

## PUBLIC INPUT

### Overview

The complexity of park planning requires a thoughtful, rational, and participative process. One of the key objectives in the master planning process was to have an inclusive public engagement process in order to gain a clear understanding of public opinion and desires regarding facility development, park acquisition and recreation programming. Public input also provided staff with the basis on which to formulate recommendations, as well as identify improvement areas and highlight current strengths.

Like any undertaking, creating a dialogue begins with a sound strategy. Columbia Parks and Recreation's (CPRD) strategy for information sharing and transparency was to meet with a record number of citizens and diverse park user groups. Department staff communicated with a total of 58 park user groups (over 325 citizens) at 45 separate meetings throughout an eleven-month time period. Input was obtained in a variety of forums: community-wide meetings, small focus group meetings and boards and commission meetings. The Department facilitated two community-wide public input meetings designed to ascertain priority needs, as well as provide feedback on capital improvement projects and revisions to existing planning documents. The initial master plan meeting was held on October 18, 2011 and served as both a venue for comments regarding the park master planning process and input related to priority needs for parks and recreation facilities and services. The evening meeting was divided into categories to provide park user groups with an opportunity to gather in unison to ensure relevant information was not overlooked. Sessions were divided by the following groups:

1. Sports and Athletics
2. Environment and Natural Resources
3. General Park Users and Interested Parties

The second community-wide public input meeting was held March 15, 2012. The goal of this meeting was to solicit comments on the following planning documents: *2012 Draft Trails Plan*, *2012 Draft Neighborhood Park Plan* and lists of identified capital improvement projects for both existing facilities and facilities with an undetermined location.

Both public meetings were held at the ARC. The Department advertised meetings by utilizing the following venues: media press release, paid advertising, social media, City website posting, radio interviews, and email listservs. Attendees were provided with an opportunity to communicate with onsite staff or via public comment form.

In addition to public meetings, CPRD conducted both a citywide citizen survey, as well as a park user survey in order to help

**45 public input meetings were held**



Public Input Meeting at the ARC

**753 completed household surveys**

provide insight into the community’s desire for public facilities and recreation programming. The private firm ETC Institute/Leisure Vision was contracted to conduct a random citizen survey in March and April 2010 and obtained 753 completed household surveys. The purpose of the survey was threefold: to establish priorities for the improvement of facilities and programs, to determine park user satisfaction with the Department, and to determine funding support for parks and recreation services. Based on input received from the random survey, staff conducted a similar online park user survey in November and December 2011. The Department received a total of 786 completed park user surveys. The survey instrument and charts/graphs from both surveys can be found in Appendix B. The complete 681 page Findings Report for the citywide citizen survey by ETC Institute/Leisure Vision and the complete park user survey can be found on the Parks and Recreation website at [www.GoColumbiaMo.com](http://www.GoColumbiaMo.com).

**786 completed park user surveys**

Other comments received via email, phone calls and informal discussions completed the public input process and provided a full inventory of public opinion. The following narrative provides both a summary of the various phases of the input process and conclusions drawn therefrom.

The Parks and Recreation Department conducted the following public and focus group meetings from October 2011 through August 2012.

**Public Meetings**

- 10/18/11 Public Meeting
- 03/15/12 Public Meeting

**Focus Group Meetings**

- 09/15/11 Maplewood Barn Community Theater
- 09/20/11 Columbia Center for Urban Agriculture and Columbia Garden Coalition
- 09/26/11 Blue Thunder Track Club and Douglass Athletic Association/Baseball
- 09/26/11 Columbia's Farmers Market
- 10/06/11 Diamond Council
- 10/07/11 Archery Enthusiasts
- 10/11/11 Skateboard Park Enthusiasts
- 10/11/11 Pickleball Enthusiasts
- 10/11/11 Boone County Historical Society
- 10/13/11 City of Columbia Disabilities Commission
- 10/14/11 Missouri Department of Conservation – Hunting
- 10/14/11 Sustainable Farms and Community
- 10/17/11 Mid-Missouri LaCrosse League
- 10/19/11 Bicycle and Pedestrian Commission
- 10/20/11 Missouri Department of Conservation - Fishing



Public Input Meeting at the ARC

- 10/20/11 Columbia Parks and Recreation Commission
- 10/24/11 United Cerebral Palsy Heartland; ADA Playground Design
- 10/24/11 Columbia Youth Basketball Association
- 10/25/11 Columbia Bike Club
- 10/26/11 Columbia Convention and Visitor Bureau
- 10/27/11 Columbia Disc Golf Club
- 11/01/11 City of Columbia Historic Preservation Commission
- 11/04/11 Finger Lakes State Park
- 11/07/11 Rock Bridge State Park
- 11/08/11 Boone County Park Commission
- 11/09/11 GetAbout Columbia: Non-Motorized Transportation Pilot Project Advisory Committee
- 11/10/11 Columbia Swim Club
- 11/14/11 Columbia Soccer Club
- 11/14/11 Carrera Soccer Club
- 11/15/11 Columbia Chamber of Commerce
- 11/15/11 Boone County Baseball
- 11/15/11 Columbia Council PTA
- 11/16/11 CoMo Bike Polo
- 11/30/11 PedNet Coalition
- 12/02/11 Douglass Park Neighborhood Association and Douglass High School
- 12/06/11 Greenbelt Land Trust of Mid-Missouri
- 12/07/11 Mizzou Club Sports
- 12/09/11 Columbia Youth Football League
- 01/18/12 Douglass Park Forum
- 04/18/12 Douglass Park Forum (follow up to January meeting)
- 04/19/12 Columbia Parks and Recreation Commission
- 05/04/12 Columbia Track Club
- 08/23/12 Douglass Park Planning Committee



Douglass Park Planning Meeting

Parks and Recreation planning and administration staff also communicated with the following groups via email, phone calls or informal discussions:

- Boone Ice Group
- Central Latino de Salud
- Father Tolton High School
- Columbia Sports Group
- Columbia Audubon Society
- Columbia College
- United States Tennis Association/Missouri Valley
- Rockers Girls Softball Club
- Special Olympics - Bocce Ball

*Citizen Comment from  
the Citywide Survey:*

**“We love this city because of the value they place on trails, parks, green space and nature.”**

## Regularly Scheduled Meetings

### Columbia Public School District

The Columbia Parks and Recreation Department recognizes that quality public schools are essential to the City of Columbia. The Columbia Public School District and the Parks and Recreation Department share the goals that children be safe, healthy, and well-prepared for education and becoming productive community members. Together, the school district and the Department partners to provide facilities including parks, trails, playgrounds, fitness tracks and indoor gym space.

Administrators from both the school district and the Department regularly meet to discuss future facility and program partnerships in order to maximize the benefits provided to all of Columbia's citizens.

### Higher Education

The Department works closely with local colleges and universities regarding the joint use of facilities. Columbia College and Stephens College uses Columbia Parks & Recreation Department's fields as their home for their softball programs. The University of Missouri is working with the Department on use of Cosmo-Bethel Tennis Courts as a practice site for hosting Southeastern Conference tournaments. In addition, MU Recreation uses numerous fields and facilities for their various club teams. In return, the Department utilizes facilities at the local colleges for leagues, tournaments and special events such as the Tiger Night of Fun Halloween event at the Hearnes Center. Communication between the local colleges and universities is ongoing with meetings planned as needed.



Public Input Meeting at the ARC

### *Citizen Comment from the Park User Survey:*

**“Love the hiking and biking trails. Because of them I’m outdoors more often, and the improvements for bikes (trails/roads) has dramatically increased my bike riding.”**