A Connection To Nature Close to Home

The Montbello Open Space & ELK Education Center will protect and nurture two of our greatest assets – our children and our environment –creating a healthier and more vibrant community for all.

The Challenge
Studies show that low-income, underserved, urban neighborhoods are at substantial disadvantage when it comes to safe parks and natural open spaces. A neighborhood without inviting outdoor space that supports and encourages play and a child’s innate desire to learn is an empty place.

For children and families living in Montbello – one of Denver’s most economically distressed communities – many kids play in the cement storm drainage canals running through the streets rather than in the few traditional parks that do exist.

When a person has to leave his or her neighborhood to experience nature, they develop the impression that nature is always something “out there,” not part of their reality.

Lack of access leaves distressed areas at an additional disadvantage by limiting exposure to potential interests and careers; to physical activity and play; to discovery of themselves and their world.

The Vision
Environmental Learning for Kids, The Trust for Public Land, and Denver Parks and Recreation are working together to transform a once neglected property into a natural open space and outdoor learning laboratory.

In 2012, The Trust for Public Land acquired the 5½ property for Denver to be incorporated into its park network. Since this time, partners have been working tirelessly to transform the site into natural open space. A vacant lot will be transformed into a short grass prairie ecosystem with outdoor classroom, walking paths, nature play areas, and green infrastructure.

A new education center will be built on one acre of the property that once completed, will house ELK’s education programs and many other community services. ELK will manage the open space to provide the community with unparalleled science education and outdoor experiences.
Environmental Learning for Kids – For almost two decades, ELK has been cultivating a passion in science, leadership, and service for a diverse community of learners. ELK’s programs introduce, immerse, educate, and mentor youth from ages 5-25, shaping our future leaders and engaged citizens of tomorrow.

The Trust for Public Land – Since 1972, The Trust for Public Land has been changing the face of cities across America, creating parks, planting gardens, and protecting natural lands. In Colorado, we apply our national expertise to local challenges ensuring that city dwellers – in particular those living in park-poor and disadvantaged communities – have all the benefits that parks provide.

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The Montbello Open Space & ELK Education Center will transform this neighborhood, providing an underserved and diverse urban community environmental, educational, and health benefits for many generations to come. Won’t you be among our founding partners and join us in making this vision a reality?

For more information contact:

ELK gave me the motivation I needed to get out of my comfort zone and push myself just a little more. They always believed in me, even in the times that I didn’t believe in myself. Because let’s face it, some people will still root for my failure, especially since I am Hispanic and a woman. But for those that hope that I fail, I tell them that there will be that times I fail. But that doesn’t mean I won’t pick myself up. – ELK Student Coordinator & Outdoor Youth Ambassador, Yesica, age 20

[This project] ...means a lot to kids like me .... it’s important to have an open land near our home. So it can bring my family and other families closer to nature and the outdoors. ~ Montbello resident, Priscilla, age 10