

HERITAGE TRAIL

LINKAGE CONCEPT



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Heidi Williams Mayor

City Council Members

Ward 1

Jenice Dove

Mack Goodman

Ward 2

Eva Henry

Val Vigil

Ward 3

Beth Humenik

Lynne Fox

Ward 4

Eric Tade

Randy Drennen



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Staff Members:

Amy Schmaltz, Planner I

Cory Miller, Planner Volunteer

Glenda Lainis, Policy Planning Manager

Diane Van Fossen, Capital Projects and Planning Manager

Andy Jennings, Parks and Forestry Manager

Buz Hedglin, Arts and Culture Manager

Paula Schulte, Landscape Architect

Heidi Feigal, Senior Landscape Architect



TABLE OF CONTENTS



- A. Background
- B. Evaluation of Comprehensive Plan Proposal
- C. Intent and Recommendations
- D. The Overall Concept
- E. Proposed Trail Loops and Heritage Themes
- F. Ways to Make the Heritage Trail System Special

Heritage Trail Map

HERITAGE TRAIL CONCEPT PLAN

A. BACKGROUND

As proposed in the Comprehensive Plan, the creation of the City of Thornton Placemaking Cultural Trail is to highlight and connect Thornton's many distinct (placemaking) districts and create memorable places and an identifiable image for Thornton. A placemaking district is defined as an active, exciting district for residents and visitors to live, work, and play in a stimulating and creative environment. The figure at right illustrates the original "Cultural" Trail concept as identified in the Comprehensive Plan.

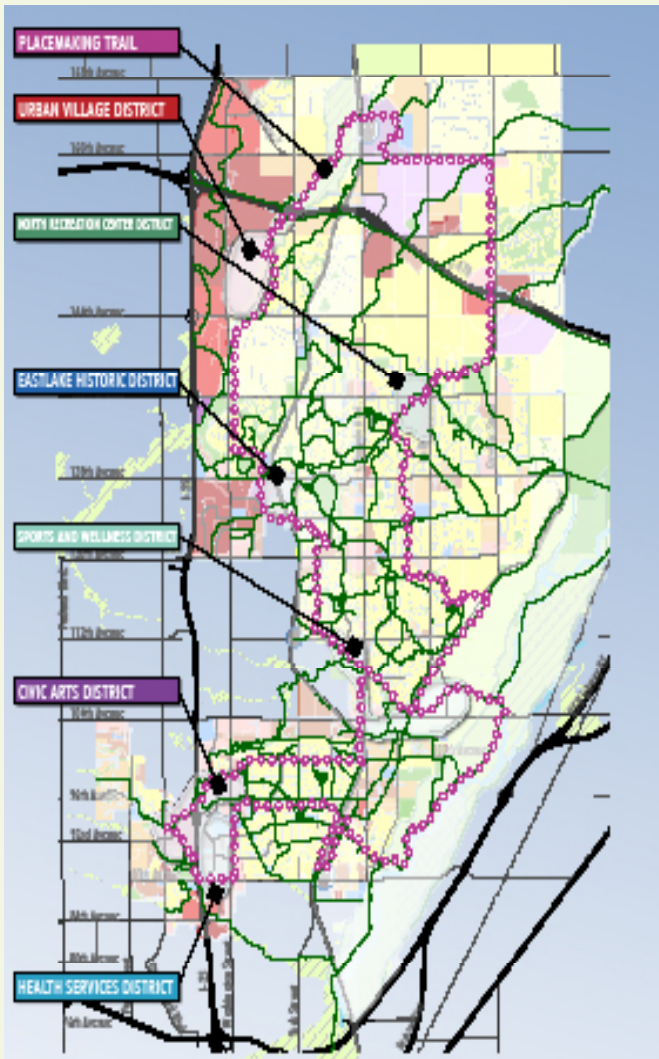
"As envisioned, this trail would be a world-class urban bicycle and pedestrian path that connects neighborhoods, Placemaking Districts and entertainment amenities, and would serve as the signature trail for the entire Thornton trail and greenway system." - City of Thornton Comprehensive Plan 2007



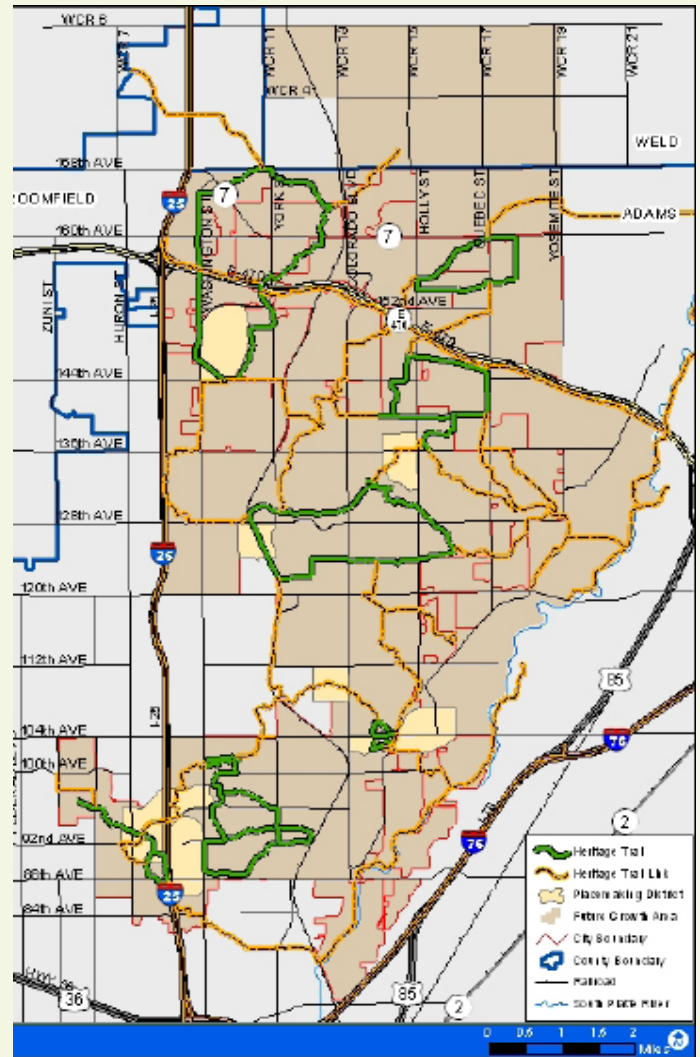
▲ The Public Realm Elements identified in the Comprehensive Plan will be incorporated into the "Heritage Trail" concept.

B. EVALUATION OF COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PROPOSAL

After extensive review and discussion, an interdepartmental committee consisting of representatives from the Community Services & City Development Departments recommended that the "Cultural" designation be revisited. It was suggested that Thornton's strengths lie in its heritage: magnificent vistas, the historic Town of Eastlake, the South Platte River, Big Dry and Niver Creeks and their drainages, fishing lakes, and rich agricultural lands. Since these themes reflect more strongly the image of Thornton, it was proposed that the trail system identified in the Comprehensive Plan be retrofitted to a "Heritage" Trail concept.



▲ Placemaking Cultural Trail System identified in the City of Thornton Comprehensive Plan.



▲ Revised linkage concept.

The original trail plan in the Comprehensive Plan, identified the Cultural Trail as one continuous loop and approximated Thornton's perimeter. After much discussion, the committee found that the large loop was not desirable because it did not incorporate many of the existing trails in Thornton but instead included long portions of sidewalk along major arterial streets. Additionally, the long distance of the original trail loop might have appealed to experienced cyclists but it did not offer much opportunity to other trail users, such as walkers, runners, families with young children, and recreational cyclists.

HERITAGE TRAIL CONCEPT PLAN

C. INTENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The intent of the Heritage Trail system is to convey Thornton's spirit, character, and uniqueness by integrating a diverse spectrum of regional themes, or stories, which pertain to Thornton's history, culture, and environment. It is recommended that a number of separate trail loops, with varying themes, make up the Heritage Trail System which in turn becomes part of Thornton's overall trail system. The Heritage Trail loops will be comprised of existing trails, sidewalk and new trail segments that will connect to each other.

The Heritage Trail system will be incorporated into the Parks and Open Space Master Plan. The theme and approach is illustrative of the "string of pearls" concept identified in the Master Plan.

D. THE OVERALL CONCEPT

Seven potential trail loops have been identified with lengths that range from one-mile to 7.0 miles, thus appealing to a variety of trail users with varying levels of physical ability.

The trails are interspersed throughout the City in order to enable use by residents of all geographic areas of the City. Trail themes differ by location to highlight existing conditions, environmental features, historical ambiance, and recreational uses. While the loops are physically separated from each other, they will be linked by regional and neighborhood trails to form the Heritage Trail system.

Each loop of the Heritage Trail system will contain educational signage at story nodes, public art and themed site amenities which will identify them as part of the Heritage Trail System.

"The phrase "string of pearls" has been adopted to convey a powerful visual image that readily communicates Thornton's vision for the Parks, Recreation, Trails, and Open Space System. Rather than the patchwork quilt of green spaces that characterizes many communities' systems, Thornton's parks, recreation facilities, open spaces, and other civic places such as schools, would be linked by a system of off-street trails and pedestrian friendly streets. A system of parkways and boulevards would reinforce these connections, visually and physically." - City of Thornton Parks and Open Space Master Plan, February 2008

E. PROPOSED TRAIL LOOPS AND HERITAGE THEMES

The Heritage Trail staff committee evaluated areas for proposed trails based upon existing natural, historical, and cultural resources. Each trail is described on the following pages and located on the overall map on page 36.

Because this document is conceptual in nature, it is anticipated that the trail names, locations and site amenities will be finalized once detailed studies of the trails are conducted. Additional trail loops can also be added at a later date. It is expected that loops will be completed in phases, as development occurs the city, capital improvements for existing trails are scheduled, and funds become available. A segment of the Eastlake Heritage Trail loop has been completed between York Street and Colorado Boulevard.



▲ East Lake Logo .



▲ Interpretation panel along the South Tyneside Heritage Trail, U.K. A modern-looking free form “stained glass” effect was chosen to reflect the long history of glass making in the area.

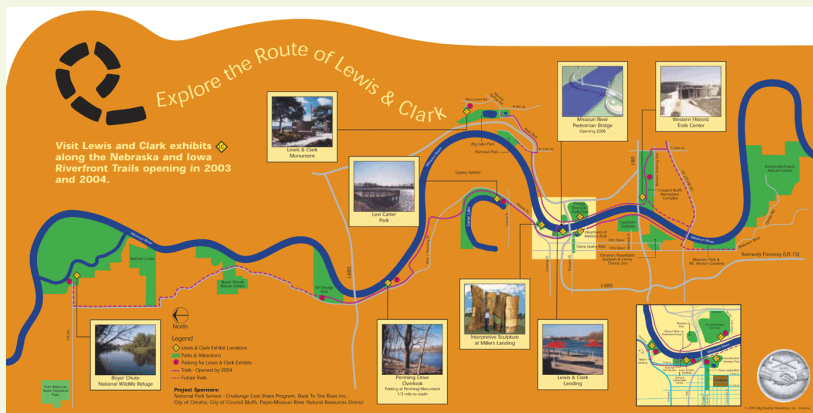


▲ Uniform signage and lighting identifies trails in downtown Indianapolis that comprise the Cultural Trail.



▲ Trail marker for the South Tyneside Heritage Trail,

HERITAGE TRAIL CONCEPT PLAN



▲ A colorful exploratory map explains highlights along the Lewis & Clark Trail along the Nebraska and Iowa Riverfronts. A similar map could be useful to identify the various points of interest along the Heritage Trail.

“Trails have the power to connect us to our heritage by preserving historic places and by providing access to them. They can give people a sense of place and an understanding of the enormity of past events...”

-Creating Connections: A Component of the Oregon Trail

“...the problem of urban heritage is in some ways the key to the solution: if we can take a story outside itself and show its connection to other stories, places, and aspects of urban life, we broaden the potential base of interest and we help to aggregate the otherwise fragmented appeals of a range of themes or stories. And in so doing, we can offer a bigger and more exciting story still ~ how a particular city and region works, grows, and changes historically ~ so that the excitement and interest of every dimension can, in fact, begin to add up to that elusive goal of so much heritage development: conveying a deeper sense of the spirit, character, and uniqueness of a place.” - Michael Frisch in *Reconsidering Concrete Atlantis*

Eastlake Heritage Trail

In 1908, the Union Pacific Railroad began building a branch railroad line west of their mainline that stretched from Davenport to Cheyenne, Wyoming. The branch line went from Sand Creek Junction (Commerce City) through Eastlake to Deer, south of Crosby. The railroad wanted access to marketing opportunities from the increasing irrigated agricultural acreage and the resources of the coalfields in the Davenport, Forestburg and Frederick area.

Union Pacific built a passenger and freight depot at Eastlake in 1910. In 1911, the 21.5-acre town site of Eastlake was platted by the Eastlake Investment Company. The streets ran parallel to the railroad in the diagonally oriented railroad tracks at the western border (instead of following the usual Davenport north-south and east-west city grid alignment). Eastlake was annexed into the City of Thornton in 1990, but retains its separate name and post office ZIP code.

By 1909, the railroad supported Eastlake as the nucleus of the western Adams County agricultural region and provided a direct link to Davenport's cattle and grain markets. From produce, business freight and passenger services west daily to and from Davenport. Service to Fort Collins was added by 1911. In Eastlake, businesses were formed to provide goods and services to the agricultural community which included two grain elevators, a tiffins mill, a saloon station for serving customers into produce, a lumber yard, a bank, a hotel, a country store, a post office, churches and a public school.

From economic, especially wheat, alfalfa, sugar beets, livestock and produce west from Eastlake to Davenport and points east on the railroad.

▲ East Lake Heritage Trail signage.



▲ The Niver Creek Nature Trail

NIVER CREEK NATURE TRAIL

Heritage Theme *Native Plant &* *Animal Life*

The Niver Creek Nature Trail provides an oasis from the surrounding urban environment by offering a relaxed connection to nature. The trail showcases habitat for the wildlife that makes its home in the mosaic of wetlands, drainage ways and native vegetation along the creek and is a significant visual feature west of I-25.

THEME

The theme of this trail is dedicated to local plant and animal life. Niver Creek Open Space is one of the core areas in the City for preserving open space and natural habitats. Native grasses, trees and shrubs have been planted to help restore the area to the planted wildlife habitat that existed prior to the development of this site as a regional detention basin.

Plant Life

- Riparian corridor with Cottonwood and Willow trees and shrub lands along the creek create hunting habitat for raptors perching in

trees

- Herbaceous wetlands including cattail marshes for nesting and hiding habitat of birds & small mammals
- Areas of standing or moving water enhance wildlife habitat
- Native and non-native grasses in areas upland from the creek provide food and den sites for small mammals

Animal Life

- Amphibians, water birds and waterfowl associated with wetlands and drainage areas
- Fox, Coyote, Raccoon, Skunk, Muskrat
- Small mammals like Rabbits, Voles, Squirrels, Pocket Mice
- Snakes
- Raptors including Hawks, and occasionally Eagle
- Small prairie songbirds and other bird species like Red-winged Blackbird, Meadowlark, and Robin



▲ Native plants: Gayfeather (left) and Needle-and-thread grass



▲ Purple



▲ Bald Eagle

HERITAGE TRAIL CONCEPT PLAN

NIVER CREEK NATURE TRAIL LOOP

TRAIL LOCATION AND FEATURES

The Niver Creek Nature Trail is located in Niver Creek Open Space, a 65-acre regional detention basin and open space area with significant wildlife habitat and native vegetation. The trail follows Niver Creek west of I-25, between 88th and 96th Avenues. The distance of this proposed loop is approximately two-miles, allowing for a short and relaxed walking trail.

POSSIBLE TRAIL ENHANCEMENTS

Possible enhancements to the Niver Creek Nature Trail are educational signage, animal tracks in concrete, bird houses and other interpretive open space components.



▲ Components of “Prairie Underground”, left, and “Tracks”, right by Gregg LeFevre, located in Longmont, CO.

▲ Blanket



- ▲ Hoffman Homes marketing brochure for one of the three original house models in Original Thornton, the Ashley.



- ▲ Jane Russell with Sam Hoffman on Opening Day, April 1953.



- ▲ Jane Russell, right, with Marilyn Monroe, her "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes" costar putting signatures, hand and foot prints in cement at Grauman's Theater, 1953 (Hollywood, CA).

ORIGINAL THORNTON TRAIL

The Original Thornton Trail will showcase the City's 1950's beginning, including developer Sam Hoffman's master planned community.

*Heritage Theme
1950s Suburbia
& Thornton's
Hollywood Roots*

THEMES

The theme will pay homage to 1950s suburban design and recall Thornton's famous patronage.

1950s Suburban Design



Signage along the trail will call out design elements such as post-World War II suburban ranch homes, curvilinear streets, and cul-de-sacs in addition to community features such as churches, schools, and commercial centers.

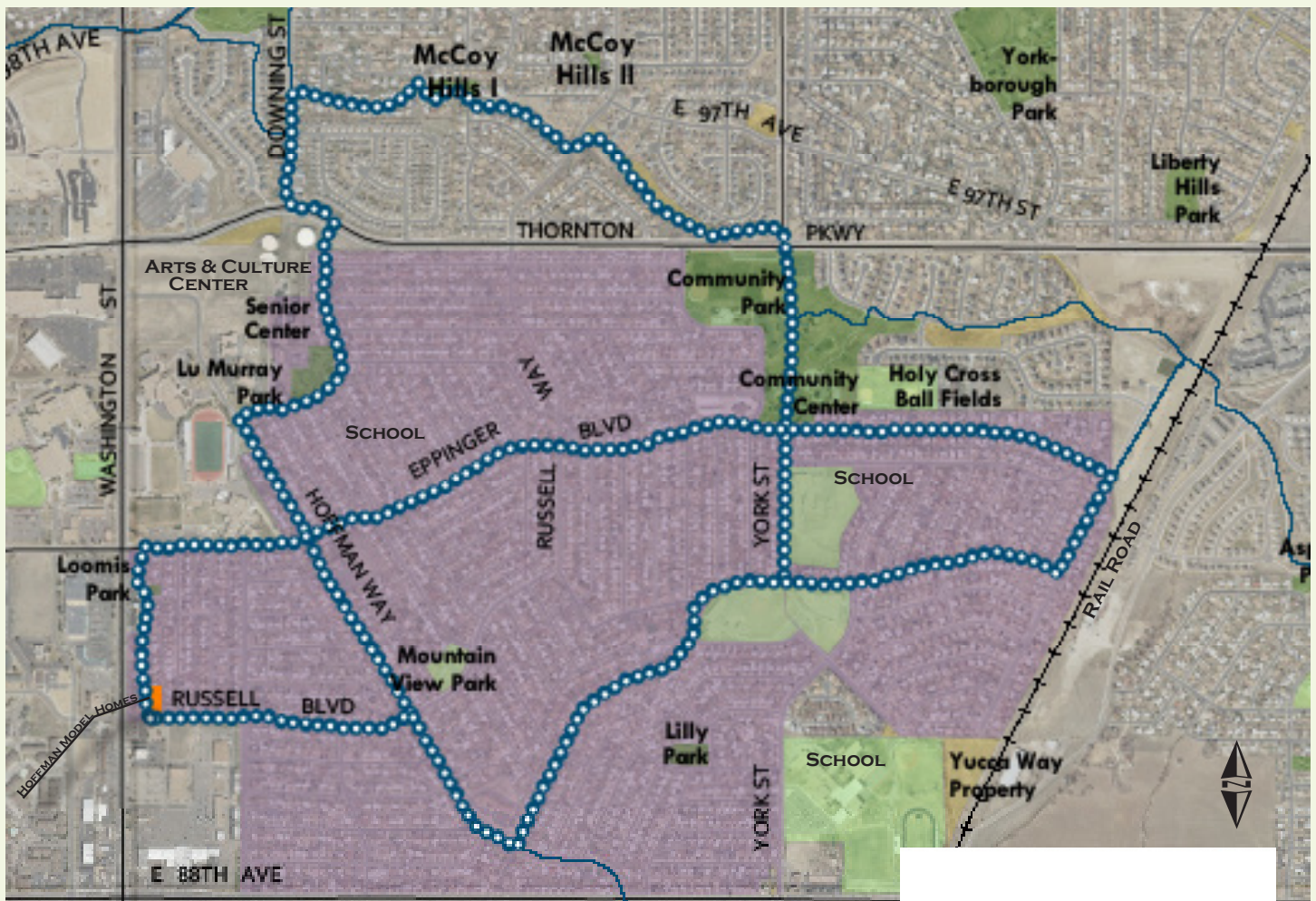
Historic plaques can adorn homes and community buildings along the trail. A museum featuring "a day in the life" of 1950s Thornton residents may become part of this trail loop.

Thornton's Hollywood Roots

Original Thornton's Russell Boulevard and Russell Way were named after film legend Jane Russell, whose three brothers worked for Sam Hoffman's F&S Construction company. Hoffman hired Russell to decorate Original Thornton's three model homes on Clarkson Street and to promote the development. Thousands attended Original Thornton's grand opening celebration to meet Jane Russell and Colorado's former governor, Dan Thornton, the City's namesake.



ORIGINAL THORNTON TRAIL LOOP

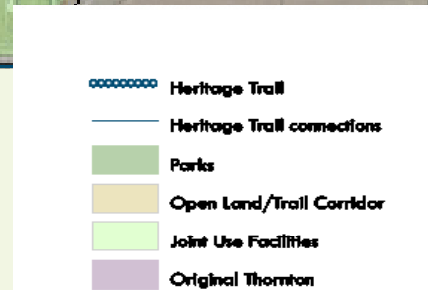


TRAIL LOCATION AND FEATURES

Informational signage can highlight landmarks along the Original Thornton Trail such as the shopping center on Washington Street, model homes on Clarkson Street, Russell Boulevard and Russell Way, the Thornton Women’s Club cinder block building in Community Park and other historically significant sites to Thornton.

The Original Thornton Trail will be designed for medium length walks and short bike rides. The outer-perimeter of the trail is approximately 5 miles in length, but many options for shorter walks are also available.

The environment of this trail differs greatly from some of the other trails that will enjoy scenic nature and mountain views. This urban trail will utilize existing sidewalks.



▲ Mosaic outside of the former home of the Thornton Women’s Club, est. 1954.



▲ Eppinger St. in Original Thornton – example of neighborhood sidewalk.

POSSIBLE TRAIL ENHANCEMENTS

- 1950s museum
- Neighborhood and educational signage to highlight historical information and significant locations
- Replica of hand and footprints of Jane Russell and Marilyn Monroe from Grauman's Chinese Theater in Los Angeles



▲ Photos illustrate “a day in the life” of Thornton residents in the 1950s.



▲ Example of 1950's home decor, a possible component envisioned for Original Thornton House Museum.

Hand and foot prints of Jane Russell and Marilyn Monroe outside of the Grauman Chinese Theater.



Entyway signage for Original Thornton.

HERITAGE TRAIL CONCEPT PLAN

LAMBERTSON LAKES TRAIL

The Lambertson Lakes Trail will highlight the historic Lambertson farm located on a tributary of Grange Hall Creek at 100th Avenue and Washington Street. The original farm was established over 100 years ago and provides a rich historic and farming context for the City.

Heritage Theme Agriculture

THEME

The trail will feature an agricultural heritage theme.

Agricultural Heritage



▲ The Lambertson Lakes barn.



▲ Tractor at Lambertson Farm.

▲ Photos above from Agriburbia, a Denver-based company that integrates aspects of agrarianism with land development, will convert up to 1/2 acre of land into a productive produce garden (www.agriburbia.com).

The Lambertson family farmed over 300 acres from this site, growing irrigated wheat, barley, and alfalfa and operating a feedlot with 200-300 cattle each winter. A large vegetable garden, apple orchard and chicken coop provide food for the family and products to trade at the Eastlake grocery store.



▲ The Lambertson Lakes Homestead Master Plan suggests operating a working farm on the site. Food could be grown and possibly donated to the Food Bank of Thornton.

LAMBERTSON LAKE TRAIL LOOP



▲ Trail on Lambertson Lakes Open Space.

TRAIL LOCATION AND FEATURES

The trail is located north of E. 100th Avenue between Washington Street and 101st Avenue. The trail is intended for a short scenic stroll and historical learning experience and will include a walking tour of the Lambertson farm buildings.

- Heritage Trail connections
- Heritage Trail
- Parks
- Open Land/Trail Corridor
- Joint Use Facilities
- Golf Course
- Parks/Golf Course In Progress

HERITAGE TRAIL CONCEPT PLAN

POSSIBLE TRAIL ENHANCEMENTS

Possible enhancements such as educational signage about the historic barn, outbuildings and former and current farming operations, along with the elements listed below, are envisioned along this trail.

- Living farm
- Kid's farm; Petting zoo
- Community Gathering Area/Garden



▲ Examples of educational and living farm features.



▲ Map depicting Kid's Farm at the Smithsonian National Zoo in Washington, D.C. above, is an example of an interactive, educational program.



▲ Possible uses for the civic and outdoor event space at the Lamberston farm.



▲ Examples of community garden, farmers market, and crop farming.



EASTLAKE HERITAGE TRAIL

The Eastlake Heritage Trail will pay tribute to the historic town of Eastlake, originally settled as a Union Pacific Railroad village nearly 100 years ago. The railroad shaped the development and character of Eastlake that still exists today. Incorporated into Thornton in 1990, the historic town includes a grain elevator which was used to process and transport grain to Denver. Many original homes, community and business district buildings remain.

*Heritage Theme
- Railroad,
Agricultural
Commerce, &
Irrigation*

THEME

The Eastlake area includes a diverse heritage of 20th century agriculture, railroad trade, and irrigation themes.

Railroad Heritage

The railroad brought farming business and passenger service to Eastlake with farm products and livestock going through Eastlake from Ft. Collins and Greeley to and from Denver. Proximity to the railroad stimulated the location of several industrial enterprises such as two grain elevators, cattle corrals, beet dumps, and a pickle factory.



▲ Photo depicting the first grain elevator and train station in Eastlake.



The Farmers' Cooperative Grain Elevator, listed to the National Historic Register is located just off the Union Pacific Railway. Grain spouts attached to the east elevation of the elevator deposited grain into rail cars, streamlining agricultural commerce.

HERITAGE TRAIL CONCEPT PLAN

Agricultural Heritage

Eastlake was mostly a wheat farming and sugar beet community, but cucumbers for pickles, barley and alfalfa were also grown. Riverdale Grange #187, a fraternal farm family organization supported by Eastlake area farmers, still holds a charter.

The pyramid-like aspect of the elevators as architectural shrines, in this broader context, is rendered alive and dynamic while still drawing on what is so manifestly dramatic, unique, and irreplaceable in the grain elevator landscape as a heritage destination.

*-Michael Frisch in
Reconsidering Concrete Atlantis*



▲ New Improvements to Eastlake.

Irrigation Ditches

Colorado was the first state with a code of laws for public administration of streams. Ditches and canals were constructed that allowed farmers to tap mountain water sources for crop cultivation. Water for Eastlake’s three reservoirs came from Clear Creek, which is part of the South Platte River basin.



▲ Farmer irrigating in Adams County

POSSIBLE TRAIL ENHANCEMENTS

Building plaques and educational signage can identify and discuss the town’s railroad layout and vernacular architecture style. Additional enhancements include themed trail furniture and play equipment.

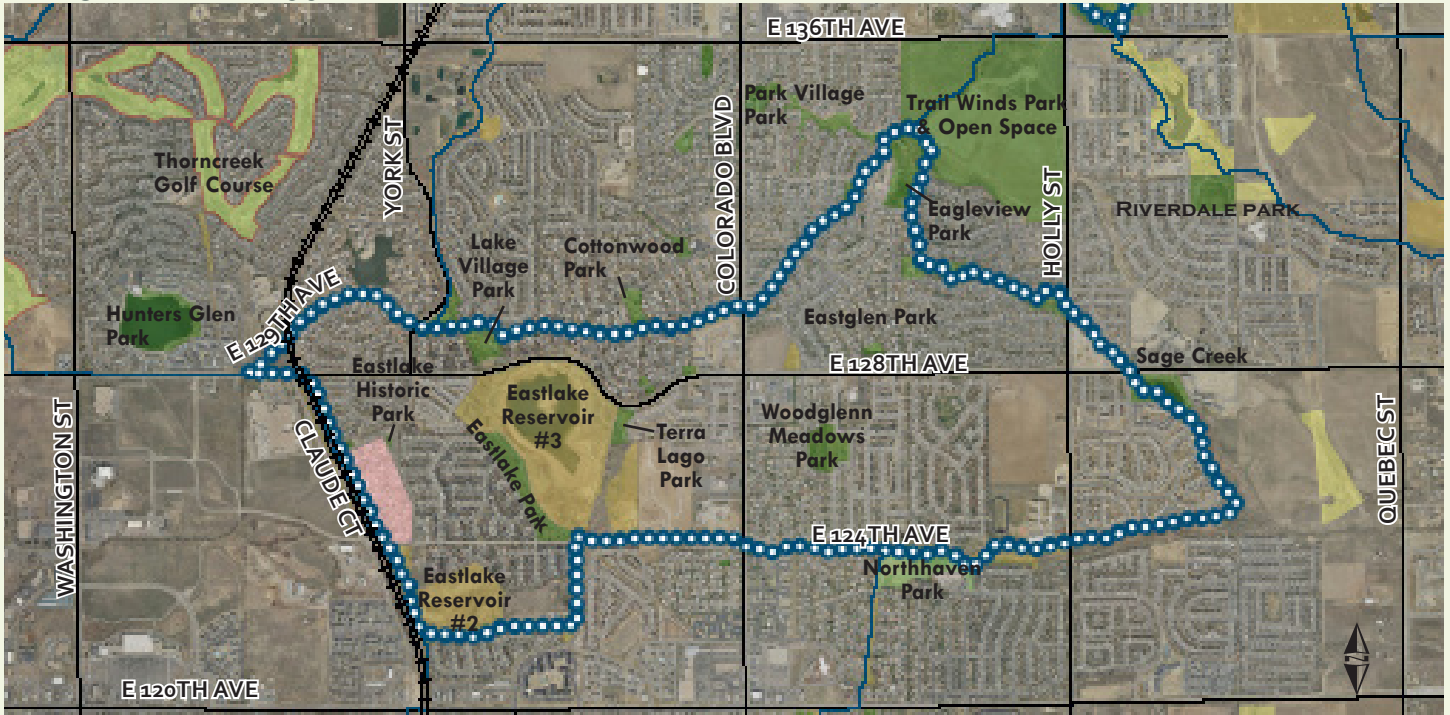
TRAIL LOCATION AND FEATURES

The trail is approximately 6-miles in length extending from the railroad tracks at Claude Court to just past Holly Street and generally contained between E. 136th Avenue and E. 124th Avenue. Additionally, this trail loop would feature a separate tour of the historic town of Eastlake. The historic town area, which is distinct from the suburban development that surrounds it, evokes a small town ambiance reminiscent of a bygone era.



▲ Eastlake #3, the only remaining reservoir from the three that once served Eastlake farmers.

EASTLAKE TRAIL LOOP

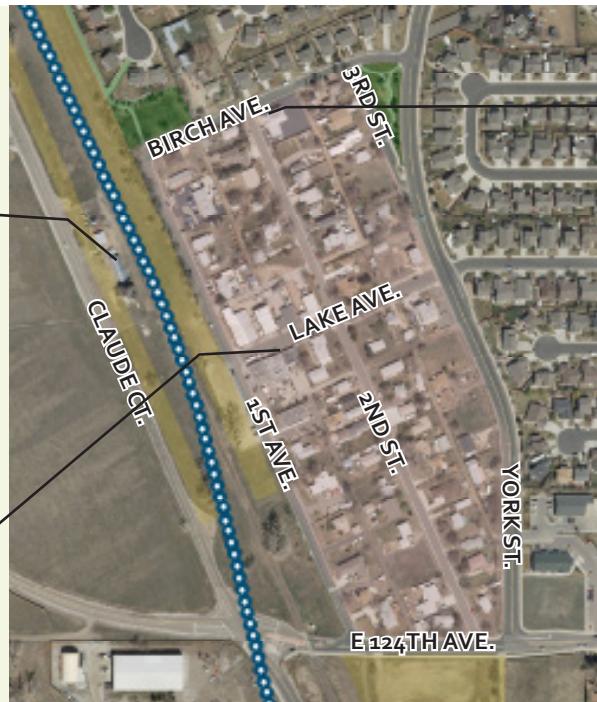


▲ Eastlake grain elevator – listed on the National Historic Register May 2010.

Denver Public Library, Western History Collection, Charles Louis McClure, MCC3867



▲ Businesses along Lake Ave. between 1st & 2nd Streets are original structures.



▲ The Eastlake First Congregational Church est. 1915.



▲ This 2nd Street home represents the modest size and design of the original homes in Eastlake.



▲ View from Homestead Hills Park.



▲ Picturesque view in Thornton.



VISTA TRAIL LOOP



VISTA TRAIL

Heritage Theme *Mountains & Plains, Elevation & Weather*

The Vista Trail will link existing and proposed parks located at Thornton’s higher elevations, including four parks over one mile high. On a clear day, the Vista Trail can offer a two-hundred square

mile lookout view of the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains, including the Flatirons behind Boulder and Pikes Peak in Colorado Springs.

THEME

The theme of the Vista Trail will be the 360 degree Thornton. Voiews of the mountains and the plains, including Denver International Airport, the downtown Denver skyline, and the Continental Divide with acknowledgement of the everchanging Colorado weather.

Mountains and Plains, Elevation and Weather

Many of Colorado’s famous “Fourteener Mountains” are visible from Thornton and provide the backdrop to the ever changing weather systems that build along the Continental Divide and charge across the plains. The Vista Trail will afford views of the giant cumulous clouds that build to the east in summer afternoons and the colorful Colorado sunrises and sunsets. Many years ago, the area of Homestead Hills Park, near the intersection of 144th Avenue and Colorado Boulevard, was known as “Eastlake Hill”, and was used by Native Americans as a lookout.

TRAIL LOCATION AND FEATURES

The Vista Trail will travel to several of Thornton’s highest elevation parks. From Homestead Hills park, the trail can travel to a proposed park on a high hill in the subdivision to the northeast. From there the trail can lead east to the park planned for the Holly Hills neighborhood and then the park in Quebec Highlands with another high elevation vantage point. The trail can then head west through the Aylor Open Lands to the existing Springvale Park which has a commanding view of downtown Denver.



▲ Mountain-inspired mounds at Central Park in Aurora.



▲ Climbing boulders at Central Park in Aurora.



▲ Example of a mountain themed playground.

POSSIBLE TRAIL ENHANCEMENTS

- Educational signage to identify the mountains along the Front Range with their elevations and cloud identification, including facts about lightning and other weather phenomena
- Elevation markers that could also be used to make a rubbing (trail logo)
- Play areas with mountain climbing theme amenities
- Statues of the high altitude Colorado animals such as mountain goats, big horn sheep and marmots
- Weather stations



▲ Portions of Robert Tully's "Ripple Effects", a public art installation in Fort Collins.

ANGLERS TRAIL

The Anglers Trail showcases the valuable natural resources associated with the South Platte River and surrounding area. Buffalo, Native Americans, fur trappers and traders, homesteaders, miners, merchants, and farmers populated Adams County. Today the fishing ponds and surrounding shortgrass prairie are home to diverse native wildlife and provide numerous recreational opportunities.

Heritage Theme
evolution of
Landscape, Animals,
& Human Settlement

THEME

The theme of the Anglers Trail honors the evolution of land use from exploitation to reclamation and conservation. It celebrates the area inhabitants over time.

Animal Life

Extensive prairie dog colonies provided food for birds and mammals of prey. While the number of prairie dogs on the Great Plains is down an estimated 98-percent from 100 years ago, the area surrounding the Anglers' Trail includes two designated prairie dog habitat areas.

Today, riparian mammals include raccoons and deer that have adapted to urban conditions including habitat fragmentation.

Human Settlement

Native American hunting and gathering tribes inhabited the South Platte River area, using the river for travel, hunting, and commerce well before Europeans ever set foot in this area.

The first Europeans to visit the area were trappers and traders. The present day South Platte River Greenway Trail was originally called "Trapper's Trail".

Floodplains along the South Platte River provided prime agricultural land that supported settlement of the region. The Lower Clear Creek and Colorado Agricultural Ditches were constructed through the area to further support farming.



▲ Blue Heron at Sprat Platte Fishing Area.



▲ The black-tailed prairie dog and North American beaver once inhabited the area surrounding the Anglers' Trail.



▲ Ute tribe encampment

ANGLERS' TRAIL LOOP



Landscape

Human activity has altered the original landscape of this area, but once exploited resource areas are being reclaimed and preserved for wildlife habitat and recreation. The Sprat Platte Fishing Facility is a former gravel pit that is stocked with fish for recreational fishing.

TRAIL LOCATION AND FEATURES

The Anglers Trail is mainly surrounded by agricultural land and open space areas and incorporate fishing ponds and prairie dog habitats. This loop features a connection to the South Platte River Greenway Trail.

POSSIBLE TRAIL ENHANCEMENTS

- Wildlife watching structures
- Educational signage on map boards with information on the evolution of wildlife and human settlement in the area
- A miniature set up of a Native American encampment which could allow interactive play for children
- Statues and play components of native animals and fish from past and present times



▲ Recreational fishing at the Sprat Platte Fishing Area.



▲ Fishing themed bench



▲ A view of the Big Dry Creek.



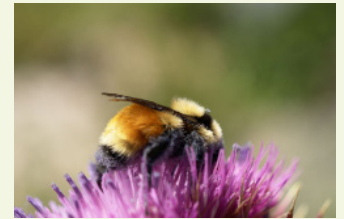
▲ Native plants growing



▲ A view of the landscape near the Big Dry Creek.

BIG DRY CREEK TRAIL

Heritage Themes *Wildlife Corridors,* *Oil & Gas* *Exploration*



▲ Bumble bee on purple thistle. ©All rights reserved John Chulick.

With its year round water flow, the Big Dry Creek is the dominant ecosystem of the northwest geographic area of Thornton. The abundant wildlife and native vegetation thrive along the Big Dry Creek floodplain is co-existting with oil and gas resource development.

THEME

Wildlife Corridor

The theme of the Big Dry Creek Trail will emphasize the role and importance of the creek and its floodplain and how the natural and developed environment can live side by side. The Big Dry Creek is an important wildlife habitat and corridor area that supports a variety of small mammals, birds, and reptiles that inhabit the woodland, river land, and grassland.

Oil and Gas Exploration

The northern tier of Thornton's Urban Growth Boundary, through which this trail loop passes, contains hundreds of oil and gas leased areas.



▲ Geese in flight near Big Dry Creek.

BIG DRY CREEK TRAIL LOOP



TRAIL LOCATION AND FEATURES

Starting at the southwest end of the trail at I-25 and the jurisdictional boundary with Westminster, the path heads northeast along the Big Dry Creek passing many pristine wildlife and riparian areas. Bald eagles and other birds of prey can be found at some locations. The trail moves northward, crosses E-470 through an underpass and runs northward tunneling under the former Union Pacific railway line. The Big Dry Creek and associated trail then move north eastward into Weld County.

POSSIBLE TRAIL ENHANCEMENTS

- Statues and educational signage featuring area wildlife, habitat components flood plain limits and descriptions
- Oil and gas extraction diagram
- Miniature toy oil derricks that can be maneuvered by children



▲ Oklahoma monument pays homage to the area's oil pioneers.



▲ Signal Ditch Trail



▲ Photograph illustrating an irrigation ditch in Adams County, 1939.



▲ Open Space Well near Signal Ditch Trail.

SIGNAL DITCH TRAIL

THEME

The Signal Ditch Trail will emphasize the history & importance that irrigation ditches played for the farm families settling western Adams County

Original Families

The Thornton area was settled by farm families that were able to grow crops and raise livestock because mountain snowmelt water was brought to canals by gravity, allowing additional land to be irrigated for agriculture.

Heritage Theme *Original Families,* *Irrigation Ditches*



▲ Capital stock certificate of the Signal Ditch Company issued in 1889.

Irrigation Enterprises

Ditch companies and districts developed on a local level, uniting community resources as it became clear that efficient irrigation called for a much greater degree of capital expenditure and technical expertise.

Colorado Water Law

The Doctrine of Prior Appropriation is the basis of water rights in Colorado and is often called "First - in - Time, First - in - Right". The earliest entity to establish a legal claim to a specific quantity of stream water has a more senior right to use the water during years of drought and water shortage.

SIGNAL TRAIL LOOP



TRAIL LOCATION AND FEATURES

The location of this trail is conceptual but would form a loop using the Signal Ditch alignment.

-  Heritage Trail connections
-  Heritage Trail
-  Parks
-  Open Land/Trail Corridor
-  Joint Use Facilities
-  Golf Course
-  Parks/Golf Course in Progress

POSSIBLE TRAIL ENHANCEMENTS

- Educational farm-life signage illustrating water law, farm life
- Interactive models of a working irrigation ditch



▲ Replicas of covered wagons doubling as benches could be a feature along this trail.



▲ Historic panel in Westminster pays homage to early homesteaders in the area.

HERITAGE TRAIL CONCEPT PLAN



▲ Unique signage connects the distinct historic themes along South Tyneside Heritage Trail, U.K.

F. WAYS TO MAKE THE HERITAGE TRAIL SYSTEM SPECIAL

To help make the Heritage Trail system special and part of Thornton's identity, the loops should be user-friendly and offer unique experiences. The following ideas suggest how area residents could be made aware of the Heritage Trail and its amenities.

- Feature a "trail of the month" on the City's website and Channel 8, showcasing the location, theme and specific trail features and enhancements.
- Distribute maps to schools and work with teachers to conduct field trips along loops.
- Organize special events happening on the trail loop, for example scavenger hunts, music performances, bird watching or a fishing festival.
- Create a Heritage Trail "rubbing" or "embossing" card on which a trail user could rub or emboss a raised loop logo design onto the embossing card.
- Create and hide geocaches at points along trail loops. Geocaching refers to a "game of high-tech hide and seek" in which the participants use a Global Positioning System (GPS) receiver or other navigational technique to hide and seek virtual or real treasures, themed according to the specific Heritage Trail loop.
- The City could create a "story trek" guide to the Heritage Trail system, recording information about each trail loop and accessed by the users mobile or smart phone.



▲ This REI Kid's Adventure journal is an example of an activity to involve kids in the Heritage Trails.



▲ Example of engraved stones for embossing or rubbing.

- Create a signature animal for each trail's theme. Replicas of the chosen animal could be loaned out to local businesses, organizations and citizen groups to be individually decorated, painted or otherwise made special. The animals could then be located along their respective Heritage Trail loops.



▲ Art Parade Animals— A. Milwaukee Beastie, B. Ludlow Vermont Llama, C. Sioux City, Iowa Prairie Dog, D. Houston Texas Cow Parade, E. Longmont, Colorado Goose, F. Cincinnati, Ohio Pig.



▲ Example of a “geocache” .

Geocaching refers to a “game of high-tech hide and seek” in which the participants use a Global Positioning System (GPS) receiver or other navigational techniques to hide and seek geocaches. A geocache is a small waterproof container containing a logbook and other treasures such as unusual coins or currency, small toys, or ornamental buttons. Geocachers are free to take objects (except the logbook, pencil, or stamp) from the cache in exchange for leaving something of similar or higher value. The coordinates of geocaches along with other details of the location, are posted on a listing site such as www.geocaching.com.



▲ Example of a “geocoin” a metal or wooden coin minted in similar fashion to a medallion, token coin, military challenge coin or wooden nickel, for use in geocaching.

HERITAGE TRAILS

