

Harvard Gulch – Meeting Comments & Responses

#1

1. More lights all along the path
2. Remove, cut back or clear some of the evergreen trees along the path between Milwaukee and Steele - there are many potential hiding spots for predators (human and wild)
3. Even out the path - it dips and tilts in places between Milwaukee and Steele
4. Smooth out the surface all along the path
5. Make the transitions from path to street more gradual for bikes, wheelchairs and strollers - currently the path goes from path to street with a deep drop off at every intersection from Adams to Jackson
6. Add crosswalk stripes and signs on the roads where the path crosses a neighborhood street - I believe this includes all streets from University to Colorado. The path from University to Downing has crosswalk stripes and signs on every intersection.

Response

We want to thank you for your input on the Urban Waterways Restoration Feasibility Study. We received the following comments below, and they will be considered as a part of the study:

1. More lights all along the path
2. Remove, cut back or clear some of the evergreen trees along the path between Milwaukee and Steele - there are many potential hiding spots for predators (human and wild)
3. Even out the path - it dips and tilts in places between Milwaukee and Steele
4. Smooth out the surface all along the path
5. Make the transitions from path to street more gradual for bikes, wheelchairs and strollers - currently the path goes from path to street with a deep drop off at every intersection from Adams to Jackson
6. Comment #6 is outside of the scope of this study. However, Transportation staff is currently conducting a mid-block crossing study to address needed pedestrian crossings at mid-block intersections. Included in this study are trail crossings; we will be identifying a way to address crossing needs at such locations, prioritizing these locations for installation, and ensuring that such crossings are consistent in nature for entire trail systems.

#2

Frustration with a pond on the HG Golf Course that is dried up and a mess. They want it filled back up again.

Response

Currently Denver Parks & Recreation is working on an agreement with Denver Water to convert the golf course & the park to use reclaimed water for irrigation. This conversion would allow the pond to sustain more of a permanent pool.

We are hoping that the agreement with Denver Water will go smoothly. In addition, this conversion will need to be approved by City Council, and Parks is hopeful that they will get approval sometime this summer. From there Parks & Recreation will move into the design phase, and then construction.

We are moving forward and making progress, however at this point we are uncertain of a timeframe for construction due to unknown of how long it will be till the agreement with Denver Water is final and if City Council will approve the conversion.

#3

We recently have walked the Harvard Gulch Trail from S. Colo. Blvd to S. University (and beyond). It was a great walk, well traveled and for the most part attractive, but certainly can use some additional care and landscape. We saw wild life (ducks, muskrat). We agree that Harvard Gulch East Park (at S.Jackson St.) is a lovely natural area, and needs to be a designated park. In fact, there is a wish that the entire trail become designated to preserve it officially.

Response

We want to thank you for your input on the Urban Waterways Restoration Feasibility Study and the importance of habitat to you. Thank you for sharing your first hand experience from walking the Harvard Gulch Trail. As a part of this study we will be looking into recommending improvements that will promote habitat restoration. That section of the trail is on the list for designation. It does take some time to go through the process. But Parks is looking into it, it could be a few years though.

The City's Department of Environmental Health is supportive of improvements that create opportunities for active, healthy lifestyles, but does not recommend swimming in any surface water body in Denver (wading, fishing, and boating are ok). Swimming in the lakes and streams in Denver is prohibited by Division 2, Section 24-9 of the Denver Revised Municipal Code. We hope someday it will be safe to swim in the City's streams and lakes, but for now, it is not. This study is a step in the right direction to helping us get closer to achieving that goal.

#4

I have just been thinking how nice it is that we have this trail and how it can be a wonderful asset to youngsters on bikes and how much better it could be if the curbs at the street crossing could be replaced with lay down ramps. This of course would also make it wheelchair accessible. Is this issue part of the discussion at the meeting? Also do you know anything about whether the curb situation will be discussed? I emailed Liz Adams to see if she had an opinion on this before casting my vote - no response. Do you know which candidate would be more likely to support this project? Just curious because I think it should be done and the trail should be improved as it is a great asset to our community.

Response

USACE Provided Response: Things like this will be taken into consideration during the study and we always welcome this type of input. Whether it can be addressed or not I couldn't say at this point. It will depend on the alternative we choose and how it relates to the existing trail.

#5

Need more natural buffers/riparian habitat areas along Harvard Gulch, north of Logan. Also, I strongly believe that creating environmental education opportunities, both in the gulches and along the river, should be one of the main goals of the entire project.

Response

We want to thank you for your input on the Urban Waterways Restoration Feasibility Study and the importance of flooding, visual appearance, habitat, water quality and recreation to you.

Thank you for your specific comment about needing more natural buffers along Harvard Gulch a north of Logan. We are aligned with your comment about creating environmental education opportunities. This will be strongly considered in some of the study recommendations.

The City's Department of Environmental Health is supportive of improvements that create opportunities for active, healthy lifestyles, but does not recommend swimming in any surface water body in Denver (wading, fishing, and boating are ok). Swimming in the lakes and streams in Denver is prohibited by Division 2, Section 24-9 of the Denver Revised Municipal Code. We hope someday it will be safe to swim in the City's streams and lakes, but for now, it is not. This study is a step in the right direction to helping us get closer to achieving that goal.

#6

Harvard Gulch Trail is very poor for biking because of deteriorated pavement and multiple street crossings. Many sections of the gulch should be restored to a natural habitat including wetlands. This would improve quality of water draining into S. Platte River.

A related project in the area is the Urban Rivers study of Bear Creek, which shows elevated ecoli between Bear Creek Lake and the S. Platte River. Harvard Gulch probably has the same problem. I serve on the stewardship group for that project (led by Rachel Hansgen) and also the water quality committee of the Rocky Mtn Sierra Club. I am also involved with the Water Quality Forum organized by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. That group would definitely be interested in opportunities for improving water quality in these stream and river segments.

In addition to improving the trail for recreation, an effort should be made to connect it to the S. Platte Bikeway and the Highline Canal Trail.

Response

We want to thank you for your input on the Urban Waterways Restoration Feasibility Study and the importance of habitat, water quality and recreation to you. At this time, we will consider including improvements to the roadway crossings for the bike paths if they are tied to other flood risk reduction improvements. As part of another project, transportation staff is currently conducting a mid-block crossing study to address needed pedestrian crossings at mid-block intersections. Included in this study are trail crossings; we will be identifying a way to address crossing needs at such locations, prioritizing

these locations for installation, and ensuring that such crossings are consistent in nature for entire trail systems.

The City's Department of Environmental Health does sample Harvard Gulch at the confluence with the South Platte River once a quarter. It does have elevated E. coli levels and is on the State's 303(d) list as impaired for its uses by E. coli.

The City's Department of Environmental Health is supportive of improvements that create opportunities for active, healthy lifestyles, but does not recommend swimming in any surface water body in Denver (wading, fishing, and boating are ok). Swimming in the lakes and streams in Denver is prohibited by Division 2, Section 24-9 of the Denver Revised Municipal Code. We hope someday it will be safe to swim in the City's streams and lakes, but for now, it is not. This study is a step in the right direction to helping us get closer to achieving that goal.

#7

Would like to get Harvard Gulch done so can get storm sewer fixed in Yale Ave between I-25 and Colorado Blvd. If one option is to do offline detention, use Bible Park as a good example how a park may serve as detention.

Response

We want to thank you for your input on the Urban Waterways Restoration Feasibility Study and the importance of flooding and maintenance to you.

Thank you for your support in reducing the flood risk in Harvard Gulch, and the suggestion of using Bible Park as a good example of detention.

#8

Harvard Gulch path - curbs block access to the trail and when crossing the streets. (Downing to Colorado Blvd)

Response

Thank you for your input on limited access for Harvard Gulch trail from Downing to Colorado. Improving the wheelchair and bike accessibility along the trail is something that this study will be looking into.

#9

Stream restoration would be great!

Response

We want to thank you for your input on the Urban Waterways Restoration Feasibility Study and the importance of visual appearance, access, habitat, water quality, stream restoration and recreation to you.

The City's Department of Environmental Health is supportive of improvements that create opportunities for active, healthy lifestyles, but does not recommend swimming in any surface water body in Denver (wading, fishing, and boating are ok). Swimming in the lakes and streams in Denver is prohibited by Division 2, Section 24-9 of the Denver Revised Municipal Code. We hope someday it will be safe to swim in the City's streams and lakes, but for now, it is not. This study is a step in the right direction to helping us get closer to achieving that goal.

#10

Near my house, Harvard Gulch has the potential to be something special, but is nothing more than a glorified drainage ditch. Specifically, I would like to see some level of dedicated path along the gulch that eliminates at least some of the street crossings (e.g. under University Blvd).

Response

We want to thank you for your input on the Urban Waterways Restoration Feasibility Study and the importance of access, habitat, and recreation to you.

This study will be looking into improving the experience of the Harvard Gulch trail biking, walking, running etc... It will also be looking into naturalizing the channel and reducing the amount of structural concrete used to line the bottom.

#11

I would like the concrete portion of Harvard Gulch replaced with something that can support habitat and allow people to get down closer to the water. In a recent storm it was very apparent that the water draining into the channel (between University and Downing) was very dirty, I am interested in how either Harvard Gulch or somewhere upstream water quality can be addressed. In addition, many portions of the Harvard gulch trail are not ADA accessible, including many of the crosswalks. This is a heavily utilized trail that with some more work would become an even greater amenity for the neighborhood.

Response

We want to thank you for your input on the Urban Waterways Restoration Feasibility Study and the importance of visual appearance, access, habitat, water quality and recreation to you.

The City's Department of Environmental Health is supportive of improvements that create opportunities for active, healthy lifestyles, but does not recommend swimming in any surface water body in Denver (wading, fishing, and boating are ok). Swimming in the lakes and streams in Denver is prohibited by Division 2, Section 24-9 of the Denver Revised Municipal Code. We hope someday it will be safe to swim

in the City's streams and lakes, but for now, it is not. This study is a step in the right direction to helping us get closer to achieving that goal.

This study will be looking into naturalizing the concrete portions of Harvard Gulch to improve access and support habitat. Ecosystem restoration (one of our goals for the study) and water quality often are bi-products of each other. The City's Water Quality program manager is involved in this study and where we can the City would like to identify areas that would need water quality improvements to help restore the health of the waterway.

In addition, improving the wheelchair and bike accessibility along the trail is something that this study will be looking into.

#12

Harvard Gulch is a "hidden gem" of a park that is used by many in the surrounding neighborhood. It would be so great to get rid of the solid concrete ditch in the upper sections, if possible. Thank you for asking for comment. I was out of town during the time the public meeting was held.

Response

We want to thank you for your input on the Urban Waterways Restoration Feasibility Study and the importance of visual appearance, access, habitat, water quality and recreation to you.

This study will be looking into naturalizing the concrete portions of Harvard Gulch to improve access and support habitat.

#13

Harvard Gulch Park is heavily used. It is the GEM of our Rosedale neighborhood. Many people choose to live here because of the recreation in our parks. After a hard rain, the Gulch runs very high and fast. I would like to know how protected we are from the 100-year flood. In the parks, the gulch is natural looking, but through neighborhoods, it is quite unattractive with significant areas of large concrete retaining walls with lots of graffiti. I would also like to see more bird and water wildlife in our gulch.

Response

Thank you for your input on the Urban Waterways Restoration Feasibility Study and indicating the importance of flooding, visual appearance, access, habitat, water quality and recreation.

#14

The trail along Harvard Gulch from Colorado Blvd to University Blvd is very old and in poor shape. It zigzags from one side of the gulch to the other each block, and there are few curb ramps at the street crossings. My family and I would personally like to see some trail improvements as an early action item for improvement. We realize there are some broader goals regarding flooding and the natural habitat,

but the trail is one component that requires far less money to improve and could be started today. If possible, it would be great to see the recommended alternative include a list of "low hanging fruit" that could be implemented immediately with local funds, at a lower cost, and without negatively impacting the overall long-term goals for the gulch. We feel that trail improvements such as a continuous concrete path and curb ramps could easily be one of those early improvements.

We would also like to see specific attention paid to each end of the trail through University Park. At Colorado Blvd, a design that works with the YMCA it provide access to/from the Y and Colorado Blvd would be a great benefit to the neighborhood and the YMCA. At University Blvd, a mid-block pedestrian signal or a traditional signal at Vassar Avenue is an important safety component for bikes and pedestrians between the neighborhoods.

Response

Thank you for your input on the Urban Waterways Restoration Feasibility Study and indicating the importance of recreation.

As the study develops, we plan on prioritizing the planned improvements. I imagine that Some of the high benefit, low cost projects could occur early in the implementation phase which follows this feasibility study.

In many places, the maintenance access roads for gulch improvements serve double-duty as trails. There is a high likelihood that in some areas we will need to realign the existing trails to accommodate wider channel sections for flood risk reduction. In these cases, general, it is better to improve the waterway with flood risk reduction improvements and incorporate the related trail improvements with gulch improvements. In other cases where channel widening is not needed, it may be possible to improve the trails independently as you suggest. then add the trails, because . Once the study is far enough along to produce a plan for the improvements, the project team will the CCD could look into the timing and phasing of all the improvements in order to ensure improvements are not made only to be torn up a short time later with a larger project. . where gulch improvements need to be coordinated with maintenance access road/trail dual use, A related consideration will be how many years it would be to implement the flood risk reduction improvements, and might consider small improvements to the trails if there was a large gap from the start of the implementation phase to the end of the program.

We will consider trail connection from the YMCA as you suggest and we will talk with the Public Works-Transportation and Mobility Team and the Corps of Engineers and Urban Drainage and Flood Control District about improving the crossing at S. University.. Thank you for your comments.

#15

I live in the University Park/Observatory Park neighborhood. Right now the "creek" is an eyesore. The path is broken up everywhere, dangerous to use and ugly to look at. It could very well be a feature of the neighborhood and another reason to love the neighborhood. We are in desperate need of a safe bike path from West to East and this should be the location! I would love to know more about plans for the project. Thanks for your work on the project.

Response

Thank you for your input on the Urban Waterways Restoration Feasibility Study and indicating the importance of visual appearance and recreation.

The second round of public meetings will address your question about what types of alternatives we are considering to improve the safety, reduce the flood risk, and improve the habitat and ecology of this waterway including the issues of the existing trails that you raise.

#16

I think it's a great resource as is, but always in need of improvement. In particular, I think crossings of the gulch trail/walkways across streets is a challenge. There aren't many ADA-compliant connections, minimal striping, or wayfinding/safety signage, particularly between Colorado Boulevard and University.

Response

Thank you for your input on the Urban Waterways Restoration Feasibility Study and indicating the importance of flooding, visual appearance, access, maintenance, habitat, water quality and recreation.

We will consider adding more ADA-compliant pedestrian and bicycle-friendly connections to the trail system as you suggested.

#17

I'm mostly concerned about the walking trail along the gulch between Jackson St. and University Blvd. I'd really like to see improvements to this for safety and convenience -- ramps from the trail to the streets, to cross the streets easier for strollers and bikes; crosswalks or crossing signs across the streets; more and better lighting, especially in the park; a level or smoother surface; trash cleanup in the gulch; and doggie clean up bags and trash collection in the park and neighborhood like they have in Lowry and Stapleton

Response

Thank you for your input on the Urban Waterways Restoration Feasibility Study and indicating the importance of recreation.

We will consider using Stapleton and Lowry as an example trail system for the development of the Harvard Gulch alternatives.

#18

I prefer a natural area that supports a wide variety of vegetation and opportunities for learning more about nature, not regularly mowed down.

Response

Thank you for your input on the Urban Waterways Restoration Feasibility Study and indicating the importance of visual appearance, access, habitat, and recreation.

Your comment is regarding one of the primary goals of the study and will be shared with the Corps of Engineers as well as the Urban Drainage and Flood Control District.

#19

The Harvard Gulch trail is heavily used, but is really hard for strollers, bikes and handicapped accessibility. It would add great value to the neighborhood to increase the floodplain and provide a path for the community.

Response

Thank you for your input on the Urban Waterways Restoration Feasibility Study and indicating the importance of flooding, habitat, water quality and recreation.

Reducing the flood risk and improving safe connectivity are some of the primary goals of the study.

#20

Safety and aesthetic concerns with the waterway regarding stagnant water, breeding ground for bugs (mosquitoes), associated odors and appearance. Not an amenity for the kids to enjoy/explore. Would like to see the flood control measures handled in a more natural way (i.e. not with concrete channels, etc).

Response

Thank you for your input on the Urban Waterways Restoration Feasibility Study and indicating the importance of visual appearance, habitat, water quality and recreation.

Reducing the flood risk while naturalizing the waterway is one of the primary goals of the study. We are aware of the sedimentation and ponding issues in various locations of Harvard Gulch especially in the vicinity of S Madison Street and these have been shared with the Corps of Engineer and the Urban Drainage and Flood Control District.

#21

Thanks for the information. Interesting that there are traffic people looking into the possibility of perhaps a self activated light at the crossing of the Harvard Gulch Trail at S. University Blvd. For anyone using this trail to be able to continue directly in either direction across S. University, the pedestrian crossing light is the only way safely to avoid a considerable detour to a traffic light. I can't see the city putting in a center-island for getting part way across and waiting for the next chance to continue- not very safe anyway. Nor is an overpass or underpass likely!

Are the people investigating this from Public Works, Parks, or ?? We are very interested in getting such a self-activated light for Buchtel Blvd. Trail as well, where people sometimes wait (seemingly) forever to get across to/from the Buchtel Trail, usually with small children, dogs, sometimes canes and walkers. There is only one traffic light between S. University and S. Colorado Blvd.

Also, some sort of identifying sign is needed at S. Jackson St. for Harvard Gulch East Park at Harvard Gulch Trail.

Response

Thank you for your input on the Urban Waterways Restoration Feasibility Study.

When the alternatives are developed, there will be coordination with traffic in public works. Currently Parks & Public Works -Wastewater Capital Projects Management are the lead Project managers of this feasibility study, and we are updating other agencies across the City for the review of the alternatives.

These comments have been submitted to our network connectivity project managers in the Public Works Transportation and Mobility Team.

#22

Generally prefer boulders and riprap over concrete. I also like crusher fine trails, although I understand people biking or walking with strollers would disagree.

Response

Thank you for your input on the Urban Waterways Restoration Feasibility Study and indicating the importance of visual appearance, access, maintenance, habitat, water quality and recreation.

Reducing the flood risk while naturalizing the waterway is one of the primary goals of the study. We will share your comments with the Corps of Engineers as well as the Urban Drainage and Flood Control District so that they can be considered in the development of alternatives and costs.

Harvard Gulch – Map Comments & Responses

Recreation/Trails (C: Comment / R: Response)

C: Connection (pedestrian/bike) between parks and South Platte Greenway.

R: All options will be initially considered, including better river access

C: Keep the ballfields at Harvard Gulch Park

R: Thank you for this. This study will likely not consider removing the ball fields.

C: Bike path "Gateway" feature at major intersections (See Sanderson Gulch at Jewell)

R: All options will be initially considered, including better river access

C: Trail does not have ADA ramps at street crossings - needs crosswalks and curb laydowns at each crossing. (@ Milwaukee St. near McWilliams Park)

R: All options will be initially considered, including better river access for ADA

C: Perhaps tie to multi-modal transportation plan - May also serve as an east-west bike trail from Colorado Blvd. to Broadway? (@ Harvard Gulch in general)

R: All options will be initially considered, including better river access

C: High desire for continuous trail (rather than existing zig-zag) curb ramps, and a smooth concrete trail. (from Jackson to Adams St. east of McWilliams Park)

R: This is one of the primary goals of the study.

C: Coordinate with YMCA Development for trail connection between Jackson and Colorado Blvd.

R: All options will be initially considered, including better river access

C: Walk Denver - Look into separation of paths to improve safety for walkers runners, bikers. Look at what other cities have done. MSP trails around lakes, Eugene OR along river, etc.

R: All options will be initially considered, including better river access

C: Some of these intersections lack curb cuts for easy bike access (@ from S. Lafayette St. to S. Williams St.)

R: All options will be initially considered, including better river access

C: Need pedestrian connection east (@ S. Jackson St.)

R: All options will be initially considered, including better river access

Ecological Restoration (C: Comment / R: Response)

C: Daylighting opportunity? (@ from Harvard Gulch Park to South Platte River)

C: Mosquitoes (@ Harvard Gulch Park east)

C: Cement culvert that is trash strewn (@ S. Corona St.)

R: The City's Department of Environmental Health is partnering with The Greenway Foundation to decrease the challenges of trash in the South Platte River and its tributaries, including outreach and engagement efforts to help Denver's citizens understand that "trash in my neighborhood = trash in my waterways". Efforts are also underway with local colleges and universities to engage students in a competition to create trash removal devices that can be placed in these urban waterways. This effort was inspired by Baltimore's innovative and successful trash wheel.

C: Restoration (from S. Downing St. to DeBoer Park)

R: Thank you for this input

C: Steep banks (@ Harvard Gulch in SE corner of the park)

R: Thank you for this input

C: Improve channel (@ Harvard Gulch Park west)

R: Thank you for this input, this is one of the study's primary goals.

C: As planning continues to improve water quality/habitat - look into paths (hard and soft) Also, I think about having development along waterway ROW intersect w/dev. Make the river look welcoming and increase safety.

R: This is one of the primary goals of the study

C: Unnatural channeling of Harvard Gulch. Would be great to get more natural habitat and riparian buffering (for flood mitigation and wildlife) (@ west end of Harvard Gulch Park)

R: This is one of the primary goals of the study

C: Invasive bird species (@ Harvard Gulch in general)

R: Thank you for this input

Flooding | (C: Comment / R: Response)

C: Building at intersection of Colorado Blvd. and Yale flooded years ago

R: At the NE corner of S. Colorado Blvd & E Yale (2696 S Colorado Blvd), David Krickbaum noted flooding.

The City and County of Denver spoke with him on 5-14-2015 for clarification:

It was at least 13 years ago, happened on a weekend and cars in the parking lot on the NE corner of S Colorado Blvd and E Yale Avenue were flooded. They came back to work on Monday morning and saw debris lines on the cars. The building just east of the parking lot did not have flooding to his knowledge.

C: Church at Eudora St. has flooded

R: Thank you for reporting this. The City's Storm Drainage Master Plan identifies the need to make the storm drain bigger in Yale Avenue. Before that can be done the system downstream needs to be enlarged and that is more than 20 years away. In the interim, floodproofing measures should be implemented. In a few years, there will be a storm drain improvement project called E Yale Avenue Storm-Phase 1 which will intercept runoff at the sump in Glencoe, south of Yale and discharge it on Yale Avenue west of Eudora/downstream of the church. This may help somewhat, but floodproofing measures should be implemented until the entire system is upgraded.

Miscellaneous | (C: Comment / R: Response)

C: Can we get answers to our questions? How do we get these answers out to everyone?

R: You can submit questions through the website denverwaterways.com, and the responses will be posted online

C: Concern about time to construct - would we be denying ourselves access to a beautiful amenity to only make small improvements/benefits??

R: The duration of construction is not yet determined, but it will be worthwhile to wait a few months or even a year in order for these improvements to be constructed.

C: Pump house (@ NW corner of Harvard Gulch Park pond)

R: Thank you for pointing this out as a potential utility conflict.

C: Need the pond back! (@ Harvard Gulch Park)

R: Denver Water and Parks & Recreation is currently working together to be able to restore this pond so that it will have a permanent pool.

C: In Harvard Gulch / Golf Course - Pond's been dry about 5 years

R: Denver Water and Parks & Recreation are currently working together to be able to restore this pond so that it will have a permanent pool.