



# CITY OF WICHITA

## PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE PLANNING PROCESS

MAINTENANCE STAFF FOCUS GROUP

FEBRUARY 14, 2007

Park and facilities maintenance is an important factor in the public perception of Wichita's parks system, and, therefore, in its success. Key maintenance staff members were convened on February 14 to discuss strengths, weaknesses, visions, and opportunities for parks and recreation in Wichita, from the maintenance perspective. Participants identified a variety of maintenance-related strengths, especially capital improvements that have built playgrounds, put in parking and irrigation, and allowed for infrastructure improvements. Other strengths include:

- Interactive water elements
- Innovations on Riverwalk and in Old Town
- Bike trails
- Transportation alternatives
- Public golf courses
- Diverse resources
- Sports fields (albeit with limited funds)
- Obtaining great results with limited resources
- Intra- and interdepartmental cooperation
- Zone system of maintenance
- Technology improvements

Despite its strengths, many maintenance and facility maintenance issues have not been addressed. According to participants, despite many strengths, maintenance issues still exist within the system. In particular, staffing and funding for park maintenance should keep pace with the future growth of the park system. There is a need to create a plan for asset preservation, rather than reacting on an as-needed basis. Equipment, paths, vehicles, pavement—all of these must be maintained, or eventually replaced, on an established schedule with funding taken into account. Other needs and issues include:

- Choose quality over lowest price
- Adequate staffing and equipment
- Incorporate technology - the GPS unit and GIS staff
- Increased funding to address increased assets
- Prioritized, essential-driven spending
- Address vandalism, which increases at night and in spring
- Address right-of-way design and maintenance needs
- Improve turf care
- Attract better summer help – need to pay more, eliminate caps.
- Clarity amongst city departments about roles and responsibilities
- Use of employment service is helpful in terms of staff quantity, but staff quality suffers.
- Need to coordinate with flood control
- Need to establish care parameters
- Closer construction supervision
- Hire City landscape architect
- Refine ADA plan

Maintenance personnel identified the following additional needs to create a welcoming and highly valued park system:

- Increase and focus funding on critical needs
- Weed control with as few chemicals as possible
- Proper irrigation
- Rest periods for athletic fields
- Lighting improvements
- Water quality plan
- Pathway connectivity
- Creating local partnerships to avoid problems such as vandalism
- Increase mowing frequency
- Focus on the good of the City rather than special interests

In summary, maintenance personnel believe that they have maximized opportunities to “do more with less.” As a result, increased budget and staffing levels are needed to maintain aging facilities and keep up with future population growth and system improvements. New initiatives to utilize technology and implement practices that promote environmental sustainability would improve efficiency and environmental and community health. Community education is needed to increase citizens’ awareness of maintenance needs and that fact that “you get what you pay for,” to foster greater support for the park system.



Graphic Recording of 2-14-07 Maintenance Focus Group