

# PARK AND FACILITY INVENTORY

## *Park Categories*

Park departments are better able to determine issues that are important to the development of a park with an understanding of how each park functions within the community. These issues include:

- Why people come to a particular park.
- What activities they engage in.
- When it is used and for how long.
- What types of design elements support these activities.
- Development of management and maintenance procedures.

Park agencies have developed park category guidelines to aid in identifying the role a park plays in the community. To establish appropriate categories for city parks, the Columbia Parks and Recreation Department uses a combination of guidelines established by the National Recreation and Park Association, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, and various other publications of park planning guidelines.

The Department has established the following five categories of parks:

1. Neighborhood Parks
2. Community Parks
3. Regional Parks
4. Special Purpose Parks
5. Greenbelts/Greenways/Trails

Listed below are definitions for each of the park categories. Following the definitions is a list classifying Columbia's parks by their respective category. Recognizing that many parks meet needs consistent with multiple categories, the Department has selected the category that represents the *primary* function of each park.

**1. Neighborhood Parks:** Neighborhood parks provide easily accessible, low-intensity recreational areas for unscheduled use, visual relief from urban congestion and scenic value, and buffering between adjacent land uses. Primary users are within walking distance ( $\frac{1}{2}$  plus/minus mile radius). Ease of non-motorized access is a primary consideration. Typically, a neighborhood park is about 10 acres (plus/minus 5 acres) in size and consists of a playground, picnic shelter or picnic area, basketball court, open space play/practice fields, and a perimeter exercise trail. Neighborhood parks may be smaller than 5 acres, but recreational facility development usually requires 2.5 acres. Whenever possible, neighborhood parks should be located adjacent to elementary or intermediate schools to

maximize cooperative use of recreation facilities. Since it is designed to service those within walking distance, features such as parking areas, scheduled athletic fields, or restroom facilities may not exist or be limited. Trail connections to contiguous park lands or greenways may exist where feasible.

**2. Community Parks:** Community parks provide a variety of individual and organized recreation activities conveniently located for short-term visits. Community parks may be located in residential neighborhoods and suburban areas. Community parks may also be located adjacent to elementary or intermediate schools to maximize cooperative use of recreation facilities. In mixed-use developments, proximity to retail/office areas is desirable for cooperative use of parking and minimal impact on residences. Access should be via secondary roads where possible. Parking is provided on site or on a shared location with an appropriate adjoining development. The service area for community parks generally extends up to 3 miles. The park size typically will be 15-100 acres, serving several neighborhoods. Facility development may include picnic units, court facilities (tennis, basketball and/or volleyball), playground, tot lot, garden plots, fitness stations, athletic fields, amphitheater (average 50-150 capacity), trails, and parking. Courts and athletic fields may be lighted or unlighted. On-site parking is required for athletic field development. Restroom facilities may exist on sites with scheduled athletic fields.

**3. Regional Parks:** Regional parks provide a diversity of recreational opportunities in both natural settings and intensely developed indoor or outdoor facilities that can accommodate large numbers of people without significant deterioration of the recreation experience. Proximity to major highways or arterial roads is highly desirable in order to accommodate relatively large volumes of traffic at peak times; access via public transit and trails/greenbelts also should be planned wherever feasible. The size is normally 200 acres or more. Sensitive environmental areas and cultural resource sites will be managed as natural or cultural resource sub-units of these parks. Depending on the density of surrounding communities and normal traffic constraints, the service area generally extends up to 5 miles. Depending on site characteristics, regional parks may combine large complexes of intensely developed facilities with extensive natural areas. The extent of development will depend on topography, the extent of environmentally sensitive land, and the amount of developable acreage. Lighted facilities and extended hours of operation are the norm. Development may include, but is not limited to, informal picnic areas, reservable picnic pavilions for scheduled use, playgrounds, tot lots, court facilities, lighted athletic fields, running track, restroom/concession buildings, garden plots, indoor or outdoor equestrian facilities, indoor recreation center, indoor or outdoor entertainment features, amphitheater (average 150-500 capacity), 9-18 hole golf course, miniature golf, golf driving range (lighted), visitor center and interpretive exhibits, walking trails and bridle paths, and parking. In some cases, overnight camping may be allowed.

**4. Special Purpose Parks:** Special purpose parks include parks that provide the community with a unique purpose. Examples include parks or sub-units of parks that are designated as a natural, historical, or cultural resource or parks with a singular purpose - such as a park that only hosts a community recreation center. Some special purpose parks may be managed under joint public/private partnerships or public/quasi-public partnerships. These parks may be located as independent sites or as a sub-units within other types of park lands. Depending on the specific location, a variety of access modes may be available - from walk-in to public transit. Parking should be provided for the majority of users. The service area is city-wide and the size will vary.

As a unit of the special purpose parks, natural resource parks preserve, protect and perpetuate areas of sensitive or unique environmental ecological and scenic values. Development that does not adversely affect ecological functions and enhances awareness of the resource values is appropriate. Interpretive (educational) facilities and structures include visitor centers, orientation kiosks, hiking, biking, and equestrian trails (as designated), signs, and benches. Visitor centers are appropriate only near the periphery of these parks and are generally reserved for parks that are approximately 100 acres in size and/or act as a trailhead. Depending on the size of the park, the service area may be city-wide or county-wide; or for natural resource parks 20-75 acres, the service area may extend up to 3 miles. Natural resource parks may also exist as a sub-unit of another park classification.

Another unit of special purpose parks are parks that protect, preserve, and recognize significant historical or cultural features. These properties may meet the eligibility requirements for the National Register of Historic Places Criteria or a specific "public significance criteria" as designated by a local heritage/cultural resource organization. To the extent that they do not adversely impact the cultural resources themselves, portions of the sites may be developed with demonstration areas, interpretive structures and/visitor centers, trails, informal picnicking areas, restrooms and parking.

Other facilities which could be developed as special purpose areas include golf courses; driving ranges; aquatic parks; equestrian facilities; horticulture centers and gardens; ice rinks; recreation centers; archery and shooting ranges; field houses or stadiums for major sporting events; and multiple, simultaneous tournament-level athletic complexes.

**5. Greenbelts/Greenways/Trails:** Greenbelts preserve large contiguous natural areas for riparian habitat, water quality protection, and aesthetic values. Greenbelts also protect multiple-use greenways and natural open space in more urbanized areas of the city for recreation, aesthetic values, water quality protection, and non-motorized transportation routes between major destination points. Management plans should give total consideration to the resources and allow public use only as compatible with resource protection. Greenways are located in suburban and urban centers and built-out areas of the city. Access is primarily by "trailheads" with parking lots strategically located along greenbelt routes. There may also be lateral connecting trails that tie neighborhoods, parks, and other

public/private areas to the greenbelt. The service area is city-wide. Development within the greenbelt may include interpretive facilities and structures (exhibits, signage, hiking, biking and equestrian trails) that do not adversely impact riparian habitat, water quality, or aesthetic values. Wherever possible, trails should be located near the periphery of the corridor. Multiple-use trails can support more intense trail development to facilitate higher levels of transportation and recreational use. In addition to trails - seating areas, small picnic and open play areas, landscaping and interpretive structures also may be developed - provided they also do not adversely impact ecological functions.