

RECOMMENDED CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

Conclusion

As with all planning documents, the Recommended Capital Improvements Chapter is considered to be a “living document” that will be continually updated and revised in order to meet the growing needs of Columbia’s citizens. There are three primary goals of this chapter:

1. Identify all major maintenance and renovation projects.
2. Identify new facility needs.
3. Develop a five-year Capital Improvement Program.

It is understood that the list of projects realistically exceeds the amount of finances that are currently available. However, it is important to identify all park and facility capital improvement needs, as funding may become available through unknown sources, such as private donations, grants, future ballot issues, and/or partnerships with other governmental or private parties.

The list of recommended capital improvements is evaluated each year through the City’s five-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP). It is through the CIP that priority projects are identified. The plan is prepared and adjusted annually and serves as the critical component of the comprehensive City budget. Citizen input is continually sought and is officially solicited during individual park planning sessions, Parks and Recreation Commission meetings, and various public hearings held during the City Council meetings.

Columbia is extremely fortunate that the community has supported the renewal of the 1/8-cent Park Sales Tax, which is the major funding source for parks and recreation capital improvement projects. During the economic downturn of the past several years, many parks and recreation departments were forced to terminate large numbers of employees, close facilities, such as swimming pools and recreation centers, cancel program offerings, and even close parks and trails. Columbia had to make several reductions during this period, but due to the dedicated Park Sales Tax, the Parks and Recreation Department was able to minimize the impact this reduction had on its citizens. As Columbia continues to grow, the Park Sales Tax is critical in keeping up with the city’s growth and citizens’ expectations of a high-quality, comprehensive park system.

Columbia has the four key elements needed to implement a successful capital improvement program:

1. An updated *Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan*
2. Dedicated funding sources (Park Sales Tax, Golf Course Improvement Fund, Recreation Center Improvement Fund, and Recreation User Fee Fund)
3. Interactive citizen input process
4. Annual priority evaluation process through the Capital Improvement Program, as part of the City’s annual budget process

These key elements enable the Parks and Recreation Department to achieve its mission to “improve our community’s health, stability, beauty, and quality of life by providing outstanding parks, trails, recreational facilities, and leisure opportunities for all Columbia citizens.”