




Community Engagement Findings
for the
Former Hughes Site
to the
City of Fort Collins City Council

Prepared by Kearns & West
for the City of Fort Collins

Engagement conducted between October 2022 – February 2023



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Neutral Engagement, Collaboration, and Strategic Communications

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Cover Photo: Aerial photo of the Hughes site and Maxwell Natural Area. Credit: City of Fort Collins.

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I. Executive Summary

This document provides the Fort Collins City Council with findings from five months of community engagement to understand the community's desired uses of the former Hughes Stadium site. This document does not provide the City with agreed-upon future land use scenarios, but reflects the input heard from the community through a variety of engagement methodologies to inform next steps that Council may decide to take to advance planning at the Hughes site.

Although this discrete phase of engagement spanned five months, the City has been conducting engagement with the community regarding the Hughes site since 2016, as different land use scenarios were discussed. This engagement phase revealed that there is a diversity of desired uses for the site.

With this report, neither the engagement consultant, Kearns & West, nor City staff are providing recommendations. However, as the property comes into City ownership and engagement continues, these findings ideally promote a conversation among Council Members that is informed by an understanding of the variety of community interests in Fort Collins surrounding Hughes.

Throughout surveys, focus groups, and discussions with and among City boards and staff, it's clear that the former Hughes Stadium site is a highly valued, cherished piece of property, with endless opportunity. In April 2021, nearly 70% of voters supported ballot language to rezone the property as Public Open Lands and use the property for "parks, recreation, and open lands, natural areas, and wildlife rescue and rehabilitation." The community group Planning Action to Transform Hughes Sustainably (PATHS) collected 8,300 signatures in support of placing the measure on the ballot.

This property already meets many community needs. Adjacent property owners use it as an informal place to spend time outdoors, within proximity of their homes. In some respects, Hughes is an extension of some their backyards and neighbors feel a sense of ownership over it. It's used by bird watchers and wildlife observers, and is adjacent to the Maxwell Natural Area, Dixon Reservoir, Pineridge Natural Area, and Horsetooth Reservoir, where countless families, bike riders, hikers, and nature enthusiasts enjoy outdoor, nature-based experiences. The existing disc golf course and sledding hill are seasonal uses.



FIGURE 1: THE HUGHES SITE. PHOTO CREDIT: CITY OF FORT COLLINS.

The community members who contributed their time to share input on potential future uses for Hughes share a common set of interests and none are mutually exclusive. Community members showed up to focus groups, surveys, meetings, and other forms of outreach in good faith, ready to think creatively about the site, willing to hear other perspectives, and willing to find compromise. The care that the community feels for the site and its potential to bring people together, regardless of their interest, came across, and is a true testament to the health of the Fort Collins community and ability for individuals and groups to find common ground behind an opportunity for inspiration, connections both physical and spiritual, and restoration in all forms.

Overall, people share the belief that the views of the foothills that Hughes provides should be preserved; that a community space for recreation and nature in that part of the City is sorely needed; that the existing and potential future habitat and buffers for nature should be enhanced; and that access to nature, wildlife habitats, recreation opportunities, and community spaces should be prioritized.

The themes of a community was the common thread throughout all outreach, regardless of an individual or group's position or desires. However, there are divergent opinions about what that means. For some, it means a place for people of all ages and abilities to ride a bike in a safe, closed, family-oriented environment. For others, it means a place to demonstrate how to restore native grassland habitat and together "do the right thing" to create an accessible and balanced space. For others, that could mean a place where little happens beyond current activities, with the addition of a few amenities such as a basic restroom, some signage, more parking, and the continuation of sledding and disc golfing at the site.

This document does not represent a consensus outcome, but reports on the engagement heard, and reflects on the engagement to represent the highest need combined with the best use of the property given its history, ecological state, and using this property versus another property. Tensions will remain between interests groups, which could manifest in skepticism or distrust of this particular engagement phase.

Some groups reflected that the community focus groups should have been sequenced to first engage PATHS, the group that spearheaded the community organizing effort to build community support for placing the rezoning and acquisition effort on the ballot. PATHS leaders argued that understanding PATHS' perspectives and experiences speaking directly with voters in the earliest part of this engagement phase would have yielded valuable background on the project and key community members to engage. Other criticisms of the public process include that some renters did not get postcards during the neighborhood outreach, and that the process favored recreation or infrastructure-heavy uses. All engagement was valued and incorporated equitably, and although it benefitted the process in some respect to hear from PATHS members mid-way through the process to report back on feedback heard and contrast it to PATHS' experiences, it's been acknowledged that the sequence for engagement was called into question.

However, as is noted throughout this document, divergent opinions on how the space should be used, or critiques of the engagement process don't preclude forward momentum on the Hughes site planning process. With the energy, positive mindset, and depth of knowledge that community members have brought to this process to date, there is unmistakable willingness to bridge gaps, find creative paths forward, partner on funding opportunities, and create an inclusive and innovative space.

II. Background

The City of Fort Collins' citizen-initiated ordinance related to the former Hughes Stadium site was approved in April 2021. The ordinance requires Fort Collins to "rezone upon passage of the ordinance" the 164.56-acre former home of the Hughes Stadium to the [Public Open Lands \(POL\) District](#) and required the City to acquire the property at fair market value, for "parks, recreation, and open lands, natural areas, and wildlife rescue and rehabilitation."



FIGURE 2: THE HUGHES FOOTBALL STADIUM. PHOTO CREDIT: THE COLORADOAN-DON REICHERT

To understand community desires, visions, and uses of Hughes, a project team comprised of Fort Collins staff and Kearns & West, a neutral third-party outreach and engagement firm (the project team) designed an engagement plan to solicit community input into potential development options for City Council's considerations. The team considered each community group's relationship to the Hughes site and sought to balance priorities and needs in these findings.

In the engagement, many community members were confused by the terms used in the ballot measure and between "Public Open Lands" and "Natural Areas," terms explained below:

- "Public Open Lands" is a zoning designation that allows for designated uses that can include parks, recreation activities, urban agriculture, composting facilities, wildlife rescue and education centers, small scale solar.
- City of Fort Collins Natural Areas Department-managed lands are called "Natural Areas" where the primary focus is conservation and restoration with limited recreational activity, with dedicated funding through a voter-approved tax that articulates designated uses.

This is noted because community members interpret "Natural Areas," "Open Lands," "Parks," and "Recreation" differently, which may have affected the survey results conducted as part of this engagement. That said, the survey conducted via the City's OurCity platform does provide an overview of general desired uses, beyond the specific terms such as natural areas or open lands. The ballot language can be interpreted to meet many community needs, and although the City is obligated to follow the POL zoning in its Land Development Code, there are different uses allowed based on different levels of review. The City intends to try to deliver on as many of the uses stipulated in the ballot language as possible, based on feasibility.

Community members by and large did ask questions about the meaning of the ballot language – whether structures are allowed to be built in the first place, if all the desired uses must be developed, if the list contained within the ballot language serves as a series of options, and what constraints there are on the proposed uses. It is recommended that the meaning of the ballot language and rezoning parameters be described and interpreted for community members beyond this engagement phase.

III. Engagement Findings

The following findings reflect what the project team heard over the course of the five-month engagement period. These findings can serve as the basis for discussion among City Council and staff, and the basis for future outreach and deliberation around next steps. As scenarios are developed, various community members can assist in refining the approach and providing user-specific insight into the planning. For many, Hughes is in a part of the City that many consider to be a “programming desert.” The community generally would like to see the City develop a coherent vision for the whole site that incorporates multiple uses and fosters public/private partnerships. Funding and management could come from a combination of departments and creative third-party funding sources.

In the most basic sense, there is support for wildlife center, potentially in one corner, disc golf in another, small bike park in another, and restoration/connected habitat in another.

A. Areas of Universal Common Interest

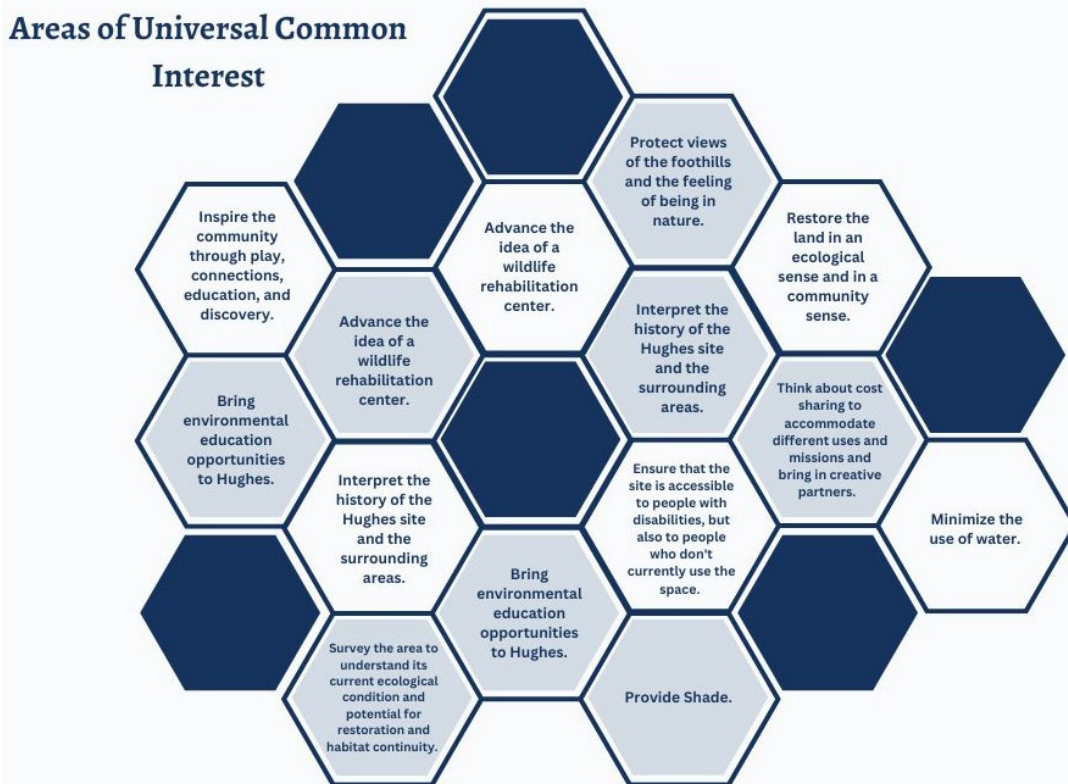


FIGURE 3: AREAS OF UNIVERSAL COMMON INTEREST HEARD THROUGHOUT THE ENGAGEMENT PROCESS.

B. Leveraging Existing Data

To ensure current engagement builds on previous efforts, the project team used findings from the 2021 [Parks and Recreation Master Plan](#) and the 2022 [Fort Collins Community Survey](#), both statistically valid and recent surveys. Understanding residents’ outdoor facility needs amenities assisted the project team in framing engagement strategies and activities regarding the Hughes site. During the time in which development of the Hughes site was an option, residents did

express the desire to restore the property and plan uses that fostered conservation and recreation. While a "no development" option was not on the table at that time, community preference still pointed to desires for that outcome.

The Fort Collins Community Survey identified quality outdoor and recreational opportunities as an asset to City residents, results that the public engagement efforts around the Parks and Recreation Master Plan reiterated. The survey found that 97% of the Fort Collins population believe that quality parks, paved trails, and recreation facilities are important to the City's identity.

Within outdoor facilities, respondents identified the following top five amenities as most important to their households:

- Paved, multi-use trails
- Hiking trails
- Natural areas and wildlife habitats
- Unprogrammed spaces
- Playgrounds

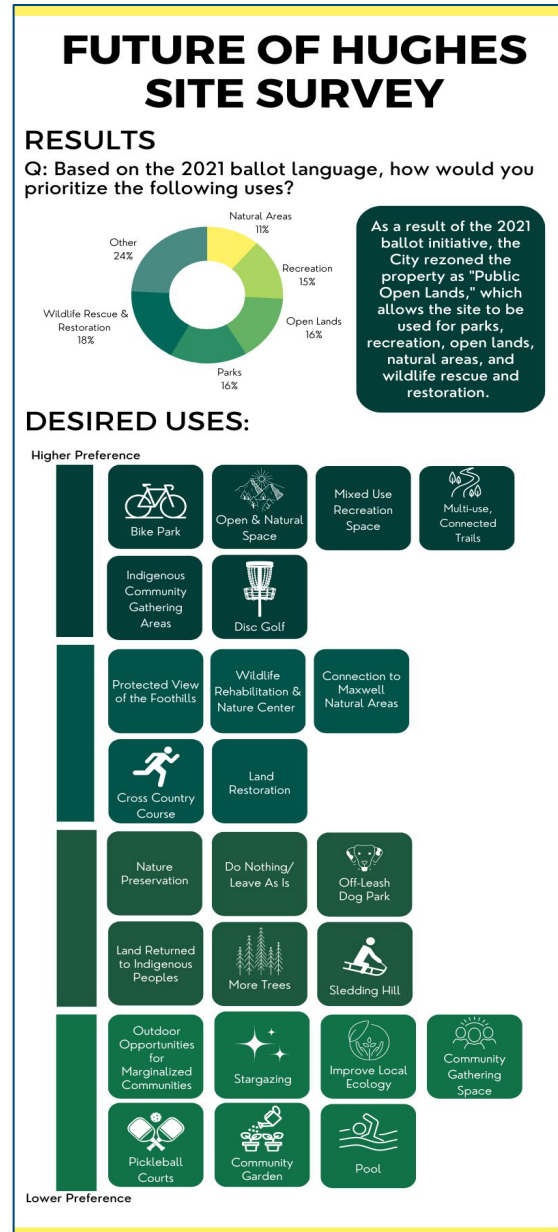
Similarly, residents identified the follow ten items as recreational needs for their households:

- Multi-use paved trails
- Multi-use soft surface trails
- Natural areas & wildlife habitats
- Unprogrammed space
- Parks and plazas downtown
- Park shelters and picnic areas
- Community gardens
- Playgrounds
- Dog parks
- Water-play features

C. Future of Hughes Stadium Site Survey (Survey #1)

The first round of digital engagement specific to this phase asked community members to share their desired potential uses for the former Hughes site.

The survey was live from the launch of the website in late December 2022 until January 31, 2023. Duplicate responses were removed, and the data were summarized to understand the respondents' priorities



FIGURES 4 AND 5: RESULTS FROM THE FIRST ROUND OF DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT. THE WORD CLOUD SHOWS ANSWERS TO "HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE THE SPACE USED?"

and desired activities for the site. The survey received 2,710 unique responses.

Respondents supported an even distribution of community priorities for the site. Fifteen percent of respondents supported recreation, 16% open lands, 16% parks, 11% natural areas, and 18% wildlife rescue and restoration. The public was also given an opportunity to prioritize “other,” elaborating on the type of open lands or recreational activities they hoped to see on the site.

Figures 4 and 5 show answers to the question of how community members would like to see the space used. High preferences were voiced for a bike park, open and natural space, mixed use recreation space, multi-use connected trails, an Indigenous Peoples community gathering area, and maintaining the disc golf course. The word cloud was populated from the question: “How would you like to see the space used?” Responses that were most popular are represented with larger font size, including trails, natural, area, wildlife, park, bike, open, and space.

The results of the first survey helped draft the second round of digital engagement, which looked to understand the desired level of impact and potential phasing of activities on the site.

D. Future of Hughes Stadium Site Survey (Survey #2)

The second round of digital engagement specific to this phase asked community members to share their preferences for level of activity on the Hughes site.

The survey was live between February 10 – 24, 2023. Duplicate responses were removed, and the data were summarized to understand the community’s desired activities for the site. The survey received 1,896 unique responses.

When asked about their desired level of impact/activity for the site on a scale of 1-5 (1 being low impact activities and 5 being high impact activities), about 50% of respondents supported high impact activities, 11% supported medium impact activities, and 20% supported low impact activities. Both levels “2” and “4” received support from 10% of respondents.

Respondents could pick their top five preferred activities on the site. **Figure 6** shows results of the question as a bar chart starting from highest to lowest.

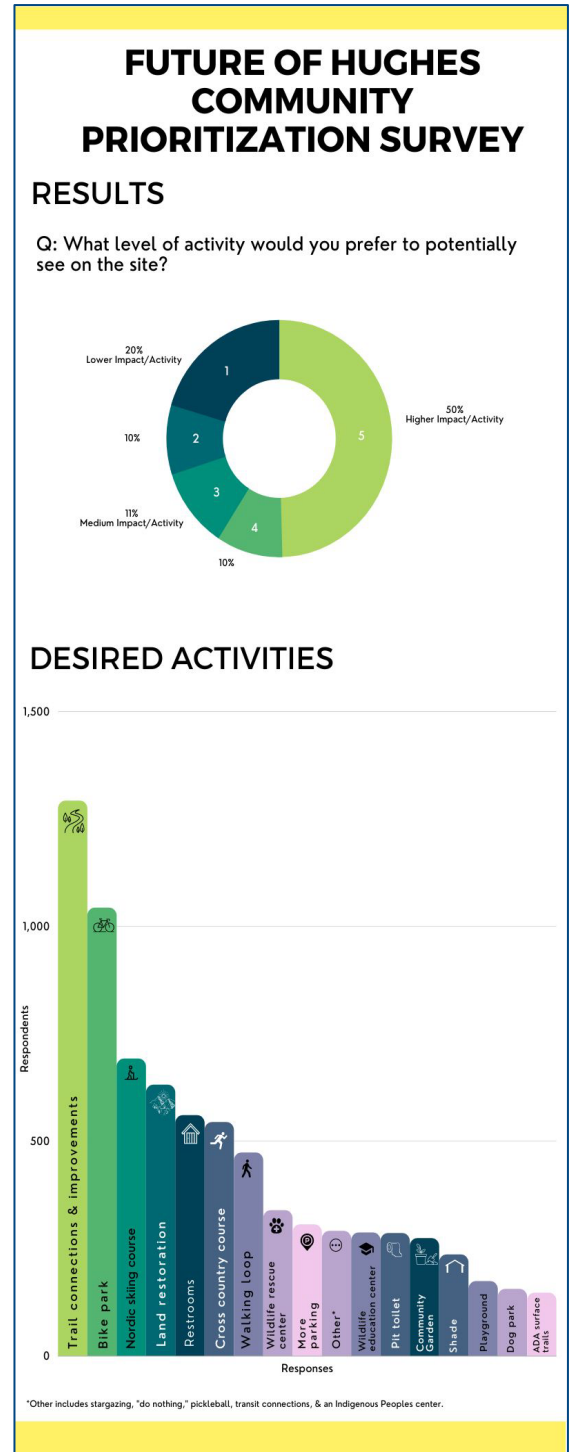


FIGURE 6: RESULTS FROM THE SECOND ROUND OF DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT.

High preferences were voiced for trail connections and improvements, a bike park, a Nordic skiing course, land restoration, restrooms, and a cross country running course.

The survey also included a free response question where many respondents reiterated their activity preferences.

E. Focus Groups

Findings from focus groups and conversations across the community are represented by engagement opportunity below. The separation between recreation, wildlife, conservation, and other interests as reflected in the summaries helped the project team make space for group-specific interests to be heard, but don't imply that future conversations should be segregated by use or interest, or that scenarios for Hughes should exclude one group or another. At this stage of the engagement process, it's helpful to gather like-minded interests together to hear, collectively, thoughts on the direction of the property from a particular point of view.

Community members were identified based on their role within community organizations and previous engagement with City efforts, including Hughes site outreach, the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, and wildlife rehabilitation discussions.

Across all engagement, community members reflected a desire to understand each other's interests and come together on proposed approaches for Hughes. The sense of community and co-creation was strong across all engagement.

The focus groups either took place in person, as a hybrid meeting, or virtually. The meetings typically began with a short presentation on the process, after which the project team facilitated a discussion to understand the group's or individual's position on using the Hughes site and how that relates to the original ballot language.

The input under each theme reflects thoughts from a variety of attendees and is not weighted based on frequency of mentions or type of organization who provided that feedback. The comments are summarized to indicate key themes, then organized by topic.

Recreation Focus Group

A November 16 focus group was held with recreation community members from the following organizations: Parkour, Overland Mountain Biking, Wolfpack, YourGroupRide.com, Poudre School District, Radio Controlled Rock Crawlers, Fort Collins Baseball Club, Bike Fort Collins. The project team also spoke separately (due to scheduling conflicts) with individuals representing drone park, velodrome, and disc golf interests. Their feedback is incorporated below.

Key themes: Community members reflected the desire to maintain the natural, open space feel of the property, while providing a space that allows residents and visitors alike to play sports, build community, improve their quality of life, spend time outdoors, and be inspired. Community members representing bike interests greatly wish to see a bike park built at Hughes, modeled after the Vail Bike Park in Boulder, while others could use the space for a wildlife rehabilitation facility. Community members widely support the spirit of the ballot language and desire to maintain the views of the foothills and ensure that any new structures are consistent with the zoning requirements in the POL zoning district. Community members also reflected the need to offer unique amenities for the community and visitors in a public space, rather than a

private one, to promote connecting with others and inspire future generations of outdoor enthusiasts.

- **Enhance Recreational Spaces and Build a Bike Park**
 - Consider building a bike park or "bike hub" that includes all ages features, including a paved perimeter trail, unpaved mountain bike and cyclocross courses, a pump track, and dirt jumps; with opportunities for skills development and intermediate/advanced features.
 - A bike hub could connect to the Maxwell Natural Area, nearby trails, and the City bike route system.
 - A bike hub could accommodate other uses than a bike park such as a radio-controlled rock crawler track, a Nordic skiing course, and cross-country running track, and a parkour facility.
 - Community members support maintaining the disc golf course and water retention areas. Community members generally agree that the site does not need to house sports fields for a local school district or to meet community needs.
 - The disc golf course is suitable for disc golfers in its current form but could benefit from enhancements such as trees or movable pin locations.
- **Consider a Community Center**
 - Community members advocated for a space that inspires residents to explore new recreational hobbies and connect to the natural environment.
 - The history of the site could be interpreted in any development and incorporated into future land-use scenarios.
 - The space could be left open in areas for informal community or neighborhood uses.

Wildlife Focus Groups

Two November 16 focus groups were held with the Rocky Mountain Raptor Center and the Northern Colorado Wildlife Center, separately.

Key themes: The Hughes site is an ideal location to help the Northern Colorado Wildlife Center grow its organization and expand its ability to help the community. The Rocky Mountain Raptor Center also sees opportunity in relocating its center to Hughes. The footprint it requires is greater than that of the wildlife center, but there's the possibility of co-locating the facilities. Both organizations believe that the capital investment in building a new center would be significant but are willing to help with fundraising. Hughes is an optimal site because it also offered the opportunity for community members to become more integrated into nature through educational opportunities.



FIGURE 7: GREENWOOD WILDLIFE REHABILITATION CENTER IN LONGMONT, COLORADO.

- **Build a Wildlife Rehabilitation Facility**
 - Community members would like dedicated, spacious facilities to house existing and future rehabilitation services and presented a variety of site location scenarios.

- Community members suggested the concept of a “Nature in the City” visitor center that provides community engagement and education on raptor and wildlife rehabilitation practices.
- Rehabilitation spaces require a natural buffer space from development.
- A rehabilitation space could provide emergency rescue operations for wildlife.
- Developing dedicated, suitable rehabilitation and recovery spaces can build upon Fort Collins’ efforts to promote conservation and preservation within the City and to meet broader county and state needs.

PATHS Focus Group

The project team met on January 25 with Planning Action to Transform Hughes Sustainably (PATHS). PATHS is a citizen-funded, nonprofit, grassroots organization that organized the citizen-led ballot initiative. The organization is founded on preserving the Hughes land as a public open space for the Fort Collins community and local wildlife.

Key themes: Representatives from PATHS would like to see Hughes turned into a Natural Area with a wildlife center. Ecological continuity is a priority. PATHS supports maintaining the disc golf course and sledding hill, and opposes a bike park, built facilities, hard surface paths, and playground. It was indicated that the word “recreation” was included in the ballot language to ensure that the disc golf course and sledding hill were preserved. They reflected that the essence of the ballot initiative process was to create open space with no development, and people voted to protect Hughes, not develop it.

- **Continue the community engagement process.**
 - Use the PATHS group as a resource and reflection of the community’s desires.
 - Consider increasing participation in the engagement process by keeping the survey open.
 - Describe the differences between “natural areas” and “open space” in future engagement activities.
 - Foster a relationship with CSU and the Poudre School District to teach students about the natural environment.
- **Consider the intent of the ballot language.**



FIGURE 8: RED FOX MEADOWS AND A RAPTOR OVER FORT COLLINS. PHOTO CREDIT: CITY OF FORT COLLINS.

- Turn Hughes into a Natural Area and prioritize protected open space.
- Keep the disc golf course and sledding hill as a recreational space due to its low impact and the City's love of the activity.
- Lease space to the Northern Colorado Wildlife Center.
- **Preserve the land as a natural, open space.**
 - Preserve the dark, natural open space to allow stargazing.
 - Preserve the views of the foothills.
 - Prevent recreation uses that require infrastructure.
 - Use the space for only low-impact recreation use, such as low-impact trails.
 - Consider incorporating a shaded community space.
 - Emphasize the value of this property in relation to Pineridge and Maxwell Natural Areas.
 - Protect the highly traveled migrations routes for the wildlife in the area.
 - Prevent the expansion of parking at the Hughes site.

Conservation Interests Focus Group

Two identical February 9 focus groups were held with individuals and organizations representing conservation interests. The first focus group was attended by individuals from CSU's Conservation Leadership Thru Learning program, Colorado State University's Warner College Diversity and Inclusion Program, Wildlands Restoration Volunteers, Colorado Natural Heritage Program, and Audubon Fort Collins. The second focus group was attended by individuals from the Save the Poudre, The High Plains Environmental Center, The Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, Colorado Open Lands, and the Sierra Club-Poudre Canyon Group.

Key themes: The Hughes site offers countless opportunities for innovation – innovation in restoration, inclusivity, integrating technology, and accessible design. The opportunities to bring back habitat for birds is rare, and the grassland habitat at Hughes provides a chance to let the community watch the land be restored. Any restoration effort at Hughes should be guided by a study of the existing plant and animal habitat and what areas can be restored. Restoring Hughes can give future stewards of the land a vision of what their legacy could look like, but we need to design systems that allow people to enjoy the space.

- **Engage and create a space for a diverse demographic of people.**
 - Use the wealth of knowledge and lively student population from CSU.
 - Create spaces that are inclusive for all populations including underrepresented communities, older generations, and those with physical and mental disabilities.
 - Ensure engagement with underrepresented communities to better understand how to make the space inclusive for all.
 - Understand what will attract or invite community members to the space.
 - Create a space on the property that is planned for nature appreciation for all people, including those with cognitive and mental disabilities.
 - Create community agreement amongst different interest groups and the community.
- **Use current and past City examples as a guide.**
 - Consider how people view or socialize with this space to understand future uses.
 - Learn the mistakes of previous planning efforts and incorporate lessons learned into this project.

- **Plan for multiple uses on the site.**
 - Expand the definition of restoration to include social dimensions such as restoring the history of the site and giving future generations a vision of legacy.
 - Incorporate low impact recreation opportunities with the grassland habitat, such as a community pavilion, playground, nature observation points, or bike paths.
 - Consider lighting on the site to be sensitive to birds and wildlife, while also promoting a safe experience for community members.
 - Find balance in the various perspectives to create a site.
 - Consider a multi-use park where activities vary from season to season.
 - Develop trail connections to Natural Areas.
 - Plan for additional shade, whether natural or manmade.
 - Consider moving the disc golf course to the northeast part of the property to create a contiguous tract of development and recreational uses on the northern half of the property, and a contiguous tract of Natural Area (abutting Maxwell) on the southern part of the property.
- **Restore the land to its natural grasslands' habitat.**
 - Use the Hughes site as an opportunity to bring back the grassland habitat for local birds and animals and connect to wildlife corridors.
 - Continue to engage the community while restoring the land to a grassland habitat to create learning and community volunteer opportunities.
 - “Tiny” areas of restoration are not as valuable as contiguous habitats.
- **Explore partnerships and opportunities for Hughes.**
 - Explore grants and partnerships to secure funding.
 - Embrace areas of conflict or tension to understand points of consensus, creativity, and innovation.
 - Consider the history of fire and flooding in this area when designing the site.
 - Prioritize a space that would bring more environmental education to the community, school districts, and CSU students.

F. City Boards & Departments Discussions

The input under each theme reflects thoughts from a variety of board and department members and is not weighted based on frequency of mentions or group that provided feedback. The comments are organized by themes.

Parks Department

Key themes: The Parks Department is interested in exploring the use of Hughes to fulfill many of the facilities gaps identified in its master plan. There are trail connectivity options and relatively large swaths of land that make the property an appealing option for passive or active recreation opportunities. The Department has a need for a large footprint park, and Hughes meets that need.

- **Use the Hughes site to address gaps identified through the City's Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Findings Report.**
 - Include passive recreation activities on Hughes (e.g., seating/casual use spaces, community gardens, walking trails, landscape features, sledding, and regional stormwater detention).
 - Implement active recreation on Hughes (e.g., bike trails, outdoor fitness and exercise facilities, naturalistic play attractions, playgrounds, cross-country track, RC car track).

- Build Facilities on Hughes (e.g., dog park, individual picnic and seating areas, group picnic areas, park shelters, restrooms, Native American center, educational facilities).
- **Explore the Department’s interest in the area.**
 - Desire for proximity to the foothills to allow community members such as mountain bikers and Nordic skiers to use in this area.
 - Desire for a paved trail that connects north-south, and ideally, crosses through the Hughes site.
 - Understand the funding needs to acquire the property and open a new facility.

Natural Areas Department

Key themes: The Natural Areas Department understands the community’s desire to see Hughes restored to meet high conservation and ecological values. Hughes is a highly disturbed site, and it would take significant investment to preserve it. Land use regulations would shift when comes under the City’s management (e.g., related to off leash dog use). The opportunity cost of acquiring and restoring Hughes would compromise the Department’s capacity and resources to acquire and/or restore other parcels of land. There’s a middle ground between wholesale Parks Department management of the site and Natural Areas Department management of the site that should be explored. A blended, cost-shared solution is preferred.

- **Continue conversations about restoring Hughes to natural habitat.**
 - Acknowledge that restoration costs are high for Hughes to meet ecological goals.
 - Be flexible, if Hughes were to be designated a Natural Area, to understand where the property fits within the Department’s restoration framework and mission.
 - Explore ADA and accessibility considerations for the space.
 - Explore the trade-offs of restoring Hughes versus restoring and acquiring other City properties.
- **Explore how natural areas could integrate with wildlife rescue on the site.**
 - Discuss whether a wildlife center can be placed within a natural area and what relationship, or partnership would exist between the City and the center, particularly around facility management and the site’s mission.
- **Connect to surrounding natural areas.**



FIGURE 9: FORT COLLINS NATURALIST COMMUNITY. PHOTO CREDITS: CITY OF FORT COLLINS.

- Explore connections for visitors to the adjacent Maxwell Natural Area.
- Explore connections to the existing trails within the Foothills Zone.

Land Conservation and Stewardship Board

Key themes: Equitable engagement is a priority for outreach. Restoration at the area should be prioritized and informed by a natural resource inventory and habitat study. Partnerships with community groups is critical to success.

- **Consider how to fund potential activities on Hughes.**
 - Consider additional funding sources to fund the planning or implementation.
 - Explore public-private partnerships that could assist in funding future activities.
 - Embrace the cost of restoration as this is a once in a lifetime opportunity to restore this site.
 - Connect funding with uses – for example, funding for natural areas should be spend on natural area activities, and funding for recreational activities should be spent on parks and recreation activities.
 - Avoid investing significant funding into maintenance and facilities costs.
- **Prioritize open natural space.**
 - Conduct a resource inventory at Hughes.
 - Restore the natural habitat for grassland birds.
 - Prevent Hughes from becoming a tourist destination.
 - Understand that recreational activities negatively impact wildlife.
 - Maintain the disc golf course as a compatible use to a natural area.
 - Minimize the use of water.
- **Engage the community on potential uses and partnerships.**
 - Connect with conservation interests and the PATHs group to hear their perspectives.
 - Partner with the Raptor Center and Northern Colorado Wildlife Center.
 - Engage with those who visit the Maxwell Natural Area to understand how their activities could expand into Hughes.
 - Develop online surveys in multiple languages and engage underserved communities.
 - Align community engagement with property acquisition.
 - Restore trust with citizens by engaging those who developed the ballot measure to understand their perspective on current desired activities.

Parks & Recreation Board

Key themes: Funding will be a key issue to address in any scenario, and many of the scenarios advanced by recreation group will require significant funding. City Council should align the uses at Hughes with gaps identified in previous planning documents and master plans. There is overlap between desired uses and values for the property, regardless of individual's positions.

- **Collaborate with Indigenous Peoples and understand their needs.**
 - Consult or hire Indigenous People in subsequent phases of work on the Hughes site.
 - Create opportunities for Indigenous Peoples storytelling.
- **Understand how Hughes can support other City planning efforts.**
 - Use the Trails Master Plan, the Parks & Recreation Master Plan, and the Active Modes Plan to see how Hughes could support City priorities.
- **Use the site for recreation programming.**

- Explore the idea of a mountain bike park.
- Develop a “safe” list of agreed upon amenities that allows future Hughes planning processes to be successful.
- Consider community gathering spaces, such as a festival or community garden space.
- Create a space that blends with the surrounding Natural Areas.
- **Create transparency with the public.**
 - Discuss funding considerations in public.

Disability Advisory Board

Key Themes: The board supports the idea of a community space, but with little new development. A potential bike park is generally supported, given the size of the cycling community. Hughes would be an ideal location for walking trails, if the area is developed with adaptive needs in mind. The property could become a sanctuary for birds or other animals through a nature or wildlife preserve with education opportunities. Accessibility key, especially with parking, and the board would like to be part of future discussions to ensure accessibility. The board raised questions and concerns were raised regarding water usage, Dial-A-Ride services, and shade.

Natural Resources Advisory Board

Key Themes: The board generally supports the idea of this being an important area to transition between Natural Areas and surrounding urban uses and preserve existing wildlife habitats. A desire to incorporate community feedback for potential restoration as a Natural Area at least on portions of the property and consider other areas for recreational uses. The board raised questions regarding upcoming engagement and whether youth and other interested parties have been engaged in the process.

Indigenous Peoples Involvement Findings

These conversations are ongoing. On February 25th, City staff met with a group of Native American and Indigenous community members to discuss more broadly the topic of land use and meaningful community spaces within the Fort Collins and Northern Colorado region.

IV. Engagement Procedure

The engagement process to inform potential uses for Hughes entailed developing overall communications goals and objectives, developing consistent project messaging, facilitating discussions with community members, engaging Indigenous Peoples, and managing digital engagement focused on educating, engaging, and surveying the Fort Collins community.

A. Goals

The project team developed a “Hughes Engagement Plan” that outlined the messaging, strategies, and tactics to implement in support of listening to the community on desires for Hughes. The public engagement process aimed to inform the broader community through shared knowledge and consult various groups regarding the continuum of future options available for the Hughes site. The following engagement goals were established to ensure alignment throughout the project:

- Inform the Fort Collins community about the Hughes site engagement effort and opportunities to engage.
- Engage the community through focus groups and digital platforms to identify and record potential uses and preferences for the Hughes site and identify other parties to engage in the process.
- Report on and inform the community on a variety of scenarios and budget constraints for the Hughes site.
- Present findings to the Fort Collins City Council.

B. Key Messages

The project team sought to advance key messages about the history of the site, the engagement effort, and next steps in the process to equitably inform the community and make sure that the correct information was disseminated through community partners. These messages were as follows:

- A citizen-initiated ballot measure was added to the April 2021 municipal election ballot and was passed.
- This ballot language required the City Council of Fort Collins to rezone the former Hughes Stadium property to a Public Open Lands District. Language in the ballot requires the City to acquire the property at fair market value and use the property for parks, recreation, open lands, natural areas, and wildlife rescue and restoration.
- The City completed the rezoning of the former Hughes Stadium property, and is in the process of acquiring the former Hughes Stadium site.
- The City is in the process of meeting its obligation of the ballot language.
- The engagement builds upon past engagement efforts specific to Hughes, and acknowledges the broad range of desires related to the property from those who voted on it.
- Engagement efforts are in coordination with existing City plans, including the City's Master Plan, City's Transportation Master Plan, Fort Collins Park, and Recreation Master Plan, and builds upon previous engagement around the site.
- The City is engaging internally, across departments, to discuss appropriate uses given the area's context.
- This phase of community outreach focuses on determining and envisioning the continuum of options the Hughes site could offer given the ballot language. Targeted community outreach will help the City understand potential future uses for the land, which will then be presented to City Council.
- The Hughes site is a valuable but relatively small parcel of land, at 164 acres. The ballot language gives the City flexibility in how to meet a broad set of community needs with the land. While the City cannot accommodate all desires for the property, it will make every effort to listen to community needs and plan the property in a useful and beneficial way for the community.
- There is not currently funding in place to proceed on any potential use scenarios.

C. Participants

Between October 2022 and February 2023, the project team engaged with the community in a variety of ways. A postcard was sent to 633 residents with proximity to the Hughes site. Digitally, approximately 14,600 visited the website, and the first survey saw 2,710 unique responses (open December 1, 2022 – January 31, 2023). The second survey saw 1,876 unique responses (open February 10, 2023 – February 24, 2023). The City sent email blasts, reached out to adjacent HOA property management companies, posted on social media, and provided updates on Hughes in e-newsletters.

For in-person board presentations and focus groups, the project team also met with about 67 community members with a variety of interests and sent invitations to about 111 community members.

D. Methodology

The outreach effort sought to inform and hear feedback from interested individuals through digital communications and engage community members through focus groups.

The community's interests are infinite and conversations with community members about their views, desires, and needs related to Hughes are a never-ending source of inspiration and a true window into the Fort Collins community. Understanding the community's interest and vision for the site within the context of the ballot language was a key tenet of engagement.

The project team conducted a variety of engagement activities to collect feedback on specific desired uses, aspirations, barriers, and community concerns or opportunities for the Hughes site. The structure of those activities is explained above and summaries of the outcomes from each activity are available in [III. Engagement Findings](#). Across all engagement, the questions asked followed these themes:

- How have you been involved in planning the former Hughes site?
- What have you heard from the community to date?
- Given the allowable uses, how would you like to see the space used?
- What would you like to see here?
- Do you have a view on what uses (within the parameters of the ballot language) should be prioritized?
- What do you see as the keys to success for ensuring an effective, inclusive engagement process?
- Is there anyone you know who should be involved in this process, who is not currently?

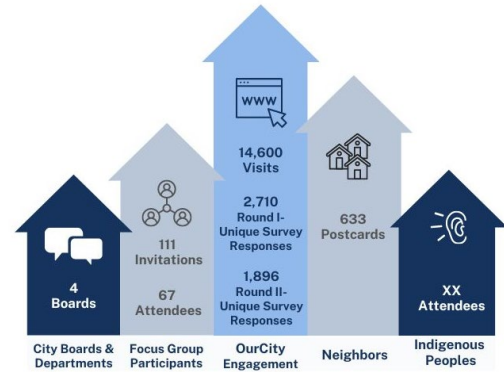


FIGURE 10: NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS CATEGORIZED BY AUDIENCE TYPE.

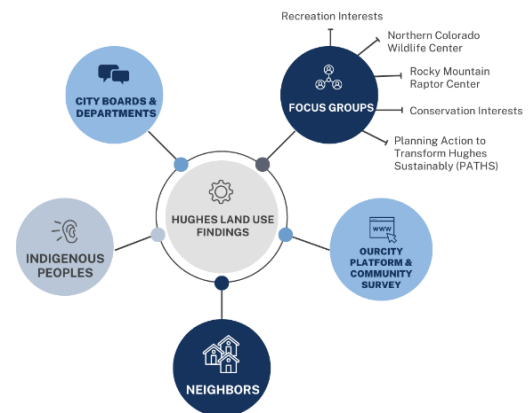


FIGURE 11: AUDIENCES ENGAGED IN THE PROCESS.

OurCity Platform and Community Surveys

Consistent communications strategies are important to understand how the target audiences will be engaged throughout the process. Considerations were given to tools that would best inform, educate, and engage the community throughout the process. Outreach to community members and groups through a community survey administered on the City's OurCity website was the first tier of engagement. The built-in engagement activities available on the OurCity platform lent themselves well to conducting the following two community surveys:

- Future of Hughes Stadium Site Desired Uses Survey (survey #1)
- Future of Hughes Stadium Community Prioritization Survey (survey #2)

Using the OurCity engagement platform, community members could stay informed on the current process and ideas heard to date. Community members were able to provide additional feedback through digital questionnaires with potential activities and a prioritization exercise. In addition to the OurCity platform, the project team used existing communication channels, including e-mail and newsletter to promote the website launch and online engagement opportunities. This allowed the project team to provide updates to the various audiences and keep all informed.

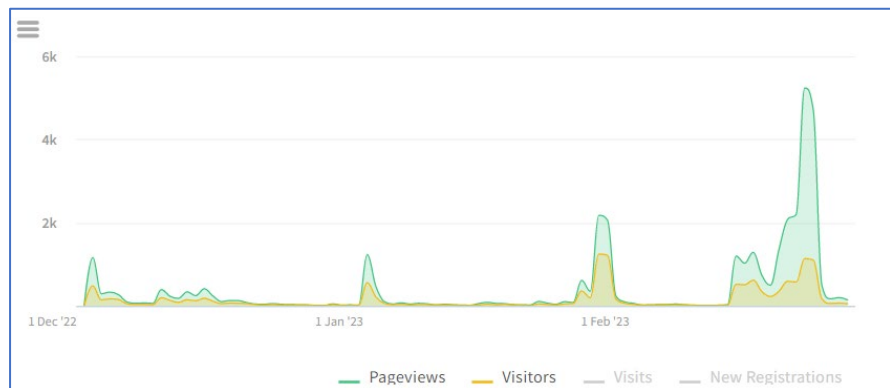


FIGURE 12: VISITORS TO THE OURCITY PROJECT PAGE IN THOUSANDS OVER TIME.

The first survey questions were designed by the project team. Translation for additional languages was provided through the OurCity interface. The survey asked individuals to rank which of the five uses in the ballot language they would like to see prioritized, asking the following questions:

- How would you like to see the space used?
- Who else should be engaged in this process?
- Is there anything else you would like the City to know?

Over the course of the outreach during the first survey, 7,700 community members visited the site. **Figure 12** shows the various spikes in digital engagement from November 1, 2022, until February 2023. When analyzing the sources of traffic to the OurCity page, many community members used a direct hyperlink to access the page followed by social media, referrals, or emails. A small portion found the site through search engines. The spikes on the graph are the following:

- The first spike corresponds with the launch of the website around December 1, 2022.
- The second spike happens around January 3, 2023, likely due to the neighborhood postcards arriving to mailboxes.
- The third spike of 1,244 visitors was on January 31, 2023, the day the first community survey closed and the day after a Coloradoan article on the topic.

- The most recent spike correspond to the launch and closure of the second community survey with 1,135 visitors.

The second survey was designed similarly to the first survey. Questions were drafted by the project team. Translation for additional languages was provided through the OurCity interface. The bulk of the engagement was performed in English. This survey asked community members to consider their preferred level of activity on the site on a scale of 1-5 (1 being lower impact or activity uses, and 5 being higher impact or activities). Additionally, the survey asks community members to answer the following questions:

- Of the items listed on the survey, pick your top 5 uses or activities that you prefer to see on the site.
- Is there anything else you would like the City to know?

The activities and uses included on the survey were not exhaustive or comprehensive, but were instead a list of most common requests on current and past engagement phases. An option for other was included in the list for community members to raise an additional activity or use for the site.

Focus Groups

Representatives that participated in focus groups were engaged because of their relationship to the ballot measure, the mission of their organization aligned with the allowable uses in the ballot language, they were identified as potential users of the Hughes site, or they expressed interest in the process. These groups included those who worked to pass the ballot measure, wildlife rescue and restoration interests, conservation interests, recreation groups previously engaged during the City's Parks and Recreation Master Plan, and open space and natural areas advocates.

The main goals of the focus groups were to:

- Gather input and suggestions on potential uses and preferences for the Hughes site.
- Share information on a variety of scenarios and budget constraints for the site.
- Assess the community's continued interest in participating in the process.

Each meeting began with a short presentation on the process, after which the project team facilitated a discussion to learn each group's interests in using Hughes (and how), and the feasibility of implementing those uses. For consistency, the project team developed a script and discussion guide for each conversation.

City Boards & Departments Discussions

A primary interest in engaging with key City advisory boards was to inform community leaders about the process while collecting feedback on outreach efforts and findings to date. The project team met with the following four City boards:

- Disability Advisory Board
- Land Conservation and Stewardship Board
- Natural Resources Advisory Board
- Parks & Recreation Board

Neighborhood and Adjacent Property Owner Outreach

The project team engaged residents and adjacent property owners to inform them about the Hughes site engagement process through a post card mailer. Kearns & West supported the City's communications department in developing the postcard. Six hundred and thirty-three households surrounding the Hughes site received the postcard in early January 2023.

The postcard was designed to educate these households about the Hughes site engagement process, knowing that many neighbors and adjacent property owners use the site informally to walk and be in nature. Hearing from these community members is especially important since they will bear witness to any changes to the site, and their daily lives may be temporarily impacted, or their daily routines may be altered. The call to action in the postcard to adjacent property owners was to visit the OurCity website and take the survey to share their vision for the land.



FIGURE 13: THE FUTURE OF HUGHES POSTCARD SENT TO ADJACENT PROPERTY OWNERS.

Indigenous Peoples Involvement

The project team listened to Indigenous Peoples to understand their needs and how these needs could be folded into the Hughes site planning. The project team worked with City staff engaged in Indigenous programming to ensure engagement was responsive to cultural needs.

V. Conclusion

Community members approached potential planning scenarios with creativity, flexibility, and pragmatism, suggesting ways for multiple facilities to exist on the site, and offering that various organizations' desired uses for the site could be adapted and blended for co-location while maintaining safety, particularly for wild animal enclosures. All community members reflected their willingness to find opportunities for collaboration among organizations and partners.

Despite the appetite for a variety of restoration or recreation scenarios, an option to make minimal changes to the property represents one end of the spectrum of development (or no development), to keep the property as is, with its existing uses. These might be considered of lower potential impact, as detailed in this section. On the other end of the spectrum of potential scenarios, generally considered medium- or high-impact is an option to fully develop the property consistent with both the various options in the ballot language ("parks, recreation, and open lands, natural areas, and wildlife rescue and restoration") and the cross section of desired City activities from the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and the City's community wide survey (paved, multi-use trails, hiking trails, natural areas and wildlife habitats, and unprogrammed spaces).

Land ownership plays a big part in what can happen at Hughes. It appears that there are multiple scenarios for land acquisition, the three most notable being whether the land is acquired by the Natural Areas Department, the Parks Department, or with general funds; or a combination of all three, depending on how the site will be used. The plan for uses will determine funding for acquisition, and the different uses have tradeoffs and opportunity costs.

While the topic of funding various proposals was addressed through engagement, no conclusions were made on specific funding streams. All groups recognized that implementation of most, if not all, scenarios, would require funding partnerships or external funding, but were committed to leading those efforts and entering in creative funding partnerships with the City. Community members also support the idea creating consensus-based proposals to expand the list of potential partners who could help fund and fundraise toward development, and bringing in a variety of funding partners. Each scenario has its own phases of construction, funding, challenges, departmental constraints.

A. Potential Impact Measurements

Many of the desired uses for the former Hughes site sit along a spectrum of implementation considerations – some may be relatively easily implemented with little budget and a short development schedule or requiring minimal restoration. For example, developing a pit toilet or enhancing the disc golf course could be realized with minimal investment and a relatively low footprint or staff mobilization.

In the second survey, community members were asked to reflect on how the site could be used, on a scale from lowest level of impact/activity and the highest level of impact/activity, based on activities categorized by three levels of potential impact – low, medium, and high. Then, community members were asked to pick the top five uses or activities that they would prefer to see on the site in the future. Community members were reminded that there is currently no funding designated for restoration or any other potential activities or uses on the site, and that overall funding sources were could combing Natural Areas and Parks resources based on usage/activities; and that uses and activities are not exhaustive or comprehensive and are instead a list of most common requests on various survey and outreach results to date.

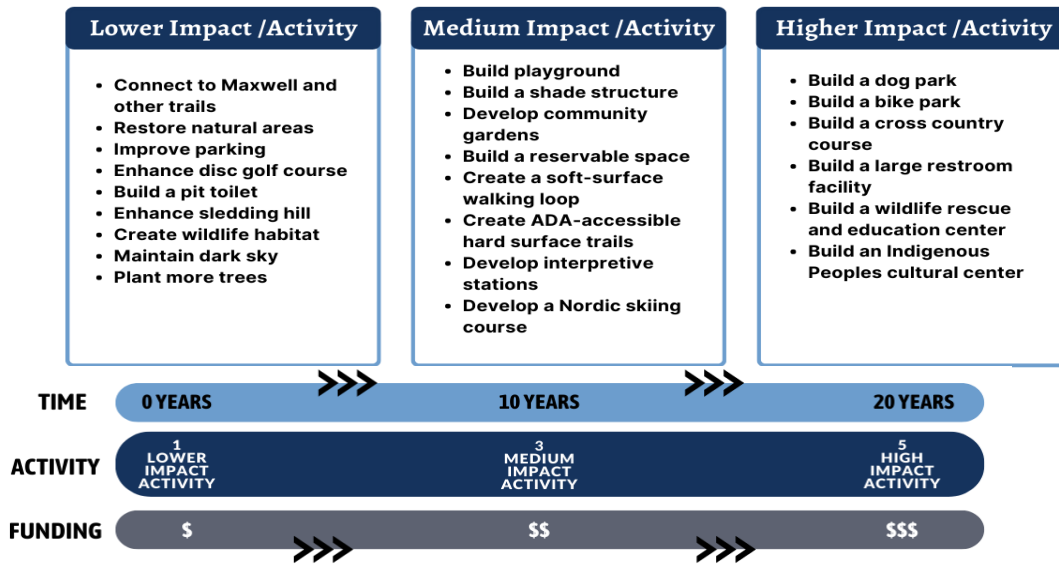


FIGURE 14: CORRELATION BETWEEN THE POTENTIAL LEVEL OF IMPACT/ACTIVITY, FUNDING STREAMS, AND IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD.

In this context, the level of impact generally reflects the amount of effort and resources required to implement a potential use or the ease of implementing a scenario but can also reflect the amount of time it would take to implement or the level of funding. The potential level of impact and the ease of implementation from funding and construction perspectives are correlated, and implementation costs are generally consistent with the implementation timing.