



CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAN

A. Introduction

Urban parks improve lives. They educate, protect, and enrich young people. They provide places to play after school and during summer vacations, and give individuals and families countless hours of recreation and relaxation. Park vegetation and water features produce clean air and protect cities from floodwaters. They help to increase property value, grow the local tax base, contribute to education, reduce crime, attract businesses, and create jobs. These ideas and principles have been adopted by National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) as a call-to-action in its *National Agenda for Urban Parks and Recreation in America*. Parks are also elements that help make up the public realms of great cities – cities that people desire to live, work, and raise a family in. Increasingly, people look to parks and recreation as fundamental elements of what makes a city a great place.

In Golden, these park and open space areas are critical elements of what the community is all about. Golden is known for its scenic setting and high quality outdoor recreation. The recreation and leisure experiences are varied, from aggressively negotiating the waters in Clear Creek or hang gliding the updrafts off Lookout Mountain; to hitting a home run over the fence at Ulysses Park; or simply enjoying the quiet, contemplative places with sounds of nature, intimate interactions with native plants and animals, and the views to dramatic hillsides and rock formations. The unique formation of this city cannot be duplicated and is the most important factor in the high quality of life and enjoyment of leisure time for its residents and visitors.

As such, the City of Golden has taken the initiative to identify areas of park and recreation deficiency within the community, and subsequently create innovative solutions, to ensure that the community of Golden continues to be a place where people have a desire to live, work, and play.

B. Purpose of the Plan

Since the development of the previous Parks and Recreation Master Plan in 1986, the City of Golden has undergone an evolution from a small bedroom community in the Rocky Mountain foothills, to a growing and dynamic suburb in the larger Denver metropolitan area. While the community has gracefully accepted this role, it has been careful to maintain the character and identity that has made it such a unique place to live, work, and play for more than 150 years.



Washington Avenue Bridge

Parks and recreation have always been an integral part of the community, one in which residents have made a commitment to support. Over the years, city leaders have recognized Golden's unique geographic location tucked into the foothills, and have encouraged an appreciation for the generous natural resources that surround the community. The abundance of natural resources, including North and South Table Mountains and Clear Creek, have given the city a number of unique recreation resources not found in most communities along the Front Range. Combined with a continued commitment to the development of urban parks and vibrant recreation programming, the City of Golden recognizes its unique and special place in the larger region.



Clear Creek

As such, the City of Golden embarked on an ambitious effort to become one of the best park and recreation systems in the country. In order to realize this goal, the city retained EDAW/AECOM Inc. to develop a park and recreation master plan that defines the 15 to 20-year vision for the city. The specific focus of the plan was to:

- Develop a detailed inventory of all parklands and quantify the level of service for existing and future residents.
- Assess the current condition of the city's parks, trails, and recreation facilities, including consideration of safety conditions and ADA issues.

- Analyze and determine community needs through discussions with user groups, trends in recreational programs in parks, and public meetings.
- Identify areas of the community currently underserved by parks and changes in population to determine parkland and facility needs, as well as opportunities for synergies between parklands and future redevelopment projects.
- Define level of service standards, a classification system, and general design criteria for parks.
- Outline improvement programs that will update the features in existing parks.
- Create and define a clear vision and complementary goals and objectives to help realize the goal of becoming the best park and recreation system in the country.
- Develop an action plan for implementation.

An adopted parks and recreation master plan is intended to be a guiding document that is used by the elected and appointed officials to discuss and evaluate potential actions. Recommendations for projects and other specific actions will be further evaluated on a case by case basis.

Preferences in recreation are continually changing. Additionally, recreation facilities deteriorate over time, thus requiring ongoing maintenance. Therefore, it is critical that park and recreation departments stay abreast of trends to ensure that their system stays current and continues to serve the ever evolving needs of residents and visitors.

This park and recreation master plan should be revisited and updated periodically, ideally every five years, to ensure that it accurately reflects current and future needs and changing conditions, and to adjust priorities within the community as appropriate.



C. Community Profile

The City of Golden is an established, mixed-use suburban community in the Denver metro area with approximately 17,895 residents. The city is located just west of Denver, north of Wheat Ridge, and south of Arvada. To the west is unincorporated Jefferson County. Interstate-70 (I-70) runs east-west along the southern edge of the city. Other major arterials in the community are Jefferson County Highway 58 in the northern portion of the city, running adjacent to Clear Creek; US Highway 6 that runs east from the Clear Creek canyon, then south through the community where it intersects with I-70; US Highway 93 that runs north from the intersection of Highway 58 and US Highway 6, along the western edge of the community; and US Highway 40 that runs east-west along the south side of the city. Other major arterials and streets include: Washington Avenue; Ford, 10th and 19th Streets; and South Golden Road.

Golden is unique in that although it is a suburb of Denver, it is relatively secluded. It is nestled along Clear Creek at the eastern edge of the foothills of the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains. North and South Table Mountains abut the city just to the east, providing seclusion from other Front Range communities. Other geographic features include Mount Zion and Lookout Mountain, which abut the city directly to the west. This unique location, with easy access to outdoor features, has made Golden a highly desirable place to live, work, and recreate.

Golden has a historic and vibrant downtown that is home to many commercial businesses, including restaurants, bars, and shopping. Other notable commercial and industrial areas of the city, outside of downtown, are located along South Golden Road, US Highway 6, West Colfax Avenue, I-70, and at the Coors Technology Center on Highway 58. The city's residential areas include a mix of residential housing styles that range from single family



Downtown Golden

detached houses to apartments, along with established schools, parks, recreation facilities, and open space. The Colorado School of Mines (CSM) is also located within the city, adjacent to downtown. CSM is a public research university of approximately 4,000 students devoted to engineering and applied science. CSM has distinguished itself by developing a curriculum and research program that is geared toward responsible stewardship of the earth and its resources.

There are several major employers located in the city, encompassing a diverse range of industries. Most famously, Golden is home to the Coors Brewery, the largest single source brewery in the world. Golden is also home to the National Renewable Energy Laboratory and the American Mountaineering Center, which hosts the Colorado Mountain Club, Outward Bound West, and the American Alpine Climb Museum and Library. Attractions in Golden beyond the global employers listed above include the Colorado Railroad Museum, Buffalo Bill's Gravesite and Museum, the Astor House, Foothills Art Center, the Geology Museum, the Quilt Museum, the Golden History Museum, and Heritage Square Amusement Park.





Coors Brewery

The climate in Golden is typical of the Colorado Front Range, with more than 255 days of sunshine per year. The average temperature in July is 74 degrees, while the average temperature in January is 30 degrees. Golden receives an average precipitation of 15.4 inches per year and an average annual snowfall of 60.3 inches.

D. Planning Process and Document Organization

The plan was developed through a series of meetings with several groups, which all provided insight, advice, and guidance during the process. The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board provided insight and guidance on the plan and served as the primary advisory group. There was also a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), which consisted of staff from the Parks and Recreation Department, Planning and Development Department, Public Works Department, Golden Urban Renewal Authority (GURA), Jefferson County R-1 School District, Prospect Park and Recreation District, Jefferson County Open Space Department, the Public Art Committee, and the Astor House and History Park. The TAC provided technical guidance and input throughout the planning process. In addition, meetings and regular updates were held with Golden City Council.

In addition, detailed public involvement and community outreach efforts were put forth. There were two public open houses related to the project, as well as in-depth interviews with various user groups throughout the community. Additionally, there was a project email address where public input was given throughout the process to the plan consultants and park and recreation director.

The planning process was structured with a series of tasks that built upon each other. The tasks and chapters in which they are described are as follows:

Chapter One – Introduction

Establish purpose of the plan and planning process. Document historical background and existing relevant policy plans.

Chapter Two – Existing Resources

Develop classifications for various types of parks, and standards for their locations, sizes, and other characteristics. Conduct an inventory and develop a detailed database and maps of existing parklands, trails, and recreation facilities. Identify the service areas associated with various types of parks.

Chapter Three – Issues and Needs

Identify issues and determine needs based on the results of the inventory; interviews with interest groups, recreation providers, and park and recreation staff; trends in participation in organized and self-directed recreational activities; population growth and distribution projections; and comparisons with other communities.

Chapter Four – Master Plan Recommendations

Develop recommendations and actions for the parks and recreation master plan, and define the standards for acreage of parkland to provide based on the number of residents. Identify specific park enhancements, and upgrade projects and potential locations for additional parkland, facilities, and trails.



Chapter Five – Implementation

Identify existing and potential tools for implementation (including regulations, funding sources, and partnerships), and specific actions with identified responsibilities and costs.

E. City of Golden History¹

In order to develop a vision for the future, it is helpful to have an understanding of the past.

The first explorers to the Golden area were Louis Vasquez, Major Stephen Long, and Kit Carson, while the first inhabitants were the Arapahoe and Plains Indians. The first settler in the Golden area was David Wall who, in 1858, obtained land, laid out a two-acre garden, and irrigated it with water from the creek. By 1859 he was selling produce to the large numbers of gold seekers passing through the valley. In early 1859, George Jackson discovered gold in the rocky canyons of Chicago Creek. As word about the gold discoveries spread, thousands of pioneers passed through the valley. Many of the early settlers came to the area with supplies and large wagons that could not be moved into the mountain canyons. They established campsites in the valley, while other members of the party headed for the rich gold fields in the mountains.

Around this time a group of Bostonians, headed by George West, arrived from a trip across the plains with intentions of mining for gold. They saw the growing number of settlers at the mouth of Clear Creek and decided to go no further. They built the first frame building to house their Boston Company and laid out a town, which they designated Golden City on June 20, 1859. By the end of 1859, there were

¹ City of Golden history referenced from the following sources:

- City of Golden website, <http://ci.golden.co.us/>
- Colorado School of Mines website, http://www.mines.edu/Beyond_csm/region_info/golden/history.html
- Online Golden website, <http://www.onlinegolden.com/history.htm>
- Golden 411 website, <http://www.golden411.com/goldenhistory.htm>

more than 700 citizens residing in the city. At this same time, George Pullman, who lived in Golden City, operated a gold and money brokerage in Russell Gulch and began to build the Pullman railway sleeping car, in which bunks similar to those in miners' cabins were introduced on railway cars.

In 1859 the Jefferson Territory was formed, albeit not a legal action. In 1861, the Colorado Territory and Jefferson County were legally formed. Golden City became the county seat of Jefferson County and the following year became the territorial capital of Colorado. It remained the capital until 1867, when it was moved to Denver.

Colorado's first railroad company, the Colorado Central and Pacific Railroad, was incorporated in 1865, but the first train did not operate until late in 1870. At the time of incorporation, Edward L. Berthoud became Chief Engineer. Black Hawk, Central City, Silver Plume, Idaho Springs, Dumont, Empire, Georgetown, and many other towns were dependent on Golden City for supplies needed to support the activities of the gold seekers. At first wagons carried the materials, but eventually Golden City became an important rail terminus. At one time there were approximately 30 trains passing through the switching facilities. In the late 1800s, railroad headquarters were moved to Denver and Golden ceased to be a rail center.

In 1866, George West began publication of the *Colorado Transcript* – Colorado's oldest weekly newspaper, which is still published in Golden as the *Golden Transcript*. The name of Golden City was changed to Golden in 1872. The following year Adolph Coors, Sr. founded the Adolph Coors Company, and in 1874 the Colorado School of Mines was founded. In 1876, Colorado was admitted to the Union as the 38th state.

Golden grew slowly at this point, relying heavily as a supply center for the mining districts in the mountains to the west. Golden also grew as an industrial town. Clear Creek provided water for milling, smelting, manufacturing, and generating



electricity. Local coal mines yielded resources for early industry and employed many local residents. Agriculture also became an important and vibrant industry for the city. Its ranching and industrial heritage soon became intertwined with its 1870s railroad resources, and by the 1890s, Golden had also become a regional tourist destination. Two funiculars were in operation in the early 1900s. One went up Castle Rock where a dance hall was located, and the other went to the top of Lookout Mountain where Buffalo Bill Cody is buried. Eventually these funiculars were taken out of operation and only scars on the landscape remain. During the mid-1900s, Golden became the hub of two transcontinental highways, I-40 and I-70, which helped promote the town as a tourist destination.

After almost nearly 150 years of existence, the City of Golden is healthy and progressive. It has become an energy center as the search continues for alternate fuels at organizations such as the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL). The Coors Brewery is Golden's leading industry and attracts 300,000 visitors each year. Colorado School of Mines, which offers degrees in science and engineering, is operating at capacity enrollment with students from all 50 states and many foreign countries. The U.S.G.S. Earthquake Information Center is housed on the campus at CSM. The headquarters for the American Alpine Club and the American Mountaineering Center are located in Golden as well.

Since the early 20th century, there has been a strong focus on providing residents in the community with ample park and recreational opportunities. Golden had long been a staging area for trips and excursions into the mountains and, over time, evolved into a regional tourist destination. City leaders likewise made strong efforts to provide parks. Several parks in the downtown area have a long and storied history dating back to the early 1900s, like Parfet Park. Since that time, the city has continued to provide unique and cutting-edge recreational opportunities, such as an archery range, world-class golf course, and the state's first urban white water kayak park.

F. Relationship to Other Plans

The Golden City Council has adopted several guiding documents that include principles and recommendations for the provision of parks, recreation, and trails. This parks and recreation master plan will serve as the guiding document for providing parks, trails, and recreation facilities within the City of Golden. It builds upon previously adopted plans and, in the case of potentially conflicting information, supersedes information in the previous documents regarding park-related topics. Relevant plans include:

1986 City of Golden Parks Master Plan

This document was designed to assess the present situation of parks, trails, recreation, and open space within the City of Golden and to propose alternative recommendations for their future development. The plan takes into consideration the many competing uses of land resources for homes, places of work and commerce, transportation, and recreation, which affect the daily lives of Golden residents. The goals of this plan were threefold: 1) Describe the role of parks, open space, and recreation in the community; 2) Provide city administration with a guide to follow in the selection and development of areas within the city that can be used by the public for recreational activities; and 3) Create a specific policy stating recreational requirements for new developments and subdivisions as they are being planned. Since the development of the 1986 Parks Master Plan, most of the proposed residential developments have been constructed, and the recommended park and recreation facilities associated with them have been completed. Many of the other recommendations from this plan have also been completed with the exception of a few, such as key trail connections and development of parkland in underserved areas in south and east Golden along Ford Street.

2003 City of Golden Bicycle Master Plan

The bicycle master plan describes the city's vision for bicycle route development. It will serve as a 10-year plan, which will help guide



the city in developing a citywide bicycle system that also links to surrounding areas. Over the last several years, biking in the City of Golden has increased tremendously. The ability to bike for both recreation and as an alternate means of transportation is very important to residents of the city, thus, the need for the creation of this plan. The intention of this plan is to provide a high quality and safe bicycle system for a wide diversity of users, including family-oriented recreational riders, commuters, and advanced athletes.

2003 City of Golden Comprehensive Plan Update

The comprehensive plan is the guiding document for the future of Golden. Generally, it describes the city's desired future, and guides how that future is to be achieved. The plan is an advisory document providing policy direction. The plan addresses changes in the community since 1992, as well as elements of the Mile High Compact of August 2000 that were not addressed in Golden's earlier comprehensive plan. The plan addresses issues such as economic vitality, transportation, parks and recreation and trails, annexation, and community services. The purpose of the plan is to assure higher integration and consistency among the city's various policy documents. The comprehensive plan becomes a unified document providing consistent policy direction regarding community goals.

2007 Downtown Golden Character Plan (in draft)

The 2007 Downtown Golden Character Plan provides the framework for an update and refinement of a number of prior planning documents, including the 1989 Golden Urban Renewal Plan and 2003 Golden Comprehensive Plan Update. The character plan provides the Golden community the opportunity to ensure that the policies and planning documents that guide public decisions



Historic Golden

are consistent with the community vision. This plan is still being developed and as of publication of the parks and recreation master plan, has not been formally adopted by the city. The character plan is intended to:

- Provide community input for an update of the Golden Urban Renewal Plan.
- Provide land use and redevelopment recommendations for preservation and redevelopment opportunities in the downtown area.
- Provide recommendations for public investment in the downtown area, public realm, park and open space areas, and streetscape.
- Provide recommendations for update and refinement of design standards, and guidelines for construction and alterations in the downtown area.
- Provide the policy and design connections between the downtown area and the surrounding neighborhoods.



2003 Jefferson County 5-Year Master Plan

The 2003 edition of the Jefferson County Open Space 5-Year Master Plan is an update of the 1998 version. The purpose of the Jefferson County Open Space 5-Year Master Plan is to set or establish goals and objectives needed to ensure the continued success of the open space program, as well as provide effectual information about standard procedures. In addition, the mission of Jefferson County Open Space is accomplished through providing efficient and effective planning, passive outdoor recreational access, and opportunities consistent with the natural and historical values of the property.



Lookout Mountain

Other, less formalized planning efforts have also taken place in Golden over the last several years. These planning efforts have been recognized during the development of this parks and recreation master plan, and correspondence from these efforts has been reviewed and referenced. These other efforts include a walkability analysis and report by Dan Burden with the firm of Glatting, Jackson, Kercher, and Anglin; a study and report by the Golden Bandshell Committee for the provision of a bandshell at Parfet Park; and the results of a hiker and pedestrian focus group held by the Jefferson County Open Space Department.

