



Open Space Restoration

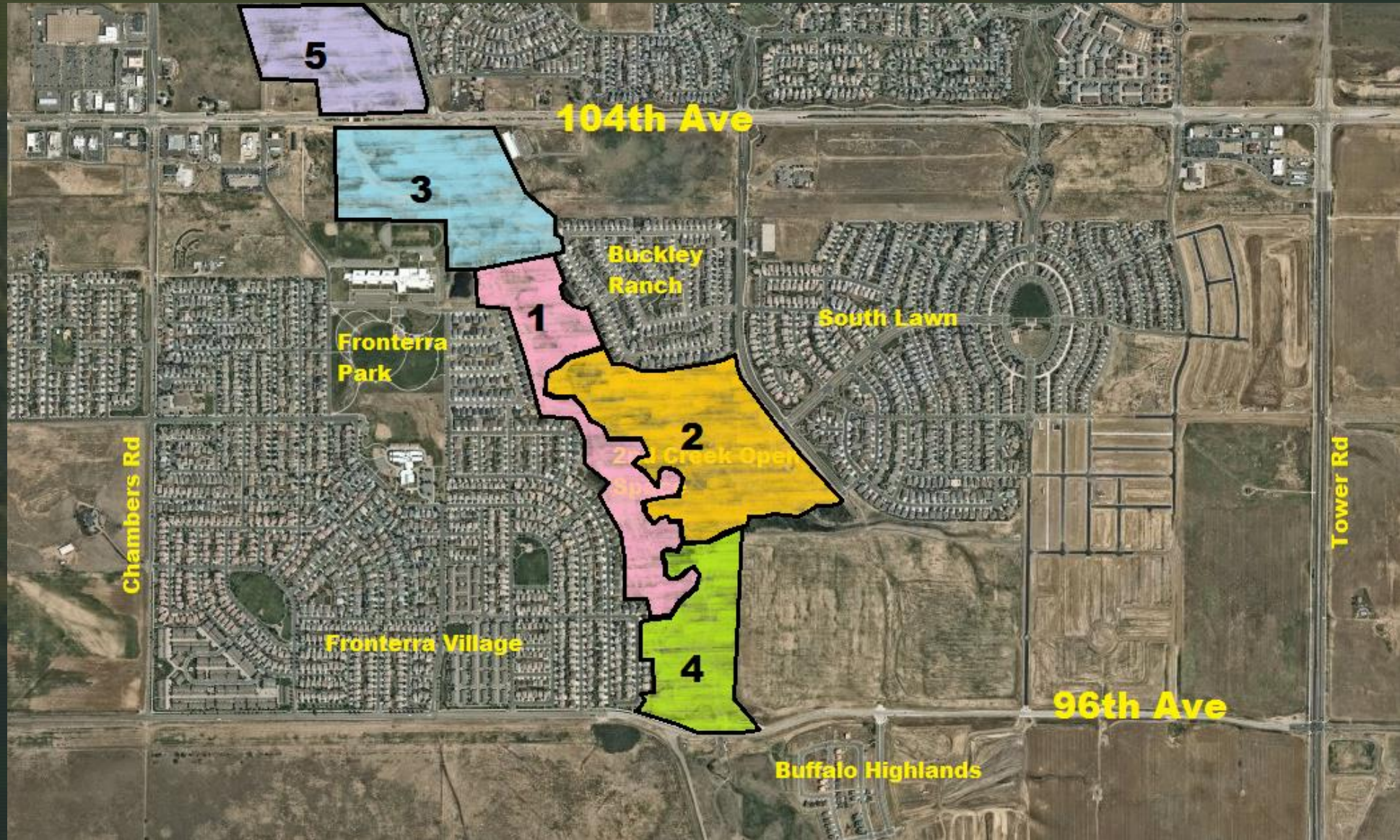
Commerce City Parks, Recreation & Golf
April 8, 2019



Open Space Restoration Objectives

- Weed Mitigation
- Erosion Controls
- Revegetation with Native Species
- Wildlife Management
- Seamless Continuity of Greenspace from RMANWR to 2nd Creek Open Space.

2nd Creek Open Space Preliminary Phasing Plan (187 Acres)



Current Conditions Priority Area #1

June 2018



Current Conditions Priority Area #5 June 2018



Restoration Process

- Integrated Pest Management
 - Weed Control
 - Wildlife Management
- Native Vegetation Restoration
- Monitoring and Observation

Coordination and
Communication with USFWS
and RMANWR Throughout
Process



Remnant Shortgrass Prairie – Pawnee National Grasslands

Weed Control

- Biological (insects)
- Physical/Mechanical (hand pulling, cutting, tillage)
- Chemical
- Weed Control in partnership with Adams County Open Space and Colorado State University

Wildlife Management

- Wildlife Management Plan Adopted by City Council 15th of September, 2008
 - Goals: (1) Conservation and Management of Wildlife Populations (2) Integrated Pest Management
 - Integrated Pest Management at these sites: Prairie Dogs
 - Native Species may be considered for control if the species:
 - Harms or destroys natural resources in parks or open space area
 - Poses a human health hazard
 - Threatens Public Safety

The background of the slide is a photograph of a prairie landscape. In the foreground, there is a dense field of tall, green grasses. In the background, a flat prairie extends to a distant horizon under a clear sky. A semi-transparent dark grey banner is positioned at the top of the slide, containing the title.

Prairie Dog Management

- Maintain healthy prairie dog colonies
- Minimize degradation of natural resources
- Minimize damage to public and private property
- Minimize possibilities for future conflict between prairie dogs and humans
- Minimize human health or safety hazards

Guidelines for Management

- Prairie Dog Populations Exceed Carrying Capacity in this area
- 20% bare ground in colony boundary indicates carrying capacity has been met or exceeded, dozens of acres in this area have over 80% bare ground
- Destruction of City owned and private property (homes, schools and businesses backing to open space)
- In this area colonies over carrying capacity have created “moonscapes” where there is little to no vegetative cover, resulting in heavy erosion sediment flowing over trails and into 2nd Creek
- Overpopulated colonies have high likelihood of collapse from infectious diseases that can spread to humans and pets
- Trail Safety
- Noxious Weed Infestations of Colonies

Buckley Ranch West HOA Park



Management Options

- Burrow Flushing
- Live Trapping
- Fencing or Visual Barriers
- Fumigation
- Cost differences: Fumigation \$3 per burrow. Live trapping and relocation \$374 per Prairie Dog

Relocation Considerations

- Compliance with CRS 35-7-203 requires permission of the board of county commissioners when releasing prairie dogs into any county except for the county in which the prairie dogs were trapped
- Requires permit from State and extended periods of time for trapping
- Relocation area must have been prepped with holes already in existence or dug. When relocated the survival rate among transplanted prairie dogs averages between 30% to 50%
- Estimated Prairie Dog population in 2nd Creek is 1600-2400, which may cost an estimated \$600,000 to \$900,000 to relocate
- Wildlife Refuge directly adjacent to Second Creek contains large colonies of Prairie Dogs preserving the population in the overall prairie range in the community

Re-Establishment of Prairie

- Seedbed Preparation
- Weed Control



Seedbed Preparation

- Multifaceted approach using various methods nearly simultaneously
 - Mechanical tillage – turn soil, break up compaction, prep for seed, mitigate weeds and some minor regrading to repair erosion damage
 - Choosing correct seed mix
 - Following RMANWR Habitat Management Plan
 - Seeding method – City equipment and staff
 - Timing of planting – small window in spring and fall, non irrigated area reliant upon natural precipitation for seed germination and growth



Coordination

- Work with RMANWR and USFWS to create a landscape that is similarly managed outside the refuge so that animals have a corridor for travel along 2nd Creek that minimizes human interaction and has similar vegetative species
- Continue work with CSU on studies of biological agents (insects) for controlling invasive non-native weed species, where applicable
- Continue working with Adams County on weed management (mechanical and chemical controls), where applicable

Benefits of Restoration

- **Protect Water Quality and Integrity of Floodplain**
- **Create habitat for a variety of species: birds, pollinators and other wildlife**
- **Educational opportunities for the community – Stuart Middle School and 2nd Creek Elementary using as learning landscape**
- **Eliminate about 2 tons of carbon from the atmosphere per acre**
- **Enhance visual aesthetic in the area and in the City**



Citizen Outreach Plan

- Citizen knowledge and cooperation is important to success of project
- Door hangers
 - Will include general information for homeowners adjacent to 2nd Creek Open Space with links to City website for detailed information
- Signage
 - Posted at entrances to Open Space
 - Posted where revegetation has closed parts of open space off trail
 - Posted in conjunction with integrated pest management (weed and wildlife)
- Digital communications campaign
 - Social Media Outreach – Facebook, NextDoor, Etc.
 - HOA notifications
 - City website and publications



Questions?