Adams 14 Elementary Schools
Learning Landscapes

MASTER PLAN

- Alsup Elementary
- Kemp Elementary
- Central Elementary
- Monaco Elementary
- Dupont Elementary
- Rose Hill Elementary
- Hanson K-8

COLORADO HEALTH FOUNDATION

Spring 2011
## Table of Contents

**section 1**
- Executive Summary
- Introduction
- Adams 14 Background
- Intent & Process
- Recommendations
- Learning Landscapes Background

**section 2**
- School Background
- Existing Conditions
- Playground Assessment

**section 3**
- Design Advisory Team
- Vision, Goals, Wish List
- Ordering System
- Master Plan

**section 4**
- Cost Estimate
- Resources
- Acknowledgements
- Master Plan Poster
Section One

Executive Summary

- Introduction
- Adams 14 Background
- Master Plan Intent and Process
- Recommendations
- Learning Landscapes Background
Introduction

Schoolyards provide an opportunity for the built environment to promote increased physical activity for children and the surrounding community. In addition, studies show that well-planned and equipped schoolyards increase physical activity while also enhancing the learning environment resulting in improved achievement. Such play areas provide physical and mental challenges that translate to improved health and learning attention. Furthermore, with proper design, these areas themselves become outdoor classrooms or learning landscapes and fulfill, a secondary goal for many schools to become a positive focal point of the neighborhood, place to gather and to meet, a place to enjoy, a place that enhances the community’s appearance.

Improving schoolyards is a proactive way to benefit health at the community level. The surge in childhood obesity, in recent years, threatens the future health of Colorado. According to the Colorado Health Report Card published by the Colorado Health Foundation, "Colorado ranks 23rd among the states in the category of childhood obesity dropping in rank from 3rd to 23rd in just four years. The current ranking signals a rapid increase in the prevalence of childhood obesity that negatively impacts the overall health and well-being of Colorado’s children. Preventing and combating the childhood obesity epidemic will require a multi-faceted approach. "It means changing behaviors around food intake, physical activity and our residential community. It means addressing the environment in schools and rethinking our culture to emphasize good health” says James O. Hill Professor of Pediatrics and Medicine at the University of Colorado School of Medicine.
In January 2011 the Adams County School District 14 was awarded an Active Play Areas planning grant from the Colorado Health Foundation. The Colorado Health Foundation believes that if kids are a part of a “healthy school” including but not limited to access to physical activity and healthy foods, then they will be more likely to learn better and maintain a healthy lifestyle throughout life. In addition, The Foundation upholds that thoughtful design of a new or renovated activity space at the children’s school can promote greater levels of moderate or vigorous physical activity and decrease sedentary activity.

The Active Play Areas planning grant provided an opportunity for the school district to partner with Learning Landscapes at the University of Colorado Denver to develop seven elementary school Active Play Area Master Plans.

The Learning Landscape program within the Colorado Center for Community Development at the College of Architecture and Planning seeks to strengthen elementary schools and their surrounding neighborhoods by designing playgrounds to promote physical activity and social interaction. With over ninety schoolyard renovations complete, the success of this program is founded on a mutual respect of aesthetic, maintainability, safety, and recreational issues.
Adams County School District 14

Adams 14, located in Commerce City, is Colorado’s 23rd largest school district, serving nearly 7,000 students and 33,000 residents annually. Adams 14 strives to ensure academic success for every student by providing highly effective classroom instruction, supplemental enrichment opportunities and parent/family collaboration opportunities.

Commerce City is a highly-industrialized community bisected by industry and busy roadways, with limited walkable and accessible play spaces. Schools and neighboring communities become little ‘islands’ unto themselves, establishing a premium on available areas to play and recreate.

The Adams-14 community has a high population of low income residents with 82 percent of students in the district qualify for free or reduced lunch. Additionally, 81 percent of students are Hispanic, with 57 percent identifying Spanish or another language as their primary language.

Total Enrollment 6,702
77% Hispanic
18% Anglo
3% African American
2% American Indian

Hispanic children in Colorado are three times more likely to be obese, further emphasizing the importance of providing quality play spaces. (Colorado Health Report Card)

We learn, we Move, we enjoy healthy foods, it is part of who we are!

Wellness

Adams 14 schools are engaged in a number of wellness initiatives, including school gardens, youth farmers’ markets, the flat fourteener running program and serving healthier cafeteria foods. Adams 14 decision makers believe that healthy students are healthy learners. The District is developing a culture of school wellness and active play areas.

Increasing physical activity not only aligns with the District’s Wellness initiatives but with the surrounding community’s as well. Commerce City is one of 16 Colorado municipalities recognized by the White House as a “Let’s Move City,” for its ability to promote and provide services that reduce childhood obesity. "Commerce City believes in promoting the health and well-being of all residents by offering services and amenities that promote an active lifestyle,” said Mayor Paul Natale. (Commerce City Press Release February 5, 2011)
Existing Challenges

Adams County School District 14 is an urban school district facing challenges common to other urban districts. The infrastructure is aging – the average facility age is over 50 years - and maintenance funding is limited leaving little if any budget available to improve schoolyards and play areas. Several Physical Education teachers and District Administrators have commented on the lack of play areas and equipment available for their students to be active. They have shared observations of students sitting around at recess and after school because they lack quality equipment and active play areas. The Adams 14 operations team agrees that the District’s playgrounds and active play areas are the most neglected of all initiatives, due to lack of funding. Most A-14 elementary schools require moderate to extensive renovations or upgrades to meet adequate playground standards. These include replacing playground equipment, providing American with Disability Act [ADA] accessibility, and providing an outdoor classroom learning environment. Playgrounds lacking appropriate choices for children tend to become arenas for bullying and teasing. Recess should be a positive experience that compliments academic development, a place where children develop their emotional, physical and social skills.

In 1997 the District updated play equipment at several school sites. The equipment installed during this time consisted of one play space for all age groups at each school. Although these spaces were designed to be appropriate for ages 5-12, there is a lack of physically challenging equipment for intermediate students. In addition, updates made to play spaces in 1997 predated the expansion of Adams 14’s early childhood programs. Thus, amendments and improvements to play facilities do not accommodate the District’s youngest learners. As a consequence, Adams 14’s playgrounds are grossly underserved preschool students with outsized, outdated and often unsafe equipment.

Related Efforts and Integration

In spring 2010 the District worked with consultants H+L Architecture to develop a district-wide facilities master plan. The Comprehensive Facilities Master Plan focuses on the conditions of building and the interior of the schools. The two master planning projects complement each other well and provide the school district with a comprehensive facility and grounds plan.

The Comprehensive Facilities Master Plan lists 3 major Educational Planning Goals to direct improvements. Implementation of the Active Play Areas Master Plan will specifically help to reach Goal # 3 for Neighborhood Schools.

Goal 3: Neighborhood Schools

Intent: Providing structures that encourage school-community connections.

- Welcoming architecture
- Safety and security
- Respect pride in neighborhood schools
- Student engagement
- Parents/community
- Curb appeal
- Early Childhood Center (age-appropriate equipment and safety)

Schoolyards have the ability to provide a safe welcoming space for students and community, raise neighborhood pride, and provide curb appeal for the school.
**Intent of the Master Plan**
The master plan is intended to serve as a roadmap for proactively developing strategies and tactics needed to develop sound, safe and active play areas that are proven to increase activity for its students and surrounding community members. The purpose of the master plan is for A-14 to be strategically poised to capture opportunities to improve and expand play areas as they become available. The A-14 Active Play Areas Master Plan is intended as a tool for schools, parents, and district administration to seek funding for future schoolyard renovations and wellness initiatives.

The master plan is a written report and plan that sets forth the structure for future campus improvements. Each school has a vision that speaks to the desires of the school and surrounding community. The vision is further delineated into goals that identify the major components for implementation. These goals are defined through the use of text and imagery. A programmatic list of uses is also developed. Lastly, each master plan sets forth the aesthetic ordering system suggested for use during the design phase to organize the programmatic uses. This plan will provide a framework for fund raising and future construction.

**Planning Process**
The Master Plan process took place from February to June 2011 and involved input at both the district level as well as the individual school level. At the district level the collaborative process was guided by the Grants and communication office, the Wellness Coordinator, and the Facility Management division. Learning Landscapes staff consulted with the district team members to ensure the individual school master plans aligned with the existing facility master plan, and the overall vision for the District. The team also discussed strategies for phasing, sustainable maintenance and funding for implementation.

At the school level the collaborative process was guided by schoolyard improvement committees and facilitated by Learning Landscapes staff. The schoolyard committees were generally comprised of the principal, PE teacher, and pre-k teacher, members of the school’s wellness team, parents, and teachers. The team members helped to identify issues with the existing sites, formed a vision and goals to guide the planning process, gathered information and feedback from people outside the committee, provided feedback on iterations of the plan, administered photo surveys and collected student art work.

This two-tiered collaborative effort allowed the individual schools to develop a schoolyard master plan to reflect the history, culture and curriculum unique to each school and at the same time aligned the needs of the individual school with those of the District.
**Recommendations**

Improved play facilities will serve multiple purposes in not only engaging Adams 14 students, but also the entire community. The following are recommendations for implementation of the Active Play Areas Master Plan at each Adams-14 elementary school.

- Install New Age Appropriate Play Equipment
  - To increase physical activity for all ages and to provide a variety of safe, challenging activities for all students.

- Install Running Tracks and Walking Paths
  - To provide opportunities for students, teachers, staff and community to track their distance and encourage each other to get moving.

- Install Climbing Structures
  - To increase upper body strength and coordination.

- Improve ADA Accessibility
  - Each play area should be accessible to all the students in the school. It is important for all students and community members regardless of mobility, to be able to interact and be active with one another.

- Provide More Hard Surface Games with Educational interactive elements
  - At each school, the design committees requested more color on the schoolyard. Students are excited by the color and it sparks their creativity during play.

- Install Vegetable Gardens
  - To promote healthy eating, community stewardship, educational opportunities, and food literacy.

- Develop Outdoor Learning Environments
  - Spaces for teachers to bring students outside and to practice inquiry and to interact with the landscape as an educational system.

- Develop Community Gathering Spaces
  - Welcoming the neighborhood to gather, play, and exercise in these public areas will help build support stewardship of the community. It is important for the students to have a safe place to be active not just during recess but also afterschool and on the weekends.

- Increase Opportunities for Shade
  - To protect students and visitors from the intense Colorado sun and to provide additional gathering spaces for community members.
LEARNING LANDSCAPE HISTORY

The first Learning Landscape was built at Bromwell elementary school in 1998 as a result of a six-year collaboration of parents, elementary students, staff, faculty, neighbors, local businesses and University of Colorado Denver (UCD) landscape architecture graduate students. The vast expanse of asphalt and pea gravel on the Bromwell playground resembled a prison yard, not an environment encouraging activity and child development. Bromwell parents and community members took action to transform the schoolyard into an active and aesthetically pleasing place for learning and physical activity.

Bromwell's schoolyard renovation project coincided with the end of mandatory busing at Denver Public Schools (DPS). Cessation of mandatory busing meant a renewed interest in Denver neighborhood schools and soon the Bromwell Learning Landscape project evolved into a citywide urban initiative evoking social change and physical transformation of public grounds.

UCD encourages faculty to connect the campus to the community. Landscape Architecture Professor, Lois Brink's Learning Landscapes course proved a tremendous opportunity for civic engagement. Through Learning Landscapes, UCD graduate students are able to stretch the boundaries of landscape design, engage the community and gain real-world design experience. In 1999 (UCD) College of Architecture and Planning entered into a formal agreement to plan, design, and help build Learning Landscapes at DPS elementary schools throughout the district. The partnership between UCD and DPS has resulted in the transformation of 81 neglected public elementary schoolyards into Learning Landscape Playgrounds.

In 2008 Denver voters expressed satisfaction with the program by passing a multi-million dollar bond initiative to fund the redevelopment of every DPS elementary schoolyard into a learning landscape by 2013.

WHAT WE DO

With a budget of approximately $450,000 per playground, Learning Landscapes leads UCD students, elementary schools and community members in the redesign of schoolyards into fun multi-use parks designed to reflect the culture of the surrounding community. The Learning Landscapes project helps reconnect communities with neighborhood schools. The graduate students get meaningful, hands-on experience working with the community to create master plans and designs for a Learning Landscapes schoolyard.

HOW WE DO IT

By listening and actively involving the school community throughout the planning, design, construction, and maintenance of the Learning Landscape schoolyard. Each school is asked to form a Learning Landscape team to help inform design and programming decisions as well as keep a watchful eye for vandalism and maintenance issues after construction is complete.

We document and distribute site-specific resources for educators and community members on the outdoor educational elements unique to each Learning Landscape schoolyard. Promoting the programmatic use of the Learning Landscape is critical for the long-term viability and sustainability of these projects.

Community Involvement

Inevitably each site is used by the community when the schools are not in session. As such we feel it is important to work with community leaders to get feedback on the communities needs and desires to determine how the communities use the site and what other organizations help maintain the site - like the Parks and Recreation, softball leagues, soccer leagues, gardening clubs, etc.
A **learning landscape** is a multi-use park for outdoor learning, discovery, creativity and play that celebrates the unique character of the school and community.

**Learning Landscapes** are comprised of grass playing fields, age-appropriate play equipment, trees, shade structures, gateways, artwork, class room gardens, traditional play elements and non-traditional play elements among other things.

Learning Landscapes function as local public parks providing much needed open space and social gathering places while fostering neighborhood pride for local communities.

**Educational Elements** tend to be focused on the unique curriculum of each school. Educational elements also tend to be derived from the schools theme, mascot, motto, etc. These components come in the shape of games that are super imposed on the hard court surfaces and or words, poems, mathematical formulas etc. These educational elements can be tied to the schools curriculum whereby school teachers can use these elements by bringing their class rooms outside. Or the learning components are simply whimsical things that all the kids to use their imaginations while playing hopscotch, tether ball, what have you.
Section Two

- School - Background
- Existing Conditions
- Playground Assessment
School Background

Background Information
Central Elementary school, located on 64th & Holly St, is in a residential neighborhood in Commerce City, CO. Central Elementary enrolls grades Pre-K thru fifth grade drawing students from south central Commerce City. The building was originally constructed as an elementary school in 1954. The site is approximately 11 acres and is designated as a Colorado state park. The boundaries of the site include 64th Avenue to the south, Holly Street to the west, residential homes to the north, commercial properties to the east and the Adams-14 Mildred Sanville Preschool to the southeast.

The Central Elementary mascot is a bobcat, the school colors are blue and white. They call themselves the "Central Cubs" which stands for Cooperating, Understanding, Believing, and Success. As of spring 2011, the enrollment was 634 students according to the District’s 2010 Facilities Master Plan exceeding the capacity of the school building by 150 students.

Central takes responsibility for instructing, encouraging and supporting student’s learning, establishing a safe environment for students, and respectfully and courteously communicating and cooperating with students, staff and families. In addition, Central is a professional development site for the University of Colorado-Denver and has a before and after school program called S.T.A.R.S. that offers homework help, arts, games, and recreation for students.

More than half of Central students speak Spanish as their primary language. The principal as well as several staff members are bilingual, and have created a resource center that offers English and Spanish CDs and books that parents can sign out. The staff is committed to making the students, parents, and learning experience as seamless as possible.

Neighborhood Context
The neighborhood around Central Elementary is comprised of single-family detached housing and commercial property on small neighborhood streets. There is a retail center and commercial buildings around the intersection of Ivy Street and 64th Ave. to the southeast of Central. One of the District’s two dedicated Early Childhood Education centers, Adams-14 Mildred Sanville Preschool is located on 64th street bordering the southeast corner of the schoolyard.

The grounds of the former Mile High Greyhound Park, a dog racing facility, are located southwest of the school. This 76-acre parcel is available for redevelopment and is envisioned as a commercial, mixed-use area with restaurant dining, retail, office and high-density residential (Commerce City Website).

Within walking distance of the school is the Sand Creek Trail & Greenway a three mile multi-purpose trail. This segment of the Sand Creek Trail is part of a regional greenway connecting fifty miles of urban trails in northeast Denver Metropolitan. The trail connects local businesses and adjacent neighborhoods to an extensive trail system. (American Trails)
**Catchment Area**

Central Elementary serves a two square mile geographic attendance area with its boundaries being Highway 2 to the north and west, Kearney to the east, and 52nd and 48th Ave. to the south. In 2009 Central received a Safe Routes to School grant to improve and encourage walking and biking to and from school. The improvements to the site included:

- A new crosswalk across Holly north of 64th
- New fencing to protect students from parking lot traffic
- New signage to create awareness of the crosswalk and pedestrian traffic
- School and neighborhood sidewalk improvements

**School Mission**

“Mission Statement: All members of our community are committed advocates who work together to inspire each child and ensure individual proficiency.”

**School Demographics**

Spring 2011 Enrollment:
According to the District’s 2010 Facilities Management Plan, projected enrollment in 2012 will exceed the capacity of Central Elementary by 118 students.

Male Students: 341
Female Students: 293

Free and Reduced Lunch: 84%

**English not primary language:** 57% of students

**Demographic Make-up of Students:**
- Hispanic: 80%
- White: 15%
- African American: 5%
- American Indian or Alaska Native: 1%
- Asian or Pacific Islander: 0%

**Grade Distribution of Students:**
- Preschool: 33
- Kindergarten: 99
- 1st grade: 83
- 2nd grade: 91
- 3rd grade: 111
- 4th grade: 80
- 5th grade: 102

**Surrounding Area Demographics:**
The 2010 Census reported there were 4,671 people living in the area surrounding the school, with about 94% of housing units occupied. According to the 2005-2009 American Community Survey estimate, the median annual household income for residents within the Adams 14 School District was $41,382 and 68% of units were owner-occupied compared to 32% rented.

Source: 2010 Census (census tract 87.05, block groups 1 & 2 and census tract 87.09, block group 2)
## Existing Conditions

Central Elementary has a large play area located to the south and west of the school building. The playground area has a large asphalt play surface with two basketball courts, a large grass field, including two baseball fields, and three play pits.

### ADA Accessibility

Central is a Severe Significant Needs school that enrolls special needs students with cognitive and mobility challenges. The school currently has access doors in and out of classrooms to the playground that are not ADA compliant. The existing play pits do not have ADA ramps for accessibility.

### Safety

Issues of safety were addressed by the design team during the meetings:

- Students hiding and lack of supervision points near the modular buildings
- Strangers watching students from east 64th street near the existing primary play pit
- Dogs barking at students in the playground area
- Gravel from play area getting on the asphalt and walkways creating tripping hazards
- Lack of age-appropriate and fenced play equipment near pre-k building
- The play pits are not ADA accessible
Drainage

Drainage on the site is adequate with areas of concern. Storm water management at Central Elementary is a combination of surface flow and a closed storm water sewer system. At several locations downspouts discharge water from the roof across sidewalks creating a slipping hazard during the winter freeze thaw cycles. Negative slopes around the building collect water during storm events interrupting circulation patterns and deteriorating sidewalk conditions.

The west courtyard has two existing storm water inlets that are not sited at the lowest point to maximize storm water collection. No observed flooding was observed during the development of the master plan. Serve storm events and existing conditions could have large impacts on building maintenance, safety and circulation patterns.

The high point on the site is located in the southeast corner and the low point is in the northwest corner of the lot draining the athletic fields. Water collects on the northeast side of the school on the hard surface near the primary classrooms and primary play pit creating access challenges and a slipping hazard during the winter from surface flow and a roof discharge spout(s).

On the north side of the building water collects freezing in the winter creating a safety hazard to students, parents and faculty. Soil erosion continues to enhance the issue.
**Circulation-pedestrian & vehicular**

A majority of Central students are picked-up and dropped-off by parents or are walked to school. One bus drops off and picks up students at a designated spot along Holly Street. Students entering and exiting school primarily use the pedestrian path located at the corner of Holly and 64th Street. The secondary pedestrian entrance path is located north of the corner entrance perpendicular to the school’s primary door entrance. The third entrance is north and is used by the students and parents entering from the neighborhood.

The majority of Central students exit for recess through their individual classroom doors. Some students exit for recess through the hallway near the cafeteria.

**Parking**

Existing curb cuts serve a total of three parking lots. The two main vehicular entrances are located along Holly Street on the west side of the school. The first entrance leads to the faculty parking lot, and the second leads to the parent parking lot and cafeteria drop-off. The second entrance is shared with utility vehicles with access to the other side of the school for maintenance and emergency needs. The third entrance located on E. 64th street is gated and rarely used.

Central’s parking was recently improved with a CDOT Safe Routes to school grant in 2009. The faculty parking lot has forty-two spaces with three dedicated for ADA. The parent lot has forty-one spaces and the additional parking located near the cafeteria has seven spaces and is used by the cafeteria delivery and utility access. There are no on-street parking spaces around the school, but during drop-off/pick-up hours the parents park along Holly Street, and the adjacent streets along Holly. The parent parking lot becomes full near 3:30pm when it’s time to pick-up students. The staff close the parent and faculty parking lot to keep people from entering and causing congestion during student pick. Meanwhile the surrounding areas become very congested during pick-up and drop-off hours.

**Maintenance**

Central’s schoolyard is maintained by the Adams School District 14 service center. The entire schoolyard is equipped with an irrigation system, the grass fields and existing trees and shrubs are well maintained.

**Environment Plant conditions**

Central is a large parcel covered by a vast lawn that is well maintained. There are several trees on the northwestern, western, and southern edges of the property. New trees were planted in front of the school at the corner of Holly Street and E. 64th Street. Several mature trees provide the largest shaded area on the site in the grass area adjacent to the parent parking lot. The area located along the E. 64th Street also includes mature trees and is well shaded. A small fenced and irrigated planting bed is located at the primary entrance of the school and is planted with seasonal tulip bulbs.

**Playground assessment and Capacity**

The playground has a large asphalt play area with two basketball courts, a large grassed area, two baseball fields, and three play pits. None of the play pits have signage indicating what ages are appropriate to play on the equipment. The grassed area to the east of the school building is primarily used for soccer and football.

The large asphalt area provides ample space for students but, lacks hard surface games for primary aged students. Existing games are intended for intermediate students.

The first play pit is located at the northeast edge of the asphalt on the east side of the school. The metal swings are non-ADA compliant with pea gravel underneath and no ADA ramp into the play pit. The primary-age students exit their classrooms for recess next to this area but it does not provide age appropriate play equipment for these students. This play area has existing concrete play pit walls and would be well suited for new primary-age equipment.

The second play pit is located on the southeast edge of the hard surface on the east side of the school. Intended for intermediate aged students, a majority of all Central students play in this area. This play pit consists of one large play structure installed in 1998 with engineered wood fiber surfacing. The equipment is considered ADA accessible but there is no existing ramp into the play pit. The existing equipment in this area is in good condition, but it’s not age appropriate for primary aged students. Next to the play structure are
swings with non ADA compliant pea gravel surfacing. This play area has existing concrete play pit walls and would be well suited for new swings or additional age appropriate play equipment.

The third play pit area is located on the southern edge of the hard surface on the south side of the school in an area that is visually and physically disconnected from the other play pits and primary classroom doors. This area is intended for primary age students. This equipment, installed in 1998, is in good condition but according to the manufacturer this equipment is no longer in production. The surfacing underneath the equipment is ADA compliant engineered wood fiber with no ADA ramp access. Next to the play structure are swings with non ADA compliant pea gravel surfacing. The school would like the existing play pit to become a climbing and habitat zone with updated swings to enhance activity in the area.

The Pre-K students at Central currently use the playground located at the Mildred Sanville preschool. This play equipment area is fenced and has adequate play equipment to serve the students but is located a great distance from the preschool classroom decreasing play time.
Section Three

- Design Advisory Team
- Vision/Goals/Wishlist
- Ordering System
- Master Plan
Design Advisory Team
The design advisory team played a critical role in creating the Central Elementary Schoolyard Master Plan. The team consisted of the principal and three teachers. They met with the Learning Landscape’s staff during the planning process to discuss issues, concerns, desires and other important information regarding the schoolyard. At each meeting various scenarios, proposals, and questions were brought to the table based on the previous meeting and other research for feedback and input helped refine the vision, goals and layout for the master plan.

Constituent Issues, Needs, and Desires Issues
- Lack of age appropriate play equipment for primary and pre-k
  - The play equipment is too far from the primary classrooms
  - The play pits are not ADA accessible
  - The play pit on the south side of the school is difficult to supervise during recess
  - There is not enough shade on the playground
  - Gravel from the playground travels onto the asphalt and the sidewalks creating safety issues. Please get rid of the gravel!
  - Students playing soccer in the courtyard area is loud and distracting
  - Sanville Pre-K play area is locked and not accessible by the community
  - School is located on state park property requiring additional approval for improvements

Needs
- Primary Play equipment
- Add shade near intermediate and primary play areas

Desires
- Widen maintenance path along the edge to the building where the primary classrooms are located.
- A vegetable garden to promote healthy eating and community stewardship
- It is really important to the students to have sufficient grass space for soccer.
- The community uses the baseball field on the west side of the schoolyard so it is important to the community not to cut into the field.
- Teachers desire an outdoor classroom and habitat area along 64th street to buffer the traffic noise along the street and to develop an area that can be supervised.
- Landscape screen along the fence adjacent to the residential backyards and 64th street
- Redesign the courtyard into an outdoor seating area
- More color and interactive asphalt paintings for educational purposes
- Additional age appropriate climbing structures for the students
- Additional parking
- Create a walking path around the schoolyard
- Seating for parents to watch children on the weekend
- Add more play equipment on north side of the building in an existing play pit
Defining the School’s Vision
Over the course of several meetings with the design team and teachers, the Learning Landscapes staff helped the school formulate the following vision and list of goals based on the school’s desires and needs.

Vision
"Create a welcoming, safe, and assessable Colorado theme playground that promotes educational and physical development as well as providing a gathering space for students and the community."

Goals
1. Create an inviting, colorful, and safe environment for students and families
2. Develop the schoolyard as a community gathering space that everyone can take pride in
3. Create a playground that is fully ADA accessible
4. Create a space that enhances students learning through activity and discovery
5. Encourage physical activity for all age groups
6. Provide a variety of play equipment that is appropriate for all age groups
7. Provide more shade and gathering spaces to foster positive social activity
8. Create a unique identity for the schoolyard and to celebrate Colorado
9. Enhance the schoolyard by incorporating art, appropriate colors and other elements that students can take pride in
Wish List
- **Discovery Maps** – social studies & geography
- **Colorado themed playground area** – maps and signage about Colorado geography
- **More asphalt games**
- **Shade structures** – near the basketball court and play area
- **Soccer goals** – for students and the local Rapids team to practice
- **More climbing equipment**
- **Running path** – around the play area
- **Outdoor classroom** – Located in the unused courtyard area between the classrooms
- **Outdoor cafeteria** – Located in the larger outdoor space between classrooms
- **Play equipment storage**
- **More trashcans**
Photo Survey Results

Number of Responses

Tetherball  | Maps  | Basketball  | Sculpture  | Quiet Places  | Gateway  | Grass Field  | Art Mural  | Boulders  | Water Play  | Cultivated Garden  | Quiet Places  | Climbing  | Wild Places  | Game Table  | Play Equipment  | Swing  | Outdoor Classroom

Vision/Goals/Wishlist
**Student Wish List**
The “Wordle” below represents elements students would like to see in their playground based off drawings of their dream playground. The bigger the word, the more frequent the element was represented in the students drawings...
Ordering Systems
This is a unique way of organizing the site in a sort of abstract way. We look at unique influences of each school and neighborhood for inspiration. As such, the ordering systems tend to become an abstraction that unifies a number of different influences and can act as a philosophical mantra of sorts. In some cases the ordering system might be interpreted literally in other cases they remain a thematic device. Either way, the ordering system is an important part of a Learning Landscape and can offer the whimsy and inspiration that these sites and their users desire by keeping ideas fresh and fun.

Central’s Ordering System
The ordering system is inspired by the state of Colorado. Concepts for the ordering system could include a Colorado history timeline, Colorado maps, the Colorado state flag, geologic formations such as boulder climbing areas, and designating areas based on the names of Colorado mountains and historical points. In addition, thematic artwork and designs can be used to spark student’s interest and learning opportunities.
Central Active Play Areas
Master Plan Description
The Central Active Play Areas Master Plan was developed based on the needs and desires of the school. Described below are the proposed changes to the Central schoolyard in an effort to fulfill the vision and goals developed by the design team.

1. New Play equipment with ADA accessibility
   a. New primary play area located next to the primary classrooms
   b. Update existing swings
   c. Climbing structures to encourage physical activity
2. Walking path around the grass fields made of crusher fines
3. Asphalt games and graphics
   a. Add primary and pre-k games near their respective classrooms
4. Shade structure and shade trees
5. Additional seating for community use and social gathering
6. A community garden
7. Community Gateway
8. Outdoor classroom and habitat area
Section four

- Cost Estimate
- Resources
- Acknowledgements
- Master Plan Poster
## Central Elementary - Active Play Areas Master Plan - Cost Estimate

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### Site Furnishings, Athletic Equipment and Misc.

- Picnic Table: EA $1,000.00, 3 units $3,000.00
- Trash Receptacle: EA $650.00, 3 units $1,950.00
- 6' Bench: EA $850.00, 6 units $5,100.00
- Banner Pole and Banners: EA $900.00, 6 units $5,400.00
- Basketball Goal: EA $1,200.00, 4 units $4,800.00
- Tetherball Poles: EA $350.00, 3 units $1,050.00
- Permanent or Moveable Soccer Goals: EA $1,000.00, 2 units $2,000.00
- Backstop with Hood: EA $2,500.00, 1 unit $2,500.00
- Shade Structures @ Plaza: EA $25,000.00, 1 unit $25,000.00
- Gateway Feature: LS $10,000.00, 1 unit $10,000.00

**SUBTOTAL** $60,800.00

### Gardens, Planting and Irrigation

- Shrub Bed Soil Prep: SF $0.30, 3,900 units $1,170.00
- Soil and Soil Prep @ field and play areas: SF $0.55, 0 units -
- Seed, low grow-no mow areas: SF $0.67, 0 units -
- Irrigation, shrub beds: SF $0.75, 3,900 units $2,925.00
- Irrigation, sod areas: SF $0.55, 0 units -
- Irrigation, tree bubblers: EA $600.00, 40 units $24,000.00
- Shade Tree, 3" caliper: EA $400.00, 20 units $8,000.00
- Deciduous Ornamental Tree, 2.5" caliper: EA $100.00, 0 units -
- Boulder-Field: EA $150.00, 18 units $2,700.00
- Shredded Mulch, 4" depth over fabric: SF $1.20, 3,900 units $4,680.00

**SUBTOTAL** $21,875.00

### Vegetable Garden

- Soil Amendment: CY $35.00, 15 units $525.00
- Concrete mow band, 8'x6": LF $11.00, 130 units $1,430.00
- 4' Chainlink Fence: LF $20.00, 130 units $2,600.00
- Chain Link Gate, 4' width: EA $350.00, 2 units $700.00
- Irrigation: EA $1,500.00, 1 unit $1,500.00
- Compost Storage & Accessories: EA $1,000.00, 1 unit $1,000.00

**SUBTOTAL** $7,755.00

### Metal

- Steel Edger: LF $5.00, 3,519 units $17,595.00
- 4' Chainlink Fence (at ECE Play Pit / Garden): LF $20.00, 195 units $3,900.00
- 6' Chainlink Fence: LF $25.00, 0 units -
- Chain Link Gate, 4' width (at ECE Play Pit and Community Garden): EA $1,200.00, 0 units -

**SUBTOTAL** $21,845.00

### Site Improvements

- Total: $330,889.20

### Project Start Up

- Typical construction mobilization: $10,000.00
- Infrastructure: $10,000.00
- Demolition: $25,000.00

### Architecture Engineering and Coordination

- 8% of construction cost: $26,471.14
- Owner Representative Fees: $16,544.46
- Contingency Cost: $33,088.92

### Project Grand Total

- $451,993.72
Resources:
Colorado Children’s Campaign
Commerce City Press Release February 5, 2011
Education News Colorado “Child obesity threatens Colorado’s future” by Diane Carman on Feb 14th, 2011
Health at a Crossroads
2010 Supplement to the Colorado Health Report Card – Colorado Health Foundation
National Center for Health Statistics,

Acknowledgements:
Colorado Health Foundation
Principals, staff, students and parents at:
Alsup Elementary
Central Elementary
Dupont Elementary
Hanson PreK-8
Kemp Elementary
Monaco Elementary
Rose Hill Elementary
Adams County School District 14 Administration
Adams County School District 14 Facility Maintenance
Adams County School District 14 Communications
Adams County School District 14 Wellness
Commerce City Parks and Recreation
Recreation Plus

University of Colorado Denver
College of Architecture and Planning
Colorado Center for Community Development
Learning Landscapes
Professor Lois Brink
Executive Director
Cate Townley
Community Outreach Coordinator
Christopher Schooler
Senior Research Associate
Graduate Student Interns:
Erin Fiene
Garrick Swansen
Augusta Prehn
Bryon Weber
Michael Griffith
Letora Fortune
Patrick Pickard
Patrick Healy

Resources and Acknowledgements
VISION
Create a welcoming, safe, and accessible Colorado theme playground that promotes educational and physical development as well as providing a gathering space for students and the community.

GOALS
1. Create an inviting, colorful, and safe environment for students and families
2. Develop the schoolyard as a community gathering space that everyone can take pride in.
3. Create a playground that is ADA accessible
4. Create a space that enhances students learning through activity and discovery
5. Encourage physical activity for all age groups.
6. Provide a variety of play equipment that is appropriate for all age groups
7. Provide more shade and gathering spaces to foster positive social activity.
8. Create a unique identity for the schoolyard and to celebrate Colorado
9. Beautify the schoolyard by incorporating art, appropriate colors and other elements that students can take pride in.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

A LOOK INTO CENTRAL ELEMENTARY’S FUTURE

Wish List
- Discovery Maps – social studies & geography
- Colorado themed playground area – maps and signage about Colorado geography
- More asphalt games
- Soccer goals – for students and the local Rap ids team to practice
- Running path- around the play area
- Outdoor cafeteria – Located in the larger outdoor space between classrooms
- Play equipment storage
- More trash cans

Students drawing their dream playground
Parents discuss design ideas
Potential location for outdoor classroom – Located in the unused courtyard area between the classrooms

The design advisory team played a critical role in creating the Central Elementary Schoolyard Master Plan. The team, included the principal and teachers, met with Learning Landscapes’ staff during the planning process to discuss issues, concerns, desires and other important information regarding the schoolyard.