Mission

To improve the quality of life by providing recreational, leisure, and aesthetic opportunities for all citizens, and by conserving and enhancing the environment.

We will accomplish this mission by providing quality programming, making the best use of existing resources, developing a supportive and influential constituency, developing effective collaborations and partnerships, and acquiring and preserving natural features.

From the Director

Dear Friends of Parks and Recreation:

I am proud of our accomplishments in 2008. The year was not without its challenges, but our department persevered, and as you will read in this report, produced some great results.

The Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners has developed five Strategic Priorities that serve as our guide in everything we do. They include youth development and our role in “building better kids”; green solutions as a part of planning and development process for all projects; financial sustainability to ensure equal resources for the entire community; developing plans, strategies and work procedures to increase economic achievement for MBE/WBE companies; and marketing our programs and services. In 2008, these priorities led to two major developments—the new KC Parks brand and the formation of the Youth Development Task Force.

In July, we launched a new image campaign and introduced a new KC Parks branding logo. The green ball design was created in partnership with the Kansas City Area Development Council and modeled after their red ball, “One KC” campaign and concept. The marketing division implemented a campaign to internally and externally re-brand, increase visibility and awareness, and enhance the image of Kansas City Parks. The new brand and co-branding tools were introduced to our Parks Partners in October.

The Youth Development Task Force, a joint initiative between the Office of the Mayor and Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners, convened early in the year to focus on enhancing internal collaboration and resource sharing. Anticipated outcomes from the group include repositioning youth and family services as a basic and essential city function; better coordination, external communication and marketing of services and programs; and developing a volunteer component to support the efforts of current and future programs.

Additional highlights of the year include the appointment of Meghan Badwey Conger as a Commissioner to the Parks Board, continuing to strengthen our green initiatives, the closing of Cliff Drive for Car Free Weekends and the opening of the new Southeast Community Center in Swope Park.

I appreciate the service of the Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners. I applaud the hundreds of volunteers that assist us and the many Parks Partners that allow us to succeed. Together with our staff, we achieve our vision of healthier citizens, a desirable community and a sustainable environment.

Mark L. McHenry, Director
On May 16, the gates of Cliff Drive officially closed to vehicular traffic for the first time as part of the new Car Free Weekends program. The gates continued to close every Friday at 2:00pm and were reopened at 8:00am each Monday through October.

The Car Free Weekends program was implemented to provide safe opportunities for pedestrian and bicycle-oriented activities that promote healthy lifestyles for all to enjoy. In addition, the reduction of vehicular traffic helps preserve the natural environment that is unique to Kessler Park and Cliff Drive. Cliff Drive is located in George E. Kessler Park in historic Northeast Kansas City and is part of the Kansas City, Missouri Park and Boulevard System. Cliff Drive is officially designated a State Scenic Byway, one of only five in the state of Missouri. The byway extends approximately 4.27 miles from The Paseo and Independence Avenue through Indian Mound on Gladstone Boulevard and Belmont Boulevard.

Several organizations worked in partnership with Parks and Recreation to develop the Car Free Weekends program including the Cliff Drive Corridor Management Committee, Scarritt Renaissance Neighborhood Association, Kansas City Museum, Westside Housing, City of Kansas City, Missouri, and the KCMO Police Department.

June 10 marked the ribbon cutting and dedication for the single largest playground construction project in the 116-year history of Kansas City, Missouri Parks and Recreation. Mayor Mark Funkhouser joined the Board for the “completion of construction celebration” at Spring Valley Park playground, one of 17 new playgrounds erected throughout the city.

In August of 2007, Parks and Recreation joined forces with the City’s Procurement Services to begin the proposal process for a Playground Replacement Program. After careful review of those proposals, Cunningham Associates Incorporated was selected and the $1.2 million playground construction project began. Money from general obligation bonds, approved by voters in 2004, funded the program.


All of these new playgrounds offer fitness, socialization and recreational opportunities and are designed and appropriate for children ages 2-12.
Dedicated in 1983, the first fountain to be built north of the Missouri River was the result of an enormous grassroots campaign. Donations to raise the $250,000 needed to build the fountain varied wildly—from schoolchildren’s pennies to tens of thousands of dollars from area businesses. The combined fundraising effort led to the fountain being called the “Spirit of Cooperation.”

On June 21, many of the original supporters came together in celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the fountain for a “Taste of the Northland”. Restaurants and caterers showcased their fares as attendees mixed and mingled around the Northland icon.

The fountain is made up of a large reflecting pool 80 feet in diameter. Multiple jets make up the water feature of the fountain. The central water jet shoots water approximately 30 feet into the air, where it disperses in a fine mist. A ring of jets surround the central jet and shoot water outwards. Other jets along the exterior shoot water inwards.

The fountain was the first in the city designed and built to run year-round, creating breathtaking ice sculptures during the winter months, making it one of the most popular fountains in the city.

More than 100 local youth were “explorers for a day” as participants in the second annual Tree Camp held in June at Loose Park. The Tree Camp is a joint program of the Garden Center Association and Kansas City Parks and Recreation and was created for children attending summer camps at four of the department’s community centers. Campers experienced a day of exploration in the Stanley R. McLane Arboretum in Loose Park, enhancing their understanding of nature, particularly trees. The youth, ages 5-14, had fun using skills of leadership and team building in an atmosphere that encouraged exploration, creativity and individuality.

Campers utilized *Explorers Field Guides*, developed by Garden Center Association members, that included two courses of discovery created to open up the wonderful and extensive collection of native trees in the arboretum. The “Lake Course” leads on a path of discovery around the park’s lagoon to 12 different species of trees with activities to do with each. The “Champion Tree Compass Course” leads explorers all over the park using an orienteering compass. Compass bearings lead to eight of the eleven Champion Trees located in the park. A Champion Tree is the largest of its species in a particular area, in this case, Kansas City, Missouri.

Funding is currently being sought to expand Tree Camp to summer camp attendees at all of the department’s community centers in 2009.
Kansas City Parks and Recreation together with the Mayor’s Office, the Kansas City Wizards and ownership group OnGoal, LLC, officially kicked-off the inaugural Mayor’s Night Kicks Tournament on July 8. With Hispanic, Somali and American players, the Kansas City Cup Tournament truly celebrated the international flavor of Kansas City.

The six-week evening soccer tournament for adult males ages 18-25 took place on Field 3 of the Wizards Training Center in Swope Park. Games were played on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Sunday nights at 8:00pm and 10:00pm and consisted of two 45-minute halves with a 15-minute halftime. Similar to the World Cup format, the 16 teams were divided into four groups of four teams. The first round allowed for each team to play the other three teams in their group. Week four found the top two teams in each group advancing to play in the quarter-finals where they played in a single elimination bracket. Week five hosted the two semi-final games; the third place and championship games were played on August 22 and broadcast on MetroSports.

The top three teams including the Kansas City Cup winners, CD Honduras, were awarded medals and introduced at halftime during the Kansas City Wizards home game on August 23 at Community American Ballpark.

The highly anticipated new Southeast Community Center in Swope Park officially opened its doors for business on December 13. The grand opening celebration culminated with a ribbon cutting led by the Mayor, City Council, City Manager and Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners. Equipment and class demonstrations, family activities and tours took place throughout the day. KCWE Channel 29 hosted a Free Swim Pool Party in the afternoon and the day concluded with a Santa’s Wonderland.

The new center, located a few blocks east of the former center in the north part of Swope Park, includes a full-sized basketball court, meeting rooms, a tot drop-off room, craft room, therapy pool, recreation pool with play features and fitness area with weights and cardiovascular equipment. A variety of aerobics, fitness and craft classes are offered, and a 1/15-mile suspended track is installed above the gym so members can walk or run in year-round comfort.

The Southeast Community Center in Swope Park is 46,755 square feet with a capacity of 1,566 people. The environmentally-friendly facility includes a rain garden to capture stormwater runoff and features a 1% for Art Installation, *Inheritance*, by local artists Julia Cole and Leigh Rosser.
Completed Projects

Amity Woods Nature Park Trail-Phase 1
Arleta Park Playground
Barry Road Park Shelter, Parking Lot and Rain Garden
Blues Park Playground
Brookside Court Park Improvements
Brookside Court Lighting
Chelsea Park Improvements
Chouteau Greenway Park Improvements
Cliff Drive Restoration-Phase 2
Cypress Park Playground
Dunn Park Playground
Essex Park Playground
Gage Park Playground
Garrison Community Center Stone Stair Replacement
Gillham Park Stairs
Hyde Park Stairs
Indiana Park Playground
Iser Park Playground
Longview Tract - Playground and Shade Structures
Lykins Park Playground
New Southeast Community Center in Swope Park and 1% for Art Installation
North Congress Park Playground
Northeast Athletic Field Playground

Completed Projects

Park Forest Park Lighting
Platte Purchase Park Solar Lighting in Shelter and Park Road Paving
Pleasant Valley Park Parking Lot Expansion and Drainage Improvements
Prospect Park Playground
Shoal Creek Living History Museum-Stone Repair to Water Well and Lighting
Skiles Park Playground
South Oak Park Lighting
Spring Valley Park Playground
Spring Valley Park Solar Lighting
Swope Park Bathhouse Renovation
Swope Park Playground
The Grove Playground
Tiffany Springs Park Parking Lot Improvements
Tony Aguirre Community Center Pool Dehumidification Replacement
Vineyard Park Lighting
Waterwell Athletic Complex Parking Lot, Landscape and Maintenance Building
Waterwell Park Playground
Waterworks Park Lighting and Curb Improvements
Winner Park Shelter
Woodsmoke Park Lighting

july 3
Gillham Park pre-4th of July Celebration

july 8, 22
KCWE Free Swim Pool Party

july 8
Welcome to Hollywood: Take Your Dog to the Movie Night

july 10
Mayor’s Night Kicks Kick Off

july 11-13
USTA National Husband Wife Hard Court Tennis Tournament

july 11, 18, 24 and August 1
Hyde Park Children’s Film Festival

july 15-20
High School Musical at Starlight Theatre

july 22
Commissioner Conger Swearing-In Ceremony

july 25-27
Missouri Valley Swimming Division II Championships

july 26
Dragon Boat Festival

july 28-August 3
The Music Man at Starlight Theatre

August 1
Rose Garden in Loose Park closes for renovations

july 22
Mayor's Night Kicks Kick Off

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August 1
Rose Garden in Loose Park closes for renovations
Early in their term, the Board of Parks and Recreation declared "marketing" as a top priority for the department. As a result, a new image campaign and branding logo were introduced in July. The green ball design was created in partnership with the Kansas City Area Development Council and modeled after their red ball, "One KC" campaign and concept. The new brand was extended for use by our Parks PARTNERS at a reception held October 9 in the Helzberg Diamonds VIP Room at Starlight Theater. Representatives from more than 50 Partner organizations attended to learn about the new green ball branding and receive the tools to co-brand with KC Parks. It is anticipated that through co-branding, we will expand our image and showcase the vastness and impact parks has on the metro area as united Kansas City Parks PARTNERS.
S.H.A.P.E. 2008

By the Numbers

2004 park inspections conducted
190 parks involved
88% park acceptability rating
9,799 acres of Kansas City parkland
86% facility acceptability rating
240 facility inspections conducted
28 facilities involved

How it Works

S.H.A.P.E. (Safe, Healthy, Attractive, Public, Environments) provides up-to-date information on overall conditions of Kansas City’s park system. The focus of the program is to work effectively on a citywide level to ensure all parks owned properties are equally maintained. Inspectors rate up to twenty amenities, grade each property with an “acceptable” or “unacceptable” rating, and then immediately report conditions. Each quarter results are presented to department staff, Parks Board Commissioners, Mayor, City Manager and other elected officials in order to encourage input. All results can be viewed on Parks and Recreation’s webpage, www.kcmo.org/parks.

Why we do it

When George Kessler designed the Kansas City park system, he created a unique gem for many generations to adore. The elaborate system has flourished to include 9,799 acres of park owned land that must be monitored frequently to stay on top of routine maintenance while the objective remains on improving cleanliness efforts. In recent years, staffing levels have diminished while work improvement needs have increased. Because of this, inspector visits help the department identify operational strengths and weaknesses.

Promoting and protecting our City’s park system is essential for future generations. Our department staff shares ownership and takes pride in the parks and facility areas they maintain every day. With S.H.A.P.E. we have created a standardized labor plan that helps us work smarter, more efficiently, and most importantly, as a team.
**Admissions**

- Kansas City Zoo: 482,949
- Liberty Memorial: 156,604
- Starlight Theatre: 250,063

**Operations**

- Forestry
  - Trees planted: 3,178
  - Trees trimmed: 16,468
  - Trees removed: 2,043

- Maintenance
  - Athletic field maintenance: 2,821
  - Landscape maintenance: 11,604
  - Park repairs: 11,869
  - Special event preparation: 2,344
  - Litter/trash removal: 34,949

*Hours worked*

- PITCH MAGAZINE’S
  - BEST OF KANSAS CITY
  - Best Park: Editorial Staff Choice
    - Cliff Drive
  - Best Park: Readers Choice
    - Loose Park

- INGRAM’S MAGAZINE
  - BEST OF BUSINESS KC
    - Best Theatre (Bronze)
      - Starlight Theatre
    - Best Performing Arts Venue (Gold)
      - Starlight Theatre
    - Best Museum or Art Gallery (Bronze)
      - National World War I Museum at Liberty Memorial
    - Best Family Outing Venue (Gold)
      - Kansas City Zoo
    - Best Park: Readers Choice
      - Loose Park

**Volunteers**

- Number of volunteers: 6,558
- Volunteer hours: 44,594
- Estimated value: $718,847.38

**Events**

- Number of events: 282
- Event attendance: 551,856

**Measurements**

- Total participation: 2,532,766
  - All facilities and programs
- Youth participation: 542,807
  - All facilities and programs
- Customer participation: 549,191
  - Community Centers
- Customer participation: 126,869
  - Pools and Spraygrounds
- Customer participation: 244,908
  - Athletic Facilities and Programs
- Total acreage mowed: 69,178
- Customer participation: 6,970
  - 3-1-1 Action Center
- Requests resolved: 1,389
  - Graffiti incidents removed

**Admissions**

- KC Parks PARTNER Reception
- Harvest Festival at Shoal Creek
- Monnett Society Visitor Center Grand Opening
- WaterFire Kansas City on Brush Creek
- Veterans Day Observances

**Operations**

- Ribbon Cutting
- Opening
- KC Indian Art Market & Cultural Festival
- The Wilderness Run
- 18th & Vine Terrace

**Volunteers**

- Kansas City Zoo: 482,949
- Liberty Memorial: 156,604
- Starlight Theatre: 250,063

**Events**

- Kansas City Marathon
- Harvest Festival at Shoal Creek
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I n the late 19th century, Kansas City had few paved streets and even fewer sidewalks, but the town was booming. As the population continued to grow and the city land size increased, the main focus remained on commerce and building places for people to live and work. There was, however, a group of citizens who saw the need for creating a better quality of life and improving the city’s appearance through the development of municipal parks, and later, a boulevard system.

The fledgling park movement continued to gather momentum until one of its firmest supporters, William Rockhill Nelson, moved to town and took up the cause. As the editor of the evening newspaper, The Star, Mr. Nelson used his position to campaign for paved roads and streets. He also advocated for improved sidewalks and sewers, decent public buildings, better streetlights, and more fire and police protection. His most enduring legacy, however, was the city’s parks and boulevard system which he promoted with August Meyer, local businessman and president of the 1892 Park Board, predecessor to the Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners. The Park Board hired landscape architect George E. Kessler to design a boulevard and park system master plan that would provide for a “city with a park.”

Work on the boulevard system began in 1893 with the development of Independence and Gladstone Boulevards. Acquisition of properties began in earnest when, in 1895, the city approved a charter amendment to give the Parks Board power to condemn land, issue bonds and receive special taxes. North Terrace Park (now Kessler Park), West Terrace Park and later Penn Valley Park were among the first developments. A milestone was achieved with a gift of property from Col. Thomas H. Swope, a pessimistic “knocker” of the parks plan. In 1896, Swope deeded to the city 1,200 acres, which became the park that bears his name and the largest park in the system. Another important gift to the city was that of Loose Park in 1927, donated by Ella Loose in memory of her husband, Jacob.

Since then, hundreds of additional parks and boulevards have been developed throughout the greater Kansas City area. In 1967, the Park Department and Recreational Division of the city’s Welfare Department were combined into the present-day Kansas City Parks and Recreation Department. Thanks to the foresight of city leaders and advocates, Kansas City is internationally known for its beautiful parks and boulevards system. Today’s Parks, Recreation and Boulevards Department honors the past while continuing to grow and make improvements for the future.