OVEREND MOUNTAIN PARK
MANAGEMENT PLAN

UPDATED to reflect Name Change March 2, 2010
REVISED by the PARKS and FORESTRY ADVISORY BOARD on JULY 17, 2003
ADOPTED by the DURANGO CITY COUNCIL on JANUARY 2, 1996
As recommended by the
DURANGO PLANNING COMMISSION on DECEMBER 18, 1995

Updated Management Plan Adopted by Natural Lands Preservation
Advisory Board
April 8, 2019
This updated 2019 Overend Mountain Park Management Plan replaces the 2010 Overend Mountain Park Management Plan in full.

I. INTRODUCTION

A group of recreation-minded citizens first proposed the creation of the Mountain Park in 1992 as a means of preserving the recreational open space opportunities that existed on the private lands immediately west of the Crestview neighborhood. In 1993 Trails 2000 formalized this dream by negotiating a reduced sale price on 151 acres and then began a public fund-raising program to provide the seed money for the project. In December of 1994 the City of Durango (through the joint cooperative funding effort of the City of Durango, Trails 2000 and La Plata Open Space Conservancy who obtained a matching grant from Great Outdoors Colorado [GOCO]) acquired title to approximately 151 acres of land bordering the west side of the City. In January 1995 an additional adjoining 67 acres was acquired with City funds.

In December of 1995, an additional 51.7 acres (Overend property) was acquired at a reduced price (by another joint cooperative funding effort of Trails 2000, City of Durango and La Plata Open Space Conservancy obtaining another GOCO grant). In 1999, the Peregrine Creek Addition dedicated 28.1 acres to the City and in 2007 an additional 3.8 acres from Ella Vita Canyon was dedicated. In 2014, the City acquired an additional 50.51 acres in the adjacent Hidden Valley parcels. The combination of land acquisitions and dedications resulted in the total acreage of the Overend Mountain Park at 352.11 acres.

The intent of these acquisitions was to preserve through public ownership as a natural mountain park the recreational, open space, scenic viewsheds and wildlife habitat uses of the property. A specific provision of the GOCO grant, reflected as a provision in the conservation easement on the property granted by the City to the La Plata Open Space Conservancy, required the development of a management plan to assure that the property be managed in accordance with the intent of its acquisition. The area encompassed in the Park is indicated on the attached map.
Subsequent to the initial park acquisitions, an ad hoc “stakeholder’s advisory committee” was formed to develop recommendations to be incorporated in the initial management plan for the property. Representatives of various agencies and organizations including City staff, Bureau of Land Management, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, US Forest Service, State Forest Service, La Plata County, La Plata Open Space Conservancy, Trails 2000, San Juan Audubon Society, as well as private citizens and residents of the Crestview neighborhood formed the nucleus of this advisory committee. A formal survey was developed to solicit opinions from the committee as to the future of the area. The initial management plan was developed based upon the input of the advisory committee and the results of the survey and has been updated in 2019 in coordination with the City’s Natural Lands Preservation Advisory Board.

II. DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

Overend Mountain Park is a 352.11-acre property located along the western boundary of Durango City limits. Perins Peak Wildlife Management Area belonging to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lies to the west of the park, and La Plata County-owned land (closed county landfill) lies to the south. Privately owned lands border the Park to the northeast, east, and southeast with the high-density neighborhood of Crestview along the central eastern boundary. Parcels of City-owned open space, dedicated as part of the Park and Highland Park Additions to the City of Durango, are included in the boundary of Overend Mountain Park.

Although the property has been in private ownership, it has historically been used by Durango residents and visitors for passive recreational activities such as hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, sledding, and bird watching. A variety of natural surface trails evolved over time which were evaluated and re-constructed for more sustainable alignments beginning around 2008. The recreational utilization of this area has been crucial in the development of Durango as a home and training area for many of its world-class athletes.

Durango’s iconic Hogsback Ridge is partially located within Overend Mountain Park. When viewed from neighborhoods and Fort Lewis College on Durango’s eastern reaches, Overend is not only the backdrop to downtown Durango but also the foreground to Perins Peak and the La Plata Mountains.

Elevations in the Park range from 6,500 feet on its flatter benches to nearly 7,500 feet on its ridge tops. The majority of the Park has Cretaceous Mancos Shale geology and is heavily wooded with piñon, juniper, ponderosa pine, gambel oak, mountain mahogany, chokecherry, and serviceberry. North-facing slopes host fir and spruce forests. There are small open meadows on the flatter benches that are vegetated with native grasses and wildflowers.
The area provides forage and covers for wildlife and is designated as severe
deer and elk winter range by Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), supporting
deer, elk and other big game, as well as small mammals and birds. The
adjacent BLM land contains nesting areas for Peregrine falcons, managed
cooporatively by CPW. The Park is considered to have significant biodiversity of
conservation value under evaluation systems used by CPW, La Plata Open
Space Conservancy, and the Colorado Natural Heritage Program.

A baseline assessment of the property has been prepared and is available for
review at the City of Durango Parks and Recreation Department.

III. MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

It is the intent of the City of Durango to manage the Overend Mountain Park in
order to:

• preserve and protect the area in an undeveloped and natural state as a
  recreational open space area while providing continued non-motorized
  recreational opportunities and enjoyment of the outdoors.

• provide opportunities for local outdoor education;

• maintain or restore the vegetation composition and structure to a healthy
  biological condition more resembling the historical natural conditions;

• maintain its viability as wildlife habitat; and

• minimize impacts to or a conflict with the adjacent lands both publicly and
  privately-owned.

IV. SPECIFIC MANAGEMENT POLICIES

1. The City annexed all areas of the Park, which were formerly outside the
   City limits. Zoning of the property reflects its public ownership and/or
   designation as open space/park area.

2. Management authority for the Overend Mountain Park shall be the City of
   Durango, by and through the Parks and Recreation and Police
   Departments. The City shall consult the Natural Lands Preservation
   Advisory Board when considering significant improvements to the Park.
   Any proposed changes to the Management Plan shall be circulated to the
   Natural Lands Preservation Advisory Board for its review and adoption.
3. The park shall be maintained in its natural state with public recreational use limited to non-motorized, passive recreation on the designated natural surface trail system.

4. All uses/activities within the Park are subject to the City Code, and the City will be responsible for enforcement of all regulations. The following uses/activities are specifically prohibited within the Overend Mountain Park:

   - overnight camping
   - fires of any kind and smoking
   - hunting or discharge of firearms/weapons
   - dogs not on a leash
   - injury to or molestation of birds, game or wildlife
   - motorized vehicles (except for employees or agents of the City, engaged in the conduct of official business)
   - destruction of natural vegetation (except for purposes of wildfire hazard mitigation or forest and/or trail management, pursuant to recommendations of the State Forest Service and City Arborist, and the Natural Lands Preservation Advisory Board).

5. Substantial development of facilities within the Park is not anticipated. Improvements on the property are envisioned to be limited to:

   A. **Trails**: The existing trail system shall be evaluated on a routine basis to determine functionality, appropriateness and sustainability. The maintenance, closing and/or rerouting of existing trails, and the development of new trails, shall be based upon this evaluation and the participation and input of the Natural Lands Preservation Advisory Board. Trail proposals affecting property under conservation easement will also be forwarded to La Plata Open Space Conservancy for consideration. Connection of the Park trail system and the Colorado Trail is considered a priority.

   B. **Signage** on the Property may include:
      - Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) recognition
      - identification of park rules/regulations at established public access points
      - trail markings and, as appropriate, length and degree of difficulty
      - interpretive signs to educate users on flora/fauna, etc.
      - identification of perimeter boundaries
      - identification of uses or restrictions (closures) affecting adjacent BLM/CPW lands
      - recognition of Trails 2000, La Plata Open Space Conservancy, or other partnering entities
C. **Trailhead Improvements:** The City will seek to secure multiple points of public access to the Park. However, developed trailheads (with parking and restroom facilities) will not be established in a way that would negatively impact existing residential neighborhoods or conflict with the terms of the conservation easement. Potential locations for developed trailhead facilities that have been identified include the former Van Dal landfill area (now in County ownership) and City property on Avenida del Sol. Establishment of developed trailhead facilities shall occur only following review in a public forum such as before the Natural Lands Preservation Advisory Board.

D. **Wildlife Observation Area(s)** may be designed and located with the assistance of CPW and BLM.

6. The City, at its discretion, may elect from time to time to temporarily close selected areas of the property when it deems it necessary to prevent personal injury and/or damage to the property or for the protection and/or rejuvenation of specific resources, including wildlife and vegetation.

**V. AMENDMENT/UPDATE**

This Management Plan shall be amended from time to time as necessary, due to significant changes in use patterns and/or changes in land use policies on adjacent public lands, provided the Management Plan continues to protect the intent of the original acquisition and the conservation easement. Parks and Recreation Department staff will review the Management Plan annually in conjunction with the La Plata Open Space Conservancy monitoring requirements for the Conservation Easement. The City will consult with the Natural Lands Preservation Advisory Board in the amendment and/or update process.

It is anticipated that additional lands will be added to the Overend Mountain Park. As these properties are acquired and formally designated as part of the Park, they shall be automatically subject to this Management Plan.

**VI. NEAR-TERM STEWARDSHIP GOALS**

**Trails:** The existing trail system will continue to be evaluated for its functionality, appropriateness and sustainability. High priority trail projects include the stabilization of Ned’s Hill trail, the replacement of the Ella Vita Trail bridge, and the restoration of the meadow area within Grabens Loop. Wayfinding signage at trail intersections will be updated, replaced or added if necessary. Socially created trails will be closed. Cooperation and consultation with adjacent land management agencies as well as recreational user groups will occur in order to manage an approved trail system that is consistent with the terms of the
conservation easement and the Management Plan, as well as seasonal closures or cultural resource protection regulations.

**Management Cooperation:** The City will continue cooperative management discussions with the Bureau of Land Management and Colorado Parks and Wildlife relative to the potential integration of the management and closure policies for Overend Mountain Park with the existing Perins Peak Wildlife Management Area Management Policies.

### VII. ONGOING STEWARDSHIP GOALS

**Annual Maintenance:** Annual and ongoing maintenance will be based on routine inspection and need. Typical ongoing maintenance shall include weed mitigation, fire mitigation, trash removal, erosion control, vandalism repair, trail system repair and improvements (including bridges), and routine maintenance and improvements required to address normal wear and tear of amenities.

**Habitat Protection and Enhancements:** Based on the finding of the baseline assessment and other research efforts undertaken from time to time, habitat protection and enhancement efforts consistent with this Management Plan may be undertaken to improve the ecological and biological diversity and health of the property.

**Law Enforcement:** The City of Durango Police Department serves as the entity responsible for providing law enforcement on the property.

**Camping Mitigation:** City staff will continue to monitor the property for illegal camping activities, and when necessary mitigate camping, trash, and camping-related impacts.

**Biological or Cultural Resources Site Assessment:** If necessary, a biological or cultural site assessment shall be undertaken to determine the specific location, type, and quantities of unique plant and animal habitat/species, and unique natural or cultural resources to be preserved, in advance of fire mitigation, trail system modification, or other stewardship activities consistent with this Management Plan.

**Wildfire Fuels Reduction:** The property will be evaluated by City staff and when necessary, appropriate fire authorities, and a wildfire fuels reduction plan will be implemented to reduce hazardous fuels.

**Noxious Weed Abatement:** The property has been added to the existing weed mitigation program currently administered by the City of Durango Parks and Recreation Department. Weed abatement efforts will occur annually, as needed.
**Erosion Control:** The property will be evaluated by City staff as needed, and an erosion control plan will be implemented to reduce runoff when and where necessary.

**Volunteer Engagement:** City staff will continue to engage community volunteers and partner with volunteer-focused organizations in the ongoing stewardship of the property.

* * * *