



City of Excelsior Springs Application for Gold Level Recognition



COMMUNITY FOR ALL AGES

SERVING ALL AGES AND ABILITIES IN PUBLIC OUTDOOR SPACES AND BUILDINGS

Excelsior Springs Parks and Recreation is a thriving department skillfully serving those of all ages and abilities in our community.

The Parks and Recreation Department has recently produced their 2021 strategic plan with goals set for the next five years. This plan was adopted by the Parks and Recreation Board on February 23, 2021 and presented to Excelsior Springs City Council on June 7, 2021. The City of Excelsior Springs will use this plan to guide our Parks and Recreation services for residents of all ages and abilities in the coming years.

A comprehensive community survey was used to gather data about the use of their facilities and to understand the desires of city residents when it comes to Parks and Recreation amenities. Evaluating this data allowed the Parks and Recreation board to establish a plan for the coming years to meet the needs of all ages and abilities.

These plans include:

1. Building additional trails with plans to accomplish a loop for the Rainbow Trail, to finish a loop around Powell Lake and connect Century Bark, the community's dog park. (Social Inclusion) The Rotary Club has placed benches along the existing trails to provide a place to rest while enjoying the trails.
2. Holding the grand opening of the recently finished Rainbow Splash Park featuring a flat, accessible surface. (Social Inclusion)
3. Adding solar lighting the trails and placing musical instruments along the trails.
4. Adding an amphitheater using the natural terrace of Century Bark for movies and concerts in the park. (Social Inclusion)
5. Naturescapes: Using the natural environment to create play spaces within the parks.
6. Modernizing and improving existing playgrounds with newer designs in play equipment, and paving surfaces to make gazebos and playgrounds accessible to wheelchairs and strollers. (Social Inclusion)



7. Building new playgrounds that will feature “facilities that are appropriate for ALL ages and abilities.” Plans are in the works for the new Milwaukee Neighborhood Park that will feature fully inclusive equipment and paved access for wheelchairs and strollers, a protective fence, and a butterfly garden. (Social Inclusion)
8. Expansion of services to the senior community through the Excelsior Springs Senior Center housed at the Excelsior Springs Community Center.



EXCELSIOR SPRINGS COMMUNITY CENTER:

One of the greatest assets of Excelsior Springs Parks and Recreation is the Excelsior Springs Community Center, which meets all Americans with Disabilities Act requirements, specifically Title II and Title III guidelines. The design of the center took into account that members and guests would be from 0-102 years of age. The design process gained input from numerous individuals and groups to meet the needs of all.

Amenities for all ages at the community center include a heated pool where swimming lessons and water exercise classes take place, as well as various other facilities for fitness. Every second grader in Excelsior Springs is taught to swim at the center. A nutrition counselor is available for consultation. (Health) The Wellness Café on site offers nutritious smoothies.

Staff at the Community Center are trained in the specialized needs of citizens of different ages. The Community Center is a designated SAFE place. ESCC has an agreement with the Orrick and Excelsior Springs Special Education Departments on internship programs. ESCC staff conduct swim lessons and fitness classes for children and adults with special needs. Dr. Lisa Adams oversees both of these programs. ESCC has three employees with autism and two employees in wheelchairs.

The Community Center hosts a weekly Farmer's Market, providing the community access to fresh, nutritious food. (Health) Plans are now being made for Phase II of the center, which will include an outdoor pool that will be accessible (Zero Entry) and ADA compliant.

The Community Center houses our Senior Center where there is a dedicated staff member and a handful of volunteers overseeing all aspects of Senior Center operations. A designated room, equipment, and exercise instructors are partially funded by Clay County Senior Services. A fitness class, Silver Sneakers, is provided for seniors at the center. Seniors can participate in the MARC lunch program, during which speakers are often invited to share about subjects pertinent to seniors including fraud awareness, diabetes and heart health, and opportunities for wellness. The Parks and Rec plan specifically includes mention of an expansion of services to the seniors who receive services and who socialize and exercise at the center.



PARTNERSHIPS

Mid America Regional Council funds Senior lunches and the dedicated employee who oversees the Senior lunch program.

A partnership has been developed between the Hospital, School District, and Community Center to provide fitness and wellness options for hospital and school employees. ESCC also partners with SAFE (Substance Abuse Free Environments) to provide education opportunities for parents and students. In November 2020, the city in partnership with SAFE promoted the American Cancer Society's Great American Smokeout campaign.

Clay County Senior Center has been a valuable partner in helping our city serve our aging population in the following ways:

1. As a major financial contributor to the new Senior Center.
2. They have contributed financially to support staff for the Senior Center.
3. CCSS has an agreement with the Excelsior Springs Career Center for life-long learning education.
4. CCSS provides discounts for seniors to have memberships to the Community Center as well as providing funding for exercise instructors.
5. CCSS provides significant financial support to a local nonprofit, The Good Samaritan Center, as a Rural Advocate.
6. Residents of Excelsior Springs benefit from the CCSS Transportation program with Assisted Transportation for medical appointments.
7. CCSS funds OATS (Older Adult Transportation Service) to take seniors to the grocery store/outings.
8. CCSS funds a home repair program, in-home support services, and Lifeline (a personal emergency response system).



OTHER WORK SERVING ALL AGES AND ABILITIES

HOUSING AND DEVELOPMENT

CODE REVIEW: The Community Development Department in partnership with the Planning and Zoning Board is doing a thorough review of the City's zoning codes. This discussion includes consideration of Accessory Dwelling Units, either detached or attached. Shared dwellings are currently allowed. The City's zoning designations do allow for a range of housing options and each zoning designation has a planned development counterpart which allows for greater flexibility and latitude for developers seeking to make the best use of the land for greater density and affordability. The board has already amended setbacks to allow extra space for ramps in the front or rear of a property through Ordinance 19-01-02.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT: The City of Excelsior Springs has designated two Opportunity Zones, which offer tax incentives to investors who invest in our community through a qualified Opportunity Fund. The City's 353 Tax Abatement program provides a means for property owners in the 353 District to obtain a return on their investment when they make improvements to their property. A portion of property taxes can be abated in return for improvements made to the property and removal of all blight. On July 19, 2021 the council approved the addition of the Elms Historic District Neighborhood to the 353 Tax Abatement District further enabling property owners with historic homes and buildings to be able to make improvements.

DESIGN: The City has adopted the International Code Council Building Codes, which allow for Universal Design and accessibility features. We are considering incentives to encourage developers to incorporate Universal Design in their plans. The City supported the work of MARC in the creation of the Remodeling for Accessible Homes Guidebook by making a donation towards its production. City staff also committed time to planning the project.



Housing: There are multiple options for affordable and accessible housing in Excelsior Springs and a growing number of options for senior housing. The City of Excelsior Springs Housing Authority has three multi-family housing locations and several single-family homes (166 units) available to those who qualify. According to data in the First Suburbs Coalition Regional Housing Summit Summary Report, Excelsior Springs has the most affordable rental units in the Kansas City area.

For Senior Housing, the historic Oaks apartments are located downtown with 40 units. Plans are in the works for senior living apartments in two other locations in town. The Colony Plaza provides 111 units of affordable, accessible housing.



DEDICATED STAFF PERSON:

The City has created a Neighborhood Specialist position to focus on policy and programs relating to neighborhoods, codes, and property maintenance. This person's duties include:

1. Assisting property owners in obtaining 353 Tax Abatements for making improvements on their property,
2. Connecting property owners in need with organizations who can help them with accessibility renovations or repairs.
(These organizations include RebuildingTogether KC, Good Samaritan Center of Excelsior Springs, Habitat for Humanity, Christmas in October and others.)
3. Connecting those in need of having simple tasks done such as yard work, shoveling snow, or changing batteries in smoke detectors with volunteers who can assist through the Neighbors Helping Neighbors volunteer program,
4. Assisting property owners in applying for USDA Rural Development loans,
5. Contributing to the Communities of Excellence Housing Task Force,
6. Promoting preservation by working with the Historic Preservation Commission,
7. Assisting the Code Enforcement Officer with Code Compliance,
8. Representing the City in the Communities for All Ages program,
9. Promoting National Neighborhood Watch and Ready.gov emergency preparedness,
10. Supporting code and zoning policy that promotes ageing in place such as Universal Design and Accessory Dwelling Units.
11. The Neighborhood Specialist will be training with the City of Excelsior Springs Police Department in the Crime Free Multi-Housing Program as soon as training is available.



CARING FOR ALL AGES AND ABILITIES THROUGH TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY

The City of Excelsior Springs Transportation Department serves all ages and abilities through our specialized buses, and operates in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. They offer service to the hospital and medical offices, which is free for those on Medicaid. There is also service to local grocery stores. Routes and times are posted online.

Transportation employees are required to have the following training annually:

1. Aggressive Driving
2. Backing Safely
3. Basic First Aid
4. Blood-Borne Pathogens
5. CPR, National Safety Council Course
6. Dealing with Difficult Passengers
7. Defensive Driving
8. Distracted Driving
9. Diversity & Awareness-Providing Quality Customer Service for Transportation Passengers who have Disabilities
10. Driven to Extremes
11. Drug and Alcohol Awareness
12. Emergency and Evacuation procedures
13. Fatigue Awareness for Drivers
14. HIPPA Training
15. Night Driving
16. Operation Lifesaver
17. Highway-Rail Crossing Safety
18. Passenger Assistance/Mobility Aid Securement
19. Sensitivity Awareness
20. Sexual Harassment
21. Slips-Trips & Falls Prevention, Wheelchair Securement, and Winter Driving Safety



Our drivers are well trained to assist passengers of all ages and abilities. During Covid shutdowns, the Transportation Department assisted the Senior Center with delivery of meals to their clients.

SAFE STREETS AND SIDEWALKS

In the spring of 2021, the City did a comprehensive survey and information campaign regarding Safe Streets and Sidewalks. We were able to discover the areas of town where residents felt sidewalks were most needed. We have a prioritized list in place of streets which need attention and we are currently seeking funding for these projects.



SOCIAL INCLUSION, COMMUNICATION, AND PARTICIPATION

Volunteering!

The City provides a dedicated page of its website to those who wish to volunteer. There are days scheduled for stream and park clean up.

A separate program, **Neighbors Helping Neighbors**, matches the needs of some with the willing hands of others. Volunteers with this program make it possible for residents to age in place by performing simple tasks. Shoveling snow, mowing, changing batteries in smoke alarms, changing lightbulbs, etc. are a few of the tasks that can be done to make it possible for someone to stay in their home longer.

Community of Excellence

The City is a member of the Communities of Excellence network of cities. City staff, elected officials and volunteers come together in several different task forces to identify and study areas for improvement. Data is collected and action plans put in place. These task forces are:

- Economic Vitality
- Housing
- Healthcare
- Ethics and Inclusion
- Communication



COMMUNICATION

- The City partners with the Excelsior Citizen, which is a nonprofit group communicating with the community daily through social media.
- Listening sessions are held regularly on subjects of interest to residents regarding policy and decisions affecting the community.
- City Council and School Board meetings are being streamed live through social media and are also recorded to be viewed later if desired.



CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Public meetings will continue to be available for viewing online to allow for greater accessibility.

The City partners with the Job Corps Center and Excelsior Springs Career Center to assist students in gaining job and life skills. Students from the Career Center are learning construction skills while making improvements to a public building. Students from the Culinary program at Job Corps often provide catering services for Chamber of Commerce events and other community events.

Encore Careers

The City of Excelsior Springs sets an example regarding hiring retirees. We have several employed by the city, including:

- Police Chief Clint Reno, who retired from the Excelsior Springs Police Department after 27 years of service. He has entered a “second act” career by working for the city in the capacity of part time Information Technologies employee.
- Dave Shadwick retired from the city and currently works part time with the same crew from which he retired.
- Charles Lee retired from the city and currently works part time for Utilities.
- Mike Britt retired from a teaching career and currently works our yard waste program part time.
- Johnna Cravens works for the school district as a bus driver and fills in during summer break and when not driving for the school for our transportation division.



COMMUNITY AND HEALTH SERVICES FOR ALL AGES

The following are examples of how the City of Excelsior Springs is promoting Community and Health Services for all ages:

- Mayor Sharon Powell made a Proclamation for the recognition of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day on June 7, 2021.
- The City promotes the work of the Good Samaritan Center, which is a local nonprofit providing a food bank, thrift store, counseling, home repair assistance, utility assistance, and other services.
- The Community Center hosts free blood pressure checks and other health screenings that are sponsored by the Fire Department and Hospital.
- The Hospital has been the anchor for vaccination information and distribution for Excelsior and surrounding areas.
- Excelsior Springs paramedics offer vaccinations for those who are homebound.
- The City supported and promoted the Great American Smokeout in November of 2020 alongside SAFE (Substance-Abuse Free Environments) and the Communities of Excellence Healthcare Task Force to encourage smoking cessation.
- Nutrition is provided to seniors through MARC's lunch program at the Senior Center.
- The Wellness Café offers nutritious smoothies and drinks and is located at the Community Center.
- The Tobacco-21 ordinance was passed on May 15, 2017 changing the approved age of tobacco product sales to 21 years of age.



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