

Council Agenda Summary

March 1, 2022

Key Staff Contact: Kelly Snook, Interim Culture, Parks and Recreation Director, 970-350-9425

Title:

Consideration of Naming the East Greeley Natural Area "Campo Esperanza Natural Area".

Summary:

The property known currently as the East Greeley Natural Area was acquired by the City in 2008. Over the past year, the City has constructed a new urban natural area as part of larger grant funding to improve public amenities in the East Greeley neighborhoods through funding from the Colorado Health Foundation (CHF) and Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO).

To foster neighborhood ownership in the new natural area, Natural Areas & Trails (NAT) staff solicited naming suggestions from the community from October 1st through December 17th. Following the guidelines in the 2021 NAT naming policy (Attachment 1), staff has prepared this agenda item summary to provide background information about the property, assess suggested names from the community, and make recommendations for names that would be in-line with criteria set forth in the policy.

PROPERTY BACKGROUND The site of the newly developed natural area was part of a farm located on the NE corner of E. 24th Street and the future Balsam Avenue. County records trace ownership back to about 1925. Names associated with ownership include Dean Royer, a prominent Greeley businessperson during the 1960's and 70's. In 1981, the property was subdivided into two parcels through a recorded exemption in Weld County.

The portion west of the irrigation canal included a house and farm structures, and at one point was infamous in the area for the large number of goats and mountains of trash, which generated complaints from the new residential area west of Balsam Avenue. The portion east of the canal was an irrigated row crop field and had two oil and gas wells. The land west of the canal was annexed to the City in 1991 and the parcel on the SW corner was purchased by the City in 2004 and reclaimed. Discovery Bay water park was built on the site in 2007. In 1994, the northern and eastern portion was again subdivided into two parcels. The parcel west of the canal now contains Waggin' Tail Dog Park along with the non-potable irrigation pond and detention area. In 1999, the parcel east of the canal was purchased and annexed to the City for residential development. In 2001, an investor purchased the property and entered into a conservation easement (CE) with the City for the site to protect "significant ecological values". However, the owner became delinquent on property taxes and a private party picked it up in a tax sale in 2004. Because the CE precluded any ability to develop the property, that person assigned the certificate of tax lien purchase to the City of Greeley in 2008.

SIGNIFICANT NATURAL FEATURES The site was a former agricultural field, and was flat with the only significant landform being the Greeley #3 Canal that forms the east, north and west boundaries of the property. In addition, as fallow ag land, the site did not contain significant habitat, native plant or wildlife populations. Property research did not reveal any known historical or cultural resources beyond its agricultural use.

NAMING SUGGESTIONS NAT staff worked closely with the City's Communications & Engagement (C&E) department to promote a naming contest for the new natural area, from the grand opening of the property on October 2nd, through December 17th. C&E has provided statistics for the community outreach impact for this effort in Attachment 2.

There were 69 names suggested (see Attachment 3) for the property. Staff have reviewed all of the names and assessed each based on the criteria detailed in the NAT naming policy.

Suggestions of note include:

- **May Bunjes** | NAT received 43 suggestions to name the Natural Area in memory of May Bunjes, a popular and dedicated community volunteer who was active in such organizations as CASA, the American Cancer Society, Meals on Wheels, Habitat for Humanity and Hispanic Women of Weld County, among others. Ms. Bunjes died in 2020 at age 71 from COVID-19. In spite of the number of suggestions made, staff does not recommend this name due to the fact that while Mrs. Bunjes was a Greeley resident, there do not appear to be any specific ties to the East Greeley area. Given the level of community support there may be another more appropriate way to honor her memory and service to the community.

- **Cultural references** | There were several names that were suggested that connected to the East Greeley's Hispanic/Latinx community. Staff has provided translated titles and recommendations based on NAT naming policy criteria and a neighborhood nexus.

- **East Memorial references** | Staff received suggestions and comments related to the East Memorial name, which references a tragic 1961 school bus accident where 20 elementary children were killed when a school bus they were riding in was struck by a train southeast of the project site. When a new elementary school was built in 1963, it was named East Memorial Elementary in memory of the tragedy. While the elementary school is now part of the Bella Romero Academy, the East Memorial Park still provides a memorial in name to the tragedy. Because another City amenity is already named East Memorial in the immediate vicinity, staff does not recommend this name for the natural area.

GREELEY PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD RECOMMENDATION On February 4, 2022 at the regularly scheduled Parks Advisory Board Meeting, the Board considered all of the staff and community suggested naming options. Ultimately a motion was made and passed unanimously to recommend '**Campo Esperanza Natural Area**' meaning **Field of Hope** to the City Council.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION The following property names encompass both meeting the criteria set forth in the NAT naming policy, while also having a strong relation to the location, natural history, and culture of the site and surrounding neighborhood. Staff recommends the Board select one of the following names:

- **Campo Bello Natural Area** | Meaning “beautiful field” in Spanish, this name both reflects the former and current use of the site, and incorporates the strong Hispanic influence in this neighborhood.
- **Rabbitbrush Natural Area** | Rabbitbrush is a critical native shrub species that supports hundreds of mammals, birds, and pollinator species in the shortgrass prairie ecosystem. Before cultivation, this site certainly hosted rabbitbrush and, in the construction of the new natural area, rabbitbrush was included in the native landscaping of the site.
- **Esperanza Natural Area** | Meaning “hope” in Spanish, Esperanza reflects comments staff has received from the community of hope for a new revitalization of the neighborhood in part from projects like the natural area. Staff has also received comments related to the East Memorial reference and made suggestions that if that name was not used, perhaps something related to hope would be appropriate to reflect the human necessity to move on while not forgetting the past. The original suggestion for this name was “Esperanza View” but the City’s Spanish translator recommended to use Esperanza alone.
- **Prodo Silvestre Natural Area** | Originally submitted as “fiero prada”, translators recommended instead Prodo Silvestre, the meaning being closer to the intended “wild meadow.” This name reflects the culture of the East Greeley community, and also the wild and fierce nature of the transition on this property.

Fiscal Impact:

Does this item create a fiscal impact on the City of Greeley?	No
If yes, what is the initial, or, onetime impact?	
What is the annual impact?	
What fund of the City will provide Funding?	
What is the source of revenue within the fund?	N/A
Is there grant funding for this item?	No
If yes, does this grant require a match?	
Is this grant onetime or ongoing?	
Additional Comments:	

Legal Issues:

None.

Other Issues and Considerations:

None.

Strategic Work Program Item or Applicable Council Priority and Goal:

Image: Reinforce Greeley’s vision as an attractive and vibrant community in which to live, learn, work and play.

Infrastructure & Growth: Establish the capital and human infrastructure to support and maintain a safe, competitive, appealing and successful community.

Decision Options:

1. City Council may adopt the name 'Campo Esperanza Natural Area' as recommended by the Greeley Parks and Recreation Advisory Board.
2. City Council may adopt one of the staff-recommended property names.
3. City Council may adopt one of the other names on the list of suggestions that meet the NAT naming policy criteria.
4. City Council may reject all names and ask staff to solicit additional names based on the process laid out in the NAT naming policy.

Council's Recommended Action:

A motion to recommend permanently naming the property currently known as East Greeley Natural Area to "Campo Esperanza Natural Area".

Attachments:

1. Natural Areas and Trails Naming Policy
2. Communications and Engagements Naming Statistics
3. East Greeley Natural Area Naming Suggestions