

Chapter 5 Parks and Open Space

5.1 Overview

The Parks and Open Space Chapter describes the role of open lands as an organizing element of the North Washington Subarea Land Use Map and provides park, trail, and open space recommendations for the North Washington Subarea (See Exhibit 5.1).

<i>Parks and Open Space Guiding Principles</i>
5-A Early maximum acquisition
5-B Require investment by developers
5-C Utilize public and private partnerships and IGAs
5-D Parks and Open Space are integral to Thornton's identity, economic health and quality of life
5-E Plan with current and future maintenance needs in mind
5-F Enhance the continuity of natural features

Thornton is fortunate to have the Big Dry Creek floodplain/floodway, a natural area with wildlife habitat and varied environmental characteristics, which can serve as a major open space area in the North Washington Subarea. As a key organizing principle for the North Washington Subarea Land Use Map, the preservation and enhancement of the Big Dry Creek floodplain, provides a spine upon which to organize neighborhoods, employment centers, recreation areas and civic spaces.

In 2003, the City prepared the Big Dry Creek Environmental Study, which provides detailed information, identifies priority environmental areas and provides recommendations on conserving, managing and enhancing the Big Dry Creek area. This study, together with The Parks and Open Space Master Plan, form the basis for recommendations for parks, open space and trails in the subarea.

5.2 Open Space Master Plan

The City of Thornton Parks and Open Space Master Plan was adopted by the Thornton as a supplement to the Thornton Comprehensive Plan in September 2003. The plan envisions a “string of pearls” for the City – a system of parks, recreation facilities, open spaces and other civic places such as schools that would be linked by a system of off-street trails and “pedestrian friendly” streets.

In the North Washington Subarea, the plan provides for:

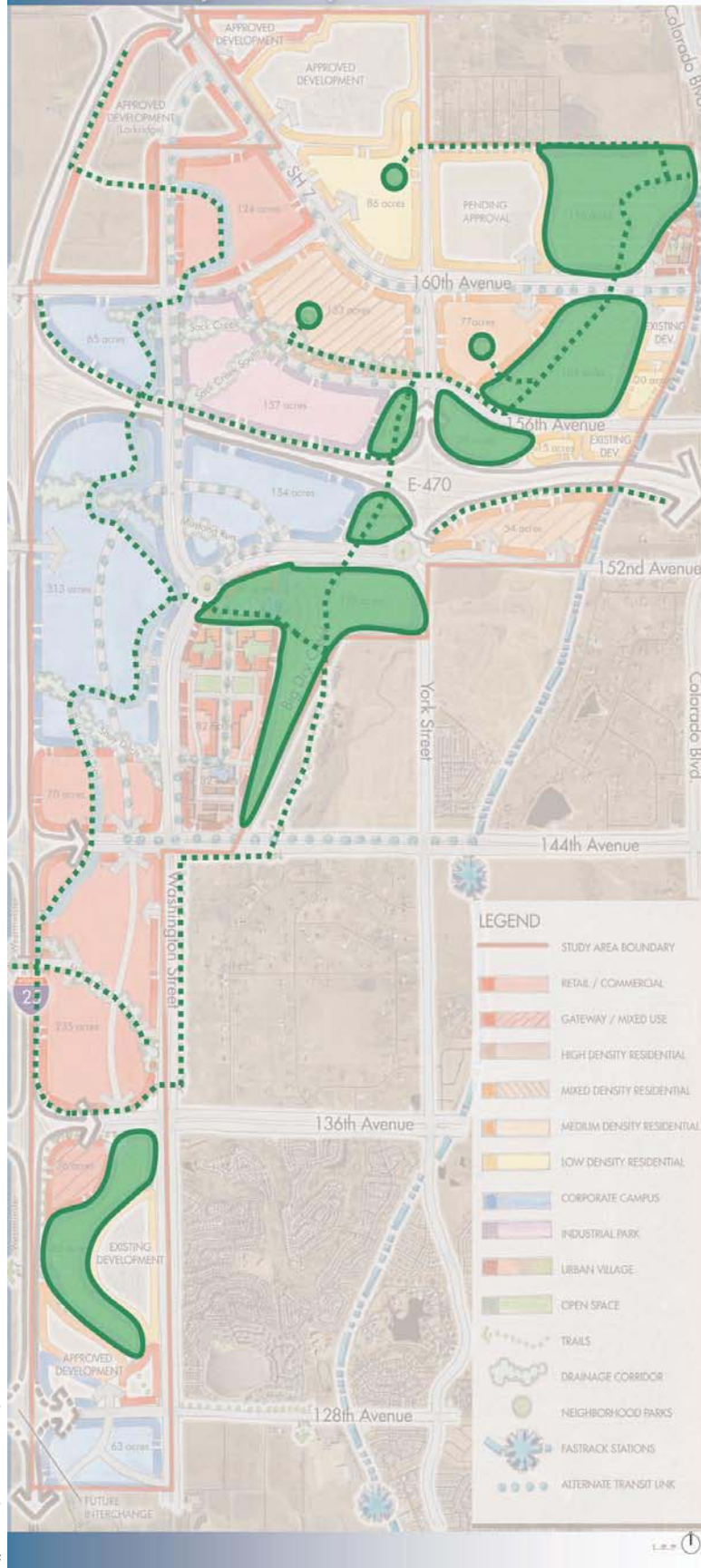
1. Open space along the Big Dry Creek through the Subarea
2. Park areas oriented to the Big Dry Creek
3. Park areas oriented to development north of E-470
4. Development of the regional trail along E-470
5. Development of a regional trail along the Big Dry Creek from I-25 through the Subarea
6. Development of a trail system oriented to the Bull Canal

5.3 Parks, Open Space and Trails

The parks, open space and trails recommendations contained herein are essential to the planned development of the Subarea. The Big Dry Creek serves as the spine, linking the land use areas, both residential and non-residential. In addition, the treatment of the Big Dry Creek and tributaries provides the City with the opportunity to establish the quality of development and aesthetics so important to realizing the future vision for the Subarea. Parks, open space and trails recommendations for the Subarea build on the “string of pearls” concept as described in the Parks and Open Space Master Plan. Recommendations include:

- 5-1 Preserve and enhance the Big Dry Creek and tributaries floodway/floodplain as the organizing element for land use and as the integral parks and open space feature for the Subarea. The crucial issue to proceeding with this is to define the long-range floodplain/floodway to be protected and enhanced. Two actions will define this beyond current conditions: 1) Discussions with Westminster regarding any changes to the I-25/Big Dry Creek culvert(s) and with Adams County and Weld County regarding the culvert under the railroad near Colorado Boulevard, and 2) Results of the Urban Drainage/Thornton study of the tributary streams to the Big Dry Creek.
- 5-2 Where appropriate, community and neighborhood parks should be accommodated within the Big Dry Creek corridor.
- 5-3 The future Urban Village should be integrated with the Big Dry Creek corridor. Appropriate civic uses such as an amphitheater, a plaza/fountain area, and other such uses designed to provide program space and festival areas should be incorporated into the Urban Village.
- 5-4 A region-wide and city-wide trail system will be an important element supporting development of the Subarea. The trails system should include:
- a. Regional trail along E-470 linked to the Big Dry Creek Regional Trail and the Bull Canal trail
 - b. Big Dry Creek trail with linkage to the E-470 trail
 - c. Sack Creek trail linked to the Big Dry Creek trail
 - d. Mustang Run trail linked to the Big Dry Creek trail
 - e. Shay Ditch trail linked to the Big Dry Creek trail
 - f. McKay Ditch trail linked to the Big Dry Creek trail
 - g. Bull Canal Trail through the Regional Employment Center
- 5-5 Where possible trails should be separated from major roadways with underpasses, similar to that constructed for the trail under 136th Avenue near I-25. Where that is not possible, a safe pedestrian/bicycle crossing should be provided.
- 5-6 Neighborhood parks to serve residential areas should be provided at the time of development in accordance with City park standards.
- 5-7 As a follow-up to this Subarea planning study, a detailed plan of the Big Dry Creek and tributaries should be conducted. Recommendations should incorporate findings of the Big Dry Creek Environmental Study and should include recommendations on relationship to and coordination with urban development; location of parks, open space and trails; accommodation of storm drainage; and areas to be preserved and enhanced to contribute to the beauty and utilization of the Big Dry Creek and its tributaries.

North Washington Subarea Park/Open Space Framework



Source: HNTB Corporation

City of Thornton North Washington Subarea Plan

Exhibit 5.1 Parks and Open Space Framework