



PARKS AND RECREATION

10.1 - INTRODUCTION

The Parks and Recreation system for Independence is the responsibility of both the Parks and Recreation Department and the Planning Department. The Parks and Recreation Department has the primary responsibility for the operation and maintenance of the City parks and recreation programs. The Parks Department is funded jointly from the City's general fund and a public health and recreation levy passed by the citizens in 1968.

The planning for the parks system is a joint concern of both the Planning Department and the Parks and Recreation Department. The Planning Department is primarily responsible for the long range planning of the parks system, including updating of the Master Parks Plan. The Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for the short range planning, including implementation of the Master Parks Plan, and development of the parks and recreation programs.

10.2 - DESCRIPTION OF THE PARK AND RECREATION SYSTEM

The City of Independence has a relatively young Parks and Recreation system. The Parks and Recreation Department was established in 1946 at which time the Park system consisted of only two parks and one athletic facility totaling just 52 acres in size. Since 1946, the park system has grown to include 37 parks totaling more than 711 acres in size.

In addition to physical facilities, the Park and Recreation system includes numerous pro-

grams and activities designed to meet the needs of the community. These programs serve various age groups and interests and range in scope from athletics to the arts.

The Park and Recreation system provides services by means of physical facilities (parks), and programs and activities. The types of physical facilities include the following:

1) Playground Parks, which are less than ten acres in size and as small as a one acre lot, are used primarily as playgrounds for children and picnic areas for adults.

2) Neighborhood Parks, which are ten to thirty-five acres in size and are meant to provide playground facilities as well as facilities for organized sports activities for field games such as, softball, football, soccer and tennis

3) District Parks, which are thirty-five to one hundred acres in size and are meant to serve a wide age group with active and passive recreation areas. These parks include playground equipment, all weather multi-purpose courts, field game areas, picnic areas, and natural undeveloped areas.

4) Nature Parks, which consists of hiking trails, day camping and overnight camping for organized groups, interpretive programs and are intended to provide an educational experience.

The programs and activities offered fall under the following categories:

1) Sports (Baseball, Soccer, Basketball, Touch Football, Softball, etc.)

2) Arts and Crafts

- 3) Physical Fitness Programs
- 4) Dance Programs
- 5) Senior Program
- 6) City Theatre Programs (Children, Adults, and Senior Citizens)
- 7) Swimming

10.3 - OVERVIEW OF THE PARK AND RECREATION SYSTEM

Independence benefits both culturally and economically from its proximity to Kansas City. Independence is a part of the greater Metropolitan Kansas City area. As a result, Independence park standards have been developed through the Mid-America Regional Council in order to co-ordinate the recreational needs of the metropolitan area. The City currently uses these standards to fulfill the park and recreational needs of our community.

The metropolitan area's regional planning agency (The Mid-America Regional Council) has recommended thirty (30) acres of park land per thousand population for the metro area. This figure includes large, metro area parks of one-hundred (100) or more acres. Applying this standard after factoring in the acreage from the larger metro area parks would mean that the City of Independence should provide eleven (11) acres per thousand population or have 1,233 acres of park land to serve its current population. The City currently has 711 acres, meaning there is a 523 acre shortfall in meeting the park land standards. This shortage is spread equally throughout the City. Unfortunately, the additional acreage needed to serve the older sections of the City is very difficult and costly to acquire because suitably located vacant land is at a premium. As a result, the deficit in park land will have to be made-up in the newer

sections of the City. This means that those residents of the older sections will not enjoy the same access to parks as those in the newer sections.

In terms of accessibility to programs, most outdoor athletic activities, such as softball, and soccer leagues, are conducted at district parks. The City's three developed district parks have been sited in locations which provide relatively equal accessibility to all residents. Other programs, such as indoor athletic leagues and non-athletic activities such as arts and craft instruction are primarily offered at the Roger T. Sermon Community Center. The central location of this facility and the public transit system makes it readily accessible to most of the City's residents.

In addition to the district parks and the community center, the City contracts with the Independence School District for use of some of their indoor facilities. These sites allow the City to provide additional recreational services on the neighborhood level.

Many of the City's older parks were built before current "barrier free" criteria relative to accessibility for persons with disabilities were developed. Therefore, many of the City's older parks were not designed to be accessible to persons with disabilities. In some cases, for example, restrooms and other facilities were not available to persons with disabilities. Future plans include improving accessibility to all residents of the community, with some special emphasis and consideration being given to the elderly and persons with disabilities.

10.4 - PHYSICAL RESOURCES FOR RECREATION

The following three pages contains Table 10.41 which provides a list of and description of all physical recreation facilities which are part

TABLE 10.41 (CONT.)

Park/FacilityName Location Type	Year Acq.	Total Acres	Malat. Acres	Shelter Houses	Rest- Rooms	Ball Grills	Soccer Diamonds	Soccer Fields	Tennis Courts	Volleyball Courts	Concessions	Water	Playground
Cler-Mont 19009 Susquehanna Drive Playground	1973	4	4	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	N	N	Y
Curtis Park East Lexington Bridge Playground	1976	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	N	Y
Hiram Young Park Noland Road and Lexington Historic	1975	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	Y	N
Randall Park 509 Jennings Road Undeveloped/District	1972	165	150	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	N	Y
Sermon Center Park Truman Road and Hocker Playground	1976	2	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	N	N	N
Young Park 300 North Hocker Playground	1972	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	N	N	Y
French Acres Park Truman Road and Rogers Playground	1950	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	N	Y
Blackburn Park 17203 East R.D.Mize Road Playground	1972	7	7	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	N	N	Y
Bridger Junior High 2110 Speck Road Neighborhood	1970	37	29	0	0	0	5	4	0	0	N	N	N
George Owens Nature Park 1601 South Speck Nature Reserve	1972	85	6	2	2	2	0	0	0	1	N	Y	Y
John Van Hook Park Shrank Road and 35th District	1966	105	40	1	2	2	3	3	0	0	N	Y	Y
Little Blue Park 78 Highway and Ranson playground	1962	6	6	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	N	Y	Y
Beckett Park 27th and Cherokee Playground	1973	7	4	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	N	N	Y
Carriage Hills Park 41st and Coventry Playground	1969	3	1	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	N	N	Y
Sycamore Hills Park 15208 E. 39th Playground	1964	4	3	0	0	1	2	0	2	0	N	Y	Y
Crysler Park 23rd and Chrysler Neighborhood	1950	15	13	0	1	4	2	0	0	4	Y	Y	N
Santa Fe Park 2900 Santa Fe Road District	1971	45	39	2	2	4	3	0	12	0	Y	Y	Y
Cassell Park 31st And Hardy Playground	1980	4	4	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	N	N	N

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Bundshu Park 9th and Scott Neighborhood	1964	19	4	0	0	3	1	1	2	0	N	Y	Y
Charles Long Park Truman Road and Brookside Playground	1976	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	Y	N
McCoy Park 24 Highway and Delaware Neighborhood	1973	19	19	2	1	3	1	0	2	0	N	Y	Y
Mill Creek Park 1717 North River Boulevard District	1963	45	38	2	3	6	3	0	4	1	Y	Y	Y
Polly's Pop Park Maple and River undeveloped/Playground	1980	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	N	N
Bingham-Waggoner Mansion Pacific and Osage Streets Historic	1979	20	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	Y	N
Memorial Building Pleasant and Maple Historic	1925	1	1	1	5	0	0	0	0	2	Y	Y	N
Brady Park Delaware and Charles Streets Undeveloped/Playground	1972	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	N	N
Fairmont Park Norledge and Home Neighborhood	1964	19	15	1	1	10	0	0	0	0	N	Y	Y
Hink Park 24 Highway and Sterling Playground	1978	8	6	1	0	6	0	0	0	0	N	Y	Y
Saint Clair Park 24 Highway and Farley Undeveloped/Playground	1982	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	N	N
Chopin Hood Park 300 North trail Ridge Drive Neighborhood	1968	12	10	0	1	3	1	0	2	0	N	Y	Y
Dickinson Park 1700 Dickinson Road Playground	1977	7	5	1	0	4	0	0	1	0	N	Y	N
Dickinson Pool 1700 Dickinson Road Swimming Pool	1977	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	Y	Y	N
Sermon Community Center Noland and Truman Roads Community Center	1980	3	3	1	4	0	0	0	0	2	N	Y	N
Woodlawn Sea and Hocker Streets Playground	1950	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	N	Y	N
Benton Park Hayward and Crane Streets Playground	1973	6	6	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	N	N	Y

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Country Club Park 30th and Norton Playground	1952	6	5	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	N	Y	Y
Davis Park Arlington and Scarritt Neighborhood	1971	12	12	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	N	Y	N
Firehouse Park 36th and Sterling Undeveloped/Playground	1976	7	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	N	N
Grand Park 35th and Grand Undeveloped/Playground	1978	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	N	N
Roberts Park Blue Ridge Cut-off UndevelopedNeighborhood	1976	11	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	N	N

of the Independence Parks and Recreation system.

Major Strengths of the Recreation System

The Independence Park and Recreation System has a number of strengths. Among them are the following:

1. Distribution of parks. Independence has 37 parks that range in size from 1 acre to 165 acres. These parks are located throughout the community.

2. Sports facilities. The following parks provide outstanding sports facilities for the community:

1) Chrysler Stadium. One of the best base ball stadiums in the four-state area. Plus one additional ball diamond and 4 volleyball courts.

2) Mill Creek Park. Five Baseball Diamonds - provides fields for all ages. Four tennis courts and one volleyball court are available for area residents.

3) Van Hook Park. Three baseball diamonds and four excellent soccer fields, with bleachers, provide fields for

all age groups.

4) Santa Fe Park. Twelve tennis courts and 3 ball diamonds are available for area residents.

5) Cassell Park. Three ball diamonds are available for all age groups.

6) Little Blue Park. Two ball diamonds the are available for area residents.

7) Sermon Community Center. This indoor facility includes two volleyball courts and one basketball court that are available yearround for residents of Independence.

8) Memorial Building. This indoor facility provides yearround activities with two volleyball courts and one basketball court. for residents of Independence.

3. School facilities. In 1970 a joint agreement between the City of Independence and the Independence School District resulted in a contract between these two agencies for the use of school property for City recreational programs.

In 1972 this changed to include the installment of permanent park facilities on the grounds of four schools, which includes the athletic fields, for organized sporting events. Randall, Bridger Jr. High, Blackburn, and Sycamore Hills are the four schools. The City is able to use all of the school gyms for basketball. The school district has opened an indoor swimming pool.

Major Weaknesses of the Recreation System

Despite its strengths, the Independence Park and Recreation system suffers from a number of weaknesses. Primarily, the City does not have enough park land. As stated earlier, at least an additional 500 acres of park land is needed to meet established metro area standards. Many of the existing parks are in need of various degrees of rehabilitation. The City does not have a large public swimming pool. There are no ice skating facilities. A six court tennis complex is needed in the eastern part of the City, and more community centers are needed.

Another major weakness is that maintenance is inadequate. As a result, over time the quality of the facilities have deteriorated. The City needs to provide better maintenance and rehabilitation to improve the quality of the facilities. This is particularly true in some of the older neighborhoods where park and recreation programs and facilities are more critical to the elderly, persons with disabilities, and members of low and moderate income and minority populations.

Historical Sites that Provide Recreation Opportunities

Independence has a rich and colorful history. Its past has left it with numerous historically significant sites and two of these are currently managed as part of the Independence

Park and Recreation system.

- The Bingham Waggoner Estate, 313 W. Pacific, Independence, Missouri, National Register of Historic Places, 1969.

- Vaile Mansion, 1500 N. Liberty, Independence, Missouri, National Register of Historic Places, 1969.

The National Register status of each site, the ongoing restoration and rehabilitation efforts at both sites, and the usage and/or activities at each site are managed by the Planning Department, Historic Preservation Division. The properties are managed toward the concurrent goals of protection, conservation, appropriate development, and perpetual preservation of each property. The development of each property is oriented specifically for the individual historical goals of each property. Coupled with these concerns, all proposed usage, development activities, restoration and rehabilitation issues, or other activities which may impact these properties, are coordinated with the appropriate State and Federal agencies, before any proposed activities of this nature are undertaken.

As two separated tracts of land, these two parks combine to provide approximately twenty-two acres of property available to the public during normal operating hours. Open spaces provide rest areas for visitors to the sites, parking, and picnic areas for special functions.

Both properties are important to the community in that they are located in low income neighborhoods and, therefore, prevent blight, promote neighborhood development, and preserve the communities heritage.

10.5 - PRIVATE RESOURCES

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10.5 - PRIVATE RESOURCES

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cilities in the City of Independence that are available to the general public. These include swimming pools, tennis courts, golf courses, gymnasiums and shooting ranges. These private commercial and not-for-profit facilities fill voids in recreational service that the City is unable to fill. Consequently, they are an important part of the total community recreation system.

Private Recreation Facilities for Public Use

There are a number of non-profit recreation agencies serving the Independence Community.

The facilities include the following:

- All American Fitness. Racquetball, weights, aerobics, outdoor pools, gymnastics, dry saunas, whirlpool, and track.

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- Great American. Aerobics, gymnastics, ballet, handicapped class, and aikido.

- Bally's. Indoor jogging track, competition swimming pool, aerobics, life cycles, saunas, steam and whirlpool, weight room, and racquetball.

- Blue Valley Activities Center. Open gym, meeting rooms, athletic field, T-ball, and coaches pitch diamond.

- Y.M.C.A. Gym, basketball, volleyball, indoor soccer, athletic field, football, tee ball, baseball, swimming pool, open swimming, water volleyball water-acqua fitness, water exercises for muscle tone, sauna, karate, baby

Table 10.51

LEAGUE	NO. OF TEAMS	NO. OF PARTICIPANTS	FACILITY USAGE
Independence Youth Athletic Association	184	2208	Sermon Center, Memorial Building, and 22 Indep. Public School Gyms.
Independence Men's Basketball Association	12	120	Memorial Building Gym.
Independence Volleyball Association	52	468	Memorial Building
Kiwanis Baseball	9	135	Crysler Stadium and Santa Fe Park
American Legion Baseball	3	45	Crysler Stadium and Santa Fe Park
Soccer Association of Independence	35	420	Van Hook Soccer Complex
Independence Girls Softball Association	33	495	Bridger, Little Blue, Mill Creek, Van Hook, and Santa Fe Parks.
Independence Adult Athletic Association	120	1440	Van Hook and Santa Fe Parks.
Ban Johnson Baseball	1	25	Crysler Stadium
Queen City Athletic Association	126	1512	Mill Creek, Little Blue, Santa Fe, Cassel, McCoy, Bridger Parks and Chrysler Stadium.

classes, Summer Day Camp (ages five to 15), Overnight lock-ins, and weight nautalist.

- Boys and Girls Club. Gym, game rooms, library, arts and crafts, small group club room, weight room, playground, athletic field, and summer camp.

- Mademoiselle Fitness Center. Swimming pool, indoor tracks, weoght machines, exercise bike, aerobics, and wet and dry sauna.

Organized Athletic Programs

There are a number of recreational programs offered in Independence. While City Park and Recreation facilities are used by each program, the programs themselves are administered by various athletic associations and organizations within the City. Table 10.51, on the preceeding page, provides a listing of each program along with the number of teams and participants and the City facility that the program uses.

Jackson County Parks

Jackson County presently operates 22 parks with over 22,000 acres. Hill Park, Adair Park and part of the Little Blue River Trace, are located within the corporate limits of Independence. The county provides maintance for all of their park facilities.

10.6 - REHABILITATION ISSUES

There are both parks and recreation buildings in need of rehabilitation. Two of our community recreation buildings need improvement and rehabilitation and several of the parks and open spaces need restoration and rehabilitation.

The division between the need for new areas and facilities and the need for rehabilitat-

ion is fairly clear, with one major exception. There is a need for new community buildings to service target populations in older urban neighborhoods that are presently not being serviced by facilities. With that exception, the new facilities and parks are needed in the newer suburban areas of the community and rehabilitation is needed in the older neighborhoods. In general, it is more cost efficient to rehabilitate an existing park or facility than to build a new one. We are also fortunate in that some of our existing parks provide adquedate service and they could not be replaced today without considerable disruption to the urban fabric. Displacement and relocation are not attractive alternatives, and several of the parks are really where they ought to be.

What Area Parks Need Rehabilitation?

The Park Department has recently completed an inventory and analysis of existing parks and has developed a system wide list of needed rehabilitation projects. The following list indicates the existing park name and the type of improvement required.

Year Acquired

1973 - Benton Park - Six (6) acres.

- Shelter house needs painting.
- Playground equipment needs to be replaced. Most playground equipment has been removed.

1973 - Beckett Park - Seven (7) acres.

- Playground equipment has been removed and needs to be replaced.

1979 - Bingham Waggoner - Nineteen (19) acres.

- Needs a new fence around the main building and carriage house.

1964 - Bundschu Park- 19 Acres.

- Replace playground equipment

that has been removed.

- Renovate the exercise trail.
- New park benches and picnic tables
- four (4) each.

1952 - Country Club Park.

- New park benches and picnic tables
- six (6) each.

1976 - Curtis Park - Three (3) acres.

- New picnic tables and park benches
- three (3) each.

1977 - Dickinson Park - 42 acres.

- Shelter house needs to be renovated and needs five (5) new picnic tables.

1964 - Fairmount Park - 19 acres.

- Renovation of shelter house.
- Renovate restrooms to make them handicapped accessible.
- Replace the playground equipment. Ten (10) picnic tables, five (5) benches, four (4) cooking grills need to be replaced.

1974 - Firehouse Park - Seven (7) acres.

- We have a small 3/4 acre lake that needs to be renovated.
- Need five (5) picnic tables and six (6) park benches in shelter house.

1962 - Little Blue Park - Six (6) acres.

- New fences around two athletic fields.
- New backstops on two (2) athletic fields.
- Replace all of the old playground equipment.
- Pave the parking lot.
- Rebuild the concession stand and restrooms.

1973 - McCoy Park - 19 acres.

- Renovate all shelter houses.
- Replace all lighting along walkways and around play areas and shelter house.
- Replace playground equipment that has been removed.
- Rebuild restrooms that have been destroyed by vandalism.
- Replace two (2) volleyball courts that were removed to put in an additional six (6) horseshoe courts.
- Replace four (4) cooking grills.
- Replace six (6) picnic tables.
- Install ten (10) park benches.
- Renovate two (2) tennis courts.

1963 - Mill Creek Park - 45 acres.

- Renovate all restrooms.
- Install new electrical system in the two (2) shelter houses.
- Replace the backstops and fencing around No. 1 and No. 2 athletic fields.
- Twenty (20) new picnic tables.
- Twenty (20) new park benches.
- New bleachers (two sections) for No. 3 athletic field.
- Repair parking lots.

1972 - George Owens Park - 85 acres.

- New roof for the lodge and lower shelter house.
- New furniture for the lodge.
- Renovate the lower shelter house and restrooms.
- Correct erosion problem that is causing the bay lake to fill with silt.

1972-80 Randall Park - 166 acres.

- Build eighteen hole golf course.

1971 - Santa Fe Park - 45 acres.

- Rebuild the twelve (12) tennis courts at this location.
- Renovate the restrooms.
- Build a new concession stand.
- Replace the lighting system on the

- two (2) athletic fields.
 - Renovate the restrooms and bleachers.
 - New playground equipment is needed.
 - Repair parking lot.
- 1964 - Sycamore Hills Park - four (4) acres.
 - New playground equipment is needed.
 - Build two (2) sand volleyball courts on the tennis courts that can no longer be played on.
- 1966 - Van Hook Park - 105 acres.
 - Replace bridge between the south side of park and the north side of park over a creek.
 - Repair the park roads and parking lot.
 - Need playground equipment for the north side of the park.
- 1972 - Young Park Four (4) acres.
 - Needs new playground equipment.
 - Repair basketball court and renovate the basketball courts lighting system.
- 1938 Chrysler Stadium - 15 acres.
 - Replace the present lighting system.
 - Renovate the bleachers that were built in 1938.
 - Build a new restroom facility.
 - Install lights on the No. 2 athletic field.
- 1926 - Memorial Building
 - The gym floor needs to be replaced.

- The roof has a major leak that needs attention.
- New backboards for the gym.
- Renovation of the restrooms and showers.
- We need to install a handicapped restroom on the first floor.
- Renovation of the building's electrical system.
- New rugs in the office area.
- Rebuild racquetball court.

10.7 - CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND ISSUES

The City of Independence has several problems in its park and recreation system. Many of them stem from the lack of resources, both fiscal and human. Funds have been inadequate to keep up the pressures of service and facility demand and reductions in staff levels that have not been restored hamper the program. Over the years, private groups and associations have taken on the burden of providing recreation programs in both public and private facilities and the City's role is to provide some facilities and scheduling.

Significant problems exist in some of the existing facilities and parks. Several of the more urban, neighborhood oriented parks have been allowed to deteriorate due to lack of resources and vandalism has really taken its toll on some of our facilities. Several of the parks no longer have functioning restrooms, for example, and the structures sit and deteriorate and continue to be vandalized. As the level of service declines, so does the participation; and as use declines, vandalism increases since there are fewer persons present to act as a deterrent. Several of these parks are in our more densely populated urban neighborhoods, which also contain significant target populations such as the elderly, low and moderate income, minority

groups and youth.

The City has set aside some CDBG funds to begin to rehabilitate some of our parks, but more resources are needed. Rehabilitation of existing facilities is a top priority for future park activities.

Several of our neighborhoods are presently not served by multi-purpose recreation facilities and our public transportation system is not adequate to substitute for access to the facilities. We need to develop at least three new public recreation facilities to meet the needs of our older neighborhoods. Private groups also need the resources to be able to open and operate satellite facilities in additional areas not presently being served. Two of our recreation buildings need rehabilitation and in one case expansion. These buildings are presently being used at or near capacity and there are conflicts between target groups for some of the facilities. The rehabilitation of these existing facilities will be a very high priority for future activities.

At the present time there is some undeveloped and underdeveloped park space. We need to be able to convert some of our vacant lots to parks and we also need to be able to further develop some that have only a minimum of facilities and equipment available. These properties will serve both the parts of the community that contain our target populations, but some of our newer suburban areas as well. The development of present holding will be important in future activities.

The City of Independence does not have the resources to provide all the services it is being asked to provide. Over the years, the City has not been able to take advantage of various grants and related programs to take some of the strain off its available resources. The City is beginning to look outside for assistance on a variety of fronts which will help us revitalize several of our older declining neighborhoods.

The same neighborhoods that need revitalization and rehabilitation of parks have other "social" problems that need to be addressed. The City is committed to begin to make a difference in these areas.

10.8 - GOALS FOR THE SYSTEM

Goals as Identified in Existing City Comprehensive Plans

The City's Park Plans have been prepared by the Planning Department in conjunction with the Parks and Recreation Department, which provides continuity between the two related, but distinct planning processes. The two efforts have generally been based on common goals, however, they have been different in focus and detail, due to the nature of the Scopes of both endeavors.

The City's Comprehensive Plan, as amended, identified several goals for the Master Plan that are related to parks and recreation, for example:

"To improve the physical environment of the Community as a setting for human activities-to make it more functional, beautiful, decent, healthful, interesting, and efficient."

The Plan also established several Goals for the City as a Whole, which deal with the role of parks and recreation within the community. In reviewing these, the plan advocated the creation of a healthful urban environment, which would provide a safe, secure, and comfortable place in which to live and enjoy both mental and physical health, which included parks and recreation areas. In particular, the following Goal for Leisure Time was adopted. "LOCALIZE LEISURE TIME ACTIVITIES"-A system of parks and open spaces should be created and maintained on both a community and neighbor-

hood basis. Provisions should also be made for other types of leisure activities such as continuing education and training for adults. Leisure time activities should be easily accessible to all residents.

The Plan also advocated utilization of the Neighborhood Concept as a basis for further "post war" development. An integral part of this concept includes the inclusion of neighborhood parks, playgrounds and open spaces. The City has followed these concepts in the development of new subdivisions.

Goals as Identified in Park Master Plans

As mentioned, the Master Park Plans were developed by the Planning Department which provided for good continuity and coordination between the two departments. The Park Plans were based in part on Standards and Criteria that were developed in the Kansas City Metropolitan area by several organizations, KA-MO-PAR, the Kansas-Missouri Parks Association; Mid-America Regional Council. These groups, along with the planning efforts of Jackson County, of which Independence is the County Seat, provided the frame work for much of the City's Park planning efforts.

One of the City's goals, as related to parks, is to achieve the standard of thirty acres of park land per thousand population for the Kansas City Metropolitan Region. Independence adopted, as a goal for community based parks, the goal of eleven acres per thousand population. This is based in part on the Jackson County Park Plan that recommends that major parks, those over one hundred acres, be developed by the County without regard to corporate limits.

The goals, as adopted in the Master Park Plan, however, do not stop at acreage. The Plan sets as part of its goals, the convenient location and meeting a variety of needs. The plan clearly states that...."a park that does its

job has to be more than a random collection of vacant parcels."

The plan therefore established as a goal, the development of different types of parks, which would include District Parks, Neighborhood Parks, and Playgrounds. The City has also entered into a joint agreement with the Independence School District, the largest, but one of only five that serve the present corporate boundaries, to develop permanent parks on the grounds of some of the district's elementary schools. To date, there have been several projects completed under this agreement.

Goals for Present Park Lands

Several of our present park sites have been allowed to deteriorate, just as have the surrounding neighborhoods. One goal is to revitalize existing neighborhoods through the rehabilitation of existing park lands and facilities. Another Goal is to better maintain these facilities after the implementation of the rehabilitation plans. Another Goal is to increase funding to allow for better day-to-day operations of existing facilities. Another Goal is to help meet the growing demands for recreation programing.

Another set of Goals for existing park lands centers around the development of previously undeveloped-vacant sites. Newer residential developments in Independence generally contain middle and upper income families, while the existing older parts of the community tend to house low and moderate income families. The pressures for allocation of limited resources will be very strong and the newer areas might exert sufficient pressure to have funds allocated in their direction. Therefore, in the future, existing park lands should be developed before the City allocates any of it's limited resources to the acquisition and/ or development of newer park properties.

Since, several of our target populations generally reside in the older portions of the

community, there are some specific goals which address their needs. Older neighborhood parks were built prior to the time when care and attention were given to the needs of the elderly and the disabled. One specific goal is to make parks that undergo rehabilitation more accessible and usable to these groups. Buildings and facilities should be constructed to provide maximum accessibility, with appropriate interior furnishings and exterior ramps and other spaces designed with inclusion in mind. Specialized facilities, such as "trails for the elderly" should also be considered for inclusion in parks which serve these populations.

Goals for Future Park Land

The Comprehensive Plan update has evaluated the park and recreation needs for portions of the City which have been annexed since the last Plan was adopted. Facilities to serve future populations in these areas have been identified. All facilities should consider special target groups, such as elderly and persons with disabilities when broad parameters for future facilities are determined.

There are several areas with unique environmental or topographic features in previously unincorporated eastern portions of Independence. Special attention should be given to protecting these features. Jackson County has made some effort to preserve open space in the Little Blue Trace, however, facilities to support this endeavor are very limited. Where possible, the City should seek to improve and enhance the beginnings made by the County. Additional facilities, trails, parking lots, access points, educational materials, interpretive and historical information, and other additions need to be provided.

The requirement of mandatory dedication of park and open space as a part of the subdivision process will reduce the need to acquire new park land in the developing portions of the City. Cooperation with the various

school districts that serve the City has yielded some positive results and the number of joint use facilities should be increased.

Overall Goals for the Recreation System

The primary goal for the recreation system is that all residents of the community, especially those target groups, such as; persons with disabilities, the elderly, low income, and minority persons, should be met either by public not-for-profit or private providers. The City should facilitate the provision of reasonable recreation services by other providers however and whenever possible. The goal is the service and not who provides it.

A long range goal of the Parks and Recreation Department is to add three additional multi-purpose recreation facilities. These facilities should serve portions of the community which presently do not have already access to existing facilities.

Another goal is to provide satellite facilities in older neighborhoods which generally contain low income youth. Independence has a surplus of existing commercial properties, some of which are in or near areas where target populations of low income and moderate income youth reside. Some of these properties could be converted to "store front" multi-purpose recreation-community centers. These facilities could also serve the elderly, persons with disabilities and other identifiable groups. Since one of the City's recreation program goals is to facilitate the provision of services to our residents, an effort should be made to find funds that could be used to underwrite these efforts.

A related goal is to provide and support private efforts to improve recreational programs to serve every citizen of the community. Joint sponsorship and development of facilities and programs which expand service is a goal for the City. In past years, private groups

have added greatly to the quality of life in our community by developing facilities and sponsoring programs that serve the community. Our goal is to improve the level and quality of services provided by this partnership and to expand recreation programs to all citizens.

10.9. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Planning Department has conducted interviews with several recreation specialist in the community as a part of this work task. These professionals have different points of view, as certainly is to be expected. In addition, Planning Department Staff who worked on all or most of the previous Master Park Plans have provided input.

For purposes of organization, the Recommendations are grouped by functional or programmatic categories.

Recreation Programs

The City's Park and Recreation Department would like to open three additional multi-purpose recreation facilities in neighborhoods that are presently not being served and in which the resident populations do not have access to either facilities or adequate public transportation. There are existing buildings which could be converted and/or rehabilitated to accommodate recreation facilities. Private sector providers would also like to open additional satellite facilities in some of these neighborhoods. They have a good working arrangement with the City's Recreation Department and it is hoped that a public-private cooperative effort can be developed to expand recreational opportunities in these target areas.

Rehabilitation of Existing Park and Open Spaces

The City has never had a fully developed Park System. Many of the holdings presently in

the park system have no facilities and receive only periodic maintenance. They need to be developed as park, recreation and/or open spaces. Other vacant city property could also be developed for park space, if resources were available. Future activities should include the identification of these holdings as parks.

Some of our facilities that have been developed are in need of major repair and improvement. Several parks that had restrooms and other facilities have been severely vandalized and those facilities are no longer working. Several of the parks have had all the fixtures removed and only the empty shells of the buildings remain. In others, pavillions have been destroyed, playground equipment ruined and tables and benches destroyed. It is recommended that in several of the parks that serve some of our more urban neighborhoods, these parks be rebuilt and reopened. A list of several parks and their needs is included in Section 10.6 of this chapter.

This category also should include the re-establishment of programs that have been eliminated. For example, one of our nature parks no longer offers educational activities, as it once did. Many of the facilities which supported these programs should be restored and rehabilitated so that the programs could be re-instituted.

Park and Open Space facilities as part of new residential development

It is recommended that the City implement the proposed mandatory dedication of park and open space land ordinance. This would provide park land or an in lieu of payment which could be used for park and recreation facilities to serve the neighborhoods in the area of the new developments.

Acquisition of new park and open space areas

Eastern Independence contains some really

unique and beautiful areas of heavily wooded and rolling to rugged topography. Several areas afford magnificent views of not only the City, but far reaches of the metropolitan area. Some of these vistas should be preserved and developed as public open spaces. Other unique areas should be acquired for future development before they are no longer available. The acquisition of some of these areas would be compatible with existing holdings and facilities developed either by the City or Jackson County.

Provision of additional for profit private sector facilities

At the present time, additional facilities are needed to serve the general population. Due to the nature of the facilities, they could be provided by the private sector. These facilities would include, but certainly not be limited to services such as travel trailer campgrounds, golf facilities, year round and indoor swimming, racquetball and health clubs, and "high tech" physical fitness centers. Many of our communities recreation and exercise needs are being met by the private sector. It is recommended that additional facilities be constructed to improve the level of service available to residents of the community.

Special purpose facilities should be developed

Current trends in recreation have imposed new demands for services and/or facilities on local units of government as well as others. Facilities such as exercise courses, biking trails, jogging paths, grass ski slopes, water parks, skateboard parks, executive golf, and others. As the need for facilities changes, which it continues to do, these needs should be evaluated and integrated into appropriate planning studies and documents.

Facilities for special populations should be provided

Independence is currently reviewing the

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements to provide accessibility to persons with disabilities. Future park projects will include the new ADA requirements and provide access for this group of people.

Low-income day care and recreation facilities

There is a significant need in our community for day care and recreation to serve low income and "shelter" children. None of our private or public providers presently accommodate this population group. In some instances, the parent is unable to receive counseling, job training, or actively seek employment because there is no facility to care for the children. In other instances, because of inadequate transportation and the absence of facilities, children of low income families are denied access to adequate public recreation. Provisions should be made to develop programs and facilities that would respond to these needs.

Continued cooperation with other public agencies, such as school districts, should be continued: Independence is served by five separate school districts, which range from the most urban in the metropolitan area, Kansas City, Missouri; to probably the most rural, Ft. Osage. Cooperation with these operating units can lead to further utilization of existing facilities and the development of expanded programs. Swimming pools, gyms, tracks, exercise facilities, and others could be enhanced and made available to the general public at probably lessor cost than the facilities could be duplicated. In addition, programs could be developed to serve the residents of the community that the operating units may not be able to develop or operate, for various reasons. Closer cooperation in program development and facility planning will benefit the community.

Park and Recreation Land Area Requirements

Our park and recreation needs have been far greater than our ability to finance them for

a number of years. Independence currently has a total of 711 acres of park land. With the 65 acres of developed county park land that serve as a neighborhood park and district park, the 313.8 acres available vacant land that could be acquired for recreational use, the 560.8 acres of undeveloped county park land along the Little Blue Trace, and the 368.5 acres of existing private facilities and land, the cities park requirements could be achieved.

Table 10.91 on page 10-17 reflects the park land area requirements by neighborhood and councilmanic districts. The shortage of park land is spread equally throughout the city. It should be noticed that the number of acres of available vacant land in the older sections of Independence has been declining in recent years. If Independence is to maintain the minimum park land requirements for all areas of the city this land needs to be acquired. Development could follow at a slower pace, as funds become available in the future.

At the present time the city provides 261 acres of playground and neighborhood park land for recreational use. To meet the minimum park land requirements for playgrounds and neighborhood parks, as recommended by the Mid America Regional Council, we need an additional 298.3 acres. There are 175.6 acres of vacant undeveloped land available in the the older developed portion of the city that should be aquired to meet the recreational needs of the community. This additional park land coupled with the 25 acres of county park land located in Neighborhood 41 and the 367.5 acres of optional park land coupled with the 25 acres of county park land located in Neighborhood 41 and the 367.5 acres of private recreational land would fullfill the requirements:

The total number of acreas of existing district park land falls short of the requirements by 224.7 acres. There are 138.2 acres of vacant undeveloped land available in the older developed portion of the city. This land coupled

with the 45 acres of county district park in neighborhood 26 and the 368.5 acres of private recreational land would meet the minimum district park land requirements.

Located in the eastern undeveloped portion of Independence is a linear county park and flood control system known as the Little Blue Trace. There are approximately 560.8 acres of county land along the Little Blue Trace that could be developed to fullfill the district park requirements of the eastern portion of Independence. This coupled with the 368.5 acres of private recreational land and the proposed park and open space dedication of land, as part of every new subdivision, all park land area requirements would be fullfilled.

The remaining stumbling block to complete our recreational land area requirements is the financing of the development and continued maintenance of Independence's park and recreation system. Additional funding sources and mechanisms along with enhancments to the existing funding sources should be explored.

The Park Service Area map, Figure 10.91 on page 10-18 indicates the area of the community that is served by each park type. This is a generalized service area based on the standards, as recommended by the Mid-America Regional Council. Due to the shortage of park land in some neighborhoods a few neighborhood parks and district parks serve beyond the half mile radius and mile radius service area. Also, some of the programs and athletic fields available at certain parks tends to draw people from other areas of the city. The playgrounds tend to only serve the quarter mile service area in their particular neighborhood.

The park land acreage that was indicated as available vacant land for park use has been located on the map and shown as either a playground, neighborhood park, or a district park with the corresponding service area.

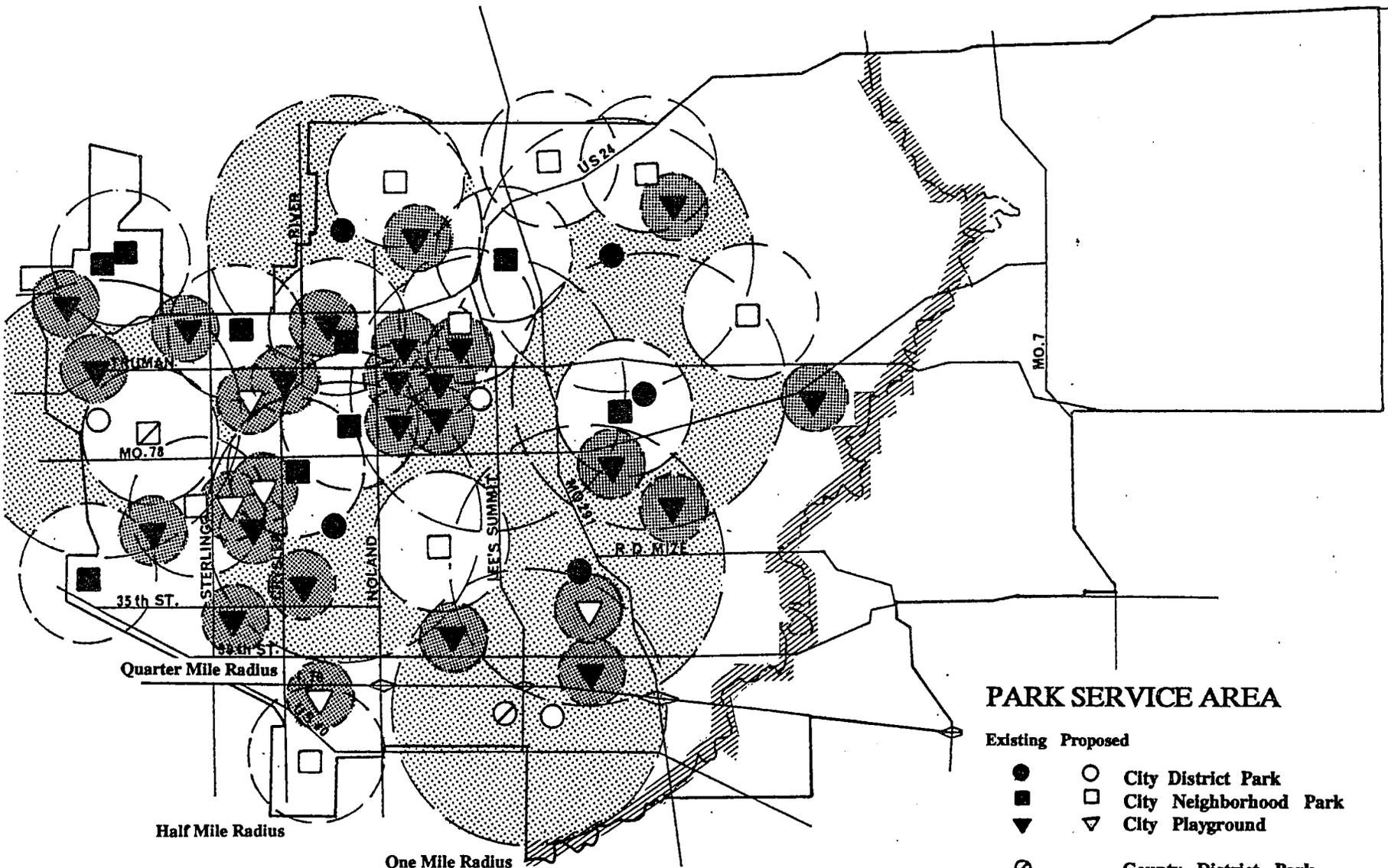
TABLE 10.91

PROPOSED PARK AND RECREATION LAND USE AREA REQUIREMENTS BY COUNCILMANIC DISTRICT

Councilmanic Districts	Neighborhood District	Population By Neighborhood	Existing Park and Recreation Land in Acres					Required Neighborhood Park & Playground Land In Acres		Required District Park Land In Acres	
			City Neighborhood & Playground & Park	District Park	County Park	Private Recreation	Required Acres	Additional Acres Needed that are Available	Required Acres	Additional Acres Needed	
1	1	2187	31				10.9				
1	2	958	2				4.8				
1	3	1870	2				9.3				
1	4	1363	8				6.8				
1	5	2383					11.9				
1	9	2282	19				11.4				
1	10	4001	2				20	5			
1-2	13	1827					9.1	15			
1-2	14	3675	7	45			18.3				
1-2	15	2100	22				10.5				
1-2	16	3103	22	1		19.1	15.5				
1	40	1145					5.7				
1	41	2161			25		10.8		174.3	78.2	
District Total		29,055	115	46	25	19.1	145	20	174.3	78.2	
2	21	1480					7.4				
2	22	1935	7				9.6	10			
2	23	4469	12	3			22.3		60	60	
2	27	1571	12				7.8				
2	28	1256					6.2				
2	32	1761					8.8	10			
2	33	608					3				
2	34	4556		165		5	22.8		95.2		
2	35	3583	4				17.9	20			
2	36	1470					7.3	10			
2-3	47	74			22						
2	48	326			73.4		1.6				
2	49	2781			44		13.9				
District Total		25,870	35	168	139.4	5	128.6	50	155.2	60	
3	24	3487					17.1	20			
3-4	25	5729	4				28.6				
3-4	26	3066			40	31.8	15.3				
3	29	5368		105		34.2	26.8		105		
3	30	2983	3				14.9	5			
3	31	3133				27.5	15.6				
3-2	37	2853	37	85		10	14.2				
3	38	4970	20		132.2	10	24.8		65		
3	39	10			66						
3	43	307					1.5	36.2			
3	44	640			25		2.7				
3	45	546			66	130.5	3.5				
3	46	708			132.2		3.2		33.8		
District Total		33,800	64	190	461.4	244	168.2	61.2	203.8	0	
4	6	2232				97.7	11.1	10			
4	7	2162	15				10.8				
4	8	1284				2.7	6.4				
4	11	4218	6				21	15.7			
4	12	1781	7				8.9				
4	17	3169	19	45			15.8		141.4		
4	18	3168					15.8				
4	19	1932					9.6	3.7			
4	20	2159					10.8	15			
4	42	1471					7.3				
District Total		23,576	47	45	0	100.4	117.5	44.4	141.4	0	
City Total		112,301	261	449	625.8	368.5	559.3	175.6	673.7	138.2	

Figure 10.91

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PARK SERVICE AREA

Existing Proposed

- City District Park
- City District Park
- City Neighborhood Park
- City Neighborhood Park
- ▼ City Playground
- ▽ City Playground
- ⊙ County District Park
- ⊞ County Neighborhood Park
- ▨ County Little Blue Trace



Independence, Missouri