



11—Parks, Open Space, and Recreation

Guiding Principle

Provide ample and well-distributed parks and recreation facilities, and a connected system of trails and open space, to provide for outdoor recreation, relaxation, and rejuvenation, and to protect views.

Introduction

Commerce City's setting on the eastern plains along the South Platte River affords it vast views of the mountains and Denver skyline. The city has long planned for a connected system of open space mainly along the South Platte River and First, Second, and Third Creeks. Parks and recreational facilities are also critical to the quality of neighborhoods and the city overall, in maintaining views, clean air and water, and spaces for people to recreate and live healthy, active lifestyles.

In 2009, Commerce City maintained 18 parks, 19 miles of trails, and 760 acres of dedicated open space. Each park contains a number of facilities, ranging from playgrounds to playing fields to shelters for active recreation use and interactive use and enjoyment. The city also operates and maintains the Buffalo Run municipal 18-hole golf course. Finally, the city maintains a 68,000-square foot recreation center that offers a wide variety of programs and services for all ages and segments of the population.

Influencing Factors

The following factors helped inform and define the parks, open space, and recreation goals contained in this chapter:

Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge

At approximately 17,000 acres, the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge is one of the largest urban open space areas in the United States. It has enormous potential for recreation, tourism, and wildlife viewing opportunities. A Visitor's



Parks, Open Space, and Recreation Maps and Plans...

The Park, Trail & Open Space System Map & Guide (2007) illustrates the current system and some of the planned future additions to the system. Commerce City has several other plans actively used to guide development of parks, recreation, and open space, including:

- ✓ *The Parks and Recreation Master Plan* (1994),
- ✓ *Prairieways Action Plan, Guidelines for Parks, Trails and Open Space* (1999),
- ✓ *South Platte River Corridor Heritage Plan* (1999) Adams County Plan, and
- ✓ *Strategic Plan for Recreation Programs, Services, and Facilities* (2007).



Center for the facility will be completed by the end of 2010, greatly increasing visitor traffic to the refuge and the city.

Funding for Parks, Trails, and Open Space Projects

Because of the city's rapid growth and geographic expansion, the city has a number of ongoing development and acquisition needs for recreation. Adequate funding for park and recreation improvements remains a major challenge.

Future Park Needs

As the city grows, there will be continuing needs for new parks to serve its residents. Current estimates from the city's *Strategic Recreation Plan* are that an additional four or five neighborhood parks and one additional community park will be needed in the next decade. The Strategic Recreation Plan describes existing conditions of parks, and current plans and policies.



Open space offers refuge for wildlife.

Recreation Center

This Plan addresses increased year-round recreational opportunities for everyone, including the potential for a recreation center in the Northern Range.

National Wildlife Refuge/Barr Lake

As mentioned before in this Plan, the National Wildlife Refuge and Barr Lake are both tremendous assets and resources that benefit the city and help shape the open space system.

How Do Parks, Open Space, and Recreation Relate to Sustainability?

Parks and open space are one of the key components of a strong and sustainable community. They contribute to the following:

- ✓ Health, active living;
- ✓ Help maintain a strong local economy by increasing adjacent property values, and improving the city's attractiveness to clean and green businesses;
- ✓ Create a clean environment and wildlife habitat; and
- ✓ Increase the level of community pride and people's physical and mental health.

Directions and Goals

Based on the influencing factors outlined above, the parks, open space, and recreation goals contained below consider the following:

Parks, Open Space Conservation, and Recreation

Conserving open spaces as growth occurs is important to achieving the *C3 Community Vision* and becoming a sustainable community. This *C3 Vision Plan* advances the community and city parks, open space, and recreation goals. Focused park plans, identified on the previous page, help guide the city's choices for future facility improvements.

Parks, Open Space, and Recreation goals address:

1. Parks to enhance neighborhoods and meet citywide recreation needs,
2. Year-round, active recreational opportunities,
3. Connected open space,
4. Natural resources, and
5. Trail network.



Sustainability/Related Chapters



This Element Contributes to Sustainability...

Parks, open space, and recreation areas affect how people view community desirability; they contribute to sustainability in many ways. The goals help to:

A Robust Economy and Commerce:



- ✓ Improve adjacent property values and tourism.
- ✓ Attract and retain desirable technology and businesses.

A Quality Environmental Context:

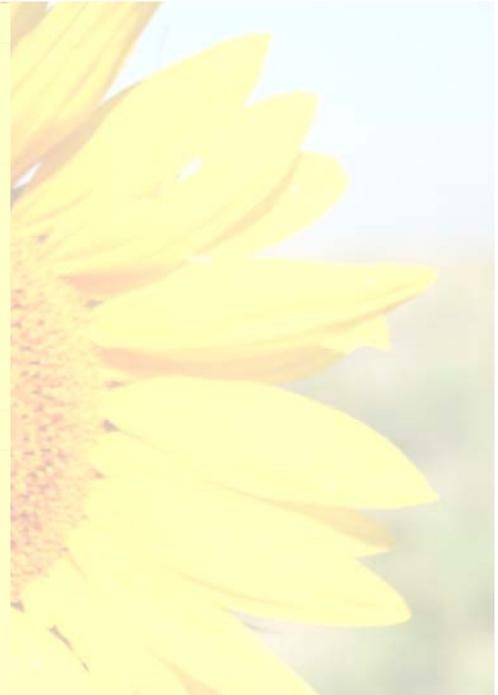


- ✓ Provide a clean environment by providing green space within the city.
- ✓ Improve environmental quality through groundwater recharge areas, natural sound buffers, stormwater protection for wetlands, natural cooling (reducing urban heat effect), and carbon uptake from trees and vegetation.
- ✓ Preserve wildlife habitat through a connected system of open spaces (corridors for wildlife and places for birds).

A Resilient Community:



- ✓ Create spaces for community members to develop social ties and share experiences.
- ✓ Maintain and improve community pride.
- ✓ Provide opportunities to be physically active—an essential part of staying healthy and prevent chronic health problems related to lack of physical activity. Relaxation can also reduce stress.
- ✓ Provide a place of refuge for at-risk youth through community recreation and neighborhood programs.



These Goals in Related Chapters

The parks, open space, and recreation goals relate to other Plan elements and chapters, as identified in the Table 11.1.

Table 11.1: Related Chapters for Parks, Open Space, and Recreation Goals

Plan Element/Ch. #:	 4	 5	 6	 7	 8	 9	 10	 11	 12	 13	 14	 15
	Land Use, Growth	Economic Dev.	Fiscal Stability	Housing/Neighbor	Redevelopment	Transportation	Safety, Wellness	Parks, Open Space	Public Facilities	Appearance	Cultural Facilities	Environmental
Goals												
1. Parks to meet needs	✗	✗		✗	✗		✗	✗		✗	✗	✗
2. Year-round recreation				✗			✗	✗				
3. Connect open space	✗	✗				✗	✗	✗		✗	✗	✗
4. Protect natural resources	✗							✗		✗		✗



Best Practices

Park Location and Design



Civic spaces and parks in Commerce City should be designed according to the following principles and should:

- ✓ Contribute to meeting Level-of-Service (LOS) goals and be distributed throughout the city (i.e., Park land LOS = 6 acres/1,000 people.)
- ✓ Be located within the core of neighborhoods or districts (e.g., the “Neighborhood Village” concept).
- ✓ Provide visibility from at least one local street (ideally two) to provide “eyes on the park” for enhanced safety.
- ✓ Provide useable space that is large enough to meet an intended use (meet the criteria in the *Master Plan*).
- ✓ Incorporate natural features, such as streams.
- ✓ Demonstrate wise use of water and energy.

Parks, Open Space, and Recreation Goals and Policies

Goal P 1—Build and maintain parks to enhance neighborhoods and meet current and future generation needs

The city will maintain current parks, which are a major community asset, and use the current plans to identify and prioritize future park locations and serve the city’s active recreation needs as growth occurs.

Citywide Policies:

P 1.1—Consistent Park Level-of-Service

Build new parks and recreation facilities to maintain the established goals for parks, as prioritized and guided by the *Parks and Recreation Master Plan* (as updated periodically), and through the *Strategic Plan for Recreation Programs, Services and Facilities*. Implement the recommendations of the *Strategic Plan* to meet the needs of current and future generations, as funds are available.

P 1.2—Neighborhood and Community Parks for Future Growth

As new development occurs, the city will strive to ensure that developers dedicate adequate park and recreation land and fees, to meet established level-of-service goals and provide adequate neighborhood and community parks in accordance with the *Master Plan*.

P 1.3—Neighborhood Parks/Schools Coordination

Locate parks within neighborhoods on collector streets so they are easily accessible for pedestrians and bicycles. Generally, they also should be located adjacent to schools to enable sharing of space and facilities. (See *Best Practices for Park Location and Design*.)

P 1.4—Pocket Parks for Neighborhood Gathering

As part of its neighborhood concept, the city promotes pocket parks where deemed appropriate. Developers will provide additional small, privately maintained parks in neighborhoods to provide for neighborhood recreation and community gathering.

Policies for Strategic Planning Areas:

P 1.5—Historic City Parks

To enhance distribution of land and facilities throughout the city, evaluate needs for new parks for Adams City, Derby, and Dupont (as identified in the 1994 *Parks and Recreation Master Plan*).



Goal P 2—Increase year-round active recreation opportunities

The city will explore opportunities to increase year-round active recreation opportunities citywide for all ages and segments of the population. Commerce City will maximize existing agreements and cooperation with other entities and service providers.

Citywide Policies:

P 2.1—Recreation Center Level-of-Service

Establish and maintain a Level-of-Service for community recreation centers in accordance with the *Strategic Plan for Recreation Programs, Services, and Facilities*.

P 2.2—Outdoor recreation, year-round

Enhance opportunities for year-round activity in city parks, trails, open spaces, and recreational facilities for all ages (children to seniors). Outdoor recreation should include active play and use (e.g., ballfields, seasonal swimming, golf), and passive uses (e.g., picnicking and bird watching).

Policies for Strategic Planning Areas:

P 2.3—Northern Range Recreation Center

Based on Level-of-Service for community recreation centers, noted in P 2.1 above, identify when and where it would be appropriate to build a public recreation center in the Northern Range.



The city maintains and operates the Buffalo Run Golf Course. It is open to the public and businesses.



The Recreation Center allows for year-round active recreation.

Goal P 3—Enhance and connect open space land

The city will continue to expand a greenway system to further enhance and connect the Sand Creek Regional Greenway and South Platte River corridors. In addition, the open space system should connect with the National Wildlife Refuge and Barr Lake. Open space should generally protect views and provide passive recreation and learning opportunities.

Citywide Policies:

P3.1—Expanded Greenway System

Implement existing plans to expand the greenway and open space network along rivers, creeks, canals, drainage, and utility corridors. Provide trail-oriented recreation and connections between neighborhoods, parks, and other origins and destinations, including to the National Wildlife Refuge. The *Emerald Strands Plan* (1990) and more recent plans—*South Platte River Corridor Heritage Plan* (1999), *Adams County Open Space Plan* (1998), and *Prairieways Action Plan* (1999), provide guidance and implementation strategies.



Trails are addressed in Chapter 9: Transportation.



Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge perimeter trail



Barr Lake State Park and city open space resources offer places for recreation, relaxation, and rejuvenation.



Open space areas conserve natural resources.

P3.2—Open Space in New Developments

New development will contribute to the open space system by dedicating land to protect drainageways, wetlands, utilities corridors, wildlife habitat, historic sites, or other features and lands identified on city plans, and it will provide appropriate open space buffers.

P 3.3—Open Space Lands Stewardship

The primary focus of open space resources is stewardship of resources, including the rivers, streams, trees, and natural areas.

P 3.4—National Wildlife Refuge and Barr Lake Linkages

The city will work with the National Wildlife Refuge to increase awareness of the Visitors Center and other refuge resources, including bison and other wildlife and recreation opportunities. Provide open space linkages to Barr Lake.

P 3.5—Mineral Properties Integrated with Open Space System

The sequencing of mineral resource properties for community use before, during, and after mining will be encouraged, while measures will be taken to avoid development of lands with known mineral deposits before mining occurs. The city will encourage trails and passive uses along the South Platte River where possible after mining.

P 3.6—Open Space and Parks Linked to Arts, Culture, and History

Pursue the integration of arts, culture, history, and other learning and interpretive opportunities in parks and open space areas, including the area around the South Platte River and the National Wildlife Refuge.



See Chapter 9, Transportation, for goals and policies related to trails.

Goal P 4—Protect and restore natural resources

The city will aim to protect and restore rivers and streams (South Platte River and related tributaries, including Sand Creek; First, Second, and Third Creeks; Box Elder Creek; and Barr Lake). It also will maintain urban trees and provide natural area connections.

Citywide Policies:

P 4.1—Protection of Resources

The city and private developers will locate trail and other improvements in open space areas to minimize impacts on natural systems and keep greenways and tributaries in a natural state.

P 4.2—National Wildlife Refuge and Barr Lake

Develop partnerships with the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge and Barr Lake to work on common goals related to stewardship as well as for adjacent city open space lands.



Parks, Open Space, and Recreation Strategies

This section contains a list of strategies to implement the parks, open space, and recreation goals. Table 11.2 corresponds with the goals of this chapter, identifying specific actions for each.



See Chapter 16, Implementation, for the Priority Action Plan summarizing key strategies for the city to accomplish in the next several years. Appendix E contains a full list of all the chapters' strategies.

Table 11.2: Parks, Open Space, and Recreation Strategies

Goal/ Strategies	Related Goal/Strategies
Goal P 1	Parks built and maintained to meet needs
P 1a	Prioritize Recommendations Prioritize implementation recommendations of the Strategic Plan for Recreation Programs, Services, and Facilities (2007) including new park development, facilities, and recreation.
P 1b	Re-evaluate Schedule – Master Plans Re-evaluate 5-Year Master Planning Schedule (updates for the Strategic and/or Master Plan).
P 1c	Parkland Impact Fee Reassess parkland impact fee annually.
P 1d	Dedication Standards Assess parkland dedication standards in the LDC to confirm the city is achieving its 6 ac/1,000 target.
P 1e	Stable Funding Identify stable funding source for parks development, operations, and maintenance.
P 1f	Intergovernmental Agreements (IGAs) Maximize existing IGAs and cooperation with other entities for recreation opportunities (e.g., School District 27J and Adams County School District 14, Belle Creek Family Center/Metro District, Reunion Recreation Center/Metro District, other possible metro districts, and outside or alternative recreation providers) (as identified in Goal 2).
P 1g	Partnerships Form partnerships and coordinate with metro districts (including but not limited to Belle Creek Metro District and Reunion Metro District).
P 1h	Golf Course Monitoring Develop and monitor a Golf Course Plan for expansion.
P 1i	Private/Public Partnerships Explore other private/public partnerships (e.g., with businesses) to build and maintain recreation facilities.
Goal P 2	Year-round active recreation opportunities provided
P 2a	Recreation LOS Establish Recreation Level-of-Service (LOS) goal in accordance with the <i>Strategic Plan for Recreation Programs</i> .
P 2b	Stable Funding Identify stable funding sources for recreation development, operations, and maintenance.
P 2c	Private/Public Partnerships Explore other public/private partnerships (e.g., with businesses) to build and maintain recreation facilities.
Goal P 3	Connected open space
P 3a	Sand Creek Greenway Appearance Improve appearance of properties bordering the Sand Creek Greenway through the development review process.



Goal/ Strategies	Related Goal/Strategies
P 3b	Regional Partnerships Form partnerships with neighboring jurisdictions to implement the <i>South Platte River Corridor Heritage Plan</i> (including Adams County).
P 3c	USFW Coordination Work with US Fish and Wildlife to provide stewardship for the National Wildlife Refuge.
P 3d	Barr Lake Coordination Work with the state and Adams County to achieve common goals related to Barr Lake protection.
P 3d	Work Cooperatively Work cooperatively with the North East Greenway partners to implement and achieve common goals.
Goal P 4	Natural resources protected
P 4a	Boost Volunteer Programs Boost volunteer programs that focus on land restoration and stewardship.
P 4b	Natural Resource Stewardship Programs Support <i>Adopt-an-Open Space</i> and <i>Master Naturalist</i> volunteer programs to maintain natural resources and open spaces.

Monitoring Parks, Open Space, and Recreation

This section identifies possible performance indicators for monitoring progress toward achieving the parks, open space, and recreation goals.



See Chapter 16, *Implementation*, for a description of Plan Monitoring. That section describes how to narrow down and select appropriate performance indicators and how to fine-tune and set targets.

Table 11.3: Parks, Open Space, and Recreation Indicators

Related Goal	Target	Possible Indicators
P 1—Parks	Park Level-of-Service goal (6 acres/1,000 residents)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parkland (acres per 1,000 residents). ▪ Developed facilities and ballfields (per capita, per standards in Master Plan). ▪ Location of parks and facilities to serve population.
P 2—Year-round recreation	Recreation (in accordance with <i>Strategic Plan for Recreation...</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recreation center facility(s) (locations, expenditures, amenities).
P 3—Connected open space	Increase connections along waterways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Open space acres (in accordance with <i>Parks, Trails, and Open Space Master Plan, Prairieways Action Plan</i>). ▪ Open space connections along rivers and creeks (new acres).
P 4—Natural resources	Increase stewardship and restoration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Acres of natural areas protected or restored.