

March 2, 2013

To whom it may concern:

Regarding: **Canyon Park**

The Hispanic Community of the City of Boulder, past and present, respectfully request that the name of **Canyon Park** be changed to: **EMMA MARTINEZ PARK**.

A search of the archives for the City of Boulder regrettably reveal very little about the presence of a viable and clearly identifiable Hispanic Community living and contributing to the identity of and history of the City. It is as if we came, and lived here but left no "footprints". This egregious oversight on the part of City civic leaders, elected officials, media and historians can be corrected to a significant degree by now recognizing that Boulder's documented history is seriously incomplete without mention of the ethnic communities that have resided in Boulder over the years.

Those of us whose Hispanic families were among the earliest to reside in the City of Boulder and made their living in the mining, agricultural, and service industries recognize that our families were attracted to Boulder for the same reasons that other residents came and established themselves as contributing members of the community; yet, very little is known about our historical presence. We continue to live in Boulder and open our arms to the most recent arrivals into our community.

Emma Martinez is a member of one of the earliest Hispanic families to establish themselves in Boulder. She lived, studied, married and worked in the neighborhood bounded by 17th Street, 24th Street (Folsom Street), Arapahoe Avenue and Bluff Street. When the Quonset huts that were located on the site of the present day Canyon Park were vacated with the intent of making that site available for development, she, with the support of the Hispanic residents of the area, salvaged the playground equipment for use by the neighborhood children and later successfully petitioned the City to convert the site into a Children's Park. Years later, when the City changed the name of the street adjacent to the park from Water Street to Canyon Blvd and made plans to widen the street she protested plans to narrow the sidewalks from the conventional width to a narrower width that would have made it unsafe for the many Hispanic children that used that route as they walked to school daily. City planners had failed to take children's safety into account in drafting their plans. Emma Martinez served unselfishly during the 1960's and early 70's on numerous City and County Citizen's Boards. She was often the lone voice on these boards advocating for the poor, the elderly and the minority communities. These examples are only a small part of the many efforts that Emma Martinez made toward making Boulder a more inclusive community.

Further testimony by other proponents and supporters of this request will confirm the selfless contributions of Emma Martinez and her role as a representative of our Hispanic Community.

Making this symbolic change in the name of one of Boulder's most visible and centrally located community park will establish and convey the message that Boulder is indeed a place for everyone.

Please give our request your every consideration.

Euvaldo Valdez

Philip Hernandez

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Emma Gomez Martinez

A Biographical Sketch

The Martinez family moved to Boulder in the early 1930's. They chose Boulder because of less racial discrimination than in the surrounding communities in Boulder County and for better educational and employment opportunities for their children. In the early 1950's John, one of the sons of a family of eleven siblings, met and married **Emma Gomez** who had lived in Boulder County since 1929.

Emma Martinez and her husband John moved into Boulder in 1952. As a young, newly married, couple they came for the same reasons many other young couples did; to pursue opportunities other communities did not offer. They moved in at 2040 Water Street, in a neighborhood that included several other Hispanic families; some of which had been in Boulder since the 1920's. Across Water Street, which was a dirt road with a railroad running along the middle was a small transitional residential community composed of eight to ten quonset huts used as married student housing (two families per Quonset) by the University of Colorado.

As a young energetic housewife and mother and her supportive husband, Emma and John were welcomed by the other Hispanic families. Emma, although she had only a high school education, soon assumed the role of spokesperson for the Hispanic Community in Boulder and became the primary advocate when issues needed to be addressed with the City of Boulder, Boulder County, and the law enforcement agencies that served the City of Boulder. When the University of Colorado no longer needed the Quonset Village they traded the land to the School District that existed at that time. Thus began a several year challenge to preserve the property and keep it from being developed for either residential or commercial use. Emma Martinez was at the forefront of that effort.

Each summer the School District would send a crew to remove the swing sets, slides and merry-go-round that remained at one end of the quonsets. Each year Emma would cross the street and convince the workmen not to remove the only playground equipment that the neighborhood children had to play on. The School District consented although they provided no maintenance for the property. At various times during the summer months Emma and other parents would organize the neighborhood children into a, "clean-up crew" and clean up the only park and play area to which they had access. During the late 50's and early 60's the quonset huts were occupied by several non-profit agencies and were progressively removed until, in the mid 60's, only three remained. The property, that Emma continued to visualize as a community park remained in a state of disrepair with only the clean-up work that the neighborhood children would periodically do under the guidance of Emma and other parents.

In the late 60's construction began on a wider thoroughfare into Boulder Canyon with the new route being Water Street from 28th Street into the mouth of Boulder Canyon. The new Boulevard was to be named Canyon Boulevard. During the construction several parents at the west end of this project realized that the sidewalks along the north side of the new street were being poured as a 24 inch sidewalk. The parents approached Emma, as a reliable and credible advocate, and requested that she

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carry the concern to the project manager. Emma researched the construction plans and discovered that the plans called for a much wider, conventional width sidewalk. She approached the Construction Supervisor with the concerns of the community that the more narrow sidewalks presented a danger to the neighborhood children who used this walkway daily to get to either Lincoln or Whittier Elementary Schools and /or to Casey Jr. High. As a result the earlier pour was removed and the rest of the sidewalk was poured at the required width. The sidewalk remains the Southern Boundary of Canyon Park.

In 1965 Emma was named to the first Board of Directors for the Office of Economic Opportunity; our nations earliest efforts in the war on poverty. Because of her unique knowledge of the Goss /Grove neighborhood she convinced the OEO Board to establish their center in the Quonset Hut property. Emma knew poverty, having worked in the local beet fields, a Boulder laundry and as a hotel maid, and was easily able to identify with the residents of this Core Boulder neighborhood. She focused her work on behalf of all residents of the neighborhood but was uniquely qualified to advocate for the Hispanic Community. She spoke the language of the community, was trusted by them and knew them personally. Among the amenities that she advocated for was the dedication of the property, seemingly useless to any government entity, as a community park.

In 1971 the Martinez Family moved to 2978 Loma Place in the Palo Park subdivision. However, she continued her daily presence at the property soon to be Canyon Park. Emma had been hired as the Program Coordinator and Boulder Center Director and Assistant Boulder County Director for the Office of Economic Opportunity that now occupied two of the three remaining Quonset Huts on the property. Working in her position as liaison to the Boulder City Manager's Office she was able to propose and successfully advocate to have the property at 2045 Canyon Boulevard dedicated as a community park. The property had, by this time, come under the ownership of the City of Boulder. Thus, Canyon Park, the dream and vision of many residents of Boulder became a reality.

A recent survey of the archives and literature of the City and County of Boulder reveal a serious lack of any mention of the presence of a viable and identifiable Hispanic Community living and contributing to the identity and history of the City of Boulder. Having been a primary proponent for a city Park to benefit the children of the city of Boulder, it is now entirely fitting that the Park be renamed: Emma Martinez Park.

Throughout the many years of involvement in the public affairs of the City of Boulder Emma recognized and assumed her civic responsibilities through service on numerous Boards and Commissions for the City and County of Boulder. She also encouraged other members of the Hispanic Community to participate under her mentorship.

Boards and Commissions in which Emma served during her extensive tenure of public service are:

1. Boulder Housing Authority; Board Member during the formative years of this agency

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2. Boulder County Community Service Advisory Council
 3. Boulder County Social Service and Child Welfare Agency
 4. Boulder County Juvenile Services Division
 5. Boulder Valley Public Schools Vocational-Technical Center Advisory Board
 6. Office of Economic Opportunity; Charter Member, Chairperson of County Board of Directors; served as appointed liaison to Boulder City Manager
 7. Boulder Human Relations Commission; husband served as chairman
 8. Latin American Education Foundation; State Board Member
 9. Mexican Americans of Boulder County United; Charter Member
 10. St. Thomas Aquinas Housing Corporation; Developed Alvarado Village Subsidized Housing
 11. YMCA Boulder

During her service on these Boards and Commissions Emma was often the lone voice for the poor and disenfranchised of our Community.