

Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Town of Empire, CO

2024



Project Description:

The Town of Empire is nestled in a four-point star-shaped valley, two miles from Interstate 70 and on Highway 40. With a population of 345, the Town has enjoyed slow growth, well under projected estimates between the 2000 and 2020 census counts. The Town has capped short-term rentals to 5%, and currently has no hotel or motel accommodation for tourism. As a result, Empire is known as a day recreation spot, or a place to stop and enjoy ice cream and clean Town restrooms as you pass through on your way to either Summit or Grand counties.

Over the years, two main Town parks have evolved as a place residents and tourists may enjoy during the warmer months: Theobald Park and Minton Park. In 2021, a third area was dedicated as a “welcome park” for visitors entering Empire from the east, and we have used recycled asphalt millings to start prepping the parking lot surface. Discussions with Staff and the Board of Trustees have included providing east-bound travelers with safe, electric charging stations, clean restroom facilities, and a place to rest and learn about local amenities before traveling to Berthoud Pass.

The Town maintains a Visitor’s Center in Theobald Park with 2 restroom stalls for those traveling through on Highway 40; however, older signage for parking and this facility makes it difficult for first-time visitors to find and properly utilize. To remedy this situation, CDOT has plans to expand the crosswalk in downtown Empire to assist tourists with crossing the street to access the visitor center . Further we know visitors who google a safe picnic area have left positive reviews about Minton Park, and that the lack of restrooms at that park prevent full enjoyment for many.

What has been lacking is any sort of strategic planning around the Town’s park assets. Ask anyone in Town what they would like to see happen with the current Town parks, and you get a wide range of suggestions. Town staff has been engaged in strategic planning training, has developed training for elected and appointed officials and all involved now understand that addressing the future of our parks needs to be long-term and strategic in order to create a Parks and Recreation Master Plan that assists our community’s enjoyment as well as positions the Town of Empire’s businesses with support for economic growth.

Finally, with the Town of Empire scheduled to be under construction in 2024 with the CDOT resurfacing of Highway 40 and the implementation of a \$4 million water infrastructure grant from the federal government, now is a perfect opportunity to address the long-term infrastructure needs of our parks as well.

Where do we begin?

- 2024 Planning Grant
- Adopt Goals with Staff and BOT
 - Engage Advisory Committee & Community
- Identify Long-Term Funding Sources



Town of Empire Parks and Recreation Strategic Planning Project Goals

PHASE I: CONTINUE PARKS NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND FEASIBILITY STUDIES (DECEMBER 2023-APRIL 2024)

- Goal 1: Continue to survey our residents about their long-term wishes for Empire's other park assets. *Success is measured by participation rates and conclusions in staff reports.*
- Goal 2: Coordinate and track volunteer opportunities, including forming a Parks Advisory Committee with our highly skilled resident volunteers. *Success is measured by the number of volunteers and the amount of hours of participation.*
- Goal 3: Assign staff to pursue additional funding to implement future parks plans. *Success is measured by creating a long-term funding strategy for prioritized areas in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.*

Town of Empire Parks and Recreation

Strategic Planning Project Goals, cont'd

PHASE II: CREATION OF THE PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN (MAY 2024-OCTOBER 2024)

- Goal 4: Assign staff to lead strategic planning sessions with community volunteers to develop the projects identified for the Parks Master Plan. *Success is measured by participation and the formation of the plan.*
- Goal 5: Continue to research other potential partners and funding sources for implementation of the plan. *Success is measured with the creation of a long-term funding plan.*
- Goal 6: Design all projects considering the concepts of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) in partnership with our local law enforcement officers to protect our Town assets in the design process; investigate other forms of preventing vandalism and securing Town assets (gates, cameras etc.) *Success is identifying measurables within CPTED to integrate into our plan.*

2024 Action Steps & Timeline

01

January to March:

- * List Assets for Feasibility Studies
- * Gather volunteers
- * Continue Comprehensive Master Plan Adoption
- *Begin Framework for the Parks Master Plan

02

April to June:

- *Form Parks Advisory Committee
- *Conduct Surveys and Feasibility Studies
- *Begin to identify future funding sources
- * Create the Outline for the Parks Master Plan

03

July to September:

- *List and identify projects
- *Involve the community in prioritizing projects
- *Apply for funding for implementation into 2025
- *Add Specificity to the Parks Master Plan Outline

04

October to December:

- *CPTED concepts identified to integrate into projects
- *Continue project planning
- *Continue to seek external funding
- *Draft Deliverables of the Parks Master Plan

05

2025 NEXT STEPS:

- *TBD!



Summary

Beyond the one-year terms of this planning grant, the Town will secure additional funding to sustain the Parks and Recreation Master Plan into 2025 and beyond. To sum, we define the project success of our strategic planning in Year 1 by creating a feasibility study, creating the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, involving community members on Advisory Committees to create strong design, and identifying sustainable funding sources.

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Thank you

Lisa Kunze

Town of Empire

Projects Assistant

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