



COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

CITY COUNCIL of SALT LAKE CITY

TO: City Council Members

FROM: Allison Rowland
Senior Budget & Policy Analyst

DATE: September 17, 2024

RE: INFORMATIONAL: EMERALD RIBBON ACTION PLAN UPDATE

Item Schedule:

Briefing: September 17, 2024

Public Hearing: n/a

Potential Action: m/a

ISSUE AT-A-GLANCE

The Administration transmitted an update on its *Emerald Ribbon Action Plan*, which will guide implementation of capital investment, operations, and maintenance along the Jordan River Corridor. This area runs approximately 10 miles—the length of the Jordan River within Salt Lake City. It includes adjacent City-owned open spaces, totaling 772 acres of natural areas, parks, golf, and the Regional Athletic Complex. Through the Action Plan, the Department of Public Lands aims to develop “a community-supported vision for the corridor and the critical tools [it] will need to bring that vision to life over the next 10- 20 years.” This includes policy and planning recommendations, a prioritized and phased list for capital improvements along the river, and guidelines for operations and management. The update concentrates on public engagement, a proposed framework for the final plan, and five site concept designs for existing or future investment.

The Department plans to transmit the final plan to the Council later this year, and will begin the first phase of improvements using \$9 million from the 2022 Parks General Obligation (GO) Bond. An [Existing Conditions Report](#) for the *Emerald Ribbon Action Plan* was completed in December 2023. This report helped form the basis for the public engagement efforts, which were supported by the [Emerald Ribbon Plan](#) website.

Goal of the briefing: Review and discuss updates on the *Emerald Ribbon Action Plan*.



ADDITIONAL AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- A. **Public Engagement.** In the past year, the Department has worked with over 1,000 Westside residents, organizations, and river-users more broadly, to help ensure the plan meets the priorities of the communities it will serve. There were three phases of public engagement which ranged from focus group discussions with technical and community experts, to diverse resident groups and community leaders, public workshops, and surveys. From these conversations, the Department identified the following priorities:

“The key takeaways from this round of engagement were that people want to prioritize care for nature, would love to see an enhanced trail system, want to encourage activation in a thoughtful and sustainable way, and think that safety is a top concern.”

- B. **Framework for the Final Plan.** The goals and framework for the final Emerald Ribbon Plan were developed from the guiding principles identified through public engagement. The Department will use them to organize the recommendations in the final plan. The goals are:

1. Celebrate the rich ecological and cultural diversity of the corridor.
2. Connect the corridor into surrounding streets, trails, and waterways.
3. Cultivate collective care of the corridor.
4. Restore and enhance the river ecosystem as a peaceful refuge.
5. Activate the corridor to create a safe, vibrant destination.

- C. **Five Site Concept Designs for Investment.** More detailed concept designs were developed for five sites along the Jordan River corridor. Some of the high priority projects will be completed at each of these sites in the next three to five years using 2022 GO Bond funding, but the long-term completion of these designs would depend on the availability of funding in the future (see section D below). The sites are:

- Rose Park Nature area: 1000 North to the Rose Park Golf Course clubhouse and bridge.
- Cottonwood Park area: at approximately 300 to 500 North.
- Fairpark Urban Core area: North Temple to 200 South.
- Bend in the River and Modesto Park area: Fremont Avenue to Three Creeks Confluence Park.
- Glendale Oxbow area: between the future Glendale Park and 2100 South.

Concept descriptions and designs for each of these areas are included in the transmittal, on pages 6 to 15. The concept designs for the Rose Park Nature area and the Cottonwood Park area include proposals to change the levee on the west side of the Jordan River, north of North Temple. The levee protects hundreds of Westside homes from flood, and the Department states that it is working closely with the Public Utilities Department and Salt Lake County to find “appropriate, thoughtful, and efficient approaches to improve the levee and minimize flood risk.”

- In the past, plans for public lands have set community expectations for City actions, and corresponding budget expenditures. ***The Council might wish to consider whether “concept designs” differ from “plans” in terms of committing the City to future spending.***
- ***The transmittal lists the Fisher Mansion as part of the Fairpark Urban Core area, but it does not appear to include the Mansion itself as part of the Emerald Ribbon Plan. Would the Council like to request an update on plans for the Fisher Mansion from the Administration?***

D. **Funding the Emerald Ribbon Action Plan.** The Council allocated \$9 million for capital improvements for the Emerald Ribbon project from the General Obligation (GO) bond that was approved by City voters in November 2022. The Department has supplemented this amount with \$1.5 million in CIP and impact fees, so far. The transmittal states:

“...with the support of the City Council, future funding requests for capital and O&M improvements will be made strategically through CIP (general fund and impact fees), state and federal grants, and other opportunities as they become available.”

Estimated costs for additional staffing and programming are not yet included in this version of the Emerald Ribbon Action Plan. An operations and maintenance report is also planned, to set policy recommendations and maintenance practices for achieving the goal of a more naturalized corridor. The report will evaluate and streamline existing work on the corridor, including allocation of staff, time, and resources. It will also identify major partners internal and external to the City that could take part in partnerships and agreements for improved maintenance on the river.

➤ ***The Council may wish to ask whether the Administration intends to expand the Park Ranger program to provide coverage to the Emerald Ribbon.***

E. **Next Steps.** The Department has continued work on the Emerald Ribbon Plan throughout the summer and intends to have a full draft of the Action Plan ready for Council review in October. Along with the plan, the Department is working on maintenance and operations guidelines that will support the implementation and long-term care of these projects. The goal is for the final plan to be released by the end of 2024.