

GAGE PARK IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITY

ANNUAL REPORT

Enhancing Gage Park For Our Community

2024



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GPIA - 2024 Annual Report

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About GPIA

Established on November 8, 2022, by Shawnee County residents' vote, GPIA enhances Gage Park through a \$.002 sales tax on county purchases. This tax is earmarked exclusively for Gage Park improvements and remains in effect until residents vote to repeal it.

The Kansas Department of Revenue collects this tax, earmarking it exclusively for Gage Park improvements. Any adjustment to the sales tax rate necessitates approval through a vote by Shawnee County residents.

GPIA uses sales tax funds to improve Gage Park's facilities, create educational programs for kids, and support other initiatives, ensuring the park remains a cherished space for county residents and regional visitors.

Leadership

Board of Directors: Directors of Shawnee County Parks and Recreation, Topeka Zoo and Conservation Center, Kansas Children's Discovery Center, plus two members each from Topeka City Council and Shawnee County Board of Commissioners.

These individuals may designate representatives to serve on their behalf.

Financial Allocation Summary

Entity	Annual Allocation	%	Monthly Avg
Zoo & Conservation*	\$5,276,934	58%	\$439,744
Parks & Recreation*	\$2,017,113	22%	\$168,092
Discovery Center*	\$1,383,259	15%	\$115,271
GPIA Administration	\$444,838	5%	\$37,069
Interest Earned	\$16,334	-	\$1,361
TOTAL	\$9,138,478	100%	\$761,539

*Includes \$25,000 contribution from GPIA Discretionary Fund (\$25,000 to Zoo for Library Pass Program, \$25,000 to Parks & Recreation for master plan, \$25,000 to Discovery Center for Library Pass Program)

Monthly Distribution

Jan \$741K	Feb \$837K	Mar \$691K	Apr \$695K	May \$774K	Jun \$747K
Jul \$792K	Aug \$780K	Sep \$773K	Oct \$800K	Nov \$699K	Dec \$767K

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SHAWNEE COUNTY PARKS + RECREATION

Gage Park Play Land Renovation Project

The Gage Park Play Land renovation project will completely reimagine the park, introducing innovative features and modern designs to create an exceptional destination for families and visitors. Completion is planned by mid-2026.

Construction Timeline



Project Features

Sky Trail

An elevated net trail system running the entire length of Play Land, creating a unique adventure experience for visitors.

Splash Pad

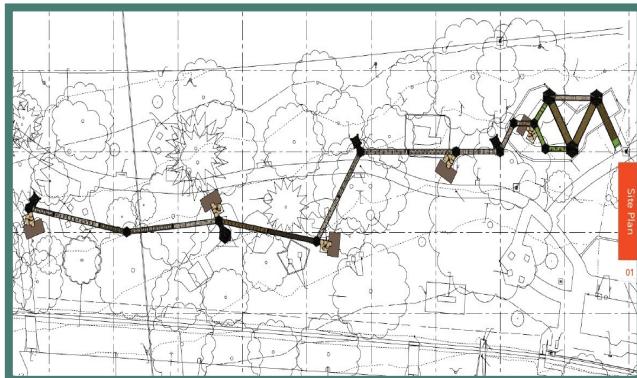
A brand-new interactive water feature that will provide cooling fun during summer months for children of all ages.

Inclusive Play Areas

Nine separate play areas with updated, inclusive designs to engage kids of all ages and abilities.

Additional Upgrades

New shelters, increased seating, and improved landscaping to enhance comfort for families and community gatherings.



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2024 Events and Activities

Gage Park Founders Fest

April 27, 2024

The first annual Gage Park Founders Fest welcomed families for a free day of entertainment, activities, and community celebration.

Attendance: 3,000+

Jerold Binkley Tulip Time

April 10-23, 2024

Annual celebration featuring over 100,000 tulips in bloom throughout Gage Park and other locations.

Attendance: 25,000+

Carousel Anniversary

July 12-14, 2024

Celebrating 37 years of the historic carousel with special rides and family activities.

Attendance: 5,200

Mini-Train Experience

Year-round attraction

The electric Gage Park Mini-Train ran with new audio enhancements, offering visitors a scenic tour.

Annual Ridership: 42,000+

TOPEKA ZOO & CONSERVATION CENTER

The Rainforest Turns 50

We commemorated five decades of our beloved Rainforest habitat, the first of its kind west of the Mississippi.

Monarch Waystation Schools

We launched a new program partnering with schools to create Monarch waystations, helping support migrating butterflies.

New Animal Arrivals

2024 saw several exciting new species, including Bali mynas, red and yellow barbets, spoonbills, guinea fowl, and Giant Indian Fruit bats.



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Art for Conservation

Our painted manhole covers initiative gained momentum, with a record number of covers transformed this year.

Educational Programs

Our camp programs and educational outreach reached an unprecedented number of students in 2024.

Significant Milestones: This year, several iconic residents reached significant milestones, including our Asian elephant, lioness, and African crowned cranes.

Who We Reached in 2024

263,350

Total Visitors

4,785

Zoo Memberships

#1

Best Family Entertainment

51%/49%

County/Non-County Visitors

Visitor Demographics



58% Adults



35.6% Children



3.4% Seniors



3% Under 2

Pollinator Impact

We tagged countless Monarch butterflies and expanded pollinator gardens, actively supporting the vital role of pollinators in our ecosystem.

Our new video on the impact of single use plastics in the environment garnered significant community attention, furthering our mission to inspire sustainable practices.



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KANSAS CHILDREN'S DISCOVERY CENTER

Building Discovery: The Next Chapter

In September 2024, the Discovery Center broke ground on an \$11 million expansion project that will more than double the facility's size, introducing three new learning lab classrooms and expanded exhibit space.



- 1 STEAM Learning Labs:** Three dedicated classrooms for science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics programs.
- 2 Exhibit Expansion:** New spaces for both traveling and permanent installations, enhancing the visitor experience.
- 3 Accessibility Upgrades:** Critical access improvements ensuring the facility serves all community members.
- 4 Innovation Hubs:** Cutting-edge learning environments designed to spark curiosity and creativity.

One Million Visitors & Counting

April 2024 marked a historic milestone as the Discovery Center welcomed its one millionth visitor, highlighting the center's significant impact on education in the region.

ALL-TIME VISITORS

1M+

2024 ATTENDANCE

120,000

FREE/REDUCED
ADMISSION

33%

SCHOOL
PARTICIPANTS

15,000

Sept 2024

Groundbreaking ceremony for Building Discovery expansion

April 2024

One millionth visitor milestone reached

Early 2026

Anticipated grand opening of expanded facility

GPIA FUNDING ALLOCATION FOR DISCOVERY CENTER

Permanent Exhibits: 32% (\$437,863)

Facility Updates: 15% (\$205,248)

Traveling Exhibits: 28% (\$383,130)

Building Discovery: 25% (\$342,080)

Based on GPIA annual allocation of \$1,368,321 for Kansas Children's Discovery Center

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How GPIA Dollars Support the Discovery Center

Permanent Exhibits

Support for hands-on learning exhibits including a circuit maze and shake table to encourage experimentation and STEAM learning.

Traveling Exhibits

Funding for special exhibits including "XOXO: An Exhibit About Love and Forgiveness" and "Emotions at Play with Pixar's Inside Out."



Facility Updates

Infrastructure improvements including outdoor shade structures and sidewalk repairs to enhance visitor comfort and safety.

Building Discovery

Support for the \$11 million expansion project breaking ground in September 2024, which will more than double the size of the facility.

Impact on the Community

The Discovery Center's programs and exhibits continue to provide essential educational resources for Shawnee County families, with increasing accessibility through free and reduced admission programs for those in need.

By fostering curiosity and hands-on learning, the Discovery Center plays a vital role in supporting early childhood development and STEAM education throughout the region, helping to build the foundation for lifelong learning.

Looking Ahead to 2025

With GPIA funding support, the Discovery Center will continue construction on the Building Discovery expansion project through 2025, with an anticipated opening of the new facilities in early 2026. The expansion will allow for increased capacity, new educational offerings, and enhanced visitor experiences.

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Looking Ahead

As GPIA completes its second full year of operation, we look forward to continued growth and enhancement of Gage Park's facilities and programs. The investments made throughout 2024 have established a strong foundation for future development, ensuring that Gage Park remains a vibrant community resource for generations to come.

The ongoing success of GPIA is made possible through the support of Shawnee County residents, whose commitment to this community asset allows for continuous improvement and innovation in programming, conservation efforts, and educational opportunities.

Thank You

The GPIA Board of Directors extends its deepest gratitude to the residents of Shawnee County for their continued support of Gage Park. Your investment in this community treasure ensures that it will remain a vital resource for education, recreation, and conservation for generations to come.



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