



2023 ANNUAL REPORT



LOVELAND OPEN LANDS & TRAILS



Haag property addition to Willow Bend

SECURING PROPERTIES FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

Setting the stage for future open lands and trail development, Loveland increased its holdings with additions representing 137 acres of new properties under purchase and option agreements. These lands will provide significant public access for future generations, conserve valuable habitat for wildlife, improve long-term sustainability of the Big Thompson River corridor and its floodplain, and promote air and water quality.

The Open Lands portfolio added 37 acres with the purchase of a key parcel along the Big Thompson River known as the Haag property. This acquisition expands Willow Bend Natural Area to 168 acres and will provide additional public access to the river corridor via connecting trails in the future. The project preserves beneficial habitat for aquatic species, birds, mammals and other wildlife using the riparian corridor. The property was purchased in the fall, utilizing funds from Loveland's share of the Larimer County Open Space Tax (\$1.2M).

The City was also able to negotiate an option for the future acquisition of 100 acres in southeast Loveland, which will conserve and connect to existing east Big Thompson River corridor properties, providing future passive recreation and trail opportunities for this fast-growing area of the community.

Throughout the year, Loveland worked with Fort Collins and Larimer County on stewardship of the Heaven's Door Ranch, which was acquired in late 2022. Under an Intergovernmental Agreement established by Loveland and Fort Collins, the cities collaborated as co-holders of the Conservation Easement to develop a Baseline Inventory Report for the 1,547-acre property located at the gateway to the Big Thompson Canyon, assuring the land is planned and managed to protect the resource values in perpetuity.



Heaven's Door Ranch partnership project

MISSION STATEMENT

To identify, preserve, protect, connect and enhance open space, natural areas, trails and wildlife habitat to promote the enjoyment of outdoor activities while advancing environmental stewardship, environmental education and outdoor experiences.

EXPLORE YOUR OPEN LANDS & TRAILS

- 34.9 miles of paved trails
- 28 miles of soft-surface trails
- 18 open land sites open to the public

NEW TRAILS AND IMPROVEMENTS

Trails are highly valued Loveland amenities, consistently ranking high in public outreach and citizen surveys, for existing paved and soft-surface trails throughout the community and the desire for additional trail access.

In May, Loveland opened the newest section of the trail system, Centerra Trail, providing a safe, non-motorized transportation option to connect east neighborhoods to the City's Recreation Trail System for the first time. The new 1.3 mile hard-surface trail connects the City's Boyd Lake and Civic Center trails to the Centerra Millennium trail system. Centerra Trail starts at North Denver Avenue and connects to the pedestrian underpass at North Boyd Lake Avenue, offering multi-use access to Loveland Centerra neighborhoods and the trails around Houts Reservoir and Equalizer Lake.

Funding for the Centerra Trail project came primarily from state and regional transportation grants totaling \$1,225,000, helping to cover the cost of design and construction, along with a \$25,000 contribution from High Plains Foundation towards trail construction. The balance of funding was provided by Loveland's share of Colorado Lottery dollars and the City's Trails Capital Expansion Fees.

In addition, design and approvals were completed for paving of the final segment of the Loveland Loop Trail, along the Big Barnes Ditch between Namaqua and Wilson Avenue. The project is scheduled for construction in mid 2024, with grant funding from the Transportation Alternatives Program and Loveland's Conservation Trust Fund dollars.

Planning and design of the Boise to Willow Bend Trail were also finalized for the 1.3 mile segment that will connect from Old St. Louis Natural Area at Boise Avenue east to Willow Bend Natural Area, as the newest segment of the East Big Thompson Trail. Planning included environmental clearances, geotechnical surveys and engineering, and permitting for wetland crossings and bridges. Construction of the paved trail connection is anticipated in 2024.

Other site improvements completed included new fishing inputs at River's Edge ponds and plans for the installation of a fishing dock on Bass Ponds for increased accessibility, as part of a Fishing is Fun grant project through Colorado Parks and Wildlife. Trail repairs and the installation of new benches improved ADA accessibility throughout the system. Repairs were made to address trail damage from high water, erosion and drainage issues due to this year's excessive precipitation. New interpretive signage along Centerra Trail provides opportunities for trail users to learn about the history, distribution and treatment of water serving Loveland and downstream communities.

STEWARDSHIP & RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Stewardship to maintain and improve resources at open lands and trails is a key initiative and ongoing focus for the Division.

Projects were completed at many sites including restoration efforts with native vegetation, trail resurfacing, invasive species management, parking lot improvements, additional wayfinding and interpretive signage, new Mariana Butte Trail to the Top markers and new native pollinator habitat areas at Sunset Vista.

Staff and volunteers take great pride in providing and maintaining quality outdoor experiences and facilities for the community.



New Centerra Trail



"Get Out, Get Active" participants on Centerra Trail



Boise Bend Trail erosion repair



Open Lands & Trails field crew

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Staff was dedicated to planning for development of natural areas and trails, including Willow Bend along the east Big Thompson River, Dakota Ridge/Skyline in the foothills west of town and Eagle Vista in southwest Loveland. A key component in these planning efforts is balancing conservation and recreation, to preserve and enhance resource values while providing for sustainable public access and trail connections. At Eagle Vista, extensive evaluation of alternatives resulted in a revised trail alignment designed to reduce resource impacts. The proposed final management plan was presented for public review in December and includes a vision for public access, trails, land conservation, restoration and management of important habitats and corridors.

A major planning initiative included final design of the Willow Bend Park & Natural Area, a joint project of the Department's Open Lands & Trails, Recreation, Planning and Parks Divisions, for the City's first fully accessible park and connection with the Boise to Willow Bend Trail. Loveland also partnered with Larimer County to plan and design new access to Wild Natural Area, in conjunction with a county transportation project to install a new traffic signal at Hwy 34 and Glade Road. Both projects are scheduled for construction in 2024.

Staff had the opportunity to actively collaborate on the Department Master Plan, Eagle Vista Management Plan, Connect Transportation Plan, the Streets Safety Master Plan, the Envisioning Plan for the Big Thompson River, Brownfields EPA grant and the Big Thompson River Mitigation Planning, ensuring that future site developments balance conservation with new recreational opportunities.

VOLUNTEERS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

The Open Lands & Trails Division provides a wide variety of opportunities for volunteers to share their love of nature with people of all ages through education, outreach, stewardship and support projects & programs. **Education volunteers** inspired local school children to learn about wildlife, plants and ecosystems during field trip programs at Viestenz-Smith Mountain Park, River's Edge Natural Area and Namaqua Park. Newly-trained and veteran **Trail Host volunteers** continued to be the eyes and ears of the program, greeting thousands of visitors, answering questions, encouraging compliance with regulations and reporting site use and maintenance issues. **Stewardship volunteers** helped restore habitat, maintain trails, remove weeds, monitor nesting raptors, create and maintain new pollinator habitat, install fishing access points and clean up natural areas. **Outreach volunteers** connected with the community during interpretive walks, public programs and events including Celebrate Loveland Trails Day, Trek the Thompson, Dog Day of Summer, Earth Day, Children's Day, Everybody Bike Day and Nature Cabin Open House days. Comprehensive training is offered for all volunteers, scheduled through Open Lands & Trails' Offero online system.

BY THE NUMBERS

- Environmental Education = 33 volunteers donated 710 hours, presenting 47 programs attended by 1,255 adults and children
- Stewardship = 464 volunteers contributed 4,088 hours to 31 projects
- Community Outreach = 50 volunteers donated 963 hours during 65 programs that reached 1,691 participants
- Administrative & Program Support = 19 volunteers contributed 453 hours in 13 projects
- Trail Hosting = 40 volunteers completed 1,830 visits and counted 36,448 visitors at 19 different open lands & trails, donating 2,509 hours of their time
- Nature Cabin = 11 docents hosted 68 Open House days with 4,184 visitors to the VSMP Nature Cabin donating 611 hours

Total volunteer hours given = 8,722 hours by 571 active volunteers



Site planning at Skyline Natural Area



Drone survey at Dakota Ridge



Guided walk at Mariana Butte



Outreach volunteers at Loveland Trails Day event booth

OPEN LANDS & TRAILS ADVISORY COMMISSION

The nine-member citizen advisory commission makes recommendations regarding the attributable revenue share to the City of Loveland from the Larimer County Open Space Sales & Use Tax, as well as any funds designated by the City for open lands and trail purposes.



Open Lands & Trails Advisory Commission

COMMISSION MEMBERS

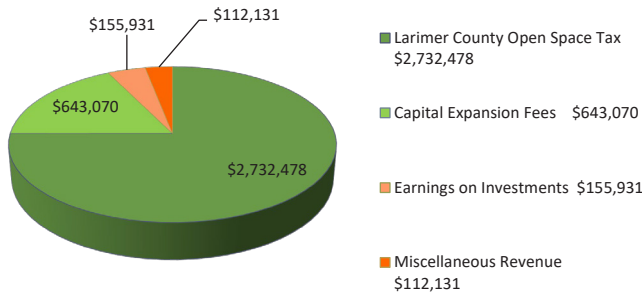
Adam Beeco, <i>Chair</i>	Andy McRoberts
Gale Bernhardt	Jim Roode
Jim Edmiston	Barb Schultz
Michael Hinterberg, <i>Vice Chair</i>	Jacki Marsh, <i>City Council Liaison</i>
Scott James	Jon Mallo, <i>Alternate Liaison</i>
David LaGreca	Daylan Figgs, <i>County Liaison</i>



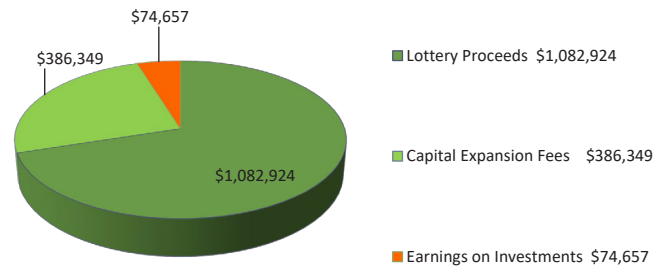
Monarch butterfly on beeplant at Sunset Vista

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

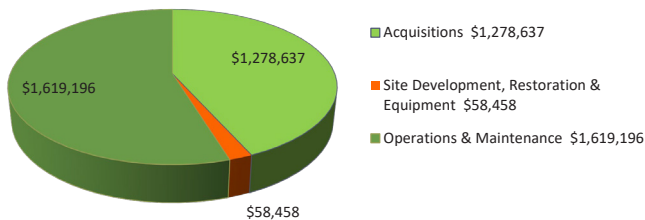
Loveland Open Lands Revenue 2023



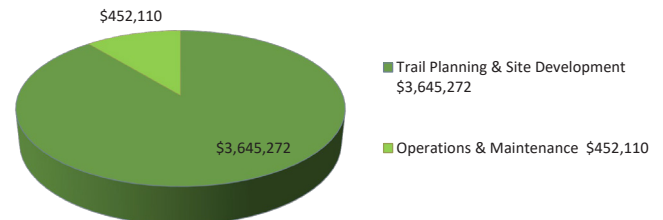
Loveland Trails Revenue 2023



Loveland Open Lands Expenditures 2023



Loveland Trails Expenditures 2023



LOVELAND OPEN LANDS & TRAILS a Division of Loveland Parks & Recreation

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