

E-Rock PLP&T vision 1st draft, Put forth at Board of Trustees' request October 2024

The Town of Palmer Lake Parks and Trails (and Open Space) Plan is an integrated, visionary plan to guide the development of Palmer Lake's parks, recreation, open space, and trails facilities, programs and services for up to ten years. As a companion document to the Palmer Lake Comprehensive Plan (dated, 20??), the Plan responds to and builds on other long-range planning documents and recommends the Town develop management plan for key open space areas such as E-Rock (to include a new name).

The Town is moving forward with a mission to protect and enhance the natural, cultural, and scenic resources unique to the open spaces of its planning area. This Open Space Management Plan (OSMP) is designed to guide the management of undeveloped areas, like E-Rock, that are slated to be permanently maintained in a natural state for the near future, with added recreation amenities considered in the future, e.g. athletic field, nature center, etc.

In general this is a long-range plan developed by Palmer Lake Parks and Trails (PLP&T) for the immediate and future use of the E-Rock property. Because PLP&T is uncertain as to the scope of the requested vision for E-Rock, just the area along the creek, the ball-field, and the perimeter trail, or the entire property minus the future Public Safety area, Willan's 2.8 acres, and the large lodge buildings, we decided to include the entire property. As the PLP&T Commission is made up of volunteers, relying on help from Palmer Lake Public Works department, we suggest going slowly with quality and timely additions to the property, i.e. additional trails, athletic field, designated wildlife areas, and nature center all driven by public input, and available fund, to maintain a mostly passive park and open space environment with no large scale events. Palmer Lake is fortunate to have Centennial Park which has successfully hosted numerous large scale events, thus a second venue of this sort in E-Rock would be contraindicated.

The attached map outlines the suggested use and maintenance zones for the entire property.

### **Purpose and Intent**

Open space is defined as: protected lands of significant value that are conserved in their natural state, restored, or improved with appropriate native landscaping to retain a natural or natural-appearing condition.

This OSMP is different from the Comprehensive Plan and its companion Glen Park or Centennial Park Master Plans because it does not provide land use policies or development design guidelines; it is a roadmap of sustainable practices for maintaining and managing lands the Town has acquired for an open space park. These open space parcels differ from traditional park developments because infrastructure is focused to provide passive recreational uses that are more aligned to natural areas such as hiking and birdwatching and are not irrigated.

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

To protect and enhance the natural, cultural, and scenic resources unique to the Town of Palmer Lake through:

- Thoughtful land acquisition;
- Appropriate land stewardship; and
- Sustainable management.

in order to:

- Provide exceptional recreational opportunities;
- Preserve open space and wildlife habitat; and
- Connect the community with each other and the natural environment.

Taking this context into consideration, the OSMP intends to:

- Define Palmer Lake's mission for open space management and identify objectives and strategies to satisfy its mission;
- Adhere to federal, state, and regional regulations and guidance as applicable;
- Provide sustainable actions to manage natural areas well into the future; and
- Identify a framework and tools to aid in ecological assessments and monitoring

Palmer Lake is a community which recognizes the importance of:

- Conserving and enhancing its historic small-town character, the roots from which it grew, preserving the natural environment in which it resides;
- A caring community which offers its residents an environment in which to seek a high quality of life;
- A balanced community with a diverse range of housing, employment, educational, shopping, and recreational opportunities; and
- A vital community which provides financial and social support for quality of life

Once PLP&T has more guidance from the BOT we will outline in more detail:

#### GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR OPEN SPACE

##### Stewardship of the Natural Environment

##### Protected Lands Program

##### General Management Objectives for:

vegetation

restoration and enhancement

Open Space Management Plan

Maintenance of Primitive Trails

Maintenance of Picnic Areas and Benches

Maintenance of Hardscapes - parking areas, trailheads, ADA designated areas

Fencing and Signage

Control of Hazardous Weeds

Maintenance/Use zones will inform Town management objectives and public access policies, in turn it can help improve efficiency by focusing efforts where it is needed most.

Specifically, proposed use/maintenance zones may be used to:

- Identify high public use areas;
- Protect ecologically sensitive areas;

- Designate the level of maintenance intensity required within each zone; and
- Track the acreage associated with each maintenance zone across the Town’s open space parcel portfolio.

Additionally, if the Town determines an average cost per acre associated with each management zone, this method can be used to support budget forecasting for annual maintenance/use activities, or as part of the parcel acquisition due diligence process to estimate maintenance cost of a potential purchase analyzed against the value of the site to the Town.

Maintenance/use zones can be a valuable planning and evaluation tool that can scale as the Town’s open space portfolio grows.

**PROPOSED USE/MAINTENANCE ZONE DESCRIPTIONS**

Rating	Allocation	Public Use	Description
Zone 0	Closed	None	Access restricted due to lack of public amenities, wildlife refuge, leased lands, safety concerns, etc.
Zone 1	Protected	Limited	Areas with high conservation value. Access limited to designated trails and amenities.
Zone 2	Nature Escape	Moderate	Off-trail access permitted for passive recreation activities such as fishing, wildlife viewing, etc.
Zone 3	Recreation Area	Moderate to active	Developed areas which receive moderate use and provide access to picnic areas, open pavilion, creekside benches, trails, etc.
Zone 4	Athletic	Substantial	Sports field

Description of possible amenities and /or needs for each zone:

Zone 0: limited use single track trail, 1 or 2 benches, signage

Zone 1: Strategic mowing, 3’ each side of single track trails, natural areas leave wild except for mowing strategically as outlines on more detailed maintenance description. Wildflower ID signage, Plant native grasses and pollinator plants, remove noxious/invasive weeds, Place 2-3 benches along the east fence and in the oak groves with views toward the mountains and Ben Lomond, benches placed below the PS area facing the south, SW.

Zone 2: Single track nature trail with education and ID signage. No benches, tables etc.

Zone 3: Picnic tables (away from the creek, in the shade, spaced well away from each other), Bear proof trash cans (2) placed at either end of the area, Benches along the creek and trail (2-4 to start), benches (1-2) above the USAFA bridge area along the trail with views of the mountains, Open pavilion & trails along the creek, 1 porta potty with wooden tasteful surround placed at the east end of the area where it can be serviced easily, barriers/gates placed at both ends of the area to limit vehicle traffic to PLPD, PLFD, PLPW, create a boulder barrier/fence along the east boundary of Zone 3, remove the fire ring near the pavilion, plant ground cover where the cabin foundations were.

Zone 4: work with athletic clubs and organizations to renovate the ballfield and a parking area adjacent to it.

