

## LA VETA OUTDOOR RECREATION INITIATIVE

The Town of La Veta oversees various projects that promote outdoor recreation. The projects include playground replacement, new outdoor recreation amenities, open space, and trail connectivity. The projects are community-driven priorities contained in the *La Veta Parks, Open Space, and Trails Master Plan* adopted by the Town Board in 2021. We seek a collaborative funding approach to implement projects in the west and northwest sections of Town on existing town-owned right-of-way.

Prioritization is on the design and construction of Cucharas River Trail (CRT) and then phase in the design and construction of the adjacent recreational amenities. La Veta will make the CRT as shovel ready as possible which will strengthen the grant applications.

The following grant sequence and timeline is recommended:

October 1, 2023: The Town will apply to Colorado Parks and Wildlife for a \$45,000 planning grant to design the CRT with construction phases and budget. When complete, the trail will add three miles to the community-based system of trails, connecting four town-owned open spaces that feature riparian, forest riparian, river, and prairie ecosystems. The trail will also connect regionally to the Southern Mountain Loop Trail. The recommendation is to prioritize the design and construction of the Cucharas River Trail as phase 1 and then the adjacent recreation amenities as phase 2.

La Veta will explore additional funding available from Huerfano Park and Recreation District, DOLA, and community fundraising to cover the design cost over and above the \$45,000. It is attractive to grantors to see the Town of La Veta's commitment and availability to bring in other funders.

March 2024 or July, 2024: The Town should apply for a FY 2023 Third Cycle or FY 2024 First Cycle GOCO Community Impact grant to help fund the design and construction of the CRT and adjacent recreational amenities. The First Street trailhead for the CRT is adjacent to three recreational priorities identified by the community. These projects include a pump park, a dog park, and a night-sky viewing park. In 2020, the master plan budget estimate for the three projects was \$500,000 to \$600,000, which will need to be updated through the planning grant.

October 1, 2024: The Town will apply for a Colorado Parks and Wildlife grant to fund the construction of the CRT. The 2020 construction estimate for the CRT was \$275,000, which will be updated.

October 1, 2024: The Town will apply to Colorado Parks and Wildlife for a \$45,000 planning grant to design phase 2 of the CRT project, which will include the three adjacent recreation amenities.

September 15, 2025: The Town will apply to Colorado Health Foundation to help fund the construction of the three projects adjacent to the trail. This timeline is an estimate, although we believe the design plan for the CRT and the adjacent amenities will be complete.

The above collaborative funding strategy builds on the following Town and County infrastructure projects:

- **Playground Replacement:** The Town received a Colorado Health Foundation planning grant to design a new playground for the Town Park. With support from La Veta Trails and the La Veta Library, the Town implemented a community input process that informed the design recommendations. The Town has applied for a \$600,000 Colorado Health Foundation grant to construct the new playground in 2024. The decision is pending.
- The Town received a \$1.5 mil Downtown Main Street Revitalization grant that will improve parking, install new sidewalks and ramps, and crosswalks on Ryus and a two-block section of Main St. This work will be completed in 2023-2024.
- The Town has received a \$360,000 CDOT TAP grant to construct the Southern Mountain Loop Trail through the Town, adding bicycle facilities at the Depot and the Town Park. This grant will start July 1, 2024.
- **EIAF Main Street Live** The Town received a \$1,351,125.00 grant from DOLA to complete a street renovation for the north of the railroad tracks to include curb, gutter, multimodal path, bike lane, landscaping and lighting. Work will be completed in 2024-2025.
- Huerfano County has submitted a concept paper for a GOCO Centennial grant to plan, design, and construct priority sections of the Southern Mountain Loop Trail following the recommendations of the CDOT PEL Study. The first priority is the La Veta to Lathrop State Park section along either Valley Road or within the railroad right-of-way owned by the San Luis Rio Grand (SLRG). Either of these route alternatives will connect to the Town's planned route for this trail. The Town and La Veta Trails are among the project partners, providing a strong ability to coordinate the projects and guarantee regional connectivity. While GOCO did not approve the County's concept paper, the County has indicated it will move the priorities forward and reapply next year.