

Mike Johnston's Response to Position Statement from Save Open Space Denver regarding the Open Space and Recreational Future of the Park Hill Golf Course Land

For the third time since November of 2021 (yes 301 and no 302 and no 2 O), voters in the City and County of Denver have sent a decisive message in overwhelming fashion that they wish to guarantee the open space and recreational future of the Park Hill Golf Course land. As the leaders of this multi-year fight, Save Open Space Denver feels it is our responsibility to lay out the principles that should guide any future discussions regarding this invaluable land. We expect the following:

1. That future City leaders will respect and honor the conservation easement and its conservation purposes of providing open space and recreation to the people of Denver.

Yes I will honor and respect both the spirit and the letter of the conservation easement to provide open space and recreation. Denver voters have twice made clear that the easement represents an important commitment to open space, greenery, and recreation in a rapidly growing city where we need more of all three.

2. That open space and recreation are the ONLY legal and appropriate uses for this land. This is very clear under the current terms of the easement.

I agree that the easement only allows for open space and recreation. As Mayor, I will push hard for a solution that delivers a world-class park and open space that is open to the public.

3. If Westside Investment Partners chooses not to re-open golf operations, that City leaders will facilitate the City's purchase of the property for a designated city park at its fair market value (as encumbered by the easement) by using funds from the Referred Measure 2A 0.25% sales tax revenues

I will use city resources under 2A to facilitate converting the current land into a public park at a fair market value, and believe that would be a better outcome than it reverting to the land being used primarily for golf.

4. That the newly elected Mayor engage a wide range of unpaid Denver community volunteers in a measured and thoughtful planning process to define a broad outline of features and amenities that will activate the land consistent with the conservation easement's open space and recreational purposes

I will 100% commit to engaging stakeholders and build community consensus around the top priorities for features and amenities and I would make sure that Save Open Space Denver is always at the table.

5. That the outgoing administration will respect the next administration's ability to fully take on this once-in-a-generation opportunity to strengthen our parks system by refraining from any type of intervention in this process before July 17

I agree with this approach.

6. That full appraisals of the property will be conducted to determine its fair market value both with the conservation easement in place and without the conservation easement in place

I agree that this is a critical next step in the process. Any workable solution to this issue must reflect the fair market value of this land with and without the easement.

7. That the incoming administration will comply with state law in its future dealings with the protected land

I agree. This will always be my administration's approach, on this issue and a wide range of others. Given the history of this project, it is of particular importance that any future steps be taken carefully, and only after consultation with all the key stakeholders to rebuild trust where it has been broken.

8. That the newly elected Mayor and City Council will repeal the small area plan approved on December 5, 2022, in accordance with the voters' rejection of Measure 20

Given the result of the 20 measure, I agree that the current small area plan is no longer applicable and must be rewritten. I believe we need to take a fresh look at this issue in the aftermath of the clear verdict on 20, prioritizing open space, greenery and recreation for the public, and respecting the importance of the easement.