



CITY OF WICHITA
PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE PLANNING
PROCESS

SUMMARY OF DISTRICT 4 OUTREACH MEETING
MAY 17, 2007

Residents of City Council District 4 were invited by City Council Member Paul Gray to share their views related to city parks, recreation and open space on Thursday evening, May 17 at the Alford Library community room. Eight (8) residents ranging in age from youth under age 18 to senior citizens participated.

The purpose of the outreach meeting was to:

- define the importance of the Park, Recreation & Open Space (PROS) Plan ;
- highlight current park assets in Wichita at large and in District 4;
- solicit citizen observations, and learn of their ideas for parks in the future and how to pay for them; and
- communicate what happens next in the planning process.

Four questions used to elicit participants' observations and preferences for the future are listed below, along with a summary of their responses:

1. What are the best features of Wichita's parks, recreation programs and open spaces?

- Facilities are accessible – most district residents have park facilities and programs within five miles of their home or work.
- Variety of programs/facilities are available, i.e., from fishing to dancing, with appeal to all age groups.
- Watson Park's extensive open space and opportunities for multiple activities.
 - Examples of participants' use include cross county practice, picnicking, biking and Sunday outdoor worship services.
- Picnic areas are adequate in most areas of district.
- Facilities are generally well maintained.
- Sedgwick County Park, with its opportunities for numerous activities, is a major community asset.

2. What are the limitations of Wichita's parks, recreation programs and open spaces?

- Several comments related to inadequacies at Osage Park:

- Poor lighting at Osage Park, especially around parking areas, compromises public safety and discourages park use during evening hours.
- Current landscaping not designed for public safety needs.
- Park has no walking paths.
- District 4 has no bike paths.
- Current recreation programs and schedules are not aligned with residents current needs and family realities (no specific examples given).

3. What would you like to see changed, added or eliminated in the way of parks, facilities recreation programs or open spaces in the future?

- Bike paths are a significant need, and two ideas were offered:
 - construct path on the north side of I-235 from West Street to Guard Armory
 - create a mountain bike path.
- New park facilities such as ball diamonds and other sport facilities west of airport in areas of new development are high priority.
- Construct a soccer field at Osage Park:
 - space is available and would not conflict with other uses
 - park is adjacent to high density residential area with many children.
- Needed improvements in existing District 4 parks include:
 - more sheltered areas to allow more family and group activities
 - more picnic areas, especially in shaded areas, and open spaces to allow more use at the same time. How about gazebos for picnicking?
 - more play activities such as croquet, horseshoes, miniature golf, bad mitten, volleyball, shuffleboard
 - cement (not asphalt) basketball courts and maintain the hoops.
- More ball diamonds are needed city-wide.
- Create an all-terrain, 4-wheel drive vehicle path outside of populated area (requested by youth participants)
- Create more passive open spaces for “peace and quiet” pleasure
- Broaden recreation programming:
 - too much emphasis on programming for seniors
 - expand types of programs to include some of those offered at City Arts
 - consider partnerships with other organizations (such as Shepherding Center) to offer senior classes such as journaling and religion
 - encourage age integration in recreation programming
 - revive the “Free University” program present in Wichita 20 years ago (a model where volunteers with special expertise provided class instruction)

4. How should the City of Wichita pay for park and recreation services?

- All but one participant indicated they would consider a dedicated sales tax if it were approved by voters.
- All participants were strongly opposed to a general property tax increase, but most were willing to learn more about how a dedicated property tax would work.
- Participants voiced little support for realignment of current park facilities (possible closures) to better match resources to current needs.

- All participants were open to consideration of the following revenues sources:
 - increases in user fees (no specific percentage increase offered)
 - expansion of the acquisition of non-federal grants
 - increases in solicitation of private donations from local residents and organizations
 - provision of voluntary “check off” on state income tax filings for dedication of funds to local parks (would require change in state law).
- Requiring new development to “pay for itself” through park impact fees, similar to the practice in some nearby districts was mentioned by one participant.