

**Frequently asked questions for Blodgett Open Space Master and Management Plan
February 29, 2024**

Traffic Impacts and Trailhead Security

Q: What are you going to do about security, crime and trailhead management in and around the Open Space?

A: The Master and Management Plan recommends several trailhead management approaches to reduce and mitigate security and safety issues at Blodgett Open Space. These options include CSPD security audits of trailheads, security patrols at key times, gate closure management with all Open Space parking behind security gates and earlier gate closures (9pm).

Site enhancement recommendations include appropriate site improvements to include nighttime gate closures, parking lot lighting, automated gates and the installation of security cameras. These measures will be included with trailhead improvements but are subject to available funding.

Park Rangers and Park staff do not have enforcement capabilities; therefore, our team will work with the Colorado Springs Police Department (CSPD) regarding any security issues or nefarious activity.

Q: What are you going to do about the increase in traffic, speeding in the neighborhoods?

A: The Open Space is open to the entire community, and we plan to sustainably accommodate the increase in the use and minimize the impact in the open space. For instances dealing with traffic and speeding in surrounding neighborhoods, we will collaborate with Traffic Engineering and the Colorado Springs Police Department. The master and management plan provides guidance over the improvements and management of the open space over the next 15-20 years.

Q: Will there be a 4-way stop at Woodmen/Centennial and Orchard Valley?

A: The 4-ways stop identified at Woodmen Road and Orchard Valley Road was an alternative considered during the public process. Based on community feedback, we removed the 4-way stop from the Master and Management Plan. Any future discussion around the relocation or increased capacity at Orchard Valley Trailhead, including a change in access to Woodmen Road, will require a new public process.

Q: What can I do to report an issue (homeless camps, trash, downed trees, etc.) in the Open Space?

A: We encourage residents to connect with the city and report any maintenance issues and concerns including management or trail safety concerns on our GoCOS App or by visiting [ColoradoSprings.gov/GoCOS](https://coloradosprings.gov/GoCOS). We also ask that for crime reporting or public safety concerns that you call the non-emergency police line at 719-444-7000.

Wildlife in Blodgett Open Space

Q: Will this new plan disrupt wildlife habitat, specifically for the Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep?

A: The Master and Management Plan reflects the community's strong commitment to habitat protection. The plan recommends three strategies to reduce impacts to wildlife and enhance wildlife areas and corridors:

- 1) Implement a sustainable, strategically planned trail system, enhance and expand wildlife habitat, establish wildlife corridors, and manage appropriate designated public access to the open space. Trail system improvements in the open space include integrating two wildlife corridors with expanded and enhanced habitat areas.
- 2) Closure of illegal, redundant, and unsustainable trails to enhance, improve and maximize wildlife habitat areas, restore open space natural areas, and improve wildlife corridors from habitat area in and around Blodgett Open Space. With the closure of approximately 11.4 miles of non-system trails and by establishing a sustainable trail system, the implementation of this Plan will restore open space and habitat areas.
- 3) Implement and enhance monitoring of wildlife habitat and implement adaptive strategies if impacts arise including seasonal trail closures, restricting dog access, closing trails, and limiting public access.

While bighorn sheep utilize Blodgett Open Space and the surrounding neighborhoods for their winter range habitat, the more sensitive migration routes and lambing areas are located west of the open space in the Pike National Forest.

Q: Was Blodgett Open Space a Nature Preserve?

A: Blodgett Open Space was acquired by the City of Colorado Springs over 20 years, through the Trails, Open Space and Parks (TOPS) program. Many of the parcels that make up the open space were slated for residential development but was preserve through the TOPS program. The properties were acquired as open space, defined in the 2014 Parks System Master Plan, to retain land, water, vegetation, historic, cultural and aesthetic features in their natural state. These areas provide wildlife habitat, help shape healthy growth, maintain scenic vistas and provide recreational opportunities for the community. Blodgett Open Space is home to many high value resources, including providing winter range habitat to the Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep. The management guidelines emphasize resource protection within Open Spaces. The master and management plan provides the guiding document for the conservation of the resources with appropriate public access.

Open Space Improvements

Q: What does the Master and Management Plan recommend for parking at the trailheads?

A: Blodgett Open Space provides regional connectivity to neighboring Pike National Forest and other parks and open spaces. The public master plan process identified three trailheads with parking locations. From the data and input gathered, improving facilities at the two existing trailheads (North Trailhead and Orchard Valley Trailhead), and an additional trailhead with parking and facilities near the Pikeview Quarry are recommended. The Plan creates dispersed access to the Open Space by planning for three trailhead parking areas to reduce impact from a

single point of access. To increase safety and accessibility, this Plan recommends trailhead amenities, additional security measures, and adequate trailhead parking to reduce the impact of open space parking in the neighborhoods.

In the draft Plan, 45 parking stalls were planned for the Orchard Valley Trailhead. After hearing significant concerns throughout the public process, the number of stalls was reduced to 15. Anything over 15 spaces and/or changed in location to the old barn area will require an additional public process.

The Quarry Trailhead located on the south end of Blodgett Open Space went from 250 parking stalls to 180 throughout the public process. The implementation of these stalls will be a phased approach, starting at 50 parking spots. If necessary, based upon use, this may increase to 100 parking stalls in phase 2 and a total of 180 in phase 3. Anything over 180 spaces will require an additional public process.

The North Trailhead is proposed to have a total of 41 spaces. This is a reduction of 10 spaces based on community input from the final community engagement opportunity in February 2024. Implementation of the additional parking stalls will occur in two phases, based on parking demands, neighborhood street parking issues and safety concerns. Anything over 41 spaces will require an additional public process.

Q: What amenities are proposed for the trailheads?

A: Each trailhead shall be appropriately designed to include nighttime closure gates, accessible parking, appropriate levels of parking lot lighting (as needed), kiosk, restroom, trash receptacle, and access to at least one trail designed to meet universally accessible trail standards. Signs and furnishings will conform to City Park standards. The improvements will be sensibly designed for the open space character and aesthetic.

Q: What kind of trails will there be in Blodgett Open Space according to the Master and Management Plan? Will there be any paved trails in the Open Space?

A: The Blodgett Open Space Master and Management Plan includes multi-use as well as bike-only and hike-only trails that are limited to passive recreational use with a high priority in resource conservation. The trail system aims to preserve the natural qualities of the land and improve wildlife habitat while providing varied access through a network of engaging non-motorized trails.

All trails within Blodgett Open Space will be natural surface (rocks, gravel and dirt). The Park to Peak Trail connecting from Oak Valley Ranch Park to the Quarry Trailhead will be a Tier 2 regional trail (8' wide breeze gravel trail). All other trails will vary between 18" and 48" based on their designation and difficulty. The trails plan is available in the Master and Management Plan on the project web page.

Q: Why are existing hiking-only trails being removed from the north portion of the Open Space?

A: The current designated trail system within Blodgett Open Space provides for multi-use trails. There are no hiking-only trails within the current open space trail system. The proposed master plan will establish hiking-only trails in the north portion of the open space.

Q: There has been a lot of public interest for more hiking-only trails. What has been done to provide equitable trail length for hiking only?

A: Modifications to the recommended trail system were made at the end of February 2024 based on public input from the final community engagement opportunity. The recommended trail system will add 0.4 miles of the existing Red Squirrel Trail as a hiking-only trail (originally proposed for decommissioning), and converts a section of 0.5 miles of bike only trail to multi-use southeast of the proposed Quarry Trailhead. The remaining open space trail system will be open to multi-use trail users.

Q: Will there be a bike park in Blodgett Open Space?

A: There is not a bike park in the Blodgett Open Space Master and Management Plan. The community expressed their desire for single-use trails within Blodgett Open Space including hiking-only and biking-only trails. In addition to proposed 1.5 miles of hiking-only trails, there are approximately 2.4 miles of directional bike trails proposed within Blodgett Open Space.

Pikeview Quarry, located to the southwest of Blodgett Open Space is slated to be offered to the City of Colorado Springs around 2025. If and when it becomes City property, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services will begin to move forward with a new public process to discuss opportunities for recreation, public access and a possible future bike park.

Q: Why is the designated downhill bike-only trail longer than the hiking-only trail?

A: The proposed trail system is designed with consideration of the communities' desires and opportunities while addressing their concerns shared during the master plan process. The plan includes 10.4 miles of multi-use trails for all users with 1.5 miles designated as hiking only and 2.3 miles of downhill mountain-biking only. The hiking only trails are multi-direction. The bike-only are downhill direction only.

Q: Can paragliding be done in Blodgett Open Space?

A: The master and management plan recommends two paragliding launch sites at different elevations and a landing site in the lower meadow, all in the southern portion of the open space. The neighborhood paragliding landing areas at Oak Valley Ranch Park and Wilson Ranch Park that were originally recommended in the draft plan have been eliminated based on community feedback.

Master Plan Implementation

Q: What happens the first year, second year, third year, as far as implementing the Master Plan?

A: The master and management plan guides the improvements and management over the next 15-20 years. Not all improvements will happen right away. After an approved and adopted master and management plan, the initial effort on implementation will seek to improve user safety and user experience, provide open space restoration and enhance wildlife habitat. This can be achieved through starting the construction of a sustainable trail system by improving and implementing phase 1 of the Quarry Trailhead. Several management actions can be completed to address some of the issues that are lower-cost items, such as changing the time gates are closed. The Master Plan identifies the high, medium and low priorities generated from the public process. The implementation of the recommendations will follow the priorities and the needs generated from open space monitoring and are subject to available funding.

For the 2024 City Budget, a total of \$200,000 was identified for the first implementation effort. The Parks Department has submitted a grant request for \$250,000 to Colorado Parks and Wildlife to leverage the approved 2024 Blodgett funds to support the first effort of implementation. We anticipate this funding will support trail construction to establish a sustainable trail system and add 50 parking stalls to the Quarry Trailhead. The City will continue to seek additional funding in the 2025 City Budget, however, without guaranteed funding it's difficult to say what can be accomplished in the next five years.

Master Plan Process

Q: How did you communicate the Master and Management Plan process to the community?

A: We followed the pillars for effective public participation through the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2). Our planning process began in Feb. 2023 and was extended an extra month to allow for addressing additional comments and concerns. Our public communications efforts included social media and Nextdoor posts, media coverage, trailhead kiosk flyers, email list communication, stakeholder outreach, TOPS Working Committee and Parks Advisory Board updates, as well as word of mouth.

Q: What proposed actions will require additional public process?

A: The master plan allows for a phased implementation of the plan recommendations, and it identifies certain elements which would require a new public process. The plan recommendations include limits for total parking counts and trail mileage; however, the phased approach gives the Parks Department flexibility to implement the recommendations over time within the guidance of an approved master plan. This phased approach allows staff to respond to changes, impacts, increased use and issues identified from monitoring.

In several locations, the master and management plan identifies specific elements that would trigger a new public process, these changes include:

- The location change and lot expansion of the Orchard Valley Trailhead,
- expansion over the cap to parking quantities identified for the North Lot and the Quarry Trailhead,
- changes over a cap to the total length of trail miles, and
- specific mention that if and when the Pikeview Quarry property is offered to the city and the department pursues the bike park, then a new public process would occur.

Those public processes would conclude with Parks Advisory Board consideration and approval.