

Background

In 2014, the City launched an effort called “Nature in the City” to ensure that, as our community grows to its build-out population, all residents have access to high-quality, natural spaces close to where they live and work. Whether it’s a formal natural area, neighborhood park, or just the open space behind your house, our primary objective is to create and maintain access to nature within Fort Collins.

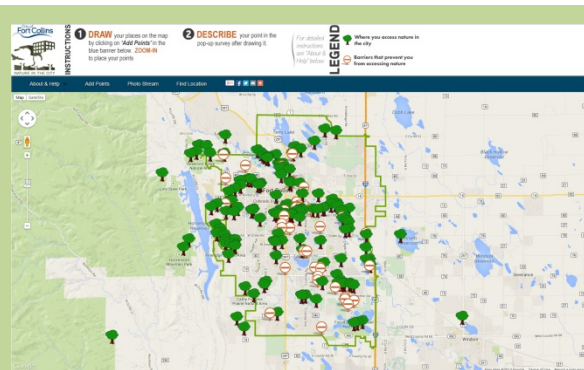


Figure 1 - Screenshot of the Nature in the City WikiMap

Executive Summary

83 users engaged with the City on WikiMaps, which is an online mapping tool that allows users to plot their own points on a map and comment on the points of other users. These 83 users submitted over 200 locations in and around Fort Collins that represent elements of nature they enjoy or barriers that prevent them from accessing nature. What the WikiMap information shows is that there are a number of assets within the city that many people enjoy. Users cited the Poudre River Trail, Spring Creek Trail and the City’s parks frequently as places where they access nature. Users submitted almost four times as many places they access nature in the

WikiMap Summary

- 83 users contributed 200+ points of data
- 161 places where people access nature
- 44 barriers to accessing nature
- 2.6 reasons why users access nature per point
- 1.6 barriers to accessing nature per point

city versus barriers to accessing nature, which demonstrates the high quality of nature in the city and that accessing these places is generally easy. Where access to nature can improve is along major streets. Major streets create safety and connectivity issues that present a challenge to nature seekers. This information coupled with the other outreach efforts from Nature in the City will help to create a plan that enhances the natural assets of the city while improving upon areas of need.

What follows is a discussion of why the respondents access nature where they do and what barriers exist to accessing nature in the City.

Why Respondents Access Nature

WikiMap users noted 161 locations where they access nature in Fort Collins. Users most commonly access nature for personal exercise or play according to the WikiMap survey. The other three most common reasons included:

- To escape from the urban environment/fresh air
- To experience beauty, peace or feel rejuvenated
- For wildlife (intrinsic value or viewing), plants, trees.

Where users go to experience these qualities of nature is shown in Figure 6. Users were allowed to pick three reasons per data point so many data points included multiple reasons for accessing nature at that particular spot. For each point, users picked 2.6 reasons why they access nature there on average. What this shows is that the choice of where to access nature is multi-faceted. People can get exercise or play in any number of locations but the fact that nature can provide an escape from the urban environment or an opportunity to see wildlife enhances the user's experience.

The map also shows that many users prefer to access the Spring Creek and Poudre River trails. From this information, the City can glean what sorts of activities Fort Collins residents prefer based on the infrastructure/activities provided on these trails. Other popular access points included city parks, neighborhood parks and water features. The word cloud shown in Figure 2 encapsulates these sentiments. The word cloud was created from the comments provided by WikiMap users. The emphasis on bike trails and access paint a clear picture that being able to bike on trails is highly valued by the community. This speaks to the importance of the extensive bike/pedestrian trail network in Fort Collins and its interconnectivity with the overall bike/pedestrian network in the City.

Where You Access Nature Survey Overview

Number of responses - 161

Top 3 survey responses:

- Personal Exercise or Play - 91
- Escape from Urban Environment/Fresh Air - 65
- To Experience Beauty, Peace or Feel Rejuvenated and Wildlife (intrinsic value or viewing), Plants, Trees - 61

Other survey responses

- Wide Open Spaces - 42
- Family Exercise or Play - 26
- Convenience/It's Close to Home or Work - 0
- To be Close to or Enjoy Water - 40
- To Walk my Dog/Pet - 25
- Other - 8

Average number of reasons why users access nature per point - 2.6

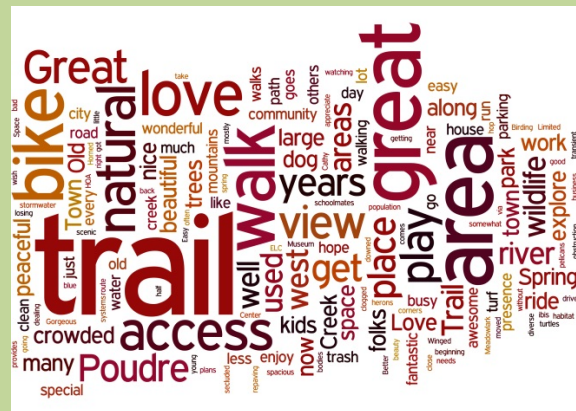


Figure 2 - Word cloud generated from WikiMap user comments about where they access nature

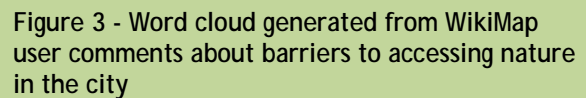
The word cloud above demonstrates the importance of the City's extensive bike/pedestrian trail network. Commenters used adjectives like *love*, *great* and *peaceful* frequently to describe the City's bike/pedestrian trails.

Barriers to Accessing Nature

While users lauded the nature they access, many users experience barriers to accessing these same features. WikiMap users, however, cited barriers far less frequently than places to access nature. Users cited only 44 barriers, which is only about a quarter of the number of reasons why people access nature. Below is a chart summarizing the types of barriers users experience to accessing nature in the city. The most common barrier was lack of easy access due to major streets, railroad tracks or traffic. Feeling unsafe or fearful and a lack of infrastructure were the two other most frequently cited barriers. Again, many areas represented multiple varieties of barriers, thus making access to nature difficult for users.

The map in figure 7 shows the various barriers as submitted by WikiMap users. Barriers are widely dispersed throughout the community but particular problem areas include Prospect near Leshar Middle School, Harmony near the Power Trail and the intersection of Harmony and

The word cloud in figure 3 summarizes the comments left by WikiMap users. Commentors focused on the difficulty of crossing major streets and how that makes them feel less safe. Streets like Harmony, Drake and Prospect were mentioned so frequently that they appeared in the word cloud.



The word cloud above shows that words like *access* and *trail* were used commonly, meaning that trail access was a large concern. Other words like *difficult*, *connect* and *traffic* further solidify that busy streets present challenges for accessing trails conveniently.

Number of responses - 44

- Lack of easy access, e.g., major street/railroads/traffic - 24
- Unsafe/Afraid/Fear - 17
- Lack of infrastructure, e.g., no sidewalks, trail or parking - 15

- Too crowded - 1
- Didn't know it existed - 0
- Not handicap accessible - 0
- Restrictions (no dogs, seasonal closures, cost) - 2
- On private land - 8
- Lack of public transit or other transportation - 0
- Lack of time - 0
- Other - 3

Average number of barriers to accessing nature per point - 1.6

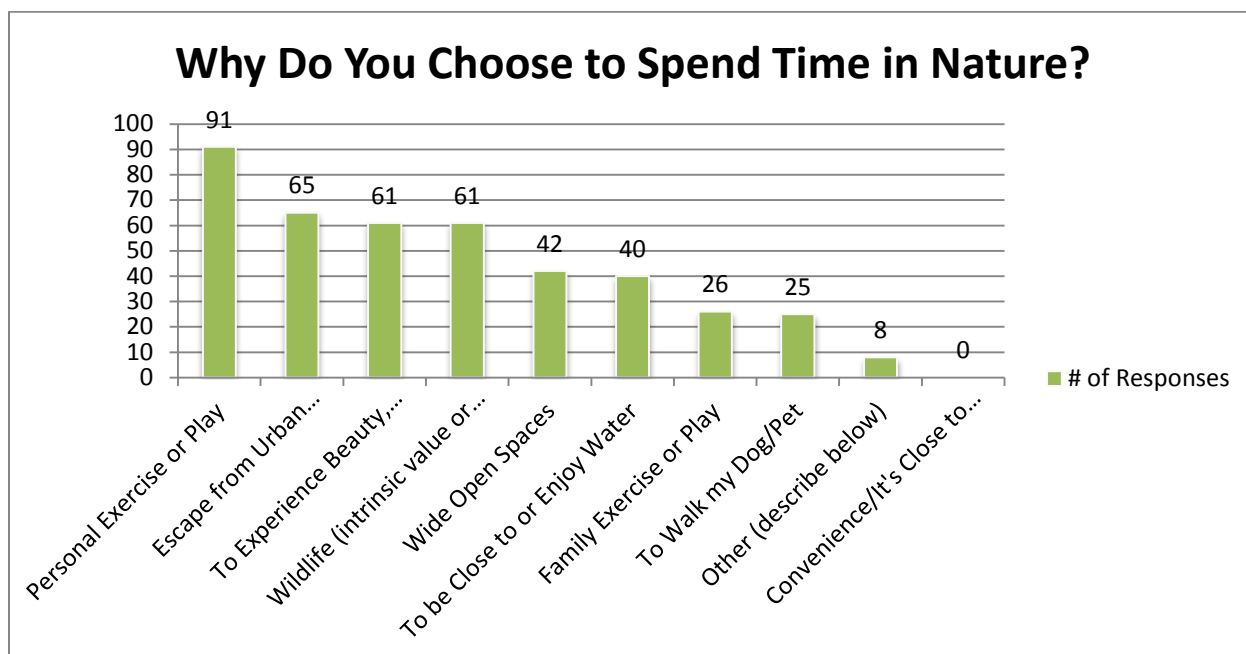


Figure 4 - Chart of survey results for the question, "Why do you choose to spend time in nature?"

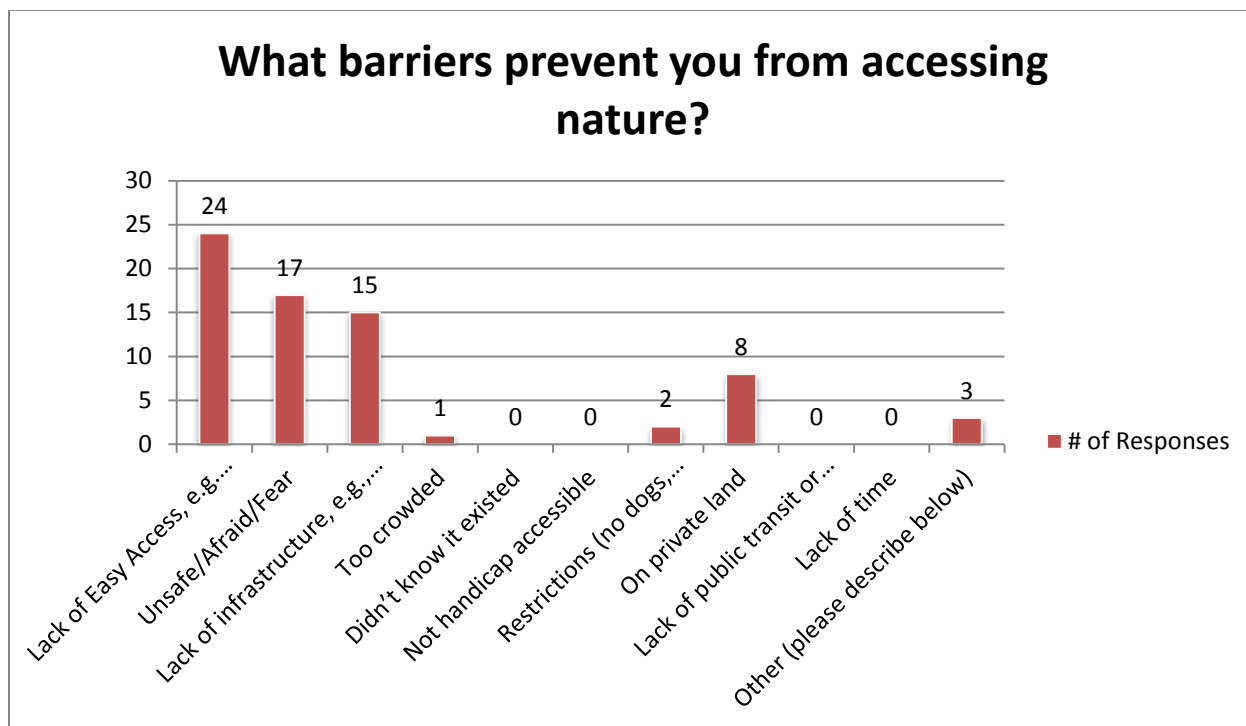


Figure 5 - Chart of survey results for the question, "What barriers prevent you from accessing nature?"

Why do you choose to spend time in nature?

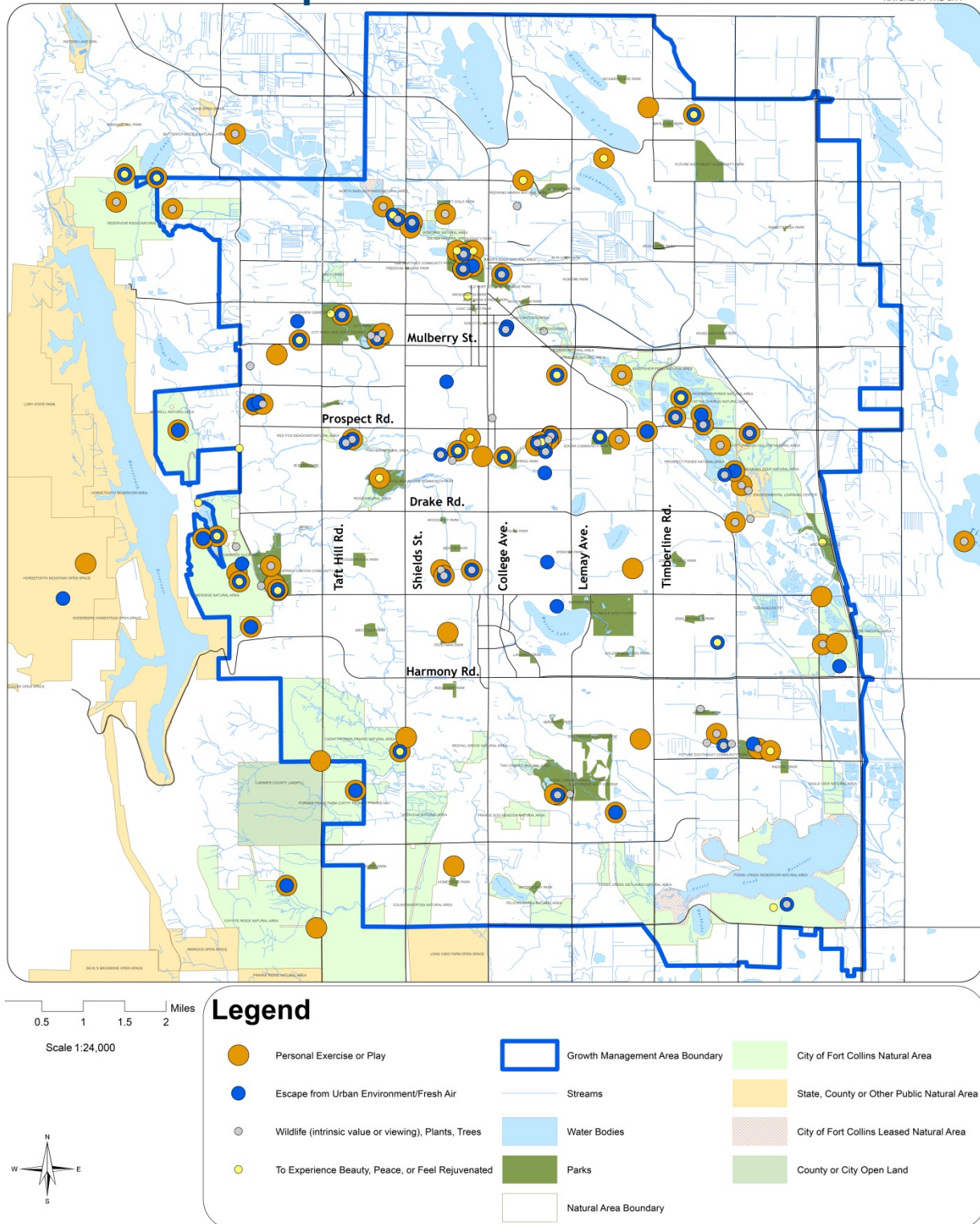


Figure 6 - Map for the top 3 responses to the question, “Why do you choose to spend time in Nature?”

What barriers prevent you from accessing nature?

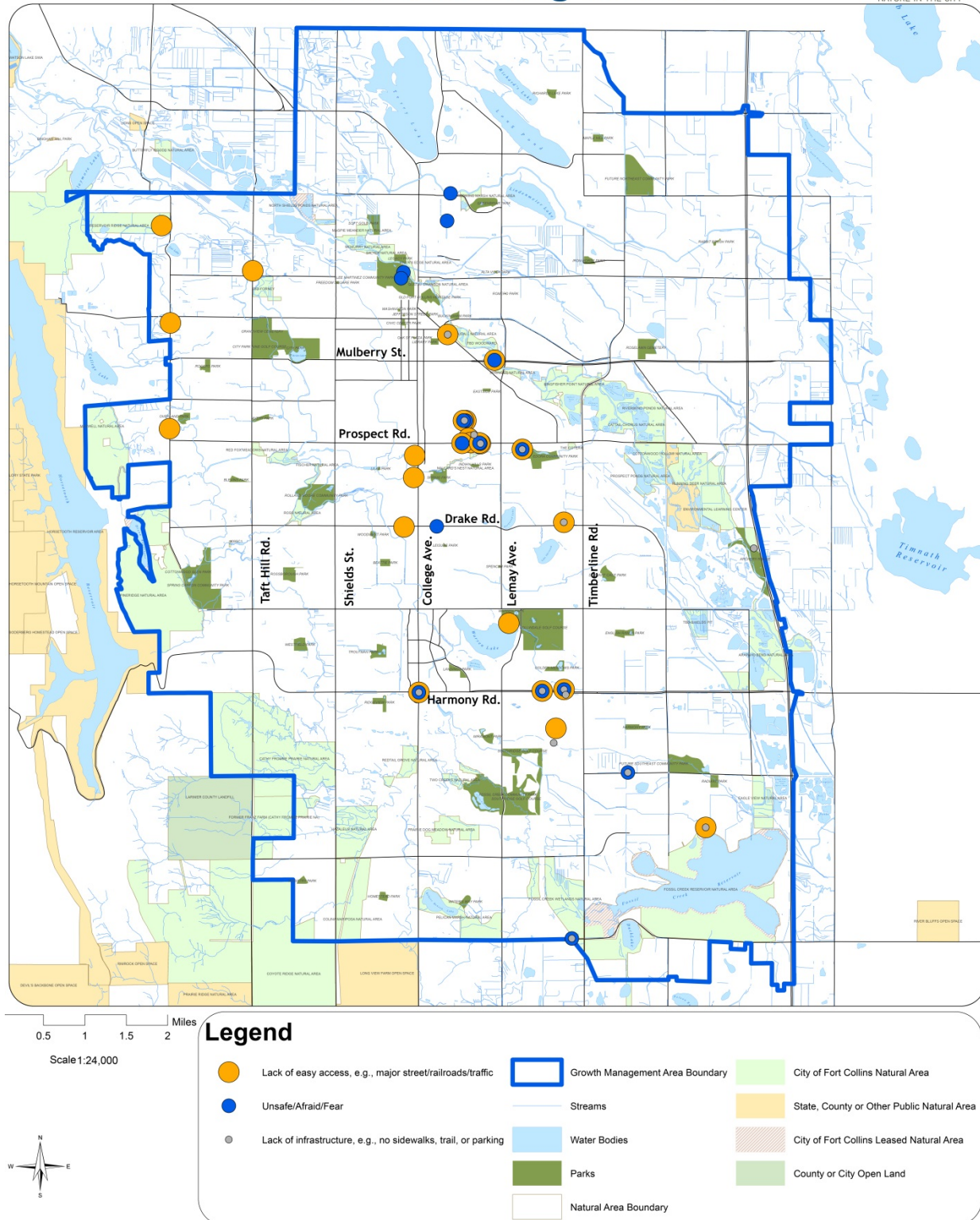


Figure 7 - Map for the top 3 responses to the question, “What barriers prevent you from accessing nature?”