

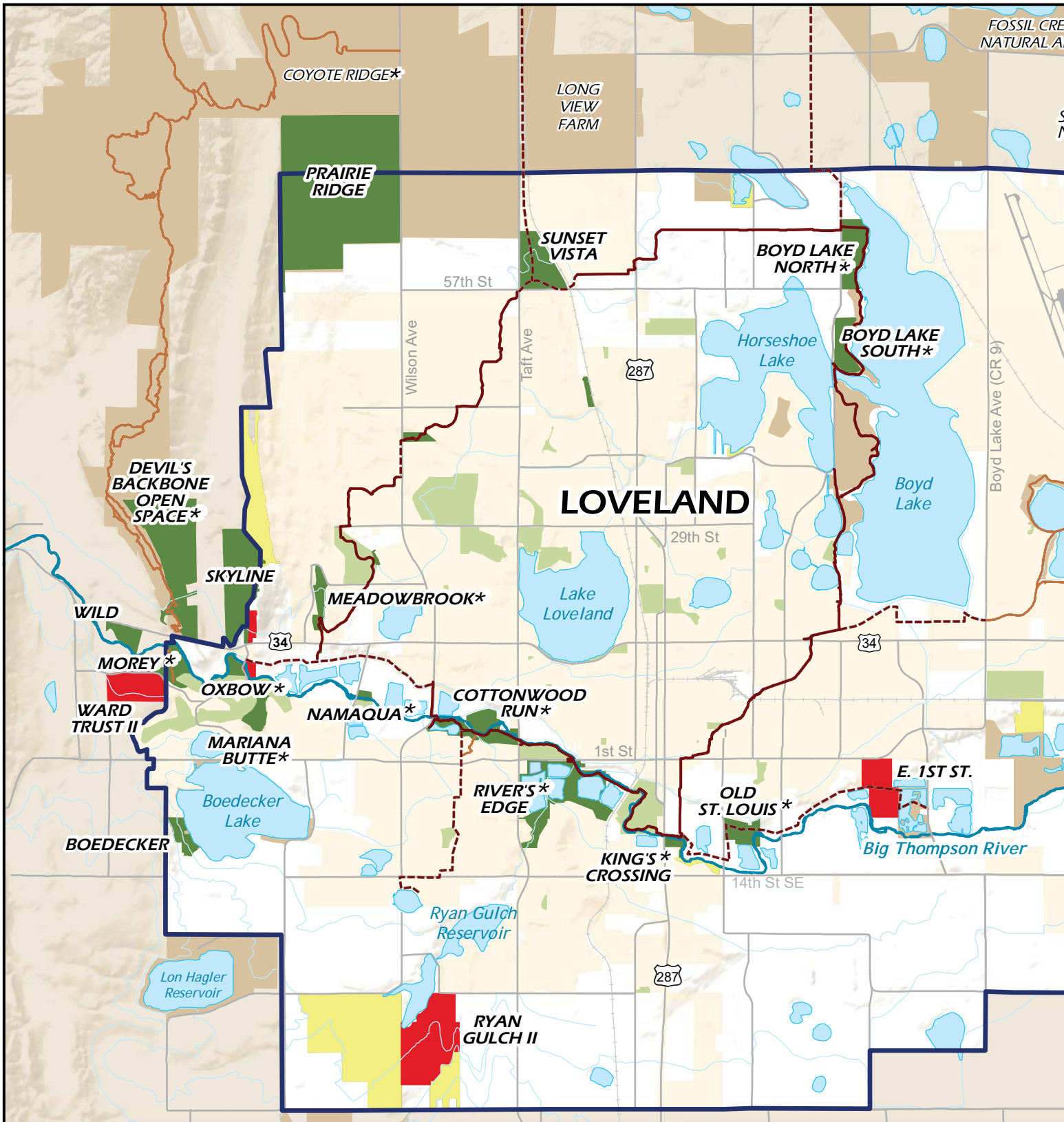


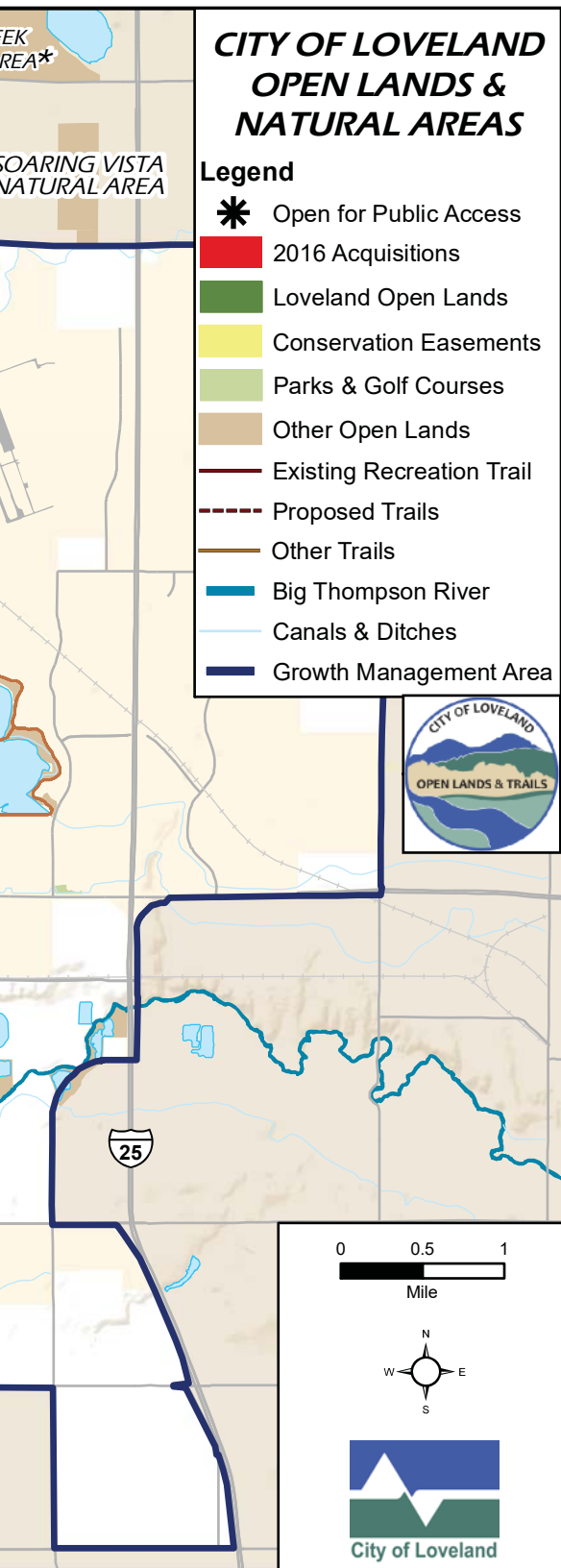
City of Loveland
Parks and Recreation

2016 Open Lands and Trails *Annual Report*



Loveland's Open Lands





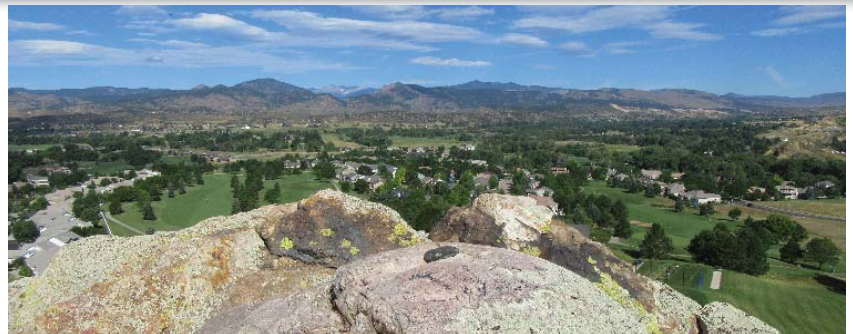
OPEN LANDS & TRAILS ARE VITAL TO OUR QUALITY OF LIFE

2016 was another banner year!

The Open Lands and Trails Division continued to contribute to Loveland’s quality of life in 2016 by conserving an additional 360 acres of priority open land, providing new public access and trails, expanding environmental education program offerings, developing a more comprehensive maintenance program, and reaching out to the community in new ways.

Loveland is so fortunate to have an abundance of natural areas and open lands, to protect important wildlife habitat, conserve natural resources, and provide access to nature for our growing population.

We invite you to come out and explore your local natural areas; listen to the birds, watch the wildlife, learn about the environment, volunteer with us, or take a hike. Loveland’s Open Lands and Trails are about connecting people, places and possibilities!



STAFF

- Elizabeth Anderson, Parks and Recreation Director
- Marilyn Hilgenberg, Open Lands and Trails Manager
- Debbie Eley, Open Lands Specialist
- Brian Hayes, Open Lands Coordinator
- Jonathan Huey, Open Lands and Trails Crew Supervisor
- Michele Van Hare, Environmental Education Coordinator
- Bree Knouse, Open Lands and Trails Maintenance Worker
- Janet Meisel-Burns, Senior Parks and Recreation Planner
- Kelly Smith, Parks and Recreation Planner
- Scott Sinn, Parks and Recreation Planner

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the City of Loveland Open Lands Program is to identify, preserve, protect and enhance open space, natural areas and other significant lands. This ongoing process is accomplished through cooperation with and respect for private and public landowners, surrounding municipalities and counties, natural resource agencies, and other organizations with similar interests.

Open Lands & Natural Areas

(8,198 acres)

Big Thompson River Corridor

- Morey Wildlife Reserve*
- Wild Natural Area
- Ward Trust Property I & II
- Oxbow Natural Area*
- Namaqua Natural Area*
- Cottonwood Run Natural Area*
- River's Edge Natural Area*
- Centennial Natural Area
- King's Crossing Natural Area*
- Old St. Louis Natural Area*
- East 1st Street Property
- Koppes Conservation Easement
- Waterford Conservation Easement



River's Edge Natural Area



Dakota Ridge
Conservation Easement

Foothills/Mountains Open Lands

- Skyline Natural Area
- Hidden Valley
- Devil's Backbone Open Space (Larimer County Partnership)*
- Dakota Ridge Conservation Easement
- Viestenz-Smith Mountain Park Open Space
- Hermit Park Open Space (Larimer County Partnership)*
- Chimney Hollow Conservation Easement (Larimer County Partnership)
- Sylvan Dale Conservation Easement (Larimer County Partnership)

Neighborhood Natural Areas

- Meadowbrook Natural Area*
- West Boedecker Lake
- Horseshoe-Coulson Conservation Easement

Recreation Trail Natural Areas

- Boyd Lake North and South*
- Emerald Glen Natural Area*
- Fairgrounds Natural Area*



Great Horned Owl Nest



Badger at Sunset Vista

Community Separator - North

- Prairie Ridge Natural Area
- Sunset Vista Natural Area
- Long View Farm (Larimer County Partnership)
- Soaring Vista Natural Area (Fort Collins Partnership)
- Walden West Conservation Easement

Community Separator - South

- Lazy J Bar S (Raptor Ridge) Conservation Easement
- Hopkins (Hollander) Conservation Easement
- Dunkin (Fancher) Conservation Easement
- Heron Lakes CE (Larimer County & Berthoud Partnership)
- Ryan Gulch II

* Sites open for public access

2016 Acquisitions

Skyline Natural Area

- Additional 9 acres at Skyline Natural Area
- Foothills hogback shrubland habitat
- Provides potential trail access from Highway 34
- 1/2 share of Louden Ditch water



Oxbow Natural Area

- Additional 9 acres at Oxbow Natural Area
- East of Rossum Drive
- Big Thompson River access
- Future fishing access & wildlife viewing
- Future connection to City's Recreation Trail System

Ward Trust II

- 78 acres adjacent to Morey Wildlife Reserve
- Partnership with GOCO and Larimer County
- 60 acre feet of George Rist Ditch water



East 1st Street

- 79 acres
- Agricultural land and floodplain natural area
- Big Thompson River access
- 4-acre pond and wetlands
- Adjacent to Simpson Ponds State Wildlife Area

Ryan's Gulch II

- 185 acres
- 6 shares of Southside Ditch, Reservoir & Extension
- Future trail access & wildlife viewing
- Partnership with Larimer County & Berthoud



Public Access Improvements



Volunteers at River's Edge Natural Area

Quick-win Projects

The *Parks & Recreation Master Plan* prioritized additional public access to natural areas.

Improvements completed in 2016 included:

- **Oxbow Natural Area** - new soft-surface trail provides access to the Big Thompson River
- **King's Crossing Natural Area** - new soft-surface loop trail and parking area
- **Mariana Butte Trail** improvements
- **Morey Wildlife Reserve** - reconstruction and new soft-surface trails and site amenities.
- **River's Edge Natural Area** - new trail connection and access point at Carlisle Drive and addition of a 1st Street parking lot and trailhead. New trails in 2017 will connect the parking area to existing trails.

Morey Wildlife Reserve Restoration

The 2013 Big Thompson flood dramatically changed the landscape at Morey Wildlife Reserve, filling in the former gravel mining pond and creating new wetlands and overflow channels. Restoration efforts focused on reclaiming native upland and wetland habitats and restoring public access for passive uses such as wildlife viewing and environmental education. In 2016, the natural-surface pedestrian trail was reconstructed and an additional loop trail through the restored site was completed to enhance recreation experiences. Community volunteers, conservation corps crews, and Group Publishing's "Week of Hope" youth volunteer groups assisted with planting and trail building, using grant funding to leverage city dollars.



Morey Wildlife Reserve restoration

Mariana Butte Trail

At Mariana Butte, volunteers from the local chapter of CATS (Colorado Addicted Trailbuilders Society) have completed nearly one mile of sustainable soft-surface trails at this highly visible landmark site. The trail loops around the base of the Butte and a spur trail takes hikers to the top, offering incredible views. A new north trail to the Big Thompson River is under construction.



New Open Lands signs



Volunteer trail-building project at Mariana Butte



Maintaining Preserved Lands

Twelve sites encompassing 900 acres are publicly accessible - with more planned

Loveland's open lands and trails were highly rated by citizens in the 2016 Citizen Satisfaction Survey. Staff is working hard to provide the best experiences and practices at open lands and trails to meet citizen expectations. Several site improvements and more comprehensive operation practices were implemented in 2016, including:

- Policies and practices to protect resources
- Signage - A new signage program was implemented
- Fencing and Security
- Vegetation Management - Planting, weed management, mowing & restoration
- Waste Management
- Snow Removal
- Parking and Trailheads
- Trail Maintenance
- Management of Stewardship Projects



Arbor Day tree planting at River's Edge Natural Area



Jim Tolstrup from High Plains Environmental Center consulting on vegetation management practices



New trail from Carlisle Avenue at River's Edge Natural Area



NATURAL AREA	AMENITIES/RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES											
Boyd Lake (State Parks Partnership) 6500 N. County Rd. 11C	P											
Cottonwood Run Taft-Wilson along Big Thompson River												
Devils Backbone (City Partnership) 1725 Hidden Valley Drive	P											
Emerald Glen Wilson Ave. & 45th Street												
King's Crossing 990 S. Lincoln Ave.	P											
Mariana Butte 701 Clubhouse Drive	P											
Meadowbrook 2000 Cascade Avenue												
Morey Wildlife Reserve 5439 Cedar Valley Drive												
Namaqua (and Park) 816 N. Cty. Rd. 19E (Namaqua Rd.)	P											
Old St. Louis 1010 S. St. Louis Ave.	P											
Oxbow 1135 Rossum Drive												
River's Edge 960 W. First Street	P											
Round Mountain 1211 W. Highway 34	P											



Working with Colorado Avian Research and Rehabilitation Institute on installation of barn owl nest boxes



Protection of wildlife and habitat



Bird Perch Poles

City of Loveland Water and Power Department donated bird perch poles at River's Edge Natural Area to provide additional foraging and resting perches for birds of prey.

Trails

Loveland's Trails System

The 2014 *Parks and Recreation Master Plan* identifies access to trails as one of citizens' top priorities. To meet that citizen expectation, Loveland provides its citizens and visitors with an 18-mile hard-surface Recreation Trail which encircles the City, as well as several new soft-surface trails on open lands throughout town. Citizens highly value and rate trails as one of Loveland's top amenities. Trails connect the community and outdoor opportunities in a unique way and significantly contribute to the quality of life in Loveland.

Parks and Recreation Master Plan Trail Goals

- More trail opportunities to connect with nature
- Complete the Recreation Trail Loop
- Make regional trail connections
- Provide soft-surface trails

Soft-Surface Trail Opportunities

- **Devil's Backbone Open Space**
- **Kings Crossing Natural Area**
- **Mariana Butte**
- **Meadowbrook Natural Area**
- **Mehaffey Park**
- **Morey Wildlife Reserve**
- **Old St. Louis Natural Area**
- **Oxbow Natural Area**
- **River's Edge Natural Area**

Expansion of the Devil's Backbone Open Space Trail System

Loveland partnered with Larimer County on the expansion of the parking lot and the addition of a new trail at this popular open space. Loveland contributed \$118,500 towards the project, which provides additional parking and a new multi-use Hidden Valley Trail. City and county funds were leveraged by many hours donated by local volunteer groups.



Hidden Valley Trail



New soft-surface trail at Morey Wildlife Reserve

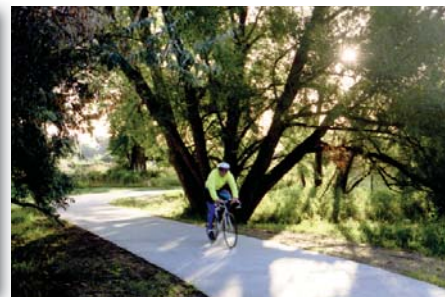
New Trail Emergency Gates

Parks Crews fabricated and installed 10 new emergency gates at pedestrian underpasses along the Recreation Trail System to close areas from public access in the event of flooding, maintenance, and emergency situations.

Recreation Trail Projects

Taft to Wilson Avenue Trail

- Flood repair project to realign trail along the Big Thompson River and improve resiliency
- Construction is underway and is anticipated to be completed by summer 2017



Long View Trail

- A joint City of Loveland, Larimer County and Fort Collins project for a regional trail from 57th Street and Taft Avenue in Loveland to Cathy Fromme Prairie Natural Area in Fort Collins
- Construction is anticipated to begin in 2017
- Grants will cover almost half of the cost of construction:
 - **Colorado Department of Transportation** - Transportation Enhancement (TE) Grant for \$1 million
 - **Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) Grant** for \$999,550 from the Paths to Parks Initiative



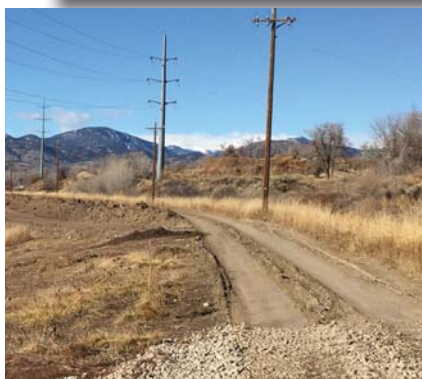
North Colorado Front Range Trail

- A joint City of Loveland, Larimer County and Fort Collins project to construct a regional trail north from Loveland at County Road 11C.
- Grants will cover majority of Loveland's trail construction:
 - **Colorado Department of Transportation** - Transportation Enhancement (TE) Grant for \$450,000
 - **Colorado Front Range Trail** - Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) Grant for \$350,000
- Final design completed and construction to begin in 2017



W US 34 Underpass to Namaqua Rd

- Designed and under construction
- Repurposed bridge from Viestenz-Smith Mountain Park
- Anticipated completion by summer 2017
- \$97,000 GOCO Planning Grant and 2020 \$600,000 grant by CDOT Alternative Transportation Program



Partnerships

Partnering with the Community

Partnerships have allowed incredible things to happen in the Loveland community with regards to open lands and trails and significantly strengthen our program. Some examples of partnerships in 2016 include:

Annual Waterway Cleanup

117 volunteers removed 60 tons of debris from local waterways.

Audubon Society and Bird Experts

Local volunteer bird enthusiasts and Audubon members led guided bird walks and surveyed natural areas for bird species, nesting activity and the annual Christmas Bird Count.

Flood Recovery

Citizen volunteers helped with flood clean-up at Morey Wildlife Reserve and Oxbow Natural Area. Many volunteers and groups also planted hundreds of native plants and restored soft-surface trails at Morey Wildlife Reserve and River's Edge Natural Area.

Mariana Butte Trail Project

CATS (Colorado Addicted Trailbuilders Society) volunteers completed a new sustainable "trail to the top" and additional trail linkages in the Mariana Butte area.

Front Range Community College Volunteers

Students and teachers removed hundreds of invasive Russian olive trees from Ryan's Gulch II and along the Big Thompson River as part of the FRCC Exotic Species Elimination Project.

High Plains Environmental Center

The City contributed \$400,000 toward the construction of a new High Plains Environmental Center (under construction in 2017) and HPEC staff consulted with the City on the management and long-term restoration of wetlands at Sunset Vista.

Week of Hope Volunteers

Youth groups from across the country helped with Open Lands and Trail projects over five weeks during the summer.

Larimer County Conservation Corps

Crews removed Russian olive trees & other invasive species through a grant from Great Outdoors Colorado.

Loveland Fishing Club

Purchased materials and constructed Fishing Line Recycle Tubes installed at River's Edge Natural Area and other sites.



LIMB (Loveland Initiative for Monarch Butterflies)

Propagated and helped plant 2,000 native milkweed plants for butterfly migration habitat.

County Open Space Tax 20th Anniversary

Promoted 20th anniversary of Help Preserve Open Spaces Sales Tax with community events.

Colorado Avian Research and Rehab Inst.

Local raptor experts helped install two barn owl boxes and monitor for nesting activity.

GOCO, Larimer County, Trust for Public Land and Town of Berthoud

Partnerships on land acquisitions and regional trail connections.



Annual Waterway Cleanup at Oxbow Natural Area



Community Outreach



National Trails Day at Morey Wildlife Reserve

Site of the Month & Special Events

In order to familiarize citizens with new open lands and natural areas available for public access, a different site was featured each month. The public was invited to participate in activities such as guided bird walks and nature hikes, and to volunteer for stewardship projects such as trail building, planting, trash clean-up, and flood repairs.

Special events included “New Year, New You” at the Library, Childrens Day, Dog Day Afternoon, Halloween Festival, and Cherry Pie Festival.



Dog Day at River's Edge Natural Area

Awards and Recognitions

Big Thompson Recreation and Conservation Assessment Award

Loveland partnered with Larimer County and other stakeholders to develop a vision plan for the Big Thompson River corridor following the devastating 2013 flood. With funding from a Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) Flood Recovery Grant, the partners developed “A Bigger Vision for the Big T: A Recreation and Conservation Assessment.” The plan evaluated pre- and post-flood conditions in the project area between Loveland and Estes Park, identified and prioritized recreation and conservation opportunities, and provided an Action Plan to “build back better than before.” In 2016, the plan was awarded the Resilience Award by the Colorado Chapter of the American Planning Association.

Staff Recognitions

As a result of hard work and dedication, the Open Lands staff team was recognized with the “Team Award” by the City of Loveland. In addition, Brian Hayes, Debbie Eley, Michele Van Hare, and Marilyn Hilgenberg were individually recognized as Employees of the Year for their significant contributions to the Open Lands and Trails program.

Brian Hayes, Open Lands Coordinator, has been appointed by the governor to serve on the Colorado Conservation Easement Oversight Commission.



Our goal is...

to preserve and protect significant open lands, natural areas, and wildlife habitat, and to develop trails and citizen opportunities to connect with nature for present and future generations.

Environmental Education & Volunteers

2016 Environmental Education

- Monthly **Preschool Programs (PEEPs)** for ages 2-5 at parks, natural areas & Loveland Library reached 463 pre-schoolers and 300 adults.
- **Urban Wilderness, Plants & Places and Wildlife Around Us** programs were presented to 931 school-age students.
- **Special Programs** - River exploration programs, monthly guided bird walks, guided nature walks, CSI - Critter Scene Investigation activities, Active Generation Open Lands Tour, and History & Moonlight Evening Hike.
- **Presentations to Civic Groups**

More than 2,000 environmental education participants in 2016



Plants and Places school program

BUCKS FOR BUSES

One of the greatest barriers to providing programs to school students is transportation. To address this need, a new initiative called Bucks for Buses collects charitable donations to provide transportation scholarships that enable economically challenged schools to attend environmental education programs at River's Edge Natural Area.

Total Volunteer Hours in 2016 5,110 hours

- **18 Environmental Education volunteers donated 570 hours** teaching environmental education programs.
- **20 Public Outreach Volunteers contributed 845 hours** helping with public programs, trail hosting, and civic events.
- **Community Stewardship & Special Projects** solicited the help of some **320 volunteers** who contributed more than **3,695 hours** of service.



Open Lands Advisory Commission

2016 Open Lands Advisory Commission

The Open Lands Advisory Commission is comprised of volunteers who live in or near the City and represent Loveland's diverse land use interests. The commission advises City Council regarding open lands and trail issues.

Members:

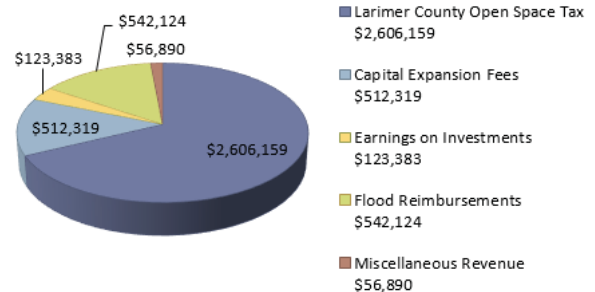
Gale Bernhardt
Rick Brent
Andy Hawbaker
Ross Livingston, Vice Chair
Darren Pape
Jim Roode
Nathan Thompson
Jean Whittaker
William Zawacki, Chair
Hugh McKean, City Council Liaison
Kerri Rollins, Larimer County Liaison

Open Lands Financial Overview

OPEN LANDS REVENUE – \$3,840,875*

The Open Lands Program is funded primarily by Loveland’s share of the Larimer County ¼-cent Open Space Sales Tax, which provided \$2,606,159 in revenue in 2016. The City’s Open Lands Capital Expansion Fees are collected on new residential housing units and generated \$512,319 for acquisitions & capital improvements. Flood reimbursements totaled \$542,124 and Miscellaneous Revenue came from utility and agricultural lease income. Investment earnings increased in 2016, amounting to \$123,383.

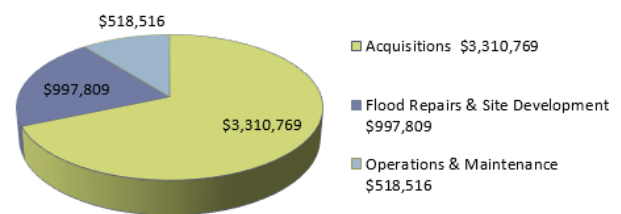
Loveland Open Lands Revenue 2016



OPEN LANDS EXPENDITURES – \$5,215,313*

Capital Expenditures in 2016 for acquisitions totaled \$3,648,138 including the purchase of Ryan’s Gulch II, the Skyline and Oxbow additions, East 1st Street, and Ward Trust II. Flood repairs and site development expenditures, including new and rebuilt public access amenities and the contribution to the new High Plains Environmental Center, totaled \$935,140. Operations and Maintenance, encompassing professional services, personnel, and supplies, required \$632,043.

Loveland Open Lands Expenditures 2016



Grants & Donations

Grants and donations significantly contribute to the success of Loveland’s Open Lands Program:

- **Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) Open Space grant** of \$500,000 for purchase of 77-acre Ward Trust II Property.
- **Flood Recovery grant from GOCO for \$140,000** for the reconstruction of River’s Edge Natural Area
- **Applied for a Colorado Health Foundation grant** for \$85,200 to provide more opportunities for Loveland citizens to access the outdoors.
- **Received a \$15,000 grant from GOCO** to fund the removal of invasive Russian olive trees by the Larimer County Conservation Corps.
- **Received a \$6,500 grant from Colorado Parks and Wildlife** through Aloterra for restoration with native plant materials at Morey Wildlife Reserve.
- **Received a \$60,000 Invasive Phreatophyte Control Program grant** from CWCB, in partnership with Larimer County, to remove Russian olives, Siberian elm & tamarisk.

*2016 Unaudited Year-end Figures

OPEN SPACE SALES TAX

Thank You for Supporting the Larimer County Open Space Sales Tax!

The primary funding source for Loveland’s Open Lands Program is the county-wide ¼-cent Open Space Sales Tax, originally passed in 1995. In 2014, voters supported the extension of the county tax for 25 years, passing the referendum with 82% approval. Loveland’s share of this revenue is used for acquisition, development, public access, stewardship, and management of open space, natural areas, wildlife habitat, and trails in and around Loveland.

Trails Financial Overview

TRAILS REVENUE – \$1,213,302*

The Trails Program is funded primarily by Loveland's share of Colorado Lottery dollars, which provided \$813,724 in revenue in 2016. The City's Trails Capital Expansion Fees are collected on new residential housing units and generated \$306,556 for acquisitions & capital improvements. Investment earnings increased in 2016, amounting to \$64,109.

TRAILS EXPENDITURES – \$373,482*

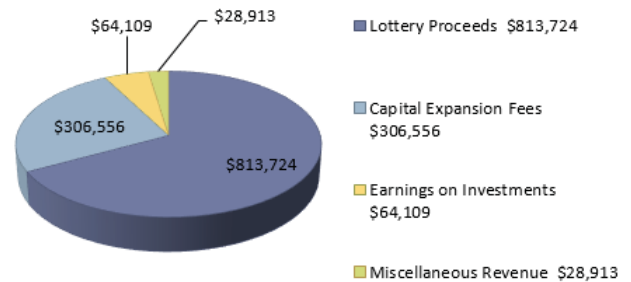
Capital Expenditures in 2016 for trails construction totaled \$173,973, including planning and engineering for the Colorado Front Range Trail, Long View Trail and Recreation Trail west of Namaqua Avenue. Operations and Maintenance, encompassing professional services, personnel, and supplies, required \$199,509.

Stretching Available Dollars for Trails

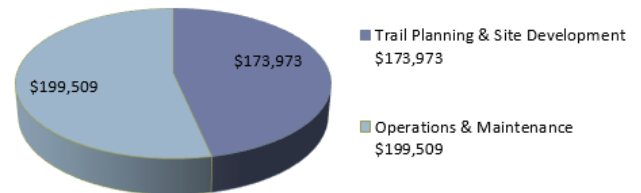
The City received several key trail grants to assist with the planning and development of Loveland's trails over the next few years:

- **Front Range Trail** was awarded a \$450,000 Colorado Department of Transportation Enhancement grant and a \$350,000 Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) grant.
- **Long View Trail** was awarded a \$1,000,000 Colorado Department of Transportation Enhancement grant and a \$999,550 GOCO Paths to Park Initiative grant.
- **Namaqua Avenue Underpass** was awarded a \$97,000 GOCO Planning grant and \$600,000 Colorado Department of Transportation Alternative Transportation grant.
- **Taft to Wilson Flood Trail Repairs** received supplemental funding from GOCO and FEMA.

Loveland Trails Revenue 2016



Loveland Trails Expenditures 2016



*2016 Unaudited Year-end Figures



Recreation Trail at Emerald Glen Natural Area

2017 PLANNED ACQUISITIONS

As outlined in the 2014 *Parks & Recreation Master Plan*, the Open Lands Division will continue to focus on acquisition of strategic properties identified in priority areas. These parcels include a 57-acre Big Thompson River parcel at Namaqua Avenue, two parcels adjacent to the Big Thompson River near Boise Avenue, and a trail corridor on the north shore of Boedecker Reservoir.



Namaqua Avenue Property

MANAGEMENT & STEWARDSHIP OF OPEN LANDS AND TRAILS

Balancing public access with conservation of natural resources will be a focus of management and stewardship plans developed for open lands and natural areas. In 2017, plans for Sunset Vista, Prairie Ridge and Skyline Natural Areas will include opportunities for public input regarding desired recreational uses and site amenities, and will incorporate the evaluation of existing resources, opportunities, and constraints. Trails and connectivity will also be a major focus of the division, linking natural areas, open lands, and parks, and providing access for more citizens to connect with our great outdoors.



Boedecker Reservoir views

TRAIL CONNECTIONS

Significant recreation trail connections will be completed in 2017 including a bridge crossing and trail from west Highway 34 to Namaqua Avenue and the north Front Range Trail connection from Loveland to Fort Collins. Construction will also begin on the Long View Trail through Sunset Vista Natural Area. In addition, flood and trail repairs from Taft to Wilson Avenue along the Big Thompson River will be completed by summer 2017.

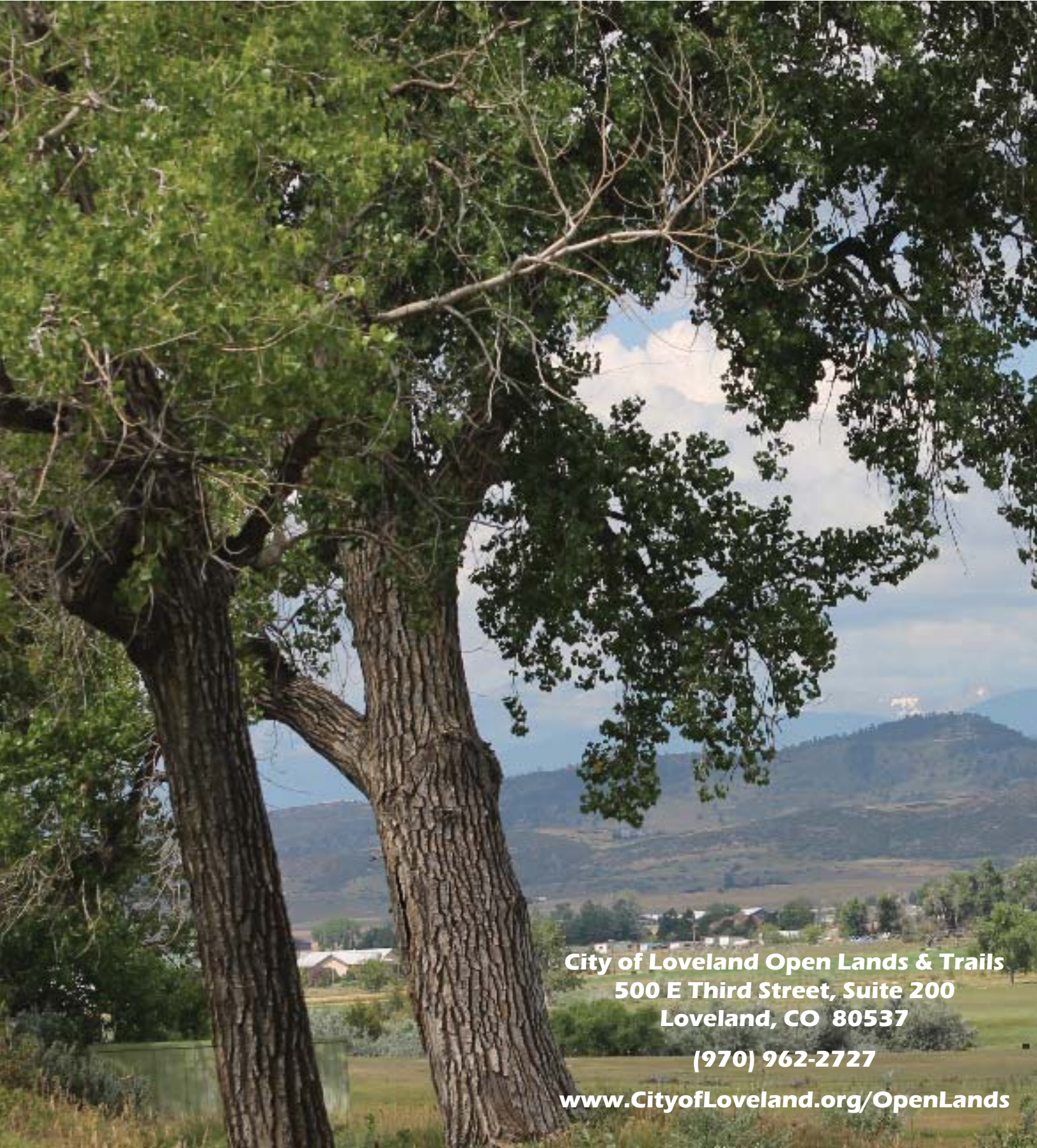
PROJECT OUTDOORS - GREAT OUTDOORS COLORADO INSPIRE INITIATIVE

Loveland is excited to be part of the Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) Inspire Initiative with Project Outdoors, aimed at identifying ways to engage youth and families in the outdoors and improve opportunities and access to nature-related activities, places, and programs.

Projects identified during this planning process may be eligible for up to \$3M in implementation funding during a GOCO grant cycle in the summer of 2017. Partners include Larimer County, Boys and Girls Clubs of Larimer County, High Plains Environmental Center, Colorado State University, Front Range Community College, and Thompson School District. Learn more:

www.cityofloveland.org/projectoutdoors





City of Loveland Open Lands & Trails
500 E Third Street, Suite 200
Loveland, CO 80537

(970) 962-2727

www.CityofLoveland.org/OpenLands