

Inspiring Pueblo's Youth as Future Stewards of the Great Outdoors



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The City of Pueblo was selected to participate in the Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) Inspire Initiative –aimed at inspiring the youth of Colorado to appreciate, enjoy, and foster stewardship of the great outdoors. The city's Get Outdoors (GO) Pueblo Inspire Initiative, focused on gauging youth interest in the outdoors, identifying valued outdoor elements, and developing a plan for how the city will provide these elements. The project convened a coalition of youth empowered to outreach with their peers and proactively participate in the

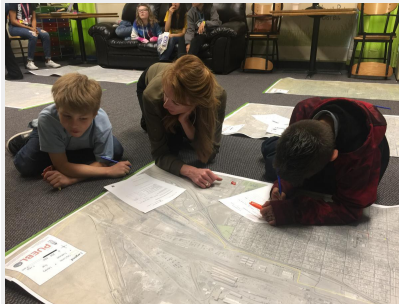
project development, enabling them to build confidence in their speaking, presentation and leadership skills, directly assist with data collection, and champion the importance of planning and the natural environment with future generations.

The cornerstone of the project was the “Steps to Outdoors” concept that encourages youth to experience the outdoors, starting with their own backyard. As they progress along the steps, they experience city parks, local areas of interest, such as the Mountain Park Environmental Center, Nature and Raptor Center of Pueblo, the Arkansas



River, and finally the great outdoors.

The steps are achieved through proposed PLACES, PROGRAMS, and PATHWAYS designed to provide access and exposure to nature education and a range of outdoor activities. PROGRAMS focus on working with local and statewide partners to provide outdoor education and recreation for youth. PROGRAMS include educational sessions at Mountain Park Environmental Center, a backpacking and wilderness survival camp, and owl pellet dissection. PATHWAYS focus is on opportunities for youth to participate in outdoor education projects that can lead to leadership and career opportunities such as a youth summer employment program preparing them for work experiences in national parks, forests, wildlife refuges, and fish hatcheries. The Lake Minnequa Outdoor Adventure Center was proposed as a central hub and PLACE to support outdoor programs, workshops and facilities to outreach and inspire youth participating in the PROGRAMS and PATHWAYS.



The PLACES, PROGRAMS, and PATHWAYS were developed as a direct result of extensive public outreach focusing on underserved neighborhoods where the greatest benefit could be achieved due to lack of access and opportunity. The direction of the project was framed by input received through an array of outreach activities with community groups, stakeholder organizations and community youth to create partnership opportunities, instill ownership in the project and a create a plan that reflects youth interests, creates immersive environments, and inspires paths to long-term environmental stewardship.

The long-term value of the GO Pueblo Inspire Initiative is the promotion of social equity, creating a lasting foundation to connect future generations with the natural landscape, fostering their appreciation of the outdoors and learning to be physically active in their surroundings to improve their overall quality of life.

