

RECREATE: PARKS 20 **RECREATION MASTER PLAN**

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Stakeholder Groups

Bicycle Colorado **Bike Fort Collins** Cycles for Youth Downtown Business Association Downtown Development Authority Fort Collins Areas Swim Team Fort Collins Baseball Club Fort Collins Pickleball Club Fort Collins Running Club Fort Collins Ultimate Frisbee Fort Collins Womens Hockey Larimer County Dept of the Built Environment Lewis Tennis School Liberty Common Charter School Northern Colorado Disc Golf Overland Mountain Bike Association Poudre School District Rocky Mountain Adventures Tennis Association Triple Crown Sports Twin Silo BMX University Bike Advisory Committee Visit Fort Collins Your Group Ride

Prepared for the City of Fort Collins

by OLIN

with PROS Consulting, Mundus Bishop, the Trust for Public Land, and ETC Institute



Recreate Rethink. Renew. Reimagine.

Parks and recreation are part of what attracts residents to Fort Collins and entices them to stay. In 2008 the City adopted a Parks and Recreation Policy Plan, which provided a strategy for expanding parks and recreation to align with the community's vision for the future. As a city that is proud to build what we plan, since 2008 we have added a half dozen new neighborhood parks, Twin Silo Community Park, Poudre River Whitewater Park, the Foothills Activity Center, and miles of new trails—and more is underway.

As Fort Collins continues to meet its future, this new Parks and Recreation Master Plan, ReCreate, is a roadmap to making the best use of the resources we have. We acknowledge that parks and recreation provide immense value to the community and offer benefits that touch every one of the City's outcome areas. It means acknowledging that parks and recreation are part of a holistic system of public spaces that spans the natural and the designed, the big and the small, the urban and the not-so-urban, but together bring beauty to Fort Collins and give it an intentional sense of place. We acknowledge that partnerships within and outside of city government are necessary to provide the high-quality spaces and programs that residents have come to expect.

As we work to rethink, renew, and reimagine parks and recreation in Fort Collins, we are committed to ensuring that equity is a primary consideration. The process of developing the plan included engagement with a representative cross-section of residents, and equity is a theme interwoven throughout the master plan to ensure all community members benefit from the richness of parks and recreation. This shows up in the plan's level of service metrics ensuring access to recreational amenities across the city; it shows up in recommendations to expand equitable program pricing strategies; and it shows up in proposing we proactively and consistently bring neighbors into the process of shaping future projects so that public space reflects the needs and values of the community.

I could not be more optimistic for the future of parks and recreation in Fort Collins and look forward to seeing the vision of this plan realized.

Wade Troxell Mayor

PARKS & RECREATION VISION

Parks, trails, and recreation facilities in Fort Collins are an invitation to all community members to sustain and build wellness, curiosity, innovation, and community—as part of the city's iconic, interconnected network of public space.

A HOLISTIC SYSTEM OF PUBLIC SPACES

A bike ride along the Poudre River Trail for some fresh air or for a commute to work. A walk into the foothills to decompress or to learn. A ballgame for the championship or between neighbors. A dip in the pool to cool off or to maintain agility. A slide through a grain silo or a sugar beet. Flowers and holiday lights in Old Town. Tree-lined streets that turn into festival grounds. Public spaces are part of what make Fort Collins Fort Collins.

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan focuses specifically on parks and recreation, but it reflects a holistic, interconnected view of the city's public spaces supported by City Plan. While each part of the system serves a different purpose, has its own vision, and is managed differently, residents should experience these spaces as complementary and seamless.

A focus on parks and recreation, within a framework of the city's public space network.

Components of Fort Collins' Public Spaces Network



"Our parks, I think, are a jewel, an asset, that we can, through this integration and systems perspective, get so much more out of for our community."

-Mayor Wade Troxell



PHYSICAL VISION PLAN

EXISTING SYSTEM

PARKS

CITY NATURAL AREAS COUNTY NATURAL AREAS

RECREATION FACILITIES

- PAVED TRAILS
- SOFT TRAILS

PROPOSED IN 2008 PLAN

PROPOSED PARK, LAND ACQUIRED

PROPOSED PARK, LAND NOT ACQUIRED

PROPOSED TRAILS .

NEW PROPOSALS

PROPOSED COMMUNITY/NEIGHBORHOOD CENTERS

PROPOSED PARKS

PROPOSE TRAIL CONNECTIONS

THE BENEFITS OF PARKS AND RECREATION

Fort Collins recognizes the tremendous benefits it receives from its public spaces and will continue to find ways to increase and leverage those benefits. Parks and recreation in Fort Collins benefit every one of the city's seven outcome areas. These outcome areas are used for budgeting and for tracking progress. An investment in parks and recreation is an investment in each of the city's priorities.



High Performing Government Benefits

- Analysts estimate that in 2015, public park and recreation agencies in the U.S. generated an astounding \$154 billion in economic activity and supported 1.1 million iobs.¹
- A report by American Forest estimates that trees in cities help to reduce the costs of stormwater retention facilities by \$400 Billion.²

Transportation Benefits

- Trails are a critical part of the parks and recreation system.
- A study in 2008 by the Rails to Trails Conservancy found that "50 percent of trips taken in the United States can be accomplished by riding a bicycle for 20 minutes."³
- Active transportation infrastructure, including bike trails, has been shown to create more direct and indirect jobs than road Infrastructure. ⁴

MPLAN and the Center for Regional Analysis—George Mason University for NRPA

ImpLaw and the Center for Kegional Analysis—George Mason University for NRPA Environmental Protection Agency. nd. What is Green Infrastructure? Retrieved from https://www.epa.gov/greeninfrastructure/what-greeninfrastructure Rails to Trails Conservancy. 2008. Active Transportation for America: The Case for Increased Federal Investment for Bicycling and Walking. Supported by Bikes Belong Coalition Garrett-Peltier, H. 2011. Pedestrian and Bicycle Infrastructure: A National Study of Employment Impacts. Political Economy Nowak, David and Heisler, Gordon. "Air Quality Effects of Urban Parks and Trees". 2010. National Recreation & Park Association. Akbari, H., D. Kurn, et al. 1997. Peak power and cooling energy savings of shade trees. Energy and Buildings 25:139–148. E.Gregory McPherson, et. al. "Benefit-Cost Analysis of Fort Collins" Municipal Forest" by 2003. Pacific Southwest Research Station Center for Urban Forest Research.

Safe Community Benefits

- Parks make places more livable and more beautiful, which makes residents take more pride in their neighborhoods.
- Parks and recreation facilities provide places for people to gather and to socialize. They serve as places to hold events that strengthen community bonds and cultural ties.
- Small events such as birthday parties and reunions bring friends together, while large civic events can draw entire neighborhoods. Both are equally important and make neighborhoods more lively, active spaces.

Economic Health Benefits

- Parks and recreation facilities are economic drivers within cities.
- Property values near parks are significantly higher than those without parks nearby. ⁹
- Parks also increase economic health by contributing to local tourism, which in turn leads to more money being spent at business and shops. 10

Culture and Recreation Benefits

- Parks and recreation facilities are cultural assets.
- Parks reflect the history and culture of a city. Fort Collins' Twin Silo and The Farm at Lee Martinez Community Park pay homage to the agricultural, working class roots of the city.
- Parks and recreation facilities enable and promote recreation. Parks and recreation facilities are the most common places for people to unwind, relax, and spend their leisure time.

Environmental Health Benefits

- Parks and recreation facilities also improve water and air quality.
- It is estimated that within the lower 48 states, urban trees remove 783,000 tons of pollution every year. This environmental service is estimated to be worth \$5.6 billion to the U.S.⁵
- Trees reduce the heat island effect in urban areas by lowering the temperature around and beneath their canopies. Shaded surfaces may be between 20 and 45 degrees cooler than unshaded surfaces.6
- Green spaces aid in reducing stormwater runoff. Green infrastructure, such as rain gardens and bio-swales, collect and hold large amounts of rainwater from streets and roofs.⁷ A study by the US Forest Service found the trees in Fort Collins save the city \$400,000 annually by reducing runoff.⁸

Neighborhood Livability and Social Health Benefits

- People are much more likely to exercise when they have easy access to park space¹⁰
- Enhanced access to parks along with public outreach led to a 48 percent increase in the frequency of physical activitv¹⁰
- Parks and recreation facilities, help reduce mental fatigue.¹¹ Trees, in particular, can lessen depression and anxiety and improve memory.^{12,13}
- Children with ADD were able to concentrate much better after plaving in a park with greenery.14

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ANALYSIS AND ENGAGEMENT

The process of developing this Parks and Recreation Master Plan included a number of opportunities for residents, advocates, and elected leaders to weigh in and provide input. The goal of these touch points was to gain a thorough understanding of park and recreation wants and needs. This knowledge was critical to creating a plan that will effectively serve the community for the next decade or more.





CLASSIFICATIONS

Parks, recreation facilities, and programs encompass a broad range of places and activities. Parks and recreation facilities differ in size, amenities, design, usage, and programming. Programs differ in level of public interest, public benefit, and expectations for cost recovery, as well as market competition. Clear classifications are meant to help set mutual expectations between the City and residents about how parks, facilities, and programs function.

PARK AND RECREATION FACILITY CLASSIFICATIONS

The new park and recreation facility classification system proposed in this plan expands the existing classification system to both clarify how existing parks and recreation facilities function and provide guidelines about future park and recreation facility typologies that Fort Collins expects to need in the future to meet the needs of current and future residents.

Recreation Facility Classifications

- community centers (new)
- neighborhood centers (new)
- indoor/outdoor sports complexes (new)
- court/field clusters (new)
- special use facilities (new)

Park Classifications

- community parks
- schoolside parks (new)
- neighborhood parks
- mini parks (new)
- urban parks (new)
- plazas (new)
- special use parks (new)

PROGRAM CLASSIFICATIONS

All programs offered by the Recreation Department are categorized as essential, important, or value-added programs. These classifications distinguish the level of public benefit and private benefit.





PARKS & RECREATION FACILITIES BY CLASSIFICATION



POLICY FRAMEWORK

The path forward for parks and recreation in Fort Collins is captured within the following goals, actions, and methods.



Provide equitable access to parks.



RECREATION

Provide equitable access to recreational experiences.





FUNDING

Ensure the financial sustainability of parks and recreation.



PARTNERSHIPS

Strengthen partnerships to leverage resources for mutual benefit.

ECONOMIC HEALTH

Promote the synergy between parks, recreation, and economic health.



COMMUNICATION

Improve marketing and communication to enhance operations and user satisfaction.



TRAILS

Expand the active transportation network to support access.



RESOURCES

Protect and enhance natural and historic resources in parks.





OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE

Ensure parks, paved trails, and recreation facilities are operated and maintained efficiently and to defined standards. Each goal describes an ideal future for the parks and recreation system. Each goal is supported by a set of actions that the City can take to move towards that ideal future.

DESIGN

Elevate the design of and connection to nature in parks and recreation facilities.



SAFETY

Continue to enhance safety and security in all parks and facilities.





1. PARKS

The life cycle of a park does not stop at construction. Parks need to be periodically evaluated to ensure they stay relevant. Park Life Cycle



79% of residents citywide

59%

in northeast Fort Collins feel there are sufficient parks within walking distance of home

GOAL

Provide equitable access to parks.

Fort Collins has a substantial network of parks where people can relax, exercise, socialize, and come together for community events. A large majority (79%) of survey respondents felt that there are sufficient public parks, natural areas, and open spaces within walking distance of their residence. However, as Fort Collins continues to grow, the City will need to consider how to meet the needs of existing and new residents. In addition, City Plan elevated Nature in the City's goal to increase the number of residents who have access to natural areas, parks, and/or open space within a 10-minute walk of their home , reinforcing the need to close existing gaps and provide nature in areas planned for intensification. As an integral component of the city's public space system, providing access to parks is one way to achieve the City Plan goal.

ACTIONS

- Expand the usability of existing parks.
- Expand existing parks and secure new parkland, where possible, to serve growing and under-served communities in established parts of the city.
- Continue to build new parks to serve newly developing parts of the city.
- Ensure access to spaces that are intentionally designed to support casual, impromptu use.
- Assess and augment the capacity of downtown parks and public spaces to accommodate community events and festivals of various sizes.



2. RECREATION

GOAL

Provide equitable access to recreational experiences.

Fort Collins offers a wide array of programs in its parks and recreation facilities. While program participation is high, it is highest in parts of the city that are closest to the Northside Aztlan Community Center and Fort Collins Senior Center (above 60%) and lower in other parts of the city (under 60%). Recreation preferences are not the same for everybody, and trends continually change. The City must keep an eye on local and national trends to ensure that recreation facilities and programs offered continue to respond to residents' needs. Residents indicated that aquatic facilities and programs as well as exercise and fitness facilities and programs were very important to their households.

ACTIONS

- Provide recreational amenities according to level of service standards.
- Expand year-round usability of existing recreation facilities.
- Strive for universal access.
- Ensure facilities and programs continue to respond to changing user needs.
- Promote public health and wellness through public spaces programming.

Innovation rooms ranked at the top of residents wants for a new recreation center. Top Amenities for a new southeast recreation center



Source: Fort Collins Southeast Community Recreation & Arts Center

4,094 Reduced Fee Passes issued

"Reduced fee program is great! Thanks for making it even easier!"

- Lincoln Center Open House Attendee



3.TRAILS

"There are... very few sidewalks that exist between neighborhoods... We must actively do the work to create those connections."

- OurCity Contributor

GOAL

Expand the active transportation network to support access to parks and recreation.

With more than 44 miles of paved, multi-use trails throughout the city, Fort Collins is one of only five communities awarded Platinum Bike Friendly Community status by the League of American Bicyclists. The city has a strong network of cycling advocates and an active base of casual cyclists, who use trails for both recreation and transportation. The recent introduction of e-bikes has further grown the number of cyclists using Fort Collins' trails.

ACTIONS

- Expand the network of paved, multi-use trails.
- Increase safe routes to parks and recreation facilities.
- Ensure trails function for a range of recreational and transportation users.

Fort Collins has:



miles of soft surface trails



4.RESOURCES

GOAL

"Parks [should be] designed with area character/story in mind—so they are each unique."

- Preston Middle School Open House Attendee

Protect and enhance natural, historic, and cultural resources in parks and increase related activities.

Natural, historic, and cultural resources are irreplaceable assets. More than half (52%) of survey respondents identified natural areas and wildlife habitat as outdoor facilities important for their households behind only trails—and nearly half (44%) identified nature-based recreation as important programs and activities—the highest of any type of program or activity.

ACTIONS

- Integrate natural resources and natural resource interpretation into the design of parks.
- Develop and promote nature-based education, recreation, and training programs.
- Optimize the care of natural resources across parks and natural areas.
- Capitalize on historic and cultural resources, themes, and stories in parks and recreation facilities.

Historic resources can be used to inspire stories and create unique park features. Twin Silo Community Park





5.FUNDING

58% of operational spending in recreation is recovered in revenue



"Consider alternative funding streams used in other cities."

- Preston Middle School Open House Attendee

and recreation facilities.

GOAL

Enhance the financial sustainability of parks and recreation.

The City strives to use taxpayer dollars wisely. While the Parks and Recreation Departments have stretched operational budgets to maintain existing parks, recreation facilities, and other city infrastructure, additional capital and operational funding is needed to ensure all parks and recreation facilities continue to provide the level of experience that residents seek. A full range of funding needs include day-to-day operations and maintenance costs as well as capital costs for replacing individual park and recreation amenities at the end of their life cycles, refreshing existing parks, and building new parks and recreation facilities in both growing and established parts of the city.

ACTIONS

- · Secure sufficient funding to develop, maintain, and program parks and recreation facilities as well as enhanced infrastructure.
- Consider and budget for both up-front and ongoing costs and benefits in maintenance and capital budgeting.
- Continue to generate revenue from parks, recreation facilities, and programs that can be reinvested back into these assets.



Time



6.PARTNERSHIPS

GOAL

Strengthen partnerships to leverage resources for mutual benefit.

Residents of Fort Collins benefit from having access to amenities provided by the City and other entities, including Larimer County and the Poudre School District. In an era of limited resources, partnerships can help deliver more efficient and effective services. By strengthening existing partnerships and identifying new partners, the City can leverage its resources to make limited funding stretch further. Important to these partnerships are finding common goals, such that each partner benefits from the arrangement, and formalizing agreements to hold each partner accountable.

ACTIONS

- Strengthen partnerships between City departments.
- Formalize and strengthen partnerships with other major providers of parks, recreation facilities, and programs in Fort Collins and the North Front Range.
- Regularly revise or create partnership agreements to ensure fair and equitable relationships.
- Support and strengthen resident opportunities for involvement, volunteerism and giving in support of parks, recreation, and trails.

Best Practice: Partnerships



Learning Landscapes is a program at the University of Colorado Denver that transforms neglected public elementary schoolyards into attractive and safe multi-use parks tailored to the needs and desires of their neighbors and communities.

The Learning Landscape model is a great example of turning school yards into public spaces that serve the city and the community.

"[Fort Collins needs a] hybrid between parks and natural areas where people can recreate in a natural setting outside sensitive habitat areas."

- Lincoln Center Open House Attendee



7. OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE

GOAL

Ensure parks, paved trails, and recreation facilities are operated and maintained efficiently and to defined standards.

"Every park in the city needs shade/trees planted [near] playground structures and benches."

- OurCity Contributor

Maintenance standards and operations procedures help ensure that the City is maintaining similar facilities efficiently and at the same level.

ACTIONS

- Ensure maintenance standards are clear and consistently implemented.
- Strengthen sustainability policies and practices.

"There are many beautiful and well-maintained parks."

- Lincoln Center Open House Attendee



8. ECONOMIC HEALTH

GOAL

Promote the synergy between parks, recreation, and economic health.

Parks, trails, and recreation facilities provide tremendous value beyond being places for reflection, connection with nature, and physical activity. Nearly all (97%) of residents in Fort Collins feel that parks, paved trails, recreation facilities, and programs are important to the city's identity. Parks, trails, and recreation facilities attract residents, businesses, and tourists alike. Studies have consistently shown that proximity to high quality parks and recreation facilities contributes to higher property values. In Colorado, outdoor recreation generates over \$13 billion in consumer spending every year.¹³

ACTIONS

- Provide amenities for residents while unlocking recreation tourism potential.
- Encourage new park- and recreation-oriented development or redevelopment to capitalize on the economic value of parks, trails, and recreation facilities.

97%

of residents in Fort Collins feel that parks, paved trails, recreation facilities, and programs are important to the city's identity.



9. COMMUNICATION

GOAL

Improve marketing and communication to enhance operations and user satisfaction.

Successful parks, trails, recreation facilities, and programs hinge on user awareness, enthusiasm, and participation. The City should continue to improve its ongoing engagement and communication practices by considering a more holistic strategy and additional outreach tactics to more equitably inform and get feedback from a broad spectrum of existing and potential users.

ACTIONS

- Promote parks and recreation as part of a unified public space system.
- Update and develop new marketing and communication materials that increase awareness and highlight the benefits of parks, trails, recreation facilities, and programs.
- Regularly measure and report on the progress of Master Plan implementation.
- Engage users, partners, and staff in the planning, development, programming, and maintenance of parks and recreation facilities.

33% of survey respondents indicated that they do not use parks and recreation facilities or programs because they do not know where to go or what is

offered



10. DESIGN

GOAL



Twin Silo represents high level of design and excellence that the rest of the park system can strive for.

Twin Silo Community Park Shelter

Elevate the design of and connection to nature in parks and recreation facilities.

Design excellence enhances wellness, ecosystem services, and function. From the earliest stages of project development, it is important to consider how a project can be beautiful and multifunctional while addressing the needs of adjacent communities. Design excellence requires an attention to quality of built structures, landscape typology, and the way buildings and landscapes interact with each other. Integrating artists and designers early in the process can help lead to design excellence. Elevating the quality of design of parks and recreation facilities will also serve to elevate the level of design across Fort Collins.

ACTIONS

- Develop a unified design language for parks and recreation facilities that is flexible enough to allow for individualized park identities.
- Strive for design excellence in the development and refresh of parks and recreation facilities.
- Promote the planting, preservation, and maintenance of canopy trees and native vegetation on public and private land. (See 4.1., p. 236)
- Incorporate public art, including landscape-based art and functional art, into parks and recreation facilities.

"With all the new apartment construction, we need to be intentional about creating green space with walking/running/ riding trails."

- OurCity Contributor



11. SAFETY

"Keep up the great work by the rangers!"

- OurCity Contributor

GOAL

Continue to enhance safety and security in all parks and facilities.

Concern about safety, whether real or perceived, keeps some residents from using parks and recreation facilities.

ACTIONS

- Ensure adequate "eyes on the street" around and in parks and recreation facilities.
- Update guidelines and policies on safety and security.

Park rangers are critical to user safety.

Fort Collins Park Rangers



