



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Why Was the Plan Developed?

The City of Golden has embarked on an ambitious effort to become the best park and recreation system in the country. This Parks and Recreation Master Plan is intended to become the guiding document for this vision in the future as it relates to parks, trails, and recreation within the city. The City of Golden continues to evolve from a once small bedroom community in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, to a premier suburb of the greater Denver metropolitan area, as well as a tourist destination within the State of Colorado. As this evolution occurs, the community has been mindful of maintaining the unique character and heritage that has made Golden such a unique place to live, work, and play over the years. Yet, this progression towards a community of the greater Denver area and regional tourist attraction has led to an evolution in the diverse park and recreation needs of the city.

Easy and equitable access to high quality park and recreation facilities is a highly valued element of the community. So too is the broader, high quality public realm. Elements such as safe pedestrian and bicycle environments, connections to nearby open space areas, places to recreate and meet neighbors, access to Clear Creek, and places for community gatherings and celebrations all serve to enhance community livability, desirability, and attractiveness to visitors. In addition, the urban forest, parklands, Clear Creek Corridor, trails, and open spaces improve environmental health by providing cleaner air and water and preserving critical urban wildlife habitat.

Much more than the physical environment, the City of Golden is served by the benefits of a great park and public open space system. The public parks, trails, and recreation system are available to all citizens, regardless of their age, ability, or economic status, and provide many great benefits for all people. High quality parks, recreation, trails, and parks that celebrate local culture, heritage, and values improve physical and mental health, create opportunities to develop and enhance the community, add to civic pride, and provide positive opportunities for leisure time pursuits. Parks also provide for business, tourism, art, and cultural interests and needs. This master plan is a fundamental element for advancing continued investment in this valued community asset.

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, and have encouraged an appreciation for the generous natural resources that surround the community. The abundance of natural resources, proximity to the mountains, and presence of 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.

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.
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- 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.
- Recognize the importance of Clear Creek to the community and determine ways in which to more fully integrate as a regional park and recreation resource.
- Develop an action plan for implementation.

An Involved and Public Process

The park and recreation master planning process for the City of Golden began in May 2007. This process was developed through a series of meetings with several groups, all of which provided insight, advice, and guidance. These groups included the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, which served as the primary advisory group; and a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), which consisted of representatives and leaders from various city, county, and nonprofit agencies and organizations. Meetings and regular updates were also held with Golden City Council. In addition, detailed public involvement and community outreach efforts were organized. Multiple interviews were conducted with frequent park user groups, including local sports clubs, cultural and civic organizations, and other interested parties. Additionally, two public open houses were held to solicit general

community input. Lastly, there was a project email address where public input could be given throughout the process to the plan consultants and park and recreation director.

The plan also includes comparison studies with peer cities in the greater Denver area, and communities of a similar size to Golden that have won a gold medal for their park systems from the National Park and Recreation Association (NRPA). The plan also examines recreation trends from the Colorado SCORP (State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan) and national recreational trends and statistics. In addition, prior and relevant plans were incorporated into this plan, including the 1986 City of Golden Parks Master Plan, 2003 City of Golden Bicycle Master Plan, 2003 City of Golden Comprehensive Plan Update, 2007 Downtown Golden Character Plan (in draft) and 2003 Jefferson County 5-Year Master Plan. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan is intended to complement and build upon the guidance and principles previously defined in these plans.

Inventory of Parklands, Open Space, Trails, and Recreation Facilities

An important component of this plan is to identify, label, and map all parklands, recreation facilities, and trails owned and managed by the city in order to update and refine previous city park inventories. The plan also identifies areas of the city in need of additional parklands, open space, trails and trail connections, and recreation facilities based on a standard level of service and service area.

Community Needs

The extensive study, public involvement, and inventory process conducted in the planning process identified several needs related to parks, recreation, and trails in the community. Some of those needs include:

- Developing parkland in a few isolated, underserved areas.
- Upgrading certain facilities and amenities in various parks.



- Selecting new trails and trail connections.
- Unique recreation opportunities that provide variety for residents and capitalize on the tourist economy.
- Redesigning Tony Grampsas Park.
- Additional multiuse field and full-size baseball field.
- Outdoor performance venue.
- Paragliding landing area.
- Systemwide ADA audit.

The planning process also identified a need for the establishment of a Clear Creek Park District (CCPD). Recognized as one of the most important and visible assets in the community, there has been strong support within the community to more fully incorporate this resource into one continuous park, recreation, leisure, and social area of the city.

Recommendations of the Plan

Recommendations of this master plan were formulated to address the specific needs that arose from the planning process. Recommendations are located in Chapter Four. Project priorities, implementation actions, and potential funding strategies are located in Chapter Five. Recommendations take shape in the following four essential forms:

- New parkland
- Major park improvements
- Park enhancements
- Establishment of a Clear Creek Park District

Specific projects that were identified based on the outcome of the inventory and needs assessment process and the community survey revealed that citizens of Golden have interests and needs that range from neighborhood scale to community scale. Large, high profile projects that affect a large number of people and contribute to current communitywide goals may generate great public support, but should be carefully balanced with projects that provide

connections and park amenities to currently underserved residents. Ongoing upgrades of existing facilities and the addition of smaller scale amenities to enhance existing parks should also be considered.

In general, this plan recommends that the city select a few small projects that can be easily implemented across the community, while funding the planning and design of larger-scale projects. Smaller projects may include upgrades to playground equipment, landscape improvements, signage replacements, and amenity additions, such as skate features or a sledding hill. This may also include completion of key trail connections, extensions, and road crossings; acquisition of land for park development in underserved areas; an ADA audit; and adding splash features to a park.

While progress is being made on these projects, planning can begin on larger projects. This plan recommends a complete redesign of Tony Grampsas Park, which would allow for full utilization of the available park topography to accommodate additional uses, while maintaining portions in a naturalized state. The city should also plan for major improvements to the overall design and functionality of Ulysses Park so it will more effectively serve as a community park to the southern portion of the city. Lastly, the city should begin a long-term planning effort for a CCPD. The overall goal for the Clear Creek Corridor is to create a unified park experience along Clear Creek in downtown Golden. It is also meant to more fully integrate existing public spaces into the overall fabric of the community. The CCPD would incorporate Lions, History, Parfet, and Vanover Parks, and the areas between these parks along the creek, into one seamless park, recreation, and leisure experience.

