



Root &  
Renew

# Littleton's Parks, Open Space, and Trails Vision Plan

March 2025



Prepared by Livable Cities Studio

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# Introduction

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# Why Now

Littleton is a municipality located just south of Denver, Colorado. Littleton's history dates back to the Pikes Peak Gold Rush of 1859. Over the last century, it has maintained its historic charm while growing into a city of nearly 50,000 people. The quintessential Colorado spirit of being active and spending time outdoors is alive and well in Littleton, and the city boasts a robust system of parks, open spaces, and trails to support its residents. In 2016, Littleton

completed the Littleton Parks, Recreation, and Trails Master Plan which provided a policy framework to guide decision-making to meet the needs of future generations of City of Littleton residents and provided a collaborative approach to service delivery coordinated with the South Suburban Parks and Recreation District (SSPRD). Littleton has a unique relationship with SSPRD in which SSPRD and Littleton share responsibilities related to asset ownership and

maintenance. Since the plan's completion in 2016, recreation trends have shifted significantly, and park usage has surged. Root & Renew is now underway to build on the work of the 2016 plan and ensure that current needs and trends in parks and recreation are equitably addressed citywide.



Mary Carter Greenway

## Vision

The City of Littleton aims to equitably serve all communities within Littleton with a focus on resilience, maintenance, and upgrading assets to meet trends.

The plan's recommendations are organized within four major themes inspired by the Envision Littleton recommendations and community feedback: parks and open space, activities and trends, resiliency and nature, and community and culture. Envision Littleton is a long-range planning initiative that guides the city's growth and development based on community-driven priorities. Each Root & Renew theme includes specific goals and relevant case studies that can be used as inspiration.



Parks and Open Space



Activities and Trends



Resiliency and Nature



Community and Culture



South Platte Park



# The Need for a Robust Parks, Open Space, and Trails System

Parks, open space, and trails provide vital opportunities for community members to enhance their physical and mental well-being. They strengthen a sense of community by providing places for people to connect. These spaces also improve environmental sustainability and deliver economic benefits. Examining this through an equity lens, these benefits are unfortunately not shared equally by all.



## Physical Health Benefits

Easy access to parks is associated with reduced obesity, reduced osteoporosis, lower body mass index, lower blood pressure, and enhanced child development.<sup>1</sup>



## Mental Health Benefits

Those who live closest to green space and have contact with nature report having less stress.<sup>1</sup>



## Interpersonal Connections

Nearly half of Americans report feeling alone or left out. Parks strengthen structured social connections through group activities and can foster informal social interactions through walking paths and children's play.<sup>1</sup>



## Enhanced Resiliency and Stewardship

Parks reduce extreme heat in neighborhoods, provide flood control, and improve air quality. Nationwide, areas within a 10-minute walk of a park are as much as six degrees cooler than areas beyond that range.<sup>1</sup>



## Economic Benefits

Local park and recreation agencies generated more than \$201 billion in economic activity and supported nearly 1.1 million jobs in 2021.<sup>2</sup>



## Equity

A Trust for Public Land study analyzing the 100 most populous American cities found that neighborhoods where most residents identify as Black, Hispanic and Latino, American Indian/Alaska Native, or Asian American and Pacific Islander have, on average, 43% less access to park acreage than predominantly white neighborhoods.<sup>3</sup>

1. The Power of Parks to Promote Health, [bit.ly/Parks-to-Promote-Health-pdf](https://bit.ly/Parks-to-Promote-Health-pdf)  
 2. NRPA 2023 Economic Impact Report, [bit.ly/NRPA-Economic-Impact-Report-pdf](https://bit.ly/NRPA-Economic-Impact-Report-pdf)  
 3. Parks and an equitable recovery, [bit.ly/Parks-Equity](https://bit.ly/Parks-Equity)

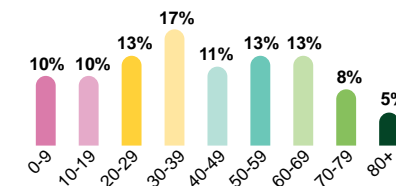
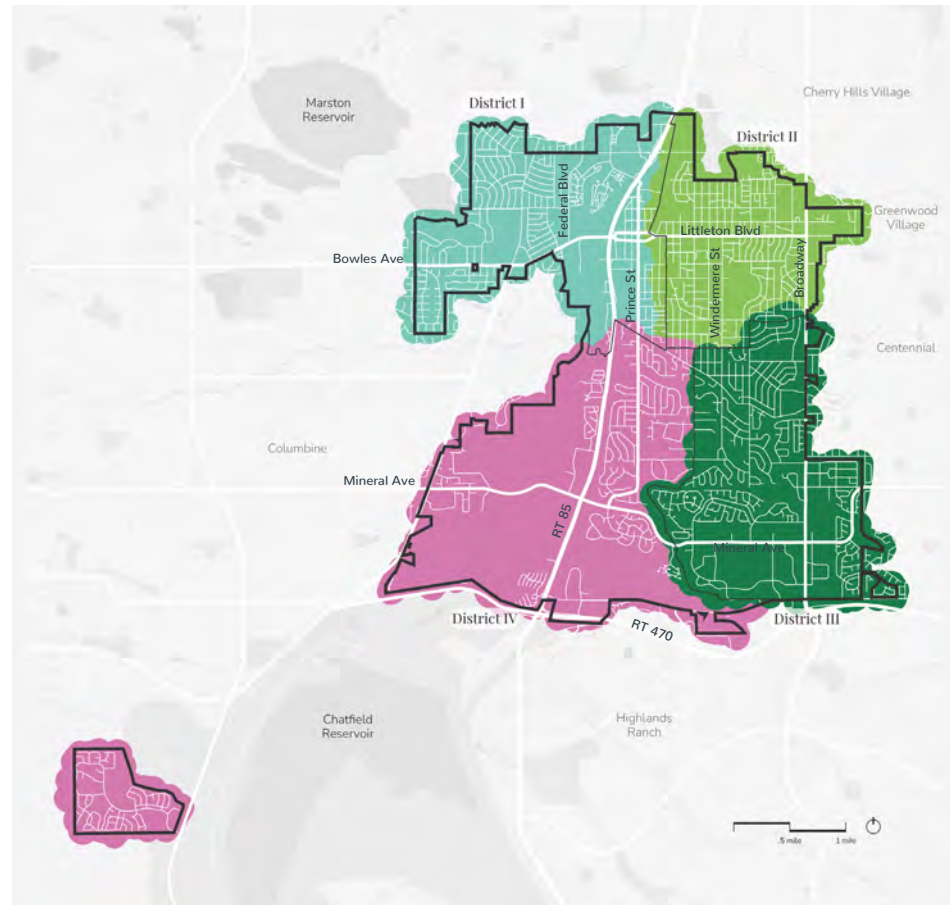
# The System Today

## Community Profile

Littleton is home to just over 45,000 residents. Assuming a 2% population growth rate\*—slower than the statewide projected growth rate of 11.7%—Littleton is expected to reach 55,649 residents by 2030. Overall, Littleton is predominantly White / Caucasian, with an average household income that aligns with the regional average and a median age higher than the regional average. Littleton is broken up into four city council districts, each with a unique demographic makeup. To ensure that different voices and desires throughout Littleton were heard and elevated, the project process analyzed existing conditions, demographics, and community desires based on each of the four city council districts.

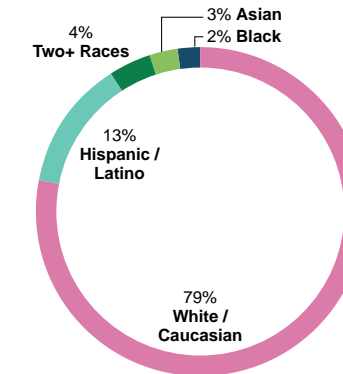
\* This assumed growth rate was decided upon with the City of Littleton based on a slower than state average growth pattern historically.

The overall demographic data for Littleton was pulled from the Census Reporter (utilizing ACS 2023 5-year data). The granular block data, providing demographic insights for trends per district, was pulled from the 2010 and 2020 census block GIS data. The household income data was pulled from 2017 - 2021 ACS block group data. The district numbers for income are approximate aggregates - since block groups do not align perfectly with city council district boundaries.



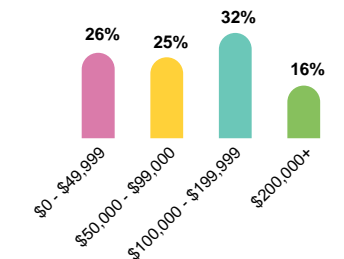
### Age

Littleton's youth population (people under 18) is 20% which is lower than the Denver regional average of 22%. Littleton's aging population (people over 60) is 26% which is higher than the Denver regional average of 19%. Population trends from 2010 - 2020 indicate that the youth population is slowly shrinking citywide. District II has the highest concentration youth with 20.5% of the population under 18. Population trends from 2010 - 2020 indicate that the aging population is growing citywide. District IV has the highest concentration of an aging population with 20.5% of the population over 65.



### Race & Ethnicity

Littleton is made up of 79% White / Caucasian residents, 13% Hispanic / Latino residents, 3% Asian residents, 2% Black residents, and 4% residents who claim Two+ Races". Population trends from 2010 - 2020 indicate that the Hispanic / Latino, Asian, and Black populations are slowly growing citywide. District IV has the highest concentration of Hispanic/ Latino population, at 24.2%, and Black population, at 2.6%. District III has the highest concentration of Asian population, at 3.0%. Overall, District II is the most racially diverse council district.



### Income

Littleton's median household income of \$96,661 is slightly lower than the Denver regional average of \$97,825. District II has the lowest median household income by far at approximately \$54,542, while District III and District IV have the highest median household incomes at approximately \$111,099 and \$109,961 respectively.



## Assets Today

Littleton has a robust parks system, encompassing 1,682 acres of parks and open spaces along with 40 miles of trails. According to the Envision Littleton 2040 Existing City Databook, the city provides 30.9 acres of park and open space per 1,000 residents—well above the Colorado median of 9.2 acres per 1,000 residents and the national median of 9.6 acres per 1,000 residents. Even without the 927-acre South Platte Park, Littleton still surpasses the Colorado median, offering 11.5 acres of park and open space per 1,000 residents. These figures demonstrate that Littleton not only meets but exceeds many statewide and national benchmarks for access to parks, open space, and trails.

The 40 miles of trails in Littleton include dedicated connecting trails, not counting park walks and sidewalks. Major trails in the study area include the Mary Carter Greenway Trail, Big Dry Creek

Trail, Lee Gulch Trail, the High Line Canal Trail, and Little's Creek Trail.

Parks vary in size and include larger spaces, such as Ketring Park, and smaller spaces, like pocket parks. Parks often feature amenities like picnic areas, playgrounds, and other active recreation elements. There are 43 total parks in Littleton totaling 437 acres.

Open spaces serve to protect natural areas and provide opportunities for a variety of recreation. These are publicly accessible areas that are managed with an emphasis on conservation. These spaces are frequently more low-impact and passive in recreation offerings including trails, interpretive signage, and viewing areas. There are 24 total open spaces in Littleton totaling 1,089 acres. The largest of which is South Platte Park which features 880 acres of open space along the South Platte River and Mary Carter Greenway Trail.

Throughout this document there will be references and analyses related to parkland, which refers to both parks and open space combined. There are many national benchmarks that utilize this combined parkland metric.

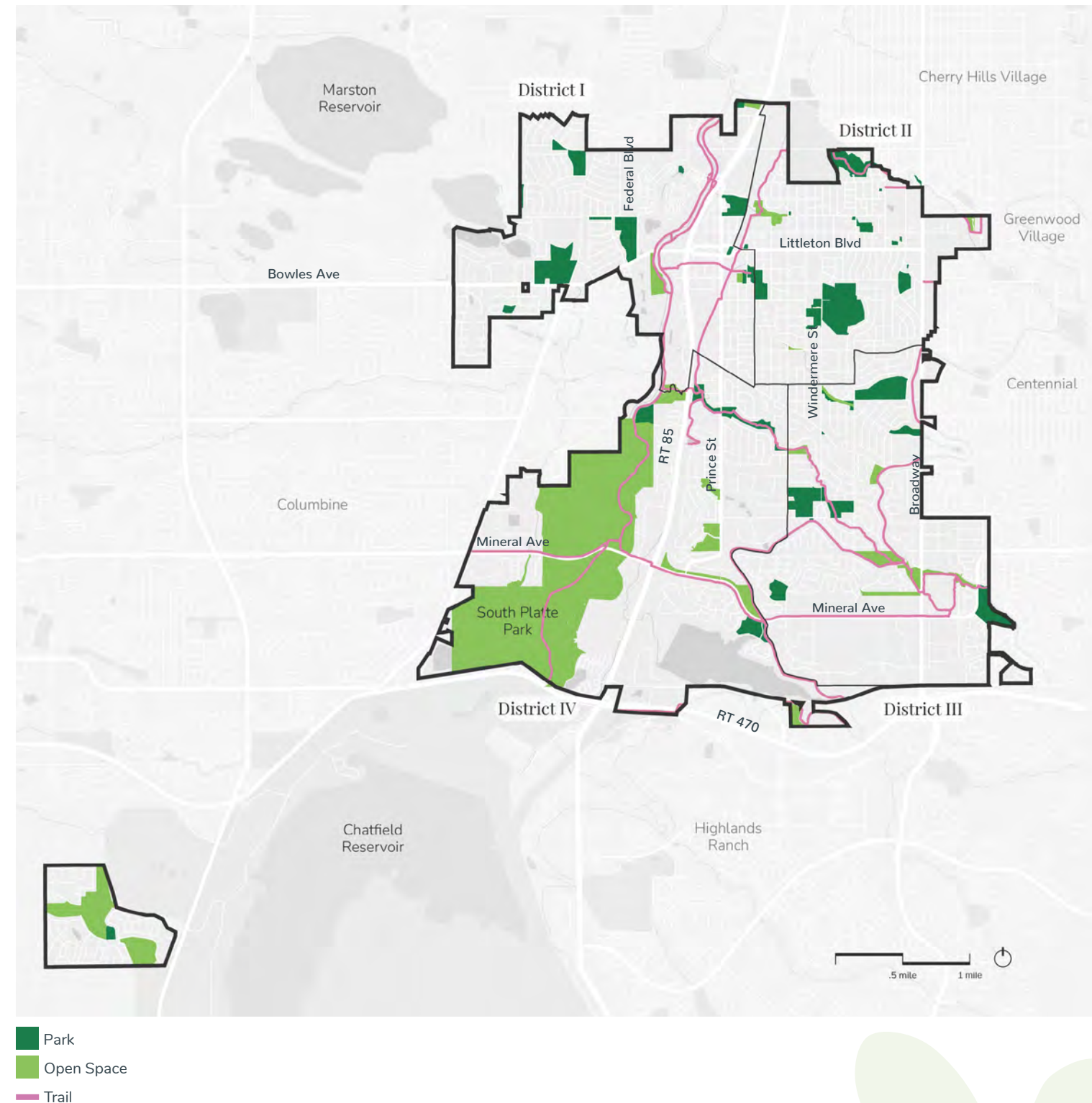
### Methodology:

The project team has included parks, open space, and trails within the City of Littleton boundary for the plan analyses (see Root & Renew Asset List Inventory in appendix for full list of assets utilized). The project team and the City of Littleton recognize that several additional school park spaces and assets just outside the city boundary provide recreational opportunities for City of Littleton residents (see Park Network map in appendix). These additional assets, including Cornerstone Park, are excluded from the Root & Renew analyses.

over  
**1000 acres**  
of **OPEN SPACE**

over  
**500 acres**  
of **PARKS**

**40 miles**  
of **TRAILS**





# SSPRD and Littleton’s Parks

The initial agreement between SSPRD and Littleton began in 1964 and was adjusted in 1974, giving Littleton more control of park ownership and design. Separate agreements to address maintenance and management of South Platte Park were entered in 1982 and 1983. While this partnership has been cooperative and prosperous, there is an opportunity to examine whether amendments to this long-standing collaboration would be beneficial in the long term.

## SSPRD Park Classification and Standards

SSPRD classifies assets based on characteristics of the park, such as size, amenities offered, access, and intended duration of use. This classification system directly dictates the level of service and allowable amenities. The park classifications here reference SSPRD’s system, which does not perfectly align with Littleton’s classification system.



Root & Renew // Littleton’s Parks, Open Space, and Trails Vision Plan

### REGIONAL PARKS

Provide recreational programs and amenities intended to serve the community as well as park users throughout the surrounding region.

- Key amenities typically provided:
- » Lighted synthetic athletic complexes
  - » Lighted sports courts
  - » Large or multiple playgrounds
  - » Multiple shade pavilions
  - » Restrooms
  - » Walking trails
  - » Regional parks may also support specialty facilities, bicycle and skateboard facilities, public art, outdoor event spaces, plazas, and other unique amenities

- City of Littleton Regional Park:
- » South Platte Park

### COMMUNITY PARKS

Serve as a focal point for community-wide activities that serve a broad purpose and balance active and passive recreation needs. Allow for group activities not feasible nor desirable at the neighborhood level due to noise, lights, traffic, etc. Should maintain a balance between programmed sports facilities and other activity areas to appeal to the broader community.

- Key amenities typically provided:
- » Multiple programmed bluegrass or synthetic turf athletic fields and courts with or without lighting systems
  - » Large playground with multiple structures
  - » Community event spaces
  - » Walking trails
  - » Shade pavilions
  - » Public art
  - » Restrooms
  - » Potential for additional specialty park amenities

- City of Littleton Community Parks:
- » Bowles Grove Park
  - » Gallup Park
  - » Ketring Park
  - » Progress Park
  - » Writer’s Vista Park
  - » Wynetka Ponds
  - » Oxbow Point
  - » TrailMark Open Space

### NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

Provide both active and passive recreation opportunities and serve as a common area for neighbors of all ages to gather, socialize, and play. In most cases, programmed sports should be limited to youth sports games and practices.

Key amenities typically provided:

- » Multi-purpose athletic field
- » Sport courts
- » Playground
- » Shade pavilion
- » Looped rails
- » Non-flushing restrooms

City of Littleton Neighborhood Parks:

- » Berry Park
- » Carbone Park
- » Charley Emley Park
- » Hogback Hill Park
- » Little’s Creek Park
- » Powers Park
- » Puma Park
- » Ridgeview Park
- » Ridgewood Park
- » Southbridge Park

### MINI PARK

Specialized parks designed to serve a limited area or neighborhood.

Key amenities typically provided:

- » Small shade pavilion
- » Picnic area
- » Playground equipment
- » Park benches
- » Open turf areas for informal play
- » If space allows, a sport court

City of Littleton Mini Parks:

- » Elati Park
- » Footbridge Park
- » Ida Park
- » Promise Park

### CIVIC PARKS

Specialized parks that are typically passive and support the surrounding area.

Key amenities typically provided:

- » Plazas,
- » Small, shaded seating areas
- » Display gardens
- » Green areas
- » Public art
- » Memorials

City of Littleton Civic Parks:

- » Bega Park
- » Gallup Gardens

### SCHOOL PARKS

Shared sites with local schools for use by the public when not in use by schools. Provides opportunities for organized and informal sports, and playgrounds.

City of Littleton School Park:

- » Runyon Elementary

### NATURE PARKS

Nature parks combine open space parks and built spaces for unstructured play and exploration.

Key amenities typically provided:

- » May include low impact and recreational features such as educational signage, nature art, and nature play elements
- » May also provide shaded seating, walking trails, native and xeric planting, etc.

City of Littleton Nature Parks:

- » Reynold’s Landing
- » Ashbaugh Park/Pond
- » Cimarron Trail Park
- » Slaughterhouse Gulch Park

### OPEN SPACE

Open Space is generally a publicly accessible area dedicated to the preservation of significant natural resources and open space. These areas are generally maintained in their natural state and help preserve significant views, provide wildlife sanctuaries, and preserve lands. Low impact, nature-based recreation such as trails, interpretive signage, and viewing areas are possible in areas of low environmental sensitivity. Spaces should balance human impact and conservation of natural elements.

May provide nature education opportunities.

Key amenities typically provided:

- » Interpretive signage
- » Viewing areas

City of Littleton Open Spaces:

- » South Platte Park
- » Horseshoe Park
- » Nevada Ditch Conservation Easement
- » TrailMark Open Space
- » Watson Lake

### TRAILS, CORRIDORS, AND TRAILHEADS

Shared-use paths, trailheads, or land used for trail corridors that connect elements of the community. Greenways adjacent to trails may provide space for park-like recreation and placemaking. May exist or be developed in utility easements and corridors such as canals, former railways, etc. and may provide the potential for partnerships with groups such as utility companies, water district partnerships, etc.

Key amenities provided:

- » Potential for play features
- » Potential for public art
- » Potential for interpretive signage

City of Littleton Trails, Corridors, and Trailheads:

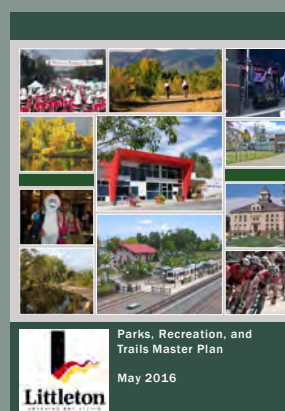
- » Big Dry Creek Trail North
- » High Line Canal Trail
- » Lee Gulch Trail / Ivan Thomas Greenway
- » Littleton Community Trail
- » Mary Carter Greenway
- » Railroad Spur (Mineral) Trail



# Planning Process

## Building on Past Efforts

Several planning efforts at a variety of scales have provided foundational elements and ideas for Root & Renew. The following summarizes the key elements from each of the related existing plans.



### Littleton Parks, Recreation, and Trails Master Plan (2016)

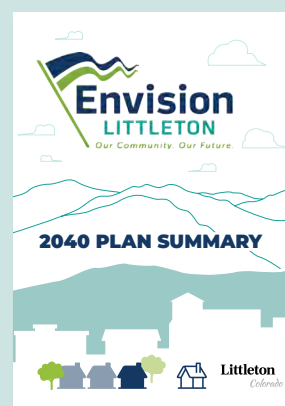
This plan has guided the parks and recreation system for the past eight years. The plan was organized into four major issue areas and recommendations were provided for each.

- » Identified organizational improvement, financial stewardship, programs and service delivery enhancements, and facilities and amenity management as the major issue areas.
- » Identified “walking for exercise”, “swimming”, “jogging/running”, and “weight lifting” as the most popular activities.
- » Included a methodology which incorporates a qualitative and quantitative analysis of parks using a GRASP methodology that accounted for both 0.5 mile and 1-mile buffers from major park elements. This concluded that there were very little gaps in the system in terms of access.
- » Included several specific recommendations for parks.

### Envision Littleton (2019)

This document is Littleton’s comprehensive plan, adopted on October 15, 2019. The plan is a 20-year framework intended to guide future development and community enhancement efforts in Littleton.

- » Provided a vision that Littleton will always be a community of active people who make the most of their city’s cultural and natural resource abundance, which supports the need for the Root & Renew plan.
- » Identified several core values related to parks, open space, and trails including “the outdoors”, “being inclusive”, “quality”, and “integrity”.



### South Suburban Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2022)

This is a vision plan for the future of SSPRD intending to meet community needs and desires, manage resources, and meet requirements for accreditation by the Commission for Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies.

- » Organized opportunities for improvement in five areas. The specific recommendations within each of the following areas are high level, intended to provide flexibility for each municipality.
  - Quality First.
  - Connect Community.
  - Enrich Wellness.
  - Stewards of Nature and Sustainability.
  - Fiscal Responsibility.
- » Identified equity zones within the district using the CDC Social Vulnerability Index and the CDC Places: Health Data. Portions of Littleton have been identified as very high equity priority zones (in the northeast), high equity priority zones (in the north central zone), and medium equity priority zones (in the east). The identified equity zones within Littleton should be high priority for improvements.
- » Classified the SSPRD maintained parks within Littleton as either regional, community, or neighborhood and identifies each as either poor, fair, good, or excellent condition.
- » Identified Littleton Golf & Tennis Club as a facility that could use the most improvement (heard throughout the engagement process). Improvements were made to Littleton Golf & Tennis in 2023.
- » Encouraged exploring new trends in recreation. Specifically calls out outdoor art classes, alternatives to traditional sports-based programming as examples.



## Urban Tree Canopy Report (2023)

The City of Littleton commissioned this assessment to characterize tree canopy cover in the city and make recommendations for future work.

- » Identified that the average overall tree canopy in Littleton is 19.5% coverage.
- » Reported that the average surface temperature in Northeast Littleton (identified as a high equity need zone in other plans) is 90.8 degrees F compared to a citywide average of 87.7 degrees F, meaning they are more likely to be experiencing urban heat island effect.
- » Included recommendations to plant new trees and preserve the existing canopy, which this plan does support.



## Littleton Linkages Trail Study (2023)

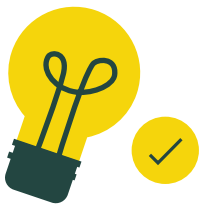
This study was conducted to evaluate network gaps and develop recommendations for filling them, giving everyone safe and comfortable options for accessing Littleton's great trails.

- » Identified key opportunities to enhance the trail segments within Littleton.



## Key Takeaways

- 01** Envision Littleton provided a foundation for key community values within Littleton and highlights the outdoors and natural resources as key areas of importance for Littleton residents.
- 02** The Littleton Parks, Recreation, and Trails Master Plan benchmarked resident desires in 2016 and provides inspiration for the overarching themes for this plan.
- 03** The South Suburban Parks and Recreation Master Plan documented SSPRD priorities and provided an overview of high equity need areas related to recreation regionally, with District II in Littleton being identified as a very high equity priority zone.
- 04** The Urban Tree Canopy Report and the Littleton Linkages Trail Study provided an overview of recent issues related to tree canopy and trail connectivity which have influenced the goals in this plan, including that District II is the hottest district.





# Project Timeline

## STEP 1 Summer/Fall 2023 PROJECT KICKOFF & ANALYSIS

The project kicked off in Summer 2023. The first phase of the project included a systems analysis and research on past planning efforts related to Root & Renew as well as peer cities that have developed similar plans for their communities. An extensive inventory was conducted on parks, open space, parkland, and trails to evaluate whether the City of Littleton is meeting national level of service standards. There was also research into national trends, both overall related to general activity and related to specific activities that are gaining popularity.

## STEP 3 Summer 2024 DRAFT PLANS

Feedback from first phase of engagement directly informed the draft vision, themes, and goals, which were developed during Summer 2024.

## STEP 2 Winter 2023/Spring 2024 ENGAGEMENT PHASE 1

The first phase of engagement took place through Winter and Spring from 2023 - 2024. This phase focused on gathering data about current usage and experiential qualities related to parks, open space, and trails within Littleton. It also inquired about future desires. An online survey reached 458 residents while a virtual public meeting reached 11 attendees. The project team, hoping to reach more people, conducted a small group meeting and six pop up events at parks and recreation centers throughout Littleton.

## STEP 4 Fall 2024 ENGAGEMENT PHASE 2

The final phase of engagement took place during Fall 2024. The project team presented the draft vision, themes, and goals to make sure these captured the desires heard during engagement phase 1. The team conducted an online survey and popped up at existing community events to spread the word about the project and prompt people to take the final survey.

## STEP 5 FINAL VISION PLAN

## What We Heard

Root & Renew's robust outreach approach gathered input from 976 engagement touch points. The engagement process included stakeholders, department staff, and community members to identify key priorities for the parks, open space, and trails system.








-  **2** Online surveys
-  **9** Pop ups at existing community events, parks, and recreation centers
-  **1** Community meeting
-  **1** Small group meeting

## Community Impressions

The Littleton community expressed overall satisfaction with the current state of its parks, open spaces, and trails. However, a recurring theme emerged around the need for better connectivity—residents strongly desire safe and convenient links between existing amenities. The community also emphasized the importance of resilience within the park system, advocating for features such as low-water landscapes, pollinator plantings, and converting traditional landscaping to more sustainable options.

Shade proved to be a significant concern, with calls for more coverage along trails and within park spaces. Enhanced maintenance and cleanliness ranked as a high priority, reflecting the community's focus on maintaining the quality of their outdoor environments. When it came to specific activities and amenities, enthusiasm centered on improved access to trails, playgrounds, courts, and natural areas. There was notable interest in expanding opportunities for disc golf, pickleball, and water play features, alongside strong support for adding more shade structures to enhance comfort throughout the parks system.

### PRIORITY OF INVESTMENT

-  1. Trails
  -  2. Playgrounds
  -  3. Courts
  -  4. Natural Areas Activities
-  Strong additional support was voiced for disc golf



Pop up at Berry Park



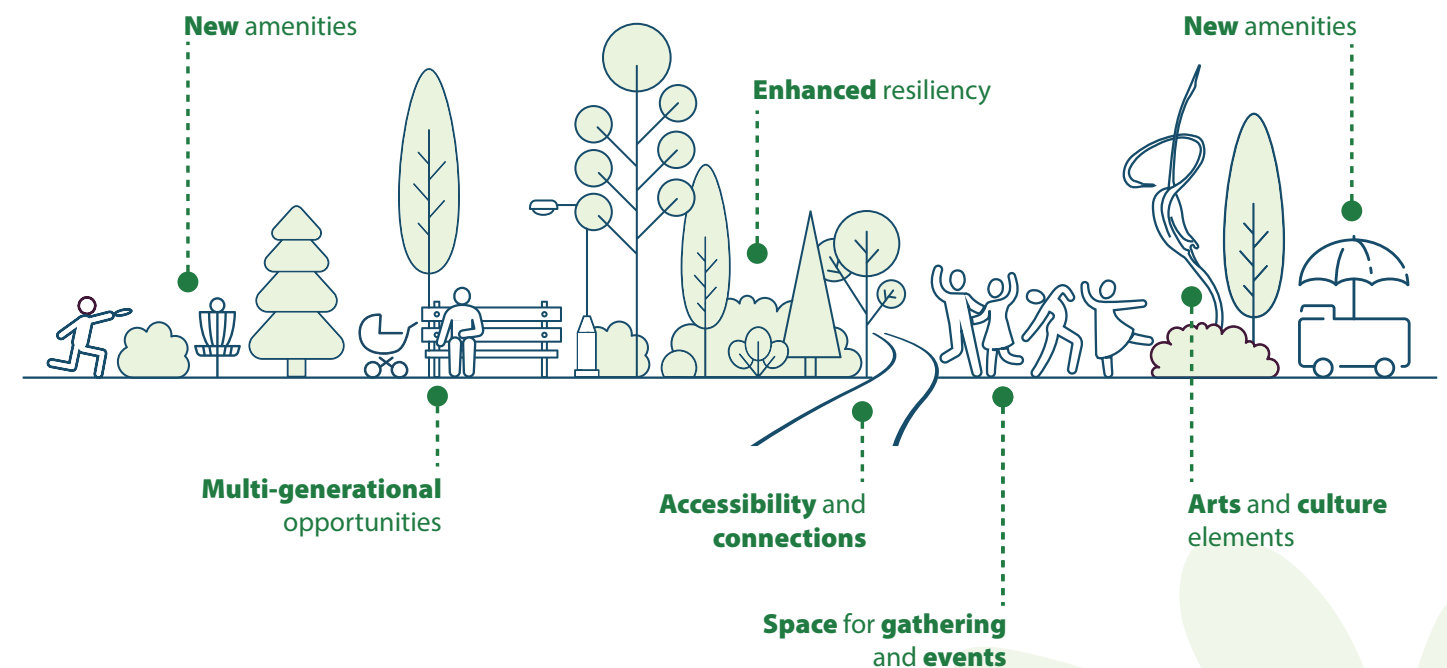
Pop up at Promise Park



Pop up at Carson Nature Center



Pop up at Reynolds Landing





# Foundation

**Peer Cities 14**

**Benchmarking 14**

Trends

**Level of Service 15**

Access-Based Standards

Population-Based Standards

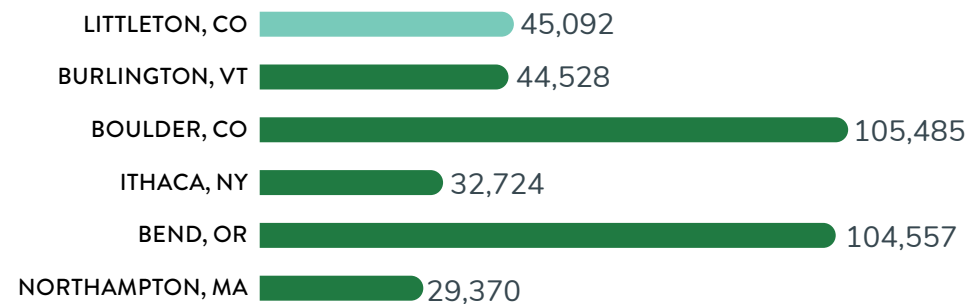


# Peer Cities

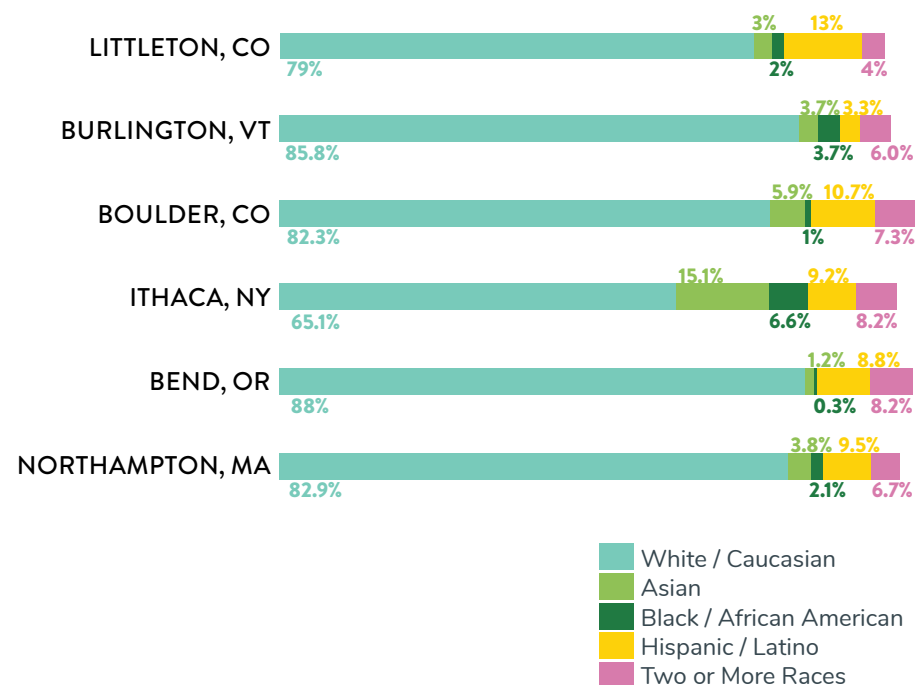
While the City of Littleton is unique in terms of its historic character, access to outdoor recreation, and small-town feel, several communities with similar situations were studied. These peer cities provided precedents and inspiration for how to approach innovative parks planning.

Burlington's recreation plan, completed in 2015, was very specific to Burlington's character and included a robust amenity benchmark based on national and citywide inventory. Boulder's recreation plan, completed in 2022, broke Boulder up into subcommunities for evaluation. This inspired the Root & Renew project team to utilize the district analysis approach for Littleton. Ithaca, NY has a similarly robust trail system. Bend, OR offers a vast network of parks, open spaces, and trails including the 981-ace Shevlin Park, not dissimilar from Littleton's South Platte Park. Northampton, MA emphasizes public participation in their open space planning process. These aspects of the peer cities parks, open space, and trails plans and approaches to managing their resources directly inspired this plan.

## Population\*



## Demographic: Race and Ethnicity\*



\*Population and demographic data for Littleton - ACS 2023 5-year data from Census Reporter  
Population and demographic data for peer cities - Census July 1, 2023 (V2023) from United States Census Bureau QuickFacts

# Benchmarking

## Trends

### Participation

Participation in some type of sports or fitness activity is increasing nationwide, with the percentage of Americans who participated in at least one activity growing for the fifth consecutive year according to the Sports Fitness and Leisure Activities Topline Participation Report (2023). 77.6% of Americans participated in at least one activity in 2022. There is a correlation between income and participation, with higher income populations participating more and lower income populations participating less.



**77%**  
almost 4 out of 5 of Americans, participated in at least one activity in 2022



**PICKLEBALL**  
**158.6%** increase over three years

### Activities

Pickleball is the fastest growing sport in America, with participation almost doubling in 2022 and experiencing a 158.6% increase over three years. Golf and tennis have both grown in popularity by 20% since 2019. Disc golf has also seen an increase in popularity, with the number of courses worldwide doubling since 2017<sup>1</sup>. Most team sports are seeing a significant decrease in overall participation numbers, with soccer being the only team sport that saw an overall participation increase.

### Other

There are several more general trends that are impacting parks and recreation departments. This includes determining the level of innovation that may disrupt or help departments related to artificial intelligence (AI). The impacts of climate change are evident and there is a desire for parks and recreation departments to collectively adapt to this challenge through processes like stormwater retention and green infrastructure in parks. After the surge in dog ownership after the pandemic, dog parks remain the fastest-growing type of park<sup>2</sup>.

1. Disc Golf Growth Report 2024, [bit.ly/DGGR2024-pdf](https://bit.ly/DGGR2024-pdf)
2. NRPA Top Trends in Parks and Recreation for 2024, [bit.ly/Top-Trends-in-Parks-Rec-2024](https://bit.ly/Top-Trends-in-Parks-Rec-2024)



# Level of Service

Level of service analysis provides a way for a community to benchmark current access to assets and amenities based on a standardized national metric. This allows communities to determine where they may need to improve and celebrate where they are excelling. Level of service can be determined by looking

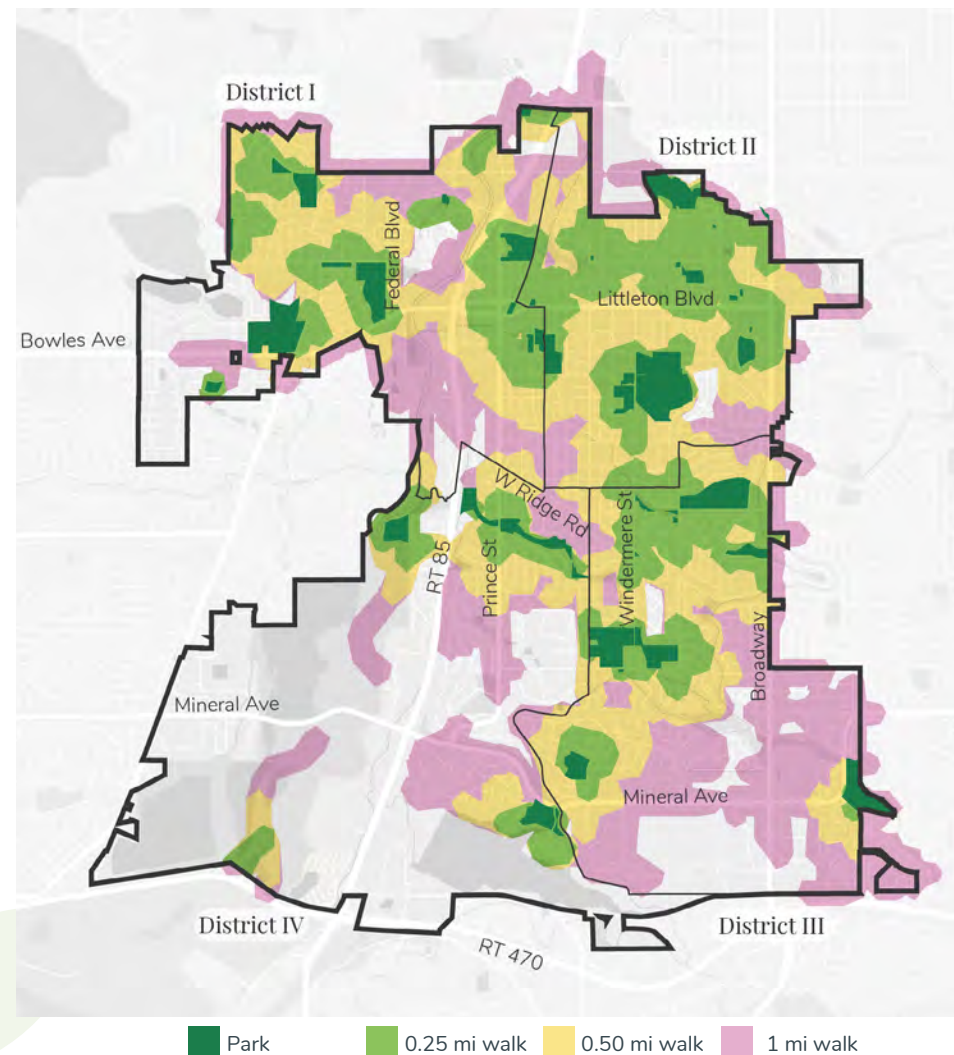
at population-based standards, which is expressed as a ratio of number of amenities to population, or access-based standards, which is expressed as residents within a determined buffer of proximity to amenities or assets. As part of this process, both population-based and access-based standards were utilized to benchmark Littleton's

current level of service. It is imperative to look at access to parks, open space, and trails while also evaluating access to specific amenities. These standards were evaluated citywide and district by district, which helped inform the equitable goals for this plan.

NOTE: The level of service calculations were done with the assets within the City of Littleton boundary. See the "Park Network" map in the Appendix for additional assets outside the City boundary that provide recreational opportunities for City of Littleton residents.

## Access-Based Standards

The project team utilized parks for the walkshed access analysis. Littleton has great walking access to parks, with 73.5% of the City within a 1-mile (or 20-minute) walk of a park, 40.2% of the City within a .5 mile (or 10-minute) walk of a park, and 23.7% of the City is within a .25 mile (or 5-minute) walk of a park.



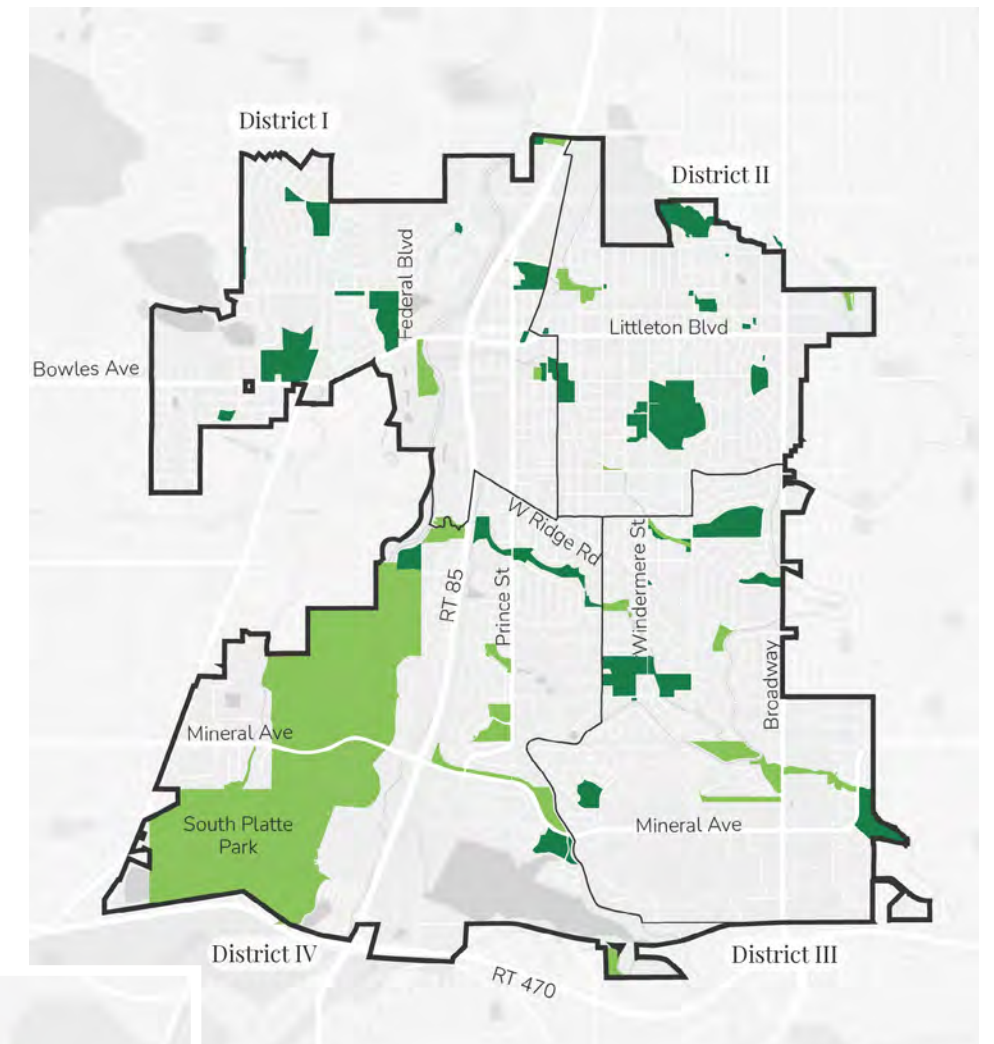
# Population-Based Standards

## Access to Assets

Access to parks, open space, parkland, and trails were evaluated against the SSPRD average reported in the South Suburban Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The parkland category was evaluated against the national average reported in the National Recreation and Park Association's 2023 NRPA Agency Performance Review.

### Parkland

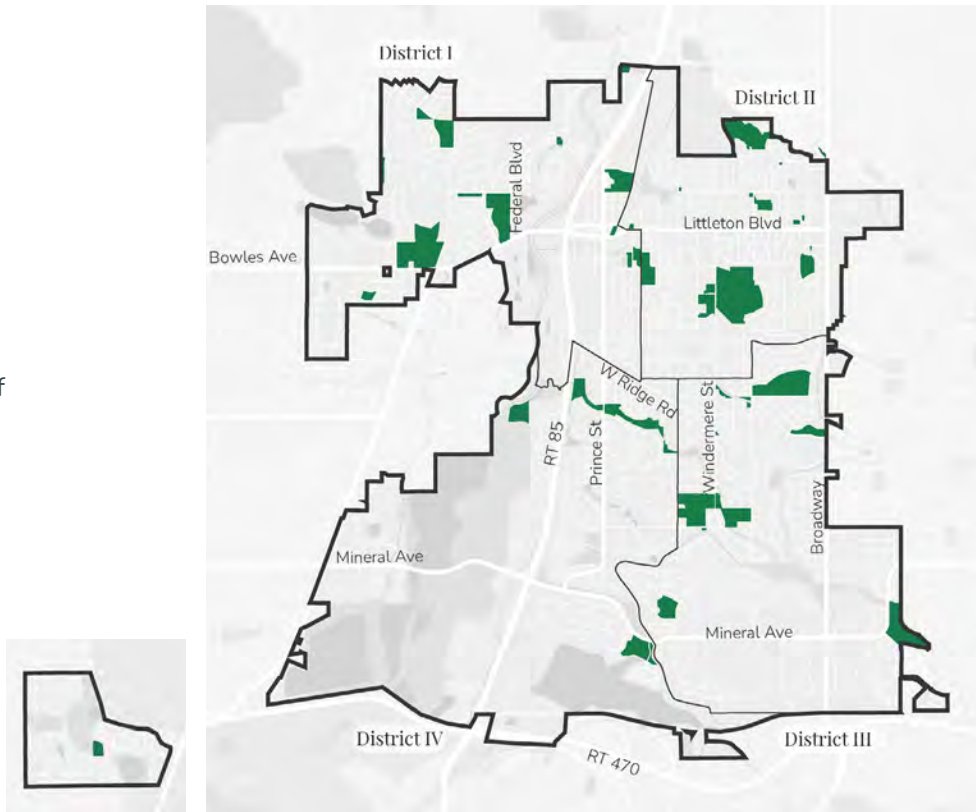
- » Citywide, Littleton has 30 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. This is higher than the SSPRD average of 17.69 acres per 1,000 residents and higher than the national average of 10.8 acres per 1,000 residents.
- » District IV has the highest average access to parkland, with 79.8 acres per 1,000 residents.
- » District I has the lowest average access to parkland, with 10.7 acres per 1,000 residents.





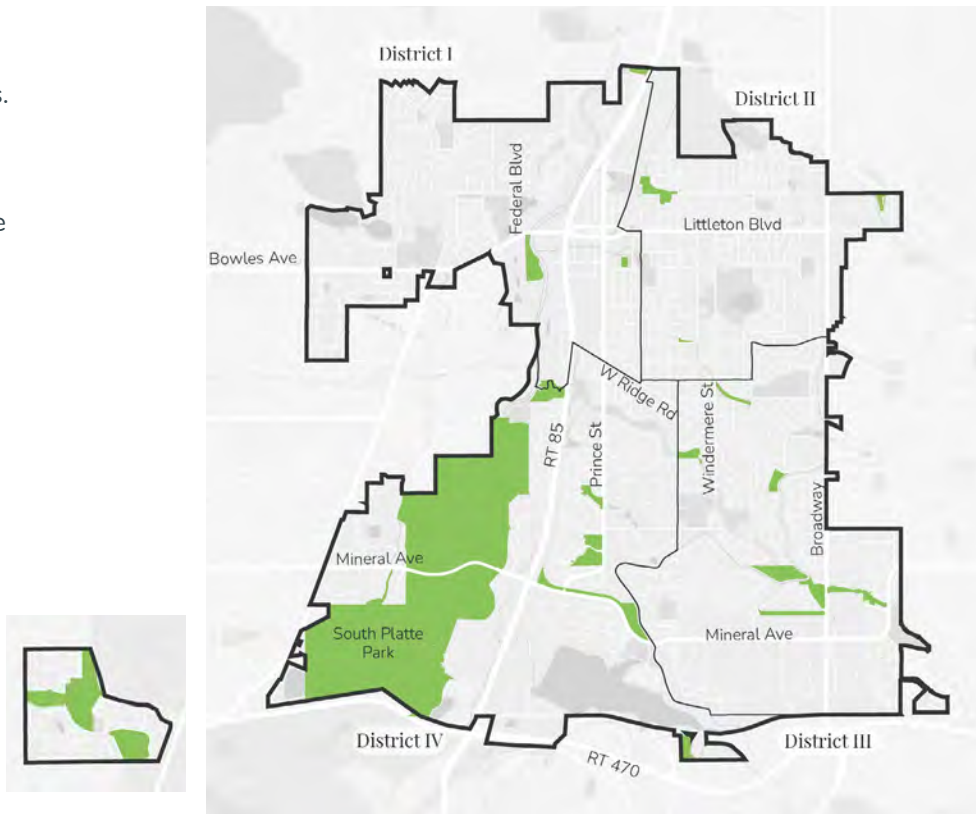
## Parks

- » Citywide, Littleton has 8.57 acres of parks per 1,000 residents. This is higher than the SSPRD average of 6.39 acres of parks per 1,000 residents.
- » District III has the highest average access to parks, with 11.69 acres of parks per 1,000 residents.
- » District IV has the lowest average access to parks, with 3.94 acres of parks per 1,000 residents.



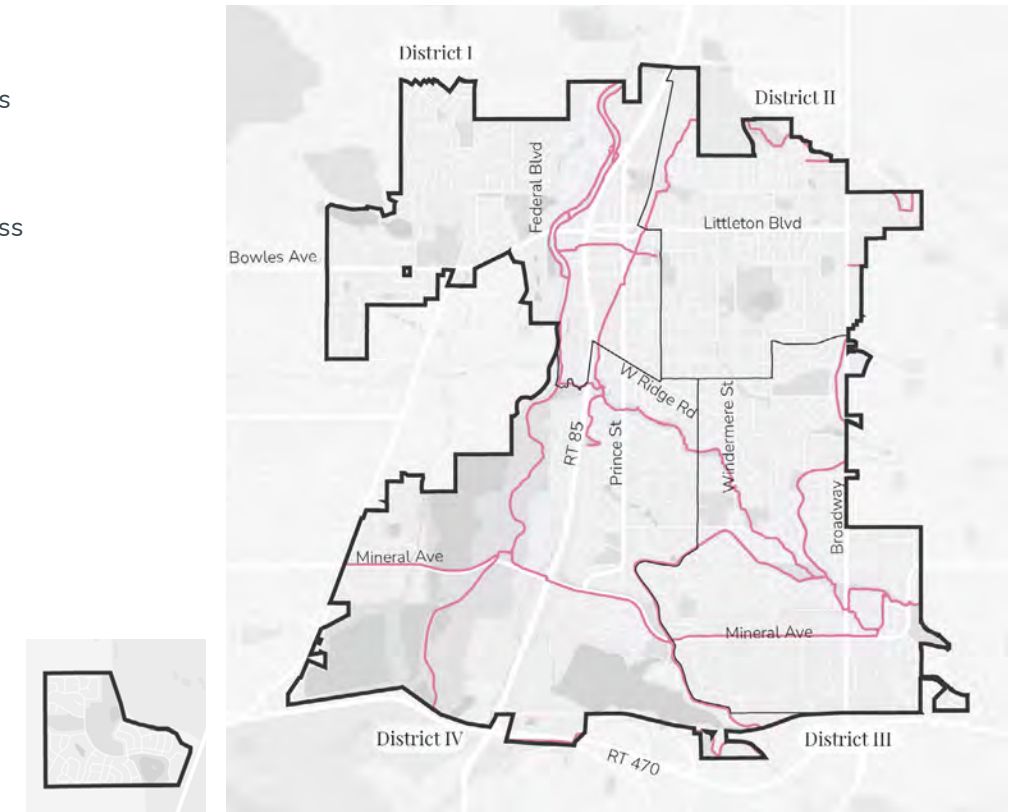
## Open space

- » Citywide, Littleton has 21.1 acres of open space per 1,000 residents. This is higher than the SSPRD average of 11.3 acres of open space per 1,000 residents.
- » District IV has the highest average access to open space, with 74.20 acres per 1,000 residents. This is largely due to the 880-acre South Platte Park open space.
- » District II has the lowest average access to open space, with 1.08 acres per 1000 residents



## Trails

- » Citywide, Littleton has 40.1 miles of trails. This is higher than the national average of 19 miles of trails.
- » District IV has the best trail access with 16.3 miles of trails.
- » District II is lacking trail access with only 3.6 miles of trails.

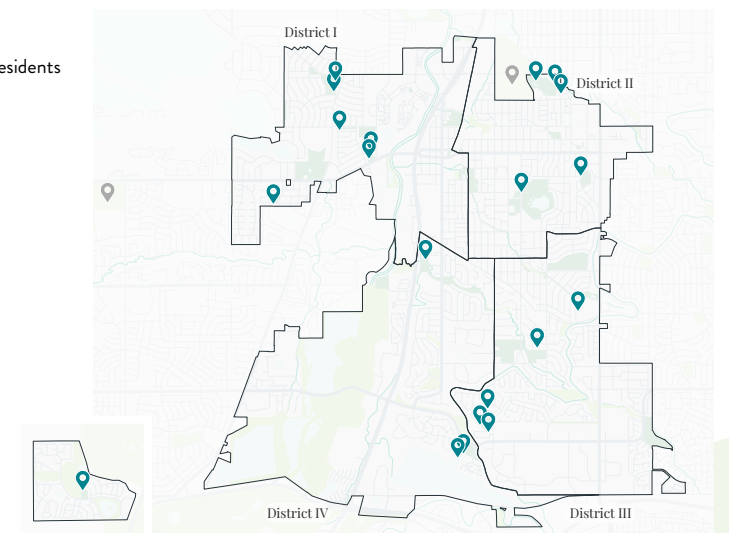
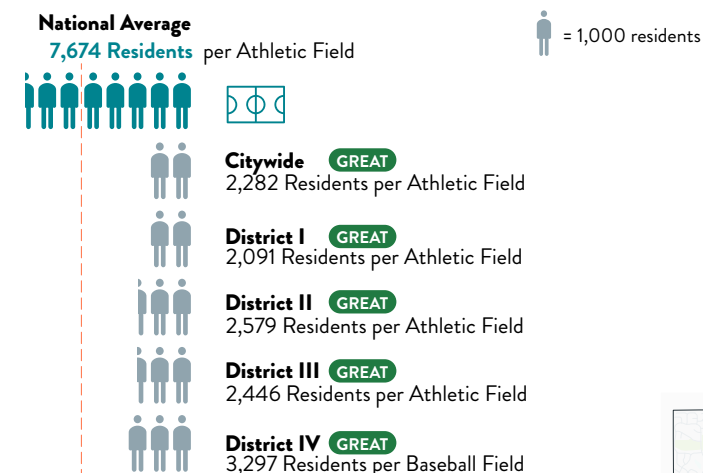


## Amenities

The following City of Littleton amenities are benchmarked against the NRPA national average number of median residents per amenity for cities with 20,000 - 49,999 residents. Each amenity was evaluated citywide and by district. At each level, “great” indicates below the national average by 50% or more, “good” indicates below the national average by 49% or less, and “needs work” indicates above the national average.

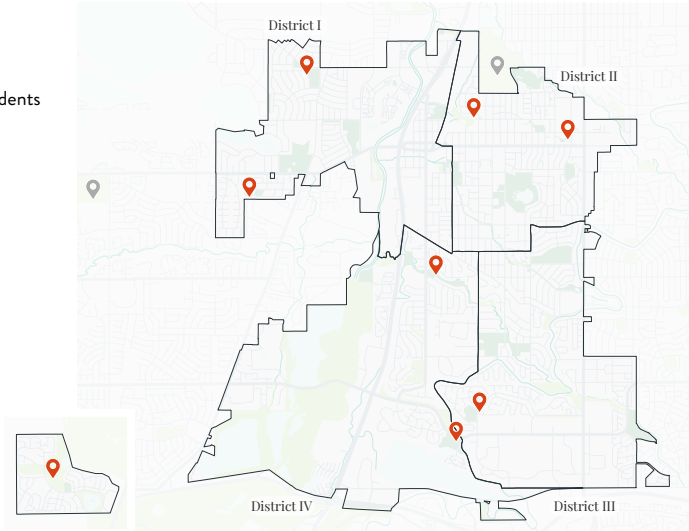
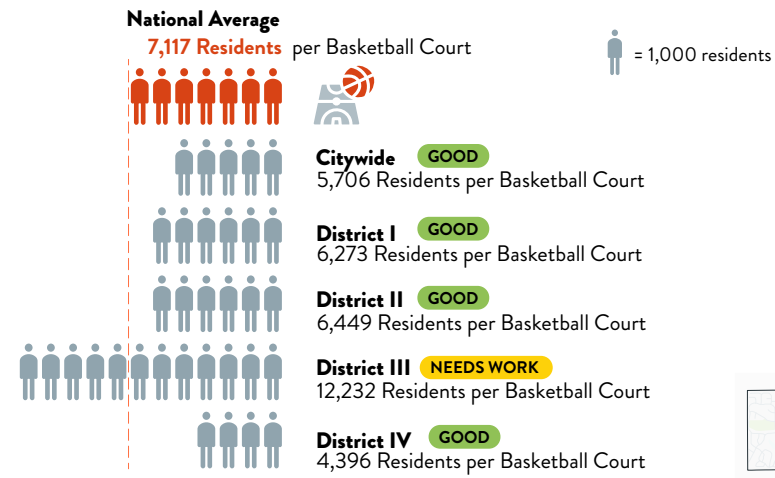
NOTE: The amenities level of service calculations were done with the amenities within the City of Littleton boundary. While not included in the analysis, the gray markers on each map visually indicate amenities with a .5 mile buffer of the City of Littleton boundary.

### ATHLETIC FIELD

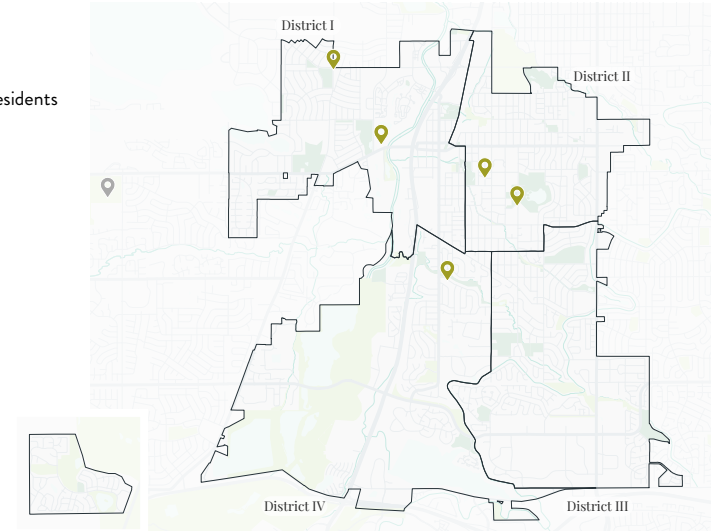
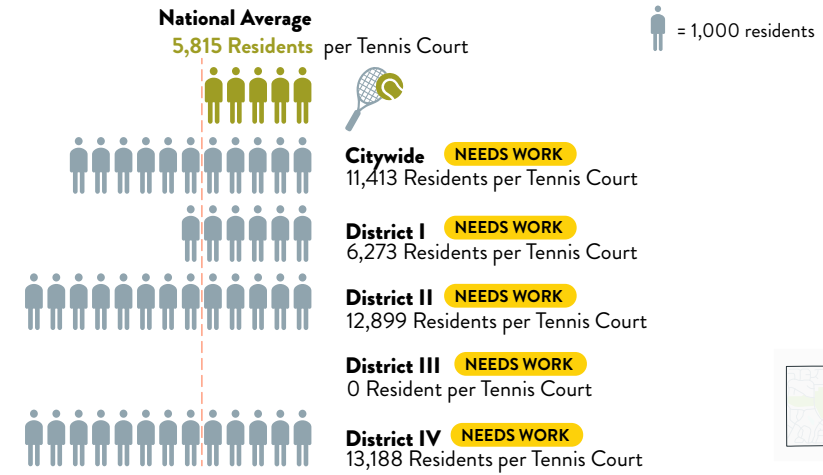




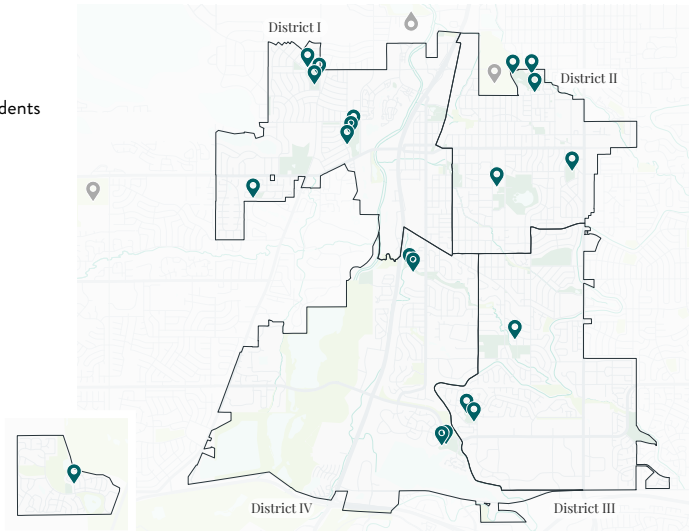
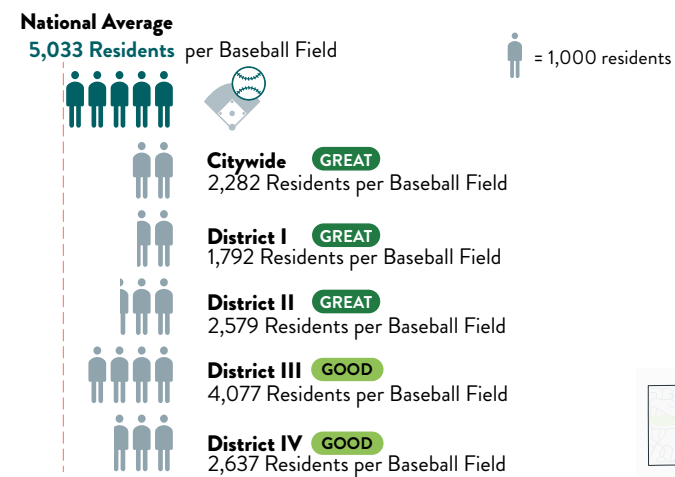
## BASKETBALL COURT



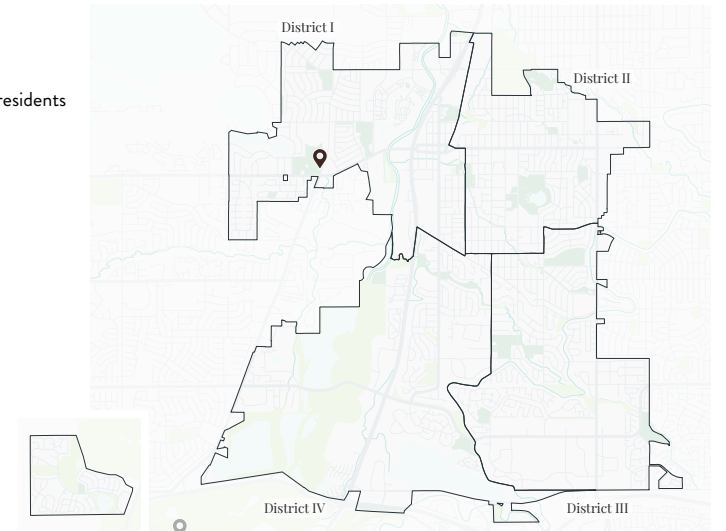
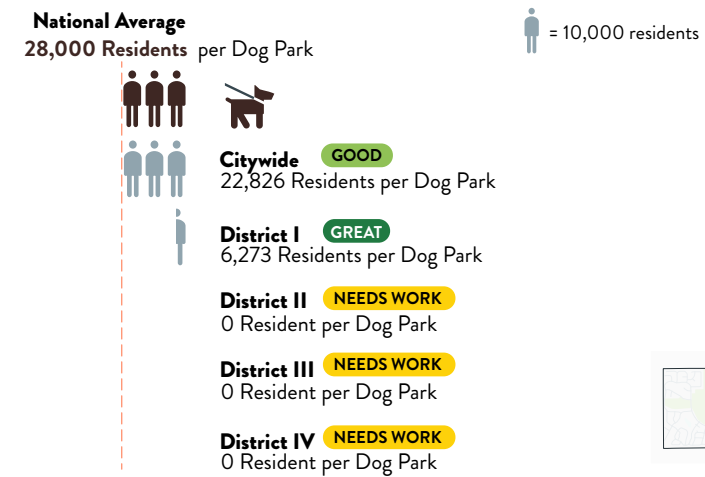
## TENNIS COURT



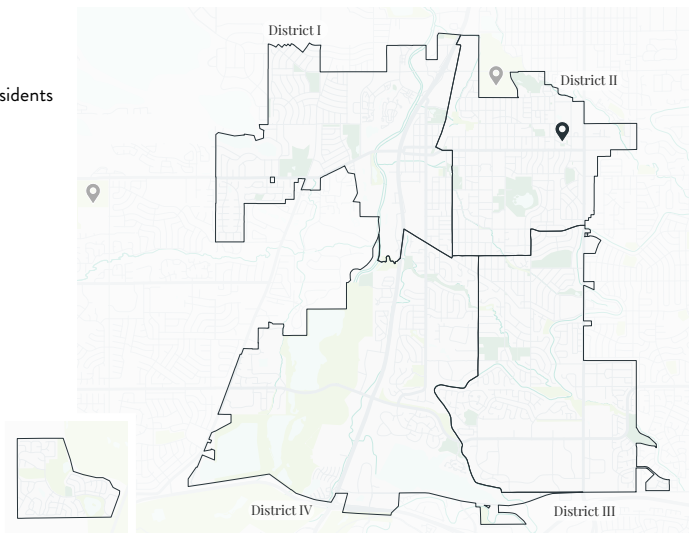
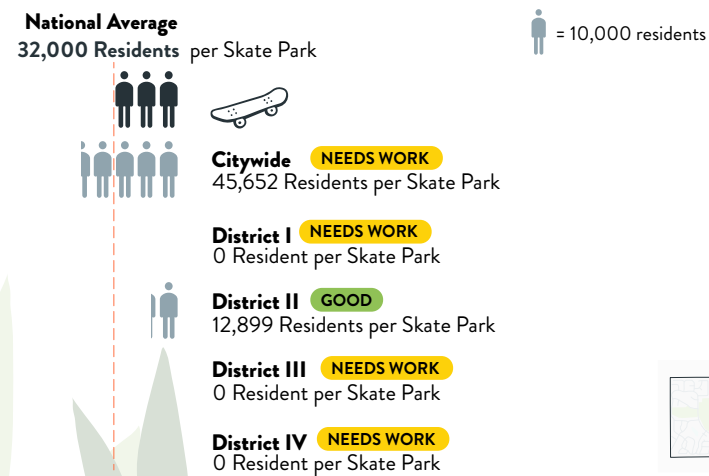
## SOFTBALL FIELD



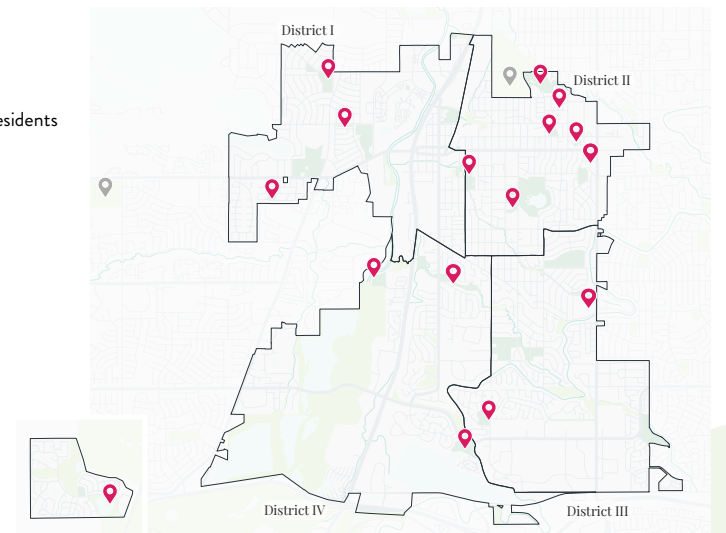
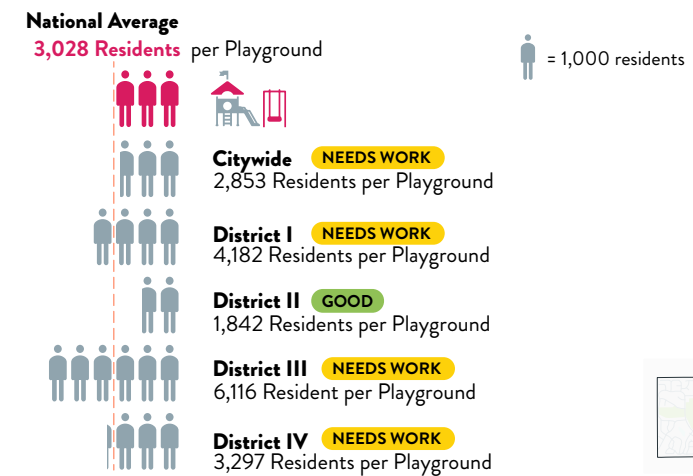
## DOG PARK



## SKATE PARK



## PLAYGROUND



# The Vision

The City of Littleton's extensive parks system provides residents with excellent access to parks, open space, and trails. Root & Renew focuses on working collaboratively with partners at SSPRD to create and maintain accessible places that support a community of active people while responding to emerging trends.

The plan's recommendations are organized within four major themes inspired by the Envision Littleton recommendations and community feedback: parks and open space, activities and trends, resiliency and nature, and community and culture. Each theme includes specific goals and relevant case studies that can be used as inspiration.



## Parks and Open Space 19

Maintain and enhance existing assets



## Activities and Trends 20

Develop more opportunities for residents based on emerging trends



## Resiliency and Nature 21

Prioritize protecting and preserving Littleton's natural environment



## Community and Culture 22

Cultivate inclusive social spaces







# Parks and Open Space

## Maintain and enhance existing assets

1. Improve entrances to parks and create gateways that create a safe sense of arrival, utilizing the Littleton Linkages plan to make these types of changes in tandem with the plan's identified improvements.
2. Identify parks that should be high priority to receive new amenities.
  - Playgrounds should be added to Districts I, III, and IV
  - Basketball courts should be added to District III
  - Skate parks should be added to Districts II, III, and IV
  - Dog parks should be added to Districts II, III, and IV
  - Tennis courts should be added to District III
  - Restrooms and water fountains should be implemented citywide



Sterne Park

3. Enhance maintenance efforts and address aging equipment and amenities, prioritizing improvements to trails, playgrounds, and courts
4. Prioritize cleanliness within parks, related specifically to geese and dogs.
5. As opportunities arise, consider properties for acquisition.
  - Additional parks should be prioritized in District IV
  - Additional naturalized experiences typically associated with open spaces should be prioritized in District II
  - Additional trails should be prioritized in District II

### Case Study

Denver Parks and Recreation (DPR) has dealt with an [overpopulation of geese](#) for several years which leads to cleanliness issues related to geese. DPR uses a variety of methods to manage the goose population, making parks cleaner and more enjoyable for visitors. These methods include the egg oil method, the hazing method, and utilizing population surveys and tracking.







## Activities and Trends

### Develop more opportunities for residents based on emerging trends

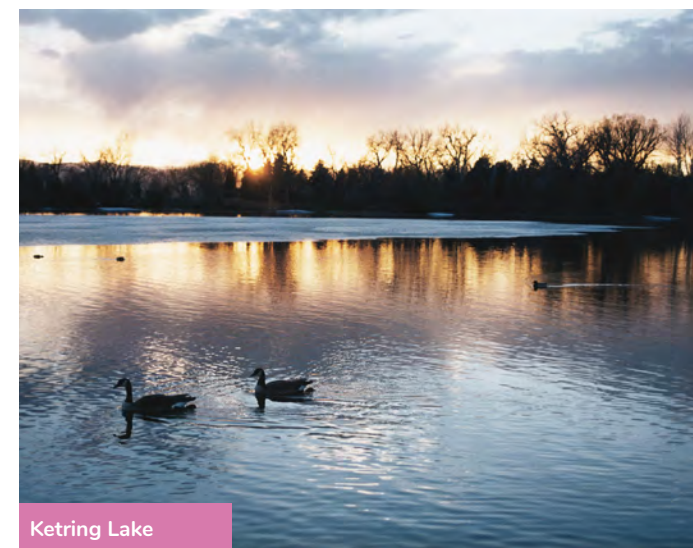
1. Provide additional recreation opportunities for residents based on emerging trends.
2. Evaluate recreation trends every five years to ensure new offerings align with resident preferences.
3. Improve resident access to active water recreation, such as fishing and non-motorized water sports, such as kayaking and paddleboarding.
4. Add more water play and splash pads citywide with a focus on District II part of the city.



High Line Canal

### NRPA Top Trend Reports

Every year the National Parks and Recreation Association releases articles that highlight [top trends in parks and recreation](#) for the upcoming year. For example, in December 2024, the report highlighted the desire to address the loneliness epidemic in parks as a major trend for 2025. The City of Littleton can utilize these reports to support the activities and trends theme.



Ketring Lake



Wynetka Ponds Park

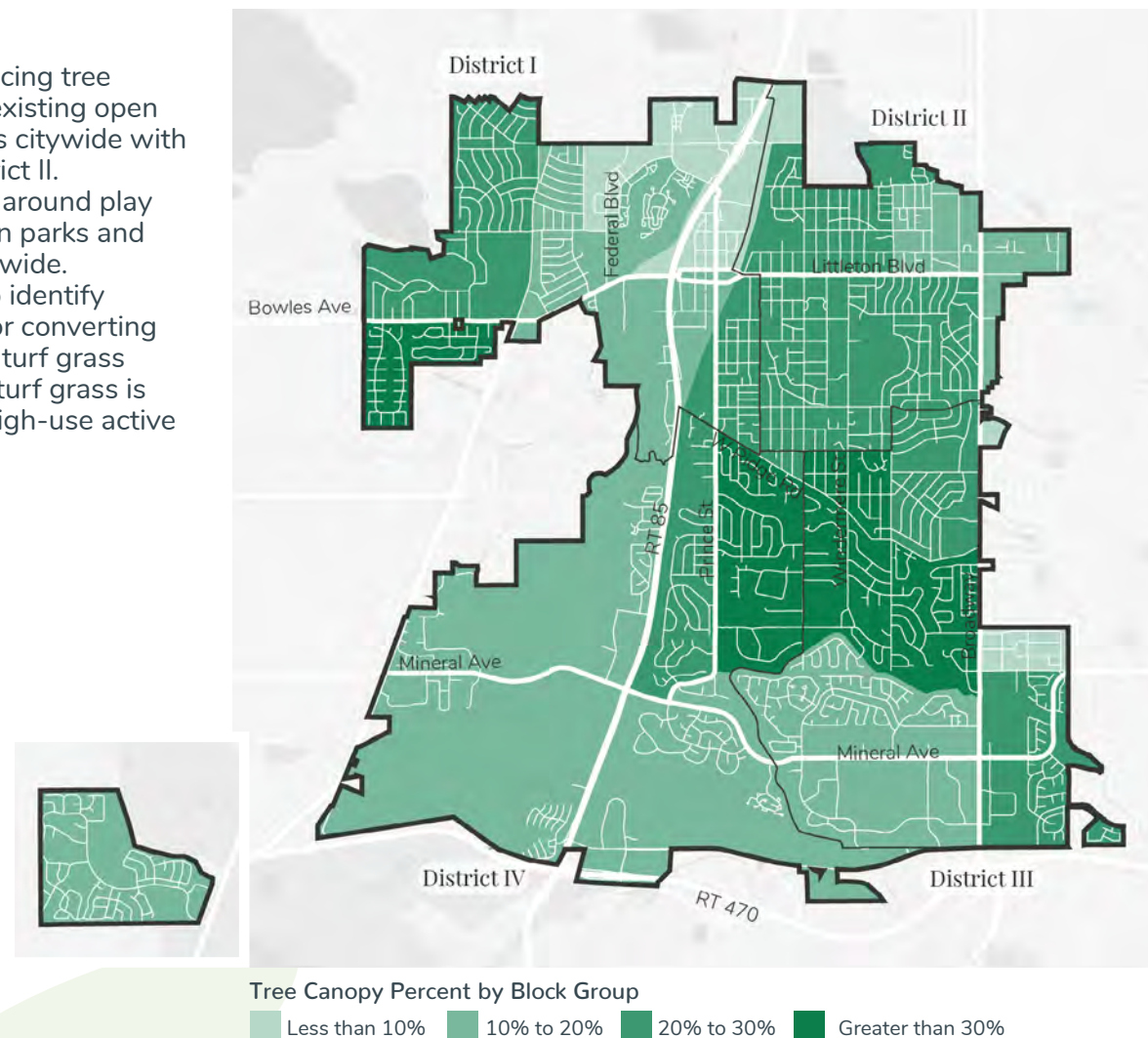




# Resiliency and Nature

## Prioritize protecting and preserving Littleton's natural environment

1. Prioritize enhancing tree canopy within existing open space and parks citywide with a focus on District II.
2. Enhance shade around play areas and within parks and open space citywide.
3. Assess parks to identify opportunities for converting high water-use turf grass while ensuring turf grass is maintained in high-use active area.



4. Evaluate planting areas that can be transitioned to pollinator gardens with low water-use plants.
5. Provide demonstration educational garden as a pilot project in a high traffic / easily accessible area.

### Case Study

#### Turfgrass Restrictions in Park Spaces

The City of Denver faces similar challenges related to water conservation and recently put their "[Turfgrass Restrictions in Park Spaces](#)" policy into place. DPR outlines that turfgrass shall not be used as the primary landscaping groundcover in areas identified as providing limited to no functional recreational value and that drought tolerant and ecosystem restoration species are to be used instead, where applicable. A key implementation strategy involves identifying suitable locations for turfgrass conversion and integrating drought-tolerant species where applicable.







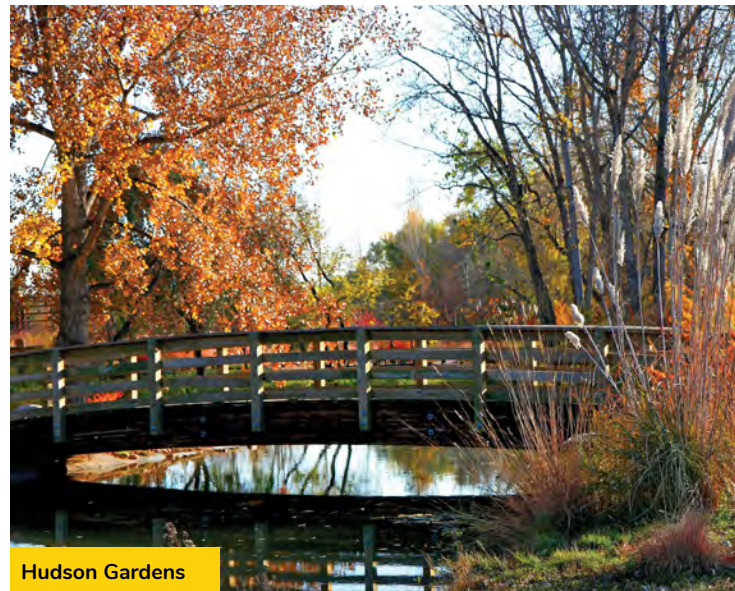
# Community and Culture

## Cultivate inclusive social spaces

1. Establish partnerships with community organizations to encourage volunteer programs. Volunteer programs could include wildlife monitoring initiatives to support conservation efforts and community engagement.
2. Engage residents with park improvements that are culturally responsive, including public art installations and language-inclusive signage and wayfinding.
3. Provide age-inclusive activities within parks and open spaces.
4. Activate parks through community events and educational activities.
5. Enhance maintenance of existing community gardens and consider implementing new gardens in District I and District III.
6. Develop park design recommendations to accommodate neurodivergent park users.



South Platte Park



Hudson Gardens

### Case Study

#### Sensory Playground, Northglenn, CO

The Northglenn Sensory Playground was developed by Design Concepts and the Northglenn Parks and Planning staff to provide fun, imaginative, and safe opportunities for children of all ages and abilities. In addition to ensuring the park is accessible to individuals with physical disabilities, several features create a welcoming environment for neurodivergent visitors. This includes a sensory garden and tactile opportunities to interact with sand and water, allowing children to partake in diverse sensory experiences to promote holistic development.





# Moving Forward





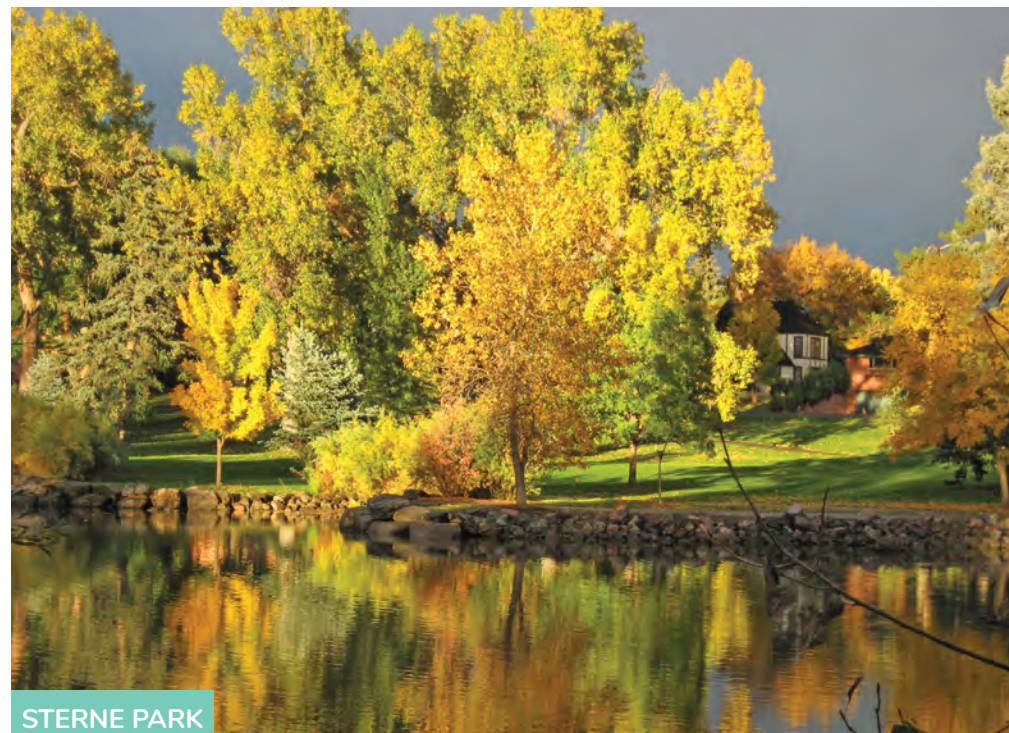
Root & Renew establishes community-informed goals to equitably address the current needs of Littleton residents while remaining adaptable to future priorities. The initiative leveraged extensive community engagement to create a vision that positions Littleton as a leader in parks, open space, and trails among similarly sized communities. The next phases of work will involve collaborating with SSPRD to update the maintenance agreement and developing more detailed recommendations for the City.



SOUTH PLATTE PARK



HUDSON GARDENS



STERNE PARK



GALLUP PARK



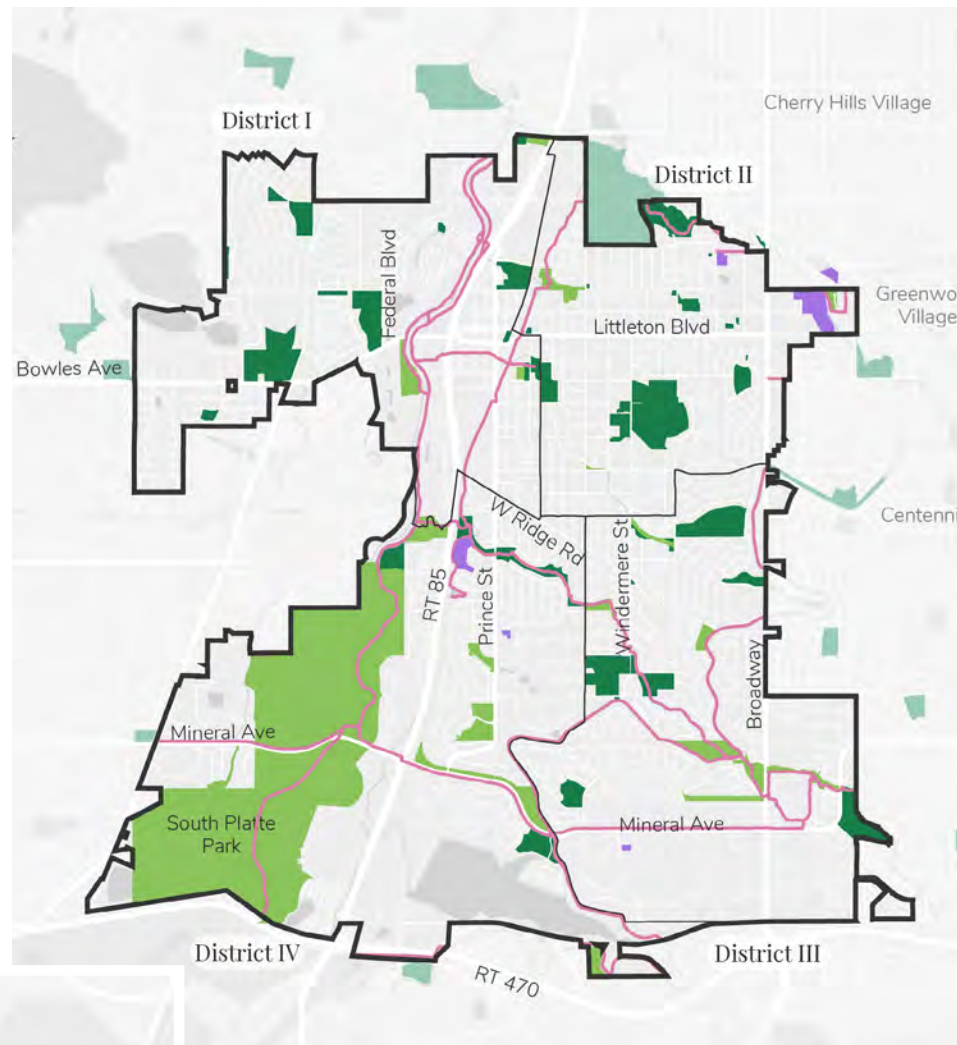
# Appendix

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Glossary	26
Root & Renew Asset List Inventory	27
Current Asset List and Classification	28



# Park Network

While this plan focuses solely on the assets within Littleton City Boundaries, there are additional publicly accessible schools and nearby parks that contribute to the overall network of parks, open space, and trails within Littleton. This map reflects parks that are within a .5 mile buffer from the Littleton City Boundary, including Cornerstone Park. The schools shown on this map include Mackintosh Academy, St. Mary's Catholic School, Littleton High School, Littleton Preparatory Charter School, Field Elementary School, and the Littleton Academy Charter School. Additional schools are reflected in the existing "parks" assets, see the "Root & Renew Asset List Inventory" for those.



# Glossary

**Open Spaces:** Open spaces serve to protect natural areas and provide opportunities for a variety of recreation. These are publicly accessible areas that are managed with an emphasis on conservation. These spaces are frequently more low-impact and passive in recreation offerings including trails, interpretive signage, and viewing areas.

**Parks:** Parks are areas that are managed with an emphasis on enjoyment by people and preservation of the natural environment. These are typically smaller spaces than open spaces and often feature amenities like picnic areas, playgrounds, and other active recreation elements.

**Parkland:** Parks and open space grouped together. This is a frequent metric utilized by the National Recreation and Park Association to determine access standards.

**Trails:** Dedicated connecting trails, not including park walks and sidewalks.



# Root & Renew Asset List Inventory

With the support of the City, the project team used the following list of assets for the parks, open space, and trails data in this vision plan. Assets noted as “Park outside Littleton”, like Cornerstone Park, were not directly included in the analyses outlined in this plan.

Asset Name	Asset Type	Address	Owned	Maintained
Angeline Little Greenway	Open Space	6599 S Forestill St.	COL	COL
Ashbaugh Park/Pond	Open Space	6954 S Windermere St	COL	SSPRD
Bega Park	Park	2250 W Main St	COL	SSPRD
Berry and Powers	Park	805 W Berry Ave.	COL	COL
Berry Community Gardens	Special Use Park	734 W Berry Ave.	COL	COL
Berry Park	Park	3400 W Berry Ave	COL	SSPRD
Bessette Arboretum	Special Use Park	11 W Caley Ave.	COL	COL
Big Dry Creek Open Space	Open Space		SSPRD	SSPRD
Bowles Grove Park	Park	5501 S Federal Blvd	COL/ SSPRD	SSPRD
Bradbury Plaza	Park	6887 S Gallup St.	COL	COL
Carbone Park / Runyon Elementary School Park	Park	7455 S Elati St	COL	SSPRD
Charley Emley Park	Park	2301 W Briarwood Ave	COL	SSPRD
Cimarron Trail Park	Park	5350 Bow Mar Dr	SSPRD	SSPRD
Courthouse Plaza	Park	5690 S Court Pl.	COL	COL
Cornerstone Park	Park outside Littleton		n/a	n/a
Creekside Experience	Park	5501 S Federal Blvd	COL/ SSPRD	SSPRD
Danny Phillip Dietz Jr. Memorial	Special Use Park	W Berry Ave. and S Kling St.	OTHER	SSPRD
Dawson Greenway	Open Space	1500 W Sterne Pkwy.	COL	COL
East Elementary School Park	Park	5933 S Fairfield St.	OTHER	SSPRD
Elati Park	Park	5350 S Elati St.	COL	SSPRD
Ensor Open Space	Open Space		COL	SSPRD
Footbridge Park	Park	1312 W Geddes Ave.	COL	SSPRD
Gallup Gardens	Park	6015 S Gallup St.	COL/ OTHER	SSPRD
Gallup Park	Park	6147 S Gallup St	COL	SSPRD
Gardiner Greenway (Geneva Park)	Park	5334 W Crestline Ave	COL	COL
Grandpa's Acres	Open Space	500 W Ridge Rd.	COL	SSPRD
Hamlet Park	Park	4466 W Lake Cir N.	SSPRD	SSPRD
Harlow Park	Park	5151 S Lowell Blvd.	SSPRD/ OTHER	SSPRD
Heritage High School and Tennis Courts	Park		Arapahoe County School District	Arapahoe County School District
Hogback Hill Park	Park	8892 W Trailmark Pkwy	COL	SSPRD
Horseshoe Park	Open Space	7600 Block, S Elati St.	COL	SSPRD
Hudson Gardens	Special Use Park	6115 S Santa Fe Dr.	SSPRD	SSPRD

Asset Name	Asset Type	Address	Owned	Maintained
Ida Park	Park	152 W Ida Ave.	COL	SSPRD
Jackass Gulch	Open Space		COL	COL
Jackass Hill Park	Open Space	Sunset Dr & S Prince St.	COL/ SSPRD	SSPRD
James A. Taylor Park	Park	5120 S. Meade St.	SSPRD	SSPRD
Jamison Greenway	Open Space	632 W Jamison Ave.	COL	COL
Ketring Park	Park	6028 S Gallup St.	COL	SSPRD
LaRocco Plaza	Park	5490 S Windermere St.	COL	COL
Lee Gulch Overlook	Open Space	6591 S Santa Fe Dr.	COL/ SSPRD	SSPRD
Little's Creek Flood Plain	Open Space	2201 W Sheppard Ave	COL	COL
Little's Creek Park	Park	6801 S Broadway	COL	SSPRD
Littleton Golf & Tennis Club	Special Use Park	5800 S Federal Blvd	SSPRD	SSPRD
Littleton Open Space	Park		COL	COL
Littleton Open Space	Park		COL	COL
Murry Open Space	Open Space		COL	SSPRD
Nevada Ditch Conservation Easement	Open Space	4200 W Jamison Pl.	COL/ OTHER	SSPRD
Ohlson Acres	Open Space	1756 Plum Valley Ln.	COL/ SSPRD	SSPRD
Overlook Open Space	Open Space	7687 S Overlook Way	COL	COL
Oxbow Point	Park outside Littleton	4924 S Zuni St.	n/a	n/a
Powers Park	Park	601 W Powers Ave.	COL	SSPRD
Progress Park	Park	5100 S Hickory St.	COL	SSPRD
Promise Park	Park	233 W Powers Pl.	COL/ SSPRD	SSPRD
Puma Park	Park	7900 S Ogden Way	COL	SSPRD
Rafferty Gardens	Park		City of Englewood	City of Englewood
Reynolds Landing	Park	6745 S Santa Fe Dr.	SSPRD	SSPRD
Ridgeview Park	Open Space	2500 W Roland Ave.	COL	SSPRD
Ridgewood Park (Lower)	Park	6700 S Prince St.	COL	SSPRD
Riverside Downs	Park	5258 S Prince St.	OTHER	SSPRD
Sheppard Community Garden	Special Use Park	2158 W Shepperd Ave	COL	COL
Sherman Park	Park		COL	COL
Slaughterhouse Gulch Park	Open Space	5562 S Crocker St.	COL/ OTHER	SSPRD
South Platte Park / Carson Nature Center	Open Space	3000 W. Carson Dr.	COL/ OTHER	SSPRD
Southbridge Park	Park	7791 S Windermere St.	COL	SSPRD
Sterne Park	Park	5932 S Spotswood St.	COL	SSPRD
TrailMark Open Space	Open Space	8853 W Trailmark Pkwy	COL/ SSPRD/ OTHER	SSPRD
TrailMark Park	Park	8853 W Trailmark Pkwy	SSPRD/ OTHER	SSPRD
War Memorial Rose Garden	Park	2201 W Shepperd Ave	COL	SSPRD
Whitman Elementary / Euclid Middle School Parks	Park		Arapahoe County School District	Arapahoe County School District
Watson Lake	Open Space	5800 S Federal Blvd.	SSPRD	SSPRD
Writers Vista Park	Park	1900 W Mineral Ave	COL	SSPRD
Wynetka Ponds	Park	5875 S Lowell Blvd.	COL/ SSPRD	SSPRD

# Current Asset List and Classification

This work was completed in 2023 to take an inventory and assessment of the existing park system. The tables below reflect the current inventory of the City's assets from that study within the pocket park, neighborhood park, community park, regional park, open space park, specialty park, and trailhead categories.

COMMUNITY PARKS	ACRES
Bowles Grove Park	19.30
Gallup Park	8.10
Harlow Park	12.40
Ketring Park	45.20
Progress Park	23.40
Puma Park	3.30
Reynolds Landing	9.70
Southbridge Park	10.10
Sterne Park	13.90
Writers Vista Park	13.80
Wynetka Ponds	37.70
TrailMark Park	28.40
<b>Total:</b>	<b>217.20</b>

REGIONAL PARKS	ACRES
Littleton Golf & Tennis Club	109.90
South Platte Park	912.29
<b>Total:</b>	<b>1022.19</b>

SPECIALTY PARKS	ACRES
Berry Community Gardens	0.40
Danny Phillip Dietz Jr. Memorial	0.27
Douglas H. Buck Recreation Center	2.90
Hudson Gardens	28.80
Sheppard Community Garden	2.00
War Memorial Rose Garden	1.30
<b>Total:</b>	<b>35.67</b>

POCKET PARKS	ACRES
Bega Park	1.20
Berry and Powers	0.40
Bessette Arboretum	0.24
Bradbury Plaza	0.19
Courthouse Plaza	0.80
LaRocco Plaza	0.20
Riverside Downs	3.60
Elati Park	0.20
Footbridge Park	0.30
Ida Park	0.02
Promise Park	1.00
<b>Total:</b>	<b>8.15</b>

NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS	ACRES
Berry Park	2.30
Charley Emley Park	1.70
Cimarron Trail Park	2.50
Creekside Experience	3.36
Damon Runyon Elementary School (Carbone) Park	4.53
East Elementary School Park	1.79
Gallup Gardens	2.70
Gardiner Greenway (Geneva Park)	9.55
Hamlet Park	2.70
Hogback Hill Park	3.70
James A. Taylor Park	2.70
Little's Creek Park	6.20
Powers Park	4.50
Ridgewood Park (Lower)	10.30
<b>Total:</b>	<b>66.63</b>

TRAILS	MILES
Big Dry Creek Trail North	0.62
High Line Canal Trail	4.39
Lee Gulch Trail / Ivan Thomas Greenway	3.38
Littleton Community Trail	0.91
Mary Carter Greenway	4.94
Railroad Spur (Mineral) Trail	2.39
<b>Total:</b>	<b>16.63</b>

TRAIL HEADS	ACRES
Big Dry Creek East Trailhead	5.30
West Belleview Trailhead	0.30
<b>Total:</b>	<b>5.60</b>

OPEN SPACE	ACRES
Angeline Little Greenway	7.63
Ashbaugh Park/Pond	4.90
Dawson Greenway	0.63
Grandpa's Acres	5.00
Horseshoe Park	15.40
Jackass Hill Park	18.10
Jamison Greenway	10.10
Lee Gulch Overlook	6.30
Little's Creek Flood Plain	6.01
Nevada Ditch Conservation Easement	7.90
Ohlson Acres	6.70
Overlook Open Space	1.99
Oxbow Point	0.39
Ridgeview Park	5.00
Slaughterhouse Gulch Park	13.50
TrailMark Open Space	91.70
Watson Lake	12.80
<b>Total:</b>	<b>214.05</b>



