

ACQUISITION

Needs Analysis - Greenbelts/Greenways/Trails



Overview

Greenbelts, greenways, and trails have been identified for many years as one of Columbia's most valued recreation resources. The long term planning and identification of the greenbelt and recreation trails network began many years ago and continues to provide a blueprint for the trails and greenbelt development to date. The development of a trail network encircling the city will allow residents the opportunity to experience natural beauty and wildlife in the heart of Columbia. The community's commitment to this development goal is alive and well.

The recreation facility needs assessment portion of this planning document has provided a wealth of information regarding the public's support for various recreation opportunities in Columbia. One area that consistently generated strong support is the development of more recreational trails that can be used for a wide range of activities. The success of the existing trails within the park system provides an excellent barometer for measuring the popularity of this activity. The recent recreation needs assessment confirms the strength of this popularity.

In an effort to satisfy the public's need for trails, the Columbia Parks and Recreation Department has aggressively pursued the development of a wide range of trails. The MKT Nature/Fitness Trail is a 4.7 mile trail running from downtown Flat Branch Park to the southwest where it connects to Boone County's MKT Trail and eventually to Missouri's KATY Trail. It was the first railroad conversion project in Missouri and serves as an excellent example of a multi-use trail offering opportunities to exercise or simply enjoy nature in a beautiful natural setting. The newly finished 4.3 mile Bear Creek Trail in the northern part of Columbia extends from Columbia Cosmopolitan Recreation Area (CCRA) to Oakland Park. The Hinkson Creek Trail, a joint effort between the City of Columbia and the University of Missouri, connects Grindstone Nature Area/Capen Park to the MKT at the 1.9 mile marker. Each of these trails is accessible from a number of different trailhead parking lots and access points.

Other trails that have become very popular in the parks range from the foot path nature trails found at Grindstone Nature Area to the 12 ft.-wide, hard-surface fitness trail located at CCRA. Trail designs vary depending on surrounding park elements and the intended purpose of the trail. Each trail offers unique qualities contributing to the overall trail system.

City planners are placing an increased emphasis on providing space for non-motorized forms of transportation within the roadway corridors. City staff and the PedNet Coalition have proposed a comprehensive network of nature trails and urban “pedways” that blend the recreation trails with the development of the roadway trails network. The goal is to integrate trails into the overall city’s infrastructure planning.

This development effort is intended to provide an effective system of inter-connectivity between: residential subdivisions, employment centers, businesses, parks, schools (including local colleges and MU), the public library, the recreation center, and downtown. It will enable pedestrians, cyclists, wheelchair users, in-line skaters, and skateboarders to travel safely between these locations while enjoying a pleasant experience. The PedNet master plan describes a twenty-year time frame for achieving this level of trail and pedway development in Columbia.

The goals established for the PedNet planning and implementation are desirable. The CATSO 2025 Transportation Plan has incorporated the current PedNet map as part of this transportation planning document. The potential benefits of this proposed comprehensive trail system are numerous. The pedestrian-friendly corridors offered by the PedNet plan will provide a more efficient and safe method for people to travel by non-motorized means within the city. As a department, the highest priority for a pedway is a linkage between CCRA and the new Recreation Center on Ash Street.

Future Acquisitions

The Columbia Parks and Recreation Department is committed to acquiring green space for the construction of trails, greenways, and greenbelts. These areas will provide quality and diverse recreational opportunities for an ever-growing population. As an added benefit, these green spaces also help provide areas for stormwater control.

To meet these needs, a ranking of the targeted acquisitions was prepared. Four factors were used to determine this ranking:

- The part the trail section plays in the overall goal to complete a “loop trail” around Columbia.
- Areas currently or soon to be under development. Properties may become unavailable or prohibitively expensive.
- The need to serve areas of expanding residential population.
- Current feasibility of acquisition.

The proposed acquisition targets are not limited to a ten-year plan. These acquisition targets fit in to the overall trail network goal for Columbia. Hence, the proposed trail acquisitions are prioritized into three categories:

Primary Acquisition Targets

The primary targets represent important pieces of the overall trail system. In addition, they are or may come under increasing development potential. These linkages should be aggressively pursued.

Secondary Acquisition Targets

The secondary targets are under less development pressure than the primary targets. While critical to the overall plan, there may be additional time available for acquisition. However, it is important that these linkages eventually become integrated into the trail system.

Tertiary Acquisition Targets

These properties are either under little development pressure or not feasible to purchase at this time. It is important to monitor the status of these linkages and more actively pursue them as they become available or threatened by development.

Recommended trail acquisition locations are listed on the accompanying Recommended Acquisition List.

Conclusion

Recreational trail use is a popular trend nation-wide, representing one of the highest-ranked recreational demands in the United States. Trails serve a wide variety of uses. They range from functional transportation connectors, which enable citizens to travel safely from one location to another, to the passive and intimate pathways that provide opportunities to enjoy nature in a quiet and personal way.

The enthusiasm and support for trail development in Columbia are very apparent. This support is growing as new trails are developed throughout the community. Columbia has adopted a very pro-active approach toward achieving success with its overall municipal trail program. Trails are a valued resource in this community. Good trail planning and development truly enhance the quality of life in Columbia.

"A good sweat, with the blood pounding through my body, makes me feel alive, revitalized. I gain a sense of mastery and assurance. I feel good about myself. Then I can feel good about others." Arthur Dobrin