



Department Source: Parks and Recreation  
To: City Council  
From: City Manager & Staff  
Council Meeting Date: December 2, 2024  
Re: Stephens Lake Park Improvements

## Executive Summary

The Parks and Recreation Department is requesting approval of an ordinance authorizing improvements at Stephens Lake Park. The proposed improvements include replacement of the playground structure next to Gordon Shelter, replacement of the asphalt driveways at the Old 63 park entrance and Broadway park entrance and construction of a horticulture maintenance area. The project has a total budget of \$125,000 and is funded by the 2021 Park Sales Tax. The improvements will be completed using a combination of contract and force account labor. Contract labor will be used for the playground installation and replacement of the park entrances. Park staff will complete all other work related to the proposed improvements. The proposed improvements at the park are scheduled to begin summer 2025 and completed by spring 2026.

## Discussion

The 116-acre Stephens Lake Park, located at 2001 East Broadway, contains a variety of recreational activities and amenities, including park shelters, playgrounds, hard surface trails, 11-acre lake, splash pad and swimming beach. The park is classified as a level II arboretum by the ArbNet Arboretum Accreditation Program and the Morton Arboretum. The park is identified in the *2013 Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan* as a community park serving residents and visitors throughout the year.

The Parks and Recreation Department is requesting approval of an ordinance authorizing the construction of improvements at Stephens Lake Park. The proposed improvements include replacement of the playground structure next to Gordon Shelter and replacement of the asphalt driveways at the Old 63 park entrance and Broadway park entrance. In addition to these improvements, staff will construct a horticulture maintenance area for staff and volunteers to manage the arboretum.

After reviewing the proposed Stephens Lake Park improvements in the *2013 Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan*, staff included funding in the 2021 Park Sales Tax ballot renewal for improvements to the lower parking lot area at Stephens Lake Park. The funding for the park would have focused on improvements to this area to expand parking and add a new restroom to this area to support festival and trail activities in this area. Park staff held an initial public input meeting at Riechmann Pavilion on Aug. 31, 2023 to discuss the improvements with the public. After additional staff discussion about needed improvements and the loss of the Treeline Music Festival held annually at the park, staff made the decision to change the scope of the project to focus on needed maintenance to existing park facilities.



# City of Columbia

701 East Broadway, Columbia, Missouri 65201

Park staff held a second public input meeting on Sept. 26, 2024 at Riechmann Pavilion in the park. Staff met with citizens to discuss the proposed plans and gain feedback about the proposed improvements. Citizens had an additional opportunity to provide comments about the project on [beheard.como.gov](https://beheard.como.gov). All feedback from the public input meetings and [beheard.como.gov](https://beheard.como.gov) are included with this Council memo.

Park staff introduced the proposed Stephen Lakes Park improvements to the Parks and Recreation Commission on Nov. 21, 2024. After discussion of the project, the commissioners voted to endorse the proposed improvements at the park and recommended that Council approve the plans as presented. After considering all citizen comments and the P&R Commission recommendation, staff believes the proposed improvements to Stephens Lake Park represents a consensus of park users and staff.

The proposed improvements to the park, funded by the 2021 Park Sales Tax, will include the following:

1. Contract labor will be used to replace the existing playground structure located adjacent to Gordon Shelter. The existing 20-year old playground is one of the most used playgrounds in the park system and needs to be replaced due to age and high usage. The new playground will accommodate children ages 2 to 12 years old. The ADA compliant play structure will meet current ASTM safety guidelines, and park staff will install wood fiber mulch throughout the designated playground area.
2. Contract labor will be used to replace the asphalt pavement at two of the park entrances. The Old Highway 63 entrance and the Broadway entrance have asphalt pavement at each location that were installed approximately 20 years ago. Due to the extensive vehicle traffic at each parking lot, staff is proposing to replace the asphalt pavement with 6-inch thick concrete pavement. This will extend the longevity of the entrances to the park and reduce the long-term maintenance.
3. Park staff will create a horticulture maintenance area adjacent to the lower Broadway parking lot. The fenced maintenance area will allow for the storage of tools, equipment and materials needed to manage the park and arboretum. The area will include a small shed, electric access for charging tools and equipment, water with a fill station and space for equipment storage. The improvements to this area coincide with the creation of an arboretum volunteer program that started in 2024.

The project has a total budget of \$125,000 and is funded by the 2021 Park Sales Tax. Portions of the project will be bid through the City's Purchasing Department and the proposed improvements will be completed using a combination of contract and force account labor. Contract labor will be used for the playground installation and concrete pavement installation. Park staff will complete all other work associated with the capital improvement project. The proposed improvements at the park are scheduled to begin summer 2025 and completed by spring 2026.



## Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: The total project cost is \$125,000 and is funded by the 2021 Park Sales Tax.  
Long-Term Impact: The improvements to the park will result in a reduction of capital expenses related to the maintenance of the existing asphalt entry drives. The replacement of these surfaces with concrete pavement decreases the necessary long-term maintenance.

## Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impact

### Strategic Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Reliable and Sustainable Infrastructure, Secondary Impact: Not Applicable, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

### Comprehensive Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Infrastructure, Secondary Impact: Not applicable, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

## Legislative History

Date	Action
N/A	N/A

## Suggested Council Action

Approve the ordinance authorizing the improvements to Stephens Lake Park.