservation of various environments
- Sports and recreation experiences

Steering Committee: Subgroup B – Chuck Flink facilitator

Question # 1: What are your thoughts about the Vision Statement as proposed? What changes would you recommend?

- where do we stand today
- eastern county does not currently provide good access
- strike word “rural”
- recognize east and west differences
- vision statement should describe what the county will look like 100 years from now.
- accessibility should be defined for now and in the future
- if you include the word “rural” than you must define “urban”
- what is the conceptual land use framework for the county and how is this expressed in the vision statement?
- include both urban and rural
- not all about access to lands, what about conservation of lands w/out access

- how does the Open Space Plan relate to the Comprehensive Plan
- can we use the terms “greenbelt” or “green infrastructure” in the vision statement or are those words too politically charged?
- Open Space program is not just about open space for people, also about open space for nature's sake – this should be reflected in the vision statement.
- maintain natural heritage of the county
- what do we want the eastern 2/3rd of the county to look like – reflect this in the vision statement.
- do we allow land use to be driven by the land development process, whereby remnant land becomes open space, or does Arapahoe County get out in front and define what land use will be for the middle third and eastern portions of the county?

Question # 2: What are your thoughts about the Open Space Themes as defined? What other themes are important to consider for the program?

- Legacy – the County, through the open space plan, is setting the agenda for the future – this is a great responsibility that we have for our children and grandchildren.
- Conservation-based growth – this is not about being “anti-growth;” most of us are pro-growth but we want the pattern of future growth to be different and more respectful of the natural and cultural heritage of the county. Smart growth is important.
- Value – open space adds economic value to our county and makes neighborhoods and communities more liveable. The county must embrace open space as a positive for our future.
- Education -- use the county open space system to educate our citizens about the landscapes that they live in. We all (county residents) need to speak the same language when it comes to conservation, public access and stewardship.
- Communication – it is important that we communicate the intent of the open space program with our fellow citizens. We must have a shared and common vision. Some folks are unaware of the program and its benefits.
- Flexibility – what we know today can and will change. Let's be sure that the open space program can evolve, grow and change with the county. Let's not be locked into one way of doing business.
- Timelessness – when I think about a 100-year vision, I think about the need for the county open space to preserve landscapes in perpetuity and serve the needs of county residents for generations to come.
- Sustainability – let's stress investment and return and make certain that our investment is appropriately managed for the long term – which includes maintenance.
- The open space program was founded on some important principles: respect for property rights, addressing the needs of citizens and being fiscally sound. These are important themes as well.

Question # 3: What is the most important future accomplishment of the Arapahoe County Parks, Open Space and Trails Program?

- That we completed and adopted the master plan.
- The open space system is connected for people and for wildlife and that it is integrated within the comprehensive land use plan.
- That we protect the Lowery Range for multiple values: conservation, recreation, education, public access and use.
- The county executed the vision for the open space plan, implemented the plan.
- The county open space program is self perpetuating – and has been implemented according to the plan.
- The open space plan is a living document that is evolving and changing with the changes to our county.
- That we have done a great job of educating our electorate as to the benefits of open space and they in turn voted yes on renewing the OS resolution.
- That we all had the foresight to purchase property and expand upon the open space program in the midst of this challenging economy.

Steering Committee: Subgroup C – Bill Neumann facilitator

Question # 1: What are your thoughts about the Vision Statement as proposed? What changes would you recommend?

- vision statement should be more about the people that it affects
- people of Arapahoe County enjoy high quality open space – needs to touch the people.
- statement needs to be about open space
- term “citizens” should be used instead of people
- is vision achievable in 100 years?
- incorporate wildlife into the vision statement
- vision should be difficult – let’s challenge ourselves
- incorporate – “quality of life” into the vision statement
- include purpose of open space in statement
- put “beautiful vistas” in vision statement – don’t have to be accessible – specific for homebound people.
- need flexibility in the vision statement
- keep the vision and mission statement simple – healthy lands, healthy people, healthy communities is a good start
- the current vision statement reads like a mission statement

Question # 2: What are your thoughts about the Open Space Themes as defined? What other themes are important to consider for the program?

- Wildlife – this must be included as a theme.
- Diversity of Ecotypes and Experiences
- Sustainability – drainageways, natural system, not just financial as expressed in presentation.
- Educational programs
- Preservation – keep county landscape in a natural state, support wildlife
- Trails - to a variety of destinations
- Air Quality – needs to be protected

- Healthy natural systems – air, water, soils, etc.
- Vibrant Economy – restate as “enhance economy”
- Restoration – clean up of disturbed landscapes as important as preservation
- Control Diversity of Uses – open space versus athletic fields – favor open space

Question # 3: What is the most important future accomplishment of the Arapahoe County Parks, Open Space and Trails Program?

- Preserve natural environment for future generations
- Quality of life for citizens
- Acquire lands in a natural state – buffer lands that are undeveloped.
- Maximize experience between people and natural resources.
- Accessibility for everyone.



Figure A.5: Bob Searns (facing audience) summarizes the results of the second master plan steering committee meeting.

Steering Committee Meeting 2: Arapahoe County CentrePoint Building

The second meeting of the Arapahoe County Open Space Master Plan Steering Committee was held at the CentrePoint Plaza in Aurora on November 19, 2009. Attendance for the meeting was excellent. A total of 40 invited steering committee members attended the meeting.

The meeting began with a welcome and introduction by Bob Toll, who thanked participants for attending and reminded everyone of the important role that the Committee plays in the planning process. Chuck Flink, of Greenways Inc. lead consultant for the open space master plan, led the group through a recap of the first meeting, shared results of the first public open house and provided summary results from the on-line and statistical surveys. Flink stated that the statistical survey results were “hot off the press.” He added that responses to the statistical survey exceeded expectations, with 821 responses returned. The most important information gleaned from the statistical survey includes:

- 1) Respondents feel that the most important goals for the open space program are to protect and preserve water quality, preserve urban and rural open

space, protect wildlife habitat corridors and preserve agriculture and ranch lands.

- 2) Forty-two percent of respondents were aware of the open space program and 55% support the shareback funding.
- 3) Sixty one percent of respondents would vote in favor of renewing the sales tax that funds the program.

Flink offered a conceptual framework for the open space program, describing the future vision, mission and objectives of the program. He also provided a “working definition” for open space that offers more depth to the term “open space” than what Arapahoe County has been used during the past five years. Flink presented and described how a “level of service” can be used to determine the proper amount of open space needed to meet current and future needs. He also suggested that Arapahoe County may want to consider establishing a numerical target for open space conservation, that would define a minimum acreage needed to meet future needs and demand. He described how a “hubs and spokes” approach would lead to an interconnected framework of parks, open space and trails throughout Arapahoe County.

Flink defined a conceptual implementation strategy for the open space program that recognizes geographic differences in Arapahoe County and provides a unified, yet tailored and management implementation approach that offers a flexible approach to future open space conservation efforts. He suggested that there are three subareas of the County, that require a slightly different approach to implementation: western third, focused on closing gaps in the open space network and making connections; middle third, which should plan for the future and establish a framework of open space in support of future growth and development; and the eastern third, which should focus on conserving the natural and heritage landscapes of rural Arapahoe County.

Flink asked the Committee to divide itself into three subgroups, and provide responses to the following questions:

- # 1: Which vision statement most accurately describes and depicts the Arapahoe County Open Space program?
- # 2: What are your thoughts about a target or goal for open space conservation? What about “hubs and spokes?”
- # 3: What are the implementation challenges and opportunities for parks, trails and open space and how are these best addressed?

The following text describes the responses of each of the three subgroups.

Steering Committee: Subgroup A – Chuck Flink facilitator

Question # 1: Which vision statement most accurately describes and depicts the

Arapahoe County open space program?

- I like the “healthy” motto for the vision and think that the 2nd definition makes a good “mission” statement.
- First one is fine as long as it is a complete sentence.
- Would like to see the word “interconnected” included.
- What does “Healthy Lands” refer to – wildlife habitat?
- I like the reference to “enhancing quality of life” in 2nd statement.
- Need to keep it short and to the point, # 3 is too long.
- I prefer a hybrid between # 1 and # 2.
- I recommend “Arapahoe provides healthy lands naturally for generations to come.”
- How does anyone define the word “healthy” as it means different things.
- Let’s be sure to inspire as well as aspire
- Include the word “recreation.”
- I favor “open space for generations to treasure and enjoy”
- Let’s replace the word “healthy” with active lifestyle

Question # 2: What are your thoughts about a target or goal for open space conservation? What about “hubs and spokes?”

Target/Goal for Open Space Conservation:

- I don’t care for the notion of a target – don’t feel it is necessary and can be distracting
- How is the percentage goal applied throughout the County?
- I fear that people will regard the minimum as the maximum
- If you use a target, relate it back to population and/or density.
- Access is more important than having a target for total open space
- I feel that a target is in fact a useful metric for measuring progress and I support the use of a target goal for the program.
- I worry that the target could be used against the program.
- I think it very valuable to have a metric to benchmark our progress with other counties and to see how our program is achieving its goals
- For data wonks this is a good thing – I like the idea of being able to measure progress with a numeric goal
- A metric is okay as long as we first establish the big picture of conservation for the program.
- How much open space do we have right now?

Hubs and Spokes:

- I really like the concept of hubs and spokes and support an interconnected system of parks, open space and trails
- The public needs to understand the relevance and importance of this concept.
- This makes more sense in the regional context – as we zoom out and figure out how Arapahoe County relates to regional metro initiatives and those of border counties.
- Hubs and spokes should not be the sole determinant of what is conserved and acquired for the open space program

- What are the hubs and spokes within Arapahoe County?

Question # 3: What are the implementation challenges and opportunities for parks, trails, and open space and how are these best addressed?

- I like how you described the three sub areas of the county – although I am not sure about the tag lines for each.
- All three tag lines could be found in each of the sub areas.
- Let's not create an "us" versus "them" scenario.
- I think that maintenance and management is a very important consideration for the county.
- Conservation and education are critical to future success and needs to be stressed in implementation
- Focus on stewardship in thinking about implementation
- Focus on the value that open space elements provide to the County
- We need lots of outreach, education and work with partners to make the program successful
- A conservation toolbox is a critical component of implementation
- I think that the Board of County Commissioners can be a barrier to successful implementation if they don't buy into the concepts being defined.
- Let the land speak to the uses required.

Steering Committee: Subgroup B – Robert Searns & Bryn Searns facilitators

Question # 1: Which vision statement most accurately describes and depicts the Arapahoe County open space program?

- "Healthy lands, healthy people, healthy communities," sounds too much like a cereal jingle.
- Vision statement should be more specific to Arapahoe County. For example, "Arapahoe County heritage" rather than "Western heritage."
- Vision statement is jargon-heavy. The statement should appeal to the people.
- Should use the term people instead of citizens.
- Should emphasize the harmony between people and nature/heritage.
- Vision statement # 3 is too lengthy.
- Important to keep the term infrastructure in the vision statement.
- More than just conserving land -- vision statement should include air, water, vistas, archeological sites, habitats, and wildlife.
- Serve: A nice verb to use to capture the idea that Arapahoe County taxpayers get something back for their investment/money.
- Should research how other successful programs marketed their project.
- "3- second, 30-second, and 3-minute vision statement." - The vision statement should consist of different parts. Imagine looking at a brochure:
- Cover of brochure has tagline – catchy slogan to grab attention (e.g., "Making our open spaces your favorite places.")
- Inside the brochure - substance of the vision

Question # 2: What are your thoughts about a target or goal for open space

conservation? What about “hubs and spokes?”

Target/Goal for Open Space Conservation:

1. Balance between metrics and qualitative description for goals:
 - Need to clarify and define what is meant by conserving 30%. What will be conserved? For what purpose? Why 30%? There is a concern that the 30% goal is arbitrary –there needs to be specific reasons behind the metric.
 - In addition to the metrics, need a qualitative description of the goals.
 - Must clarify that the goal is a benchmark rather than a regulation. There is concern that developers will perceive the 30% benchmark as a regulatory requirement.
 - Metrics are good because they provide a tangible number to show the taxpayers that their funds have been used to conserve a definite amount of open space.
 - Will unused sites go back into the available open space pool as opposed to being sold?

2. Goals should be tailored for each landscape:
 - The urban areas have different open space needs/goals than the rural areas. There needs to be long-term goals that are specific to each landscape.
 - Rural areas could have magnets or “get away destinations” to attract people (solace in the landscape, vistas, views, quiet meditation.)
 - The eastern section of Arapahoe County is a rural area and by nature “open space,” composed of several undeveloped properties. It is important to conserve open space areas where people have a legal right to use the land for recreation etc.

3. There needs to be inter/intra county connectivity in order to set and achieve goals:
 - Hubs and Spokes:
 - Hubs and spokes is an outdated term. Could use spine and ribs, tree branches etc.
 - Could use Quincy Avenue as the spine – bring the hubs and spokes into Quincy Avenue.
 - There could be a hub at E-470.
 - Should use railway, utility, and floodway easements.
 - Could also have hubs and spokes in each section of the county
 - Should work with other counties to implement hubs and spokes, and to make the system more connected/integrated.

Question # 3: What are the implementation challenges and opportunities for parks, trails, and open space and how are these best addressed?

- Cooperation among agencies (e.g., counties, municipalities, planning, development, urban drainage, and utilities) and proactive involvement is essential.
- The citizens, as taxpayers, must be proactively engaged and involved in a positive manner.
- Stewardship: Need a plan that assures the sustainability of the properties,

- given that there is a sunset provision.
- Protection mechanisms (e.g., land trusts, conservation easements.)
 - Destinations that have public access points. Public access points should be in harmony with the needs of landowners.
 - Need a plan to protect acquisitions.
 - Need more pocket open space parks in urban areas, and should protect the current parks.
 - “Complete the connections” instead of “close the gaps.”
 - Funding:
 - Don’t sacrifice integrity for partnerships. “Don’t sell your soul.”
 - Leverage funds – money needs to be used appropriately (e.g., the funds are not for private uses or for the benefit of private actors.)
 - Build public awareness of the program to encourage funding.
 - Overall Goals:
 - Quality of open space
 - Partnerships
 - Provide access
 - Plan for the future
 - Preservation for the future.
 - Reinstatement
 - Awareness of needs/availability
 - Electorate awareness of what tax has accomplished
 - Connectivity

Steering Committee: Subgroup C – Bill Neumann facilitator

Question # 1: Which vision statement most accurately describes and depicts the Arapahoe County open space program?

- Statement # 1 is too broad “slogan like”
- We like Statement # 2 because it best captures the vision for the county
- Statement # 3 is too wordy.

Question # 2: What are your thoughts about a target or goal for open space conservation? What about “hubs and spokes?”

Target/Goal for Open Space Conservation:

- Like the use of the targets for Arapahoe County.
- Use of percentage is okay if tied to the OS Resolution
Perhaps better used by municipalities than the county
- Need a balance of useable open space with conservation areas
- If 30% goal is used, it needs to have a balance of open space types
- What is the counties role in implementing the target
- How is the 30% coordinated to make open space meaningful

Hubs and Spokes:

- Hubs and spokes works better regionally, need to know what is going on to the north and south of Arapahoe County

Question # 3: What are the implementation challenges and opportunities for parks, trails, and open space and how are these best addressed?

- Focus on education and maintenance
- Utilize volunteers for implementation
- Education will be huge as we approach sunset of OS Resolution
- Prioritize conservation easements
- Maintenance of opens space lands will be important
- Provide regional trail spines
- Identify stakeholders and build partnerships
- Can this OS Plan help municipalities with comprehensive plans to achieve coordinated effort
- Need incentives
- Include school districts as stakeholders
- Analyze how open space impacts property values, lifestyle, quality of life, education, etc.
- Consider regional water detention and retention facilities as part of open space lands.

Steering Committee Meeting 3: Arapahoe County Fairgrounds and Regional Park

The third and final meeting of the Arapahoe County Open Space Master Plan Steering Committee was held at the Arapahoe County Fairgrounds on April 27, 2010. Attendance for the meeting was excellent. Approximately 40 of the invited steering committee members attended the meeting.



Figure A.6: Bob Searns, Bryn Searns and Bill Neumann (facing audience) summarize the results of the third master plan steering committee meeting.

The meeting began with a welcome and introduction by Bob Toll, who thanked participants for the assistance that they provided in helping the County prepare the Open Space Master Plan. Chuck Flink, of Greenways Inc. lead consultant for the open space master plan, provided an overview presentation of the Final Master Plan report. He stated that based on a meeting on the evening of April 26 with the Arapahoe County Open Space and Trails Advisory Board that the consultant team would make some final adjustments to the final report. The OSTAB forwarded a recommended to the Board of County Commissioners to adopt the master plan, pending recommended changes to the document.

Upon conclusion of the presentation Flink asked the Committee to divide itself into three subgroups, and provide responses to the following question:

1: How do we work together to implement the Open Space Master Plan? Specifically, what are the policies, programs and projects that should be undertaken by the County and its partners?

The following text describes the responses of each of the three subgroups.

Arapahoe County Steering Committee: Subgroup A – Chuck Flink facilitator

Question: What are the important policies that the County should work on to implement the Open Space Master Plan?

- The distribution of sales and use tax funding is very important. Currently some project partners are not eligible for shareback funds and the grant process is so competitive that it is difficult to reliably plan on funding for certain partnership projects.
- Concerned about the amount of money devoted to maintenance. The County needs to consider a policy shift where both the County and its partners can utilize sales and use tax funding to support maintenance of parks, trails and open space.
- Modify the shareback formula to account for population, but include where P&R Districts overlap so that the funds are distributed more fairly.
- When the County uses the term Balance of Investments, does this include making investments in rural areas. The County needs to keep in mind that a lot of folks in western Arapahoe County would go to facilities in eastern Arapahoe County if there were good park, trail and open space resources to use. The County has not done enough to build and open for public use those rural facilities.
- The County should partner with Transportation interests to develop greenway corridors like the Quincy Road corridor. Hopefully this can happen.
- The definitions of open space must be clearly articulated and incorporated as policy in implementation.
- As a policy statement, the County should be sure to encourage partnerships as part of the implementation strategy.
- The County should reauthorize the sales tax resolution for a minimum of 25 years.

Question: What are the programs that the County should implement as part of the Master Plan?"

- Arapahoe County is too much of a "silent" partner in project. The County needs to become more visible.
- Who is the target audience for the program? Is it younger residents, older residents, trail enthusiasts or park enthusiasts?
- What is the County's communications strategy? (Nichole Parmelly with the County Open Space Program provided the following answer)
 1. Working on a branding strategy
 2. Completing an open space mapping strategy to determine where sales and use tax funds were spent as part of accountability.
 3. Working to produce digital newsletter and other information about the program.
- At the OSTAB meeting last night, the County introduced a consultant that is working to prepare Open Space Design Guidelines. These will be used to guide development of facilities.
- How can the Open Space Program maintain momentum when there are changes in the OSTAB and BOCC membership? Flink answered that this was a purpose of the Master Plan.
- The County should promote a number of events in conjunction with the Master Plan roll out to celebrate the completion of the Plan and promote the program. These events should be interactive and the County should have different events for different audiences. For example, take advantage of the 2010 National Trails Day.
- The County should utilize its web site to depict the future facilities that will be built as a result of the Master Plan. This can help citizens envision and get excited about the program.
- The County should build and/or supply information about the program on information kiosks across the County. These kiosks might be owned by local governments or P&R districts. A coordinated information campaign is needed.
- The County should also work with HOA's and provide them summary information about the program. They can distribute to residents at summer events sponsored by the HOA's.
- Bike shops and bike clubs are another good place to post information about the program.
- The County should work more closely with the local business groups and chamber of commerce.

Question: What are the projects that should be launched as part of implementation?

- South Platte River Working Group will be discussing a river corridor plan that approximates what has happened in Breckenridge.
- The Highline Canal Corridor is another great early action project.
- Don't forget to establish wildlife corridors.
- The Quincy Road Corridor in the middle part of Arapahoe County should be a high priority project.

- Implementing the recommendations of the Fairgrounds and Regional Park Master Plan should be a high priority.
- Also, link the ACFRP to the Aurora Reservoir.
- Triple Creek Greenway corridor
- Complete the Countywide Trails Master Plan.
- Launch a more up to date and inspiring web site for open space.
- Bradbury Ranch should be acquired.
- Complete the Cherry Creek Trail between the Reservoir and 17 Mile House Farm Park.

Arapahoe County Steering Committee: Subgroup B – Robert Searns and Bryn Searns facilitators

Question: What are the important policies that the County should work on to implement the Open Space Master Plan?

- Art in public places and highlighting the culture of the County.
- Enact rules to keep County parks, trails and open space safe. Also rules should be consistent
- Green initiatives – heritage sites that utilize historic windmills, use of solar technology, other green energy initiatives.
- Highlight cultural initiatives – work with CSU through online courses and agricultural programs.
- Policy Goals should be:
 - o Art and culture
 - o Education as part of a “healthy community”
 - o Green initiatives
 - o Show all citizens of the County that they benefit from the open space program
 - o Environmental ethics – appreciation for nature
 - o Conservation – of nature and landscapes
 - o Connectivity – multiuse trails
- How will the County get landowners and citizens on board with the OS Program?
- Public relations and marketing
 - o Concern – is everyone benefiting equally from the OS Program, particularly the shareback allocation?
 - o Appeal to HOA’s and leverage County funding
 - o Educate the public about the program – show the possibilities
 - o Cooperate and collaborate among local governments and districts
- Need specific project plans and illustrate how these projects benefits local constituents.
- Marketing – Open Space is Land, Parks and People
- Illustrate the actual expenditure of open space sales and use tax against typical resident purchases.

Question: What are the projects that should be launched as part of implementation?

- Arapahoe County Fairgrounds and Regional Park

- Delaney Farm – preserve heritage sites.
- Balance between passive and active recreation
- Highline Canal Corridor
- Cherry Creek Greenway
- Quincy Road Corridor
- Property in eastern County

Arapahoe County Steering Committee: Subgroup C – Bill Neumann facilitator

Question: What are the important policies that the County should work on to implement the Open Space Master Plan?

- Protect land with easements rather than acquisition if possible.
- Make sure development regulations are reviewed to ensure that landscape character is preserved.

Question: What are the programs that the County should implement as part of the Master Plan?"

- Need easy-to-find web page, interactive, blog, etc.
- Would like local representative to work with Arapahoe County to implement Open Space Plan
- A continued "Partnership"
- Provide coordinated effort where open space dedication or acquisitions are made.
- Need communication with the community to gain and maintain support
- Need multiple events to gather public support. (Bring citizens out to open space sites - provide transportation for seniors.)

Question: What are the projects that should be launched as part of implementation?

- Local representatives or sub-group to assist County with setting priorities within each segment of County
- Needs to be a balance of projects in each segment of the County (west, central and east)
- "Bring to life" dots on the map - Need to better identify existing open space, parks & trails to show public benefits. Also identify proposed projects. Need more detailed Master Plan showing connectivity within County and to adjacent counties of Adams and Douglas.
- Include community gardens as connection to "agricultural heritage"
- Do more to get citizens excited about program (better marketing/visibility)
 - o Connectivity

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

We interviewed several individuals from various municipalities and special districts in Arapahoe County. Overall, most expressed satisfaction with the Arapahoe County Open Space Program (“ACOS”) and praised its staff. Many identified the program as an essential element for the development and success of open space, parks, and trails. There were some critiques about the grant application process. Special districts voiced concern about the inequitable nature of the Shareback program. Importantly, many of the entities/jurisdictions in Arapahoe County rely on the ACOS Program for the development of trails, parks, and open space. Without the program, projects would be severely hindered. Below is a general summary of the comments and input we received from respondents.

Question # 1: How effectively has the Arapahoe County Open Space Program helped your community meet the park, open space and trail needs of your community? Can you provide specific examples of this effectiveness? Are there any shortcomings in the program with respect to your jurisdiction?

PROS

- **Vital Program:** Many of the jurisdictions/entities expressed that the funds from the ACOS Program are vital to the development of parks and open space. Without ACOS funds, certain projects would never have come to fruition. ACOS made parks & open space projects possible and will continue to make future projects achievable. In fact, there are projects already in the pipeline and there are plans to apply for and use ACOS funds. The funds are a “must have.” Funds are important for capital improvement projects, remodeling projects, and for the development of new trails and parks.
- **Benefits to the Community:** ACOS funds helped municipalities/entities provide higher quality parks (e.g., better playground equipment, picnic facilities etc.), and thus there are more benefits for the community. As one respondent put it, “ASOC funds were essential to add onto our existing funds and build something of high quality and which the residents truly appreciate and utilize.”
- **Supplemental Funding:** ACOS funds supplement limited tax bases for many districts. Additionally, ACOS grants help districts & entities leverage state and municipal funds. For example, having ACOS grants helps to leverage funds and receive matching funds from GOCO. In addition, some jurisdictions/entities used Open Space funds as a cash match. Funds were used to acquire open space and to support trail connectivity.
- **Praise for the ACOS Staff:** ACOS staff is very professional and they are working hard to meet the needs and interest of the community. Some respondents praised the grant application process, because staff took the time to educate grant applicants (e.g., explained why a grant application had been rejected and provided tips on how to improve the application). There has been great cooperation among the agencies to accomplish common goals.

CONS

- Critiques of the Grant Application Process:
The grant application should clarify what needs to be included on the grant application, so it is clear to both ACOS and the grant applicant what the funds will and will not cover. For some, there were unexpected out of pocket expenses.
Overwhelming for small governmental entities.
- Delay in Release of Funds: There is too much lag time between the grant award notification and the disbursement of funds. As a result, some jurisdictions lose their contractors because they cannot move forward with a project until the money is actually in hand.
- Oversight: Oversight and micromanagement hinders progress. Post-approval, the process of working through County planning and engineering takes a long time. SEMSWA regulations are sometimes a hindrance.

Question # 2: What elements of the County Open Space Program, if anything, would you like to see changed? Should there be changes to the Shareback program, and if so what would you recommend? How about the Grants program?

- There is some confusion about which County fees are applicable to the projects. Some were surprised at the high fee amount and had not considered the fees in their original budgets. There was a suggestion to reduce or waive the fees when applicants apply to open space projects, because open space projects are funded by taxpayers rather than private developers.
- There needs to be a way to address unforeseen expenses as projects get going.
- It would be helpful if the County was more proactive about asking the communities about their needs in relation to parks and open space. Currently, the onus is on the community to go through the grant application process and secure funds. A suggested alternative to the grants process is to have the County allocate money to the communities in the same way it allocates money for road or construction projects.
- Special Districts' Concerns: There is an inequitable distribution of funds. Special districts should also receive shareback funds and it should be in an equitable manner (e.g., based on the percentage of the population). Eventually, the County should increase the percentage of funds allocated to special districts. Often, special districts must go to other sources in order to cover the on-going maintenance cost of a project. It is difficult to maintain projects that were originally funded through a grant. For example, citizens use the parks, but the park is not a revenue source for the district, so it does not have enough funds to maintain the parks.

Question # 3: As the County is in the process of developing a new Open Space Master Plan, what are the projects or initiatives within your jurisdiction that should be considered as regional or county priorities?

- Connectivity – Connecting trails and communities is important to many jurisdictions. For example, one municipality plans to develop trails and

bicycle lanes; such development is key to providing connectivity between neighborhoods and jurisdictions.

- Open Space Acquisition/Conservation – important in both the rural and urban areas of the County.
- Development of more parks – Some parks are currently used to capacity. The population is growing and density is increasing, thus it is important to develop more facilities.

Question # 4: What percentage of your parks/open space program is funded by the Arapahoe County Open Space program? What would happen to your program if the reauthorization is not approved by voters in 2013?

The percentage ranged from 0% to 50% on certain projects. However, many said that open space projects will not be possible if the program is not approved by voters in 2013. Others said that park and trail development would be severely delayed and limited. As one respondent put it, “No grants, no parks.” Many jurisdictions are planning on asking for grant funds for future projects; such projects may not happen if the funds are not available. Also, the Open Space funds are important because funds are used to leverage other grants.

Question # 5: Do you have other comments and suggestions that you would like to share with respect to the Arapahoe County Open Space program?

- Public Relations: Arapahoe County has improved its PR, but it is very important for the County to sell the ACOS program to voters. The County must promote the program and convince the taxpayer that the program is worth the additional tax. The success of the program should be visible (e.g., ribbon cutting ceremonies, articles in local papers, involvement of the local media etc.). It is important to educate the constituents about the ACOS program and its benefits.
- Eastern/Rural Section of County: The eastern section of the county is underutilized. There is a lot of potential. Arapahoe County should consider ways to connect the eastern section to the western section. For example, use the Fairgrounds as a central point between the east and west. The eastern section of the county wants to attract the “big city people to the small towns.”
- Public Input: Many entities/jurisdictions were happy that the County was reaching out and gathering input from the communities (i.e., interview of stakeholders, public meetings). One person suggested that the County should tape the public meetings and put the taped meeting on the website so that those who couldn’t attend can still feel involved.

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COMMENT FORMS

A comment form was developed for Arapahoe County during this planning process and made available in both hardcopy and in digital format, and was available online for more than four months (example survey form page is illustrated below). The web address was distributed at public meetings, to local interest groups, in newsletters, and on flyers throughout the County. Input from the public comment forms helped to shape the recommendations and direction of this plan. Responses from both the online and written comment forms were tabulated and the results are illustrated on the following pages.

Arapahoe County
Celebrating First

[Exit this survey >>](#)

Arapahoe County Open Space Master/Action Plan - Comment Form

2. Which of these do you feel is important to be part of the Action Plan? (Rank Top 3; 1 being the most important)












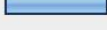


	#1	#2	#3
Countywide Trails	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Neighborhood Parks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Regional Parks (larger than 50 acres)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School Parks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Natural Resource Protection	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Farmland Protection	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Enhance Existing Park Facilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>		

3. How would you like to use parks and open space? (Select all that apply)

- Walking and Bicycling
- Educational/Interpretive Parks
- Informal Field Sports
- Fitness Trail
- Programmed Youth Sports
- Picnicking
- Wildlife Viewing/Bird Watching
- Connection with Nature
- Equestrian Activities
- Other







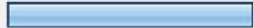

[<< Prev](#) [Next >>](#)

Arapahoe County Open Space Action Plan - Comment Form

1. Where do you live?				
			Response Percent	Response Count
Aurora			31.0%	52
Bennett			2.4%	4
Bow Mar			2.4%	4
Centennial			22.6%	38
Cherry Hills Village			1.8%	3
Columbine Valley			0.6%	1
Deer Trail			0.6%	1
Englewood			7.7%	13
Foxfield			1.2%	2
Glendale			0.6%	1
Greenwood Village			7.1%	12
Littleton			17.9%	30
Sheridan			1.2%	2
Unincorporated Eastern County (such as Byers, Strasburg, and Watkins)			3.0%	5
Unincorporated Western County (such as 4 Square Mile area)			0.0%	0
Other (please specify)				18
			answered question	168
			skipped question	22

2. Which of these do you feel is important to be part of the Action Plan? (Rank Top 3; 1 being the most important)					
	#1	#2	#3	Rating Average	Response Count
Countywide Trails	42.2% (43)	36.3% (37)	21.6% (22)	1.79	102
Neighborhood Parks	26.9% (14)	34.6% (18)	38.5% (20)	2.12	52
Regional Parks (larger than 50 acres)	19.4% (14)	40.3% (29)	40.3% (29)	2.21	72
School Parks	9.1% (1)	27.3% (3)	63.6% (7)	2.55	11
Natural Resource Protection	53.2% (59)	30.6% (34)	16.2% (18)	1.63	111
Farmland Protection	36.4% (24)	43.9% (29)	19.7% (13)	1.83	66
Enhance Existing Park Facilities	9.7% (3)	32.3% (10)	58.1% (18)	2.48	31
			Other (please specify)		32
			answered question		167
			skipped question		23

4. How would you allocate \$100 in revenues among the categories of funding listed below? (Please be sure your total adds up to \$100).

		Response Percent	Response Count
Purchase land to preserve open space and protect the environment		69.5%	107
Protect views, vistas, and ridgelines		48.1%	74
Development of an interconnected trail system throughout Arapahoe County		56.5%	87
Preserve agricultural and ranch lands		54.5%	84
Protect wildlife habitats and corridors		70.8%	109
Preserve water quality		49.4%	76
Develop large regional parks for passive activities (picnic areas, trails, playgrounds, etc.)		43.5%	67
Other		13.6%	21
		answered question	154
		skipped question	36










6. In your opinion, what is the most important benefit of protecting open space and building trails? (Rank 1 to 6; 1 being the most important).

	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	Rating Average	Response Count	
Creating value and generating economic activity	6.4% (9)	6.4% (9)	18.6% (26)	20.7% (29)	17.1% (24)	30.7% (43)	4.28	140	
Bicycle and pedestrian transportation	24.5% (34)	14.4% (20)	12.2% (17)	9.4% (13)	20.9% (29)	18.7% (26)	3.44	139	
Improving the health of residents through active living	23.2% (32)	27.5% (38)	15.2% (21)	13.8% (19)	15.2% (21)	5.1% (7)	2.86	138	
Plant and wildlife protection	45.5% (70)	13.6% (21)	14.9% (23)	16.2% (25)	6.5% (10)	3.2% (5)	2.34	154	
Water resource protection	4.6% (7)	37.9% (58)	18.3% (28)	19.6% (30)	13.7% (21)	5.9% (9)	3.18	153	
Enhancing cultural awareness and community identity	4.1% (6)	6.8% (10)	22.4% (33)	15.6% (23)	19.7% (29)	31.3% (46)	4.34	147	
	<i>answered question</i>								161
	<i>skipped question</i>								29

7. What do you believe should be the most important aspect of the Open Space Master/Action Plan?

	Response Count
	130
	<i>answered question</i>
	130
	<i>skipped question</i>
	60

8. Additional comments:		
		Response Count
		65
	<i>answered question</i>	65
	<i>skipped question</i>	125

9. How did you hear about the Arapahoe County Open Space Master Planning effort?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Arapahoe County web site		13.0%	20
Signage		5.8%	9
Word of Mouth		51.9%	80
News story		7.1%	11
Newsletter		11.0%	17
Flyer		6.5%	10
Advertisement		0.6%	1
Access Arapahoe		0.6%	1
Other		14.3%	22
	If possible, please provide specific information such as name of newspaper		43
	<i>answered question</i>		154
	<i>skipped question</i>		36