



February 14, 2013

Denver City Council
1437 Bannock St., Rm. 451
Denver, CO 80202

Honorable Members of Council,

Colorado Conservation Trust (CCT), as a Denver-based advocate for open space, thanks you for your thoughtful consideration of the proposed land swap between the City and Denver Public Schools (DPS). CCT was founded to protect important landscapes through applying a broad range of conservation tools and building the capacity of conservation organizations that preserve the land. Over the past decade, CCT has invested \$14 million in open space conservation across Colorado.

Denver has a proud tradition of conservation. Our city and mountain parks, trails, natural areas and open spaces provide the foundations for safe and healthy neighborhoods while attracting investment, jobs, and visitors vital to Denver's economy. Sustaining this tradition is fundamental as our city grows and our parks serve more users.

After discussions with the Hancock Administration and Denver Parks and Recreation, we are confident that our City remains committed to this tradition. Denver has added 225 acres of parkland in the past five years and plans to add another 140 acres in the next five years. The loss of nine acres of natural area adjacent to Hentzell Park will be balanced with the planned acquisitions of five acres of natural area in Montbello and 24 acres of natural area in Globeville.

Colorado Conservation Trust could not support the loss of designated open space for commercial or residential development. However, we understand that there is a critical need for additional elementary classroom space in this area and a lack of alternative sites to meet this need. The construction of a school on this site will help the City meet one of our most important civic responsibilities: educating our next generation. Siting the school adjacent to the Hentzell Park offers a singular opportunity to engage students as stewards of our natural lands through outdoor education. We urge DPS to seize this opportunity when designing the landscape and curricula of the school.

We understand that Superintendent Boasberg has committed to return this area to open space if a public school is not constructed on the site. We commend Councilwoman Lehmann's plan to propose an ordinance to designate the remaining undesignated 15 acres of Hentzell Park as parkland, protected in perpetuity and alterable only by a vote of the Denver electorate. We urge all members of Council to support this ordinance. We also urge the City to assess our natural areas and designate acreage that meets criteria for protection as parkland or natural area, carrying on our proud tradition of conservation in this extraordinary City.

With thanks,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brian Ross".

Brian Ross
Executive Director