

## FINANCING ALTERNATIVES AND METHODS

### *Overview*

The success of the Master Plan is ultimately measured by the Department's ability to implement the recommendations, thus providing higher quality of parks and services that meet the needs of the citizens of Columbia. To a large extent this will be governed by the ability of the City to effectively finance the proposed improvements.

This chapter identifies and defines the various financing methods that are available for capital projects and summarizes the funding sources that the Department has used for the past ten years. Following this discussion is a comparison of funding sources used by other municipalities. Since grants are an important source of funding, the chapter concludes with a list of various federal, state, and private grants that are available to local parks and recreation agencies.

Historically, the primary funding source for capital projects has been the use of various sales tax ballot issues. This has allowed the City to present specific projects to the citizens to either approve or defeat by voting process. Many of the City's neighborhood parks were acquired and developed in this manner. Larger community park improvement projects such as the Oakland Pool renovation, improvements to the Cosmo Park soccer fields, and the addition of two softball/baseball fields at the Antimi Sports Complex are all examples of sales tax projects. Volunteer citizen committees have also helped promote specific sales tax issues. The Columbia Community Recreation Center is an example of a citizen-supported proposal that represents the largest parks and recreation ballot issue project to date.

In 2000, another community issue - the possible commercial development of Stephens Lake - prompted the passing of the Parks Sales Tax to finance the purchase of this land for park use. Once the funding commitments for Stephens Lake Park have been met, this tax will provide a permanent source of funding for either park capital projects or operating expenses.

The Park Sales Tax has dramatically changed the funding sources used for Parks and Recreation capital projects. From 1994-2000, 19.9% of the projects were funded through the City's General Fund. This funding source was second only to the Federal Highway Administration Surface Transportation Enhancement Program (STP Enh - a trails grant program) which funded 21.3% of Parks and Recreation projects from 1994-2000.

Since the passing of the Park Sales Tax, the Department has not received any of the City's General Fund for Parks and Recreation capital projects. In FY 2002 the Park Sales Tax contributed 60.7% of project funding and 49.6% in the proposed FY 2003 Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Some of the Park Sales Tax is also being used to supplement the Department's General Fund and Recreation Services' operating budget. As the amount of Park Sales Tax used to subsidize the Department's operating budget increases, it decreases the amount of Park Sales Tax available to fund capital projects and acquire new park land.