

PUBLIC INPUT

Conclusion

As this chapter indicates, the department has spent approximately nine months gathering public input through numerous public meetings, random citizen surveys, specific park user surveys, and meetings with multiple user organizations. Listed below is a summarization of the top parks and facility needs as identified through this process.

- 1. Trails and Greenbelts.** There is strong support for trails and greenbelts in terms of citizen use, satisfaction with existing trails, and financial support for acquisition and development. Citizens also expressed strong financial support for setting aside future funds for trail maintenance. Trails and greenbelts were the most important recreation facility according to survey respondents.
- 2. Neighborhood Parks, Open Space, and Picnic Facilities.** Neighborhood parks, open space within 10 minutes of home, and picnic facilities were the second, third, and fourth most important facilities to survey respondents. The Department should continue to pursue acquisition, development, and maintenance of these parks, open spaces, and facilities.
- 3. Athletic Fields and Courts.** Each individual athletic organization expressed a need for additional fields, courts, and related support facilities, such as, concession stands, storage rooms, batting cages, parking lots, and restrooms. Listed below is a summary of the estimated field needs based on current and anticipated participation numbers:
 - a. Baseball/Softball 10 fields (8 youth, 2 regulation)
 - b. Soccer 10-12 fields (all regulation)
 - c. Football/Lacrosse 6 fields (4 regulation, 2 youth)
 - d. Basketball 4-6 indoor courts for youth & rec league play
 - e. Tennis 8-10 outdoor courts

The organizations prefer the proposed fields be located in a single location in order to maximize the use of support facilities, such as, parking lots, roads, restrooms and concessions. Unfortunately, due to lack of available space, existing parks do not allow the addition of these athletic complexes. In order for these complexes to materialize, additional park land must be acquired.

These organizations also express a need for practice areas. Sports such as baseball, softball, and basketball rely primarily on game fields and courts as their practice areas. For example, baseball and softball teams need a smooth, dirt infield for practice.

Since basketball is primarily played in the winter, an indoor facility is warranted. Soccer, football, and lacrosse may practice on any sufficiently-sized open space area. Neighborhood and community parks should be developed with sufficient open space for this purpose.

With the numerous private indoor tennis clubs and the recent construction of the University of Missouri's indoor tennis center, the Department is not recommending the addition of an indoor tennis center. The Department believes that an outdoor complex should be built as part of a regional park development.

4. **Ice Skating Facility.** There are several citizen groups that are interested in developing an ice skating facility in Columbia. Representatives of these groups regularly use the ice skating facility in Jefferson City. Their first choice is to develop an indoor facility with two sheets of ice. If an indoor facility is not feasible, an outdoor single sheet facility would meet short-term needs. There is interest in a private/public development on land that is owned by the Boone County Government, and should that proposal fail to materialize, the development should be considered on City-owned land.
5. **City-wide Special Events.** Participation in city-wide special events was the top recreational choice in both surveys. The large number of citizens participating in special events indicates a need to continually improve services and facilities that provide special event support.
6. **Swimming Facilities.** Swimming garnered strong support as a participation activity finishing near the top in both surveys and was a top participation activity in meetings with local school-age youth. There appears to be a need for an additional outdoor family aquatic facility that is more leisure-oriented. This facility should include items such as water slides, wave pools, lazy rivers, and spraygrounds. The construction of the recreation center should alleviate the perceived need for an indoor facility.
7. **Benefits of Parks.** Respondents to the survey indicated a perceived economic benefit to parks and open spaces near their home. Ninety percent felt that well-maintained parks and open spaces enhance property values of surrounding homes. Emphasis should be placed on renovation and maintenance of existing parks. Respondents also supported requiring developers to set aside a portion of all new developments for parks or open space. At the public meetings, there were many comments that supported these survey results. Similar comments requested additional park security in the form of a park ranger program that would provide both enforcement and interpretive programs.

8. **Indoor Nature/Interpretive Center.** Comments from the two surveys and public meetings indicated strong support for the development of a nature/interpretive center similar to the Runge Nature Center in Jefferson City. When asked if Columbia's population could support one or two facilities, many indicated that depending on the size, one facility would be sufficient.
9. **Golf Facilities.** Golf garnered strong support as a participation activity finishing near the top in both surveys. Public comments indicated support for an 18-hole championship course that would include a practice/training area.
10. **X-Games.** Non-traditional activities such as skateboarding, in-line skating, and motocross biking are becoming more mainstream to the youth of Columbia. Meetings with local youth support the need to continue to add these types of facilities throughout Columbia so that all may be able to enjoy them. It was also suggested that any new facilities should be different than existing sites in order to provide different challenges.

2001 - Focus Group Meeting - Russell Property



Citizens voting for their top five P&R choices.

