



Communication Services

5334 South Prince Street

Littleton, Colorado 80120

Phone: 303-795-5467

Fax: 303-734-5470

www.co.arapahoe.co.us

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Contact:

NICHOLE PARMELLY

Communication Services Specialist

Direct: 720-874-6669

Mobile: 303-710-7893

E-mail: nparmelly@co.arapahoe.co.us

Protect. Connect. Enjoy. - Arapahoe County Open Spaces

Arapahoe County distributes \$11 million for open space, park and trail projects

Littleton, CO — Thanks to the generous citizens of Arapahoe County, the Board of County Commissioners Friday distributed \$11 million in Open Space sales tax revenues and awarded the citizen led Sales Tax Reauthorization Committee with the *Our Progress Takes Flight* Stewardship Award during a ceremony at Hudson Gardens.

Grants and awards were distributed to local cities, towns and eligible special districts during the County's Open Spaces Shareback and Grant award ceremony, which is held each June.

"From wildlife preservation and water quality enhancement to park improvements and trail connections, the Arapahoe County Open Spaces Program is making the County an even better place to live, work and play," said Commissioner Nancy Sharpe, who serves as Board Chair. "These accomplishments would not be possible without the support of voters and city, county and special district partners."

Funding for these projects is made possible by the generous citizens of Arapahoe County through the voter-approved Arapahoe County Open Space Sales and Use Tax, which is dedicated to preserve open space, enhance parks, build trail connections and protect our heritage areas. During the November 2011 election, residents voted (with more than 62 percent approval) to continue the Arapahoe County Open Space program that extends the quarter of a penny sales and use tax for an additional 10 years to Dec. 31, 2023.

Since the program's inception, the County's Open Space program has conserved more than 18,000 acres of open space, built more than 30 miles of new trails and created and enhanced neighborhood and regional parks.

The citizen-led Sales Tax Reauthorization Committee was presented with the *Our Progress Takes Flight* Award, which recognizes an individual, local government or organization that displays outstanding leadership, cooperation and stewardship to ensure the conservation and protection of the great outdoors.

As this year's winner, the Reauthorization Committee's passion for preserving the County's heritage, providing recreational opportunities for residents and helping communities understand the values of open space one citizen at a time is appreciated. Their leadership garnered adoption of the sales tax extension last November.

New this year was the recognition given to Commissioner Susan Beckman for her visionary leadership and tireless advocacy for Arapahoe County open space, parks and trails. Commissioner Beckman is finishing her third and final term as Commissioner.

Upon receiving a standing ovation, Commissioner Beckman said, "It has been my privilege to work with our cities and district partners in making a positive difference in the quality of life for everyone who lives in our communities. We should all take pride in this tremendous effort to protect and enhance the parks, trails and open space throughout Arapahoe County."

Open Space Shareback Awards

Fifty percent of the annual tax revenue is returned to incorporated cities and towns to enhance local parks, trails, recreation and open space.

More than \$75 million from the Open Space Fund has been distributed to municipalities since the program's inception. This year, Arapahoe County distributed nearly 9 million in shareback funds, which was divided among the following cities and towns, based on population:

• Aurora	\$5.22 million	• Englewood	\$554,541
• Bennett	\$6,470	• Foxfield	\$12,556
• Centennial	\$1.84 million	• Glendale	\$76,688
• Cherry Hills Village	\$109,987	• Greenwood Village	\$255,375
• Columbine Valley	\$23,010	• Littleton	\$724,219
• Deer Trail	\$10,015	• Sheridan	\$103,846

Arapahoe County Open Space Grants

In addition to Shareback funds, 12 percent of the annual tax revenue is set aside for competitive grants to eligible special districts and municipalities with almost \$18 million in grants awarded since 2004 for 106 projects throughout the County. On June 9, Arapahoe County awarded \$2 million in grants for 16 open space, park and trail projects. Grant recipients generated an additional \$1.3 million dollars in required matching funds.

There are three grant categories: standard, small and planning grants. Planning grants emphasize the importance of project planning, helping agencies prepare construction projects to be "shovel ready," and thereby increasing chances to receive additional funding for future project phases. Offering three categories also allows for similar projects to be evaluated against each other. This has encouraged smaller agencies with smaller budgets to apply. The 2012 projects receiving funding include:

Standard Grants

Arapahoe Park and Recreation District – Country Park Trail: Grant: \$250,000 Match: \$190,000

The District will construct a trailhead, picnic shelter and a one-mile trail on 175 acres of newly acquired parkland.

Arapahoe Park and Recreation District – Tallgrass Park Phase II: Grant: \$250,000 Match: \$312,000

This grant will be used to expand access and use of the 9.4 acre neighborhood park, including a multi-use playfield, trails and landscaping.

City of Aurora – Aurora Reservoir Scuba Beach Improvements: Grant: \$190,000 Match: \$92,100

Aurora will add picnic shelters, restrooms, new changing areas and new trails to link the Aurora Reservoir Scuba Beach to the water's edge.

City of Centennial – Centennial Center Park Meadow Improvements: Grant: \$100,000 Match: \$75,000

Centennial will create a natural, passive use area with trails, picnic shelter, demonstration garden and landscaping at the new Centennial Center Park.

Cherry Creek Vista Park and Recreation District – Cottonwood Trail Improvements: Grant: \$250,000 Match: \$151,000

This grant will allow the District to replace two existing, deteriorating pedestrian bridges along the Cottonwood Trail as well as close a gap in the trail system.

City of Englewood – Playground Renovation at Northwest Greenbelt: Grant \$156,600 Match: \$113,700

Englewood will use this grant to renovate an outdated playground in their northern community.

City of Sheridan – Irving Street Bridge at Bear Creek: Grant: \$144,700 Match: \$67,600

This grant will help Sheridan replace a deteriorating and heavily-used pedestrian/cyclist bridge with a safe and convenient connection to nearby trail systems.

City of Sheridan – Sheridan Schools Trail Connection System: Grant: \$208,000 Match: \$97,100

Sheridan will provide a paved, off-street pedestrian and bicycle path that is part of a larger trail plan to connect Sheridan area schools, nearby urban parks, existing trails, neighborhoods and businesses.

South Suburban Park and Recreation District – Willow Creek Trail Improvements: Grant: \$250,000 Match: \$139,000

South Suburban will improve a 1.5 mile section of the Willow Creek Trail and create a loop-trail within the Willow Creek Open Space.

Small Grants

City of Aurora – Wildlife Feeding Education Initiative: Grant: \$15,000 Match: \$10,500

Aurora will create outreach materials to increase public awareness about the impacts of humans feeding wildlife in the community.

City of Littleton – Environmental Education and Community Outreach - Grant: \$22,800 Match: \$7,500

This grant will support the creation of an environmental education program to increase public awareness regarding local plants, wildlife and habitats; and how people can be good stewards of the land.

Strasburg Metro Park and Recreation District – Five Acre Park Phase II: Grant: \$25,000 Match: \$10,000

The District will add landscaping, benches, bike racks and much needed paving in the dugouts and under the bleachers at Five Acre Park

Planning Grants

City of Aurora – Del Mar Park Site Planning: Grant: \$50,000 Match: \$63,300

Aurora will complete a master plan for the western portion of Del Mar Park, one of Aurora's oldest and largest urban parks.

Cherry Hills Village – High Line Tree Planting Plan: Grant: \$7,200 Match: \$2,700

Cherry Hills Village will prepare a strategic plan to identify areas along 3.2 miles of the High Line Canal that are in need of tree replacement.

Greenwood Village – Huntington-Caley Corridor Master Plan: Grant: \$50,000 Match: \$5,000

With this grant, Greenwood Village will complete a master plan with community input for 15 acres of open space and park land.

Parker Jordan Metro District – 27-Acre Open Space: Grant: \$50,000 Match: \$5,500

The District will develop a site plan to address restoration, environmental education and interpretation opportunities, and possible links to the Parker Jordan Centennial Open Space.

To learn more about Arapahoe County Open Space, visit www.co.arapahoe.co.us and download the 2012 Community Guide *Protect. Connect. Enjoy.* and/or sign up to receive the [Arapahoe County Open Space e-newsletter](#).

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<ftp://www.co.arapahoe.co.us/Pub/CM/Photos/OpenSpace/OSCeremony2012/>