



# BEYOND PESTICIDES PRESS RELEASE

Protecting Health and the Environment with Science, Policy, and Action

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### *Cities of Lakewood and Golden Launch Organic Land Management in Demonstration Parks Following a Successful Program in Longmont*

WASHINGTON, DC, July 10, 2024—As Independence Day celebrations draw to a close across the United States, the cities of Lakewood and Golden launch organic land management demonstration sites at multiple city parks, as Park Directors carry out their mission to manage beautiful parks and playing fields with a focus on environmental and public health protection. Longmont implemented an organic program at two parks and is now ready to take the program city-wide.

The programs are a collaboration of the cities and the environmental organizations Beyond Pesticides and People and Pollinators Action Network, with underwriting from Natural Grocers®.

Beyond Pesticides, through the [Parks for Sustainable Future nationwide program](#), collaborates with communities across the country to transition parks, playing fields, and public spaces to organic land management. The program provides in-depth training to assist community land managers in transitioning two public demonstration sites and the knowledge necessary to eventually transition all public areas in a locality to these safer practices.

The program's goal is to further shift from synthetic weed killers and other potential pesticide use to organic practices that rely on methods and products that support soil biology and microbial life in the soil. This approach, used by organic agriculture, naturally produces nutrients for plants, resulting in more resiliency and a reduction in water use. Longmont Parks Supervisor for the Parks, Open Space, and Trails Department, Ben Gratton, said, "Instead of using pesticides, Longmont selects turfgrass with more aggressive rhizomes—underground stems—to outcompete weed seeds, engages in more frequent core aeration and in overseeding to decrease weed pressure dramatically."

"We are excited to be working with the City of Lakewood and the City of Golden on organic land management practices that protect community health and the environment, including bees, butterflies, and birds, and support efforts to mitigate climate change and biodiversity decline. Organic practices eliminate fossil fuel petroleum-based products and sequester atmospheric carbon in the soil, combating the climate crisis." —Jay Feldman, executive director of Beyond Pesticides.

#### *Lakewood, CO*

Lakewood, CO, in addition to serving as the headquarters of Natural Grocers, is home to 114 parks and 240 miles of trails, totaling over 7,400 acres of open space. In collaboration with the City of Lakewood, three park demonstration sites have been selected for the program:

- [The Link Recreation Center Baseball Field](#)—The site hosts a 99,700 sq. ft. high-traffic ballfield that hosts programmed athletics and outdoor recreational youth programming.
- [The Mountair Dog Park](#)—Formerly a baseball field converted to a dog park in 2024, this 64,300 sq. ft. space has transitioned based on community feedback to serve residents and their four-



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legged friends in the growing neighborhood.

- [Belmar Traditional Park](#)—One of the “true jewels” of the Lakewood Park system, the 199,000 sq. ft. open turf space featuring natural grasslands and trees is routinely used by neighborhood and park visitors.

According to Jim Haselgren, parks manager, “We are excited to work with Beyond Pesticides in creating organic park areas and adding to our existing conservation efforts, converting bluegrass areas to native grass stands, maintaining industry-leading water conservation practices, and supporting pollinator pathways within our park system.”

*Golden, CO*

The Parks Department in Golden, CO maintains 253 acres of parks within city limits. Emerging from grassroots efforts in the community led by Laurel Starr, the nonprofit People and Pollinators Action Network, and a group of dedicated volunteer citizens named the “Weedbusters” advocating for “pesticide-free” land management at DeLong Park, the City of Golden have selected the following three park demonstration sites for the program:

- [DeLong Park](#)—Opened in June 2022, the new site is designated “as a pilot project for the City’s first organic park location. This means... using only natural, organic products for all plants and grasses. No synthetic chemicals will be used in our maintenance practices.”
- [New Loveland Mine Park](#)—Completed in 1996, this neighborhood park takes its name from the mining site on which it was built. There is a fully ADA-accessible playground, surrounded by natural grass turf.
- [Southridge Park](#)—Built in 1980, the park features a modern playground, two tennis courts, a basketball court, and a large flat area used by local soccer associations. Southridge Park is an excellent stand-in for high-use athletic fields, with 400-500 hours of youth soccer playing time per year. According to Golden Parks staff, the site is the “best microcosm of a park that has everything we need to learn how to implement the strategies represented in the Beyond Pesticides program.”

Carly Lorentz, deputy city manager for Golden, states, “We are grateful for the opportunity to participate in the Beyond Pesticides program. The guidance and training for staff will help the development of maintenance practices and plans that support our effort to be a leader in our industry, including water conservation and organic practices.”

“We are thrilled to collaborate with Colorado communities dedicated to creating safe spaces for people, pets, and pollinators! It’s inspiring to see our cities leading the charge in piloting organic turf management, and we’re confident that other communities will follow their example. It’s an excellent model for how local governments and communities can work together to create safe havens for pollinators.” Joyce Kennedy, executive director of People and Pollinators Action Network.



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## *Lifetime sponsorship by Natural Grocers*

The Parks for a Sustainable Future program is supported by Natural Grocers, which underwrites the horticultural consultation services, including testing of soil biology, development of a plan with recommended practices and materials, as well as ongoing collaboration with Parks Department staff.

Alan Lewis, Vice President Advocacy & Governmental Affairs at Natural Grocers stated, "We are thrilled have Lakewood and Golden, both of our home cities, committed to organic management of these treasured areas that are so important to their citizens. We know from long experience the parks managers will be happily surprised by the naturally weed-free landscapes and the cost savings due to lower water use. The biggest benefit, of course, will be for families with children and pets who will have safer green spaces to play on."

In addition to Natural Grocers' Five Founding Principles, "organic" is at the heart of the company. Natural Grocers only sells USDA certified 100% organic produce and has always been active in promoting and protecting the integrity of the organic label. The stores are Certified Organic Food Handlers, which means all stores are inspected annually by an organic certifying agency to ensure that they are only using organic-approved processes and cleaning products.

This certification, plus the family-operated grocer's commitment to selling only 100% Certified Organic Produce, guarantees integrity from farm to basket to table.

*Envision an organic community where local parks, playing fields, and greenways are managed without unnecessary toxic pesticides, children and pets are safe to run around on the grass, and bees and other pollinators are safeguarded from toxic chemicals.*

*At Beyond Pesticides, this is the future we envision and are working to achieve.*

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## **Beyond Pesticides**

Beyond Pesticides is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization headquartered in Washington, D.C., which works with allies in protecting health and the environment with science, policy, and action to lead the transition to a world free of toxic pesticides. Learn more at <https://www.beyondpesticides.org/>.

## **Natural Grocers**

Founded in 1955, Natural Grocers by Vitamin Cottage, Inc. (NYSE: [NGVC](#)) is an expanding specialty retailer of natural and organic groceries, body care products, and dietary supplements. The products sold by Natural Grocers must meet strict quality guidelines and may not contain artificial colors, flavors, preservatives or sweeteners, or partially hydrogenated or hydrogenated oils. The Company sells only USDA-certified organic produce and exclusively pasture-raised, non-confinement dairy products, and free-range eggs. Natural Grocers' flexible smaller-store format allows it to offer affordable prices in a shopper-friendly, clean, and convenient retail environment. The Company also provides extensive free



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science-based Nutrition Education programs to help customers make informed health and nutrition choices. Headquartered in the Union Square neighborhood of Lakewood, CO, Natural Grocers has 168 stores in 21 states. Visit [www.naturalgrocers.com](http://www.naturalgrocers.com) for more information and store locations.

## **City of Lakewood Community Resources, Parks Division**

The Department of Community Resources is responsible for providing recreation and leisure activities to the Lakewood community. Our goal is to provide exceptional facilities and programs that make this city an outstanding place to live.

## **City of Golden**

The mission of the Parks and Recreation Department is to promote and provide safe and comprehensive community facilities, programs, and services to enrich the quality of life for all residents and visitors.

Access to high-quality park and recreation facilities is a highly valued element of the Golden Community. The abundance of natural resources, proximity to the mountains, and presence of Clear Creek give residents and visitors unique recreation resources not found in most communities along the Front Range. Golden Parks, Recreation and Golf Division is committed to the development of urban parks, vibrant recreation programming, and preservation of the natural and historic resources in the City of Golden.

## **Contact**

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