



April 9, 2019

Dear Denver Neighbors:

As leading advocates for Denver's public parks, open spaces, trails and waterways, we are writing to express our deep concerns about proposed Initiative 300 appearing on the May 2019 Denver ballot.

While this measure is being framed as one about homelessness, it is, in fact, a sweeping change to how Denver's public places will be used and will likely have devastating impacts on the accessibility, safety and quality of Denver's beloved community spaces. We believe that all people have a right to be in Denver, but that does not mean our parks and open spaces should be made unusable by the public and turned into campgrounds. We have three primary concerns about this proposed policy that we hope Denver voters will consider:

- (1) 300 will fundamentally change the way Denver residents and visitors use parks, open spaces, trails and waterways.** Initiative 300 gives any and all persons in Denver – whether or not they are experiencing homelessness – the right to rest and shelter in all public places and prohibits the City from implementing laws that infringe upon those rights. As a result, people will be able to camp in our parks, parkways, open spaces, and tree lawns in our neighborhoods and along our trails and greenways 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, indefinitely. The City may no longer be able to enforce basic safety laws including park curfews. Further, it will be very difficult, if not all together impossible, for the City, community non-profits and private citizens to host activities in our parks, as they may not be allowed to displace homeless encampments to set up for events. This means that beloved traditions in our community – City Park Jazz, Civic Center Eats, Independence Eve, Colorado Dragon Boat Festival, The Furry Scurry, The Turkey Trot and even Easter Sunrise Services at Red Rocks – may have to be discontinued. Valuable services and programming, such as environmental education experiences for thousands of inner-city youth, would likely come to a halt.
- (2) 300 will bring significant impact without new resources.** Our parks and public places were not designed for human habitation. People living in parks will have significant impacts on trees, plants, water, buildings and infrastructure there. The City will need to spend additional money to collect trash, remove human waste, repair damaged facilities and natural resources impacted by this unintended use. However, 300 provides no new

funding to meet this new demand. Denver voters generously invested in our parks when they approved issue 2A on the November 2018 ballot. We are concerned that those newly approved funds, which were intended to support Denver's parks and open space needs in the face of our community's significant growth and development, will be diverted from their intended purpose to address the impacts of 300.

(3) 300 will lead to environmental damage to fragile waterways and ecosystems. The trash and waste that is produced when large groups of people live together without basic modern infrastructure like running water and toilets can have major impacts on public and environmental health. This is particularly concerning around rivers and waterways and wildlife habitats.

We believe that homelessness is a real challenge for Denver and that thoughtful solutions are needed to ensure our community is a safe, welcoming place for everyone. However, Initiative 300 is not a solution to homelessness – it does nothing to help people experiencing homelessness today or to address the root causes of homelessness in our community. We agree with the Denver Homeless Leadership Council (which includes representation from Denver's prominent homeless service providers such as the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless) that the impacts of 300 "are both detrimental to [people experiencing homelessness] and our community."

This initiative poses a major risk to the accessibility, safety and quality of our parks and open spaces and hinders current efforts to improve and expand them. We urge Denver voters to carefully consider their vote on 300.

Sincerely,

Jeff Shoemaker
The Greenway
Foundation

Scott Robson
Civic Center
Conservancy

Bart Berger
Denver Mountain
Parks Foundation

Kim Yuan-Farrell
The Park People