

## **Describe the proposed project and the community need...**

The rapid growth in the Tri-Lakes area has led to a serious lack of outdoor facilities. The grant funding would allow us to address the needs of the local community: lack of an organized youth sports facility in Palmer Lake. Youth sports leagues and clubs are interested in supporting and using a multi-use field.

Public youth athletic fields are few and far between. Currently, families have to travel to larger metro areas just to participate. For example local teams must often travel 19 miles to Goose Gossage Park, Fox Run park, 11 miles, or Pride Soccer Complex, 23 miles for their games. The Parks Palmer Parks and Trails Commission (PLPTC) collected data on the fields that are available for practices within a 15 mile radius to Palmer Lake. There are seven (7) fields - half are natural grass, a few have lines for soccer, and one has lines for lacrosse. Most are simply unlined and all have to be reserved and include fees to use them. Fields that are located at local schools are only available once their school teams are finished which is often after 5:00 and subject to fees. This multi-use field will be located in a public park and provide access to anyone with scheduled practice and game times for local clubs through the Town office. Practice times will be made available for multiple youth sports teams, without fees, who participate in the maintenance and support of the field.

The Monument Warriors, a Colorado Special Olympics club, that works with and offers athletic opportunities in the Tri-Lakes area is very supportive of the field as they have difficulty finding available fields for their handicapped, special needs programs. We would make sure they have filed time free of charge.

Our local Palmer Lake Elementary School has approximately 350 students and roughly 25% receive free or reduced lunch benefits. Many families cannot drive to sports fields in Colorado Springs and this field would allow these students access within walking or biking distance of their school and home across the pedestrian bridge or along the The Santa Fe Regional Trail. The school for the past 41 years has used to park and trail as the start of their biggest annual fundraiser - The July 4th Fun Run attracting almost 1000 participants in 2023. The multi-use field would become a staging area for the event.

A small town like Palmer Lake struggles to find revenue for projects of this size and need, having an athletic field will help attract more families to Town businesses, helping to bolster the economy. The Town of Palmer Lake has been designated as an economically distressed area due to lack of 5-year population growth against the State average hence the need to attract visitors via multiple recreational opportunities.

Our goal is to make The Recreation Area - Centennial Park a recreation hub for everyone, returning it to the 100 year-old roots, recreation, beyond a whistle stop for water and wood on the way to somewhere else.

## **Reflect on the community-driven nature of this project**

For more than three years the current PLPTC volunteers have been gathering information through surveys for the Centennial Park Master Plan and grant submissions. During various 2022 community events, including the .5k fun run fundraiser by APL, Little League games, Palmer Divide Soccer Club, Taste of Palmer Lake, Palmer Lake Volunteer Fire Department Open House, in-person interviews in the parks, and on-line data was gathered through feedback in an open ended survey from citizens and visitors to determine what new facilities and improvements they want to see in our parks.

The 2022 survey data showed the number one concern was the lack of organized outdoor facilities for youth. Of 290 survey responses: 101 wanted to see a multi-purpose field for more sports, 58 wanted a restroom on the west side of the Lake and RR tracks, and improvements to the baseball field. We are currently working with the Tri-Lakes Little League and a private donor on a multi-year plan to improve the Baseball field. In a follow-up survey suggested by GOCO in their "Recommendation" conducted with the assistance of Lewis-Palmer School District 38 in May and June 2023, The Parks Commission had received 185 responses from students age's 4 to 17 with an overwhelming 82.8% wanting a soccer field.

We have enlisted the support of interested organizations to help with the development of the field. In addition to applying for the GOCO grant, we have applied to the Daniel's Fund, as suggested by GOCO. Tim Geitner, with Daniel's Fund, has spoken with Parks and Trails

Commissioners and has encouraged us to apply for funding in 2024 for the associated equipment: nets, goals, flags, benches, bleachers, fencing for example that may not have been fully funded by the GOCO grant.

Various area sports clubs are investing in the field. Palmer Divide Soccer is planning to provide funding for upkeep and maintenance as well as seeking an additional grant from the Colorado Soccer Association. Palmer Divide Soccer Club has pledged to make this their home field. They also pledge to offer free scholarships to children who cannot afford to participate. There are other sport entities: lacrosse and football that have expressed interest in using the field. Additional supporters for the field includes: Awake Palmer Lake, The Palmer Lake Restaurant Group, and School District 38.

Funding for all of the recreation facilities and projects have been provided through many businesses, fundraising, grants, Conservation Trust Fund, Town Public Works, and in-kind labor by community volunteers, including the writing of this grant application. Some of the funding sources are listed on the attached spreadsheet.

We are also working with Mile High Youth Corps for new trail construction connecting the upper part of Town to Glen Park and the Creekside Trail. This would create the only safe, non-motorized access for walkers and bikers between the two areas of Town. In June we hosted 51 Conservation Youth Core Association volunteers training to become outdoor conservationists building a trail extending a new section of Creekside Trail to a proposed new park. We are also applying for a MYHC grant to finish the trail in 2024.

### **Reflect on the intended outcomes of your project and the multiple benefits...**

The Town of Palmer Lake currently owns an undeveloped parcel of land that would be turned into a 105 yard by 55 yard multi-use playing field as the land is already rough graded with donated dirt. They have agreed to converting it at no cost to a multi-use field. After comparing ongoing maintenance costs, including water and labor, it was determined that an artificial turf field would be more economical than natural grass in the long run. A natural grass field costs more to maintain and has 3.5 x less usage time than artificial turf as grass needs time to recover between games and practices. Part of this decision to go with artificial turf was based on the local YMCA still using their artificial turf field after 15 years. A major concern is a lack of water: we felt that justifying using water to maintain a sports field is not in the best interest of the residents of Palmer Lake who are on constant year-round water conservation restrictions

Funds will be utilized to build, line, and landscape the multi-use field and purchase associated equipment.

Trail connectivity to adequate parking, handicap access, and restrooms are currently in place through in-kind labor and/or material through past or on-going grants and fundraising. Awake Palmer Lake raised money to build two stairways, a safety fence, sled hill (all to be completed this summer), and handicapped accessible path connecting the multi-use field and the Lake across the new pedestrian bridge, creating a safe passageway to the west side of the railroad tracks for parking, businesses, a new restroom, and pickle ball courts (funded by a grant ??? To be completed in 2024), and other activities around Town.

The multi-use field project is part of a community wide, multi-year effort by the PL Parks and Trails Commission to improve, expand, and create trails, playgrounds, and parks in Palmer Lake. Yes, it has been and will be a busy year ahead as the Town is committed to making its parks a major part of it's economic and physical health

In summary, we believe that the addition of a multi-purpose field will have a positive impact on our community by allowing families and children to have a place to play organized sports which is good for the health of Coloradans.

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Funding for this project has come from Awake Palmer Lake, which through volunteer fundraising efforts, has contributed \$100,000 in cash for matching funds as well as arranged for 20,000 cubic yards of fill dirt (delivered value \$180,000) for site preparation. The Town of Palmer Lake has committed to add an additional 6,000 cubic yards of fill dirt as needed and will assist in earthwork including spreading, fine grading, preparation and erosion control (\$55,060). Most of this soil was donated from a construction project thus saving us thousands of dollars