



KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

Parks and Recreation Sustainability Plan



Native prairie, green spaces, forests, riparian zones and other natural areas provide multiple benefits for the people who live or work near them. These natural resources are an important part of a community, and they benefit both people and the environment through *ecosystem services*. Ecosystem services clean our air and water, slow down flooding, trap carbon, and create cooler communities by reducing urban heat islands. Services also include pollination; healthy ecosystems have diverse pollinators and butterflies. One out of every four bites of our food rely on pollinators.

The Kansas City, Missouri Parks and Recreation Department's sustainability plan enhances the ecosystem services of its natural areas and reduces the department's negative ecological impact. The sustainability plan creates a more regenerative environment by renewing, revitalizing and restoring ecosystems where people and nature thrive together.

TOP RECOMMENDATIONS

Annual Beds to Perennial Natives

- KCNPI recommends replacing 20 percent of the Parks Department's annual beds with native perennials in a two-year period.
- Replace entire annual beds with native perennials.
- The recommended list of "most likely to succeed" species provide texture, varied bloom seasons, have high success rates and behave predictably.
- Due to increased demand for native plants, order as soon as possible.
- Implement a series of repeated annual trainings for Parks' landscaping staff.

Turf Grass Reduction

- Reduce turf grass by 5 percent (excluding golf courses and sports fields) in five years.
- Devote appropriate resources to manage Parks' natural resources including staff funding for a Parks Ecologist, District Forepersons, and seasonal staff.
- Invest in equipment and seed for transitioned acreage.
- Prepare soil appropriately to enhance the success of new native landscapes.
- Instead of native grasses, some reduced mowing areas can be addressed with shrubs and trees.

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TOP RECOMMENDATIONS (CONT'D)

Water Conservation

- Reduce water use by 10 percent in three years.
- Transitioning 20 percent of Parks Department's annual beds to perennial natives will significantly reduce water use after native plants are established in Year Three.
- Install water sensors to water beds on-demand instead of on schedule.
- Schedule watering before 10 a.m. to reduce evaporation.
- Contractors should adhere to the same water conservation strategies as the Department.
- Within Parks Department buildings, foster a culture of water conservation.

Integrated Pest Management

- Begin using an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach to reduce chemical use.
- Establish Action Thresholds for pest management.
- Choose non-chemical solutions first: prevention, cultural, physical, mechanical, biotic, and chemical last.
- Prioritize training and management in high use areas like golf courses and sports fields. Require contractors to adhere to the same standards as the Parks Department.
- Require certification by management staff and provide ongoing, annual training for all staff who use chemicals.
- Document chemical use.

Stewardship Goals

- In the Kansas City, Missouri Parks Department's next strategic plan, KCNPI recommends stewardship goals and policies to promote a sustainable, regenerative environment.

Communications Strategies

- Engage Parks staff through regular trainings to engage their interest in sustainable activities.
- Create talking points for front-line staff regarding new sustainable strategies.
- Provide regular updates to the Parks Board and City Councilmembers
- At newly transitioned turf areas install easy-to-read, durable signs, "Urban Prairie Coming Soon, Do Not Mow."
- Similarly, when applying chemicals, place temporary signage, "Warning, Pesticide Applied to Park. Harmful to People and Pets."
- Highlight new native landscapes with press releases and social media including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Look for opportunities to tell stories about pollinators, butterflies, birds and habitat.
- Consider hiring an expert consultant to create and manage an expansive communications and marketing plan.

Underwriting Strategies

- National and Federal grants are more likely to underwrite programs of the size and scale of the Kansas City, Missouri Parks Department, and their priorities are aligned with the mission of Parks' sustainability efforts.
- Consider hiring a professional grant writer with successful experience acquiring federal funding.
- Local, private foundations are more likely to play a targeted role in Parks' sustainability project.

