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Community Update for the Former High School Site (7th Street)

BACKGROUND

The southern part of Cortez is underserved from a Park's infrastructure perspective. To address the needed park space, the City acquired the former High School on 7th Street and reserved a portion for a future housing project and the remaining as a neighborhood park. In 2018, a master planning effort occurred to determine the amenities and design for the park. Construction design occurred in 2019 and 2020. Design plans were phased. However, when final design cost estimates were produced, the construction cost of the park was unrealistic to complete. The project stalled.

This updates the community on the City's direction regarding the former High School site. In summary, the following is planned:

1. The preliminary direction is to plan and assess the feasibility of implementing the housing portion of the site.
2. In the next year, the City will begin to improve existing resources on the site's western edge for use as an interim neighborhood park.
3. In the future, the City will need to re-evaluate the park orientation, master plan, amenities, and design to suit the neighborhood best.

HOUSING MASTER PLANNING AND FEASIBILITY

In October 2023, the City of Cortez received a Technical Assistance Grant from the Colorado Housing Finance Authority to develop a housing master plan and determine the feasibility of implementing the housing project on a portion of the site. We expect this project to be completed between November 2023 and June 2024.

CHFA Technical Assistance Grant Scope Excerpt

"The Technical Assistance Team shall work directly with the project sponsor(s) to translate stakeholder voice into a community beneficial action plan (*as clarified in the S.H.I.P. guidelines*) and a feasible concept plan. Project analysis and activities will generally consist of initial concept design or master planning, financial viability or modeling, and a recommended action plan to advance the project.

Concept design may include an initial site plan and exterior renderings to show the overall concept design of the project. A maximum of three alternative initial design options will be provided in the early stages of this phase of work relating to site exploration and potential density. Financial analysis may include recommendations for funding opportunities, initial project financial modeling, and/ or matchmaking with partners and funders. A final action plan (*or report*) will be submitted to the project sponsor, recommending a course of action aligning with initial program objectives."

Neighborhood engagement opportunities will occur to help set the future housing project plan. A steering committee will guide the project. Contact Rachael Marchbanks with questions on this project.

INTERIM PARK IMPROVEMENTS

During the winter of 2022, the irrigation system failed and was not repaired until Summer 2023. The site did not look good during most of the summer. Repairs to the irrigation system were made to keep it functional. At the end of the summer, prep work was completed for further improvements in 2024; weeds were treated, and the field was aerated and dethatched.

In 2024, staff plans to implement improvements to maintain the site as an asset for the neighborhood. We will overseed grass, improve the irrigation controller, keep weeds at bay, and site amenities like picnic tables, benches, signage, and more trash cans.

FUTURE PARK IMPROVEMENTS

Future park improvements, as identified in the site-based master plan completed in 2018, are on hold indefinitely. The 2018 plan far exceeds the City's financial resources. The site-based master plan must be re-evaluated to serve the neighborhood at the appropriate scope and scale and fit the City's financial resources.