



# City of Columbia

701 East Broadway, Columbia, Missouri 65201

Department Source: Parks and Recreation

To: City Council

From: City Manager & Staff

Council Meeting Date: March 4, 2024

Re: Orr Street Park Property Development and Naming

## Executive Summary

The Parks and Recreation Department is requesting approval of a resolution to set a public hearing adopting the proposed park master plan for the Orr Street park property and authorizing the construction of improvements at the park. Staff is also requesting the City Council to approve "North Village Park" as the official park name. The proposed park development includes perimeter curb and sidewalk improvements, utility and stormwater infrastructure upgrades, turf and landscaping installation, tree plantings, park lighting, public art, flexible performance area, active family space with themed playground and a variety of seating and shade structures, and parking improvements. The total project budget is \$1,550,000 and is funded by the 2021 Park Sales Tax and a Missouri ARPA Community Revitalization Grant from the Missouri Department of Economic Development. 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. Improvements at the park are scheduled to begin after City Council authorization and the project must be completed by September 2026 to comply with the grant requirements.

## Discussion

At the April 19, 2021 City Council meeting, city staff received authorization to acquire two lots owned by Union Electric Company, doing business as Ameren Missouri, at 209 St. James Street and 210 Orr Street for the future development of a park in this location of Columbia. The property was the former site of Columbia Gas Works from 1875 to 1932 and served as an Ameren Missouri Service Center for many years. Between 1994 and 2014, Ameren Missouri completed the cleanup of the site in conjunction with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Missouri Department of Natural Resources (MODNR). In 2018, a certificate of completion was issued by MODNR as it related to the required cleanup of the property to allow for non-residential property uses. On Aug. 20, 2023, Council authorized staff to acquire the property located at 307 & 309 St. James Street to incorporate into the park property. The acquisition of the additional property allows park staff to present the proposed park development plan for the Orr Street park property. The plan for the park revitalizes the city block with a focus on public outdoor art, music and access to green space.

The Parks and Recreation Department is requesting approval of a resolution to set a public hearing adopting the proposed park master plan for the Orr Street park property and authorizing the construction of improvements at the park. Staff is also requesting City Council approval of "North Village Park" as the official park name. The proposed park development includes perimeter curb and sidewalk improvements, utility and stormwater infrastructure upgrades, turf and landscaping installation, tree plantings, park lighting, public art, flexible



performance area, active family space with themed playground and a variety of seating with shade, and parking improvements.

## **Planning Committee and Public Input Process:**

Parks and Recreation staff completed an extensive public input process for the development of the park plans that included working with a citizen committee to develop the initial park plan and assist with the grant application process, multiple meetings at the park site and specific meetings with interested groups.

Parks and Recreation staff worked with Mayor Buffaloe to create a small committee of Columbia citizens to help create the development plan for the park and assist staff with the grant application and letters of support for the Missouri ARPA Community Revitalization Grant from the Missouri Department of Economic Development. The group of citizens that comprised the committee included:

- Tootie Burns (Co-Chair), Local Artist and North Village Arts District Business Owner
- John Ott (Co-Chair), Downtown Business Owner
- Nickie Davis, Downtown CID Director
- Mike Nolan, North Village Arts District Business Manager
- Kenny Greene, Neighbor and North Village Arts District Business Owner
- Van Hawxby, North Village Arts District Business Owner
- Cliff Jarvis, Columbia College Vice President for Facilities Operations
- Shannon Webster, Local Artist and North Village Arts District Business Owner
- Anna Meyer, Balsamo Warehouse Business Owner

After receiving notification regarding the Community Revitalization Grant award from the Missouri Department of Economic Development, park staff coordinated the public input process for the park development plans. The park project page was available on the BeHeardCoMo website from July 15, 2023 through Oct. 13, 2023. Staff also coordinated the following in-person meetings to discuss the proposed plans:

1. Public input meeting at the Orr Street park site on July 22, 2023.
2. Public input meeting at the Orr Street park site on Aug. 4, 2023.
3. Discussion with the Disabilities Commission on Sept. 13, 2023.
4. Discussion with the Benton Stephens Neighborhood Association on Sept. 20, 2023.
5. Discussion with the Downtown Leadership Council on Jan. 24, 2024.

In addition to the public input meetings, park staff also met with multiple city departments to review the proposed plans for the coordination of work that will need to take place on the property to correct and/or improve city utilities, sidewalks and adjacent streets. Park staff met with staff members from Public Works – Streets, Public Works – Parking, City Utilities – Electric, City Utilities – Water, City Utilities – Sewer/Stormwater. Staff also met with staff members from the Columbia Police Department to review park safety and security.



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Park staff has also met with staff from the Missouri Department of Natural Resources (MODNR) on multiple occasions throughout the initial planning phase of the park development to ensure that all proposed park improvements will meet the current requirements associated with the former brownfield site. MODNR did not have any concerns with the proposed plans and will be consulted throughout the design and construction phases of the project.

All feedback from the public input meeting and [beheard.como.gov](https://beheard.como.gov) are included with this Council memo and can also be found online at:

[https://www.como.gov/webapps/cipweb/display\\_project.php?project\\_id=2337](https://www.como.gov/webapps/cipweb/display_project.php?project_id=2337)

Park staff introduced the proposed park plans to the Parks and Recreation Commission on Nov. 16, 2023. After discussion of the project, the commissioners voted to endorse the proposed plans for the park development and recommended that Council approve the plans as presented. The Commission also recommended naming the park "North Village Park" as part of the motion. After considering all citizen comments and the P&R Commission recommendation, staff believes that the proposed park plan and park name represents a consensus of citizens and staff.

## **Proposed Park Development:**

Due to the current conditions present at the park property and the need to address multiple issues related to existing city utilities, sidewalks and adjacent roadways, park staff is currently working with the City's Purchasing Department to select a qualified architecture and/or engineering firm to assist with the development of construction documents for the property. The plans developed by the firm will assist with the implementation of the proposed park improvements outlined in this section of the memo.

The proposed improvements to the Orr Street park property include the following:

1. A combination of contract and force account labor will be used to complete necessary utility work associated with the park property. This will include improvements related to access to water for park patrons and relocating the existing fire hydrants on the property. Stormwater improvements will include new curb and gutter stormwater inlets along portions of the curbed park perimeter, along with porous paving improvements for stormwater collection in part of the proposed parking spaces along Ash Street and St. James Street. Utility improvements will also include the undergrounding of overhead electric and communication lines along St. James Street and Ash Street and setting a new transformer to provide necessary electric for park lighting and amenities.
2. Park staff will work closely with the architecture/engineering firm and staff from the Public Works Department to make improvements to sidewalks, parking spaces, streets and crosswalks. Public Works staff identified multiple opportunities to correct current roadway widths, reduce speed of traffic and improve existing sidewalk widths. The construction plans for the park will address these opportunities by setting roadway widths, creating space for future sidewalk improvements on St. James Street, Ash Street and Park Avenue opposite the park property and identifying crosswalk improvements at each corner of the



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park. As part of the park project, staff is proposing to add perimeter sidewalks with widths up to 20 feet around the four sides of the park property. The extra width of sidewalk will allow for expanded ADA access around the park, tree planting opportunities and space for 10' x 10' tents for use during special events at the park. The expanded sidewalks will also accommodate a variety of benches along the perimeter of the park. Specific locations have not been identified as this offers an opportunity for public art and bench installation, as coordinated through the Office of Cultural Affairs public art process.

Contract labor will also be utilized to make parking improvements at the property. The plan for parking improvements was discussed with citizens at every meeting due to feedback related to the number of parking spaces needed at the park. All parking spaces will be metered and managed by the Public Works Parking Utility. A portion of the parking spaces along St. James Street and Ash Street, totaling 24 parking spaces, will be utilized as the stormwater detention controls for the park site through the utilization of porous paving. The final plans proposed by the architecture/engineering firm will include the total amount of porous paver parking spaces needed to meet City code related to stormwater improvements. The information below details parking quantities at the existing park property and quantities in the final proposed park master plan. These changes are a result of feedback acquired during the public input process.

Existing Park (25 total parking spaces):

- 24 parallel parking spaces
- 1 ADA parking space

Initial Plans presented for public feedback (57 total parking spaces):

- 45 standard pull-in parking spaces
- 6 ADA parking spaces
- 6 parallel parking spaces

Final Proposed Park Plan (45 total parking spaces):

- 28 angled pull-in parking spaces
- 6 ADA parking spaces
- 11 parallel parking spaces

The proposed plan includes the removal of parking along Orr Street to correct roadway alignment. The plan includes the addition of 6 parallel parking spaces along Park Avenue, 28 angled pull-in parking spaces and 4 ADA parking spaces along St. James Street, and 5 parallel parking spaces and 2 ADA parking spaces along Ash Street. The 6 parallel parking spaces on Park Avenue will also provide dedicated parking spaces for food trucks during special events at the park.

The additional parking at the park can also be promoted as a future trailhead for the expansion of the Columbia Trail System that will utilize the Colt Railroad corridor. The trail is funded as part of the 2021 Park Sales Tax and will provide non-motorized access from the terminus of the railroad at Rogers Street into north Columbia to Brown Station Park.



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3. Contract labor will be used to install new playground equipment at the park including a playground structure designed for children ages 2 to 12 years old, swing set and an independent climbing feature. The new ADA-compliant play structure will meet current ASTM safety guidelines with pour-in-place rubber playground surfacing and a large shade structure covering the play space.
4. Park staff will install an outdoor seating area with a variety of seating options for park patrons adjacent to the playground. This area will be placed on a concrete surface and will be discussed as an opportunity for public art. In addition to multiple tables with seating, staff will also install bike parking and a water fountain with dog bowl in this area.
5. A combination of contract and force account labor will be used to create a flexible performance area in the park with a 2,500 square foot concrete pad and open green space area. This performance area and turf lawn provide an opportunity for the promotion of music and performing arts at the park. The concrete pad will have the capability of holding a portable stage for performances and have an accessible electric panel for performing equipment.

All events at the park will follow City ordinances related to park uses and hours and individuals will complete a park special use permit for events within the park. If an event at the park requests use of areas outside of the park boundaries, such as a road closure, the event coordinators will have to go through the city's special event permit process with final approval by the City Council.

Park staff has also discussed multiple uses for this type of space in this location of Columbia. The park design with an open lawn area will allow for the return of a Parks and Recreation-planned Family Fun Fest to downtown Columbia and will be utilized by Armory Summer Camps. Recreation staff will be able to bring campers to the park to play games on the lawn, have lunch in the park and utilize the playground.

6. Park staff will work with the Office of Cultural Affairs to identify an artist to install the park sign at the corner of Park Avenue and Orr Street. The sign will serve as the first piece of public art located at the park and staff outlines the plan for additional public art installations later in this memo.
7. A combination of contract labor and park staff will be used to install interactive LED park lighting along the perimeter walkways and interactive LED string lighting over the active family space.
8. Park staff will complete all portions of the project related to landscaping, turf establishment and tree selection and planting. The existing park property has zero trees on the property and park staff proposes to plant 50 trees throughout the property.



## **Future Installation of Public Art and Park Amenities:**

Park staff has identified six locations for outdoor public art and will work with a small committee to develop the long-term plan for the installation of art at each location once the construction documents for the park have been completed by the architecture/engineering firm. The park will be used as a primary location for citizens and visitors to Columbia to view a variety of outdoor public art displays that will be installed when funding becomes available for each of the locations. The public art displays will enhance the park experience for patrons and impact the city's cultural tourism. Park visitors will be able to view and interact with the different outdoor art exhibits allowing for public opportunities related to art engagement, education and promotion. As funding becomes available for each art location, city staff will return to City Council to discuss the selected artist, art installation and request approval to proceed with the addition of the art at the park.

During the public input process, park staff had multiple discussions regarding restroom availability at the park. With the proposed park development plan, no permanent restroom is identified as part of the initial park construction. This is due to available project funding, necessary utility improvements, cost of a permanent restroom and the ability to supply portable toilets for special events. While a permanent restroom facility is not shown in this phase of construction, park staff will work with the architecture/engineering firm during the planning phase to identify a future location for a restroom based on park design and access to utilities. Staff would return to City Council at a later date when funding is available to discuss approval of this improvement and update the master plan for the park.

## **Project Funding and Construction Timeline:**

The \$1,550,000 park development project is funded by the 2021 Park Sales Tax, totaling \$300,000, and a \$1,250,000 grant from the Missouri ARPA Community Revitalization Grant Program through the Missouri Department of Economic Development. The project is included in the City's FY2024 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. Contract labor will be used for site grading, sidewalk and concrete flatwork installation, parking installation, playground installation and installation of utilities. Park staff will complete all other work associated with the development of the park. Improvements at the park are scheduled to begin summer 2024 and must be completed by September 2026 to comply with the grant requirements.

### Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: The total project cost is \$1,550,000 and is funded by the 2021 Park Sales Tax and a Missouri ARPA Community Revitalization Grant from the Missouri Department of Economic Development. The funding includes \$300,000 in Park Sales Tax funding and \$1,250,000 in donated funds.



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Long-Term Impact: Park staff estimates an annual increase in expenses between \$3,000 and \$5,000 for the maintenance of the park. This will include mowing, trash removal, expenses related to park utilities and general park maintenance.

## Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impact

### Strategic Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Reliable Infrastructure, Secondary Impact: Inclusive Community, Tertiary Impact: Resilient Economy

### Comprehensive Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Infrastructure, Secondary Impact: Livable & Sustainable Communities, Tertiary Impact: Inter-Governmental Cooperation

## Legislative History

| Date      | Action  |
|-----------|---|
| 8/7/2023  | B173-23: Authorizing a real estate contract with Vicarious LLC for the acquisition of property located at 307 and 309 St. James Street to be used for park and greenspace purposes.<br><a href="#">City of Columbia, Missouri - File #: B173-23 (legistar.com)</a>  |
| 6/20/2023 | B135-23: Authorizing a grant agreement with the Missouri Department of Economic Development associated with the Missouri ARPA Community Revitalization Grant Program to be utilized for the proposed development of the Orr Street Park property; amending the FY 2023 Annual Budget by appropriating funds.<br><a href="#">City of Columbia, Missouri - File #: B135-23 (legistar.com)</a> |
| 4/19/2021 | B128-21: Authorizing a contract for sale of real estate with Union Electric Company, d/b/a Ameren Missouri, for the acquisition of property located at 209 St. James Street and 210 Orr Street to be potentially used for greenspace, parks, arts, and/or market activities.<br><a href="#">City of Columbia, Missouri - File #: B128-21 (legistar.com)</a>                                 |

## Suggested Council Action

Approve a resolution to set a public hearing adopting the park master plan for the Orr Street park property, authorizing the construction of improvements and adopting "North Village Park" as the official park name.