



Department Source: Parks and Recreation
To: City Council
From: City Manager & Staff
Council Meeting Date: November 4, 2019
Re: Magnolia Falls Park Improvement Project

Executive Summary

The Parks and Recreation Department is requesting approval of an ordinance authorizing the Magnolia Falls Park Improvement Project. The proposed improvements to the park include the construction of a small shelter, playground, 0.6 mile gravel trail, small parking lot, pond improvements, ADA walkway, and other miscellaneous park improvements. The total project budget is \$125,000 and is one of the projects identified and funded by the 2015 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 installation of the playground, pond improvements, parking lot construction, and ADA walkway construction. All other work will be completed by park staff. Improvements at the park are scheduled to begin spring 2020, with an anticipated completion date of spring 2021.

Discussion

The 16-acre Magnolia Falls Park, located at 4820 South Old Mill Creek Road, was donated to the City of Columbia by Beacon Street Properties, LLC. in 2014. The development of the neighborhood park was included as a project in the 2015 Park Sales Tax ballot issue and the proposed improvements for the property are typical for a neighborhood park development in the city of Columbia. A typical neighborhood park is approximately 10 acres in size and consists of a playground, picnic shelter or picnic area, basketball court, open space play/practice fields, and a perimeter exercise trail. Primary users of the park are within a half-mile radius, which represents an adequate walking distance.

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Park staff began internal discussions about the development of Magnolia Falls Park in 2017 and visited the park multiple times to evaluate existing park features, design elements and necessary amenities. Park planning staff then created proposed plans to initiate public input based on typical neighborhood park design and utilizing key natural features of the Magnolia Falls Park property. The plan focused on adding traditional amenities such as a playground, walking trail, shelter, and improved pond, while protecting the trees and natural landscape already established at the park property.



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Park staff held the first interested parties meeting at Beulah Ralph Elementary School on July 30, 2019. An online survey was also available for citizens from July 17, 2019 to August 8, 2019. At the IP meeting, park staff met with citizens from the neighborhood to discuss the proposed plans and gain feedback about the park and proposed improvements.

Feedback concerns included park users parking in existing neighborhoods to get to the park, construction of a basketball court, and lack of ADA access. At the conclusion of the meeting, park staff informed the attendees that they would gather all public input, review the proposed plans and schedule a second interested parties meeting to present a revised plan based on the discussions and feedback from the first round of public input.

After adding a small parking lot, removing the basketball court, and providing for ADA access from the parking lot, park planning staff held a second interested parties meeting at Beulah Ralph Elementary School on September 10, 2019. An online survey was also available to provide online comments regarding the revised plans from August 20, 2019 to September 13, 2019. All feedback from the public input meetings and online como.gov surveys are included with this Council memo and may also be found online at:

<https://www.como.gov/parksandrec/wp-content/uploads/sites/25/2019/08/IP-meeting-comments-Magnolia-Falls-Park.pdf>

and

<https://www.como.gov/parksandrec/wp-content/uploads/sites/25/2019/09/IP-meeting-comments-September-Magnolia-Falls-Park.pdf>

Park staff introduced the proposed plans for Magnolia Falls Park to the Parks & Recreation Commission on Thursday, October 17, 2019. Two commissioners had attended the IP meetings and after discussion of the project, the commissioners voted to endorse the proposed improvement plan and recommended that Council approve the plans as presented.

After considering all citizen comments and the P&R Commission recommendation, staff believes that proposed improvements to Magnolia Falls Park represent a consensus of park users and staff.

The proposed improvements at Magnolia Falls Park will include the following:

1. Contract labor will be used to construct a new playground at the park. The new playground structure will be designed for children 5-12 years old and include swings adjacent to the playground. After the installation of the playground structure and swings, park staff will complete the playground improvements with the installation of the wood fiber mulch surfacing and new park bench within the playground area.



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2. Park staff will construct a 16' X 20' small shelter at the park, including the placement of 4 picnic tables and installation of a barbecue grill.
3. Park staff will complete the 0.6 mile gravel perimeter trail at the park. A gravel trail was part of the original development of the park so staff will add two-to-three inches of trail surface rock bringing it up to the standard of other neighborhood park walking trails in the park system.
4. Contract labor will be used to complete two grading projects at the park to create the open playfield on the east side of the park and to expand the existing pond located on the west side of the park. Park staff will complete turf establishment on the open playfield and add a soccer goal to one end of the field. The existing pond is too small for quality fish habitat, so park staff is proposing to deepen the existing pond and expand the total area of the pond allowing for a sustainable water ecosystem.
5. Contract labor will be used to construct a small parking lot with entrance/exit to Old Mill Creek Road. Staff is proposing to add 6 standard parking spaces and 1 ADA accessible parking space to the park. The parking lot will provide the ADA acceptable route into the park and to different park amenities.
6. Park staff will construct a new 6' wide concrete path from the neighborhood access off Forsythia Falls Loop to the playground and shelter. The concrete walkway will provide an improved connection from the neighborhood to the park. Park staff will not replace the existing low water crossing utilized for access into the park from the neighborhood. Park staff will return to the City Council at a later date to request approval for the replacement of the crossing after establishing a funding source for the replacement.
7. Park staff will complete additional miscellaneous improvements, including park sign installation, bike rack installation, estate fencing installation along Old Mill Creek Road, turf establishment, and tree plantings within the park.

The \$125,000 improvement project at Magnolia Falls Park is funded by the 2015 Park Sales Tax and is included in the City's FY19 Capital Improvement Program budget. 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. Construction of the improvements will begin spring 2020, and staff anticipates the park improvements to be completed by spring 2021.

Proposed Phase II improvements to the park include replacing the existing low water crossing bridge. This wasn't a high priority of the respondents primarily due to the estimated cost of \$65,000 and possible damage to a very large white pine tree near the bridge. This tree could possibly be the largest of its kind in Boone County. Funding for the Phase II improvements may be considered as a future project in the 2021 Park Sales Tax ballot.



Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: The total cost of the improvement project is \$125,000 and is funded by the 2015 Park Sales Tax.

Long-Term Impact: Since acquisition, park staff has been mowing and performing other minor maintenance tasks. It will cost an additional \$4,000 to \$5,000 per year for maintenance after this stage of park development.

Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impact

Strategic Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: 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 Magnolia Falls Park Improvement Project.