

CONCLUSION

The Parks and Recreation staff in preparing this *2002 Facility Needs Update* has met the following pre-designated goals:

- Updated the inventory of existing public and private park, recreation, and open-space facilities.
- Obtained the most current state and national standards for park and open space facilities.
- Hosted public forums seeking citizen input regarding city-wide park and recreation needs.
- Conducted a series of focus group meetings with special interest groups and community organizations such as the Columbia Soccer Club, Greenbelt Coalition, Boone County Historical Society, etc.
- Contracted a city-wide, random survey of Columbia citizens to determine their perceptions of the recreation and open space needs within the community. This survey was conducted by ETC Institute/Leisure Vision, who conducted similar surveys for both the 1994 Master Plan and the Community Recreation Center Feasibility Study. Use of this firm ensured the validity of the survey.
- Conducted a user survey of visitors to Columbia's parks, trails, and recreational facilities. Survey was conducted by Parks and Recreation staff and consisted of questions similar to those on the ETC Institute/Leisure Vision survey.
- Using the data obtained through all of the above actions, prepared an updated needs and facilities assessment and developed a Capital Improvement Program.

The "Needs Update" is just one portion of a comprehensive park master plan. The *1994 Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan* was intended to be a 10-year planning document. Since the time period is coming to an end, it is the recommendation of the Department that during the next two to five years, the following remaining master plan actions be implemented:

- 1. Analysis of Services:** Includes citizen satisfaction with existing programs and citizen interest in new programs; evaluates the most effective methods of disseminating information to the public about recreation programs, facilities, and opportunities; and examines maintenance services, standards of care, and operating procedures.

2. **Analysis of Staffing:** Includes the evaluation of the Department’s full-time staffing levels and responsibilities, compares staffing levels with comparable communities, and recommends future staffing levels and positions as it relates to the implementation of the Master Plan.
3. **Analysis of Finances:** Includes analysis of current recreation fees and charges; compares fees and charges with comparable communities; evaluates programming costs; analyzes current and potential methods for funding capital projects and operating costs; and examines citizen support for financing the acquisition, development, and maintenance of parks, trails and open spaces.

Due to the perceived political nature of these three issues, the Department recommends that a third party be responsible for conducting the above analysis, thus avoiding any conflict of interest.

The primary method for implementing the Master Plan is the City's annual budget. The City evaluates and prioritizes all proposed projects each year in the course of preparing the annual budget. These projects are developed with the goals of the Master Plan in mind. The preparation of the budget provides an on-going opportunity for Columbia residents to help shape the future of the Columbia Parks and Recreation Department by participating in public forums and providing comments.

In conclusion, the *Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan, 2002 Facility Needs Update* is a re-dedication of the Columbia Parks and Recreation Department to the vision of the citizens and elected officials who anticipated the great potential of parks and who were willing to advocate creating a parks and recreation system for the benefit and enjoyment of the public.

The plan acknowledges the continuing commitment of the citizens, elected officials, and staff, whose dedicated efforts will guide Columbia’s Parks and Recreation Department as it responds to the challenges ahead.

“To conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.” Frederick Law Olmsted, 1916