



**Agenda Memorandum**

Agenda Item – 6.D.

City Council Meeting  
January 23, 2023

**Subject:** Information Only – 2017 Draft Standley Lake Regional Park Master Plan

**Prepared By:** Holly Walters, Open Space Superintendent

**Recommended City Council Action:**

This report is information only and requires no action from City Council.

**Summary Statement:**

- In 2014, Staff began the process of seeking qualified design professionals through the standard RFP process to prepare a new master plan and brand identity for Standley Lake Regional Park and Wildlife Refuge.
- The draft master plan was completed in June 2017. The draft master plan was scheduled to be presented to City Council in October 2017 but never presented to City Council nor finalized due to many reasons outlined in the background section of this Staff Report.
- As the draft plan is outdated, Staff is currently reviewing opportunities to update the 2017 draft plan while bringing it into alignment with current allowable uses and plan on bringing that information to City Council when available.

**Fiscal Impact:**

\$0 in expenditures

**Source of Funds:**

Not applicable

**Background Information:**

At the request of City Council, the 2017 Draft Standley Lake Master Plan is being provided for reference.

In 2014, Staff began the process seeking qualified design professionals through the standard request for proposals (RFP) process to prepare a new master plan and brand identity for Standley Lake Regional Park and Wildlife Refuge. The intention was to create a plan that would serve as a guide for future improvements and expand recreational programming at the park. The plan was intended to strike a balance between preserving its inherent natural beauty and ecological importance with its use as a unique and centralized Front Range regional recreation destination and drinking water supply for three municipalities. Given the lake's critical importance as Westminster's sole source of drinking water and a primary water supply for Thornton, Northglenn, and FRICO, protecting water quality was the highest priority throughout the master planning process.

The planning process was divided into three phases. A Standley Lake Regional Park Master Plan Advisory Committee was created to provide project oversight and plan review throughout the planning process. In addition to regular meetings with the Master Plan Advisory Committee, a series of stakeholder workshops and open houses were conducted at each phase of the master plan development to maximize community engagement.

A public outreach campaign was conducted by the consultant, Matrix Design Group, using a series of online surveys to understand the interests and desires of core users of Standley Lake Regional Park, local residents (both users and non-users of the park), and residents from the broader Front Range region. Current usage characteristics, community values with respect to open space, priorities for trails and other facilities, satisfaction with current facilities, importance of various facilities and services, communication, and decision-making factors were probed through the various survey efforts. Additionally, current recreation trends and demographics were evaluated for applicability within the park.

A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis was conducted with the advisory team, stakeholders, and community to assess the full spectrum of issues in and around the park.

The final draft was the result of exhaustive studies and collaborations between park staff, environmental scientists, key stakeholders, and the community to determine the most effective guidelines and strategies for managing these sensitive resources while at the same time providing the recreational improvements the public desires. The draft master plan was completed in June 2017.

Key features of the 2017 Draft Standley Lake Regional Park Master Plan recommendations included a loop trail around the perimeter of the lake with connections to the Greenway regional trail network; a new, expanded Nature Center; a new day-use area on the southeast side of the lake; a variety of day-use pavilions and park shelters including new restrooms; expanded camping opportunities; additional wildlife viewing areas; shoreline access improvements; and an increased focus on conservation and revegetation. Trailered power boating storage and launch facilities were also included in the draft master plan as it was permitted on the lake at the time the master plan was being developed.

The draft master plan was scheduled to be presented to City Council in October of 2017. At that time, the Public Works and Utilities Department asked for the presentation to be postponed due to legal concerns. The draft master plan did not reflect or acknowledge the future high-water line in language nor was the future high-water line indicated on any of the illustrations or maps. There were further concerns that there was little reference made to the future enlargement of the lake.

In 2018, Standley Lake was under consideration as a potential location for the proposed drinking water treatment facility. In addition, the intergovernmental agreement (IGA) that was in place at that time was due to expire the following year in 2019. These factors led to delaying the draft master plan presentation until the final location of the drinking water treatment facility had been determined, and the IGA was renewed to ensure that the plan was in alignment with both efforts. However, Matrix Design Group was brought back to address the concerns about the inclusion of the future high-water line in the draft master plan illustrations and maps as well as the language to emphasize the importance of Standley Lake as a primary source of drinking water for Westminster as well as Thornton and Northglenn. These changes are reflected in the current draft version of the master plan.

In 2019, the City of Westminster, with the requested assistance of Colorado Parks & Wildlife (CPW), discovered that some of the permit holders were circumventing the watercraft inspection & decontamination (WID) process and had launched without the required inspection, decontamination, and thirty-day quarantine. The City had not utilized CPW's system previously as it did not track out-of-state boaters at that time and did not work with the City's protocols. CPW was only involved when Staff requested that they run a comparison of Standley Lake permit holders' numbers to out-of-state data that CPW had accessed.

Upon the discovery of the WID circumvention, trailered motorized boating access was suspended at that time. The Standley Lake Boating Task Force (SLBTF) was formed with the goal of finding solutions to allow trailered motorized boating without compromising water quality. The task force was comprised of volunteer members from the boating, paddling and fishing community as well as industry professionals. There were no City employees on the task force, however City employees were involved with supporting the tagging sub-committee to assist in finding potential solutions. After months of exploration, the SLBTF did not identify a solution that would support allowing trailered powerboats back on Standley Lake without compromising the water quality. As a result, the IGA was extended until 2020 to allow for more time to collaborate and discuss with all stakeholders involved with renewing the IGA.

In 2020, Northglenn, Thornton, and Westminster agreed upon and executed a renewed Standley Lake Park Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with expiration occurring in 2030. This revision updated the allowable boating recreation at Standley Lake to include only hand-launched watercraft, paddle craft, and electric motors with less than 75 pounds of thrust. These terms from the 2020 IGA have now superseded the 2017 Draft Standley Lake Master Plan.

Additionally, the draft master plan referenced a potential "loop trail" that is no longer possible due to the relocation of the eagles' nest within the protected wildlife area at the park. The relocation of the nest and the federally required buffer zone around the nest disallow the building of a trail in that area. Staff agreed that this element of the draft master plan, along with the other elements that are no longer in alignment with current policies or agreements, will have to be removed and the plan updated as the current IGA dictates that "Westminster agrees to provide any proposed master plan updates, which may outline additional proposed facilities at a conceptual level. All updates to the master plan shall be reviewed and approved by the City Managers of the Cities."

In 2021 and 2022, the draft master plan updates were postponed due to turnover of key staff, the selection of a new director for Parks Recreation and Libraries Department, and the impacts from COVID.

Since the development of the draft master plan, Staff has continued to implement the elements of the plan that were feasible and in alignment with existing plans and agreements. Some of these improvements include additional perimeter fencing for security, improved park signage, additional shade shelters, expanded paddle craft rental opportunities, and campground improvements.

Staff is currently reviewing opportunities to update the 2017 draft plan while bringing it into alignment with current allowable uses and plan on bringing that information to City Council when available.

Providing this draft plan supports the guiding principle of transparency and supports the Strategic Plan goal of Quality of Life ensuring access to parks, open space and trails.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Mark A Freitag*

Mark A. Freitag  
City Manager

**Attachments:**

Attachment A: The Standley Lake Regional Park DRAFT Master Plan (dated June 9, 2017)