

OVERALL VISION: “A STRING OF PEARLS”

An essential element of this Master Plan is an overall vision for parks and open space in the city of Thornton. This vision describes the desired future character and features of the city’s parks and open space system and serves to guide decisions about the locations of parks and trails, the amount and types of recreation facilities, types of recreation programming, safety and lighting, and the preservation and protection of open space.

The overall vision is to create an integrated system of safe parks, recreation facilities, trails, and open space that will:

- *Provide recreational and cultural opportunities for all residents,*
- *Be equitably distributed, to the extent possible, throughout the community,*
- *Connect neighborhoods, parks, schools, recreation facilities, and business districts,*
- *Preserve the heritage and quality of life in Thornton,*
- *Enhance and build upon Thornton’s environmental assets, and*
- *Enhance the community’s identity.*

The phrase “string of pearls” has been adopted to convey a powerful visual image that readily communicates the city’s vision for the Parks, Recreation, Trails, and Open Space System. Rather than the patchwork quilt of green spaces that characterizes many communities’ systems, city of Thornton parks, recreation facilities, open spaces, and other civic and community places such as schools, would be linked by a system of off-street and on-street trails and pedestrian and bicycle friendly streets. A system of parkways and boulevards would reinforce these connections, visually and physically.

This vision has been further developed for the major components of the system: parks, recreation facilities, trails, and open space.

VISION FOR PARKS, RECREATION FACILITIES, AND TRAILS

The city of Thornton’s parks, recreation facilities, and trails are a city-wide amenity that enhances residents’ quality of life, promotes a healthy sense of civic pride, and enhances the city’s overall image.

The city of Thornton’s parks, recreation facilities, and trails will be planned, developed, maintained, and linked as part of a city-wide system that provides for a diversity of recreational opportunities. From tots to active adults, the system will provide for the active and passive recreation needs of all. Safe places for family gatherings, informal play, organized sports, healthy exercise, and restful contemplation will be found throughout the system. Attention will be given to achieving this city-wide system at each step in the development review and capital improvement process.

The system of parks, recreation facilities, and trails will be accessible, safe, and equitably distributed throughout the community. The system will include parks of all sizes, from pocket parks to community parks. These parks shall be linked by trails and well designed parkways and boulevards. The land on which the parks are built shall not be burdened with developmental problems or unusual long-term maintenance liabilities. The design of each park should be of the highest quality, respectful of local environmental conditions, and responsive to local needs, but it

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must also be related to, and clearly a part of, the broader system. All components shall collectively be recognizable as parts of the city of Thornton system. The system will be carefully cared for and maintained.

The city of Thornton’s system of parks, recreation facilities, and trails will be a source of civic pride, and will demonstrate that the community provides for the needs of its citizens and encourages citizens to care for their community.

VISION FOR OPEN SPACE

Open space is an integral part of the city of Thornton’s heritage and legacy for future generations. Designated open space areas are parcels intentionally protected from development and set aside for unstructured recreation and the appreciation of natural surroundings. Open space is not a temporary designation for vacant lands.

Desirable open space will contain one or more of the following: broad open areas with unobstructed views, wildlife habitat, multiple types of vegetation, water features, and historic agricultural land to preserve the cultural heritage of the city.

The protection of open space is intended to:

1. *Preserve natural areas*
2. *Provide for passive recreation*
3. *Contribute to a unique community identity and quality of life*

In general, lands that are formally designated as open space shall be preserved in, or returned to, their natural, sustainable state, free from intrusive structures. Enhancements to vegetation, drainage corridors, and other natural features may be considered when such enhancements can be demonstrated to provide positive environmental benefit, such as improved wildlife habitat or improved wetland function.

Open space is intended to create a balance between developed and undeveloped areas throughout the city of Thornton, and to allow residents and visitors the to opportunity to enjoy nature. The vision for open space is to provide residents and visitors a feeling of freedom and separation from the rigors of urban life styles—providing solace in a hectic world.

GOALS AND POLICIES

A second essential element of the Parks and Open Space Master Plan is a series of goals and policies that take the ideas set forth in the community's vision and translate them into specific direction that will help implement the vision. Goals identify a desired state of affairs in the future. They describe broad public purposes towards which the policies and implementation programs in this Master Plan are aimed. Policies provide more immediate guidance when decisions are being made that affect the implementation of this Parks and Open Space Master Plan.

The goals and policies stated below have been grouped by topic. These topics are as follows:

- *Overall System and Community Image*
- *Parks, Recreation Facilities and Recreation Programs*
- *Trails*
- *Open Space*
- *Historical and Cultural Resources*
- *Planning*
- *Acquisition, Funding, Management, and Maintenance*

Goals and Policies: Overall System and Community Image

Goal 1: Plan and develop an interconnected city-wide system of parks, recreation facilities, trails, parkways and boulevards, and open space that provides for a diversity of recreational opportunities for the community. The park and open space system, where appropriate, should be integrated with other community facilities, especially schools.

Policies:

- 1.1 Parks, recreation facilities, and open space should be clearly integrated into a system and not appear as separate or distinct.
- 1.2 Parks, recreation facilities, and open space should be connected via local and/or regional trail systems. Where it is not possible to connect facilities directly with off-road trail facilities, routes should align and be integrated into existing street corridors. Designated, striped bike lanes will be provided for cyclist use and wide, detached sidewalks will be provided for safe, pedestrian walking routes.
- 1.3 External connections from the city's trail system to regional trails that are located beyond the city limits should be provided.
- 1.4 Where appropriate, neighborhood parks may be constructed adjacent to school sites.
- 1.5 Where possible, water reservoirs should be considered for recreational uses such as picnic sites, trail usage, fishing, nature study, and wildlife habitat.

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- 1.6 The city should cooperate with adjacent municipalities, school districts, and other government agencies to ensure Thornton’s system of parks, recreation facilities, opens space, and trails are located so as to maximize coordination with these neighboring facilities.
- 1.7 The city of Thornton’s system of specially designated parkways, boulevards, and Heritage Trail system should be defined and developed to connect with the park, recreation, and open space system, enhance the image of the city and provide for an orderly and visually distinguishable expansion of the community. The design of these streets and Heritage Trail loops need not be identical, but design themes that are approved and coordinated should be reasonably repeated in order to enhance community identity.

Goal 2: *Distribute park, recreation and open space resources, to the extent possible, on an equitable basis.*

Policies:

- 2.1 The city should cooperate with adjacent churches, municipalities, school districts, and other similar government agencies to ensure that a broad range of accessible parks and recreation facilities are equitably provided to Thornton citizens.
- 2.2 Where deficiencies exist in the more developed areas of Thornton, highest priority should be given to cooperating with the school districts to provide park development and recreational opportunities at existing school sites.
- 2.3 New developments and redevelopment should provide for park and open space needs generated by the proposed land uses via dedication of property and/or payment of appropriate cash-in-lieu of land dedication, improvements to parks, or other such mechanisms as might be appropriate, and shall be consistent with the Parks and Open Space Master Plan.

Goal 3: *Develop the parks and open space system as a major component of Thornton’s community image and identity, and promote an overall design theme that is unified, consistent, and committed to quality.*

Policies:

- 3.1 High points throughout the planned growth area provide beautiful mountain vistas that have high public value and should be maintained for public purposes. New park sites, open space, and recreation facilities should take advantage of the city’s high ground, ridgelines, and interesting views and vistas to the extent possible.
- 3.2 The design of the parks and recreation facilities should reflect certain consistent design principles, elements, and themes. Components, such as signage, benches, lighting standards, trash receptacles, and site furnishing elements should be standardized throughout the system.

Goals and Policies: Parks, Recreation Facilities and Recreation Programs

Goal 4: *Recognize the recreational needs of all city of Thornton citizens in providing parks, recreation facilities, and recreation programs in the community.*

Policies:

- 4.1 Recreational opportunities should be maintained at the current level of service and equally distributed, to the extent possible, throughout the city of Thornton.
- 4.2 Recreation programming and facilities should be routinely monitored to provide equity of distribution and adequate allocation of resources.
- 4.3 The city's parks should, where practical, be designed and constructed to accommodate the needs of citizens of diverse age groups, interests and physical abilities.
- 4.4 The design of community parks and recreation facilities should be completed in cooperation with civic groups, clubs, special interest groups and sporting organizations to ensure proactive planning for needed amenities. Information on existing levels of programming and projected future needs provided in the Parks and Open Space Master Plan and related updates should also provide guidance in designing new facilities.

Goal 5: *As the city of Thornton grows, apply a consistent, fair, and rigorous set of park planning and design standards to all development, and these standards shall include the types of parks listed in Policies 5.1 through 5.3.*

Policies:

- 5.1 Pocket Parks: Ranging from 1/4 up to 5 acres in size, pocket parks should include multi-use lawn areas for picnics and open play areas, hardscape play areas, pavilion, playground and site furniture. An example includes Aspen Park. The city of Thornton typically will not maintain parks less than 5 acres.
- 5.2 Neighborhood Parks: Ranging from 5 up to approximately 25 acres in size, neighborhood parks should include programmable multi-purpose sports fields, playgrounds, hardscape sports court areas, pavilion, gathering space, trail and site furniture. Neighborhood parks should be designed to be within walking distance of a given service area without crossing arterial streets or other barriers, and provide formal and informal recreational opportunities. Design should allow for adequate parking, either on-street around the park or in a parking lot. Additional amenities should respond to the specific park size, special site opportunities, and the local demographics. Examples include Yorkborough Park, Pecos Park, and King Ranch Park.
- 5.3 Community Parks: At generally a minimum of 25 acres in size, community parks should include multiple programmable sports fields, hardscape sports court areas, playgrounds, and other amenities such as pavilions that accommodate large groups and gatherings, shade structures, and rest rooms. They may be constructed with recreation centers or other civic buildings and may include cultural amenities such as amphitheaters, gardens, and public art. Adequate parking facilities should be provided. Examples include Community Park and Margaret W. Carpenter Park and Open Space.

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Goal 6: *Develop parks, open space, and recreation facilities to preserve and emphasize significant features of the city of Thornton’s natural environment.*

Policies:

- 6.1 Environmental attributes should be considered in making decisions about the location of parks and facilities.
- 6.2 Neighborhood and community parks should be built to preserve, enhance, and appropriately utilize the community’s significant natural features and views where at all possible.
- 6.3 To the greatest extent possible, parks should be located proximate to, and integrated with, environmentally significant areas such as water bodies or wetlands.
- 6.4 Where possible, significant stands of trees and shrubs and unique forms of vegetation, existing or proposed, should be incorporated into the master plans and designs for new parks.
- 6.5 Mitigate impacts to wildlife by minimizing light pollution.

Goal 7: *Recognize and respond to passive, as well as active, recreational needs in the design of the park and recreation system.*

Policy:

- 7.1 Where possible, new park sites should be located and designed to preserve or be sensitive to critical ecosystem components, including wetlands and wildlife habitats, and should be designed to accommodate both passive as well as active recreational uses.



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Goals and Policies: Trails

Goal 8: Create and connect recreational opportunities through a well connected trail system.

Develop a trail system that provide safe access to and from neighborhood parks, open space areas, community-wide recreation centers, schools, and regional facilities. The trail system is a recreation facility offering a diverse system of long and short routes for walkers, joggers, and cyclists. A needs-based assessment of key missing gaps shall guide the completion of a system of primary corridors designed to provide geographic coverage across the city in a realistic time frame. Over time, additional projects will be constructed to complete a finer-grain network of local connections that feed into the long, cross-town routes.

Policies

- 8.1 The trail system should include on- and off-road facility types to meet the needs of advanced Type A bicyclists, less-experienced Type B/C basic and child cyclists, and a diverse group of pedestrians who seek trails for recreation and fitness activities. *(For trail facility types and definitions of Type A, B, C cyclists, see Chapter 6 Trails Element.)*
- 8.2 A combination of grade-separated crossings and enhanced roadway intersection designs should facilitate safe crossing of major roadway, railroad, and natural barriers to provide trail system connectivity. *(For trail crossing types see See Chapter 6 Trails Element.)*
- 8.3 The trail system should clearly identify routes with wayfinding signage as necessary.
- 8.4 Trail projects should continue to be cost-effectively implemented as opportunities allow through ongoing land development processes and roadway resurfacing and widening projects.
- 8.5 Additional need-based trail projects should move forward independently. Priority shall be placed on completing missing links in the identified network of primary corridors.
- 8.6 The city shall continue to compile requests for neighborhood and site-specific trail projects that are located outside of the primary corridor network. These requests for local trail connections should be annually prioritized for the implementation of select linkages, as feasible.

Goal 9: Provide long open space trail corridors.

The city of Thornton is situated within several irrigation ditch, creek, and drainage corridors, and is adjacent to the South Platte River. Develop the interconnected system of trails with a landscape buffer in the corridor. Consider opportunities for trail development within linear corridors through multi-purpose use of utility easements, rail and road rights-of-way, and landscape buffers located along property boundaries.

Policies

- 9.1 Priority should be placed on developing a system of primary corridors that are at least 2.5 miles in length (average distance of a bicycle trip), and geographically distributed across the city to form a grid spaced 1-2 miles apart. This network should be comprised primarily of off-road trails, with connecting segments of on-street facilities where needed for system continuity.
- 9.2 Trail alignments and design should reveal interesting views of landscape features and should take advantage of ridge lines, water features, wetlands, and stands of trees.

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- 9.3 Where possible, trail corridors that run through private property should be incorporated into easements and rights-of-way reserved for utilities and transportation facilities.
- 9.4 Development proposals for annexation, rezoning or subdivision should be required to dedicate easements for trails in all developments affected by the trail system shown on the Parks and Open Space Master Plan Map - Exhibit 4.1.

Goal 10: Provide trail connection to other modes of transportation.

Offer a feasible commuting alternative to driving, designed to make safe and direct connections to local trip destinations and connect to RTD “park and rides”, and to North Metro Rail Line stations in the FasTracks corridor.

Policies

- 10.1 The FasTracks corridor through the city of Thornton should include a trail corridor with trailheads and connections to neighborhood on-street trails, off-street trails, and bike lanes as appropriate.
- 10.2 Safe and secure bicycle parking and appropriate pedestrian amenities should be provided at FasTrack stops.

Goal 11: Incorporate “Complete Street” projects into the trails network.

Create additional opportunities to accommodate bicycle and pedestrian travel along arterial streets to expand the off-road trail system.

Policies

- 11.1 All facility designs shall incorporate American Association of State Highway and Transportation Official (AASHTO) Guidelines and all other applicable federal, state, and local regulations, as required.
- 11.2 Where trails cross arterial streets, I-25 and E-470, railroad rights-of-way, and other barriers to uninterrupted travel, underpasses or overpasses should be provided to provide a continuous route for trail users.
- 11.3 At-grade intersections throughout the trail/bike network should include highly-visible marked crosswalks and bicycle lane intersection treatments as defined by AASHTO, the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO), and the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD).

Goal 12: Promote the city of Thornton’s unique environmental, cultural, and historical resources.

Develop the city of Thornton 2012 Comprehensive Plan’s Heritage Trail concept of linked loops to create a sense of cultural identity by bringing specific arts, education, heritage, and environmental experiences to trail users.

Policies

- 12.1 A consistent signage and wayfinding program should be implemented to identify the Heritage Trail loops, including systematic placement of ¼-mile markers to enable recreational users to track distances traveled.
- 12.2 At least one Type I trailhead with parking should be provided for each Heritage Trail loop project. (*For Trailhead Types see Appendix 13.C Trail Amenity Specifications.*)
- 12.3 The design of each Heritage Trail loop should include distinct materials and furnishings, interpretive exhibits, and signage that reflect the assigned Heritage Trail theme.

Goal 13: Support a variety of trail users.

Provide trails for use by people of all ages, interests, and abilities. By city code, equestrians are not permitted on the city of Thornton's trails for recreation use.

Policies

- 13.1 The city's trail system shall, where practical, be designed and constructed to accommodate the needs of and be accessible to citizens with various physical abilities, including pedestrians who use mobility devices.
- 13.2 Only non-motorized uses shall be allowed on the off-road trails system and trails shall be signed to prohibit motorized uses, except for users with certain disabilities.
- 13.3 The off-road network should be developed to include a system of stacked loop trails to provide a diverse variety of travel options, trip lengths, and user experiences. A mixture of paved and soft-surface trail types should be provided to compliment Thornton's natural environments and accommodate various recreational activities.

Goal 14: Raise awareness and educate trail users.

Educate the public on etiquette between trail users, rules of the road governing bicycle/motor vehicle interaction, and overall knowledge of alternative transportation options and destinations that can be accessed by the trails system.

Policies

- 14.1 A comprehensive, accessible signage and wayfinding program should be developed for the trail system including trail identification, system maps, mile markers, interpretive exhibits, wayfinding/directional routing, and temporary signage that announces and celebrates the opening of new projects.
- 14.2 Printed maps and brochures, web sites, electronic media, and public events should be used to supplement signage to educate trail users and non-users on bicyclist/pedestrian/motorist etiquette and to raise public awareness of Thornton's trails and connections to regional destinations.

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Goals and Policies: Open Space

Goal 15: *Preserve the city of Thornton’s unique environmental and visual resources in a natural condition.*

Policies:

- 15.1 Open space should be located, configured, and designed to preserve indigenous wildlife habitats and native plant species, irrigation ditches, ridges and hilltops that provide long range views and vistas, areas of visual significance such as stands of mature trees and shrubs, large expanses of prairie grasses or wetlands, and unique land features such as enclosed valleys, rock outcroppings, steep slopes, and drainages.
- 15.2 Native animal and plant life should be perpetuated as part of the natural ecosystem on open space lands. Native plant and animal populations shall be protected from removal or destruction, unless such populations begin to exceed the carrying capacity of the land and/or become a public health concern, in which case, management actions may be undertaken. Natural processes shall be used to the greatest extent possible to control native species. Non-native species will be managed to prevent the displacement of native species.
- 15.3 Aquatic environments and the abundance and distribution of native aquatic species, including fish, should be preserved or restored. The city shall seek to restore, maintain or improve the quality of all surface and ground water resources on open space lands. Activities with high potential for point or non-point source water pollution shall be avoided. Streams and reservoirs may be stocked with non-native species only when non-natives are already present or would not diminish native populations.
- 15.4 Existing native vegetation should remain undisturbed in areas where no development has yet been approved by the city, except in cases of agricultural cultivation or noxious weed control.
- 15.5 Open space land may be improved after acquisition to protect or provide passive recreation use, to provide enhanced habitat for native plant or wildlife species, to control erosion, to screen out incompatible adjacent uses or views, and to permit continuation of agriculture. Vegetation enhancements shall use native, noninvasive plant material. Selected non-natives may be approved if they will not displace native species and there may be ecological benefit to encouraging species diversity.
- 15.6 The South Platte River valley is an important open space resource for the city of Thornton, as well as for surrounding communities. A high priority shall be given to preserving this resource, and linking the city’s park and open space system to it using trails and other means.
- 15.7 The Big Dry Creek corridor is an important open space resource for the city of Thornton, as well as for surrounding communities. A high priority shall be given to preserving this resource, and linking the city’s park and open space system to it using trails and other means.
- 15.8 The Gravel Lakes are an important open space resource for the city of Thornton, as well as for surrounding communities. A high priority shall be given to preserving this resource, and linking the city’s park and open space system using trails and other means.
- 15.9 The Niver Creek Corridor is an important open space resource for the city of Thornton, as well as for surrounding communities. A high priority shall be given to preserving this resource, and linking the city’s park and open space system using trails and other means.

- 15.10 Historical irrigation ditches are an important open space resource for the city of Thornton, as well as for surrounding communities. A high priority shall be given to preserving these resources, and linking the city's park and open space system using trails and other means.
- 15.11 Historical drainageways to the South Platte River, Big Dry Creek and Niver Creek are important open space resources for the city of Thornton, as well as for surrounding communities. A high priority shall be given to preserving these resources, and linking the city's park and open space system using trails and other means.

Goal 16: Provide recreation opportunities in natural areas for the enjoyment of residents and visitors in Thornton.

Policies:

- 16.1 Open space included in the city-wide system shall include a variety of parcel sizes.
- a) Areas of natural open space should be interspersed with development to provide respite from urban life. These areas may have paths, bikeways, and opportunities for observing wildlife. Visitors are expected to walk to these areas.
 - b) Large tracts of land should include a combination of hills and flatlands, wildlife, water, trees, etc. They should include corridors for trails as well as wildlife, and should connect with other open spaces, parks, recreation facilities, and civic destinations. Visitors are expected to drive to these areas or reach them via regional and local trail connections.
- 16.2 Open space shall generally be open for passive public use and enjoyment. Occasionally, open space areas may be closed to public use seasonally or when necessary for protection or restoration of habitat, or during nesting or breeding seasons for wildlife. Development of active recreation facilities, such as athletic fields, swimming pools, tennis courts, and formal picnic areas shall be precluded unless the land has been acquired as open lands or for both open space and park purposes.
- 16.3 Where compatible with habitat, trails shall be developed to provide access to open space parcels. Open space parcels shall be connected to each other and to parks, schools, and other logical destinations via local and/or regional trail systems.

Goal 17: Open space acquisitions, either by purchase or by land dedication, shall contain resources that warrant protection.

Policies:

- 17.1 Land offered to the city to meet public land dedication requirements shall be consistent with the Parks and Open Space Master Plan or, in the opinion of the city, shall contain sufficient open space values as to warrant protection.
- 17.2 New developments shall be planned to preserve and protect open space identified in the Parks and Open Space Master Plan Map - Exhibit 4.1.
- 17.3 New development proposals shall be evaluated by the city to determine what, if any, impact the development will have on ecosystems, cultural and visual resources, and environmental hazards. Development proposals should include an analysis and recommendations by competent experts regarding the impact of a particular proposal on ecosystem components.

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- 17.4 The Thornton City Council shall consider recommendations from the Parks and Open Space Advisory Commission (POSAC) in making decisions on expending funds for acquiring open space. POSAC shall make its recommendations based on the city of Thornton Comprehensive Plan, the goals, policies, implementation strategies, and maps included in this Master Plan, and an evaluation of the open space needs of the community.
- 17.5 Potential acquisitions shall be evaluated according to the Evaluation Criteria in this Master Plan. (See *Chapter 7 Open Space Element*). Generally, areas with multiple attributes shall be considered to have a higher value than those with single attributes.
- 17.6 Decisions to acquire land for open space shall consider the costs required for long term, quality maintenance.
- 17.7 Volunteers are a valuable resource to city staff. The city shall make an organized effort to utilize volunteers in managing and maintaining the open space system to achieve a cost-effective use of city resources.

Goal 18: Use open space lands in a manner that allows for reasonable use by the public while protecting environmental resources.

Policies:

- 18.1 Open space lands shall be generally usable by the public in a variety of ways, which may include viewing, hiking, nature education, and other passive recreation, etc. It is important, however, to balance recreational access with protection of natural resources. It is possible, for example, that a parcel may include an area with general public access and another area with only limited or no public access.
- 18.2 Generally, property acquired for open space shall not be disposed of or converted to another use except in extraordinary circumstances with the approval of city council. The open space fund shall be reimbursed for the value of any property disposed of or converted to other uses in accordance with city policy.
- 18.3 Open space lands may not be used for road rights-of-way unless these roads have been identified in the city's Transportation Plan. Water, sewer, and other below ground utilities may be installed on open space lands only with adequate assurance that the disturbed area will be restored to a natural appearance.
- 18.4 Open space properties may be leased for continued agricultural uses such as farming and grazing. When not precluded by safety considerations, agricultural leases shall afford public access for passive use.
- 18.5 Open space properties including water bodies may be closed temporarily in order to protect a natural resource or to make the property safe for public enjoyment.
- 18.6 The city shall maintain the integrity of water delivery and storage structures on its open space lands. It shall manage water responsibly for beneficial uses to ensure the protection of water rights.

Goal 19: Incorporate lands that have development or geologic constraints as part of the city's open space system, if appropriate, and in the interest of public health, safety, and welfare.

Policy:

- 19.1 The city shall incorporate land that is subject to 100-year frequency flooding and geologic constraints as part of its open space system, if appropriate.

Goal 20: *Coordinate and cooperate with surrounding jurisdictions so that the open space system is allowed to follow natural systems across jurisdictional boundaries.*

Policies:

- 20.1 Future open space plans should be coordinated with other communities, governmental and private agencies to ensure that regional linkages exist for ecosystem components.
- 20.2 The city shall cooperate with adjacent municipalities, school districts, and other similar government agencies to ensure the city of Thornton's open space system is located logically and integrated regionally.

Goals and Policies: Historical and Cultural Resources

Goal 21: *Preserve historical and cultural sites in their traditional condition for the benefit of future generations.*

Policies:

- 21.1 The park and open space system should recognize, respond to, protect, and incorporate the city of Thornton's unique historic, archeological, ethnographic, and cultural resources. Candidates for preservation include:
 - Working farms and irrigation ditches
 - Sites containing archeological and ethnographic artifacts
 - Sites with buildings or artifacts that are on, or qualify for, the State or National Register of Historic Places
- 21.2 The city shall seek to incorporate historically significant areas or features in the parks and open space system. Such elements as historic structures or other vestiges of Thornton's rich agricultural past can add exciting and unique recreational and educational qualities to Thornton's park system.
- 21.3 Potential resources will be evaluated according to local, state and National Register standards. (More specific guidelines regarding disposition of historic, archeological and ethnographic resources are included in the Technical Appendices - Appendix 10.)
- 21.4 The city shall comply with the Historic Recognition Code (Chapter 19 of the Thornton City Code).

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Goals and Policies: Planning

Goal 22: *Prepare and regularly update a Parks and Open Space Master Plan to guide the development of the parks, trails, open space, and recreation system for the city of Thornton.*

Policies:

- 22.1 The Parks and Open Space Master Plan shall provide an overall vision, goals, and policies for the development of the parks, trails, recreation, and open space system in the city of Thornton. The Master Plan shall identify proposed levels of service, existing and future needs for parks, trails, recreation, and open space, and an implementation program.
- 22.2 The city shall update the Parks and Open Space Master Plan at least every three years.
- 22.3 The city shall identify trail connection priorities at least annually. (Note that trail alignments delineated in this Parks and Open Space Master Plan are conceptual. Actual trail alignments may vary depending on landowner negotiations, site investigations, soils, and terrain constraints.)
- 22.5 Land that is acquired for open space to be held as a conservation easement shall be inventoried in detail i.e. the city shall collect existing data, create a photographic record, and conduct specific studies as warranted to document unique conditions and thereafter, its condition shall be monitored at least annually.

Goals and Policies: Acquisition, Funding, Management and Maintenance

Goal 23: *Provide for the funding of the proposed parks, recreation, trails, and open space system by using a variety of funding sources.*

Policy:

- 23.1 Possible funding sources to be pursued include, but are not limited to, the following:
- Lottery funds and grants distributed by the State
 - Thornton’s Capital Improvement Plan
 - Grants awarded by public and private foundations
 - Impact fees collected from private developers
 - Cash-in-lieu of land dedication collected from private developers
 - Sale of surplus parkland owned by the city
 - Bond
 - Donations and gifts

Note: In 2013, Thornton residents voted to extend the existing parks/open space sales and use tax through 2038, and allowed up to 20% of the total annual revenue to be spent or reserved for maintenance costs.

Goal 24: *Acquire/preserve park and/or open space lands using available mechanisms.*

Policy:

- 24.1 Acquisition for preservation of property or property interests necessary to carry out goals and objectives

set forth in this Parks and Open Space Master Plan may be achieved through a variety of mechanisms, including but not limited to, donation, dedication, gift, bequest, trust, intergovernmental agreement, purchase, deed reservation or restriction, development condition or restriction, easement, lease, exchange, Purchase of Development Rights (PDR), Transferable Development Rights (TDR), and the exercise of the city's power of eminent domain.

Goal 25: *Assure that the park and open space system is realistic and affordable, and that the costs required for long term, quality management and maintenance are recognized.*

Policies:

- 25.1 Development of new parks and recreation facilities should be implemented at a pace commensurate with the city's ability to provide proper maintenance.
- 25.2 Specific park designs shall consider on-going maintenance costs and water costs.
- 25.3 Where feasible, the city should make use of water wise landscape principles, such as limiting high water use turf areas, exploring bluegrass conversion opportunities, using low water demand plants, installing efficient irrigation systems, and improving soil with adequate organic material.
- 25.4 Prior to the dedication or acquisition of any land to the city for park or open space purposes, a site assessment shall demonstrate that the land is free of any toxic or hazardous waste and/or that the city will not be liable for any future cleanup.

Goal 26: *Assure that parks, open space, recreation, and trails are managed and maintained in an environmentally responsible and cost-effective manner that preserves the underlying resources while being attentive to public enjoyment and safety concerns.*

Policies:

- 26.1 The city shall develop guidelines for managing and maintaining parks, open space, recreation facilities, and trails that meet the performance objectives stated above. These guidelines should be reviewed on a regular basis and revised as necessary.
- 26.2 Maintenance staffing levels shall be evaluated against requirements provided in the staffing benchmarks, and appropriate adjustments made where necessary as inventory of open lands and facilities increases.