



MEET ME @ MCCOY

McCOY PARK VISION PLAN

SPENCER, OKLAHOMA

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Introduction

McCoy Park is an important public asset for Spencer, Oklahoma. It is a centrally located green space that connects surrounding neighborhoods, civic buildings, and local institutions. Recognizing the park's potential to serve as a more vibrant and inclusive community gathering place, the City of Spencer partnered with the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG) and the University of Oklahoma Institute for Quality Communities (IQC) to reimagine its role in the city's future.

Through ACOG's Community Economic Resiliency Initiative (CERI), Spencer was selected to receive technical assistance to strengthen the community's economic and social resilience. The CERI program brings together local governments and expert partners to identify high-impact opportunities for growth, quality of life improvements, and long-term sustainability.

As part of this effort, IQC worked closely with Spencer leaders, residents, and ACOG staff to develop a vision for McCoy Park that reflects local values and priorities. The team led community workshops, met with a local steering committee, and conducted on-the-ground research to identify design and programming strategies that would make the park more welcoming, functional, and connected.

To build momentum and encourage local pride, the project was branded as Meet Me @ McCoy – an invitation for residents to see the park not just as a destination, but as a regular part of daily life. The name emphasizes McCoy Park's role as a inclusive, welcoming space where people of all ages and backgrounds can come together.

This report presents a set of recommendations to guide future improvements to McCoy Park, including physical upgrades, landscape strategies, programming ideas, and partnership models. The goal is to support a park that reflects Spencer's identity, strengthens community ties, and contributes to the city's continued growth and resilience.



Background

Opened in the Land Run of 1889 after Native American removals and developed in 1901 in the Crutch Township, Spencer, Oklahoma received official postal designation in 1907 with an initial population of 1,020 residents in the Crutch Township and 300 in the City of Spencer. A part of the Oklahoma City Metropolitan Area, Spencer has morphed into a bedroom community of Oklahoma City with the development of Tinker Air Force Base and nearby employment. Spencer’s population grew rapidly from 1960 (1,189) to 2020 (3,982). Today, Spencer is a racially diverse community with a population that is 28% white, 52% Black or African American, 3% American Indian or

Alaska Native, 7% of some other race, and 10% multiracial.

Kringlen Park, a recently planned community park at NE 50th St, recently completed construction. Spencer is also in the process of creating a comprehensive plan. Along with these planning efforts, the city is also prioritizing upgrading McCoy Park, an unofficial park just south of Spencer City Hall and the Police and Fire departments. With existing housing nearby and significant infill development occurring around McCoy Park, the site has significant potential to be a communal gathering place in central Spencer.

Existing Conditions

Ecology

Though it is not in a FEMA floodplain, the McCoy Park area has sensitive drainage considerations. The park is in the North Canadian River watershed and sits in a low spot with drainage from nearby neighborhoods directed into the park. This environmental constraint also bears potential for creation of a natural water feature and green infrastructure within the park.

Proximity

With four municipal buildings, a senior center, multiple housing developments, and Spencer High School and Rogers Middle School each just a half mile away, McCoy Park’s centrality provides opportunities for gathering, economic development, healthy living, and even increased mobility. Though there are few sidewalks leading into the park, the park already functions as Spencer’s public square and meeting place.

Present Day Challenges

McCoy Park currently faces several challenges that limit its full potential as a welcoming and active public space. The park’s existing infrastructure is aging and underutilized, with limited shade, seating, and accessible pathways. Drainage issues have contributed to soil erosion and disrupted walking paths, especially near the center of the park. Despite its location near schools, civic buildings, and residential

neighborhoods, the park lacks clear entry points, signage, and lighting that would enhance visibility and safety. Inconsistent programming and maintenance have further reduced daily use, creating a space that feels disconnected from the life of the surrounding community. Addressing these issues is critical to transforming McCoy Park into a destination that serves residents of all ages and backgrounds throughout the year.





The background of the image is a solid green color with a pattern of white, irregular, wavy lines that resemble topographic contour lines or a wood grain texture. These lines flow across the entire frame, creating a sense of movement and depth.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Steering Committee Meetings

In fall 2024, IQC conducted a site visit to McCoy Park and led an engagement session with the McCoy Park Steering Committee to gather input and build alignment around the park's goals and long-term vision. Using a “walk-shop” format—an interactive walking tour paired with discussion—the IQC team and committee members explored the park together to assess its key assets, identify opportunities, and understand existing challenges.

In February, the IQC presented a set of initial design concepts to the steering committee to

gather feedback and refine ideas. These options explored a range of ideas related to the park's personality, amenities, operations, and storytelling. The discussion helped shape the direction of future design and programming strategies. This meeting laid the foundation for a larger public outreach event in April, where refined design proposals were shared with the broader Spencer community for additional input.



Community Outreach Event

The IQC team engaged residents of Spencer during the city’s annual Easter gathering, using a variety of interactive tools to gather public input on the future of McCoy Park. Activities included a visual preference board, a wish wall, and priority voting to better understand community desires for park features, character, and programming. The feedback revealed strong interest in a central covered gathering space, a playground and splash pad, enhanced natural landscaping with a whimsical quality, and consistent programming to bring the park to life.

Participants overwhelmingly supported including a pavilion, amphitheater, and splash pad for children’s play. The engagement activities also highlighted a clear preference for a nature-based park identity over a more modernist or minimalist aesthetic. Many community members expressed enthusiasm for lush plantings, gardens, and fruit trees to complement McCoy Park’s existing vegetation and support a calming, nature-focused experience.

Wish Wall

As part of the event, a wish wall invited residents to share their hopes for McCoy Park by placing

sticky notes on a large banner. Participants used the wall to express a wide range of ideas, concerns, and imaginative suggestions. The activity encouraged both practical input and creative thinking about how the park could serve as a gathering place for all ages.

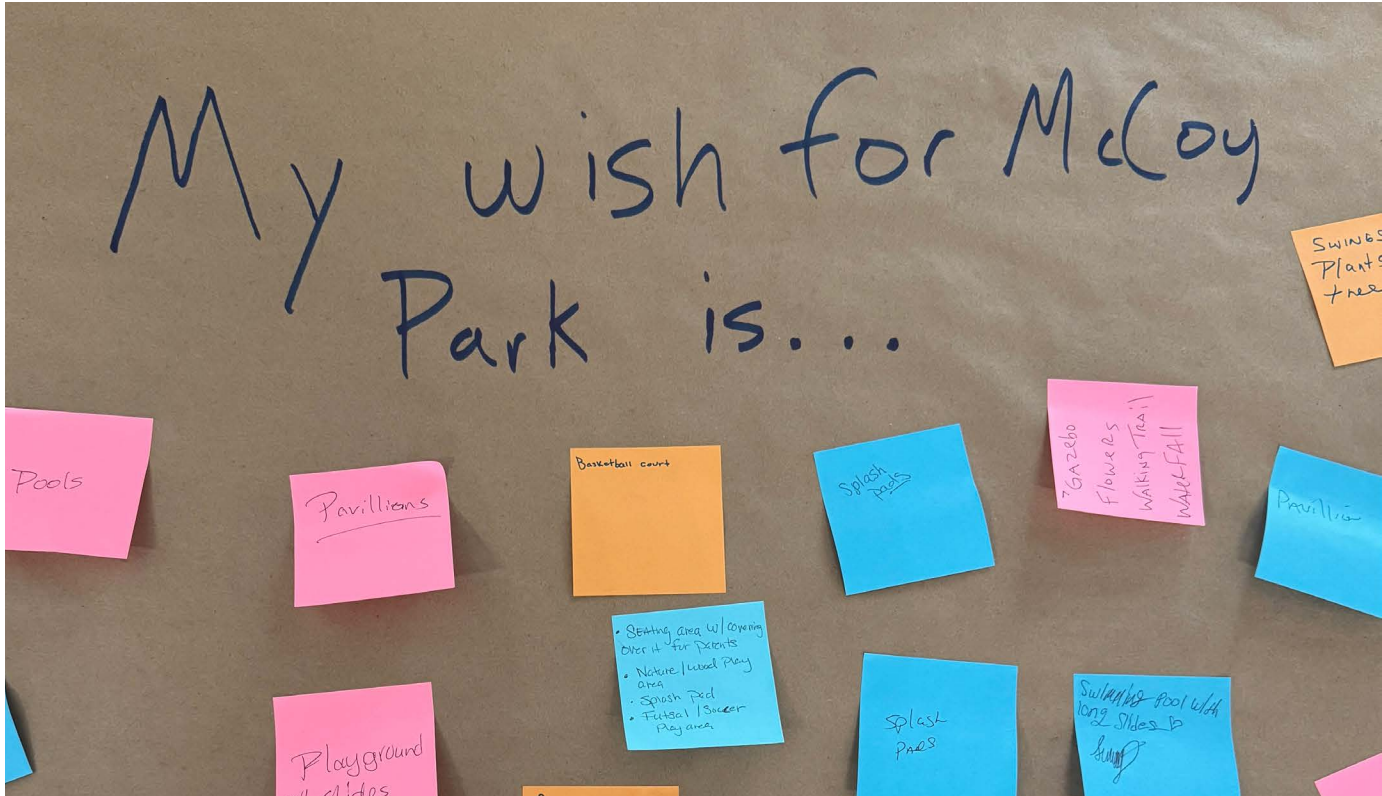
Survey

In addition to in-person engagement, a citywide survey provided more detailed insight into community habits and priorities. Results showed that many Spencer residents frequently visit parks outside the city, primarily for exercise, children’s play, and sports. There was a clear desire for more regular events and activities in Spencer, including festivals, concerts, and food-focused gatherings.

Survey respondents identified Scissortail Park, Kiwanis Park in Midwest City, and Hafer Park in Edmond as popular destinations, and they emphasized that McCoy Park should offer similar amenities. The most requested features included event spaces with seating and tables, playground and splash pad facilities, and recreational elements such as basketball courts and open fields for sports.

Community Engagement Synthesis

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES:	Public Gathering Places and Events
	Recreation for All Ages
	Enhanced Nature and Park Feel
GATHERING PLACES & EVENTS:	Multipurpose Pavilion
	Amphitheater
	Food Truck Plaza with covered seating
RECREATION FOR ALL AGES:	Major Festivals and Holiday celebrations
	Minor Monthly gatherings: concerts, food trucks, markets
	Playground
ENHANCES NATURE & PARK FEEL:	Splash Pad
	Enhanced Walking Trails with Shade and Seating
	Water Features
	Additional Trees, Plants, Gardens, and Fruit Trees
	Whimsical and Nature Based Park Identity





**PARK
VISION**

VISION

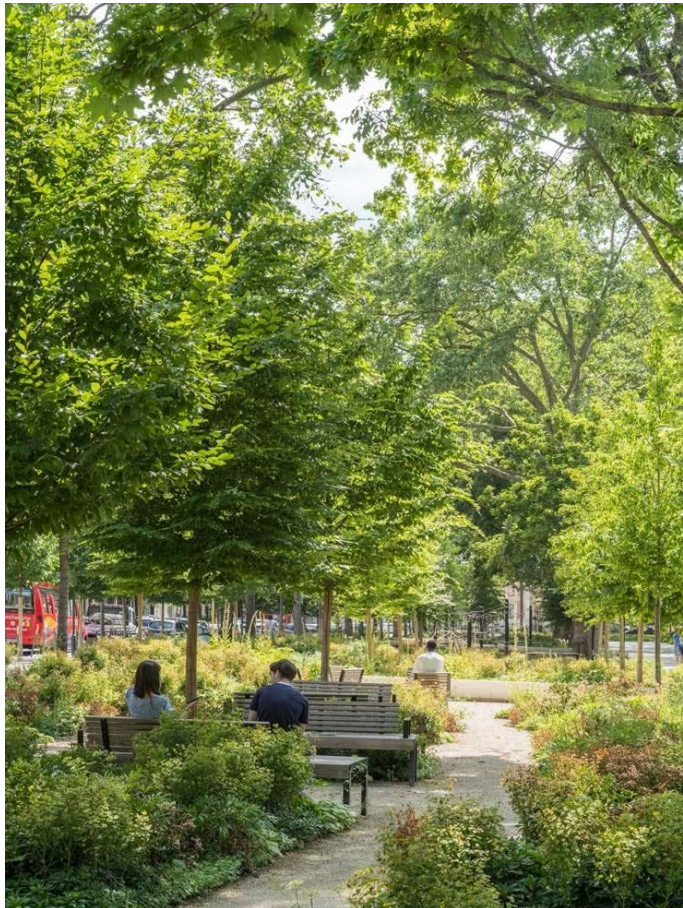
Parks are more than just green spaces. They are places where neighbors connect, children play safely, and families make lasting memories close to home. Parks support healthy lifestyles, reflect local identity, and provide free, inclusive spaces for everyone to enjoy.

McCoy Park has the potential to be a key reason why people choose to stay in, invest in, and visit Spencer.

The following recommendations were developed with the park's central location and unique role in mind. Already a hub of activity for a diverse range of users, McCoy Park can grow into an even more vital civic and social space. These strategies aim to celebrate what already works and enhance the everyday life of Spencer residents.



LOOK & FEEL



Authentic & Natural

McCoy Park is envisioned as a place that reflects the natural beauty and authentic character of its surroundings. Every design decision—from the selection of native plants to the use of natural materials in playgrounds and seating—aims to

preserve a sense of place that feels grounded, welcoming, and true to the local landscape. Rather than imposing overly manicured or artificial elements, the park will celebrate simplicity, nature, and the everyday rhythms of community life.



PARK ASSETS

Pavilion with Amphitheater

At the heart of McCoy Park, three centers of activity will anchor everyday life and events. A pavilion with an amphitheater, a food truck court, and playground will anchor the park at its edges and in its center. In the center of the park, a multipurpose pavilion, capable of hosting dining events, dancing, and even weddings will be situated with an amphitheater to its north. The

amphitheater allows for further flexibility for the park to host concerts, movie screenings, recitals, and more. With a McCoy park branded storage unit behind nearby, seating and tables can be safely stored between or during events on the stage and amphitheater lawn.



BLUFF CREEK CONTINENTAL RESOURCES PAVILION

Food Truck Plaza

It is recommended to reorganize the parking lot serving the east side of McCoy Park. This updated design can include an active edge capable of accommodating food trucks and temporary vendor stalls. This area should include integrated electrical hookups to support quiet, low-emission operations and enhance visitor comfort during events. To further activate the eastern portion

of the park, shaded seating areas are suggested along the pathway connecting the parking lot to the park interior. These improvements will help support flexible programming such as food truck festivals, farmers markets, and maker events, while providing year-round amenities for casual park use.”



PARK ASSETS

Playground & Workout Equipment

Near the center of the park and adjacent to the pavilion, a new playground will provide play opportunities for children of all ages. A designated area for younger kids will sit alongside more traditional equipment, creating an inclusive space for families. To maintain a natural feel,

the use of natural materials is recommended for the playground design. Along the park’s walking loop, a series of well-designed workout stations will support a variety of bodyweight exercises for users of all fitness levels.

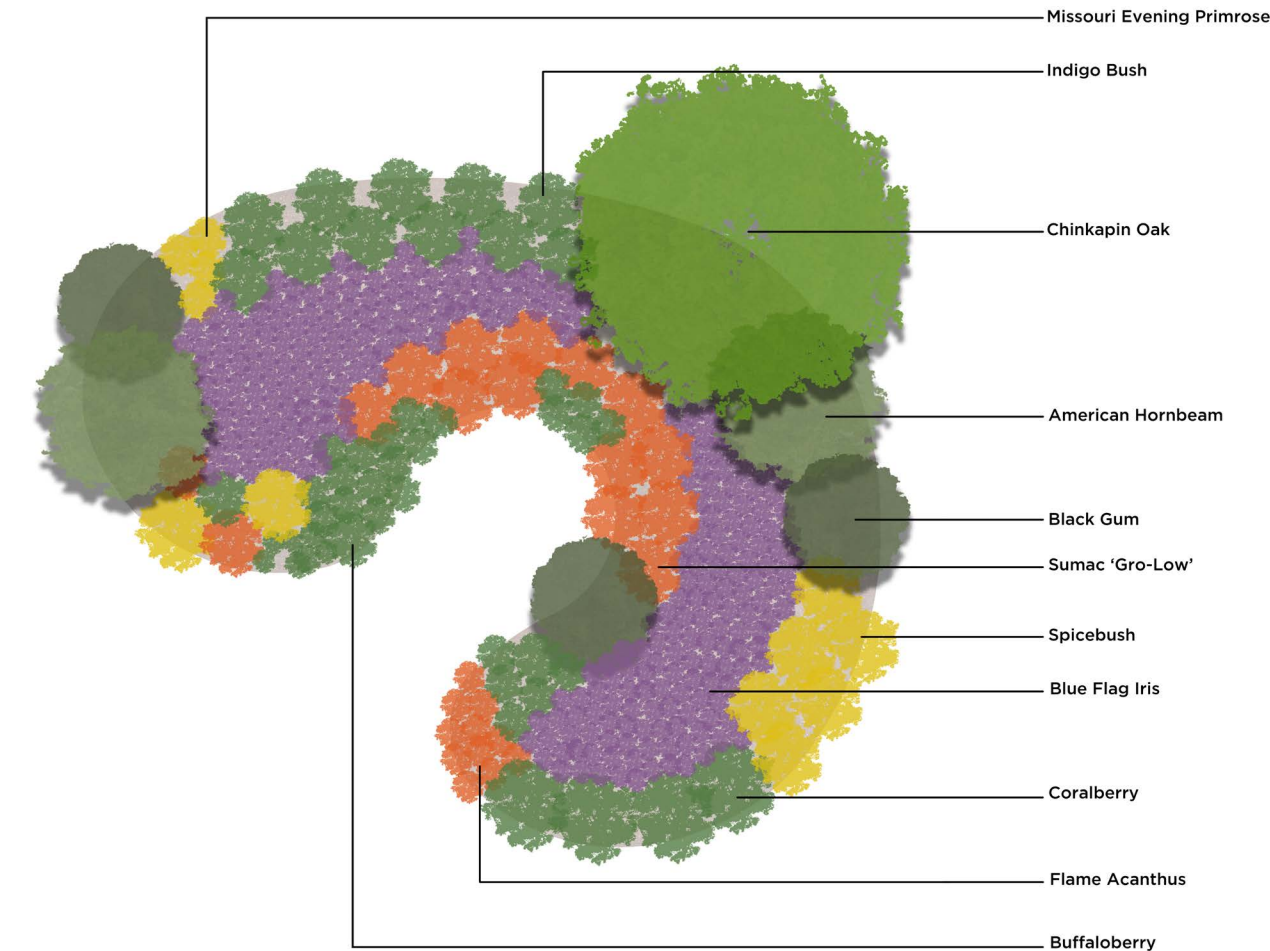


Rain Garden

Because McCoy Park sits at a lower elevation than the surrounding neighborhoods and civic buildings, and because nearby development is expected to increase stormwater runoff, it is essential to incorporate landscape strategies that address both aesthetics and water management. This plan recommends the use of native vegetation along with a dry detention pond to fulfill both purposes. The detention pond will help

resolve ongoing issues such as soil erosion and sidewalk damage in the center of the park, while also creating an attractive natural feature with native plants, trees, and shrubs.

To ensure the system functions effectively during peak storm events, the stormwater management design should be developed in consultation with a qualified hydrologist.



PARK ASSETS

Signage & Wayfinding

To enhance visibility and access, a prominent entrance on 36th Street will serve as a welcoming gateway for passersby and park visitors. Additional secondary entrances at the eastern parking lot, southern boundary, and western edge of the park will be clearly defined through a combination of thoughtful planting design and effective signage. Signage at each entry point should be consistent in style and branding, using natural materials and muted tones that complement the park’s authentic and nature-focused character.



Wayfinding signage within the park should be minimal yet functional, guiding users to key destinations such as the playground, pavilion, amphitheater, and trailheads. Interpretive signs may also be incorporated to share information about native plantings, stormwater features, or the park’s history, fostering a deeper sense of connection and understanding among visitors. Together, these improvements will establish a stronger sense of arrival, orientation, and inclusion, ensuring that McCoy Park remains both inviting and easy to navigate for all.



Seating

For McCoy Park, we recommend a mix of permanent and movable seating to create a comfortable, inclusive, and flexible space. Shaded benches, seat walls, and picnic tables should be placed along paths and near play areas for rest and gatherings. Movable café tables and lawn

platforms can support events and everyday use, while accessible seating with backs and armrests ensures comfort for all ages. Quiet nooks and artist-designed pieces can add character and reflect the community, making the park feel welcoming and uniquely local.



PARK ASSETS

Lighting

Appropriate lighting is essential to ensure McCoy Park remains safe, welcoming, and usable during early morning and evening hours. It is recommended that pedestrian-scale lighting be installed along key circulation routes, including the central trail loop, primary entrances, and gathering areas such as the pavilion, playground, and amphitheater. Lighting should be warm in tone and designed to minimize glare and light pollution,

preserving the park’s natural atmosphere while enhancing visibility and security. Solar-powered fixtures and energy-efficient LED technology are encouraged to reduce long-term maintenance costs and environmental impact. In addition, low-level lighting near signage and seating areas can further support accessibility and wayfinding without disrupting the park’s serene character.



Accessibility & Trails

Building on McCoy Park’s existing trail loop, proposed trail extensions from new parking areas—designed to meet ADA accessibility standards—will ensure that all visitors feel welcome and able to navigate the park with ease. One extension will connect the eastern parking

lot and food truck court to the central trail loop, while another will link the northwestern entrance and adjacent street parking to the same loop. Along these paths, strategically placed benches and outdoor fitness equipment will provide shaded spots for rest, recreation, and scenic enjoyment.



PARK ASSETS

Plants & Trees

Plants and trees play a vital role in providing both shade and visual appeal within any successful park environment. The species recommended for McCoy Park, illustrated in the diagram to the bottom and right, have been carefully selected for their compatibility with Oklahoma’s climate. All are native species that require minimal watering and maintenance while offering generous canopy coverage throughout the park.

Trees:

- » Eastern Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*): Oklahoma's state tree, known for its vibrant pink flowers in early spring and heart-shaped leaves.
- » Serviceberry (*Amelanchier arborea*): Offers early spring white blossoms and edible berries that attract birds. AP News
- » Bur Oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*): A majestic oak providing ample shade and supporting various wildlife species. Oklahoma Ag & Forestry

Shrubs:

- » American Beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*): Features striking purple berries in the fall, providing food for birds.
- » Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*): Thrives in moist areas, producing unique spherical white flowers that attract pollinators. Wikipedia+1Better Homes & Gardens+1
- » Fragrant Sumac (*Rhus aromatica*): A low-growing shrub with fragrant foliage and red berries.

OKC Beautiful, a local environmental nonprofit, offers valuable support by providing free native plants and trees for public parks across the Oklahoma City metro area. Their tree planting season runs from October through April and includes a simple agreement to ensure newly planted trees are watered regularly during their early establishment period.



Perennials and Wildflowers:

- » Purple Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*): A hardy perennial with distinctive purple blooms that attract pollinators. Gardenia
- » Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*): Bright yellow flowers that provide long-lasting color and support pollinators.
- » Missouri Evening Primrose (*Oenothera macrocarpa*): Produces large, showy yellow flowers and is drought-tolerant. homesandgardens.com+14Better Homes & Gardens+14STK Homes+14
- » Cardinal Flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*): Known for its vibrant red flowers that attract hummingbirds.



Grasses:

- » Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*): A native grass with blue-green foliage that turns reddish-brown in the fall.
- » Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*): Provides texture and movement, with feathery flower panicles and winter interest.



Groundcovers:

- » Creeping Phlox (*Phlox stolonifera*): Offers a carpet of colorful blooms in spring and suppresses weeds.
- » Wild Strawberry (*Fragaria virginiana*): Provides edible fruits and serves as a low-maintenance groundcover.



Place Management & Volunteering

A park’s long-term success depends not only on thoughtful design and construction but also on consistent maintenance and active operations. Establishing a semi-formal volunteer group can be an effective strategy to support basic upkeep by organizing tree plantings, landscaping projects, litter cleanups, and minor maintenance tasks. ‘Adopt-a-Park’ programs are a common and proven model for building community stewardship. These groups often engage a diverse mix of participants including seniors, school clubs, civic groups, and regular park users.

At the same time, the planning, parks, and city

manager’s departments play a critical role in coordinating larger-scale programming such as concerts, festivals, and farmers markets. These types of events require dedicated, long-term leadership to ensure consistency, quality, and public trust. While it can be challenging to allocate staff or resources within municipal departments, the return on investment, measured in community engagement, social cohesion, and local economic vitality, makes it essential to identify city personnel or trusted community partners capable of leading ongoing programming efforts.



Friends of
McCOY
PARK*

Programming & Events

Given McCoy Park’s central location and its existing use for events like the Spencer Farmers Market, it is recommended that a formal events schedule be established to celebrate both everyday community life and larger communal gatherings. Highlighting key social amenities—such as the multipurpose pavilion, amphitheater, and food truck court—through kickoff events,

recurring programming, and seasonal festivals will generate consistent activity that encourages daily park use beyond scheduled events. Regular, well-promoted programming not only draws people into the park but also fosters a sense of belonging, safety, and shared ownership. When parks are actively used throughout the day, they naturally become more welcoming and secure for all.



McCOY *PARK**

McCOY
*PARK**

*It's not just a park. It's Spencer's place to gather, eat, play, walk, fellowship, meditate, talk, relax & dream.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Near Term Recommendations (6 Months-1 Year)

Park Paths and Circulation

While medium and long improvements are needed to extend the trail to entrances of McCoy Park, short term patches and fixes within the near future can restore the existing trail to provide for seamless travel throughout the park.

Rain Garden

Similar to the walking trail, medium and long term improvements are needed to fix stormwater runoff throughout the park. However, short range improvements performed on a volunteer basis can create a rain garden through the excavation of a small retention pond in the center of McCoy Park. Dredging of the pond in the near term can alleviate runoff events that inundate the walking trail, and can precede a larger park drainage system.

Trees and Plants

Partnerships with OKC Beautiful and grants from local family foundations for tree plantings can immediately enhance the canopy cover and beauty of McCoy Park. Tree planting days can immediately galvanize energy around McCoy park for further community awareness and pursuit of medium and long term park goals.

Furniture and Lighting

Furniture throughout the park and at the food truck pad can be installed in the near term. City budget or creative project funding like school partnerships or scouts projects could assist in creation of a food truck seating area along the eastern edge of the park.

Place Management and Volunteering

A McCoy Park non-profit, dedicated to the maintenance and operations of the park would ensure smooth programming and reliable upkeep of the park space. If established in the short term, the place management organization could build park momentum, facilitate early recommendation implementations, and of course establish a programming calendar to activate the park as a regular community gathering place.

Medium-Term Recommendations (1-2 Years)

Food Truck Pad

The food truck pad can be completed either with crushed granite, permeable pavers, or traditional asphalt. Accompanying the seating and parking lot on either side of it, this medium term recommendation can be achieved through the parks budget or grants associated with enhancing public space. The Oklahoma City Community Foundation’s Parks and Public Spaces grant and the AARP Community Challenge grant are viable funding sources for this element that would enhance community gatherings.

Playground and Workout Equipment

TSET grants are a popular vehicle for funding the installation of playground and exercise equipment beyond city dollars. Grant cycles run on a yearly basis and require a small match from recipients.

Paths and Circulation and ADA Accessibility

Full extension of the walking trails throughout McCoy park will require larger funds. The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) acts as a reimbursement fund, and the TAP and TSET grant programs can provide up front funding.


Rain Garden

Construction of the rain garden should be accompanied by wider hydrology considerations for all of McCoy Park. Key to ensuring that the rain garden functions well into the future, a hydrologist should be consulted to recommend and implement enhancements to the rain garden that ensure its long term functioning.

Long-Term Recommendations (2-5 Years)

Entrance Signage, Parking Plan, Multipurpose Pavilion and Amphitheater

Larger ticket items like entrance signage, new parking, and an amphitheater that doubles as a pavilion will likely require city funds. However, the Oklahoma City Community Foundation does fund a yearly Parks and Public Spaces Initiative grant for neighborhood and community parks. Eligible items include crushed gravel, shade structures, and wayfinding signage. The volunteer program requirement within this grant can be easily met with the usage of the Friends of McCoy Park organization.



FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Pedestrian, Cyclist, and Safety Traffic Safety Infrastructure

Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT)
ODOT’s Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)

Provides funding through a competitive application process for local projects that support additional transportation options, strengthen local economies, improve quality of life, protect the natural environment, and enhance transportation infrastructure. An 80/20 match is required for populations over 5,001.

American Association of Retired Persons (AARP)
Community Challenge Program

The AARP Community Challenge program offers grants to fund projects focusing on making communities more livable for people of all ages. The Flagship Grant includes a category for projects creating vibrant public places and a category focused on increasing connectivity, walkability, and bikeability. The Capacity-Building Microgrants include opportunities for bike audits and walk audits.

Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust (TSET)
Built Environment Grants

Built Environment Grants fund a variety of project types, including planning, design, and policy development, and construction implementation. Projects aligning with TSET’s mission to improve Oklahoman’s health and quality of life by achieving targeted improvements in the health of Oklahomans. Planning and policy grants are eligible for up to \$150,000 with no match required. Construction projects can receive up to \$500,000 for up to two years with a match based on population size.

US Department of Transportation (USDOT) DOT’s
Safe Streets for All (SS4A)

Program provides two types of grants: Planning and Demonstration Grants and Implementation Grants. Funding is provided to projects seeking to prevent roadway deaths and injuries.

Historic Preservation, Public Spaces, Public Art & Landscaping

T-Mobile

T-Mobile’s Hometown Grants fund projects that foster local connections, like technology upgrades, outdoor spaces, the arts, historic preservation, and community centers. Awards are up to \$50,000 and available for towns with populations less than 50,000.

Project for Public Spaces

Project for Public Spaces Community Placemaking Grants are available for non-profits and local government agencies up to \$100,000 to transform public spaces or co-create new ones.

National Trust for Historic Preservation

The Hart Family Fund for Small Towns encourages preservation at the local level in small towns with populations under 10,000. Grants range from \$2,500-\$15,000 through a competitive application process.

Oklahoma City Community Foundation (OCCF)

The OCCF Culture and Community Grant supports projects seeking to celebrate and preserve Oklahoma’s cultural heritage. Grants can be up to \$40,000 and are available to projects within Canadian, Cleveland, Oklahoma, and Logan counties.

Independent Retail Community Initiatives

The Pop-Out Grant is available to independent shop owners in Oklahoma strengthening their communities, including through beautification efforts. Grants are up to \$1,500.

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Oklahoma Arts Council

The Oklahoma Art in Public Places Act invests in public art in community spaces to support state capital improvements. The Program brings together governments, artists, and communities to create art representing Oklahoma values and history.

OKC Beautiful

OKC Beautiful serves the OKC region through numerous programs that include tree plantings and plant species donations. With a staff and volunteer base dedicated to tree plantings and park cleanups, OKC Beautiful can enhanceNature in McCoy Park and help maintain its beauty.



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