



Community Involvement Process

INTRODUCTION

Important to the planning process is the feedback provided by citizens. In fact, as priority projects are considered in this report, emphasis will be given to those projects which were mentioned in each of the citizen involvement venues and high priority will be given to those needs that citizens said were most important to them in each of the venues; e.g. focus groups, public meetings, citizen survey, steering committee meetings, citizen team meetings, park board meetings, etc.

One of the most important *values* upon which the goals in the initial parks and recreation master plan were developed in 2000 and updated in 2009 was that it be *citizen-focused*. As stated by County Commissioners and staff, Platte County will continue to actively involve its citizens in the success of the park system and constantly communicate the benefits and services provided through parks and recreation.

THE APPROACH

The approach to actively engage citizens in the 2009 update was very dynamic and included approximately 4,000 people. It included ten types of opportunities and options so that citizens could select the best way for them to express their preferences. Each of the opportunities and options is detailed below:

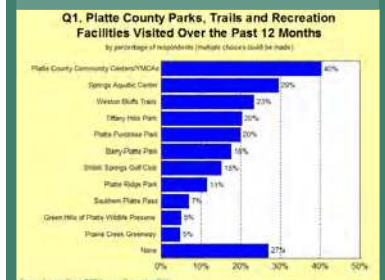
Individual Interviews of Key Stakeholders – The first step in the process was to interview County Commissioners and staff of the Parks and Recreation Department. The importance of these interviews as the first step was to ensure that the consultant team was knowledgeable of the key issues facing the Department. Awareness of the key issues was important as the consultant prepared for all subsequent community involvement meetings.

Statistically Valid Citizen Survey – A “Community Attitude and Interest Survey” was distributed to 2,000 randomly selected households in the summer of 2008. From that distribution, 405 surveys were returned. The results from the returned surveys provided decision-makers with statistically reliable data at a confidence level of 95% and a precision of +/- 4.9%. In other words, if the survey was done 100 times, the same results would be returned 95 times within a range of +/- 4.9%. All survey results are in the Appendix of this report.

Second Statistically Valid Citizen Survey – In April 2009 a second follow up survey was conducted to test the key goals of the preliminary master plan. Again, the survey was conducted to yield statistically valid results with a confidence level of approximately 95%. The survey questionnaire was sent to a combination of both citizens who had completed the first survey and a new sample pool of residents who had not previously participated. The results of the second survey indicated strong citizen support for key elements such as trails development, open space protection, and indoor recreation programs through the community centers. Citizens also expressed strong support for renewing the ½ cent parks and recreation sales tax, with 76% of residents either “very

“The number one question we get from prospective residents is: ‘Where is the pool and amenities center?’”

*– Developers Roundtable
Focus Group
November 14, 2008*



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supportive” or “somewhat supportive”, a 4% increase over the first survey conducted in August 2008.

Citizen Team Meetings – Members of the Citizens Team included active and knowledgeable stakeholders from all geographic areas of the County. The advantage of meeting with this group was to ensure that geographic preferences were made known to the consultant team.

Steering Committee Meetings – Members of the Steering Committee included County Commissioners and senior staff of the Parks and Recreation Department. The advantage of meeting with this group was to ensure that all phases of the planning process (the public involvement process, responsiveness to urgent issues, political ramifications, etc.) were in alignment with the vision of the group.

Public Meetings (Open Houses) – On two occasions, the public-at-large was invited to attend an Open House—one at the County Courthouse in Platte City and the other at the Community Center in Parkville. Each meeting was well attended by citizens who had an opportunity to visit with County Commissioners, Parks and Recreation Department Staff, Park Board Members, Citizen Team Members, Steering Committee Members, and Consultant Team Members. Comments were taken from citizens in a variety of ways; e.g. direct input into a computer, comment cards, and face to face communication.

Park Board – As appointed by the County Commission, members of the Park Board are entrusted with a very high level of responsibility as they work closely with Parks and Recreation Staff to develop policies which ensure that resources are being allocated in a manner which is consistent with the recommendations in this master plan update. The Park Board has been involved during this process as a “sounding board” as the plan has been developed.

Interactive Web Site – A web site (www.platteparks.org) was designed for the update of the master plan. The site was used to keep citizens informed by sharing meeting summaries from all meetings, by encouraging citizen feedback about their preferences, and for sharing various educational articles which served to educate the public about important elements of the park system.

Focus Groups – A very high level of emphasis was placed on focus group meetings. In fact, there were 26 during the planning process. Each focus group was carefully selected to ensure that special interest groups, existing partners, potential future partners, diverse age groups both young and old, and Federal and State Agencies were included. The three purposes for the focus groups were:

- to engage citizens in the process and create ownership
- to update attendees about the status of the master planning process with emphasis on the citizen survey results
- to learn about current projects that are going on around the County and to listen to their ideas and preferences regarding future parks and recreation needs in the community



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Comment Cards – At each venue, Parks and Recreation Staff distributed comment cards for citizens to use to provide feedback. Comments were routinely placed on the platteparks.org website for review by those who submitted them and for others to be aware of.

Explorer Newsletter – The *Explorer* Newsletter is a tool used by the Parks and Recreation Department to directly email to those residents who choose to be on the distribution list. It is sent out four times annually to approximately 1,000 households in the County in addition to being posted on the website. Its purpose is to keep citizens informed about current events within the park system.

