



## Inspiration from the Eastern Plains Project Descriptions

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### **1. Arkansas Valley Fairgrounds & Crystal Lake Planning**

The City of Rocky Ford is continuing planning efforts to revitalize the historic Arkansas Valley Fairgrounds and develop the adjacent Crystal Lake site to support outdoor access and recreation. GOCO-funded planning efforts launched in the summer of 2022 and produced a comprehensive vision concept, including architectural, engineering, surveying, due diligence, and permitting to make this project shovel ready. Funding also supports increased capacity for the City to conduct ongoing community engagement, strategic planning, sustainability planning for operations and maintenance, and to explore strategic partnerships and programming opportunities.

This regionally impactful project has garnered statewide and national recognition with a recently awarded Children in Nature Network grant that was combined with \$150,000 of GOCO funding initially, an additional \$400,000 in GOCO Centennial investment, and potential funding for creating a new Generation Wild coalition and a CPW Regional Partnership Initiative coalition.

### **2. Cheraw Community Complex**

The Town of Cheraw is developing the Cheraw Community Complex over the next 2 years. The effort is part of implementing Cheraw's comprehensive community development plan to enhance quality of life, increase access to outdoor recreation, and retain and attract residents.

This project is designed to be the centerpiece of ongoing community transformation efforts with housing development, community walkability, and additional recreation expansion opportunities tying directly to this project. This Complex will be in the center of this rural community and features a pavilion, playground, splash pad, walking paths, exercise equipment, ball courts, a multipurpose



AstroTurf field, and solar lighting providing multi-generational recreational opportunities to the local community and surrounding region.

A community letter with over 80 signatures pledging donations of time, volunteer hours, services, and support for this project was submitted, showing immense community support for this proposal, which ultimately led to GOCO's investment of \$883,700.

### **3. Fort Lupton Community Park Renovation Project**

The community of Fort Lupton collaboratively planned a more inclusive community park where children of all ages and abilities can play, and parents can connect. The project adds an accessible splash park and playground, and improved trails in and to the existing community park. These elements reduce economic and physical barriers to outdoor recreation in the community, and improvements increase safety, provided much-needed outdoor recreation options for those with physical disabilities or economic challenges, and make the park accessible by walking or biking. With the addition of these park improvements, the Community Park Renovation Project play area provides a place where residents, guests, and visitors can meet and spend time together with their families, friends, and fellow citizens. GOCO's investment of \$790,000 increases outdoor activity and park usage, improving the quality of life for the residents of Fort Lupton.

### **4. Haxtun Pool Renovation**

The Town of Haxtun renovated their public pool facility to provide a more modern and accessible pool for their community. The pool serves as a central gathering space for the community, supports multi-generational programming, and hosts local school athletics.

The Town's proposal to GOCO prioritized zero entry access to better serve toddlers and the elderly, and people with disabilities, lap lanes, a toddler slide, and lighted bubble fixtures to provide a multi-generational swimming experience for locals and the surrounding regional communities.

This was a community-driven project, born 20 years ago when the 8th grade class initiated a "Pennies for Pools" campaign that raised \$4,888 for pool upgrades. Over the years, the community continued to gather donations and was able to raise an additional \$738,519 in cash and in-kind contributions, which was used as match for their GOCO request of \$923,400.00.

### **5. Lamar Recreation Master Plan**

The City of Lamar was funded by GOCO to produce a multi-year recreation master plan informed by the local community. The city is hiring a planning consultant to conduct numerous activities over the next number of months to gather input from community members, many of whom are hard to reach due to language, transportation, and income barriers. The consultant is also partnering with paid



college and high school student interns, and other youth-serving organizations, to implement the engagement process.

Lamar has been hosting multiple community gatherings to engage the community in the process and has been intentional to engage with marginalized and underserved community members at events including the Cinco de Mayo celebration, school kickoff events, local sporting events, and the county fair. Lamar successfully completed the previous recreation master plan, and this planning effort aligns with their community comprehensive plan, making a GOCO investment of \$155,000 compelling.

## **6. Las Animas-Purgatoire River Project**

Southern Plains Land Trust (SPLT) acquired 458-acres near the City of Las Animas in Bent County that surrounds the historic Boggsville site. Following closing, due diligence, and a community planning effort, a conservation easement will be conveyed to Colorado Open Lands to permanently conserve this land.

The property includes one mile of prime riverfront real estate along the regionally important Purgatoire River. The river and its riparian forests provide outstanding habitat for birds, mammals, and other wildlife. The property also contains diverse wildlife habitat, including mature cottonwood riparian forests, high-quality wetlands, and a small black-tailed prairie dog colony. The wetlands are perennial ponds that support native fish and other aquatic wildlife and represent a critical ecological resource for both migratory and resident waterfowl and passerine birds. The property also includes agricultural resources including hay fields irrigated through 20 shares of leased water. The ultimate goal of the project is to provide rare public river access and recreation opportunities in southeast Colorado.

SPLT's proposal included plans for in-depth community engagement to further develop this property and the Boggsville site and enhance public access to this unique and much needed open space, which prompted GOCO's investment of \$650,000.

## **7. Otis Park Improvement**

Otis is currently revitalizing its central community gathering space and park. The project addresses deteriorating conditions of the existing playground, baseball field, and other park amenities. Otis values this park as a vital space for family gatherings, community events, and recreational activities. Improvements to the space include leveling of the baseball field, improvements to the dugouts and field fencing structures and lights, creating a safer and more inclusive playground with accessible equipment and poured-in-place surfacing, constructing walking trails with exercise stations, ADA restrooms, relocation of the basketball court, adding shade, and more. Improvements not only enhance safety, but also create a vibrant, inclusive, and accessible community space that can



accommodate a wide range of multi-generational activities, transforming the space into a thriving, outdoor hub that fosters community vitality and fellowship and promotes health and well-being.

Community engagement and feedback played a significant role in shaping the project's scope, with input from various demographics, including youth, parents, and senior citizens. The community showed strong support for the project, through volunteer labor and financial commitments. Partnerships included the Otis Volunteer Fire Department, the Town of Otis, and the Otis School District, MLB, and alternative funders. This funding, along with support from various vendors offering project discounts, helped make the project a reality. GOCO invested \$773,592 in this project.

### **8. Step It Up! Your Health Matters**

Cheyenne County and the Cheyenne Wells School District partnered to construct a new outdoor built environment in the Town of Cheyenne Wells supporting public health, recreation access, youth connections, and economic vitality. The project will replace a 19-year-old track at the school, and build a new playground, bleachers, perimeter fencing, landscaping, restrooms, concession building, and track for the benefit of the County's intergenerational community.

Upgraded facilities now provide opportunities for young people, people of color, low-income, and aging populations to combat prevalent health issues like cancer and obesity. This space is also used for outdoor educational events hosted by “Step It Up! Your Health Matters” project, including 5K walks, tobacco cessation programs, color runs, cancer walks, youth programs, and other educational outreach and events. Events hosted at the facility will also have economic benefits, driving tourism and sales tax revenue for the community.

This community-driven project was supported by partnerships with several major funders, including GOCO, the Colorado Health Foundation, Daniels Fund, El Pomar, and the Cheyenne County School District. Over \$80,000 in community cash and in-kind contributions was leveraged as a match to the GOCO investment of \$674,500.