

Introduction

The City of Joplin has taken a proactive position on its planning efforts during the last several years by working with Bucher, Willis & Ratliff Corporation on its 1994 Comprehensive Plan, its 1997 Parks and Recreation Management Plan and this Citizens Park System Master Plan. Because of those efforts, we now have a good understanding of the issues affecting the park system and the willingness of citizens to make the necessary improvements.



The purpose of this Plan is to provide the Parks and Recreation Department and the community with a roadmap to implement its vision for parks, trails and open space. Leading communities in Missouri continue to support parks and recreation as a strong component in defining the quality of life issues for their citizens – it should be no different in Joplin. We know from the citizen survey that citizens want their park system improved and that they value this service relative to others provided by the City. This recognition of the importance of providing citizens with quality leisure facilities and programs fits in perfectly with the most significant renewal of urban parks in America in more than a half century. In fact, some are saying that their parks are the best places to build healthy communities. Many communities are anchoring their business districts with parks, or leisure facilities, which offer a “sense of place” for everyone.

City partners have also been considering various changes to improve the community. One of those partners, the Chamber of Commerce, formed the Vision 20/20 Committee who has also recognized the value of good planning and implementation of parks and recreation improvements to the vitality of the community. Its discussions include the maintenance of existing parks, the construction of a centralized sports complex and a nature center.

Finally, it has become obvious to us that citizens are seeking the benefits which a strong park system and recreation program can provide. In fact, we have heard on several occasions that Joplin residents want their system to:

- **Provide Social Benefits** by connecting people with neighbors of other ages, incomes, backgrounds and abilities. Parks and recreation can build community pride and spirit.
- **Provide economic benefits** by improving the quality of life in the City and helping to attract businesses and residents. Top-rate parks and recreation programs and facilities can be a competitive advantage for Joplin in economic development.
- **Provide benefits to the environment** by connecting people with and educating them about nature. In addition, greenways can provide alternative transportation opportunities.
- **Provide benefits to individuals** by promoting physical fitness and self-improvement. Opportunities for exercise and being outdoors result in greater physical fitness, emotional well being and connectivity to nature.

Existing Conditions

As documented in the Facility Inventory in Section 7 and Findings in Section 11, the park system is in need of improvements. Citizens recognize this need and expressed support for those improvements in Section 9 through a statistically valid citizen survey. We contacted 602 residents and 161 non-residents in the survey who expressed interest in improved playgrounds, shelters, security lighting, parking and access roads, athletic facilities, pools and restrooms.

Also included in the Facility Inventory in Section 7 is a number of maps we have used to graphically display the existing park system and future areas for land acquisition to improve equity access to the park system for those neighborhoods who do not currently have it.

Where do we go from here?

With a strong emphasis on citizen involvement, an effort was made to better understand what citizens want their park system to be in the future. Through various venues which included individual interviews, public meetings, a planning workshop, citizen survey, and advice from a citizen steering committee, we learned, and reported in Section 5, the priorities citizens have placed for park improvements. Again, their expectations are very basic and at the core of what the City would consider as central to its delivery



of park and recreation services. Our direction is to prioritize improvements to neighborhood parks which include: shelters, playgrounds, security lighting, pool improvements, athletic facility improvements and restrooms. Trails, passive parks and natural resource areas were also recommended to us by citizens as projects they would like for us to consider.

How do we get to where we want to go?

After listening to citizens, we continued working with the citizen advisory committee to develop a series of action strategies found in Section 11. These strategies are designed to provide decision makers with the information they need to make informed decisions about the future of the park system. Again, those action strategies are designed to capture the needs expressed by citizens for their park system. The strategies include funding mechanisms for improvements; identifying and controlling costs; the need to leverage funds with partnerships; providing equitable access to the park system; renovating neighborhood parks and pools; new athletic facilities for tennis, soccer, baseball and softball; for pursuing the Nature Park at Wildcat Park; and for increasing resources to the Parks & Recreation Department for improved maintenance.

Implementation

It has been obvious throughout the study that citizens are desirous of a park improvement plan which is implemented. We feel that objective can be accomplished because of the Plan's design to provide citizens with the type of improvements they want while also giving them a funding mechanism (sales tax) which is reasonable and affordable. Citizens of Joplin know that 250,000 visitors come to town each day and that those visitors are important contributors to the local economy through the sales taxes they pay. By leveraging the sales tax with cost controls and other recommendations made in Section 12, the dream for improved neighborhood parks can come true.

Park Site Recommendations

- Schifferdecker Park – maintenance and capital investments should be made in the park to upgrade it to a level where it is considered a “signature park”. Suggestions are to remove the existing tennis court complex to be located in a new sports complex with athletic fields and amenities (restrooms, concession stands, parking, lighting, etc.), shelter, restrooms, playground. Also recommend an ADA accessible playground on the south end, playground on the north end, parking improvements with curb and gutter, replace the shelter north of the pool, restrooms on the north and south end and replacement of the pool.
- McClelland Park – improve the viewshed from the park to Shoal Creek, new playground, parking, security lighting, restrooms, shelters and a lighted trail around and throughout the park.
- Dover Hill – lighted trail and parking to accommodate a trailhead to connect with the trail system currently being planned by TranSystems. The lighted trail would culminate on the south side of the park which features a viewshed of the college, Landreth Park and the City – especially at night when the lights are on in the Central Business District.
- Dover Park Soccer Complex – consider for removal the soccer fields into an athletic complex. There is no water and sanitary sewer at the existing complex.
- Ewert Park – consider for removal the existing ball field, renovate existing pool, new shelter roof on existing shelter, new shelter, clean up the drainage ditch, bridge, restrooms and ADA accessible playground.
- Humphrey Park – playground, shelter, restroom, parking and new surface for basketball court (no longer to be used for tennis).
- Leonard Park – playground, restrooms, covered ditch, trail, shelter, access to the tennis courts.
- Parr Hill – playground, restroom, renovate the basketball courts, overlay on the trail, and pond renovation.
- Cunningham – restrooms, pool renovation, parking, accessible playground (ADA).
- McKinley – playground, covered ditch and paved entry.

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- Garvin – shelter, covered ditch, paved parking
- Mohaska – covered ditch and playground.
- Iron Gates – shelter, playground, resurface basketball court, paved access and parking.
- Roanoke – playground and paved parking.
- McIndoe – improved picnic area, roadway improvements, security lighting, fishing access and connecting trails.
- Wildcat – consider for removal the ball fields to either accommodate the Nature Center or to be placed in an athletic complex, roadway improvements and bridge to Chert Glades.

Summary

Park system improvements requested by citizens can be provided with the following investment:

Summary of Expenditures:

Neighborhood Park Improvements	\$1.845M to \$2.585M
Trails @ McClelland, Dover & Schifferdecker Parks	\$450K to \$550K
Landscaping in the Park System	\$100 to \$150K
Ewert Pool Renovation	\$800K to \$1M
SUB TOTAL	\$3.195M to \$4.285M
Reserve	\$405K to (-\$6855K)
T O T A L	\$3.600,000.00

Projects for consideration in a sales tax referendum in 2001:

Cunningham Pool Renovation	\$800K to \$1M
Schifferdecker Park Pool Replacement	\$3M to \$3.75M
Athletic Complex	\$6M to \$8M
Joe Becker Stadium Renovation	\$100K to \$200K
Land Acquisition for Neighborhood & Large Parks	\$2M to \$4M
Operating Budget Increase for Parks & Recreation	\$144K per year
Adventure Park	\$200K to \$300K
Trail System	To be determined by TranSystems Study