

CONCLUSION

The Parks and Recreation staff in preparing this 2013 *P&R Master Plan* 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 Land Trust, Columbia Chamber of Commerce, 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 City of Columbia and the 2002 *Facilities Needs Update*. Use of this independent 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.
- Analyzed national, regional and local recreation participation habits, identifying trending patterns in order to predict possible impacts to the City of Columbia.
- Using the data obtained through all of the above actions, prepared an updated needs and facilities assessment and developed a Capital Improvement Program.



3M Flat Branch-Hinkson Creek Wetlands

Since the 2013 P&R Master Plan is primarily based on parks, trails and open space needs, it is the recommendation of the Department that during the next two to five years, the following 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 2013 *Parks, Recreation and Open Space 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 an independent third party be responsible for conducting the above analysis, thus avoiding any conflicts of interest.

In addition to the above issues, the Department recommends that a city-wide parks and recreation survey be conducted at least once every five years. The ideal time is to conduct the survey during the year prior to the extension of the capital improvement Park Sales Tax ballot. The current 2010 Park Sales Tax is scheduled to expire in March 2016. Based on previous renewals, the City generally asks the voters for an extension sometime during the year prior to the expiration. This is typically done during regularly scheduled ballot issues in April or November or during any other possible elections. These surveys have proven to be a valuable resource for staff, commissioners and council as they provide direction on what the voters desire and are willing to support.

The primary method for implementing the 2013 P&R Master Plan is the City's annual budget. The City evaluates and prioritizes all proposed projects each year through the preparation of the annual budget. These projects are developed with the goals of the 2013 P&R Master Plan in mind. The preparation of the budget provides an on-going opportunity for Columbia residents to help shape the future of the Parks and Recreation Department by participating in public forums and providing comments.

In conclusion, the *2013 Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan* is a re-dedication of the 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 and aspires to reach the vision for parks, recreation, and greenways developed by Columbia residents in the *Imagine Columbia's Future - Community Vision and Action Plan*.

Parks, Recreation, and Greenways Vision Statement:

“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.”