

Proposed Master Plan Bonnie View, Fairview Park and the Audubon Nature Sanctuary

Summary of Properties

The planning process included three contiguous properties: Fairview Park, Bonnie View Park and property owned by the Columbia Audubon Society. Together these three properties consist of approximately 150 acres situated along Scott's Branch Creek and accessible to hundreds of residential homes that surround the properties. Fairview Park has served the area for over 35 years as a community park with traditional park amenities such as an open space playfield, tennis courts, restroom, and a reservable picnic shelter. Bonnie View Park and the Columbia Audubon Nature Sanctuary are largely old farm fields and wooded areas along the creek.

Planning

A detailed history of the planning efforts is posted on the Bonnie View website so discussion will concentrate on recent planning efforts. Following multiple public input and focus group meetings, park planning staff has developed a master plan which staff believes represents a consensus of those that have participated in the process. The result of this public input process is the proposed Bonnie View Park Master Plan. The master plan represents a blueprint regarding all future development of the property. Development of the entire master plan may take a period of 10 or more years. For example, Cosmo Park was and is still under development. The funded option represents what staff is proposing to complete with the funding available from the 2005 and 2010 park sales taxes.

BONNIE VIEW MASTER PLAN

Overview

The overall goal of the Bonnie View Master Plan is to enhance the existing natural features and restore additional native habitats to create a variety of outdoor educational opportunities. Appropriate habitat restoration, restoration of native plant communities where they can be managed properly, where they will thrive and where the species might have naturally existed before this site was a farm, will provide the greatest opportunity for educational opportunities for visitors to the site, by creating a variety of habitats for flora and fauna to thrive.

North of Rollins Road

Some of the previous draft plans showed potential neighborhood park amenities north of Rollins Road. Based on little public support, these development items were removed from the plan. This area is now proposed to be natural open space.

Parking Lot, Shelter, ADA Trail, Connector Trail to Fairview Elementary

The primary access to the park is proposed off of the round-a-bout on Rollins Road. This is where the main parking lot, shelter, restroom, ADA accessible nature trail and educational amenities are proposed. Representatives from Fairview School, Pednet and City traffic planning staff all wanted the plan to include the potential for remote bus drop-off at the Rollins parking lot. The proposed plan allows school buses to pull into the Rollins parking lot, unload school children and have them get some exercise walking to school through the park. An additional benefit of this program is to lessen the vehicle/bus congestion at the school. The 80 vehicle lot is sized to allow bus and emergency vehicle access and a few bus parking spaces for future class science trips. Staff is proposing to build half of the 80 vehicle lot in the funded portion of the plan. There are multiple rain gardens and retention ponds to control storm water run-off from the parking lot and other hard surfaces.

Shelter and Restroom

A small restroom and midsized shelter (26' x 46') is proposed and included in the funded phase of development. The reservable shelter will have electricity and is similar to those recently constructed at Stephens Lake Park. The construction of a nature education center was considered, but staff feels that the facility need is currently being met in the Gans Creek/Waters Moss agreement between the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) and the City of Columbia. MDC is in the process of constructing a regional office and community conservation education center at the Gans Creek Recreation Area and the agreement calls for the City to have access to the center including office and meeting space for future Naturalists or other nature/conservation education programs.



Prairie and Native Flower Restoration Areas

The Prairie & Native Flower Restoration Area is located just off of the Rollins parking lot on a former, fairly flat fescue field. Staff is proposing to convert this area to a demonstration site of prairie and native flowers/plants.

The 2.5+/- acre site will be bordered by a concrete ADA accessible trail with interpretative signs and displays. The short grass prairie with enhanced native flowers will be more open and showy than typical prairie restorations that are predominately



grasses. Typical prairie restorations are between 10-20% forbs (wild flowers) and 80-90% grasses. Staff is proposing a higher percentage (approximately 50%) of forbs to be planted to create an enhanced prairie. The ADA accessible concrete path will allow easy access for park visitors to a variety of prairie, wild flowers and woodlands in close proximity to the shelter and outdoor classroom. At the east end of the restoration area is an outdoor classroom consisting of a circular stone seat wall with room for approximately 25 students. Staff is proposing that the 2.5 acre Prairie & Native Flower Restoration area, interpretative signs and ADA Trail be included in the first phase of development. The additional prairie and native flower restoration area near the parking lot along Scott's Branch Trail is approximately 5 acres and is not funded at this time.

Nature Exploration Playground (unfunded)

Instead of a traditional playground, staff is proposing a playground that blends natural materials and native vegetation with creative physical features constructed in ways that, through play, teaches school-aged children about their environment. A playground similar to what staff is proposing is the Arbor Day Foundation's Nature Exploration Playground. This playground is not included in the first phase of development, but staff feels that with grants and volunteer labor, it may be developed in phases with little or no cost to the department.



Scott's Branch Trail

The 2002 Trails Master Plan proposed that the Scott's Branch Trail be routed from Rollins Road along Scott's Branch Creek through the Audubon owned property, Dublin Ave Park and on to the intersection of Chapel Hill and Scott Blvd. Following opposition to this route by the Columbia Audubon Society, the 2010 Trails Master Plan eliminated this route and simply identified it as a "route to be determined" trail. Following



subsequent planning meetings, staff is proposing to construct the 8' wide, hard surface trail from Rollins Road to Weaver Road and from the end of Dublin Avenue to the Scott Boulevard underpass. The trail section from Weaver to Rollins will serve as an access for students that live south of Fairview School to walk to the school through an attractive and safe environment. The connection between the two trail sections will be served by the sidewalks along Bray and Dublin Avenues. While it is not ideal to route connecting trails along residential sidewalks (due to sidewalk/bicycle conflicts), the proposed route bypasses the Audubon Nature Sanctuary. Staff have met with representatives of the Audubon board and while an official Audubon endorsement may not be forthcoming, staff feels that the proposed route represents a consensus of those that participated in the planning activities and is a workable compromise.

Natural Surface Trails

Throughout the two parks and the Audubon Sanctuary are proposed natural surface trails. These trails will be marked with wayfinding signs similar to those found in the National Park Service parks and trails. Where the trails cross open space turf and future prairie restoration areas, the trails will be marked with mowed paths. As the trails cross into the woodlands, the paths will be cleared and marked with the wayfinding signs.

Tall Grass Prairie Restoration (unfunded)

The tall grass prairie area is proposed to be about 12 acres, 3.5 of those acres on the Audubon property. This area is currently a fescue farm field on the south end of the property. The tall grass prairie is proposed to be 90% grasses and 10% forbs (native flowers). Tall grass prairie is an important source of winter food and nesting material for many bird species. The tall grass prairie



restoration work is not funded at this time.

Wetland Restoration Area (unfunded)

The proposed wetland area is located along Scott's Branch Creek, where staff can create some seasonal wetland pools that mimic natural wetland ecosystems. The pools will be too shallow to support fish, creating a perfect environment for amphibians. This will also add to the variety of bird, mammal and plant species on the site. The wetland restoration work is not funded at this time.

Savanna and Forest Restoration Work (unfunded)

The savanna restoration area will be managed by adding Burr Oaks and other species that can handle the periodic burns that naturally occur in savanna areas. There is no funding at this time for savanna restoration, so the area will be brush-hogged a couple of times a year to keep it open until the restoration funding is available. Certain buffer areas along property lines will be allowed to grow up as wooded areas to screen views of the adjacent homes. Mowing will cease in future wooded restoration areas to allow trees to grow. Park staff will manage the existing woodland areas by encouraging desirable tree and shrub species and removing invasive species as time and funding allows.

Note: all of the previously discussed unfunded native plant and tree restoration work may be accomplished with grants and volunteer work.

FAIRVIEW PARK MASTER PLAN

Garden Plots

The existing garden plots in Fairview Park will be improved by adding a small seasonal (March - October) porous parking lot that will serve as access to the garden area. Staff is anticipating a grass paver system using boulders and vegetation to define the parking area. There will be a gate that will be locked in the off-season. A drinking fountain with a jug filler attachment is proposed in the garden area so that garden users will no longer have to bring their own water to get their plants established.

Open Play Fields

No changes proposed in this area.

Improvements to the Shelter Area

Staff originally attempted to find a parking solution for the tennis users, rather than having them park along Fairview Road. Effort was made to find a way of designing a parking lot that would jointly serve the shelter in Fairview Park and the tennis users. After much discussion with tennis players, school administration and neighbors to the east of the park, it became evident that the tennis players are happy to park along Fairview Road and residents to the east of the park felt strongly that the woods along Fairview Avenue needed to be preserved and that parking along Fairview Road was desirable as a means of slowing traffic down. The current plan proposes a joint parking lot with Fairview School that could be used by the school during the school day and available to the public in the evenings and on weekends when shelter reservations

typically occur. Other improvements to the area include a new shelter to replace the 35+ year old existing shelter, a new small playground and an improved volleyball court.

Forest Restoration Area (unfunded)

The forest restoration area in Fairview Park is approximately 2.7 acres and is proposed to be an area where park staff will add a mixture of Oak/Hickory woods species and quit mowing the existing turf. Non-native species will be removed until the tree species are able to out-compete invasive species.