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Why Denver swapped land near the airport for a former golf course

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The future of Park Hill Golf Course has been decided – almost.

If City Council approves a land swap [announced Wednesday](#) between local developer Westside Investment Partners and the city of Denver, the 155-acre golf course will become a public park.

A date has not been set for the council's vote.

The city proposed trading 145 acres of land at the intersection of East 56th Avenue and North Valley Head Street for the golf course property. The city-owned When asked why the city felt compelled to swap land rather than purchase Park Hill Golf Course from Westside, a spokesperson said exchanging the land is a better investment.

“It is a better investment to exchange land, which is undeveloped and outside Denver, for land inside Denver that we have an immediate use for and that we have already spent years considering what to do with,” said Jon Ewing, marketing and communications specialist for Mayor Mike Johnston’s office.

The former golf course property, 4141 E. 35th Ave., has been [fenced off and closed to the public since 2023](#) when Denver voters rejected repealing a city conservation easement on the land to allow development on parts of the property.

Glendale-based Westside [purchased the former golf course property in 2019 for \\$24 million](#). It intended to add thousands of housing units and commercial developments on half of the property.

Opposition to the proposed development led the city to ultimately swap land near DIA with Westside to open the former golf course to the public.

“The city came to an agreement with Westside because we believe this property can be one of the finest parks in all of Denver,” Ewing said. “Deals like this don’t come along often, or in many cities, ever. Under city ownership, Denver will utilize community

feedback to transform the space into a modern park that will be a crown jewel of the city. That only happens under city ownership.”

If the deal is approved by City Council, what once was a golf course will become “the largest acquisition of a new park to our park system in more than 100 years,” Johnston said Wednesday.

Some fencing will remain around the park for the time being, but Ewing said the city will create entrances. The park is expected to open this summer and unfold in three stages.

In the short term, the city’s Parks & Recreation department will fix broken walkways and trim overgrown bushes and trees. Then, the department will build low-cost amenities that could include picnic tables, a disc golf course, a dog park or walking trails, Ewing said.

The third stage includes creating a long-term vision for the park with community input, Ewing added.

“This deal wasn’t secured in a day and the park won’t be what we want it to be in a day,” he said. “It will take a lot of community input and hard work to make it into the place that neighbors want and deserve. The good news is we aren’t starting from scratch. We have years of feedback to guide us.”

This isn’t Westside’s first time owning land near the airport. Over the years, it has sold several plots of land near DIA and along the E-470 corridor.

In 2022, Westside sold [152 acres to PepsiCo Inc.](#) for \$49 million and a plot of land [east of the Gaylord Rockies Resort & Convention Center for \\$4.8 million](#). In 2020, Westside [sold 125 acres](#) in the area to a development group for an industrial and logistics park.

It is unclear what Westside plans to do with the 145 acres near the airport.

land is in Adams County, south of the Denver International Airport.