



# Get Outdoors Greeley

A 5-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN FOR NATURAL AREAS, OPEN LANDS, AND TRAILS



**FEBRUARY 2021**

City of  
**Greeley** Colorado  
NATURAL AREAS & TRAILS



Thanks to community feedback and a diverse Steering Committee, the Natural Areas & Trails Division has prepared the first ever Strategic Plan to guide the City of Greeley's natural areas, trails, and open lands investments for the next 5 years.

***Cover photo credit: Lorenzo Gonzales (left), Pace Clyncke (right)***



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our natural areas face extraordinary pressures. At a time when visitors need them most, the City of Greeley is challenged economically and that future funding for maintenance of Natural Areas & Trails is uncertain at this time. The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the importance of parks, trails, and open space as a health-affirming respite from necessary restrictions. The 2016 Parks, Trails, and Open Lands Master Plan, reaffirmed through the pandemic has also highlighted certain inequities, including the fact that up to 1 in 3 Greeley residences do not have a park or natural area within a 10-minute walk of home.

We know that being connected to nature satisfies human need for exercise, beauty and fresh air in all seasons. Outdoor places are for family and community celebrations, as well as a refuge for the restoration of one's spirit and hope during difficult times. J. Max Clark, a Union Colony member and newspaper editor, said of Greeley, "We found this place a desert and have made it a delightful land."

Managed well, these delightful lands protect the city from flooding, mitigate heat island effects, provide pollination for the state's top agricultural economy, attract the best and brightest companies and employees, and bring many other economic, environmental, and health benefits.

But up until now there has not been a strategy to guide the newly created Natural Areas & Trails Division's future. This Strategic Plan recommends which investments will bring the greatest and most equitable benefits of nature closer to home.

## SO WHAT'S THE PLAN?

The Strategic Plan is organized around five priority themes, each with a supporting goal (below), objectives, and 5-year Action Plan.



**Sustainable Funding.** Develop and maintain sustainable funding sources to sustainably and equitably acquire, restore, and maintain natural areas and a trail system in perpetuity for all Greeley residents.



**Connections to Nature.** Equitably create physical connections to nature for all Greeley residents, through acquisition of high-value lands and expansion of the City's trail system.



**Stewardship.** Restore and perpetually manage lands with high conservation value for the benefit of natural habitats and all Greeley residents.



**Community Connections.** Connect residents nature by partnering with the community to provide inclusive and equitable educational, volunteering, and leadership opportunities for all Greeley residents.



**Operational Excellence.** Provide effective, efficient, and consistent level of service to all Greeley residents at all natural areas, open lands, and trails.



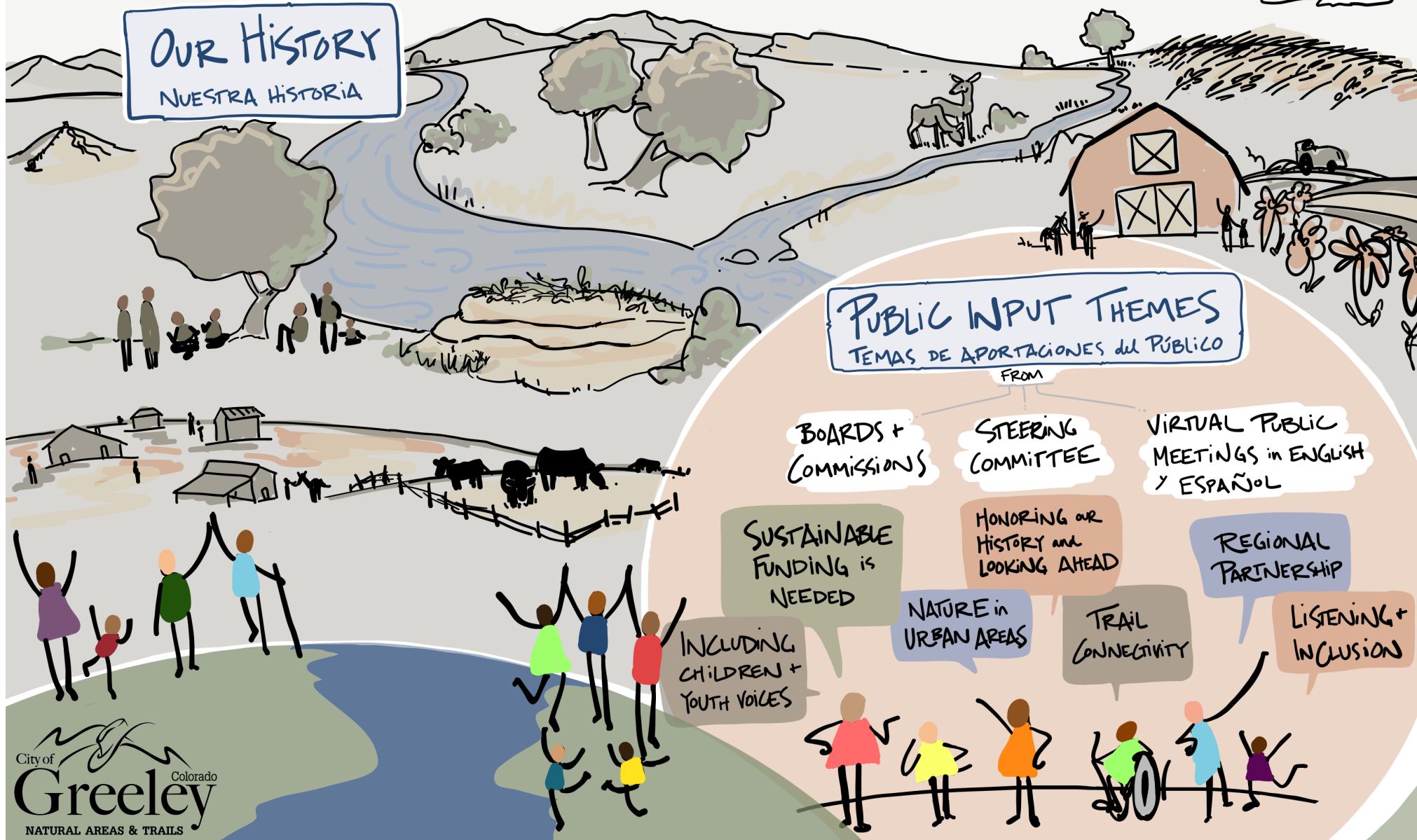
**Capital Planning.** Ensure continued investment is dedicated to repairing and updating existing amenities and maintaining the ecological values for which the natural areas were conserved.



*Poudre Trail crossing of Greeley #3 Canal in Signature Bluffs Natural Area*

# GET OUTDOORS GREELEY STRATEGIC PLAN

## OUR HISTORY NUESTRA HISTORIA





PRIORITY THEMES  
TEMAS PRIORITARIOS



SUSTAINABLE  
FUNDING



CONNECTIONS +  
NATURE



COMMUNITY  
CONNECTIONS



OPERATIONAL  
EXCELLENCE



STEWARDSHIP



CAPITAL  
PLANNING

OUR FUTURE  
NUESTRA FUTURO

A COMMUNITY CONNECTED to NATURE  
UNA COMUNIDAD CONECTADA CON LA NATURALEZA

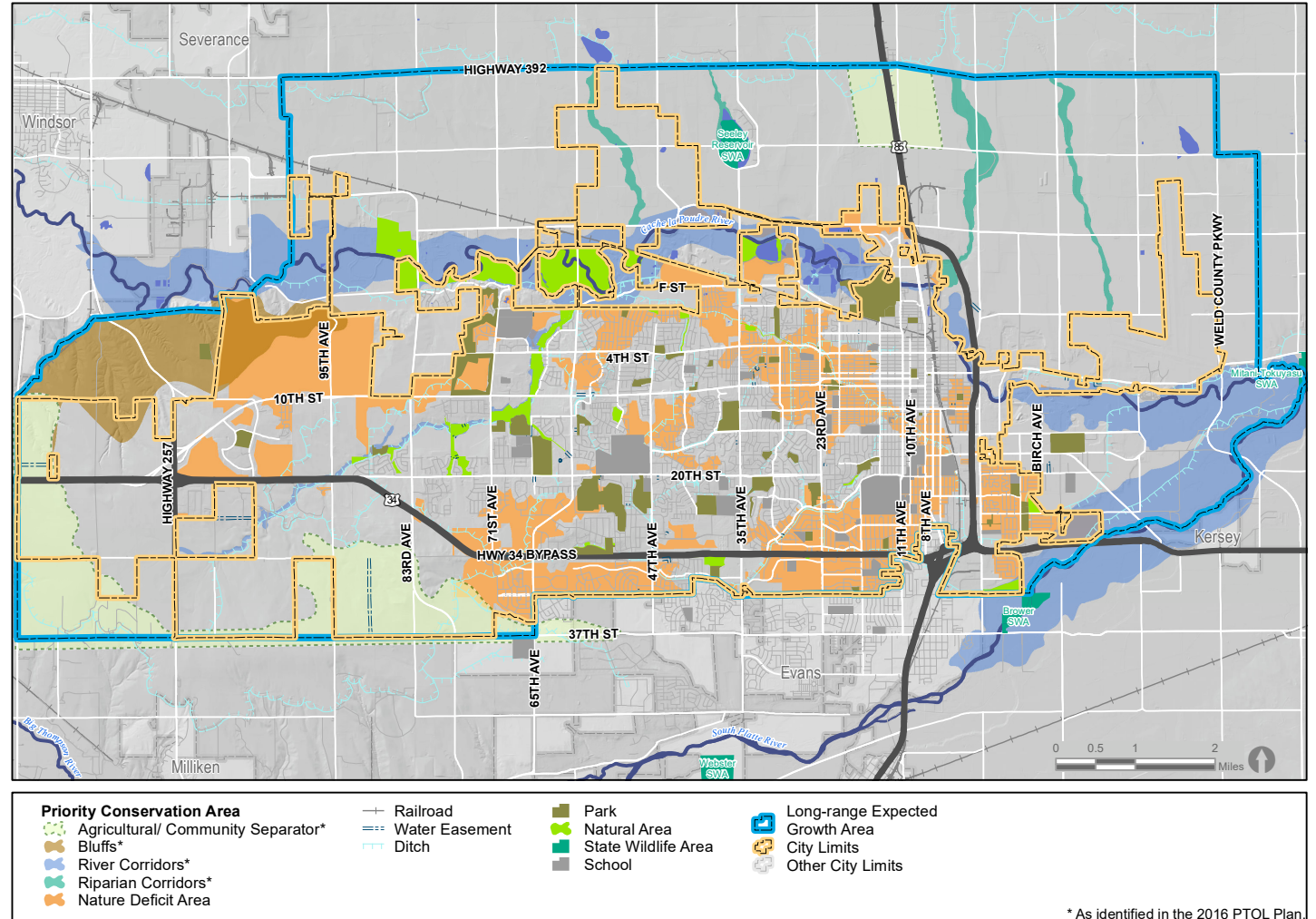


# PRIORITY CONSERVATION AREAS

As Greeley's population continues to grow, the City will continue to evaluate the recreational and natural area needs of the community in order to ensure a high quality of life and equitable access to nature.

Community values and adopted plans affirm the long-term vision for a system of Priority Conservation Areas. The intent is to focus any future acquisition efforts on the highest conservation values and recreational opportunities, *not* to acquire or protect an entire area.

The Natural Areas & Trails Division will pursue conservation projects within these focus areas in partnerships with others, and with willing sellers or donors, through appropriate funding opportunities.





# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## CITY COUNCIL

- John Gates | Mayor
- Dale Hall | Ward IV Mayor Pro Tem
- Tommy Butler | Ward I
- Brett Payton | Ward II
- Michael Fitzsimmons | Ward III
- Kristin Zasada | At Large
- Ed Clark | At Large

## EXECUTIVE TEAM

- Becky Safarik | Assistant City Manager
- Andy McRoberts | Director of Culture, Parks & Recreation
- Joel Hemesath | Director of Public Works
- Sean Chambers | Director of Water & Sewer
- Benjamin Snow | Director of Economic Health & Housing
- Brad Mueller | Director of Community Development

## CORE TEAM

### CITY OF GREELEY

- Justin Scharton | Project Lead
- Karen Scopel | Project Support
- Andy McRoberts | CPRD Sponsor

### LOGAN SIMPSON

- Jeremy Call | Project Lead
- Kristina Kachur | Project Support
- Brian Taylor | GIS

## STEERING COMMITTEE

- Adam Jokerst | Greeley Water & Sewer
- Brandon Muller | Colorado Parks & Wildlife
- Brian Hathaway | Greeley Stormwater Division
- Chelsie Romulo | University of Northern Colorado Geography, GIS & Sustainability
- Clint Torczon | Parks & Recreation Advisory Board
- Ivan Diaz | Youth and Family Connections
- Jen Kovecses | Coalition for the Poudre River Watershed
- Leslie Beckstrom | Weld County Department of Public Health and Environment
- Linda Hood | Greeley Stormwater Division
- Lindsay Kuntz | Greeley Real Estate Management
- Marian Duran | Greeley Community Development
- Patrick Gardner | The Trust for Public Land
- Ray Tschillard | Poudre Learning Center
- Robert Hinderaker | Poudre River Trail Corridor, Inc.
- Scott Franklin | University of Northern Colorado School of Biological Sciences
- Sharon Bywater-Reyes | University of Northern Colorado Earth and Atmospheric Sciences
- Steven Frederick | Greeley Parks
- Wade Willis | Town of Windsor Open Space & Trails
- Wade Shelton | The Trust for Public Land

**We extend a special thanks**  
to the entire  
community for their  
involvement in  
developing City of  
Greeley's natural  
areas, trails, and open  
lands investments for  
the next 5 years. Their  
input and support  
are the catalyst for  
outstanding natural  
areas, open lands,  
and trails in the City of  
Greeley.

Illustrations provided by Karina Branson of ConverSketch.



*Signature Bluffs Natural Area*

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# 01/INTRODUCTION

Get Outdoors Greeley is a 5-year Strategic Plan for the City of Greeley's (City) natural areas, trails, and open lands that benefit our community. In 2019 the City created a new Natural Areas & Trails Division. This Strategic Plan represents the Division's inaugural goals and work plan for future acquisition, restoration, long-term stewardship, capital project prioritization, and sustainable funding of priority lands and infrastructure, and builds upon the City's existing planning efforts.

# PLAN VISION

Get Outdoors Greeley provides a 5-year strategic framework to coordinate the management of the City's natural areas, trails, and open lands within the Long Range Expected Growth Area (LREGA) and surrounding region.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



Sustainable  
Funding



Community  
Connections



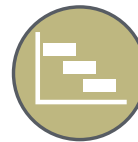
Connections  
to Nature



Operational  
Excellence



Stewardship



Capital Planning



## NEED FOR A STRATEGY

Rich soils at the confluence of the Cache La Poudre and Platte rivers have supported diverse civilizations for at least 13,000 years, such as the Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Sioux (Lakota) who occupied the area when Anglo emigrants arrived in the 19th century. With the establishment of the Union Colony in 1870 as an agricultural community, and a global agri-business community in the 21st century, Greeley's success has always been tied to its abundant and well-managed working landscapes. Intensive labor crops brought successions of new immigrants—Germans-from-Russia, Hispanic Americans, Mexican nationals and others. Recent immigrants and refugees from East Africa, Southeast Asia, Mexico, and Central and South America ensures Greeley remains a diverse community, and has become one of the **most** linguistically diverse communities in Colorado with 26% of the population speaking a language other than English at home.

Owing to this history, some portions of the city - largely on socio-economic or racial lines - show elevated levels of chronic disease such as obesity and type II diabetes, while also reporting lower self-assessed health status. Currently, 34% Greeley residences do not have a park or natural area within a 10-minute walk of home. The increasingly diverse and younger trajectory of Greeley's population requires a renewed look at values and recreation needs of key stakeholder groups.

Today, at 48 square miles of gridded residential and commercial districts, Greeley boasts a diverse array of undeveloped lands along the rivers and bluffs surrounded by giant green circles of irrigated crop land within square section lines. Managed well, these protect the city from flooding, mitigate heat island effects, provide pollination for the state's top agricultural economy, and bring many other demonstrated economic, environmental, and public health benefits. Further, trail corridors are essential in providing for alternative transportation to move people through the community. The increasingly diverse and younger trajectory of Greeley's population requires a renewed look at values and recreation needs of the community.

But there is no strategy to guide Natural Areas & Trails' future apart from solid policy guidance in the Imagine Greeley Comprehensive Plan (2018) and the Parks, Trails and Open Lands Master Plan (PTOL Plan, 2016). This policy foundation, in addition to this Plan's robust public engagement efforts, provide the blueprint for the next five years.

**Over a hundred and fifty years after the founding of Union Colony and generations after the Native Americans before them, we are relearning what others have learned by observation and hardship: to let rivers be rivers, recognize natural constraints, and to reserve the best farmland as the community's foodshed.**



*Lincoln Park, dubbed “Greeley’s little breathing spot” by the Colonists, remains a “village commons,” the first of more than 40 parks maintained as quality of life amenities for the community. Provided by the Greeley History Museum.*

Over 100 years of experience has taught farmers, land managers, and urban planners alike that green spaces are essential infrastructure. The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the importance of providing parks, trails, and open space as a health-affirming respite from necessary restrictions. Combined with economic challenges, parks and public lands face extraordinary pressures, from increased visitation to budget cuts due to lost revenue. While the lasting impacts are unknown at the time of this document, if anything, the increase in visitation is a window into what may come with increased population growth.

These are some of the drivers that require a assessment the Natural Areas & Trail's approach to funding, planning, delivering, and maintaining natural areas, trails, open lands, and associated services and programming. By using data-driven approaches and proactive, inclusive decision-making with the community, this Strategic Plan identifies which investments will bring the greatest and most equitable benefits of nature closer to home.

## SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES

Community needs and perceptions were documented in several recent outreach efforts. The 2016 PTOL Plan highlighted support for acquisition of natural areas by the City (72% respondents supportive) and connecting trails for biking and walking to parks (77% respondents supportive). Further, 92% of respondents in the 2016 PTOL Plan surveys identified funding for parks, trails, recreation, and natural areas as important. The immediate and unavoidable challenge is to obtain adequate funding to conserve, connect, restore, and care for a robust natural areas and trails system. Although the City and its partners have excelled in doing the best they can with what they have, thanks in large measure to dedicated partners and Great Outdoors Colorado grants, without new funding sources the new Natural Areas & Trails Division will not fully achieve the vision and mission that city leaders and residents have charged it with. As public use and recreation increases, so does the need for visitor infrastructure development, which can further increase long-term management and stewardship costs. Additional details on budgets and funding for the Natural Area & Trails Division is provided in the section "Funding Overview" in Chapter 3.



*The Strategic Plan is guided by a triple-bottom line philosophy of maximizing and balancing social, economic, and environmental benefits from Natural Areas & Trails' limited resources.*

**The immediate and unavoidable challenge** is to obtain adequate funding to conserve, connect, restore, and care for a robust natural areas and trails system.



## **#1. The number one long-term challenge is sustainable funding to create the natural areas system that residents call for.**

An open lands system is best and most efficiently created well ahead of development, before speculation and development pressures drive up land values. The same property that costs \$10,000 per acre prior to development pressure typically costs \$35,000 or more per acre within City limits.

The idea that “growth pays for growth” is a good one, and that philosophy has played out well for infrastructure like water, sewer, streets, and stormwater that are funded by impact fees. However, there is not an impact fee for conserving nature ahead of development much less restoring lands. An opportunistic approach of acting on potential land conservation deals requires accruing cash in advance.

Without a separate funding source for land conservation, and in light of escalating land prices that make strategic acquisitions very expensive, the majority of Natural Areas & Trails’ funding will be directed to a triage approach to maintenance and conserving only the most threatened smaller properties and will miss the vast majority of opportunities to conserve high-value land before it is developed.

## **#2. A second challenge is sustainable funding to create and maintain a connected trails system.**

Almost 20 years ago the Greeley Trails Master Plan mapped nearly 50 miles of future trails to connect to the Poudre River Trail. That vision was expanded in the 2015 Bicycle Plan and 2016 PTOL Plan to 121 miles. Today only 8 miles of that vision have been built outside of the Poudre River Trail.

New residents currently fund a portion of future trails through a Trail Development Fee charged to new home construction. However, this fee does not cover the full construction cost of a typical 10-foot paved trail, which averages \$1 million per mile, and none of the maintenance of the existing trails that residents now enjoy, many of which are impacted by flooding. A 2019 study of the Poudre River’s riverbanks and trails found that between \$4.4 million to \$11.6 million would be required to repair the Poudre River Trail at risk of future damage. The need to adequately fund long-term maintenance, restoration, and capital replacement erodes the City’s ability to accomplish other significant community priorities.

## Natural Areas & Trails Vision Statement

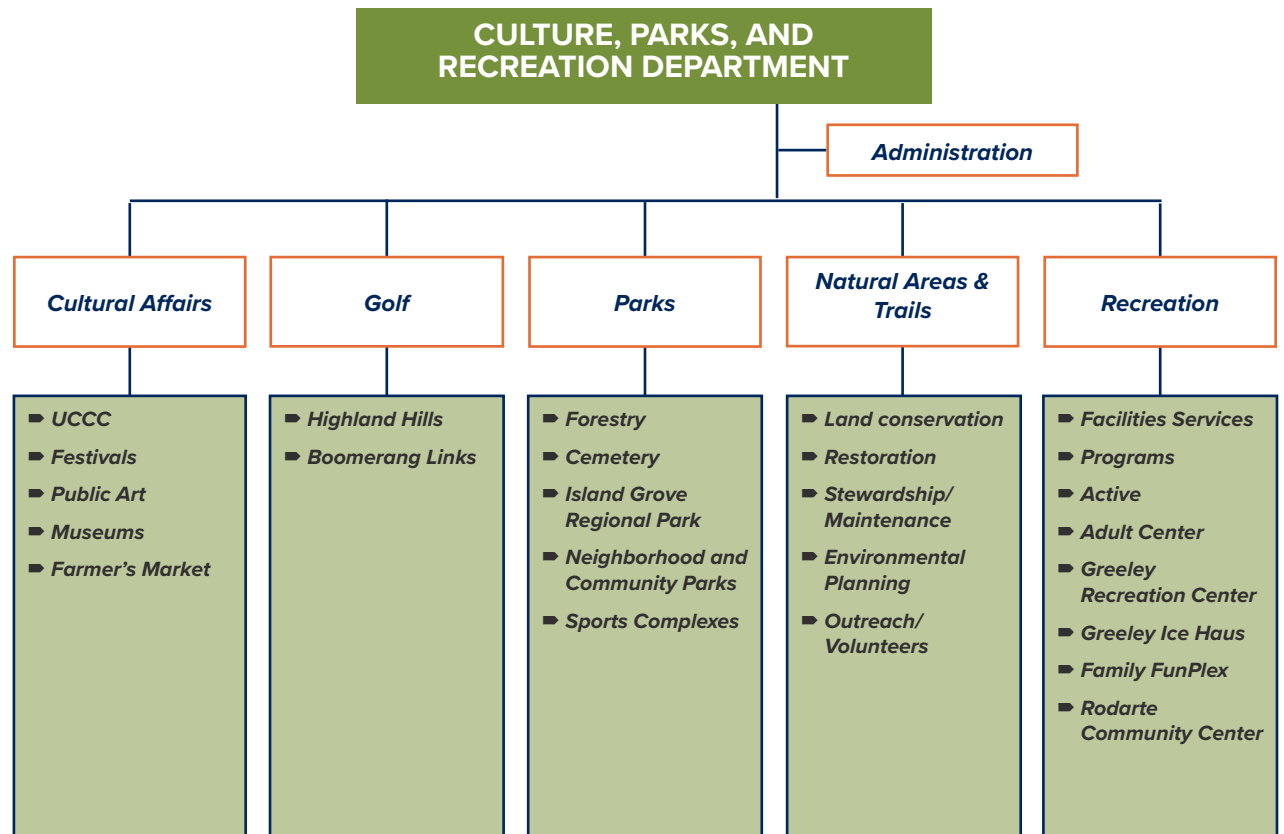
A community connected to nature.

## Natural Areas & Trails Working Mission Statement

Collaboratively conserve, restore and steward lands with significant natural resource, agricultural, and community-shaping values. Equitably connect the community to conserved lands through a community-wide trail system. Facilitate inclusive nature-based experiences to help create a community that values and engages with nature.

## NATURAL AREAS & TRAILS OVERVIEW

The Natural Areas & Trails Division is part of the City of Greeley's Culture, Parks, and Recreation Department. The Division was created in 2019 when the Department was restructured to provide greater emphasis on protecting, restoring, and managing the highest value and most sensitive lands as the community grows. Natural Areas & Trails works with willing partners to conserve important wildlife habitat, recreation, agricultural, and open lands within the City and the surrounding area.





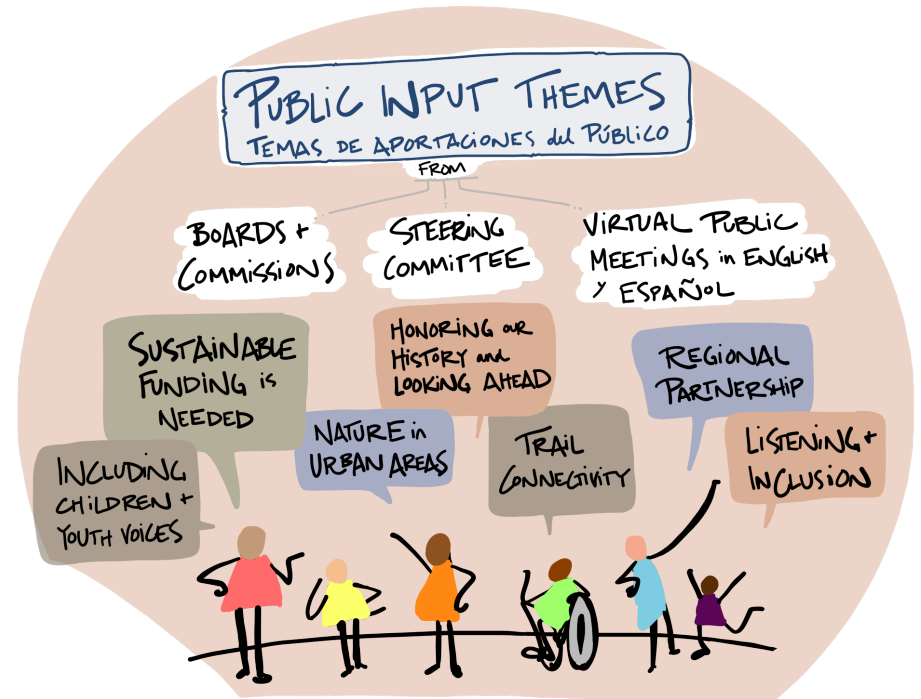
## STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The process leveraged an ongoing dialogue with the community as documented in public opinion polling and participant feedback in annual resident and non-resident satisfaction surveys, the Imagine Greeley Comprehensive Plan, the Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) Get Outdoors Greeley Inspire Initiative Report (Inspire Initiative Report, 2017), and the PTOL Plan.

A broad and inclusive Steering Committee provided technical expertise and support throughout the planning process. The committee included subject experts within the City organization and community partners outside the City who offer advocacy and expertise from additional perspectives, and are both implementers and end-user constituencies of the Plan. Over the course of four in-depth worksessions, the Steering Committee helped advance shared priorities within their area of expertise as key advisors, helping to build consensus, and working collaboratively with the Core Team.

During the Draft Plan, virtual events were held to refine the document and numerous presentations were given to the City's boards and commissions, including Parks and Recreation, Water & Sewer, Stormwater, Human Relations Commission, Youth Commission, Commission on Disability, and Planning Commission.

Additional details of the Strategic Planning Process, as well as Community Needs and Perceptions are provided in Appendix 2.



## PREVIOUS PLANNING EFFORTS AND RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER DEPARTMENTS AND PARTNERS

The core of this Plan is rooted in previous planning efforts that provide overall City direction based on extensive public input. City-wide efforts include the Imagine Greeley Comprehensive Plan, the Inspire Initiative Report, and the PTOL Plan. These adopted master plans set the policy framework for acquisition, development, and management of various public and private natural areas, open lands, and trails.

In addition to these plans, numerous other plans and studies have been completed to support the implementation of the PTOL Plan as well as direct related Departments and partners. Natural Areas & Trails works with other City departments and divisions; school districts and universities; adjacent municipalities; such as Windsor, Evans, Kersey, Milliken, Johnstown, and Weld County; and non-profit agencies and regional conservation partners, including Great Outdoors Colorado, Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado, The Trust for Public

Land, and Colorado Parks and Wildlife. These groups are working in one way or another to improve and protect environmental quality and/or provide access to nature for the community. Many of these groups have their own strategic goals and work plans that are related to and harmonizing with the work of Natural Areas & Trails. Some of those plans and related actions are provided in Appendix 2.



*Sheep Draw Natural Area Nature Trail*

## Imagine Greeley Objectives

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Select relevant objectives from Imagine Greeley Comprehensive Plan (2018)

NR-2.8 Promote the harmonious co-existence of agricultural uses with the natural environment.

NR-3.1 Ensure that important natural features and viewsheds are protected or enhanced as development occurs.

NR-3.2 Secure and protect meaningful public open lands areas within and near to the city in order to provide visual relief from the urban landscape, preserve “food sheds” and important vistas, and/or retain separation from other communities.

NR-3.3 Maximize the recreational use and preservation of areas that cannot be developed due to floodplain or storm drainage limitations.

NR-3.4 Strategically secure and/or acquire ecologically sensitive or important lands to protect their ecological function or other natural values.

NR-3.5 Work with landowners, developers, farmers, and environmental interests to protect important natural areas, native wildlife habitat, vistas, and other significant or environmentally sensitive lands. Develop mechanisms to ensure that natural areas are preserved as development occurs.

NR-3.10 Optimize open space opportunities by coordinating land use management with other City functions that may offer complementary objectives (e.g., drainage areas, water acquisitions, Poudre Trail, parks, and trail system).

## PTOL Plan Vision

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Select relevant Vision Statements from the Parks, Trails, and Open Lands Master Plan (2016)

1. Capture opportunities to **protect open lands** and to ensure residents have the **chance to enjoy nature**; partner for success in being stewards of the city’s **natural resources and beautiful landscapes**; **acquire high-quality** properties in advance of development **to connect open lands along river and stream corridors**, retain **scenic views** and support **agriculture**.

2. Add to trail offerings and make them accessible to more people; **diversify the types** of trails available; **connect gaps** in the existing trail network and **plan for expansion to underserved areas**.

6. Add to the City’s capacity to care for parks, trails, open lands and recreation facilities in order to improve their condition and offerings. **Provide the capital and staffing resources necessary** to maintain a system which keeps up as Greeley’s population expands.



# 02/ **FOUNDATION**



This chapter establishes the foundation for recommendations by providing a summary of existing resources, public needs and perceptions, areas of ecological significance, and future growth impacts. All of these factors play a role in how Natural Areas & Trails operates and thrives in the next 5 years.

## EXISTING NATURAL AREAS, OPEN LANDS, AND SIMILAR PROPERTIES

The Natural Areas & Trails Division manages a portfolio of properties that provide for a range of public and natural resource benefits, as do many other City departments and partners. For example, the parks managed by the Parks Division also provide opportunities to connect to green spaces. Natural areas primarily exist along the Poudre River and Sheep Draw corridors, but are also interspersed throughout the community as smaller neighborhood properties (Table 1). These properties are shown on Map 1.

In addition to the lands managed by Natural Areas & Trails Division and separately by the Parks Divisions, other City and partner agencies manage properties that provide access to nature and improve the quality of life, wellness, and experience of Greeley's residents (Table 2). For example, farms and ranches acquired for water rights, and later managed by Natural Areas & Trails, may accomplish multiple goals, such as preservation of heritage sites, cultural and environmental interpretation, and passive recreation.






Table 1 / Natural Areas & Trails Managed Property Definitions

	DEVELOPED PARKLAND	NATURAL AREAS
<b>Definition</b>	Developed parks and sports complexes, which are characterized by high levels of facility development and high levels of use, such as organized sports, dog exercise areas, group gatherings, and special events.	Lands in public ownership that protect environmentally sensitive resources and corridors and are managed by the Natural Areas & Trails Division. Recreational use varies based on the resources; nature-based passive recreation is emphasized.  Some natural areas may remain undeveloped and may limit or prohibit public access in perpetuity for resource conservation, such as viewsheds, community separators, agricultural lands, high value habitat areas, etc.
<b>No. within the LREGA</b>	45	29
<b>Acres (2020)</b>	602	1,068
<b>Public Access</b>	High	Moderate
<b>Operational Cost</b>	High (Managed separately by Parks Division)	Moderate
<b>Property Example</b>		

Twin Rivers Park

Gateway Lakes Natural Area

Table 2 / Other Properties Definitions

	OPEN LANDS				
	Schools	Partner Agency Properties	Utility Easements	Storm Drainage	Conservation Easements/ Working Farms and Ranches
Definition	Playgrounds and athletic fields that are available for recreation. These are typically only available to the public outside of school hours. The acres listed include the entire school property.	Conserved lands that are not managed by the City, such as the Poudre Learning Center, State Wildlife Areas, and sometimes private lands. These lands play a role in connecting people and wildlife to nature.	Electric, water, and sewer easements and rights-of-ways that could serve as trail corridors and visual greenspace.	Other properties that have been purchased by City departments, such as Water and Sewer, and Stormwater, for water rights, stormwater conveyance and detention basins and also provide habitat values.	Agricultural lands, community buffers, protected viewsheds, and even high value wildlife habitat can typically be conserved by a conservation easement. Conservation easements protect resource values while keeping lands in private ownership.
No. within the LREGA	33	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Acres (2020)	573	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Public Access	Limited	Moderate (Public access to SWAs with Fishing or Hunting License)	Limited	Limited	None
Operational Cost	High (Managed by School District)	Moderate (Varies)	Moderate-Very Low (Many are or could be used as trail corridors)	Low (Managed by other City departments)	Very Low - None
Property Example					
	Monfort Elementary School	Mitani Tokuyasu SWA	West Grapevine Ditch between 13th Street Road @ Peakview Park and 16th Street	Eagle View Pond	JB Jones Natural Area



# NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES

Greeley currently has a robust system of trails and paths for non-motorized users that includes: off-street trails; soft surface trails; subdivision trails; sidepaths; and bikeways (Table 3).

Natural Areas & Trails maintains 30 miles of off-street trails. The Poudre River Trail runs east-west along the northern edge of Greeley from Island Grove Park and connects to Windsor and communities further west. Sheep Draw Trail parallels the Sheep Draw stream corridor, starting at the Cottonwood Bend Natural Area on the Poudre River, and traverses south through the Pumpkin Ridge and McCloskey Trail Natural Areas. Once a final trail connection is completed under the 83<sup>rd</sup> Avenue bridge, the Sheep Draw Trail will be connected all the way to the Pebble Brook neighborhood near Highway 34. Soft surface loop trails exist within several of the natural areas.

Segments of off-street trails are scattered throughout the city in subdivisions. Those trails are maintained by homeowners associations.

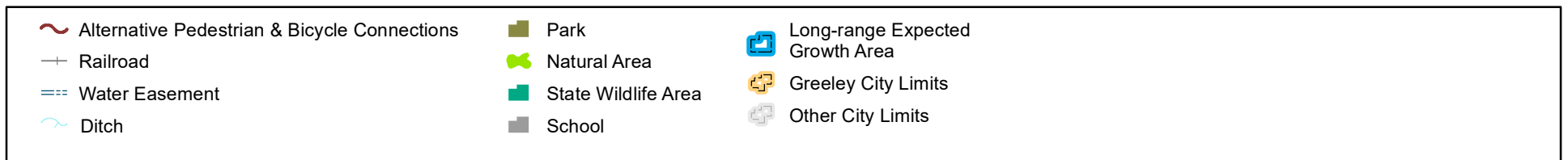
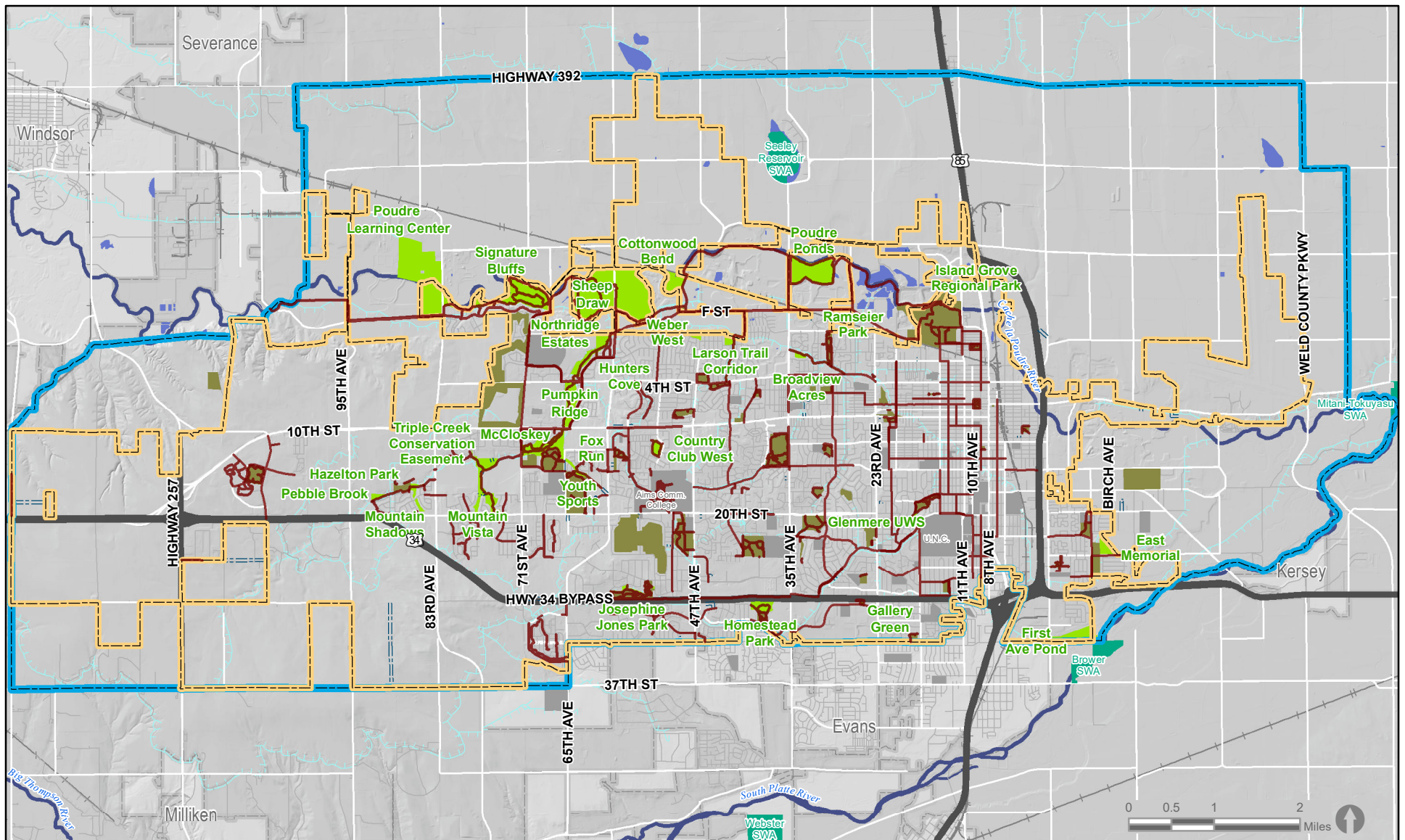
There are approximately 27 miles of sidepaths (shared use paths) within Greeley, primarily located on major grid roads, such as 47th Avenue, 35th Avenue and 20th Street. Sidepaths provide important connections from north to south along 59th, 47th and 35th Avenues and east to west along 4th Street, 20th Street and a portion of Highway 34. Currently all these facilities are either asphalt or concrete. With a few exceptions, Natural Areas & Trails does not manage or maintain these sidepaths.

Bikeways provide transportation corridors to key destinations and natural areas within the city. These corridors are typically within the right-of-way; most are managed by the Public Works Department. There is a large concentration of bikeways within the historic downtown, and along major roadway corridors west of downtown.

Table 3 / Non-motorized Facility Definitions

DEFINITIONS	MILES (2020)
<b>Natural Area Trails</b> Off-street trails are dedicated to non-motorized uses that are outside of the road right-of-way, and are often along utility, railroad, drainage or natural corridors, or through natural areas. They include concrete and soft surface trails.	30 (23 miles concrete, 7 miles soft surface)
<b>Sidepaths (Shared Use Path)*</b> Sidepaths are secondary shared use paths managed by Public Works that provide connections to nature. Sidepaths are dedicated to non-motorized users (bicycles and pedestrians) that are within or immediately adjacent to the road right-of-way, but are separated from the street by a curb or median. They differ from sidewalks in that they are wide enough (10 to 12 feet) for multiple uses and often designated as bicycle facilities.	27
<b>Subdivision Trail*</b> Subdivision trails are shared use paths not managed by the City that are constructed as part of a specific development (usually a residential neighborhood). Most provide important connections to the City's trail system.	10
<b>Bikeways*</b> On-street bicycle facilities are important Public Works connectors between off-street trails and between parks and other community destinations. They could be in the form of bike lanes, signed routes, or separated bikeways.	48

*\*These amenities are not managed by the Natural Areas & Trails Division.*



Map 1 / Existing Conditions

# The Weld County Community Health Survey shows...

- Since 2010, the percent of residents reporting they have high blood pressure, diabetes, and overweight or obesity increased whereas asthma stayed the same. However, in 2016 these chronic conditions are all lower than the U.S. rates.
- Diabetes and overweight and obesity disproportionately impact Hispanic and Latino residents.
- The Greeley/Evans region of the county had the highest rate of residents with asthma and overweight or obesity.
- Fair/poor physical health was more often reported by residents who lived in Greeley/Evans as compared to the rest of Weld County (17%).
- 1 in 5 Greeley/Evans residents report they currently have depression, anxiety, or another mental health condition.

Completed every three years, most recently in 2016, this report assesses local-level data on health status, health behaviors, and needs of residents. (Data from 2019 was not available at the time of this Plan.) While the following indicators can be improved through access to nature, there are other significant contributing factors (e.g. socioeconomics, level of activity, etc.). The report summarizes data for the Greeley and Evans areas jointly.

## PUBLIC HEALTH

A look at modern headlines underscore how crucial close-to-home green spaces are to Greeley's quality of life: "Pandemic proves we need open spaces," "Open space plays a vital role in the pandemic," and "In a pandemic, parks are keeping us alive." During the COVID-19 crisis, people started turning to parks, trails, and natural areas like never before—for fresh air, safe space, exercise, meditation, and much needed peace - a trend that is likely to continue.

Research shows that providing outdoor recreation amenities and access to nature, indeed, are a potent force for our physical, mental, and environmental well-being. "Kids who have access to more green spaces are more likely to remain physically active as they grow older. Children with a park or playground within half a mile of their homes are almost five times more likely to be a healthy weight than children without playgrounds or parks nearby" (Generation Wild, Get Outdoors Colorado). A 2020 study published in *Science Advances* showed children that were allowed to play in more natural and biodiverse nature spaces showed better immunity and less auto-immune diseases than children who

didn't play in nature (Roslund et al 2020). The Thriving Weld Active Living workgroup, a county-wide partnership, has introduced [Outdoor Rx](#), a new initiative aimed at getting people outdoors by providing an online map of outdoor recreation amenities and tools and promotional materials.

A 2018 study in urban Philadelphia demonstrated that even small green spaces with modest amenities have significant benefits to the health of those that lived near these "pocket" green spaces, as compared to those that didn't have easy access to nature in their neighborhood (South et al).

It may take decades to move the needle on chronic diseases even with evidence-based interventions. Research shows that investing in local well-being initiatives could improve the quality of life and increase longevity for the community.





## GAPS AND BARRIERS TO ACCESS

Greeley's City Council reads a quote from Greeley resident Gelene McDonald during each Council meeting – “If you belittle what you have... it becomes less. If you appreciate what you have, it becomes more”. This sentiment can be applied to important lands worth conserving and stewarding as well. These lessons can be taught through educational, volunteering, and leadership opportunities within our natural areas and open lands but most importantly physical and emotional connection with the land.

People will utilize natural areas and trails more if they are located within a reasonable walking distance. As identified in the Inspire Initiative Report, common barriers to getting outdoors include “don't know where to go”, “no places of interest nearby”, and “no way to get there” - all factors that could be mitigated by having natural areas and parks close to home. An adopted standard throughout the land use planning and recreation field has become a 10-minute walk to nature ([National Recreation & Parks Association](#)), a campaign which the City has signed on to.

Map 2 shows how existing natural areas and parks can be accessed within a 10-minute walk (½ mile) without having to cross an arterial street. Approximately 66% of all residences are located within ½ mile of a park or natural area. Areas not currently served by a park or natural area, known as “nature deficit areas,” primarily include the southern edge; between 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue and US 85; and, while mostly undeveloped, the west side of the city. Between the northern city limits and

the LREGA also has minimal park or natural area access, however, residential density is very low to non-existent within and north of the floodplain.

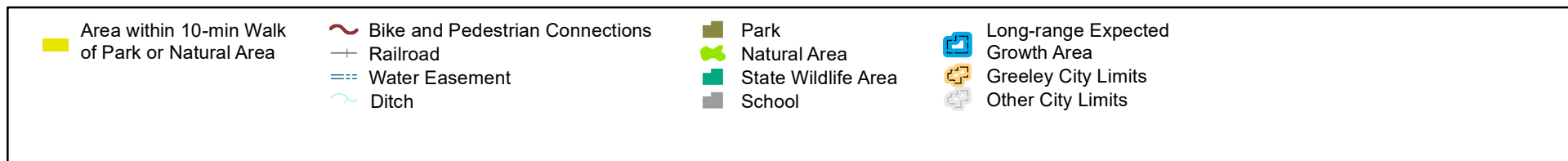
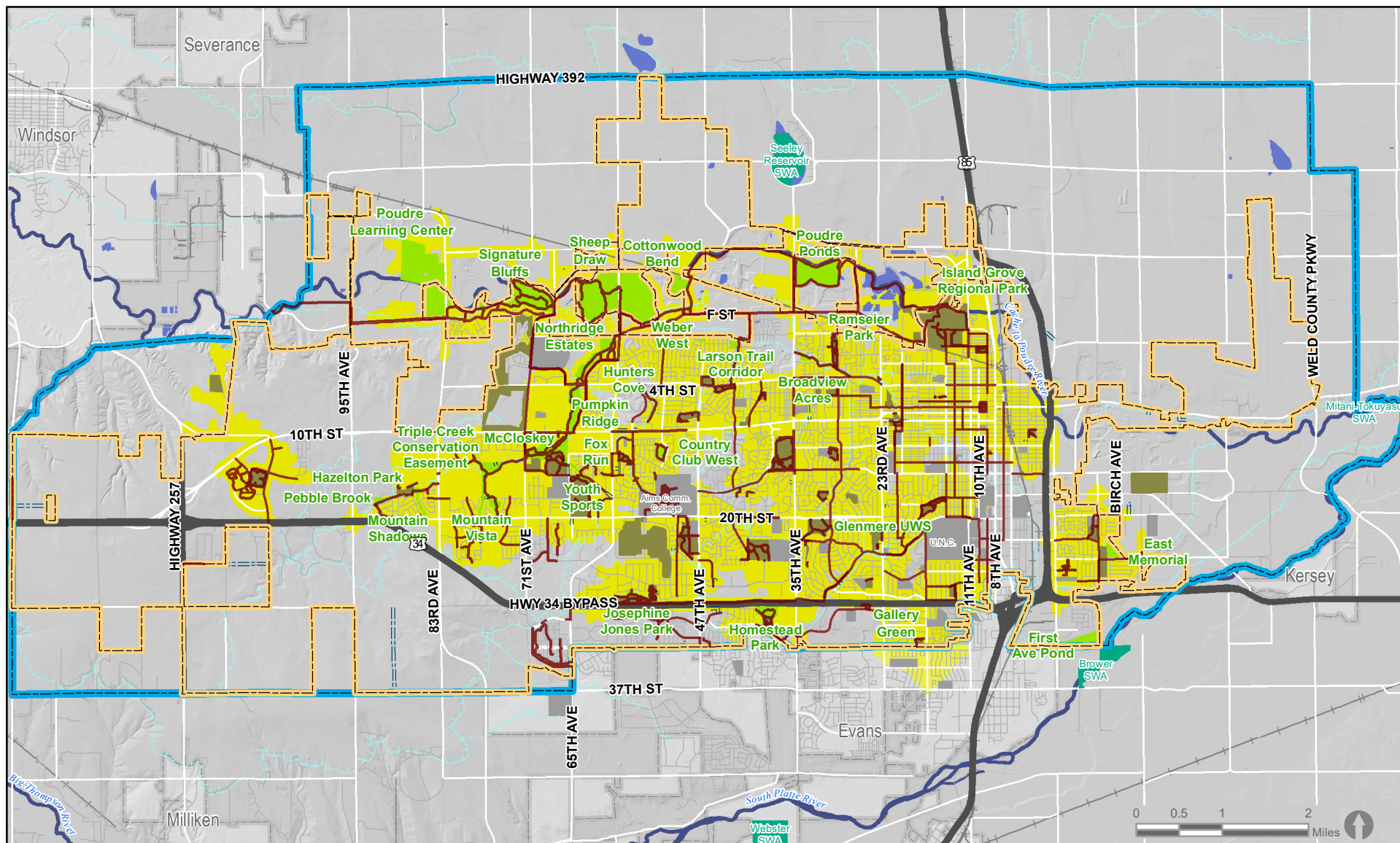
Through the Inspire Initiative Report, youth and adults indicated the opportunities and activities they seek outdoors and the improvements that would encourage them to spend more time outdoors. This provided a place-based understanding of the qualities residents seek in natural experiences. These qualities were translated into a *Nature Score*, a matrix used to uniformly assess parks and natural areas in Greeley for their desirable qualities. A total of 9 out of 45 parks and natural areas within Greeley obtained an 'A' Nature Score. Of the remaining parks and natural areas, 9 obtained a 'B' Nature Score and 25 received a 'C' Nature Score.

Updated 10-minute walk mapping shows that less than half (44%) of Greeley households are located within ½ mile of high or moderate (A or B) quality nature experience (Map 3).

**Kids who have access to more green spaces** are more likely to remain physically active as they grow older.

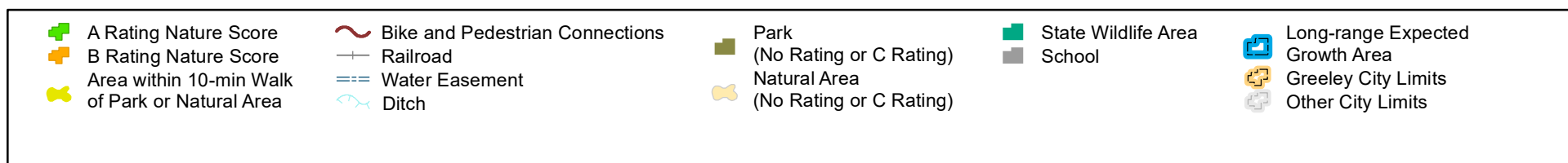
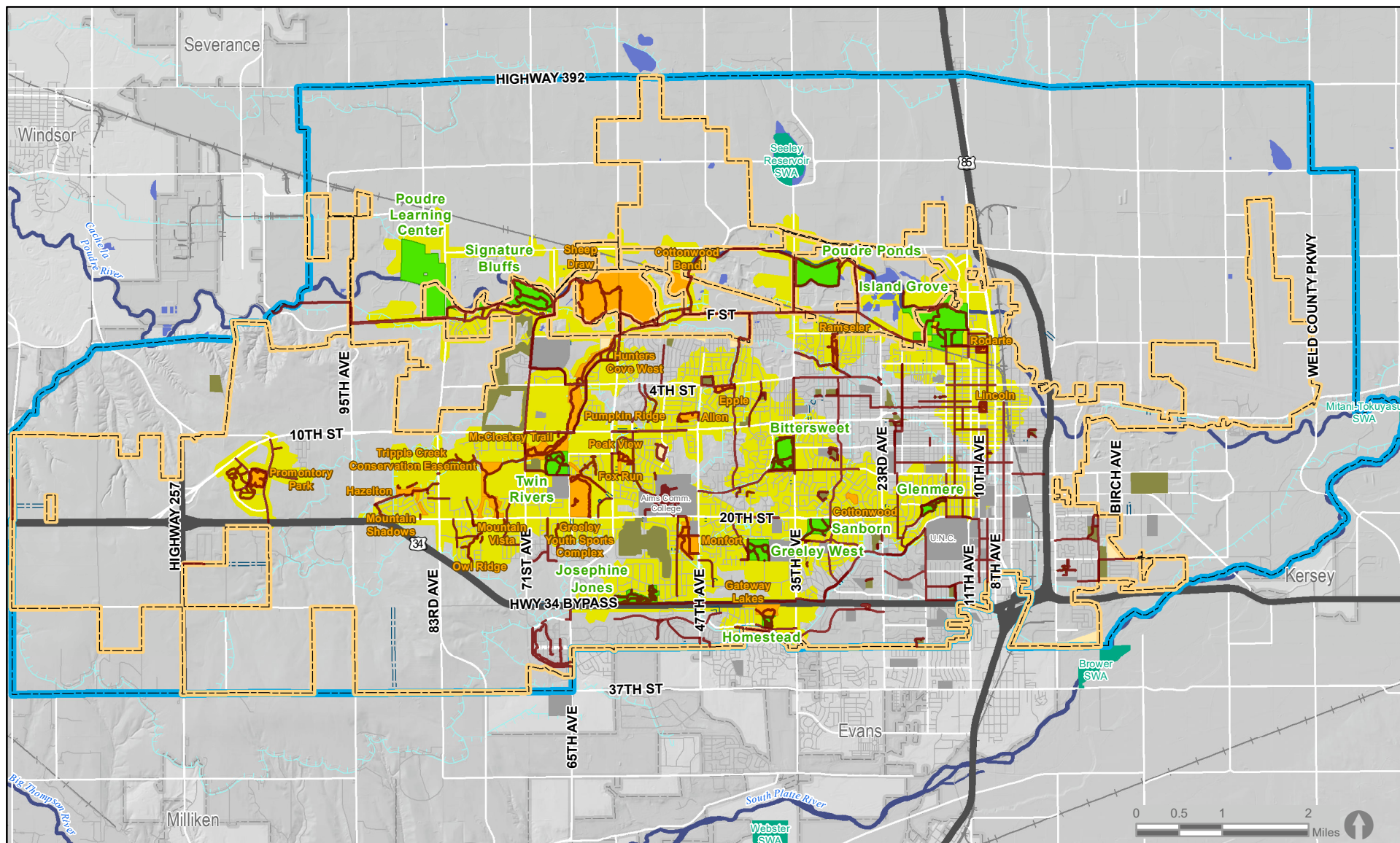
## Easy access to natural areas and trails brings the following public health benefits:

- Physical benefits such as:
  - Lower blood pressure
  - Healthier body weight
  - Lower blood sugar
  - Decreased stress and anxiety
  - Reduced screen time and increased attention span
  - Reduced ADHD symptoms - especially in children
- Treatment for depression, anxiety, PTSD, and other traumatic events
- Shorter hospital stays for patients with views of nature
- Positive impacts to circadian rhythms and improved sleep with less human-created night lighting
- Removal of air pollution by trees and shrubs
- Mitigation of heat island effect in urban settings
- Improved water quality through management of stormwater (also reduces costs to the City)
- Stimulating community cohesion for a stronger, safer, and engaged community



Map 2 / Areas within a 10-minute walk of a Park or Natural Area

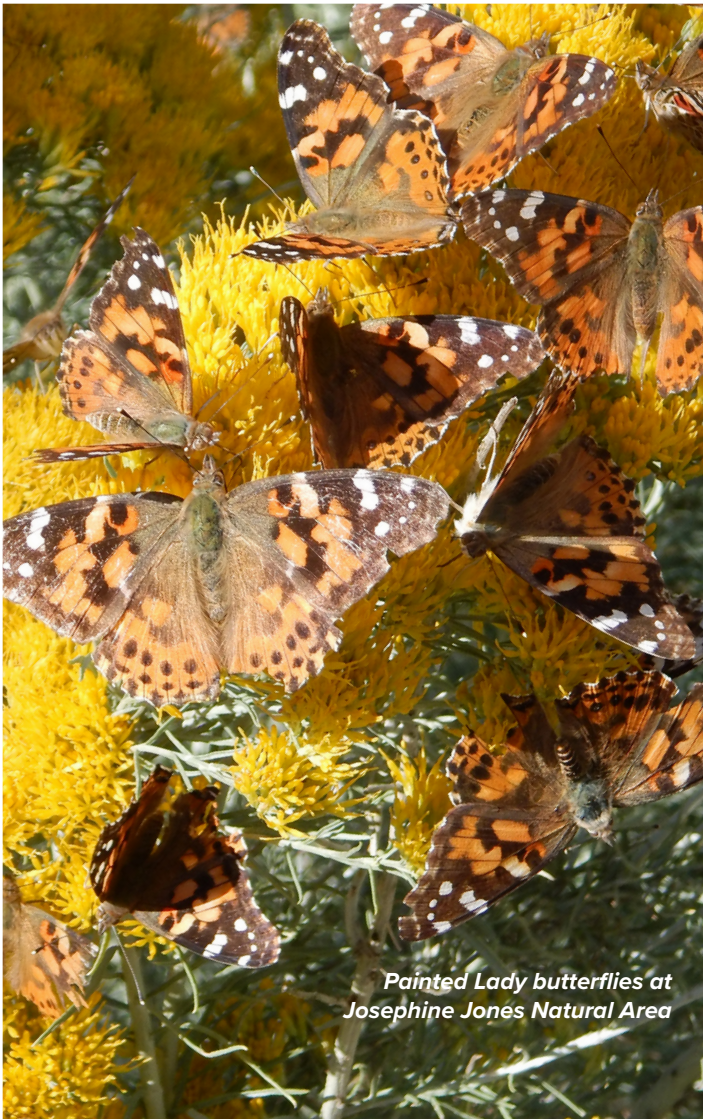




Map 3 / Areas within a 10-minute walk of a High or Moderate Quality Nature Experience (Nature Score A or B)



## AREAS OF ECOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE



*Painted Lady butterflies at  
Josephine Jones Natural Area*

A well managed ecosystem provides numerous environmental benefits, including wildlife diversity and abundance, connectivity for maintaining genetic diversity seasonal use and movement corridor, streams not just for flood management but for conveyance of water to facilitate water rights use and recharge, and many others.

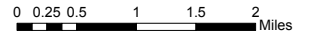
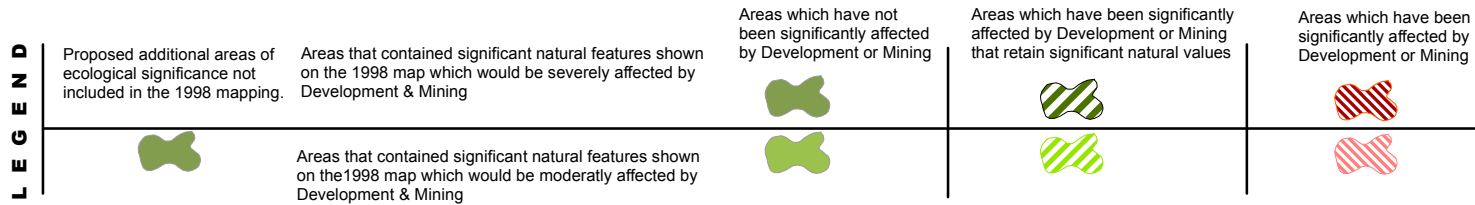
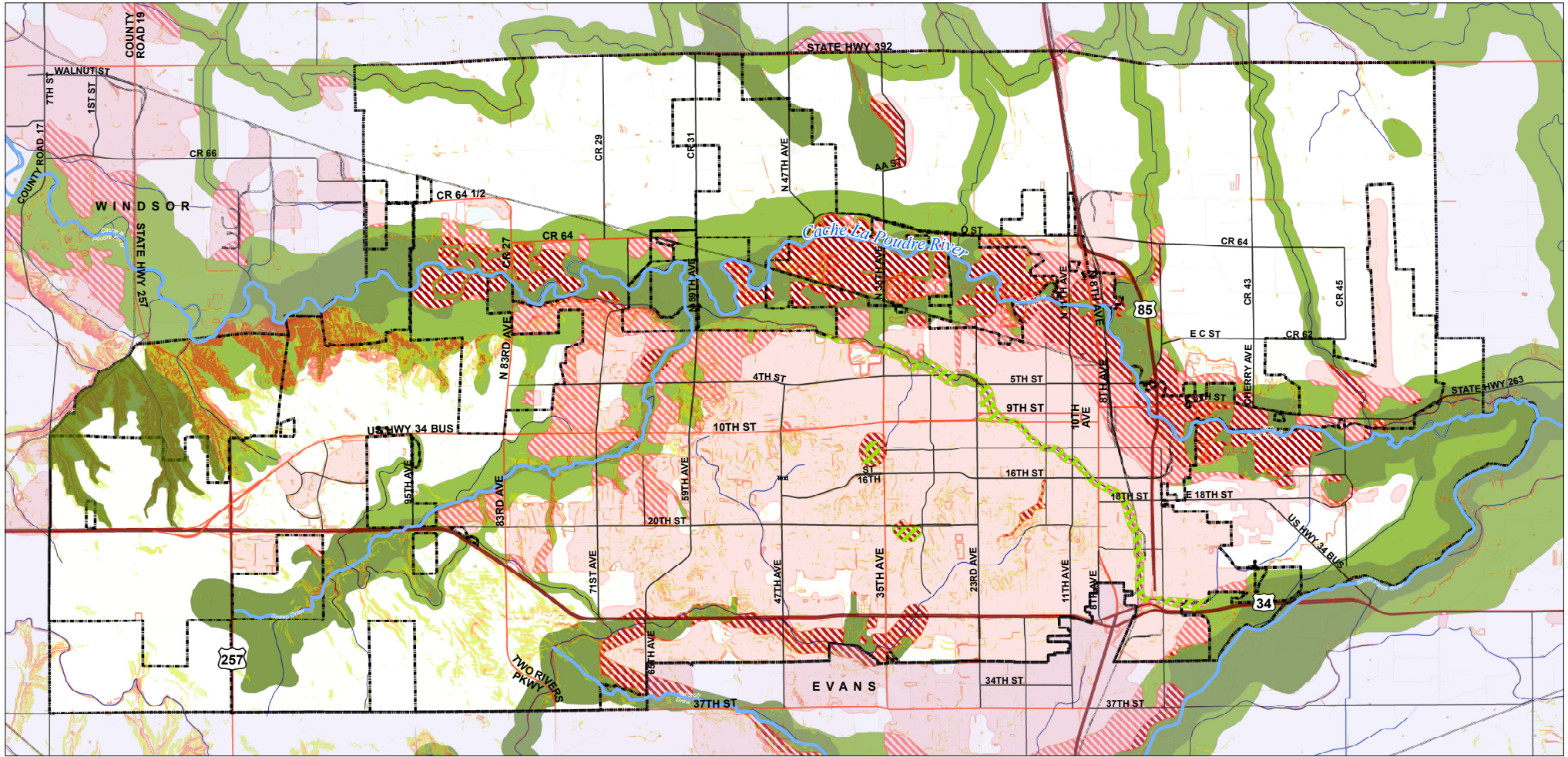
Because of significant community concerns about development and growth impacts on wildlife in the city, an advisory committee was formed by the City Council in 1986 to provide guidance and input on matters affecting wildlife in the community. After other iterations of this committee and additional planning efforts, the Areas of Ecological Significance was adopted in the Greeley Development Code in 1998 (Chapter 18.48). The purpose is to establish standards which will ensure that when property is developed within the city measures are taken to protect and enhance areas of ecological significance, critical wildlife habitat and populations, native and unique plant communities, and valuable natural features that benefit the entire city.

Ecological significance is illustrated by overlaying critical and important wildlife habitat, riparian forests, wetlands, 100-year floodplains, drainages, significant landforms and other resources. These areas are ranked based on the overlapping of different resource layers. Where multiple layers overlap, the ecological significance is rated as “high” whereas a single layer will be rated as “moderate.” The riparian areas along the Cache la Poudre and South Platte River corridors provide the greatest ecological significance with both the Sheep and Ashcroft draws also highlighting important ecological significance.

“High” rated areas are less likely to see residential and commercial development, making them the easiest opportunity for open space and trails. Natural areas and open lands provide functions, also known as “ecosystem services”, that are important to the natural environment and human health, such as water and air filtration, carbon sequestration, and stormwater management. Because of these services, not to mention wildlife habitat impacts, it is best to proceed carefully when developing recreational facilities in these areas.

Map 4 was produced by the City of Greeley’s Community Development team as part of the 2018 Comprehensive Plan to identify areas of ecological significance per the City’s code. It is currently being updated by the Community Development Department and any updated version would supersede this version.





Map prepared by John Barnett 07/19/16

**IMAGINE GREELEY**

**Map 4 / Areas of Ecological Significance** (Imagine Greeley Comprehensive Plan)

## PRIORITY CONSERVATION AREAS

The 10-minute walkability maps, Areas of Ecological Significance, and Imagine Greeley's Future Land Use Map together inform a system of Priority Conservation Areas. These high priority areas were grouped into five categories below and on Map 5. The intent of Priority Conservation Areas is to focus acquisition efforts on the highest conservation values and recreational opportunities, *not* to acquire or protect the entire area. Natural Areas & Trails will pursue conservation projects within these focus areas in partnerships with others, and with willing sellers or donors.



### RIVER CORRIDORS

The Poudre and Platte river systems have been conservation priorities for decades, and are the focus of half a dozen regional efforts such as the Comprehensive Cache la Poudre Greenway Guide, The Lower Poudre River Flood Recovery and Resilience Master Plan, and Poudre River Greenway Initiative. Preserving and restoring these river systems mitigates flooding, improves water quality and wildlife habitat.

### RIPARIAN CORRIDOR/GREENWAY

At a smaller scale, streams and their associated riparian areas can mirror the Poudre River Greenway Initiative. Riparian lands have high ecological value as drainage and wildlife corridors, as well as recreational greenways.

### BLUFFS

This prominent and ecologically important geologic feature rises from the shortgrass prairie in western Greeley. Conservation of the bluffs areas protect viewsheds, wildlife and trail corridors, and specific habitats for native plant and wildlife species.

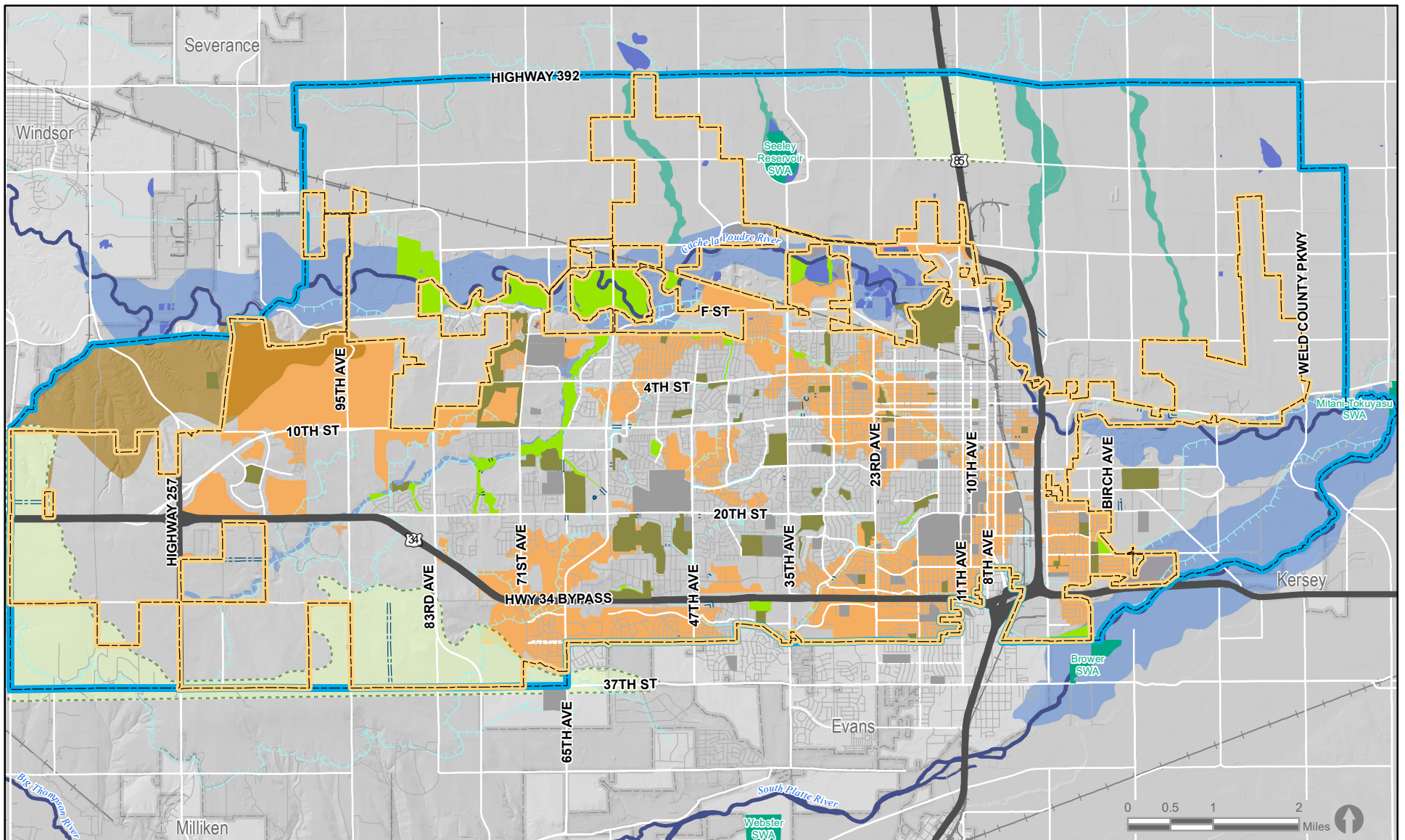
### AGRICULTURAL USES, VIEWS & COMMUNITY SEPARATORS

Greeley's prime agricultural lands have had state and national importance for over a century. Doubling as scenic gateways, our foodshed lies perilously between growing communities. The existing rural character maintains Greeley's identity. Community Separators are supported concepts in Imagine Greeley and the PTOL Plan and outreach is on-going. In most cases, land remains in private ownership with little to no public access.

### NATURE DEFICIT AREAS

Neighborhoods within the city limits that are greater than a 10 minute walk to a high-quality nature area, without crossing an arterial street. These areas tend to exhibit higher concentrated socio-economic risk factors than the city at large indicating residents likely have greater challenges to spending time in nature (see the 2017 Get Outdoors Greeley Report). The Division increases awareness of offerings, connect youth to nature, promote equitable access, and protect valued natural resources.





#### Priority Conservation Area

- Agricultural/ Community Separator\*
- Bluffs\*
- River Corridors\*
- Riparian Corridors\*
- Nature Deficit Area

- Railroad
- Water Easement
- Ditch

- Park
- Natural Area
- State Wildlife Area
- School

- Long-range Expected Growth Area
- City Limits
- Other City Limits

\* As identified in the 2016 PTOL Plan.

Map 5 / Priority Conservation Areas

## FUTURE URBAN GROWTH IMPACTS

### POPULATION AND HOUSING

Greeley is projected to have a population of 125,557 within the next five years under a medium growth scenario and up to 150,000 by 2038 (Greeley Annual Growth and Development Projections Report [AGDPR] 2020, Imagine Greeley 2018) (Figure 1). To maintain the existing ratio of 1,068 acres of open space per a city population of 111,748, an additional 132 acres would need to be conserved in five years.

Within the northern Colorado region, Greeley, Fort Collins, and Windsor were the top three communities to issue new permits for residential buildings (Figure 2). Housing development is a stronger indicator of population growth. Also, with Greeley being one of the more affordable communities within Northern Colorado, with a median home sale price of \$320,000, an affordable housing market will continue to promote population growth.



Figure 1 / Population Scenarios

**Greeley is expected to continue growing in proportion to numerous factors including Greeley's ability to keep attracting residents, the supply and cost of housing, and the availability of jobs.**

As Greeley's population continues to grow, the City will continue to evaluate the recreational and natural area needs of the community in order to ensure a high quality of life and equitable access to nature. It will also be important to proactively identify and conserve lands and the necessary connections to those amenities to maximize both ecological benefits (as discussed in the previous section on Ecologically Sensitive Areas) and community benefits (physical and mental health, retaining a sense of community, etc). Many of the negative impacts commonly associated with growth can be mitigated by Natural Areas & Trails working in a collaborative fashion with urban planners and developers to ensure balance between conservation and development occurs.

## WATER SUPPLY, WATERWAYS, AND WORKING FARMS AND RANCHES

Greeley's "liquid gold" – water – governs the community's ability to change, grow, and prosper. Waterways and the natural areas they support are also important to the community as recreation corridors, visual open space, community separators, and wildlife habitat. Ensuring the water quality of these corridors will promote healthy ecosystems that benefit all. Ditches and other utility corridors can also provide unique trail opportunities for access to nature.

For over 100 years, the City has acquired agricultural lands for their water rights to ensure there is enough water for current and future economic and population growth. Working closely with the Water and Sewer Department, some City-owned working farms and ranches can appropriately incorporate public access and/or wildlife habitat features. Co-purchase of lands between Water and Sewer (for the water) and Natural Areas & Trails (for land conservation and/or outdoor recreation) could leverage departmental funds to pursue properties that otherwise each department on their own could not afford. Water and Sewer typically resells properties it acquires to recoup money for additional water purchases. Natural Areas & Trails would need additional funding to purchase these lands. Alternatively, through conservation easements with willing landowners, Natural Areas & Trails could work to preserve working farms and ranches in perpetuity.

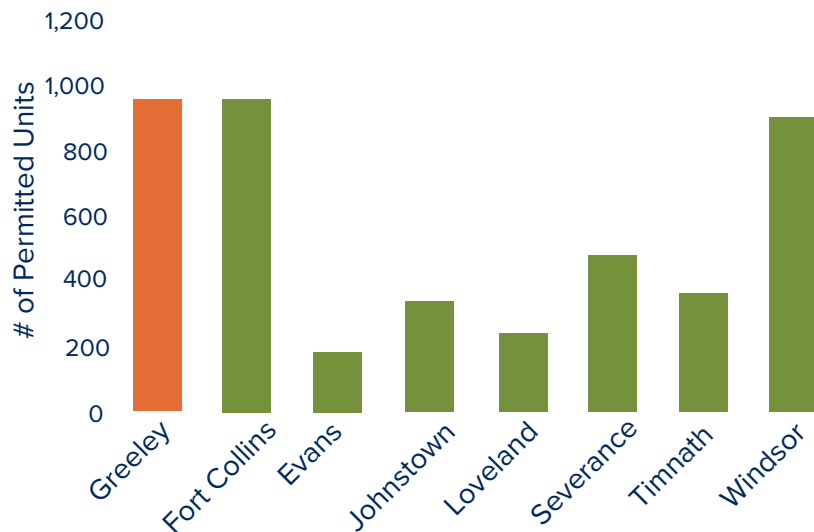


Figure 2 / 2019 Residential Permits

**Within the northern Colorado region, Greeley, Fort Collins, and Windsor were the top three communities to issue new permits for residential buildings.**



## Economic Benefits of Natural Areas & Trails

- **Agriculture.** Working farms and ranches are a cultural and economic cornerstone of Weld County.
- **Economic development.** The high quality of life provided by open space amenities attracts and retains the best and brightest companies and employees.
- **Greater property value.** People like living near them and are willing to pay a premium for the privilege.
- **Recreation and tourism.** Visitors spend money at local businesses.
- **Direct use value.** Residents save money by using the natural areas at no- or low-cost instead of having to pay to participate in these activities elsewhere.
- **Ecosystem services.** A healthy ecosystem can help pre-treat stormwater, mitigate floods, lower ambient temperatures, sequester carbon, and reduce soil erosion. These services provided by nature lessens cost to treat water, recover after floods, cool homes, and restore soil-eroded lands.

## ECONOMY

Greeley's natural areas, nature-based recreation areas, and conserved working farms and ranches provide enjoyment, recreation, costs savings, and local revenues that directly and indirectly bolster the economy. There are over 2,700 different employers in Greeley ranging from small family-owned startup companies to state colleges, from extensive healthcare facilities to regional and national retail trade. Surprisingly, Arts, Entertainment & Recreation and Fishing & Hunting industries in Greeley comprise less than 2%. The average across the Front Range is 10%, and in the mountains over 40%, suggesting that Greeley is well below its potential in attracting visitors who spend money at local businesses that focus in these industries (AGDPR 2020).

In a competitive global economy, companies and employees have a world of choices about where to locate and expand their business. Having great opportunities for outdoor recreation and benefits associated with conserved lands is attractive to both employers who seek a high quality of life for their employees and visitors who wish to spend time visiting and recreating in the community. Further, outdoor recreation retailers and manufacturers seek to be located in areas where their products can be tested with direct connections to the target customers.

## Colorado Tourism and Recreation Accounts For:

\$62BILLION  
to Colorado's economy  
511KJOBS

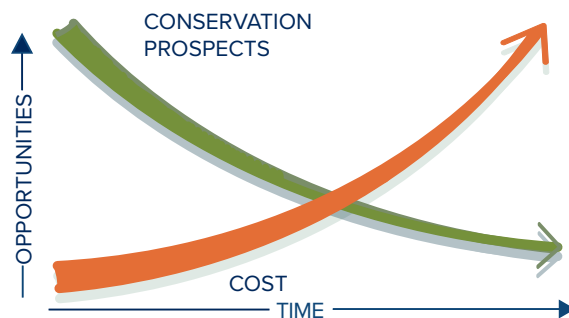
\$9BILLION  
in state & local tax dollars

# 03/ **STRATEGIC PLAN FRAMEWORK**

This chapter describes the Natural Areas & Trails Division strategic framework in order to meet the community's needs, address identified issues, and sustainably steward the lands. First is an analysis of the current financial condition of Natural Areas & Trails. This is followed by a series of goals and objectives to direct future actions. Measurable metrics are outlined to effectively and efficiently track progress towards achieving the goals and objectives.

## Planning for the Future

As Greeley's population continues to grow, the City should continue to evaluate the recreational and ecological values of the community in order to ensure a high quality of life and equitable access to nature. It will also be important to proactively identify and conserve lands and the necessary connections to those amenities to maximize both ecological benefits and community benefits. As more land is developed over time, conservation opportunities may be lost, and the land will become more costly to conserve. Demographic changes will also occur with population growth and time.



## FINANCIAL FUTURES

### BUILDING ON SUCCESSES

The PTOL Plan outlined goals and objectives for the Culture, Parks and Recreation Department, one of which was to create the Natural Areas & Trails Division. Less than five years later, significant accomplishments stemming from the PTOL Plan have included:

- Creation of Natural Areas & Trails Division staff team and budgets
- Completion of Sheep Draw Trail Segment 2 (minus western 1,200 foot connection to 83rd Ave)
- Planning and design (working with willing landowners) of Greeley Canal #3 Trail completion in early 2021
- Acquisition of Cottonwood Bend Natural Area (173 acres); additional 29 acres at Signature Bluffs Natural Area; Pebble Brook (6 acres); and Fox Run (24 acres)

These major milestones were made possible through the City's general fund, dedicated project funds, impact fees, and various grants and donations. Still, a sizable gap remains in funding, facilities, and services to achieve the vision established in 2016 and reaffirmed in 2018 via Imagine Greeley.

### FUNDING OVERVIEW

To understand this Strategic Plan, first we need to understand the funding sources for the Natural Areas and Trails Division:

- General Fund (Operations based on 2020 budget) – ~\$680,000
- Conservation Trust Fund (Lottery) – varies, ~\$50,000/year
- Capital Fund for trail repair/specific projects have been funded – varies, \$275,000 annually (in 2020 \$200,000 was provided by Weld County)
- Trails Development Fee – varies on amount of development, ~\$300,000 per year
- Grants and Other Sources – varies by project

While variable per year, the total 2020 operations and projects budget is approximately \$1.3 million. The average budget over the last three years has been \$800,000. Compare that to the \$88 million backlog of deferred maintenance needs and Capital Improvement Projects approved in past plans.

Funding plays an integral role in determining how and when the goals, objectives and metrics in this Strategic Plan will be achieved. The current level of operational funding from existing funding streams is not sufficient to maintain existing natural areas or the trail system at a desired level of service.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The majority of current Culture, Parks & Recreation Department's portion of the impact fees and food tax largely go toward parks and indoor facilities. Additionally, the food tax helps fund streets, sidewalks, and other City facilities.



This is in part because as public use increases – a function of visitation, intensity of recreational activities, and proximity to urban areas – the long-term costs to manage a property also increase. These increased operational costs reduce the Division’s capacity to acquire more land or build trails. Conversely, properties that generally do not allow public access, such as conservation easements, typically have lower operational costs and in some cases generate revenue. Average costs of four types of lands are shown in Table 4.

*Table 4 / Average Costs per Acre by Natural Area Type*

TYPE OF LAND	ACQUISITION/ CONSERVATION COSTS (PER ACRE)	CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT & RESTORATION COSTS (PER ACRE)	ANNUAL O&M COSTS (PER ACRE)
Floodplain	\$6,250	\$10,000	\$400
Community Separator Land	\$12,000	\$2,000	\$100
Urban Land	\$35,000	\$5,000	\$500
Open Lands (Conservation Easements, No Public Access)	\$10,000	\$0	\$100*

\* Does not account for potential enforcement and litigation of violation.

Currently in Colorado, the largest 20 cities all have access to some form of dedicated open space funding, except for Pueblo (#9), Greeley (#11), and Grand Junction (#18). Compared to Longmont, Fort Collins, Cheyenne, and Santa Fe, which are close cousins to Greeley in geography, population, and demographic trends, Greeley’s Natural Areas & Trails annual operating budget is \$680K and it shows – all peer communities have conserved more property and built more miles of trails. Programs with large acres of conserved land typically have larger budgets which are often supported by dedicated sales tax dollars from either the municipality or the county. The following peer cities were chosen as they represent free standing communities near large metro areas, typically with a small university or college, and are similar in population and demographics (Table 5).

## What could be accomplished in the next 10+ years with or without a new funding source?

Natural Areas & Trails’ current revenues and capacity would only add 500 acres of natural area and five miles of trail. If a dedicated funding source, such as a 10 year 0.25% sales tax, were approved by Greeley voters the acres conserved could nearly triple over just 10 years.



Table 5 / Peer Community Benchmarks

	GREELEY	LONGMONT	FORT COLLINS	CHEYENNE	SANTA FE
<b>Population</b>	111,748 (AGDPR 2020)	95,986 (Census 2018)	167,823 (Census 2018)	63,243 (Census 2018)	84,605 (Census 2018)
<b>University/College Student Resident Population</b>	12,000	NA	33,000	~2,000 (41% of 5000 are full time)	15,000
<b>Dedicated Open Space/Trails Funding Source (Year Approved)</b>	City: <b>No</b>  County: <b>No</b>	City: <b>\$75 million</b> , 13- year, 0.2% sales tax (2007)  Boulder County: <b>\$275 million</b> , .475% sales tax (multiple) used for joint projects	City: <b>\$150 million</b> , 25- year, .25% sales tax (2002)  A portion of Larimer County: <b>\$262 million</b> , 25-year, .25% sales tax (2014)	City: No  Laramie County: <b>\$9 million</b> , 0.1% sales tax (2017)	City: <b>\$30 million bond</b> (2008)
<b>Annual Budget</b>	<b>\$1.3 million</b>	<b>\$4 million</b> (2018 Open Space Plan)	<b>\$13 million</b>	Unidentifiable as it is included with Parks, Rec, and Golf. Belvoir Ranch is managed by Public Works Budget	<b>\$6.6 million</b> (includes Parks, Trails and Watershed)
<b>Acres Managed</b>	<b>1,068</b>	<b>4,569</b> (2018 Open Space plan)	<b>36,600</b> (Includes properties outside of City limits, such as Soapstone Prairie Natural Area)	<b>700</b> plus the <b>18,800</b> acre Belvoir Ranch is managed by Public Works (2014 Plan)	<b>4,000</b> (2017 POSTR Plan)
<b>Miles of Trail</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>172</b>

## The largest 20 cities in Colorado

all have access to some form of dedicated open space funding, except for Pueblo (#9), Greeley (#11), and Grand Junction (#18).

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goals and objectives for this strategic plan are drawn from the PTOL Plan, the Inspire Initiative Report, and the 2018 Imagine Greeley Comprehensive Plan. In addition, this Plan's steering committee and public engagement have further shaped the direction of the strategy. Finally, they have been further refined based on critical program needs and activities needed for an impactful five-year strategic plan.

The goals and objectives are organized around six strategic priorities. Each theme has one overarching goal that is directly related to Natural Areas & Trails' vision and mission. Under each goal is a series of objectives that act on that goal.



Sustainable  
Funding



Connections  
to Nature



Stewardship



Community  
Connections



Operational  
Excellence



Capital Planning



*Cache la Poudre River*





## Sustainable Funding



***Sustainable Funding Goal | Develop and maintain sustainable funding sources to sustainably and equitably acquire, restore, and maintain natural areas and a trail system in perpetuity for all Greeley residents.***

Current funding levels have allowed the Division to build an organizational foundation upon which a more robust program can be built. While Natural Areas & Trails currently manages over 1,000 acres of natural areas and over 30 miles of off-street trails, current funding levels are not sufficient for meaningful land acquisition, restoration, capital replacement, or connections with the community through environmental education or volunteer services.

While a few goals can be achieved with current funding sources, hard choices are imminent in order to plan and prioritize allocations of available funding. Securing a dedicated open space funding source in the near future will be critical for the success of a land conservation strategy within Greeley, especially considering the pace of growth in the past several years and the projected growth by the State demographer over the next thirty years in the north Front Range region.

## **Objectives**

- SF 1.** Secure an open space sales tax or other dedicated funding mechanism to realize the City's stated goals in Imagine Greeley, this plan, and previous planning efforts.
- SF 2.** Once a dedicated funding mechanism is secured, establish criteria for identifying equitable priorities for funding in each priority conservation area. Regularly report spending and acquisitions to the Parks & Recreation Board.
- SF 3.** Develop and maintain adequate, and long-term, life-cycle capital replacement funding.
- SF 4.** Develop and maintain adequate, and long-term, land restoration funding.
- SF 5.** Secure sufficient capital and operational funding to develop facilities and amenities, maintain sites, partner with the community on educational programming for residents and users, and engage volunteers on natural areas properties.
- SF 6.** Develop financial and other incentives with partners for private lands conservation and habitat improvement projects (e.g. conservation easements, gardens in a box, school yards, small grants, urban agriculture, etc.).
- SF 7.** Leverage dedicated and general fund sources by pursuing grants, private donations, sponsorships, and financial partnerships with other municipalities, Weld County, and the State of Colorado departments and agencies.





## Connections to Nature



*Poudre River Trail*

***Connections to Nature Goal | Equitably create physical connections to nature for all Greeley residents, through acquisition of high-value lands and expansion of the City's trail system.***

A strong connection to nature is critical to a community's wellbeing, especially as Greeley grows and longstanding areas that were once used for unstructured play and exploration become developed. Conserving high value wildlife habitat, prime agricultural lands, urban nature hubs, and community gateways help create a more desirable community to attract businesses and residents alike, thus boosting economic development. Additionally, assessing ways to add potential trail connections, such as via utility corridors or abandoned railroad rights-of-ways, as well as reducing barriers across these corridors. As noted in the 2018 study in Philadelphia (Chapter 2), the benefits of even modest additional nature connections are amplified in communities that have historically been underserved.



## Objectives

- CN1.** Conserve additional lands within Priority Conservation Areas (PCAs) in the City's LREGA that have high value wildlife habitat, wildlife movement corridors, and/or high potential to enhance connections to nature for Greeley residents. Long-term, acquisitions will be equitably dispersed among Priority Conservation Areas based on goals developed and tracked in Objective SF2.
- CN 2.** Work with partners such as Stormwater, Parks, school districts, and others to improve access for "nature deficit areas" of the city through the acquisition and restoration of urban nature amenities based on goals developed in Objective SF2.
- CN 3.** Complete short-term priority trail projects (detailed in Action Items) as funding is secured to eliminate trail gaps that are essential to improving the connectivity of the existing off-street trail system, and begin design of mid-term projects. Trail connections should be prioritized in "nature deficit areas" first.
- CN 4.** Leverage opportunities that are present in the City's open lands that are managed by various City departments in order to benefit access, recreation, and wildlife habitat improvements, including:
- Trails in utility easements and drainage ways;
  - Natural functions of stormwater retention sites, rain gardens, bioswales;
  - Water & Sewer Department agricultural properties;
  - Underrepresented outdoor recreation opportunities, such as water recreation and mountain biking;
  - Schools and school yards; and,
  - New park development and existing park renovations to establish native vegetation areas and attract and increase habitat diversity.
- CN 5.** Ensure important private landscapes and lands essential to the region's history and identity are conserved within PCAs by utilizing conservation easements, development review, and other land use mechanisms, including:
- Important geologic landforms (e.g. the Bluffs);
  - Community separators;
  - Agricultural lands (e.g. - USDA-NRCS easement programs);
  - Gateway viewsheds; and
  - Historical or other unique landscapes.
- CN 6.** Work with willing landowners and partners to strategically conserve working farms and ranches that have heritage and conservation values (i.e., prime soils/farmland, water conservation, wildlife habitat, etc.) to allow agricultural land to remain sustainable and productive, typically in private ownership.
- CN 7.** Leverage regional partnerships for landscape-scale conservation outside the LREGA, including the South Platte and Poudre River corridors, adjacent community separator areas, the Laramie foothills mountains to plains conservation area, and connections to the Pawnee National Grasslands.
- CN 8.** Develop and maintain a 10-minute walk GIS layer to inform land acquisition and trail connectivity decisions in the future, and more specifically delineate and update the Nature Deficit PCA.



## Stewardship



*McCloskey Natural Area -  
Volunteers building the Firefly Trail*

***Stewardship Goal | Restore and perpetually manage lands with high conservation value for the benefit of natural habitats and all Greeley residents.***

The ongoing stewardship of natural areas, trails, and open lands is key to ensuring healthy lands and efficient and effective management of public resources. Healthy lands are less expensive to maintain, require less pesticides, reduce negative impacts to neighbors, and provide “ecosystem services” which make it less expensive to, for example, treat stormwater that has already been filtered by a functional wetland.

## Objectives

- ST 1.** Develop management and restoration plans for all Natural Area & Trail Division properties that identify high functioning ecosystems, impacted lands, and management strategies to protect and restore systems while providing for equitable community recreational and/or educational activities where ecologically sustainable. Establish baseline for river and upland restoration metrics.
- ST 2.** Restore ecological functions of impacted landscapes through noxious weed management and native vegetation establishment, and by using natural processes such as prescribed fire, grazing, or other practices to increase long-term ecological health.
- ST 3.** Pursue river restoration projects with internal and external partners in priority reaches of the Sheep Draw, and Poudre and South Platte Rivers to improve important river functions. Priority projects should focus on floodplain connectivity, natural vegetation recruitment, natural erosional and deposition processes, flood intensity mitigation, fish passage, aquatic species and wildlife habitat, and water quality improvements. Projects that have high ecological merits along with significant social equity or justice components (e.g. flood mitigation, river access, etc.) should be prioritized.
- ST 4.** Create and maintain wildlife habitat and movement connectivity GIS mapping layer to help direct land acquisition and small grant priorities.
- ST 5.** Ensure infrastructure and amenities minimize impacts to wildlife movement and habitat fragmentation and PCAs, such as wildlife-friendly fencing, trail design and location, and wildlife under/overpasses. Advocate for external infrastructure projects such as road, utility, energy, and others to use the avoid/minimize/mitigate hierarchy to lessen impacts on City properties.
- ST 6.** Develop and apply management area categories for existing and future natural areas properties that represent a spectrum of protection/use from preserve areas to urban nature hubs.
- ST 7.** Assess names of existing and future properties to ensure inclusive and culturally appropriate naming of natural areas and trail corridors. Update the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board by-laws and naming process to include Natural Areas & Trails lands.
- ST 8.** Develop a Ranger program within the Natural Areas & Trails system to provide education and enforcement of the regulations (user safety, wildlife impacts, etc) through proactive environmental education, and enforcement of regulations on natural areas and trails.
- ST 9.** Complete a feasibility study of potential locations within the city for wetland restoration projects with the ability to develop mitigation banking and credits.
- ST 10.** Develop a comprehensive monitoring program for vegetation, wildlife, river health, and usage to make informed management decisions. Conduct regular monitoring with partners such as UNC, other City departments, and volunteers to track ecological health indicators, document user activity, identify trends, assess impacts to wildlife habitat, and evaluate equity in system access and usage.





## Community Connections



***Community Connections Goal | Connect residents to nature by partnering with the community to provide inclusive and equitable educational, volunteering, and leadership opportunities for all Greeley residents.***

Responsibly stewarding a community's natural resources is only possible through a deeply rooted community-wide conservation ethic. Local natural areas provide amazing opportunities to learn in these living laboratories for students and the community alike. A community-wide understanding and appreciation of the importance and benefits of nature and the effort involved in its care is vital to the long-term support of Natural Areas & Trails programs.

## Objectives

- CC 1.** Partner with community members to develop and conduct community programming, events, and other outreach and communication efforts for the community that provide education about the benefits of nature, while providing content in an inclusive and accessible manner for all. Include bilingual written and verbal communications, culturally relevant content inclusive to various communities within Greeley, events for all ages and abilities, etc. whenever possible.
- CC 2.** Support the Poudre Learning Center, school districts, UNC, and other partners in youth education and engagement efforts and partner on developing additional Science/ Technology/ Engineering/ Arts/ Math (STEAM) educational opportunities for the entire community.
- CC 3.** Leverage City staff capacity through a robust volunteer program. Encourage volunteerism and a community conservation ethic by providing opportunities for people of all abilities to assist in maintaining and restoring natural areas. Continue, and make permanent, the partnership with Volunteers for Outdoors Colorado (VOC) Volunteer Partnership Coordinator staff position, housed within Natural Areas & Trails.
- CC 4.** Conduct periodic (ideally annual) community surveys on user satisfaction with the Natural Areas & Trails system and user surveys to the following growing demographic groups in Greeley that typically require unique and targeted outreach, including but not limited to active seniors, communities of color, underserved populations, and persons with disabilities.
- CC 5.** Increase public awareness of Natural Areas & Trails offerings through partnerships to develop marketing, communications, and branding campaigns with the City's Communications & Engagement department or external firms.
- CC 6.** Establish an open lands working group, which may be a sub-group of the existing Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, the steering committee for the Inspire Initiative Report, or an extension/evolution of another working group. This group should be representative of the demographics of the Greeley community including gender, race, ethnic background, language, sexual orientation, etc.
- CC 7.** In partnership with other programs in the city, develop small grant, certification, and other incentive programs to urge homeowners to provide "backyard/urban habitat" for local wildlife, which also feature benefits of water conservation, reduced chemical use, increased social equity, and improved physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing. Work with residents and property owners to pursue wildlife-friendly designations, such as Bee City USA, Caring for Watersheds, and Certified Community Wildlife Habitat.





## Operational Excellence



Owl Ridge Trail

***Operational Excellence Goal | Provide effective, efficient, and consistent level of service to all Greeley residents at all natural areas, open lands, and trails.***

While Natural Areas & Trails is primarily responsible for maintaining the City's natural areas and off-street trail system, other City properties are managed by a variety of City departments and divisions. For example, parks also provide access to more developed nature and internal trail systems but are managed by the Parks Division. Currently, due to limited staff capacity, lesser used properties or trail corridors may not get the maintenance attention needed due to staff "triaging" the more popular sites. This can create unintentional, but real inequities in how properties are serviced. The following objectives lay out how Natural Areas & Trails plans to rectify these imbalances.



## Objectives

- OE 1.** Provide and maintain approximately 1 permanent full-time equivalent for every 335 acres acquired (as adopted in the 2016 PTOL Plan). In addition, add adequate seasonal employee support depending on the types of lands managed. Providing this staff capacity will ensure lands can be appropriately restored, managed, and maintained; ensure compliance with management plans; and meet the requirements of associated planning and administration of all Natural Areas & Trails properties.
- OE 2.** Upgrade and expand existing equipment fleet to realize more reliable, effective, and cost-efficient operations and plan for regular lifecycle replacements.
- OE 3.** Develop and document standards for Natural Areas & Trails and cross-departmental maintenance, especially for shared Parks and Natural Areas properties and stormwater detention ponds, to provide appropriate level of service, better plan for equitable staff capacity at all sites, and optimize efficiencies of field operations by coordinating maintenance tasks.
- OE 4.** Provide adequate staffing to support the Plan's objectives, including but not limited to rangers; planning and restoration specialists; volunteer, environmental education, and outreach coordinators, and seasonal crews.
- OE 5.** Partner with Community Development, Economic Health, and Housing's conservation tools and strategies, such as in the land use code.
- OE 6.** Develop career pathways and recruit candidates that are representative of the Greeley community. Focus of recruitment and career development should be on those groups not traditionally represented in natural resource careers.



## Capital Planning



McCloskey Natural Area -  
Trailhead construction

***Capital Planning Goal | Ensure continued investment is dedicated to repairing and updating existing amenities and maintaining the ecological values for which the natural areas were conserved.***

Natural area facilities, infrastructure, and equipment are regularly maintained, but given their age, are susceptible to malfunction or failure and will require additional funding to be replaced or upgraded at the end of their useful life. Renovation, upgrades or replacement is ultimately required to keep the system safe, operational, and inviting. Regular maintenance is key to extending the useful life of amenities and facilities and reducing long-term costs; therefore, it is important to implement routine maintenance plans and standards.

## **Objectives**

- CP 1.** Create and implement an asset management system to inventory, track, budget for and replace facilities when they reach the end of their useful life.
- CP 2.** Prioritize upcoming capital projects within the planning horizon of this plan to assist with the City's CIP process. Similar to ensuring equitable land acquisition, develop and maintain a system to ensure capital maintenance and replacement occur in an equitable manner across the entire system, especially in areas of the community that have been historically underserved.
- CP3.** Work to improve coordination in the co-location of facilities and amenities, and coordination of construction timing with the needs of other City departments. Examples include co-location of stormwater facilities and natural areas or trails amenities within the facility.



**“When performance is measured, performance improves. When performance is measured and reported, the rate of improvement accelerates.”**

## METRICS

Performance measures should reflect community needs, inspire action, document how Natural Areas & Trails is meeting identified community goals, and help decision-makers make wise decisions.

Characteristics of effective metrics include the following<sup>2</sup>:

- Are **relevant** to the goals of the Strategic Plan and other community programs;
- Are **clear, concise, and easy to understand**;
- Are based on **reliable and regularly reported data** and can be consistently and accurately tracked over time at no/low cost;
- Are **usable** by City Council, Parks & Recreation Advisory Board, and staff in making decisions, reflecting a topic the community can do something about;
- Serve a **long-range goal**, rather than tracking disconnected short-term outcomes; and
- **Cut across multiple resources** and goals.

While no single indicator can paint a complete picture of progress, a suite of carefully selected indicators can be used to present a compelling summary of achievements and challenges that can be shared in the Strategic Plan and through subsequent annual reports. When rooted in available data, metrics serve as quantitative signposts for monitoring Natural Areas & Trails’ performance without adding cumbersome data collection to staff workloads.

The following key metrics were identified as having a) the greatest community impact and b) those in which Natural Areas & Trails would have the most influence in moving the needle (Table 6). All metrics should take into consideration broader trends and conditions from socio-economics to public interest to real estate. There is a whole suite of indicators that are related to the provision of natural areas, open lands, and trails; however, other departments, agencies, or partners may already be tracking them and/or working to directly impact change. For example, the Weld County Department of Public Health and Environment already tracks level of chronic disease (i.e. obesity) and physical activity levels. Improving the water quality, including reducing levels of e. coli, is important to safe river recreation and the health of the community but is a broader watershed issue and solution.

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2 Hart, Maureen. 2006. Guide to Sustainable Community Indicators, 2nd Ed. Sustainable Measures, West Hartford, CT.

Table 6 / Selected Metrics

METRIC	APPLICABLE GOAL AREA	VALUE	BASELINE	5-YEAR TARGET
<b>Walkability:</b> Percentage of households inside City limits within 10-minute walk (0.5 mile) to high quality parks and natural areas. See section on “Gaps and Barriers to Access” on page 15.	CN, CC, CP	High	66% (2020)	Work towards ensuring that everyone has safe, easy access to a quality park within a 10-minute walk by 2050 in alignment with then NRPA campaign.
<b>River Restoration:</b> River Assessment Framework (RAF) grade (as developed by the City of Fort Collins, and currently being adapted by the Coalition for the Poudre River Watershed).	SF, CN, ST, OE	High	No baseline currently	Establish baseline condition grades for all reaches.
<b>Upland Restoration:</b> Percentage of random point from Colorado Natural Heritage Program’s Ecological Integrity Assessment.	SF, CD, ST, OE	Medium	No baseline currently	Establish baseline condition for all properties for all applicable vegetation communities.
<b>Conserved Lands:</b> Acres conserved per Priority Conservation Area per year, as compared to goals identified in an accountability system.	All	Medium/High	Agricultural/Community Separator: 0 Bluffs: 0 River Corridors: 756 acres Riparian Corridors: 150 acres Nature Deficit Areas: 0	Work with advisory board to establish percentages by PCA.
<b>Funding Availability:</b> Sufficient funding to meet goals of this Strategic Plan through additional dedicated funding sources and meet CIP/ project goals as identified in the accountability system.	SF, CP, OE	High	Minimal	Develop asset management system to determine funding needed and establish annual funding set aside for capital replacement.
<b>Community Satisfaction:</b> Percent of citizens responding very satisfied/satisfied with overall quality of natural areas and trail system as determined by city-wide Community Survey or other surveying mechanism that provides representative sample of Greeley’s demographics.	All	Medium/High	Not yet available - Question not currently asked on the survey	Establish question in next city-wide survey.
<b>Perception of Safety:</b> Percent of citizens responding always safe/ usually safe in natural areas and trail system as determined by city-wide Community Survey or other surveying mechanism that provides representative sample of Greeley’s demographics.	OE, SF, CC, CP	Medium/High	Not yet available - Question not currently asked on the survey	Establish question in next city-wide survey.
<b>Inclusivity in Programs and Leadership:</b> In conjunction with larger City processes, determine percentage variance of Natural Areas & Trails volunteer events, community programs, and Open Lands Working Group demographics average as compared to overall city demographics.	CC	Medium	City currently beginning to track outreach efforts	Develop tracking methodology and track at least one year’s data in the planning horizon.
<b>Self-rated Health:</b> Working with broader City and County programs and processes, track percent of Greeley/Evans residents reporting poor or fair health status by county region, ethnicity, and income to improve the disparities that are present.	CN, ST, CC, CP	Medium	From 2013, 17% of Greeley/Evans residents report having Fair or Poor health; 18.2% of Hispanic residents report having Fair or Poor health; and 35% of residents at 100% of federal poverty report having Fair or Poor health.	Decrease the percentage of residents reporting Fair or Poor health for region, ethnicity and income level by 5-10% change from baseline.

## ACTION PLAN PRIORITIES

Color Code	Description
	= <b>High</b> priority, within 5 year scope.
	= <b>Medium</b> priority, within 5 year scope.

Six action plan tables, categorized by the six strategic themes, can be found in the appendix. While most are primarily capital improvement projects, the table also includes financial initiatives, policy updates, programming, planning, and land conservation activities. Consistent with Chapter 3 goals and objectives, the priorities include completing inexpensive “low hanging fruit” projects, pursuing major land conservation projects opportunistically, and pursuing high priority projects strategically.

The Strategic Plan concludes with a map and overview of the High and Medium priorities geographic focus and equity opportunities. Existing and planned natural areas and trails show how recommended projects would improve connectivity. These priorities are overlaid on the Priority Conservation Areas. Specific land conservation targets are not identified precisely, as they are confidential, opportunistic, and always dependent on willing sellers and partners.

*Table 7 / High & Medium Priorities Shown on Map 5*

MAP KEY	PROJECT NAME
A	Larson Trail to Poudre River Trail (PRT)
B	Sheep Draw Trail (83rd Ave to 71st Ave)
C	59th Ave - Sheep Draw Natural Area Restoration
D	Narrows Restoration
E	Duran-Red Barn Restoration
F	83rd Avenue Trail Sheep Draw Trail to PRT
G	Sheep Draw Trail Realignment at Mountain Shadows
H	PRT Underpass under 35th Ave
I	Abandoned Sheep Draw oxbow trail
J	Poudre River Restoration near 95th Avenue (Reach 13)
K	RR Bend Restoration
L	Poudre Ponds Reach 6B Restoration
M	Poudre Ponds Reach 6C Restoration
N	Shur View Restoration

*Table 8 / City-wide High & Medium Priorities*

SUSTAINABLE FUNDING
Existing Funding Sources
New Funding Sources
Grant Opportunities
Quality of Life Fund Project List
Additional Departmental Funding
CONNECTIONS TO NATURE
Development Code Revisions
Likely Land Conservation Opportunities
STEWARDSHIP
Upland and Wetland Restoration Projects
Herbicide Application Program
Develop a small grants program to work with private owners and HOAs to encourage proper stewardship.
Reach 13: Broe-Marietta-Orr
COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS
Volunteer Program
Environmental Education Program
Natural Areas & Trails Wayfinding Signage Plan and Implementation

Implement Satisfaction Surveying
OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE
Restoration/Herbicide Specialist (NEW)
Volunteer Coordinator (NEW)
Environmental Planner (NEW)
Sr. Environmental Planner (Promote)
Seasonal Crews
Update PTOL Plan
Update 2002 City of Greeley Trails Plan
Update 1998 Wildlife Management Plan
Ranger (NEW)
CAPITAL PLANNING
New Natural Areas & Trails Offices/Shop
Large Signage for Natural Areas & Trails properties
Trail Capital Maintenance
Natural Areas & Trails Office - Basement Expansion



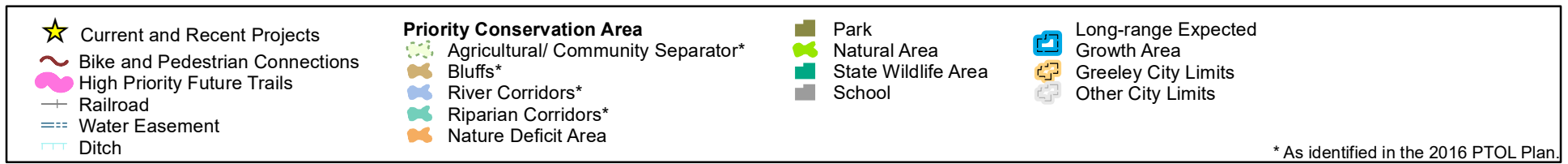
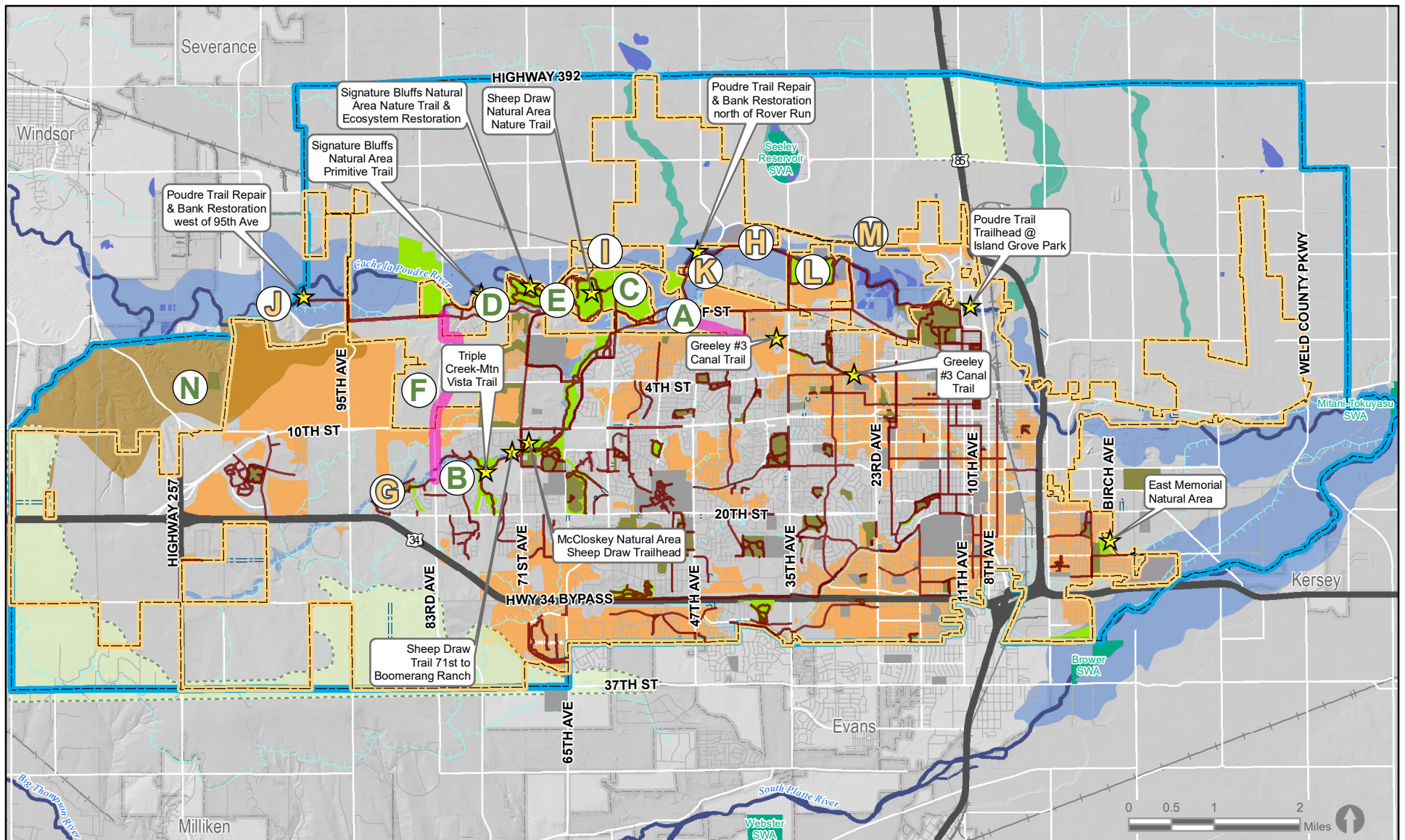


Figure 3 / Action Plan Map



# APPENDIX 1 / **ACTION PLAN**

This appendix outlines the specific actions, projects, and programs for the Natural Areas & Trails Division for the next five years. A number of projects will depend on a new dedicated funding mechanism; consequently additional funding sources are being explored.



# FUNDING SOURCES

Land acquisition and management revenues across Colorado are commonly derived from three primary sources: the municipality's General Fund, locally approved sales tax or bond revenues, and the State's Colorado Lottery Conservation Trust Fund and GOCO grants. The General Fund and sales tax or bond revenues serve to leverage grants which often require matching funds. Existing local, regional, state, and federal funding sources are shown below.

## Summary of External Funding Sources for Natural Areas & Trails

GRANT SOURCES	LAND CONSERVATION	OFF-STREET TRAILS <sup>1</sup>	RESTORATION	WATER CONSERVATION	OUTDOOR/ NATURE EDUCATION
Great Outdoors Colorado/Conservation Trust Funds (Lottery Funds)	X	X	X	X	
Land and Water Conservation Fund	X	X	X	X	
Colorado Parks and Wildlife (multiple)	X	X		X	X
Poudre Heritage Alliance	X	X			X
Conservation/Trail Advocacy Groups	X	X	X	X	X
National Wildlife Federation	X		X	X	
Colorado Water Conservancy			X	X	
Department of Local Affairs	X	X			
Federal Highway Administration BUILD Grants		X			
Federal Highway Administration Recreational Trails Program		X			
Highway Safety Improvement Program/ National Highway Performance Program/ FASTER Safety Grants		X			
North Front Range MPO		X			
Rails to Trails		X			

<sup>1</sup> See the 2015 City of Greeley Bicycle Master Plan for additional trail funding sources.

Additional types of partnerships and grants that Greeley might be eligible for as plan implementation is pursued include:

- Healthy places/healthy communities
- Healthy Eating / Active Living (HEAL)
- Wellness for minority or low-income groups
- Active seniors
- Tourism enhancement
- Hazard planning and flood damage repair (i.e., FEMA and HUD disaster recovery grants)
- Avian/waterfowl habitat enhancement (i.e., Ducks Unlimited)
- Safe Routes to School
- Weld County Area Agency on Aging
- AARP

# ACTION PLAN TABLES

Six action plan tables, categorized by the six strategic themes, aid Natural Areas & Trails in the annual city-wide capital improvement planning and project prioritization process. While most are primarily capital improvement projects, the table also includes financial initiatives, policy updates, programming, planning, and land conservation activities.

Action items were compiled from primary sources including the PTOL Plan, current Natural Areas & Trails capital improvement planning, and other recent studies and plans shown in the ‘Source’ column.

The project team completed a prioritization process to help identify the infrastructure projects that will create the most impact in Greeley’s Natural Areas & Trails system and that best aid in achieving the Chapter 3 goals and objectives. Prioritization criteria was based on the goals and objectives, especially alignment with mission and goals, available funding, partner position and readiness, and ease of implementation.

Current operation and maintenance costs are not included in the following tables, therefore it is not a complete picture of total future budget needs. The action plan highlights above and beyond capital projects and new personal if funding is identified. The following High (green) and Medium (yellow) priority projects and programs could be accomplished in 2021-2026.

The remaining projects and programs (red) that fall below the line would require a new dedicated funding source, additional capacity or partnerships to be addressed in the next 5 years. The total estimate of all capital and additional operational projects (High, Medium, and “Below the line”) is at least \$83 million given that costs for several stewardship projects have not been estimated. Of that amount, 20% are High priorities. Note that costs are not available (N/A) for several projects and therefore not accounted for in the total.

## Action Table Legend

Color Code	Description	Total Estimated Cost
	= <b>High</b> priority, within 5 year scope.	\$27,894,199 (Annual \$590,000)
	= <b>Medium</b> priority, within 5 year scope.	
	= <b>“Below the line”</b> priorities. Low priority, or beyond 5 year scope, but need to keep on a 5+ year list.	\$55,036,350 (Annual \$75,000)
Total Capital Costs		\$82,930,549
Total Annual Costs		\$665,000



## Sustainable Funding

PROJECT NAME	DESCRIPTION	SOURCE	TYPE OF PROJECT	ANNUAL COST	COST
Existing funding sources	Seek funding/support from sources that have provided funds for past projects.	Parks Trails & Open Lands Master Plan	Financial	N/A	N/A
New funding sources	Explore the feasibility of gaining funding from new sources and developing partnerships to accomplish trail expansion and open lands conservation.	Parks Trails & Open Lands Master Plan	Financial	N/A	N/A
Grant opportunities	Pursue grant opportunities related to Master Plan goals and recommendations.	Parks Trails & Open Lands Master Plan	Financial	N/A	N/A
Quality of Life Fund project list	Update the Quality of Life Fund project list 2016-2023 to include capital projects envisioned in the PTOL Plan and this Strategic Plan. This is outdated now, but having an annual mechanism to incorporate projects into the CIP process in funds 304 and 314 will be important until/if a dedicated funding source comes to pass.	Parks Trails & Open Lands Master Plan	Financial	N/A	N/A
Additional Departmental Funding	Fund additional programs and departmental resources identified in the PTOL Plan and this Strategic Plan.	Parks Trails & Open Lands Master Plan	Financial	N/A	N/A
Sustainable Funding Grand Total Cost				N/A	N/A





## Connections to Nature

PROJECT NAME	DESCRIPTION	SOURCE	TYPE OF PROJECT	ANNUAL COST	COST
Larson Trail to Poudre River Trail (PRT)	Construction of 0.86 miles of multimodal trail to connect the Larson Ditch Trail to the PRT. Current plan has \$208k for design/easements in 2021, with \$800,000 for construction that isn't funded until 2022+.	CIP Compilation	CIP	N/A	\$ 1,008,000
Sheep Draw Trail (83rd Ave to 71st Ave)	The paved off-street trail will fill the existing gap between 83rd Avenue and 71st Avenue in the Sheep Draw Trail, with a potential connection to 77th Avenue.	Parks Trails & Open Lands Master Plan	CIP	N/A	\$ 322,000
59th Ave - Sheep Draw Natural Area Restoration	Priority rankings in the Poudre Trail Riverbanks Study: Alternative 1B is #3, Alternative 2 is #4, Alternative 1A is #8.	Appendix C: PoudreTrail-Riverbanks Concept Cost Estimate	CIP	N/A	\$ 510,000
Narrows Restoration	Priority rankings in the Poudre Trail Riverbanks Study: Alternative 2A is #2 and Alternative 2B is #5.	Appendix C: PoudreTrail-Riverbanks Concept Cost Estimate	CIP	N/A	\$ 1,338,500
Duran-Red Barn Restoration	Priority rankings in the Poudre Trail Riverbanks Study: Alternative 1 is the top ranked project by OTAK MCDA.	Appendix C: PoudreTrail-Riverbanks Concept Cost Estimate	CIP	N/A	\$ 494,500
Development Code Revisions	Engage with development code revisions to embed conservation tools and strategies (conservation development, transfer of development rights).	Strategic Plan	Policy	N/A	\$ 25,000
Likely Land Conservation Opportunities	Assumes 235 acres over 5 years, using average of \$15,800/acre in combination of fee-simple and conservation easements.	Strategic Plan, Imagine Greeley	Land Conservation	N/A	\$ 3,750,000
83rd Avenue Trail Sheep Draw Trail to Poudre River Trail	Construction of a new off-street trail connection from the Sheep Draw Trail to the Poudre River Trail generally following the east side of 83rd Avenue. Approximately 2.16 miles in length.	CIP Compilation	CIP	N/A	\$ 2,200,000
Sheep Draw Trail Realignment at Mountain Shadows	Sheep Draw Trail Realignment at Mountain Shadows.	CIP Priority List	CIP	N/A	\$ 500,000
PRT Underpass under 35th Ave	PRT underpass under 35th Avenue.	CIP Priority List	CIP	N/A	\$ 1,000,000
Abandoned Sheep Draw oxbow Trail	PRT convert abandoned Sheep Draw oxbow to a nature trail/tribute trail.	CIP Priority List	CIP	N/A	\$ 50,000
Podure River Restoration near 95th Avenue (Reach 13)	Priority rankings in the Poudre Trail Riverbanks Study: Alternative 5 is #7 and alternative 4 is #9.	Appendix C: PoudreTrail-Riverbanks Concept Cost Estimate	CIP	N/A	\$ 1,045,500



PROJECT NAME	DESCRIPTION	SOURCE	TYPE OF PROJECT	ANNUAL COST	COST
RR Bend Restoration	Priority rankings in the Poudre Trail Riverbanks Study: Alternative 1 is #6, low cost might put it up to a top priority.	Appendix C: PoudreTrail-Riverbanks Concept Cost Estimate	CIP	N/A	\$ 172,000
Poudre Ponds Reach 6B Restoration	Priority rankings in the Poudre Trail Riverbanks Study: 3 alternatives, none in top 10.	Appendix C: PoudreTrail-Riverbanks Concept Cost Estimate	CIP	N/A	\$ 1,680,000
Poudre Ponds Reach 6C Restoration	Priority rankings in the Poudre Trail Riverbanks Study: 3 alternatives, none in top 10.	Appendix C: PoudreTrail-Riverbanks Concept Cost Estimate	CIP	N/A	\$ 290,500
Connections to Nature “High” and “Medium” Total Cost				N/A	\$14,386,000
PRT new trailhead at 59th Ave	PRT new trailhead at 59th Avenue.	CIP Priority List	CIP	N/A	\$ 350,000
Additional Land Conservation Opportunities (dependent on new funding source)	Assumes 800 acres in 5 years, average of \$15,800/acre in combination of fee-simple and conservation easements.	Strategic Plan, Imagine Greeley	Land Conservation	N/A	\$ 12,650,000
Southwest Trail Sheep Draw to Ashcroft Draw	A new trail section that will link the Sheep Draw Trail south of Highway 34 and Promontory to the head of the Ashcroft Draw. Trail length of approximately 4.95 miles. May need to be phased in due to cost.	CIP Compilation	CIP	N/A	\$ 4,950,000
Sheepdraw Trail Pebble Brook SW to 95th Ave	Design, right-of way, and construction of approximately 1,775 linear feet of 10-foot wide trail along the Sheepdraw. Connects to the existing trail at the West property line of the Pebble Brook subdivision. This section will follow the Sheep Draw channel and the new alignment of West 20th Street West to 95th Avenue. Need to acquire easement. See Trails Master Plan; map # 5.	CIP Compilation	CIP	N/A	\$ 500,000
Boyd Freeman	Priority rankings in the Poudre Trail Riverbanks Study: 2 alternatives, not in top 10.	Appendix C: PoudreTrail-Riverbanks Concept Cost Estimate	CIP	N/A	\$ 644,000



PROJECT NAME	DESCRIPTION	SOURCE	TYPE OF PROJECT	ANNUAL COST	COST
35th Ave Crossing	Priority rankings in the Poudre Trail Riverbanks Study: 3 alternatives, none in top 10.	Appendix C: PoudreTrail-Riverbanks Concept Cost Estimate	CIP	N/A	\$ 3,396,000
Northridge Estates Neighborhood Park and Trailhead	Design and construction of one neighborhood park abutting the Hunters Cove Natural Area to include: shelter, playground, native and non-native grass, landscaping, electrical, and portable restroom facilities. Paved trailhead parking to be installed concurrent with park development. Site is located in the south west corner of the intersection of 59th Avenue and C Street. Project will be phased with year one being design and year two is construction. Unclear if any funds will come from Natural Areas & Trails.	CIP Compilation	CIP	N/A	\$ 250,000
10th St. Sidepath 71st Ave to 77th Ave	Construction of a sidepath/trail on the north side of 10th Street/Business 34 between 71st Avenue and 77th Avenue along the southern edge of Boomerang Golf Course. Project will include a safety "net" along the golf course to prevent errant golf balls from hitting trail users. Approximately .5 miles in length.	CIP Compilation	CIP	N/A	\$ 500,000
Poudre River Trail East (Section 1)	The Poudre River Trail east of its current terminus near Island Grove Park has been in a number of planning documents for future development. The trail would roughly follow the Poudre River extending east from 11th Avenue, providing a recreational connection for Greeley's eastern residents.	Parks Trails & Open Lands Master Plan	CIP/Planning	N/A	\$ 15,000,000
South Platte Trail Connection	This 9.1 mile off-street trail will follow the South Platte River on the southeast side of Greeley, serving an area of the city that is not served by any other trails. The north end of the trail would connect to the Poudre River Trail to provide a portion of a trail loop on the east side of Greeley.	Poudre/Platte Trail Master Plan	CIP/Planning	N/A	\$ 9,000,000
Connections to Nature "Below the Line" Total Cost				N/A	\$47,240,000
Connections to Nature Grand Total Cost				N/A	\$61,626,000





## Stewardship

PROJECT NAME	DESCRIPTION	SOURCE	TYPE OF PROJECT	ANNUAL COST	COSTS
Upland and Wetland Restoration Projects	Small scale upland, wetland, etc. restoration projects such as Signature Bluffs not contained in the various river plans.	CIP Priority List	CIP	N/A	\$ 100,000
Shur View Restoration	Restore 900+ acres of shortgrass prairie.	Strategic Plan	CIP	N/A	\$ 200,000
Herbicide Application Program	Annual equipment and materials to support the new Restoration/Herbicide Specialist position (under Operational Excellence).	Strategic Plan	CIP	N/A	\$ 50,000
Develop a small grants program to work with private owners and HOAs to encourage proper stewardship	Cultivate private owner stewardship, especially with neighborhood groups.	Strategic Plan	Planning	N/A	\$ 20,000
Reach 13: Broe-Marietta-Orr	Reach 13 is 1.2 miles long and presents a great opportunity to improve river function because it is not constrained by urbanization and has mostly agricultural, grazing, or open space land adjacent to the river.	Lower Poudre River Recovery and Resilience Master Plan	CIP	N/A	\$ 2,807,200
Stewardship "High" and "Medium" Total Cost				N/A	\$3,177,200
SP Reach 14: Patterson Ditch Diversion Structure to US Highway 34	US Highway 34 is currently being modified and repaired using FEMA Public Assistance funding. Diversion structure modifications may be beneficial to aquatic organisms. Potential for wetland development along the right bank near the end of the reach. An existing historical stream channel could provide for wetland development with floodplain reattachment along the bank.	South Platte River Master Plan - Evans	CIP	N/A	N/A
SP Reach 15: US Highway 34 to US Highway 34 Business Route	Bridge improvements and restoration/preservation of reach.	South Platte River Master Plan - Evans	CIP	N/A	N/A
Reach 15: Signature Bluffs West	Reach 15 starts at the 83rd Avenue bridge and has high priority scores for river assessment, potential improvement, sediment model balance, and watershed scale benefit. The "Narrows" section of the Poudre River Trail is a priority area in order to reduce the vulnerability of the trail to geomorphic hazards. Because the river is largely disconnected from its floodplain and confined by levees during large flood events, this floodplain disconnection greatly accelerates flow during flood events because the water cannot spread out over the floodplain to reduce energy.	Lower Poudre River Recovery and Resilience Master Plan	CIP/Planning	N/A	\$ 2,665,100
Reach 17: Sheep Draw	Reach 17 has high priority scores for potential improvement, river assessment, watershed scale benefit and Poudre Trail vulnerability. There was public feedback about this part of the river due to flooding issues at the upstream end of the reach. One of the biggest factors that limits riverine function and causes issues in Reach 17 is the proximity of the Poudre Trail, which closely follows the river right bank throughout the entire reach.	Lower Poudre River Recovery and Resilience Master Plan	CIP/Planning	N/A	\$ 3,640,000



PROJECT NAME	DESCRIPTION	SOURCE	TYPE OF PROJECT	ANNUAL COST	COSTS
Reach 20: Great Western Railway Improvements	Reach 20 is highly constrained and historically channelized due gravel mining operations for the entire reach. This reach could be greatly improved by offsetting the surrounding levees as much as possible to allow the river to re-establish some sinuosity, floodplain connection, and riparian areas. This would also help dissipate flood flow energy and create sediment storage areas to reduce sedimentation problems downstream at underpasses in the City of Greeley. Offsetting the PRT, which lines the river right bank, could greatly decrease risk and increase room for improved stream function.	Lower Poudre River Recovery and Resilience Master Plan	CIP/Planning	N/A	N/A
Reach 21: Poudre Ponds	Reach 21 has been historically straightened and is highly confined by levees and the Poudre River Trail on river right and is disconnected from its floodplain on river left. The alignment of the river channel has been significantly altered since the 1950s. There are two large existing gravel bars on river right that can be utilized to improve riparian function by encouraging connection via overflow channels. There are opportunities for floodplain reconnection and riparian vegetation establishment on river left, which can greatly increase aquatic and riparian function and help control bank erosion issues.	Lower Poudre River Recovery and Resilience Master Plan	CIP/Planning	N/A	N/A
Reach 22: 25th Ave	Reach 22 is overall highly entrenched, disconnected from its floodplain, and confined by levees on both sides of the channel, reducing river function over the years. This reach could be improved by offsetting the levees on both sides of the channel as much as possible to give the river room to migrate and re-establish a floodplain and riparian area that could store sediment and reduce flood flow stream power. This would eliminate the constriction of the pedestrian bridge mid-reach and greatly reduce the constriction caused by having a trail on both sides of the river in Reach 23, and impacts from the existing drop structure located just downstream of N. 25th Avenue. Aquatic habitat and water quality could be greatly improved if the inlet right upstream of this structure on river left is investigated and BMPs were installed.	Lower Poudre River Recovery and Resilience Master Plan	CIP/Planning	N/A	\$ 4,446,000
Reach 23: Island Grove	Reach 23 is highly constrained and historically channelized due gravel mining operations for the entire reach. This reach is also confined by the PRT on both sides of the channel for most of the reach. Reach 23 could be improved by offsetting the surrounding levees as much as possible to allow the river to re-establish some sinuosity, floodplain connection, and riparian areas. This would also help dissipate flood flow energy and create sediment storage areas to reduce sedimentation problems at the downstream side of the reach at Highway 85 and the railroad.	Lower Poudre River Recovery and Resilience Master Plan	CIP/Planning	N/A	N/A
Reach 24: 6th Avenue	Reach 24 is highly constrained and historically channelized due to urban development along the entire river right side of the reach and parts of river left and five bridges. There are some areas, specifically on river left, that could provide opportunities to re-establish some sinuosity, floodplain connection, and riparian areas. This would greatly help dissipate flood flow energy and create sediment storage areas to reduce sedimentation at the downstream Highway 85 crossing.	Lower Poudre River Recovery and Resilience Master Plan	CIP/Planning	N/A	N/A



PROJECT NAME	DESCRIPTION	SOURCE	TYPE OF PROJECT	ANNUAL COST	COSTS
Reach 25: Greeley WWTP	Reach 25 is very confined by development for the upper part of the reach and largely backwatered near the end of the reach, upstream of, and due to, the Ogilvy diversion structure. Re-connecting floodplain and re-establishing riparian vegetation where possible, such as downstream of the Fern Avenue bridge, can help increase the aquatic and riparian function. However, significant improvement to river function in this reach would most plausibly need drastic improvements to the Ogilvy diversion structure.	Lower Poudre River Recovery and Resilience Master Plan	CIP/Planning	N/A	N/A
Reach 26: Varra	Reach 26 is largely disconnected from its floodplain, over-widened, historically channelized due to gravel mining operations, and lacks vegetation. This reach could be greatly improved by offsetting levees as far as possible to allow the river to move and be re-connected to its floodplain. This improvement should be coupled with channel narrowing and re-establishing riparian vegetation. These treatments would allow the reach to greatly increase aquatic and riparian function but also help decrease flood flow energy and reduce the bank erosion that led to the reservoir breach.	Lower Poudre River Recovery and Resilience Master Plan	CIP/Planning	N/A	N/A
Reach 27: Fern Avenue	Reach 27 is one of the least constrained reaches in the Lower Poudre River project extent, but has straightened and been disconnected from its floodplain through time. This reach has probably straightened via chute cut-offs in response to increased stream power upstream during large flood events due to the channelization, confinement, and urbanization in the reaches through Greeley. However, this reach could be further improved by re-connecting the floodplain in several areas.	Lower Poudre River Recovery and Resilience Master Plan	CIP/Planning	N/A	N/A
Reach 28: Confluence	Reach 28 is one of the least constrained reaches in the Lower Poudre River project extent, but it has straightened and been disconnected from its floodplain. This reach has probably straightened naturally via chute cut-offs in response to the increased stream power upstream during large flood events due to the channelization, confinement, and urbanization in the reaches through Greeley. This reach could be further improved by re-connecting the floodplain in several areas.	Lower Poudre River Recovery and Resilience Master Plan	CIP/Planning	N/A	N/A
Stewardship "Below the Line" Total Cost				N/A	\$7,111,100
Stewardship Grand Total Cost				N/A	\$10,288,300





## Community Connections

PROJECT NAME	DESCRIPTION	SOURCE	TYPE OF PROJECT	ANNUAL COST	COST
Volunteer Program	Expenses for new Volunteer Coordinator (under Operational Excellence) to leverage community service groups to supplement staff. Involve youth in programs, such as TPL example, student conservation corps, AmeriCorps, Weld County Youth Corps.	Strategic Plan	Staff Capacity	\$ 50,000	N/A
Environmental Education Program	Leverage partnerships with PLC for youth programming, then create programming for other community groups.	Strategic Plan	Staff Capacity	\$ 85,000	N/A
Natural Areas & Trails Wayfinding Signage Plan and Implementation	Complete a comprehensive wayfinding and regulatory signage plan for all Natural Areas & Trails. Begin implementing high priority Phase I signage. Assure the signage is primarily universal in design to allow easy understanding regardless of language or ability (e.g. braille on signage) and integrates with regional partners for continuity with the Poudre River Trail within Windsor, Brower Wildlife area with Evans, etc.	CIP Priority List	CIP	N/A	\$ 50,000
Implement satisfaction surveying	Work with the City's Communication & Engagement department to incorporate questions related to natural areas, trails, and open lands for the next community survey in 2021 and/or partner with UNC's journalism, social science research land, and strategic communication programs to do visitor intercept or city-wide surveys.	Strategic Plan	Staff Capacity/Partners	N/A	N/A
Community Connections Grand Total Cost				\$135,000	\$50,000



## Operational Excellence

PROJECT NAME	DESCRIPTION	SOURCE	TYPE OF PROJECT	ANNUAL COST	COST
Restoration/Herbicide Specialist (NEW)	New position to lead weed management program, then ongoing native restoration in NAs. Includes staffing, in addition to additional truck, and spray equipment.	Strategic Plan	Staff Capacity	\$65,000	\$60,000
Volunteer Coordinator (NEW)	Transition VOC position into partially or completely City funded position.	Strategic Plan	Staff Capacity	\$75,000	N/A
Environmental Education and Outreach Coordinator (NEW)	New position to lead environmental education staff and outreach, including youth outreach and community engagement strategies, such as Safer Outside campaign.	Strategic Plan	Staff Capacity	\$60,000	N/A
Environmental Planner (NEW)	Provide additional environmental planner for management plans, biodiversity monitoring, more technical side of things.	Strategic Plan	Staff Capacity	\$90,000	\$30,000
Sr. Environmental Planner (Promote)	Promote current Environmental Planner position to Sr. Planner to supervise Environmental Planner.	Strategic Plan	Staff Capacity	\$25,000	N/A
Seasonal Crews	Need to increase staffing to possibly two seasonal crews to complete maintenance backlog.	Strategic Plan	Staff Capacity	\$100,000	N/A
Update PTOL Plan	Update 2016 Parks, Trails and Open Lands Master Plan.	Strategic Plan	Policy	N/A	\$75,000
Update 2002 City of Greeley Trails Plan	The Trails Master Plan is a critical tool in analyzing site specific connections and influencing trail connections through development review.	Strategic Plan	Planning	N/A	\$50,000
Update 1998 Wildlife Management Plan		Strategic Plan	Planning	N/A	\$50,000
Ranger (NEW)	Possible hybrid position with Parks. Sharing Ranger position(s) with the City's Parks Division may be a mechanism to be efficient with finite resources, as could a volunteer ranger assistant program. Ranger positions should lean heavily on education and the Authority of the Resource concepts, and coordinating and supporting the Greeley Police Department for any criminal matters.	Strategic Plan	Staff Capacity	\$40,000	\$15,000
Operational Excellence "High" and "Medium" Total Cost				\$455,000	\$280,000
Crew Supervisor (NEW)	New position to lead field activities.	Strategic Plan	Staff Capacity	\$75,000	\$60,000
Operational Excellence "Below the Line" Total Cost				\$75,000	\$60,000
Operational Excellence Grand Total Cost				\$530,000	\$340,000



## Capital Planning

PROJECT NAME	DESCRIPTION	SOURCE	TYPE OF PROJECT	ANNUAL COST	COST
New Natural Areas & Trails Offices/Shop	Construct a new Shop for the Parks Operations which will also include Forestry operations and, most likely, Natural Areas and Trails Division. Originally located at Island Grove, currently exploring another property. No additional funding from Natural Areas & Trails anticipated.	CIP Compilation	CIP	N/A	\$ 7,000,000
Large Signage for Natural Areas & Trails properties	Install large Signage for NA properties to improve identification and public awareness.	CIP Priority List	CIP	N/A	\$ 200,000
Trail Capital Maintenance	Annual funding to maintain (but mostly use to repair backlog of trail repairs) the City's trail system. Ongoing funding of \$75,000 from City through 2022, in addition to a contribution from Weld County (\$200k in 2020). In 2023 and 2024, funding bumps up to 1,075,000.	CIP Compilation	CIP	N/A	\$ 2,700,000
Natural Areas & Trails Office - Basement Expansion	The Natural Areas & Trails office was remodeled from a rental house in 2019 with 304 funds. The original \$100k for remodeling of the office only allowed for remodeling of the main floor, with the basement untouched. Natural Areas & Trails staff has maxed out the main floor and two staff have already moved into a partially finished portion of the basement. Funds would finish the basement to create more office space, create egress, update radon mitigation system, and install bathroom. Not needed if Parks/Natural Areas & Trails/etc shop and offices are developed.	CIP Compilation	CIP	N/A	\$ 100,999
Capital Planning "High" and "Medium" Total Cost				N/A	\$10,000,999
71st Avenue/ Poudre Trail Crossing	The Poudre Trail currently crosses 71st Avenue at grade, marked by crosswalk markings and warning signs. Improvements to this crossing could include installing additional markings and signage, tree and brush clearing to improve sight distance, installation of a pedestrian refuge island, and/or installation of a flashing beacon. Evaluate the possibility of reducing the speed limit along 71st Avenue to slow traffic.	Parks Trails & Open Lands Master Plan	CIP	N/A	N/A
59th Ave / Sheep Draw Trail (F Street) Crossing	The Sheep Draw Trail currently crosses 59th Avenue at grade across two legs of the intersection with C Street, marked by crosswalk markings and warning signs. Improvements to this crossing could include the installation of a pedestrian refuge island.	Parks Trails & Open Lands Master Plan; Appendix C: PoudreTrail-Riverbanks Concept Cost Estimate	CIP	N/A	\$ 625,250
Poudre River Trail Crossing at 83rd Ave	The Poudre Trail currently crosses 83rd Avenue at grade, marked by crosswalk markings and warning signs. Improvements to this crossing could include installing additional markings and signage, installation of a pedestrian refuge island, and/or installation of a flashing beacon.	Parks Trails & Open Lands Master Plan	CIP	N/A	N/A
Capital Planning "Below the Line" Total Cost				N/A	\$625,250
Capital Planning Grand Total Cost				N/A	\$10,626,249





# APPENDIX 2 / **SUPPORTING DETAIL**

This appendix details supporting information to the Strategic Plan including a history of Greeley's natural resources and settlement related to natural areas and trails, the planning process, and highlights of the public's needs and perceptions.



## GREELEY'S ROOTS

If you stroll through Greeley's downtown Lincoln Park, you may notice etched into the concrete supporting a circular, columned arbor these words: Temperance, religion, education, agriculture, irrigation, cooperation, and family. These are the "guideposts" of the Union Colony of Colorado, a colonization company founded by Nathan Meeker that selected a location near the confluence of the Cache la Poudre and South Platte Rivers as the future town of Greeley, Colorado Territory. Meeker, the agricultural editor of the *New York Tribune*, named the town in honor of the Tribune's editor, Horace Greeley.

For the most part, the homogenous members of Meeker's proposed agricultural and temperance colony were financially solvent, temperate, religious, educated, moral, law abiding, conservative, and family-oriented. The Union Colony pioneers, with tenacity and thriftiness, persevered under extreme hardships that included blizzards, hail, legal battles over the equitable diversion of water from the Cache la Poudre River, and crop losses from four locust plagues, all during the town's first decade. These pioneers established the cultural and physical infrastructure of social and arts organizations, ditches, reservoirs, farms, ranches, schools, churches, and industries that still shape Greeley today.

The area the colony selected is the result of 70 million years of geologic deposition from the Rocky Mountains, artfully exposed and carved into the High Plains by the South Platte River and its tributaries, such as the Cache la Poudre. These waterways first supported water and soil movement, then wildlife migration, followed by movements of paleo hunters and gatherers, Native people, trappers, traders, gold seekers, freighters, the Overland Stage, and immigrants who came into this region. 11,500 BC marked the entry of the first known people to enter the area, Clovis mammoth hunters, followed by other nomadic PaleoIndian groups (11,000 – 7,000 BC), archaic foragers (5,000 – 0 BC), the "Plains-Woodland" peoples (1,000 BC), and the Upper Republican early agriculturalists (1,200BC).

Between 1500 and 1700, Apache groups occupied eastern Colorado during a slow migration to New Mexico. The Apaches obtained horses, circa the 1600s and became the first mounted hunters on Colorado's plains. By 1700, the Comanche and mountain allies, the Utes, entered northeastern Colorado, and pushed the Apaches southward. By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes, mobilized by acquisition of the horse, moved into the area as the Comanche moved southward. The Cheyenne and Arapaho and the neighboring Sioux (Lakota) would meet, as enemies, when Anglo emigrants arrived in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**"Rio De Chato"** - given to the major river in northeastern Colorado by Spanish explorers in 1659.

**"Rio de Jesus Maria"** - named by Pedro de Villasur in 1720 on a reconnaissance mission in this area.

**"Nithabaska"** – what Peter and Paul Mallet learned Native Americans call the river in 1739, meaning "shallow bed."

**"Platte"** - The equivalent French translation of shallow bed word was "plat." The Mallet brothers speculated that the Riviere Plat was a riparian trade route to China!



The 1851 Treaty of Ft. Laramie designated the area lying east of the Rockies, and between the Arkansas and North Platte Rivers, as the territory of the Cheyenne and Arapaho. For the next 10 years, tens of thousands of fortune seekers followed the South Platte River into the region, which alarmed the Native peoples who realized the newcomers would have an impact on their lands and their food supply (primarily bison). The influx of Anglos led to strained relations and a disrespect for land that Native people had occupied for thousands of years. This resulted in the 1861 Treaty of Fort Wise, which attempted to justify the fact that settlers had trespassed onto ancestral lands, and also attempted to force the Cheyenne and Arapaho to abandon the lands given them by the 1851 Treaty of Ft. Laramie, and relocate to a tract of land south along the Arkansas River.



*The Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851 began a long, unsuccessful process of defining territory in which Native Americans could live without conflicts and additional land cessations.*



View of the Rocky Mountains on the Platte 50 miles from their Base.

*The first recorded sketches by a white person of the Platte River riparian corridor, the expansive Great Plains, and mountain backdrop were drawn by Samuel Seymour during Major Stephen H. Long's Rocky Mountain Expedition, 1819-1820.*

In the 1860s traders and emigrants flooded into the South Platte and Cache la Poudre River valleys along stage route lines, intensifying the competition for resources such as bison and land. Tensions were at a breaking point by October 1865, following the infamous November 29, 1864 Sand Creek Massacre where approximately 150 Indian men, women and children, peacefully camped in their winter quarters, were attacked and killed by soldiers under the command of Col. John M. Chivington. This massacre prompted the survivors to retaliate against Anglo settlers. In 1865 they attacked stage stations and ranches in the South Platte River valley, but by October 1865, the Cheyenne and Arapaho were forced to move to an assigned reservation in "Indian Territory" (Oklahoma). With the forced relocation of Native peoples onto reservations, the federal government effectively opened this region to settlement by others.

The 60,000 acres in the fertile valley between the Cache la Poudre and South Platte Rivers, which was acquired in 1870 by the Union Colony for town and agricultural purposes, had been traversed by humans for thousands of years. Much of this land still includes priceless resources that deserve our respect and protection today.



# We do not inherit the land from our ancestors, We borrow it from our children.

- Proverb of unknown authorship

As an agricultural community in the 19th century, and a global agri-business community in the 21st century, Greeley's success is tied to its abundant and well-managed working landscapes. A hallmark of the Union Colony pioneers was the collective development of water resources (irrigation ditches, canals, and reservoirs) along with helping develop the prior appropriation doctrine of water law that would be emulated in the rest of the western U.S. The milestones were critical to successfully manage precious water resources in a semi-arid environment subject to cyclical economic boom and bust cycles and wet and drought cycles.

The sugar beet, Greeley's "white gold" crop for most of the 20th century, was a labor intensive crop from planting to harvesting, and a succession of new immigrants—the Germans-from-Russia, Hispanic Americans, Mexican nationals and others—were recruited as "stoop" laborers. The migrant cycle was broken when the Germans-from-Russia settled on Greeley's east side in a neighborhood of humble homes nicknamed "Little Russia," which is the [Sunrise Neighborhood today](#). In 1924, Great Western Sugar Company had established Greeley's Spanish Colony (one of 13 in northeastern Colorado) outside the City limits at O Street and 25th Avenue. Recent immigrants and refugees from East Africa, Southeast Asia, Mexico, and Central and South America ensure Greeley remains a diverse community, and has become one of the most linguistically diverse communities in Colorado with 26% of the population (ca. 110,000) speaking a language other than English at home.

The plan of cooperation adopted by the Union Colonists included communal ownership of social properties and uses, such as the schools, grounds, and the waterways that would be essential to the success of "the common good"<sup>iv</sup>. Lands north of the Poudre River were reserved for farms. Homes were set back from river floodplains. Short-term profits were renounced in favor of long-term health. Over a 150 years after the founding of Union Colony and generations after the Native Americans before them, we are re-learning what others have learned by observation and hardship: to let rivers be rivers, recognize natural constraints, and to reserve the best farmland as the community's foodshed.



***Lincoln Park, dubbed "Greeley's little breathing spot" by the Colonists, remains a "village commons," the first of more than 40 parks maintained as quality of life amenities for the community. Nathan Meeker encouraged colonists to participate in "Village Improvement Campaigns," which included transporting deciduous and coniferous saplings from the foothills west of Greeley and transplanting them in Lincoln Park, along the streets and avenues and in their spacious yards. At the ballot box, citizens approved bonds to continually upgrade the municipal water and sewer system to protect both public health and the environment. In 1910, Greeley's Mothers' Congress, comprised of 40 women, lobbied for health reforms and more parks and playgrounds for school children.***

# Steering Committee Representation

The Steering Committee offered technical expertise and support throughout the planning process. They included technical experts within the City, as well as key community partners - typically the end-users and implementers of the Plan. Throughout the planning process the Steering Committee helped to enhance the Plan within their area of expertise as key advisors, helped to build consensus, and worked collaboratively with the Core Team.

- Community Development Department
- Parks & Recreation Advisory Board
- Parks Division
- Real Estate Management
- Stormwater Division
- Water & Sewer Department
- Coalition for the Poudre River Watershed
- Colorado Parks & Wildlife
- Poudre Learning Center
- Poudre River Trail Corridor, Inc.
- Town of Windsor Open Space & Trails
- The Trust for Public Land
- University of Northern Colorado (various programs and departments)
- Weld County Department of Public Health and Environment
- Youth and Family Connections

## STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Utilizing various outreach tools, the overarching goal of the public outreach process was to inform the project stakeholders and the public of the plan in order for the community to gain a common understanding of the objectives, as well as, support and acceptance of the Strategic Plan.

### PHASE 1: FOUNDATION

*(JUNE 2020 – JULY 2020):*

- Public engagement plan and assemble an outreach network
- Understand community priorities via past outreach and existing relevant plans
- Identify gaps in funding, growth needs, and levels of service
- Steering Committee #1

### PHASE 2: RECOMMENDATIONS

*(AUG 2020 – OCT 2020):*

- Update goal statements and opportunity area priorities
- Outline potential projects and programs
- Steering Committee #2
- Develop an action plan including funding and partnerships
- Match priorities with funding, identify funding gaps
- Develop a Draft Plan
- Steering Committee #3 & #4



### PHASE 3: PUBLIC REVIEW

*(NOV 2020 – DEC 2020)*

- Virtual meetings held in English and Spanish to refine the Draft Plan
- Review by City and County Department staff
- Presentations to various boards and commissions including:
  - Parks and Recreation Board
  - Water & Sewer Board
  - Poudre Learning Center Board of Directors & Foundation Board
  - Poudre Trail Board
  - Human Relations Commission
  - Youth Commission
  - Art Commission
  - Commission on Disability
  - Planning Commission
  - Transportation Advisory Board

### PHASE 4: REVISIONS AND ADOPTION

*(JAN – FEB 2021)*

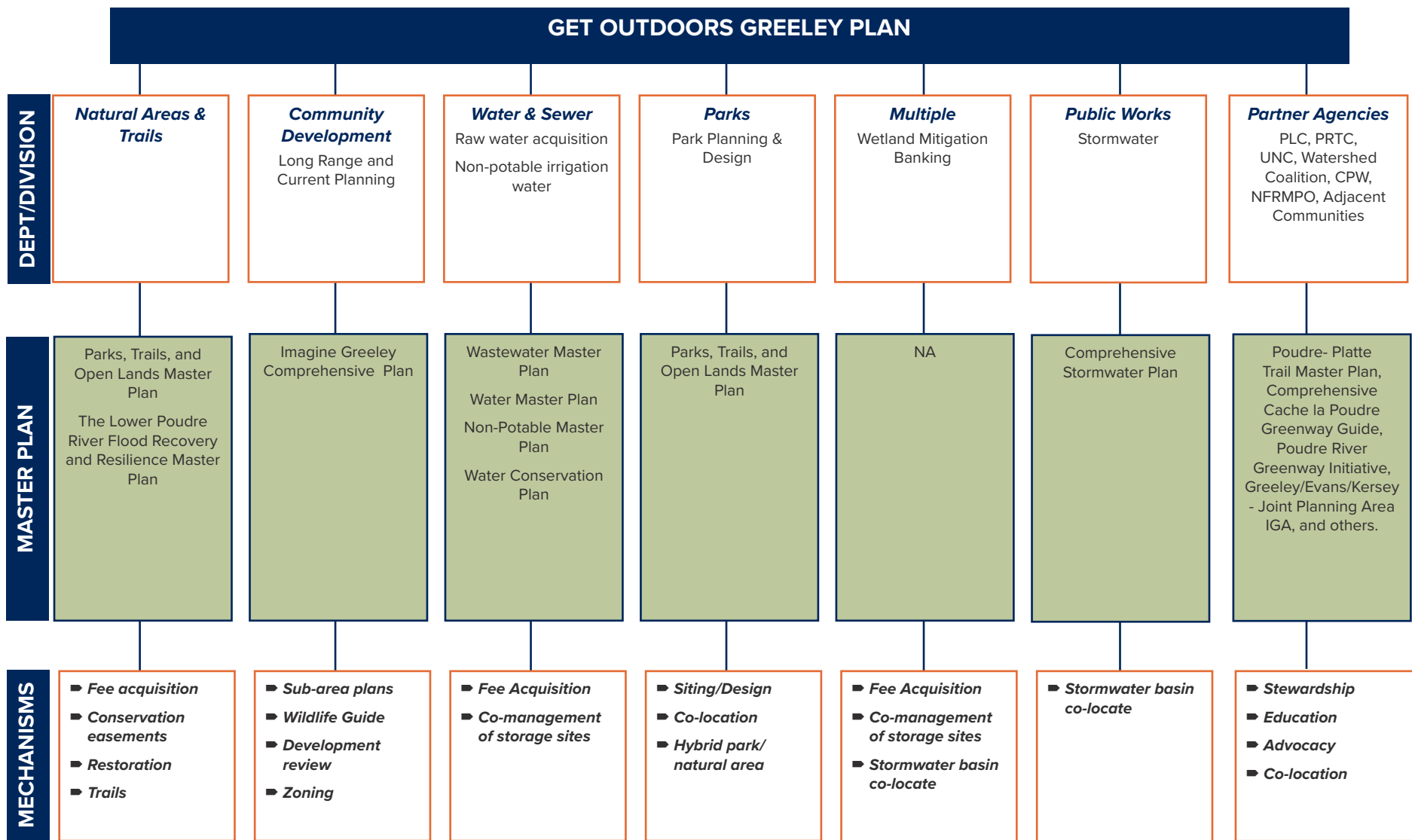
- Revise plan with feedback from the public and guidance from City Council and stakeholder groups
- Final Plan for Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and Planning Commission recommendation
- City Council adoption hearing





*Sheep Draw Natural Area- Volunteers from University of Northern Colorado helping to build the nature trail.*



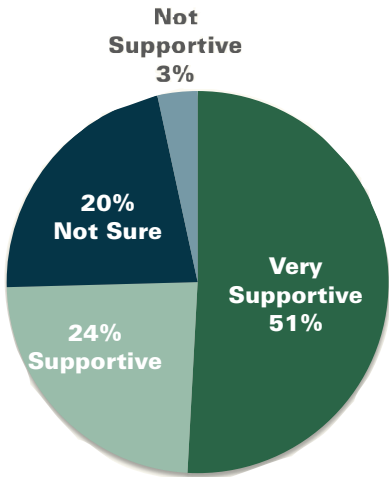
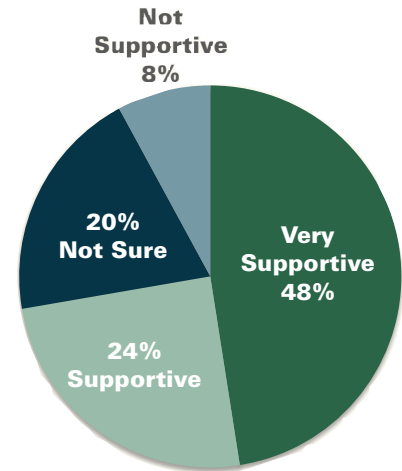


# COMMUNITY NEEDS AND PERCEPTIONS

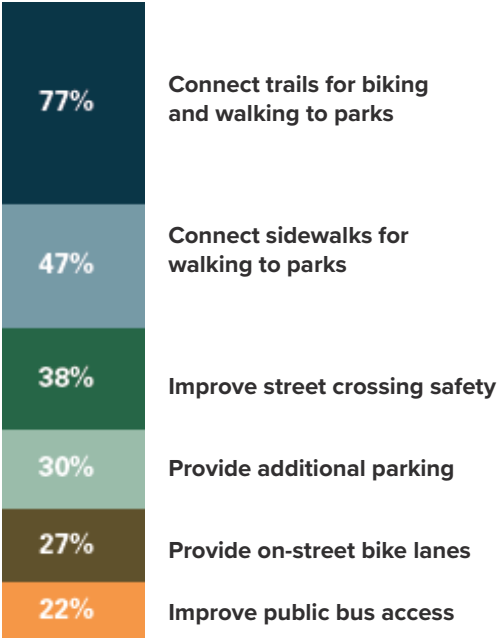
## PROVISION OF OUTDOOR RECREATION AMENITIES, ACCESS TO NATURE, AND OPEN SPACE

Community needs and perceptions were documented in several recent outreach efforts. For example, the PTOL Plan included community-wide workshops and open houses.

The City of Greeley conducts a Resident Survey every two years, including 2019, 2017, 2015, and 2013. The survey rates quality of life in the city, service delivery, and performance of the local government. While a number of factors can influence people’s perceptions throughout the year, the data are still relevant to provide a glimpse of the public perceptions. Of the City Council priorities, 58% of respondents identified that the City should spend more effort on “Economic Health and Development” (job growth, private and public sector investments), and “Infrastructure and Growth” (maintaining water services, streets, parks, etc). Natural Areas & Trails will work with the City’s Communication & Engagement Department to incorporate questions related to natural areas, trails, and open lands for the next community survey in 2021.

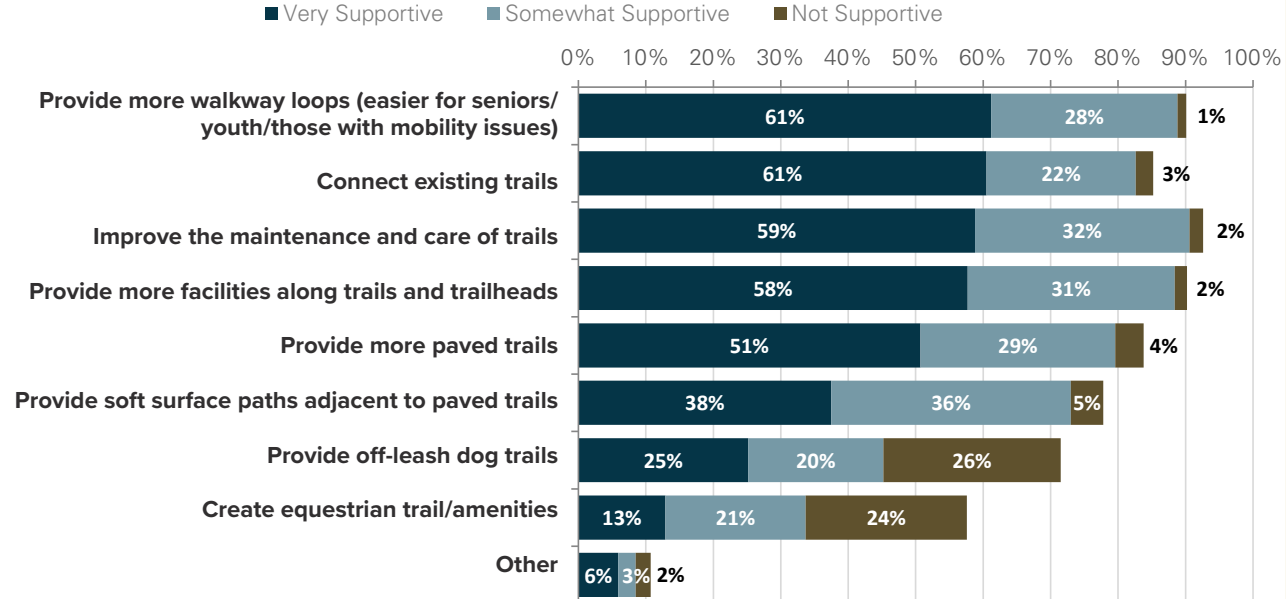


Community Support for Acquisition of Natural Areas by the City (top) or by Active City Program (bottom) (Source: PTOL 2016)



Community Support for Infrastructure Projects (Source: PTOL 2016)





*Community Support for Trails and Walkaways (Source: Community Survey, as reference in PTOL 2016)*

## Where should we improve natural areas?

Areas selected by youth for improvements to natural areas:

- Areas around Bittersweet park
- Areas to the south of Poudre Ponds
- Neighborhoods to the east of 14th Avenue, south of Lincoln Park, north of Greeley Central High School
- Neighborhoods surrounding University of Northern Colorado.
- Island Grove Park
- East Memorial Park

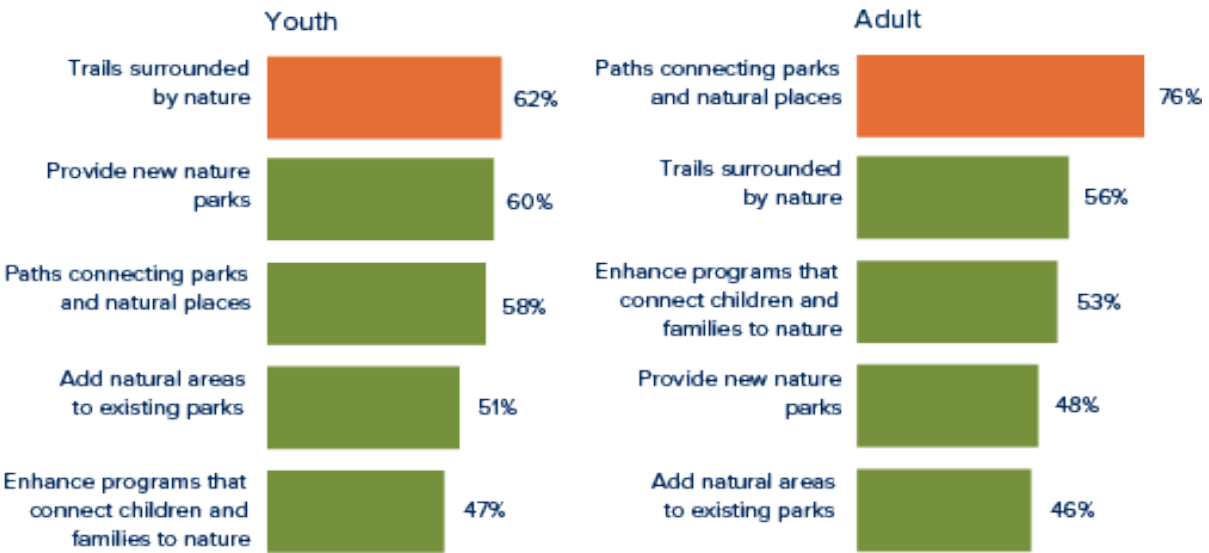
Adults most commonly selected:

- Surrounding Twin Rivers Park
- North of McAuliffe Elementary School
- Along the Poudre River Trail.
- Downtown
- Bittersweet Park
- Gateway Lakes Park

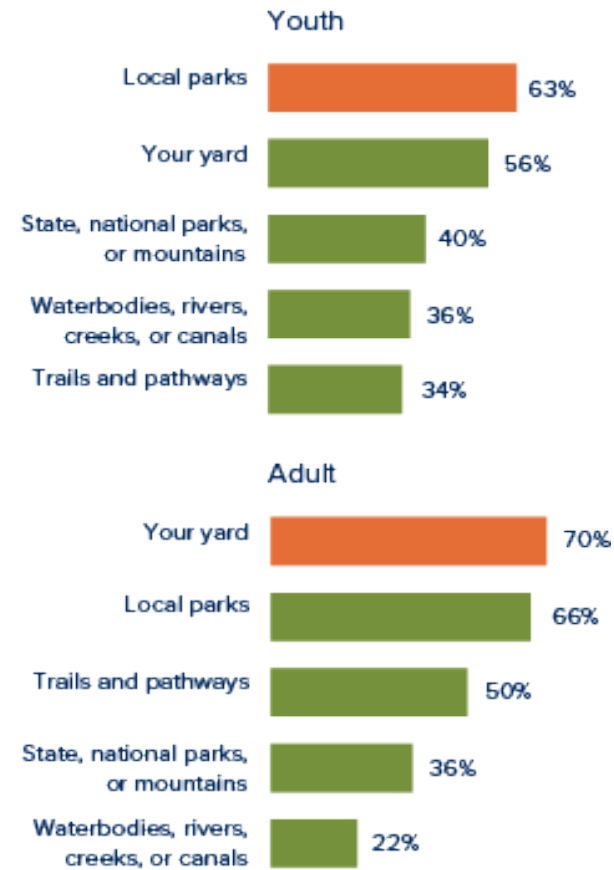
(Source: Inspire Initiative Report 2017)

The Inspire Initiative Report focused on a decision-making process that was directed by youth in the community, and youth and adults were surveyed separately. Key findings include:

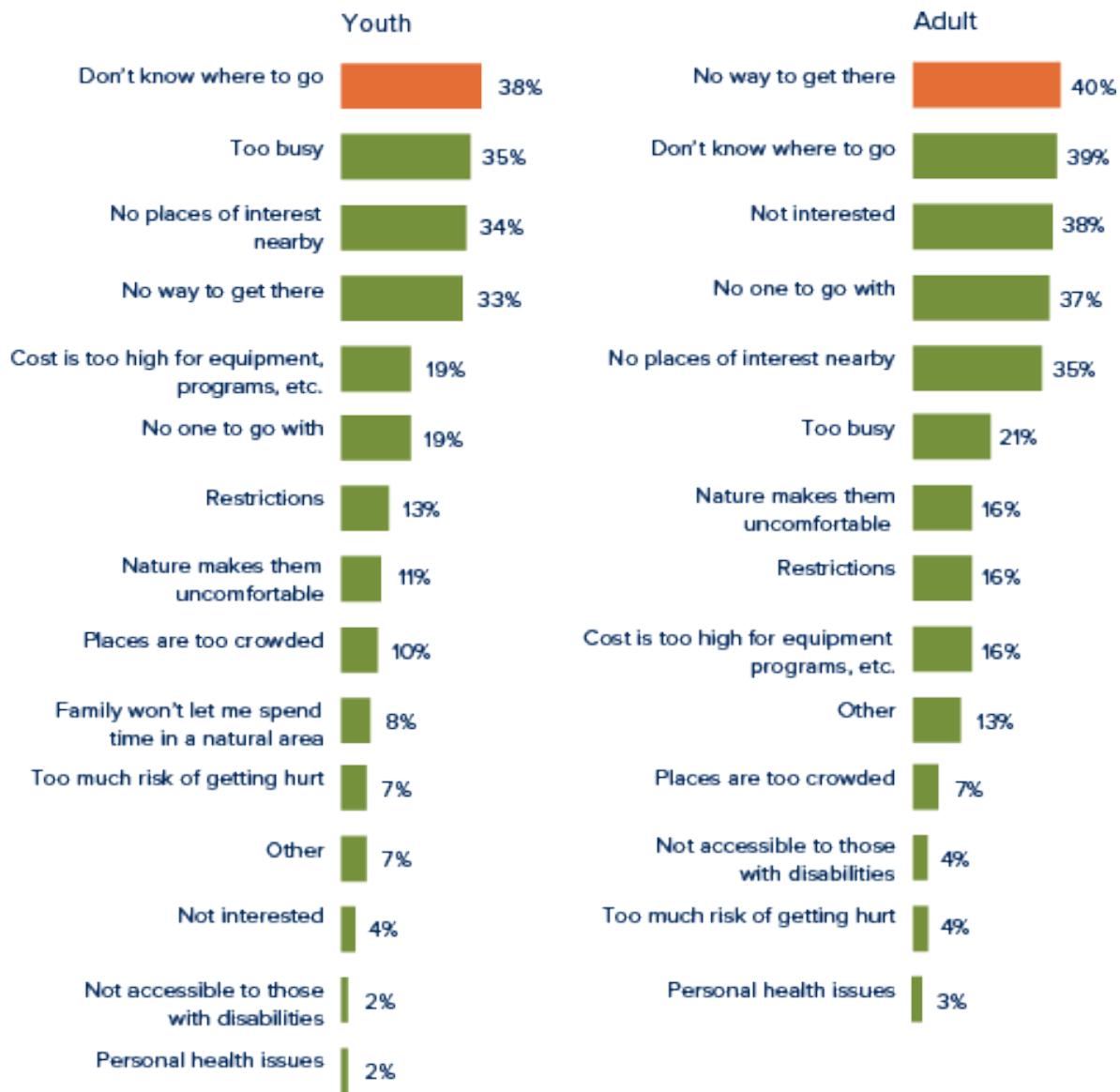
- 72% of respondents are supportive of acquiring additional natural areas. Further, three-quarters of respondents supported an “Active City Program” to acquire lands. There is a high level of support for trails and access to parks can be improved by developing additional trails and walking paths to parks. Additionally, more facilities, and the maintenance of trails and facilities, are important to the community.
- Both youth and adults primarily experience nature in local parks or their yard, versus in state/national parks or along trails. Opportunities for playing and exploring in nature should be expanded, both by adding more trails, and by connecting and surrounding those trails with nature.
- Other improvements important to getting youth and members of their households to spend more time in nature include new nature parks (60%), and adding natural areas to existing parks (51%).



Improvements Needed to Encourage Households to Spend Time in Nature  
(Source: Inspire Initiative Report 2017)



Top 5 Places Youth and Members of Their Household Experience Nature  
(Source: Inspire Initiative Report 2017)



*Barriers to Getting Outdoors*  
 (Source: Inspire Initiative Report 2017)



