



Finance Committee

April 18, 2024
Packet Addendum #1

From: [Yan Chun Su](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Subject: re. Budget Amendment for Open Space
Date: Wednesday, April 17, 2024 9:13:19 PM

Dear Councils/Finance Committee Members,

Louisville has approximately 32 miles of trails (<https://www.louisvilleco.gov/exploring-louisville/visitors/trails-and-maps>), for just over 20,000 residents. In comparison, our neighbor Lafayette has approximately 20 miles of trails, for over 30,000 residents. We are in an extremely fortunate position not only to have access to trails in Louisville, but also City of Boulder Open Space and Mountain Park's more than 150 miles of trail system. With these unparalleled luxuries, we have the duty to focus on being the best steward of this land. I believe our town should spend money on vegetation survey, restoration, funding programs to increase soil health, biodiversity on open space land, but not on opening more trails. In other words, please consider delaying funding the Trails Master Plan until after other programs have been implemented, until the new Open Space Master Plan is in place.

Yan Chun Su
Louisville CO

==CAUTION: EXTERNAL EMAIL==

This email originated from outside the City of Louisville's email environment. Do not click links or open attachments unless you validate the sender and know the content is safe. Please contact IT if you believe this email is suspicious.

From: [Bev B](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Cc: [Jeff Durbin](#); [Adam Blackmore](#); [Ember Brignull](#)
Subject: Finance Committee Meeting - Trails Master Plan funding
Date: Wednesday, April 17, 2024 11:29:19 AM

Dear Council Members Hoefner, Hamlington, and Kern,

I am writing to you about a Budget Amendment item on tomorrow's Finance Committee agenda. I am concerned about the inclusion of funding for a Trails Master Plan at this time. I believe that it is premature to fund a Trails Master Plan prior to revising Louisville's outdated (2004) Open Space Management Plans. Vegetation surveys of Open Space properties are but one important component of a comprehensive revision of Open Space plans, which should also include wildlife surveys and evaluation of wildlife species and habitat needs, among many other critical components. I believe that planning trails without updated master planning in place first is ill-advised and planning in the wrong order. Up-to-date, integrated Open Space master planning would provide the appropriate context and baseline for trails planning.

Open Space staff may be aware of an important guiding document for trails planning, ["Colorado's Guide to Planning Trails with Wildlife in Mind"](#) developed by Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) with multiple federal and local agency partners, plus a recreation and conservation advisory group and technical advisory team. The number one component of trail planning, on p. 16 of the Guide, is "Evaluating Wildlife Habitat" and it includes consideration of endangered, threatened, imperiled, and declining wildlife species. The Boulder County Comprehensive Plan Environmental Resources Element designates wildlife Species of Special Concern that includes these categories of species, which need and deserve protection. A number of these species depend on grasslands for their survival - for example grassland birds are experiencing large declines across North American - and Louisville's Open Space properties can make an important contribution toward keeping these species in Boulder County, if managed wisely.

Again, I believe the appropriate context for trails planning, including with wildlife in mind, would be updated Open Space master planning.

Once trails are established, the impacts to wildlife are difficult or impossible to reverse. Trails and the associated human use fragment habitat, impacting wildlife far beyond the width of a trail itself, as much research has shown - here is just one example from 2023, ["The Ecological Consequences of Wildland Recreation"](#)

I enjoy our open spaces and I vote in favor of taxes to support them. Until Open Space master planning is updated, I would like to see priority given to addressing social trails, similar to the great work staff has done near the northwest corner of Hecla Lake. I'd like to see unnecessary switchback shortcuts such as the ones west of Louisville Reservoir used as an opportunity to

encourage people to stay on trails - especially paved trails. Let's manage the trails we have before planning for more! I would like to see Open Space find ways such as increased education, signage, etc. to help our residents understand and care about the impacts we all have on our beloved wildlife when we recreate, and how we can recreate more responsibly.

Thank you for your consideration,
Bev Baker, Louisville Resident, Ward 1

cc: Mayor Leh
Mayor Pro Tem Dickenson
Council Member Fahey
Council Member Bierman.

==CAUTION: EXTERNAL EMAIL==

This email originated from outside the City of Louisville's email environment. Do not click links or open attachments unless you validate the sender and know the content is safe. Please contact IT if you believe this email is suspicious.

From: [H.M](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Cc: [Jeff Durbin](#); [Adam Blackmore](#); [Ryder Bailey](#); [Ember Brignull](#)
Subject: LOSA notes on the April 18, 2024 Financial Committee Packet
Date: Wednesday, April 17, 2024 3:12:57 PM
Attachments: [LOSA Response to Proposed April 2024 Budget Recommendations 4-17-24.pdf](#)

Dear City Council Members and Louisville City Management Staff,

Good afternoon. Please find attached our (Louisville Open Space Advocates/LOSA) notes on the April 18, 2024 Financial Committee Packet. They are the result of multiple meetings, phone calls and team writing sessions. In the document, we reiterate our goals for open space and discuss and make recommendations about the proposed budget amendment and financial policy updates. We are passionately committed to preserving and protecting Louisville Open Space. Thank you for all you do to support Open Space and our community. Thank you also for your time and consideration.

Sincerely yours,
Helen Moshak on behalf of LOSA
Louisville Resident

==CAUTION: EXTERNAL EMAIL==

This email originated from outside the City of Louisville's email environment. Do not click links or open attachments unless you validate the sender and know the content is safe. Please contact IT if you believe this email is suspicious.

Louisville Open Space Advocates (LOSA) Response to Proposed April/May 2024 Budget Recommendations

LOSA is a citizens' advocacy group dedicated to championing open space in Louisville. We are passionately committed to preserving and protecting Louisville Open Space. This includes prioritizing acquiring new properties and easements and wildfire mitigation. Voters resoundingly supported Open Space by passing Ballot Measure 2C in 2023, approving the original tax renewal and the 0.125% additional tax dedicated to OS with the highest approval rate in the history of the tax at a time when voters were concerned about property tax valuation increases. We welcome the opportunity to join the City Council, staff, OSAB, citizens, partners and experts in advocating for OS management best practices, professional standards, science and data-based decision making and community engagement. Please understand that we appreciate all the work accomplished to this point and know that together we are beginning to make good progress. Here are our notes, ideas and recommendations on the April 18, 2024 Financial Committee Packet.

I. LOSA's Top 3 Goals:

1. Allocate funds for acquisition and OS Division development.
2. Create a separate and comprehensive OS Management Plan completed in 2025.
3. Budget for dedicated OS staff for project management, front-line technicians, and citizen education/volunteer coordination.

II. Executive Summary in Black. LOSA's comments in Blue.

The proposal in the April 18, 2024 Financial Committee packet:

- A. Increases the open space operations budget by \$307K for a vegetation survey, trail planning and equipment¹. This is a great start... but it is not enough, and the planning is in the wrong order.
 - a. Open Space planning best practices calls for a full inventory of the ecosystem before planning. Instead of allocating funds for premature trail planning, expand the vegetation survey to include wildlife for a complete and scientific inventory and assessment.
 - b. The next step, after the inventory and assessment, is to complete the full Open Space Management Plan in 2025 before we do any long-range planning for trails. A comprehensive, integrated open space management plan includes sections on wildlife and plan management, integrated weed management, riparian and prairie restoration, and wildfire resilience and should be completed in a single round of planning with the help of expert consultants, OSAB and community engagement.
 - c. Trail planning should be the last phase of the planning process so that the trail planning is fully informed by the data and management plan. Planning for trails first may result in the mismanagement of the city's largest and most valuable assets and risk damage or irreparable harm to native habitats or species of special concern.
 - d. In addition to prioritizing an ecological inventory and assessment and a management plan first, increasing the OS Operations Budget for additional front-line and project-management staff will increase staff capacity and expertise for planning, science and implementation.

- B. This amendment continues to allocate substantially more money for Parks than Open Space. \$3 for parks:\$1 for open space in 2023 capital projects carry-forward. A total of \$1,896,000 is proposed for Parks in four capital funds and \$595,000 for Open Space in three funds² .
- a. This carry-forward should be distributed more equitably between OS and Parks, delaying some vehicle purchases or playground replacements until system-wide trail wayfinding is complete and Hecla Lake is restored. In the future, discontinue the long-standing pattern of deferring OS capital projects (e.g., a 20-year-old 2004 OS Management Plan and 10-year delay on installing wayfinding) and prioritize and increase OS CIP projects.
- C. The new revised 2023 Actuals for the Year-End Balances for funds that are possible OS fund sources are up over \$1.2M³ from the estimates in the 2023 Adopted Budget.
- a. We urge that these 2023 one-time year-fund balances be allocated to begin to seed the OS Acquisition Reserve now. Allocating these funds to the reserve in 2024 follows the intent of and immediately implements the proposed update to Financial Policy 2.2 allocating unencumbered OS fund balances to the OS Acquisition Reserve.
- D. The proposed changes to Finance Policy 2.2 create an Acquisition Reserve and require that 40% of the new OS tax dollars and any unencumbered year-end fund balance be budgeted for the Acquisition Reserve. The proposed financial policy fails to identify a formula or policy-level process for establishing the reserve target.
- a. We fully support the creation of an OS Acquisition Reserve (AR).
 - b. In parallel with the Parks Annual General Fund Transfer, Council should create an Open Space Annual General Fund Transfer to contribute to the OS Acquisition Reserve (AR) and when the target is met, budget the funds for OS Operations and Capital.
 - c. Seed the OS Acquisition Reserve, starting with allocating the \$1.2M in 2023 OS and CTF year-end fund-balance increases identified in this budget amendment as the first contribution to the reserve.
 - d. We think an annual allocation of 40% Acquisitions/60% Operations of the new tax revenue is too aggressive given the long list of unmet needs for Open Space Operations and Capital Projects identified by OSAB, staff and LOSA. Examples include
 - i. A dedicated OS Project Manager
 - ii. A full ecosystem inventory and assessment
 - iii. A separate Open Space Management Plan
 - iv. Natural Resources Management staff
 - v. Hecla Lake Restoration
 - vi. Wayfinding system-wide
 - vii. A full-time Volunteer & Education Coordinator
 - viii. Expansion and maintenance of the prairie pockets program
 - ix. Permanent water rights for Hecla Lake and the Warembourg Fishing Pond
 - x. An interpretive education center like the one at [Waneka Lake](https://www.lafayetteco.gov/2711/The-Shack-at-Waneka-Lake)
(<https://www.lafayetteco.gov/2711/The-Shack-at-Waneka-Lake>),
 - xi. the list goes on...

Instead of 40% AR/60% OS Ops, we urge you to first seed the Acquisition Reserve with the \$1.2M from the increases to 2023 year-end fund-balance increases from old combined OS&P Sale Tax fund and the Conservation Trust Fund and a GF transfer. After seeding the fund, a 20% AR/80% OS Ops distribution will make progress toward the reserve target and provide funding for these critical projects and programs.

- E. In the proposed financial policy text the original language that supports Council replenishing the OS Fund reserves with fund transfers, partnerships, bond financing and sound fiscal management is deleted from the document.
- a. This language should be retained to give Council and staff management options and resources for acquisition and replenishing/increasing the Acquisition Reserve.
- F. The proposed financial policy text (underlined) is too broad and fails to follow Ballot Measure 2C’s new tax dedication language. Current proposed language in the packet: “Use of acquisition reserves for purposes other than open space acquisition requires authorization from City Council.” These funds cannot be used for other purposes outside of the uses dedicated in the ballot measure/ordinance.
- a. Align language with the ballot measure and ordinance language (alternate version language underlined in yellow): “Use of acquisition reserves for other purposes as defined in Ordinance X other than open space acquisition requires authorization from City Council.” and “In the event acquisition reserves are used for other purposes as defined in Ordinance X other than open space acquisition, a plan will be developed by the City Manager to replenish the reserves as quickly as reasonably possible and will be presented as part of a long-term financial plan.”

Footnotes

¹ **Open Space Budget Adjustment Summary:** The City Manager is recommending a \$307,000 increase to the Open Space Operations Budget to fund;

- a. A Vegetation Survey of all Open Space properties
- b. Trails Master Plan (increased funding to PROS Long-Range plan project)
- c. Equipment for trail corridor and disturbed land restoration
- d. Hecla Phase 1 (restore pipeline corridor, some trail border restoration, fencing around habitat viewing area and restoration in that area)
- e. Work stations for new staff

² **2023 Capital Funds Carry-Forward Summary:** In this 2023 Capital Funds Carry Forward Request, if approved, Louisville is allocating \$3 of these funds on Parks Capital Projects for every \$1 spent on OS Capital Projects. The carry-forward total for Open Space projects is \$595,000; the carry-forward total for Parks projects is \$1,896,000.

Data Source: Pages 8-12 April 18, 2024 Financial Committee Packet

Fund Name	2023 Capital Carry Forward Request	Capital Project Description
b. Fund 202 – Conservation Trust Fund	\$415,000	Parks Project: \$400K Playgrounds OS Project: \$15K signs and phase 1 wayfinding
f. Fund 210 – Open Space	\$274,030	OS Projects: 104th Empire Trail, trail improvements, Signage and phase I wayfinding,
g. Fund 211 – Parks	\$254,387	Parks Projects: Irrigation, trucks, nursery stock, amenities
h. Fund 301 – Capital	\$11,460,002	OS Projects \$32K Aquarius Trailhead Parks Projects \$1.017M - Irrigation, Vehicles and Equipment, Playgrounds, Medians
n. Fund 603 - Fleet	\$394,245	Parks Projects \$225K - Vehicles

City Total Capital Projects All Funds Carry Forward	\$22,908,492	All City-wide Capital Projects 2023 Carry Forward
Open Space Projects All Funds CCF Total	\$595,000	All Open Space Projects 2023 Carry Forward Total
Parks Projects All Funds CCF Total	\$1,896,000	All Parks Projects 2023 Carry Forward Total

³ **2023 Revised Year End Fund Balances:** The new revised 2023 Actuals for the Year-End Balances for funds that are possible sources to fund the OS program or establish an Open Acquisition Fund reserve are up over **\$1.2M** from the 2023 Adopted Budget.

Data Source: Pages 60-61 April 18, 2024 Financial Committee Packet

Conservation Trust - Lottery Fund 2023 Year-to Date Fund Balance Actual is \$860,218 (**+\$383,222** up from Adopted Budget)
 Open Space & Parks Fund 2023 Year-to-Date Fund Balance Actual is \$2,622,762 (**+\$877,532** up from Adopted Budget)