

Columbia Vision Commission: RE-Vision Dialogue
April 22, 2015 – Missouri Employers Mutual, 101 N. Keene St.
Columbia, Missouri

Commission Chair Maurice Harris welcomed guests to the RE-Visioning dialogue at 6 p.m. Other Commissioners attending included Vice-Chair Alvin Cobbins, Jeremy Milarsky and Kevin Reape. Chair Harris summarized the Vision process and the five-year review process, noted the location of future meetings and observed that the Vision should reflect changes that have occurred in the community over the past few years.

Education

Chair Harris summarized the vision statement and goals for education, as noted in the Community Vision document, and asked for comments from those attending.

Vision: Excellent education programs and facilities are available to students of all ages in a variety of programs that both support each individual's goals and address the diverse social, economic, and environmental needs of the community.

Goals (numbering corresponds to Community Vision document)

- 8.1 Facilities – Educational facilities in Columbia will benefit and meet the current and long range needs of the entire community through plans for shared usage and focused attention to technology, the environment and energy efficiency
- 8.2 Resource Allocation – The community and all its public and private entities work together to ensure that resources for education are allocated effectively through all life stages.
- 8.3 Quality – Columbia will provide a continuum of high-quality educational opportunities that enable students of all ages and abilities to achieved individualized learning and training goals that ultimately improve quality of life.

What progress have you seen since the Community Vision was created?

James C. Martin, Citizens Police Review Board Member, City of Columbia: As we progress with technology in education, we sometimes forget the ABCs. We teach children in elementary school the safe way to cross streets but, as they get older, it all goes out the window. Educational institutions should be an example of how we make progress. Is there any way they can address safety to keep people from walking against traffic lights?

Chair Harris: Acknowledges problems that City and University of Missouri are trying to solve on College Avenue and notes the link between education and community facilities.

Erika Coffman, Parks and Recreation Manager, City of Columbia: Police Department recently talking with pedestrians, drivers and cyclists about road safety. Several warnings and citations were issued.

Rene Powell, Disabilities Commission Member, City of Columbia: Transportation has improved since community vision was created, but bus stops are being placed across from each other without adequate crosswalks.

Commissioner Milarsky: Encouraged participants to think about the “big picture” when referring to progress and issues relating to the community vision.

Lawrence Simonson, Assistant Director, PedNet Coalition: Has lived in Columbia five years and, now that he has a child, sees that Columbia school board makes data-driven decisions, stays current with technology and research, is progressive and does a great job of putting students first.

What else has happened since then?

Elinor Barrett, Associate Director, Daniel Boone Regional Library: During its long-range planning cycle, the Library decided to focus on lifelong learning, adding a lot of resources, available at no charge to patrons, online and at the Library. The Vision implementation report emphasized traditional education and would like to include both lifelong and non-traditional learning.

Chair Harris: Acknowledged that others had shared this thought with Commissioners.

Annette Triplett, Director, PedNet Coalition: Did not see education included in the transportation report or transportation in the education report, so that is a gap. Has concerns about being able to walk, bike or get public transit to attend school and college.

What should the community do, going forward?

Elinor Barrett: There is a gap in available, free meeting space. The Library has free space, but some groups may not qualify to use it. Parks and Rec has good space, but it may not be affordable for some.

Lawrence Simonson: The heart of the city is its school system, and we should keep it healthy. It doesn't seem like some groups get together very well, especially to discuss issues relating to growth and sprawl. People seem disconnected, and they work separately.

Eric Johnson, Principal, Hickman High School: Agrees that more synergy is needed, especially to help fragile families who need wrap-around services, including transportation, mental health service, information for families and for the school system.

Erika Coffman: The Parks and Rec Department works with guidance counselors to make sure kids now about the City's CARE (work experience) program. It's helpful for kids who don't plan to go to college and want to explore a trade. Employers like them, and many ask to have kids return to their workplaces.

Unidentified man: What is the outcome for education: a happy life, or a healthy life? Would like to see more emphasis on guiding students to look inward, be less destructively self-critical. This contributes to three areas of health: relationship with God, the community and the planet. Interested in progressive, alternative teaching methods that contribute to children's health and happiness. Fears for our current system that creates toxins, altered foods and path to disaster if the system goes down.

Community Facilities and Services

Chair Harris summarized the vision statement and goals for community facilities and services, as noted in the Community Vision document, and asked for comments from those attending.

Vision: High-level, comprehensive, responsive services - from library, to police, emergency, substance abuse and public works - keep the city clean, safe and beautiful and citizens informed and knowledgeable: provide equitable treatment to all, incorporate input from citizens, and support the high quality of life of the community.

Goals (numbering corresponds to Community Vision document)

- 3.1 Library - Access to library services, facilities and community meeting spaces will be increased.
- 3.2 Law Enforcement - The relationship between the Columbia Police Department and the community will be positive and mutually respectful.
- 3.3 Public Safety - Community members will be safe and secure.
- 3.4 Public Works - City services will be efficient, effective and expanded.

What progress have you seen since the Community Vision was created?

Melissa Carr, Director, Daniel Boone Regional Library: When the Vision was created, Library was looking at how to expand facilities. Since then, they're looking at getting more services into the community. Survey says that 25% of patrons think the "digital branch" is their main facility. Fewer people want new buildings. Library is working toward convenience, lifelong learning and assuring that electronic materials are present and accounted for. Digital makes up about 15% of collection now.

John Glascock, Director, Public Works Department, City of Columbia: City tries to be efficient with everything. Now has an online snow removal plan; Public Works information officer better engages citizens; Columbia Regional Airport has grown from 9,000 to 60,000 enplanements per year; now flying to Chicago and Dallas instead of Memphis; sidewalks and trails have expanded; and changed transit system to reflect community wishes.

Mike Griggs, Director, Parks and Recreation Department, City of Columbia: Parks partners with Public Works on snow removal, including clearing sidewalks around schools. Parks vehicles are smaller and better for clearing smaller streets and neighborhoods.

John Glascock: Water and Light Department also helps clear snow. Ten years ago, there would have been less cooperation.

James C. Martin: Citizens Police Review Board was formed in 2009 by City ordinance. It interacts with Columbia Police on behalf of citizens, and relationships are better now. Review Board has been instrumental through independent investigations. Previously, the Police Department had the final word.

Karen Chandler, Superintendent of Recreation and Community Programs, Parks and Recreation Department, City of Columbia: Through programs held at Douglass Park, the department has helped make it safer actually and as perceived by the public. Work jointly with Police and manage five or six programs at the park every week. People seem to appreciate the involvement of two officers assigned there, and it's a model for other communities.

What else has happened since then?

Elinor Barrett: Since the community vision was created, the economy tanked and we saw a lot of people whose lives were on the edge. They needed access to computers because their own equipment was broken or they did not have any. See a lot of poverty coming to the library...people who are mentally ill, maybe homeless, who need services that the City provides, even though the economy has improved. Have seen more safety incidents in the neighborhood, including drugs and substance abuse. Have a close relationship with Police Department.

Erika Coffman: Social media contributes to making an incident that is very minor into something that's quickly going down. People gather, take photos. We have to post signs to prohibit photos.

Lawrence Simonson: Libraries are fantastic. Due to their outreach, they're a community hub. Should be expanded; there are areas, such as north Columbia, that don't have access, and maybe it's a transit issue. Law enforcement does a great job. They take a lot of flak but respond pretty well, and Columbia has a pretty low crime rate. Police need a better understanding of alternative transportation; sees room for improvement after working with them on the pedestrian project. With Public Works, has seen fantastic growth in sidewalks and more shoveling. The most vulnerable...young children and people who use wheelchairs and canes...are locked in when sidewalks aren't cleared. It's hard to walk or bike to Cosmo Park, even with the roundabout and the diverging diamond interchange.

Gabe Huffington, Parks Services Manager, Parks and Recreation, City of Columbia: Park rangers take a lot off Police Department's hands by patrolling parks. Would like to expand to 24-hour coverage and keep Police on the streets.

John Glascock: Funding is a big deal for Public Works. Federal funds for sidewalks are about to expire, and we might not be able to keep up with demand. Transportation funds will be divided between the airport, transit and streets. The city is growing with a lot of needs to fill using those resources.

What should the community do, going forward?

John Glascock: Sees more public-private partnerships.

Annette Triplett: Would like to see more cooperation between the Police and Public Works departments in preventing and responding to traffic crashes, in road design and in speed limit changes.

Parks, Recreation and Greenways

Chair Harris summarized the vision statement and goals for parks, recreation and greenways, as noted in the Community Vision document, and asked for comments from those attending.

Vision: A network of attractive and safe parks and recreational amenities are connected by trails and greenways that provide area residents with access to nature, recreation and facilities for active play, both indoors and out.

Goals (numbering corresponds to Community Vision document)

- 12.1 Parks - A variety of attractive, well maintained parks throughout Columbia, including neighborhood parks, regional parks, nature parks and urban parks will ensure all residents have access to a full range of outdoor and indoor recreational opportunities.
- 12.2 Recreation - Columbia's recreation needs and desires will be met through effective public and private partnerships that provide outstanding, exciting and diverse recreational facilities such as, but not limited to, an ice skating rink, golf courses, tennis courts, soccer fields, ball fields, ball parks and swimming pools. These will be placed appropriately throughout the city to allow easy access for everyone.
- 12.3 Greenways - An extensive network of greenways will play a significant role in providing transportation options, protecting wildlife corridors, watersheds and floodplains and increasing public access to natural and open spaces.
- 12.4 Trails - An extensive, safe network of trails will accommodate a variety of users ranging from recreational to non-motorized travelers. This network may include roadway and public transportation infrastructure to connect parks, neighborhoods, schools and businesses.

What progress have you seen since the Community Vision was created?

Mike Griggs: The Parks and Rec implementation report covers the main area. We're completing the 2013 master plan, our "bible" for the next ten years. It's based on deserts, or places where there are no parks.

Lawrence Simonson: The sole reason I chose to move here was for parks and bike trails...they're the gems of the community...fantastic progress.

Annette Triplett: Columbia is considered a leader in walking and biking because of the investments made here. This has led to economic development opportunities, like the locations of Carfax and IBM. Community has revolutionized since the vision was created.

Melissa Carr: As a grandparent, has discovered all the new things in Columbia parks, like the free spraygrounds at Stephens Lake Park. Grandchildren love coming here in the summer; so many places to go and so different from Omaha.

Erika Coffman: Parks Department has a strong partnership with Boone County Family Resources, supporting their trainees through the CARE program. Have supplied for Pacquin Towers, there are more service learning students, serve people with special needs and have expanded the Special Olympics program, put more emphasis on autism and on communication about opportunities.

Dee Dokken, Osage Group, Sierra Club: How much tax revenue dedicated to natural space, and how much space added

Mike Griggs: Have added a couple hundred acres, mostly since 2007. Working with the Greenbelt Land Trust, using a land acquisition matrix to score priority areas.

Gabe Huffington: Have improved accessibility of park system and continue working on this. A consultant evaluated needs and improvements in playgrounds, parking and restrooms.

Mike Griggs: We've gone from "meeting" to "exceeding" standards.

What else has happened since then?

Dee Dokken: Pinnacles Park is in limbo between the County and the City and could use some advice from experts while retaining its autonomy. Weekly insect spraying near wetlands should be discontinued or, at least, discussed, because it can hurt aquatic life. Providing an ice rink should be the lowest priority.

Lawrence Simonson: Our large grant for bikes and trails will go away soon. Citizens and businesses continue to see value in them, and community should find a way to continue to develop.

Eric Johnson: Compared to the south side of town, northeast Columbia is under-developed, especially for parks and recreation programs. Is this because of land values? Not sure what youth have access to north of the Business Loop, but may need something similar to the ARC. Public transit is better, but young people tend to not use it and need more recreation spaces in their areas.

Mike Griggs: Department has a great partnership with the school district, and could not run winter programs without them. It's getting harder to get into gyms; schools are providing more of their own programs, but it keeps Parks programs out. It's harder for 6th graders, on down. Agrees with Dee Dokken on the ice rink. City needs a field house for basketball and volleyball tournaments.

What should the community do, going forward?

Mike Snyder, Parks Development Superintendent, Parks and Recreation Department, City of Columbia: Hopes to complete the 30-mile trail route around Columbia. There's a big chance that the northeast and northwest areas are under-served. It's important to find funds for transportation corridors that connect all parts of Columbia.

Mike Girggs: Will have to do more public-private partnerships, and you might start seeing more sponsorships for programs. Ten years ago we would not have considered, but we need to do this, selectively, for programs that don't generate enough income.

Karen Chandler: The City has taken on the 4th of July celebration from the private sector and reaching out to the community for its support is the only reason we can continue the celebration. Recreation Services is an enterprise fund, and we do this for a number of events.

Lawrence Simonson: Mostly agrees with other comments. Millennials, retirees and businesses are moving to places where they want to *live*, not so much where they want to work. Things like Fire in the Sky make this a nice place to live. We could use another ARC. Supports the Parks Department.

Gabe Huffington: Community will see efforts to increase tourism through sports facilities and tourism. Visitors notice why people want to live here. We talk a lot about trails and use them for promotion.

Erika Coffman: Physical fitness is important as we move forward. It provides a healthy outlook and opportunities for young people. Planning more trail programming and events...getting kids dirty and active.

Transportation

Chair Harris summarized the vision statement and goals for transportation, as noted in the Community Vision document, and asked for comments from those attending.

Vision: Columbia and central Missouri, a growing urban community, will have a modern transportation system, which allows its citizens to move about freely within the region using whatever means are desired – automobile, bus, bicycle, walking – and to do so safely, within a reasonable time frame and without encountering needless congestion.

Goals (numbering corresponds to Community Vision document)

- 13.1 Non-motorized Transportation - Columbia will enjoy a safe, interconnected, non-motorized transportation (NMTN) network. It will be culturally supported by the citizens as it will encourage social interaction and healthy lifestyles. The roadway, sidewalk, public transit and trail systems will all tie together into an effective integrated transportation network.
- 13.2 Advance Planning and Development - Columbia will have diverse travel options that allow for safe and efficient travel to and through destination points. Travel options will be compatible with adjacent land uses and coordinated with the transportation timing needs of the community.
- 13.3 Road Network and Traffic Management - A network of safe roadways in and around the city will provide sustainable, efficient mobility to vehicular travel and other modes in a complementary manner.
- 13.4 Public and Human Services Transportation - An efficient, innovative, accessible public and human services transportation system will be fully integrated with all other forms of transportation in Columbia and surrounding communities. It will be possible for all residents to live easily in Columbia without a vehicle.

What progress have you seen since the Community Vision was created?

John Glascock: The non-motorized federal grant started when the vision was created. Bike lanes have created a safe network that connects to sidewalks and trails, and this is a great asset that will need continued funding. Area has a CATSO plan, and the state, county and city cooperate on the road network and traffic management. Public transit has grown, but there are private providers, primarily serving students, who did not serve the area when the vision was created. We've changed from the hub-and-spoke routes and seeing different ridership patterns.

Rachel Bacon, Transportation Planner, Community Development Department, City of Columbia: New plans have been adopted for sidewalks, long-rang transportation, public transit and community services.

James C. Martin: Few cyclists abide by traffic rules, which creates problems. How would public transit or the City address these? Most people don't obey traffic signals, so roundabouts probably are safer.

Erika Coffman: City has an educational component through GetAbout Columbia, and Police and PedNet Coalition have done a lot of work on cyclist and driver education. Will continue to work on this.

What else has happened since then?

Karen Chandler, speaking as a citizen: Lives by Battle High School and sees kids walking in the ditch, back and forth to school. There may be a plan to address, but it should advance more quickly.

Mitch Skov, Senior Transportation Planner, Community Development Department, City of Columbia: St. Charles Road was not built to carry the traffic that it now handles, due to a decision about locating Battle High School. He would have looked at a place where roads and sidewalks already exist. It's a problem to mix bike and high-speed auto traffic.

Annette Triplett: The vision, PedNet Coalition and transportation plans reference but don't define "safety." Have focused on reducing violence, but traffic fatalities kill more people than guns. A vision of zero fatalities would be appropriate.

John Glascock: A lot of money comes from MoDOT, which is having its own funding problems, and this will affect City funds.

What should the community do, going forward?

Lawrence Simonson: A vote on the capital improvement tax is coming up soon. Would like the project list to focus more on sidewalks; it's the top request he hears at community meetings he attends. Columbia has a "complete streets" policy, but it tends to focus mostly on roads. Should build streets to be safest for the most vulnerable and safer for all users, including drivers. Focus more on maintenance instead of expansion...cyclists and people in wheelchairs know where the potholes are. Use an interdisciplinary approach to increasing compliance with and awareness of traffic laws, and don't single out cyclists. Could be a problem for students, when they first come to town.

Rene Powell: Public transit promotes civic participation and inclusion by helping people get to meetings.

Dee Dokken: Sometimes, where there is controversial development, it seems like we err on the side of impervious, rather than pervious, sidewalks. Too often seems like there's an agreement to eliminate the sidewalk instead of downsizing the development.

Mike Griggs: Although people say City offices don't work together, we do, including when new developments are proposed. Projects are compared to master plans, and we tell developers what they need to set aside for parks, trails, etc., before homes are built, and we try to get trail easements ahead of time.

Open Period

Chair Harris: Invited comments on all topics.

John Glascock: Voters just approved stormwater ballot issue, so will be working on projects. Vote on capital improvements sales tax is coming up.

Mike Griggs: Park sales tax vote is coming up.

James C. Martin: Would love to see recommendations that people with dogs who use parks pick up after their dogs.

Dee Dokken: Links to news items in the Commission's Parks Implementation Report may be helpful, but people may not read them. Notices only one data point for parks performance indicators.

Commissioner Milarsky: Did not see trends in the master plan.

Mike Griggs: Probably can update.

Chair Harris thanked participants and announced next meeting on Wednesday, May 20, 2015 at the Activity and Recreation Center (ARC), 1701 W. Ash, from 6 – 8 p.m.. Topics will include health, social services and housing; community pride; and arts and culture.

Commissioner Cobbins: Invited additional ideas and asked participants to help spread the word about future meetings.

Chair Harris and Commissioner Milarsky: Refer to vision website, where comments may be posted. Invites applications for vacant Commission positions.

Meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Toni Messina, Civic Relations Officer and staff liaison