

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 the following:

- Reasons people come to a particular park.
- The activities they engage in.
- Frequency and duration of use.
- Types of design elements that support these activities.
- Management and maintenance procedures, policies and regulations.

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 six categories of parks:

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

Did you know?

Children with a playground within a half mile of home are five times as likely to be a healthy weight than those without.

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, 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 in size and consists of a playground, picnic shelter or picnic area, basketball court, open space play/practice fields, and a perimeter exercise trail. In some cases, neighborhood parks may be smaller than 10 acres, but in order to be classified as a neighborhood park with recreational amenities, the recommended minimum



Auburn Hills Park

size is 3-5 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 reservable picnic shelters, court facilities (tennis, basketball and/or volleyball), playground, swimming pools, spraygrounds, garden plots, fitness stations, athletic fields, amphitheater (average 50-150 capacity), trails, and adequate parking. Courts and athletic fields may be lighted or unlighted. On-site parking is required for community parks with pools, reservable shelters or athletic field development. Restroom facilities may exist on sites with reservable shelters, pools, and scheduled athletic fields.



Stephens Lake Park

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 may 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,



Football Fields at Cosmo Park

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.



MLK Memorial at Battle Garden

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. Natural Resource Areas

Natural resource areas are lands set aside for preservation of significant natural resources, remnant landscapes, open space, and visual aesthetics/buffering.

These natural areas can come in the form of natural drainageways, creeks, wetlands, river greenway areas, habitat protection areas, steep hillsides, significant tree clusters or plant materials, or where the preservation of an open space area provides a visual relief from the images of the built and urbanized environment.



Capen Park

Since the emphasis is upon the protection of the resource, facility development should be limited to those that support the natural resource. Typically, these facilities include interpretive centers, restrooms, outdoor classrooms, trails, vehicular access, and parking lots. Active recreation facilities, such as organized playing fields, are discouraged. They should only be accommodated if the park is large enough and there is adequate separation between the activity area and the natural resource. At all times, the central philosophy is deference to the natural resource over human needs.

Did you know?
100 mature trees remove about 430 pounds of pollutants annually.

6. 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

Did you know?
The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends providing more facilities like trails to help people increase their physical activity.

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.



Scott's Branch Trail