



**PROJECT
OUTDOORS**

Plug in to Nature
in NW Fort Collins

FORT COLLINS INSPIRE INITIATIVE

PLANNING REPORT

PREPARED FOR THE LARIMER COUNTY INSPIRE COALITION
JULY 24, 2017





PROJECT OUTDOORS

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in Northwest Fort Collins



DESIGNWORKSHOP



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PROJECT OUTDOORS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FORT COLLINS INSPIRE INITIATIVE



PLANNING OPPORTUNITY AND PURPOSE

Inspiring a deep connection to nature is the goal of Project Outdoors because it is vital for the wellbeing of our community, our wildlife, and the Colorado way of life. This planning process provided the opportunity to gain an understanding the specific barriers northwest Fort Collins youth and families experience to connecting to the outdoors, identify strategies to address the disconnect, and empower youth and the community to be part of a collective to solve it. Proposed strategies to address the disconnect included improvements to places, programs and career pathways.

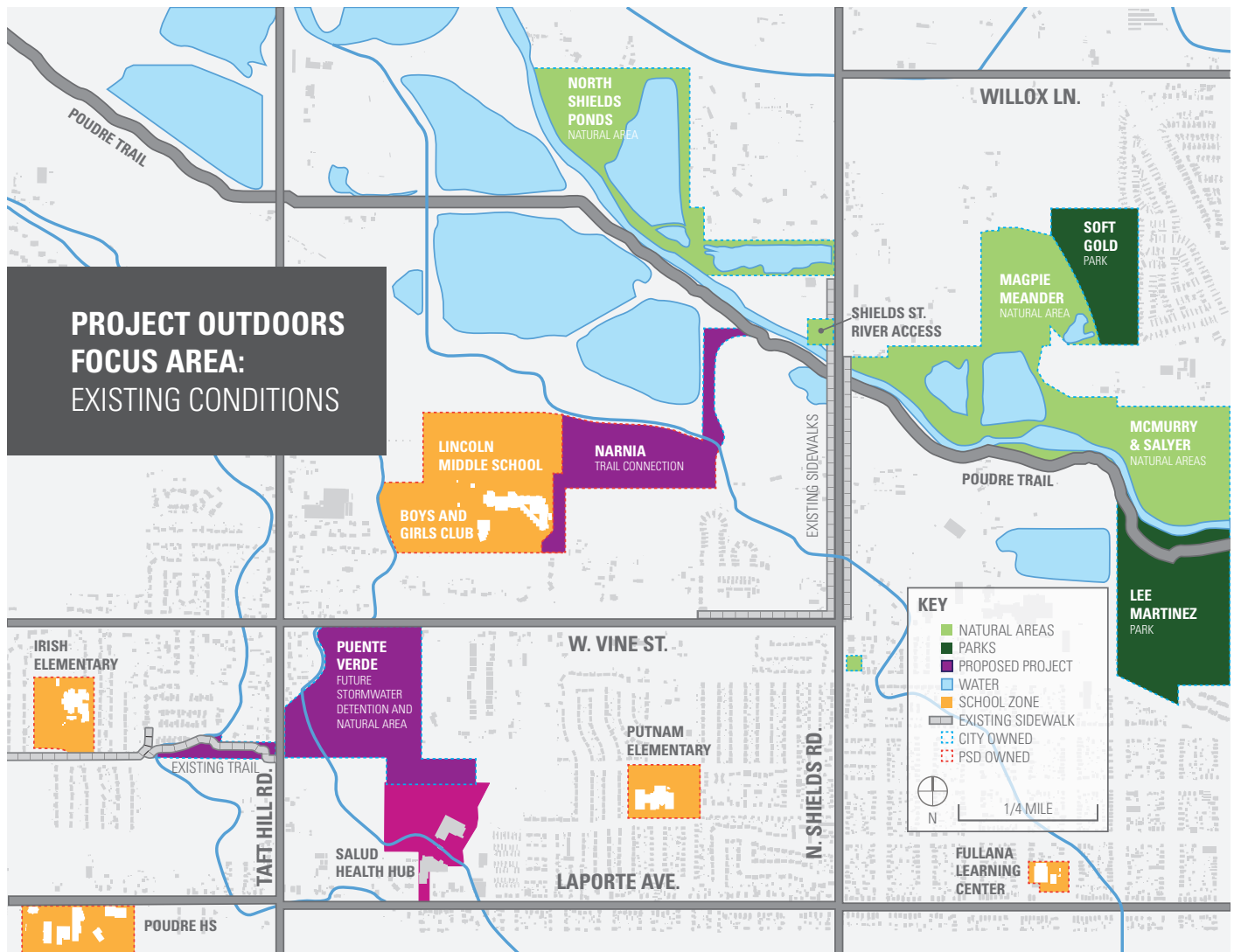
The planning process (January 2016 through July 2017) is followed by the

opportunity to apply for \$1-3 million in implementation funds from Great Outdoors Colorado.

Project Outdoors is led by a Youth Advisory Council of Boys & Girls Club members and a coalition of local partners including Larimer County Department of Natural Resources, City of Fort Collins, Boys & Girls Club of Larimer Country (BGCLC), Colorado State University, and the Poudre School District.

NW FORT COLLINS NEIGHBORHOOD STATISTICS

5 SQUARE MILE AREA	16% of households have incomes below the poverty level
9,860 RESIDENTS	
2,734 RESIDENTS ARE UNDER THE AGE OF 24	66% of students receiving free and reduced school lunch
5 SCHOOLS: 2,890 STUDENTS	45% of students are non-white or mixed race.
1,250 MEMBER BGCLC	



VISION SUMMARY

In a community that prides itself on outdoor conservation and trails, residents of northwest Fort Collins voiced feelings of being neglected in regards to outdoor access and amenities. This underserved neighborhood is one of the city's most culturally diverse with census data reporting 13.9% Hispanic residents, 45% non-white residents, and 66% of students receiving free and reduced school lunch. The Fort Collins Boys & Girls Club serves the most vulnerable youth in the community and is the hub for Project Outdoors. In-depth, bilingual engagement process revealed that the neighborhood is close to open spaces, parks, and trails, but access and connections do not currently exist. Barriers include unsafe routes for bikes and pedestrians, a perception that nature is far away, open spaces that are not yet open to the public, and lack of amenities that make the outdoors more inviting and comfortable. The lack of adult leaders and culturally relevant outdoor programming mean that many kids don't make the time to and/or have an interest in the outdoors. Other barriers include access to outdoor gear, lack of transportation, and support for teachers and students. To address lack of connectivity, the community-created vision for place-based infrastructure transformation includes two key trail connections and a bike/pedestrian path. To address the lack of nearby outdoor sites especially for kids at school, three learning gardens and nature connection infrastructure near the Boys & Girls Club will make the outdoors more welcoming and safe.

TRAIL CONNECTIONS

A community-voiced priority is a trail connection between Lincoln Middle School and the 10 mile long artery, the Poudre Trail. This would provide a physical connection between the school and the adjacent Boys & Girls Club to the Poudre River and its beautiful green corridor of natural areas and parks. Instead of traveling on busy Vine Drive (nearly universally cited as a barrier and safety concern because of lack of sidewalks), the trail connection would provide safe, off-street access to the outdoors.

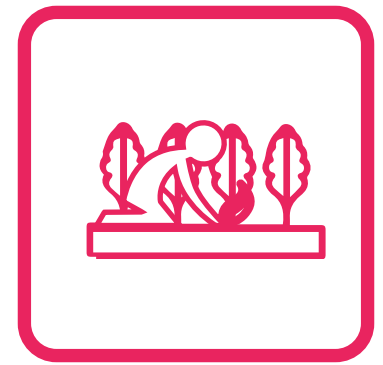
To make the Lincoln/Poudre trail connection come alive for young people, they suggested formalizing their name for it, Narnia, and adding an entryway, a gathering spot with shade, interactive trail surfaces (such as games stamped into the cement), and fun play elements such as a lookout tower. While a few youth already visit, they suggested making it universally welcoming by adding an outdoor classroom and making expert-level bike features safer and more accessible.

A second trail connection at Puente Verde builds on the Lincoln to Poudre Trail connection (in English, "Green Bridge", the temporary name for a City of Fort Collins future natural area/stormwater site until the community names it). It would connect Irish Elementary to the Boys & Girls Club and to Salud Health Hub (a low-income clinic), open the natural space to the public, provide a safe route to avoid busy streets, and facilitate Poudre Trail access.



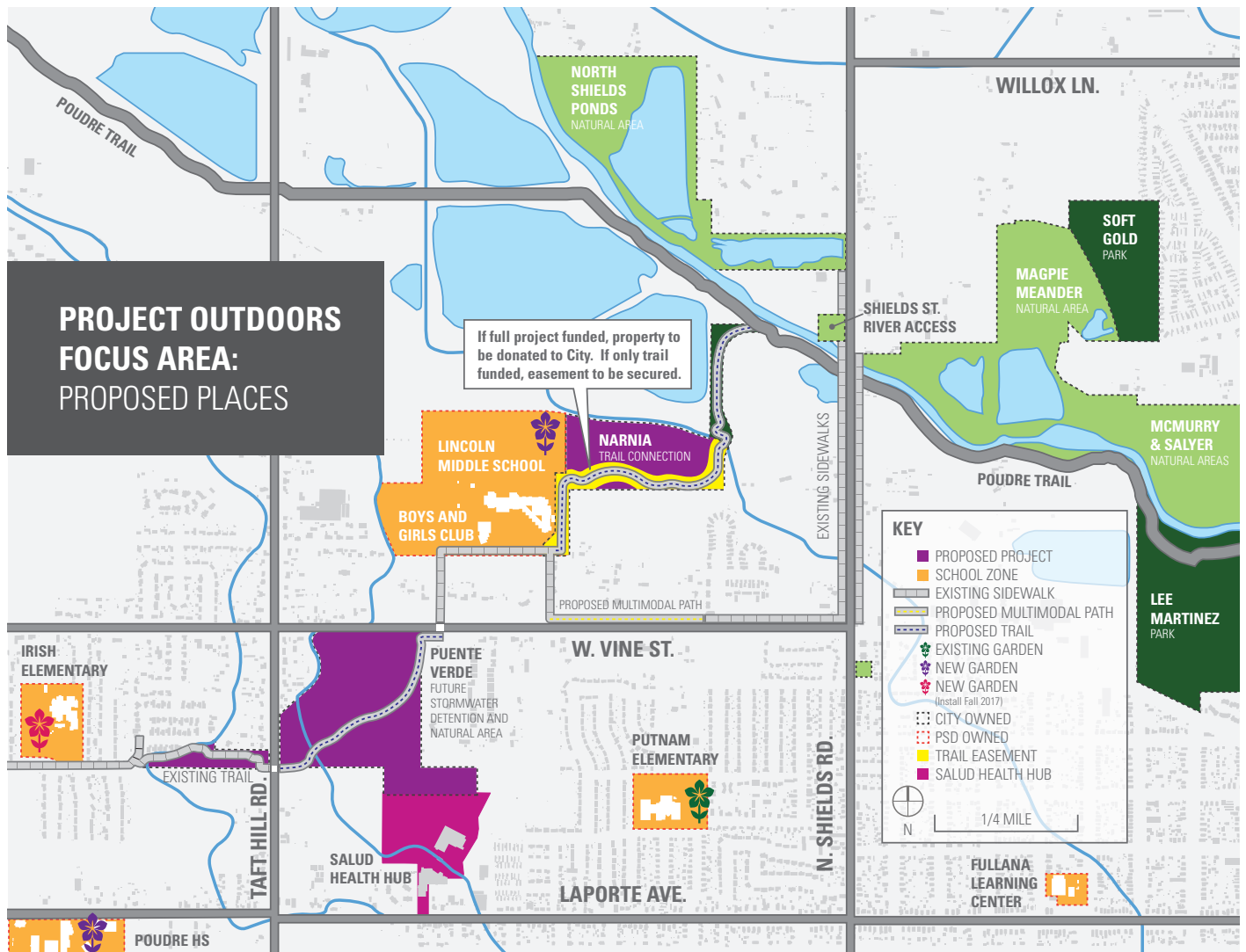
LEARNING GARDENS

Teachers and administrators said they are passionate about incorporating the outdoors into their everyday learning activities but they don't have time or funding for many field trips, so on-site learning gardens were preferred. The Poudre School District has had outstanding experiences with The Kitchen Community's program that provides garden infrastructure, curriculum connections that are woven into the fabric of daily learning, and teacher workshops. New learning gardens will be installed at Irish Elementary School, Lincoln Middle School, and Poudre High School.



MULTIMODAL PATH

Concerns about lack of safety for pedestrians and bikes on Vine Drive due to the lack of sidewalks and bike paths, were voiced repeatedly by a wide range of youth, stakeholders, and residents. A multimodal roadside path is a high community priority that would connect neighborhoods to the Lincoln/Poudre Trail connection, provide a safe route to school and the Boys & Girls Club, and it would be a recreational amenity. Providing this path would build trust and soothe feelings of being overlooked.

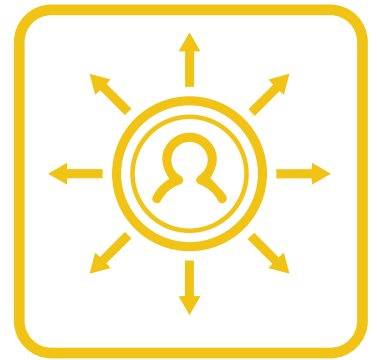


PROGRAMS & PATHWAYS

Parents listed time, money, and transportation as barriers to participating in outdoor programming and suggested incorporating the outdoors into existing activities. To address the youth-voiced barriers of lack of adults to accompany them into the outdoors and a lack of programs that facilitate outdoor exploration, the vision is for a comprehensive sequence of in-school, after-school, and summer programs. Locations gradually build from the backyard and schoolyard to Colorado's spectacular backcountry. Capacity to take on new programming was recognized as the key barrier for local organizations. Thus, programming will be coordinated by two new positions, one focused on in-school programming for five schools (Prek-12th grade) and teacher training, and another position is focused on creating weekly after-school and summer day camp activities at the Boys & Girls Clubs in Fort Collins and Loveland.

Highlights of programming include monthly field trips at four preschools and elementary schools, paired with pre- and post-trip classroom visits by program providers. A new Boys & Girls Club outdoor club will offer weekly opportunities during the school year and day camps during the summer to connect with nature. Outdoor gear will be provided for students and will be housed in a new gear library at the Boys & Girls Club. In middle school, classes from science to art to physical education will activate Narnia and the proposed trail connection. Support will go toward learning garden curriculum connections and increasing participation in Lincoln Middle School's outdoor and character-building program which culminates with a backcountry trip. At Poudre High School, the existing natural resource track is bolstered by an in-school entrepreneurship program which activates the proposed garden. Special events such as an outdoor career fair and visits to Colorado State University's mountain campus build excitement and give young people experience with outdoor-oriented higher education and jobs. During the summer, teens are invited to day camps (with a focus on outdoor career exploration) paid summer internships with Larimer County Conservation Corps and other local agencies, and community volunteer stewardship projects. Youth will enhance their outdoor skills, become passionate outdoor stewards, and have great qualifications for natural resource jobs. To realize this inspiring vision with its multiple parts, a part-time coordinator will manage the project and ensure success.

With funding and resource support, northwest Fort Collins will transform from being overlooked and blocked from outdoor access, into a vibrant outdoor-connected community.

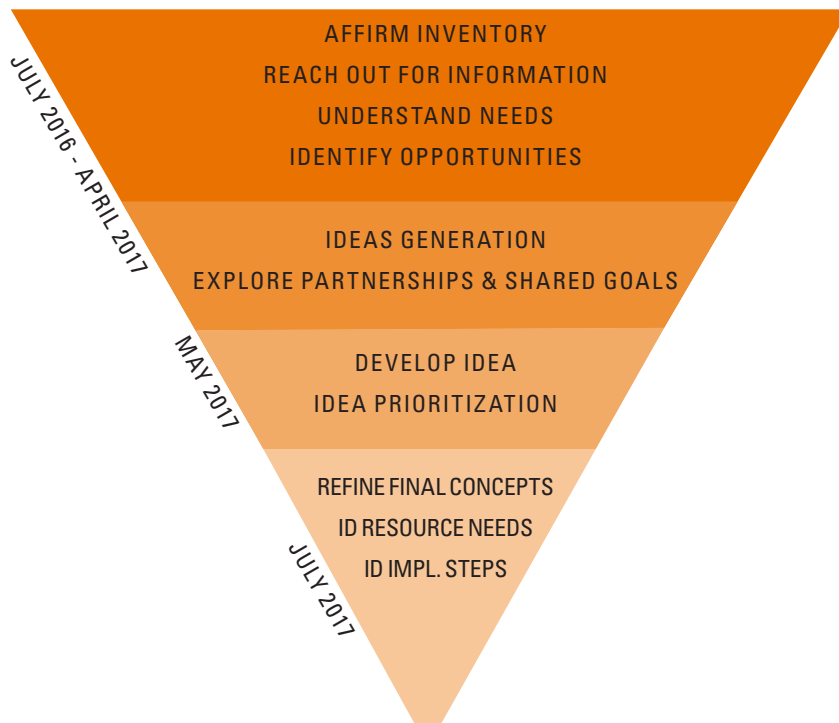


PLANNING PROCESS HIGHLIGHTS

Approximately 800 people were engaged in providing input of ideas, understanding the issues, and collaboration in finding solutions. This youth and community driven process allowed for discovery, included nontraditional methods of engagement, and tapped into existing community groups, organizations, and social networks. This approach encouraged innovative ideas to emerge from the community, partners, and youth. This means of discovery meant the planning process was not linear, but rather an iterative process that focused on advancing ideas of exploration, refinement, and prioritization. The planning process diagram (below) illustrates how the project generally moved through phases: from general needs and resources identification to specific implementation actions. Youth and community engagement activities were woven throughout the process, and sought to go where the people were and engage them, regarding both specific idea advancement and the general project direction.

PLANNING PROCESS DIAGRAM

INSPIRE INITIATIVE:
DREAM BIG. REFINER IDEAS.
EMPOWER. PARTNER



IMPLEMENTATION INITIATIVE:
DETAIL PLANS. CONSTRUCTION. NEW
OPPORTUNITIES. PLAY. EVALUATION



The planning process focused on building relationships and engaging a diverse group of area youth and stakeholders from many organizations. One of the most beneficial parts of the planning process was the opportunity to learn about the outdoor related projects that are happening in the community and develop new and in-depth relationships with community members and the organizations that serve them. For example, City of Fort Collins previously provided only sporadic field trips for two of the schools in the neighborhood. After the planning process, they have relationships with teachers at all the schools and multiple connections with Poudre School District (PSD) administrators. The City's commitment to the Boys & Girls Club has deepened (including extending the Youth Advisory Council into summer 2017) as a result of working with their staff and building relationships with their youth members.

The list below summarizes key community engagements in addition to bi-weekly meetings of the 26 member Coalition and on-going conversations with a broad range of stakeholders.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES	# PARTICIPANTS
Kick-off Meeting Open House	80 attendees
Teacher Meeting	25 attendees
Youth Advisory Council	12 members
Career Pathways Partner Conversations	41 participants
Environmental Education Program Providers Retreat	28 participants
Surveys of B&GC members and Salud Health Clients	26 responses
Ongoing Conversations with Boys & Girls Club Staff	6 staff members
Ongoing meetings with teachers, school administrators, PSD Facilities, PSD Curriculum staff	12+ participants
Ongoing listening sessions and multiple site visits to five schools	26 participants
Youth Survey (created by and distributed by Youth Advisory Council)	120 responses
Prioritization Open House	100+ attendees
Career Pathways Providers Meeting	17 participants
Poudre School District Site Stakeholder Brainstorming Session	24 attendees
Lincoln Middle School Student Engagement	300 youth
Boys & Girls Club Engagement	20 youth

NEXT STEPS

Now that a community-driven vision has been put forward, it is time for partners to come together to invest in these ideas and cause change. Success in the Inspire process lies in doing what has never been done before. While outdoor programming is offered throughout Larimer County, providers are at capacity with long waitlists. Many schools are left without outdoor experiences. In addition, teachers are overwhelmed with the day-to-day tasks of helping their students meet standards and increase test scores.

Some immediate improvements were made as a result of this planning process, such as the formation of an outdoor club that expands upon the format of the Youth Advisory Council field trips throughout the summer of 2017. In addition, the planning effort gave energy and support to empower others to take action to connect youth to the outdoors. For example, Poudre High School's Outdoor Club leader was inspired to expand the club by working towards engaging more students and overcoming barriers to participation, such as lack of gear. The sharing of information about existing outdoor programs and places has provided youth and families with opportunities they didn't know existed.

New key community supporters emerged in this process and will help aid in the next steps of implementing the vision including:

- Vida Sana Health Equity Coalition
- Agriculture and gardening outdoor program providers working in this neighborhood
- Bike advocacy groups
- New interdepartmental collaboration within the City of Fort Collins
- Residents, Boys & Girls Club members, students, neighborhood kids, and their parents
- Organizers from four other major area planning/implementation effort
- Outdoor program providers
- Educators and school leadership from five area schools

The next steps to implementing the vision are securing funding from a variety of sources, further developing partnerships and agreements, and continuing communication and relationship building with area youth and community partners. It will take a great deal of time and effort to completely eliminate the disconnect of youth and families to the great outdoors, but through support of the community and partners there are many tangible solutions that will have immediate impact on the lives of the people Project Outdoors will serve.

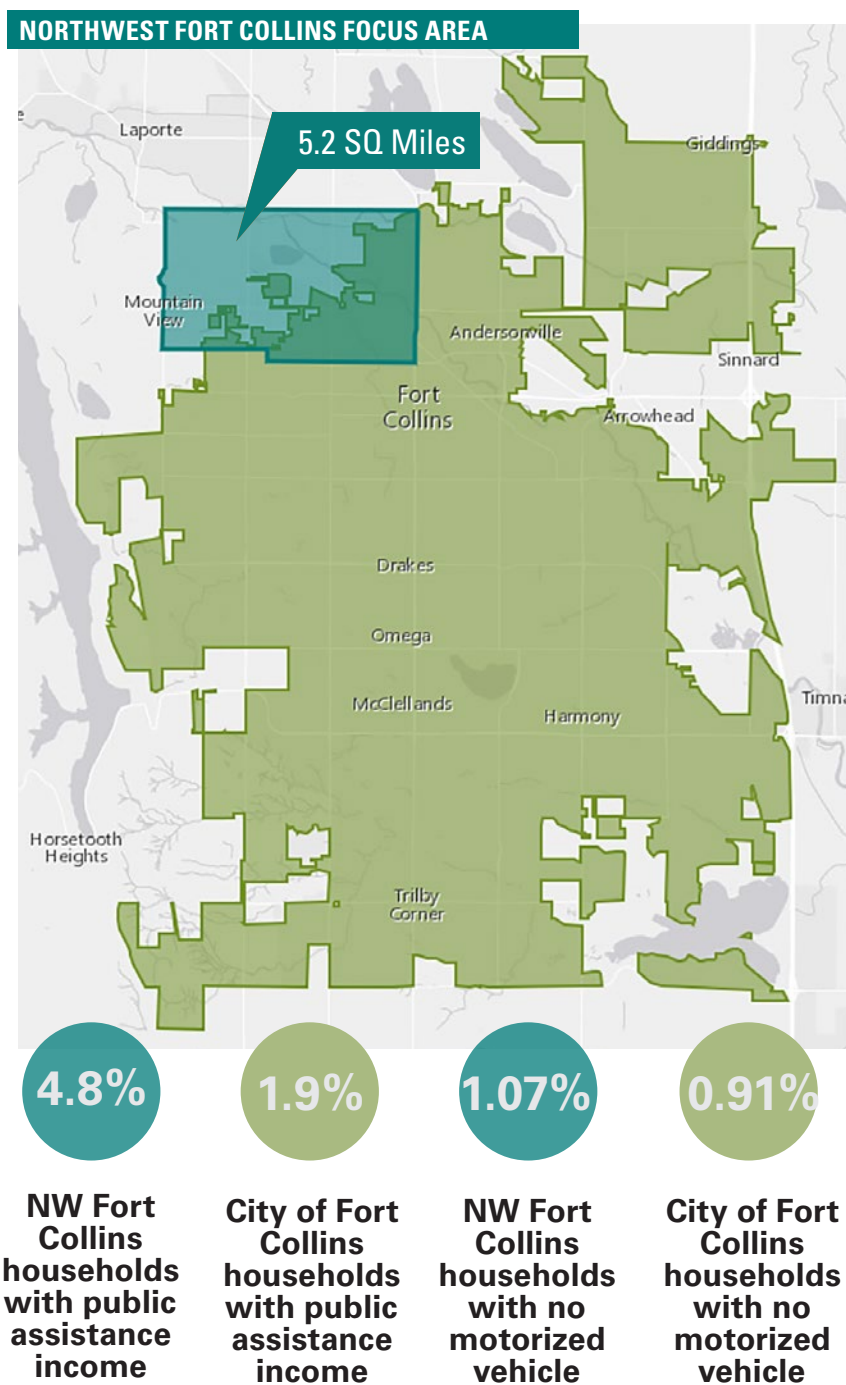
People



REGIONAL CONTEXT

Larimer County is a region comprised of rich farmland, vast stretches of ranchland, foothill forests and high mountain peaks. There are many natural resources in the county including the Cache la Poudre and Big Thompson rivers, reservoirs and lakes, wildlife habitat, and scenic vistas. Over 50 percent of the land in Larimer County is public land. The majority of publicly owned land is either within Roosevelt National Forest or Rocky Mountain National Park. In addition, Colorado Parks and Wildlife areas, Larimer County parks and open spaces, and municipal parks provide a wide spectrum of recreational opportunities. With plentiful public land, the presence of Colorado State University, and a culture defined by “the great outdoors,” there are many opportunities for youth and families to experience nature in Larimer County.

However, not everyone in the community has the same advantages in opportunities to connect to nature. Previous studies have revealed the northwest quadrant of Fort Collins as a location that lacks physical connectivity from residential neighborhoods and public facilities to the Poudre River, trail corridors, parks and natural area lands. This area of the city is also a location with higher concentrations of socioeconomic factors, for neighborhood residents, students, and Boys & Girls Club of Larimer County (BGCLC) members, that are known to create greater challenges in accessing nature, such as lower income levels, transportation challenges, and a variety of cultural norms.



NORTHWEST FORT COLLINS CONTEXT

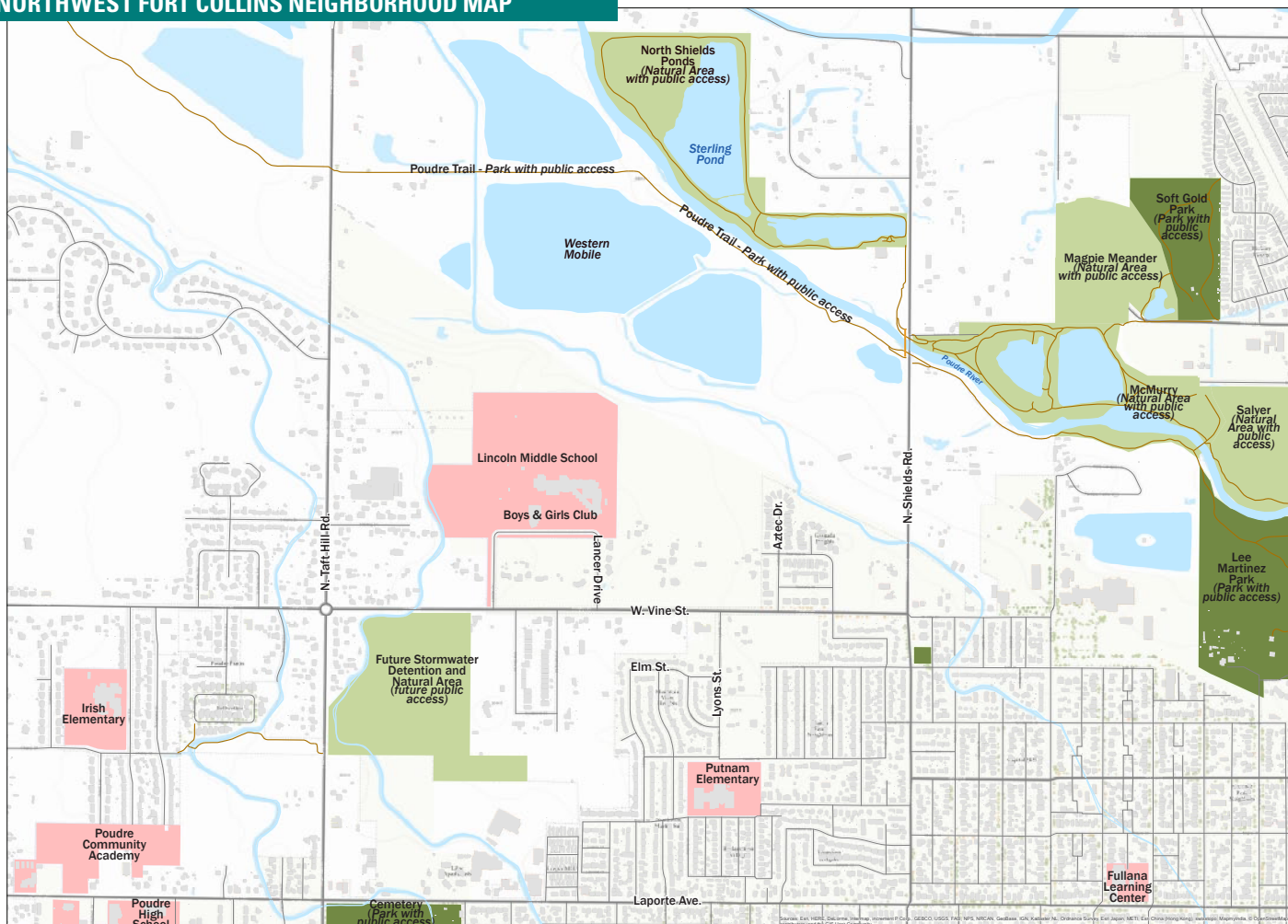
The northwest neighborhood planning effort encompasses roughly 5.2 square miles of land. The focus area is bounded by Laporte Avenue to the south, N. Sunset Street to the west, includes three natural areas, Soft Gold Park and Lee Martinez Park to the east, and to the north includes North Shields Ponds. Five schools are located in this area as well as the Fort Collins BGCLC, making it an area that serves as a hub to many area youth.

The neighborhood is fairly rural in character with low density development patterns. Neighborhood parks are not embedded in neighborhoods with sidewalk connections to serve residents as in other more developed portions of the city. The neighborhoods are made up largely of established, single family homes with a high percentage of renters (43%). School properties and the natural areas on the focus area edges serve as the nearest public outdoor recreation spaces.

2006 NORTHWEST SUBAREA PLAN VISION



NORTHWEST FORT COLLINS NEIGHBORHOOD MAP



NW FORT COLLINS COMMUNITY

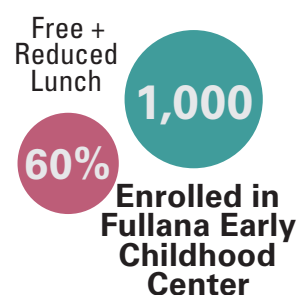
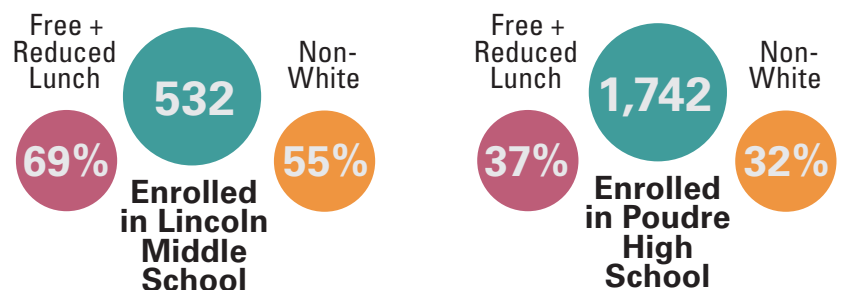
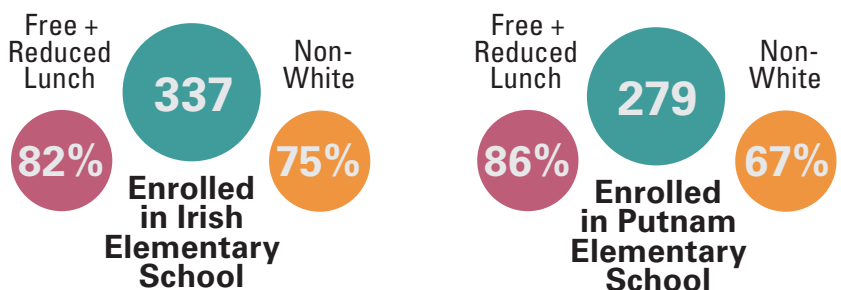
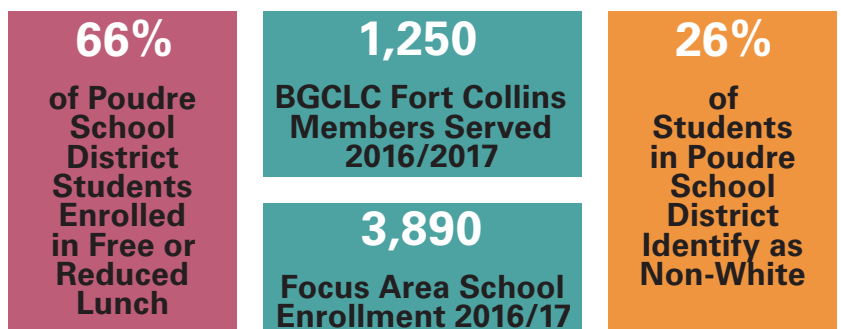
We are compelled to serve the Fort Collins BGCLC and northwest focus area because of its geographic location near the Poudre River and local natural areas, as well as its proximity to underserved schools and neighborhoods. The children who make up the BGCLC's membership and many of the students in area schools are primarily low-income, racially diverse kids who are not typical participants in outdoor activities. The Fort Collins location serves 1,250 members, 66% of which are on free and reduced lunch.

SOCIOECONOMIC INDICATORS OF NW FORT COLLINS

Students: The Focus Area contains five schools in the Poudre School District that cumulatively enrolled 3,890 student during the 2016/2017 school year:

- Fullana Learning Center (early childhood)
- Irish Elementary
- Putnam Elementary
- Lincoln Middle School
- Poudre High School

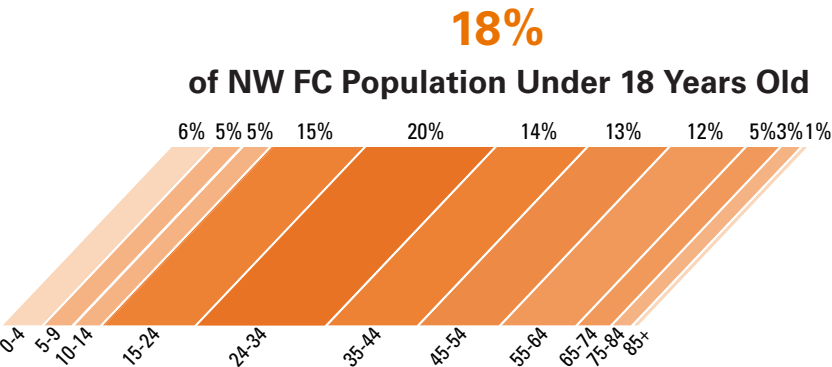
Several of these listed schools are Title 1 schools: at least 40% of the students are from low-income families. The focus area schools report more students receiving free and reduced school lunch than the average reported for the entire school district. Putnam and Irish Elementary schools report the highest disparity; 86% and 82% respectively, compared to the District average of 31%.



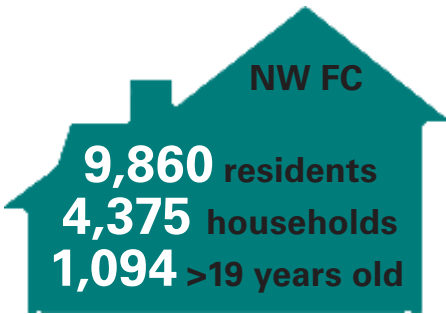
Population: Fort Collins is a growing Front Range community of approximately 158,375 residents, projected to increase by 1.8% by 2021 to 172,875. The community represents diverse backgrounds, including students and professors at the Colorado State University, newer suburban, family-oriented neighborhoods and older, lower density neighborhoods occupied primarily by renters.

A total of 9,860 residents, or 4,375 households, are located in the 5.2 square mile northwest Focus Area of Fort Collins. The percentage of households that have one or more youth 18 years old or younger is similar to the percentage throughout Fort Collins at 28%, totalling 1,094 youth residing within the Focus Area.

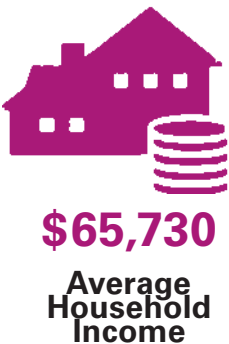
Income: A little more than 16% of households in the Focus Area reported incomes below the poverty level. Ten percent of households received food stamps/SNAP status in 2016. The Focus Area reports lower average annual household incomes than other households in Fort Collins. In 2016, the area’s average household income totaled \$65,730, while Fort Collins averages \$76,821.

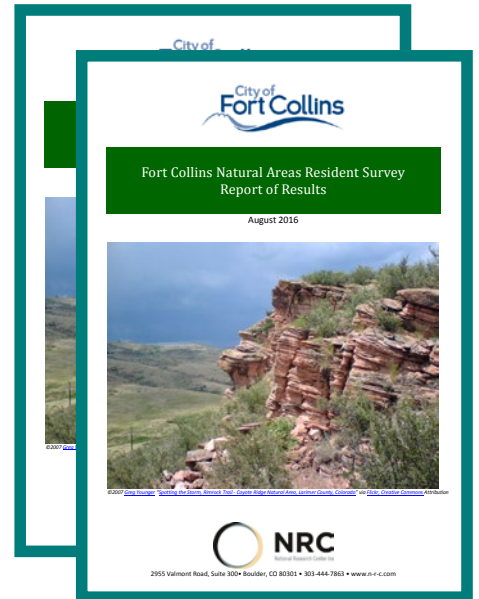
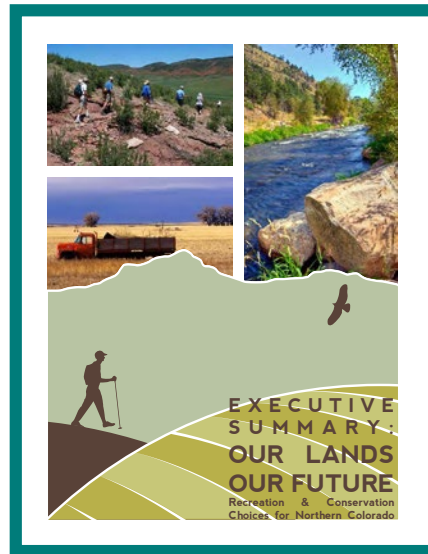
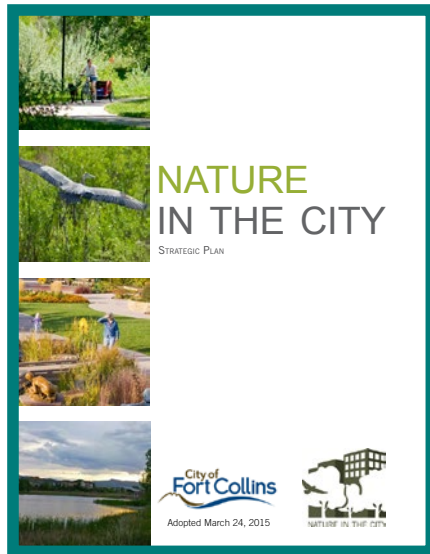


Ethnic and Racial Diversity: Residents of the Focus Area are more ethnically diverse per population than Fort Collins. Over 14% of people that reside in the Focus Area identify as Hispanic (11.2% of Fort Collins residents report having Hispanic heritage). 11.4% of residents are non-white or mixed race. Additionally, the student body of the focus area schools contain higher numbers of students identifying as non-white than the Poudre School District as a whole. Putnam and Irish Elementary schools report the greatest diversity; 75% and 67% of their student body, respectively, identify as non-white. Cumulatively, the District enrolls a student population that is 25% non-white.



16% of Households with Income Below Poverty Level in Last 12 Months





SUMMARY OF RELEVANT STUDIES AND PLANNING EFFORTS

The following regional and local studies provided a basis for the Fort Collins Inspire planning effort:

- Northwest Subarea Plan: 2006
- Larimer County Plug in to Nature: 2012
- Our Lands - Our Future, Larimer County: 2013
- Nature in the City Strategic Plan: 2015
- National Youth Outcomes Initiative Outcomes Report: 2015
- Lincoln Middle School Walkability Audit: 2016
- Lincoln Middle School Community Feedback: 2016
- Fort Collins Natural Areas Resident Survey Reports

These reports were reviewed to identify relevant opportunities and public input findings for Northwest Fort Collins. The full review of past reports and studies is provided in the Appendix.

NORTHWEST SUBAREA PLAN

While this Fort Collins subarea plan is over a decade old, it contains relevant proposals for connecting neighborhoods and open lands. Many of the “future” trails identified on this map are yet to be realized and some are currently under development. The Lincoln to Poudre Trail connection and Puente Verde trail connection are two places identified in the subarea plan that are proposed to be completed as part of the Project Outdoors effort.

North West Subarea Plan

December 2006

- Legend**
- Paving Area
 - City Limits
 - GMA Boundary
 - Rivers, Streams, and Ditches
 - Streets

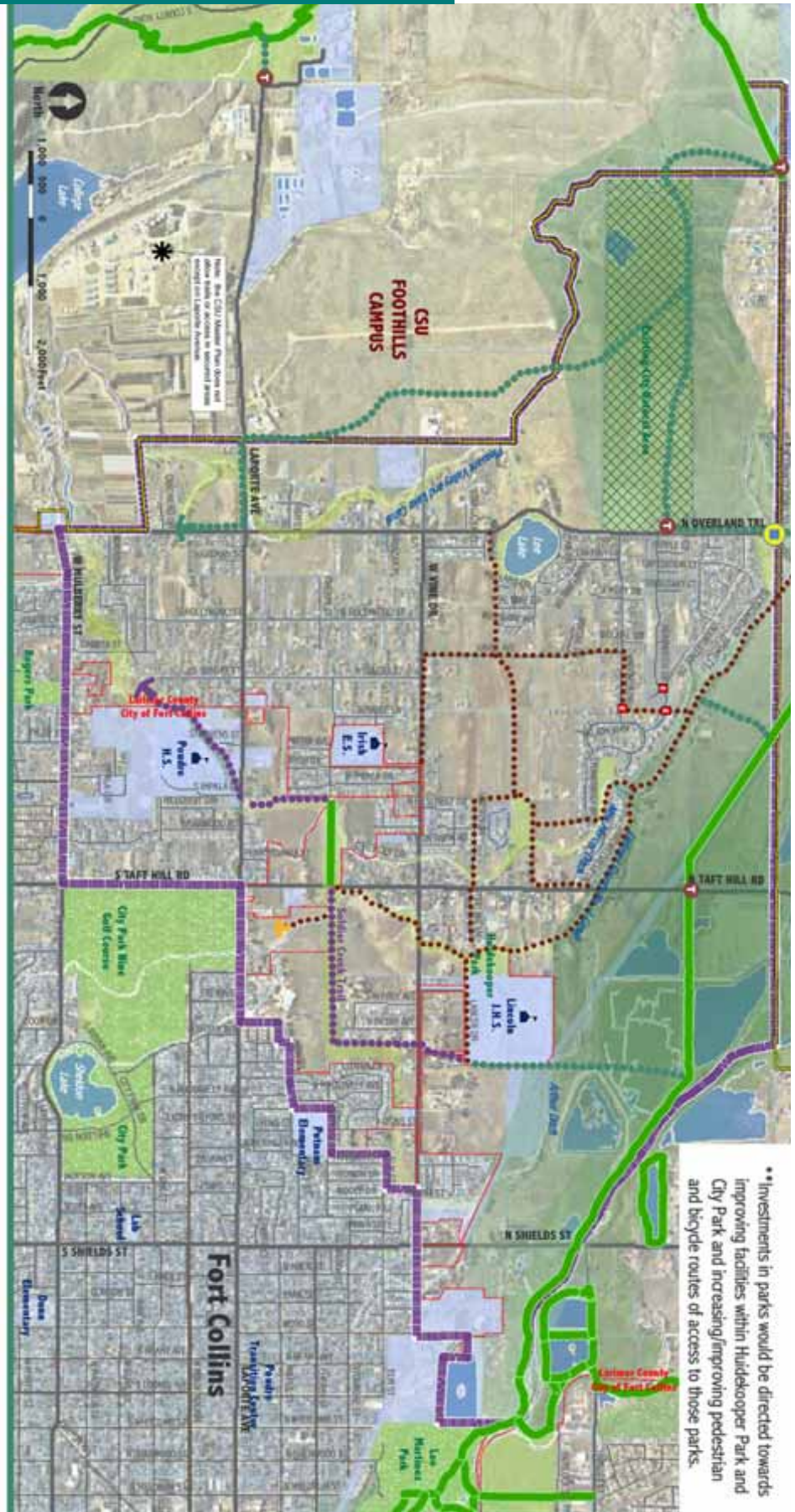
- City Natural Area
- Future Open Lands
- Stream and Ditch Corridors (Public/Private)

- Existing Multi-Purpose Trails
- Future Multi-Purpose (Community) Trails
- Future Solider Creek Trail
- Future Local Neighborhood Connections (Neighborhood Initiated)

- Future Underpass
- Trailhead with Parking
- Access for Emergency Vehicles only; Bicycles and Pedestrians



MAP 2: OPEN LANDS AND TRAILS PLAN



**Investments in parks would be directed towards improving facilities within Hudekoper Park and City Park and increasing/improving pedestrian and bicycle routes of access to those parks.

PLUG IN TO NATURE FINDING CONNECTIONS TO THE OUTDOORS FOR YOUTH AND FAMILIES IN LARIMER COUNTY: 2012

This study was the original GOCO pilot project for understanding youth and family connections to the outdoors for Larimer County. Community engagement was a critical piece of this process. Engagement and analyses identified locations throughout the County most in need of improved/added nature opportunities and with natural qualities survey participants indicated they desire.

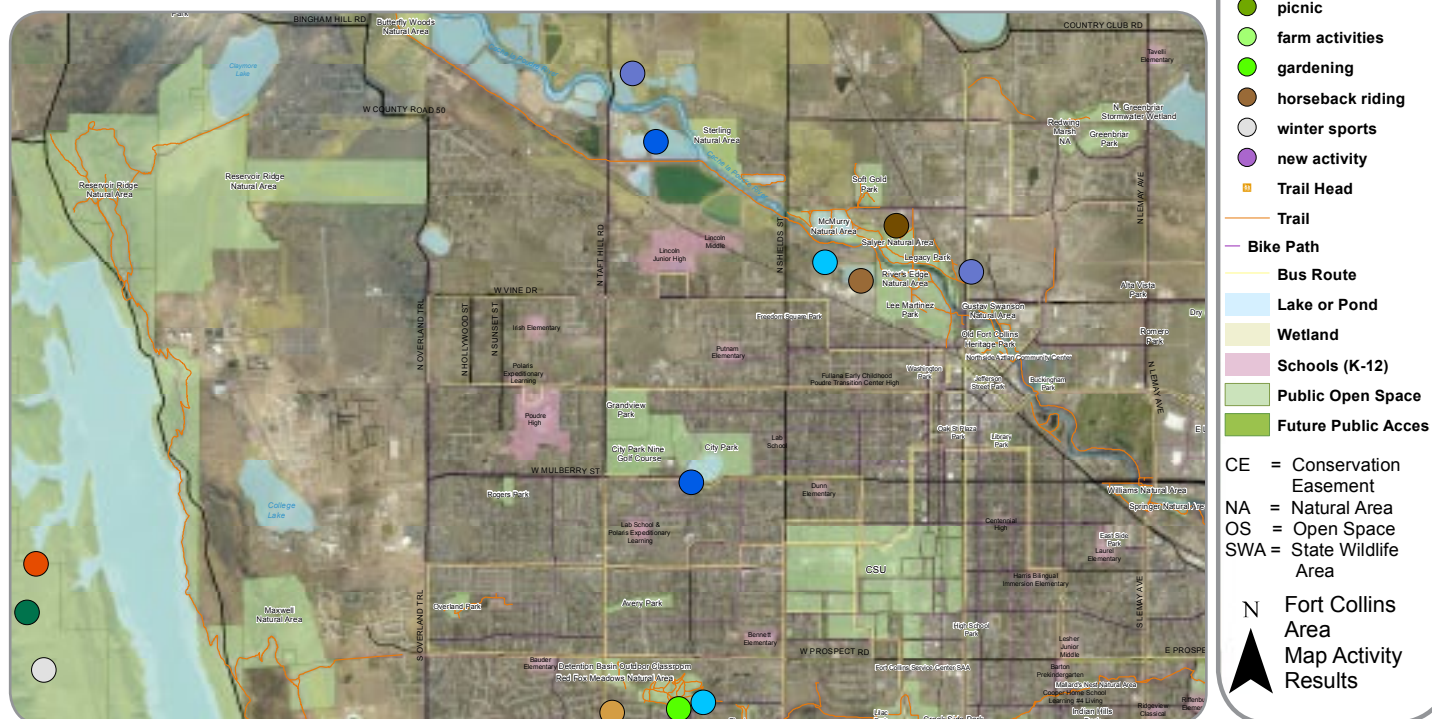
Northwest Fort Collins was one of the areas in Larimer County identified as being underserved because it met this criteria:

- Schools not served by open space or parks within a five minute (1/4 mile) walk
- Concentration of child care facilities that do not have a park or open space located within a five minute walk
- Residences without access to a park or open space within a five minute walk
- Higher than typical concentration of resident median household income below poverty level (census block data)
- Higher density of children living in this area
- High racial diversity of residents living in this area
- Lands with values important to Larimer County residents for spending time outdoors/in nature that are not currently conserved (along the Poudre River)

The map below shows the locations where people indicated they would like to have new outdoor/nature activities. The following locations in or near the Inspire study area were selected on the map.

- North Shields Ponds (formerly Sterling Natural Area): swimming and water sports
- McMurtry Natural Area/Salyer Natural Area/Lee Martinez Park: water sports, fishing, nature classes, outdoor volunteerism

PLUG INTO NATURE: LOCATIONS FOR NEW OUTDOOR/NATURE ACTIVITIES



OUR LANDS - OUR FUTURE 2013 STUDY

Larimer County and all of its cities and towns evaluated the achievements, opportunities and possible gaps in the region's land conservation, open space, and nature-based recreation programs. Opportunity maps were developed by identifying conservation and recreation values and goals, collecting the best available data related to each goal and mapping those data across the county. The following opportunities are found within the Project Outdoors Fort Collins study area:

- Working Farm & Ranch Area Conservation Opportunities
- Natural Resource & Wildlife Area Conservation Opportunities
- Urban Open Space & Trails Conservation Opportunities

The study also included priorities for public outreach and connecting people to nature that confirm the importance of the Inspire Initiative for the County.

NATIONAL YOUTH OUTCOMES INITIATIVE OUTCOMES REPORT BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS: 2015

In 2011, BGCA launched the National Youth Outcomes Initiative (NYOI). This initiative guides Clubs in helping youth achieve outcomes in three priority areas: Academic Success, Good Character and Citizenship and Healthy Lifestyles. NYOI provides metrics to assess outcomes. Some of these metrics were useful for research on the time spent in nature, especially the health and lifestyles indicators (days physically active, volunteerism, abstaining from fighting).

LINCOLN MIDDLE SCHOOL WALKABILITY AUDIT

Coalition members participated in a walkability audit conducted by the Colorado State University Institute for the Built Environment at Lincoln Middle school (LMS). LMS was specifically chosen as the focus of this audit because northwest Fort Collins neighborhoods are known to be lacking in safe pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and advocacy groups have been vocal about making improvements in the area. The walking audit included the observation of incomplete sidewalks along Vine Drive and no dedicated walking/ biking paths connecting to the school, as well as other hazards and lack of safe street crossings.

LINCOLN MIDDLE SCHOOL COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

In addition to walkability audits, the CSU Institute for the Built Environment also interviewed parents at LMS to better understand how parents, students and teachers perceive walking to school. Most comments were directly related to Vine Drive. Many students seemed to be aware of the lack of sidewalks. They expressed a clear desire to be separated from the cars. Parents expressed fear of the danger of not having sidewalks that connect and worries of their children walking on the street shoulder. Teachers expressed that students frequently walk to school and must walk on the road shoulder.

NATIONAL YOUTH OUTCOMES INITIATIVE: PRIORITY OUTCOMES



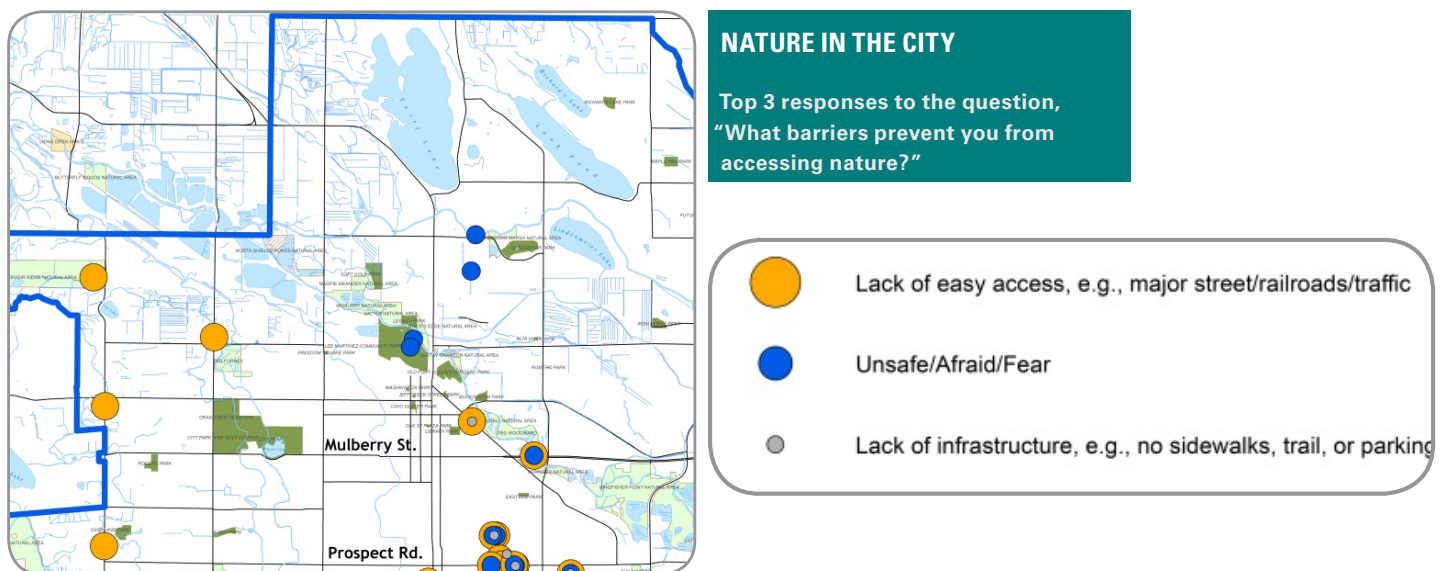
NATURE IN THE CITY STRATEGIC PLAN: 2015

Nature in the City capitalizes on long-standing efforts to further protect and integrate nature into the City of Fort Collins' fabric through a variety of regulatory, policy, outreach, and collaborative solutions. The vision of Nature in the City is to provide a connected open space network accessible to the entire community that provides a variety of experiences and functional habitat for people, plants and wildlife.

The broader goals of "Easy Access to Nature, High Quality Natural Spaces, and Land Stewardship" are supported by five policy areas the City will pursue:

- Connectivity
- Land Use and Development
- City Practices and Policy Coordination
- Long-term Monitoring
- Funding and Incentives

Additionally, city residents participated in online mapping of barriers and access points. The below maps show that survey respondents choose some of the natural areas and parks located on the edges of the northwest Fort Collins focus area as locations they spend time in nature primarily for reasons of "personal exercise or play, escape from urban environment/fresh air, wildlife, plants and trees." Lee Martinez Park was the only location identified to have barriers that prevent them from accessing nature (response that it is unsafe/afraid/fear). These results demonstrate that there are valuable places in proximity to northwest neighborhoods that should be made more accessible to area youth.

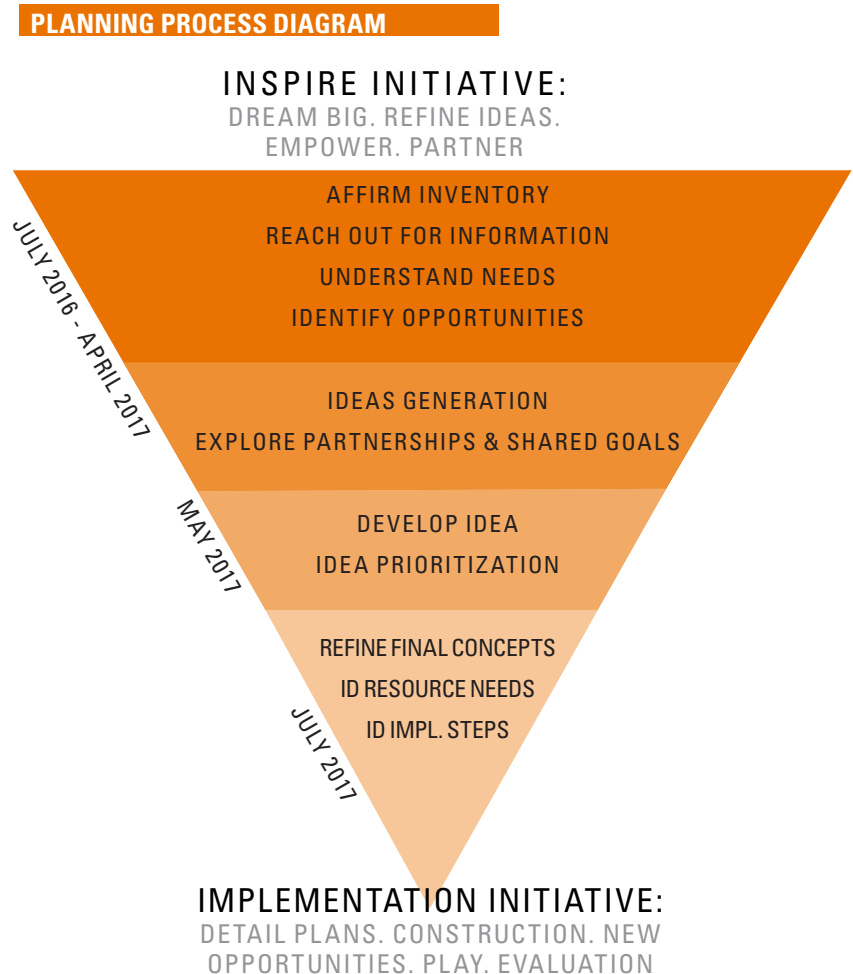


Planning



PLANNING PROCESS

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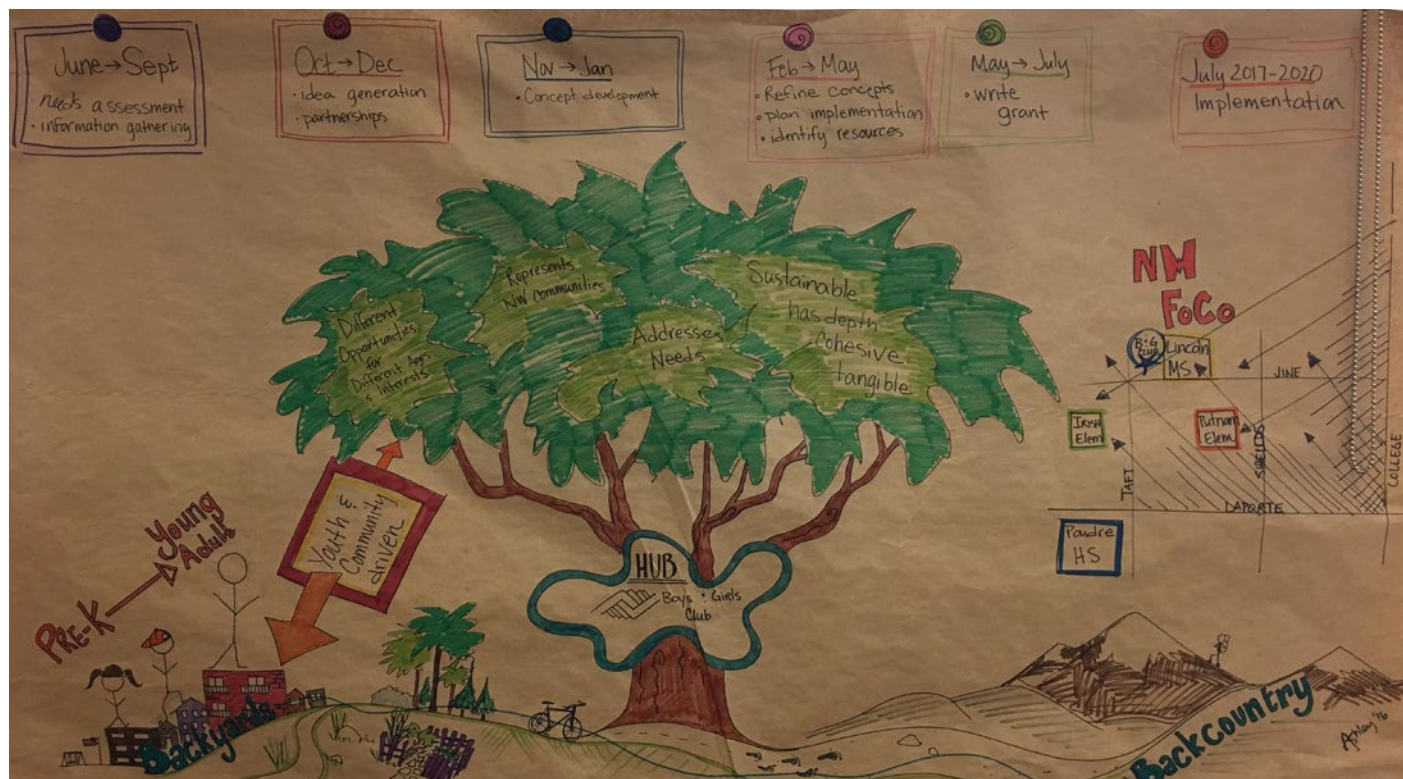


ENGAGEMENT GOALS & OUTCOMES

Engagement goals of the coalition reflect the commitment to a participatory, community and youth driven process. The goals are listed below with a summary of how they were achieved.

Goal: Youth from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and youth not currently connected to nature are engaged in the process.

- Active participants in the process were Boys & Girls Club members, Youth Advisors, and students at the four schools. Highlights include feedback from 300 Lincoln Middle School students, the survey designed by the Youth Council and the 120 responses they collected, and the Youth Advisory Council (YAC) itself.
- A significant outcome of this planning process was the authentic relationships that formed in this very first engagement of youth from this neighborhood in outdoor- oriented programs. The field trips offered YAC members a respite and social outlet they very much valued and provided the YAC with first-hand experiences that helped inform their feedback in the Inspire process. The relationships with YAC members will continue through the formation of an outdoor club to build off the success of the field trip experiences.



Goal: Connect with families. A high proportion of people that live in the neighborhood give input, feel empowered and involved in local government. Engagement includes people from a broad racial makeup to reflect the true community composition.

- Successes include door to door invitations to the kick-off meeting, participation in that event (80 people), direct mail with invitations to kick-off and prioritization events, and participation in prioritization event (100 people). In a neighborhood with approximately 9,860 residents, this is a small percentage; however in hindsight, the goal for a high percentage of involvement is an unrealistic expectation given the everyday challenges residents experience. Without a neighborhood advocacy group or champion, it is difficult to connect with the community except through the organizations that serve them.

Goal: Listening sessions for neighbors, teachers, students, Latino families, and program providers.

- There was multiple listening sessions with all of the audiences above.

Youth and the community were empowered to identify local barriers to the outdoors and their preferred solutions to those barriers through specific tools available during engagement activities. For example:

- Maps of the neighborhood were available at the kick-off meeting and residents were invited to mark them with where they go currently and where they would like to access the outdoors. This showed physical barriers and desired connectivity.
- Questions such as "what prevents you from spending time outside" and "what do you think prevent northwest Fort Collins youth and families from participating in outdoor programs?" were included in the youth-designed survey for their peers, community engagement activities, and conversations and listening sessions.
- Options to solve or mitigate the barriers were provided at the prioritization open house. Participants were given play money and they "spent" it according to their own values and perspective. This resulted in a ranking that shaped the 100%, 75% and 50% budget proposals.
- Lincoln Middle School students were highly involved in creating the concepts for Narnia including dot voting on various elements, open-ended conversations, and completing exit slips that asked what is most important to you about this place?"

COALITION MEMBERS

The community-driven planning process was led by the Project Outdoors coalition, spearheaded by Larimer County Department of Natural Resources with representatives from the Boys & Girls Club, Colorado State University, the Youth Advisory Council, and City of Fort Collins. There was frequent consultation with Poudre School District including administration (facilities and curriculum departments, principals), plus teachers and students at the five schools. Outdoor program providers and community stakeholders shared insight at many milestones.

Organization Description

Larimer County Department of Natural Resources is a sales-tax funded agency with the goal of serving the County as a whole. In general, this county-wide perspective is just as vital to its mission as its own programming objectives. Larimer County also led the Plug into Nature process in 2012, creating strong relationships with the nature program providers in this community, and has an intimate knowledge of the data collected and the process that was followed. This knowledge and history of collaboration was useful in conducting a high-quality, dependable planning process for the Inspire Initiative.

City of Fort Collins: Staff from several departments within the City provided support and leadership to this project. The Natural Areas Department provides land conservation and neighborhood natural areas, as well as natural areas at larger scales. The department is also the largest environmental education provider in the county, reaching over 12,000 people a year including many Poudre School District students. Other City of Fort Collins entities committed to this project are the Nature in the City project, the Parks Planning and Development Department (which creates and manages an extensive network of paved trails), the Safe Routes to School program, the Engineering Department and FC Moves focused on sidewalks and safe crossings.

The Boys & Girls Club of Larimer County (BGCLC) is positioned to serve as the hub for this project because of its access to over 3,500 children ages 6-18 in the Larimer County community. Each club is located in a part of the county with the most need from an economic and social standpoint. BGCLC seeks opportunities to better connect the children it serves to nature. The Fort Collins location currently serves 1,250 members. The club also serves 40 local schools.

Coalition Members

Heather Young

Kerri Rollins

Andy Grinstead

Zoe Shark

Sue Schafer

Diane Wendt

Stephanie Kopplin

Rob Mosby

Tessa Greegor

Mike Calhoon

Mark Sears

Justin Scharton

Kaycee Headrick

Andy Abbott

Kathi Wright

Hailey Slee

The Poudre School District (PSD) has five schools located within the focus area and is the property owner of the Boys & Girls Club building and surrounding land. The district serves 30,000 students, pre-K to 12th grade, in Fort Collins and nearby communities. It has identified the need for students to have access to natural areas and resources through curriculum-based experiences. The district seeks to address barriers, such as cost and resources, which prevent students from having these types of experiences.

Colorado State University (CSU) Warner College of Natural Resources' mission is to connect people with nature by facilitating educational, inclusive and safe experiences in the natural environment and to advance the field of environmental education through sound research and practice. The college provides a diversity of programs to groups throughout the community. These groups include public schools, scout troops, CSU groups, service organizations and many others. The college also provides volunteer and group service learning coordination.

The City of Loveland Natural Areas manages 28 natural areas, 32 park sites, 18 miles of recreation trail, and a swim beach, all of which offer additional opportunities for the public to connect with nature. The education program reaches more than 2,500 northern Colorado residents annually through a variety of focused programs for preschoolers, school children, adults, families, and seniors. Loveland's participation on the Coalition provides knowledge and resource sharing. Loveland also replicated the Fort Collins Inspire planning process, since many community stakeholders and resources were similar.

CONTEXT IN WHICH THE COALITION OPERATES

The Coalition served as the facilitators and listeners for this community-driven process. They gathered bi-weekly to discuss progress, identify next steps, and make prioritization decisions. Subcommittees were formed to focus on the three focus areas of the planning process: place-based infrastructure, programming and career pathways. They met regularly to advance the planning process, meet with individuals or small groups of stakeholders to develop ideas. Two coalition members served as liaisons to the Youth Advisory Council ensuring their engagement at every step. Half-day retreats were held at key milestones involving various stakeholder groups and the core team.

Coalition Members

Beth Higgins
DeeDee Wright
Stacy Poncelow
Robert Beauchamp
Pete Hall
Jerry Garretson

Rob Novak
Nicole Stafford
Dean John Hayes

Debbie Eley



July 2016 Coalition Hub Tour

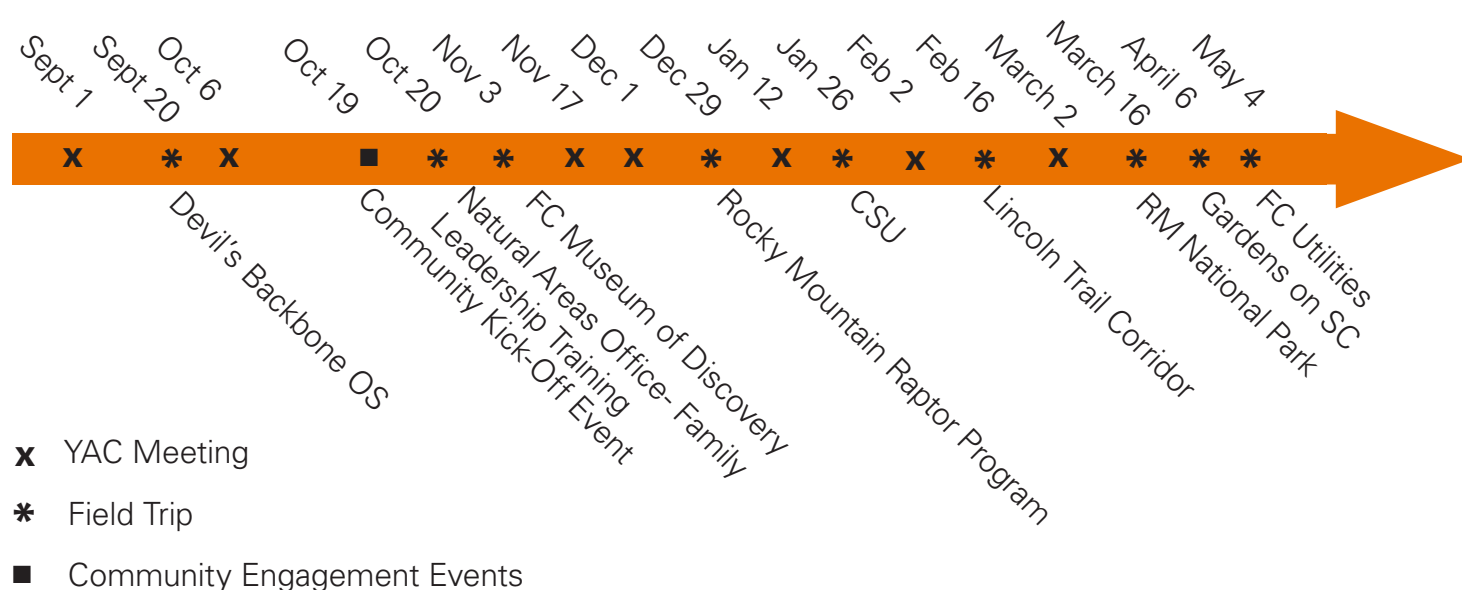
YOUTH ADVISORS AND YOUTH ASSIGNMENTS

A **Youth Advisory Council (YAC)** was formed in April, 2016 so that the planning was led by those who would most benefit from the project outcomes. Eight Fort Collins Boys & Girls Club members (middle school age) were selected to serve on YAC and were joined by three Larimer County Youth Corp members (high school students) and one CSU student. Ranging in age from 12-22, the younger members that were less experienced with the outdoors benefited from mentorship and bigger picture thinking from the older members. The group met twice monthly (18 meetings) and had responsibilities throughout the process. YAC lead the planning process and served a variety of purposes, showing leadership by:

- Experiencing nature and outdoor programs on field trips throughout Larimer County and expressing their impressions and perspectives on community needs. It became clear early on that these field trips were necessary to increase YAC member awareness of local resources and exposure to ideas about nature. It was also important for building trust and collaboration within the group and Fort Collins Natural Areas liaisons.
- Coming up with the “Project Outdoors” name.
- Creating a survey and collecting 120 responses.
- Exploring the focus area to identify both challenges to and opportunities for youth connecting to the outdoors.
- Brainstorming ideas for interventions.
- Providing perspectives and ideas for engaging other youth, such as through survey methods and questions and involvement meetings.
- Facilitating discussions at public open house events.
- Creating a video to express the project purpose and outcome.

The outdoor activities were such a success that the group has decided to continue to meet and expand to an outdoor club during the summer of 2017.

YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES



YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL IN ACTION



YAC Local Parks Field Trip

YAC Led Community Mapping Exercise



OUTREACH EVENT SUMMARY

The table below summarizes the list of events and opportunities for input that engaged nearly 800 stakeholders throughout the planning process. The Appendix provides a list of stakeholders and communication outreach methods that extended far beyond this number that provided input.

ENGAGEMENT TYPE	DATE	# PARTICIPANTS
Kick-off Meeting Open House	Oct. 19	80 attendees
Teacher Meeting	Nov. 14	25 attendees
Youth Advisory Council	on-going	12 members
Career Pathways Partner Conversations	July-Nov.	41 participants
Environmental Education Program Providers Retreat	Dec. 7	28 participants
Surveys of B&GC members and Salud Health Clients	Nov- Dec	26 responses
Conversation with Boys & Girls Club Staff	on-going	6 staff members
Follow-up meetings with teachers, school administrators, PSD Facilities, PSD Curriculum staff	on-going	12+ participants
Listening sessions and multiple site visits to each school	Jan - Feb	26 participants
Youth Survey (created by and distributed by Youth Advisory Council)	Jan -Feb	120 responses
Prioritization Open House	Feb 28	100+ attendees
Career Pathways Providers Meeting	March 28	17 participants
Poudre School District Site Stakeholder Brainstorming Session	April 18	24 attendees
Lincoln Middle School Student Engagement	May 22 & 23	300 youth
Boys & Girls Club Engagement	May 22	20 youth



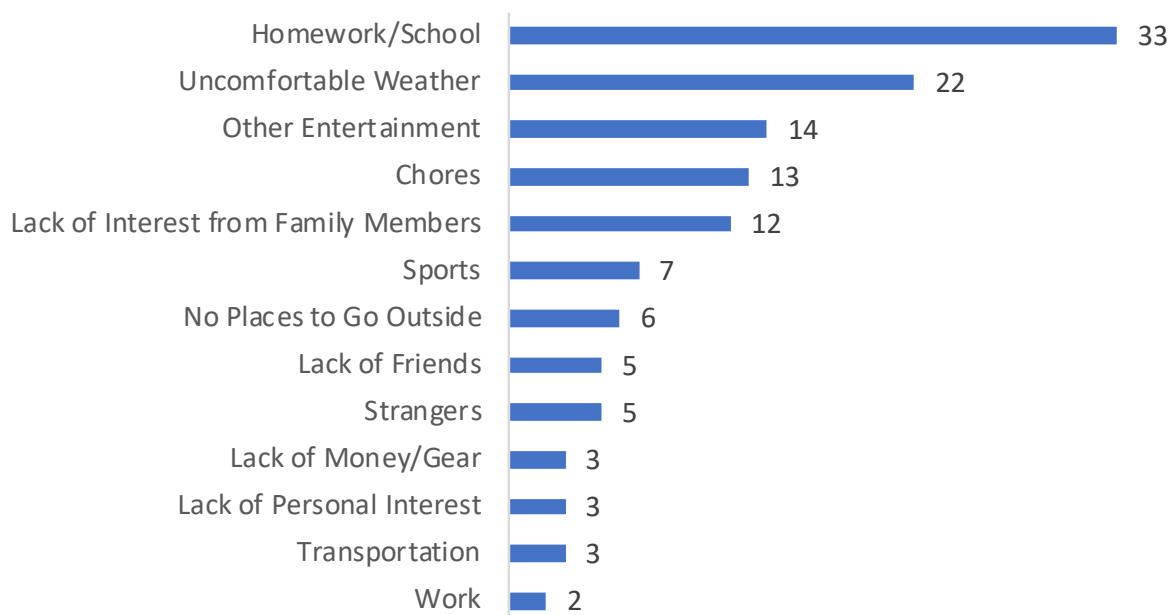
BARRIERS & MOTIVATORS KEY FINDINGS

Some common themes emerged as youth and the northwest Fort Collins community were empowered to identify local barriers to the outdoors and their preferred solutions:

- Barriers include physical discomfort (hot, cold, bad weather, bugs), safety concerns, lack of trust, distant location of places to visit, trail connectivity, lack of awareness of offerings, time, lack of people to accompany, and resources (e.g. gear, cost, transportation, language, training, staff to coordinate, knowledge)
- There is a need for trail connections and safe routes for bikes and pedestrians, and support for biking and walking as outdoor activities.
- Support is needed for nearby outdoor facilities at schools and Boys & Girls Club (gardens, outdoor classrooms, play spaces, trees, and places to bike, summer camps). Challenges to support at schools include: teacher burnout, complex site conditions, ownership and management issues, challenges with bureaucracy, and liability concerns.

The Youth Survey, written by and conducted by the Youth Advisory Council was a very important source of information. When asked about barriers to spending time outdoors, youth indicated that time constraints with school, homework, chores, sports, work, and family responsibilities play a factor in time they have to dedicate to being outdoors. Cold or uncomfortable weather was a popular response to this question likely due to the survey being conducted in January through February. Social influences, like lack of family members' interest in the outdoors, and lack of friends to join them outdoors, were also some of the more common barriers identified.

*Youth Survey /
Top Responses
to the Question:
What are some
barriers to you
not being able
to spend time
outside?*



The planning process identified significant barriers to natural resource career pathways. Lack of awareness of natural resources career opportunities was evident from the kick-off meeting, teacher and program provider engagement, and survey results. The challenge was confirmed by the Poudre High School teachers who coordinate the Agriculture and Natural Resources career track. They said students often choose this track only because they lack interest in other career tracks, and they have a narrow understanding of agriculture and natural resources careers. Compounding the problem, there are very few outdoor oriented internships, stewardship projects, and service learning opportunities in northwest Fort Collins. Where opportunities exist, they are often unpaid or offer limited compensation, creating a tough choice for students who need to earn money to support themselves (and their families) and save for college.

OUTREACH EVENT DESCRIPTION AND FINDINGS

The following summarizes the meeting formats and key takeaways from each of the stakeholder engagement events. A full description, meeting materials, and public responses can be found in the Appendix.

KICK-OFF MEETING

An open house meeting was held at the Fort Collins Boys & Girls Club on October 18, 2016 to launch the Project Outdoors: Plug in to Nature Northwest Fort Collins initiative. The meeting was organized into three topic areas:

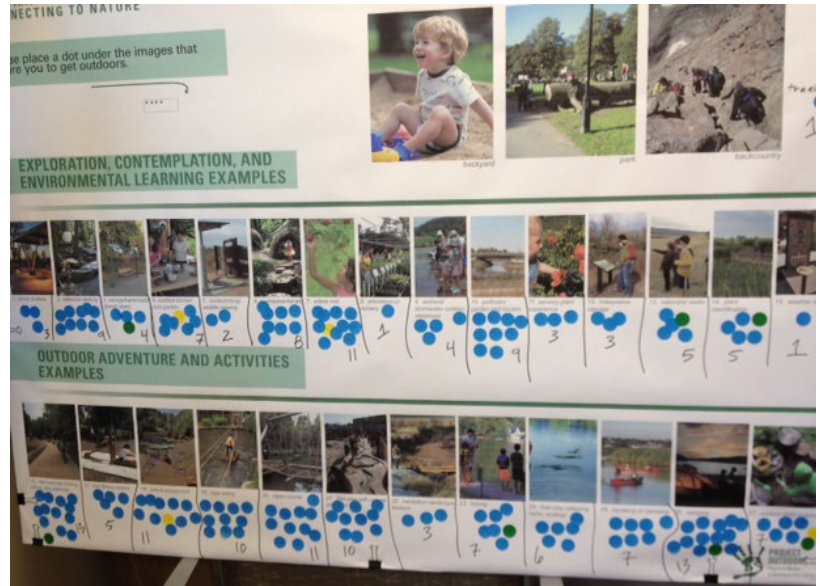
1. Places (including connectivity, inspiration images, and places to spend time in nature)
2. Programs
3. Career Pathways

These topics were arranged in stations to collect input from the 80 attendees. Key findings include support for:

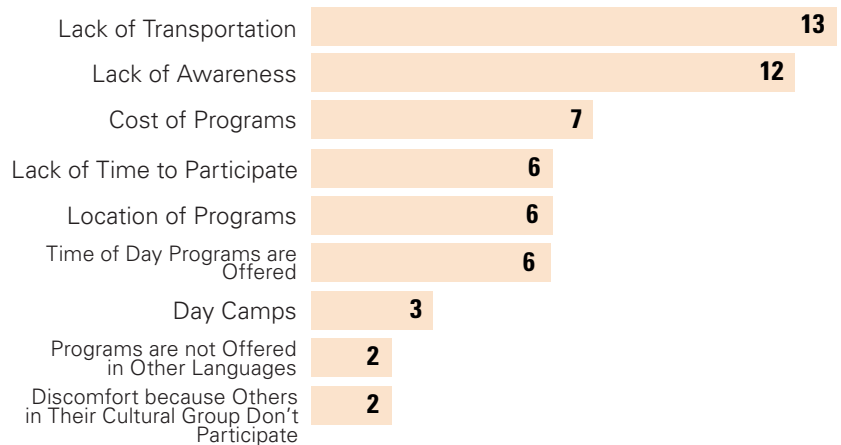
- A trail connection between Lincoln Middle School and Poudre Trail
- Sidewalks on Vine Drive
- Popular “inspiration” photos for place-based improvements:
 - Edible trail
 - Camping
 - Exercise
 - Nature playground
 - Ropes course

Barriers to participating in programs, entering natural resource careers, and spending time outdoors were identified, all of which were supportive of themes heard throughout many other engagements.

Kickoff Meeting Open House Engagement



WHAT DO YOU THINK PREVENTS NORTHWEST FORT COLLINS YOUTH AND FAMILIES FROM PARTICIPATING IN OUTDOOR PROGRAMS?



KICK-OFF MEETING

BARRIER OR SUGGESTION

ACTION IN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

SUPPORT FOR TRAIL
CONNECTION BETWEEN
LINCOLN MIDDLE SCHOOL
AND POUDRE TRAIL



TRAIL CONNECTION
INCLUDED IN
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

SIDEWALKS ON
VINE DRIVE



MULTI-MODAL
PATH INCLUDED IN
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

POPULAR INSPIRATION
PHOTOS FOR PLACE-
BASED IMPROVEMENTS
(EDIBLE TRAIL, CAMPING,
EXERCISE, NATURE
PLAYGROUND, ROPES
COURSE



NARNIA INFRASTRUCTURE
PROPOSAL INCLUDES A
SITE FOR COPACK CAMPING
INSTRUCTION AND NATURE
PLAY ELEMENTS. TRAIL
CONNECTION WILL BE A
VALUABLE EXERCISE ROUTE
FOR BOTH PEDESTRIANS AND
BIKERS.

BARRIERS TO CAREERS
(LACK OF AWARENESS
OF OPPORTUNITIES,
NEED FOR PAID
OPPORTUNITIES)



ADDRESSED BY
PATHWAYS SEQUENCE
WHICH INCLUDES
AWARENESS BUILDING
AND PAID INTERNSHIPS)

TEACHER MEETING

A listening session with teachers from Lincoln, Putnam, Irish, and Poudre High School was hosted to gain insight into their experiences with youth connecting to nature, how schools play a role in this nature connection, and what would be needed to facilitate greater connections. From the facilitated discussion around topics with 25 teachers the following key findings emerged:

- Teachers prefer onsite facilities to address time and transportation challenges.
- Many teachers do not feel commitment from the local school district and administration to address this topic.
- Teachers need resources such as gear, training, transportation, and facilities.
- There is a high interest in gardens and outdoor classrooms, but many barriers to implementation exist.
 - » Suggestion that it would be helpful to have a menu of options that are pre-approved from the District Facilities department.
- Clubs and after-school programs could be a good avenue to engage students outdoors.

CAREER PATHWAYS PARTNERS CONVERSATIONS

The first few months of the project included Coalition member outreach and conversations with key stakeholders to understand career pathways opportunities. These small group and individual conversations included:

- Poudre School District Principal, Outdoor Club Coordinator, and Natural Resources Track Coordinator
- Front Range Community College and Poudre School District Natural Resource Track Staff
- Lincoln Middle School COPACK (Colorado Promotes Achievement, Caring and Kindness) leadership
- Poudre High School and Poudre School District leadership regarding internship opportunities.
- Denver-based Career Pathways providers (CMC, ELK, CPW)
- Work Gone Wild leadership
- Fort Collins area Career Pathways Program Providers (17 individuals)

Environmental Education Provider Retreat



TEACHER MEETING

BARRIER OR SUGGESTION

ACTION IN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

TEACHERS NEED ON-SITE FACILITIES TO ADDRESS TIME AND TRANSPORTATION CHALLENGES.

THE THREE PROPOSED SCHOOL LEARNING GARDENS ARE ON-SITE. THE OTHER SCHOOL HAS A GARDEN ALREADY.

TEACHERS NEED ON-SITE FACILITIES TO ADDRESS TIME AND TRANSPORTATION CHALLENGES.

SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS INCLUDES AN IN-SCHOOL OUTDOOR EDUCATION COORDINATOR TO ADDRESS TIME CHALLENGES, TRAINING TO DEMONSTRATE THAT OUTDOOR EDUCATION DOESN'T HAVE TO TAKE MORE TIME, AND TRANSPORTATION FUNDS FOR A FIELD TRIP FOR EACH GRADE LEVEL.

TEACHERS DO NOT FEEL DISTRICT COMMITMENT TO ADDRESS YOUTH DISCONNECT FROM NATURE.

POUDRE SCHOOL DISTRICT BECAME A PARTNER AND ALLY IN COALITION.

TEACHERS NEED RESOURCES SUCH AS GEAR, TRAINING, TRANSPORTATION AND FACILITIES.

GEAR, TRAINING, TRANSPORTATION AND FACILITIES ARE ALL INCLUDED IN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN.

HIGH INTEREST IN GARDENS AND OUTDOOR CLASSROOMS.

GEAR, TRAINING, TRANSPORTATION AND FACILITIES ARE ALL INCLUDED IN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN.

CLUBS AND AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS COULD BE A GOOD AVENUE TO ENGAGE STUDENTS OUTDOORS.

CLUBS AND AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS ARE IN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROVIDERS RETREAT

Twenty-eight program providers from a variety of sectors of the environmental education community in Northern Colorado gathered to learn about the Inspire process and discuss ideas for the implementation grant. Participants broke into groups, and discussed projects they felt would make a difference to the target community and address current barriers to participation. Program providers were encouraged to proposed projects that worked across organizational boundaries. Each group then pitched their best ideas to the wider group. Similar ideas were merged and the group had a chance to prioritize ideas and add details to the proposals. Following the prioritization discussion individuals contributed ideas to proposals that best fit with their organization's mission and interests. A follow-up form was distributed to the group to collect additional ideas for the "program" section of the implementation grant. The ideas collected were then fleshed out further by the Inspire coalition prior to taking them to a public meeting for input. The group identified several key areas for partnership and program ideas through conversation at the meeting:

- Integrated programming structure for on-site and off-site K-5 STEM/Environmental Education programming, supported by a staff member in Poudre School District.
- Resources included enhancing outdoor spaces at schools; funding for teaching training; a gear library.
- The need to support place-based opportunities with programming on gardening and native plants.
- Facilities to support outdoor skills programming along proposed trails such as mountain biking and native plant ID.
- Add outdoor club opportunities at the Boys & Girls Club, supported by a new, grant funded staff member.

SURVEY OF BOYS & GIRLS CLUB MEMBERS, SALUD HEALTH CLIENTS

Twenty-six surveys were completed by families this effort specifically targets to serve. The responses highlighted the desire for a few key elements to help overcome barriers to engagement in the outdoors:

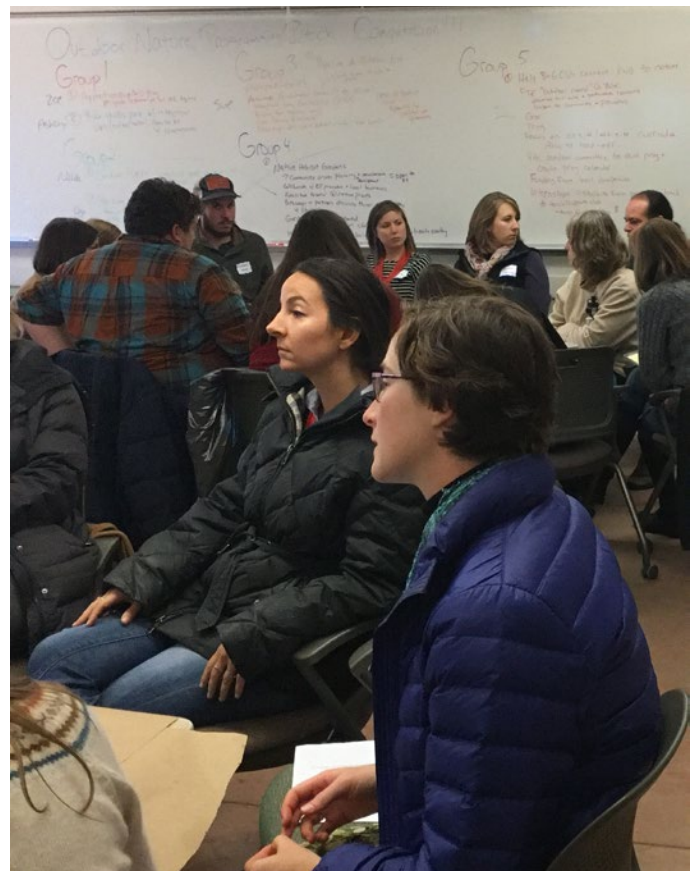
- Parks, trails, sports facilities
- Strategies to make nature more comfortable (for example, shade).

BOYS & GIRLS CLUB STAFF

Coalition members engaged Boys & Girls Club staff in conversations about the support or improvements they would need to provide greater access to nature for their members. Staff primarily focused on:

- Increased access and add appealing features to park behind their facility including camping overnight option and a supervised campfire.

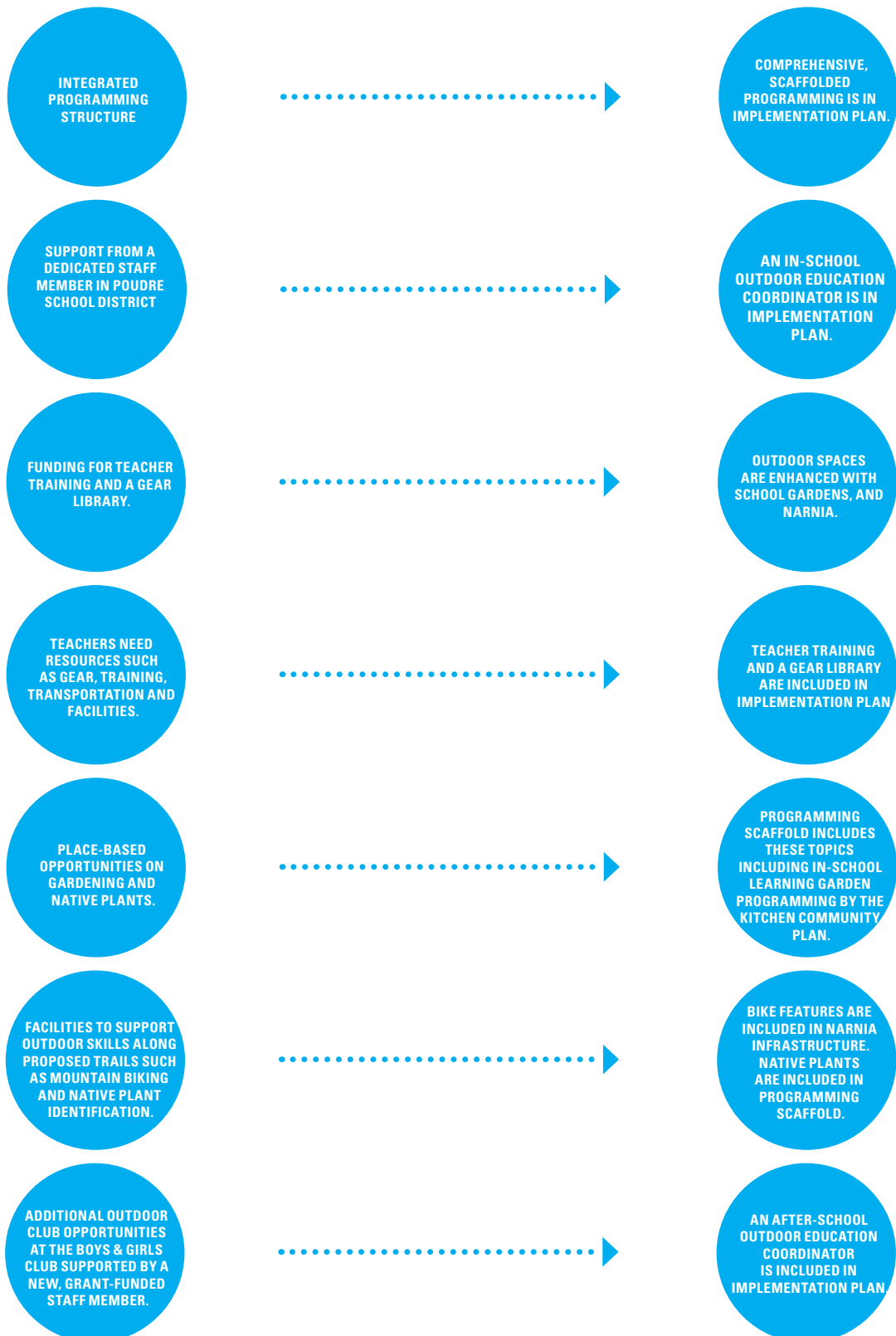
Environmental Education Provider Retreat



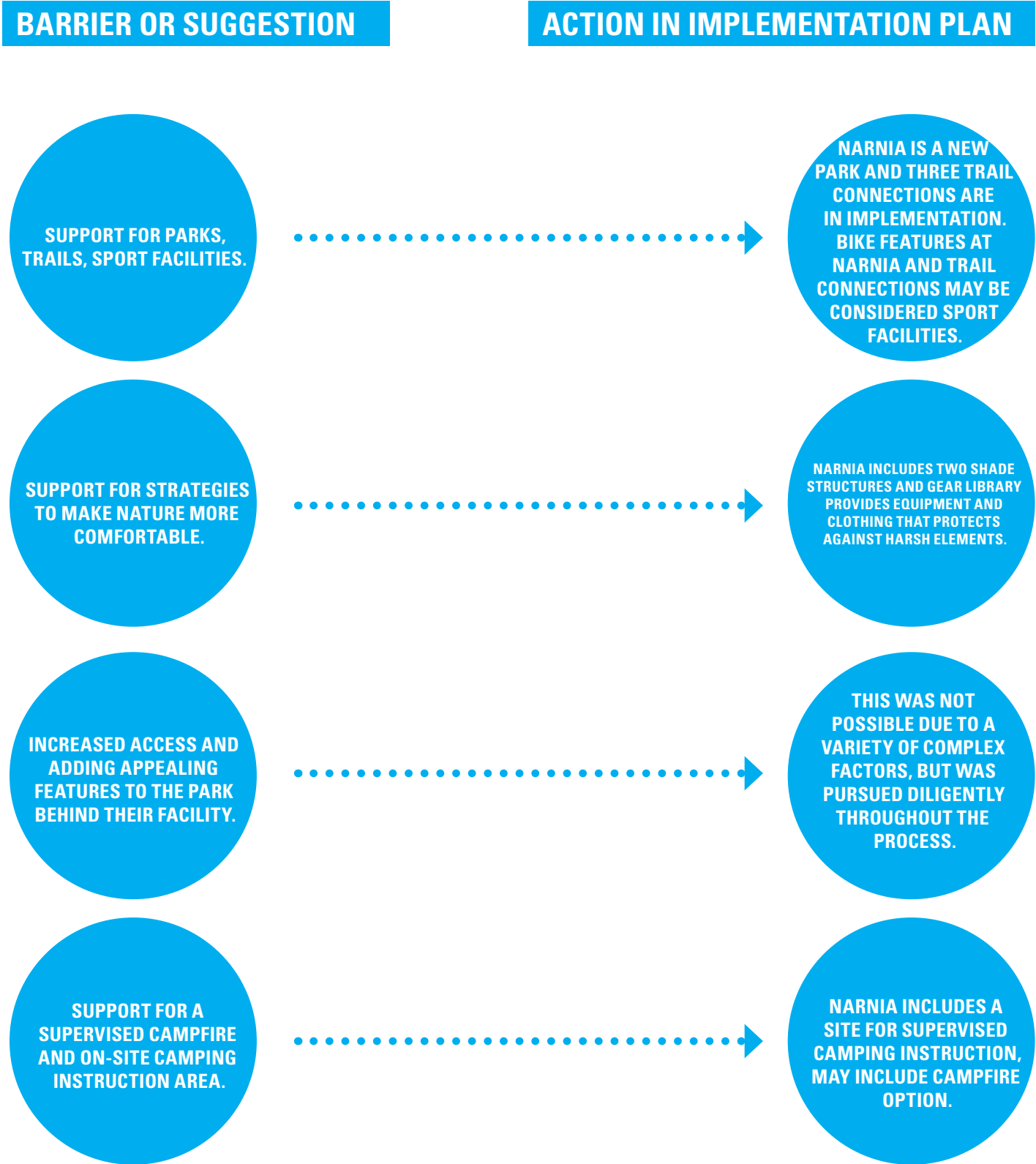
ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROVIDERS RETREAT

BARRIER OR SUGGESTION

ACTION IN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN



**SURVEY OF BOYS & GIRLS CLUB MEMBERS AND STAFF +
SALUD HEALTH CLIENTS**

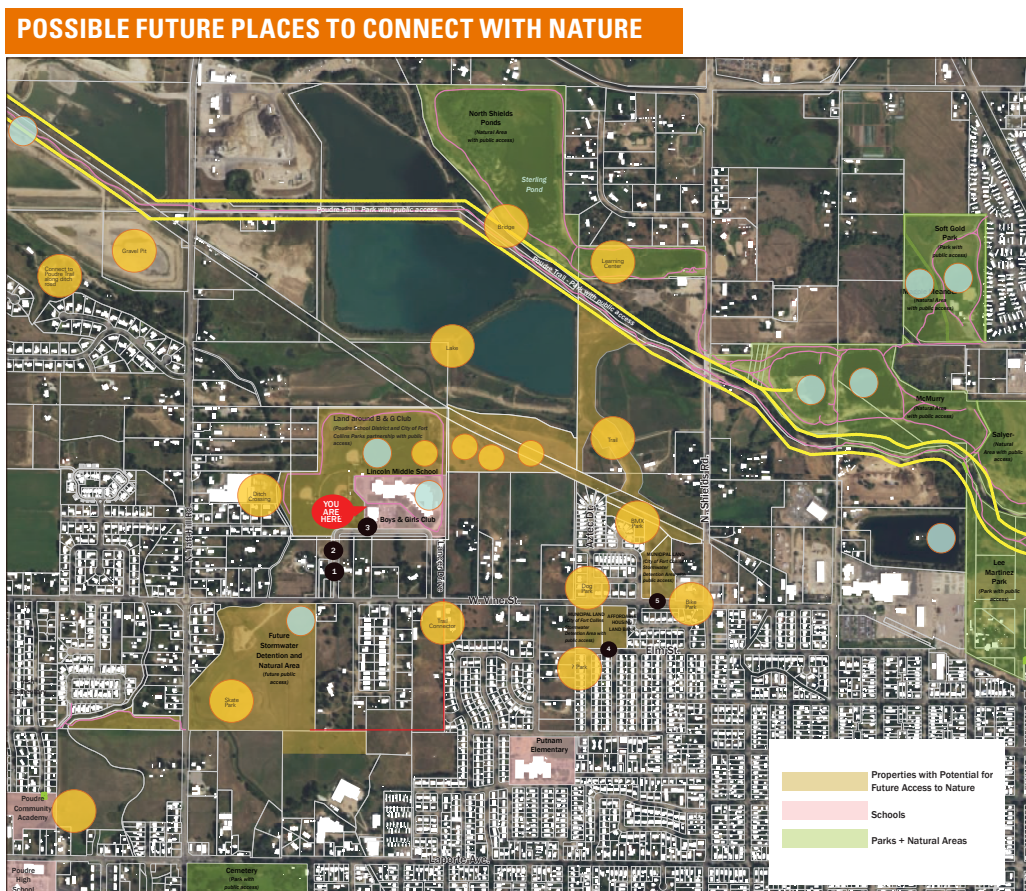


LISTENING SESSIONS AND MULTIPLE SITE VISITS WITH SCHOOLS

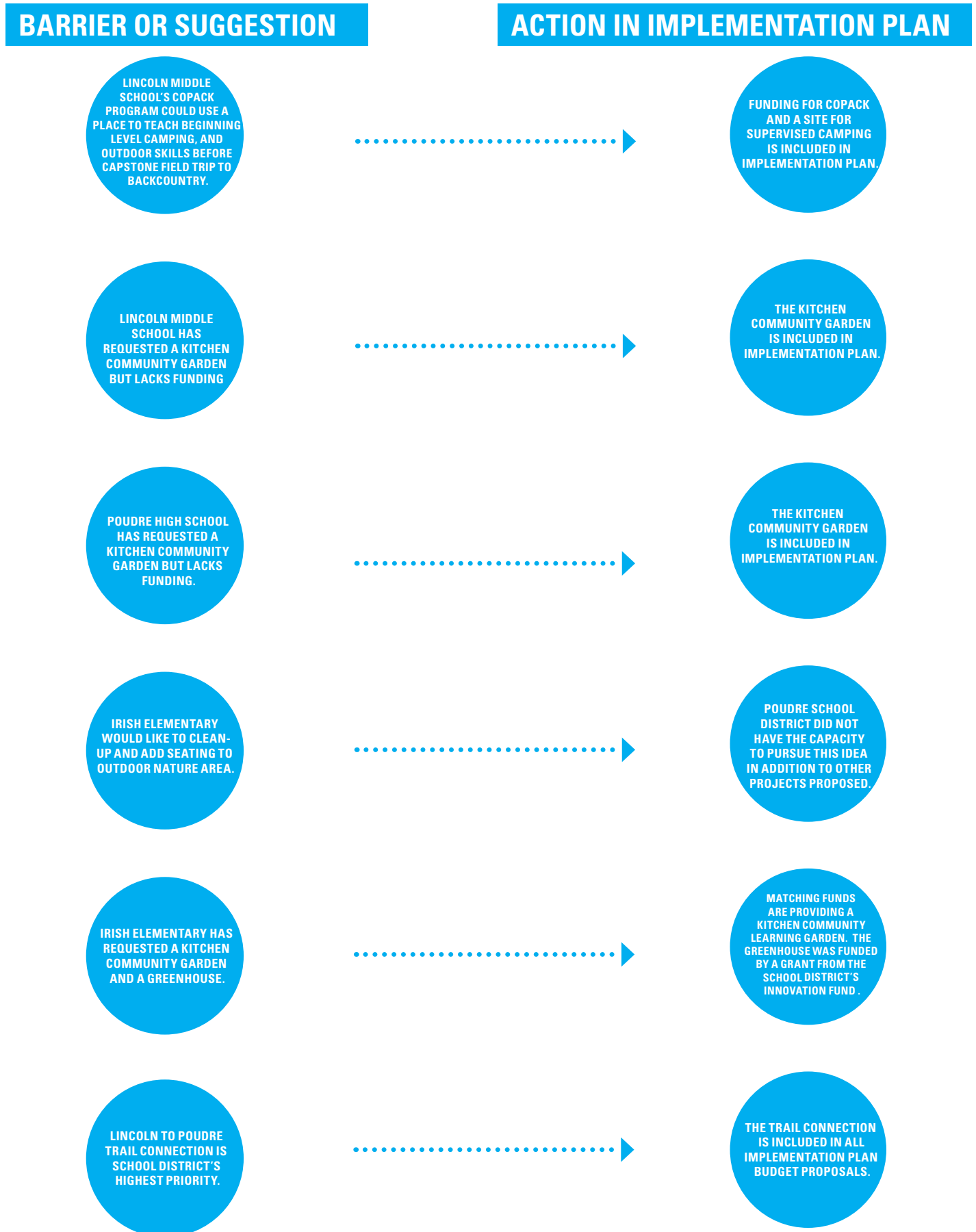
Schools are an essential connector of area youth to the outdoors as well as a primary location that youth might spend time outdoors. For this reason, many conversations throughout the process took place between Coalition members, teachers (Wellness Committee and science staff), administrators, and facility managers. The following summarizes the opportunities and challenges discovered in these meetings:

- Lincoln MS- COPACK program successful and could use a place to teach beginning level camping and outdoor skills before capstone trip out of state. Learning garden proposed by Kitchen Community,
- Poudre HS- Would like outdoor classroom, enhance habitat of wetland area, trail, seating, learning/ entrepreneurship garden. Wetland project could address Facilities drainage issues.
- Irish Elem- Would like to clean-up and add seating to outdoor nature area, install greenhouse (approved by PSD, needs funding)
- Putnam Elementary- highly functioning Kitchen Community garden, would like some small improvements, more plantings, address retaining wall issue.
- Huidekoper Park- Not very feasible due to complex City Parks/PSD partnership, lack of water tap, not on Parks' timeline to address for several years. Would consider small scale, temporary improvements generated by B&G Club members, limited planning efforts.
- PSD Facilities Dept's top priority is the Lincoln to Poudre Trail connection, okay to share other ideas for prioritization, but would like to accomplish this project to completion rather than start several ideas that don't get finished.

Early in the planning process sites were explored throughout NW Fort Collins to identify any that might have potential to serve youth and community access to nature in a new way, such as City stormwater properties, school properties, and other publicly held properties. The feasibility of their use and potential to be desirable natural places was explored to identify possibilities for implementation.



LISTENING SESSIONS AND MULTIPLE SITE VISITS WITH SCHOOLS



YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

A survey was created by Youth Advisory Council and 120 responses collected by YAC members. Key findings of the survey include:

- Favorite activities to do outside: sports, biking, walking/running, and hiking.
- Most reported spending more than 90 minutes outside during the week and weekend. The next most common answers were 30-60 minutes during the week and 60-90 minutes on weekends.
- The most often mentioned barriers to the outdoors included homework, weather, lack of people to accompany, family responsibilities and chores.
- “If my family and friends liked getting outside more”, “nature areas close to home or school” and “If there were easier access to get outside (bike trail, bus, etc)” were the top suggestions to encourage outdoor activity.

CAREER PATHWAYS PROVIDERS MEETING

Individuals with an interest in the Pathways portion of the Inspire grant convened to discuss options for the implementation grant proposals. Two groups gained an understanding of the options, and how they run along a continuum (backyard to backcountry, age gradient) to create the potential for a student to be interested in pursuing a career in Natural Resources.

A board game style activity was undertaken by each group, wherein the options were laid out at individual spaces around the board. Additional spaces representing the unpredictability of life, some positive and negative, were also placed along the board. For instance, you could have had a great time outdoors on a field trip (skip ahead two spaces) or a terrible time on a field trip (take two spaces back).

Generally the meeting was effective in allowing networking among potential partners, and explaining and vetting out of ideas. The game was well received by the group, and fostered strong discussions. Key findings from the group included:

- Career pathway opportunities are severely limited in the study area.
- There is a gap in 6th-8th grade programming of any type.

- Natural resource careers generally preclude low income students due to need to forgo summer employment for unpaid internships/field courses, and limited ability to sustain seasonal wage work for extended time prior to being hired for full-time benefitted positions.
- Existing career pathways could be easily improved by current provider agencies with investment in stipends for interns and increased coordination.

PRIORITIZATION OPEN HOUSE

The Prioritization meeting was a way to engage stakeholders that had been involved at various levels throughout the process in identifying the most compelling and desirable ideas that had been generated to date.

Proposed places improvements in priority order (as ranked by participants) are as follows:

1. Putnam Learning Garden Enhancements
2. Outdoor Classroom at Poudre HS
3. Learning Garden shared by Lincoln MS and B&G Club
4. Outdoor Gear Library
5. Trail Connection from Lincoln to Poudre Trail
6. Enhance Trail Connection with features along the proposed trail
7. Learning landscape and greenhouse at Irish
8. Sidewalks on Vine
9. Huidekoper Park enhancements

Proposed programs and pathways in priority order are as follows:

1. In school programs (early childhood, high school, elementary school)
2. Pathways training for providers
3. Middle school programming (in-school and after school)
4. High School programming (after school and summer)
5. Middle school summer programming
6. PSD Outdoor Education Coordinator
7. Elementary school summer and after school
8. B&G Club outdoor coordinator
9. College age opportunities

YOUTH SURVEY BY YOUTH COUNCIL

BARRIER OR SUGGESTION

ACTION IN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

FAVORITE ACTIVITIES TO DO OUTSIDE: SPORTS, BIKING, WALKING/RUNNING, AND HIKING.

PLACES PROJECTS PROVIDE PLACES FOR BIKING, AND WALKING/RUNNING. HIKING IS A KEY ELEMENT OF PROGRAMMING SEQUENCE.

BARRIERS TO THE OUTDOORS INCLUDED: HOMEWORK, WEATHER, LACK OF PEOPLE TO ACCOMPANY, FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES AND CHORES.

BY INCORPORATING THE OUTDOORS INTO SCHOOL AND AFTER-SCHOOL/SUMMER PROGRAMMING SEQUENCE, THESE BARRIERS ARE RESOLVED.

"IF MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS LIKED GETTING OUTSIDE MORE", "NATURE AREAS CLOSE TO HOME OR SCHOOL" AND "IF THERE WERE EASIER ACCESS TO GET OUTSIDE (BIKE TRAIL, BUS, ETC)" WERE THE TOP SUGGESTIONS TO ENCOURAGE OUTDOOR ACTIVITY.

BY INCORPORATING THE OUTDOORS INTO SCHOOL AND AFTER-SCHOOL/SUMMER PROGRAMMING SEQUENCE, THESE BARRIERS ARE RESOLVED. PLACES PROJECTS RESOLVE ACCESS CONCERNS BY PROVIDING CONNECTIVITY.

CAREER PATHWAYS PROVIDERS MEETING

BARRIER OR SUGGESTION

ACTION IN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

CAREER PATHWAYS ARE SEVERELY LIMITED.



MANY CAREER PATHWAYS OPPORTUNITIES ARE INCLUDED IN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN.

THERE IS A GAP IN 6TH-8TH GRADE PROGRAMMING OF ANY KIND.



MANY CAREER PATHWAYS OPPORTUNITIES ARE INCLUDED IN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN.

CAREERS PRECLUDE LOW-INCOME STUDENTS.



PAID INTERNSHIPS AND IN-SCHOOL PROGRAMMING ADDRESS THIS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN.

STIPENDS AND INCREASED COORDINATION COULD IMPROVE CAREER PATHWAYS.



STIPENDS AND INCREASED COORDINATION ARE INCLUDED IN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN.

PRIORITIZATION OPEN HOUSE

BARRIER OR SUGGESTION

ACTION IN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

PLACES PRIORITY ORDER:

1. PUTNAM LEARNING GARDEN
2. OUTDOOR CLASSROOM AT PHS
3. LINCOLN MIDDLE SCHOOL GARDEN
4. OUTDOOR GEAR LIBRARY
5. TRAIL CONNECTION LINCOLN TO POUDRE TRAIL
6. ENHANCE TRAIL CONNECTION WITH FEATURES ALONG TRAIL
7. LEARNING LANDSCAPE AND GREENHOUSE AT IRISH ELEMENTARY
8. SIDEWALKS ON VINE
9. HUIDEKOPER PARK ENHANCEMENTS



IMPLEMENTATION PLAN INCLUDES LINCOLN MIDDLE SCHOOL LEARNING GARDEN, GEAR LIBRARY, TRAIL CONNECTION, ENHANCEMENTS TO TRAIL CONNECTION, IRISH ELEMENTARY LEARNING GARDEN, MULTIMODAL PATH ON VINE. OTHER PROJECTS WERE NOT FEASIBLE DUE TO VARIOUS ISSUES INCLUDING THE FACT THAT POUDRE SCHOOL DISTRICT DID NOT HAVE THE CAPACITY TO PURSUE ALL IDEAS PROPOSED SIMULTANEOUSLY.

PROGRAMS AND PATHWAYS IN PRIORITY ORDER:

1. IN SCHOOL PROGRAMS (EARLY CHILDHOOD, HIGH SCHOOL, ELEMENTARY SCHOOL)
2. PATHWAYS TRAINING FOR PROVIDERS
3. MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAMMING (IN-SCHOOL AND AFTER SCHOOL)
4. HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMMING (AFTER SCHOOL AND SUMMER)
5. MIDDLE SCHOOL SUMMER PROGRAMMING
6. PSD OUTDOOR EDUCATION COORDINATOR
7. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SUMMER AND AFTER SCHOOL
8. B&G CLUB OUTDOOR COORDINATOR
9. COLLEGE AGE OPPORTUNITIES



COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAMMING AND CAREER PATHWAYS, AND THE OUTDOOR EDUCATION COORDINATOR POSITIONS ARE INCLUDED IN THE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN. COLLEGE AGE OPPORTUNITIES WERE NOT INCLUDED AS THEY WERE THE LOWEST PRIORITY AND A FUNDING MECHANISM WAS NOT IDENTIFIED.

PSD SITE STAKEHOLDER BRAINSTORMING SESSION

Twenty-four stakeholders toured the Poudre School District site and engaged in a brainstorming session to share observations and ideas for better engaging youth. A snapshot of key themes includes:

1. The community has already defined how they like to use the site: free range exploration, a dynamic bike zone, and creative play (forts, wandering +). Any site proposals should be respectful of existing uses and seek only to enhance, formalize, or complement.
2. Connectivity is key! Be it physical or social, strong connections are desired to make it easier and safer to get from A to B, and to provide opportunities for diverse community members to learn, explore, and continue to define the site together. Ongoing programming and partnerships can help to extend the boundaries of the site to reach a broader community.
3. The site is complex. Layers of history, infrastructure, nature and culture weave their way in and out of the parcel. These elements could each be embraced and highlighted through site-specific education and interpretation that tell the story of this place and its community (e.g. rotating signage, pavers that highlight artifacts (e.g. RR), a student curated gallery, etc.).
4. A slow, incremental approach is best (e.g. youth oversee bike zone improvements over time, restoration is part of service learning).

PSD Site Stakeholder Brainstorming Session Tour



PSD SITE STAKEHOLDER BRAINSTORMING SESSION

BARRIER OR SUGGESTION

ACTION IN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

THE COMMUNITY HAS
ALREADY DEFINED HOW
THEY WANT TO USE THE
SITE.

SITE PROPOSAL IS
RESPECTFUL OF
EXISTING USES
AND SEEKS ONLY TO
ENHANCE, FORMALIZE
OR COMPLEMENT.

CONNECTIVITY IS KEY!

CONNECTIVITY IS A
MAJOR THEME OF THE
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN.

ONGOING PROGRAMMING
AND PARTNERSHIPS
CAN HELP EXTEND THE
BOUNDARIES OF THE SITE
TO REACH A BROADER
COMMUNITY.

THE IMPLEMENTATION
PLAN SPECIFIES
THAT NARNIA WILL
BE ACTIVATED WITH
PROGRAMMING.

THE SITE IS COMPLEX
EACH ELEMENT SHOULD
BE EMBRACED AND
HIGHLIGHTED.

THE DIVERSE STORY OF THE
SITE WILL BE TOLD THROUGH
ENVIRONMENTAL ART
THRESHOLD AND COMMUNITY
WILL SHAPE THE STORY
THROUGH MODULAR NATURE
PLAY MATERIALS.

A SLOW, INCREMENTAL
APPROACH IS BEST (E.G.
YOUTH OVERSEE BIKE ZONE
IMPROVEMENTS OVER TIME
RESTORATION IS PART OF
SERVICE LEARNING)

MORE ACCESSIBLE,
BEGINNER AND
INTERMEDIATE
FEATURES ARE ADDED
AND EXPERT LEVEL
FEATURES ARE RETAINED
IN NARNIA CONCEPTUAL
PLAN.

LINCOLN MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Three hundred Lincoln Middle School students were engaged over a two day period to spend an hour exploring vacant the PSD site adjacent to their school. With city plans for including a trail easement on the property, it is important to understand the current use patterns and make sure ideas for enhancements to the site are driven and supported by youth. Engaging youth in envisioning the future of the site contributes to their empowerment in continued shaping of this place and encourages their discovery and use.

While the majority of youth engaged were unaware of this site and/or expressed some confusion about ownership of the parcel as well as access to the site, it was clear that some youth have spent time in the space after school or on the weekends. The goals of this engagement were to help more youth discover the site, inform youth about current constraints and potential futures for its use, and to gather feedback from students about their desires for future uses and elements to be built.

Classrooms of approximately 30 students spent an hour rotating between three stations with discussions hosted with 10 students at a time.

- Site Introduction (in classroom and walk to the site)
- Bike Skills Station
- Gathering Space Station
- Trail Experience Station
- Exit Slips individual feedback

The main themes of feedback received from students are as follows:

- Students overwhelmingly expressed that they liked the site the way it currently is; many especially appreciated the 'untouched,' 'hidden' feeling of the natural areas.
- The bike hills are a feature worth retaining. Ideas for enhancing the bike park and adding features along the proposed trail corridor and a gathering space also meet with great support
- Create a space where classes can informally or formally gather.
- Create shade and a place to sit with natural elements.
- Allow for more levels of bike skills in the existing bike zone with a intermediate pump track, and potentially a small tot track.
- Make the site more visible and inclusive with increased signage.
- Create places along the trail to pause with natural elements like play structures and sculptures made with local wood sources.



LINCOLN MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

BARRIER OR SUGGESTION

ACTION IN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

STUDENTS LIKE NARNIA
THE WAY IT IS NOW.



THE UNTOUCHED AND
WILD ASPECTS OF THE
SITE ARE PRESERVED
IN THE NARNIA
INFRASTRUCTURE
CONCEPTUAL PLAN.

BIKE HILLS ARE WORTH
RETAINING. ALLOW FOR
MORE SKILL LEVELS TO
ACCESS BIKE ZONE.



MORE ACCESSIBLE,
BEGINNER AND
INTERMEDIATE
FEATURES ARE
ADDED AND EXPERT
LEVEL FEATURES ARE
RETAINED IN NARNIA
CONCEPTUAL PLAN

CREATE A SPACE WHERE
CLASSES CAN GATHER.



OUTDOOR CLASSROOM
IS INCLUDED IN NARNIA
CONCEPTUAL PLAN.

CREATE SHADE AND
A PLACE TO SIT WITH
NATURAL ELEMENTS.



TWO SHADE
STRUCTURES AND
SEATING ARE INCLUDED
IN NARNIA CONCEPTUAL
PLAN.

MAKE SITE MORE
VISIBLE WITH SIGNAGE.



AN ENTRANCE
GATE AND ARTFUL
THRESHOLD ARE
INCLUDED IN NARNIA
CONCEPTUAL PLAN.

CREATE PLACES
ALONG THE TRAIL TO
PAUSE WITH NATURAL
ELEMENTS LIKE PLAY
STRUCTURES AND
SCULPTURES MADE OF
NATURAL ELEMENTS.



ART THRESHOLD
AND NATURE PLAY
MATERIALS ARE
INCORPORATED INTO
NARNIA CONCEPTUAL
PLAN.

THE SITE SHOULD BE
CALLED NARNIA.



THE IMPLEMENTATION
PLAN USES THE NAME,
NARNIA.



Boys and Girls Club Engagement



Inspire Ideas



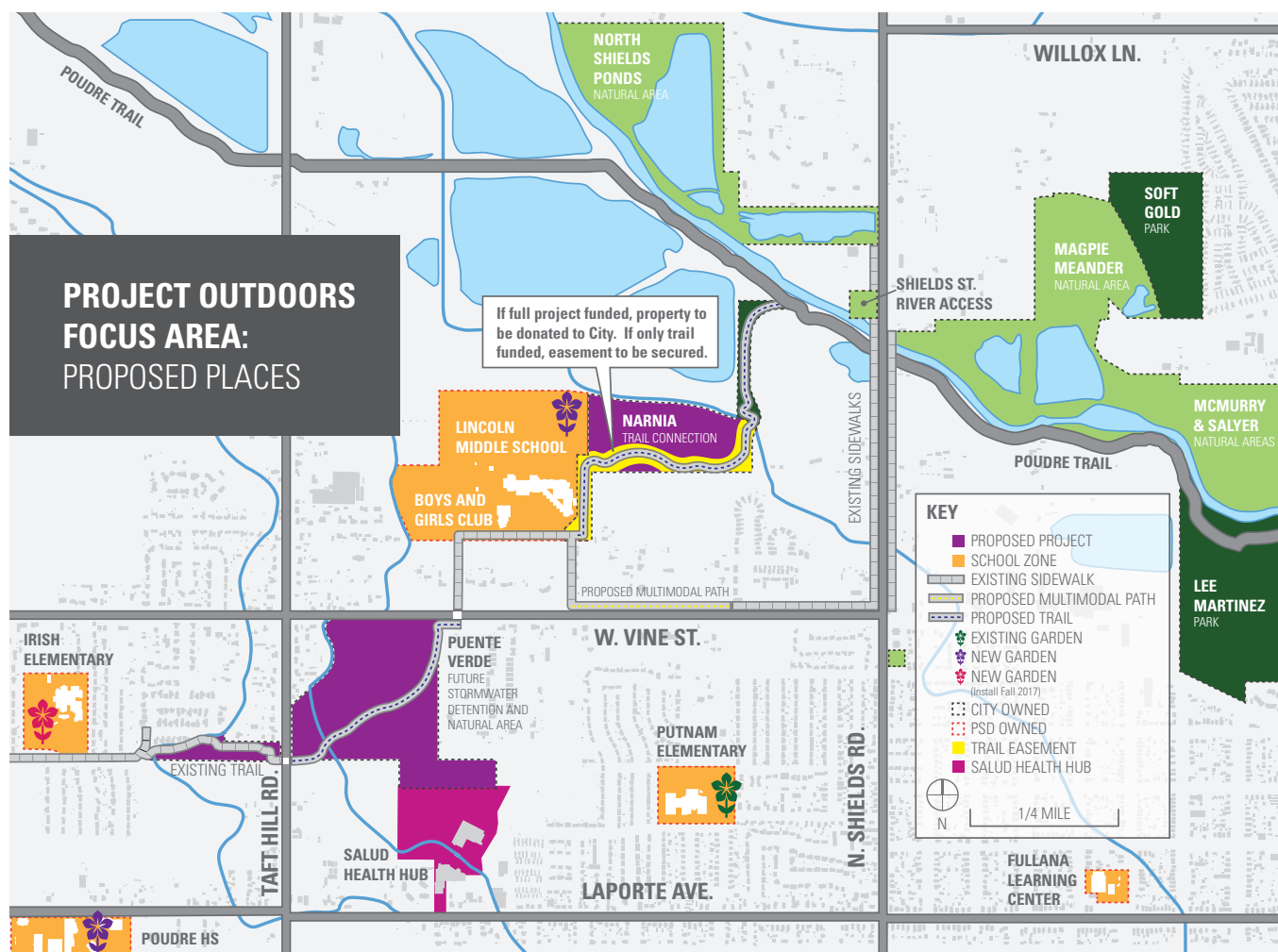
INSPIRE IDEAS SUMMARY

In this exploratory process, stakeholders were asked to think big and innovatively about solutions for connecting youth and families to the outdoors. Ideas were generated for places for kids and their families to play and connect with the outdoors, programs that activate those places, and pathways to outdoor stewardship and leadership roles. While many worthy ideas were generated, the majority require funding to implement that must be acquired from a variety of sources. The Great Outdoors Colorado Inspire Initiative Implementation Grant is an opportunity to seek funding for a great number of the ideas generated.

Below is a list of the ideas explored in greater detail for investment, followed by detailed descriptions on the following pages:

PLACES

- **Lincoln to Poudre Trail Connection Through Narnia**
- **Narnia Nature Connection Infrastructure**
- **Multimodal Path**
- **Puente Verde Trail & Crossings**
- **STEM-Enabled Learning Garden at Lincoln Middle School**
- **Learning Garden at Irish Elementary**
- **Entrepreneurship-focused Real Food Lab at Poudre HS Learning**
- **Garden at Poudre High School**



PROGRAMS & PATHWAYS

- **Early Childhood Outdoor Education**
- **Kindergarten through 5th Grade In-School Programs & Field Trips**
- **Kitchen Community In-School Learning Garden Programming**
- **Outdoor Education Teacher Training**
- **After-school & Summer Outdoor Club**
- **Gear Library**
- **Capacity: In-school Outdoor Education Coordinator**
- **Capacity: After-school and Summer Outdoor Education Coordinator**



ADDITIONAL IDEAS

Some additional ideas that arose through the planning process to pursue in the future through other funding sources or partnerships include:

Places:

- Add sidewalks or multimodal paths on both sides of Vine St. and Taft Hill Rd.
- Identify ways to develop Puente Verde stormwater site that incorporate both “green infrastructure” stormwater detention elements and connect youth to nature.
- Improvement to Putnam’s Learning Garden.
- Add a greenhouse at Poudre High School.
- Add pollinator gardens to each Learning Garden.
- Create a trail connection between Willox Street and Soft Gold Park.
- Create a trail connection from Poudre Valley Mobile Home Park (on North College Ave) to Willox and Soft Gold Park.
- Evaluate the feasibility of creating trails on stormwater properties (located near Shields Street) to connect residents to the proposed Lincoln to Poudre Trail.
- The youth advisory council suggested a tree house on Huidekoper Park, behind their facility. Perhaps this can be incorporated when this area is developed as a neighborhood park in the future.

Programs & Pathways:

- Transform the BGCLC to an outdoor focused club.
- Expand scaffolded programming to other parts of the school district.
- Use the collective impact model to continue to partner with outdoor education providers to streamline and make offerings more efficient.
- Provide programming at Poudre Valley Mobile Home Park (just outside out Project Outdoors boundary). This would leverage Bike Fort Collins’ efforts and recent land conservation by Natural Areas.

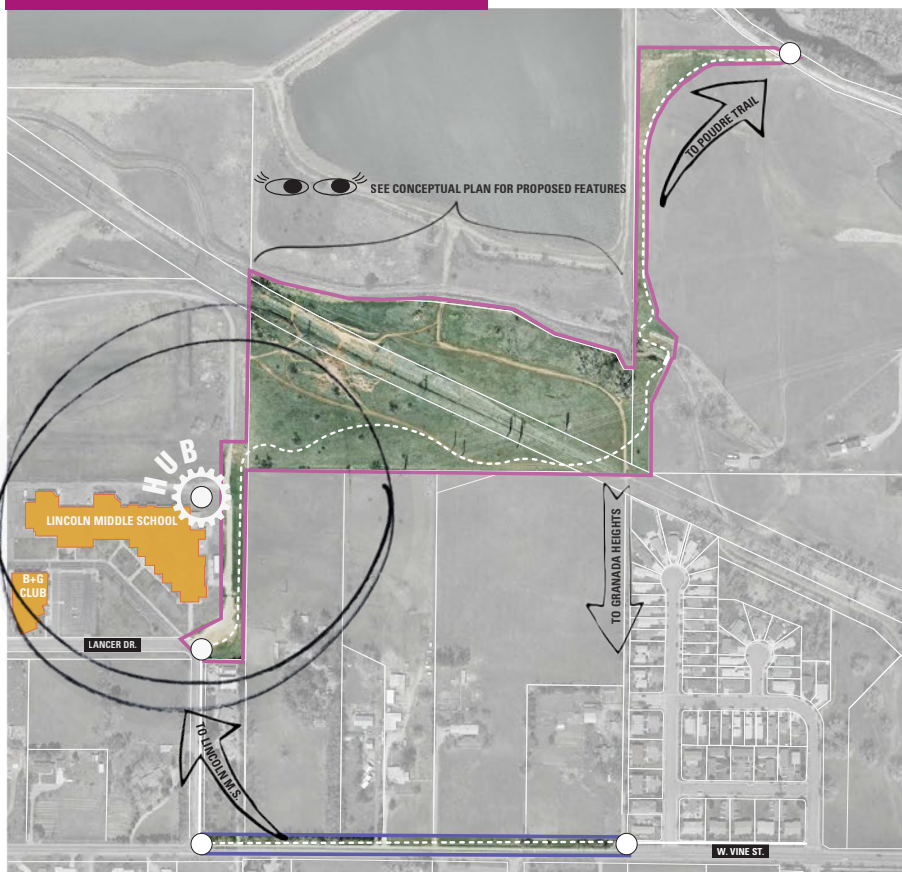
PLACES - LINCOLN TO POUDRE TRAIL CONNECTION THROUGH NARNIA



The Poudre School District owns a parcel immediately east of Lincoln Middle School, that while legally not open to the public, has become a site where residents connect to the outdoors. Residents from surrounding neighborhoods walk their dogs or ride horses here, local youth have built forts in a grove of trees, and an expert-level BMX course was constructed on the hills. Teachers at Lincoln Middle School, unclear on whether they and their students can access the site, haven't often utilized the site for experiential learning opportunities.

The proposed $\frac{3}{4}$ mile- long, 10 foot wide paved trail would connect Lincoln Middle School to the Poudre Trail, an existing 10 mile- long trail artery. This would provide a physical connection between the school and the adjacent Boys & Girls Club to the Poudre River and its beautiful green corridor of natural areas and parks. Instead of traveling on busy Vine Drive (universally cited as a barrier to accessing the river and a safety concern), the trail connection would provide a safe, off-street route to the outdoors and neighborhoods where Boys & Girls Club members and Lincoln students live.

PROPOSED TRAIL CONNECTION EXHIBIT



NARNIA

PROPOSED TRAIL CONNECTION
CONNECT LINCOLN M.S. TO POUDRE TRAIL

MULTIMODAL PATH

SAFE PASSAGE TO THE HUB
BRIDGE THE W. VINE GAP

- PROPOSED TRAIL CONNECTION
10' WIDE | CONCRETE MAIN WITH 2' WIDE GRAVEL OPTION
- EXISTING TRAIL OR SIDEWALK CONNECTIONS
- NEW CONNECTING POINT



0' 150' 300' 600'
scale 1"=300'



Barriers and Solutions

The trail connection is a crucial component that addresses multiple barriers such as distant location of places to visit and the lack of nearby outdoor facilities for schools. It provides a nearby nature experience which solves issues with time and transportation. This project component directly addresses residents' high priority trail connections and safe routes for bikes and pedestrians for both alternative transportation and outdoor recreation.

A trail connection to the Poudre Trail and the many natural areas on the northern side of the Poudre River have been identified in numerous past planning efforts. The Plug into Nature study and a decade-old subarea plan for the neighborhood identified these as important areas to connect with a future trail alignment. Throughout the Project Outdoors process, youth and the community expressed that this trail connection is a priority, as it addresses a variety of challenges experienced in accessing the surrounding trail network, parks, and natural areas.

The trail connection would be used by Lincoln Middle School for multiple curriculum activities, notably the Bike Physical Education unit (the school has a fleet of bikes purchased through a Safe Routes to School grant), as a route for the cross-country running team, and for science classes to access a real-life water quality monitoring location. The nearest existing connection to the Poudre Trail is more than one mile away from Lincoln Middle School and lacks sidewalks and bike paths, making it a dangerous route for students.



PLACES- NARNIA NATURE CONNECTION INFRASTRUCTURE

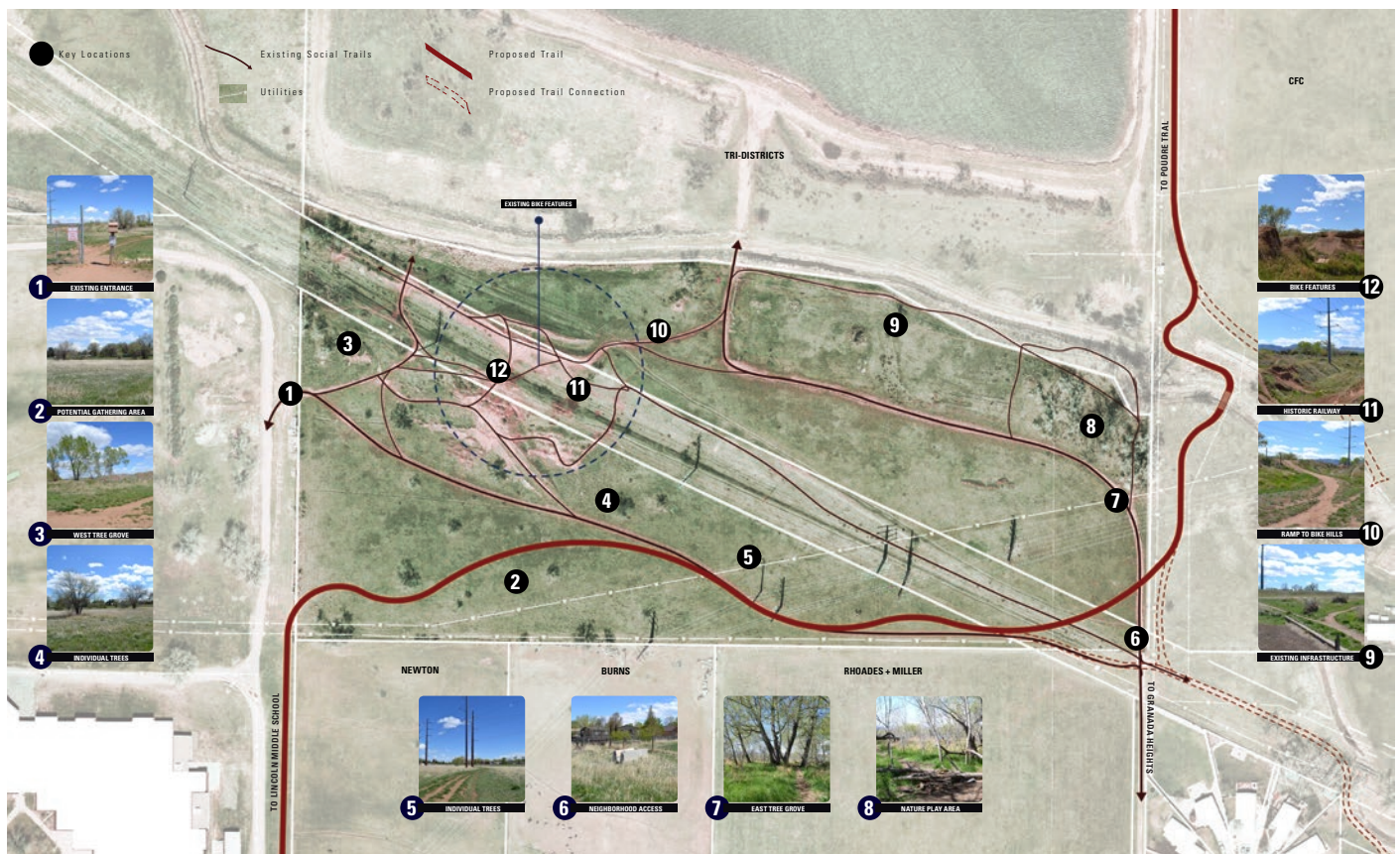


The parcel of land to the northeast of Lincoln Middle School is unofficially called Narnia by Lincoln students. It is a magical undeveloped realm with little oversight or management. Although the site is not legally open to the public, the community regularly it and has “spoken” about how it would like to continue to use it by engaging in a variety of free range activities including dog off-leash wandering and the creation of social trails and bike features.

Narnia is layered with historic and modern infrastructure elements, existing patterns of use, and various easements and underground utilities. The sit is neighbored by Lincoln Middle School to the southwest, the Granada Heights neighborhood to the southeast, and gravel mine ponds to the north (privately owned and not open to the public). A multitude of outdoor recreation activities are waiting to be discovered via the Poudre Trail portal to the northeast, but are currently inaccessible.

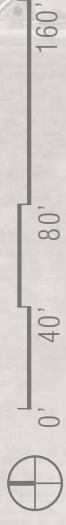
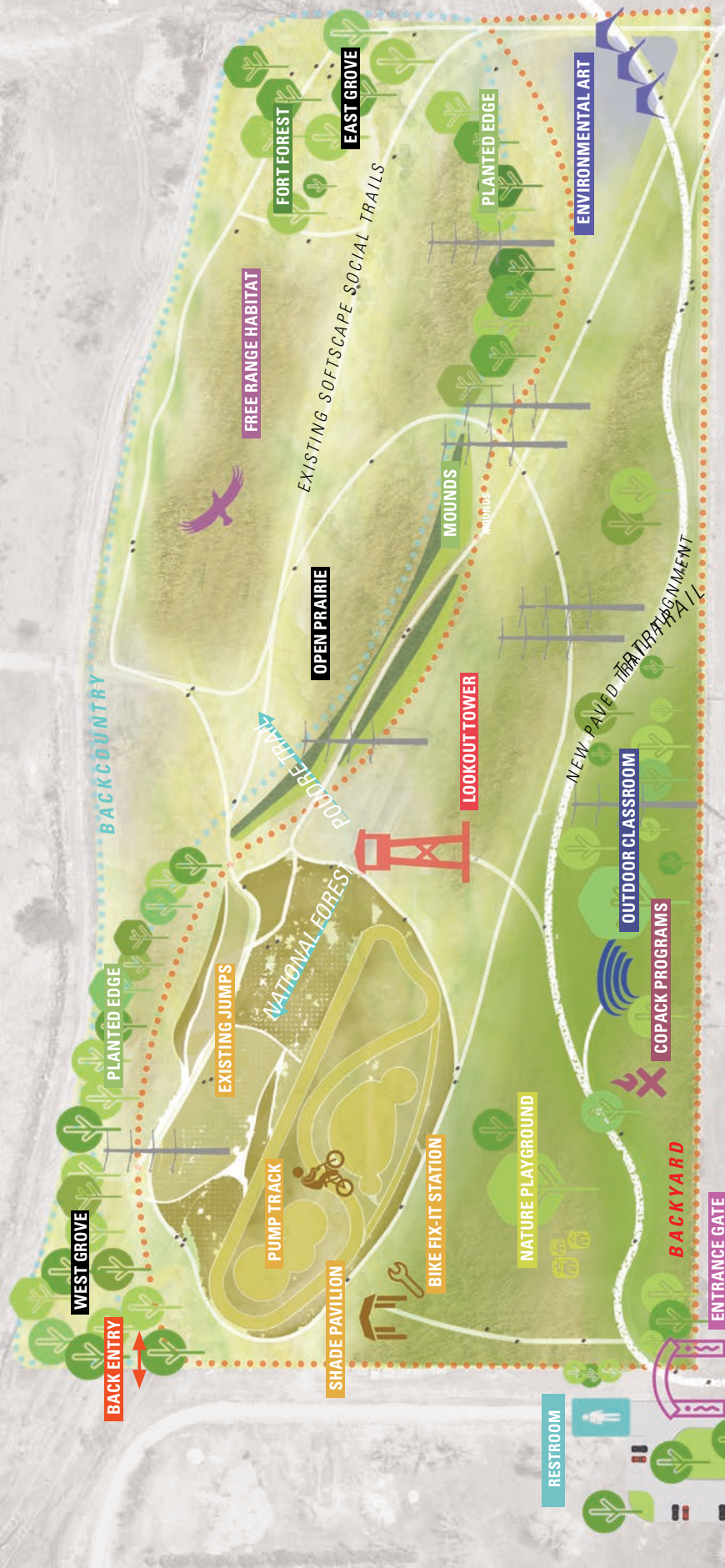
Students from Lincoln Middle School expressed their appreciation for the “untouched” feeling of the space, while other stakeholders said that the rich layered history on the site should guide the formal organization of future development. With this conceptual plan, we propose to enhance existing on-site amenities, add features to engage the community, and provide more accessible opportunities for students and neighbors to interact with and better understand the natural world.

NARNIA PARK EXISTING CONDITIONS AND SITE IMAGES



DESIGNWORKSHOP

NARNIA PARK CONCEPTUAL PLAN



Entrance Gate: Many students were unclear about the ownership of Narnia and whether they were allowed to access it. A ceremonious entrance gate will signal to the public that entrance is free and open to everyone. The gate will be visible from the school and neighboring properties and will be constructed with natural materials that reflect the character of the site and neighborhood.

Outdoor Classroom: Because of its adjacency to Lincoln Middle School and other schools in the Poudre School District, an outdoor classroom will be created to provide a flexible place to accommodate formal gathering during or after school. Teachers and students noted that the integration of seats, shade, and a table on which to write would greatly benefit their school learning environment and ability to gather outside.

Fort Forest: The northeast corner of the site is a cool and calming respite where existing tree forts and sculptures are nestled beneath understory trees. Increased plantings and moveable building materials are proposed for this area to encourage its continued use and as a flexible outdoor play zone.

Look-Out Tower: While the existing site topography allows one to gaze out towards the horizon, a lookout tower would elevate the viewer at least 15 feet higher to offer more expansive views of the spectacular Roosevelt National Forest to the northwest and the meandering green Poudre River corridor to the northeast.

Environmental Art Threshold: Just as the entrance gate creates a threshold when approaching the site from the southwest, environmental art placed at the confluence of the site edge, the Granada Heights neighborhood, and the Poudre Trail, will create a playful and engaging way to enter/exit the site to the southeast.

Bike Skills Area: For many, the current ad hoc bike park is a beloved feature. While it is community-built and well-used, the elements of the bike park are restricted to advanced users. It also encroaches on the historic railroad embankment and may not meet community performance standards for safety. By shifting some bike features to the southern edge of the rail corridor, future issues with the preservation code can be avoided. The hills to the north of the rail corridor provide the right topography to retain more advanced bike features while a new beginner-level pump track would be situated on more level ground, south of the rail corridor.

SELECTED NARNIA PARK ELEMENTS



SHADE PAVILION



FREE RANGE HABITAT



MOUNDS



EXISTING JUMPS



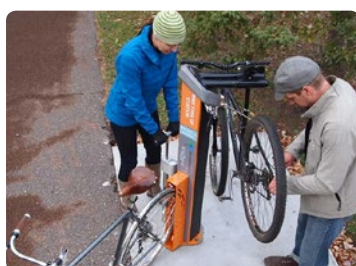
FORT FOREST



PUMP TRACK



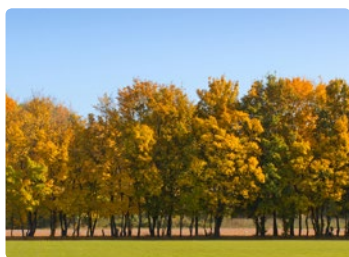
LOOKOUT TOWER



BIKE FIX-IT STATION



ENTRANCE GATE



PLANTED EDGE



ENVIRONMENTAL ART



OUTDOOR CLASSROOM

Backyard to Backcountry Approach

The concept for the Narnia site includes a more developed “Backyard” experience near Lincoln Middle School and a more rustic experience in the “Backcountry” portion of the site. The Backyard area is the closest to the parking lot and school, lending easy access for students, teachers, and the community (including a possible neighborhood park site in the future). Uses and amenities in this area will be similar to those in city parks but will cater to nature play, experiential environmental learning and exploration. In contrast, the Backcountry portion of the site is a nod to the historical free-range uses, including off trail access, fort building, and a dog off-leash zone. The transition between the Backyard and Backcountry will be delineated with thoughtful topography, vegetation, and environmental art installations, and other methods to lessen the appearance and feeling of being fenced out of (or in) a particular area. The backyard to backcountry gradient separates non-compatible uses in the two areas, allows youth-driven features to be integrated, and acknowledges existing community desires to maintain free-range habitat.

Barriers and Solutions

Narnia addresses many of the most important and often reiterated community voiced barriers:

- Physical discomfort (hot, cold, bad weather, bugs) is addressed by providing shade, seating, and a paved trail corridor with mowed vegetation on the sides, and snow removal in winter.
- Safety concerns are mitigated by opening the site to the public, increasing visitation and providing beginner-level bike features.
- The need for trail connections and safe routes for bikes and pedestrians is a key component addressed through the project.
- Narnia is a nearby outdoor facility adjacent to a school and the Boys & Girls Club. It provides the community-requested outdoor classroom, play space, tree groves, and places to bike, learn, and explore.

While Narnia is located immediately adjacent to Lincoln Middle School, it is legally off-limits. As such, it is rare for teachers to use this school property for educational purposes. However, an opening in the fence allows for access after school hours.

Bike jumps have been created by highly skilled cyclists. There are no beginner or intermediate bike features that might attract a wider set of users. Distant access points and a lack of clear signage creates uncertainty about the property and its use. When bike features are used by programming providers (for bike training and education), this space of the park will become activated with more diverse users.

The site is anticipated to be activated by Lincoln Middle School students (during school and also after school and during the summer) and their families during and after school and across all seasons. More residents are expected to use the site than do currently since it will be open to the public, connected, and welcoming. In addition, City of Fort Collins Natural Areas will provide educational programming on-site. Poudre School District will use the proposed outdoor classroom, specifically the COPACK outdoor adventure program within Lincoln Middle School. The Boys & Girls Club may develop additional programming to activate the planned Inspire features.

PLACES - MULTIMODAL PATH



Safety concerns were nearly universal about Vine Drive, a busy two-lane arterial street which lacks sidewalks and has narrow shoulders. It is an important route connecting people and surrounding neighborhoods to outdoor opportunities, nearby trails, schools, transit and other destinations.

Multimodal paths have been identified as a priority in multiple planning and outreach efforts (including the 2006 Northwest Subarea Plan, 2014 Bicycle Master Plan and the City's 2020 goal to create a low-stress bike network). In Fort Collins development pays its own way, (development fees fund sidewalks, street improvements, and parks), the lack of new housing and business construction along Vine Drive has resulted in a lack of basic infrastructure.

In a related effort, the City of Fort Collins' Big Jump grant (which has the goal to triple bike ridership in this underserved neighborhood), is also focused on enhancing Vine Drive for all modes of travel. The project consultant is recommending a multimodal path connecting Lincoln Middle School to five neighborhoods within Poudre School District's non-eligible bus zone. Students are required to walk, bike, or be driven to school. The multimodal trail will also connect to the proposed Lincoln/Poudre Trail connection and provide access to its green spaces, parks and natural areas.

An 8-10 foot wide multimodal path is proposed for one side of Vine Drive to connect existing sidewalks between Lincoln Middle School and Grenada Heights neighborhood, approximately 1,500 feet. A multimodal path along West Vine will provide a safer biking/walking route and provide peace of mind for parents and students. As a result, there will be more excitement and encouragement about connecting to the outdoors as part of everyday life.

VINE DRIVE MULTIMODAL PATH LOCATION



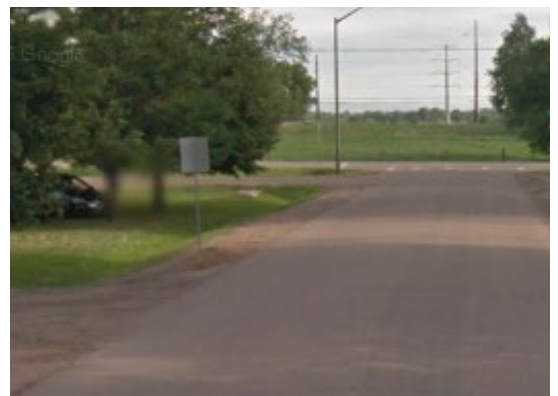
Barriers and Solutions

After learning that Boys & Girls Club members at Putnam Elementary wait 45 minutes for a bus to take them less than a mile to the Club, reviewing related plans, and coalition members participating in the Lincoln walkability audit, a multimodal path on Vine Drive became an obvious potential project.

Community conversations consistently identified sidewalks and multimodal paths as a major barrier to the outdoors. The lack of sidewalks on Vine Drive was frequently cited as a cause for residents to feel overlooked. The coalition heard comments such as “We don’t even have sidewalks! Would that ever happen in south Fort Collins? No way!”

The multimodal path will be activated when Boys & Girls Club members, Lincoln Middle School students, and neighborhood residents use it as a daily route to access nature, school, the Lincoln/Poudre Trail connection, and other destinations. The trail will also be activated through City of Fort Collins’ Safe Routes To School programming such as Putnam and Irish Elementary Bike-Pedestrian Safety Education, Lincoln Middle School’s Bike PE unit (the school has a fleet of bikes and does an entire unit on bike skills), and Irish and Lincoln’s After-School Bike Club.

VINE DRIVE EXISTING CONDITIONS



PLACES - PUENTE VERDE TRAIL & CROSSINGS



After learning that Boys & Girls Club members at Irish Elementary wait for a bus to take them less than a mile to the Club, a trail connection through Puente Verde (Green Bridge) was explored. The site is a natural area and stormwater detention area used for materials storage (such as large piles of soil and culverts). It is undeveloped and closed to the public. The goal is to give Irish Elementary students and neighbors access to the green space and a route to the Poudre River via the proposed Lincoln/Poudre Trail connection. The project would also result in an off-street, safe route to the Boys & Girls Club, and Lincoln Middle School addressing the community's connectivity concerns that were nearly universally expressed.

Currently, there is an existing paved trail from Irish Elementary to Taft Hill Road and paved shoulders along Taft Hill Road and Vine Drive that serve as bike lanes to Lancer Drive. Lancer Drive has a sidewalk for pedestrians and a bike lane for bicyclists. No pedestrian paths or sidewalks link the trail that ends at Taft Hill Road to Lancer Drive. Travel on bike or foot between Irish Elementary and the Boys & Girls Club and Lincoln Middle school is difficult and not very safe.

Improvements to provide this connection include:

- Construction of a signalized crosswalk on Taft Hill Road at the trail from Irish Elementary.
- Construction of a soft-surface trail diagonally across Puente Verde (City-owned property) to Vine Drive. The trail will be 8 feet wide of compacted road base to provide a firm, durable, all weather, and maintainable surface.
- The trail will cross the Larimer No. 2 Irrigation Canal which will require the construction of a 10' wide pedestrian bridge.
- Construction of approximately 250 feet of curb, gutter and sidewalk along the south side of Vine Drive to provide access from the trail to the crosswalk on Vine.
- Construction of a signalized crosswalk on Vine Drive on the west side of Lancer Drive.
- Construction of approximately 25 feet of 8 foot wide sidewalk and a curb return and accessible ramp at the SW Corner of Lancer Drive and Vine Drive to connect Lancer to the crosswalk on Vine.

Barriers and Solutions

Connectivity and safety were key priorities heard from the community so several options were explored. First, County and City staff looked at the challenges of constructing a sidewalk on Taft Hill and Vine Drive versus the challenges of constructing the proposed trail. The current right of way for the road is narrow and makes it extremely difficult if not impossible to add sidewalks without acquiring more right of way, which would be costly. Thus, trail is the best option. The trail provides the best connection to nature, opens a previously closed area, is most cost effective, most user-friendly, and is the easiest to accomplish. In addition, the Salud Health Clinic, located just south of Puente Verde, would like to support wellness through a connecting trail which would provide an exercise route and provide biking and walking access to the clinic.

PUENTE VERDE TRAIL AND CROSSING PROPOSED TRAIL CONNECTION



FUTURE STORMWATER DETENTION AND NATURAL AREA



Puente Verde Trail will be activated when Boys & Girls Club members, Lincoln Middle School students and neighborhood residents use it as a daily route to access nature, school, the proposed Lincoln/Poudre Trail connection, and other destinations. The trail will also be activated through City of Fort Collins' Safe Routes to School programming such as Putnam and Irish Elementary Bike-Pedestrian Safety Education, Lincoln Middle School's Bike PE unit (the school has a fleet of bikes and does an entire unit on bike skills), and Irish and Lincoln's After-School Bike Club.

Young people and community members will further engage with the site by helping to name it. Puente Verde (Green Bridge) is a temporary name assigned by the City to reflect the bridge to the green space and outdoors that the site will create.

PLACES - STEM-ENABLED LEARNING GARDEN AT LINCOLN MIDDLE SCHOOL



The Kitchen Community will design, oversee construction and installation of a Learning Garden at Lincoln Middle School in collaboration with Poudre School District's Facilities staff. A Learning Garden is a school garden outdoor classroom uniquely designed for each school. The project will include:

- 12 raised garden beds
- Art pole
- 5 seating boulders
- 6 benches
- Organic soil
- Concrete surfacing
- Removing or altering existing irrigation where new concrete will be installed

Boys & Girls Club Garden



Barriers and Solutions

Lincoln Middle School and Poudre High School have applied to The Kitchen Community to have a Learning Garden installed at their site. When a school applies, they must form a multi-disciplinary team of a least four members of the school community (often this involves a parent or parent-liaison). In addition, the school must have approval from the principal and a letter of support. Lastly, the school must identify how they plan to use their Learning Garden as a tool for teaching. Because the The Kitchen Community (TKC) has a fairly lengthy process of vetting schools and their demand exceeds their capacity to fund Learning Gardens, they find that there is a high degree of engagement by the time TKC installs the Learning Garden itself. Once the Learning Garden is constructed, they will schedule an installation day where the entire school community participates in filling the raised beds with soil and doing a full planting of their Learning Garden. TKC focuses efforts on supporting teachers to integrate the Learning Garden into the normal life cycle of their classrooms thereby engaging students in hands-on, experiential nature-based learning.

The Kitchen Community has constructed nearly 400 Learning Gardens in six markets across the United States over the past five years. Their experience suggests that when there are opportunities for students to engage in nature on a daily basis and ultimately integrate cultivation and interaction with nature into the classroom, there are tremendous benefits. In 2016, The Kitchen Community's evaluation found that 85% of teachers across their network of schools see increased student engagement in the Learning Garden. In addition, a third-party evaluation of their impact conducted by Mission Measurement, found that three out of four students talk to their parents about what they learn in the Learning Garden and 86% of teachers agree that some subjects are more easily taught in the Learning Garden.

The Kitchen Community's Learning Gardens are specifically designed as outdoor classrooms. They feature ADA accessibility providing all students with access to nature. They are sited in a highly visible place encouraging students and their families to experience nature and real food on a daily basis as part of the school environment. Complimented by programmatic support (see Programs section), Learning Gardens become integrated into the daily life of a school through standards-aligned curriculum and program support.



PLACES - LEARNING GARDEN AT IRISH ELEMENTARY



The Kitchen Community will design, oversee construction and installation of a Learning Garden at Irish Elementary School in collaboration with Poudre School District's Facilities staff. Learning Gardens are edible gardens but they are so much more. They are designed to be easy to maintain outdoor classrooms that create an inviting learning space. Learning Gardens are comprised of raised beds, benches, boulders, and shade, and they are able to accommodate classes of 30+ students. The capital construction will include:

- 12 raised garden beds
- Art pole
- Seating boulders
- 4 Benches
- Organic soil
- Concrete surfacing

A LEARNING GARDEN DESIGN EXAMPLE



Image based on rendering of DSST Middle School in Denver

PLACES- ENTREPRENEURSHIP-FOCUSED REAL FOOD LAB LEARNING GARDEN AT POUDRE HIGH SCHOOL



The Kitchen Community will design, oversee construction and installation of an Entrepreneurship-focused Real Food Lab Learning Garden at Poudre High School in collaboration with Poudre School District's Facilities staff. Learning Gardens are edible gardens but they are so much more. They are designed to be easy to maintain outdoor classrooms that create an inviting learning space. Real Food Lab Learning Gardens are comprised of raised beds, benches, boulders, and shade and they are able to accommodate classes of 30+ students. Real Food Lab High School Learning Gardens are designed specifically to accommodate education in entrepreneurship with the goal of strengthening the local neighborhood and school community. The gardens are large enough to permit greater production of food crops to be sold or donated.

The capital construction will include:

- 16 raised garden beds
- Art pole
- Seating boulders
- Benches
- Organic soil
- Concrete surfacing

A Real Food Lab Learning Garden at Poudre High School may look like this:



Camino Nuevo High School, L.A.

PROGRAMS AND PATHWAYS



The planning process produced a comprehensive vision for scaffolded programming and pathways, from early childhood through 12th grade. For the youngest students, where currently very little opportunity for outdoor education exists, monthly programming will come directly to preschool classrooms and schoolyards. Preschool children will learn about birds, insects, animals, plants, and gardening from Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, The Growing Project, Gardens on Spring Creek, Larimer County Department of Natural Resources, and the City of Fort Collins Natural Areas Department. In addition, adding outdoor education to non-formal family programs such as Best Start for Babies and Toddlers will teach parents how to access outdoor resources on their own.

At the elementary school level, programming will be offered in school through a sequenced program series. Each grade level will participate in an on-campus, pre-field trip lesson, an off-campus field trip, and an on-campus, post-field trip lesson. The on-campus portions will serve to extend the field trips to local green spaces with 5th graders visiting the backcountry at Lory State Park. The sequenced programming series is complimented with Learning Garden activities which are part of the fabric of everyday learning.

Students learn the wonder of growing their own food – learning about soil, planting, cultivation, harvesting, and ultimately consumption of that delicious produce. Students will understand what real food means for their own health, the health of the environment, and the power of building community over a shared meal. After the school day is over and when school is out for the summer, the Boys & Girls Club Outdoor Club provides at least weekly outdoor activities. The scaffold consists of:

- Early Childhood Outdoor Education
- Kindergarten through 5th Grade In-School Programs & Field Trips
- Kitchen Community In-School Learning Garden Programming
- Outdoor Education Teacher Training
- After-school & Summer Outdoor Club
- Gear Library
- Capacity: In-school Outdoor Education Coordinator
- Capacity: After-school and Summer Outdoor Education Coordinator

In middle school and high school, the focus turns towards more sophisticated Learning Gardens and career pathways. In the middle school Learning Garden, STEM-enabled components allow students to manipulate data and explore STEM-related topics in a hands-on environment. Sproutin' Up and The Kitchen Community will each "adopt" classrooms and coordinate their programming. In high school, the focus turns to entrepreneurship and getting students thinking about how they can solve food access issues in their own communities through the creation of, and most importantly, the execution of a real food-related business plan.

Career pathways will be improved by first building awareness of outdoor and natural resources careers. At the elementary school level, a coloring book helps students literally see themselves in outdoor careers and introduces the

variety of professional options. In middle school and high school, students will discover professional options through visits to natural resources agencies, service projects and job shadowing and a career fair. Paid internships, service learning, and volunteer opportunities allow young people to “try-on” different jobs in a variety of settings. The scaffold consists of:

Awareness Building

- Work Gone Wild- Fort Collins
- Natural Resources Career Fair
- Natural Resources Careers Coloring Book
- Warner College Diversity and Inclusion Initiative

Internships

- Summer and After-school

Service Learning

- Community Stewardship Volunteer Projects
- Sproutin’ Up Entrepreneurship Program
- Agricorps Expansion

The diversity of pathways choices was created by leveraging and expanding existing opportunities to ensure underserved students can participate. This suite of diverse pathways significantly improves student exposure to outdoor and natural resource careers to inspire youth to consider natural resources education beyond high school.

Also during the summer and after school, middle and high school students and their families can participate in outdoor adventures with Colorado Youth Outdoors, Lincoln Middle School COPACK and Poudre High School Outdoor Club. All of the adventure options intentionally focus on building character while teaching lifelong recreation skills and creating an enduring bond to the outdoors. The backcountry/ outdoor adventure scaffold includes:

- After-school and Summer Colorado Youth Outdoors
- Poudre High School Outdoor Club
- Outdoor Adventure: Lincoln Middle School COPACK



PROGRAMS- EARLY CHILDHOOD OUTDOOR EDUCATION



Opportunities

Currently, very little opportunity for outdoor education exists for our youngest students. Time, liability, transportation, money, and access are all barriers for preschool aged children and their families. Through Inspire, a coalition of experienced outdoor program providers is committed to offering monthly programs to Putnam and Irish Elementary schools as well as the Fullana Early Learning Center. Programs such as Best Start for Babies and Toddlers will teach parents how to access outdoor resources on their own. Children will learn about a variety of natural resource topics including birds, insects, animals, plants, and gardening.

Providers will include the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, The Growing Project, Gardens on Spring Creek, Larimer County Department of Natural Resources and the City of Fort Collins Natural Areas Department.

Barriers and Solutions

Classroom teachers do not generally have the time or expertise to provide science education for early childhood education students. Outdoor Education program providers have a myriad of resources and the expertise, but need financial support in order to target underserved populations. Because transporting young children is often difficult, programs will be created for the classroom and school campus. Regular access to outdoor programming will help children make a deeper connection with nature as well as nurturing trust with educators. As program providers develop relationships with the schools, they will also start to develop relationships with the parents and will soon serve as a resource to them as well.

PROGRAMS - KINDERGARTEN THROUGH 5TH GRADE IN-SCHOOL PROGRAMS & FIELD TRIPS



Opportunities

In the K-5 in-school program series, various outdoor/environmental education organizations in the community will implement a yearly, three-part program in a given grade (see chart below) at both Putnam and Irish Elementary schools. Each program will include an on-campus, pre-field trip lesson, an off-campus field trip, and an on-campus, post-field trip lesson. The on-campus portions of the program will utilize the outdoor spaces (e.g., outdoor classroom, garden, greenhouse) at the schools and will serve to extend the field trips, including associated learning objectives, beyond the “one-off” experiences that field trips can become. Field trips will take students to various outdoor spaces within the community with the 5th grade trip taking place at Lory State Park, which is considered a backcountry outdoor place.

All programs in the series will meet Colorado Academic Standards and align with existing FOSS kits (Full Option Science System classroom-based hands-on science activities). In addition, the series is scaffolded so that objectives from the previous years are built upon in subsequent years. For example, students will begin to learn about life cycles in kindergarten as they explore trees. They will continue to explore and expand on this concept when learning about seeds, insects, and wildlife. If funded, the Outdoor Education Program Coordinator position with the Poudre School District would coordinate each program with teachers and providers.

The overall goals of the K-5 in-school series are to:

- Ensure that each school-aged child receives at least three experiences outdoors during the school year
- Increase students' awareness of, knowledge about, and passion for the local environment
- Increase students' comfort levels in the outdoors
- Help teachers meet state standards and give their students novel experiences

Grade	Topic	Standard	Provider	Field Trip location
K	Trees	Life Science Standard 2.1 Organisms can be described and sorted by their physical characteristics. Aligned with FOSS Trees	City of Fort Collins Natural Areas	Natural Area close to school
1	Seeds	Life Science Standard 2.1 Offspring have characteristics that are similar to but not exactly like their parents' characteristics. Aligned with FOSS New Plants	Gardens on Spring Creek	Gardens on Spring Creek Botanic Garden
2	Insects	Life Science Standard 2.2 Each plant or animal has different structures or behaviors that serve different functions. Aligned with FOSS Insects	Colorado State University Environmental Learning Center	Environmental Learning Center (nature preserve)
3	Plants	Life Science Standard 2.1 The duration and timing of life cycle events such as reproduction and longevity vary across organisms and species. Aligned with FOSS Structures of Life	The Growing Project	Hope Farms
4	Birds, research process	Life Science Standard 2.3 There is interaction and interdependence between and among living and nonliving components of ecosystems. Aligned with FOSS Structures of Life	Bird Conservancy of the Rockies	Lee Martinez Park (Project Outdoors neighborhood)
5	Ecosystems; Hiking, research process, career awareness	Preparation for ecoweek, intro to careers & research; Life Science standard 2.1 All organisms have structures and systems with separate functions. Aligned with FOSS Environments	Lory State Park/ Friends of Lory State Park & Rocky Mountain Cat Conservancy	Lory State Park

Barriers and Solutions

Outreach confirmed that parents are overwhelmed with multiple jobs and child care. It is difficult for parents to find the extra time to engage their children in outdoor activities. Parents and teachers are both consumed with the academic success of students which means that outdoor activities do not take priority. Most elementary-level teachers are not specifically trained in natural science and therefore do not have the expertise to bring this into the classroom. Currently any exposure that students have to outdoor education happens almost by accident- based on the teacher's personal desire to get kids outside. During teacher engagement sessions, teachers expressed that liability was their biggest barrier to taking kids on field trips. By using the school grounds as the "place" for much of the programming, many liability issues are eliminated and the outdoors become accessible throughout the school day. In addition, in-school programming was the top ranked priority at the prioritization meeting.

Funding is needed to address staff time, volunteer training, field trip busing, and program supplies Irish and Putnam Elementary schools have two of the highest student populations on free and reduced lunch in the Poudre School District. Because of this, field trip opportunities are limited as families are often unable to contribute to field trip funds. Lack of time is another barrier identified by both parents and teachers. Having programs take place during the school day takes pressure off parents and still ensures that students receive at least three outdoor experiences each year. In addition, programs are tied to Colorado State Academic standards, ensuring that they fit into classroom curriculum that teachers are already responsible for teaching.

PROGRAMS - KITCHEN COMMUNITY IN-SCHOOL LEARNING GARDEN PROGRAMMING

Opportunities

The Kitchen Community (TKC) connects students and their families to nature through Learning Gardens. Learning Gardens are edible gardens but they are also outdoor classrooms that can accommodate classes of 30+ students. TKC will provide programming to activate the learning gardens at the four schools (Putnam, Irish, Lincoln, Poudre).

Through the Edible Garden Initiative, the Learning Garden is full of fresh fruits and vegetables with at least two productive harvests a year. TKC provides gardening materials, tools, and instruction, including seeds and seedlings, a personalized growing plan, and a comprehensive Learning Garden manual. TKC hosts trainings and demonstrations to ensure that teachers have the skills to maintain a thriving garden and are confident in their abilities to work with students in the Learning Garden. TKC gives direct support to each school by participating in Garden Team meetings, helping with maintenance, and being readily available to discuss questions and big ideas! A productive garden is key



to impacting students' habits. Ninety eight percent of teachers agree that the Learning Garden has increased their students' awareness of healthy foods.

The Kitchen Community's Garden-Based Education Initiative equips schools to use their Learning Garden as a teaching tool to engage students in hands-on learning. TKC will provide curriculum in entrepreneurship and nutrition and health, accompanied by trainings and supporting materials to create a unique and indepth learning experience for students. TKC's website contains a library of resources for teaching in the Learning Garden, including lessons, activities and guidance on standards alignment. A study of TKC's Learning Gardens showed that 93% of teachers see an increased level of student participation when working in the Learning Garden, and 86% agree that some subjects are more easily taught in the Learning Garden.

Barriers and Solutions

With time, transportation, cost, and location as major barriers to the outdoors, in-school learning garden programming solves many key challenges. Teachers requested nearby outdoor spaces, training and curriculum support which are all provided through TKC's programming.

Elementary and Middle School- At Putnam, Irish and Lincoln schools, students will experience Garden Bites, created in partnership with Common Threads. It is a Learning Garden-based nutrition curriculum for elementary and middle school students. Garden Bites pairs classroom-based nutrition education and cooking lessons with the Learning Garden for a deep dive into health, nutrition, and connection to the environment. This curriculum includes in-class cooking.

PROGRAMS- OUTDOOR EDUCATION TEACHER TRAINING

Opportunities

To make in-school programs possible and overcome barriers, professional development workshops are proposed to help teachers become aware of the resources in their community and how to tap into the educational potential of nature. A 16-hour summer course for teachers held at the schools will give them experience activating their nearby outdoor resources, and they will participate in model experiential, interdisciplinary lessons. The training logistics will be coordinated by Colorado Parks and Wildlife and it will include CPW resources and expertise. Teachers will be introduced to environmental education providers and plan ways to use nearby outdoor spaces into the classroom. Research shows that students who spend time outdoors are more creative, better at problem-solving, and build deeper relationships. Teacher training encourages outdoor education to be further integrated into the school's culture.



Barriers and Solutions

Teachers themselves suggested training (and providing materials) as ways to connect their students to the outdoors. Conversations with environmental education providers and school district staff also showed support for training as a key supportive element.

PROGRAMS- AFTER-SCHOOL & SUMMER OUTDOOR CLUB

Through the Outdoor Club, members of the Boys & Girls Club will participate in year-round (after school and summer), age-appropriate outdoor experiences. Specifically, programming will take place in three scaffolded stages.

Stage 1: (6-9 years old) Youth will have the opportunity for local outdoor engagement. They will have opportunity to visit local parks and open spaces, go on easy guided hikes, learn basic principles about the outdoors and their local community. The goal of this stage is for our youth to build a foundation of knowledge about the outdoors.

Stage 2: (10-12 years old) Youth will go outside their local community and will have the opportunity to visit state parks and national parks, learn about the concepts of nature preservation and the importance of our ecosystems. The goal of this stage is for our youth to develop an appreciation of the outdoors.

Stage 3: (13-15 years old) Youth will have the opportunity to put their knowledge to use and participate in larger scale excursions including: backpacking, camping, community service, and learning survival skills. The goal of this stage is to have youth transform their knowledge into active engagement by utilizing the skills they have been learning through the program.



PROGRAMS- GEAR LIBRARY

Through the gear library, members of the Boys & Girls Club, students at the four area schools, and their families will be able to check out gear necessary to explore nature in various ways. Gear will include basics such as high-quality rain gear, snow pants, gloves, and water bottles, as well as more specialty items such as backpacking packs, sleeping bags, and stoves. In addition, the gear library will have daypacks with high quality nature exploration items (e.g., binoculars, magnifying glasses, colored pencils) to check out.

The gear library will be managed by the Boys & Girls Club Outdoor Coordinator. A suggested donation price will accompany each piece of gear, though check-out is ultimately free if a family is unable to pay. The gear library will also be an integral part of the Poudre High School Outdoor Club, ensuring that students, regardless of experience or economic status, have access to proper gear to participate in club outings.



PROGRAMS- AFTER-SCHOOL AND SUMMER COLORADO YOUTH OUTDOORS



Colorado Youth Outdoors' (CYO) Core Programming is helping families with middle and high school students build and strengthen their relationships while learning lifelong recreation skills and intentional relationship building skills. CYO programming is structured in 12 to 15 week sessions in the fall and spring and runs in three week ventures. A venture focuses on one traditional outdoor recreation activity and is a minimum of two hours in length. Activities include fly fishing, spin fishing, fly tying, archery, shooting sports, camping and survival, and orienteering. The programs happen in the evening, usually between 5:30 pm and 7:30 pm, and require that a parent or significant adult participate with each youth attending.

CYO will also provide core parent/youth programming for the coalition at hub sites for younger youth and their families in the recreation areas (Boys & Girls Club, Lincoln/Poudre Trail Connection, Narnia, Puente Verde, schoolyards).

In addition to Core Programs, CYO is part of the Inspire Coalitions in Weld County, Loveland, and Fort Collins to help youth and families enjoy their natural areas and get outdoors. CYO will be providing training through the Train the Leaders course for the coalition, which will train leaders from the four

Project Outdoors schools, the Outdoor Education Coordinators (both in-school and after-school/summer), Boys & Girls Club staff, coalition members, and other outdoor education providers. This training will allow existing agencies and programs to sustain programming and ensure ongoing support. There will also be training for Project Outdoors neighborhood parents to support them as they seek to take their families into the great outdoors.

PATHWAYS- AWARENESS BUILDING: WORK GONE WILD- FORT COLLINS



Opportunities

Work Gone Wild will serve to connect Poudre High School students and Larimer County Boys & Girls Club members with natural resources careers through opportunities for students to visit with and shadow natural resources professionals and take field trips to work sites and offices. Visits will include opportunities for stewardship projects and service learning where applicable.

A wide network of natural resources professionals will be tapped to facilitate specific opportunities for visits. Outdoor and natural resources agencies and non-profits are abundant in Fort Collins: National Park Service; U.S. Forest Service; USDA wildlife and soil and crop research centers; U.S. Geologic Survey; Colorado Parks and Wildlife; Colorado State University; CSU Environmental Learning Center; Front Range Community College; State Forest Service; Larimer County Natural Resources; Larimer County Conservation Corps; Larimer County Search and Rescue; City of Fort Collins Natural Areas and Utilities departments; Rocky Mountain Raptor Program; Bird Conservancy of the Rockies; Rocky Mountain Cat Conservancy and more. Front Range Community College and Warner College of Natural Resources will also participate to help students understand how to access the education that is required to attain some natural resources careers.

Poudre High School students will discover careers through 3-4 half day experiences each school year, and a week-long camp will connect Boys & Girls Club members to career pathways each summer. Poudre High School (PHS) Natural Resource career track students (classes of 20-24 and their teachers) will take half-day excursions that will include tours, conversations with natural resource professionals, job shadowing, service learning projects, and visits to collegiate natural resources programs. Staff from PHS will attend with the students and facilitate opportunities. Coordinators will create opportunities for mentoring with youth who have attended the program for one year and will assist with the following year's group. Each natural resources career track class will have a series of 3-4 half-day experiences, each year, in each of the three grant years (with the intention of establishing the program well enough that it continues without grant funding).

When school is out for the summer, Boys & Girls Club members, who participate in the Project Outdoors Youth Advisory Council (20-24 middle school-aged youth and their leaders) will experience a similar series of half-day excursions each summer in a day-camp format, in each of the three grant years (with the intention of establishing the program well enough that it continues without grant funding in the future).

The goal of these series of outings is to increase awareness of a variety of natural resources career opportunities, ensuring that youth understand how to attain a rewarding career in natural resources.

Barriers and Solutions

Knowledge and awareness of natural resource career opportunities was identified through the planning process as a significant barrier to natural resources careers. This barrier became apparent through direct engagement with the public (open house kick-off meeting, follow-up survey), and through discussions with Poudre High School teachers managing the Natural Resources and Agriculture Career Track.

Work Gone Wild will address those barriers through field trips to natural resources agencies, job shadowing with natural resources professionals, and service learning/stewardship projects. The intent is for these opportunities to not only raise awareness about natural resources careers, but also to get students comfortable with and excited about the idea of seeing themselves in those careers. This introduction is a perfect way to prepare students for the diversity and inclusion initiative activities (proposed elsewhere in the grant) by CSU Warner College of Natural Resources at CSU and Front Range Community College.

PATHWAYS- AWARENESS BUILDING: NATURAL RESOURCES CAREER FAIR

Opportunities

The Natural Resources Career Fair at Poudre High School will expose both high school and middle school students to natural resources careers. The fair will feature local natural resources agencies that will be available to discuss career opportunities as well as potential internships for high school students. Students and families from Lincoln Middle school will also be invited to the fair to help them understand natural resources careers prior to selecting their career track at Poudre High School.

Each invited agency or nonprofit group will staff a booth and provide information about the types of careers their agency might offer and an engaging activity for students. Invitations will be widely extended to organizations such as the National Park Service; U.S. Forest Service; USDA wildlife and soil and crop research centers; U.S. Geologic Survey; Colorado Parks and Wildlife; Colorado State University; CSU

Environmental Learning Center; Front Range Community College; State Forest Service; Larimer County Natural Resources; Larimer County Conservation Corps; Larimer County Search and Rescue; City of Fort Collins Natural Areas and Utilities departments; Rocky Mountain Raptor Program; Bird Conservancy of the Rockies; Rocky Mountain Cat Conservancy and more. Front Range Community College and Warner College of Natural Resources will also participate in order to help students understand how to access the kind of education that is required to attain a natural resources career.



The event will take place in November in each of the three grant years, in the PHS gymnasium, and be open to all Lincoln Middle School and Poudre High School students, but it will be particularly focused on students in the Agriculture and natural resources career track. The In-School Outdoor Education Coordinator will lead the planning and implementation of the fair event.

The goal of the career fair is to increase awareness of natural resources career opportunities, and ensure that youth understand how to attain a rewarding career in natural resources.

Barriers and Solutions

Knowledge and awareness of natural resources career opportunities was identified through the planning process as a significant barrier to natural resources careers. This barrier came to light through direct engagement with the public (open house kick-off meeting, follow-up survey), and through discussions with Poudre High School teachers managing the Natural Resources and Agriculture Career Track.

A career-fair specific to natural resources careers will address these barriers by providing information and inspiration to students who may have an interest in pursuing natural resources careers.

PATHWAYS- AWARENESS BUILDING: NATURAL RESOURCES CAREERS COLORING BOOK

Larimer County Natural Resource Department will develop a coloring book to distribute to K-5th grade students in northwest Fort Collins. The coloring book will feature a different natural resources career on each page, along with a few words about the positive impacts someone with that job makes on the world.

Additional information in the coloring book will help young students understand how to set themselves up for educational success to eventually achieve a career in natural resources. The coloring book will be developed both in English and Spanish.

The goal of the coloring book is to begin building awareness about the variety of natural resources career opportunities at a young age.

Awareness of natural resources careers and how to achieve them was identified in the planning process as a key barrier. Starting at an early age, this simple publication will help to address that challenge. The hope is that young people will color it with their family members and be inspired to see themselves in natural resources careers.



PATHWAYS- AWARENESS BUILDING: WARNER COLLEGE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION INITIATIVE



Opportunities

Colorado State University's Warner College of Natural Resources has identified a distinct strategic need to increase the diversity of its undergraduate student body by focusing on recruiting traditionally underserved audiences, specifically the Latinx community, into its programs, thereby increasing the diversity of the field of natural resources more broadly.

The College intends to begin significant engagement with "Alliance Partnership" high schools close to CSU's main campus in Fort Collins. Alliance Partnership schools, such as Poudre High School, are a good fit for attracting underserved audiences due to their racial and ethnic diversity including higher levels of Latinx individuals than the College currently attracts diversity of income levels, high level of financial aid need, and due to their established relationship to the University.

Engagement with northwest Fort Collins youth is part of the Warner College's overall strategy to make the community aware of its offerings as well as to demonstrate that the College would be a resource for them in attaining their educational goals.

A series of engagements will be offered to Poudre High School students to introduce them to the field of natural resources. The College will partner with service providers that are likely to interest this community including: CSU's Environmental Learning Center, Access Center, and El Centro, Colorado State Forest Service, and Front Range Community College's Natural Resources program. Students benefit by learning about these organizations and their services. The providers benefit by connecting with the community and demonstrating the College's interest in being an honest broker and good neighbor. Engagements will include community events in the neighborhood (ice cream socials/food trucks) and events at Poudre High School and the Boys & Girls Club. During the events, families can sign up to participate in activities at Colorado State University, the CSU Environmental Learning Center, CSU's Mountain Campus, and Front Range Community College including summer institutes, day long or overnight visits, and events. Through these types of events, community members will build relationships with the institutions and reduce barriers of trust and the perception that collegiate natural resources programs "aren't for us" or unattainable.

Warner College is fully committed to a strategy that meets its diversity and inclusion strategic goals and following a two-year pilot program engaging with Poudre High School will replicate and expand to Alliance schools in Greeley (1) and then Denver (2) for a total of four schools.

Barriers and Solutions

During engagement, the coalition heard many barriers to outdoor careers and higher education in natural resources. Challenges included lack of awareness and knowledge of natural resources careers and educational opportunities; perceived lack of ability to attain educational opportunities to achieve a natural

resources career; the perception that natural resources fields “aren’t for us or people like us” (due to lack of role models in the field); and lack of trust or comfort with institutions providing natural resources education and career opportunities.

With these barriers in mind, Warner College intends to create a framework to introduce itself to Latinx communities to mitigate the above barriers. We welcome the opportunity to dovetail our broader statewide efforts to connect to underserved communities with the Inspire Coalition in Northern Colorado.

PATHWAYS- SERVICE LEARNING (AFTER-SCHOOL AND SUMMER): COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP VOLUNTEER PROJECTS



Opportunities

Larimer County Conservation Corps will create additional opportunities for youth from northwest Fort Collins to participate in the Agricorps program. Agricorps is a part-time service learning opportunity for youth aged 14 to 16. They participate in a month-long summer experience to learn about sustainable agriculture and local food projects, volunteer at local farms and community gardens, and receive a monetary incentive upon completion.

Barriers and Solutions

Through the engagement process, Project Outdoors learned that far and away, the largest barrier to outdoor careers is a lack of paid natural resource internship opportunities. Not only are these opportunities non-existent or very limited for Poudre High School students, but job opportunities for high school students in general are quite limited. Additionally, while some natural resources internship opportunities do currently exist, funding is not available to provide stipends, making the opportunities largely impossible and unappealing to lower-income students who may need to earn money to provide for their future education, or in some cases, support their families. Students and parents also expressed a general lack of awareness of natural resources careers. Providing paid internship opportunities will mitigate this barrier.

The internships also solve an outdoor program provider barrier. Agencies expressed concern about providing for interns’ workers’ compensation, insurance, and other risk-related benefits. By running these internships through the Larimer County Conservation Corps (that has solved these issues already), these barriers will be mitigated.

PATHWAYS- SUMMER INTERNSHIPS

To significantly expand paid natural resources internship opportunities, existing opportunities will be leveraged and expanded. A network of internship opportunity providers will pair interested students with agency partners for students to directly experience and “try-on” natural resources careers.

This proposal includes:

- Enhancing the existing Poudre School District POWER internship program, to include stipends for natural resource internships.
- Enhancing the existing City of Fort Collins City Works Youth Edition program, which will newly include funds for students to carry out projects they propose to natural resources related City departments and programs.
- Increasing the capacity of the existing Front Range Community College internship placement program for natural resources careers.
- Creating Edu-Corps, a new program within Larimer County’s Conservation Corps, that provides interns to support environmental education programming throughout the region.



PATHWAYS- INTERNSHIPS (AFTER-SCHOOL AND SUMMER): NATURE IN THE CITY BIODIVERSITY PROJECT

Students in northwest Fort Collins will have the opportunity to work directly with CSU faculty, graduate students, and research scientists in collecting field data, shadowing natural resource jobs and learning field research skills (which are highly-desired in biological research positions). CSU faculty, students and scientists will invite young people to participate alongside them as they implement the Nature in the City Biodiversity project.

The Nature in the City Biodiversity Project is a citizen science program to monitor birds, bees, and butterflies around Fort Collins. The goal is to collect long-term ecological data that will help support the Nature in the City Strategic Plan to maintain “a connected open space network accessible to the entire community that provides a variety of experiences and functional habitat for people, plants, and wildlife.” During the summer, volunteers will learn about urban wildlife and explore the many natural spaces in Fort Collins as they conduct scientific surveys for birds, bees, and butterflies.

It is a perfect match because Nature In the City seeks to increase and diversify citizen engagement in its initiative and to inspire collaborative stewardship to preserve and enhance urban open space. Nature in

City’s goals are to:

- 1) Increase the scientific literacy and understanding of bird and butterfly ecology among a diverse group of Fort Collins citizens, providing them with the environmental knowledge and capacity to participate in land-use planning, development, and management decisions.



2) Increase connection to nature and familiarity with local natural areas among participating citizens, ensuring that implementation of Nature in the City and related sustainability initiatives are actively supported by diverse, engaged, and knowledgeable citizens.

3) Increase the use of ecological data in land-use planning, development, and management decisions in Fort Collins, helping the City and project partners to avoid or mitigate adverse impacts of development and optimize natural area management to benefit ecosystem health and human wellbeing.

4) Improve habitat conditions for birds, butterflies, and other species on public and private open space, ensuring that higher quality and better connected habitat is preserved and enhanced for wildlife and biodiversity throughout Fort Collins.

Specifically, youth from the Boys & Girls Club and the four schools will be invited to a focus group comprised of youth residents. They will also have the opportunity to volunteer as citizen scientists. They will learn biodiversity monitoring protocol and be assigned a location in northwest Fort Collins. Then they will monitor and report data they observe about birds and insects. Youth will be invited to participate in social survey efforts by sharing their perspective and voicing their thoughts through facilitated workshops designed just for these youth participants.

PATHWAYS-OUTDOOR ADVENTURE: POUDRE HIGH SCHOOL OUTDOOR CLUB



The Poudre High School Outdoor club seeks to provide positive experiences that expose students to Colorado's great outdoors during after-school hours. The goal is to facilitate experiences for students so they become lifelong lovers of nature and the outdoors. The school-sponsored and teacher-led extracurricular Club provides weekly hikes, occasional snowshoe trips, fishing outings, and service learning and volunteer opportunities. Students plan a weekend camping or backpacking trip each semester, giving them experience to organize their own future trips. Students participate in programs led by experts on group organization, packing, first aid, resource management, and wildlife identification. Each participating Club member will be fully equipped to safely and effectively lead groups in the outdoors themselves.

High quality outdoor experiences are critical to creating interest in careers in natural resources, but the cost of gear can be prohibitive. This proposal is paired with the gear library proposal (elsewhere in grant application). Additionally, access to training and skills-building opportunities can be a barrier that leads to feeling uncomfortable attempting outdoor activities. Participating in the Outdoor Club helps students alleviate both those barriers, while providing them with important opportunities for outdoor leadership and to mentor their peers.

PATHWAYS- OUTDOOR ADVENTURE: LINCOLN MIDDLE SCHOOL COPACK



Helping kids thrive, connect, and give back are at the heart of COPACK (Colorado Promotes Achievement, Character & Kindness). It is alarming the number of Lincoln students that are hospitalized for various issues. The common theme is giving up versus persevering through hardships. Depression, dropout, and suicide rates are too high. Kids need to connect to school, to the world, and to each other. This is why surrounding our teens with good people in a constructive environment is so important. Students are placed in challenging and unfamiliar situations with supportive peers and mentors in order to improve growth mind-set, and foster a sense of community, integrity, and kindness. The students learn they are not alone, and that they can succeed and even lead. Being part of the PACK is belonging.

COPACK provides bimonthly character instruction and team-building activities after school or on weekends to facilitate collaboration and growth. Students use credit to attend adventures, including backpacking excursions to Utah, Yellowstone National Park and Colorado fourteeners, and learning to ski. They complete projects for national and state parks and can earn additional credit by completing academic activities related to their trip.

COPACK is unique in that it allows students to earn tuition towards adventure and gear. It is imperative that the school incentivize a way to encourage participants to extend the school day and level the socioeconomic playing field. Participants are tracked in high school attendance, behavior, grades, and graduation rate.

COPACK students may enroll in an enrichment class that meets two-three times a week during school hours where they train in CPR, First Aid and guiding skills, and they learn about the geography and cultures of the places they visit. In the fall, students can serve at Lory State Park and hike a fourteener. In the winter, students can go on field trips to learn to ski. Participants then attend a re-energizing celebration during winter break. At the end of the school year, students choose between a five-day backpacking trip to Yellowstone National Park, or the redrock country of Utah. In the summer, there is a reunion of all past and current participants.

Eighth grade students will visit their future high school and meet individually with a counselor before the next school year starts. Throughout the program, students may use their credit towards trip costs or

COPACK swag at cost. Participants that attend at least two years of high adventures can apply to be guides in their third year and receive training and skills that go along with those positions. Students are recruited by information sent home, parent meetings (fall, winter, spring), and student meetings highlighting the programs and trips. Teachers refer students and social media is used to get the word out. Sixteen different staff members lead the programs or guide high adventures including Lincoln's principal, assistant principal, teachers, paraprofessionals, a student-teacher, and a tech manager.

PATHWAYS- PROVIDER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TRAINING



Professional development for program providers was one of the most highly ranked priorities at the prioritization meeting. When program providers use best practices to engage underserved communities, the entire programs and pathways series is more effective and culturally-relevant. In seeking training opportunities, the northern Colorado Inspire coalition was impressed with the success of program providers in the Denver-metro area which have effectively engaged underserved communities (similar to the Project Outdoors neighborhood). Thus, we intend to invite the leaders of Environmental Learning for Kids (ELK), the Colorado Mountain Club (CMC), and Colorado Parks and Wildlife's SOLE program to contribute to a one-day training workshop for teachers and program providers focused on the skills needed to engage underserved communities.

CONCLUSION

Ideas have been proposed through this planning process that will improve the lives of youth and families and greatly increase the likelihood that they will spend more time in nature. Some of these ideas have been immediately implemented. Supporters, advocates and implementors have all been organized for action to see these ideas through. Most importantly, youth and community members were the voice of these ideas, directing the efforts and desired outcomes.

The next steps to implementing the vision are securing funding from a variety of sources, further developing partnerships and agreements, and continuing communication and relationship building with area youth and community partners. It will take a great deal of time and effort to completely eliminate the disconnect of youth and families to the great outdoors, but through support of the community and partners there are many tangible solutions. With funding and resource support, northwest Fort Collins will transform from being overlooked and blocked from outdoor access, into a vibrant outdoor-connected community.