

City of Colorado Springs Park System Master Plan



Parks, Recreation, Trails,
Open Space & Cultural Services



September 23, 2014

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Disclaimer: Although every reasonable effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information provided on the included maps, The City of Colorado Springs cannot be responsible for consequences resulting from omissions or errors in the information and graphic representations made herein. Users should consult with the City of Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department to ascertain whether any modifications have been made since the publication of this material.

Projection: All Maps are displayed in NAD 1983 State Plan Colorado Central FIPS 0502 Feet.

Additional Map Sources: Design Workshop, 120 East Main Street Aspen, CO 81611 970.925.8354

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Master Plan Leadership

Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department

Chris Lieber, Park Development Manager

Kurt Schroeder, Park Operations and Development Manager

Kim King, Recreation and Administration Manager

Matt Mayberry, Cultural Services Manager

Karen Palus, Director of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services

Task Force Members

John Maynard

Jeff Mosher

Susan Davies

Scott Campbell

Cheryl McCullough

John Olson

Renee Zentz

Mina Liebert

Dr. Barbara Joyce

Christina McGrath

Dave Munger

Beth Roalstad

Boyd Williams

Tim Boddington

Richard Skorman

Merv Bennett

Jill Gaebler

Scot Hume

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board

Jackie Hilaire, Chair

Gary Feffer

Charles Castle

Scot Hume

Alex Johnson

Ron Ilgen

Mina Liebert

John Maynard

Hank Scarangella

Technical Team Members

David Deitemeyer

Kate Roppel

Brian Kates

Gerry Strabala

Diane Ridderhoff

Tilah Larson

Jeff Webb

Leah Witherow

Connie Perry

Tim Roberts

Jay Hein

Carl Schueler

Tom Bonifas

Tim Mitros

Aimee Cox

Nina Vetter

Kim Gortz

Elaine Kleckner

Frank Landis

Consultant Team

Design Workshop

Richard Shaw

Anna Gagne

Jessie Young

Kathleen King

Sarah Horn

ETM Associates, LLC

Tim Marshall

Dave Sitrer

National Research Center

Erin Caldwell

CDR Associates

Laura Sneeringer

City Council

Keith King, *District 3, President*

Merv Bennett, *President Pro-tem*

Don Knight, *District 1*

Joel Miller, *District 2*

Helen Collins, *District 4*

Jill Gaebler, *District 5*

Andy Pico, *District 6*

Jan Martin, *At-Large*

Val Snider, *At-Large*

TOPS Working Committee

Jason Alwine

P.J. Anderson

Ian Kalmanowitz

Jeff Mohrmann

Jim Rees

Kirk Samelson

Leslie Thomas

Becky Wegner

Paul Franco

Emily Epstein

Joe Lavorini

Photos Courtesy of:

The City of Colorado Springs

Colorado Springs Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB)

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PLAN SUMMARY

1. Park System Master Plan Introduction
2. Plan Creation Process
3. Top 10 Issues for the Master Plan to Address
4. Opportunities for Future Improvements
5. Vision Summary: General Concepts
6. Master Plan Themes
7. Composite Master Plan



PARK SYSTEM MASTER PLAN INTRODUCTION

In 2013, the City of Colorado Springs decided that it was necessary to update the Parks, Recreation and Trails 2000-2010 Master Plan and the 1996 Open Space Plans, in order to provide long-term direction for delivery of services and to sustainably meet community expectations. These documents provide guidance to the City Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services (PR&CS) Department, the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, the Trails, Open Space and Parks Working Committee (TOPS), as well as other City departments and partners. The timing of this Master Plan takes advantage of a number of factors:

- Many of the recommendations of the past plans have been implemented, and these investments and accomplishments have generated new opportunities. For example, the creation of new trails provides opportunities to link the trail system together.
- The El Paso County Parks Master Plan was completed in June 2013 and identifies many opportunities for coordinated efforts with the City of Colorado Springs.
- Demographic changes in the Colorado Springs population require an adjustment of park services in order to meet a variety of needs. For example, older adults are looking for different types of recreation activities than those currently provided.
- Community interest in new sports and outdoor recreation has changed with time and facilities, programs and management need to adjust to take this into account.
- Development patterns have changed and a recent focus on infill development creates new types of parks, recreation and trails needs.
- Municipal finance changes have required adjustments to park service delivery. Funding has stabilized considerably over the past couple of years. It is important to evaluate how operations changes have impacted performance and examine alternatives and creative solutions for future operations.



Monument Valley Park is one of the City's signature parks where people can access nature within minutes of their homes. Source: City of Colorado Springs



Friend's groups and volunteers have helped the City to achieve many of the goals outlined in the 2000 Master Plan, for instance helping to build the Van Diest Playground. Source: City of Colorado Springs



Colorado Springs is distinguished as a Bicycle Friendly Community by the League of American Bicyclists. Colorado Springs received its silver designation in 2008, which will be re-evaluated in 2016. Source: City of Colorado Springs

This Master Plan proposes a vision and strategies to enhance the landscape and valued recreation features that draw people to Colorado Springs, ensuring future generations enjoy the legacy of public parks and open space. Community values and priorities formulate the framework of the plan. The plan seeks to enhance and promote the landscape, built-environment, culture and history of Colorado Springs and proposes parks and open space strategies customized to the area’s unique sense of place and people.

The recommendations included in this plan will provide a balanced system of conveniently located parks, interconnected trails, open space networks and multipurpose recreational facilities. The plan addresses the resiliency of the parks system and department operations in changing fiscal and political environments. It also addresses services, management, maintenance and facilities in a fiscally responsible and sustainable manner.

Many of the recommendations of this Master Plan are immediately actionable, and these near-term steps and partnerships are identified in an Action Plan. The Action Plan serves as a dynamic guiding tool for the PR&CS Department and will be updated on an annual basis with review by the Parks and Recreation Board prior to the development of the annual budget.

The planning horizon for the Master Plan is 10 years, however, it is likely that some of the visionary ideas within this plan will require more time to complete. This vision describes the potential, not a promise for the future. The vision captures the aspirations for projects that will leave a legacy for the community. The plan inspires action and provides a focal point to drive future policies for parks, open space, trails, recreation and cultural services that City leadership and citizens can support. Ultimately, the Colorado Springs Park System Master Plan guides decisions that will contribute to a high quality of life for residents and provide a world class destination for visitors.



Bluestem Prairie Open Space is a major conservation accomplishment made possible through partnerships and community support. This prairie grassland is home to over 200 bird species and native wildlife. The Park System Master Plan recommends protecting additional high quality natural areas. Source: City of Colorado Springs

PLAN CREATION PROCESS

Community Involvement

The greatness of Colorado Springs' parks, recreation, trails, open space and cultural services can be attributed to the many community members who care deeply about and are stewards of these amenities and resources. Their involvement and input in shaping the plan through a variety of forums is critical to its implementation. The consultant team met with the Master Plan Task Force and Technical Committee throughout the process to gain insight and guidance on the direction of the plan. A series of roundtable discussions engaged stakeholders in conversations on diverse topics. The consultant team, City boards, committees and leaders discussed implications of the findings throughout the planning process.

Additionally, the plan is informed by an understanding of overall citizen values and priorities. A public meeting, online survey and mail survey were designed to gain input from a representative group of the community and parks, recreation, trails and open space users. Input from both citizens that use City services, properties and facilities often, as well as those who rarely or never use them was provided to gain an understating of current perceptions, priorities and needs. The public also reviewed the plan themes and alternative strategies and provided feedback to indicate their level of support. The level of involvement from community members far exceeded participation rates of past City plan processes and is a testament to the value residents place on the parks system and their desire to contribute to its improvement.

Inventory and Analysis

The team compiled and reviewed a multitude of resources and existing plans pertaining to the parks, recreation, open space, trails and cultural resource offerings in the region. The team evaluated and analyzed existing sources of information and data, including plans, community demographics, growth projections, geographic distributions and convenience of park and recreation locations, quality of existing natural resources, and the PR&CS Department operations and budget. Evaluation also included comparing Colorado Springs' parks, trails, recreation and open space system to systems in other similarly sized cities.



Members of the Master Plan Task Force participate in a map activity to identify the strengths and challenges for parks, recreation, trails, open space and cultural services throughout the city. Source: Design Workshop



Hundreds of community members attended the public meeting held in May, 2014 where citizens voiced their opinions and preferences that helped shape the recommendations of the plan. Source: Design Workshop



Public meeting participants reviewed maps of recreation trails, open space, and parks and shared their ideas and priorities to enhance the current system. Source: Design Workshop

TOP 10 ISSUES FOR THE MASTER PLAN TO ADDRESS

Throughout the public and stakeholder engagement process, a large variety of topics were discussed. As a result of this process, the issues of greatest concern have become the focus of this Master Plan. It is essential that PR&CS, along with community partners, address these issues over the next 10 years in order to maintain and enhance the park system. The following is a summary of the issues (not in order of importance):

1. Insufficient and uncertain funding,
2. Park structures and facilities in poor condition,
3. Natural and historic resource conservation, restoration and management needs,
4. Gaps in the trail system,
5. Some parks are loved to death (over used),
6. Flood, fire and drought impacts,
7. Lack of public awareness about the contributions and benefits of parks, trails and open space,
8. High cost of water for park maintenance,
9. Safety concerns and the need for park rule enforcement, and
10. Priorities and values of community members need to be determined.



Colorado Springs receives an average of 17 inches of precipitation each year (cities in Colorado range from seven to 31 inches annually). Low amounts of rainfall and increasing costs of irrigation water creates challenges to maintaining natural areas, park land, sports fields and plantings in public spaces. Source: City of Colorado Springs

OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

The Park System Master Plan is intended to be visionary and ambitious. Many of the recommendations will be challenging to implement and will require great effort and time to accomplish. However, a number of factors set the stage for this plan to be successful:

1. High rate of resident recreation and outdoor activity,
2. Beautiful scenery and high quality natural areas,
3. Well-rounded historic parks system,
4. High rate of volunteerism and community-based parks stewardship,
5. TOPS program successes,
6. Parks and special events are used as a means to promote tourism,
7. A strong vision for downtown revitalization and infill,
8. Use of drainage ways for trail connections,
9. Future city growth and redevelopment potential, and
10. Community excitement for a new parks, recreation, trails, open space and cultural services approach.



*Walking, biking and jogging are popular activities in Colorado Springs. The trail system is used year-round.
Source: Colorado Springs CVB*

VISION SUMMARY: GENERAL CONCEPTS

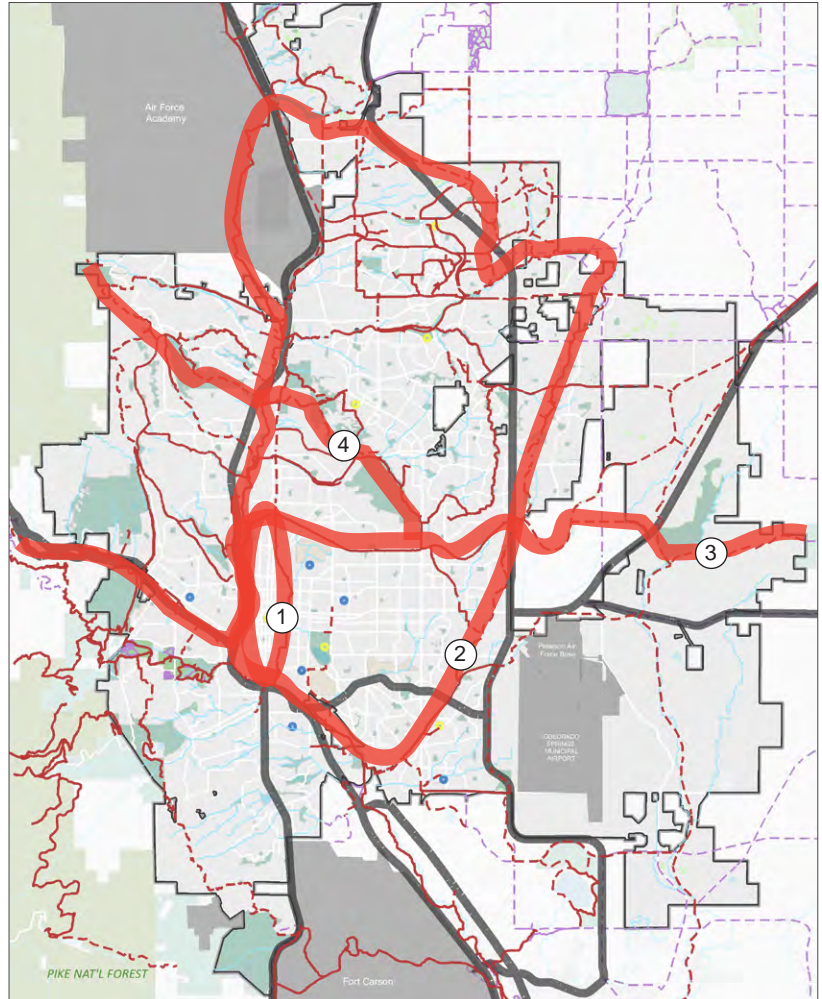
The vision for the Park System Master Plan focuses on the big ideas and new approaches that will help Colorado Springs thrive and continually improve the quality of life for residents. The following summarize the general concepts contained in the vision (see Chapter 4 Master Plan):

- Face our financial challenges and **secure diverse funding sources** over the next 10 years to ensure resilience.

Key Recommendations: Increase TOPS sales tax. Negotiate water rate reductions for park irrigation. Establish a non-profit park system foundation for proactive fundraising. Pass along some of the costs of new parks and trails creation to developers. Stabilize the amount of City General Fund distributed to the department. Consider additional recommended funding diversification ideas.

- **Link trails** to complete connections between recreation hubs.

Key Recommendations: Add approximately 150 miles of urban and internal park trails to the existing regional trails network. Connect existing trails to complete a 54 mile 'Ring the Springs' bike or run signature athletic challenge. Create a destination Mountain Bike Ride Center. Accommodate recreation trends that showcase the special topographic and natural characteristics of Colorado Springs, such as disc golf courses, challenge races and water-based sports. Strengthen community connections to the U.S. Olympics headquarters and the many world-class athletes.



Expanding the trail system was identified by the public as a top priority. Closing some critical gaps will greatly enhance connectivity for the entire system. Less than 50 miles of urban trails would need to be added in order to complete the four key connecting routes in the trail network identified in the recreation trails recommendations.

Trail Network Concepts

- ① Legacy Loop
- ② Ring the Springs
- ③ East-West Connector
- ④ Park to Peak Connector

- Fill in the gaps in the current **open space ring**. Enhance the value of existing open space land assets by expanding conservation to the high quality natural lands surrounding them.

- Create a network of **“Complete Creeks” or greenway** opportunities for urban open space and trails.

Key Recommendations: Pursue the conservation of approximately 25,000 acres of Candidate Open Space Areas. Develop seven primary urban drainage ways as greenways. Expand outdoor/nature education and programming. Balance recreation and natural resource protection.

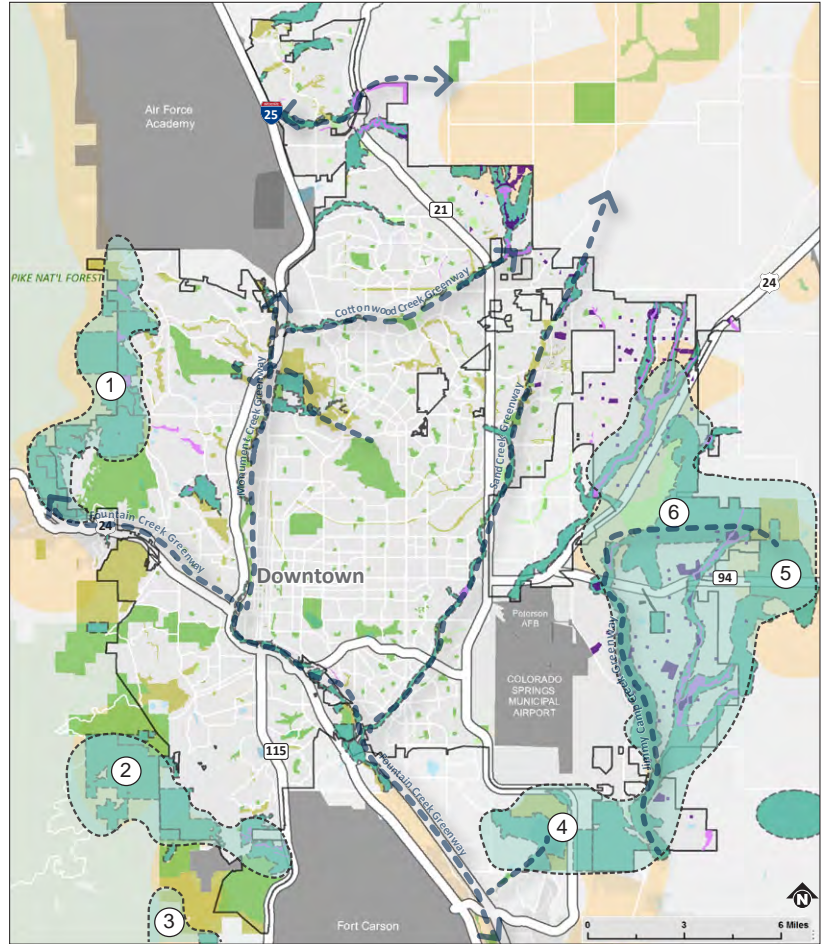
- Demonstrate our worthiness to be called **‘Champions of the Outdoors’**, by providing world-class recreation opportunities and acting as stewards of the natural environment. Enhance the uniqueness of the City’s recreation offerings by providing opportunities for adventure and recreation challenges.

- Expand **mountain and nature-based recreation** opportunities.

- Address deferred **maintenance and needed improvements** to maintain our parks and recreation assets and legacy.

- **Strengthen safety and security** and address flood, fire and drought issues.

Key Recommendations: Address eminent structural failures with a capital cost plan. Increase turf care standards and plant replacement and care. Comprehensively address the management and stewardship needs of the natural environment and open space lands with a natural resource management plan and specialized staff. Improve safety and stewardship within parks and trails by reinstating the park enforcement team and developing a park ambassador program. Use activation, programming and park design elements, and maintenance to address security and rule enforcement challenges.



While maintaining existing land resources is a priority of this plan, so too is continuing to implement the vision held by the City’s founders by continuing to expand conservation lands. Open space lands protect natural resources and provide recreational outlets for a growing population.

Candidate Open Space Areas

- ① Mountain Shadows
- ② Cheyenne Cañon / Cheyenne Mountain
- ③ Rock Creek
- ④ Bluestem Prairie
- ⑤ Jimmy Camp / Corral Bluffs
- ⑥ Corral Bluffs Expansion

- Address **population growth and changing demographics** with new parks, services and recreation opportunities.

- Provide **year-round recreation opportunities** to encourage community health and wellness for all residents.

Key Recommendations: Address recreation needs of seniors. Connect major parks with trails such as the Park to Peak Connection. Complete the downtown 10 mile Legacy Loop trail. Improve street crossings for pedestrians and bicyclists in 20 key locations to better connect people to parks, recreation and trails. Provide more community gardens within parks. Develop more partnerships to provide indoor recreation offerings.



The Master Plan seeks inspiration from existing trends and emerging sports to cater to resident's desires and attract new residents and visitors. Valmont Bike Park in Boulder, Colorado is an example of a successful bike park.

Source: Rob Miller <http://blog.twoknobbytires.com>

- Recognize the value and purpose of the **arts, history and civic pride.**

- Promote and enhance **tourism opportunities** in parks and recreational areas.

Key Recommendations: Provide education and interpretation of the cultural significance of Colorado Springs' geologic, natural and heritage features. Create new funding sources to maintain and enhance public art, and historic and cultural assets. Align parks, recreation, trail amenities and cultural facilities with opportunities to enhance and expand tourism and special event offerings.



Well maintained parks and open spaces reflect the importance of these places to the community. Source: City of Colorado Springs

MASTER PLAN THEMES

The Master Plan recommendations reflect community values captured from the public engagement process, evaluation of current operations, analysis of existing facilities and policies, and consideration of trends. These recommendations have been organized under seven core themes, which guide the future parks, recreation, trails and cultural services actions and decision-making for the next 10 years.

The Park System Master Plan recommendations are organized around 7 key themes:



Take Care of What We Have



Diversify Financial Strategies, including New Methods of Funding



Broaden, Enhance and Promote Recreation Opportunities



Continue Open Space Conservation in Advance of Development



Build our Community with the Understanding that Parks, Open Space and Trails Create Great Neighborhoods



Manage Parks for Better Usability and Greater Enjoyment

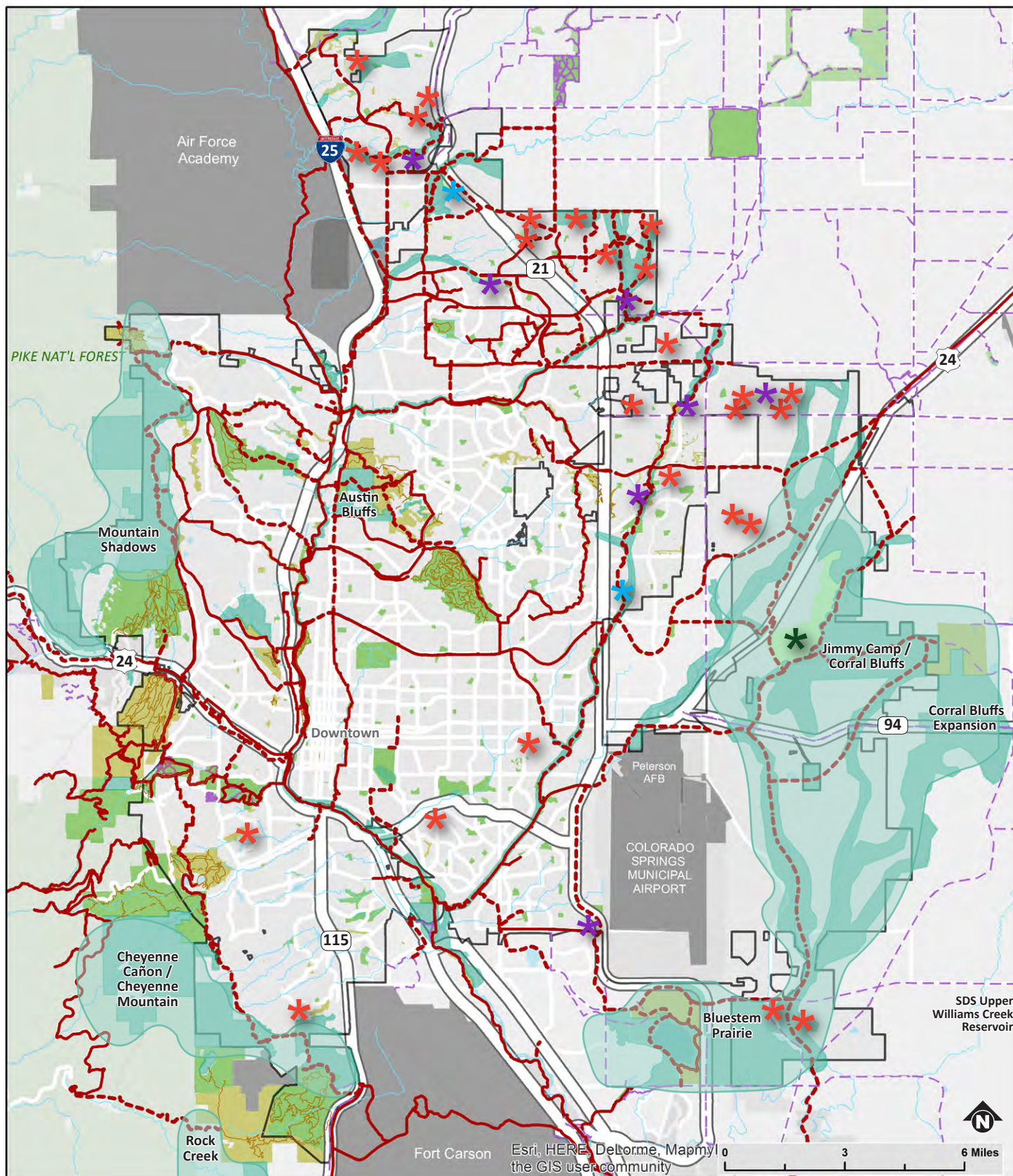


Enhance and Formulate Strong and Broad Partnerships

COMPOSITE MASTER PLAN

The Composite Parks, Open Space and Trails Master Plan (Map 1) identifies the primary physical plan recommendations including the City's existing and planned trails, future parks to be developed, and the Conceptual Open Space Network. Each of these elements are described in greater detail in the Master Plan Recommendations Chapter. When combined together, the separate elements of the PR&CS system integrate to create a robust network of parks and open spaces linked by a system of multi-use trails.

Map 1: Composite Parks, Open Space and Trails Master Plan



- | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| Candidate Open Space Area | Proposed Urban Trail | Pike National Forest |
| Conceptual Open Space Network | Existing Urban Trail | Park Lands (City, County and Special District) |
| Neighborhood Park | Existing County Trail | Open Space/Special Resource Area/Greenway |
| Community Park | Proposed County Trail | Undeveloped Park Land (City and Special District) |
| Sports Complex | Existing Park Trail | City Limits |
| Regional Park | | |

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INTRODUCTION

1. Colorado Springs Context
2. Plan Purpose
3. Plan Creation Process
4. Description of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services
5. Framework from Previous Colorado Springs Plans
6. Public Opinion Summary



COLORADO SPRINGS CONTEXT

Plan Introduction

The City of Colorado Springs Park System Master Plan addresses services, management, maintenance and facilities in a fiscally responsible and sustainable manner. Current community values and priorities formulate the framework of the plan. The plan describes the landscape, built-environment, culture and history of Colorado Springs and proposes strategies customized to the area's unique sense of place and people. The plan addresses the resiliency of the parks system and department operations in changing fiscal and political environments.

The planning horizon for the Master Plan is 10 years, however it is likely that some of the visionary ideas within this plan will require more time to complete. The vision captures the aspirations for projects that will leave a legacy for the community well into the future. The plan inspires action and provides a focal point to drive future policies for parks, open space, trails, recreation and cultural services that City leadership and citizens can support. Ultimately, the City of Colorado Springs Park System Master Plan guides decisions that will contribute to a high quality of life for residents and provide a world class destination for visitors.

Colorado Springs Context

The City of Colorado Springs is situated in one of the most spectacular settings along the Front Range, in El Paso County. The city's location at the base of Pikes Peak provides dramatic views of this prominent landmark from almost every location in the metro area. Furthermore, the city encompasses a diverse array of natural areas, including forested foothills, sheer-walled canyons, mountain streams, unique rock formations, expansive grasslands, meandering creeks and scenic bluffs and mesas. The city is bordered by public lands (US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, State parkland) and has over 15,000 acres of City managed parks and open space, including the renowned Garden of the Gods Park. In 2014, the city was home to approximately 446,439 people and this number is projected to increase to 523,039 by the year 2025.

Parks, open space and recreation opportunities within Colorado Springs and the surrounding mountains have been an important part of the experience of the city since its founding. Colorado Springs is one of the few Western US cities fortunate enough to begin with the dedication of hundreds of acres of City parkland, including Palmer Park and North Cheyenne Cañon which provide scenic views, opportunities for enjoyment of nature and outdoor recreation. The parks, recreation, trails and open space system has developed into a diverse and vibrant network – a direct result of decades of work, leadership, and investment by community members and leaders.

When General William Jackson Palmer founded Colorado Springs in 1871, he envisioned a grand and gracious park system ringing the community, connecting all its residents to the discovery, pleasure and peace that nature provides.

– Nancy Lewis with Deborah Odell *“The Parks of Colorado Springs: Building Community, Preserving a Legacy”*

Colorado Springs has been honored with a number of accolades and designations that relate to the bountiful parks, recreation, open space, trails, and recreation offerings:

*#1 Best City in America
(Outside Magazine, 2009)*

*#2 Fittest City in America
(Men's Fitness Magazine, 2010)*

*#2 Park in the World - Garden of the Gods-
(Trip Advisor Traveler's Choice, 2014)*

*#2 Best Cities for Women to Live
(Women's Health Magazine, 2010)*

*#5 Best Cities to Live, Work and Play
(Kiplinger's Personal Finance, 2008)*

*#6 Best Big Cities for Active Families - Best
for Endurance Sports
(Outside Magazine, 2014)*

*#7 Best Place to Raise an Outdoor Kid
(Backpacker Magazine, 2009)*

*#19 Best City for Families
(Parenting Magazine, 2010)*

Tree City USA – 35 Consecutive Years

*Silver Level Status Bicycle Friendly
Community*

U.S. Cities with the Cleanest Air, 2012

PLAN PURPOSE

The Park System Master Plan helps City leaders and PR&CS staff make sound decisions in order to maintain and enhance the system, including planning, management, programming and funding decisions for all the parks, trails, open space, recreation and cultural services within the City of Colorado Springs. The document is visionary and inspires the community to continually improve the park system, ensuring it suits community desires today and provides a legacy for future generations. The means of achieving this vision will need to be flexible, allowing recommendations to be explored and adjusted based on changing circumstances.

The City's first adopted Master Plan for parks and open space was completed in 1976. Subsequent master plans were completed in 1982 and 1988. This document serves as an update to the Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Trails 2000-2010 Master Plan, as well as the separate Open Space Master Plan adopted in 1996. Colorado Springs has seen many changes since 2000, requiring a revised vision and action plan that accounts for new economic realities, recreation trends and community preferences. The update to this Master Plan is an opportunity to understand citizen values and anticipate future needs.

The City of Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department manages a wide range of places and services that contribute to residents' quality of life, including:

- developed parks,
- open spaces and natural areas,
- sports complexes,
- an urban trail system,
- park trails,
- an urban forest,
- the Pikes Peak Highway,
- two golf courses,
- two cemeteries,
- cultural and historical resources,
- recreation centers,
- recreation opportunities for youth, teens, adults and seniors
- community centers, and
- street medians.

The Master Plan addresses all these places and services with the exception of operations and maintenance of the golf courses, cemeteries and Pikes Peak Highway, as these services are enterprises. The plan establishes the foundation for the City's decision making related to each element of the PR&CS Department's responsibilities. The role of the City is to support park, trails and open space projects that have clear public value, protect public interest and provide public access to desired, needed and well-designed facilities.

PLAN CREATION PROCESS

Driven by Community Values and Vision

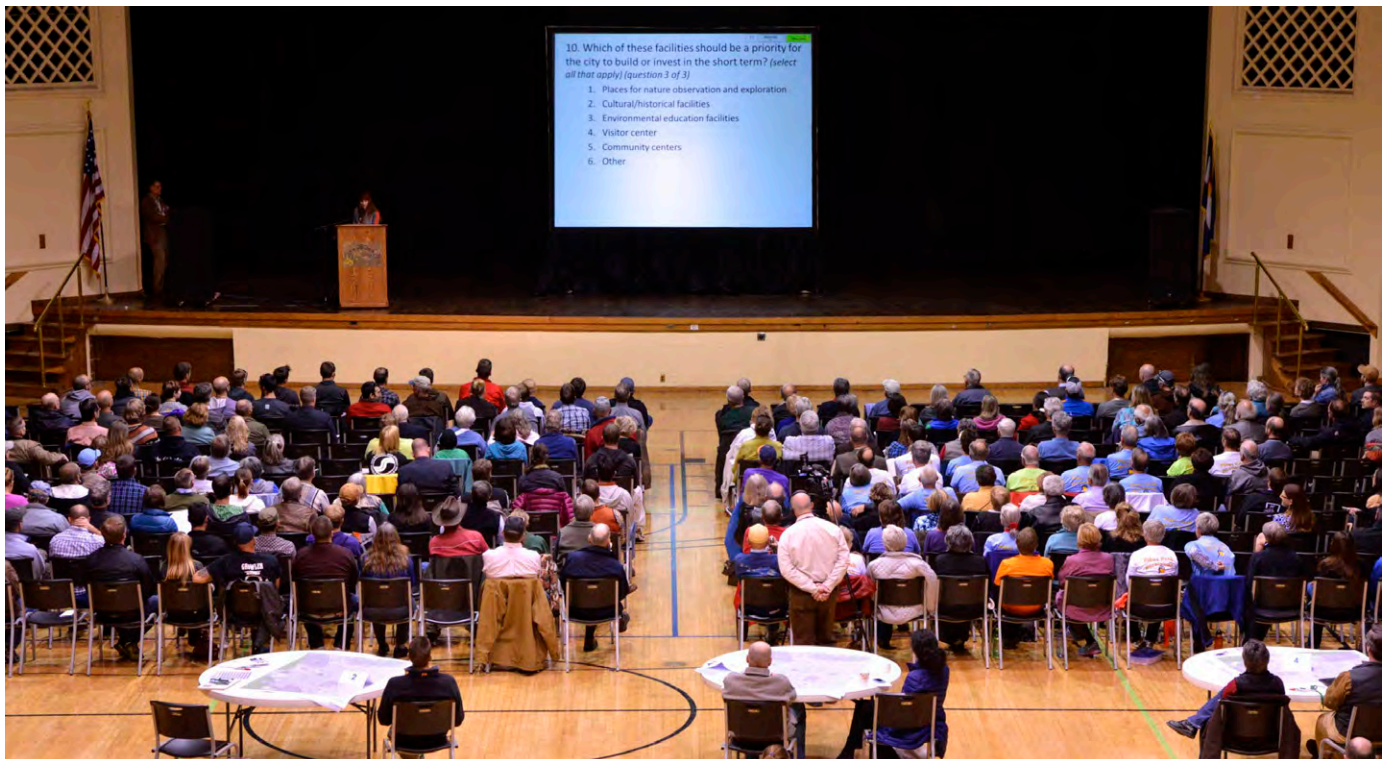
From November, 2013 to September, 2014, Design Workshop and ETM Associates provided consulting services to the Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services staff and engaged a Task Force, Technical Team and city residents to update the Parks, Recreation and Trails 2000-2010 Master Plan. The cornerstones of the plan update process are developing an understanding of current use patterns, values and preferences, and coming to consensus regarding the opportunities and priorities for the park and recreation system. The public participated in a number of opportunities and provided input through a resident survey, a public meeting with instant feedback polling and interactive mapping exercise, and an online survey. Throughout the process, the City's website provided project updates.



Over 300 community members attended the public meeting held in May 2014. Source: Design Workshop

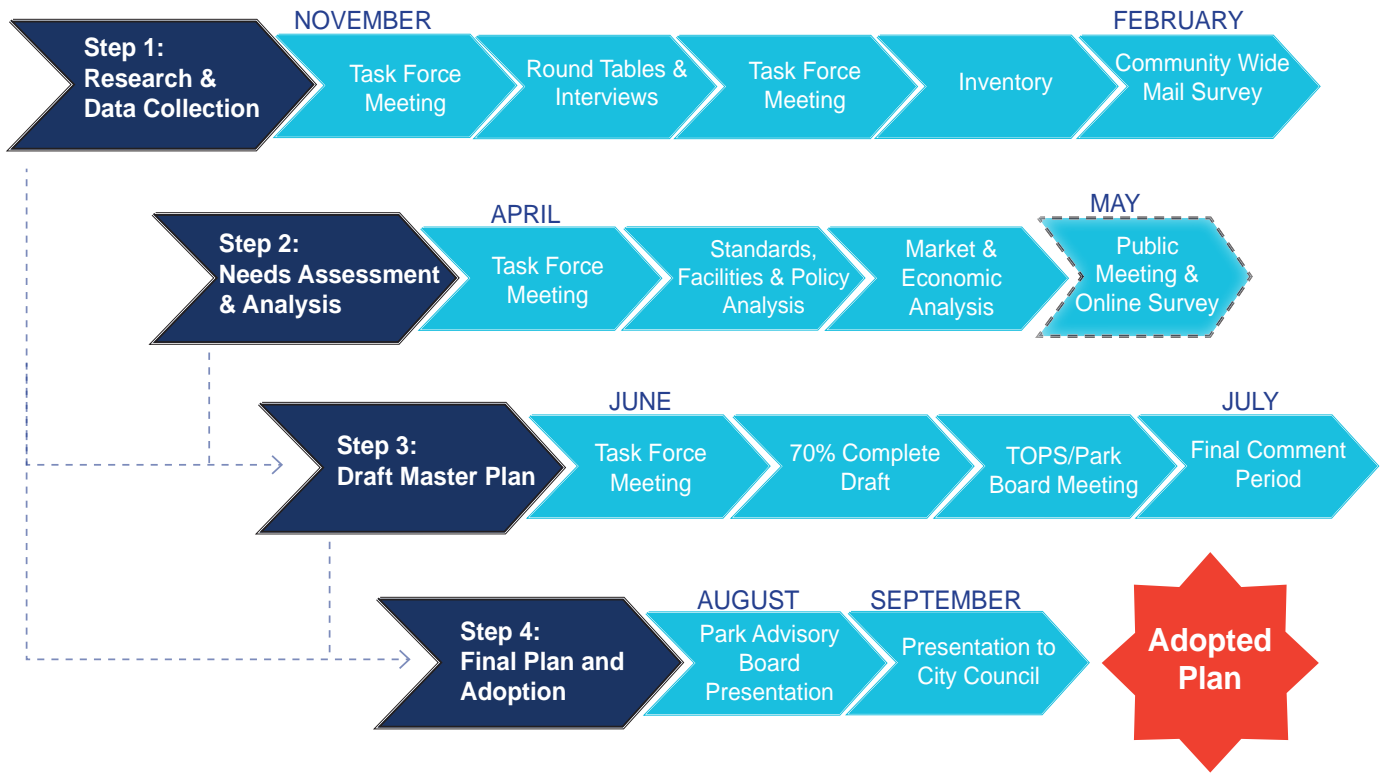
Dedicated Leadership

The Task Force consisted of 18 members who provided guidance on the overall plan direction, themes and stakeholder and public outreach methods. Members represented various groups responsible for plan implementation or the City's partner organizations. The Technical Team consisted of 25 subject matter experts who provided technical information and content and shared specific expertise important to the Master Plan. Each team member was selected to share a unique spectrum of experience and area of focus, representing many disciplines and divisions of City government.



During the public meeting participants provided input using instant feedback keypad polling to voice their opinions and priorities for the Master Plan. An additional 1,131 online surveys responses were collected answering the same set of questions. Source: Design Workshop

Figure 1: Process and Schedule



Feedback Loops Built in to the Project Steps

The plan update process consisted of four main steps to move the project from a vision to a plan with actionable strategies. The project timeline and steps are identified in Figure 1.

STEP 1: RESEARCH AND DATA COLLECTION

Startup Meetings and Round Tables – The plan process launched with Task Force and Technical Team meetings to understand existing PR&CS programs, achievements, and challenges.

Seventy-seven participants engaged in focus group discussions on six different roundtable topics:

- Enhancement and Expansion of Open Space, Trails and Recreation,
- Special Events Promotion and Organization,
- Partnerships and Collaborations for the Parks and Trails System,
- Community Development and the Parks and Trails System,
- Parks, Trails and Open Space Current System Evaluation, and
- Recreation, Outdoor and Cultural Programs.

A summary of the wealth of information and perspectives gathered through these meetings is provided in the document Appendix B.

Mail Survey – The National Research Center conducted a citywide survey using best practices for random selection of households to achieve representation from a cross-section of the community. A mailed survey was sent to a total of 1,600 addresses in five districts of the city (Downtown, Northeast, Northwest, Southeast and Southwest). Completed surveys were received from 252 households, achieving a response rate of 16 percent, providing statistically significant results. The survey was weighted to reflect the demographic profile of all Colorado Springs residents and all five districts of the city. The survey results provided insight into current perceptions and participation, priorities, values, and goals for open space, parks, trails and recreation activities. See Appendix C: Survey Report of Results for more information.

Inventory of Open Space, Parks and Trails – The team gathered data from City departments and past reports to assess current conditions and update outdated information from the Parks, Recreation and Trails 2000-2010 Master Plan.

STEP 2: NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND ANALYSIS

Distribution and Access Analysis - Geographic Information System (GIS) software was used to evaluate a variety of environmental, land characteristic and population data sources to identify the most suitable locations for future parks, open spaces and trails. The needs assessment accounted for complex sets of information including: demographics, proximity to neighborhoods, development/growth trends, environmental and natural resources, special districts, protected lands and land ownership. GIS Network Analyst software enabled the team to better understand the relationship between household locations and distance to parks and open space by accounting for actual transportation networks, including roads and trails, and identifying significant barriers to access such as interstates and major highways. This methodology provided a more rigorous and accurate understanding of the accessibility of the system than past methods which utilized a set radius.

Standards, Facilities and Policy Analysis – A conditional assessment of all major park facilities was carried out through interviews with facility operators and site visits. Evaluation of PR&CS operations, facility offerings, and policies was conducted to formulate recommendations for improvements.

Market and Economic Analysis – Revenue figures for all Department facilities as well as all current funding mechanisms available and allocation of funds for acquisition, new construction, administration, operations and maintenance were evaluated. The City of Colorado Springs data was compared with benchmark communities, current best practices, and creative funding options to determine the appropriate recommendations to create a sustainable and resilient department that can address the backlog of identified needs while also planning for future growth and emerging trends.

Public Meeting and Online Survey - A large public meeting was held at the City Auditorium at the end of May 2014. Almost 300 community members weighed in on their overall priorities and concerns as well as their thoughts regarding the initial plan recommendations. Instant feedback polling was used to understand attendee's preferences in response to 20 questions. Participants provided additional information for the development of the plan recommendations through a facilitated map activity to identify locations for natural resources protection, desirable locations for future parks and recreation activities, places and facilities in need of maintenance, and trail gaps and priorities. For those who were unable to attend the meeting, the keypad polling questions were posted to an online survey, which collected 1,131 responses. The questions asked during the public meeting and online survey built on the findings of the public survey. While the feedback is not a scientifically representative sample of the community like the resident mail survey, the responses provided insight into user group interests and was a platform for everyone in the community to provide their ideas.

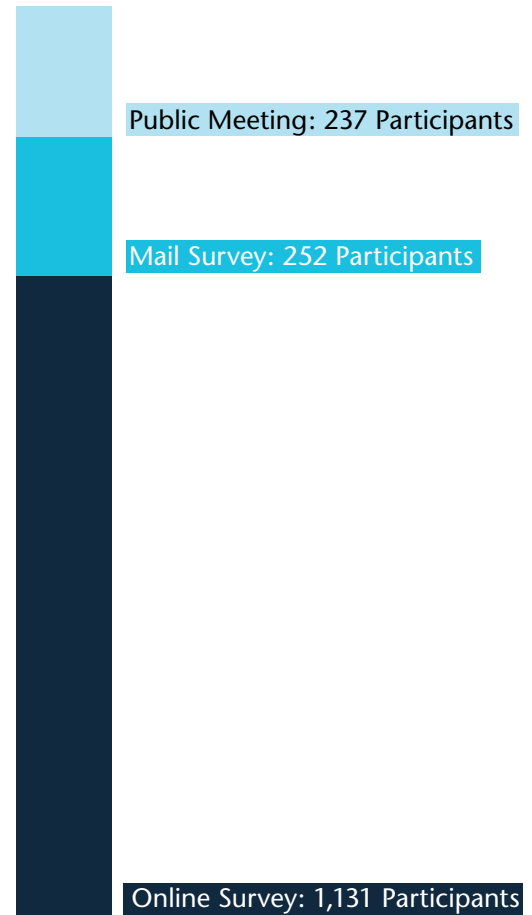
STEP 3: DRAFT MASTER PLAN

The results of research and data collection and the needs assessment and analysis were compiled and formulated into a draft Master Plan with recommendations supporting the plan's key themes. Meetings were held with the Task Force, Technical Team, TOPS Committee, Park Board and City Council to garner feedback and further refine the plan during this stage.

STEP 4: FINAL PLAN ADOPTION

The draft document was circulated widely to stakeholders and placed on the City's website for review and comment. Subsequently, the final plan was completed and the document was presented to and approved by City Council on September 23rd, 2014.

Figure 2: Number of Participants For Each Public Engagement Opportunity



The public was asked for their opinion through three different outreach techniques. A total of 1,620 responses were received to questionnaires.

DESCRIPTION OF PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURAL SERVICES

Departmental Overview

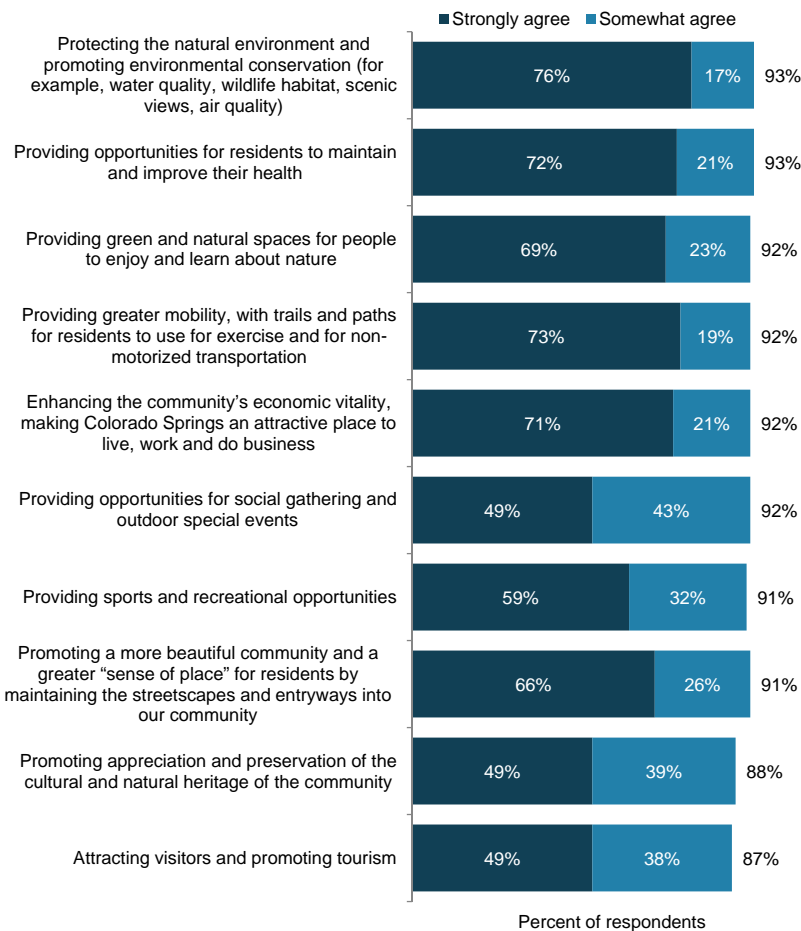
Mission

The mission of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services (PR&CS) is to serve the citizens of Colorado Springs with integrity, through competent provision and management of:

- trails, open spaces, parks and recreation areas,
- cultural and historical resources,
- urban forests,
- recreation opportunities for youth, teens, adults and seniors, and
- services that provide for or improve the quality of life and enhance the image of the city.

Figure 3: Public Support for the PR&CS Purposes

Cities offer parks and recreation facilities and programs to their residents for various reasons. Please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree that the City should offer services for each of the following purposes.



The public survey completed March, 2014 indicated there is strong public support for all of the services the PR&CS Department provides to the community. Figure 3 shows that 93 percent of survey respondents agree or strongly agree that the City should provide services to protect the natural environment and promote environmental conservation and provide opportunities for residents to maintain and improve their health.

Source: Colorado Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Survey, Report of Results, March 2014

Organization and Responsibilities

The PR&CS Department is split into three divisions (Figure 3):

- Recreation and Administrative Services,
- Cultural Services and
- Park Operations, Development and Forestry.

The Park System Master Plan does not address the operations and maintenance of Golf Courses, Cemeteries, Pikes Peak or Special Improvement Maintenance Districts (SIMD's) as they are operated as enterprises, and therefore, not included in the City staffing summaries.

Recreation and Administrative Services

The Recreation and Administrative Services division is responsible for enhancing the quality of life for people of all ages and abilities by implementing diverse and inclusive programs, facilities and services.

Cultural Services Division

The Cultural Services Division is responsible for enriching the lives of citizens and visitors by preserving and interpreting the cultural and natural history of the Pikes Peak region.

Park Operations, Development and Forestry

The Park Operations and Development Division is responsible for maintaining and managing all of the parks, trails and open spaces in the City of Colorado Springs.

Forestry is responsible for managing the City's urban forest in a healthy, safe and sustainable state, which means maintaining the original forest legacy, managing risk, and increasing the canopy coverage for shade, stormwater retention and property value.

Figure 4: Organizational Overview



FRAMEWORK FROM PREVIOUS COLORADO SPRINGS PLANS

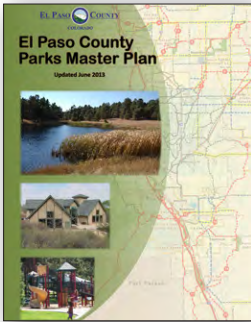


The Parks, Recreation and Trails 2000-2010 Master Plan as well as the Open Space Plan (1996) inform the creation of this plan update.

A number of other relevant plans influencing the past and future of Colorado Springs' parks, trails and open spaces have been considered in the development of the Park System Master Plan, including:

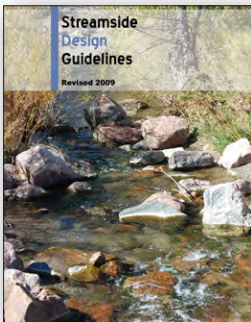
Comprehensive Plan (2001)

The 2001 City of Colorado Springs Comprehensive Plan lays out goals for parks and open spaces to achieve a balance within the city. Through geographic distribution of parks and open space, identification and preservation of natural features, and the development of an interconnected system of trails, parks and open space, the Comprehensive Plan looks to strategically develop the growing city in a way that will enhance Colorado Springs natural environment. This vision and goals serve as a basis for the recommendations described in the Park System Master Plan.



Colorado Springs Parks Solution Team Executive Summary

In 2012 the Parks Solutions Team studied how the City's Parks assets could maximize the community's recreational experiences and provide the best possible resources for quality of life improvement under recent budget constraints. This Master Plan builds on those original concepts and explores ways in which current funding can be expanded to create financial stability within the PR&CS Department.



El Paso County Parks Master Plan (2013)

The County Parks Master Plan emphasizes the role of natural, historical, and cultural resources and interpretive programs throughout the region and identifies potential sites for recreation development, open space preservation and trail linkages. As the City and County work together, the two plans should be used in collaboration to build the regional system of parks and trails as well as its cultural and interpretive programs.

2013-2015 City of Colorado Springs Strategic Plan

The Mayor's 2013-2015 Strategic Plan lays out specific, measurable goals for the future of Parks, Planning and Public Works which are applicable to, and have been addressed by this Master Plan effort:

- Increase park volunteer hours from 140,000 to more than 200,000
- Diligently pursue competitive municipal water rates
- Reduce acres of irrigated turf by 10 percent
- Prioritize delivery of maintenance services to parks with greatest use and revenue generation
- Develop definitive plans to continue outsourcing and implement community partnerships

Pikes Peak Area Council of Government (PPACG) Nonmotorized Transportation System Plan (2014)

The 2001 Colorado Springs Intermodal Transportation Plan preceded the PPACG Regional Nonmotorized Plan under development in 2013 to 2014. The Nonmotorized Plan should be referred to for bicycle and pedestrian transportation routes, such as on-street bicycle lanes and commuter routes. The Park System Master Plan addresses bicycle and pedestrian recreation trails.

Stormwater Needs Assessment (2013)

The Stormwater Needs Assessment will continue to serve as the guiding document for stormwater-related improvements and priority projects within the parks system. It also provides guidance for how greenways and trail corridors should be created and managed.

Site and Facility Plans

The City has a number of site, facility and program management plans that provide specific guidance for operations, such as Red Rock Canyon Master Plan (2013), Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum (2010) Garden of the Gods Master Plan (1994), Midland/Fountain Creek Parkway Corridor Plan (1988) and more.

PUBLIC OPINION SUMMARY

The following is a summary of the public opinions collected through a mail survey, online survey, and public meeting keypad polling organized by topical area. The entirety of the responses are provided in Appendix B.

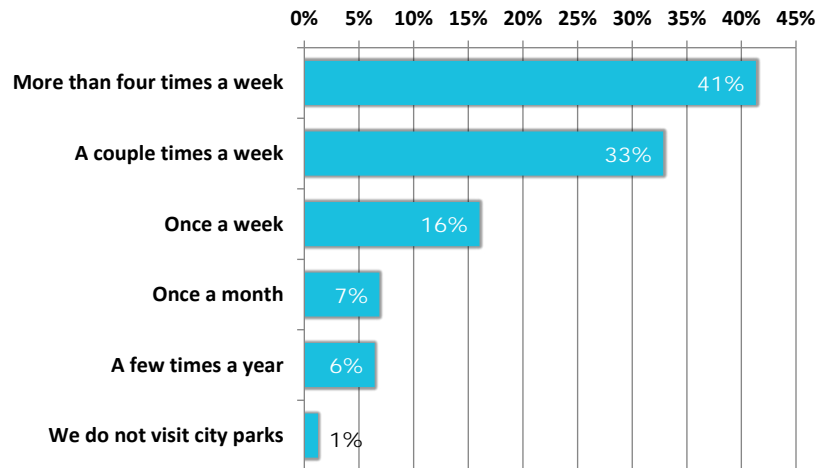
People use City parks, trails and open space often.

People are recreating frequently outdoors in Colorado Springs. A significant majority, 90 percent, of online survey and public meeting participants frequent City of Colorado Springs parks, trails or open space once a week or more. Remarkably, 41 percent of respondents said they visit parks, trails or open space more than four times a week (Figure 5). The mail survey respondents indicated slightly less frequency, with 71 percent recreating outdoors in Colorado Springs once or more times a week.

Open space trails were indicated by public meeting and online survey participants to be the City amenity or program used most often (67 percent). Urban trails (paved or located in urban locations) were the second most used amenity (47 percent). Large regional and large community parks, small neighborhood parks, and attending special events in parks were also identified as programs or amenities used often by a large percent of households (Figure 6).

Figure 5: Rate of Park, Trail or Open Space Visitation

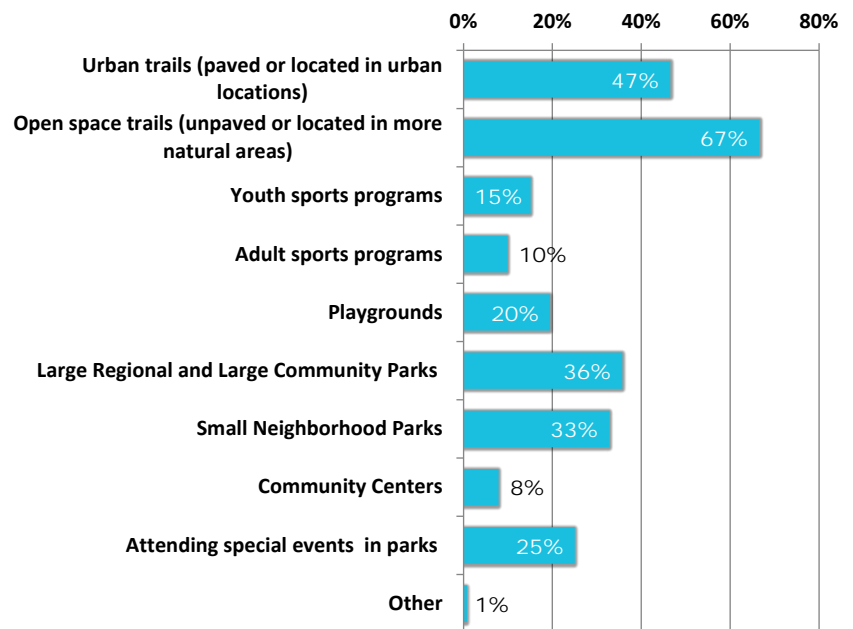
How often does a member of your household typically visit a City of Colorado Springs park, trail, or open space?



Source: Combined Results from Public Meeting Keypad Polling and Online Survey

Figure 6: Programs and Amenities Used Most Often

Which of these City programs or amenities does your household use most often? (Select up to 3)



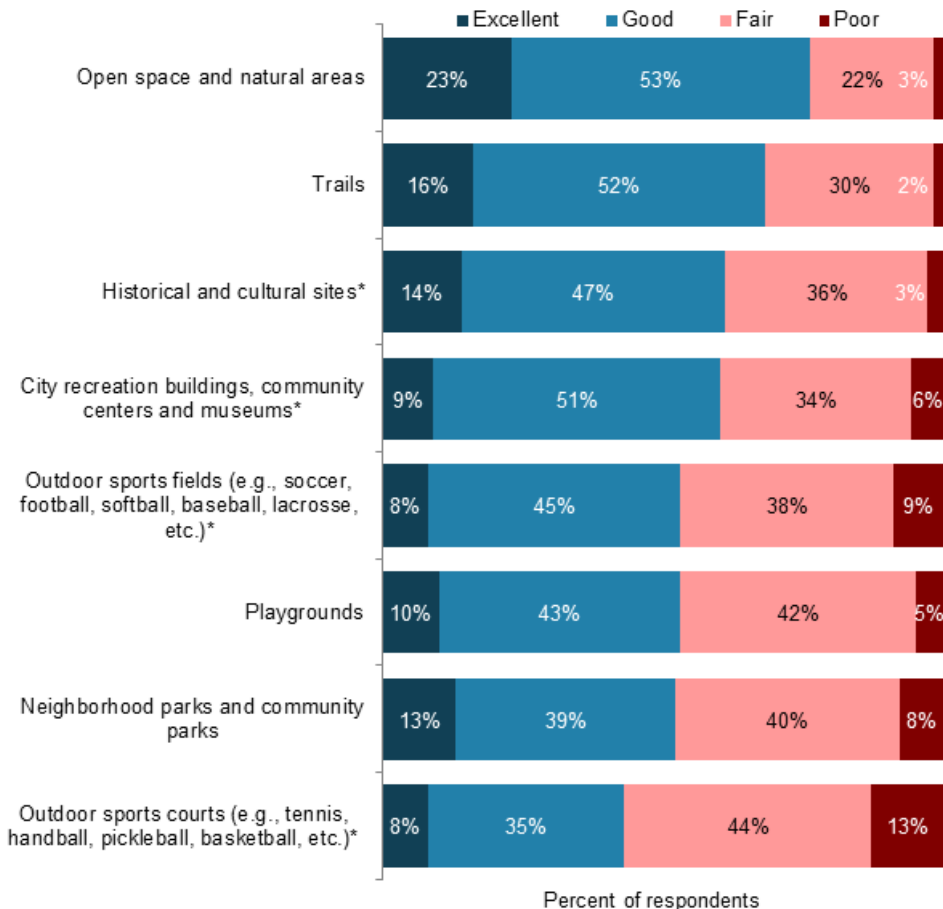
Source: Combined Results from Public Meeting Keypad Polling and Online Survey

Pressing need for maintenance.

The public meeting polling and online survey revealed that insufficient maintenance is deterring 24 percent of people from visiting some parks, trails and open spaces. Insufficient and uncertain funding was the issue people felt was the most important to address, followed by parks structures and facilities in poor condition or lacking, natural and historic resource conservation, restoration and management needs, park-over use, and flood, fire and drought impacts. Improving maintenance of open space lands and park recreation facilities were identified as top priorities to address in the next five years. Mail survey respondents rated the quality and condition of eight PR&CS facilities (Figure 7) and roughly half to two-thirds of participants found them to be in excellent or good condition, indicating a need for improving maintenance especially for outdoor sports courts, neighborhood parks and community parks, playgrounds, outdoor sports fields and City recreation buildings/community centers/museums.

Figure 7: Facility Quality and Condition Ratings

How would you rate the overall quality and condition of each of the following?



* Indicates a "don't know" response above 20%

Source: Colorado Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Survey, Report of Results, March 2014

Right amount of park lands, but need for expanded recreation opportunities.

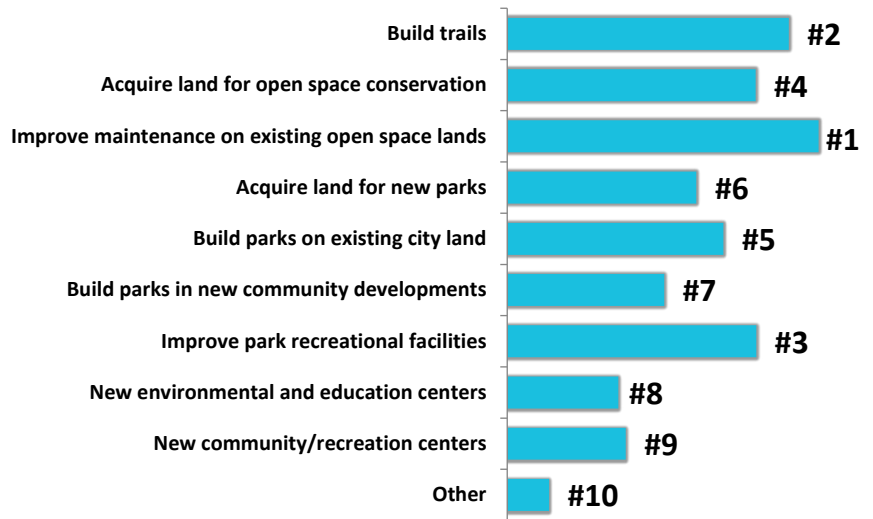
Residents are generally satisfied with the facility and program offerings of the PR&CS Department, however offerings could be improved to meet community needs. The public meeting polling and online survey results ranked improving park recreation facilities as the third highest priority to invest in over the next five years, whereas acquiring land for new parks and building new community or recreation centers were toward the bottom of the list of priorities (Figure 8). Similar results in the mail survey found that the majority (80 percent) of respondents feel that the amount of neighborhood parks is “about right” followed by about three-fourths of respondents who feel the amount of outdoor sports fields, community parks and regional parks is “about right.” Mail survey respondents reported that there are not enough recreation areas that accommodate people with special needs. Additional facilities that were identified as needs within the community included community gardens, dog parks or off leash area, places to fish, a mountain bike park, and areas for small group gathering places and picnicking.

PR&CS programs are important and should be expanded.

The majority of mail survey respondents were satisfied with the program and activities offered by the PR&CS Department, though only about 20 percent participated in a City program within the last year. The majority of respondents felt that programs offered by the City are essential or very important, especially programs for children and youth, people with special needs and low-income households (Figure 9).

Figure 8: Investment Priorities

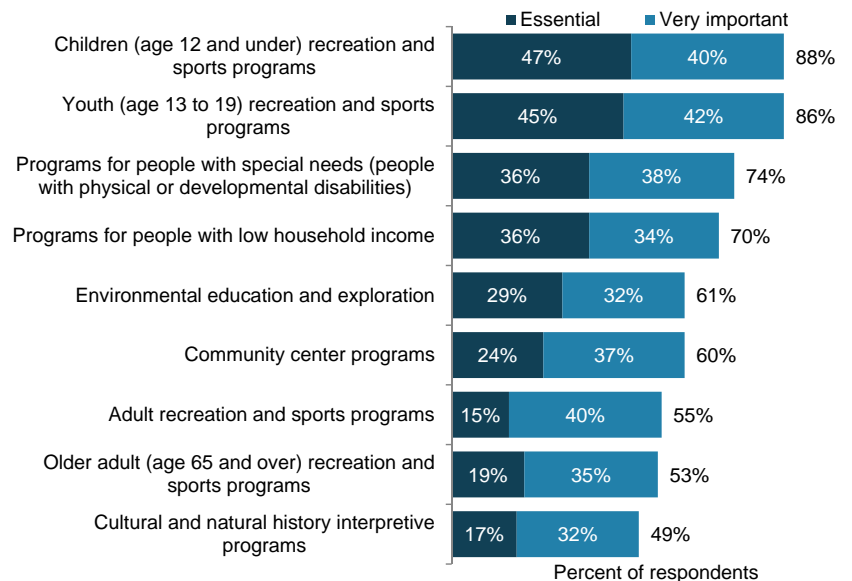
Which of these do you think should be a City priority to invest in over the next five years? (select in rank order)



Source: Combined Results from Public Meeting Keypad Polling and Online Survey

Figure 9: Program Importance

Please rate how important it is for the City to provide the following programs.



Source: Colorado Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Survey, Report of Results, March 2014

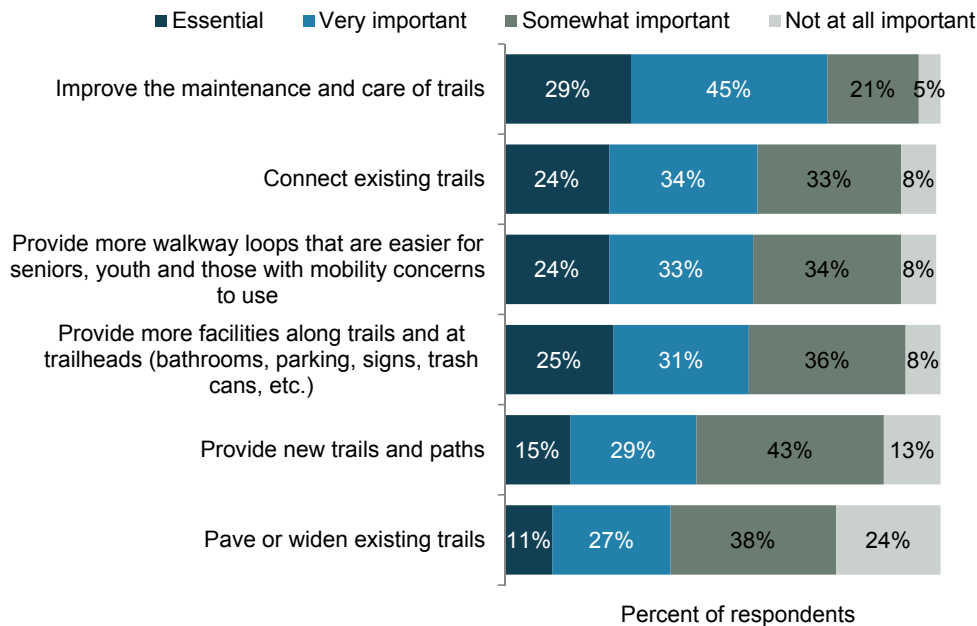
Program needs identified through the public process included a desire to expand the following: family activities, environmental education and exploration activities, races, special events, and programs or tours that explore culture, natural history and heritage. There is continued interest in the City’s provision of recreation programs for children and youth sports as well as agreement from three-fourths of residents that providing programs for people with special needs is very important or essential.

Trails provide something for everyone.

Urban and open space trails are the amenities offered by the PR&CS Department that are used most often by households in Colorado Springs. Sixty-three percent of public meeting and online meeting participants felt that trails were the most important priority for the City to build or invest in the short term. The mail survey illustrated that almost two-thirds of the community are generally satisfied with the trail system and that building new trails was less of a priority, however, additional public meeting discussions lead to the identification of trail needs and current gaps in the network that are a high priority to complete. The top rated action item on the mail survey was to improve the maintenance and care of trails with almost two-thirds of respondents reporting this to be “essential” or “very important” (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Trail Priorities

Please rate how important, if at all, you think it is that the City undertake each of the following related to trails and walkways within City parks and open space?



Source: Colorado Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Survey, Report of Results, March 2014

Strong support for Trails, Open Space and Parks (TOPS).

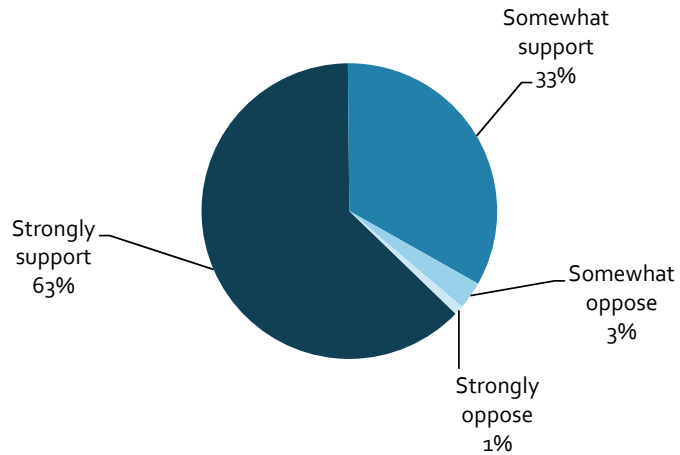
Ninety-six percent of mail survey respondents strongly supported or somewhat supported extending TOPS beyond 2025 to generate funds for acquisition, development and maintenance of trails, open space and parks (Figure 11). The public meeting and online survey polling also showed nearly half of participants supported increasing TOPS sales tax rate as one of the ways to increase funding in the future. The most important reasons identified by the engagement process to acquire open space lands moving forward are to protect high quality natural lands in advance of development pressures, provide outdoor recreation and education opportunities, and protect scenic views, and preserve wildlife habitat. More online survey and public meeting polling participants prioritized investing in acquiring additional open space than acquiring land for new parks.

Safety concerns and lack of enforcement are detracting from the parks, trails and open space.

Forty percent of mail survey respondents expressed concern about personal safety when using parks, trails and open space (Figure 12). Awareness and enforcement of park and open space rules was identified by more than half of survey respondents as a need. The public meeting and online survey provided indication of the strategies to address safety or park rule enforcement that people would most support. Strategies to reduce homeless populations and panhandling in public space, park design elements for crime prevention, law enforcement team dedicated to parks, and more staff presence in parks and trails were all supported. Only 14 percent of respondents indicated they did not have safety concerns.

Figure 11: Level of Support for Extending TOPS

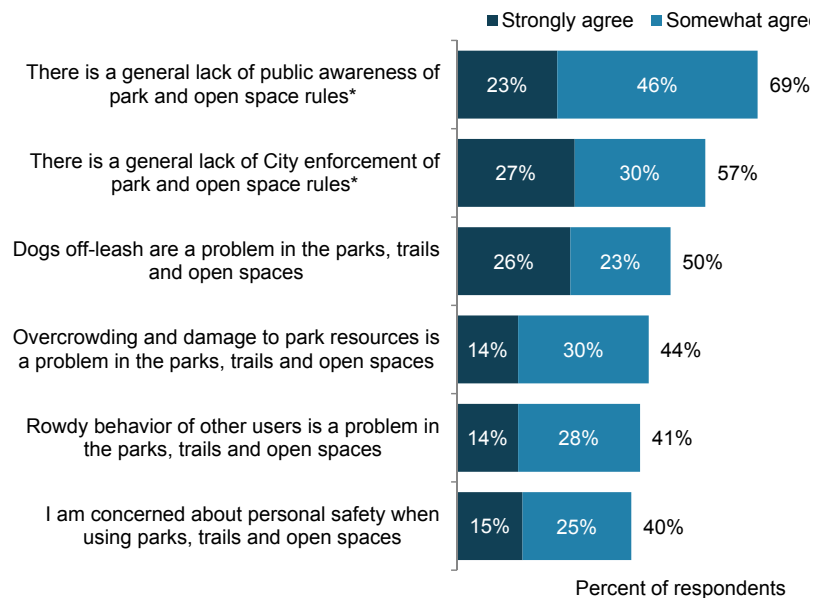
To what extent would you support or oppose a future ballot measure to extend the TOPS program beyond 2025?



Source: Colorado Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Survey, Report of Results, March 2014

Figure 12: Safety and Park Management Concerns

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about parks, recreation, trails, open space and cultural services provided by the City?



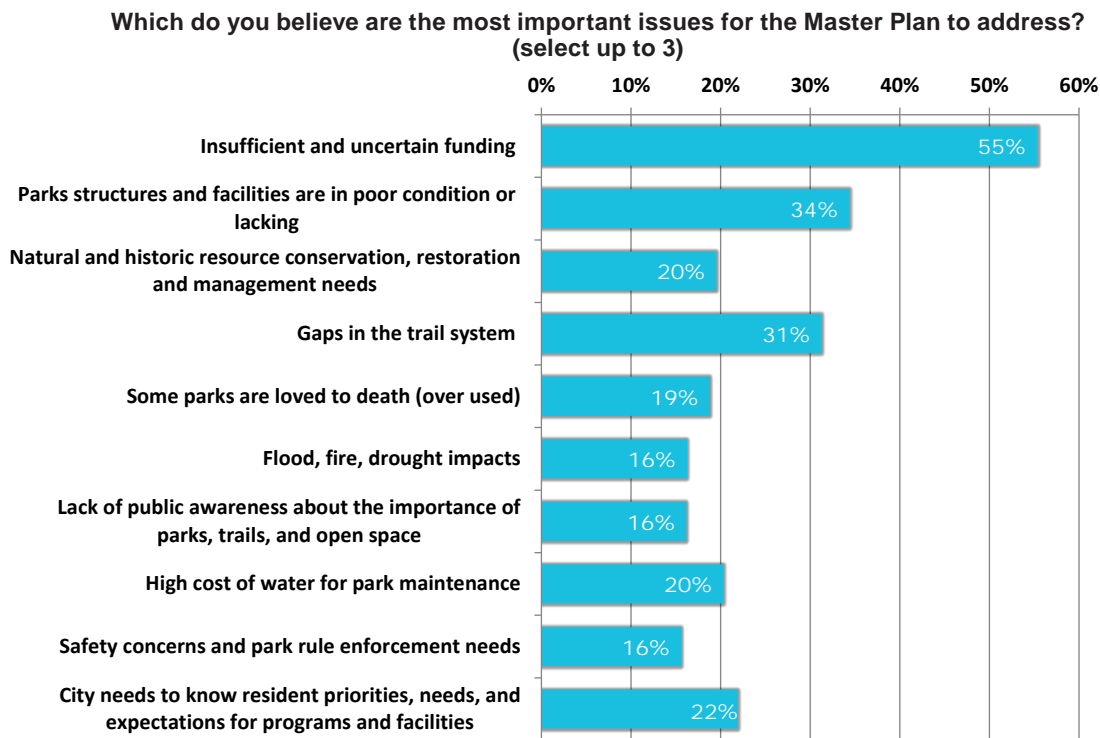
* Indicates a "don't know" response above 20%

Source: Colorado Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Survey, Report of Results, March 2014

Insufficient and uncertain funding is the most important issue to address.

All the various public engagement methods utilized identified a common theme of the need to increase the amount of funding and for it to be more consistent. Fifty-five percent of public meeting and online survey participants felt it was the most important issue for the Master Plan to address (Figure 13). Various funding mechanisms were explored to determine levels of public support. All funding alternatives were supported except increasing user fees.

Figure 13: Top Issues for the Master Plan to Address



Source: Combined Results from Public Meeting Keypad Polling and Online Survey

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND TRENDS ASSESSMENT

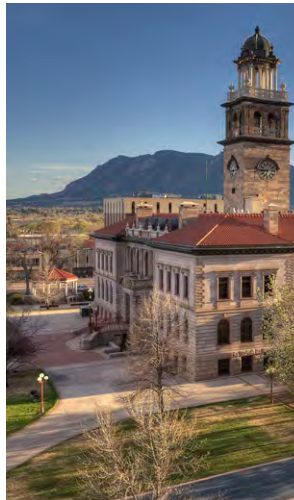
1. Chapter Overview
2. Environmental Setting
3. Community Profile
4. Recreation Trends
5. Benchmarking
6. Inventory of Parks, Open Space and Trails
7. Distribution of Parks and Gap Analysis
8. Recreation Facilities, Programs and Partnerships
9. Park Operations
10. Volunteer Programs
11. Conclusions



CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The environmental setting defines many of the unique recreation and cultural offerings available in Colorado Springs. Natural areas containing diverse vegetation, wildlife habitat, stream courses and rock formations provide the backdrop for many of the hiking, biking, climbing, bird watching and other outdoor activities enjoyed by residents and visitors year-round. While these natural areas provide many opportunities, the climate, hydrology, and wildfire danger also pose challenges to maintaining parks, urban trees, stream courses and open space in ideal conditions. These conditions are explained to examine the strengths, threats and opportunities to parks, open space, trails, recreation and cultural services. Colorado Springs' community profile is also important to review in order to gain an understanding of the approximate amount and types of programs, activities, recreation opportunities, and other services available to the population. Understanding the needs of current and future residents is essential for PR&CS's future planning. Examination of local, state, and national recreation trends provides a basis for considering the desires and influences that Colorado Springs may experience into the next decade.

An inventory of the existing parks, open space and trails provides a foundation for examining how well Colorado Springs is providing for its citizens. The inventory is compared to other benchmark communities and the geographic distribution of parks, recreation and services is examined in relationship to resident access. Current recreation facilities, programs and activities, partnerships, and deficiencies are examined to capture a snapshot of PR&CS operations. This analysis helps to inform the recommendations provided in the Master Plan chapter.

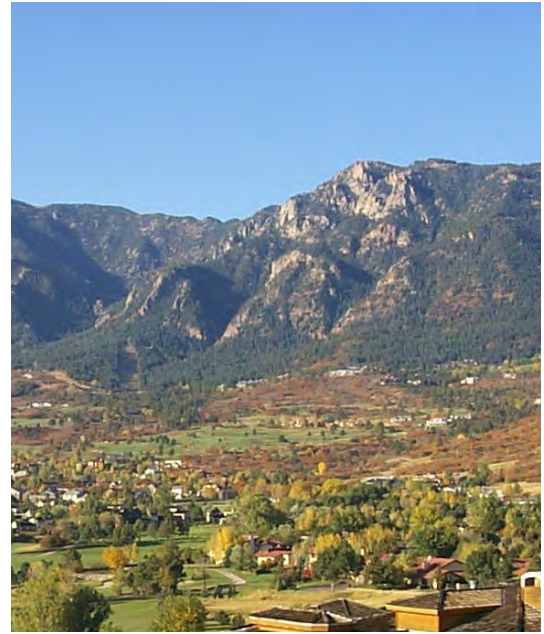


The Colorado Springs PR&CS Department provides a wealth of opportunities for the community from state-of-the-art skateboard parks to areas for quiet contemplation and everything in between. Source: City of Colorado Springs & Colorado Springs CVB

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Landscape Feature Highlights

Located just east of the Southern Rocky Mountains, at 6,035 feet above sea level, Colorado Springs has a semi-arid climate with relatively mild temperatures and precipitation, allowing for year-round outdoor recreation. The city sits at the base of Pikes Peak, connecting the Rocky Mountains and their dramatic landscapes of the west with expansive grasslands and big sky to the east. To the north lies the Palmer Divide, while desert landscapes become more visible moving south toward Pueblo. This transitional space provides the city with a wide range of natural features, scenic views and mountain recreational activities within a short drive. Cultural landmarks such as Garden of the Gods, Cave of the Winds, Seven Falls and Pikes Peak also add to residents' vast opportunities to experience the outdoors in this region. The landscapes of Colorado Springs include meandering creeks, scenic bluffs and prairies full of wildflowers. The abundance of natural features in the area inspired the dedication of early City parks: North Cheyenne Cañon in 1885, Palmer Park in 1902, and Monument Valley Park in 1907.



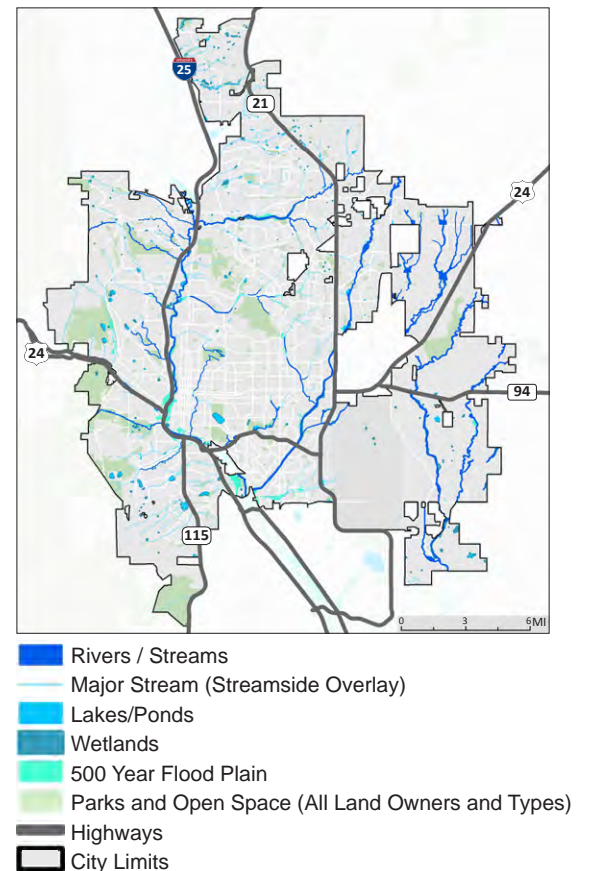
View of Cheyenne Mountain Source: Colorado Springs CVB

Hydrology

Colorado Springs is located within the Fountain Creek Watershed, a 927 square mile region. Fountain Creek originates west of the city near Woodland Park and flows south through Colorado Springs where the creek then merges with Monument Creek and Sand Creek before meeting up with the Arkansas River in Pueblo, Colorado. Other creeks in the area include Bear Creek, which comes to the city from Bear Creek Canyon located southwest of Colorado Springs, and Cottonwood Creek, which comes from the east (See Map 2). In addition to providing important fish and wildlife habitats and natural protection from flooding, these waterways also serve as recreational opportunities for the community, with many trails following the water courses. Five reservoirs and two natural lakes in the area provide other water-based recreation opportunities.

These water bodies play a major role in water quality and drainage issues. The Fountain Creek watershed has historically experienced water quality issues from both point and non-point source pollution loading into Fountain Creek. In 2011, the Fountain Creek Watershed Flood Control and Greenway District completed the Fountain Creek Corridor Master Plan to improve watershed health, create stable riparian and wetland ecosystems and develop a trail from Colorado Springs to Pueblo with recreational and educational opportunities. Additionally, the Stormwater Engineering Department runs an Adopt-a-Waterway program encouraging local businesses, environmental groups, academic institutions, neighborhood organizations and other community groups to formally adopt a waterway. These groups clean creeks, trails and stream-side natural areas for the purpose of improving water quality in the Fountain Creek watershed and have become a useful source of maintenance for the community.

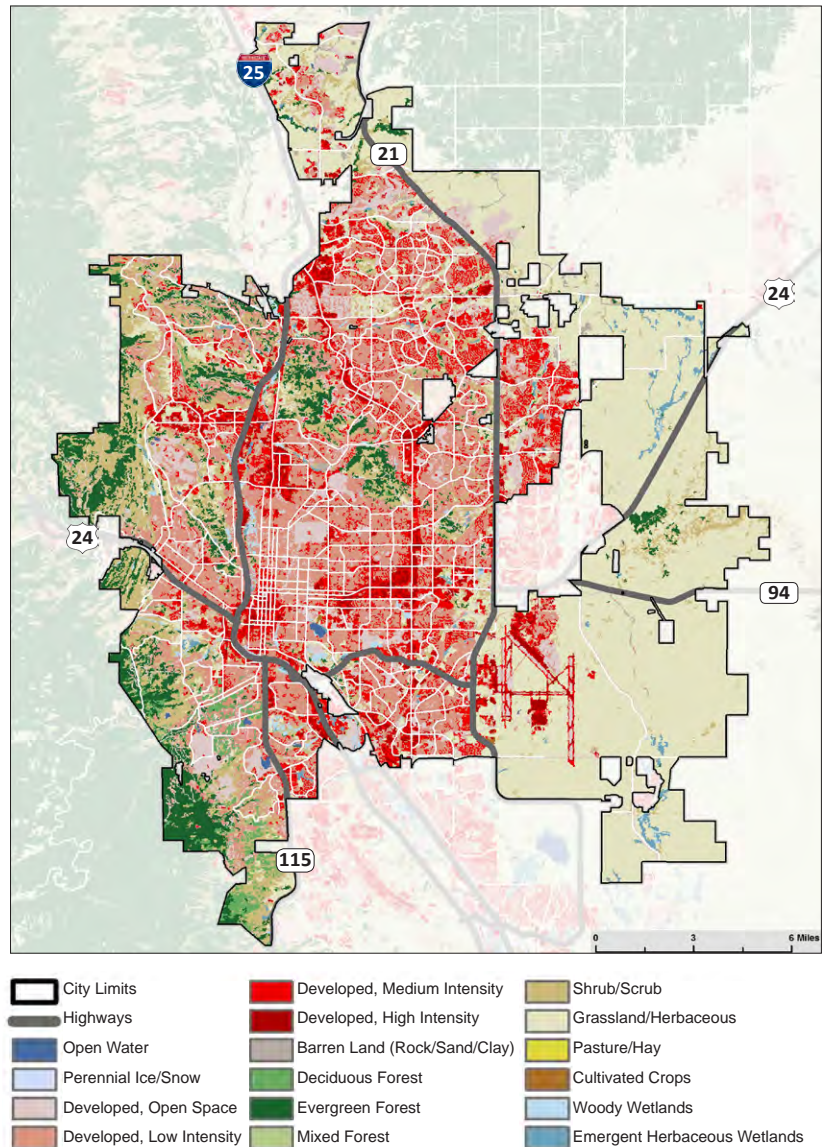
Map 2: Rivers, Streams and Water Bodies



Only one percent of the City of Colorado Springs landcover is water (Map 3). This goes beyond lakes and ponds to include wetlands adjacent to streams and creeks. There are 13,956 acres of wetland habitat in Colorado Springs located along creeks as well as ponds and marshes. Wetlands provide habitat for many bird, fish, and wildlife species in Colorado Springs and also help to improve water quality. Some notable wetland recreation areas include Monument Valley Park, Tejon Marsh and America the Beautiful Park.

In order to protect the natural areas, open space and multi-use trail opportunities along stream corridors, in 2002 the Colorado Springs City Council passed what is now known as the Streamside Ordinance. The ordinance was updated in 2007 to “guide development and maintenance of the properties adjacent to stream corridors in a manner that is compatible with the environmental conditions, constraints and character of these areas.” The ordinance and associated Streamside Design Guidelines (Colorado Springs, 2009) apply to stream-adjacent wetlands and land that extends between 70 and 120 feet beyond the edge of an adjacent stream channel and ensures that trail and recreation opportunities have been identified for potential development projects.

Map 3: Landcover



Source: National Land Cover Database, 2011 Edition

Flora and Fauna

The diversity of landscapes and ecosystems in Colorado Springs gives this region a wide plant palette. Cottonwoods and willows line waterways that run through the city. In drier areas, short-grass prairies include cactus, yucca and buffalo grass, that are common to many regions along the eastern and southern Colorado plains. Moving west across the city, the landscape transitions to higher ecosystems with many rock outcrops where plants like gamble oak and mountain mahogany take root. Pinyon pine, ponderosa pine and junipers are located in open space ecosystems at higher elevations, shown as Evergreen Forest in Map 3.

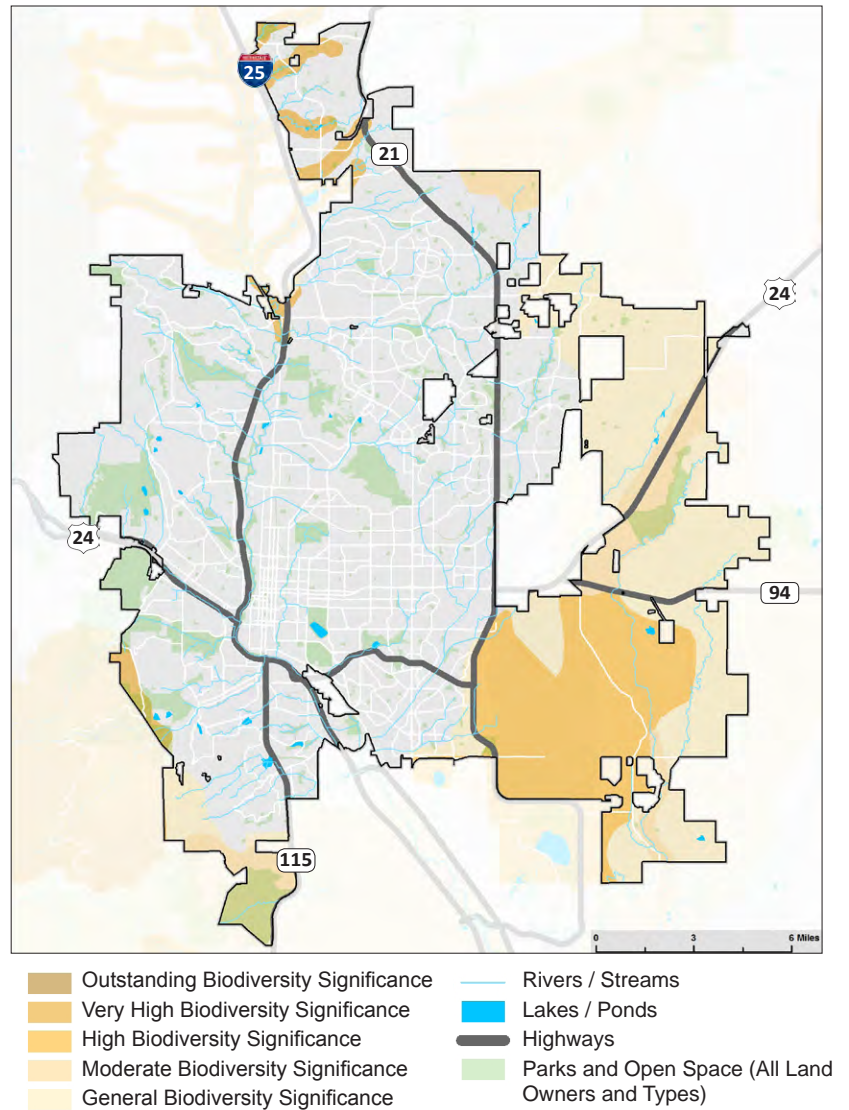
Common trees found within the more urban areas of the city include cottonwoods, which were historically imported as street trees from the Arkansas Valley by General William Jackson Palmer to provide shade in Colorado Springs and give the city’s new streets a tree-lined look and feel. Palmer also brought Catalpa to Colorado Springs, which is still used as a street tree today. The Forestry Department maintains a list of suitable trees for urban streets within the city and now oversees more than 198,000 street trees and 19,386 park trees.

Wildlife Habitat

Wildlife habitat encompasses everything animals need to live in an area, seasonally or year-round, including movement corridors, water supply, food and shelter. Open space acquisitions have been used to protect habitat for species that are important to the region, including rare, threatened and endangered species identified by the Colorado Parks and Wildlife and listed in Table 1.

In addition to the Colorado Parks and Wildlife habitat areas that identify suitable lands for specific species, the Colorado Natural Heritage Program has developed a database highlighting Potential Conservation Areas throughout the state, which are ranked according to their biodiversity significance. This database has determined the primary land areas required to support the long-term survival of specific species, natural communities or ecological processes. The identified areas are based on biological and physical factors and do not account for land ownership or political boundaries. These areas require ground-truthing to verify the presence of quality natural habitats. The areas of biodiversity significance shown in Map 4 are based on observed occurrences of imperiled or significant species within the specified area. Many of the undeveloped lands along the periphery of the city, especially along the eastern portion, provide general biodiversity interest with significant areas in the north along the stream corridors and in the southeast, which rank as high biodiversity significance.¹

Map 4: Biodiversity Significance Ranking



Source: Colorado Natural Heritage Program. 2013. Potential Conservation Areas. Biodiversity Tracking and Conservation System. Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado, U.S.A. Data exported 09/30/2013.

“Colorado residents value wildlife viewing; almost all Coloradans report that one of the reasons they take trips to the outdoors is for the chance to see wildlife. Almost all residents also report they enjoy watching wildlife when they take a trip outdoors, enjoy seeing wildlife around their homes, and report that the wildlife they see is an important part of their community. Coloradans think it is important that residents have a chance to learn about the wildlife in the state.”

Source: Vaske, J. J., Wittmann, K., Williams, T. V., Hardesty, K., & Sikorowski, L. (2001). *Wildlife Viewing in Colorado: A Review and Synthesis of Existing Data*. Project Rep. for the Colo. Div. of Wildlife. Human Dimensions in Nat. Res. Unit Rep. No. 33, Colorado State Univ., Fort Collins. 41 pp.)

¹ Colorado Natural Heritage Program. 2013. Potential Conservation Areas. Biodiversity Tracking and Conservation System. Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado, U.S.A. Data exported 09/30/2013.

Table 1: Wildlife Species of Significance within the Colorado Springs Region

COLORADO SPRINGS WILDLIFE SPECIES OF SIGNIFICANCE		
	Common Name	Status
Mammals	Preble's Meadow Jumping Mouse	Federally Threatened / State Threatened
	Black-tailed Prairie Dog	State Special Concern
	Swift Fox	State Special Concern
	Botta's Pocket Gopher	State Special Concern
	Northern Pocket Gopher	State Special Concern
	Townsend's Big-eared Bat	State Special Concern
Birds and Raptors	Mexican Spotted Owl	Federally Threatened / State Threatened
	Burrowing Owl	State Threatened
	Peregrine Falcon	State Special Concern
	Bald Eagle	State Special Concern
	Ferruginous Hawk	State Special Concern
	Long-billed Curlew	State Special Concern
	Mountain Plover	State Special Concern
	Colorado Checkered Whiptail	State Special Concern
Reptiles and Aquatic Species	Common Kingsnake	State Special Concern
	Northern Leopard Frog	State Special Concern
	Arkansas Darter	State Threatened (Federal Candidate)
	Flathead Chub	State Special Concern
	Southern Red Belly Dace	State Endangered
	Greenback Cutthroat Trout	Federally Threatened / State Threatened

Source: Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Natural Events

DROUGHT IMPACTS

Drought is a common occurrence in Colorado Springs. Including snowfall, Colorado Springs receives an average of only 17 inches of precipitation each year. The city is not located on a major waterway, requiring water to be delivered to Colorado Springs from nearly 200 miles away. While 2014 has been an above-average year for precipitation, the semi-arid climate of Colorado Springs in combination with limited water sources and drier, hotter summers means that the city will likely continue to face drought challenges in the future. Drought can have significant impacts on parks, open space and recreation sites:

- Increased wind erosion of soils and poor soil quality,
- Forest and vegetation quality degradation,
- Increased risk of wildfires,
- Loss of wetlands and aquatic habitats for wildlife,
- Loss of water-related recreation activities, and
- Need for increased watering of turf and plant materials to prevent loss.

Efficient use of water and protection of natural resources and wildlife habitats will need continued monitoring and maintenance as Colorado Springs' parks and operations regimes evolve into the future.

What is the value of rain?
\$45,000 is the utility cost savings the City Parks Department experiences every day rain water eliminates the need to turn on sprinklers and water the parks.

FIRE IMPACTS

A number of Colorado Springs' parks, trails, and open spaces are still recuperating from recent natural disasters, which included two significant wildfires and a major flood event. The 2012 Waldo Canyon Fire took place in the Pike National Forest and adjacent areas. The fire destroyed 347 homes and resulted in damage to 179 acres of Colorado Springs' public lands. These areas include Blodgett Peak Open Space, Mountain Shadows Open Space and parts of Foothills Trail. The Waldo Canyon trail, one of the region's more popular hiking areas was also severely damaged.

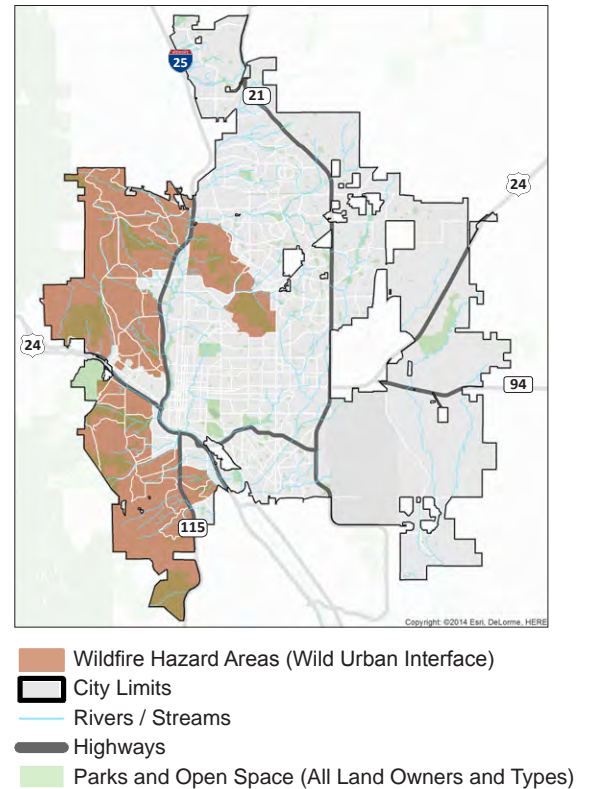
In June 2013, the region suffered another fire which took place north of the city. The Black Forest fire is considered the most destructive wildfire in Colorado history. It destroyed 486 homes and damaged 37 homes. The fire charred more than 14,000 acres of land in the area and caused more than \$85 million in damages. Nearby Royal Gorge Park, which helps to support the tourism economy in Colorado Springs, was completely burned and is currently undergoing rehabilitation. In the immediate future, the short-term loss of these popular recreation areas may drive more hikers, bikers and others to look for alternative sites in the region. As the City looks toward management of existing and future parks, trails and open space, fire mitigation and management should be a top priority. While these amenities serve a public recreation need, the selective siting, design and careful management of these properties can play a role in overall strategies to mitigate fire risk and protect residents, development and natural landscapes from total burn. Management of open space lands within the Wildland-Urban Interface areas (Map 4), where there is high potential for wildfire in close proximity to developed lands, will reduce the fire risk to homes and structures.

FLOOD IMPACTS

The recent fires have put Colorado Springs at a 350 percent increase in debris flow off burn scars. Additionally, the aftermath of these fires significantly raises flood risk and increases pressure on stormwater systems and infrastructure. A 2012 Stormwater Needs Assessment identified 282 stormwater-related projects that will need attention in the coming years. Stormwater related projects that were implemented were put to the test a year later when the Front Range experienced catastrophic flooding during the heaviest rainfall Colorado has ever seen. In Colorado Springs, this flood event caused an estimated \$13 million in damaged infrastructure, roads, utilities, trails and parks. The trail system experienced significant damage, as trails were washed out and eroded.

Flash flooding is the most common natural hazard in Colorado Springs. These floods are usually a result of thunderstorms and generally occur from May through September. Protecting parks, trails, and open space from flooding will continue to be a priority and a challenge.

Map 5: Wildland-Urban Interface



The Wildland-Urban Interface, or WUI, describes areas where man-made improvements are built close to, or within, natural terrain and flammable vegetation, and where there is a high potential for wildland fire.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

The demand for recreation, parks, trails, and cultural services in Colorado Springs is heavily influenced by changing population, demographic trends and the local economy. Understanding these factors provides insight into the current needs of the community and helps to anticipate future demands.

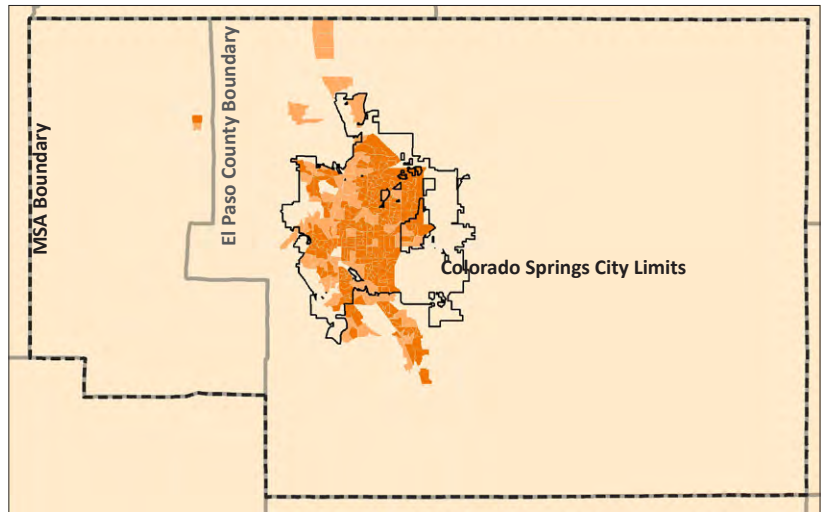
Population History and Forecasts

With a land area of 195 square miles and a 2014 estimated population of 446,439, Colorado Springs is Colorado’s largest city in terms of area, and second only to Denver in population. The City of Colorado Springs population makes up 65 percent of the total population in the Colorado Springs Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), representing a high concentration of the regional population.¹ Map 6 shows the regional population concentration is centered within Colorado Springs and neighboring communities to the north and south.

The Colorado Springs population has more than doubled in size since 1980, as shown in Figure 14. Roughly 85,500 additional people have been added to the city since the Parks, Recreation and Trails 2000-2010 Master Plan was created.

It is important for the 2014 Master Plan to anticipate the population for the next 10 year planning horizon. The population growth rate within the city has slowed since 2010, attributed mostly to lower rates of job growth. The Colorado State demographer anticipates an annual growth rate of 1.45 percent for the city. When applied to year 2025, this equates to a total population of 523,039.

Map 6: Population Density

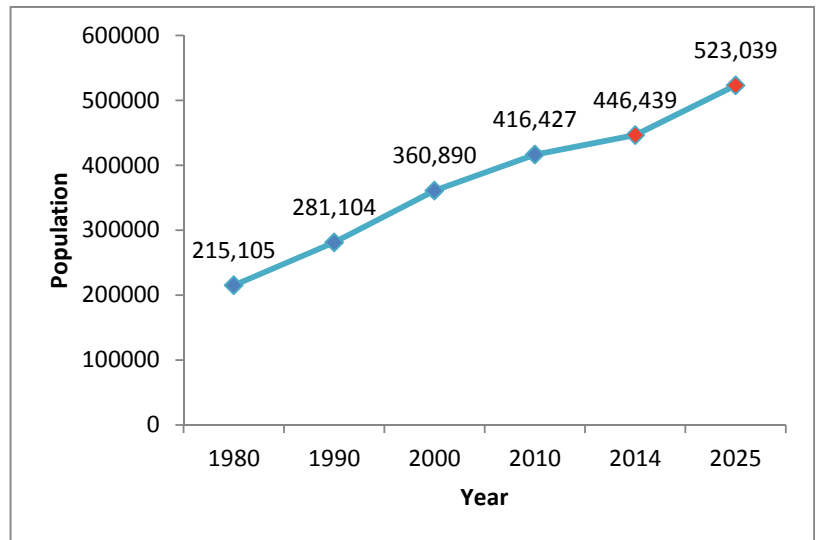


Population Density
(People per Acre - 2010 Census)

- Low Density
- Medium Density
- High Density
- Colorado Springs MSA Boundary
- Colorado Springs City Limits

¹ The Colorado Springs Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) is the region surrounding the City of Colorado Springs defined by the United States Office of Management and Budget for statistical purposes. The Colorado Springs MSA encompasses both El Paso and Teller Counties.

Figure 14: Population Growth 1980 - 2025



Source: U.S. Census Bureau (1980-2010) and projected rate from the State Demographer (2014 and 2025)

Areas anticipated for the highest rate of population growth from 2012-2017 are located on the eastern and northern edges of the city (Map 7). It is also important to examine the population increases expected for the region, since many residents from the surrounding rural unincorporated areas, towns and cities enjoy the parks, recreational opportunities, special events and cultural resources the city offers. The Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), including all of El Paso County and Teller County, was estimated by the U.S. Census to be home to 650,673 people in 2010. The population of the MSA is expected to grow by 26 percent by 2025 to 820,954 people, a slightly greater rate of increase than the City of Colorado Springs.

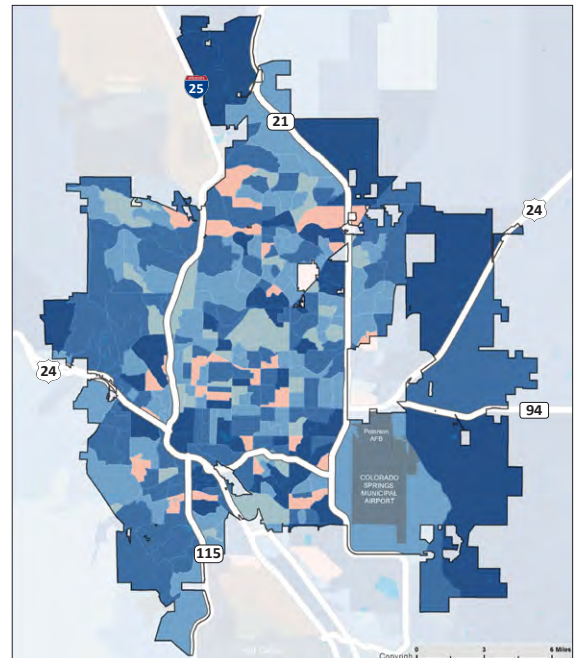
Local Economy

The Colorado Springs economic base is diverse and includes many large employers. The region’s economy is largely dependent on government-related employment. Area military installations are a significant factor in the local economy, constituting more than 20 percent of all employment. This employment sector includes military families and veterans that return after service to make this area their home. The natural areas, mountain views, parks and recreational opportunities are a large factor in attracting and retaining employers, especially in the tourism and sports industries.

Major local industries include:

- Aerospace/Defense/Homeland Security,
- Data Networking/Storage,
- Customer Support/Financial Services,
- Healthcare,
- Higher Education,
- Manufacturing,
- Medical Innovation & Technology,
- National Non-profit Organizations, and
- National Sports Governing Bodies and Sports Organizations.

Map 7: Annual Population Growth Rates 2012 - 2017



Annual Population Growth

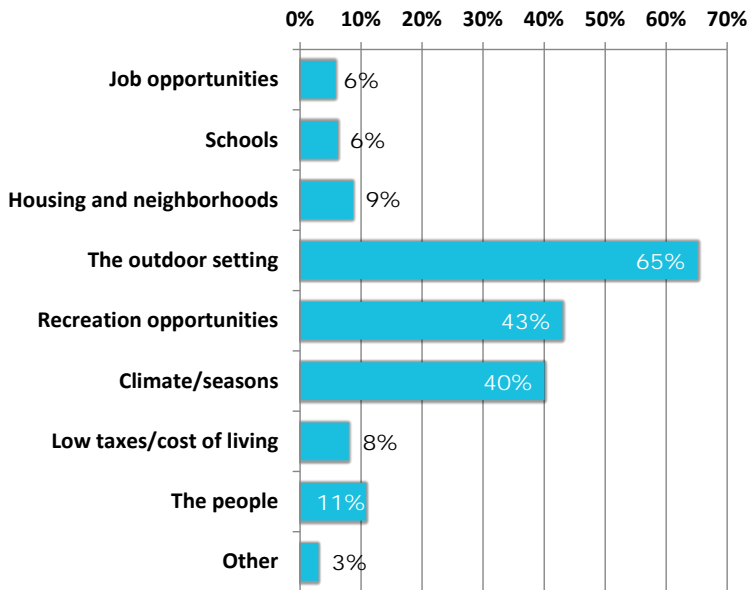
- 2.6% or more
- 1.3% to 2.5%
- 0.4% to 1.2%
- 0.1% to 0.3%
- 0% or negative

Source: ESRI

Education

Students are a significant portion of the parks, trails, recreation and cultural services users. There are nine public school districts serving Colorado Springs, with more than 100 public elementary, middle, junior and senior high schools. There are also more than 50 private, parochial and charter schools and an estimated few thousand home school students. In addition, Colorado Springs has more than 50 vocational and two-year schools, colleges and universities. With the campuses of Colorado College and the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs (UCCS) located in the city, college students represent an important user group for Colorado Springs' parks and open space. UCCS has 10,598 students on campus and Colorado College has 2,008 students. UCCS is projected to increase in enrollment to 13,600 students by 2020. The University developed a new Master Plan in 2012 to anticipate accommodation of this growth. Pikes Peak Community College, University of the Rockies, Webster University, and Nazarene Bible College also have campus locations in Colorado Springs. The students at these schools have recreation, outdoor and cultural needs that are met partly by the schools, but this user group also utilizes City resources.

What are two things you like most about living in Colorado Springs?



Source: Combined Results from Public Meeting Keypad Polling and Online Survey, May 2014

Public Opinion polling shows that the outdoor setting, recreation opportunities and climate/seasons are the top three things that people like most about living in Colorado Springs.

City Land Use, Expansion and Growth Areas

Colorado Springs contains approximately 195 square miles of land, of which about 132 square miles are developed. The remaining 32 percent is comprised of vacant/developable land (Figure 15). This is the highest proportion of land use concentration in the city. Residential land uses comprise the second largest amount of land use, followed by a general “other” category that consists of road right of way, cemeteries, golf courses and undetermined use types. Residential land uses place a high demand on City services including parks, trails and recreation. This high percentage of residential land use points to an economic imbalance and challenge to city finance. The land use patterns of the City as of 2012 are shown in Map 8.

Parks, trails and open space lands represent nine percent of the land use currently in the city. The locations of anticipated development and growth are a major consideration in the creation of this 10-year Master Plan for future additional parks, trails and open space and the locations for programs and services. Development patterns and proposed new neighborhoods have implications for where parks and trails may be needed to serve the growing population. This future infill also must be considered in order to develop an understanding of where open space with high quality natural environments may require conservation actions for protection.

Most areas anticipated for growth and development over the next 10 years have already been annexed into the city. The majority of the lands identified as vacant/developable that are planned for development are located on the east and north edges of the city, although vacant and re-developable “infill” properties are scattered throughout the city. Fifty-seven percent of the vacant/developable land is within the approximately 24,000 acre Banning Lewis Ranch (BLR), the largest of these master planned developments, located

Map 8: 2012 Land Use

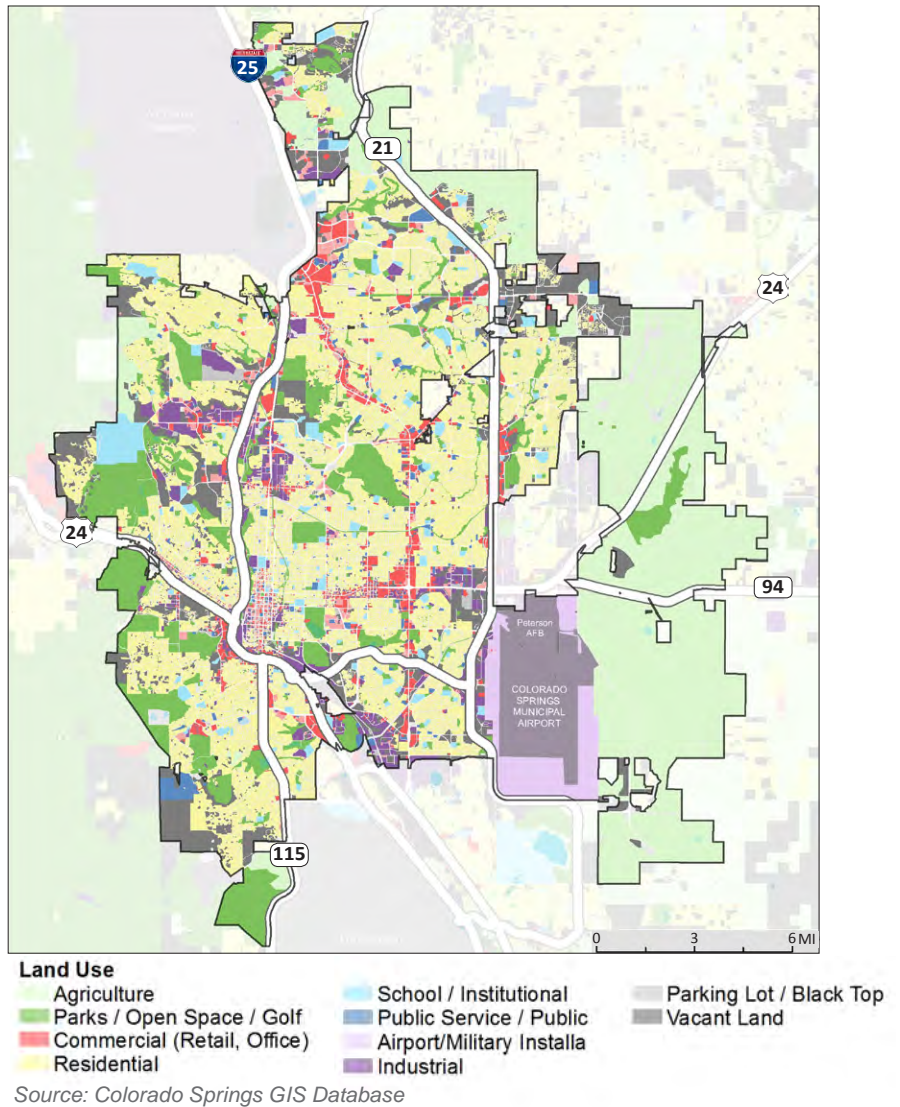
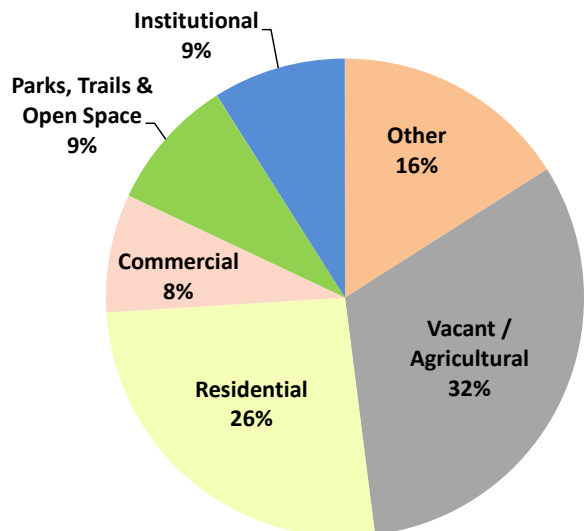


Figure 15: City Land Use Distribution 2012



Source: Colorado Springs GIS Database

on the eastern border of Colorado Springs. While this property was planned to house up to 175,000 residents, when annexed in 1988, development has been slow to start, with the first homes not constructed until approximately five years ago.

Outside of BLR, a remaining 14 percent of the city has been planned but not yet built. It can be anticipated that development might next occur in these northern portions of the city.

The City of Colorado Springs 2006 Annexation Plan provides a framework for decisions concerning expanding the city boundary and annexing additional undeveloped areas. Due to a combination of legal, fiscal, policy and procedural complexities, it is also considered unlikely that annexation of large existing developed areas will occur in the foreseeable future.

The area in the northeast of the city, in the vicinity of Woodmen and Black Forest Roads, is one place that may have implications for parks planning if it does become annexed. Other areas adjacent to the city boundary are not planned for annexation at this time, however they could be annexed in the future through an election-based process.

While major annexations are not anticipated in the near future, the City is focusing on several infill areas to grow employment opportunities, enhance quality of life, and improve the appearance of Colorado Springs neighborhoods and streetscapes. The Mayor and City Council's strategic plans direct attention to three Economic Priority Zones; Southeast Colorado Springs, Downtown and UCCS/Austin Bluffs/Nevada. Parks, trails, recreation and cultural services improvements should also align with these objectives and PR&CS should anticipate a growing need for services and amenities in these infill priority areas as well as the developing edge of the city, predominantly to the north and east.

Population Age Composition

The current distribution of age groups and projected increase in these groups are important factors to consider for parks and recreation planning. The interests and activities of different age groups can vary widely and require various park services and recreation amenities.

Colorado Springs' age group distribution is similar to the State of Colorado's, other than a slightly larger percentage of the population under the age of 19 (roughly 28 percent of the city population), and a slightly smaller percentage between the ages of 20-44 (roughly 34 percent of the city population). Table 2 shows the age distribution in these groups for the Metropolitan Statistical Area, along with the expectation for the population by 2019. The 45-64 age group is expected to be the slowest growing age group (at 5.9 percent) between 2010 and 2019, and the 65 plus age group is expected to be the fastest growing (46.5 percent). While projections beyond 2019 for the MSA are not currently available from the US Census Bureau, these trends are expected to continue over the next decade along a similar trajectory based on regional projections by the State Demographer. These changes in demographics contribute to future needs for services and facilities.

Table 2: Population by Age

COLORADO SPRINGS MSA POPULATION BY AGE							
Age	Census 2010		Census 2014		Census 2019		Percent Change (2010-2019)
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
0-19	186,973	29%	188,819	28%	200,138	28%	7.0%
20-34	139,190	22%	147,923	22%	152,818	21%	9.8%
35-44	84,479	13%	85,519	13%	94,756	13%	12.2%
45-64	169,897	26%	176,091	26%	179,905	25%	5.9%
65 and up	65,074	10%	77,441	11%	95,328	13%	46.5%

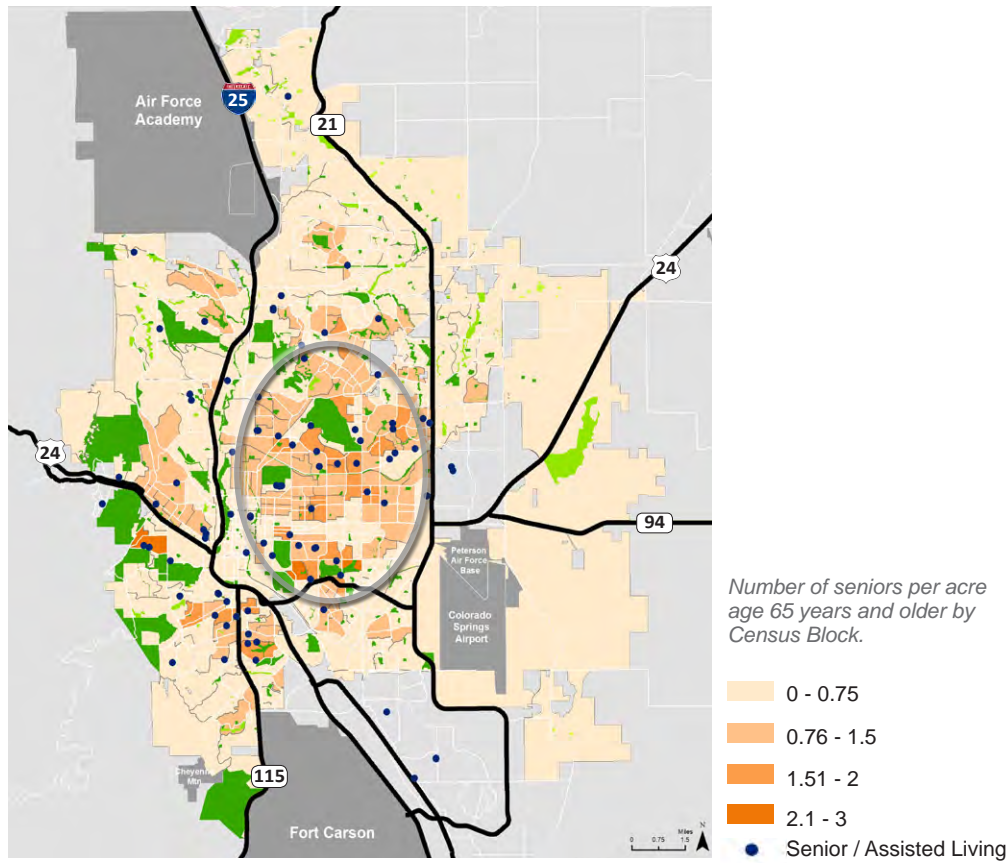
Source: ESRI

The geographic distribution of differing age groups throughout the city can have implications for how parks are re-purposed over time to meet the changing demographics of the neighborhoods that surround them. Seniors are found in higher concentrations in the central region of the city, with higher densities of seniors found in close proximity to the City's signature parks including Palmer Park and Memorial Park (Map 9). Children and youth are more highly concentrated in neighborhoods of the eastern side of the city, where more single family homes are located (Map 9). Changes in the distribution of age groups throughout the city is difficult to predict over time and map data is only available the beginning of every decade from the US Census Bureau. The City of Colorado Springs Planning and Development Department anticipates an increase of an older population in the northern parts of the city in the near future.

One of the most prevalent contributors to the growing population is the more than 65 age group. This age group is expected to continue to be the fastest growing segment of the population over the next decade. In 2012, the Milken Institute ranked Colorado Springs 39th out of 100 large cities for successful aging for individuals aged 65-79. Successful aging, according to the institute, includes cost of living, crime rates, weather, number of health care facilities, employment rates, commute times, and access to senior enrichment programs, among other factors.¹ Colorado Springs made Money Magazine's 2013 list of 10 best places to retire, recognizing the quality of life available to seniors in the Rocky Mountains.

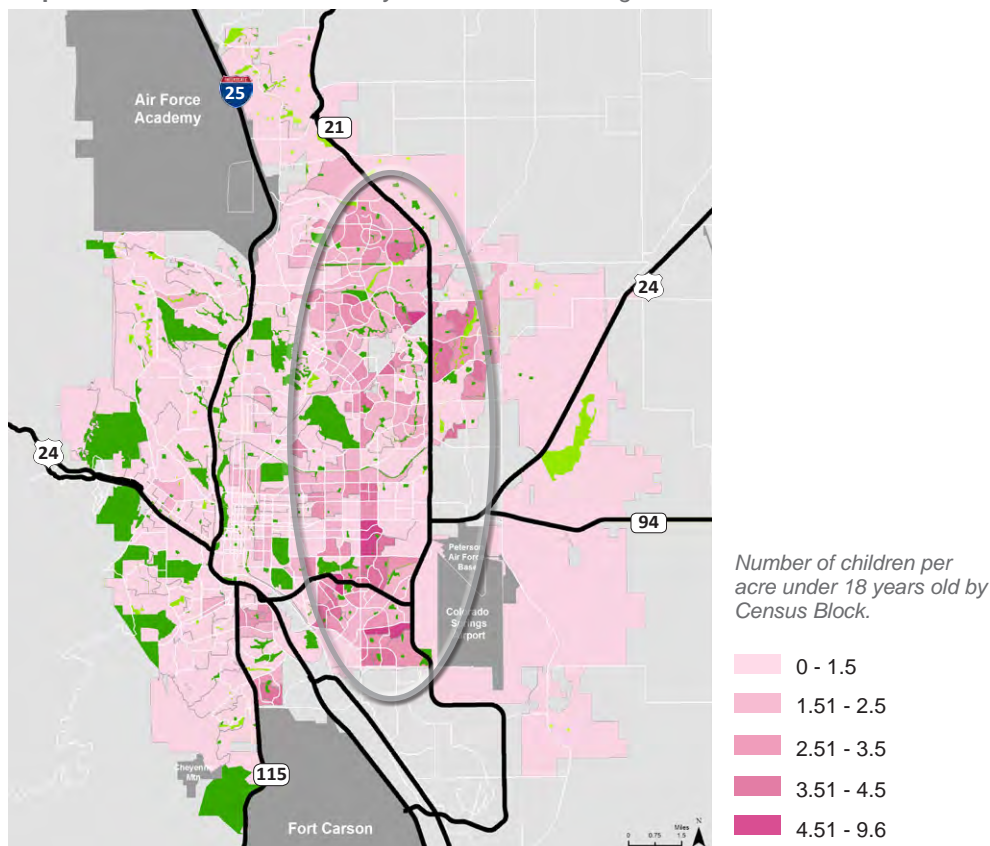
¹ Best Cities for Successful Aging; July 2012, Milken Institute: Anusuya Chatterjee with Ross DeVol.

Map 9: Senior Density: Population Per Acre Age 65 and Greater



Source: U.S. Census Blocks 2010 and Colorado Springs GIS Database

Map 10: Children and Youth Density: Children Per Acre Age 18 and Under



Source: U.S. Census Blocks 2010

Over the past 10 years there has been an increase in participation in senior recreation programs and events, such as the Silver Sneakers physical activity program that now has more than 9,000 participants. The decline in population ages 25-44 is a critical concern as this age group represents the majority of the workforce and has critical implications for economic development and attracting new businesses. Many cities are working hard to attract young professionals and find that placemaking and creating enjoyable places to walk and bike with many leisure and recreation opportunities are successful in attracting this demographic. The multi-generational makeup of Colorado Springs is important to consider for parks, open space and recreation planning.

Household Income

Colorado Springs' median household income in 2012 was \$54,351. This is lower than the state median, which is \$58,244, but slightly higher than the national median (\$53,046). Approximately 13.7 percent of the population has an income that is below poverty level. This percentage of low income population is slightly higher than the state average of 12.9 percent.¹ The unemployment rate in Colorado Springs has increased dramatically since 2006, doubling from 4.7 percent to 8.3 percent 2013.² The geographic distribution of different income levels varies throughout the city with lower income populations located primarily in the center and southern portions and higher income households located along the city's periphery as shown in Map 11. The economic prosperity of the overall population has implications for thinking about funding, fees and programming for parks, recreation and associated services.

Race and Ethnicity

Within the City of Colorado Springs, people of Hispanic origin are the largest and fastest growing minority group. According to the 2010 US Census, 15.3 percent of the population is of Hispanic origin and this percentage is expected to increase to 18 percent by 2017. Among this population, 44 percent speak Spanish at home. The second largest minority group is the black community which comprises 5.8 percent of the population. A diverse racial and ethnic population has implications for parks, open space, recreation and cultural resource planning. Minority populations including Hispanics, Blacks, and Native Americans are more highly concentrated in the southeast area of the city where they have less access to larger regional or community parks as shown in Map 12. Residents in these areas rely on smaller, older neighborhood parks and community centers for recreation. This plan seeks to increase the understanding of how different cultural groups might utilize parks and recreation services and determine if their needs are being met.

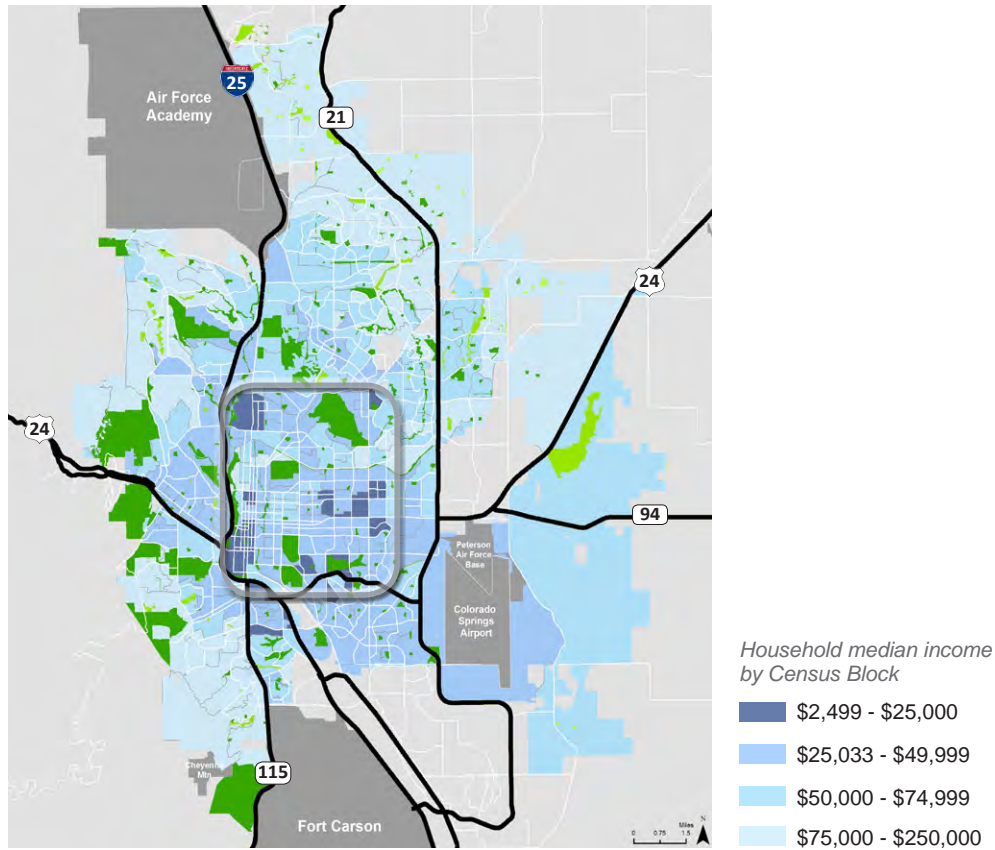
Health Trends

For over a century, Colorado Springs has enjoyed a reputation as a health and wellness destination, thanks to spectacular views of Pikes Peak, the mild and sunny climate, and ample recreational opportunities. In addition to these natural characteristics, the presence of health care and sports organizations, including the Olympic Committee and U.S. Olympic Training Center, reinforces this perception. These traits have a major impact on the daily quality of life of residents, and help to sustain the tourism economy.

¹ Source: US Census Bureau 2008-2012

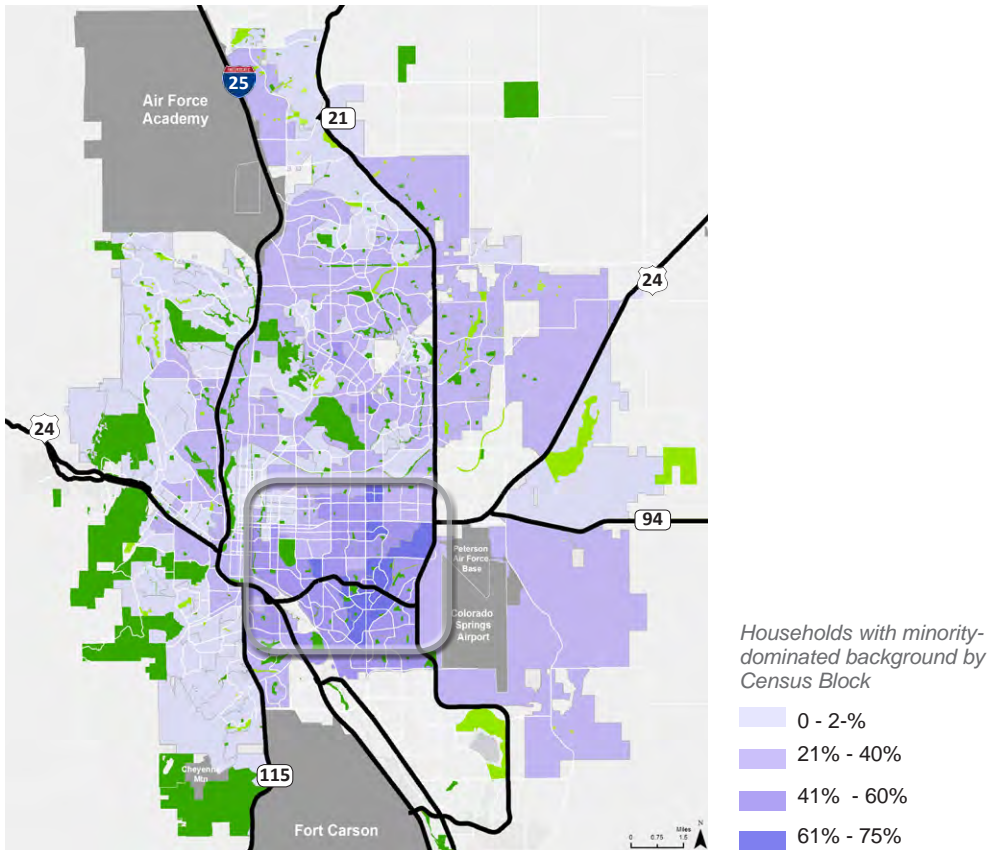
² Source: Quality of Life Indicators Report 2013 for the Pikes Peak Region. ppunitedway.org

Map 11: Demographics: Median Household Income



Source: American Community Survey 2011

Map 12: Demographics: Minority Populations



Source: American Community Survey 2011

Colorado Springs continues to receive national recognition for fitness, recreational opportunities and bicycle infrastructure. In 2013, Prevention magazine rated Colorado Springs one of the “Top 25 Happiest, Healthiest Cities in America” for its active community, low diabetes rates and healthy blood pressure levels.¹ While the City’s parks and open space continue to support an active community, the 2013 Pikes Peak Regional Quality of Life Indicators Report noted some challenges the region will face in the future as summarized below.

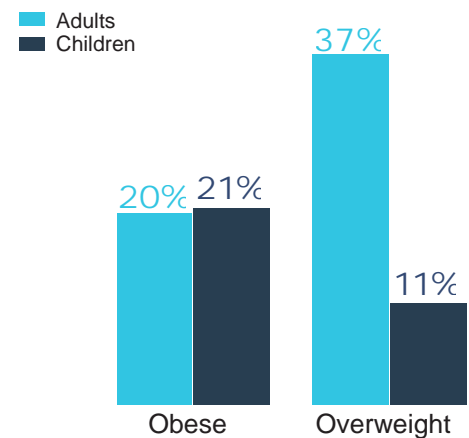
Obesity rates in Colorado doubled from 1995 to 2010, and one in five Colorado adults are considered obese. With an average rate of 25.8 percent, the state of Colorado ranks 23rd in the nation for childhood obesity. In El Paso County, an estimated 37.1 percent of adults are overweight and 21.2 percent are obese, as shown in Figure 16. While these numbers present challenges, it is encouraging that health data indicates that both adults and children in El Paso County are more physically active than Colorado averages (Table 3). It is an important role of parks, trails, open space, and recreation services to encourage physical activity and community health.

Resident Disability Status

Another sector of the community that requires special consideration for parks, recreation, trail and City services planning are people with disabilities. According to the 2010-2012 American Community Survey, 68,000 residents within El Paso County are estimated to have disabilities (11.2 percent of the total county population). Having some sense of how many people with hearing, vision, cognitive, self-care, or independent living functions challenges gives policy makers and government staff information useful for planning. Table 4 indicates the two primary disabilities in El Paso County are ambulatory difficulty (the ability to walk, climb stairs, reaching and lifting independently) and cognitive difficulty (having difficulty concentrating, remembering or making a decision).

The City has focused attention on providing facilities and programs to people with disabilities for the past several decades (since the 1970’s) to fulfill an important public need. The increase in the city’s aging population will require continued focus on consideration of their needs, such as the provision of comfortable and safe walking paths.

Figure 16: Percent of El Paso County Population who are Overweight or Obese



Source: Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. “Colorado Health Indicators.” <http://www.chd.dphe.state.co.us>. Accessed: 3 December 2013.

Table 3: Physical Activity Levels in El Paso County

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LEVELS COLORADO AND EL PASO COUNTY	
Percent of children aged 5-14 who were physically active for at least 60 minutes/day for the past 7 days (2009-2010)	
El Paso County	36.7%
Colorado	33.8%
Percent of adults aged 18+ who get 30+ minutes of moderate activity per day on 5+ days/week or 20+ minutes of vigorous activity per day on 3+ days/week	
El Paso County	57.5%
Colorado	55.9%

Source: Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. “Colorado Health Indicators.” <http://www.chd.dphe.state.co.us>. Accessed: 3 December 2013.

Table 4: Primary Disabilities in El Paso County

NUMBER OF RESIDENTS WITH DISABILITIES	
Disability	Population
Hearing difficulty	18,348
Vision difficulty	9,862
Cognitive difficulty	22,054
Ambulatory difficulty	28,641
Self-Care difficulty	9,192
Independent Living difficulty	18,144

Source: American Community Survey 2010-2013

¹ Source: Mahoney, Sarah and Susan Coenen. “25 Happiest, Healthiest Cities in America,” Prevention (2013): <http://www.prevention.com/mind-body/emotional-health/25-happiest-healthiest-cities-america>

RECREATION TRENDS

This section provides useful data that sheds light on the overall demand for outdoor recreation, as well as a comparison of statewide trends to some of the broader, national trends. The urban and natural areas of Colorado Springs provide opportunity for traditional recreation activities and sports as well as the opportunity for introduction of new recreation activities and more extreme sports. Anticipating the future recreation demands of citizens and visitors requires an understanding of both the most popular activities and emerging interests.

Outdoor Recreation

Nearly 50 percent of Americans over the age of six participated in at least one outdoor recreation activity in 2012; an increase of 7.5 million participants since 2006.¹ The rate is much higher in Colorado, with 90 percent of Coloradans participating in some form of outdoor recreation over the past year. About 66 percent of all Colorado residents recreated outdoors at least one day a week, on average.²

Similar to the activities that are most popular for people throughout the nation, walking, hiking, picnicking, jogging, fishing, biking, and camping are the most popular activities in Colorado. Nearly 83 percent of the Colorado population participates in trail activities (walking, jogging, hiking, horseback riding, biking), making these the most popular way of enjoying the outdoors. Table 5 shows the top 10 outdoor activities in Colorado (by percent of the total population that participate and the number of days they engage in this activity in a year). Colorado Springs is wise to focus on providing trails and places to walk or jog, picnic spaces, fishing access, biking routes, and playgrounds to serve the main outdoor activities that are enjoyed by Colorado residents.

Table 5: Most Popular Outdoor Activities for Colorado Residents

TOP 10 OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES BY % COLORADO POPULATION				
Activity	% Population	Rank	# Activity Days	Rank by Days
Walking	66%	1	103,861,714	1
Hiking/Backpacking	52%	2	47,600,791	2
Picnicking	37%	3	17,312,343	8
Fishing	36%	4	26,411,408	6
Tent Camping	36%	5	14,158,319	12
Skiing or snowboarding at a ski area	34%	6	14,546,563	10
Jogging/Running (outdoors)	31%	7	46,888,810	3
Swimming (outdoors)	30%	8	17,662,875	7
Road Biking	27%	9	32,772,438	4
Playground Activities	22%	10	26,516,371	5

Source: Colorado Parks and Wildlife, 2013 Outdoor Recreation Participation Public Survey Summary Report, Research, Planning and Policy Unit, June 2013

Local Governments Role and Response to Trends

A survey of 174 Colorado local government agencies or programs with outdoor recreation focus identified the most common investment needs that exist within the state.

The top five most significant investment needs include:

1. Community trail systems,
2. Regional trail systems,
3. Additional trail corridors, conservation easements, and/or rights of way,
4. Team sports facilities, and
5. Additional opportunities/access for water-based recreation.

Other common needs: off-leash dog areas, camping facilities, regional type parks that accommodate special events, trail head facilities, parking access to open space, and motorized trail access.

Source: 2013 Local Government Survey Summary Report Colorado Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

¹ Source: Outdoor Foundation. "Outdoor Recreation Participation Report 2013". www.outdoorfoundation.org/pdf/ResearchParticipation2013Topline.pdf

² Source: Colorado Parks and Wildlife, 2013 Outdoor Recreation Participation Public Survey Summary Report, Research, Planning and Policy Unit, June 2013

Sports and Fitness

A national study examines overall participation in sports, fitness and recreation in the United States, and underscores the popularity of fitness sports. Overall individual participation rates for 2012 show that 61 percent of individuals more than six years of age participate in fitness sports, 49.4 percent in outdoor sports, 63.7 percent in individual sports, 21.6 percent in team sports, 12.8 percent in racket sports and 12.8 percent in water sports.¹ Table 6 provides a greater breakdown of the popularity of sports and activities throughout the nation. This national information provides a baseline for understanding which sports and activities may require a greater amount of facilities and City programs in Colorado Springs. This information also helps to explain Colorado Springs' emphasis on providing basketball courts, golf courses, tennis courts, baseball fields, and soccer fields, which is in line with national trends for participation.

Youth Recreation Trends

National rates of youth outdoor recreation participation have dropped from 2006 to 2012, raising alarm that not enough is being done to encourage youth to exercise, play outdoors or explore nature. In 2012, 63 percent of youth ages 6-12 and 60 percent of youth ages 13-17 participated in outdoor recreation. The outdoor activities that are most popular for youth are slightly different from those of the entire population. Table 7 provides more detail about popular outdoor activities for youth ages 6-17 throughout the nation. Particularly road, mountain and BMX biking are about as popular as running, jogging and trail running. Skateboarding outings are more frequent than fishing or camping.¹ Colorado Springs has expanded its provision of skateboarding parks, mountain biking and BMX biking trails over the past 10 years, reflecting this interest from youth.

¹ Source: Outdoor Foundation. "Outdoor Recreation Participation Report 2013".

Table 6: National Sports and Activity Participation

SPORTS AND ACTIVITIES	
Activity	Percent of the Population who Participated in 2012
Basketball	8.4%
Golf	7.8%
Tennis	5.9%
Baseball	4.7%
Soccer (outdoor)	4.4%
Ice Skating	3.9%
Horseback Riding	2.8%
Softball (slow pitch)	2.7%
Football (touch)	2.6%
Volleyball (court)	2.4%
Football (tackle)	2.2%
Football (flag)	2%
Volleyball (beach)	1.8%
Soccer (indoor)	1.7%
Volleyball (grass)	1.5%
Track and Field	1.4%
Cheerleading	1.3%
Softball (fast pitch)	1%
Ice Hockey	.9%
Swimming (competition)	.9%
Lacrosse	.6%
Field Hockey	.5%
Rugby	.4%

Source: Outdoor Foundation. "Outdoor Recreation Participation Report 2013"

Table 7: Youth Outdoor Activities National Trends

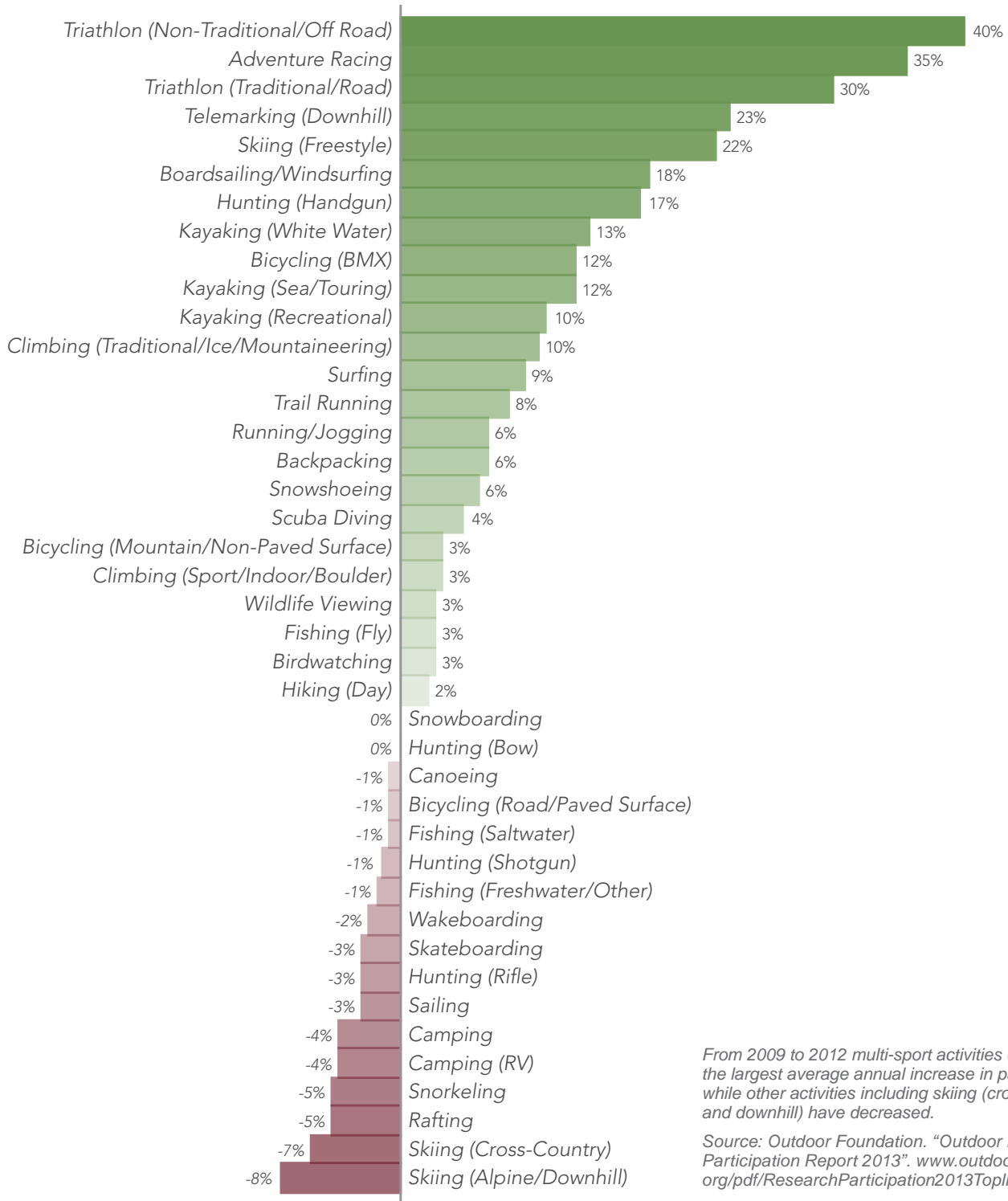
Most Popular Outdoor Activities Youth ages 6-17 - Participation Rate	Favorite Outdoor Activities Youth ages 6-17 - Frequency of Participation
1. Road, Mountain and BMX Biking 27% of American youth/13.4 million participants	1. Running, Jogging and Trail Running 82 average outings per runner/992 million outings
2. Running, Jogging and Trail Running 24% of American youth/12.1 million participants	2. Road, Mountain and BMX Biking 71 average outings per cyclist/947 million outings
3. Car, Backyard and RV Camping 20% of American youth/10.2 million participants	3. Skateboarding 58 Average outings per skateboarder/220 million outings
4. Freshwater, Saltwater and Fly Fishing 20% of American youth/9.9 million participants	4. Freshwater, Saltwater and Fly Fishing 16 average outings per fishing participant/155 million outings
5. Hiking 12% of American youth/6.1 million participants	5. Hiking 11 average outings per camper/113 million outings

Source: Outdoor Foundation. "Outdoor Recreation Participation Report 2013". www.outdoorfoundation.org/pdf/ResearchParticipation2013Topline.pdf

Emerging National and State Sports & Outdoor Activity Trends

Identifying emerging sports and recreation activities that are growing in popularity helps the City understand where to focus resources and capitalize on these interests, anticipating the facilities and services that will be in demand in the future.

Figure 17: National Outdoor Activity Participation Trends (2012) Average Year-to-Year Change in Participation, 2009-2012



From 2009 to 2012 multi-sport activities experienced the largest average annual increase in participation while other activities including skiing (cross country and downhill) have decreased.

Source: Outdoor Foundation. "Outdoor Recreation Participation Report 2013". www.outdoorfoundation.org/pdf/ResearchParticipation2013Topline.pdf

Figure 17 shows outdoor activities that may not have high participation numbers, but have increased in popularity between 2009 - 2012.¹

- National trends show that triathlon and adventure races are the outdoor activities that have grown the most in popularity over the past five years. Colorado Springs has experienced this trend with the addition of many organized races.
- Kayaking, BMX biking, climbing, trail running, bicycling, wildlife viewing, bird watching, and hiking are other state trends Colorado Springs has the opportunity to capitalize on due to its prime location for these activities.
- Water sports are highly popular in Colorado; with nearly 58 percent of residents participating in water activities such as fishing (36.4%), swimming outdoors (30.2%), power boating (13.3%), whitewater rafting (9.3%), water skiing (7%), kayaking (5.1%), jet skiing (4.1%), canoeing (3.6%), stand up paddleboarding (2.6%), or sailing (1.3%). Nationally, kayaking and fly fishing are on the rise in percent increases of participants and stand up paddleboarding had the highest percentage of people trying the sport for the first time.

Colorado Springs Sports and Outdoor Activity Trends

Master Plan Roundtable discussions conducted in December 2013 included input from stakeholders regarding sports and activity trends they have witnessed and believe will have implications for future City parks resources. The following are some key trends they have observed:

- People are recreating closer to home now more than in the past; playgrounds and trails close to where people live are in high demand.
- Running is a popular pastime in Colorado Springs and running clubs are increasing in numbers. People are looking for safe routes of various lengths and difficulties to run on in groups.
- 5 kilometer and 10 kilometer runs are on the rise along with themed races and challenge events. Every year the number of participants and number of events increases. This has implications for use of City streets and resources for these events.
- Many events, such as sports competitions and festivals, have become extended from one day

to multiple days. The longer duration encourages visitors to stay and enjoy other tourism attractions.

- There is a growing trend of people using motorized transportation on City trails (e.g., Power-Driven Mobility Device, Segway or motorized bicycle). It is expected this trend will continue as the population ages and the need for mobility assistance grows.
- There is an increasing desire for activities serving older adults such as pickleball, short walking path loops, and community gardens.
- Fat bikes are the biggest growing segment in the Colorado Springs cycling community. The wider tires makes it possible to ride on snow and terrain that mountain bikes cannot easily manage like creek beds, sand, mud and slick rocks. Fat bikes have implications for trail use in the winter, and the desire for people to create new trails in natural areas that were previously inaccessible.
- Colorado Springs is unique in that sports related to high speed and/or endurance are possible because of the mountain terrain, such as downhill skateboarding and hill climbs. New non-traditional/extreme sports are introduced every year particularly because Pikes Peak provides a paved, steep route.
- The new skateboard park has been growing in popularity and event attendance is growing larger. BMX biking is similarly growing in popularity.
- The addition of more mountain biking trails is not only increasing the number of residents taking up the sport, but bringing more visitors to Colorado Springs.
- The regional parks are seeing a rise in people interested in nature exploration and education.
- Interest in lacrosse is on the rise in Colorado Springs, reflecting the rise in popularity throughout the nation.
- Disc golf is growing in popularity and there are many requests for more courses.
- Splash pads and water play features in parks are crowded with children and there is demand for more.
- Residents have been spending more of their recreation dollars on membership fees for social/recreation and civic clubs, the purchase of bicycles and the purchase of hunting and fishing equipment rather than other types of recreation expenditures and equipment.

¹ Source: Outdoor Foundation. "Outdoor Recreation Participation Report 2013". www.outdoorfoundation.org/pdf/ResearchParticipation2013Topline.pdf

BENCHMARKING

Comparisons to other communities are included throughout this plan to provide a sense of where Colorado Springs may be surpassing or falling behind other similar sized cities. While benchmarking can be useful for cities to understand what they need to do to create and maintain excellent park systems, it is important to note that each city has different assets and meets community desires in unique ways.

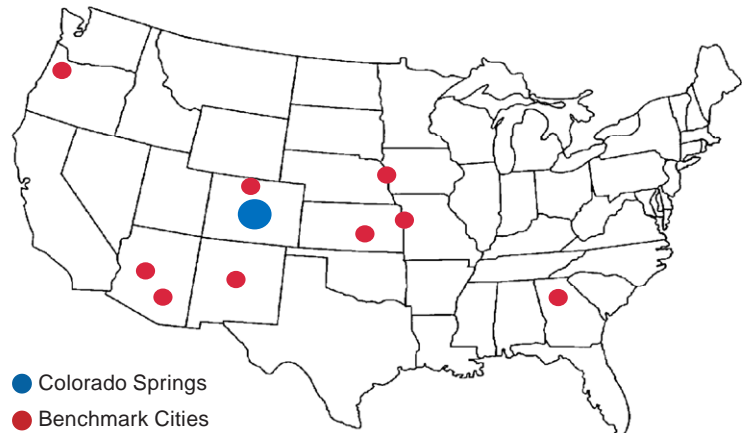
Community Benchmarking Methodology

The benchmark cities in this plan were selected based on several similar criteria, such as size and demographic makeup. One source for benchmark data is the Trust for Public Land (TPL) ParkScore.

The TPL ParkScore evaluates the three most important characteristics of an effective park system for the 50 largest U.S. cities: acreage, services and investment, and access. ParkScore considers the public land owned by regional, state and federal agencies – including school playgrounds open to the public and greenways that function as parks. The measurements are intended to gauge how well cities and their parks are meeting the needs of their residents.

In addition to the ParkScore analysis, the City of Colorado Springs was benchmarked against several comparable cities based on criteria including: population, overall size (acreage) and location.

Figure 18: Benchmark Cities Locations



Comparable Communities

The benchmark cities (locations identified in Figure 18) include:

Comparable Community	Population	Size - Acres	TPL ParkScore Ranking
Portland, Oregon	603,000	85,000	# 3
Omaha, Nebraska	420,000	81,000	# 12
Albuquerque, New Mexico	555,000	120,000	# 15
Kansas City, Missouri	464,000	201,000	# 16
Tucson, Arizona	524,000	145,000	# 42
Atlanta, Georgia	424,000	85,000	# 42
Wichita, Kansas	385,000	102,000	# 48
Mesa, Arizona	452,000	87,000	# 56
Fort Collins, Colorado	141,000	68,000	N/A
Colorado Springs	425,000	119,000	# 23

* All data is based on the TPL 2014 City Park Facts, with the exception of the City of Fort Collins which is based on the 2012 City budget.



Look for this symbol throughout the Master Plan to see how Colorado Springs stacks up compared to the benchmark cities!



TPL ParkScore scoring system. Source: Trust for Public Lands 2014 City Park Facts

The 2014 TPL ParkScore ranking for Colorado Springs was lower in 2014 than 2013. The drop from 17th to 23rd is due to several reasons. First, TPL included 10 additional cities to the list for a total of 60 cities. This alone caused some substantial swings in the city rankings. Additionally, the spending per capita ranking decreased in 2014 due to TPL's use of a number of past years to quantify spending per capita. Spending per capita is not accurately represented in real time and 2015 TPL data may show a rather high jump in Colorado Springs spending per capita category as previous low funding years are no longer used in the calculation. Lastly, 2014 TPL data quantified Colorado Springs' parkland and open space acreage differently than previous years by removing all city edge parkland and open space from the acreage inventory, even though it is maintained by PR&CS. This dramatically affected the acreage category, dropping Colorado Springs by 25 percent. The TPL ParkScore ranking is a good tool to identify city parks and recreation departments' relative strengths and weaknesses, however the data may not always accurately portray a particular city.

Comparable Communities Benchmarking Summary Highlights



Park Acreage and Facility Inventory

Colorado Springs has a large park system with significantly more park, open space and natural area acreage than several comparable cities. Only a few cities, such as Albuquerque and Fort Collins, boast significantly more acres of parkland. Smaller community and neighborhood park acreage is also relatively high, with an impressive 145 playgrounds located throughout the city.

Colorado Springs has more neighborhood park acreage per resident than any other benchmark city.



Operations and Maintenance Expenditure

Colorado Springs PR&CS has a relatively small operations and maintenance (O+M) budget compared with other city parks and recreation departments. Several benchmark citywide annual O+M budgets are considerably higher with the average expenditure over twice that of Colorado Springs. O+M expenditure per resident is also low in Colorado Springs with only \$38 spent per resident annually on average. Most benchmarked cities spend far more with Portland and Fort Collins spending three to six times more per resident. This benchmarking data illustrates that PR&CS is accomplishing quite a bit with a very limited annual budget.

Colorado Springs has nine skateboard parks, ranking 3rd in the nation's 100 most populous cities with 1.9 skateboard parks per 100,000 residents.



Staffing

Staffing levels are also rather low within PR&CS, with fewer full-time, non-seasonal employees (FTEs) than most other benchmark cities. Although quite a few hourly O+M staff are employed on a part-time or seasonal basis, a larger workforce is needed to maintain the significant parkland acreage and provide recreational and programming services to the growing population. Benchmarking of FTEs per acre and FTEs per 10,000 residents in comparable cities reveals a significant lack of staff in Colorado Springs. With a growing population, the current ratio of 3.5 full-time employees per 10,000 residents will need to match, if not exceed, population growth in the future.

INVENTORY OF PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS

Overview

The City of Colorado Springs boasts a wide variety of parks, open space and trail amenities. Colorado Springs’ founder, General William Jackson Palmer, had the foresight early on to establish a park and open space system, giving the City a legacy of parkland. Palmer’s original parkland dedications, including Acacia Park and Palmer Park (totaling over 2,000 acres), have continuously been expanded over the last century, creating a stunning public park system. Figure 19 displays the acres of parks and open space added to the PR&CS inventory over time. The rate of acreage increase mirrors the increase in city population. Open space acquisitions dramatically increased starting in 1997 when TOPS was established.

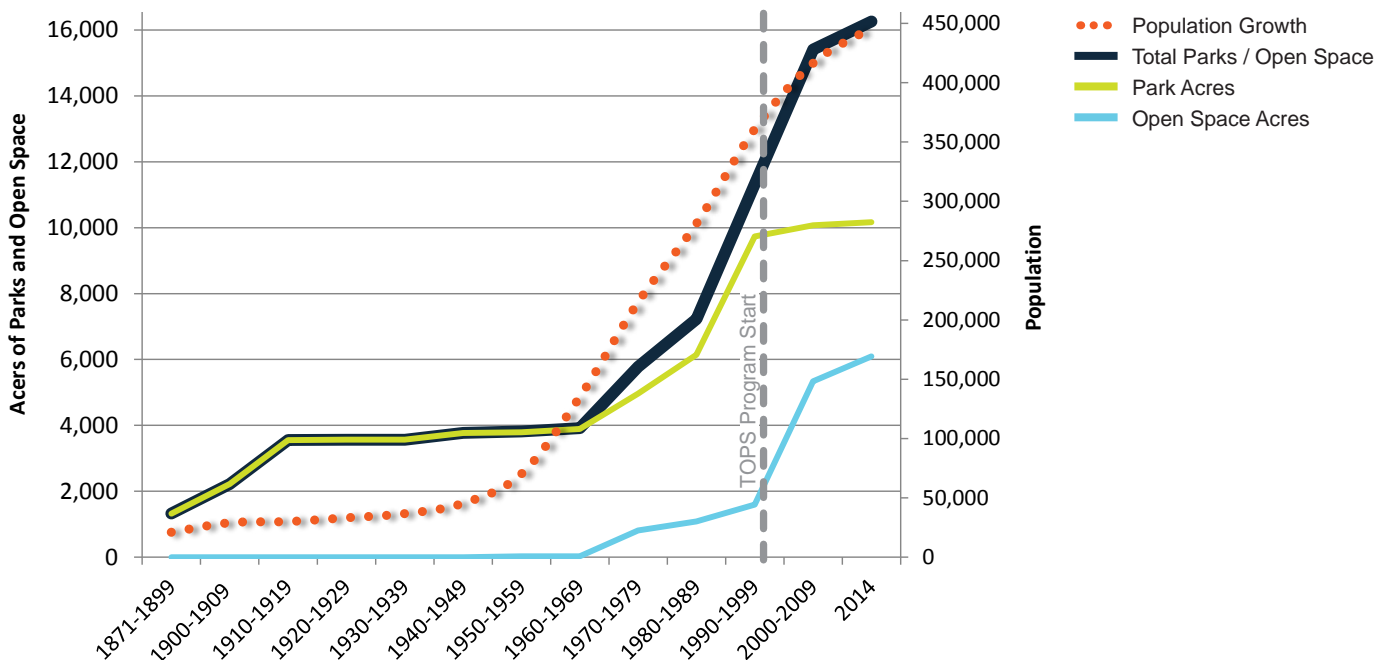
Parks Operations manages the following parks, open space, and trails:

- 7 Regional Parks
- 8 Community Parks
- 135 Neighborhood / Mini Parks
- 3 Sports Complexes
- 5 Special Purpose Parks
- 49 Open Space Areas
- 144 Miles of Urban Trails
- 134 Miles of Park Trails

The City has increased park and open space lands based on the recommendations of the Parks, Recreation and Trails 2000-2010 Master Plan. Today, Parks Operations manages 158 developed parks, 10 undeveloped parks, 49 open space and special resource areas and 278 miles of trails. City owned and managed recreation, community and cultural service facilities are detailed in the following section. The PR&CS Department also has enterprise partnerships with the Patty Jewett and Valley Hi golf courses and the Evergreen and Fairview Cemeteries. The Department also manages 210 miles of medians within the public right of way which create important linkages and add value and interest to the public realm. The enterprise partnerships and medians have not been included in the parks, open space and trails level of service calculations included in this section. Private facilities such as the Venetucci Farm, private sports complexes and recreation centers add to the quality of life and diversity of offerings for Colorado Springs’ residents; however, these private facilities are not included in the following inventory or level of service analysis due to the fact that they often require a fee or membership to gain access.

Other public park and open space lands belonging to federal, state and county jurisdictions in close proximity to Colorado Springs directly contribute to the offerings available to the community. Additionally, public parks and open spaces owned and managed through the City’s special districts supplement the park and recreation needs of the community at the neighborhood level. Both of these types of facilities are included in the inventory and are incorporated into the geographic distribution evaluation and level of service analysis. Appendix A includes a full list of all the City’s park, open space and recreation properties and facilities as well as additional public lands.

Figure 19: Parks and Open Space Acquisition Over Time, Comparison to Population Growth



PR&CS Parks

The City of Colorado Springs owns and manages 158 developed parks, totaling 8,655 acres which are classified into several different types summarized in Table 8 (Special Purpose Parks, Neighborhood / Mini Parks, Community Parks, Sports Complexes and Regional Parks). The definition of each of these park classifications is provided in Table 9 on the following page. In addition to the developed parks, 851 acres of parkland have not yet been built or are incomplete.

Key properties added to the City’s inventory during this time include America the Beautiful Community Park, 20 neighborhood parks, and Jimmy Camp Creek Regional Park. The locations of the existing parks and open space properties are displayed on Map 13.

SPECIAL PURPOSE PARKS

Special purpose parks are park lands and urban plazas under four acres in size, and often provide developed recreational facilities. Many of the parks classified as Special Purpose Parks are within the downtown core and have historic community significance. For example, the city’s first City-owned park, established in 1871, known as North Park or Acacia Square, is the site of the present-day Acacia Park and has this classification. The City has one urban plaza, Alamo Square, which is also classified as a special purpose park. All special purpose parks are listed in Appendix A.

MINI-PARKS

Mini-parks generally serve a similar purpose as neighborhood parks but are roughly 3.5 acres or less in size. They are grouped with the neighborhood park acreage total for purposes of summarization. The City has generally moved away from developing mini-parks that are less than three acres in size, due to the difficulty in maintaining these areas and a preference for providing more dynamic parks that can serve more diverse interests.

Table 8: Colorado Springs Park Inventory by Property Type

CITY OWNED / MANAGED PROPERTIES		
Classification	Developed or Mostly Complete (acres)	Un-built or Mostly Incomplete (acres)
Special Purpose Park	13	
Neighborhood Park / Mini Parks	899	15
Community Park	700	61
Sports Complex	101	82
Regional Park	6,942	693
Sub-Total Parks	8,655	851
Open Space / Special Resource Area	6,057	
Trail Corridor/Greenbelt	439	169.1
Sub-Total Open Space	6,497	169.10
TOTAL	15,153	1,020

Source: Colorado Springs GIS Database
 Un-built or Mostly Incomplete acres does not include proposed properties where established acreage has not yet been officially platted. As of July, 2014 there are two neighborhood parks and one community park within the Wolf Ranch Neighborhood that fall into this category, totaling approximately 30 proposed acres.

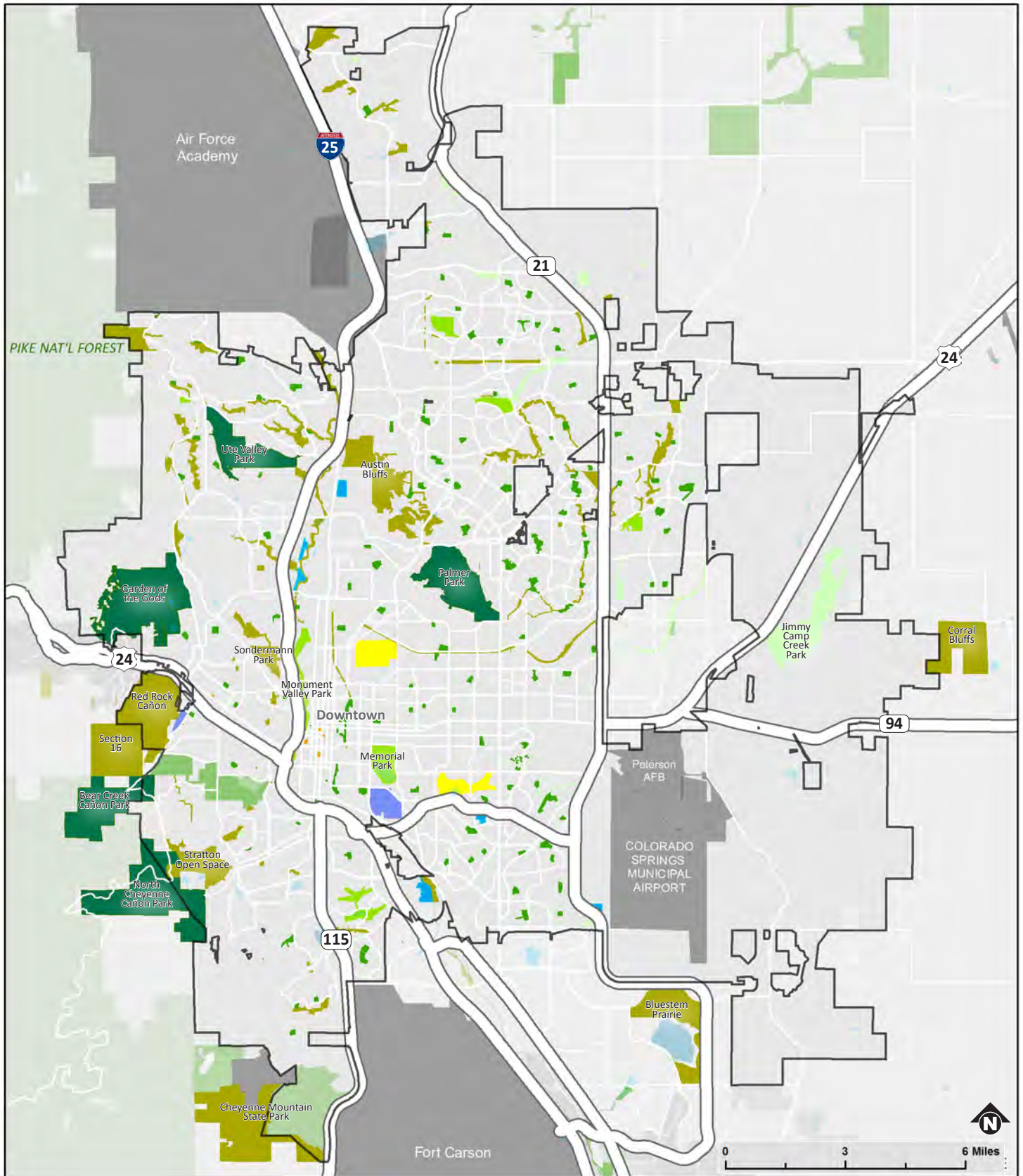





Acacia Park located in the downtown core is one of the City’s first parks. Source: City of Colorado Springs

Table 9: Parkland Classifications and Standards

PARKLAND CLASSIFICATIONS AND STANDARDS			
Acreeage	Purpose / Function	Site Characteristics	Service Area/ Access
A. Special Purpose Parks (Primarily in the Downtown)			
Varies	Intended to serve a particular community need, such as a horticultural center, environmental education center, working farm, performance area, urban plaza, and civic parks.	Varies. Selection of environmental education centers based on providing a range or representative ecosystems.	Not applicable. In most cases, good access from an arterial or collector street.
B. Mini-Parks			
Less than 3.5 acres	Intended to serve a neighborhood where opportunities for a larger park site are not available. Generally, such small park sites are not encouraged.	Varies, but may include free play area, play equipment and picnic shelter.	0.25 mile radius Centrally located within neighborhood being served.
C. Neighborhood Parks			
3.5 to 20 acres	Provide nearby recreation and leisure opportunities for the individual neighborhoods they are intended to serve. Should serve as a common area for neighbors of all ages to gather, socialize, and play. They should provide play structures for children age three to five, independent of school facilities.	Locate adjacent to schools. Portions of the site should be relatively flat to accommodate facility development. Typically will include a paved multi-purpose area for court games, a play field, play equipment, and shaded areas for picnics and sitting.	0.5 mile radius; parkland standard of 2.5 acres/1000 people Centrally locate within area served and accessible via a walkway or urban trail.
D. Community Parks			
35-175 acres	Serve as a focal point for community-wide activities and provide facilities that are less appropriate for neighborhood parks due to noise, lights, traffic, etc. Often opportunities exist to reserve large group picnic areas. Should maintain a balance between programmed sports facilities and other community activity areas, such as gardens, plazas, etc.	Sports facilities and other athletically programmed areas should be limited to a maximum of 50% of the total park area, including parking. Portions of the site should have gentle topography to accommodate active sports fields and open turf areas for passive recreation.	2.0 mile radius; park land standard of 3.0 acres/1000 people Good access from an arterial street. Direct access to regional trail system desirable.
E. Sport Complex			
20 acres or greater	Intended to serve a community-wide need for higher intensity use facilities such as: baseball, softball, football, and soccer fields, tennis court complexes; in-line skating rinks; recreation centers; aquatic centers; and skateboard parks.	Emphasis on facilities development, but including some limited areas of passive use for picnicking and unstructured field use. The majority of the site should be relatively flat to accommodate active sports fields and other facility development.	Strategically located to fill service gaps for sports facilities. Good access from arterial or major collector street.
F. Regional Park			
100 acres+	Protect large areas with natural resource values of regional significance. These areas should also provide opportunities for nature-oriented, outdoor recreation.	Emphasis is on achieving an appropriate balance between resource protection and public use. No more than 10% of site area can be dedicated to park infrastructure, including roads, parking, environmental education/interpretation, picnic sites, and visitor support facilities.	N/A

Map 13: Existing Parks and Open Space by Classification



- | | | |
|--|--|---|
|  Community Park |  Special Purpose Park |  Undeveloped Park Properties |
|  Neighborhood/Mini Park |  Sports Complex |  Cemetery |
|  Regional Park |  Open Space |  Golf Course |
| | |  City Limits |

NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

Existing neighborhood parks are generally within walking distance of the neighborhood being served, and range between 2.5 acres and 27 acres in size. Since 2000, the City has only increased its neighborhood/mini/special purpose park acreage by 15 percent (developed and undeveloped), while also relying on special districts to fill this need within the community. The Parks, Recreation and Trails 2000-2010 Master Plan recommended maintaining the historic level of service target of 2.5 acres per every 1,000 residents. Including public neighborhood parks owned and managed by special districts, and the City's mini and special purpose parks which largely serve the same purpose as neighborhood parks, the City's park system currently falls slightly short of meeting this target, with a level of service of 2.3 developed park acres per 1,000 residents. When the undeveloped parcels are developed, the level of service will reach the target, providing 2.55 acres per 1,000 residents.

COMMUNITY PARKS / SPORTS COMPLEXES

Colorado Springs' community parks are generally 25 to 100 acres in size and are intended to serve several neighborhoods as well as community-wide needs. Community parks provide active recreational facilities such as athletic fields, community recreation buildings and/or other special features that cannot be easily accommodated in neighborhood parks. In addition to highly developed sports facilities, community parks typically provide large areas for open play, walking, and other non-programmed uses.

Sports complexes are intended to serve a community-wide need for higher intensity uses by offering fields for baseball, softball, football, and soccer fields; tennis courts; in-line skating rinks; recreation centers; and skateboard parks. While in some cases these facilities are similar in size to community parks, their focus is on developed sports facilities, with only limited acreage devoted to unprogrammed use. The City has established three sports complexes, ranging from 20 to 40 acres in size. Two additional sports complexes, Larry Ochs Sports Complex and Tutt Sports Complex, are planned but not yet developed.

The Parks, Recreation and Trails 2000-2010 Master Plan established a level of service goal for community parks / sports complexes to be three acres per 1,000 residents. The City's existing community park/sports complex acres provide a level of service of 1.8 acres per every 1,000 residents. The completion of planned facilities (Sky View, Indigo Ranch, and John Venezia community parks and the two sports complexes) the City's level of service will increase to 2.1 acres per every 1,000 residents.

The inventory of sports complexes has decreased since 2000 with the loss of Four Diamond Sports Complex in 2014 (previously a joint-use agreement between the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs and the City). Additionally, the City no longer has a joint use arrangement with the El Pomar Sports Park which was previously listed under the City's inventory in 2000. The El Pomar Sports Park is a private facility and though it supplements public facilities it is not included in the City acreage inventory. Appendix A lists all of the PR&CS community parks and sports complexes.



Lunar Park is an example of one of Colorado Springs' neighborhood parks. Source: City of Colorado Springs

The PR&CS Department manages 12 athletic fields that may be reserved for team practices for a fee. Other PR&CS fields are available on a first-come, first-serve basis



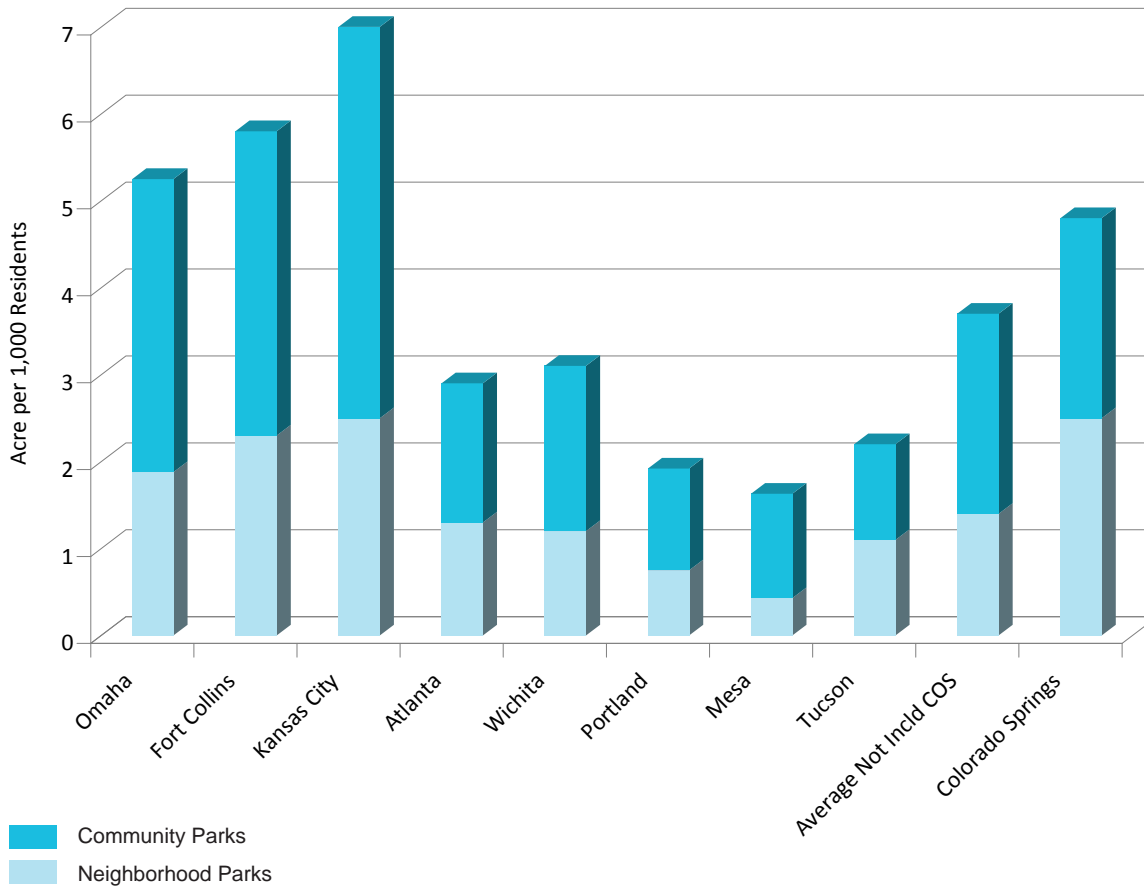
Quail Lake Park is one of Colorado Springs' Community Parks located in the southeast of the city. The park provides access for fishing and soft surface trails. Source: Design Workshop



Comparison Cities: Neighborhood and Community Parks

Colorado Springs community park acreage per 1,000 residents matches the benchmark average, while neighborhood park acreage per 1,000 residents is above average. Colorado Springs is surpassed in total neighborhood and community park acreage per resident by Omaha, Fort Collins and Kansas City.

Figure 20: Neighborhood and Community Parks



Note: TPL accounts for park acreage only located within the city boundaries. Parks managed by entities other than the city (such as HOA/Special District and County parks) are not accounted for in TPL estimates.

Source: Data is based on Omaha Parks and Recreation Master Plan, City of Fort Collins 2013-2014 Biennial Budget, Kansas City Parks and Recreation Reference Book, Mesa Parks and Recreation Facilities Guide and City Parks and Recreation Website Park Acreage Data.

REGIONAL PARKS

Regional parks in Colorado Springs usually include a major natural area or regional landmark and some provide developed recreational facilities. Within a regional park, a large portion of land is retained in a natural state and therefore contributes to regional open space needs. Most regional parks within Colorado Springs are a minimum of 100 acres.

Regional parks serve the recreation needs of city residents, the surrounding community, El Paso County residents and they are also significant tourist attractions. For example, Garden of the Gods attracts an estimated two million visitors annually. The North Slope Recreation Area, totaling over 2,000 acres, is a significant regional park owned and managed by the City in cooperation with the Colorado Division of Wildlife and the U.S. Forest Service. It is located approximately 13 miles from the City of Colorado Springs incorporated boundary but provides important recreation services to residents willing to travel in pursuit of outdoor recreation and park experiences. There is not an established standard for regional parks per resident as their placement is based on the availability of land assets. No additional regional parks have been added to the City's inventory since the Parks, Recreation and Trails 2000-2010 Master Plan. Appendix A lists all City owned regional parks.



North Cheyenne Cañon is one of Colorado Springs' signature regional parks. Source: City of Colorado Springs

PLANNED/PROPOSED PARKS

The City of Colorado Springs has an additional 851 acres of dedicated parkland available that has not yet been developed. This includes planned parks, which have been platted and are not subject to change, including Jimmy Camp Creek Regional Park (692.8 acres), two Indigo Ranch Community Parks (7.9 and 3.2 acres respectively), John Venezia Community Park (29.5 acres); Skyview Community Park (20.4 acres); Larry Ochs Sports Complex (60.3 acres); Tutt Sports Complex (22.1 acres); Dublin North Park (4 acres); Grey Hawk Park (4.5 acres); and Skyway park (6 acres).

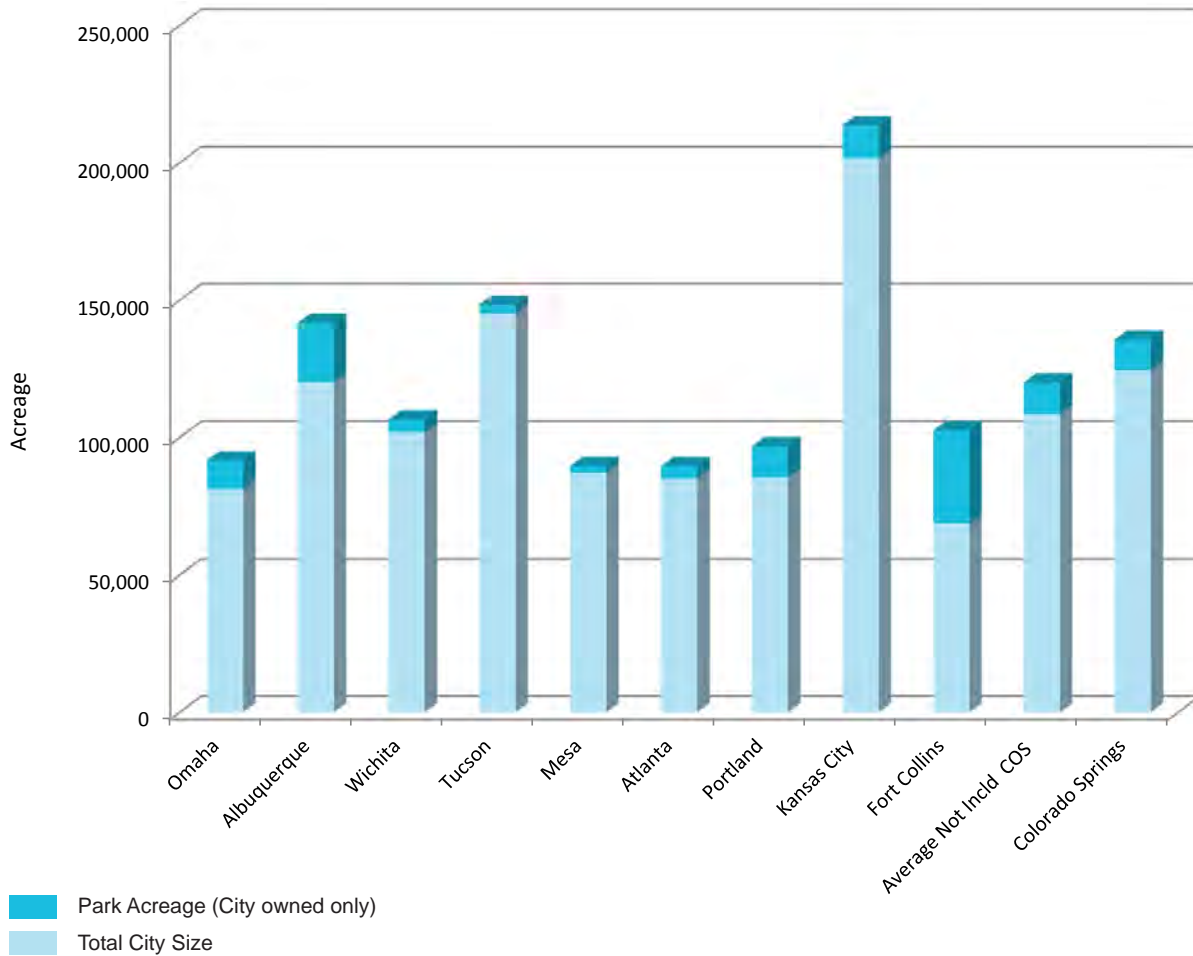
Other parks are proposed; however they have not been platted or master planned, and therefore the final acreage and location of these parks has not been formally established and therefore are not included in the inventory. At the time of this plan, the proposed park designation includes three parks within the Wolf Ranch neighborhood in the northeast section of the city.



Comparison Cities: City Acreage and Parkland

The ratio of Colorado Springs city land area to its total amount of park acreage is close to the average for the benchmark communities.

Figure 21: Total City Acreage and Parkland Acreage



Note: Acreage data for each benchmarked city includes only city owned parkland within city limits. Federal, state, county and regional parks are not included in the acreage quantities.

Source: Data is based on the TPL 2014 City Park Facts, with the exception of Fort Collins (2012 city budget report). City land area is based on 2010 census data.

Open Space

Open Space Areas are parcels of land set aside to retain land, water, vegetative, historic, cultural and aesthetic features in their natural or primarily natural state. These areas provide wildlife habitat, help shape healthy growth, maintain scenic vistas, and provide recreational opportunities. Establishing an incomparable system of open spaces, natural areas and greenways was identified in the City’s Comprehensive Plan as essential to projecting an attractive image and protecting the city’s unique character and scenic beauty.

The City, through the TOPS program, has made significant strides in conserving valuable open space lands that will continue to be a legacy for the community. When conserving open space, the following are taken into consideration:

- Linkages and trails, access to public lakes, streams, and other suitable open lands, streams corridors and scenic corridors along existing highways,
- Preservation of fragile ecosystems, natural areas, scenic vistas or important areas supporting biodiversity, natural resources, and cultural, historical and archeological areas,
- Creating spatial definition of and between urban areas,
- Areas of environmental preservation, designated as areas of concern,
- Conservation of natural, cultural and visual resources, e.g. forest lands, range lands, surface water,
- Lands within or adjacent to parks or public open lands, and
- Preservation of land for educational opportunities and outdoor recreation areas limited to passive recreation uses, e.g. hiking, photography, natural studies.

Table 10 summarizes the number of open space properties and their acreage.

Table 10: Open Space Inventory

OPEN SPACE INVENTORY		
Type of Open Space	Number	Acres
Open Space	25	5,632
Special Resource Area	24	427
Trail Corridor/Greenway	n/a	608
Total	49	6,666

The community’s support, through the approval of the TOPS sales tax, has played a vital role in enabling the City to make significant land purchases since the adoption of the 1996 Open Space Master Plan, adding 6,178 acres of open space, 197 acres of neighborhood and community parks, and 46 miles of urban trails to City inventory in the last 18 years.



Stratton Open Space is permanently protected by a conservation easement achieved through the cooperation of the City of Colorado Springs and the Palmer Land Trust. Source: City of Colorado Springs

The City has 49 open space and special resource areas ranging in size from under one acre to over 1,000 acres, for a total of 6,666 acres. Included in the total acreage are 608 acres of trail corridor/greenway open space along the city’s streams, connecting open space and park lands. Many of the City’s properties connect with state, federal, and El Paso County open space lands, creating a network of open space in close proximity to city residents. Map 13 shows all of the existing open space locations, also listed by name type in Appendix A.

Since the Parks, Recreation and Trails 2000-2010 Master Plan was created, the City has significantly increased its open space properties and acreage by 236 percent, with a few significant open space purchases, including the Cheyenne Mountain State Park backdrop property, Bluestem Prairie, Corral Bluffs and Stetson Hills. The City owns and manages 678 acres of open space lands outside city limits.

Table 11: Natural Area Classifications

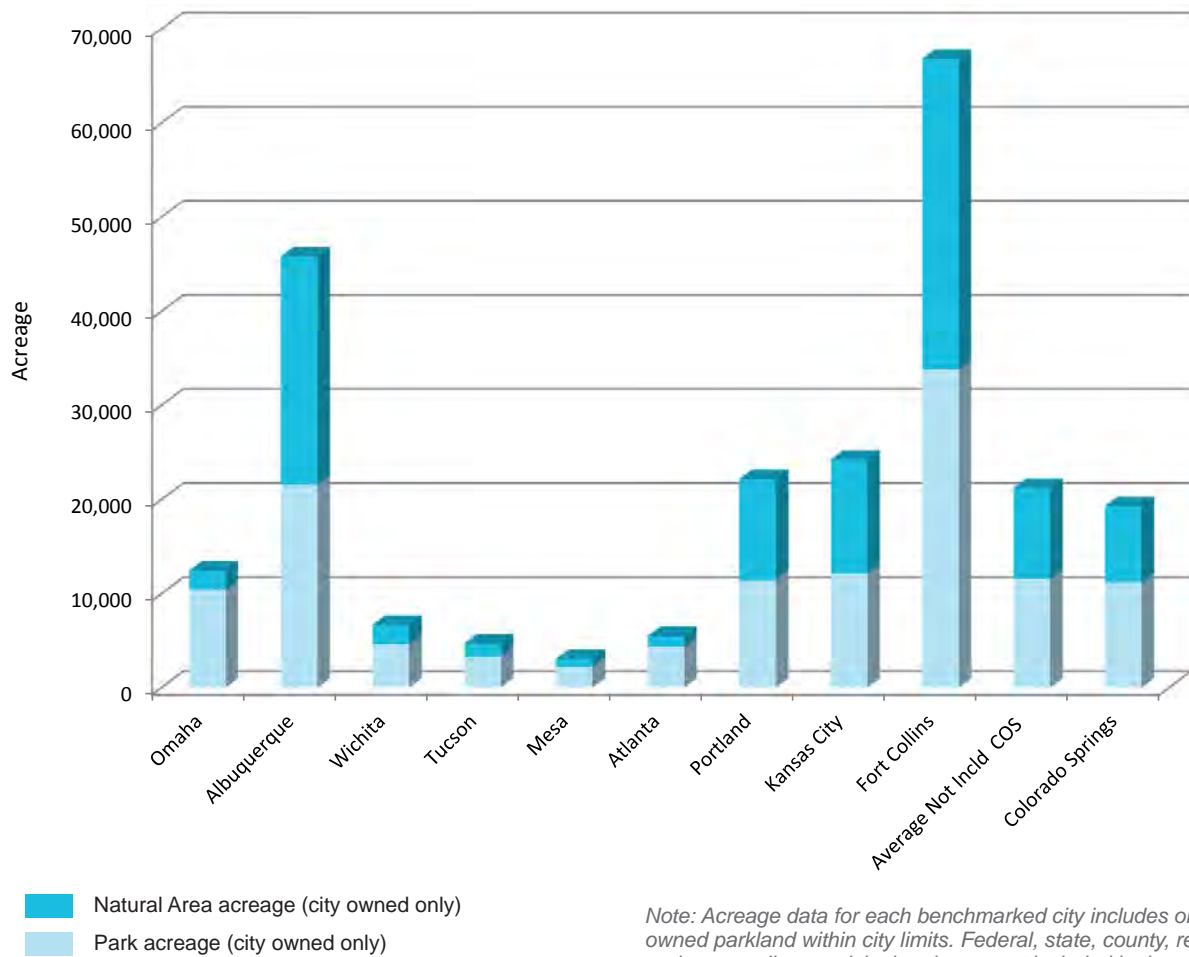
NATURAL AREA CLASSIFICATIONS		
Acreage	Purpose / Function	Management Guidelines
A. Open Space		
10 acre minimum	Protect natural values. These areas may also provide opportunities for nature oriented, outdoor recreation.	Emphasis is on resource protection. Public use to be determined on a case-by-case basis. No more than 10% of site area can be dedicated to park uses, including roads, parking, environmental education/interpretation, picnic sites, and visitor support facilities.
B. Special Resource Area		
Varies	Protect areas with important natural, cultural or other community values. These may include areas of significant vegetation, important habitats, scenic areas, or areas that contribute to urban shaping and buffering goals.	Emphasis is on protection of the values that quantify the area for designation as a special resource area. In some cases, public access will not be provided and no facilities will be developed.
C. Greenway		
Varies	A linear open space along either a natural corridor, such as a creek, stream valley, ridge line, along a railroad right-of-way converted to recreational use, a canal, scenic road, or other route. They can be either natural or landscaped routes for pedestrian or bicycle pathways or serve as open space connectors linking parks, natural reserves, cultural features, or historic sites.	Emphasis is on balancing linear recreation with natural resource conservation, enhancement of wetland and riparian areas and water quality improvements.



Comparison Cities: Natural Areas and Parkland Acres

Colorado Springs has more City-owned park acreage and natural areas than Omaha, Wichita, Tucson, Mesa and Atlanta, but less than Albuquerque, Portland, Kansas City, and Fort Collins. Colorado Springs is similar to other cities known for their outdoor lifestyle in the provision of both natural areas and urban parks. Note that TPL categorizes natural areas in a slightly different way than Colorado Springs Open Space category.

Figure 22: Total Park Acreage and Natural Area Acreage



Note: Acreage data for each benchmarked city includes only city owned parkland within city limits. Federal, state, county, regional and surrounding municipal parks are not included in the acreage quantities.

Source: Data is based on the TPL 2014 City Park Facts, with the exception of Fort Collins (2012 city budget report). All area data is based on 2010 Census.

Other Agency Parks and Open Spaces

Special districts, El Paso County, State and Federal agencies, and other jurisdictions all contribute to the park and open space system that Colorado Springs residents enjoy. Map 14 identifies park and open space lands that are owned or managed by entities other than PR&CS.

SPECIAL DISTRICT PARKS AND OPEN SPACE LANDS

There are about 80 special districts of various types in Colorado Springs. Many of these have some active or potential role in the funding or operation and maintenance of parks, open space, trails, recreation facilities or related infrastructure.

For the past decade or so, the City has routinely required major annexors to not only dedicate park lands but also construct and maintain their neighborhood parks. The applicable negotiated annexation agreements often contemplate the use of one or more metropolitan districts for this purpose. Developers in turn rely on metropolitan districts as a means of obtaining tax exempt financing and to shift at least a share of these public improvement costs to the benefiting property owners. Developers also rely on metropolitan districts to provide a higher level of parks and recreation amenities, and to assure that parks and related facilities are provided concurrently with development rather than being delayed for many years as part of the City capital improvements backlog.

Park lands that are managed or are being funded by metropolitan districts include 27 neighborhood parks, one community park, the Norwood Recreation Center, one Banning Lewis Ranch recreation center and publicly accessible or private open space, including trail corridor areas. The total acreage of these special district properties includes 141 acres of developed parcels and 158 acres of undeveloped areas that are planned as future parks. Metropolitan districts are almost exclusively created to

Map 14: Other Agency Parks and Open Space

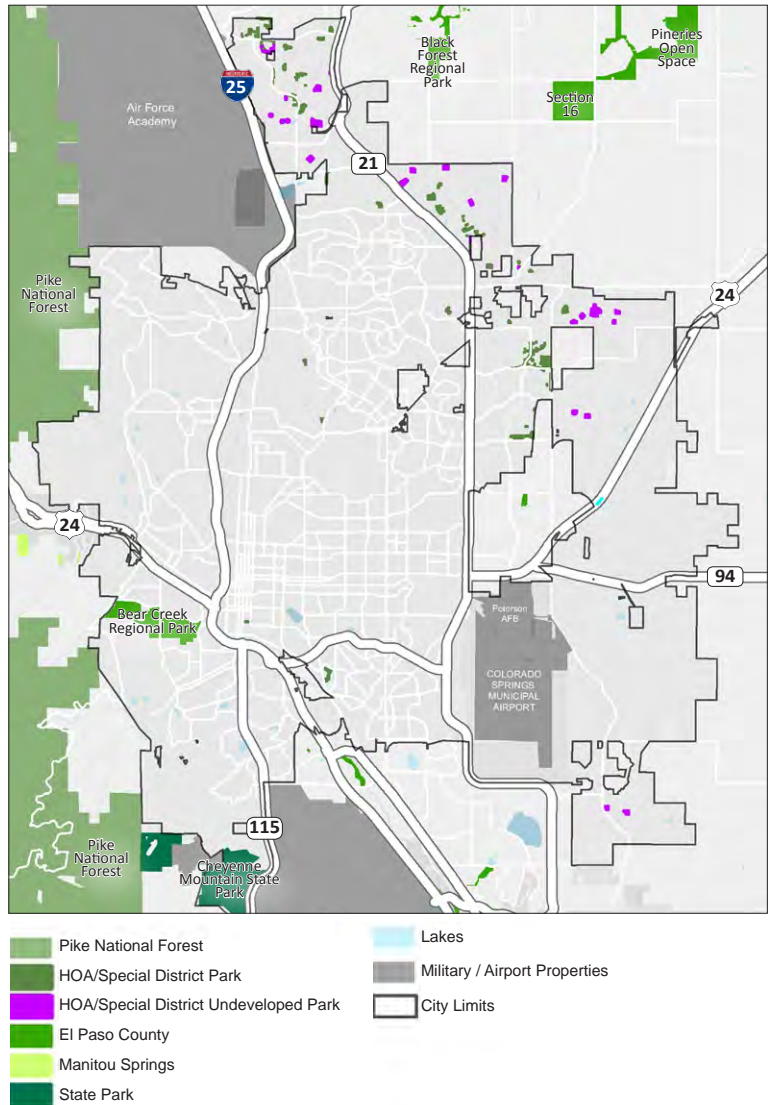


Table 12: Special District Park Inventory within City Boundaries

METRO DISTRICT AND HOA PROPERTIES (WITHIN CITY BOUNDARIES)		
Classification	Developed or Mostly Complete (acres)	Un-built or Mostly Incomplete (acres)
Community Park	9.1	46.7
Sports Complex	3.9	
Neighborhood Park and Mini Parks	53.7	103.9
Special Purpose Park	n/a	n/a
Regional Park	n/a	n/a
Open Space / Special Resource Area	28.3	
Trail Corridor/Greenbelt	49.7	7.2
TOTAL	140.8	157.8

Source: Colorado Springs GIS Database
The Norwood Recreation Center, on 4 acres of land, is also owned/managed by a Special District.

serve newly developing properties. Over the next two or three decades, several dozen additional parks could be added to the metropolitan district portfolio, particularly in Banning Lewis Ranch. Table 13 summarizes the acres of properties within city boundaries that are managed by these other entities.

Going forward, issues and opportunities with respect to special districts (particularly metropolitan districts) and parks will likely include the following:

- Opportunities to continue to shift the fiscal impacts of new development and redevelopment from existing tax payers to the taxpayers in these newly developing areas,
- Opportunities to provide high standard of parks and recreation infrastructure to newly developing areas with a sustainable revenue source for ongoing operations and maintenance,
- Opportunities for more localized neighborhood level ‘ownership’ and responsibility for parks,
- Various concerns with equity and proportional allocation of City resources if some areas are largely responsible for funding and maintaining their own public park and recreation facilities via additional taxes while more established areas continue to rely on citywide revenues to the extent these are available,
- Trend toward ‘balkanization’ of the parks and recreation function when so many different entities have some role in financing, operations or other responsibilities,
- Potential for greatly differing standards and levels of service throughout the City based first on whether a property is included in a special district and then on the financial capability of the district to provide parks-related facilities and services,
- ‘Financing inefficiency’ associated with many metropolitan districts wherein a large share of total tax and fee revenues ends up being allocated to interest payments and uses other than direct capital or operational costs,
- Challenges associated with incorporating smaller properties (including small annexations) into the special district model and approach because existing districts tend to be development-specific and the smaller properties may not reach the thresholds that trigger providing their own facilities,
- Challenges associated with migrating many existing developed areas to more of a special district model because of the aversion of many property owners toward additional taxation and governance, and
- Potential for taxpayers in special district areas to not be supportive of future City or region-wide parks funding initiatives because their taxes and fees are already substantially higher than the City average and/or because they may not perceive a direct benefit to their area.

Table 13: Other Agency Properties within three miles of Colorado Springs

OTHER AGENCY PROPERTIES (EL PASO COUNTY, COLORADO PARKS AND WILDLIFE, MANITOU SPRINGS)	
Classification	Other Agencies (acres)
Neighborhood Park and Mini Parks	54.7
Special Purpose Park	n/a
Community Park	5.92
Sports Complex	5.1
Regional Park	3,721.2
Open Space / Special Resource Area	86.0
Trail Corridor/Greenbelt	42.0
TOTAL	3,915.6

Source: Colorado Springs GIS Database

PROPERTY OWNERS ASSOCIATIONS

Throughout Colorado, property owners associations (POAs) have taken on an increasing role in the affairs, services and governance of many commercial and residential projects at the development project level. These activities often pertain to or overlap with parks, trails, open space and recreation functions. Statewide there are more than 10,000 of these associations. For residential areas, they are referred to as homeowners associations (HOAs).

Within Colorado Springs it has become standard practice for POAs (rather than the City or districts) to be used as the entity to own and maintain smaller project-specific facilities such as pocket parks, streetscapes, local trails and development-specific recreation amenities. In some cases POAs are used to own and manage substantial open space tracts.

PIKES PEAK RURAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY (PPRTA)

The PPRTA is a regional voter-approved transportation authority which encompasses five local governments including Colorado Springs, Manitou Springs, El Paso County, Green Mountain Falls and Ramah. The PPRTA funds transportation and transit improvements with associated landscape enhancements along many of the city's major corridors that are maintained by the Parks and Forestry Division. Projects also have included on-street bikeway improvements, crossing and safety enhancements at intersections to improve connectivity within the city.

EL PASO COUNTY

El Paso County owns or manages approximately 6,500 acres of parkland and 100 miles of trails. All of these are accessible within 45 minutes for Colorado Springs residents. Most of the parks are regional parks that are typically 400 acres or larger. Those closest to Colorado Springs include Bear Creek, Fountain Creek and Black Forest Regional Parks. These three parks are included in the acreage summary of other agency park and open space assets related to Colorado Springs due to their close proximity (Table 13).

Bear Creek is located in the western portion of Colorado Springs in the foothills, adjacent to the City's Bear Creek Cañon Park. It is the most frequently used County park. The park includes approximately three miles of Bear Creek and encompasses a total of 546 acres. Park facilities include a nature center, community garden, picnic pavilions, volleyball and basketball courts, horseshoe pits, multi-purpose fields, playgrounds, an archery range, tennis and pickleball courts, an exercise course and the popular dog park. Trails are accessible to hikers, bikers and equestrians.

Fountain Creek Regional Park is a 460 acre linear park situated along Fountain Creek between the cities of Colorado Springs and Fountain. The park includes a regional trail system connecting to Colorado Springs and the Pikes Peak Greenway to the north and the City of Fountain to the south. Park amenities include an

active use area, fishing ponds, nature center and nature park. The active use area includes 12 acres of multi-purpose play fields, picnic shelters and a playground.

Black Forest Regional Park, with 385 acres, is located north of Colorado Springs, directly east of the U.S. Air Force Academy. The park offers hiking trails, picnic facilities and tennis courts.

The County also retains responsibility for two neighborhood parks located south of Colorado Springs. Widefield Park is 34 acres and provides tennis courts, play fields, a playground, basketball courts and disc golf. Stratmoor Hills Park is 1.3 acres and provides picnic tables, a playground and basketball courts. El Paso County provides two regional trails easily accessible to Colorado Springs' residents. The New Santa Fe Trail follows a north-south route from Palmer Lake to Colorado Springs. It is a gravel surfaced 8-foot wide path that generally follows the abandoned Santa Fe Railroad right of way. Also interfacing with Colorado Springs is the Fountain Creek Regional Trail, which begins at Circle Drive in the City and extends for 10 miles south along Fountain Creek into Fountain Creek Regional Park.

U.S. FOREST SERVICE

The 3 million acre Pike and San Isabel National Forests and Cimarron and Comanche National Grasslands border the western side of Colorado Springs and provide many trails easily accessible to residents, including the popular Waldo Canyon Loop and Barr Trail. The 25 mile round-trip Barr Trail is used for the Pikes Peak Marathon and trail races. Several other trails providing access to U.S. Forest Service lands can be accessed through North Cheyenne Cañon Park and Bear Creek Cañon Park.

COLORADO PARKS AND WILDLIFE

Immediately south of Colorado Springs, the 1,680 acre Cheyenne Mountain State Park, provides remarkable opportunities for experiencing the outdoors as the plains transition to the high peaks of the Rocky Mountains. The park provides superb natural areas for wildlife viewing, protection of fragile ecosystems, hiking, camping, picnicking and interpretive learning opportunities.

MANITOU SPRINGS

Manitou Springs, just to the west of Colorado Springs, has 109 acres of park and open space properties within a three mile distance of Colorado Springs.

Level of Service Standards Evaluation

The level of service or number of acres of each park type provided for every 1,000 residents is a way to track how well the City has accomplished the goals of the Parks, Recreation and Trails 2000-2010 Master Plan, which established level of service standards based on comparable communities. All public lands and lands with public access within three miles of the city have been considered in this level of service analysis. Regardless of ownership and management, these areas provide the same essential services to the community. The other agency lands considered in Table 14 include Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Manitou Springs, and the City of Fountain as well as public parks within the City’s special districts. The land making up Pike National Forest has not been considered in level of service calculations, though it adds greater opportunities to access outdoor recreation for the community.

Level of service from the neighborhood parks provided by City owned and managed properties alone, falls short of reaching the goal established in the Parks, Recreation and Trails 2000-2010 Master Plan of 2.5 neighborhood parks per 1,000 residents. However, when the properties under ownership of individual special districts and other agencies are considered, the level of service slightly exceeds the goal, reaching 2.6 acres of neighborhood parks per 1,000 residents. Neighborhood parks provided by private developers through homeowners associations and special districts play an important role in meeting the level of service target. These parks create hubs of activity for children and adults, as well as contribute to property values and overall quality of life for residents.

When both undeveloped and developed community parks and sports complexes are evaluated together, the City’s properties provision of 2.1 acres per 1,000 residents falls significantly short of the goal of three acres of community parks per 1,000 residents. Adding the community parks and sports complexes provided by other entities including proposed parks gets the City closer to this goal with 2.3 acres per 1,000 residents.

No level of service goals or standards were established for regional parks or open space as the locations of these areas are based more on availability and quality of natural resources or significant land forms. However, when open space and lands along greenways and trail corridors are added - many of which provide some areas for recreation in the form of trails and passive areas - the City provides an unparalleled level of service and access to the outdoors, with 46 acres provided for every 1,000 people.

Planned but undeveloped parks need to be completed to achieve level of service goals. The City will need to add neighborhood parks, community parks and sports complexes in the future at the same rate it has over the last ten years in order to keep up with the needs of new residents.

Table 14: Level of Service Evaluation

Property Type	Total Acres		Level of Service (Acres per 1,000 Residents)	
	Developed	Undeveloped	Only Developed	Developed + Undeveloped
Neighborhood / Mini / Special Purpose Park (2000 Level of Service Goal - 2.5 acres / 1,000 Residents)				
City Park Acres Per 1,000 Residents Ratio	912	15	2.0	2.1
City + Other Agencies (within 3 miles) + Special District Parks	1,020	118	2.3	2.6
Community Parks / Sports Complex (2000 Level of Service Goal - 3 acres / 1,000 Residents)				
City Park Acres Per 1,000 Residents Ratio	801	143	1.79	2.1
City + Other Agencies (within 3 miles) + Special District Parks	821	190	1.84	2.3
Total City Parks/Open Space (includes all park types, open space, and trail corridors - No Level of Service Goal)				
City Park Acres Per 1,000 Residents Ratio	15,153	1,020	34	36
City + Other Agencies (within 3 miles) + Special Districts Parks	19,209	1,178	43	46

Source: Colorado Springs GIS Database - Level of Service is based on the 2014 population estimate of 446,439 people.

Trails

The City provides two types of trail systems, urban trail corridors and trails within parks and open space. In total, the two systems offer 278 miles of paved and natural surface trails to serve all ability levels and interests (Table 15). Map 15 shows the existing trail systems.

URBAN TRAILS

Urban trails consist of non-motorized paved and unpaved paths throughout the city. Currently, there are 144 miles of urban trails. These trails are typically located along natural waterways and open spaces. In some cases, the trails allow for riparian vegetation preservation and serve as corridors for wildlife movement between undeveloped areas. Urban trail corridors are readily accessible for a range of uses including hiking, walking, jogging, bicycling, and horseback riding, though not all trail widths and lines-of-sight meet the guidelines to safely accommodate multiple users. In addition, trail width and surface materials vary between trails and in some instances even along the same trail, causing abrupt changes (e.g., asphalt to gravel) and difficulty of use for some users (e.g., rollerbladers). The Parks, Recreation and Trails 2000-2010 Master Plan outlines design guidelines for the three tiers of urban trails and should continue to be referenced for trail design (Table 16).

PARK TRAILS

Park trails are trails internal to park properties. Often these trails are narrow, natural surface multi-use trails (for hikers, dogs on leashes, bikes, and horses). The City currently has 134 miles of park trails that add to the diversity of park experiences available in Colorado Springs. Overuse and natural events, such as floods and fires, have had a substantial impact on these trails in recent years, leaving some closed or in need of realignment.

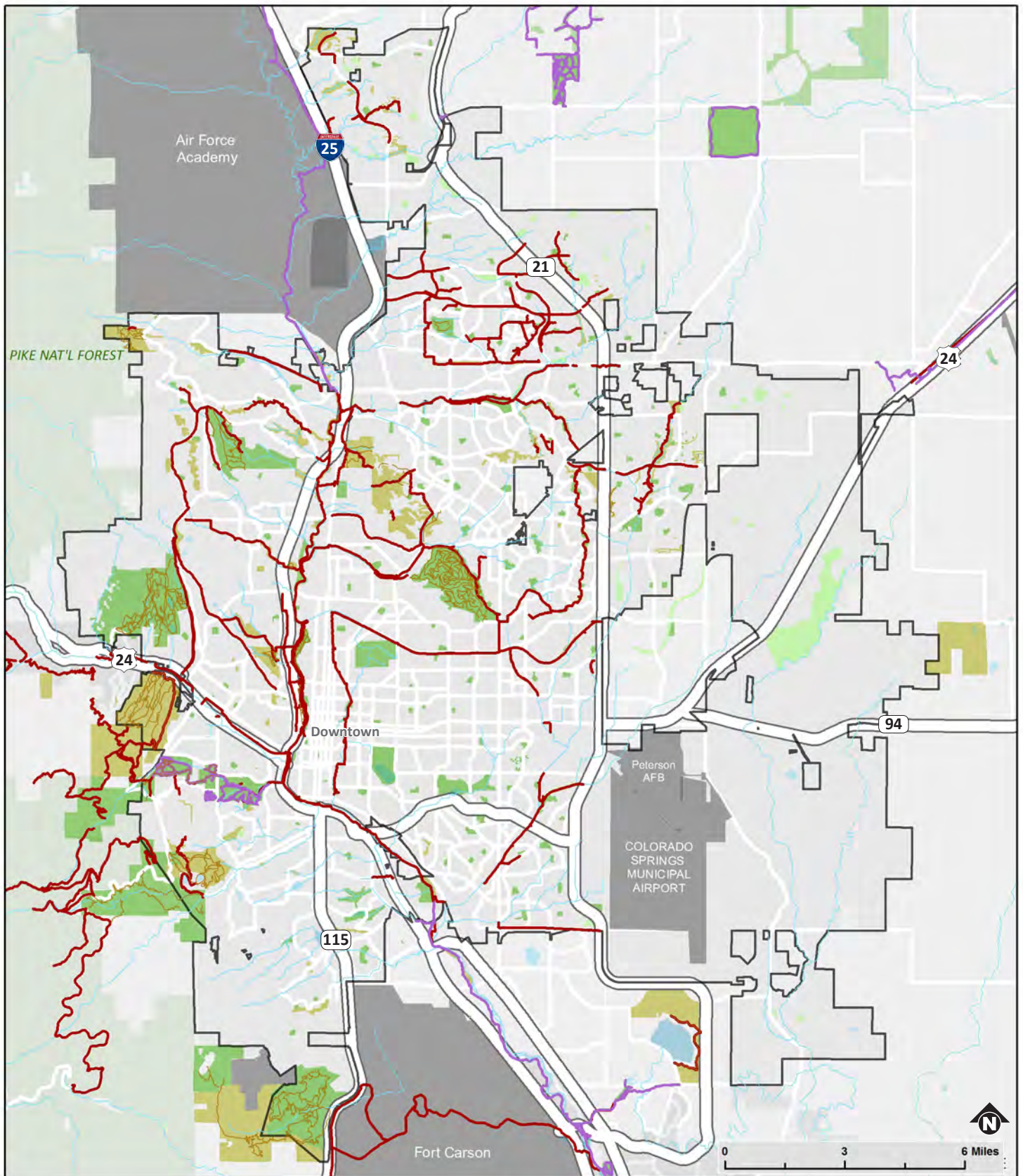
Table 15: Trails Inventory

TRAILS	
Trail Type	Miles
Urban Trails	144
Park Trails	134
County Trails (within city limits)	11.7

Table 16: Urban Trail Tiers

URBAN TRAIL TIERS		
Tier	Purpose / Function	Design Guidelines (Overview)
Tier 1	Multi-purpose trails - accommodate a variety of trail users including walkers, joggers, recreational bikers, commute bikers, and horseback riders (as appropriate) within the same trail corridor. Serve the highest volume of users.	12 foot wide main trail with a separate but parallel gravel trail (four-foot wide), good line of sight, and layout designed for commuter speeds and a high volume of users. A soft surface gravel or mowed grass shoulder on each side of the trail should be provided to reduce user conflicts.
Tier 2	Feeder trails for the Tier 1 trails - provide for a diversity of users including bicyclists, in-line skaters, walkers, runners, and equestrians.	Single 12-foot trail paved with concrete or asphalt. A four-foot soft shoulder on each side of the trail is provided to reduce user conflicts. The right-of-way easements should be 50 feet in width where feasible.
Tier 3	Less improved trails located in the mountains or foothills serving primarily hikers and mountain bikers. These trails, which are expected to receive less use than the Tier 1 and 2 trails,	Four- to six foot wide, soft surface trails with no shoulders. Equestrians would share use of the four- to six-foot wide trail.

Map 15: Existing Trails



- Existing Park Trail
- Existing County Trail
- Existing Urban Trail
- Pike National Forest
- Park Lands (City and Special District)
- Open Space/Special Resource Area/Greenway
- Undeveloped Park Land (City and Special District)
- City Limits

DISTRIBUTION OF PARKS AND GAP ANALYSIS

Park Distribution Evaluation Method Overview

Geographic distribution of parks and open space is another factor to examine in understanding the level of service the park system is providing to residents. Many studies show that locating parks and open space within a comfortable walking distance of homes contributes greatly to resident's satisfaction with their quality of life. Close proximity to a park or open space is also an important deciding factor for people in choosing a place of residence. Comfortable walking distance is often defined for families with young children, older adults and people with certain physical limitations as a quarter-mile or five minute walk. A half-mile walk (typically 10 minutes) is well within a reasonable distance for the remainder of the population.

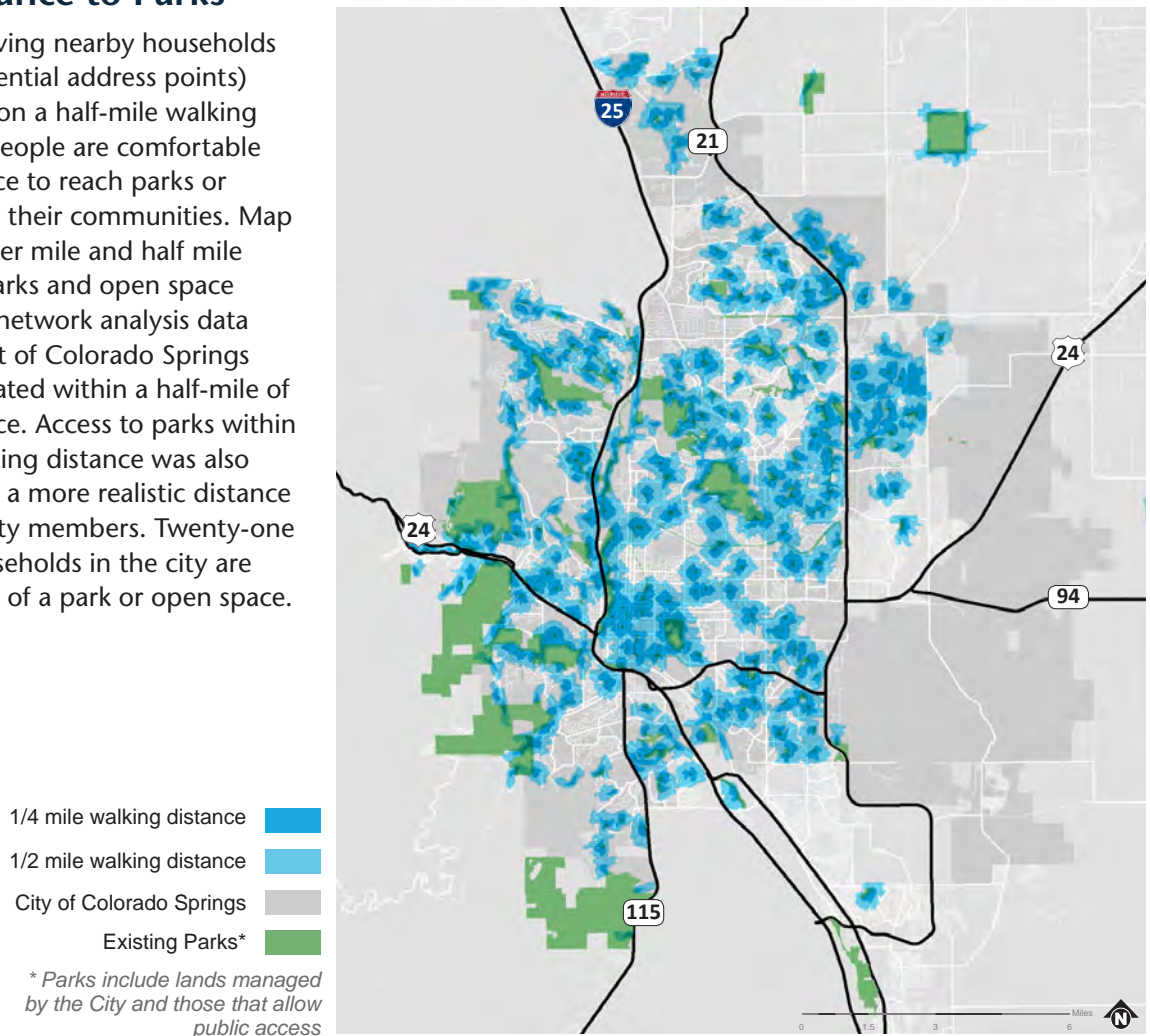
Innovations in analytical software such as ESRI's Network Analyst tool have enabled analysis of a household's access to parks and open space, providing a rigorous understanding of the accessibility of the parks and open space system. In the past, methods to evaluate a community's access to parks and open space utilized a set radius that did not account for actual travel routes and barriers in the built and natural environment, such as major roadways and waterways. The Network Analyst software measures the actual travel distances to each park type utilizing existing transportation networks. This allows a more exact measurement of park accessibility related to residential addresses within the community. Typical travel distances and transportation modes (e.g., walking, driving, biking, taking public transit) were used to determine access to different types of parks and open spaces. These radii range from a quarter mile travel distance for neighborhood parks up to five miles for regional or community parks. All lands that provide public access to recreation within Colorado Springs (including special district parks and properties managed by other jurisdictions and agencies within three miles of the city's limits) were included in the analysis, as these lands provide the same or similar park and open space services to Colorado Springs residents.

Park distribution analysis provides an understanding of parts of the city that are well-served by parks and open space, as well as identification of underserved (gap) areas. Within the districts and neighborhoods there are unique circumstances that need to be individually analyzed and understood beyond the effort of this Master Plan in order to best meet the needs of each area where gaps in park provision exist. For example, conversations with members of individual neighborhoods may reveal that programs and activities are desired rather than new facilities.

Walking Distance to Parks

Access to parks serving nearby households (identified by residential address points) is evaluated based on a half-mile walking distance, as most people are comfortable walking this distance to reach parks or open spaces within their communities. Map 16 shows the quarter mile and half mile distance from all parks and open space access points. The network analysis data revealed 53 percent of Colorado Springs households are located within a half-mile of a park or open space. Access to parks within a quarter-mile walking distance was also evaluated, as this is a more realistic distance for some community members. Twenty-one percent of the households in the city are within quarter mile of a park or open space.

Map 16: Households within Walking Distance of Parks



1/4 mile walking distance ■
 1/2 mile walking distance ■
 City of Colorado Springs ■
 Existing Parks* ■
** Parks include lands managed by the City and those that allow public access*

Households within Walking Distance of a Park

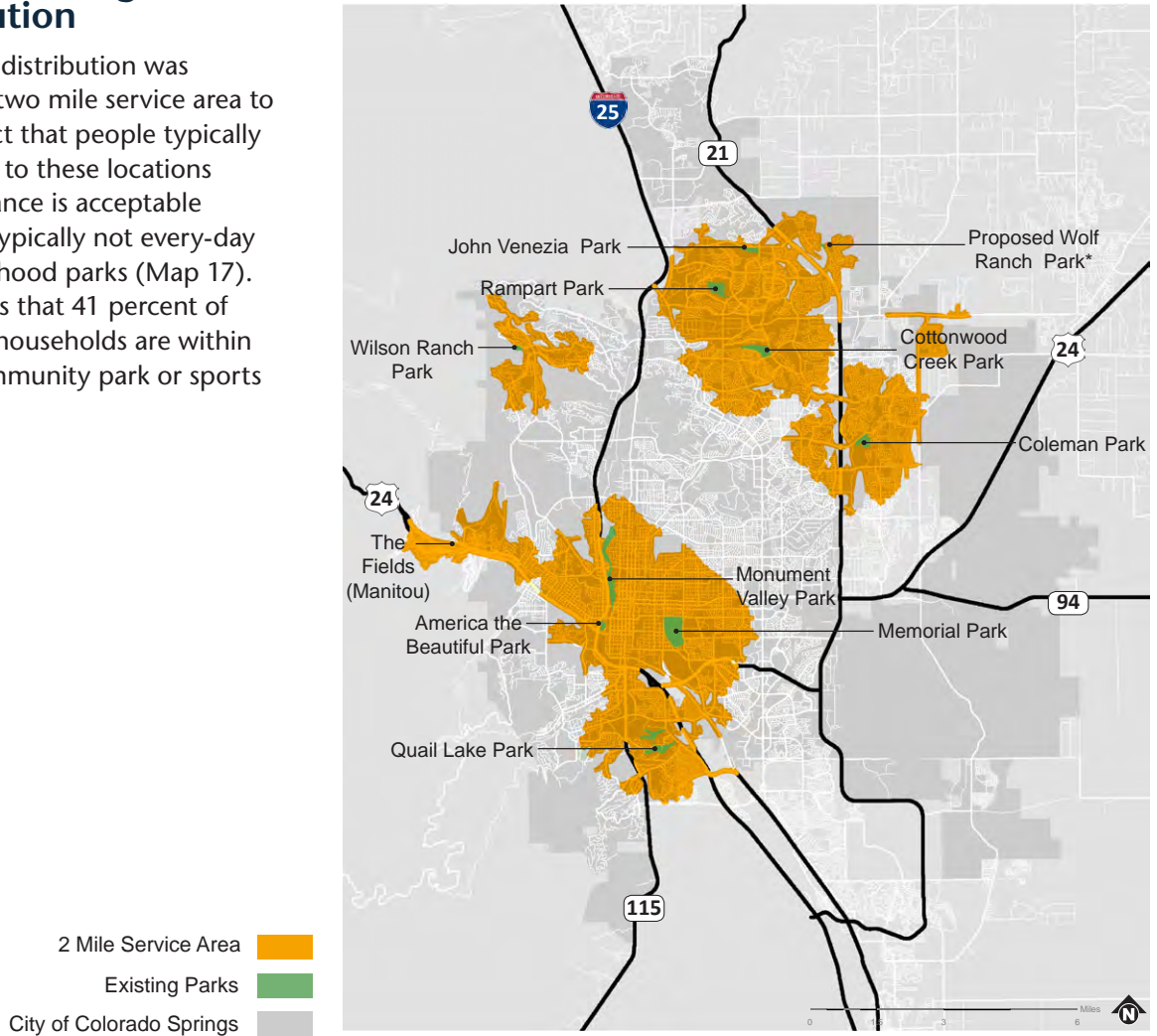


How far are you willing to walk? Research shows that most people are comfortable walking a half-mile distance to reach a destination like a park or open space site. Meanwhile, a quarter-mile distance is a reasonable walk for families with young children or older adults.

Community and Regional Park Distribution

Community parks distribution was evaluated using a two mile service area to account for the fact that people typically walk, bike or drive to these locations and a greater distance is acceptable because they are typically not every-day trips like neighborhood parks (Map 17). The analysis reveals that 41 percent of Colorado Springs households are within two miles of a community park or sports complex.

Map 17: Community Park Service Areas



Percent of Households within 2 miles of a Community Park

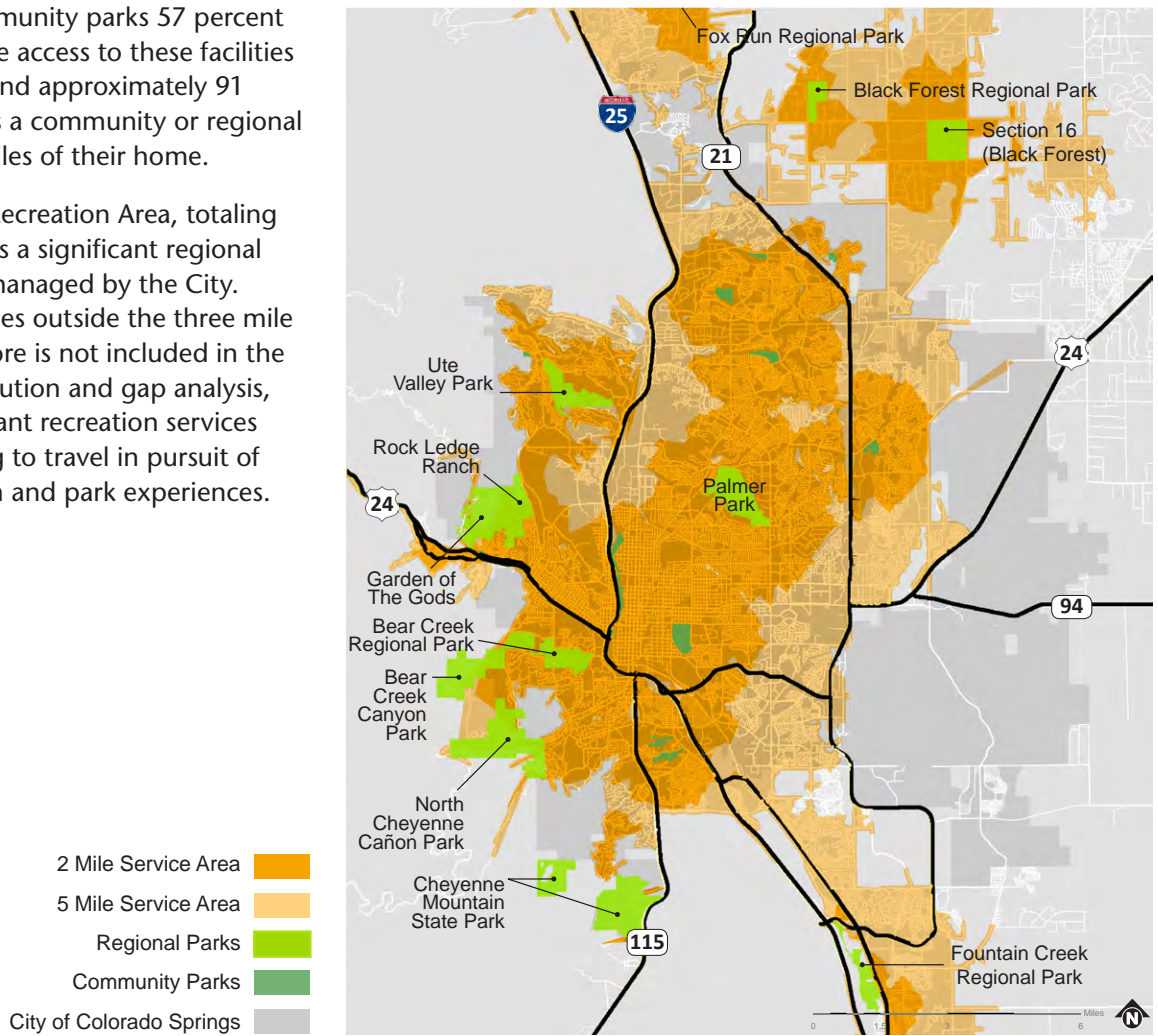


*This analysis includes the proposed Wolf Ranch Community Park.

Map 18 shows that when regional parks are added to the community parks 57 percent of households have access to these facilities within two miles and approximately 91 percent can access a community or regional park within five miles of their home.

The North Slope Recreation Area, totaling over 2,000 acres, is a significant regional park owned and managed by the City. Though the park lies outside the three mile buffer, and therefore is not included in the geographic distribution and gap analysis, it provides important recreation services to residents willing to travel in pursuit of outdoor recreation and park experiences.

Map 18: Community & Regional Park Service Areas



Percent of Households within 2 or 5 miles of a Community or Regional Park



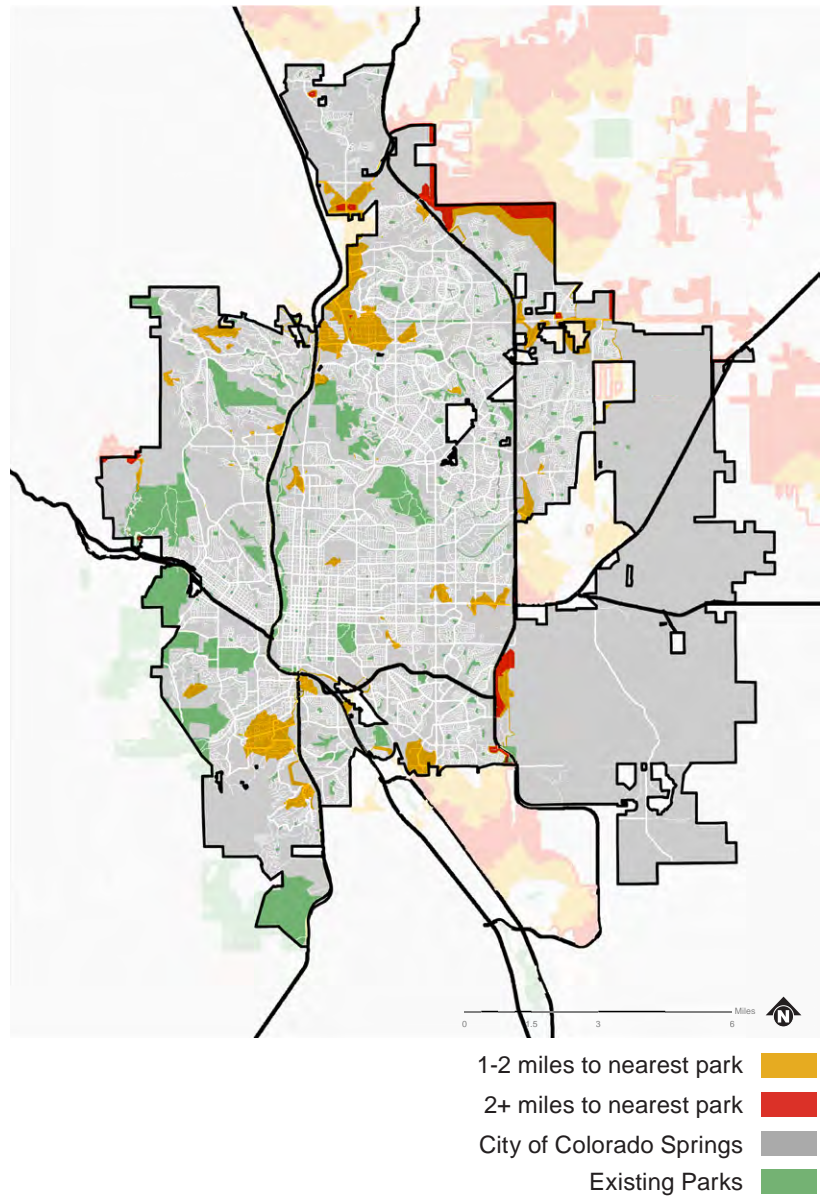
Parks and Open Space Gap Analysis

The park land gap analysis helped identify the areas of the City that do not have parks within a reasonable distance to households. There are only a few areas in the city where households do not have access to a park or open space within two miles. However, for the most part these areas have very few existing households. There are some areas in the city (identified in orange on Map 19) where access to the nearest park is between one and two miles. These areas, particularly the Briargate area in the northeast of the city and a small pocket of homes in the Woodman Valley, are underserved in terms of walkable access to parks and open space. The other areas identified in orange are primarily commercial areas. The City could focus on connections to neighboring parks and open space and minimizing barriers to walkability so that employees working in these areas have better access to outdoor spaces close to their place of work.

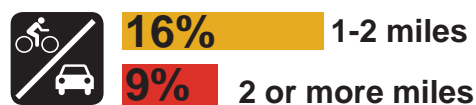
Eighty-four percent of Colorado Springs households have less than one mile to travel to reach a public park, indicating good distribution of parks. Sixteen percent of households are located one to two miles from the nearest public park entrance. Nine percent of the households in Colorado Springs are greater than two miles from a public park entrance.

Fewer parks are located beyond the city limits. Nearly 80 percent of the 46,350 residences located in close proximity to the city boundaries are without a public park within one mile of their home. Decision-making for annexing properties should consider existing levels of park provision to residents in these areas currently outside of the city.

Map 19: Parkland Gap Analysis - Households with Greater Distance to Parks



Percent of City Households with Parks Located more than a Mile Away.



PR&CS FACILITIES, PROGRAMS AND PARTNERSHIPS

In addition to the parks, open space and trails, the PR&CS Department also owns or manages a number of recreation, special purpose and cultural facilities including:

- two recreation centers/indoor aquatic facilities and four outdoor pools as well as partnerships with recreation providers including YMCA and Boys and Girls Clubs,
- five community centers,
- Sertich Ice Center,
- 148 outdoor sports courts,
- three dog parks and three dog runs
- three community gardens
- 145 public playgrounds,
- the Velodrom at Memorial Park (bike and roller skate racing tracks),
- the City Auditorium,
- the Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum
- Rock Ledge Ranch, and
- visitor and environmental centers.

The budget reductions in 2010 required that the PR&CS Department explore alternative means of providing selected services to the community. In some instances, partnerships were formed, while in other instances, operations were turned over to a non-profit or for-profit entity, as has been the case with the City's aquatic facilities and some recreation center operations. The PR&CS determined that the best option to continue senior services was to transfer ownership of the property to the Housing Authority of the City of Colorado Springs, with the understanding that services would continue at their current levels and potentially be enhanced and expanded over time.

Unique partnerships between neighborhood associations, churches, schools, non-profit agencies, private businesses, and military installations allows the Colorado Springs community centers to create an environment for learning, recreation, and personal growth. The Community Centers provide comprehensive and integrated community-based services at a single site for youth, families, the elderly and those with special needs. The sites each focus on seven program areas: Early Childhood, Youth and Teens; Health and Wellness; Food Insecurity; Medical Services; Public Safety; Technology; and Community Building.

Recreation and Special Purpose Facilities

RECREATION CENTERS AND AQUATIC FACILITIES

Recreation centers support both general informal use by the public as well as scheduled use for athletic competitions, recreation programs and leagues, or other events. The specialized maintenance and management requirements have been addressed by the City through a partnership with the YMCA of the Pikes Peak Region, which operates the two City owned properties at Memorial Park Recreation Center and Cottonwood Creek Recreation Center. In total, there are six YMCA locations throughout Colorado Springs (Briargate, Cottonwood Creek, Garden Ranch, Southeast Armed Services, Memorial Park and Downtown YMCA) and two Boys and Girls Clubs.

The YMCA of the Pikes Peak Region also operates the City's four outdoor aquatic facilities including pools at Monument Valley, Portal, Wilson Ranch, and the Prospect Lake Beach area. The City's pools served over 106,500 visitors in 2013.

COMMUNITY CENTERS

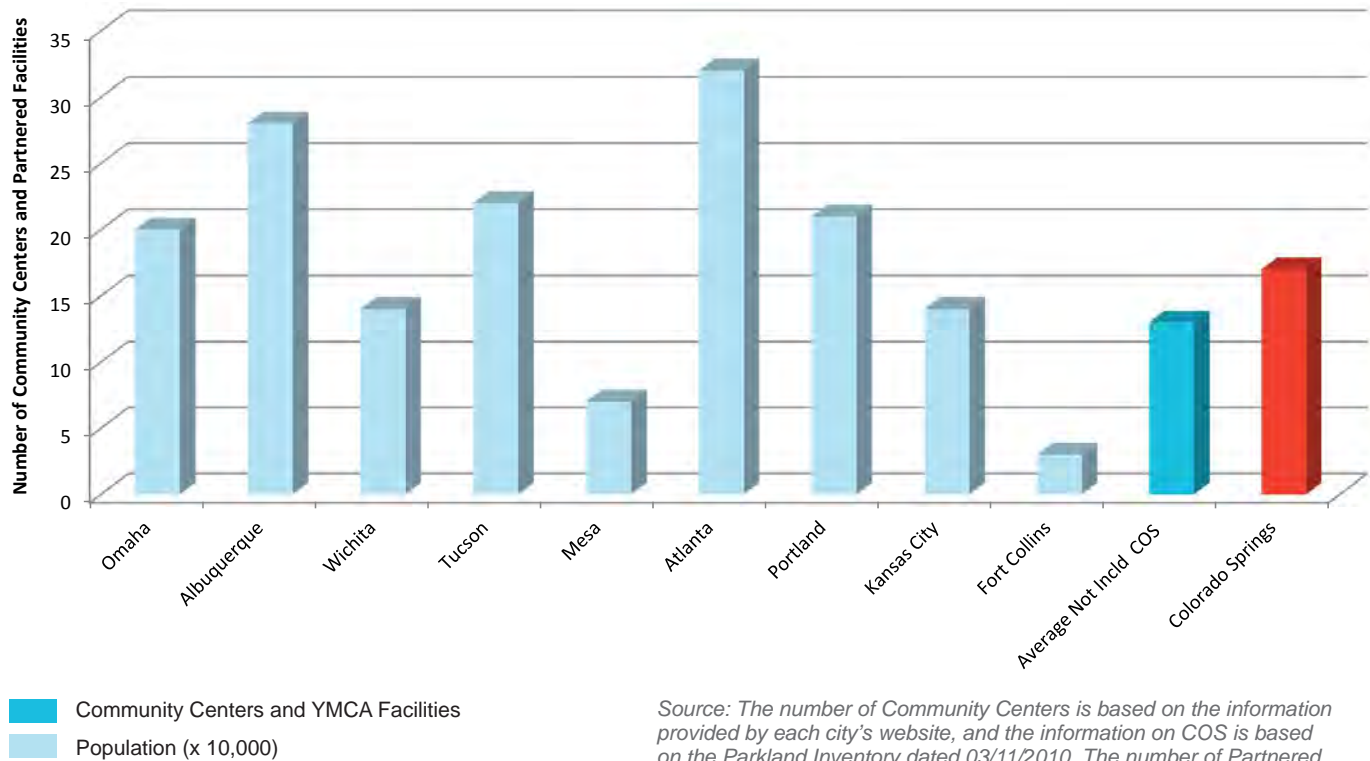
Colorado Springs has five Community Centers; Deerfield Hills, Otis Park, Hillside, Meadows Park and Westside Center offering a range of social programs (See Map 20). Located in areas impacted by marginalized socioeconomic conditions, each center strives to effectively develop creative solutions to improve the quality of life in the surrounding neighborhoods. The five centers served over 60,000 community members in 2012, for a total of over 187,000 users. Additional information about each of these centers can be found in Appendix A.



Comparison Cities: Recreation and Community Centers Per Resident

Compared to cities with similar populations, community centers per resident in Colorado Springs are in line with the average (Figure 23). While there are a good amount of community centers in Colorado Springs, several community facilities are in disrepair and require significant long term maintenance.

Figure 23: Number of Community Centers and YMCA Facilities per 10,000 Residents



Source: The number of Community Centers is based on the information provided by each city's website, and the information on COS is based on the Parkland Inventory dated 03/11/2010. The number of Partnered Facilities is based on information provided by affiliated websites.

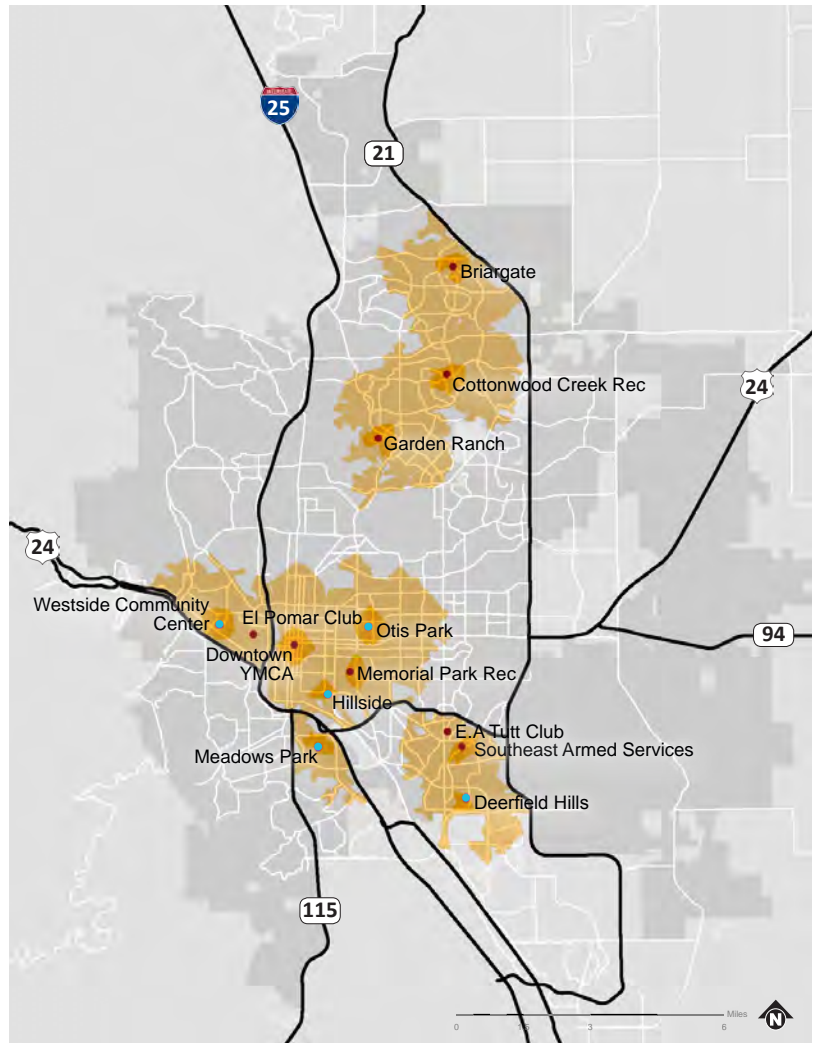
RECREATION AND COMMUNITY CENTER DISTRIBUTION

Access to recreation and community centers operated by the City as well as partnership facilities, including those owned or operated by the YMCA, was evaluated utilizing both a half-mile walking distance as well as a two mile biking or driving distance (Map 19). The network analysis data revealed that only a limited number of households, close to four percent, are within walking distance of these facilities. Over a third of the City’s households are within a comfortable two mile biking distance or quick drive. The primary gaps in the community are along Powers Boulevard, the northwest and southwest areas of the city.

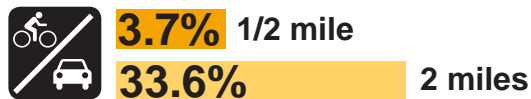
The City recognizes the valuable services offered by special district funded recreation centers for residents within the district boundaries, however, they are not included within this analysis because they do not provide services to the general public.

- City Owned Community Center ●
- Other Recreation Providers (YMCA / Boys and Girls Club) ●
- 1/2 mile to Recreation / Community Center
- 2 miles to Recreation / Community Center
- City of Colorado Springs

Map 20: Recreation and Community Center Service Areas



Household Distance to the nearest Recreation and Community Center Area



SERTICH ICE CENTER

The City owns Sertich Ice Center, located in Memorial Park, offers a single sheet of ice with year-round skating including figure skating, hockey programs and special events. In 2013 the facility served over 145,000 people and generated \$598,000.

OUTDOOR SPORTS COURTS

The City maintains a variety of outdoor sports courts. There are 52 tennis courts (39 of which are in playable condition), 13 Pickleball courts, two handball courts, two inline skating rinks, 78 basketball courts and one wheelchair softball facility. These courts are located in a number of the City’s parks, with the hub of activity for tennis and handball located at Memorial Park where many tournaments, leagues and lessons take place. The current hub of activity for pickleball is located at Monument Valley Park for tournaments and lessons.

DOG PARKS AND OFF LEASH AREAS

The City currently has three dog parks located in Cheyenne Meadows Park, Palmer Park, and Rampart Park. Also available to dog owners are three dog runs or hiking areas where dogs are allowed off-leash if kept under control. The dog runs are located along Foothills trail in front of Rock Ledge Ranch, Red Rock Canyon Open Space and Palmer Park. Additionally Bear Creek Park offers dog owners and additional dog park within city limits, though this area is managed by El Paso County Parks. The number of dog parks per city population is below five comparable front-range cities as shown in Table 17.

COMMUNITY GARDENS

Each of the City’s three community centers host community gardens that seek to fill the void in areas where healthy, affordable food is difficult to obtain. Programs range from renting raised garden beds, to providing Colorado State University Extension gardening classes, to teaching gardening to the K-12 youth and Diakonia Preschool programs. In 2010 the Meadows Park Community Center embarked on a garden program to connect the three centers’ individual programs. In addition to the Community Centers, the City has four additional community gardens at Dorchester Park, Old Farm Community Gardens, Harlan, Wolfe and Vermijo Park in addition to partnerships with the Pikes Peak Urban Gardens (PPUG). PR&CS has partnered with PPUG to provide operational space in one of its six greenhouses.

Table 17: Dog Park Level of Service Comparison

Comparison City	2012 Population	Number of Dog Parks	Dog Park Level of Service - Number of Parks per 1,000 people
Denver	634,265	11	0.017
Boulder	101,808	4	0.039
Westminster	109,169	3	0.027
Pueblo	107,772	2	0.019
Fort Collins	148,612	4	0.027
Average		4.8	0.026
Colorado Springs*	433, 570	3	0.007

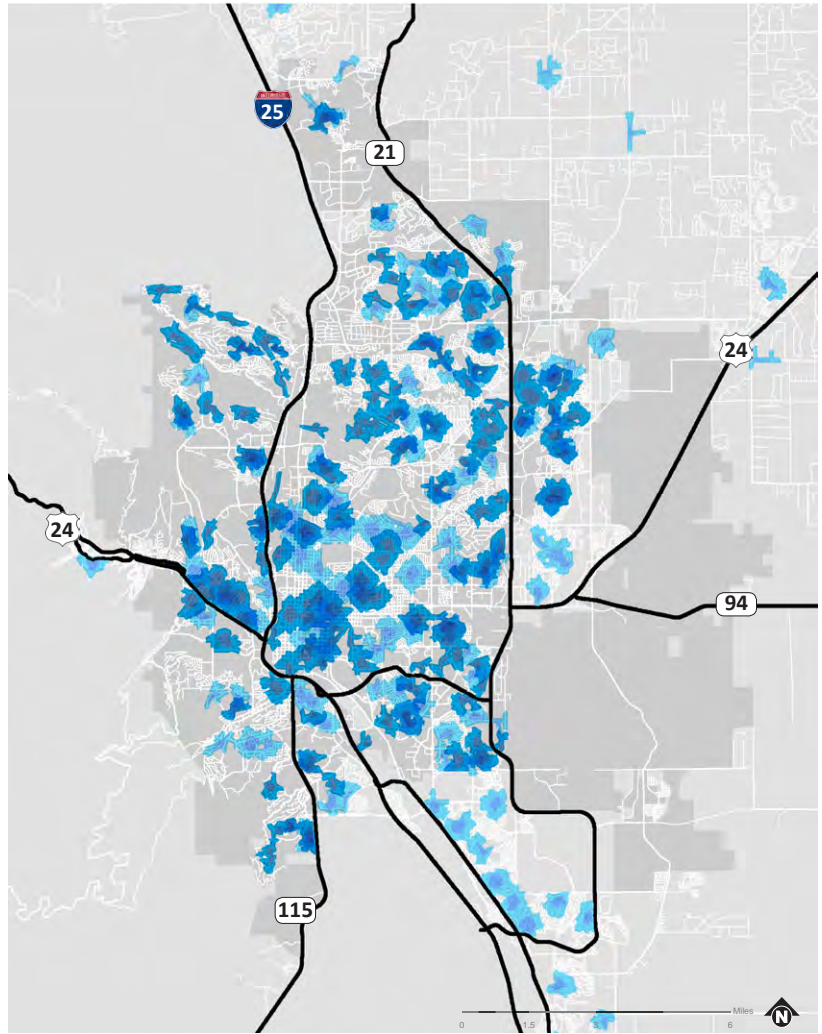
*Does not include the three dog runs in Colorado Springs.
Source: City Websites, 2014

PLAYGROUNDS

Access to playgrounds analysis looks at playground locations within the City’s parks as well as access to elementary schools which may offer public access to a playground. Playgrounds are relatively evenly distributed throughout the community with no significant large gaps in service area; however, the schools are filling a gap in service in the southeast neighborhoods where there are not as many City park properties. The City and school’s playgrounds are also supplemented by playgrounds that serve as neighborhood, apartment complex, or child care providers amenities that are not accounted for in the City’s inventory.

Only 25.6 percent of households are within a half-mile of a City playground. Only 7.4 percent of households are within a quarter-mile distance of a City playground, which may be a more realistic distance for young children to travel by foot or bicycle. School playgrounds and playgrounds provided by other entities are important to add to the play areas within close distance of residents.

Map 21: Playground Service Areas



- Playground 1/4 Mile Service Area
- Playground 1/2 Mile Service Area
- Elementary 1/4 Mile Service Area
- Elementary 1/2 Mile Service Area
- City of Colorado Springs

Household Distance to the Nearest City Playground



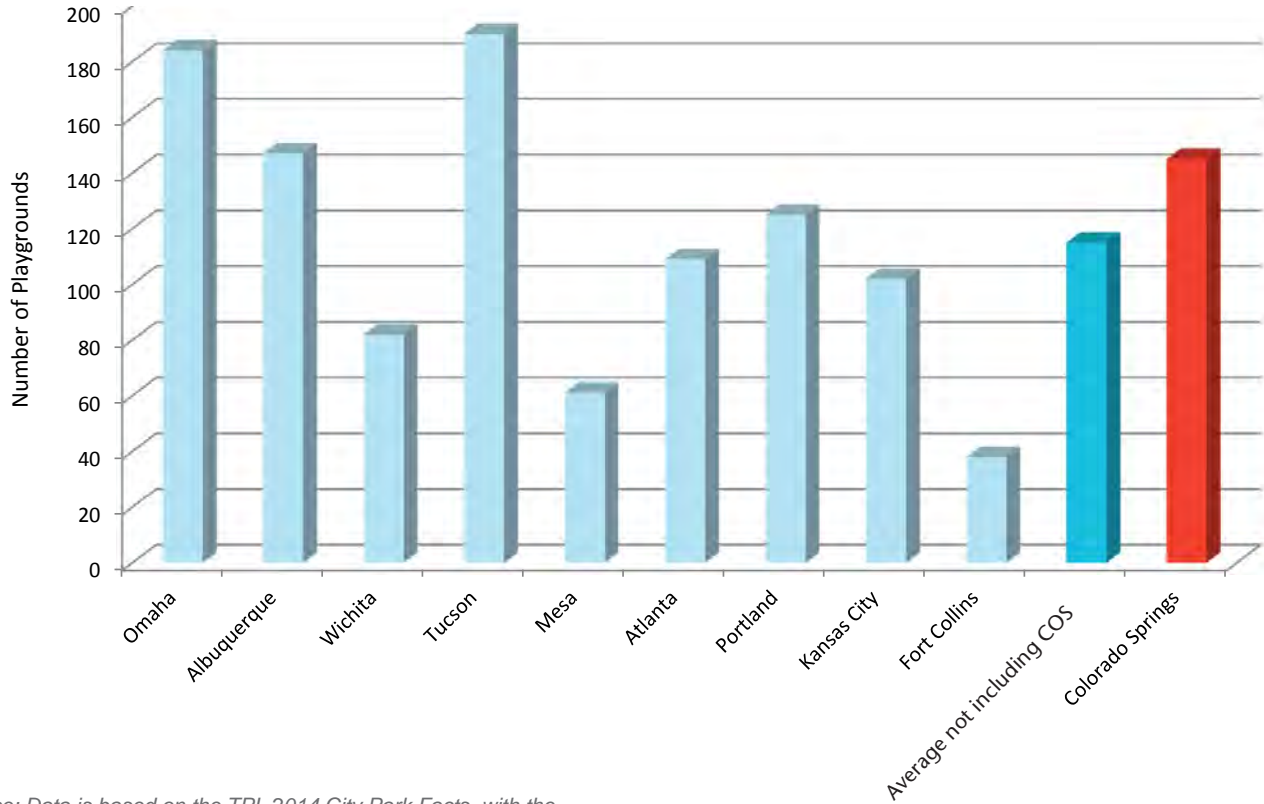
Colorado Springs maintains 145 public playgrounds throughout the city. Most elementary schools also provide playgrounds.



Comparison Cities: Playgrounds

Colorado Springs maintains 145 public playgrounds, significantly higher than the benchmark average of 115 playgrounds (Figure 24). 20-30 playgrounds are in poor condition and the City is actively repairing their inventory, while seven playgrounds are being completely renovated this year.

Figure 24: Number of Playgrounds in each City



Source: Data is based on the TPL 2014 City Park Facts, with the exception of Fort Collins. This data is based on Fort Collins 2012 city budget.

Historic and Cultural Service Facilities

CITY AUDITORIUM

City Auditorium is used for concerts, meetings, and trade shows as well as recreational sports and sports events, including adult volleyball programming. The facility hosted over 550 events in 2013, or an average of 1.5 events per day and generated about \$135,000 dollars in rentals and concession revenue. It is on the National Register of Historic Places.

COLORADO SPRINGS PIONEER MUSEUM

The Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum is located in the heart of downtown and hosts rotating exhibits, educational programs and special events. The staff is responsible for a large and growing collection of artifacts and archival materials, as well as a variety of research programs focused on the history of Colorado Springs and the Pikes Peak region. Each year the museum welcomes more than 50,000 visitors. The 1903 El Paso County Courthouse is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

ROCK LEDGE RANCH

The Rock Ledge Ranch Historic Site is a living history farm and an open-air museum that depicts life in the Pikes Peak region through four time periods: American Indian era of the 1770s, the settlement period of the 1860s, the 1880s Chambers Home and Ranch, and the 1907 Orchard House. The site partially supported by the Rock Ledge Ranch Living History Association and is managed by PR&CS. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

VISITOR AND ENVIRONMENTAL CENTERS

The PR&CS offers environmental education programs at the Starsmore Discovery Center and Helen Hunt Falls Visitor Center. Programs are also provided by parks staff and volunteers at the Garden of the Gods Visitor and Nature Center, which is privately operated by the Garden of the Gods Foundation. The City's Beidleman Environmental Center, located in Sondermann Park, is operated by the Catamount Institute, which continues the centers goals to educate the community about environmental issues through workshops, adventures and sustainable living programs.



The historic City Auditorium, built in 1923, continues to serve the Colorado Springs community as an affordable venue to host a wide variety of events including concerts, trade shows, graduations and athletic competitions. Source: City of Colorado Springs



Rock Ledge Ranch offers many programs and opportunities throughout the year for community members to step back in time to learn about the history of the Pikes Peak region. Source: <http://rockledgeranch.com> (2014)

PR&CS Programs and Activities

Recreation services enhance the quality of life for people of all ages and abilities by implementing diverse and inclusive programs, facilities and services for Colorado Springs residents. The City’s sports programs served 143,000 people in 2012.

ADULT SPORTS

The City organizes sports leagues for adults and seniors for softball, volleyball (sand and indoor), basketball, and flag football. These leagues serve over 35,000 adults throughout the year at various locations within the city, including schools facilities (Table 18).

YOUTH PROGRAMS

The City’s youth sports programs are designed to offer participants a variety of recreational sport leagues and activities in a safe, fun and well supervised environment. Youth sports programs include soccer (spring and fall), tackle football (spring and fall), baseball, T-ball, and softball, as well as boxing and judo with programs offered throughout the year (Table 19). Participation in these programs enhances and builds positive recreational experiences and healthy lifelong habits.

ICE SKATING

Programs offered at the Sertich Ice Rink include public skating, Learn-To-Skate classes, figure skating sessions, youth hockey and summer hockey school, ice rental and adult open hockey. The Sertich facility also hosts birthday parties, groups and features drop in pick up hockey, late night skate night and a stick, puck session.

TENNIS

A full range of tennis opportunities for juniors and adults is available. The Pikes Peak Community Tennis Association (PPCTA), a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, and COS Tennis have partnered with the PR&CS Department. They provide lessons, classes, tournaments and other tennis activities.

Table 18: Adult Sports Participation

2013 ADULT SPORTS LEAGUE TEAM PARTICIPATION	
League	Number of Teams
Basketball	84
Flag Football	77
Softball	316
Volleyball	20

Table 19: Adult Sports Participation

2013 YOUTH SPORTS LEAGUE TEAM PARTICIPATION	
League	Number of Teams
Youth Soccer	2,100
Youth Football	4,300
Youth Softball / Baseball	4,000
Volleyball	315
Boxing	125
Cheerleading	100
Little Quarterbacks	30
Other Sports	50

Source: Colorado Springs Budget Impact Summary



Youth sports programs including tackle football offer opportunities for kids to develop skills and teamwork. The City’s programs depend heavily on dedicated volunteers to coach teams at City parks.
Source: City of Colorado Springs

CAMPS, COMMUNITY PROGRAMS & PARTNERSHIPS

In addition to the adult and youth sports programs offered year-round to the community, the City also offers the following special programs:

Skyhawks Summer Sports Camps programs emphasize fundamental skill development by utilizing small group activities in a fun and positive environment for children age 5-12. Camps accommodate both beginner and experienced players.

Challenger British Soccer Camp provides players of all ages and abilities with the opportunity to receive high-level soccer coaching from a team of international experts.

Young Stars summer day camps is a program offered throughout the city for youth participants. The camps are based out of City parks near participants homes.

The **Special Olympic Partnership** program offers youth and adult basketball, volleyball and adult softball for people with special needs and served 100 participants in 2013.

Small Starz Basketball program serves youth ages 6 through 16.

The **Daddy Daughter Dance** special event serves as a fundraiser for community programs and is a popular event for young girls and their fathers including dinner and dancing.

The Colorado Parks and Recreation Association offers skills challenge programs with professional sports teams to work with members of the Nuggets, Rockies and Broncos.

THERAPEUTIC RECREATION PROGRAM AND PARALYMPIC SPORT CLUB

The Therapeutic Recreation Program (TRP) provides opportunities for youth and adults with disabilities to acquire skills that enable them to participate in leisure experiences and enhance their abilities to function within a community setting. The TRP staff provides advocacy and support for individuals with disabilities to enjoy general recreation activities, as well as specialized therapeutic programs that include opportunities in five core areas: Arts and Culture; Sports, Fitness and Aquatics; Social Enrichment; Community Integration/Leisure Education; and Outdoor Adventures. The TRP served over 25,000 participants in 2012.

Paralympic Sport Club Colorado Springs - TRP and the U.S. Paralympics, a division of the U.S. Olympic Committee, partnered in 2008 to offer adaptive sports programming for community members and injured service members who have physical disabilities. The programs focus on providing a variety of sports clubs and special events throughout the year. The vision of the program is to provide sports opportunities that will help increase independence, self-esteem, physical development and quality of life for adults and children with physical disabilities.



The Paralympic Sport Club offers adapted sports programming including golf and water skiing for people with physical disabilities. Source: City of Colorado Springs

PARK OPERATIONS



Memorial Park Recreation Center aquatics area. Source: City of Colorado Springs



Memorial Park Recreation Center. Source: City of Colorado Springs

Park Facilities Assessment

The existing park facilities are well maintained and in good shape, but there is evidence that additional maintenance is needed, particularly with regard to improved turf standards, playground repair and the repair of irrigation systems. PR&CS has been converting lawn areas to more naturalized meadows to not only reduce irrigation needs, but also to reduce the amount of turf areas that need more intensive maintenance.

Sports facilities are in good shape but require constant maintenance due to their heavy use. PR&CS has to dedicate considerable resources to facility maintenance, particularly due to the fact that sports facilities are prime revenue generators.

Several recreation centers are also available to the community including pools, an aquatics center, and indoor sports facilities. Several of the facilities are aging and need repair, particularly roofs, HVAC and interior maintenance. Many repairs are done through the County as they have facility maintenance contracts that PR&CS can “piggyback” on.

Each of the three City-run community centers offers a full range of core programs for both youth (from preschool to teen and seniors). The centers are well used, with each getting up to 65,000 annual visitors. Each center has a revenue target which varies from center to center.

Since 2009, the centers have focused on developing partnerships to help with programming and program delivery. Partners use the centers as a venue. “Kids-on-Bikes” and “Girls-on-the-Run” are examples of partnerships for delivering programs. Additionally the centers have a full-range of after school and camp programs. Since 2009, the center staff facilitate more programs through providers than City staff.

The centers could be doing more to provide targeted programs that reach their constituents, but due to limited budgets they are constrained. One considerable issue is that the centers do not have wireless internet, which limit programming. Additionally, the centers do not have adequate computers and computer resources, which also limits programming opportunities. Computer security is a major issue, and would need to be addressed before any expanded computer programming can be considered.

Division Staffing

PR&CS employs a total of 120.75 full time employees who are divided among the three divisions within the Department.

RECREATION AND ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

The Recreation and Administrative Services division employs 25.75 full-time staff distributed as follows:

- Division Manager (1)
- Adult Sports (2)
- Youth Sports (2)
- Ice Center (2.75)
- City Auditorium (1.25)
- Administration (8)
- Therapeutic (4)
- Meadows (1.75)
- Hillside/Otis Centers (2)
- Deerfield Hills Center (1)

CULTURAL SERVICES DIVISION

Cultural Services employs 10 full-time staff and they cover the following areas:

- Division Manager (1)
- Museum (6)
- Garden of the Gods Visitor Center (1)
- Rock Ledge Ranch Historic Site (1)
- North Cheyenne Cañon (1)

PARK OPERATIONS, DEVELOPMENT AND FORESTRY

The Park Operations, Development and Forestry Division has 85 employees, covering the following areas and districts:

- Division Manager (1)
- Regional Parks and Trails (10)
- Design and Development (6)
- Parks / Facility Construction (6)
- Park / Facility Mechanical (7)
- Developed Medians, Horticulture (3)
- Forestry / Right of Way (9)
- SIMD Unit Administrator (1)
 - Stetson Hills (2)
 - Norwood (4)
 - Old Colorado City (1)
 - Mesa Springs (1)
 - Briargate (5)
- North District (6)
- South District (9)
- South Athletic District (8)
- North Athletic District (6)

Additional hourly staff employed within the three divisions are not included with the full-time staff.

Figure 25: Full-time Staff by Division





Comparison Cities: Staff Levels

Colorado Springs PR&CS maintains and operates parks, trails, open space and recreational facilities with a relatively small full-time staff. Below are several charts (Figures 26-28) illustrating how PR&CS staffing compares to other U.S. city parks and recreation departments. Colorado Springs has one of the smallest full-time Operations and Maintenance (O+M) work forces of all comparable cities. A number of PR&CS staffing has shifted from City staff to contracted services; the positions were simply forgone and not replaced in any capacity.

Figure 26: Regular, Non-seasonal Employees

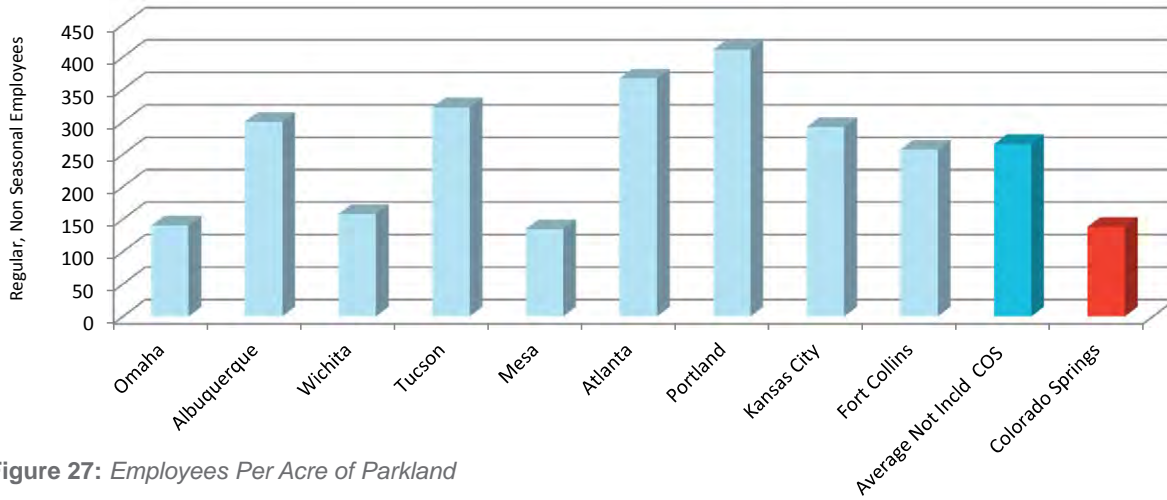


Figure 27: Employees Per Acre of Parkland

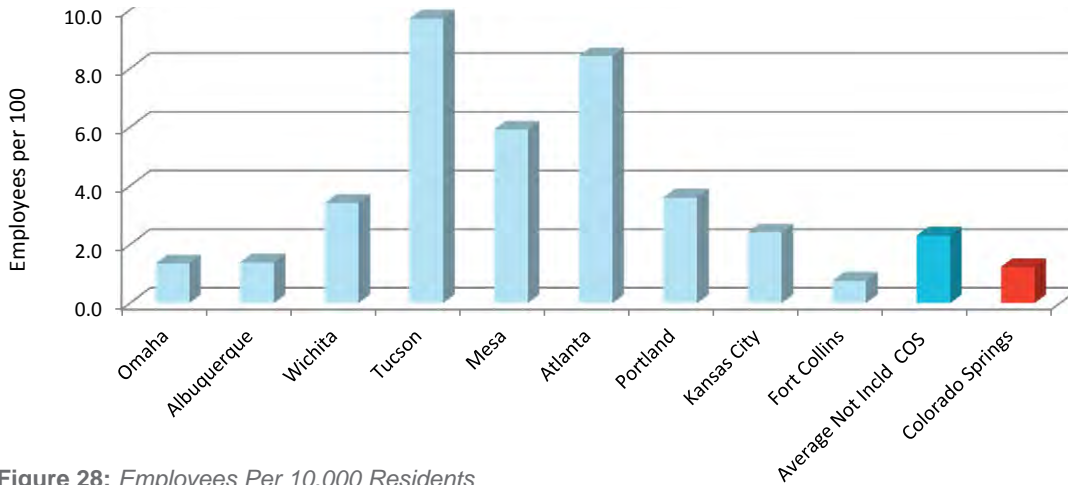
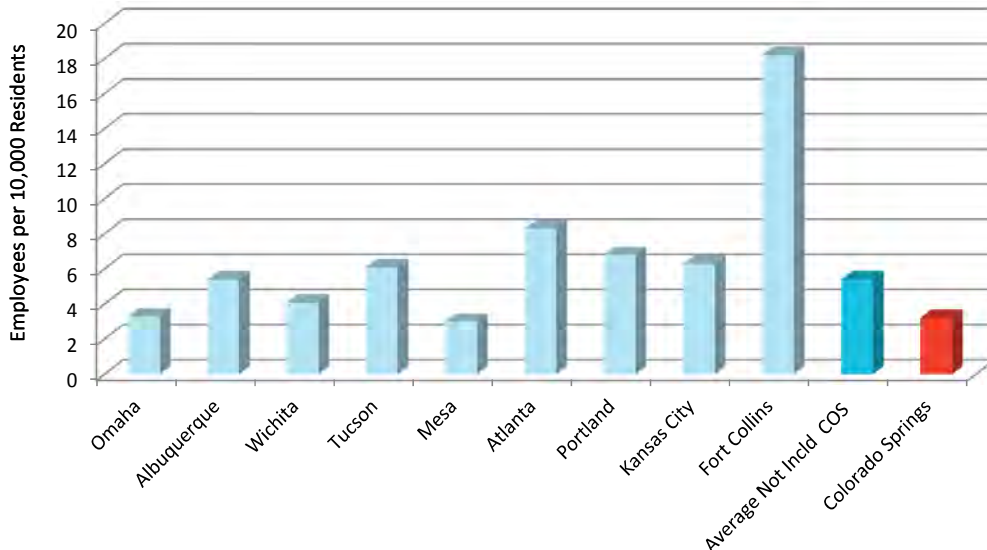


Figure 28: Employees Per 10,000 Residents



Source: Data is based on the TPL 2014 City Park Facts, with the exception of Fort Collins. This data is based on the City of Fort Collins 2012 city budget. The number of special improvement maintenance districts' employees have been subtracted from the total number of regular, non-seasonal employees.

VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS

Existing Role and Dedication of Volunteers

Colorado Springs PR&CS has a very strong volunteer support system with nearly 6,000 volunteers logging over 150,000 hours in 2013. The volunteers provide a broad range of assistance including maintenance, programming, education, awareness and advocacy as well as fundraising to the PR&CS programs (Figure 29).

The sports and recreation programs are robust with over 62,000 hours devoted each year to support young athletes in Colorado Springs. Programs like “Adopt-A-Park” and “Springs in Bloom” offer opportunities for individuals, various community groups, and local businesses to take an active role in maintaining and improving local parks, trails and open spaces. These commitments can range from maintaining a single flower bed, to an entire stretch of trail or greenway. Volunteers also provide programming and visitor services for several parks and open spaces, visitor centers, and programs.

Volunteer services include:

- Hiking guides,
- Routine maintenance and cleaning of parks, trails and open space,
- Clean-up projects,
- Natural resource management,
- Park Ambassadors,
- Instructors,
- Sports coaches,
- Docents,
- Retail operations at visitor centers,
- Special event coordinators,
- Board leadership and strategic planning,
- Advocacy and awareness, and
- Fundraising for renovations and capital improvement projects.

Friends Groups and Support Organizations

A number of friends groups and support organizations care for, plan and raise funds for parks, trails, open space, recreational facilities and cultural resources, each having a unique focus on stewardship, maintenance, financial support or increasing public awareness. The PR&CS Volunteer Office actively coordinates and collaborates with these groups to facilitate programs and provides tools and other resources to support clean-up and restoration projects.

Table 20 documents the significant contribution of volunteer hours and funding to support PR&CS operations, with a minimum of 45,000 hours allocated between the 21 friends groups. Additionally, at least \$565,500 was raised among the friends groups in 2013. All of these proceeds went to directly fund open space acquisition, programming, maintenance and capital or restoration projects. For example, the Friends of North Cheyenne Cañon raised funds to build a visitor center at Helen Hunt Falls. The group also staffs the visitor center and retail revenue from the visitor center goes to the Cañon to fund further projects.

Figure 29: Allocation of 2013 Volunteer Hours

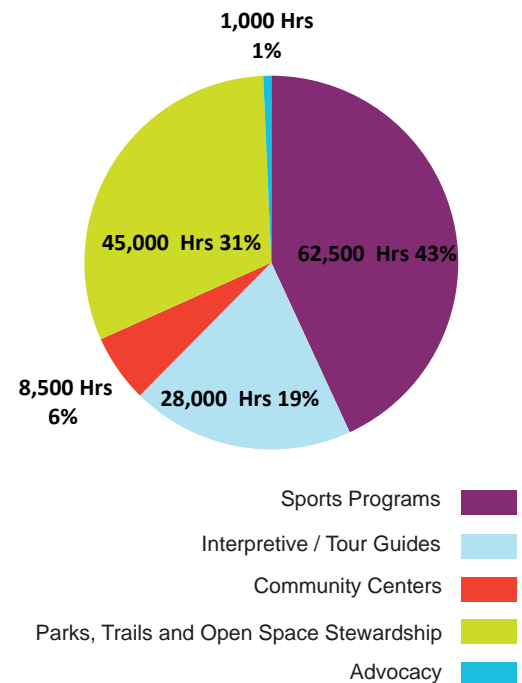


Table 20: Colorado Springs Friends Groups Function List (part 1)

COLORADO SPRINGS FRIENDS GROUPS FUNCTION LIST (PART 1)								
Friends Group	Area of Focus	Functions Currently Being Performed						
		Awareness & Advocacy	Program Volunteers	Project Volunteers	Avg # of Volunteers	Avg Volunteer Hours	Avg Annual \$ Contribution	Other Parkland Parkland Directed Fundraising
City Auditorium	Supporting the use and maintenance of this historic site	X		X			project based	renovation goals
Corral Bluffs Alliance	To preserve Corral Bluffs' natural and cultural resources through public awareness, funding, educational materials and programs, and sponsoring special events	X	X	X			project based	
Friends of Blodgett Peak Open Space	Stewardship, maintenance and volunteer projects in Blodgett Peak Open Space	X		X		36	project based	
Friends of Pikes Peak Pickleball	Promotes and supports the sport of pickleball	X	X	X	40	1,650	\$12,000	Dedicated Pickleball Courts
Friends of Sondermann Park	Stewardship, maintenance and volunteer projects in Sondermann Park	X		X		25	project based	
Friends of Stratton Open Space	Stewardship, maintenance and volunteer projects in Stratton Open Space	X		X		50	project based	
Friends of the Peak	Stewardship, maintenance and volunteer projects on the South Slope and with other Friends groups	X		X		90	project based	
Garden of the Gods	Promoting, preserving and enhancing the natural and historic assets of the Park through interpretive and educational support	X	X	X	125	11,000	\$45,000	
Garden of the Gods Foundation	Improving the quality of the Park by gathering resources and making grants that enhance and protect it including maintenance and education	X			8	40	\$120,000	
Guardians of Palmer Park	To help maintain the Park's unique beauty and spirit for the enjoyment of future generations	X		X		2,200	project based	
Horticultural Arts Society	Dedicated to learning about appropriate plant materials and cultivation methods for the Pikes Peak region including maintenance of three public gardens in Monument Valley Park	X		X			project based	
Incline Friends	Stewardship, maintenance and volunteer projects on the Incline	X		X		155	project based	Incline Renovation
Medicine Wheel Trail Advocates, Inc.	To maintain and expand trail access for mountain bikers and all trail users in the Pikes Peak region	X		X		200	project based	

COLORADO SPRINGS FRIENDS GROUPS FUNCTION LIST (PART 2)								
Friends Group	Area of Focus	Functions Currently Being Performed						
		Awareness & Advocacy	Program Volunteers	Project Volunteers	Avg # of Volunteers	Avg Volunteer Hours	Avg Annual \$ Contribution	Other Parkland Parkland Directed Fundraising
Monument Valley Park	Dedicated to the enhancement and improvement of the natural and cultural environment of the Park	X		X		100	project based	historic stonework
North Cheyenne Cañon	Preserving, protecting, and enhancing the natural, scenic, and historic resources of the Park through maintenance, projects and programming.	X	X	X	130	8,400	\$20,000	programs
Pioneers Museum Foundation of Colorado Springs	To provide financial support for exhibits and programs, restoration projects and ongoing collection acquisition efforts.				9	220	project based	
Red Rock Canyon	Supporting the site through stewardship, education, advocacy, fund raising and volunteer projects	X	X	X		140	project based	pond restoration
Rock Ledge Ranch Living History Association	Restoration, programming and projects focused on site improvements	X	X	X	110	3,000	\$50,000	
Rocky Mountain Field Institute	Natural resource restoration and volunteer projects with a focus on Garden of the Gods	X		X	2,000	9,000	n/a	
The Pioneers Museum	To provide volunteer assistance and financial support for exhibits and programs, restoration projects and ongoing collection acquisition efforts.	X	X		130	6,000	\$50,000	
Therapeutic Recreation Community Partners	Developing and implementing strategies to support the services, programs and needs of the Colorado Springs Therapeutic Recreation Program	X	X		60	2,200	project based	
Trails and Open Space Coalition	Restoration, programming and projects focused on site improvements	X			0	500	n/a	
Ute Valley Park	Stewardship, maintenance and volunteer projects in Ute Valley Park	X		X		1,800	\$10,000	Land acquisition & maintenance

CONCLUSIONS

Open space protection will need to be a focus over the next decade to protect many high-quality natural areas threatened by development expansion to meet the needs of a growing population. High-level maintenance of parks, open space and trails will be challenging, but critical as natural events such as flood, fire and drought continue to have negative impacts. The population of Colorado Springs is expected to grow to 523,039 people by 2025, requiring PR&CS to anticipate future demands of the new population for services and facilities, as well as adapt to demographic trends, including a larger percentage of older adults and minorities.

Colorado Springs and communities throughout the state find that walking, hiking and biking are the activities people engage in most often. Ninety percent of Colorado Springs residents report recreating outdoors at least once a week on average. This is higher than the state average of 66 percent. Similarly, overall physical activity levels are higher for children and adults in El Paso County than those in the state. It will be important for Colorado Springs to tap into sports, fitness, and recreation trends not only to serve current residents, but to attract visitors, new residents and employers. The City should continue to provide a diversity of sports, fitness, activity facilities and programs. Many of the emerging activity interests of community members relate to the availability of the mountain environment for recreation, the aging adult population's recreation interests, and an interest in sports that require a high level of fitness and provide an athletic challenge.

Colorado Springs has more acres of parks and open space than most U.S. cities and they are distributed geographically to provide residents with convenient access. While these factors could contribute to Colorado Springs providing one of the best park systems in the country, lower levels of spending and numbers of staff than any other comparable cities has contributed to deficiencies in park quality over time.

Colorado Springs must complete planned parks and continue to have special districts provide parks and recreation in order to achieve established level of service goals. Community parks, regional parks and community centers are well-distributed throughout the city however, as the eastern part of the city develops, it will be important to make Jimmy Camp Creek Park, and other community or regional recreation centers available to new residents.

The trail systems, both urban trail corridors and trails within parks and open spaces, provide many important routes for connecting people to recreation destinations, as well as offering enjoyable experiences to people of all skill levels and activity interests. Connecting these trails together and providing new trails in the eastern portion of the city will further expand recreation opportunities.

Currently PR&CS maintains and operates parks, trails, open space and recreational facilities with relatively fewer full-time staff than other comparable cities. Volunteers play an important role in caring for parks, trails, cultural facilities and open space. Nearly 6,000 volunteers provided support to PR&CS in 2013. It is clear that PR&CS, with the help of volunteers, has competently served the community with fewer resources than most cities. The challenge is to understand how this can continue given the projected population growth and identified ongoing issues. The following chapters seek to assist PR&CS find solutions that will help the Colorado Springs parks, recreation, trails and open space system to become one of the premier systems in the country.

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FUNDING, OPERATIONS, AND RESOURCES EVALUATION

1. Economic Benefits of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources
2. Existing Funding Sources and Allocation
3. Existing Capital and Operating Budgets
4. Existing Revenue Sources
5. Funding and Service Delivery History
6. Existing Maintenance Standards for Parks and Recreation
7. Critical Service Areas



ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

An Economic Case for Parks

Parks, open space and trails provide substantial economic value to the City of Colorado Springs. Though recreation, aesthetics and environmental attributes are often cited as the primary benefits of these land uses, they also provide economic benefits that are equally important and should not be understated. Numerous cities throughout the U.S. have begun to examine the long-term economic impacts of parks, trails and open space. Colorado Springs could benefit from such an examination.

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) has developed the Center for City Park Excellence which looks at the economic benefits of parks in many U.S. cities. While the science of city park economics and benefit quantification is in its infancy, a 2010 TPL study of Denver’s entire park and recreation system which includes the trails, natural areas, neighborhood and community parks and parkways provides a strong point of reference for Colorado Springs to make an economic benefit argument for parks (Table 21). Of all the locations where such research has been completed, Denver provides the best direct comparison to Colorado Springs. The study provides insight for city governments, the development community and citizens regarding the economic factors and relative benefits that parks provide.

The TPL report looked at nine major factors related to city government and citizens:

Direct Income for City Government

1. Property value (increased property tax from the increase in value of certain residences related to their proximity to parks)
2. Tourism (sales tax receipts from tourism spending by out-of-towners who came to Denver primarily because of its parks)

Savings to Government

3. Community cohesion (benefit of people banding together to save and improve neighborhood parks and ward off anti-social problems that would typically incur police, fire and rehabilitation costs)
4. Stormwater retention (the trees and soil of Denver’s parks retain rainfall, cutting the cost of treating stormwater)
5. Clean air (park trees and shrubs absorb a variety of air pollutants)

Table 21: *The Estimated Annual Value of the Denver Park and Recreation System*

ESTIMATED ANNUAL VALUE OF DENVER PARK AND RECREATION SYSTEM		
Revenue-Producing Factors for City Governments		
Tax receipts from increased property value		\$4,081,302
Tax receipts from increased tourism value		\$3,048,861
	Total	\$7,130,163
Cost-Saving Factors for City Government		
Stormwater management value		\$804,187
Air pollution mitigation value		\$128,914
Community cohesive value		\$2,607,523
	Total	\$3,607,523
Cost-Saving Factors to Citizens		
Direct use value		\$452,014,258
Health Value		\$64,955,500
	Total	\$516,969,785
Wealth-Increasing Factors to Citizens		
Property value from park proximity		\$30,690,771
Net profit from tourism		\$18,027,542
	Total	\$48,718,313

Source: *The Economic Benefits of Denver’s Park and Recreation System, The Trust for Public Land, 2010*

Note: Numerous factors such as tax rates, property values and others can influence the valuation of a park and recreation system.

Cost-Saving Factors to Citizens

- 6. Direct use (value of using city parks, recreation centers and trails as public resources instead of purchasing these items in the marketplace)
- 7. Health value (savings in medical costs from the beneficial aspects of physical activity in parks and on trails)

Wealth Increasing Factors to Citizens

- 8. Property value increase based on proximity to parks
- 9. Net profit from tourism

The TPL report estimated that the direct property tax increase related to park proximity came to an estimated \$4.1 million annually. Studies throughout the U.S. have shown that parks and open space have a positive impact on nearby property values, both residential and commercial. Most people are willing to pay a “premium” for homes or work close to a quality park or public space. Conversely, parks and open space that are perceived as dangerous or unsafe have a negative impact on nearby property values. Table 22 summarizes the economic benefit of parks to residential property values in Denver.

Denver parks are used by both residents and tourists. In calculating the economic impact from tourism, only “new” revenue from tourists is considered. Increased spending by tourists is estimated at \$18 million annually, resulting in around \$3 million in tax receipts.

The TPL study illustrates the benefits to the city from its parks in terms of increased property values and taxes, greater economic development, increased taxes from tourism and an improved quality of life, supporting the argument that well-maintained parks and open space make good economic sense.

Table 22: The Estimated Economic Benefits of Parks to Residential Property Values in Denver

THE ESTIMATED ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF PARKS TO RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY VALUES IN DENVER	
Economic Benefits of Parks to Residential Property Values	
Market value of properties within 500 feet of parks	\$14,487,661,644
Market value attributable to parks (5%)	\$724,383,082
Assessed taxable value of properties near parks	\$1,159,736,040
Property tax revenue from properties within 500 feet of parks	\$81,626,050
Tax revenue attributable to parks (5%)	\$4,081,303
Value of properties sold in 2008 within 500 feet of parks	\$613,815,418
Value of properties sold attributable to parks (5%)	\$30,690,771

Source: *The Economic Benefits of Denver’s park and Recreation System, The Trust for Public Land, 2010.*

Tourism Boost

Across the nation, parks, protected rivers, scenic lands, wildlife habitat, and recreational open space help to support a \$500-billion tourism industry. Travel and tourism is the nation's third largest retail sales industry and tourism is one of the country's largest employers, supporting more than seven million jobs, including almost 750,000 executive jobs. At present rates of growth, the tourism and leisure industry will soon become the leading U.S. industry of any kind.¹

Outdoor recreation, in particular, represents one of the most rapidly growing areas in the U.S. economy. Much of this recreation is supported by public and private parks, open space and trails. Popular outdoor recreational activities include hiking, camping, biking, birding, boating, fishing, swimming, skiing and snowmobiling. According to the Outdoor Recreation Coalition of America, outdoor recreation generated at least \$40 billion in 1996, accounting for 768,000 full-time jobs and \$13 billion in annual wages.¹

A recent poll conducted by the Outdoor Industry Association found that natural beauty and scenic views are the most important criteria for tourists seeking outdoor recreation sites. Recognizing this, Colorado Springs is uniquely positioned to capitalize on its highly rated parks and open space, such as Garden of the Gods, Red Rock Canyon, Palmer Park and Pikes Peak.

The Colorado Springs region attracts more than five million visitors annually. Parks, recreation, trails, open space and cultural services contribute greatly to this industry, by attracting a portion of these tourist visits and supplementing the visitor experience for those visitors coming to the city for other reasons, e.g. business, conferences, visiting family and friends. Having a robust parks, trails and open space system may encourage repeat tourism, as people get excited about the outdoor recreation opportunities and come back to explore more.



Bancroft Park hosts Blues in the Park and a farmers market. Source: Colorado Springs CVB

Sports competitions hosted in Colorado Springs parks offer a unique setting to out-of-town competitors. For example, the pickleball tournaments conducted at Monument Valley Park have resulted in many return competitors from outside this region. Visitors rave about the ability to play this sport in a lush mature park setting, at the foot of Pikes Peak, sheltered from the wind, and rich in the legacy of General Palmer. They do not find this kind of setting elsewhere, particularly in the desert southwest. This explains why in the last Pikes Peak or Bust pickleball tournament competitors and their families visited from 13 states and Mexico - including Alaska, California, New York and Florida - with many making the occasion an extended family vacation in our area and vowing to come back year after year.

1. Outdoor Industry Association. "The Outdoor Recreation Economy Report 2012". 2012 http://outdoorindustry.org/pdf/OIA_OutdoorRecEconomyReport2012.pdf

Government Cost of Supporting Parks and Open Space Vs. Development

The question may not necessarily be whether to invest in parks and open space, but whether such an investment will yield a better return than developing the land for some other purpose. Most conventional wisdom is that development is the highest and best use of land for increasing municipal revenues. Development increases the tax base and results in a lowering of individual property taxes. Therefore, larger property tax revenues are likely if land is developed rather than used for parks or open space.

While this does happen, in some cases, development actually increases property taxes. When property is developed, taxes on existing residents usually increase because the cost of providing and maintaining public services and infrastructure is likely to exceed the tax revenue generated by the development. Figure 30 illustrates this for three general types of land use. On average, for every \$1 million in tax revenue received from commercial/industrial use and from farm/forest/open space use, the amount needed for public services was \$270,000 and \$350,000, respectively, whereas residential use required \$1,160,000. Preserving open space can be a less expensive alternative to development.

Figure 30: *The Median Cost to Provide Public Services to Various Land Uses per Dollar of Revenue Raised (data collected in 98 communities)*

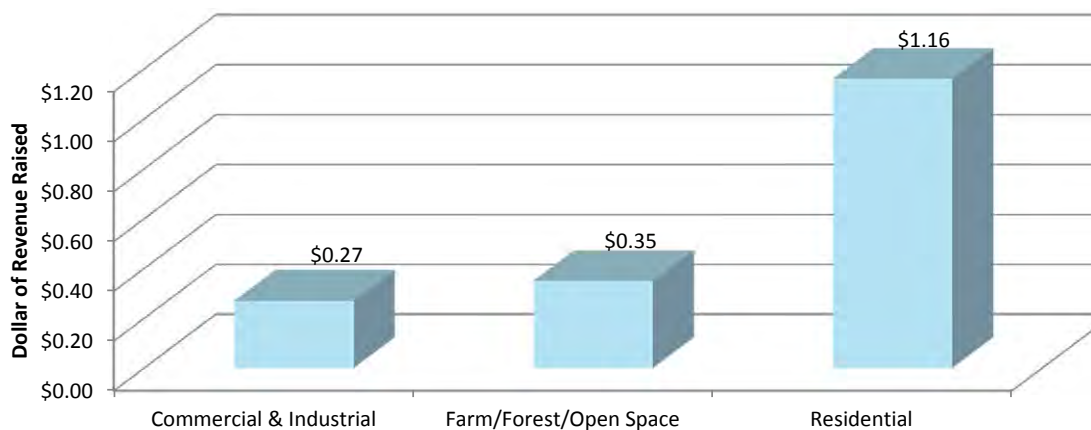


Figure 30 illustrates the expense of providing and maintaining public services and infrastructure for three general types of land use. On average, for every \$1 million in tax revenue received from commercial/industrial use and from farm/forest/open space use, the amount needed for public services was \$270,000 and \$350,000, respectively. Residential use required \$1,160,000. Preserving open space can be a less expensive alternative to development.

Source: Crompton, J., "The Impact of Parks and Open Space on Property Taxes," in *Trust for Public Land, The Economic Benefits of Land Conservation*, 2007. *The Economic Benefits of Land Conservation*, TPL

EXISTING FUNDING SOURCES AND ALLOCATION

Current Funding Sources

Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services (PR&CS) utilizes multiple sources to fund acquisition and maintenance of parkland, trails and open space, as well as to provide recreational facilities and programming to the community. The current funding sources are summarized below.

General Fund (GF) – The General Fund provides approximately 64 percent of all annual funding for PR&CS. The GF monies support operations and maintenance of parkland and open space, recreational facilities and programs, administration and cultural services.

TOPS Tax (TOPS) – The Trails Open Space and Parks Tax (TOPS) is a 0.1 percent (one cent for each \$10 spent) tax on all sales in the City of Colorado Springs. The TOPS program was established in 1997 to acquire real property in the City and El Paso County. Extension beyond 2025 will require voter approval.

Of the proceeds collected, the City Code limits the percentage of funds that can be spent in specific areas. The limitations prescribed in the City Code section 4.6.202 include:

- A maximum of three percent can be spent for program management purposes.
- A minimum of 60 percent shall be used for the acquisition and stewardship of new open space lands.
- A maximum of 20 percent may be used for new open space land for new trails within the City, including the construction, acquisition and maintenance of new trails.
- A maximum of 20 percent may be used to acquire an interest in new open space land for new park areas, including the construction and acquisition of new park recreational capital improvements, maintenance of new park areas and to maintain and renovate all parks.

Revenue/Donations – A small percentage of the annual budget comes from earned income, grants and charitable donations. Income is earned primarily by the recreation division through fees. A dedicated PR&CS staff grant writer actively seeks grant funding. Several charitable organizations and friends groups also fundraise and apply for grant money which goes to parks and open space.

Conservation Trust Fund (CTF) – Colorado Lottery proceeds constitutionally mandated to be distributed directly to local governments, based on existing population, for acquiring and maintaining parks, open space and recreational facilities are kept in Conservation Trust Funds. The funds are distributed and monitored through the Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA). Funds can be used for the acquisition, development, and maintenance of parks and trails, capital improvements or maintenance of recreational facilities. CTF funding is not a fixed amount and fluctuates from year to year; it also increases with an increase in population.

Special Improvements Maintenance Districts (SIMD) – A portion of the annual budget comes from Special Improvement Maintenance Districts within the City of Colorado Springs. Seven SIMDs have been created, with funds (from agreed upon assessments for each district) going directly to maintenance and repair of medians and right of ways within the specific districts. Because funding for SIMDs is so narrowly focused (geographically and purposefully) funding from SIMDs is excluded from analysis of the Department's operating budgets.

Pike Peak Rural Transportation Authority (PPRTA) - The PPRTA funding source is focused on transportation infrastructure in the region that includes specific CIP projects related to our trail corridors. PPRTA currently funds landscape maintenance of some right of ways (limited to past PPRTA project limits) and trail corridors; for example: Rock Island Trail, Pikes Peak Greenway, Shooks Run Trail and others were funded through the PPRTA. Beginning in 2015, the recently approved PPRTA extension tax will provide a total of \$7 million for trail projects over the next 10 years.

Existing Budget Allocation

Annual PR&CS budget funds are allocated to the following categories:

- Operations and Maintenance
- Recreation and Administration
- Capital Improvements and Acquisitions

The total 2013 PR&CS Department budget is close to \$22.4 million, of which \$18.9 million is dedicated to maintenance and the operation of parks, open space, facilities and programs (Table 23). Nearly \$3.5 million is used for capital improvement projects (CIP) and trail and open space acquisitions, which comes primarily from TOPS, with some supplemental funding from CTF and GF.

The typical annual CIP funding average is \$3.5 million. Parks received nearly \$3.4 million from TOPS, \$50,000 from the CTF, and \$44,000 from the GF that was used for CIP and acquisition.

Table 23: 2013 PR&CS Department Budget Breakdown

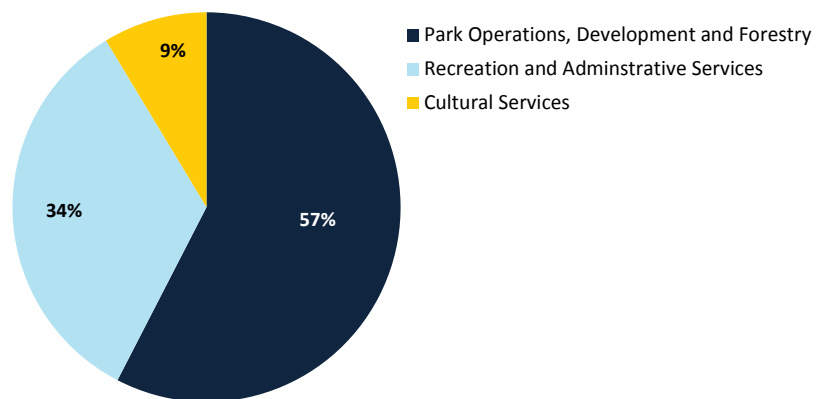
COLORADO SPRINGS FISCAL YEAR 2013 BUDGET					
Funding Source	CTF	TOPS	General Fund	Grants	Total Funding
Park Operations, Development and Forestry	\$3,700,000	\$715,698	\$6,481,800	\$0	\$10,897,498
Recreation and Administrative Services	\$0	\$33,893	\$5,353,994	\$1,000,000	\$6,387,887
Cultural Services	\$0	\$0	\$1,226,968	\$413,528	\$1,640,496
Totals	\$3,700,000	\$749,591	\$13,062,762	\$1,413,528	\$18,925,881
Capital Improvements and Acquisitions	\$50,000	\$3,376,807	\$44,000	\$0	\$3,470,807

CTF=Conservation Trust Fund; TOPS=Trails and Open Space Tax
Source: 2013 PR&CS Department Budget

PR&CS Total Operating Budget

The PR&CS total operating budget was \$22.4 million in 2013, including its capital improvement plan and acquisition funds. The amount of capital improvement and acquisitions budget varies each year. The 2013 total operating budget shows 57 percent was allocated towards Park Operations, Development and Forestry; 34 percent towards Recreation and Administrative Services, and the remaining nine percent towards Cultural Services (Figure 31).

Figure 31: Total Operating Budget Breakdown by Division



EXISTING CAPITAL AND OPERATING BUDGETS

Operations and Maintenance Budget

In 2013, the total amount provided by the General Fund for PR&CS operations and maintenance was \$10.9 million. This accounts for 57 percent of the total operating budget of \$18.9 million (operating budget not including capital improvement and acquisition funds).

Table 24: 2013 Park Operations, Development and Forestry Budget Breakdown

COLORADO SPRINGS FISCAL YEAR 2013 BUDGET					
Funding Source	GF	CTF	TOPS	Total Funding	Revenue
Park Operations, Development and Forestry					
Forestry Streets	\$182,665			\$182,665	\$10,000.00
Forestry Operations	\$746,874			\$746,874	
Forestry (CTF) ¹		\$50,000		\$63,346	
Parks Planning and Design	\$47,051			\$47,051	
Park Maintenance	\$4,167,742			\$4,167,742	\$197,500.00
Mechanical Construction	\$552,563			\$552,563	
West District	\$258,074			\$258,074	
Parks Construction	\$526,831			\$526,831	
TOPS Administration			\$183,698	\$183,698	
TOPS Maintenance			\$532,000	\$532,000	
CTF Maintenance & Administration		\$816,043		\$816,043	
Primary Parks		\$231,728		\$231,728	
North District		\$295,811		\$295,811	
South District		\$453,513		\$453,513	
Regional Parks & Trails		\$498,471		\$498,471	
North Athletic		\$594,164		\$594,164	
South Athletic		\$760,270		\$760,270	
Totals	\$6,481,800	\$3,700,000	\$715,698	\$10,897,498	\$207,500.00

GF = General Fund; CTF=Conservation Trust Fund; TOPS=Trails and Open Space Tax

¹ One Forester

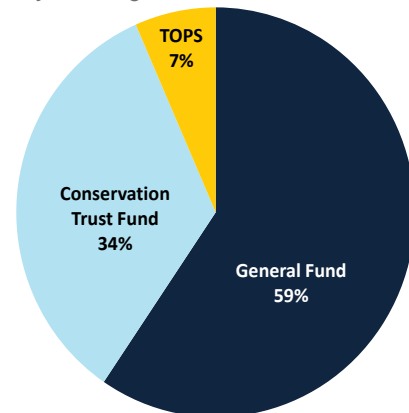
Source: 2013 PR&CS Department Budget

Park Operations, Development and Forestry Budget

The Park Operations, Development and Forestry Division budget for 2013 is \$10.9 million, which represents about 57 percent of the total park operating budget (Table 24).

Funding for Park Operations, Development and Forestry comes from three major sources. The General Fund provides 59 percent, Conservation Trust Fund at 34 percent, TOPS at seven percent (Figure 32).

Figure 32: Park Operations, Development and Forestry Funding Sources



Recreation and Administration Budget

The Recreation and Administrative Services Division budget for 2013 is \$5.4 million annually, which represents about 34 percent of the park operating budget. Recreation and Administration provides programming for several recreation and community centers, community programming, sports and departmental administrative services (Table 25).

Table 25: 2013 Recreation and Administration Budget

COLORADO SPRINGS FISCAL YEAR 2013 BUDGET				
Funding Source	GF	TOPS	Total Funding	Revenue
Recreation and Administrative Services				
Administration ³	\$892,242	\$33,893	\$926,135	\$106,000
Therapeutic Recreation	\$411,919		\$411,919	\$104,959
West Side Community Center ²	\$75,000		\$75,000	\$0
Deerfield Community Center	\$303,341		\$303,341	\$73,305
Meadows Community Center	\$268,594		\$268,594	\$39,172
Hillside Community Center	\$394,924		\$394,924	\$104,300
Auditorium Operations	\$180,352		\$180,352	\$183,390
Youth Sports	\$599,839		\$599,839	\$625,789
Adult Sports	\$356,091		\$356,091	\$356,354
Aquatics ¹	\$1,070,964		\$1,070,964	\$0
Uncle Wilbur FTN Acacia Park	\$25,101		\$25,101	\$0
Julie Penrose FTN Americal Park	\$20,001		\$20,001	\$0
Ice Center	\$651,239		\$651,239	\$621,698
Community Programs	\$104,387		\$104,387	\$74,650
Total	\$5,353,994	\$33,893	\$5,387,887	\$2,289,617

GF = General Fund; TOPS = Trails and Open Space Tax

¹ Includes Cottonwood Creek Rec Center, Prospect Lake, Memorial Park Rec Center, Monument Valley Pool, Portal Pool, Wilson Ranch Pool. Funding goes to support partnership with YMCA, repairs and maintenance of facilities, and off-season expenses.

² Managed and operated by others, funding provided to support operator

³ Tops funded 25% senior Analyst, 25% Admin. Tech

Source: 2013 PR&CS Department Budget

Cultural Services Budget

The Cultural Services Division budget for 2013 totaled \$1.6 million, which represents nine percent of the total park operating budget (Table 26). Cultural Services protects and interprets the cultural and natural history of Colorado Springs.

Table 26: 2013 Cultural Services Budget

COLORADO SPRINGS FISCAL YEAR 2013 BUDGET			
Funding Source	General Fund	Revenue ¹	Total Funding
Cultural Services			
Rockledge Ranch	188,748	50,000	238,748
N. Cheyenne Cañon	138,044	7,696	145,740
Garden of the Gods	44,201	108,332	152,533
Colorado Springs Museum	855,975	247,500	1,103,475
Totals	1,226,968	413,528	1,640,496

¹ Revenue from earned income, grants and restricted donations

Source: 2013 PR&CS Department Budget



Comparison Cities: Operations and Maintenance Expenditure

Community benchmarking indicates that Colorado Springs PR&CS operations and maintenance (O+M) budgets are considerably lower than most comparable cities. Figures 33 and 34 show total O+M expenditure and expenditure per resident fall below the benchmark average. Colorado Springs maintains its parkland and open space at a comparatively low cost per resident at \$44/resident. The benchmark average cost is \$90/resident. Most comparable cities spent considerably more in 2013 and the average is approximately double Colorado Springs' annual expense.

Figure 33: Total Operations and Maintenance Expenditure

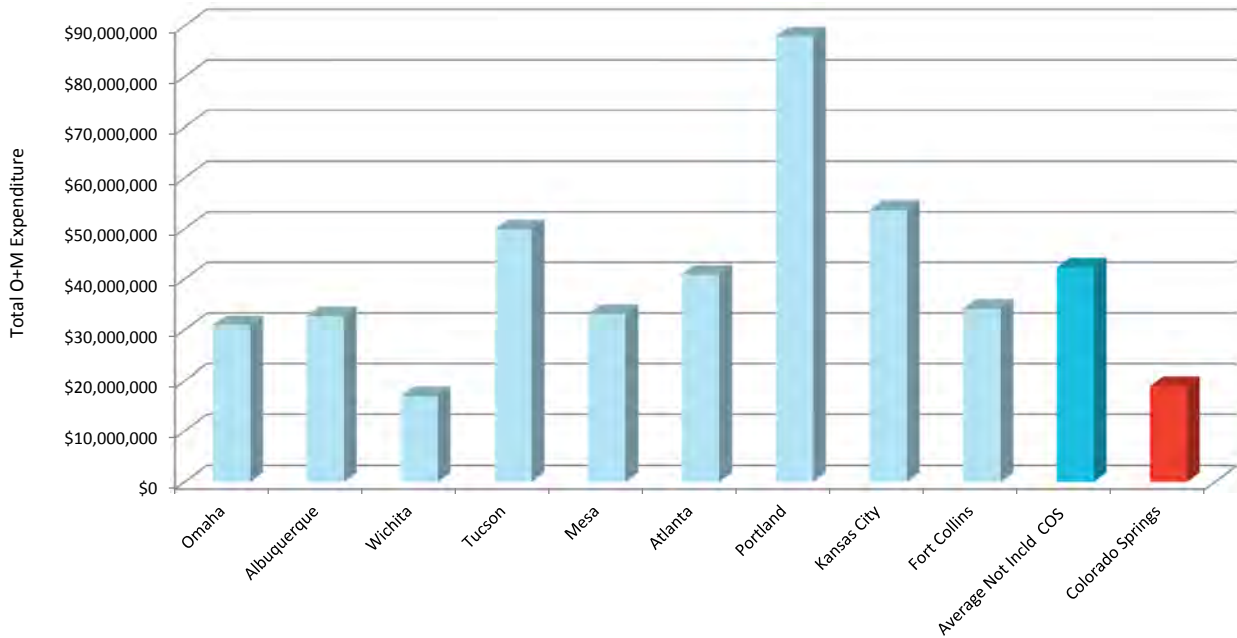
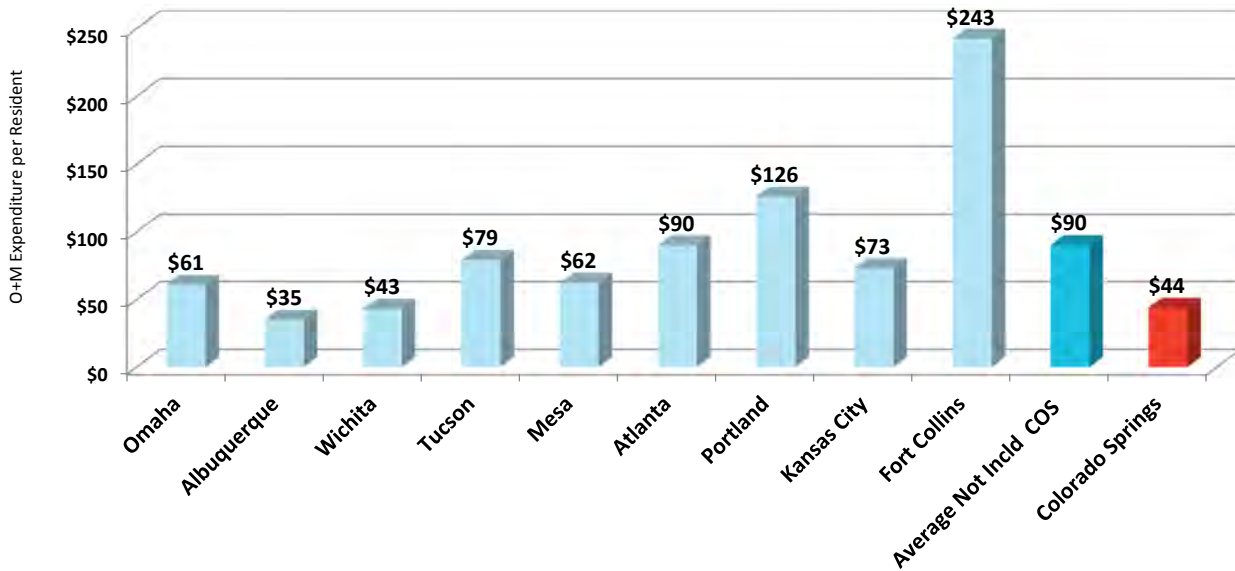


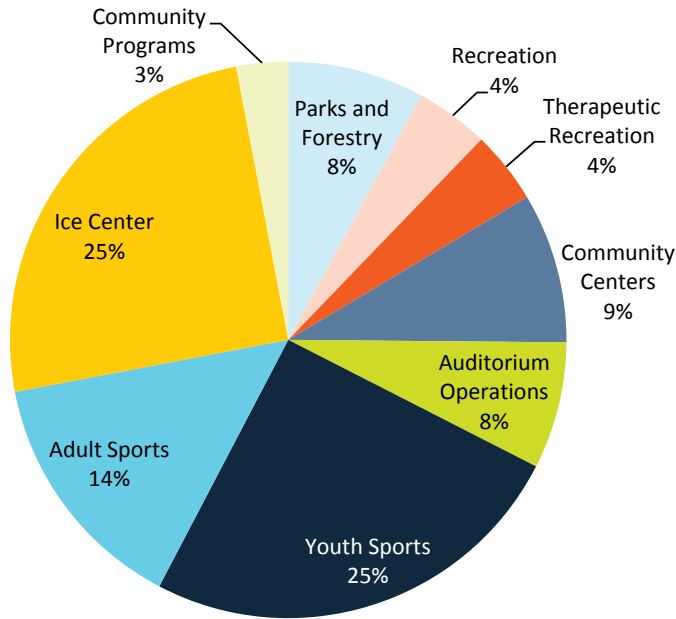
Figure 34: Operations and Maintenance Expenditure Per Resident



Source: Data is based on the TPL 2014 City Park Facts, including the City of Colorado Springs for consistency, and with the exception of Fort Collins. This data is based on the Fort Collins 2012 city budget.

EXISTING REVENUE SOURCES

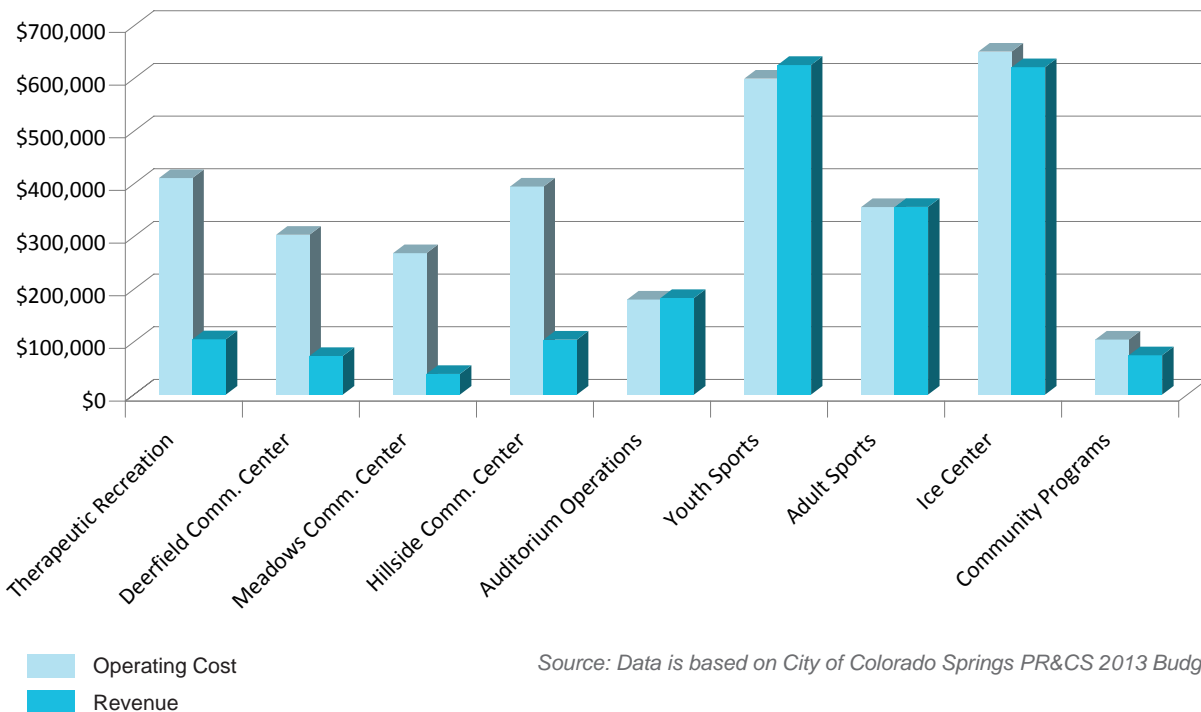
Figure 35: Sources of Revenue from City Programs



PR&CS generated nearly \$2.5 million in revenue in 2013. The primary sources of revenue were the numerous recreational facilities and community sports programs run by the City. In addition, a small amount of revenue came from the Park Operations and Maintenance division, primarily from permits, admissions, rentals and forestry fees. Figure 35 illustrates the sources of revenue distribution from City programs.

Several facilities and programs generate significant revenue in relation to their operating budgets. The Youth and Adult Sports Programs generate enough revenue to offset annual operating expenses. Revenue from the Sertich Ice Center and City Auditorium ticketing, rentals and sales almost covers annual operating costs (Figure 36).

Figure 36: Recreation Expenditure and Revenue



Source: Data is based on City of Colorado Springs PR&CS 2013 Budget.

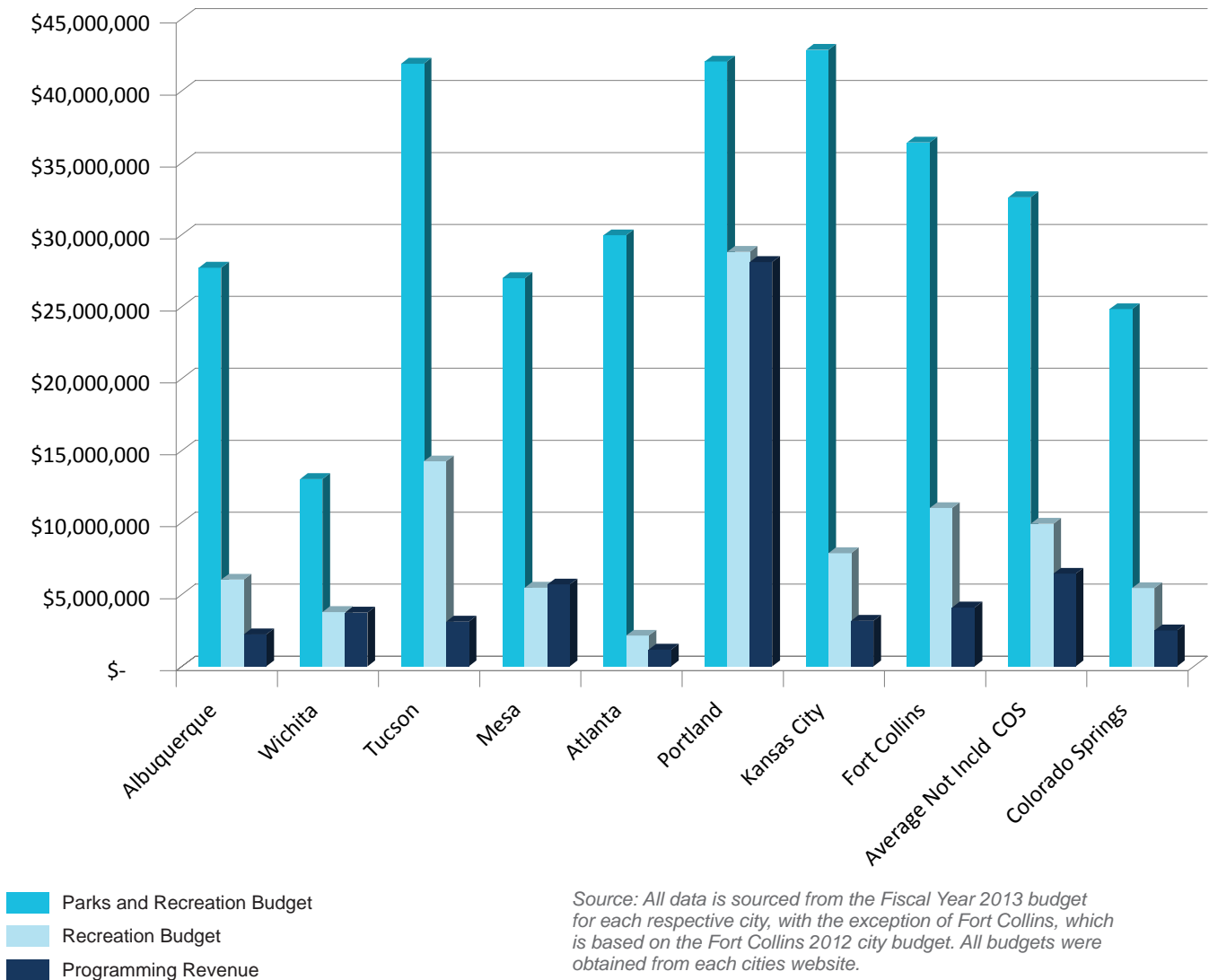


Comparison Cities: Program Revenue

In relation to other comparable U.S. cities, Colorado Springs ranks low in programming revenue. Generated revenue totals approximately 46 percent of the recreation budget, while the average revenue/budget ratio for the benchmark cites was 64 percent (Figure 37). Some cities, such as Portland and Wichita, generate enough program and facility revenue to cover their entire parks and recreation budget.

The programs in Colorado Springs are heavily subsidized and are created to be inexpensive and affordable to benefit the communities. Due to the subsidies, the programs are not designed to be revenue generators. The primary goal is to engage and encourage community participations, however, there are opportunities for the programs to grow, along with the potential for greater revenue generation.

Figure 37: Parks and Recreation Budget and Program Revenue by City



FUNDING AND SERVICE DELIVERY HISTORY

Prior to the 2008 fiscal year, before the national economy fell into a recession, PR&CS was well-funded with a fairly high level of service delivery. Park land and facilities were at full operation and were well maintained, with a robust schedule of annual capital replacement/improvement projects. The Recreation and Cultural Services Division was also well-funded, managing a wide array of full-time facilities, amenities and programs that met user needs.

The economic downturn forced City government to significantly cut department budgets, including PR&CS's, from the General Fund (GF). As a result, PR&CS had to rely on friends groups and other funding sources to operate and maintain the parks system at significantly lower levels.

The entire City workforce was also reduced. A 2008 total PR&CS workforce of 180 full-time employees was reduced to 49 employees by 2010. Park Operations staffing was cut by 86 percent from 84 full-time employees in 2008 to 12 employees in 2010, resulting in reduced turf care standards and forestry management practices, public restroom closings, reduced trash pick-up and removal of trash cans from parks. Table 27 displays the progression of funding in 2008, 2010 and 2014. Figure 38 shows changes to the General Fund in this same period of time.

The Recreation and Cultural Services division budgets were also cut, with significant staff reductions. Several facilities, including all outdoor swimming pools were closed for several years. Most of the aquatic facilities have reopened, and are managed by the local YMCA. Management of the West Side Community Center was turned over to a local church group. The operating schedules for Cultural Services facilities were reduced to three months and staffing levels were also significantly reduced.

Since the budget cuts of 2010, the General Fund has been trending upward, allowing for increased standards of park operations and maintenance (Figure 38). However, the extended period of reduced maintenance and closed facilities has created a significant backlog of maintenance, renovation and repair projects that will now need to be addressed. Turf fields and irrigation systems have fallen into disrepair, along with a significant backlog of capital improvements required for all facilities.

Prior to 2008, the GF constituted approximately 85 percent of overall parks maintenance funding, with CTF and TOPS providing the remaining 15 percent. After the economic downturn in 2010, the GF was reduced significantly, as CTF and TOPS funding increased and made up a larger portion of the total budget. Since 2010, there has been a higher expectation of private fundraising.

Table 27: Funding Progression for Park Maintenance and Forestry

FUNDING PROGRESSION										
	2008		2010		2012		2014		Illustrative w/GF % increase	
General Fund ¹	\$8,994,834	85%	\$2,599,639	39%	\$5,657,191	61%	\$7,970,698	70%	\$12,000,000	75%
TOPS	\$336,000	3%	\$325,171	5%	\$257,228	3%	\$432,000	4%	\$500,000	3%
CTF	\$1,302,000	12%	\$3,757,267	56%	\$3,390,000	36%	\$3,025,000	26%	\$3,500,000	22%
Total²	\$10,632,834		\$6,682,077		\$9,304,419		\$11,427,698		\$16,000,000	

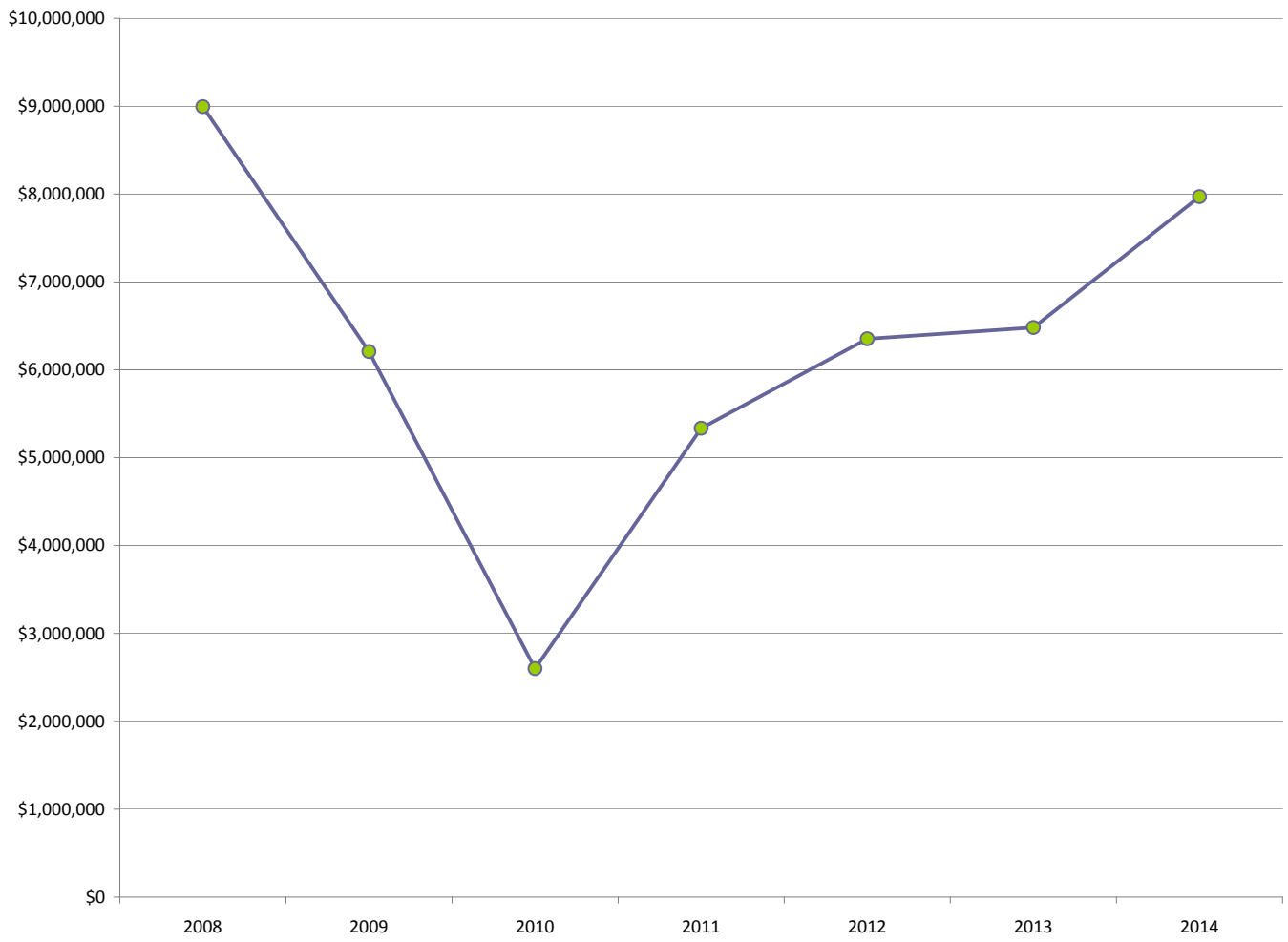
¹ Includes park maintenance and forestry operations

² Total does not include SIMD as these are restricted to maintenance districts

TOPS=Trails and Open Space Tax CTF=Conservation Trust Fund

Source: 2013 PR&CS Department Budget

Figure 38: Changes in General Fund Progression from 2008-2014



Source: 2013 PR&CS Department Budget

EXISTING MAINTENANCE STANDARDS FOR PARKS AND RECREATION

Service levels have nearly rebounded to pre-2009 levels. Increased funding has enabled PR&CS to hire additional staff and gradually increase standards of maintenance for facilities and amenities; however, deferred maintenance has created a significant backlog of repairs.

Parks

The existing park system is generally well-maintained with adequate maintenance schedules for lawn mowing, trash removal, amenity maintenance and cleaning. While maintenance is improving, many parks still lack adequate service in the following areas: watering and fertilizing, playground equipment maintenance, lighting, amenity maintenance, and plant material replacement.

Trails

The existing maintenance of the extensive trail systems throughout Colorado Springs is lacking; many trails need some level of repair and maintenance. Erosion and heavy use consistently wears on the trail system, and additional trail maintenance would enhance access and enjoyment. Routine mowing and pruning of trail corridors, regular sweeping, repair of degraded asphalt sections and trip hazards, as well as ADA improvements are among the types of repairs needed to improve the existing trail system.

Open Space

Maintenance of open space and natural resource areas is lacking. Currently, there is no or very little natural resource management being done in these areas. If this trend continues, it will prove detrimental to these lands.

Facilities

The maintenance and repair of park and recreation facilities, including sports facilities and recreation centers is an important issue for the City to address. Several facilities require significant capital improvements, including roof repair, HVAC replacement, athletic court renovations, irrigation upgrades and replacement, and sports field renovations.

Current Maintenance Delivery of Services

The Park Operations Division currently provides regular, ongoing maintenance through in-house services. A dedicated, skilled in-house staff (including a plumber and electrical technician) addresses many maintenance and repair needs. However, specific services are contracted out to external service providers, including:

- Fertilizer application
- Mowing (except turf fields)
- Herbicide application
- Port-a-John rental and maintenance
- Fencing repair
- Painting
- Irrigation (some performed in-house)
- Paving
- Lawn maintenance

This mix of in-house and contracted work has enabled the maintenance staff to focus on more skilled maintenance tasks and repairs.

CRITICAL SERVICE AREAS

Park Maintenance

Over the last few years as funding has increased, many service areas that were not addressed during the recession, such as re-opening of park restrooms, reducing the backlog of deferred maintenance repairs, and increased turf care standards have resumed to some extent. However, there are still many critical services areas that need to be addressed, such as:

- Repair, replace and upgrade irrigation systems,
- Continued playground improvements - repair and replacement of broken equipment,
- Recreation facility repairs – roofs, HVAC systems, interior repairs, and
- Sports facility repairs – basketball and tennis courts, field and fence repairs.

While not a direct service area repair issue, park vehicles are an average of 16 years old. Under more comfortable budgetary circumstances, these should be replaced every five years. An aging fleet costs more to maintain, resulting in increased downtime while awaiting repair. Replacement of old fleet vehicles will increase productivity and reduce annual maintenance costs and downtime.

Natural Resource Management

An area that is not currently being adequately addressed is the overall health of the natural environment. There is no comprehensive effort to address the ongoing management needs of the natural environment.

The Master Plan survey results show that while the natural beauty of Colorado Springs' parks and sites is what attracts residents and visitors to the area, these same respondents also believe that these areas do not really require maintenance and care, as they can take care of themselves. While natural areas do not necessarily need the same level of day-to-day care as sports fields or other intensely used landscapes, they do need long-term and focused management in order to sustain the flora and fauna, provide healthy habitat for wildlife, and to protect them from fires and misuse.

Management of natural areas is not only a great opportunity for volunteers but also presents a platform for developing the notion that maintenance is more than just cutting grass but that the long-term management of natural areas is as much about stewardship as it is maintenance. Stewardship of natural areas is an opportunity for both adults and children. The long-term sustenance of native habitats in the urban environment requires greater public sensitivity and awareness, which is best fostered by education, with every age group. Building a sense of stewardship for natural areas through ecological restoration, good maintenance practices and



Black Forest Fire Department working on burning off the ground fuel to control the Black Forest wildfire in June 2013. Source: Brennan Linsley



Garden of the Gods is rich in ecological resources. Expert knowledge will be required to protect and preserve the geological formations along with all other natural resources in the park. Source: Colorado Springs CVB

MASTER PLAN

1. Vision
2. Take Care of What We Have
3. Diversify Financial Strategies Including New Methods of Funding
4. Broaden, Enhance and Promote Recreation Opportunities
5. Continue Open Space Conservation in Advance of Development
6. Build our Community with the understanding that Parks, Open Space and Trails Create Great Neighborhoods
7. Manage Parks for Better Usability and Greater Enjoyment
8. Enhance and Formulate Strong and Broad Partnerships



VISION

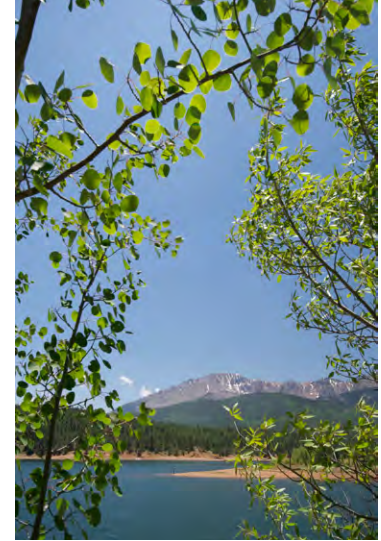
Master Plan Theme Introduction

The Master Plan chapter provides guidance and recommendations for addressing the challenges that the Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services Department faces today and must address for the future prosperity of the community. The Master Plan provides direction for the next 10 years, containing some steps that can be completed within a matter of months or years, while others will require community and regional solutions that will take a number of years to accomplish. The separate Action Plan document provides more detail regarding how these steps may be incrementally achieved. To be successful, the Master Plan will require the focused energy, commitment and resources of the City, other government agencies, regional partners, local businesses and non-profit organizations, friends groups, user groups and the general population.

The recommendations reflect community values captured from the public engagement process, evaluation of current operations, analysis of existing facilities and policies, and consideration of trends. Seven core themes emerged as the basis for the Park System Master Plan, which serves as the guiding document for future parks, recreation, trails and cultural services actions and decision-making for the Colorado Springs community:

1. **Take Care of What We Have**
2. **Diversify Financial Strategies including New Methods of Funding**
3. **Broaden, Enhance and Promote Recreation Opportunities**
4. **Continue Open Space Conservation in Advance of Development**
5. **Build our Community with the Understanding that Parks, Open Space and Trails Create Great Neighborhoods**
6. **Manage Parks for Better Usability and Greater Enjoyment**
7. **Enhance and Formulate Strong and Broad Partnerships**

The Master Plan themes have been formulated into recommendations for solving the challenges Colorado Springs faces, along with visionary elements that reflect aspirations of what the city can become in the future. From the core themes above, a vision has been developed that includes the proposal of a number of strategic directions for the PR&CS Department to begin the process of reformulating parks, recreation, open space, trails and cultural services. The vision emphasizes our community goals, aspirations, and emboldens the pursuit of new opportunities. It highlights elements that are unique to this plan and provides the PR&CS Department with a renewed focus. The vision also provides a means of imagining what success would look like in ten years and how the community might transform.



*Residents appreciate the city's proximity to mountains and forest.
Source: City of Colorado Springs*

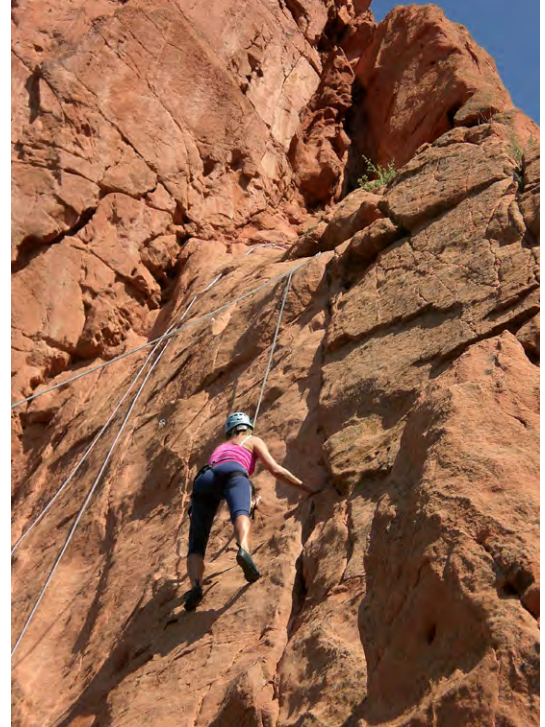
PR&CS ENVISIONS COLORADO SPRINGS AS A COMMUNITY WHERE:

We demonstrate our worthiness to be called **'Champions of the Outdoors - A Premier Place to Play'**. This title has two meanings. First, that we provide world-class outdoor recreation opportunities that attract people to visit and live here, so they may enjoy the challenge these outdoor recreation amenities present. Second, that we are stewards of the natural environment and champions of the important cause to provide everyone with a pleasurable experience in our parks and trails.

We face our financial challenges with a **renewed dedication to obtaining additional funding** for our parks, trails, open space and cultural services so that we will secure sustainable funding over the next ten years. Utilizing more diverse and stable funding allows us to not only address current deficiencies, but to also transform our parks system into one of the best in the world. We look to our voters to support our parks, open space, and trails through an increased tax, and will evaluate new funding techniques such as establishing a non-profit foundation.

We expand opportunities for **mountain and nature-based recreation** to provide a variety of options for everyone in the community, from those who climb large rock formations to those who listen to the birds sing from a bench in a neighborhood park. We commit to showing our gratitude for Colorado Springs' distinctive natural setting of peaks and plains.

We will grow and improve our trails network, linking together existing pathways to provide places for people to leisurely walk, jog, or bike as part of their everyday routine. We also acknowledge the special role our trails play in providing athletic pursuits for diverse sports enthusiasts. Connecting our trails to create a 54 mile loop around the city (named **Ring the Springs**) will allow us to provide an athletic challenge and signature attraction to residents and visitors alike. This loop and many other trails connecting parks, open spaces and cultural services will provide opportunities for people to explore the diverse landscape, history and culture of Colorado Springs.



Mountain recreation opportunities are located within the city. Source: Colorado Springs CVB



The Swing High Universal Playground demonstrates the community's commitment to providing opportunities for children of all abilities to enjoy the City's parks. Source: City of Colorado Springs

We recognize and value the purpose of **arts, cultural services, history and civic pride** in our community and that our park system is known for this richness. We include all four in the re-imagining of parks, trails, and open spaces. We understand that civic pride and engagement are critical to improving our quality of life.

We **take care of our current parks, trails, recreation facilities, and open spaces** and make them shining examples of our commitment to healthy lifestyles. We will value our existing resources by addressing maintenance and improvement needs. The life of our buildings and structures will be extended so they may serve future generations.

We continue to **invest in conserving open spaces**, utilizing creative methods and partnerships for their acquisition, utilizing greenways for open space and trails, and finding a balance between recreational opportunities and natural resource protection. We treasure the natural resources surrounding the city within the mountains and the prairie, as well as natural areas and streams within our urban areas. Like the community founders, we recognize our role in protecting and enhancing these resources for the health and well-being of our community.



Garden of the Gods is one of the most heavily used parks within in the City. Taking better care of our parks, trails and open spaces is a top priority. Source: Colorado Springs CVB

1. TAKING CARE OF WHAT WE HAVE

Park Stewardship, Maintenance, Operations and Care

Overview

The Parks, Recreation and Trails 2000-2010 Master Plan focused on the recreation needs of the community, such as recommending the addition of more sports fields and neighborhood parks due to rapidly increasing population and economic development. Development expansion has slowed and today there is a need to create a culture of operation and care to maintain the City's existing assets and preserve a legacy. This is why the focus of this Master Plan is "Taking Care of What We Have."

A substantial number of maintenance needs throughout the park system have been deferred due to insufficient funds and lack of staff. Maintenance and replacement cutbacks have occurred system wide. However, this lowered level of maintenance may be most felt in the parks and trails that have the greatest number of visitors and are "loved to death." Given the extent of the PR&CS lands, there is also a need to care for diverse ecosystems and manage them for long-term sustainability. Healthy ecosystems will help to mitigate citywide challenges related to flooding, erosion, wildfire, weeds and invasive species while enhancing community aesthetics and biodiversity.

Irrigation, labor and park facility operations are major components of the Colorado Springs' maintenance budget needs (both existing and proposed). Improvements needed for buildings managed or owned by the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department compose a large portion of identified maintenance costs. This is in-part due to the fact that elements of buildings are older than their intended life-cycle and replacement rather than continued repairs are necessary. Community members feel that outdoor sports courts, neighborhood and community parks, playgrounds, outdoor sports fields, City recreation buildings, community centers and museums represent the park elements in poorest quality and condition. The following recommendations address the current operational and maintenance needs most pressing for Colorado Springs parks, recreation areas and trails.



Volunteers lead by a trained crew participate in trail repair. Source: City of Colorado Springs

Recommendations

- Address the imminent structural failures with a capital cost plan.
- Increase turf care standards to include watering, repair and replacement.
- Replace bluegrass turf with less water intensive grass species in lower use park areas.
- Actively address plant material replacement and care.
- Repair, replace and upgrade irrigation systems.

... continued Park Maintenance, Operations and Care

Recommendations

- Replace PR&CS Department aged fleet vehicles.
- All of the City's new construction and renovation projects for existing facilities should seek to meet or exceed the requirements and specifications of the American's with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Comprehensively address the management and care needs of the natural environment and open space lands such as erosion control, invasive species, forest management and wildfire. (See recommendation details on the following page regarding trails and open space natural resource management).
- The PR&CS Department should work to eliminate and/or control noxious weeds on park and open space properties as a part of ongoing maintenance. Develop a citywide integrated weed management plan to help effectively and efficiently control weeds that degrade ecosystem and pose a threat to the integrity and usability of the City's park and open space properties.
- Comprehensively address natural resource management and urban forestry through the creation of annual maintenance tasks as part of a long-term natural resource management approach.
- Develop a specialized parks team of natural area managers (may include networks of state and federal land managers) supplemented with trained volunteers.
- Increase trail maintenance and address the negative impacts of social or unplanned trail creation.
- Continue outsourcing for improved park maintenance. (See recommendation details on the following page regarding optimum program and maintenance delivery of services).
- Outsource contracted services to complete selected capital improvement projects.
- Continue to engage volunteers and non-profit groups to assist in maintaining parks, trails and open space resources.
- Complete sports facilities repairs (e.g., sports courts and fields, fence repairs). (See recommendation details on the following page regarding outdoors sports facilities).
- Prioritize recreation facility repairs strategically with a focused long-term capital improvement program. (See recommendation details on the following page regarding City recreation buildings, community centers and museums).
- Continue playground and other park facility improvements. (See recommendation details on the following page regarding neighborhood parks, community parks, and playgrounds).
- Increase focus on providing urban forestry tree care and replacement. (See recommendation details on the following page regarding urban forestry).
- Complete historic preservation activities on listed or eligible properties including North Cheyenne Cañon, Monument Valley Park, the Pioneers Museum and City Auditorium.
- Use the Sustainable Sites Initiative (SITES™) principles as a guide for park and open space design, development and maintenance.

Recommendation Details

OPTIMUM PROGRAM AND MAINTENANCE DELIVERY OF SERVICES

The current mix of service delivery provided by PR&CS strikes a good balance between in-house and contracted services. It is recommended that the service delivery continues in this trend as it allows in-house staff to respond to an ever changing landscape with evolving maintenance requirements. Regularly scheduled work such as lawn mowing and turf care should continue to be provided through contracted services. In addition, some specialized tasks such as fencing repair and painting can continue to be outsourced through contracted trades.

TRAILS AND OPEN SPACE NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

An area that will become more critical and is currently not being adequately addressed is the overall health of the natural environment. Currently there is no comprehensive effort to address the ongoing management of open spaces and natural areas within parks.

There can be a misunderstanding that “restoration” of natural areas can be accomplished as a discrete capital project designed, bid out and done within a short construction time of one year or less. This approach can be very destructive to woodlands, and forested and remnant habitats, such as those in Palmer Park. Such an approach, by definition, concentrates site disturbance, involving removal of large amounts of vegetation all at once before initiating replanting and stabilization. A large project, done in a typical capital project manner, may span several seasons and even though it affects a portion of the site, may have a much larger impact.

Natural areas are complex living systems that cannot be installed in a single season, these areas need ongoing maintenance and a long-term commitment to stewardship. Effective natural resource restoration should be carried out over the long-term. Many sensitive species should not be planted until greater levels of stability have been achieved. In some areas this will take many years because native canopy and understory layers need to be established before enhancement of more fragile ground layer vegetation can be undertaken.

Restoring a landscape is like raising a child; you can not really do it all at once or even plan for it all at once. This appraisal, however, should not be taken to mean no planning is necessary, only that a continuing planning process with assessment and revision over time, is more realistic than a fixed comprehensive plan. Long-term goals for each area must be reviewed and agreed upon in concept and a comprehensive plan developed, for each set of management actions before they are initiated. The overall process must be clear, even if every detail of every stage is not fully worked out.

The best model appropriate for management of natural areas is a specially trained team supplemented with volunteers and targeted outside contractors. A specialized park-team dedicated to natural resource management would get more “bang for the buck,” because good natural resource management is a lot more like maintenance than a traditional capital project.

Recommendation Details

In addition to standard natural resource management practices, PR&CS has to deal with managing for fires as well as the “maintenance” of geologic formations. PR&CS will need to develop and implement a long-term natural resource management plan and develop a natural resource team for the natural areas in Garden of the Gods, Red Rock Canyon and Palmer Park, to manage, protect and maintain these natural areas, particularly as the number of visitors increases. Increased off-road biking and hiking will, overtime, increase damage to natural areas resulting in long-term degradation of these landscapes.

OUTDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES

Outdoor sports fields and facilities are a vital component of the parks and recreation system which generate significant revenue. These facilities must be regularly maintained and updated to provide usable, cost efficient community resources. Water usage and usable playing surfaces are key in supporting outdoor sports programs and updating irrigation systems and continuing to convert overused turf fields to artificial turf will allow PR&CS to “keep up” with current heavy use and ever increasing demand. Improved turf quality is also dependent on a more aggressive turf management program of adequate watering and increased mowing on a minimum 7-10 day cycle. Basketball and tennis courts are behind on regular scheduled repair and should be prioritized for maintenance. Fences in poor condition at outdoor sports facilities is another sign that regular maintenance is needed.

Top Priorities:

- Cottonwood Creek Park
- Sky View Sports Complex
- Facilities at Memorial Park

CITY RECREATION BUILDINGS, COMMUNITY CENTERS AND MUSEUMS

Several recreational and cultural facilities are beginning to show their age and require significant structural and mechanical improvements to provide safe, clean educational and recreational services. The backlog of facility repair will need to be prioritized based on use and needs with a focused long-term capital improvement program. Building safety issues such as roof repairs and HVAC system replacement should be prioritized. PR&CS should look for opportunities to partner with Colorado Springs Utilities for rebates and best practice strategies to cost effectively plan upgrades and repairs to facilities.

Top Priorities:

- Sertich Ice Rink
- City Auditorium

NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS, COMMUNITY PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS

PR&CS should continue to address improvements to the smaller neighborhood and community parks that have been overused or fallen behind on general maintenance, upkeep and capital improvements. Playground repairs and conversion of playground surfaces from wood fiber to poured-in-place safety surfacing should continue to be prioritized to increase safety levels. Detailed maintenance such as restroom cleaning, trash pick-up and site furnishing repairs must also be actively addressed. Irrigation systems must be repaired, replaced and upgraded.

Top Priorities:

- Memorial Park
- Monument Valley Park
- Acacia Park
- Antlers Park
- Ute Valley Park

URBAN FORESTRY

Tree care and tree replacement standards are lacking with no annual tree replacement schedules currently in place. The backlog of dead, diseased, or dying trees has been growing for several years and needs to be addressed. A regular schedule of annual tasks including annual pruning, watering, and tree replacement is necessary to maintain a healthy urban forest, in addition to ensuring a safe environment for visitors.

TAKING CARE OF WHAT WE HAVE

Recognize the Civic Purpose of Arts, History and Civic Pride

Overview

Arts and cultural services serve a fundamental civic purpose - improving the quality of life for residents. They also encourage economic development and tourism. While Colorado Springs has extensive arts and cultural history resources, funding to support, maintain, protect, enhance and promote these elements is lacking compared to similarly sized cities.

Urban design character and quality also need to be addressed to keep Colorado Springs competitive with other cities. The city currently lacks comprehensive citywide and district design guidelines for streets, buildings, and public outdoor spaces. The opportunity to create an arts and culture plan also exists. Establishing these guidelines and creating a plan focused on Colorado Springs' arts and culture would address many of the design elements that the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department is responsible to provide.



Public art can make a park iconic as this sculpture has done for America the Beautiful Park in Downtown Colorado Springs. Source: Colorado Springs CVB

Recommendations

- Create a public art master plan.
- Protect, document and interpret cultural resources within parks, open spaces and along trails and within the community. Interpretation may include mobile applications in addition to signage.
- Create a dedicated 'art in public spaces' funding source, such as a sales tax. Provide a percentage dedicated to maintenance.
- Create guidelines for appropriate memorials and art placement in City parks system-wide.
- Develop a preservation plan and dedicate resources to the protection of cultural and historic resources within parks and open space.
- Require a small percentage of all publicly funded capital improvement budgets be directed to support or incorporate art into the design. For example, pedestrian road underpasses could include murals and urban trail projects could include aesthetically pleasing tree and vegetation plantings.
- Continue to create venues for local artists to display their works within parks (temporarily and permanently).

TAKING CARE OF WHAT WE HAVE

Fulfill the City's Commitment to Completing Parks

Overview

A tight budget has led to delays in the City fulfilling its current commitments to building a number of parks or completing recreation facilities. Construction has been postponed for a number of neighborhood parks and five regional, community and sports parks. Advancing their completion should be a priority and they should be considered part of the current inventory of parks in terms of "taking care of what we have." See Table 28 for a listing of future parks planned and city owned or proposed and not owned by the city.

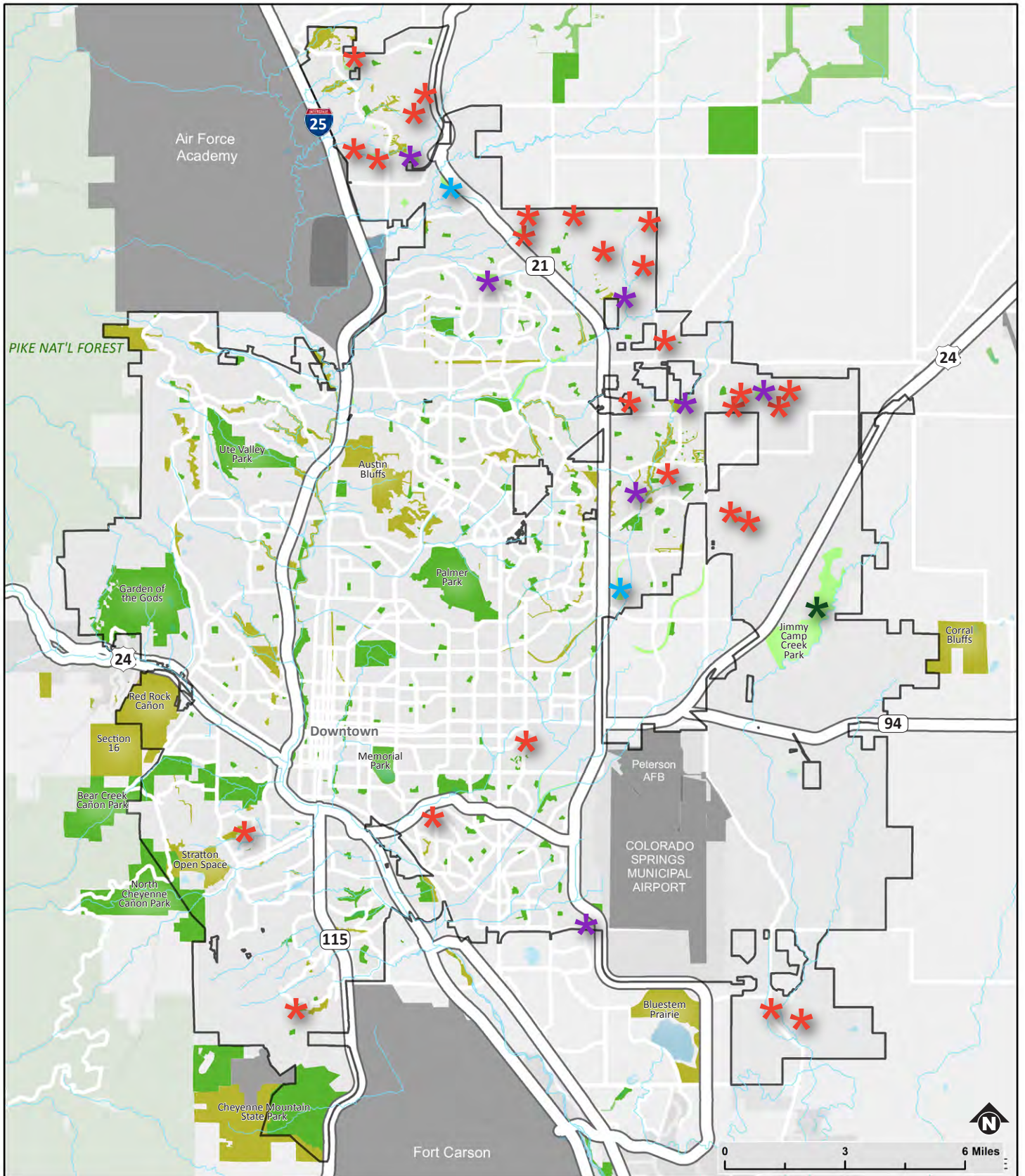
Recommendations

- Prioritize developing the identified future parks (which the City has already planned and committed to) before constructing additional parks.
- Re-evaluate individual park plans with neighborhood groups in a public engagement process to ensure park design plans match actual desires for use, allow for variation in park types (e.g., nature-based exploration parks versus sports fields), and implement cost-effective, low maintenance solutions.
- Continue to fundraise and apply for grants to fund park creation (e.g., through health organizations, outdoor education providers and sports organizations). Smaller grants for different elements within parks, such as stormwater or fishing ponds, may also help move projects to construction.
- Continue to create opportunities for volunteers to help build parks and install park amenities, and to participate in continued maintenance.
- All of the City's new construction should seek to meet or exceed the requirements and specifications of the American's with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Table 28: Future Parks

FUTURE PARKS	
Name	Type
Grey Hawk	Neighborhood Park
Skyway	Neighborhood Park
Laura Gilpin (east end)	Neighborhood Park
Glen Oaks	Neighborhood Park
Mountain Vista East	Neighborhood Park
Mountain Vista West	Neighborhood Park
Pikes Peak Heights	Neighborhood Park
Spring Creek	Neighborhood Park
Wolf Ranch Northeast	Neighborhood Park
Wolf Ranch Northwest	Neighborhood Park
Coleman (east end)	Community Park
Venezia	Community Park
Skyview	Community Park
Indigo Ranch	Community Park
Wolf Ranch	Community Park
Flying Horse	Community Park
Tutt	Sports Complex
Larry Ochs	Sports Complex

Map 22: Future Park Properties



- Undeveloped Parks
- ★ Neighborhood Park
- ★ Community Park
- ★ Sports Complex
- ★ Regional Park

- Pike National Forest
- Park Lands (City and Special District)
- Open Space/Special Resource Area/Greenway
- Undeveloped Park/Open Space Land (City and Special District)
- City Limits

TAKING CARE OF WHAT WE HAVE

Address Floods, Fires and Drought

Overview

Natural disasters have been a constant, costly challenge to caring for existing parks, natural areas and trails. The City must address past impacts on PR&CS properties and prepare to mitigate future emergencies. While often the PR&CS Department may play a secondary or supportive role in addressing flood, fire and drought events, the manner in which park and open space lands are managed and designed can play a significant role in mitigating the impacts of these natural events citywide.

Recommendations

- Develop fire mitigation partnerships and create natural area management plans with land managers, utility providers, public safety officials and State Parks representatives.
- Work with natural resource managers of wildlife habitat to balance wildlife needs with management for fire, floods and drought.
- Refer to the City of Colorado Springs Streamside Design Guidelines for recommendations regarding floodplain treatments, vegetation management, stream bank stabilization and other elements that mitigate flood events.
- Provide education and enforcement to address unintentional forest fire starts and arson.
- Form stormwater, floodplain and vegetation management partnerships with flood control districts, watershed managers, City and County public works departments, ditch companies and other land managers.
- Complete similar efforts to the Pikes Peak Regional Greenway Master Plan and Fountain Creek Restoration Plan along other stream corridors to improve stormwater management and decrease flooding issues.
- Install more drought-tolerant plant materials and reduce park dependency on water resources.
- Identify and re-route trails that are susceptible to frequent damage from flooding.

2. DIVERSIFY FINANCIAL STRATEGIES INCLUDING NEW METHODS OF FUNDING

Core Efforts to Create Financial Stability

Overview

Past uncertain and insufficient funding from the General Fund has proven the need to diversify future funding resources to adequately maintain and operate citywide parks and recreation resources. In 2008, the General Fund accounted for 85 percent of a well-funded park maintenance budget. During the economic downturn, in 2010 General Fund resources dramatically dropped to only 39 percent of the maintenance budget leaving other sources like TOPS and CTF to take up the slack.

In addition to uncertain funding, increased levels of service, higher maintenance standards and increased use will require additional funding for operations and maintenance. An estimated \$16 million annual operating budget for park operations and maintenance will allow for increased maintenance to pre-2008 levels. This increase assumes that TOPS and CTF funding levels remain consistent or increase somewhat and the General Fund increases to approximately 75 percent.

In addition to the annual operations and maintenance budget, an annual capital repair and improvements budget for open space and facilities will need to be allocated over the next several years to repair the \$180 million backlog of deferred maintenance to parks, open space and recreational facilities. Ideally an annual budget of \$5 to \$6 million will help reduce the backlog of repairs. Additional supplemental CIP funding from CTF and TOPS will reduce the backlog even faster.

The reality of uncertain funding from the General Fund, backlog of capital projects and renovation as well as increased maintenance standards requires the need to consider a diverse mix of financial strategies including new methods of funding to support citywide recreation, parks and open space. Several strategies and funding methods are proposed as a menu of options for further consideration to diversify and strengthen PR&CS funding over the next several years.

Recommendations

The funding recommendations are potential options for the City to explore and serve as a starting point to engage in continued dialogue and communication with residents and community leaders. Additional community conversation and analysis needs to take place to determine the best mix of funding mechanisms to put the park system on a sustainable path. The Action Plan identifies the next steps to evaluate the appropriate options to pursue. The following is a list of potential funding alternatives to explore:

- Stabilize the amount of City General Fund distributed to the Department at a consistent level to ensure reliable levels of park services.
- Increase the TOPS sales tax from 0.10 percent (one tenth of a cent) to up to 0.50 percent through adoption from voters. The amount of increase should be based upon an analysis of financial requirements needed to effectively implement master plan recommendations and potential for voter support.
- Negotiate water rate reductions with Colorado Springs Utilities. The rate reduction for PR&CS could be offset by an increase in residential water rates to help subsidize the PR&CS discount.
- Explore grey water use for irrigation and continued landscape renovation to reduce irrigation needs.
- Seek agreeable bond rates to fund capital improvements and determine appropriate methods to pay off bonds such as TOPS funds.

... continued Core Efforts to Create Financial Stability

Recommendations

- Considered park development fees and other financial tools to offset the cost of providing needed parks and facilities associated with new development.
- Implement a more focused and proactive fundraising effort through a citywide non-profit foundation.
- A diverse financial strategy will help to meet annual operating and maintenance cost, while not rely solely on TOPS to meet this need.
- Explore the potentiality of revenue generation from fee-based programs. General programming can remain free and be delivered to a larger audience without a fee. Programs or services that target specific group of users can be fee based, as those who elect to participate in these programs will be charged.

Recommendation Details

CITY GENERAL FUND

With the variety of existing operational funding sources and their potential for growth, PR&CS may be uniquely positioned to reduce its reliance on the General Fund for providing the majority of operational funding. Consistent levels of General Fund support cannot be assumed. While the level of General Fund support has been on the increase since 2010, there is no guarantee that trend will continue as General Funds are the most inconsistent source for park and recreation operations. The General Fund should continue to provide a significant and consistent level of funding for PR&CS; however, alternate funding sources, such as TOPS increases as suggested, should assume a larger percentage of the annual operating budget.

The General Fund budget allocations should be the core for annual funding of PR&CS operation and a long term source for the parks and recreation budget. Parks are an essential public service and the collection of sales taxes will be the primary source for operation of the park system.

The General Fund has been increasing consistently over the last several years at an average of 12 percent annually. If the General Fund budget was to return to pre-2008 levels PR&CS should target a modest increase of 5-6 percent annually. However, even though the General Fund, consisting largely of sales and use tax revenues, has increased since the recession there are other high priority competing needs and deferred expenditures that have accumulated over time.

The impacts of a fluctuating General Fund in Colorado Springs are numerous, including bad press for the community regarding the cutbacks, inconsistency in services, inability to adjust or add to current services, decrease in property values, community instability, detraction from special events and sports tournaments, and more.

In 2008, the General Fund provided 85 percent of total funding for PR&CS. If we assume that CTF and TOPS continue to slowly trend upward, and that the GF provides 75 percent of the park budget, today the total maintenance budget would be approximately \$16 million, with \$12 million provided by General Fund.

... continued Core Efforts to Create Financial Stability

Recommendation Details

TOPS FUNDING

Several other comparable Colorado communities have much higher open space sales taxes than Colorado Springs TOPS Tax of 0.1 cent/dollar. Westminster, Boulder, Fort Collins and Longmont all have a tax used for open space, trails, parks, and recreation ranging from 0.2 cents/dollar to 0.6 cents/dollar. Some of these cities open space sales tax is designated only for open space acquisition and maintenance, unlike Colorado Springs that is used for trails and parks as well. In addition, many Colorado Counties have a sales tax for open space and parks that is shared with communities located within the County.

96% of the respondents to the mail survey supported extending TOPS beyond its current 2025 expiration.

Larimer County's "Help Preserve Open Space" sales tax of 0.25 percent was initiated in 1995 and has been extended through 2018. The tax is specifically for the purchase and protection of open space, natural areas, wildlife habitat, and regional park preserves, regional trails, and agricultural lands. Larimer County shares approximately 55 percent of its sale tax proceeds with its incorporated cities and towns. Additionally, communities like Fort Collins within Larimer County also have a sales tax to support natural areas and trails. In 1992 the first Fort Collins citizen-initiated 0.25 percent sales tax passed and has been extended to 2030.

Boulder County has four ongoing open space sales tax sources which combine to a total of a 0.6 cent/dollar open space tax. Their purpose is to support the preservation of open space property purchases, the management and conservation of native habitats, and support of recreational opportunities and programs. The first tax of 0.25 percent was voter approved in 1993 and has been extended until 2019. The most recent additional tax of 0.15 percent was approved in 2004 and sunsets in 2030. Property taxes in Boulder also generate roughly \$4 million annually for open space acquisitions. The City of Boulder has had an open space tax since 1967 that has ranged over the years from 0.88 percent to 0.22 percent. The City of Boulder Parks and Recreation Department has a separate dedicated sales tax over the years as well (currently at 0.25 percent).

Adams County has an open space sales tax of 0.25 percent which is authorized through 2026. Proceeds from the sales tax benefit parks, recreation and open space projects county-wide. Adams County distributes 30 percent of the monies it collects back to the cities in which they are generated. After administrative expenses the remaining amount is distributed through a competitive grant program to jurisdictions within the County. The city of Westminster located within Adams County additionally has its own open space sales tax of 0.25 percent.

Voters in 1994 approved a Parks, Trails and Open Space Sales and Use Tax in Douglas County. The 0.6 cent/dollar sales and use tax funds land acquisition and property management as well as education, outreach and special events.

Arapahoe County Open Space Sales and Use Tax is dedicated to preserving open space, enhance parks, build trail connections and protect heritage areas. The 0.25 percent sales tax revenue provides for a number of specific park and open space uses with 50 percent of the revenue distributed to cities and towns based on the total population amount.

The combined city and county sales taxes for several other cities equate to significantly higher dedicated open space funding resources than Colorado Springs. The combined City and County of Boulder open space sales tax rate is 0.85 percent. When compared to these other cities, it is clear that Colorado Springs similarly may gain support from voters to increase the sales tax rate and capitalize on dedicated open space funding.

There is a need to emphasize the role TOPS plays to Colorado Springs residents, and allow them to be aware of where the funding is spent. Signs at TOPS funded project sites that say "Your TOPS Funds at work" could help reinforce the message.

... continued Core Efforts to Create Financial Stability

Recommendation Details

TOPS funding is a rather reliable resource with a consistent contribution to PR&CS of approximately \$6 million annually over the last five years. In 2013 \$6.9 million was allocated to PR&CS at the current sales tax rate of 0.1 percent. Table 29 indicates the funding history of TOPS from 2008-2013.

Table 29: 2008-2013 TOPS Revenue Generation History

TOPS FUNDING					
2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
\$6,398,144	\$5,786,980	\$6,101,653	\$6,198,609	\$5,861,557	\$6,910,664

City residents could increase the existing TOPS tax rate or approve a county open space tax to bolster dedicated open space funding. Table 30 represents several increased tax rate scenarios with potential PR&CS funding estimates. The table shows the results from various options to overall increase in TOPS funding, the exact funding percentages for the various TOPS categories would be established based upon financial analysis of the needs within each area.

Table 30: TOPS Rate Alternatives

TOPS RATE ALTERNATIVES					
Category *	2013 Recognized Revenue	Optional Scenarios			
	At 0.1%	At 0.2%	At 0.3%	At 0.4%	At 0.5%
Total	\$6,625,000	\$13,250,000	\$19,875,000	\$26,500,000	\$3,125,000
Administration - 3%	\$183,000	\$397,500	\$596,250	\$795,000	\$993,750
Park Maintenance - 6%	\$367,000	\$795,000	\$1,192,500	\$1,590,000	\$1,987,500
Amount less Administration	\$6,075,000	\$12,057,500	\$18,086,250	\$24,115,000	\$30,143,750
Max. of 20% to Acquire, Construct, Maintain and Renovate Parks	\$1,215,000	\$2,411,500	\$3,617,250	\$4,823,000	\$6,028,750
Max. of 20% to Develop Trails	\$1,215,000	\$2,411,500	\$3,617,250	\$4,823,000	\$6,028,750
Min. of 60% for Acquisition and Stewardship of Open Space	\$3,645,000	\$7,234,500	\$10,851,750	\$14,469,000	\$18,086,250

* The amount in each category should be adjusted in the future to reflect projected needs.

Source: The dollar values are based on the Recognized Revenue in 2013, provided by the City of Colorado Springs. The spending percentages are based on the 2013 Colorado Springs Annual Budget and Allocation report, Chapter 2-16: three percent is allocated toward Administration and the remainder is split into 15 percent for maintenance, 85 percent for acquisitions and other approved uses (grouped as CIP).

... continued Core Efforts to Create Financial Stability

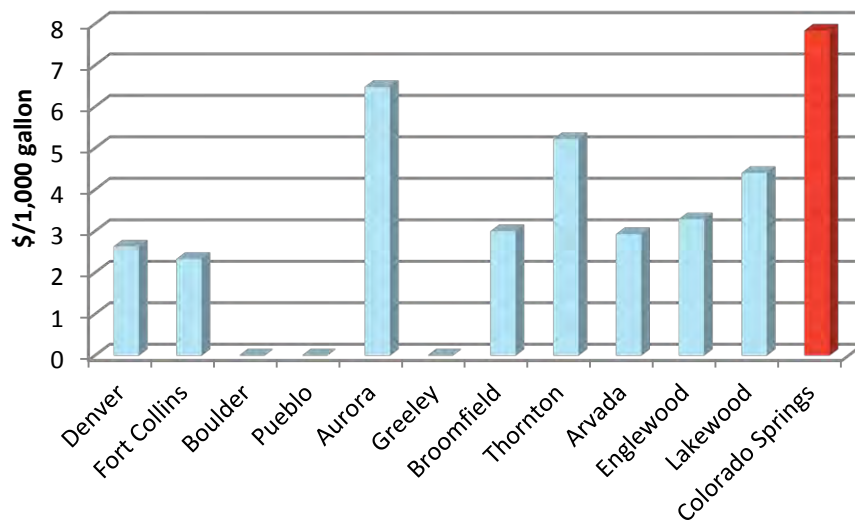
Recommendation Details

WATER COSTS REDUCTIONS

Several strategies could be implemented to reduce water costs and water consumption associated with PR&CS operations. Several other Front Range communities parks and recreation departments get discounted water rates, or in some cases, pay nothing for water service. Figure 39 illustrates other Colorado cities and their water rate for every 1,000 gallons. Colorado Springs pays significantly more than other cities.



Figure 39: Front Range Communities Parks Department Cost of Water



75% of public meeting and online survey respondents would support a discounted water rate for the City Parks Department irrigation water if it meant an increase in citywide water rates resulting in an increase in the average homeowner monthly bill.

Water rates have risen dramatically over the last several years with a direct impact on General Fund resources available for park maintenance. In 2013, the cost of water accounted for 41 percent of the General Fund resources and will increase to 51 percent in 2014 (Table 31). Negotiations with Colorado Springs Utilities should continue to be explored in an attempt to reduce PR&CS irrigation water rates.

Park Operations is converting several landscape areas which currently require significant irrigation to meadow landscapes which require less irrigation once they are established. These conversion projects should be expanded as the project costs will be recouped relatively quickly through the long term savings associated with more xeric landscapes.

Opportunities for a citywide grey water treatment plant or park specific grey water treatment systems could be explored to collect, clean and re-use water for irrigation purposes. Considering the extremely high water rates, grey water treatment for irrigation purposes could be a cost effective solution.

Table 31: General Fund for PR&CS Water Expenditures

COLORADO SPRINGS WATER UTILITY RATES		
Year	Cost	% of GF
2011	\$1,870,400	37%
2012	\$2,417,200	43%
2013	\$2,286,700	41%
2014	\$3,416,700	51%

GF = General Fund. Source: PR&CS Department

... continued Core Efforts to Create Financial Stability

Recommendation Details

BOND FUNDS

Consider securing dedicated funds through the sale of bonds for acquisition, development and renovation of parks, trails and open space. Bonds could provide funds to both municipal and tax-exempt non-profit organizations that qualify as “charitable conservancies”. Conservancies and municipal agencies would have to provide some level of matching funds for the development of park and recreational facilities. Bond monies are restricted for capital improvements and cannot be used for maintenance or operating expenses and should be used to invest in projects and improvements that provide measurable operational efficiencies. TOPS funds could be used to pay off bonds over time.

PARK DEVELOPMENT FEES

Creation of a park development fee could help offset a variety of costs to the City associated with new development and address the need for both parkland and park amenities. The current development exaction program could be altered to become a more effective revenue generating tool. Stakeholder discussions must be undertaken to evaluate possible revisions to current policies and fees.

In addition to residential plots or subdivisions, a community benefit ordinance could be applied to office construction, hotels, schools, churches, senior housing/care facilities, hospitals, light industrial and other types of commercial uses. Employers, employees and developers may view the creation of parks and trails as a benefit to them. Requirements for these land uses to provide usable outdoor spaces will make for a more livable city and generate higher property values for property owners.

CITY-WIDE NON-PROFIT FOUNDATIONS

The creation of a City Parks Foundation could be useful in fundraising and grant seeking to support city parks, open space, and trails efforts and the City could direct it to provide an umbrella for friends groups fundraising efforts.

Included as part of the new non-profit’s mission would be:

- Fill gaps in services not currently being fulfilled by the City
- Assist PR&CS with grant writing and grant support
- Consider grants for capital projects
- Recruit philanthropic park sponsorship funds
- Secure private foundation grants
 - Matching grants from governmental programs
 - Grants that are dedicated to a single purpose at a national level (like Challenge Aspen or Winter Park handicapped athletics)

52% of polling respondents supported the idea of creating a non-profit foundation to support parks and parks funding. This funding mechanism received the highest level of support out of the eight options provided.

DIVERSIFY FINANCIAL STRATEGIES INCLUDING NEW METHODS OF FUNDING

Additional Funding Diversification Ideas

Overview

The PR&CS Department must diversify its sources of funding and therefore a wide-range of options should be explored. Some funding sources may not be sufficient to overcome the substantial financial challenges the Department is currently faced with; however, they can help support specific projects. The City may have little influence to ensure that some of these additional sources of funding opportunities are realized. Still other options will be challenging to implement due to current political climates but should be pursued as opportunities arise. The alternative funding sources often times provide secondary benefits that should not be overlooked. For example, providing more amenities not only helps supplement revenues, but also improves the visitor experience and may increase repeat visits. Establishing opportunities to collect voluntary fees or donations helps reiterate to visitors that the City's precious parks and open spaces are free to the public, and provides a reminder that the volunteers and generous donations are important to keep parks going. Voluntary donations of both time and money help reinforce the bond between the users and their parks.

Recommendations

Various alternatives or options for funding must be explored, including the following:

- Increase the existing City Bicycle Excise Tax or seek other adjustments to increase the amount gained annually.
- Dedicate lodgers tax to the purposes of parks, trails, recreation and cultural services.
- Create a voluntary fee for tourism activities.
- Implement parking fees focused on tourism.
- Create a real estate transfer tax.
- Increase revenue-generating opportunities (facilities and programs).
- Ensure Conservation Trust Fund (CTF) program is retained after 2025 by involvement in State legislative efforts.
- Create a Parks and Recreation Property Tax to fund O+M and CIP programs.
- Pursue opportunities for joint funding of projects with county, state and/or federal agencies as appropriate.

... continued Additional Funding Diversification Ideas

Recommendation Details

CONSERVATION TRUST FUND

CTF revenue will likely increase over time and provide additional funding for park and trail maintenance.

CTF funding is not a fixed funding resource, and does fluctuate from year to year. Long term funding projections have been calculated below based on historical population and per capita funding data analysis.

Population growth through 2025 averages 1.7 percent annually based on the Colorado State Demography Office projections. Historical CTF funding data indicates an increase of \$0.18 per capita annually. Long-term CTF funding projections for the City of Colorado Springs show a consistent increase in funding if population growth and Lottery revenue continues to trend upwards (Table 32).

Table 32: Conservation Trust Fund Revenue Projections

ESTIMATED CONSERVATION TRUST FUND REVENUE			
Year	Population*	CTF per Capita**	CTF Revenue
2013	426,883	\$10.81	\$4,614,605.23
2014	431,710	\$10.99	\$4,743,629.48
2017	454,238	\$11.52	\$5,233,725.52
2020	477,941	\$12.06	\$5,762,053.33
2025	520,226	\$12.95	\$6,734,849.71

* Population estimates are based on a 1.7% annual population increase.

** CTF per capita distributions based on population figures from 2 years prior.

CITY BICYCLE EXCISE TAX AND/OR REGISTRATION FEE

Adopted in 1988, this tax currently generates up to \$150,000 a year and is useful in gaining match funds. The purpose of this tax is to provide funding for city bikeway improvements. The first priority for the use of the revenues from this tax shall be the construction of off street bicycle paths designated by the City bicycle plan. The second priority shall be other bikeway improvements recommended by the bicycle plan (Ord. 88-161; Ord. 01-42). There is hereby levied and shall be paid by every bicycle vendor within the city an excise tax of four dollars (\$4.00) on the sale of each new bicycle.

The City could increase tax amounts or relate the amount to the sales price (more expensive bikes require a larger tax). The tax could be expanded to all bike shop purchases including bike maintenance. An alternative could be a voluntary donation to help fund a project related to improved bike facilities. Alternative purposes to expand the use of the tax or fees could include associated trail improvements such as signage.

The existing tax has been widely accepted for a long time. Trails have been identified as a high community priority and the cyclist community could be advocates for the expansion of this tax. The benefits are directly related to the user group.

... continued Additional Funding Diversification Ideas

Recommendation Details

LODGERS TAX DEDICATED TO PARKS, TRAILS, RECREATION AND CULTURAL SERVICES

In addition to the City of Colorado Springs sales tax on lodging services, the City Code imposes a two percent Lodgers Tax on the sale of lodging or campground space rental. The purpose of the tax is to attract visitors and to enhance the economy of the city and the Pikes Peak region. The Lodgers Tax is placed in a special fund, separate from the City's General Fund, and is to be used only for its intended purpose.

The tax amount could be increased and/or designated for a parks, trails, recreation and cultural services purpose. Currently the LART tax results in approximately \$3 to \$4 million annually. This tax goes to the Convention and Visitors Bureau for special events and economic development endeavors. Funds are currently used for operations and typically not for infrastructure needs. The strategy could be changed to invest in bigger projects to draw tourists, like the Garden of the Gods.

Sales tax on tourism activities is directly related to this parks user group and tax payers have less opposition to this tax. Currently the tax rate is much lower than other cities of similar size.

CREATE A VOLUNTARY FEE FOR TOURISM ACTIVITIES

This is a potential method where visitors could make a donation through their hotel, recreation expenditures, user fees or special events. This would be dedicated revenue targeted at tourists to support parks.

REAL ESTATE TRANSFER TAX

A dedicated fund for parks, recreation, open space and cultural services could be generated from a tax on assessed value of realty transfers.

The real estate transfer tax would be levied on the sale of property, increasing with the value of the property being sold. This tax could be paid by either the buyer or seller or a combination of both.

Real estate transfer tax can create significant funding for park and open space acquisition, particularly in fast-growing communities. This tax is widely used in Colorado jurisdictions to fund parks and open space.

... continued Additional Funding Diversification Ideas

Recommendation Details

INCREASE REVENUE GENERATING OPPORTUNITIES

Additional park-based revenue could be raised through increased interpretation and visitor amenities. More proactive interpretation programs could include visitor/interpretation centers at major park sites like Red Rock Canyon Open Space and Palmer Park. Centers could have a park shop along with a café to try and generate more revenue.

PARKING FEES

The concept of charging for parking on heavy tourist visitation days at heavily used areas such as Garden of the Gods, Pikes Peak Highway, Red Rock Canyon Open Space and Palmer Park could be considered. Charges could be limited to parking at the bigger tourist destinations and on selected days, such as major holidays or specific days during the peak visitation period. The idea would be to charge on days when more tourists visit a site and less locals, to avoid, as much as possible, any backlash from locals who do not feel they should be paying for parking.

PARKS AND RECREATION TAX OR OPEN SPACE TAX

In recent years, many counties and municipalities have, with voter approval, established dedicated open space taxes. The revenues from an open space tax can support a pay-as-you-go strategy for open space preservation, or can go toward debt service or to pay for open space. Experts in public finance often oppose dedication of specific revenues to “silos” of program support. They argue that such dedication reduces the flexibility needed to allocate funds in ways that reflect the current electorate’s priorities and constraints, rather than those of earlier electorates. On the other hand, advocates of open space preservation note that voters who resist general tax increases invariably support dedicated taxes for worthwhile and quantifiable purposes such as land acquisition.

Most local dedicated open space funding mechanisms take the form of a uniform additional levy on assessed property, which in many counties range in the 2-3 cents per \$100 of assessed value.

3. BROADEN, ENHANCE AND PROMOTE RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

Recreational Trails

Overview

The Colorado Springs trail system is well loved and well used by community members. Trails in both the citywide Urban Trail network as well as the trail systems internal to parks and open spaces are important reasons people choose to live in and visit Colorado Springs. Since 2000, the City has added 78 miles of urban trails, creating the current 144 mile trail network. While the trail system is extensive, there is a need to link the trails and make connections within the network. Additionally, maintenance and care of trail pathways and corridors surrounding the trails has been deferred for too long and is impacting the quality of the existing trail network. The recommendations below focus on continued investment to maintain quality urban trails, improve connectivity by addressing critical linkages and trail crossings, and expand the system to address growing demands.

Trends in Colorado Springs and the US have consistently shown that trail based recreation activities have both high participation rates within communities and high frequency of participation by individuals. These findings were validated in the Master Plan process in which trails stood out as community members highest priority for short term investments in facilities.

Recommendations

- Focus on closing the gaps between the Urban Trail System’s existing Tier 1 (paved multi-purpose) and Tier 2 (feeders or connectors to Tier 2) trails, in order to increase opportunities to connect neighborhoods to parks and open space areas with trails. With these connections, various loops can be created throughout the city that capitalize on the existing network and improve connections east to west and north to south (Map 25).
- Map 24 identifies trail location priorities for improvement or construction over the next 10 years. With all of the planned and proposed trail additions the Colorado Springs system is anticipated to double in size to total approximately 300 miles of trails. Recommendations include:
 - 32 miles of short term maintenance improvement projects,
 - 36 miles of new trails to complete within the near-term, likely within the next 5 years,
 - 45 miles of trails to be developed in the medium-term time horizon,
 - 100 miles of trails identified for development in the long term, many of which the timing is based on city expansion and new development demands for trails along with developer partnerships or responsibilities to create these trails connecting new neighborhoods,
 - 14 miles of trail maintenance needs and trail connections on El Paso County trails have been identified through the Master Plan process that are of particular interest to the City due to their close proximity and role in connectivity. Some of key trail connections include completing the Cheyenne Mountain Heritage Trail from Old Stage Road in the Pike National Forest to the Dixon Trail in Cheyenne Mountain State Park, a connection to and throughout the Bluestem Prairie Open Space, and connections to the Santa Fe Trail along Fountain Creek Trail, and
 - 21 critical grade separated crossings or crossing improvements to enhance connectivity and pedestrian/bike safety throughout Colorado Springs.
- Develop an inclusive trail system that serves the varied needs of trail users including various age groups, modes of travel, and ability levels from beginners to advanced, as well as addresses universal accessibility. Constructing Tier 1 trails where possible which include adjacent soft surface pathways as described in the trail design guidelines (Parks, Recreation and Trails 2000-2010 Master Plan) will help to accommodate multiple users and activities. Where possible soft surface paths should be considered along Tier 2 trails as well. During significant trail renovations PR&CS should construct these adjacent pathways where feasible.

... continued Recreational Trails

Recommendations

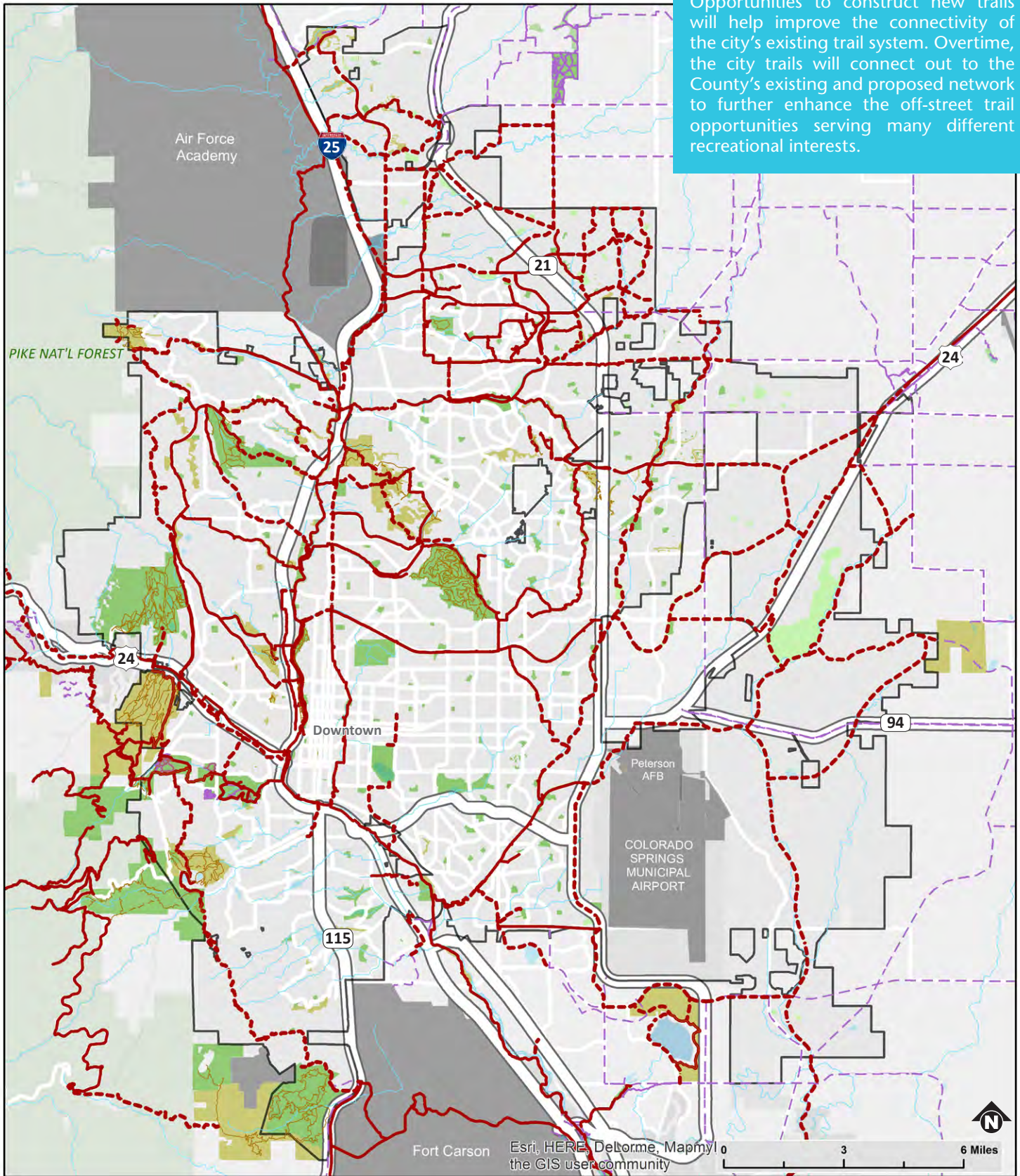
- Improve ease of travel for pedestrians and bicyclists for purposes of improving access to places of recreation to enhance opportunities to enjoy parks and natural areas by experiencing them through the trail network.
- Develop partnerships with local trails coalitions as well as regional, county, state and federal land owners to build on the destination hiking and mountain biking trails system which can be marketed as a way to attract additional tourism to the area and serve local interests. Examples include: Ring the Peak Trail, Chamberlain Trail, Cheyenne Mountain Loop Trail, and Dixon Trail.
- Adopt natural surface trail standards that can be consistently applied for volunteer projects.
- Focus new trail priorities to create connections along the foothills as well as exploring new trail alignments for hiking and biking on the city's eastern edge.
- Ensure a variety of trail tiers (primitive to urban) are accommodated along the city's eastern edge.
- Repair and maintain existing trail assets, including trails damaged by fires and floods. Determine if new alignments are possible to avoid future damage from natural disasters.
- Consider adding additional loops of varying lengths within parks to mitigate the development of social trails (unplanned trails created by park visitors). When developing trails, provide a variety of trail distances that can accommodate special events including 5k, 10k, and marathon distances.
- Support a non-profit organization or create a citywide volunteer program for trail maintenance and creation. This organization will provide training to volunteers, tools and direct a crew to target specific trails for improvement annually.
- Improve wayfinding by installing signs and maps at key junctions in the trail system and identifying parking locations (for additional recommendations on signage please refer to Signage and Wayfinding Recommendations section).
- Design trails throughout the city to increase appropriate recreation and commuter usage and discourage illegal uses and activities. Ensure that trail corridor improvements align with the recommendations for security and safety outlined in the following section.



Single track trails in Palmer Park offer a diversity of experiences within the heart of the city. Source: City of Colorado Springs

Map 23: Existing and Proposed Trail Network

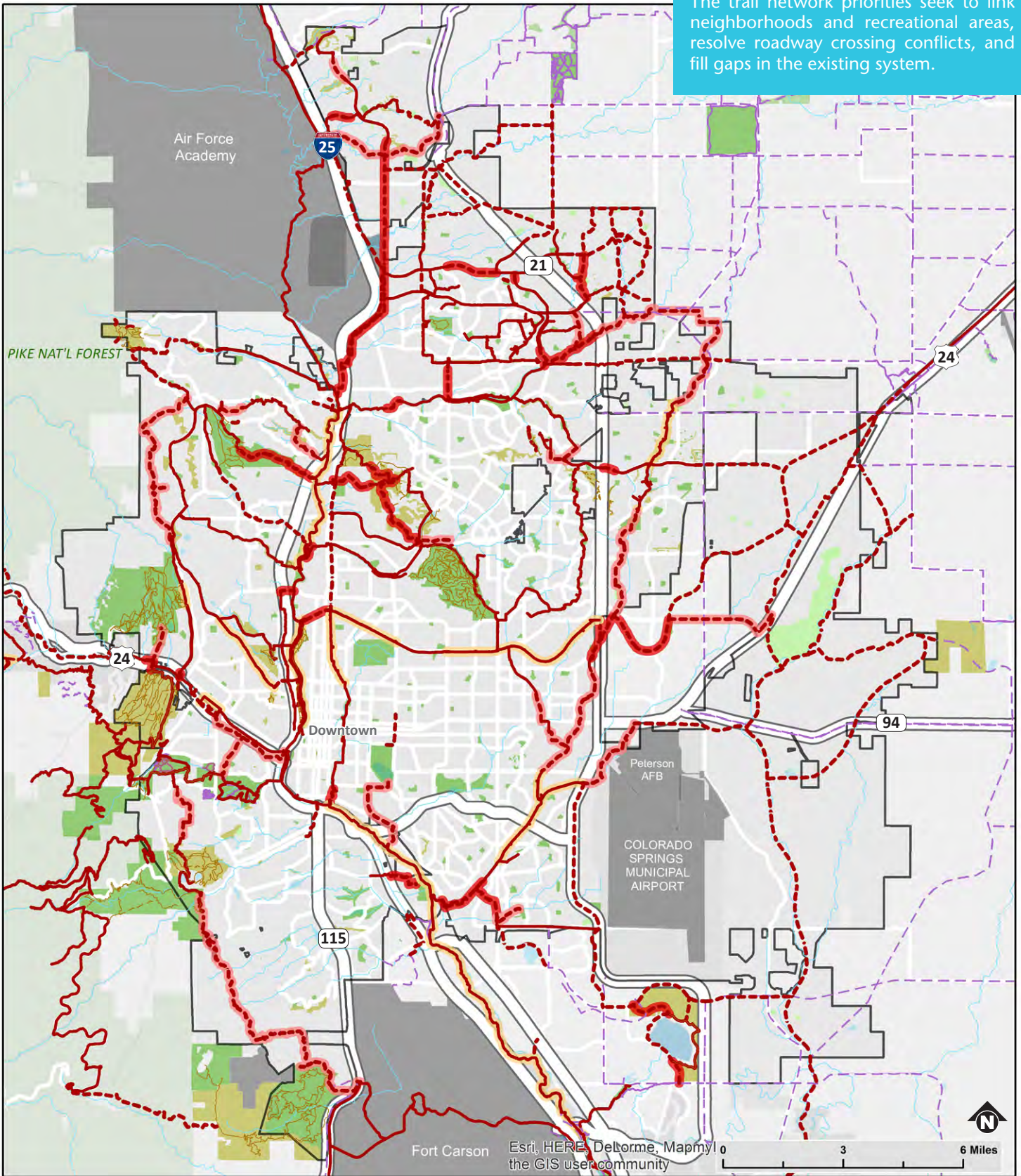
Opportunities to construct new trails will help improve the connectivity of the city's existing trail system. Overtime, the city trails will connect out to the County's existing and proposed network to further enhance the off-street trail opportunities serving many different recreational interests.



- - - Proposed Urban Trail
- Existing Urban Trail
- Existing County Trail
- - - Proposed County Trail
- Existing Park Trail
- Pike National Forest
- Park Lands (City and Special District)
- Open Space/Special Resource Area/Greenway
- Undeveloped Park Land (City and Special District)
- City Limits

Map 24: Trail Priority Recommendations

The trail network priorities seek to link neighborhoods and recreational areas, resolve roadway crossing conflicts, and fill gaps in the existing system.



- Existing Trail - Needs Improvement
- Short-Term Priority Trail
- Mid-Term Priority Trail
- Proposed Urban Trail
- Existing Urban Trail
- Existing County Trail
- Proposed County Trail
- Existing Park Trail
- Pike National Forest
- Park Lands (City and Special District)
- Open Space/Special Resource Area/Greenway
- Undeveloped Park Land (City and Special District)
- City Limits

... continued Recreational Trails

Recommendation Details

LEGACY LOOP

Total Loop Length: 9.75 miles

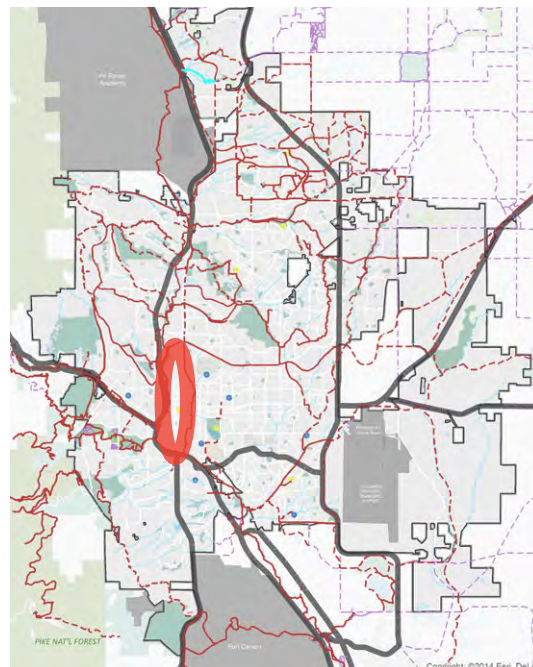
Trails to Build: 0.83 miles

Trails with Maintenance Needs: 3.9 miles

Trail Segments: Pikes Peak Greenway Trail, Shooks Run Trail, Rock Island Trail

Grade Separated Crossing Needs at two locations: Rock Island Trail/Nevada Avenue and Shooks Run Trail and Las Vegas Street

Description: Improving and finishing the Legacy Loop Trail will provide a multi-use pathway that encircles downtown Colorado Springs, providing an opportunity for tourists to explore some of downtown's highlights on foot or bike, as well as providing a great trail for downtown residents and employees. The majority of this trail system is complete, and finishing two critical connections along the Rock Island Trail on the north and the Shooks Run Trail to the south will complete the 9.75 mile loop trail. Constructing these segments will not only complete the long anticipated Legacy Loop Trail, they will also connect Colorado Springs' two largest trail networks the Pikes Peak Greenway Corridor and the Rock Island Trail Corridor. This will greatly enhance the overall connectivity of the city, enabling residents to travel from Manitou Springs through to Briargate and northeast neighborhoods and connecting the Town of Monument all the way south to the Town of Fountain on a continuous network of urban trails.



Legacy Loop

RING THE SPRINGS

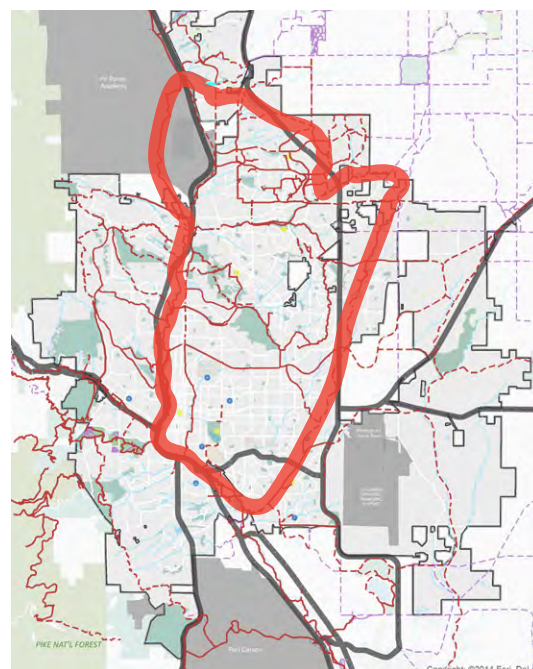
Total Loop Length: 53.78 miles

Trails to Build: 27.01 miles

Trail Maintenance Needs: 12.7 miles

Trail Segments: Pikes Peak Greenway Trail / El Paso County New Santa Fe Trail (West), La Foret, Skyline Trail (North), Powers Trail (North East), Sand Creek Trail (Northeast to South).

Description: Closing the gaps in this trail loop, which are primarily identified as short and medium term segments, will create a significant multi-use loop trail that traverses through many of the city's outer neighborhoods and areas where future development is anticipated. This loop will eventually consist of primarily Tier 1 trails serving multiple uses and will be ideal for the endurance riders and cyclists who are looking to complete a long half day to full day ride. The loop trail can also be broken up into smaller segments that are suitable all abilities and levels of fitness and will provide a protected, off road facility that is suitable for both walking and biking. The Ring the Springs Trail connects some of the city's best urban parks as from the mountains to the prairies, providing trail users



Ring the Springs Trail

... continued Recreational Trails

Recommendation Details

opportunities to take in iconic views of Pikes Peak as well as geologic formations along the foothills and the eastern plains.

Though you can access the trail from anywhere along the route, it will officially begin and end in heart of downtown Colorado Springs, where access can be gained from the foothills and Manitou Springs. The route heads north through the iconic America the Beautiful and Monument Valley Parks adjacent to the I 25 corridor to where it meets up with the New Santa Fe trail that goes through the Air Force Academy, offering scenic vistas of the mountains. The trail then heads south east through the newer developments, including Wolf Ranch and Briargate, before heading south along the Sand Creek trail network.

EAST-WEST CONNECTOR

Western City Limits to Corral Bluffs

Total Trail Length: 25.85 miles

Trails to Build: 15.35 miles

Trails with Maintenance Needs: 5.48 miles

Trail Segments: Manitou Springs Trail, Midland Trail, Rock Island Trail, Jimmy Camp Creek Trail

Description: The East-West Connector Corridor knits together segments of trails from Manitou Springs to Corral Bluffs following the Midland Trail, Rock Island and Jimmy Camp Creek Trail alignments. A few short term priority segments and grade separated crossings will complete the corridor along the western portion of the East-West Connector to where the corridor meets proposed trail alignments to the east of Powers Road where it will eventually continue all the way to Corral Bluffs. This will provide essential trail connections to more recently acquired open spaces and highlight some of the lesser known properties which will eventually be opened to the public including Jimmy Camp Regional Park and Corral Bluffs Open Space.

PARK TO PEAK CONNECTOR

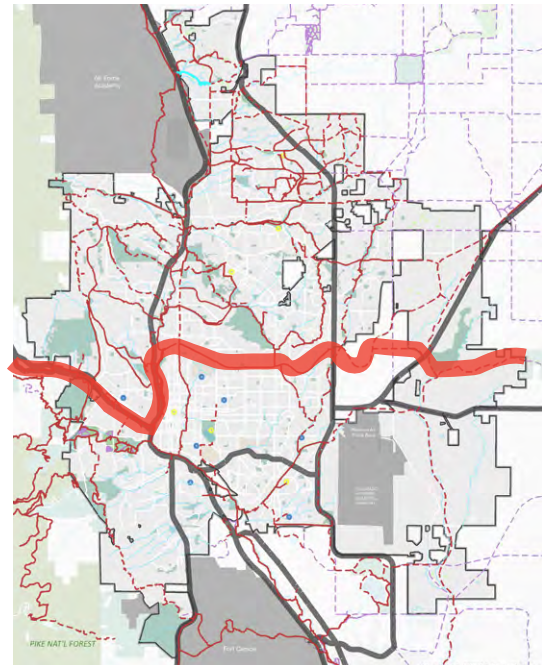
Palmer Park to Blodgett Peak Open Space

Total Trail Length: 12.64

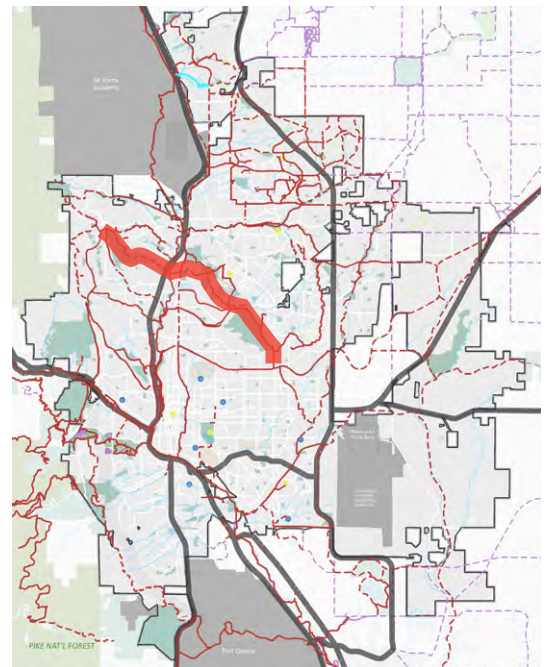
Trails to Build: 5.86

Trail Segments: Glencrest Trail through Palmer Park, Homestead Trail, Foothills Trail, Pulpit Rock Trail, Templeton Gap Trail, and Ute Valley Trail

Description: This trail segment links popular regional parks and open space properties from the northwest corner to the center of the city. The trail corridor begins in Palmer Park, accesses Austin Bluffs Open Space, Ute Valley Regional Park, and continues on to Blodgett Peak Open Space which offers connections into Pike National Forest. It is envisioned that this trail corridor provide both a Tier 1, multi-use connection in addition to a parallel single track or natural trail opportunity.



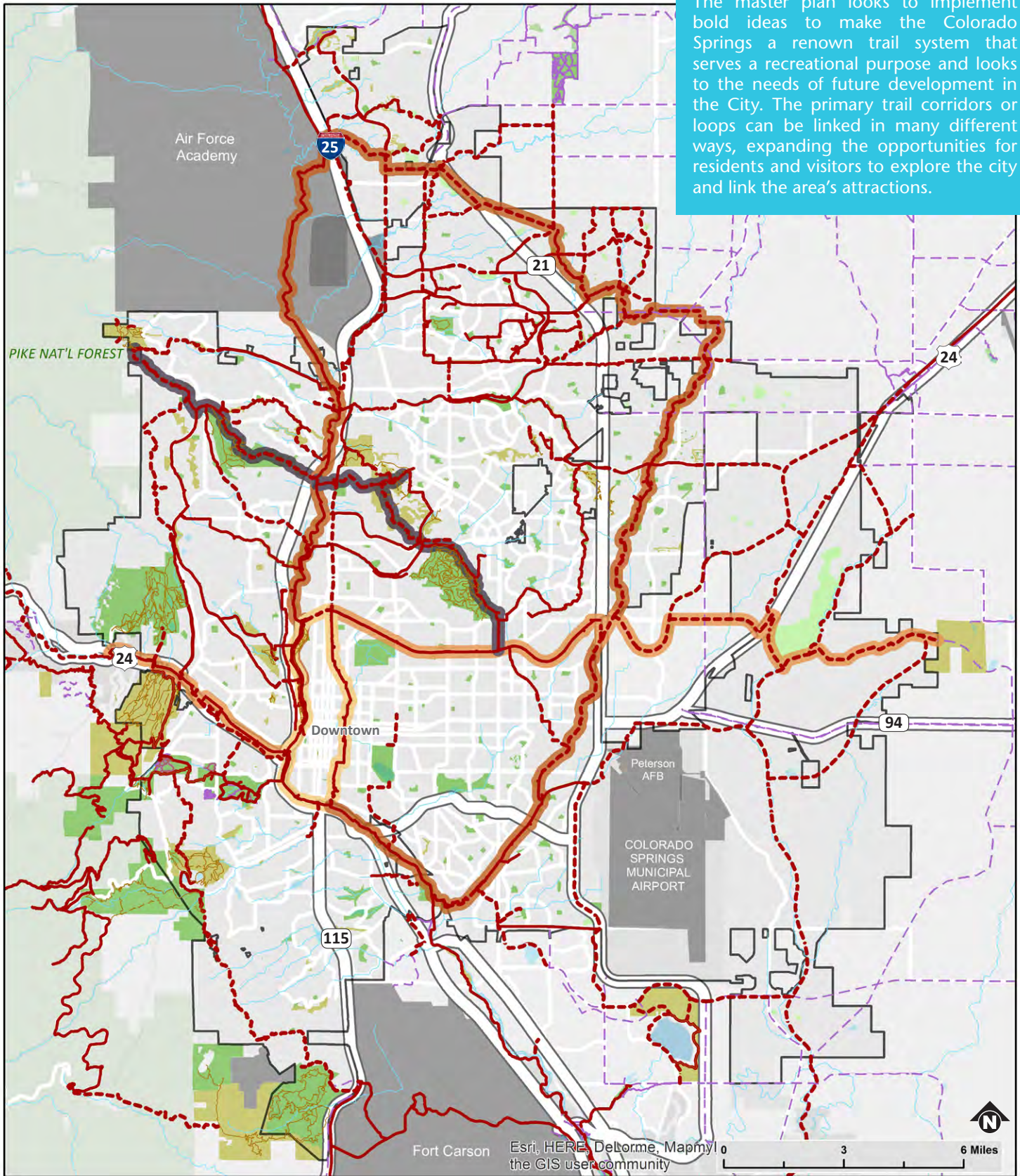
East-West Connector Trail



Park to Peak Connector Trail

Map 25: Network of Primary Trail Routes and Loops

The master plan looks to implement bold ideas to make the Colorado Springs a renown trail system that serves a recreational purpose and looks to the needs of future development in the City. The primary trail corridors or loops can be linked in many different ways, expanding the opportunities for residents and visitors to explore the city and link the area's attractions.



- | | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| Legacy Loop | Proposed Urban Trail | Pike National Forest |
| Grand Loop | Existing Urban Trail | Park Lands (City and Special District) |
| East West Connector | Existing County Trail | Open Space/Special Resource Area/Greenway |
| Park to Peak Connector | Proposed County Trail | Undeveloped Park Land (City and Special District) |
| | Existing Park Trail | City Limits |

Recommendation Details

DESTINATION MOUNTAIN BIKE RIDE CENTER

The City should establish a strategy to become a certified International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA) Ride Center. PR&CS should explore strategies to build upon the existing trail assets to create a destination mountain bike center aimed to accommodate local interests and to attract tourism. While most trails within Colorado Springs' parks and open spaces should remain under the City's multi-use trails policy - serving diverse interests while minimizing user conflicts and environmental damage - some areas may be considered for implementation of new design strategies or modifications and trail planning to accommodate specific user groups such as mountain bikers. There is a large market for tourism related to outdoor activities and mountain biking in particular is a niche in which Colorado Springs has a locational advantage by capitalizing on the city's proximity to the urban population centers along the Front Range and offering unique and diverse topography. Trail designs that accommodate the needs of different types of riders and ability levels such as classic cross country and back country rides, flow trails, gateway trails, and gravity and purpose built directional trails can expand the diversity of the network, creating a system that people want to return to again and again. City park and open space properties along the foothills lend themselves particularly well to many of these types of trails (the land just south of the Cheyenne Cañon was identified through the public process as a potential area to expand mountain bike specific trails which deserves further exploration).

The City should continue to work with advocacy and trail coalitions, Colorado Springs Utilities (CSU), and the Forest Service to build urban single track opportunities where feasible. Opportunities to expand single track opportunities exist both within the City limits and on adjacent lands.

REPAIR AND MAINTAIN EXISTING TRAIL ASSETS

Past fires and floods have led to the closure of many trail resources, and consequently the overuse of remaining resources, especially in the parks and open spaces along the foothills. The City has worked diligently to repair and reopen these trails, and will need to act pro-actively to prevent future damage.

Consider adding additional loops of varying lengths within existing parks to mitigate the development of social trails such as those that have developed in Garden of the Gods and Palmer Park, that negatively impact the natural resources and habitat value of the surrounding lands. Social trails are unplanned, informal trails that are created by users often short-cutting planned trails; these spontaneous trails have the potential to degrade the user experience and natural resources in certain areas.



Many communities including Moab, Utah and Steamboat Springs, Colorado have developed extensive trail systems to serve a variety of ability levels and interests and are attracting tourists from around the country. Source: Design Workshop



Colorado Springs mountain biking trails have all the qualities needed to become visitor destinations. Source: Max Taam

... continued Recreational Trails

Recommendation Details

Educating trail users about proper trail etiquette and the importance of staying on established trails through signage, mapping and marketing campaigns can play an important role in reducing social trail development and promoting the re-vegetation of these areas over time.

A total of 32.4 miles of trail maintenance needs have been identified through the planning process. The top locations to prioritize for trail repair and maintenance include:

Trail Name: The Rock Island Trail Corridor (Tier 1)
Segment Length (Maintenance Portion): 3.54 Miles
Segment: from Circle Drive to Powers Road

Trail Name: Pikes Peak Greenway Trail North (Tier 1)
Segment Length (Maintenance Portion): 1.45 Miles
Segment: From the proposed extension of the Rock Creek Trail south to Uintah Street.

Trail Name: Pikes Peak Greenway Trail South (Tier 1)
Segment Length (Maintenance Portion): 2.66 Miles
Segment: Spring Creek Reach - from the intersection with Shooks Run Trail to the city's boundary (and then continuing on the County's Fountain Creek Trail for an additional 6.72 miles).

Trail Name: Pikes Peak Greenway Trail East (Tier 1)
Segment Length (Maintenance Portion): 2.05 Miles
Segment: Monument Valley Park Reach - East side of Monument Valley Park from Boulder Crescent pedestrian bridge north to meet the existing pavement near East Monroe Street.

Trail Name: Shooks Run Trail (Tier I)
Segment Length (Maintenance Portion): 1.75 Miles
Segment: From the Rock Island Trail beginning to the east of downtown and running south to Uintah Street

Trail Name: Palmer Mesa Trail (Tier 2)
Segment Length (Maintenance Portion): 1.68 Miles
Segment: (Mesa Road South Reach) From Fontanero Road to Uintah St.

Trail Name: Sand Creek Trail South
Segment Length (Maintenance Portion): 7.94 Miles
Segment: From Academy Boulevard North to Airport Road and North east to Powers Road

Trail Name: Sand Creek Trail North
Segment Length (Maintenance Portion): 2.53 Miles
Segment: From Stetson Hills Boulevard to where the trail currently ends just north of Dublin Boulevard

Trail Name: Midland Trail
Segment Length (Maintenance Portion): 0.58 Miles
Segment: Northwest of Pikes Peak Avenue for .58 miles

Trail Name: Foothills Trail
Segment Length (Maintenance Portion): 0.37 Miles
Segment: North end of 31st Street to the intersection with Gateway Road

... continued Recreational Trails

Recommendation Details

IMPROVE STREET CROSSINGS IN CRITICAL LOCATIONS TO ENHANCE CONNECTIVITY

There are a number of intersections throughout the community that should be prioritized for grade separated crossings and/or intersection improvement to enhance the safety and ease of using the City's off-street trail system. This is a key consideration in improving access to park and open space properties where high traffic roadways create a significant barrier to access. Critical crossings are identified in Map 26 with the general priority that was established through the public engagement process and projects that are currently in the works. Each crossing should be evaluated on a case by case basis for appropriate treatments and best practices that address safety and mobility and are cost effective. The proactive cooperation and coordination between the PR&CS Department, Public Works, CDOT, PPACG and El Paso County Transportation is essential to completing the identified crossing improvements.

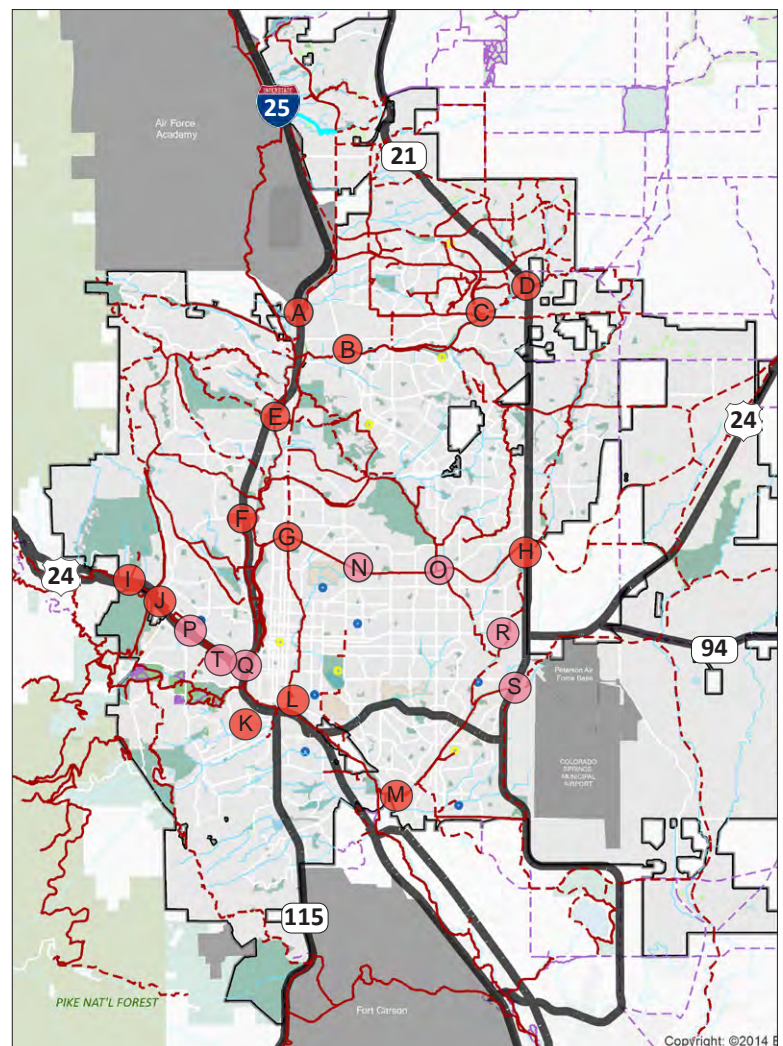
Short Term Priorities:

- A. Skyline North Reach Trail at Woodmen Rd and I-25
- B. Cottonwood Creek Trail at North Academy Blvd
- C. Woodmen Trail at East Woodmen Rd and Austin Bluffs Parkway
- D. Cottonwood Creek Trail at HWY 21
- E. Ute Valley Trail at I-25
- F. Mesa Springs Greenway at I-25
- G. Shooks Run Trail and Rock Island Trail at Lilac Street
- H. Sand Creek Trail and Rock Island Trail at Highway 21
- I. Manitou Springs Trail at Highway 24
- J. Foothills Trail and Midland Trail at Highway 24
- K. Pikes Peak Greenway Trail at Highway 24
- L. Spring Creek Trail at Highway 24 and Hancock Ex
- M. Sand Creek Trail at Las Vegas Street
- N. Rock Island Trail at North Union Boulevard

Mid Term Priorities:

- O. Homestead Trail and Rock Island Trail at North Academy Boulevard
- P. Foothills Trail at Highway 24
- Q. Midland Trail at I-25
- R. Sand Creek Trail at East Platte Ave
- S. East Fork Sand Creek Trail and Powers Trail at HWY 21
- T. South 8th Street and West Colorado Avenue

Map 26: Intersection Improvement Priorities



- Short Term Priority
- Mid-Term Priority
- Existing Trails
- - - Proposed Trails
- City of Colorado Springs

BROADEN, ENHANCE AND PROMOTE RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

Recreation Opportunities

Overview

A greater diversity in recreation interests and demographic changes in Colorado Springs has created a need for the City to consider its role in providing facilities. Historically the PR&CS Department's primary focus was on the provision of sports facilities and youth programs, however there is a growing interest from people of all ages in outdoor/nature and extreme sport activities that take advantage of the city's mountain setting. As is the condition in the rest of the country, Colorado Springs must serve an aging, yet active population of retirees who are looking for activities that suit their interests and abilities. The City must also provide amenities that attract young professionals and businesses, many of whom are looking for locations to live and work where the focus is on a high quality of life, including the availability, quality and variety of parks and recreation amenities. Providing facilities that address all of these trends and user groups is key to meeting the recreation needs of the entire Colorado Springs community.



Memorial Park Skate Park is a professionally designed and constructed competition-size skate facility serving skaters, skateboarders and BMX bikers. Source: City of Colorado Springs

Recommendations

- Accommodate non-traditional/emerging trends that showcase the special characteristics of the Colorado Springs region. These opportunities provide highly desired community recreation facilities as well as encourage tourism and economic development:
 - Address the demand for emerging mountain/extreme sport facilities by establishing designated areas on properties where the environment will not be negatively impacted and where new uses are compatible with existing park and open space uses. Some of the emerging trends to accommodate include: mountain bike park(s), disc golf course(s), downhill skateboarding, BMX biking, fat bike trails, dog-friendly parks and trails, rock climbing, challenge races, and places to access natural waterways for fishing and boating. These topics are addressed in more depth under Recommendation Details.
 - Explore the potential to partner with the U.S. Hang Gliding & Paragliding Association, located in Colorado Springs, to establish a launch and landing site for training.
 - Strengthen community connections to the U.S. Olympics headquarters and the many world-class athletes that reside in Colorado Springs by exploring opportunities for athlete public demonstrations, events, and endorsement of the trail and park system.
- Address the recreation needs of changing demographics by developing facilities to serve the City's population:
 - Examples of facilities that serve the older adult population include outdoor gyms or fitness playgrounds, ADA accessible walking paths, pickleball, community gardens and more passive recreation opportunities such as wildlife viewing. Adding equipment that is comparable to what can be found in an indoor workout facility to parks or along trails can increase usage by this demographic, while helping to increase physical activity as well as encourage interactions in the outdoors. New facilities should be located to take advantage of the greatest number of senior residents, primarily in the center of the city to the east of downtown.

...continued Recreation Opportunities

Recommendations

- Higher education opportunities and military bases already position Colorado Springs to attract the Millennial Generation (born between 1982 and 2000) and young professionals. The city may retain this demographic by providing neighborhoods that have an active restaurant/retail scene complemented by parks and recreation. This age group tends to be interested in recreation and leisure activities that encourage socialization and teamwork such as community gardens, disc golf, group fitness and team sports.
- As population numbers continue to grow, so too does the need to meet demand for neighborhood/community parks and sports facilities. The City should continue to ensure that recreation facilities for traditional individual and team sports facilities with historically maintained levels of service to keep pace with population growth are provided. Re-evaluate the needs of the community as new parks are developed.
 - As new neighborhood and community parks are developed or redeveloped throughout the city, the need for traditional sport facilities should be evaluated during the individual park master planning process. Some identified needs to be addressed in the near term include lacrosse specific fields, indoor soccer facilities and other types of playing fields and sports courts.
 - Develop multi-purpose facilities where practical to meet changes in facility needs over time – Evaluate if multi-purpose facilities can meet the identified sport specific needs of the community, allowing for greater flexibility over time. For example, sports fields should be planned to be able to accommodate multiple sports such as football, soccer and lacrosse and outdoor and indoor sports courts may be able to serve both tennis and pickleball.
- Strategies, locations and alternatives for different facility types should be evaluated based on appropriate locations, synergies with other park activities, potential partnerships and cost effectiveness. Often the operations and maintenance costs of these types of facilities can be high, necessitating that the City undertake a comprehensive needs assessment and evaluation process which includes the community and City leaders before committing to the development of a specific facility.



The City's spraygrounds draw in crowds on hot summer days. Source: City of Colorado Springs

... continued Recreation Opportunities

Recommendation Details

Citywide Emerging Trends / Identified Facility Needs:

DISC GOLF

Work with interest groups to establish a site and construct one to two signature disc golf courses. Currently, the city and the larger region do not offer enough disc golf facilities to meet resident use patterns. There are two dedicated facilities, at Cottonwood Creek Park and at Widefield Park, which were established in the 1990s. The City is currently addressing the increased needs of the disc golf community in Colorado Springs. Four sites which meet the criteria for a course have been identified. Individual neighborhood meetings are being held in 2014 to gauge receptiveness. If the sites identified in the initial planning process do not gain traction, the City will examine other City-owned properties that are conducive to disc golf. The design of these facilities should take tournament play into consideration, as hosting disc golf events have the potential to attract new visitors to the city. El Paso County also identified in their 2013 Parks Master Plan the need for disc golf as a priority to provide new facilities. Opportunities should be explored for partnership.



Disc Golf players throughout the region are looking for more places to play. Source: Towne Post Network (Creative Commons)

MOUNTAIN BIKE PARK

The City should work with existing user groups and non-profit organizations to begin the process of establishing criteria for potential sites, fundraising, and understanding different facility needs for the development of a mountain bike park. The PR&CS Department should look at the suitability of existing park lands and other City properties for the development of a minimum of one and possibly two mountain bike parks within the city to serve different geographic areas, interests and abilities.

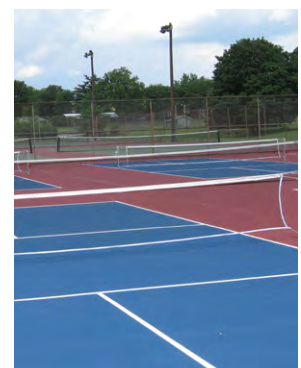


Valmont Bike Park in Boulder, Colorado provides opportunities of all ages and abilities. Source: Dave Wright Photography (Creative Commons)

PICKLEBALL COURTS

Pickleball is one of the fastest growing sports in the United States and is especially popular among older adults in Colorado Springs. The sport attracts people from different backgrounds and is ideal for all ages and ability levels. The game is played on a badminton size court with the net lowered to 34 inches with a perforated plastic ball and wood or composite paddles.

The City is undertaking a process to identify specific needs of this user group and compatible locations on existing City properties or opportunities for partnerships. Appropriate locations are likely to be in close proximity to where active seniors are living within the city. Some of the elements to consider when siting potential pickleball facilities include wind, opportunities to permanently convert underutilized tennis courts, ball contact noise concerns with neighbors, and shared use opportunities for restrooms, parking and other amenities. Additionally, user groups have identified the need for a location to host larger tournaments.



Pickleball Courts are about one-third the size of a tennis court and use a lower net. Source: John Beagle (Creative Commons)

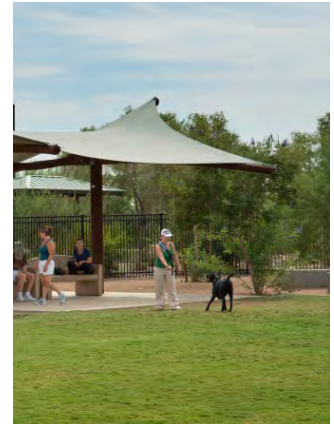
... continued Recreation Opportunities

Recommendation Details

DOG PARKS

Dog parks continue to increase in popularity and there is currently unmet demand within the Colorado Springs community for additional dog off leash areas. The City has an existing level of service for dog parks of one dog park per 74,497 residents, while the average for other Front Range communities evaluated is about one per 42,000 residents.

Re-evaluate open space areas and regional facilities to see if there are specific areas where an off-leash dog policy can be allowed without compromising natural resources, wildlife activity or current use patterns. Identify City parks and trails in which conflicts with off-leash dogs and other park users has a negative impact on park experiences. Conflicts should be addressed by providing alternative sites specific for off-leash dogs and education and enforcement of existing rules. The size and location of dog parks should be carefully evaluated to serve the needs and desires of the community. Locations for additional dog parks to serve the growing population should be considered as development occurs along the city's eastern edge.



Dog parks provide places within urban areas where dogs can play off leash. Source: Design Workshop

FISHING AREAS

PR&CS should look for opportunities to partner with Colorado Springs Utilities to provide access to natural creeks and waterways where the recreation activity will not interfere with the primary purpose of utility provision. A primary area to explore this type of arrangement in close proximity to the city is at the Southern Delivery System (SDS) Project / Upper Williams Creek Reservoir anticipated for completion in 2016.

WINTER SPORTS

Unreliable snowfall limits the number of opportunities to formalize winter sports within the city limits. However in areas along the mountain backdrop, such as the North Slope Recreation Area, opportunities for trail based winter activities such as snowshoeing, cross-country skiing and fat biking (snow specific mountain biking with wider tires and specialized bikes) should be encouraged. The City should work with user groups to improve facilities for these uses where feasible and should explore partnerships with USFS and Colorado Springs Utilities to expand winter sport opportunities in the foothills.



Ice skating and hockey programs at Sertich Ice Rink have continued to be popular activities for Colorado Springs residents. Source: QueenYuna (Creative Commons)

If an appropriate location can be identified with sufficient snow the City might consider working with a vendor to provide tubing or sledding serving Colorado Springs' youth. The City should maintain their current pathway policy to plow Tier 1 pathways within 24 hours of a snowfall event, though the City has received requests to leave the snow on pathways following large snow events for the purpose of cross country skiing or snow shoeing, this is not compatible with the dual transportation needs these pathways serve for both commuting and recreation.

ICE ARENA

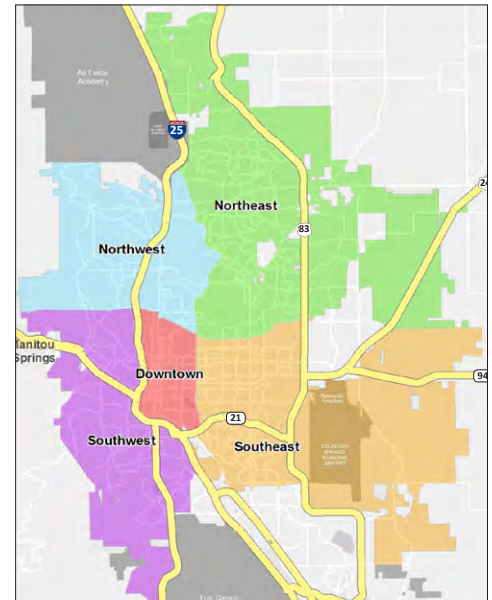
The City should continue to pursue the development of a second sheet of ice at Sertich Ice Arena to meet growing demand. By adding a second sheet of ice to the existing facility, the City would enhance the economic viability and revenue generation at a much smaller cost than building a new facility.

... continued Recreation Opportunities

Recommendation Details

CITY DISTRICT RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

While a citywide approach to addressing recreation trends and emerging community needs is essential, the planning process evaluated each of the five districts' satisfaction with current recreation opportunities and residents' desire for additional facilities. Public input provided indications for some facilities and activities that would be of interest to add over the next 10 years to the distinct districts within the city. The following list reflects the top activities and facilities identified at the public meeting and in the subsequent online survey. PR&CS should strive to provide a balance of both passive and active park spaces within each district to account for the neighborhood's specific needs and user groups. When designing and repurposing park properties PR&CS should be sensitive and responsive to the surrounding context and the appropriateness of the proposed activities being considered.



Northwest District



- Disc Golf
- Community Garden
- Mountain Bike Park
- New Community Park
- Off-Leash Dog Park
- Outdoor Education Center
- Outdoor Sports Court
- Pickleball Courts
- Skateboard Park

Northeast District



- Developing Planned Parks
- Disc Golf
- Fishing Areas
- Gathering Spaces
- Off-leash Dog Park
- Outdoor Soccer Field
- Pickleball Courts
- Playground
- Special Event Space

Downtown District



- Amphitheater
- Disc Golf
- Community Center
- Community Garden
- Ice Arena
- Pickleball Courts
- Off-Leash Dog Park
- Outdoor Sports Areas
- Swimming Facility

Southeast District



- Disc Golf
- Community Center
- Community Garden
- Fishing Area
- Mountain Bike Park
- New Community Park
- Outdoor Sports Field
- Pickleball Courts

Southwest District



- Disc Golf
- Mountain Biking Park
- Mountain Winter Sports
- New Community Park
- Outdoor Education
- Rock Climbing
- Skateboard Park
- Swimming Facility

BROADEN, ENHANCE AND PROMOTE RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

Programs and Activities Opportunities

Overview

The PR&CS Department offers a wide variety of recreation programming services including athletics, fitness and aquatics. These programs utilize City staff and facilities in partnership with community non-profits. Overall, the community is satisfied with the recreation programming and activities offered. However, over the last few years the level of funding for the City's programs has been uncertain. Financial uncertainties have kept the PR&CS Department from developing new programs or expanding their services. If consistent funding sources recommended in this plan are developed in tandem with creative partnerships, recreation programs should become more sustainable. Reliable funding sources will enable the Department to expand program offerings. Family activities, outdoor / environmental education, youth sports, aquatics and cultural arts are all program activities PR&CS should continue to provide, expand upon or improve in the coming years. A strategy also needs to be established to accommodate the growing number of active retired seniors and the increase in demand for recreation programs this group is likely to generate.



Over 10,000 youth participate in PR&CS sports and partnership programs annually. Source: City of Colorado Springs

Recommendations

- Continue to provide recreation and sports programs and build partnerships for children, youth and adults.
 - Existing sports programs and leagues should continue to be provided through City run programs or outside providers contracting with the City, including: soccer, football, tennis, golf, swimming, volleyball, ice skating and hockey.
 - Aquatics:
Youth and senior aquatics programs should continue to be provided to the community as these programs have historically experienced the greatest levels of participation. Continue the partnership with the YMCA of the Pikes Peak Region to operate the City's aquatic sites (Cottonwood Creek Recreation Center, Memorial Park Recreation Center, Wilson Ranch Pool, Portal Pool, Monument Valley Pool and the Prospect Lake Beach/Bath House.
 - Fitness Programs:
Fitness classes and activities should target all age groups. Ensure that the continuum of fitness needs and abilities are addressed as seniors transition from their 60s to their 90s and beyond. Activities include fitness classes, aquatics and nature walks, as well as other lifestyle programs to encourage social interactions, health awareness, crafts and hobbies.
- Expand outdoor/nature education and programming and include partners such as schools and nature organizations.
 - Engage younger generations in outdoor programs. Look for ways to integrate technology with traditional recreation and nature. Youth are increasingly interested in technological outlets creating opportunities for activities like geocaching with global positioning systems (GPS) as a way to engage this generation as well as younger generations in the outdoors.
 - Partner with local universities to create a Park / Nature Appreciation Day in local grade schools and high schools for youth to participate in different elements of the park system that are age appropriate.

...continued Programs and Activities Opportunities

Recommendations

Lessons can focus on developing “Leave no Trace” ethics, respect and responsibility for nature and the importance of becoming stewards of the environment, among many other topics.

- Locations where the community has expressed interest in seeing environmental education or interpretive programs include: Ute Valley Park, Red Rock Canyon Open Space, Bluestem Prairie Open Space, Fountain Creek and Jimmy Camp Creek.
 - Develop programs that are suitable for families to participate in together, these might be environmental / outdoor focused or natural history/heritage programs within the City’s parks and open spaces.
- Continue to provide and expand programs for people with special needs through the Therapeutic Recreation Program (TRP).
 - The community highly values these services. Programs for both physical and mental disabilities cover a wide range of activities with a vision to increase independence, self-esteem, physical development and quality of life for children and adults.
 - Opportunities currently provided include arts and culture; sports, fitness and aquatics; social enrichment; community integration/leisure education; and outdoor adventures.
 - The Paralympic Sport Club focuses on providing various sports clubs and special events throughout the year for community members and injured service members with visual and physical disabilities.
 - Consider expanding offerings with a program specifically targeted to serve elderly populations.
 - Establish cost recovery policies and expectations for City programs and activities. Create a distinction between the programs for which it is not realistic to expect fees to cover the cost of providing the program and those that should be covered by user fees. Undertake stakeholder discussions to determine the appropriate role of PR&CS and recreation clubs or providers.

BROADEN, ENHANCE AND PROMOTE RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

Cultural Services

Overview

The Cultural Services Division is charged with preserving and interpreting the area’s cultural and natural history. The division’s programs and facilities increase awareness and appreciation of the area’s unique landscapes, natural resources, wildlife and history. These elements play an important role in local and regional education, but also serve as a tool for tourism by enhancing the visitor experience of the parks system. As the City continues to develop its brand, the culturally significant elements of the city should come to the forefront.



Cultural Services works to help citizens and visitors learn about the region’s wide variety of landscapes, natural resources, wildlife and history. Source: City of Colorado Springs

Recommendations

- Educate citizens and visitors about the cultural significance of Colorado Springs’ geologic and natural features. These resources represent the evolution of the surface of the earth and possess a natural beauty that can only be found in the Pikes Peak region. Colorado Springs’ natural resources are a key part of the City’s identity and need to be promoted as such.
- Develop a strategic plan for cultural resources in parks and open space so they may be preserved and interpreted consistently.
- Pursue opportunities to cross-educate and cross-promote the city as culturally rich in the traditional sense, but also reinforce the idea that natural features are an important part of its cultural history.
- Expand Colorado Springs interpretive and wayfinding signage programs to make cultural sites part of the recreation experience and allow community members and visitors to navigate the city’s cultural resources.
- Develop “Nature in the City” programs to increase natural exploration and promote access to natural resources. Natural resource tours or “nature walks” should be included in the Walking Tours program, which currently provides historic tour guides.
- Preserve and enhance the extensive collection of artifacts and documents that illustrate the region’s heritage at the Pioneer’s Museum.

BROADEN, ENHANCE AND PROMOTE RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

Tourism Enhancement Opportunities

Overview

The success of tourism has a significant impact on Colorado Springs' economy. Today, the region attracts 5.5 million overnight visitors a year, spending 1.2 billion dollars. These visitors generate more than \$35 million in local taxes. Tourism can continue to be a driver of socioeconomic progress in Colorado Springs through the accumulation of community revenue, the creation of jobs and enterprises, and infrastructure development. Parks, recreation, cultural services, trails and the open space system represent key components to the branding of Colorado Springs as a destination city and attracting tourists.

Trends in tourism indicate that travelers today are looking for memorable experiences as opposed to just rest and leisure. Millennials are more likely to travel in pursuit of favorite interests or activities while the most important factor in travel to seniors is customer service and quality of facilities.

Colorado Springs has a rich history as a tourist destination, known for natural beauty and historic parks, as well as recreation and outdoor adventure. Economic development efforts are most successful when they are authentic and expand on the qualities that already exist within a community. Building the City's identity as a recreation and outdoor adventure destination reflects the need for a citywide understanding about the importance of parks, trails and open space maintenance and management. Additionally, a robust collaboration between the PR&CS, the Communications Department, surrounding recreation areas such as Pikes Peak-America's Mountain, and the Colorado Springs Visitors Bureau will help to simultaneously promote both the city and its parklands. This Master Plan enhances these opportunities by conserving, restoring and managing the city's recreational, natural and historic resources to ensure that these areas will remain attractive to visitors for years to come.



*Tourist attractions such as the Balloon Classic at Memorial Park have a positive impact on Colorado Springs' economy.
Source: City of Colorado Springs*

Recommendations

- Include City parks, recreation and cultural features in a marketing program with the goal of branding Colorado Springs where community members are "Champions of the Outdoors." Colorado Springs should be known as the city for adventure and recreation tourism.
- Promote the flora, fauna, geology and cultural heritage of Colorado Springs as primary attractions for Eco-tourists. Jimmy Camp Regional Park and Corral Bluffs Open Space should be the primary locations to enhance eco-tourism offerings.
- Promote Colorado Springs as an ideal host city for environmental and nature-based institutions and associations searching for conference and convention locations.

... continued Tourism Enhancement Opportunities

Recommendations

- Use cross-marketing to promote the City Parks System and enhance national, regional and local partnerships.
 - When people visit the city for a race, recreation event or youth sports competition, they want to know what other opportunities, events, museums, and sites they can visit during their stay. Likewise, those in town for a concert, food event, or conference want to know what park events, trails, and open spaces they can visit. Combining forces with the Colorado Springs Communications Department, the Colorado Springs Visitors Bureau and the Colorado Springs Sports Corporation will help PR&CS create a cross-marketing strategy that includes a parks, recreation, trails and natural areas Event Calendar.
- Develop a strategic schedule for sports tournaments, competitions and events to increase tourism and create synergies with existing facilities.
- Develop mobile applications to locate parks, trails, and open space and enhance experiences through story-telling.
- Leverage opportunities for Olympic presence and the Rocky Mountain State Games to be a part of athletic events. Sports, outdoor activities, extreme sports and a community focus on physical fitness should all be emphasized to attract special events organizers to choose Colorado Springs. Parks, trails, and recreation facilities for these activities must be in excellent condition and function with event purposes in mind to continue to attract premier athletic events.
- Create opportunities for shoulder season events to encourage activities at times when parks are less used.
- The PR&CS Department should establish a policy allowing for programmed events/activities within open space lands as long as the natural and cultural resource values are not impacted.

There's an App for That...

The importance of mobile technology to the health and vitality of Colorado Springs' tourism industry cannot be underestimated. People used to travel with guidebooks, maps, brochures and other printed materials. Now, mobile applications, or "apps," have become tourism's best ally for acquiring new customers and retaining old ones. Apps created specifically for Colorado Springs will make the City more accessible, more inviting, and easier to navigate as a destination city.

4. CONTINUE OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION IN ADVANCE OF DEVELOPMENT

Continue the Success of TOPS

Overview

A central feature of what attracts residents and visitors to Colorado Springs is the conservation of open lands and natural areas within and surrounding the city. Open Space lands contribute to Colorado Springs' economic vitality, water management, recreation, habitat preservation, locally grown food sources, and sense of place. Open spaces to be considered for conservation are not defined solely by the absence of development, but by the presence of natural resource values and community wide benefits.

In 1996, an Open Space Plan was established to conserve key lands in advance of development. Much has been accomplished since then to conserve vital lands targeted in the plan, however an equal amount of the lands identified have been developed and forever changed. Many of the 1996 plan's remaining Candidate Open Space Areas remain in need of protection.

In July 1997, following the recommendation of the Colorado Springs Open Space Master Plan, residents voted to approve a 1/10th of 1 percent (1 cent on a \$10 purchase) sales tax for trails, open space and parks, establishing the TOPS open space conservation program. Based on the program's success, in 2003, voters approved to extend the program through 2025. The community's support for these efforts through the approval of the tax is testament to the importance the community places on continuing to preserve and maintain Colorado Springs' natural features, habitats and recreation areas.

Since its establishment in 1997 TOPS has:

Conserved 6,178 acres of Open Space

Built over 32 Neighborhood Parks

Constructed over 46 miles of Urban Trails

Funded \$46,164,050 for 13 open space projects

Leveraged \$26,229,667 matching funds in the form of grants and donations



Monument Valley Park provides access to nature within the heart of the city. Source: City of Colorado Springs

Recommendations

- Increase TOPS funding to achieve greater levels of financial support. Conduct focus groups and surveys to determine the likelihood of support for an increase to the TOPS one cent tax. If the tax increase is supported by community members, determine the appropriate language for the ballot measure.
- Continue to use TOPS funds for their primary role for land acquisition and stewardship. It is in the City's best interest to continue to purchase land for open space and parks as it becomes available and work with interested sellers when opportunities arise, as prices are likely to continue to increase and may become unattainable in the future. No alternative funding source is likely to be successful like TOPS in creating funds for open space conservation. While keeping the primary intent in-tact, carefully evaluate the potential demand for funds and right-size the percentages to meet these needs.

Recommendations

- Create a public campaign to promote the TOPS program through education and recognition of program accomplishments and identification of the benefits these lands represent. Encouraging residents to support TOPS, as their important contribution to the community and stewardship makes them “Champions of the Outdoors.” Strategies may include signs posted at the properties to acknowledge the community contribution (e.g Your TOPS Funds at work) and promotion through media campaigns. The Town of Crested Butte, Colorado placed signs in restaurants to educate patrons about the use of the sales tax for open space conservation. This is one example of a successful promotional campaign. Posters for local businesses that highlight themes such as “Buy local, support open space” or “Your purchase supports your open space” raise awareness about the existing TOPS program.
- Develop a strategy well in advance of TOPS sunset in 2025 to renew the program. Determine if the public might support approving the TOPS program in perpetuity.



Red Rock Canyon Open Space is an example of the incredible lands and resources that the TOPS program has been able to purchase and make available to the public. Source: City of Colorado Springs

CONTINUE OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION IN ADVANCE OF DEVELOPMENT

Filling in the Gaps in the Open Space Network

Overview

Expanding the open space network by filling in its gaps will build on one of the most desirable and attractive elements of Colorado Springs. Open space should be planned for and conserved through a variety of methods based on the principles of environmental conservation including: conserving large, contiguous areas of native vegetation, protecting rare landscape elements and significant natural features, and maintaining connections between open space areas by identifying and protecting corridors for wildlife movement. Much of the City of Colorado Springs Open Space lands adhere to the principle that conservation lands function better biologically in large land reserves rather than in many small separated land tracts. However, additional conservation is needed to avoid fragmentation of these land reserves and to bolster their ecological integrity.

The presence of natural and cultural resources constitutes the basis of identification of future Candidate Open Space Areas. Geographic Information Systems data has been utilized to identify lands (largely vacant or undeveloped) containing biodiversity, wildlife habitat, wetlands, riparian areas, topographic features / steep slopes, floodplains and cultural resources. Open space conservation should be pursued for these candidate areas using all of the various methods available to the City.

The City is fortunate to still have so much land worthy of open space protection consideration. Since 1997, approximately 25 percent of the candidate open space areas identified have been preserved, another 25 percent have been lost to development, and the remaining 50 percent are potential priority candidates for open space conservation.



*Corral Bluffs Open Space was purchased in 2008 with TOPS funds and provides important open space along the eastern edge of the city.
Source: Corral Bluffs Alliance - www.corralbluffs.org*

Recommendations

- Pursue the conservation of the 20,360 acres of Candidate Open Space Areas within the city's boundaries as identified in Map 27: Open Space Master Plan. Almost 5,000 additional acres have been identified for conservation that are beyond the city's boundaries. The identified candidate open space areas combine to create the City's Conceptual Open Space Network (in light blue), which illustrates how the parcels can be linked to create a continuous network of open space around the city's perimeter.
- Fill in the gaps in the City of Colorado Springs open space ring to create a network of lands that are interconnected for greater biodiversity, wildlife movement and scenic protection. This open space ring effectively directs development inward and reduces future inefficient, outward development sprawl.
- Continue to pursue opportunities for partnerships and regional coordination, with a specific focus on conservation of the 7,353 acres of Candidate Open Space Areas located outside of the city limits.
 - Continue to work with the surrounding communities and El Paso County, especially in areas where interests or opportunities of individual jurisdictions overlap. Leveraging financial and other resources to conserve larger parcels, providing greater value, may be feasible through these partnerships, providing shared benefits for both communities.
 - Continue to work with the Palmer Land Trust for open space conservation.
 - Pursue the increased use of conservation easements as an important method for protecting both public and private open space in perpetuity. Purchasing conservation easements as an alternative to fee simple acquisition can be a less expensive tool to protect natural resources, maintain viable agricultural operations, and share management responsibilities with other entities.

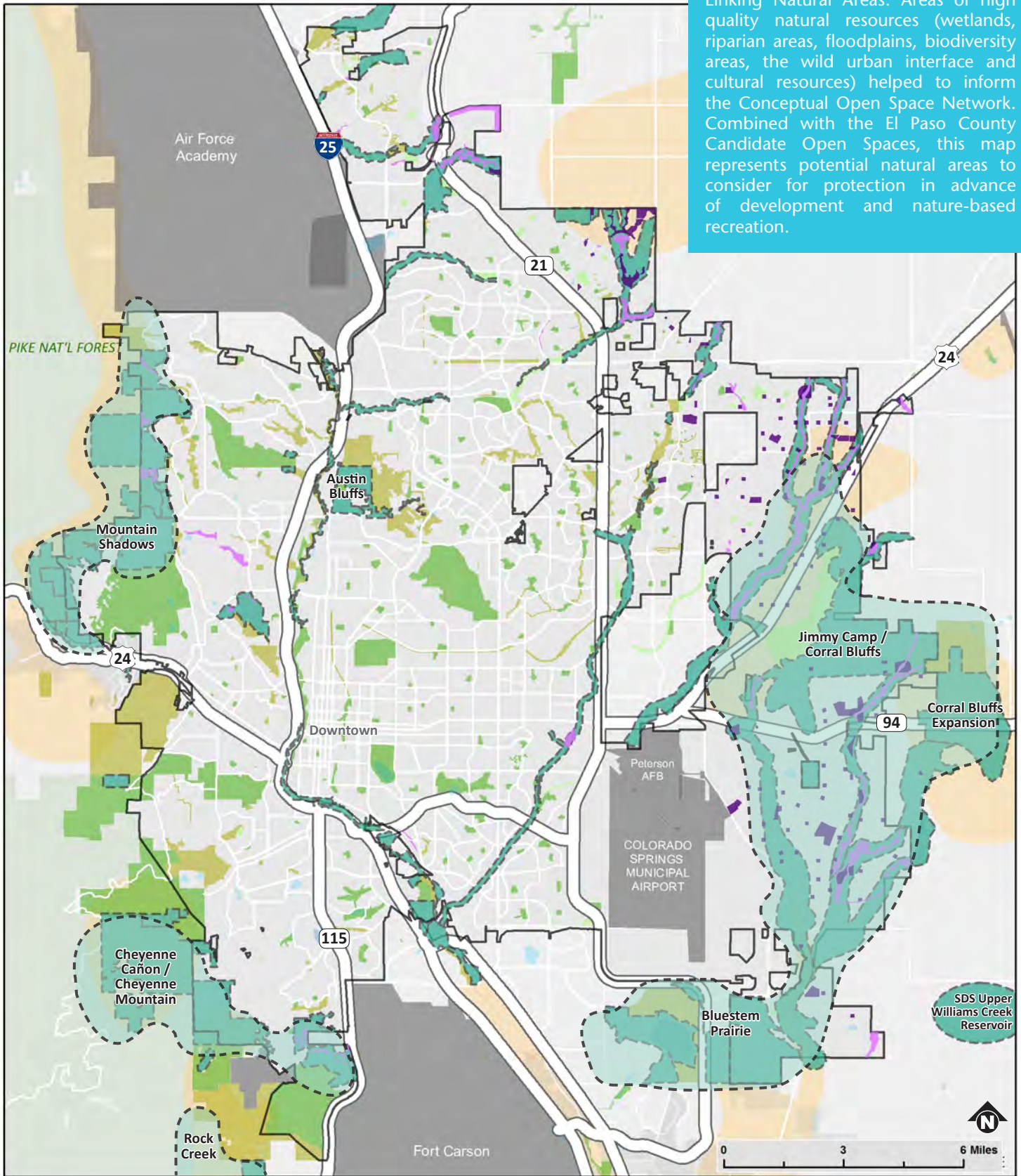
...continued Filling in the Gaps in the Open Space Network

Recommendations

- Potential acquisition priorities should be based on the primary ecological services (tied directly to the natural environment) and secondary purposes (supplemental community values) established in the 1996 Open Space Plan. The primary and secondary criteria listed below can be used to evaluate preservation of open spaces not specifically identified on the open space map.
 - Primary purposes include: protection of environmental features, wildlife habitat, significant vegetation and water resources; also important to the City's pursuit of open space is the potential for provision of recreational and educational opportunities and the protection of visual resources.
 - Secondary purposes of open space are those that represent important community values that are not directly tied to the natural environment. These supplemental purposes serve in addition to or in conjunction with the primary purposes, but should not be the only reason for the purchase of open space. Secondary purposes include: protection of cultural resources, protection from environmental hazards, urban shaping and buffering, agriculture and adjacency to existing parcels.
 - Open space areas representative of Colorado Springs' main natural area types should be targeted for conservation. These include grasslands, bluffs and mesas, foothills, and stream corridors or riparian areas. Public access and recreational opportunities should be provided in locations where these activities can be managed in tandem with conservation efforts.
- Work with Colorado Springs Utilities (CSU) to identify CSU lands that have natural value for use as open space and seek a partnership to jointly manage these lands to conserve their natural values. Determine if public access might be possible on these lands for recreation purposes.
- Work with CSU to determine if a joint partnership is feasible to create water-based recreation opportunities at SDS Reservoir.
- Though the TOPS program has become one of the main sources of funding for open space acquisition within the city and its continuation is crucial for the success of the open space program, other available financial and administrative resources should also be used for the conservation of open space areas. The City should make the widest possible use of public and private resources for land conservation. Opportunities include public/private partnerships, regulatory approaches, leveraging funds for matched contributions and grants, utilizing conservation easement mechanisms, and utilizing volunteer and pro bono expertise.

Map 27: Open Space Candidate Areas

Linking Natural Areas: Areas of high quality natural resources (wetlands, riparian areas, floodplains, biodiversity areas, the wild urban interface and cultural resources) helped to inform the Conceptual Open Space Network. Combined with the El Paso County Candidate Open Spaces, this map represents potential natural areas to consider for protection in advance of development and nature-based recreation.



- | | |
|---|---|
|  Candidate Open Space Area |  Pike National Forest |
|  El Paso County Candidate Open Space |  Park Lands (City and Special District) |
|  Conceptual Open Space Network |  Open Space/Special Resource Area/Greenway |
|  Master Planned Future Park |  Undeveloped Park Land (City and Special District) |
|  Master Planned Future Open Space |  City Limits |

...continued Filling in the Gaps in the Open Space Network

Recommendation Details

The general areas (identified on Map 27: Open Space in light blue) are the primary areas identified to target for conservation in order to improve existing open spaces by avoiding fragmentation and adding to their value.

MOUNTAIN SHADOWS

Candidate Open Space Size: 2,117 acres within city limits and 1,160 acres within the County

Area Classification: Foothills

Description: The Mountain Shadows Candidate Area stretches from the southern edge of the Blodgett Peak Open Space to the northern edge of Highway 24 along the foothills bordering the Pike National Forest. This area includes large land holdings such as the Flying W Ranch, Queens Canyon (public access is currently allowed, but there is no guarantee this will continue indefinitely), and Williams Canyon. Additional conservation of lands in this area offer potential to extend open space and trail connectivity, serve growing recreational demands of city residents, and provide additional connections to the Pike National Forest. This area includes important habitat for the Golden Eagle and known use areas for the Townsend's Big-eared Bat, a species of State Special Concern. The foothills area is also within the City's Wild Urban Interface designation, where there is high potential for wild land fires. The area is important to conserve due to the visual impacts of development in relation to this landscape type, unique habitats provided by the transition zone between diverse attributes of the plains and mountain attributes.

CHEYENNE CAÑON / CHEYENNE MOUNTAIN

Candidate Open Space Size: 1,308 acres within city limits and 1,889 acres within the County

Area Classification: Foothills

Description: The Cheyenne Canyon Candidate Area is located in the southwest corner of Colorado Springs and extends into County lands adjacent to the city boundary. The area identified begins at the southern edge of North Cheyenne Canyon Park and follows the city boundary on the southeast to the northern edge of Cheyenne Mountain State Park, just west of the northern end of the Fort Carson Military Reservation. It sits at the ecozone between the prairie grasslands of the Great Plains and the lower montane foothill forests of the Front Range. As a result, it supports a very diverse array of flora and fauna. Habitats for the Burrowing Owl (a State Threatened Species); Ferruginous Hawk, Mountain Plover and the Swift Fox, as well as some significant riparian areas are encompassed by this Candidate Area. It is one of the most significant areas for biodiversity in close proximity to the city, as identified by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program, where multiple rare plants and bird species are found.

ROCK CREEK

Candidate Open Space Size: 155 acres (within the County)

Area Classification: Foothills

Description: The Rock Creek Candidate Area is located along the southern and western edges of the existing Cheyenne Mountain State Park and Open Space and the Rock Creek drainage area/basin. It is primarily evergreen forest and has been identified as a potential conservation area by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program due to its high biodiversity significance. It overlaps with El Paso County's identified open space potential area around Blue Mountain. The area is a potential use area for species of State Special Concern or under threat including the Colorado Checkered Whiptail, Townsend's Big-eared bat, Swift Fox and the Golden Eagle.

BLUESTEM PRAIRIE

Candidate Open Space Size: 1,006 acres within city limits and 1,260 acres within the County

Area Classification: Grassland

Description: The Bluestem Prairie Candidate Area extends to the east and west from the existing Bluestem Prairie Open Space located just south of city limits; it encompasses vacant and agricultural land and includes the Big

...continued Filling in the Gaps in the Open Space Network

Recommendation Details

Johnson Reservoir. Important conservation elements include the expansive stands of relatively rare tall-grass prairie, rolling grasslands with sweeping views of the Front Range and the surrounding high plains. It is highly visible from Powers Boulevard, one of the main routes to the airport, and links directly into the Big Johnson Reservoir, an area which has been identified as a significant conservation resource in El Paso County. The area is identified as having high biodiversity significance by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program, encompassing the largest known occurrence of a Big Bluestem prairie in Colorado. Wildlife habitats for different species of skippers, the Black Tailed Prairie Dog, the Swift Fox and the Golden Eagle are all found in this area. Combining these resources could serve as an outdoor recreation area and open space buffer between Colorado Springs and the City of Fountain

JIMMY CAMP / CORRAL BLUFFS

Candidate Open Space Size: 2,965 acres within city limits

Area Classification: Grassland

Description: This candidate area builds on the land already dedicated as Jimmy Camp Creek Park, a regional park site that is not yet open for public use, in the central portion of Banning Lewis Ranch. While the park site captures many significant natural features, the surrounding area is also environmentally and visually important and could provide important open space linkages. It is highly visible from U.S. Highway 24, a gateway for travelers from eastern Colorado into Colorado Springs. The vegetation is a mix of riparian, mid-grass prairie and extensive Ponderosa Pine forest. The property has moderately significant wildlife habitat. A brief archeological survey in 2008 led to the identification of a site that is recommended to be tested for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. This location has also been a significant site for the study of paleontology, with many fossils found now on display at the Smithsonian, Denver Museum of Natural History and Science (DMNS), and the University of Colorado Museum of Natural History. The DMNS recommends ongoing research, preservation of natural outcrops and exposed and buried fossils, and possible creation of guided trails, interpretive signage and even an interpretive center for the Corral Bluffs area. This location serves as the juncture for the planned extension of the Rock Island Trail and the planned Jimmy Camp Creek Trail.

CORRAL BLUFFS EXPANSION

Candidate Open Space Size: 2,330 acres within the County

Area Classification: Bluffs and Mesa Areas

Description: Land to the south of the existing Corral Bluffs open space is identified as a candidate area for open space expansion. Land features include dramatic bluffs that mark the beginning of the Fountain Creek drainage basin, geologic formations and rock strata. Though the purchase of Corral Bluffs open space marked an important step in preserving some of the bluff's rich archaeological, paleontological, and cultural resources, additional land to the south contains many of these same qualities and is worthy of preservation. Wildlife including the Golden Eagle and the Ferruginous Hawk (species of State Special Concern) are known to be found in this area. The Corral Bluffs expansion area provides abundant opportunities for nature observation and environmental education as well as opportunities for trail connections. Furthermore, expansion in this area and balancing resource protection with recreation and public access can add to the opportunities available on the eastern edge of the city, where fewer parks and open space are currently available with public access.

ADDITIONAL NATURAL AREAS

The candidate areas identified on the open space plan are not exhaustive or exclusive. As more environmental information becomes available, additional areas may be identified through a periodic review process for the plan.

CONTINUE OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION IN ADVANCE OF DEVELOPMENT

Urban Greenway Opportunities for Public Open Space and Trails

Overview

Enhancing existing stream corridors provides the best opportunity to conserve additional open space within urban areas. Expanding open space along the identified corridors and linking these areas together creates “complete creeks” or greenway corridors that serve stormwater needs, enhance recreational trail experiences, and facilitate wildlife movement, the factors that should be considered when creating greenways. This will help maximize the investments in connected open spaces within the interior of the community, rather than conserving individual parcels on an ad hoc basis. Though much of the land adjacent to these corridors is preserved through other mechanisms that have been implemented as a result of previous open space plans (such as the Creek Protection Overlay Zone), expanding these areas through additional open space dedications will have increased benefits for restoring viable habitats and enhancing recreational experiences.

Greenways are linear open spaces primarily following stream corridors which connect cultural and natural areas and provide trails and recreation opportunities.

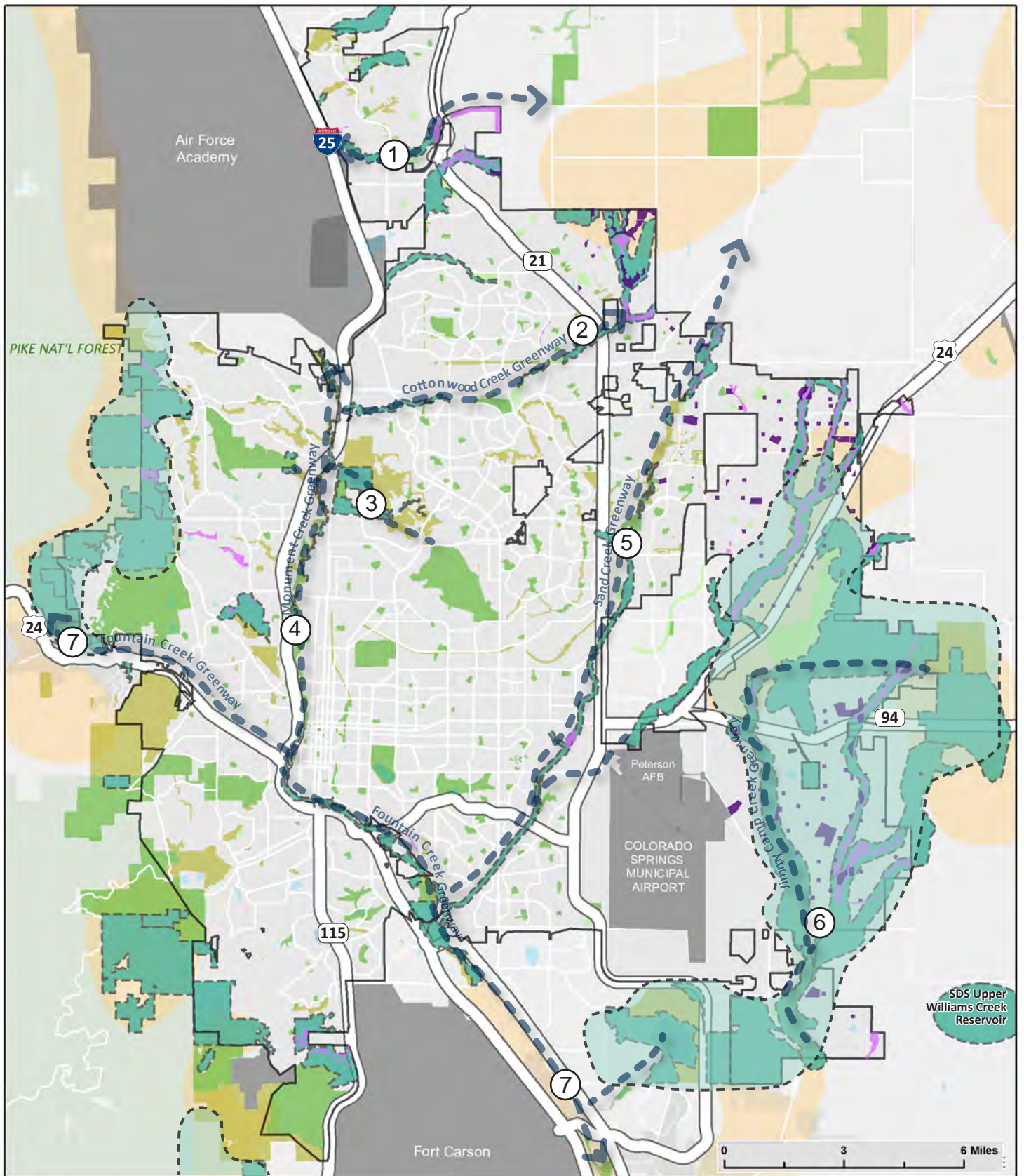


Monument Valley Park Greenway. Source: City of Colorado Springs

Recommendations

- Develop urban waterways as “complete creeks” or greenways with managed natural vegetation and trails, focusing on the following corridors: Black Squirrel Creek, Cottonwood Creek, Mesa Greenway (Park to Peak), Pikes Peak Greenway/Monument Creek, Sand Creek Greenway/Sand Creek East Fork, Lower Jimmy Camp Creek, and Fountain Creek as shown on Map 28.
- Participate in Drainage Basin planning/regulations to support the conservation of creek/riparian candidate areas as more natural drainage ways.
- Change policies to allow for “complete creeks” where stormwater management lands include trail and recreation uses that are compatible with stormwater resources. Adhere to the City of Colorado Springs’ Streamside Design Guidelines for trails and recreation best practices.
- Encourage an update to the Streamside Overlay Zone to better facilitate the protection and restoration of riparian corridors.
- Create management plans for the Greenways to strategically address maintenance and ensure ecological functions are enhanced.

Map 28: Greenway Candidate Areas



- Proposed Urban Trail
- Candidate Open Space Area
- El Paso County Candidate Open Space
- Conceptual Open Space Network
- Master Planned Future Park
- Master Planned Future Open Space
- Pike National Forest
- Park Lands (City and Special District)
- Open Space/Special Resource Area/Greenway
- Undeveloped Park Land (City and Special District)
- City Limits

Recommendation Details

1. BLACK SQUIRREL CREEK GREENWAY

Candidate Open Space Size: 229 acres within city limits

Description: Lands along Black Squirrel Creek include sensitive wetland areas and habitat for wildlife species of concern including the Mountain Plover, Black Tailed Prairie Dogs and Burrowing Owls. The Flying Horse Ranch planned trail parallels the stream corridor.

2. COTTONWOOD CREEK GREENWAY

Candidate Open Space Size: 871 acres within city limits

Description: This area begins where Cottonwood Creek crosses under I-25 and goes to the northeast edge of the city where the creek is formed by two natural tributaries. The stream corridor includes the Cottonwood Creek Trail, portions of which are yet to be completed, and Cottonwood Creek Park. The candidate area surrounding the tributaries to Cottonwood Creek, in the Briargate master planned area, serves as a transition zone, featuring Ponderosa Pine and Scrub Oak feathering into the prairie from the north, and forest grasslands rising to the edge of the Black Forest from the south. The dominant vegetation is forest grasslands mixed with Ponderosa Pine forest and riparian vegetation. Portions of the site are significant wildlife habitats. This area is in one of the major undeveloped sections of the Briargate master plan. It could serve as an open space buffer between the Black Forest to the north and future urban development to the south and west.

3. MESA GREENWAY

Candidate Open Space Size: No specific candidate acres are identified

Description: The Mesa Greenway spans the recently expanded Ute Valley Park, the Austin Bluffs Open Space, Palmer Park and proposed candidate open space areas, roughly following the stream channels of South Rockrimmon, and Templeton Gap North Tributary and Floodway. While the area is highly developed, small pockets of woody wetland vegetation and riparian areas remain that may be targeted for conservation.

4. PIKES PEAK GREENWAY (MONUMENT CREEK)

Candidate Open Space Size: 215 acres within city Limits

Description: The Pikes Peak Greenway follows both Monument and Fountain Creeks and runs the length of the city, a distance of about 14 miles. Grants from Great Outdoors Colorado and the El Pomar Foundation have assisted with the completion of the trail that runs along the greenway, which connects with El Paso County's New Santa Fe Trail through the Air Force Academy and Fountain Creek Trails, forming a continuous link from the Douglas County line to Pueblo County. Nearly every east-west trail in the city connects or will connect with this Greenway. The entire corridor is significant wildlife habitat, formed in part by the Cottonwood and Willow stands that line the creek. It represents the spine of the city's greenway system. Preserving additional lands along the corridor will help to enhance this key recreational amenity, as well as riparian vegetation and habitat.

Recommendation Details

5. SAND CREEK GREENWAY / SAND CREEK EAST FORK

Candidate Open Space Size: 1,955 acres within city limits

Description: The east fork of Sand Creek cuts across the northern portion of Banning Lewis Ranch, a 23,000 acre master planned community that is yet to be developed. Significant stands of Cottonwoods and Willows exist along much of the creek in the woody wetlands, and tall-grass prairie and forest grasslands cover the surrounding area. Most of the site is significant wildlife habitat, including supportive habitat for the Ferruginous Hawk, State species of Special Concern.

6. LOWER JIMMY CAMP CREEK

Candidate Open Space Size: 3,779 acres within city limits

Description: This area follows Jimmy Camp Creek as it meanders through a grassland bowl framed by eroded cliffs and distant bluffs. The lower section of the creek serves as significant wildlife habitat due to its mix of tall-grass prairie and important areas of riparian vegetation and wetlands. A planned trail will follow the creek from the Rock Island Trail south to the city limits. Significant wildlife habitats include unique habitat for the Arkansas Darters, as species of fish that is under threat of extinction within the State of Colorado as well as Golden Eagles and Ferruginous Hawks.

7. FOUNTAIN CREEK

Candidate Open Space Size: 417 acres within city limits, 211 within the County

Description: Fountain Creek has experienced challenges such as sedimentation and flooding due to increasing urbanization, resulting in more rapid habitat loss, however, opportunities remain to conserve and restore riparian areas along the creek. There are opportunities along this greenway for interpretive and educational facilities, especially addressing the migratory bird species which are notable in the County's Fountain Creek Regional Park. Significant wildlife habitats include unique habitat for the Arkansas Darters, as species of small plains fish that is under threat of extinction within the State of Colorado as well as Golden Eagles and Ferruginous Hawks.

ADDITIONAL RIPARIAN AREAS

Kettle Creek, Branches of Monument Creek, Pine Creek, Sand Creek and Smith Creek all have areas along the stream corridors where riparian vegetation and wetlands exist and should be considered for conservation.

Balance Recreation and Natural Resources Protection

Overview

In the City's open spaces, natural areas and regional parks, balancing use with preservation is a constant challenge due to the popularity, overuse and misuse or abuse of many of the community's open space properties. The City has developed recreational and educational opportunities that are well suited to the natural setting in many of its open spaces. These opportunities include hiking, running, bicycling and equestrian sports that use primarily unpaved trails, as well as rock climbing and some water sports. More passive pursuits, including nature observation and educational events, including bird watching and plant identification are also activities the community enjoys. Amenities and recreational facilities in open space areas are typically limited to trails and supporting picnic areas, interpretive facilities, restrooms, and parking lots. Outdoor recreation and educational opportunities on open space lands are important reasons the community has supported many of the City's open space purchases. While it is important to provide opportunities for community members to experience the outdoors, these activities are intended to be accommodated only to the extent that they are compatible with the protection of the natural environment.

The City has been challenged with limited resources and staff, making it difficult to effectively manage open space resources and enforce rules and regulations. Some of the challenges on existing open space lands include the proliferation of social trails (many of which are created because of a lack of loops and connectivity), failure to follow "Leave no Trace" ethics, as well as extractive practices (e.g., removing rocks, fossils and picking flowers etc.). Due to unique site/climate conditions, including soil type, sensitive vegetation and lack of water, deterioration and degradation are causes for major concern.

Conservation and preservation remain the primary purpose for open space acquisitions. However, where it is possible, trails for walking, hiking, biking and nature observation can be implemented in a manner that does not degrade the natural environment. Since the Master Plan calls for increased use in open spaces, there needs to be a balance between recreation and resource conservation.



Wildlife viewing can increase citizen's appreciation for natural areas, but poor management can be a detriment to wildlife habitat. Source: Design Workshop

"Parks need to respond to the needs of a community and simultaneously protect the community's unique physical attributes. They need to be special, memorable spaces that stand the test of time."

-Megan Lewis, From Recreation to Recreation, American Planning Association

Recommendations

- Natural areas are complex living systems that require a long-term natural resources management approach to natural area management rather than a conventional capital project approach. The City should comprehensively address the management and stewardship needs of the natural environment and open space lands such as erosion control, invasive species, and wildfire. Many sensitive species should not be planted until greater levels of stability have been achieved and concentrations of invasive species removed. In some areas this will take many years because native canopy and understory layers need to be established before the planting of the more fragile ground layer of vegetation.
- Management and stewardship practices will evolve and be revised over time, and all open spaces should have a designated management strategy in place, and natural resource management plans created for sites that must balance park user and natural resource needs. A specialized parks team of natural areas managers supplemented with trained volunteers should be developed, that address natural resource management and urban forestry through the creation of annual maintenance tasks.
- Provide trails for walking, hiking, biking, and nature observation and education where compatible with open space lands. Providing access to these places in a manner that does not degrade the natural environment is an essential way to carry forth an ethic of conservation and a true appreciation for the natural environment. Conservation and preservation should remain the primary purpose for open space acquisitions.
- Develop master plans for all open space properties which address appropriate access and connectivity with neighboring properties, resource sensitivity, existing resources and opportunities for resource enhancement and restoration. Plans should be created and updated for all properties or groups of properties within a contiguous area with progress tracked over time.
- Evaluate existing park trails to ensure that loops of varying distances are provided for and connectivity is achieved on officially designated trails to help deter people's need for creating social trails.
- Communicate park rules and "Leave No Trace" ethics to the public through the use of signage and informational campaigns (refer to the Signage section for more details).
- Educate and influence children and families through educational programs that highlight the importance of natural resources and community members' responsibilities in protecting them.

5. BUILD OUR COMMUNITY WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS CREATE GREAT NEIGHBORHOODS

Evaluation Methods for Providing New Parks and Renovating Existing Parks within the Park Development Process

Overview

The best examples of great neighborhoods in Colorado Springs include parks with active and passive recreation opportunities that meet resident needs and serve an important function as places for play, exploration, exercise, gathering with neighbors and building a sense of community. These neighborhood parks are integral to the community fabric and provide a foundation that the subdivision design revolves around. They are located a short distance from resident's homes and are linked together by sidewalks and trails. Natural areas and stream courses are conserved and maintained for the benefit of all. The healthy future of city neighborhoods is dependent upon holding a high standard for parks, so they enrich the lives of the people living around them.

New development and population growth within the community results in increased demand for parks, trails and open space facilities and services. These demands on the park system can be characterized as follows:

- Securing land for future parks, trails and open spaces,
- Developing new parks, trail and open space facilities, and
- Renovation of existing parks and trails.

Methods to respond to this growth should be evaluated to ensure fair and equitable distribution of park services and amenities across the community. Current City policies methods for securing land for future parks, but do not address the development of new parks or renovation of existing parks.

Securing land for future parks, trails and open spaces: Current City policies for the number of parks and acres required are appropriate. These policies have resulted in a fairly even distribution of neighborhood parks throughout the city and are fulfilling community members' desires for parks within new developments. No change to the existing standard of 2.5 acres of neighborhood parks and 3.0 acres of community parks per 1000 people and an existing service radius to residents of 0.5 miles are proposed. Future parks should be developed applying this standard. The Subdivision Regulations of the City of Colorado Springs City Code (adopted March 22, 1977) requirement that developers dedicate 0.0165 acres (719 square feet) per dwelling unit for residential land densities in excess of eight dwelling units per acre, and 0.02325 acres (1,013 square feet) per dwelling unit for residential land densities of eight dwelling units or less per acre should be maintained. The existing code should be updated to reflect current parkland dedication standards and census data.

Developing new parks, trail and open space facilities: The challenge the PR&CS Department faces is the unsustainable cost of funding the construction of new parks and renovation of existing parks over time. Developing neighborhood parks costs the City approximately an average between \$105,000 to \$120,000 per acre. The cost to develop community parks is approximately an average between \$200,000 and \$300,000 per acre. Many developers have found that building their own parks and creating a Special District tax to fund maintenance is advantageous to homes sales, rather than dedicating parkland to the City. However, there are cases in which developers do not wish to build their own

...continued Evaluation Methods for Providing New Parks and Renovating Existing Parks within the Park Development Process

parks and/or be the park property owners/managers. Smaller developments and infill projects are unlikely candidates for the creation of a special district. The City should consider the capital and maintenance costs incurred when a developer does not provide park construction and maintenance, and seek means to offset the costs the City incurs currently. This approach will avoid deferred construction due to a limited budget and/or reduced park maintenance levels that have occurred in the past.

Renovation of existing parks and trails: Infill development can place additional pressure on existing parkland. An infill park renovation fee could be considered that directs funds to renovation of existing parks within close proximity to the development. The cost of park renovation varies extensively, but a formula could be developed that accounts for costs such as new park amenities to meet changing demographics, irrigation upgrades, playground renovation, restroom renovations, court renovation, etc. This cost would be substantially less than new park development but could be meaningfully invested in adjacent parks that directly serve infill development.

Recommendations

- Quantify the financial benefits to residential and commercial development related to park access and infrastructure in Colorado Springs to make a case for why parks are good for our community.
- Create a new policy to address neighborhood park development costs by imposing a park development fee or requiring developers to complete park construction.
- Evaluate the appropriate park, recreation and trail development fee amount based on sustainable practices of benchmark communities. Also consider the costs the City currently incurs on a per resident basis. Solicit input from developers and seek support in adoption of a new policy that appropriately reflects the true impact of new development.
- Base the fee on an overall cost to the City, in which the land area dedication may be less with higher costs applied to the design and recreation features.
- Consider a new development resident use fee appropriate for regional sports facilities, community parks and regional parks related to an increase in population demands.
- Consider a park renovation fee for new development infill areas.
- Continue to encourage the creation of special districts to collect fees from residents to pay for parks and trails maintenance costs.
- Do not annex developments that have not met City park provision standards.

BUILD OUR COMMUNITY WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS CREATE GREAT NEIGHBORHOODS

Adjusting Methods for Administrating Parks Development Contributions

Overview

The Subdivision Regulations of the City of Colorado Springs City Code, Section 7.7.1201, explains the policy and purpose behind school and park dedications:

"...Whenever land is proposed for residential use, the owner of the land should provide land for school needs generated by the proposed residential use, and the owner of the land should provide land or fees primarily for park needs generated by the proposed residential use and secondary fees, if any, for physical improvements thereto."

The policy has resulted in the creation of many successful residential neighborhood parks that are important to the quality of life enjoyed by citizens. Adjustments to the specifics of the regulations will further enhance the community by providing parks, recreation opportunities, and trails to support other types of land uses. For example, residents within senior living/care facilities benefit from the inclusion of outdoor spaces, pathways, and outdoor recreation areas. Changes to the policy to include active senior living requirements for parks, recreation, and trails for senior care developments would benefit residents and reduce dependency on the City to provide these amenities within close proximity of the developments.

Additionally, developers and City staff have identified mutually beneficial changes to the Subdivision Regulations with the City Development Code that would improve neighborhoods.

Recommendations

- Change the City Code to separate school fee from parkland fee policy. This will simplify the review process and make the process and requirements clearer to developers.
- Update the existing code to reflect current parkland dedication standards and latest census data.
- In addition to requirements for residential plats or subdivisions, apply a park community benefit ordinance to office construction, hotels, schools, churches, senior housing/care facilities, hospitals, light industrial and other types of commercial uses. Base the ordinance on evaluation of parks, trails, and recreation needs that result from these land uses of various densities. Work with developers to identify methods for contributing to community purposes (e.g. semi-public plazas, semi-public recreation facilities, trails, or fee-in-lieu).
- Base the fee on an overall cost, in which the land area may be less but with higher costs applied to the park or trail amenities.

BUILD OUR COMMUNITY WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS CREATE GREAT NEIGHBORHOODS

Specifications for Neighborhood and Community Park Types

Overview

Parks provide an opportunity to establish neighborhood and community character and express the distinctness of the community. Principles of good design for parks, trails and open space provide the basic framework that is then varied from neighborhood to neighborhood to reflect the history, culture, demographics, landscape and existing social and recreational resources of each community.

Recommendations

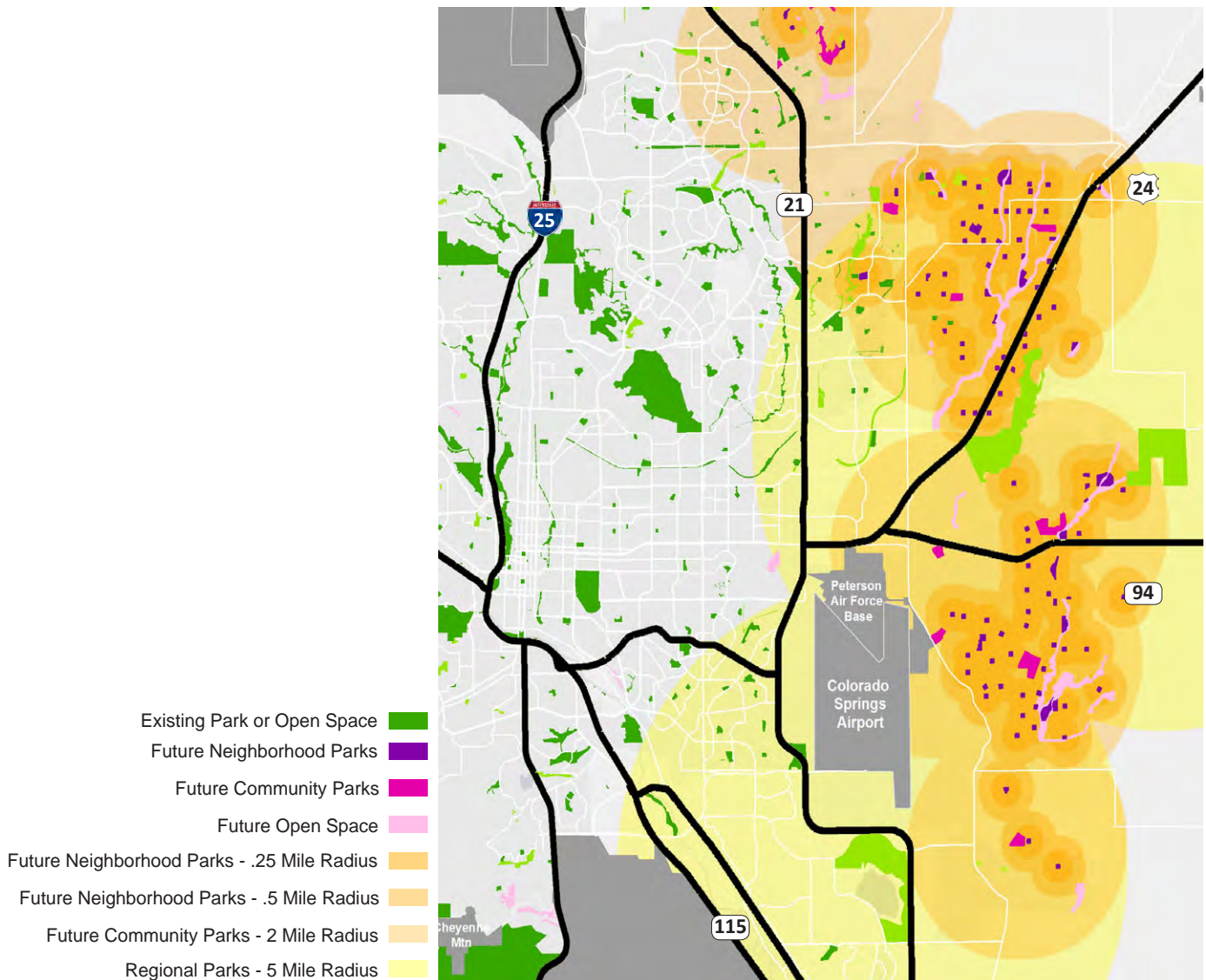
- Locate parks as the center of community life and resident gathering hubs.
- Locate parks along greenway corridors.
- Connect parks with trail corridors and safe walking routes.
- Locate neighborhood and community parks within a half mile or less of residences (considered a comfortable walking distance) and consider safety and ease of travel in their location. Avoid placement of parks that require residents to cross major roadways, and develop pathways and trails to link residents to parks. See Table 9: Parkland Classification and Standards for requirements specific to neighborhood and community parks.
- Determine proposed park amenities by examining demographics, site history, key issues (e.g. health data, crime data, environmental resources and economic development opportunities), neighborhood assessments and resident needs and desires.
- Adjust current policies to encourage more athletic facilities and facilities for sports activities within neighborhood parks.
- Provide guidelines for combining stormwater management lands with recreation opportunities, where appropriate.
- Within the review process, require developers to demonstrate low potable water use design below the levels of traditional parks.
- Maintenance of smaller neighborhood parks (two acres or less) should be made responsibility of the developer/HOA/Special District rather than the City due to their disproportionately high maintenance costs.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the Planned Unit Development Zone District and Design Guidelines to ensure they are achieving the desired goals for conserving open space as part of the development process. The ongoing maintenance needs of parcels within planned developments should be considered an essential component of this evaluation. Also assure that the parks, recreation and open space systems that result from the development process create a network of open space.
- Utilize development fees from infill projects to improve and renovate existing parks within half a mile of the new development.
- Open space must be meaningful and enhance riparian areas, vegetation and tree protection, wildlife habitat and corridors, scenic view protection, and the provision of natural areas for residents to explore. Connected, large tracts of land are preferred for their ecological benefits.

...continued Specifications for Neighborhood Park Types

Recommendations

- Use this Master Plan, with applicable recommendations from the 1996 Open Space Plan, as the standard of reference for evaluating the configuration of open space designations in development Master Plans submitted for amendment.
- Require the dedication of open space resources that demonstrate high value to the open space system as part of annexation agreements.

Map 29: Future Park Function and Size Hierarchy



The Park System Master Plan considers future planned and potential park and open space sites to determine what function and size could best meet the needs of communities surrounding these future sites. These spaces will primarily be created through the land development and dedication process.

6. MANAGE PARKS FOR BETTER USABILITY AND GREATER ENJOYMENT

Park Facility Improvements

Overview

Strategic park facility improvements can help to ensure that Colorado Springs' Parks are appropriately serving the needs and priorities of the community to provide for greater enjoyment and usability. Providing amenities for park users, including restrooms, lighting, picnic areas, trash receptacles and dog waste stations as well as increased code enforcement can help to address community needs, improve safety and security, and managing overuse. Many of the City's park and open space properties experience challenges related to overuse; including too many events and activities taking place in a handful of the City's most popular parks which are degrading the existing facilities and diminishing the user experience in certain areas. Other parks suffer from vandalism and property crimes. ADA accessibility is also an issue with current parks facilities. Persons with disabilities should be able to enjoy the City's park facilities and special care should be taken to ensure that all potential users regardless of age and ability are able to engage with the parks system. In order to provide the premier parks, recreation and open space system that represents the City of Colorado Springs, the PR&CS Department must assure that facilities are accessible and well maintained.

This plan recommends prioritizing facilities improvements according to the following considerations:

- Improvements to address safety and universal accessibility of parks facilities.
- Strategic plans for improvements that benefit the greatest number of citizens. Having plans in place will decrease the need to address improvements on an ad hoc basis as issues arise in specific parks.
- Improvements that move parks toward greater sustainability (e.g., investing in quality materials and amenities for facilities that need less maintenance over time).

Recommendations

- Complete individual park evaluations and management plans to address changing recreation needs, essential maintenance projects and community concerns.
 - Regional and Signature Parks - Prioritize parks that are most in need of maintenance and that receive the most use. These are primarily the larger, regional parks and trails, as well as those in the downtown core. Many City facilities in these areas are over capacity and the PR&CS Department needs to develop specific and targeted strategies to accommodate multiple users. Addressing identified needs to improve usability and enjoyment for all visitors is critical and in addition, improvements will provide visible changes to help generate community support. Priority properties for park evaluations and facilities management plans include Acacia Park, Palmer Park, Memorial Park, and Monument Valley Park.
 - Neighborhood / Community Parks - Improvements should be designed to accommodate a diversity of needs in order to maintain relevancy to specific neighborhoods. Changing demographics within individual neighborhoods can sometimes mean that parks are outgrown by neighboring residents who transition from raising young children to being empty nesters. Individual park evaluations should focus on opportunities to repurpose parks facilities to meet the needs of existing and anticipated populations. Engaging the surrounding neighborhoods to plan for parks will help to ensure that parks and their facilities serve the needs of the community in which they are located, encouraging repeat use that contributes to vibrant and well-loved public spaces.
 - Community Gardens - Look for opportunities to develop community gardens in City parks, especially those that are under utilized. Chances to work with neighborhood groups and Pikes Peak Urban Gardens should be pursued to ensure that investments made to create urban community gardens are successful overtime. The City should develop a formal program and add information to their website targeting neighborhood or friends groups who are interested in using park lands to develop garden plots. Tool sheds should be a facility consideration when implementing community gardens.

...continued Park Facility Improvements

Recommendations

- Continue to look for opportunities for non-profit or school partnerships to utilize PR&CS facilities. These non-profit or education organizations may be able to provide funding to address park facility improvement desires.
- Ensure that ADA access requirements and special needs of both old and young are accommodate. As parks are renovated and new parks are developed, special emphasis should be placed on facilities that meet the requirements of people with special needs. As the City pursues maintenance and renovation projects, ADA compliance may require upgrades of non-accessible facilities.
- Build and reopen restrooms and critical amenities at trail heads, community and regional parks.
 - Budget cuts in 2010 necessitated the closing up of public restrooms within parks due to the lack of funds to service them. This has raised concern among community members who have identified reopening current facilities and building new restrooms as a priority. Restrooms at trailheads, and community and regional parks should be reopened, and in some cases newly constructed facilities should be provided for public use. Red Rock Canyon and Palmer Park were identified as two areas with some of the highest demand for restrooms.
 - As the City renovates old and builds new restroom facilities, a minimum level of service and maintenance should be met (safety, cleanliness and accessibility). The City should use vandalism resistant fixtures and designs whenever possible when building new or remodeling old facilities.



Memorial Park provides the first playground in the Pikes Peak Region designed for universal accessibility for children with disabilities. One partner in creating this park was the Swing High Project, headed by Olympic medal-winning gymnast Michelle Dusserre-Farrell, who has a daughter with spina bifida. Source: City of Colorado Springs

MANAGE PARKS FOR BETTER USABILITY AND GREATER ENJOYMENT

Cultural Facilities

Overview

The PR&CS Department is responsible for a number of important cultural facilities in Colorado Springs. These include City Auditorium, Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum, Rock Ledge Ranch Historic Site, Starsmore Discovery Center and Helen Hunt Falls Visitor Center. These facilities serve as educational and interpretive centers in the community. Planning for the continued operation and maintenance of these facilities will be imperative to their preservation and continued use into the future. In addition, maintenance of the collection is an important function of the PR&CS Department.



The Colorado Springs Pioneer Museum is located downtown in the beautifully restored 1903 El Paso County Courthouse. Source: City of Colorado Springs

Recommendations

- Develop operations and maintenance plans for all existing cultural buildings and related collections. Proactive care and maintenance of these facilities will help to prevent costly reconstruction or upgrade needs. Using the Pioneers Museum Operations and Maintenance Plan as a model, the City should develop similar plans for each of its cultural facilities.
- Use phasing strategies and capital funds to implement facility improvement and maintenance plans.
- Include cultural facilities as assets to the Colorado Certified Creative District. Colorado Springs' was approved as a Colorado Certified Creative District in 2014. As the City begins to develop this district, they should consider how the Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum and City Auditorium can contribute to and enhance the future development and use of the district. Becoming a Certified Creative District provides the City with new grant opportunities that may be useful for improving current cultural facilities.

MANAGE PARKS FOR BETTER USABILITY AND GREATER ENJOYMENT

Directional and Interpretive Signage

Overview

The community has expressed a strong need for an improved sign system in Colorado Springs' parks, recreation, trails, open space, and cultural services. Technology is increasingly replacing the need for signage, but also requires dedication to updating websites and providing online applications for wayfinding and interpretation. Strategies to improve the quality and clarity of directional and interpretive signs throughout the city's parks, recreation sites, trails and open spaces can provide the following benefits:

Navigation

A well-designed sign system helps guide visitors and residents to key destinations, like parks and museums. Additionally, signs can help recreationalists interpret parks, navigate trails, and identify facilities and other sites of interest.

Identity Creation, Awareness Building and Education

Colorado Springs' mountain scenery, parks and recreation opportunities are already major elements of the City's identity. Adding a sign system to support these features is a part of expressing the character unique to Colorado Springs and developing a sense of place. Signage serves as branding that is the thread of continuity from gateways to trailheads to community centers. Signs also help educate visitors and community members about important and interesting site features and build their awareness of facilities and amenities.

Branding and Tourism

A sign system represents an important piece of Colorado Springs' marketing and branding program. The city offers unique experiences that visitors cannot find in their own hometowns. Signs in the parks, trails, recreation and cultural services system should communicate the outstanding opportunities that Colorado Springs offers, while reinforcing the identity of the community. A successful sign program is not only functional and memorable; it also extends a welcoming gesture to visitors. It reflects the community's values and highlights that they care for everyone's comfort and experience.

Resource Management

Signage contributes to parks, trails, and open space maintenance and management by informing patrons of important rules and regulations, protecting natural areas from misuse, and providing instruction on care and maintenance, such as the disposal of waste.



Red Rock Cañon interpretive signage educates the public about the wildlife found on the site. Source: City of Colorado Springs

... continued Directional and Interpretive Signage

Recommendations

Improvements to the PR&CS signage program in Colorado Springs will help the City accomplish a number of the goals laid out in this Master Plan. The following principles should guide future efforts to enhance and improve the parks, recreation, and cultural services sign system in Colorado Springs.

- Consistent, Controlled and Durable

Consistency among sign content and sign types not only helps to create a unified community identity, but it also allows for a common level of clarity within the City's sign program. Some standards can be adapted to suite unique areas or neighborhoods within the city. A common parks system language for clear communication of necessary information to users should be established. The design of signs should also take material durability and longevity into consideration. Sign materials should have the ability to withstand the elements of Colorado Springs' climate conditions, along with the wear and tear of daily user contact, interactions with wildlife and potential vandalism.

- Amplify Cultural, Geologic, Scenic, Heritage and Natural Features and Historic Landscapes

Colorado Springs is home to some of the unique and significant natural features and historic sites and landscapes in the United States. Recognizing important cultural and geologic artifacts of the landscape through interpretive signage will not only educate visitors about their history, impact and importance, but can also inspire a feeling of stewardship in site visitors, and a sense of community pride in local heritage.

- Enhance Connectivity and Aid in Navigation

Colorado Springs and the nearby area contains than 8,000 acres of parkland and open space, almost 300 miles of trails, and more than 6,000 acres of open space land but the connections among these great amenities are not always apparent to recreation users, partly due to an inadequate signage system. An improved sign system should clearly identify the location of connections and aid users in navigating this extensive system.



Examples of different signage types and styles.
Source: Design Workshop

... continued Directional and Interpretive Signage

Recommendations

- **Communicate Parks and Trails Management Objectives**

Signs in the parks, recreation and cultural services system should clearly indicate rules, regulations and expectations of usage to maintain quality of facilities and prevent harmful behaviors that would negatively impact the natural or programmatic features of the parks and trails.
- **Recognize Community Contributions**

Through friends groups, volunteer organizations, individual contributions and TOPS contributions, Colorado Springs community members take on great responsibilities for the care, maintenance and enhancement of community landscapes. A sign system is a great method for recognizing these contributions and can help to create a sense of ownership among community members and contributing organizations or individuals. The identification of parks and trails supported through TOPS funding should be a priority for a sign system moving forward.
- **Create Fundraising Opportunities**

Special signage programs can be useful tools for attracting sponsorships, donations, grants and other types of funding that help to enhance the parks, recreation and cultural services system. Providing organizations and individuals with a temporary or permanent recognition opportunity acknowledges the donor as a community participant and steward of the parks, recreation and cultural services system.
- **Develop a mobile mapping application and complimentary website for citywide trails.** Signs throughout the City's trail system could be linked to a website that includes further information that will help with navigation and interpretation. Information available on the website might include up-to-date trail closer/opening information, rules and regulations and event announcements.



Examples of different signage types and styles.
Source: Design Workshop

... continued Directional and Interpretive Signage

Recommendation Details

DESIGN AND LOCATION

Sign programs generally consist of symbols, colors, messages and images. A well-designed sign program is intuitive, easy to grasp quickly and able to cross cultural and language barriers. The location of a sign should be accessible to all site users and inclusive of those with disabilities. Other factors such as the amount of foot traffic, potential for vandalism, and accessibility for maintenance are also important considerations for sign location. The outcome of a successful sign program enables visitors to easily determine their own experiences by empowering them to make their way through an area with comfort and clarity.

DEFINING A HIERARCHY

A hierarchy among sign types will help to differentiate parks, recreation and cultural service types (i.e., a regional park from a community park from a trailhead, etc.), while maintaining a clear and consistent look and message within the system. Subtle differences in size, color and graphic symbols will enhance the program's usability and allow recreation users to identify types of sites, allowed uses, and regulations within different locations more quickly and clearly.

INTERPRETIVE PARKS AND OPEN SPACE SIGNAGE

Interpretive signs are educational tools that can enhance the experience of a park, trail, open space, or cultural site for users by informing them about the importance of a site, its features, and/or history. These types of signs are cost-effective ways to give a consistent message to many visitors at the same time. They can be viewed at a visitor's convenience, are available 24 hours and day, and do not require staff or facilities to enrich the interpretation. An interpretive sign should create a relationship between the user and site by providing information that educates and directs an audience in their experience.

CITY STREET SIGNAGE

City street signs can provide another navigational opportunity for Colorado Springs' parks and recreation sites. Street signs could incorporate symbols indicating the direction to a nearby park, trail, or cultural amenity. This type of signage element would be both a way-finding device and an additional method for reinforcing the importance of the parks system in the City of Colorado Springs.

Recommendation Details

GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPERS

As the City continues to work with developers to create neighborhood parks and trails in new communities throughout Colorado Springs, it would benefit both to define specific guidelines for the need, design and location of new signs in neighborhoods. These guidelines should maintain consistency with other sign elements in the City parks, recreation, and cultural services system to reinforce community identity and indicate linkages within the system. Additionally, these signs would indicate to the public that these neighborhood parks are not private but are open to the entire community.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT SIGNS

Resource management signs are helpful tools to define site rules, manage user conduct, protect sites, and define issues of liability within parks, trails and open spaces. Balancing the need for resource management signage with an avoidance of “sign pollution,” which can detract from the natural beauty of a site, is critical. Resource management signage requires carefully selected language that welcomes responsible exploration. Severe or negative terminology (e.g., “DON’T TOUCH!”) should be avoided. The control of sign content with strategic sign placement, at entry and decision making points, will help to convey the most important information to the widest group of potential site users.

MANAGE PARKS FOR BETTER USABILITY AND GREATER ENJOYMENT

Enforcement and Safety

Overview

Providing a parks system that both looks and feels safe is key for community wellness and continuous park use. The level of comfort experienced by park users has a direct relationship to usage rates. When sites become unsafe, or are perceived to be unsafe, they lose their value and benefit to the city. In recent years, Colorado Springs has faced challenges with security and rule enforcement, creating a perception that some parks and trails are unsafe, diminishing their value and associated use for parks visitors. The lack of enforcement personnel specifically dedicated to parks and open space properties has created a culture in which breaking the rules comes without consequence. In order to shift this mentality and create a better ethos of respect for park rules, the City should consider a number of improvements and revisions to the current system.

Recommendations

- **Maintenance is key to crime prevention:**
Well-maintained areas signal to visitors that a place is active and well cared for. Illegal activity in parks tends to take place in unmaintained areas, where there is lesser perceived potential for interaction with law enforcement, maintenance crews and parks visitors. An increase in park maintenance crews will provide additional eyes on the park and help deter park rule breaking, such as littering and vandalism. Uniforms for Parks staff can also be useful in addressing enforcement and security concerns.
- **Environmental design of access, surveillance and territory will deter illegal activity:**
The design of park, trail, and/or open space access can be controlled by fencing, natural elements (such as planting), or something as simple as a path. These indicate to park users and those outside looking in, exactly where people can and should be walking. Environmental design of park sites can also deter clustering of illegal activity, by minimizing the amount of spaces that are hidden.
- **Use park activation and programming to address safety issues:**
In New York City, the Citizen’s Taskforce on the Use and Security of Central Park determined that there is a direct relationship between the level of park use and people’s perception of its security. The more park visitors are involved in positive activities, the more likely it is that anti-social behavior is deterred. Some programming strategies to improve real and perceived safety include:
 - Locate activities near perimeters, entrances or along pedestrian paths.
 - Locate food concessions at park edges that serve both streets and parks.
 - Make sure activities in parks include human presence from early morning to evening (such as outdoor fitness classes, community gardens and programmed sports activities).
 - Offer a variety of tours or events that will encourage more widespread use of parks and increase positive activity.
 - Create a program and events schedule for parks that stretches activity throughout the day and week.
- **Address homelessness as a citywide social issue:**
While the presence of homeless persons in parks does have an impact on park usage and the perception of safety, issues of homelessness in Colorado Springs need to be addressed at a citywide level in coordination

Recommendations

with multiple City departments, social services and non-profit groups. The City should facilitate partnerships between temporary housing providers, rehabilitation facilities, church groups, hospitals, and other non-profits and government agencies to help the homeless community locate the resources they need to improve their quality of life. Proactive responses by these groups have a better chance of being supported by the community.

- Reinstating a park enforcement team dedicated to improving quality of life:

The City of Colorado Springs needs to provide routine patrol and enforcement in parklands. Before the Park Enforcement Team was eliminated due to budget reductions, the program was an effective way for park maintenance and program staff to communicate issues and reduce the amount of time they spent on vandalism and litter clean-up. A park enforcement team would be responsible for addressing issues related to quality of life and members would be able to ticket park and trail rule breakers. The team coordinates with and notifies City Police or the County Sheriff regarding crimes and security issues. Off-duty police officers can provide extra security as needed for special events or heavy use days.

A hotline to report issues and rule infringement can help target staff time and effort to specific areas as issues arise. The Colorado Springs Customer Service website and “GoCoSprings” mobile application can be utilized and promoted as a way for residents to report service request for specific park properties. Establishing a phone hotline may also be a way to encourage the reporting of issues and rule infringement.

Enforcement should include ticketing for infringements to the established dog leash law. The City Code requires all dogs to be on a leash while in city parks and on city trails (other than designated off-leash areas) and public awareness must be built to encourage compliance with the rules that will minimize user conflicts. For example, dog off leash areas might be designated and separated from mountain bike trails, as these two groups often conflict. Colorado Springs should also consider creating alternatives to these rules that have been successful in other Colorado communities, such as certification programs allowing for exceptions for dog owners who are able to demonstrate voice control.

- Expanding on Park Ambassador Programs to improve and enhance the park visitor experience and educate park and trail users about rules and regulations:

Park Ambassadors can be particularly effective in providing a “public face” to park visitors. Ambassadors function as greeters and sources of information, in addition to being another set of “eyes and ears” in the parks. They will be primarily concerned with the quality of the visitor’s experience, and will not become directly involved in any park security issue (but they can report any incident). The Ambassadors program will provide a uniformed presence throughout the parks and trails system. They are meant to be seen as much as to see. Ambassadors can ask someone who is breaking park rules to stop and explain the reason for the rules. If the problem continues, they can report it to park staff. Training for volunteer or paid positions will be necessary.

A Bark Ranger program was implemented in the summer of 2014 which could serve as a model for the park ambassador program. Bark Rangers are dog and owner teams that help to positively reinforce good pet behavior in the City’s parks and educate the public about the benefits of keeping dogs leashed and proper waste disposal. Another example is the Parks Ambassador program at North Cheyenne Cañon Park which has been in place for a few years. This program was created, initiated and conducted by PR&CS Department staff along with the Friends of Cheyenne Cañon.

Public Roadway Medians and City Gateways

Overview

Medians help to enhance the aesthetic quality of streets, neighborhoods and districts. The City's "Springs in Bloom" program is a great way to connect community members to their environment and allows them to take ownership and pride in their streets. While costs for plants and irrigation are taken on by the PR&CS Department, maintenance is provided by program participants. Unfortunately, not all medians are adopted and the City retains responsibility for the remaining sites, with limited resources.

Recommendations

- PR&CS should continue to work with stakeholders to evaluate and find solutions to address the maintenance and care of medians throughout the city and address the considerable needs to improve public roadway medians. Throughout the city the roadway medians should demonstrate city pride and quality to create parklike experiences along the City's roadways.
- Develop a context sensitive streetscape and median design and landscape standards plan. Undertake the development of these standards with stakeholder involvement.
- Make new community developments responsible for their own median planting, irrigation and maintenance. Developers should meet City standards for median design and planting.
- Develop a design language that is native to the city's unique geographic area. There are many perennial and native species that are attractive alternatives to high-maintenance annuals which should be incorporated into median planting. These types of plantings and xeric landscaping will reduce the amount of maintenance and irrigation required for median planting, as well as eliminate the cost for new plants each season.
- Continue to partner with Colorado Springs Utilities to identify water conservation strategies and advance an appropriate plant palette.
- Prioritize gateway locations for seasonal displays. When allocating resources, time and money to City medians for seasonal plantings, certain locations should be prioritized:
 - Primary road connections to the city
 - Downtown locations
 - Cultural sites
 - Regional parks gateways

MANAGE PARKS FOR BETTER USABILITY AND GREATER ENJOYMENT

Special Events

Overview

Special events in Colorado Springs parks can have a multitude of benefits for the city. They can:

- Generate community excitement and support for the parks
- Generate revenue for the local economy
- Attract visitors and enhance tourism opportunities
- Contribute to City marketing and branding

Recent trends in special events include accommodations for larger crowds, events that support participant activity, the presence of food trucks, and the continued popularity of youth events and races. In order to improve the City's ability to host special events, Colorado Springs should consider some of the following existing challenges:

- Lack of facilities
- Facility maintenance inadequacies
- Need for additional staff to provide protection to parks sites and assist with proper load in and exit at events.
- Lack of accommodations for vehicular, bicycle, pedestrian and ADA access
- Lack of understanding in the community about regulations for deed-trusted sites versus TOPS parks



Special event held at Mountain Shadows Neighborhood Park. Source: City of Colorado Springs

Recommendations

- Expand partnerships to provide non-traditional events in the parks. Bringing events to the parks that may not typically take place at a recreation site can attract new groups to the city and its parks system. Some creative pairings taken on by other cities include performance art events, film events and food events.
- Identify, enhance, and promote sites that are suitable for hosting recreation events. Many of Colorado Springs' parks, trails, and open space sites would be excellent choices for hosting national, regional and local events. Identifying and promoting these sites, trails, and parks as specific to certain kinds of activities helps not only to attract events, but supports the marketing and potential branding of Colorado Springs. For example, where can the City host "the most challenging 10K race in the nation?"
- Maintain high-quality facilities to attract sporting events. Planning for maintenance of sports surfaces and building a reputation for high quality facilities will be necessary as Colorado Springs competes with other cities for sporting events.
- Create a signature event for Colorado Springs. A signature event will anchor smaller events, and can help bring a new identity to the city that attracts more visitors that can come back every year. This event can involve art, food, music and even outdoor sporting activities.

...continued Special Events

Recommendations

- Site amenities that can either be enhanced or created at certain sites to improve their suitability for recreation events include:
 - Shelter/Shade
 - Parking
 - Parking for food trucks
 - Staging
 - Seating
 - Lighting
 - Access to electricity
 - Bathrooms
 - ADA accessibility
- Continue to streamline the City's permit process for events.
- Provide opportunities for special event organizations or participants to voluntarily make financial contributions to Colorado Springs parks, open space, recreation, and trails.
- Define extreme sports activities as an economic cluster to attract events to this "Premier City." Colorado Springs offers adventure recreationists the opportunity to engage in all kinds of extreme sports including: skateboarding, BMX biking, downhill longboarding/skating, fat biking, mountain biking, mountain climbing and rafting. This is a unique aspect of the Colorado Springs parks system and should be promoted as one of the key reasons to not only visit the city, but also to hold your extreme sporting event here. This group of activities should be identified on both the City's website and the Colorado Springs Visitors' Bureau site.
- Encourage and support emerging recreational activities such as disc golf, pickleball and foot golf that offer unique opportunities for destination tournaments.
- Collaborate across City departments to manage a Parks Calendar of Events.

A well-managed event calendar balances parks events with non-event days to maintain the intended use of the system and allow for grounds as well as staff recuperation after events. It is also important to continue to host and produce events in the "shoulder seasons." This will help generate additional revenue throughout the year, maintain interest in parks, and build publicity and momentum for park events in all seasons.

7. ENHANCE AND FORMULATE STRONG AND BROAD PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships and Collaborations to Address Community Issues

Overview

Many of the existing challenges the PR&CS Department faces are best addressed with a community based approach, engaging leaders and citizens to holistically problem-solve. Ongoing coordination with other agencies and regional entities is necessary for many of the Master Plan recommendations to be accomplished. Several opportunities could be explored to further partner with other City departments to minimize costs, share responsibilities and resources, and create a better outcome for parks, trails and open space. Collaboration with regional entities is essential to explore prospects that exist beyond the city boundaries, such as trail connectivity, open space networks and water quality improvements. Collaboration with citizens is essential to make any of these opportunities realities. There is potential financial value to increasing partnerships, although they may not increase revenue directly, partnerships may result in substantial reductions in expenses.

Recommendations

- Form partnerships or working groups to address the following topics:
 - Community health and wellness
 - Environmental education programming
 - Fire preparedness and natural areas management
 - Forest and natural areas management
 - Greenway management
 - Homeless population in public spaces
 - Park rule enforcement and safety
 - Parks, trails and recreation marketing and tourism promotion
 - Senior recreation opportunities and special needs (Partnership opportunity with Innovations in Aging Collaborative)
 - Special events and festival planning
 - Urban flood control and stormwater management
 - Wildland hazards
- Work with advocacy and parks, trails and recreation user groups to create a culture of 'Champions of the Outdoors.' The social networks and resources of these groups can be leveraged to build community awareness and support for initiatives.
- Encourage partnerships between City departments including City Engineering, Communications, Development Review Enterprise, Economic Vitality, Emergency Management, Environmental Sustainability, Finance, Forestry, Housing Development, Land Use Review, Parking System Enterprise, Planning and Development, Police, Public Works, Stormwater, Streets and Transit Services.
- Look for opportunities to partner with local colleges and universities including Colorado College, Pikes Peak Community College, and University of Colorado, Colorado Springs. Opportunities could include a number of activities including restoration efforts, research activities and education.
- Collaborate with the surrounding communities of Manitou Springs, Stratmoor, Cimarron Hills, Fountain, Monument and El Paso County to coordinate the provision and management of regional open space, trail connections and recreation services.

...continued Partnerships and Collaborations to Address Community Issues

Recommendations

- Seek opportunities for open space protection, stewardship, outdoor education and recreation enhancement through partnerships with land trusts such as The Palmer Land Trust, The Nature Conservancy, The Trust for Public Lands and the Conservation Fund.
- Team with local military bases in the provision of trail connections and soliciting volunteers for construction projects.
- Coordinate with state and federal agencies responsible for surrounding public lands to capitalize on opportunities for collaboration.
- Develop relationships with and provide guidance to Special Improvement Maintenance Districts (SIMDs) and HOAs responsible for providing neighborhood recreation, trails, parks and open space.
- Expand partnerships and collaboration as a programming strategy. Continue partnerships with current service providers, such as the YMCA and Community Centers, and look for new opportunities with a variety of organizations.
- Create new parks and recreation service and shared-use agreements with local school districts to establish an understanding of roles, responsibilities and limitations.
- Collaborate with local and state health providers, such as the Colorado Health Foundation and Live Well Colorado, to address recreation programming, health initiatives and funding opportunities.
- Work with Front Range Community Services to identify volunteer opportunities that benefit PR&CS.
- Bolster support for the “Super Friends Group,” by expanding it based on a “Partnership for Parks” model. (See recommendation details regarding “Partnership for Parks”).

Recommendation Details

“PARTNERSHIP FOR PARKS”

A new “Partnerships for Parks” division would build on the current community volunteer office within PR&CS to strengthen and support community volunteer groups, friends groups, and the “Super Friends Groups”; to link them together, so they can learn from each other and be stronger collectively; and to promote parks in general so people will join in efforts to restore and preserve them. Partnerships for Parks would work with existing community organizations, bolster existing volunteer support services, and help new friends groups. Their office within PR&CS would build upon the existing volunteer coordinator office and grow its mission to provide proactive support for existing and new friends groups.

Partnerships for Parks would provide workshops, organizational development/support, volunteer opportunities organization and problem-solving experience to support local efforts to revitalize parks and the neighborhoods that surround them.

The Department would work closely with the proposed new Parks Foundation (detailed following) to help identify the desires of existing and new friends groups in order to support Parks Foundation fundraising efforts. Partnerships for Parks would be liaison between PR&CS and the new Parks Foundation.

ENHANCE AND FORMULATE STRONG AND BROAD PARTNERSHIPS

Form a Parks Foundation

Overview

Existing efforts to develop and nurture friends groups and volunteers should be continued. However, this Master Plan also recommends forming a citywide Parks Foundation to coordinate and bring more focused fundraising efforts to park support. The Foundation is not intended to replace current funding sources or as a means for the City to abdicate responsibilities. Instead, the Foundation is to add support and fill a currently unmet role. Its mission would be to provide support for all city parks, particularly the smaller neighborhood parks that don't have any fundraising capacity, and to reduce the need for every non-profit or Friends Group to have organizational capacity for fundraising. Friends groups would be encouraged to continue their successful fundraising efforts. The Parks Foundation would focus on large scale, collaborative fund raising efforts - providing opportunities for friends groups to leverage their resources for larger, community wide benefit. Additionally, the Parks Foundation could initiate more focused fundraising efforts for all parks, creating an umbrella fund that supplements and enhances the efforts of friends groups.

One of the major advantages of the public/private partnership model is its flexibility. Non-profits are typically less bureaucratic, can focus their energy upon the task at hand and move quickly toward implementation. Additionally, private non-profits can coordinate the interests of private sector partners with the interests of government, as representatives from both sectors serve on the organization's board. Over time, the Parks Foundation, through unique and sophisticated partnerships, can provide continued support for all of Colorado Springs parks and target fundraising efforts to specific park sites or programs when necessary.

Recommendations

- Form an agreement with the PR&CS Department for the formation of a citywide non-profit and establish the Foundation's mission statement.
- Select a Board president.
- Select between 10-12 Board members.
- Draft and sign Operating Agreement between Colorado Springs Parks Foundation and City of Colorado Springs.
- Provide administrative office space for Parks Foundation.
- Advertise and hire Executive Director and key senior staff.
- Begin to develop fundraising priorities.
- Initiate fundraising initiatives.
- Develop working relationships with existing friends groups.
- Develop process for providing grants to friends groups.
- Coordinate a partnership for PR&CS, City boards and regional agency collaboration.

Recommendation Details

PARKS FOUNDATION SUMMARY

The Parks Foundation is envisioned as a public/private partnership. The public private partnership model consists of a private non-profit organization operating in partnership with some level of government. The organization's board of directors may include members appointed by both the public and private sectors. The Foundation can provide support in the following areas: fundraising, park design, construction, management, maintenance, special events management and programming. The Foundation can also work on the development of new sources of revenue and coordination of efforts between government and the private sector to implement a capital improvements plan, maintenance schedules, operations plans and special events coordination.

The Parks Foundation mission could include the following tenets:

- Improve the quality of public spaces for the citizens of Colorado Springs by assisting with restoring, constructing and managing parks in partnership with the City, to provide a level of excellence that meets the needs of the community and inspires continued support of parks citywide.
- Give a voice to the smaller parks and community centers within the city, and provide them with the support they need to build and maintain their sites, programming and activities.
- Develop a public-private partnership with the City.
- Provide assistance with fundraising for development, operations and management of City parks, open space and trails.
- Assist friends groups with volunteer training and fundraising.

Figure 40 shows a suggested organizational structure showing how the Parks Foundation could integrate with PR&CS, existing non-profits and existing friends groups.

Figure 40: Illustrative Organizational Structure for the New Foundation, PR&CS, and Existing Non-profits and Friends Groups

