



JEFFERSON
COUNTY COLORADO
Open Space

Jefferson County Open Space

Conservation Greenprint 2020-2025

A background image of a topographic map with contour lines, rendered in a light gray color, covering the right half of the page.

WHAT IS THE CONSERVATION GREENPRINT?

A plan for the future of Jefferson County Open Space

The Conservation Greenprint 2020-2025 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.

This document explains Jefferson County Open Space goals for the next five years and provides measures for success. These priorities are the direct result of extensive public conversations, collaboration, and feedback about the value of public lands and local priorities for improvement.

This Greenprint is a collective call to action to address the challenges and opportunities we face today for a better tomorrow. The vision for our future is clear: we must all work together for the betterment and health of our environment, public lands, and people.

JEFFERSON COUNTY OPEN SPACE

A local conservation legacy

Jefferson County Open Space is the nation's first sales tax funded county open space organization. We have grassroots beginnings as a land conservation organization, dating back to 1972 with PLAN Jeffco and The League of Women Voters of Jefferson County. These organizations proposed a unique concept to the Board of County Commissioners: preserve the scenic vistas and open lands within the county by collecting a one-half of one percent sales tax in Jefferson County. The voters resoundingly agreed, thereby ensuring land conservation and access for public enjoyment.

We have thoughtfully leveraged strategic partnerships and invested Jefferson County Open Space sales tax funds for stewardship, land acquisitions, and projects to advance our mission. **Preservation Progress** is our annual report that details these investments, reflecting the community desire to balance preservation of precious resources with public access to nature.



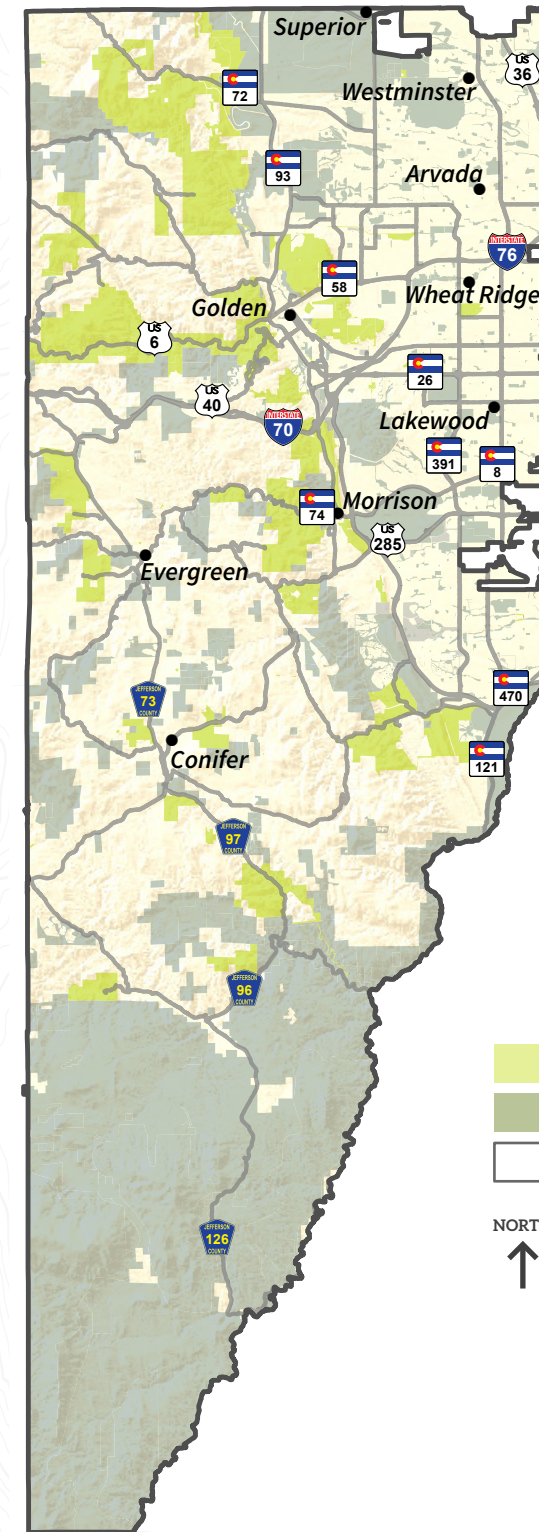
252 MILES
of trails



**27 OPEN SPACE
PARKS**



56,000 ACRES
preserved



LEGEND

- Jefferson County Parks and Open Space
- Other Parks and Open Space
- Jefferson County Boundary



JEFFERSON COUNTY OPEN SPACE

Our mission is the driving force

Preserve open space and parkland

Protect park and natural resources

Provide healthy, nature-based experiences

We believe **RESPECT** fosters **COLLABORATION** that inspires **INNOVATION**.

JEFFERSON COUNTY OPEN SPACE

Serving the community



Close to home

Connections to nature are easy to access and close to where people live, work, and play. Our parks, trails, and open space are highly visited as they provide close proximity to Colorado's plains, foothills, and mountains.



A gateway to healthy experiences

We are the first mountain stop west of Denver, offering nearby plains, foothills, and mountain experiences to 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.



Active local participation

People in the community value connecting to nature and passionately support conservation. 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.



Factors that will influence our ability to thrive include:

Understanding our role in a changing climate

Seasonal patterns are rapidly changing, which can drastically impact our environment – from droughts and floods to wildfires and shifting landscapes.



What proactive steps can we continue to take in collaboration with the community to form a shared perspective and responsive plan of action?

Focusing on equity in the face of growth

The Denver Metro Area is growing at nearly 2% per year, contributing to more visitors to Jefferson County Open Space parks and a greater need to serve our entire community.



As numbers and demographics continue to shift, how can we provide opportunities and experiences that serve people of all ages and abilities, the socioeconomically underserved, and minority populations?

Gathering data for informed planning

Jefferson County Open Space park visitation has steadily increased to an estimated 7 million visitors per year, and the necessity for accurate data to better understand needs, patterns, and trends is imperative.



How can we remove barriers to access in our parks, improve trail courtesy, and address population growth?



COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The local perspective

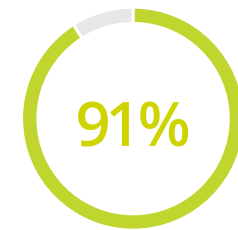
The Conservation Greenprint team gathered feedback from thousands of residents and visitors while working hand-in-hand with many stakeholders throughout the planning process. The community and our partners were asked about the value and importance of open space and parklands, current and potential management and stewardship practices, and areas of focus for the next five years. The collective feedback identified these five key themes:



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

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

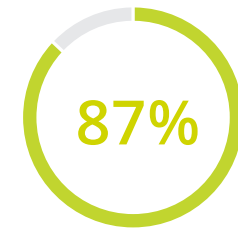
What are the greatest benefits of public open space and parkland to you?



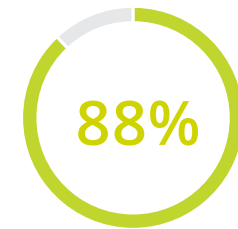
Assurance that open space will be there for future generations



Diverse habitat for wildlife



Improves my physical/emotional health



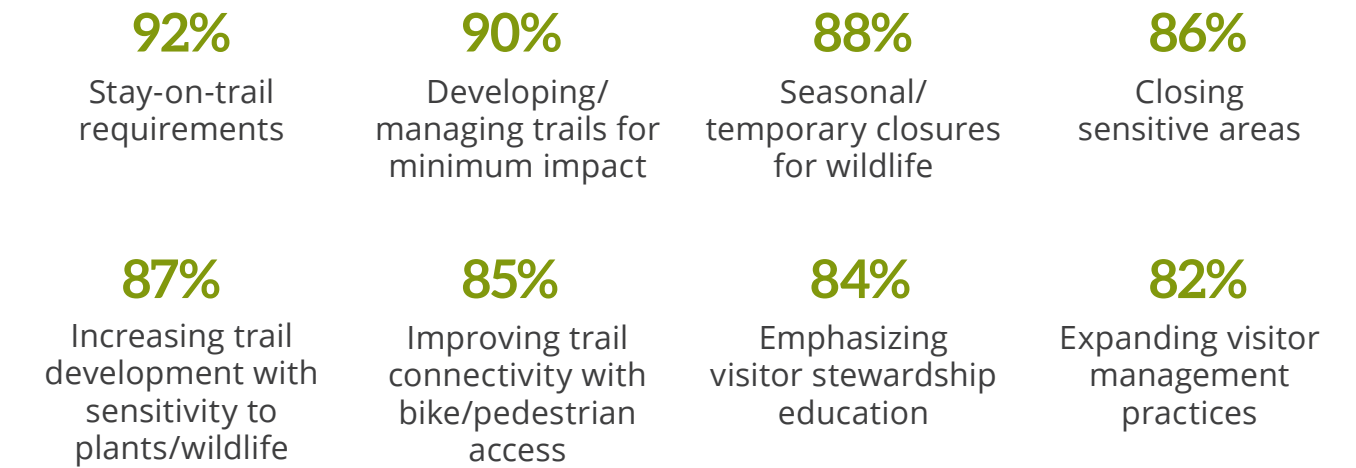
Protection of resources (cultural, geological, etc.)



Why is public open space and parkland important to you?



Jefferson County residents strongly support:



OUR VISION

Nature, heritage & humanity thriving in wild harmony

Jefferson County Open Space is the front door to the Colorado mountains. On the metro side, society is rapidly evolving, with new people and possibilities arriving every day. On the natural side, the plains, foothills, and mountains are a welcomed escape to the wild, natural landscape of Colorado. It is our collective responsibility to achieve balance between nature and people as parts of our ongoing story.

It's about nurturing the natural world that makes everything possible, protecting the longevity of land, wildlife, and biodiversity. We seek to provide all ages, abilities, ethnicities, and walks of life access to the outdoors. We plan to empower a new generation of stewards who celebrate the past to build a better future, while creating a culture of visitors who love the parks, are courteous to each other, and respect nature.

This vision is an opportunity to strengthen a healthy Jefferson County community that celebrates the "wild" at the core of who we are, a place where all living things can grow and thrive for generations to come.



Healthy Environment

Healthy Lands

Healthy People

OUR 2020-2025 GOALS

Healthy Environment

#1 VISITOR STEWARDSHIP & COURTESY

Interact with 350,000 park visitors to share important stewardship and safety information.

#2 INFORMATION SHARING

Engage 10,000 community members in conversations that will positively impact our environment.

#3 PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT

Inspire community members to share their talents and energy by volunteering 270,000 hours.

#4 LAND ACQUISITION

Coordinate land conservation efforts in Jefferson County to preserve an additional 3,000 acres of public open space and parkland.

Healthy Lands

#5 WAR ON WEEDS

Treat 48,000 acres of Jefferson County Open Space lands for harmful and invasive species.

#6 FOREST HEALTH

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.

#7 HABITAT RESTORATION

Restore 325 acres of land disturbed by human activity and natural events.

Healthy People

#8 EASY AND EQUITABLE ACCESS

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.

#9 PARK SYSTEM TRAIL EXPANSION

Build 50 miles of new trails and increase designated use trails from 27 to 48 miles in Jefferson County Open Space parks.

#10 QUALITY VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Implement visitor experience standards at all 27 Jefferson County Open Space parks and improve or develop 17 trailheads.

Achieving Our Goals

The *Conservation Greenprint Implementation Details* outline important focus areas, strategies, funding, and timelines for each goal. More information can be found under the References section at the end of this document.



HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Goal #1 Visitor Stewardship & Courtesy

INTERACT WITH 350,000 PARK VISITORS TO SHARE IMPORTANT STEWARDSHIP AND SAFETY INFORMATION

The best steward of public lands is a low-impact visitor. It begins with respect for the land, nature, and each other, and extending common courtesy to fellow park visitors by following park regulations. We seek to spread the message about picking up trash, keeping dogs on a leash, picking up after them, and staying on trails to reduce human impacts. Enhancing the flow of relevant information will improve trail courtesy and compliance with park regulations, reduce visitor impacts on natural resources, and increase public appreciation of the outdoors.

Goal #2 Information Sharing

ENGAGE 10,000 COMMUNITY MEMBERS IN CONVERSATIONS THAT WILL POSITIVELY IMPACT OUR ENVIRONMENT

The strongest way to improve is to work with people to develop new ideas, engage in conversations that yield interest or action, and forge partnerships to address issues, determine roles, and discuss strategies. From big-picture conversations that address larger, global issues – like conservation, growth, and climate change – to local, specific discussions that determine action for parks, trailheads, natural resources, visitor information, and system management, new partnerships and community groups can create critical momentum that leads to necessary changes.



84%
of the community
strongly supports
promoting trail courtesy
and park regulation
compliance

79%
of the community
says the Jefferson County
Open Space website is their
best source of information

Goal #3 Personal Involvement

INSPIRE COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO SHARE THEIR TALENTS AND ENERGY BY VOLUNTEERING 270,000 HOURS

Volunteers are a tremendous asset for Jefferson County Open Space. They continue the legacy established by our founders, extend our reach, and have a personal connection with our organization, lands, and park visitors. From trail projects and information sharing to wildlife inventory and monitoring, they provide a valuable service to people and nature. They build community by sharing information, their personal talents, and energy.

SPECIALTY VOLUNTEER NEEDS

Visitor Data Collection. Learning about people's preferences, patterns, and ideas for improvement

Nature Data Collection. Surveying and learning more about plant communities and wildlife

Digital Storytelling. Capturing videography and photography to tell engaging stories

Passionate Education. Teaching people about our parks, planning efforts, and visitor stewardship



39,787 HOURS
average volunteer service
per year, 2014-2019

HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Goal #4 Land Acquisition

COORDINATE LAND CONSERVATION EFFORTS IN JEFFERSON COUNTY TO PRESERVE AN ADDITIONAL 3,000 ACRES OF PUBLIC OPEN SPACE AND PARKLAND

An increase in population growth and park visitation accentuates the importance of continued land conservation to protect natural resources and provide high-quality nature-based experiences. To honor our mission, land conservation opportunities need to be assessed and prioritized according to the value they add to park and open space systems.

The *Jefferson County Conservation Atlas* identifies important attributes of public and private lands throughout our county. It is a resource to achieve better understanding of our environment and conservation across the broader landscape through information sharing, collaboration, protection, and public and private landowner stewardship.



The *Jeffco Open Space Land Acquisition Overview* includes our criteria, policies, practices, and disclaimers. To qualify for acquisition consideration, a property should meet multiple criteria noted below, or have regional, ecological, or strategic significance.

Land Acquisition Criteria

- ▶ Access and Nature-Based Experiences
- ▶ Natural Resource Attributes
- ▶ Scenic Quality
- ▶ Heritage Preservation
- ▶ Connectivity
- ▶ Plan Congruence
- ▶ Financial Considerations

HEALTHY LANDS



Musk Thistle (*Carduus Nutans*)

Goal #5 War On Weeds

TREAT 48,000 ACRES OF JEFFERSON COUNTY OPEN SPACE LANDS FOR HARMFUL AND INVASIVE SPECIES

Non-native species of plants and pests are one of the greatest threats to the health of our ecosystem. Jefferson County Open Space will be a leader in the eradication of these species to protect native plant communities and wildlife habitat.



Myrtle Spurge (*Euphorbia Myrsinites*)

88%
of the community
believes that Jefferson
County should be a leader
in the war on weeds

Goal #6 Forest Health

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

We strive to lead by example in managing healthy forests in the wildland-urban interface. Reducing tree density and ground fuels mitigates the risk of wildfire, improving the health of plant communities and wildlife habitat while keeping our community and park visitors safe. Together, we can improve forest health and reduce wildfire risks, manage non-native plants and pests, enhance wildlife habitat and water quality, and create a more resilient environment.

To be effective, forest health and wildfire mitigation must occur on public and private properties across the landscape. **Jefferson County TerraSource** is a one-stop online resource for residents and landowners to find guidance, best practices, and answers to questions about caring for their land and promoting stewardship across the county. Whether managing public or private land in the plains or in the mountains, working collaboratively across the county is the only way to ensure a healthy landscape.

Goal #7 Habitat Restoration

RESTORE 325 ACRES OF LAND DISTURBED BY HUMAN ACTIVITY AND NATURAL EVENTS

Stronger ecosystems are more resilient to catastrophic events such as flooding, fire, and erosion, so restoring our lands is essential to preserve natural aesthetics, restore wildlife habitat, and improve area water quality. Undesignated trails are a human-caused disturbance that can be mitigated by sharing information with visitors and restoring those areas.



86%
of the community
supports Jefferson
County Open Space
being a leader in
forest health

88%
of the community
supports stewardship
of existing lands as
our top priority

HEALTHY PEOPLE

Goal #8 Easy & Equitable Access

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

Every resident in Jefferson County should have access to a park or trail 10 minutes from their doorstep. Partnerships with public parks and transportation organizations will provide a greater number of residents with equitable access to the outdoors.

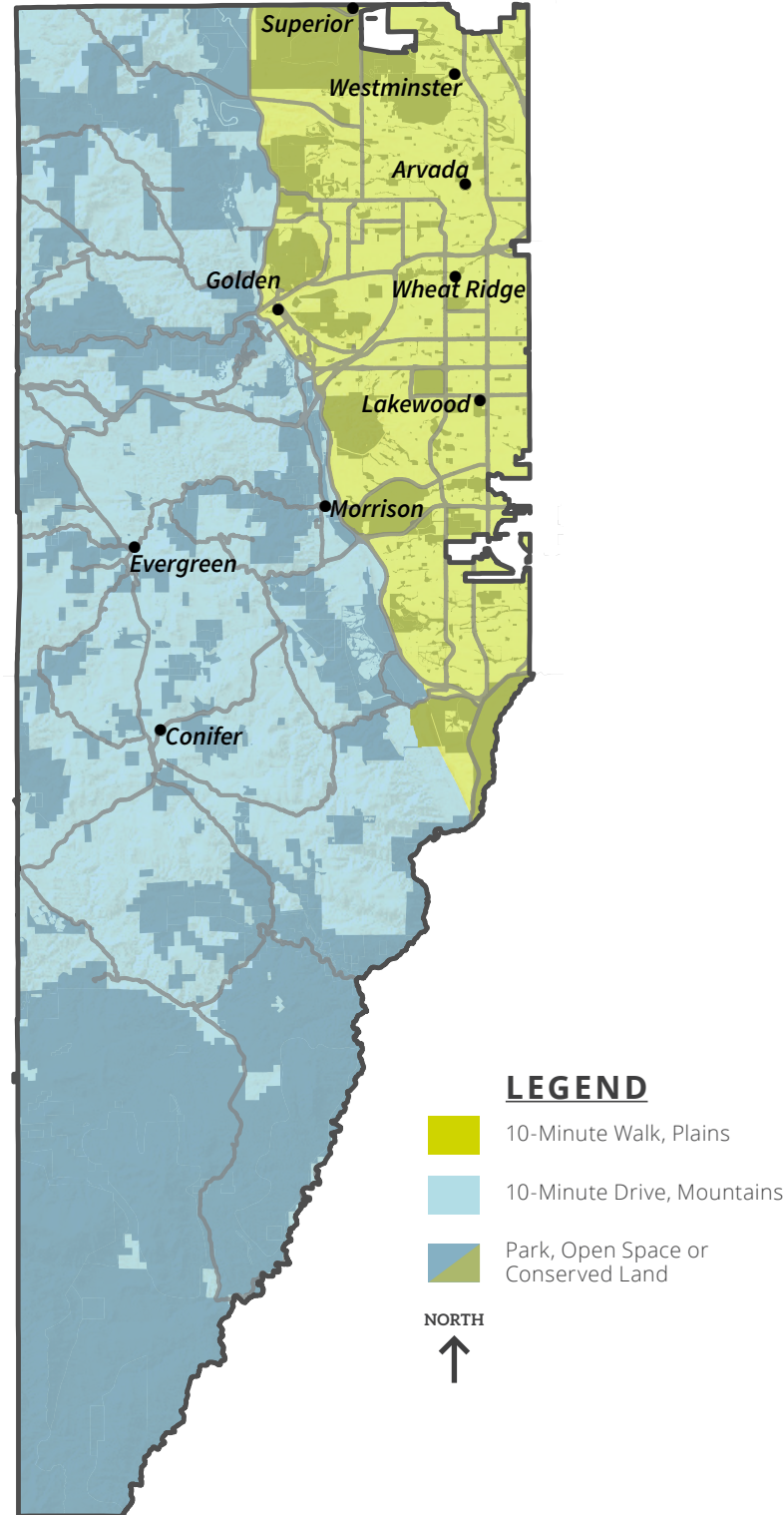
The *Jeffco Trails Plan* is a comprehensive guide for future trail expansion across the county. Learn about the community vision, explore nearby trail ideas, and find helpful resources for planning local action.

In the Plains
Within a 10-Minute Walk

In the Mountains
Within a 10-Minute Drive

84%
of the community
desires park access
close to home

85%
of the community
desires better bicycle &
pedestrian access to parks

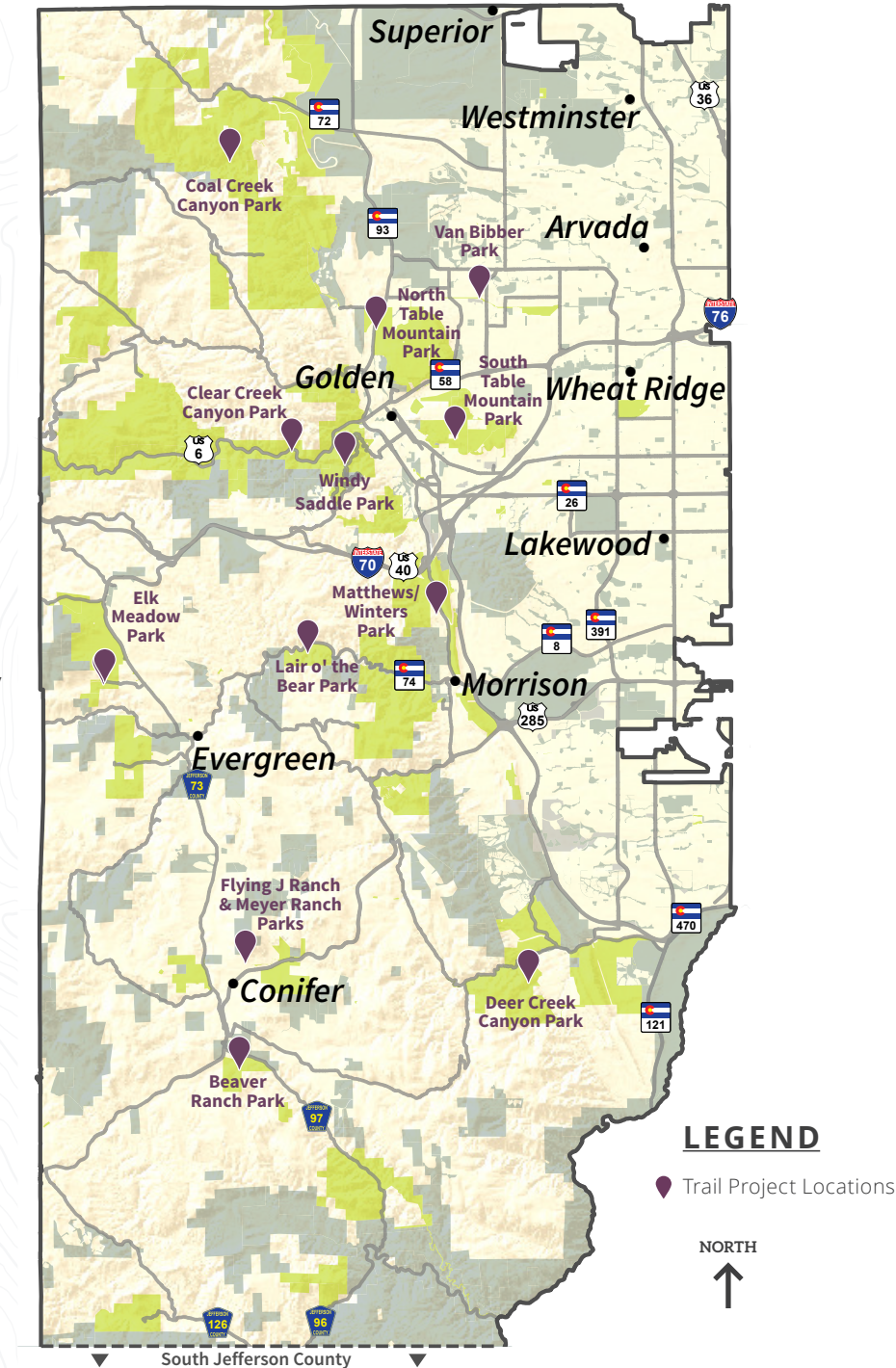


Goal #9 Park System Trail Expansion

BUILD 50 MILES OF NEW TRAILS AND INCREASE DESIGNATED USE TRAILS FROM 27 TO 48 MILES IN JEFFERSON COUNTY OPEN SPACE PARKS

An expanded trail system in Jefferson County Open Space parks will provide greater access to nature close to home. Trails that are responsibly planned and sustainably designed will have the least impact on plant communities and wildlife. Offering diverse trail experiences dispersed across our system will help to balance the human impacts on the land and provide visitors with new opportunities to enjoy nature. Designated use trails will address community interests to improve safety and the overall experience for every type of visitor.

87%
of the community
desires more trails that are
sensitive to plants and wildlife



HEALTHY PEOPLE

Goal #10 Quality Visitor Experience

IMPLEMENT VISITOR EXPERIENCE STANDARDS AT ALL 27 JEFFERSON COUNTY OPEN SPACE PARKS AND IMPROVE OR DEVELOP 17 TRAILHEADS

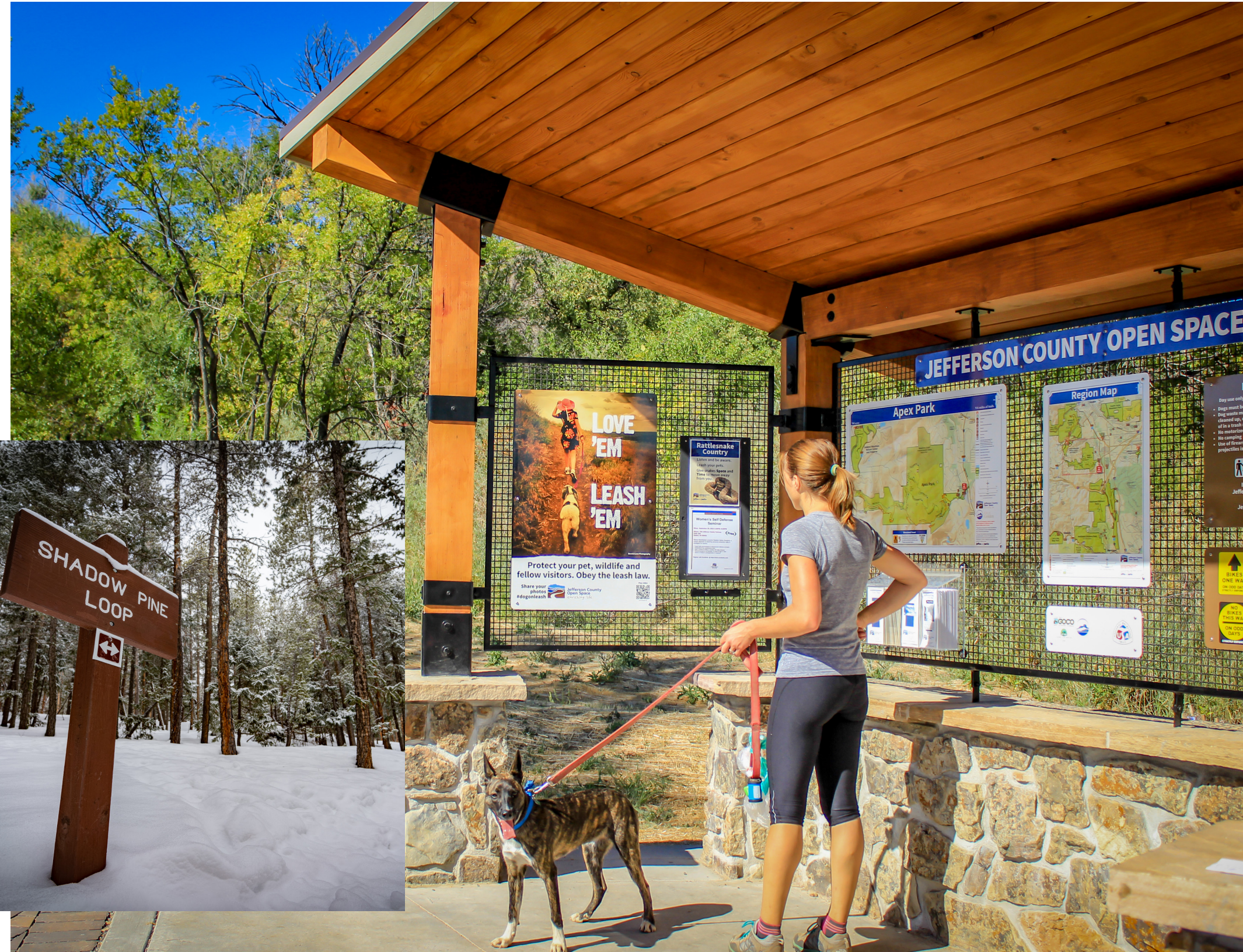
Jefferson County Open Space aspires to provide a high-quality visitor experience. To sustain and enhance this experience, we seek to define a standard level of quality that sets expectations and makes a positive first impression while establishing a culture of care for public lands. This includes improving restroom and parking facilities; providing intuitive wayfinding, maps, and resources; and collaborating with partners to designate trails for specific uses and develop multimodal connections to open space parks.

80% say that parking availability impacts their decision to visit a park

85% want trails with clear signs and wayfinding

75% support more designated use trails

82% support muddy trail closures and “stay on trail” management



NEXT STEPS

Taking action in your community

VISIT RESPONSIBLY

Respect regulations, be courteous to others, lead by example, and take good care of nature's home.

GET INVOLVED

Attend local meetings, get involved in community discussions, and become an active volunteer.

STAY CONNECTED

Find up-to-date Jefferson County Open Space information and sign up for notifications about changes, updates, and community activities.



References

1. Conservation Greenprint Implementation Details
2. Jeffco Open Space 2020-2025 Financial Plan
3. Jeffco Open Space Interactive Projects Map
4. Conservation Greenprint 2019 Community Engagement Summary
5. 2018 Jefferson County Open Space Resident Survey
6. Jeffco Open Space Vision to Action Framework
7. Jeffco Trails Plan
8. Jefferson County Open Space Forest Health Plan
9. Jeffco Open Space Land Acquisition Overview
10. Jefferson County Conservation Atlas
11. Jefferson County TerraSource
12. Jeffco Open Space Park Plans
13. 2019 Preservation Progress
14. Jeffco Open Space Lands Rules and Regulations Policy
15. Jeffco Open Space Advisory Committee Policy
16. Jeffco Open Space Program Terms, Priorities, Use of Funds and Transfers Policy
17. 2011 Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP) Study of Jefferson County
18. 1998 Front Range Mountain Backdrop/ Foreground Preservation Area Study
19. 2019 Colorado Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)
20. 1972 Jefferson County Open Space Enabling Resolution, as amended by the 1980 Enabling Resolution Amendment



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