



CITY OF WICHITA

PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE PLANNING PROCESS

SUMMARY OF MAYOR'S OUTREACH MEETING JUNE 2, 2007

City residents were invited by Mayor Carl Brewer to share their views related to city parks, recreation and open space on Saturday morning, June 2, at City Arts gallery. A total of 122 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 and Open Space (PROS) Plan;
- highlight current park assets in Wichita at large;
- 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 responses:

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

- Free and/or low-cost recreation programs
- Opportunities for learning
- Amenities for all ages
- Walking and bicycle paths
- Multi-use facilities
- City park department web site
- Large tracts of green space and natural trails
- Diversified sports facilities
- Riverside Park and other space that allows river access
- Parks well maintained with notable improvements in cleanliness and safety
- Parks that honor veterans
- Sedgwick County Park's size and diversity of activities
- Water features in existing parks
- Parks that have restroom access
- Facilities for public gatherings such as gazebos
- Opportunities for fishing

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

- Shortage of park land and facilities in northwest Wichita
- Shortage of parks in the outlying areas of the city
- Absence of smaller parks at the neighborhood level
- Overall insufficient resources dedicated to parks, recreation and open space in Wichita

- Shortage of facilities at specific parks
 - No handicapped fishing docks at Cruiser Lake
 - No shelters and facilities for youth at Herman Hill Park
 - General lack of facilities at Gove Park
- General shortage of facilities/amenities
 - Lack of picnic shelters
 - No open space areas that allow dogs
 - Absence of boat house
 - Shortage of skate facilities
 - No ATV parks in city
 - Poor lighting in some parks
 - Limited trails for walking/jogging
 - Shortage of public swimming pools
 - Lack of shade around playground equipment
- Park access limitations
 - Parks are “disconnected” – lack trails to connect parks
 - No access at 27th Street to Watson Park
 - Handicapped parking spaces are not sufficiently wide
 - Lack of general parking
 - Parks are not open on holidays
 - Swimming pool hours are too short
 - Lack of recreation services for children with disabilities
- Maintenance limitations
 - Grass mowing cycle is too long
 - Some parks lacking in general maintenance
 - Trash pick up is too infrequent
 - Fountains are not well maintained

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?

Responses were generated by participants and are listed in order of priority. The number to the right indicates how many participants identified it as one of their top three priorities.

1. Create more and accessible green space in community (20)
2. Create dog parks (15)
3. Increase city funding for maintenance of existing facilities and development of new facilities (14)
4. Create a BMX park and expand skate parks (14)
5. Create a new park near Elm Street (14)
6. Expand conversion of abandoned rail corridors to walking trails (rails to trails) (12)
7. Expand opportunities for participation in sports for children and families (11)
8. Expand access to river through creation of more trails (11)
9. Improve park maintenance, especially mowing (10)
10. Close/reallocate park facilities that have low usage (9)
11. Plant more trees throughout city (9)
 - Plant more 100-year trees (4)

12. Develop a student volunteer corps with a mission to pick up trash in parks (8)
13. Expand partnerships with schools, neighborhoods and YMCA for operations/maintenance (7)
 - Increase neighborhood “ownership” and pride in parks so that they will contribute volunteer support to maintenance and operations (7)
 - Expand solicitation of volunteers to help maintain parks
14. Initiate actions to increase public safety in all parks (7)
 - Restore park police services (4)
15. Build a permanent stage (amphitheater) in downtown area (7)
16. Develop trails/green space to connect existing parks (7)
17. Distribute park resources evenly throughout the city (5)
18. Repair existing basketball courts (5)
19. Build a municipal swimming pool in Riverside Park (5)
20. Expand public art in parks (4)
21. Create “clean” stations for dogs (4)
22. Create more access to hiking in the “big ditch” floodway (3)
23. Repair existing tennis courts (3)
24. Stimulate more pride in park resources (3)
25. Renovate the Girl Scout “Little House” in North Riverside park (2)
26. Develop a trail along 17th Street (1)
27. Remove the tennis dome in Riverside Park (1)
28. Add soccer fields to existing parks (1)

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

Participants were asked to indicate the funding sources they would favorably consider from a list of options offered by the facilitator. Options are listed in order of favorability, with the most favorable listed first. The number to the right indicates how many participants are open to considering it as a funding option.

- Dedicated sales tax (19)
- More public/private partnerships -- solicitation of more private dollars (17)
- Dedicated property tax (13)
- Impact fees on new development (12)
- General sales tax (7)
- Increased user fees (6)
- More non-federal government grants (4)
- General property tax (3)
- Realignment of resources (2)
- Dedication of infrastructure development dollars for green space (1)
- Hotel tax (1) (this option added by a participant) (1)