

# Thornton, Colorado

Director of Parks and Recreation  
Recruitment



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# City Profile

Thornton is the 6th largest city in Colorado and benefits from its proximity to downtown Denver, Denver International Airport, and the foothills of the beautiful Rocky Mountains. Thornton has a diverse population of just over 153,000 people and is expected to grow by another 90,000 people in the next 30 years. The City has diverse neighborhood choices that offer both established neighborhoods and newer development.

While early development in Thornton was primarily residential, it has become a destination for primary employers and regional retail. The City hosts three Regional Transportation District commuter rail stations with two additional stations planned further north. The City's Comprehensive Plan, recent development code update and several key projects will invite greater density and additional mixed uses to build on Thornton's already high quality of life.

Thornton has aggressively pursued recreation programs with nearly 1,000 acres of land developed or designated for public parks. The numerous lighted tennis courts, pickleball courts, athletic fields, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, recreation centers and gymnasiums offer recreation opportunities for people of all ages and activity levels. Thornton recently opened a new community center with an attached library and a partnership to produce an innovative nature library is under construction.

Today, Thornton continues moving forward in a responsible manner that strengthens Thornton's increasing footprint. This includes the City's responsiveness to growth with an ever-growing menu of city services, programs, and capital investments. The City has met evolving needs of the community with new program investments including new recreation centers, a robust active adult center, expansion of open space area, and a plethora of community events.

## Form of Government

Thornton is a home rule city operating under a Council - Manager form of government. The City Council consists of the Mayor who is elected at large, and eight Council Members, two elected from each of the city's four wards. The Mayor and Council each serve four-year terms, and all have an equal vote. The City Council enacts ordinances, approves the City budget, and appoints the City Manager, City Attorney, and Municipal Judge. The City Manager administers the daily operations and programs of the City through the department heads, other staff members, and employees. The current City Manager was appointed to her role in October of 2024. The Director of Parks and Recreation will report to a newly created Assistant City Manager for Quality of Life and Development along with the Community Programs Director and Planning and Economic Development Departments Assistant City Manager for Quality of Life and Development along with the Parks and Recreation and Community Programs Departments.



# Recent Departmental Accomplishments

- Increasing overall fitness participation by 12%
- Continued and new partnerships with the Anythink Library district to offer workshops and programming in partnership with recreation services
- New culture event offerings started in 2025
- 15 capital improvement projects completed in 2025



# Strategic Departmental Priorities

The work of the Community Programs Department is central and visible in the City's recently adopted strategic plan. One of the city's four strategic goals is to create Vibrant and Purposeful Development by Actively pursue mixed-use and walkable development and redevelopment that include diverse housing choices. Attract commercial development with appealing amenities and economic opportunities that offer destinations for the community and visitors. Maintain inviting public spaces and facilities to inspire community pride and enjoyment.

While work plans for the fifteen related actions are currently underway, several key initiatives are ongoing or upcoming including:

- Working towards the adoption of a new Parks and Open Space Master Plan as well as an Arts and Culture Master Plan
- Complete and align the parks and open space master plan with the comprehensive plan.
- Assess future needs for public facilities, art, cultural amenities, parks and trails to plan for City full build-out
- Analyze and refine the process for inclusion of arts and culture in private sector projects.



# Community and Department Feedback

The City of Thornton completed a third-party Citizen Satisfaction survey in late 2025. Overall, the City performs exceptionally well in parks and recreation.

83% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the conditions of recreation facilities.

80% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the conditions of parks.

## Position Profile

The Director of Parks and Recreation leads, directs and manages the parks and recreation facilities and programming in a manner that enhances the community and improves the quality of life. Provides visionary leadership through robust stakeholder engagement in coordination with planning and development to create the desired community outcomes. Implements the approved strategic workplan and addresses the city priorities through thoughtful leadership and policies.

Develops intergovernmental strategies and partnerships. Represents the city and maintains strong relationships with regional partners, including Adams County, school districts, athletic associations, State Agencies, Homeowners Associations and Metro Districts and other Special Districts like the Mile High Flood District and the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District.

Develops and implements rules, regulations, policies, and procedures to advance the department's mission, goals, and objectives.

The Director and members of the Parks and Recreation Teams work with other departments to strengthen the City's capacity to engage residents in meaningful ways across all City programs. Programs and efforts include forming partnerships with neighborhoods, residents, and community groups to strengthen and enhance both the social fabric and physical aspects of Thornton neighborhoods.

The successful candidate will also demonstrate strengths to include:

- Serves as the subject matter expert for parks and recreation services and exhibits initiative to identify areas of innovation, opportunity, and efficiency based on best and emerging practices, technology and process improvement.
- Experience with implementation of Parks and Open Space Master Plans
- Develops and implements the department budget, including coordination with the Engineering Department for major capital projects and fleet. Determines levels of staff, equipment and other resources needed to effectively and efficiently provide departmental services and programs. Pursues grant opportunities at the federal, state, and local level.

- Monitors departmental operations and customer service to ensure quality control; identifies and resolves deficiencies; prepares and presents periodic and special staff reports on departmental issues and projects.
- Balances advocacy for individual department wants/needs with commitment to and support for the best overall outcomes for the city and community.
- Maintains a thorough knowledge of federal and state laws, local statutes, ordinances, standards, procedures, and trends related to department operations, and ensures their implementation. Develops and implements rules, regulations, policies, and procedures to advance the department's mission, goals and objectives.
- Strong personnel and management skills to include hiring, development, discipline, termination or advancement of employees.

## Education and Experience

Bachelor's degree in Parks & Recreation or related field from an accredited college or university; eight years' management experience in parks, recreation or related field, including five years of supervisory experience. Equivalent combinations of education and experience may be considered. The candidate will have successfully served in or will demonstrate strong familiarity with the Council-Manager form of government. Successful candidates will also have a proven record of leadership, fiscal stewardship, innovation, and relationship-building.

## Compensation and Benefits

The City of Thornton offers a competitive salary range of \$182,914 - \$241,446 annually commensurate with the successful candidate's qualifications and experience. The City provides a comprehensive benefits package to support employees through important events in their life, to enhance their life outside work, and to help them plan and prepare for the future.

## Application and Selection Process

[Apply Here](#)



This position will accept applications until August 3, 2026.

For more information on this position, contact:

**Marsha Reed, Senior Vice President, Executive Recruitment**

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*The City of Thornton is an Equal Opportunity Employer and values diversity in its workforce. Applicants selected as finalists for this position will be subject to a comprehensive background check. The selected candidate must pass a preemployment drug screening and/or post-offer physical examination, and secure a valid Driver's License within a reasonable period following appointment.*





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