PRAIRIE DOG RELOCATION INFORMATION

Updated December 2025

This document serves as an explanation of the City's Prairie Dog Ordinance (Ord. Number 2628 adopted on August 28, 2000) and of the procedures for compliance. A copy of Ordinance 2628 is available upon request and states that no Development Plans will be issued for development applications received after August 2000 until the developer documents good faith efforts to relocate prairie dogs from the land slated for development.

Compliance Procedures
To verify compliance with the City's Prairie Dog Policy, the City Development Department requires documentation from the developer at three key points in the development process:

1. **At First Submittal** For Development Plans, the developer must submit a letter that serves as evidence of good faith efforts to relocate the prairie dogs (see below for more details.) If a development project does not require a Development Plan, then the planner assigned to the project will determine the appropriate time for submission of the evidence of good faith effort.
2. **With Grading Permit Application** – To receive a grading permit, the developer must submit a letter indicating actions taken to remove prairie dogs from the site.

Evidence of Good Faith Effort
The City of Thornton requires developers to submit a letter outlining actions taken in good faith to relocate prairie dog colonies from the development site, including the results of those efforts. The City of Thornton considers a good faith effort to relocate prairie dogs to include, at a minimum, but not limited to, two of the following actions:

- Contacting private and public property owners in Adams County to request use of their land for prairie dog relocation.
- Examining other personal property holdings of the developer, or other persons not listed, for suitability for prairie dog relocation.
- Working with Colorado Parks and Wildlife and City Development staff to examine the possibility of including prairie dog colonies in the proposed development. (This option is possible only on a case-specific basis.)
- Contacting at least one or more prairie dog relocation organizations to attempt to schedule prairie dog relocation.
- Contacting a contractor to inquire into possibility of relocating the prairie dogs to a black-footed ferret farm or raptor rehabilitation center.
- Pursuing any other options known to the developer.

If good faith efforts reveal that relocation is possible, the developer may relocate the prairie dogs, in conformance with Colorado Parks and Wildlife regulations, from the land slated for development. If good faith efforts reveal that relocation is not feasible, the developer may dispose of the prairie dogs through extermination methods permitted by the Department of Agriculture. The City strongly encourages property owners to capture and relocate or capture and donate the prairie dogs to a raptor rehabilitation center or black footed ferret conservancy.

The City strongly discourages the use of any extermination method other than USDA gas cartridges.

In order to relocate prairie dogs, a permit is required from Colorado Parks and Wildlife. The process takes approximately 30 days and requires the applicant to identify the relocation site, the process through which the prairie dogs will be relocated and the relocation organization. Colorado Parks and Wildlife recommends that individuals who are attempting prairie dog relocation start by contacting a relocation organization.

Relocation Sites
State statutes prohibit the transfer of prairie dogs across county lines without the prior approval of the board of county commissioners of the receiving county. Developers may wish to approach public and private landowners in Adams County to search for relocation sites. In addition, developers may wish to review their existing property holdings or to purchase land to examine the possibility of relocating the prairie dogs to another site within Adams County.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) has guidelines as to what constitutes a suitable prairie dog relocation site. Contact CPW for specific guidelines at 303-291-7227 or visit their website at https://cpw.state.co.us/Pages/default.aspx.

Timing of Relocation
Prairie dogs can be relocated only at specific times during the year, which must be considered when planning relocation. While the relocation process must commence as early as possible in the development process to insure success, prairie dogs must be physically relocated close to the time of grading to prevent recolonization prior to the start of construction.

Contact Information
Please direct questions about the City of Thornton's prairie dog ordinance to City Development at 303-538-7295.

Relocation Organizations

Animal & Pest Control Specialist, Inc.
3800 E. 64th Ave.
Commerce City, CO 80022 Phone: 303-987-0842

Animal & Pest Control Specialists (APCS) is a nuisance wildlife removal company with an emphasis on prairie dog removals and management. All technicians carry licenses issued by the Colorado Division of Wildlife and/or the Colorado Department of Agriculture. APCS has a division dedicated to prairie dog removals and works closely with raptor programs and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service's Black- footed Ferret Program in Carr, Colorado. APCS uses the most up-to-date methods and equipment when implementing trapping, flushing or fumigation programs in order to assist you and meet your needs. Any and all non-target animals that are captured during the trapping or flushing process will be released immediately on-site. All methods and procedures follow all city, county, state and federal rules and regulations.

Roe Ecological Services, LLC
Christopher Roe and Kelly Roe, Wildlife Biologists 970-532-1305 or email to res@yourwildlife.com Website - www.YourWildlife.com

Roe Ecological Services (ROE) is available to perform prairie dog live relocations or humane removals (live-trap and donate to a raptor rehabilitation program). ROE works to ensure 100% removal at the end of the project. ROE is also available to provide clients with wildlife impact assessments, threatened and endangered species surveys, wetlands surveys and delineations, assistance obtaining federal permits for impacts to wildlife or wetlands, designing and installing prairie dog movement barriers, natural resource inventories and assessments, and more. .

Smith Environmental and Engineering

Peter Smith, Vice President
720-887-4928 or email to petersmith@smithdelivers.com Website - www.smithdelivers.com

Smith Environmental and Engineering (SMITH) has a property in eastern Adams County that receives live prairie dogs. In addition to receiving and relocating prairie dogs, SMITH provides comprehensive environmental services, including NEPA document preparation, environmental assessments, threatened and endangered species surveys, wetlands surveys, wildlife studies, and many others. SMITH's engineers and scientists can perform any and all environmental studies and design needed to get clients through the planning and permitting process for any project.