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## PARKS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

### Fox Run Nature Center Site Development Plan Letter of Intent

#### Property Data

Schedule Number: 6100000297  
Legal Description: NW4 & SW4, EX NE4SW4 OF SEC 28-11-66 E2SE4, S2SE4NE4, THAT PART OF N2SE4NE4 OF SEC 29 LY SELY OF A STRAIGHT LN CONNECTING SW4 AND NE COR OF SD N2 SEC 29-11-66  
Parcel Size: 389.5 Acres  
Zoning: RR-5  
Land Use: Exempt Nonresidential Land- El Paso County Regional Park (Existing & Proposed)  
Address: 2108 Stella Drive, Colorado Springs, CO 80921  
Building Area: 8,245 Sq.Ft.

#### Project Statement

This is a request by El Paso County Parks and Community Services seeking approval of a Site Development Plan for the Fox Run Nature Center. The two-acre site is located along an existing gravel road within Fox Run Regional Park. The project site is currently vacant of structures and features recreational trails, rolling terrain, and a ponderosa pine forest. The site location was identified through various plans and studies, including the 2013 El Paso County Parks Master Plan, 2019 Feasibility Study, 2022 Parks Master Plan Update, and respective public processes.

El Paso County Nature Centers' mission is to provide various outdoor recreation opportunities for all county residents & visitors. El Paso County values collaboration and is dedicated to making a positive difference in the community by serving the residents of El Paso County. County Nature Centers are a cornerstone in the park system and have successfully developed life-long nature conservationists, advocates, and stewards of the great outdoors. The Fox Run Nature Center will continue the legacy of the county's award-winning centers, adding more programming for residents and visitors in northern El Paso County.

The nature center design features two buildings, an observation tower, and a canopy walk. The design encourages views into the forest and the preservation of mature trees. Design elements include splitting the building into two smaller structures, the use of planters and tree wells, and disbursement of the parking stalls to avoid mature trees.

The tower is designed to allow visitors to peer into and just above the tree canopy. The tower will provide opportunities for all visitors to view the black forest canopy and learn about the interpretive aspects of the ponderosa pine forest, black forest, and the palmer divide.

The tower will not provide views into neighboring properties and will not be visible from all areas of the park. Because the focus of the nature center is the forest, the removal of trees will be limited to only what's necessary. The tower and canopy walk will be surrounded by trees and will not be visible from all areas of the park.

The nature center will be made from fire-resistant materials and be an example for a building in the wildland-urban interface. The nature center will incorporate new technologies and construction methods into the design. This will reduce operating costs, increase energy efficiencies, and showcase newer building technologies. The nature center will be 100% electric, utilize heat pumps, and include radiant floor heating. Electrical services will be provided by Mountain View Electric Association and water will be provided by Donala Water and Sanitation District.

The site will be accessed using existing internal park roads from Roller Coaster Road and Stella Drive. A traffic study was completed in May 2023 which showed an acceptable level of service will be maintained without the need for any roadway improvements. The parking lot is being designed to avoid mature stands of trees and reduce stormwater runoff. This is being achieved by featuring a loop road with dispersed parking bays instead of the use of a traditional parking lot. There will be no more than 50 parking spots.

The overall project area is two acres and includes the nature center and parking lot. To offset this impact from construction activities, the County is committed to decommissioning approximately two acres including the fallen timber road, 34 existing parking spots, a restroom facility and restoring the forest canopy. The old road and parking areas will be graded, planted, and converted into a trail to ensure the trail network remains intact.

El Paso County Parks and Community Services appreciates this opportunity to expand our services to northern El Paso County. Should any additional information be needed, please contact me at your earliest convenience.

Respectfully,

Todd Marts  
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