



# 2020-2024 STRATEGIC PLAN

Shawnee County  
**parks+**  
**recreation**





## Our Vision

Shawnee County Parks + Recreation in partnership with the citizens of Topeka and Shawnee County will develop and manage accessible, walkable parks, recreation facilities, and programs through a collaborative leadership process that provides a long-term perspective for how Parks + Recreation will impact the livability and economic value of living in the city and county.

## Our Mission

Shawnee County Parks + Recreation is an essential service established to improve quality of life for all residents of the county by proactively responding to changing demographics, emerging trends while maximizing all available resources in providing quality parks, recreation facilities and programs that enhance the residents health, promotes economic vitality and long term sustainability now and for future generations.





Shawnee County Parks + Recreation is a combined city and county park system that was developed to service the needs of the City of Topeka and Shawnee County residents in 2012. A Department-wide Master Plan was adopted in 2014. The guiding principles and objectives that developed this Master Plan include:

- Sustainably grow the best practices and quality services of the Department.
- Serve the relevant park and recreational needs of the City of Topeka and Shawnee County residents.
- Further position the county as a regional and statewide destination, while protecting the accessibility of city and county facilities for residents.
- Support the county to qualify for enhanced partnerships and funding opportunities in both the public and private sectors.
- Leave a positive legacy for current and future generations of Shawnee County.

In 2018, Shawnee County Parks + Recreation earned accreditation by the Council on Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies, a distinction held by fewer than 2 percent of park and recreation agencies nationally. CAPRA accreditation is a valuable measure of an agency's overall operation, management, and service to the community. It demonstrates that an agency complies with national standards of excellence and is delivering the best services to the community. In short, going through the process of accreditation has made us a stronger department and one that is better positioned to serve the public.

The following broad-based strategic planning tool should be used in conjunction with the Master Plan to help guide the future of Shawnee County parks, facilities, and recreation programs and provide direction to the Department for redevelopment, growth and enhancement of its park and open-space system over the next five years.



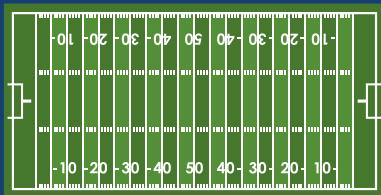
# OUR PLAN

## Land Use Management

Our vision for parklands is to continue to make all parks a place of civic pride that results in highly productive and positive use that supports healthy, active lifestyles for people of all ages. Our goal is to maintain a high quality, diverse, and balanced park and open space system.

### Strategies

- In existing parks, upgrade aging amenities, add new improvements, and provide quality maintenance based on community expectations, national standards and Departmental standards, budget parameters, and available park capital improvement funding.
- Where possible, connect trail systems to community and regional parks to support a network of trails throughout the county. Continue to work toward the established goal of 150 miles of trails throughout Topeka and Shawnee County.
- Develop a Master Plan for Gage Park to include the Zoo master plan and the Discovery Center.
- Evaluate existing park inventory to determine each parcels impact on the surrounding neighborhood and the community as a whole.
- Protect and expand natural areas through acquisition, restoration, and/or conservation.



### FUN FACT...

SCP+R manages 2,625 acres of parkland. That's equivalent to 1,970 football fields!





# OUR PLAN

## Facility Management

Update existing facilities and when possible, add new facilities in underserved areas of the county to provide a balance of recreational opportunities for all residents.

### Strategies

- Provide accessible indoor and outdoor spaces for people of all income level, ethnicity, gender, ability, or age.
- Develop an ADA Transition Plan for all SCP+R facilities to ensure access for all.
- Develop a facility update and improvement plan for the existing community centers to address community needs in the areas of health and wellness, youth services, arts, adaptive recreation, after-school programs, and youth sports opportunities.
- Reinforce the Department's commitment to public safety at parks and facilities through Park Police visibility and public interaction.
- Develop and implement a preventative maintenance program and procedures to prolong the life of facilities, equipment, and other assets.

### Did You Know?

70% of Topeka residents live within a 10-minute walk of a park.  
The national average is 54%!





# Programs and Services

Develop and maintain a wide variety of quality programs and services for all ages, abilities, and interests. Continue to offer existing programs while working to increase offerings in program areas such as adaptive recreation, senior programs, and health and wellness.

## Strategies

- Ensure that all existing and new programs are responsive to current trends, changing demographics, support accreditation standards and provide opportunities that people will enjoy.
- Work to improve the process of evaluating programs, facilities, and services for operational efficiency and effectiveness.
- Continue marketing strategy to increase resident awareness of departmental programs and services and overall appreciation for the value of Parks + Recreation services.
- Increase number and quality of programs by creating partnerships and collaborations with other agencies, organizations, or individuals using processes that are transparent and easy to follow.
- Determine existing cost recovery levels by evaluating the direct and indirect cost of providing programs and services to the community.



### Fun Fact...

In 2018, 75,803 people participated in SCP+R recreational programs.






## Professional Development

Retain, attract and cultivate effective, dynamic staff by fostering growth and development through training, education and mentoring.

### Strategies

- Increase training and professional development opportunities while developing a department-wide culture that values continued training for all staff.
- Create an environment that encourages staff to share innovative ideas and recognize each other's contributions.
- Establish internal customer service standards and establish methods to monitor and track customer satisfaction.
- Develop updated performance measures to help the Department move from an effort-based culture to an outcome-based culture.
- Assess staffing levels based on current and future workload, national standards and community expectations.



### Did You Know?

Trip Advisor named Topeka one of the 25 Best Weekend Getaways with Kids based largely on our parks.



# OUR PLAN

## Fiscal Stewardship

Seek a balance between tax and earned-income support that meets the expectations of the community, Department, and County leadership. Employ best practices aimed at keeping the Department financially sustainable. Seek adequate funding to meet the community's expectations for providing parks, recreation facilities, and program services that make the county a desirable place to live, work, and visit.

### Strategies

- Work within annually adopted budget and comply with policies and procedures.
- Determine life cycles for equipment and schedule maintenance and replacement or renovation funding.
- Establish principles and processes to ensure the budget is fully utilized throughout the fiscal year in a planned, thorough and thoughtful manner.
- Work with the Shawnee County Board of Commissioners to determine an acceptable amount of tax-dollar support to maintain a city/county system of parks, recreation facilities, and programs.
- Develop a pricing plan and policy designed to help offset operational and capital costs.

#### Fun Fact...

Volunteers contributed more than \$1.14 million in time and talent to Shawnee County Parks + Recreation in 2018. Their efforts equal the effort of nearly 25 full-time staff members.







## Measuring Success

It is important to note that as part of the accreditation process, Department goals and objectives must be measurable and directed toward accomplishing the Departments mission. Each of the goals, visions and strategies outlined in this document can be linked in some way to the 2014 Department Master Plan. In addition, each item is tied to specific staff with measurable outcomes and a general timeline for completion.

### Did you know?

Our parks hosted 16 locations as Shawnee County/Topeka staged the nation's 7th largest National Night Out Event.

