



## CITY OF WICHITA

### PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE PLANNING PROCESS

BUSINESS COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUP  
MAY 15<sup>TH</sup>, 2007

Members of Wichita's business community were invited to gather on May 15<sup>th</sup> for a focus group to discuss the relationship between Wichita's businesses and its park and recreation system. Business community participants noted the importance of parks in providing free, low cost exercise opportunities and quality family recreation for the entire community. The business representatives who attended the meeting also emphasized the role that parks and recreation services can play in improving Wichita's quality of life and attracting professionals to live and work in the city. Participants commented that the engineer shortage means that young professionals have many job choices and are basing job decisions on quality of life issues, including parks, trails, and recreation. Parks and recreation also has a role in selling people on downtown. In terms of achieving these ends, attendees suggested that the Department prioritize the following:

- Reinvest in and modernize existing parks and facilities
- Develop marketing materials, including maps showing park locations and a sales tool for use by local businesses, and distribute this widely
- Organize special events and festivals (e.g. Shakespeare-in-the-park, concerts, or movies) to populate parks
- Develop trails that connect various parts of the city
- Develop volunteer opportunities (corporate and otherwise), such as a river cleanup

Among the ways of completing these priority items, attendees suggested that the following:

- Raise the importance of parks and recreation in the public eye and in the government by:
  - Strengthening the link between parks and education, economic development, and public health
  - Bringing people into parks and encouraging use
- Improve existing partnerships and develop new ones, particularly with organizations such as the Wichita Downtown Development Corporation and the Young Professionals of Wichita, in order to ascertain needs
- Create ways for small businesses to contribute to parks and recreation
- Continue the arena tax as a way to fund improvements