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## CHAPTER THREE ISSUES AND NEEDS ANALYSIS

This chapter documents the issues and needs that influence the types and number of parks, recreation facilities, and trails that are needed in the community. The needs assessment phase of a parks and recreation master plan documents the demand for services from current and future residents and, in association with the inventory of existing facilities, highlights potential areas of shortfall or oversupply, which in turn will give direction to future master plan recommendations. Identifying levels of satisfaction, perceptions, use patterns, and priorities for recreational programs and facilities through contact with the user public is an important part of this process. Accurately assessing the needs of residents requires a diverse approach, using many different techniques to gather information. Collectively, the data from these various sources creates a picture of what is needed and desired within Golden, and can serve as the basis from which to develop a list of projects, priorities and actions, which will be the next step in this planning process. Each technique used in this process provides valuable information, but the data from any one technique should not be viewed in isolation and without comparing the needs to the Vision, Goals, and Objectives of the community.

Areas of the community that do not have convenient, safe access to neighborhood parks were identified in Chapter Two. This chapter includes population and growth projections and demographic characteristics in Golden, as well as a comparison of peer communities to determine the levels of service they provide for parkland and common recreation facilities. This



*White Ash Mine Park*

database serves as a benchmark when determining the levels of service that are appropriate for Golden.

Recreational preferences and the level of demand for additional park amenities and recreational opportunities are also addressed in this chapter. Pertinent information from national databases on recreation participation levels and data from the Colorado State Outdoor Recreation Plan 2002 have been considered. Two public open houses were held to solicit input from the general public, and comment forms with questions related to the master planning process were made available to the public. Comments were also solicited from the public through a project email address. Members from the local business community, Jefferson County R-1 School District, and city staff from various departments also participated in steering committees to help provide insight to the issues and needs present in the community. Additionally, interviews were conducted with representatives of other public and nonprofit recreation providers in Golden to assess any specific needs their organizations may have.

The results of this analysis are summarized at the end of the chapter.

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### A. Population and Demographic Characteristics

In 2007, the City of Golden has an estimated population of 17,895 people. The average household size for the City of Golden is 2.35 people. The median age of the population in Golden is 32.8, slightly lower than the Colorado average of 34.3. Approximately 19% of the population is age 10-19 – the predominant age of children who are most active in programmed recreational sports leagues. Approximately 8.0% of the total population in Golden is age 65 or older. Table 3.1 illustrates these numbers in detail.

general, people become less physically active as they get older; nearly 40% of people over the age of 55 report no leisure-time physical activity. Challenging exercises and physical activities, done regularly, can help many older adults improve their health, even when done at a moderate level<sup>3</sup>. It should be recognized however, that the demographic characteristics of the community will shift again over time. As such, the City of Golden should continue to focus on providing parks, trails, greenways and open space with facilities and programs to promote physical and social activities throughout a person’s entire life span.

Table 3.1 Golden Age Distribution

Location	Median Age	Under 5 years	5 to 14 years	15 to 19 years	20 to 34 years	35 to 54 years	55 to 64 years	Ages 65+
Golden	32.8	5.7%	10.8%	9.7%	27.1%	31.3%	7.5%	8.0%
Colorado	34.3	6.9%	14.1%	7.1%	22.5%	31.4%	7.9%	9.7%

The ethnic makeup of Golden is predominately white (90.7%), with other ethnicities such as African American (1.3%), American Indian (1.6%), Asian (3.6%), Latino (6.6%) and others (2.8%). Changes in diversity should be monitored over time to determine if changes in culturally-related programs or facility design based on ethnic preferences and culture should be made in the community.<sup>1</sup>

The population of Golden is also aging, as are many areas of Colorado and the US. By the year 2030, there will be more Americans over age 65 (20% of the total population) than under age 18<sup>2</sup>. Parkland will continue to be an important element to neighborhoods and communities regardless of the age of residents, but the programs and facilities may need to adjust slightly in the near term to meet the needs of an active, yet somewhat less mobile and athletic clientele. Being physically active is key in maintaining independence and a high quality of life, and our society and media are certainly emphasizing this in recent years. In



Fossil Trace Golf Club

### B. Future Growth and Development

In 1995 voters in Golden approved the Growth Management Plan, which caps growth at one percent per year and the plan went into effect on January 1, 1996. As such, future residential growth in the city is expected to continue slowly. Representatives from the city’s Planning Development Department expect that the majority of future residential growth in the

<sup>1</sup> Percentages may total more than 100% due to multiple responses.

<sup>2</sup> US Administration on Aging, website accessed January 2006.

<sup>3</sup> National Institute on Aging – Exercise: A Guide from the National Institute on Aging, 2001.



community will come in the form of infill development or annexation. Although growth will occur slowly, it is essential that the parks, recreation, and trails system continue to meet the needs of city residents, particularly those in higher density areas such as downtown.

### C. Peer Community Comparisons

A detailed community comparison study was conducted that examined the parkland and facility provisions of other similar communities along the Colorado Front Range. The average of those communities providing the highest levels of service for each recreation facility was also calculated. Additionally, communities of similar size to Golden that won gold medal recognition from the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) were examined. The NRPA gold medal award is the most prestigious award a park and recreation agency can win, and honors the nation's outstanding agencies for excellence in the field of park and recreation management. Criteria for winning the award includes: how well the agency has established a long-range plan for the community and how well the agency is following the plan; revenues and expenditures to see how the agency has grown; how various challenges were met; how new projects or services were implemented and received by the community; what advocacy programs are in place; whether conservation and preservation is a priority; how the agency uses technology; and how the agency includes recreation inclusion throughout its programs. The Front Range communities in the comparison analysis included: Westminster; Arvada; Loveland; Greeley; Englewood; Thornton; Broomfield; Wheat Ridge; Parker and Castle Rock. The gold medal communities included: Bloomingdale Park District, IL; Herndon, VA; Vernon Hills, IL; Frankfort Square Park District, IL and North Platte, NE.

Table 3.2 is a summary of the average number of facilities provided by the top-tier communities (those providing the highest level of service in each category) and the NRPA gold medal communities. This table also indicates the

amount of developed parkland they provide (see Appendix B for the complete table). The level of service for neighborhood parkland in the City of Golden is 3.7 acres per 1,000 people, well above the established standard of 2.5 acres per 1,000 people. Compared with the average of communities providing the highest levels of service along the Front Range of Colorado of 3.8 acres per 1,000 people, Golden is almost even. However, when compared to the communities nominated for NRPA Gold Medal status, which provide an average level of service of 5.5 acres of neighborhood parkland per 1,000 people, Golden is slightly behind. The provision of neighborhood parkland in Golden should also be taken in context with the overall distribution of neighborhood parks. Any deficit in neighborhood parkland compared to other communities can be addressed through the provision of additional neighborhood parks in a few key underserved areas of the city as discussed later in this chapter.

The level of service for community parks in the City of Golden far exceeds the established standard. This needs assessment also reveals that this level of service is above the average for communities providing the highest levels of service along the Front Range in Colorado of 4.4 acres per 1,000 people. Additionally, this level of service is approximately the same as communities nominated for NRPA Gold Medal status, which provide an average level of service of 6.3 acres per 1,000 people. Although the City of Golden is providing a level of service higher than other communities, the established standard of 2.5 acres per 1,000 people is notably less than the other communities. The established standard of those communities providing the highest level of service along the Front Range is 6.5 acres per 1,000 people. Given that Golden is far exceeding its community park standard, the City may want to consider raising this standard to more accurately reflect the current situation and become more in line with other communities in the region.



Table 3.2 Summary of Community Comparisons

	FACILITIES (per population*)		
	Average Level of Service for Top 1/3 Front Range Communities	Average Level of Service NRPA Gold Medal Communities	Current Level of Service for Golden
Football/Soccer Fields	1: 1,706	1: 2,479	1: 1,053
Softball/Baseball Fields	1: 1,859	1: 1,428	1: 1,627
Outdoor Basketball Courts	1: 3,667	1: 7,320	1: 2,983
Tennis Courts	1: 4,417	1: 2,358	1: 3,579
Skateboard Parks	1: 31,405	1: 11,029	1: 8,848
In-line Hockey Rinks	1: 12,773	1: 12,162	1: 17,895
Ice Rinks	1: 58,387	1: 3,681	0
Swimming Pools	1: 15,349	1: 10,674	1: 8,848
Gymnasiums	1: 15,777	1: 16,710	1: 8,848
	PARKLAND		
	Average Level of Service for Top 1/3 Front Range Communities (developed parkland per 1,000 people)	Average Level of Service NRPA Gold Medal Communities (developed parkland per 1,000 people)	Current Level of Service for Greater Golden (developed parkland per 1,000 people)
Community Parkland	4.4	6.3	8.4
Neighborhood Parkland	3.8	5.5	3.7
<b>TOTAL DEVELOPED PARKLAND</b>	<b>8.2</b>	<b>11.8</b>	<b>12.1</b>

\*2007 population 17,895, City of Golden Planning and Development Department.

For further consideration, if 5 acres is included in the calculations for Lions Park, Tony Grampsas Park, and Ulysses Park that serve neighborhood park functions to those residents within 0.5 mile, the effective level of service for neighborhood parks would increase to 4.50 acres per 1,000 people.

Interestingly, most of these communities have not yet achieved their standards and are providing a level of service slightly lower than what they have adopted. This is very typical of communities across the US as they are often in a catch-up mode, and invariably struggle with implementation tools that allow them to achieve their targets. The actual level of service being provided by the top communities along the Front Range is 3.8 acres per 1,000 people for neighborhood parkland, and 4.4 acres per 1,000 people of community parkland. These numbers are even slightly higher for the NRPA Gold Medal communities. Golden provides a level of service of 8.4 acres per 1,000 residents for community parkland, and a level of service of 3.7 acres per 1,000 residents for neighborhood parkland.

In general, the level of service for most recreation facilities in Golden is above that of peer communities and Gold Medal communities. The level of service for tennis courts is slightly lower than that of Gold Medal communities, but still higher than peer communities. The level of service for in-line hockey rinks is also slightly lower than both peer communities and Gold Medal communities, but not so much that the city should consider adding another. Golden has a level of service of zero for ice rinks, whereas the level of service for other communities is approximately one ice rink for approximately every 12,000 people. With respect to all other recreation facilities in the comparison, Golden is providing a very high level of service.

#### D. National Recreation Participation Trends

The Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association (SGMA) has commissioned an annual mail survey of American households to determine what activities they participate in at least one time per year. Approximately 15,000 completed mail surveys are received and responses are



balanced to reflect U.S. Census parameters for age, gender, race, household income, and geographic region. The responses reflect people age six and above. The last few SGMA surveys have been more comprehensive than previous years; therefore, benchmark data is not available for many of the categories.

As shown in Table 3.3, the most popular activity is recreational swimming, followed by walking, free weights, biking, fishing, hiking, and running/jogging. Many activities have seen a decline in total numbers over the past 12 years, including many of the organized team sports. However, three relatively new activities have made large gains in popularity – in-line roller skating, free weight use, and mountain biking. Data was not available by region, but it is likely that mountain biking involves a larger percentage of the population in this region than nationally.

Table 3.3 Total National Participants by Activity – All Ages

Activity	Percent Change Since 1987	2004 Participants (in 1,000s)
Recreational Swimming	Na	95,268
Recreational Walking	Na	92,677
Free Weights	+ 131%	52,056
Recreational Bicycling	Na	52,021
Fishing	- 18%	47,906
Fitness Walking	+ 48%	40,299
Day Hiking	Na	39,334
Running/Jogging	0%	37,310
Basketball	- 4%	34,223
Golf	- 2%	25,723
Volleyball	- 38%	22,216
Tennis	- 13%	18,346
In-Line Roller Skating	+ 270%	17,348
Football	Na	16,436
Softball	- 24%	16,324
Soccer	+ 3%	15,900
Horseback Riding	Na	14,695
Yoga	Na	12,414
Skateboarding	- 3%	10,592
Baseball	- 36%	9,694
Artificial Wall Climbing	Na	7,659
Mountain Biking	+ 253%	5,334

Sports Participation Trends 2004, Sports Research Partnership, April 2005.

According to a 1997 SGMA reports<sup>4</sup>, the most popular sports for youth based on “frequent” participation are (Table 3.4):

Table 3.4 Total National “Frequent” Youth Participants

Activity	Number of Participants in U.S. (in 1,000s)
Basketball (25+ days/year)	12,803
Soccer (25+ days/year)	6,971
Baseball (25+ days/year)	5,229
In-Line Skating (52+ days/year)	3,591
Touch Football (25+ days/year)	3,590
Volleyball (25+ days/year)	3,022
Running/Jogging (100+ days/year)	2,824
Slow-Pitch Softball (25+ days/year)	2,717
Tackle Football (52+ days/year)	2,079
Fishing	2,021

Seven of the 10 most popular activities are team oriented; 8 of the 10 require specialized outdoor facilities. More recent data is not publicly available from this organization; but since 1997 when this study was conducted, it is well known in the parks and recreation industry that interest in in-line skating, skateboarding, and rock climbing has increased dramatically, and lacrosse and BMX/hill jump biking are emerging in popularity.

### E. State of Colorado Recreation Trends and Issues

According to the Colorado SCORP 2003-2007, 94% of the population in Colorado engages in some form of outdoor recreation. Table 3.5 shows both the percentage and actual numbers of participants for a variety of activity types among Colorado residents.

<sup>4</sup> Sporting Goods Manufacturer’s Association, study conducted annually by American Sports Data, Inc. 1997.



Table 3.5. Participation by Type of Outdoor Activity Among Colorado Residents

Activity Type	Percent Participating 2003	Millions of Participants 2003
Outdoor Recreation Participant	94.38	3.13
Trail/Street/Road Activities	87.35	2.90
Individual Sports	33.41	1.11
Team Sports	24.52	0.81
Spectator Activities	75.06	2.49
Viewing/Learning Activities	87.62	2.91
Snow/Ice Activities	37.41	1.24
Camping	45.21	1.50
Hunting	10.55	0.35
Fishing	35.21	1.17
Boating	32.67	1.08
Swimming	41.01	1.36
Outdoor Adventure Activities	61.79	2.05
Social Activities	87.34	2.90

NSRE, 2000-2003. Versions 1-14, N=1,001, Interview dates: 7/99 to 3/03. From Colorado SCORP 2003.

The SCORP also states that “Colorado’s proactive open space protection efforts provide the venues where the full range of Colorado’s outdoor recreation attractions are enabled to flourish for the enjoyment of residents and visitors alike. Yet today, Colorado faces a substantial challenge in satisfying the outdoor recreation demands of a rapidly expanding population, while meeting the responsibility to conserve the world class outdoor resources for which Colorado is renowned. Millions of visitors to Colorado continue to enjoy a wide diversity of outdoor recreation activities, yet recreation management agencies across the community, state, and federal spectrum report difficulty keeping up with public expectations for quality outdoors experiences.”

As such, there are several social, economic, and environmental trends and influences that have shaped the strategic action elements of the SCORP that should be considered, many of which are relevant in Golden. These include trends in the way Coloradoans choose to recreate, demographic trends of population growth, strong statewide open space protection efforts, recreation access, and unprecedented environmental conditions and stresses, such as

drought. The SCORP has identified six issues of statewide significance that Colorado must address to most effectively meet the challenge of satisfying the outdoor recreation demands of a rapidly expanding population, while meeting the responsibility to conserve the special outdoors resources for which Colorado is renowned. Many of these issues pertain directly to Wheat Ridge and include:

1. Colorado’s citizens and visitors need more effective ways to access the wide array of information about recreation sites and their host communities, and outdoor recreation providers need to better integrate outdoor recreation marketing and management to sustain Colorado’s outstanding recreation attractions, its economic vitality, and resulting quality of life.
2. Communities must invest in outdoor infrastructure through well planned, ongoing commitments to meeting a growing population’s expectations for a wide range of safe, up-to-date sites at which to enjoy the outdoors.
3. Public recreation agencies faced with tight budgets yet increasing demand for recreation services are considering increased reliance on fees and creative public/private partnerships to enhance public services.
4. The sustainability of natural and cultural landscapes and our capability to be stewards of those resources must be considered when agencies and communities plan for and manage the location and scope of outdoor recreation activities.
5. Public access to outdoor sites and management of travel on public lands is challenged by the capacity of our statewide transportation infrastructure and of our natural resources to accommodate the volume of demand.
6. Recreation agencies can more effectively engage Colorado’s citizens and visitors in resource stewardship responsibilities through youth outreach and volunteer programs.



## F. Recreation Program Participation and Facility Usage

Many of the large, intensively used facilities in a parks and recreation system are used by participants or organized programs.

Understanding how these programs use the parks allows a community to identify specific activities that may be underserved by facilities. Programs that are seeing an increase in participation may indicate a need for more facilities. In addition, different age groups, abilities, and skills often require different types and sizes of facilities. Understanding the differences in these user groups will help Golden more specifically determine what needs to be provided in the system.

To determine facility usage, City of Golden Parks and Recreation personnel, as well as local interest groups who provide recreational activities, were interviewed to determine how their organization and programs utilize Golden facilities. The interest groups interviewed were also asked for information regarding the quality of facilities they use, the need for additional facilities, the size of their organization, and how it functions within the community. The City of Golden offers a variety of organized sports to the community, and a number of other programmed sports are available from non-profit and private organizations in Golden, including the Table Mountain Soccer Association, the Golden Girls Softball Association, the Golden Junior Baseball Association, the Golden Marlins Swim Team, the Golden-Applewood Midget Football Association, the Golden-Applewood Youth Basketball Association, and the Westside Lacrosse Club. Other private and nonprofit organizations and interest groups providing unique recreational opportunities and civic functions were interviewed as well, and include the in-line hockey users group, paragliders, white water course users, dog park users, Trout Unlimited, and the Golden Civic Foundation.

### Baseball/Softball Programs

Providers report that there has been steady and increasing participation in youth baseball over the last few years in Golden. Youth baseball in Golden is provided primarily through the Golden Junior Baseball Association (GJBA). GJBA utilizes almost all of the available fields in Golden at one point or another throughout the year. This includes fields 1-5 at Ulysses Park, the north and south fields at Tony Grampsas Park, and both fields at Lions Park.



*Batting Cages at Ulysses Park*

Girls youth softball in Golden is provided through the Golden Girls Softball Association (GGSA). Providers report that there has been steady and strong participation in youth softball over the last few years in Golden. GGSA currently utilizes all three fields at Tony Grampsas Park as well as both fields at Lions Park. Youth softball is also provided through the Golden High School girls' softball teams. The number of participants on these teams is held constant at 35 players per season. The high school softball teams primarily utilize the three fields at Tony Grampsas for practice and games.

Adult softball in Golden is provided through the Park and Recreation Department. Recreation staff report a steady increase in participation in organized adult softball over the last few years. 2006 saw more than 2,500 participants and they are expected to exceed that this year. Adult softball is played primarily at fields 2, 3 and 4 at Ulysses Park, at the north and south



fields at Tony Grampsas Park, and the east field at Lions Park.

There are two senior softball leagues in Golden; one for ages 50 and up and one for ages 70 and up. The 50+ league reports a 35% increase over the last few years, while the 70+ league maintains a roll of 35 players per season. The 50+ league uses fields at both Tony Grampsas and Ulysses Parks, while the 70+ league only uses fields at Tony Grampsas Park. Each league travels throughout the Denver metro area for games, and they each average about three games per year played in Golden.

### **Football Programs**

Youth football in Golden is provided through the Golden-Applewood Youth Football Association. Providers report steady participation in the program for the last several years. Golden-Applewood primarily uses the outfields at Lions Park in the fall. They report that the fields are in excellent condition and, overall, have a great relationship with the Parks and Recreation Department.

### **Soccer Programs**

Youth soccer in Golden is provided through the Colorado Ice Soccer Club, also known as the Table Mountain Soccer Association. There were more than 1,500 participants in 2006, and they expect participation to remain steady in the future. Table Mountain Soccer currently utilizes fields 2, 3 and 4 at Ulysses Park, as well as multi-use fields at Golden Heights, Southridge, and White Ash Mine Parks for practice. In the summer of 2007, the City of Golden completed the Rooney Road Sports Complex. This facility was built in conjunction with the Table Mountain Soccer Association, which provided a large portion of the money for construction. As such, they will play all of their games at this facility next year rather than at Ulysses Park. Additionally, they will also have priority use of the fields.

### **Swimming Programs**

Youth swimming in Golden is provided through the Golden Marlins Swim Team. Providers report increasing participation in their program over the last few years. They utilize the pools at both Splash Aquatics Park and at the Community Center for practice and meets. Although they are happy with the current facilities in the city, ideally they would like to have more indoor pool space.

### **Basketball Programs**

Organized youth basketball in Golden is provided through the Golden-Applewood Youth Basketball Association. Providers report increasing participation in the program over the last several years. The program now has more than 350 participants. The league utilizes the gymnasium at Tony Grampsas Park for both games and practice. They report that with the growth of the program, there is not enough court space available for them to use.

Adult basketball in Golden is provided through the Parks and Recreation Department. There has been steady participation in these leagues and they primarily utilize the courts at the Community Center; however, the courts at Tony Grampsas are also used.

### **Lacrosse Programs**

Youth lacrosse in Golden is provided through the Westside Lacrosse Team. Although small, this organization reports steady and increasing participation over the last few years. Currently, they utilize the outfield of the west ballfield at Tony Grampsas Park. Representatives from the team report they need more field space for practice and games, and would really like to have a standard lacrosse or multi-use field to use.

### **Other Recreation Programs and Activities**

There are several other organized and informal recreation programs and activities that occur with frequency in Golden. In the fall, the outfields at Ulysses Park are rented out to Ultimate Frisbee teams for games and practice. Although the fields do not meet their required



dimensions, they are in good condition and can play under the lights. Representatives report steady participation over the years.

### ***In-Line Hockey***

In-line hockey teams use Hockeystop Park on a regular basis for practice and games. Representatives report they are happy there is a dedicated park for in-line hockey in Golden, but the rink is substandard. They suggest that Hockeystop is in poor condition relative to other facilities in nearby communities. There is no drinking fountain, permanent bathroom, lights, scoreboard, and only limited bleachers. They also suggest that the playing surface is poorly maintained in terms of debris/dirt/snow.



*Entrance to Clear Creek Whitewater Park*

### ***White Water Course***

Users of the Clear Creek Whitewater Park were also interviewed. They report that the course is in excellent condition and well used. It is not uncommon for more than 100 boaters to pass through the course every hour during busy summer evenings. As such, parking has become a problem and it is crowded along the trail. This has led to some conflicts between the various users. They suggest it would be nice if the south side of the creek in CSM lands could be cleaned up and utilized for put-ins and take-outs. There should also be more formalized put-ins and take-outs to help minimize streambank erosion that is occurring. They also suggest the need for a balance in the users on the river.



*Hockeystop Park*

With all the use, there have been conflicts on the river, and they are worried the conflicts will only get worse over time. They feel the trail is too narrow for the variety of uses on it. Also, fisherman and kayakers don't mix well near the course. Anglers like the play holes because it is good fishing; but fishing line gets caught over the gate lines, making it hard to move the slalom gates. Additionally, tubers grab and pull on the gates, often breaking the gates or pulling down the wires. Lastly, boaters often take out where people are sitting on the benches next to the library, thereby disturbing the sitter's experience.

Other thoughts expressed by white water course users suggest that the pond at Lions Park is very unique to this course. It is one of the few places with a flat water teaching and warm-up area, close to a white water site. Consideration should be given to ways to discourage the geese and create a flow-through, so the water is not so stagnant. If the pond is going to continue to be used for flat water training, there may be a need to ensure that the water is clean and does not remain stagnant. They also suggest fixing the drop structures immediately above and below the Washington Avenue bridge to make them better play holes. It would give people in town more to look at. They suggest creating a beginners section between drop 7 (the last drop in the main park) to above the library hole. It would



need shoreline eddies, some channelization and a few mid-river rocks, but no big drops.

### ***Paragliding/Hang Gliding***

A representative for the Rocky Mountain Hang Gliding Association was interviewed. He reports that this is a highly popular activity in Golden for participants and observers alike. This group suggests that there is an average of 15 participants using the take-off at Lookout Mountain every weekend, with an average annual increase of 10% over the last few years. This is one of the activities that makes Golden such a unique place to be and is considered one of the best launch sites in the state. However, they have problems with access and parking as their landing site lies on Colorado School of Mines property and encroaches on a CDOT right-of-way. Also, due to development, the landing areas are becoming tighter and more restricted. Ideally they would like the landing area adjacent to Highway 6 to be preserved as it is critical to this recreational use and no other options exist.

### ***Dog Parks***

Local users of Golden's two dog parks were interviewed. They report that the parks are highly popular and well used. They suggest that both parks are a little small and the entrance at Ulysses is dirty. They would like more room for an additional dog park in the city and one with water features for dog play, such as along Clear Creek. More terrain in the dog parks would also add interest and improve the user experience.

## **G. Existing and Future Recreation Facilities Needs**

Table 3.6 lists the current level of service for various recreation facilities that groups and individuals use in Golden, as well as the average level of service for top tier communities along the Front Range and the NRPA Gold Medal communities. Based on these levels of service, current and future recreation facility needs and deficits are shown.

According to this analysis, which uses a standard based on the average of the NRPA Gold Medal communities, there is a need for two additional baseball/softball fields, three additional tennis courts, five ice rinks, and one disc golf course. Since the growth rate in Golden is capped at 1% per year and will subsequently be very minor over the next several years, facility needs based on future population were not calculated. The need for specific facilities to accommodate future growth should be determined on a case-by-case basis and reflect the overall needs of the larger community.

It should be noted that the analysis above is only one tool in determining recreation facility needs. Other factors should be considered as well, including differences in the age, quality, accessibility, or other design characteristics of the facilities, as well as the needs expressed by Park and Recreation Department staff and of local user groups.



Table 3.6. Recreation Facility Needs

Recreation Facility	Facilities per Population*					2007 Facility Need**	2007 Deficit
	Current (2007) # of Facilities in Golden	Average Level of Service for Golden	Average Level of Service for Top 1/3 Front Range Communities	Average Level of Service for NRPA Gold Medal Communities			
Football/Soccer Fields	17**	1: 1,053	1: 1,706	1: 2,479	7	0	
Softball/Baseball Fields	11	1: 1,627	1: 1,859	1: 1,428	12	1	
Outdoor Basketball Courts	6	1: 2,983	1: 3,667	1: 7,320	2	0	
Tennis Courts	5	1: 3,579	1: 4,417	1: 2,358	8	3	
Swimming Pools	2	1: 8,848	1: 15,349	1: 10,674	2	0	
Ice Rink	0	0	1: 58,387	1: 3,681	5	5	
Disc Golf Courses	0	0	N/A	N/A	1***	1	
Gymnasium	2	1: 8,848	1: 15,777	1:16,710	1	0	
Skateboard Parks	2	1: 8,848	1: 31,405	1: 11,029	2	0	
In-line Hockey Rink	1	1: 17,895	1: 12,773	1: 12,162	1	0	

\* 2007 population 17,895, City of Golden Planning and Development Department.

\*\* Based on NRPA Gold Medal community average.

\*\*\* The need for one disc golf course is a professional recommendation by the plan consultants as no comparative data was available from compared communities.

**Multi-Use Fields**

The analysis above indicates there is not a need for additional multi-use football and soccer fields in the community. However, staff and lacrosse user groups have indicated a need for an additional full-sized field that can accommodate football, soccer, and lacrosse. With the completion of the five fields at Rooney Road Sports Complex, the Table Mountain Soccer Association will no longer occupy the fields at Ulysses Park. This move should free up some space for other organizations to utilize this field. Still, there is a need for at least one more multi-use field in the city, preferably in a centralized location. Related to this, there has been an expressed need for additional multi-use field space along Clear Creek in downtown Golden to accommodate special events, as well as organized and drop-in football, soccer, and lacrosse. Strong consideration should be given to providing this type of field in conjunction with any redevelopment of Lions Park and other public land along Clear Creek in downtown Golden.

**Softball/Baseball Fields**

According to the above analysis, there is a need for one more softball/baseball field in the community. Input from staff also indicates the need for one or two additional full-size baseball fields with 340-foot baselines and a minimum of a 400-foot center field. Staff also indicates the outfielders at the ballfields at Lions Park, the north and south fields at Tony Grampsas Park, and some of the fields at Ulysses Park are too short by today’s standards. It is recommended that the city consider redesigning Tony Grampsas with the inclusion of a minimum of a four-field, state-of-the-art ball complex that would meet the needs of baseball, with configurations that could also accommodate softball. Other recommendations include converting field 1 at Ulysses Park for softball use, and begin utilizing movable fencing on field 3 so the outfielders would be regulation distance. Options should also be investigated for the possibility of bringing fields 4 and 5 up to regulation size as well.



### Outdoor Basketball Courts

The analysis above indicates no shortage of outdoor basketball courts in the city. Staff has not indicated a need for additional outdoor courts at this time. However, any new neighborhood parks constructed in the future should include, at a minimum, one half-court to ensure adequate distribution of these facilities throughout the community.

### Tennis Courts

According to the facility analysis above, there is a need for three additional tennis courts in Golden. Staff has not indicated there is a shortage of tennis courts in the community and has not reported any crowding on existing courts. The provision of additional tennis courts should be included in any new neighborhood parks that are constructed, particularly in the south area of the city where there is a lack of courts. They could also be included as community parks are redesigned in the future, if and when demand increases.

### Ice Rinks

The analysis above shows a shortage of five ice rinks. The majority of the communities in the NRPA Gold Medal comparison are in climates where temporary outdoor recreational rinks can be provided by methods such as flooding in-line hockey rinks or tennis courts, without the need for mechanical freezing. Some communities, however, provide competition level outdoor rinks that are kept mechanically frozen. As there is no organized ice hockey program in Golden, there has been no expressed need for a competition level ice rink within the city. The neighboring North JeffCo Park and Recreation District also maintains two indoor rinks at its Apex Recreation Center. The construction of an ice rink requires a large capital investment and they are typically a regional attraction in nature. As such, construction of such a facility within the next 10 years is not recommended, and resources should be devoted to more pressing needs. However, many communities along the Front Range are now providing smaller, portable leisure rinks during the winter holiday season. A rink of this nature would make a nice

addition and attraction to downtown Golden.

The city should consider adding a small rink of this nature in a downtown park location, or future public square.

### Disc Golf Courses

The above analysis did not address the provision of disc golf in peer communities. Disc golf is a sport that is rapidly gaining popularity throughout the country as well as Colorado. Currently, there is one disc golf course in Golden; however, it is located on the grounds of Golden High School and public access is limited to after 2:30 pm, Monday through Friday and on weekends. Athletic events and practices also frequently occur on the site, prohibiting play. As such, it is recommended that at least one disc golf course be provided in the city, preferably at a community park or open space area that has ample room and challenging topography.

### Gymnasium

Although the analysis above does not indicate a need for additional gymnasiums, staff and user groups report that occasionally there is a lack of court space and/or scheduling conflicts. Some of this conflict might be addressed through additional use of local school facilities. When the useful life of the gymnasium at Tony Grampsas Park is exceeded, consideration should be given to providing two or more courts in a new facility.

### Skateparks

The comparison analysis above does not indicate a need for additional skateparks in the community. However, public comments have indicated a desire for another skatepark or additional skate features to be added to existing parks. Additionally, the two existing skateparks in the community are located south of town at Ulysses and Golden Heights Parks. As such, efforts should be made to provide additional skatepark features in existing neighborhood parks in central and north Golden. Although a full-scale skatepark would be welcome in a centralized location, the addition of more minor





*Skatepark at Ulysses Park*

skate elements into existing neighborhood parks would improve the distribution of these recreational amenities.

### **In-Line Hockey Rinks**

The analysis above does not show the need for an additional in-line hockey rink in the city. However, reports from user groups indicate that improvements could be made at the existing facility. This would include a drinking fountain, permanent restroom, lighting, scoreboard, bleachers, and better and more regular maintenance of the skating surface. There has also been requests in the community for a dedicated in-line loop track. These are not very common and would likely not receive much use. However, the addition of such a facility would certainly be unique.

### **Other Unique Recreation Facilities and Amenities**

Comments from the public, staff, and Park and Recreation Advisory Board members have indicated a need for additional recreation facilities in the community to help identify Golden as a unique place to live, work, and play. These types of amenities will not only provide variety for residents, but will also serve to attract visitors and capitalize on the tourist economy. Some of these facilities include the addition of a sledding hill. While no specific site is recommended, the establishment of this amenity would provide residents and visitors

with a well-loved winter experience. It should be centrally located, supervised, and at an adequate grade, but not too steep. It should also include some associated facilities, such as a temporary place to sell refreshments, a power source, a temporary heat source (such as a protected bonfire), and furnishings to sit on.

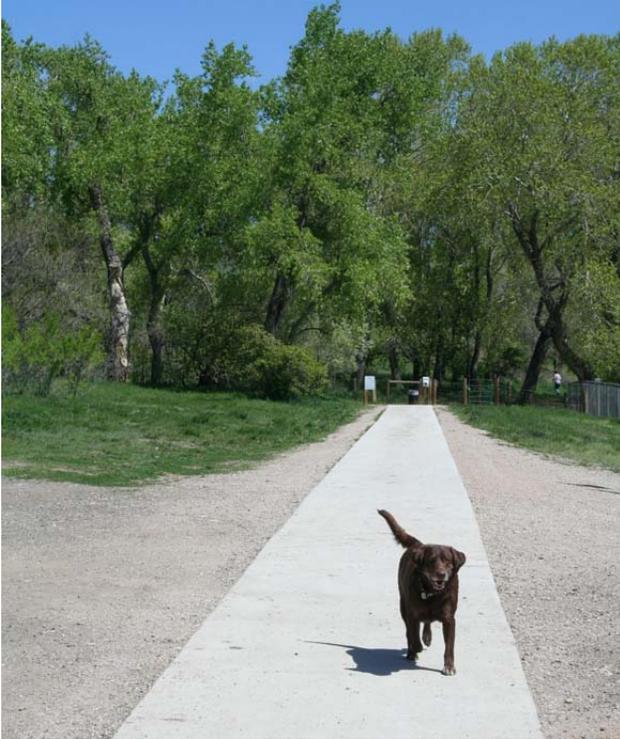
There has been strong support for the addition of a splash park in the community, or adding splash amenities to existing parks. These have become highly popular amenities throughout the country and would greatly benefit Golden. Potential locations include Parfet and Vanover Parks. These amenities can also be added to urban parks, such as public squares. Any location identified for this type of recreation amenity should be further studied as it relates to the overall context of the park and surrounding neighborhoods and land uses.

There is a strong need for a dedicated landing area for paragliding and hang gliding in the community. With the pressure of development and the encroachment of the existing landing areas on CDOT property, it is advisable for the community to provide an adequate landing area to ensure that this highly unique and well-loved activity remains a part of the character of Golden. A place for spectators to view the landings would also be advisable.

A full systemwide ADA audit is needed for all parks in Golden. However, there have also been requests for a fully accessible playground to be constructed in the community. Not only would this put Golden in a position to keep pace with what other communities along the Front Range are doing, it would also ensure that the parks and recreation system is available to all residents and visitors. This could easily be accommodated in a new neighborhood park or renovated community park.

Although there are currently two dog parks in Golden, there has been strong support and high demand for an additional dog park with water features. While a specific location has not been identified, the city should consider the provision of one if a suitable location can be found.





*Returning from the Dog Park at Tony Grampsas Park*

Other unique ideas that could be included in the park and recreation system in Golden, which are not found in many places, include designated bocce ball courts, a high ropes course, and a model car/airplane park. The need for establishing a community garden has also been widely expressed. Many communities provide gardens for residents to enjoy and even volunteer to help maintain. These could range from neighborhood-scale flower gardens to communitywide vegetable gardens to city-sponsored horticultural or xeriscape gardens along the Clear Creek Corridor.

## **H. Existing and Future Parkland Needs**

The City of Golden currently has an adopted standard of 2.5 acres of community parkland per 1,000 residents, and 2.5 acres of neighborhood parkland per 1,000 residents. The city has an inventory that provides 3.7 acres of neighborhood parkland per 1,000 residents, which exceeds the existing standard. If 5 acres each is factored in for Lions, Tony Grampsas, and Ulysses Parks (which serve

neighborhood park functions) to those residents within 0.5 mile, the level of service would increase to 4.50 acres per 1,000 residents. The city also currently provides 8.38 acres of community parkland per 1,000 residents. If the 40 acres for Rooney Road Sports Complex is removed, which has limited public availability due to Table Mountain Soccer Association's priority use arrangements, the effective level of service would be 6.2 acres per 1,000 residents. The level of service under both of these scenarios is above the established standard.

The neighborhood park standard should be increased to more accurately reflect the level of service being provided, from 2.5 to 3.5 acres per 1,000 population. Golden may also want to continue to monitor satisfaction levels of residents and develop neighborhood parklands as needed. Additionally, the city may want to expand existing parks and be proactive with developers of infill and redevelopment projects to ensure that adequate resources are being placed on the provision of park and recreational services within the city.

Due to the fact that the city is providing well above the established standard for community parkland, it is advisable that this standard be increased to more accurately reflect what is being provided, at a minimum, 5.5 acres per 1,000 residents. This would also establish a standard that is more like that being provided by both top tier Front Range Communities (4.4 acres per 1,000 residents) and of NRPA Gold Medal winning communities (6.3 acres per 1,000 people).

Map 2, Neighborhood Park Service Areas, in Chapter Two shows the areas within Golden that are underserved by neighborhood parks. In areas where a service radius does not exist, it is either because there is no available neighborhood park or access to a park is prohibited by a barrier, such as a major roadway. Although the overall level of service for neighborhood parkland is approximate to the established standard, careful consideration should be given to the provision of parklands to those areas of the city that are currently underserved. These areas include the area



north of Highway 58, east of North Ford Street, and south of 1st Street; the area east of Ford Street, north of Sunset Drive, and south of 17th Street; and the area south of Highway 6, north of Highway 40, east of County Road 93, and west of Johnson Road.

## I. Trail Needs

Overall the City of Golden has an extensive and interconnected trail system, providing diversity in both types of trail experience and destinations. However, there are a few critical connections, extensions, and crossings that still need to be constructed to make a fully comprehensive trail system in Golden. These segments are listed below:

- 19th Street to Clear Creek along 6th Avenue.
- 19<sup>th</sup> Street to Kinney Run Trail on the west side of Highway 6.
- Iowa Street to Washington Street on the west side of Highway 93.
- South side of Clear Creek from 6th Avenue to History Park.
- North side of Clear Creek connecting Vanover Park and Parfet Park.
- Connection to Rooney Road Sports Complex and C-470 Regional Trail.
- At-grade crossing improvements at 6th Avenue and 19th Street.
- Interface of Clear Creek Trail west of Highway 6 with future JeffCo Open Space trail plans.
- Complete missing connections along Highway 93 north of Golden Gate Road as residential development occurs.
- Provide an additional crossing of Clear Creek near West 6th Avenue.

There is also a need to better establish trail signage and make wayfinding improvements for trails in the downtown area. Currently, it is difficult to navigate from the Clear Creek Trail in downtown as it leaves the city to the east past Coors Brewery. Another difficult area reported by users of the History Park is navigating from there to Lions Park. Lastly, there are tentative plans to extend the forthcoming Front Range Trail north from the Clear Creek Corridor on the east side of North Table Mountain, and along Highway 6 to connect to the C-470 trail. The city should continue its strong cooperation with this effort.



*South side of Clear Creek looking west from History Park towards 6th Avenue*

## K. Systemwide Needs

There are a few needs that apply not to one specific park, but rather to the entire parks system in Golden. First and foremost, there is a need for a systemwide ADA audit to specifically determine which parks need accessibility improvements. Although many parks provide adequate accessibility, there are some that do not. There is also a need for upgraded park signage. Although existing signs in the parks are standard in their appearance, they are dated and have a common look, as in many park systems. Another area the city should





*Typical park sign*

consider is the existing site furnishings (i.e., benches, picnic tables, trash receptacles, bike racks, etc.) that are commonly used for all parks within Golden. It is more cost effective from a maintenance standpoint to provide site furnishings that are uniform and from the same manufacturer. Although there is a desire to have unique and identifiable parks, several of them could contain similar furnishings. The exception would be the signature parks that have their own unique site furnishings, such as Discovery Park. This is an issue that should be determined by parks staff to determine if uniform site furnishings are in the best interest of the city. Lastly, not every park in the city has adequate bike parking. In order to be a community that encourages bike travel, it is necessary to provide bike parking at every park in the system.

