

MEMORANDUM

COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
Region Two – North Program
1480 Quail Lake Loop (2170) (Central Front Range)
Colorado Springs, Colorado 80906
(719) 634-2323 / Fax (719) 227-3298



DATE: January 6, 2012

Subject: US 24 West Environmental Assessment
Request of Section 4F Concurrence for Impacts
(Two Parks and One Trail)

Mr. Kurt Schroeder, Manager
Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services Department
1401 Recreation Way
Colorado Springs, Colorado 80905

Dear Mr. Schroeder,

This letter is a request for concurrence on the potential impacts and recommended mitigation measures for two city owned and operated parks and one city trail due to transportation improvements identified by the US 24 West Preferred Alternative in the US 24 Environmental Assessment. Below is a brief description of each park and trail resource and the potential impacts and mitigation recommendations which are addressed in detail in the US 24 West Environmental Assessment and Section 4(f) Evaluation report prepared by the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) under the guidance of the Federal Highway Administration.

We have developed the US 24 Preferred Alternative over the past few years utilizing Context Sensitive Solutions where the project team engaged with all stakeholders to develop a transportation facility which addresses safety and mobility while fitting into the total setting. We have thoroughly enjoyed working with Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation, & Cultural Services Department. This includes Chris Lieber, Sarah Bryarly, the TOPS committee and its committee members. The Preferred Alternative reflects input from all of these stakeholders.

Impacts and Mitigation Recommendations

The 21st Street Pocket Park

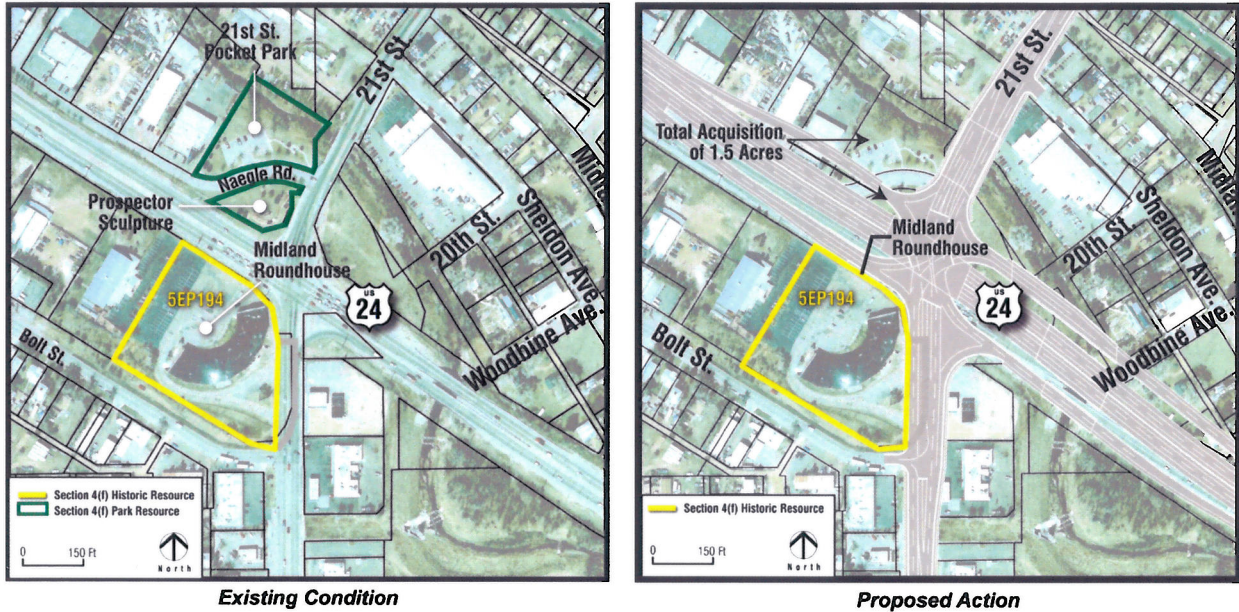
This small 1.5-acre park is located at the NW quadrant of the intersection of US 24 and 21st Street. As shown in **Exhibit 1**, the park is bisected by Naegle Road. On the south, a landscaped mound holds the Prospector Sculpture, which is a landmark for the community. To the north, the majority of the park is a paved parking lot with a small area for a picnic table and a walking path. As illustrated in **Exhibit 1**, the project requires a new interchange at 21st Street which would result in the total acquisition of the park. At this location, the interchange and highway widening would occur to the north to avoid impacts to the Midland Terminal Railroad Roundhouse, which is a historically significant property that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This new interchange would use a large portion of the 1.5-acre park. The remaining parcel of park land would no longer be accessible due to its proximity to the grade-separated interchange.

Mitigation strategies were developed in consultation with the City of Colorado Springs Parks Recreation &

Cultural Services Department staff and include CDOT relocating the Prospector Sculpture to an alternative location along US 24 within Old Colorado City, as part of the mitigation for the build alternative. Several possible locations exist but one idea popular with stakeholders is to locate the sculpture within Vermijo Park at the intersection of US 24 and 26th Street because 26th Street is considered the gateway into the Old Colorado City Historic District. CDOT will provide notice to the City of Colorado Springs prior to acquisition of the 21st Street pocket park. At that time, CDOT will coordinate with the City of Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services Department to identify a location where the sculpture could be relocated.

Exhibit 1

Impacts to the 21st Street Pocket Park

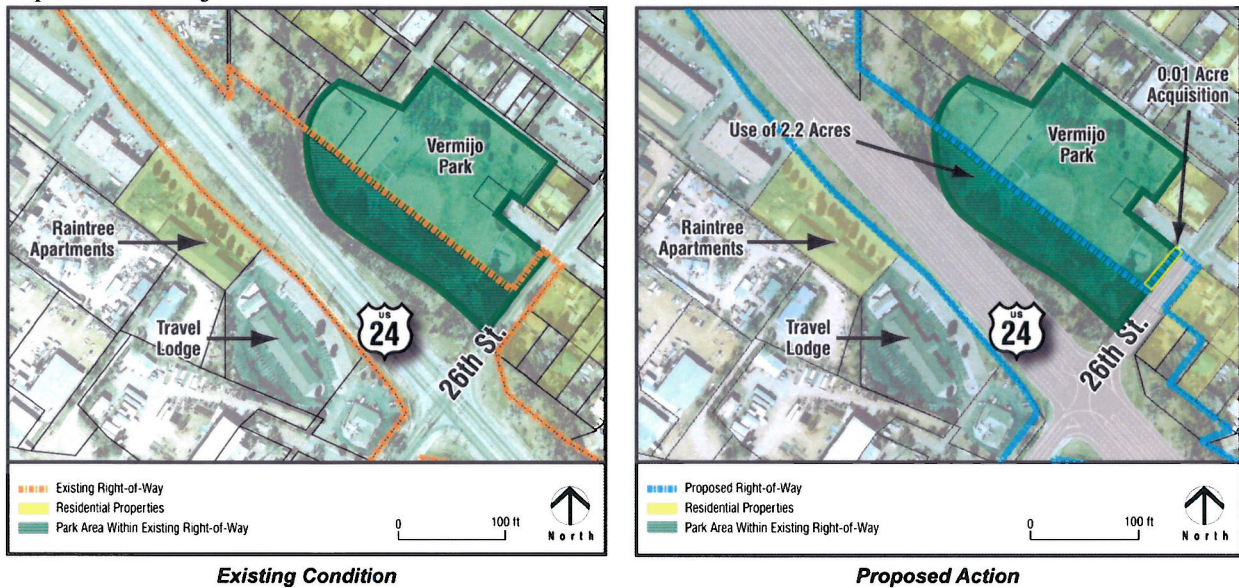


Vermijo Park

Vermijo Park is a 4.6-acre park located in the northwest corner of US 24 and 26th Street. The recreational amenities include a baseball field, basketball court, playground, and walking paths. The City does not program events at the park. As shown in **Exhibit 2**, the part of the park that will be temporarily impacted is within the existing CDOT right-of-way. The project involves a bridge replacement at 26th Street, which requires channel modifications to be made to Fountain Creek. These improvements would impact 2.2 acres of the park, including part of the baseball field. Impacts to the 2.2 acres would be temporary but the baseball field would be removed. Due to the limited area of the park, a new baseball field cannot be relocated within the park. As illustrated in **Exhibit 2**, less than 0.1 acres of the park would need to be permanently acquired to accommodate a new bridge on 26th Street and the accompanying sidewalk along the eastern edge of the park.

Mitigation for impacts to Vermijo Park was developed during coordination with the City of Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services Department and includes CDOT contributing up to \$50,000 to the City of Colorado Springs for a park master planning effort. Following use of the 2.2 acres, the area will be regarded and re-seeded. All trees along Fountain Creek greater than 2 inches in diameter at breast height (DBH) that will be removed during the channel re-grading process will be replaced at a 1 to 1 basis. Non-native trees will be replaced with native trees.

Exhibit 2
Impacts to Vermijo Park



Midland Trail

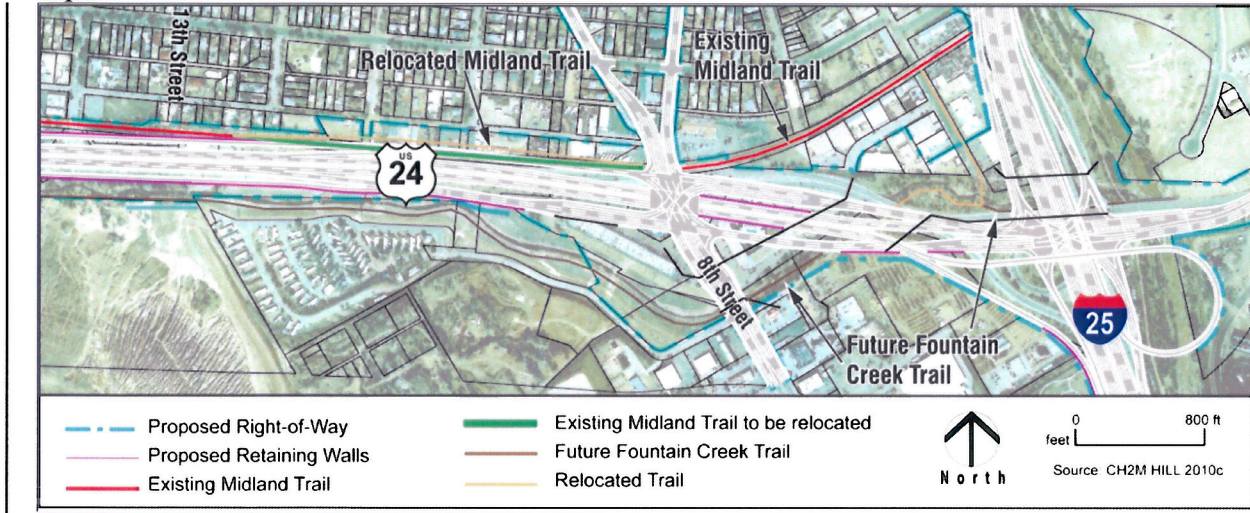
The Midland Trail is a 2.8-mile concrete trail that extends from America the Beautiful Park located on the east side of I-25 and ends at Ridge Road with a short segment missing between 21st Street and 25th Street. The trail is classified by the City of Colorado Springs as a Tier 1 trail. Tier 1 trails are paved, multi-purpose trails that can accommodate a variety of trail users including walkers, joggers, recreational bicyclists, commuting bicyclists, and horseback riders within the same trail corridor.

As shown in **Exhibit 3**, the construction of the 8th Street interchange would require realignment of the Midland Trail between 8th Street and 11th Street, a distance of approximately 0.3 mile. As part of the project, CDOT would construct the missing connection of the Midland Trail between 21st Street and 25th Street on the right-of-way acquired for the project improvements. This would create a continuous off-street trail from I-25 to Ridge Road and would improve connectivity with all of the trails throughout the US 24 Corridor.

At the cross streets of 21st Street, 26th Street, 31st Street, and Ridge Road, the bridges crossing the Midland Trail would be replaced, causing a temporary construction impacts to the trail in the vicinity of each bridge. No long-term impacts at these four trails locations are expected and the continuity of the trail during construction would be maintained through the use of temporary detours. These four temporary impact areas total approximately 0.2 mile of the trail.

Mitigation measures for impacts to the Midland Trail include realignment of the trail between 8th Street and 11th Street. For safety reasons, the 10-foot-wide trail must be offset from the highway by 12 feet to allow adequate separation (highway clear zone) between higher speed vehicles and pedestrians and bicyclists using the trail. The affected portion of the trail will be reconstructed and no permanent change in the function or continuity of the trail will occur. For the four bridge replacements over the Fountain Creek, the trail would be temporarily relocated at each bridge during construction and a new permanent trail would be constructed as part of each bridge improvement. Once construction is completed, users would be able to cross under each bridge at these locations on newly constructed trail.

Exhibit 3
Impacts to the Midland Trail



The mitigation described above was developed in coordination with the City of Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation & Cultural Service staff. CDOT will continue to work with the City staff through the design and construction process for the relocation of the Midland Trail.

Your concurrence reflects that the City of Colorado Springs agrees that the above mentioned impacts to the two parks and one trail, and described mitigation strategies are acceptable.

Thanks very much to you Kurt and your Parks and Recreation Department's efforts to make this a better project.

Sincerely,

David Watt, Resident Engineer

The City of Colorado Springs Parks Department concurs with the above request on this date February 3, 2012.

Kurt Schroeder, Manager
 Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services Department

CC: Lisa Streisfeld, CDOT
 Mary Jo Vobejda, CH2MHILL