



Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

The implementation of this update to the Parks and Recreation Master Plan of 2000 presents a number of intriguing opportunities that capitalize on the enthusiasm generated by Platte County citizens for their park system. This enthusiasm has fueled widespread support for the Guiding Principles of the Master Plan. These Principles that serve as the foundation are:



protecting our natural resources



providing health and wellness opportunities



creating safe recreation places for our children

This Master Plan is *citizen-focused; collaborative* with public, private, and not-for-profit partners; and intended to be a plan that is *sustainable* by protecting natural resources through the preservation of open greenspace and improving water quality. Partnerships will help leverage precious county resources for maintenance and planned improvements.

PLATTE COUNTY PROFILE

As a community, we continue to grow at a steady pace. During the life of this master plan (2010 to 2030), we will *grow by an additional 20,000 people*. It is fair to say that many of these new citizens will move to Platte County because of their preference for a lifestyle that features access to open spaces where wildlife and natural resources can be observed and enjoyed; where trails can be used to maintain one's health; and where recreation facilities provide families with fun and safe activities.

As we interact with our citizens we will continue to ensure that we are aware of community needs as Platte County becomes more *diverse*, ethnically, generationally, and socially. We will support special events and festivals in our parks as a great way to bring the community together. We realize we will need more community gathering areas, shelters, and diverse recreational opportunities in our parks and we look forward to meeting the special needs of County residents.

Recognized as a highly *educated community* whose *household income* is higher than the surrounding areas, we are aware that we should provide some services that are beyond the basic or entry level services that are typical of a county-wide park and recreation system. *Our services will be priced* according to the formula that *those who benefit should pay* on a sliding scale that recovers more revenue from those services *primarily benefiting the individual (specialized class)* to more support for those services *which benefit the community as a whole (special events/educational/youth)*.

"We are seeing needs coming out now that we also heard 10 years ago; these are 'second generation' issues that may now have come of age since a good base of parks is now in place."

– Michael Short, Community Recreation Focus Group, December 18, 2008

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“I give Platte County a perfect 10 when it comes to the job you have done with our parks, I’ve got goose bumps just thinking about the future opportunities.”

– NE Area Focus Group
October 7, 2008



REVIEW PROCESS OF PARK FACILITIES AND MANAGEMENT POLICIES

To determine our current status, we critiqued the condition of our existing facilities and management policies.

Our *existing facilities* include two community centers, five parks, fifteen miles of trails, and one golf course. Evaluations and recommendations for each of these facilities are included in this report. Our recommendations are as follows:

- Continue to develop extensions to trails along priority corridors such as the Missouri River;
- Create an Open Space Plan that targets a percentage of land in the County for protection based on its location relative to streams, rivers and areas that are environmentally sensitive, or vital for protecting our natural resources;
- Study expansion of community centers to include amenities such as larger aquatics and gymnasium space and flexible meeting/programming space;
- study a new community center for underserved, high growth areas of the County to address crowding at the existing centers;
- Support more youth programs in the County by encouraging cooperation and diversity among County partners to meet the needs of our children;
- Continue improvements to the Shiloh Springs Golf Course; increase play and revenue by improving course conditions and programming;
- Evaluate new partnerships for facilities that adhere to the Master Plan’s Guiding Principles

This report provides detailed comments about the importance of *partnerships* in Platte County. Tiffany Hills Park, the Springs Aquatic Center, and many other local park improvements were made possible through new collaborations with local cities and non-profit organizations. The review of management policies focused on the sustainability of these partnerships, including the Outreach and Partnership Grant Programs. The Plan contains important considerations that must be managed by the Park and Recreation Department as it allocates resources for future maintenance and planned improvements.

For the Plan to succeed, the County must:

- select partners who share a common mission;
- capture the critical elements of each partnership in a written agreement to be re-evaluated annually and meet regularly with partners to discuss opportunities to improve;
- ensure that partnership funds are used by the recipients to design, construct, and manage facilities at a level that meets pre-approved standards as stated in the agreements.



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CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

Following our review of existing facilities and management policies, it was apparent that a dynamic planning process should be implemented to reach out to all citizens who expressed an interest in getting involved to provide the feedback needed for “**informed decisions**” about the “**preferred future**” of the park system. To that end, we used not one or two citizen involvement venues, but **EIGHT**. The following is our procedure for ensuring a planning process that is *citizen-focused*:

- Create a *Citizens Committee and a Steering Committee*. Membership on these committees included elected officials, park board members, staff, and numerous citizens who have stepped forward over the years to profess their interest in anything that can be done to make Platte County a better place to live.
- *Interview* citizens identified as key stakeholders due to their positions as elected or appointed leaders, as a leader of a special interest group (partners), or who have special expertise in a field related to parks and recreation.
- Administer *statistically valid citizen surveys*, distributed to approximately 3,500 randomly selected households. From those surveys that were distributed, 773 were returned providing results that are at a precision of +/- 5.3% and a level of confidence of 95%. In other words, if the survey were distributed 100 times, the same results would be returned 95 times within a margin of error of +/- 5.3%.
- Meet with *26 focus groups* to “drill down” on current issues of importance including those issues in the statistically valid citizen survey. Participants in the focus groups were used to provide additional information that went beyond the responses to key questions and provide perspective on how our goals can be accomplished.
- Conduct two public meetings called **OPEN HOUSES**. These meetings were well attended and we were on hand with pad and pencil to record comments by those in attendance.
- Utilize our website, www.platteparks.org to extensively update citizens about the progress of the Master Plan and to solicit citizen comments on any matter of importance to them.
- Compose *newsletters* that were sent periodically to citizens who expressed an interest in learning more about the services provided by the Parks and Recreation Department to keep them informed about the development of the Master Plan.
- Distributed *comment cards* on the website and throughout the County to provide an additional opportunity for citizens to provide feedback. As with all other venues, comments were placed on the website for others to read and to stimulate additional discussion.

“Our citizens are telling us quality of life issues like better parks are of utmost importance to them”

*– Kathy Rose, Riverside Focus Group Member
October 24, 2008*



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Table: Citizen Involvement Statistics

Venue	Involvement
Unique website visitors	3,213
YouTube visitors	604
Responses to first citizen survey	404
Responses to second citizen survey	369
Attendees at first open house	80
Attendees at the second open house	50
Focus Group participants	125
Citizen Team members	12
Comment Cards	49
TOTAL	4,906





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GOALS

After critiquing the condition of our existing facilities and management policies, and learning directly from citizens about their preferences for their future park system, our objectives are as follows:

- preserve Platte County open space by acquiring land for conservation and recreation;
- protect and improve water quality and stormwater infrastructure to promote a healthy, sustainable community;
- expand the greenway trails network;
- create new and diverse trail experiences like horse trails, backpacking trails, paddle (canoe/kayak) trails, and mountain bike paths;
- enhance community parks by:
 - creating new master plans for community parks at land-banked, county-owned sites and development of them with high value amenities such as trails, playgrounds, dog parks, picnic areas, fishing areas, un-programmed open space, and special areas for music, arts, and cultural heritage sites while respecting the need for conservation
 - continuing the implementation of existing individual park site master plans at Platte Ridge Park, Green Hills Park, and Platte Purchase Park
- Study expansion opportunities for new community center facilities and amenities to address evolving needs and growth of community;
- improve Shiloh Springs Golf Club;
- create new recreational facilities designed especially for Platte County youth such as sports fields, and interactive playgrounds
- support positive sports and wellness programs that promote active learning and provide youth mentoring opportunities;
- create a sustainable park system by providing high quality maintenance, increasing levels of security by working with law enforcement, developing and implementing park planning, construction, maintenance, and operating standards;
- pursue partners who share a common vision for creating quality projects and programs such as by expanding the Outreach Grant Program and creating a volunteer corps;
- interact with citizens to ensure that community preferences are known and represented as resources are allocated.

