



CITY OF WICHITA
PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE PLANNING
PROCESS

HEALTH AND WELLNESS FOCUS GROUP

FEBRUARY 15, 2007

Health and wellness is a topic area that is increasingly, directly associated with parks and recreation services. To explore how the City could enhance the role that the parks system plays in promoting healthy lifestyles a group of health professionals from the public and private spheres was gathered to discuss the topic on February 15th.

Several health issues confront Wichita residents, including low birth weights, nutritional deficiencies, tobacco use, and obesity in children and adults. Perceptions of parks as unsafe places to play or exercise can contribute to high obesity rates. Changing this perception is just one way to improve wellness by improving the parks system. Other actions that could be taken include:

- Building more skate parks and interactive playgrounds
- Setting up community gardens (only one exists currently)
- Distributing questionnaires at local schools and businesses
- Getting parks brochures into medical offices
- Improving the parks system's website
- Advertising in airports and at movie theaters
- Making parks more inviting by adding paths
- Programming events, similar to the Final Friday arts program
- Featuring family-friendly activities, with connections to each age group
- Changing the City ordinance that prohibits selling goods in parks, to clear the way for farmers' markets
- Publicizing Walk Wichita as exercise with a cultural twist
- Providing opportunities to the uninsured
- Partnering with the Chamber of Commerce, churches, nonprofits, even bridal fairs to promote the varied uses and benefits of parks
- Establishing a newcomer campaign with realtors and neighborhood associations

Making health and wellness a top priority in Wichita also means making the parks system practical, sustainable, durable, and relevant. Increasing the public's awareness of what parks offer, using the strategies mentioned above, is essential to achieving these goals.