

# Parks, Recreation, Open Space & Trails

## Vision

We believe in preserving and enhancing our enjoyment of – and access to – parks, recreational opportunities, open space, and trails.

## Philosophy

Scenic views of the natural environment, easy access to public lands and a range of recreational opportunities are three of our greatest assets and the reasons many people choose to visit or make the Aspen Area their home.

We have made great strides in the acquisition of open space, in the improvement of our trail system and our recreational facilities. Future acquisition of open space should focus on the intrinsic value of open space, wildlife habitat, protection of scenic resources, recreational uses and trail connectivity. Future trail expansion should connect existing trails to improve and maintain easy access to public lands and provide opportunities for the use of trails by commuters in both summer and winter.

As stated in the 2000 AACP: "Constant vigilance is required to ensure that (open space) is protected for its visual and recreational contribution to our community as well as for its immediate accessibility from all parts of town."

The City's extensive recreation programs and facilities have become a valuable community asset. These programs and facilities must be constantly reassessed and revitalized.



# What's Changed Since 2000

One of the most significant accomplishments since 2000 has been the acquisition of two major open space parcels: The 250-acre Smuggler Mountain property and the 742-acre Brush Creek (Droste) property (located just outside the Urban Growth Boundary). Other major accomplishments since 2000, under the heading of Parks, Recreation and Open Space, include:

- Construction of the Aspen Recreation Center.
- New Aspen Golf Clubhouse and Championship Tennis facility.
- The Rio Grande Skateboard Park.
- The Cemetery Lane and Highlands Trails.
- Highway 82 pedestrian improvements.
- Jennie Adair Park, wetlands and storm water improvements.
- More than 2,000 new street trees planted to strengthen the "urban forest."
- New irrigation system using treated effluent water at the golf course, saving 60 million gallons per year.
- Restoring the historic Ute Cemetery.
- Designing and constructing the Maroon Creek Wetlands.

## What's New in the 2011 AACP

There are no dramatic changes to the Vision, Philosophy and Policies in this chapter compared to the 2000 AACP. In fact, much of the wording remains the same. This is due largely to the long-term and unwavering support in the Aspen Area for Parks, Open Space and Recreation. Due to the need for privacy regarding negotiations over land to be purchased, public plans, including this one, typically do not identify specific parcels that may be targets for acquisition.

Some shifts in policy direction for the 2011 AACP include an emphasis on providing recreational opportunities that are "affordable." Also, promoting Aspen as a high altitude training venue is a concept that would be explored as part of updating the Recreation Business Plan. Another new policy is aimed at establishing undevelopable "buffer" areas alongside public trails to maintain and improve the recreation experience. Finally, there is a new emphasis on trail acquisition and/or improvement that targets commuter trails and connectivity with the public transit system.

## Linkages

This plan recognizes that community goals are often inextricably linked: sometimes they complement each other, and at times they come into conflict. Parks, recreation, open space, and trails are an integral part of our resort economy, providing opportunities to enjoy scenic views and an outdoor lifestyle, while preserving outlying rural environment and contributing to biodiversity. Potential conflicts may arise as other community priorities are considered for our remaining open lands.

### Definitions

**Active Park:** An active park is a park parcel that has significant maintenance and usually contains a ball field, volleyball court, or flat area which can be used for programmed sporting events, special events and parties. Wagner Park, where Rugged Fest is held, is an example of an active park.

**Passive Park:** A passive park is either a park parcel that is maintained in its natural or native state with little or no maintenance or is a formal park parcel that has maintenance and irrigation but does not have programmed recreational capabilities. In either scenario these parcels may have benches and trails located within the parcel. The Jenny Adair Wetlands is an example of a passive park.

# Parks, Recreation, Open Space & Trails Policies

# Policy Categories

## I. PARKS

I.1. Acquire land for parks whenever possible.

*Community Goal,  
Collaborative Initiative,  
Work Program for Parks/  
Open Space*

I.2. Maintain a balance between active recreational parks and passive parks.

*Work Program for Parks/  
Open Space*

## II. RECREATION

II.1 Provide affordable recreational opportunities for all ages.

*Community Goal,  
Collaborative Initiative*

II.2 Promote Aspen as a high altitude training venue.

*Community Goal,  
Collaborative Initiative*

II.3 The Aspen Recreation Department should strive to be financially self-sustaining while still providing affordable, quality recreational opportunities.

*Collaborative Initiative,  
Work Program for  
Recreation*

II.4. Strive to integrate physical rehabilitation and adaptive recreation into Aspen Recreation Department facilities and programs.

*Work Program for  
Recreation*

II.5 New recreational facilities should offset impacts regarding traffic and job generation and maintain the contextual character of the built environment.

*Proposed Code Amendment*

## III. OPEN SPACE

III.1. Maintain and protect existing open space parcels.

*Community Goal,  
Collaborative Initiative*

III.2. Acquire open space to preserve biodiversity, wildlife habitat, scenic value and to support trail connectivity and recreational activities.

*Community Goal,  
Collaborative Initiative,  
Work Program for Parks/  
Open Space*

# Parks, Recreation, Open Space & Trails Policies

# Policy Categories

## IV. TRAILS

IV.1. Acquire, improve and develop trail connections throughout the Aspen Area.

*Community Goal,  
Collaborative Initiative,  
Work Program for Parks/  
Open Space*

IV.2. Encourage regional trail planning.

*Community Goal,  
Collaborative Initiative*

IV.3. Increase opportunities for summer and winter trail commuting.

*Collaborative Initiative,  
Work Program for Parks/  
Open Space*

## V. PUBLIC OUTREACH

V.1. Promote our parks, open space, trails and recreational opportunities through maps, brochures, and on-line services.

*Collaborative Initiative,  
Work Program for Parks/  
Open Space and Recreation*



*Examples of Passive and Active parks in the Aspen Area. The photo on the left is the Jenny Adair Wetlands, a passive park, while the photo on the right is Wagner park, an active park.*