



DATE: October 29, 2021
TO: Community Development (CD) Board
FROM: Tam Rodier, CD Program Coordinator *Tam*

SUBJECT: CDBG-CV PARKS PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES

Problem / Issue Statement

The CD Board has \$554,586 in CDBG-CV funds to allocate to nonprofit organizations and other governmental entities that:

- Exclusively support coronavirus and other infectious disease response.
- Primarily benefit low-income individuals and families in Billings.
- Avoid duplication of other local, state, or federal service or support to prevent fraud, waste, and abuse. Repayment of funding utilized for duplicative activities is required.

The CD Board has previously discussed that park improvements in low-income areas of Billings may reduce the spread of COVID-19 by implementing touchless features and other elements in park facilities. Some improvements discussed may also positively affect mental health by encouraging socially-distanced exercise / outdoor activities. CD Board representatives and staff toured a few parks in low-income areas and discussed eligible activities that may provide significant improvement(s) within the parks.

CD Staff worked with the City's Parks, Recreation & Public Lands (PRPL) staff to prepare the attached listing of potential park improvements in the following eight (8) low-income area parks:

- **North Park**, 6th Avenue N & N 19th Street
- **South Park**, 6th Avenue S and S 30th Street
- **Pioneer Park**, 3rd Street West & Parkhill Drive
- **Optimist Park**, Morgan Avenue & Hallowell Lane
- **Highland Park**, 2nd Avenue S & S 37th Street
- **Central Park**, 8th Street West & Central Ave.
- **Arrowhead Park**, Crow Lane and Sioux Lane
- **Comanche Park**, South Plainview Street

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends the CD Board prioritize the following parks improvements:

North Park: Adult exercise area and equipment, North Park Center accessibility improvements, new restroom, 12-month touchless water fountain, new shelter, and concrete path bulb-out (estimated \$438,778).

North Park has already achieved designation as a “Park Rx.” The “Park Rx” designation means health and/or social service providers encourage people to spend time at the park / in nature to improve their health and well-being. These improvements would strengthen its amenities and encourage additional use. Adding amenities to North Park may also relieve overcrowding at Pioneer Park.

Pioneer Park: Zimmerman Center ADA enhancements, restroom repair / upgrades, and Heritage Park Trail improvements (estimated \$152,500).

Pioneer Park has also achieved designation as a “Park Rx.” It is arguably the busiest park in the community. These improvements would strengthen its amenities, support heavy park usage, and meet current user needs.

Comanche Park: Playground replacement, ADA accessible parking spots and walkway to playground (estimated \$200,000).

Comanche Park playground equipment is decades old and needs to be replaced. Park usage will likely increase significantly with these improvements.

All eight parks in low-income areas: Wi-Fi hotspots would be added (where feasible).

Staff requests the CD Board review and prioritize the project list based on available CDBG-CV and CDBG funding. This will allow staff to refine the list, verify costs estimates, and present the resulting parks projects list to the City Council for review and approval / disapproval.

Alternatives Analysis

- 1) Prioritize the park improvement project list and direct staff to proceed with a grant award recommendation to the City Council.
- 2) Disapprove staff recommendation.

Community Development Board Decision:

- Approval
- Conditional Approval (state conditions)
- Denial

Staff Attest: