

# Rita Valentine Park Conceptual Design





The site for the Rita Valentine Park sits in the northwestern part of Steamboat Springs. Together with the adjacent M&H Property site, it offers an opportunity to enhance the availability of both open space and developed recreation in this active and outdoor-oriented community.

The Rita Valentine property was gifted to the City of Steamboat Springs on January 15, 1985. It has been open and available since to the public as an informal and undeveloped park. The site covers 40 acres and abuts the 35 acre M&H property to provide a combined tract of 75 acres within the developed part of Steamboat Springs. Steamboat Springs currently has 29 developed parks totaling 410 acres of land.

### **Statistically Valid Survey Results**

In the survey, 87% of the respondents said that they have used city parks at least once in the past year, with an average frequency of 21.3 visits per year. Only trails ranked higher in usage at 93%. Eight percent (8%) use “other parks, open space, and recreation services, with the average frequency being 4.0 visits per year. This highlights the importance of parks and open space to the residents of Steamboat Springs. City parks also ranked high in importance, with 91% of respondents ranking them “very important”, again second only to trails which ranked first with 93% of respondents rating them “very important”. At the same time, 88% of respondents said that city parks are “meeting the needs of the community”. In general, the survey indicates that city parks are highly important to residents and that their needs for city parks are being met.

When asked what facilities need to be added, expanded, or improved, open space and natural areas ranked first, with 84% of respondents rating these “very important”. Other items that were rated “very important” by at least 50% of respondents included unpaved trails (77%), paved recreation trails (62%), dog park (57%), additional river access (54%) community gathering space/outdoor event facility (53%), river features, and picnic shelters(50%).

Survey respondents were also asked to prioritize among six options which are most important to develop in the Steamboat area. The highest priority was given to “develop more parks/open space areas in new residential areas”, and the second priority was to “improve existing parks”. It is likely that some people might consider Rita Valentine an “existing park” while others might not consider it to be a park at all.

As for what type of parks people prefer, 91% strongly agreed with the statement “I would like a mixture of parks that incorporates both native and manicured park types”. Seventy-five percent (75%) strongly agreed with the statement “I prefer parks that are more natural with very little manicured grass” while 67% strongly agreed with “I prefer parks that are manicured and have grass in all open areas”. Respondents could agree with both statements and did not have to choose one statement or the other.

Respondents also want to have parks and active recreation opportunities close to home, as evidenced by agreement with the statements “I value having active recreation opportunities in the parks near my home (81%) and “it is important to me to have a park within walking distance of my home” (80%). Respondents were evenly split on whether they value having “large parks with a variety of activities more than small neighborhood parks with fewer activities” (50%).

The survey results, while informative, do not clearly point to a particular course of action for the Rita Valentine site. On the one hand, there is clear support for open space and natural areas. On the other, people also want parks with active recreation opportunities close to home. The split between parks that are manicured and those with very little manicured grass indicates that there is a desire to have both types of parks available in Steamboat Springs. The fact that 88% of respondents feel that the current parks are meeting the community’s needs indicates that there is not currently a pressing need to add additional developed park acreage. However, as the city grows, additional developed park land will be needed if current levels of service are to be maintained.

All of this indicates that, as Steamboat Springs’ only major undeveloped public land in this part of the city, the Rita Valentine and M & H Property sites need to serve a complex blend of public needs and desires now and in the future.

### **Master Plan Recommendations**

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan outlines a series of goals and strategies for the parks and recreation system. The Rita Valentine site may play a role in some of these. For example, **Goal Six** is to **Strengthen Recreational Opportunities**. Part of Strategy 6.1 is to “*fill in programming gaps such as (non sport) adult activities.*” The Rita Valentine site may offer opportunities to provide non-sport adult activities such as walking and running for fitness, nature observation, and recreating with dogs off-leash. **Goal Nine** is to **Plan and Implement Capital Improvements**. Strategy 9.3 calls for preparing new master plans for key parks and facilities in a phased approach over several years, and re-purposing some parks. It also says to “*provide dog park in existing park for the short term, plan for long term location*”. As explained below, the Rita Valentine site could be suitable for either or both the short and long term provision of an off-leash dog area. Strategy 9.4 includes “*ID opportunities to increase LOS, develop undeveloped park sites*”. The Rita Valentine site offers such possibilities. Overall LOS can be increased citywide and within the neighborhood by providing new recreation opportunities at the site.

### **Public Workshop**

To solicit further input on the future of this site, a public workshop was conducted on October 8<sup>th</sup> 2008. More than 20 people attended the workshop. At least half of those present responded by raising their hands when asked if they “can see the Rita Valentine site from their home”. This indicates that there was strong representation from the adjacent neighborhood at this workshop, even though it was held on the northwest side of the city, which is outside of the neighborhood. The fact that there was correspondingly small representation from beyond the neighborhood fits with the survey finding that most people in Steamboat Springs feel that current parks are meeting the needs of the community, so there is no major push to develop more parks right now.

Participants of the workshop expressed strong support for a protecting the natural quality and open space feel of the site, particularly the M & H Property. They showed an interest in connecting this open space to the rest of the community by providing vehicle access and parking lots on both the north and south perimeters of the site, and by providing trails through the site and connecting these to other trails in the community where possible. Other uses suggested from the workshop included trails, natural plantings, art and sculpture, disc golf, and a skate park.

There was significant interest and support for incorporating off-leash dog use into the site. In the public survey conducted earlier, a dog park was ranked as one of the top outdoor recreation facilities needed in Steamboat Springs.

Because of the makeup of its attendees, the workshop should not be considered to represent the desires and expectations of the general citizenry of Steamboat Springs. But given the turnout and enthusiastic participation of those who were there, it likely provides a reliable indicator of the neighborhood’s vision for the site. This vision appears to be a place where opportunities for active and passive recreation can be offered to all of the residents of Steamboat Springs, but where the emphasis is on a naturalized appearance rather than a traditional park setting.



# The Site



## Rita Valentine Concept and Vision

### The Site

The Rita Valentine and M & H Property together provide an opportunity to meet many of the current and future needs for Steamboat Springs identified through the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and other planning processes.



# Existing Conditions



## Existing Conditions

The Rita Valentine and M&H properties have rolling terrain with native grass and plants. Residences back onto the properties and social trails wind throughout.



# Rita Valentine and M&H Boundary

- Protect as Open Space/Park via Ordinance



## Open Space & Park Designation

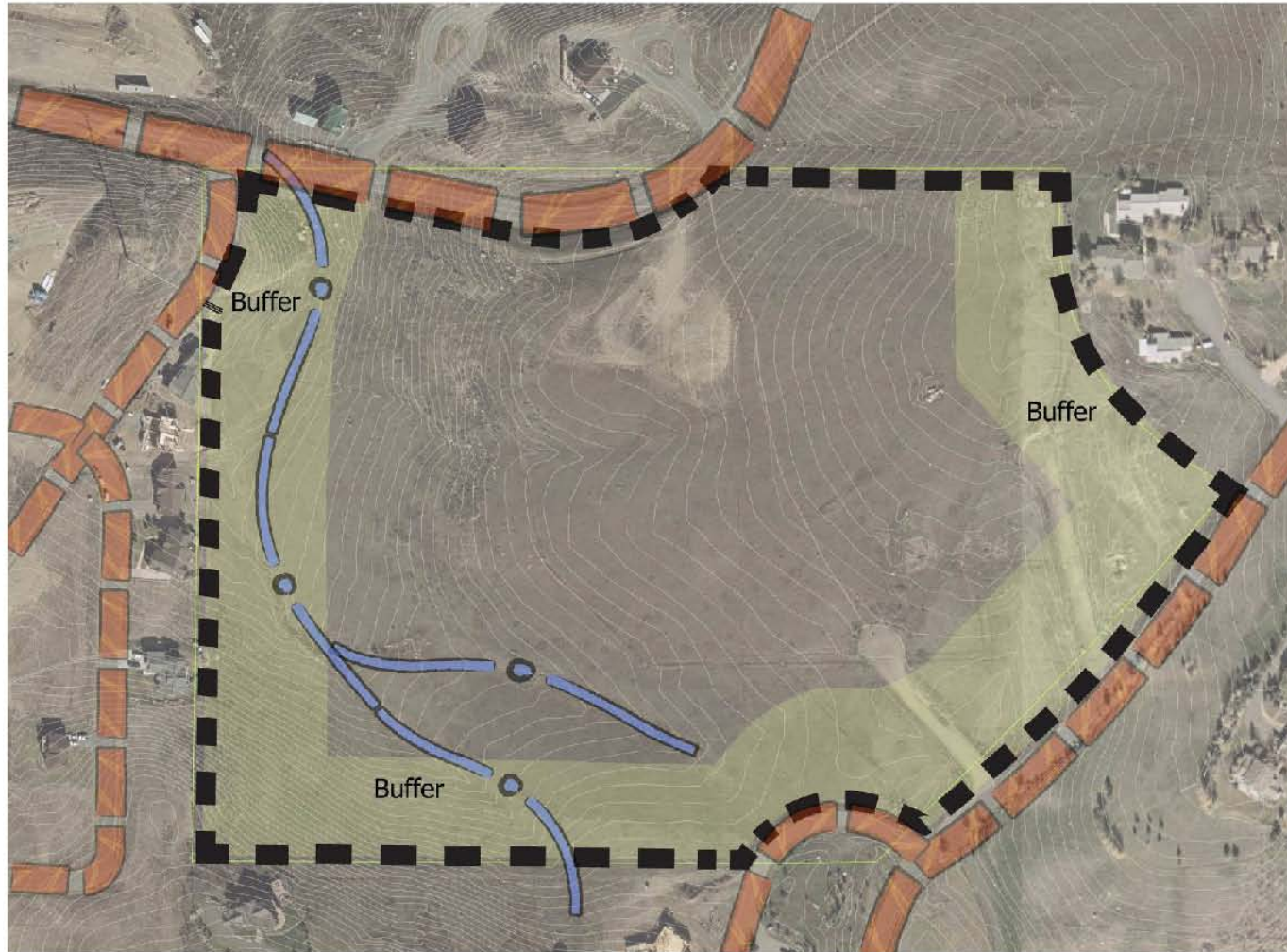
A conceptual design of the park is presented here with short, mid, and long-term actions. The short term plan could begin in 2010 and continue through the year 2014. It includes clarification of the boundary lines and intended functions between Rita Valentine Park and the M & H Property. The M & H Property would become designated open space, while the Rita Valentine site would retain its designation as a park.





# Buffer Areas

Short Term



2008

2010

2014

2019

### Buffer Areas

A buffer area would be designated around the park site to provide separation and a transition from surrounding homes and to enhance the natural aspects of the site.

# Neighbors

# Short Term



2008

2010

2014

2019

### Buffers – Examples of Neighbors

This may include additional naturalized plantings of trees and shrubs that would also provide wildlife habitat similar to the yards of neighboring yards.



# Tree Stands

## Short Term



2008

2010

2014

2019



### Buffers – Tree Stands

This may include additional naturalized plantings of trees and shrubs that would also provide wildlife habitat similar to the yards of neighboring yards.



# Trails

## Short Term



2008

2010

2014

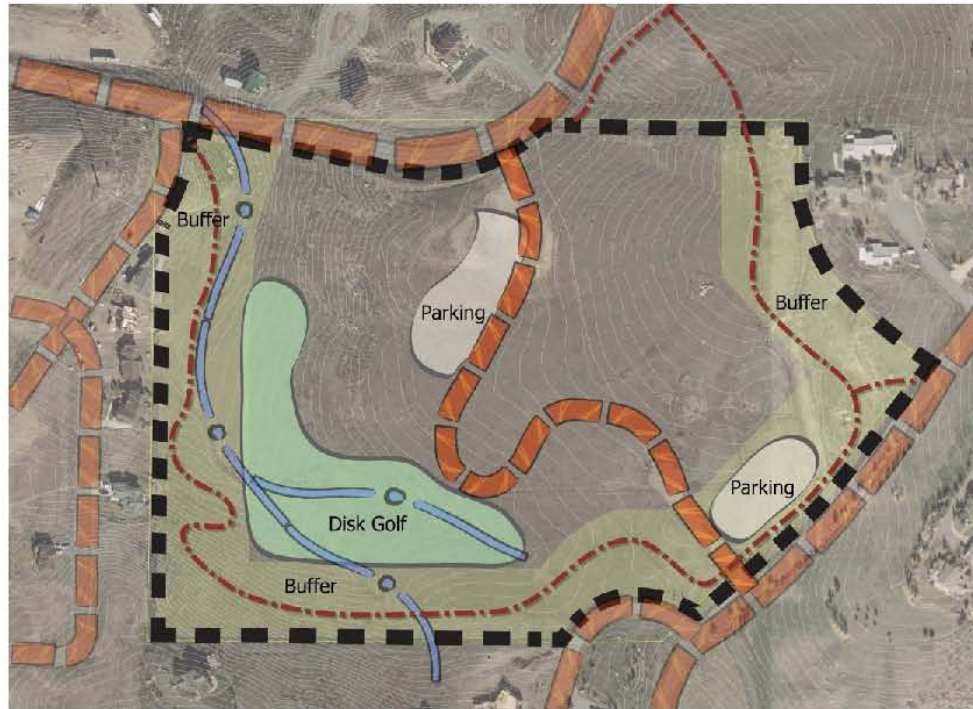
2019

### Trails

The short term plan also includes providing trails within the site with extensions into the open space of the M & H Property. The trails would also connect to surrounding streets.

# Parking Lot Design Development

Mid Range



## Parking and Vehicular Access

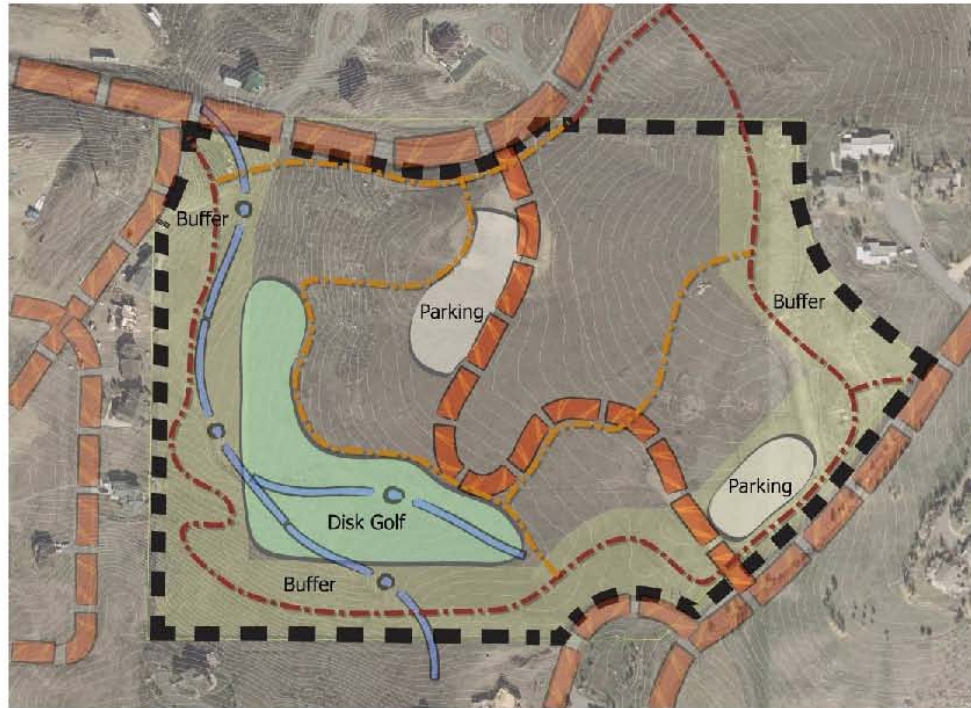
The mid-range plan, running from 2014 until 2019, would see the addition of vehicle access into the site, with parking lots and a connecting road. A disk golf course could also be added at this stage. The disc golf course would retain the naturalized landscape of the site.





# Trail Development

Mid Range



2008

2014

2015

2019

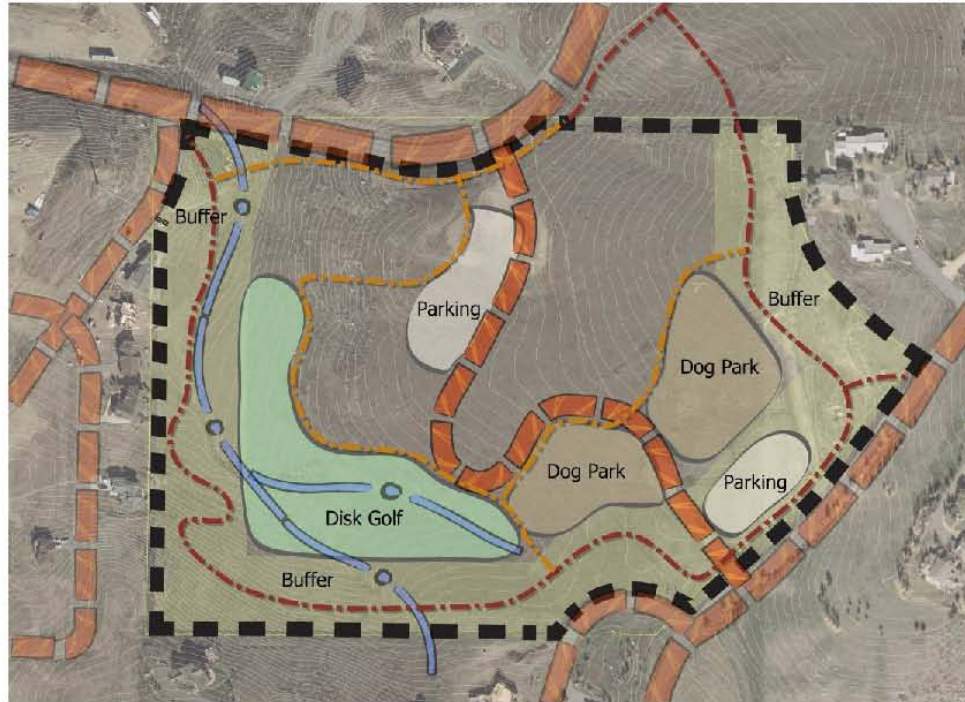
## Trail Development

Trail development during approximately the year 2015 would connect the new parking and disk golf areas to each other and the rest of the site.



# Dog Park

## Mid Range



2008

2014

2016

2019

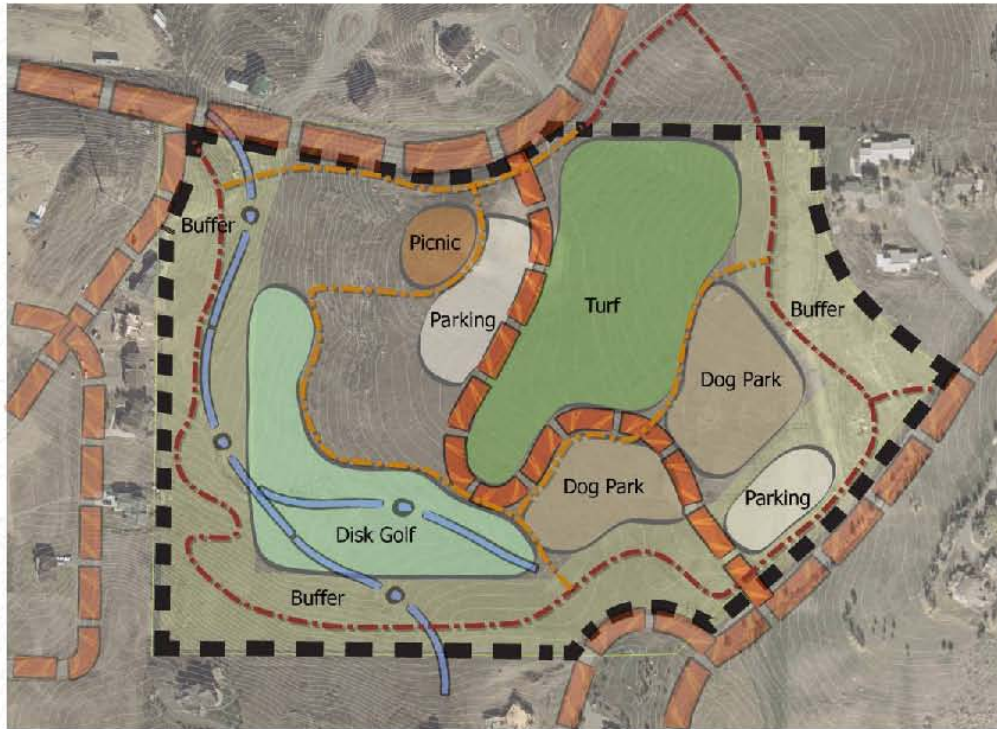
### Dog Park

In 2016 part of the site could become a dog park.



# Developed Park

# Mid Range



2008

2014

2017

2019



### Developed Park

The year 2017 would bring an open turf area and picnic facilities.



# Playground Development

Mid Range



2008

2014

2018

2019

## Playground Development

In 2018, a destination playground adjacent to the parking area and turf area would be added



# Skate Park and Climbing Wall

Mid Range



## Skate Park & Climbing Wall

Also in 2018, a skate park and climbing wall would be added and fill in the area north of the playground.

2008

2014

2018

2019

# Facility

# Long Range



**Indoor Pool**

**Field House**

**2008**

**2014**

**2019**



### Indoor Facility

In the long range plan, beginning ten years from now, indoor facilities could be added to the site, such as an indoor pool, field house, and/or youth and teen activity spaces.



# Facility

# Long Range



## Youth Teen

2008

2014

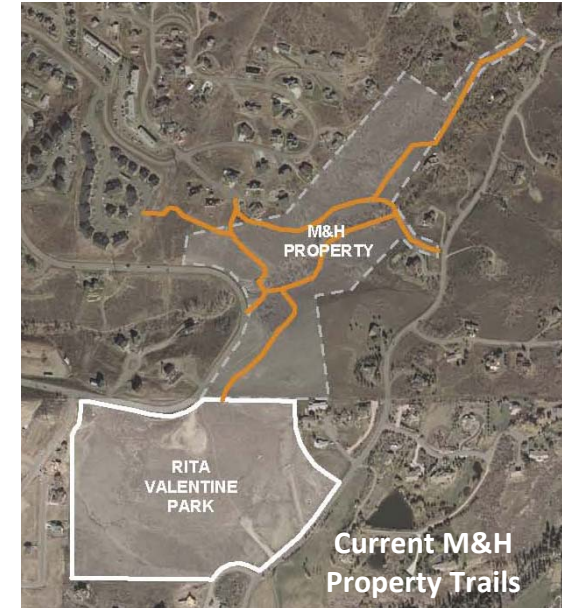
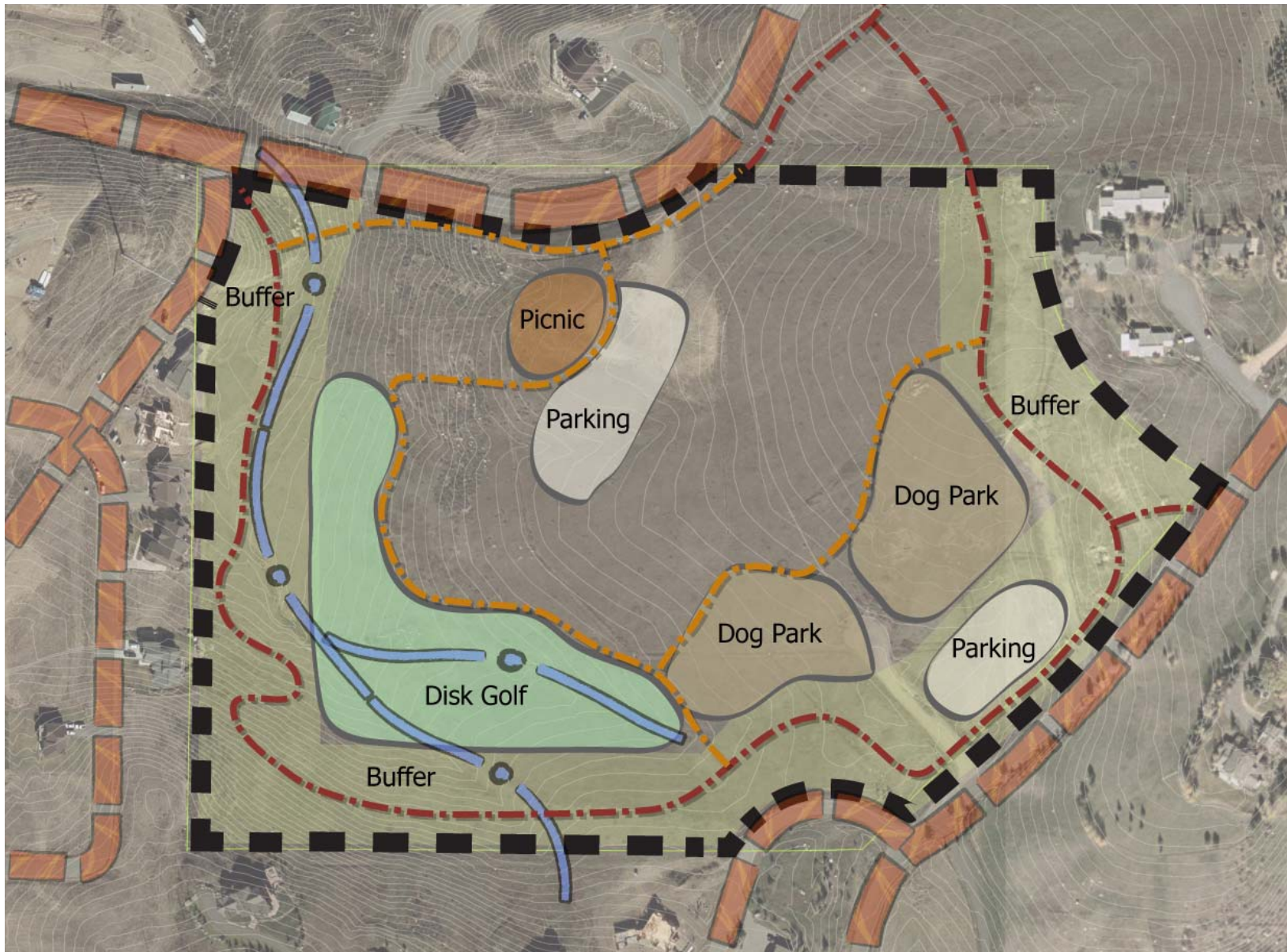
2019



### Conclusion

This is only a concept and not a blueprint for the site. Specific plans would have to be drawn up for each stage, and this would occur through a public process. Funding would also need to be allocated before each stage could proceed. It is likely that the concept will evolve over time as the process continues.





**Next Steps**

The next stages of development for Rita Valentine Park will continue through public process and include Schematic Design, Design Development, and Construction Documents. At the time of this master plan, consensus was built for improvements that emphasize native planting and vegetation, soft surface trails, and passive recreation. The design elements shown on this page reflect these values and are the most immediate improvements that could occur during the first phase of Rita Valentine development. 59 of the 75 acres (78%) shared between the M&H property and the Rita Valentine property are retained as natural and passive features in this design. The direction of and desires for future park features in the remaining undeveloped 16 acres of the site will evolve over time through continued public process in future phases.