



Appendix C

# Master Plan Analysis

South Suburban  
Parks & Recreation  
2022 Master Plan

APRIL, 2023



*Mary Carter Greenway*





*Hudson Gardens Water  
Lilies*

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# MASTER PLAN ANALYSIS

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# 01 Demographic Analysis

## MEMORANDUM PURPOSE

This interim report intends to capture all currently available demographic data to provide a Community Profile for the South Suburban Park and Recreation District. The report seeks to relate this population data to outdoor recreation and analyze potential implications for recreation planning for the South Suburban Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

This data is important for identifying demographic and population changes since the previous 2017 Strategic and Master Plan. While we anticipate much of the data in this memo will be appropriate for inclusion in the Master Plan document, some of the more detailed demographic data, for example, will be more appropriate for an understanding of directing the public engagement process.

Please note that this memo draws primarily upon data from Esri Business Analyst and the U.S. Census or American Community Survey. The Esri population projections from Esri Business Analyst pulls data from within the South Suburban Park and Recreation District boundary. The 2020 American Community Survey (ACS) and the 2020 U.S. Census blocks were examined to understand the demographic shifts in Colorado, specifically in and around the South Suburban Park and Recreation District. This community profile is being created with the release of some, but not all, portions of the 2020 Census. When possible, 2020 datasets are cited; if not available, 2019 data must be utilized. This will be standard for all planning research completed this year, and the lack of 2020 Census data is supplemented by 2020 Census Bureau ACS data and population data from the Colorado State Demographers office. The profile seeks to utilize the most recently released data as a rule of thumb.

### **This Community Profile report addresses the following:**

- Demographics
  - Population Trends and Projections
  - Age Demographics
  - Race and Ethnicity
  - Households
  - Education and Technology
- Economics
  - Workforce Profile
  - Income
  - Commuting to Work

### **The Equity Analysis in Appendix C builds upon this report to addresses the following:**

- Poverty and Low-income
- Disabilities
- SVI Vulnerable Populations
- Parks Gap Analysis



## INTRODUCTION

The South Suburban Park and Recreation District is a socially and culturally diverse area that provides parks and recreation services to over 153,000 residents throughout six municipalities: the Town of Bow Mar, Town of Columbine Valley, City of Littleton, City of Sheridan, City of Centennial west of 1-25, City of Lone Tree including unincorporated portions of Douglas County, Jefferson County and Arapahoe County. The South Suburban boundary encompasses 46 square miles, including the City of Lone Tree in the southeast section of the District to the City of Sheridan in the northwest and contains portions of three counties, Arapahoe County to the east, Douglas County to the South, and Jefferson County to the west. It also borders Denver County to the north. As such, the South Suburban Park and Recreation District has diverse demographic groups that represent both a challenge and an opportunity to advance the goals of serving all its residents with parks, recreation, trails, and open spaces. Each municipality has unique needs and desires for its parks and recreation.

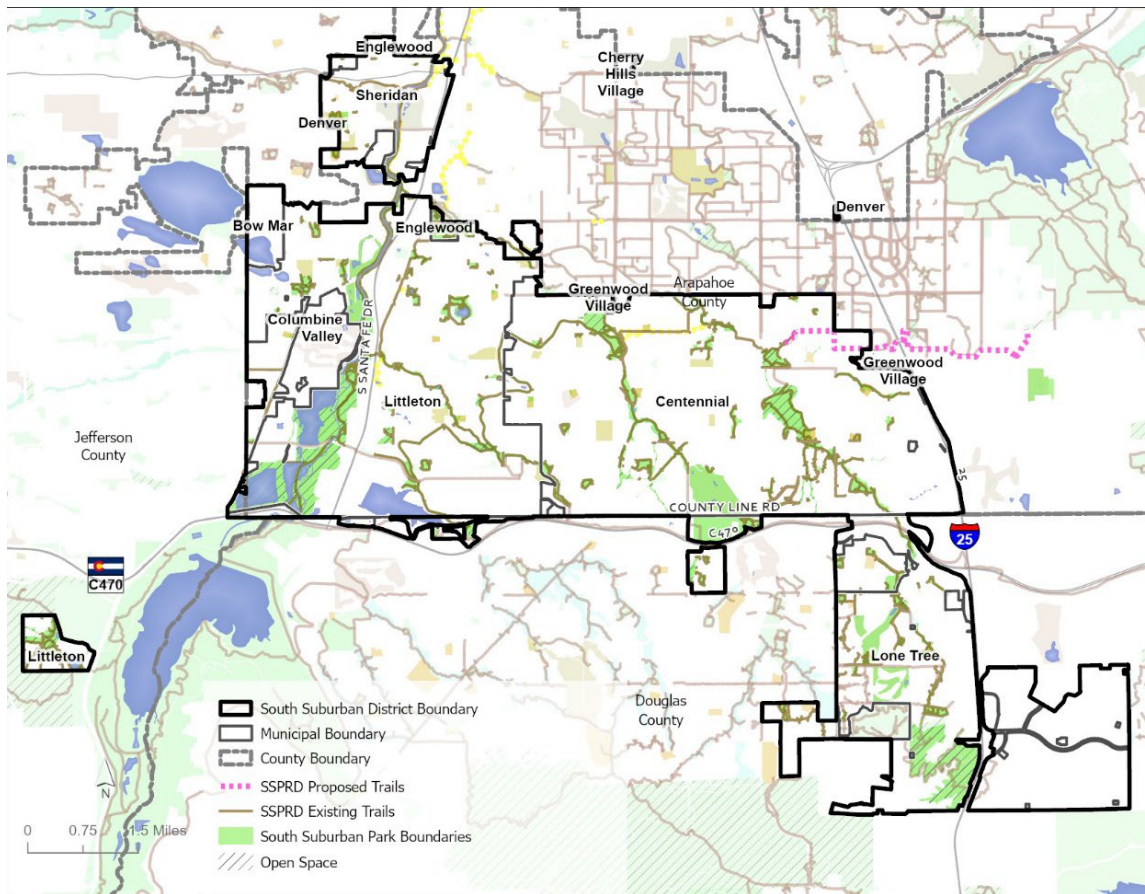


Figure 1: SSPRD District Boundary Map

Source: Esri GIS Data, South Suburban Park and Recreation District

## DEMOGRAPHICS

### **2021 South Suburban Key Facts**

- Population (2021): 153,251
- Median Age (2021): 43.7
- Median Household Size: 2.39
- Percentage Renter Occupied: 23.3%

### POPULATION TRENDS AND PROJECTIONS

According to 2020 US Census data, Colorado has experienced a population growth of 14.8 percent over the past ten years<sup>1</sup>. Many counties, including Arapahoe, Douglas, and Jefferson, are experiencing similar population changes to the state<sup>2</sup>; all three counties were included in the list of the top ten counties with the largest populations in 2020. From 2010 to 2020, 95 percent of the population was along the Front Range; Denver experienced the most population growth, increasing by over 112,000 in the last decade<sup>3</sup>. Denver is experiencing tremendous growth, pushing south and into these three counties. Broomfield County (just north of Jefferson County) experienced the fastest growth rate of 32.7 percent<sup>4</sup>. Based on the Population Changes by County 2010 to 2020 map (Figure 6), both Arapahoe County and Douglas County are in the highest brackets (50,001 to 115,64) for population growth. Jefferson County follows next with population changes of 10,001 to 50,000. According to a Colorado Parks and Wildlife report, growth projections will continue to increase by over 20 percent between 2020 and 2040<sup>5</sup>, with the most change happening in the Front Range, especially in northern Colorado and on the Western Slope<sup>6</sup>. An increase in population in Colorado and specifically these counties is important to consider for the South Suburban Park and Recreation District.

The South Suburban Park and Recreation District's population in 2021 is estimated at 153,251, which increased from 137,098 in 2010<sup>7</sup>. This two percent population change is significantly less than the surrounding region, due in part to many of the communities within South Suburban's boundaries being well built-out and unable to expand in area. The population is projected to increase to 162,081 by 2026, according to Esri's Business Analyst Community Profile, but this will be dependent on communities such as Lone Tree's development potential and availability of infill development<sup>8</sup>. This projected increase translates to an annual growth rate for the South Suburban Park and Recreation District of 1.13 percent (Figure 3), slightly below Colorado's. Population in South Suburban and its corresponding Counties will increase in growth, and it is

<sup>1</sup> *Growing Forward*, Colorado Department of Local Affairs

<sup>2</sup> 2020 Census Data

<sup>3</sup> *2020 Population Summary*. State Demography Office.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> *Colorado's Changing Population*, Colorado Parks, and Wildlife

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> *Business Analyst 2020*, Esri

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

important to anticipate increased use of parks, trails and open spaces, including visitation from residents that live outside of South Suburban's boundaries.

SSPRD Population Summary		Percent Change
2000 Total Population	134,354	
2010 Total Population	137,098	2%
2021 Total Population	153,251	12%
2026 Projected Population	162,081	6%

Figure 2: Population Change in the SSPRD

Source: 2020 US Census Data

Annual Growth Rate		
	SSPRD	Colorado
2021-2026	1.13%	1.37%

Figure 3: Growth Rates

Source: Esri, Business Analyst 2020

Figure 4 shows the population of South Suburban within each of the following municipal and county boundaries.

Location	SSPRD Residents 2020	Total Municipal/County Residents 2020
Town of Bow Mar	587	853
City of Centennial	69,623	108,418
Town of Columbine Valley	1,502	1,502
City of Littleton	45,498	45,652
City of Lone Tree	14,180	14,253
City of Sheridan	6,105	6,105
Unincorporated Arapahoe County	2,937	97,047
Unincorporated Douglas County	10,207	205,800
Arapahoe County	123,959	655,070
Douglas County	24,935	357,978
Jefferson County	2,310	582,910

Figure 4: Population per Municipality and County in SSPRD

Figure 5 shows the population change from 2010 to 2020 for Arapahoe, Jefferson and Douglas counties. Douglas County had the most increase in population during this period with 25.4 percent population change. Followed by Arapahoe with 14.5 percent and Jefferson at nine percent. As seen in Figures 5 and 6, all three counties have increased significantly in population from 2010 to 2020.

Population Change per County			
	Arapahoe	Jefferson	Douglas
2020	655,070	582,910	357,978
2010	572,003	534,543	285,465
Population Change	14.52%	9.05%	25.40%

Figure 5: Population Change per County

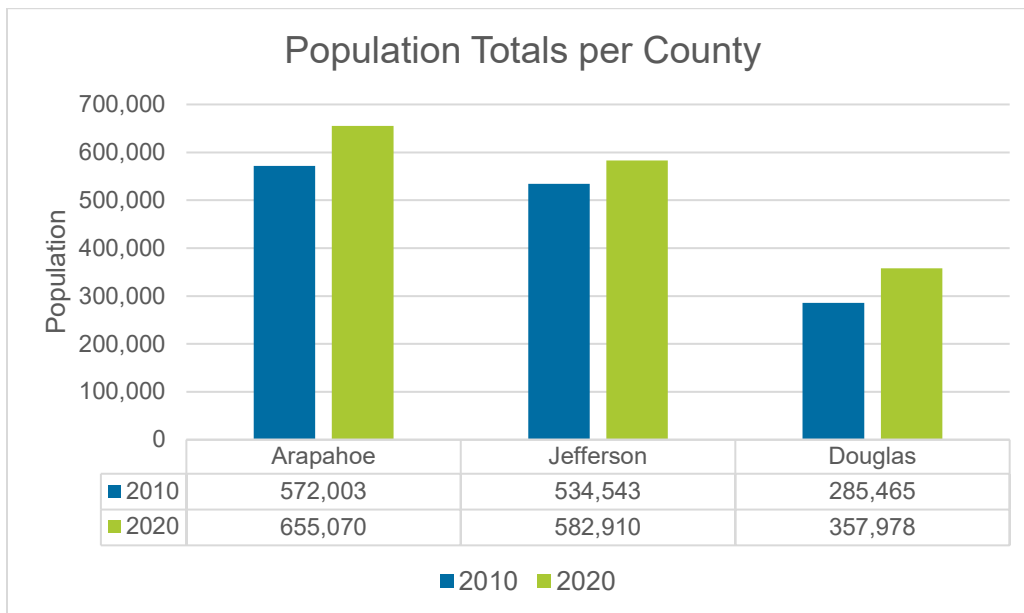


Figure 6: Population Change per County, 2010-2020

Source: 2020 US Census



Colorado's Population Change per County map (Figure 7) is based on 2020 Census data and highlights the population change projected by 2050 with the most change shown in red and the least change in blue. It shows population change is anticipated to be greatest in the future in Weld, Adams, and El Paso Counties, but still relatively high in the South Suburban area.

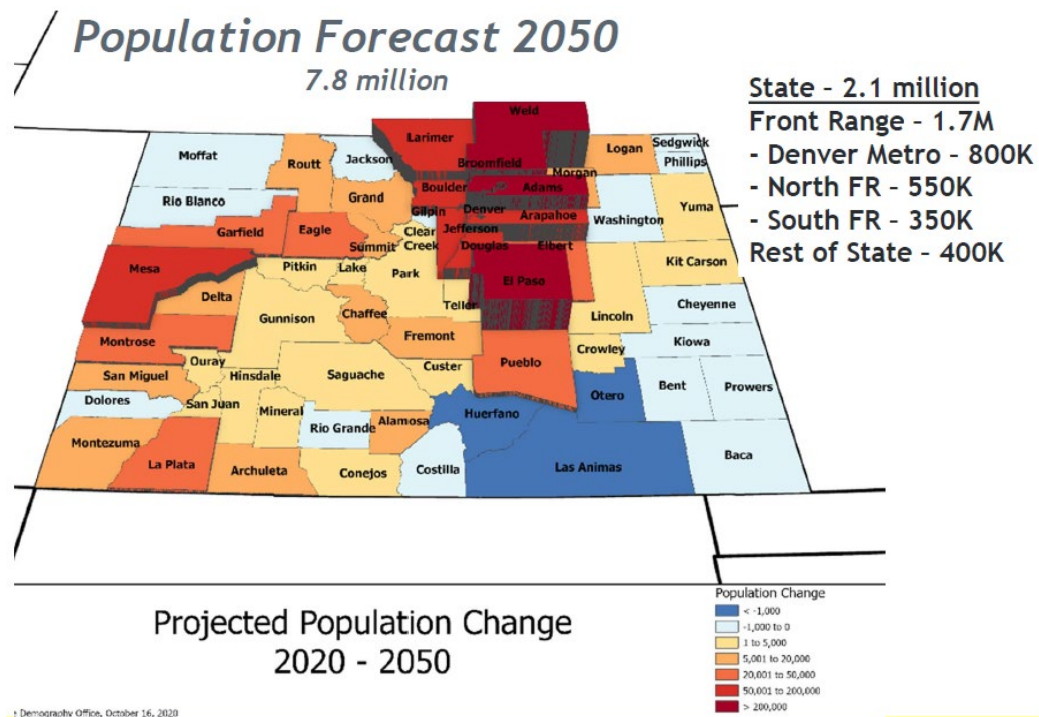


Figure 7: Population Change by County 2020 to 2050  
 Source: 2020 Population Summary, State Demography

The graph below (Figure 8) shows the continued increase in population change from 2000 to 2026 in the South Suburban Park and Recreation District.

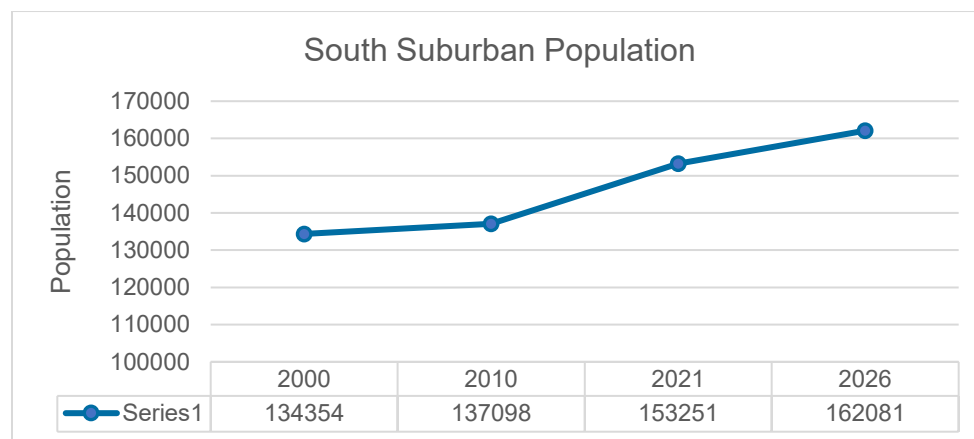


Figure 8: Population Change Graph  
 Source: Esri, Business Analyst 2020

The map below (Figure 9) shows the locations with the greatest density of residents (population per square mile) and dot density of 1 dot per 50 people within Census Tracts. The South Suburban Park and Recreation District population is fairly evenly distributed throughout the municipalities, specifically in South Suburban's center with the least amount of density in southern Lone Tree currently. The most populous areas of South Suburban are northern Littleton, northeast Centennial, north Littleton, and southwest Lone Tree. Centennial, Littleton and Lone Tree have the most population per square mile<sup>9</sup>.

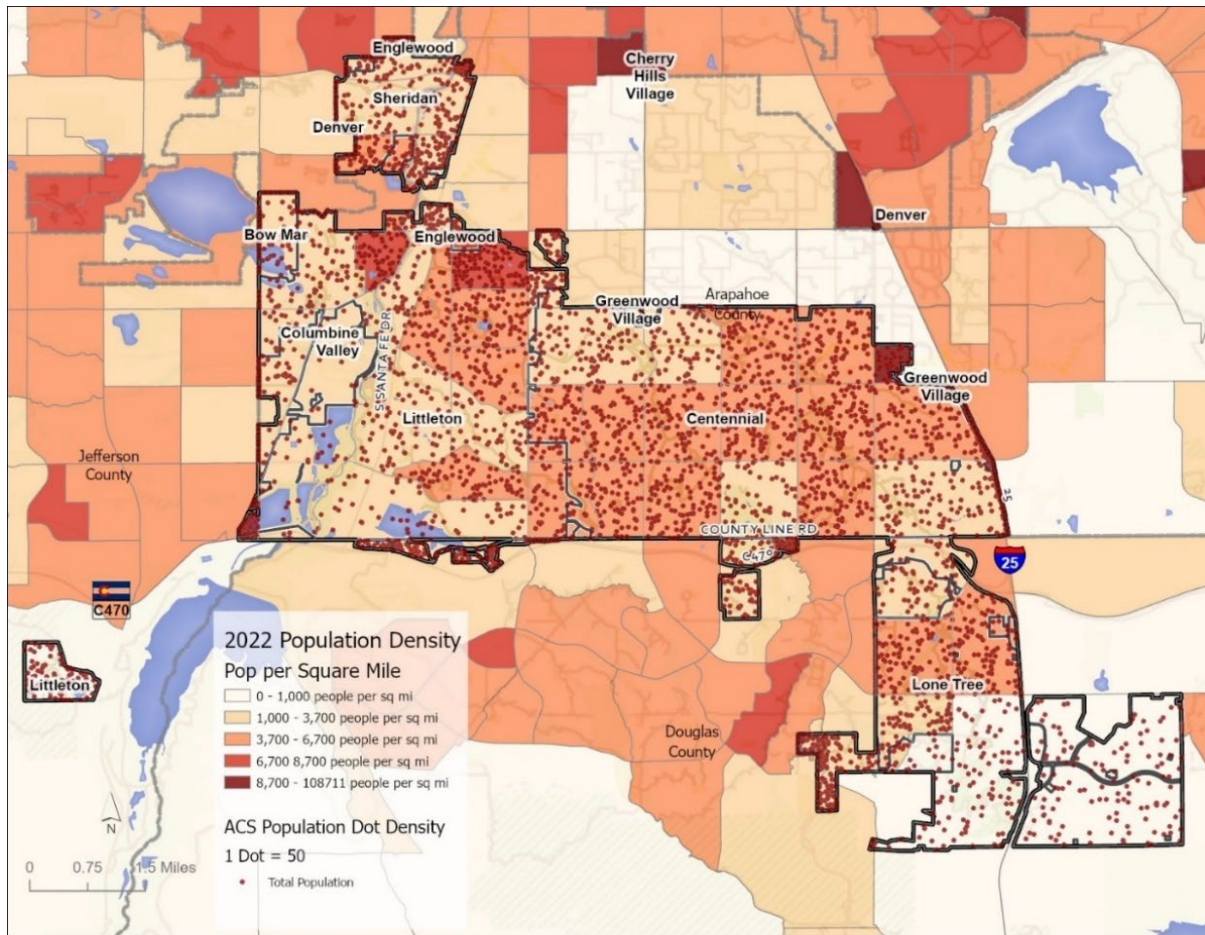


Figure 9: Pop per Square Mile and Dot Density

Source: ACS 2020 Population Variables, 2022 Population Density (Esri Demographics)

<sup>9</sup> Population Variables, ACS 2020 Census Data

## AGE DEMOGRAPHICS

A significant segment of the South Suburban Park and Recreation District demographic is those aged between 30 to 50 years, as seen in the ACS Census map of Median Age Population (Figure 10)<sup>10</sup>. The median age in South Suburban as of 2021 is 43.7<sup>11</sup>, which is higher than it was in 2010. The median age is expected to increase with time. Figure 10 shows the median age is fairly consistent across South Suburban, with pockets of lower median age within Bow Mar, Sheridan, Centennial and Lone Tree.

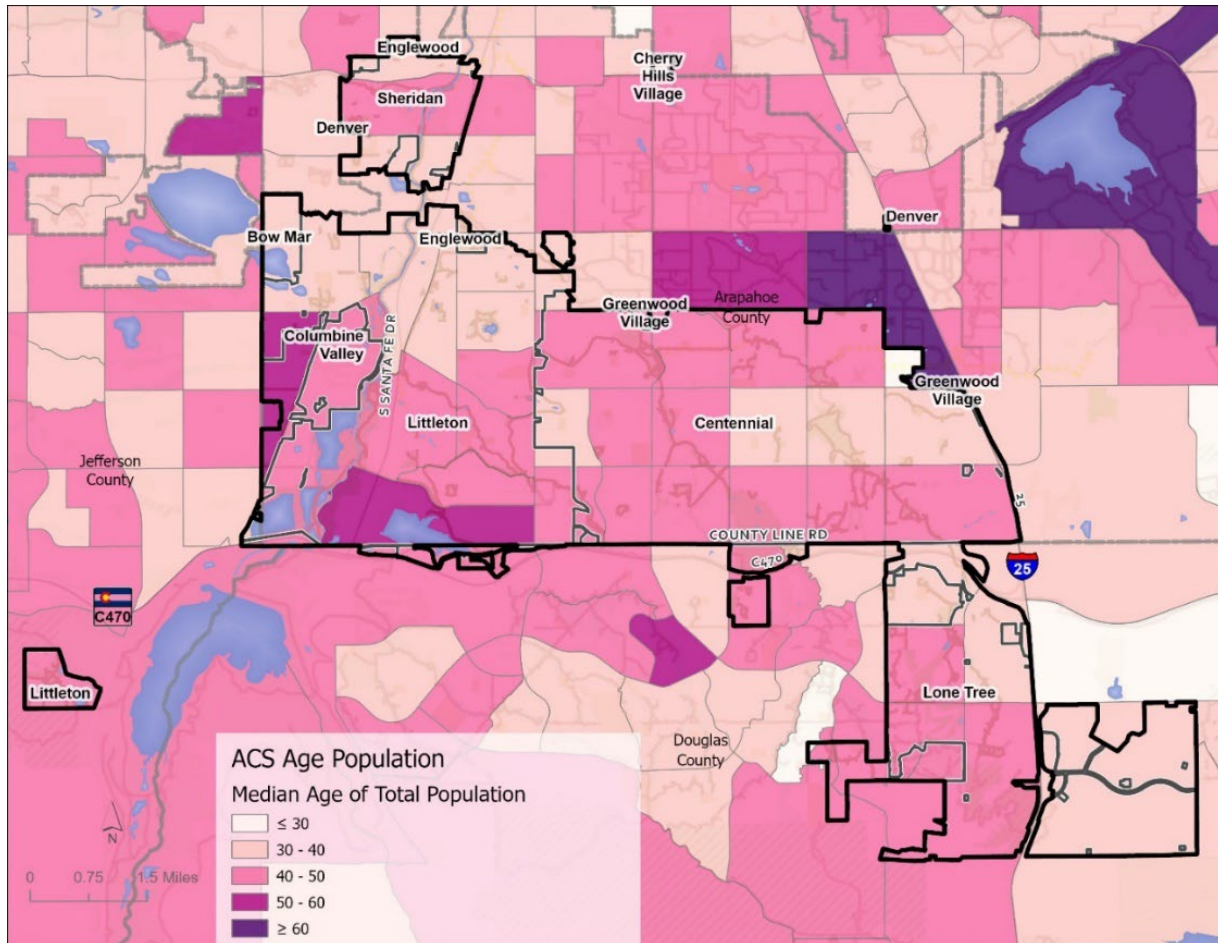


Figure 10: Median Age Population

Source: ACS 2020 Population

<sup>10</sup> Population Variables, ACS 2020 Census Data

<sup>11</sup> Business Analyst 2020, Esri

While Colorado’s population is younger than most states at a median age of 38 (Figure 11), the proportion of those 55 and older is increasing significantly in the coming years<sup>12</sup>.

Median Age		
	SSPRD	Colorado
2010	41.6	36.1
2021	43.7	37.8
2026	44.3	38.2

Figure 11: Median Age  
Source: Esri, Business

The 2022 median age in Colorado is 36.9 with 22 percent of the population under the age of 18 and 14 percent over 65 (Figure 12)<sup>13</sup>.

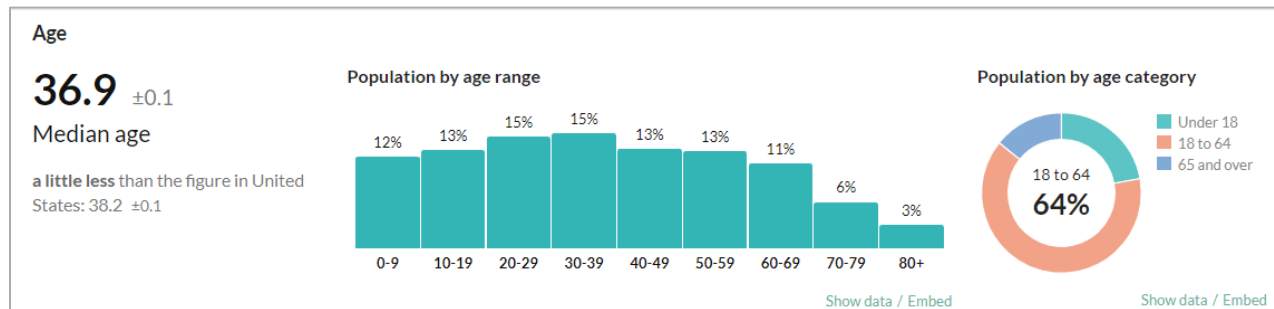


Figure 12: Median age in Colorado  
Source: Census Reporter

The largest age group proportionately in the South Suburban Park and Recreation District is those aged between 45 and 65 years. This group consists of 40 percent of the population. Populations under 24 years old make up 28 percent of the population and over 65 years old make up 20.4 percent (Figure 13)<sup>14</sup>. While South Suburban has a smaller percentage of the youth population than the rest of the state, the percentage of the population over 65 years old is higher than the state.

<sup>12</sup> Colorado’s Changing Population, Colorado Parks, and Wildlife

<sup>13</sup> 2020 Census Data

<sup>14</sup> Business Analyst 2020, Esri



Age Distribution				
Age Groups	SSPRD		Colorado	
	2021	2026	2021	2026
0 - 4	4.8%	4.8%	6.1%	6.2%
5 - 9	5.3%	5.2%	6.3%	6.2%
10 - 14	6.1%	5.6%	6.4%	6.2%
15 - 24	11.6%	11.0%	13.0%	12.7%
25 - 34	12.1%	12.2%	14.3%	14.2%
35 - 44	11.6%	12.0%	13.5%	13.8%
45 - 54	12.9%	12.2%	12.2%	11.8%
55 - 64	15.2%	13.7%	12.8%	11.5%
65 - 74	11.8%	12.8%	9.5%	10.2%
75 - 84	6.0%	7.7%	4.2%	5.4%
85 +	2.6%	2.8%	1.6%	1.8%

Figure 13: Age Distribution

Source: Esri, Business Analyst

The projected age distribution from 2021 to 2026 in the South Suburban Park and Recreation District (Figure 14), shows that populations over 65 are predicted to increase within the South Suburban Park and Recreation District by nearly three percent<sup>15</sup>. Colorado is ranked as one of the healthiest states in the country<sup>16</sup>, which has many implications for parks and recreation. As populations continue to grow older their needs and preferences will evolve. Considering that older generations are predicted to increase; South Suburban might plan for future opportunities for senior spaces such as low-stress relief trails and other senior activities. A further analysis for populations over 65 and under 18 is included in the Equity Report.

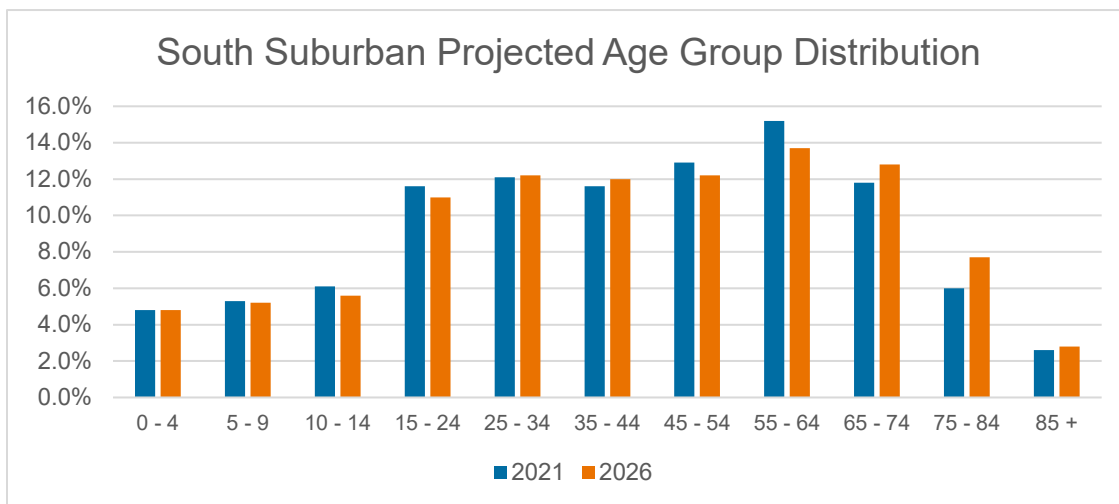


Figure 14: Age Distribution

Source: Esri, Business Analyst 2020

<sup>15</sup> Business Analyst 2020, Esri<sup>16</sup> Lifelong Colorado Initiative, Department of Local Affairs

## RACE AND ETHNICITY

The South Suburban Park and Recreation District has a larger than state average white population that makes up about 87 percent of the population<sup>17</sup>. Other significant racial/ethnic groups in South Suburban include those of Hispanic origin (10.9 percent), Asian populations (4.5 percent), Black populations (1.6 percent), and two or more races (3.2 percent). 3.1 percent of the population identifies as ‘Some other Race’<sup>18</sup>.

The table below indicates the racial distribution in 2021 between the South Suburban Park and Recreation District compared to Colorado, with the percentage of the population of Hispanic Origin showing significantly lower in South Suburban 10.9 percent than the States 22.2 percent.

Population by Race/Ethnicity (2021)		
	SSPRD	Colorado
White Alone	86.9%	79.0%
Hispanic Origin	10.9%	22.2%
Black Alone	1.6%	4.4%
American Indian Alone	0.6%	1.2%
Asian Alone	4.5%	3.5%
Pacific Islander Alone	0.1%	0.2%
Some Other Race Alone	3.1%	7.8%
Two or More Races	3.2%	4.1%

Figure 15: Population by Race/Ethnicity (2020)

Source: Esri, Business Analyst 2020

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

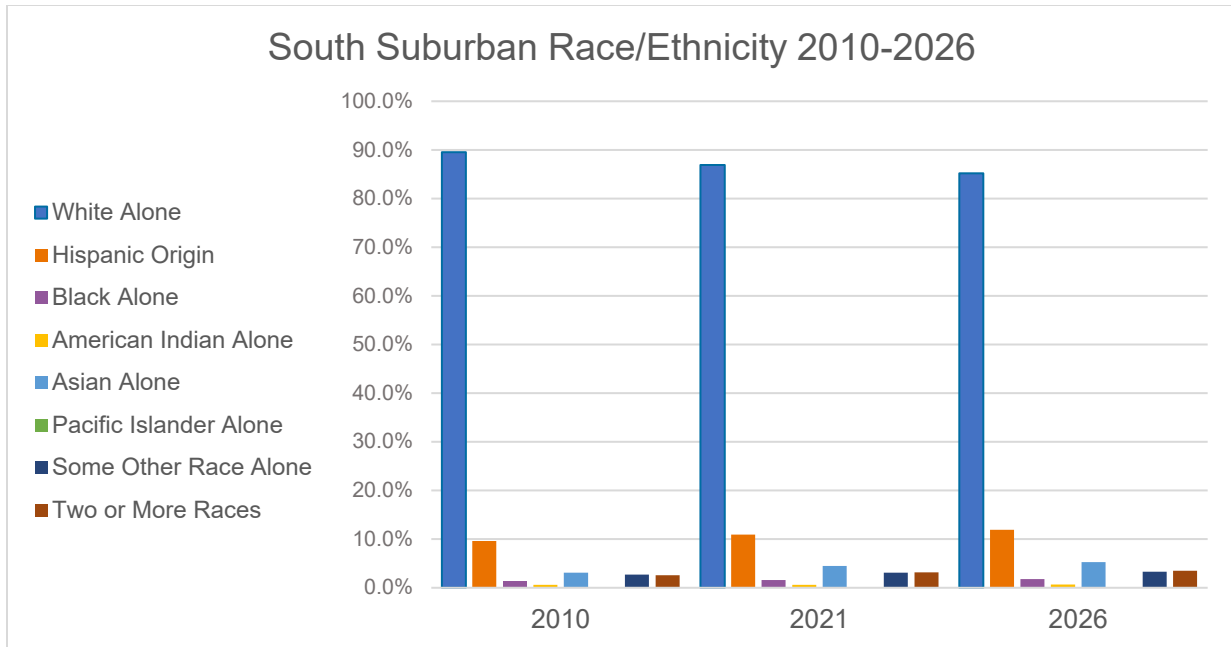


Figure 16: Race/Ethnicity Changes in SSPRD

Source: Esri, Business Analyst 2020

According to the Esri Business Analyst Diversity Index (see Figure 17), racial and ethnic diversity is anticipated to increase over time. The South Suburban Park and Recreation District's Diversity Index is 38.9 today and anticipated to increase to 42.4 by 2026. Between 2010 and 2026, the population of all racial/ethnic groups is projected to increase with the exception of those who identify as Pacific Islanders, which stays the same, and those who identify as white alone, which decreases (see Figure 16)<sup>19</sup>. The Diversity Index in SSPRD is 38.9, which is significantly lower than Colorado's 59<sup>20</sup>.

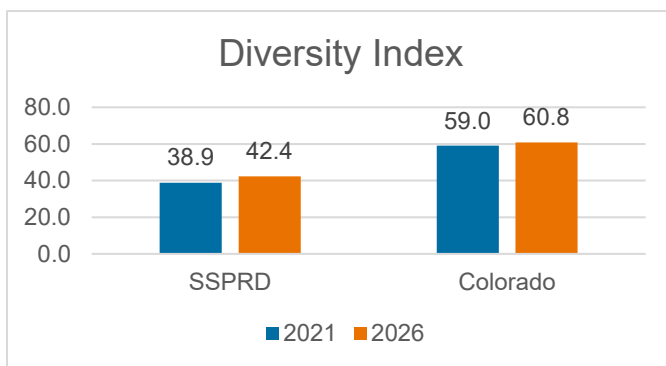


Figure 17: Diversity Index Projected Change, 2021-2026

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

It is also important to consider race and ethnicity throughout the corresponding counties that may have visitation to utilize South Suburban parks and recreation offerings. White Alone populations represent 56 percent of the population in Arapahoe County (Figure 18)<sup>21</sup>. Hispanic or Latino populations represent 21 percent of the population; 10 percent are Black or African American alone<sup>22</sup>. Seventy-five percent of Jefferson County's population is white; 16 percent is Hispanic or Latino. Douglas County is 78 percent white alone, with 10 percent Hispanic or Latino<sup>23</sup>.

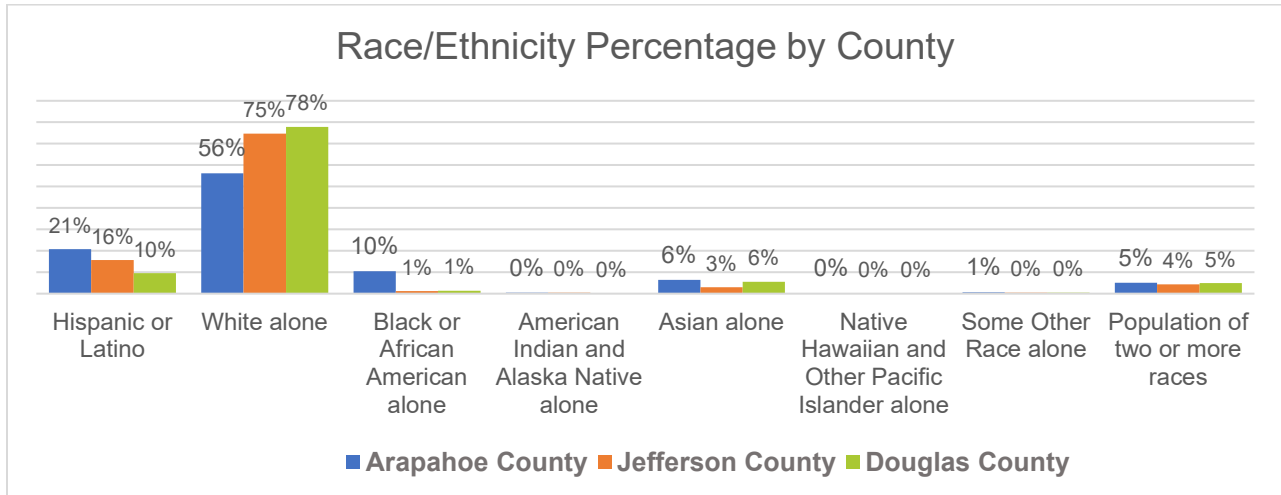


Figure 18: Race and Ethnicity Percentage by County

Source: 2020 US Census

The table below shows the Total Race and Ethnicity population counts for Arapahoe, Jefferson and Douglas counties.

Race and Ethnicity per County			
	Arapahoe	Jefferson	Douglas
Total Population	655,070	582,910	357,978
Hispanic or Latino	135,729	91,514	34,110
White alone	368,047	435,245	278,770
Black or African American alone	68,152	6,653	4,788
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	2,654	2,898	970
Asian alone	41,855	17,694	19,807
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	1,634	464	290
Some Other Race alone	3,549	2,816	1,551
Population of two or more races	33,450	25,626	17,692

Figure 19: Race and Ethnicity per County

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

<sup>23</sup> Ibid



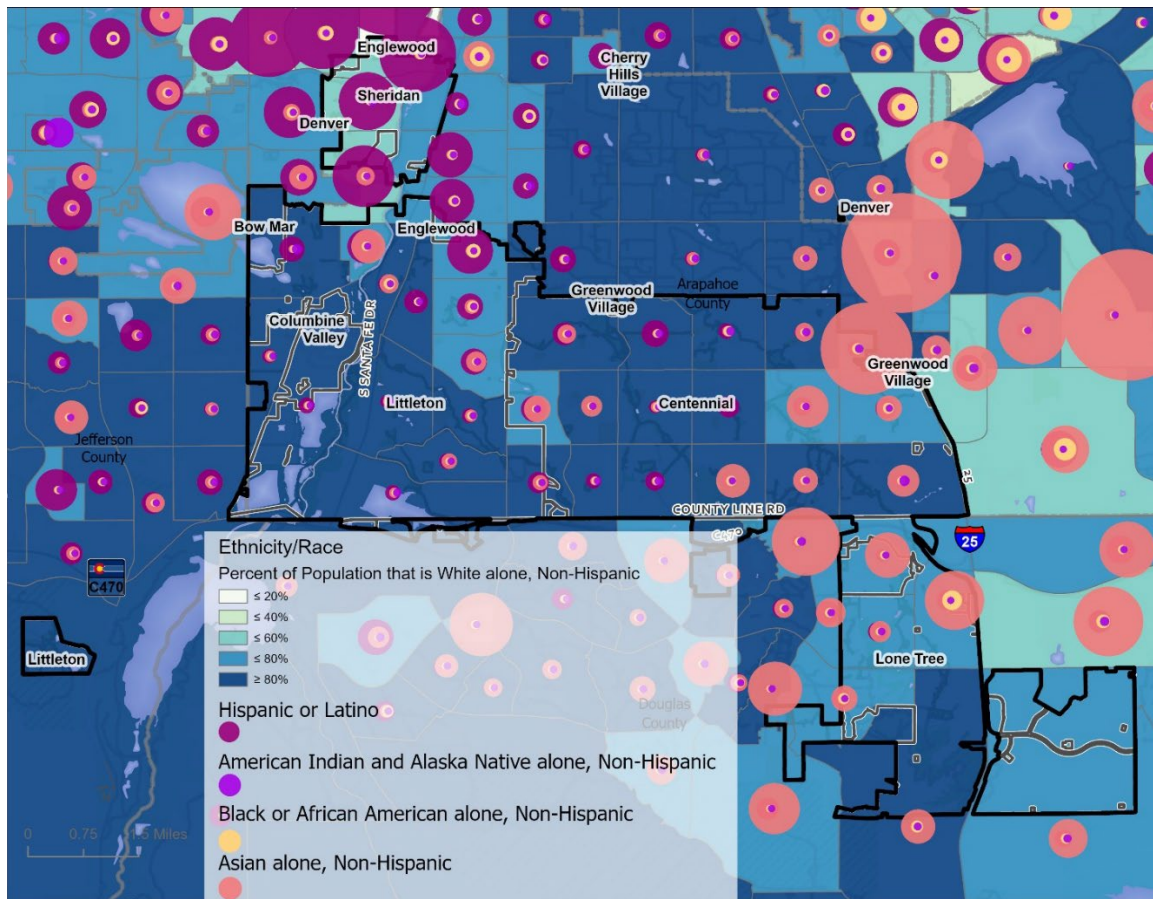


Figure 20: ACS Race and Ethnicity Distribution  
Source: ACS 2020 Population Variables

## HOUSEHOLDS

The South Suburban Park and Recreation District serves around 63,629 households today (2021), up from 56,348 in 2010<sup>24</sup>. The projected annual household growth rate between 2021 and 2026 for South Suburban is 1.16 percent, slightly lower than Colorado's 1.38 percent<sup>25</sup>. The 2021 average household size in South Suburban is 2.39 individuals, somewhat lower than the State's 2.5 individuals. From 2000 to 2021, the average household size has slowly decreased and is projected to continue to decline through 2026. This is consistent with the age population being primarily older in South Suburban, with the median age in 2021 at 43.7.

South Suburban Household Summary	
Households	
2000	52,610
2010	56,348
2021	63,629
2026	67,391

Figure 21: Household Summary in SSPRD

Source: Esri, Business Analyst 2020

Average Household Size		
	SSPRD	Colorado
2000	2.53	2.53
2010	2.42	2.49
2021	2.39	2.5
2026	2.39	2.5

Figure 22: Household Sizes

Source: Esri, Business Analyst 2020

Annual Household Growth Rate		
	SSPRD	Colorado
2021-2026	1.16%	1.38%

Figure 23: Household Growth Rates

Source: Esri, Business Analyst 2020

<sup>24</sup> Business Analyst 2020, Esri

<sup>25</sup> Ibid

A large proportion, 66.4 percent, of the South Suburban Park and Recreation District owns their own home, which is slightly higher than Colorado, 58.7 percent<sup>26</sup>. While most areas within South Suburban are owner-occupied, there has been a slight decrease in homeownership from 2000 to 2021 and a steady increase in the percent of renter-occupied housing units. While owner-occupied units are projected to increase slightly by 2026, it is only by a small percentage (67.1 percent)<sup>27</sup>. This is also the case in Colorado, with homeownership rates expected to change only marginally to 59.7 percent by 2026<sup>28</sup>.

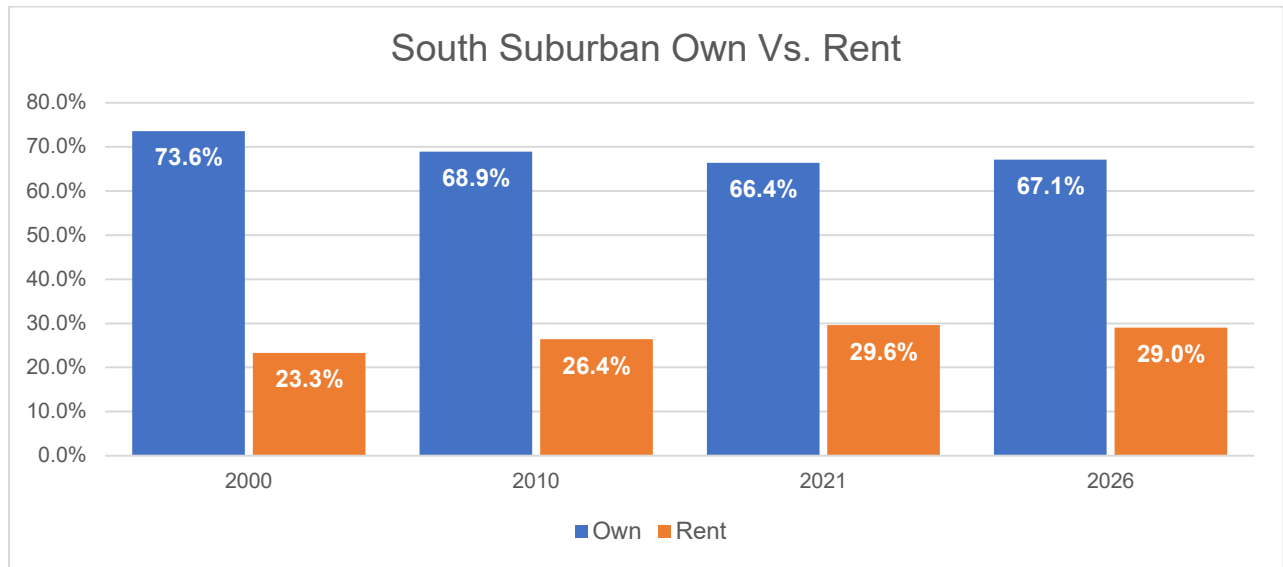


Figure 24: Housing Unit Summary  
Source: Esri, Business Analyst

Housing Unit Summary						
	South Suburban			Colorado		
	Owner Occupied	Renter Occupied	Vacant Housing	Owner Occupied	Renter Occupied	Vacant Housing
2000	73.6%	23.3%	3.0%	61.7%	30.0%	8.3%
2010	68.9%	26.4%	4.7%	58.4%	30.7%	10.8%
2021	66.4%	29.6%	4.0%	58.7%	32.5%	8.7%
2026	67.1%	29.0%	NA	59.7%	31.8%	NA

Figure 25: Housing Unit Summary  
Source: Esri, Business Analyst

<sup>26</sup> Ibid

<sup>27</sup> Ibid

<sup>28</sup> Ibid

When looking at the Percent of Owner-Occupied Total Housing Units Map (Figure 26), most census tracts within South Suburban are 80 percent or more owner-occupied.<sup>29</sup> However, in Sheridan, less than 60 percent of the housing units are owner-occupied, along northern Littleton, which has less than 20 percent in some areas, and Lone Tree, with some areas at less than 40 percent.

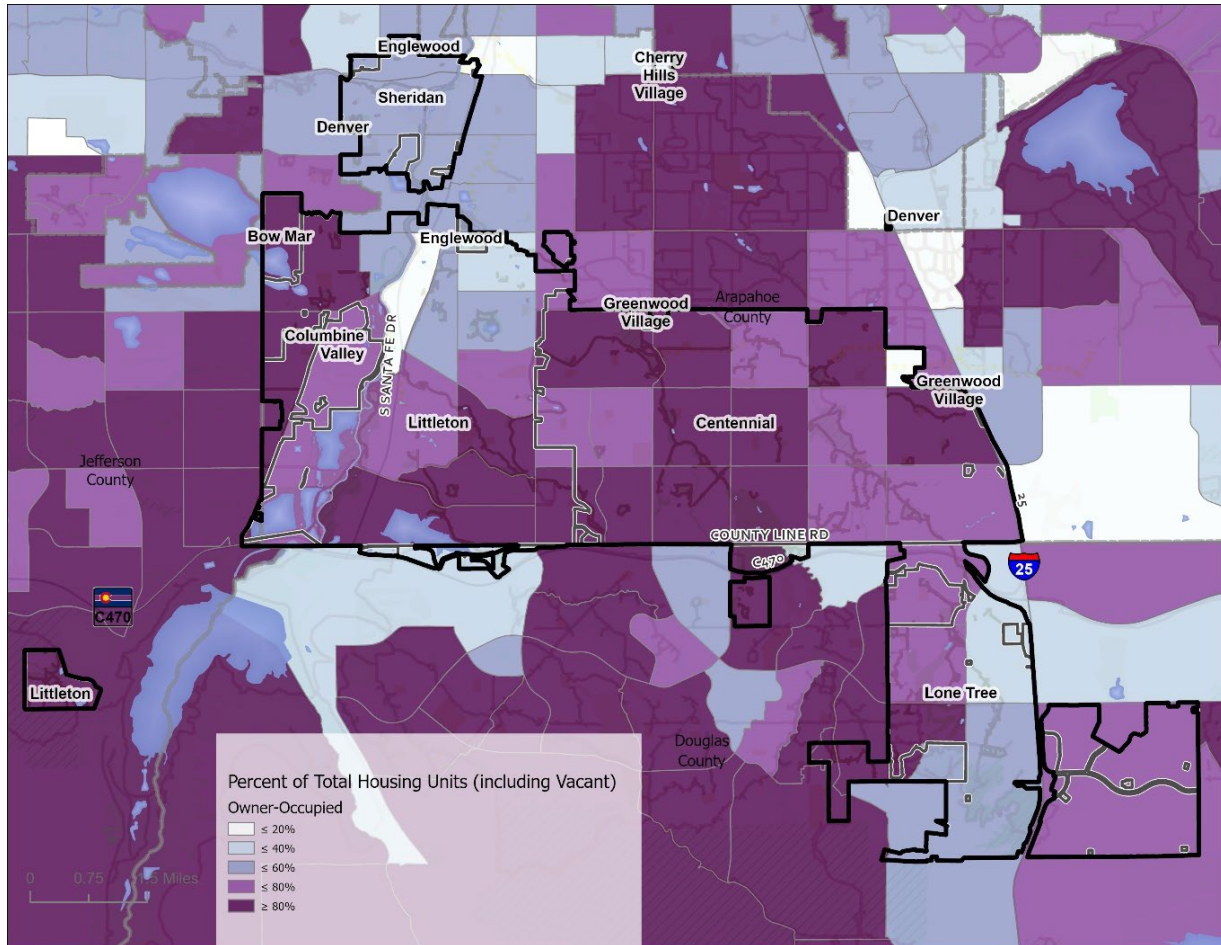


Figure 26: ACS Percent of Owner-Occupied Total Housing Units.

## EDUCATION AND TECHNOLOGY

The South Suburban Park and Recreation District has a significant portion of the population with bachelors and graduate/professional degrees. Approximately 36 percent of the population has a bachelor's degree, higher than the State's 27 percent and 23.3 percent of the population has a graduate/professional degree, also significantly higher than Colorado's 16.4 percent<sup>30</sup>. Figure 27 displays the percentage of the population over 25 with a bachelor's degree or higher. Many census tracts within the central and eastern portions of the South Suburban Park and Recreation District can be described as having 60 percent or more of households holding a

<sup>29</sup> Population Variables, ACS 2020 Census Data

<sup>30</sup> Ibid



college degree. Census tracts to the north, including those in Littleton and Sheridan, have a slightly lower proportion of college graduates.

Population by Educational Attainment		
	SSPRD	Colorado
Less than 9th Grade	1.1%	3.1%
9th - 12th Grade, No Diploma	1.8%	4.1%
High School Graduate	11.6%	17.0%
GED/Alternative Credential	2.4%	4.0%
Some College, No Degree	17.2%	19.9%
Associate Degree	6.9%	8.4%
Bachelor's Degree	35.9%	27.0%
Graduate/Professional Degree	23.3%	16.4%

Figure 27: Educational Attainment  
Source: Esri, Business Analyst

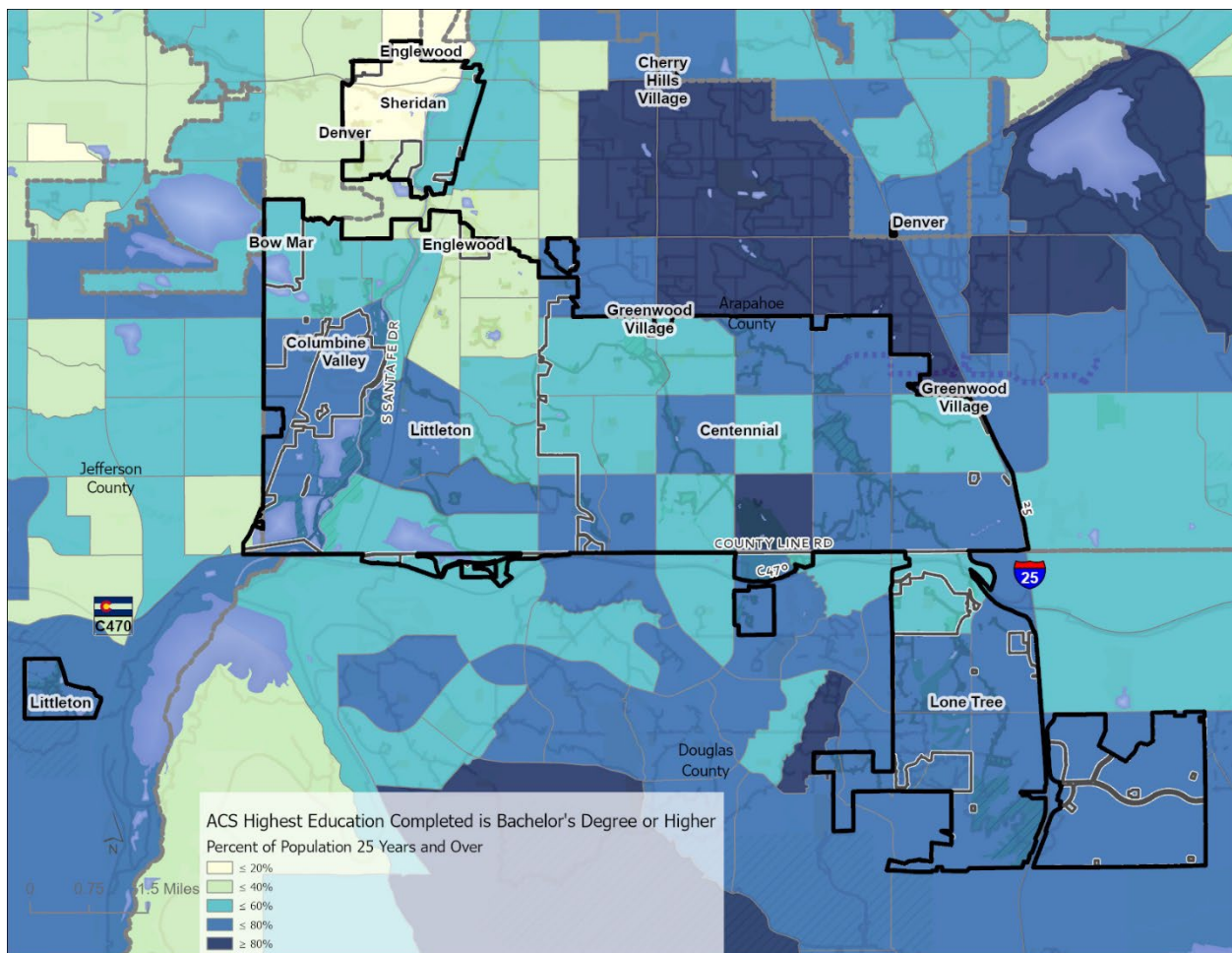


Figure 28: Percent of Population with the Highest Education Completed

Most of the population in South Suburban has some technology device in the home, including a computer, smartphone or tablet. There are pockets with less access to technology, including portions of Sheridan and Littleton, where less than 20 percent of the population does not have technology in the home, including internet access<sup>31</sup>. Areas with the highest density of populations without internet access correlates to areas where households do not have technology devices.

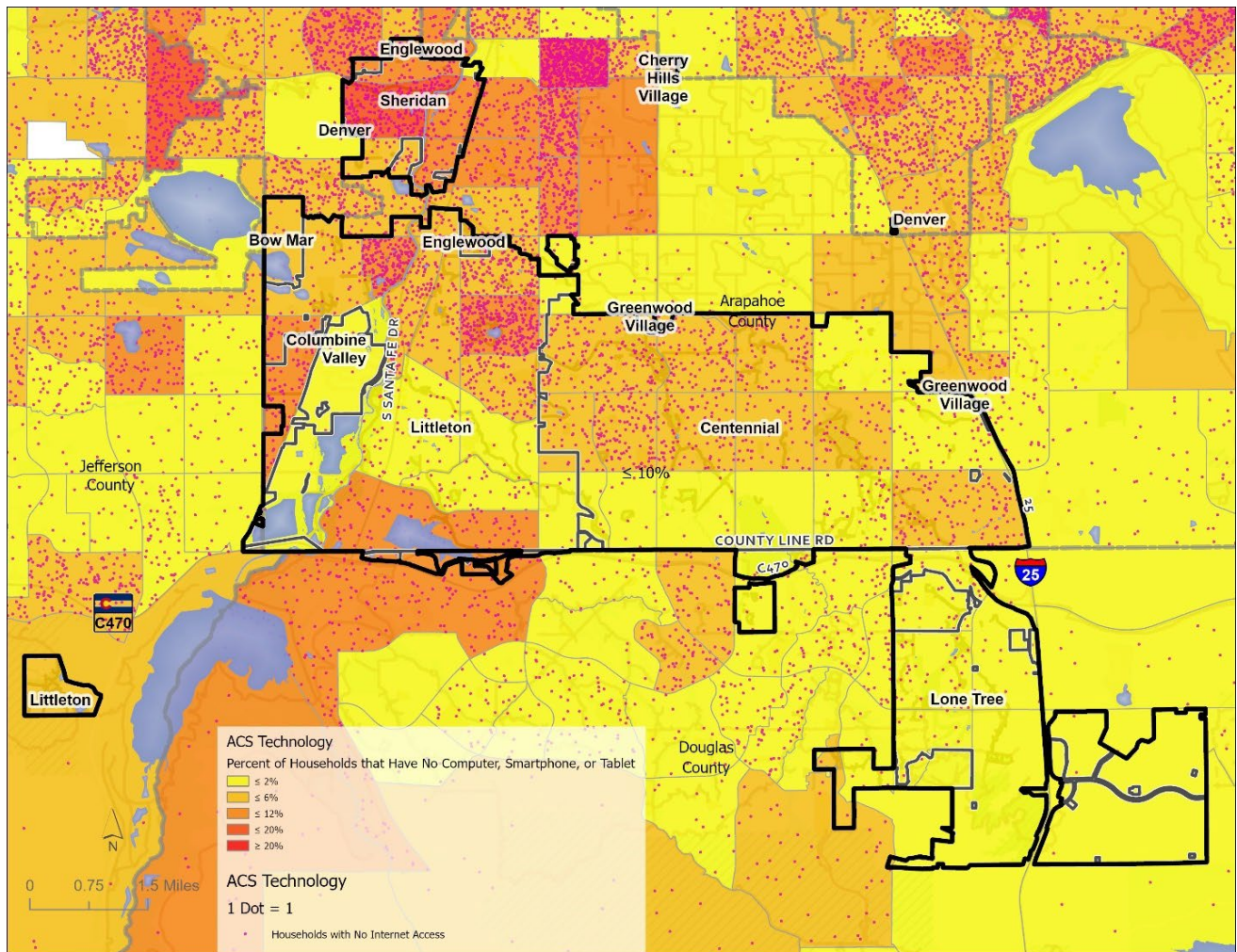


Figure 29: Populations without Technology  
Source: ACS 2020 Population Variables

<sup>31</sup> Ibid

## ECONOMIC TRENDS

### **2021 SSPRD Key Facts**

- Unemployment Rate: 7.3%
- Median Household Income: \$102,654
- Household Income Less than \$35,000: 12.1%
- Employee Population in Professional Office Work: 78.6%
- Percent Bike or Walk to Work: 2%

### WORKFORCE PROFILE

South Suburban's unemployment rate is 7.3 percent, slightly higher than Colorado's 6.4 percent<sup>32</sup>. This is somewhat surprising, considering the percentage of people with higher education levels within the South Suburban Park and Recreation District outpaces that of Colorado and their percentage of the population that is youth and seniors is fairly similar. More than half of the residents employed in the South Suburban Park and Recreation District (51.1 percent) work in the services industry<sup>33</sup>. Other industries with a considerable number of workers include finance/insurance/real estate (11.3 percent), retail trade (10.3 percent) and manufacturing (6.3 percent). Overwhelmingly, 78.6 percent of the employee population are Professional Office Workers, which includes Management/Business/Financial, Professional, Sales, and Administrative Support<sup>34</sup>. 11.5 percent of the employee population are working in farming, forestry, fishing, construction, extraction, installation, labor, etc. occupations.

Unemployment Rate (2021)		
	SSPRD	Colorado
Unemployment Rate Population 16+	7.3%	6.4%

Figure 30: Unemployment Rates

Source: Esri, Business Analyst 2020

<sup>32</sup> *Business Analyst 2020*, Esri

<sup>33</sup> Ibid

<sup>34</sup> Ibid

Employment by Industry (Population 16+)		
	SSPRD	Colorado
Agriculture/Mining	1.2%	2.3%
Construction	5.7%	8.2%
Manufacturing	6.3%	6.8%
Wholesale Trade	2.7%	2.3%
Retail Trade	10.3%	9.8%
Transportation/Utilities	4.0%	5.3%
Information	4.3%	2.6%
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	11.3%	7.4%
Services	51.1%	50.0%
Public Administration	3.3%	5.2%

Figure 31: Employment by Industry  
Source: Esri, Business Analyst 2020

Employment by Occupation (Population 16+)		
	SSPRD	Colorado
Professional Office Worker	78.6%	67.5%
Physical Labor, Industrial, Farming, Manufacturing Worker	11.5%	18.4%
Services	9.9%	14.1%
Management/Business/Financial	27.9%	21.4%
Professional	30.3%	26.6%
Sales	11.3%	9.2%
Administrative Support	9.1%	10.3%
Farming/Forestry/Fishing	0.2%	0.5%
Construction/Extraction	2.9%	5.6%
Installation/Maintenance/Repair	2.1%	2.5%
Production	1.8%	3.4%
Transportation/Material Moving	4.5%	6.4%

Figure 32: Employment by Occupation  
Source: Esri, Business Analyst 2020



## INCOME

The median household income (MHI) of those living within the South Suburban Park and Recreation District is significantly higher than the State's – approximately \$103,000 compared to \$77,000, respectively. The household income over the next five years is predicted to increase by 9.62 percent bringing the MHI to \$112,534 by 2026. The percentage of growth is slightly lower than Colorado's household income growth at 11.99 percent.

Median and Per Capita Income			
		SSPRD	Colorado
Median Household Income	2021	\$102,654	\$77,265
	2026	\$112,534	\$86,527
	% Change	9.62%	11.99%
Per Capita Income	2021	\$55,360	\$40,734
	2026	\$61,950	\$46,132
	% Change	11.90%	13.25%

Figure 33: Median and Per Capita Income, 2021-2026

Source: Esri, Business Analyst 2020

Household Distribution by Income		
	SSPRD	Colorado
<\$15,000	4.5%	7.5%
\$15,000 - \$24,999	3.3%	6.2%
\$25,000 - \$34,999	4.3%	6.7%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	8.3%	10.5%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	15.6%	17.4%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	12.3%	13.8%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	21.6%	18.4%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	13.6%	9.1%
\$200,000+	16.6%	10.3%
Average Household Income	\$133,050	\$103,739

Figure 34: Income Distribution

Source: Esri, Business Analyst 2020

Looking at the ACS 2020 Population Variables, areas with a median household income over \$100,000 are in Bow Mar, Columbine Valley, and some areas of Centennial, Lone Tree, and Littleton<sup>35</sup>. Most areas in Littleton and Sheridan have a median household income of less than \$100,000 in the past twelve months<sup>36</sup>, with a Census Tract in Sheridan with median household incomes less than \$40,000, much lower than the surrounding areas.

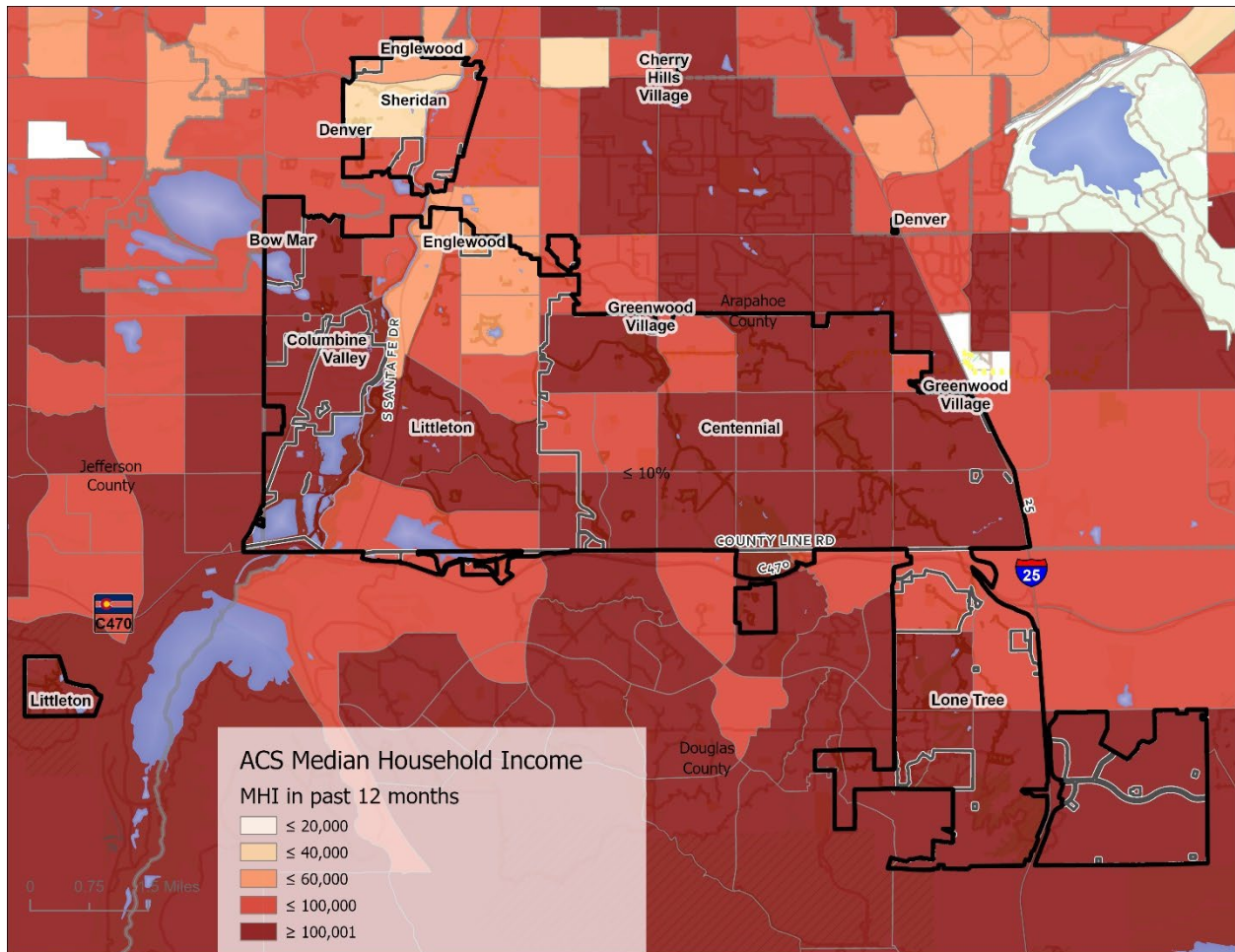


Figure 35: Median Households by Income  
Source: ACS 2020 Population Variables

<sup>35</sup> ACS 2020 Population Variables

<sup>36</sup> Ibid

## COMMUTING TO WORK (TRANSPORTATION)

Looking at the ACS 2020 5-year estimates data in the South Suburban Park and Recreation District, 53 percent of the population over 16 works within their county of residence and 46 percent work in another county but within Colorado (Figure 36). Over 70 percent of the workforce in the South Suburban Park and Recreation District commute to work by driving, the same as the State and three counties (Figures 37, 38). The percentage of people who drive a vehicle to work is significantly higher than other means of transportation according to the ACS 2020 Census Data, including public transit, bicycling, or walking. In South Suburban and all three counties, over 10 percent of the population worked from home instead of commuting.

SSPRD Work by Residence		
Workers Age 16+	82,502	54%
Worked in State and County of Residence	43,639	53%
Worked in State but Outside County of Residence	38,043	46%
Worked Outside State of Residence	820	1%

Figure 36: SSPRD Work by Residence  
Source: ACS 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates Data

SSPRD Transportation to Work 16+		
	Total	Percent
Car, truck, or van -- drove alone	60,961	74%
Car, truck, or van -- carpooled	4,623	6%
Public transportation (excluding taxicab)	3,332	4%
Bus or Trolley Bus	902	1%
Light Rail, Streetcar or Trolley	790	1%
Subway or Elevated	1,228	1%
Long-distance Train or Commuter Rail	411	1%
Taxicab	52	0%
Motorcycled	126	0%
Bicycled	402	0%
Walked	1,353	2%
Other means	789	1%
Worked from home	10,865	13%

Figure 37: SSPRD Transportation to Work 16+  
Source: ACS 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles

Transportation to Work				
	Colorado	Arapahoe	Douglas	Jefferson
Car, truck, or van -- drove alone	72.9%	74.7%	74.1%	75.1%
Car, truck, or van -- carpooled	8.6%	8.7%	5.9%	6.8%
Public transportation (excluding taxicab)	2.8%	3.6%	1.6%	2.9%
Walked	2.8%	1.5%	1.3%	1.5%
Other means	2.1%	1.5%	1.1%	1.5%
Worked from home	10.8%	10.0%	16.0%	12.2%
Mean travel time to work (minutes)	25.80	28.2	27.7	27.8

Figure 38: Transportation to Work

Source: ACS 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates Data

Most of the workforce commuting in Colorado have a travel time to work of around 26 minutes, mean travel time of 25.8 minutes, similar to the drive times in the three counties, approximately 27 to 28 minutes to work (Figure 39).

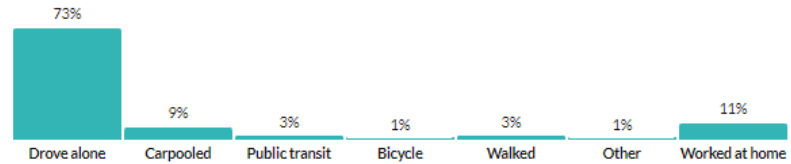
#### Transportation to work

**25.8** minutes

Mean travel time to work

a little less than the figure in United States: 26.9

#### Means of transportation to work



\* Universe: Workers 16 years and over

[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Figure 39: Colorado Transportation to Work

Source: Census Reporter

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# 02 Recreation Trends

## MEMORANDUM PURPOSE

This memo intends to capture the breadth of readily available data regarding relevant outdoor recreation data and trends for the South Suburban Park and Recreation District (SSPRD) and surrounding counties applicable to the South Suburban Parks and Recreation Strategic and Master Plan. This data is important for understanding gaps in the current level of services and identifying recreation changes since the previous 2017 Strategic and Master Plans. Key items from this memo will be summarized in the Master Plan and the full contents of this memo may be included as an appendix for reference in the plan if desired by SSPRD. This report addresses the following:

- Colorado Recreation Trends
- SSPRD Recreation Trends & Popular Outdoor Activities
- Economic Impacts of Recreation
- National Changes in Activities
- National Trends in Parks and Recreation
- Demographics and Recreation Trends
- Colorado Recreation Opportunities and Challenges
- Conclusion

## COLORADO RECREATION TRENDS

### Population Changes Implications

Colorado has long been known for its outdoor opportunities and recreation offerings, contributing to experiences in its diverse landscapes, all-season activities, and rich outdoor culture. These qualities contribute to a high quality of life and compel many people to visit and move here. Colorado is one of the fastest-growing states in the nation, with a population of over 5.5 million and expected to grow to 8.5 million by 2050. <sup>1</sup>

According to an ESRI Business Analyst,<sup>2</sup> the 2021 population for the South Suburban Park and Recreation District was 153,251 and is projected to grow to 162,081 by 2026. <sup>3</sup> Increasing populations mean more residents and higher visitation rates. This growth translates to more stress on parks and natural areas, higher maintenance costs, and more crowding and competition for the use of recreation or leisure facilities. It is critical to think ahead and plan now to address these challenges and keep these spaces in the pristine and desirable condition that makes Colorado a one-of-a-kind state.

**Table 1: SSPRD Demographic Summary**

Source: ESRI Business Analyst Sports + Leisure Market Potential Report and Recreation Expenditures Report

Demographic Summary	2021	2026
Population	153,251	162,081
Population Age 18+	122,539	131,008
Households	63,629	67,391
Median Household Income	\$102,654	\$112,534

### Colorado and North Central Region Popular Outdoor Activities

Outdoor recreation is especially popular in Colorado and continues to grow as an industry. According to Colorado's 2019 *Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)*, over 92 percent of Coloradans recreate outdoors at least once every few weeks and some four or more times weekly.<sup>4</sup> Many Coloradans (64 percent) are not traveling far to spend time outdoors but instead are using parks, open spaces, and trails in their local communities between one and four times per week.<sup>5</sup> According to the 2018 SCORP survey of Outdoor Recreation Report, the North Central region, which includes the South Suburban Park and Recreation District and its surrounding counties, had one of the highest participation rates in outdoor recreation, with 46 percent of adults taking part in these types of activities.<sup>6</sup>

SCORP stated that Colorado's top ten outdoor activities in 2019 were walking, hiking/backpacking, picnicking/tent camping, fishing, playground activities, jogging/running outdoors, skiing/snowboarding, wildlife viewing, and RV camping/cabins, and team or individual sports.<sup>7</sup> While the percentage of people that participated in recreation activities is similar to the rate reported five years prior, some recreation activities are showing stronger increases than others.

The number one activity, walking, demonstrates that people of all ages and backgrounds like to get outside in nature and participate in low-impact activities that do not necessarily cost money. These trends show that SSPRD and surrounding counties and municipalities should prioritize investments to build more walking and hiking trails and create more opportunities for people to go into nature together.

\*It is important to note that the SCORP report was done in 2019 and does not reflect or anticipate the impacts of Covid-19 nor the increased trends around outdoor recreation since the global pandemic started in 2020.

**Table 2: SCORP Activities in North Central Region (seven-county area).**

Source: 2019 Colorado SCORP

Popularity	Activity Group	Activities in Group	North Central Region Participation
1	Trail/Road	Walking, Jogging/Running (outdoors), Hiking/Backpacking, Horseback riding, Road biking, Mountain biking, Off-highway vehicle (OHV) or 4-wheeling/motorcycling	1.7 million
2	Other Outdoor	Developed/RV camping, Tent camping, Picnicking, Target or skeet shooting, Rock climbing, Team, or individual sports (outdoors), Playground activities	1.2 million
3	Wildlife-related	Hunting, Fishing, Ice fishing, Bird Watching, Wildlife viewing (excluding bird watching)	759 thousand
4	Water-based	Swimming (outdoors), Power boating, Water/Jet skiing, Sailing, Canoeing/Kayaking, Whitewater rafting, Stand up paddle-boarding	676 thousand
5	Winter	Skiing (alpine/tele)/snowboarding, Sledding/tubing, Snowmobiling, Snowshoeing, Cross-country Skiing	481 thousand

SCORP categorizes all outdoor activities into five groups and ranks the popularity of these groups by region of the state. SSPRD is located within the North Central region. The most popular activities in the North Central region were trail/road-based, such as walking, hiking, biking, and off-roading. The second most popular activities included other outdoor activities, like RV and tent camping and target shooting. The third popular activity group was wildlife-related, including activities such as hunting, fishing, and bird watching. The fourth popular activity group was water-based, including swimming, boating, canoeing/kayaking, and other water-based activities. Last in most popular activities were winter activities, such as skiing and snowboarding, sledding/tubing, snowmobiling, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing.

### SSPRD RECREATION TRENDS & POPULAR OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

Along with the state SCORP data, this analysis uses the ESRI Business Analyst Sports and Leisure Market Potential Report 2021 to help identify the most popular outdoor activities within SSPRD. The Sports and Leisure Market Potential Report is a point of reference for the most popular activities by the number of adults who have participated in them in the past 12 months.

Market Potential Data (MPI) shows the likelihood that an adult resident will participate in the identified activities compared to the national average in the past 12 months. The national MPI average is 100; therefore, numbers below 100 represent a lower-than-average participation rate, and numbers above 100 represent a higher-than-average participation rate. MPI data also compares the estimated percentage of the U.S. population and the local population participating in each activity. High index numbers (100+) are significant because they demonstrate greater potential for residents to participate in programs and a need for related facilities. The MPI and estimated participant numbers are helpful tools for estimating resident participation in identified activities and projecting the need for facilities in the future. However, the number of expected adults is not exact and excludes the essential youth demographic.

Table 3 compares outdoor activity-based trends and the likelihood that an adult resident within SSPRD will participate in the identified activities compared to the national average. The SSPRD service area activities are defined by four categories – General Sports, Fitness, Outdoor Activity, and Money Spent on Recreation. Walking for exercise is the number one outdoor fitness activity in SSPRD, with an estimated 36,000 adults participating in walking for exercise, or nearly 30 percent of the population. Barbequing was the top activity in the Outdoor Activity category, with over 370,100 adults or 30 percent of the population participating. Other notable activities with a higher than national average participation rate and a sizable percentage of participation from SSPRD residents include swimming, hiking, jogging/running, overnight camping, and weightlifting.

**Table 3: SSPRD Participatory Market Potential***Source: 2021 ESRI Business Analyst Sports + Leisure Market Potential Report and Recreation Expenditures Report*

Product/Consumer Behavior	Expected # of Adults Participating	Percent of Adults Participating	MPI (Scores over 100 = participation above national avg.)
<b>General Sports</b>			
Golf	13181	11%	129
Tennis	5639	5%	123
Soccer	5492	5%	105
Football	5216	4%	105
Baseball	4992	4%	107
Volleyball	3955	3%	102
Softball	2806	2%	93
<b>Fitness Activities</b>			
Walking for exercise	36881	30%	118
Jogging/running	16653	14%	124
Weightlifting	16363	13%	125
Yoga	13769	11%	125
Aerobics	10723	9%	120
Pilates	4733	4%	128
<b>Outdoor Activities</b>			
Barbecuing	37112	30%	112
Swimming	24014	20%	124
Hiking	20002	16%	128
Overnight camping	15491	13%	104
Bicycling (road)	14433	12%	124
Fishing (fresh water)	12224	10%	96
Canoeing/kayaking	9841	8%	120
Boating (power)	6997	6%	122
Birdwatching	6388	5%	114
Ping pong	5648	5%	131
Bicycling (mountain)	5373	4%	117
Frisbee	5317	4%	116
Backpacking	4891	4%	113
Skiing (downhill)	4455	4%	135
Drone Flying	3031	3%	95
Archery	2965	2%	92

\*MPI measures probable demand for the adult market.

## ECONOMIC IMPACT OF RECREATION

The outdoor recreation industry is a significant economic engine for Colorado. ESRI's Sports and Leisure Market Potential 2021 shows that over 10,000 SSPRD residents spent \$250 or more on sports and recreation equipment and more than 7,750 people spent \$100 to \$249 in 2021.

**Table 4: Sports/Recreation Spending on Equipment - Participatory Market Potential for SSPRD**

Source: ESRI 2021 Business Analyst Sports + Leisure Market Potential Report and Recreation Expenditures Report

Money Spent on Recreation	Expected # of Adults Participating	Percent of Adults Participating	MPI (Scores over 100 = participation above national avg.)
\$250+ on sports/rec equip	10418	9%	123
\$100-\$249 on sports/rec equip	7758	6%	121
\$1-99 on sports/rec equip	7190	6%	99

The ESRI Business Analyst Recreation Expenditures Report looks at the spending potential for four categories: Entertainment/Recreation Fees and Admissions, Recreational Vehicles and Fees, Sports, Recreation and Exercise Equipment, and Photographic Equipment and Supplies. In 2021, residents in the South Suburban Park and Recreation District spent over \$71,000,000 million on Entertainment and Recreation Fees and Admissions, with the most money spent on Membership Fees for Social, Recreation, and Health Clubs. The second-largest amount was spent on Recreational Lessons, followed by Fees for Participant Sports, indicating that many people within SSPRD are willing to spend money on recreational sports and fitness programs (Table 5).

The report also shows that people in SSPRD spent over \$15,500,000 million on Sports, Recreation, and Exercise Equipment. The most considerable spending went toward purchasing exercise equipment and gear, game tables, hunting and fishing equipment, and bicycles.



**Table 5: 2021 Recreation Expenditures**

Source: ESRI Business Analyst Recreation Expenditures

Activity	Spending Potential Index	Average Amount Spent	Total
Entertainment/Recreation Fees and Admissions	152	1,123.29	71,473,988
Membership Fees for Social/Recreation/Health Clubs	152	378.26	24,068,008
Fees for Recreational Lessons	155	218.65	13,912,782
Fees for Participant Sports, excl. trips	150	173.12	11,015,255
Tickets to Theatre/Operas/Concerts	155	125.49	7,984,795
Admission to Sporting Events, excl. trips	153	98.84	6,289,403
Tickets to Parks or Museums	140	47.41	3,016,422
Recreational Vehicles and Fees	145	163.94	10,431,312
Camp Fees	163	50.45	3,210,085
Rental of Boats/Trailers/Campers/RVs	161	35.22	2,240,893
Sports, Recreation and Exercise Equipment	136	244.82	15,577,529
Exercise Equipment and Gear, Game Tables	141	77.88	4,955,209
Hunting and Fishing Equipment	123	59.77	3,803,053
Bicycles	137	40.74	2,592,420
Camping Equipment	142	29.50	1,877,236
Winter Sports Equipment	152	11.20	712,898
Water Sports Equipment	130	10.84	689,525
Other Sports Equipment	146	10.36	659,451
Rental/Repair of Sports/Recreation/Exercise Equipment	144	4.12	262,368
Photographic Equipment and Supplies	144	66.36	4,222,682
Photographic Equipment	150	24.05	1,530,182

## NATIONAL CHANGES IN ACTIVITIES

### Overview of National Trends

Supplemented with input from SSPRD residents, a study of national recreation trends is helpful for understanding changing needs and informing decisions about the activities that may need additional accommodation in the future. The Sports and Fitness Industry Association's (SFIA) 2021 (based on data collected in 2020) Topline Report on Sports, Fitness, and Leisure Activities reveals that the most popular sport and recreational activities include walking for fitness, treadmill free weights, running/jogging, and hiking.<sup>8</sup> The SFIA national trends support the most popular activities within the South Suburban Park and Recreation District provided by the ESRI Business Analyst Sports and Leisure Market Potential Report 2021, highlighting outdoor fitness and activities.

Most of these activities appeal to younger and older age demographics, are enjoyed regardless of the level of skill, and have minimal economic barriers to entry. These activities also experienced an increase in popularity from previous years. Given the COVID-19 pandemic, the ability to participate in these activities alone or socially distanced from others was a significant

contributing factor to their increased popularity. The report also shows that inactivity in America dropped throughout every income bracket for the first time.

Many recreation shifts are the product of the COVID-19 pandemic and the advised social distancing measures that were put into place in 2020. As a result, activities that showed decreased participation rates in 2020 are team sports, activities that take place indoors, and those that require close contact. According to the National Park Service (NPS), there was a 28 percent decrease in national parks from the previous year due largely to temporary park closures and COVID-19 restrictions due to 66 of the 423 parks being fully closed for two months or more.<sup>9</sup>

While shifts in recreation activities fluctuated at the beginning of the pandemic, many national parks reported unprecedented visitors, with over 60 million increased visitations in 2020. Other recreation activities, especially those done outdoors, have witnessed an increasing level of participation. According to NPS, six parks broke the visitation record in 2020, and 44 national parks set a record for recreation visits in 2021.<sup>10</sup> SFIA predictions anticipate Outdoor Sports and Individual Sports to be the two top categories to increase post-COVID-19.<sup>11</sup>

The SFIA Report is organized into several categories to better understand trends. This report analyzes fitness sports (activities that are participated in specifically to work out), outdoor recreation (only sports that can be done outside), individual and team sports, and lastly, respondents who plan to participate in sports/activities.

### **National Trends in Fitness Sports**

The SFIA Report groups aerobic, conditioning, and strength activities under Fitness Sports. This category includes walking for fitness, Cross-Training, running/jogging, yoga, and free weights. Many activities have become popular due to an increased interest in improving health by engaging in an active lifestyle. These activities also have very few limitations to engage in – they are relatively inexpensive and can be performed by nearly anyone with no time restrictions. The most popular fitness activity is fitness walking, which had over 114 million participants in 2020, according to the SFIA report's inferred forecasts.

### **National Trends in Outdoor Recreation**

The second most popular of the activity groups was outdoor sports/recreation, with more than 52.9 percent of people reporting that they participated in such activities in 2020. In 2020, hiking (57.8 million), bicycling (44.4 million), camping (36 million), and fishing (14.5 million) had the most significant number of participants in the outdoor recreation category. Much like the general fitness activities, outdoor recreation activities encourage an active lifestyle, can be performed individually or with a group, and do not have time restraints. Most outdoor activities had an increase in participation. Over the past five years, only seven out of the 23 outdoor activities in the report showed a slight decline in participation rates, including climbing and hunting/shooting.

### **National Trends in Individual and Team Sports**

The most heavily participated individual sports for 2020 were golf (36.8 million) and tennis (21.6 million). The number of participants for each of these activities is well above the other activities in the other individual sports category, including archery, ice skating, boxing, horseback riding, skateboarding, and pickleball. The increase in individual sports in 2020 might be attributed to the ability to compete at a distance and a relatively small number of participants. Golf also appeals to a broad age spectrum and is considered a life-long sport.

### National Intent to Participate

The SFIA report also includes a chapter that shows which activities people want to continue, start, or end in the next 12 months. Fishing, running, biking, and hiking were aspirational activities for most age groups. The intent to start swimming for fitness was also popular in populations older than 35 years. When aspirational activities were viewed by income, fishing, hiking, and working out with weights were amongst the top activities for all income groups. Fishing and hiking were most popular amongst lower-income groups, while working out with weights and hiking was at the top for higher-income groups.

### National Trends in Youth Sports

It is important to note that the following statistics derive from data that precedes the COVID-19 pandemic; it can be expected that some changes in youth sports have resulted from the pandemic similarly to those reflected above. Project Play: State of Play 2020 is a report on national trends in youth sports. According to the report, in 2019, nearly 61 percent of children played team sports on at least a casual basis – the highest on record dating back to 2012 and an eight percent increase from 2018. Sports with the highest inclines among youth ages 13-17 were softball (12 percent), lacrosse (8 percent), field hockey (8 percent), and volleyball (8 percent). Those with the highest decline were tennis (5 percent) and cheerleading (4 percent).

An important trend for the future of parks and recreation is children transitioning from elementary to middle school ages.<sup>12</sup> In 2019, the youth sports ecosystem lost almost 3 million children during this change. The sport with the most significant loss by middle schoolers was baseball, with nearly 2 million fewer participants for ages 13-17 than ages 6-12. One reason might be attributed to the loss of structural characteristics. For instance, Little League and other forms of community-based play are most popular through age 13. However, as the competitive pitching level increases, players move onto larger fields, and the presence of travel teams increases, which often requires a financial contribution to participate. This increase in competitiveness and financial commitment may deter participants.<sup>13</sup> Some sports, such as gymnastics, are intentionally structured to accommodate younger children. On the other hand, sports such as tackle football are designed more for older youth. The individual sports that gained middle school participants are tennis, swimming, and track and field.

The Aspen Institute, a non-partisan nonprofit think tank that offers interdisciplinary research, found that lacrosse is growing in popularity among children. In 2018, the Sports and Fitness Industry Association evaluated 14 team sports; lacrosse had the highest percentage of newcomers and returning participants (55 percent) among children aged six to 12. Even though the sport had lost 36 percent of its players in 2017, it remained higher than any other sport, with a net gain of 19 percent, surpassing track, and field (16 percent) and wrestling (11 percent).<sup>14</sup> The report also states that while participation has increased in sports for males and females, the gap has widened. Males played sports more regularly than females by 6.4 percentage points at ages 6-12 and 8.7 percentage points at ages 13-17. This growing gap may be due to personal choices, family circumstances, changing interests, societal stereotypes, gender biases, and community offerings.<sup>15</sup>

## NATIONAL TRENDS IN PARKS AND RECREATION

The NRPA looks at hot topics and trends that parks and recreation departments may see become a focus in their localities in the coming year, citing those elements in the annual Top Trends in Parks and Recreation Report. The 2021 list includes some interesting topics that may apply to SSPRD.

### Pandemic-Based Changes

The impacts of COVID-19 have transformed the way people use and think about parks and recreation. NRPA states that some changes caused by COVID-19 will continue to stay in place.

<sup>16</sup> One of the most significant impacts of the pandemic was on workplaces. Practices such as working remotely, virtual learning and meetings, and contactless transactions will survive post-pandemic. Other notable changes impact our society, economy, and transportation systems. The NRPA estimates that many of these trends will continue. Patterns such as declining mass transit systems, altering land-use patterns, the shrinking number of brick-and-mortar businesses, and a widening social inequality gap will likely continue. Changes such as expanding pedestrian spaces, converting street portions for outdoor dining and bike lanes, and installing parklets, are also likely to remain.

Another impact of the pandemic is on economic conditions. <sup>17</sup> COVID-19 delivered a crushing blow to the budgets of states and localities. According to NRPA, one-third of all park and recreation budgets will see 25 percent or more cuts in 2021-2022 budgets and even greater in 2022-2023 budgets without robust financial aid from the government. As the demand for outdoor spaces and recreational opportunities increases, so does the need for more resources. Increased demands strain the park systems meaning more people are utilizing the facilities, causing increased waste, environmental impacts, and more traffic on trails. According to NRPA, state parks and local parks face a \$5.6 billion and \$60 billion deferred maintenance backlog. Understanding what happens behind the scenes is essential for thinking about parks and recreation.

- Parks, trails, and natural spaces act as critical infrastructure to the public, serving physical, mental, and emotional needs.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has amplified the importance of close-to-home access to nature and outdoor recreation, further expanding the relationship between people and public spaces.
- There are growing opportunities for outdoor public spaces to provide flexible, adaptive, and expansive outdoor areas for classes and programming.
- Using trails to fill gaps in public transportation.
- Addressing overcrowding by expanding resources in high demand areas and raising awareness in popular locations.
- Addressing the disconnect between youth and sports and athletics, fear in managing physical interactions in youth sports, and underserved populations facing the inability to 'pay-to-play.'

The NRPA Youth Sports at Park and Recreation Agencies report states that nearly all (97 percent) park and recreation respondents noted that many of the COVID-19-based innovations their agencies made to health and wellness programs will continue post-pandemic. Among the top lasting transformations are those to outdoor health and wellness programming (e.g., exercise classes) (offered by 80 percent of agencies), mental health programming (e.g., yoga, tai chi, mindfulness) (55 percent), and providing social connection opportunities for older adults (53 percent).

### Climate Change Impacts

Climate change is an evolving issue that continues to present challenges in parks and open spaces. Extreme temperatures influence all types of outdoor recreation and limit the capability of park and recreation agencies to conduct programs, day camps, afterschool programs, fitness activities, and just about any type of outdoor activity.<sup>18</sup> It is crucial for outdoor recreation and parks and recreation agencies to adapt to these changes.

There are plenty of challenges that arise due to extreme heat, but there are plenty of opportunities to consider when facing climate change. According to NRPA, current trends show that most new parks will evolve with resiliency at the forefront of design. Methods such as providing more trees and green infrastructure, protection against flooding, stormwater filtering, and more shade areas can provide multi-benefits for combating these extreme temperatures and help prevent heat island effects. Trees and green infrastructure are recognized for their recreational uses and their importance to health and well-being, specifically in a climate-changing world. The NRPA reiterates that parks provide the natural infrastructure that helps communities reduce the urban heat island effect and mitigate the impacts of extreme heat.

Other parks and recreation trends predict that programming spaces and potential new park sites will transition into underground and abandoned facilities such as unused tunnels, mall garages, and big-box stores. These spaces provide structures for skateparks, farmer's markets, and program areas.<sup>19</sup>

## DEMOGRAPHICS AND RECREATION TRENDS

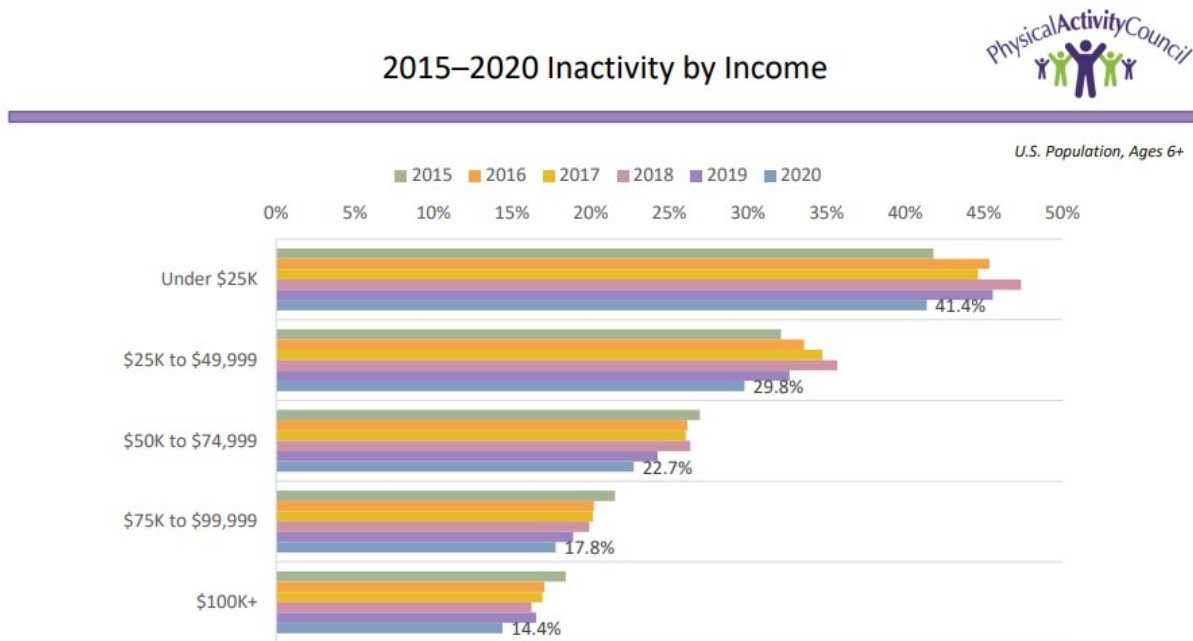
### Recreation Trends Across Generations and Income Levels

The Physical Activity Council's 2021 annual study for sports, fitness, and recreation participation shows that fitness, outdoor, and individual sports have had the highest participation rates among Americans for the past six years, reaching 67 percent, 51 percent, and 45 percent, respectively. However, there is a significant difference in team sports popularity when broken down by generation. Among populations under 20, the participation rate is 56.6 percent. The participation rates are lower for each generation, with only 30.4 percent for millennials and getting as low as 4.9 percent for those ages 55 and older. When asked which activities younger individuals (ages six to 17) are the most interested in yet do not participate in, they predominantly chose fishing and basketball. Populations 45 and older expressed more interest in fishing and hiking.<sup>20</sup> These activities do not require intense skills and require a limited amount of equipment. They can also be done alone or in social settings. This information is critical in understanding the outdoor recreation needs of young and elderly populations within the South Suburban Park and Recreation District.

The report also shows how inactivity is oppositely proportional to income, with individuals earning under \$25,000 showing an inactivity rate as high as 41.4 percent. As respondents' income increases, their inactivity decreases; participation rates among individuals making \$100,000 and above are as low as 14.4 percent. Fishing and hiking are the two activities people of lower income expressed the most interest in, compared to hiking and working out with weights on the other side of the income spectrum. Understanding how income influences physical activity should affect SSPRD's decisions to facilitate access to recreational opportunities in lower-income communities and allocate different offerings more equitably. Each income group and age group have different physical or financial needs and should be a significant consideration in decision making.



According to the 2020 *Healthy Aging in Parks Survey* by the NRPA, 84 percent of park and recreation agencies offer in-person fitness and exercise programs, while 75 percent of agencies offer virtual fitness and exercise programs. Further, recreational agency programming includes arts and theater (76 percent), family engagement opportunities (68 percent), and mental health programming (55 percent). Parks and Recreation agencies also play a crucial role in nutritional health, with many providing community gardening (49 percent), nutrition education opportunities (47 percent), and nutritional programs for youth (28 percent) and older adults (35 percent).<sup>21</sup> Many agencies from outside partnerships support these offerings. Some of these partnerships are with community-based organizations, libraries, health care providers, faith-based groups, and housing authorities. It is nearly impossible for the Parks and Recreation Departments and groups to provide for all the needs and desires of a community entirely on their own. Developing partnerships that enable organizations to leverage resources and assets is essential in working towards overlapping goals.



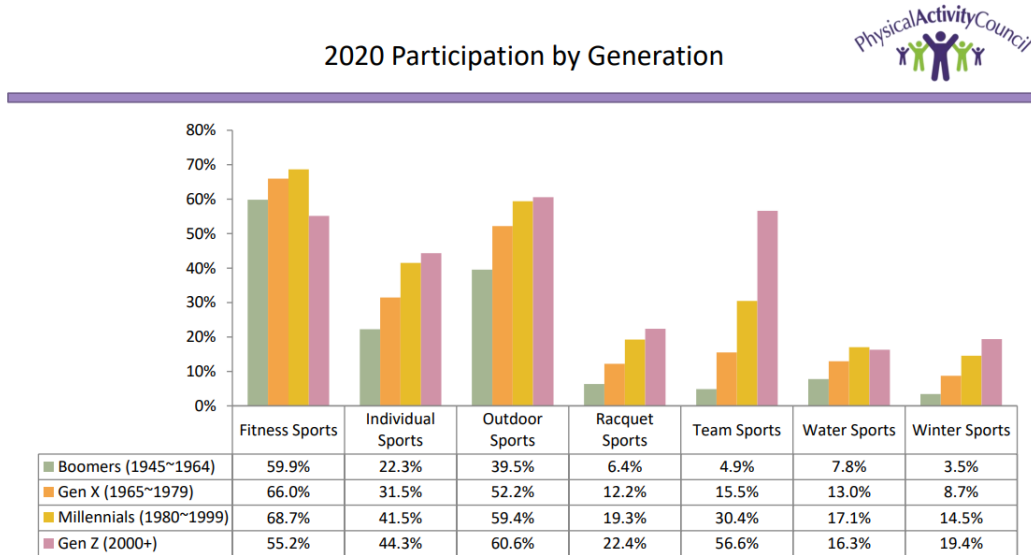
**Figure 1: 2015 – 2020 Inactivity by Income**

Source: Physical Activity Council

### Youth Recreation Participation Rates

Based on the U.S. participation in the 2020 Physical Activity Council report, youth are the most active in Outdoor Sports, followed by Team Sports. This group, which today is considered Gen Z, also has the highest participation rates in most of the participation categories, except for Fitness Sports and Water Sports. However, in 2020, inactivity rates were around 14.3 percent for people between 6 to 17, compared to other age groups where inactivity was as high as 34 percent.<sup>22</sup> After Gen Z, people between 20 and 40 years of age (Millennials) had a 69 percent participation in Fitness Sports followed by Outdoor Sports (60 percent) and Team Sports 30 percent.<sup>23</sup>

Many youths are introduced to sports and recreation through physical education and school sports programs. <sup>24</sup> Participating in gym class/physical education (P.E.) at school directly links to activity levels in adulthood. <sup>25</sup> While school P.E. participation might have been restricted throughout the duration of the pandemic, the significance of physical activity during the day did not decline. Youth who engage in physical activity in school were also more likely to participate outside of school. <sup>26</sup> Compared to their non-physical education attending classmates, one out of eight youths who attended P.E. were likely to participate in a high-calorie activity during the year. Almost 20 percent of youth respondents who did not participate in P.E. during 2020 reported being inactive.



**Figure 2: 2020 Participation by Generation**

Source: Physical Activity Council

## COLORADO RECREATION CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Outdoor recreation is a continuously growing sector in Colorado that connects many other industry sectors. It is very much a part of the state's identity and culture and the foundation for its economic stability and growth. Given how vital outdoor recreation is to Colorado's identity and continued economic prosperity, SCORP identifies the state's top four priorities for outdoor recreation to ensure that it continues to grow successfully. Those priorities are *sustainable access and opportunity, stewardship, conservation, and funding*.

SCORP also details the top three conditions that negatively impact parks and open spaces across the state, hindering participation in outdoor recreation. These are *limited time, traffic congestion, and overcrowding*. SCORP suggests addressing these limitations through strategic management, long-term planning, and maintenance of existing infra-structure and trail networks.

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While there are challenges for outdoor recreation, there are also trends that point to opportunities. SCORP identifies some of these. There has been a rapid increase in the 65 years and older population in Colorado and throughout the United States in the last few years. By 2040, there will be three times as many people in this age group as there were in 2019. This significant increase will impact Colorado programs in parks and recreation facilities in the future. People over the age of 65 tend to gravitate toward opportunities for socialization and serving their larger communities. However, NRPA Top Trends in Parks and Recreation 2022 reports a

decline in youth sports participation and a steady decline in physical activity by youth.<sup>28</sup> According to the Aspen Institute's Project Play State of Play 2021 report, three in 10 children who previously played a team sport state they are no longer interested in playing since the pandemic.<sup>29</sup> The decrease in youth participation provides a unique opportunity in how sports programs and outdoor recreation opportunities are offered. Focusing on providing recreational and outdoor opportunities to include these groups has the potential to support parks and open spaces with dedicated participants who can help teach the next generations how to be good stewards of our public spaces.

The fact that Coloradans spend more time and money outdoors than the national average provides an opportunity to continue to educate residents and visitors on the importance of these spaces, encouraging volunteer and conservation efforts, and providing opportunities for people to spend even more time outdoors. Utilizing public/private partnerships to support and enhance outdoor recreation is another opportunity to provide a safety net when and if one type of funding for parks and open spaces might not be available.

## CONCLUSION

The communities within the South Suburban Park and Recreation District are socially, culturally, and economically diverse. As four different counties intersect with SSPRD, there is much growth potential to provide outdoor recreation opportunities within South Suburban and its surrounding areas. Additionally, South Suburban is fast-growing – with projected populations to increase over the next five years. Based on the ESRI Business Analyst Recreation Expenditures, Coloradans in SSPRD are willing to spend money on recreation and entertainment opportunities as well as equipment for outdoor activities. Reports such as these and the findings presented in this memo should be referenced to help identify future parks, open spaces, and trail opportunities within SSPRD.

The proposed guiding principles for the updated 2022 Master Plan align with the 2017 Master Plan, which prioritizes Quality First, Enrich Wellness, Connections to Nature, and Lead Sustainability. With the new plan, there is a push to prioritize outdoor opportunities throughout SSPRD. SCORP has identified the four top priorities for outdoor recreation across the state, *sustainable access and opportunity, stewardship, conservation, and funding*, which align favorably with the guiding principles and objectives of the Master Plan update.

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## Notes\*

(\*‘Ibid’ refers to the previous noted reference)

<sup>1</sup> 2019 Colorado Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

<sup>2</sup> Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026. MRI-Simmons in a nationally representative survey of U.S. households.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026 Esri converted Census 2000 data into 2010 geography.

<sup>4</sup> 2019 Colorado Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, page 115

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, page 115

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, page 22

<sup>8</sup> Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA). 2021 Sports, Fitness, and Leisure Activities Topline Participation.

<sup>9</sup> National Parks Service. National Parks Hosted 237 Million Visitors in 2020.

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- <sup>10</sup> National Parks Service. Most famous national parks set visitation records in 2021.
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- <sup>15</sup> Ibid
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- <sup>18</sup> Ibid
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid
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- <sup>23</sup> Ibid
- <sup>24</sup> Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA). COVID-19 Industry Impact Report 2021 Results pages 24 - 38
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid
- <sup>27</sup> 2019 Colorado Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, page 4
- <sup>28</sup> National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). Top Trends in Parks and Recreation 2022
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid

# 03 Related Plans Summary

## MEMORANDUM PURPOSE

To identify relevant aspects of plans, policies, or visions as they relate to South Suburban's parks, recreation, trails, and open space system that should be acknowledge or carried forward in the 2022 South Suburban Park and Recreation District Master Plan Update.

The South Suburban Park and Recreation District (SSPRD) serves the Town of Bow Mar, Town of Columbine Valley, City of Littleton, City of Sheridan, City of Centennial and City of Lone Tree, as well as Douglas, Jefferson, and Arapahoe Counties. Relevant plans from these jurisdictions have been included in this review.

### **The following past reports and documents have been reviewed:**

1. Douglas County Parks Trails and Open Space Master Plan (2012-2030)
2. Centennial Trail and Recreation Plan 2017
3. High Line Conservancy Master Plan 2019
4. Arapahoe County Open Spaces Master Plan 2021
5. 2017 Arapahoe County Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan
6. 2018 Arapahoe County Comprehensive Plan
7. Columbine Valley Master Plan 2020
8. Jefferson County Open Space Conservation Greenprint 2020
9. Jefferson County 2020 Preservation Progress
10. Jeffco Trails Plan 2020
11. Littleton Parks, Recreation and Trails Master Plan 2016 (to be updated in 2023)
12. Littleton Nature Within Reach Year One Report 2022
13. Envision Littleton Comprehensive Plan 2019
14. City of Lone Tree Comprehensive Plan 2019
15. Sheridan Comprehensive Plan 2015
16. South Platte River Corridor Vision 2013
17. Santa Fe Drive Action Plan - PEL CDOT 2021

### **The memo is organized into:**

Section 1: An overall summary of each plan for quick review (pages 2 through 4)

Section 2: A more detailed accounting of each plan, including noteworthy language as quotes, partnerships, and guiding objectives, actions, etc.

## SECTION 1: PREVIOUS PLANS OVERVIEW SUMMARY

This section provides an abbreviated overview of each individual plan and highlights the planning efforts relevant to SSPRD.

1. The Douglas County Parks, Trails, and Open Space Master Plan focuses on **regionally significant park areas and trail connectivity**. The plan does not mention partnerships with SSPRD but does express a desire for **coordination between county planning efforts**. The plan calls out east to west trail connectors such as the **High Line Canal corridor, and C-470**. It calls out north to south regional trail connectivity along **Cherry Creek** and, in the county's western portion, via the High Line Canal, Waterton Canyon, Indian Creek, and Roxborough State Park corridors. It mentions a desire to better connect Inter-regional trails, including segments within the **Plum Creek, Cherry Creek, and Greenland Ranch corridors**.
2. Centennial's Trails and Recreation Plan specifically identifies **South Suburban Park and Recreation District as an essential partnership** with the city, which has resulted in the installation of several trail connections, including **the Little Dry Creek Trail**. The plan highlights the following parks and trails part of the SSPRD partnership: **The High Line Canal and deKoevend Open Space Park**.
3. The 2019 High Line Canal Master Plan identifies the SSPRD partnership. The themes focus on public health through **improved access, safety, and quality of experience**; environmental health, ensuring the Canal is a thriving natural corridor, repurposing the Canal as a green infrastructure/stormwater management system, and honoring the Canal's history and educational potential.

The plan highlights the following opportunity for a connective corridor: **Enhancing Experience at Broadway**

4. The Arapahoe County Open Spaces Master Plan highlights SSPRD serving **an important role in education and programming** under the plan's Program Offerings & Gaps Assessment section. It highlights the **South Platte Park and Carson Nature Center**.
5. The Arapahoe County Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan highlights the status of bicycling and walking in Arapahoe County. **SSPRD was engaged in preparing this Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan** and has expressed support for the plan.

Plan's High Priority Trail Projects relating to SSPRD:

- Mary Carter Greenway Trail – Bowles to Dartmouth
- Mary Carter Greenway Trail – Bowles to Denver County Line (north of Dartmouth)
- Mary Carter Greenway Trail – Bowles to Union
- Mary Carter Greenway Trail – Riverpoint Pkwy into Denver
- Cornerstone Park, Trail Connector
- South Platte River Trail (east side of the river) – Riverpoint Pkwy into Denver

6. The Arapahoe County Comprehensive Plan does not reference SSPRD but references topics of which SSPDR might be relevant to SSPRD, including Regional Cooperation, Open Space, Parks and Trails, Mobility and Connectivity, Natural Areas, and Sustainability.
7. Columbine Valley Master Plan looks at the city's growth and development. The plan identifies being served by SSPRD for parks and recreation services. It **expresses a need for partnerships with South Suburban Park and Recreation District** or other entities to facilitate and fund parks within the Town, as highlighted in the Strategies for Implementation under Parks goals.

The plan identifies the following planned projects:

- **Wild Plum** – The plat for Wild Plum provides a possible future trail connection to the South Platte River trail system if jointly requested by the Town Trustees and the South Suburban Park and Recreation District.
  - **The Mary Carter Greenway Trail** follows the South Platte River on the Town's eastern boundary. The Mary Carter Greenway Trail extends almost 30 miles from Chatfield State Park through downtown Denver to East 120<sup>th</sup> Parkway, and it connects to many other regional trails, including the Bear Creek, Dry Creek, and Cherry Creek paths.
  - South Suburban's **Columbine Trail** is a multi-use trail that parallels the town boundary along the west side of Platte Canyon Road and links West Bowles Avenue to the C-470 Bikeway.
8. The Jefferson County Open Space Conservation Greenprint Plan seeks to preserve open space and parkland, protect parks and natural resources, and provide healthy, nature-based experiences in Jefferson County. It does not reference SSPRD but does aim to strengthen partnerships and enhance community connections.
  9. The Jefferson County 2020 Preservation Progress Plan explains Jefferson County Open Space goals for the next five years and is part of the Jefferson County Open Space Conservation Greenprint 2020–2025 Plan. Relevant plan goals include the call to **engage with community members, collaborate with partners** to provide access to a **trail or green space within a 10-minute walk** or drive from home and **coordinate land conservation efforts** in Jefferson County.
  10. The Jeffco Trails Plan explores the future of all trails in Jefferson County and focuses on improving existing trails and enhancing mobility. The plan goals are to strengthen **connections across the entire region**, increase equitable access, and create safer experiences.
  11. The Littleton Parks, Recreation, and Trails Master Plan is **the first plan to provide a cross-boundary, collaborative approach to coordinate service delivery with SSPRD**. The plan highlights action recommendations for specific parks throughout Littleton . For example, the plan suggests considering upgrading the playground and routine maintenance in Berry Park. It highlights that **SSPRD manages up to 61 properties and has 12 properties adjacent to Littleton**. Some of the key goals include **improving the marketing and communication** of recreational programming offered by Littleton and SSPRD, increasing event and activity sponsorships/partnerships, and providing amenities at new and



existing parks based on the level of service analysis. It is important to note this plan was not adopted by the City and has not been implemented.

12. The Littleton Nature Within Reach Report identifies opportunities for locally driven projects to build momentum around an equitable, city-wide nature play effort. The plan focuses heavily on community voices and engagement throughout Littleton.

***An important finding from the plan:*** “There are **30 childcare facility options** within the Littleton city limits. Most facilities are **not within walking distance to a park**, which means it would be difficult to take children to nearby nature; these facilities must **rely on their own outdoor play** areas to bring nature to children daily.

13. The City of Lone Tree Comprehensive Plan emphasizes its partnership with SSPRD and other agencies to coordinate regional open space and wildlife habitat preservation and protection efforts. The plan highlights parks and facilities maintained by SSPRD, including **Lone Tree Recreation Center, Kimmer Plaza, the Hub, Cook Creek Pool**, and others. It also mentions the area that is **east of I-25 as a future opportunity for considerable land development including parks and a trails system**.

14. The Sheridan Comprehensive Plan spotlights potential opportunities to promote an active and healthy lifestyle along waterways and seeks to coordinate with local and regional partners. It identifies the Sheridan Recreation Center, which is owned by the Sheridan School District and operated by South Suburban Park and Recreation District.

**Actions relating to South Suburban include:**

- Work with SSPRD to implement the **South Platte Corridor River Vision** recommendations for trails **improvements along the South Platte River**.
  - Work collaboratively with Sheridan School District and South Suburban Parks and Recreation to identify opportunities for increasing **access to existing resources like playgrounds and recreation facilities**.
  - Create a **path connecting the Quincy trail across Federal and down to Centennial Park**.
  - Install trails that contribute to the overall trail system.
  - Take advantage of **potential greenways** that might exist in utility or railroad rights-of-way as **opportunities for adding to the overall trail and greenway network**.
  - Work with the Regional Transportation District (RTD) and SSPRD to provide **access to transit and recreational opportunities** when new housing is considered or in new growth and redevelopment areas.
15. The South Platte River Corridor pulls together the ideas and proposals of a broad cross-section of stakeholders for the South Platte River corridor through Adams County to help restore a more natural function and balance to the river in the South Platte Park area. The plan states SSPRD as one of the partnerships and identifies **locations that pertain to SSPRD**.

For example:

- **“Oxbow Pond” (at Lowe’s) Habitat Improvements:** South Suburban Parks and Recreation plans to improve the oxbow pond just west of the Lowe’s parking lot, adjacent to the South Platte.”
- **“Reynolds Landing Improvements: South Suburban trailhead has been identified as under-utilized** and a good candidate to take some recreational use pressure off South Platte Park.
- **Completed Project:** Improved/Signalized Access at Breckenridge Brewery/ Reynolds Landing

## SECTION 2: DETAILED REVIEW OF PREVIOUS PLAN DOCUMENTS

This section reviews the 17 previous plan documents relevant to the 2022 South Suburban Park and Recreation District Master Plan Update in greater detail than the summary provided above.

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### 1. DOUGLAS COUNTY PARK TRAILS AND OPEN SPACE MASTER PLAN 2012-2030

DEPARTMENT ISSUING | OPEN SPACE AND NATURAL RESOURCES DIVISION

LOCATION | DOUGLAS COUNTY, COLORADO

PUBLICATION YEAR | 2012

#### **Summary**

The Douglas County 2030 Parks, Trails, and Open Space Master Plan is an adopted sub-element of the 2030 CMP and is a policy guide intended to guide decision-making processes in the development and management of parks and trails, and in the preservation and conservation of open space. The plan envisions an integrated system of regional parks and trails providing diverse recreational opportunities that enhance the quality of life and supports programs for healthy communities and active lifestyles.

The plan provides two separate considerations for both “**Park and Trails**” and “**Open Space**” highlighting goals, objective, and policies in each.

The overall decision-making process for parks, trails, and open space:

1. **Goals** - provide general statements reflecting County desires.
2. **Objectives** - establish a more specific framework for the larger goal.
3. **Policies** - provide more detailed guidance for direction and action.

#### **Callout Comments from the Plan**

- “Protect and enhance parks, trails, and open space as an important component of the high quality of life within the County.”
- County has focused on regionally significant park areas and trail connectivity.
- “This Plan also speaks clearly to the need and desire for **coordination between County planning efforts** for parks, trails and open space, and complementary efforts undertaken by other planning agencies.”
- “Document builds upon and refines two significant County efforts in the establishment of parks, trails, and open space: the 1994 voter approval of the Parks, Trails, and Open Space Sales and Use Tax (herein referred to as the “PTOS Sales and Use Tax”) and the 1998 Parks, Trails, and Open Space Master Plan.”
- “Strong level of community support for the preservation of open space, wildlife habitat, and parks and recreation as components of character of the County and its high quality of life.”
- “720 individual value statements were provided through this process.”

### **Regional Connectivity**

Regional trail connections have been established in some portions of the County and remain undeveloped in others. **East to west connectivity is provided in the High Line Canal corridor, and the C-470 and Douglas County's East-West Trail.**

**North to south regional trail connectivity occurs along Cherry Creek and, in the western portion of the County, via the High Line Canal, Waterton Canyon, Indian Creek and Roxborough State Park corridors.**

### **Inter-regional Trails**

Trails include segments within the **Plum Creek, Cherry Creek, and Greenland Ranch corridors.**

### **Open Space Partners**

- Colorado State Parks
- Towns of Castle Rock and Parker

### **Specialized supporting partner organizations:**

- The Conservation Fund
- Douglas Land Conservancy

### **Trends**

- Protection and conservation of open space resources
  - 46,000 acres of open space have been preserved and conserved
  - Wildlife habitat areas and movement corridors have been protected
- Over **1,400 acres of park land** has been developed or acquired.
- Wildlife Habitat and Movement Corridors
- Historical, Archeological and Paleontological Sites
- Scenic Viewsheds
- Community Buffers
- Conservation of Natural Resources
- Partner Funds and Grants

### **Other Trends**

- **Citizen-Supported Funding:** funded by revenues collected through the County's Park, Trails and Open Space Sales and Use Tax.
- **The County Open Space Advisory Committee (COSAC)** advises the Board of County Commissioners in the disbursement of funds from the Open Space Lands, Trails, and Parks Fund and in the selection, acquisition, maintenance and preservation of open space lands.

### **Themes**

#### **Parks and Trails:**

- Funding
- Trail Design
- Multiple-use Trails in Natural Settings
- Trail Network Locations

- Regional Connectivity
- Parks, Trails, and Open Space Maps
- Inter-regional Trails
- Northeast Trail Study Area

**Open Space:**

- Funding
- Land Preservation Tools
- Open Space Land Acquisition
- Passive recreation opportunities

**Goals, Objectives, and Policies**

**Parks and Trails Goals:**

Goal PT 1, Interconnected **system of regional parks and trails**

Goal PT 2, Recreational needs for a **wide variety of users**

Goal PT 3, Compatible with the **natural and built environment**

Goal PT 4, **Stewardship** of the natural environment

Goal PT 5, Increase **public awareness** and understanding

Goal PT 6, **Safe and secure** parks, and trails

Goal PT 7, **Operational efficiencies** through planning, development, and management practices

**Open Space Goals:**

Goal OS 1, Acquire and **preserve open space**

Goal OS 2, Provide opportunities

Goal OS 3, Protect open space resources through conservation

Goal OS 4, Acquire, develop, and manage open space resources

Goal OS 5, Strengthen the opportunities for understanding and appreciation of open space and natural resources

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## **2. CENTENNIAL TRAIL AND RECREATION PLAN 2017**

DEPARTMENT ISSUING | CITY OF CENTENNIAL PROJECT MANAGEMENT TEAM

LOCATION | CITY OF CENTENNIAL, COLORADO

PUBLICATION YEAR | 2018

### **Summary**

The City of Centennial 2018 Centennial Trail and Recreation Plan provides direction for **long- and short-term** planning as part of Centennial NEXT, the City's comprehensive plan update. The document provides a guiding resource for residents, stakeholders, community leaders, City staff and policy makers as they make decisions about **new investments, facility maintenance, policy and governance of the trails and recreation system** in the City of Centennial.



### **Callout Comments from the Plan**

- “Centennial’s Trails and Recreation jurisdictional structure continues to be distinct from other municipalities in the region, as it **depends on partnerships** — with the **South Suburban Park and Recreation District, Arapahoe County Open Spaces, the Arapahoe Park and Recreation District, Smoky Hill Metropolitan District and Southeast Metro Stormwater Authority (SEMSWA)**, along with many homeowners’ associations (HOAs)”
- Highlights: “Centennial Center Park, the High Line Canal, deKoevend Open Space Park and the Piney Creek Trail.”

### **Partnerships**

- These partnerships have resulted in the installation of a number of new trails including the **Little Dry Creek Trail** and new facilities such as the **Arapahoe Road Trailhead**.
- South Suburban Park and Recreation District (SSPRD)
- Arapahoe County Open Spaces (ACOS)
- Arapahoe Park and Recreation District (APRD)
- Smoky Hill Metropolitan District (SHMD)
- Southeast Metro Stormwater Authority (SEMSWA)

### **Trends**

- Approximately 110,000 residents in the City of Centennial
- Approximately 69,623 City of Centennial residents live in SSPRD
- 53 parks
- 569 acres
- 534 acres of private (HOA) open space\*
- 57 miles of existing trails
- 64 miles of trail facilities
- 2,066 total acres of parks and open space
- Centennial Center Park, an 11-acre park
- The County plan proposes an additional 108 miles of proposed bike facilities and 14 miles of proposed trail connections across the County

### **Themes**

Four defining concepts of the plan are directly aligned with resident feedback and serve as the framework for plan recommendations

- Playing at Home
  - Align Park Development with Population Growth
  - Activate What We Have
- Connecting Communities
  - Complete and Fortify the Network
  - Elevate the Trails Experience
- Serving an Active Population
  - Diversify Recreation and Athletics Facilities
  - Organize Activities and Inform Citizens

- Protecting Our Natural Resources
  - Provide and Preserve Habitat
  - Conserve Historic Character and Landscapes

### **Other Themes**

- **Accessibility** and universal design for the entire community
- Functional and activated **network**
- **Regional decision-making** and investment management
- Community identity

### **Goals**

- Reaffirm the community's vision and values as they relate to parks, trails, open space, and recreation within Centennial.
- Address the City's policies and practices for collaborating with local recreation districts and other partners.
- Create a plan that provides policy guidance; identifies future capital projects; and includes an implementation strategy for prioritized projects.
- Deliver a plan that meets the expectations of the City Council, the Planning and Zoning Commission and Open Space Advisory Board and can be supported by Centennial's stakeholders.

## **3. HIGH LINE CONSERVANCY MASTER PLAN**

DEPARTMENT ISSUING | HIGH LINE CANAL CONSERVANCY

LOCATION | DENVER, COLORADO

PUBLICATION YEAR | 2019

### **Summary**

The 2019 High Line Canal Master Plan provides a collaborative framework to reclaim the historic waterway for the region and depicts a new life for this legacy greenway. The plan's purpose is to provide clear guidance for repurposing the historic Canal, improving the health of people and the environment, and increasing accessibility and enjoyment for generations to come. The 15-year plan reclaims the Canal corridors over 800 acres as an innovative part of our region's park and green infrastructure system.

### **Callout Comments from the Plan**

- "The Plan serves as a pathway forward to revitalize and transition the Canal as a regional greenway while improving the health of the ecosystem."
- "The High Line Canal stretches 71 miles from Waterton Canyon in Douglas County to its terminus in Adams County near Denver International Airport. Within its 100-foot width, the Canal corridor contains over 850 acres of land."

- “Serves several roles: a water delivery infrastructure, a recreational trail, and an important urban ecosystem.”
- “The of the canal future depends on strong leadership, cooperation, and planning to preserve, protect, and enhance this resource for recreational use and environmental health.”

### **Partnerships**

- Denver Water (Canal side)
- Governmental entities and special districts (trail side)
- South Suburban Park and Recreation District
- Local Municipalities
- Douglas County, Arapahoe County, Adams County

### **Trends**

- Total area of The High Line Canal is comparable to the total size of New York’s Central Park.
- 850 acres
- 71 miles of trails
- Connects to over 8,000 acres of adjacent open space from state parks to pocket parks and sees 500,000 users annually.

### **Themes**

- Public health through improved **access, safety, and quality** of experience
- Environmental health ensuring the canal is a thriving **natural corridor**
- Repurpose the Canal as a green infrastructure/stormwater management system
- Honoring the Canal’s history and **educational potential**.

### **Other Themes**

- Stormwater Management
- Opportunity Areas
- Design Guidelines
- Signage and Wayfinding
- Character Zone Plans
- Regional Collaboration

### **Guiding Principles**

- **Natural:** To preserve the natural character of the Canal, ensuring that it continues to be a natural refuge for the region’s population and wildlife. The Canal’s natural, scenic beauty is integral to its identity.
- **Connected and Continuous:** To maintain and increase the connectivity of the Canal along all 71 miles, preserving and enhancing the Canal’s use as an important continuous resource and part of the regional environmental and trail network.
- **Varied:** To respect the variety of communities and experiences along the Canal and to preserve the various physical characteristics of the different Character Zones through the course of its 71 miles.

- **Managed:** To work together in order to preserve and support a long-term, sustainable future for generations to come. Our Canal is a critical, cherished asset for the region.
- **Enhanced:** To enhance the enjoyment and use of the Canal in keeping with its natural and varied character.

### **Objectives**

- Human Health, Use, and Safety
- Environmental Health
- Adaptive and Innovative Reuse
- Access and Connectivity

### **Opportunities**

- Connected Valley: Closing the Gap at Plum Creek
- Connective Corridor: Enhancing Experience at Broadway
- The Linear Park Loop: Connectivity at Sand Creek and Colfax

## **4. ARAPAHOE COUNTY OPEN SPACES MASTER PLAN 2021**

DEPARTMENT ISSUING | ARAPAHOE COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

LOCATION | ARAPAHOE, COLORADO

PUBLICATION YEAR | 2021

### **Summary**

The Arapahoe County Open Spaces Master Plan provides a course for the next 10 years, defining opportunities for conserving and enhancing natural lands and water resources, closing the gaps in the County’s outdoor recreation network, setting priorities for programming, encouraging more residents to spend time in these places, refining operations and maintenance practices, and ensuring a sustainable long-term future for the program. The plan has a long-term vision for the Open Spaces program is characterized by the phrase “Healthy Lands, Healthy Community, Healthy People.”

### **Callout Comments from the Plan**

- “Arapahoe County is one of the **fastest growing counties in Colorado** and is **home to 13 cities and towns**, including the cities of Aurora, Centennial, Cherry Hills Village, Englewood, Glendale, Greenwood Village, Littleton, and Sheridan; and the towns of Bennett, Bow Mar, Columbine Valley, Deer Trail and Foxfield; and the unincorporated areas of Byers, Strasburg and Watkins.”
- “Arapahoe County Open Spaces operates and maintains a total of 5,346 acres across 20 different parks, trails and open spaces in unincorporated Arapahoe County.”

### **Partnerships**

- South Suburban Park and Recreation District
- Local Municipalities

**Trends**

- By 2030, the County is projected to be the most populous county in the Denver metro area.
- The median age in Arapahoe County is 36.5, about the same as the median age of 36.6 in Colorado and 37.9 nationwide.
- Has its own competitive grants program that offers funding for improvements
- Half of the sales and use tax collected by Arapahoe County Open Spaces goes right back to the municipalities
- Arapahoe County Open Spaces operates and maintains a total of 5,346 acres across 20 different parks, trails and open spaces in unincorporated Arapahoe County.
- Over 31,000 acres of open space, including agricultural land, has been protected since the program began

**Themes**

- **Promote:** Healthy lifestyles, recreation, outdoor activities and exploration
- **Protect:** The natural environment and contribute to the ecological health of wildlife and native plant species
- **Protect:** Floodplains and enhance water and air quality
- **Conserve:** Ranches and agricultural land for food production and wildlife habitat
- **Preserve:** Heritage and history
- **Attract:** Businesses, visitors, new residents

**Other Themes**

- Economics:
  - Growth & Job Creation
  - Property Values
- Environmental:
  - Water Quality, Increasing Biodiversity & Habitat
  - Agricultural Land
- Trails:
  - Connections
  - Health & Safety
- Equity:
  - Share back Program

**Objectives**

The plan's five objectives describe the future of the open spaces system:

- Provide Equitable Access to Nature
- Maintain Ecosystem Health and Resilience
- Support a Sustainable System through Programming, Operations and Maintenance
- Align Plans and Policies to Maximize the Impact of Open Spaces
- Ensure the Future of the Arapahoe County Open Spaces Program



## **5. 2017 ARAPAHOE COUNTY PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE MASTER PLAN**

DEPARTMENT ISSUING | ARAPAHOE COUNTY OPEN SPACES DEPARTMENT, ARAPAHOE COUNTY TRANSPORTATION DIVISION, ARAPAHOE COUNTY PLANNING AND LAND DEVELOPMENT DIVISION, ARAPAHOE COUNTY COMMUNICATION SERVICES

LOCATION | ARAPAHOE COUNTY

PUBLICATION YEAR | 2017

### **Summary**

The Arapahoe County Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan highlights the current status of bicycling and walking in Arapahoe County and provides a vision and direction on how it will evolve into the future. The Plan outlines goals, policies, strategies, and performance measures related to bicycle and pedestrian facilities and programs. The purpose of the countywide BPMP is to establish a safe, connected regional trail network from, to, and throughout Arapahoe County.

### **Callout Comments from the Plan**

- Covers approximately 800 square miles, spans 79 miles from east to west and anywhere from 4 to 12 miles north to south
- A few key areas in the County have high employment density (greater than 15 jobs per acre), including the I-25 corridor, west of Santa Fe south of Belleview, pockets of Aurora, and the City of Glendale.

### **Partnerships**

- Arapahoe County
- Adams County
- Arapahoe Park and Recreation District
- City of Aurora
- Town of Bennett
- Bicycle Colorado
- City of Centennial
- Cherry Hills Village
- Colorado Department of Transportation
- Columbine Valley
- Deer Trail
- City and County of Denver
- Denver Regional Council of Governments
- Denver South TMA
- Douglas County
- City of Englewood
- Town of Foxfield
- City of Glendale
- City of Greenwood Village
- City of Littleton

- City of Sheridan
- South Suburban Parks and Recreation
- Strasburg Parks
- Tri-County Health

### **Trends**

- **“17 funded projects** (these projects will be designed and built in the near future – most within two years)”
- “159 Trail projects, 53 grade-separation projects, and 10 trailhead projects”
- “339 On-street bike projects”
- “93 Sidewalk projects”

### **\*Responsible agencies: SSPRD**

- \*Mary Carter Greenway Trail - Bowles to Dartmouth
- \*Mary Carter Greenway Trail - Bowles to Denver County Line (north of Dartmouth)
- \*Mary Carter Greenway Trail - Bowles to Union
- \*Mary Carter Greenway Trail - Riverpoint Pkwy into Denver
- \*Cornerstone Park, Trail Connector
- Big Dry Creek Trail south of Belleview - Trail Connector
- \*S. Platte River Trail (east side of river) - Riverpoint Pkwy into Denver
- Bow Mar Drive - Berry to Belleview

### **Themes**

#### Bike and Trail Network

- Network Development Process
- Proposed On-Street Bike and Trail Network
- Regional Bike Routes
- Wayfinding
- Bicycle Facility Types

#### Education and Outreach Recommendations

- Safety-based Recommendations
- Other Outreach and Education Recommendations

#### Safe Routes to Schools

- Framework for School Walk Audits

### **Vision**

Arapahoe County’s bicycle and pedestrian network will be a comprehensive system of on-street and trail facilities that safely connects neighborhoods and destinations and encourages walking and bicycling for travel and recreation.

**Goals**

The plan identifies 6 goals as the foundations for performance measures, performance targets, project prioritization, and policy recommendations.

- Biking and Walking Activity
  - A bicycle and pedestrian network that increases biking, walking, and access to public transportation
- Access and Connectivity
  - A high-quality, connected, accessible, and intuitive bicycle and pedestrian network that is integrated with the regional bicycle, pedestrian, and transit system and is free of barriers.
- Health and Safety
  - A bicycle and pedestrian network that safely and comfortably accommodates all users and supports personal health and well-being.
- Education and Outreach
  - A public that is educated about the laws and safe operating behaviors for bicyclists, pedestrians, trail users, and motorists.
- Land Use Context
  - A bicycle and pedestrian network that is compatible with adjacent land uses, enhances the surrounding environment, and supports economic vitality and community prosperity.
- Coordination and Partnership
  - A comprehensive network that connects biking and walking routes across boundaries

**6. 2018 ARAPAHOE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

DEPARTMENT ISSUING | ARAPAHOE COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

LOCATION | ARAPAHOE COUNTY

PUBLICATION YEAR | 2018

**Summary**

The Arapahoe County Comprehensive Plan provides a perspective on opportunities for the future. The Plan envisions what the County will be like in the future by illustrating a generalized pattern of future land use, serving as a policy and strategy guide to update the County's land use regulations, and establishing the foundation for new programs.

**Callout Comments from the Plan**

- The Denver Metropolitan Area is projected to continue to grow, with an expected increase of one million residents and 600,000 jobs by 2040.
- There is limited developable land available in the western and southern portions of the metro area to accommodate growth; however, there are few physical barriers to development in Arapahoe County.

## **Partnerships**

Neighboring jurisdictions

## **Trends**

The County has adopted the following plans that are incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan

- 2035 Transportation Plan (adopted in 2010)
- Open Space Master Plan (adopted in 2010)  
Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan (updated and adopted in 2015)
- Bicycle / Pedestrian Master Plan (adopted in 2017)

## **Themes**

- Urban Development
- Regional Cooperation
- Public Safety
- Local And Regional Public Facilities and Utility Facilities
- Neighborhood Character and Design
- Open Space, Parks, and Trails
- Mobility And Connectivity
- Natural Areas
- Sustainability

## **Vision**

- Values its unique communities, businesses, neighborhoods, and high quality of life.
- Maintains a balance between growth and the natural environment.
- Maintains its rural heritage and character.
- Ensures development is in harmony with the environment by **conserving natural areas and environmental quality.**

## **Guiding Principles**

- Growth Management
- Public Facilities and Services
- Neighborhood Livability
- Economic Health
- Transportation And Mobility
- Natural And Cultural Resources and Environmental Quality

## **Goals**

- Goal GM 2 - Coordinate **Regional Planning**
- Goal PFS 12 – Minimize Impacts of Local and Regional Public Facilities and Utility Facilities
- Goal NL 1 – Create Livable Mixed-Use Neighborhoods in Designated Growth Areas
- Goal NL 2 - Ensure Compatibility between New Development and Existing Neighborhoods

- Goal NL 3 – Ensure New Development and Redevelopment Provides Opportunities for Healthy Living
- Goal NL 5 – Develop a Countywide Open Space, Parks and Trails System
- Goal NCR1, Conserve Natural Areas
- Goal NCR 2 - Preserve Cultural Resources
- Goal NL5, Develop a Countywide Open Space, Parks, and Trails System
- Goal NCR 5 – Seek Opportunities to **Advance Sustainability Initiatives**

## **7. COLUMBINE VALLEY MASTER PLAN**

DEPARTMENT ISSUING | PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION

LOCATION | TOWN OF COLUMBINE VALLEY, COLORADO

PUBLICATION YEAR | 2020

### **Summary**

Columbine Valley Master Plan looks at the growth and development by providing a broad vision for the Town’s future and suggesting goals, policies, and actions. It takes into consideration citizen and staff input by the Planning & Zoning Commission and incorporates residents’ input through surveys, open houses, and a public hearing.

### **Callout Comments from the Plan**

“...residents have expressed growing interest in parks, open space and trails.”

“...better access to the South Platte River and Mary Carter Greenway”

### **Partnerships**

- **Consider partnerships with South Suburban Park and Recreation District** or other entities to facilitate and fund parks within the Town.

### **Trends**

- Columbine Valley now encompasses more than a dozen neighborhoods and is home to nearly 1,400 residents
- 655 acres with 588 households, 99 undeveloped platted building lots
- 22.05 acres of land that are zoned agricultural
- Has 12 homeowner’s associations (HOAs)

### **Parks, Open Space and Trails Inventory**

#### **Private access only**

- Columbine Country Club - Two golf courses
- Columbine Country Club - Dutch Creek drainage runs from Platte Canyon Road to the South Platte River
- Burning Tree - Three parks are set aside for residents only



- Brookhaven - Drainageway areas, maintenance access paths and a large native vegetation area that serves as a flood detention facility that is part of Drainageway D comprise the neighborhood's open space.
- Brookhaven - Two tracts are planted in turf grass
- Brookhaven - A golf cart, pedestrian and bicycle trail link Brookhaven Lane and Watson Lane (Private restricted easement for use by residents of the Brookhaven and Watson Lane HOAs only).
- Brookhaven - A concrete path, used by golf carts, bicycles and pedestrians, extends from the Willowcroft emergency access along the Urban Drainage easement and connects Brookhaven Lane and Willowcroft Drive to Brookhaven Trail.
- Willowcroft - The neighborhood has 1.4 acres of open space planted in native and turf grasses.
- Willowcroft - A concrete path, used by golf carts, bicycles and pedestrians, extends from the emergency access along the Urban Drainage easement and connects Brookhaven Lane and Willowcroft Drive to Brookhaven Trail. (Private)
- Wilder Lane - Various drainage areas including the Nevada Ditch serve as open space for the neighborhood entryways also provide visual openness but are unusable for recreation. (Private)
- Wilder Lane - Three common areas in the neighborhood are planted in turf grass with planting beds. (Private)
- Country Club Villas - Drainageway areas and an entryway provide visual openness but aren't usable for recreation. (Private)
- The Village in Columbine Valley - A drainage easement (pocket park) is located near Platte Canyon Road and Nevada Ditch, which runs from south to north through the neighborhood. (Private)
- Polo Meadows - Nevada Ditch runs from south to north on the east side of the neighborhood while Normandy Gulch runs through the neighborhood from west to east. (Private)
- Columbine Valley Estates - 1.9-acre open space with pond is available for use by HOA residents. (Private)
- Columbine Villas - Common open space around its single-family attached homes is set aside for residents of the HOA. (Private)

### **Public access**

- **Columbine Park**

### **Amenities Outside of Town Within 1 Mile**

- South Platte Park
- Hudson Gardens
- Hamlet Park
- Harlow Park
- Bowles Grove Park
- Columbine Trail
- Reynolds Landing Park
- Mary Carter Greenway

- Wynetka Ponds
- Berry Park
- Littleton Golf and Tennis Club
- Columbine Trail Park
- Bega Park

### **Themes**

- Quality of life
- Town aesthetics
- Proximity to amenities
- Sense of community

### **Vision**

To remain a friendly, attractive, safe, and desirable community in a fast-growing metro area through thoughtful development and civic policies.

### **Mission**

To preserve our small-town heritage and quality of life by providing high-quality public services and giving citizens a voice in shaping the town's future.

### **Goals**

#### **Open Space Goals:**

1. Provide open space to encourage the protection of views and water quality.
2. Preserve natural attributes such as floodplain and wetlands areas, geological hazards, vegetative stands and wildlife habitats.
3. Provide open space in areas of Town that aren't near publicly accessible open space.
4. As the infill parcels in Town develop further, strive to create open space areas through purchase or dedication.
5. Focus creation of any new open space areas on passive recreational opportunities such as trails or natural landscapes. Encourage opening these spaces to all Town residents.

#### **Parks Goals:**

1. Create Park areas through purchase or dedication.
2. New parks should consider an active (playground) recreational component and be open for use by all Town residents.

#### **Trail Goals:**

1. Establish safe connections from Columbine Valley to schools and regional pedestrian and bicycle trails.
2. Expand the Wild Plum trail system to connect Town neighborhoods as much as possible and improve off-street movement of pedestrians, bicycles and golf carts through the Town.

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## 8. JEFFERSON COUNTY OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION GREENPRINT

DEPARTMENT ISSUING | JEFFERSON COUNTY OPEN SPACE

LOCATION | JEFFERSON COUNTY

PUBLICATION YEAR | 2020

### **Summary**

The Jefferson County Open Space Conservation Greenprint Plan is a strategic framework for the preservation of open space and parkland, protection of park and natural resources, and provision of healthy, nature-based experiences in Jefferson County. The plan explains Jefferson County Open Space goals for the next five years and identifies a collective call to action to address the challenges and opportunities we face today for a better tomorrow.

### **Callout Comments from the Plan**

- “Serve 582,000 Jefferson County residents and over 3 million people in the Denver Metro Area, with 27 parks and 252 miles of trails close to urban areas.”
- “From 2015-2019, over 13,650 community members have provided their service to Jefferson County Open Space through diverse volunteer opportunities that enrich our county.”
- “The Denver Metro Area is growing at nearly 2% per year, contributing to more visitors to Jefferson County Open Space parks”

### **Partnerships**

- Public parks and transportation organizations
- Jefferson County Open Space

### **Trends**

- 252 miles of trails
- 27 open space parks
- 56,000 acres preserved
- Park visitation has steadily increased to an estimated 7 million visitors per year
- The Denver Metro Area is growing at nearly 2% per year
- Serve 582,000 Jefferson County residents and over 3 million people in the Denver Metro Area

### **Themes**

#### **Serving the community**

- Close to home
- A gateway to healthy experiences
- Active local participation
- Understanding our role in a changing climate
- Focusing on equity in the face of growth
- Gathering data for informed planning

### **Other themes**

The local perspective: collective feedback

- Preserving more open space and parkland
- Strengthening partnerships
- Enhancing community connections
- Stewarding existing lands
- Building more trails

### **Vision**

We must all work together for the betterment and health of our environment, public lands, and people

### **Mission**

- Preserve open space and parkland
- Protect parks and natural resources
- Provide healthy, nature-based experiences

### **Goals**

- Healthy Environment  
Goal #1 Visitor Stewardship & Courtesy  
Goal #2 Information Sharing  
Goal #3 Personal Involvement  
Goal #4 Land Acquisition
- Healthy Lands  
Goal #5 War on Weeds  
Goal #6 Forest Health  
Goal #7 Habitat Restoration
- Healthy People  
Goal #8 Easy and Equitable Access  
Goal #9 Park System Trail Expansion  
Goal #10 Quality Visitor Experience

## 9. JEFFERSON COUNTY 2020 PRESERVATION PROGRESS

DEPARTMENT ISSUING | JEFFERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS, JEFFERSON COUNTY  
OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

LOCATION | JEFFERSON COUNTY

PUBLICATION YEAR | 2020

### Summary

The Jefferson County 2020 Preservation Progress Plan explains Jefferson County Open Space goals for the next five years and provides measures for success. The plan priorities are taken from public conversations, collaboration, and feedback about the value of public lands and local priorities for improvement. This document is part of the Jefferson County Open Space Conservation Greenprint 2020–2025 Plan. Plan specifically highlights goals and accomplishments amidst the 2020 coronavirus.

### Callout Comments from the Plan

Jeffco Open Space protected the 182.9-acre Coyote Ridge Open Space located at State Highway 128 and McCaslin Boulevard. We also purchased a 6.3-acre inholding on Mount Glennon that could provide space for a future trailhead and parking area with access to new trails on the ridge.

### Partnerships

- Jefferson County
- Boulder County Open Space
- Town of Superior
- Denver Mountain Parks
- Local Cities

### Trends

#### 2020 Accomplishments

- **80,985 stewardship education contacts** were made in our parks and in the community.
- **4,725 community engagements** took place both virtually and socially distanced.
- **14,730 volunteer hours** were logged despite limited availability for group projects and the decreased in person opportunities for engagement.
- **7,902 acres were treated for invasive species**, helping native species and wildlife to thrive within our parks.
- 134 acres of park land was treated for wildfire mitigation and forest restoration
- 2.83 acres of unauthorized trails were closed at South Table Mountain Park to improve visitor experience, discourage resource degradation, and avoid trespassing.
- The **County adopted the Jeffco Trails Plan**, a collaborative effort between Jeffco Open Space and local cities and districts to create an interconnected and comprehensive trail

system that increases equitable access by **allowing residents to begin their outdoor recreation experience within a 10-minute walk or drive from home.**

- The Trails Team **constructed 5.37 miles** of new trail last year
- **Trailhead improvements** were made at 13 parks.
- Upgrades to existing signs, maps, information kiosks, regulatory and wayfinding signs in 24 parks, all with the goal of improving safety, resource protection, and the visitor experience.

## **Themes**

Themes guide the 10 plan goals

- Conservation Greenprint
- Visitor Stewardship & Courtesy
- Information Sharing
- Personal Involvement
- Land Acquisition
- War on weeds
- Forest Health
- Habitat Restoration
- Easy & equitable access
- Park System Trail Expansion
- Quality Visitor Experience

## **Vision**

Nature, heritage, and humanity thriving in wild harmony. We must all work together for the betterment and health of our environment, public lands, and people.

## **Mission**

- **PRESERVE** open space and parkland
- **PROTECT** park and natural resources
- **PROVIDE** healthy, nature-based experiences

## **Goals**

- Goal 1: Interact with 350,000 park visitors to share important **stewardship** and safety information.
- Goal 2: **Engage 10,000 community members** in conversations that will positively impact our environment.
- Goal 3: Inspire community members to share their talents and energy by **volunteering** 270,000 hours.
- Goal 4: Coordinate **land conservation** efforts in Jefferson County to preserve an additional 3,000 acres of public open space and parkland.
- Goal 5: Treat 48,000 acres of Jefferson County Open Space lands for **harmful and invasive species**.
- Goal 6: Update the Jefferson County Open Space Forest Health Plan and **reduce tree density and fuel sources** on 1,000 of our 17,000 acres of forested lands.



- Goal 7: Restore 325 acres of land disturbed by human activity and natural events.
- Goal 8: Applying guidance from the Jeffco Trails Plan, **collaborate with partners** to provide access to a trail or greenspace within a **10-minute walk or drive from home**.
- Goal 9: **Build 50 miles of new trails and increase designated use trails** from 27 to 48 miles in Jefferson County Open Space parks.
- Goal 10: Implement **visitor experience standards** at all 27 Jefferson County Open Space parks and **improve or develop 17 trailheads**.

## 10. JEFFCO TRAILS PLAN

DEPARTMENT ISSUING | JEFFERSON COUNTY OPEN SPACE

LOCATION | JEFFERSON COUNTY

PUBLICATION YEAR | 2020

### Summary

The Jeffco Trails Plan explores the future of all trails in Jefferson County. The plan is organized by community engagement, vision, community benefit, success, and next steps.

### Callout Comments from the Plan

“How can we **improve connections** and provide convenient and **equitable access** to the outdoors and community destinations for every resident and visitor?”

“Plan focuses outside of Jefferson County Open Space Parks to ensure that every resident in Jefferson County has access to a trail or greenspace 10 minutes from their doorstep.”

### Partnerships

Jefferson County Open Space

### Trends

- 230,000 acres of public land
- 966 miles of trails
- 1,100 MILES of trails by 2030

### Top Public Priorities

- Develop more local trails & paths to area destinations
- Create more opportunities to enjoy the outdoors close to home
- Increase safety on trails and at trail crossings

### Themes

- Improved Health
- Enhanced Mobility
- Greater Value

### **Other Themes**

- **Enhance existing trails** with necessary improvements
- Expand existing trails with new sections and connections
- Create new trails to reach areas of opportunity

### **Vision**

“...unites the people, places, and possibilities as an attractive Jefferson County experience with much to discover.”

### **Goals**

- Improve connections across the entire region
  - Increase equitable access
  - Create safer experiences for everyone
- 

## **11. LITTLETON PARKS, RECREATION AND TRAILS MASTER PLAN**

DEPARTMENT ISSUING | CITY OF LITTLETON COLORADO

LOCATION | CITY OF LITTLETON, COLORADO

PUBLICATION YEAR | 2016

### **Summary**

The Littleton Parks, Recreation, and Trails Master Plan provides a policy framework to guide decision for future generations of City of Littleton. It is the first plan to provide a cross-boundary, collaborative approach to service delivery coordinated with the **South Suburban Park and Recreation District (SSPRD)**.

The plan offers a community driven picture of the parks, recreation, and trail system within Littleton, and serve as a roadmap with recommendations and implementation strategies for elected officials, special committees, and staff to work with SSPRD to provide an appropriate balance of parks, trails, recreation facilities, and programs now and into the future.

### **Callout Comments from the Plan**

“Littleton and SSPRD should develop opportunities with agencies such as Foothills Parks and Recreation District and Ken-Caryl Ranch Metropolitan District to provide more services to TrailMark residents.”

“...important that the services and amenities meet the standards for **a high level of service**. This may involve **improvements to existing sites** as well as the **potential development** of new sites. It also entails the **equitable provision of services**.”

“Did an evaluation of marketing efforts and effectiveness for ease of access to information, ability to locate information, and **cross-referencing data from both Littleton and SSPRD**.”

Action Item 4.1.f - “**Work annually with [SSPRD] to evaluate individual components in parks within Littleton** to identify low scoring components and modifiers. Prioritize annual improvements based on safety concerns, addressing lower service areas, trends, high demand components and regional or destination factors.\*”

### **Callouts for specific locations**

Parks associated with Action Item 4.1.f

**Low Scoring Components in reference to Action Item 4.1.f**

Location	Component	Recommendation
Berry Park	Playground, Local	Consider upgrading the playground and routine maintenance on other park amenities such as picnic tables.
Big Dry Creek Trail	Trailhead	Consider adding amenities to increase service as a full service trailhead.
Charley Emley Park	Basketball	Consider upgrading to a post tension pad and fencing along north edge of the court.
Charley Emley Park	Playground, Local	Consider mid-term playground renovation and upgrade.
Cimarron Trail Park	Open Turf	Consider a booster component in this park if irrigation is not available for bluegrass.
Elati Park	Playground, Local	If space allows consider playground upgrade or additional booster component.
Gallup Gardens	Public Art	Consider refurbishment or replacement.
Geneva Park	Educational Experience	Consider making map and key more readily available outside of City Hall.
Harlow Park	Ballfield	Consider adding dugout seating and ADA access.
Harlow Park	MP Field, Large	Field is an overlay of ballfield, therefore, limit programming of this field if possible.
Harlow Park	Tennis	Consider post tension court upgrades.

## Parks associated with Action Item 4.1.f continued

Location	Component	Recommendation
Horseshoe Park	BMX Course	Consider refurbishment and upgrades to improve usability of bike course and increase visibility and access.
Littles Creek Greenway	Passive Node	Consider bridging creek to provide access from trail.
Littles Creek Park	Open Turf	Consider adding a booster component at this park.
Littles Creek Park	Playground, Local	Consider updating this playground.
Littleton Golf & Tennis Club	Trailhead	Consider formalizing this parking area as a trailhead to provide a better staging area to users.
Powers Park	Shelter	Consider adding a picnic table to serve playground patrons.
Powers Park	Open Turf	Consider adding a loop walk as a booster component in this park.
Progress Park	MP Field, Large	Field is an overlay of ballfield, therefore, limit programming of this field if possible.
Progress Park	MP Field, Large	Field is an overlay of ballfield, therefore, limit programming of this field if possible.
Progress Park	Playground, Local	Consider adding a formal playground or additional nature play features to serve adjacent multi-family housing residents.
Progress Park	Trailhead	Consider adding staging area and wayfinding to server adjacent users.
Promise Park	Playground, Local	Consider increasing routine maintenance of equipment and EWF surfacing. Add ADA ramp.
Promise Park	Open Turf	Consider improving and better monitoring of irrigation coverage.

## Parks associated with Action Item 4.1.f continued

Location	Component	Recommendation
Puma Park	Backstop, Practice	NA
Puma Park	MP Field, Large	Field is an overlay of ballfield, therefore, limit programming of this field if possible.
Ridgewood Park	MP Field, Large	Field is an overlay of ballfield, therefore, limit programming of this field if possible.
South Platte Park	Trailhead	Consider adding a staging area on north side of parking area and monitor parking demands based on newly added parking at Reynolds Landing.
Southbridge Park	Ballfield	Consider upgrades to field and backstop.
Southbridge Park	Multiuse Court	Consider re-organizing entry sequence and potential for adding a booster component.
Sterne Park	Shelter, Group	If this park is heavily used for picnicking, consider additional shelters or picnic grounds.
Sterne Park	Shelter	If this park is heavily used for picnicking, consider additional shelters or picnic grounds.
Writers Vista Park	Basketball	Consider replacing with post tension court as part playground/shelter redevelopment.
Writers Vista Park	Shelter	Consider redevelopment of shelter along with playground and basketball court to highlight vista. Potential opportunity for destination playground if additional parking can be added.

**Partnerships**

South Suburban Park and Recreation District

**Trends**

- Littleton's demographic profile indicates that **29.2% of the current population falls within the Baby Boomer age range** (those approximately 45-64 years of age).
- The Millennial Generation comprised 24.4 percent of Littleton's population in 2015.
- Littleton's 2015 demographic profile indicates that 88.5% of the population is Caucasian. Additionally, 12.8% of the population is of Hispanic origin (irrespective of race).

### **Site Visits and Assessments**

- **61 SSPRD managed properties**
- 12 SSPRD properties adjacent to Littleton
- 49 properties within Littleton city limits
- 10 Littleton managed properties
- 4 Indoor Facilities within Littleton
- 3 indoor facilities adjacent to Littleton
- Elementary and Middle Schools within Littleton
- 220 miles of trails in and within 3 miles of Littleton

### **Age Groups**

The population distribution from 2000 to 2020:

- Northeast subarea – predicted to have the highest population in 2020 at 18,728, making up about 40 percent of the total population in Littleton.
- West subarea - expected to grow rapidly at an annual rate of 3.53 percent, from 10,955 in 2000 to 14,823 in 2020.
- Southeast subarea - population decreased from 2000 to 2010 (12,995 to 12,003), but a steady increase in the population is projected from 2015 to 2040.

### **Themes**

Themes throughout the plan

- Level of service
- Water Recreation opportunities
- Increase Amenities
- Communication between Littleton, SSPRD and the public

### **Key Issues Summary**

Organizational Improvement

- Improve marketing and communication of recreational programming offered by Littleton and SSPR
- Improve signage agency-wide  
Increase opportunities for participation/support
- Improve communication of mixed-use trail amenities, such as trail etiquette and safety

Financial Stewardship

- Increase event and activity sponsorships/partnerships

Programs and Service Delivery Enhancements

- Improve recreational activities on the river and ponds
- Improve recreation programs
- **Increase access** to desired services and programs for the geographically isolated TrailMark community



**Facilities and Amenity Management:**

- Improve connectivity of trails
- Increase water access to river and ponds
- Provide **amenities at new and existing parks** based on level of service analysis
- Consider **increasing outdoor athletic space** (i.e., fields, lights, etc.)
- Address **ADA accessibility** (Transition Plan) at all facilities per 2010 guidelines

**Vision**

“To preserve a family-oriented and economically vibrant community that encourages citizen involvement, respects diversity, values community character, and enhances the quality of life of Littleton residents and visitors.”

**Goals**

- Goal 1: Enhance Organizational and Operational Efficiencies
- Goal 2: Enhance Financial Stability
- Goal 3: Enhance Program and Service Delivery
- Goal 4: Enhance Facilities and Amenities

**Objectives**

- **Improve communication efforts between Littleton and SSPR**
- Improve communication efforts with the public
- Improve signage agency-wide
- Increase engagement and use for parks and trails
- Increase visibility of opportunities for public engagement or support
- Promote safety and etiquette of mixed-use trails
- Maintain existing facilities
- Promote event and activity sponsorships
- Evaluate dedicated funding options for park and trail projects that are responsive to the desires of Littleton citizens
- Develop recreational opportunities in water areas
- Improve or increase amenities at existing parks where appropriate
- Add or improve trails and trail connectivity
- Increase or add water access to river and ponds

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## 12. LITTLETON NATURE WITHIN REACH YEAR ONE REPORT

DEPARTMENT ISSUING | NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD HEALTH OUTDOORS

LOCATION | LITTLETON COLORADO

PUBLICATION YEAR | 2022

### **Summary**

The Littleton Nature Within Reach Report focuses on identifying opportunities for locally driven nature play projects. The National Wildlife Federation's Early Childhood Health Outdoors (ECHO) team spent a year-long community engagement process and targeted outreach in Littleton, CO, aimed at building momentum around an equitable, city-wide nature play effort. The report includes background research partnership development, community engagement and planning efforts led by the National Wildlife Federation's ECHO team from January 2021 through March 2022.

### **Callout Comments from the Plan**

"Meeting community members **face-to-face at a series of Meet, Greet, and Eat events** over the summer **provided valuable insight** from families and children about nature experiences across Littleton."

**North Littleton Promise:** "If the high school students in the community were involved in the process, especially in engaging their own community, that could be really powerful and impactful."

### **Partnerships**

#### **Boulder**

- Growing Up Boulder

#### **Golden / Lakewood**

- Jefferson County Public Health
- Triad Early Childhood Council

#### **Denver**

- Aging Dynamics
- Arturo Garcia, Artist
- Mile High Flood District

### West / South Littleton

- Denver Audubon
- Denver Botanic Gardens at Chatfield Farms
- Foothills Park and Recreation District
- Jefferson County Public Library | Columbine
- Night Lights

### Littleton (outlined)

- Arapahoe Community College
- Bemis Public Library
- Carson Nature Center
- City of Littleton | Planning Department
- Hudson Gardens
- Littleton Museum
- Littleton Public Schools
- North Littleton Promise
- South Metro Land Conservancy

### Centennial / Englewood / Highlands Ranch

- Arapahoe County Open Space
- High Line Canal Conservancy
- **South Suburban Parks and Recreation**

### Roxborough Park

- Douglas County Libraries | Roxborough
- Roxborough Primary School

### Trends

- Littleton is predominately white, with 89.3% of the total population. The second highest percentage of race, Hispanic population is **largely located in Northern Littleton**.
- There are **30 childcare facility options** within the Littleton city limits - Most facilities are **not within walking distance to a park**, which means it would be difficult to take children to nearby nature; these facilities must **rely on their own outdoor play** areas to bring nature to children daily.
- The community center is the **Douglas H. Buck Community Recreation Center**. Littleton's community center and facilities are predominately located in northern Littleton, close to the downtown corridor.
- There is one stop in southern Littleton that has close proximity to a parks system. The other lite rail stop is in downtown Littleton with little proximity to nature. The RTD bus line predominately runs north/south along University BLVD and east/ west along E Littleton Blvd and W Bowles. There are 6 parks/playgrounds within a block of a bus stop.
- There are small pockets of parks in and around the northern part of the city, many children still do not have easy access to nature.

**Vision****National Wildlife Federation**

We envision a world in which everyone can experience the benefits of nature, where our infrastructure is designed to promote mental and physical well-being, ensure equitable access for all people and encourage connection throughout everyday life. We recognize that providing access to nature goes hand in hand with protecting and conserving nature for future generations. We seek to advance efforts aimed at connecting people with nature, and in so doing, building community stewards of land, water and our shared resources.

**Early Childhood Health Outdoors Vision:**

We envision a world in which every young child experience nature daily for the health of our kids, communities, and planet.

**Goals**

- Establish two community-based demonstration sites, which will serve as hubs of learning for those across the community seeking to implement nature-based outdoor play and learning settings.
- Community Nature Play Day with Littleton-based programmatic partners to build momentum for hands-on nearby nature experiences in Littleton.
- Nature play professional development and training for educators and caregivers in early childhood programs and public schools.
- Identify municipal policies and opportunities to expand nature play in Littleton
- Volunteer engagement for implementation.
- Through continued partnership development, identify additional locations for nature play implementation.
- Capture stories from residents, including families and children, to tell the collective story of the impact of nature within reach.

**13. ENVISION LITTLETON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

DEPARTMENT ISSUING | CITY OF LITTLETON, COLORADO

LOCATION | LITTLETON, COLORADO

PUBLICATION YEAR | 2019

**Summary Themes**

Partnerships with SSPRD surrounding Parks and Trails as well as implementation of plan priorities related to Land Use and Community Character.

**Plan Considerations:**

- More effective **collaboration with partner entities** that have responsibility for managing and **enhancing elements of Littleton's park and open space inventory** (e.g., South Suburban Park and Recreation District, High Line Canal Conservancy, etc.).
- Work with SSPRD for **Programming and community outreach**

**Actions:**

- Action ENV 12: Collaborate with the South Suburban Park and Recreation District and other partners to continue to prioritize active habitat, vegetation, wildlife, water resource, and visitor management measures for South Platte Park as detailed in the South Platte Park Management Plan.
- Action ENV 13: Evaluate the potential for water conservation measures in Littleton’s parks, in coordination with the South Suburban Park and Recreation District, including possible use of synthetic turf on sports fields in some instances.

**14. CITY OF LONE TREE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

DEPARTMENT ISSUING | LONE TREE PLANNING COMMISSIONERS

LOCATION | CITY OF LONE TREE

PUBLICATION YEAR | 2019

**Summary**

The City of Lone Tree Comprehensive Plan is focused on creating a steadily growing community that serves the needs of its residents, businesses, and visitors. The plan is an extension of the cities vision, and sets forth the goals, objectives, and policies by which the City will continue to be a desirable place to live, work, and play. It provides a policy framework for decisions that affect the physical, social, and economic environment of the City of Lone Tree. The plan heavily focuses on land use and economic development.

**Callout Comments from the Plan**

“City will work with various agencies including **South Suburban Park and Recreation District**, Douglas County, and the Colorado Parks and Wildlife, to **coordinate regional open space and wildlife habitat preservation** and protection efforts.

“**The Hub**, this facility is a venue for a variety of multigenerational classes and programs, as well as a place to relax with friends, play cards, or read a book and enjoy a cup of coffee. Maintained by **South Suburban Parks and Recreation**, the facility is also available for rentable community meeting space.

“**Lincoln Pedestrian Bridge**, completed in 2018, provided an important **north to south link**, and the **SkyRidge Avenue Bridge over I-25** provides an important **east to west link** to that network of trails.”

“Planning and Growth Area is framed by **scenic bluffs to the south**. The bluffs are a natural feature marked by prominent ridgelines that help to shape and define the City’s boundaries.”

“North of the bluffs consists of **gently rolling terrain with native grasses predominating on undeveloped lands**. Cottonwood and willow trees are scattered along the drainages, and Gambel oak (large native shrubs) dot the bluff hillsides.”

“Highlands Ranch, immediately west of Lone Tree, is a large, master-planned community located in Douglas County’s designated Primary Urban Area.”

“Large lot development in McArthur Ranch is located to the west and adjacent to low-density development planned in RidgeGate”

“City residents are served by **urban-level emergency services**, including police and fire protection, and state-of-the-art medical facilities that provide emergency treatment service. Schools, a library, the Lone Tree Arts Center, **parks, trails, and recreational facilities are located here.**”

“...considerable developable land. Vast majority of this land is located east of I-25 and south of Lincoln Avenue in the RidgeGate Planned Development District (PDD).”

### **Partnerships**

- South Suburban Park and Recreation District
- Douglas County
- Colorado Parks and Wildlife,
- RidgeGate Planned Development District
- Southridge Preserve Planned Developments
- Park Meadows Metro District
- Rampart Range
- South Metro Fire Rescue
- Southgate Water and Sanitation
- Douglas County Libraries
- Douglas County School District

### **Trends**

- Plan to provide parks within a half-mile radius of residents
- Incorporated boundaries encompass around **10-square miles**
- **500 acres of existing and future park land** are located within the City’s Planning and Growth Area.
- A 65-acre regional park is planned east of I-25, across from the future City Center
- 7-square miles of unincorporated lands with the potential for annexation
- Successful in **preserving over 700 acres of open space** at its southern edge – solely through land use annexation and zoning negotiations
- **Outside the core City Center** area is planned for mixed-use residential development including gathering spaces, and a **rich parks and trails system.**
- Southridge Preserve Planned Development requires clustered development and preserves over 70 percent of that project as public open space.
- Links to other open space systems such as the Bluffs Regional Park and Highlands Ranch Backcountry Wilderness
- **Lone Tree Recreation Center**, a 54,000 square-foot facility
- **Kimmer Plaza** is a unique park experience

### **Callout locations**

- Cook Creek Pool
- Lone Tree Golf Club and Hotel
- Lone Tree Recreation Center
- Kimmer Plaza



## **Themes**

- East of I-25 – future opportunities
- Lone Tree Planning and Growth Area
- Land Use / Zoning
- Development
- Recreation
- Gathering Places
- Cliff Bluffs
- Open Space

## **Vision**

Lone Tree is a premier community connected by great neighborhoods, vibrant public spaces, a beautiful natural environment, and thriving businesses.

## **Guiding Principles**

- **A strong sense of connection** – this includes **physical connections** such as linked neighborhoods and pedestrian- and bicycle friendly streets, as well as social connections strengthened through community events and programs.
- **Safety for residents** through **adequate infrastructure**, policing resources, and appropriate design.
- A walkable and bicycle-friendly cityscape comprised of **mixed-use and compact development**.
- An attractive, high-quality community, guided by the **City's Design Guidelines**. A balance of **diverse land uses** to ensure a vibrant and adaptable community that grows in a fiscally sustainable manner.
- Rich **gathering spaces and destinations**, transit-oriented developments, and commercial activity centers as places for residents, workers, and visitors to come together.
- Preservation and enhancement of **natural areas** important for their intrinsic beauty, wildlife habitat, recreational utility, and environmental value.
- **Open space, parks and recreational opportunities** for people of all ages, interests, and abilities.
- Communication, collaboration and **partnership with area agencies, jurisdictions, and stakeholders** to accomplish projects and programs that benefit the city and the region.

## **Goals**

There are five major goals set forth in this Comprehensive Plan:

1. **Land Use** – Well-managed growth, based on sound planning principles, with an emphasis on high-quality design.
2. **Environmental Quality** - A clean, safe, and healthy natural and built environment for today and generations to come.
3. **Community Facilities and Services** – Quality facilities and services for the Lone Tree community that are safe, efficient, and cost-effective.

4. **Transportation** – A safe, connected, and efficient transportation system in harmony with surrounding land uses and the environment.
5. **Economic Development** – A vibrant and financially sustainable economy

### **Policy**

Evaluate the **nature and extent of City facilities** and services to provide safety, efficiency and convenience and to meet the needs and desires of the community. This includes the facilities and services provided directly by the City (general government, community development, police, public works, arts, and culture) and those provided by other service providers, including special and metro districts such as Park Meadows, Rampart Range, South Metro Fire Rescue, **South Suburban Parks and Recreation**, Southgate Water and Sanitation, Douglas County Libraries, and the Douglas County School District.

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## **15. SHERIDAN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2015**

DEPARTMENT ISSUING | SHERIDAN PLANNING COMMISSION

LOCATION | CITY OF SHERIDAN

PUBLICATION YEAR | 2015

### **Summary**

The Sheridan Comprehensive Plan is the first plan update since 2004 focusing on individual neighborhood changes, health studies and demographic and economic shifts. The purpose of the plan is to respond to the changing circumstances to continue to meet the needs of its residents and retain the quality of life that initially attracted those residents to the community. Other focuses include opportunities along waterways, promoting an active and healthy lifestyle and coordinating with local and regional partners. There is also a heavy focus on the South Platte River and how that is incorporated into the community.

### **Callout Comments from the Plan**

“Survey was given at the 2013 **National Night Out** and the 2013 **Sheridan Celebrates** event. The City received over **150 surveys**”

“Tri-County staff found that **residents were already accessing a variety of destinations on foot**, particularly schools and public buildings in the Northgate and City Center neighborhoods.”

“Neighborhoods are where **"community"** should be found. In this ever-growing world where technology seems to be taking over, community cannot be forgotten.”

“The existing **Sheridan Recreation Center**, owned by the Sheridan School District and operated by **South Suburban Park and Recreation District**, serves as a community center. Citizens today indicated that the **facility needs to be updated and expanded** to provide for the recreational and social needs of the community.”

### **Partnerships**

- South Suburban Parks and Recreation
- Tri-County Health Department (TCHD)
- South Platte Working Group
- Sheridan Health Services
- Ground Work Denver
- Realtor Association and Home Builders Association
- Sheridan School District
- City of Englewood

### **Trends**

- The City of Sheridan has a **much higher percentage of adults who are 65 years and older** compared to Arapahoe County and the state overall.
- Need Connections between neighborhoods and the South Platte River and Bear Creek Corridors.
- **Each of the neighborhoods has at least one small park** that provides outdoor recreation opportunities for the young and old.
- Community is also served by **two community-sized parks**.
- The most central community park contains **ball fields, a playground, skate park and recreation center**, - located in conjunction with Sheridan High School.

### **Trails and Parks and Recreation Callouts**

- Quincy Trail
- South Platte River
- Bear Creek Corridors
- Centennial Park
- Sheridan Recreation Center
- Regional Transportation District (RTD)

### **Themes**

- Focus on neighborhoods
- Opportunities along waterways
- Sense of Community
- Active and Healthy Lifestyles
- Demographically and economically diverse
- Economic development, land use, transportation, and utility opportunities

### **Vision**

Those living in Sheridan enjoy a backyard full of nature with both the **South Platte River and Bear Creek** running through the community. **Trails along the waterways** and throughout the City **connect health-minded residents and business** owners alike to regional recreational opportunities. The City supports **healthy and active lifestyles** promoting access to healthy food and recreation opportunities for all residents.

## **Goals**

### **Recreation, Open Space, and Culture Goals**

- Goal: Improve community quality of life, health, attractiveness, and identity, by **providing recreational opportunities** through the creation and maintenance of a **sustainable system of interconnected parks, trails, and recreation facilities**.
- Enhance community quality of life, attractiveness and identity by **preserving significant views and diverse habitat**, especially along the **waterways**.

### **River Point Goals**

- Continue to work with the City of Englewood and the South Suburban Park and Recreation District to **offer recreational opportunities** to the citizens of Sheridan.

### **Recreation, Open Space, and Culture Objective**

- **Connect all the trail segments, greenway systems, and bike paths** throughout the City and the region, as opposed to individual trail segments that do not connect to other amenities or resources.

### **Actions relating to South Suburban**

- Create an overall Trails Plan for the City.
- Work with the **South Platte Working Group** to implement the recommendations of the **South Platte**
- **Corridor River Vision** pertaining to trail improvements along the South Platte River.
- Work collaboratively with Sheridan School District and South Suburban Parks and Recreation to identify opportunities for **increasing access to existing resources** like playgrounds and recreation facilities.
- Create a path connecting the Quincy trail across Federal and down to Centennial Park.
- Stripe more bike lanes on streets to provide connection between the regional trails along the waterways and various parts of the City.
- As appropriate, ensure that new development or redevelopment projects are required to **install trails that contribute to the overall trail system** in the City and the region as a whole.
- Take advantage of **potential greenways** that might exist in utility or railroad rights-of-way as opportunities for adding to the overall trail and greenway network or possibly as locations for community gardens.
- Adopt the recommendations of the South Platte Working Group Vision for the South Platte River.
- Work with Ground Work Denver to continue to clean-up and restore native vegetation along Bear Creek.
- Work with the Regional Transportation District (RTD) and South Suburban Park and Recreation District to **provide access to transit and recreational opportunities** when new housing is considered.
- Work with the Regional Transportation District (RTD) and South Suburban Park and Recreation District to provide **access to transit and active transportation opportunities** in new growth and redevelopment areas.

- Work collaboratively with Sheridan School District and South Suburban Parks and Recreation to identify opportunities for **increasing access** to existing resources like **playgrounds and recreation facilities**.
- Promote **unified messaging about the resources** available to Sheridan residents through existing communication portals from the City, Sheridan School District, and South Suburban Parks and Recreation.

## **Other Goals**

### **Community Engagement and Special Events**

- Develop and maintain a wide variety of methods by which the City engages its citizens for purposes of disseminating information, **requesting input and promoting specific programs or initiatives**.
- Develop and maintain a wide variety of special events that attract visitors, boost the economy and strengthen the desired image of the community as a destination.
- Encourage and **support community organizations, neighborhoods, and schools** with programs and events that will serve and engage the entire community.

### **Growth and Economic Development**

- Goal: Promote access to healthy food options through retail establishments.

### **Land Use and Community Design**

- Goal: Provide more opportunities for walking and **promote walking** as a viable transportation option in Sheridan.
- Goal: **Signage** - Ensure the existence of attractive, tasteful, unobtrusive private and public signage throughout the community that efficiently directs residents and visitors to businesses, transportation routes, cultural, and recreational opportunities, and other places and facilities of interest within the City of Sheridan.
- Promote more **resilient development practices** for new projects and redevelopment.

## **16. SOUTH PLATTE RIVER CORRIDOR VISION**

DEPARTMENT ISSUING | SOUTH PLATTE WORKING GROUP

LOCATION | ARAPAHOE COUNTY

PUBLICATION YEAR | 2013

### **Summary**

The South Platte River Corridor document provides a record of the charrette that pulls together the ideas and proposals of a broad cross section of stakeholders for the South Platte River corridor through Arapahoe County. The South Platte River corridor runs through Arapahoe County, from Dartmouth Avenue to C-470. The idea is to help restore a more natural function and balance to the River in the South Platte Park area focusing on Urban Drainage projects.

The three major tasks of the document process (preparation for the charrette; conducting and documenting the charrette; and summarizing and distilling the results into a plan for action)

### **Callout Comments from the Plan**

“...**concerns about channel stability** with the **local communities’** desires to have a more healthy and natural river will be the key to assuring that the South Platte River continues to become an ever more valuable natural resource for the citizens of Arapahoe County.”

“South Platte River corridor has at once severe bike and pedestrian connectivity challenges, and at the same time, exceptional opportunities to take advantage of multi-modal transit.”

“Centennial Park to Quincy Avenue Trail Connection: The significant lack of trail connections to the neighborhoods west of the South Platte River was identified as an important issue during the charrette.

“The City of Sheridan has been looking into possible trail routes between Centennial Park and the areas west of Federal. There is great potential to provide a safe bike and pedestrian route through this corridor that would provide a dramatic improvement to access, and it is recommended that a detailed trail route and preliminary design study be done to move this effort forward, and to assist with attaining grant funding that might be available to make this trail project a reality.”

**“Oxbow Pond” (at Lowe’s) Habitat Improvements:** South Suburban Parks and Recreation plans to improve the oxbow pond just west of the Lowe’s parking lot, adjacent to the South Platte. Although this is a relatively small parcel, **restoration of this area combined with potential habitat improvements** at the fire training center to the north, and the Murray Open Space to the east, will contribute to a significant improvement in the **habitat value** of this segment of the South Platte River corridor. **Some revisions may need to be made to South Suburban’s concept plan for this area if reconfiguration (or relocation) of the fire training facility can be accomplished, because new opportunities will likely arise that will affect this area.”**

**“Improve parking lot/trailhead at Oxford Avenue and the River:** This parking lot, north of Oxford and west of the River, is slated to be expanded per South Suburban. This is a good **opportunity area** to **strengthen the image of the corridor** through the incorporation of identity elements such as **signage, monumentation, art elements, kiosks, etc.**, so that the continuity of the Greenway is clear from Oxford, and the “district” brand is reinforced.”

“Master plans have been done by South Suburban for Murray Open Space and the Oxbow Property. Revisions to the plans may be required if fire training facility improvements are performed, due to new opportunities and changing conditions.”

**“Reynolds Landing Improvements:** With the development of the Breckenridge Brewery and the new signalized access at Santa Fe, Reynolds Landing will likely start to have **more visibility and usership**. This **South Suburban trailhead** has also been **identified as being under-utilized**, as well as a good candidate to take some of the **recreational use pressure off the South Platte Park**. Improvements recommended for these areas include **river edge improvements** that allow children and others to safely engage the water.”



### **Water Resources, Habitat & Natural Areas Callouts**

- Little Dry Creek Trail and Corridor Enhancement Potential
- South Platte/Bear Creek Confluence Habitat and Trail Enhancement Potential
- Golf Course Corridor Riparian Habitat Improvements
- Oxford-Union Channel and Habitat Improvement Project
- Centennial Park/Oxbow Pond Nature Study Opportunity
- Fire Training Facility Water Quality Protection Measures
- Big Dry Creek Channel and Trail Potential Enhancements
- “Oxbow Pond” (at Lowe’s) Habitat Improvements
- Little’s Creek Habitat Improvement Opportunities
- Watson Lake Potential Habitat Improvements--(Aquatic and Vegetative)
- Lee Gulch Pond Habitat Improvement Opportunities
- South Platte Park Channel and Habitat Improvement Area
- Over-Concentration of Fishing and Boating in South Platte Park
- Cooley Lake Edge at Tuck Property
- Ensor Property Floodplain Buffer Zone

### **Trail & Multi-Modal Connectivity Callouts**

- “Land-locked” Area between Dartmouth and Hampden West of the Santa Fe Drive
- Planned Floyd Avenue Underpass and Bridge
- Poor Trail Connection to Neighborhoods West of Oxford-Union
- Unsafe Bike/Pedestrian Connection from the East of Santa Fe at Oxford Avenue.
- Good Vehicular Trailhead Access from Santa Fe at Murray Open Space
- Hudson Gardens’ Lack of Integration with Greenway
- Columbine Valley: Few Connections from South Platte to West
- Improved/Signalized Access at Breckenridge Brewery/ **Reynolds Landing – Completed**
- Lack of Visual Connection from Aspen Grove/RTD Lot to Greenway

### **Partnerships**

- Arapahoe County
- Town of Columbine Valley
- City of Englewood
- City of Littleton
- Arapahoe County Open Space and Trails Advisory Board
- City of Sheridan
- South Metro Land Conservancy
- South Suburban Park and Recreation District
- Trust for Public Land
- Colorado Water Conservation Board
- Great Outdoors Colorado
- Trout Unlimited
- Urban Drainage and Flood Control District
- US Army Corps of Engineers

## **Trends**

### Corridor-Wide Issues and Opportunities

1. Shallow Flows in River and Poor-Quality Aquatic Habitat
2. Water Quality Treatment Opportunities
3. Low Quality Vegetative Habitat
4. Little Dry Creek Trail and Corridor Enhancement Potential - **important connection** between the South Platte River and the Englewood City Center

## **Themes**

1. Water, Habitat, and Natural Areas
2. Trail and Multi-Modal Connectivity
3. Recreation, Civil Uses, Education, Culture, and Identity
4. Land Use and Economic Development

## **Goals**

- Create an internet-based informational network for River corridor resources
- Seek to improve water quality throughout the corridor
- Develop trails on both the east and west sides of the River wherever possible
- Long term goal: Provide separate concrete and gravel trails for bikes and pedestrians
- Look at widening all 8' wide trails to 10' or 12' wide throughout corridor
- Consider developing interactive water features:
- Develop an overall fishing management plan
- Consider a comprehensive public art program along the corridor
- Consider screening and/or berming in all areas with adjacent properties which create a negative (visual or other) impact on the corridor
- Develop River corridor signage & image
- Consider the future of golf courses along the South Platte River

## **2012 Goals**

- To enhance the South Platte River corridor as a **recreational resource** for the entire region
- To **restore and revitalize** the River and its habitat, while maintaining its role as a flood conveyance
- To encourage and **improve opportunities for education** and understanding of South Platte River health and its tributaries
- To **connect the communities** to the River through more consistent land use, economic development and coordinated policies.

## 17. SANTA FE DRIVE ACTION PLAN

DEPARTMENT ISSUING | COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

LOCATION | C-470 TO I-25

PUBLICATION YEAR | 2022

### Summary Themes

**Travel corridor, pedestrian and bike safety and access, environmental study area- habitat and wildlife protection for Santa Fe Drive, north-south interregional highway between Castle Rock and Denver.**

- The 11-mile segment of Santa Fe Drive studied for this report is between C-470 and the junction of Alameda Avenue and Interstate 25 (I-25) (the Santa Fe Drive corridor).
- Passes through Littleton, Columbine Valley, and Sheridan.
- Transportation issues and environmental concerns in the Santa Fe Drive corridor
- West-east connectivity issues for walking and biking

### Pedestrian and Bicycle

- Santa Fe Drive lacks adequate facilities to accommodate pedestrian and bicyclist crossings of the highway with connections to area sidewalks, trails, and LRT stations.
- There are more than 24 recreational and open space resources within the Environmental Study Area that could be impacted by recommended projects.
- The South Platte River, Lee Gulch, and Big Dry Creek have the most intact vegetation and largest wetland and riparian communities adjacent to Santa Fe Drive. Pg. 59-60

### Plan Action Projects:

#### Littleton/Downtown Trail to Station Connection Improvements - UNFUNDED

Enhanced and additional wayfinding signage would be installed along the **Little's Creek Trail south of the Bowles Avenue intersection to enhance multimodal connections across Santa Fe Drive between the Mary Carter Greenway Trail and the Littleton/Downtown Station.** Enhanced crossings would also be installed at the three existing at-grade downtown street crossings. The project would improve a **grade-separated multimodal crossing** of the Santa Fe Drive corridor and enhance the connection to the Littleton/Downtown Station.

#### Mary Carter Greenway Trail Widening under US 285 - UNFUNDED

The Mary Carter Greenway Trail would be **widened under US 285**, as much as possible without major structural modifications to US 285 bridge. The **trail improvement would address an existing narrow choke point for pedestrians and bicyclists** and would **increase capacity and safety along the regional trail system.**

#### Future Projects - trail connections, trail paving, trail widening, accessibility

- Mary Carter Greenway Trail Bridge Widening near Mineral
- Lee Gulch Trail Paving
- Littleton Community Trail Paving
- Bowles Connection to Mary Carter Greenway Trail
- Mary Carter Greenway Trail Widening under US 285 (Early Action)
- Little Dry Creek Trail Wayfinding at Dartmouth (Early Action)

# 04 Equity Maps and Analysis

## MEMORANDUM PURPOSE

This memo's purpose is to identify areas where greater equity could be achieved through benefiting residents with parks and recreation. It provides demographic analysis identifying vulnerable populations to help indicate under-resourced areas within the South Suburban Park and Recreation District and identifies areas of focus for enhancing equity which will inform strategies for the South Suburban Parks and Recreation Master Plan. This analysis also creates an understanding of where gaps in current park accessibility, environmental inequities and vulnerable populations overlap.

This memo draws primarily upon data from Esri Business Analyst, the U.S. Census and the Census Bureau's American Community Survey. The 2020 American Community Survey (ACS), the 2020 U.S. Census blocks and 2016-2020 ACS 5 Year Estimates Data were examined to understand the demographic shifts in Colorado, specifically in and around the South Suburban Park and Recreation District. Esri Business Analyst calculates this population data utilizing the South Suburban Park and Recreation District boundary as its area for analysis. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) data are also included in the public health analysis. This equity memo has been formulated with the release of some but not all portions of the 2020 Census. When possible, 2020 datasets are cited; if not available, 2016-2020 ACD 5 Year Estimates are utilized. The profile seeks to use the most recently released data.

### **This Equity Memo report addresses the following:**

- Introduction
  - What is Equity in Parks and Recreation?
  - Understanding Equity in the South Suburban Park and Recreation District
- Demographic Equity Factors
  - Households Below the Poverty Line
  - Languages Spoken at Home
  - Race and Ethnicity
  - People with a Disability
  - Transportation Accessibility
  - Dependent Age Groups (Over 65 and Under 18)
- Environment & Health Equity Factors
  - Health & Access to Exercise (CDC Places Data)
  - Asthma Prevalence
  - Mental Health
  - Physical Inactivity
- Equity Analysis
  - CDC Social Vulnerability Index (SVI)
  - South Suburban Parks & Recreation Equity Zones

- Areas for Investment
  - Equity and Parks Gaps (Level of Service) Analysis
  - Equity, Tree Canopy & Urban Heat Islands
  - Equity and Population Density

## INTRODUCTION

### **What is Equity in Parks and Recreation?**

Identifying places to enhance equity is important to ensure everyone receives the appropriate investment for where they are<sup>1</sup>. This definition of equity is distinct from the idea of equality where everyone gets an equal amount of investment. Providing equal investment might not account for under-resourced communities. Equity recognizes that each person has different circumstances and allocates the resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome. Equity in parks is the inherent philosophy that public parks and recreation are for everyone, regardless of skin color, sexual orientation, ability, gender, income, age or ethnicity<sup>2</sup>. It ensures that all communities have access to the benefits of quality parks, recreational spaces, facilities and programs.

There is a long history in the United States of inequities in park access and underinvestment in park areas. Many underserved areas without convenient access to parks stem from years of racially discriminatory policies and a lack of funding and development. This has led to many under-resourced communities such as minority groups, low-income, immigrant and new Americans, those with physical and cognitive disabilities, and LGBTQ+ communities, not feeling welcome in public parks and spaces<sup>3</sup>. In addition to location and access considerations, other factors discourage or prevent individuals from choosing to visit parks or participate in recreation programs such as park design, types of amenities, program offerings, recreation types, history of discriminatory practices, lack of representation, surveillance and profiling, parks maintenance, hours of availability, and lack of familiarity. The many varieties of barriers are why there is a focus on fair and just investment that centers resident interests, needs, and priorities.

Lower levels of access to high quality parks and recreation opportunities creates disparities in populations experiencing the benefits of improved physical and mental health, cleaner air, social settings, property value increases, and more. Parks and recreation are increasingly viewed as essential for the well-being of residents and a strong contributor to quality of life within neighborhoods. However, not every community has historically seen the same investment in its parks and open spaces<sup>4</sup>. The NRPA estimates that as many as 100 million people, 30 percent of the U.S. population, lack access to the essential benefits parks and recreation provide<sup>5</sup>.

During the past few years, many people depended on public outdoor spaces and parks to overcome the health and economic challenges brought on by the Covid-19 global pandemic.

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<sup>1</sup> *Understanding Equity in Parks and Recreation*, NRPA

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> *Why Equity is at the center of all we do*. National Parks and Recreation Association

This was a dramatic shift in park usage from people looking for exercise, safe social connections, and the restorative effects of nature.<sup>6</sup> As it has become evident that parks are no longer simply for recreation but are a necessity for the physical, mental and social well-being of communities, many cities across the country are recognizing the impact of underinvestment in park areas and are acting to advance equity in park access within their cities<sup>7</sup>.

### Understanding Equity in the South Suburban Park and Recreation District

The South Suburban Park and Recreation District provides parks and recreation services to over 153,000 residents throughout six municipalities, including all of the City of Littleton, City of Sheridan, Town of Columbine Valley, City of Lone Tree, portions of the Town of Bow Mar (west of Lowell), the City of Centennial (west of 1-25) and unincorporated portions of Douglas County, Jefferson County and Arapahoe County. When considering equity in South Suburban Park and Recreation District, it is important to recognize that it serves a socially and culturally diverse area. Due to this, each municipality has unique needs and desires for its parks and recreation but shares a common goal of serving all residents equitably with quality parks, recreation, trails, and open spaces. The following analysis examines equity by identifying and comparing concentrations of vulnerable populations and other demographic factors with park locations.

### DEMOGRAPHIC EQUITY FACTORS

2016-2020 ACS 5-Yr Estimates Data is often used to identify census areas that have a higher percentage of population that are identified as vulnerable (defined as populations who are at greater risk of experiencing poor health outcomes due to social and economic factors, often in need of special care or considerations). Overlaying this socioeconomic information with data related to the availability and quality of parks, open space, and recreation offerings can establish a clearer understanding of under-resourced populations (defined as populations that do not have sufficient access to socioeconomic resources and government social services). The criteria used to determine vulnerable populations are relevant for this planning project because they can indicate areas with a concentration of high-risk populations (groups that have a higher risk of a certain health outcome than the general population).

ESRI defines high-risk populations as:

- Households below the poverty level
- Households receiving Supplement Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits
- Percent of the population 18 to 64 that do not speak English
- Households with one or more persons with a disability
- Owner households with no vehicles

South Suburban's high-risk population is relatively lower than statewide levels, with lower percentages of the population experiencing the at-risk criteria listed above. However, it is still important to identify areas for possible improvements to benefit existing at-risk populations. The

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<sup>6</sup> *Parks and an equitable recovery, Trust for Public Land*

<sup>7</sup> *Understanding Equity in Parks and Recreation, NRPA*



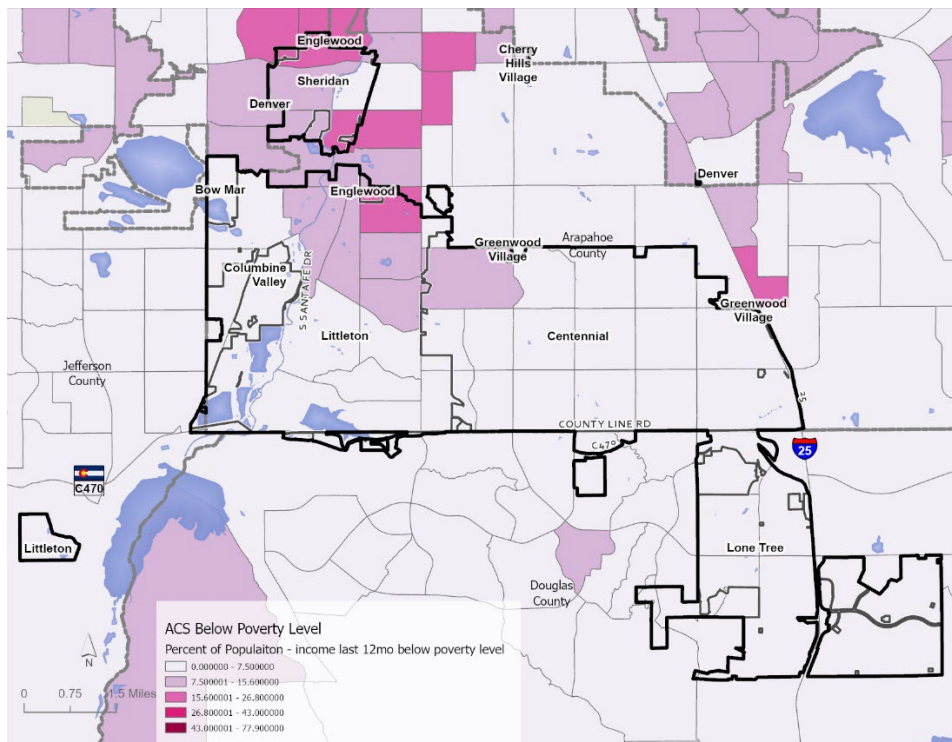
following maps highlight areas of concentration for at-risk populations in the South Suburban Park and Recreation District.

### **Households Below the Poverty Level**

The South Suburban Park and Recreation District's total households in 2020 is estimated at 62,204, with 5.53 percent of households below the poverty level<sup>8</sup>, lower than the State's 9.52 percent of households below the poverty level. Around 3.70 percent of the household population within the South Suburban Park and Recreation District are receiving aid from food stamps or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Figure 1. According to 2020 US Census data, the percent of the population below the poverty line is the highest in Sheridan and sections of northern Littleton (Figure 2).

	Households	Households Below the Poverty Level		Households Receiving SNAP	
	Total	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
<b>SSPRD</b>	62,204	3,440	5.53%	2,299	3.70%
<b>Colorado</b>	2,137,402	203,514	9.52%	154,593	7.23%

*Figure 1: Total Households, Households Below the Poverty Level, Households Receiving SNAP*  
Source: 2016-2020 ACS 5-Yr Estimates Data



*Figure 2: Percent of Population Below the Poverty Line*  
Source: ACS 2020 Population Variables

<sup>8</sup> 2016-2020 ACS 5-Yr Estimates Data

### **Languages Spoken at Home**

Figure 3 shows that less than one percent of residents within South Suburban between the ages of 18 and 64 speak languages other than English at home.

Language Spoken at Home Ages 18-64		
SSPRD	Total	Percent
Speak Spanish & No English	113	0.08%
Speak Indo-European & No English	34	0.02%
Speak Asian-Pacific Islander & No English	72	0.05%
Speak Other Language & No English	4	0.00%
Colorado	Total	Percent
Speak Spanish & No English	22,475	0.42%
Speak Indo-European & No English	1,016	0.02%
Speak Asian-Pacific Islander & No English	2,984	0.06%
Speak Other Language & No English	755	0.01%

*Figure 3: Language Spoken at Home Ages 18-64*

*Source: 2016-2020 ACS 5-Yr Estimates Data*

### **Race and Ethnicity**

While the South Suburban Park and Recreation District generally has a larger than state average white population<sup>9</sup>, there are concentrated areas with significant percentages of minority residents, as shown in Figure 6. This includes a significant Hispanic/Latino population in Sheridan, which includes populations between twenty and forty percent minority groups. There is also a prominent Asian population in Lone Tree which has a twenty percent minority population.

District-wide, significant racial/ethnic groups in South Suburban include those of Hispanic origin (10.9 percent), Asian populations (4.5 percent), Black populations (1.6 percent), and two or more races (3.2 percent). 3.1 percent of the population identifies as 'Some other Race'<sup>10</sup>.

The table below indicates the racial distribution in 2021 between the South Suburban Park and Recreation District compared to Colorado, with the percentage of the population of Hispanic Origin showing significantly lower in South Suburban 10.9 percent than the State's 22.2 percent.

<sup>9</sup> *Lifelong Colorado Initiative*, Department of Local Affairs

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

Population by Race/Ethnicity (2021)		
	SSPRD	Colorado
White Alone	86.9%	79.0%
Hispanic Origin	10.9%	22.2%
Black Alone	1.6%	4.4%
American Indian Alone	0.6%	1.2%
Asian Alone	4.5%	3.5%
Pacific Islander Alone	0.1%	0.2%
Some Other Race Alone	3.1%	7.8%
Two or More Races	3.2%	4.1%

Figure 4: Population by Race/Ethnicity (2020)

The table below shows the Total Race and Ethnicity population counts for Arapahoe, Jefferson and Douglas counties.

Race and Ethnicity per County			
	Arapahoe	Jefferson	Douglas
Total Population	655,070	582,910	357,978
Hispanic or Latino	135,729	91,514	34,110
White alone	368,047	435,245	278,770
Black or African American alone	68,152	6,653	4,788
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	2,654	2,898	970
Asian alone	41,855	17,694	19,807
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	1,634	464	290
Some Other Race alone	3,549	2,816	1,551
Population of two or more races	33,450	25,626	17,692

Figure 5: Race and Ethnicity per County

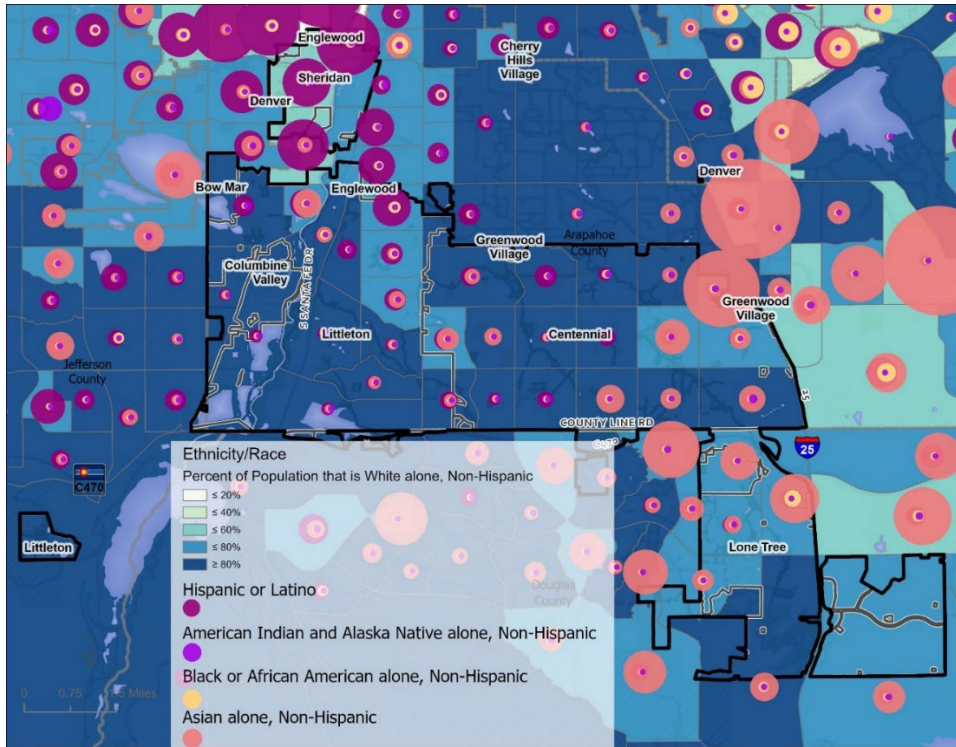


Figure 6: ACS Race and Ethnicity Distribution

Source: ACS 2020 Population Variables

## People with a Disability

Looking at the ACS 2020 5-year estimates data in the South Suburban Park and Recreation District, 18.24 percent of households have one or more persons with a disability, slightly less than the state's 21.95 percent<sup>11</sup>. When looking at the Percent of Population with a Disability Map (Figure 8), 15 percent or higher census tracts of households with a disability are distributed throughout Centennial, Littleton, Columbine Valley and Sheridan. Many of the same areas show that over 20 percent of the population with a disability are over the age of 65 (Figure 9).

Households with 1+ Persons with a Disability		
	Total	Percent
SSPRD	11,348	18.24%
Colorado	469,063	21.95%

Figure 7: Households with 1+ Persons with a Disability

Source: 2016-2020 ACS 5-Yr Estimates Data

<sup>11</sup> 2016-2020 ACS 5-Yr Estimates Data

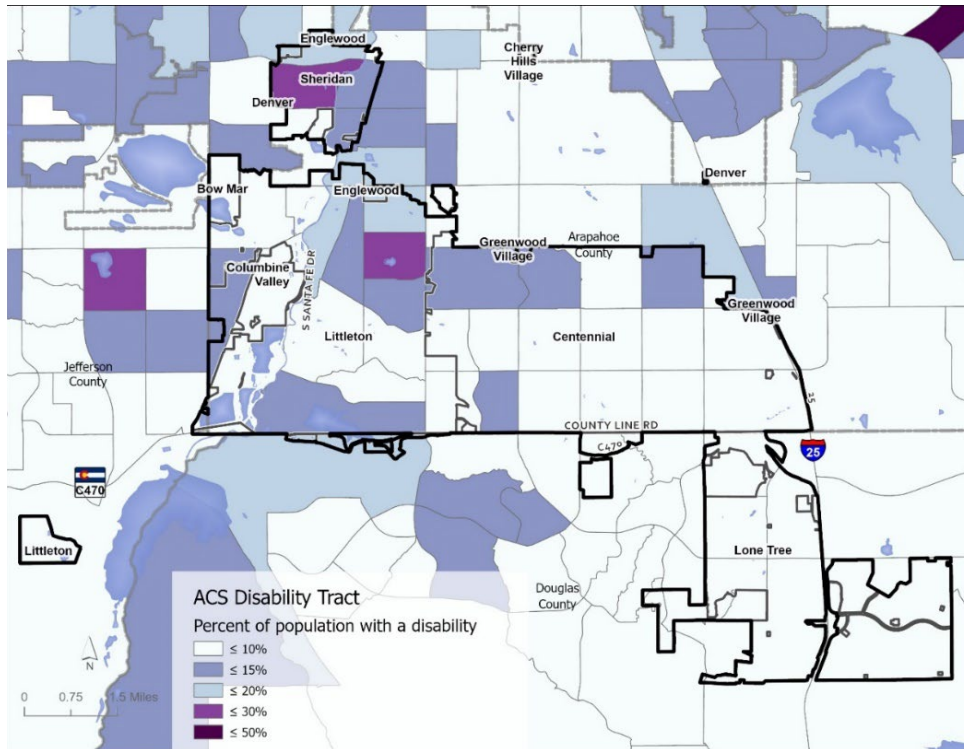


Figure 8: Percent of Population with a Disability  
Source: ACS 2020 Population Variables

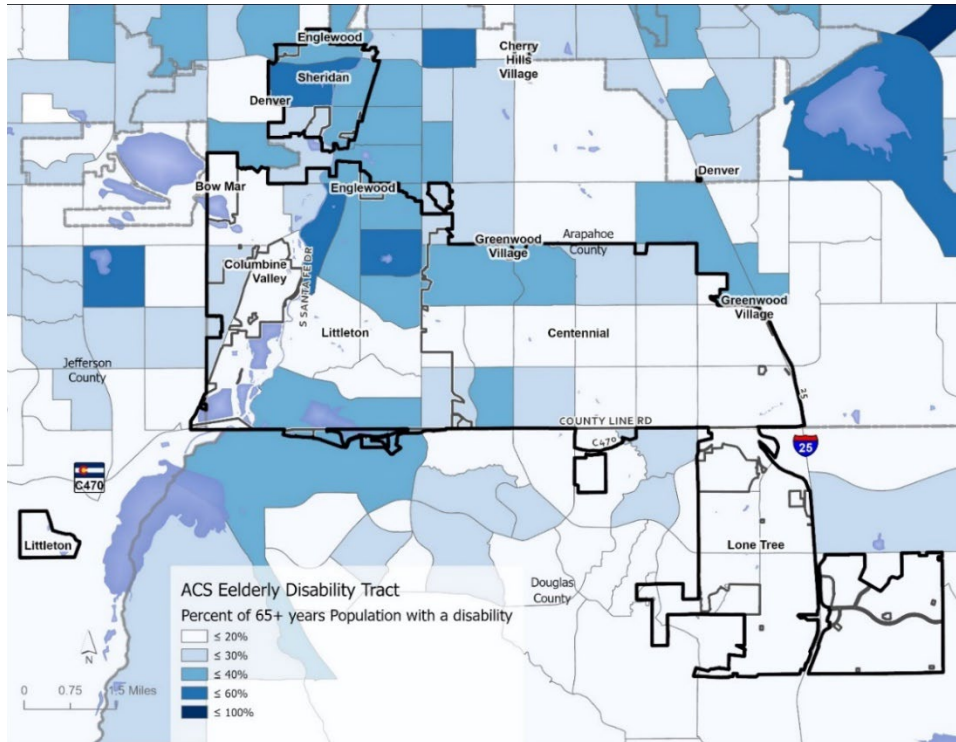


Figure 9: Percent of Population with a Disability over the age of 65  
Source: ACS 2020 Population Variables



## Transportation Accessibility

Most households in the South Suburban Park and Recreation District have an available vehicle. Only 1.55 percent of households in South Suburban are households with no vehicles (Figure 10), comparable to the state average of 1.75 percent. Census tracts with the highest percent of households with no vehicle accessibility are distributed throughout most of Sheridan, the northern and southern parts of Littleton, and Columbine Valley (Figure 11).

Owner Households with No Vehicles		
	Total	Percent
SSPRD	675	1.55%
Colorado	24,606	1.74%

Figure 10: Owner Households with No Vehicles  
Source: 2016-2020 ACS 5-Yr Estimates Data

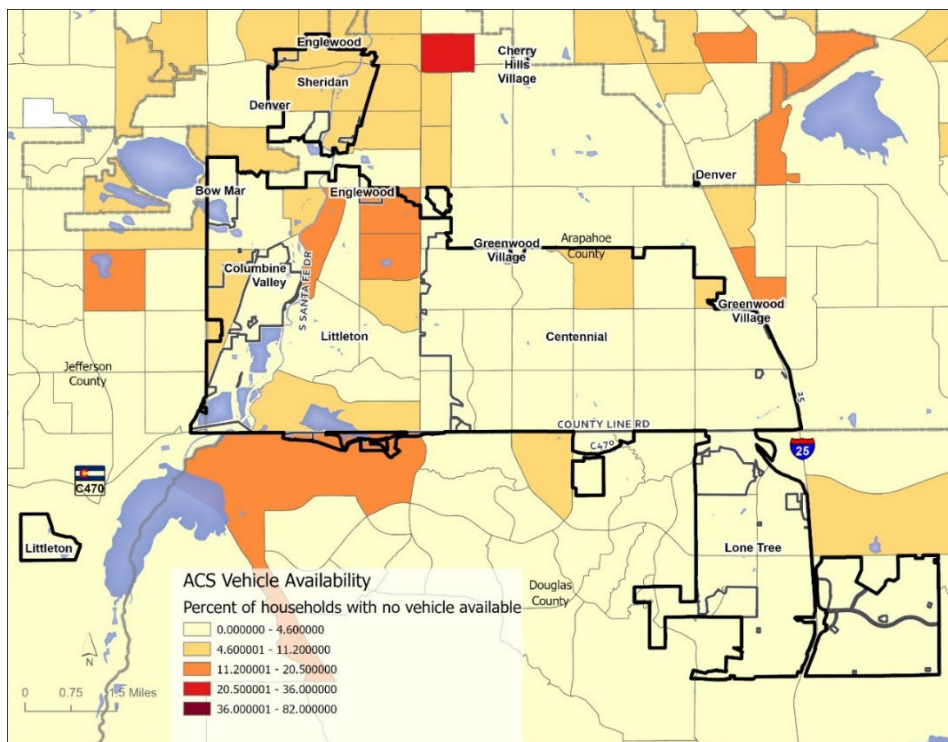


Figure 11: Percent of Households with no vehicle accessibility  
Source: ACS 2020 Population Variables

### **Dependent Age Groups (Over 65 and Under 18)**

Seniors and youth are also groups that should be considered in equity studies as these populations may need additional support to travel to parks or specialized programming to meet their needs. The South Suburban Park and Recreation District has a considerable portion of the population over the age of 45. The median age in South Suburban as of 2021 is 43.7<sup>12</sup>, which is higher than in 2010. The median age is expected to increase with time (Figure 12), with populations 55 and older increasing significantly in the coming years<sup>13</sup>.

The South Suburban Park and Recreation District has a decent portion of children under 14 years of age at around 16 percent, lower than the state's 18.8 percent. This age group is expected to decrease in the coming years (Figure 14), comparable to a projected statewide trend for the state of Colorado. The 65 and older age group is expected to grow, especially considering the current largest age group proportionately in the South Suburban Park and Recreation District is those aged between 45 and 65 years<sup>14</sup>. The 65 and older age group in South Suburban accounts for 20.4 percent of the population, significantly higher than the state's 15.3 percent. This age group is projected to increase to 23.3 percent by 2026.

Colorado is ranked as one of the healthiest states in the country<sup>15</sup>, which has many implications for parks and recreation. As populations continue to grow older, their needs and preferences may change. Considering that older generations are predicted to increase within South Suburban's boundaries, South Suburban might plan for future opportunities to accommodate seniors such as low-stress trails, senior activities and programs, and park amenities that cater to seniors.

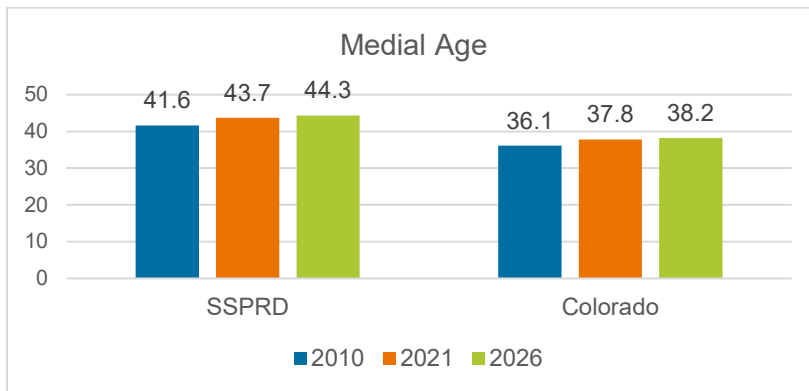


Figure 12: Median Age

Source: Esri, Business Analyst 2020

<sup>12</sup> Business Analyst 2020, Esri

<sup>13</sup> Colorado's Changing Population, Colorado Parks, and Wildlife

<sup>14</sup> Business Analyst 2020, Esri

<sup>15</sup> Lifelong Colorado Initiative, Department of Local Affairs



Age Distribution				
Age Groups	SSPRD		Colorado	
	2021	2026	2021	2026
0 - 4	4.8%	4.8%	6.1%	6.2%
5 - 9	5.3%	5.2%	6.3%	6.2%
10 - 14	6.1%	5.6%	6.4%	6.2%
15 - 24	11.6%	11.0%	13.0%	12.7%
25 - 34	12.1%	12.2%	14.3%	14.2%
35 - 44	11.6%	12.0%	13.5%	13.8%
45 - 54	12.9%	12.2%	12.2%	11.8%
55 - 64	15.2%	13.7%	12.8%	11.5%
65 - 74	11.8%	12.8%	9.5%	10.2%
75 - 84	6.0%	7.7%	4.2%	5.4%
85 +	2.6%	2.8%	1.6%	1.8%

Figure 13: Age Distribution, 5-year Increments

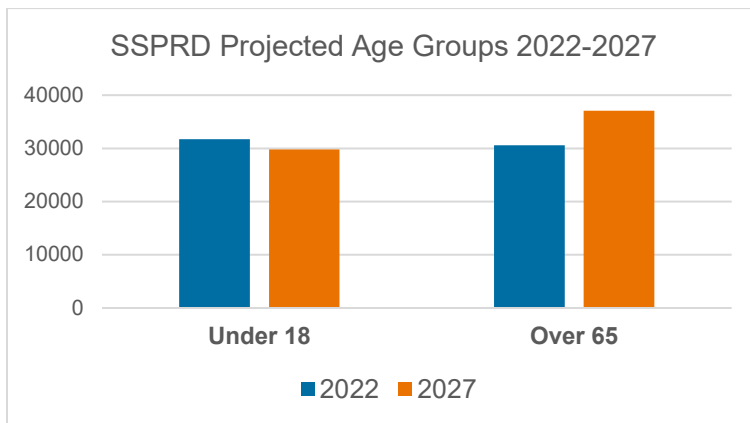


Figure 14: SSPRD Projected Age Groups 2022-2027  
Source: Esri, Business Analyst 2020

Figure 15 shows the distribution and residential locations of populations under 18 and over 65, with areas highlighted in dark purple as the most populated locations in the South Suburban Park and Recreation District. The green dots represent one dot per 80 people for residents under the age of 18. The yellow dots represent one dot per 80 people for residents 65 and older. The dots do not indicate address points, but rather, are graphically distributed across census tracts.

Centennial and Lone Tree show the most populated areas, with a concentration of residents in Centennial over 65 and Lone Tree under 18<sup>16</sup>. Other places with higher populations of these groups include Littleton, specifically to the South, with a higher concentration of 65 and older residents, and Bow Mar, with a higher concentration of groups under 18. Notably, the dot density shows the distribution of both groups throughout the entire South Suburban Park and Recreation District. Figure 16 shows the percentage of residents under the age of 18. Figure 17 shows the age distribution for the percent of residents over the age of 65.

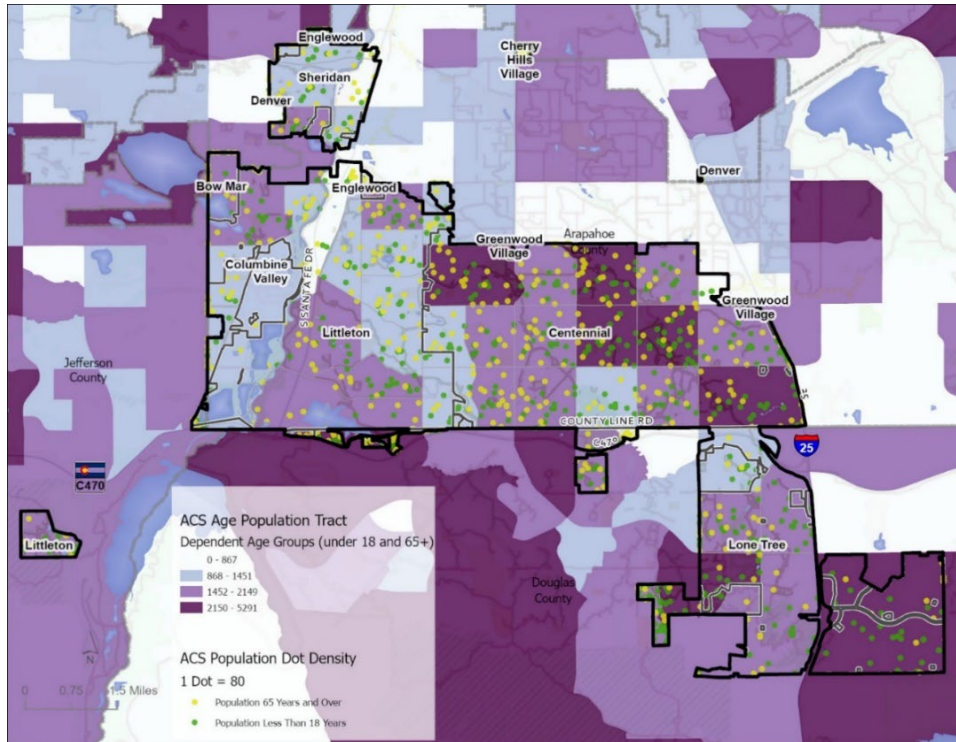


Figure 15: Population of Dependent Age Groups (Under 18 and Over 65)

Source: 2022 Population Density (Esri Demographics), ACS 2020 Population Variables

<sup>16</sup> Population Variables, ACS 2020 Census Data

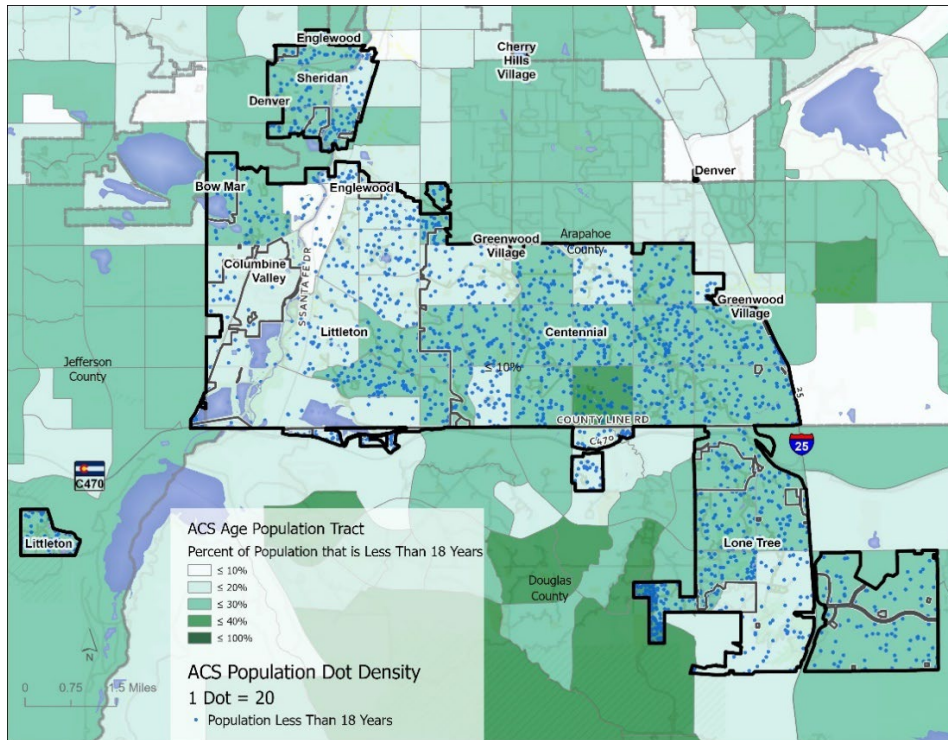


Figure 16: Percent of Population Under 18 and Dot Density Under 18  
Source: 2022 Population Density (Esri Demographics), ACS 2020 Population Variables

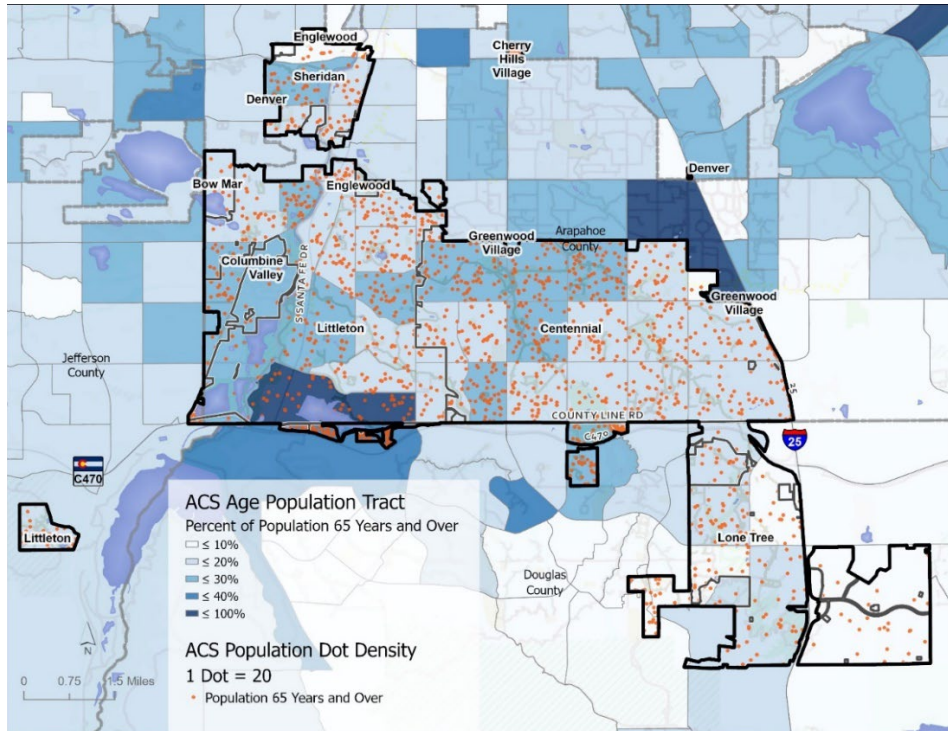


Figure 17: Percent of Population Over 65 and Dot Density Over 65  
Source: 2022 Population Density (Esri Demographics), ACS 2020

When looking at the Percent of Population Age Groups over the age of 65 and under 18 (Figure 18), most census tracts within South Suburban are 40 percent or more over the age of 65 and under 18<sup>17</sup>.

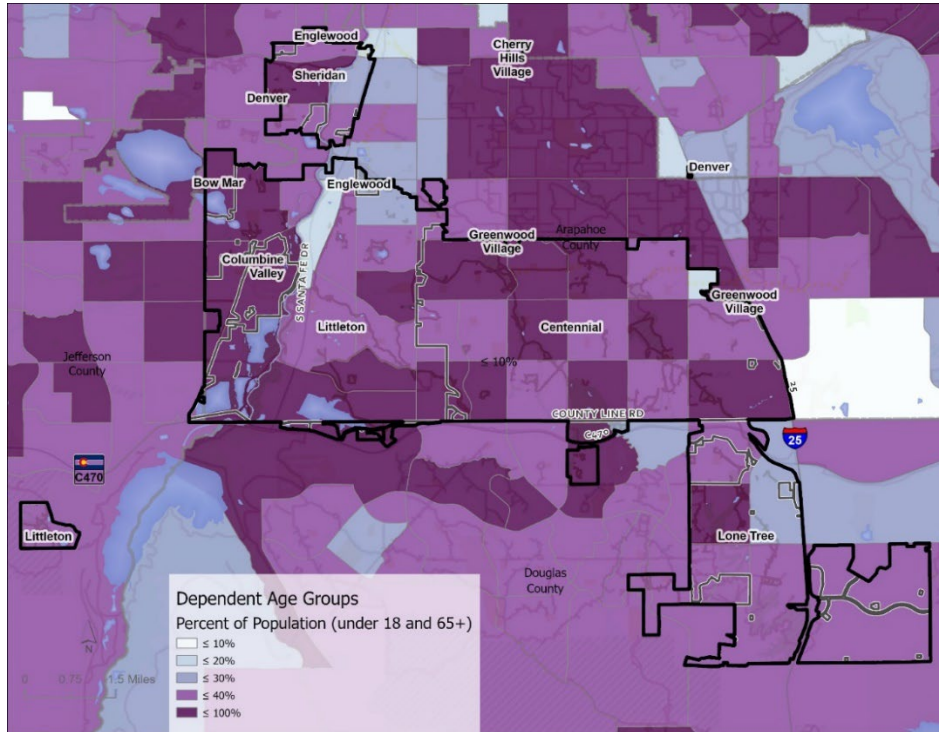


Figure 18: Percent of Population Under 18 and over 65  
Source: ACS 2020 Population Variables

## ENVIRONMENT & HEALTH EQUITY FACTORS

### Health & Access to Exercise (CDC Places Data)

The CDC Places Data is a collaboration between the CDC, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the CDC Foundation providing health data to better understand the burden and geographic distribution of health measures in their areas and assist them in planning public health interventions<sup>18</sup>. This data was utilized in the equity study, as health indicators are often linked to environmental conditions and highlight areas where populations have an increased need to access greenspace that contributes to healthy lifestyles, as well as areas that would benefit from environmental enhancement.

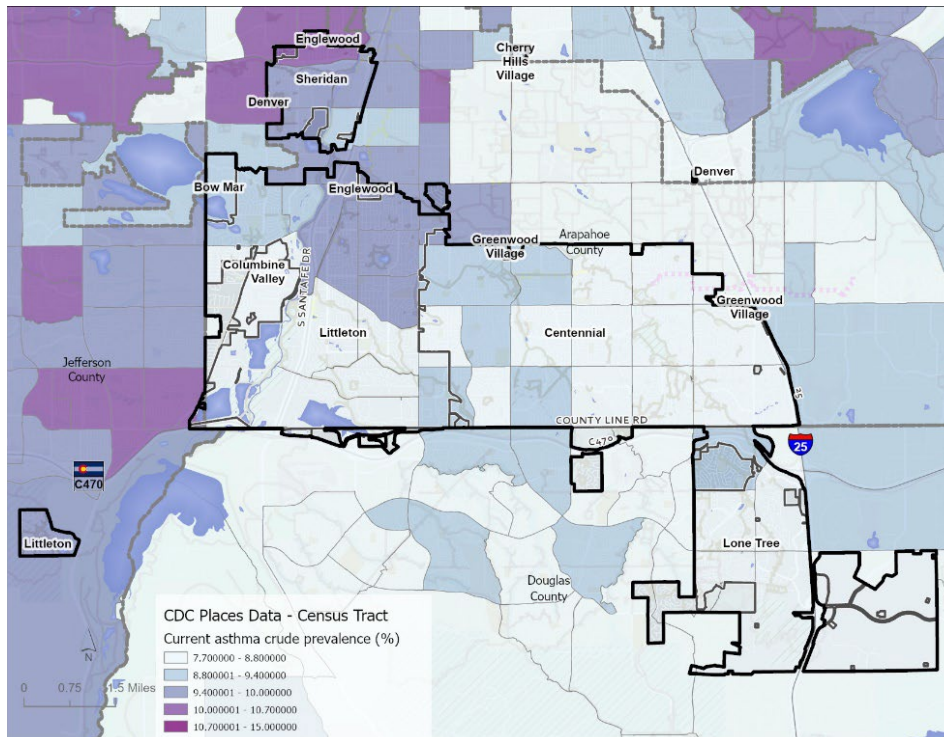
<sup>17</sup> Population Variables, ACS 2020 Census Data

<sup>18</sup> PLACES: Local Data for Better Health, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



## **Asthma Prevalence**

The map below (Figure 19) shows the estimate for the crude prevalence (defined by the CDC's crude rate calculation of the total number of cases divided by the total population and multiplied by 100,000) of current asthma among adults aged  $\geq 18$  years, 2019. The census tract with current asthma prevalence among adults aged 18 and older are distributed throughout western parts of Centennial, northern Littleton, northern area of Lone Tree, Bow Mar and Sheridan with the highest prevalence.

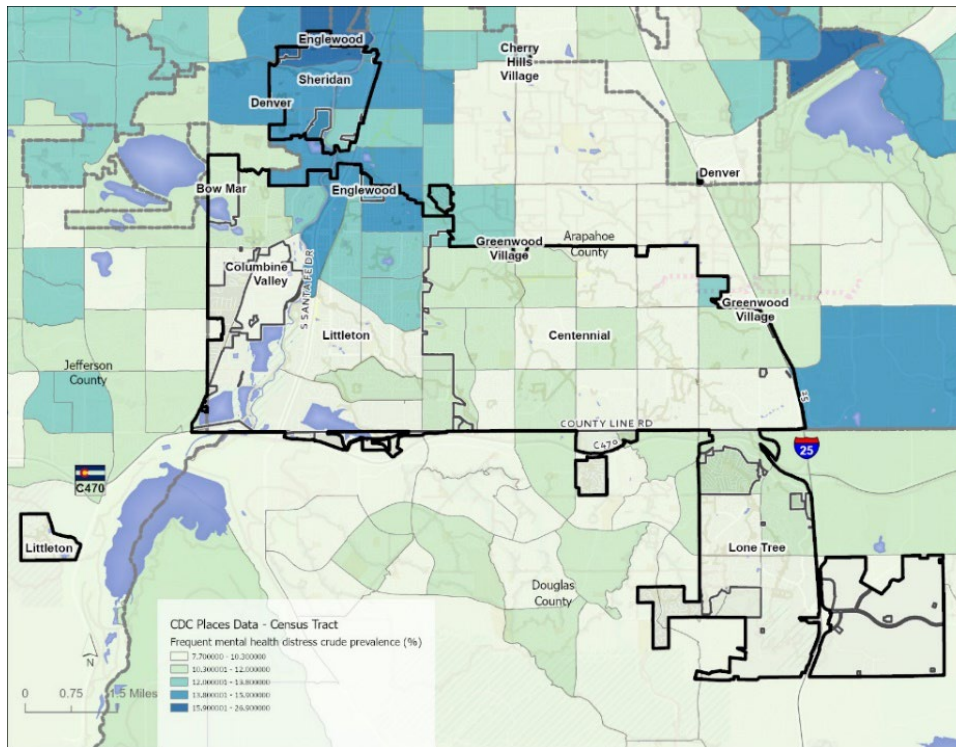


*Figure 19: CDC Asthma Prevalence*

*Source: Division of Population Health, National Center for Chronic Disease*

## **Mental Health**

Figure 20 shows the estimate for the crude prevalence of fair or poor mental health among adults aged  $\geq 18$  years, 2019. The census tract with the largest percent of mental health distress prevalence among adults aged 18 and older is distributed throughout Centennial, the northern area of Lone Tree, Bow Mar and Sheridan. Sheridan and northern Littleton have the highest percent of estimated mental health distress prevalence among adults over 18.



*Figure 20: CDC Mental Health Distress Prevalence*

*Source: Division of Population Health, National Center for Chronic Disease*

## Physical Inactivity

Figure 21 shows the estimate for crude prevalence of no leisure-time, physical activity among adults aged  $\geq 18$  years in 2019. The census tract with the highest percent of physical inactivity prevalence among adults aged 18 and older is distributed throughout most of Centennial, all of Columbine Valley, Bow Mar and Sheridan. Sheridan and Littleton have the highest percent of estimated physical inactivity prevalence among adults over 18.

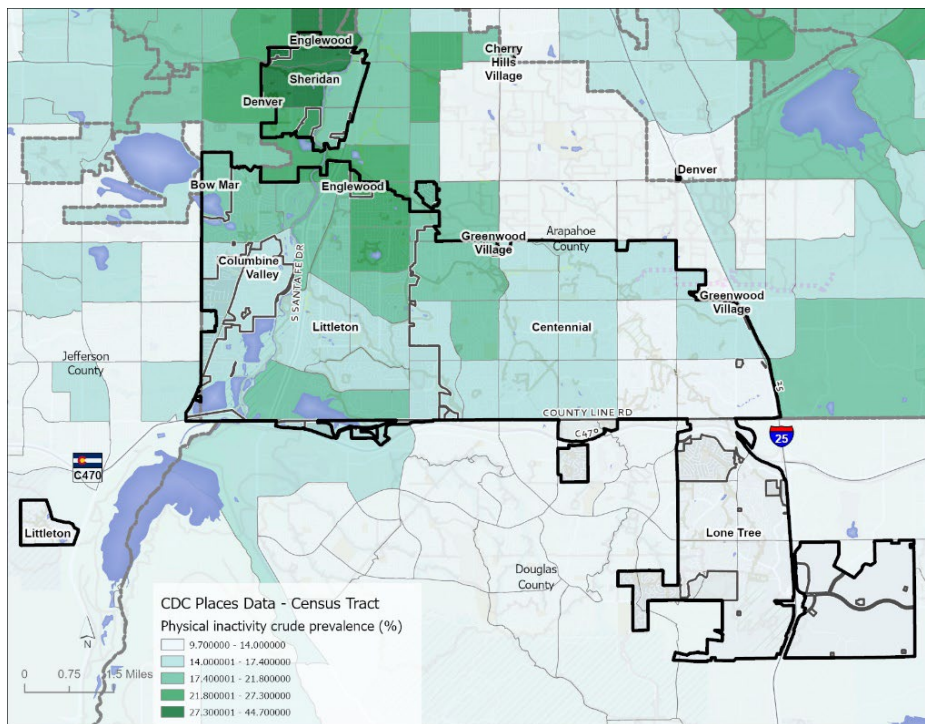


Figure 21: CDC Physical Inactivity Prevalence

Source: Division of Population Health, National Center for Chronic Disease



## EQUITY ANALYSIS

### **CDC Social Vulnerability Index (SVI)**

Social vulnerability refers to the potential negative effects on communities caused by external stresses on human health, according to the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR)<sup>19</sup>. Reducing social vulnerability can increase a community's resilience by decreasing economic loss, building social connectedness, and promoting social and physical well-being<sup>20</sup>. The Center for Disease Control's (CDC) Social Vulnerability Index is a good point of data for evaluating equity in park distribution.

The index composites 15 variables that the U.S. Census defines through geospatial research and analysis. Although the index was developed to assist in disaster planning, the criteria used to determine vulnerable populations are relevant for the South Suburban Park and Recreation District in that it can indicate areas where there are barriers in the park system or underrepresented groups.

The CDC Social Vulnerability Index uses geospatial research and analysis with U.S. Census data to determine the social vulnerability of every census tract. It ranks each one based on 15 socioeconomic factors, which are grouped into the following four related themes:

#### Socioeconomic status

- Below poverty
- Unemployed
- Income
- No high school diploma

#### Household composition and disability

- Aged 65 or older
- Aged 17 or younger
- Older than age 5 with a disability
- Single-parent households

#### Minority status and language

- Racial/cultural minority
- Speak English "less than well"

#### Housing type and transportation

- Multi-unit structures
- Mobile homes
- Crowding
- No vehicle
- Group quarters

<sup>19</sup> Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

Figure 22 is a composite of the SVI 15 social factors used and shows the overall social vulnerabilities of residents in the South Suburban Park and Recreation District.

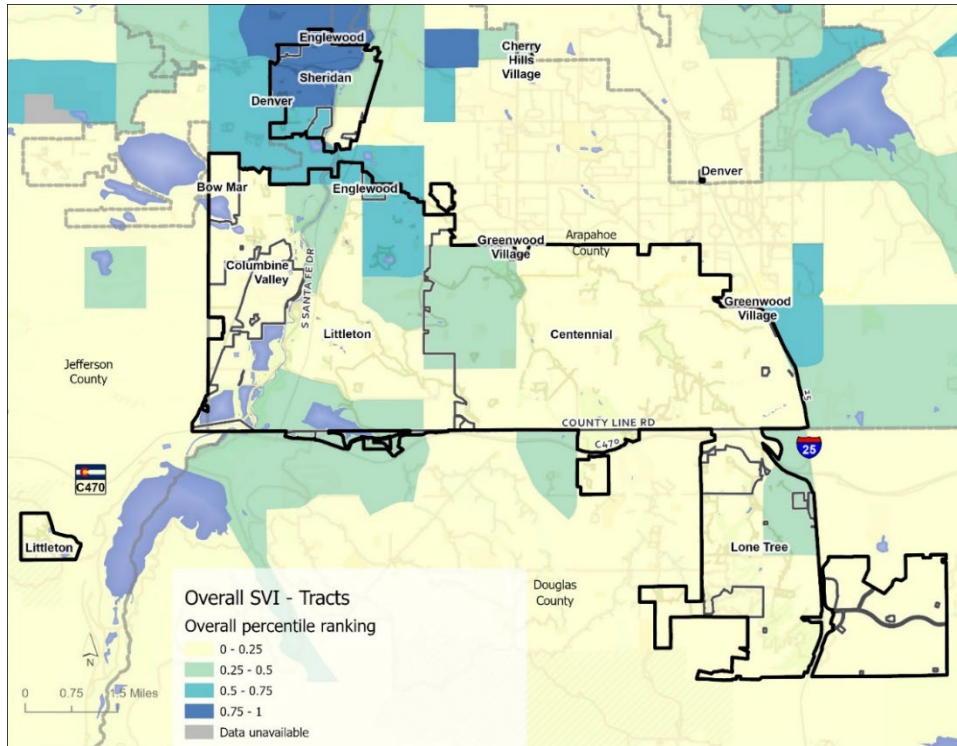


Figure 22: SVI Overall SVI Map

Source: Esri GIS Data, South Suburban Park and Recreation District Data

### **South Suburban Equity Zones:**

Figure 23 highlights the equity priority zones within South Suburban Park and Recreation District. These locations include neighborhoods with higher concentrations of vulnerable populations that also experience health conditions indicative of environmental inequities. These locations provide the greatest opportunities for enhancing equity within South Suburban. The equity zones were identified by layering priority factors including the CDC's Healthy Places data of asthma prevalence, mental health distress, physical inactivity, and the CDC Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) consisting of the 15 socio-economic factors mentioned above. The equity zones are categorized using a priority scale that shows very high, high and medium equity priority areas.

Equity zones with very high priority are highlighted in orange and are primarily centered in the northwest section of the South Suburban Park and Recreation District, especially within the northwestern portions of Sheridan and the northeastern portions of Littleton. High and medium priority equity zones also exist within these municipalities, and the eastern portion of Centennial contains a medium priority equity zone.

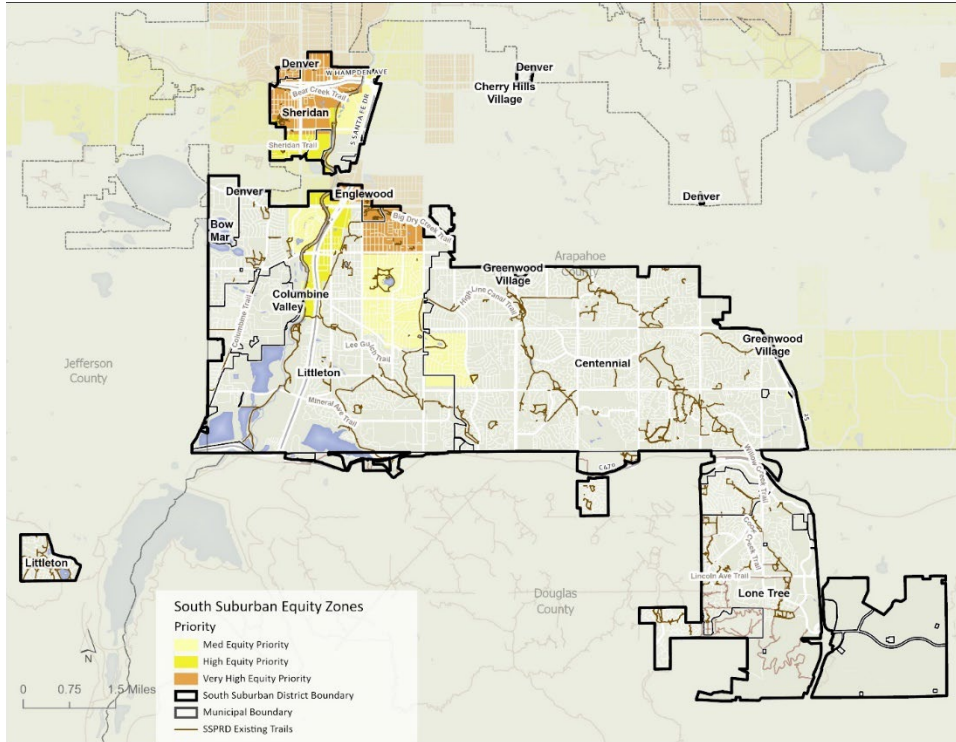


Figure 23: SSPRD Equity Zones

Source: CDC Social Vulnerability Index, CDC Healthy Places, South Suburban Park and Recreation

## AREAS FOR INVESTMENT

To identify areas where park investment would have the most impact on improving equity in park provisions, equity zones were overlaid with environmental factors such as gaps in park access, tree canopy factors, urban heat islands and areas of higher-density population. The analysis below examines how investing in specific geographic areas with targeted actions can directly improve equity within neighborhoods by improving environmental conditions through park and greenspace provisions. The accompanying maps highlight these areas and provide location-based recommendations for how enhancing or adding to greenspace can improve equity in each neighborhood.

### Equity and Parks Gaps (Level of Service) Analysis

To identify areas where the addition of parks would have the most impact on improving equity, equity zones were overlaid with gaps in park access. Figure 24 shows that 1-mile park access gaps, highlighted in pink, do not coincide with South Suburban equity zones. While Figure 24 shows residents in equity zones can access a park within one mile of their home, improvements could still be made to improve access in these areas. Finding creative ways to integrate green infrastructure and park provisions into high-density, built-out neighborhoods improves equity in access for a greater portion of the population. Creative strategies such as finding space in street corridors to create linear parks or enhancing trail corridors that run through dense urban centers are ways to improve park provisions in these areas. In the future, the redevelopment of commercial centers into mixed use spaces may also provide opportunities to increase greenspace through new neighborhood parks.

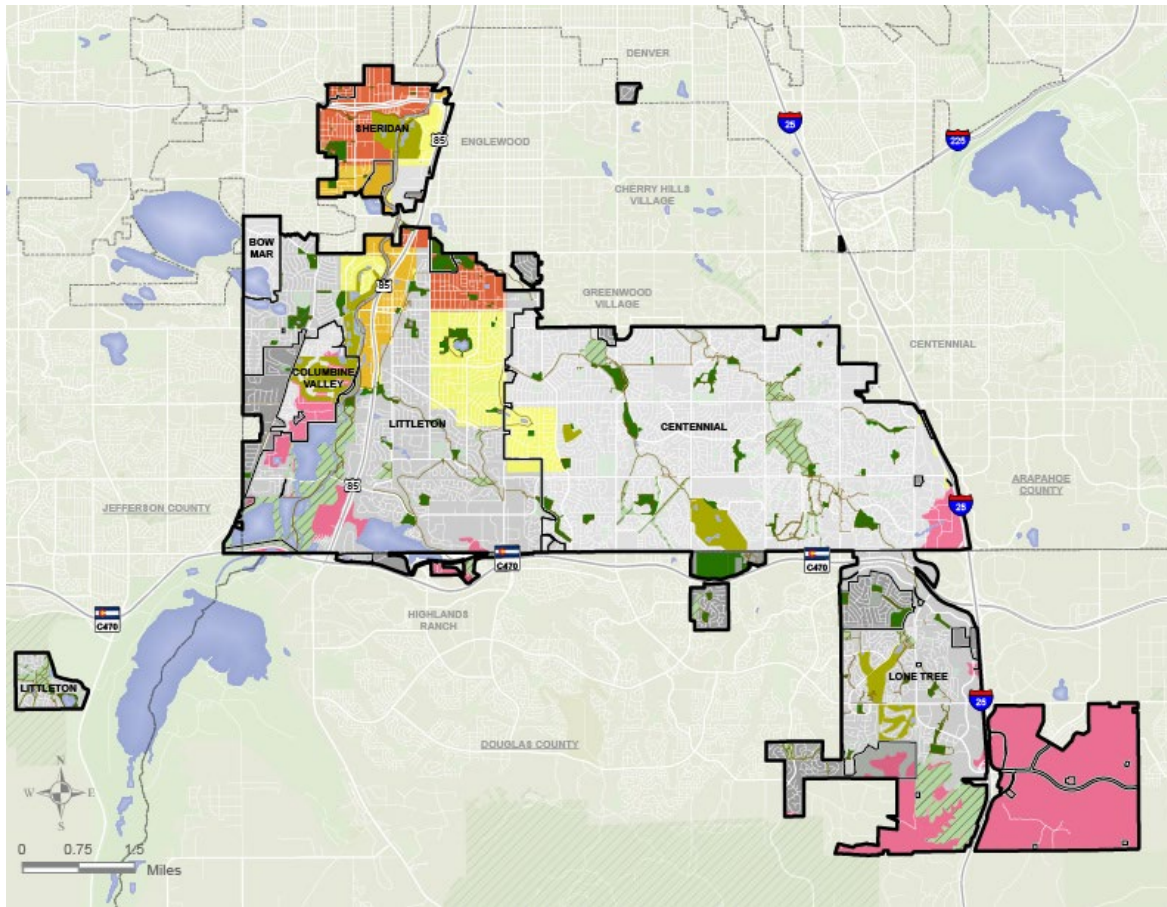


Figure 24: SSPRD Equity Zones and Parks Gaps

Source: CDC Social Vulnerability Index, CDC Healthy Places, South Suburban Park and Recreation District, Design Workshop Parks Gaps

### **Equity, Tree Canopy & Urban Heat Islands**

Equity zones can also be compared to locations with heightened environmental injustices, such as increased urban heat islands. Studies have shown direct ties to neighborhoods “redlined,” or deemed undesirable, by the 1930’s Federal Home Loan Bank Board and lack of tree cover and impervious surfaces<sup>21</sup>. Adding to and enhancing greenspace provisions in such areas improves local environments and enhances equitable access to natural assets. An example of such improvements is the addition of trees to parks and trails which create shade, lower local temperatures and clean the air.

The tree cover equity score was developed through a collaboration of non-profits, corporations and governmental agencies to ensure equitable tree cover in all neighborhoods. The score is calculated by measuring tree canopy, urban heat islands and socio-economic demographic criteria that highlight vulnerable populations. Lower tree equity scores indicate areas where

<sup>21</sup> Nowak et al. *The disparity in tree cover and ecosystem service values among redlining classes in the United States*



equity and environmental conditions could be improved through the addition of tree canopy, while higher tree equity scores indicate areas with desirable tree coverage.<sup>22</sup> Figure 25 shows tree equity scores within South Suburban Park and Recreation District, while Figure 26 shows the tree equity score of various neighborhoods within South Suburban's equity zones. Areas with lower equity scores are highlighted in lighter shades of green and yellow.

While portions of South Suburban in Douglas County such as Lone Tree and TrailMark do not fall within equity zones that indicate vulnerable populations, they do have lower tree equity scores. While this may indicate a need for additional trees in these areas, it is important to consider that many of these areas consist of newly developed neighborhoods with young trees which do not yet create the tree coverage that would be attained from mature trees. However, as the community expands and grows in these areas, new parks and open spaces with an adequate provision of trees will be an important component to include.

The majority of Sheridan within South Suburban's boundaries has either a very low or low tree score. Areas with a very low tree score, highlighted in light yellow include Sheridan neighborhoods just north of the Bear Creek Trail, between Hampden Dartmouth Avenues, and the commercial and industrial area between Santa Fe Drive and the Mary Carter Greenway Trail. Areas with a low tree score, indicated in light green, include commercial areas and residential neighborhoods between the Mary Carter Greenway Trail and Lowell Boulevard near Sheridan High School. Littleton also has a few low tree score areas, which include the neighborhood and commercial area near Littleton High School, between Broadway and Delaware, and also a largely commercial area with a few interspersed residences in northern Littleton near the Centennial shopping center at the intersection of Belleview Avenue and Federal Boulevard.

To improve environmental equity in these areas, South Suburban could plant additional trees at parks that lie within low tree equity score areas. Forming partnerships that support tree planting or the maintenance of mature trees along trail corridors, such as the Mary Carter Greenway Trail, Bear Creek Trail, and Big Dry Creek Trail would also increase environmental equity. This could be particularly effective in neighborhoods that are surrounded by commercial development and associated large parking lots. These areas are susceptible to higher urban heat island effects and would benefit from shaded trail corridors that increase access to open space.

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<sup>22</sup> <https://treeequityscore.org/about/>

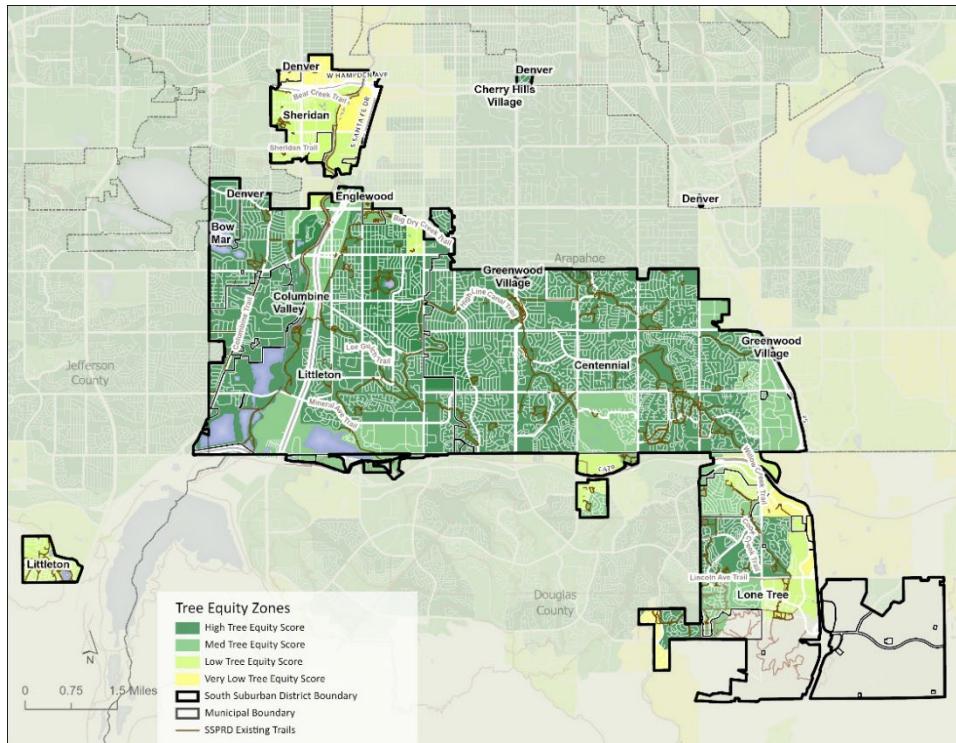


Figure 25: SSPRD Boundary and Tree Equity Scores

Source: CDC Social Vulnerability Index, CDC Healthy Places, South Suburban Park and Recreation District, Tree Equity Score

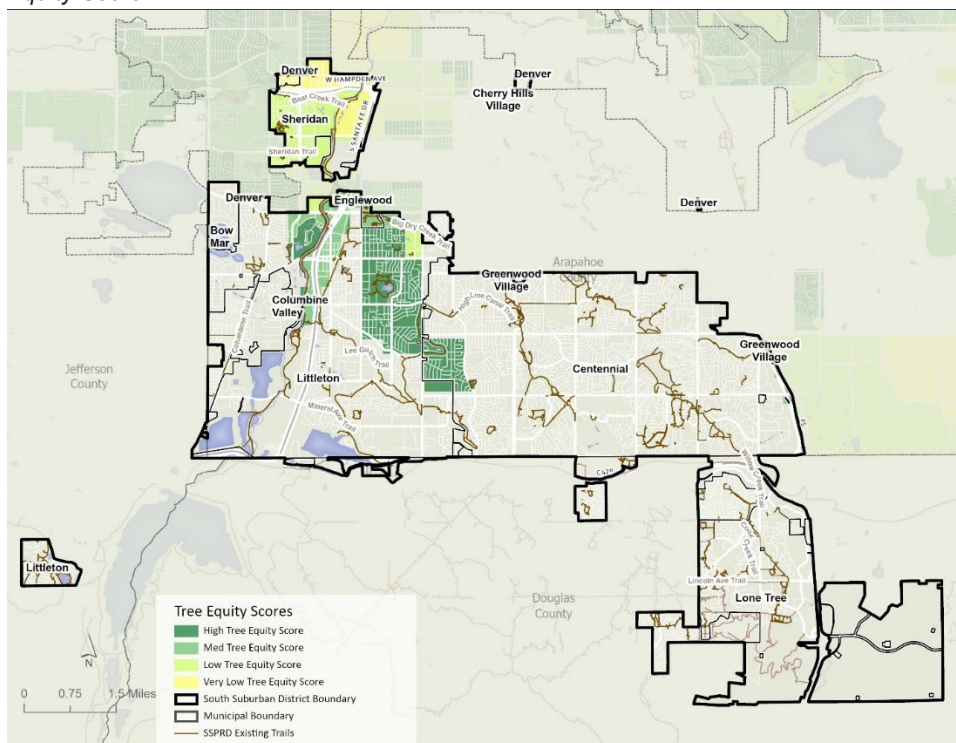
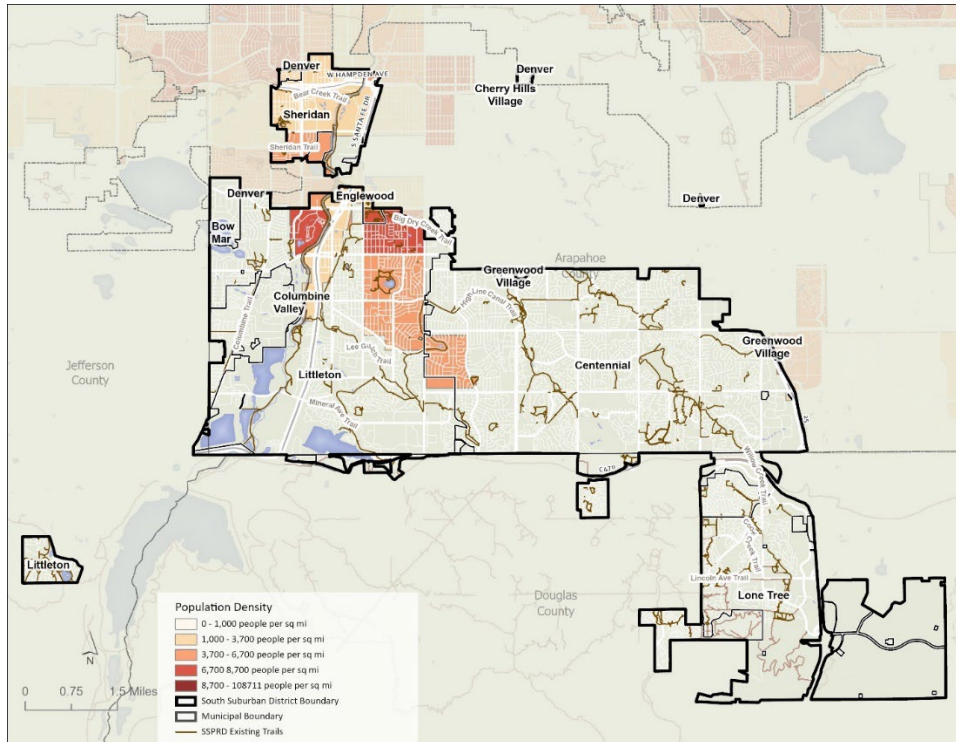


Figure 26: SSPRD Equity Zones and Tree Equity Scores

Source: CDC Social Vulnerability Index, CDC Healthy Places, South Suburban Park and Recreation District, Tree Equity Score

### **Equity & Population Density**

Figure 27 shows areas of higher population density within South Suburban equity zones, areas which would maximize the effects of investments, by reaching a greater number of residents. The most populated equity zone areas are in northern Littleton, especially the neighborhoods between Littleton Boulevard and Belleview Avenue just south of Cornerstone and Progress Parks, and a neighborhood of townhomes just north of the Littleton Golf and Tennis Center, bounded by Belleview Avenue, the Mary Carter Greenway Trail, and Federal Boulevard.



*Figure 27: SSPRD Equity Zones and Population Density*

*Source: CDC Social Vulnerability Index, CDC Healthy Places, South Suburban Park and Recreation District, 2022 Census*

### **Summary**

In conclusion, South Suburban Park and Recreation District can enhance equity for vulnerable populations by identifying strategies to increase parks and greenspace provisions within the identified South Suburban equity zones. Investments may include environmental enhancements, the addition of new park amenities, or additional parks to close gaps in the system and improve park access and walkability. Equity could also be enhanced in these locations through targeted programs that provide free or low-cost services and address barriers that various vulnerable demographic groups may face. Public engagement and outreach in equity areas should be prioritized, so that these communities can provide insight into their needs and desires, as well as help shape the future of park investments and improvements in their neighborhoods.



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# 05 Land Dedication Policy Assessment

## MEMORANDUM OVERVIEW

Municipalities throughout South Suburban Parks and Recreation District require by jurisdictional code for new development to provide open space that will serve the development's new residents. Requirements vary for each municipality and county and these provisions range from loosely defined open space, to dedicating park land, to fees for addition of park space and amenities. The lowest end of requirements may result in unusable and low-quality open space dedication that do not provide quality nature conservation, recreational amenities, or adequate park land to support the community.

The array of code requirements differing from eight jurisdictions also makes it difficult for South Suburban to anticipate what lands might become part of their inventory to improve and maintain. Without appropriate contributions by development SSPRD is challenged to provide consistent levels of service and ensure that each community's recreation needs are being met. Working with the municipalities and counties to find alignment in developer requirements and land dedication code would help South Suburban better manage and plan for recreation investments as communities continue to develop and grow.

This memo provides high-level summary information of existing land dedication policies, in-lieu fees, and impact fees for parks and open space land in the municipalities and counties of South Suburban. The research is intended to guide conversations with jurisdictional partners in exploring revisions to policies and land use code.

The memo includes:

- Key Takeaways
- General Overview of Exactions
- Recommendations
- Summary of Local Ordinances
- Comparison Matrix of Local Land Dedication and Fee-In-Lieu Policies and Programs

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

Overall, a number of key themes emerge from the research:

- Most of the researched municipal jurisdictions allow for a choice between parkland dedication and fee-in-lieu, or a combination of the two.
- Costing methodologies that determine land valuation for fee-in-lieu vary and may not always equal the actual costs of developing park and recreation amenities.
- The type and features of open space developers are required to provide per code are not always well-defined, which can lead to open spaces that are not quality, useable recreation areas.
- The amount of dedicated parkland required for each municipality is dependent upon current and future population estimates.
- Land dedication requirements differ depending on specified park classification.

## GENERAL OVERVIEW OF EXACTIONS

Exactions can be imposed as a condition for approval of land development and relate to a public need generated by the development itself. They are a means of providing parks and recreation facilities in newly developed areas of a jurisdiction without burdening established residents. Impact fees, land dedications, and fees-in-lieu are all types of exactions. They are imposed on a one-time basis. The exactions must bear a reasonable relationship to the facility needs that can be attributed to the development, so that the new development or residents directly benefit from the new infrastructure. Further, the courts have consistently indicated that facility standards for new and existing residents should be the same.

Land dedication can be imposed by a local government on a development applicant to ensure land is available for public facilities—including parks, trails and open space—and that they will be provided in a timely manner to serve the new development. The amount of land required must meet the needs generated by the new residents. The local government may also require infrastructure improvements needed for the new facilities.

Payment of a fee-in-lieu of land dedication may happen when there are site constraints within the development, or the location is not ideal for the jurisdiction. When collecting a fee-in-lieu, the amount should be equivalent to the value of land that would have been dedicated and any required infrastructure improvements.

The above types of exactions are sometimes limited to “project-level” mitigation. In contrast to project-level improvements, impact fees fund growth-related infrastructure that will benefit multiple development projects, or the entire jurisdiction—referred to as system-level improvements.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout our analysis of the current open space requirement policies across the municipalities, the following primary recommendations emerged for leadership of the South Suburban Parks and Recreation District leadership to consider:

- **Encourage jurisdictions to exercise or add fee-in-lieu options.** Include code requirements for when fee-in-lieu is a more desirable option than land dedication for approval bodies discretion.
- **Revise land dedication requirements to include more stipulations.** See Douglas County, Lone Tree and Centennial for development code for considerations of additional requirements and definitions. Include definitions of parks and open space types and rates, purposes, criteria for dedications, people per household rates, guidelines for appropriate locations, and more.

- **Eliminate the fee-in-lieu choice for costing methodology by the applicant.** Costing methodologies that determine land valuation for fees-in-lieu should not be left to the applicant, unless relevant land assessments by third parties are commissioned. SSPRD may need to take the lead in providing appropriate land value rates per geography. The code should allow for annual update of the rates.
- **Include park development or improvement costs and utility access provisions.** The true cost of providing parks, recreation, and open space is not accounted for in most of the local codes.
- **Include local trail or pathway requirements and credit for regional trail provision.**
- **Host a Land Dedication Code Workshop.** As the leading provider for park and recreation needs, South Suburban should convene a collaborative workshop with municipal and county partners. The workshop would provide an opportunity to assess the various land dedication policies and establish recommendations that work toward a universal structured program for parkland and open space dedication. With support of regional partners, South Suburban should advise that each municipality update their code to enforce this program and seek consistency and clarity throughout all partnering communities.
- **Present Master Plan needs to local decision-makers.** Final determinations for many developer requirements are made by local government officials and decision-makers. South Suburban and regional partners should share Master Plan priorities with decision-makers on an annual basis to better align decisions on developer requirements with Master Plan goals.
- **Include a provision for regular updates to the program.** South Suburban and regional partners should establish regular analysis of land dedication policies and fee-in-lieu calculations to ensure the program meets the needs of the communities within South Suburban and future parkland development.

## LOCAL ORDINANCES

The remainder of this document provides further information on municipalities within South Suburban, including Arapahoe County, Douglas County, Bow Mar, Centennial, Columbine Valley, Littleton, Lone Tree, and Sheridan; and their current respective approaches for land dedication and fee-in-lieu requirements for parks and open space.

## **Arapahoe County, Colorado**

Link to Ordinance: [Arapahoe County Subdivision Regulations](#)

Arapahoe County commissioned an assessment of their land development/policy exaction regulations from TischlerBise that was produced February 2021. The County's 2021 Open Space Master Plan calls for revision to the code in following the findings of the TischlerBise study. However, changes have not yet been made to the code. The following reports on the current code that SSPRD should encourage Arapahoe County to amend.

Arapahoe County allows for a hybrid of both park land dedication and fee-in-lieu to develop and maintain their parkland and open space throughout the county. The code does not distinguish among different types of dedication requirements for parks and open space.

### ***Parks and Open Space Land Dedication Requirements***

Park land dedication requirements in Arapahoe County, Colorado are based upon the population expected to be generated at the time of which the project is completed. The land dedication requirement is **6 acres of dedicated parkland per 1,000 residents**.

To determine projected population, Arapahoe County utilizes the following population per unit factors for calculations:

- 2.96 persons/ Single Family Detached unit
- 2.39 person/ Multifamily- Mid Density unit
- 1.76 persons/ Multifamily- High Density unit

### ***Payment of Fee-in-Lieu***

If the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) determines that the acreage required within a development for parks or other public purposes is too small to be viable or desirable or cannot be integrated into the development they instead require payment of a fee-in-lieu to the county. Arapahoe County utilizes either an appraisal method or assumed value method to determine whether the owner/ subdivider will dedicate land or pay a fee-in-lieu to the County.

- **Appraisal Method** determines the fair market value of the property by the Board of County Commissioners after consideration of qualifying appraisals submitted to the Board of County Commissioners.<sup>1</sup>
- **Assumed Value Method** sets fair market value in the Arapahoe County Land Development Code at \$20,000 per acre in the rural school districts and \$40,000 per acre in the suburban school districts.<sup>2</sup>

The BOCC may require both dedication of land and payment of sum of money provided that such a combination shall be at a minimum of the amount equivalent to the value of the area calculated to be dedicated.

<sup>1</sup> Development is also required to provide a separate land dedication of 0.25 acres per 1,000 residents for other public purposes.

<sup>2</sup> See *Land Development Code*, Board of County Commissioners of Arapahoe County, August 15, 2019.

**Recommended Revisions**

The TischlerBise Study recommends the following approaches to exactions program to align with future County parks and open space needs:

- Include costs for both land acquisition and improvements (development of park properties), which reflect actual costs.
- Update costs (and fees) annually to reflect inflation, land cost changes or other changes in costs.
- Align mitigation/exaction approach with the impact to the type of facility as well as County policy, master plan vision, level of service, capital planning, and geography (where appropriate). For example, the study recommends in unincorporated parts of the county:
  - Local Parks LOS of 0.5 acres per 1000 people; exaction type: land dedication and/or fee in lieu
  - Regional Parks LOS of 2.83 acres per 1000 people; exaction type: impact fees
  - Open Space LOS of 6.56 acres per 1000 people; exaction type: impact fees
  - Trails LOS 0.28 acres per 1000; exaction type: impact fees
  - Trailhead LOS 2.06 acres per 1000; exaction type: impact fees
- Isolate parks, open space, and recreation from other public facility needs such as schools or other public purposes.
- Include criteria or standards for park land dedication and regional trails

**Douglas County, Colorado**

Link to Ordinance: [Douglas County Subdivision Resolution](#) 10/13/2015

Douglas County provides an option for the Board of County Commissioners to decide between land dedication and fee-in-lieu. An important note is that the County assumes responsibility of development and maintenance of all regional parks, trails, and open lands unless otherwise negotiated.

Douglas County structures park land dedication requirements into two separate buckets, Local Parks and Regional Parks. These two land uses are defined as:

- **Local Parks** are classified as either neighborhood parks or community parks. Neighborhood parks are walk-in parks with a suggested minimum size of 5 acres having a service radius of 1/4 to 1/2 mile. Community parks are drive-in parks with a suggested minimum size of 20 acres having a service radius of 2 miles.
- **Regional Parks** are a major park that offers recreational opportunities of a nature or of such wide variety that it attracts people of the widest possible range of age and interest. The suggested minimum size for a regional park is 50 acres having a service area of 5 to 7 miles.

In general, these lands need to be suitable for the development of active play areas, trails, or in some instances serve to preserve unique landforms or natural areas. The code includes many stipulations regarding the criteria of the characteristics of the land that will be accepted.



Additional dedication for **open land** may be required by the Board if deemed necessary to preserve areas of special countywide significance. Also **local trails** are required of all developments and not counted as a credit for land dedication requirements. **Regional trail** land dedications may be considered for acceptance toward park land dedication requirements.

### ***Parks Land Dedication Requirements***

Park land dedication requirements in Douglas County, Colorado are based upon the population expected to be generated at the time of which the project is completed. The land dedication requirement is **15 acres of dedicated parkland per 1,000 residents**.

The County also provides calculations of land dedication per residential and non-residential developments.

- Residential Developments:
  - Local Park =  $DU \times 0.015$  acres/ unit
  - Regional Park =  $DU \times 0.030$  acres/ unit
  - Total =  $DU \times 0.045$  acres/ unit
- Non-Residential Developments:
  - Required to dedicate a minimum of 3% of the gross site for park purposes
  - Provision of park facilities within non-residential developments is encouraged. Only in those cases where the provision of park and recreational facilities will help satisfy the need for certain public recreational facilities will credit be considered.

### ***Payment of Fee-in-Lieu***

The Douglas County Board of County Commissioners is permitted to review development applications and deem if it is more appropriate to accept fee-in-lieu rather than incorporate park space within a proposed development.

### **Land For Public Parks Fee Calculation:**

The cash-in-lieu fee shall be equivalent to the full market value of the acreage required for park land dedication. Value shall be based on anticipated market value after completion of platting. The applicant is required to submit a proposal for the cash-in-lieu fee and supply a minimum of one appraisal of the property for the Board to evaluate the adequacy of the proposal.

When the combination of land and cash-in-lieu of land is requested, the following formula shall be used:

1. Total park dedication in acres required as calculated by land dedication requirements – Land Acreage Accepted = Total acreage for dedication as cash-in-lieu
2. Total acreage for dedication as cash-in-lieu X \$ Value/ acre as determined by market value = Dedication \$ amount required

**Bow Mar, Colorado**

Link to Ordinance: [Sec. 17-2-130. - Land dedication or cash payment in lieu thereof.](#)

Bow Mar has both a fee-in-lieu or land dedication option at the Town's discretion. Unlike Arapahoe and Douglas County, the Town of Bow Mar does not have a park land acreage per resident ratio that guides their dedication formulas, but rather requires a percentage of the entire subdivision.

***Parks and Open Space Land Dedication Requirements***

A requirement of a minimum of 20% of the gross area of all land being subdivided must be dedicated to open space and other community recreational amenities, cultural, educational and civic amenities and facilities. If the land is not suitable to provide such dedication, land may be accepted outside of the land being subdivided as a dedication.

***Payment of Fee-in-Lieu***

The Town may accept a payment equivalent to the fair market value of the land required for dedication. In addition, every subdivider shall pay to the Town a development fee of five thousand five hundred dollars (\$5,500) for each lot included in the proposed subdivision to improve and maintain the open space. A combination of both land dedication on the site and fee-in-lieu is permitted at the discretion of the Town.

**Centennial, Colorado**

Link to Ordinance: [C. Dedications for Parks and Other Public Purposes.](#)

Centennial has both a fee-in-lieu or land dedication option at the City's discretion. Centennial's code does provide a land value of \$40,000 per acre for fee-in-lieu. Interestingly, Sec. 12-10-304 allows for privately owned and maintained parks that may be credited up to 35 percent against the park requirements if it is in the public interest. Centennial does have unique land dedication requirements for developments in the AC and UC Zone districts.<sup>3</sup>

***Parks and Open Space Land Dedication Requirements***

Centennial separates their land dedication into two buckets: public parks and other public purposes. Trails and walkways are considered under the umbrella of other public purposes.

- **Public Parks:**
  - The land dedication requirement for public parks is **6 acres of dedicated parkland per 1,000 residents**.
- **Other Public Purposes** (including, but not limited to, libraries, multipurpose pathways, fire stations, public buildings, and other similar facilities):
  - The land dedication requirement for public parks is **0.25 acres of dedicated per 1,000 residents**.

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<sup>3</sup> [Centennial Dedications for Parks and Other Public Purposes](#)

The code includes standards for dedicating land that includes:

- Evaluation of the suitability of the land by the entity or department that will receive the dedication
- Required improvements to install streets, sidewalks, utilities and drainage to serve the site
- Be free of hazards or contamination
- Be strategically located as a link between other open space areas and parkland

#### **Payment of Fee-in-Lieu<sup>4</sup>**

If the decision-maker determines that the acreage required is too small to be viable or desirable or cannot be integrated into the development, then the owner/subdivider is required to pay a sum of money to the City of Centennial, Colorado, in lieu of the land dedication requirement.

The assumed value of land that is required to be dedicated is \$40,000 per acre. The amount may be modified by resolution of the City Council on an annual basis. The applicant may prove their land is less than this standard by receiving an appraisal by a MAI (Member of Appraisal Institute). The appraiser must state fair market value.

#### **Land For Public Parks Fee Calculation:**

(Land Value per Acre) x (The Required Acres of Dedicated Land) = Required fee-in-lieu

As an alternative, the City may require a combination of land and fees-in-lieu. Land that is dedicated shall not be included in the calculation of fees-in-lieu.

#### **Columbine Valley, Colorado**

Link to Ordinance: [Land-Use-Regulations-Nov-2014.pdf \(columbinevalley.org\)](#)

#### ***Parks and Open Space Land Dedication Requirements***

Columbine Valley's land use regulations include loose definitions of what constitutes open space: land used for recreational, landscaping and/or buffering purposes. Gross Open Space includes residential yards, parklands, and landscaping treatments within non-residential developments. Common open space includes recreational, landscaping and/or buffering purposes, parkland, drainageways, recreational facilities, trails, natural preserves, and etc. Common open space does not need to provide public access.

The Town of Columbine Valley requires land dedication of a minimum of 20 percent of commercial or residential development be dedicated to common open space or other public facilities unless otherwise approved by the Town Board of Trustees. Residential estate planned development districts require a minimum of 35 percent common open space.

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<sup>4</sup> [Centennial Dedications for Parks and Other Public Purposes](#)

**Littleton, Colorado**

Littleton receives their land dedication through the Arapahoe County requirements for a majority of the Town. The areas of the Town that sit within Douglas County is referred to as TrailMark, in which Douglas County's land dedication requirements are upheld. There is no dedicated funding source for open space and recreation development nor maintenance beyond the funds dedicated through the Littleton's General Fund.

Littleton likely is not receiving park land dedications at a rate appropriate for an urban area because of their reliance on the county codes that provide levels of service rates for rural areas that are focused on natural lands preservation rather than developed parks.

**Lone Tree, Colorado**

Link to Ordinance: [Sec. 17-9-50. Cash-in-lieu of land dedication.](#)

Lone Tree includes both park land dedication or Cash-in-lieu at the City Council's discretion.

***Parks and Open Space Land Dedication Requirements***

Park land dedication requirements in Lone Tree are based upon the population expected to be generated at the time of which the project is completed. The land dedication requirement is **15 acres of dedicated parkland per 1,000 residents** (based on an occupancy factor of 3.0 people per household).

Lands must be suitable for the development of active play areas, passive recreation areas, trails or, in some instances, to preserve unique landforms or natural areas. The code includes selection criteria for public park land dedications. Additional dedication for open space may be required by the Council if deemed necessary to preserve or conserve natural areas of special significance.

If it is not deemed feasible to dedicate this land on the site, land dedication requirements may be located off-site if they are placed within two miles of the development.

The City may assume or negotiate the responsibility of development and maintenance of all parks, trails and open space.

***Payment of Fee-in-Lieu***

Cash-in-lieu of land dedication shall be permitted in cases in which the cash value of park land dedication is deemed, by the Council, to be more appropriate in satisfying the needs of the proposed development than land within or in the vicinity of the proposed development.<sup>5</sup>

In those land developments where proposed regional trails are located, no cash-in-lieu of land will be accepted unless there is an acceptable alternate route shown on the Comprehensive Plan or other public parks, trails or open space plan adopted by the City.

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<sup>5</sup> [Lone Tree Colorado Municipal Code Sec 17-9-50](#)

**Land For Public Parks Fee Calculation:**

(Total Acreage for Dedication) x (Totals \$ value/ acre)

When the combination of land and cash-in-lieu:

1. (Total Acreage for dedication as cash-in-lieu) - (Land acreage accepted by the City) = Total Acreage for dedication as cash-in-lieu
2. (Total Acreage for dedication as cash-in-lieu) x (Total \$ value/ acre) = Amount Required for Cash-in-lieu

The minimum cash-in-lieu fee shall be five thousand dollars (\$5,000).

The cash-in-lieu fee, where feasible, must be used to benefit the residents within a reasonable service area. If possible, the service area shall be within one (1) mile of the project site and not more than two (2) miles from the project site unless otherwise agreed to by the City.

**Credits Toward Dedication**

The applicant may receive credit toward park land dedication requirements by providing swimming pools that meet the public need. They can also receive credit by providing private park, recreation or open space purposes.

**Sheridan, Colorado**

Link to Ordinance: [Sec. 55-115. - Parkland dedication requirements.](#)

Sheridan's subdivision land use code includes provisions for fee-in-lieu or public parks and recreation land dedication.

***Parks and Open Space Land Dedication Requirements***

Sheridan subdivision regulations require that **five (5) percent of the subdivided gross land area** be dedicated to public parks and recreation. The code includes criteria of what constitutes appropriate land for park purposes or undisturbed natural open space as publicly owned open space.

Different mixed use and commercial districts have requirements for usable open space ranging from a minimum of 10 percent to 25 percent of the district.

***Payment of Fee-in-Lieu***

If it is determined that the proposed development has insufficient land to provide adequate public parks to the parkland standards established by the City of Sheridan, then a cash-in-lieu dedication fee will be accepted. This fee will be calculated according to the fair market value of the land on a per square foot basis by means of either an appraisal or the cash value of comparably zoned land within the County.

## Land Dedication & Cash-In-Lieu Comparison Matrix

Location	Land Conveyance Rate (Residential)	Fee-in-Lieu Rate	Criteria for Dedications	OS/Trail Dedications	Park Requirements	Commercial Requirements
Arapahoe	6 acres of parkland/ 1,000 residents. 1.76 to 2.96 persons per household	Either appraisal or assumed value method (\$40,000 per acre)	None currently, but under consideration	No	None currently, but under consideration	No
Douglas	15 acres of parkland/ 1,000 residents. Local Park= DU x 0.15 acres/unit and Regional Park = DU x 0.03 acres/unit	Appraisal of land market value required by applicant. Minimum rate for minor development	Yes, many criteria	Yes, local and regional trails and open land	No	Yes, 3% of the gross site for park purposes
Bow Mar	Minimum 20% of the gross area of all land must be dedicated	Fair market value of the land	None	No	\$5,500 for each lot	No
Centennial	Public Parks: 6 acres of parkland/1,000 residents Other Public Purposes (public buildings and pathways): 0.25 acres per 1,000 residents	Land value of \$40,000 per acre.	Yes	Yes, multi-purpose pathways	No	AC and UC Zones
Columbine Valley	Minimum of 20% open space (not required to be public) or other public facilities unless otherwise approved	None	Open Space= residential yards, parkland, landscape treatments, drainageways, trails natural preserves	Included in definition	No	Yes, 20% common open space
Littleton	Refers to Arapahoe and Douglas County code	Refers to Arapahoe and Douglas County code	Refers	Refers	No	No
Lone Tree	15 acres of dedicated parkland/ 1,000 residents (3.0 people per household)	Total land market value/acre	Yes	Yes, open space	No, but may negotiate with applicant	No
Sheridan	5% of the subdivided gross land area must be dedicated to public parks and recreation	Fair market value of the land by either appraisal or cash value of comparably zoned land	Yes	No	No	Yes



# o6 Public Requests Review (2017 - 2021)

## MEMORANDUM PURPOSE

Public input received over the last four years (2017-2021) was evaluated to inform the 2022 Master Plan. Public input was provided to SSPRD through capital projects requests, citizen requests, and individual park project surveys. This memo summarizes public feedback and findings to begin the effort of developing questions for a District-wide survey.

## METHODOLOGY

The following data from the survey results and public requests were analyzed to show emerging trends or patterns. Between 2017-2021 there were 84 total citizen requests submitted and 1049 responses gathered from 13 public surveys.

### **Citizen Requests were extracted from the following documents:**

- 2018 Citizens' Capital Requests
- 2019 Five Year CIP Citizens Requests-recommendations
- 2020 Citizen and Partner Capital Requests
- 2021-2022 South Suburban Budget Requests MASTER

### **Public feedback from survey results were extracted from the following surveys:**

- Berry Park Improvements Online Survey
- Bobcat Park Public Input Form Online Survey
- South Suburban Public Feedback Centennial Ridge Park
- Cornerstone Park Meeting Comments
- David A. Lorenz Public Input
- Improvements to Ida Park Online Survey
- Jackass Hill Comments
- Lone Tree Regional Park Public Input Summary
- Lonesome Pine Park Online Survey
- Progress Park Master Plan Public Input
- Reynolds Landing (and Superchi Property) Summary of Public Engagement Survey Results- Summer 2021
- Ridgeview Park Community Input Summary
- Southbridge Park Online Survey

Requests were individually listed and assigned an initial category based on similar themes. An inventory of these categories was used to further refine requests into a list of Main Categories for both citizen requests and public survey input (See Table 1).

The Top Themes (See Table 2) emerged based on similar requests repeatedly showing up in public input. To find the Top Themes, Main Categories were combined based on similar characteristics and the number of requests for each Main Category item. The Top Themes are not listed in any order of importance but are categorical themes.

## FINDINGS

Top Themes that emerged from all the data sources are grouped and shown in Table 1, listed in order roughly by number of requests.

**Table 1: Top Themes from all input sources (2017-2021)**

Top Themes
Improvements
Connectivity and Trails – Biking, Walking, Running
Specialty Amenities (one-off requests)
Skate and Bike Park
Increased Plants and Nature
Active Play
Outdoor Sports Courts
Dog Friendly Parks
Restrooms
Shelters or Shade Spaces
Water Play
Safety
ADA and Inclusive Parks

Comments requesting improvements to existing amenities were the most frequent type of feedback provided in citizen requests and the surveys. While many of the improvements were unique, taking care of existing amenities and spaces emerged as an important Main Category. The “Improvements” category includes all requests for change, upgrades, or renewals to existing parks or trails. Examples include playground replacements, adding equipment to existing features, and trail improvements.

The second-largest Main Categories of feedback include Trail Connections and Connectivity. There were many requests that asked for enhanced trail connections, trail connections in specific locations, or better access to places with trails.

The third-largest Main Category is Specialty Amenities of one-off items. This category has unique requests for particular services or amenities. While there are many of these specialty requests, there were not a large number of requests for any one amenity. The common theme was a desire for specialty amenities that would serve unique user groups. Such amenities may be important to consider as regional park features that would fill specific needs. Examples include but are not limited to Parkour-specific parks, food gardens, bocce court and horseshoe pits, as well as apiaries and beekeeping areas.

Table 2 provides more detail of the types of public requests received through CIP and other budgeting efforts. Table 3 has slightly different sets of park user requests received within individual park planning and design projects. Both lists are organized by items with the most number of requests first.

**Table 2 CIP and Budget Input Public Requests**

Citizen Request Categories
Improvements
Trail Connections
Specialty Amenities
Skate Park
Plants and Nature
Dog Park
Basketball Court
Pickleball Courts
Mountain Bike Trails
Lighting
Equipment
Bike Park
Parkour Park
Trail Improvements
Signage
Crosswalk
Racquetball
Classrooms
Playground
Disc Golf
ADA
Open Space
Restroom

**Table 3: Individual Park Project Requests**

Public Survey Input Categories
Activities for All Ages
Connectivity
Dog-friendly Parks
Green Infrastructure
Park Improvements
Pedestrian Safety from Vehicles
Pickleball Courts
Restrooms
Seating
Shade
Shelters
Event / Concert / Gathering Area
Swimming Pool
Update Equipment
Water Features
Trails – Biking, Walking, Running
Water Refill Stations
ADA Accessibility
Tennis Courts
Basketball Courts
Maintenance
Grass Areas
Safety

### Next Steps

Community feedback evaluated in this memo will be combined with feedback received during the 2022 Master Plan public engagement process. While the 2017-2021 feedback is important to consider, input needs to be expanded upon with current information and feedback from a broader set of citizens. The 2022 Master Plan engagement process will generate additional public feedback gathered at community events as well as through an online public survey. This evaluation of input collected in the past will be used to help craft community-wide survey questions to better understand support for these requests.

# 07 Benchmarking Analysis

## MEMORANDUM PURPOSE

Benchmarking park and recreation provisions can be a useful tool to help parks and recreation providers such as South Suburban assess how they are doing in comparison to other communities and national standards. Assessing benchmarking metrics is one measure to help providers understand if provided facilities, amenities, programming, maintenance, and current staffing are meeting community needs. According to the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), park benchmarking metrics are useful resources to “assist park and recreation professionals in the effective management and planning of their operating resources and capital facilities.”<sup>1</sup>

## BENCHMARKING LIMITATIONS

While benchmarking can be useful, there are some limitations. Each municipality or recreation district has distinct and differing focuses, making it difficult to compare and contrast all amenities on equal footing. For example, some municipal parks and recreation departments do not have a focus on indoor facilities or programming, resulting in lower benchmarking numbers for these amenities. On the contrary, such amenities may be a larger focus for recreation district providers which show robust inventories in these categories. As another example, some municipalities partner with recreation districts or counties to fill out park, open space, or program offerings, which can result in robust land inventories or program offerings beyond what a single municipality or district offers on its own. Similarly, some municipalities are structured with multiple departments that separately manage parks, natural areas, and recreational programming each as their own entity. In these cases, comparisons can be misleading, as South Suburban has many partnerships that fill needs for open space or programming that may not be included in their personal inventory.

## OVERVIEW OF COMPARISON MUNICIPALITIES AND RECREATION DISTRICTS

Seven different municipal parks departments and recreation districts were selected for this benchmarking study. These municipalities and districts have similarly sized populations with South Suburban's and are geographically located in the same region. Arvada and Apex are assessed together as they work together to provide recreation service and amenities to residents of Arvada. Highlands Recreation District and Foothills Recreation District are also assessed as one unit as they are similar in size to South Suburban's population and areas served when combined.

Municipalities and recreation districts used in the benchmarking assessment include:

### City of Arvada / Apex Recreation District

- Population Served: 123,436

The City of Arvada manages a 3,400-acre system of parks, open spaces, and trails with a focus on outdoor park provisions and programming. Apex Recreation District supports the City of Arvada's recreation needs, with a focus on recreation centers, pools, and indoor recreational programming.

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<sup>1</sup> [NRPA Park Metrics | Research | National Recreation and Park Association | NRPA](#)

City of Greeley

- Population Served: 98,500

The City of Greeley's outdoor spaces are managed by the Culture, Parks, and Recreation Department and the Natural Areas and Trails Department, which have responsibility for a wide range of spaces including parks, golf courses, museums, art, civic centers, natural areas, and trails.

City of Fort Collins

- Population Served: 170,243

Recreation amenities and provisions are managed by three different departments. The City of Fort Collins Parks Department oversees parks, urban trails, cemeteries, and urban forestry. The City's Natural Areas Department acquires and manages open space and conservation areas, and the Recreation Department has a focus on managing indoor recreation facilities, pools, and providing recreational programming.

City of Lakewood

- Population Served: 157,481

The City of Lakewood Community Resources Department has seven divisions that manage parks, trails, open space, indoor recreation centers and programming, golf, performing arts venues, museums and galleries, and childhood services. The Parks, Forestry, and Open Space Division manages the City's parks, trails, and open space and includes urban forestry and horticulture programs.

Highlands Recreation District and Foothills Recreation District

- Population Served: 196,000 (combined population)

The Highlands Ranch Metro District and Foothills Recreation District are assessed as a single unit, in order to provide a comparison benchmark that is a recreation district model and serves a similarly-sized population to South Suburban.

The Highlands Ranch Metro District provides residents with parks, trails, open space, and outdoor recreation programming. This district serves 103,000 residents. The Foothills Recreation District provides residents with parks, trails, open space, and outdoor recreational programming, as well as recreation centers, pools, and indoor recreational programs. This district serves 93,000 residents.

**BENCHMARKING ASSESSMENT**

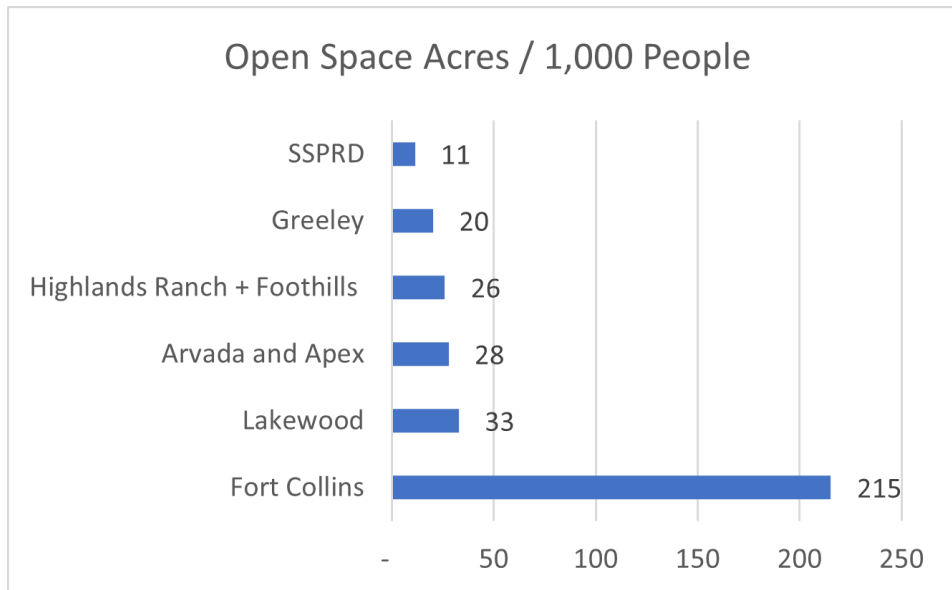
To account for population differences between the various municipalities and recreation districts, benchmarking comparisons for Open Space and Park acreages are displayed per 1,000 people. Benchmarking comparisons for recreation amenities are displayed per number of feature or facility for each municipality or recreation district. As mentioned earlier, the goal of benchmarking is not to attain the highest level of service in each category, but to use the comparative data as one measure that informs how South Suburban is serving the community. The NRPA explains that benchmarking information “does not present park and recreation “standards,” nor do the benchmarks represent any standards against which every individual park and recreation agency should measure itself. The reason for this is simple: there is not one



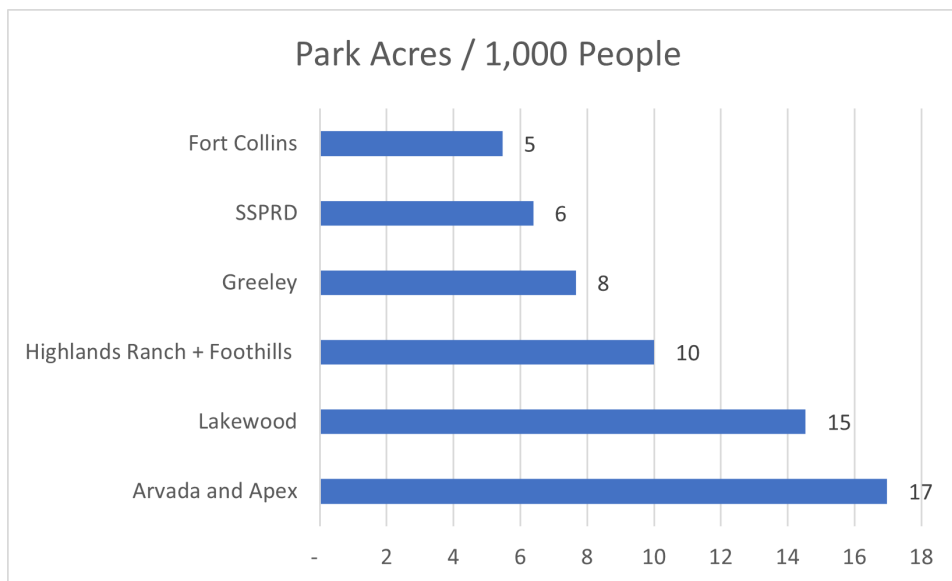
single set of standards for parks and recreation because different agencies serve different communities that have unique needs, desires and challenges.”<sup>2</sup>

**The following tables outline benchmarking comparisons for various recreation spaces, amenities, and facilities.**

#### **Open Space Acres per 1,000 people**

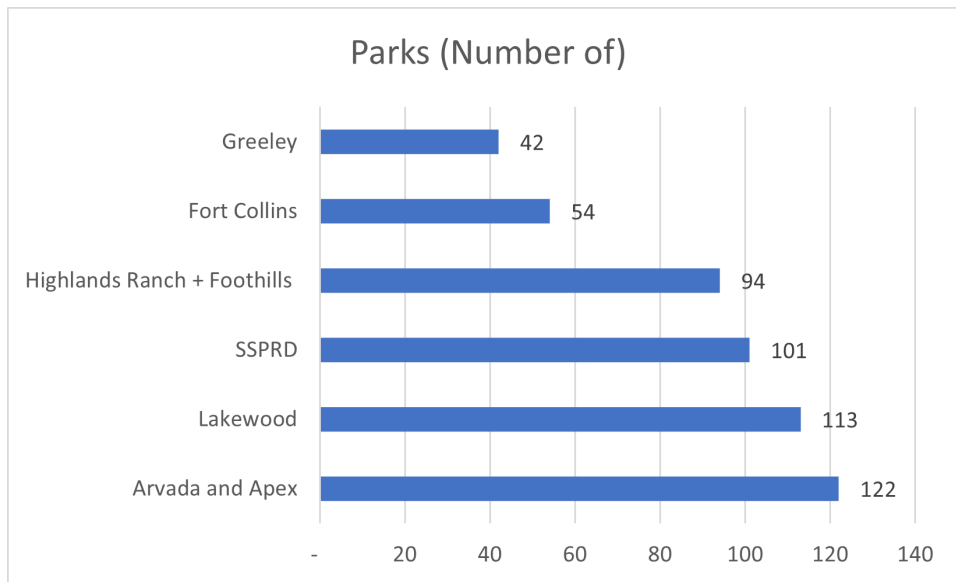


#### **Park Acres per 1,000 people**

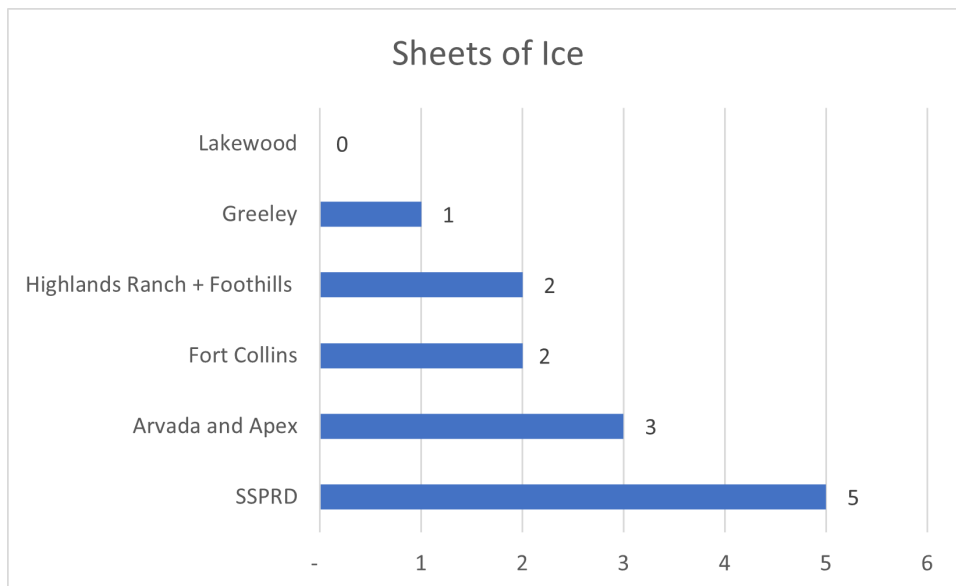


<sup>2</sup> 2022 NRPA Agency Performance Review

## Number of Parks



## Sheets of Ice



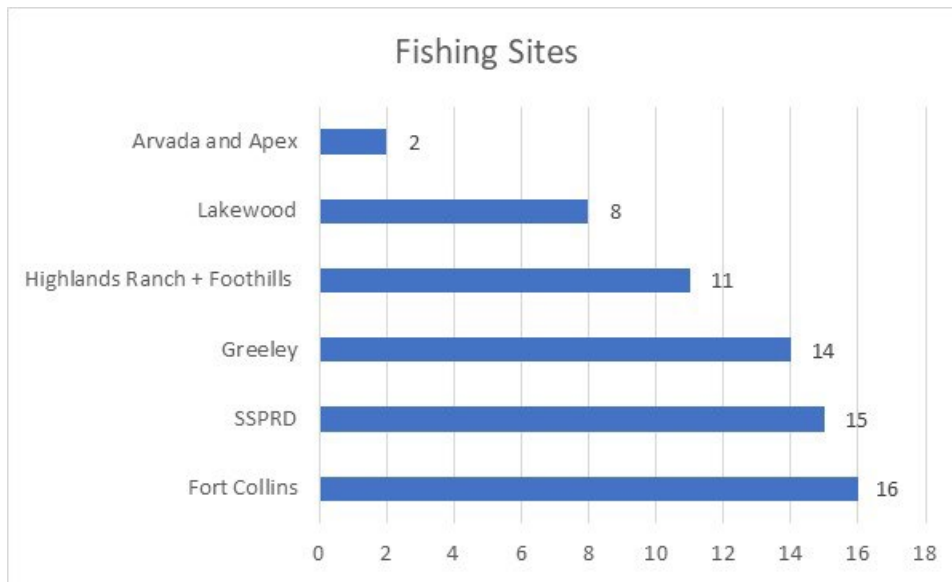
## Disc Golf Courses



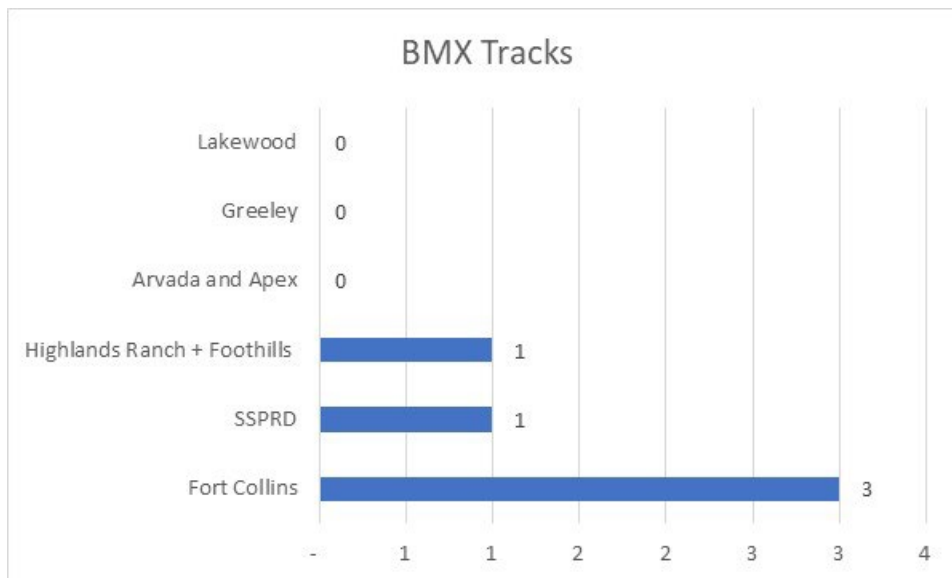
## Golf Courses



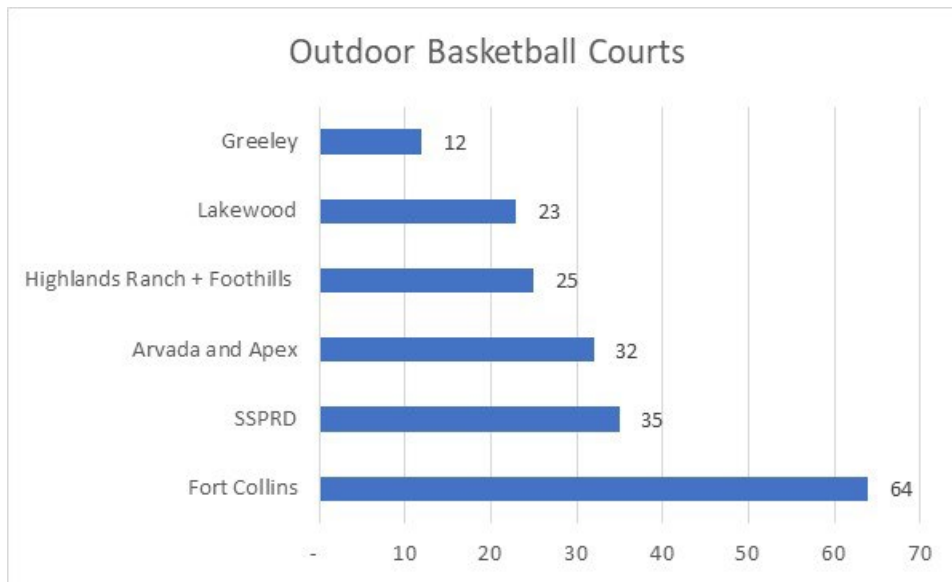
## Fishing Sites



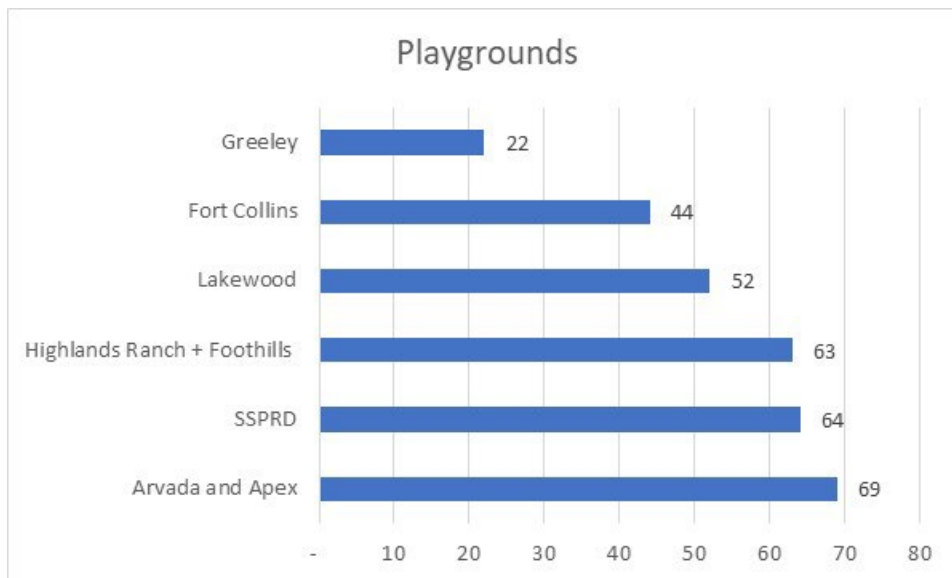
## BMX Tracks



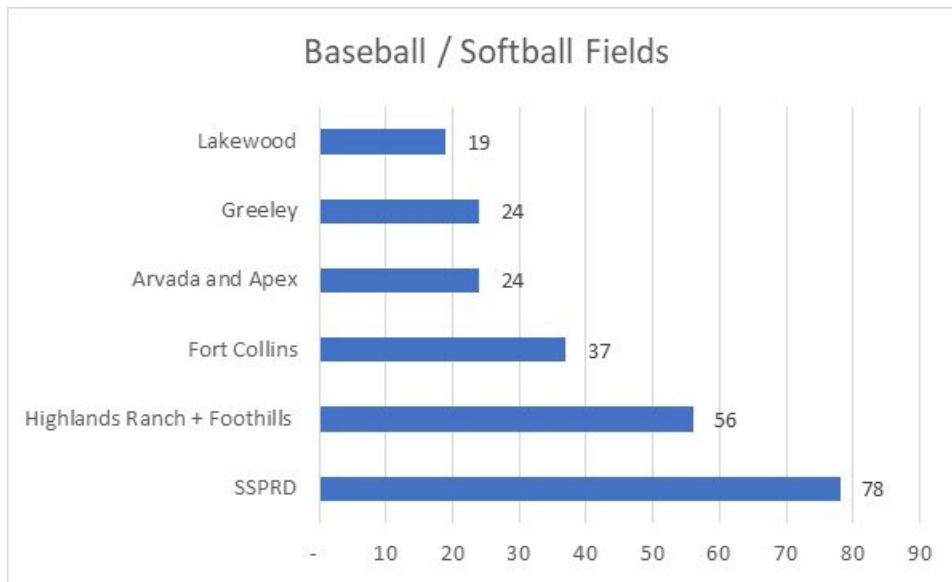
## Outdoor Basketball Courts



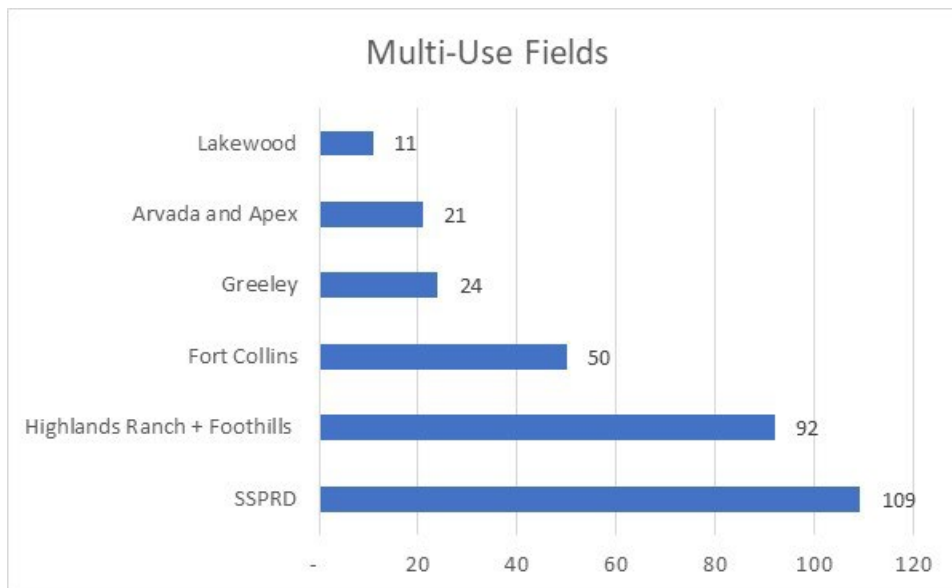
## Playgrounds



## Baseball / Softball Fields

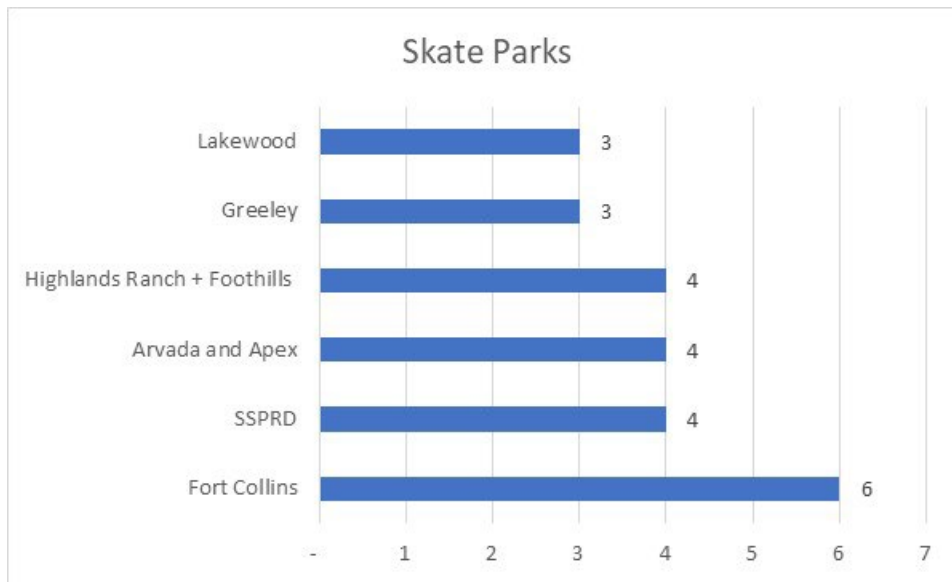


## Multi-Use Fields

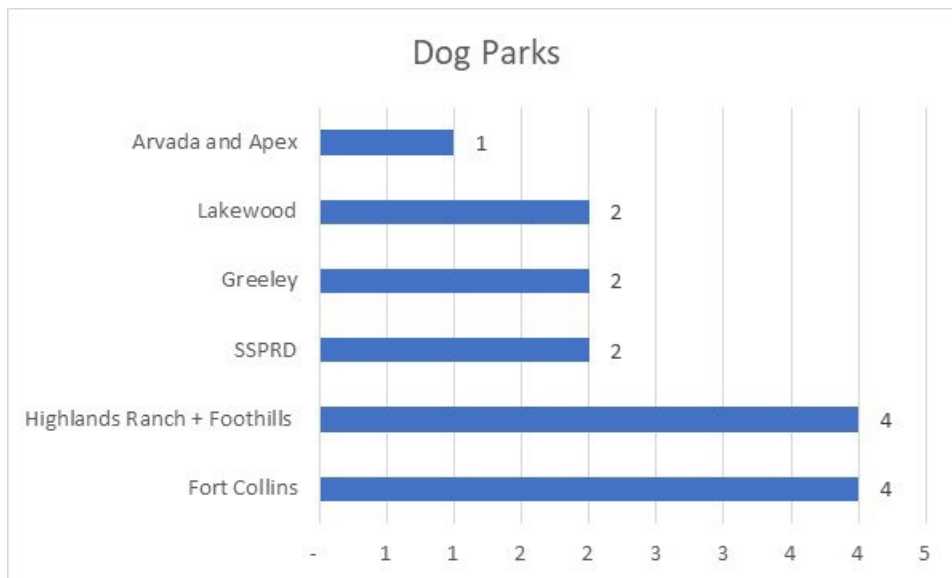




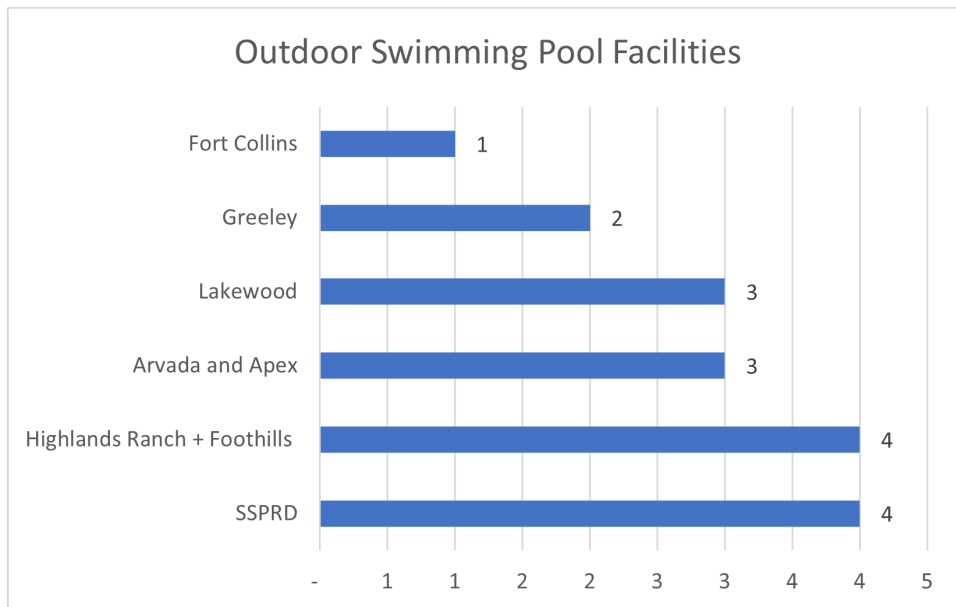
## Skate Parks



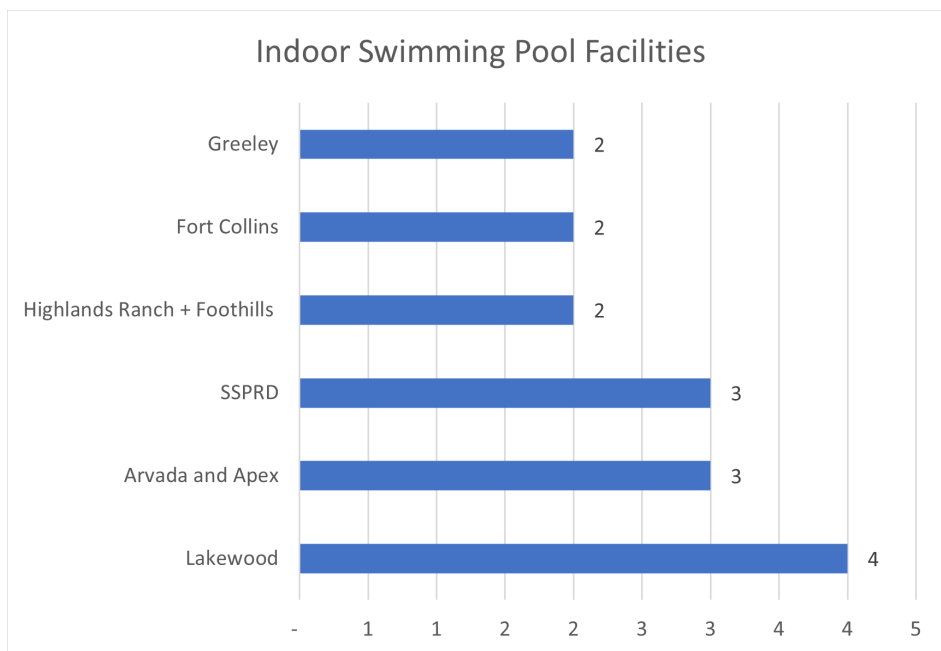
## Dog Parks



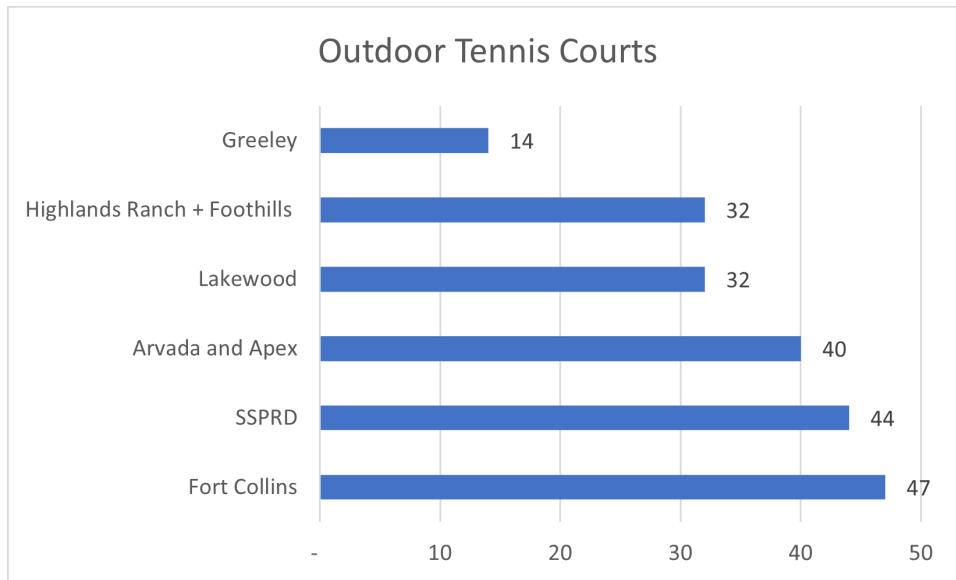
## Outdoor Swimming Pool Facilities



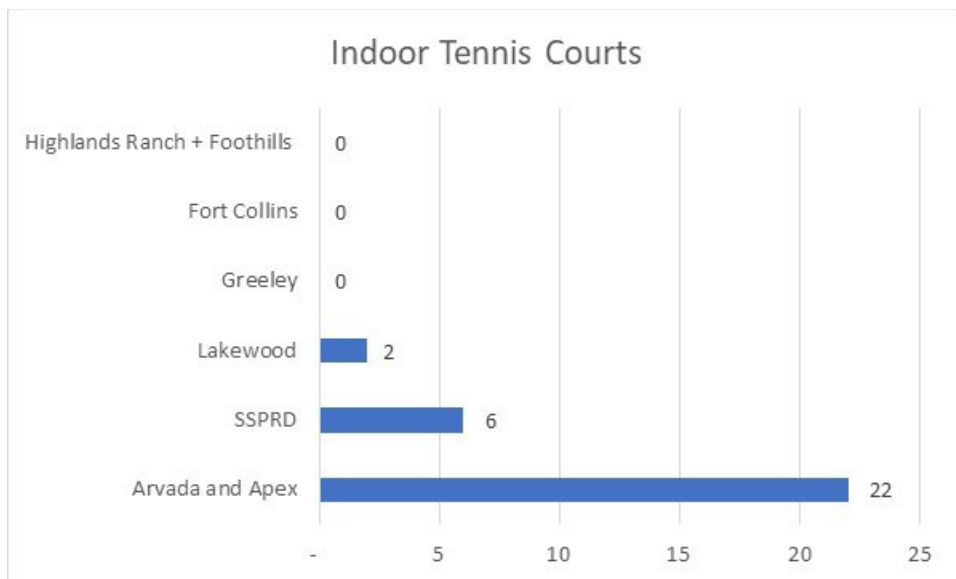
## Indoor Swimming Pool Facilities



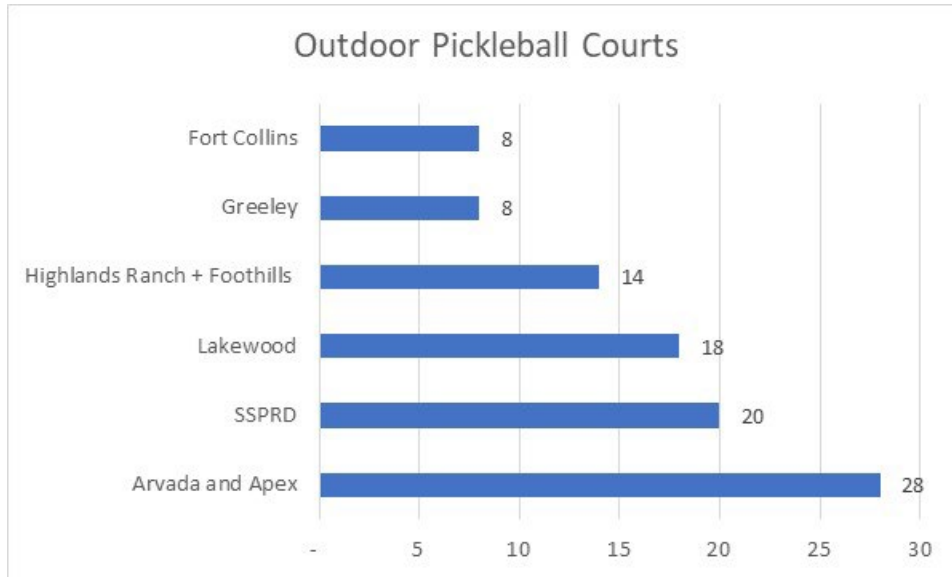
## Outdoor Tennis Courts



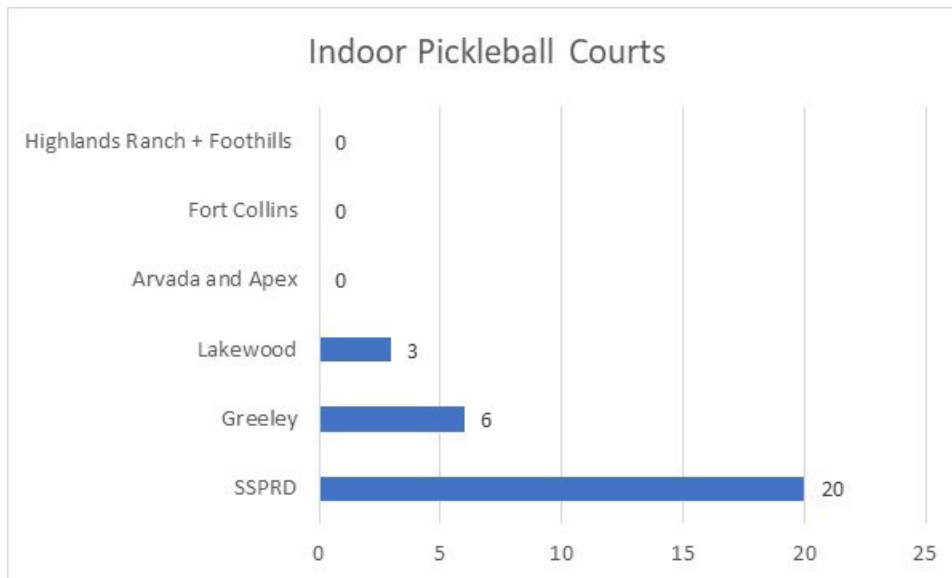
## Indoor Tennis Courts



## Outdoor Pickleball Courts



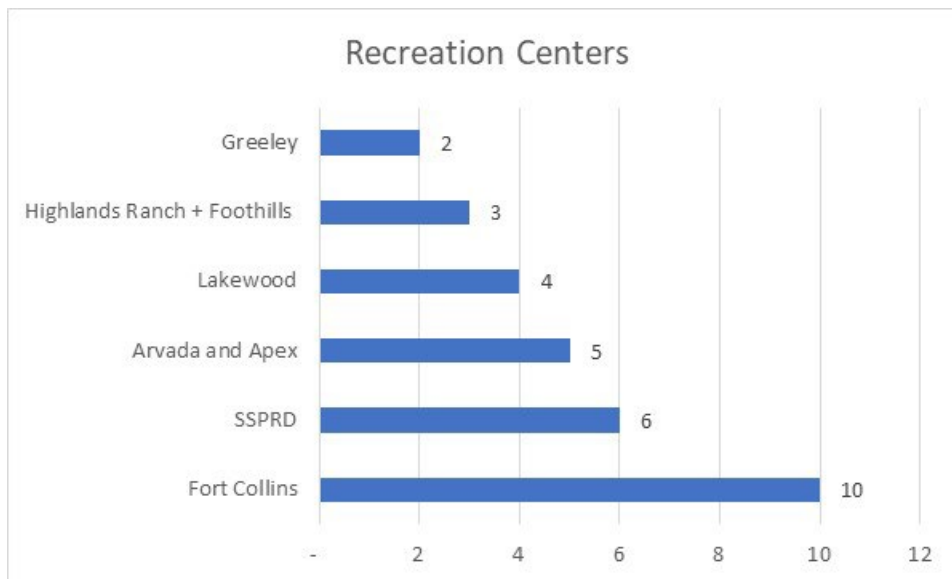
## Indoor Pickleball Courts



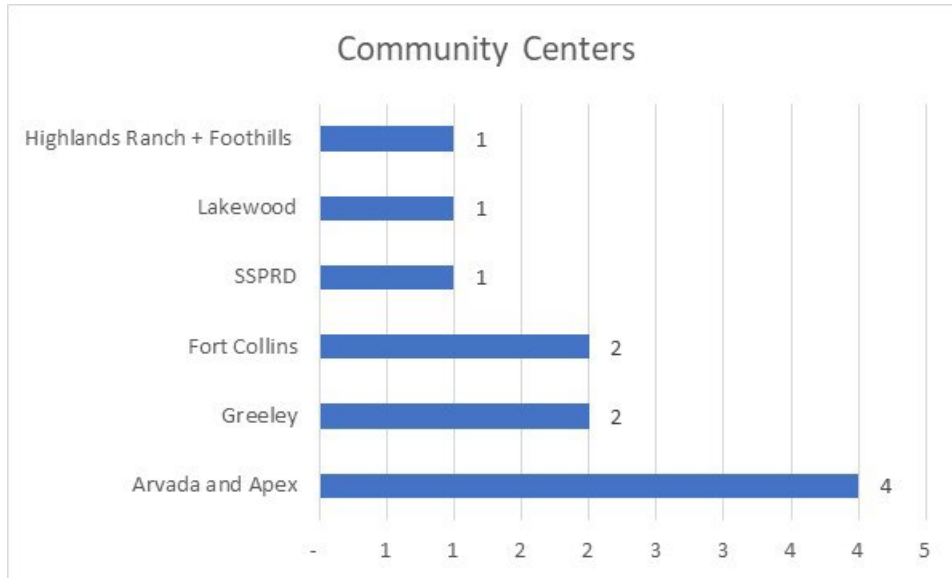
### Trails (Linear Miles)



### Recreation Centers



## Community Centers



## DATA SOURCES

### City of Arvada, CO / Apex Recreation District

- [Parks Addresses & Amenities.xlsx 2018 \(arvada.org\)](#)
- Imagine Arvada Parks, Trail, and Open Space Master Plan 2016 [Arvada Master Plan.pdf](#)
- City of Arvada Parks and Open Space Guide 2015 [SW edits 2015 MAP 1014.ai \(arvada.org\)](#)
- [Home – Apex Park and Recreation District \(apexprd.org\)](#)

### City of Greeley, CO

- Data provided by City of Greeley Culture, Parks, and Recreation Department

### City of Fort Collins, CO

- City of Fort Collins ReCreate: Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2021): [fort-collins-parks-and-recreation-master-plan-spreads-web.pdf \(fcgov.com\)](#)
- Amenities: [Recreational Amenities - City of Fort Collins \(fcgov.com\)](#)
- Parks online: [Recreational Amenities - City of Fort Collins \(fcgov.com\)](#)

### City of Lakewood, CO

- [A-Z Park List - City of Lakewood](#)
- [Pools and Splash - City of Lakewood](#)
- [Pickleball and Tennis - City of Lakewood](#)
- Imagine Tomorrow! Arts, Parks, and Recreation for All Master Plan 2023 (Draft), Appendix B Recreation Center Analysis (Draft) and Appendix G Recreation Center Analysis (Draft)



**Highlands Recreation District and Foothills Recreation District**

- Data provided by Highlands Recreation District
- Data provided by Foothills Recreation District

