

May 26, 2009 FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:



County Commission Adopts New Park Master Plan *Citizens to Decide Parks Sales Tax Renewal on August 4th*

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Culminating a yearlong process, the Platte County Commission adopted a strategic vision and goals plan at its May 14th, 2009 meeting for the Parks and Recreation Department. The plan, called the Park System Master Plan, was developed using significant public input from area residents and community leaders.

“This is a citizen-driven Plan” commented Betty Knight, Platte County Presiding Commissioner. “We listened to what the public told us was most important, and built a plan around their priorities.”

The new updated Plan is intended to guide County decisions for the next ten to twenty years with three key principles:

- To protect valuable natural resources in Platte County,
- To provide quality health and wellness opportunities for citizens, and
- To create new safe recreation places for children

The goal for implementation of the new plan is to create a park system that is sustainable, collaborative, and citizen focused. Specific action items for the County to implement have been included in the plan for each principle area. Key initiatives are to build more walking and biking trails, to protect more open space in Platte County, primarily along streams and rivers for conservation and passive recreation, and to expand opportunities for wellness at the community centers. Also of high

importance was for more facilities to be built specifically for children, like interactive playgrounds, and to keep all county park facilities well maintained.

In total, more than 4,000 individuals were involved in the planning process, and their input formed the basis of the plan. Specifically:

- Two open house forums were held, one in Platte City and one in Parkville
- Two citizen surveys were conducted, one at the beginning of the process to gain general feedback and one at the end to test the results
- Twenty-six focus groups convened in summer and fall of 2008 to provide ideas for specific policy areas and recreational needs and discuss partnership opportunities for each
- A website was created for the project that provided information throughout the planning term and also gave citizens an instant opportunity to send feedback to Commissioners

With the new plan adopted, Second District Commissioner Jim Plunkett commented on the next steps: *"I've listened to the citizens in my District, and they want the opportunity to vote on continuing funding for this Plan through a renewal of the dedicated sales tax. I think they should have that opportunity"*. First District Commission Kathy Dusenberry agreed, stating *"I hear people from all over the county saying that parks and open space are important to them. Dedicated funding is vital to keeping this program going strong"*.

On May 21st the County Commission unanimously passed an Ordinance placing the issue before the voters. The public vote is scheduled to be held on August 4th, 2009. The question on the ballot will decide whether or not to renew and continue the dedicated half-cent (1/2) sales tax to fund maintenance and improvement of the County parks system. The renewed tax, if approved, would sunset in ten years.

For more information on the process and for summaries of the public input, visit www.platteparks.com or contact Brian Nowotny, Platte County Parks and Recreation Director, at 816.858.3541.

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