

## Purpose of the Project

The purpose of Nature in the City is to ensure that, as our community grows to its buildout population, all residents have access to high-quality, natural spaces close to where they live and work.

## Background

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, almost 80% of people in the United States live in an urban setting. That means now, more than ever, people are experiencing nature in an urban environment.

As our community transitions from a suburban to urban city and densities increase, informal natural areas and features within the urban core are threatened unless we take action to ensure these areas are either preserved or created.

This effort will develop a Nature in the City Strategic Plan to ensure every citizen has access to nature. The Strategic Plan will include design guidelines, policies, and actions designed to achieve this goal. An interdisciplinary team including City and Colorado State University representatives will address three key objectives:

- Ensure every resident is within a 10-minute walk to nature from their home or workplace,
- Have natural spaces that provide diverse social and ecological opportunities, and
- Continue to shift the landscape aesthetic from lawns to more diverse landscapes that support healthy environments for all species.

## Public Engagement Strategies

- Citizens Advisory Committee (bi-monthly);
- Visioning workshops (spring);
- Focus group discussions (late spring);
- Online, interactive map to learn how residents access nature (spring/summer);
- Visual preference survey to evaluate different strategies for incorporating nature into the community (Oct 2014);
- Periodic updates to City Boards and Commissions (quarterly);
- City Council Work Session (Oct 28, 2014);
- Project website, email list, and social media.

## Project Schedule

Nature in the City is a 15-month project that will take place in three phases:

- Phase One: Inventory and Assessment (Jan to Sept 2014) - The first year of the project is primarily devoted to data collection and analysis to assess our existing natural assets/gaps from a triple bottom line perspective (economic, social, and environmental).
- Phase Two: Strategic Plan (Aug to Dec 2014) – The Strategic Plan will include policies and action steps to address the gaps and challenges identified in the inventory and assessment. Short-, medium-, and long-term strategies will be identified.
- Phase Three: Implementation (Dec 2014 to Mar 2015) – Implementation will include design guidelines, regulatory updates, and incentives to achieve strategic objectives.

## How do you define nature?

For the purposes of this project, we define Nature in the City as the following:

*“Places that support plants, animals, and natural processes and contribute to a variety of experiences for human enjoyment and well-being.”*

Through this definition, we are acknowledging nature is all around us. Whether we see a Sharp-shinned Hawk in Old Town or a butterfly seemingly floating through the Bacon Elementary schoolyard, or we feel the shade from a cottonwood tree or the respite experienced from silence and fresh air in the middle of an urban environment, nature is the air we breathe, the land that surrounds us, and the species that inhabit the land.

When we shift to the definition of nature with respect to this project, we are seeking to provide a wide range of places and experiences so all residents have meaningful and enriching interactions with nature. For example, places may include parks, Natural Areas, or informal spaces such as the open space in your neighborhood or where you work, or the community garden where you grow vegetables. By experiences, we’ve heard people value the intrinsic value of having nature nearby as well as the opportunities for personal or family recreation, the need to escape from the urban environment, or as a place to find beauty and relaxation. While not every site will provide every experience, we are seeking to ensure that all residents have access to a variety of natural experiences close to where they live and work.

## Learn more

[www.fcgov.com/natureinthecity](http://www.fcgov.com/natureinthecity)

Visit our website to join our email list, explore case studies, and view project documents.

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The photos above depict a range of natural experiences within the City of Fort Collins, ranging from public lands such as Spring Canyon Park (Top Photo: Hines, Inc.) to informal spaces including the Larimer Canal No. 2 (Middle Photo: Lindsay Ex), or natural play spaces such as a fallen tree or in your own backyard (Bottom Photos: Plug in to Nature). Depending on your perspective, all of these places contribute to Nature in the City.