



Section 2d: Parks and Recreation, Culture and Arts

Introduction

Facilities such as parks, libraries, arts and culture programs are important components of any city. They help provide a community its own identity as well as improve the quality of life for those residents choosing to call that place home. Providing suitable, accessible community facilities and services is a basic function of local government and one that affects the quality of life of every citizen. Many times the effectiveness of local government is measured, to an extent, by its ability to adequately plan for and finance these facilities and services. The city of Lathrop strives to improve the existing community facilities and services it provides to its residents, while maintaining equitable user fees and tax structure.

This section of the Lathrop Comprehensive Plan will examine the available parks and recreation, culture and arts in Lathrop, and develop a set of goals and objectives to support the community's vision for the cultural and recreational services offered by the City of Lathrop.

Parks and Recreation in Lathrop Today

The availability of parks, open space and recreational facilities plays a key role in establishing the quality of life for a community and promoting the health of its residents. Parks provide opportunities for recreation, reflection, and relaxation, as well as a community gathering place. Additionally, they improve community health, increase property values, offer habitat for numerous species of animals and plants, and establish green space in the community, which is an effective stormwater management strategy.

The City of Lathrop furnishes three city-maintained parks that offer a number of amenities. In addition, the city has several recreation programs, most of which are conducted by non-profit organizations that have entered into agreements or contracts with the City for the use of its parks and facilities. The City has no residency requirements for entry into its parks, serving city residents and visitors alike.

The three city parks (see Figure 2.17) are managed by the Lathrop Park Board and maintained by city employees. The nine-member board was created by the City of Lathrop using Missouri's Revised Statutes (RSMO) Section 90 (Parks and Recreation for cities). RSMO 90 establishes how park board

Fig. 2.17	Acres	Basket-ball	Base-Ball/Soft-ball	Soccer	Shelter Houses	Play-grounds	Hike/Bike Trails	Rest-Rooms	Water Fountains	Tennis	Concession Stand	Volley-ball
City Park	2.1	Yes			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		
Ingram Fields	7		Yes		Yes			Yes			Yes	
Ben Jones Park	15			Yes			Yes	Yes			Yes	

members are appointed and tax rates are determined and levied, terms for park board members, and organizational powers. Park board members are appointed by the Board of Aldermen.

Funding for the park board is tax-based through an assessment of \$0.1516 per \$100 assessed on real estate. The park board's annual budget is approximately \$25,000. In addition, the board seeks federal and state grants as well as resources from private foundations. Two funding options the City may explore in the future are the Missouri Department of Natural Resources' Land and Water Conservation Fund and the Missouri Department of Transportation's Transportation Enhancement Act grant. These potential resources can be applied to a number of activities, including trail-related projects, baseball field enhancements and swimming pools. Most recently, the board completed renovating Ingram Fields Park. This \$80,000 project included Americans with Disability Act (ADA) improvements and new concession stands. The park board does not currently have a formal long-range plan.

In 1996, the National Recreation and Park Association and the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration released the *Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines*. This manual established a series of standards for park and recreation space in regards to planning, acquiring and developing community lands for parks, recreation and open space. The guide also set forth how much park space should be devoted to residents of a community, i.e. the number of acres of park space per unit of population. While there are a number of ways to determine this minimum, (percentage of area, carrying capacity of the land, etc.) the accepted standard is 10 acres per 1,000 persons. The City of Lathrop meets this standard; based on 2004 Census estimates, the city has a population of 2,302 and,

Fig. 2.18

	Recommended Space Requirements	Recommended Size and Dimensions	Number of Units Per Population	Service Radius	Location Notes
Swimming Pool	Varies on size of pool and amenities. Usually ½ to 2 A site	Teaching- minimum of 25 yards x 45' even depth of 3 to 4 ft. Competitive- minimum of 25 m x 16 m.	1 per 20,000 (Pools should accommodate 3 to 5% of total population at a time.)	15 to 30 minute travel time	Pools for general community use should be planned for teaching, competitive and recreational purposes with enough depth to accommodate 1m and 3m diving boards. Located in community or school site.
Trails	N/A	Well-defined head maximum 10' width, maximum average grade is 5% not to exceed 15%.	1 system per region	N/A	
Tennis	Minimum of 7,200 sq. ft. single court (2 A for complex)	36' x 78', 12' clearance on both sides; 21' clearance on both ends	1 court per 2,000	1/4 -1/2 mile	Best in batteries of 2-4. Located in community park or adjacent to school.
Basketball 1. Youth 2. High School 3. Collegiate	2400-3036 sq. ft. 5040-7280 sq. ft. 5600-7980 sq. ft.	46-50' x 84' 50' x 84' 50' x 94' With unobstructed space on all sides	1 per 5,000	1/4 -1/2 miles	Usually in school, recreation center or church facility. Safe walking or bike access.

considering the city’s 24.1 acres of park space, results in a ratio that exceeds the recommended standard by one acre. Considering recent population trends within the City of Lathrop, the community and the park board should consider developing a long-range park plan to acquire and develop additional park space. Figure 2.18 is a matrix of the National Park Standards, which identifies activities and facilities, the recommended space requirements, the number of units/facilities per population, the service radius and location notes. The listed activities were identified in a recently completed Lathrop community survey.

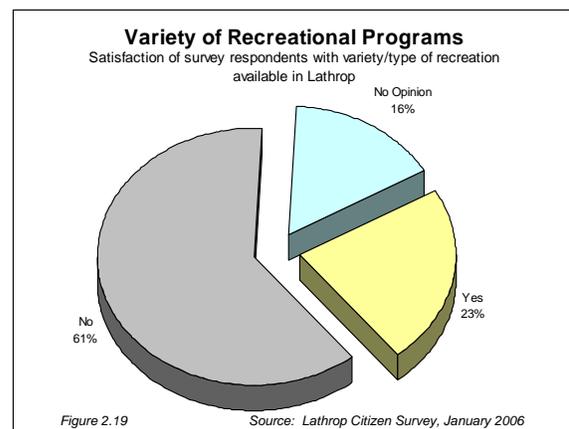
In addition to city parks, residents of Lathrop are within 30 miles of several other recreational options. These include:

- **Pony Express Lake-** seven miles south of Maysville, MO
 - Activities: fishing
 - Acreage: 240
- **Wallace State Park-** Cameron, MO
 - Activities: camping, fishing in six-acre lake, hiking on four trails, picnicking, swimming
 - Acreage: 502
- **Smithville Lake-** Smithville, MO
 - Activities: camping, fishing, bike trail, hiking, picnicking, boating, hunting, golfing, swimming, horse trails
- **Watkins Woolen Mill State Park-** Lawson, MO
 - 100 wooded camp sites, fishing, picnicking, swimming, tours, hiking, horse trails, 3.75-mile paved biking trails
 - Acreage: 1467

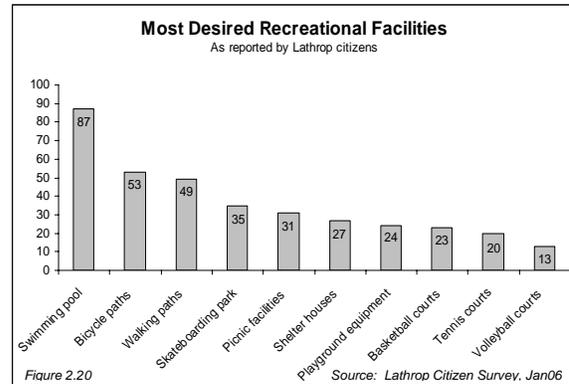
Furthermore, there are several nearby golf courses, including:

- Cameron Memorial Golf Club- a semi-private course located in Cameron, MO
- Excelsior Springs Golf Club- a public course located in Excelsior Springs, MO
- Marimack Golf Complex- a public course located in Kearney, MO
- Plattsburg Country Club- a semi-private course located in Plattsburg, MO
- Hidden Valley Golf Club- a public course located in Lawson, MO

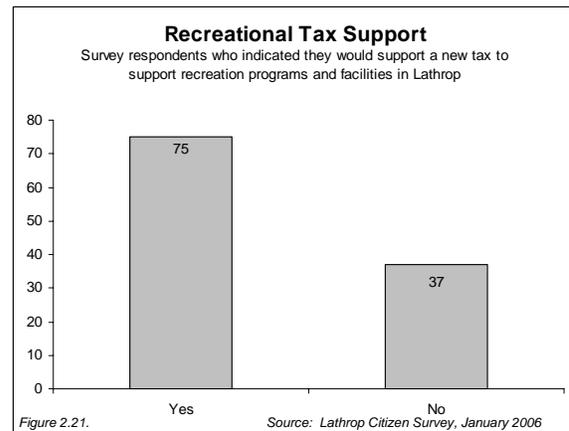
In January 2006, the City of Lathrop distributed a survey to assess citizen opinion regarding the city’s current recreational programs. Respondents were asked if they believed there was an adequate number/variety of organized recreational programs in Lathrop. Figure 2.19 illustrates that of the 132 respondents 82 (73%) are currently not satisfied. (21 respondents had “No Opinion”.)



Respondents were then asked to rank, from a provided list, the most desired recreational facility for Lathrop; Figure 2.20 details the results. (Respondents were asked to “check all that apply” for this question.) The recreational facility most preferred by respondents was a swimming pool, followed by bicycle and walking paths and a skateboard park.



The final survey question pertaining to recreation asked “Would you be willing to increase your taxes to support additional recreational facilities in Lathrop?” Seventy-five of the 130 respondents said they would support a Recreational Tax (see Figure 2.21).



Arts and Culture in Lathrop Today

The City of Lathrop has a number of cultural events that takes place throughout the year. One of the most well-attended events is The Living History Festival and Small Farmers Reunion, which occurs in October. Another event that attracts numerous visitors

is the Antique Car and Tractor Association’s Annual Festival. This event usually takes place in the month of June, and draws thousands of visitors to the area. Other cultural happenings include Santa’s Workshop, Kid’s Big Truck Day and Fun Fest and the Friendship Festival. In addition, the Women’s Service and Social Club sponsor the annual Holiday Craft Show. Many of these events are sponsored by individual groups and typically are coordinated with the Lathrop Festival Corporation. There is no dedicated tax-supported funding stream for any of the events.

One of the most important cultural facilities in Lathrop is the Van Buren-Spaeth Library and Museum. Established in 1989 by a group of civic volunteers, the library has grown from a small compilation to its current collection of 15,000 books. Along with publications, the Library has two computers which are available to the public and hosts a variety of reading programs.

The Library operated for several years in its original location on Oak Street before moving to its current facility on North Pine Street. The Oak Street building was purchased using donations collected from throughout the community. However, the Library quickly outgrew the facility. In 1998, a local church donated their building on Pine Street to the Van Buren-Spaeth Library and Museum.

The Library and Museum staff is comprised of volunteers. It is funded through donations, proceeds from the sale of the original Oak Street building, funds bequeathed to the library and an annual fundraising campaign. The Library is located upstairs, while the Museum is in the downstairs of the

building. The Museum contains an assortment of artifacts, documents and collectibles that captures the history of Lathrop and its historical claim as the “Mule Capital of the World”.

Vision, Goals, and Action Plans

The vision and goals for Parks and Recreation and Arts and Culture were developed by a civic committee, comprised of Lathrop citizens with first-hand knowledge of the status of parks and recreation, arts and culture programs and facilities in the city. Committee members were tasked with developing an overarching vision for developing these services within the city, and devising a set of goals to support that vision.

VISION FOR PARKS AND RECREATION AND CULTURE AND ARTS IN LATHROP

The City of Lathrop recognizes the importance of a vibrant “Parks and Arts” community and will work to encourage and facilitate a committed Park and Recreational program, while supporting and investing in community-wide Arts and Culture activities.

Goal 1: The maintenance of Lathrop’s parks and recreation program is a vital community service, and as such, should be a priority for the City of Lathrop.

A high-quality recreational and parks program offers many important benefits for a community. Beyond the positive aspects of improved health, opportunities for socialization and providing public meeting space, an active park and recreation program promotes the value of teamwork, responsibility and furthers the sense of community. In as much, the community has a responsibility to maintain and support such programs, financially and organizationally.

Short-Term Action Plan (implement within 5 years)

- 1) Using community input and direction from the City of Lathrop, assess the city’s current park and recreation program/facilities. Based on results of this evaluation, create a long-range park plan that will address the recreational needs of a growing population.
- 2) Establish a “Friends of the Park” 501c3. This organization will allow the Lathrop Park Board to seek new grant opportunities. In addition, this group will be assigned the task of helping to increase awareness of the existing park system and recreational programs.
- 3) The Lathrop Park Board will develop and implement a variety of recreational programs to involve a wider range of community members. The city will strive to encourage involvement with the parks and recreational department and the programs it offers.
- 4) The Lathrop Park Board and the Friends of the Park will work with other community organizations, such as the Lathrop School District, area churches and civic groups to

help inform the citizens of Lathrop on any park and recreational-related referendum issues.

- 5) Continue to explore and identify possible funding streams to help with the expansion of the park system.

Long-Term Action Plan (implement within 10 years)

- 1) As the community continues to grow, the City of Lathrop will systematically assess and expand the park system to ensure it meets the NRPA standard of 10 acres per 1,000 persons.
- 2) Implement long-term park plan, and update the plan at least biannually.

Goal 2: To facilitate recreation in the City of Lathrop.

Recreation and physical activity are important factors in a community's quality of life. The Lathrop Park Board and the City of Lathrop serve as the primary provider of organized recreational programs for the community's residents. Employing a variety of assets, the City of Lathrop will develop and implement a plan to expand and improve on existing recreation programs and activities.

Short-Term Action Plan (implement within 5 years)

- 1) Using community input and direction from the City of Lathrop, assess the community's current park and recreation program/facilities. Based on results of this evaluation, create a long-term park plan.
- 2) Form relationships with area organizations to assist in the development, marketing and implementation of recreational programs for residents of Lathrop.
- 3) In conjunction with the Lathrop School District, create a community activity plan to educate citizens about the many benefits of an active lifestyle. In an effort to minimize costs, improve community ownership and develop career-building skills, this program would potentially be staffed and administered by Lathrop High School students.
- 4) Constantly work to provide a proper recreational program. In addition, explore and expand plans to provide additional recreational programs, ensuring that activity costs are low enough to encourage widespread participation.
- 5) Identify and apply for relevant federal, state, and private foundation park and recreational grants to assist in the acquisition of additional land and equipment.



City Park, in downtown Lathrop.

Long-Term Action Plan (implement within 10 years)

- 1) Complete long-term park plan.
- 2) As Lathrop's population continues to grow, evaluate parks and recreation program to ensure the programs meet the needs of Lathrop's citizens.

Goal 3: Encourage and expand Lathrop's existing Arts and Culture community.

Arts and Culture plays a vital role in the life and well-being of a community. They are an important tool for educational, economic and community development and can revitalize a community's pride. The City of Lathrop recognizes the value and encourages artistic activities in its community. With that, civic leaders will work to encourage and expand Lathrop's Arts and Culture community.

Short-Term Action Plan (implement within 5 years)

- 1) Assess Lathrop's current Arts and Culture community. Working with local artisans, develop a long-term plan to cultivate this community in Lathrop.
- 2) Form a 501c3 artisan support Group. Explore funding mechanisms for growing the arts and culture, including the Missouri Arts Council, private foundations and area businesses.
- 3) Coordinate with the Lathrop School District to develop an "Arts in Curriculum" program. This program would support collaborations among artists, classroom teachers, and administrators in developing curricula that integrates fine arts content in non-arts classes.
- 4) Develop a Community Arts Program to nurture an interest in art and culture with area residents. Create learning workshops to help educate/instruct citizens.
- 5) Arts and culture supporters should visit similar-sized communities with a strong arts culture to better understand how they grow the arts and culture in their town.
- 6) The Artisan Support Group and the Lathrop Chamber of Commerce will explore the possibility of forming strategic partnerships with other regional destination-based communities. These collaborations will help to promote Lathrop's arts and culture programs and allow for the exchange of ideas.
- 7) The city should support and coordinate closely with the Lathrop Antique Club (fairgrounds board) to ensure cultural and historical events in the community are planned and expanded into the future.



Van Buren-Spaeth Library and Museum

Long-Term Action Plan (implement within 10 years)

- 1) Complete Arts and Culture long-term plan.
- 2) Become a destination-based community for regional tourism.

Goal 4: Promote literacy and local interest through the creation of a full-service library.

A high quality library provides many important yields for a community. Beyond its service as a public meeting place, a full-service library promotes the value of literacy, provides access to available technology and furthers the sense of community. In as much, the residents have a responsibility to reciprocate support both financially and with time and talents.

Short-Term Action Plan (implement within 5 years)

- 1) In cooperation with the Clinton County Library Board, develop a local “Friends of the Library” community action group to help educate the citizens of Lathrop on any library-related, county-wide referendum issues. This group will be tasked with the responsibility of helping to create a levy-supported, county-wide library system as well as increase awareness of the existing library system.
- 2) The Friends of the Library community action group will develop and implement a variety of literacy programs to involve a broader spectrum of community members. The programs will strive to encourage involvement with the library and participation in the offered reading programs.
- 3) The Van Buren-Spaeth Library and the Friends of the Library will explore the possibility of forming strategic partnerships with other regional libraries. These collaborations will help to promote the Lathrop library system and allow for the exchange of ideas.
- 4) Continue to explore and identify potential sustained funding streams to help with the creation of a full-service library in the City of Lathrop and additional literacy programs. Initiate a computer-based technology curriculum.

Long-Term Action Plan (implement within 10 years)

- 1) Improve the Library’s existing structure to meet the demands of Lathrop’s growing population. In addition, continue to develop the Library’s collection of books and periodicals, work to improve literacy programs and the Library’s technology capacity.