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ASSOCIATION *for*
OLMSTED
PARKS

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February 10, 2014

Ms. Lauri Dannemiller
Manager, Denver Parks and Recreation
201 West Colfax Ave, Dept. 601
Denver, CO 80202

Dear Ms. Dannemiller,

On behalf of the National Association for Olmsted Parks (NAOP), I am writing to ask Denver Parks and Recreation to reconsider its plans for the City Loop development in City Park.

The issue as noted in your own 2001 plan, *Revitalizing the Legacy of City Park*, is that "City Park is on the brink of losing its character to the assault of urban progress."

One hundred years ago, the renowned Olmsted Brothers landscape architectural firm developed site plans and landscape designs to enhance Henry Meryweather's layout of the park. The mix of wooded areas, meadows and sinuous pathways was designed to give city dwellers ease and relaxation.

The 2001 plan noted that some of these pathways had disappeared and some features of the park were no longer well-integrated or maintained. Restoration of City Park was recommended to "strengthen the sense of the park as a refuge from outside uses." Replacing the Dustin Redd playground with a 13-acre development hosting a myriad of planned attractions such as skate parks, an ice rink, a track and a performance space will seriously damage the bucolic nature of the park.

Although 13 acres may seem like a small percentage of the park, most of the land in City Park is occupied by institutions or active recreation. It is also highly likely that such a development would require increased space for parking cars. Further removal or reorganization of remaining land for additional development is counter to the character of the park and defeats the restoration goal of siting "new park elements integrally with historic features."

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Vibrant cities are full of cultural, educational and recreational amenities. As their populations grow, the proportion of park space to population shrinks. The need for refuge from the fast pace of city life is as great now as it was when the Olmsted Brothers made their contribution to the design of City Park. Other great city parks with the Olmsted imprint have been seeking ways to reduce development and auto impacts – Prospect Park removed its skating rink, Rock Creek Park’s Beach Drive has a weekly car-free day, and the City of Olympia, Washington, purchased acreage to preserve the view of the State Capitol, a vista designed by the Olmsted firm.

The National Association for Olmsted Parks urges the City of Denver to come up with progressive approaches that are more sensitive to City Park’s nationally significant historic legacy. If the Dustin Redd playground needs to be replaced, the playground in Olmsted Linear Park in Atlanta, Georgia, could be a good model. The first playground in Olmsted Linear Park had been “stuck in” without regard to its environment. The new playground manages to serve the needs of children as well as being appropriately integrated with the overall design of the park.

Established in 1980, the National Association for Olmsted Parks advances Olmsted principles and the legacy of irreplaceable parks and landscapes that revitalize communities and enrich people's lives. It is the only national organization solely dedicated to preserving the Olmsted legacy by providing the advocacy, research and outreach needed to protect, restore and maintain these exemplary parks and landscapes, particularly in urban areas.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Kristen Palumbo Handy
Acting Executive Director

cc: The Honorable Michael B. Hancock
Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, City and County of Denver