

**PARKS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

**Park Lands Agreement Program Guidelines 2024**

**Program Background**

El Paso County Parks & Community Services offers a program to land developers designed to promote the development and implementation of the El Paso County Parks Master Plan. The Park Lands Agreement program provides certain credits against required park development fees for the establishment of regional park land or open space, park site development, or construction of master-planned regional trails.

Any provided credits shall be outlined in an agreement between El Paso County and the developer during the land development review process and memorialized through a Board of County Commissioner's resolution. Required dedication of park lands, fees in lieu of land, or a combination of land and fees for public parks, open space, and trails is outlined in Land Development Code Section 8.5.2 Park and Open Space Standards and Dedications (as may be amended and/or recodified).

Applicants are encouraged to contact El Paso County Parks & Community Services early during the entitlement process to discuss a potential Park Land Agreement. This may occur at the early assistance, sketch plan, rezone, or preliminary plan phase. El Paso County has no obligation to enter into any agreement. The program is organized into three agreement types which are further detailed in this program guideline document (as may be amended and/or recodified).

**Regional Park Lands Agreement (RPLA)**

Dedication of land to El Paso County which directly supports the development of regional parks / open spaces as identified in the El Paso County Parks Master Plan. Lands shall either serve to establish a new regional park / open space or supplement an existing regional park / open space. Lands shall be of significant quality or acreage and be valued higher than the required regional park fee. The construction of county-owned park / open space facilities can also be considered at a minimum 2:1 matching ratio.

**Regional Trail Agreement (RTA)**

When dedication of a regional trail easement to El Paso County is required, the county and developer may elect to enter into an agreement to provide regional park fee credits for construction of a regional trail. Trail segments must be identified in the El Paso County Parks Master Plan and include a logical terminus. The development of a County-owned trail will be considered at a minimum 1:1 matching ratio.

**Urban Park Lands Agreement (UPLA)**

El Paso County supports the construction of non-County owned neighborhood or community park sites by providing credits against required urban park fees at a minimum 2:1 matching ratio. Urban park sites provide active recreation opportunities to immediate neighborhoods with credits provided to individual final plat filings.

**Program Guidelines**

El Paso County Parks and Community Services will administer the Park Lands Agreement program under the following guidelines. Applicants will be required to demonstrate the intention to provide park amenities of equal or greater value for required regional and urban park fees as outlined below:

**Regional Park Lands Agreements**

- Regional Park Land / Open Space Land Dedications (Min 1:1 value): Land values must be equal to or greater than the required regional park fee.
- Regional Park / Open Space Construction (Min 2:1 value): Construction of county park amenities must be at least twice the value of the required regional park fee.
- Agreements shall be tied to development applications at early stages within the entitlement process: e.g., rezone, sketch plan, PUD, and preliminary plan applications.
- At the time of the agreement, calculated dwelling units and associated credits will be established. Established credits shall be used until exhausted. Additional regional park fees shall be applicable for any increases in density defined in the original agreement.
- County Parks shall be included in the design and construction phase for any park development with ownership and maintenance conveyed to the County only after final acceptance by the County.
- Construction of park improvements shall be completed within two years of the execution of the agreement unless otherwise specified. If not completed within two years, the applicable regional park fees will be immediately paid to the County. El Paso County Parks will not consider future applications until the improvements have been completed or fees have been paid.

### **Regional Trail Agreements**

- Agreements shall be tied to development applications at early stages within the entitlement process: e.g., rezone, sketch plan, PUD, and preliminary plan applications.
- Regional Trail Construction (Min 1:1 value): Trail construction must be equal to or greater than the required regional park fee.
- At the time of the agreement, calculated dwelling units and associated credits will be established. Established credits shall be used until exhausted. Additional regional park fees shall be applicable for any increases in density defined in the original agreement.
- All regional trail segments must be identified in the El Paso County Parks Master Plan, be constructible, and include a logical terminus that provide substantial benefit to the County.
- Trail easements required per the land development code still apply regardless of agreement.
- The County shall be included in the design and construction phase for any trail development with ownership and maintenance conveyed to the County only after final acceptance by the County.
- Construction of trail improvements shall be completed within two years of the execution of the agreement unless otherwise specified. If not completed within two years, the applicable regional park fees will be immediately paid to the County. El Paso County Parks will not consider future applications until the improvements have been completed or fees have been paid.

### **Urban Park Lands Agreements**

- Agreements shall be tied to development applications at final plat stage.
- Urban Park Lands Agreements can run concurrent to a Regional Park Lands or Regional Trail Agreement.
- Only one Urban Park Lands Agreement will be allowed per park site / filing.
- Urban Park Land Construction (Min 2:1 value): Urban Park construction must be at least twice the value of the required urban park fee.
- Phasing to provide more than one UPLA to a park site will only be considered if the following conditions apply:
  - Neighborhood Park: the filing's dwelling units (2/3) are within 1/4 mile of the park site.
  - Community Park: the filing's dwelling units (2/3) are within 1/2 mile of the park site.
- Unlimited public access must be provided to the respective facility during normal operational hours.
- The applicant/developer must demonstrate its ability to perpetually maintain the site and shall identify the agency responsible for continued maintenance in the agreement.
- Construction of park or trail improvements shall be completed within two years of the execution of the agreement unless otherwise specified. If not completed within two years, the applicable urban park fees will be immediately paid to the County. El Paso County Parks will not consider future applications until the improvements have been completed or fees have been paid.

## **Program Process**

El Paso County Parks and Community Services will administer the Park Lands Agreement program utilizing the following process. Agreements will need to be supported by County staff, presented to the El Paso County Park Advisory Board, and approved by the El Paso County Board of County Commissioners prior to recording of the relevant final plat applications. Applicants are encouraged to contact department staff early in the development process to discuss potential agreements. The following information will be required as part of a Park Lands Agreement process.

- Cover letter on applicant letterhead to include the official request for an agreement, the type of agreement being applied for, a summary of the filing(s) to be included in the agreement, a detailed estimate of regional or urban park fees to be waived, timeline for construction, agency responsible for ongoing maintenance of the proposed facility.
- Detailed cost estimate of the proposed recreational facility, whether it be a neighborhood park, community park, internal trail system, or regional trail. In the case of a Regional Park Lands Agreement, the applicant should include an estimate of the property's value including information usually included in a title commitment (easements, ROWs, jurisdictional wetlands, hazardous waste sites, water wells, etc).
- Detailed site plans, construction documents, and/or renderings of the proposed recreational facility, again, whether it be a neighborhood park, community park, internal trail system, regional trail system, and associated landscaping, irrigation, and drainage infrastructure.
- Applications must be supported by County staff, endorsed by the El Paso County Park Advisory Board, and approved by the El Paso County Board of County Commissioners. Applicants are advised that this process will take a minimum of two months to complete.

## **Program Contact Information**

For more information about this program please visit the website below or contact El Paso County Parks & Community Services. <https://communityservices.elpasoco.com/parks-planning/>

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