



**PARKS**

**& GOLF**

**2024**

**RECREATION**

**MASTER PLAN**

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*We thank the many full- and part-time staff from various City departments and the divisions within Parks, Recreation, and Golf for their assistance and review.*



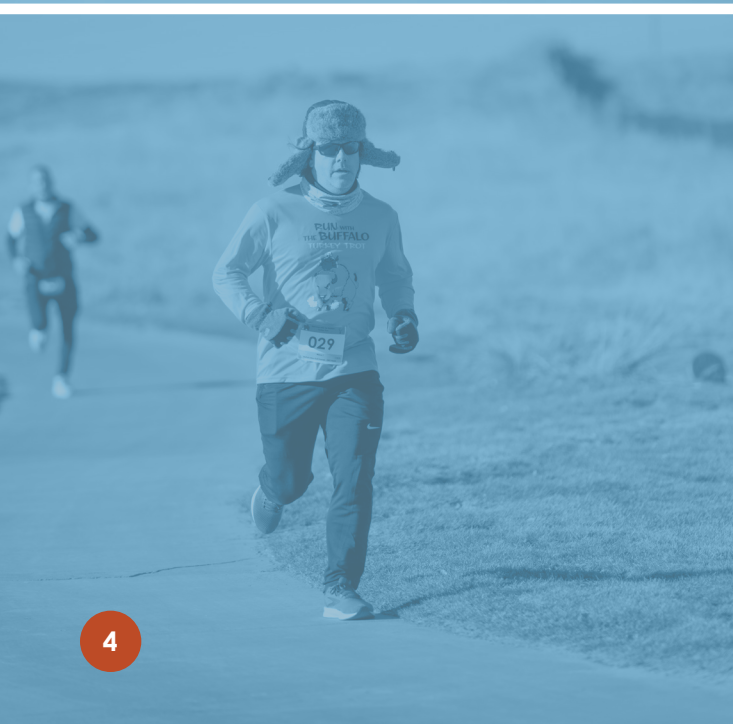
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# Executive Summary



Commerce City, Colorado retained Berry, Dunn, McNeil & Parker, LLC (BerryDunn) to facilitate the preparation of a Parks, Recreation, and Golf Master Plan. The plan was initiated in July 2023, with final plan adopted by City Council in July 2024.

## Introduction and Methodology of the Master Planning Process

The City initiated the Master Planning process to help equitably meet community residents' needs as the community grows from a population of about 70,000 to a projected population of 150,000. A comprehensive planning process was conducted, resulting in findings that supported community and organization visioning, recommendations, and an implementation plan.

## Community Engagement and Needs Identification

It was important to include, represent, and consider all diverse voices, expressed desires, and needs in this plan. The expansive engagement strategy occurred over several months and included more than 61,000 documented points of contact throughout the City. Engagement options included meetings, interviews, a statistically valid resident survey, Social Pinpoint and project website online engagement platforms, a golf-specific user survey, various email and social media outreach efforts, comment cards, and informational signage in facilities and parks around the City.

## Key Planning Efforts

The planning effort included analysis of services along with comparative analysis and benchmarking with other similar City systems, impacting regional and national trends, and financial analysis. Innovative methods such as the use of mobility data were incorporated into planning efforts to help maximize analysis and findings.

Key trends and opportunities affecting services include:

- Improving preventive health aspects, such as physical activity and nutrition
- Access and alternative transportation to nature and trails
- Safety and perceptions of safety
- Social engagement
- Integration of an equity lens in all diverse offerings and communications

The Department plays a strong role in environmental management, conservation, and community resiliency, preparing for and responding to natural disasters, storm water management, and helping with social needs such as drug/alcohol overuse and help for unhoused residents.

A detailed gap analysis of what the City currently provides and what will be needed in the future in terms of programs, facilities, trails, and open space land was conducted. Findings show a strong need for integration with the citywide transportation plan, enhancing on- and off-street trail connections and greenways. Staffing resources are needed as the system grows, with a focus on needing additional park rangers for positive presence and safety, along with additional marketing and communications staff for the Department. Specific capital improvements are highlighted, along with a walkability analysis. In addition, a special assessment was performed for Buffalo Run Golf Course (BRGC) and Bison Grill.

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## THEME ONE



## Full and Diverse Range of Parks and Recreation Services

This theme addresses goals for improvements for providing equitable services across the City for all residents. There are needs for increased programming and expansion of safety and services. Analysis of needed programming and facility needs should be ongoing through annual programming plan, staffing allocations, maintenance, and capital plans.

## THEME TWO



## Ongoing Financial Sustainability and Community Benefits

The focus of this theme is to incorporate annual review and evaluation of the financial strategies, with adjustments as possible to increase service levels. There appears to be opportunities for additional alternative funding (sponsorships, grants, and partnerships), but these will need to be well managed in a centralized, departmental manner.

## THEME THREE



## Additional Programs and Spaces

The City is growing, and residents have expressed needs for additional programs. While the community population grows, programs, services, and spaces will need to evolve to respond to demands. Increased focus will be needed to occur in areas of community building, accessibility to facilities and services, technology, synergy throughout communications and marketing, and increased partnerships.

## THEME FOUR



## Capital Facilities and Amenities

The City is growing and will continue to need additional capital projects; many of these will feature collaboration across departments. Capital needs will include adding specific spaces to address immediate and future service gaps.

## THEME FIVE



## Enhancements for Buffalo Run Golf Course and Bison Grill

The Golf Course Needs Analysis (part of this planning process) indicated that Buffalo Run is being updated for water and drainage improvements, and Bison Grill is undergoing expansion. Recommendations for this theme focus on increasing golf-specific marketing resources to expand usage by non-golfers, telling the story of the course as a “Links-style” course, and adding more programs and facility rentals.

## THEME SIX



## Positive and Proactive Communication With the Community

The Department would greatly benefit from increasing communication and marketing to the public and visitors. This will help celebrate, educate, and inform the public, and help spread out use for facilities and parks that are “over-loved.” The Department has an opportunity to leverage strong demand and support from the public and create a culture that celebrates and highlights the abundance of natural and recreational resources and high quality of life available in the City.

## THEME SEVEN



## High Performing Team With Sufficient Staffing and Support Resources

To help meet the current and future community demands and achieve the goals identified through this planning effort, the City will need to continue to build a foundation of adequate staff and support resources. The provision of public services requires staffing and resources. Modifications in these resources should be done strategically to help ensure alignment with evolving community needs.

## THEME EIGHT



## Citywide Collaboration

Planning for operations, design, and maintenance management is an ongoing process. This theme highlights adding focus on trends in planning and management, adding emphasis for the next five years in conservation and resiliency, mobility and connectivity, community revitalization and urban renewal, and community-wide planning alignment.



# SECTION

# 1

# Introduction







## Project Background

Commerce City (the City) retained Berry, Dunn, McNeil & Parker, LLC (BerryDunn) to assist the City with the preparation of a Parks, Recreation, and Golf (PRG) Master Plan. In preparation for continued expected growth within the City, this plan is intended to revisit and refine the Department's vision and make progress in its desire to provide a "a quality community for a lifetime" for the next generation. As part of this initiative, the department wished to renew the direction of the Parks, Recreation, and Golf facilities system, a system often cited as one of the City's most valuable and cherished amenities, through a better understanding of the City's current environment, robust engagement efforts, and charting the actions necessary to grow and sustain efforts.

**The plan was initiated in July 2023 with the final plan adopted by the City Council in July 2024.**



## Project Work Plan and Tasks

City staff and BerryDunn developed a detailed project work plan to meet the project objectives. This plan included review and integration with many other planning efforts. As part of the information-gathering phase, BerryDunn reviewed and integrated information from other recent and current planning work (many available at this [link](#)), including:

- Parks and Recreation Master Plan (1994)
- Prairieways Action Plan (1999)
- Second Creek Greenway Master Plan (2005)
- Strategic Plan for Recreation Programs, Services, and Facilities (2007)
- Walk Bike Fit (2012)
- BRGC Strategic Master Plan (2014)
- Commerce City Athletic Fields Study
- Previous GRASP® analysis and mapping
- Other sub-plans and departmental divisional summaries
- Budget summaries and processes
- Additional studies, plans, site plans, and evaluations completed previously





## 1| Strategic Kickoff

- Critical success factors
- Key focus areas
- Meeting schedule
- Identification of key stakeholders
- Gathering of all relevant documents
- Briefing with decision makers



## 2| Information Gathering

### NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- Staff
- Stakeholders
- Public meetings
- Focus groups
- Interviews
- Surveys
- Online engagement

### INVENTORY

- All assets
- All program locations
- Other providers

### LEVEL OF SERVICE ANALYSIS

- GIS component-based mapping
- Quality, quantity, and functionality

### COMMUNITY PROFILE

- Historical and planning context
- Demographics

### TRENDS



## 4| Draft Recommendations

### SUMMARY FINDINGS STRATEGIES

- Long-term vision
- Short-term action

### IMPLICATIONS

- Financial
- Operational

- Maintenance

### RECOMMENDATIONS

### IMPLEMENTATION ACTION PLAN

- Tasks
- Timing
- Costs

### REVIEW & REVISIONS



## 5| Final Plan

### REVIEW

- Staff
- Public
- Decision makers

### DISTRIBUTE/POST



## 6| Implementation

- Action plan
- Annual review



## 3| Findings and Visioning

### PRESENTATION/ FEEDBACK SESSIONS

- Staff
- Stakeholders
- Decision makers
- What we have discovered
- Key issues matrix
- Key ideas and themes

### ANALYSIS

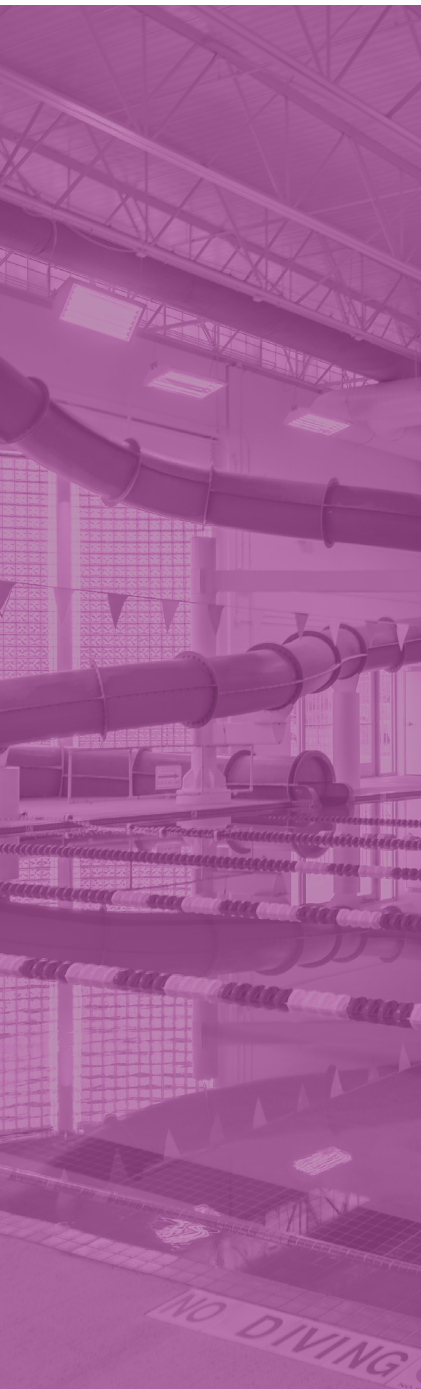
- Programming
- Operations
- Maintenance
- Marketing & Communications
- Financial Resources

SUMMARY OF TASKS COMPLETED	
<b>Task 1: Project Initiation</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <b>1.1</b> Conducted an initial project planning and strategic kickoff summary</li> <li>◆ <b>1.2</b> Developed a project work plan and schedule</li> <li>◆ <b>1.3</b> Developed an information request and review of previous plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <b>1.4</b> Facilitated a kickoff meeting and system tour</li> <li>◆ <b>1.5</b> Conducted monthly status updates and meetings</li> </ul>
<b>Task 2: Research and Trends</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <b>2.1</b> Conducted a demographics, trends, and comparative analysis</li> </ul>	
<b>Task 3: Needs Assessment</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <b>3.1</b> Developed an engagement strategy protocol</li> <li>◆ <b>3.2</b> Developed project branding</li> <li>◆ <b>3.3</b> Developed and maintained a project website via Social Pinpoint</li> <li>◆ <b>3.4</b> Engaged the City's internal stakeholders</li> <li>◆ <b>3.5</b> Engaged the public and other external stakeholders</li> <li>◆ <b>3.6</b> Conducted a statistically valid survey</li> <li>◆ <b>3.7</b> Developed an engagement summary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <b>3.8</b> Conducted facility inventories and mapping updates</li> <li>◆ <b>3.9</b> Updated the Geo-Referenced Amenities Standards Program (GRASP®) Level of Service (LOS) analysis</li> <li>◆ <b>3.10</b> Gathered Placer.ai mobility data and user geo-analysis</li> <li>◆ <b>3.11</b> Conducted a summary LOS analysis</li> <li>◆ <b>3.12</b> Assessed BRGC and Bison Grill</li> </ul>
<b>Task 4: Implementation Plan</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <b>4.1</b> Compiled findings</li> <li>◆ <b>4.2</b> Validated findings and facilitated visioning workshops</li> <li>◆ <b>4.3</b> Drafted, designed, presented, and edited the Master Plan</li> </ul>	
<b>Task 5: Master Plan Adoption</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <b>5.1</b> Finalized and presented the Master Plan</li> </ul>	

Table 1.1 Summary of Tasks Completed

# SECTION 2

## The Community – Who We Are and What We Need





## Community Profile and Brief History

Commerce City has a long and diverse history that has influenced what has been built over the years, who lives in the City now, and current needs in the community. In 1859, John D. “Colonel Jack” Henderson built a ranch, trading post, and hotel on Henderson Island in the South Platte River in Arapahoe County, Kansas Territory. Henderson Island is today the site of the Adams County Regional Park and Fairgrounds, just northwest of City boundaries. Among the first establishments in the modern Commerce City were cemeteries. Several towns were founded in this part of Adams County in the 19th century as transit operations and agriculture grew.

Derby, a Burlington Railroad station in 1887, was laid out as a town in 1889, although it was largely vacated by 1891. Irondale was first settled in 1889, named after a foundry that was opened that year. It was incorporated as the town of Irondale in 1924 but unincorporated in the 1930s due to increasing vacancy. Adams City was laid out in 1903, with developers hoping the county seat would be established there; however, Brighton was elected county seat in 1904 and Adams City was vacated in 1922. Rocky Mountain Arsenal was founded in 1942 due east of the growing community. In 1947, Adams County School District 14 was formed from surrounding schools, and Adams City was redeveloped. In 1951, as Denver was considering annexing the area, a plan to incorporate southern Adams County was developed. On July 8, 1952, area residents voted 251 to 24 to incorporate Commerce Town, comprising neighborhoods such as Rose Hill and southern Adams City. Commerce Town annexed part of Derby in 1962, increasing the population over fourfold, enough for the town to gain the status of a city. The city name was duly changed to Commerce City. By 1970, the City’s home-rule charter went into effect and, in the process, established the council-manager form of city government. The City’s population then was about 16,000 people.

The City has continued growing. As parts of the City have added population and industry, demographics have changed. In 2023, the population was just under 70,000, and buildout is expected to eventually be around 150,000 people. The City has a variety of transportation and natural barriers (such as the large block of Rocky Mountain Arsenal land) that affect how residents can move and use facilities, parks, and trails. In addition, various developments, industrial aspects, and homeowner associations have created varied types of service levels across the City. For this project, it has been very important to look closely at the demographics and community needs and desires across the City.

## Current Demographics

BerryDunn completed the Commerce City demographic profile to provide an analysis of household and economic data in the area, helping to understand the historical and projected changes that might impact the community. The demographics analysis offers insight into the potential market for the community’s parks, trails, and recreation programs and services by highlighting where and how the community will change.

Population, age distribution, income, race/ethnicity, and other household characteristics referenced throughout this report were sourced from ArcGIS Business Analyst, utilizing the U.S. Census data with estimates generated in August 2023. Commerce City and subarea boundaries were used as the geographic area for this study. Additional comparisons to Colorado and the United States were provided where applicable for additional context.

Throughout the report, there are various maps that represent the demographic information in a visual format, with data points color coded by block groups. Block groups are statistical divisions of census tracts used by the U.S. Census Bureau, and they are often utilized in demographic studies to analyze and understand finer-scale population characteristics within specific geographic areas. The block groups in this study extend beyond Commerce City boundaries.

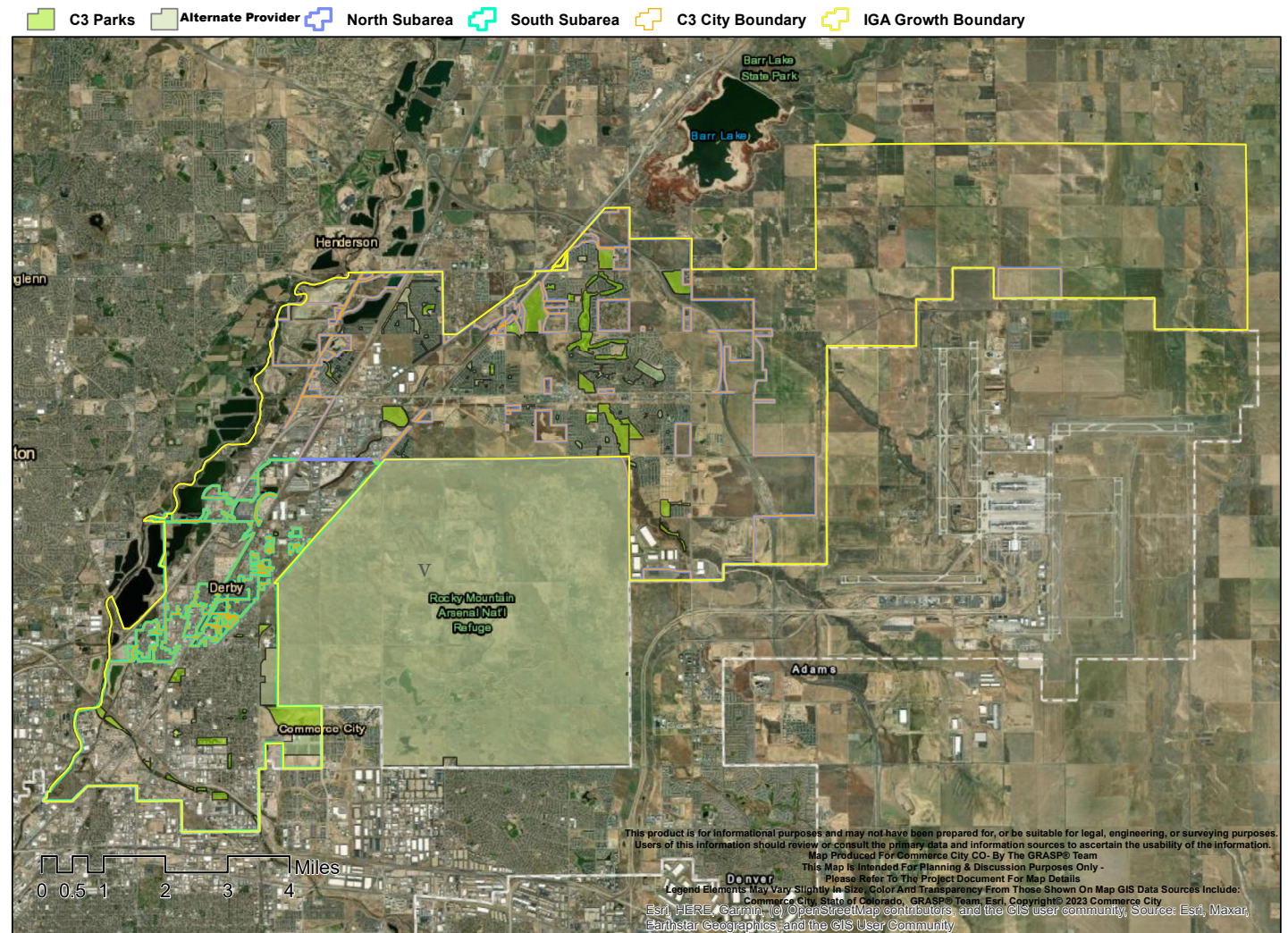


Figure 2.1: Commerce City North/South Subareas and IGA Boundaries

## Population

The population in Commerce City was estimated at 69,789 in 2023. That is an increase of over 48,077 from 21,712 in the year 2000. Future projections indicate Commerce City will continue with a steady growth to a population of 73,233 by 2028 (Figure 2.2).

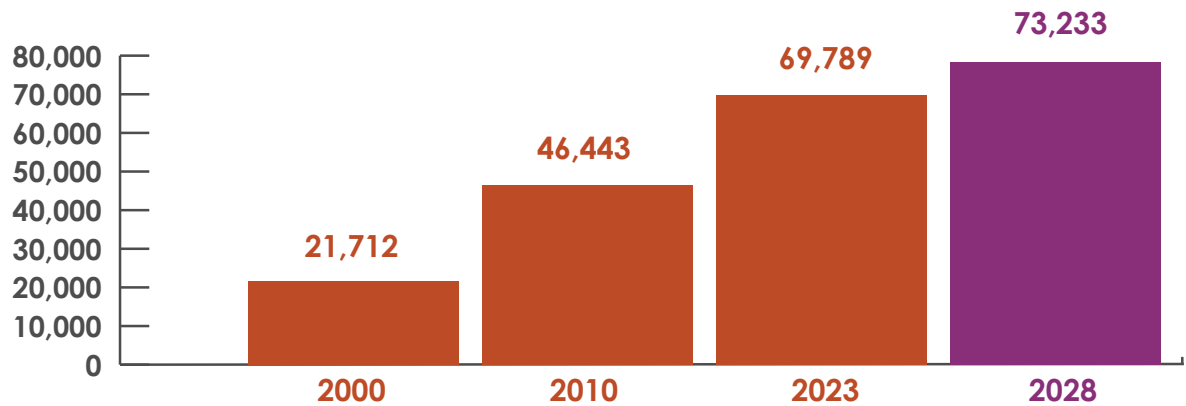


Figure 2.2: Population Change (2000 – 2028)

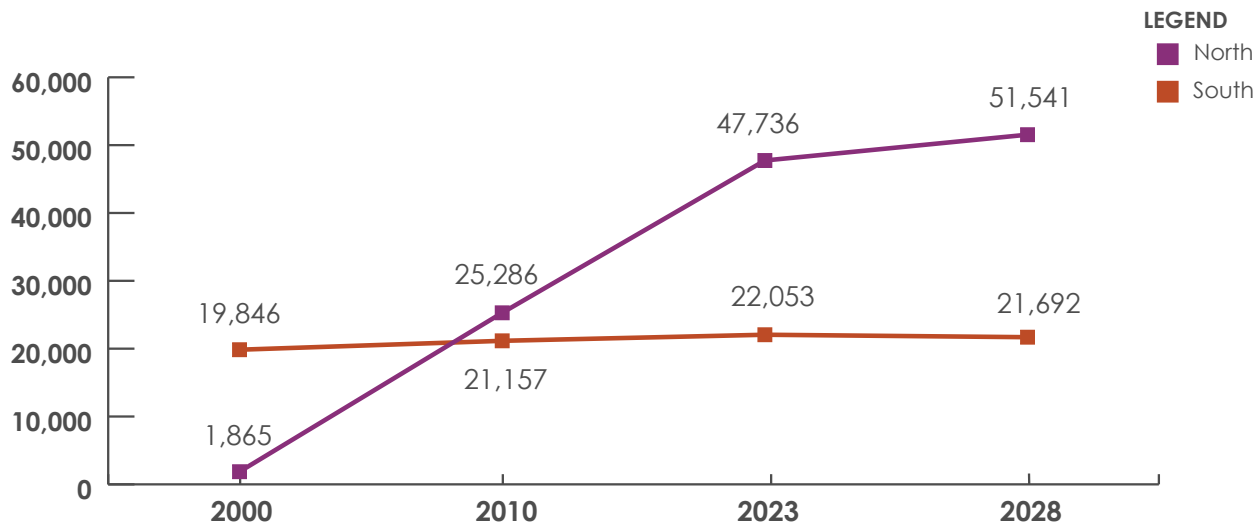


Figure 2.3: Population Change in North/South Subareas (2000 – 2028)



The population growth rate from 2023 to 2028 is projected at 0.61% for Commerce City, with a higher annual growth rate identified in the north subarea (1.55%) and a negative annual growth rate identified in the South subarea. From 2020 to 2023, this difference was more pronounced, with the north subarea growing over 5.5%, and the south subarea declining with a negative growth rate of -0.54%.

Figure 2.4 shows the population growth rate by block groups. The blocks shaded in orange and dark orange indicate where the population is expected to grow the most, up to 12% by 2028.

	North	South	Commerce City
2010 – 2020 Compound Annual Growth Rate	4.70%	0.59%	2.65%
2020-2023 Compound Annual Growth Rate	5.56%	-0.54%	2.51%
2023-2028 Compound Annual Growth Rate	1.55%	-0.33%	0.61%

Table 2.1: Compound Annual Growth Rate for North/South Subareas (2010 – 2028)

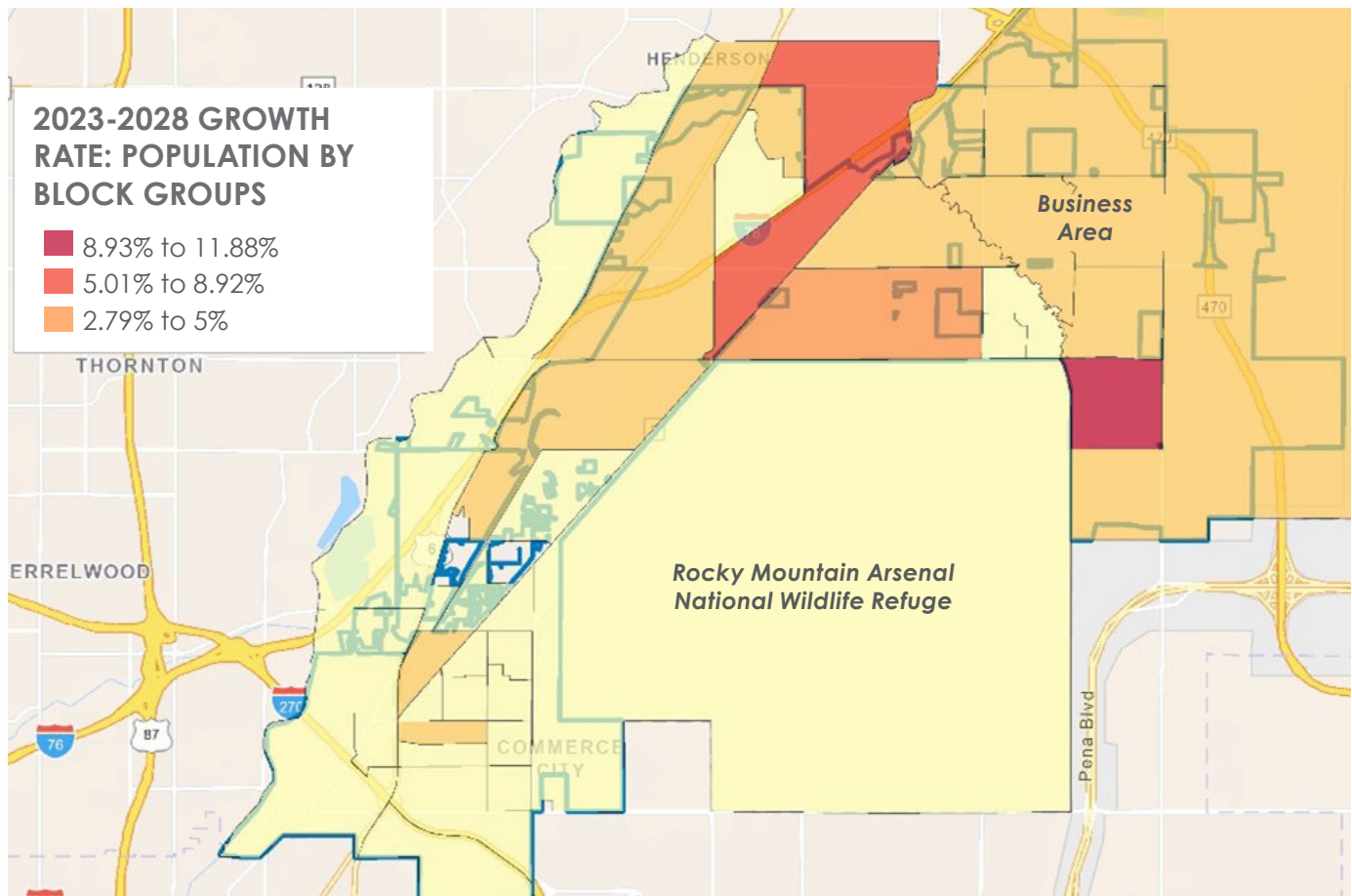


Figure 2.4: Commerce City Population Growth Rate by Block Group (2023 – 2028)  
Source: ArcGIS Business Analyst (2023)

## Age Distribution

The median age of residents in Commerce City was 33 years old, younger than the 2023 median age in CO (38) and the median age in the U.S. (39). The age groups making up the largest percentage of the population in Commerce City were youth (0 – 19 years) at 35%, adult (35 – 54 years) at 29%, and young adult (20 – 34 years) at 18%.

When comparing the age distribution within Commerce City, the South subarea has more young adults and seniors, while the north subarea has more middle-aged adults (35 – 54 years old). Both subareas have a similar percentage of youth aged 0 – 19 (between 34% and 36%).

Note: Figure 2.5 provides a citywide breakdown of age groups as a percentage of the total population, while Figure 2.6 represents the percentage of each subarea's population that falls within each age category. Therefore, Figure 2.6 is the average of the North and South data, not the sum.

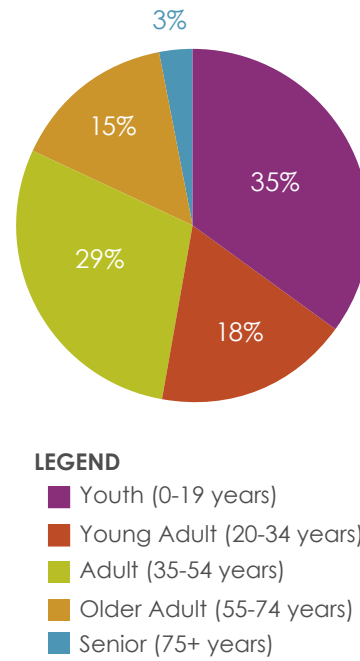


Figure 2.5: Age Distribution of City Overall (2023)

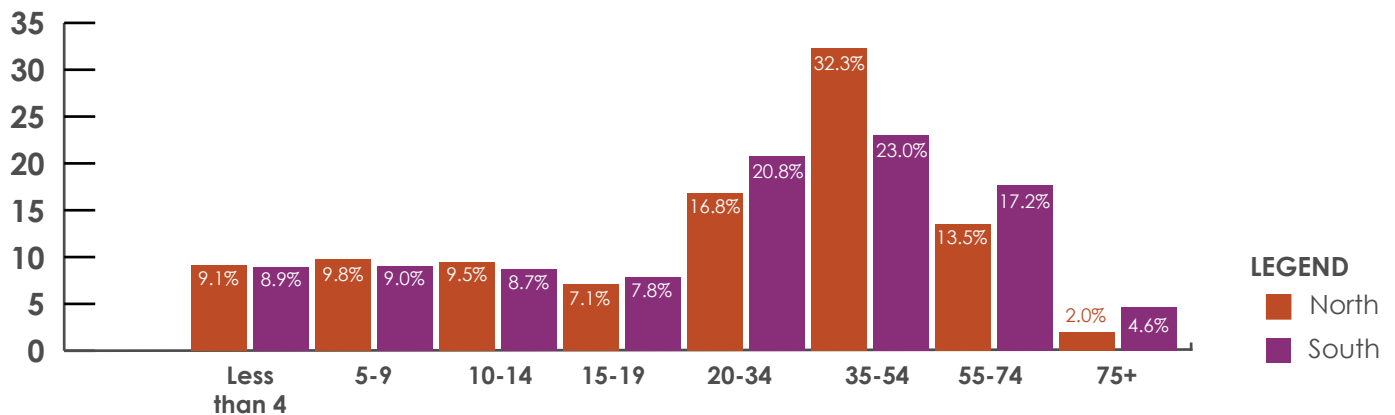


Figure 2.6: Age Distribution by North/South Subareas (2023)

The map in Figure 2.7 shows the median age by block groups. The blocks shaded in dark green have the oldest median age group (ages 38 – 41).

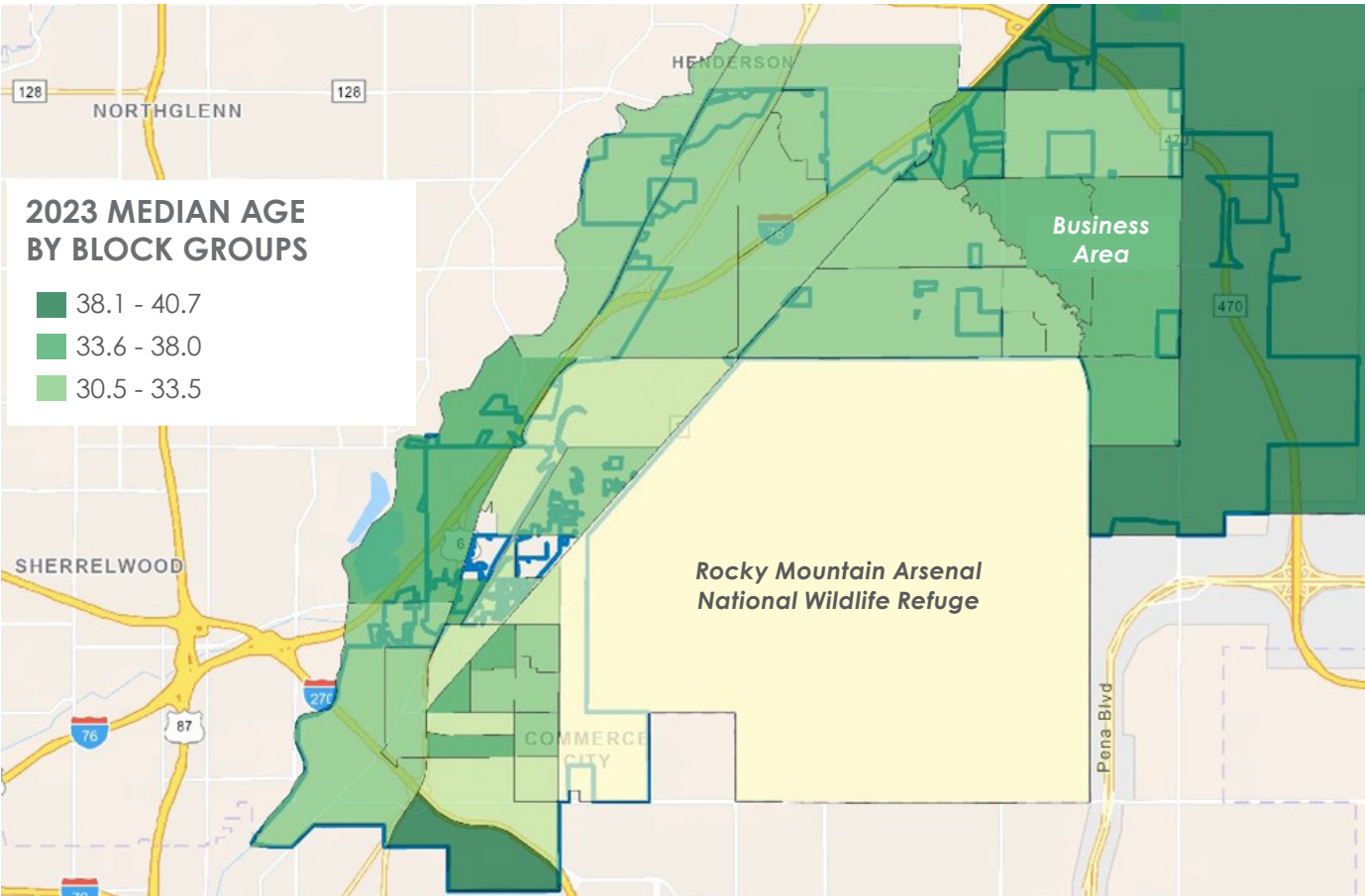


Figure 2.7: Commerce City Median Age by Block Groups (2023)  
Source: ArcGIS Business Analyst (2023)

Age Change Over Time

Over the next five years, the age groups of older adults and adults are expected to decline slightly within Commerce City (-1.1%), while the age groups of youth, senior, and young adults are expected to grow in the next five years.

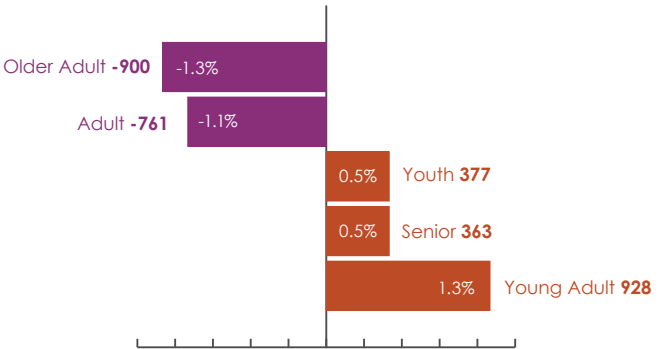


Figure 2.8: Projected Age Change Over Time (2023 – 2028)



Household Characteristics

The household characteristics in Commerce City indicate that the community earns a slightly higher median household income than CO (Figure 2.9). Less than 9% of the population lives below the federal poverty line, and the median household income is higher than both the State and the United States.

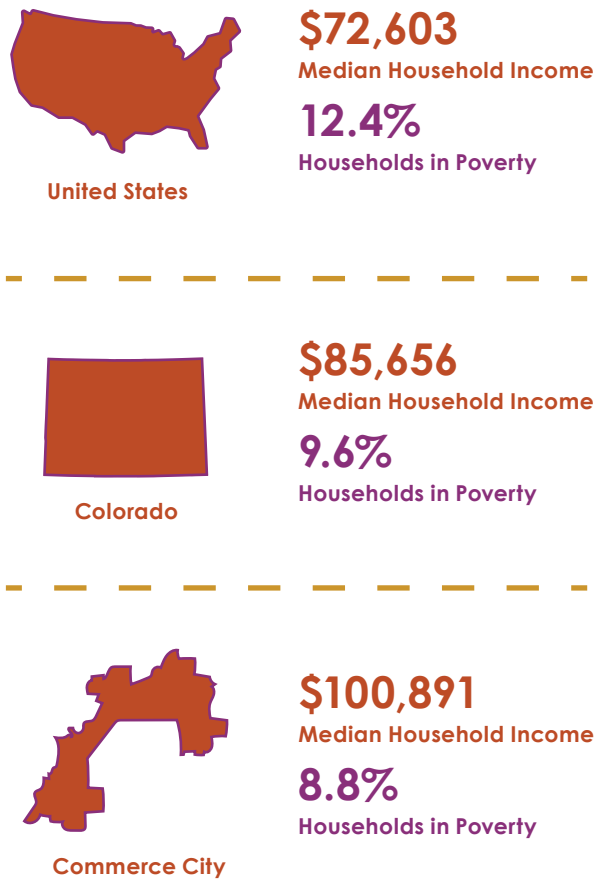


Figure 2.9: Household Characteristics (2023)

When comparing the household characteristics inside the City, the north subarea has a higher median income and home value, and significantly fewer households in poverty compared to the south subarea.

	North	South	Commerce City
Median Household Income	\$114,490	\$50,791	\$100,979
Average Home Value	\$516,389	\$451,978	\$502,468
Average Household Size	3.22	3.23	3.22
Households Below Poverty Level	3.04%	18.43%	8.77%

Table 2.2: Household Characteristics of North/South Subareas (2023)





The map in Figure 2.10 shows the median household income by block groups. The areas shaded in dark purple show where the higher income earners reside (\$110,000 to \$152,000).

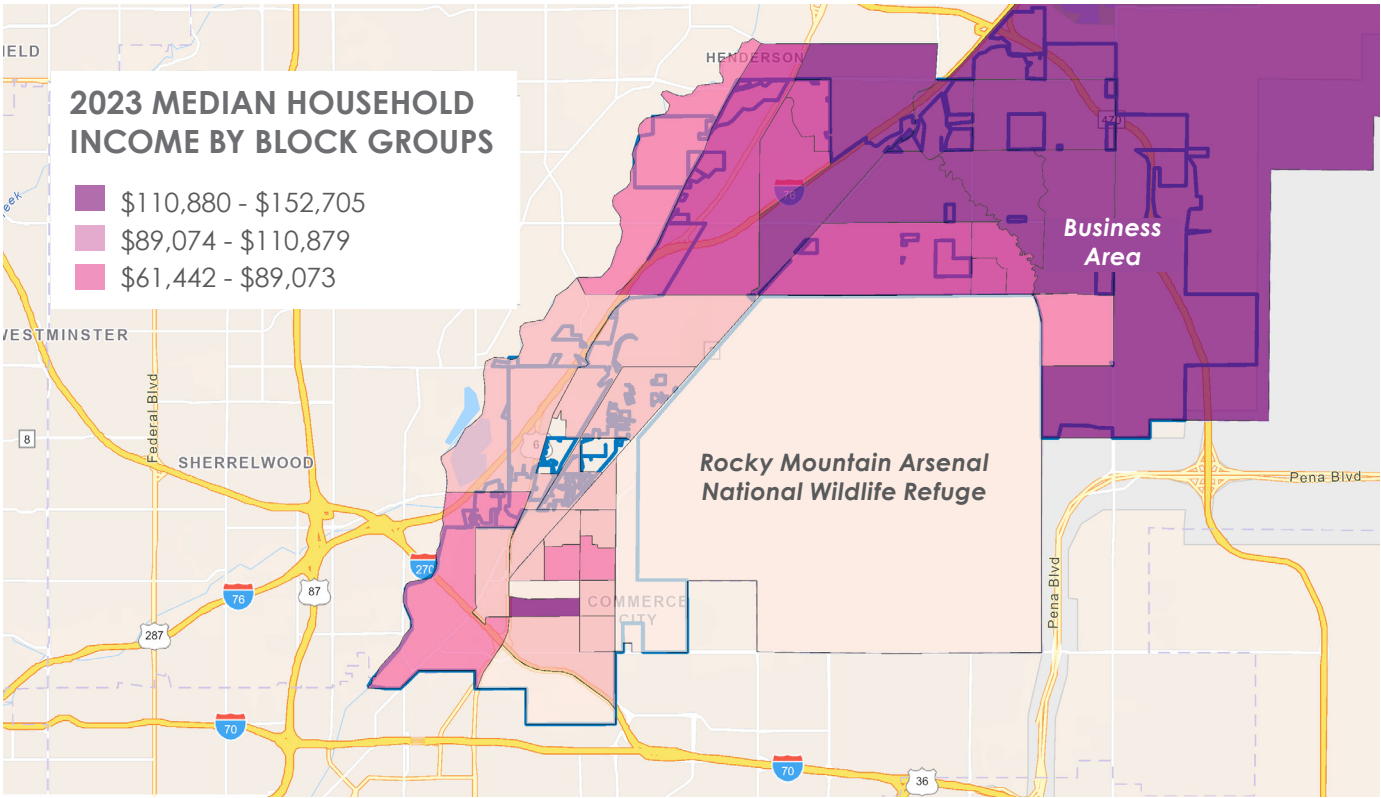


Figure 2.10: Commerce City Median Household Income by Block Group (2023)  
Source: ArcGIS Business Analyst (2023)

Commerce City is becoming increasingly more diverse over time. From 2010 to 2023, the white population decreased by almost 20%. Those of “two or more races” increased 15%. Those who identify as being of Hispanic origin (regardless of race) are expected to increase from 47% to 49% from 2010 to 2028.

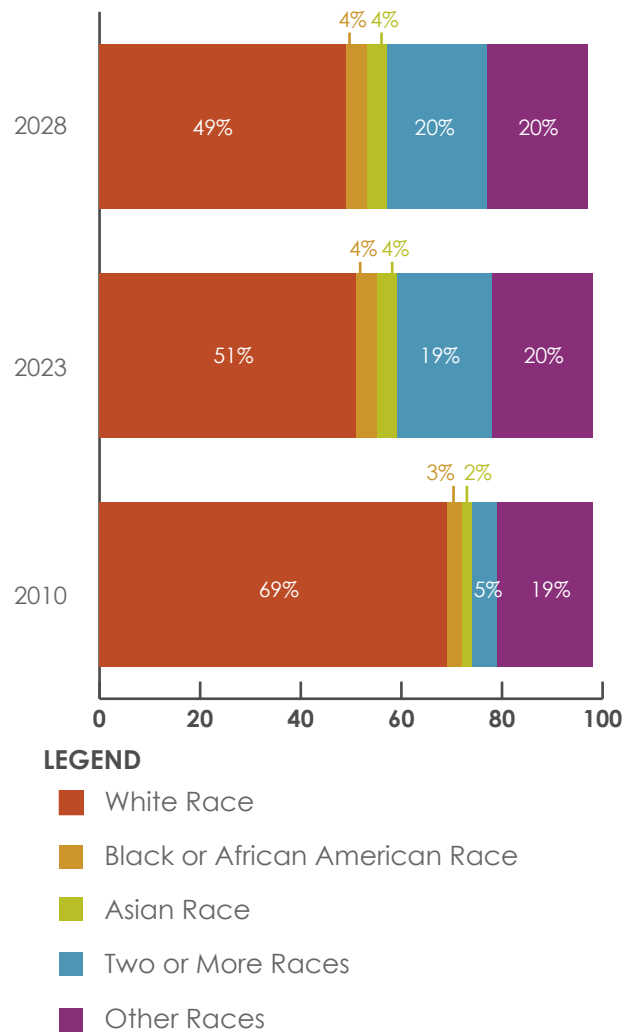


Figure 2.11: Racial Diversity (2010 – 2028)

The racial diversity within Commerce City is distinct between the north and south subareas. In the south, there is a greater population of those identifying as “two or more races.”

	North	South	Commerce City
White	58.33%	35.59%	51.14%
Black/African American	4.73%	3.25%	4.27%
Asian	4.98%	0.59%	3.60%
American Indian/Alaska Native	1.30%	2.63%	1.71%
Pacific Islander	0.26%	0.08%	0.21%
Two or More Races	17.49%	23.58%	19.43%
Other Race	12.91%	34.27%	19.64%
Hispanic	36.70%	73.20%	48.21%
Adults that Speak Spanish	10.99%	27.70%	17.41%
Diversity Index	79.0	81.7	82.9

Table 2.3: Race and Ethnicity Characteristics

The diversity index from ArcGIS is a measurement that quantifies the variety and distribution of different demographic groups within a specific geographic area.





Figure 2.12 shows the diversity index by block groups. The area shaded in dark gray ranks the highest in the diversity index at 82 - 85.

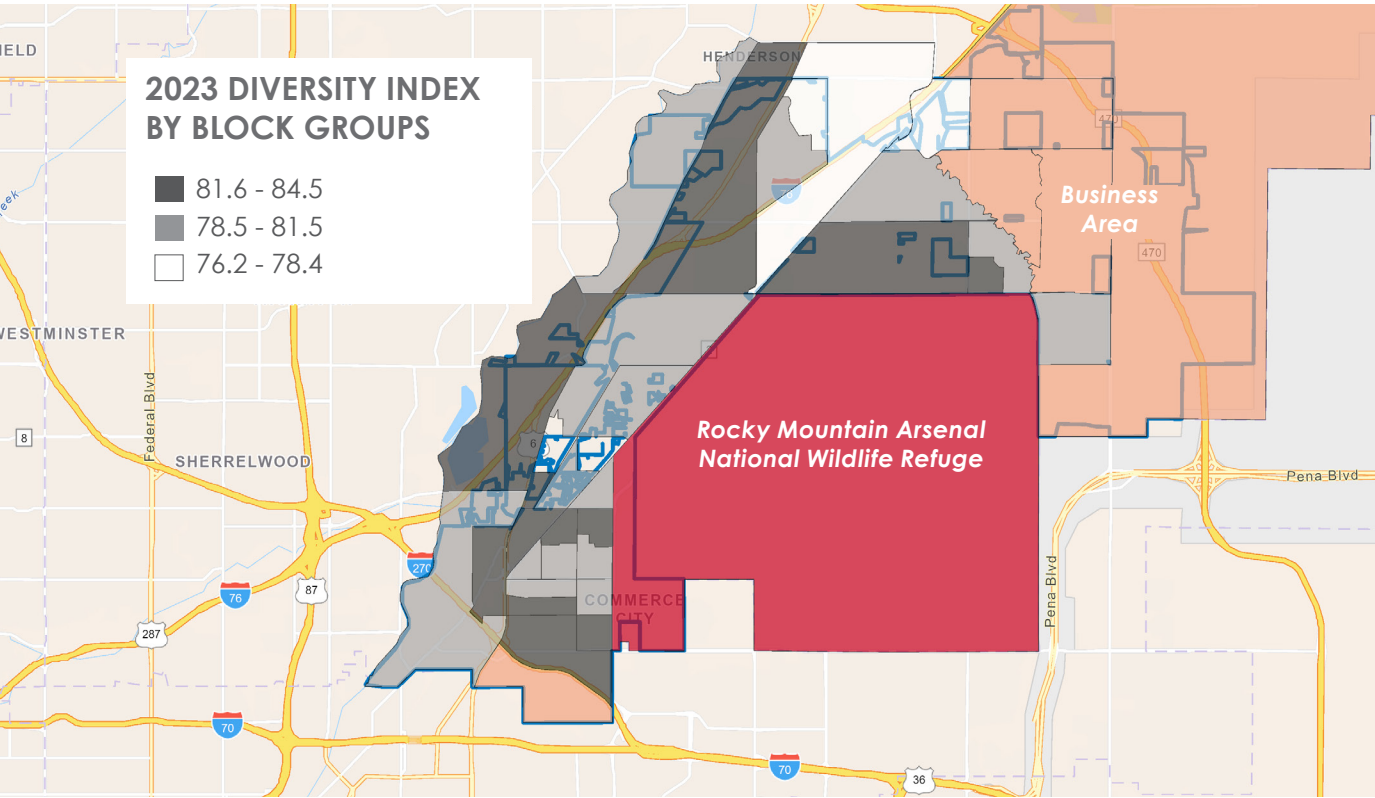


Figure 2.12: Commerce City Diversity Index by Block Groups (2023)  
Source: ArcGIS Business Analyst (2023)



## Summary of Demographic Impacts for Commerce City

The following items summarize the key demographic points that impact service now and in the future:

### • Population Growth:

- » Commerce City's population surged from 21,712 in 2000 to 69,789 in 2023. The population is projected to reach 73,233 by 2028.
- » The north subarea is growing much faster than the south. From 2020 to 2023, the north grew by 5.56%, while the south decreased by 0.54%.

### • Household Characteristics:

- » The median household income in Commerce City is higher than both the State and the United States. The north subarea has a notably higher income than the south subarea.
- » Only 3.04% of households in the north subarea are below the poverty level, compared to 18.43% in the south subarea.

### • Age Distribution:

- » The median age in Commerce City is 33, younger than both Colorado (38) and the U.S. (39).
- » 35% of the population is aged 0-19, indicating a strong need for youth-oriented services.

### • Racial Diversity:

- » The south section of town is much more racially diverse, with 73% Hispanic population, and high numbers of "two or more races" or "other races." Of households in the south subarea, 27% speak Spanish.
- » The white population decreased by almost 20% from 2010 to 2023, while those identifying as "two or more races" increased by 15%.
- » The Hispanic population is growing more slowly and is only expected to grow from 47% in 2010 to 49% by buildout.



## Enhanced Community Engagement Findings

It was important to include, represent, and consider all diverse voices and community member desires and needs in this plan. From July 2023 to October 2023, BerryDunn and team members executed an expansive engagement strategy throughout the City. BerryDunn recognizes that not every resident is comfortable or willing to attend formal meetings in government facilities, so the customized engagement strategy relied upon a robust combination of virtual and in-person meetings, including participating at a variety of community events. Through many broad, multifaceted engagement tools, the project team connected with residents, staff, partners, visitors, park and recreation system users, and non-users. Most notably, the focus on diversity, equity, and inclusivity enabled the project team to place special emphasis on engaging with hard-to-reach and underserved stakeholders.

Commerce City’s communications staff worked collaboratively with the PRG project team to execute additional outreach through city-managed assets, including facility signage, yard signs, table tents at Bison Grill, direct mail postcards, webpage banner ads, and a robust social media campaign.

### Campaign Brand

An initial stage of the project was to develop a distinctive, engaging brand to support engagement materials. This brand was used to craft a wide range of marketing materials, such as information handouts, flyers, poster boards, park signs, table tents, and comment cards. Materials were translated to reach all desired communities.

- **Theme: A Growing City**
- **Tagline: Play now...build our future!**



Figure 2.13: Commerce City Comment Card with Campaign Brand



## Documented Points of Contact

The table below breaks down and summarizes more than 61,000 documented points of contact recorded throughout the public engagement campaign across the City. A “point of contact” refers to every instance in which a unique individual provided documentable evidence of receiving and/or responding to a specific engagement tool (i.e., a recorded comment, an opened email, a piece of direct mail delivered to a residence).

Outreach Method	Points of Contact
Dot-ocracy Votes	3,922
Discovery Interviews	660
Statistically Valid Survey	407
Website Visits	1,266
Social Media Posts	9,811
Emails (communications team)	5,882
Direct Mail Postcard	18,424
Facility Comment Cards	41
Golf Survey (308 received)	2,961
City Newsletter	18,424
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>61,798</b>

Table 2.4: Outreach Methods



In BerryDunn’s experience, points of contact are a more accurate representation of engagement efforts than comment tallies; while some residents may be unwilling to participate in a discussion, data can demonstrate an invitation to participate and engage in the conversation.

According to Hootsuite, one of the leading software tools for tracking social media analytics, the average engagement rate for marketing campaigns executed by local governments is between 0.68% and 2.4%. For the sake of comparison, Commerce City’s actual engagement rate (by a conservative estimate) is closer to 15.3% - a remarkable achievement.

## Discovery Sessions (i.e., Stakeholder Meetings)

The Master Planning process invited various community groups from around the City to provide input on recommended focus areas, suggested improvements, community desires, and potential

threats/challenges. Below is a summary of responses by category, with the numbers/unit of measure referring to the number of meetings in which each topic was mentioned:

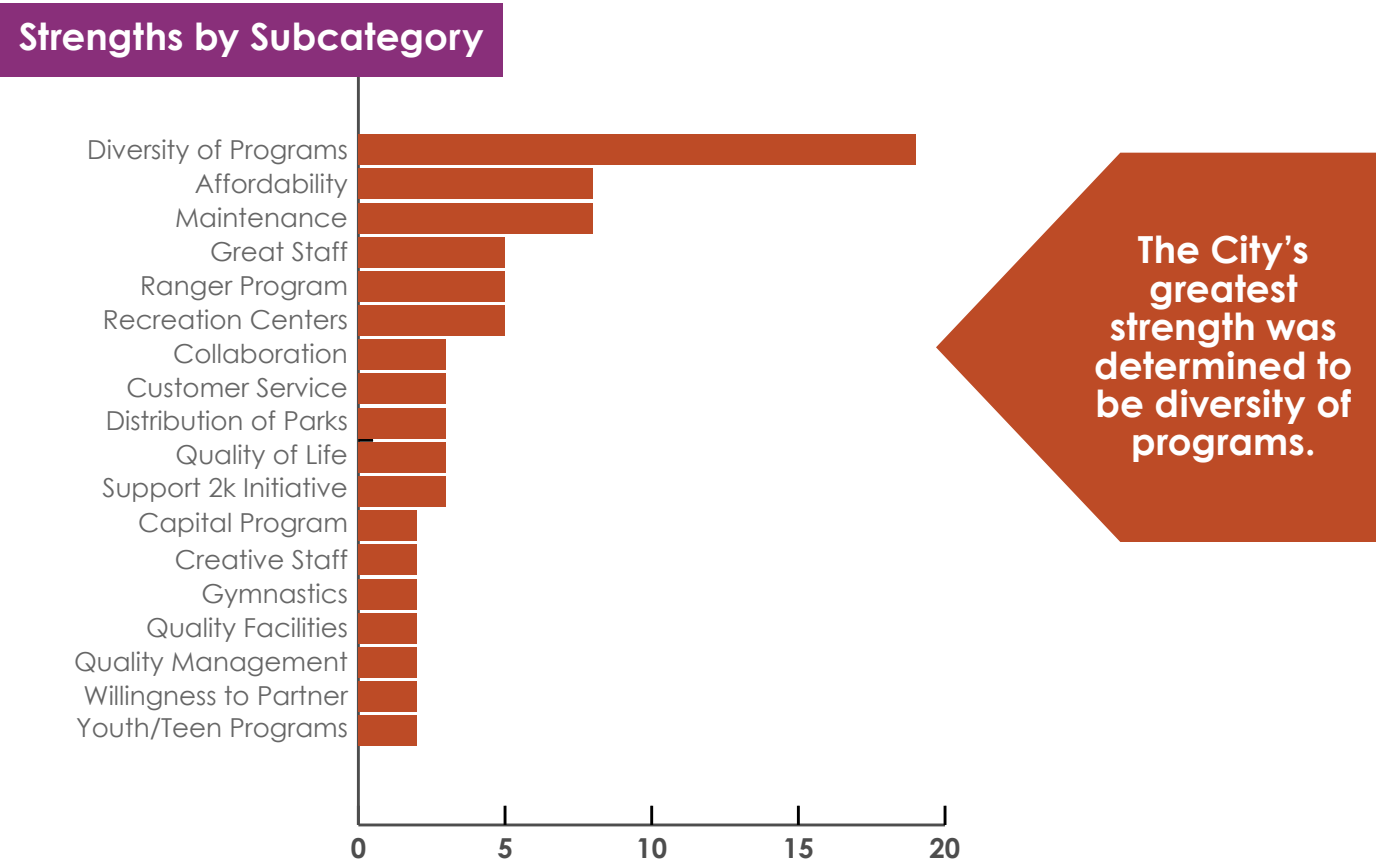
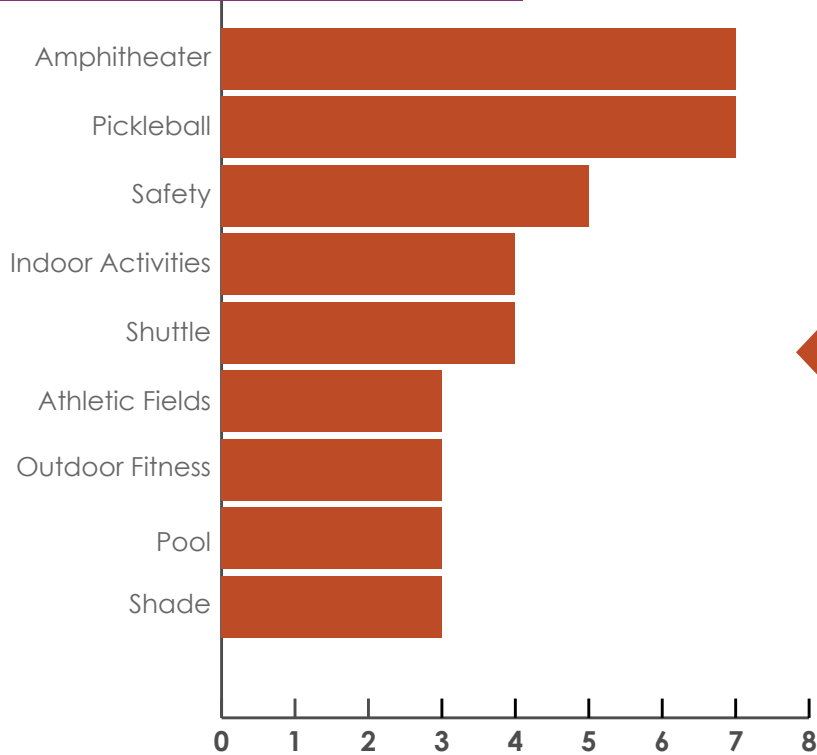


Figure 2.14: Strengths by Subcategory

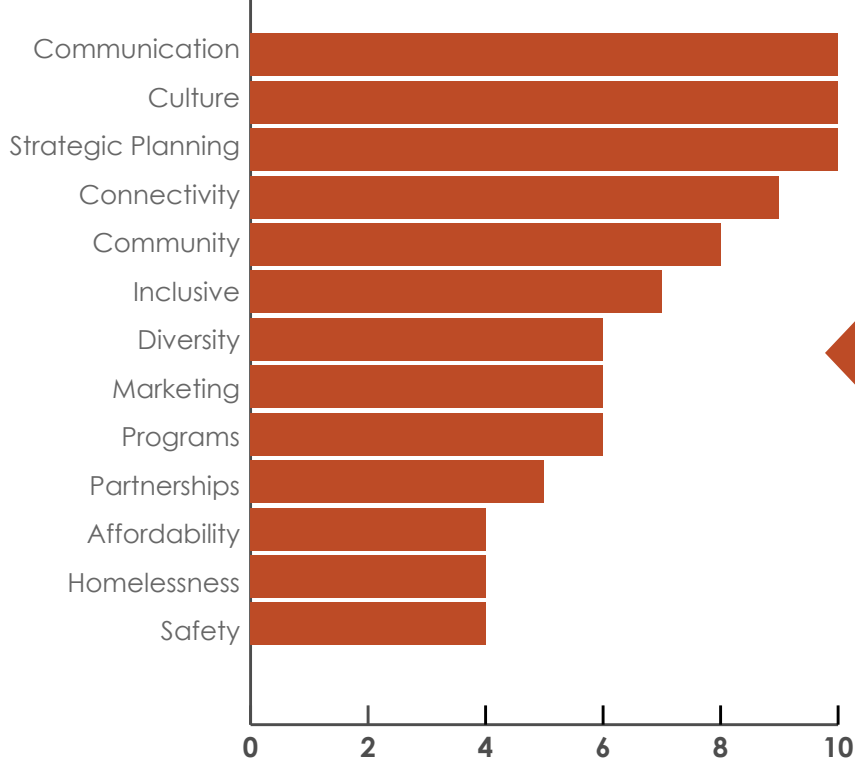
### Desired Amenities by Subcategory



The City's most desired amenity was determined to be an amphitheater and pickleball.

Figure 2.15: Desired Amenities by Subcategory Summary Responses

### Key Challenges/Issues Facing City Government



Some areas for improvement were determined to be communication, culture, and planning.

Figure 2.16: Key Challenges/Issues Facing City Government Summary Responses



## Pop-Up Engagements

BerryDunn’s approach to public engagement relies upon meeting residents face-to-face in the community (as opposed to inviting residents to official government functions). To that end, the project team conducted a series of 16 highly interactive pop-up engagements at a variety of locations and special events during the engagement phase of this project. These activations featured use of simple dot-voting (i.e., dot-ocracy) to record preferences and interests. The following map illustrates the community saturation achieved through these pop-up engagements, which resulted in 3,922 recorded comments: Figure 2.17 depicts the locations of the pop-up event locations.

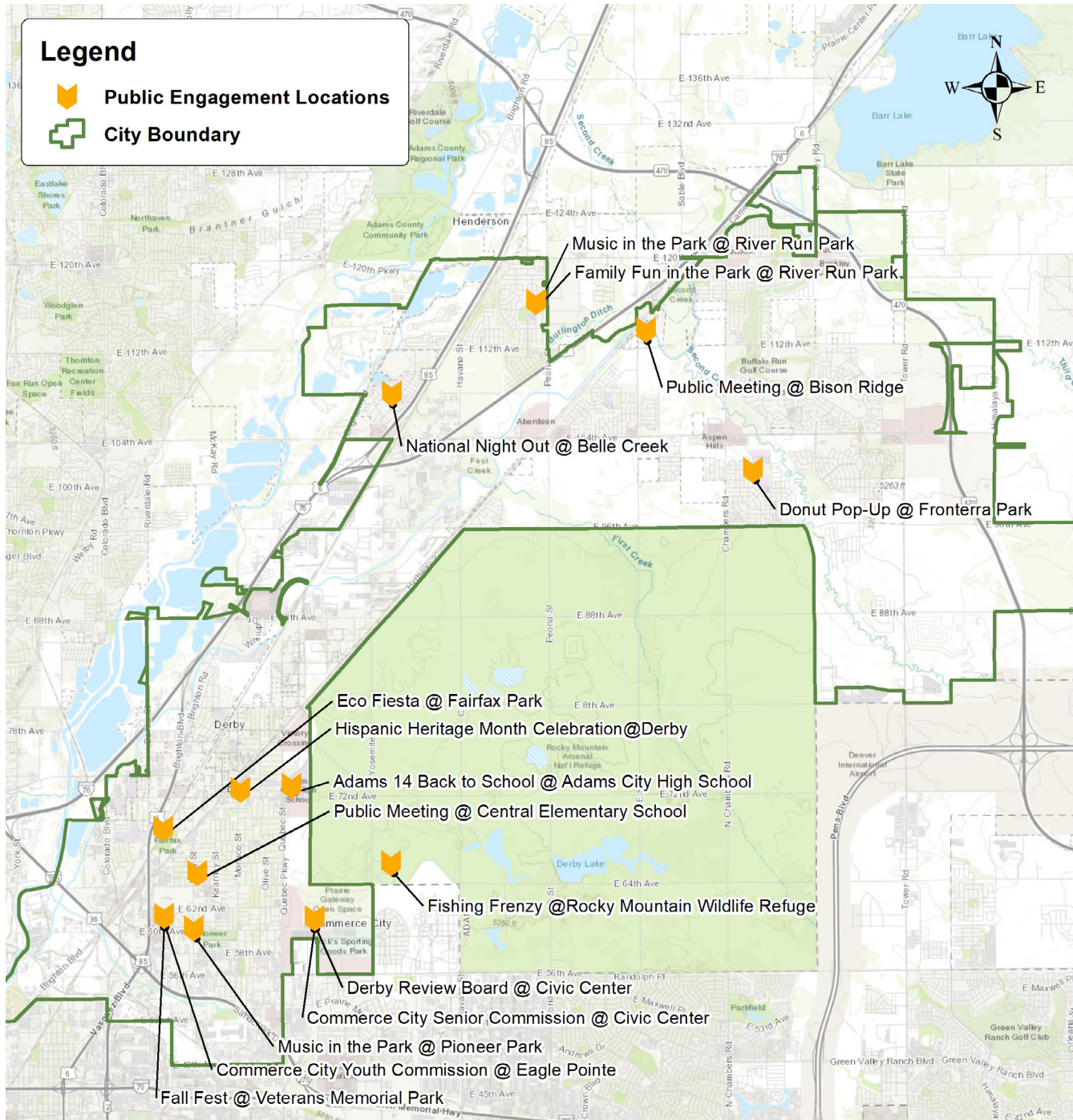


Figure 2.17: Pop-Up Event Locations to Gather Additional Information

Summary of Highest Priorities by Category

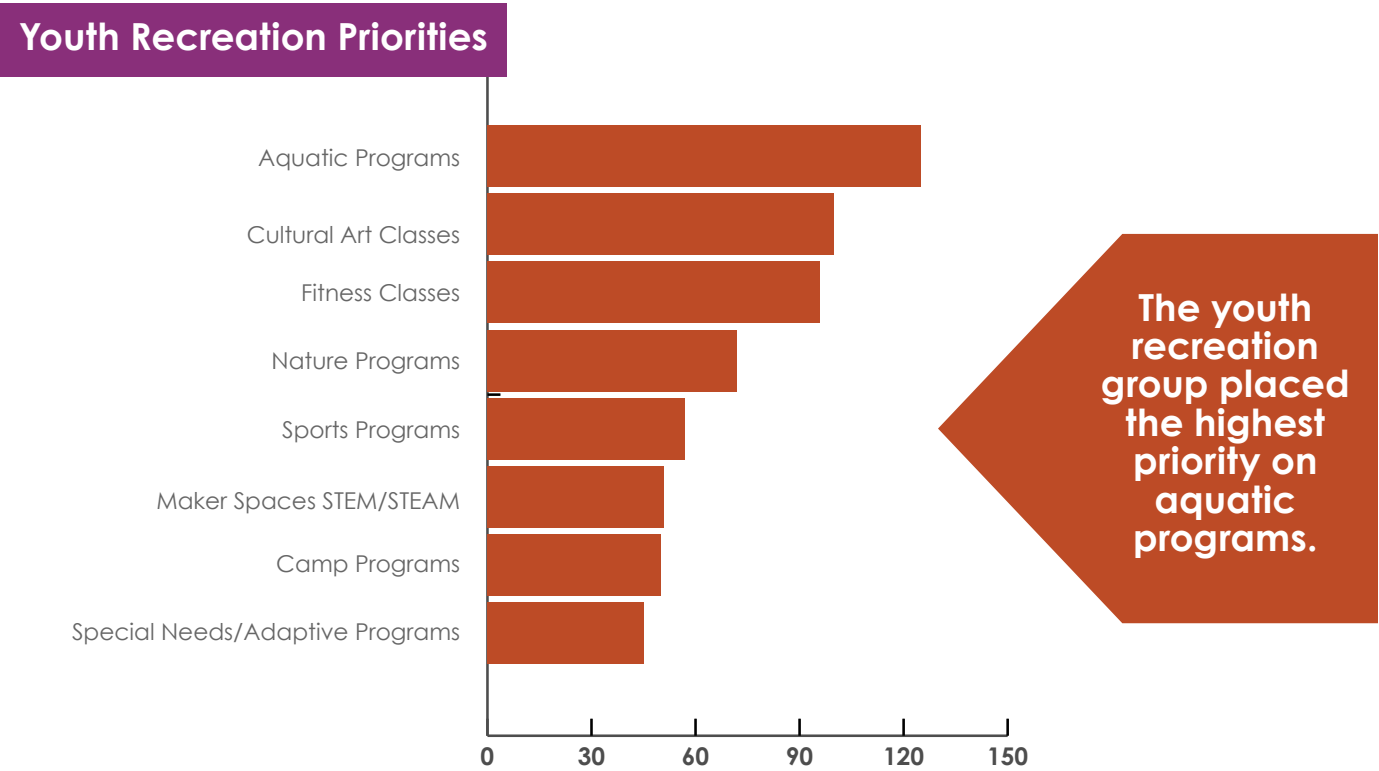


Figure 2.18: Youth Recreation Priorities Summary Responses

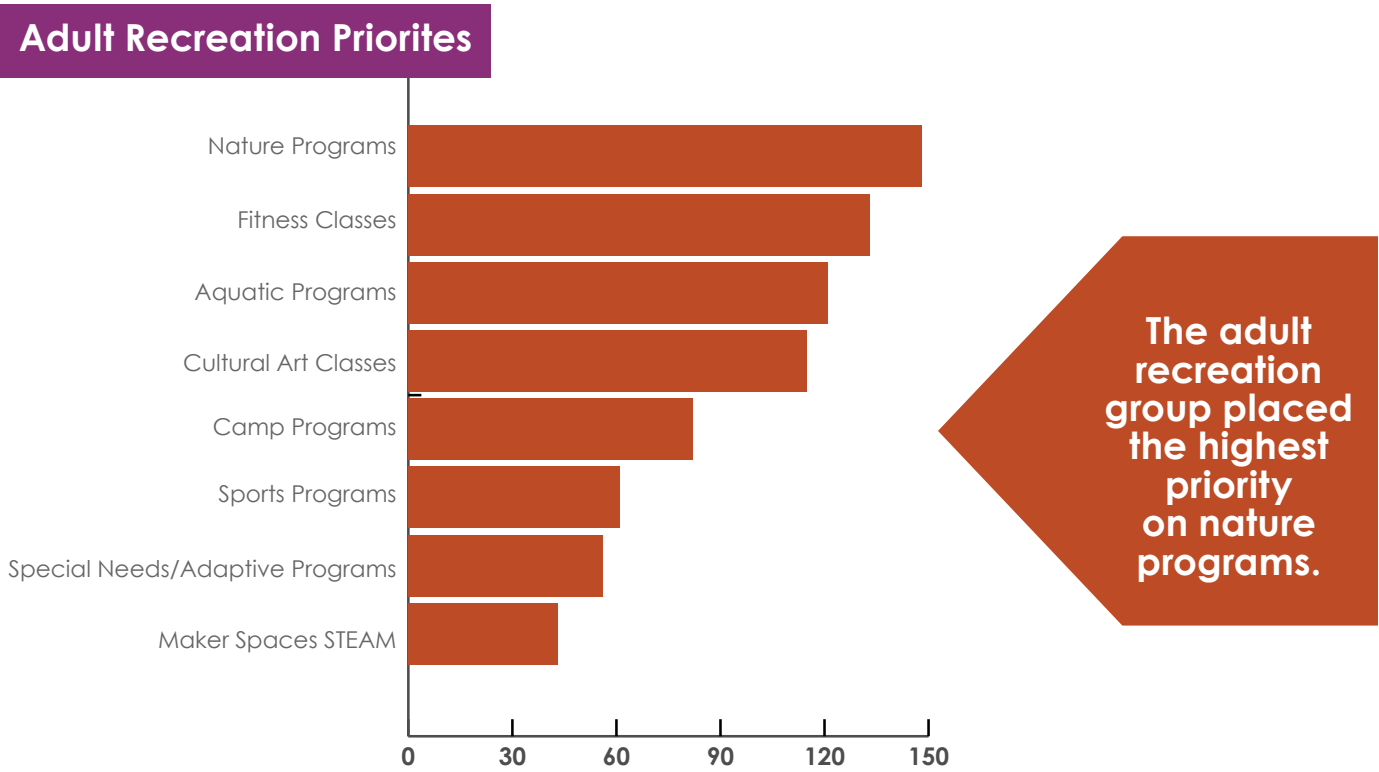


Figure 2.19: Adult Recreation Priorities Summary Responses

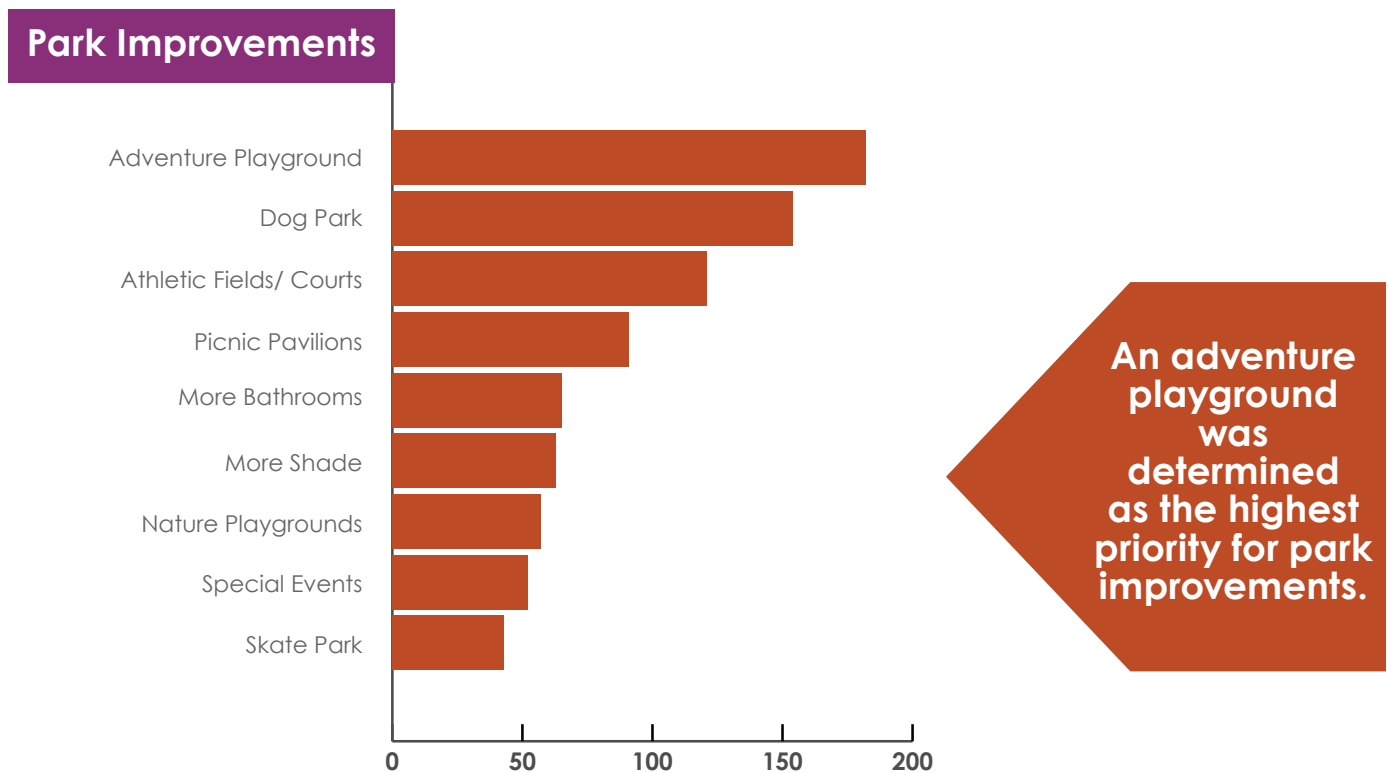


Figure 2.20: Park Improvements Summary Responses

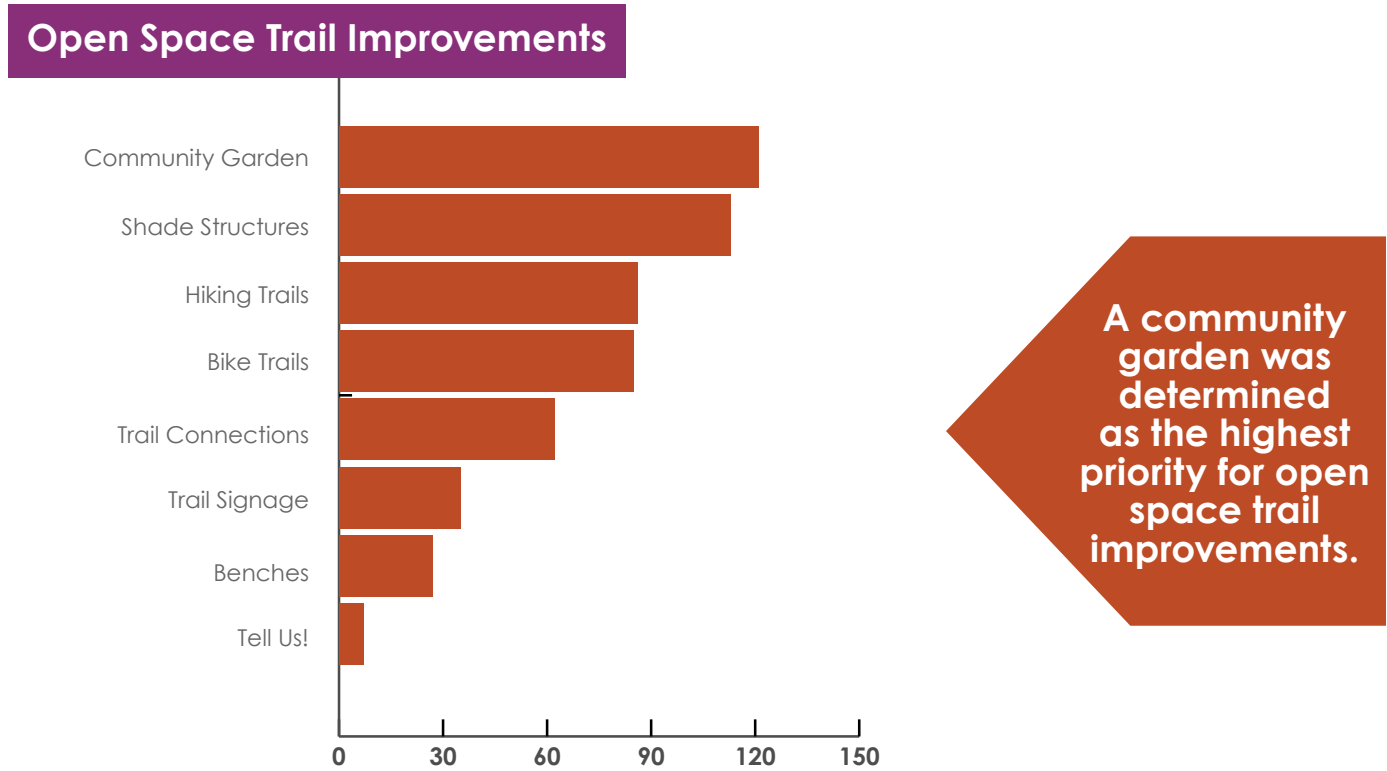


Figure 2.21: Open Space Trail Improvements Summary Responses



### Golf Priorities

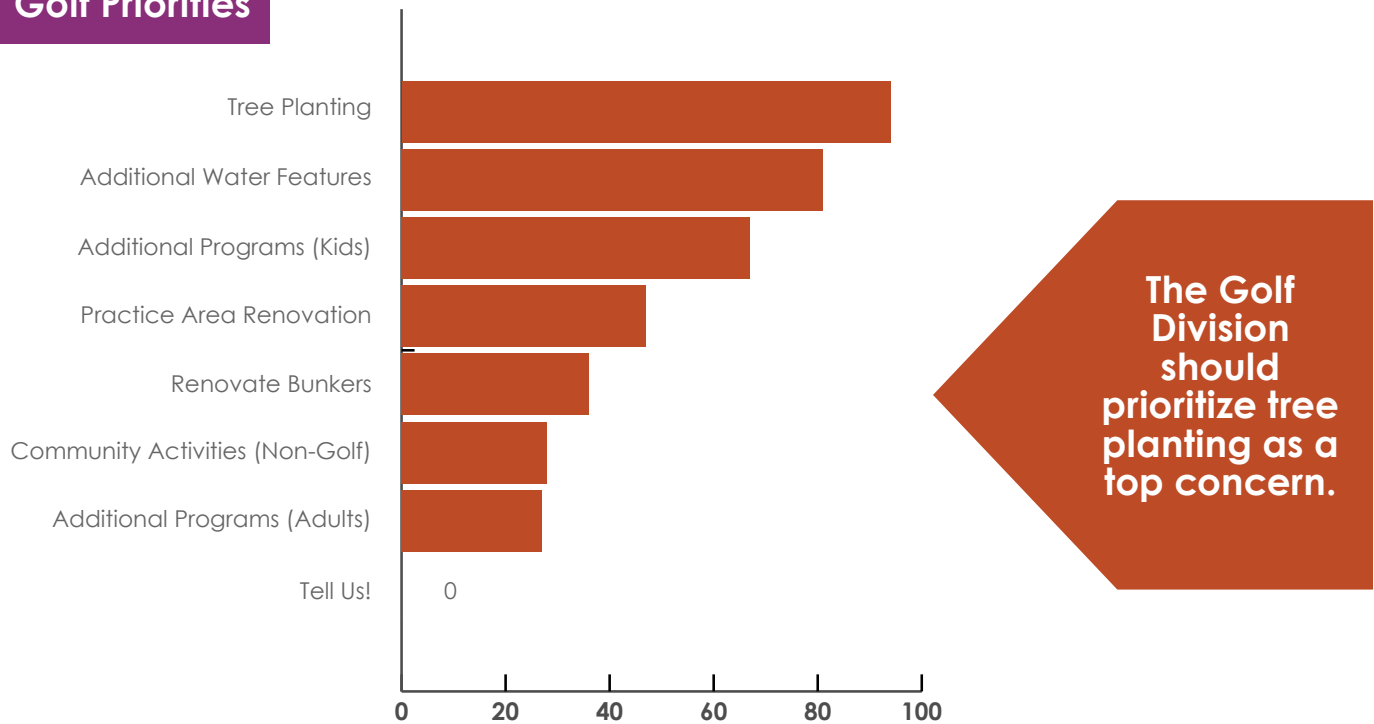


Figure 2.22: Golf Priorities Summary Responses

### What is Lacking?

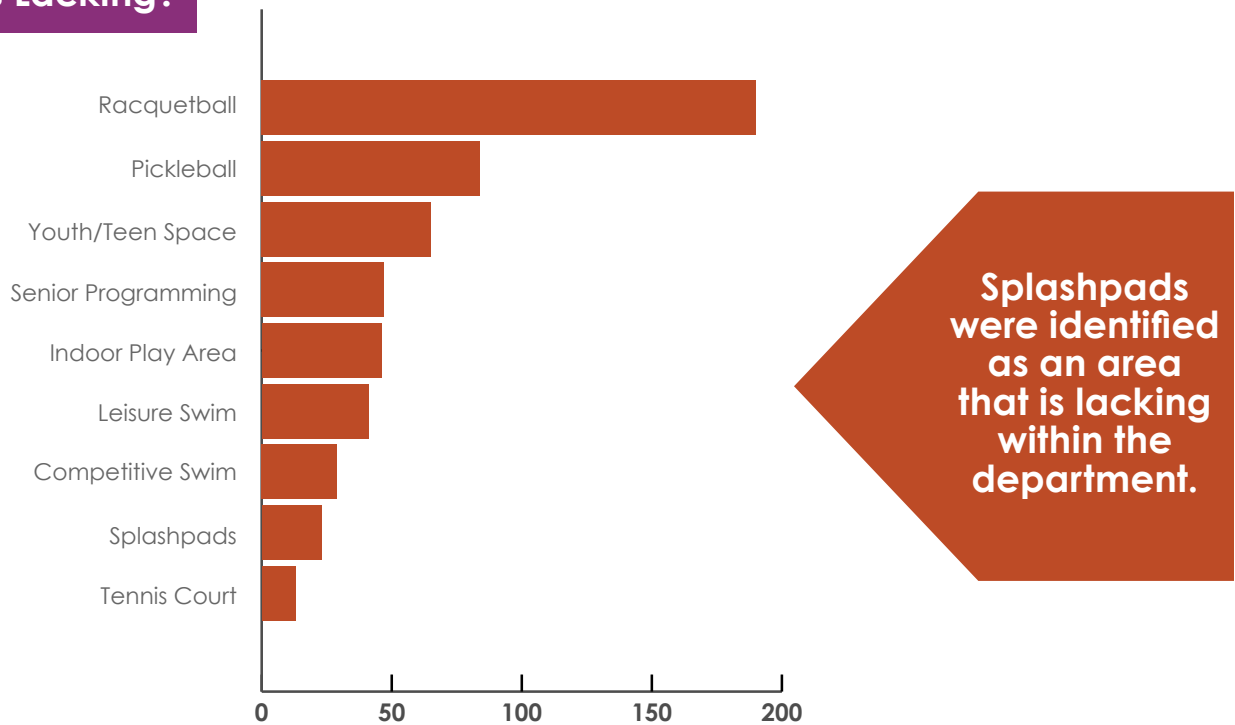
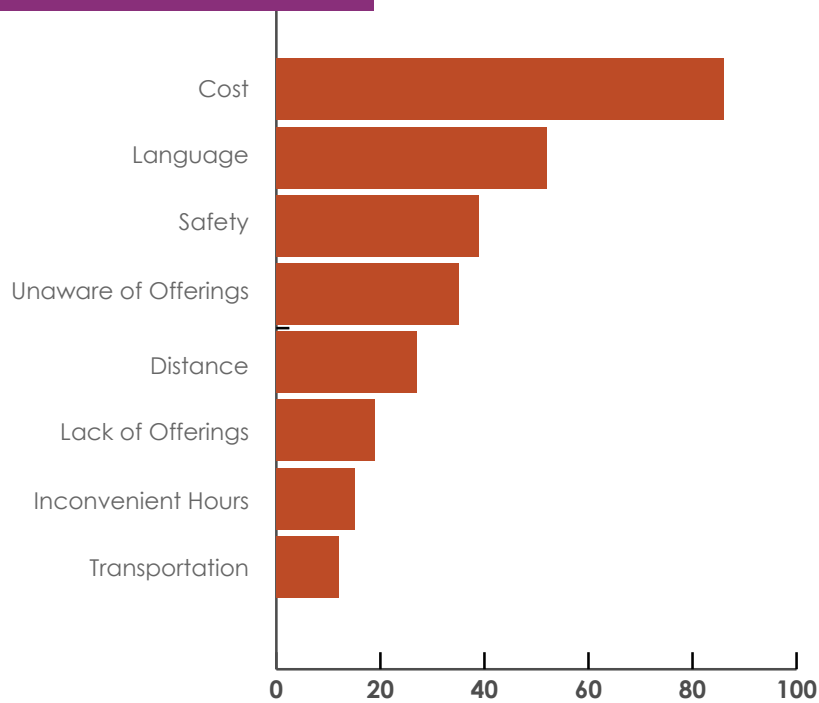


Figure 2.23: What is Lacking? Summary Responses

## What are the Obstacles?



The cost is identified as the primary hurdle within the community.

Figure 2.24: What are the Obstacles? Summary Responses

## ENGAGEMENT FINDINGS - SUMMARY OF TOP PRIORITY NEEDS:

- Shaded Areas
- Aquatics (Programs and Facilities)
- Cultural Arts (Programs/Facilities)
- Special Events
- Community Gardens
- Trails/Connectivity
- Dog Parks
- Restrooms (Preferably Plumbed)
- Pickleball Courts
- Nature Programs
- Adventure Playgrounds



# Results from the PRG Community Survey

The BerryDunn team worked with ETC Institute and City staff to administer a PRG Master Plan survey for the City during the fall of 2023. A survey packet was mailed to a random sample of households in Commerce City. Residents who received the survey were given the option of returning the survey by mail in a pre-paid envelope or completing it online at [CommerceCitySurvey.org](https://CommerceCitySurvey.org).

The goal was to collect a minimum of 400 completed surveys from residents. The goal was exceeded, with 407 completed surveys collected. The overall results for the sample of 407 households

has a precision of at least +/-4.8 at the 95% level of confidence. A full report from the survey has been provided as a Staff Resource Document. Some key survey findings are summarized below.

## FACILITIES USE

Eighty-nine percent (89%) of respondents reported visiting parks, recreation, or golf facilities in a typical year. Of the 11% who do not visit, the highest percentage (20%) say it is due to use of other city, state, private, or HOA facilities, not feeling safe using parks/facilities, or high fees.

**If your household does NOT visit any facilities in a typical year, please check ALL the reasons why you do NOT visit.**

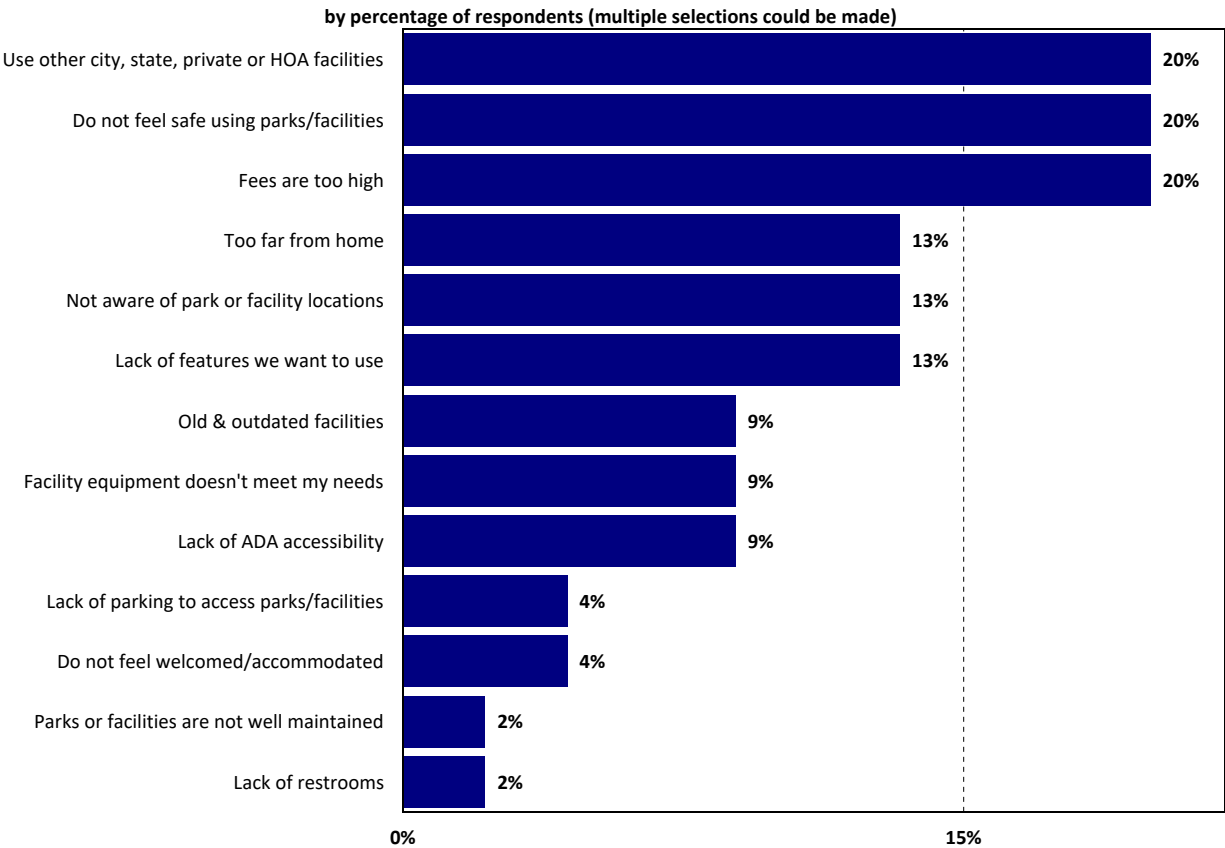


Figure 2.25: Survey Question on Facility Use



## SUPPORTING THE BENEFITS OF PRG

Respondents were provided with a list of 13 potential benefits from parks and recreation and asked to rate their agreement with each. Respondents most often chose that they “agree” or “strongly agree” that PRG services:

- Improve households’ physical health and fitness (72%)
- Improve mental health and reduce stress (67%)
- Provide access to greenspace, nature, and play spaces (65%)

## COMMUNICATION METHODS

Respondents most often report learning about the Commerce City PRG news/activities/events via the city website (54%), social media (38%), or temporary signs at parks or around the City (37%). Respondents would most prefer communication to come from the City’s website (44%), email notification (41%), or social media (37%).

## PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

Fifty-seven percent (57%) of respondents reported participating in PRG programs or events. Of the 43% who do not participate, the highest percentage (34%) say it is due to not knowing what is offered followed by busy schedules/lack of interest (24%) and inconvenient program times (17%).

**If your household does NOT participate in any programs or events during a typical year, please CHECK ALL the reasons why you have NOT participated.**

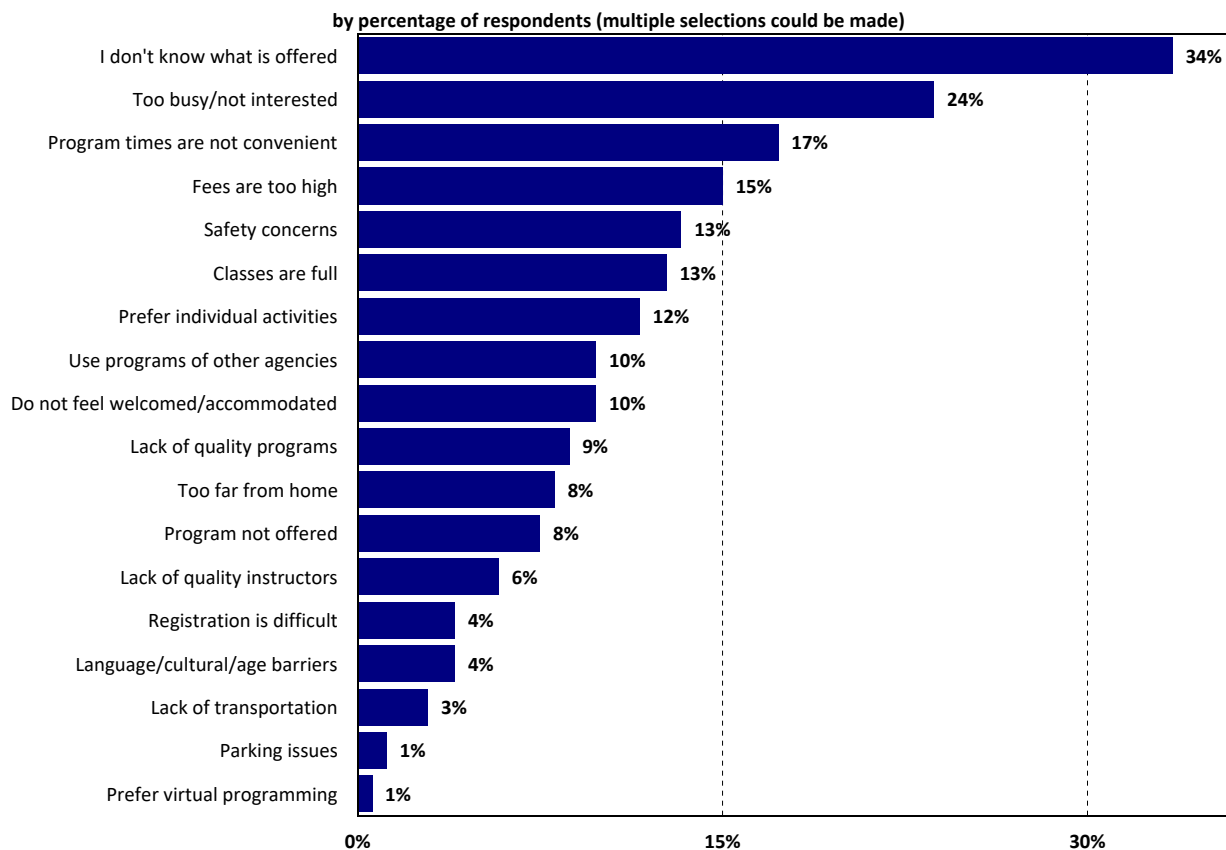


Figure 2.26: Survey Question on Participation

### FACILITY/AMENITY NEEDS NOT MET

Top priorities indicated that the following needs were partly met or not met at all:

- 1. Shade areas within parks and around facilities
- 2. Community gardens
- 3. Water recreation
- 4. Art, history, and cultural spaces

### Estimated number of households whose facility/amenity needs are only “Partly Met” or “Not Met”

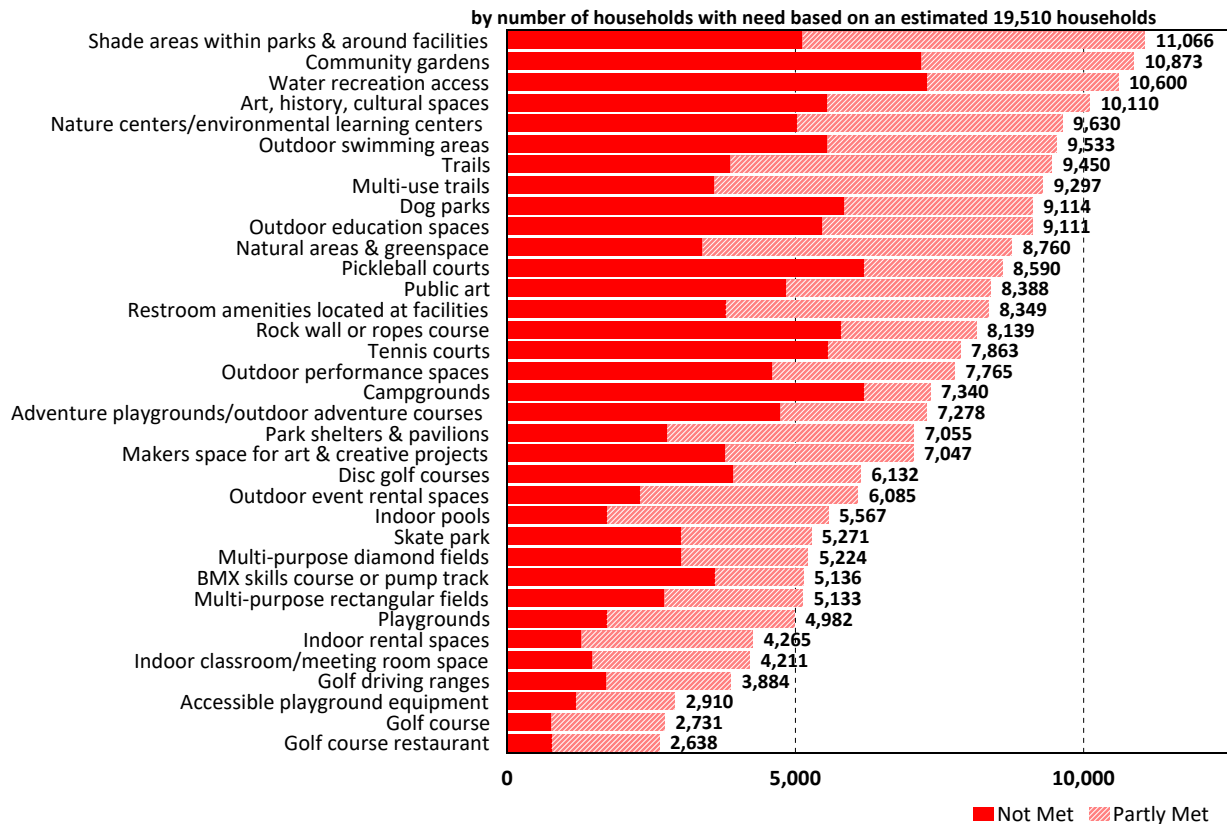


Figure 2.27: Survey Question on Facility/Amenity Needs Met

## NEED FOR ADDITIONAL RECREATION PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

Mirroring the results of the community engagement contacts, residents have indicated a strong need for more programs and activities. Based on number of responses, the highest program needs are for

additional community events and performances, along with more fitness and wellness programs, outdoor and nature-based recreation, and aquatics.

### Estimated Number of Households Who Have a Need for Programs/Activities

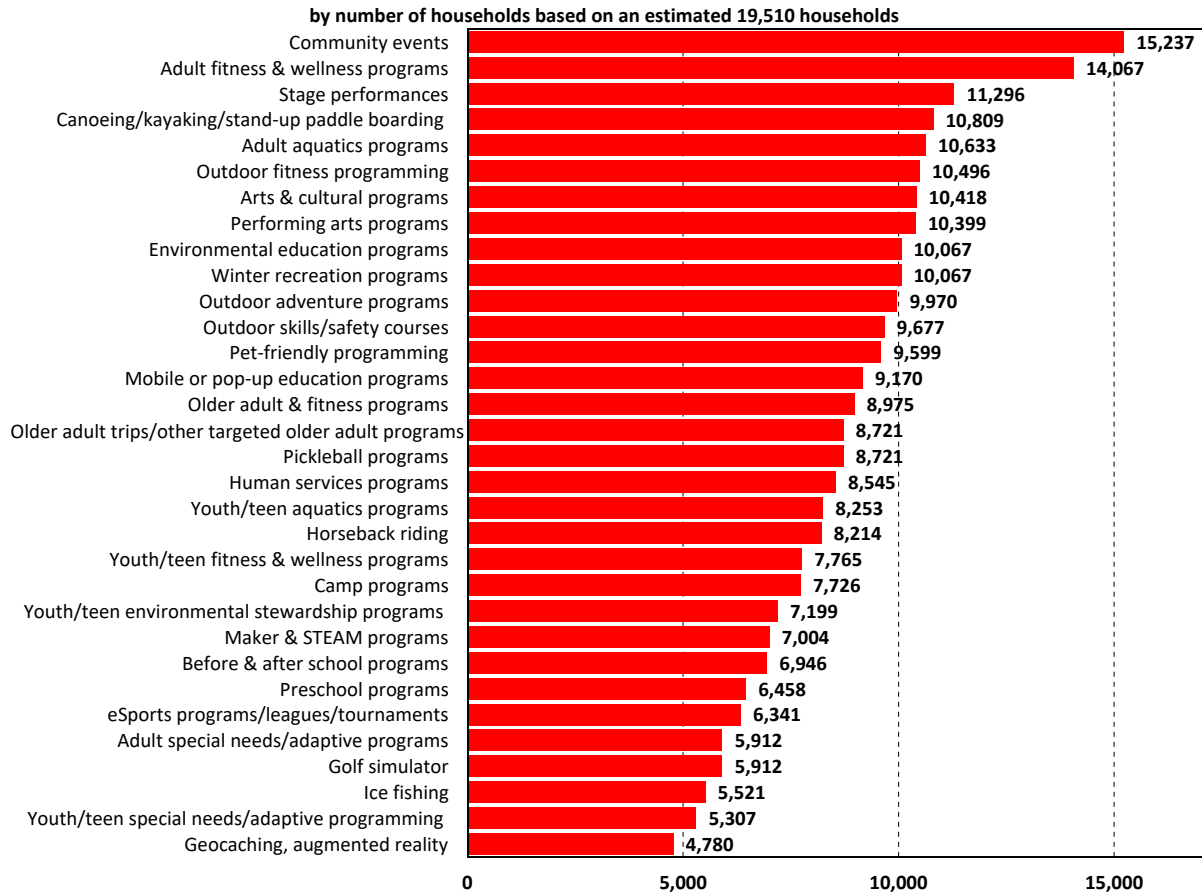


Figure 2.28: Survey Question on Program/Activities

## SUPPORT FOR IMPROVEMENTS

Respondents were provided with a list of 11 potential improvements for existing facilities and asked to rate their level of support for each. Respondents most supported:

- General repair and increasing maintenance (87%)
- Improving existing trail systems (84%)
- Adding/expanding trails in existing parks (83%)

When respondents were asked to rate their support for seven types of potential new developments, they most supported (i.e., rated "somewhat supportive" or "very supportive") developing new:

- Parks that meet the highest needs of the community (82%)
- Walking/biking/equestrian trails with connections to other amenities (80%)
- Sports facilities (75%)



When asked to select the four improvements most important to their household, respondents most often chose:

- General repair and increasing maintenance (38%)
- Improvements to existing trail systems (31%)
- Adding/expanding trails in existing parks (28%)
- Development of new trails with connections to other amenities (28%)

## TYPES OF FACILITIES AND AMENITIES MOST NEEDED

Responses included shade areas within parks and around facilities, community gardens, water recreation, art, history, and cultural spaces.

## PRIORITIES FOR FACILITY INVESTMENTS

The Priority Investment Rating (PIR) was developed by ETC Institute to provide organizations with an objective tool for evaluating the priority that should be placed on recreation and parks investments. The PIR equally weighs (1) the importance that residents place on amenities/facilities and (2) how many residents have unmet needs for the amenity/facility. Again, trails, aquatics, shade, and dog parks topped the list.

### Estimated number of households whose facility/amenity needs are only “Partly Met” or “Not Met”

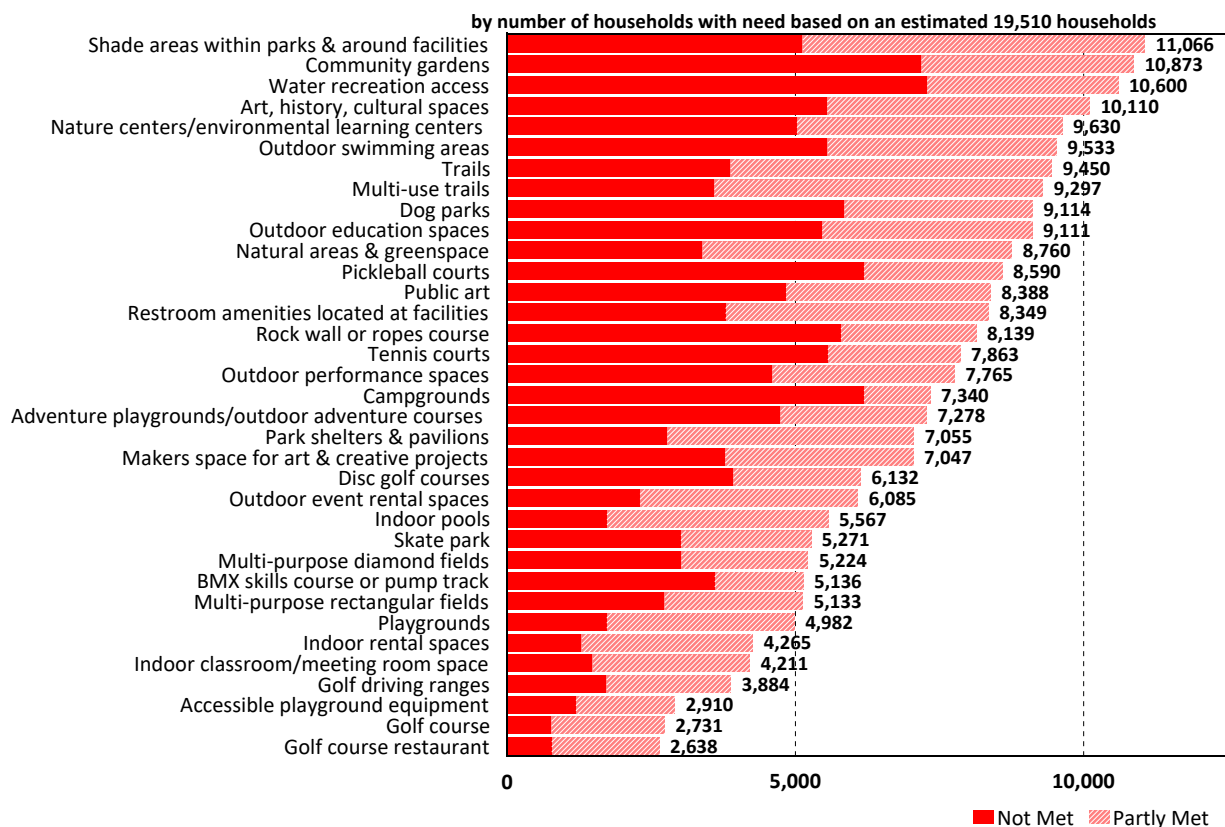


Figure 2.29: Survey Question on Facility/Amenity Needs Met

## DETAILS AND CROSS-TABULATIONS

The full results from the random community surveys have been provided as a 110-page Staff Resource Document. The survey received responses from a variety of demographics and ages with strong representation from the south and north parts of the City. The few significant differences were between the two areas of town as they gave various reasons they don't visit facilities:

- More north residents said facilities are “too far from home” - 17% north vs. 6% south
- More north residents say facilities are “old and outdated” – 13% north vs. 0% south
- More north residents report of “lack of features we want to use” – 21% north vs. 0% south
- More south residents said they “do not feel safe using facilities” – 14% north vs. 31% south

### Top priorities for investment for facilities/amenities based on priority investment rating

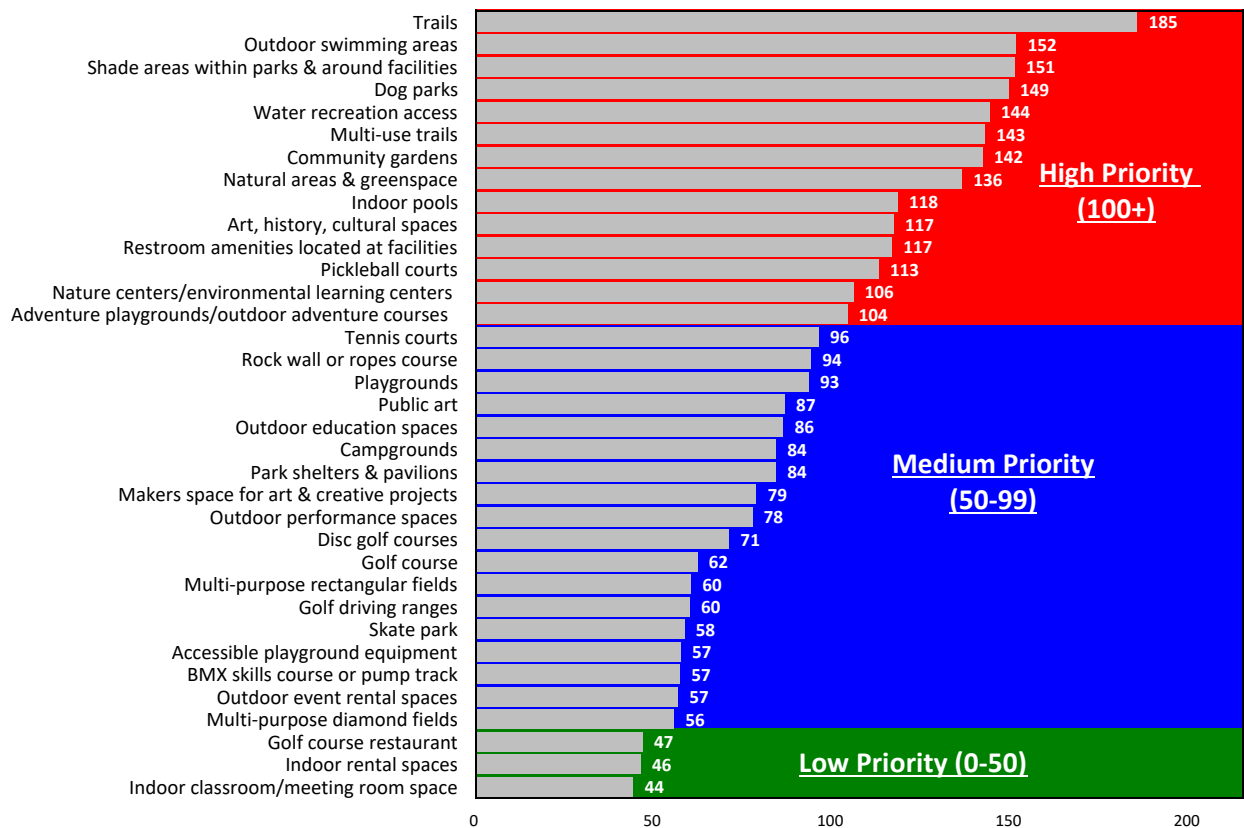


Figure 2.30: Survey Question on Facilities/Amenities

## Social Pinpoint Online Engagement Platform

Social Pinpoint is a powerful web-based tool used on this project to gather feedback and insights from stakeholders. By using advanced mapping and engagement features, Social Pinpoint allowed BerryDunn to easily collect and analyze feedback from a wide range of residents, including community members, customers, businesses, and employees.

The Social Pinpoint site for the Commerce City Parks, Recreation, and Golf Master Plan received a total of 4,135 site visits, 1,351 unique users, 128 budget responses, 1,351 map comments, and 118 idea wall comments.

## Social Pinpoint Interactive Mapping

The interactive mapping tool allowed community members to share their suggestions, strengths, challenges, and favorite places to visit in Commerce City. Respondents were able to pin their comments in their desired locations within City boundaries anonymously and view other submissions on the platform.

The mapping tool received a total of 931 site visits and 206 pinned comments that were made across different map layers. The suggestions category received the most comments (72.7%), followed by challenges (22.4%), strengths (3.0%), and favorite places (1.8%). The information below is broken down by category and park boundaries.



Figure 2.31: Community Engagement Results



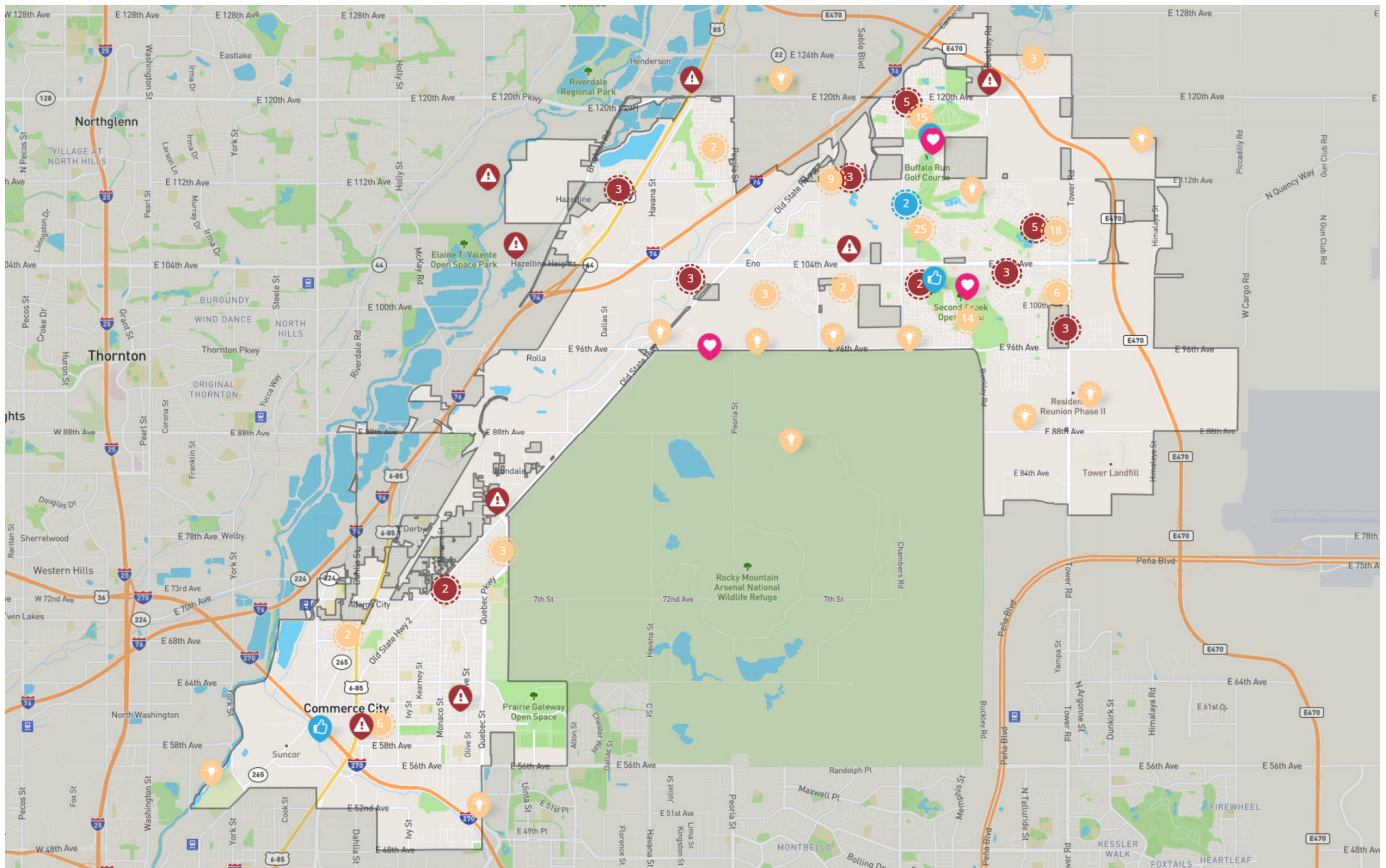


Figure 2.32: Social Pinpoint Mapping Locations

Full results and comments from the Social Pinpoint online engagement platform have been provided as a Staff Resource Document and findings have been incorporated into overall key findings analysis and recommendations. They mirrored the feedback received from the overall community

engagement comments, with a few details that were site-specific provided to staff. Another function was to give community members a centralized project site to gain information and to review drafts and presentations as they were made available to the public.

# SECTION 3

## Usage and Trends Impact on Services, Management, Finance, and Operations





## Current Service Mix and Financial Sustainability Strategies

Commerce City offers a wide variety of PRG services, programs, facilities, and lands. The activities and available offerings are marketed through an *Activity Guide* published three times per

year (winter/spring, summer, and fall) in print and online. The guide includes translation into *Spanish* in most sections and options for Spanish speakers who may need additional translation assistance.



Figure 3.1: Activity Guide (English and Spanish)



The Department has previously undergone extensive analysis of service categories and potential cost recovery and pricing discussions. Current identified categories of service for Commerce City include:

### COMMUNITY AND EDUCATION SERVICES

This category involves programs that are oriented toward life skills development, social services, (i.e., health and welfare), or are educationally focused. Examples include preschool-aged programs, 55 alive, YCPA, therapeutic programs, health services, and active adult center resource.

### COMMUNITY EVENTS

These are large-scale community events that appeal to a broad portion of the community. This category also includes requests from other departments to provide event support. Examples include 4thFest, Neighborhood Outreach, and Fall Fest.

### DROP-IN MONITORED ACCESS (SELF-DIRECTED/NON-INSTRUCTIONAL)

These are activities that do not require registration, are non-instructed, and include staff/volunteer supervision or oversight. Examples include public swim, recreation center game room, fitness/aqua classes (membership inclusive), weight room, pickleball, and open basketball.

### FOOD AND BEVERAGE

Consumable goods are available for purchase at various Department facilities, including BRGC Restaurant and Paradise Island concessions.

### INCLUSION

Inclusion includes reasonable accommodation to any Department activity, park, and/or facility providing leisure opportunities to people with physical or cognitive disabilities. Inclusion services are intended to comply with Americans with Disabilities Act (a federal mandate).

### MERCHANDISE FOR RE-SALE

The availability of non-consumable goods for purchase at various Department facilities, such as golf shirts, golf clubs, swim goggles, swim diapers, and locks, is provided to better serve the community.

### NON-SKILL-BASED ACTIVITIES

Classes, clinics, workshops, and other structured (instructor-led or supervised) recreation activities, in which registration is required, are designed to provide socialization, interaction, and lifelong learning.

- Sub-categories include:
  - » **Enrichment:** Examples include active adult and youth trips, camps, family programs.
  - » **Specialized:** Examples include adult culinary programs and adult wellness programs (New Year, New Gear).

### PARKS, ATHLETIC FIELDS, TRAILS, OPEN SPACE, AND RECREATION FACILITIES ACCESS (SELF-DIRECTED/NON-MONITORED)

Outdoor and indoor open access to parks and facilities is available without staff or volunteer supervision or oversight. Examples include outdoor basketball courts, tennis courts, playgrounds, spray grounds, skate parks, recreation and community center lobbies, public art, and trails.

### RENTALS

Park, shelter, and recreation facility rentals are available at the following locations: Eagle Pointe Recreation Center/Active Adult Center, Bison Ridge Recreation Center, Paradise Island, and Buffalo Run Golf Course.

## SKILL-BASED ACTIVITIES

These skill-based activities include classes, clinics, workshops, and other structured (instructor-led and/or supervised) recreation activities in which registration is required and the primary intent is to acquire or enhance a specific skill set.

- Sub-categories include:
  - » **Beginning/intermediate levels:** Examples include swim lesson levels 1 through 6, parent-tot gymnastics, adult beginning guitar, youth baseball and all other recreation-based youth sports, pre-gymnastics, and adult group golf programs.
  - » **Advanced/competitive levels:** Examples include CARA gymnastics, CARA Swim, competitive golf leagues, adult sports, and adult/couples golf programs, such as 9 and Dine.
  - » **Private lesson levels:** Examples include personal training, private swim/golf/gymnastics, and massages.

## SPECIAL EVENTS

These are events that serve a specific, market niche and smaller portion of the community. Examples include active adult Volunteer Recognition, Daddy Daughter Dance, Dance Recitals, Youth Baseball Day, CARA gymnastics meets, and golf course open house.

Through staff work, the categories of service have been allocated “formulas” for anticipated cost recovery goals and pricing guidelines based on a variety of factors, with the primary factor being whether the service offers a “common good” to the community as a whole (universal value and access for all), or more “individualized” services (limited impact and access for some). These categories of service formulas are summarized below in Figure 3.2.

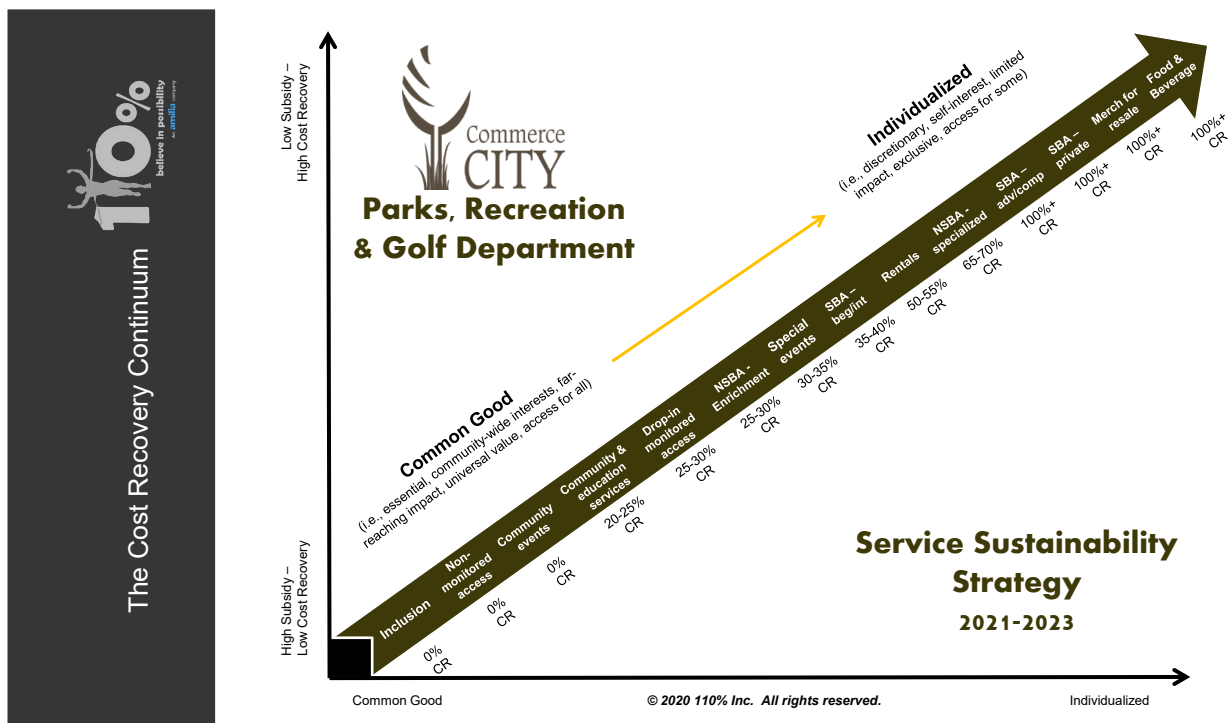


Figure 3.2: Categories of service for Commerce City Financial Sustainability

From the analysis in this planning process, the financial sustainability strategies, categories of service, application of formulas, and program mix appear to be strong and well managed for the City. As there are always needs for additional revenue and available resources must be allocated annually, there could be more attention paid to creating evaluation reports of each category and resultant cost recovery. However, this system appears to be working well overall for the City, staff, and providing an equitable service mix for the community.

## Comparative Analysis and Benchmarking

Benchmarking communities of similar jurisdiction population and size can be an effective tool in fostering a deeper understanding of high-performing agencies' operations and budgets. This type of analysis often clarifies how other agencies manage their budgets, generate revenue, offer programs, and run their facilities.

Benchmarking analysis for the Department was conducted to help understand how Commerce City compares to other similar agencies across finances, operations, and program/service offerings. A full Comparative Analysis Report has been provided as a Staff Resource Document. This section highlights some of the key relevant findings.

The intent of benchmarking is usually not to make a one-to-one comparison with other agencies, as each jurisdiction has its own identity, ways of conducting business, and community needs. It is typically more important for an agency to measure where it is now, how that relates to determined needs, and then benchmark against itself over time.

The political, social, economic, and physical characteristics of each community make the policies and practices of parks and recreation agencies unique. Additionally, organizations do not typically measure or define various metrics the same way for parks, trails, facilities, and maintenance. It is important to contextualize all data in a benchmarking study. Although benchmarking can be a great comparative tool, it does not necessarily lend itself to being a decision-making tool.

For this study, 2022/2023 National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) park metrics data was used to compare Commerce City to the quartile data (lower, median, and upper quartiles) of six similar agencies in the NRPA Southwest Region. Although NRPA did not disclose agencies by name and state, BerryDunn filtered by similar operations and levels of service to benchmark against. The NRPA Southwest Region consists of the following states: Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah.

### JURISDICTION SIZE

Measured in square miles, the benchmarked agencies range from 36 square miles (Commerce City) to 82 square miles (upper quartile). Commerce City is the smallest in size below the lower quartile.

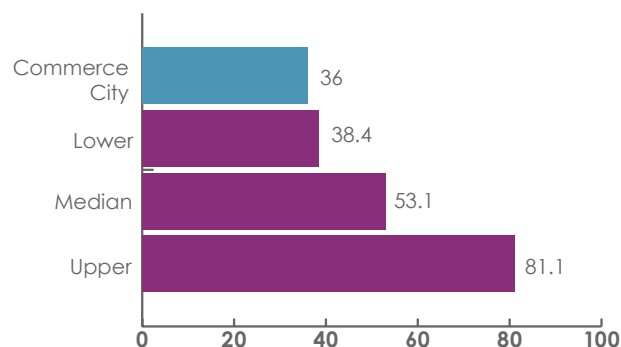


Figure 3.3: Size of Jurisdiction – Benchmarked Comparison (Square Miles)



## EMPLOYEES IN WORKFORCE

In analyzing the total number of full-time employees (FTEs), Commerce City Parks, Recreation, and Golf is estimated to have 60 FTEs in 2022 (15 additional employees in park maintenance). Comparable organizations ranged from 66 to 154 FTEs.

	Commerce City PRG	Lower	Median	Upper
Total Number of FTEs	60	66	97	154
FTEs per 10,000 Population	9	N/A	14	N/A

Table 3.1: Total Number of FTEs and FTEs per 10,000 Population

## CAPITAL AND OPERATING BUDGET COMPARISONS

Data from the study indicates that comparable operating budgets typically were between \$11.8 million and \$14.2 million; capital budgets ranged from \$5.5 million to \$20.1 million.

	Commerce City	Lower	Median	Upper
Operating Budget	\$15,594,396	\$11,886,675	\$12,560,260	\$14,260,202
Capital Budget	\$5,454,833	\$5,506,250	\$12,216,849	\$20,155,649

Table 3.2: Parks and Recreation Agency Operating and Capital Budgets (2022)

Commerce City fell above the upper quartile at \$19.8 million. Commerce City fell below the lower quartile in terms of capital budget, which was \$5.4 million. Not all agencies contain the same divisions.

## EXPENDITURES AND REVENUE PER CAPITA

Commerce City showed the highest level of operating expenditures per capita.

	Commerce City	Lower	Median	Upper
Operating Expenditures per Capita	\$258	\$128	\$144	\$246
Total Revenue to Total Operating Expenditures	37%	24%	31%	43%

Table 3.3: Average Expenditures and Revenue per Capita (2022)



## RATIO OF TOTAL REVENUE TO TOTAL OPERATING EXPENDITURES

Commerce City is between the upper and median quartile at 37%.

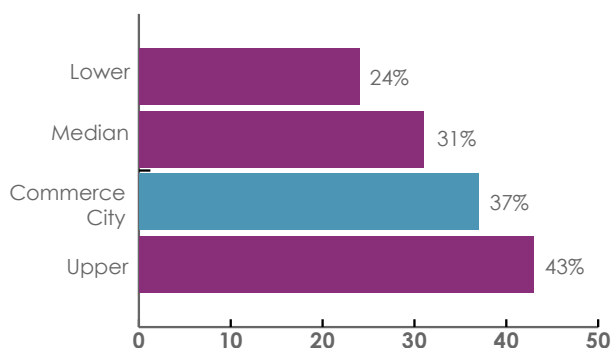


Figure 3.4: Total Revenue to Total Operating Expenditures 2022 – Benchmarked Comparison

## SUMMARY OF COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS FINDINGS

The benchmarking analysis provided an understanding of the relative position of Commerce City among peer agencies and identifies potential areas for improvement or expansion.

- Key takeaways include:
  - » **Capital Budget:** Commerce City has a substantially lower capital budget (\$5.4 million) compared to the median (\$12.2 million). Increased capital would bring the agency to a similar budget of peer agencies.
  - » **Operating Expenditures:** Commerce City has a slightly higher operating expenditures per capita compared to similar organizations. However, the City does appear to be minimizing expenses relative to revenues for parks and recreation services.

## Mobility Data and Participation

To help inform information about actual usage of the system, BerryDunn analyzed available mobility data from Placer AI, a company that aggregates cell phone movements through locations to help identify numbers of users at various places. No identifying information is provided from users, but gathering general numbers of users over a period of time can help identify trends in usage of primary facilities around the community. For this project, 12 months of data ending in October 2023 were analyzed.

The primary relevant sites analyzed in this study for mobility data analysis are:

- Bison Ridge Recreation Center
- BRGC
- Eagle Pointe Recreation Center
- Fairfax Park
- Fronterra Park
- Pioneer Park
- Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge
- Sand Creek Regional Greenway

As shown in Figure 3.5 there were over 1.5 million overall visits identified to just these eight facilities over 12 months, with most of the visits to Bison Ridge.

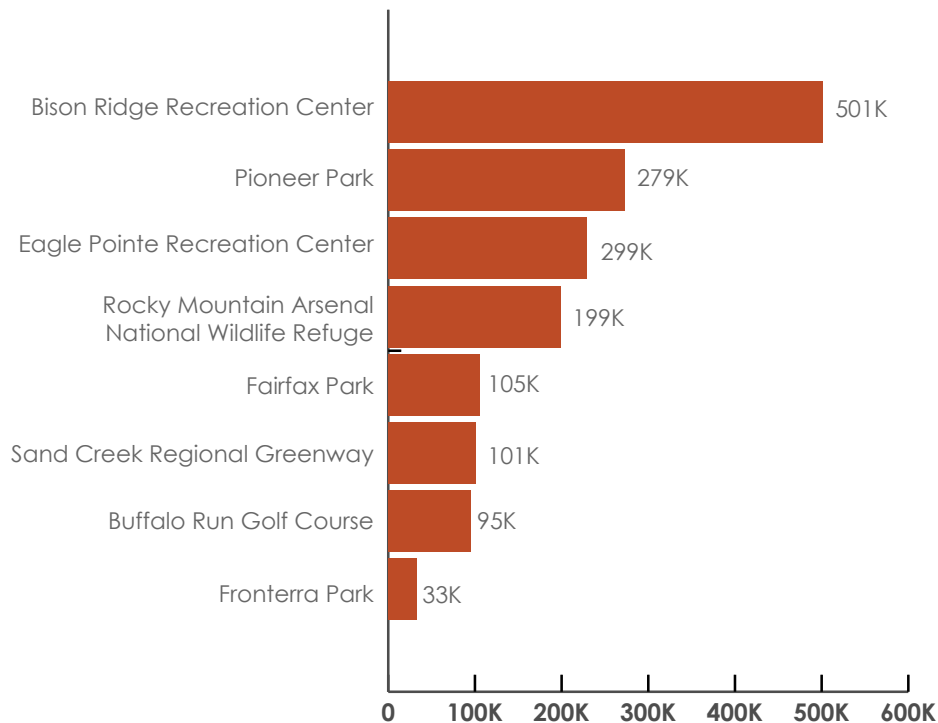


Figure 3.5: Overall Visits to Facilities Over 12 Months



## Visitor Diversity in Visitation

Visitor race and ethnicity vary greatly among the primary parks and facilities sites visited, with visitors of Hispanic origin making up the majority of visitors for Pioneer Park, Fairfax Park, and Eagle Pointe Recreation Center.

### Visitor Race and Ethnicity (last 12 months)

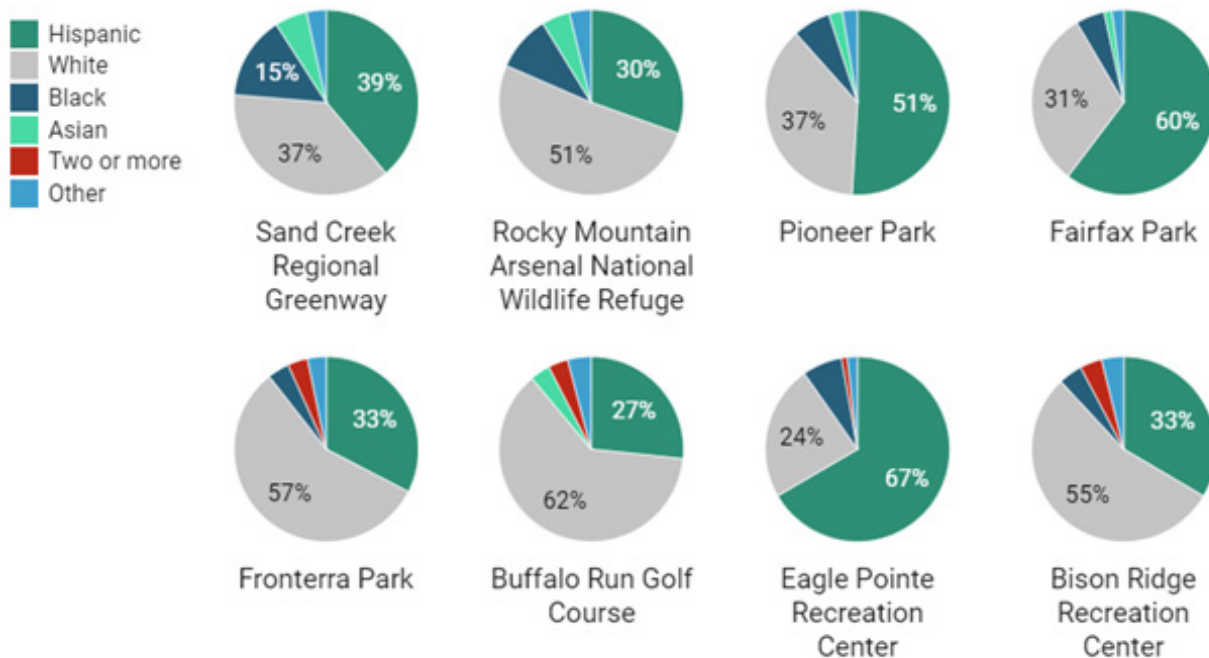


Figure 3.6: Primary Facility Visitation by Race and Ethnicity

## Participation Trends for Fitness and Sports in Commerce City

The mobility data also allows analysis of specific fitness and sports. Walking, weight lifting, and swimming were the most popular fitness activities. Basketball, golf, and soccer were the most popular team sports in the City. Full results from the mobility data and trends analysis have been provided to the project team as a Staff Resource Document.

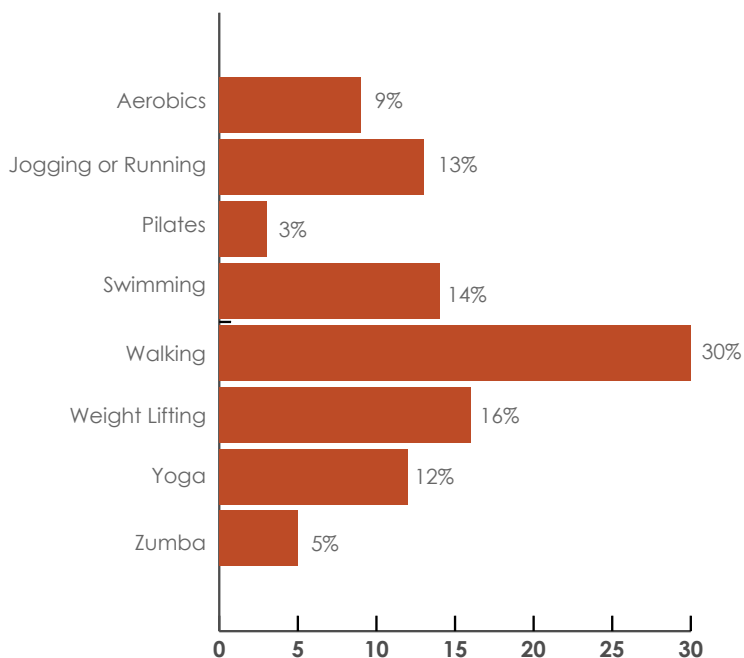


Figure 3.7: Local Fitness and Sports Participation in Commerce City

## Relevant Programming and Service Trends

Understanding the latest trends affecting service is crucial for Commerce City to effectively plan for the future. This section analyzes trends and needs identified from the community engagement process, with those recognized as key influencing trends on a regional or national level. This information is relevant when planning new programs, parks, and facilities and creating the annual budget and capital improvement plan. Understanding these trends can also help Commerce City reach new audiences and determine where to direct additional data collection efforts. Additional national trends detail has been provided in a Staff Resource Document, with key aspects highlighted below.

### THE ROLE OF PUBLIC PARKS AND RECREATION IN PREVENTIVE HEALTH - MODIFIABLE HEALTH FACTORS

Research has shown that public parks and recreation systems can integrate proven preventive

health factors, also known as social determinants of health, which are modifiable by parks and recreation agencies. These typically include physical activity, nutrition, social and parental engagement, transportation, access to facilities and nature, safety and perception of safety, and reduction of drug and alcohol abuse.

These factors can be evaluated and prioritized in conjunction with current program offerings and component-based inventory and findings through division-specific management and program planning. These aspects can be crucial for strategically positioning the Department for additional partnerships, funding, identity, and public support. The following pages outline the factors. Figure 3.8 provides a summary graphic for how these factors and various actors (partners, other providers, etc.) interact in the City to improve the overall system.

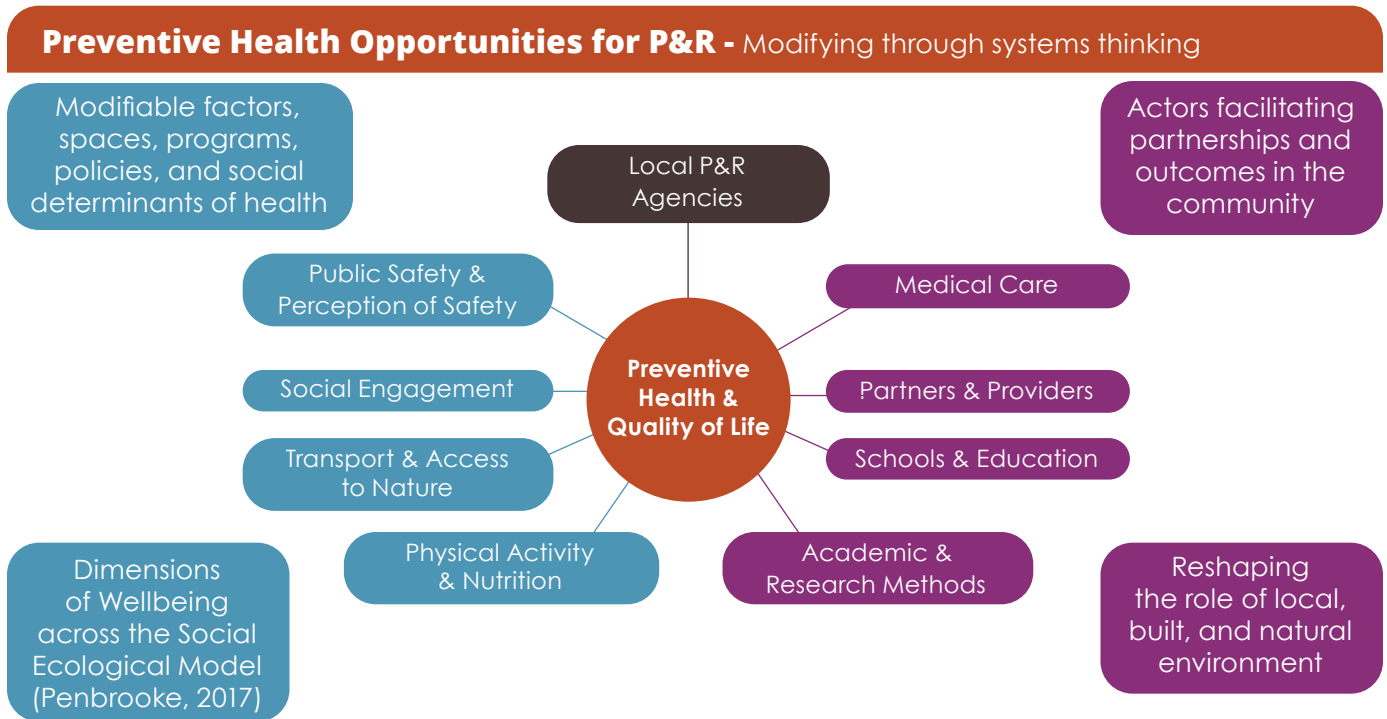


Figure 3.8: Opportunities to Improve Preventive Health Through Systems Planning



## Physical Activity

The City has many opportunities to increase physical activity for residents. This can be done through a variety of actions, such as providing more programs, more places to be active, education, and other offerings. Below are some potential indicators for increasing physical activity.

### TYPICAL INDICATORS

- Availability of assets/ programs
- Quality of natural and built environment
- Varied physical demands of programs/services
- Application of evidence-based standards and practices by staff
- Marketing and promotion of increased physical capacity and availability

## Nutrition

The City can help address availability and education related to good nutrition. Nutritional factors include a balanced intake of foods that provide the necessary daily nutrients for an active lifestyle and that are culturally relevant. Some common potential improvements that can be made through parks and recreation follow. The Department might not consider itself a primary nutrition provider, but it can modify preventive health greatly through education on the front line for youth and adults, providing locations for healthy food availability, working with schools, libraries, and other partners, and modeling through healthy in-house guidelines for snacks, concessions, and meals provided, especially in programs.

### TYPICAL INDICATORS

- Availability of healthy food and vending/ concessionaire guidelines
- Information, education, and training
- Healthy food/drink options
- Collaboration with local restaurants or meal sites
- Community gardens



## Social Interaction and Engagement

Social engagement has become imperative. Parks and recreation provide places and programs that can affect a variety of potential indicators to address social interaction and engagement. This factor might be even more important coming out of the pandemic, due to the need for social distancing and isolation, which caused mental health issues for many. Social engagement can focus on peer-to-peer interactions as well as parental and family engagement. Social engagement includes positive social relations and role modeling with peers and adults in various settings, along with engaging in social discourse and developing and maintaining friendships with others.

### TYPICAL INDICATORS

- Efforts to prevent bullying and hazing
- Non-competitive organized activity options
- Establish practices of social inclusiveness
- Positive social environment
- Relevancy of programs/services to residents



## Transportation and Access to Facilities and Nature

As discussed in Section 4, if residents cannot get to something, they cannot use it. Indicators related to transportation and access can be evaluated relative to location of components within the City parks and recreation system. For instance, although walking access to a nearby amenity might be convenient, it may not be to a resident's preferred amenity or available at the most suitable times of day. This may be correlated to the factor of Perception of Safety, where geographically there is access available, but a barrier can exist, or the perception may be that it is not safe to walk or bike there.

Going forward, each park and facility should be evaluated in planning for access improvements. Transportation services can include various modes of traditional and alternative transportation for individuals or groups, including vehicles offered by public, private, or family members. Well-planned City regional trails can be used for getting residents to and from a program, event, or activity; for physical activity; or potentially to get to work or other needs.

### TYPICAL INDICATORS

- Accessibility, availability, and interconnectivity of public and alternative transportation
- Cost of services
- Convenience
- Consumer knowledge of public transportation services
- Utilization rates



## Safety and Perception of Safety

If people do not feel safe, they will not use parks and facilities or participate. Safety concerns have been expressed in all forms of the community engagement in Commerce City, especially in the south subarea. When safety is a concern, actual crime rates can be addressed separately. This can usually be done in conjunction with public safety officers (police) and/or implementing media campaigns that highlight positive actions and actual crime rates (when low).

Across the country, public agencies are implementing community police partnerships with parks and recreation departments to help establish positive preventive relationships. The community input in the City indicated that right or wrong, park rangers are often seen as positive law enforcement and important deterrent agents, especially in parks. The Department is also a key partner in helping to coordinate opportunities and management for non-sanctioned uses of lands and helping unhoused populations.

### TYPICAL INDICATORS

- Crime rate at or near assets/programs
- Parent/children perception of safety level
- Safety inspection and risk management
- Prevention practices of direct and affiliated service providers
- Staff supervision and surveillance efforts

Because this element was identified as having a key impact on residents' use of services in Commerce City, additional considerations include:

- **Park Rangers and Park Enforcement** Park enforcement and park rangers are indispensable for maintaining a secure and welcoming environment. Their strategic presence in key areas not only deters potential incidents but also promotes a sense of security. Park rangers serve as the eyes and ears of public spaces, helping to ensure the well-being of visitors. Additionally, well-trained rangers facilitate positive experiences and foster a connection between the community and the park environment. They help educate and inform the public.
- **Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)** Incorporating CPTED principles into park design involves strategic planning to deter potential criminal activity and enhance overall safety. This is achieved through designing pathways and gathering spaces that ensure visibility throughout the park. The goal is to eliminate blind corners where visitors may be at higher risk for crime. Another principle of CPTED is access control by incorporating well-designed entrances and exits, directing the flow of visitors and preventing entry into unauthorized areas. <sup>1</sup>
- **Positive Activation** Positive activation is the practice of injecting vitality into public spaces, transforming parks into dynamic hubs of community engagement. By actively programming a space with activities, such as fitness classes, cultural events, and festivals, parks become lively areas that cater to various interests. This activation attracts visitors and deters crime. <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cannavino, M. July 2016. "Using Design to Reduce Crime." Parks & Recreation 52(7): 34-37. Accessed. Parks & Recreation website. <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2016/march/using-design-to-reduce-crime/>

<sup>2</sup> City Parks Alliance. May 2019. "Active Parks, Healthy Cities." City Parks Alliance. Accessed December 14, 2023. <https://cityparksalliance.org/resource/active-parks-healthy-cities/>

- **Strategic Lighting** Lighting serves as a unifying element that combines CPTED and positive activation. A trend within parks and recreation is the strategic use of lighting to enhance safety and create a captivating ambiance. The careful placement of eco-friendly LED lighting not only extends park usability into the evening but also deters potential safety concerns. Improved visibility enables better surveillance captured by cameras and reduces dark spots that may compromise safety.

## Prevention of Stress/Mental Health Challenges, Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Public policies can address how people can learn coping strategies from parks and recreation for managing stress and minimize negative health behaviors such as tobacco use and alcohol overconsumption. Public parks and recreation agencies may also be able to play a positive role in addressing addictions, such as smoking, vaping, and alcohol overconsumption, especially among youth.

In the United States, more than 1,200 municipalities and counties now have smoke-free parks. Because addressing tobacco is typically a community-wide policy for public facilities, the City has a tobacco-free policy that applies to parks and public spaces.

On a societal scale, reduction of alcohol and other addictive drug consumption in communities is warranted as a preventive public health goal. Agencies may offer alcohol education to the public through programs and special events. By using systems approaches and working with other actors within the community system, the City can play an important front-line role in education and social connections that are vital in preventing and treating substance addictions.

The Department has an opportunity to address alternative activities and education regarding drug and alcohol use, along with smoking. Comments during engagement discussions suggested beliefs that parks and recreation can provide positive engagement and activities that help connect people and provide alternatives for stress reduction and positive coping mechanisms in the City. These beliefs have been enhanced during the pandemic as the public often realized how important parks and recreation services are to their quality of life.

## Community, Equity, and Diversity Trends

There is growing recognition that access to parks and recreational spaces is not equitable around most communities, and this is somewhat true in Commerce City. According to NRPA, in many cities across the United States, there are fewer quality parks in proximity to residents with low incomes and communities of color.<sup>3</sup> Data from the Outdoor Participation Report shows participation rates among diverse groups are evolving quickly but still do not reflect the diverse populations throughout the country.<sup>4</sup> Black Americans represent approximately 12.4% of the population but only 9.4% of outdoor participants. Those who identify as Hispanic make up almost 18% of the population but only 11.6% of outdoor participants. These two groups are particularly underrepresented, although they are rising over time. The higher levels of diversity in Commerce City, especially the south part of the City, make these trends relevant for future planning.

3 NRPA. April 2020. "Is COVID-19 Uncovering Park Inequities?" National Recreation and Park Association. Accessed September 2019. <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2020/may/is-covid-19-uncovering-park-inequities/>

4 Outdoor Foundation. 2021. Outdoor Participation Trends Report. 2021: Participation Rates by Ethnicity. Outdoor Foundation. Accessed September 14, 2023. <https://outdoorindustry.org>

Many other large cities have begun establishing data-driven criteria to guide investment in public recreation to improve equity. The City Parks Alliance<sup>5</sup> identified five common elements critical to developing, implementing, and evaluating a data-driven equitable investment strategy:

- Leverage leadership from one or more sectors. Strong leadership is critical to make the case for creating and implementing an equitable approach. In addition to various governmental bodies, involving local foundations and those from the non-profit sector can help to bring the need for equity into focus.
- Define equity goals and collect data to support the goals. Data collection and analysis must be reliable, consistent, transparent, and guided by agreed-upon equity goals. The data collected in each city may vary but often includes statistics on poverty, crime, health, youth population, park access, unemployment, past capital and maintenance investment, and access to parks.
- Educate and engage the community on equity data. Educating all levels of government, residents, non-profits, foundations, and the private sector on data findings is important for building awareness, cultivating buy-in, and establishing a commitment to implementation. Extensive outreach and engagement are critical to help ensure the data aligns with reality and that the process builds ownership of the results.
- Establish and sustain equitable funding practices. A variety of strategies can be implemented to help ensure that equity becomes a reality, including new ordinances, voter-approved measures, strategic plans, and internal reorganization.
- Institute consistent tracking and evaluation procedures. Tracking new funding initiatives with an oversight committee that is required to produce an audit, report, or study results helps ensure consistent implementation over time.

Attention to race and ethnicity will become increasingly important in every aspect of service provision. More than ever, recreation professionals are rightfully expected to work with, and have significant knowledge and understanding of, individuals from many cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds. This is especially true in Commerce City. Some specific opportunities include:

### ADOPTING AN “EQUITY LENS” IN ALL ASPECTS

PRG staff, teams, engagement, and offered programs should always be representative and thoughtful of all backgrounds and cultures in the community. This initiative focuses on:

- Conducting demographic research and identifying priority communities and geographies for targeted outreach.
- Creating a staff culture with clear expectations, which involves adopting an “equity lens.”
- Ensuring all team members and volunteers engage in focused outreach to diverse, under-represented groups, such as:
 

» Communities of color	» Those with health disparities
» Low-income communities	» Older adult and youth residents
» Immigrant and refugee communities	» Individuals with differing abilities
» Indigenous communities	» Genders and orientations
	» Other segments

Representation, respect, and integration of all people is always expected. The City already has specific trainings and information on DEI-related education. This initiative aims to continue incorporating that focus at all levels and in ongoing evaluations of staff, programs, public information, and feedback opportunities.

<sup>5</sup> City Parks Alliance. July 1, 2019. Investing in Equitable Urban Park Systems: Case Studies & Recommendations. City Parks Alliance. <https://cityparksalliance.org/resource/investing-equitable-urban-park-systems-case-studies-recommendations/>

## COMMUNITY AND SPECIAL EVENTS

Community-wide events and festivals often act as essential place-making activities for residents, economic drivers, and urban brand builders. According to the 2023 Eventbrite Trends Report, the following trends are expected to impact event planners and community builders in the coming years.<sup>6</sup>

- **Re-Emergence of Live Events** There is a significant enthusiasm for in-person events. Older age groups, who had been reluctant to venture out due to COVID-19, are now willing to engage more. Hence, events that target older audiences, like symphonies or theaters, might see a boost in attendance.
- **Economic Considerations but Continued Interest** Inflation and the economy are concerns for many, yet most people do not plan to cut their event spending. Event organizers are largely maintaining ticket prices.
- **Music's Essential Role** Music events, especially at local and independent venues, will continue to be a favorite. People are willing to pay higher prices for favorite performers.
- **Value of Connection and Immersion** Events counter social isolation and bring joy and feelings of connection. Immersive experiences, which blend music, video, live performers, and augmented reality, are trending.
- **Preference for Familiarity** People prefer attending familiar events close to home, going with friends, and seeing familiar performers. This could be due to post-pandemic cautiousness or cost considerations.
- **Experiences Over Material Gifts** People are preferring experiences over physical gifts, emphasizing intimate personal connections that events offer.

- **Catering to Sensitivities** Many people have sensitivities to loud noises and crowds. Event organizers should consider sensory rooms and quiet spaces to allow people to recharge without the noise.
- **Virtual Events Remain Relevant** While live events are making a comeback, virtual events are not disappearing. The convenience, cost-effectiveness, and comfort that online events offer still appeal to a large segment.

## CULTURAL AND BILINGUAL EVENTS

Parks and recreational spaces are evolving into vibrant hubs of cultural exchange, where diversity is celebrated through a tapestry of cultural and bilingual events. These initiatives go beyond traditional programming, embracing the rich culture of the community. Cultural events showcase a variety of traditions, art forms, and cuisines, creating an inclusive space where residents can connect with and appreciate the cultural diversity within their community. By incorporating bilingual elements into events, parks become an accessible platform for all.

## COMMUNITY CENTERS

Parks and recreation agencies serve their communities in many ways. Some of the primary facilities that the City operates are the community centers. These facilities may host a variety of amenities, such as sport courts, multipurpose rooms, fitness gyms, aquatic facilities, and much more. There has been a shift from traditional fitness and general activities in community centers to a more modern approach, which includes healthy living classes, computer/internet access, and older adult transportation. Data from the NRPA indicates that recreation centers play an important role in communities across the country. Figure 3.9 demonstrates an infographic from NRPA discussing the potential for non-traditional community services.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Eventbrite. n.d. 2023 Event Trends Report. Eventbrite. Accessed December 14, 2023. <https://www.eventbrite.com/blog/asset/event-trends-report-2023/>

<sup>7</sup> NRPA. n.d. Recreation Centers Play an Important Role in Communities. National Recreation and Park Association. Accessed September 2019. <https://www.nrpa.org/publications-research/park-pulse/park-pulse-survey-recreation-centers-role-in-communities/>



## Recreation Centers Play an Important Role in Communities Nationwide

Per a recent NRPA poll, **Americans urge their local recreation center to offer a wide variety of nontraditional services, including...**



These are **in addition to services traditionally offered** by park and recreation agencies – including fitness centers, out-of-school time programming and aquatic facilities.



[www.nrpa.org/Park-Pulse](http://www.nrpa.org/Park-Pulse)

This Park Pulse survey was conducted on behalf of NRPA by Wakefield Research among 1,000 nationally representative Americans, ages 18+, between August 3 and 9, 2017.

Figure 3.9: Non-Traditional Services Desired in Community Centers

## Sports and Recreation Participation Trends

The analysis identified current trends in sports and recreation, with a particular focus on participation trends derived from the Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) 2022 Report.<sup>8</sup>



Figure 3.10: Sports and Recreation Participation Trends

<sup>8</sup> SFIA. June 1, 2022. "SFIA's 2022 State of the Industry Research Reports 15.8% Industry Growth." Sports & Fitness Industry Association. *SFIA | 2022 State of the Industry Research Reports 15.8% Industry Growth*

## Aspirational American's Activities by Age

The SFIA report provides data related to what inactive Americans were most interested in participating in by age. Commerce City has a median age of 33. By comparing SFIA inactive aspirational activities by age, the top activities for

most Commerce City residents (falling between the ages of 25 – 34) are likely fishing, running/jogging, camping, working out using machines, and cardio fitness.

6 – 12 Years of Age	
Fishing	1
Camping	2
Running/jogging	3
Soccer	4
Basketball	5
Swimming for fitness	6
Hiking	7
Tackle football	8
Hunting	9
Boxing	10

13 – 17 Years of Age	
Fishing	1
Bicycling	2
Tennis	3
Swimming for fitness	4
Shooting	5
Working out using machines	6
Hunting	7
Camping	8
Hiking	9
Running/jogging	10

18 – 24 Years of Age	
Working out with weights	1
Running/jogging	2
Cardio fitness	3
Camping	4
Hiking	5
Working out using machines	6
Yoga	7
Basketball	8
Fishing	9
Hunting	10

25 – 34 Years of Age	
Fishing	1
Running/jogging	2
Camping	3
Working out using machines	4
Cardio fitness	5
Hiking	6
Working out with weights	7
Shooting	8
Yoga	9
Soccer	10

35 – 44 Years of Age	
Fishing	1
Camping	2
Cardio fitness	3
Working out with weights	4
Working out using machines	5
Running/jogging	6
Hiking	7
Yoga	8
Swimming for fitness	9
Hunting	10

55 – 64 Years of Age	
Fishing	1
Camping	2
Swimming for fitness	3
Working out using machines	4
Working out with weights	5
Cardio fitness	6
Yoga	7
Hiking	8
Shooting	9
Hunting	10

45 – 54 Years of Age	
Fishing	1
Camping	2
Cardio Fitness	3
Working out using machines	4
Working out with weights	5
Shooting	6
Hiking	7
Yoga	8
Hunting	9
Running/jogging	10

65+ Years of Age	
Fishing	1
Camping	2
Swimming for fitness	3
Working out using machines	4
Working out with weights	5
Shooting	6
Cardio fitness	7
Hiking	8
Yoga	9
Hunting	10

Figure 3.11: SFIA Inactive Aspirational Activities by Age





## Recreational Sports and Programs

### Trends for Youth Ages 13 and Younger

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of youths involved in team sports was beginning to decline. From 2008 to 2018, the participation rate of children between the ages of 6 and 12 dropped from 45% to 38% due to the increasing costs, time commitments, and competitive nature of organized sports leagues.

According to the Aspen Institute,<sup>9</sup> after most athletic programs were shut down in the spring of 2020, 30% of children who previously played team sports now say they are no longer interested in returning. It is estimated that up to 50% of the private travel sports clubs will fold following the pandemic, putting pressure on municipal recreation programs to fill the gaps for children who do want to continue playing organized sports. There is a heightened need to save and build low-cost, high-quality, community-based sports programs that can engage children of all abilities in large numbers.

### OTHER RELEVANT TRENDS FOR YOUNGER YOUTH INCLUDE:

- **STEM/STEAM** also known as Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEM, STEAM) Programs
- **Summer and School Break Camps** Participation in parks and recreation youth camp programs continues to be very strong. For some agencies, these programs are the most significant revenue producers.
- **Nature-Related Programming** There is an international movement to connect children, their families, and their communities to the natural world.
- **Travel Tournaments** Recreational sports have become increasingly more competitive over time. Parents of youth sports participants historically traveled only a few miles to their local fields to watch games. Club leagues have brought a new level of competition.

<sup>9</sup> Aspen Institute. State of Play 2022. Project Play.org. Accessed September 14, 2023. <https://projectplay.org/state-of-play-2022/introduction>

## Trends for Teens/Younger Adults Ages 13 – 24

Local parks and recreation agencies are often tasked with finding opportunities for teen programming beyond youth sports. As suicide is the second highest cause of death among U.S. teens, mental health continues to be a priority for this age group. Activities such as meditation, yoga, sports, art, and civic engagement can help teens develop life skills and engage cognitive functions. Beyond interacting with those of their own age, many agencies are developing creative multigenerational activities that may involve seniors and teens assisting one another to learn life skills. Agencies that can help teens cultivate career development skills and continue their education are most successful in promoting positive teen outcomes and curbing at-risk behavior.

### SOME KEY TRENDS FOR TEENS:

- **Esports** (also known as electronic sports, e-sports, or eSports) is a form of competition using video games that is growing rapidly.
- **Parkour** is a physical training discipline that challenges the participant to move their body through obstacle courses, similar to military training.
- **Outdoor Active Recreation** includes activities such as kayaking, canoeing, stand-up paddleboarding, mountain biking, and climbing. Rentals for those who want to “try before they buy” are popular in many areas. All of these types of activities have experienced an increase since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Bicycling** became the third most popular sport amongst teens in 2020. Skate park usage has surged as well.
- **Life Sports** are a new priority in the recreation world, where the focus is on developing youth interests in activities that they can enjoy for a lifetime, such as biking, kayaking, tennis, golf, swimming, and jogging/walking.
- **Holistic Health** is the importance of parks and recreation in supporting a holistic lifestyle will continue to grow. Individuals are seeking opportunities to practice mindfulness, authentic living, and disconnection from electronic media. Programs to support mental health, including those that help to combat anxiety, perfectionism, and substance abuse in youth and young adults, are increasingly needed.







## Trends for Adults Ages 25 – 54

- Aerobic Activities** For most age groups, swimming for fitness and weight training are the two most frequently mentioned activities in which people indicate interest. Running, walking, and biking for fitness continue to show strong and consistent growth. Fun Fitness is a current trend. Exercises such as P90x, Insanity, and Crossfit have proven that a lot of equipment is not required to get fit. Since these programs have become popular, newer versions have become available, with some cutting the time it takes to look and feel fit in half. These types of classes have been growing and will continue to grow in popularity at recreation and fitness centers.
- Group Cycling or Spinning®** Group cycling and spinning continue to grow in popularity as younger fitness enthusiasts embrace this high-performance group exercise activity. Additionally, program variations have been developed to attract beginner participants, making it accessible to a wider audience.
- Yoga and Pilates** While Pilates has shown an incredible 10-year growth trend, the past 3 years have seen a decline in participation. However, yoga class participation is up across all levels. Millennial fitness participants (ages 28 – 43) are showing a higher propensity to choose group-oriented programs, and this activity is growing for all age levels.
- Cornhole (or Bags)** Cornhole is a low-impact, low-cost activity that can be played by people of all ages. Young adults are signing up for leagues (held indoors or outdoors). It does not take any skill, and it is a social activity. Although it can be offered recreationally, some competitive leagues are offered as well.

## Trends for Adults Ages 55 and Over

- Lifelong Learning** A Pew Research Center survey found that 73% of adults consider themselves lifelong learners. Do-it-yourself project classes and programs that focus on becoming a more “well-rounded” person are popular. Phrases such as “how to” can be added to the agency website’s search engine optimization, as consumers now turn to the internet as their first source of information regarding how-to projects. Safeguarding online privacy and use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) are also trending courses.
- Fitness and Wellness for Active Aging** Programs such as yoga, Pilates, tai chi, balance training, chair exercises, and others continue to be popular with older generations. It is important to note that ages 55+ can represent four decades of older adults with a variety of needs and ability levels. Some will be more active and want to participate in general adult classes, perhaps with modifications, while others will want and need more specialized classes geared for those with health or mobility issues.
- Encore Programming** This is a program area popular with baby boomers who are soon to be retired and focuses on a broad range of programs to prepare people for transitions into retirement activities. Popular programs for the 55+ market include fitness and wellness (specifically yoga, mindfulness, tai chi, relaxation, personal training), drawing and painting, photography, languages, writing, computers and technology, social media, cooking, mahjong, card games, volunteering, and what to do during retirement.
- Creative Endeavors** Improv classes promote creative endeavors. Workshops and groups help older adults play, laugh, and let loose while practicing mental stimulation, memory development, and flexibility.
- Specialized Tours** Participants are looking for more day trips that highlight unique local experiences or historical themes. For example, a focus on authentic food, guided night walks, bike tours, concentration on a specific artist’s work, and ghost walks are among the themes being sought.
- Pickleball Integration in Parks** A significant trend in park planning is the incorporation of pickleball programs and facilities in response to the sport’s rapid rise in popularity. To meet the need, some agencies are addressing the trend by repurposing existing spaces such as tennis courts or incorporating pickleball into their capital improvement plans for their own recreational or competitive sports.<sup>10</sup>



10 Galvin, Gabby. February 2023. “Pickleball Is Booming. Here’s How Cities Are Adapting to the Craze.” Smart Cities Dive. Accessed December 14, 2023. <https://www.smartcitiesdive.com/news/how-cities-adapting-us-pickleball-craze/642125/>



# Environmental Management, Conservation, and Resiliency

## HOW PARKS AND RECREATION HELPS DURING NATURAL DISASTERS AND EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS

The City is being affected by potentials for natural disasters, major storms, climate change, and public health challenges, like the pandemic, drug and alcohol overuse, and increasing unhoused populations. Parks and recreation can play a strong role in creating a more resilient community, especially since the Department manages many public spaces for stormwater management, sheltering during extreme events, managing greenspace for carbon sequestration, and providing social engagement that helps with community and individual stress reduction.

Extreme weather events are becoming far too common around the world, whether they are floods, tornadoes, wildfires, heavy snowstorms, or other types of disaster. The services the Department provides for the City and residents are essential during these types of events, and preparedness is crucial.

During a disaster, typically the parks and facilities are safe public places that residents can go. Parks are often used as retention ponds during heavy rain or runoff events and can perform key remediation aspects for stormwater or treefall removal needs. Following a disaster, the opening or re-opening of community trails, parks, facilities, and recreation programs plays an extremely important role in recovery of a community. As seen during the COVID-19 pandemic, quite often the more stressed or overwhelmed an individual is, the more parks and recreation services are needed.

Disasters can be vivid reminders of how vulnerable community health can be. The social ties that develop through community change efforts improve health outcomes and are critical for

surviving and recovering from tragedies that may occur in the City. Under-resourced populations are often the most affected. Programs and services can offer these residents a crucial sense of “return to normalcy” after a disaster, providing spaces for stress reduction and community connections. Parks and recreation services are so vital to the mental, physical, and environmental health of the community that if the City is not prepared for disaster, the community is not prepared.

Results have shown that parks and recreation are often a key player in stormwater management, erosion controls, wildlife habitat, and barriers for wildfires. Mitigating climate change and its potential consequences, such as natural disasters and soil erosion, helps minimize financial impacts and prepares the City for future challenges.

## EMERGENCY SHELTER ACTIVATION AND OPERATIONS PROCEDURES

The City maintains a short-term emergency shelter capability based on supplies maintained by the Emergency Manager (EM) and the availability of City facilities and City staff. This capability is intended to meet the immediate short-term (<3 days) needs of up to 100 residents in the event of an evacuation/loss of housing, unhoused individuals, extreme cold events, rescued travelers, and other situations that could arise.

Activation of the emergency shelter may be proactive or reactive. The City leadership may direct the opening of an emergency shelter when life threatening weather is anticipated or City leadership may direct the activation of an emergency shelter to meet the needs resulting from evacuation operations.

The City and PRG are currently working on an updated Emergency and Activation Procedures document for staff readiness that includes the Police Department, Community Development, and the PRG Department. The following list outlines general key factors for preparedness and response considerations.

<b>PREPARE– BEFORE AN EVENT:</b>	<b>RESPOND– DURING AN EVENT:</b>	<b>RECOVER– THE REBUILD TO NORMALCY AFTER A DISASTER EVENT:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>CONNECT AHEAD</b> – Identify and connect with the right partners and staff in advance.</li> <li>• <b>UPDATE INVENTORY</b> – Ensure the County’s Digital Asset Inventory in GIS is current. A complete inventory helps secure federal funding, insurance, and grants for rebuilding.</li> <li>• <b>LAND AND LEASE RECORDS</b> – Know where the records are located and have redundancy in case files are destroyed.</li> <li>• <b>HAVE A GENERAL SECURITY PLAN AND EMERGENCY RISK MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS PLANS</b> – Make sure that staff know who is to work during an event, how to contact each other, and how to cover for personal needs.</li> <li>• <b>READY CARE AND SHELTER PLANS</b> – Often parks and recreation facilities and gyms become shelter locations. Ensure that recreation facilities are ready to shelter hundreds of displaced families.</li> <li>• <b>TRAINING</b> – Training is crucial for disaster response, involving awareness, collaboration with regional and federal agencies, and understanding roles for the next phase.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>ESTABLISH THE COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM (CERT) PROTOCOLS.</b></li> <li>• <b>MUTUAL AID</b> – Have agreements with other agencies so they can help and reciprocate as needed.</li> <li>• <b>SHELTER MANAGEMENT</b> – Determine who is running shelters and programs.</li> <li>• <b>ASSET MANAGEMENT</b> – Determine who is evaluating parks, trails, and facilities.</li> <li>• <b>ALIGN WITH FEMA AND RED CROSS</b> – In larger events, these federal agencies will respond, but staff will need to be ready to work with them quickly.</li> </ul>	<p>The best way to recover is to proactively plan so that County parks and facilities are designed and updated to weather disasters. When building or updating assets and programs, the County should incorporate disaster and resiliency planning as much as possible in advance to help mobilize, get funding to rebuild, and help the community return to normal.</p>

Figure 3.12: Emergency and Activation Procedures

## Telling the Story Better - Parks Can Help Create Resilience and Conservation

As climate change and urbanization continue to put pressure on communities outside of extreme disasters, parks can help as one key solution. As communities like the City grow and densify, they are naturally building hotter environments. Research shows that parks can mitigate the increases in heat and excess carbon through stronger greenspaces and stormwater management.

An additional recent research article in National Geographic featuring work by Trust for Public Land and others indicates that heat nearly always aligned with the densest urban areas. Large parks can help cool communities, and trees are key aspects; however, it is more than just shade trees that help fight climate change. Parks can help mitigate areal flooding, capture excess carbon, and foster a stronger sense of community among those who will be affected by extreme weather and the changes it can bring.

As the City grows, it is important to enact guidelines for appropriate public land dedications, especially for new developments and in the City's role as an "overlay system" working with the various municipalities. This will help ensure that the City can continue to provide greenspace as additional areas develop or densify and provide adequate tree canopy, areas for stormwater management, and places for the community to connect and restore.

### WATER MANAGEMENT

Parks, recreation, and golf agencies often play a strong role in helping to manage flooding and water runoff. This has been very important in Commerce City and Colorado as a whole and may increase in importance as climate instability increases. Many Commerce City parks have been purposefully designed as retention basins during storm events. While some residents are troubled that parks could become unusable when it rains, especially in the south sections of the City, communications need

"Biodiversity, recreational and cultural co-benefits that make greenspace such an important element of a healthy, liveable city. In other words, greenspaces aren't just pleasant places for a family picnic. They are a vital part of an ecosystem, and a key to making cities liveable as the climate changes."

The Conversation  
Published on March 15, 2023

to be consistent and positive around the beneficial role that parks play in helping to reduce property damages from flooding.

### XERISCAPING

A trend in park design is the integration of xeriscaping principles, transforming once water-intensive landscapes into sustainable, environmentally designed spaces. Xeriscaping is a landscaping approach that prioritizes water conservation, which is particularly impactful in parks where greenery is abundant. By selecting drought-resistant plants, incorporating efficient irrigation systems, and utilizing permeable materials for pathways, xeriscaping minimizes water consumption while maintaining a visually appealing environment.

In addition to its ecological benefits, xeriscaping aligns with community awareness and education about responsible water use. Parks designed with xeriscaping principles become living demonstrations of sustainability, inspiring visitors to adopt water-wise practices in their own landscapes.

## SOLAR LIGHTING AND ENERGY CONSERVATION

The City can be a model for energy efficiency in the community. Currently, the City is utilizing energy-efficient LED pedestrian and parking lighting. Look for opportunities to utilize more sustainable solar lighting in park and trail development. Conservation considerations should be an integral part of all improvements and management practices. Communicating these practices can help educate residents and gain support.

## Marketing and Communications – Reaching Residents

The City does a fairly robust job of marketing and communications to the public, and the outreach and support for this project from staff indicated a strong commitment to trying to reach all residents. All materials are available in both Spanish and English. However, as discussed in

Section 2, the community input indicated that there are still strong challenges in how people can find out about the various offerings. Need for more communications and ability to find out about programs, services, and facilities topped the lists for what community respondents say need improvement, and many staff agreed.

The information is presented well in mostly organized ways but needs to be updated and released more often. As shown in Figure 3.13., 16 types of recreation programs are included in the marketing materials.

The City mostly uses a centralized marketing function, which generally serves the City and the Department well. However, staff and the public have expressed the need for faster social media and direct marketing to specific segments, more resources for disseminating information, and quicker communication through various marketing channels. Additionally, there is a need for more timely assistance with Spanish translations of materials.



Figure 3.13: Marketing of Recreation Services



The community survey asked respondents their preferred sources of information from the City, as shown in Figure 3.14. Some potential options identified for marketing and communications improvements would be to add dedicated centralized marketing and social media specifically for the PRG Department to help create and release these sources, have website and social media updates made more often in a coordinated manner for the Department, and to include a bilingual preference in all hires.

## Internal Communications

In addition to a need for more external-facing communications, staff engagement activities indicated a need for additional internal departmental communications.

Staff reported often “not knowing” or not being able to find information. As many staff are “front line” to the public, having improved internal communication strategies will help with external communications also. Employees at the front line, such as desk attendants, instructors, park rangers, maintenance workers, etc., can help the public find the information they need and tell the story of why these services are so important, if they know about it.

One strategy could be, as part of a departmental marketing and communications function, to ensure that all marketing efforts also include an internal communication focus so that staff can better know the great things the Department is doing and help convey them to the public.

### Which THREE of the sources listed in Question 10 do you PREFER TO USE MOST?

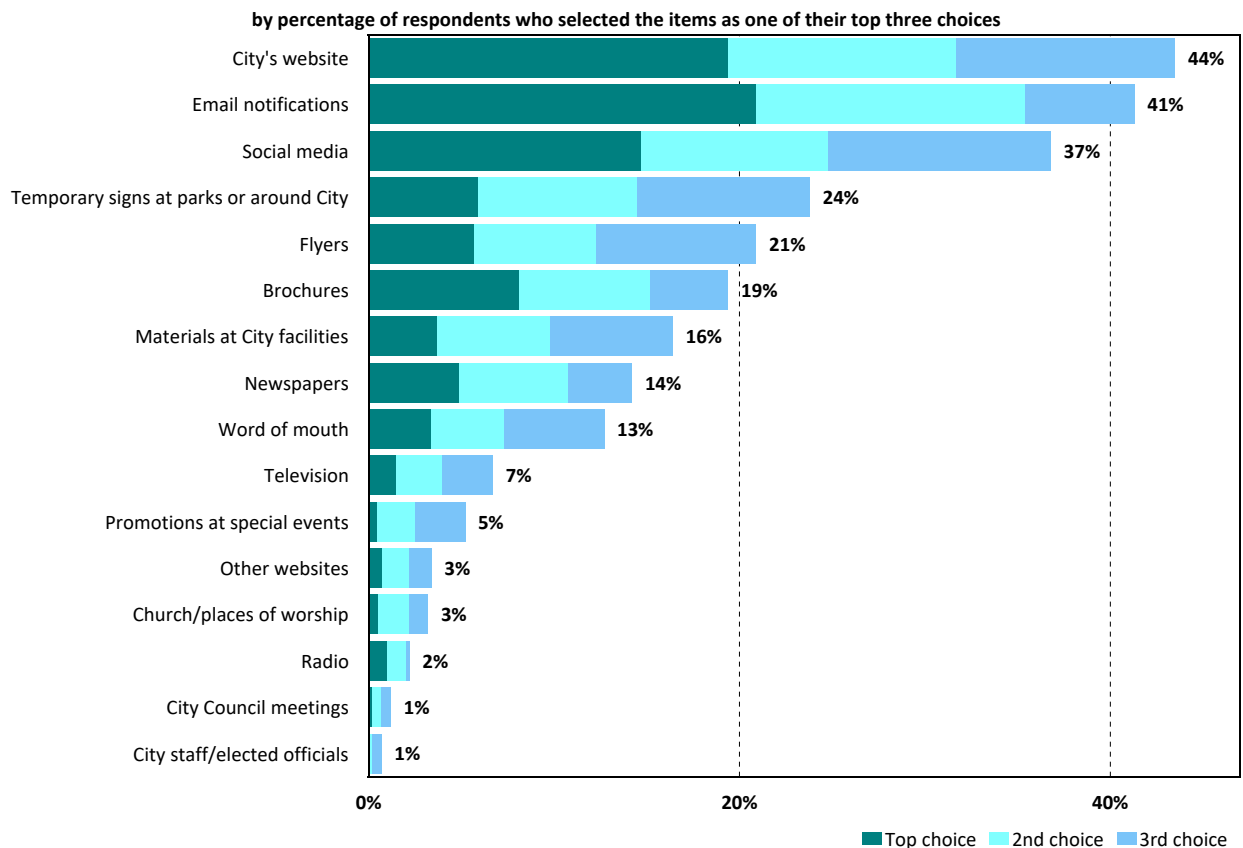


Figure 3.14: Community Survey Preferred Sources for Communications Information

# SECTION 4

## What We Have Now – Current Provisions of Lands and Facilities



## Facility Inventory and LOS Analysis

For the PRG Master Plan, a complete inventory of all “components” (lands, facilities, amenities) owned and managed by the PRG Department were evaluated through an updated inventory and Level of Service (LOS) Analysis. This process included using GIS technology to update locations, inclusions, and functionality of how the available assets serve the City residents.

LOS describes how a recreation system provides residents access to recreational assets and amenities. LOS indicates the ability of people to connect with nature and pursue active lifestyles, often reflects community values, and can have implications for health and wellness, the local economy, and quality of life.

A full digital inventory, various mapping perspectives, and a detailed report of the methodologies and findings have been provided to staff as Staff Resource Documents. This section of the plan includes summary highlights and examples for how the system is serving the community. This includes looking at equity across the City, with comparisons of north and south areas, and gap analyses.

### COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF COMPONENTS AND LOS

Parks and recreation professionals often use national standards as benchmarks for planning. These standards may include recommendations for ideal acreage, ballfields, pools, and playgrounds. Historical references date back to 1906, when the Playground Association of America recommended 30 square feet of playground space per child. In the 1970s and 1980s, more detailed publications on these topics emerged. In 1983, Roger Lancaster’s book, “Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines,” recommended a core system of parklands with 6.25 to 10.5 acres of developed open space per 1,000 population. These guidelines were not formally adopted by NRPA, but a ratio of 10 acres of parkland per 1,000 people has been widely accepted.

It’s important to note that these standards are not universally applicable. Factors such as the inclusion of golf courses, indoor and passive facilities, skate parks, ice arenas, public art, new components like pickleball courts, and the unique characteristics of a community can significantly influence ideal standards. Quality and maintenance levels also play a crucial role in evaluating the adequacy of recreational facilities.

## GRASP®

Parks, trails, recreation, and open spaces are key parts of community infrastructure, including playgrounds, multipurpose fields, and passive areas. To determine the LOS, component-based composite-value methods are used to inventory, measure, and portray the services provided by these systems. The composite-values methodology process BerryDunn uses for analysis is called GRASP®, designed by Design Concepts and GreenPlay in the 2000s. This process is now considered the “gold standard” for professional inventory and LOS practices in the United States. Commerce City has used GRASP® Methods in prior Master Planning inventory and LOS projects with GreenPlay in earlier years, so base layers and historical data were available. These were reviewed, validated, and updated for this planning process.

This methodology records each park component’s geographic location, quantity, and capacity. It also uses comfort, convenience, and ambiance as characteristics that are part of the context and setting of a component. They are not characteristics of the element itself, but they enhance the value when they exist. Combining and analyzing each component’s composite value makes it possible to measure the service provided by a parks and recreation system from various perspectives and for any given location. Typically, this begins with deciding on relevant components, collecting an accurate inventory of those components, and conducting analysis.

## The Commerce City Parks, Recreation, and Golf System

In Commerce City, the PRG Department plays a pivotal role in nurturing a strong sense of community, promoting physical and mental well-being, and enhancing the overall quality of life. Throughout the City, well-distributed parks and open spaces serve as accessible public gathering spots where residents can socialize, play, and enjoy active and passive spaces.

The City boasts an impressive 960 acres of parks and open spaces, complete with amenities like shelters, barbecue pits, volleyball and basketball courts, and connections to local trails. With over 25 miles of trails, some of which link to the expansive regional trail system, such as the Sand Creek Regional Greenway, residents have significant opportunities for outdoor activities.

Additionally, the City’s proximity to the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge adds to its attractiveness, making it a hub for both local and regional tourism and recreational opportunities.

In 1967, Commerce City saw the establishment of its inaugural park, Gifford Park. During the 1970s, the City continued to develop its recreational spaces, adding City Park (1971), Veteran’s Memorial Park (1971), Fairfax Park (1973), Monaco Park (1973), Olive Park (1974), and Freedom Park (1974) to its roster of parks. The 1980s witnessed the creation of additional parks, such as Adams Heights Park, Derby Park, Los Valientes Park, and Monaco Vista.



## Updated Component-Based Inventory of the System

In June 2023, BerryDunn conducted site assessments at Commerce City parks, trails, and open spaces. The inventory for this study focused primarily on components at outdoor public spaces and included parcels and locations for recreation centers. Alternative providers like Homeowner Association properties and schools were included on a location basis only for reference. The following information was collected during site visits:

- Component type, geo-location, and functionality with scoring based on the condition, size, site capacity, and overall quality
- The inventory team used the following four-tier rating system to evaluate park components:
 

» 0 = Nonfunctioning	» 2 = Meets Expectations
» 1 = Below Expectations	» 3 = Exceeds Expectations
- Components were evaluated from two perspectives:
  - » The value of the component in serving the immediate neighborhood
  - » The value of the component to the greater community

In addition to standard components, the inventory also evaluated features that provide comfort and convenience to users, called site modifiers. People don't typically go to park sites for site modifiers, like restrooms or shade, but they won't tend to stay long if these aspects are needed and not included.

After the site visits, a scorecard and inventory map were created for each facility. Following review and approval of park scorecards and inventory maps

by Commerce City a GRASP® Inventory Atlas was created. The Atlas is provided as a supplemental document to the plan update.

The system inventory map provides an overview of the size and location of parks and recreational facilities in and around Commerce City. In Figure 4.1, the green parcels denote Commerce City parks. The map also showcases indoor facilities and various service providers. The map divides the city into two areas: north and south. This division facilitates a more in-depth analysis of each area's specific needs through a comprehensive LOS assessment.



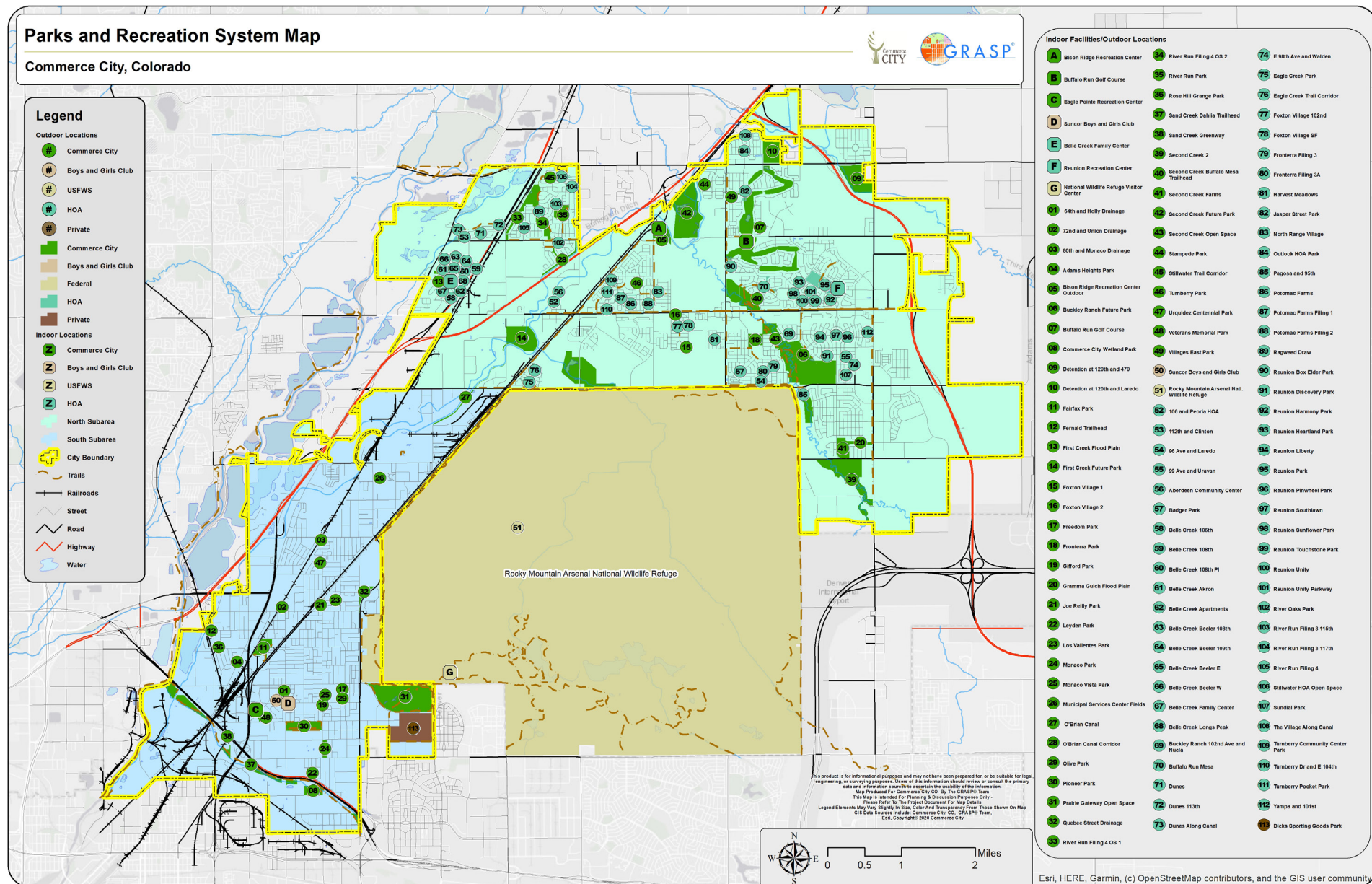


Figure 4.1: System Map Staff Resource Document – LOS Commerce City



## Park Classifications

As a means of organizing the City’s public open space facilities, park areas are classified according to a hierarchy that provides for a comprehensive system of interrelated parks. All parks can be placed into specific categories or classifications. Some parks that meet neighborhood needs and have specialized amenities could be placed into more than one classification but are placed in the classification that meets the broadest definition. The park classifications that are appropriate for Commerce City do not necessarily meet NRPA guidelines in a strict sense as far as size or amenities, but they are appropriate to the overall offerings of the City. The Commerce City classifications are as follows:

- **Pocket Parks (8):** 1 acre to 1.9 acres
- **Neighborhood Parks (7):** 2 acres to 20 acres
- **Community Parks (4):** 8 acres to 37 acres
- **Special Use Parks:**
  - » Municipal Services Center Fields
  - » First Creek Dog Park
  - » Buffalo Run Golf Course



## DETENTION OR RETENTION PARCELS

Detention or retention parcels range from 0.3 acres up to 69 acres. Detention areas offer minimal recreation opportunities but play a key role in stormwater management and safety from flooding. Existing properties that fall into this category include the following:

- |                            |                                 |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| • 64th and Holly Drainage  | • Detention at 120th and 470    |
| • 72nd and Union Drainage  | • Detention at 120th and Laredo |
| • 80th and Monaco Drainage | • Quebec Street Drainage        |

## Open Space

Open space areas are acquired to preserve the natural, unspoiled character of a particular location or geographic feature. These areas are typically important habitat conservation or environmentally-sensitive areas such as wetlands, shorelines, forest lands, and stream corridors. Passive recreation uses are appropriate for these sites, such as walking, bird watching, interpretive educational programs, and signage. Limited parking may be provided to support passive recreation needs with other support facilities, such as shelters and restrooms.

The Commerce City area includes a significant amount of land designated for open space. Nearly 17,000 acres of open space are easily available to Commerce City residents. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) owns and manages most of this open space, including the RMANWF, focusing on wildlife conservation, habitat restoration, and public education and recreation.

The open space includes preserved or maintained natural areas within the City, such as water bodies or greenways, as well as golf courses. Open space areas used as buffers or for landscaping within planned subdivisions as well as detention/retention ponds are also included.

Open space sizes range from 0.7 acres up to 180 acres. Open spaces offer a variety of both active and passive recreation opportunities from walking trails to natural areas. Existing properties that fall into this category include the following:

- Commerce City Wetland Park
- First Creek Flood Plain
- Ragweed Draw
- Sand Creek Greenway
- Second Creek Open Space
- Prairie Gateway Open Space

## Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge

Serving as a prominent geographic landmark of Commerce City, the RMANWR offers local residents and tourists access to one of the nation's most extensive urban wildlife sanctuaries.

Spanning 15,000 acres, it stands as one of the largest urban nature preserves in the nation. This extraordinary refuge is home to a diverse array of wildlife, including bison, owls, mule deer, and majestic bald eagles. Notably, it boasts one of the last remaining short-grass prairies in existence.

The story of the RMANWR is a compelling testament to the transformative power of environmental stewardship and habitat restoration. It has evolved from a former industrial site into a flourishing ecosystem that benefits both wildlife and the local community. Today, it ranks among the largest and most cherished refuges in the country, attracting birdwatchers, anglers, hikers, and nature enthusiasts year-round.



## Trailheads and Corridors

Trailheads range from 0.4 acres to 0.7 acres. Trailheads offer access to trails, parking, and general staging amenities. Existing properties that fall into this category include the following:

- Commerce City Wetland Park Trailhead
- Second Creek Buffalo Mesa Trailhead
- Fernald Trailhead
- Prairie Gateway Open Space
- Sand Creek Dahlia Trailhead

Trail corridors provide access to park sites, environmental areas, community facilities, commercial districts, and residential neighborhoods. Trail corridors are linear parks that may have local and regional significance. Commerce City offers a variety of trails that provide residents and visitors with opportunities for outdoor recreation, exercise, and enjoying the natural beauty of the area. Trails are designed for walking, jogging, biking, and in some cases, horseback riding. Notable trail corridors in Commerce City include:

- **Sand Creek Regional Greenway** The Sand Creek Regional Greenway is a popular trail that passes through Commerce City. It connects the High Line Canal Trail and the South Platte River Trail, creating a network of over 40 miles of paved and unpaved trails. This greenway provides beautiful views of the South Platte River and Sand Creek, and it's a great spot for birdwatching and wildlife viewing.
- **South Platte River Trail** The South Platte River Trail runs along the South Platte River and extends through Commerce City. This multi-use trail is part of a larger network that stretches from the mountains to the plains, making it a favorite among cyclists, joggers, and nature enthusiasts.

- **Reunion Trail** The Reunion Trail is a neighborhood trail in the Reunion community of Commerce City. It provides a scenic route for residents to walk, jog, or bike while enjoying views of the nearby lakes and parks.
- **Second Creek Greenway** This meandering soft surface trail provides a north/south connection to numerous neighborhoods along the Second Creek riparian corridor.
- **Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge Perimeter Trail** This trail provides a great walking/jogging trail along the west and north perimeter of the wildlife refuge and also extends along the eastern edge of the refuge south to the Commerce City limits.



## Indoor Facilities

Across the country, community centers are evolving from their original purpose as a community gathering place with facilitated programs into recreation centers that offer a host of fitness and active-life options, including pools, exercise and dance classes, weight rooms, personal trainers, and sports courts. A well-run facility serves as a thriving hub of activity for youth, adults, families, older adults, and civic organizations. Commerce City operates two indoor facilities; each provides a unique user experience. These facilities provide Commerce City residents with recreational opportunities indoors. They operate throughout the year and include the Eagle Pointe Recreation Center and the Bison Ridge Recreation Center.

### Eagle Pointe Recreation Center

The 67,000 sq. ft. Eagle Pointe Recreation Center offers a wide variety of health, fitness, and creative programs, activities, and classes. The recreation center underwent a major renovation in 2018, with a 6,000 sq. ft. addition, totaling 67,000 sq. ft. The upgrades improved flow, increased spectator space, and improved energy efficiency.

The addition and renovation to the Eagle Pointe Recreation Center, built in 1986, increases the programming offerings and provides a safer environment for patrons. A therapy pool was added to the existing natatorium, and the interior of the building was modernized with new finishes and lighting. A state-of-the-art “cardio movie theater” pays homage to one of the last drive-in movie theaters in Colorado, The 88 Drive-In.

### Bison Ridge Recreation Center

Opened in 2019, the Bison Ridge Recreation Center is a 108,000 sq. ft. state-of-the-art facility with an indoor pool, multi-court gymnasium with an elevated walking/jogging track, a nearly 10,000 sq. ft. gymnastics area, weights/fitness area, dance/aerobics studios, rooftop fitness deck, a 300-person community room, and the largest collection of public art sculptures in the City.

The center's design honors the pastoral nature of the site; gabled roofs identify the key program spaces—community rooms, gymnasium, natatorium, and gymnastics studio. Pictured as a prairie gateway, the building is prominent and visible to many adjacent thoroughfares.

### Bison Ridge Recreation Center

- **IIDA Rocky Mountain Chapter:** Brilliantly Executed Spaces and Thinking (BEST) Serve Award, 2019
- **Colorado Parks & Recreation Association:** Columbine Aware, New Facility of the Year Award, 2019
- **Athletic Business:** Facility of Merit Award, 2019





## Subarea Comparison

The analysis included looking at both the north and south parts of the City as subareas. When the data for the two subareas is compared, differences in the facilities provided by Commerce City in north and south subareas were observed. Specifically, the north subarea offers a greater total acreage of recreational space, whereas the south subarea boasts a higher number of distinctive park spaces and components within those spaces.

It's worth noting that community parks, a category exclusively found in the south subarea, contribute significantly to this disparity. These community parks provide a substantial number of components that are not present in the north subarea parks. As a result, the south subarea accounts for approximately 65% of the 220 components available citywide, but only 32% of the population.

### Commerce City CO North/South Subareas

#### Legend

■ C3 Parks   
 ■ Alternate Provider   
 ■ North Subarea   
 ■ South Subarea   
 ■ C3 City Boundary

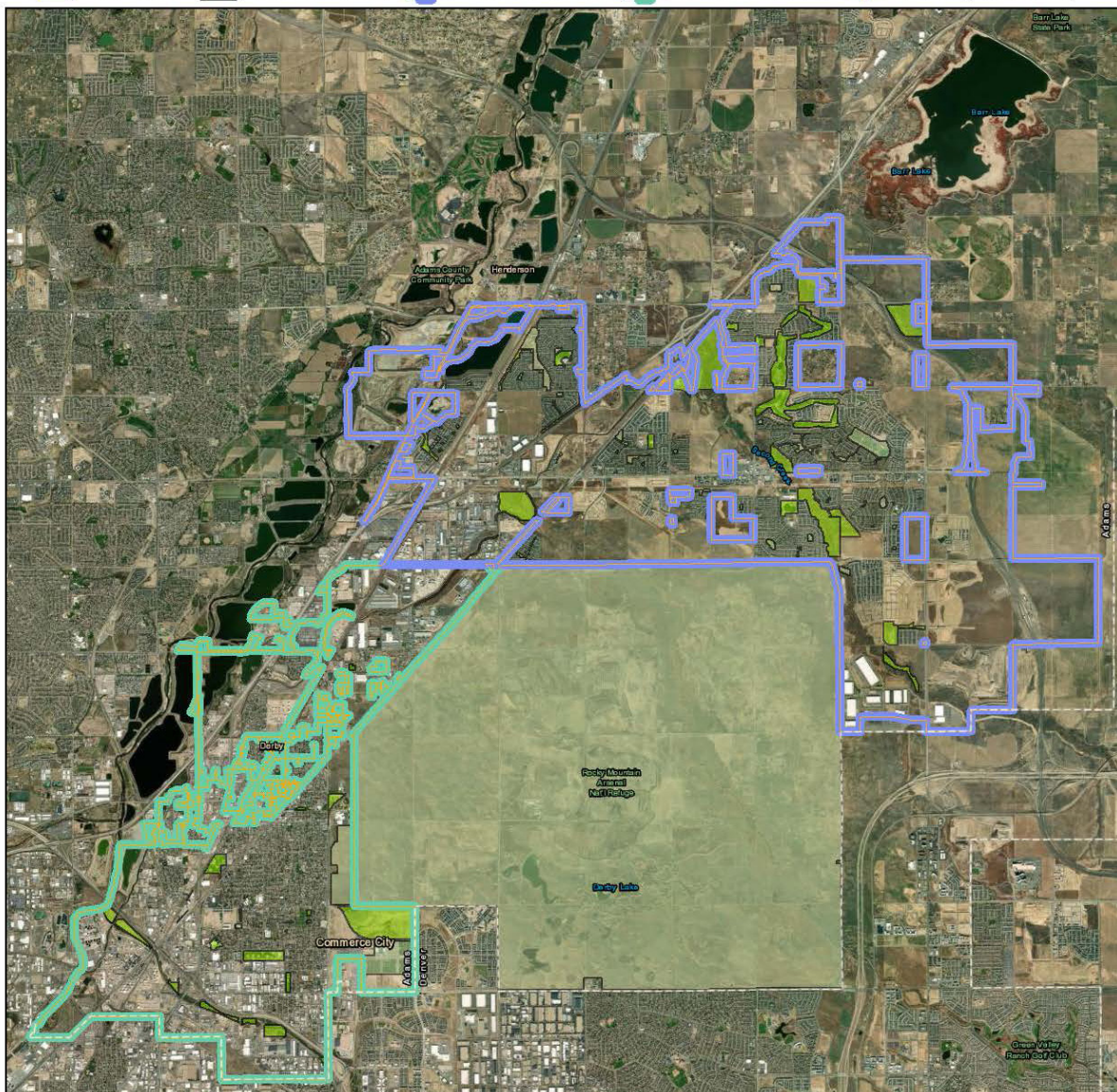


Figure 4.2: Commerce City North/South Subareas



# One-Mile LOS Gap Analysis

Figure 4.3 provides the volume of recreation opportunities based on a one-mile service area. Darker gradient areas indicate a higher volume of opportunities. In general, Commerce City has effective distribution of parks and facilities in terms of one-mile access.

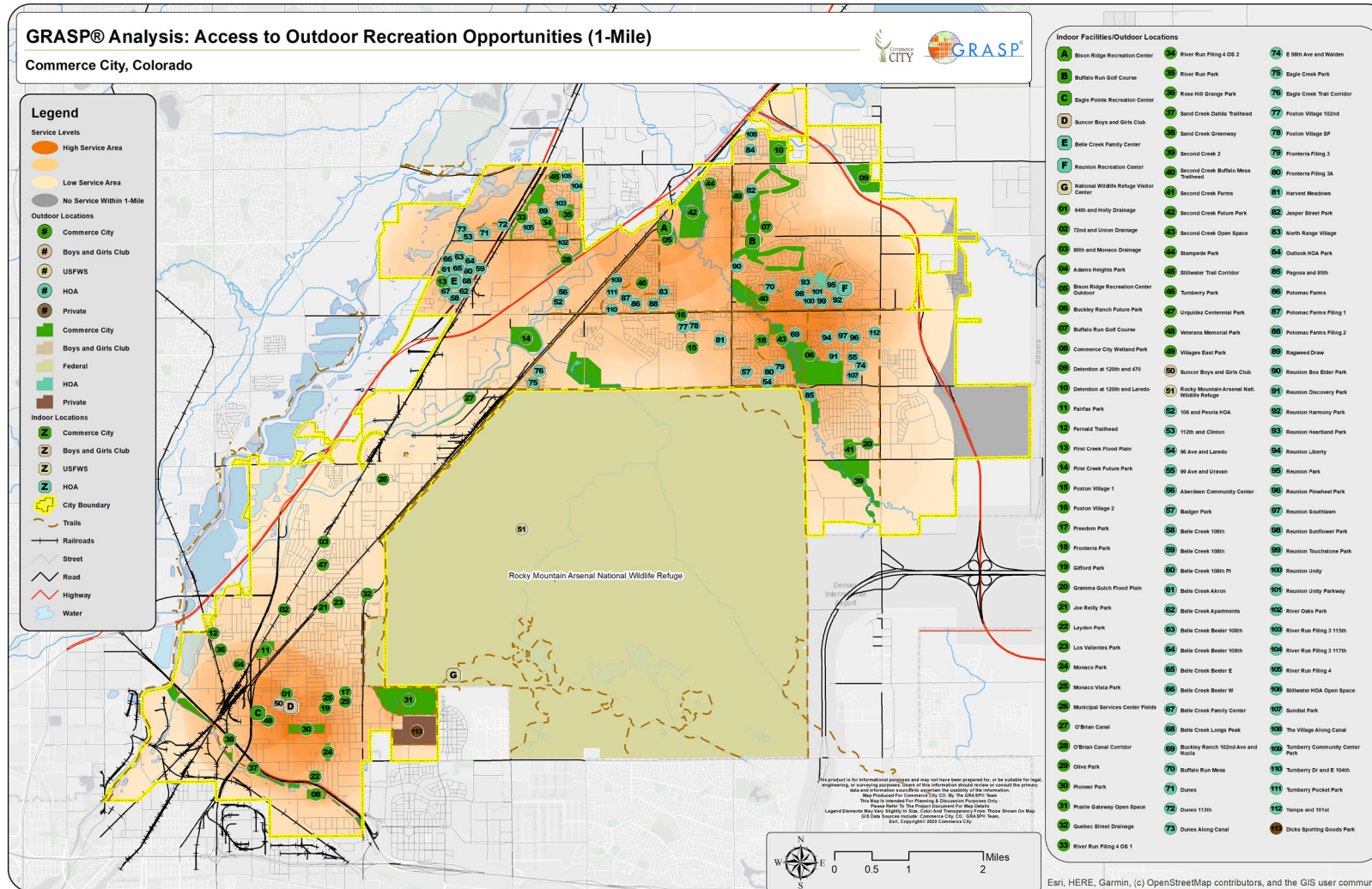


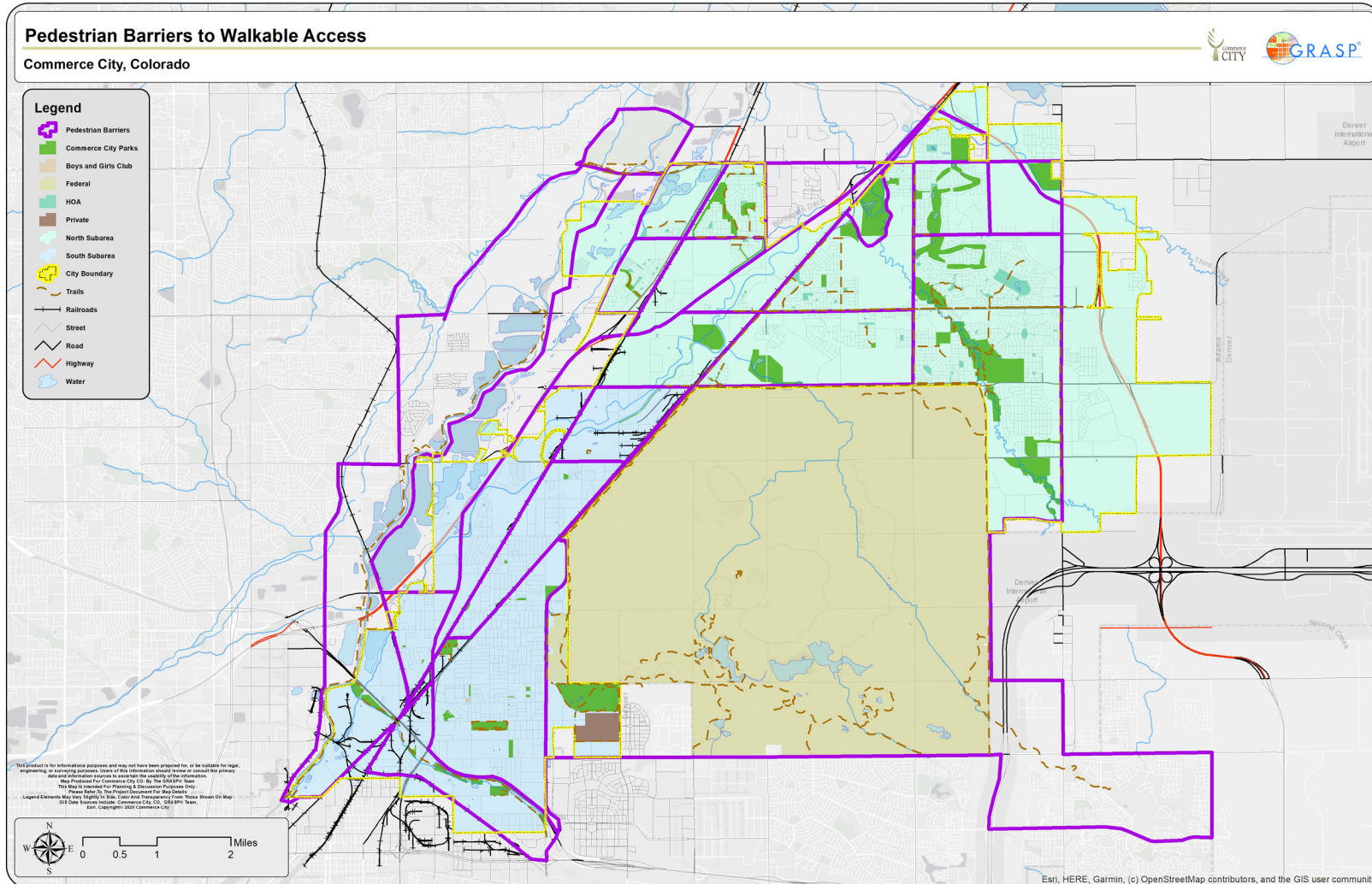
Figure 4.3: One-Mile Access to Outdoor Recreation

Nearly all Commerce City residents have access to active or passive recreation opportunities within a one-mile service area.



# Walkability Gap Analysis

Based on the one-mile gap analysis, a 10-minute or half mile service area is recommended for Commerce City. Walkability analysis measures how conducive the built environment is for walking. Pedestrian barriers, such as highways, major streets, railroads, and natural features like rivers, impact walkable access. Figure 4.4 denotes zones created by pedestrian barriers; these areas are accessible without crossing a major street or obstacle. Green parcels represent park properties. The yellow outline represents the City limit.



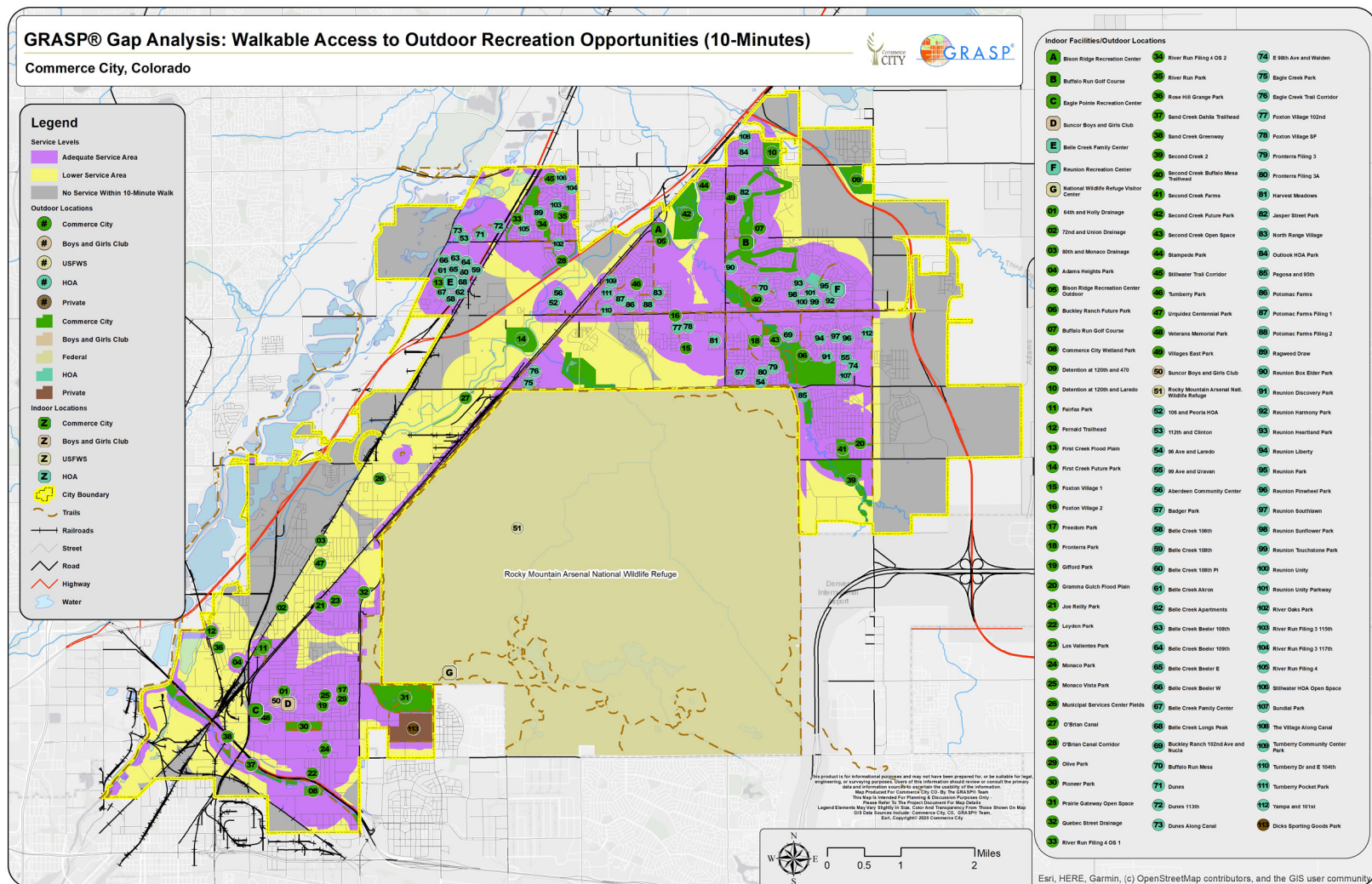
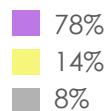


Figure 4.5: Walkable Gap Analysis

When target values are considered, 78% of the City residents have walkable access to at least four components.

### PERCENTAGE OF RESIDENTS MEETING TARGET VALUE WITH WALKABLE ACCESS



## Park Metric Analysis

The park metric analysis compares Commerce City-owned facilities to recent NRPA national statistics from its 2023 Agency Performance Review. Commerce City is above the NRPA median for park acres per capita, with 13.75 acres per 1,000 residents, versus the NRPA median of 11.2 acres. The park metric analysis accounts for 960 acres of active and passive park land. Buffalo Run Golf Course and 13 undeveloped parcels primarily in the north subarea are excluded from the analysis. Considering the anticipated population growth, the analysis indicates a requirement for an additional 33.6 acres of developed parkland by 2028. This increase is necessary to uphold the current LOS of 13.75 acres per 1,000 residents.

When comparing specific components to the NRPA park metrics, Commerce City meets the median in

most categories. Tennis courts, pickleball courts, multipurpose synthetic fields, and community gardens are the exceptions. park metrics do not represent any standards against which each park and recreation agency should measure itself. There is not one single set of standards for parks and recreation because different agencies serve different communities with unique needs, desires, and challenges. Table 4.1 provides a NRPA park metric comparison, but it is important to keep in mind that this is just one tool, and purely looking at the number list is not helpful. This metric must be compared to the results and needs indicated from the other methods of information gathering. Section 5 provides capital recommendations based on that type of comparison to allow for overall prioritization and recommendations in Section 6.

Outdoor Facility	Agencies Offering This Facility	Median Residents per Facility	Commerce City Current Quantity	Commerce City Residents per Facility	Need to Meet NRPA Median
Playgrounds	95%	3,779	21	3,323	0
Basketball Courts	86%	8,790	14	4,985	0
Tennis Courts	76%	5,577	2	34,895	14
Pickleball Courts	31%	11,150	0	N/A	6
Diamond Fields: Multipurpose	79%	7,237	11	6,344	0
Rectangular Fields: Multipurpose	69%	13,244	12	5,816	0
Multipurpose Synthetic Field	25%	43,100	0	N/A	1
Dog Parks	68%	54,119	1	69,789	1
Swimming Pool	51%	43,100	3	69,789	0
Skate Parks	41%	52,906	3	34,895	0
Community Gardens	52%	62,927	0	N/A	1
Golf Regulation 18-hole Courses	29%	69,374	1	69,789	0

Table 4.1: Park Metric Analysis



# SECTION 5

## Capital Improvements Opportunities



## Key Capital Findings and Suggested Improvements

Based on the findings from all methods, the following section outlines specific ideas for capital parks, recreation, and trails improvements that appear to be priorities and warranted for consideration.

### Community Gathering Areas

Based upon interviews and public engagement meetings, there were numerous requests for large outdoor gathering areas for community cultural and music events. This could include an outdoor amphitheater for music in the park, car shows, food trucks, farmers market, festivals, etc. Currently, outdoor events would occur within shared park space such as the ballfields at Pioneer Park, but no formal outdoor amphitheater space exists in the City. Future facilities could possibly be located at the new Greyhound site, Bison Ridge Recreation Center, and other future community parks that could accommodate large events.

Other nearby communities have or are planning similar outdoor event spaces. Examples include proposed Adams County facility, Carpenter Park-Thornton, Civic Green Park-Highlands Ranch, Broomfield Community Park-Broomfield, S. Miller Park-Castlerock, and The Armory Performing Arts Center-Brighton, others. The following lists describe estimated facilities and site amenities for each location. This provides a better understanding of the space required and the programming offered by other regional cities.

#### Adams County amphitheater/outdoor venue (currently in design)

- Site: 2.3 acres
- Rough-Cut Stone Events Amphitheater
- Seating Capacity: 500 sq. ft.
- Stage Type: lighting truss system
- Stage Size: 2,000 sq. ft.
- Parking: 33 standard spaces and 6 ADA spaces (with adjacent shared parking)
- Restrooms

#### Carpenter Park, Thornton

- Site: 150 acres  
(amphitheater area is 10,500 sq. ft.)
- Seating Type: grass lawn and concrete
- Seating Capacity: 500
- Stage Type: concrete with roof
- Stage Size: 700 sq. ft.
- Parking: 91 standard spaces, 3 ADA spaces (overflow parking at tennis courts 119 standard spaces, 4 ADA spaces)
- Facilities: restrooms and water fountains
- Type of events: Barrel & Beer, car shows, neighborhood movies in the park, 4th of July celebrations, craft shows

**Civic Green Park, Highlands Ranch**

- Site: 6.5 acres  
(amphitheater area is 5,000 sq. ft.)
- Seating Type: grass lawn
- Seating Capacity: 100
- Stage Type: concrete stage with roof
- Stage Size: 1,600 sq. ft.
- Parking: street parking (18 standard spaces) and adjacent Regional Transportation District lot (173 standard spaces, 6 ADA spaces)
- Facilities: restrooms and water fountains
- Type of events: Summer concerts, film screenings, workout events, ice cream social, Kidfest

**Phillip S. Miller Park, Castlerock**

- Site: 320 acres  
(amphitheater area is 7,800 sq. ft.)
- Seating Type: grass lawn and concrete
- Seating Capacity: 2,000
- Stage Type: concrete stage with roof
- Stage Size: 800 sq. ft.
- Parking: 125 standard spaces, 5 ADA spaces (120 unpaved overflow spaces)
- Facilities: restrooms and water fountains
- Type of events: concerts, shows, graduations, church services, weddings, outdoor education programs

**Broomfield Community Park, Broomfield**

- Site: 41 acres  
(amphitheater area is 2,200 sq. ft.)
- Seating Type: concrete
- Seating Capacity: 150
- Stage Type: Concrete with Removable Roof
- Stage Size: 700 sq. ft.
- Parking: 17 standard spaces, 2 ADA spaces
- Facilities: restrooms
- Type of events: concerts

**The Armory Performing Arts Center, Brighton**

- Site: 0.7 acres  
(amphitheater area is 600 sq. ft.)
- Seating Type: grass lawn
- Seating Capacity: 100
- Stage Type: concrete with roof
- Stage Size: 400 sq. ft.
- Parking: 91 standard spaces, 4 ADA spaces
- Facilities: restrooms
- Type of events: concerts, private parties, small gatherings



## NEW INDOOR RECREATION AND AQUATICS SPACES

The City is continuing to grow, and indoor recreation and aquatics space is at a premium. NRPA park metrics finds 63% of reporting agencies offer an indoor facility that meets the definition of a recreation center. In 2022, parks and recreation agencies serving populations of 50,000 to 99,999 provided one recreation center per 38,000 residents. This would indicate that the City is close to needing a third recreation center as the population grows.

As outlined in Section 4, the City currently operates two primary indoor recreation facilities with a total of 67,000 sq. ft. (Eagle Pointe), 108,000 sq. ft. (Bison Ridge), and 175,000 sq. ft. (indoor space.) In Colorado, members of the consulting team have often used a goal for communities of 2.4 sq. ft. of indoor community recreation center space per population (2,400 per 1,000). This equates to approximately one indoor multipurpose recreation center of approximately 60-80,000 sq. ft. per multipurpose center with primary and supporting components per 25,000 population. This calculation also indicates that Commerce City is at the point that new indoor space is warranted.

Typical primary components of full-service indoor community recreation centers include four primary elements plus support, offices, and storage spaces.

The primary indoor components typically include:

- Fitness (group exercise, cardio equipment, flexibility training, weight circuit, and free weight training spaces)
- Aquatics (leisure and/or competitive lap pools) and supporting elements
- Gyms and/or indoor field house space
- Multipurpose classrooms and rental space (wet and dry activities)

Other popular elements are spaces dedicated for specialized activities, such as senior centers, ice arenas, art and culture space, pickleball or other court sports, climbing walls, etc.

At this point in time, the assessments indicate that programming space, especially for seniors, aquatics, fitness, arts and culture, pickleball, and possibly indoor field house multi-sport space, are warranted. As these spaces typically take many years and often additional bond-type financing, the time is likely now to begin planning for an additional recreation center. In the interim, program allocation changes could be made to add senior spaces at Bison Ridge. Additionally, partnered spaces around the City, such as HOA's, churches, and schools, could be utilized. Plans to expand Bison Ridge to include additional indoor space for aquatics should also be considered.

## MULTI-USE TURF FIELDS

During public engagement events, additional soccer fields/multi-use turf fields were identified as a community need. The City has an ongoing agreement with Kroenke Sports & Entertainment (KSE) for use of multi-use turf fields at Dick’s Sporting Goods Park that seems to be working well for current City-sponsored programs. However, community non-profit sports associations and other providers report additional needs. There will also be growth in future programming as the population grows. It is important to revisit and solidify the agreements to allow for additional programming on these fields.

In addition, it may be prudent to add additional fields in new larger park developments, especially on the north side of the City. Multi-use fields could be accommodated in future community parks such as Second Creek Community Park at Highway 2 and 112th Avenue. There currently is no available public land for multi-use fields in the south part of the City.

Typically, multiple fields are grouped together to accommodate tournament play and to allow adjustment of field lines and goals for different sized fields based upon age groups. A typical soccer field is 225’ x 360’. A set of four soccer/multi-use fields would require 7.5 acres of land.

## PICKLEBALL COURTS

Many community members and City officials indicated the desire for pickleball and possibly tennis courts in a location where noise is not an issue and hours of play could easily be controlled. This is a fast growing and popular activity for people of all ages. These courts could possibly be located near the Bison Ridge Recreation Center or future community parks. Sound studies would be recommended to ensure proper buffers or distances between pickleball courts and residential homes.

## ADVENTURE PLAYGROUNDS

During pop-up events, participants requested more adventure or “ninja style” playgrounds. These might include challenge courses or complex climbing elements.

Other nearby communities with similar outdoor adventure playgrounds include: Edge Zipline in Castlerock’s Adventure Park, Paco Sanchez Park-Denver, Sandstone Ranch Park-Longmont, and Crescent Park-Erie. Below is a list of those facilities and the site amenities for each to provide a better understanding of space required and programming provided by other cities.

### Edge Zipline in Castlerock’s Adventure Park

- Site: 42,000 sq. ft.
- Parking: 151 standard spaces, 5 ADA spaces
- Facilities: restrooms
- Type of equipment: zipline, 110 – element aerial trekking course (four stories), warped wall, 50 foot climbing wall, fireman’s pole, trublu trust fall, quickflight free fall, and rappelling stations

### Paco Sanchez Park-Denver

- Site: 40,500 sq. ft.
- Parking: 36 standard spaces, 2 ADA spaces
- Facilities: restrooms
- Shade shelters: 16’ x 32’
- Type of equipment: towers, net climbers, swing zipline, concrete slide, and spiral slide

**Sandstone Ranch Park-Longmont**

- Site: 31,000 sq. ft.
- Parking: 79 standard spaces, 4 ADA spaces
- Facilities: restrooms
- Shade shelters: 2 (8' x 8') and 1 (8' x 14')
- Type of equipment: tree house play structure, web climber, climbing wall, boulder labyrinth, and tire swing

**Crescent Park-Erie**

- Site: 4,500 sq. ft.
- Parking: street parking
- Facilities: restrooms
- Shade shelters: 8' x 12'
- Type of equipment: balance walk, traverse wall, ninja steps, vault walls, climb the ladder, sway steps, and agility pods

**SHADE STRUCTURES**

The need for shade structures in parks and along trails was mentioned several times. Park inventories show shelters in most parks. Shelters would typically be included with all new park development. New shade shelters are being proposed and installed along the RMANWR perimeter trail where there are no trees to provide shade.

**SPLASHPADS**

Splashpads were identified during outreach events as lacking within the City. The only public splashpad in the City is located at Pioneer Park. The adjacent Paradise Island Pool does have interactive water play features as well as a full outdoor pool. Splashpads require space for the splashpad surface, vault with pump equipment, shaded seating/picnic areas, and parking to accommodate users. This type of amenity integrates well into community-sized parks or larger outdoor public facilities such as recreation centers.

**DOG PARKS**

Off-leash dog parks were identified by community members as lacking within the City. The only formal dog park within the City is at First Creek Park at East 102nd Avenue and Havana Street. Some indicated that they felt unsafe because of its isolated location. Off leash dog parks can vary in size from 1 to 5 acres and usually include shade, seating, water, and associated parking. To mitigate concerns with sound, dog parks are typically located away from residences near open space of larger community parks. Some examples of nearby off-leash dog parks include:

- Trail Winds Dog Park, Thornton
- Happy Tails Dog Park, Brighton
- Jaycee Park, Northglenn
- Crossing Bark Dog Park, Brighton
- Big Dry Creek Park, Westminster

**COMMUNITY GARDENS**

As the City can be a model for positive nutrition practices, and as many residents do not have space or easy access to fresh fruits and vegetables, one community solution is to incorporate community gardens into parks. These gardens also add important places for social engagement and healthy physical activity. This component should be considered for all park improvements and new developments.

**PLAY EQUIPMENT**

Additional playgrounds will be needed as additional parklands are added, as these are typically a neighborhood-based component. In addition, consideration of adventure-based and nature-based playgrounds could be considered whenever play spaces are updated or warranted.



## Trails and Connectivity

Trail connection needs were identified as priorities through outreach events and interview meetings and through the LOS and gaps analysis. People can't use facilities if they can't get there, and in Commerce City, there are strong barriers to pedestrian and bicycling modes of transportation. There was a desire expressed for greater north/south connectivity in the City and better connections between recreation centers and neighborhoods.

The City is currently working on an updated Transportation Plan with Public Works that should include a heavy focus on alternative transportation modes on-street, off-street, and regional greenway trails.



## Opportunities for Trails and Connectivity Improvements

Walkability is an essential consideration in recreation planning. Various walkability metrics and methodologies have emerged to assist park and recreation managers and planners in understanding this dynamic. As the City is currently updating the Transportation Plan (including alternative transportation and trails), incorporating these various planning practices will help. Some of the current methods being used for walkability analysis are:

- Walk score
- Walkability™
- Walkonomics
- RateMy Street
- Walkability App
- Safe Routes to Parks
- Safe Routes to Play
- Safe Routes to School
- Sidewalk and Walkability Inventory
- 880 Cities and Streets ([www.880cities.org](http://www.880cities.org))
- Complete Streets Strategies

It is vital to take bicycles and public transportation users into account as well as pedestrians. The concept of “complete streets” refers to a built environment that serves various types of users of varying ages and abilities. Many associations and organizations guide on best practices in developing walkable and bikeable complete streets infrastructure. One such entity, the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals (APBP, [www.apbp.org](http://www.apbp.org)), actively promotes complete streets in cities around the country. Another such organization, the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO, [www.nacto.org](http://www.nacto.org)), recently released the NACTO Urban Street Design Guide, which provides a full understanding of complete streets based on successful strategies employed in various North American cities. This most comprehensive reference on the topic is a valuable resource for all stakeholders involved in city planning. It proves to be a critical reference in building the cities of tomorrow.

## RECREATIONAL CONNECTIVITY

The infrastructure available to get people to and from destinations is increasingly vital as many people prefer a leisurely walk or bike ride to a trip in the car. Users expect easy access to parks, recreation centers, and other community resources. Employing different modes of travel to include walking and bicycling may be referred to as recreational connectivity.

Recreational connectivity is the ability to access a variety of recreational opportunities or amenities by multiple modes of transportation. In addition to recreational trails, this may also include city sidewalks, bicycle paths, bicycle routes, and public transit infrastructure. Of course, the scope of creating and maintaining such a network is a substantial undertaking that involves many players. Along with a community expectation for this type of user-friendly network infrastructure comes the hope that stakeholders work together in the interest of the public good. At the municipal level, this might include public works, law enforcement, private land-owners, public transit operators, and user groups, as well as the local parks and recreation department.

The concept of recreational connectivity is essential within the scope of parks and recreation planning but also has more profound implications for public health, the local economy, and public safety, among other considerations. As more people look for non-automotive alternatives, a complete network of various transportation options is in higher demand. Other elements of this infrastructure might consist of street/railroad crossings, sidewalk landscaping, lighting, drainage, and even bike-share and car-share availability.

## WHERE TO START WITH WALKABILITY PLANNING?

Adopting walkability planning strategies such as 80 streets can allow Commerce City to plan for 8-year-olds to 80-year-olds to get safely around the community, in an effort to improve walkability for many different ages and ability levels. The City now has a full complete updated inventory of components, and this can be enhanced by adding trails layers through the transportation planning process with the Public Works Department.

Recognizing that trail development occurs at a variety of scales, many trails serve park users only, while others serve a citywide or regional population. Also, people with a destination in mind tend to take the most direct route, while recreationists tend to enjoy loop or circuit trails more than linear pathways. An exemplary trail system provides multiple opportunities for users to utilize trail segments to access different parts of the city directly or enjoy recreational circuits of various sizes. By employing park trails, city trails, and regional trails, users should ideally be able to select from several options to reach a destination or spend time recreating or enjoying fitness activities. Simple, early steps such as creating and identifying preferred routes and loops on city sidewalks or low traffic streets are great places to start.



## Connecting People to Trails

As the trail system connects and develops, additional resources are desirable to support users. It is worthwhile to consider signage and wayfinding strategies, trailheads and access points, public trail maps, and smartphone applications as strategies to connect people to trails and affect positive user experience.

### SIGNAGE AND WAYFINDING

Signage and wayfinding strategies enhance a system by promoting ease of use and improving access to resources. Branding is an essential aspect of adequate signage and wayfinding markers. A hierarchy of signage for different types of users assists residents and visitors as they navigate between recreation destinations. Further, a strong brand can imply investment and commitment to alternative transit and can positively impact city identity and open economic opportunities.

### TRAILHEADS AND ACCESS POINTS

It is also vital to provide users access to trails. There are two ways to approach this. First, develop formal trailheads to include parking, bike racks, signage, restrooms, drinking water, a trail map, and other amenities. A trailhead provides access to trails that serve a higher volume of users at destinations reached by automobile. The second approach involves providing a trail access point, usually without the extensive amenities found at a trailhead. Trail access points are appropriate in residential or commercial areas where users are more likely to walk or ride a bicycle to reach the trail. Trailheads and access points should be primary points of interest on any trails mapping.

### MAP AND APP RESOURCES

By making trail maps, available users may enjoy trails with greater confidence and with a better understanding of distances, access points, amenities, and the system. Even with a developing trail system, such a trail map can provide valuable information to users.

## Trail Connections Needed

### CONNECTIONS TO BISON RIDGE RECREATION CENTER

Currently, there is no east/west pedestrian/bike connection to the recreation center along 112th Avenue from Chambers Road. Trail connections would need to be coordinated with future road expansions. City staff indicated that the Second Creek Greenway providing a north/south connection to Bison Ridge would be a priority. It should be noted that the completed sidewalk along Potomac Street from the south does provide an interim pedestrian connection to Bison Ridge.

There are no sidewalks along 120th Avenue so pedestrian connections to Bison Ridge from the north do not currently exist. There have been studies completed for a trail along the O'Brien Canal connecting neighborhoods from the east to Bison Ridge, but there are no current agreements with FRICO to utilize the road adjacent to the ditch.

### UNITED POWER CORRIDOR

Several community members indicated that the United Power corridor could potentially provide a trail corridor. The east/west corridor parallels 104th Avenue between I-76 and Tower Road. This could provide another east/west trail corridor connecting neighborhoods such as Reunion Ridge and Turnberry Crossing, but there are no current road crossings along the corridor. A study would need to be completed to determine feasibility of the corridor.

### SECOND CREEK GREENWAY

This trail is completed between 96th Avenue and just east of Chambers Road. The section between Chambers Road and Bison Ridge will require several pedestrian bridges but will provide an important future north/south connection.



## TRAIL CONNECTIONS BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH SECTIONS OF CITY

The existing Prairieways Action Plan shows potential connections that should be further explored and implemented as possible. It is essential that the City be better connected so that community members can get safely across town.

Other trail connection priorities:

- Trail Connections to Eagle Pointe Recreation Center (60th Avenue as shown in WBF Plan)
- Trail Connections to Sand Creek Greenway
- Trail Connections to South Platte River Trail

## Buffalo Run Golf Course and Bison Grill Assessment

As part of the Master Planning process, the team conducted a specific analysis of the needs, facility findings, and marketing options for the BRGC and Bison Grill restaurant, with a particular focus by Richard Singer of the National Golf Foundation. The full 49-page Golf Course Assessment Report has been provided as a supplementary Staff Resource Document.

The assessment included an on-site inventory of the BRGC and Bison Grill, discussions with golf staff, public input in engagement meetings, review of financial performance and operations, and a user survey of 308 Commerce City golfers (list provided by City staff).

## SUMMARY FINDINGS FOR THE GOLF COURSE AND BISON GRILL

The BRGC is an appealing golf facility that consists of one 18-hole championship golf course, driving range, extensive golf practice amenities, maintenance facility, and clubhouse. The course dates to 1996 when it was developed by the City as a recreational amenity and to stimulate development in the northern part of Commerce City. BRGC is a City-owned public-access golf facility that is self-operated within the City's Parks, Recreation and Golf Department.

### THE GOLF COURSE FACILITY

As of January 2024, the BRGC facility includes the following key components:

- An 18-hole golf course with all commonly associated modern amenities (high-quality greens, multiple tee boxes, cart paths, on-course services, etc.).
- Full-service 9,000 sq. ft. clubhouse that includes a pro shop, restaurant area, restrooms, conference room, offices, and open areas.
- A 1,900 sq. ft. tournament pavilion for hosting larger outdoor events under a covering.
- Extensive practice amenities including a 20-25-station all grass driving range with 300 yards of length and 40 yards of tee depth. There is also a chipping green, (with bunker), separate putting green and a small lesson area (ideal for golf schools, clinics, corporate outings, and instructions).
- A 1.75 acre maintenance compound with 6,600 sq. ft. maintenance building for storing maintenance equipment and housing maintenance staff.
- A 3.0 acre parking lot with approximately 200 defined parking spaces (150+ standard spaces for an 18-hole golf course).

This assessment found that the BRGC was in less-than-ideal physical condition during the NGF site-visit in Summer 2023, mostly as a result of specific issues that are not controllable by the City (poor soil, water quality, drainage). At the time of this review, the City was in the process of completing several property enhancements aimed at improving the condition of the golf course (irrigation/drainage), as well as preparing for an upcoming clubhouse expansion anticipated in 2024 and 2025.

## FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE, OPERATIONS, AND USAGE

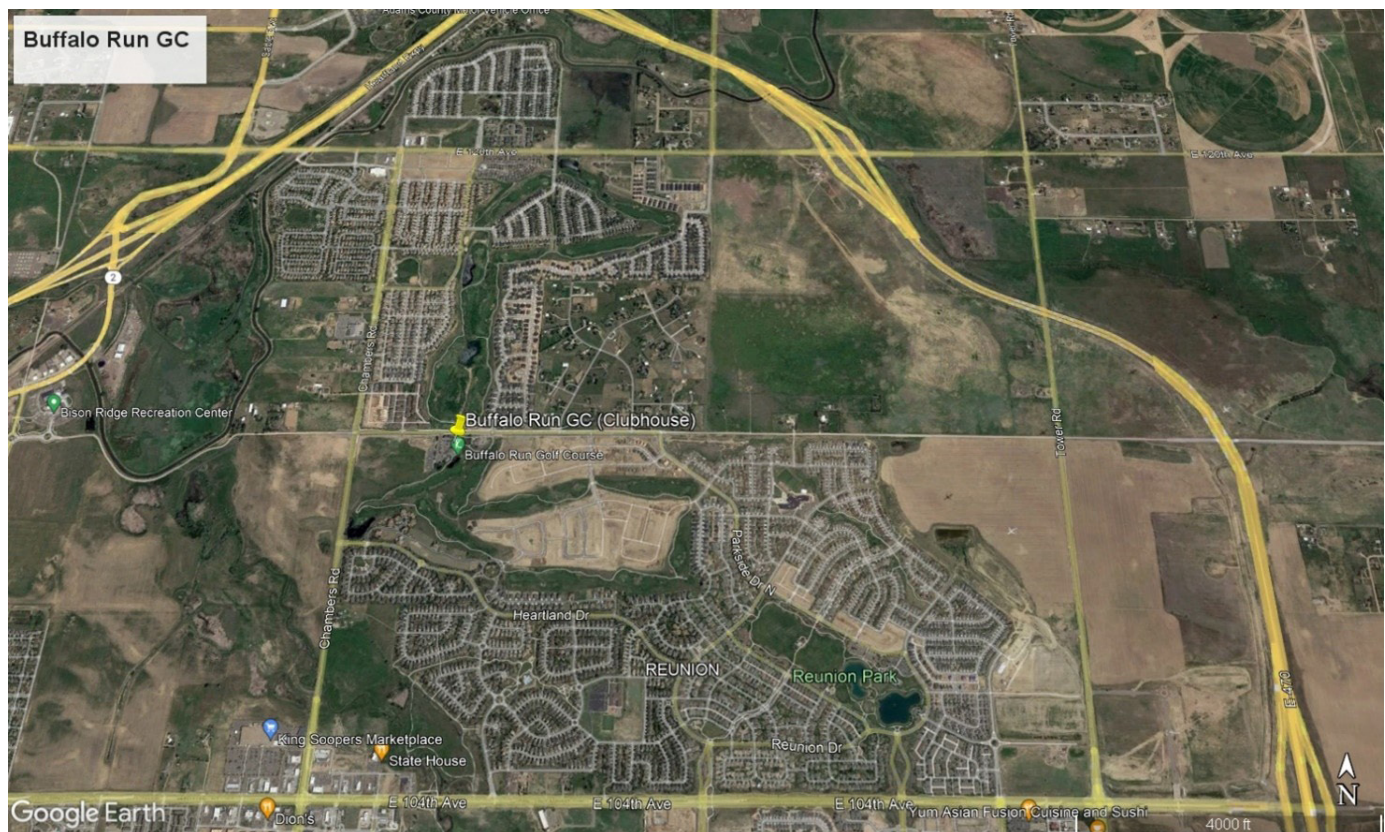
In 2023, Commerce City generated just under \$3.3 million in total gross revenue at BRGC from golf fees, food/beverage sales, merchandise sales, and other services, showing a large economic impact for the area. This revenue amount is about 21% higher

than 2019, suggesting dramatic recent growth due largely to the impact of COVID-19.

The course produced total top-line revenue of about \$1.87 million from golf operations in 2022, down from the \$2.07 million generated in 2021 but still much higher than the \$1.54 million produced in 2019 (pre-pandemic). In addition, food and beverage operations from Bison Grill generated an additional \$1.59 million in gross revenue.

In all, the total rounds of golf hosted by the facility (39,000+ rounds in 2022 and 2023) and the robust revenue are both higher than national comparisons for similar public golf courses. BRGC generated total customer spending of \$82.63 for each round of golf played in in 2023, compared to a national standard of \$43.90 per round.

## AERIAL VIEW – BUFFALO RUN GOLF COURSE



Google Earth image showing Buffalo Run Golf Course (BRGC) and direct surrounding elements, showing proximity to the Reunion area, large tracts of still undeveloped land, and the E-470 roadway. The image also shows how the BRGC is fully intertwined with its surrounding residential real estate.



## Public Purpose of Buffalo Run Golf Course

As a true municipal golf facility under the umbrella of Commerce City, the BRGC operation has a clear “public purpose,” which includes provisions for equal access to club facilities, extensive recreation-based programming, and a strong junior/youth orientation. The BRGC is active in providing various benefits to the Commerce City community that supports a public purpose of the BRGC, including:

- Extensive junior golf programming including junior camps each summer, a defined junior green fee discount, and other junior golf activities.
- The course is home to four local scholastic golf teams (Adam’s City High School and Prairie View High School students). The BRGC allows team members to have free access to the golf course and practice facility throughout the entire year (not just their respective golf seasons) with the intent to keep them engaged all year long.
- BRGC hosts several important regional events and tournaments that attract visitors to Commerce City, including large tournaments for groups to use the facility to raise money for various charities.
- The presence of the BRGC enhances the overall quality of life in Commerce City, and the course adds significantly to the property value of homes in Commerce City, ultimately helping to support the City’s property tax base.





## ASSESSMENT AND POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS FOR GOLF

After review of BRGC, the assessment found a good-quality public golf course facility that appears well run and is providing affordable public golf recreation to area residents and other visitors. Potential improvements for the BRGC and Bison Grill that could lead directly to enhanced visitation, support from residents, and revenue for the City include:

- Addressing the overall condition of the golf course (in process)
- Adding more entry-level and introductory programs, potentially in other areas of the City and targeting younger age groups, could help reach and introduce residents to golf who may not currently be likely to visit BRGC
- Expansion of the size of the clubhouse and marketing to the general public (in process)
- Increased availability of marketing resources specifically for the course and Bison Grill



## Adopting a Links Course Concept for the Golf Course

One opportunity for additional marketing for the golf course is to feature it as a natural “Links Course.” BRGC already possesses many characteristics of a true links golf course, which can be promoted and marketed without making any substantive changes. This links course concept could make BRGC a unique value proposition in the northeast Denver sub-market. Below is a summary of what defines a true “links” course, much of which is already present at BRGC.

A links golf course is characterized by dunes, an undulating surface, and sandy soil unsuitable for farming but which readily supports various indigenous grasses like brown-top bent and fescue. These elements result in the firm turf associated with links courses, allowing golf balls to run out much farther after landing on the fairway, requiring a distinct style of play. Common traits of links courses include uneven fairways, thick rough, lack of trees, higher winds, and small, deep “pot bunkers.”

# SECTION 6

## Recommendations and Action Plan



# Key Findings Analysis

As part of the findings and visioning phase of the planning process, a key issues analysis matrix was created to organize and prioritize findings from various methodologies. This matrix was used in all presentations with the project team, City and Departmental staff, the City Leadership Team, City Council, the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee, the Senior and Youth Advisory Boards, and the public during meetings and input sessions.

The left column of the matrix identifies emerging key findings by theme and need. Subsequent columns indicate whether each topic was identified as a priority or an opportunity for improvement. Not all topics were covered in all methods, and many other topics were discussed.

Sources included both qualitative and quantitative data:

- Summary of staff input
- Organizational assessment from relevant plans, available materials, and other analyses
- Summary of input from the public and stakeholder engagement strategies and methods
- A column for consultant team opinion to indicate consensus from the consultant team after review of all methods
- Results from the random statistically-valid community survey
- Findings from the GRASP® Inventory, LOS, and Gap and Equity Analyses

The organization and initial prioritization using the matrix helped identify potential recommendations and strategies to move forward in an Action Plan, as outlined in Section 6.

Key Issues Analysis Matrix							
2023 Data Sources		Qualitative Data			Quantitative Data		Potential Ideas
<div>Commerce CITY</div> <div>Key Findings - Rating Scale</div> <div>a - priority</div> <div>b - opportunity to improve</div> <div>c - minor or future issue</div> <div>blank means the issue didn't come up or wasn't addressed</div>		Staff Input	Consultant Team	SWOT Analysis/Discovery	Public Input/Pop-ups	Org Assessment	<div>BerryDunn</div> <div>Preliminary Considerations</div>

Figure 6.1: Top Section of the Key Issue Analysis Matrix



## Recommendations Summary

This section summarizes the themes identified from the findings analysis and outlines recommendations for each theme. These recommendations often reference details and opportunities from earlier sections of the plan. Many will need to be incorporated into other planning documents, such as the City Comprehensive Plan, capital improvement plans, and annual work plans. The goals and action plan section provides a summary for each goal, including a suggested implementation timeline and conceptual financial implications.

### 1. Diverse Range of Parks and Recreation Services

This theme addresses goals for improvements for providing equitable services across the City for all residents. There are needs for increased programming, expansion of safety, and services (including the need for two additional park rangers). Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles should be incorporated

for all facility and park improvements. There is a need for expanding the Navigators program work with other City services for under-resourced and unhoused populations. Analysis of needed programming and facility needs should be ongoing through the annual programming plan, staffing allocations, maintenance, and capital plans.

Priority Needs and Findings	Recommendations
<b>1.1</b> Develop equitable services for the core City and the expanding northern areas	Sections 3, 4, 5, outlined specific program and facility needs for the City. Use the analysis provided to add services where possible over the next 10 years.
<b>1.2</b> Increase programming and services in the northern and expanding areas	Add program focus and additional spaces as outlined in Sections 4, 5, and 6.
<b>1.3</b> Expand Park Rangers Programs	Add two additional bilingual park rangers, and likely additional rangers as parklands increase.
<b>1.4</b> Expand the "Navigators" program to help people find the services they need (seniors, unhoused, etc.)	Assign dedicated City resources for partnering with PRG, working with unhoused population.
<b>1.5</b> Enhance safety and perception of safety – CPTED, positive activation, the presence of rangers, improved lighting, and more	Continue including CPTED principles for safety enhancements in all design and renovations.
<b>1.6</b> Include equity focus and diverse representation for all offerings and planning	Convey a culture of working with an "equity lens" and cultural awareness for hiring, training, programming, and marketing that include diversity, equity, and inclusion for all.

Table 6.1: Diverse Range of Parks and Recreation Services

## 2. Financial Sustainability and Community Benefits

Section 2 discusses the City's current financial sustainability strategies and efforts to incorporate equitable pricing and cost recovery goals. These strategies appear to be mostly working; however, there continues to be a need for additional programming and facilities, which will require more resources for staffing, equipment, and places to hold those programs. The focus of this theme is to incorporate annual review and evaluation of the financial strategies, with adjustments as

possible to increase service levels. There appear to be opportunities for additional alternative funding (sponsorships, grants, and partnerships), but these will need to be well managed in a centralized, PRG-specific manner. Additional communication of these strategies and goals can help the public understand why things are priced the way they are and the benefits of what they are paying for and receiving.

Priority Needs and Findings	Recommendations
<b>2.1</b> Additional funding to meet growing needs	Annually review fees, the fee-reduction program, and allocations for continued growth.
<b>2.2</b> Additional focus on alternative funding and centralized sponsorships	Finalize sponsorship and grants procedures. Create partnership procedures documents for PRG in alignment with City-centralized resources.
<b>2.3</b> Ongoing cost recovery analysis	Annually review the sustainability model and subsidy target goals relative to program plans for each area.
<b>2.4</b> Enhance scholarship/need-based fees and programs and increase marketing and communication in this area	Create more detailed public guidelines and marketing to convey the availability of equity assistance PRG offerings for those in need.

Table 6.2: Financial Sustainability and Community Benefits

### 3. Additional Programs and Spaces

Sections 3, 4, and 5 has identified findings related to needs for programs and locations for those programs. The City is growing, and residents have expressed the need for some additional programs. This theme is focused on goals that should be incorporated currently and over the next 10 years. It is closely tied to theme 4, which identifies specific capital needs to add spaces. Key focus areas for expanding programs should be:

- **More cultural programming** – There is an opportunity and interest for celebrating diversity and Indigenous populations within current programs, adding new programs, and telling the story around the diversity that exists in the City.
- **More special events/community building** – There is a strong desire for more community events, both large and small, that include music, cultural activities, intergenerational interactions, and active lifestyle opportunities.
- **Better access to Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge** – This is a gem in the middle of the City, and there needs to be a more strategic connection with this unique opportunity.. The City doesn't necessarily have to provide more nature programs but can partner to make them available and known to the public.
- **Better Wi-Fi connectivity in parks and centers** – This will help people stay longer and allow for remote working for adults and parents to attend youth activities. Apps can also help provide site interpretation and information in these sites.
- **United vision for the growing City** – Program descriptions and locations can help reduce the current “north vs. south” aspect and provide continuity in the community. Programs and events bring people together, if they know about them and can get there.
- **More partnerships with Kroenke Sports & Entertainment (KSE)** – The City has strong partnership opportunities with KSE, especially for turf fields. This partnership can be enhanced for increased economic development, fields usage for more City and partner providers, and a collaborative presence for programming.
- **Leverage opportunities to collaborate** – Increase partnership with Public Works, Community Development, and Urban Renewal divisions within the City, and other for-profit/non-profit developments. It is not possible, nor desirable, for the PRG Department to “do it all.” Increased communications, regular meetings, and better aligned planning efforts can help provide improved parks, recreation, and golf services for the community.



Priority Needs and Findings	Recommendations
<b>3.1</b> Grow additional recreation center spaces	Expand the indoor pool at Bison Ridge, add an outdoor pool in north, and add splashpads.
<b>3.2</b> Grow additional program areas	Expand active adult offerings (especially in the north region), introductory classes (especially pickleball), aquatics, nature programs, fitness, cultural arts, and after-school service areas.
<b>3.3</b> Prepare for northern regional growth expansion	Expand Bison Ridge, and when population exceeds 100,000, evaluate plan to add an additional center to northeast areas.
<b>3.4</b> Additional events and community gatherings (especially cultural and bilingual offerings)	Add a coordinator to expand cultural event offerings and/or work with Community Relations to expand.
<b>3.5</b> Capture and celebrate cultural and historical aspects in all programs	Include a focus on Latino and Indigenous history in new programming offerings and any design projects.
<b>3.6</b> Increase nature program offerings	Add and/or partner to expand nature programs.
<b>3.7</b> Expand aquatic program offerings (youth and adults)	Pursue analysis of aquatic operations, schedules, and potential partnerships to increase offerings of aquatic programs in high demand (in addition to pursuing additional aquatic space).

Table 6.3: Additional Programs and Spaces

## 4. Capital Facilities and Amenities

As discussed in previous sections, the City is growing and has current and future needs for additional capital projects and related planning procedures and guidelines, many of which will have to be developed with other departments. Specific guidelines and capital needs include adding specific spaces as indicated on the following chart to address gaps, currently and in the future, as the City grows.

Priority Needs and Findings	Recommendations
<b>4.1</b> Add rectangular turf-fields – outdoor and fieldhouse	Add additional space at community parks and/or future recreation center, multipurpose turf, and partner with KSE for space.
<b>4.2</b> Evaluate existing parks that are part of the stormwater system	Explore enhanced stormwater management options for existing parks and tell the story of flood protection.
<b>4.3</b> Add a performing/cultural/visual arts center	Work with Urban Renewal and Community Relations to add an indoor performing and visual arts space.
<b>4.4</b> Add amphitheater – larger outdoor event space	Work with Urban Renewal and Community Relations to add an outdoor event/amphitheater space
<b>4.5</b> Add indoor and outdoor pickleball courts	Evaluate increasing pickleball courts (indoor and outdoor) while minimizing residential neighbor impacts to these areas.
<b>4.6</b> More shade structures/trees	Add additional shade into all designs and updates.
<b>4.7</b> More pools and splash pads throughout the City	Add splashpads into park updates and future parks when possible.
<b>4.8</b> Add dog parks	Add one more dog park and add enhancements and safety/activation programs at the existing dog park.
<b>4.9</b> Add adventure playgrounds	Consider adding adventure-based playgrounds in park updates or future park developments.
<b>4.10</b> Add community gardens	Look for options in north and south regions for community gardens.
<b>4.11</b> Add outdoor pool in northern region due to limited space at Bison Ridge	Evaluate northern regional locations for an outdoor aquatic center.

Table 6.4: Capital Facilities and Amenities

## 5. Enhancements for Buffalo Run Golf Course and Bison Grill

Section 5 summarizes the findings from the Golf Course Needs Analysis, conducted as part of this planning process. The golf course is currently being updated for water and drainage improvements, and Bison Grill is undergoing expansion. Recommendations for this theme focus on increasing golf-specific marketing resources to attract non-golfers, promoting the course as a “links-style” course, and adding more programs and facility rentals.

Priority Needs and Findings	Recommendations
<b>5.1</b> More public multipurpose and rental spaces	Promote the upcoming additions as open public spaces and emphasize the quality of the restaurant.
<b>5.2</b> Enhanced marketing for BRGC and the restaurant	Add marketing resources specifically for golf, as part of the increased PRG resources.
<b>5.3</b> More introductory golf programs, lessons, and increased access throughout the City	Include intro programs and outreach efforts for golf- especially for youth in the southern region of the City.
<b>5.4</b> Focus on water-wise and "links-style" course attributes	Gradually change focus of marketing to highlight natural “links-style” course attributes.

Table 6.5: Enhancements for Buffalo Run Golf Course and Bison Grill



6. Positive and Proactive Communication With The Community

The Department needs to increase communications and marketing to the public and visitors. This will help celebrate, educate, and inform the public, and help spread out the use of facilities and parks that are “over-loved.” The Department has an opportunity to leverage strong demand and support from the public and create a culture that celebrates and highlights the abundance of natural and recreational resources and the high quality of life available in the City. The City has a centralized marketing function; however, adding a dedicated

marketing and social media coordinator specifically for PRG should help increase frequency and reach of Department-specific marketing. Storytelling, increased social media, cohesive signage, and easier-to-find information in both English and Spanish will also likely help increase public support and potential willingness to pay for additional services, as residents become aware of all that is provided to them. Visitors can help support services through increased revenue if they know where services are offered.

Priority Needs and Findings	Recommendations
6.1 Increase the focus on social media presence, marketing channels, and positive storytelling	Create a dedicated centralized PRG marketing/social media and communications team with an annual marketing work plan.
6.2 Additional marketing resources dedicated for PRG	Add a dedicated centralized marketing and social media coordinator for PRG to work with the City’s Community Relations team.
6.3 Update and use the website for information more quickly	Enhance the website with quicker updates, additional pages, and bilingual resources; market in both English and Spanish.
6.4 Enhanced bilingual services in PRG and for all points of outreach	Include bilingual preference in all hires and as part of all materials created.

Table 6.6: Positive and Proactive Communication With The Community

## 7. High Performing Team With Sufficient Staffing and Support Resources

Throughout the first six themes, several additional staff positions or needs have been identified. In summary, the suggested additions of current resources are included in the following recommendations.

Priority Needs and Findings	Recommendations
<b>7.1</b> Add additional safety and on-site presence in parks	Add two park ranger positions for PRG to enhance safety, perception of safety, response, and front-line communications at park sites, centers, and trails. Continually assess the need for additional park rangers.
<b>7.2</b> More resources for residents and transient populations in need	Add an additional navigator resources within the Community Well-Being Division to work with PRG and other City and partnered resource organizations to help direct those in need.
<b>7.3</b> Additional maintenance staff	Adhere to the maintenance plan recommendations when adding staff upon completion with Public Works.
<b>7.4</b> Update internal and external communications resources	Identify staff to oversee and update the internal communications plan and work with Community Relations staff for external marketing.
<b>7.5</b> Update internal technology resources	Assign staff resources to update technology for all facilities and operations.

Table 6.7: High Performing Team With Sufficient Staffing and Support Resources

## 8. Citywide Collaboration

Planning for operations, design, and maintenance management is an ongoing process. This theme highlights adding focus on trends in planning and management as discussed in Section 3, adding emphasis on the following elements for the next five years:

- The Conservation and Resiliency Plans include stormwater management, xeriscaping, energy efficiency, and disaster readiness procedures and guidelines
- Addressing connectivity and walkability across the City, in alignment with the Transportation Plan (in process)
- Opportunities to assist with enhancing community revitalization and urban renewal efforts
- Ritualized, partnered, and formalized planning efforts to help guide staff and allocation of resources going forward

Priority Needs and Findings	Recommendations
Opportunities to enhance community revitalization and urban renewal	Grow partnership with Urban Renewal and Community Relations staff.
<b>8.2</b> Water wise and xeriscaping guidelines for all City, developer, and resident usage	Partner with other city departments to develop water conservation guidelines.
<b>8.3</b> Resiliency planning for various amenities and situations	Create resiliency planning guidelines for PRG in alignment with emergency operations centers.
<b>8.4</b> Improve coordinated systems for maintenance requests	Continue focus on enhanced digital request and fulfillment system with IT and maintenance requests using Access Commerce City.
<b>8.5</b> Update trails specifications/ Trails Guidelines/Alternative Transportation Plan	Add a City-wide alternative bike/pedestrian plan as part of the Public Works Transportation Plan and implement trails.
<b>8.6</b> Need centralized purchasing/ contracting improvements	Partner with centralized City staff to improve the timeliness and ease of purchasing systems and approvals.
<b>8.7</b> Identify gaps in service as the City grows through updated planning	Continue to evaluate planning analysis every five years as population grows, and before the next Master Plan in 2029.
<b>8.8</b> Create a parks maintenance plan	Partner with Public Works to complete a full maintenance plan with spatial, workflow, and staff operating ration analyses.

Table 6.8: Citywide Collaboration



# Goals and Action Plan

## Implementation Guidelines and Strategies

The following is a list of suggestions for successful implementation of the Parks, Recreation, and Golf Master Plan. These elements represent the commitment and discipline required to integrate the process into daily and annual operations, both currently and in the future.

### SUGGESTED IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:

- The Master Plan should become the guidepost for the Department. When decisions or responses to the community are needed, the plan should serve as a guide for decision-making.
- The Master Plan information should be included as part of the new employee orientation program.
- Post the Executive Summary of the plan on the public website and track results of addressing the recommendations on the site. This will provide the community with information about the Department's strategic direction and its commitment to results. It might also be helpful to print a color brochure of the Executive Summary to distribute to interested partners and community members to provide a quick snapshot of the plan.
- A staff member or team should have the responsibility of being the project manager or "champion" of the plan's implementation to help ensure success. This champion will be responsible for monitoring the plan's progress and will work with other Department staff, City management, and other City departments to effectively integrate the plan within operations.
- A staff member or team should be assigned accountability for each recommendation. The project lead will have responsibility for tracking progress of the plan.
- Regular reporting on the Master Plan's progress should occur. Divide the plan into separate fiscal years and report one year at a time, as an ongoing annual work plan. Each action item for the year should include a list of strategies that support its completion. The strategies are developed prior to each year for the upcoming list of action items and are developed by the staff members involved in completing the action item. It is the project leader's responsibility to report on their action items in a quarterly report. A suggestion is to enter each year's data on a spreadsheet or strategic planning software that lists the goals, objectives, action items, start dates, completion dates, and the name of the staff member responsible for the action item.
- At the end of the year, perform an annual review of the Master Plan and document any changes to objectives and action items to reflect changes in priorities. This process can be included at an annual review meeting, in which successive years' objectives and action items are discussed as part of the annual budget process. Action items will tie into both the operating and capital budget processes.
- Update major stakeholders on the plan's implementation and results on an annual basis.
- Conduct staff meetings on a quarterly or semiannual basis to review the progress on implementation of the plan.
- Post a chart of each year's recommendations on office walls in administrative areas, with a check-off column designating completion as part of a visual management program.
- If there are ideas for new strategies that arise throughout the year, include them on a written "parking lot" and review them as part of the annual just-in-time review to determine if they change, or place any existing strategies or action items.
- Update the plan at the five-year mark. Adjust existing recommendations as necessary.

## Action Plan Goals

This section summarizes the goals outlined in Section 6 and includes the anticipated timing and financial implications as a comprehensive action plan. This plan covers immediate actions, operational changes for years 1 – 5, and long-term capital recommendations (planning can start sooner, but implementation typically takes at least five years).

Timing implications in the chart below include:

- Ongoing: Immediate and as needed
- Annually: Once per year on a scheduled basis
- Short-term: One to three years
- Mid-term: Three to five years
- Long-term: Five to ten years or longer (Master Plan should be updated in five years)

## THEME ONE



### Full and Diverse Range of Parks and Recreation Services

Themes and Summary Recommendations	Timing	Funding Implications
<b>1.1</b> Use the analysis provided to add services where possible over the next 10 years.	Ongoing	As determined
<b>1.2</b> Add program focus and additional spaces as outlined.	Ongoing	As determined
<b>1.3</b> Add two additional bilingual park rangers, and likely additional rangers as parklands increase.	Short-term	Staffing
<b>1.4</b> Assign dedicated City resources for partnering with PRG, working with unhoused populations.	Short-term	Staffing
<b>1.5</b> Continue including CPTED principles for safety enhancements in all design and renovations.	Ongoing	Included
<b>1.6</b> Convey a culture of working with an “equity lens” and cultural awareness to include diversity, equity, and inclusion for all.	Ongoing	Included

Table 6.9: Theme One Action Plan



## Ongoing Financial Sustainability and Community Benefits

Themes and Summary Recommendations	Timing	Funding Implications
<b>2.1</b> Annually review fees, the fee-reduction program, and allocations for continued growth.	Annually	Staffing
<b>2.2</b> Finalize sponsorship and grants procedures. Create partnership procedures documents for PRG in alignment with City-centralized resources.	Short-term	Staffing
<b>2.3</b> Annually review the sustainability model and subsidy target goals relative to program plans for each area.	Annually	Staffing
<b>2.4</b> Create more detailed public guidelines and marketing to convey the availability of equity assistance PRG offerings for those in need.	Short-term	Staffing

Table 6.10: Theme Two Action Plan



## Additional Programs and Spaces

Themes and Summary Recommendations	Timing	Funding Implications
<b>3.1</b> Expand the indoor pool at Bison Ridge, add an outdoor pool in north, and add splashpads.	Mid-term	Capital Funding
<b>3.2</b> Expand active adult offerings (especially in the north region), introductory classes (especially pickleball), aquatics, nature programs, fitness, cultural arts, and after-school service areas.	Mid-term	Capital Funding
<b>3.3</b> Expand Bison Ridge, and when the population exceeds 100,000, evaluate the plan to add an additional center in the northeast areas.	Mid- to Long-term	Staffing
<b>3.4</b> Add a coordinator to expand cultural event offerings and/or work with Community Relations to expand.	Short-term	Staffing
<b>3.5</b> Include a focus on Latino and Indigenous history in new programming offerings and any design projects.	Ongoing	Staffing
<b>3.6</b> Add and/or partner to expand nature programs.	Ongoing	Capital
<b>3.7</b> Pursue analysis of aquatic operations, schedules, and potential partnerships to increase offerings of aquatic programs in high demand (in addition to pursuing additional aquatic space).	Mid- to Long-term	Staffing

Table 6.11: Theme Three Action Plan





## Capital Facilities and Amenities

Themes and Summary Recommendations	Timing	Funding Implications
<b>4.1</b> Add additional space at community parks and/or future recreation center, multipurpose turf, and partner with KSE for space.	Short to Long-term	Staffing and Capital
<b>4.2</b> Explore enhanced stormwater management options for existing parks and tell the story of flood protection.	Immediate	Staffing
<b>4.3</b> Work with Urban Renewal and Community Relations to add an indoor performing and visual arts space.	Short to Long-term	Staffing and Capital
<b>4.4</b> Work with Urban Renewal and Community Relations to add an outdoor event/amphitheater space.	Mid- to Long-term	Capital
<b>4.5</b> Evaluate increasing pickleball courts (indoor and outdoor) while minimizing residential neighbor impacts to these areas.	Short to Mid-term	Capital
<b>4.6</b> Add additional shade into all designs and updates.	Ongoing	Staffing
<b>4.7</b> Add splashpads into park updates and future parks when possible.	Mid-term	Capital
<b>4.8</b> Add one more dog park and add enhancements and safety/activation programs at the existing dog park.	Mid-term	Capital
<b>4.9</b> Consider adding adventure-based playgrounds in park updates or future park developments.	Mid-term and Ongoing	Capital
<b>4.10</b> Look for options in the north and south for community gardens.	Short to Mid-term	Capital
<b>4.11</b> Evaluate northern regional locations for an outdoor aquatic center.	Mid- to Long-term	Capital

Table 6.12: Theme Four Action Plan

## THEME FIVE



## Enhancements for Buffalo Run Golf Course and Bison Grill

Themes and Summary Recommendations	Timing	Funding Implications
<b>5.1</b> Promote upcoming additions as open public spaces and highlight the restaurant.	Short-term and Ongoing	Staffing
<b>5.2</b> Add marketing resources specifically for golf, as part of the increased PRG resources.	Short-term	Staffing
<b>5.3</b> Include intro programs and outreach efforts for golf- especially for youth in the southern region of the City.	Short-term	Staffing
<b>5.4</b> Gradually change focus of marketing to highlight natural “links-style” course attributes.	Ongoing	Staffing

Table 6.13: Theme Five Action Plan

## THEME SIX



## Positive and Proactive Communication With the Community

Themes and Summary Recommendations	Timing	Funding Implications
<b>6.1</b> Create a dedicated centralized PRG marketing/ social media and communications team with an annual marketing work plan.	Short-term and Annually	Staffing
<b>6.2</b> Add dedicated centralized marketing and social media staff resources for PRG to work with the City’s Community Relations staff.	Short-term	Staffing
<b>6.3</b> Enhance the website with quicker updates, additional pages, and bilingual resources; market in both English and Spanish.	Short-term and Ongoing	Staffing
<b>6.4</b> Prioritize bilingual candidates in all hiring processes and incorporate bilingual elements in all created materials.	Ongoing	Staffing

Table 6.14: Theme Six Action Plan



## High Performing Team With Sufficient Staffing and Support Resources

Themes and Summary Recommendations	Timing	Funding Implications
<b>7.1</b> Add two park ranger positions for PRG to enhance safety, perception of safety, response, and front-line communications at park sites, centers, and trails. Continually assess the need for additional park rangers.	Short-term and Ongoing	Staffing
<b>7.2</b> Add an additional navigator resources within the Community Well-Being Division to work with PRG and other City and partnered resource organizations to help direct those in need.	Short-term and Ongoing	Staffing
<b>7.3</b> Adhere to the maintenance plan recommendations when adding staff upon completion with Public Works.	Mid-term and Ongoing	Staffing
<b>7.4</b> Identify staff resources to oversee and update the internal communications plan and work with Community Relations staff for external marketing.	Short-term and Ongoing	Staffing
<b>7.5</b> Assign staff resources to update technology for all facilities and operations.	Short-term and Ongoing	Staffing

Table 6.15: Theme Seven Action Plan



## Citywide Collaboration

Themes and Summary Recommendations	Timing	Funding Implications
<b>8.1</b> Grow partnership with Urban Renewal and Community Relations staff.	Short-term and Ongoing	Staffing
<b>8.2</b> Partner with other city departments to develop water conservation guidelines.	Immediate	Staffing
<b>8.3</b> Create resiliency planning guidelines for PRG in alignment with emergency operations centers.	Short to Long-term	Staffing and Capital
<b>8.4</b> Continue focus on enhanced digital request and fulfillment system with IT and maintenance requests using Access Commerce City.	Mid- to Long-term	Capital
<b>8.5</b> Add a City-wide alternative bike/pedestrian plan as part of the Public Works Transportation Plan and implement trails.	Ongoing	Staffing
<b>8.6</b> Partner with centralized City staff to improve the timeliness and ease of purchasing systems and approvals.	Short-term	Staffing
<b>8.7</b> Continue to evaluate planning analysis every five years as population grows, and before the next Master Plan in 2029.	Ongoing	Staffing
<b>8.8</b> Partner with Public Works to complete a full maintenance plan with spatial, workflow, and staff operating ration analyses.	Short-term	Staffing

Table 6.16: Theme Eight Action Plan

## Staff Resource Documents – Provided Separately

The following documents have been referenced as larger staff resource documents. Due to the volume and detail of information, these documents have been summarized in this Master Plan, with full documents provided to staff, but they have not been formatted or edited for public release. Contact Commerce City project team members if additional information is needed from the following summaries:

- Agency Comparative Analysis and Benchmarking Report
- Full Enhanced Engagement Summary Notes
- ETC Community Survey Findings Report
- National Golf Foundation – BRGC and Bison Grill Assessment
- Social Pinpoint Engagement Summary
- Trends and Placer AI Report
- Community Inventory Atlas
- LOS Analysis – Full Report and Methodologies



2024



# PARKS, RECREATION, AND GOLF MASTER PLAN