



MEMORANDUM

TO: MAYOR MIKE JOHNSTON, DENVER CITY COUNCILMEMBERS
FROM: JOLON CLARK
SUBJECT: NAMING OF UNNAMED PARK AT ILIFF AND BELLAIRE, BOUNDED BY S. BIRCH ST. TO THE EAST, S. BELLAIRE ST. TO THE WEST, E. ILIFF AVE. TO THE SOUTH, AND E. WARREN AVE. TO THE NORTH, AS "BETHESDA PARK";
DATE: FEBRUARY 13, 2024
CC: SCOTT GILMORE

I am pleased to advance this ordinance that proposes that the unnamed park at the intersection of Iliff and Bellaire, located at 4301 E. Iliff Ave, Denver CO 80222, be named "Bethesda Park". This name would serve to honor the Dutch heritage of the area and reflect the impact that the Bethesda Sanitorium later known as the Bethesda Psychiatric Hospital had on this area among several generations of immigrants. Bethesda is a Hebrew word meaning place (or house) of mercy. The name celebrates the history and reflects the values that the community wants to commemorate through this park name.

This approximately 2-acre property in the University Hills neighborhood was the first Denver Parks and Recreation (DPR) acquisition funded by the Parks Legacy Fund (the voter-approved initiative from 2018). The vision planning for the park and community engagement process began in the summer of 2022 and was completed in the spring of 2023. The next phase of park design will begin later this year, with construction starting in 2025. Once constructed, this new park will help close the gap on one of DPR's Game Plan goals that all residents have access to a quality park within a 10-minute walk or roll. In addition, the neighborhood was identified as an area of high growth in DPR's 2021 Strategic Acquisition Plan, making this park a much-needed new asset for the city and for the University Hills area.

The name "Bethesda" is the result of a community outreach effort led by a committee made up of two representatives from the neighborhood (Falene Young and Brian Ricker), a representative from Human Rights and Community Development (Patrick Walton), a Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (PRAB) representative (Frank Rowe), two City Council District 4 representatives (former Councilwoman Kendra Black and Sheila Gargan) and one nominated City Council at Large representative (Russ DenBraber). DPR supported the effort by helping with logistics and ensuring that committee members understood the department's naming policy. In this process, the committee met three times; created two public surveys; the first to solicit name ideas, and the second to select a final name; collected signatures; and presented to PRAB. They aimed to get broad support from the community surrounding the park, and those that might be interested in the history of this name. The committee succeeded in gathering 305 complete signatures in support (300 are required). DPR did not receive any letters in opposition to the naming.



Denver Parks and Recreation
Executive Director's Office

201 W. Colfax Ave. Dept 601
Denver, CO 80211
p: 720.913.0738
f: 720.913.0784

www.denvergov.org/parksandrecreation

The proposal was presented at the PRAB meeting on January 10, 2024, by committee member, Russ DenBraber. All three speakers at the public hearing, which included the current Councilwoman from District 4, Diana Romero Campbell, spoke in favor of the proposed park name. Following the public hearing, PRAB unanimously voted to recommend that the unnamed park be named "Bethesda Park". While this process of naming a park before it is constructed is new for DPR, we believe it was successful and will ensure the park can have meaningful roots for the community at its ribbon-cutting in 2025.