

EL PASO  **COUNTY**
COLORADO

COMMISSIONERS:
STAN VANDERWERF (CHAIR)
CAMI BREMER (VICE-CHAIR)

LONGINOS GONZALEZ, JR.
HOLLY WILLIAMS
CARRIE GETTNER

PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
KEVIN MASTIN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**TO: El Paso County Planning Commission
Brian Risley, Chair**

FROM: Todd Marts, Community Services Department, Executive Director

**RE: MP-22-001 Adoption of the El Paso County Parks Master Plan as the
Master Plan for El Paso County Parks, replacing previously adopted
County Master Plan elements**

Commissioner District: All

First Planning Commission Hearing Date:	10/20/2022
Second Planning Commission Hearing Date:	12/01/2022

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The El Paso County Community Services Department (CSD) requests adoption of the El Paso County Parks Master Plan. This Master Plan repeals and/or replaces the existing El Paso County Parks Master Plan (2013) as detailed in the attached Resolution. The Master Plan area includes all land within El Paso County located outside the incorporated municipalities and includes the accompanying maps, charts, and descriptive and explanatory matter. The Master Plan is an advisory document to guide park, trail, and open space development and preservation throughout the County. This is the first of two Planning Commission hearings scheduled for this item. The second public hearing is scheduled for December 1st, 2022 public review copy of the draft El Paso County Parks Master Plan has been available for public review since May 10, 2022. The hearing-based version was developed after public and review agency comments were completed and has been available on the CSD and project web sites, since September 19, 2022.

Below are the respective website addresses:

- <https://communityservices.elpasoco.com/parks-and-recreation/>
- <https://epcountyparkplan.com/>

2880 INTERNATIONAL CIRCLE, SUITE 110
PHONE: (719) 520-6300



COLORADO SPRINGS, CO 80910-3127
FAX: (719) 520-6695

www.ELPASOCO.COM

A. REQUEST/AUTHORIZATION

Request: Adoption of the El Paso County Parks Master Plan (PCD File No: MP-22-001).

B. EFFECT OF APPROVAL OF AN AMENDMENT TO THE MASTER PLAN

Colorado Revised Statute C.R.S. § 30-28-106 et. seq. provides that it is the duty of the Planning Commission to make and adopt the County Master Plan. The Statute requires careful studies to be made prior to plan adoption.

If adopted by the Planning Commission, the El Paso County Parks Master Plan will become the principal Master Plan for county parks, trails, and open space development within unincorporated El Paso County.

The El Paso County Parks Master Plan is legally considered to be advisory only. The review criteria for many of the land use applications processed by the Planning and Community Development Department include a requirement that the application be in conformance, general conformance, or consistent with the Master Plan. The El Paso County Parks Master Plan will be utilized to evaluate and inform development proposals and land use and 1041 permit applications; be a foundation for revising or developing regulations; coordinate regional and local initiatives; inform Capital Improvement Programs and Budget initiatives; identify additional studies and future action steps; and be an information source for policy makers and citizens.

C. APPLICABLE RESOLUTION

See attached PC Resolution

D. GENERAL LOCATION

El Paso County Parks Master Plan encompasses all of the unincorporated areas of El Paso County, and has a direct relationship to Federal, State, and Military Installation land and includes the land surrounding those installations, but does not set land use directives within the military installations.

E. BACKGROUND

What is required by Colorado Revised Statute?

Counties are authorized to prepare comprehensive plans as a long-range guiding document for a community to achieve its vision and goals. The Planning Commission is charged with preparing the master plan. The comprehensive plan (or master plan) provides the policy framework for regulatory tools like zoning, subdivision regulations, annexations, and other policies. A comprehensive plan

promotes the community's vision, goals, objectives, and policies, establishes a process for orderly growth and development, addresses both current and long-term needs, and provides for a balance between the natural and built environment. (See C.R.S. § 30-28-106) Elements addressed in a comprehensive plan (master plan) may include: recreation and tourism (required by state statutes), transportation, land use, economic development, affordable housing, environment, parks and open space, natural and cultural resources, hazards, capital improvements, water supply and conservation, efficiency in government, sustainability, energy, and urban design. The statutory basis regarding master plans is included as an attachment.

What does the current Master Plan include?

The previous county wide master plan for county parks, trails, and open space was the El Paso County Parks Master Plan (2013) which was adopted by the County in 2013.

Specifically, the current master plan comprises the following elements:

- 1) Existing Assets – Parks, Trails, Open Space
- 2) El Paso County Recreation and Cultural Services
- 3) Stakeholder Input and User Perceptions
- 4) Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Conservation Trends & Perspectives
- 5) Population and Growth
- 6) Parks, Trails, and Open Space Research, Analysis, and Community Needs Assessment
- 7) Master Plan
 - a. Parks
 - b. Trails
 - c. Open Space
 - d. Recreation and Cultural Services
- 8) Administration and Funding Strategies

The El Paso County Parks Master Plan (2013) is a guiding document that works with other County plans to strategize and provide outdoor recreation opportunities such as parks and trails, long term protection of open space, and historic and cultural resources interpretation. The Master Plan is an element of the Your El Paso Master Plan used by the Community Services Department (CSD), Planning and Community Development (PCD) Department, Park Advisory Board, Planning Commission, and the Board of County Commissioners to ensure that new development proposals conform and contribute to a cohesive system of parks, trails, and open space.

Since starting this planning processes, many circumstances have changed including recent municipal annexations, open space acquisitions, adoption or implementation of municipal master plans, and growth dynamics.

Development of this Plan

The RFP for development of this Master Plan was issued in 2020 and BerryDunn was selected as the consultant and began work in early 2021. Throughout the master planning process, CSD staff provided support for presentations, recording, advertisements, press releases, web support and publications.

In developing this Master Plan, CSD staff were committed to encouraging a broad spectrum of County residents to participate in an open and transparent public input process. This process was designed to provide citizens information about the purpose of the Master Plan and the facilities and services provided by the County, and to solicit ideas and priorities related to existing and future parks, trails, open space, and recreation and cultural programs offered by the County.

The community engagement process was comprehensive to both gather information and engage citizens, staff, partners, and other key stakeholders. Participants were presented information and encouraged to provide their perspectives and insights. Opportunities included:

- Focus groups/stakeholder meetings
 - Two focus group meetings representing 15 organizations, associations, and governmental agencies
- Participation in an online Bang the Table community engagement site at <https://epcountyparkplan.com/>
 - 2 months with over 2,000 page views
- Web-based survey
 - 630 survey responses

Development of this Plan occurred during the Covid-19 global pandemic, which challenged the consultant, County staff, review agencies, and public in the completion of the project.

What does this Plan include?

This update followed a similar process, utilizing the 2013 plan, existing County planning documents, and the accomplishments to date as a starting point. The project team guided the development of a public input process which included online engagement opportunities and an online survey. It has been imperative,

particularly amid the COVID-19 pandemic, that meaningful community participation in the preparation of the Plan occur and that substantial opportunities for citizen participation in the planning process have been provided. The goal of each was validating elements that exist within the plan and making updates where appropriate. This planning effort includes a comparative analysis of four (4) comparable counties in Colorado to provide benchmarking comparisons. The comparative analysis includes data on acreage relative to population, cost relative to population, and funding mechanisms to acquire and care for these lands. In general, this update process resulted in similar conclusions to the 2013 process, determining that the criteria and much of the plan are still in line with community wants and needs.

What will this Plan be used for?

The El Paso County Parks Master Plan is legally considered to be advisory only. The review criteria for many of the land use applications processed by the PCD in accordance with the Land Development Code (2020) include a requirement that the application shall be in conformance, general conformance, or consistent with Your El Paso Master Plan. This Master Plan will be utilized to evaluate and inform development proposals and land use activities and 1041 Permit applications; be a foundation for revising or developing regulations; coordinate regional and local initiatives; inform CIP and budget initiatives; identify additional studies and future action steps; and be an information source for policy makers and citizens.

F. STATUS OF MAJOR ISSUES

Through stakeholder and public outreach, the strongest sentiment for El Paso County Parks over the next 5 – 10 years is to maintain existing parks, trails, and open space. Concerns surrounding funding restrictions, which limits the County's ability to effectively manage important and unique assets were also expressed. A summary of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats is outlined in Chapter 4: Stakeholder Input and User Perceptions.

G. APPROVAL CRITERIA

1. EL PASO COUNTY MASTER PLAN CONSISTENCY AND POLICY PLAN COMPLIANCE

This Master Plan will update and replace the current El Paso County Parks Master Plan (2013) which is a component of the Your El Paso Master Plan.

2. COMPLIANCE WITH COUNTY PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES

The procedures performed in completion of the Master Plan are consistent with documented County policies and guidelines.

Certifications to the municipal planning commissions and to the Board of County Commissioners are required after adoption of the El Paso County Parks Master Plan by the Planning Commission.

3. OTHER FACTORS

C.R.S § 30-28-106 et. seq. govern adoption of a county master plan. The statute allows the Planning Commission to adopt new or amended County Master Plans “in whole or in parts”.

The El Paso County Parks Master Plan supersedes and replaces the El Paso County Parks Master Plan (2013), which was previously approved by the PC in 2013.

H. PUBLIC COMMENT AND NOTICE

The public was invited to engage at each phase in development of the El Paso County Parks Master Plan. This included development of a project website, media and press releases, social media, and emails to interested organization and individuals. The El Paso County Public Information Office was instrumental in the public involvement process. Information regarding the El Paso County Parks Master Plan has been provided continuously on the CSD website, project webpage, and periodically on the County’s main website.

Legal Notice for both Planning Commission hearings was published in the *El Paso County Advertiser and News* on October 5, 2022.

The draft Plan is available for public review online on the project webpage and the Community Services Department (County Parks) webpage at:

<https://epcountyparkplan.com/>

<https://communityservices.elpasoco.com/parks-and-recreation/>

Additional certifications are required after adoption by the Planning Commission.

I. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends adoption of the El Paso County Parks Master Plan with the following conditions and notations:

CONDITIONS

1. C.R.S. 30-28-109 requires the Planning Commission to certify a copy of the Master Plan, or any adopted part or amendment thereof or addition thereto, to the Board of County Commissioners and to the Planning Commission of all municipalities in the County. The Planning Commission's action to amend the Master Plan shall not be considered final until a minimum of ten (10) complete sets of the final documents are provided and such documents are certified by the Chairman of the County Planning Commission and distributed as required by law.
2. Upon adoption by the El Paso County Planning Commission, the effect of this document is adoption of the El Paso County Parks Master Plan as the Master Plan for El Paso County Parks, which replaces the previous El Paso County Parks Master Plan (2013).

NOTATIONS

1. Certification of the documents to the municipalities within the County pursuant to Condition No. 1 above is determined to be satisfied upon transmittal of summary information and maps along with a clear description of the locations where the complete documents are available for inspection, along with an offer to provide a given municipality a complete copy of the documents if requested. The transmittal may be in the form of a digital copy.
2. In approval of this document, it is understood that minor editorial and formatting changes will be made in conjunction with the final publication process. These modifications may include pagination, correction of typographical errors, clarifications, insertion of photographs, insertion of references and/or corrections to factual information, or inclusion of comments and modifications associated with the Planning Commission hearings. In no case will substantive changes be made to the text without reconsideration by the Planning Commission.

J. ATTACHMENTS

Draft El Paso County Parks Master Plan
Legal Notice
PC Resolution

EL PASO  **COUNTY**
COLORADO

**Community Services Department
Parks Master Plan Update**

2022





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Board of County Commissioners

Holly Williams, District 1

Carrie Geitner, District 2

Stan VanderWerf, District 3

Longinos Gonzalez, Jr., District 4

Cami Bremer, District 5

Administration

Bret Waters, County Administrator

Kenny Hodges, Deputy County Administrator

Park Advisory Board

Edmund Hartl, Jr, Chair, District 2

Anne Schofield, Second Vice Chair, District 3

Julia Landgraf, Secretary, District 1

Terry Martinez, District 3

Susan Jarvis-Weber, District 2

Kiersten Steel, District 4

Key Staff

Todd Marts, Community Services Department Director

Brian Bobeck, Park Operations Division Manager,

Jason Meyer, Planning Supervisor, Park Operations Division

Ross Williams, Park Planner, Park Operations Division

Greg Stachon, Landscape Architect, Park Operations Division

Theresa Odello, Recreation and Cultural Services Division Manager

Nina Ruiz, Planning Manager, Planning and Community Development

Victoria Chavez, Principal Transportation Planner, Department of Public Works

David Mejia, ADA Specialist, Facilities and Strategic Infrastructure Management

Consultant Team

Chris Dropinski, Principal-in-Charge, GreenPlay, LLC

Teresa Jackson, Project Manager, GreenPlay, LLC

Dave Peterson, Special Projects Consultant, GreenPlay, LLC

Bram Barth, Associate Vice President, Lose Design



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	iv-v
Tables of Figures	vi
Table of Tables / Maps	vii
Chapter 1: Executive Summary	3
Background – El Paso County Parks Celebrates 50 Years	3
Chapter 2: El Paso County Community Profile	9
Geography and Land Use	9
Community Profile	9
Demographic Summary	10
Chapter 3: The Department	21
Administration and Staffing	21
Parks and Recreation Operations and Capital Funding Sources	22
Comparative Analysis	25
Boards and Commissions	30
Chapter 4: Stakeholder Input and User Perceptions	33
Focus Groups/Stakeholder Meetings	33
Online Engagement	35
Web-based Survey	35
Chapter 5: Trends in Recreation	39
Chapter 6: Existing Properties – Parks, Trails, Open Space and Other Assets	49
Parks and Regional Recreation Areas	49
Trails	57
Open Space	62
Other Park Assets	66
Other Providers of Recreation Facilities and Open Space	67
Chapter 7: El Paso County Recreation and Cultural Services	75
Programs	75
Nature Centers	75
Chapter 8: Parks, Trails, Open Space & Historic Site Gap Analysis	79
Parks and Regional Recreation Areas	79
Trails	80
Open Space	90
Landmarks	96
Historic Site Preservation	106

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 9: Great Things to Come: Goals and Recommendations	127
Focus Area One: System and Resource Management	128
Focus Area Two: Parks	129
Focus Area Three: Trails.....	130
Focus Area Four: Open Space.....	132
Focus Area Five: Recreation and Cultural Services Programs and Facilities	132
Focus Area Six: Implementation and Funding	133
Chapter 10: Capital Improvements	139
System Inventory and Assessment	140
Critical Needs	141
Future Capital Cost.....	144
Chapter 11: Potential Funding Strategies for Consideration	145
Acquisition Strategies and Regulatory Tools	151
Funding Opportunities for Multimodal Transportation	153
State SB 260 Transportation Funding for Multimodal Projects	154
Voluntary Programs.....	156
Appendix A: Survey Summary Report	159
Appendix B: Secondary Regional Trails	189
Appendix C: List of GIS Layers for Open Space Composite Analysis	193
Appendix D: System Inventory and Assessment	195

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1: El Paso County Subareas 2020 Population	10
Figure 2: Population Estimates and Projections in El Paso County from 2000 to 2030.....	11
Figure 3: 2020 Estimated Population in El Paso County Subareas	11
Figure 4: Age Distribution in El Paso County Change from 2010 to 2020	12
Figure 5: Age Distribution in El Paso County Subareas, 2020 Estimates	13
Figure 6: Race Comparison for Total Population in El Paso County, 2020 Estimates.....	13
Figure 7: Race Comparison for El Paso County Subareas, 2020 Estimates	14
Figure 8: Educational Level of Bachelor’s Degree and Higher in El Paso County Subareas	15
Figure 9: Median Household Income Distribution, 2020 Estimates	15
Figure 10: Median Household Income Distribution by Subarea, 2020 Estimates	16
Figure 11: El Paso County Health Rankings Overview	18
Figure 12: Organizational Chart.....	21
Figure 13: Acres Relative to Operating Budget	26
Figure 14: Comparative Per Capita Spending by County	28
Figure 15: Impacts of Parks on Health, Society, Economy, and the Environment.....	43
Figure 16: 2020 Recreational Expenditures in El Paso County	44
Figure 17: El Paso County Parks Capital Needs	139
Figure 18: Capital Needs: Next 10 Years	181

TABLE OF TABLES / MAPS

Table 1: Median Age by Subarea	12
Table 2: Educational Attainment	14
Table 3: 2018 Households Below the Poverty Level	16
Table 4: 2018 Households with 1+ Persons with a Disability (percent)	17
Table 5: Comparative Evidence	25
Table 6: Comparative Operating Budget Data.....	27
Table 7: Annual Outings Per Young Adult Participant	41
Table 8: El Paso County Parks and Regional Recreation Area Classification	50
Table 9: El Paso County Trails Classification	58
Table 10: El Paso County Open Space Classification.....	62
Table 11: Trailshed Analysis	81
Table 12: Proposed Primary Regional Trails.....	86
Table 13: Critical Need: Park Components ROM	142
Table 14: Critical Need: Irrigation ROM	143
Table 15: Critical Need: Hardscape ROM	143
Map 1: Population Growth 2021 - 2026	19
Map 2: Existing Parks, Trails, and Open Space	73
Map 3: Local Access to Parks (5 minutes).....	111
Map 4: Regional Access to Parks (15 minutes)	113
Map 5: Special Facilities Access (30 minutes)	115
Map 6: Trails-head Analysis	117
Map 7: Open Space Values Attributes	119
Map 8: Open Space Composite Analysis	121
Map 9: Land Cover, Landforms, and Landmark.....	123
Map 10: Candidate Open Space	125
Map 11: Parks Master Plan	135
Map 12: Trails Master Plan	137

THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Chapter 1: Executive Summary

EL PASO COUNTY - COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT PARKS MASTER PLAN

The El Paso County Parks Master Plan (Master Plan) is a guiding document that works with other County plans to strategize and provide outdoor recreation opportunities such as parks and trails, long term protection of open space, and historic and cultural resources interpretation. The Master Plan is an element of the County's comprehensive plan (statutory master plan) used by the Community Services Department, Development Services (Planning) Department, Park Advisory Board, Planning Commission, and the Board of County Commissioners to ensure that new development proposals conform and contribute to a cohesive system of parks, trails, and open space.

The Master Plan update process was designed to comprehensively address the needs of parks, trails, open space, and recreation and cultural services throughout El Paso County in a strategic way. The Master Plan endeavors to provide a sustainable approach to allocation of resources for the next five to ten years. The process reaffirms essential goals and objectives of the previous Master Plan, while incorporating needed changes and new ideas based on input by stakeholders and analysis of data. The Master Plan will guide the County's efforts to continue to provide a high quality of parks, recreation, and natural, historical, and cultural interpretation services that are valued by citizens.

El Paso County Parks Mission

The Mission of El Paso County Parks is to:

Enhance quality of life in El Paso County by:

- Acquiring, developing, maintaining, and preserving regional parks, trails, and open space.
- Providing responsible resource management for open space lands characterized by unique natural environments.
- Providing natural and cultural history interpretation, education, and information services.
- Supporting major community events and festivals that celebrate our County's heritage and culture.
- Providing and managing visitor destinations and experiences.



Background – El Paso County Parks Celebrates 50 Years

El Paso County Parks (County Parks) began as an answer to a community need to provide increased access to outdoor recreation opportunities and open spaces for citizens of all ages and backgrounds throughout the County. Over the past fifty years, the County park system has grown to 8,000 acres of parks and open space, 138 miles of trails, two award winning nature centers, and a wide variety of education and recreation programs and facilities.



The El Paso County Community Services District was formed in 1971 to provide the parks and recreation facilities needed to serve a rapidly growing population. The Department's initial policies gave high priority to the development of park-lands in urbanized but unincorporated areas of the County. This was in an effort to reduce pressure on City of Colorado Springs facilities and programs. Within five years, the Department had completed construction of or allocated funds for the construction of parks in sixteen areas of the County. Regional trails were also a priority, and the spines of primary regional trails were established in cooperation with other jurisdictions.

It became apparent, however, that maintenance of these areas was going to become an increasingly difficult financial challenge. In September of 1976, the Board of County Commissioners established a parks division. They also re-chartered the role of the division to emphasize the provision of large, regional-scale parks and abandon the effort to provide neighborhood parks and programs.

The regional parks were designed to include a developed portion with active use facilities such as turf, multi-purpose playfields, tennis, volleyball and basketball courts, archery range, picnic areas with pavilions for group activities, restrooms, and green space for unstructured activities.

The 2013 Plan

The 2013 Plan focused on the sustainable allocations of resources while addressing the future need for facilities and services. An important element of the plan was interpretive services which fosters public involvement and stewardship. The plan incorporated the opinions of citizens through stakeholder interviews, public meetings, and a web-based survey, to determine desired changes and new ideas for the long-term vision of the County. The study, guided by a Master Plan Committee, included an inventory or assets and opportunities, population and growth analysis, trends analysis, and level of service analysis.

Additionally, information from existing resource inventories, regional plans, and other data sources were compiled into a single GIS database. The final step was to synthesize the public input with the physical characteristics of the lands within the study area to arrive at a comprehensive plan for acquiring and managing land for open space.

The Update

This update followed a similar process, utilizing the 2013 plan, existing County planning documents, and the accomplishments to date as a starting point. The project team guided the development of a public input process which included online engagement opportunities and an online survey. It has been imperative, particularly amid the COVID-19 pandemic, that meaningful community participation in the preparation of the Plan occur and that substantial opportunities for citizen participation in the planning process have been provided. The goal of each was validating elements that exist within the plan and making updates where appropriate. This planning effort includes a comparative analysis of four (4) comparable counties in Colorado to provide benchmarking comparisons. The comparative analysis includes data on acreage relative to population, cost relative to population, and funding mechanisms to acquire and care for these lands. In general, this update process resulted in similar conclusions to the 2013 process, determining that the criteria and much of the plan are still in line with community wants and needs.

Accomplishments

The Department has celebrated many accomplishments since the 2013 Master Plan, including:

Parks and Regional Recreation Areas

- Fountain Creek Regional Park: Master Plan, Phase I Improvements
- Fountain Creek Nature Center: Expansion, Exhibits
- Fox Run Regional Park Dog Park: Construction
- Falcon Regional Park Dog Park: Construction
- Falcon Regional Park: Acquisition, Master Plan, Phase I Improvements, Phase II Improvements
- Widefield Community Park: Master Plan Update, Phase I Construction, Phase II Construction
- Bear Creek Regional Park: Master Plan, Pavilion Roof Replacements, Pickleball Court Construction, Restroom Replacement, Equestrian Skills Course, Dog Park Improvements
- Bear Creek Nature Center: Exhibits
- Black Forest Regional Park: Culturally Modified Tree Study, Forest Management Plan, Drainage Study and Trails Plan, Disaster Recovery
- County Fairgrounds Improvements: Master Plan, Entertainment Pavilion, Racetrack Improvements, Grandstands Accessibility, ADA Walkway Improvements, Playground
- Rainbow Falls Historic Site: Construction, Graffiti Cleanup
- Northern Nature Center: Feasibility Study, Conceptual Design

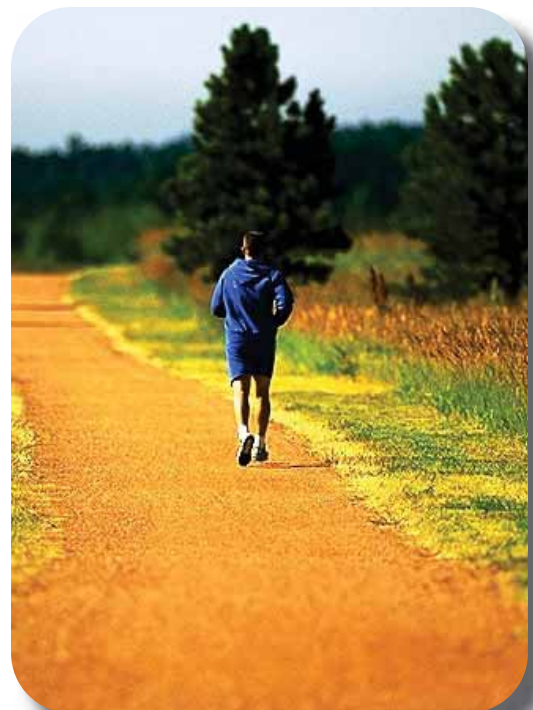
Regional Trails

- Ute Pass Regional Trail: Master Plan, Phase I Construction, Phase II Design and Construction
- Fox Run Regional Trail: Planning
- New Santa Fe Regional Trail Baptist Road Trailhead: Expansion
- Fountain Creek Regional Trail: Hanson Trailhead Reconstruction and Bridge Crossing
- Rock Island Regional Trail: Trailhead Improvements and trail expansion to library
- Eastonville Regional Trail and Meridian Ranch Regional Trail: Construction

Open Space

- Pineries Open Space: Acquisition, Master Plan, Culturally Modified Tree Study, Phase I Improvements- Trailhead and Trails, Forest Management Plan, Disaster Recovery
- Kane Ranch Open Space: Acquisition, Master Plan, Phase I Improvements- Trailhead, Trails
- Santa Fe Open Space: Acquisition, Master Plan, Phase I Improvements- Trails
- Paint Mines Interpretive Park: Erosion Control, Trails, Trailhead
- Jones Park: Acquisition, Trail Construction, Master Plan (ongoing)
- Clear Springs Ranch: Trailhead and Trail Improvements

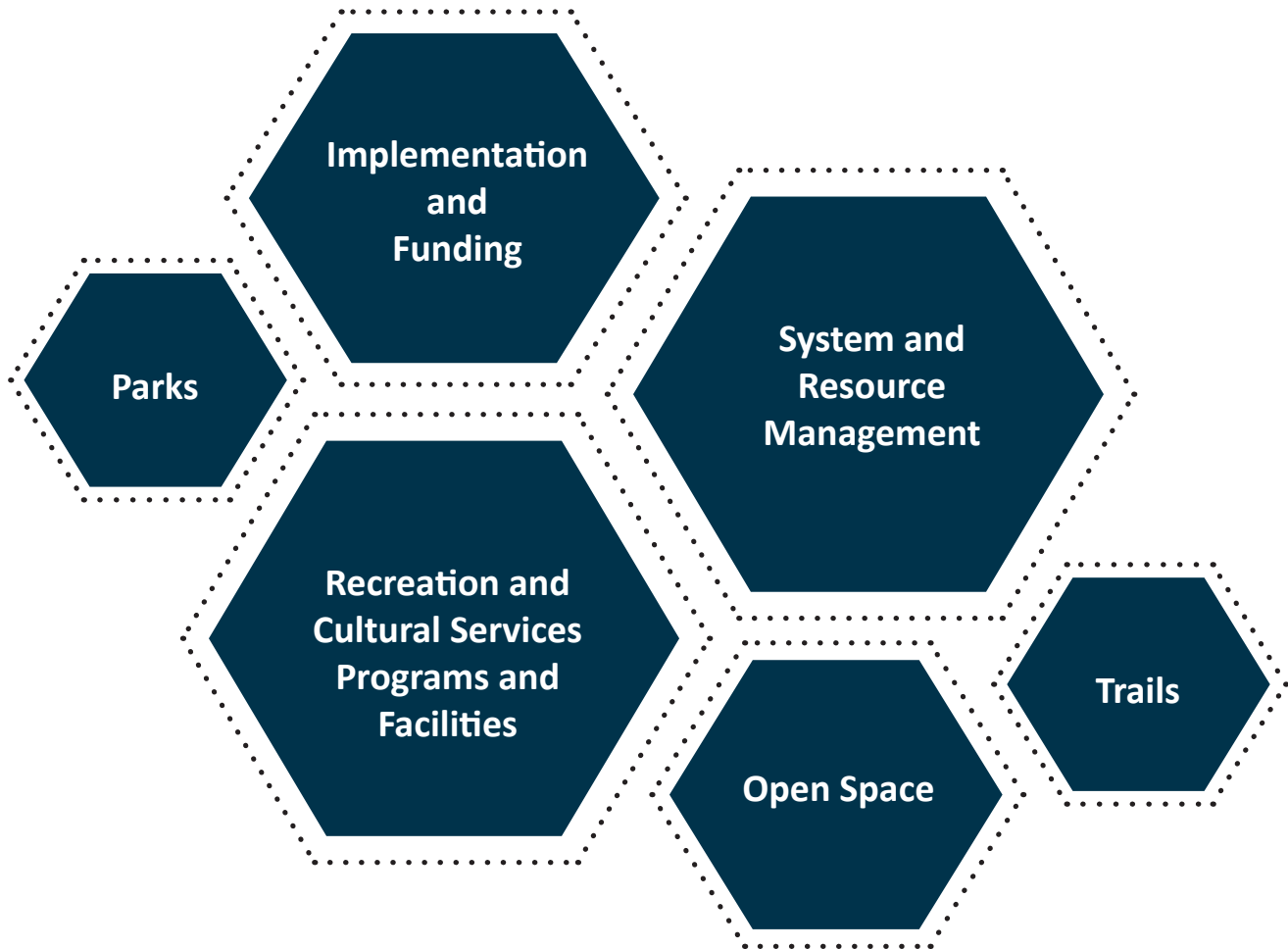
This Plan builds on the accomplishments of the Department and furthers the County's position as a regional leader in providing recreation, parks, trails and open space.



Great Things to Come: Goals and Recommendations

Key themes for focus were identified using several tools, including qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative tools included the review of existing plans and documents, staff input, focus groups, stakeholder meetings, and the consultant team expertise, while the quantitative data included the community survey, inventory, and level of service analysis.

The key themes that surfaced during the Master Plan process fell into one of 6 categories:



The consultant team, along with the County project team, performed an exercise to discuss each key theme and identify preliminary recommendations that then lead to the creation of the final goals and recommendations. The fourteen (14) goals below are intended to act as a catalyst and internal work plan. Specific, supporting recommendations for each goal can be found in **Chapter 9**. As Plan implementation begins and continues over time, engagement and leadership will be vital to Plan success.

Focus Area One: System and Resource Management

Goal 1: Provide a coordinated and connected system of parks, trails, and open space that is equitably distributed based on population and serves the needs of county residents.

Goal 2: Balance passive/active use of county parks and open space and determine what is most appropriate for individual sites based on community need and master planning processes.

Goal 3: Pursue best practices in the management and administration of all department operations.

Goal 4: Provide high quality and safe experiences for users of county park facilities and recreational areas.

Focus Area Two: Parks

Goal 5: Prioritize taking care of and maximizing current assets over acquiring new assets to better serve El Paso County Residents.

Goal 6: Maintain a consistent and equitable level of services by filling gaps in existing service levels and providing new facilities and services to meet future population demand.

Focus Area Three: Trails

Goal 7: Update trail standards and improve maintenance of existing trails.

Goal 8: Work collaboratively with other governmental agencies, private organizations and trail advocacy groups to create a continuous, connected system of regional trails.

Goal 9: Prioritize and locate trail connections using criteria and proposed actions items identified in this master planning process.

Focus Area Four: Open Space

Goal 10: Protect and enhance El Paso County's legacy of unique natural features and areas and cultural resources, working in collaboration with others to conserve high priority open space areas in the county.

Focus Area Five: Recreation and Cultural Services Programs and Facilities

Goal 11: Provide high quality recreation and educational experiences for users of county park facilities and recreational areas.

Goal 12: Expand partnering and collaboration as a programming strategy.

Focus Area Six: Implementation and Funding

Goal 13: Acknowledge the importance of parks and open space in El Paso County by providing adequate funding to develop, operate, and maintain these resources at a level commensurate with their importance.

Goal 14: Enhance El Paso County Parks through alternative funding sources.

THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Chapter 2: El Paso County Community Profile

Geography and Land Use

El Paso County encompasses more than 2,128 square miles (slightly more than twice the size of Rhode Island). The County is bordered on the north by Douglas and Elbert Counties, on the west by Teller and Fremont Counties, on the south by Pueblo County and on the east by Elbert and Lincoln Counties. The largest city in El Paso County is Colorado Springs, with an estimated population of 472,688. El Paso County is home to eight (8) different municipalities; Colorado Springs, Fountain, Manitou Springs, Monument, Palmer Lake, Calhan, Green Mountain Falls and Ramah.



The western portion of El Paso County is mountainous, while the east is prairie land where horses and cattle are important economic drivers. The altitude ranges from about 5,052 feet on the south-central border with Pueblo County at Chico Creek to 14,115 feet on the summit of Pikes Peak.

While most of the population lives in cities or towns, some El Paso County residents live in unincorporated areas that are developed to urban densities. These areas defined as having lot sizes of less than 2.5 acres. In 1990, the number of people living in urban density developments within unincorporated areas of the County were estimated by the County Development Services Department to be approximately 65,000. By 2003, that number had increased to approximately 90,000 (El Paso County Development Services Department 2005). As of 2011, there were almost 169,000 residents in unincorporated El Paso County (City of Colorado Springs 2013). El Paso County's unincorporated population for 2021 is estimated to be more than 201,918 citizens. This represents a 16 percent increase to El Paso County's unincorporated population during the past 10 years.

The County subdivision regulations require that lots smaller than 2.5 acres be served by central water and sewer systems. "Rural residential" developments of 2.5 acres or larger continue to be popular with developers and homeowners because they offer a perceived rural lifestyle that lacks typical city problems such as noise and traffic. However, these low-density developments present demands on the County to provide municipal-level services, including parks and recreation facilities. Park fees, required by the County of developers at the time of subdivision of residential lots, are the primary source of funding for development of regional park and trail facilities. If not served by regional facilities, recreational amenities for residents of unincorporated areas may be limited to those provided in a school yard or, in some cases, a small-town square.

Rural residential subdivisions are concentrated in the Black Forest, Tri-Lakes, Falcon/Peyton vicinity, Highway 94, Ellicott Valley, Security/Widefield and along Highway 115. Some of these areas, particularly Falcon and the Widefield area, have experienced rapid growth since the last Parks Master Plan update in 2013.

Special districts are the primary mechanism for provision of public services when not provided by local governments in unincorporated areas. Special districts providing multiple services are sometimes referred to as “metropolitan districts”. There are over a 100 metropolitan districts in El Paso County at this time and two recreation districts, the Ellicott Recreation District, and Widefield Park and Recreation District. The larger, well-established metropolitan districts, such as Meridian Service Metropolitan District and Woodmen Hills Metropolitan District, assess residents and provide park and recreation facilities and services, filling an important niche in central and eastern El Paso County. Besides special districts serving mostly local residents and the County with its focus on regional facilities, there are few mechanisms in place to provide, maintain, and operate the finer grain of local parks, trails, open space, and recreation services for residents of some unincorporated areas.

The remainder of the County is considered rural with very low population densities, and the majority of land is used for grazing. The eastern and southeastern portions of the county have the fewest residents of all the regions in the county. A portion of eastern El Paso County has been divided into 35 acres (or slightly larger) parcels, as this type of development does not require county review and approval.

Demographic Summary

El Paso County demographic profile was developed to provide an analysis of household and economic data in the area, helping to understand the type of park and recreation components that may best serve the community. Most of the data referenced throughout this report is sourced from *Esri Business Analyst*, which are point estimates for 2020 and 2026.¹

In this report, El Paso County, the State of Colorado, and the United States are compared to provide additional reference points, and to further understand how the County is similar or different to state and national averages.

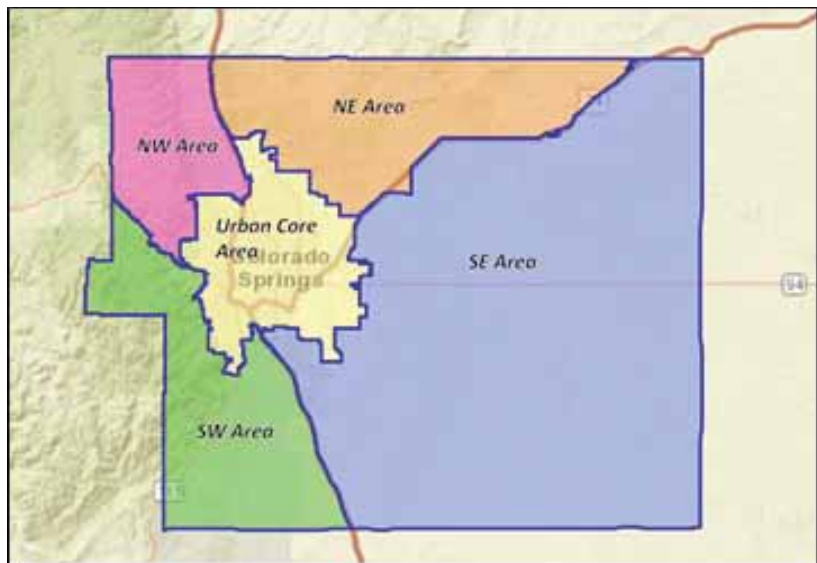


Figure 1: El Paso County Subareas 2020 Population

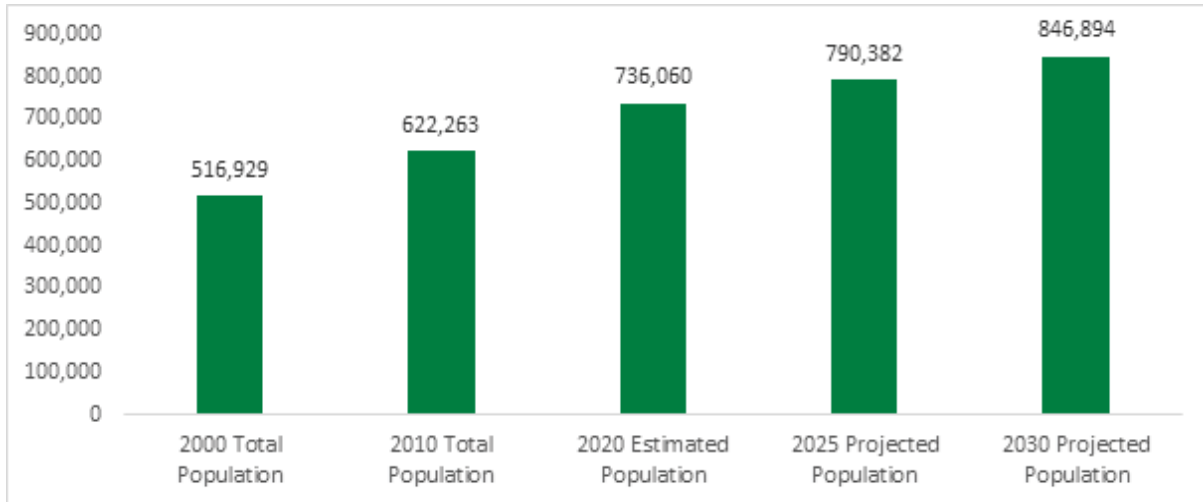
Due to the large size and high level of diversity in El Paso County, this plan includes important demographic analysis in five subareas. The map in **Figure 1** identifies each subarea: Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, Southwest, and Urban Core. The Urban Core Subarea is generally within the City of Colorado Springs.

¹ Esri balances the Census 2010 against local data sources such as building permits, residential postal delivery counts, and county data from the Internal Revenue Service to generate population estimates. Population projections are derived from a combination of models and data sources on both a local and national level. Data for this report was compiled in December 2020.

Population

In 2020, El Paso County had an estimated population of 736,060, growing at a rate of 1.65 percent on average annually since 2010. During that time, the County gained approximately 114,000 residents. From 2020 to 2025, the County is projected to grow at a rate at 1.43 percent. If that rate continues to 2030, the population could reach over 846,000 in the next decade.

Figure 2: Population Estimates and Projections in El Paso County from 2000 to 2030

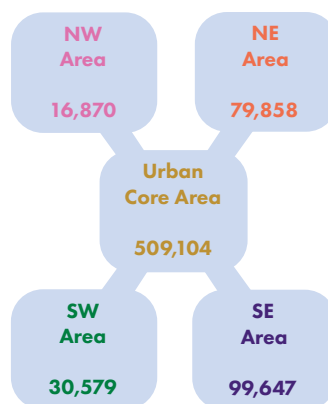


Source: Esri Business Analyst

Subarea Population

The Urban Core Area has the largest population of over 509,000 residents, followed by the Southeast (SE) Area (99,647), the Northeast (NE) Area (79,858), the Southwest (SW) Area (30,579) and finally the Northwest Area (NW) (16,870). **Map 1: Population Growth 2021 – 2026** shows anticipated growth areas using Esri Business Analyst.

Figure 3: 2020 Estimated Population in El Paso County Subareas



Source: Esri Business Analyst

Age

According to Esri Business Analyst, the median age in El Paso County is 35.9 years old, slightly younger than the State of Colorado (37.6) and the United States (38.5). The median age is projected to increase to 36.4 in the County by 2025.

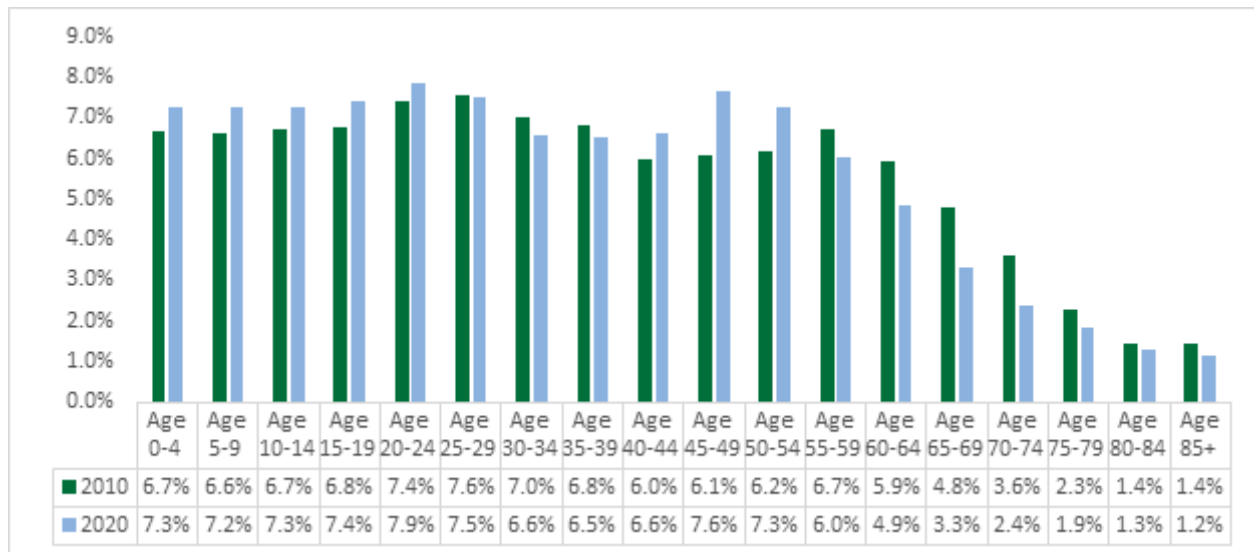


Table 1: Median Age by Subarea

Subarea	Median Age
NE Area	35.9
NW Area	41
SE Area	24.3
SW Area	34.9
Urban Core Area	25.9

The age distribution in El Paso County in 2020 is relatively even across age cohorts. Changes between 2010 and 2020 in the County indicate that the age group of 45 to 54-year-olds are increasing to make up more of the population. This group represented 12.3 percent of residents in 2010 and increased to 14.9 percent in 2020. Meanwhile, residents age 55 and older decreased from 2010 to 2020. All other age groups stayed relatively consistent.

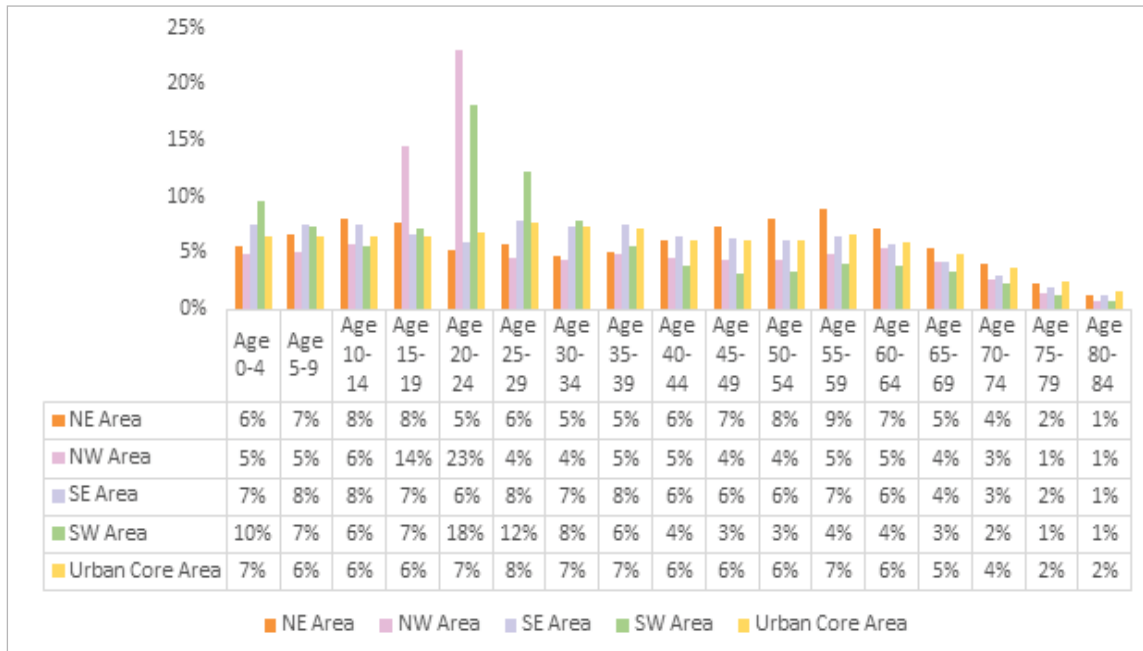
Figure 4: Age Distribution in El Paso County Change from 2010 to 2020



Source: 2020 Esri Business Analyst

A comparison of the subareas of El Paso County shows the striking contrast in age profiles across the County. Almost a quarter (23 percent) of NW Area residents were between the ages of 20 to 24 years old. Another 18 percent was of the same age in the SE area – compared to only 5 – 7 percent in the NE Area, SE Area, and Urban Core Area. The youngest age groups (under 10) are most prevalent in the SE and SW Areas, while the older demographic (50 and older) can be found primarily in the NE Area.

Figure 5: Age Distribution in El Paso County Subareas, 2020 Estimates

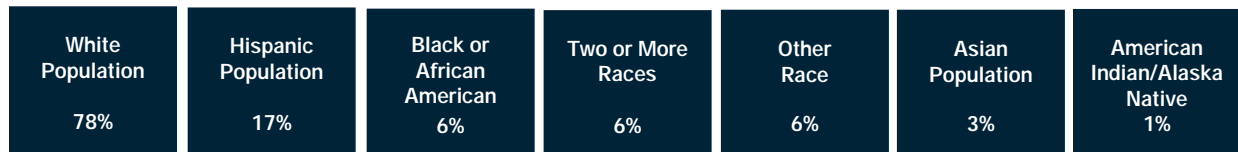


Source: 2020 Esri Business Analyst

Diversity in El Paso County

Understanding the race and ethnic character of El Paso County residents is important because it can be reflective of the diverse history, values, and heritage of the community. This type of information can assist the County in creating and offering recreational programs that are relevant and meaningful to all county residents. In addition, the data can be used in finding gaps and disparities when it comes to equitable access to parks, trails, and open space.

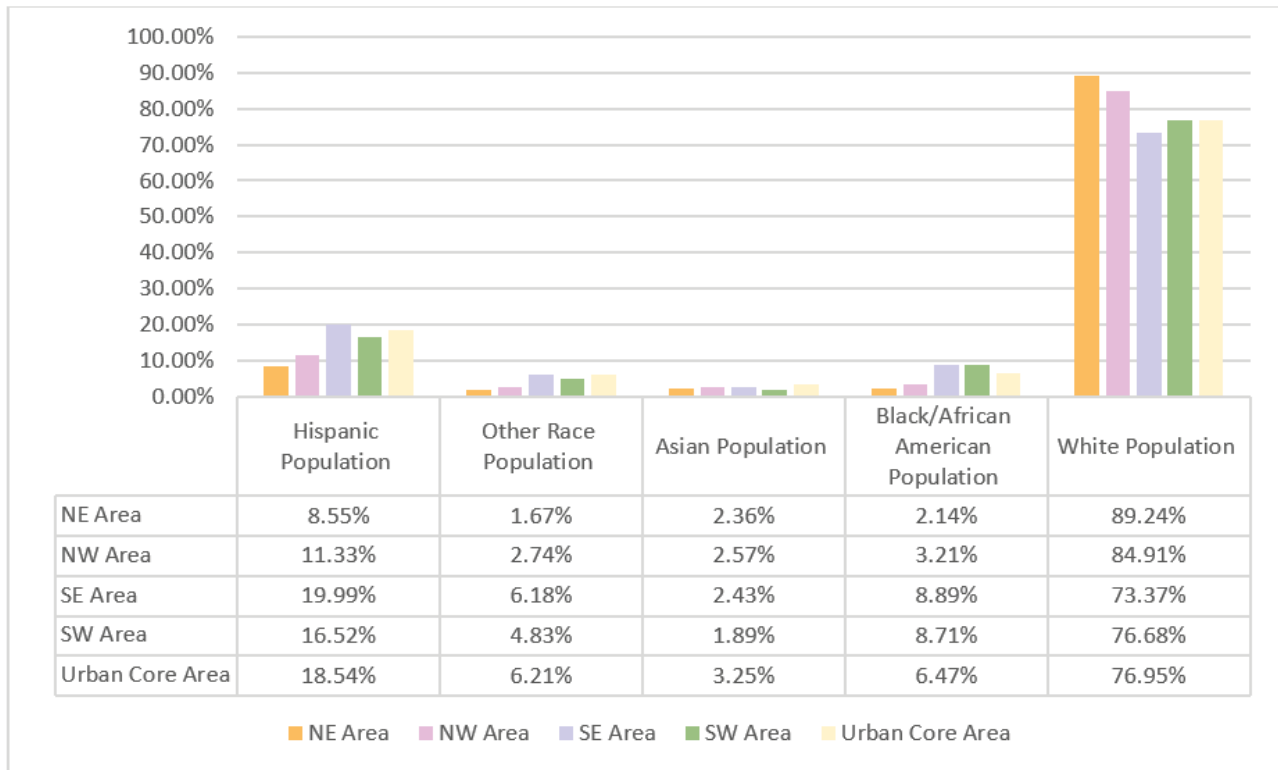
Figure 6: Race Comparison for Total Population in El Paso County, 2020 Estimates



Source: Esri Business Analyst, 2020

An estimated 22 percent of residents identify as a race other than White, with approximately 17 percent of the population identify as being of Hispanic origin. The racial and ethnic profile was relatively consistent across the subareas. The SW Area and the Urban Core Area had the highest percentage of Hispanic residents at 20 percent and 18.5 percent respectively. The SE Area and the SW Area had the highest percentage of Black or African-American residents at 8.9 percent and 8.7 percent.

Figure 7: Race Comparison for El Paso County Subareas, 2020 Estimates



Source: Esri Business Analyst

Educational Attainment

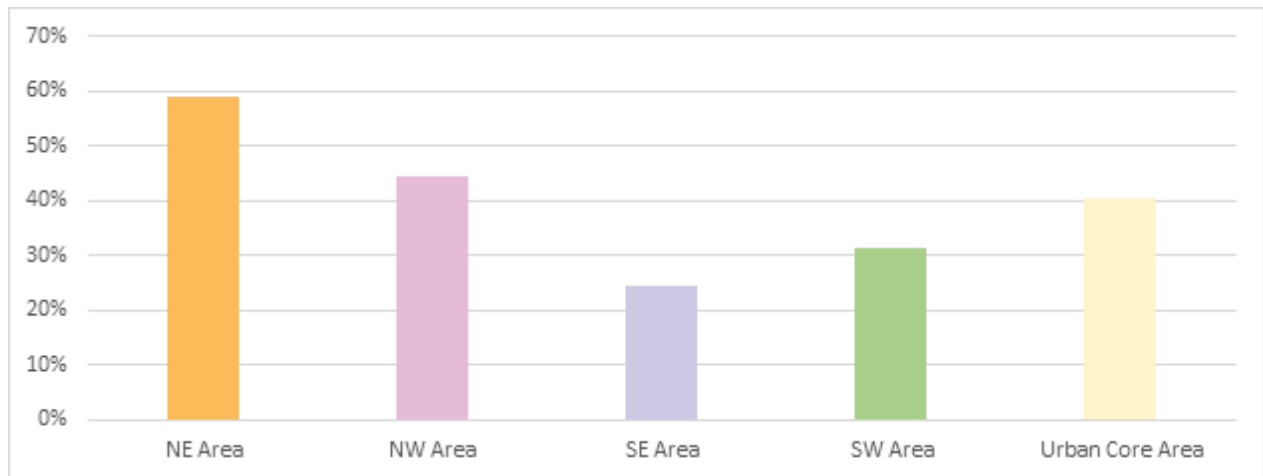
Table 2 below shows the percentage of residents (25+) that obtained various levels of education in El Paso County. Only 6 percent of the residents had not received a high school or equivalent diploma, and approximately 40 percent had received a bachelor’s degree or higher.

Table 2: Educational Attainment

Education Level	Percent Completed
Less than 9th Grade	1.90 %
9-12th Grade/No Diploma	3.90 %
High School Diploma	15.70 %
GED/Alternative Credential	3.50 %
Some College/No Degree	23.60 %
Associate's Degree	11.20 %
Bachelor's Degree	24.00 %
Graduate/Professional Degree	16.20 %

When looking at the five subareas within the County, the NE Area and NW Area had the highest levels of education in the County.

Figure 8: Educational Level of Bachelor’s Degree and Higher in El Paso County Subareas

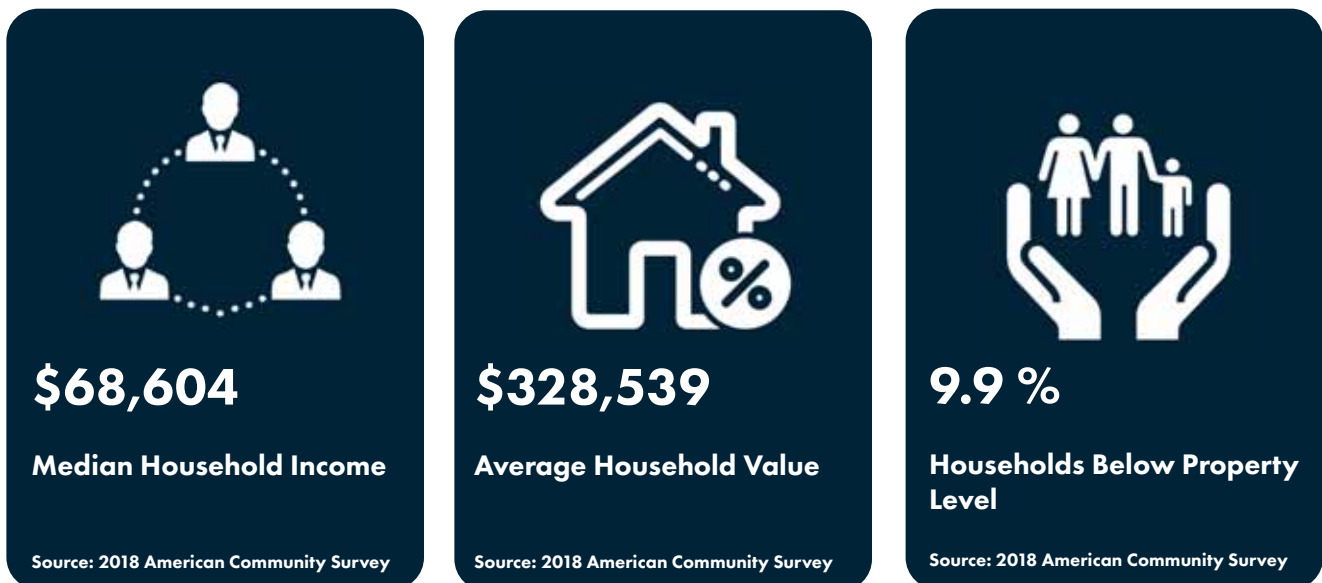


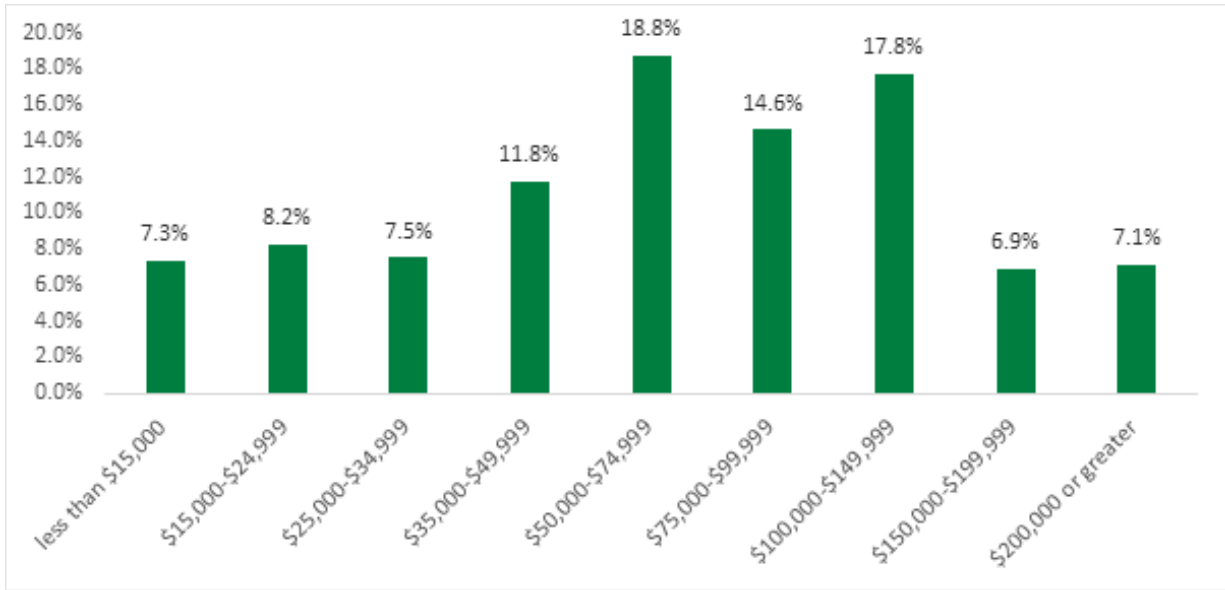
Source: 2020 Esri Business Analyst

Household Overview

Approximately 9.9 percent of County households were under the poverty level in 2018, with a median household income in 2020 of \$68,604. Approximately 18.8 percent of El Paso County households made between \$50,000 and \$74,999. An estimated 14 percent of households made less than \$15,000 per year. The household income in the County ranked higher than the State of Colorado (\$52,395) and the United States (\$62,203).

Figure 9: Median Household Income Distribution, 2020 Estimates





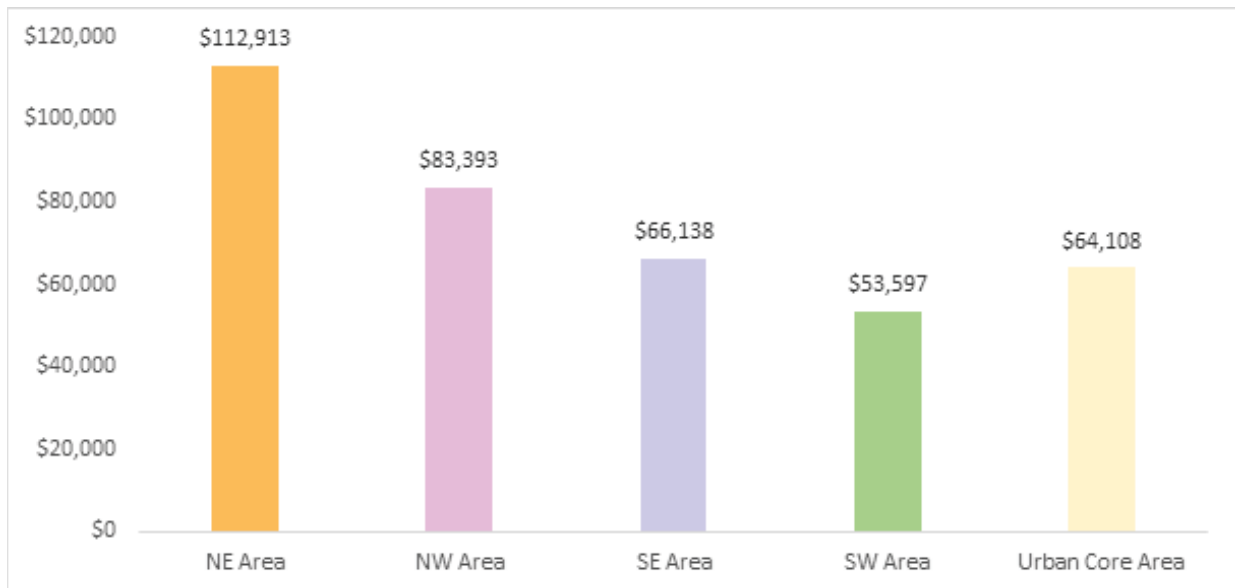
Source: Esri Business Analyst

Table 3: 2018 Households Below the Poverty Level

NE Area	NW Area	SE Area	SW Area	Urban Core Area
9.88%	3.61%	7.44%	7.13%	11.20%

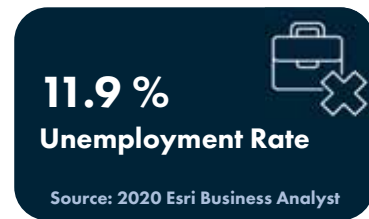
Source: American Community Survey

Figure 10: Median Household Income Distribution by Subarea, 2020 Estimates



Employment

In 2020, an estimated 11.9 percent of El Paso County’s population was unemployed, slightly higher than the State of Colorado (11.1 percent) but lower than the United States (13 percent). Approximately 68 percent of the population was employed in white collar positions, which encompass jobs where employees typically perform managerial, technical, administrative, and/or professional capacities. Another 17 percent of the County’s population were employed in blue collar positions, such as construction, maintenance, etc. Finally, 15 percent El Paso County’s residents were employed in the service industry.



People with Disabilities



According to *Esri Business Analyst*, 25.46 percent of El Paso County’s households in 2020 had one or more resident living with some sort of hearing difficulty, vision difficulty, cognitive difficulty, ambulatory difficulty, self-care difficulty, and/or independent living difficulty. This is higher than the state (21.7 percent) but lower than the national average (27.94 percent), confirming the importance of inclusive programming and ADA transition plans for parks and facilities.

Table 4: 2018 Households with 1+ Persons with a Disability (percent)

NE Area	NW Area	SE Area	SW Area	Urban Core Area
20.02 %	23.98 %	27.91 %	22.87 %	25.88 %

Source: *Esri Business Analyst*

Health and Wellness

Understanding the status of a community’s health can help inform policies related to recreation and fitness. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s County Health Rankings and Roadmaps provided annual insight on the general health of national, state, and county populations. El Paso County ranked 36 out of 64 Colorado Counties for Health Outcomes. **Figure 11** below provides additional information regarding the County’s health data as it may relate to parks, recreation, and community services.²



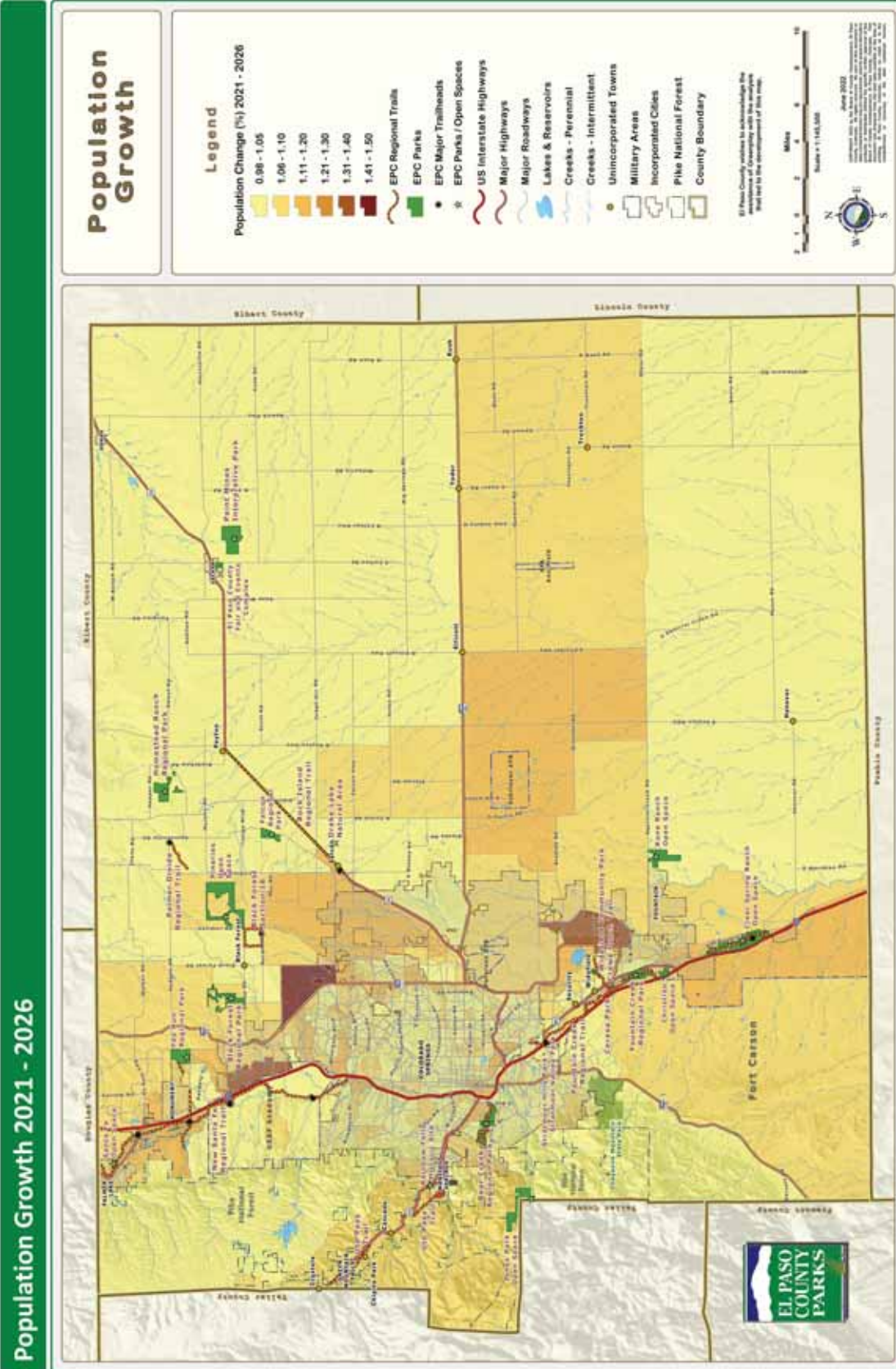
² Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, County Health Rankings 2020, <http://www.Countyhealthrankings.org>

Figure 11: El Paso County Health Rankings Overview



Source: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's County Health Rankings and Roadmaps





THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK



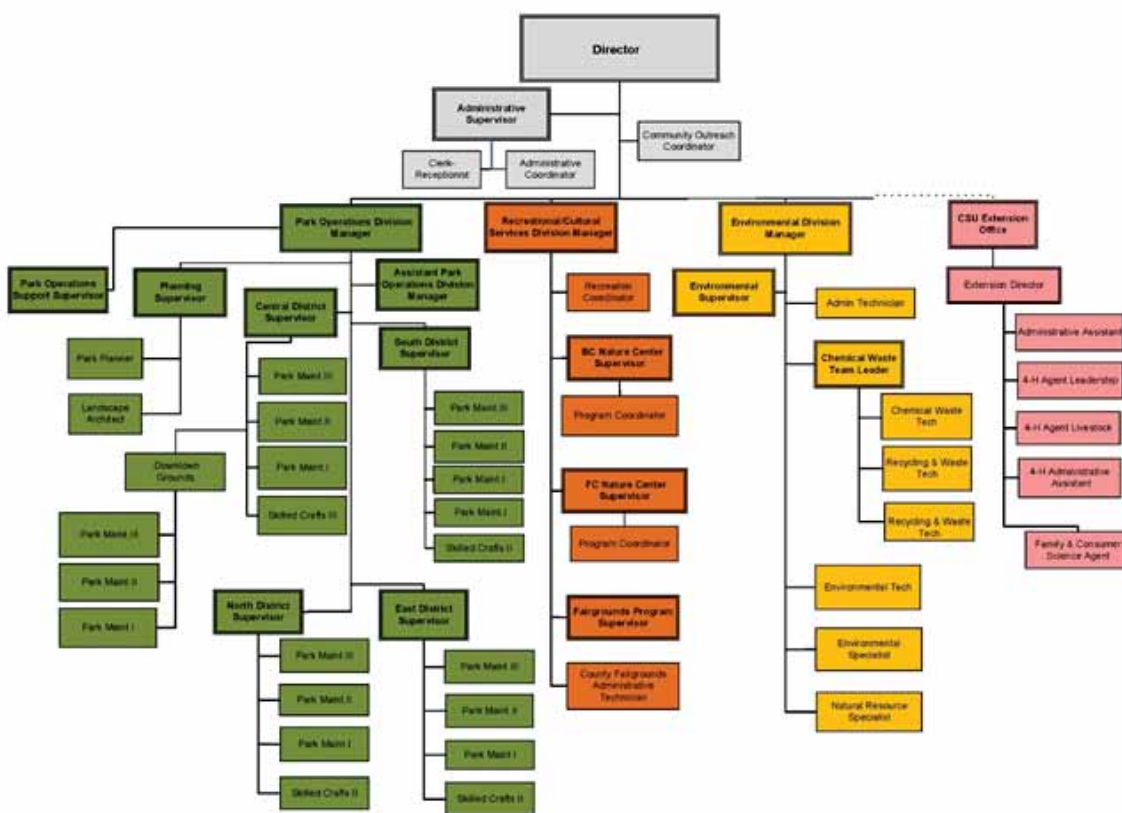
Chapter 3: The Department

Administration and Staffing

El Paso County Parks is currently comprised of four divisions: Park Operations, Recreation and Cultural Services, Environmental and the CSU Extension Office as shown in **Figure 12**. The Director of Community Services provides the leadership for the four divisions and provides the ultimate direction for Department. The Park Operations Division consist of 30 full time employees, one part time employee, and temporary/seasonal employees that are mostly tasked with maintenance of parks, trails and open space areas.

Figure 12: Organizational Chart

El Paso County Community Services Department



The Park Operations Division is responsible for the daily maintenance of all park property and landscaping functions at numerous County buildings. The division is supervised by the Park Operations Manager and is divided into four geographic districts: North, East, Central, and South. Each maintenance district is managed by a District Supervisor with several park maintenance technicians being assigned to each district.

The Park Planning team coordinates the planning and capital development functions of El Paso County Parks and provides long-range planning expertise for other County departments/divisions. The division is directed by the Planning Supervisor and includes a Park Planner and a Landscape Architect. The staff coordinates development of master plans and construction plans for parks, open space, and trail projects, provides project management of Parks capital projects, reviews development permit applications, provides substantive direction on grant submittals, completes a variety of Geographic Information System (GIS) functions, and helps staff a variety of regional planning initiatives.



The Recreation and Cultural Services Division is responsible for the management of the Bear Creek and Fountain Creek Nature Centers and the provision of a wide variety of interpretive and recreation programming. The Recreation and Cultural Services Manager directs Nature Center Supervisors and Interpretive Specialists. The division is responsible for management of the County Fair and non-fair programming at The El Paso County Fair and Events Complex, and the staff plans and conducts special events and other programs in County parks.

Volunteers are critical to the ongoing operations of El Paso County Parks, especially for recreation and cultural programs, including nature-based programming. Volunteers contribute more than 20,000 hours annually. Notable for its contribution of both volunteer time and funding is the Friends of El Paso County Nature Centers, a non-profit docent organization that provides critical support for the Bear Creek and Fountain Creek Nature Centers.

Parks and Recreation Operations and Capital Funding Sources

There are a variety of mechanisms that local governments can employ to provide services and to make public improvements. Parks and recreation operating, and capital development funding typically comes from conventional sources such as sales, use, and property tax referenda voted upon by the community, along with developer exactions. Operating funds are typically capped by legislation; may fluctuate based on the economy, public spending, or assessed valuation; and may not always keep up with inflationary factors. In the case of capital development, “borrowed funds” sunset with the completion of loan repayment, and are not available to carry-over or re-invest without voter approval.

Fee-simple purchases of land for public parks and open space are not common in El Paso County. Instead, the County has typically relied upon land acquisition techniques that involve easements, development dedication in lieu of fees, donations, grants, partnerships, and/or leveraged funds. Alternative funding sources include a variety of different or non-conventional public sector strategies for diversifying the funding base beyond traditional tax-based support.

Tax Support

The Parks Department receives approximately \$3 million in General Fund support which equates to 1.3% percent of the total County Budget. Approximately \$2.7 million is from property tax and sales tax and the remainder is generated from fees and charges. The funds are used for administrative and supervisory salaries, materials and supplies, and other general operation expenses. El Paso County does not have a dedicated sales use or property tax to support parks, trails, and open space.

Conservation Trust Fund (Lottery Funds)

El Paso County Parks receives approximately \$1.4 million annually from lottery proceeds. The Conservation Trust Funds (CTF) are provided to counties, cities, and special districts to develop new and expanded parks, trails, and open space. Due to significant financial pressures facing the County with the softening of the economy since the last Master Plan update in 2013 and the decrease in general fund support devoted to parks, \$1,000,000 of annual CTF funding is now being used for park maintenance salaries and benefits. El Paso County Parks utilizes the remainder of the annual allotment for ongoing maintenance. Therefore, there are no CTF funds available for park or open space development. The CTF has a current fund balance of approximately \$500,000.

Regional and Urban Park Fees

El Paso County Parks receives regional and urban park fees from new residential development in the County. These fees are the primary funding mechanism for capital development within the County Park system. However, with an aging park system an increasing portion of these capital funds are being used to address critical maintenance needs, thus reducing new park and open space development.

The regional park fees can be used for development of park facilities or the purchase of park property or open space. The regional fees must be used in designated areas where the fees were collected. Up until 2005, the regional park fees exacted via the development permit application process generated between \$200,000 - \$300,000 per year. In 2012, due to the soft real estate development market, the contributions to the regional park fee fund declined to \$50,000 - \$75,000 per year. From 2012 to 2021 the fee fund ran an average balance of \$407,867

Urban park fees are required for urbanized developments with lots smaller than 2.5 acres. These funds can be used for development of neighborhood / community park facilities. They can also be used for the development of neighborhood or pocket parks and recreation facilities by another governmental or quasi-governmental entity (such as a metropolitan district) as the County does not develop urban park facilities. Until 2005, urban park fees typically generated approximately \$100,000 - \$150,000 per year. In 2012, due to the soft real estate development market, contributions to this fund declined to approximately \$25,000 - \$50,000 annually. From 2012 to 2021 the fee fund ran an average balance of \$109,976.

Being the main driver of capital development, relying solely on development fees tied to fluctuations in the market make it difficult to plan for large long-term projects. This results in a lack of capital funds for acquisition of new park lands or open space. As for large capital projects the County typically phases improvements which is not an efficient use of funds or staff time.

User Fees

User fees are charged for a variety of individual or group uses currently generating approximately \$500,000 annually. El Paso County strives to charge a reasonable fee to ensure equitable access to County services.

- Admissions/Ticket Sales
- County Fair fees
- Equipment Rental: tables and chairs, tents, recreation equipment
- Facility rentals
- Program fees
- Security and clean-up fees

Contractual Services, Permits, Licensing Rights, and Use of Collateral Assets

- Agricultural leases
- Booth Lease Space: for vendors in parks, special events and tournaments
- Catering permits and services
- Concession Management: outside vendor for retail sale or rental of soft goods, hard goods, or consumable items.
- Land swaps
- Private concessionaires
- Privatization: outsourcing management or maintenance
- Special use permits

Philanthropic Support/ Donations

- Adopt-a-Park/Adopt-a-Trail
- Fundraising/Friends associations
- Gift catalogs
- Volunteers/In-kind services

Grants

El Paso County Parks aggressively pursues grants from various federal, state, and local private foundations, for respective park projects.

- Federal Highways – Nonmotorized, Transportation
- National Park Service – Recreational Trails
- Land and Water Conservation Fund
- Great Outdoors Colorado – Planning, Purchase, Construction
- Colorado Parks and Wildlife – Planning, Maintenance, Construction
- Facilities and equipment grants
- Matching grants
- Seed money or start-up grants

Other Funding Techniques

- Corporate sponsorships
- Cost avoidance (shared purchasing for example)
- Inter-local agreements
- Positive cash flow (end of year fund balance)
- Partnership opportunities
- Fee-simple land purchase

Comparative Analysis

Benchmarking with other nearby counties can be an effective tool that allows for a point of comparison with other agencies, allowing the Department to understand areas of opportunity. The intent of benchmarking is to compare “apple to apples” with other agencies, however, with recognition that each jurisdiction has its own unique identity, ways of conducting business, and distinct community needs. The political, social, economic, and physical characteristics of each community make the policies and practices of each county unique.

Additionally, organizations do not typically measure or define various metrics the same way for parks, trails, facilities, and maintenance. Agencies also vary in terms of how they organize their budget information, and it may be difficult to assess whether the past year’s expenses are typical for the community. Therefore, it is important to take all data in a benchmarking study in context, realizing that while benchmarking can be a great comparative tool, it doesn’t necessarily lend itself to being a decision-making tool.

In this study, four nearby agencies were compared to El Paso County. The population for these neighboring counties ranged from approximately 329,000 to 643,000, with El Paso County at an estimated 723,994. The square mileage of the counties ranged from approximately 740 to 2,400 square miles, with El Paso County at an estimated 2,128 square miles. The Open Space managed by each county ranges from 4,808 acres (Douglas County) to 66,619 acres (Boulder County) with El Paso County at approximately 4,824 acres. From a population and total public land perspective, El Paso County aligns closest to Arapahoe County.

Table 5: Comparative Evidence

County Data					
	El Paso	Arapahoe	Boulder	Douglas	Jefferson
Total County Population, (DLG Forecast)	723,994	643,257	329,445	345,342	582,910
% Annual Population Growth	1.90%	0.90%	0.10%	1.01%	0.49%
Total Unincorporated Population	191,863	95,375	44,494	202,400	201,950
% Unincorporated Population	26.50%	14.83%	13.50%	58.61%	34.60%
Area	2,130 sq mi	804 sq mi	740 sq mi	842 sq mi	764 sq mi
Parks, Open Space and Trails System Data					
	El Paso	Arapahoe	Boulder	Douglas	Jefferson
Number of Open Space Properties	11	5	20	16	27
Open Space (acres)	4,824	4,808	66,619	63,037	56,000
Open Space available to the public (acres)	4,554	1,743	31,026	2,038	42,339
Managed trails (miles)	138	14	123	60	252
Conservation Easements (acres)	2,500	2,700	3,871	13,000	2,822
Open Space acres Per 1,000	11.05	7.47	202.22	182.53	96.07

Operating Expenditures

FY21 approved budgets were researched for each county. These numbers should be used as an estimate only, due to the possibility of errors, data omissions, and changes due to COVID-19. Data from the study indicates that expenditures varied greatly, with peer agencies spending between \$3.8 million (Douglas County) to 24.1 million (Jefferson County) annually.

Figure 13: Acres Realtive to Operating Budget

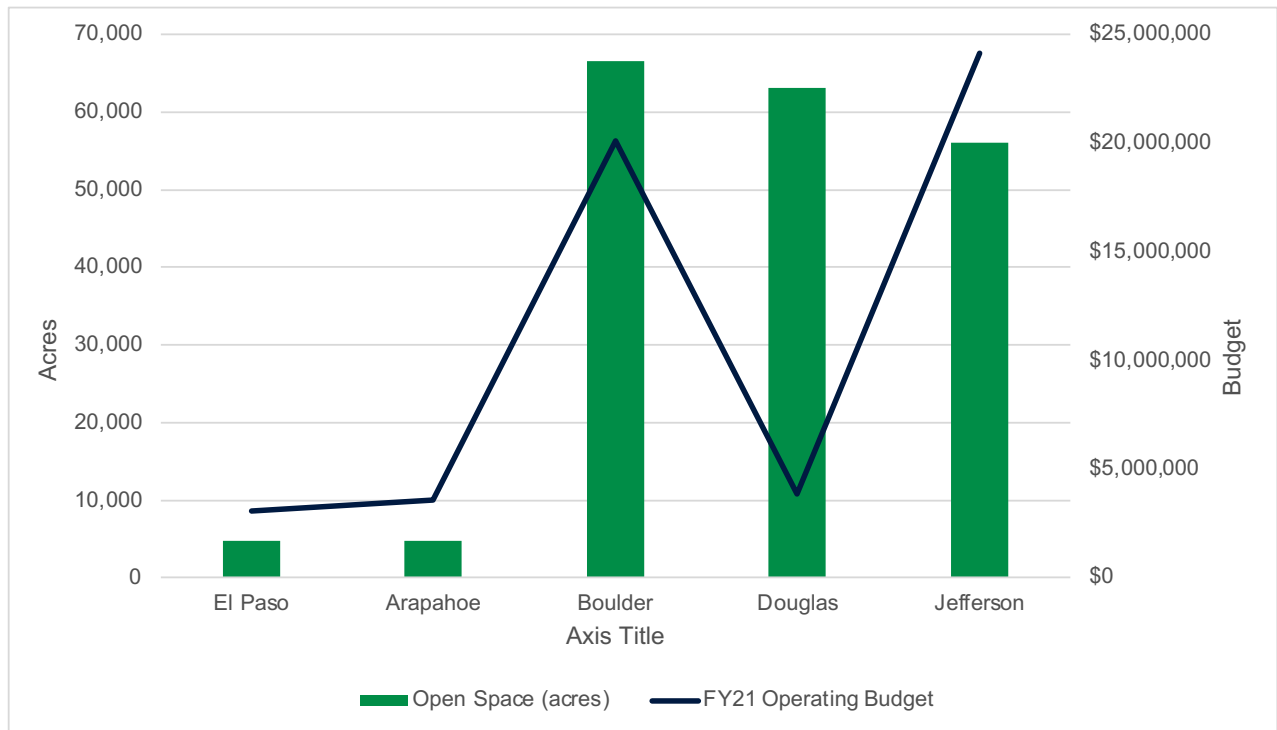
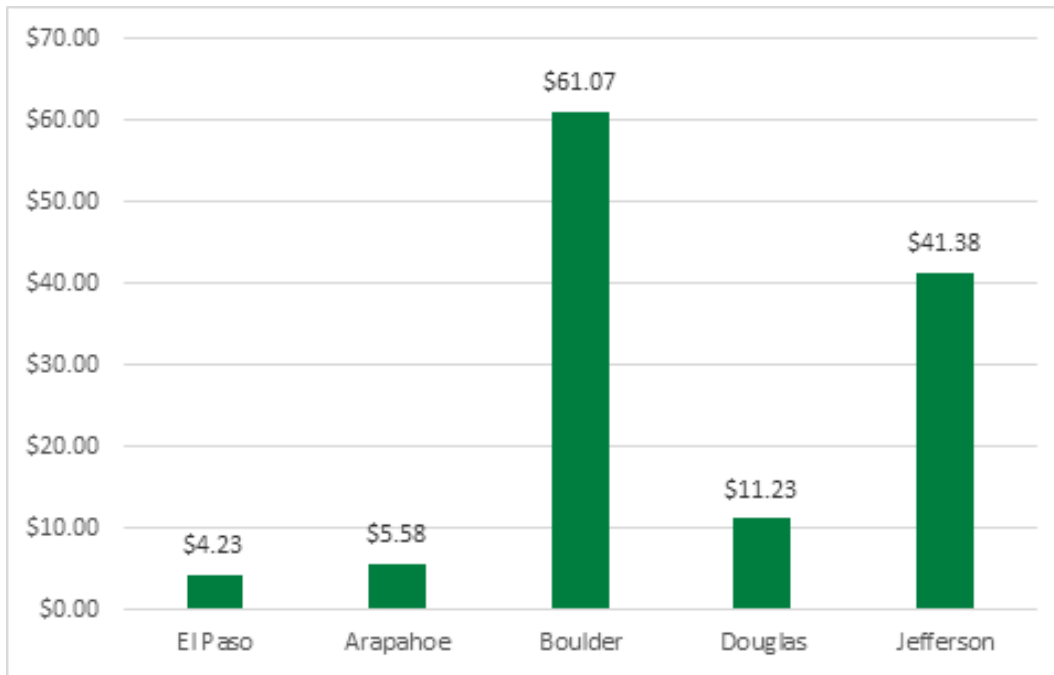


Table 6: Comparative Operating Budget Data

Budget/Funding Data					
	El Paso	Arapahoe	Boulder	Douglas	Jefferson
Primary Funding Source	General Fund	Dedicated Sales Tax	Dedicated Sales Tax/ Property Tax	Dedicated Sales Tax	Dedicated Sales Tax
Open Space Sales and Use Tax %	N/A	0.25%	0.48%	0.17%	0.50%
FY21 Sales Tax Parks/Open Space Revenue	N/A	\$29,094,000	\$56,893,000	\$13,527,000	\$53,698,000
FY21 Adopted Budget	\$3,065,000	\$30,740,000	\$61,410,000	\$6,528,000	\$62,342,000
FY21 Land Acquisition and Capital Improvements	\$0	\$0	\$36,774,000	\$607,500	\$18,916,000
FY21 Shareback Program	N/A	\$27,153,000	N/A	\$2,041,000	\$19,307,000
FY21 Fairgrounds Budget within Open Space Budget	N/A	N/A	\$4,517,000	N/A	N/A
FY21 Operating Budget	\$3,065,000	\$3,587,000	\$20,119,000	\$3,879,500	\$24,119,000
Per Capita Spending	\$4.23	\$5.58	\$61.07	\$11.23	\$41.38
Annual Per Acre Spending	\$383.13	\$746.05	\$302.00	\$61.54	\$430.70
FY21 FTE Count	26	29	109	10	113

The per person spending by each County varies significantly. El Paso County has the lowest average per person spending at \$4.23 per capita while Boulder County is spending \$61.07 per capita. Again, El Paso County aligns the closest with Arapahoe County spending \$5.58 per person. To reach \$5.58 per capita spending El Paso would need a budget increase of approximately one million dollars.

Figure 14: Comparative Per Capita Spending by County



Open Space Sales and Use Tax

In recent years, many counties and municipalities have, with voter approval, established dedicated open space taxes. The revenues from an open space tax can support a pay-as-you-go strategy for open space preservation, or can go toward debt service on money that is borrowed to pay for open space. The four comparison counties benchmarked in this study all have Open Space and Use Taxes in place.

Arapahoe County

Arapahoe County’s parks, trails and open spaces are funded by a voter supported, quarter-cent Open Space Sales and Use Tax. More than 62% of the tax revenues are distributed directly back to local agency partners through Shareback and Grant Programs. Arapahoe County has the largest shareback program in Colorado. Each year, 50% of the Open Space Sales and Use Tax revenue is distributed to twelve participating cities and towns throughout the County. In 2020, more than \$15 million was allocated for various public open space, park, playground, and trail system projects. In unincorporated areas, Arapahoe County Open Space provides stewardship for open space parks and corridors, heritage landscapes and regional trails.

The percentage of Open Spaces sales and use tax revenue that can be utilized for different functions is specified by the voter approved resolution. This limits the level of funding for key operations and maintenance purposes.

This budget covers the following funds as required by voter approved resolution:

- 26.66% for the acquisition of open space and trails in the unincorporated portion of the county
- 50% share back to incorporated cities and towns
- 12% for grants for special districts and incorporated cities and towns
- 4% for administrative costs
- 3.24% for maintenance costs
- 4.1% for the preservation of heritage areas

Boulder County

Boulder County uses various funding sources to purchase lands for use by the public as open space. The first 0.25% sales and use tax for open space acquisition and maintenance was approved by voters in 1992. Since that time voters have approved several additional open space taxes and several extensions, bringing the current sales tax rate dedicated to open space to 0.475%. The latest extension was approved by voters in 2016 and went into effect in 2020. This fund includes dedicated revenue streams that are all targeted towards funding county open space acquisitions and maintenance. Property tax funds, subject to annual appropriation by the Board of County Commissioners, generate about \$4 million annually for open space acquisitions. One-time capital expenditures are made from any surplus in revenues that are not committed for debt service or operations.



Douglas County

Both the Open Space and Natural Resources and Parks, Trails and Building Grounds Divisions are funded by revenues collected through the County's Park, Trails and Open Space Sales and Use Tax (PTOS).

As approved, the PTOS Sales and Use Tax establishes a levy of one-sixth of one cent applicable to the sales of goods, including automobiles, and building and construction materials.

The Sales and Use Tax most generally provides for the acquisition, conservation, and management of open space resources and for the construction, acquisition and maintenance of park and recreation facilities and equipment. The County PTOS Sales and Use Tax provides specific guidance in the expenditure of its funds, including:

- Providing for distribution of a portion of its revenues back to those municipalities in existence at the time of its approval.
- Identifying the maximum amount of funds (8 percent) to be used to cover overhead costs.
- Identifying percentage distributions of funds for both open space resources, and parks and recreation.
- Establishing criteria to be used in the evaluation of proposed acquisition of open space lands and interests
- Identifying intended improvements for parks and trails facilities.

Following approval of the PTOS Sales and Use Tax, in 1996, voters approved the issuance of bonds, secured by future Sales and Use Tax revenues, to expedite land acquisition during the high-growth period of the late 1990s and early 2000s. Today, revenues from the Sales and Use Tax are oriented primarily to debt payment on the bonds. Consequently, major open space acquisitions are rarer.

Alternative resource conservation tools such as multiple funding sources, partnerships with neighboring agencies and municipalities, and acquisition of conservation easements by conservation organizations have become the predominant tools in securing protection of open space resources.

Jefferson County

Jefferson County Open Space is the nation's first sales tax-funded County open space program. The voter-approved one half of one percent sales tax to fund Jefferson County Open Space is the primary revenue source for land acquisition, administration, management, city share back, and Local Grants.

When Jefferson County voters approved the Jeffco Open Space Enabling Resolution, no "sunset" or end date was included, thereby ensuring perpetual land conservation, stewardship of open space and parklands, and access for public enjoyment. The Enabling Resolution provides that cities within the County receive an attributable share of the sales tax fund for local park and open space purposes. This share amounts to nearly one-third of all Open Space sales tax collected. The allocations to cities are based on a formula derived from motor vehicle registrations.

In 1998, voters approved the issuance of Bonds to generate \$160 Million for acquiring open space lands. This issuance was passed with the understanding that the bond debt repayment would leave the attributable shares of the cities whole and be drawn solely from the County share. This bond debt repayment will be repaid fully in 2024. The largest share of the bond debt repayment took place between 2014 and 2019, with nearly 30 percent of the Jeffco Open Space budget designated for principal and interest payments for prior land acquisitions. The Bond funds have enabled the County to nearly double the Open Space property portfolio from 1999 through 2010 by acquiring 19,824 acres of land for Jeffco Open Space as well as parkland for cities and park districts from the original \$160 Million.

Boards and Commissions

Board of County Commissioners

The County Commissioners are constitutional officers elected to four-year terms. The Board of County Commissioners, an administrative and policy-making body, has only such powers and authority as are granted by the General Assembly of the Colorado State Legislature. County government is a political subdivision of state government, created to carry out the will of the state. Colorado counties with a population of 70,000 or more may have a three or five-member board of commissioners. In 1976 the voters of El Paso County chose to have a board of five commissioners, each elected to represent a district. The districts are equal in population, and the boundaries are established by the board every two years.

The Board of County Commissioners approves the annual budget for County business units, including the Community Services Department, and annually sets the amount of park fees authorized by the El Paso County Land Development Code. A Commissioner liaison to El Paso County Parks is appointed on an annual basis and the individual provides support and guidance for parks planning, operations, and programs.

Planning Commission

The Planning Commission consists of nine members appointed by the Board of County Commissioners for three-year terms. Three associate members may also be appointed for one-year terms. The Planning Commission reviews development permit applications and makes recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners, and prepares a master plan for unincorporated areas of the County.

In El Paso County, the master plan is a collection of planning documents, including the Parks Master Plan. The Planning Commission is the final approval authority for adoption of the Parks Master Plan and does so after two public hearings.

Park Advisory Board

The Board of County Commissioners appoints a nine-member Park Advisory Board which provides recommendations on the operation of the County’s park system. The Park Advisory Board’s specific responsibilities include formal recommendations on development permit applications, the annual operating budget, long-range plans, and individual master plans for the development of regional parks, trails, and open space, and department policies and procedures.

Park Fee Advisory Committee

The Committee consists of five members appointed by the Board of County Commissioners. The Park Fee Advisory Committee meets from September through December of each year to establish a fair and equitable park fee schedule for the coming year for the fees in lieu of land dedication allowed by the Land Development Code. The group works with information from the County Assessor to evaluate the fee relative to land values, in order to make recommendations to El Paso County Parks and the Board of County Commissioners.

Fair Advisory Board

The Board of County Commissioners appoints a Fair Advisory Board that assists with the administration of the County Fair. The members work closely with the Fairgrounds Corporation and staff and assume specific areas of responsibility to ensure the County Fair is administered effectively each year.



THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Chapter 4: Stakeholder Input and User Perceptions

In developing the Plan update, El Paso County Parks staff were committed to encouraging a broad spectrum of County residents to participate in an open and transparent public input process. This process was designed to provide citizens information about the purpose of the Plan and the facilities and services provided by the County, and to solicit ideas and priorities related to existing and future parks, trails, open space, and recreation and cultural programs offered by the County.

The community engagement process was comprehensive to both gather information and engage citizens, staff, partners, and other key stakeholders. Participants were presented information and encouraged to provide their perspectives and insights. Opportunities included:

- Focus groups/stakeholder meetings
- Participation in an online Bang the Table community engagement site at <https://epcountyparkplan.com/>
- Web-based survey
- As a best practice during the COVID-19 pandemic, meetings were facilitated on-line.

Focus Groups/Stakeholder Meetings

Two stakeholder groups were facilitated on June 10 and 11, 2021. Representatives of fifteen organizations, associations and governmental agencies (see sidebar), participated in the discussions. Input from the focus group meetings was used to help formulate the questions for web-based survey.

An invitation was presented to identify issues of interest and concern related to El Paso County parks, trails, and open space; collect information and insights about existing conditions of facilities and programs; explore opportunities for partnerships in implementing the updated Plan; and solicit suggestions for what the Plan should aim to include or accomplish in the future.

By far, the strongest sentiment for El Paso County Parks over the next 5-10 years is to maintain existing parks, trails and open space. Concerns surrounding funding restrictions, which limits the County's ability to effectively manage important and unique assets were also expressed.

Organizations Represented in Focus Groups



- Trails and Open Space Coalition
- Black Forest Trails Association
- Fountain Creek Watershed, Flood Control and Greenway District
- El Paso County Public Works
- El Paso County Planning Commission
- Friends of El Paso County Nature Centers
- City of Manitou Springs
- El Paso County Planning and Community Development
- Palmer Land Conservancy
- Town of Monument
- City of Colorado Springs -Parks
- Town of Calhan
- Town of Ramah
- Town of Palmer Lake

Strengths

- Nature Center Staff
- Nature Center Programs and Events
- Natural Resources
- Incredible assets
- Equestrian Center
- Responsive and compassionate staff
- Ability to stretch a dollar
- Friends Group(s) and Stewardship Programs
- Strong Collaborators
- Variety of opportunities (programs/natural assets)
- Dedicated Trail Easements

Weaknesses

- Inappropriate use of parks (e-bikes/e-scooters)
- Informal trails are disappearing
- Lack of maintenance
- Inability to keep up with use of parkland
- Lack of resources
- Insufficient enforcement
- Inadequate funding
- Current signage
- Difficult to quantify Parks value
- Low per capita (parks) spending
- Ability to manage important or unique assets due to funding restrictions
- Inadequate equestrian trailheads and parking
- Public perception that the County (not necessarily Parks) will not take on maintenance of new trails through conservation easements (extension of Front Range Trail/Raymond Peak Trail)

Opportunities

- New Leadership
- Education campaign on the benefit of parks/creating park advocates
- Water management in Parks
- Demonstration gardens
- Park Programs (Yoga, Pickleball)
- Friends Groups
- Partnering with Colorado Springs for TOPS funding
- Sales Tax
- Leveraging the communities' willingness to contribute
- Trail connectivity with Colorado Springs
- Lodgers and Automobile Rental Tax increasing in 2023 is being considered

Threats

- Climate Change – Fires
- Illegal use of motorized vehicles
- Water supply
- Water quality
- Development
- Population Growth
- Vandalism
- Overuse of assets

Online Engagement

Bang the Table was used to host the project website, epcountyparkplan.com. The multilingual online platform provided information about the Plan and offered a mechanism for community members to contribute their ideas regarding parks, open space, trails and recreation services in the County. The website utilized polls, an ideas board, and an online survey to gather community thoughts, priorities, and perspectives. During its first two months the site generated over 2,000 page views. Feedback from site contributors centered around the need for additional Park staff and concerns surrounding a lack of funding.

Web based Survey

Following the focus group sessions, all County residents and stakeholders were encouraged to visit epcountyparkplan.com to complete a survey and provide feedback on several topics. This survey was publicized through email lists, newsletters, ads on social media, public meetings, etc. A total of 630 surveys were received. It is important to note that this survey was not random, so is not a statistically-valid survey. Therefore, it is not solely relied upon for determining recommendations, but did help shape and inform the key themes and issues to be addressed through this plan.

The survey was open from September 1 through 30, 2021. Twenty-one (21) questions were asked about the parks, trails, and open space system and the recreation and cultural services programs offered by the County. The final report (provided in **Appendix A**) includes a wealth of information to help address the key issues identified during this process. Respondents to the survey provided information about interests, experiences, familiarity and awareness, satisfaction levels, and future desires. Six hundred and thirty responses were received.

55% of respondents have lived in the county for 20 or more years

60% of respondents were 50 or over

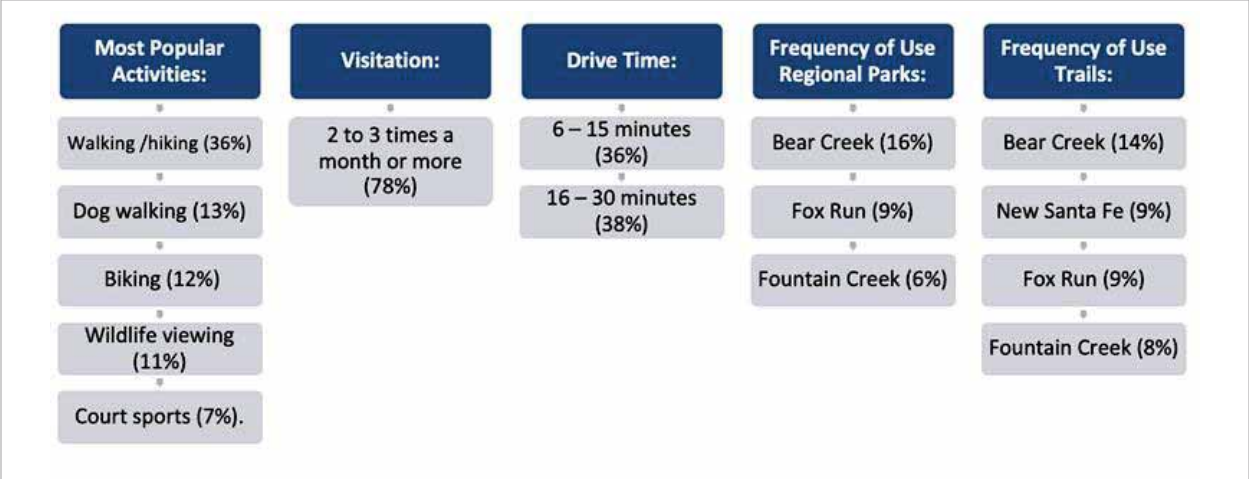
62% of respondents have two to three people living in their home

82% of respondents were White

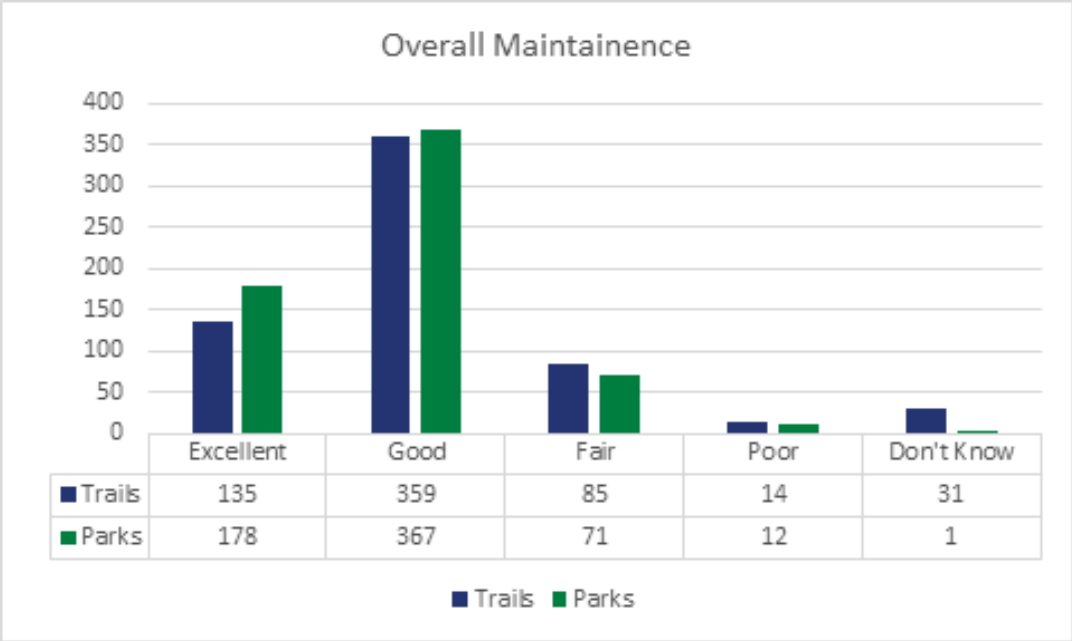
4% of respondents were of Hispanic/Latino/Spanish origin

43% of respondents live in the urban core of the county

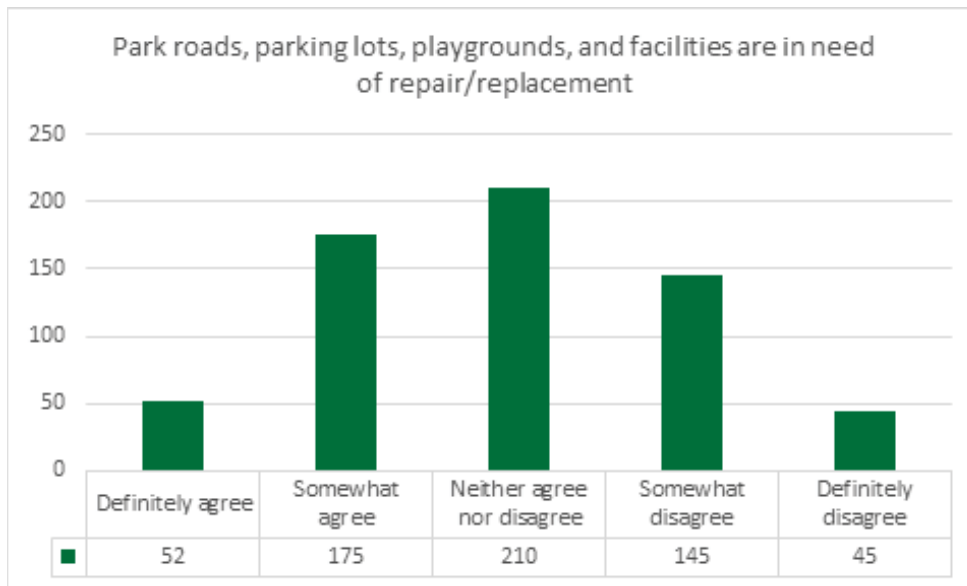
9% in SE, 28% in SW, 21% in NE and 9% in NW areas of the County



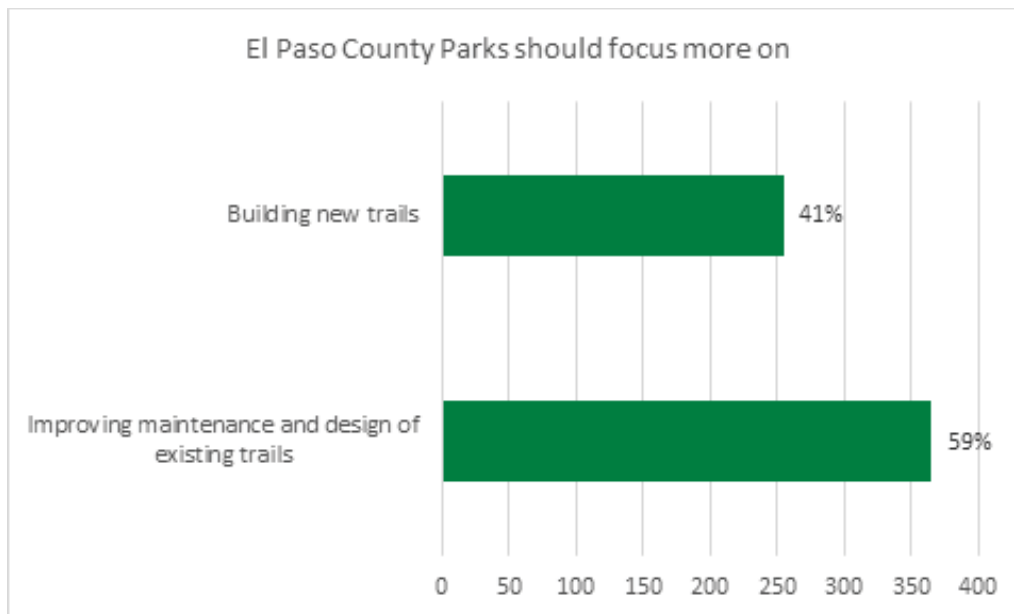
A large majority of respondents (84 percent) rated the maintenance of county parks, as either good (56 percent) or excellent (26 percent). Trail maintenance was rated at a similar level. Most respondents (79 percent) rated maintenance of trails as either good (58 percent) or excellent (21 percent).



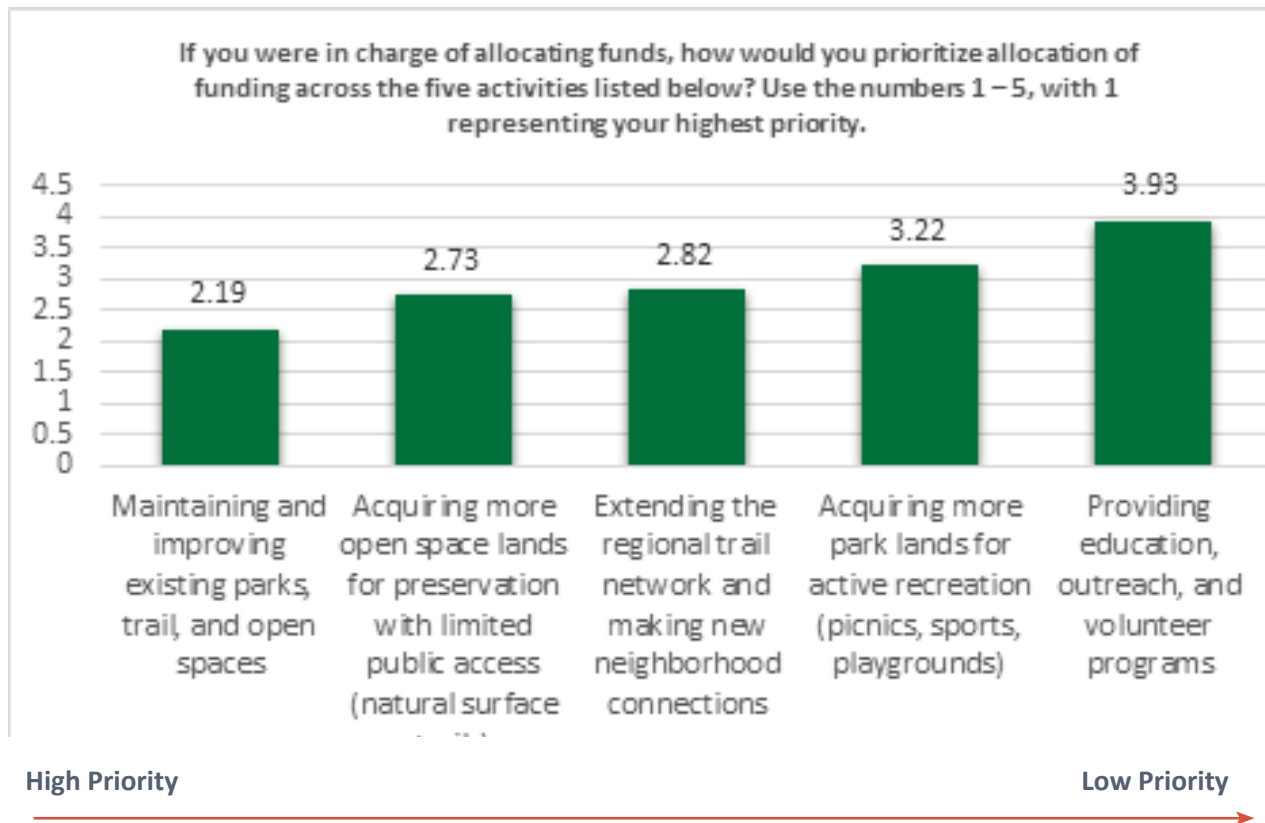
Regarding maintenance, 36 percent of respondents feel park roads, parking lots, playgrounds and facilities need repair or replacement.



On the subject of trails, 59 percent of respondents feel improving maintenance and design of existing trails is a priority over building new trails.



When respondents were asked how they would allocate funding across five activities, the maintenance of existing parks, trails and open space surfaced to the top. It was followed by acquiring more open space lands for preservation with limited public access. **One was representative of their highest priority.**



Chapter 5: Trends in Recreation

Looking at the recreation trends both nationally and regionally can help assist El Paso County in understanding and planning for the future. The survey and public input demonstrated a key interest in a number of programmatic and facility related trends that are directly relevant to the type of development of the area.

It is challenging for a parks and recreation agency to continue to understand and respond to the changing recreation interests of those it serves. The following information highlights relevant local, regional, and national outdoor recreation trends from various sources that may influence El Paso County over the next five to ten years.

Outdoor Recreation Changing from COVID-19

Outdoor recreation participation has changed greatly due to COVID-19 and several research reports have been conducted to analyze these trends. New participants were mostly looking for socially-distant outdoor activities in order to spend quality time with their loved ones while remaining safe, exercising, staying healthy, and reducing screen time fatigue. More people have been spending time outside because the pandemic has resulted in screen fatigue, although this screen time had traditionally been a barrier to spending time outside. It has been reported that screen time has still increased during the pandemic as people use it as a replacement for going out to bars and events, however most plan to reduce their screen time once restrictions are lifted. Unfortunately, one-quarter of new participants admit that they will most likely not continue their activities once restrictions are lifted due to the difficulty of travel, resuming other activities, and family demands. Travel is an obstacle that many struggle with in regard to outdoor participation, which is why a lack of information about where to go, how to participate, and what groups one could possibly join are additional barriers related to this issue. An increase in this information during a time like this could attract new participants and keep others within their already existing routines.



The Outdoor Industry Association gives the definition of a new participant which are, “those who either started an outdoor activity for the first time or for the first time in more than a year during the pandemic (since March 2020)”. As mentioned earlier with the travel barrier, new participants are largely encouraged to engage in outdoor activities when there are low barriers to entry and the activity is within 10 miles of their home. Many times, such activities include walking, running, biking, and hiking because they all are easily accessible. However, vacations can also provide an “entry point” for someone to try a new activity that they would not usually engage in such as kayaking or fishing. The most popular activities vary by ethnicity which is shown below:



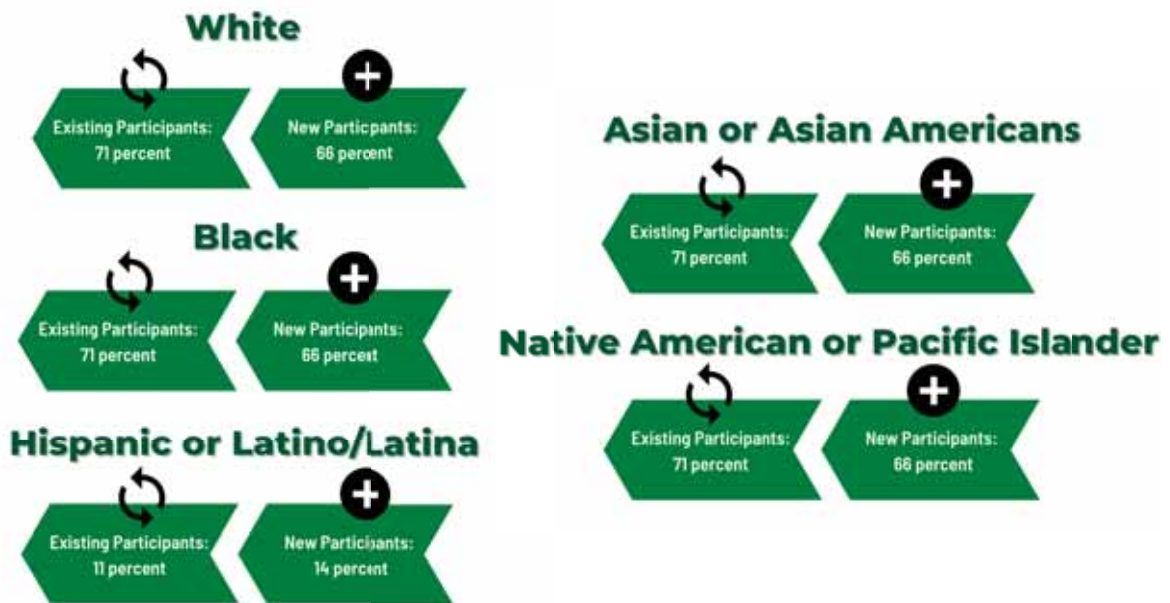
In the 2020 report, the findings showed that children ages 6 to 17 went on an average of 76 outdoor outings per year, whereas young adults (between 18 and 24 years old) went on 90 outings per year.

Table 7: Annual Outings Per Young Adult Participant

Ages 6 to 17	2020	1-Year Change	3-Year Change
Total Outings	2.57 Billion	3 percent	2 percent
Participants	33.7 Million	4 percent	2 percent
Average Outings Per Participant	76.5	-1 percent	0 percent
Ages 18 to 24	2020	1-Year Change	3-Year Change
Total Outings	1.53 Billion	-7 percent	-2 percent
Participants	18 Million	1 percent	2 percent
Average Outings Per Participant	91.2	-7 percent	-4 percent

Source: Outdoor Industry Association New Outdoor Participant Report (COVID and beyond)

Almost half of the new participants said that they had previous experience with their new outdoor activity and almost a third of people found out about their new outdoor activity via friends or relatives. Below is a list of the outdoor participant profile demographics:



New participants are also more likely to be female (58 percent vs. 49 percent), slightly more ethnically diverse (71 percent vs. 66 percent white), more likely to live in an urban area (36 percent vs. 29 percent), and lastly more likely to be in a lower income bracket (46 percent vs. 41 percent with income of \$100K+). Although Hispanic and Black participation numbers have increased recently, they still do not represent their population size. For example, Black Americans would need an additional 9 million participants to equal their percent share of the U.S. population and Hispanic Americans would need an additional 19 million participants. Out of all of these households, ones that have children have much higher participation rates than adults without children (57 percent vs. 44.4 percent).

The reports show that there are multiple ways in which the retention of new participants can be improved upon. As restrictions are lifted, making activities more social will draw in new participants because many people are looking for ways to reconnect with the community. The development of programs that have the objective to work towards diversifying the participant base should also be pushed to increase the opportunity of people apart from Caucasians. The creation of new outdoor recreation opportunities will increase the activities close to people's homes which will make them more likely to participate. Additionally, social media is a great tool to promote outdoor participation through providing information on these opportunities, providing training to build confidence, and by providing networking outlets for people to find others to participate with. Outdoor activities are a low-cost remedy for bringing friends, families, and communities together safely along with making positive changes in one's mental and physical wellbeing.

Outdoor Recreation Colorado Top Recreation Activities

Every five years, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) leads development of a comprehensive outdoor recreation plan to maintain eligibility for funding through the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and to inform additional investments from other federal, state, local and private programs. Given the significance of outdoor recreation in the state, this plan is much more than a federal requirement for funding. Colorado's 2019 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) was developed in close collaboration with a wide range of partners to provide a shared vision for the future of Colorado's outdoors. In addition, the SCORP looks at current and changing demographics and recreation trends to help the outdoor recreation sector be culturally relevant and respond to future shifts. According to the SCORP the top outdoor recreation activities in the Colorado include:³

- Walking
- Hiking/Backpacking
- Tent camping
- Picnicking
- Fishing
- Playground activities
- Jogging/Running (outdoors)
- Skiing (alpine/tele)/snowboarding
- Wildlife viewing (not including bird watching)
- RV camping/cabins

According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis the outdoor recreation economy accounted for 1.8 percent (\$374.3 billion) of current-dollar gross domestic product (GDP) for the nation in 2020. At the state level, outdoor recreation value added as a share of state GDP ranged from 4.3 percent in Montana to 1.2 percent in New York and Connecticut. Outdoor Recreation accounts for 2.5% of Colorado's GDP. **In 2020, nearly \$10 billion dollars of value was added to the Colorado economy from outdoor recreation.** Over \$5.6 million in compensation was distributed from 120,063 jobs across the state. The top three activities in terms of revenue in the state in 2020 were snow activities, boating/fishing, and RVing.⁴

3 "Colorado Parks and Wildlife." Colorado Parks and Wildlife, 2019, cpw.state.co.us/aboutus/Pages/SCORP.aspx. Accessed 23 June 2021.

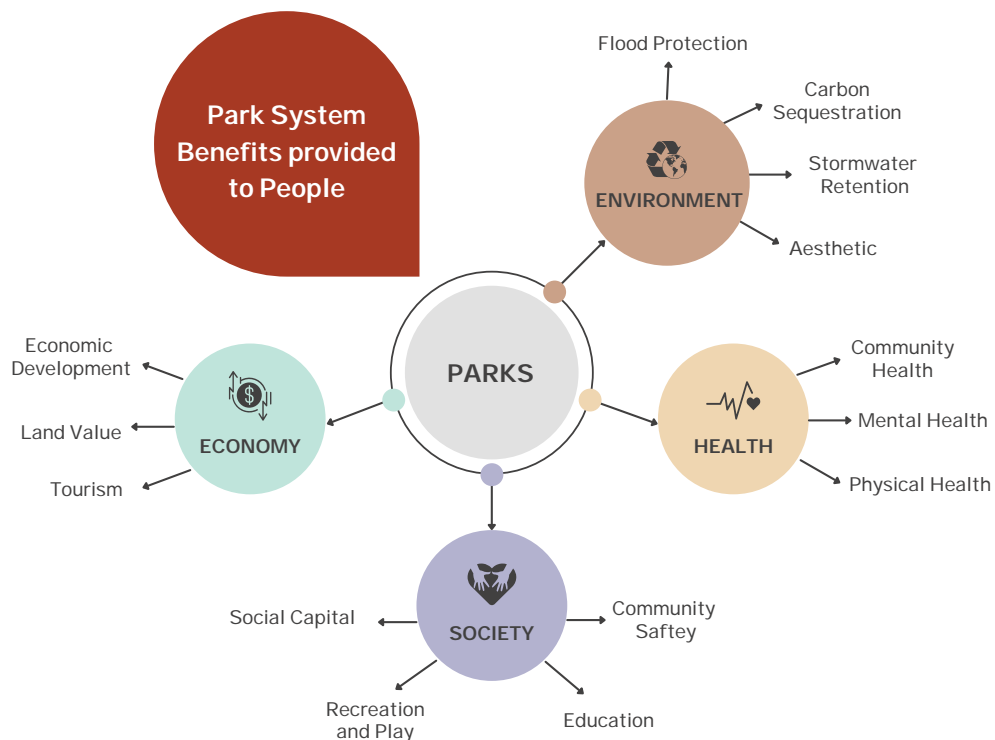
4 "Outdoor Industry Association." Outdoor Industry Association, 2021, outdoorindustry.org/state/colorado/. Accessed 23 June 2021.

Parks as Economic Drivers

The Benefits of Parks: Why America Needs More City Parks and Open Space, a report from the Trust for Public Land, makes the following observations about the health, economic, environmental, and social benefits of parks and open space:

- Physical activity makes people healthier.
- Physical activity increases with access to parks.
- Contact with the natural world improves physical and physiological health.
- Residential and commercial property values increase.
- Value is added to community and economic development sustainability.
- Benefits of tourism are enhanced.
- Trees are effective in improving air quality and act as natural air conditioners.
- Trees assist with storm water control and erosion.
- Crime and juvenile delinquency are reduced.
- Recreational opportunities for all ages are provided.
- Stable neighborhoods and strong communities are created.

Figure 15: Impacts of Parks on Health, Society, Economy, and the Environment



Source: Earth Economics

Local Recreation Expenditures

Data from *Esri Business Analyst* estimate that **El Paso County residents collectively spend more than \$206 million on recreation expenditures in the area each year.** Individuals typically will spend hundreds of dollars each year on equipment related to fitness, outdoor recreation, and other recreational activities, with the majority of expenditures related to fees and admissions for entertainment, recreation, and membership fees.

Figure 16: 2020 Recreational Expenditures in El Paso County

Variable	Individual Average	Total Spent on Recreation
Entertainment/Recreation - Fees & Admissions	\$746.77	\$206,835,923
Membership Fees for Social/Recreation/Health Clubs	\$245.30	\$67,941,818
Entertainment/Recreation - Sports/Rec/Exercise Equipment	\$218.62	\$60,551,241
Fees for Recreational Lessons	\$152.96	\$42,364,704
Entertainment/Recreation - Toys/Games/Crafts/Hobbies	\$127.34	\$35,269,859
Camp Fees	\$51.13	\$14,160,917
Pet Services	\$77.44	\$21,448,594
Bicycles	\$32.74	\$9,067,188
Hunting & Fishing Equipment	\$69.55	\$19,262,753
Camping Equipment	\$25.39	\$7,033,478
Water Sports Equipment	\$7.09	\$1,962,772
Winter Sports Equipment	\$5.31	\$1,469,849

Source: Esri Business Analyst

Trails & Health

A connected system of trails increases the level of physical activity in a community, according to the Trails for Health initiative of the (CDC). Trails can provide a wide variety of opportunities for being physically active, such as walking/running/hiking, rollerblading, wheelchair recreation, bicycling, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing, fishing, hunting, and horseback riding. Recognizing that active use of trails for positive health outcomes is an excellent way to encourage people to adopt healthy lifestyle changes, American Trails has launched a “Health and Trails” resource section in its website: www.americantrails.org/resources/benefits/.

The health benefits are equally as high for trails in urban neighborhoods as for those in state or national parks. A trail in the neighborhood, creating a ‘linear park’, makes it easier for people to incorporate exercise into their daily routines, whether for recreation or non-motorized transportation. Urban trails need to connect people to places they want to go, such as schools, transit centers, businesses, and neighborhoods.

Healthy Aging in Parks

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) developed the Healthy Aging in Parks initiative to support parks and recreation agencies in serving older adults in the community. This initiative is based on the needs of older adults, including physical fitness, socialization, transportation, and other quality of life desires. Some of the primary strategies of the Healthy Aging in Parks initiative are as follows:

- Promote participation in physical activity through providing social engagement
- Provide safe environments – both inside and outside – that limit barriers for participation
- Utilize evidence-based interventions to increase support and manage chronic diseases

Park and Recreation agencies can assist the aging demographic in staying healthy through providing programs and facilities. According to an NRPA survey, nine in ten local Park and Recreation agencies offer services for older adults. Surveys reveal that agencies are most likely to the following services:

- Exercise classes (91 percent)
- Field trips, tours, vacations (70 percent)
- Arts and crafts classes (67 percent)
- Opportunities to volunteer in recreation centers (58 percent)
- Special events and festivals (58 percent)
- Group walks (53 percent)
- Opportunities to volunteer in parks (48 percent)
- Paid job opportunities to lead exercise classes, work in recreation centers or at parks (47 percent)

For underserved older adults, parks and recreation agencies can be a critical resource, providing low-cost meals, low-cost or free fitness programs, and transportation services. However, many organizations are faced with barriers that inhibit the ability to offer these programs, with the top responses being facility space shortage (58 percent) and inadequate funding (50 percent). In order to overcome these obstacles, agencies will often develop relationships with partners in the community who may specialize in serving the older adults. Some of the primary partners include:

- Area agencies on aging (58 percent)
- Retirement communities (44 percent)
- Senior meals providers (42 percent)
- Hospitals and doctors' offices (39 percent)
- Local health departments (39 percent)
- Health insurance companies (38 percent)
- Community-based organizations (faith based, YMCAs, etc.) (38 percent)

As adults continue to age, many agencies offer a localized bus service for seniors in need of transportation. This type of service can help seniors maintain their independence while meeting their needs for grocery shopping, medical appointments, and other basic services. In addition, transportation services can help combat isolation by providing a socializing experience. Some agencies, such as the City of Walnut Creek, California, are experimenting with new technologies, such as Lyft, to further bridge the gap. Funding for the Lyft pilot program – which provides free rides for qualifying Senior Club members – was provided for by the Transportation Partnership and Cooperation for Contra Costa County (TRANSPAC). To account for a lack of smartphones and technical assistance among older adults, Walnut Creek created a Lyft reservation line where seniors can call and reserve a ride. Staff are also available at recreation centers to provide tutorials on how to use the app if desired.

Outdoor Fitness Trails Encourage Exercise

A popular trend in urban parks for health, wellness, and fitness activities is to install outdoor fitness equipment along trails. The intent of the outdoor equipment is to provide an accessible form of exercise for all community members, focusing on strength, balance, flexibility, and cardio exercise. These fitness stations – also known as “outdoor gyms” -- are generally meant for adults, but can be grouped together near a playground or kid-friendly amenity so that adults can exercise and socialize while supervising their children. The fitness equipment can also be dispersed along a nature trail or walking path to provide a unique experience to exercise in nature. Educational and safety signage should be placed next to equipment to guide the user in understanding and utilizing the outdoor gyms.

Nature Play and Programming

Playing in nature is an educational opportunity that has numerous benefits, from increasing active and healthy lifestyles, to developing a conservation mindset, to understanding the ecosystems and wildlife that depend on them. According to the report, “Nature Play & Learning Places: Creating and Managing Places where Children Engage with Nature” there is a genuine need in today’s society for learning spaces that spark creative play with natural materials, such as plants, vines, shrubs, rocks, water, logs, and other elements.

Richard Louv introduced the term, “Nature-Deficit Disorder” in 2005, which describes the effects of urbanization, technological advances, and social changes. Scientific evidence suggests that this disorder contributes to emotional and physical illnesses, including attention difficulties, obesity, nature illiteracy, and an “epidemic of inactivity.” Environmental education, provided by non-profits and parks and recreation agencies, can help combat nature-deficit disorder by sparking curiosity in the outdoors either through structured nature programming or through unstructured nature play. Nature Play is defined as “A designated, managed area in an existing or modified outdoor environment where children of all ages and abilities play and learn by engaging with and manipulating diverse natural elements, materials, organisms, and habitats, through sensory, fine motor and gross motor experiences.”

Nature Play spaces can provide valuable lessons for children, not only in regard to learning their natural environment and appreciation for nature, but also for personal development. These spaces, similar to playgrounds, provide safe spaces to take risks and understand behavioral outcomes. One of the most essential elements in planning Nature Play spaces is to conduct a risk assessment to reduce the unnecessary potential of injury. For instance, natural objects such as logs and boulders may be placed strategically for climbing, but consider where the child might land if he or she were to fall or jump off. Similarly, trees can be used as natural climbing features, with consideration to removing shrubs and nearby smaller trees below. Nature Play can happen in forest-based schools, play zoos, gardens, and summer camps. American Camp Association reported that there are approximately 5,000 day camps that currently operate in the U.S.

Parks & Recreation as Wellness Hubs

Parks and Recreation agencies are adapting to serve as Community Wellness Hubs, places for community members to improve health outcomes and enhance quality of life. Whether by providing access to healthy foods, physical activity, social connections, or access to nature, local parks and recreation departments can increase the health in their community. Numerous studies have continued to indicate the health benefits of outdoor spaces, recreation programs, and community centers.

According to the National Recreation and Parks Association:

- “Living close to parks and other recreation facilities is consistently related to higher physical activity levels for both adults and youth.
- Adolescents with easy access to multiple recreation facilities were more physically active and less likely to be overweight or obese than adolescents without access to such facilities.
- Increasing access to recreation facilities is an essential strategy for preventing childhood obesity.
- Park renovations can increase vigorous physical activity among children and can also increase the use of certain types of facilities, including playgrounds and skate parks.
- Park and recreation agencies are the second largest public feeder of children, next to schools. Park and recreation agencies annually serve approximately 560 million meals to children through summer and after-school programs.”⁵

⁵ “Parks and Recreation as Community Health and Wellness Hubs | Health and Wellness | Parks and Recreation Magazine | NRPA.” Nrp.org, 2015, www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2019/november/parks-and-recreation-as-community-health-and-wellness-hubs/. Accessed March 2021.

Signage for Wayfinding and Engagement

To increase perception and advocacy, a parks and recreation professional needs to prioritize opportunities that impact the way the community experiences the system. This can start with signage, wayfinding, and park identity. The importance of signage, wayfinding, and park identity to encourage awareness of locations and amenities cannot be understated. A park system impacts the widest range of users in a community; reaching users, and non-users, across all demographic, psychographic, behavioral, and geographic markets. In a more narrow focus, the park system is the core service an agency can use to provide value to its community (ex. partnerships between departments or commercial/residential development, high-quality and safe experiences for users, inviting community landscaping contributing to the overall look or image of the community). Signage, wayfinding, and park identity can be the first step in continued engagement by the community, and a higher perception or awareness of a park system; which can lead to an increase in health outcomes.

A Responsibility to Serve All

Local Governments have the responsibility to serve all members of the public. The National Recreation and Parks Association estimates that up to 30% of our population does not have ready access to the benefits of Parks and Recreation. Park Agencies must take the initiative to support and partner with key organizations that work with these underserved populations to remove barriers and build inclusion into the parks and programs. Within local parks and recreation, inclusion can be integrated in the system through simple but powerful changes:

- Build inclusion for people with a range of different disabilities (cognitive, developmental disabilities, mobility, visual, hearing, and mental health disabilities).
- Establish alliances, coalitions, and partnerships with organizations that serve low-income residents, people with disabilities, and communities of color to remove barriers.
- Increase the economic accessibility to create more access points for all.



THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Chapter 6:

Existing Properties -

Parks, Trails, Open Space and Other Assets

El Paso County Parks currently owns or manages approximately 8,000 acres of park land, 138 miles of trails, and approximately 2,500 acres of conservation easements. Most of the parks managed by County Parks are regional parks and open spaces that are typically 200 acres or larger. Although the regional parks are predominantly natural in character, portions of each park are developed with facilities for active recreation such as playfields, playgrounds, picnic shelters, and hard surface play areas.

El Paso County Parks also manages several neighborhood parks, community parks, and trailheads. The neighborhood parks were acquired before the county limited its role to the provision of larger, regional parks and trails. The County encourages incorporated cities, towns, and special districts in unincorporated areas to provide neighborhood park facilities and supporting maintenance in localized areas.

Parks and Regional Recreation Areas

The County’s focus for parks remains on provision of regional facilities consistent with the County Strategic Plan 2017-2021 and based on a reasonable allocation of available resources. The County currently owns and manages six full-service regional parks, which provide active use areas with facilities for a variety of sports and recreation activities, and passive use areas with limited facilities. Recreation areas have dominant natural or cultural resource values and provide special use recreation facilities. **Table 8**, on the following page, provides a chart of park classifications.



Table 8: El Paso County Parks and Regional Recreation Area Classification

Classification	Purpose/Function	Recreational Activities	Common Amenities
Regional Parks (200+ acres)	<p>Provide a large area with recreation resource values of regional and community significance and provide a variety of opportunities for sports- and nature-oriented, outdoor recreation experiences. Level of development will vary based on resource values, location, and public need. Facilities designed and developed to accommodate individuals and large and small groups. There should be an equity of distribution based on population; however, the criteria for site selection is also based on conservation of natural and/or cultural resources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Picnicking • Field sports and other selected sports activities • Hiking, walking, jogging • Mountain biking • Horseback riding • Fishing • Non-motorized boating • Pet exercise • Nature study and observation • Cultural and historic resources interpretation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking • Picnic tables/Group picnic pavilions • Benches • Fire grates/grills • Potable water • Restrooms • Identification, wayfinding, interpretive and regulatory signage • Archery range • Sports courts • Play equipment • Horseshoe pits • Exercise courses • Dog parks • Trails/Trailheads • Multi-purpose sports fields • Lighting • Nature centers • Water bodies or features • Boat access

Classification	Purpose/Function	Recreational Activities	Common Amenities
Regional Recreation Areas	Provide an area with recreation opportunities and dominant natural and/or cultural resource values. These areas provide special use recreation facilities or serve a particular area of the county. Location and level of development determined by the presence and size of natural or cultural features or by special use needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Picnicking • Field sports and other selected sports activities • Hiking, walking, jogging • Mountain biking • Horseback riding • Fishing • Non-motorized boating • Nature study and observation • Cultural and historic resources interpretation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special viewing or access areas featuring natural or cultural resources • Parking • Picnic tables/sites • Benches • Fire grates/grills • Potable water • Restrooms • Identification, wayfinding, interpretive and regulatory signage • Archery range • Play equipment • Horseshoe pits • Exercise courses • Trails/Trailheads • Group picnic pavilions • Lighting • Nature centers • Water bodies or features • Boat access

Classification	Purpose/Function	Recreational Activities	Common Amenities
Community Parks	Provide a medium to small area that supports a variety of outdoor recreation experiences at a local level. Level of development will vary based on resources, location and public need. Developers, special districts or other local governments are the primary provider of these smaller parks. Suggested locations include adjacent to junior high or senior high schools and within a one-mile radius of the residential communities that they are intended to serve.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Picnicking • Field sports and other selected sports activities • Hiking, walking, jogging Mountain biking • Horseback riding • Pet exercise • Nature study and observation • Cultural and historic resources interpretation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking • Picnic tables/sites • Benches Fire grates/grills • Potable water • Restrooms • Identification, wayfinding, interpretive and regulatory signage • Sports courts • Play equipment • Horseshoe pits • Exercise courses • Dog parks • Trails/Trailheads • Group picnic pavilions Multi-purpose sports fields • Lighting • Water bodies or features
Neighborhood Parks	Provide a small area that supports a variety of outdoor recreation experiences at a local level. Level of development will vary based on resources, location and public need. Developers, special districts or other local governments are the primary providers of these smaller parks. Suggested locations include adjacent to elementary schools and within 1/2 mile radius of the residential units they are intended to serve.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Picnicking • Field sports and other selected sports activities • Hiking, walking, jogging • Mountain biking • Horseback riding • Pet exercise • Nature study and observation • Cultural and historic resources interpretation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking • Picnic tables/sites • Benches • Potable water • Restrooms • Identification, wayfinding, interpretive and regulatory signage • Sports courts • Play equipment • Horseshoe pits • Exercise courses • Trails/Trailheads • Multi-purpose sports fields • Low-impact lighting • Water features

Classification	Purpose/Function	Recreational Activities	Common Amenities
Pocket Parks	Provide a small area within a development that provides limited outdoor recreation experiences, mostly for nearby residents. Pocket parks are primarily provided by developers, special districts, and homeowners' associations. Locations are within walking distance of the residences it is intended to serve.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Picnicking • Selected sports activities • Hiking, walking, jogging • Pet exercise • Nature study and observation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Picnic tables • Benches • Identification, interpretive and regulatory signage • Play equipment • Sports courts • Horseshoe pits • Trails or walkways • Historic Sites
Historic Sites	Provide and protect areas with historical, cultural, or archaeological values. These areas provide limited special use recreation and educational opportunities. Level of development and use determined by the presence and size of natural, historic, cultural features or by special use needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Picnicking • Hiking • Passive use • Nature study and observation • Cultural and historic resources interpretation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Picnic tables • Benches • Identification, interpretive and regulatory signage • Trails or walkways

Regional Parks

Regional parks provide a large area, typically 200 acres or more, with recreation resource values of regional and community significance.

Bear Creek Regional Park

Bear Creek Regional Park is located in the western portion of Colorado Springs in the foothills plant life zone. It is one of the most frequently used county parks. The Park incorporates nearly three miles of Bear Creek and covers a total of 545 acres, 24 acres of which are developed for active recreation. The Park is divided into three different areas linked by non-motorized, multi-purpose trails. Bear Creek East is located east of 21st Street and is home to the County Parks' administrative offices. A community garden, picnic pavilions, playground, a volleyball court, and horseshoe pits are available to users. Bear Creek Terrace, the most developed portion of Bear Creek Park, includes three playfields covering about 20 acres, an archery range, tennis and pickleball courts, an off-leash dog park, and numerous picnic pavilions.



The west end of Bear Creek Regional Park is adjacent to the City of Colorado Springs' Bear Creek Canyon Park and Red Rock Canyon Open Space which incorporates the properties previously known as Manitou Section 16 and White Acres. One of the highlights of this area is the Bear Creek Nature Center. The original center was destroyed by fire in 2000. Through significant community support, a new center was constructed that features hundreds of programs and services in the areas of conservation and nature studies.

Black Forest Regional Park

Black Forest Regional Park includes 382 acres and is located in the Black Forest, approximately four miles east of Interstate 25 on Shoup Road. The Black Forest Fire in 2013 burned over 74 percent of the park destroying the forested canopy and leaving behind flood-prone soils. In 2019 much of the forest canopy was removed to remove dead-standing trees, drainage improvements were completed, and a new stacked loop trail system was constructed after the fire. The developed area was not significantly impacted by the fire, and consists of turf playfields, tennis courts, and two picnic pavilions. A 14-mile, loop trail system (used for non-motorized recreation) winds through the park.



Falcon Regional Park

Falcon Regional Park covers 225 acres and includes active recreation areas, baseball fields and open space. The Park site is located east of the Meridian Ranch Development, adjacent with Eastonville Road, and north of Falcon High School. One of El Paso County's newest parks, Falcon Regional Park opened in the summer of 2016. As of 2021 the park features three baseball fields, multi-use field, dog park, and trails. When all phases are completed, the park will feature six baseball/softball fields, four multi-purpose fields, several pavilions, a playground, restrooms, and trails.



Fountain Creek Regional Park

Fountain Creek Regional Park is a 388-acre linear park situated along Fountain Creek between the cities of Colorado Springs and Fountain. The Park includes a creek-side trail, Willow Springs Ponds, and the Hanson Nature Park. The ponds are stocked on a regular basis, and fishing is allowed in the Willow Springs Ponds with a consumption advisory due to PCE contamination from the Schlage Lock plant located north of the park.

Downstream of the ponds, the Fountain Creek Nature Center serves as the focal point for learning about Fountain Creek, the watershed, and riparian ecology. An internal nature trail winds through the Cattail Marsh Wildlife Area and is limited to pedestrian use. Further south, the Duckwood active play area consists of a 12-acre site with multi-purpose fields, picnic shelters, and a playground. Fountain Creek Dog Park opened Summer of 2019. It hosts a 3-acre fenced in off-leash area with a trail.

Fox Run Regional Park

Fox Run Park is located in the Black Forest, approximately three miles east of Interstate 25 on Baptist Road. Opened in 1986, the 410-acre park has experienced steadily increasing use. Fox Run Regional Park is one of the most utilized County parks in terms of facility reservations.

Two ponds, trails through the Fallen Timbers Area, playfields and playground equipment, and five group picnic pavilions attract many people on a daily basis: from individual hikers and cross-country skiers to daycare providers and families. The Fox Run Dog Park opened in 2013. The five-acre off-leash park is in a fenced area in the southeast corner of Fox Run Regional Park. A park maintenance facility for the north district is also located at this park site.

Homestead Ranch Regional Park

El Paso County Parks acquired this 455-acre site located approximately 3.5 miles northwest of Peyton in 1987-88. Located at the edge of Black Forest this regional park has diverse topography ranging from rolling, open meadows to tree-covered bluffs running the length of the park. A pond and creek in the central valley of the park attracts deer, coyotes, foxes, fishing and over 35 types of waterfowl and birds. The Park includes a playground, a playing field and picnic pavilions. Equestrian riders can water their horses at the trough while enjoying the three miles of trails throughout the park.



Community Parks

Community Parks provide a medium to small area that supports a variety of outdoor recreation experiences at a local level.

Stratmoor Valley Park/Trailhead

Stratmoor Valley Park/Trailhead is located south of Colorado Springs on the east side of Interstate 25 and is adjacent to Fountain Creek. This 17.8-acre park includes playfields, a multi-use court, a playground, a volleyball court, and a picnic shelter. This Park also provides access to the Fountain Creek Regional Trail from Glenwood Drive.



Widefield Community Park

Widefield Community Park is a 50-acre site located just to the south of McCrae Reservoir. The Park hosts a playground, basketball court, baseball backstop, an 18-hole disc golf course and memorial sitting area. Improvements identified in the Widefield Community Park Master plan were completed between 2017 and 2021. The results of these projects included an expansion of the existing playground, basketball court renovation, installation of two pickleball courts, an exercise zone, trail upgrades, and the installation of additional park lighting, two pavilions, benches, trash cans, and picnic tables. The disc golf course will also benefit from upgrades, including better signage, trails, benches, and trash cans. The McCrae Reservoir, which is located north of Widefield Community Park, features a pedestrian bridge, natural trail, and wildlife viewing area.

Neighborhood Parks

Ceresa Park (also known as John Ceresa Memorial Park)

Ceresa Park serves as a neighborhood park and is a natural grass area with trees and park improvements including a playground, picnic tables, barbeque grills, and trails. The Crews Gulch Trail goes through a portion of the park. The Park is comprised of three parcels totaling 10 acres located adjacent to the east side of Fountain Creek Regional Park. Access is via Southmoor Drive or Carson Drive.



Pocket Park

Pocket Parks provide a small area within a development that provides limited outdoor recreation experiences, mostly for nearby residents.

Stratmoor Hills Park

A small park of 1.15 acres, Stratmoor Hills Park is located south of Colorado Springs on the west side of Interstate 25, south of the World Arena, near the B-Street entrance to Fort Carson. A picnic pavilion, picnic tables, playground, and a basketball court are available to the public at this neighborhood park.



Regional Recreation Areas

Regional Recreation Areas provide an area with recreation opportunities and dominant natural and/or cultural resource values.

Palmer Lake Recreation Area

The Town of Palmer Lake and El Paso County jointly own and manage the recreation area located in Palmer Lake, Colorado. The County is responsible for the New Santa Fe Trail that links to the site, parking area, and restroom. The Town is responsible for managing the active park area and facilities, which include a picnic pavilion, volleyball court, playground, horseshoe pit, and fishing dock. The Town of Palmer Lake is working to develop long-term solutions for restoring the lake. The park is bordered on the east by Ben Lomond Mountain, a highly visible and scenic natural landform.

Paint Mines Interpretive Park and Open Space

The Paint Mines Interpretive Park is located in the northeast section of the County near Calhan with approximately 781 acres of which 547 acres is open to the public. The Paint Mines have evidence of human life as far back as 9,000 years ago. The Park features fantastic geological formations including spires and hoodoos that form through erosive action that creates incised gullies and exposed layers of selenite clay and jasper. The Park includes a restroom facility, four miles of trails, interpretive signage, and many natural wonders.



The adjacent 234-acre open space, to the west, preserves additional open space in eastern El Paso County. The Palmer Land Trust holds a conservation easement on 275 acres of the property.

Historic Site

Historic Sites provide an area with historical, cultural, or archaeological values with limited special use recreation and educational opportunities.

Rainbow Falls Recreation Area

The recreation area consists of the namesake Rainbow Falls and a small series of waterfalls downstream. The five acres are developed with a parking area, trailhead, covered kiosk with historical and geological interpretive information, picnic benches and tables, a 0.15-mile trail from the parking area to the Falls, and secondary trails along Fountain Creek and viewing overlooks.

Trails

Regional trails provide recreational enjoyment, links, and access to recreation areas of regional significance and local communities, as well as commuting opportunities. **Table 9**, on the following page, provides a chart of trail classifications.

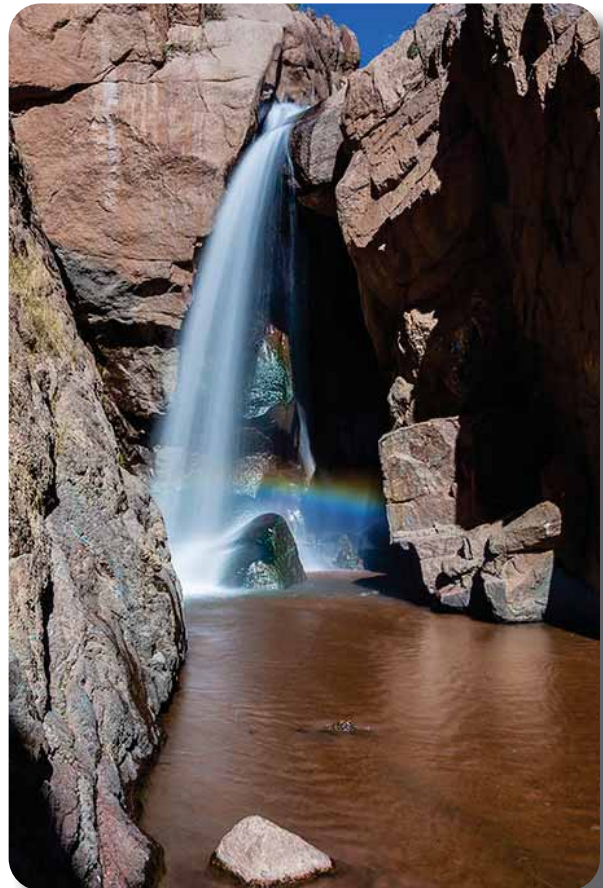


Table 9: El Paso County Trails Classification

Classification	Purpose/Function	Recreational Activities	Common Amenities
Primary Regional Trails (25-ft to over 100-ft easement of ROW)	Provide link and access to recreation areas of regional significance and local communities, and commuting opportunities. Considered the spine of the County's trail network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreational biking • Horseback riding • Walking • Jogging • Cross-country skiing • Nature study and observation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concrete, paved or gravel trail • Benches • Identification, wayfinding, interpretive and regulatory signage • Trailheads • Creek access points
Secondary Regional Trails (25-ft to over 100-ft easement of ROW)	Provide link and access to Primary Regional trails, recreation areas of local significance, local communities and commuting opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreational biking • Horseback riding • Walking • Jogging • Cross-country skiing • Nature study and observation • Cultural and historic resources interpretation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concrete, paved or gravel trail • Benches • Identification, wayfinding, interpretive and regulatory signage • Trailheads • Creek access points
Regional Trailheads (2-15 acres)	Provide access, convenience, and comfort area for regional trail user. Generally 3-4 miles apart on regional trail. Can also be combined with park sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreational biking • Horseback riding • Walking • Jogging • Cross-country skiing • Nature study and observation • Cultural and historic resources interpretation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking lot • Horse trailer parking • Restrooms • Identification, wayfinding, interpretive and regulatory signage • Picnic tables • Benches • Potable water • Lighting
Internal Park Trail (2-ft to 8-ft width)	Provide recreation opportunities and access to active use areas, facilities, natural areas and regional trails.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiking • Walking • Jogging • Mountain biking • Cross-country skiing • Horseback riding • Nature study and observation • Cultural and historic resources interpretation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concrete, paved, gravel or natural surface trail • Wayfinding, interpretive and regulatory signage • Benches

<p>Proposed On-Road Bicycle Route (6-ft to 8-ft width depending on ROW width and speed of road)</p>	<p>Provide links between communities and access to recreation areas of regional significance. May be a scenic route. This type of trail is not the responsibility of El Paso County Parks; however, coordination with the Public Services Department should occur to ensure that important connections are made to the regional trail system and other major access trails.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreational biking • Commuter biking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paved or unpaved lane on at least one side of road • Identification, wayfinding and regulatory signage
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Primary Regional Trails

Primary Regional Trails provide a link and access to recreation areas of regional significance and local communities, and commuting opportunities. They are considered the spine of the County’s trail network.

Crews Gulch Regional Trail

The 2.8-mile Crews Gulch Regional Trail winds through several neighborhoods, along a riparian corridor and links Widefield and Ceresa Parks to the Fountain Creek Regional Trail and nearby Fountain Creek Regional Park and Fountain Creek Nature Center. Once completed the trail will connect the City of Colorado Springs, Bluestem Prairie Open Space to Fountain Creek Regional Park.



Fountain Creek Regional Trail

Approximately 14 miles of trail have been developed starting at the El Pomar Youth Sports Complex in Colorado Springs, the trail continues south along Fountain Creek, past the Fountain Creek Nature Center and into Fountain Creek Regional Park. The trail passes through riparian habitat that includes mature cottonwoods, wetlands, and upland areas. The trail is part of the larger Colorado Front Range Trail system that is proposed to stretch from Wyoming to New Mexico.





Fox Run Regional Trail

The 8-mile Fox Run Regional Trail is a partially completed, soft surface trail in the northern part of El Paso County, east of Interstate 25. The trail generally follows an east-west route and connects the Town of Monument to the Black Forest area, including Fox Run Regional Park and Black Forest Regional Park. Approximately 1 mile of this trail has been completed in the Fox Pines Subdivision. Another 0.50-mile section of the trail has also been completed along Hodgen Road.

New Santa Fe Regional Trail

The 18-mile New Santa Fe Regional Trail follows the abandoned Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad right-of-way in a north-south route west of Interstate 25 from County Line Road in the north to the City of Colorado Springs in the south. The northern segment of the trail

winds through foothills, shrublands, and ponderosa pines and links to the Greenland Trail managed by Douglas County. From Monument to Ice Lake at the south end of the Air Force Academy, the trail passes through open high plains and riparian landscapes. The County secured an easement from the Air Force Academy to enable this 6.9-mile reach of the trail to pass through the facility. The trail may be accessed at Palmer Lake, Highway 105, Monument, Air Force Academy, Baptist Road, North Gate, and Ice Lake with trailhead facilities at Palmer Lake, Monument, and Baptist Road. Each trailhead is equipped with parking, a restroom, and picnic tables.



The New Santa Fe Regional Trail is very popular among recreational users and commuters. Informal user counts by County Parks estimate that 100,000 people use the trail annually. A portion of the American Discovery Trail (ADT) follows the New Santa Fe Trail. The ADT connects several of our nation’s principal north-south trails and many local and regional trails, and includes over 800 miles of trails in Colorado, the most of any state.

Palmer Divide Regional Trail

The Palmer Divide Regional Trail has 1.9 miles of developed trail through a 92-acre natural open space. A trailhead, wetland areas, and historic remnants of a dairy farm provide visitors with an enjoyable outdoor experience. The trail features tall grasses and riparian areas along Kiowa Creek. The Woodlake Trailhead is located at the southwest corner of Hodgen Road and Woodlake Road.



Rock Island Regional Trail

The 10.6-mile Rock Island Regional Trail runs parallel to Highway 24 between Falcon and Peyton and is part of the America the Beautiful Trail. It was constructed on the former Chicago and Rock Island Railroad Line that ran between Falcon and Peyton. Excellent views of several landmarks are visible from the trail including Pikes Peak, Rampart Range, Rattlesnake Buttes at Homestead Ranch Regional Park, Spanish Peaks, Wet Mountains, and the Sangre de Cristo Mountain Range. Picnic tables are located at the Falcon trailhead, and benches are placed at regular intervals along the trail corridor.



Ute Pass Regional Trail

The Ute Pass Trail is a planned 40-mile trail that will eventually connect Colorado Springs to Cripple Creek in Teller County. The trail is part of the American Discovery Trail and the America the Beautiful Trail. The trail will help to preserve the rich Ute Pass history that includes the Ute Indians using the historic trail for travel and pilgrimages, and later, explorers, gold seekers and settlers seeking the easiest passage to points west through the mountains.

The first section of the El Paso County's Ute Pass Trail was constructed in 2003, connecting the Ute Pass Elementary School with the Town of Green Mountain Falls to allow safe passage for students. In 2006, a second section was completed connecting the Town of Green Mountain Falls to the Teller County line. Green Mountain Falls later provided an on-road trail through the community that links the two sections. A third section of the trail was constructed in 2014 near Manitou Springs on Municipal Watershed Lands. The trail starts at the base of the Manitou Include and traverses up steep terrain to an interpretive loop near the community of Cascade. A fourth section was constructed in 2020 in the Chipita Park neighborhood which provides a connection to Ute Pass Elementary School. This section also included numerous pedestrian upgrades at street intersections. A fifth section of the trail is scheduled to be constructed in 2022. This section will complete the Ute Pass Regional Trail to the intersection of Fountain Ave / US Hwy 24. A small trailhead will also be constructed as part of this project. Once this section is completed, the Ute Pass Regional Trail will be completed from Cascade to the Teller County Line. A remaining 1.50-mile section through sensitive watershed lands will be planned in the future completing the regional trail.



Secondary Regional Trails

Secondary Regional Trails provide a link and access to Primary Regional trails, recreation areas of local significance, local communities and commuting opportunities. For a list of Secondary Regional Trails see **Appendix C**.

Open Space

Open Space areas possess important natural, cultural, historic, or visual resource values that have been purposefully protected, with an emphasis on protection over active use. Public access is permitted to the extent that resource values are not compromised.

Table 10: El Paso County Open Space Classification

Classification	Purpose/Function	Recreational Activities	Common Amenities
Open Space	Preserve areas with important natural, cultural, historic, or visual resource values. May include future park sites, trail corridors, buffers, agricultural lands. Emphasize protection over public access. May contain active use areas, as appropriate. Location based on resources to be contained within or preserved by the open space area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Varies, based on sensitivity of the resource(s); activities may include: Picnicking Hiking, walking, jogging Mountain biking Horseback riding Fishing Non-motorized boating Nature study and observation Cultural and historic resources interpretation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Special viewing or access areas featuring natural or cultural resources Parking Picnic tables/sites Benches Fire grates/grills Potable water Restrooms Identification, wayfinding, interpretive and regulatory signage Trails Trailheads Group picnic pavilions Low-impact lighting Water bodies or features Boat access
Natural Areas	Preserve and area with important natural, cultural, historic or visual resource values. Emphasize protection over public access. Minimal or no development. Location based on resources to be contained within or preserved by the open space area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Picnicking Hiking, walking, jogging Nature study and observation Cultural and historic resources interpretation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Picnicking Hiking, walking, jogging Nature study and observation Cultural and historic resources interpretation

Christian Open Space

Four parcels make up the property within the City of Fountain known as the Christian Open Space. It is located south of Fountain Creek Regional Park near the older commercial core of the City of Fountain. The 80-acre undeveloped open space is bisected by Fountain Creek and Crest Drive and from the north via Missouri. The Palmer Land Trust holds a conservation easement on the property. An extension of the Front Range Trail is planned through the property.



Falcon Vista Wetlands

The 17-acre creek bed with wetlands property in eastern El Paso County was provided as part of subdivision development. It is located southeast of Highway 24 adjacent to the Falcon Elementary School, near Falcon.



Forest Green Open Space

The 15-acre natural open space area is primarily grassland with a small pond, and it has no planned trails or improvements. The property was provided as part of subdivision development. It is located in northeastern El Paso County, north of Hodgen Road.

Heritage Ranch Open Space

Like the Forest Green Open Space, this 13-acre natural open space area is also primarily grassland with a small pond, and it has no planned trails or improvements. The property was provided as part of subdivision development. It is located in northeastern El Paso County, south of Highway 24.

Kane Ranch Open Space

In 2003, the Alexander Kane estate offered El Paso County approximately 495 acres of land, approximately five miles east of Fountain, for the development of a an open space park area. The County conducted an environmental review of the site, required that certain mitigation measures be undertaken, and eventually accepted ownership of the property. Opened in 2021, Kane Ranch Open Space will help provide needed park facilities for the rapidly growing community of Fountain and the expansion of Fort Carson.



Jones Park Open Space

Jones Park Open Space lies in the high foothills south of Pikes Peak and west of Colorado Springs. The largest open space holding in County Parks system, the 1,200-acre park includes coniferous forest, aspen groves, high mountain meadows, and the remnants of the original settlers' cabins, including Loud's Cabin and its stonework chimney. Bear Creek tumbles through Jones Park, which is accessed by numerous U.S. Forest Service Trails, including the Seven Bridges Trail and the recently constructed Trail 667 which traverses the slopes of Kineo Mountain.



Latigo Trails Open Space

Three parcels make up this 100-acre open space. The natural grassland open space area, split by a roadway, includes sloping topography alongside a creek. Although there is currently no development, trails opportunities exist within this open space north of the Falcon townsite.



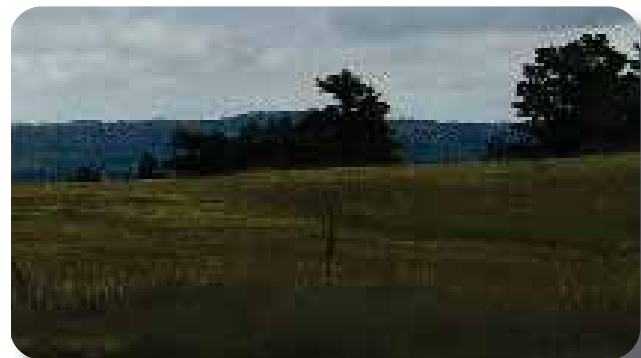
Palmer Lake Regional Recreation Area

The Town of Palmer Lake and El Paso County jointly own and manage the recreation area located in Palmer Lake, Colorado. The County is responsible for the New Santa Fe Trail that links to the site, parking area, and restroom. The Town is responsible for managing the active park area and facilities, which include a picnic pavilion, volleyball court, playground, horseshoe pit, and fishing dock. The Park is bordered on the east by Ben Lomond Mountain, a highly visible and scenic natural landform.



Peyton Pines Open Space

The 48-acre natural open space area is primarily grassland and has no planned trails or improvements. The property was provided as part of subdivision development. It is located in northeastern El Paso County near Blacksmith Road.



Pineries Open Space

The Pineries Open Space, which spans the Palmer Divide, is the second largest open space holding under County ownership at 1,070 acres. The Palmer Land Conservancy holds a conservation easement on 1,040 acres of the open space. It contains a variety of vegetation communities, including plants that are rare and unusual in Colorado, and mature Ponderosa Pine Forest that is classified as old growth. By preservation of the property in its natural condition, with limited and appropriately sited recreation uses, the scenic, wildlife, and ecological values that currently exist on the property will also be preserved and maintained. The conservation easement and Master Plan developed in 2010 allow for planned public access and development with a focus on trails. In 2013, the site was extremely damaged by the Black Forest Fire (90 percent) which significantly delayed the opening of the site for public use. Phase 1 improvements, completed in June 2020, included trailhead parking, restroom, and approximately 8.5 miles of singletrack trail.



Santa Fe Open Space

In May of 2017, El Paso County purchased 65 acres of pristine upland ranchland on the southern slopes of Ben Lomand Mountain, near Palmer Lake, Colorado. Covered in thick stands of scrub oak, mature ponderosa pine trees, and rolling grass meadows, the property was purchased with the intention of transforming it into a natural open space that would provide users of the adjacent New Santa Fe Regional Trail an opportunity to experience a more natural foothills environment in close vicinity to urbanized areas and major trailheads. In April 2022, 1.75 miles of singletrack trails opened.



Schreder Open Space

Schreder Open Space is adjacent to Fountain Creek Regional Park and located near the Nature Center. The 12 acres are managed as a separate open space area in compliance with the conservation easement held by Palmer Land Conservancy.

Natural Areas

Preserve and area with important natural, cultural, historic or visual resource values. Emphasize protection over public access

Drake Lake Natural Area

The Drake Lake Natural Area is located within the Mountain Lake Estates area of Peyton, Colorado, just off Mallard Drive. This 22.19-acre parcel of land contains a small lake, which is perpetually full. The property includes natural and constructed wetlands and areas for picnicking and wildlife viewing.



Other Park Assets

The County owns or manages other assets that serve local and regional needs and provide a variety of recreation facilities. Roles and responsibilities are articulated in lease agreements or intergovernmental agreements.

Black Forest – Section 16

County Parks, in cooperation with the Colorado State Forest Service, Academy 20 School District, and El Paso Parks Environmental Services, leases this 640-acre site from the State Land Board. County Parks and the Black Forest Trails Association maintain a 4-mile-long multi-use perimeter trail system at the site. A developed trailhead with a vault restroom is located adjacent to the parking area, accessed from Burgess Road. The County assists with forest management within the leased area.



Clear Spring Ranch Open Space

Clear Spring Ranch is located south of Fountain and is owned by the City of Colorado Springs and is managed by Colorado Springs Utilities. County Parks entered into a lease agreement with the City in 2001 to maintain recreational trails and trailhead facilities and to preserve and enhance the wildlife habitat. The 970-acre site features grasslands and foothills ecosystems, and riparian habitat along Fountain Creek. The recreation facilities include parking, a pavilion, picnic tables, restroom, and four miles of trails. Additional primary regional trails were constructed in 2013-2014 with GOCO River Corridors Initiative funds along with an improved trailhead that will accommodate equestrians.



Cheyenne Mountain Shooting Complex

The Cheyenne Mountain Shooting Complex is a joint project between the U.S. Army, El Paso County, the El Paso County Sheriff, and Colorado Parks and Wildlife. The 400-acre site sits on Army land near Interstate 25 just off of mile marker 132. The entrance is located just outside Fort Carson's Gate 20 security perimeter. Shooters using the range do not have to enter Fort Carson to use the range. The Range Complex is a three-phase project. The first phase is now complete and includes 110 shooting positions across seven ranges. The County is required by law to provide shooting range facilities to meet the training and certification needs of the Sheriff's Office.



Other Providers of Recreation Facilities and Open Space

A number of other government agencies and organizations own and manage land in El Paso County that provides recreational opportunities or serves as a form of open space.

Federal

Bureau of Land Management

Federal lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) within El Paso County encompass approximately 3,800 acres, including several small, isolated parcels in the eastern portion of the county. The largest concentration of BLM lands is adjacent to the southern edge of Pike National Forest and includes more than 3,000 acres in a nearly contiguous block. Most of the BLM lands in this area are under study for designation as wilderness due to their lack of access and largely undisturbed character. These lands are also in proximity to the Nature Conservancy's Aiken Canyon Preserve, an area with outstanding natural and scenic values.

Department of Defense

There are five military installations based in El Paso County, three of which have designated areas open for public use. At Fort Carson, the U.S. Army has approximately 3,000 acres open to the public, which include a visitor center, Turkey Creek Recreation Area, a community park (Iron Horse Park), a rodeo arena, and approximately ten miles of trail. Turkey Creek Recreation Area has stables and equestrian amenities, as well as playgrounds, picnic sites, and hiking and riding trails. The Penrose House, a historic structure, is open to the public for special events. Ten miles of multi-purpose trails traverse the installation from Interstate 25 west to State Highway 115. The civilian population is welcome to use these amenities while observing certain security restrictions.

Historic buildings, displays, and visitor information areas exist on both the Air Force Academy and the Peterson Air Force Base. Approximately 6.9 miles of the New Santa Fe Regional Trail is located on the Air Force Academy, and is available for public use. Support staff of Peterson Air Force Base and Schriever Air Force Base have initiated discussion with the City and County on potential links to City and County trails and open space.

Pike National Forest

The Pike National Forest covers approximately 117,000 acres (8.5 percent of the total County land area). It is confined to the mountainous western portion of the county in an area extending south from the Douglas County line to south of Cheyenne Mountain. Nearly all of the mountain slope area that can be seen from the Interstate 25 corridor is federal land administered by the U.S. Forest Service, and nearly all of that is accessible to the public for multipurpose recreational use, including hiking, equestrian use, mountain biking, and limited motorized uses. These lands act as a recreation and open space resource for the residents of El Paso County and the region.

State

Bohart Ranch and Chico Basin Ranch

Bohart Ranch and Chico Basin Ranch are large, multi-tract State landholdings located in southeastern El Paso County and managed primarily for natural resource conservation. Chico Basin Ranch is leased for grazing. The Nature Conservancy has a lease on the Bohart Ranch.



Cheyenne Mountain State Park

Cheyenne Mountain State Park is located at the southern edge of Colorado Springs, west of Highway 115 at the base of Cheyenne Mountain. The 2,701-acre park includes over 28 miles of hiking and biking trails, a visitor center, parking lots, camping facilities, picnic pavilions, and other park amenities.



Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife

The Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife (CDPW) leases approximately 10,000 acres from the State Land Board in the south-central portion of the county. The area is known as Turkey Track Ranch, and it is located south of Squirrel Creek Road between Peyton and Ellicott Highways. The Turkey Track Ranch is open to the public for wildlife related recreation (hunting and observation) between September 1 and February 28 of each year. While these types of public uses are emphasized during the fall and winter, other uses are not prohibited. During the remaining part of the year, the area is closed to the public and leased by a private landowner for grazing.

CDPW also manages a 360-acre state wildlife area at Ramah Reservoir that is an important refuge for migratory waterfowl. The agency owns or leases approximately half of the land, and while the rest is privately owned, public access is allowed throughout the area. Use of the area is restricted to daytime only and includes fishing, hunting, and boating. The reservoir is situated on Sandy Creek for the purpose of flood control. The amount of water in the reservoir is entirely dependent on surface runoff. As a result, the reservoir can be completely dry one out of every four or five years. CDPW has received comments from local residents that they would like to see the reservoir further developed as a water-based recreation area.

State Land Board

The State of Colorado owns a significant amount of land in El Paso County, most of which is concentrated south of Highway 94 and east of Interstate 25. This land is administered by the State Land Board for the purposes of generating revenue for the State's school system. The majority of these state-owned lands are privately leased to ranchers who use it for grazing cattle.

These lands are closed to the public; however, some leases have allowed horseback riding, hunting or hiking on the property. Amendment 16, a citizen-initiated modification to the Colorado constitution, was passed in November of 1996. This amendment fundamentally modifies the mission of the State Land Board by eliminating the requirement that state lands be managed for maximum revenue generation. The amendment now mandates the State Land Board work with local communities to preserve approximately 300,000 acres of state lands with important natural resource and scenic values.

Cities and Towns

City of Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services

The City of Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services manages seven regional parks, eight community parks, 135 neighborhood parks, six sports complexes and 49 open space areas. Combined, the city manages over 15,500 acres of parks, trails, and open space. Key assets include Garden of the Gods, Palmer Park, Cheyenne Canyon Park, Stratton Open Space, and Red Rock Canyon Open Space. The City also offers a wide variety of recreation programming services including athletics, fitness, and aquatics. The City and the County work together to ensure that trails, open space, and park development link whenever possible and to avoid duplication of services.

Colorado Springs Utilities

Colorado Springs Utilities manages thousands of acres of land owned by the City of Colorado Springs in El Paso County for the purpose of operating utility facilities and protecting its watershed and water supply. These areas include reservoirs on the north and south slopes of Pikes Peak, Longs Ranch west of Manitou Springs, Pinello Ranch north of Fountain, Hanna Ranch, and Clear Spring Ranch south of Fountain. Most of these areas allow limited public access for hiking, fishing, hunting, and biking. Depending on the facility, management of recreational used and facilities is shared by the U.S. Forest Service, Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife, County Parks, and the City of Colorado Springs. The City of Colorado Springs owns approximately 5,000 acres east of Fountain known as Hanna Ranch. Colorado Springs Utilities manages a power plant that is located on the property. Approximately 3,900 acres of the area are managed by the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife as the Colorado Springs Wildlife Area. It is open to the public primarily for hunting.

City of Fountain

The City of Fountain maintains 100 acres of parkland that primarily consists of neighborhood and pocket parks and open space areas, including the Adams Open Space. The city also maintains an urban trail system that is being linked to the county trail system. The city has over 115 acres of open space within its jurisdictional boundaries.

Town of Green Mountain Falls

The Town of Green Mountain Falls has continued to work cooperatively with the County to construct the Ute Pass Trail through its community. In addition, the Town manages several neighborhood parks that include a scenic lake with gazebo, swimming pool, tennis courts, playgrounds, and a trail system connecting to the Pikes Peak North Slope Recreation Area.

City of Manitou Springs

The City of Manitou Springs has 13 neighborhood and pocket parks serving the community, as well as over 300 acres of open space areas. Recreation facilities include a small fishing pond, multiple playgrounds and picnic areas, and a public swimming pool. In addition, several trails originate or traverse through the city. The trails include the Paul Intemann Memorial Nature Trail, Barr Trail, Manitou Incline, Williams Canyon Trail, and Creekwalk Trail. Planning for the Iron Mountain Trail is underway.

Town of Monument

The Town of Monument manages the 20-acre Monument Lake and several smaller neighborhood parks for recreational purposes. The 2003 Parks, Trails, and Open Space Master Plan identifies nine proposed parks and ten regional trails. The plan specifically encourages developing trail connections to the County's system.

Town of Palmer Lake

In addition to the Town's namesake water feature, there are two reservoirs near the town accessible via the Palmer Lake Reservoir Trail. The Town allows fishing in one of these reservoirs, and encourages hiking and other passive recreational activities. As indicated earlier in the plan, the County and the Town cooperatively manage the recreation areas surrounding Palmer Lake.

Other Public Holdings

Nature Conservancy

The mission of The Nature Conservancy is to preserve the plants, animals, and natural communities that represent the diversity of Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. In Colorado, The Nature Conservancy has helped protect more than 600,000 acres of precious landscapes. Some of these places are Nature Conservancy preserves and others are managed by partner agencies and organizations.

The Aiken Canyon Preserve is located 15.8 miles south of Colorado Springs in one of the highest quality foothills ecosystems along Colorado's Front Range. This 1,621-acre preserve has a 4-mile loop hiking trail and an interpretive center open to the public.

The Bohart Ranch is a 47,000-acre working cattle ranch, leased to The Nature Conservancy by the Colorado State Land Board. The ranch supports extensive sandsage and shortgrass prairie South of Ellicott. Because this is a working ranch, visitation is only permitted in pre-arranged groups.

Palmer Land Conservancy

The Palmer Land Conservancy is a public, non-profit land trust dedicated to the permanent protection of open space, agricultural, scenic, and natural lands in Colorado. To conserve these resources, the Palmer Land Conservancy works on behalf of the community with private landowners and public agencies. By preserving diverse, undeveloped, private, and public lands, the Land Conservancy also secures habitat for wildlife and native plants, supports agriculture and ranching on family lands, provides recreational and educational opportunities, protects important historical sites, and maintains scenic vistas for the benefit of present residents and future generations. To date, the Palmer Land Conservancy has preserved 136,000 acres in South Colorado, with 5,191 of those acres in El Paso County.

School Districts

There are 27 school districts in El Paso County offering kindergarten through 12th grade public education. The schools are important providers of organized sports facilities and recreation programs, particularly the larger districts in the Colorado Springs area. Widefield School District 3 owns and operates its own parks and recreation district, and its Trails Committee develops trail plans with connections to several County parks and trails. The Urban Park Areas established by the County for purposes of collecting and distributing park fee funds generally coincide with the boundaries of the major school districts in the unincorporated County, specifically districts 38, 20, 49, and 3. The County has provided urban park grants to support school district development of sports facilities.



Special Districts

There are numerous special districts within El Paso County (over 100 at this time), some of which currently provide recreation services and neighborhood and community park-type facilities under their service plans. The major metropolitan districts currently include: Meridian Ranch, Woodmen Hills, Lorson Ranch, Colorado Centre, Cathedral Pines, Falcon Highlands, Tri-view, Cherokee, and Paint Brush Hills. Each district varies in size and type of facilities provided and receives a portion of Colorado Lottery funds. Some metropolitan districts offer recreation programming through their community centers (e.g. Woodmen Hills), and some have established partnerships with the YMCA (Meridian Ranch) for these services. County Parks works with some of the districts to support their development of parks master plans and to provide urban park grants. Metropolitan districts play an important role in El Paso County in meeting the needs of the community for parks and other services, and are expected to continue to do so in the future.

THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Existing Parks, Trails, and Open Space



THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Chapter 7: El Paso County Recreation and Cultural Services

The Recreation and Cultural Services Division offers facilities, programs, and events at two nationally recognized nature centers and the El Paso County Fair and Events Complex. Through class field trips, recreation classes, and community-wide special events, the division provides educational, recreational, and entertainment opportunities to El Paso County citizens and visitors.

Fostering stewardship of public lands and natural resources, as well as sustainable relationships among humans, the natural environment, and the earth we inhabit, is an important role for County Parks. As the population continues to grow locally and nationwide, and as the demand upon natural resources increases, we recognize that environmental problems and opportunities within our community, both now and in the future, must be addressed by empowered, informed, and involved citizens of all ages who understand their relationship with nature.

Programs

Since 2010, El Paso County has served an annual average of 200,000 participants in recreation and cultural programs through the County's parks, nature centers, and the County Fair and Events complex. In 2020, the nature centers offered over 800 environmental education programs, serving more than 25,000 participants. The 2021 County Fair included 25,000 participants; and the nature centers served nearly 90,000 drop-in visitors.

Programs include a children's nature series, nature camps, daycare/camps, hikes, walks, family and club programs, school group field experiences, tennis lessons, archery, fitness boot camps, special events, concerts in the parks, the El Paso County Fair, and Gymkhana series. Interested parties can also schedule a guided tour, or celebrate a birthday with a party at the nature centers.

Nature Centers

It is the mission of the El Paso County Nature Centers to connect people to their natural and cultural resources and inspire them to become stewards for the parks and environment.

Bear Creek Nature Center

Bear Creek Nature Center is located in the western portion of Bear Creek Park at 245 Bear Creek Road in Colorado Springs. It opened in 1976 and was the first nature center in Colorado. The original building was destroyed by arson in 2000, and a new 8,900-square foot nature center facility opened at the same location in 2002.



Set in the scrub-oak covered foothills of Pikes Peak and Colorado's Front Range, Bear Creek Nature Center supports a variety of wildlife including red-tailed hawks, great-horned owls, black bears, mule deer, and coyotes, as well as a variety of birds, among other wildlife species. Scrub oak thickets, ponderosa pine forests, a mountain creek, and lush meadows covered with native grasses and wildflowers give this site its Rocky Mountain foothills character that attracts children and adults of all ages. Visitors find Bear Creek Nature Center and the surrounding two miles of nature trails, as well as the natural area, to be enjoyable, exciting, and fascinating.

As a window to the foothills life zone, the nature center offers wildlife viewing areas, interpretive signage, a three-dimensional map of the park and surrounding foothills, a wildlife diorama that features a black bear and cub, and a live honeybee observation hive. Also featured are interactive, computerized touchscreens and other exhibits that provide information about the park, as well as local foothills history, geology, weather and climate, wildlife, and native plants. Visitors also enjoy birdwatching and wildlife viewing on the patio at creekside, spectacular views of the mountains to the west, and a large-screen video presentation in the center's Bear Den Classroom that introduces many fascinating features of the park and the surrounding foothills.

Fountain Creek Nature Center

The Fountain Creek Nature Center is located at the edge of a riparian zone in the central portion of Fountain Creek Regional Park at 320 Pepper Grass Lane in Fountain. The facility opened in 1992 and has over 70,000 visitors annually. In 2013, the county added approximately 2,000 square feet to the existing 2,100 square-foot building to expand exhibit, education, and project areas and accommodate the growing demand for programs and meeting space. A GOCO River Corridors Initiative grant for \$330,000 was awarded in 2012, and a campaign has been initiated to raise funds for exhibits and energy efficiency building enhancements.

Set in the mature cottonwood forest and flood plain along Fountain Creek, numerous species of waterfowl and other riparian wildlife are attracted to the park by several meadows, spring-fed ponds, marshes, and the creek itself.

The nature center serves as a gateway to a variety of discovery experiences within the Cattail Marsh Wildlife Area that teems with abundant native plants and diverse wildlife including herons, hummingbirds, muskrats, and white-tailed deer. As an oasis on the plains, the nature center serves visitors of all ages and features interpretive exhibits that emphasize life in, on, and around the water. Exhibits and displays also feature wetland communities, aquatic wildlife, wildlife sightings, sounds in the park, native plants, weather and climate, the watershed, and the Rocky Mountain backdrop. Outside of the nature center are nature trails, interpretive signage, and wildlife observation blinds that provide many opportunities to enjoy abundant wildlife in this wetland environment and to observe more than 290 species of birds.



El Paso County Fair and Events Complex

The El Paso County Fair and Events Complex, located in Calhan, is home to the El Paso County Fair which is an eight day event that attracts over 25,000 participants each year. In addition to the County Fair, the Fairgrounds are used for a variety of local events and private rentals. The 40-acre site contains a grandstand with a seating capacity of approximately 3,300, approximately 108,000 square feet of indoor facility space, including numerous smaller agricultural buildings.



El Paso County Fair Mission:

- Provide a wide variety of activities that celebrates our history, culture, and heritage
- Produce a varied program schedule that appeals to the interests of Fair participants
- Provide an effective venue for 4-H activities
- Ensure that the County Fair is financially self-sufficient

In 2013 a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and funding from the Fairgrounds Corporation provided upgrades to the south grandstand restrooms, including ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) accessibility.

County Parks works closely with the County Fair Sponsorship Committee to secure sponsorships to help support the successful operation of the County Fair. County Leadership, the Fair Advisory Board (FAB) volunteers, Fair advocates, and staff continuously work to improve the Fair experience and offerings. A Community Outreach Center was established in 2012 at the El Paso County Fair and Events Complex and provides office and meeting space for various community organizations to provide social services for eastern El Paso County.

THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Chapter 8:

Parks, Trails, Open Space & Historic Site Gap Analysis

Drive time areas are created on different types of facilities based on a user's presumed willingness to travel to a facility. Areas that fall outside of these catchment areas can be considered gaps. Gaps, however, do not necessarily indicate the need for El Paso to deliver service to all areas identified by this gap analysis. Existing knowledge of other providers or further investigation to determine other providers servicing these areas should be considered. *Maps 3* through *5*, found at the end of this Chapter illustrate the gap analysis findings.

Parks and Regional Recreation Areas

The primary level of analysis for park and recreation areas is a view of these system elements considering the type of facility provided and the population it is intended to serve. This analysis considers distribution and access to facilities throughout the service area. Local access to parks is measured with a 5-minute drive time, while regional access is measured in a 15-minute drive time for regional parks and facilities and a 30-minute drive time for special facilities. Geographic distribution is considered in light of the current population and projected growth areas. This is known as gap analysis and is described below for each of the access parameters.

Local Access to Parks

Neighborhood parks serve the local population and generally include open grass areas, picnic tables, playgrounds, and basketball or tennis courts. Regional parks also fulfill the element of local service for the nearby population. For this analysis, shown in *Map 3*, a five-minute drive time was calculated for neighborhood and regional parks.

Good coverage of localized service occurs in two main corridors. It can be assumed that Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services parks are providing local or neighborhood park access within its city limits. Identified gap areas, based on projected population growth include:

- An area surrounding the Kane Ranch Open Space property, suggesting that active use elements will be an important consideration for additional development at this property.
- An area just east of the Colorado Springs city boundary and the Schriever Air Force Base. Discussion should be held with the city of Colorado Springs regarding their potential need for a neighborhood park in that area.
- An area in or near the vicinity of Ellicott, particularly to the west of Ellicott where population growth projected, depending upon the development pattern.
- An area in the vicinity of Green Mountain Falls and Crystola. Discussion should be held regarding potential partnership to provide local service.
- Three potential sites for future consideration may include the vicinities of Ramah, Yoder, and Rush. Although some population growth is projected in these areas, it is not realistic to project exactly where that population density may warrant locally accessible park facilities at this time.

Regional Access to Parks

Regional parks provide a considerable service to various users and typically include sports fields, pavilions, picnic areas, trails, and other facilities. As shown in **Map 4**, a 15-minute drive time area was placed on full-service regional park and facilities for this analysis.

Map 1, found at the end of **Chapter 2**, shows areas of projected population growth from 2021 to 2026. The pink to red shaded areas indicate projected changes in population with the darker the shading showing the areas with the largest growth. Areas of gap, based on projected population growth include the Southeast corner of the County.

Regional Access to Special Facilities

As the name suggests, special facilities provide specialized services. In El Paso County, these currently serve two distinct purposes. The first is the delivery of interpretive and educational services through two nature centers and the second is the County Fairgrounds and Event Center. As shown in **Map 5** a 30-minute drive time areas was used for the special-use types for this analysis.

The two nature centers catchment areas cover most of the West-central and Southwest portions of the county. The El Paso County Fair and Events Complex provides its coverage to the Northeast quarter of the county. Gap areas, based on projected population growth occur in the Northwest and Southeast portions of the county for special facilities.

Trails

Across the country, community planners and citizens consistently rank trails as the top desired recreational amenity. The appeal of recreational trails includes the versatility of uses and users. A shared-use trail can accommodate people of all ages, abilities, and demographic profiles. They can be used for biking, walking, rollerblading, and walking a pet among other things. Additionally, trails can serve to connect parts of the community such as schools, neighborhoods, parks, and workplaces that would otherwise be isolated and thus offer a transportation alternative to driving.

Trailshed Analysis

Trailshed analysis is a useful way to look at a trail system and its connectivity to other recreational opportunities. A trailshed may be defined as a set of connected trail segments within which any point may be reached from any other point by way of a connected included trail. It is common for a trail system to consist of many trailsheds. The idea, however, is to create a single trailshed, a completely connected trail network to serve a user area.

For this analysis, as shown in **Map 6**, and to be consistent with the previous master plan, any trail segment within 1/10 mile of any other trail segment has been included in the same trailshed. In addition to El Paso County trails, Tier 1 and Tier 2 trails within the City of Colorado Springs trail system were also included in determining trailsheds as the definitions of those trails most closely matched the regional trail definition of El Paso County. Including these additional trails from outside the system is intended to provide a fuller understanding of existing regional connectivity.

A trail catchment area is intended to define recreational amenities along the trail that are easily accessible to trail users by foot or bike. Based on these criteria, El Paso County has a total of 45 trailsheds. Trailsheds are shown on the previous section's trailshed analysis map, with each trailshed shown as a different color. For reference, each trailshed has been assigned a number, given a name, and labeled by number on the map. For trailshed names, refer to the trailshed analysis table (**Table 11**).

Table 11: Trailshed Analysis

Trailshed	Trailshed Name	Approx. Mileage of Trails within	Adjacent Trailshed within 1/3 mile	Trail Ownership	Other Providers	EPC Outdoor Facilities	EPC Indoor Facilities	Total EPC Outdoor Components	Adventure Course	Basketball Court	Basketball, Practice	Diamond Field	Diamond Field, Practice	Disc Golf	Dog Park	Equestrian Facility	Event Space	Fitness Area	Garden, Community	Garden, Display	Historic Feature	Horseshoe Court	Loop Walk	Natural Area	Open Turf	Open Water	Passive Node	Pickleball Court	Playground	Rectangular Field	Restroom	Shelter	Target Range	Tennis Court	Trailhead	Volleyball	Water Access,	
T01	Main Trail Corridor	230	T07, T10, T11, T24	Multiple	101	9	3	123	1	4	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	5	2	1	14	13	6	10	37	1	4	3	5	5				
T02	Stratton, North Cheyenne and Bear Creek	32	T06, T20, T21, T32	Multiple	4	1	0																															
T03	Cheyenne Mountain	22	None	State	1																																	
T04	Briargate Skyline South	22	T01, T30, T41	City	15																																	
T05	Intemann	18	T01, T29	Multiple	1																																	
T06	Silver Cascade Falls	16	T02, T32, T40	Multiple	4																																	
T07	Black Forest Cathedral Pines	14	T12	EPC	1	1	13		2												3						1	1	1	2	2	1						
T08	Rock Island Regional Trail	11		EPC	1	1	3																															
T09	Pineries Trail Loop	8		EPC	2	2																																
T10	Fox Run	6	T36, T38	EPC	0	1	21								1							1					2	5	5	6			1					
T11	Homestead Ranch Trail	5		EPC	0	1	7																				2	1	1	2								
T12	Skyline	5	T07	City	3																																	
T13	Stetson	5	T01, T34	City	12																																	
T14	Fountain Creek Regional Trail	5		EPC	1	1	4									1																						
T15	Paint Mines	4		EPC	1	1	4																															
T16	Sand Creek Trail	4	T01	City	3																																	
T17	Ute Pass	4		City																																		
T18	Black Forest Section 16	4		EPC	1																																	
T19	Blodgett Peak	4		City	3																																	
T20	USFS	4	T02	USFS																																		
T21	USFS 2	3	T02	USFS																																		
T22	Rockrimmon	2	T01, T27	City	8																																	
T23	Cherry Creek Regional Trail	2		City																																		
T24	Eastonville Regional Trail	2		City	1	1	7																					1	1									
T25	Reservoir Loop	2	T01	City	1							3			2																							
T26	Kane Ranch	2		EPC	2	2																																
T27	Woodmen	2	T01, T22	City	3																																	
T28	Palmer Divide Regional Trail	2		EPC			1																															
T29	Ute Indian Trail	2	T05	Multiple																																		
T30	Briargate Trail	2		City	2	2																																
T31	Norwood	1	T01	City	3																																	
T32	Mt Cutler	1	T02, T06, T40	Multiple	1																																	
T33	Jimmy Camp Creek Regional Trail	1		City																																		
T34	Pring Ranch	0.9	T01, T13	City	4																																	

THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Trailhead	Trailhead Name	Approx. Mileage of Trails within	Adjacent Trailhead within 1/3 mile	Trail Ownership	Other Providers	EPC Outdoor Facilities	EPC Indoor Facilities	Total EPC Outdoor Components	Adventure Course	Basketball Court	Basketball, Practice	Diamond Field	Diamond Field, Practice	Disc Golf	Dog Park	Equestrian Facility	Event Space	Fitness Area	Garden, Community	Garden, Display	Historic Feature	Horseshoe Court	Loop Walk	Natural Area	Open Turf	Open Water	Passive Node	Pickleball Court	Playground	Rectangular Field	Restroom	Shelter	Target Range	Tennis Court	Trailhead	Volleyball	Water Access,	
T35	Northgate	0.9	T01	City	2																																	
T36	Fox Run North Segment	0.8	T10	EPC		1																																
T37	Grinnell Boulevard Trail	0.8		City																																		
T38	Fox Run East Segment	0.5	T10	EPC																																		
T39	Circle Dr Connector Trail	0.5	T01	City	1																																	
T40	Strawberry Hill Trail	0.4	T06, T32	City	2																																	
T41	Briargate Trail 2	0.3	T04, T30	City	1																																	
T42	Sand Creek to E Platte Ave Reach	0.3	T24	City																																		
T43	Sand Creek Trail	0.3	T01	City	1																																	
T44	University Park	0.2	T01	City	1																																	
T45	Shoup Rd	0.2		EPC																																		

THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

The trailshed analysis table displays trailshed access to County Parks facilities, U. S. Forest Service lands, and Colorado Springs city parks. Access to a recreational amenity is defined by 1/3 mile proximity to any portion of a trail based on the trail centerline. Any facility located within that 1/3 mile catchment area is considered accessible via that trail. The table also lists adjacent trailsheds within 1/3 mile. Adjacent trailsheds may present opportunities to expand and unify trailsheds by linking them to others nearby.

The trailshed analysis reveals that the County trail system includes an extensive north-south trailshed reaching from the northern county border through the City of Colorado Springs to Fountain Creek Regional Park, running roughly parallel to Interstate 25. This primary trailshed may be considered the foundation of this trail network. This trailshed, named the Front Range Trailshed (01), provides user access to several County amenities, approximately half of all amenities in the County recreation system, and nearly half of all Colorado Springs parks.

In addition to this primary trailshed the North Powers (02), Cottonwood-Rock Island (03), and Sand Creek (04) trailsheds also provide extensive coverage. Though not connected with any amenities, these other trailsheds do provide access to the majority of Colorado Springs city parks. If these trailsheds were to be merged with the Front Range Trailshed (01), the newly created unified trailshed would provide access to the vast majority of outdoor recreation opportunities in both El Paso County and the City of Colorado Springs.

Further, these five “target” trailsheds have good proximity to each other. Trailsheds 02, 03, and 04 all lay within 1/3 mile of the Front Range trailshed (01), and each is within 1/3 mile of at least one of the others. For this reason, linkage of these trailsheds may be a reasonable priority in future planning efforts.

Proposed Primary Regional Trails

The Primary and Secondary regional trails were determined based on the previous Trails Master Plan, the results of the Trail Shed Analysis, GIS analysis of existing and proposed land use and other spatial attributes, and with input from stakeholders during the issue identification stage of the process. The trails listed below and shown on **Map 12: Parks Master Plan in Chapter 9**, are broad-brush in nature, and locations will be more specifically determined and easements or rights-of-way requested based on County Parks planning processes for specific trails or segments and through the development permit application review process. Note: The parenthetical references following the trail names correspond to Trails Master Plan Map numbers. A complete list of Secondary Regional Trails can be found in **Appendix C**.



Table 12: Proposed Primary Regional Trails

Trail Name	Length	Percent Complete	Summary
Arroya Lane Regional Trail (#7)	5.38 miles	29%	Starting along the Eastonville Regional Trail, near Falcon High School, the trail heads west through the Meridian Ranch subdivision crossing under Meridian Road, continuing west through the Paintbrush Hills subdivision, crossing Vollmer Road to connect to the Sand Creek Regional Trail. This trail connects the Sand Creek Regional Trail, Woodmen Hills Trail, and Eastonville Regional Trail.
Bear Creek Regional Trail (#21)	4.32 miles	93%	Starting along 8th Street at Bear Creek, the trail generally follows Bear Creek west, through Bear Creek Regional Park, past South 21st Street, before splitting into two segments. One passes to the south of the Bear Creek Nature Center connecting to the City of Colorado Spring's Bear Creek Canyon Park, the other passes just north of the Nature Center, connecting to Bear Creek Road, and the City of Colorado Spring's Red Rock Canyon Open Space.
Black Forest Regional Trail (#5)	6.11 miles	0%	Beginning at the intersection with Shoup Road and Highway 83 and connecting with proposed City trails along the Black Squirrel Creek drainage, the proposed trail heads east along the north side of Shoup Road, passing a connection to the proposed Palmer Divide Regional Trail and Black Forest Regional Park. The trail continues east along Shoup Road, past the Town of Black Forest, and terminating at the southwestern corner of Pinerias Open Space and the northeast corner of Black Forest Section 16.
Chamberlain Regional Trail (#19)	10.84 miles	85%	Starting at Highway 115 at the southern terminus of the City of Colorado Springs' proposed section of the Chamberlain Trail near Cheyenne Mountain State Park, the current trail continues east through Fort Carson, following existing concrete and gravel-surfaced trails until its eastern terminus near the Highway 16 / Interstate 25 interchange. The proposed trail then crosses Fountain Creek at the Carson Street Bridge where it will connect to the existing Fountain Creek Regional Trail.
Crews Gulch Regional Trail (#18)	4.79 miles	53%	The trail starts at its western connection to the Fountain Creek Regional Trail in Ceresa Park, then proceeds northeast along paved and gravel trails, through Widefield Community Park, then proceeding east to its current eastern terminus along Fontaine Boulevard. The proposed trail continues eastward along Fontaine Boulevard until it connects at its eastern end with the Jimmy Camp Creek Regional Trail.

Eastonville Regional Trail (#8)	12.25 miles	8%	Starting in Falcon, the proposed trail follows Eastonville Road, connecting with the existing Rock Island Regional Trail and proposed Arroyo Lane Regional Trail, then continuing northeast past the Meridian Ranch, Grandview Reserve, and Four Way Ranch subdivisions, past Falcon High School, and into Falcon Regional Park, where a gravel-surfaced trail exists. Within the park, the trail connects with the existing Meridian Ranch Secondary Regional Trail, then proceeds north along Eastonville Road past the Latigo Trails subdivision to its connection with the Latigo Trails Secondary Regional Trail and the Great Plains Regional Trail. The trail continues north until its northern connection with the Palmer Divide Regional Trail near the Woodlake Trailhead.
Fountain Creek Regional Trail (#16)	24.92	30%	Starting along Fountain Creek at the El Pomar Youth Sports Complex in Colorado Springs, the trail continues south through the Fountain Creek Regional Park. The trail is proposed to continue south, along Fountain Creek, through the Christian Open Space to Clear Spring Ranch. The trail will then continue along Fountain Creek to the Pueblo County line. This trail is a component of the Front Range Trail (FRT). The FRT is a north-south multi-use trail planned to cross the entire state along the Front Range.
Fountain Creek West Regional Trail (#17)	10.15 miles	0%	The trail begins at Clear Spring Ranch Open Space, then continues west under Interstate 25 into the Rancho Colorado subdivision, where it turns southward, following Bocca Raton Heights and terminating at the Pueblo County line. This trail is a component of the Front Range Trail (FRT). The FRT is a north-south multi-use trail planned to cross the entire state along the Front Range.
Fox Run Regional Trail (#3)	11.71 miles	27%	Starting at the Baptist Road Trailhead of the New Santa Fe Regional Trail, the trail proceeds east along the north side of Baptist Road, utilizing existing concrete sidewalks. The proposed trail turns north into the Promontory Point subdivision, then turns east where it partially exists as gravel surfaced trail before turning south into Fox Run Regional Park. The trails runs through the park on existing gravel trails to the Roller Coaster Trailhead, where it continues east along Hodgen Road. The trail then turns southward through the Flying Horse North subdivision, then terminates with its connection with the Palmer Divide Regional Trail in Black Forest Regional Park.
Great Plains Regional Trail (#10)	66.05 miles	0%	Beginning at its northern connection with the Eastonville Regional Trail and the Latigo Secondary Regional Trail, the trail heads southeast, generally following the Black Squirrel Creek channel and utilizing state and federal lands when possible. The trail connects with the proposed Highway 94 Regional Trail, then heads south through state and Nature Conservancy lands, passing its connection to the Squirrel Creek Regional Trail and traversing both the Bohart and Chico Basin Ranches. The trail continues northwest until it terminates at its connection with the proposed Kane Ranch Regional Trail.

Trail Name	Length	Percent Complete	Summary
Highway 94 Regional Trail #11)	19.35 miles	0%	This trail begins at the intersection of East US Highway 24 and Colorado Highway 94, heading east and providing connectivity to the City's Corral Bluffs Open Space. It continues eastward until it terminates at its connection to the Great Plains Trail at the point where it crosses Highway 94.
Highway 115 Regional Trail #20)	16.70 miles	0%	Starting at Cheyenne Mountain State Park, the trail follows along the westerly side of Highway 115 southwest to Fremont County. Route is not recommended for on-street due to speeds and visibility concerns. This trail connects to Cheyenne Mountain State Park, the Chamberlain Trail, Fort Carson, Turkey Creek Recreation Area, and Blue Mountain.
Jackson Creek Regional Trail (#2)	9.38 miles	0%	Starting at Hwy 105, the trail follows the Jackson Creek Parkway south to Baptist Road, before continuing southwest, through several homeowner's associations before splitting into two segments, with one passing under Interstate 25 to connect to the New Santa Fe Regional Trail, while the other continues south and connects to the City's trail system at the Northgate Open Space. This trail facilitates a connection to the Town of Monument, the Lewis-Palmer High School, YMCA, Baptist Road, New Santa Fe Regional Trail, and City of Colorado Springs.
Jimmy Camp Creek Regional Trail (#15)	19.45 miles	5%	Starting at the confluence of Jimmy Camp Creek and Fountain Creek in the City of Fountain, the trail runs northeast, along Jimmy Camp Creek, through the Lorson Ranch subdivision, continuing northeast to the Corral Bluffs Open Space, turning northwest to connect to the City of Colorado Springs. This trail connects the City of Fountain's Adams Open Space, Fountain Boulevard route, Bradley Road route, Highway 94 route, Corral Bluffs Open Space, and the City of Colorado Springs's Jimmy Camp Creek Open Space.
Kane Ranch Regional Trail (#12)	24.66	8%	Starting at its northern connection with the Jimmy Camp Creek Trail near the Lorson Ranch subdivision, the trail heads south through state lands until it reaches Kane Ranch Open Space. On existing double-track trail, the trail proceeds south through the open space, then the proposed trail heads southward through state and City of Colorado Springs lands before turning west and connecting with the Great Plains Regional Trail and terminating at the South Powers Boulevard Regional Trail. An alternative route leaves Kane Ranch Open Space near the trailhead and heads west and south through the proposed Kane Ranch subdivision and connects to the South Powers Boulevard Regional Trail.
New Santa Fe Regional Trail (#1)	18.06 miles	100%	Starting at the Douglas County line near Palmer Lake, the trail continues south, past Santa Fe Open Space, through Monument, the United States Air Force Academy, connecting to the City of Colorado Springs trail system. The trail may be accessed at Palmer Lake, Highway 105, Monument, Air Force Academy, Baptist Road, North Gate, and Ice Lake with trailhead facilities at Palmer Lake, Monument, and Baptist Road. Each trailhead is equipped with parking, a restroom, and picnic tables. A portion of the American Discovery Trail (ADT) follows the New Santa Fe Trail. The ADT is an east-west multi-use hiking trail planned to cross the entire United States.

Palmer Divide Regional Trail (#4)	41.58 miles	18%	Beginning at its connection with the Black Forest Regional Trail along Shoup Road, the trail head northwest and enters Black Forest Regional Park, where it continues along existing park trails, heading east and north. The proposed trail leaves Black Forest Regional Park at Vessey Road, then continues eastward until it reaches Pineries Open Space, where it continues eastward along existing singletrack trails, leaving Pineries Open Space at its northeastern corner. The proposed trail heads northeast until it reaches the existing Woodlake Section of the Palmer Divide Trail. From the corner of Hodgen and Eastonville Roads, the proposed trail travels eastward to Homestead Ranch Regional Park, where it continues northeast utilizing existing park trails. The proposed trail then leaves the park and continues eastward along the Palmer Divide before reaching its eastern terminus at Ramah State Wildlife Area and its connection to the proposed extension of the Rock Island Trail.
Rock Island Regional Trail (#9)	31.57 miles	31%	Starting in Falcon, the trail runs parallel to Highway 24 on the former Chicago and Rock Island Railroad Line to Peyton. The trail is part of the America the Beautiful Trail and is proposed to continue east to Calhan and Ramah.
Sand Creek Regional Trail (#6)	6.1 miles	0%	Starting at its southern end with a connection to the City's existing Sand Creek Trail, the trail heads north along Sand Creek through the Sterling Ranch and Retreat at Timber Ridge subdivisions. The proposed trail connects with the Arroyo Lane Regional Trail, then continues north along Vollmer Road until it reaches the southeastern corner of Black Forest Section 16 and its existing trail loop.
Squirrel Creek Regional Trail (#13)	19.93 miles	0%	Starting at its western terminus at the proposed Jimmy Camp Creek Regional Trail, the trail travels east along Squirrel Creek Road, providing access to Kane Ranch Open Space, then proceeding east to its eastern terminus with the proposed Great Plains Regional Trail.
South Powers Boulevard Regional Trail (#14)	9.79 miles	0%	Beginning at the trail's northern terminus at Fontaine Boulevard and its connection to the Crews Gulch Regional Trail, this regional trail heads south within the South Powers Boulevard right-of-way, passing the connections to the Jimmy Camp Creek Regional Trail, Squirrel Creek Regional Trail, and Kane Ranch Regional Trail. The trail terminates at Clear Spring Ranch Open Space and its connection to the Fountain Creek Regional Trail / Front Range Trail.
Ute Pass Regional Trail (#22)	11 miles	64%	The Ute Pass Regional Trail is a planned 40-mile trail that will eventually connect Colorado Springs to Cripple Creek in Teller County. The trail is part of the American Discovery Trail and the America the Beautiful Trail. Over 11 miles of the trail is located within El Paso County along the US Highway 24 corridor. Approximately 7 miles of the trail has been completed in the County to date. Starting at the Teller County line in Crystola, the trail continues southeast to the Town of Green Mountain Falls, where it utilizes an on-street pedestrian route. The trail continues east to Ute Pass Elementary School and continuing southeast to Winnemucca Road in Chipita Park. Completed in 2014, a 3-mile section of the trail starts at the base of the Manitou Incline, heading northwestward to Longs Ranch Road. Planning for the remaining 4-mile section from Longs Ranch Road to Winnemucca Road is underway.

Open Space

As the County's population continues to grow, the definition of open space needs to adapt to allow for a broader understanding of what open spaces can provide to the citizens of El Paso County. Open Space is defined as an area with important natural, cultural, historic, or visual resource values that has been purposefully protected. Open spaces can also include agricultural lands, buffers, or widened trail corridors that help capture and preserve the character of the county.

Preserving park lands for future development will be critical as development pressures continue to increase in the County. Lands secured by the County for future park sites or trail corridors shall be maintained as open space until adequate funding is secured to develop the site. All open spaces are managed with an emphasis on protection from overactive use. Public access is permitted to the extent that resource values are not compromised.

Natural resources information is essential for understanding the existing character of the county and helping to identify potential open space conservation areas. Determining important open space attributes or criteria is critical to prioritizing potential acquisitions. Wildfire hazard is a pressing concern at this time, and preservation of wildlife habitat and plant communities, water quality, and stormwater management remain priorities as well.

Open Space Composite Analysis

The open space composite analysis illustrates open space value in terms of ecology and wildlife, wildfire hazard, conserved and preserved land, landmarks and landforms, slope of 30 percent or greater, surface water, and cultural and historic sites. Areas are identified and buffered for the presence of these factors as well as for consideration of protection of lands that are adjacent. The categories (shown in **Map 7: Open Space Values Attributes**) are then overlaid to form a composite map that ranks the probable suitability of lands within the study area for open space. The result is **Map 8: Open Space Composite Analysis**. Areas with darker colors in the map exhibit the highest presence of values to satisfy conservation criteria; lighter colored areas exhibit lower, but still significant values for potential protection.

These properties should broadly be considered by the County as high priorities for further evaluation for protection. Because areas in the potential open space composite value analysis were evaluated based on the broad potential that these preservation attributes occur, it is not known how well or to what extent individual parcels meet specific criteria. Therefore, it is necessary to further evaluate individual parcels on a case-by-case basis for value as open space. This can be accomplished through the *Potential Open Space Tier 2 Analysis* that is being developed as a result of this master planning effort. This includes field verification and also considers other values that are not appropriate for mapping but drive the priority for open space protection such as the potential for public access, willingness of the seller, cost, immediate and ongoing maintenance needs, and potential for partnership in the endeavor.

Tier 1 Analysis

Tier 1 analysis is the foundation for and a contributor to the Tier 2 analysis and was completed as a part of this master planning effort. Its purpose is to identify the "potential" that certain attributes exist on a particular site based on existing data sets. This contributed to the identification of recommendations for "candidate open space areas." This "potential" is further evaluated in Tier 2 through a field verification to determine both the existence as well as the quality of the attribute(s). Tier 2, as more fully explained below, uses the Tier 1 information along with other important criteria to help determine priorities and strategies for protection.

Based on the attributes identified for this effort and the existence of data sets representing those attributes, the data was assembled into the following categories or themes:

- Ecology and wildlife
- Agricultural lands
- Cultural and Historic Sites
- Landmarks and Landforms
- Conserved and Preserved Land
- Surface Water
- Slope

Data for this study was obtained entirely from existing sources, without fieldwork to generate new information. The platform for managing the geospatial data was ArcGIS. Primary sources of this data included GIS (Geographical Information System) files from El Paso County. This GIS data for wildlife and ecology was obtained from the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP), and El Paso County. For a list of GIS layers, please see **Appendix C**.

All of the collected and assembled data is displayed on a series of maps, which were reviewed by the the project team. Any known inaccuracies were noted and adjusted accordingly on the maps. However, it is important to note that without field verifications of any data, inaccuracies and outdated information are bound to be inherent within the database. Nonetheless, the compiled database was found to be suitable for the use to which it has been applied in this study.

Each attribute as shown in **Map 7: Open Space Values Attributes** was weighted equally, so that none was given priority over another in the scoring. Attributes within the dataset are assigned a value score of 1 unless otherwise specified.

- **Ecology and Wildlife (A, G, H)** – Information detailing ecology and wildlife surveys is in the dataset. Survey data included habitat locations of Preble’s Jumping Mouse, as well as Wildlife Impact Areas (High and Very High). The locations of Preble’s Jumping Mouse were buffered 300 feet. Lands considered to have a high and very high Wildlife Impact were also included in this dataset. This particular composite dataset is produced by “stacking” activity areas for each of the 30 individual species in El Paso County. The last dataset included in this category includes lands with high Wildfire Hazard.
- **Conserved and Preserved Land (B, C, F)** – Parcels with a centroid within 250 feet of conserved or preserved lands were included in this dataset. Conserved and preserved lands include County, State, and Federal lands, parcels described as such in County data, Bureau of Land Management lands, parks, trails, State Parks, Military Areas, National Forests, Conservation Easements, Nature Conservancy Lands, State Land Board Stewardship Trusts & Ownership. Parcels considered to be vacant within any of the adjacent parcels were added in this dataset. Colorado National Heritage Program information was also used in this dataset including Potential Conserved Land.
- **Landmarks and Landforms (D)** – Significant landmarks and landforms were included in this dataset. Points such as Pikes Peak, were taken from the existing Parks Master Plan and given a one half-mile radius.
- **Slope (E)** – Slopes greater than or equal to 30 percent were included in this dataset.
- **Surface Water (I,J,K,L)** – Surface water includes the Black Creek Alluvial Aquifer, 100-Year Floodplain, creeks, streams, lakes, reservoirs, and wetlands. All surface water data were buffered 1000 feet.

- **Agricultural Lands (M)** – Information on irrigated agriculture is included in the dataset. Any land found within this dataset was added at a value of one (1).
- **Military Installations (O)** – Any land adjacent to a military installation included in this dataset was added at a value of one (1).
- **Cultural & Historic Sites (P)** – This dataset includes 20-30 historical sites provided through the Elaine Freed Report.

Utilizing the GIS, the theme maps were overlaid to create a composite map as shown in **Map 8: Open Space Composite Analysis**, based on accumulated scores for any given point within the study area. Darker colored areas score the highest in terms of their potential to satisfy criteria in the ordinance; lighter colored areas score the lowest.

The analysis was broad-stroke and did not address individual parcels. It simply gives an idea of where open space parcels that meet the criteria outlined are likely to occur. However, individual parcels that meet these same criteria may exist within areas that scored low overall. Also, because an attempt was made to weigh all of the criteria equally, simply based on the potential for those attributes to occur, there is no evaluation of how well or to what extent individual parcels meet specific criteria. In this analysis, the potential to meet several criteria even marginally would result in a higher score than a parcel that met a single criterion exceptionally well. Tier 1 alone is not adequate to set priorities, therefore, it is necessary to evaluate individual parcels under consideration by additional means. This is the purpose of the Tier 2 analysis described later in this section. Tier 2 also contains additional criteria by which the parcel will be evaluated.

Sensitive Wildlife Habitat and Colorado Natural Heritage Program Sites

Significant wildlife habitat in El Paso County is represented in the mapping through data collection and evaluative efforts the Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), now incorporated with Colorado State Parks into a combined division of Colorado Parks and Wildlife. This data set was further merged with a data set representing the federally protected Prebles Meadow Jumping Mouse.

CPW mapped significant wildlife habitats throughout El Paso County and their sensitivity to impact from development activities. The CPW wildlife data reflects a combined ranking assigned to 30 different species based on two factors: 1) the Impact Factor, which is the sensitivity of individual species' activity areas to potential impact from development; and 2) the Status Factor, which is based on a combination of factors related to the rarity of a certain species such as federal, state threatened or endangered, the sensitivity of a species to environmental disturbance, whether there is special concern for a species and whether the species is economically important. After assigning a rank of 1 through 5 to each of the factors, the Impact Factor and Status factors are combined and a final ranking is assigned based on the Total Factor Ranking.

The Wildlife Habitat composite data is a way for CPW to summarize wildlife information on one data set allowing for an easily understood mapping format. This composite map is produced by “stacking” activity areas for each of the 30 individual species in El Paso County. Selection criteria for this list of species was based on several categories. Economically important species, such as big game, were included. Species with restricted distributions or highly specific habitat requirements, such as great blue heron, pheasant, and osprey were selected because they serve as barometers of change. Threatened and endangered species such as the bald eagle and peregrine falcon were selected to meet legal requirements. This Prebles dataset was developed to track the buffered creek areas for the Prebles Meadow Jumping Mouse habitat in El Paso County.

High impact areas, which are considered the most sensitive, are primarily located along the southern portion of Fountain Creek, including its tributary Jimmy Camp Creek, and at several locations in the mountains. Moderate/High Impact, is the next most sensitive rating; most of these areas are associated with the remaining portions of Fountain and Monument Creeks as well as much of the montane forest and foothills areas of the county. Other areas of the county are considered some combination of Moderate to Low Impact, including most of the Black Forest and grasslands portions of the county. Generally speaking, the plains have a lower density of wildlife species and most of the area is mapped by CPW as having a low sensitivity to development activities. Exceptions to this low sensitivity rating occur along some of the riparian corridors and in a few locations with known raptor nesting sites or known occurrences of other sensitive species such as the mountain plover.

In 1996, the Colorado Natural Heritage Program performed a Level One Inventory of Biological Special Interest Areas under contract to El Paso County. Using infrared aerial photography, biologists delineated approximately 200 preliminary conservation planning areas. It should be noted that this level of survey did not include field verification of all the identified sites and the boundaries of the sites are generally drawn and not intended to be precise in all instances. The mapping shows only a portion of the approximately 200 sites that were identified and are the sites with known occurrences of rare, threatened, or sensitive species or those areas that were noted as having particularly important or intact habitat values. Various wildflowers and species such as the small rattlesnake plantain (*Goodyera repens*), are examples of the type of rare plant included in the survey.

Tier 2 Analysis

Individual tracts of land that are being considered for inclusion in the open space system should be evaluated to determine how well they address the specific attributes of open space. This includes any lands offered through a willing seller or other means.

At this level, parcels are examined with a finer filter to determine the degree to which specific open space attributes exist on the site. The criteria allow evaluation of each tract on the level to which it satisfies the open space values identified below. If a parcel rates high enough overall or in any specific category, it can be considered for inclusion in the open space system.

Tier 2 criteria include:

- Tier 1 attributes
- Willingness of seller
- Wildlife/vegetation and restoration potential
- Cultural and historic value
- Recreation value and adjacent land uses
- Cost/benefit of acquisition and long-term management

When a property is deemed desirable for acquisition, the following questions come into play:

- Will the opportunity to protect the property be lost or become significantly more expensive and/or difficult if not acquired soon?
- Should the parcel be acquired fee simple or protected through some other means?
- Based on how well the parcel meets goals of other jurisdictions, who should acquire the land? Is there a partnering opportunity?

Landscape Character and Significant Landforms/Landmarks

The character of the natural landscape is an important factor in identifying areas that should be considered for open space conservation. As more of the county is developed, less area is left in its natural condition and good examples of some of the significant landscapes that make up El Paso County may be lost. A useful way to understand the county is to divide it into landscape types, each of which reflect the character of a particular area based primarily on landforms and vegetation. **Map 9: Land Cover, Landforms and Landmarks**, illustrates that El Paso County has three major landscape types (Southern Rocky Mountains, Foothills and Transitional, High Plains), with each having one or more sub-areas. The sub-areas share similar characteristics to the larger landscape type they occupy, but exhibit sufficiently distinct variations in landform, vegetation type, or some other factor that merits their identification as separate landscape units.

Southern Rocky Mountains

This landscape type is characterized by dramatic landforms, steep slopes, and major variations in elevation. Most of this landscape type is forested, and it generally occurs at elevations above 7,000 feet in the western portion of the County. The Mountain Front subarea is a dominant feature on the face of the mountains of the Rampart Range that forms the backdrop to the county. In many places, the mountains rise abruptly along this front, reaching an elevation of more than 9,000 feet in a near vertical rise from their base. Rock faces, spires, and other interesting rock outcrops are common and add visual interest to this subarea. Vegetation is diverse and includes both montane forest dominated by ponderosa pine and subalpine communities at higher elevations dominated by Engleman spruce and other conifers. Canopy cover is generally dense and somewhat uniform, which when combined with the angle of view from the lower areas where most county residents live, results in a high degree of visual sensitivity due to the fact that changes in vegetation or other modifications are highly visible. Notable landmarks in this subarea include Cheyenne Mountain and Cameron Cone.

The Subalpine Forest occupies the uplands above 9,000 feet extending to timberline. Landforms are somewhat less dramatic within this subarea, particularly north of Fountain Creek, and large portions of the area are gently sloping, elevated uplands dominated by a dense cover of various conifers. The Alpine subarea occupies a small portion of the extreme western edge of the county. Elevations range from 11,000 feet to over 14,000 feet and a major portion of the subarea is above tree line. Pikes Peak is an obvious landmark within this subarea.

Foothills and Transitional

The Southern Rocky Mountain landscape type merges into the Foothills and Transitional Landscape type, which has been divided into five subareas on **Map 9**. The Black Forest is a major subarea that is located in the north central portion of the county east of Monument Creek. Essentially an elevated plateau dissected by a series of drainages, the Black Forest represents the furthest eastward extension of the ponderosa pine community in Colorado. As such, it is one of the more distinctive landscapes in Colorado. Neither high plains nor a simple extension of the foothills to the west, the Black Forest combines many of the best features of both landscapes. Dense stands of pine occupy the higher areas of the unit above 7,000 feet and lower areas are a mosaic of grassland, shrubland, and isolated stands of pine and scrub oak. Wind and water erosion has resulted in the sporadic occurrence of a few isolated landmarks, namely Table Rock, Rattlesnake Butte, and Fremont Fort.

The Foothills Woodland subarea includes most of the Air Force Academy and extends east to merge with the Black Forest. Topography in this subarea is fairly gentle, ranging from the flats along Monument Creek to rolling uplands penetrated by a series of small canyons. Vegetation also varies across the area,

with dense stands of ponderosa pine on the benches west of Monument Creek and open grasslands fringed with scrub oak and mountain shrubs dominating east of Monument Creek. Cathedral Rock (an isolated rock spire), Ben Lomond Mountain, and Elephant Rock are definite landmarks within this subarea. Another distinct subarea is the Pinyon Juniper Parkland area on the southern edge of the county, most of which is within the boundaries of Fort Carson. Topography within this subarea is irregular and consists of a series of small canyons and low mountains 6,550-7,000 feet in elevation. Vegetation is also varied, and includes open grasslands as well as dense stands of pinyon and juniper. This subarea is notable in El Paso County due to the fact that its occurrence here represents the northern edge of the pinyon juniper forest community along the Front Range.

The areas of lower elevation in and around Fort Carson are classified as the Foothills Grassland subarea. Although primarily grassland with a sprinkling of shrub communities, the more complex topography of this subarea distinguishes it from the flat to gently rolling plains located further east. Consistent with El Paso County's position as a meeting ground of northern and southern species, this subarea contains the furthest north extension of cholla cactus, a species that is common in the grasslands of the southwest.

High Plains

The third and largest landscape type in the county is characterized as high plains. Most of the high plains consists of the Grasslands subarea, which consists of short and mid-grasses such as blue grama, buffalo grass, and little bluestem. Topography in this landscape is primarily flat to rolling with localized variations that result from erosive action, leaving isolated buttes and ridgelines. Examples of these localized variations include the Paint Mines near Calhan, Corral Bluffs east of the City of Colorado Springs, and Crow's Roost in the south-central portion of the county. Other examples include the buttes along the southern reaches of Fountain Creek, which are a series of small teepee formations that dot an otherwise smooth landscape. Although most of the high plains within El Paso County remains in grass, some areas are cultivated for dryland wheat or irrigated crops. These relatively small subareas are identified in **Map 8: Open Space Composite Analysis** as Irrigated Agriculture and a larger area in the far eastern portion of the county identified as Dryland Agriculture.

Significant stream corridors are also noted. These include stream corridors with notable riparian areas along some or all of their length. The stream corridors usually have a narrow width and therefore do not represent a distinct landscape type. They are delineated, however, due to their importance as wildlife corridors and the visual interest they add to the landscape.

Map 9: Land Cover, Landforms and Landmarks also shows significant landforms and landmarks. These are highly visible and notable features that stand out from the surrounding landscape. In some cases, they also have historic significance. The map also delineates the Urban Area within the county. Although originally made up of a variety of landscape types, portions of which remain in a somewhat natural condition, urban development generally dominates the setting.

The results of the first phase of the Front Range Mountain Backdrop Study are also included on **Map 9**. Five Potential Critical Preservation Candidate Land Areas were identified in El Paso County, all of which are located within the defined Mountain Backdrop study area. The delineation of these areas was accomplished by overlaying a variety of quantitative and qualitative features with a computer mapping system to arrive at the most critical areas. Factors used in the analysis included, but were not limited to: computerized visual analysis, visual features, and viewpoints identified through public surveys, wildlife resources, sensitive plant ecosystems, existing public lands, existing developed areas, and mineral areas.

The five areas identified using this methodology are also shown on **Map 9** and are stated in the following list, starting on the north:

- Palmer Lake Backdrop
- Quarry Reclamation Area
- Ute Pass Area
- Section 16 to Cheyenne Mountain
- Aiken Canyon Area

Landmarks

Table Rock, Elephant Rock, Cathedral Rocks, Pulpit Rock, Fremont Fort, and Ben Lomond Mountain
In the early 1900's, summer social events included picnics at these local landmarks. Excursions led by local hotels brought visitors and county residents alike by horseback or carriage to enjoy the unusual landforms and views of the mountains.

Garden of the Gods

Although this asset is located within the incorporated City limits of Colorado Springs, Garden of the Gods is notable, as it has long been revered as a fascinating and sublime landscape. Visitors from around the world have appreciated its unique beauty, from the early 1800s, before any substantial development of the area, to present times. The park is now among the assets managed by the City of Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services.

Candidate Open Space Areas

El Paso County has an excellent quality of life with a moderate climate, affordable housing, and close proximity to many outdoor recreation opportunities. This popularity has led to explosive growth that challenges the environment that draws individuals to this area. Many Colorado counties are experiencing similar growth and have established aggressive open space programs to preserve critical vital areas for future generations. There are many positive attributes for open space conservation, and several areas are identified as high priority lands for conservation. In most cases, a broadly-defined area is shown that encompasses a landscape unit or defined habitat type without regard to individual ownership boundaries. Any acquisition of land or easements in these areas would be accomplished through agreements with the landowners on a willing seller basis. One example of such an agreement would be a Conservation Easement, which is discussed in greater detail along with other mechanisms in **Chapter 11**, under **Voluntary Programs**. The boundaries of these areas were also generalized to create linkages between important resource areas and to allow flexibility in working with landowners. The plan should not be interpreted to mean that the County will necessarily attempt to protect all the areas shown on the map. Instead, the map identifies those areas where available resources will be focused to determine if mutual agreements can be made with landowners to protect important open space.

Generally speaking, the high priority conservation areas are where two or more important natural resource values converge. These values include important wildlife habitat areas identified by the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife and Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP) sites. Other considerations include significant landscapes and important stream corridors. The Potential Open Space Composite Analysis described previously identified areas with the highest combined values of natural resource and other attributes and was used to determine the candidate open space areas described in the following list and shown on **Map 10: Candidate Open Space Areas** at the end of this **Chapter**. A Tier 2 screening needs to be undertaken prior to acquisition or conservation by other means, to fully address suitability in terms of physical, cost, and timing considerations. Protection of the identified

conservation areas could be accomplished through a variety of means, including conservation easements and other techniques that do not require fee simple purchase. Some of the conservation areas might have facility development and others might have no public use at all, depending upon the method of conservation and resource sensitivity. Those areas that become protected as natural areas or open space areas would be managed according to the guidelines listed in **Table 10: El Paso County Open Space Classification**. In most cases, development would be limited to a minimal amount based on what is needed to allow access (if appropriate) and protect the resource. Other areas could eventually become regional parks, with a higher level of facility development on a portion of the site and the remainder protected in a more natural condition.

Ben Lomond Mountain and Elephant Rock

(Elev. 7636 feet; just east of Palmer Lake; Elephant Rock slightly further [3/4 mile] east of mountain)
These regionally significant landmarks are located near Palmer Lake along State Highway 105. Elephant Rock is an isolated cluster of cap rock that extends off Ben Lomond Mountain, standing above the surrounding pines like a castle ruin. The overall landscape is very scenic. The higher portions of Ben Lomond Mountain are a series of cliff faces that have shed huge blocks of rock lying along the lower slopes. Ponderosa pine and scrub oak blend into an extensive and gently sloping meadow that meets the base of the mountain and emphasizes its abrupt rise. Protection of this area would preserve two notable landmarks and a critical backdrop to the popular Palmer Lake Recreation Area. The area is also traversed by the New Santa Fe Trail and it represents one of the more scenic settings along the trail. However, the meadows and flanks of the mountain face imminent development that may preclude the exploration of protection options unless discussions begin immediately. As a natural area, development of facilities would be minimal and access controlled to protect sensitive areas and steep slopes. Future trail connections could also be made that would link the area to existing Forest Service trails up nearby canyons to the west. The result could be a trail through land managed by the Forest Service, El Paso County and other jurisdictions. (No B-rank)

Big Sandy Creek

(headwaters at east edge of Black Forest to Ramah Reservoir)

Contains a good example of the globally-vulnerable Arkansas darter, a threatened species in the State of Colorado. The area also supports a good example of plains cottonwood riparian woodland, plains cottonwood with peachleaf willow and coyote willow; good examples of this plant community are rarely encountered. Maintenance of the natural flooding regime is important in recharge to the alluvial aquifer that supports the creek and spring-fed ponds sustaining the Arkansas darter. B-3

Bijou Basin

(“West Bijou Creek NCA”)

West Bijou Creek is an ephemeral stream on the that drains from the Black Forest region of Elbert and El Paso counties into Arapahoe County, about two miles from the Adams County line. The floodplain and channel are relatively wide and the stream is often dry in the late summer. The northern end of the conservation area is surrounded mostly by agricultural land (center pivot irrigation), but the southern end (Bijou Basin) is surrounded by rangeland. The floodplain, banks, and terraces of the stream are dominated by large or good quality patches of plains cottonwood with scattered



peach-leaf willow. Coyote willow is present within the floodplain. The upper reaches of the stream are a diverse mosaic of riparian and wetland plant associations, whereas downstream reaches can support only the cottonwood dominated plant association. The natural hydrologic flow of the stream and groundwater must be maintained for long term survival of this riparian ecosystem. Boundaries that protect the elements from direct impacts such as weed invasions and physical alterations of the vegetation structure should be considered. Boundaries should incorporate the major ecological processes that allow the element to survive, such as channel migration, flooding and sedimentation, fire, and herbivory actions. Inclusion of the entire floodplain into the site boundaries would allow for natural migration of the channel, allowing the creation of sites for cottonwood regeneration and other vegetation types. (No B-Rank)

Black Squirrel Creek: Squirrel Creek School

(Squirrel Creek Road at Ellicott Hwy)

Black Squirrel Creek supports a good occurrence of globally imperiled and state-imperiled Mountain Plover, a species designated as special concern to the State of Colorado, and a candidate for Federal listing as threatened/endangered, and as Sensitive by the BLM/Forest Service. This particular area includes breeding pairs, with over 20 breeding pairs identified in some years. Black tailed prairie dogs and Burrowing Owls also occur within this site. B-2

Black Forest North

This Black Forest area consists of a mosaic of woodlands and forest dominated almost exclusively by ponderosa pine, and occasionally including individual trees of Rocky Mountain juniper, and less frequently, small patches of aspen. The forested areas are frequently broken by meadows of shortgrass, midgrass, and tallgrass species. The Black Forest area is unique in being the only place in Colorado where montane ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) forest grows east of the Front Range foothills.

Although previous land uses have modified the composition and structure of the Black Forest, the area supports fair examples of two ponderosa pine woodland communities: ponderosa pine with sunsedge and ponderosa pine with little bluestem. The Pineries Open Space occupies an area of the Black Forest from just east of Vollmer Hill extending east and northeast over the headwater reaches of West Kiowa Creek, Black Squirrel Creek, and Snipe Creek. The Pineries Open Space also supports a good (B-ranked) occurrence of Richardson's alumroot. Since it is common throughout the rest of its range and since the Colorado portion of the range is isolated to the west of the rest of the range, Richardson's alumroot is considered disjunct in Colorado. This area supports a fair occurrence of the globally vulnerable/apparently secure (G3G4) ponderosa pine/sun sedge woodland which is imperiled (S2) in Colorado; a fair occurrence of the globally-vulnerable/apparently secure (G3G4) ponderosa pine/little bluestem woodland which is critically imperiled (S1) in Colorado; and a good occurrence of Richardson's alumroot a globally-secure (G5) species that is critically imperiled (S1) in Colorado.

Residential development is progressing rapidly in the surrounding area. This area includes relatively large tracts of intact land owned by a few property owners. Portions of the area could be expected to develop into subdivisions. Conservation strategies, including the purchase of conservation easements, could help maintain this island of significant plants and plant communities. The entire Black Forest area is considered a high wildfire hazard area by El Paso County. B-4

Black Forest South

Near its northernmost limit, the Black Forest site includes the highest point in the Black Forest (Vollmer Hill at 7,704 ft; 2,376 m) and drops in elevation to the south to 7,080 ft (2,183 m) at its southern boundary. The headwaters of numerous creeks and streams radiate from this area, including Black Squirrel Creek, Kettle Creek, Cherry Creek, and Sand Creek. The Black Forest is unique in that it is the only place in Colorado where montane forest grows east of the Front Range and foothills. On vegetation maps, satellite images, and even from the summit of Pikes Peak, this extension of forest into the plains is very conspicuous. The flora and structure of this forest resemble that of the Black Hills in South Dakota. Additionally, many species found within the Black Forest are also found disjunctly in the Black Hills. Many of the plant species that this area includes are considered “woodland prairie relicts” which were once more common in Colorado and have diminished here due to climatic change.

The Black Forest offers these species a refuge in which they can persist, widely disjunct from other populations of the same species. Long-term separation of populations of this sort can lead to allopatric speciation (the formation of new species via geographic isolation from parent populations), and for this and other reasons these disjunct populations are worthy of conservation attention. The Richardson alumroot, prairie goldenrod, birdfoot violet, and Selkirk’s violet are all common elsewhere but rare in Colorado. One occurrence of the Southern Rocky Mountain cinquefoil was found during 2000 in this area. This species is restricted in range to the Southern Rocky Mountains and is only found in isolated areas in New Mexico and Colorado. Most of the land within this area is privately owned.

Weeds threaten all of the occurrences; particularly menacing is yellow toadflax. This species was found near all of the occurrences revisited in 2000 and grows vigorously in natural and disturbed areas throughout the Black Forest, and can displace native species. In most areas, fire suppression has resulted in dense, doghair stands of ponderosa pine. The fire-maintained open savannahs that historically dominated the area have largely succeeded to closed canopy forest, reducing the quality and availability of habitat. The potential for destructive crown fires appears high in many areas. Part of the occurrence of the birdfoot violet at La Foret is growing on a mowed lawn that is surrounded by ponderosa forest and an adjacent riparian area. The birdfoot violet likely was present prior to human alteration of the area, and may persist as a response to the removal of competing taller grass and forb species as a result of mowing. B-4

Blue Mountain

(17,000 acres)

This area is located west of Highway 115 in the southwestern corner of the county and supports a good occurrence of globally vulnerable and State critically imperiled Mexican Spotted Owl, a State- and Federally- threatened species (four nests identified). Two additional occurrences of globally and state vulnerable American Peregrine Falcon exist, a Federally-endangered subspecies (two nests identified). The area only includes the nesting habitat of both species; home ranges and feeding areas reach far beyond the site boundaries. The area also contains state-imperiled Yellow lady’s slipper, in the riparian zone along Little Fountain Creek. B-3

Buffalograss Playas

In southeastern El Paso County, between the many low rolling hills of shortgrass prairie, are small flat-bottomed depressions. There are no surface channels draining the area, instead rainfall and runoff collect in these basins forming ephemeral wetlands. It is not clear whether these depressions are wind deflated playas (Bolen et al. 1989) or remnants of buffalo wallows (Uno 1989; F. Knopf, USGS, pers. comm.), both of which develop clay bottoms and collect runoff after heavy rainstorms. We have chosen

to refer to these depressions as playas, fully acknowledging that their origin is not well understood. The area outlined by the PCA is estimated to contain over 300 playas, an average density of about three playas per square mile. The playas are generally circular to oval-shaped, oriented roughly north-south, and range in size from about 0.5 to 10 ac (0.2 to 5 ha).

These basins remain dry throughout most of the year and collect water only after heavy rainfall. In southeastern El Paso County, the heavy rains generally occur in the late summer and in many cases a series of storms are required in order for the playas to retain water (Weathers 2000; G. Paul, local landowner, pers. comm.). Runoff collecting in a dry playa infiltrates cracks in the clay bottom of the playa and swells the clay, effectively sealing the playa bottom (Zartman et al. 1994). After the clay has been wetted, subsequent storms can result in playa filling. The playas may hold water for periods ranging from days to weeks, depending on the size of the drainage basin and intensity of the rainstorm (Weathers 2000). In some cases, these playas may hold water from May to August (G. Paul, pers. comm.) or in dry years may remain dry year-round.

The vegetation in the playas is shorter than the surrounding blue grama shortgrass prairie and consists of different species. The dominant species in the playas is the perennial warm-season grass buffalograss. Growing with the buffalograss are the perennial forbs plains ambrosia and short-ray prairie coneflower. The vegetation in the playas generally occurs in bands where the outermost rim often supports the highest density of plains ambrosia and coneflower. Other plants growing in the playas include a dryland sedge, prostrate vervain, frog-fruit, spreading yellow cress, greenthread, curly cup gumweed, and Russian thistle. Interestingly, buffalograss submerged during the growing season has been known to withstand more than five weeks of inundation (Porterfield 1945). In the playas that remain wet the longest, there may be a small bare ground portion in the center with very sparse cover that could include western wheatgrass, spikerush, goosefoot, or weedy annuals.

Plains ambrosia is a shortgrass prairie species that is restricted to an area of about 100 miles by 50 miles (primarily in El Paso and Lincoln counties). Plains ambrosia requires a little more moisture than most upland plants and as such, the playas appear to be their native habitat, as the clay soils of the playas retain moisture longer than the upland soils. Roadsides also appear to provide the extra moisture required by the plains ambrosia and, as such, plains ambrosia is very prevalent on the sides of many unpaved roads in the area. The playas in El Paso County are the best known occurrences for this species.

In late summer 2000, Mountain Plover were observed gathering for migration in dry playas. Mountain Plover is a declining shortgrass prairie species that is known to inhabit areas with low vegetation and a high percentage of bare ground such as prairie dog towns and heavily grazed shortgrass prairie (Knopf 1996). Observations of concentrations of Mountain Plover exceeding 50 birds in the playas in late summer may indicate that playas may be another habitat attractive to Mountain Plover because of the low-growing vegetation. In addition, a breeding location for another shortgrass prairie bird that prefers low-growing vegetation, McCown's Longspur, was noted in the vicinity of playas (A. Versaw, pers. comm.). This may be the southernmost known current breeding location in Colorado for McCown's Longspur (Kingery 1998).

This PCA contains the best-known playa habitat for the globally-vulnerable plains ambrosia. It also includes most of the known extent of the globally-vulnerable buffalograss playa community. The landscape included within this PCA is fragmented by roads and some agriculture but remains largely intact. Hundreds of playas remain in good to excellent condition in the PCA. Plains ambrosia, though locally abundant, has a very limited global range (about 50 miles by 100 miles) and almost the entire habitat is privately owned. B-2

Cheyenne Mountain

The Cheyenne Mountain area is located in the foothills of west-central El Paso County, just west of the northern end of the Fort Carson Military Reservation. It is partially contained within the newly created Cheyenne Mountain State Park, extending from the edge of the rolling prairie grasslands near Highway 115 to nearly the top of Cheyenne Mountain. It includes most of the Limekiln Valley, portions of the Cheyenne Mountain Air Force Station, and private and federal lands to the north and west. The site occupies an area at the ecotone between the prairie grasslands of the Great Plains and the lower montane foothill forests of the Front Range. It encompasses portions of both the prairie and the foothill forest ecosystems and as a result it supports a very diverse flora and fauna including golden columbine, Peregrine Falcon, and Ovenbird. It also supports one of the best remaining examples of the Front Range foothills mesic oak-shrub ecosystems, as well as remnants of tallgrass prairie. Remnant foothill grasslands of big bluestem, little bluestem, and mountain muhly support a variety of butterfly species, including the crossline skipper.

The lower elevation portions of the site are dominated by prairie grasslands with shortgrass and midgrass species interspersed with scattered islands of Gambel's oak. In these areas, several blacktailed prairie dog towns are present, and these towns support other species such as Mountain Plovers and Burrowing Owls. On higher elevation areas, forests of ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, and white fir dominate steep, rocky slopes. Mixed woodlands and shrublands form an interface between the prairie and woodland ecosystems. B-4

Chico Creek

The Chico Creek watershed reaches from the Black Forest to the Arkansas River, encompassing over 580 square miles in El Paso and Pueblo counties. Chico Creek and its tributary, Black Squirrel Creek, are ephemeral throughout most of their length and surface flow reaches the Arkansas River only after heavy precipitation events. In the southern portion of the watershed, various seeps and springs create an extensive Great Plains wetland and riparian complex with perennially ponded portions. Surface water is extremely rare in the basin, and the wetlands formed by these seeps and springs are the most significant hydrologic feature of the entire basin. The Chico Creek site encompasses these wetlands and riparian areas. It contains a good occurrence of the globally-vulnerable Arkansas darter; good occurrences of two globally-vulnerable wetland communities; and a fair occurrence of a globally-imperiled cottonwood riparian woodland.

The large acreage, and the wide range of wetland communities, are unusual qualities for the central shortgrass prairie. Wildlife observed within the wetlands areas includes plains leopard frogs; northern leopard frogs; red-winged blackbirds; and common snipe, as well as over 45 species of aquatic insects. Other wildlife using riparian areas includes the typical shortgrass prairie species such as pronghorn antelope, white-tailed deer, coyote, desert cottontail, jackrabbit, western rattlesnake, and Woodhouse's toad. Bird species include red-tailed and Swainson's Hawks, Great Horned Owl, and several others. B-3



Corral Bluffs

This distinctive landform extends along the eastern fringes of the urbanizing area of Colorado Springs. In places, the bluffs drop nearly 400 feet, marking an abrupt transition from the elevated plains on the east to the Fountain Creek drainage basin. Erosion along this front has exposed an interesting set of rock strata and created a series of gullies where more favorable moisture conditions support the establishment of isolated juniper, ponderosa pine, and other woody species. The bluffs are generally more prominent north of State Highway 94 and taper off to the south. The area encompasses an approximately one-mile wide swath of land that includes the limestone outcrops for which the area is named, as well as some of the prairie at the base and along the top of the cliffs. It also includes important wildlife habitat. Portions of the bluffs (700+ acres) have been acquired by the City of Colorado Springs. Protection of this area would maintain the visual quality of this important landmark and could also provide an opportunity for a regional trail alignment along the base of the bluffs that would link Fountain Creek with the proposed Jimmy Camp Creek Park (Colorado Springs). The bluffs also have important cultural resource values, including their use by early Native Americans as a buffalo jump. Cattlemen gave the bluffs their name back in the days of open range – the steep cliffs served as a barrier where cattle could be corralled with relatively little fence construction. (No B-rank)

Drake Lake

Part of this area is owned by El Paso County and has recently been established for passive use as a park asset. The lake is located approximately one mile east of the Falcon townsite. Situated within a rural-residential subdivision the lake supports habitat for over eighty species of birds and contains wetlands that provide habitat for a variety of plant species.

Falcon/Garrett Road

(“Sand Creek Ridge” under CNHP)

The Sand Creek Ridge area is located on both sides of U.S. Highway 24 starting just north of Colorado Highway 94 and extending north to just south of the town of Falcon, directly between the tallgrass prairie areas around the Colorado Springs Airport and the tall and mixed-grass prairies of the Judge Orr Road site. It occupies the broad northeast trending ridge that separates upper Jimmy Camp Creek from the East Fork Sand Creek. The Sand Creek Ridge PCA consists of a gently rolling ridgeline that separates the Upper Jimmy Camp Creek drainage from the East Fork Sand Creek drainage. The east side of the ridge descends through moderately steep hillsides of ponderosa pine woods into the Upper Jimmy Camp Creek drainage. The west side of the ridge descends gradually through open needle and thread (*Stipa comata*) prairies down to the East Fork of the Sand Creek. U.S. Highway 24 traverses the ridge on the west side. This area contains a good (B-ranked) example of a globally-secure (G5 S2S3) mixedgrass prairie community, needle, and thread-blue grama grass prairie. B-4

Foothills

(not included in National Forest)

The foothills area includes land that sits at the base of the Front Range and is highly visible from much of El Paso County, including Colorado Springs and other cities and towns along Interstate-25. Foothills areas are considered important due to the visual impacts from development of this landscape type, as well as their role in habitat support, being a significant transition between diverse attributes of the plains and the complex elements of the Front Range mountain habitats. The foothills area is considered a high wildfire hazard area by El Paso County. (No B-rank)

Forest Lakes (*“Monument Creek Tributaries”; Town of Monument south to AFA*) – This site consists of channels within Monument creek as well as upstream tributary drainages. Supports an excellent

occurrence of the globally-imperiled and state-imperiled Preble's meadow jumping mouse; in fact, the best known occurrence of the mouse in the Arkansas River drainage. This species is federally threatened and a species of special concern by the State of Colorado. This area contains habitat parameters likely critical to the mouse persistence: dense herbaceous and shrub riparian communities and upland grassland communities free from urban impacts. B-2*

Fountain Creek (and *Jimmy Camp Creek*) – This area is within the Fountain Creek watershed, which is comprised of 927 square miles. The Fountain Creek watershed includes portions within eleven governmental jurisdictions - Monument, Palmer Lake, Fountain, Woodland Park, Manitou Springs, Green Mountain Falls, City and County of Pueblo, Colorado Springs, Teller County, and El Paso County. The Colorado Parks and Wildlife has documented the Arkansas darter, a globally-vulnerable (G3 S2) small plains fish, in two reaches of Fountain Creek.

Arkansas darters are small Great Plains fish native to streams in the Arkansas River basin and are known to inhabit small, shallow, clear streams that are often spring-fed and have sandy substrates, slow current, cool water, and aquatic vegetation (Nesler et al. 1999). In Fountain and Jimmy Camp creeks, Arkansas darters are probably most abundant in spring-fed marshes adjacent to the creeks and not within the main channels. Other fish species that have been documented to occur with the Arkansas darter include fathead minnows, flathead chubs, longnose daces, and brook sticklebacks (Colorado Parks and Wildlife 2001d). As the Fountain Creek Watershed has become increasingly urbanized, problems associated with Fountain and Monument creeks and their tributaries have become apparent. Erosion, sedimentation, and flooding problems have highlighted the need to understand the consequences of development in the watershed on channel stability and habitat changes. Factors contributing to the watershed changes have resulted primarily from rapid area growth and include:

- An increase in impervious surfaces (i.e., roads, rooftops, parking lots) which leads to increased stormwater runoff
- Floodplain encroachment
- Increased urban irrigation
- Creek restraints and hardpointing

Reaches of Fountain Creek support a mature riparian forest of plains cottonwood with coyote willow. Unfortunately, Russian olive, crack willow, and tamarisk, all invasive exotic species, comprise much of the vegetative cover and thus contribute to ecosystem degradation. However, the riparian vegetation provides important habitat for a range of bird species and is an important migration corridor along the Front Range. In fact, Fountain Creek Regional Park has been designated by the National Audubon Society as an Important Bird Area (IBA) of Colorado (Cafaro 2000). The IBA designation is based on the area's providing essential wetland habitat and resources for resident and migrant species. Observers have recorded over 250 bird species in the park. A Great Blue Heron rookery supporting over 50 pairs is located in the riparian area.

Also documented as breeding within the Fountain Creek riparian area are Bullock's Orioles and Swainson's Hawks (Cafaro 2000). Other wildlife known in the riparian area includes beavers, muskrats, and white-tailed deer. A trail runs along portions of Monument and Fountain Creeks and interpretive programs focusing on hands-on environmental education occur within Fountain Creek Regional Park. Residential and industrial development is occurring within the watershed and on creek banks at a rapid pace, decreasing the creek's natural ability to accommodate flooding. April/May 1999 flooding along Fountain Creek removed large acreages of wetlands and adjacent riparian habitat. Another issue within the Fountain Creek watershed is water quality with increased point source and non-point source pollution loading to the creek. B-4

Fox Run Grasslands / Forest Lakes – This area is adjacent to and west of the north end of Fox Run Regional Park and lies near the head of Smith Creek. It contains a relatively large segment of Black Forest with a fringe of scrub oak that transitions into a grassland landscape on its western edge. The area is another example of a relatively undisturbed Black Forest landscape; a landscape that is becoming increasingly rare within El Paso County and other areas along the Front Range. The addition of this area to Fox Run Regional Park would increase opportunities for hiking and nature interpretation and would result in protection of a more significant segment of the Black Forest landscape. Forest Lakes is located adjacent to the Fox Run Grasslands and extends to the Pike National Forest. (No B-rank)

Judge Orr Road (25,000 acres on both sides of Hwy 24) – Good example of globally-imperiled tallgrass community, big bluestem-little bluestem, on the southeast side of Highway 24; Northwest of Highway 24 is another relatively intact grassland containing little bluestem with sideoats grama, and is globally vulnerable. Several good examples of globally-vulnerable wetland plant communities occur in this area, supporting a variety of aquatic invertebrates, small fishes, and the northern leopard frog. The small-headed rush occupies some of these wetlands along Black Squirrel Creek, the only known current Colorado location for this plant. High urgency area due to development pressures from the town of Falcon and surrounding subdivisions. B-2

Manitou North (Cave of the Winds under the Colorado Natural Heritage Program) – At least two caves within the area are used as maternity roosts by Townsend’s big-eared bats. It is not clear whether the bats in these two roosts represent one or two distinct bat colonies (K. Navo, CPW, pers. comm.).

Caves occupied by Townsend’s big-eared bats are located in precipitous, rocky terrain that is characterized by the presence of pinyon-juniper woodland with scattered, brushy oak. Stands of mixed conifers also occur on the site. In addition, a vast network of subterranean caves, including the Cave of the Winds tourist destination, lies within the site. Although guided tours at Cave of the Winds do not visit the specific caves that are used as maternity roosts by Townsend’s big-eared bats, the bat-occupied caves lie within the extensive cave network that is visited by tourists. This site includes the location of the caves in which bats were observed plus a 0.5-mile radius buffer zone around that location. The land on which the maternity roost caves are located is privately owned. Nearby caves in the same network of underground caverns are open to the public as part of a well established tourist exhibit that is visited by thousands of tourists each year. Additional development of the cave system at Cave of the Winds could impact the maternity roosts and reduce the viability of the Townsend’s big-eared bat occurrence. Because bat maternity roosts are highly sensitive to disturbance by human activities, it is critically important to keep people away from roosting areas. B-5

Manitou South – The area around Manitou Springs was identified in the Mountain Backdrop Study as an area of Critical Preservation. Much of this area is highly visible from U.S. Highway 24 and portions of Manitou Springs and Colorado Springs. All of the area is within the Mountain Front landscape type, a dramatic landscape that marks the abrupt transition from the plains to the mountains. The area has also been identified as important wildlife habitat by the Colorado Parks and Wildlife. Protection of this area would preserve scenic values as well as provide future connections to Red Rocks Canyon, Bear Creek Regional Park, and a multitude of regional trails. (No B-rank)

Riser At Calhan (northeast of Calhan, on both sides of Highway 24) – The Riser at Calhan is considered a highly significant due to the existence of two good (B-ranked) occurrences of plains ambrosia, a globally-vulnerable (G3 S3) plant species. The area is near the upper elevational extent of shortgrass and midgrass prairies in El Paso County, approaching 6,600 ft (2,035 m) at its southeastern boundary. This

area includes the highest of the high plains in El Paso County. The landscape is topographically diverse in this area, with high rolling hills in the eastern portion overlooking the bottomlands upslope from an unnamed reservoir at the northwestern edge of the area. The plant species is vulnerable to development and hydrological alterations within the area. B-3

Signal Rock Sandhills (*100,000+ acres in southeast part of county; includes Chico Basin Ranch and area known as Bohart Ranch*) – This area contains an excellent example of a globally vulnerable sand sage prairie community, a good occurrence of globally-vulnerable Great Plains mixed-grass prairie community, and good occurrences of two globally-vulnerable plant species: sandhill goosefeet, and plains ambrosia. Wildlife observed in the black-tailed prairie dog town located on the north western side of the area includes Burrowing Owls, Mountain Plovers, and swift foxes; and a Golden Eagle nest is located on the bluffs east of Black Squirrel Creek. B-2

Spruce Hill – The Spruce Hill conservation area represents a combination of important wildlife habitat and features noted by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program. The area contains some remnant ponderosa pine stands that merge with a wet meadow near the base of the hill. Seeps and wetlands are present in the meadow, adding interest to the landscape and enriching its habitat values. Spruce Hill is near State Highway 83, a heavily traveled road, and is also adjacent to ongoing residential development. It is likely that the area will continue to experience strong development pressure. (No B-rank)

Table Rock (*area includes bluffs approximately 8 miles north of Black Forest townsite*) – This distinctive landmark consists of a wooded mesa which overlooks the headwater reaches of East Cherry Creek. The exposed bedrock leaves only cracks and small patches of soil for a few tenacious herbaceous plants to grow in. The flanks are forested with ponderosa pine, particularly on the north-facing slope, where some large, old trees occur. The area contains a fair occurrence of the big bluestem prairie dropseed xeric tallgrass community; a globally-imperiled type that is also critically imperiled in the state. This area also supports an excellent occurrence of Richardson’s alumroot which is critically imperiled in Colorado. Non-native and invasive species have affected much of this area, representing a serious concern requiring active management. B-3

Truckton-Edison (*92,000+ acres in southeast part of county east of Signal Rock Sandhills*) – Contains an excellent occurrence of the Mountain Plover as well as breeding pairs of Mountain Plovers over many years. The species prefers flat open areas with very low-growing or closely-cropped vegetation, which is prevalent in this very dry area of the County. B-2

Widefield/Fountain – This Y-shaped site includes a strip of land along Fountain Creek from Academy Boulevard southward to Wigwam Road. Bounded on the west by Interstate 25, the portion of the site that lies along Fountain Creek varies in width from about 0.7 to about 2.3 miles. Among the larger tributaries that join Fountain Creek within the site are Jimmy Camp Creek, Little Fountain Creek, and Williams Creek. The eastern portion of the site (the eastern branch of the “Y”) lies to the east of the cities of Widefield and Fountain, Colorado and it is crossed by Jimmy Camp Creek. It extends southward from Fontaine Boulevard to the intersection of Link Road and Old Pueblo Road, and it is bounded on the east by Marksheffel Road and Link Road.

The western portion of the Widefield Fountain site (along Fountain Creek) consists mainly of the open, flat, floodplain along Fountain Creek and several of its tributaries. At the southern end of this area the site extends eastward onto a large expanse of cholla (*Opuntia imbricata*) within shortgrass prairie along

Hanover Road. The western portion of the site is covered by a mosaic of soil types (Larsen 1981). The complex distribution of soil types, especially within the floodplain of Fountain Creek, precludes the identification of clearly discernible patterns of preferential use of soils by the prairie dogs. The eastern portion of the Widefield Fountain East site (the eastern branch of the “Y”-shaped site) is also covered by a mosaic of soil types (Larsen 1981). Each of the five known prairie dog colonies in this area, however, is located on a patch of soil of a single type. Two prairie dog colonies are located on Nunn clay loam, two are located on Ascalon sandy loam, and one is located on Stoneham sandy loam. All of these soils are deep and well-drained, with moderately slow to moderate permeability, moderate to high available water capacity, slow to medium surface runoff, and a slight to moderate hazard of erosion or soil blowing. The effective rooting depth for plants in these soils is 60 inches (150 centimeters) or more (Larsen 1981). Riparian vegetation lines the banks of Jimmy Camp Creek, which crosses the site between C and S Road and Squirrel Creek Road and then runs southward along the western boundary of the eastern portion of the site. At least nine occurrences (colonies or towns) of the apparently secure (G4 S4) black-tailed prairie dog (*Cynomys ludovicianus*) are present within the Widefield Fountain East site.

Historically, much of the Widefield Fountain site was covered with floodplain, riparian, and native shortgrass prairie vegetation. Although patches of these vegetation types remain, large portions of the site (especially the flat, relatively rich soiled floodplain along Fountain Creek) were converted to agricultural croplands during the past 100 years. The cultivation of many of these areas was subsequently abandoned, producing “old field” (weedy, early successional) habitats. Vegetative cover on these fields now varies greatly: some areas are characterized by high proportions of bare soil, whereas other areas support dense stands of invasive, early successional perennial and annual species. Other agricultural fields within the site remain under cultivation. Horse pastures planted with mixed-grasses are common near the towns of Widefield and Fountain. Grazing of domestic livestock occurred historically on much of the site, and today grazing continues on many areas, especially to the north of Kane Road.

Human activities and the presence of free ranging domestic dogs have the potential to exert deleterious effects on the viability of blacktailed prairie dogs at the Widefield Fountain site. Depending upon the extent of anthropogenic impacts, new management actions may be needed to reduce or limit disturbances to prairie dogs. In addition, efforts to “environmentally educate” the residents of the subdivisions that lie adjacent to the prairie dog colonies may reduce the incidence and magnitude of conflicts between people and prairie dogs. B-5

** This symbol denotes an area’s Biodiversity Rank (“B-rank”) and is an indication of the biodiversity significance at a location. B-ranks include a range from “B-1” (Outstanding Biodiversity Significance), to “B-5” (General Biodiversity Significance). While the ranks assigned are based upon multiple factors, a ranking of B-1 generally means that the site contains the only known occurrence of a species or sub-species. Meanwhile, a ranking of B-5 is still significant, however the site attributes do not support the “best available” or one of the top five occurrences of the species/sub-species. Sites ranked with a B-1, B-2, or B-3 have global biological significance, and are recommended by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program for priority attention.*

Historic Site Preservation

El Paso County has an interesting human history that is often linked to its natural features and landscape. Distinctive landforms, such as the granite fins of the Morrison Formation and the Paint Mines near Calhan, had both utilitarian and spiritual values for Native Americans. Later, some of these same features were important landmarks that guided settlers to the area. Before the railroad, Big Sandy Creek provided a convenient east-west route. The stage eventually stopped in Bijou Basin, and a small town grew up around the stop. Early settlers developed water conveyances such as the El Paso Canal, which allowed settlement on the plains in the area of Colorado Springs. The mountain springs, unusual rock formations,

and the area's overall scenic beauty were popularized by entrepreneurs for their recuperative powers and gradually a leisure culture grew from Palmer Lake to Manitou Springs.

The following list includes a number of important historic and cultural sites. Some of them are also natural landforms or landmarks and have been identified on **Map 9: Land Cover, Landforms and Landmarks** as such. This list is by no means inclusive of all significant historic features or sites in the County. It is intended to highlight historically and culturally important features in the county that merit consideration for protection and potential inclusion within the county's system of regional parks and open space. Information on these sites was obtained primarily through references contained in *Historic Sites and Structures* (1979) by Freed and Barber.

Bijou Basin

Bijou Basin was the location of a stage stop. Later in the 1870's, when the railroad was being built, a community of approximately 430 people settled in the basin. Fremont Fort, a prominent rock bluff on the eastern edge of the basin has been used by many as a landmark.

Cemeteries and Churches

As settlements popped up seemingly overnight on the plains of El Paso County, community values dictated that churches and cemeteries be provided to serve the residents. Many of the historic structures or sites that have survived have special meaning today because of the stories they can tell about lives of the past. Many of the historic church sites listed in the National Register of Historic Places are contained within municipal boundaries, and are not included in this inventory. However, a number of churches from the early settlement period of the County have been preserved and are likely eligible for listing, including: the Leader Church in Yoder; the Church of Christ (sod structure) in Yoder; and the Black Forest Church on Shoup Road. Several cemeteries and private gravesites from the past also remain, including the Eastonville Cemetery, Henry Harkin's Grave, Fagan's Grave, and Table Rock Cemetery.



Corral Bluffs

The Corral Bluffs are an area of rugged topography that extends for approximately 4 miles just east of Colorado Springs. There is evidence that early Indians hunted buffalo by driving them over these cliffs. Later, cattlemen relied on the landform to help corral their herds. And local folklore claims that a trader named Jimmy Boyer set up a trading post in the area for trappers, cattlemen and settlers, and was eventually killed by his partner over a piece of calico.

Crows Roost

Believed to have been used first by the Indians as a campsite and later in the 1890s by picnickers, Crows Roost is a white sandstone rock outcropping located in the southeastern portion of the county. Many Indian artifacts have been recovered at Crows Roost and early settlers claimed that there were Indian paintings on the walls of the rock.

Homesteads and Railroads

Much of El Paso County, as well as the surrounding areas of Colorado and other western states, was settled in the 1800s, when the US Government offered free land to pioneers who made a claim to the land and successfully worked the land for five years (the Homestead Act of 1862). As a result, homesteaders arrived in rural areas of El Paso County and established settlements along railroad lines to support the trains and provide staples to travelers at regular locations along the routes. Railroads that helped provide access for settlers to the region included the Denver and New Orleans (1881); the Chicago and Rock Island (1888); and the Midland Railroad. Many of the homes built in the railroad era that remain in the eastern plains of El Paso County are likely eligible for listing on the National and State Registers of Historic Places.



Indian Burial Rock

A little-known rock outcropping south of Franceville is called Indian Burial Rock, an ancient ceremonial spot for the plains Indians. Prominent tribal members were buried here and hunters used the high vantage point to look for buffalo herds.

JG Evans Barn

This barn, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is significant because it is one of the few remaining examples of structures built during the earliest period of settlement and development in the Black Forest community of El Paso County. The barn is associated with one of the County's pioneer ranches, and is one of the earliest barns built in the area.



Jimmy's Camp

Also known as Jimmy Camp, this site is located in what is now eastern Colorado Springs, Colorado. Jimmy's Camp was an early camp site located on the Cherokee Trail. The camp was most likely named in the early 1840's for a trader named Jimmy Daugherty. It was one of the most heavily used campgrounds along the Front Range, due to the existence of a freshwater spring which provided a reliable source of water, as well as the availability of pine timber for campfires. It was frequented by Indians, Spaniards, trappers, traders, explorers, gold seekers, and pioneers over time.

Paint Mines

South of Calhan, this unique geological site was frequented by Native Americans and later curious picnickers and geology buffs. Part of the Holcomb Hills in eastern El Paso County, the Paint Mines consist of subtle dissected bluffs that have eroded to expose the muted hues of selenite and jasper: beige, purple, red and yellow. Some speculate that Indians used the soils for war paint, while the art nouveau artist, Artus Van Briggie, reportedly created some of his art pottery from the colorful soils.



Pikes Peak

Clearly the most renowned site within El Paso County, Pikes Peak is also known as “America’s Mountain.” Discovered by explorer Zebulon Pike in 1806, though long familiar to Indians and Spaniards, the peak has an elevation of 14,110 feet. It was first climbed in 1820. During the 19th century, “Pike’s Peak or Bust” became a familiar rallying cry for those heading west, and over the years it has assumed the role of a virtual icon of western exploration and settlement.



Text from the historic marker erected in 1963 atop the mountain reads: “Pikes Peak has been designated a Registered National Historic Landmark under the provisions of the Historic Sites Act of August 21, 1935. This site possesses exceptional value in commemorating and illustrating the history of the United States. US Department of the Interior, National Park Service 1963.”

Ute Pass, Santa Fe, and Cherokee Trail

Leading from the plains to the mountains, the Ute Pass trail was first worn by wildlife and Ute Indians and later by explorers, gold seekers, and settlers. It was the easiest passage to points west through the mountains and became an important conduit of settlers and development in Colorado. People came on foot and horseback, then stage and railroad, and finally on the first publicly funded highway. The Ute Pass takes its name from the Native American tribes that utilized this route during their occupation of the plains and mountains of Colorado and El Paso County. As American explorers began mapping the area in the early 19th century, a number of additional travel routes came into use, and became important connectors between frontier outposts. Routes such as the Ute Pass, Cherokee, and Santa Fe Trail were utilized so heavily and for so long that their names are often still in use to describe locations of regional significance. El Paso County was named for this pass.



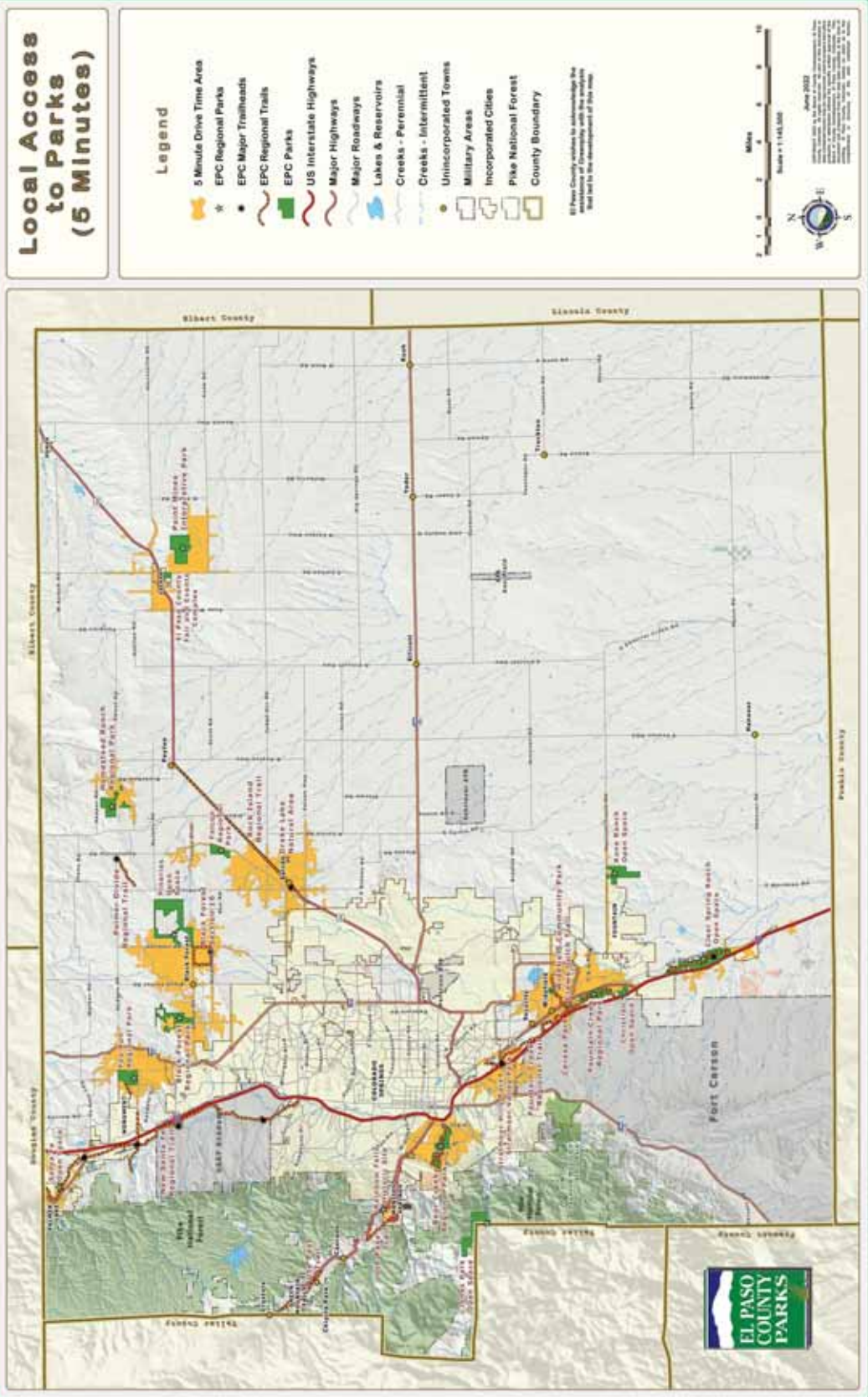
In 1929, an historic marker commemorating Ute Pass was established at the junction of US Business Route 24 and US Route 24 northwest of Manitou Springs. The marker reads as follows:

“UTE PASS Named from the old Ute Trail which led from South Park through Manitou to the Plains. Traversed by the Utes on hunting and war expeditions. Improved highway built 1916-28. Erected by the State Historical Society of Colorado from the Mrs. J. N. Hall Foundation and by the State Highway Department and the U.S. Forest Service. 1929.”

El Paso County Parks, Teller County, the Town of Green Mountain Falls, and a variety of other organizations are in the process of constructing the 40 mile, Ute Pass Trail that will eventually connect Cripple Creek to Colorado Springs.

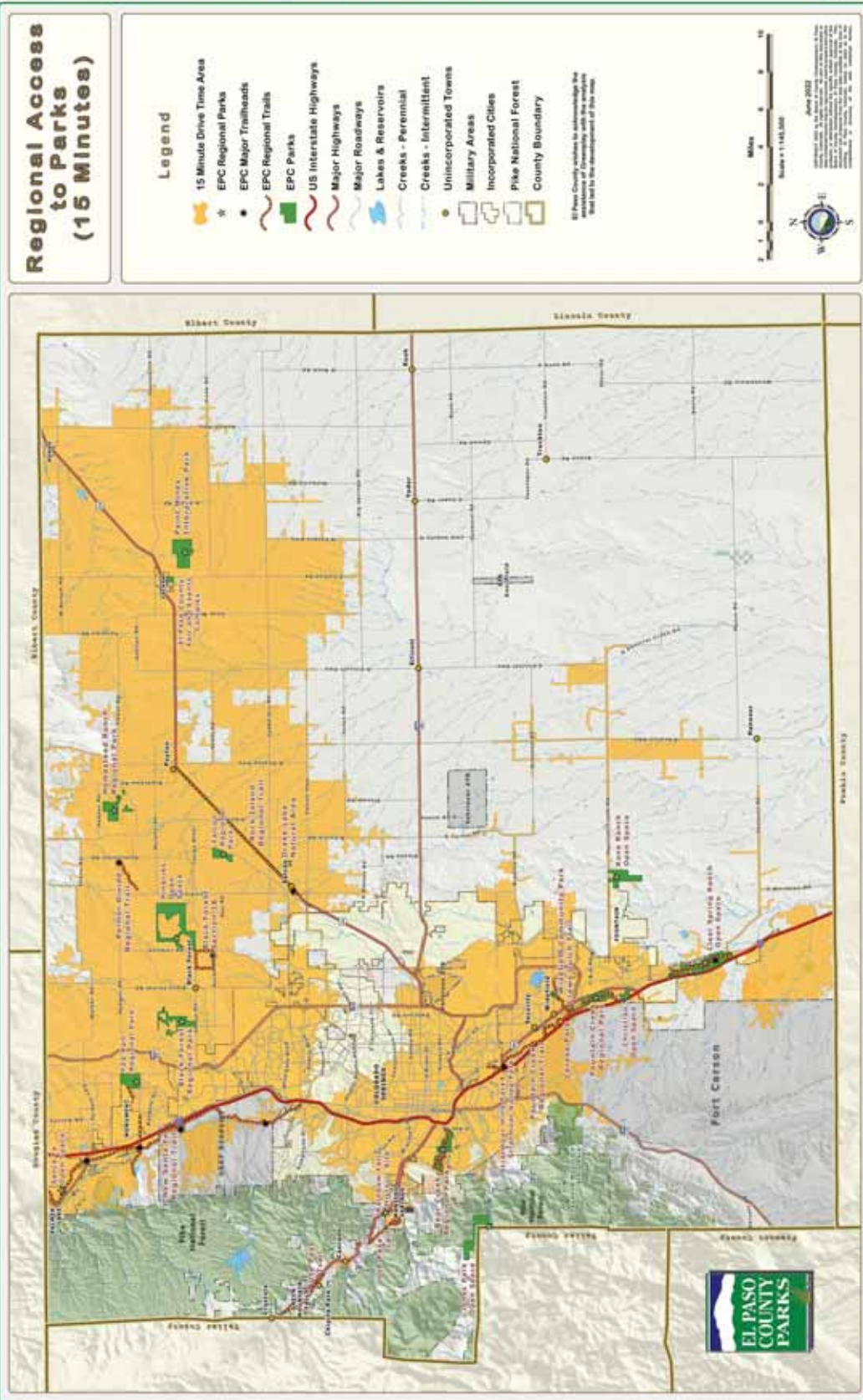
THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Local Access to Parks (5 Minutes)



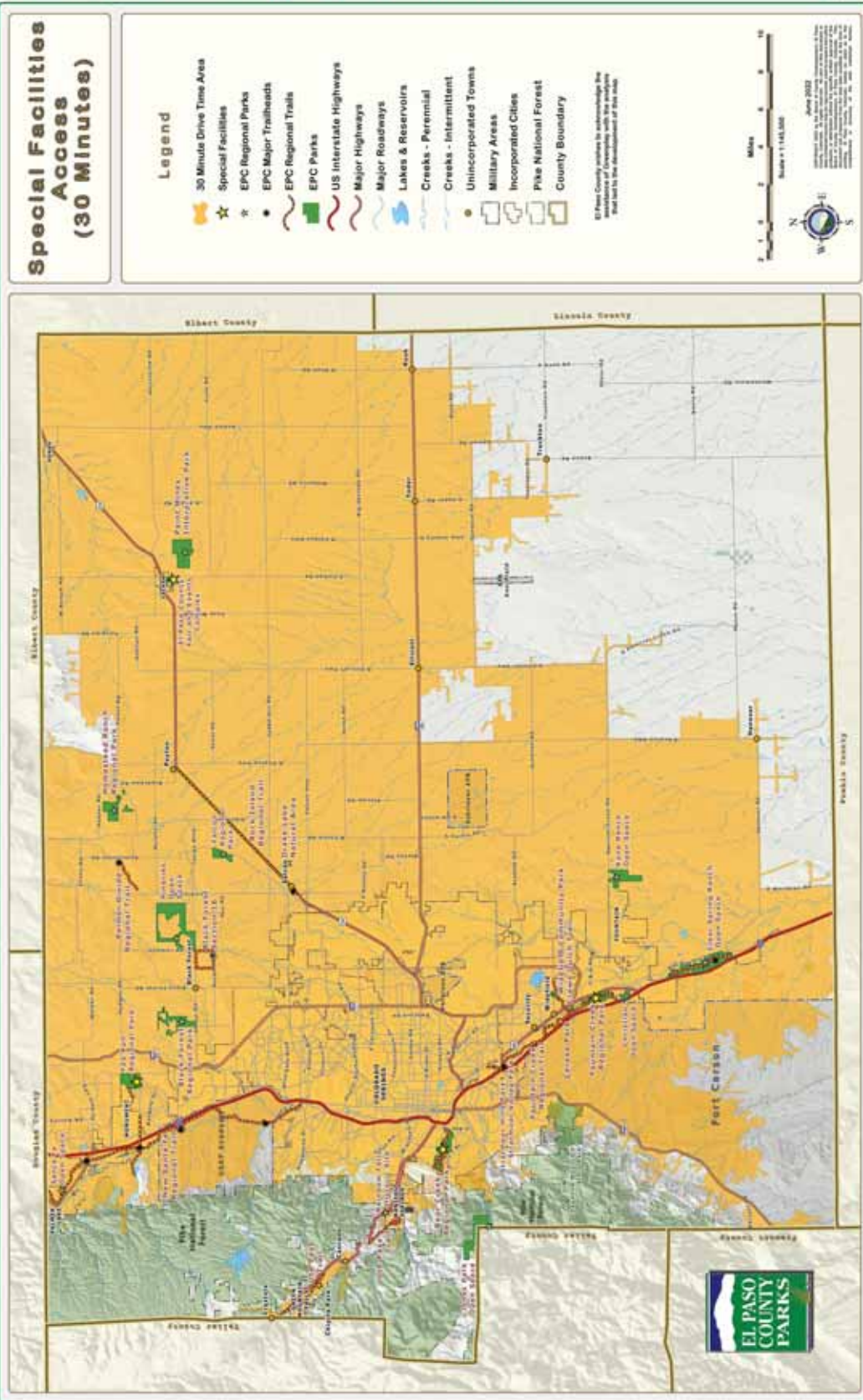
THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Regional Access to Parks (15 Minutes)



THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Special Facilities Access (30 Minutes)



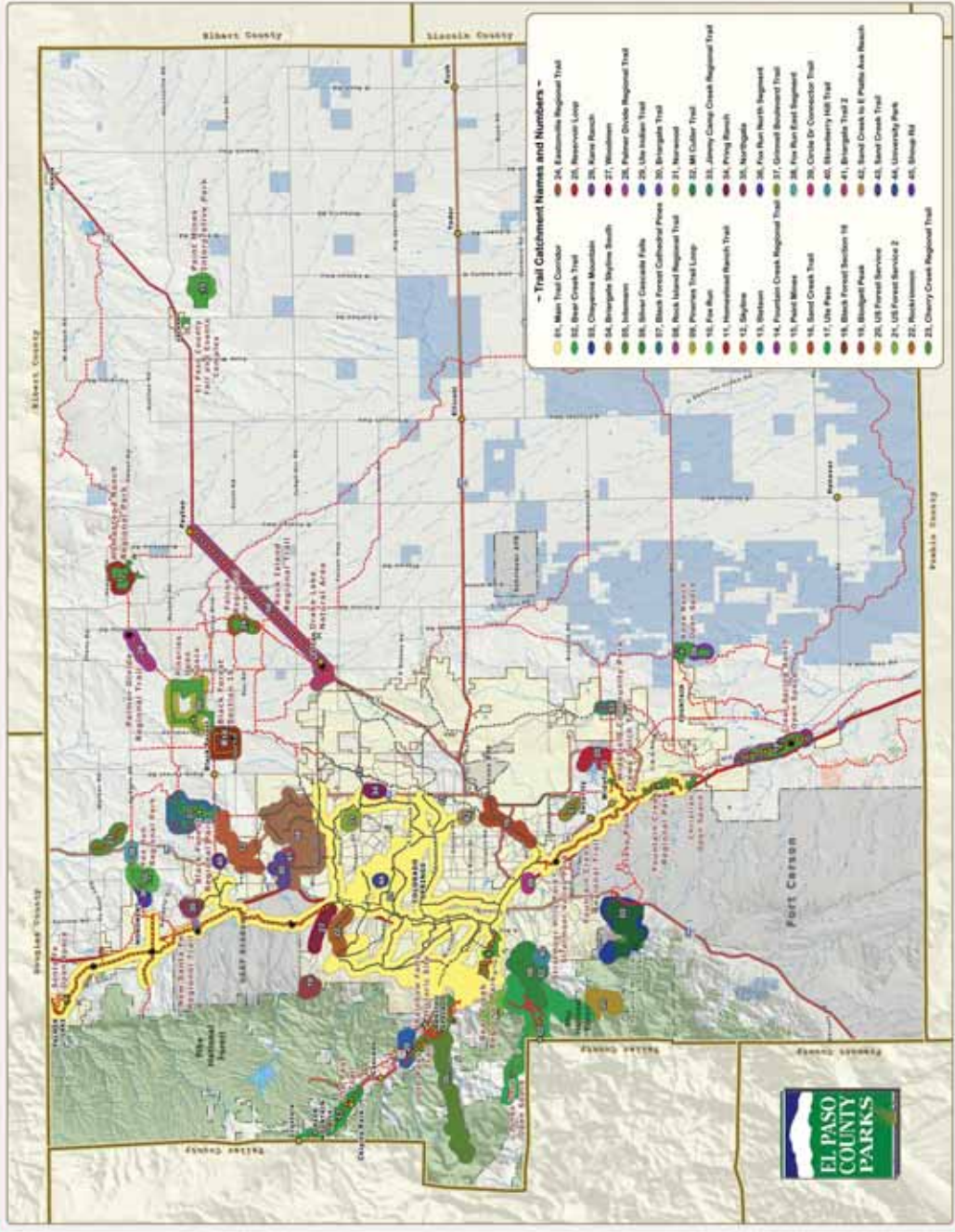
THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Trailshed Analysis

Trailshed Analysis

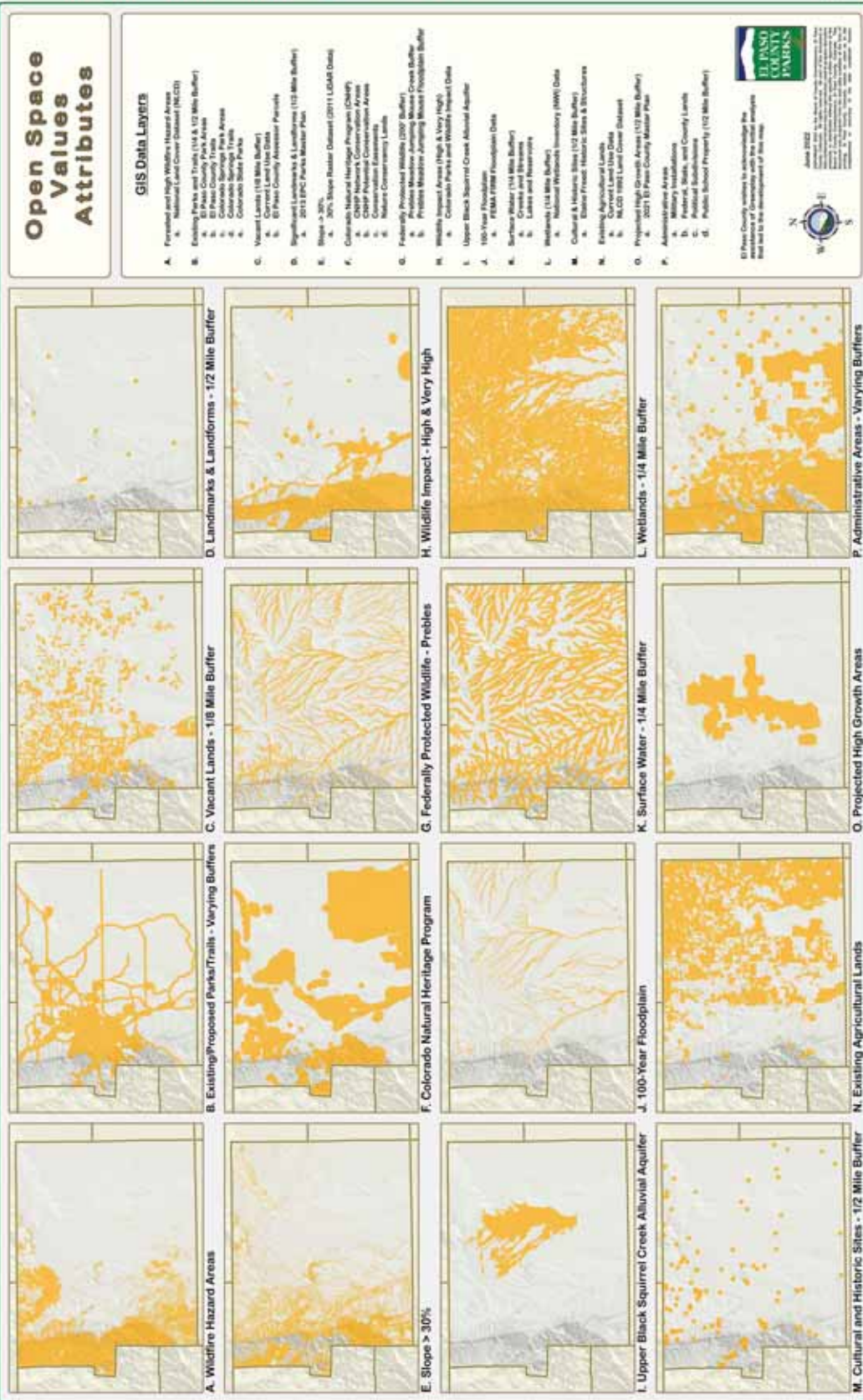
The 113-mile trail catchments, developed in various colors on this map represent individual trailsheds based on El Paso County trails, as well as Tier 1 and 2 City of Colorado Springs trails. A trailshed is a set of connected trails within which any point may be reached from any other point by way of an included trail. For this analysis, any trail within 110-miles of any other trail has been included within the same trailshed.

- Legend**
- EPC Trailheads
 - EPC Parks / Open Spaces
 - ~ EPC Regional Trails
 - ~ Existing City Trails
 - ~ Proposed City Trails
 - EPC Parks
 - ~ US Interstate Highways
 - ~ Major Highways
 - ~ Major Roadways
 - Lakes & Reservoirs
 - ~ Creeks - Perennial
 - ~ Creeks - Intermittent
 - Unincorporated Towns
 - Military Areas
 - Incorporated Cities
 - Pike National Forest
 - County Boundary



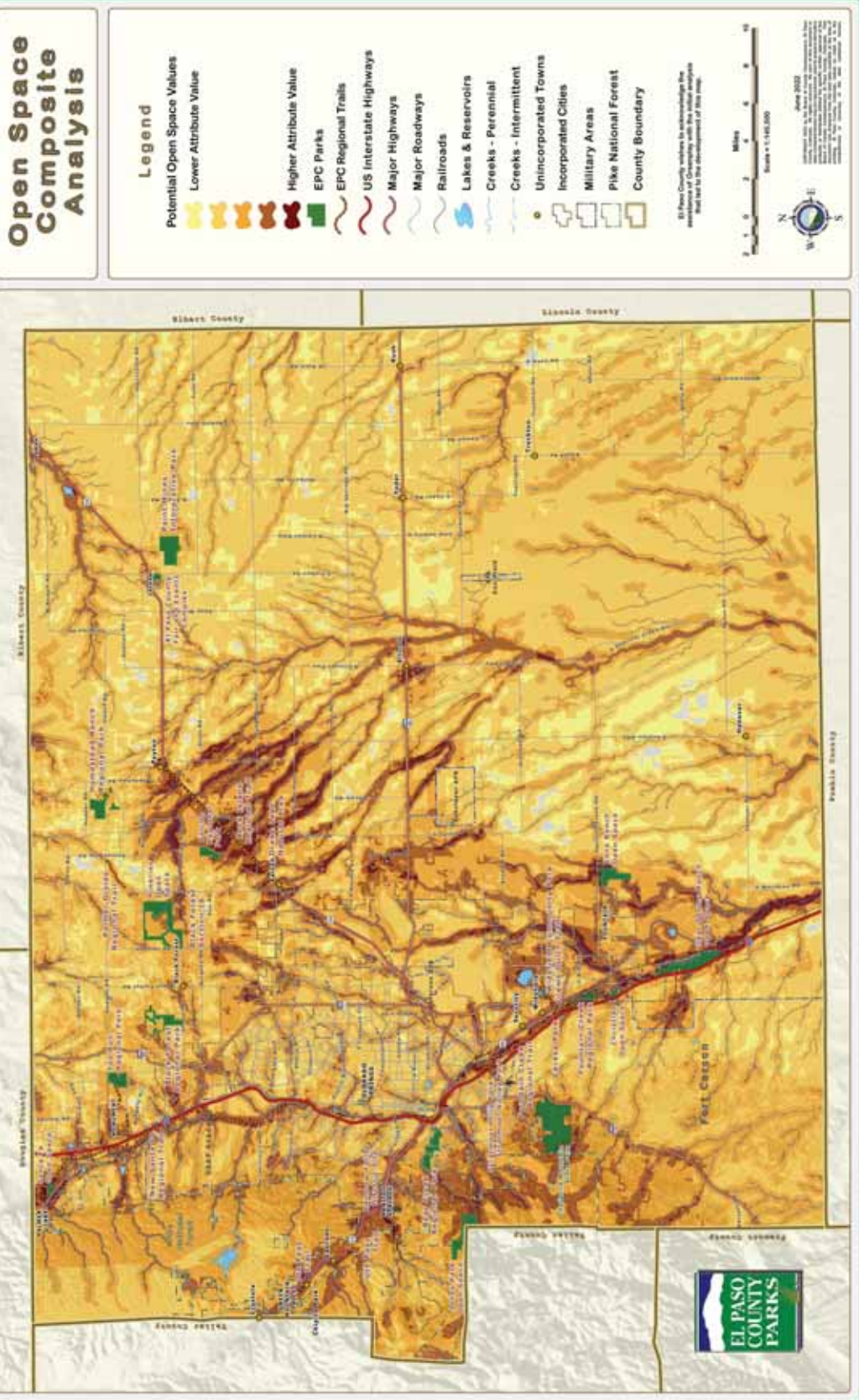
THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Open Space Values Attributes



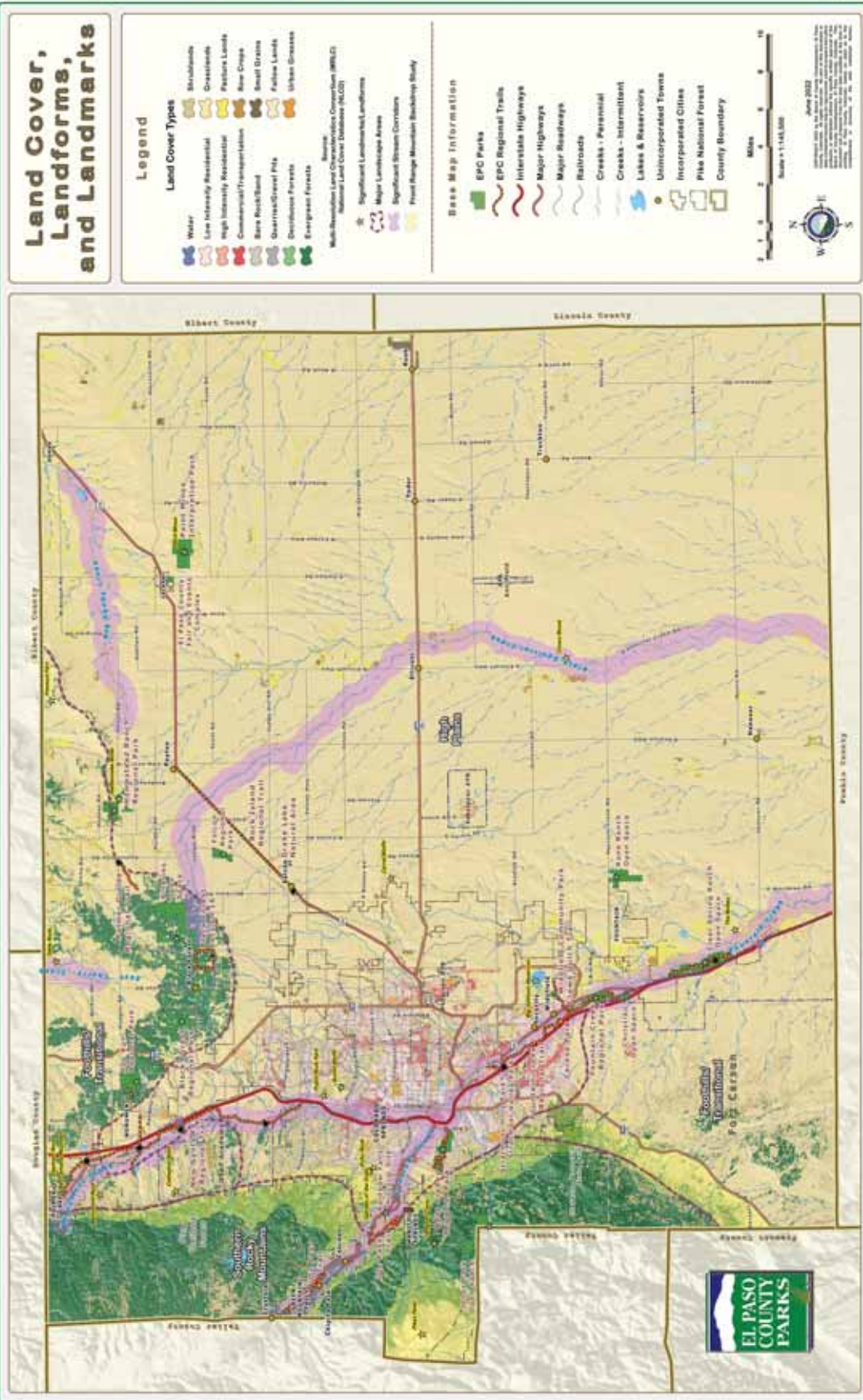
THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Open Space Composite Analysis



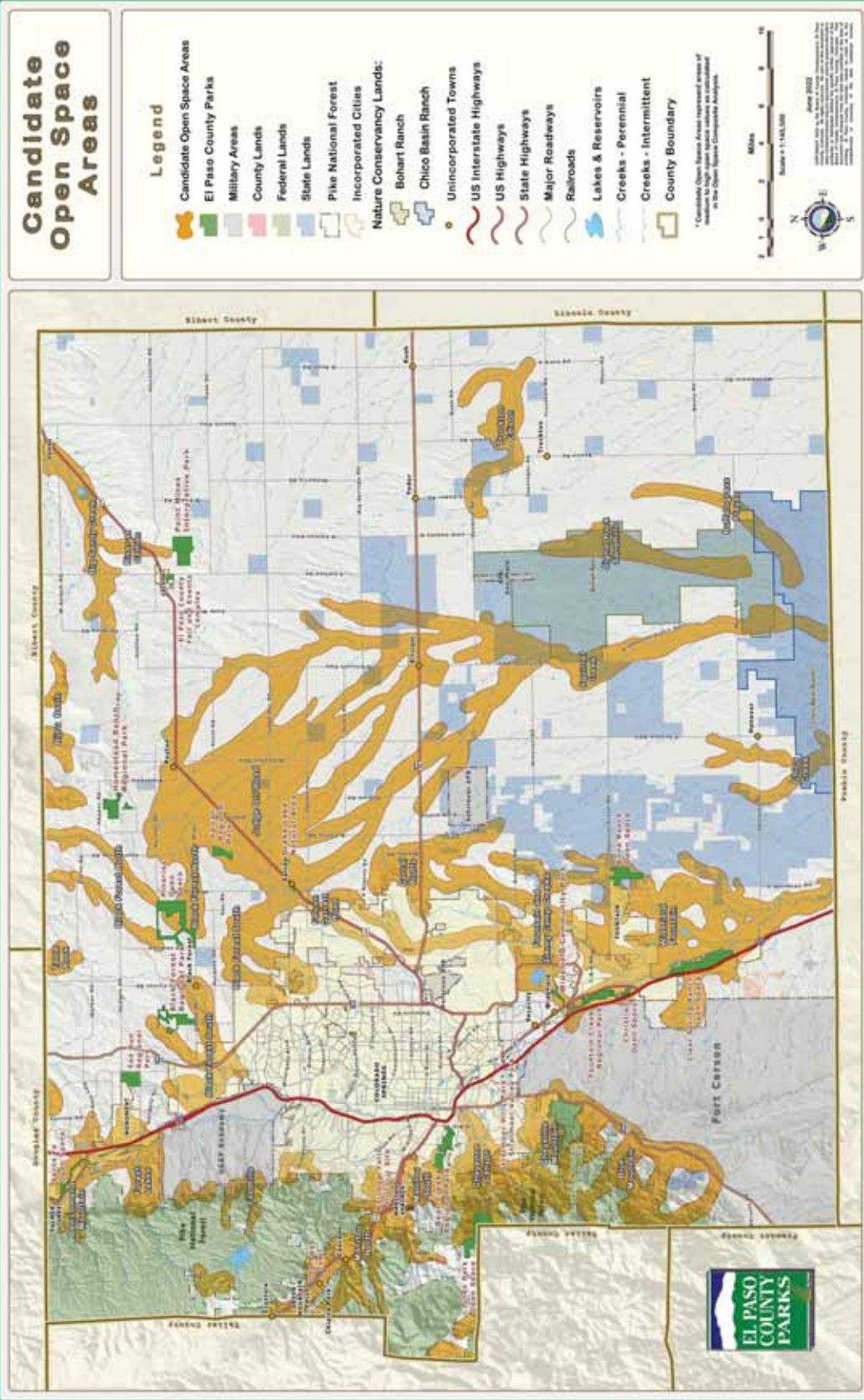
THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Land Cover, Landforms, and Landmarks



THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Candidate Open Space Areas

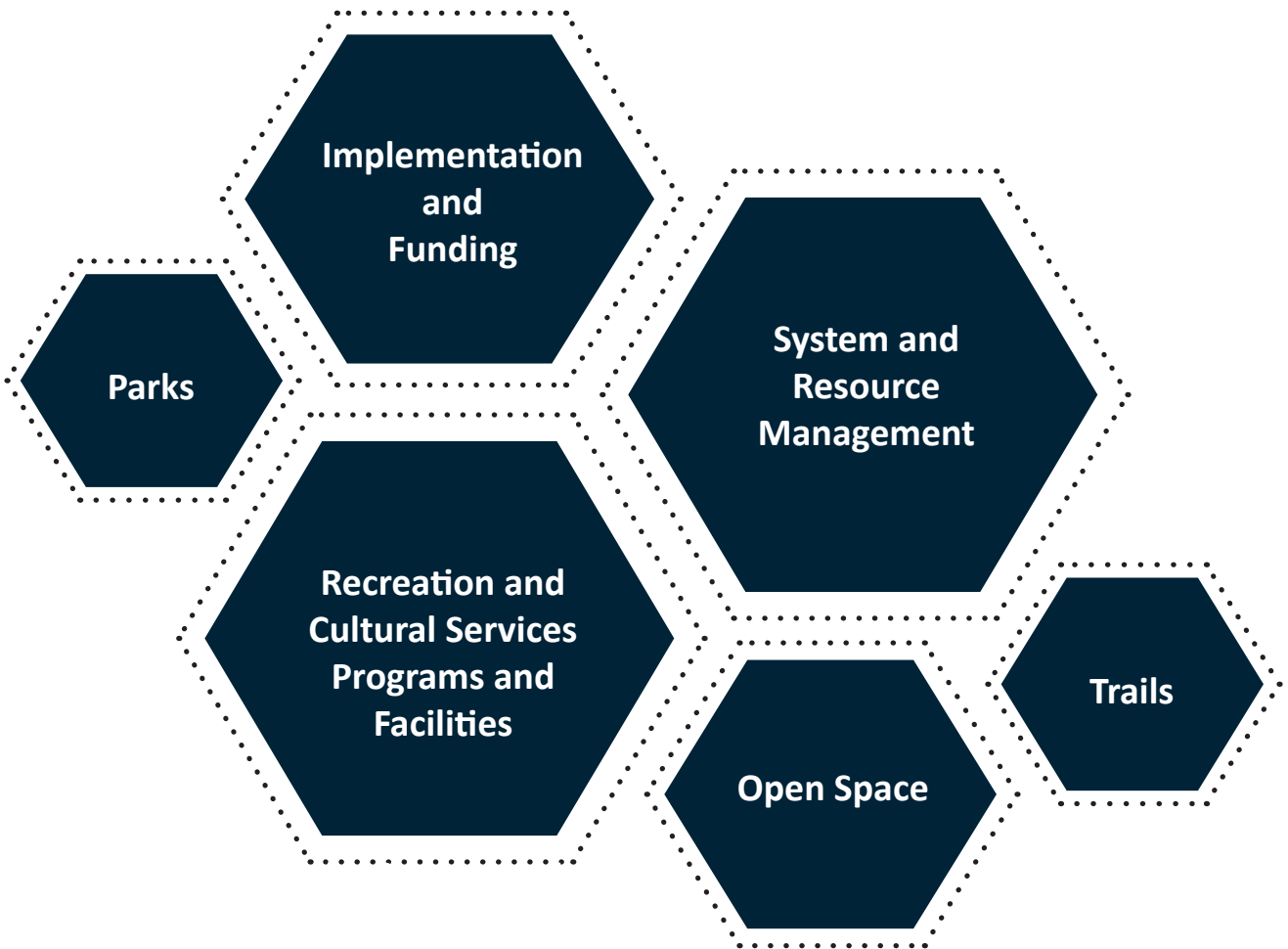


THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Chapter 9: Great Things to Come: Goals & Recommendations

Key themes for focus were identified using several tools, including qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative tools included the review of existing plans and documents, staff input, focus groups, stakeholder meetings, and the consultant team expertise, while the quantitative data included the community survey, inventory, and level of service analysis.

The key themes that surfaced during the Master Plan process fell into one of 6 categories:.



The consultant team, along with the County project team, performed an exercise to discuss each key theme and identify preliminary recommendations that then led to the creation of the final goals and recommendations. The recommendations are intended to act as a catalyst and internal work plan. As Plan implementation begins and continues over time, engagement and leadership will be vital to Plan success.

Focus Area One: System and Resource Management

Goal 1: Provide a coordinated and connected system of parks, trails, and open space that is equitably distributed based on population and serves the needs of county residents.

1.1	Continue to focus on providing regional facilities and services, and work cooperatively with other providers of park and recreation facilities and services to address existing and future needs.
1.2	Continue to participate in development review and long-range planning with the El Paso County Planning and Community Department and in transportation planning with the Department of Public Works to anticipate future growth and to identify areas where additional regional park, trail and open space needs are likely to emerge. Work with the Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments, the City of Colorado Springs and other communities and organizations to address regional issues and connectivity.
1.3	Convene on a regular basis a local parks and recreation “working group” of representatives from cities and towns to address potential collaborative efforts. The group could help address meeting community needs, integrated planning, funding, best management practices and consistent standards, promote awareness, and sharing of resources and information, training, and use of volunteers.

Goal 2: Balance passive/active use of county parks and open space and determine what is most appropriate for individual sites based on community need and master planning processes.

2.1	Balance preservation of natural and cultural resources with the need for public access, use and recreation.
2.2	Update individual park master plans at least every 10 years. Consider environmental, economic, and social sustainability when developing master plans and managing park assets.

Goal 3: Pursue best practices in the management and administration of all department operations.

3.1	Maintain optimal personnel levels, contracted services, and volunteer positions within Parks and Recreation. Add necessary positions or contracted services to deliver high-quality visitor experiences as new facilities are added or expanded.
3.2	Develop and implement forest management plans that address tree health, invasive species and fuels management for county parks and open space. Develop these plans concurrently with master plans, when possible, to ensure an integrated approach.
3.3	Consider the potential establishment of conservation easements on County parks to help provide assurance to citizens that the parks will not be sold. The easement makes the property less valuable for other development as the conserved area of the park must remain as open space in perpetuity.
3.4	Pursue Agency Accreditation status through the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA), assuring and demonstrating that County Parks is utilizing best practices in all facets of operations.
3.5	Continue to update and maintain the GIS database and capabilities and participate in regional efforts to share and disseminate data, including COMap and COTrex.
3.6	Expand the volunteer program utilizing community organizations, and individuals to assist with park system improvements and programming efforts. Consider developing a Parks Ranger volunteer program.
3.7	Continue to develop and support friends groups.

3.8	Develop and adopt a Cost Recovery/Resource Allocation philosophy, policy and implementation plan as an ongoing business practice providing parameters for setting fees for all programs and services.
Goal 4: Provide high quality and safe experiences for users of county park facilities and recreational areas.	
4.1	Provide appropriate recreational access while protecting the natural character and environmental quality of the County's parks and open space.
4.2	Provide visitors a high-quality experience and minimize user conflicts through master planning and thoughtful facility design, sustainable park management and maintenance practices, and appropriate signage and public education.
4.3	Provide for enhanced enforcement of existing rules throughout the system through signage, public education, and staff training focused on monitoring, educating users, and development of enforcement tools.
4.4	Continue to develop cooperative relationships with other enforcement authorities such as the County Sheriff's Office. Explore a Park Ranger program that will increase public safety, provide natural resource protection, environmental education, and enforcement of park rules.

Focus Area Two: Parks

Goal 5: Prioritize taking care of and maximizing current assets over acquiring new assets to better serve El Paso County Residents

5.1	Plan for preventative maintenance of all park system assets. Create a work order system to better track maintenance issues and schedules.
5.2	Create and document standards for typical park components and amenities such as playground curb walls and surfacing, shelters, park benches, picnic tables, BBQ grills, signage, and wayfinding.
5.3	Prioritize CIP and deferred maintenance based on annual identification of low scoring components.
5.4	Add and/or update existing site furnishings based on the lifecycle of such amenities and their contribution to the park's design theme.
5.5	Continue to improve and update ADA access throughout park system including adding new park paths to park components.
5.6	Implement a playground replacement program.
5.7	Gradually replace asphalt sport courts with post-tension concrete courts.
5.8	Implement replacement schedules for paving parking lots and interior roads.
5.9	Prioritize renovations and improvements to parks as noted in Chapter 10 and in the Asset Management Plan.
5.10	Land acquisition should be prioritized next to existing parks to provide buffers and build upon existing park infrastructure.
5.11	Evaluate configuration of park maintenance districts to ensure resources are adequately distributed to growing areas of the County.

5.12	Complete asset management study to identify ongoing maintenance and capital costs for the County Park system to aid with budgeting and long-range planning tasks, resource allocation, and establish a true level of service cost.
Goal 6: Maintain a consistent and equitable level of services by filling gaps in existing service levels and providing new facilities and services to meet future population demand.	
6.1	Enhance park and recreation facilities to serve population bases through expanded recreation facilities in the north-central to northeast part of the County. Regional parks in population growth areas such as southeast El Paso County.
6.2	Secure additional park lands for future park development and manage as open space until community need warrants construction.
6.3	Develop a long-term strategy to ensure the Black Forest Section 16 properly remains in-tact and available to the public.

Focus Area Three: Trails

Goal 7: Update trail standards and improve maintenance of existing trails.	
7.1	Revise trail standards to include larger urban trail corridors, including paved, soft surface, and hybrid trails. This is especially important in high growth area and at City/County interfaces.
7.2	Implement varying urban and rural trail corridor sizes to preserve the character of landscape in areas with high conservation value.
7.3	Adopt trail maintenance standards and develop an annual maintenance and paving schedule.
7.4	Evaluate opportunities and potential impacts of emerging technologies such as E-Bikes and other power assisted mobility devices. Work with other governmental agencies to establish consistent rules and regulations to provide consistency along regional trail corridors.
7.5	Provide appropriate trail-heads and amenities for trails. Include benches, shade, bicycle parking, signage, and mileage markers in trail design and improvements.
7.6	Evaluate trail system for efficiency and level of service by conducting surveys on a regular basis.
7.7	Increase trail easement from 25-ft to 50-ft to enable larger urban trail corridor (i.e. greenways), strengthen open space along trails, and aid with sustainable construction.
Goal 8: Work collaboratively with other governmental agencies, private organizations and trail advocacy groups to create a continuous, connected system of regional trails.	
8.1	Strengthen trail system plan for the region by providing an overall vision for system of regional trails within the County and connected to adjacent counties. This requires continued sharing of GIS data and the creation and promotion of consistent trail design standards.
8.2	Ensure regional trail corridors are secured by working closely with the Planning and Community Development and Department of Public Works during the planning, design and development review processes, and with other local governments.
8.3	Work collaboratively with and support other private organizations and trail advocacy groups to promote a connected regional trail system.

Goal 9: Prioritize and locate trail connections using criteria and proposed actions items identified in this master planning process.

<p>9.1</p>	<p>Use the Trailshed Analysis and the Trails Master Plan to identify potential high priority connections for County Parks based on the following criteria (in no particular order):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connection to the main spine of primary regional trails • Connection to primary regional trails and other destinations with secondary regional trails • Connection to on-road routes • Connection to regional parks • Connection to community and neighborhood parks • Connection to open space areas and greenways • Connection to public lands of other jurisdictions • Connection to key destinations, including commercial areas and employment centers • Funding opportunities • Partnership opportunities • Connection to outlying gap areas
<p>9.2</p>	<p>Locate trails along major drainages or other natural features using existing rights-of-way to the extent practical, while minimizing conflicts between trail development and wildlife habitat and other sensitive natural and cultural resources.</p>
<p>9.3</p>	<p>Continue to develop a greenway along Fountain Creek to promote the Pikes Peak Greenway and Colorado Front Range Trail.</p>

Focus Area Four: Open Space

Goal 10: Protect and enhance El Paso County’s legacy of unique natural features and areas and cultural resources, working in collaboration with others to conserve high priority open space areas in the county.

10.1	Use the Open Space Composite Values Mapping as a tier one analysis and recommendations to identify high priority areas for preservation. Use a tier two analysis to verify the quality of the resource and resource values, and to evaluate other important criteria such as the appropriate acquisition tools, potential for partnership, existing conditions, context (size, buffer, adjacency), threat of development, and passive recreational potential.
10.2	Complete Tier 2 analysis in key areas to prioritize acquisitions.
10.3	Investigate opportunities for protecting open space through a variety of techniques from fee-simple purchase to conservation easements, to use of regulatory tools, and partnerships with private landowners, other jurisdictions, or advocacy organizations.
10.4	Revise definition of open space to eliminate 200+ acre designation as open spaces can be of varying size and fill several purposes. Consider further updating the definition to include future park sites, buffer properties, trail corridors and agricultural lands.
10.5	Work with other public entities to conserve open space, consider connectivity, and provide appropriate recreational access. Consider smaller open space purchases in growing areas as a viable option.
10.6	Determine appropriate type and level of public access through master planning for each property acquired, considering resource sensitivity.
10.7	Consider open space preservation for its natural ability to support storm water management, watershed protection and restoration goals, and to protect the quality of surface water and groundwater.
10.8	Consider strategic open space acquisitions to preserve future park sites and trail corridors.

Focus Area Five: Recreation and Cultural Services Programs and Facilities

Goal 11: Provide high quality recreation and educational experiences for users of county park facilities and recreational areas.

11.1	Expand nature-based programming and develop nature center facility in Fox Run Regional Park.
11.2	Maintain the diversity and quality of and participation in the award-winning environmental education programs and day camps at County nature centers. Increase field trips and outreach to underserved communities.
11.3	Consider providing a shuttle service between nature centers to increase service area.
11.4	Enhance use of the Fairgrounds and Event Center site to offer facility opportunity for recreation and educational experiences.
11.5	Explore strategic organizational changes to balance ongoing maintenance of parks and trails with expanded community programs and services offered at the Fair and Events Center.

Goal 12: Expand partnering and collaboration as a programming strategy

12.1	Expand general programming opportunities at regional parks by developing collaborative relationships with local service providers.
12.2	Partner with local entities to provide social and recreational services for eastern El Paso County residents at the County Fairgrounds.

Focus Area Six: Implementation and Funding

Goal 13: Acknowledge the importance of parks and open space in El Paso County by providing adequate funding to develop, operate, and maintain these resources at a level commensurate with their importance.

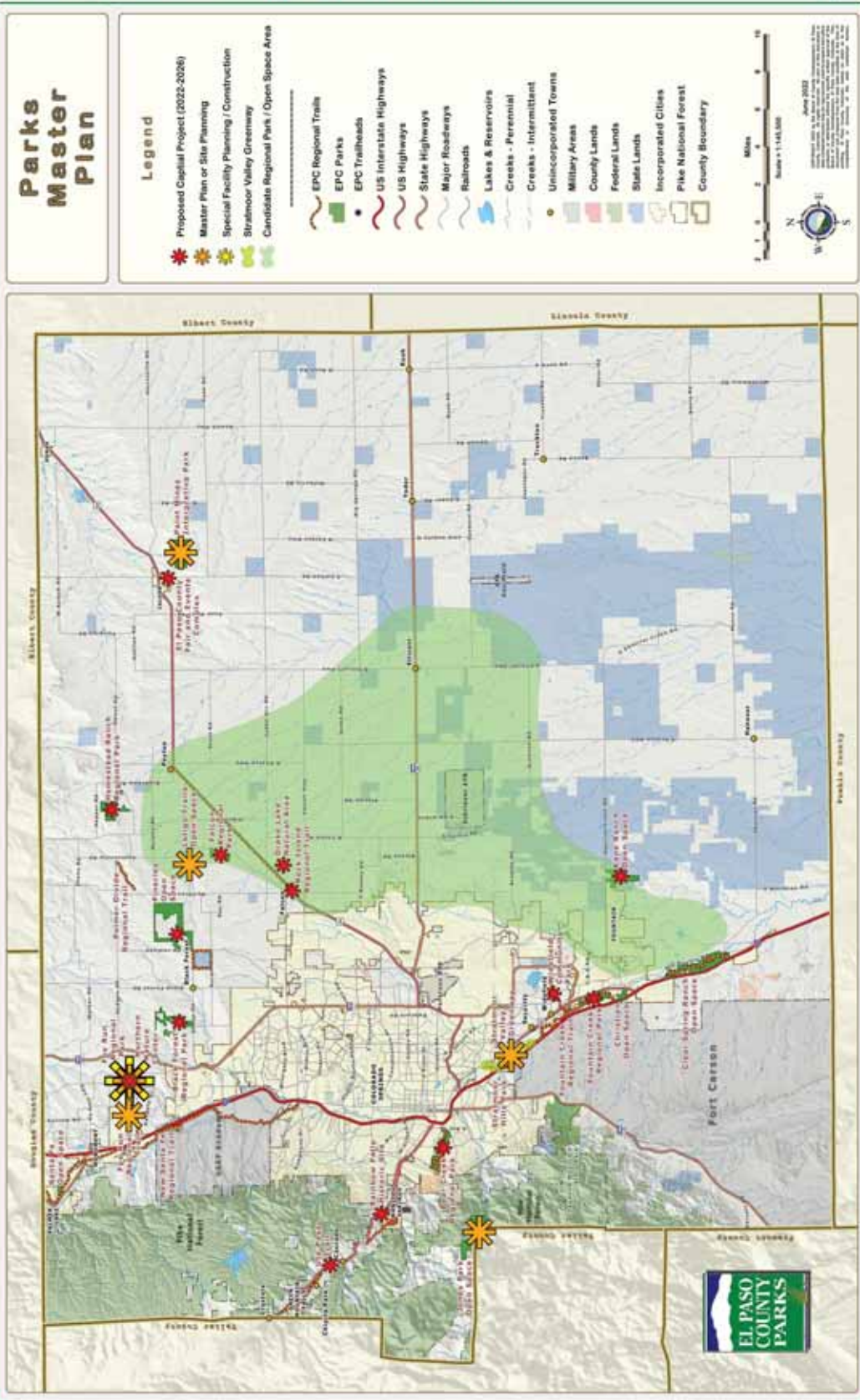
13.1	Continue to require developers to provide land dedication or fees in lieu of dedication to provide at least a minimum standard for local park service to the development.
13.2	Evaluate the use of a Park Impact Fee for development instead of relying on gross land values for development fees. Adopting new strategies regarding this revenue source would allow the County to maintain current level of service, and more effectively offset capital costs related to providing recreation facilities.
13.3	In reviewing development permit applications, request specificity in regard to the park development plans and open space, including identification of capital and maintenance costs and determination of funding for those purposes.
13.4	Consider labor, maintenance and capital replacement costs in master plan development, identifying funding source, and adequately budget funding for this purpose.
13.5	Consider maintenance cost-saving measures in capital improvement projects (such as native grass, artificial turf for sports fields, sustainable trail building, etc.).
13.6	Identify an annual budget for capital maintenance and replacement costs based on lifecycle costing.
13.7	Explore dedicated funding to maintain current level of service and to accelerate implementation of this Master Plan.

Goal 14: Enhance El Paso County Parks through alternative funding sources.

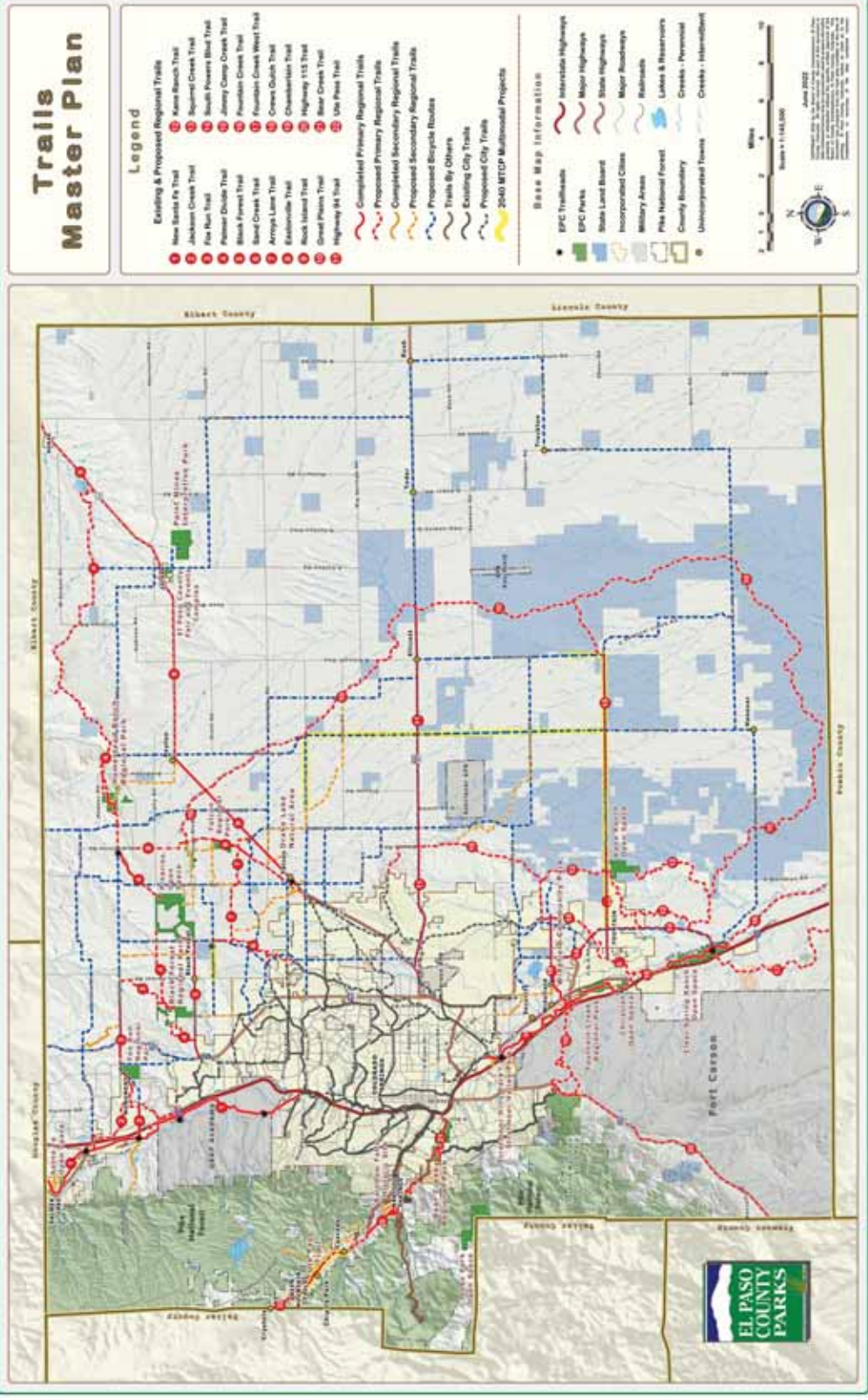
14.1	Explore the use of alternative funding sources and creative methods such as donations, grants, sponsorships, partnerships, foundations, conservation easements, trust funds, and use of volunteers. (See Chapter 11 description of potential funding sources.)
14.2	Explore the development of a parks foundation to advocate for and financially support County Parks.
14.3	Collaborate through partnerships with related programs such as with the Fountain Creek Watershed, Flood Control and Greenway District, local government, state and federal agencies, military installations and non-profit or private organizations, to enhance the parks system.
14.4	Optimize the use of fees and charges as a viable funding source through the Cost Recovery and Resource Allocation Philosophy and Policy.
14.5	Develop and adopt sponsorship, donation (land and dollars), and partnership policies that encourage each and establish consistency in process and implementation.
14.6	Take regional approach to funding; use County dollars as seed money to attract other funding, perhaps through matching grants.

THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Parks Master Plan



THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK



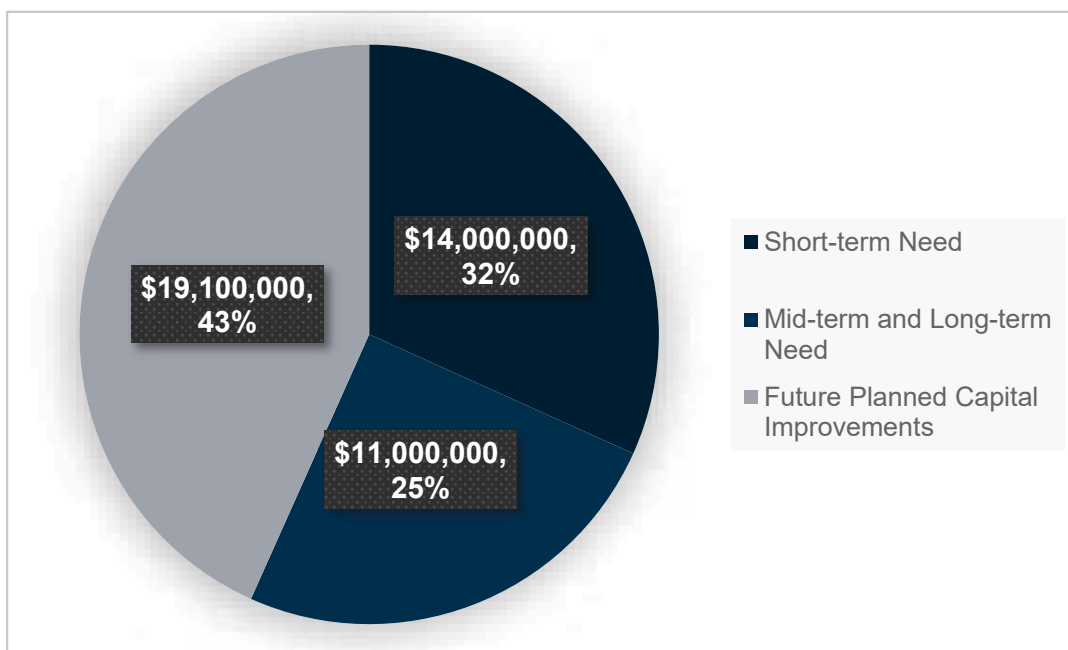
THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Chapter 10: Capital Improvement Assessment

County Parks utilizes a Capital Improvement Program (CIP) to guide capital development in the park system by balancing ongoing maintenance of existing facilities with future recreational needs. The CIP is a critical management tool that serves as a comprehensive needs assessment for capital projects; provides a prioritized implementation schedule; identifies funding strategies to complete the proposed improvements; and ensures ongoing maintenance in the park system.

A five-year capital planning horizon is employed during the County's annual budget process. A key priority identified in this Plan is maintaining the integrity of the current infrastructure and facilities before expanding and/or enhancing. This chapter recommends as-yet unfunded improvements to current infrastructure and is distinct from the County's Capital Improvement Program. El Paso Park's existing Capital Improvement Program includes funded, partially funded, and planned projects, which are not described in this chapter. The five-year capital plan may need to be adjusted in the future to include critical needs that have been identified through this planning effort.

Figure 17: El Paso County Parks Capital Needs



System Inventory and Assessment

In order to inform capital improvement needs, a system inventory and assessment was completed. The project team first prepared a preliminary list of existing site elements using aerial photography and GIS (Geographic Information System) data. Assets identified in aerial photos were located and labeled. Next, the consulting team conducted field visits to confirm or revise preliminary inventory data, make notes regarding assets, and understand the system. A comprehensive evaluation of each park asset in the system was conducted. Each element's evaluation ensures it is serving its intended function, noting any needs for refurbishment, replacement, or removal.

The following information was collected during field visits:

- Component type and geo-location
- Component quantity
- Component condition
- ¼ life-cycle timeframe
- Site photos
- General comments

All park elements were evaluated based on condition, size, site capacity, and overall quality, reflecting the user's expectations of recreational features. The inventory team used the following four-tier rating system to evaluate assets:

0 = Health or safety concerns

1 = Below Expectations

2 = Meets Expectations

3 = Exceeds Expectations

Based on the results of the inventory assessment Capital Improvements have been designated as:

Short-term (Priority 1 – 3 years)

Mid-term (4 – 7 years)

Long-term (8 – 10 years)

Appendix D: System Inventory and Assessment provides a comprehensive list of asset scoring by location. Additionally, a comprehensive Asset Management Plan has been prepared as a standalone document with additional detail.

Critical Needs

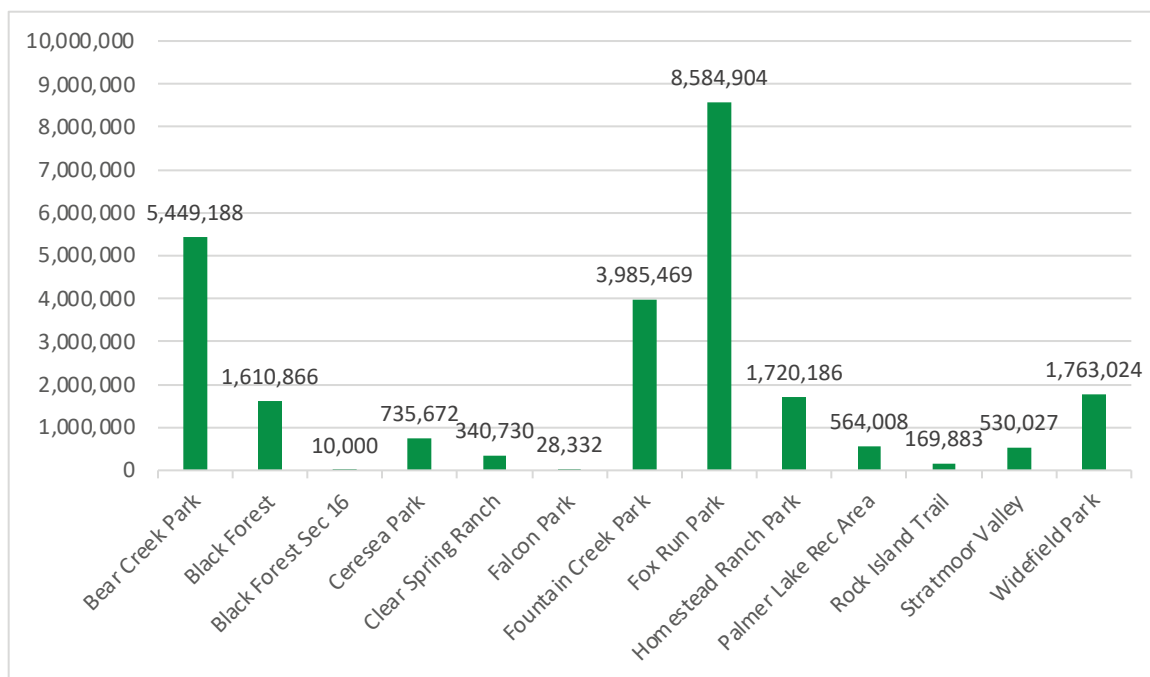
Based on the inventory assessment, low scoring components were revisited for additional evaluation. The intent of these follow-up visits was to further examine these assets to better understand the capital improvement needs. In most cases addressing deferred maintenance will reduce annual operations and maintenance costs.

Estimates of probable costs to address low scoring components are shown in today’s dollars and are a Rough Order of Magnitude (ROM) intended for general budget purposes. As a best practice, ROMs are derived from reputable databases, such as RSMMeans Data Online. They are also based on “real world” numbers, including previous bid figures and/or direct communication with contractors, vendors, and manufacturers. The ROM for the Short-term capital needs are divided into 3 categories:

- Park Components
- Irrigation
- Hardscape

The short-term critical, or capital need is 14.5 million.

Figure 18: Capital Needs: Next 10 Years



Park Components

Park Components refers to site elements related to recreational use. These may range from basic pieces of equipment to larger facilities or structural systems. While the majority of components meet expectations, six components in the system were identified as a Health or Safety concern and 35 were below expectations. **Table 13** provides the ROM for the 41 park components that are identified as a short-term priority.

Table 13: Critical Need: Park Components ROM

Facility	Critical Need
Bear Creek Regional Park	\$ 1,795,390.00
Horseshoe Court, Backboard	\$ 1,200.00
Playground, Replacement	\$ 500,000.00
Playground, Resurfacing	\$ 169,290.00
Target Range, ADA Access	\$ 50,000.00
Tennis Court, Replacement	\$ 750,000.00
Tennis Court/Pickleball Court Lighting Upgrade	\$ 175,000.00
Volleyball Court, Court One Edging	\$ 5,875.00
Volleyball Court, Court Two Edging	\$ 7,075.00
Destination Playground, Resurfacing	\$ 136,950.00
Black Forest Regional Park	\$ 436,997.84
Turf Condition (High Need on Rectangular Field)	\$ 162,000.00
Tennis Court and Basketball Court Renovation	\$ 274,997.84
Ceresia Park	\$ 485,662.00
Existing Restroom Demolition	\$ 50,000.00
Playground, Replacement	\$ 105,000.00
Playground, Resurfacing	\$ 36,300.00
Restroom (Prefabricated)	\$ 250,000.00
Diamond Field (Overseeding/Soil Amendments)	\$ 4,362.00
Turf (Overseeding/Soil Amendments)	\$ 40,000.00
Clear Springs Ranch	\$ 250,000.00
Restroom (Renovation)	\$ 250,000.00
Fountain Creek Regional Park	\$ 1,921,925.00
Horseshoe Court, Backboard	\$ 1,200.00
Multipurpose Field (Overseeding/Soil Amendments)	\$ 80,000.00
Restroom, Willow Ponds (Prefabricated)	\$ 250,000.00
Destination Playground, Resurfacing	\$ 340,725.00
Destination Playground, Replacement	\$ 1,250,000.00
Fox Run Regional Park	\$ 3,250,000.00
Restroom, Oak Meadows (New Construction)	\$ 1,150,000.00
Restroom, Pine Meadows (New Construction)	\$ 1,150,000.00
Shelter, Pond Gazebo	\$ 950,000.00
Homestead Ranch Regional Park	\$ 75,000.00
Multipurpose Field (Overseeding/Soil Amendments)	\$ 60,000.00
Pond, Fishing Improvements	\$ 15,000.00
Palmer Lake Rec Area / New Santa Fe Trail	\$ 51,125.00
Volleyball Court, Edging	\$ 6,125.00
Trailhead, Ice Lake	\$ 45,000.00
Stratmoor Valley Community Park	\$ 461,700.00
Concrete Pathway (ADA)	\$ 6,300.00
Playground, Resurfacing	\$ 125,400.00
Playground	\$ 330,000.00
Widefield Community Park	\$ 328,500.00
Basketball Practice/Pickleball Court(s), Court Resurfacing	\$ 308,000.00
Basketball Practice/Pickleball Court(s), Goal Replacement	\$ 3,000.00
Basketball Practice/Pickleball Court(s), Restriping	\$ 3,500.00
Diamond Field (Turf)	\$ -
Fitness Area	\$ 14,000.00
Grand Total	\$ 9,056,299.84

Irrigation

Retrofitting or replacing older irrigation systems is essential to achieving and maintaining the highest possible efficiency; lowest possible costs; and maximum user satisfaction regardless of turf type. Advances in sprinkler-head design; controller hardware and software, and sensor/controller communication have enabled distribution uniformities to increase efficiency. Irrigation at three facilities is not meeting expectations, each having outdated systems that require significant maintenance. **Table 14** provides the ROM for the three irrigation systems found as a short-term priority.

Table 14: Critical Need: Irrigation ROM

Facility	Critical Need
Black Forest Regional Park	\$ 171,090.00
Turf (High Need on Rectangular Field)	\$ 162,000.00
Beds - Irrigation	\$ 9,090.00
Fountain Creek Regional Park	\$ 1,231,426.00
Turf	\$ 1,013,648.00
Turf, Willow Ponds	\$ 186,900.00
Beds - Irrigation	\$ 30,878.00
Fox Run Regional Park	\$ 1,167,066.00
Turf	\$ 1,142,702.00
Beds - Irrigation	\$ 24,364.00
Grand Total	\$ 2,569,582.00

Hardscape

Properly maintained parking lots and trails provide ADA accessibility and allow water to efficiently drain off of the paved surface. Parking lots that receive routine maintenance last longer and look better than parking lots where maintenance is ignored. Unmaintained trails pose many safety hazards to users. Surface degradation can lead to tripping hazards, and result in a surface that does not meet ADA standards. Table 15 provides the ROM for short-term priorities categorized as Hardscape.

Table 15: Critical Need: Hardscape ROM

Facility	Critical Need
Black Forest Regional Park	\$ 15,000.00
Upper Parking lot Retaining Wall repair	\$ 15,000.00
Fox Run Regional Park	\$ 2,232,195.00
Main Road and Parking Lot Pavement	\$ 2,232,195.00
Palmer Lake Rec Area / New Santa Fe Trail	\$ 512,883.00
Trailhead, Baptist Road, Paving	\$ 208,495.00
Trailhead, Palmer Lake, Paving	\$ 304,388.00
Grand Total	\$ 2,760,078.00

Future Capital Cost

County Parks updates individual park master plans every 10 years or as the park or community need warrants an update. Regular updates provide guidance to long-term planning and capital budgeting. Currently there are several master plans that have been completed which include high-level cost estimate ranges to provide some insights into the level of effort and funding that may be required to implement the master plan. Currently completed master plans include:

- Bear Creek Regional Park (2014): \$7.5 million
- Black Forest Regional Park (2011): \$750,000
- Falcon Regional Park (2015): \$5 million
- Fountain Creek Regional Park (2016): \$2.2 million
- Fox Run Regional Park (2006): \$550,000
- Kane Ranch Open Space (2019): \$600,000
- Pinerias Open Space (2010): \$500,000
- Rainbow Falls (2011): \$1.5 million
- Widefield Community Park (2017): \$500,000



Chapter 11:

Potential Funding Strategies for Consideration

A number of potential funding sources were considered for County Parks. The following were placed into two categories: those that County Parks could consider for additional funding and may be the most reasonable to pursue, and those that they could consider but may not be available currently in the state of Colorado or an intergovernmental agreement may be necessary for implementation, or may meet with some resistance and be more difficult to implement. These findings do not recommend any particular funding strategy over another. Economic conditions may vary with time and County Parks should explore the best means of achieving its goals with regard to its operations, programs, and facilities on an ongoing basis. **The following funding sources are potential funding opportunities El Paso County Parks could consider for additional funding of capital and operational expenditures.**

Operating Foundation - Commercial Property Endowment Model

John L. Crompton⁶ discusses government using the Commercial Property Endowment Model citing two case studies in the United Kingdom and Mission Bay Park in San Diego, California as an alternative structure to deliver park and recreation services. A non-profit organization may be established and given park infrastructure and/or land assets to manage as public park and recreation services along with commercial properties as income-earning assets or commercial lease fees to provide for a sustainable funding source. This kind of social enterprise is charged with operating, maintaining, renovating, and enhancing the public park system and is not unlike a model to subsidize low-income housing with mixed-use developments.

Recreation Service Fee

The Recreation Service Fee is a dedicated user fee that can be established for the purpose of constructing and maintaining recreation facilities. The fee can apply to all organized activities that require a reservation of some type, or other purposes. Examples of such generally accepted activities that are assigned a service fee include recreation and cultural programs and special interest classes. The fee, above and beyond the user fee, allows participants to contribute toward the construction and/or maintenance of the facilities being used.

Merchandising Sales or Services

This revenue source comes from the public or private sector on resale items from gift shops, pro-shops, restaurants, concessions, and coffee shops for either all of the sales or a defined percentage of the gross sales.

6 Spring 2010 Journal of Park and Recreation Administration, Volume 28, Number 1, pp 103-111

Naming Rights

Many agencies throughout the country have successfully sold the naming rights for newly constructed facilities or when renovating existing buildings. Additionally, newly developed and renovated parks have been successfully funded through the sale of naming rights. Generally, the cost for naming rights offsets the development costs associated with the improvement. People incorrectly assume that selling the naming rights for facilities is reserved for professional stadiums and other high profile team sport venues. This trend has expanded in recent years to include public recreation centers and facilities as viable naming rights sales opportunities.

Naming rights can be a one-time payment or amortized with a fixed payment schedule over a defined period of time. During this time, the sponsor retains the “rights” to have the park, facility, or amenity named for them. Also during this time, all publications, advertisements, events, and activities could have the sponsoring group’s name as the venue. Naming rights negotiations need to be developed by legal professionals to ensure that the contractual obligation is equitable to all agents and provides remedies to change or cancel the arrangements at any time during the agreement period.

Gifts in Perpetuity

- **Maintenance Endowments**

Maintenance Endowments are set up for organizations and individuals to invest in ongoing maintenance improvements and infrastructure needs. Endowments retain money from user fees, individual gifts, impact fees, development rights, partnerships, conservation easements, and for wetland mitigations.

- **Irrevocable Remainder Trusts**

These trusts are set up with individuals who typically have more than a million dollars in wealth. They will leave a portion of their wealth to an agency in a trust fund that allows the fund to grow over a period of time and then makes a portion of the interest available for agency use to support specific park and recreation facilities or programs that are designated by the trustee.

- **Life Estates**

This revenue source is available when someone wants to leave their property in exchange for their continued residence on the property until their death. The agency can usually use a portion of the property for park and recreational purposes, and then use all of it after the person’s death. This revenue source is very popular for individuals who have a lot of wealth and their estate will be highly taxed at their death. Their benefactors will have to sell their property because of probate costs. Life Estates allow individuals to receive a good yearly tax deduction on their property while leaving property for the community. Agencies benefit because they do not have to pay for the land.

The following funding sources are potential funding opportunities County Parks could consider for additional funding of capital and operational expenditures but would be more challenging to pursue. Full descriptions are found in the staff resource document.

Assessments/Taxes

Dedicated sales tax: dedicated sales tax to support park and open spaces. This is a common funding strategy for agencies in Colorado, including the City of Colorado Springs. There is a potential partnership between the City and County with a joint TOPS tax initiative as City and County Parks serve both County and City residents.

- Real Estate Transfer Tax/Assessment/Fee: collected at the time of real estate transactions.
- Sporting Goods Tax: States collect and redistributes to cities and counties on a population basis and from licenses sold.
- Parks and Recreation Independent Taxing District: serves just the residents of the district through a property tax with separate administration and an elected body.
- Special Improvement District/Benefit District: provide funds for certain types of improvements that benefit a specific group of affected properties through county pass through funding.

Development Fees

El Paso County requires fees for land development in unincorporated El Paso County. These fees are determined annually using a fee formula set in the Land Development Code. This includes using the 10-year average for gross land sales. However as gross land sales are skewing to the more rural areas in eastern El Paso County lagging behind higher value sales in more urban areas. However, because gross land sales are skewing to the more rural areas within the county, the calculated fees are artificially lowered as they are not considering higher valued land sales in more urban areas.

Low park development fees have significant impacts that ripple through the County Park System. This includes less park land dedication and revenue for capital and maintenance needs. The Land Development Code ties park land dedications directly to park fees. With low park fees developers are less likely to offer park land dedication opportunities since the required park fees are below market value for developable lands. This results in narrow trail corridors, less open space, and less park sites.

Lower fees also impact capital development in growing areas as the park fees are not keeping up with rising construction costs. These fees are also being used to fund critical maintenance needs in other areas of the County, thus capital development is not keeping pace with demand as more resources are spent on maintenance of existing facilities.

More frequently, agencies are leaning to an impact fee model to assess a fee based upon the anticipated impact that new development will have on the system. El Paso County currently uses this model for roads (Road Impact Fee). Additionally, the City of Colorado Springs uses a similar model developed after working with the Trust for Public Lands.

Bonds

Referenda: general obligation, revenue, industrial development, or special assessment bonds

Annual Appropriation/Leasehold Financing: complex financing structure that requires use of a third party to act as an issuer of the bonds who would construct the facility and retain title until the bonds are retired

Federal Park and Open Space Funding Sources

- **Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act**

This funding program, commonly called ISTEA (pronounced Ice-Tea) Grants, was authorized by the Federal Government in 1991. It presented an overall intermodal approach to highway and transit funding with collaborative planning requirements. The law provided for significant enhancement revenues available for transportation related projects, including bicycle and pedestrian trails, rail depot rehabilitation, landscaping, and beautification projects. Funds are distributed through the state. ISTEA expired in 1997. The current version of the law, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) was enacted in 2012. Under MAP-21, funding for bicycle and pedestrian transportation is reduced and consolidated into a broader program called “Transportation Alternatives.” A new ‘Find It, Fund It’ chart (<http://bit.ly/157kRUt>) indicates potential eligibility for pedestrian and bicycle projects under federal highway and transit programs. In each case there are specific requirements that must be met within eligibility criteria and eligibility will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

- **Management or Technical Assistance Grants**

Unlike most project grants, a technical assistance grant does not directly support the mission-related activities of the agency. Instead, they support the agency’s management or administration and its associated fundraising, marketing, and financial management needs.

- **Program-Related Investments (PRIs)**

In addition to grants, the Internal Revenue Service allows foundations to make loans—called Program-Related Investments (PRIs)—to nonprofits. PRIs must be for projects that would be eligible for grant support. They are usually made at low or zero interest. PRIs must be paid back to the grant maker. PRIs are often made to organizations involved in building projects.

Fees and Charges

- Annual and Season Pass Sales
- Capital Improvement Fees: on top of the set user to support capital improvements
- Dog Park Fees: for exclusive use
- Flexible Fee Strategies: off peak pricing
- Parking Fee: selected destination facilities
- Room Overrides on Hotels: for sports tournaments and special events
- Signage Fees: key locations with high visibility for short-term events
- Trail Fee: for access to secured bike trails
- Transaction Surcharge: surcharge on every transaction, admission, or registration

Leases, Sale of Rights, Easements

- Leasebacks on Recreational Facilities: private investor builds facility to county specifications with investment company financing project; county leases the property back from the investor over 20+ years (or reverse).
- Private Developers: long term lease of space for recreation enhancements that could include sports complexes and recreation centers.
- Sale of Development Rights: below park ground or along trails to utility companies.
- Sale of Mineral Rights: under parks, including water, oil, natural gas, and other by products
- Subordinate Easements: Recreation/Natural Area Easements: develop some type of an improvement above ground or below ground

Permits, Licensing Rights, and Use of Collateral Assets

- Advertising Sales: tasteful and appropriate advertising on agency-related items
- Community Gardens: permit out growing plots
- Film Rights: old ballparks or unique grounds used by film commissions
- Fishing License for County Lakes: county put and take fish operation and safe fishing laws
- Hospitality Centers: developed for use by the public for wedding, reunions, and special gatherings
- Licensing Rights: entity licenses its name on all resale items that private or public vendors sell
- Manufacturing Product Testing and Display: manufacturers test their products in parks, recreation facility, or in a program or service.
- Patron Cards: allows them special privileges above the general public

Grant Resources

Many resources are available which provide information on private grant and philanthropic agency opportunities. A thorough investigation and research on available grants is necessary to ensure mutually compatible interests and to confirm the current status of available funding.

Examples of publicly accessible resources are provided below.

- Information on current and archived Federal Register Grant Announcements can be accessed from The Grantsmanship Center (TGCI) on the Internet at: <http://www.tgci.com>.
- For information on government product news and procurement visit GovPro at www.govpro.com.
- Another resource is the Foundation Center's RFP Bulletin Grants Page on Health at: <https://fconline.foundationcenter.org/>
- Research www.eCivis.com for a contract provider of a web-based Grants Locator system for government and foundation grants specifically designed for local government.

Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO)

GOCO offers competitive grant programs for outdoor recreation, land conservation, and stewardship projects in Colorado. Colorado municipalities, counties, and Title 32 special districts with parks and recreation authority are all eligible for GOCO grants.

Land Acquisition

Land Acquisition Grants to support important landscape, waterway, habitat, and public access land protection priorities.

Community Impact

Community Impact Grants to develop and revitalize parks, trails, school yards, fairgrounds, environmental education facilities, and other outdoor projects that enhance a community's quality of life and access to the outdoors.

Planning and Capacity

Planning and Capacity Grants invest in planning, capacity, research, education, and storytelling projects that address opportunities, explore issues, and examine trends in the outdoors.

Restore Colorado

RESTORE Colorado Grants to improve and restore Colorado's rivers, wetlands, grasslands, forests, and other critical habitat.

Stewardship Impact

Stewardship Impact Grants support collaborative stewardship work that demonstrates meaningful improvements to ecological and recreational amenities.

Conservation Service Corps

Conservation Service Corps Grants employ conservation service corps crews, including young people and veterans, on projects like trail building, fire mitigation and restoration, and eradicating invasive species.

Generation Wild

Generation Wild invests in diverse, local coalitions offering culturally relevant programs that provide youth and families with quality outdoor experiences as well as leadership and career opportunities.

Centennial Program

Centennial Program Grants for high-value, once-in-a-generation visions and projects that will create lasting impacts on the state and future generations.

CPW Director's Innovation Fund

The CPW Director's Innovation Fund elevates unique projects by Colorado Parks and Wildlife staff that complement CPW's and GOCO's respective missions.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW)

CPW offers competitive grant programs for non-motorized trail planning, maintenance, construction, and stewardship projects in Colorado. Colorado municipalities, counties, and Title 32 special districts with parks and recreation authority are all eligible for GOCO grants.

Banks

The Community Reinvestment Act requires banks to invest in the communities in which they collect deposits. Because of this, most large banks have a centrally-administered community grants program that you can apply to for small grants, usually at the beginning of the year. The branch managers of these banks also have money that they can give to neighborhood community groups at their discretion. To get a larger grant, your program should probably include some kind of economic development, like employing local youth.

Colorado State Historical Fund

Competitive grants, from a few hundred dollars to over \$200,000 to governmental entities and non-profits that demonstrate a strong public benefit and community support. These grants support a wide variety of preservation projects including restoration and rehabilitation of historic buildings, architectural assessments, archaeological excavations, designation and interpretation of historic places, preservation planning studies, and education and training programs.

Other Options

- Designated License Plate for Parks
- Family Tree Program: work with local hospitals to provide cash to the parks system to buy and plant a tree in honor of every new born in the City.
- Land Trusts: developed land trusts to help secure and fund the cost of acquiring land
- Maintenance Endowments: Endowments retain money from user fees, individual gifts, impact fees, development rights, partnerships, conservation easements, and for wetland mitigations.
- Neighborhood Park Watch
- Product Sales: sale of specific products for purchases or consumption by the public. This would include trees, food, maple syrup, livestock animals, fish, plants, etc.
- Raffleing: such as purchasing an antique car that can be raffled off in contests.

Acquisition Strategies and Regulatory Tools

Fee Simple Acquisition

A fee simple purchase transfers full ownership of the property, including the underlying title, to another party. Fee simple land acquisition may also be the result of a donation, with the landowner realizing tax benefits from the donation. Sometimes a combination of purchase and donation occurs, resulting in a sale of land for below market value and the landowner donating a portion of the property's value to the buyer. This type of exchange is referred to as a "bargain sale" and benefits the donor because they can deduct the value of the gifted portion of land from their federal income taxes. Under this scenario, landowners enjoy direct economic gains from the sale of their land and potentially from the tax benefits of donating a portion of their land.

Fee title purchases are voluntary transactions between a landowner (seller) and purchaser (buyer). A fee title is a full interest in real property. In granting a sale of land, the landowner generally retains no ownership of the property and gives up all rights. The party that holds the fee title, whether it is a private individual, public agency, or a non-profit organization, has a long-term responsibility to administer and monitor the title.

The process of fee simple land acquisition for conservation purposes is usually facilitated by a non-profit organization, such as a land trust, because these types of organizations often have access to funding for land purchases. (<http://www.uwyo.edu/toolkit/land-conservation/fee-simple.html>, April 24, 2013) It is unrealistic to presume that all of the land identified for protection of open space in El Paso County will be purchased by the County or other public entity. This section reviews some of the regulatory tools that can be used to contribute to implementation of the open space goals and objectives.

Parks Master Plan

The Parks Master Plan is an element of the County's statutory Master Plan, and consequently, has a higher level of standing and authority than administrative planning tools. It works with the Land Development Code during the development permit application review process to ensure that parks, trails and open space are provided and guided to appropriate areas. County Parks requests fees and trail easements through the development permit application review process and works with willing developers to secure parkland under parklands agreements.

Intergovernmental Agreements

Intergovernmental agreements can be formulated between municipalities, other governmental entities, and the County to address matters such as cooperative planning and implementation of parks, trail and open space projects and the establishment of urban growth boundaries which can be used to direct growth and the development of infrastructure to the most suitable areas, thus protecting productive agricultural land and other important open space areas. . Intergovernmental agreements for planning and development of projects is common for El Paso County, but local government entities in the region have not been supportive to date of establishing an urban growth area . The regional sustainability plan developed by the Pike Peak Area Council of Governments in 2012 encourages establishment of an urban growth area and the accompanying agreements to direct growth to areas with urban-level facilities and conserve open space.

Clustered Development

Clustered development is a type of development where the buildings are grouped together at one or more places on the development site in order to preserve the remainder of the land as open space, protect important wildlife habitat, minimize construction of roads and extension of utilities, avoid hazardous areas such as floodplains, protect the character of a landscape, and keep the remainder of the land in agriculture. Developers may be offered extra density on the cluster area as a bonus to choose this approach. A conservation easement is recommended for the undeveloped portion of the land to insure that it is retained as open space.

The Planned Unit Development (PUD) zoning provision of the El Paso County Land Development Code is one of the most effective tool that the County has to promote clustering and open space preservation in exchange for design flexibility, including smaller lot sizes, in non-urban areas. At least 10 percent of the land must be designated open space, and 25 percent of the 10 percent must allow active recreational use. There is occasionally pressure to waive the 10 percent requirement in the interest of optimizing development potential.

Larimer County has implemented a rural land use program that provides landowners with incentives to avoid standard one unit per 35 acre development, preserve open space and increase density without all the requirements of the subdivision process. Participation in the program is entirely voluntary and landowners can earn incentives by clustering development and avoiding sensitive areas. The types of incentives offered include density bonuses and an expedited review process that eliminates many of the requirements associated with a standard subdivision application. El Paso County established a similar program in 2007, via the Rural Land Use Plan zoning overlay, but it has only been used a few times, and there were developer concerns about the County's procedural requirements.

Design Guidelines

Appropriate development should respect a community's character and sense of place. In important viewsheds, such as the Interstate-25 corridor, and in proximity regional open space areas, development should be set back, located in places that reduce its visual impact, or screened with appropriate vegetation. Guidelines can also be used to influence architectural character, assuring that new buildings have a mass and scale and use of materials and colors that have minimal visual impact. Use of traditional plant materials and sensitive siting of utility lines also help to maintain the rural character of a community. Many of larger PUDs approved by the County since 2007 have been adopted by the County as part of its statutory Master Plan have included design guidelines. Continuing to encourage PUD development and updating the older small area master plans would be means to encourage open space preservation and compatible development.

Transfer of Development Rights

Transfer of development rights (TDR) is a device by which the development potential of a site is severed from its title and made available for transfer to another location. The owner of a site within a transfer area retains ownership but not approval to develop. The owner of a site within a receiving area may purchase transferable development rights which allow a receptor site to be developed at a greater density. This method allows transfer of development away from environmentally sensitive areas to areas where development is more appropriate. This may be useful for protection of natural areas or agricultural lands. It can be useful when a government entity does not have funds to purchase fee title or a conservation easement, and developers may benefit from increased density. Implementation of a TDR system, however, is a somewhat complex undertaking that is tied to other regulatory tools such as the Land Development Code, and the concept has historically been faced with some degree of resistance.

Zoning

Zoning and other regulatory tools can be used to direct development away from inappropriate areas and assure that appropriate densities and compatible uses are achieved. Effective use of large lot zoning designations maintains rural character and a land use pattern consistent with agricultural operations. Weld County, for example, has a requirement that limits development in areas zoned for agricultural use to one unit per 80 acres. However, zoning is subject to change and a rigid adherence to agricultural zoning in areas experiencing growth pressures can raise issues of individual property rights and fairness. In addition, existing County zoning often becomes moot when municipalities annex unincorporated areas. Therefore, traditional zoning and other regulatory approaches usually must be supplemented with some of the other tools described in this section to be fully effective.

Funding Opportunities for Multimodal Transportation

Federal Funding

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law includes billions of dollars in competitive funding available to cities, towns, and municipalities across dozens of new and existing programs. Federal Infrastructure Bill contains many new grant opportunities that can fund multimodal improvements:

Safe Streets and Roads for All

This new \$5 billion competitive grant program at the Department of Transportation will provide funding directly to and exclusively for local governments to support their efforts to advance “vision zero” plans and other complete street improvements to reduce crashes and fatalities, especially for cyclists and pedestrians. Applications are expected to open in May 2022.

Reconnecting Communities

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law creates a first-ever \$1 billion program at the Department of Transportation to reconnect communities divided by transportation infrastructure – particularly historically disadvantaged communities too often nearly destroyed or cut in half by a highway. This new competitive program will provide dedicated funding to state, local, metropolitan planning organizations, and tribal governments for planning, design, demolition, and reconstruction of street grids, parks, or other infrastructure to address these legacy impacts. Applications will open in the second quarter of 2022.

Rebuilding American Infrastructure Sustainably and Equitably (RAISE) Grants

This existing competitive grant program at the Department of Transportation provides \$7.5 billion with an additional \$7.5 billion subject to Congressional approval in funding for road, rail, transit, and other surface transportation of local and/or regional significance. Selection criteria safety, sustainability, equity, economic competitiveness, mobility, and community connectivity. Applications will open in the first quarter of 2022.

The Federal Lands Transportation Program (FLTP)

Established in 23 U.S.C. 203 to improve the transportation infrastructure owned and maintained by the following Federal Lands Management Agencies: National Park Service (NPS), US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), USDA Forest Service (Forest Service), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Bureau of Reclamation and independent Federal agencies with land and natural resource management responsibilities. The Federal lands transportation program shall be used by the Secretary of Transportation and the Secretary of the Federal land management agency to pay the costs of: Program administration, transportation planning, research, preventive maintenance, engineering, rehabilitation, restoration, construction, and reconstruction of Federal lands transportation facilities, and Acquisition of necessary scenic easements and scenic or historic sites; Provision for pedestrians and bicycles;

Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)

Funding is substantially increased; TAP funding level is now 10% of STBGP

TAP suballocation is increased to 59% (currently 50%)

States may allocate 100% of its funding to “counties and other local transportation entities”

The law further significantly increased the amount of non-competitive formula funding that will flow first to states and then on to cities and local governments. Examples include funding available through Surface Transportation Block Grant sub-allocations for local governments.

Carbon Reduction Program

Funds can be used for any STBGP-eligible use if a state can demonstrate a reduction in transportation emissions including bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

State SB 260 Transportation Funding for Multimodal Projects

Multimodal/Mitigation Options Revenue by Year (CDOT/Locals) - \$463 million through FY 32

MMOF funds may be used for an array of capital, construction, operations and planning projects, including but not limited to bicycle, pedestrian, ride sharing, or transit projects.

SB 260 Revitalizing Main Streets Revenue by Year (CDOT) - \$115 million through FY 32*

The Revitalizing Main Streets Grant Program is intended to help communities across the state implement transportation-related projects that improve safety and yield long-term benefits to community main streets. When defining a main street, CDOT is aiming to support areas in or adjacent to community-focused, downtowns where people work, dine and shop. Revitalizing Main Streets provides grant opportunities to support local communities as they find innovative ways to reuse public spaces and help businesses reopen safely, while improving multimodal safety and accessibility along urban arterials

CDOT Greenhouse Gas Rule

On December 16, 2021, the Transportation Commission voted to approve CDOT’s new GHG Planning Standard to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector, improve air quality and reduce smog, and provide more travel options. The GHG Pollution Standard Rule requires CDOT and the state’s five Metropolitan Planning Organizations to determine the total pollution and greenhouse gas emission increase or decrease expected from future transportation projects and take steps to ensure that greenhouse gas emission levels do not exceed set reduction amounts. This approach will also streamline the planning and delivery of innovations that have proven successful in improving quality of life and air quality, like adding sidewalks, improving downtowns for active transportation with “complete streets,” improving local and intercity transit and first-and-last-mile connectivity to transit facilities, and adding bike-shares. This policy recognizes that the transportation projects we build have an impact on how Coloradans travel and encourages choices for travelers across the state.

If the Commission determines, by resolution, the requirements of Rule 8.02.6 have not been met, the Commission shall restrict the use of Surface Transportation funds pursuant to Rule 8.02.6.4, as applicable, to projects and approved GHG Mitigation Measures that reduce GHG emissions. This means that local governments will not be able to use the largest source of federal funds for road capacity projects.

GHG Mitigation Measures. When assessing compliance with the GHG Reduction Levels, CDOT and MPOs shall have the opportunity to utilize approved GHG Mitigation Measures as set forth in Rules 8.02.4 and 8.02.6.3 to offset emissions and demonstrate progress toward compliance. Illustrative examples of potential GHG Mitigation Measures include, but are not limited to:

- Improving pedestrian and bike access, particularly in areas that allow individuals to reduce multiple daily trips and better access transit.
- Improving first-and-final mile access to transit stops and stations that make transit resources safer and more usable by consumers.
- Improving the safety and efficiency of crosswalks and multi-use paths for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other non-motorized vehicles, including to advance compliance with the ADA.
- Adopting or encouraging the adoption of locally driven changes to parking policies and physical configuration that encourage more walking, bicycling, and transit trips.
- Implementing or encouraging the adoption of transportation demand management practices that reduce VMT.

Voluntary Programs

Agricultural Districts

The County or a group of farmers may establish a district wherein a farmer may voluntarily join for a pre-established, renewable length of time. Within these districts, state and local governments may be limited in their ability to restrict farm practices, take farmland by eminent domain, or allow construction of utilities. Sometimes, counties may grant additional incentives to farmers who join or create a district cost-sharing for compliance with environmental regulations; soils and water conservation grants; exemption on state inheritance taxes; marketing support; and low-interest loans for farm operation and improvements. Creation of such districts helps promote the continuation of agricultural use, thus contributing to open space goals.

Colorado Heritage Areas Partnerships

According to a National Parks Service definition, a heritage area is a region where natural, cultural, and historic resources combine to form a cohesive, distinctive landscape arising from patterns of human activity shaped by geography. While the State of Colorado does not currently have a program for heritage area designation, it is studying the prospects for a state program. In the meantime, many communities have self-designated regions as heritage areas and have subsequently received high levels of support from state and federal agencies in addition to local governments and private sources. These areas could be eligible for funding from the Colorado Historic Society as discussed previously under “Funding Sources.”

Colorado Natural Areas Program

The Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife administers the Colorado Natural Areas Program. Its purpose is to identify, evaluate and protect examples of Colorado’s natural heritage, maintain an inventory and registry of qualified natural areas and establish a system of designated natural areas. Anyone may initially nominate an area for consideration and both public and private lands are eligible. If the area meets certain criteria, and the landowner is willing, the site may be designated as a natural area. An agreement is written that outlines management, monitoring, and rights and duties of the landowner as well as the state. Depending on the resource and the desires of the landowner, use of the area may be restricted.

Designation of such areas protects habitats, biological and geological features, rare plants, and terrestrial and aquatic communities. It requires voluntary participation of landowners. It provides a way for landowners to receive technical assistance and other support to protect important habitats.

Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP)

Established in 1979, the CNHP is a non-profit scientific organization affiliated with the Warner College of Natural Resources at Colorado State University. The CNHP is a comprehensive source of information on the status and location of Colorado’s rarest and most threatened species and plant communities. Colorado State University shares the information with a wide range of stakeholders and partnerships to help ensure the Colorado’s biodiversity resources are not diminished. The data is widely used by local communities, including El Paso County, to identify high-priority areas for conservation. A more detailed description of the specific areas identified in El Paso County may be found in **Chapter 8**.

Partners for Wildlife

This program operates similarly to the Colorado Natural Areas Program. The Partners for Wildlife program improves and protects fish and wildlife habitat on private lands through alliances between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, other organizations and individuals, while leaving the land in private ownership. At the request of landowners and providing the project meets certain criteria, the Fish and Wildlife Service will help landowners plan and design a habitat management project that will restore or enhance existing habitat.

Land Trusts

Land trusts are typically nonprofit organizations that hold land and other property rights for the benefit of the public. Because most are private, land trusts have significant flexibility in the way they can acquire property and have the ability to react quickly to buy land or acquire an easement before the land is developed. Land trusts can assist in a number of ways, including participation in pre-acquisition negotiations and the ability to accept donations of property through a transaction that qualifies the landowner for substantial tax benefits. Their private status is often appealing to landowners who may otherwise be reluctant to deal with a government entity. El Paso County Parks has worked cooperatively with the Palmer Land Trust to preserve the conservation values on several properties. Municipalities may also form land trusts. A municipal land trust is a quasi-public agency that is established by local ordinance, funded out of a city budget, and authorized by charter to hold and manage lands for conservation purposes. It functions similarly to a private land trust. A disadvantage is its connection to government, which may sway the confidence of some landowners.

Conservation Easements

The County initiated accepting conservation easements in 1997 and has secured approximately 2,500 acres. The program allows the landowner to maintain ownership and use of the land but gives up development opportunities for tax benefits. Most of the County easements are relatively small, averaging approximately 65 acres. The easement program has been very helpful in preserving open space at minimal cost to the County. The Palmer Land Trust and other land trusts have also secured thousands of acres of land through the conservation easement program, including the Pinerias Open Space easement at 1,030 acres.

Special Districts

As the County continues to experience the significant expansion of Title 32 Special Districts, with 101 established at this time according to the Development Services Department, El Paso County Parks should continue to encourage the inclusion of urban parks within the special district's level of service. The provision of these facilities can be assisted by the development of standards and criteria to be used by the developer for the recreation facilities. The County can also financially assist the developer with the provision of Urban Park Grant funds (from the fees exacted at the time of subdivision for the construction of the facilities).

Survey

SURVEY RESPONSE REPORT

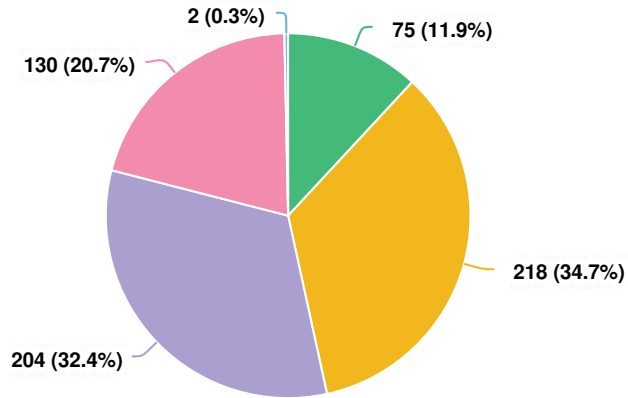
20 July 2021 - 20 October 2021

PROJECT NAME:
Get Involved



SURVEY QUESTIONS

Q1 | On average, how often have you visited El Paso County Park areas during the past 12 months?

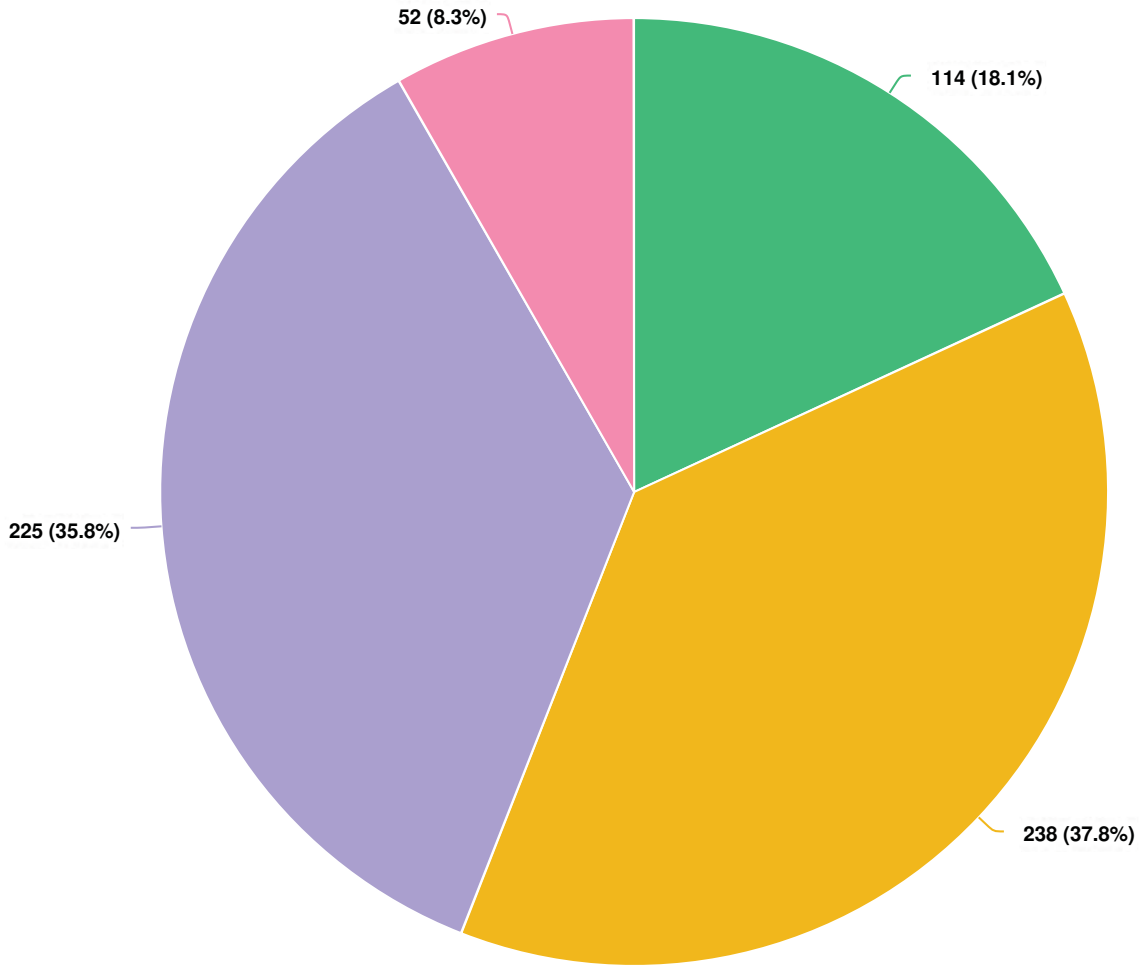


Question options

- Daily
- 2 to 3 times per week
- Once a week 2 to 3 times a month
- Once a month 1 to 3 times a year
- Never

Optional question (629 response(s), 2 skipped)
Question type: Radio Button Question

Q2 On average, how far do you drive to use an El Paso County regional park, trail or open space?

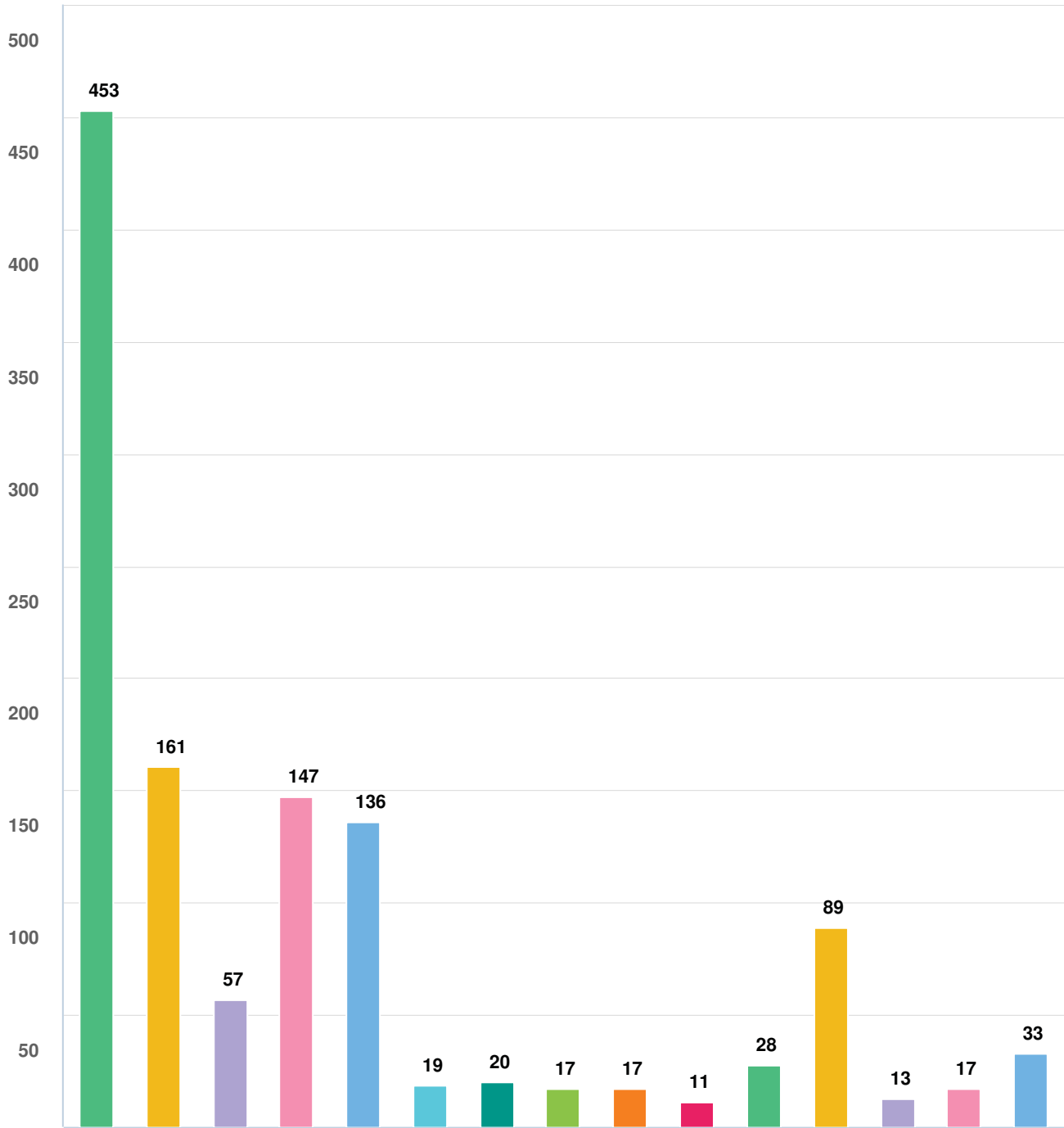


Question options

- Less than 5 minutes
- 6 - 15 minutes
- 16 - 30 minutes
- more than 30 minutes

*Optional question (629 response(s), 2 skipped)
Question type: Radio Button Question*

Q3 Of the following activities, which TWO do you most frequently participate in when visiting El Paso County Park areas?

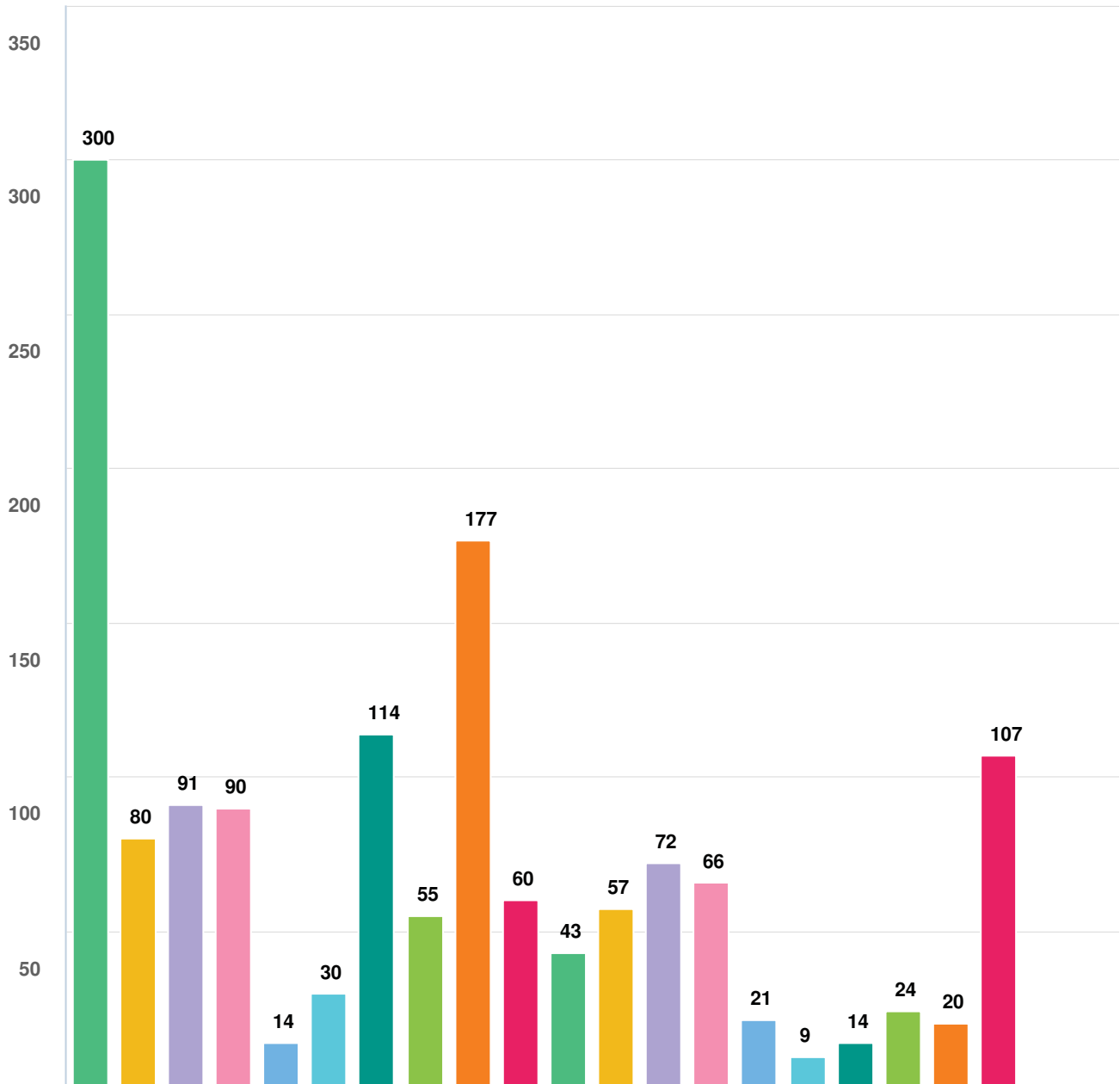


Question options

- Hiking/Walking
 ● Dog walking
● Running
● Biking
● Observing nature/wildlife
● Photography/painting
- Horseback riding
 ● Fishing
● Picnicking
● Contemplation/meditation
● Social gathering
- Court Sports (Tennis / Pickleball)
 ● Field Sports (Soccer, Baseball, Football, etc.)
● Disc Golf
● Other

Optional question (630 response(s), 1 skipped)
 Question type: Checkbox Question

Q4 Which El Paso County Park facilities do you visit most frequently? (Choose 3)

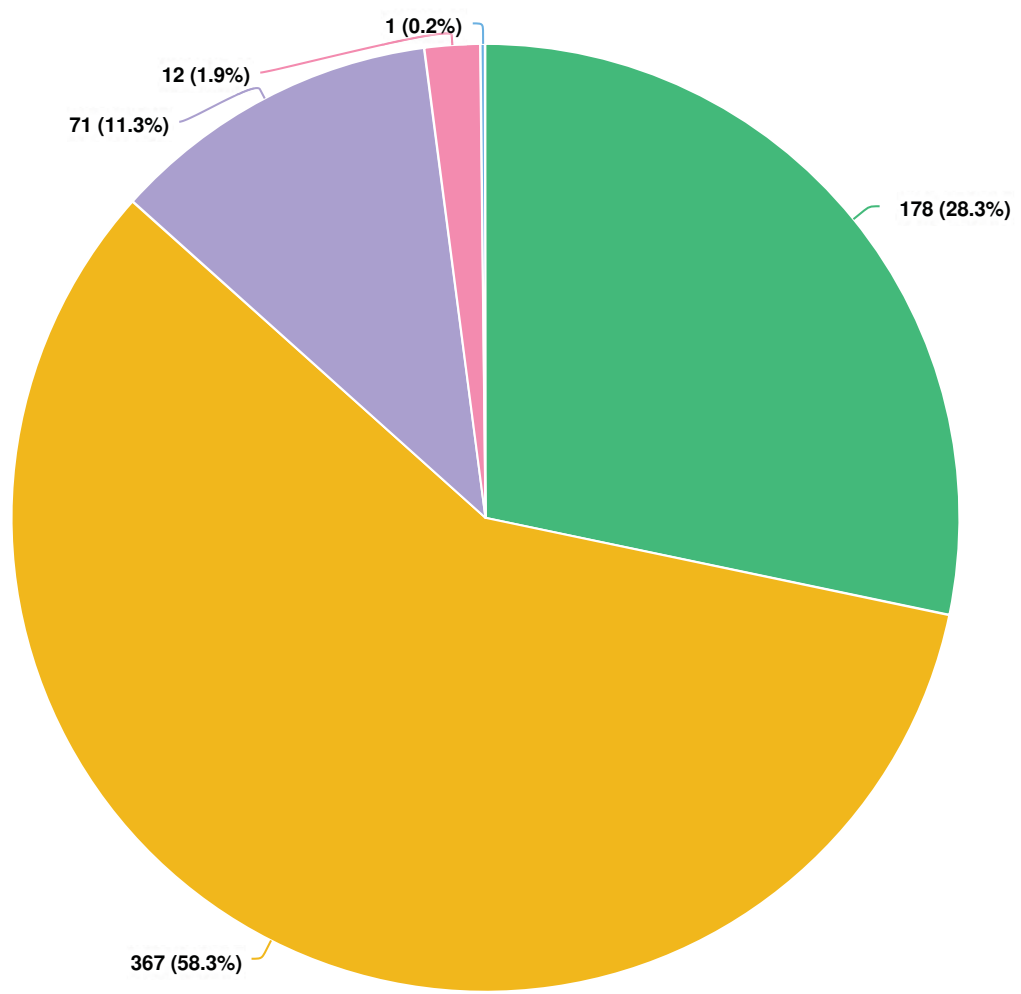


Question options

- Bear Creek Regional Park ● Beak Creek Nature Center ● Black Forest Regional Park ● Black Forest Section 16
- Clear Spring Ranch ● Falcon Regional Park ● Fountain Creek Regional Park ● Fountain Creek Nature Center
- Fox Run Regional Park ● Homestead Ranch Regional Park ● Jones Park ● Paint Mines Interpretive Park
- Palmer Lake Recreation Area ● Pineries Open Space ● Rainbow Falls Recreation Area
- Stratmoor Hills Neighborhood Park ● Stratmoor Valley Trailhead Park ● Widefield Community Park
- Willow Springs Ponds ● Other (please specify) ● Ceresa Park ● Drake Lake

Optional question (629 response(s), 2 skipped)
 Question type: Checkbox Question

Q5 How would you rate the overall maintenance of County parks?

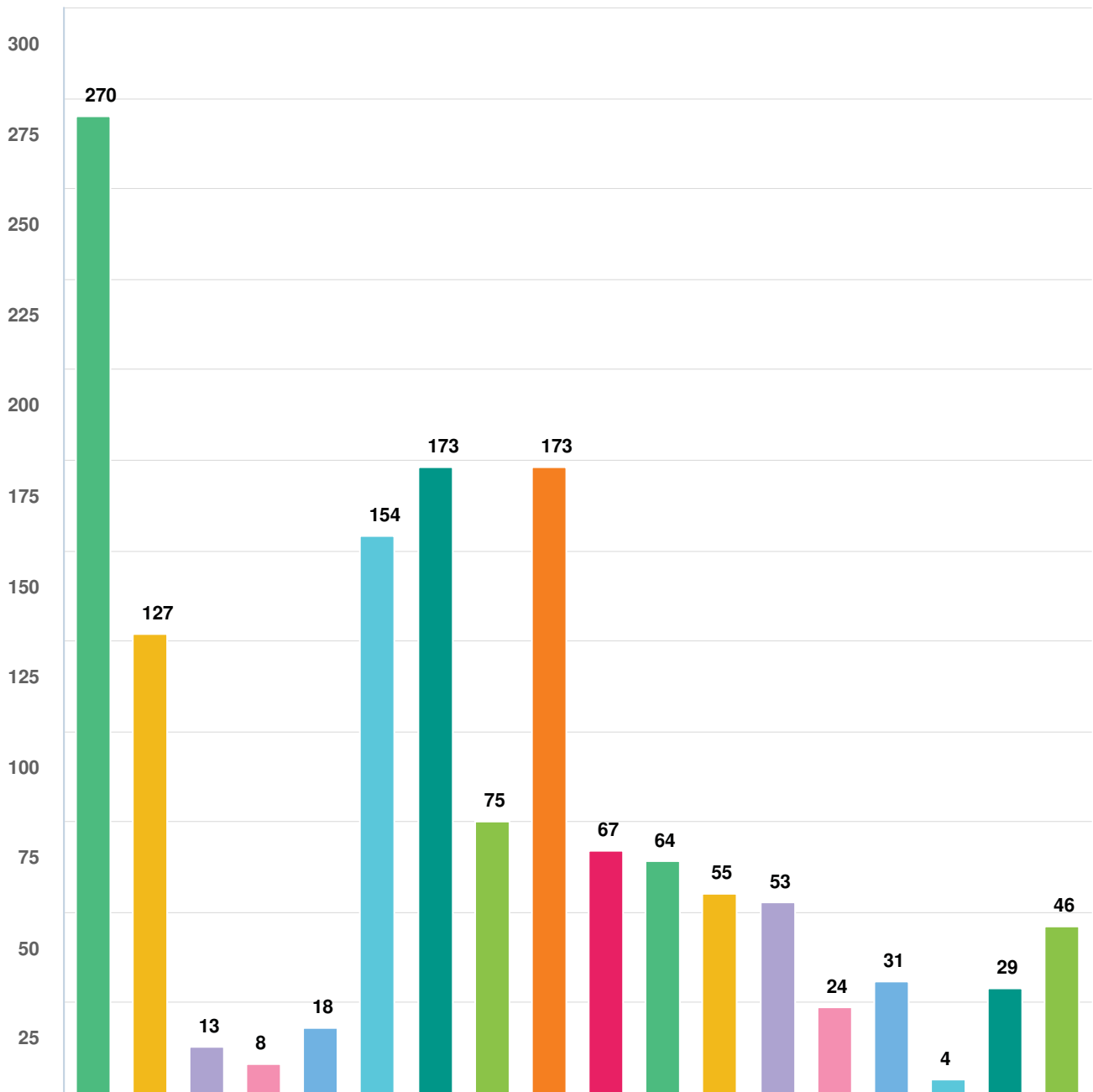


Question options

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- Don't Know

Optional question (629 response(s), 2 skipped)
Question type: Radio Button Question

Q6 Which El Paso County trail(s) do you visit most frequently? (Choose 3)

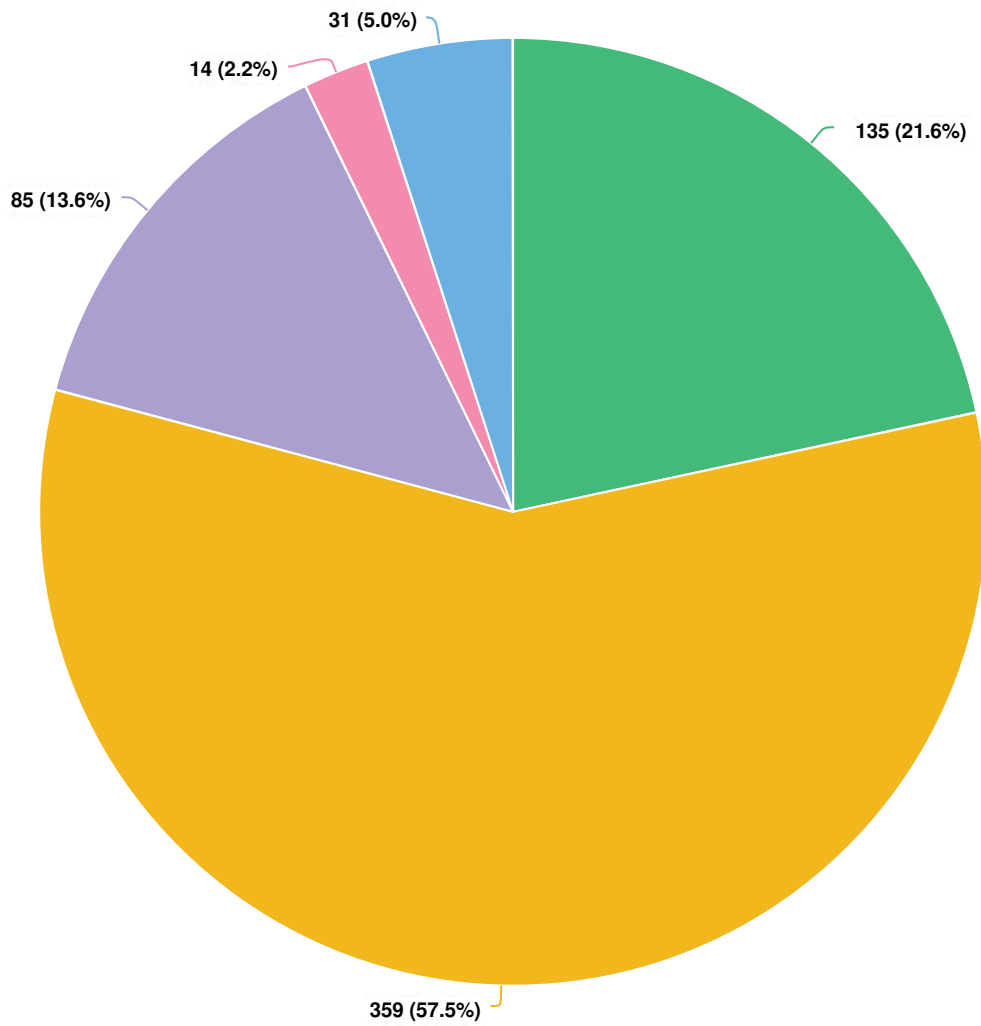


Question options

- Bear Creek Regional Park Trails
 ● Black Forest Section 16 Trails
● Clear Spring Ranch Trails
● Crew Gulch Trail
- Eastonville Regional Trail / Falcon Regional Park
 ● Fountain Creek Regional Trails
● Fox Run Regional Park Trails
- Homestead Ranch Regional Trail
 ● New Santa Fe Regional Trail
● Palmer Lake Trails
● Pineries Open Space Trails
- Rock Island Regional Trail
 ● Ute Pass Regional Trail
● Ute Pass Regional Trail
● Rainbow Falls Trails
- Woodlake Trail
 ● I have not used any County Trails
● Other (please specify)

*Optional question (621 response(s), 10 skipped)
Question type: Checkbox Question*

Q7 How would you rate the overall maintenance of County trails?



Question options

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- Don't Know

*Optional question (624 response(s), 7 skipped)
Question type: Radio Button Question*

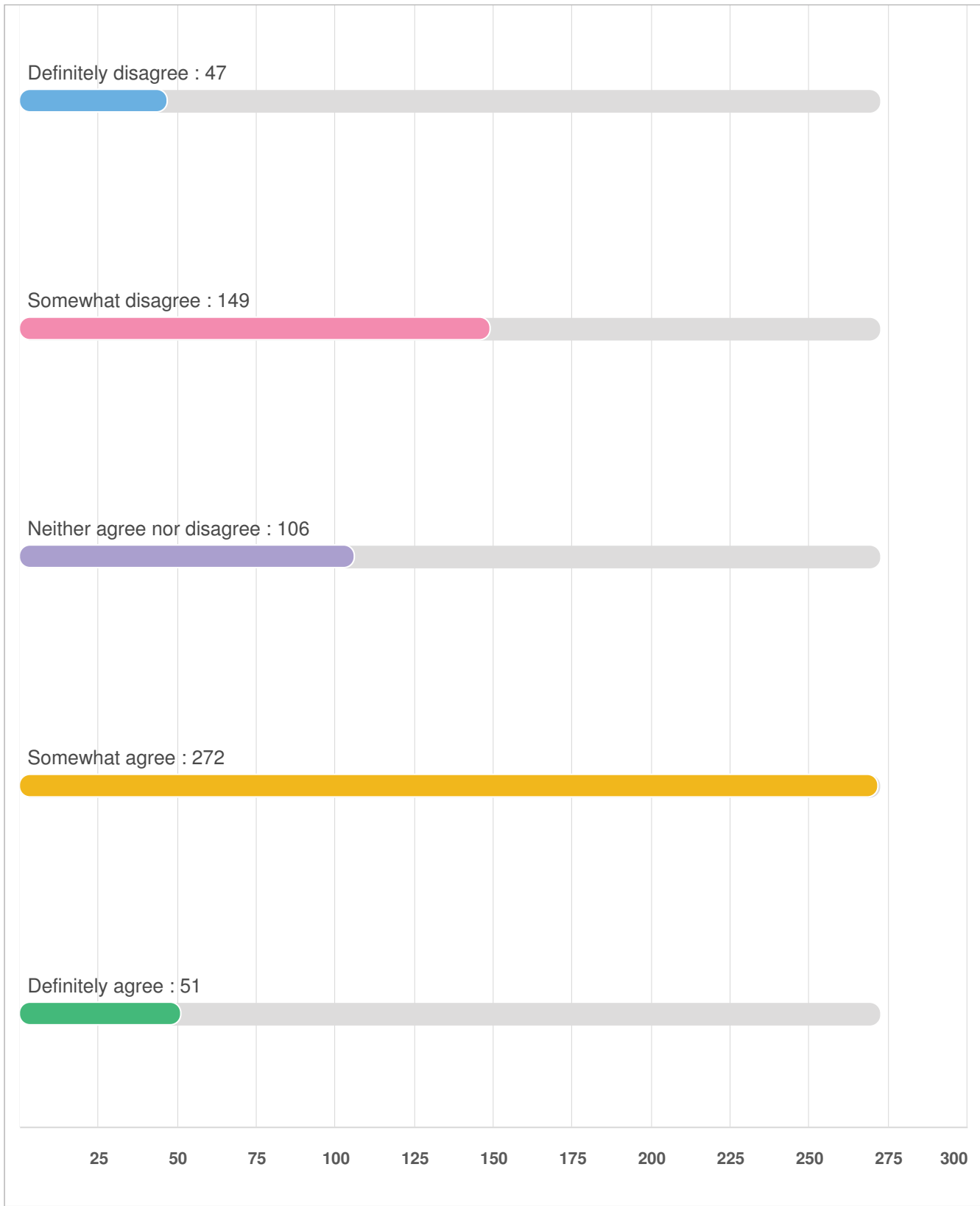
Q8 To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about parks, recreation, trails, open space, and cultural services provided by the County?



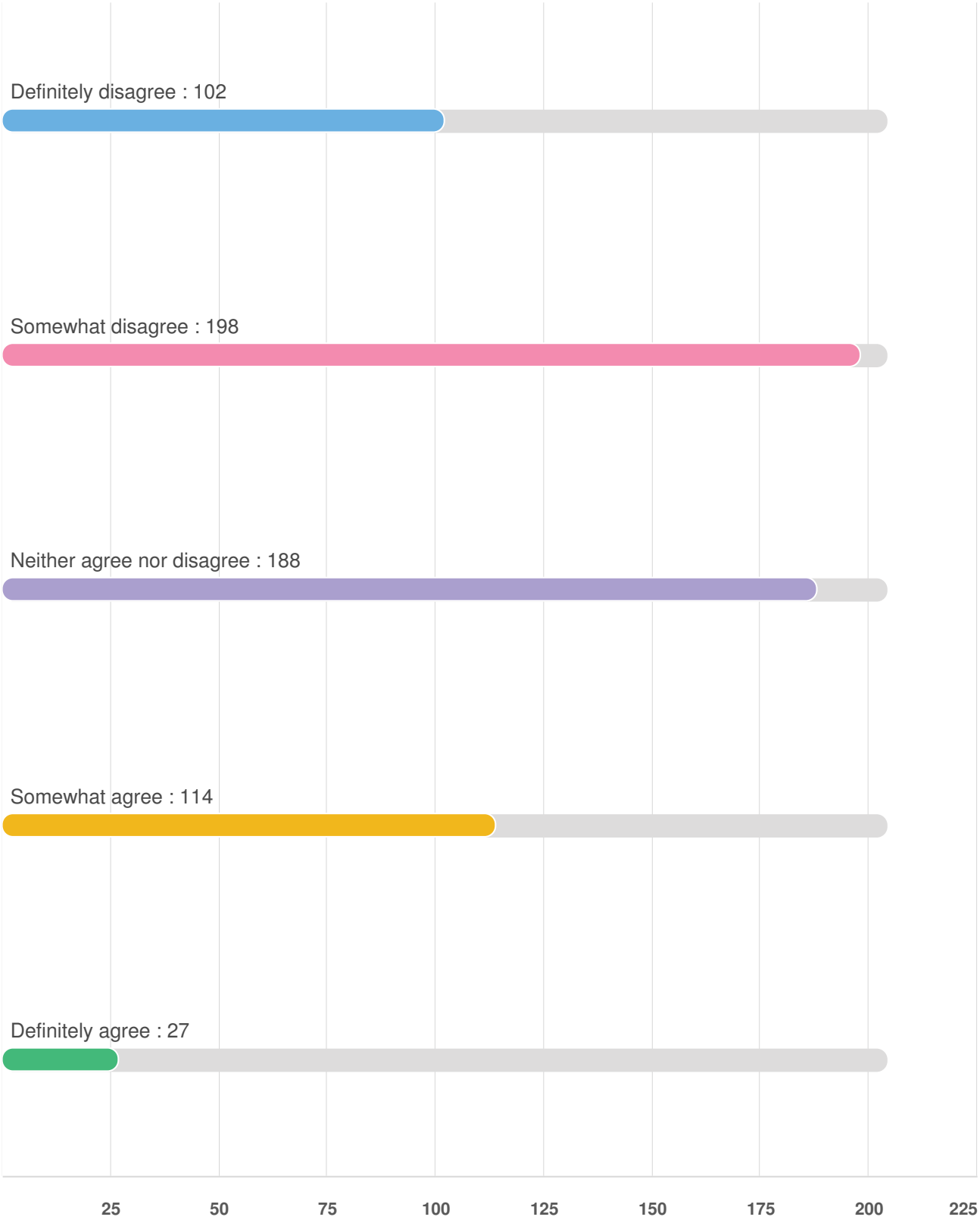
Optional question (631 response(s), 0 skipped)
 Question type: Likert Question

Q8 | To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about parks, recreation, trails, open space, and cultural services provided by the County?

There is a high level of public awareness of park and open space rules

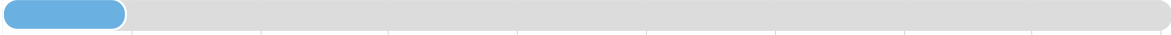


There is a sufficient level of security or park ranger presence



Overcrowding and damage to park resources is a problem in the parks, trails and open spaces

Definitely disagree : 24



Somewhat disagree : 84



Neither agree nor disagree : 145



Somewhat agree : 228



Definitely agree : 144



25 50 75 100 125 150 175 200 225 250

I am concerned about personal safety when using parks, trails and open space

Definitely disagree : 123



Somewhat disagree : 173



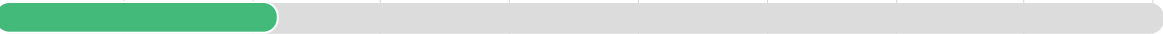
Neither agree nor disagree : 137



Somewhat agree : 151



Definitely agree : 44



20 40 60 80 100 120 140 160 180 200

Park roads, parking lots, playgrounds, and facilities are in need of repair/replacement

Definitely disagree : 45



Somewhat disagree : 145



Neither agree nor disagree : 210



Somewhat agree : 175



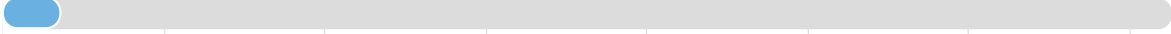
Definitely agree : 52



25 50 75 100 125 150 175 200 225

Trails are in good physical shape

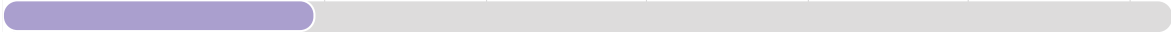
Definitely disagree : 18



Somewhat disagree : 59



Neither agree nor disagree : 97



Somewhat agree : 348

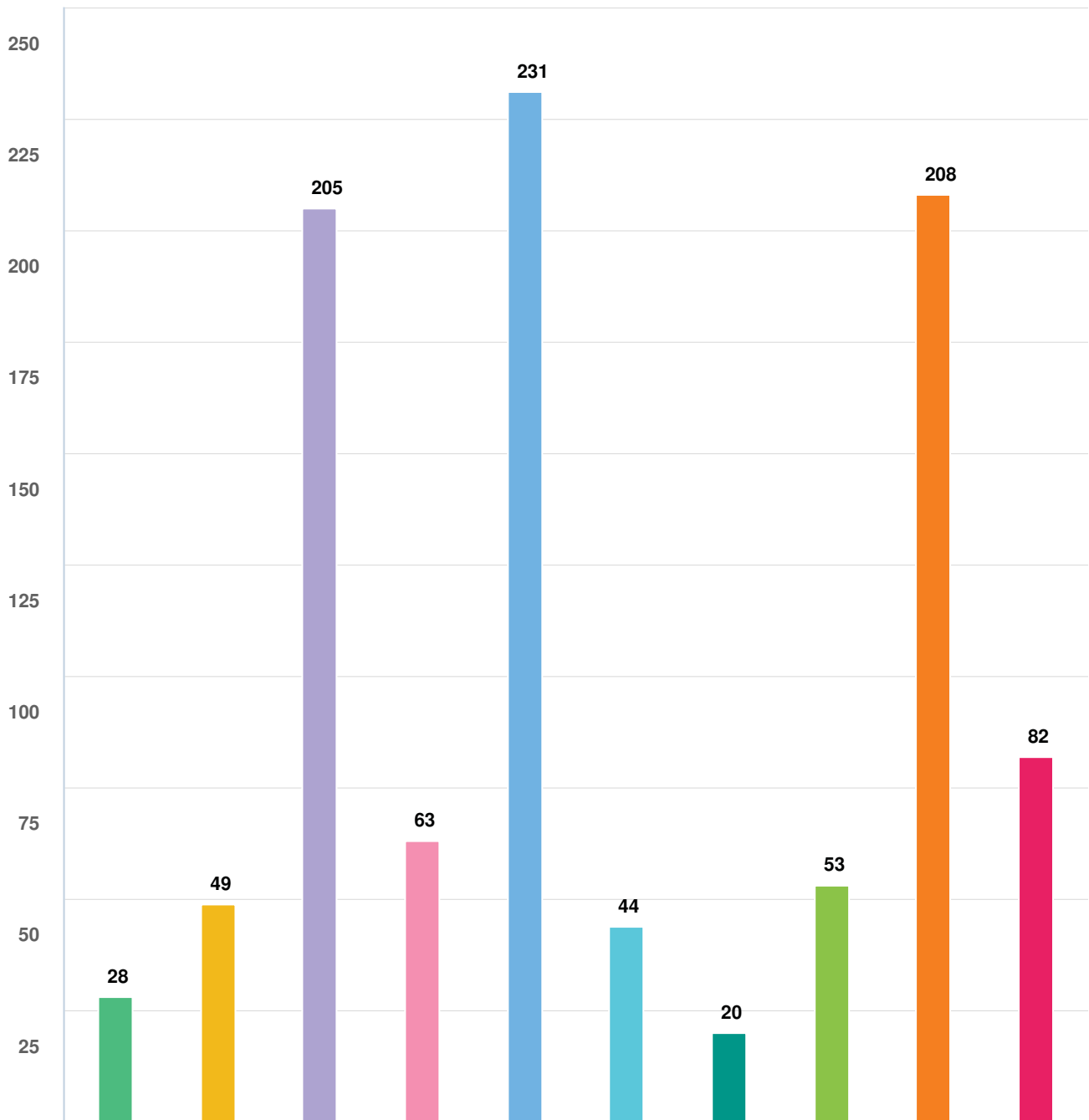


Definitely agree : 105



50 100 150 200 250 300 350 400

Q9 What are the things that keep you from visiting El Paso County Park areas more often?
(Please check all that apply.)

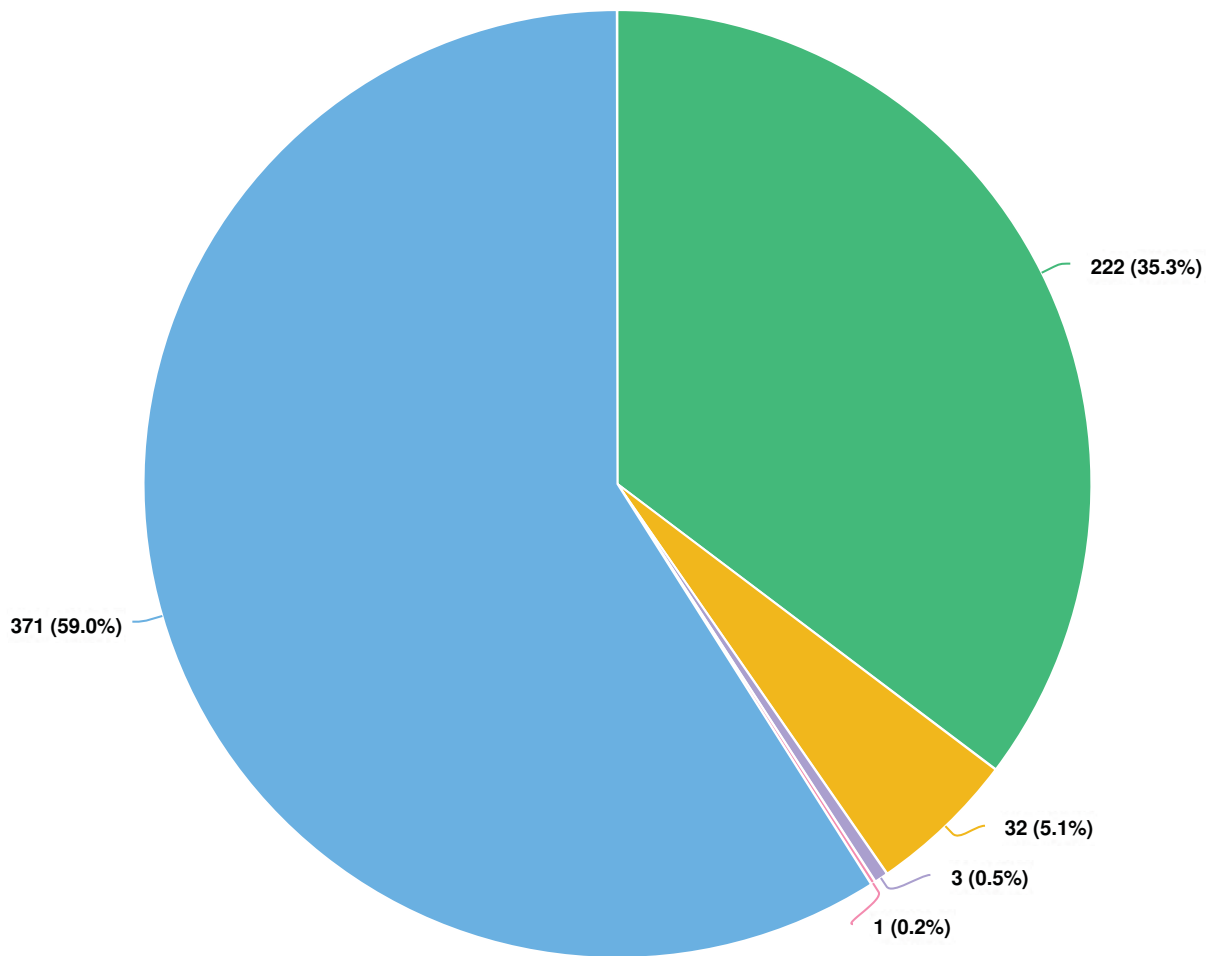


Question options

- Other (please specify)
 ● There are non-County parks that are closer to me
 ● Not easy to get there by bus, bike or walking
- The amenities aren't family friendly
 ● The trails don't match the activities I like to do
 ● Lack of time in my life to visit
- I don't know where El Paso County Parks/Trails are located
 ● The parks/trails are too crowded
- I don't feel welcome and/or safe
 ● Health or mobility issues

Optional question (594 response(s), 37 skipped)
Question type: Checkbox Question

Q10 How often do you or members of your household participate in programming at a nature center?

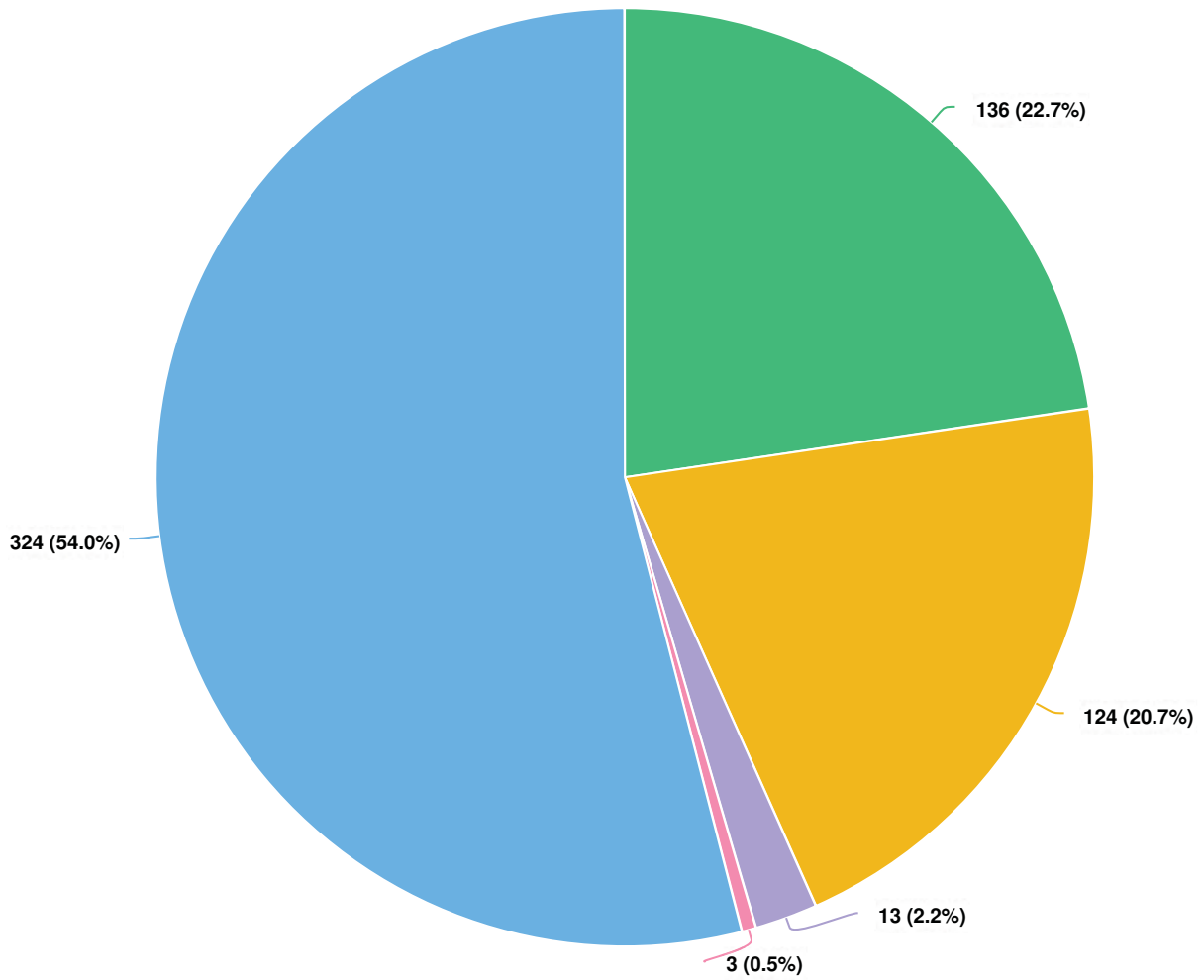


Question options

- Never
- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Yearly

Optional question (629 response(s), 2 skipped)
Question type: Radio Button Question

Q11 How do you rate the quality of the programs that you have participated in?

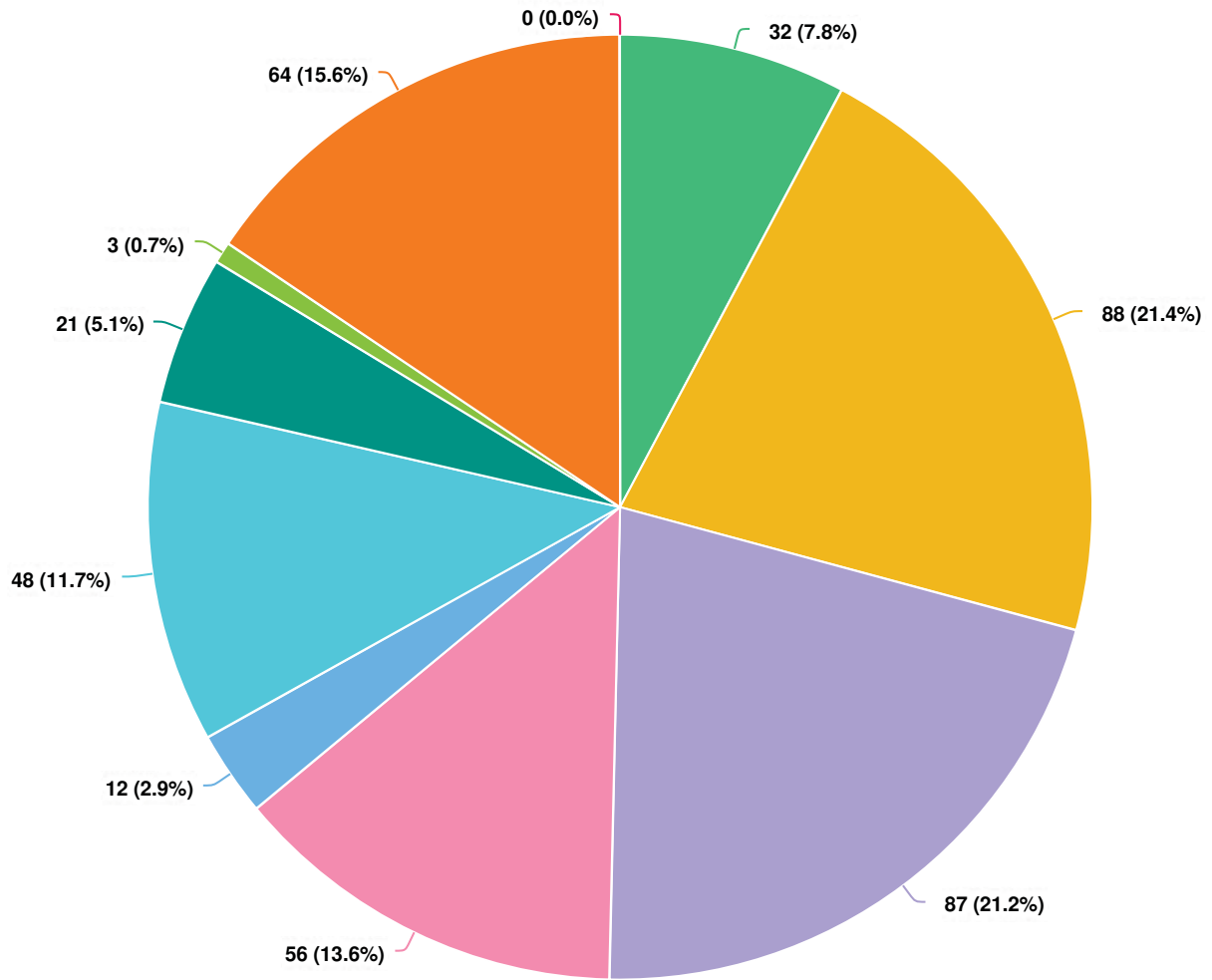


Question options

- Don't Know
- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Excellent

Optional question (600 response(s), 31 skipped)
Question type: Radio Button Question

Q12 How did you learn about Nature Center programs?



Question options

- Radio
- Other (please specify)
- TV
- Newspaper
- Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, Other)
- Other Website
- County Website
- Word of Mouth
- Visited or called a Nature Center
- Fliers/Posters

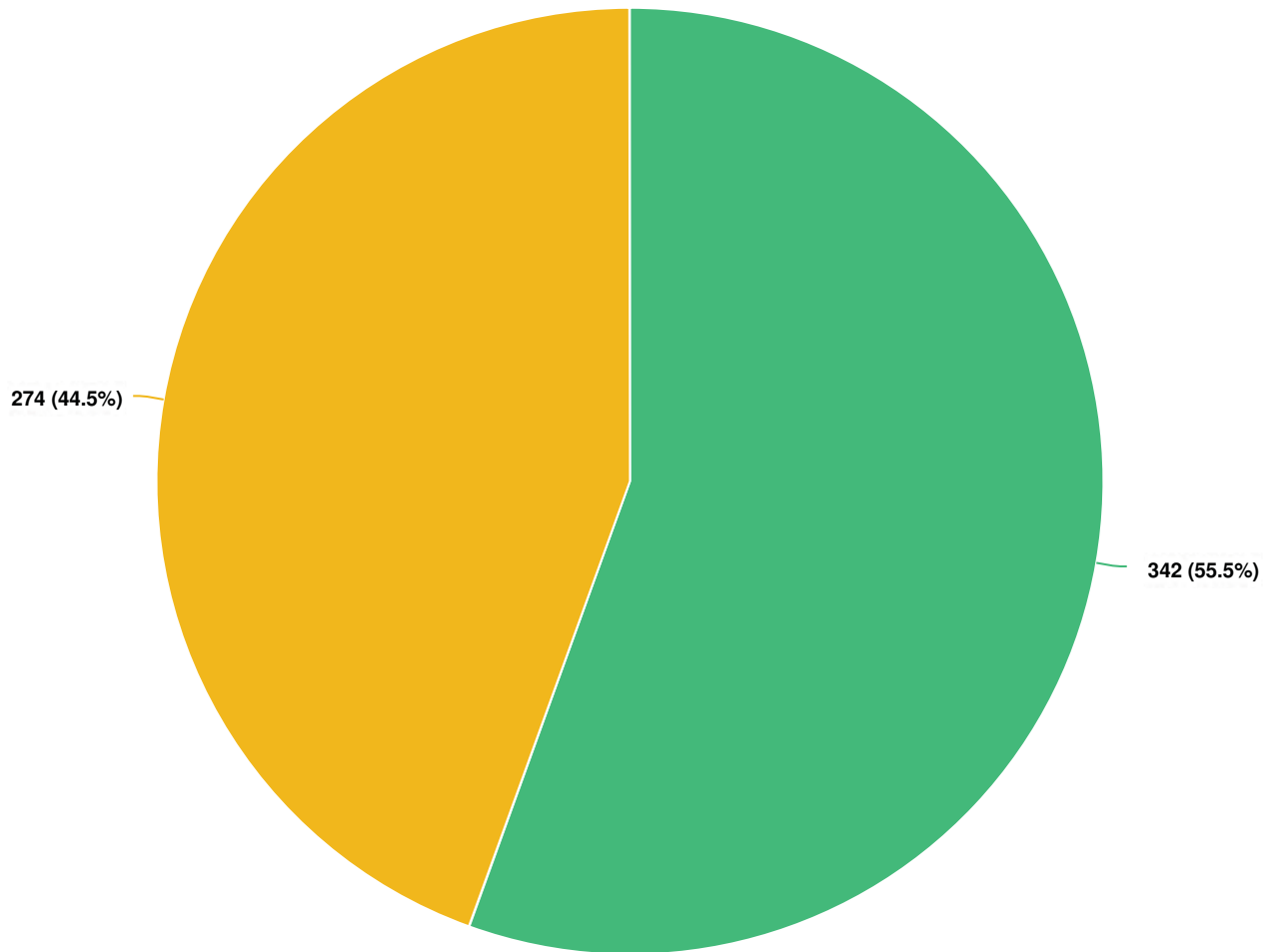
Optional question (411 response(s), 220 skipped)
Question type: Dropdown Question

Q13 If you were in charge of allocating funds, how would you prioritize allocation of funding across the five activities listed below? Use the numbers 1 – 5, with 1 representing your highest priority.

OPTIONS	AVG. RANK
Maintaining and improving existing parks, trail, and open spaces	2.19
Acquiring more open space lands for preservation with limited public access (natural surface trails)	2.73
Extending the regional trail network and making new neighborhood connections	2.82
Acquiring more park lands for active recreation (picnics, sports, playgrounds)	3.22
Providing education, outreach, and volunteer programs	3.93

Optional question (625 response(s), 6 skipped)

Question type: Ranking Question



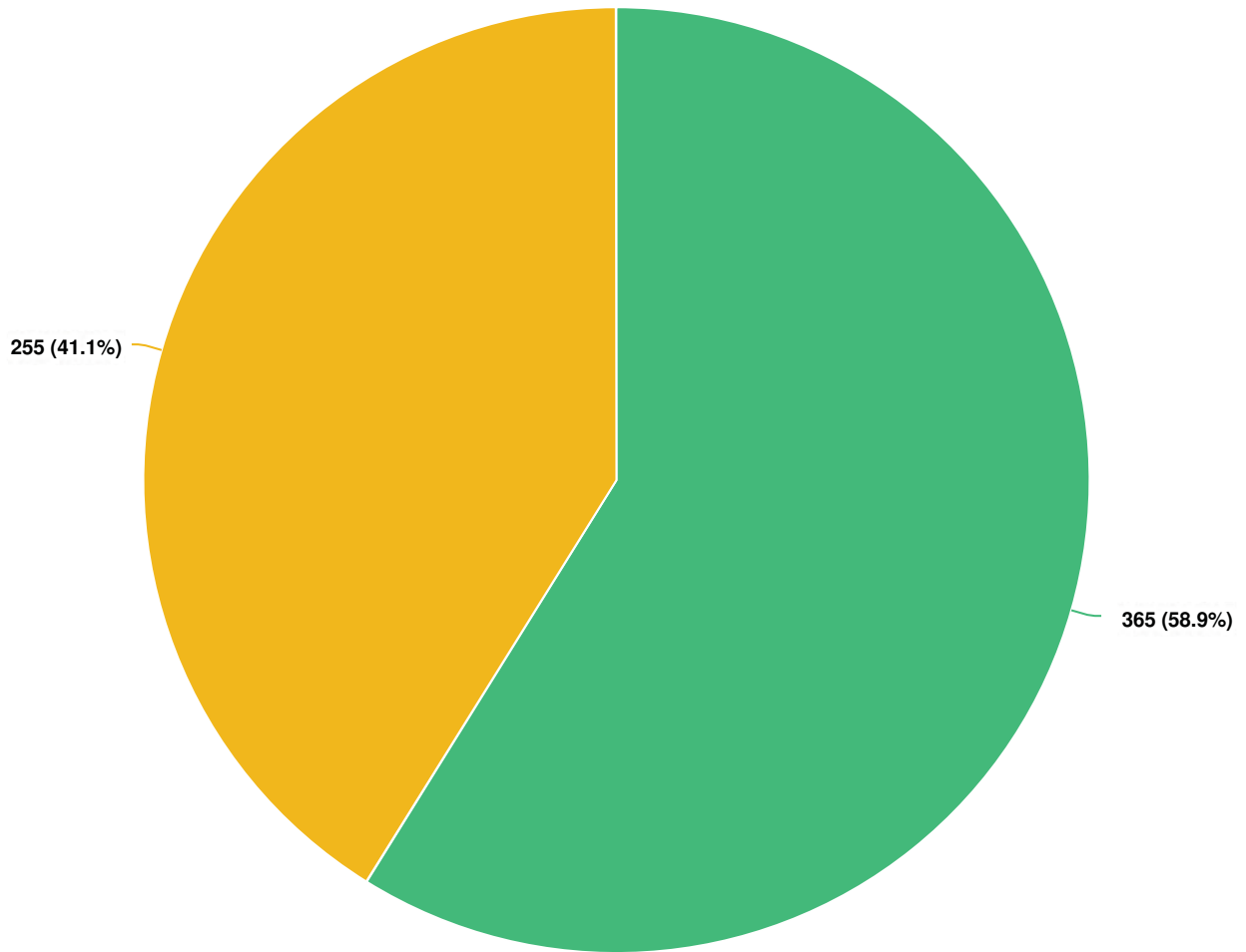
Question options

- Acquiring more lands for conservation
- Improving ecosystem health on existing El Paso lands, including forests, grasslands, creeks and wetland lands

Optional question (616 response(s), 15 skipped)

Question type: Radio Button Question

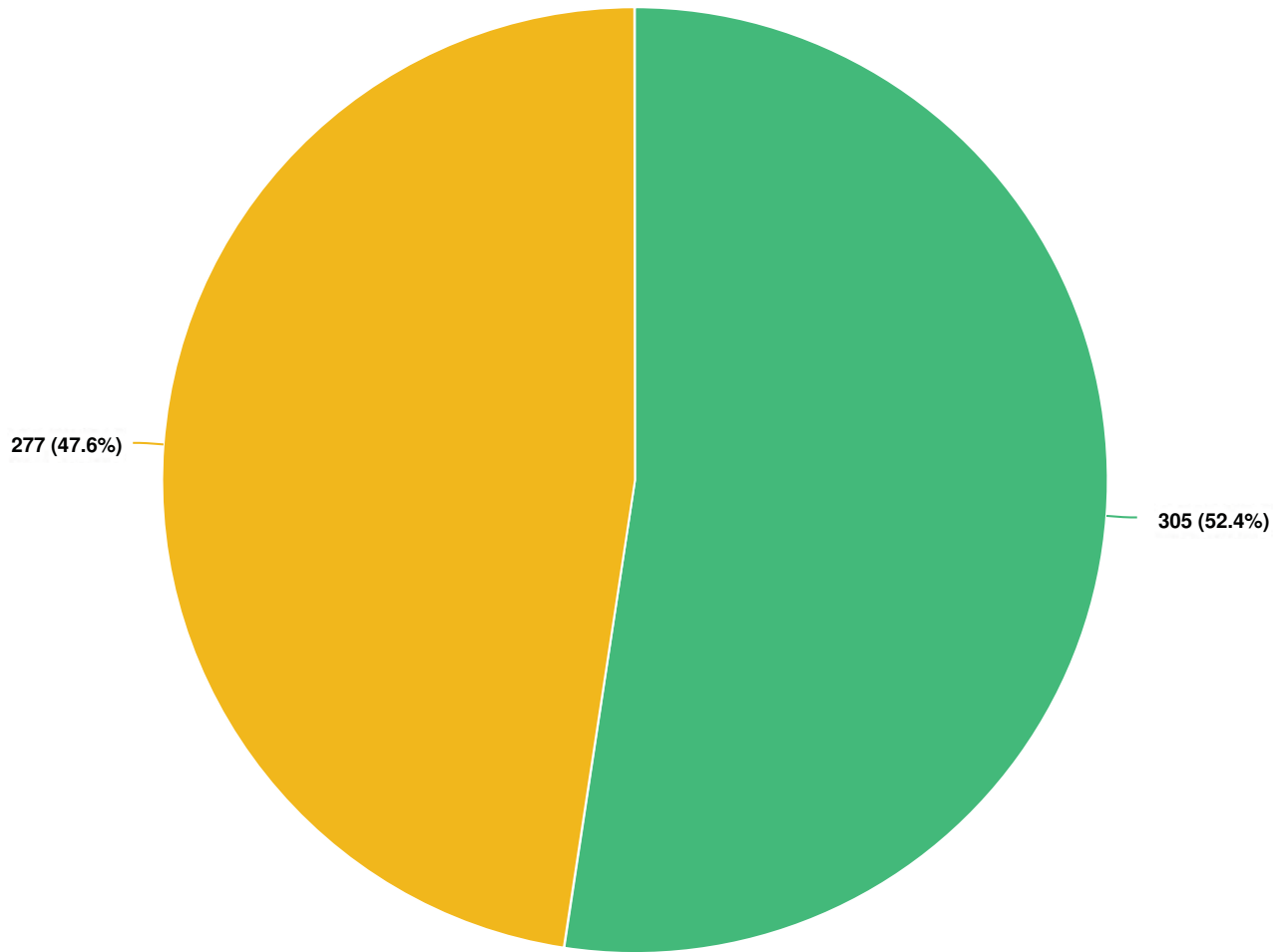
Q15 | El Paso County Parks should focus more on



Question options

- Building new trails
- Improving maintenance and design of existing trails

*Optional question (620 response(s), 11 skipped)
Question type: Radio Button Question*

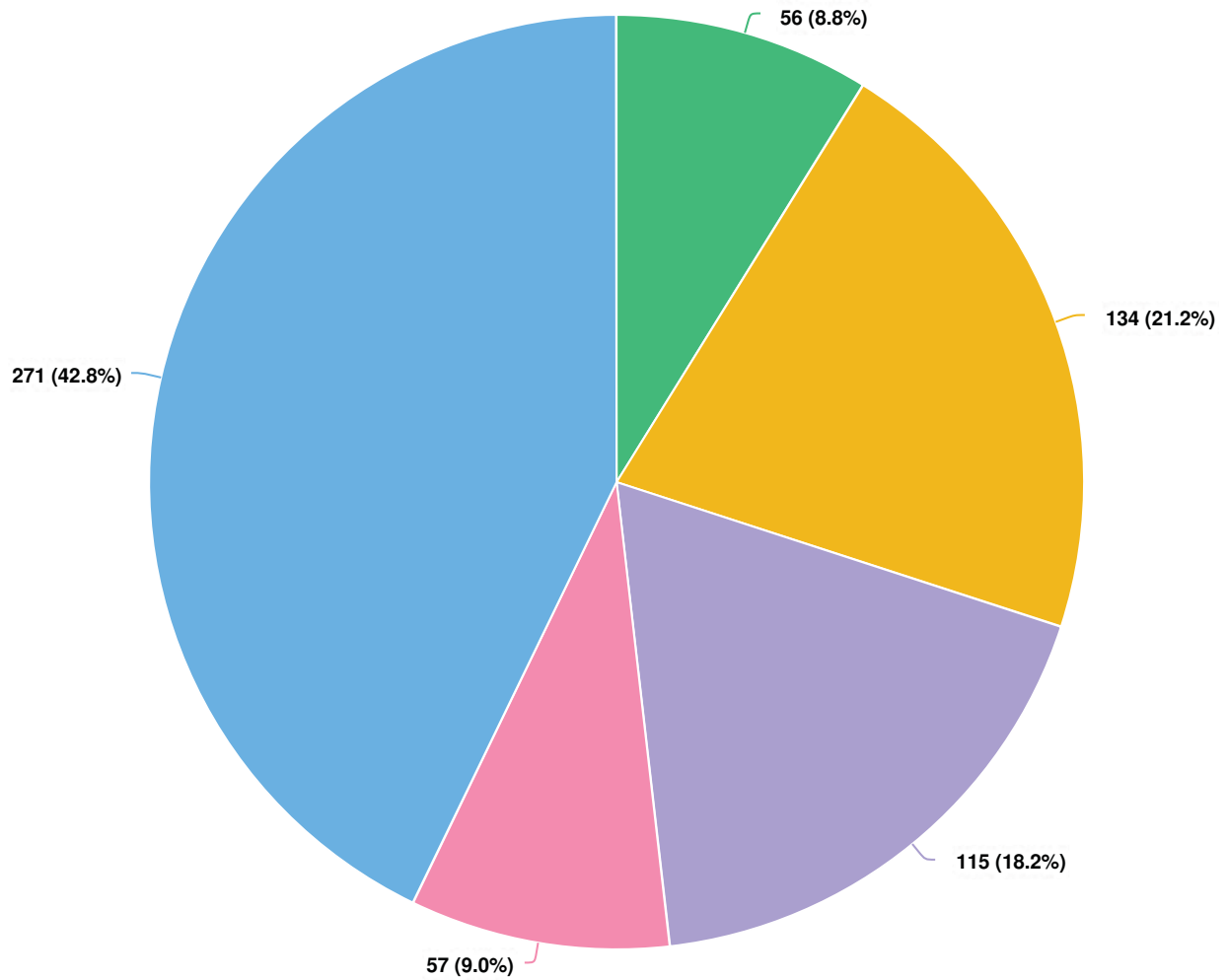


Question options

- Areas to visit where dogs are not allowed
- Areas to visit with dogs off leash

Optional question (582 response(s), 49 skipped)
Question type: Radio Button Question

Q17 For our planning purposes, please identify on the map provided, which area of the County you live?

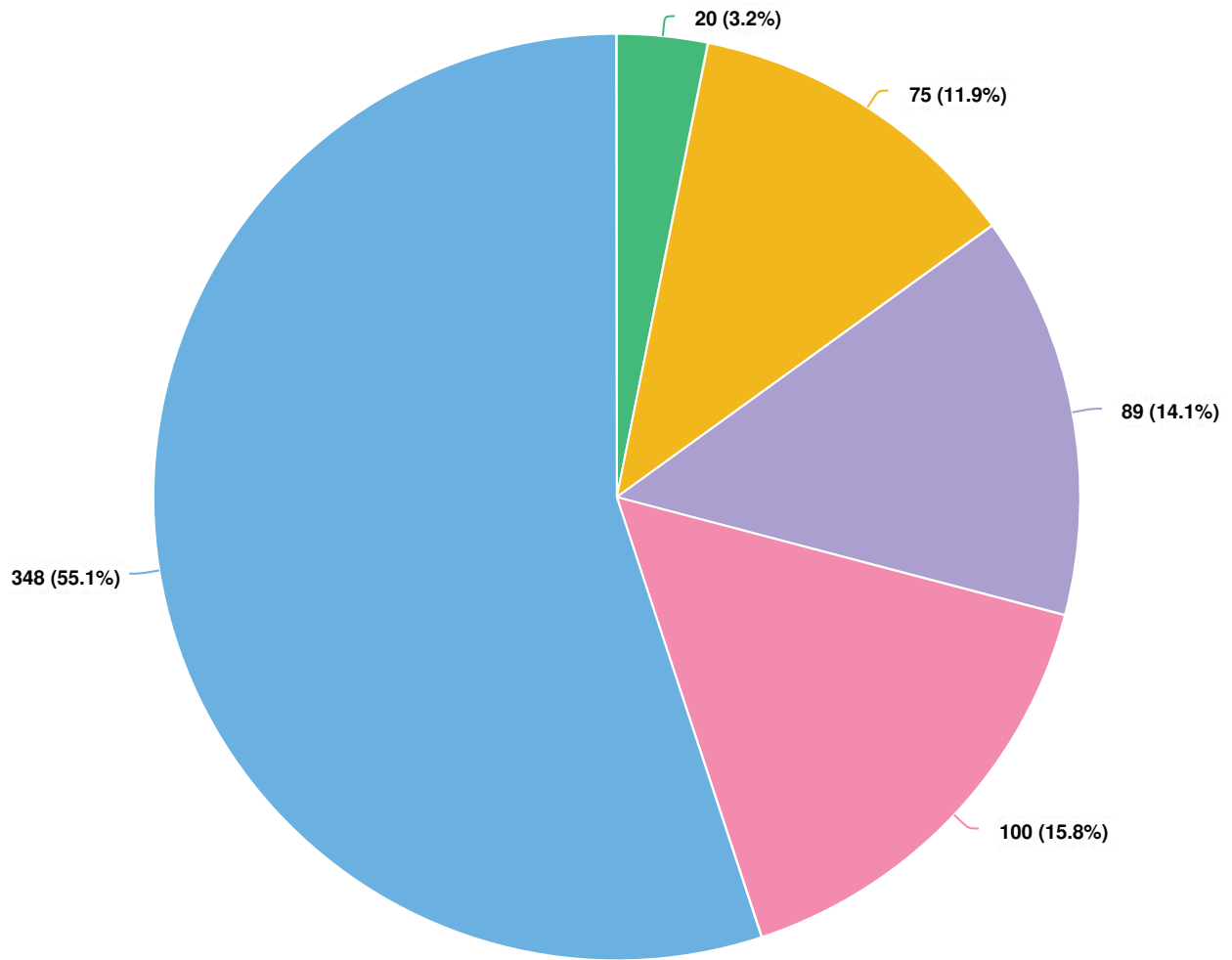


Question options

- Urban Core
- SE area
- SW area
- NE area
- NW area

Mandatory Question (633 response(s))
Question type: Radio Button Question

Q18 How many years have you lived in El Paso County?

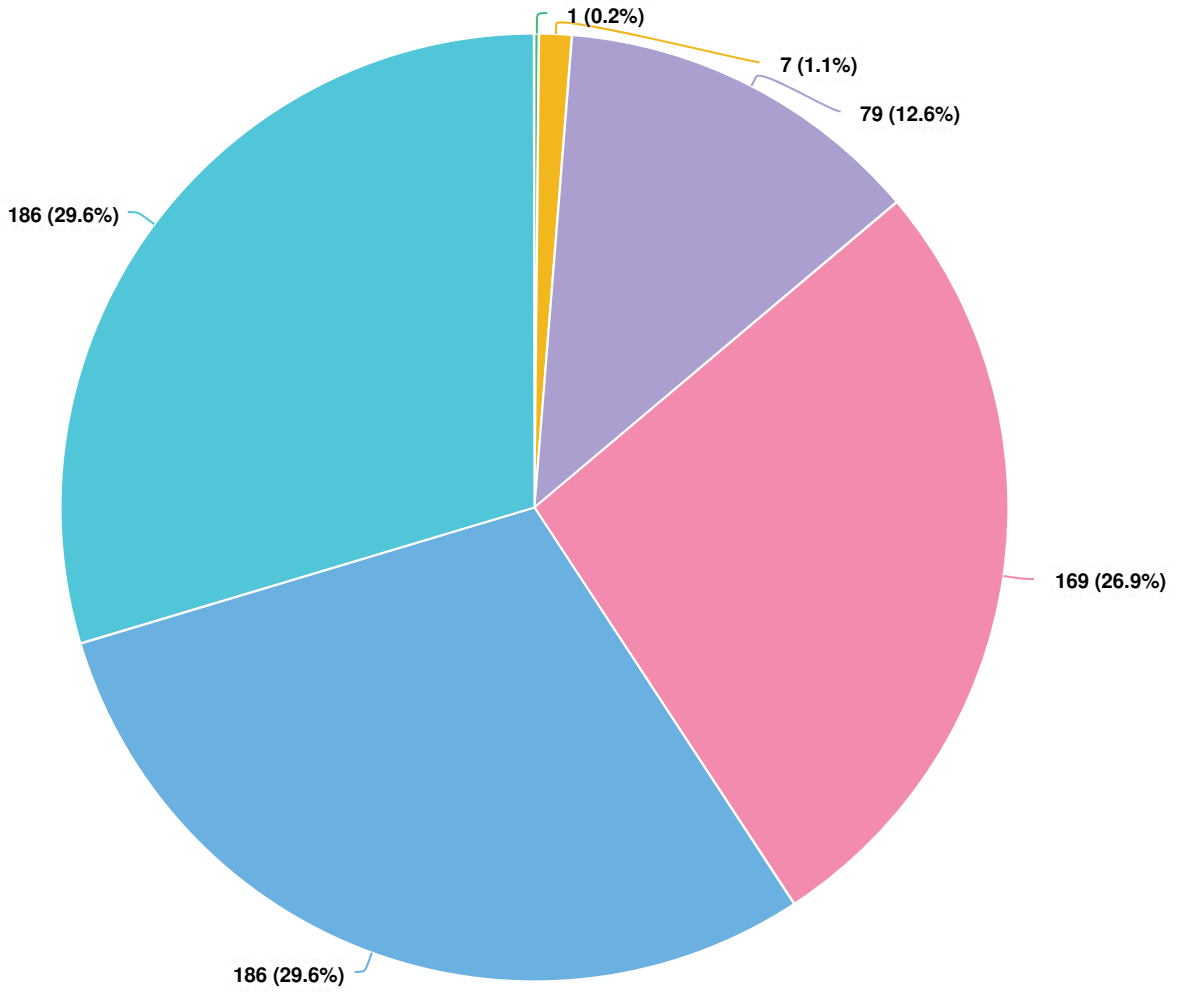


Question options

- 20 or more years
- 11 - 19 years
- 6 - 10 years
- 2 - 5 years
- One year or less

Optional question (632 response(s), -1 skipped)
Question type: Radio Button Question

Q19 What age group are you in?



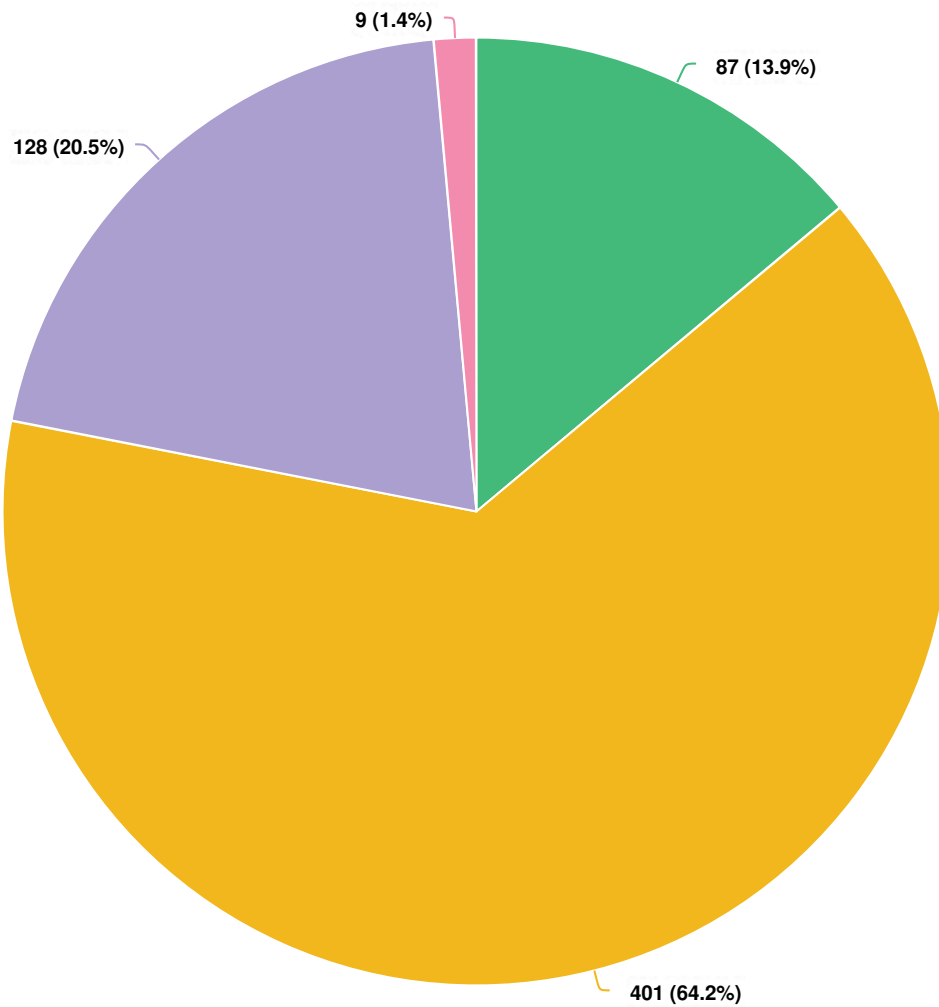
Question options

- 65+
- 50 - 64
- 35 - 49
- 25 - 34
- 18 - 24
- Under 18

Optional question (628 response(s), 3 skipped)

Question type: Radio Button Question

Q20 How many people live in your home?

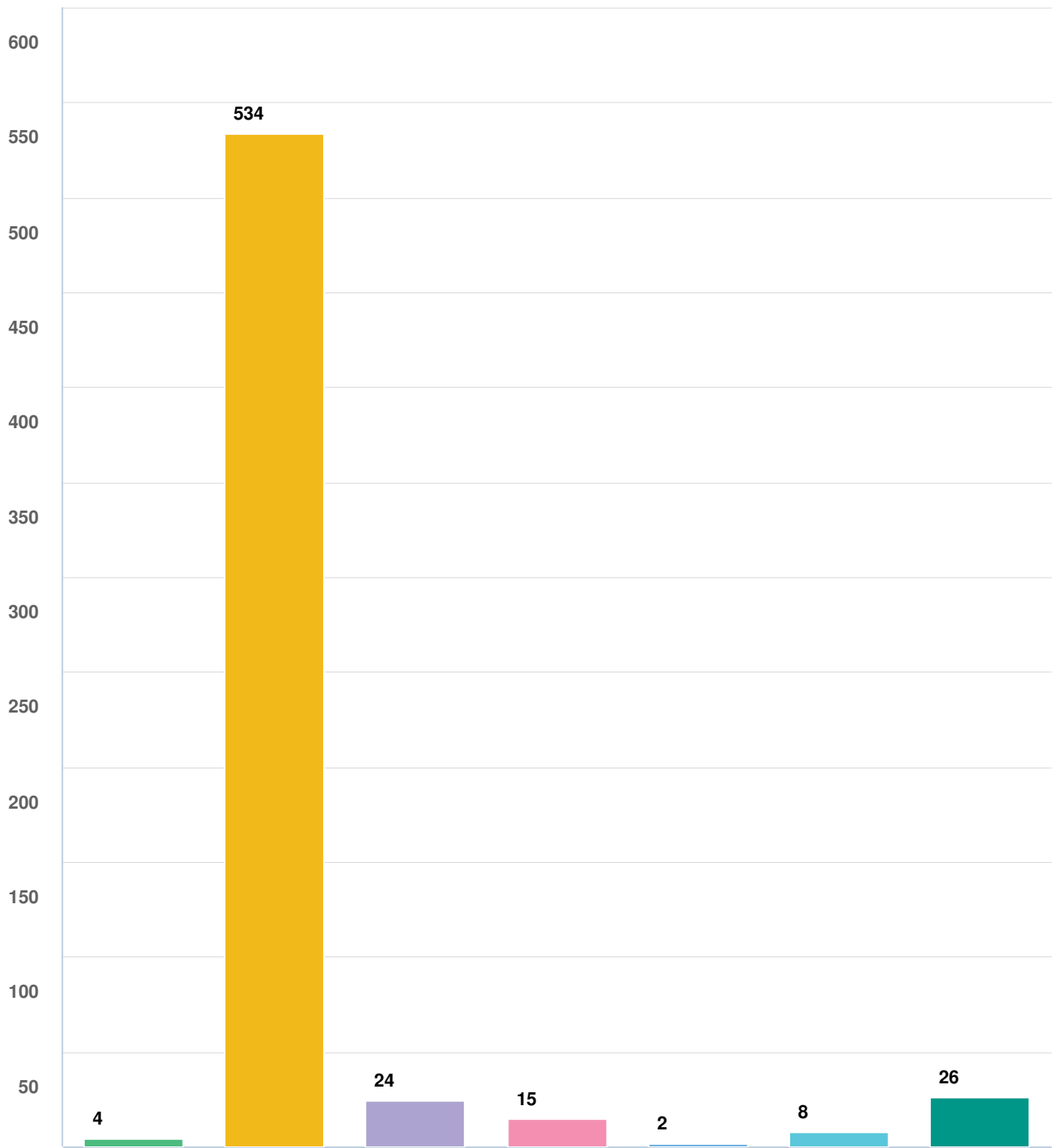


Question options

- 6+
- 4 - 6
- 2 - 3
- 1

Optional question (625 response(s), 6 skipped)
Question type: Radio Button Question

Q21 What is your race? (mark one or more)



Question options

- Other (please specify)
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- Asian
- Hispanic or Latino/a
- White
- Black or African American

Optional question (583 response(s), 48 skipped)
Question type: Checkbox Question

Secondary Regional Trails

Trail Name	Length	Percent Complete	Summary
B Street Trail	2.19 miles	42%	Starting at the end of City maintained trails, the trail follows a City drainageway southeast to B Street, crosses using a pedestrian bridge, and then turns east along a drainageway into the South Academy Station development. The trail starts again at Academy Blvd and crosses using a concrete pedestrian and bicycle path to the Pikes Peak Community College, then turns west to the Gate 4 at Fort Carson.
Ben Lomond Mountain Trail	1.98 miles	0%	Starting at the Palmer Lake Recreation Area, the trail heads east through the Ben Lomond Mountain area, then turning south to connect to the New Santa Fe Regional Trail. This trail creates a loop trail in the Town of Palmer Lake that features Ben Lomond Mountain and Elephant Rock.
Cherry Creek Trail	3 miles	69%	This gravel-surfaced trail meanders through the Walden Preserve subdivision, providing connectivity, and school and neighborhood access between Walker Road and Hodgen Road.
Drake Lake Trail	0.97 miles	0%	Starting at the Rock Island Regional trail east of the Falcon Trailhead, the trail follows an un-named creek under US Hwy 24 to the Drake Lake Natural Area.
Falcon Vista Trail	0.66 miles	0%	From its northern connection to the Rock Island Regional Trail, this trail heads southward under East US Highway 24 and through the Falcon Vista subdivision before connecting to the Falcon Highway Bicycle Route.
Forest Lakes Trail	3.52 miles	48%	This major secondary regional trail begins at its eastern connection with the New Santa Fe Regional Trail, then heads west along Forest Lakes Drive, utilizing the concrete sidewalks before turning into a gravel-surfaced trail in the Forest Lakes subdivision. The trail then reverts back to concrete and enters Waterfront Park. The proposed trail then proceeds westward through Forest Lakes before terminating at the US Forest Service boundary. It provides access to neighborhood trails, a park, and a school site.

Trail Name	Length	Percent Complete	Summary
Grinnell Boulevard Trail	4.66 miles	25%	This trail has two routes. Starting at the intersection of Powers Boulevard and Grinnell Boulevard, the trail heads south along the western, then eastern right-of-way of Grinnell Boulevard, past Bradley Road to Fontaine Boulevard, where it turns east and connects to Widefield Community Park. The second route begins at Milton Proby Parkway, heading south along Hancock Avenue before turning southeast along Bradley Road where the trail partially exists as a gravel-surfaced trail with access to Windmill Mesa Park. The trail terminates at Grinnell Boulevard where it connects to its second route.
Homestead Ranch Trail	5.22 miles	0%	Starting in Peyton, the trail heads west, past Bradshaw Road, then turns north and continues past Sweet Road, turning west to Homestead Ranch Regional Park. This trail facilitates a connection between Peyton, the Rock Island Regional Trail, Homestead Ranch Regional Park, and the Palmer Divide Regional Trail.
Judge Orr Trail	12.11 miles	0%	Starting at the intersection of Judge Orr Road and Eastonville Road at its connection to the Eastonville Regional Trail, the trail heads east along Judge Orr Road, crossing East US Highway 24, passing the Meadowlake Regional Airport, before turning south along Curtis Road. The trail then turns east along Falcon Highway and proceeds to follow an unnamed creek to the southeast. Turning east again, the trail follows Jones Road before terminating at its connection to the Great Plains Regional Trail.
Latigo Trail	6.7	0%	This trail has alternate routes for connectivity to various parks, trails, and open space. At its southern connection to the Meridian Ranch Trail and Falcon Regional Park, the trail heads north through the Latigo Trails subdivision until it meets its east-west route through Latigo Trails Open Space. The open space trail commences at its intersection with the Great Plains Regional Trail, then heads westward through the open space until reaching Meridian Road. Here, the trail splits into two alternate routes, both of which circumnavigate the Ayers Property before reaching the southeastern corner of Pineries Open Space.
Meridian Ranch Trail	3.97 miles	11%	Starting at its eastern connection with the Eastonville Regional Trail, the trail heads west along the northern boundary of Falcon Regional Park before entering the Meridian Ranch subdivision. The trail then utilizes paved concrete trails along the northern then western edges of Meridian Ranch before terminating at its southern end with its connection to the Arroyo Lane Regional Trail at Londonderry Drive.

Meridian Ranch Trail	2.46 miles	18%	Starting along the Meridian Road route north of Rex Road, this trail heads east through the Meridian Ranch subdivision to Eastonville Road.
Pipeline Trail	4.04 miles	0%	Starting at Hodgen Road, the trail follows a pipeline easement south to Black Forest Section 16. This trail connects the Hodgen Route, Palmer Divide Regional Trail, and Black Forest Section 16.
Pyramid Mountain Trail	7.52 miles	0%	Starting in Crystola near Sand Gulch Road, this trail climbs north along Wellington Gulch, then turns southeast and parallels Highway 24, through the Pyramid Mountain subdivision, connecting to the Waldo Canyon trail. This trail connects Crystola, Rampart Range Road, Pyramid Mountain subdivision, Cascade and Waldo Canyon Trail.
Rainbow Falls / Ute Pass Connection Trail	2.5 miles	0%	Starting at the Rainbow Falls Recreation Area, the trail heads south splitting into three segments. The first segment follows the old Wagon Road southwest to the Ute Pass Regional Trail. The second segment continues south before turning west at Rattlesnake Gulch to the Ute Pass Regional Trail. The third segment continues south to Ruxton Avenue. This trail connects the Rainbow Falls Recreation Area, Ute Pass Regional Trail, Manitou Incline, Barr Trail, and the Intiman Trail.
Schriever Trail	8.94 miles	0%	Starting at the Jimmy Camp Creek Regional Trail near the southern end of the Corral Bluffs Open Space, the trail continues southeast along an un-named creek, crossing South Curtis Road near the Schriever AFB, continuing to Drennan Road, and then turning east to the South Peyton Highway. This trail facilitates a connection form the Jimmy Camp Creek Regional Trail, Schriever AFB and the South Peyton Highway Route.
Woodmen Hills Trail	5.93 miles	23%	Starting at its northern connection with the Arroyo Lane Regional Trail, the proposed trail heads south through the Sterling Ranch subdivision before connecting with the Briargate Parkway Bicycle Route. The trail continues east along the Parkway before turning southeast through The Ranch subdivision, then southward through the Bent Grass subdivision. The existing gravel-surfaced trail then continues south past the Falcon Heights subdivision before terminating at its southern connection with the Rock Island Regional Trail.

THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

List of GIS Layers for Open Space Composite Analysis

A. Forested and High Wildfire Hazard Areas

- a. National Land Cover Dataset (NLCD)

B. Existing Parks and Trails (1/4 & 1/2 Mile Buffer)

- a. El Paso County Park Areas
- b. El Paso County Trails
- c. Colorado Springs Park Areas
- d. Colorado Springs Trails
- e. Colorado State Parks

C. Vacant Lands (1/8 Mile Buffer)

- a. Current Land Use Data
- b. El Paso County Assessor Parcels

D. Significant Landmarks & Landforms (1/2-Mile Buffer)

- a. 2013 EPC Parks Master Plan

E. Slope -> 30%

- a. 30% Slope Raster Dataset (2011 LiDAR Data)

F. Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP)

- a. CNHP Network Conservation Areas
- b. CNHP Potential Conservation Areas
- c. Conservation Easements
- d. Nature Conservancy Lands

G. Federally Protected Wildlife (200' Buffer)

- e. Prebles Meadow Jumping Mouse Creek Buffer
- f. Prebles Meadow Jumping Mouse Floodplain Buffer

H. Wildlife Impact Areas (High & Very High)

- a. Colorado Parks and Wildlife Impact Data

I. Upper Black Squirrel Creek Alluvial Aquifer

J. 100-Year Floodplain

- a. FEMA FIRM Floodplain Data

K. Surface Water (1/4 Mile Buffer)

- a. Creeks and Streams
- b. Lakes and Reservoirs

L. Wetlands (1/4 Mile Buffer)

- a. National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) Data

M. Cultural & Historic Sites (1/2 Mile Buffer)

- a. Elaine Freed: Historic Sites & Structures

N. Existing Agricultural Lands

- a. Current Land Use Data
- b. NLCD 1992 Land Cover Dataset

O. Projected High Growth Areas (1/2 Mile Buffer)

- a. 2021 El Paso County Master Plan

P. Administrative Areas

- a. Military Installations
- b. Federal, State, and County Lands
- c. Political Subdivisions
- d. Public School Property (1/2 Mile Buffer)

System Inventory and Assessment

THE EL PASO COUNTY ADVERTISER AND NEWS,
FOUNTAIN, COLORADO 80817
STATE OF COLORADO

SS.

COUNTY OF EL PASO

I, Karin B. Hill, do solemnly swear that I am Managing Editor of the El Paso County Advertiser and News, that the same is a weekly newspaper printed, in whole or in part, and published in the County of El Paso, state of Colorado, and has a general circulation therein; that said newspaper has been published continuously and uninterruptedly in said county of El Paso for a period of more than 52 weeks next prior to the first publication of the annexed notice and that said newspaper is a weekly newspaper duly qualified for publishing legal notices and advertisements within the meaning of the laws of the State of Colorado.

That copies of each number of said paper in which said notice and list were published were delivered by carriers or transmitted by mail to each of the subscribers of said paper for a period of 1 consecutive insertions, once each week, and on the same day of each week; and that first publication of said notice was in the issue of said newspaper dated October 5 A.D. 2022 and that the last publication of said notice was in the issue of said newspaper dated October 5th A.D. 2022.

Karin B. Hill
Managing Editor

Subscribed and sworn to before me, a notary public in and for the County of El Paso, State of Colorado, this 5th day of October A.D. 2022.

Karen M. Johnson
Notary Public
My Commission Expires January 11, 2026

KAREN M JOHNSON
NOTARY PUBLIC
STATE OF COLORADO
NOTARY ID 20014039459
MY COMMISSION EXPIRES JANUARY 11, 2026

EPC PARKS MASTER PLAN
UPDATE 2022

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that on November 1, 2022 at 1:00 P.M. in the Centennial Hall Auditorium 200 S. Cascade Avenue, Colorado Springs, Colorado, or at such other time and place as this hearing may be adjourned to, a public hearing will be held by the Board of County Commissioners of the County of El Paso, State of Colorado. Such text may be examined at the public office of the Planning and Community Development Department, 2880 International Circle, Colorado Springs, Colorado, 80910; and/or the Board of County Commissioners Office, Centennial Hall 200 S. Cascade, Colorado Springs, Colorado, 80901; and on line at the following web address: <https://epcdevplanreview.com>

El Paso County Community Services Department requests adoption of the El Paso County Parks Master Plan. This Master Plan repeals and/or replaces the existing El Paso County Parks Master Plan (2013). The Master Plan area includes all land within El Paso County located outside the incorporated municipalities and includes the accompanying maps, charts and descriptive and explanatory matter. The Master Plan is an advisory document to guide park, trail, and open space development and preservation decisions.

Type of Hearing: Legislative

Dated at Colorado Springs, Colorado, this 1st day of November 2022.

THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
EL PASO COUNTY, COLORADO

BY: /s/ _____ Chair

Published in the El Paso County Advertiser and News
Published On: October 5, 2022

ADOPTION OF THE EL PASO COUNTY PARKS MASTER PLAN

_____ moved that the following Resolution be adopted:

BEFORE THE PLANNING COMMISSION

OF THE COUNTY OF EL PASO

STATE OF COLORADO

RESOLUTION NO. MP-22-001

WHEREAS, the El Paso County Community Services Department (“CSD”) requests approval of and amendment to Your El Paso Master Plan by adoption of an Update to the El Paso County Parks Master Plan, within the designated area of the unincorporated area of El Paso County, Colorado; and

WHEREAS, § 30-28-108, C.R.S., provides that a county planning commission may adopt, amend, extend, or add to the County Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Community Services Department (CSD) engaged in a lengthy and extensive process to develop this Master Plan in conjunction with its consultant, BerryDunn, with input from the Board of County Commissioners (BoCC), El Paso County Park Advisory Board, and the public via surveys, comments, announcements, advertisements, public meetings, public comments, and agency reviews; and

WHEREAS, this Master Plan would supersede, replace, and delete the outdated El Paso County Parks Master Plan (2013); and

WHEREAS, pursuant to § 30-28-106(5), C.R.S., this Master Plan contains a recreational and tourism uses element pursuant to which the County indicates how it intends to provide for the recreational and tourism needs of residents of the county and visitors to the county; and

WHEREAS, additional local plans and elements were consulted and identified in conjunction with developing this Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to § 30-28-106(1), C.R.S., public hearings were held by this Planning Commission on October 20, 2022, and December 1, 2022, and

WHEREAS, based on the evidence, testimony, exhibits, study of the master plan for the unincorporated area of the County, comments of members of the El Paso County Planning Commission, comments of the CSD, comments of public officials and agencies, and comments from all interested parties, this Commission finds as follows:

1. That proper posting, publication, and public notice were provided as required by law for the hearings of the Planning Commission; specifically, legal notice for the hearings was published in the El Paso County & Fountain Valley Advertiser & News on October 5, 2022, and on the CSD’s website.
2. That the hearings before the Planning Commission were extensive and complete, that all pertinent facts, matters, and issues were submitted and reviewed, and that all interested parties were given an opportunity to be heard at those hearings.

3. That all data, surveys, analyses, studies, plans, designs, maps, and descriptive matter as are required by the State of Colorado and El Paso County have been submitted, reviewed, and found to meet all sound planning requirements of El Paso County.
4. That for the above-stated and other reasons, the proposal is in the best interests of the health, safety, morals, convenience, order, prosperity, and welfare of the citizens of El Paso County.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the El Paso County Planning Commission hereby approves and adopts the El Paso County Parks Master Plan for El Paso County, specifically including the maps and descriptive matter that are contained in PCD File No. MP-22-001, which is incorporated herein by this reference as if fully set forth herein.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, pursuant to § 30-28-109, C.R.S., the El Paso County Planning Commission hereby certifies to the Board of County Commissioners and to the planning commissions of all municipalities located within El Paso County a copy of the El Paso County Parks Master Plan for El Paso County, specifically including the maps and descriptive matter that are contained in PCD File No. MP-22-001.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the El Paso County Planning Commission hereby directs the Clerk of the Planning Commission to record the action taken by the Planning Commission and affix their signature to said map and descriptive matter pursuant to § 30-28-108, C.R.S.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the intent of the Planning Commission in approving and adopting the El Paso County Parks Master Plan is that this shall be used as an advisory document. To the extent the El Paso County Parks Master Plan may be subsequently referenced in the County's subdivision and/or zoning regulations, those references shall neither construe nor render the El Paso County Parks Master Plan to be a binding, regulatory document, nor shall such references overcome the intent that the El Paso County Parks Master Plan is advisory and that the Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners shall maintain their considerable discretion in deciding how to apply the Master Plan in their land use decisions.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Master Plan supersedes, replaces, and deletes the previously adopted El Paso County Parks Master Plan (2013).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the following conditions and notations shall be placed upon this approval:

CONDITIONS

1. Section 30-28-109, C.R.S., requires the Planning Commission to certify a copy of the Master Plan, or any adopted part or amendment thereof or addition thereto, to the Board of County Commissioners and to the Planning Commission of all municipalities in the County. The Planning Commission's action to amend the Master Plan shall not be considered final until such documents are certified by the Chairman of the County Planning Commission and distributed as required by law.

NOTATIONS

1. Certification of the documents to the municipalities within the County pursuant to Condition No. 1 above and the Colorado Office of Smart Growth is determined to be satisfied upon

transmittal of summary information and maps along with a clear description of the locations where the complete documents are available for inspection, along with an offer to provide a given municipality a complete copy of the documents if requested. The transmittal may be in the form of a digital copy.

2. By approving the El Paso County Parks Master Plan, the Planning Commission authorizes CSD and the County Attorney's Office to make minor editorial and formatting changes in conjunction with the final approval by the Planning Commission and for the publication process. These modifications may include pagination, correction of typographical errors, form and style edits, clarifications, insertion of photographs, insertion of references and/or corrections to factual information, or inclusion of comments and modifications consistent with and associated with the Planning Commission hearings. In no case will substantive changes be made to the text without reconsideration or amendment by the Planning Commission.

_____ seconded the adoption of the foregoing Resolution. The adoption of this plan shall be by resolution as carried by the affirmative votes of a majority of the entire membership of the commission.

The roll having been called, the vote was as follows: circle one

Brian Risley	aye / no / abstain / absent
Thomas Bailey	aye / no / abstain / absent
Tim Trowbridge	aye / no / abstain / absent
Joan Lucia-Treese	aye / no / abstain / absent
Becky Fuller	aye / no / abstain / absent
Sarah Brittain Jack	aye / no / abstain / absent
Jay Carlson	aye / no / abstain / absent
Eric Moraes	aye / no / abstain / absent
Joshua Patterson	aye / no / abstain / absent
Bryce Schuettpelz	aye / no / abstain / absent
Christopher Whitney	aye / no / abstain / absent
Brandy Merriam	aye / no / abstain / absent

The Resolution was adopted by a unanimous vote of _____ by the Planning Commission of the County of El Paso, State of Colorado.

DONE THIS 1st day of December 2022, at Colorado Springs, Colorado

EL PASO COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

By: _____

Brian Risley, Chair