

COLORADO SPRINGS PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

## ANUAL REPORT



Parks, Recreation, & Cultural Services



### **Starburst Award**

**Colorado Lottery** Panorama Park

### **People's Choice Starburst Award**

Colorado Lottery

Panorama Park

### **Golden McCloud Award**

Colorado Trails Symposium Bear Creek Cañon Trail

### **American Architectural Award**

Chicago Athenaeum International Museum for Architecture and Design

Pikes Peak Summit Visitors Center

### **Programming Award**

**Trails and Open Space Coalition**Deerfield Hills Community Center

### **Outstanding Land Managers Award**

**Trails and Open Space Coalition**Urban Trail Ranger Program

### Frontline Hospitality Tourism Worker of the Year

**Governor's Tourism Awards**Bret Tennis, Program Administrator
Garden of the Gods

### **Community Champion Award**

Colorado Parks & Recreation Association Susan Davies, Executive Director Trails and Open Space Coalition

### **Employee of the Year**

Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department Leah Davis Witherow, Curator Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum

### **Volunteer of the Year**

Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department Manny Martinez, Youth & Adult Sports

### **Volunteer Group of the Year**

Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department

Therenoutio Description Program Discoveri

Therapeutic Recreation Program - Discovery Camp Teen Volunteers

### The Gazette's "Best of Springs"

### Museum

Silver - Colorado Springs Museum

### **Bathroom**

Silver - Bancroft Park

### **Impressive Outing**

Gold - Garden of the Gods Park

### Dog Park

Bronze - Rampart Dog Park

### Lunchtime/After-Work Hike

Gold - Garden of the Gods Park Bronze - Palmer Park

### **Golf Course**

Gold - Patty Jewett Golf Course

### Park

Gold - Garden of the Gods Park Silver - Palmer Park

### **Neighborhood Park**

Silver - Panorama Park

### Places to Gaze at Pikes Peak

Gold - Garden of the Gods Park Silver - Mesa Overlook

### Trail

Gold - Garden of the Gods Park

### Place to Propose

Gold - Garden of the Gods Park Bronze - Pikes Peak - America's Mountain

### **Funeral Services/Cemeteries**

Bronze - Evergreen Cemetery

### The Independent "Best of 2024"

**Best Place for Thrill-Seekers** 

Gold - Manitou Incline

### **Best Outdoor Family Fun/Tourist Attraction**

Silver - Garden of the Gods Park

### **Trip Advisor**

### **Top Attractions in Colorado**

#1 - Garden of the Gods Park

#4 - Pikes Peak - America's Mountain

### Top Attractions in the United States

#17 - Garden of the Gods Park



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### Cover Photo Credit: Labor Day Lift Off, Sports Corp

### MISSION

The Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department is the steward of a diverse park system that enriches the community through healthy, active opportunities that engage and inspire.

### **VISION**

Building community and preserving our legacy to make Colorado Springs the finest place to live and visit.

### **EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP**

Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department

Britt I. Haley, CPRP, Director

Kim King, CPRP, Assistant Director

Eric Becker, Parks Maintenance & Operations Director

Matthew Mayberry, Cultural Services Manager

Lonna Thelen, AICP, LEED, Parks Design and Development Manager

Skyler Rorabaugh, CPRP, RCRSP, Pikes Peak - America's Mountain Manager

### **BOARD LEADERSHIP**

Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Advisory Board (As of August 2024)

- Sarah Bryarly, Chair
- Abby Simpson, Vice Chair
- Amandla Atilano-Roque
- Larry Bogue
- Stephen Harris
- Steve Lenzo
- Andrea Perry
- Julia Sands De Melendez
- Greg Thornton
- Kimberley Sherwood, Alternate
- Mike Sullivan, Alternate
- Debbie Swanson, Alternate

Trails, Open Space and Parks (TOPS) Working Committee (As of December 2024)

- Wendy Howe, Chair
- Jeff Davis, Vice Chair
- David Bundrick
- Randy Courduff
- Emily Danti
- Chelsea Gondeck
- Paula Krantz
- Hank Scarangella
- Bob Shafer
- Amandla Atilano-Roque, PRCS Advisory Board Liaison
- Larry Bogue, PRCS Advisory Board Liaison
- Abby Simpson, PRCS Advisory Board Liaison

### **HELLO FRIENDS OF THE DEPARTMENT!**

It is my pleasure to present the 2024 Annual Report of the Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department. It is both humbling and exciting to serve alongside the dedicated stewards of our beloved parks, trails, open spaces, community centers, sports facilities, recreation programs, and cultural treasures. In 2024, our team of employees and volunteers showed their strong commitment to caring for these resources that allow our community to experience unique natural landscapes, lead healthy, active lifestyles, and build meaningful social connections. This report truly holds a story for everyone!

### **HIGHLIGHTS IN THIS YEAR'S REPORT:**

- Taking care of what we have: More emphatically than in prior years, this report highlights the projects and the people who take care of our park system.
- Celebrating the Pioneers Museum: In June of 2024, staff and the community celebrated the reopening of the historic El Paso County Courthouse, which now serves as the Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum. This community treasure was successfully upgraded with a heating, ventilation, and air conditioning project to allow for proper care and curation of thousands of artifacts that help tell our shared story. I am proud to report that this complicated \$8.2 million project was completed on time and within budget. As an added bonus, the project created an additional 4,000 square feet of exhibit space through restoration of the third-floor court room.
- Antlers Park Dog Park: Thank you to our voters for approving funding for our historic downtown parks! This final downtown park project offers people of all physical abilities a safe, beautifully designed space to enjoy with their furry companions. Many military retirees and veterans, who have service or assistance dogs, have chosen Colorado Springs as home accessible dog parks are one way we can show gratitude for their service and for our freedom.
- Water conservation projects! Across cemeteries, golf courses and parks, we modernized key irrigation systems to conserve water, irrigate more effectively and save money! In this report, you will read about how significant funding was invested to keep our turf and trees healthy while conserving our most precious natural resources. Did you know that these improvements can result in up to 20% in water savings?
- Quality programs, parks, trails and experiences for all ages. From our park ranger teams to our natural resource
  stewardship, to our special events, enriching sports programs and community engagement, you will see from this report
  that our team is fully committed to providing opportunities for healthy, active living and enriched community connection. I
  challenge our readers to find inspiration for your next adventures as you review our 2024 annual report!

With gratitude for your continued support for parks, recreation and cultural services,

Britt I. Haley, Director

Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services

Bits d. Haley

City of Colorado Springs



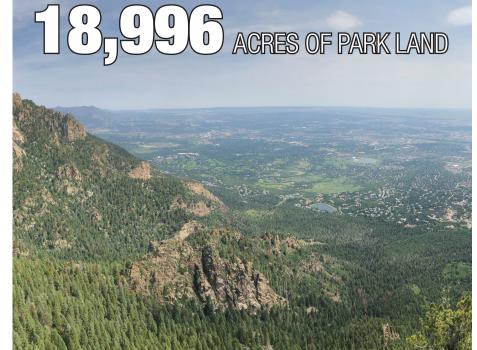
"Access to beautiful parks and recreational spaces is a fundamental part of what makes our city such an attractive place to live, work and play."

~ Mayor Yemi Mobalade

## PRGS BY THE NUMBERS

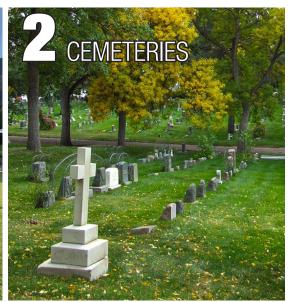
City parks have always been a vital part of Colorado Springs. In 1907, General Palmer established an independent Parks Commission to manage the city's public parks. However, as the city grew, a volunteer-led commission could no longer meet the demands of park administration. On April 1, 1947, the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services Department (PRCS) was created to oversee and care for the city's public lands.

Today, PRCS manages natural and cultural resources, maintains an extensive network of trails, and provides community programs focused on recreation, wellness, and the arts.

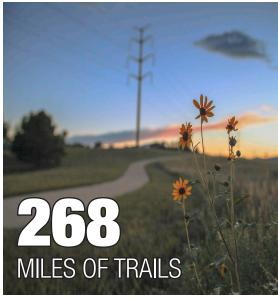


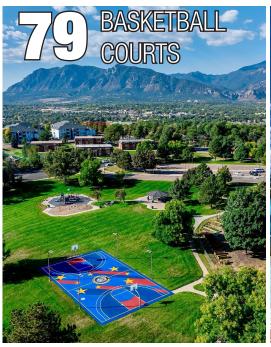




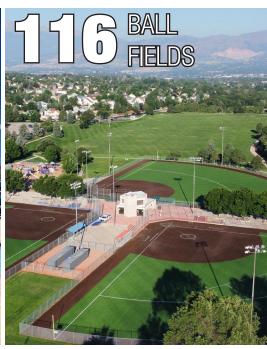


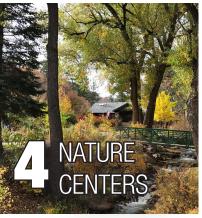


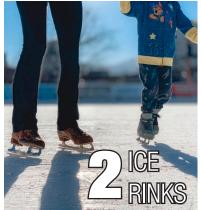










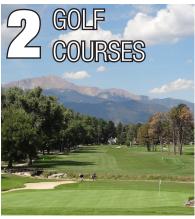
















### CARING FOR OUR PARKS

### Restoring the Memorial Park Mini Ramp

Thanks to the dedicated efforts of the PRCS Structures Team, the Memorial Park mini ramp received a major upgrade this year. To keep this popular feature safe and accessible, the team removed the entire bottom section of the ramp and replaced deteriorating wood with durable timbers, plywood, and Skatelite materials. This essential refresh strengthened the ramp's structure, ensuring skaters and bikers have a reliable space to sharpen their skills for years to come.

More than just a repair, this project reflects the city's commitment to maintaining high-quality recreational spaces that inspire activity, creativity, and community connection. Whether it's a beginner dropping in for the first time or a seasoned rider perfecting new tricks, the mini ramp remains a hub for action sports enthusiasts of all levels.





### New Pickleball Enhancements at John Venezia: Expanding Play for All!

Upgrades to the pickleball and tennis courts at John Venezia Community Park enhanced recreational opportunities for the growing number of players in Colorado Springs.

The \$300,000 project converted one tennis court into four dedicated pickleball courts, resurfaced the existing pickleball court, and added new lighting to both the pickleball and tennis courts. These improvements increase capacity and provide safer, well-lit spaces for evening play, making the park a more accessible and enjoyable destination for the community.

Funded through the Parkland Dedication Ordinance, the project was completed in collaboration with Sports Courts of the Rockies, Musco Lighting, Marc Knutila of Springs Tennis, and the local pickleball community. The enhancements reflect the City's commitment to investing in high-quality outdoor recreation spaces that meet the needs of residents and visitors alike.

2024 PARK MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS BUDGET

\$20,648,481

TOTAL STAFF POSITIONS

95.50

### MAINTENANCE PROJECTS COMPLETED

### Acacia Park

Refreshed the park's appearance by repainting the band shell and pressure washing the brick exterior of the restroom facility.

### **Cottonwood Park**

Improved visitor experience and way finding by updating more than 30 park signs.

### **Cottonwood Disc Golf Course**

Upgraded infrastructure to replace concrete tee pads, new timber stairs, critical tree maintenance and new mulch.

### **Meadows Park**

Improved accessibility by replacing deteriorating concrete and upgrading landscaping in the north section of the park, making it fully ADA-compliant.

### **Memorial Park**

Increased comfort and usability by replacing 26 picnic tables and 14 benches, while also expanding recreation options with the installation of a new cricket pitch.

### **Memorial Park Flowerbeds**

Converted flowerbeds to perennials to promote sustainability and ensure vibrant plantings for the next growing season.

### Rampart Park

Enhanced park safety and usability by removing an old chain-link fence, clearing weeds from 2.5 acres, and hauling away over 150 yards of debris from the BMX track.

### **Skyview Sports Complex**

Replaced infields to enhance playability, safety, and overall field conditions for athletes for both recreational and competitive games.

### **Uncle Wilber Fountain**

Upgraded a key park feature by installing a new water system, including pumps and piping, to replace aging infrastructure and ensure reliable operation for years to come.

### PROJECTS ACROSS THE PARK SYSTEM

### **Bottle Fillers**

Installed 26 bottle fillers throughout the park system, promoting sustainability and providing convenient hydration stations for visitors.

### **Painted Basketball Courts**

Refreshed over 20 basketball courts across the park system to improve aesthetics and playing conditions.

### **Restriped Pickleball Courts**

Enhanced playability and safety by restriping courts at Portal, Woodmen Valley, and Wilson Ranch Parks.



Improved visibility and navigation by fabricating and installing new steel entrance signage at Rock Ledge Ranch



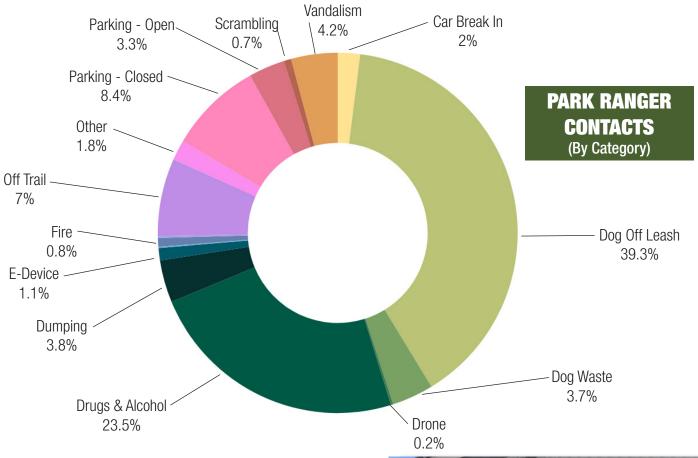
The PRCS Structures team demonstrated exceptional skill and cost-efficiency by restoring the Legacy Loop monument sign in Monument Valley Park after it was damaged by a vehicle. Their in-house efforts saved the city significant costs while preserving an important park feature.





Synthetic turf was installed on the newly constructed Memorial Park Cricket Pitch, providing a durable and high-quality surface for athletes, ensuring long-term usability and improved playing conditions.

### PARK RANGERS



**3,680** Park Ranger contacts (contacts by category provided above)

**1,315** dog off leash contacts

**1,786** encampments recorded

857 trash clean-up projects

**380** projects maintaining trails/corridors

**241** signs replaced across the system

yolunteer events with over **574**individuals totaling over \$126K in economic impact



REGIONAL
PARKS, TRAILS
& OPEN SPACES
DIVISION ———

NORTHDISTRICT

6,867 ACRES

SOUTH DISTRICT

5,739 ACRES

URBAN TRAIL 116 MILES



### **Urban Trail Ranger Program**

Launched in 2024 with funding from City Council, the Urban Trail Ranger Program has made a significant impact in its first year. This dedicated team of four plays a crucial role in improving safety and enhancing recreational experiences along Colorado Springs' urban trail system.

One of the program's most notable contributions has been tracking and monitoring encampments, identifying over 1,700 sites across the system. In addition to data collection, the team has actively participated in large-scale cleanup efforts and collaborated with key partners to support individuals experiencing homelessness encountered on our trails.

### **Key Partnerships Include:**

- Colorado Springs Police Department Homeless Outreach Team (HOT)
- Colorado Springs Police Department Downtown Area Response Team (DART)
- Colorado Springs Fire Department Homeless Outreach Program (HOP)
- Colorado Springs Neighborhood Services
- Keep Colorado Springs Beautiful
- Community Health Partnership (PPCHP)

Through these partnerships, the Urban Trail Ranger team continues to promote a safer, cleaner, and more welcoming trail system for all.



### Regional Parks, Trails & Open Spaces (RPTOS) Programs

RPTOS programs focus on conservation as well as responsible recreation. Programs include the Traveling Trunk program designed to create exciting opportunities for exploration for youth. Additional programming includes education on Leave No Trace principles through tabling events, trainings, and workshops.

total program attendees in 2024		
<b>2,836</b> One-Time Programs	<b>473</b> Traveling Trunks	
173 School & Library Field Trips	<b>96</b> Tabling Opportunities	
22	11	

**Trainings & Workshops** 

**Guided Hikes** 

### NATURAL RESOURCES

The PRCS Natural Resources team plays a vital role in preserving wildlife habitats and maintaining ecological balance across our parks and open spaces. This year, the team focused on fire mitigation, wildlife monitoring, and habitat restoration. This team highlights our dedication to the importance of balancing conservation with public land

management.

### **American Kestrel Nest Box Project**

In collaboration with the Colorado Avian Research and Rehabilitation Institute (CARRI), the Natural Resources team expanded efforts to support American Kestrel conservation in 2024.

With funding from an Aiken Audubon Grant, CARRI introduced kestrel nest boxes in select Colorado Springs Open Spaces, helping to address declining kestrel populations. Nest boxes play a crucial role in providing additional nesting sites and allow for long-term monitoring of kestrel numbers. Through banding of nestlings and adults, researchers can track kestrel lifespan, nest site fidelity, dispersal patterns, and reproductive success.

All data collected through this initiative is submitted to the American Kestrel Partnership, an international community science project dedicated to kestrel conservation.















### Stratton Open Space Wildlife Protection

Before initiating fire mitigation efforts at Stratton Open Space, the Natural Resources team conducted a Migratory Bird Treaty Act survey to ensure that no active nests were disturbed. During the survey, the team discovered 17 small nests, including multiple hummingbird nests and an Acorn Woodpecker, a species not historically known to breed in Colorado.

To protect these nesting birds (pictured to the left), fire mitigation work was postponed until September, allowing for the completion of the nesting cycle before vegetation removal. This approach ensured that fire risk reduction efforts were implemented while prioritizing wildlife conservation.

### **Burrowing Owl Conservation & Monitoring**

As a state-threatened species, burrowing owls are closely monitored at Bluestem Prairie Open Space through annual surveys. While nesting activity was documented from 2016-2019, no burrowing owls had been observed from 2019-2023.

In 2024, the team confirmed their return, with at least four nestlings successfully raised at Bluestem. Additionally, the team expanded monitoring efforts to Wildhorse Ranch Open Space, where the first-ever survey in 2024 led to the discovery of a new active burrowing owl nest, highlighting the importance of continued habitat protection and species monitoring.

### **Prairie Dog Population Recovery**

Prairie dogs serve as a keystone species, providing essential habitat for burrowing owls and numerous other wildlife species while acting as a critical food source for predators. The team has conducted annual monitoring of the prairie dog population at Bluestem Prairie Open Space since a plague event in 2016 caused a significant decline.

Since 2017, the population has tripled and continues to grow, demonstrating a strong recovery. This resurgence supports broader ecosystem stability and enhances habitat conditions for other wildlife species dependent on prairie dog colonies.

### **Long-Term Avian Monitoring Program**

An ongoing project for the PRCS Natural Resources team is monitoring the density and abundance of breeding birds across a selection of our parks and open spaces. This program aims to track population trends and assess how different management activities and recreational use impact bird communities. Birds serve as key ecological indicators, providing valuable insight into the overall health of our properties. Changes in their populations can signal both positive and negative effects of land management and land use. Maintaining healthy bird populations reflects a well-balanced and thriving park or open space ecosystem.

<b>22</b> PRCS properties surveyed annually	<b>243</b> individual survey locations	<b>729</b> surveys completed annually
185 unique species using PRCS properties during the breeding season	<b>101</b> unique species identified in Red Rock Canyon Open Spaces	65% of species show increasing populations on PRCS properties

### SUSTAINABILITY & ACCESSIBILITY

### **South Monument Valley Park Conversion**

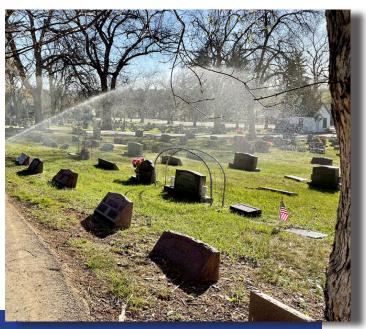
In 2024, 3.5 acres in South Monument Valley Park were converted from potable to non-potable water irrigation. This project is part of a long-term strategy to expand the use of non-potable water throughout the park system, which now totals 100 acres of parkland irrigated with non-potable water. These efforts reduce dependence on potable water sources, lower costs, and contribute to more sustainable park maintenance practices.

### **Fairview Cemetery Irrigation Upgrade**

A major irrigation system upgrade at Fairview Cemetery, funded by \$1.19 million from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), has modernized aging infrastructure to support water conservation. This project improves irrigation efficiency, reduces water waste, and ensures long-term sustainability while maintaining the historic cemetery's green spaces.

### Irrigation System Improvements Across the City

Throughout 2024, the department invested \$1.7 million in irrigation system improvements across multiple parks. These upgrades included installing more efficient irrigation heads, replacing outdated infrastructure, and integrating advanced technology to better monitor and control water use. These enhancements will support future turf conversions and allow for more precise water management.



100 acres of parkland are now irrigated with non-potable water, reducing reliance on potable sources.

\$1.7M invested in irrigation system improvements citywide to enhance efficiency.

66.4M cubic feet of water used in the SE Parks District, highlighting the need for strategic water management.

92% of the \$4.62 million irrigation budget was utilized, ensuring optimal resource management despite rising costs.



### **New Shuttles on Pikes Peak - America's Mountain**

A sustainable shuttle service was introduced on Pikes Peak – America's Mountain in 2024 aimed at reducing the environmental impact of visitor traffic and preserving the mountain's delicate ecosystem.

By encouraging guests to leave their cars behind, the shuttle service helps reduce congestion, carbon footprints, and wear and tear on the road to the summit. This initiative supports long-term sustainability efforts, helping to protect the natural beauty of Pikes Peak for generations to come.

20,000 rides in inaugural year



### Oak Meadows Park: A Playground for Everyone

The Oak Meadows Park improvement project is now complete, providing a more inclusive, accessible play space for the community. In collaboration with the City's Office of Accessibility, the project enhances safety, connectivity, and play opportunities for all visitors.

- 3,900 sq. ft. of artificial turf for easy mobility.
- 3,000 sq. ft. of new concrete sidewalks creating an ADA-compliant route to the playground and Fire Station 16's community room.

### Trail Enhancements at Bear Creek Cañon Park

Significant trail improvements were completed in Bear Creek Cañon Park including rerouting damaged sections, reinforcing existing trails and increasing regional connectivity to Red Rock Canyon Open Space, North Cheyenne Cañon Park, and U.S. Forest Service lands. In collaboration with El Paso County, the improved trail system now supports the Trailability Program, providing trail access for individuals with disabilities using off-road mobility devices. The project was made possible through the dedication of City staff and partners like RMFI, COSMBA, Medicine Wheel Trail Advocates and the U.S. Navv.



- 4,700 ft. of new accessible trail added to the system.
- 800+ volunteer hours contributed from community groups.



### Raise the WOOF: New Accessible Dog Park Downtown

The ADA-accessible dog park at Antlers Park in downtown Colorado Springs is a vibrant, welcoming space where dogs and their owners can play, exercise, and connect with the community. Designed with resident input as part of the Downtown Historic Parks Master Plan, it features accessible pathways, synthetic turf and amenities. Antlers Dog Park is ADA compliant and provides a safe and fun environment for all abilities.

- 16,100 sq. ft of new, fully accessible dog park space in Downtown Colorado Springs, creating a welcoming spot for pets and their owners.
- 2 additional on-street parking stalls added at the entrance of the park for easier access.

**SAFER PARKS** 

tripping hazards removed in 14 parks, making trails and walkways safer for all.

### **INCLUSIVE EXPLORATION**

miles of trails explored using the Track Chair Program, expanding outdoor access for individuals with mobility challenges.

### **BETTER PLAY FOR ALL**

playgrounds upgraded with Engineered Wood Fiber for safer, more inclusive play across the park system.

### **INNOVATIVE ACCESS**

state-of-the-art accessible kiosk at Rock Ledge Ranch provides ASL, Spanish, audio and visual accessibility.



### **A HISTORIC PROJECT:**

### HVAC RESTORATION

### A Milestone Achievement

In 2024, the Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum (CSPM) reached a significant milestone with the completion of a year-long capital project to install a state-of-the-art Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) system and expand public engagement spaces. The new HVAC system replaced an aging one, originally installed in the 1970s, which had struggled to maintain a stable climate within the historic 1903 El Paso County Courthouse. Thanks to robust support from the City of Colorado Springs and a combination of public and private funders, the new system now fully supports the entire building. This upgrade ensures the preservation of over 70,000 artifacts and 6,500 cubic feet of archival materials, protecting them from temperature and humidity fluctuations.

### **Restoring Spaces and Enhancing Experiences**

In addition to the HVAC installation, the restoration project transformed underutilized spaces, unlocking new potential for visitor engagement. The Division III Courtroom and Southwest Collections storage, which had been closed to the public and in disrepair, were rehabilitated into a beautiful gallery space and a dynamic collections workspace. A **key element of the restoration was the conservation of a 1903 mural in the Division III Courtroom**, ensuring that both history and art continue to tell the story of the Pikes Peak region. This transformation revitalized the museum's operations and expanded its ability to share the region's cultural history.



### **Community Impact**

On July 12, 2024, CSPM celebrated the completion of the project with a Grand Reopening Celebration, attracting over 10,000 visitors. The updated exhibits, including Camping in the Rockies and Accessorize It!, along with the behind-the-scenes Visible Collections Workspace, offered fresh engagement opportunities. The visitor response was overwhelming, with a 13% increase in attendance, reaching 88,660 visitors by the end of 2024. This success aligns with the goals outlined in the ten-year strategic plan, Vision 2023, ensuring CSPM remains a relevant, accessible, and sustainable cultural hub for Colorado Springs. This project represents a collaborative effort by CSPM staff, volunteers, community partners, and supporters, all of whom played a part in building a lasting connection to the Pikes Peak region through the preservation of history.

"We wanted to continue engaging our community with the region's history.
The CSPM
Annex allowed the Museum to focus on this mission while our main facility was under construction."

-Matt Mayberry, CSPM Director

\$1.65M

\$17K

88K

100%

7.5K

5.5K

FUNDRAISED TO SUPPORT HVAC PROJECT

TO CONSERVE THE DIVISION III COURTROOM MURAL

VISITORS EXPLORED NEW STORIES & EXHIBITS

OF THE COURT HOUSE WAS IMPACTED BY THE RESTORATION PROJECT

**OBJECTS MOVED** 

HOURS OF CSPM STAFF TO PROTECT COLLECTIONS & EXHIBITS

1.3K

MEDIA MENTIONS (2023 - 2024) ABOUT THE PROJECT

843

ADDITIONAL ARTIFACTS PLACED ON EXHIBIT

**150** 

WOMEN CELEBRATED
THROUGH WORKS OF ART

**50** 

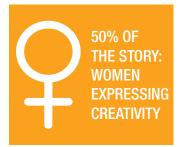
PROJECT PARTNERS ENGAGED

33

EXHIBITS & COLLECTIONS REINSTALLED

FULFILLED GOAL TO "TAKE CARE OF WHAT WE HAVE"

### 2024 NEW EXHIBITS









### DEVELOPING OUR SYSTEM

### Ladders Trail Expands Outdoor Access in North Cheyenne Cañon Park

The completed Ladders Trail provides a safer and more accessible route for hikers, runners, and cyclists in North Cheyenne Cañon Park. This 2.5-mile trail enhances connectivity between Middle Columbine Trail, Captain Jacks Trail, Gold Camp Road, and Stratton Open Space, improving access for hikers, runners and cyclists.

A highlight of this project is a custom-built timber bridge, offering a seamless access between Captain Morgans Bike Trail and Ladders Trail. Additionally, this project brought the official adoption of Penrose Trail and Captain Morgans Trail into the PRCS trail system ensuring long-term maintenance and sustainability, benefiting both recreational users and conservation efforts.





### Strengthening Connections Across the Legacy Loop System

The Legacy Loop is more than just a trail—it's a vital recreation and transportation corridor that links parks, neighborhoods, and downtown Colorado Springs. Inspired by the vision of city founder General William Jackson Palmer, the 10-mile loop connects the Pikes Peak Greenway, Shooks Run Trail, and Rock Island Corridor, creating a seamless urban trail experience that prioritizes mobility, access, and outdoor recreation.

This year, several key projects improved the safety, accessibility, and connectivity of the Legacy Loop, reinforcing its role as a hub for recreation, transportation, and community connection.

### Legacy Loop/Rock Island Trail

The Rock Island segment of trail includes 1.25 miles of widened concrete, new fencing, retaining wall and right of way improvements. This completed segment now provides off-street safe, accessible routes for all trail users. The completion of this section provides a connection from the Pikes Peak Greenway Trail to the west to Shooks Run Trail and Templeton Gap Rd., completing the north segment of the Legacy Loop.

### Mesa Creek Crossing

The Mesa Creek Crossing features a 90-foot pedestrian bridge that enhances connectivity along the Pikes Peak Greenway and allows a safer route for cyclists and pedestrians.

The project improves safety by separating trail users from the creek, enhances connectivity by linking key trail segments, and increases accessibility for outdoor enthusiasts, making the Legacy Loop a more reliable community resource.

### Pikes Peak Greenway

Significant improvements were made to the Pikes Peak Greenway between Centennial Blvd. and Mesa Road. Previously a wide gravel path, this section underwent extensive upgrades in collaboration with Colorado Springs Utilities to underground overhead powerlines and remove poles. The trail is now wider, paved, and more accessible for all users, completing a key section that connects the Uintah underpass to Mesa Road. This enhancement strengthens the overall trail network.



### **Enhancing Access with New Trail Wayfinding**

Exploring our open spaces is now safer and more accessible thanks to the installation of new wayfinding signage. These improvements enhance the visitor experience by providing clear trail markers, maps, and directional signs, ensuring users of all abilities can navigate with confidence. The enhanced signage not only improves safety but also encourages responsible recreation, protecting natural areas by guiding users to designated trails. Strengthening connections between key routes, these updates make it easier than ever for residents and visitors to fully experience the beauty and benefits of our parks and trails.

662

Wayfinding Posts & Markers Installed

AUSTIN BLUFFS OPEN SPACE BEAR CREEK CAÑON PARK NORTH CHEYENNE CAÑON PARK RED ROCK CANYON OPEN SPACE

### Blodgett Open Space Master and Management Plan Approved

City Council approved the Blodgett Open Space Master and Management Plan, setting the stage for a brighter future for this 384-acre natural treasure in northwest Colorado Springs. After 15 months of community input and collaboration, the plan focuses on enhancing public access while protecting wildlife, natural resources, and cultural heritage.

The plan brings exciting improvements, including the creation of wildlife corridors, three new trail heads with amenities, and a sustainable trail network featuring multi-use and directional paths.

One of the most exciting features is the Park to Peak Trail, which will connect Blodgett Open Space to Palmer Park, Austin Bluffs Open Space, and Ute Valley Park, creating a seamless trail system across the region. The future Chamberlain Trail will also link Blodgett to Cheyenne Mountain State Park, offering a unique backcountry experience along Colorado Springs' foothills.

This plan is a major milestone, ensuring that Blodgett Open Space remains a protected, accessible, and vibrant outdoor resource, allowing the community to connect with nature while preserving its rich heritage.



### **ADDITIONAL PROJECTS COMPLETED IN 2024**

### **Austin Bluffs Open Space**

Expanded parking by 60 spaces and added a new trail map to improve visitor access and experience.

### **Austin Bluffs Open Space**

Reduced wildfire risk by clearing over 61 acres of vegetation in partnership with the Colorado Springs Fire Department.

### South Cheyenne Canyon Bridge

Replaced an aging vehicular bridge to improve traffic flow and added a Chamberlain Trail bridge over South Cheyenne Creek.

### **Templeton Gap Bridge**

Replaced 260 feet of deteriorated wooden decking with concrete for a safer, more durable crossing.

### Section 16 / Red Rock Canyon Open Space

Enhanced parking lot safety and improved Cub Trail for better visitor access.

### Stratton Open Space

Cleared over 260 acres of vegetation to reduce wildfire risk and improve forest health.

### **Community Engagement**

The Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department values having an engaged community that can be actively involved in how the City provides essential local government services. The City prioritizes outreach tools and methods aligned with the International Association of Public Process (IAP2). This framework helps promote transparency, broad engagement, and effectiveness.

**Community Engagement** 

Participants in Community Engagement Sessions



Blodgett Open Space Master and Management Plan Community Session

### Website Statistics

25,356

visits to coloradosprings.gov/prcs

### **TOP 5 VISITED SITES**

Pikes Peak - America's Mountain, Manitou Incline, Patty Jewett, Valley Hi and Sertich Ice Center

### Social Media Statistics

25,679

Facebook Followers (+9.3%)

Instagram Followers (+30.1%)

1,30

X (Twitter) Followers (+11.3%)

3,301,127

2,616,569

Impressions across all networks (+38.7%)

Reach across all networks (+29.6%)







**GET SOCIAL WITH US! @COSPRINGSPARKS** 

**Email Marketing** 

newsletter subscribers (+68.1%)

### **Volunteers**

Volunteers play a crucial role in enhancing the parks, open spaces, and recreational areas across Colorado Springs. Their dedication and expertise help maintain and improve these valuable community assets. In 2024, volunteers contributed thousands of hours, supported numerous projects, and made a lasting impact on the environment and local residents.

/olunteer Service Value

**Unique Volunteers** 

removed from the

### THANK YOU TO OUR FRIENDS GROUPS

### Friends of Monument Valley

- Total Volunteer Hours: 87 hours
- Notable Impacts:
  - Collected 38 bags of trash and hosted 10 community events, including 4 concerts with over 1,000 attendees
  - Donated \$100,000 for stonework installation at Duck Pond.

### Friends of Peregrine Parks and Open Spaces

- Total Volunteer Hours: 328 hours
- Notable Impact: Restored trail segments across 4 major areas, including widening the Dry Creek Loop for the Action Trackchair program to accommodate hikers with mobility challenges.

### Friends of Red Rock Canyon

- Total Volunteer Hours: 805.5 hours
- Notable Impact: Enhanced trail drainage, restored rock features, and closed an unsustainable trail causing erosion.

### Friends of Ute Valley Park

- Total Volunteer Hours: 538 hours
- Notable Impacts:
  - · Supported a successful Eagle Scout project rerouting a trail and conducted multiple community outreach events to educate the public.
  - Grew Instagram following from 500 to 1,900 and completed a community survey to guide future park projects.

### **Guardians of Palmer Park**

- Total Volunteer Hours: 892 hours
- Notable Impact: Closed rogue trails and hosted 23 volunteer events dedicated to dog waste and trash removal.

### **Incline Friends**

- Total Volunteer Hours: 277 hours
- Notable Impact: Launched a scholarship program supporting 3 high school seniors pursuing land and wildlife management careers.

### **Additional Friends Groups**

Colorado Springs Mountain Biking Association (COSMBA), Corral Bluffs Alliance, Friends of Cheyenne Cañon, Friends of Garden of the Gods, Friends of Stratton Open Space, and Medicine Wheel Trail Advocates



Panorama Park in Southeast Colorado Springs has earned two prestigious honors, a testament to its profound impact on the community. First, the park was awarded the Colorado Lottery Starburst Award, recognizing its outstanding transformation and use of Lottery funds to create a space that promotes recreational equity and wellness.

Building on this achievement, Panorama
Park also claimed the first-ever Colorado
Lottery People's Choice Starburst Award.
With over 16,000 votes cast across thirteen
incredible projects in Colorado, Panorama Park
emerged as the public's top choice early in the
competition. This honor, chosen by the public,
underscores the deep emotional connection the
park has forged with the community and reflects
the power of collective pride and support.

These awards celebrate more than just a physical space; they represent community resilience, collaboration, and the collective vision of a park that serves as a hub for connection, recreation, and well-being. The recognition of Panorama Park highlights its lasting legacy as a symbol of community empowerment and shared success.







### EVENTS IN OUR PARKS

### **Enhancing Community Connections**

The Office of Special Events plays a vital role in activating parks and public spaces by facilitating a wide range of events, from small family gatherings to large-scale community celebrations. These events provide meaningful opportunities for residents and visitors to connect, celebrate, and engage with their surroundings, fostering a sense of belonging and community pride.

As part of the Community Engagement Team, the Office of Special Events manages the permitting process for parkland and amenities, ensuring equitable access while balancing public use and event impact. By supporting diverse recreational, cultural, and wellness-focused activities, the office enhances the overall park experience, making Colorado Springs' parks dynamic spaces that serve a broad spectrum of community needs.









### COMMUNITY RECREATION

The Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services Department is dedicated to providing high-quality recreation opportunities that foster physical wellness, mental well-being, and social connection. With a focus on inclusivity and accessibility, the department offers diverse programs through community centers, sports complexes, and specialized recreation initiatives. By creating spaces for residents of all ages and abilities to stay active, build relationships, and engage in meaningful experiences, the department plays a vital role in enhancing quality of life and strengthening the community in Colorado Springs.

\$1.6M **10K Revenue Generated Programs Offered** 451K 8K **Participants in Programs Meals Provided to Neighbors 211K** 5.2K **Youth Participants Persons with Disabilities Served** 107K **Pounds of Food Distributed** 3.7K **Fee-Based Programs Offered** (In partnership with Care & Share) 82K 1.3K **Youth & Adult Volunteers Volunteer Hours** 64.5K 13 **Sports Games for Youth & Adults New/Pilot Programs Offered** 





### Southeast Fall Festival: Bringing Community Together

The Southeast Fall Festival is a shining example of the Recreation Division's commitment to fostering community connections and providing meaningful resources to residents.

This annual event brings together families, neighbors, and local organizations for a festive celebration featuring trunk-or-treat, games, entertainment, and community engagement activities. In addition to the seasonal fun, the event also offers essential support through a free mobile pantry, ensuring families have access to fresh food and vital resources. By combining recreation, outreach, and family-friendly activities, the Southeast Fall Festival continues to be a beloved tradition that strengthens the community and creates lasting memories for all who attend.

3.5K

Community
Members Attended

Organizations
Offered Community
Services

Decorated Trunks for Trunk-Or-Treat



# OF SO KING

### 7.5K

Youth Sports Participants

149K

Adult Sports Participants

### Elevating Youth Sports Through the Million Coaches Challenge

In 2024, the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services Department was selected to participate in the #MillionCoachesChallenge, a national initiative supported by National Park and Recreation Association (NRPA), the Susan Crown Exchange and ESPN.

Through this opportunity, the department trained 300 coaches in partnership with the Positive Coaching Alliance.

These trainings equipped coaches with the skills to foster a positive and inclusive environment for young athletes. By investing

in quality coaching, the PRCS department continues its commitment to youth development and the power of sports in building strong communities.

**75K** 

Hours Provided by Volunteer Coaches

In Olympic City USA, we know how vital sports are in the growth of our youth. This grant provided coaches with the skills they need to inspire and guide our athletes.

-Will Davis, Youth Sports Administrator

11

### ADAPTIVE RECREATION

**19** 

Hours of Ability Awareness training provided by staff **132** 

Programs provided for youth and adults with disabilities

**1.8K** 

Hours of programs offered for youth and adults with disabilities

2.4K

Volunteer hours provided to support adaptive recreation programs 5.2K

Youth and Adults with disabilities served





### **Expanding Access Through Therapeutic Riding**

This year, the Recreation Division launched a new partnership with the Colorado Springs Therapeutic Riding Center, creating additional opportunities for participants in both youth programs and therapeutic recreation programs.

The Colorado Springs Therapeutic Riding Center provides high-quality Hippotherapy and adaptive riding programs for individuals ages two and older. Private and small-group lessons, led by certified PATH International Instructors or trained therapists, offer a safe and supportive environment where participants can build confidence, improve mobility, and experience the benefits of working with horses.

Through this partnership, more individuals have been introduced to horse-assisted therapy, providing unique and enriching experiences that support physical, emotional, and social well-being. By incorporating horseback riding into recreation programs, this collaboration continues to expand inclusive opportunities that make a meaningful impact in the community.

### **Promoting Inclusion Through Ability Awareness Training**

The Therapeutic Recreation Program (TRP) empowers individuals with disabilities by ensuring access to recreation opportunities. To enhance community understanding, TRP's three Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialists (CTRS) provide Ability Awareness training, equipping individuals and organizations with the skills to better support people with disabilities. In 2024, the following organizations participated in this impactful training:

- Colorado Springs
   Volunteer Network
- Pikes Peak America's Mountain Staff
- Kids on Bikes Staff
- COS World Affairs Council (Professionals from Saudi Arabia)
- Centennial Elementary Students (summer/fall)
- Deerfield Community Center Participants
- Carmel Community School Students
- Otero Elementary Students
- Hillside Summer Camp Participants
- PRCS Harrison School District 2 Support Staff
- UCCS Adapted Sports Class



### Making the Outdoors Accessible for ALL

The Trails, Open Space and Parks (TOPS) program in collaboration with the Therapeutic Recreation Program (TRP) launched the TrackChair program which aims to provide sustainable access to parks and open spaces.

This program utilizes all-terrain mobility devices to assist visitors with mobility challenges in exploring the trails and open spaces in Colorado Springs. This program was launched in its early phases in 2024 with increased programming planned in future years.

## VISITATION ACROSS OUR RECREATION SITES



5,152,756

Garden of the Gods Park Visitors



448,084

Pikes Peak - America's Mountain Visitors



<sup>295,505</sup>

Sertich Ice Center & Acacia Ice Rink Visitors



171,726

Rounds of Golf
(Patty Jewett and Valley Hi-Golf Courses)



107,035

North Cheyenne Cañon Park Visitors (Helen Hunt Falls and Starsmore Visitor and Nature Center)



88,413

Rock Ledge Ranch Visitors



87,516

Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum Visitors



### 

### **Total Department Budgeted Funding Sources**

Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services General F	und	\$17,937,886
City of Colorado Springs General Costs		\$6,510,275
General Fund Capital Improvement Projects (CIP)		\$191,318
	GENERAL FUND TOTAL	\$24,639,479
Trails, Open Space and Parks (TOPS) Tax		\$8,926,258
Conservation Trust Fund (CTF)		\$7,336,536
Grants & Gift Trust		\$3,536,732
Special Improvement Districts (SIMD)		\$3,815,734
Other Funds - Capital Improvement Projects (CIP)		\$171,520
NON-	GENERAL FUND TOTAL	\$23,786,780
**Enterprises		\$15,717,316
••••••••••••••••	ΤΠΤΑΙ	\$64.143.575

<sup>\*\*</sup>Enterprise operation, budget and funding figures are generated through fees received by specific Enterprise locations.

### Funds Overseen by the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department

### Trails, Open Space and Parks (TOPS)

TOPS funds are generated from a 0.1% sales and use tax adopted by voters in 1997. Funds are allocated as follows: 3% TOPS administration, 6% maintenance of TOPS properties. The balance is designated for open space purchases and stewardship (min. of 60%); new trails (max. of 20%); and park maintenance and development (max. of 20%). A minimum of 75% of Open Space funds must be used for acquisition and 25% used for stewardship.

### **Conservation Trust** Fund (CTF)

Local governments receive 40% of the total revenue generated by the State Lottery, with our city share distributed based on population.

Conservation Trust Fund dollars can be used for the acquisition, development, and maintenance of new conservation sites and for capital improvements or maintenance for recreational purposes on any public site.

### **Enterprises**

Enterprises enable the city to offer numerous cost-effective services since they are predominantly supported by user fees and do not receive support from the General Fund.

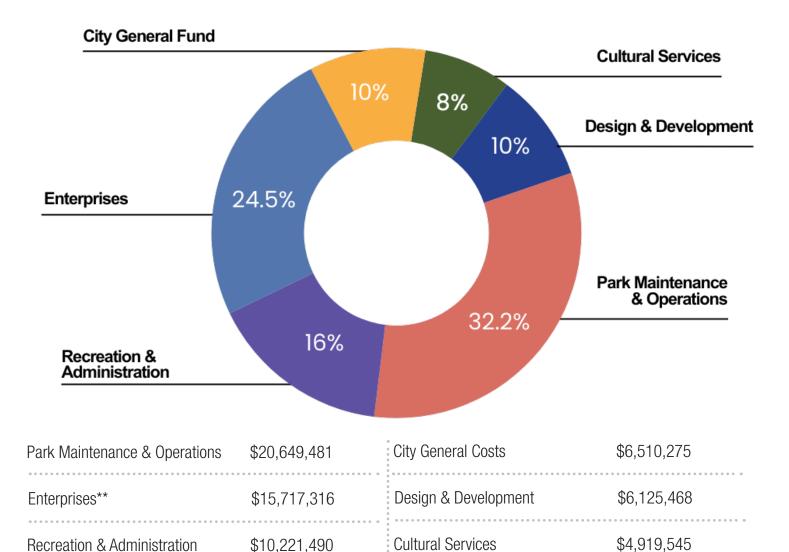
Enterprises include Patty Jewett and Valley Hi Golf Courses, **Evergreen and Fairview** Cemeteries, and Pikes Peak -America's Mountain in partnership with the US Forest Service.

### **Special Improvement Maintenance Districts (SIMD)**

Assessments against real properties within established districts provide for maintenance of specific improvements in these areas.

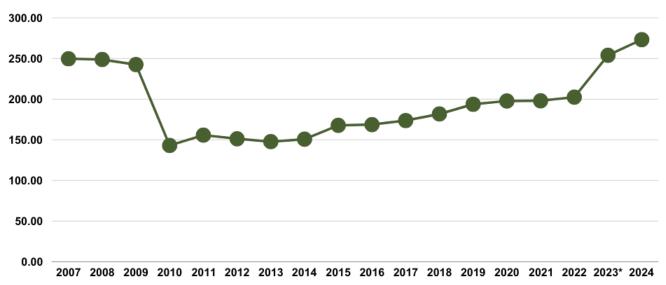
SIMD areas include Norwood, Old Colorado City, Platte Avenue, Colorado Avenue, Gateway, Woodstone, Stetson Hills, and Briargate (a general improvement maintenance district).

### **Total Department Budget by Division**



### **TOTAL BUDGET** \$64,143,575

### Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Historical Staffing



\*The staffing numbers include staff who have been converted into full-time equivalents.

### GRANT FUNDING

Grant funding plays a vital role in improving and maintaining our parkland and expanding capacity for programming, providing more opportunities for recreation and creating a stronger, more accessible park system for all. \*Indicates grants awarded in 2024 for future projects/programs.

### **CAPITAL/CONSTRUCTION GRANTS**

GRANT / PURPOSE	FUNDING SOURCE	<b>TOTAL AMOUNT</b>
CO Beautiful Legacy Loop Trail	Colorado Parks & Wildlife	\$464,871.80
Pikes Peak Greenway Trail	CO Department of Transportation (CDOT)	\$908,078.58
Black Canyon Quarry Reclamation*	CO Department of Local Affairs	\$300,000.00
Wildhorse Ranch Acquisition*	Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO)	\$1,500,000.00
Blodgett Open Space Master Plan Implementation*	Colorado Department of Natural Resources (DNR)	\$250,000.00

### **OPERATIONAL GRANTS**

GRANT / PURPOSE	FUNDING SOURCE	TOTAL AMOUNT
Harrison School District 2 Before/After School Care	Harrison School District 2	\$2,226,671.08
Generation Wild Inspire	Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO)	\$2,407,973.82
Community Centers Child Care Stabilization	Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment	\$56,446.37
Generation Wild Capacity	Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO)	\$120,094.28
Legacy Loop Trail	Colorado Parks and Wildlife	\$750,000.00
Staff for Before/After School Care	American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)	\$373,458.56

### **MAINTENANCE GRANTS**

GRANT / PURPOSE	FUNDING SOURCE	TOTAL AMOUNT
COS Forest Improvements	USDA Forest Service	\$50,996.75
Irrigation Systems - Patty Jewett, Valley Hi Golf Courses and Cemeteries	American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)	\$7,304,767.15
Community Center Improvements, WCC HVAC, Memorial Park War Memorial, Prospect Lake Improvements	American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)	\$3,129,766.80
SIMD Turf Replacements*	CO Department of Natural Resources	\$20,361.00
Fire Mitigation: Pikes Peak - America's Mountain & Fishers Canyon*	CO Department of Natural Resources	\$99,000.00

### **2024 TOTAL GRANT INVESTMENTS/AWARDS . . . . . . . 20,162,486.19**

### **Additional Funding Partners**

\$1,416,042
Operating Expenses & Capital Improvement

**Rock Ledge Ranch Living History Association** 

\$138,881.74

Operating Expenses & Marketing

\$764,639
Operating Expenses

Thank you to the Garden of the Gods Foundation for serving as a key partner in protecting the park and preserving its natural beauty for future generations. For over 29 years, the Garden of the Gods Foundation has denoted

\$6,800,000





### **Elevating Play, Empowering Communities**

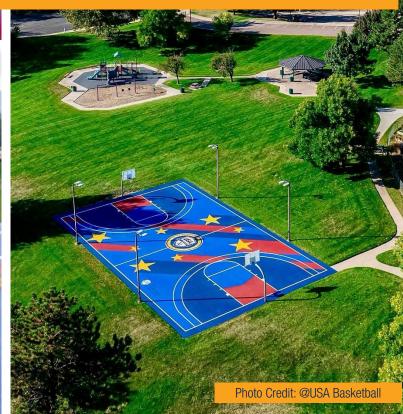
In 2024, two major basketball court revitalization projects in Colorado Springs showcased the power of sports, community, and investment in youth. These transformations at Hillside Community Center and Memorial Park are more than just facility upgrades—they are commitments to access, opportunity, and inspiration for the next generation.

At Hillside Community Center, USA Basketball's 50th Anniversary was celebrated with a court refurbishment in partnership with Project Backboard and funded by JDS Sports' Play With Purpose. This vibrant upgrade provides a lasting legacy, inspiring young athletes to strive for excellence.

Meanwhile, at Memorial Park, Hillside Connection, founded by Terrell Brown, secured funding through the Every Court Has a Story grant to completely revamp the park's basketball courts. Featuring resurfaced courts, new backboards, upgraded hoops, and player benches, the improvements are designed to create a safe, inclusive space where everyone—regardless of background—can enjoy the game. More than just a renovation, this project is breaking down barriers and ensuring that all youth have access to quality sports and enrichment opportunities.

These projects are more than upgrades—they are investments in youth, community, and the future of play in Olympic City USA.











### "EPPIC" OUR CORE VALUES

### **EXCELLENCE**

- CONSISTENTLY STRIVES TO DELIVER SUPERIOR SERVICE AND RESULTS WITH INTEGRITY:
- MAXIMIZES POTENTIAL THROUGH CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT;
- SETS, ACHIEVES, AND MAINTAINS A HIGH LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE.

### **PASSION**

 MOTIVATED TO PROVIDE REMARKABLE SERVICE AND DEDICATION TO THE COMMUNITY AND THE DEPARTMENT.

### **PROFESSIONALISM**

 HIGHLY SKILLED AND ADAPTABLE SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS THAT EMBRACE LIFELONG LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT.

### INNOVATION

 PURSUES CREATIVE WAYS TO BETTER DELIVER SERVICES BOTH WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT AND WITH EXTERNAL PARTNERS, WHILE ANTICIPATING FUTURE NEEDS.

### **COLLABORATION**

- INSPIRES OTHERS TO SUCCEED AND DEVELOP;
- THINKS AND ACTS BEYOND THE SCOPE OF INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITIES;
- PUTS DEPARTMENT GOALS IN FRONT OF DIVISION OR INDIVIDUAL OBJECTIVES:
- RECOGNIZES OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE AND IS ACCOUNTABLE TO ONE ANOTHER.





Parks, Recreation, & Cultural Services

### **GET CONNECTED**

ADMINISTRATION 1401 RECREATION WAY COLORADO SPRINGS, CO 80905

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