

FACILITY STANDARDS

Overview

Local governments are tasked with providing a variety of recreation facilities sufficient in size and number to meet the recreation demands of their residents. Facilities should be evenly distributed within the city boundaries to provide convenient access to parks and open space. Public facilities should also contain the natural resources and amenities appropriate to accommodate all the various types of recreational activities participated in by its citizens and as resources will allow.



Art in the Park Event at Stephens Lake Park

Park planners have long questioned the utilization of blanket development standards as a tool to determine recreation facility needs. Mirroring this philosophy, facility standards provided by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) have been discontinued for quite some time. At the time of discontinuation, NRPA advised communities to establish needs in a more flexible way based on their specific community demands compared to the existing level of services offered, taking into consideration the recreation services provided by non-municipal facilities for a specified area and travel distance. Non-municipal and quasi-public facilities play an important role in accommodating the recreation needs of a community, as long as planners take into consideration restrictions in hours of operation and membership requirements. Recreation standards should also take into consideration the cultural background, health assessment, age and socio-economic status of a community. For example, Columbia's higher than average rate of poverty¹, along with parallel rates to the nation's obesity epidemic, indicates a need for free or low-cost fitness facilities, such as parks and trails.

Whether or not a community is meeting the recreational demands of a community is most often determined via market research acquired from public input. With citizens continuing to take a more active role in deciding what types of outdoor recreation facilities are needed in their communities, public input seems to be the most sensible approach to determining needs and the one that the Columbia Parks and Recreation Department (CPRD) continues to follow. Public input is addressed in Chapter 6 and heavily weighted in the recommended facilities listed in Chapter 11 - Recommended Capital Improvements.

As in past plans, this chapter will only address comparisons of Columbia's outdoor facilities to the current Missouri Department of Natural Resources (DNR) standards for outdoor park facilities as stated in the *2008-2012 State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)*. This comparison is included because many state and federal agencies require it on grant applications, and City staff can use this comparison to identify possible deficiencies. The

¹ 2010 U.S. Census - Persons below poverty level: Columbia, MO - 22.9%; Missouri - 14%; National - 13.8%

Comparison to Standards Charts contain facilities within a reasonable service radius owned by schools, universities, non-municipal/quasi-public agencies, and those owned and/or operated by the City of Columbia (See Chapter 4 – Park and Facility Inventory for details). As outlined in the SCORP, state and federal owned lands and recreation facilities are not factored in the SCORP needs analysis.

Included in this chapter are:

- DNR’s updated “Outdoor Recreation Development Goals” (also referred to as “Missouri Standards”)
- Tables comparing Columbia’s facilities with DNR’s “Outdoor Recreation Development Goals” based on 2013’s estimated population and 2022’s estimated population
- Conclusions drawn from these comparisons, with Surplus/Deficit tables for 2002, 2013, and 2022

For a more accurate comparison to SCORP’s development goals, CPRD adjusted its trail classifications as per the following descriptions:

- **Exercise Trail:** This category continues to include neighborhood park trails that incorporate trailside outdoor fitness equipment.
- **Bicycle Trail:** This category now includes trails primarily used for destination bicycling and trails developed utilizing American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Guide for Design of Bicycle Facilities. (Examples: MKT Trail, Bear Creek Trail, and Hinkson Creek Trail) Since SCORP does not include a “Mountain Bike Trail” category, Rhett’s Run Mountain Bike Trail is also included in this category. In the 2002 Master Plan, this category was utilized as a subheading to indicate only rough terrain mountain bike use.
- **Multi-Purpose Trail:** This category now includes hard surface trails designed to primarily accommodate multiple forms of recreation such as walking, jogging, bicycling, rollerblading, skateboarding and scooter use. (Examples: Cosmo Fitness Trail and Stephens Lake Trail) In the 2002 Facility Needs Update, this category was utilized as a subheading to indicate multi-surface trails used for walking, jogging or bicycling.
- **Nature Trail:** This category now includes dirt trails or mowed paths minimally maintained by CPRD. (Examples: dirt trails in Wilson Park and Grindstone Nature Area) In the 2002 Master Plan, this category was utilized as a subheading to indicate maintained soft surface (gravel or dirt) trails primarily used for walking or hiking.
- **Walking Trail:** This category now includes gravel trails primarily used for walking or wheelchair use. This category was not utilized by SCORP or CPRD in 2002 (SCORP at that time included both hiking and jogging trails in their development goals).

The 2010 census population of Columbia was 108,500. Based on the population increase from the 2000 census to the 2010 census, the *Fiscal Year 2013 City of Columbia Annual Budget* projects a 2.5 percent annual population increase for 2013. The following tables use this same 2.5 percent annual increase to estimate the city’s population in 2013 and 2022.

Note: At the time of publication, DNR planning staff indicated the 2013-2017 Missouri SCORP (awaiting approval by the National Park Service) will possibly no longer utilize development standards based on population. This change in development criteria will allow more credence to be given to local public input as well as new standards related to travel time and socio-economic community characteristics.