# Together We Plan for Parks:

# Fort Lupton’s Community-Created Vision

**APA Colorado Merit Award Advancing Diversity and Social Change**

The City of Fort Lupton’s Parks and Trails Vision Plan began with a simple premise: inclusive engagement requires more than inviting people to a meeting. It requires removing barriers, building relationships, and creating opportunities for residents to participate in ways that work for them. That approach was especially important in Fort Lupton, a majority-Hispanic community where 56% of residents are Hispanic and nearly 40% speak a language other than English at home. The community is also relatively young, with approximately one-quarter of residents under age 18. From the outset, the planning process prioritized bilingual communication, youth and family participation, trusted community connectors, visual materials, and engagement in familiar places.

The results were exceptional for a community of approximately 10,000 people. The community survey received 898 responses, while 13 targeted engagement events reached residents at schools, churches, a food bank, community college, recreation facilities, and community celebrations. More than 1,875 youth and adults provided in-person input during the first engagement window alone, including 1,120 youth. Across workshops, pop-ups, meetings, and other activities, more than 2,300 people ultimately participated in shaping the plan.

Engagement for this Plan was designed to feel less like a public meeting and more like a community experience. Materials and advertisements were provided in English and Spanish, multilingual facilitators supported conversations, and events incorporated food, music, giveaways, youth activities, recreation demonstrations, and hands-on planning exercises. Through the “Build Your Own Park” activity at our Community Workshop, residents worked alongside design professionals using scaled program pieces to explore amenities, space constraints, and tradeoffs. Interactive mapping allowed participants to identify missing trail connections, unsafe crossings, and barriers to accessing parks.

Community input also directly shaped recommendations for river access, fishing ponds, regional trail connections, safer street crossings, pavilions, event spaces, family-oriented amenities, and improvements to existing parks. Just as importantly, the process demonstrated how parks can serve as an accessible entry point for broader conversations about public health, mobility, environmental quality, community identity, resilience, and equitable investment.

Supported by Great Outdoors Colorado funding and strengthened through partnerships with local organizations and community ambassadors, Fort Lupton’s approach offers a transferable model for small and rural communities with limited staff capacity. The process shows that equitable engagement does not need to be complicated, it needs to be intentional, welcoming, and rooted in the people who will live with the results.