



Comprehensive Parks & Recreation Master Plan



Conducted for the

*Village of Oak Park and
Park District of Oak Park*



by

Leisure Vision

(a division of ETC Institute)



in association with

Ballard*King and Associates

CYLA Design Associates

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*Community Profile, History, and
Overview of Master Plan Document*

Community Profile, History, and Overview of Master Plan Document

Village of Oak Park Background

Oak Park is a thriving community of more than 52,000 people strategically located in the City of Chicago metropolitan area. Within its 4.5 square miles live a diverse mix of people with different cultures, races, ethnicities, professions, lifestyles, religions, ages and incomes. Oak Park is known for its architectural heritage and the village includes two historic districts.

Oak Park was founded in 1902. By 1920 the community had grown to more than 40,000 residents. The population of the community continued to grow through the next twenty years and reached a peak in 1940 of 66,014 residents. Since then the population has declined some, with a 1970 population of 65,521 residents, a 1980 population of 54,887 residents and a year 2000 population of 52,224 residents.

Oak Park is primarily a residential community. The median age of residents is 36 years of age. 24.2% of residents are under 18 years of age and 9.5% of residents are over 65 years of age. 69% of the community is White, with 22% being Black African/American and 9% other races. The median family income is \$81,703.

Oak Park's location is a great benefit to getting around in the Chicago community. Oak Park is located 9 miles from downtown Chicago, with easy access either via the Eisenhower Expressway or public transportation. Oak Park is 10 miles from O'Hare International Airport and 8 miles from Midway Airport.

Oak Park is well served by various public transportation services, including 2 rapid transit lines, 17 bus routes, a senior bus service, 1 commuter rail line, and 2 taxicab companies.

Oak Park has been the home to many prominent residents. Oak Park is the birthplace and childhood home of novelist Ernest Hemingway. Architect Frank Lloyd Wright lived in Oak Park from 1889-1909, and 25 buildings in the Village were designed by him. Other famous Oak Parkers include: Edgar Rice Burroughs, the creator of "Tarzan"; Percy Julian, a chemist whose research led to the development of Cortisone; Ray Kroc, the founder of McDonalds; and Majorie Judith Vincent, 1991 Miss America.

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The History of the Parks and Recreation System in Oak Park

The Park District of Oak Park was established in 1912. At the time of its creation the Park District's activities were limited to the maintenance and acquisition of parkland only.

This early period was a time in which a variety of special districts developed in Illinois. Their creation came about primarily as a result of debt limitations imposed by state statutes on local governmental units. The limits were restrictive to the extent that in many communities all the capital needs could not be met. Rather than change the statutes, the strategy developed to simply form a new and separate government within the same geographic area. As a result, there were more independent taxing districts in Illinois than in any other state.

Shortly thereafter, the Village of Oak Park Recreation Department was established in 1921 on a referendum vote under what was commonly referred to as the "Playground and Recreation System. A Recreation Board was appointed by the Village President with the consent of the Trustees to oversee the recreation fund. The fund had a limit which was to be under the control of the appointed Recreation Board.

The Recreation Board could purchase property, enter into contractual agreements, operate the recreation programs, hire the recreation director and perform other functions generally accorded to elected boards. At this time, the Village Board levied the tax for the Recreation Fund, but once having done so, turned the proceeds over to the Recreation Board.

The Recreation Department was created to fill the void for providing recreation programs that the Park District was not able to provide. However, the Recreation Board began buying land for open space immediately upon its formation. Elaborate recreation programs were conducted at the playgrounds, but the open space owned by the Recreation Board were also maintained as beautiful neighborhood parks.

By the 1950's a great deal of what is the current Parks and Recreation system in Oak Park was in place under either the Park District or Recreation Department. Seven community centers had been built, including the old Stevenson Center. There were 53.95 acres of parks in Oak Park, including Lindberg, Taylor, Austin Gardens, Mills, Scoville, Ridgeland Park, Randolph, and Maple Park.

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1960-1975– A Period of Growth and Excellence

The 1960's were a time of major improvements and excellence for the Parks and Recreation systems. Major improvements or renovation work took place at the Anderson, Barrie, Carroll, and Field Centers. Longfellow and Fox were newly built and Stevenson rebuilt. During this time, the Ridgeland Common Pool and Rink was built. Barrie Park came into the Park system and major renovations occurred at Austin Gardens, Scoville Park, Wenonah Tot Lot, Randolph Tot Lot, and Kennilworth Parkway.

On June 8, 1964 voters approved funding of a tax measure for the Park District. That tax measure to establish a rate limitation of 10 cents per \$100 valuation was passed with 963 “yes” votes and 233 “no” votes. This was the last approved tax measure for the Park District of Oak Park until the present day.

In 1965, the Oak Park Recreation Department and Park District won the Gold Medal Award, awarded annually (by population size) to the outstanding Parks and Recreation system in the United States.

From its creation in 1921, the Recreation Department's tax levy was \$.09. Some time during the 1960's it was determined that this levy was not sufficient to meet the increasing recreation demands in the community. To assist in meeting these demands, the Village Board began supplementing the recreation fund with corporate fund transfers.

By 1970, corporate fund transfers were just about equal to the amount raised by the recreation tax. As a result, the Village Board felt an increasing responsibility to monitor the operation of the Recreation Department.

During the early 1970's four events occurred that contributed to greater involvement by the Village Board in the operations of the Recreation Department. First, Jim Talley was hired as the Recreation Director by the Recreation Board. Second, Lee Ellis came on board as Village Manager. Both Lee Ellis and Jim Talley had prior experience in a strong manager-council form of government and appreciated the economies of scale and efficiencies from having a variety of governmental functions under a single operating entity.

Third, the Village acquired home rule authority. Fourth, the attitude of the Recreation Board was receptive to an advisory role rather than a policy making role.

Community Profile, History, and Overview of Master Plan Document

During that period of transition, there was no formal agreement between the Recreation Board and the Village Board. Rather, there was a gradual transfer of authority until in 1974 the recreation fund was eliminated, with the entire recreation budget being funded from the general fund. From that point on, the Recreation Department operated just as the other Village departments. Critical to the success of this transfer was the Recreation Board's willingness to release control.

The early 1970's also witnessed the beginning of a movement to increase cooperation between the Recreation Department and the Park District. Joint staff meetings were held on a monthly basis and joint Board meetings were conducted quarterly. In about 1972, there was a partial exchange of Board members to help further coordinate policy. The exchange came about when the Village President appointed Park Board President Warren Stephens to the Recreation Board, and the Park Board appointed Recreation Board President; Rosemary Bailey to fill a Park Board vacancy.

During this period, two unsuccessful attempts were made to consolidate the Park District and Recreation Department, one occurring in 1971 and another in 1974. In the first case, the proposal was to dissolve the Recreation Department with the Village turning over the department's assets to the Park District for operation. That proposal was passed unanimously by the Park Board, but failed by one vote at the Village Board. The second attempt was proposed by the Recreation Board and had the Park Board dissolving and turning over all their assets to the Village Board to manage. That proposal was met by a unanimous vote to accept the proposal from the Village Board, and a unanimous voter to reject it from the Park Board.

1975-1999- The Interlocal Agreement Is Initiated

Consolidation discussions subsided after the second attempt in 1974. In 1979, Jim Talley left his position as Director of the Recreation Department and moved to the Village Manager's Office. This provided an excellent opportunity to combine Parks and Recreation operations under one administrative head. Both sides seized the moment and optimistically entered into negotiations to achieve a consolidation. For the first time, each was willing to make concessions in order to reach the objective.

1975-1979 was not the most productive period for the Park District. The Park District was in a predicament in that they could not attract an experienced administrative team for lack of funds and because of the existence of what appeared to be a competing agency in the Recreation Department. As a result, there was a general decline in the appearance of the parks and a growing deficit in the operations of Rehm and Ridgeland.

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During the time period just prior to this, two tax measures had gone before voters and been defeated. A referendum with four propositions was proposed and defeated on August 24, 1968. On July 28, 1970 a special referendum asking the voters of the Park District for authorization to levy an additional tax of .05% for all corporate purposes was defeated 994 “no votes” to 675 “yes votes.”

The Village found themselves in the same predicament after the departure of Jim Talley. It was difficult to recruit quality staff to head the Recreation Department given the duplication of a separate Park District.

In 1980 the Park Board and Village entered into an agreement to better coordinate local activities related to policy formation and planning park and recreation facilities, activities and services and to maintain, improve, and make more efficient the implementation of local decisions related to park and recreation facilities, activities and services. John Hedges was hired in 1980 to head up the Park District.

The agreement called to the Village to compensate the Park District for recreation services provided by the Park District on behalf of the Village. Inclusive, the Park District would provide basic services by operating the seven village owned neighborhood recreation centers. Therefore, rather than being a full consolidation as had been proposed and defeated in both 1971 and 1974, this agreement called for both parties to maintain their physical assets, and cooperate in the management and financing of the system.

From the very start, there was an improvement in services provided to the Oak Park taxpayer. The economics of scale that were projected did, in fact, exist. The duplication of programs and personnel were eliminated. Communication with the public relating to programs, registration and other information became less confusing and less fragmented. The appearance of the parks improved dramatically. Additionally, the Park Board was able to implement a systematic park development program financed through the acquisition of grant monies and the sale of park improvement bonds to renovate and upgrade the parks and recreation facilities.

Between 1985-86, the four oldest community centers were renovated. Cheney Mansion was also acquired in the 1980's as well as the property at 218 Madison (Administrative Headquarters and Gymnastics Center). Major renovation work occurred at a number of parks, including Taylor, Austin Gardens, Scoville, Barrie, Maple, and Euclid.

During the 1990's the focus of the Park District was on renovation of existing facilities. No new facilities or parks were added. Major renovation occurred for several special facilities of the park District including the Conservatory, Ridgeland Common, Rehm Pool, and the Administrative/Gymnastics Center.

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One renovation effort during this time was of particular importance to the Park District, both then and in the future. In 1996, on a 3 to 2 vote of the Park Board an Alternative Revenue Bond issue was approved for \$2 million to fund improvements to Rehm Pool and additionally for improvements at the Ridgeland Commons Pool. This action of the Park Board was taken rather than having the matter brought before the voters.

Bond costs were supposed to be paid through increases in pool revenues. However, pool revenues have not increased sufficiently to cover bond payments, necessitating paying parts of these bonds from other sources, including taxes. Through December 31, 2003 pool facilities have not met the revenue goals established for the revenue bonds, resulting in a pool net loss including debt service of (\$1,560,953).

2000- Present-Preparing for the Future

By 2000, it had been over 35 years since a successful voter election in the Park District and at least 15 years since voters had an opportunity to go to the polls to vote on a tax increase to fund services. That situation along with an aging infrastructure, the negative impact on the Revenue Facilities Fund of the 1996 Alternative Revenue Bond, and other strategic management, financial, and planning issues led to the Park District forming in September of 2001, a citizen's advisory committee called the "Infrastructure Committee" whose mission was "to inventory and assess the district's properties and make recommendations to the Board of Park Commissioners regarding immediate and long-range capital planning".

The result of the Infrastructure Committee's work was a proposed capital improvement program that was presented to the Board of Commissioners in November 2002. One of the major recommendations included in this plan was to develop a comprehensive plan that would include a vision statement and an examination of the neighborhood-based community recreation center philosophy.

During this same time period, the Park District and Village of Oak Park were initiating discussions related to the study and analysis of the interlocal agreement which had been developed in 1980. In Fiscal Year 2002 this agreement was providing the Park District with \$1,538,065.

The results of both of these issues led to the Park District and Village jointly funding this "Comprehensive Master Plan" in 2003.

Community Profile, History, and Overview of Master Plan Document

Comprehensive Master Plan Draft Report

Section 1: Community Profile, History, and Overview of Master Plan Document - This section provides a brief profile of the Village of Oak Park; provides a nearly 100 year history of the Parks and Recreation system in Oak Park, including both an overview of the Park District of Oak Park and the former Recreation Department of Oak Park; and summarizes the contents of this “Master Plan Draft Report”.

Section 2: Park District of Oak Park Vision Statement - This section includes a “Draft Vision” for the Park District of Oak Park. Currently the Park District does not have a Vision Statement. The “Draft Vision” was developed in partnership with the Park District Citizens Committee, and the Park District Oak Park.

Section 3: Stakeholder Interviews and Focus Groups - This section includes an executive summary of results from 33 separate stakeholder interviews and 6 focus groups conducted over a three day period of time from Tuesday, September 9 through Thursday, September 11, 2003 by the Leisure Vision Consultant Team.

Section 4: Needs Assessment Citizen Survey - This section includes an executive summary of the results from a random sampling survey conducted of 824 households in Oak Park during January and February of 2004. The results from the survey have a 95% level of confidence with a precision of +/-3.4%. This section additionally contains benchmarking comparison of results from the Village of Oak Park to both a national and Illinois database of survey responses.

Section 5: Park District Citizen Committee Minutes and Reports - This section includes the minutes from the meetings of the Park District Citizen Committee and reports generated by the Committee in support of the Master Plan effort.

Section 6: SWOT Analysis of Parks and Recreation Facilities - This section includes the results of a site inventory conducted by CYLA Design Associates of the Consultant Team. Included is a SWOT assessment (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) of the recreational facilities and site amenities of twenty Park District properties. Twenty-two categories of recreational facilities and twenty-three categories of site amenities were inventoried and broadly evaluated for condition.

Section 7: Analysis of Community Centers and Historic Homes - This section includes a comprehensive examination of the current neighborhood-based community recreation center philosophy and operation of the 7 community centers, conducted by Jeff King, President of Ballard*King & Associates and a member of the Consultant Team. This section additionally contains an analysis and recommendations regarding the historic homes conducted by Mr. King.

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Section 8: *National Trends for Parks and Recreation* - This section includes an extensive review of secondary research regarding the impact of demographic changes, lifestyle and employment practices, complimentary private recreation providers, medical advancements, etc. on public parks and recreation planning, programming, financing, and management practices.

Section 9: *Comparative Communities Benchmarking* - This section includes an executive summary of a benchmarking survey of 13 communities comparable to the Park District of Oak Park. The Park District Citizen Committee coordinated the identification of communities to participate in the Benchmarking Survey. Issues covered on the survey included: types, numbers, and acres of parks and open space available; types and numbers of outdoor recreation facilities; types and numbers of indoor recreation facilities; revenues from taxes, fees and charges; staffing costs; cooperative use agreements; capital budgets, etc.

Section 10: *Park District of Oak Park Capital Financing Services* - This section includes a comprehensive review and analysis of tax and non-tax revenue sources for operations and capital projects, including 10 year historical trends of various financial operations and fund balances.

Section 11: *Analysis and Recommendations on Governance* - This section includes an overview of the Master Planning process to evaluate and discuss the appropriate system of governance to effectuate the desired future of the community for its parks and recreation system; including recommendations from the Consultant Team and Sub-Committee of the Park District Citizens Committee.

Section 12: *Parks and Recreation Standards for Oak Park* - This section includes the development of “Standards Unique to Oak Park” for 29 different outdoor and indoor programming spaces identified from Question #6 in the needs assessment survey. The Consultant Team is working with a sub-committee of the Park District Citizens Committee on these standards. This section contains work in progress.

Section 13: *Summary of Findings and Recommendations* - This section contains an overall summary of the findings and recommendations for the various sections and tasks of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Section 14: *3-Year Action Plan and Capital Plan* - This section will be included in the final Master Plan document and will contain a 3 Year Action Plan and Capital Plan for the implementation of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Section 15: *Public Presentations* - his section contains several powerpoint presentations made by the Consultant Team as part of the Master Plan process and related briefing materials.

Park District of Oak Park
Vision Statement

Park District of Oak Park Vision Statement

CREATING AN ORGANIZATION'S VISION, VALUES AND MISSION STATEMENTS

An important aspect of planning for and articulating the future of an organization lies in the entity's leadership clearly "charting a course" and then sharing that course with those that are served by the organization. Spending significant time discussing and writing the group's vision for the future, as well as the values or "code of conduct" that the leadership will embrace to achieve the developed vision and preferred future, and creating an easy to articulate statement of mission or purpose is a wise and valuable investment. These statements help to bond and "ground" the organization's leadership, giving them a constant reminder of the higher goal they are pursuing as well as a means of communicating their actions to those impacted by their leadership.

Simply put, a vision statement is usually the product of a small informed and influential group of leaders who can effect and implement change. The vision is a clear "statement of intent" that represents the direction the organization intends to pursue for at least the next decade. The governing body should regularly revisit the vision as a technique to get back on task, particularly after responding and reacting to the inevitable daily crises and challenges that crop up, but also to reaffirm the higher purpose of the organization and to provide a self-evaluation of the body's true effectiveness.

A statement of key organizational values states to both internal and external publics the way the organization intends to carry out its work to achieve the vision. As is the case with a vision statement, values can and should be measured and the resulting assessment can be a telling aspect of the organization's true effectiveness.

Finally, the Mission emanates from the vision and values. This becomes a very public statement, mentioned regularly on organizational, promotional and educational materials and should be easily memorized. It is the entity's purpose for existing. Mission statements should be limited to two sentences, free of jargon and easily understood by anyone, regardless of their knowledge of the organization. The mission statement is the "ready answer" that Board and staff members may recite when asked the inevitable, "What does this organization do?"

Using information gleaned from interviews, the assessment of community needs, research into past policies and practices and conducting a "visioning workshop" with the Subcommittee on Governance, the consultant team developed the following draft Vision, Values and Mission statements that may be further reviewed and refined by the ultimate body that is charged with carrying out the Master Plan.

Park District of Oak Park Vision Statement

THE VISION OF OAK PARK'S PARK SYSTEM

Oak Park's parks system provides open space and recreation opportunities for all Oak Park residents and we will work persistently to ensure the availability of these quality parks, recreation programs and facilities for generations to come. We strive to provide an excellent parks and recreation system that is deeply integrated into the distinctive Oak Park living experience. We envision the recognition of our parks system by Oak Park residents as a major contributor to the enhanced quality of life that exists in the Village. We value and respect our history, our civic involvement and the Oak Park tradition of innovation and we will strongly consider these factors as we plan for the future.

We believe that citizen participation and access to their parks and recreation programs is paramount. The parks system will conduct the public's business in an open, communicative and self-evaluative fashion. We will reach out to populations that are underserved and we will continually seek feedback and take corrective measures as we strive for excellence.

We believe the key to achieving and maintaining an excellent parks and recreation system lies in creating partnerships with other community agencies to provide services in a seamless fashion. These critical partnerships are both within and external to Oak Park's boundaries. Who is providing the program or service is secondary to the quality and the diversity of the offerings. We promise, in collaboration with our partners to balance development and maintenance of quality parks and facilities with the preservation of open space. In addition we pledge to offer innovative, high quality programs that provide significant benefits to participants, residents, the environment, the local economy and our overall community.

THE VALUES OF OAK PARK'S PARK SYSTEM

In striving for excellence, we are committed to:

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION - We will demonstrate attentiveness to our customers' needs by routinely soliciting public input and feedback and welcoming ideas and input. Our processes and procedures will facilitate and reflect open and effective communication.

INCLUSION - We will recognize and appreciate our community's diverse population and we will strive to provide parks and recreation opportunities to all, regardless of economic means or physical ability.

FUNDING - We will aggressively pursue economic sustainability and stability through sound fiscal management and efficient use of resources.

Park District of Oak Park Vision Statement

PARTNERSHIPS - We pledge to work effectively with others, establishing and strengthening bonds with governmental entities as well as other community organizations and user groups for the betterment of the community.

CUSTOMER SERVICE AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT - We will demonstrate the highest standards of ethical conduct, treating everyone with courtesy and respect and recognizing diverse opinions and needs. We will actively listen and respond to requests in a prompt and respectful manner.

PLANNING - We will design long-term strategies and set measurable goals while proactively seeking positive solutions to problems and challenges.

EVALUATION - We will maintain an on-going process of evaluating our performance and effectiveness and we will measure the success of implemented policies and strategies.

SAFETY - We will actively implement sound safety practices in our facilities and in all aspects of our work, ensuring a safe environment for users and employees of the parks system.

We will value every citizen contact and pursue each as an opportunity to demonstrate these highly regarded values.

MISSION

In partnership with the community we provide quality parks and recreation experiences for the residents of Oak Park.

*Stakeholder Interviews &
Focus Groups*

***Parks and Recreation Master Plan
Village of Oak Park and Park District of Oak Park
Stakeholder Interview Summary Report***

Overview

Members of the Leisure Vision consulting team conducted 33 separate stakeholder interviews over a three day period of time from Tuesday, September 9 through Thursday, September 11, 2003. The stakeholder interviews were conducted by Ron Vine, Vice-President with Leisure Vision and Project Manager for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and Ron Secrist, Senior Consultant with Leisure Vision.

Stakeholder interviews are extremely valuable qualitative information tools to understand issues of importance to key decision makers, to help develop survey questions and to gain buy-in and trust for the Master Planning process.

The vast majority of the stakeholder interviews were one-on one meetings with elected and appointed representatives of the Village, Park Board members, representatives of the private business community, non-profit providers and other public bodies in Oak Park. Several of the interviews were held with more than one interviewee. Sixteen questions were asked in the stakeholder interviews.

The following pages contain an executive summary of comments that were provided by stakeholder participants.

1. What are the three most important issues facing the Oak Park Community?

Taxes, intergovernmental cooperation and governance, and economic development/redevelopment were the three most frequently mentioned important issues facing the Oak Park community. A number of interviewees also mentioned education, parking, and issues relating to diversity in the community. Repeatedly we were reminded that Oak Park is a geographically small community with a very involved citizen base.

A sampling of comments is as follows:

“Lack of land, high taxes, and parking.”

“Taxes, development, and having a sense of community.”

Stakeholder Interview Report

“Parking is a huge issue. Lack of hotel rooms is also huge since we have a cultural environment, but with no hotels for people to stay at.”

“Too little open space. Oak Park is a very dense community. High taxes are a big issue, as is political fragmentation brought about by the multiplicity of governmental agencies and officials.”

“Lack of parking. Also the financial relationship of government providers. The Village subsidizes parks because parks are restricted tax-wise. This leads to a strained relationship and questions as to who pays for services?”

“First, the tax burden. Second, economic development and redevelopment. Third, intergovernmental cooperation. We need a clear message where the community is going and how to prioritize things.

“Governance between the Village and Parks. Financial stability with improved fund balances.”

“Governance and particularly should the Park District try to separate from the Village or become a part of the Village. What we have now is not working. Is anyone else doing it this way? The infrastructure, the age of the buildings and not having any money to upscale buildings that are 80-90 years old is a big issue.”

“The Park levy is quite small. The Park Board has a high degree of credibility. I think people understand the Park District has been living on a shoestring budget. I think there is a substantial amount of good will towards the Park Board.”

“Maintain good solid financially strong public bodies. We have to pool resources of Village, Schools & Parks. The lack of financing for the Park District has contributed to the current problems.

“Financially supporting the school system. Also, how to provide & ensure services in an environment where you cannot raise taxes. We are a relatively liberal and diverse community and fiscal responsibility does not always connect to that. Last, how do we preserve the neighborhoods?”

“It’s always about diversity and maintaining the quality of life we have.”

“Maintaining long term diversity. Also dealing with the aging building stock. Oak Park boomed in the 1920’s so we have an older housing stock. I get blown away with the costs of maintaining infrastructure. The fiscal health of the Village is noticeably better than the Park District, but down this year.”

“Everyone just got his or her tax bills. The affordability of living in this community is becoming an issue with a lot of people.”

“Political fragmentation.”

“Governance-this is a very activist community. We have a reputation for open government, but most recently the Village and Park District have been at odds with each other.

“Oak Park is a very intense community. Everything is done under a spotlight. It has been this way for years, but it’s even more intense now. I think it is the greatest town in the country. Unique with racial diversity issues. Very active & involved community. You always see a lot of volunteers for government services and projects.”

2. What are the three most important issues facing the Park District of Oak Park?

Funding was by a wide margin the most frequently mentioned important issue facing the Park District of Oak Park. Other issues that were mentioned by a number of interviewees were governance, Village and Park Board relations, infrastructure repairs to facilities, and the neighborhood community centers. A number of interviewees commented about the high use of Park District facilities and the importance of parks and recreation services to Oak Park citizens. Several interviewees commented about the Park District having a good image in the community, and we heard much support for the new Park Board.

A sampling of comments is as follows:

“Infrastructure, funding issues, and serving diverse people in programs.”

“Funding. \$1.5 million from the Village is not enough. ”

“Designing services for youth and the Barrie Park cleanup.”

“Finances.”

“Quality of life-parks are very important. Funding and governance of parks is paramount. No unified vision.”

“I don’t think the African American community sufficiently uses parks. Also, I think we have an age group 1st-5th grade that is not served as well as it could be.”

“Lack of green space resulting in low acres of parks per resident. Financing for future. The Park District counts on schools for facilities and they are not always available.”

“Firm up the Funding base. The neighborhood centers are too narrowly focused. We need a larger central facility.”

“It is clear to me that the current community center model is not working. I think the programs are excellent, but we are duplicating so many of them because of the multiple community centers. I think we have to start thinking about specializing with the use of the community centers, i.e. centers focused on seniors, visual arts, etc. Last a super center is needed to serve the entire community.”

“Money, because we in Oak Park have a lot of expectations. I don’t know why we have been unwilling to fund parks. Also we are landlocked. How do we provide the types of programs and park spaces that are expected?”

“I think this Park Board is more citizen friendly. The issue of the Skateboard Park has been front and center for a year and then everybody sort of punted & ducked. The Skateboard Park was put on the back burner because of the Infrastructure Committee.”

“Funding is the biggest issue. Everyone is confused by the relationship between the Park District and Village unless you are in the inside. Coming up with a solution for this relationship is crucial. Also, as the Infrastructure Committee report showed, we have been operating with facilities for years with simply patching done. I would love to see a mega-center, but then you might have to take away some thing. The Park District has a good relationship with the schools, which is very helpful.”

“Capitol improvements and funding. Intergovernmental cooperation and collaborations that exceed any of our organization’s abilities. Quality recreation opportunities for everyone, including dog parks.”

“Battle over keeping all of the recreation centers. Some of the smallest centers adjacent to the elementary schools should be expanded. Other centers should be torn down and converted to sports fields. It is pretty expensive to keep those staffed and not a lot that can be done with them.”

“The Park District has to remodel. They have inherited some problems. Village expects them to be something to everyone. The Park District needs to decide what they are going to be when they grow up. I think right now the Park District has one hand tied behind their backs.”

“Funding, and financing programs of all types. The maintenance of field and turf areas is a huge thing.”

“Every park is used to the max. There are a lot of user groups jockeying for time. I love the individual parks with the field houses. I’m hoping there is a way to maintain that.”

“Too little open space. High demand. They are a victim of NIMBY and special interest groups.

“The current service delivery model doesn’t serve young families well. The Park District competes against itself with the multiple centers. They haven’t changed their mission. There is also a lack of consistency in hours centers are open and programs, specifically as relates to school schedules. This causes gaps in service delivery.”

“Financial challenges are certainly there and deferred maintenance is a significant issue. I think the Park District has a good reputation. In the past there has been dissention on the Park Board. Demand from citizens for bigger and newer facilities. We go to St. Charles and they have 30 soccer fields. We don’t have that type of access.”

“I ran programs in 1977 and the facilities are the same. I still meet there and I’m amazed. The buildings have never been upgraded. When I think of Oak Park I think red tape. I would like the Park District to discontinue the current relationship with the Village and do things on their own. The current agreement comes with too many strings like the Skateboard Park.”

3. On a scale of 1-5 with 1 being excellent and 5 being poor, how would you rate the quality of outdoor parks and recreation facilities provided by the Park District of Oak Park, and why?

“3” was the most frequently mentioned rating for the quality of outdoor parks and recreation facilities, followed by “2”. Over half of the ratings for the outdoor parks and recreation system fell into those two categories. Only four interviewees rated the outdoor parks and recreation facilities as a “1” or excellent. Again, we heard the need for improved maintenance from many of those interviewed. Below is a summary of those providing ratings.

*A rating of 1 was given 4 times. A rating of 1.5 was given 1 time.
A rating of 2 was given 7 times. A rating of 2.5 was given 3 times.
A rating of 3 was given 8 times. A rating of 3.5 was given 3 times.
A rating of 4 was given 1 times.
A rating of 5 was given 2 times.*

A sampling of comments is as follows:

“Overused. They are spectacular for the level of use.”

“Need upgrading. Not meeting today’s needs”

“Parks are good. Outdoor facilities are poor.”

"We do ok."

"There is a need for improved maintenance and significant refurbishing."

"Quality used to be 5. Quality today I would say is 4."

"Some of the parks are passive, some are active. Growing feelings of some neglect. Mills Park is one example of that."

"Green space is deteriorating. I hear the ball fields are the same, but I have no first hand knowledge. Having to spend \$15 million as indicated in the Infrastructure Committee with the results buying us a 1965 park system doesn't make too much sense."

"As the parent of a soccer player I don't have any problems. Playgrounds have been better lately. Tennis courts are neglected. No skateboard parks. The baseball fields because of the efforts of a lot of organizations are nice. Flowers are also nice with room for improvements."

"Maintenance of the sport fields is a problem because there isn't enough money to maintain them."

"People moving to the City are attracted by our schools. That is number one. But they like neighborhood parks. I don't hear the negatives about the parks. I read the articles about the facilities falling apart."

"Sod problem, maintenance problems, etc. There is not proper drainage. We don't have the irrigation systems we need"

"From what I see, overall they are average. Some better than average, some worse. Richmond Commons could be greatly improved. The private sector participates in funding fields, which in my mind has moved the fields from a 5 to a 2."

"I think we have some beautiful parks, such as Lindberg. Besides Barrie Park, we are not addressing many other parks and what can enhance the parks."

"Passive is great. Athletic fields are close to dangerous."

"I am a big fan of the parks' passive spaces. Quiet spaces are very positive parts of the town. Pools are nice. The recent upgrades are nice. It is humiliating that Oak Park has had to go outside to non-profit groups to get their baseball fields maintained. It was crazy. Playgrounds are largely past their prime."

4. Are there any outdoor parks and recreation facilities you feel should be developed or improved in Oak Park?

A wide range of passive and active parks and recreation facilities were mentioned by interviewees. The most frequently mentioned facilities included additional fields, for sports such as soccer, field hockey, baseball, and lacrosse, and more green space. A new skate park was mentioned by several interviewees. We also heard the need for additional green space for passive activities. Several interviewees mentioned that sports fields work well for younger children but not as well for older youth. Again, we heard reference to the need for a higher level of maintenance.

A sampling of comments is as follows:

“Soccer, field hockey, and lacrosse fields.”

“Probably more tennis courts.”

“There is a demand for a skateboard park and sports fields. More active areas. Current ones are not first class. Pool management this summer was far better.”

“We need to set service levels for acres/1000 residents. All public spaces and parkland, not just Park District should be considered including the schools.”

“The schools have better playgrounds than the park district.”

“Specifically open space and fields are needed. Once you get to age eight, there is really only one field you can use. Baseball fields work well up to a certain age group and then they don’t work well. Quality of playgrounds is poor. We haven’t upgraded any of them in four years. We are stretched.”

“I just don’t think there is enough green space. So many of our parks are used for sports.”

“Skate parks. We need to build places kids are going to use. The two pools are probably enough. More tennis courts.”

“I think there is a perception in the community, you see parks, but you don’t use them. You are more aware of the parks because of organized interests. A lot of use of Taylor Park is outside of the community.”

“Stevensons has been up in the air for a long time. Haven’t had use of Barrie Park for a long time, and it has affected organizations who used the park.”

“I think there are enough playgrounds. I think we generally need more field space.”

“You can go down any list and we don’t have enough. We can’t maintain what we have now.”

5. On a scale of 1-5 with 1 being excellent and 5 being poor, how would you rate the quality of indoor recreation facilities provided by the Park District of Oak Park, and why?

“3” was again the most frequently mentioned rating for the quality of indoor parks and recreation facilities, followed by “4”. Over half of the ratings for the outdoor parks and recreation system fell into those two categories. Only three interviewees rated the indoor parks and recreation facilities as a “1” or excellent. Several of those who were interviewed pointed out that the quality of specialized facilities such as the Cheney Mansion and the Conservatory were better than the quality of the seven community centers. A number of the interviewees spoke of the community centers as being an outdated model for service delivery. Again, we heard the need for improved maintenance from many of those interviewed. Below is a summary of those providing ratings.

A rating of 1 was given 3 times.

A rating of 2 was given 1 time. A rating of 2.5 was given 2 times.

A rating of 3 was given 11 times.

A rating of 4 was given 6 times.

A rating of 5 was given 2 times.

A sampling of comments is as follows:

“Small, not ADA accessible.”

“There is certainly a lack of quantity.”

“Not bad, not outstanding. Some looking pretty ragged. Of course they are 30 to 40 years old.”

“There is a lack of investment. Outdated service delivery model. Minimal progress, under-utilized, not maintained, and really nothing there.”

“The centers are a 4.5. They can have 1 class going on at a time and that is it. The basements are a wreck. It is just an outdated model with old facilities. The functionality of them is poor and upkeep is embarrassing.”

“3 for the specialized facilities. 4 for the community centers. They are not large enough.”

“5+ because facilities are outdated and inadequate.”

“Ridgeland Commons is really deteriorating. The common area is pretty beat up. I think that building should be taken down and replaced with a new indoor hockey rink. The recreation centers, I think there is support for them as they are now.”

“Cheney Mansion is well maintained. The Conservatory is wonderful. Not that familiar with the recreation centers. I question maintaining all the facilities. My daughter plays floor hockey at elementary schools. She wears a community center shirt but they never even go there because there is no place to practice.”

“The architect for the community centers might be someone special, but I don’t care. It’s going to cost over \$3 million to repair them. The better solution is to keep the ones that are at the schools. That is unique. However, the structure sizes would need to be increased dramatically. We don’t need to tear down facilities to have more green space. We need it for more sports fields. We do not need green space just to have green space.”

“The centers are basic. I don’t know how handicapped people get down there.”

“We value having meetings at Longfellow.”

“We need to spend \$400,000 per center and all that would do is get a center to be as good as it was in 1965, which is our newest center.”

“Field houses are run down. Gymnastics center is fine. The Conservatory is fine.”

“I don’t see them as run down as people think they are. I’ve been a Cubmaster, taken karate, etc. However, they could be better.”

“Outdated community model, with minimal expense. There is nothing here. Maybe in the summer there is strong use, but I don’t know what they do in the winters.”

“There are things that might work. Gymnastics works. Conservatory works. The problem is the recreation centers. Buildings are physically obsolete to varying designs. Staffing them is hopeless, which results in a high waste of money. This issue has to be solved.”

6. Are there any indoor recreation facilities, you feel should be developed or improved in Oak Park?

A number of interviewees pointed to the need to upgrade Ridgeland Commons and we also heard comments regarding upgrades needed at the Conservatory and Pleasant Home. The vast majority of comments related to the seven community centers. While some interviewees felt that updates to the current facilities would suffice, many more called for changes in the current service delivery system.

Recommendations included downsizing the number of community centers, converting some of the centers into specialty facilities, such as for the arts, seniors, etc., and building a large multipurpose community center to serve the entire community. A number of interviewees also spoke to the importance of the Park District and Schools working together on this issue and a focus given to those community centers that are located near schools and could be expanded. Several interviewees suggested that downsizing the number of community centers would provide additional land for open space and/or active sports facilities. Again, we heard that the park system is improving but not at a fast enough pace to serve citizen interests and needs.

A sampling of comments is as follows:

“The old models were built when kids dropped in at parks and the community centers. Now kids don’t drop in and use parks and buildings that way.”

“We need to have some large inter-community spaces. We will have to sacrifice some of the neighborhood feeling for that. If that doesn’t happen, we will have to dump a lot of money into facilities that aren’t going to address the needs of generations to come. In my mind, specialized centers are a good idea. The neighborhood centers should not be thought of as neighborhood centers, but rather community centers for special needs.”

“Indoor swimming pools. Stronger program supervision for participant security and safety.”

“Ridgeland needs a major upgrading.”

“Active politically astute groups will fight change of neighborhood centers, but the centers do not serve today’s families. There are no gyms to use, and not enough active space-small buildings. At least some of the buildings should be taken down and reconfigured with open space and a park/school concept. A large center in the middle of Oak Park is needed. This will help parks and the school district.”

“Community meeting space is needed to enhance revenue generation.”

“There are things that are changing for the best, but not at a rate that is fast enough.”

“Ridgeland Commons could use some money invested in it. The Conservatory needs improvements. It needs to be handicapped accessible. Pleasant Home is not funded very well. You don’t get excited there.”

“It would seem to me that there are 4-5 centers that run the same programs at the same time-and I am not sure that is the best use of resources. If you reduced them to 4 strategically located centers it would be better. It would be nice to have a large community center centrally located.”

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“Build a pool with the School District. They have 2 mediocre pools. Competitive pool with seating.”

“More independent play areas for younger children. Where kids would say, ‘Oh my gosh, I could play here for an hour.’ I’m thinking of indoor playgrounds. We have a lot of apartment dwellers. 6th, 7th, and 8th graders need places to go.”

“There aren’t any indoor sports facilities in Oak Park. Is there a need for an indoor facility? There is some private and nearby facilities, such as Gottlieb Health & Fitness in Melrose & Oak Park Health Club.”

“If co-ordination with schools continues, we might have enough gyms. We don’t have a health club in Oak Park. The YMCA is private. I’d love a softball dome. A place to play sports year-round would be great. Coordinating with another suburb that has enough land would be another idea.”

“Indoor soccer and ice-hockey.”

“A weight area with fitness facilities. I think the current centers could be retrofitted, however whatever it takes would be ok. Meeting rooms-I would like to have Ridgeland open year-round. I think Oak Park is becoming an upscale community.”

“Take most of the community center buildings down. Reconfigure into open space. Integrate school & park spaces.”

“Larger community center in middle of Village. Improve open space & indoor space; could also help schools.”

“If they could find a way to put up 1-2 central facilities, it would make taking down the existing facilities easier.”

“Gymnasium, fitness, swimming pool.”

- 7. The Village of Oak Park owns the current 7 neighborhood community centers and the Park District manages these facilities through an interlocal agreement. We will be analyzing this agreement in the master plan. What do you feel are the key criteria we should be looking at as part of our analysis of this agreement? Are there other aspects of how the Park District is governed that should be part of our analysis?**

Some of the interviewees were not familiar with the current interlocal agreement between the Village and the Park District. The vast majority of those who were familiar did not feel that the current agreement was working. Again, we heard from interviewees that the current service delivery model is outdated. Several referenced the library and asked why the community would need more neighborhood centers than library branches. We also heard interviewees refer to the community centers as “field houses” with limited facilities, serving more as park shelters.

A few interviewees felt that the Village needed to take more responsibility for maintenance, since they owned the facilities. We also heard questions as to why this agreement was different than the lease of the Dole Center to the library. A number of interviewees felt that the Oak Park community needed harder numbers on citizen needs and priorities for services and also operating costs, staffing, etc. for the neighborhood centers, prior to making a decision on this subject. Several interviewees repeated their earlier suggestions such as developing a large multipurpose community center, converting some of the centers into specialty facilities, building a facility in partnership with other communities, etc.

A sampling of comments is as follows:

“We don’t need the neighborhood concept. It is an outdated model. Why have more community centers than library branches.”

“Not aware of the separation. Always thought District owned. Hard to get access.”

“Major question is if there are enough dollars to do what is asked of the Park District.”

“Not fully familiar with the agreement. Gary Balling has instituted tighter controls, both financially and with staff. The changes are for the better.”

“I understand the current arrangement. Oak Park only has 4.5 square miles. Do we need all of them? Are they utilized? That should be the key in the evaluation-do we need them all? We also have to expand parks into more experiences beyond centers, such as walking and running paths.”

“I was not familiar with the agreement. The Village owns Dole Center and we lease the space. The Park District has the rest of it. I think that works and I would not want to see that re-examined.”

“I have no idea about the current deal. The relationship between the Village and the Park District was a surprise. But that is not to say it should not work out. Are we providing the right services that people want and need? Do we need to offer the same programs in all locations? Without the space it is awfully hard. One possibility is to build a new community center. It was really nice to have those community centers when my kids were younger. There are trade-offs.”

“I think they all should be retained and upgraded, with some specialization of services.”

“I would like to get away from the current agreement. I would like the Park District to be on their own, which right now is problematic for them and all of us. The time has come to have agreements that make sense. We don’t know what they do. There should be some way for the Village and Park Board to solve this problem, possibly with the Village assisting the Park Board on an a one-time basis to get over this hurdle. The Village is not subject to property tax caps.

“We need hard numbers for what it costs to operate and program those facilities. I think it would be good for the Park District. The Park District needs to use their money wisely. I think it would be beneficial for both the Village and Park District.”

“Money. Since the Village owns the buildings we should contribute to their maintenance. There should be closer maintenance. I think we have lost communication with the Park District. At some time we have to sit down and talk.”

“Have to analyze operating costs, programs and structures.

“The programs here are really in the parks. I think the field houses are really like shelters. It is hard to tell the difference. The field houses are really suited for restrooms, and getting out of bad weather. They are not set up for programming.”

“It would be a missed opportunity if there was not a clear decision on the governing agreement. I think the current hybrid agreement is not working. The Park District is an independent body and should be treated as such. I think there are people in the Village who want to get their arms around the Park District. I don’t think that’s the best decision but better than what we have. Decision on buildings should not be made on who owns, but demands for it.”

“Operating costs, staffing and usage are all key when you are taking a hard look at the current model. I think it is also really important not to forget what those centers mean to the communities.”

“The library has two branches, how can the Park District afford to have seven? When we meet, we are the only ones there. I don’t see activities.”

“I’m not sure that the Village shouldn’t be in charge of maintaining the field houses if they own them.”

8. Are there any services or lines of business the Park District is providing that you do not think they should be providing?

A slight majority of those interviewed felt comfortable with the current services offered by the Park District, and did not feel they were offering any services or lines of business that they should not be offering. Of those who offered opinions on services that the Park District should consider phasing out, the Pleasant Home and Cheney Mansions were the most frequently mentioned facilities. While those interviewees felt these facilities to be of value they questioned whether the mansions would be better served under a different organizational structure, possibly as independent non-profit organizations. We also heard comments regarding the need and ability for these facilities to raise private fund-raising dollars to support their mission. A few interviewees recommended that all programs needed to be constantly evaluated based on having a viable customer base and the ability of the program to be self-sustaining through fee revenues.

A sampling of comments is as follows:

“Pleasant Home is not really a tourist attraction. Let’s look at it differently. The restaurants should generate more money.”

“Cheney & Pleasant Homes. These should be made into their own 501c(3) organizations. They currently drain the Park District and it is going to cost \$2 million to rehab.”

“The Park District has their hands in a lot of things, but I can’t say it’s wrong. It is a shame they had to deal with Barrie Park. Gary Balling has been fabulous in dealing with a difficult issue.”

“Perhaps the mansions.”

“Why sled hills? Only used 3-4 times per year. Is that our best use of space? Financial issues behind Pleasant & Cheney. Need to see if they can be marketed better and more creatively. Look at spaces differently.”

“I’m not sure about the 2 mansions and how well they are doing. I know that Cheney Mansion is not doing well. The Conservatory is unique for Chicago, and the fact that we are subsidizing it by \$200,000 each year.”

“You have to wonder about Pleasant Home and Cheney Mansion, but I don’t favor selling them. But I do think it is a drain on the Park District.”

“Any program that we have to subsidize to a point that it is a loss to us. If we don’t want to charge the public what it cost to do it, then we shouldn’t do it. We shouldn’t spread ourselves too thin.”

“Cheney Mansion-I wouldn’t think of hosting wedding parties there.”

“I can’t think of anything that I think is not a good fit. I kind of dance around if the recreation centers could be replaced by other things.”

“The Cheney Mansion always comes up.”

“No, and I only say that because I look at their schedules and the subject matter looks like what people would be interested in.”

“Everything I see looks like Park District business to me.”

“No, none that I can think of. I think the Park District does excellent programs. My largest concern is the 2 houses. Pleasant Home is doing to fund-raising. I would like to see those types of things at Cheney.”

“Historic mansions are distractions. They don’t fit into mission. Those buildings are part of a tourism process. Don’t spend any money there but hope it will be great.”

“How should the mansions be managed and what should they be? How should they be funded? Conservatory fits in. Theme they have is great.”

“The Park District should be involved in providing recreational facilities, as this is it’s specific mission, and should re-evaluate any programs that are better provided and funded by the private sector or other tax bodies. Could the private sector have just as easily built an ice skating rink as the Park District, for example? Could a private sector entity have provided cooking classes?”

9. We will also be doing benchmarking comparisons of Oak Park to other communities. Are there communities that you feel are model providers of parks and recreation services who Oak Park should compare itself to? If yes, who are they?

Evanston was by a wide margin the community that was mentioned the most often by interviewees. The cities of Naperville, Elmhurst, LaGrange and Hinsdale were each mentioned by at least several interviewees. A few interviewees mentioned communities outside of Illinois, particularly Shaker Heights, Ohio. It was felt that any benchmarking communities outside of Illinois should be older, dense suburban cities.

A sampling of comments is as follows:

“Des Plaines and Elmhurst.”

“White Plains, NY.”

“LaGrange, Elmhurst, and Evanston”

“Lombard, Evanston, Naperville, Elmhurst, Skokie, LaGrange, or Hinsdale. Older suburban communities and first line suburbs in NYC, Cleveland, and Detroit.”

“Evanston.”

“Hinsdale, Evanston, and Naperville.”

“Forest Park, possibly Elk Grove.”

“Evanston is not Oak Park. It is segregated.”

“Evanston, Hinsdale, Glen Flynn, Elmhurst, LaGrange, and Western Springs.”

“Forest Park.”

“Don’t know. Oak Park is very unique, because it doesn’t have land.”

“Evanston-in the style and type of people. Naperville, Park Ridge, and Glenview.”

“Lombard, Evanston and Naperville-high end. Elmhurst, LaGrange, Shaker Heights, Ohio and Hinsdale.”

“Evanston.”

“Shaker Heights, Ohio, and Evanston.”

“Evanston is closest to us in size, borders on Chicago, and diverse. Winnetta, Wilmette, and Lake Forest. We want our schools to compete with New Tier. Hillside to a lesser extent.”

“Berwyn, N. Berwyn, Cicero, Forest Park, Elmwood Park, Franklin Park, and Norridge.”

10. A statistically valid survey of Oak Park residents will be conducted as part of the master plan. What types of questions would you most like to see asked on the survey?

We heard several question themes repeatedly by many interviewees. First, what is the usage and satisfaction with current facilities and programs offered by the Park District of Oak Park. Second, what new outdoor and indoor parks and facilities are needed and which ones are of the highest priority to residents. Third, what are the gaps in recreation programming, particular for youth, teens, and senior populations. Fourth, does the present community center model serve the needs of your household and if not, what changes should be made to provide a higher level of service. Fifth, how should services be funded, i.e. user fees, taxes, etc. and support for a voter referendum.

A sampling of comments is as follows:

“Understand what perception people have of the Park District”

“Target the needs of youths and seniors.”

“Adequacy of services, awareness of offerings, and satisfaction with quality.”

“Prioritization of service needs.”

“Interest in physical fitness facilities and would you join? Indoor pool/track, would you join/pay?”

“Maintenance of parks and fields.”

“Level of participation-understanding user needs and then who’s using. Informal park users vs. users of classes, etc. Funding theme-what willing to pay.”

“Senior programming. Youth programming. Interlocal agreements.”

“What kind of services do you use or would you like to use? Tackle the community center issue from a current system and need basis. Parking is a big issue for park usage.”

“Are you willing to pay higher taxes or fees for programs you enjoy the most?”

“What am I willing to pay per month for an increased level of park service. Is it worth a cup of coffee?”

“I think it would be interesting to ask who is using the parks.”

“What facilities and programs are lacking?”

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“How often do they use the pools and which ones. Also, what facilities are used and how often.”

“Needs & support for a referendum.”

“How do they feel about costs of programs and facilities.”

“How satisfied have parents been with programs.”

“What things should the Park District be offering? I think there are issues within the pools. It is ridiculous that we charge residents and non-residents the same fee.”

“Questions on the recreation centers-we need to have some clear answers. Measure support to pay more money to the Park District.”

“I don’t think the average person has a clue about the inter-governmental agreement.

“Fixing financial model.”

“Probably something in the way of fees.”

“Do you use the services, which ones, and if not, why?”

“Are there programs that you would like to see that you are not seeing?”

“What is your understanding of the Park District. The last election sparked interest and Barrie Park has raised community awareness.”

“What would people like to see the Park District do? Have you read the comprehensive plan? Would you become a friend of the Park District?”

“Neighborhood centers-what do they most need to offer? The indoor ice-rink and pool. What does a successful park do? I don’t think citizens have information about the agreement.”

“Itemize the programs currently offered by the Park District and provide a per household cost. Itemize programs that are proposed and provide a per household cost. Ask for each one whether the costs of these programs should be funded through property taxes or by the users of such services.”

11. Do you think that the most important issues facing the Park District of Oak Park are a) maintaining current parks and recreation facilities; b) building new parks and facilities; c) Park District and Village intergovernmental relations, d) a combination of all of what I mentioned, or e) something else?

A number of interviewees were unsure about the most important direction to take. Of those expressing an opinion, they were fairly evenly split between the options. Several interviewees indicated that finances was the most important issue facing the Park District of Oak Park. Listed below is a summary of those providing ratings.

- A. *Maintaining current parks and recreation facilities. (3)*
- B. *Building new parks and facilities. (2)*
- C. *Park District and Village intergovernmental relations. (5)*
- D. *A combination of all. (5)*
- E. *Something else. (3-Finances)*

A sampling of comments is as follows:

“Maintain what they have. Enhance operations.”

“Very critical. Has to go beyond maintaining. Remodeling-refurbishing-things, the parks need to look more crisp.”

“Maintaining and building new parks and facilities. We need to come to a decision about our model and we are going to have to base a lot on this study. I think the most important issue will be a combination of maintaining and building new parks and facilities.”

“I want them to cap the Eisenhower. I like the idea of a regional park system.”

“It is a very complex issue. I think this all has to be looked at with the larger picture in mind of what is the Village doing. I cannot remember the last time the Village has done that.”

“Maintenance. Used to be better-not real great now.”

“Finances. If you have no money you can’t do anything. They have to get their finances in order.”

“An open dialog may help them reinvent themselves. They are going to have to look at everything they have and evaluate what they can do well and what the new needs of the community are.”

“I think we are losing urban parks and I think that recreation is doing that to a certain degree. Oak Park does not have that much of it.”

“Funding is the biggest issue facing them as a group. We need to understand the needs of the community before we decide if what we currently have works.”

“Park District and Village intergovernmental relations underlies everything else. Barrie Park is a black hole of emotion and time. The Park Board might have been on the right side of the issue, as obnoxious as they were.”

“Having just been involved in building two new junior highs, I am acutely aware of construction costs. The relationship is critical.”

“Combination. Concentrate on turning some of the facilities into specialty areas. The current private tennis club could be developed into a multipurpose facility.”

12. What do you feel are the principal sources of revenue that should be considered for financing Parks and Recreation projects?

User fees was the most frequently mentioned response. While some stakeholders felt differently, the vast majority felt that there was room to increase revenues by either increasing the current user fees or creating new programming and facility opportunities for raising fees. Several interviewees indicated there was a need to raise revenues from corporate sponsorships, private fund-raising, and the efforts of friends organizations, particularly at the Cheney Mansion and Pleasant Home. We also heard again the benefits of the partnerships between the Village, School District, and Park District. We also heard about the potential of developing partnerships with other communities and possibly the Forest Preserve District, resulting in more land for parks and development of facilities with regional appeal. Many interviewees mentioned the potential of increased tax funding, either through increases in current taxes or a voter referendum for capital improvements. These interviewees were mixed as to whether the timing was right for increases in taxes.

A sampling of comments is as follows:

“Fees are too low. Non-residents should pay more.”

“Corporate sponsorship - we have a great location for doing that. Also, we could cap freeways - lots of opportunities.”

“The Village, Main Library, and Park District worked together on the footprint of the Main Library. We need more interlocal partnerships like that.”

“No new taxes.”

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“Referendum-likely not popular. Folks will bite bullet on education; recreation is considered an option, not essential. There should be a sliding scale of fees for service. Lots of high end folks can afford to pay, but low income opportunities are important.”

“The fees seem low - we need to get programs to pay for themselves. It’s going to be a real challenge. People feel they pay lots of taxes here, so they expect first rate service.”

“I think they are going to need more taxes. It’s a tough one. Part of the responsibilities for deferred maintenance lies with the Village. Whatever they do should be done right.”

“I don’t believe we should sell mansions. We need to expand our commercial base. Be creative-we are taxed out.”

“Leave Pleasant View as a restaurant. Cheney has a banquet hall with a hotel nearby. Push revenue there and see if it could handle more.”

“Short term we need a capital improvement bond issue. I think the Park Board has enough good will, as does Gary, so it should pass. I don’t see any way to change the interlocal agreement. The Village has so many sources of income. The Park District has reached a maximum for what they can charge. I think fees are getting too high. I think they have hit the limit.”

“Both federally and state-wide there should be more money for Park Districts. Also, if you are not a taxpayer, you should pay more. There should also be a Friends of Cheney House. They should not have accepted the financing without money to maintain it.”

“If I was them I would not want to depend on the Village each year. I would want to partner with them. The Village helps the high school by picking up the trash hauling expenses. The Park District would be wise to look to those ways.”

“For some of the special facilities like Cheney and Pleasant Home, more user fees. I also think that some fees should be lowered, such as sports camps. Last year it was about \$110 a week. Program quality was great, but it was expensive.”

“Charge non-resident fees for pools.”

“Fees are too low. Also, subsidy from the Village has to go up - they are a partner.”

“The Friends of the Park District is an entity that probably has to work a little harder.”

“User fees.”

13. What do you feel is the MOST IMPORTANT function provided by the Park District of Oak Park? Why do you feel this way?

A wide variety of functions were mentioned, with recreation programming particularly for youth and teens the most frequently mentioned function. Many interviewees also mentioned open space and keeping parks well landscaped. Several interviewees mentioned specific facilities, such as pools and sports facilities.

A sampling of comments is as follows:

“Teen oriented activities, particularly on weekends. Recreation for all ages.”

“Kids/youth activities.”

“Recreation for youth & adults.”

“Open space and children’s programming.”

“Recreation for all ages. Also need more green space.”

“Providing spaces for people to pursue their choice of leisure. Would like it to be a comfortable and pleasant setting - but it can’t be all things for all people!”

“Improving the quality of life in the community by improving the parks and programs.”

“Quality recreation programs - that is our strongest point right now.”

“Well maintained open spaces and the ability to have sports and recreation.”

“The two swimming pools and recreation programs.”

“There is something to be said for brick and mortar, but programs for kids, regardless of what it is can make all the difference in the world for a kids life.”

“Recreation opportunities for kids, especially 6th grade through high school.”

“Open land, having it and maintaining it.”

“Park maintenance and programs may not be the most important things, but gets people accepting of other things.”

“It’s a tie between maintenance of outdoor facilities and programs. Parents rely on programs.”

“A full range of youth services.”

“Beautiful landscaping in parks throughout the community and services.”

14. On a scale of 1-5 with 1 being excellent and 5 being poor, what do you think the image of the Park District of Oak Park is in the community, and why?

“3” was again the most frequently mentioned rating for the image of the Park District of Oak Park in the community, followed by “2”. Over half of the ratings for the image of the park system fell into those two categories. Only one interviewee rated the image of the park system as a “1” or excellent the seven community centers. The most frequent comments relating to the ratings centered upon the funding challenges facing the Park District and Barrie Park. Several interviewees indicated that the negative impact of Barrie Park was overrated and hopefully near a conclusion. At the same time, an understanding of the Park District’s funding challenges are just now being understood because of the work of the Infrastructure Committee. Listed below is a summary of those providing ratings.

A rating of 1 was given 1 time. A rating of 1.5 was given 2 times.

A rating of 2 was given 7 time. A rating of 2.5 was given 1 time.

A rating of 3 was given 11 times. A rating of 3.5 was given 2 times.

A rating of 4 was given 1 time.

A rating of 5 was given 0 times.

A sampling of comments is as follows:

“The Park District and schools are very good partners.”

“Lots of opportunities are provided by the Park District”

“Funding woes & negative press, particularly from Barrie Park hurt.”

“Run good programs-good facilities and people use them. Only tarnish on name is Barrie Park. It has dragged on too long.”

“The Barrie Park situation is unfortunate, but overall the image is still very good. Everyone knows they don’t have a lot of money, so their faults are more understandable.”

“The Board is much better than it used to be - the previous Board tackled hard things - but Barrie Park tarnished their image some.”

“They have to fix the Ridgeland Ice Arena. Parks have deteriorated because of the attention paid to Barrie Park.”

“I think the real image is a 2-3, but the Barrie Park situation is really overrated. It is a black eye. There is intense disappointment and anxiety. There is a perception of a lack of outdoor recreation spaces.”

“I think Gary is dynamic guy, a good leader. He is soft spoken, but he gets things done. He inherited that ridiculous Barrie Park thing, and it has taken way too much time.”

“It has taken forever to finish Barrie Park. People are aware it’s finished, but we have lost a facility for all these years.”

“If you live on the Northwest side or by Barrie Park the image would be pretty poor. There is a division between the South and North parts of Oak Park.”

“The image is better than it should be. If people understood in a broader sense how bad things are, the rating would drop.”

“I think it is pretty good.”

15. Is there anything that I have not asked that is an issue that should be addressed in the Master Plan?

The vast majority of interviewees answered no to this question or repeated some of the themes they had previously mentioned. Most of these comments centered around the relationship between the Village and the Park Board. Again, we heard comments regarding the financial difficulties of the Park District. Several interviewees again stressed the importance of programming, particularly for youth and teens.

A sampling of comments is as follows:

“The relationship issue is the key.”

“Remember teen services and services to kids. It’s a community responsibility.”

“I haven’t heard anything about senior programming in the Park District.”

“I think there is a growing sense that public safety is a problem in the community.”

“I think it would be a serious mistake for the Village to take over the department. I think there is a real advantage to going to the polls and electing a Park Commissioner as opposed to having just another department. In the short run it might not make much of a difference, but in the long run it would. I like the idea of an independent Park Board.”

“They need to work with the Township in working with seniors in senior residence areas.”

“I don’t think the Park District should be a separate unit of government because of funding limitations.”

“Oak Parkers are into collaborations and partnerships. In general, it is a balanced community. The Barrie Park issue is a black eye. Those who know think the Park District has done all it can.”

“Quality instructions and after school programming.”

“After school programs - there are 8 elementary schools, and we bring Park brochures in the gym - most of the recreation centers are located next to schools.”

16. If today was the year 2013, what are the most important actions that you hope to have accomplished through the master planning process? (Understand the #1 most important action.)

Many of the interviewees focused on broad issues such as having a fiscally sound parks and recreation system that can serve the needs and priorities of Oak Park citizens. Others indicated a resolution of the community center agreement and the related governance issues between the Village and Park District as the most important action to come out of the planning process. Last, many interviewees focused on specific projects such as upgrading Ridgeland Commons, developing a big park over the Eisenhower Expressway, resolving the future of Pleasant Home, preserving green space, and developing a sports facility in cooperation with other communities.

A sampling of comments is as follows:

“Decide on Pleasant Home, funding level secure for the Park system, maintenance of facilities improved, and local awareness of events.”

“Youth Center.”

“Improve status of Park District in community. Finalize Barrie Park.”

“Progress with youth programs. Park District operating well in the black and with reserves”

“Ridgeland Common - make it a regional center. It’s already a sports complex; make it a multi-use regional center by adding year round ice, fitness area, indoor swim pool.”

“Implement the plan - my worry is that the plan won’t get implemented. The community centers decision is especially important.”

Stakeholder Interview Report

“I would like to see Park District services used by more segments of the community than they are now - a better variety of age and race. They also need to develop more ways to get additional funds.”

“Come up with a plan that clarifies the relationship between the Park District and the Village. I would hate to have people in 2013 trying to figure out what part of the Park District the Village is funding and who has authority.”

“Completion of a long term plan that would meet the needs of the community, including the financial, facility, and staffing component. If you think short term you won’t get them.”

“The community would back an indoor/outdoor pool. The Park District is in a dilemma because they don’t own facilities.”

“Preserve the open space that we have. I think we can do a lot of things, but we are going to have to keep the land, and pass it along to other generations.”

“Maintain our parks so that they are vital and being used. Infrastructure has to be addressed and enhanced, particularly Ridgeland.”

“Have a big park over the Eisenhower.”

“The agreement has no accountability. It keeps the tax rate and services low.”

“The governance issue has got to be fixed; that will lead to fixes in the financial model. Right now there is no sense of ownership in the agreement.”

“A solvent financially sound Park system. I love the idea of a major indoor sports complex. People are willing to put money into building a new facility. I think they could make an effort to privately fund a new facility.”

“Providing sufficient greenspace to make Oak Park a desirable community for residents at the most economically efficient price.”

***Parks and Recreation Master Plan
Village of Oak Park and Park District of Oak Park
Focus Group Summary Report***

Overview

From Tuesday, September 9th through Thursday, September 11th of 2003, the Leisure Vision team facilitated a total of six focus groups for the Village and Park District of Oak Park, with one focus group being on each of the following six topics: indoor sports; outdoor sports; recreation centers; senior services; special properties; and youth advocacy. Focus group participants were representatives from organizations that currently use programs and/or services provided by the Park District of Oak Park. Ron Vine, Vice-President of Leisure Vision, Ron Secrist, Senior Consultant with Leisure Vision, and Jeff King, President of Ballard*King & Associates, facilitated the six focus groups.

Five major issues were discussed during the focus groups: (1) general perceptions of current services, (2) partnering between participant's organization and the Park District, (3) overall parks and recreation services, (4) financing parks and recreation services, and (5) future priorities for improvements.

The following pages contain a summary of some of the comments that were provided by participants in each of the six focus groups about each of the issues that were discussed.

GENERAL PERCEPTIONS OF CURRENT SERVICES

The moderator first asked participants how they would rate current services in Oak Park. The moderator then asked participants what they like best and least about the current services, and finally participants were asked to indicate the one thing the Village and Park District could do to improve the quality of current services to its citizens. Listed on the following pages are some of the comments that were provided on each topic by participants in each of the six focus groups.

How Participants Would Rate the Current Services in Oak Park

On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being excellent and 5 being poor, participants were asked how they would rate current services in Oak Park. Of those participants who gave a rating, 52% rated current services as a 3, 26% rated them as a 4, and 17% rated them as a 2. Listed on the following pages are some of the comments participants provided as to why they gave the rating they did.

OUTDOOR SPORTS

- We need more age appropriate space.
- Track and running facility is seriously lacking.

SENIOR SERVICES

- Since Gary has gotten here there has been more cooperation and coordination, especially with the Village staff and with schools.
- The Park District is mainly a place for young people. People look to the Park District for children's activities, not seniors.

SPECIAL PROPERTIES

- They are probably trying to do too many things; they are struggling at maintaining historic properties.
- While they are struggling, the community is well served by them - they just need more support.
- The Park District does not encourage participation as much as they should.

YOUTH ADVOCACY

- A lot of the staff is made up of high school kids, so I think there is a lot of hit and miss with the quality of the services.
- In the Park District brochures, out of 6 pages, there is only one page for teens.

What Participants Like Best About the Current Services

INDOOR SPORTS

- Having a gymnastic center - it draws people from the outside area.
- There's a good diversity of programs that are affordable and available.

OUTDOOR SPORTS

- I like the neighborhood distribution of facilities and decentralization.
- Gary Balling and his new hires are great.
- There are two excellent swimming pools for competitive swimming, which are endangered species.

RECREATION CENTERS

- Neighborhood parks are within walking distance.
- The price structure for the program is reasonable.

SENIOR SERVICES

- We're excited by the willingness of the Park District to try new things - a breath of fresh air.
- There is a good variety of classes.

SPECIAL PROPERTIES

- The special properties services add to the character of Oak Park.
- The variety of the gardens and the historic sites.
- These properties have tremendous potential. These properties could be flagship attractions.

YOUTH ADVOCACY

- The facilities at Ridgeland and Rehm are nice, as are the pool and ice-skating facility.
- There is a variety of choices for younger children and the green space is excellent.
- The staff's willingness to collaborate to meet needs.

What Participants Like Least About the Current Services

INDOOR SPORTS

- There is a perceived need for infrastructure improvements - lack of capital. We need to develop a fee policy and capital plan. There is a need for space to provide a level of service the community wants.
- Facilities with ice and indoor soccer are behind other communities.
- Aging facilities have not been maintained. A new maintenance policy is needed to avoid this situation from re-occurring. It's a mistake to build and/or renovate facilities if the Park District can't afford to maintain them.
- Condition of most facilities is not good. Many are badly in need of renovation.
- Aging facilities, limited availability during certain hours, and maintenance problems.

OUTDOOR SPORTS

- Maintenance is an issue.
- The lack of space.
- Need more space, and offer more at parks, like baseball fields, soccer, and tennis.
- The baseball/softball fields are poorly constructed and they drain poorly.

RECREATION CENTERS

- I dislike the way many of the facilities look.
- The recreation centers are all the same, which restricts what can be offered.
- There is no gymnasium.

SENIOR SERVICES

- It is a disservice to the community to not have a senior community center.
- There is no warm water pool for the seniors and disabled population within 5 miles of Oak Park.

SPECIAL PROPERTIES

- I really think the lack of communication and coordination between the organizations is poor.
- There is no master planning; they are divergent and disjointed sometimes.
- The emphasis on athletic facilities - more users fees need to be put toward maintenance.
- The lack of financial support.

YOUTH ADVOCACY

- The availability of the buildings is limited because of a lack of staffing.
- There are no larger facilities. There is no consistent communication and the Park District only provides programs that are useful up to the sixth grade.

One Way the Village & Park District Could Improve the Quality of Services to Citizens

INDOOR SPORTS

- Continue initiatives for partnerships - create win-win scenarios.
- Have a good base of financial accounting and sound policies for governance.
- Update facilities, then maintain them.
- Improve communication, survey users, and work with all user groups.
- Make sure there is constant communication between schools and the Park District so there are no surprises when space/class is cancelled.

OUTDOOR SPORTS

- There is a need for practice facilities.
- They need to light more fields.
- Build a multi-purpose facility that addresses many sports needs.
- Rehab the existing fields and pools.

RECREATION CENTERS

- All of the centers look tired and dumpy, and the nets are missing from the basketball courts.
- The employees are behind glass, which does not give people a warm, welcoming feel.
- There is not one person or department to call with issues.
- Build a mega-center.

SENIOR SERVICES

- Would be nice if there was a multi-purpose senior center.
- Improve the neighborhood buildings.
- We need one booklet that is updated quarterly and has all services.
- If you build a senior center, people will come.

SPECIAL PROPERTIES

- Need to choose between recreation center remodeling versus crumbling historic properties - need better political leadership.
- Can TIF be directed to an art/cultural museum?
- Have courage and ask for more revenues or we're shortchanging our legacy.
- Better coordination - get historic properties to cooperate with them.
- Survey the citizens to find out what services would actually get them into the properties. Try some of these services out. Also, specifically target special interest groups and find out how they might like to use the special properties (e.g: Doggy Photo Shoot Day at Cheney Mansion Grounds).

YOUTH ADVOCACY

- Raise the expectations of the supervisors/staff to ensure safe & orderly conduct as well as a commitment towards engaging youths in programs - more than just listings in a brochure.
- Build a large multi-purpose facility that offers programs for teens.
- Hire qualified staff who are capable of running age appropriate programs.

PARTNERING BETWEEN PARTICIPANT'S ORGANIZATION AND THE PARK DISTRICT

The moderator first asked focus group participants how good of a job the Park District does of partnering with their organization. The moderator then asked participants what they like best about their current partnership relationships and what aspects of the current partnership could be improved. Finally, participants were asked to indicate the one way the Village and Park District could improve the way they work with their organization. Listed below are some of the comments that were provided on each topic by participants in each of the six focus groups.

How Good of a Job Does the Park District do in Partnering with Your Organization

On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being excellent and 5 being poor, participants were asked how good of a job they feel the Park District does in partnering with their organization. Of those participants who gave a rating, 52% rated the partnership as a 2, 21% rated it as a 3, and 17% rated it as a 1.

What Participants Like Best About their Current Partnership Relationships

INDOOR SPORTS

- There is open communication between entities.
- The staff tries to be responsible and helpful.
- The Park District administration is beginning to focus on health with the ultimate goal being the health of the residents.

OUTDOOR SPORTS

- The good relationship at Ridgeland Commons between youth baseball and the Park District.
- No extra fees to use the facilities.
- The Park District has been willing to accept volunteer help in maintaining ball fields.

RECREATION CENTERS

- The District is flexible and accommodating in trying to meet the partners' needs.
- Feel cooperation for partnership is much greater than what is available to individuals.

SENIOR SERVICES

- The leadership is great.
- Availability of facilities is good.
- They are comprehensive, giving us a positive relationship.

SPECIAL PROPERTIES

- The working relationship is open, positive, and generally productive.
- The availability of information when I call with a question is excellent.

YOUTH ADVOCACY

- Gary Balling is very responsive, he has good two-way communication skills.
- We pay a fair price to rent facilities and they do work with us.
- The staff's willingness to collaborate to meet needs. The school district relationships with the Park District are excellent.

Aspects of Current Partnership Arrangements that Could Be Improved

INDOOR SPORTS

- Customer service - there is a need for training and supervision.
- Intergovernmental written agreements.

- They should take a more business approach to needs assessment.
- Have regular meetings at the executive level, board level, and citizen level.

OUTDOOR SPORTS

- Meet together to discuss our visions.
- Define the liaisons to certain groups.
- Communication of what fields are open and available.
- Support the fields and pools with taxes.

RECREATION CENTERS

- Communication between the School District and the Park District.
- The District does not maintain the facilities. When something breaks, the District does not fix it.

SENIOR SERVICES

- Neighborhood facilities seem to be geared towards kids rather than seniors.
- Perhaps the community has outgrown the need for community centers.
- I would like to see the Park District do more outreach to seniors.
- This master plan is a great opportunity to coordinate services with senior services.

SPECIAL PROPERTIES

- Improve the not-for-profit infrastructure as we have the business infrastructure.

- Have a partner review the process annually.
- Let us use the parks for more a diverse variety of events; many events are denied.

YOUTH ADVOCACY

- Re-structure the building use. We need consistent communication with their front line staff. The neighborhood park concept is no longer viable.
- Collaborate more to serve all youth instead of considering any agency as competition.

One Way the Village and Park District Could Improve the Way they Work with Participants' Organization

INDOOR SPORTS

- Need greater financial accounting, organizational support, and development.
- Develop a partnership with the Tennis and Fitness Center that promotes the growth of tennis. Tennis is one of the few athletic/recreational sports that can be played by people into their senior years and with people of all ages. It's a great family/community activity/sport.
- Adult sports don't always seem to be "ready". I know that's not all the Park District's fault. Teams are late with fees, etc. But the schedule never seems to be ready until the first game, which means inconvenience to participants.

OUTDOOR SPORTS

- I think the Park District should be more aggressive in partnering with tennis pros and private facilities, and maybe even eventually purchasing one.
- Need artificial turf on fields because of serious overuse and no pesticides.
- Have more user group meetings.

OVERALL PARKS AND RECREATION SERVICES

The moderator first asked focus group participants what other types of parks and recreation services are of priority importance to the community. The moderator then asked participants if there are any services the Park District is providing that they should not be, and how well the current neighborhood community center model is meeting the needs of Oak Park residents. Finally, participants were asked what they think the image of the Park District is in the community, and what the number one thing is that would improve the Park District's image in the community. Listed below are some of the comments that were provided on each topic by participants in each of the six focus groups.

Other Parks and Recreation Services of Priority Importance to the Community

INDOOR SPORTS

- I like programs at Cheney and the Conservatory.
- Neighborhood parks must remain. They are less costly than indoor facilities.
- Try to maximize use by having multiple functions at indoor spaces.
- Build maintenance costs into operation plans.
- The appearance of fields and parks is important - they are very visible.

OUTDOOR SPORTS

- Indoor facilities like swimming and soccer. Also biking and running trails.
- Comprehensive community center.
- Preschool daycare. Also a gazebo and storage for tennis and large facilities.
- Need bike trails.
- A Park District Health Club Facility with a gymnastics center.

RECREATION CENTERS

- Indoor basketball courts.
- One big central recreation center.
- Keep the neighborhood centers.
- We need an indoor swimming program.

SENIOR SERVICES

- The physical appearance of parks is very important - it improves the quality of life in the community.
- A priority would be a multi-purpose facility.
- The Conservatory is a real gem in the community.

SPECIAL PROPERTIES

- The parks need a “Wow” factor, and it needs to be maintained throughout the year.
- Can we find out what teenagers might like to have available? It would have to be flexible, no permanent climbing walls or skate parks because that age group changes its personality so often.
- Open grass areas, sports fields, and leisure classes.

YOUTH ADVOCACY

- Providing green space.
- Skate park, basketball hoops, get the kids out of the streets and into the parks.
- Programs that educate - the Park District is probably the largest organization serving families.

Services the Park District is Providing that they Should Not Be

INDOOR SPORTS

- Pleasant Home and Cheney Mansion are expensive to operate. Should the District even be in the real estate business?
- Running of pre-school (not to be confused with preschool-aged programs) seems like a duplication of services with private operators.
- Don't compete with private businesses directly. The Park District should fill the gaps by offering programs not provided by the private sector.

OUTDOOR SPORTS

- 4th and 5th grade dances and concessions at Ridgeland.
- Maybe Pleasant Home and Cheney - have them be a separate entity.

RECREATION CENTERS

- We don't need two pools or the ice-rink.
- Drop the 4th to 6th grade dance activity. The children are too young to promote this type of socialization.
- We don't need two historic homes like the Cheney Museum and Pleasant Home.

SPECIAL PROPERTIES

- Wedding services.

YOUTH ADVOCACY

- The Cheney Mansion is a waste of space and only half of it is used. The only reason to keep it is as a viable source of revenue.

How Well the Current Neighborhood Community Center Model is Meeting the Needs of Oak Park Residents

On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being excellent and 5 being poor, participants were asked how well the current community center model is meeting the needs of Oak Park residents. Of those participants who gave a rating, 31% rated the community center model as a 4, 29% rated it as a 3, and 23% rated it as a 2. Listed below are some of the comments participants provided as to why they gave the rating they did.

INDOOR SPORTS

- It's not adequate. The community has stated a need for a skateboard park and has been ignored.
- The programs are there, as are the facilities. Any problems are with implementation of those programs.
- I think it can work, but poor facilities and lack of staffing conspire to hamper its effectiveness.

OUTDOOR SPORTS

- The community centers are just meeting places, not real centers. We need comprehensive indoor facilities.
- They are often locked, unmanned and in need of maintenance.
- They are very small and cannot offer many programs that meet the needs of the community.
- We need one large centralized community center that has meeting/game rooms, basketball courts, exercise rooms, racquetball, etc.
- We are done a disservice by not having the neighborhood community centers maintained.

RECREATION CENTERS

- They are under-utilized and should be more permanent, and have more activities. They need more chances to invite people in.
- I don't think they are serving the needs of the right people. The neighborhood centers best serve the ages of 3-7 year olds.

SPECIAL PROPERTIES

- Having high school kids working and relating with young kids is great for building the community.
- Very good. There are community centers within walking distance of most areas, which is great.
- We need more youth programs and activities.

YOUTH ADVOCACY

- The concept is perfect, but there are unsupervised kids ages 5-15. Adults don't feel comfortable and empowered leaving their kids at facilities.
- Facilities have been outdated for about 30 years. It was a nice concept 30 years ago, but not the way we should use the facilities today.
- They should consolidate and make 2-3 larger facilities.

What Participants Think the Image of the Park District is in the Community

On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being excellent and 5 being poor, participants were asked what the image of the Park District is in the community. Of those participants who gave a rating, 46% rated the image of the Park District in the community as a 3 and 38% rated it as a 2.

One Thing that Would Improve the Park District's Image in the Community

INDOOR SPORTS

- Promote the Park District as a community resource, not just its programs.
- Consolidate so that it doesn't appear that facilities are constantly battling.
- Improve the facilities and manage them better. Need better training for the staff.

OUTDOOR SPORTS

- For the Park District to "take over" our "independent" associations successfully. Our adult soccer group was handed over to the Park District four months ago and so far, so good.
- State of the art centers.
- Better maintenance and lower league fees.
- Get this plan done, find a capital government plan, and develop a realistic game plan for adding facilities and services.
- More meetings like this one, and communication with the community.

SENIOR SERVICES

- Updating of facilities and infrastructure.
- Barrie Park needs to be cleaned up - it has been a thorn in the Park District's side.
- One larger comprehensive facility (with upgraded senior facilities), or upgraded buildings would be nice.
- A community center with involvement for all ages and an awareness program would be nice.

SPECIAL PROPERTIES

- Better trees. Barrie Park and the Park Board need to quit fighting.
- Better overall maintenance.

YOUTH ADVOCACY

- Resolving the Barrie Park issue and restoring its use. Also returning Oak Park Center Pool to Park District control.
- To give us a park in the Washington area and more things for teenagers to do.
- This process - seriously examining it's priorities and how it organizes and provides services.

FINANCING PARKS AND RECREATION SERVICES

The moderator first asked focus group participants what the biggest gaps are in financing. The moderator then asked what sources of revenue should be considered in developing new parks and recreation services. Listed below are some of the comments that were provided on each topic.

Biggest Gaps in Financing

INDOOR SPORTS

- Infrastructure and routine maintenance costs.
- Resources are spread thin and as a result facilities are deteriorating.
- The tax cap is killing all the taxing bodies.
- Maintenance needs overwhelm the maintenance staff. The Gymnastic Center relies on booster clubs for support.

OUTDOOR SPORTS

- Capital interest, maintenance, and new facilities. The taxes are too low - the Village share is not enough.
- Taxes.
- Charge user fees in addition to tax dollars.
- There are no user fees for groups who dominate the field use - they should pay.

SPECIAL PROPERTIES

- Tax resources.
- General maintenance money.

YOUTH ADVOCACY

- I think there has to be a serious examination of how services are delivered - it's very inefficient. I also think there has to be some thought on the part of the Village to subsidize parks.
- Private ventures (miniature golf to generate revenue, or a climbing wall).
- Deferred maintenance is the biggest thing that is an ongoing problem.

Sources of Revenue that Should Be Considered in Developing New Parks and Recreation Services

INDOOR SPORTS

- Look to private funding, donations, and sponsorships. There are local businesses that would sponsor programs and activities.
- I don't know when the last time was that the Park District went for a rate increase. The agreement between the Village and the Park District needs to be re-negotiated.

- Partner with other Park Districts/Villages to expand services.

OUTDOOR SPORTS

- Take advantage of our location (290 Expway, EL Metra) to sell ads. Corporate sponsorships.
- Would consider an agreement rather than a handshake deal.
- Fees to groups, corporate sponsorships and taxes.
- Taxes, referendum, and corporate sponsorships.

SENIOR SERVICES

- You have to run it like a business if you want to survive.
- I feel that if the agencies join forces financially they could create better services at a lower cost.

SPECIAL PROPERTIES

- Involve the business community in the decision. TIF costs other taxing bodies lots of money. Is TIF really being used wisely?
- Taxes and fees.
- Grants and endowments.

YOUTH ADVOCACY

- Apply for grant money to increase services for teens and youth at risk. Use sponsorship to pay for programs and services.
- Private and public partnerships.
- Sell Cheney Mansion and use funds to build a new facility and update old ones.

Would Organization Consider Paying Increased User Fees

When asked if their organization would consider paying higher user fees based on the true value of the services received, 84% of participants who were asked the question answered “yes”, and the other 16% answered “no”. When asked if their organization would consider paying high user fees if that was the only revenue source available to implement the improvements that are most needed, the vast majority participants who were asked answered “yes”.

FUTURE PRIORITIES FOR IMPROVEMENTS

The moderator asked focus group participants to develop a list of improvements they think the Park District should make. Listed below are some of the comments that were provided.

Improvements that the Park District Should Make

INDOOR SPORTS

- Improvements are needed in marketing of programs and facilities.
- Ridgeland Commons. We need more of a multi-purpose facility. Also, improve maintenance of facilities.
- Consolidate facilities so we’re not spending money on many crumbling old buildings.
- Build multi-use facilities perhaps partnering with neighboring communities.
- Need more community forums - perhaps on a set schedule. People feel better when they can voice their complaints and then we can learn their needs.
- Just like the schools set long term plans to renovate or improve each school, the Park District needs to do this. For all the facilities, fields, pools, rink, lights, tennis courts, etc., get a plan together, get a team (Park Board) to sell it, and pass a referendum to start an aggressive improvement plan. Also make sure that the plans include money for maintenance - maintenance is crucial.

OUTDOOR SPORTS

- Get focused on facilities rather than programs. Bike and running trails.

- Community centers, maintaining Ridgeland Pool and maybe a long-term plan for an indoor sports complex.
- Renovation and then maintenance of all facilities, playgrounds, tennis courts, and fields, etc. Quality supervision provided for camps. A community center that is comprehensive.
- Build a mega-center. Upgrade or close satellite centers.
- Decide on needs versus “wishes.” Do the basic things very well, with well-maintained facilities. Be cost effective.
- The first thing has been done: creating this forum gives me a higher opinion of where the Park District is going. This is money well spent if the results are attained. Need a central multi-sports facility that is indoor and outdoor with enough parking.
- Figure out what to do with the neighborhood centers and upgrade them. Target one or two high quality acquisitions or developments.

RECREATION CENTERS

- Ridgeland Center is desperate for an update. I think it would make the people feel better. Just to walk in it looks blah.
- Make sure each center is fully utilized and create a central sports/indoor swimming building.
- The Park District and the Village should work closely together to keep a closer eye on their buildings and the upkeep of them.

SENIOR SERVICES

- A multi-purpose center for all ages, classes, and a place for youth to go and play ball or just talk. Space should be available for other social services also. Have agencies come in and do workshops, etc. (Youth, township, senior services, health department) Some staff can be parent volunteers, as well as volunteers for activities.
- Have more communication to promote awareness and building upgrades.

- Consolidate resources to have one recreation center that will appeal to all ages and serve all ages based on their needs. Make sure that in the parks we do have that benches are available for seniors to use at fairly close intervals. We need more benches on our parkways on main streets. It may be a Village issue as well as a Park District issue.
- The buildings are in dire need of some help.

SPECIAL PROPERTIES

- Re-commit to neighborhood recreation centers with appropriate capital expenditures. It will be expensive, but not as expensive as shutting down a number of buildings and a large new recreation center.
- Infrastructure improvements - invest, invest, invest. Make the rational case for tax increases and referendum and do it.
- Beautification of the Village benefits everyone. Publicize accomplishments and needs. Foster and encourage volunteerism by prioritizing relationships.

YOUTH ADVOCACY

- Need better programming for kids, especially older children. We need to seriously look at how we deliver the service and consider consolidating the smaller facilities.
- Improve collaborative programming with other community services to improve the quality of programs. Have preschools do collaborative programs with the library.
- Improved buildings in neighborhoods will draw families in.

RECREATION CENTERS

- Spend more time on the care of the parks.
- The Directors of the centers are unenthusiastic and unapproachable. Need more imaginative use of the centers.

SENIOR SERVICES

- Create more awareness of what senior services are offered.
- They could bring us all together with one senior center.
- We could have more meetings together - “senior agency meetings”.

SPECIAL PROPERTIES

- Potentially what’s available is outstanding, but privatization is required.
- If the community does not know you exist, it is hard to get them to rally around you. Need to improve public awareness.
- When does a not-for-profit go out of business? Businesses do that all the time. Do we evaluate enough? Has the community over-extended itself?
- Public officials push forward a vision and sell it. Oak Park needs to retain its excellence.

YOUTH ADVOCACY

- Take into account non-public school calendars & schedules when offering programs.
- Better communication and outreach to community agencies.
- Address the need for scholarships - no child should be left out. Also need more collaborative services.

*2004 Community Attitude &
Interest Citizen Survey*

Community Attitude and Interest Citizen Survey
Executive Summary of Citizen Survey Results

Overview of the Methodology

The Village of Oak Park and Park District of Oak Park conducted a Community Attitude and Interest Survey during January and February of 2004 to help establish priorities for the future development of parks and recreation facilities, programs and services within the community. The survey was designed to obtain statistically valid results from households throughout the Park District of Oak Park. The survey was administered by a combination of mail and phone.

Leisure Vision worked extensively with Park District of Oak Park officials in the development of the survey questionnaire. Questions on the survey were developed based upon input received in a series of stakeholder interviews, focus groups, and public forums with Oak Park residents and Park District officials over a three-day period of time from September 9 to September 11, 2003. This work allowed the survey to be tailored to issues of strategic importance to effectively plan the future system.

In January, a seven-page survey was mailed to a randomly selected sample of 3,367 households in the Park District of Oak Park. Approximately two weeks after the surveys were mailed, residents who received the surveys were contacted by phone. Those who indicated they had not returned the survey were given the option of completing it by phone.

The goal was to obtain at least 800 completed surveys. This goal was accomplished, with 824 surveys being completed. The results of the random sample of 824 households have a 95% level of confidence with a precision of at least +/-3.4%.

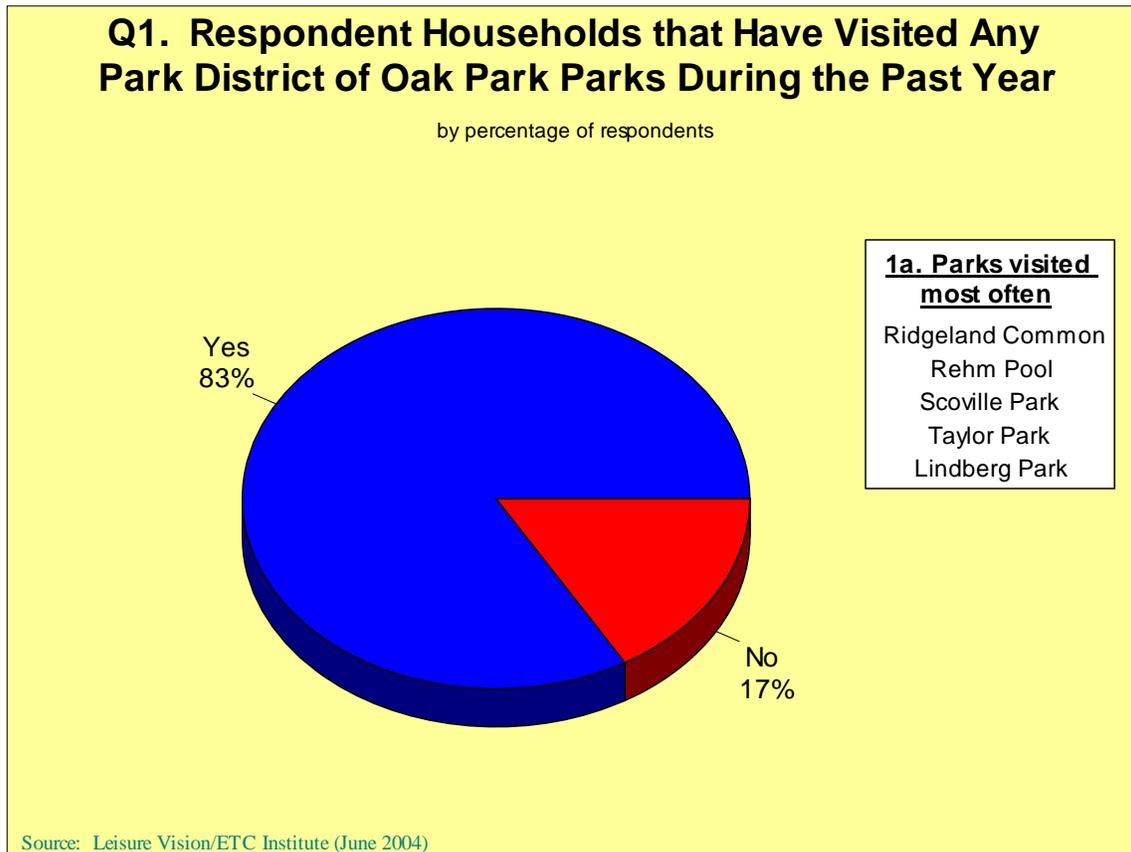
This report contains the following eight sections: 1) an executive summary of survey results, and national and Illinois benchmarking comparisons to Oak Park; 2) tabular results by gender, household size, and household type; 3) tabular results by race/ethnicity, income, and own or rent residence; 4) tabular results by length of residency and age of respondents; 5) tabular results by visitation of parks, program participation, and mode of travel; 6) tabular results by registered voters, voting, and amount willing to pay in additional property taxes; 7) tabular results by need for youth sports fields, indoor ice-skating facility, neighborhood parks, Oak Park Conservatory, and neighborhood centers; and 8) survey comments, and a copy of the survey document.

The following pages summarize major survey findings:

Visitation of Parks During the Past Year

Respondents were asked if they or members of their household have visited any Park District of Oak Park parks during the past year. Respondent households that have visited Oak Park parks during the past year were then asked to indicate which three parks they visit most often. The following summarizes key findings:

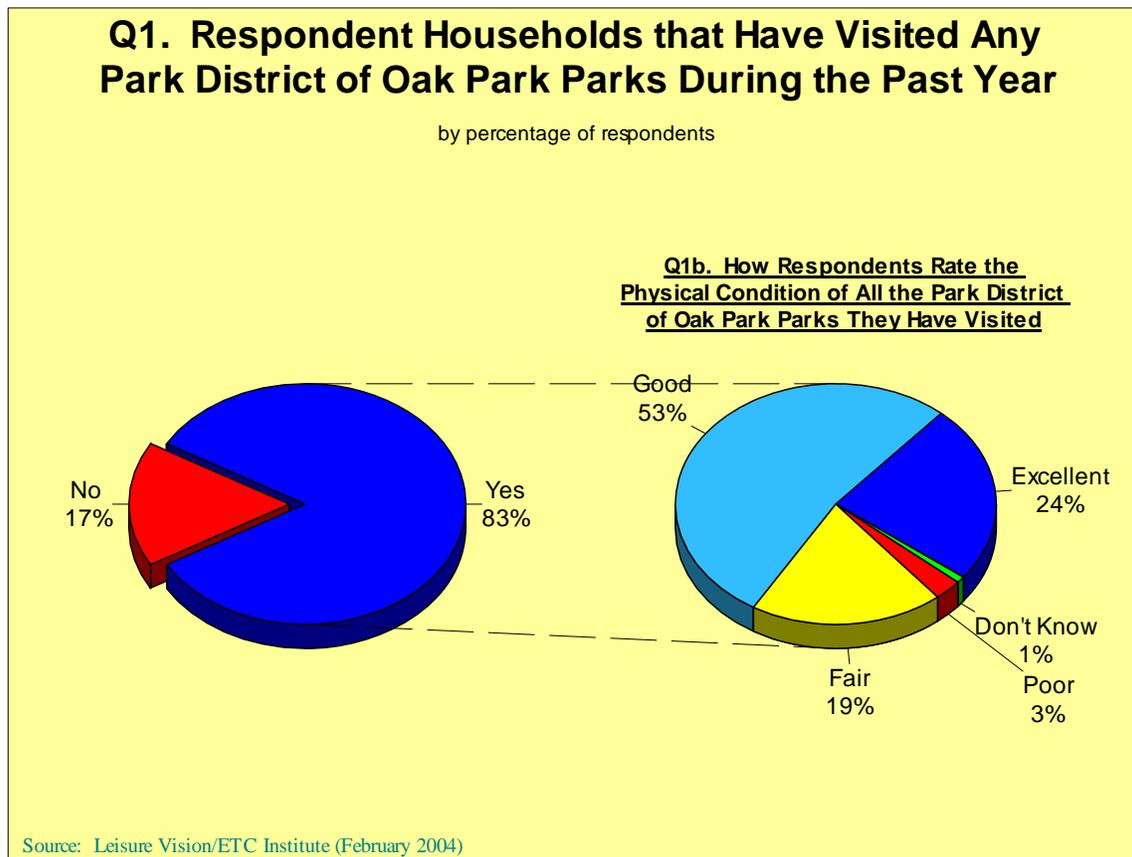
- **Eighty-three percent (83%) of respondent households have visited Park District of Oak Park parks during the past year.**
- **Ridgeland Commons is the Park District of Oak Park park that has been visited by the highest number of respondent households.** Other parks visited by a high number of respondent households include: Rehm Pool; Scoville Park; Taylor Park; and Lindberg Park.



Physical Condition of Parks

Respondent households that have visited Park District of Oak Park parks during the past year were asked to rate the physical condition of all the parks they had visited. The following summarizes key findings:

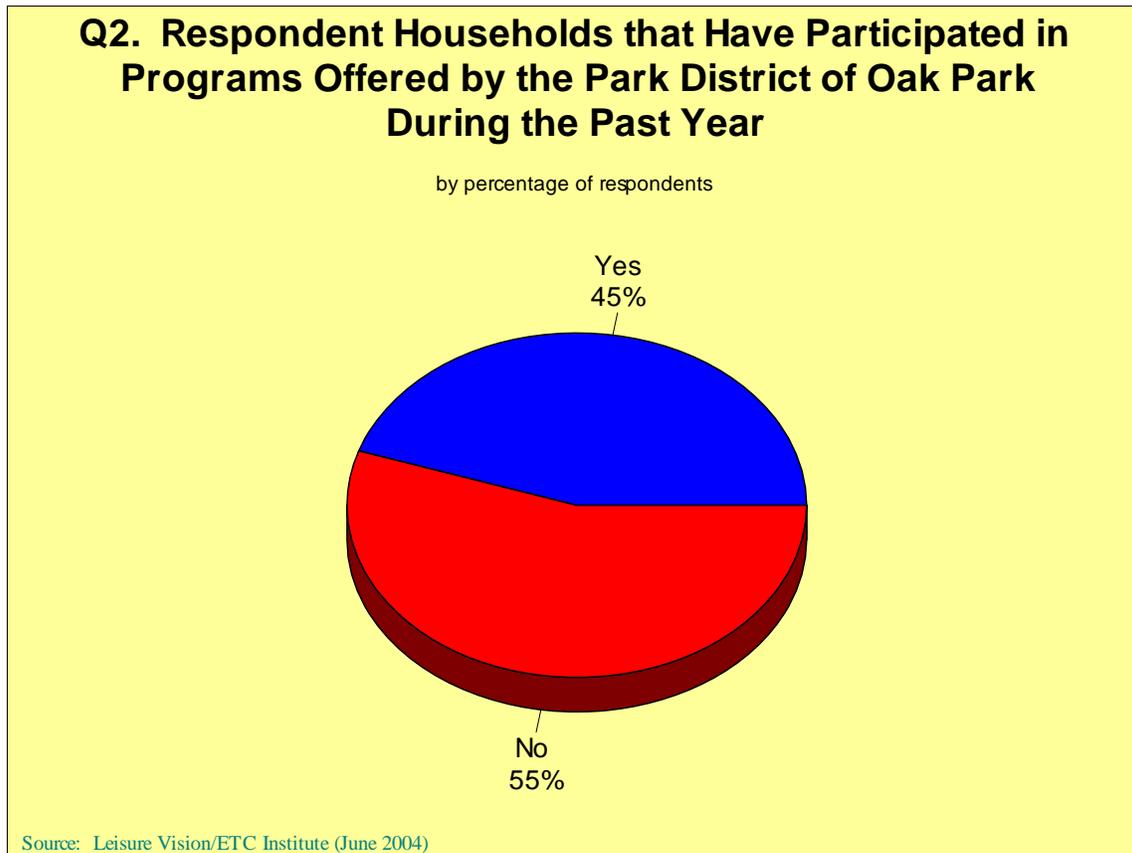
- **Seventy-seven percent (77%) of respondent households rated the physical condition of all the Park District of Oak Park parks they have visited as either excellent (24%) or good (53%).** An additional 19% rated the physical condition of the parks as fair and 3% rated them as poor. The remaining 1% indicated “don’t know”.



Participation in Programs Offered by the Park District of Oak Park

Respondents were asked if they or other members of their household have participated in any programs offered by the Park District of Oak Park during the past year. The following summarizes key findings:

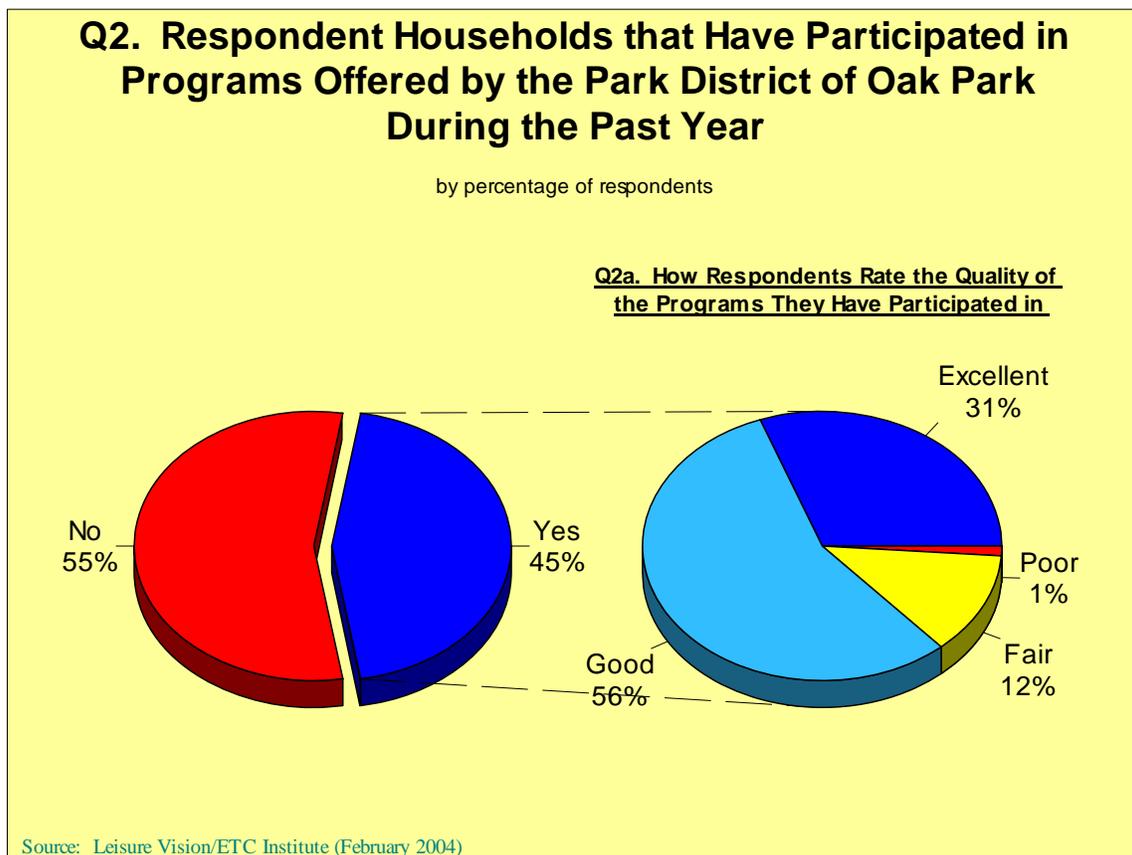
- **Forty-five percent (45%) of respondent households have participated in programs offered by the Park District of Oak Park during the past year.**



Quality of Programs Offered by the Park District of Oak Park

Respondent households that have participated in programs offered by the Park District of Oak Park during the past year were asked to rate the quality of the programs they have participated in. The following summarizes key findings:

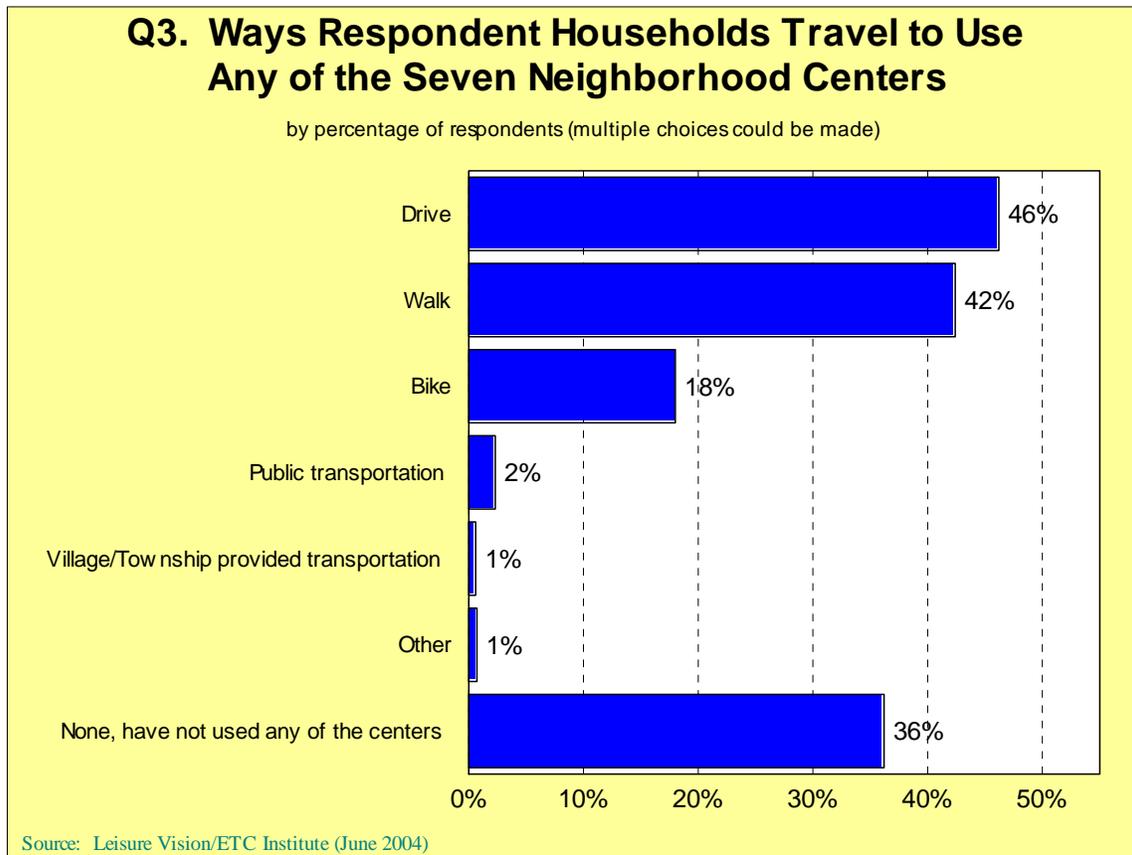
- **Eighty-seven percent (87%) of respondent households rated the quality of programs they have participated in as either excellent (31%) or good (56%).** An additional 12% rated the programs as fair and 1% rated them as poor.



Modes of Travel to Use Neighborhood Centers

From a list of five options, respondent households were asked to indicate all of the ways they have traveled during the past year to use any of the seven neighborhood centers operated by the Park District of Oak Park. The following summarizes key findings:

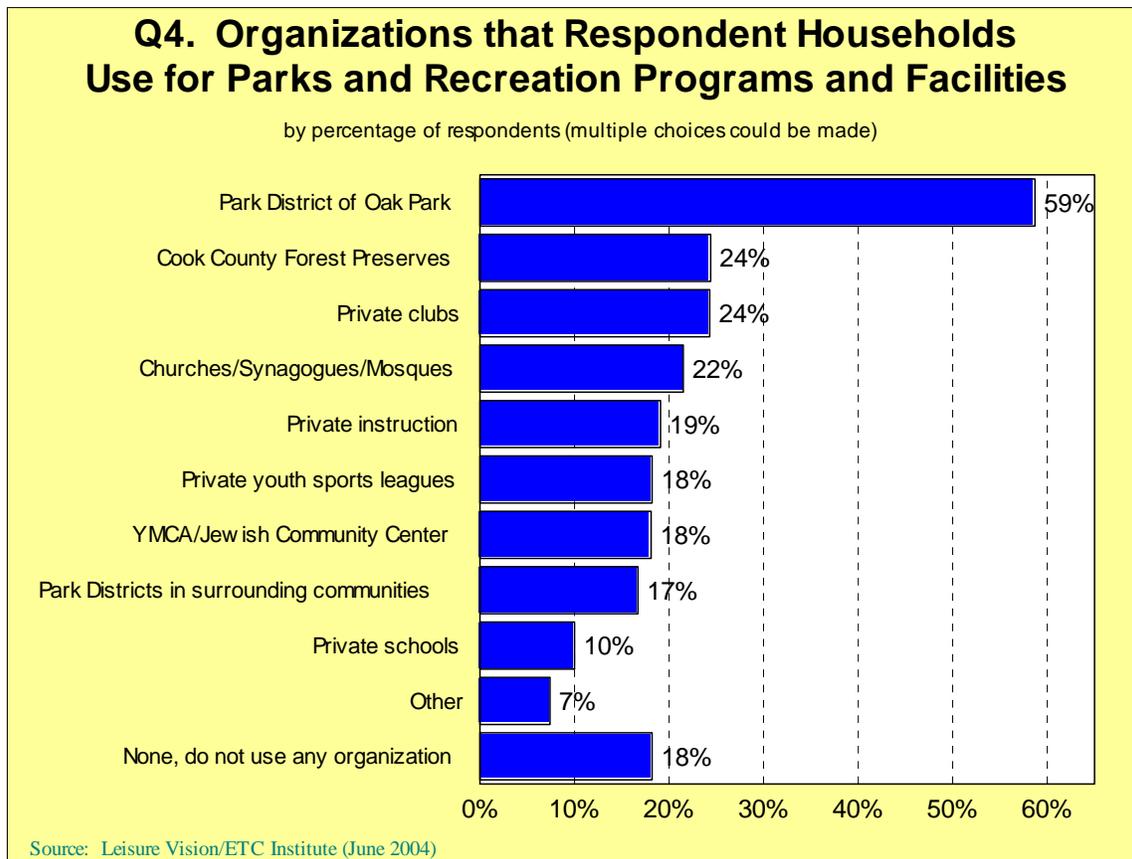
- **Forty-six percent (46%) of respondent households indicated they drive to use neighborhood centers.** Forty-two percent (42%) indicated they walk to use neighborhood centers, and 18% travel to centers by bike. It should also be noted that 36% of respondent households indicated they have not used any of the neighborhood centers in the past year.



Organizations Used for Parks and Recreation Programs and Facilities

From a list of nine options, respondent households were asked to select all of the organizations they use for parks and recreation programs and facilities. The following summarizes key findings:

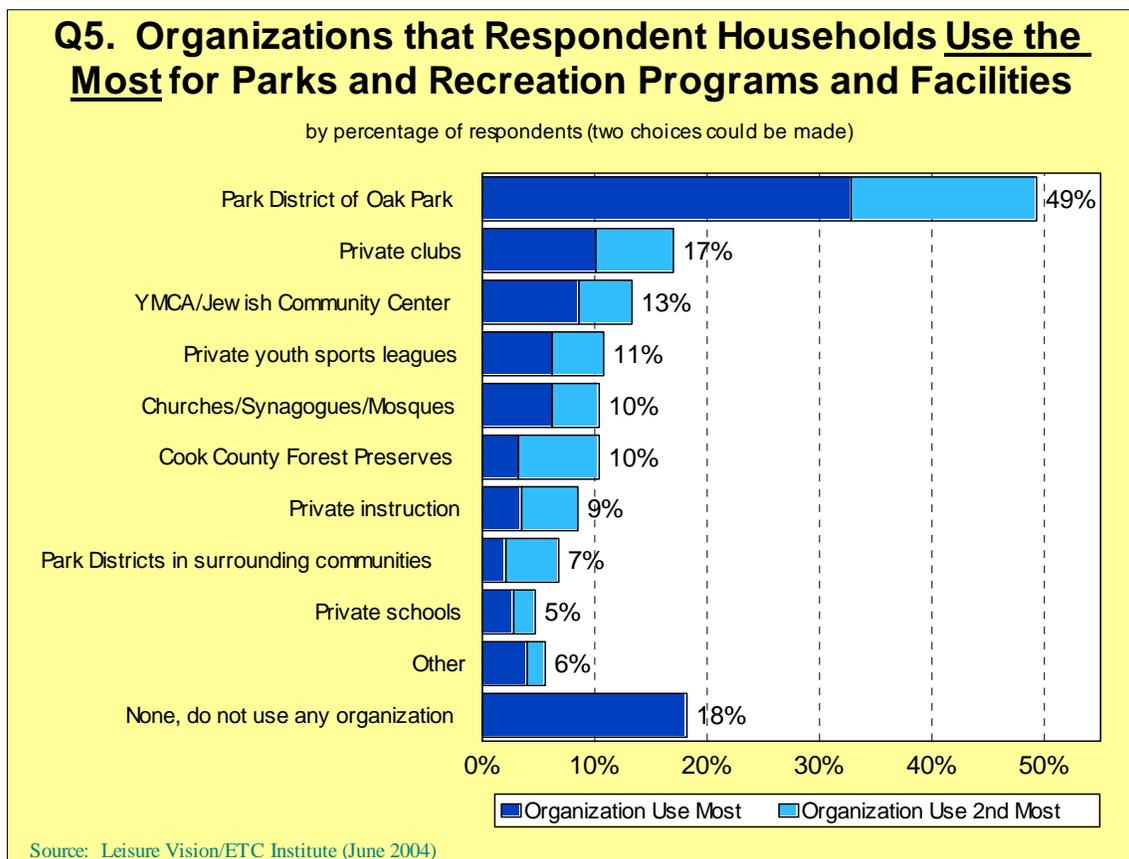
- **The Park District of Oak Park (59%) is by a wide margin the organization used by the highest percentage of respondent households.** There are three other organizations used by over 20% of respondent households, including: Cook County Forest Preserves (24%); private clubs (24%); and churches/synagogues/mosques (22%).



Organizations Used Most for Parks and Recreation Programs and Facilities

From the list of nine options, respondent households were asked to select the two organizations whose parks and recreation programs and facilities they use the most. The following summarizes key findings:

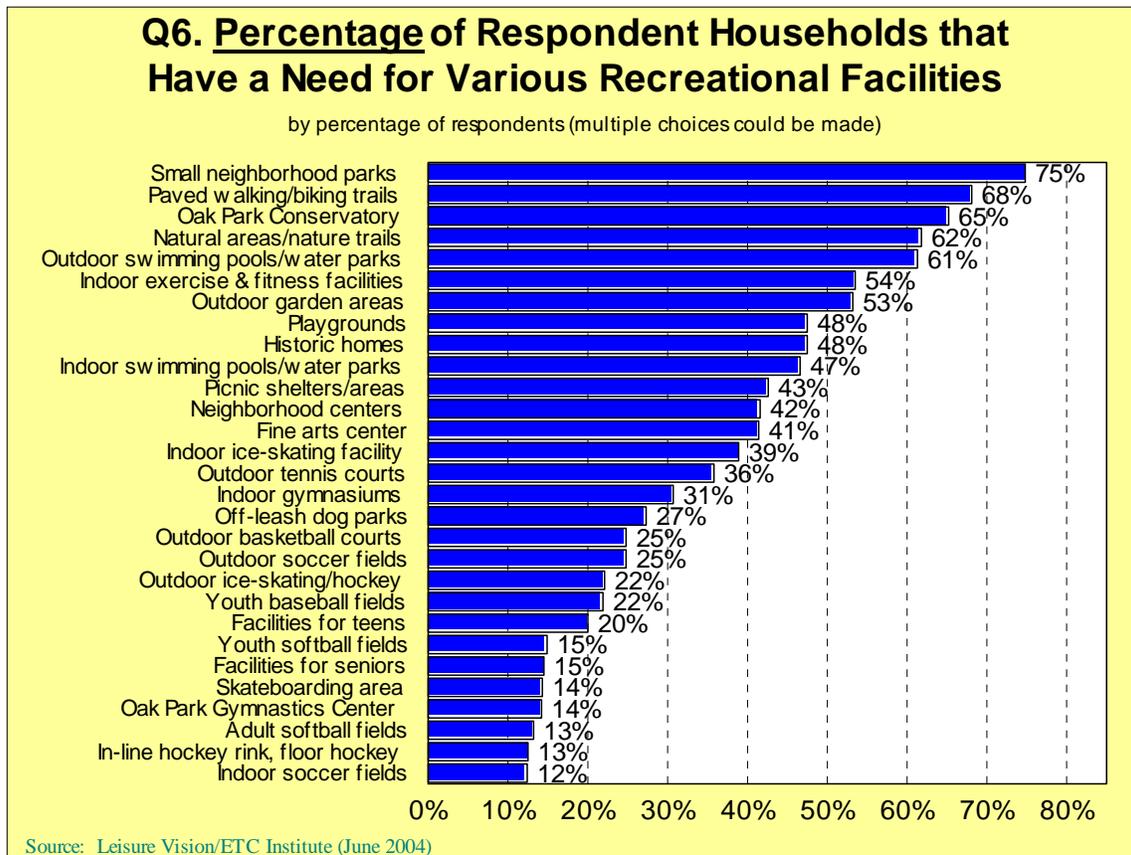
- **The Park District of Oak Park (49%) had by a wide margin the highest percentage of respondents select it as one of the two organizations they use the most.** Other organizations that a high percentage of respondents indicated as one of the two they use most include: private clubs (17%); and YMCA/Jewish Community Center (13%).



Recreational Facilities Respondent Households Have a Need for

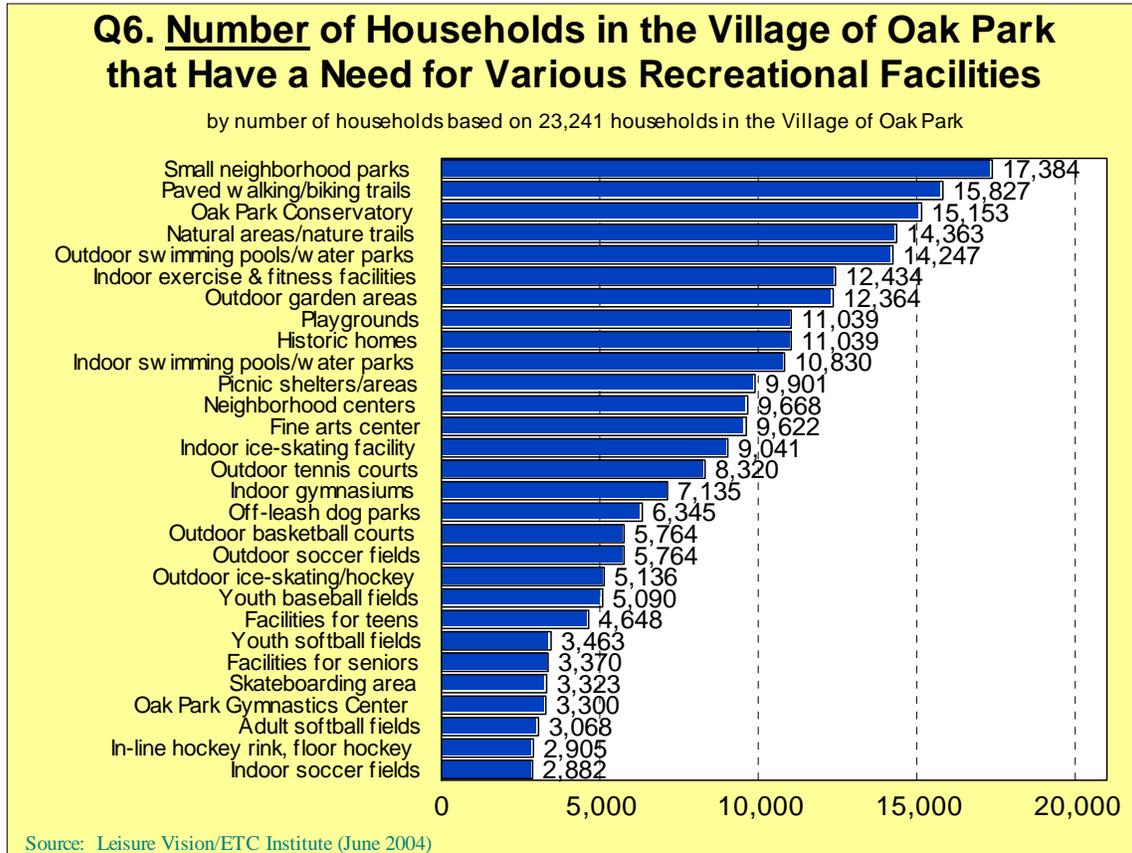
From a list of 29 existing recreational facilities, respondents were asked to indicate which ones they and members of their household have a need for. The following summarizes key findings:

- **Seven of the 29 recreational facilities had over 50% of respondent households indicate they have a need for it.** The facilities that the highest percentage of respondent households indicated they have a need for include: small neighborhood parks (75%); paved walking/biking trails (68%); Oak Park Conservatory (65%); natural areas/nature trails (62%); outdoor swimming pools/water parks (61%); indoor exercise and fitness facilities (54%); and outdoor garden areas (53%).



Recreational Facilities Households in Oak Park Have a Need For

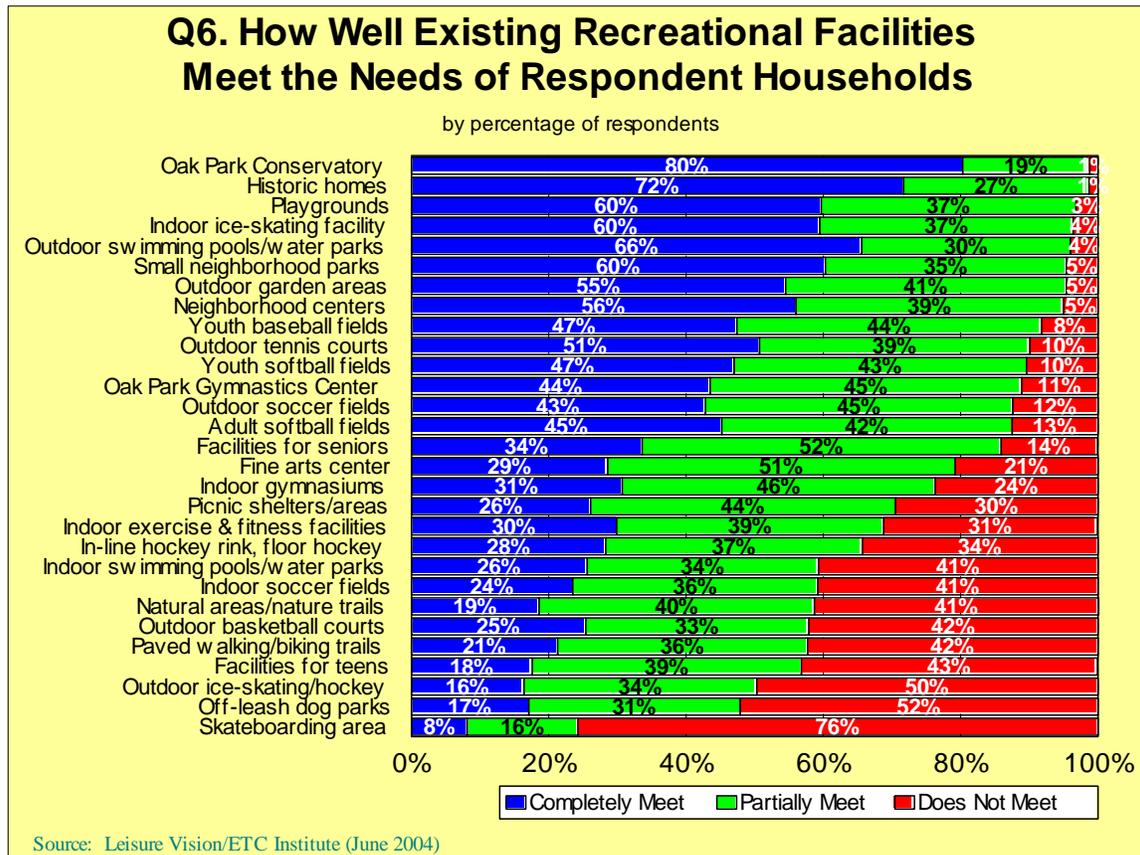
From the list of 29 existing recreational facilities, respondents were asked to indicate which ones they and members of their household have a need for. The graph below summarizes key findings on the previous page by the number of households having a need for various recreational facilities in the Village of Oak Park, based on 23,241 households in the Village.



How Well Recreational Facilities Meet Respondent Household Needs

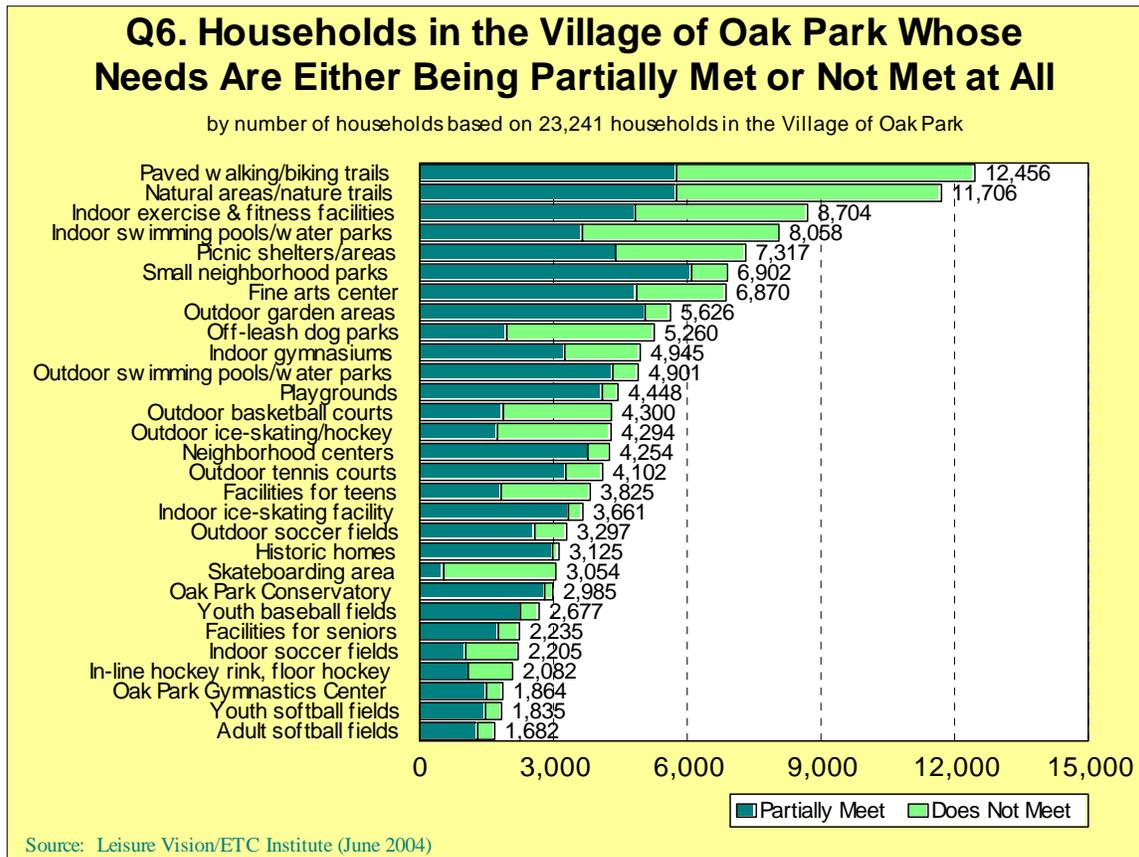
From the list of 29 existing recreational facilities, respondents were asked to indicate how well each one meets the needs of their household. The following summarizes key findings:

- Six of the 29 recreational facilities had at least 60% of respondents indicate that the facility completely meets the needs of their household.** The facilities that had the highest percentage of respondents indicate that the facility completely meets their needs includes: Oak Park Conservatory (80%); historic homes (72%); outdoor swimming pools/water parks (66%); playgrounds (60%); small neighborhood parks (60%); and indoor ice-skating facility (60%). It should also be noted that 20 of the 29 facilities had less than 50% of respondent households indicate that their needs are being completely met by the facility.



Households in Oak Park Whose Needs for Various Facilities Are Only Being Partially Met or Not Met at All

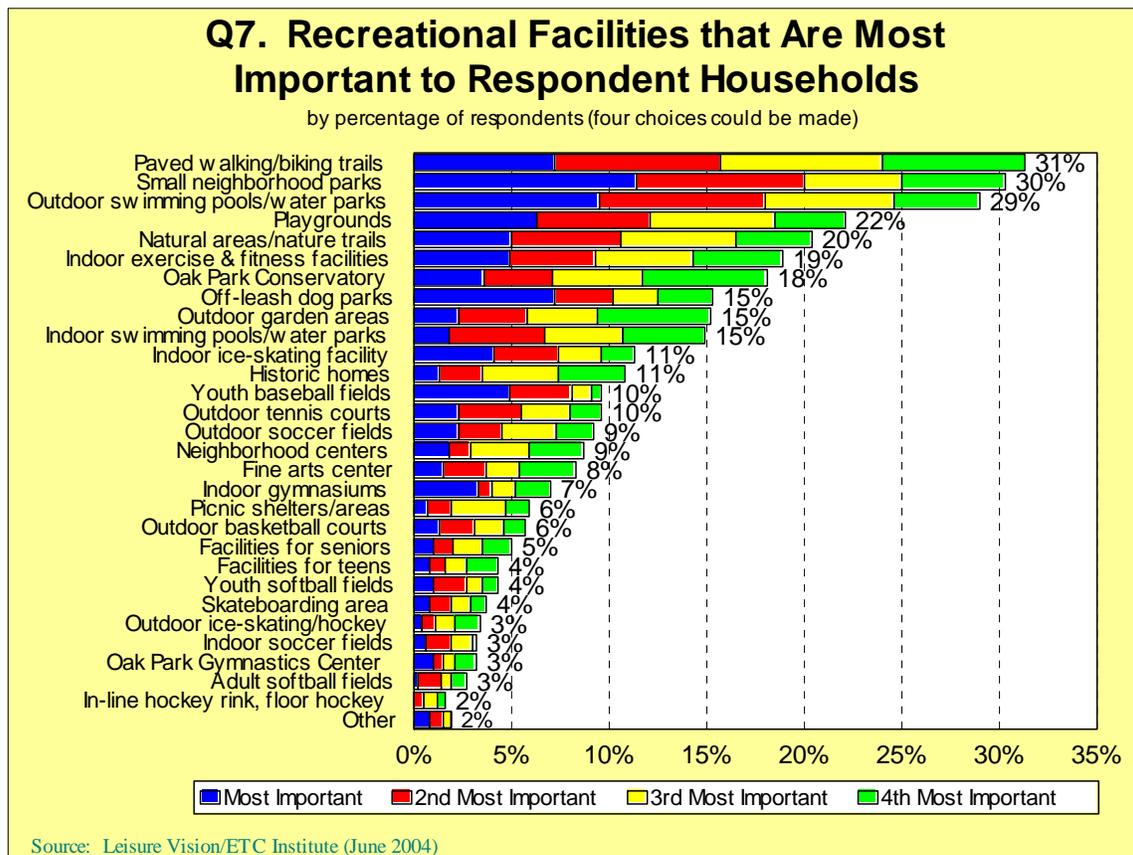
From the list of 29 existing recreational facilities, respondents were asked to indicate how well each facility meets the needs of their household. The graph below shows the number of households in the Village of Oak Park whose needs are either being partially met or not met at all, based on 23,241 households in the Village.



Most Important Recreational Facilities

From the list of 29 existing recreational facilities, respondents were asked to select the four that are most important to them and members of their household. The following summarizes key findings:

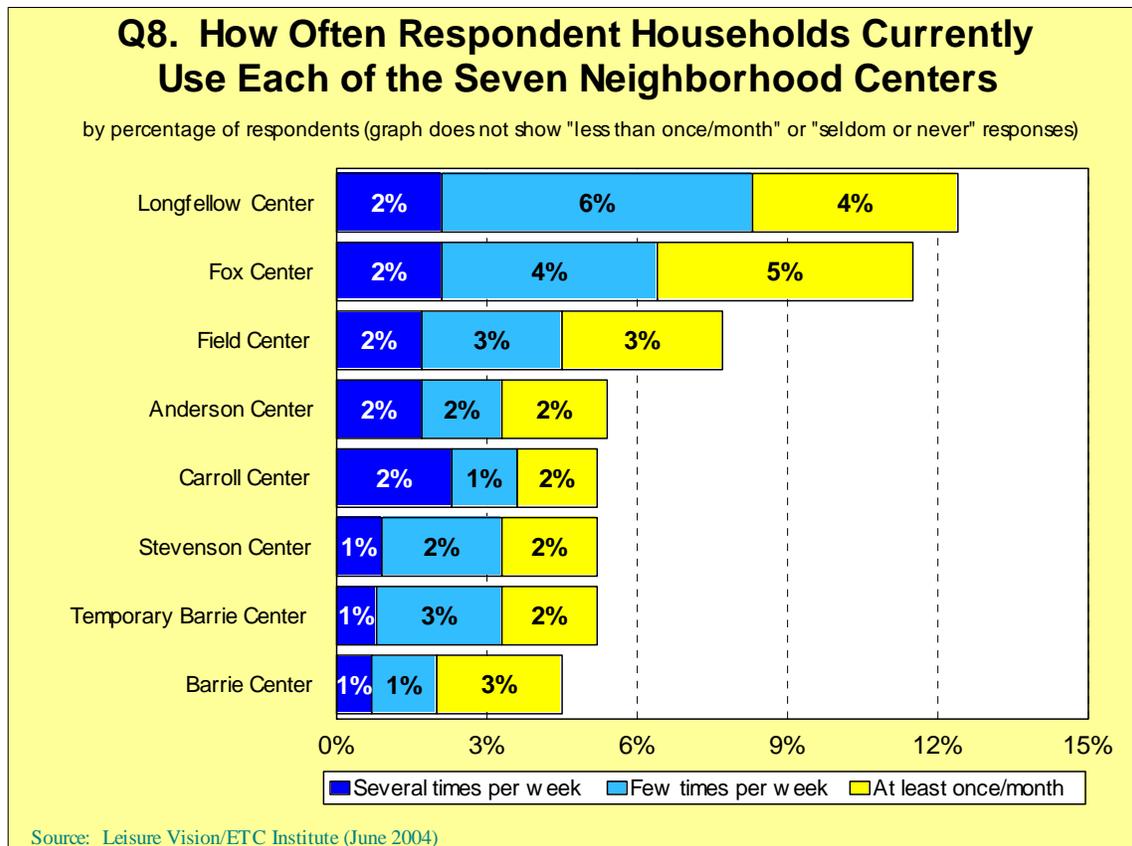
- Paved walking/biking trails (31%) had the highest percentage of respondents select them as one of the four most important facilities to them and their household.** There are four other facilities that at least 20% of respondents rated as one of the four most important, including: small neighborhood parks (30%); outdoor swimming pools/water parks (29%); playgrounds (22%); and natural areas/nature trails (20%). It should also be noted that small neighborhood parks had the highest percentage of respondents select it as their first choice as the most important facility.



Frequency of Use of Neighborhood Centers

Respondents were asked to indicate how often they and members of their household currently use each of the seven neighborhood centers operated by the Park District of Oak Park. The following summarizes key findings: (Note: The graph below does not show the percentage of respondents who indicated “less than once/month” or “seldom/never”.)

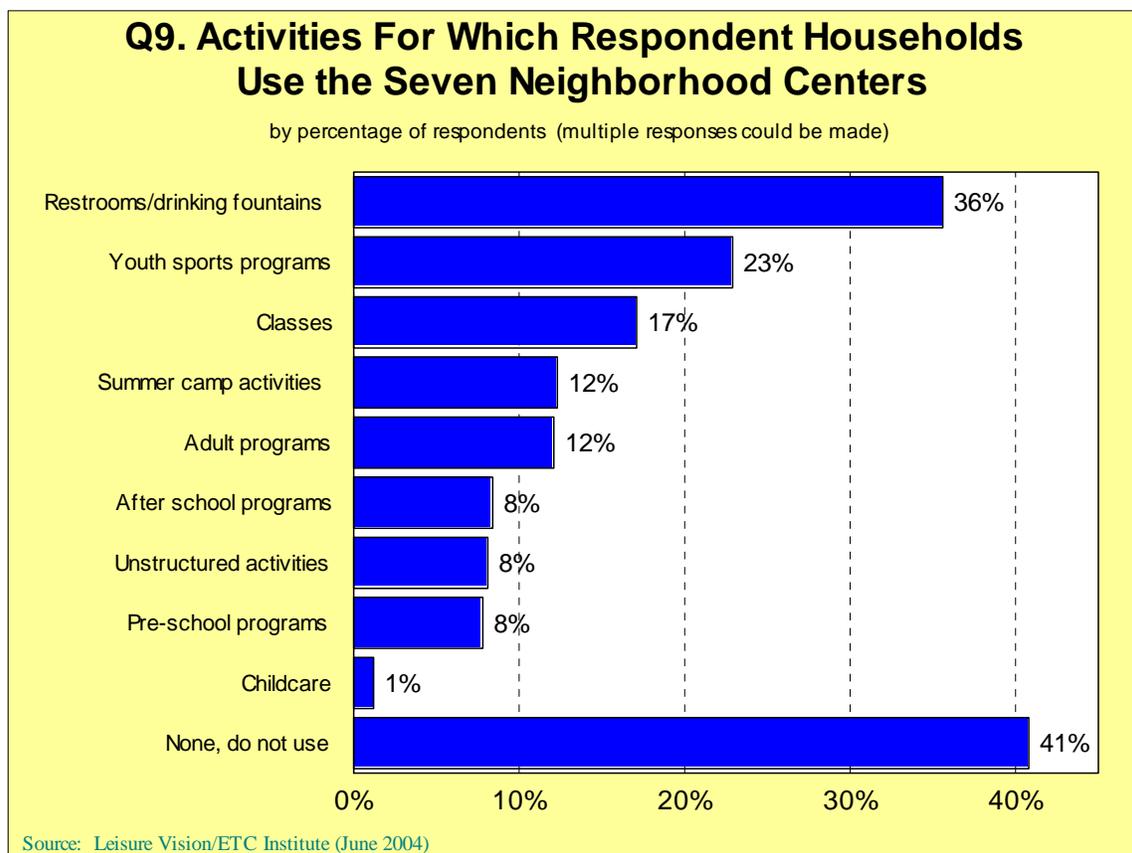
- **Twelve percent (12%) of respondent households indicated they use Longfellow Center at least once a month.** Fox Center (11%) is the only other neighborhood center that over 10% of respondent households use at least once a month.



Activities at Neighborhood Centers

From a list of nine options, respondents were asked to select all of the activities for which they use the seven neighborhood centers. The following summarizes key findings:

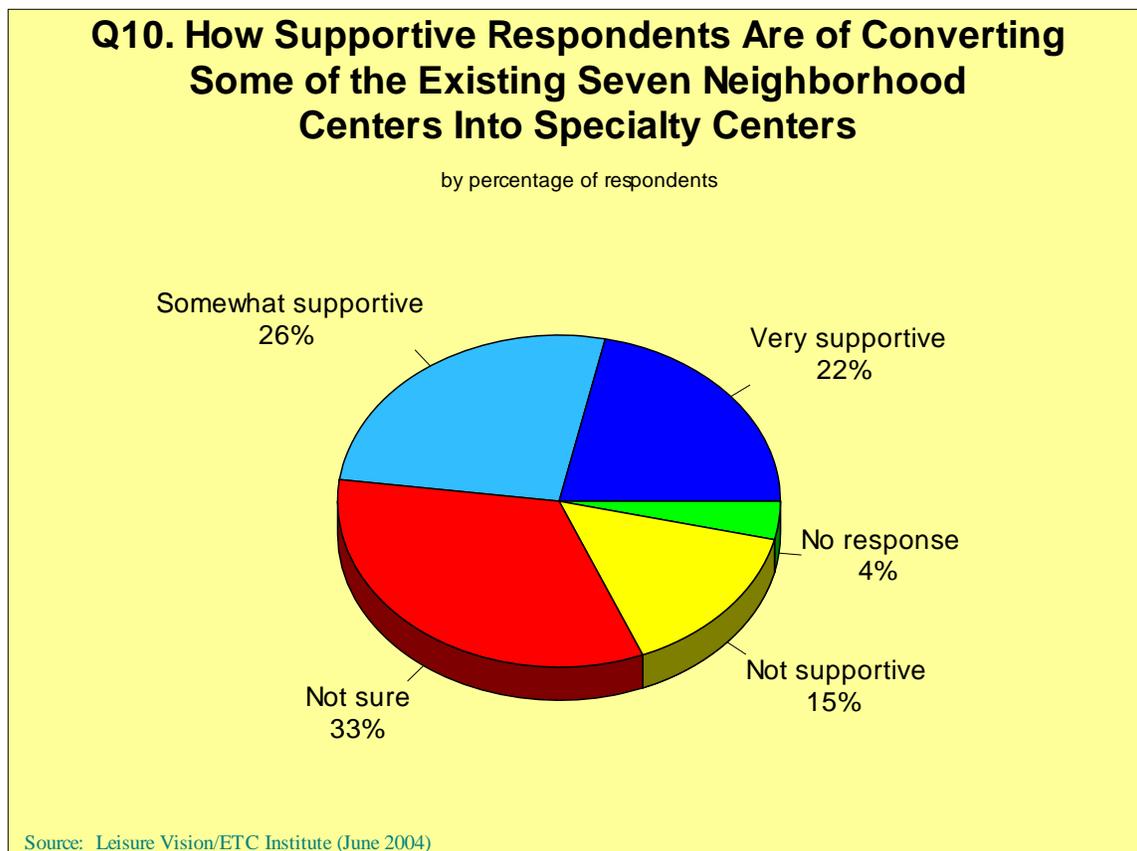
- **Restrooms/drinking fountains (36%) is the activity for which the highest percentage of respondents use the seven neighborhood centers.** There are two other activities for which over 15% of respondents use the neighborhood centers, including: youth sports programs (23%); and classes (17%). It should also be noted that 41% of respondents indicated that their household does not use any of the seven neighborhood centers.



Support for Converting Some Neighborhood Centers to Specialty Centers

Respondents were asked to indicate how supportive they are of converting some of the existing seven neighborhood centers into specialty centers. The following summarizes key findings:

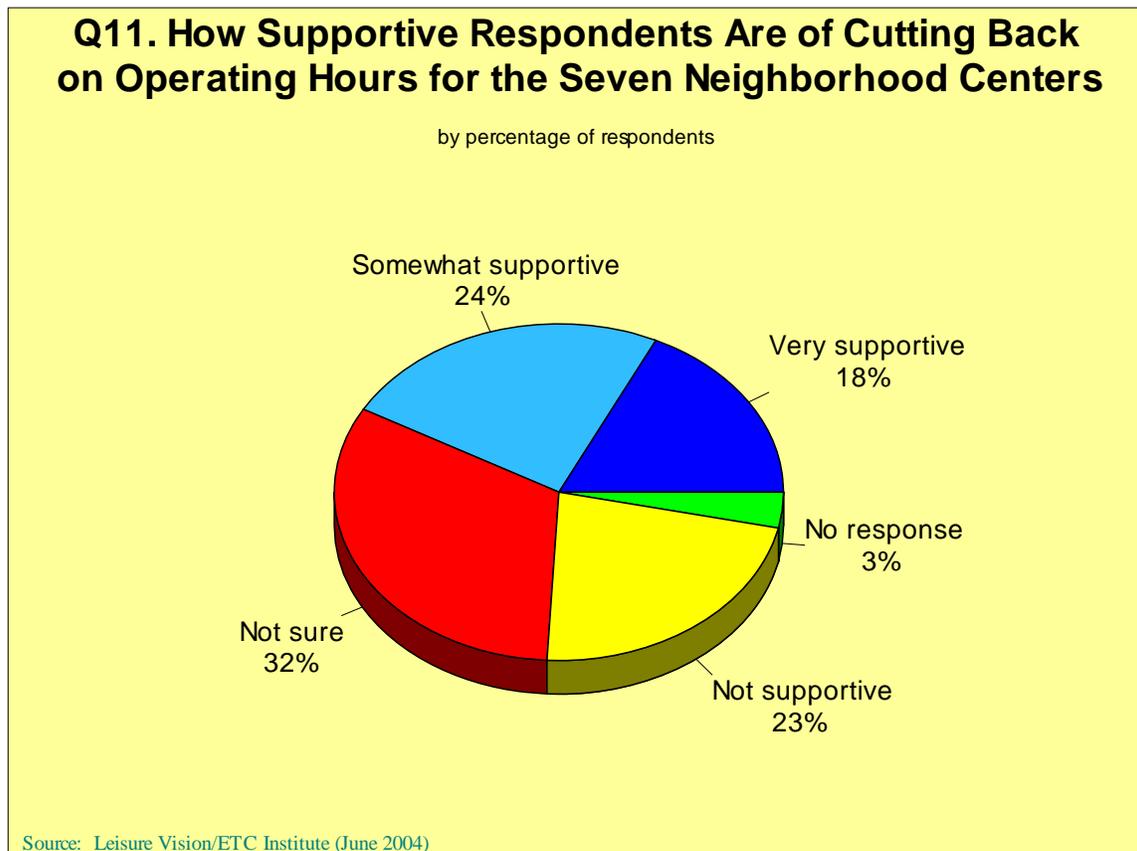
- **Forty-eight percent (48%) of respondents indicated being either very supportive (22%) or somewhat supportive (26%) of converting some of the seven neighborhood centers into specialty centers.** Fifteen percent (15%) of respondents are not supportive, and 33% are not sure. The remaining 4% did not provide a response.



Support for Cutting Back on Operating Hours at Neighborhood Centers

Respondents were asked to indicate how supportive they would be of the Park District cutting back on operating hours for the seven neighborhood centers to save staffing and operating costs and using those operating dollars for other Park District programs and activities. The following summarizes key findings:

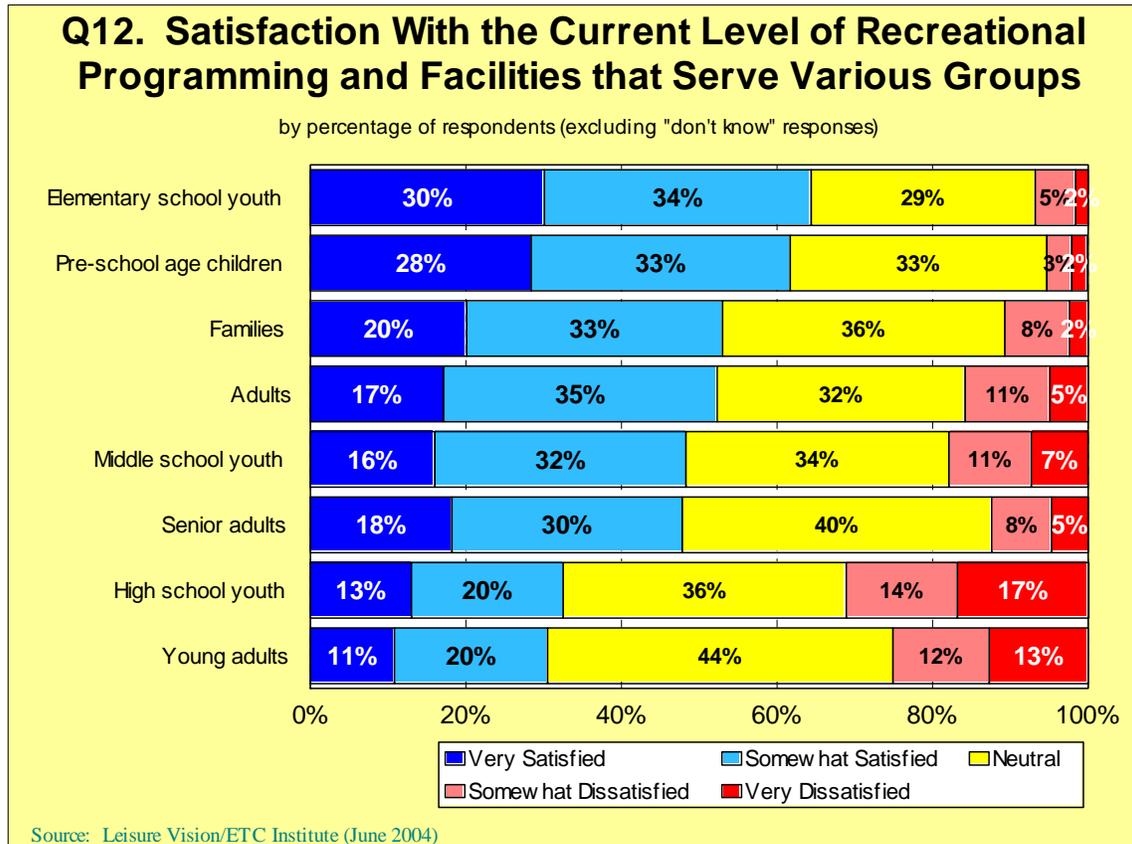
- **Forty-two percent (42%) of respondents indicated being either very supportive (18%) or somewhat supportive (24%) of cutting back on operating hours at the seven neighborhood centers.** Twenty-three percent (23%) of respondents are not supportive, and 32% are not sure. The remaining 3% did not provide a response.



Satisfaction with Level of Programming and Facilities Provided to Various Resident Groups

From a list of eight resident groups, respondents were asked to indicate their households' satisfaction with the level of recreational programming and facilities in Oak Park that serve each group. The following summarizes key findings:

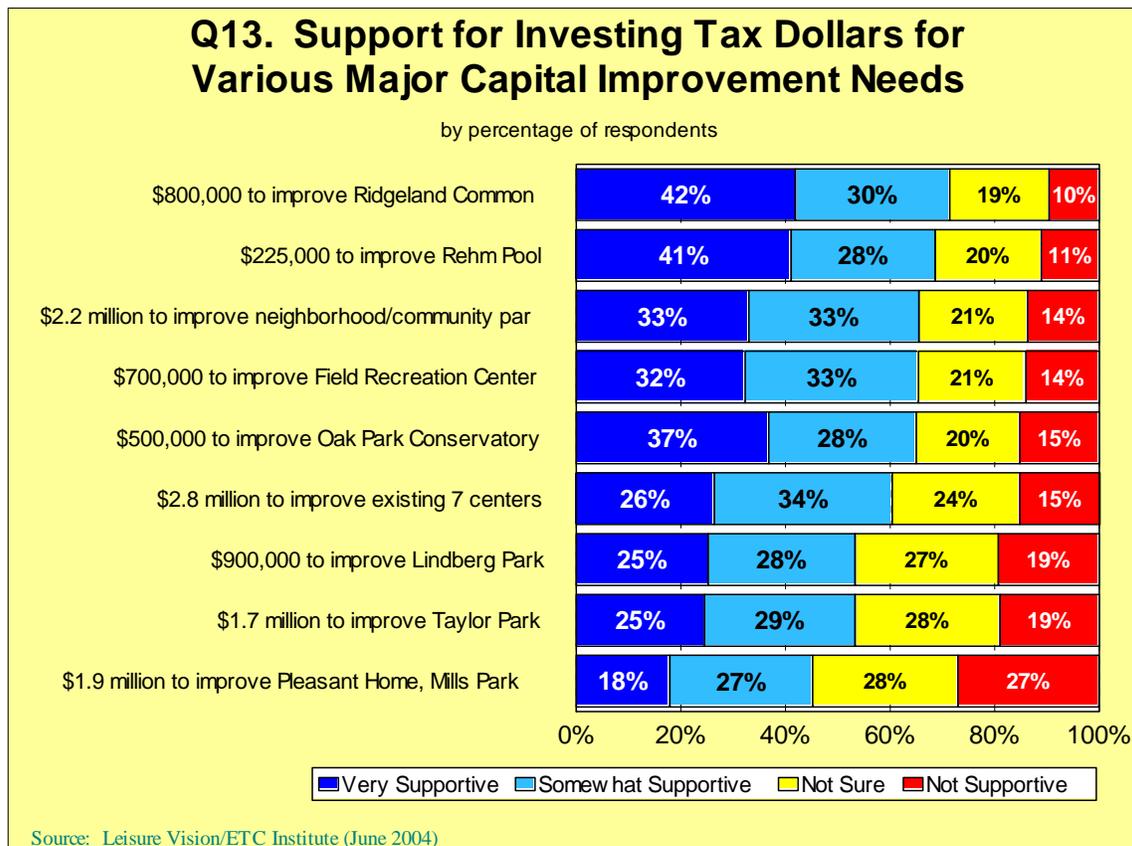
- **Four of the eight groups had over 50% of respondents indicate that they are either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the current level of programming and facilities serving them.** The groups that received the highest very important or somewhat important ratings are: elementary school youth (64%); pre-school age children (61%); families (53%); and adults (52%).



Support for Investing Tax Dollars for Capital Improvement Needs

From a list of nine capital improvement needs, respondents were asked to indicate their level of support of the Oak Park community investing tax dollars to address each one. The following summarizes key findings:

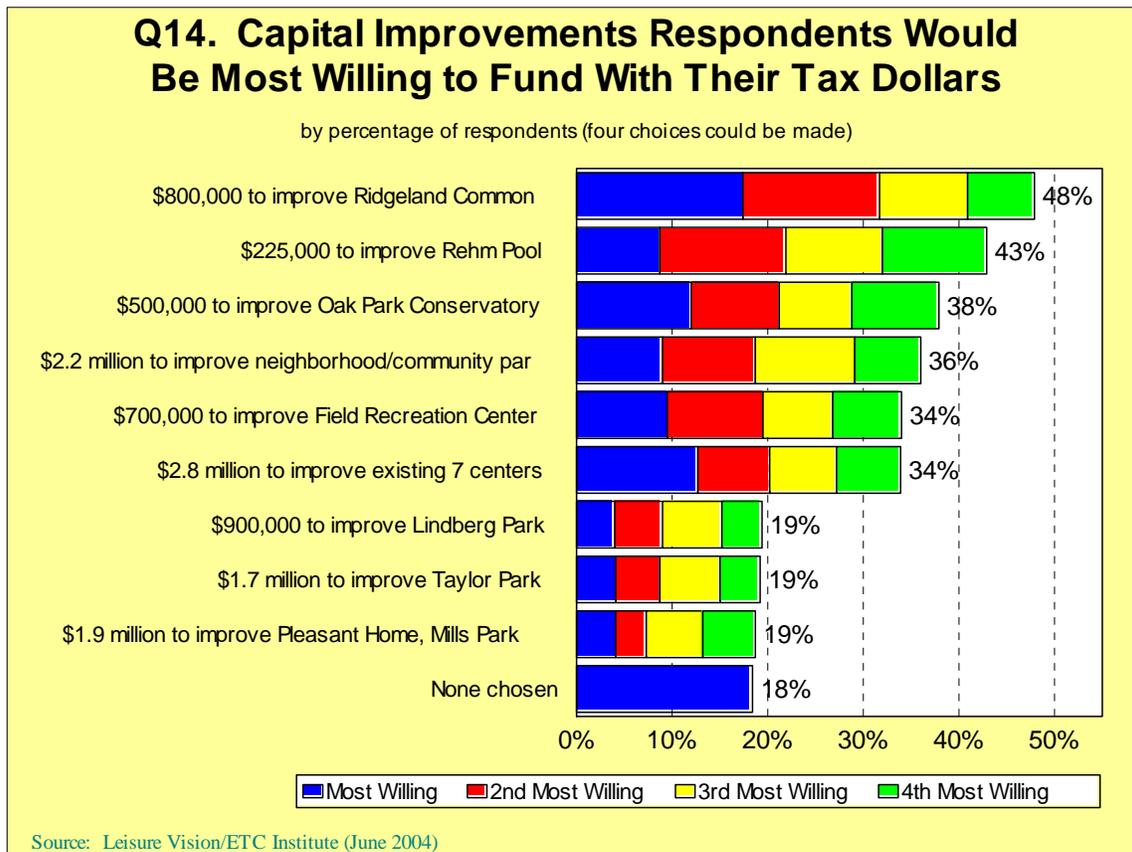
- **Two of the nine improvements had over 40% of respondents indicate being very supportive of them.** The improvements that received the highest very supportive ratings are: \$800,000 to improve Ridgeland Common (42%); and \$225,000 to improve Rehm Pool (41%). It should also be noted that eight of the nine improvements had over 50% of respondents indicate being either very supportive or somewhat supportive of them.



Capital Improvements Most Willing to Fund with Tax Dollars

From the list of nine capital improvement needs, respondents were asked to select the four they are most willing to fund with their tax dollars. The following summarizes key findings:

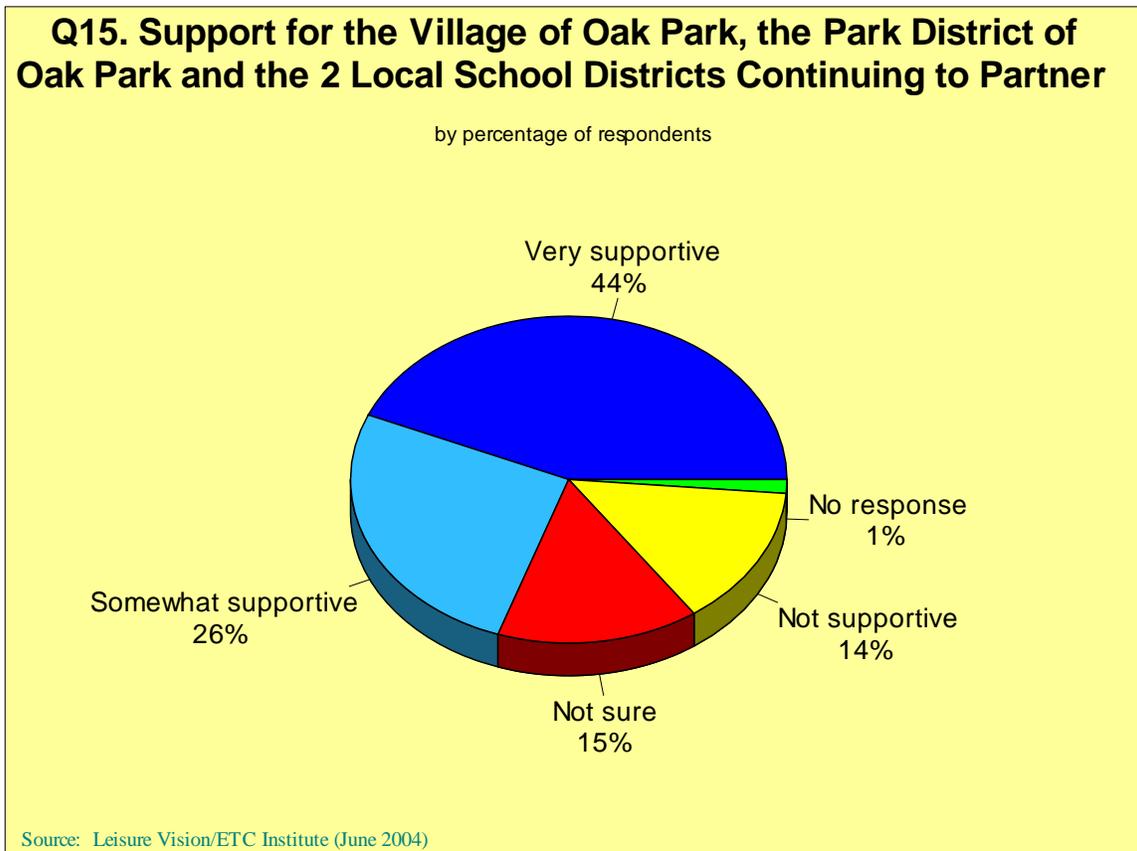
- **\$800,000 to improve Ridgeland Common (48%) is the improvement that the highest percentage of respondents selected as one of the four they are most willing to fund with their tax dollars.** \$225,000 to improve Rehm Pool (43%) is the other improvement that over 40% of respondents selected as one of the four they would be most willing to fund with their tax dollars. It should also be noted that \$800,000 to improve Ridgeland Common had the highest percentage of respondents select it as their first choice as the improvement they would be most willing to fund with their tax dollars.



Support for Continuing Partnership

Respondents were asked to indicate how supportive they are of the Village of Oak Park, the Park District of Oak Park, and the two local school districts continuing to partner in the acquisition of land and the development and operations of future parks, recreation, aquatics and sports facilities. The following summarizes key findings:

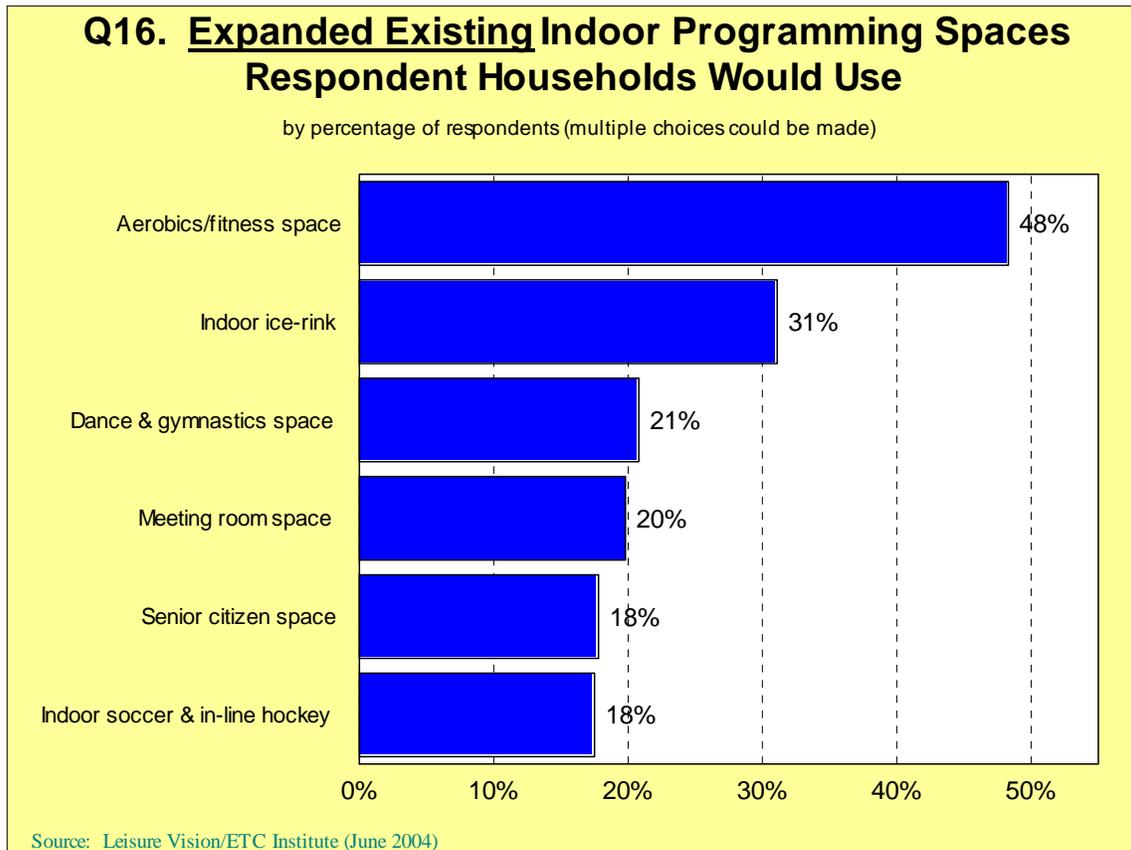
- **Seventy percent (70%) of respondents indicated being either very supportive (44%) or somewhat supportive (26%) of continuing the partnership.** Fourteen percent (14%) of respondents are not supportive, and 15% are not sure. The remaining 1% did not provide a response.



Expanded Existing Indoor Programming Spaces Respondents Would Use

From a list of six existing indoor programming spaces, respondents were asked to indicate all of the ones they and members of their household would use if expanded. The following summarizes key findings:

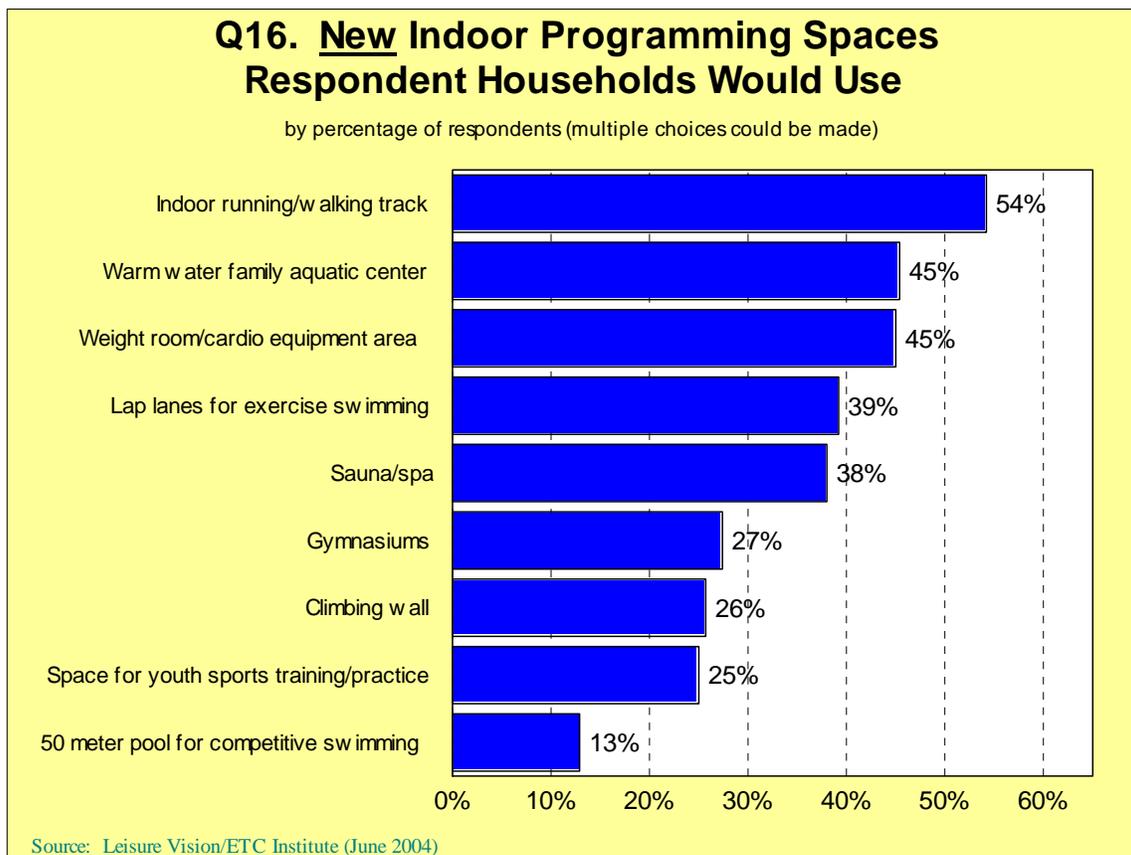
- **Aerobics/fitness spaces (48%) is the existing indoor programming space that the highest percentage of respondent households would use if expanded.** Thirty-one percent (31%) of respondent households indicated they would use an expanded indoor ice-rink.



New Indoor Programming Spaces Respondents Would Use

From a list of nine potential indoor programming spaces, respondents were asked to indicate all of the ones they and members of their household would use if developed. The following summarizes key findings:

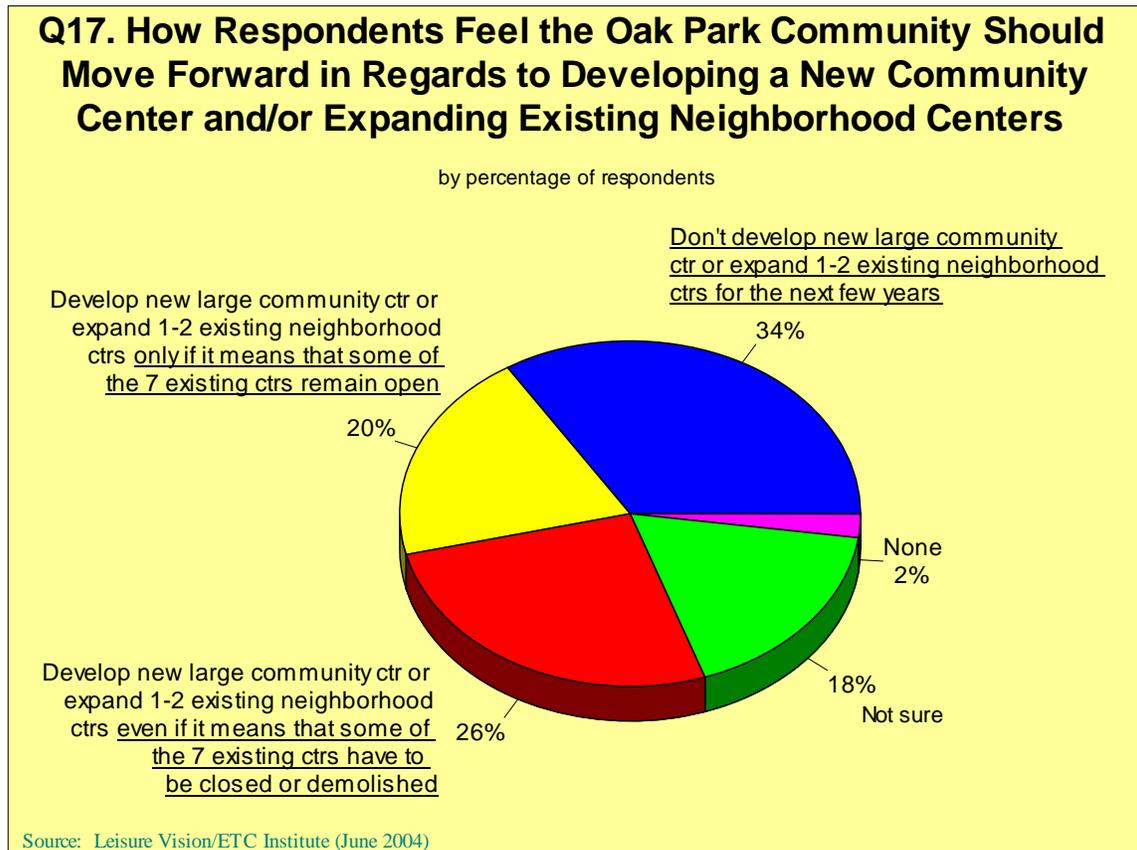
- **An indoor running/walking track (54%) is the potential indoor programming space that the highest percentage of respondent households would use if developed.** There are two other potential indoor programming spaces that over 40% of respondent households would use if developed: warm water family aquatic center (45%); and weight room/cardiovascular equipment area (45%).



Develop a New Large Community Center or Expand Neighborhood Centers

From a list of three options, respondents were asked to indicate the one that best describes how they feel the Oak Park community should move forward in regards to developing a new large community center or expanding 1-2 of the existing neighborhood centers. The following summarizes key findings:

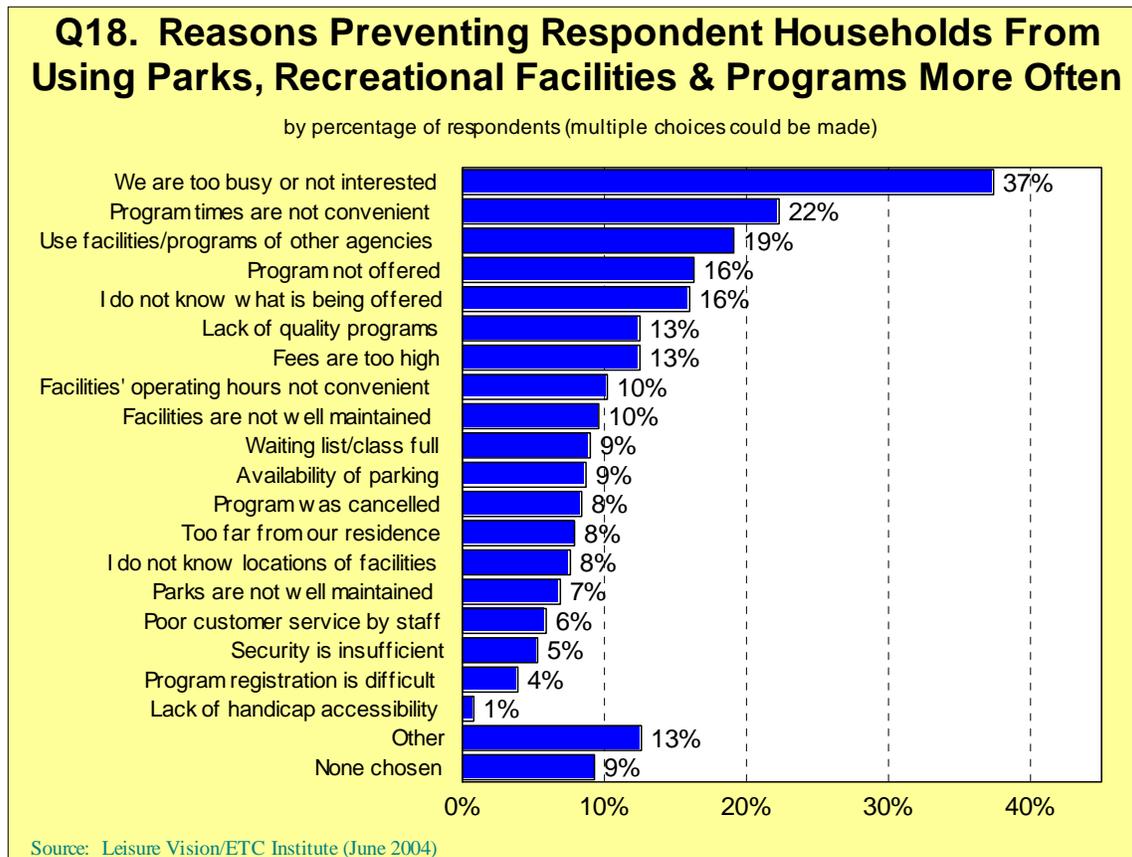
- **Thirty-four percent (34%) of respondents indicated “Don’t develop new large community center or expand 1-2 of the existing neighborhood centers for the next few years”.** An additional 26% indicated “Develop a new large community center or expand 1-2 of the existing neighborhood centers, even if it means that some of the 7 existing neighborhood centers have to be closed or demolished”, and 20% indicated “Develop a new large community center or expand 1-2 existing neighborhood centers only if it means that all of the 7 existing neighborhood centers remain open”.



Reasons Preventing the Use of Parks, Facilities and Programs More Often

From a list of 19 reasons, respondents were asked to select all of the ones that prevent them and members of their household from using parks, recreation facilities, and programs of the Park District of Oak Park more often. The following summarizes key findings:

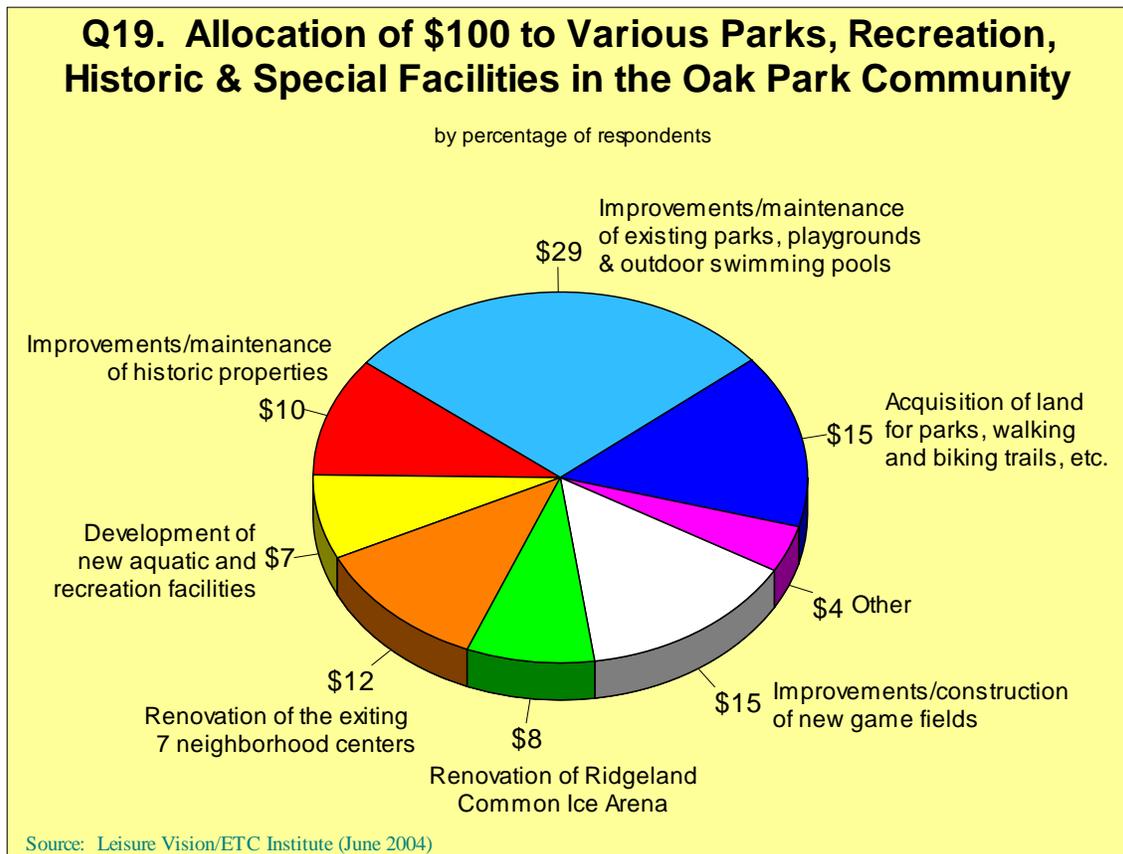
- **“We are too busy or not interested” (37%) is the reason that prevented the highest percentage of respondent households from using parks, recreation facilities, and programs of the Park District of Oak Park more often.** Other reasons that prevented a high percentage of respondent households from using parks, facilities, and programs more often include “program times are not convenient” (22%); and “use facilities/programs of other agencies” (19%).



Allocation of \$100 Among Various Parks and Recreation Categories

Respondents were asked how they would allocate \$100 in new tax funding among seven types of parks, recreation, historic, and special facilities in the Oak Park community. The following summarizes key findings:

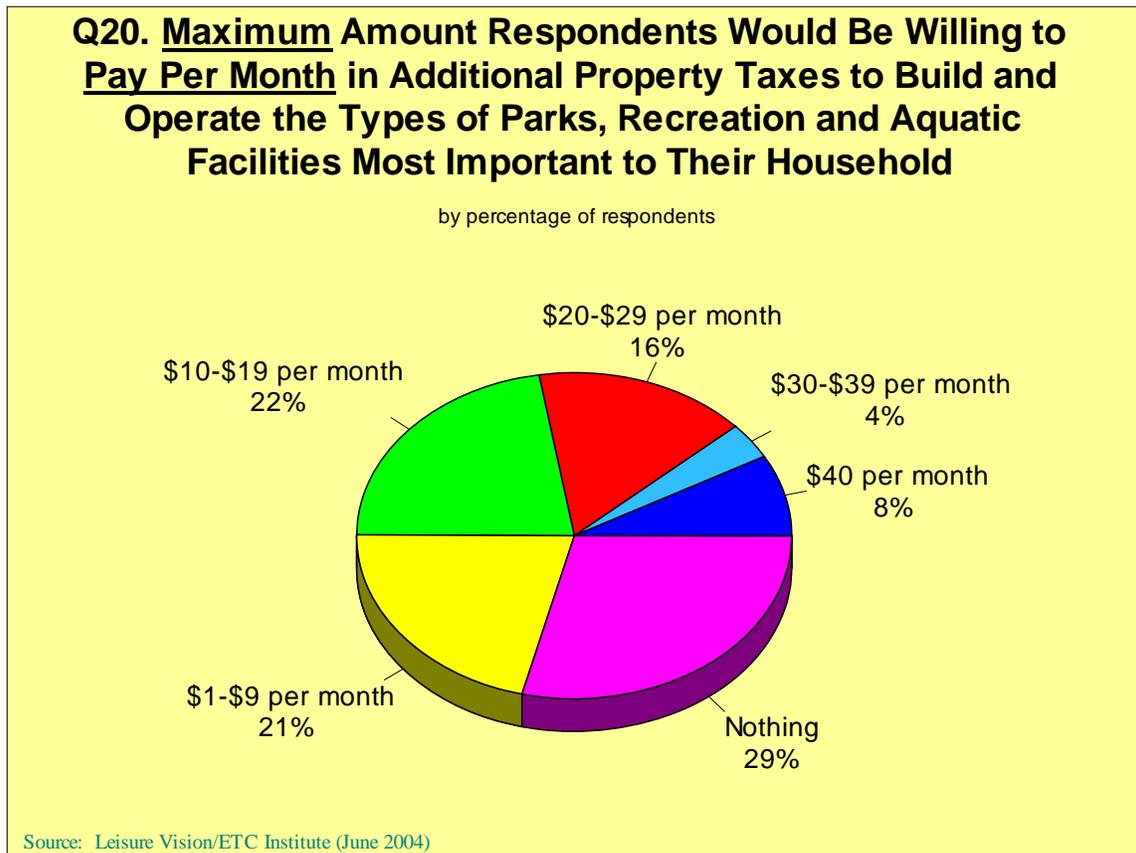
- **Respondents indicated they would allocate \$29 out of every \$100 to the improvements/maintenance of existing parks, playgrounds, and outdoor swimming pools.** The remaining \$71 were allocated as follows: acquisition of land for parks, walking and biking trails (\$15); improvements/construction of new game fields (\$15); renovation of the existing seven neighborhood centers (\$12); improvements/maintenance of historic properties (\$10); renovation of Ridgeland Common Ice Arena (\$8); and development of new aquatic and recreation facilities (\$7). The remaining \$4 were allocated to “other”.



Paying Additional Property Taxes to Fund Parks and Facilities

From a list of five options, respondents were asked to indicate the maximum amount they would be willing to pay per month in additional property taxes to build and operate the types of parks, recreation, and aquatic facilities most important to them and their household. The following summarizes key findings:

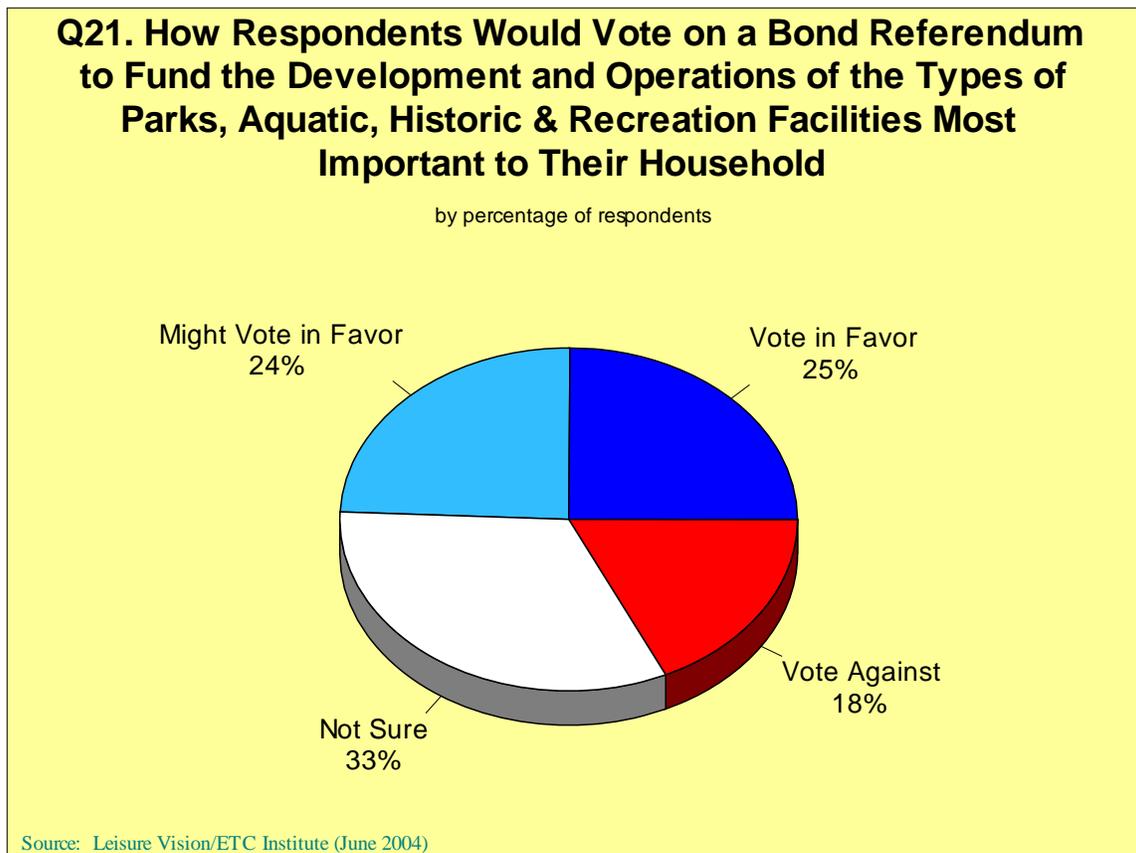
- **Twenty-eight percent (28%) of respondents indicated they would pay at least \$20 per month in additional property taxes to fund the most important types of parks, recreation, and aquatic facilities.** This group includes 16% who would pay \$20-\$29, 8% who would pay \$40, and 4% who would pay \$30-\$39. In addition, 22% would pay \$10-\$19, and 21% would pay \$1-\$9. It should also be noted that 71% of respondents are willing to pay some amount of additional property taxes.



Voting on a Bond Referendum to Fund Parks, Trails, and Facilities

Respondents were asked how they would vote if a bond referendum were held to fund the types of parks, aquatic, historic, and recreation facilities most important to them and their household. The following summarizes key findings:

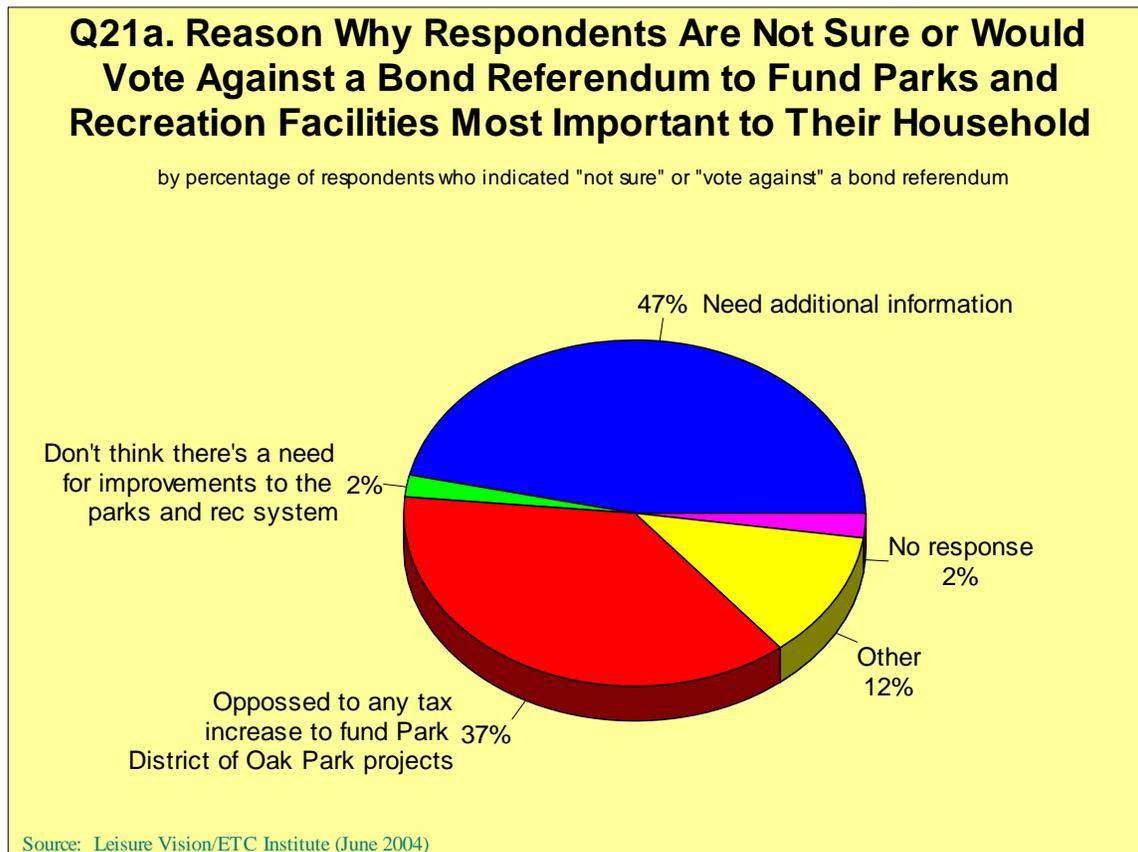
- **Forty-nine percent (49%) of respondents indicated they would either vote in favor (25%) or might vote in favor (24%) of a bond referendum to fund the types of parks, aquatic, historic, and recreation facilities most important to them and their household.** In addition, 18% of respondents indicated they would vote against the bond referendum, and the remaining 33% indicated they were not sure how they would vote.



Reasons for Being Not Sure or Voting Against the Bond Referendum

From a list of three reasons, respondents who indicated they are not sure or would vote against a bond referendum to fund the types of parks, aquatics, historic, and recreation facilities most important to them and their household were asked to indicate the major reason for their response. The following summarizes key findings:

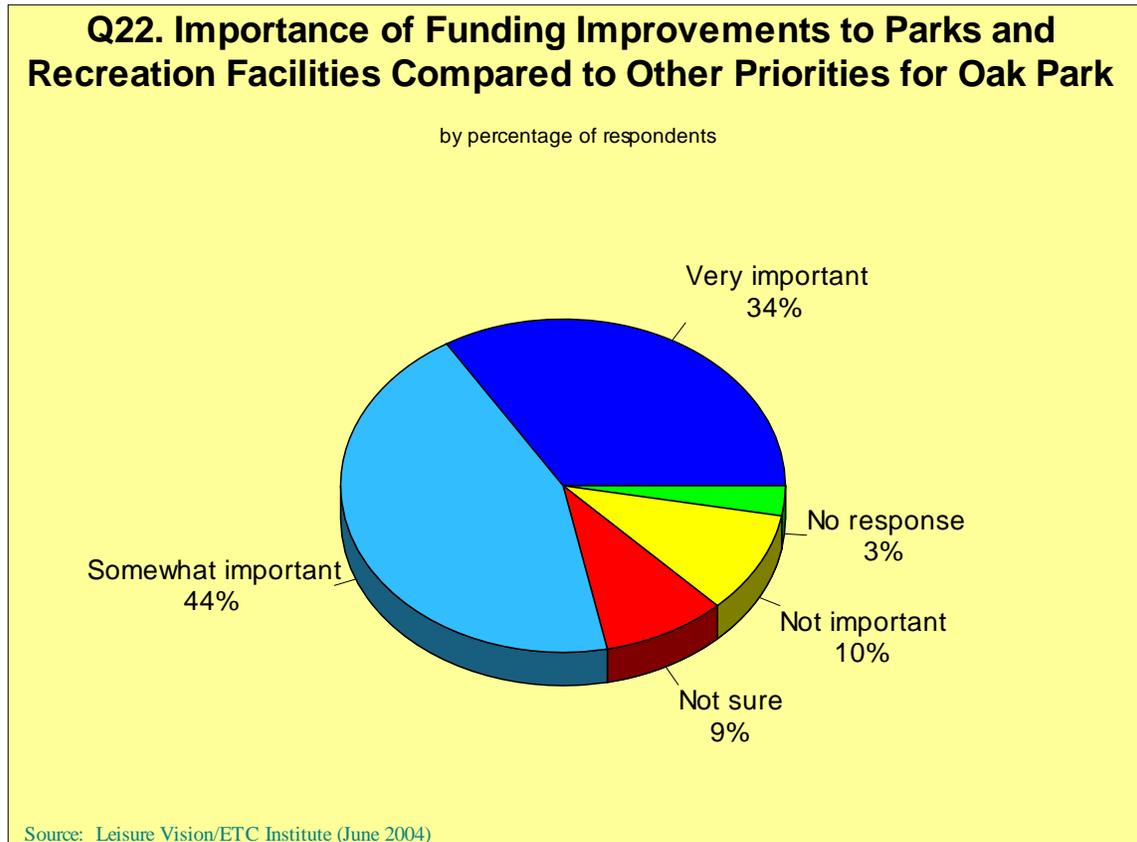
- **Forty-seven percent (47%) of respondents indicated “I need additional information” as the major reason for their response.** In addition, 37% indicated “I am opposed to any tax increase to fund Park District of Oak Park projects”, and 2% indicated “I do not think there is a need for any improvements to the parks and recreation system”. Twelve percent (12%) indicated “other” and the remaining 2% did not provide an answer.



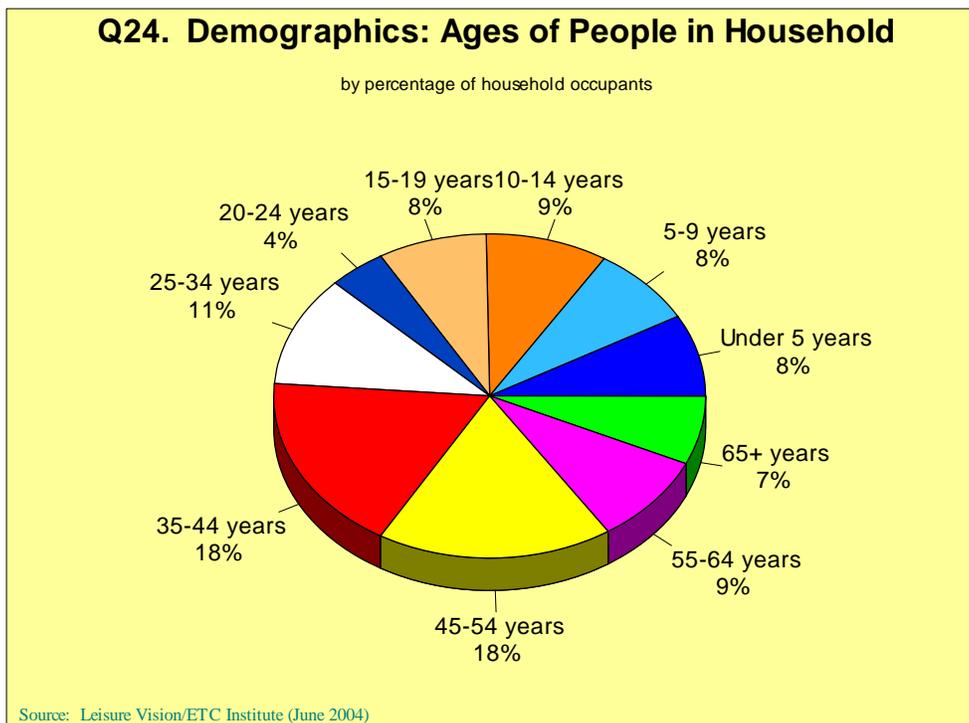
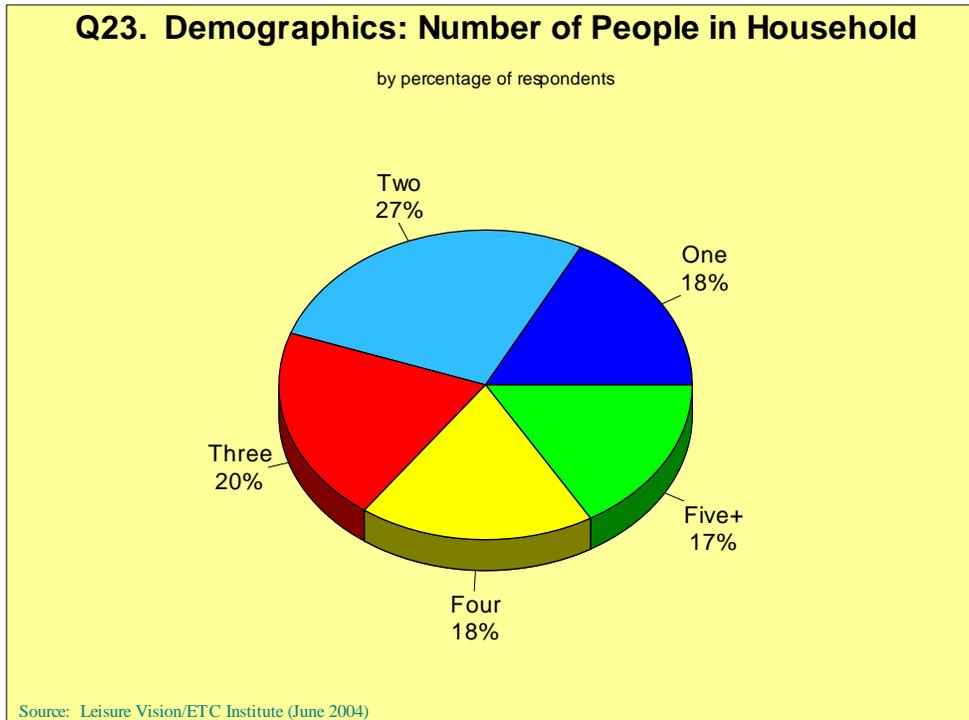
Funding Improvements to Parks and Recreation Facilities Compared to Other Priorities

Respondents were asked how important they feel it is for Oak Park to fund improvements to parks and recreation facilities over the next 10 years compared to other priorities for Oak Park, such as public safety, streets, and trash collection. The following summarizes key findings:

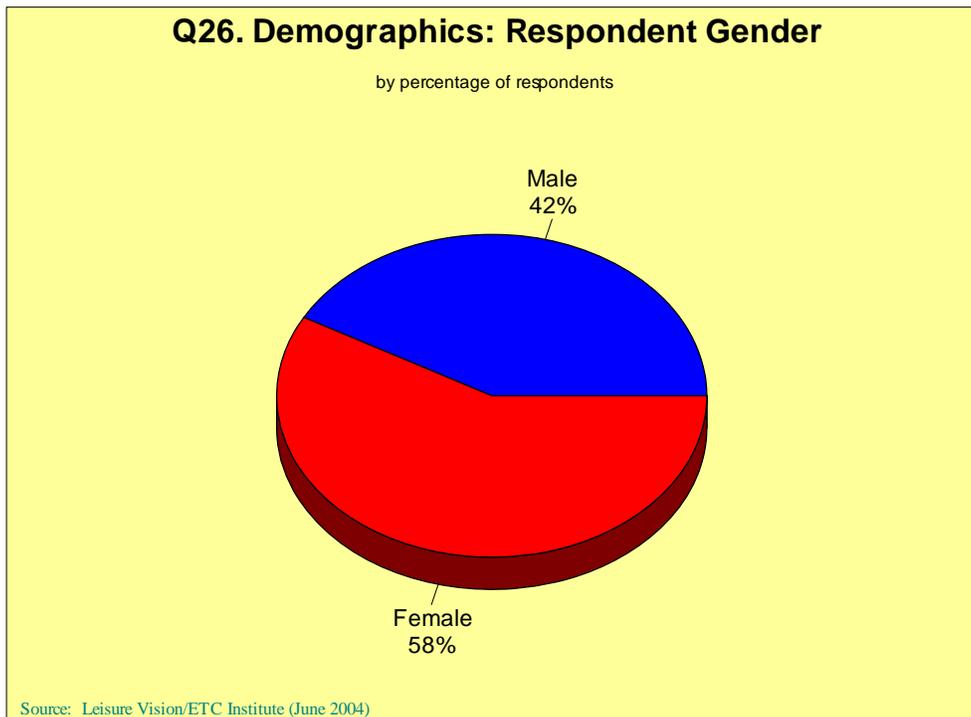
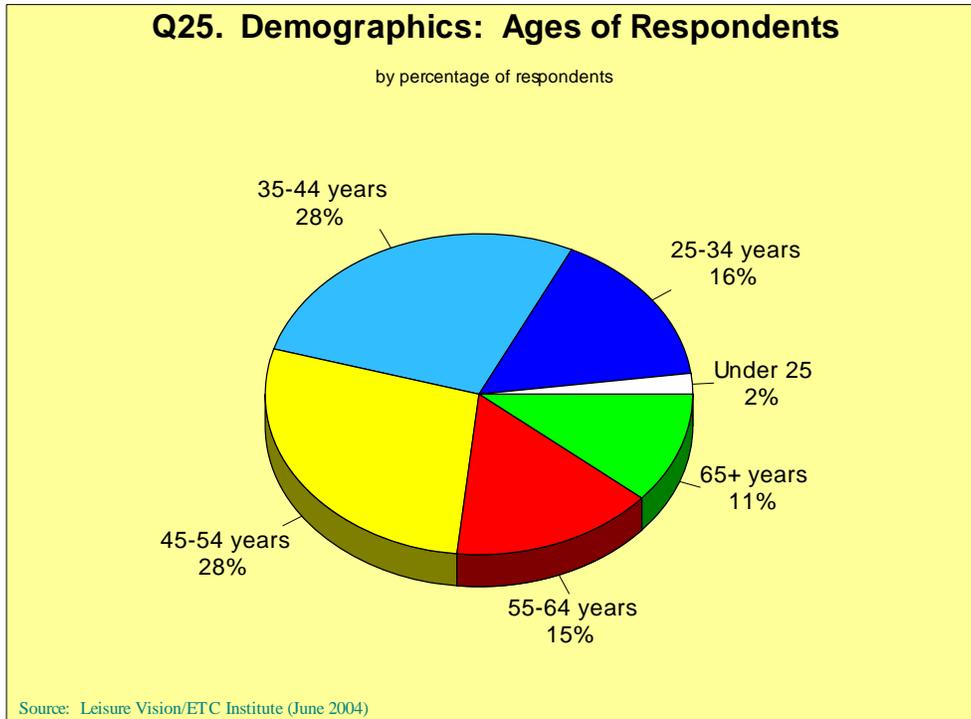
- **Seventy-eight percent (78%) of respondents indicated it is either very important (34%) or somewhat important (44%) to fund improvements to parks and recreation facilities compared to other priorities.** Ten percent (10%) of respondents indicated that it is not important, and 9% indicated “not sure”. The remaining 3% did not provide a response.



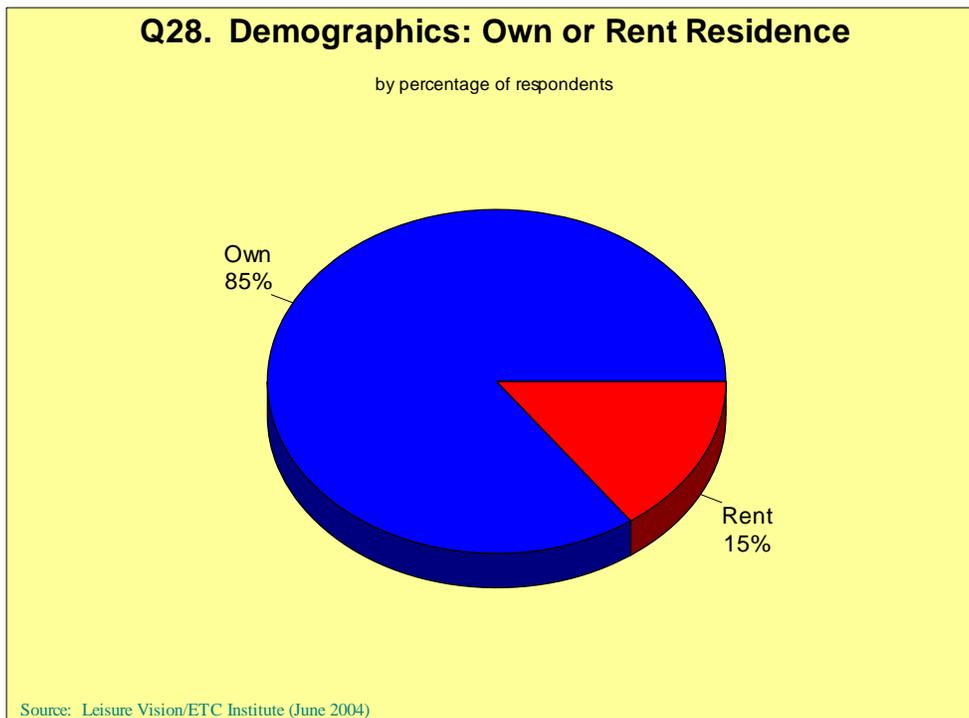
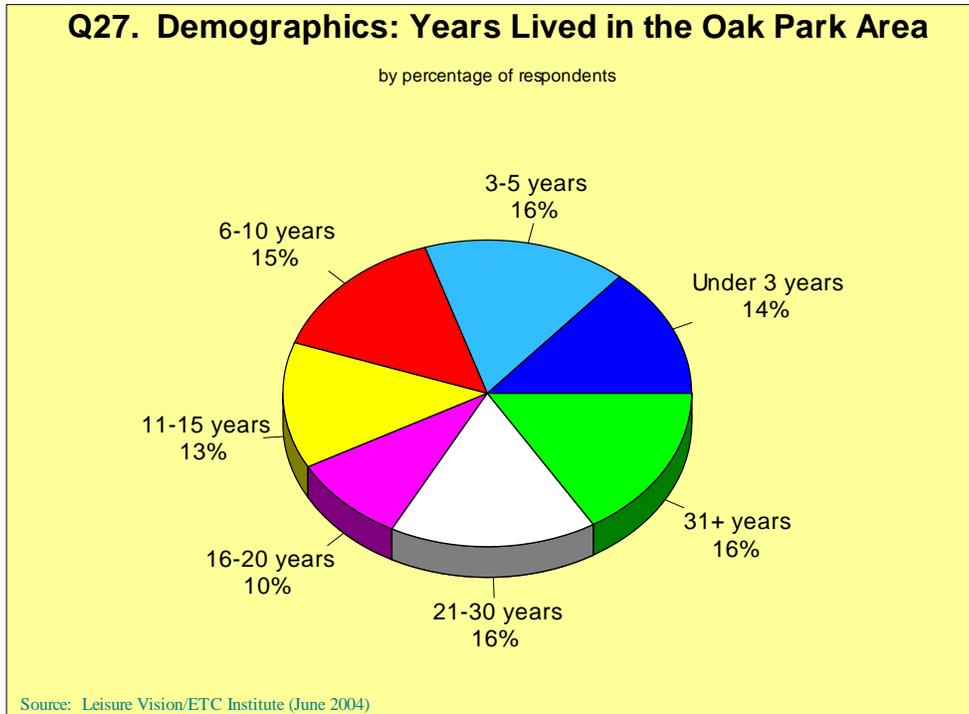
Demographics



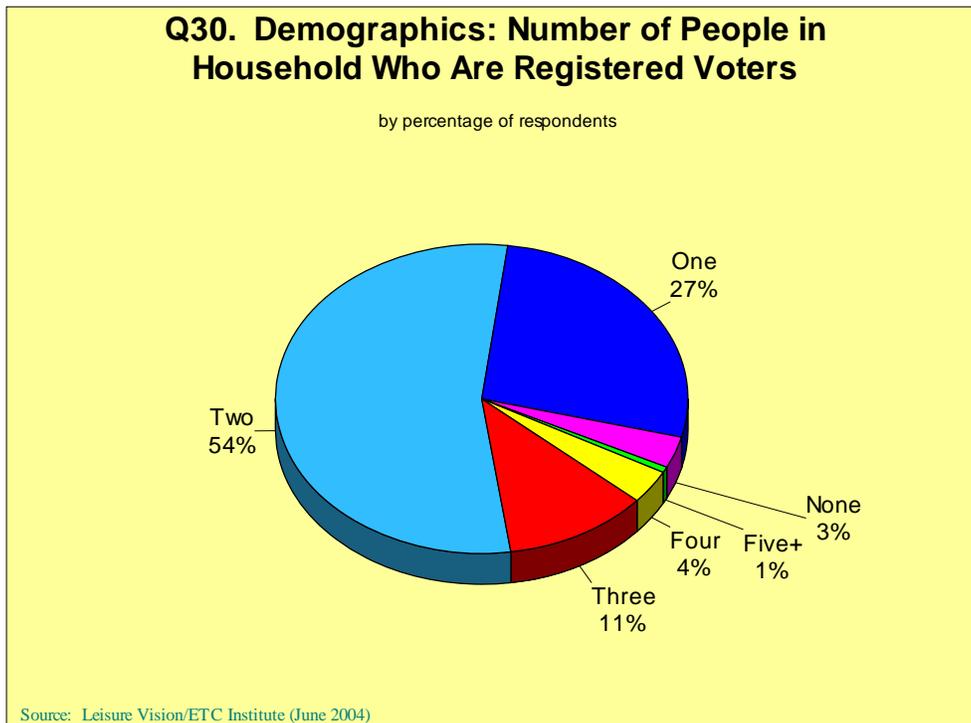
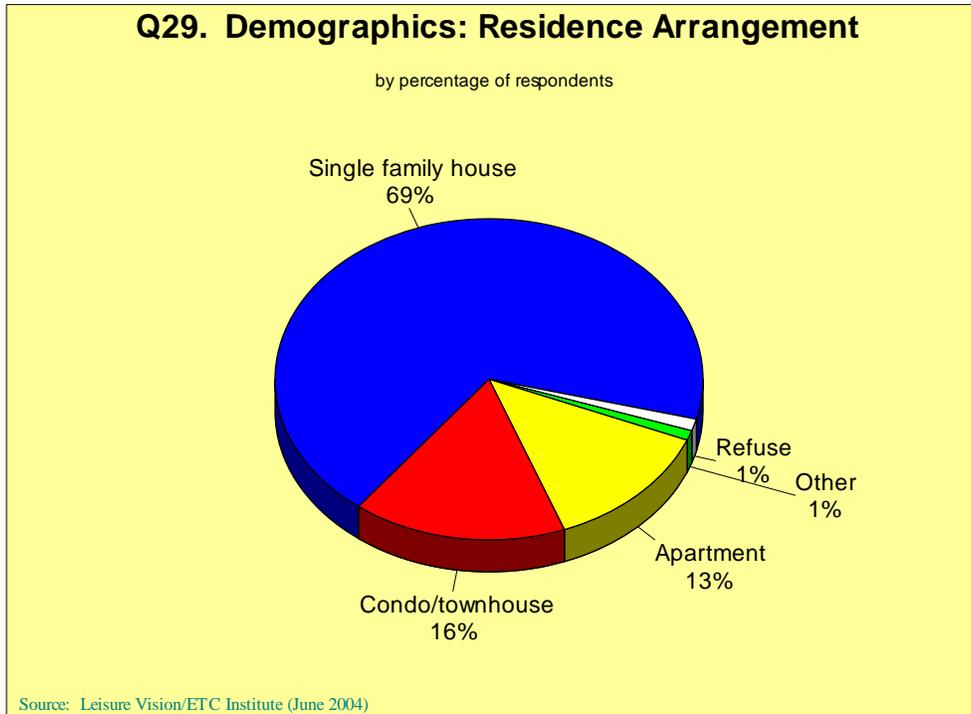
Demographics (Continued)



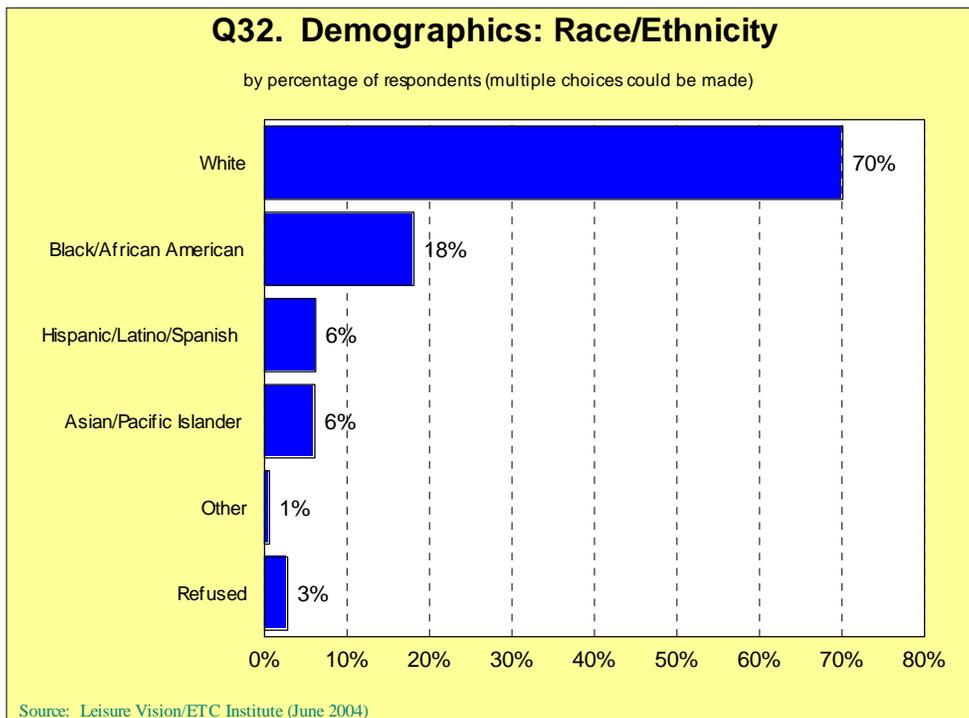
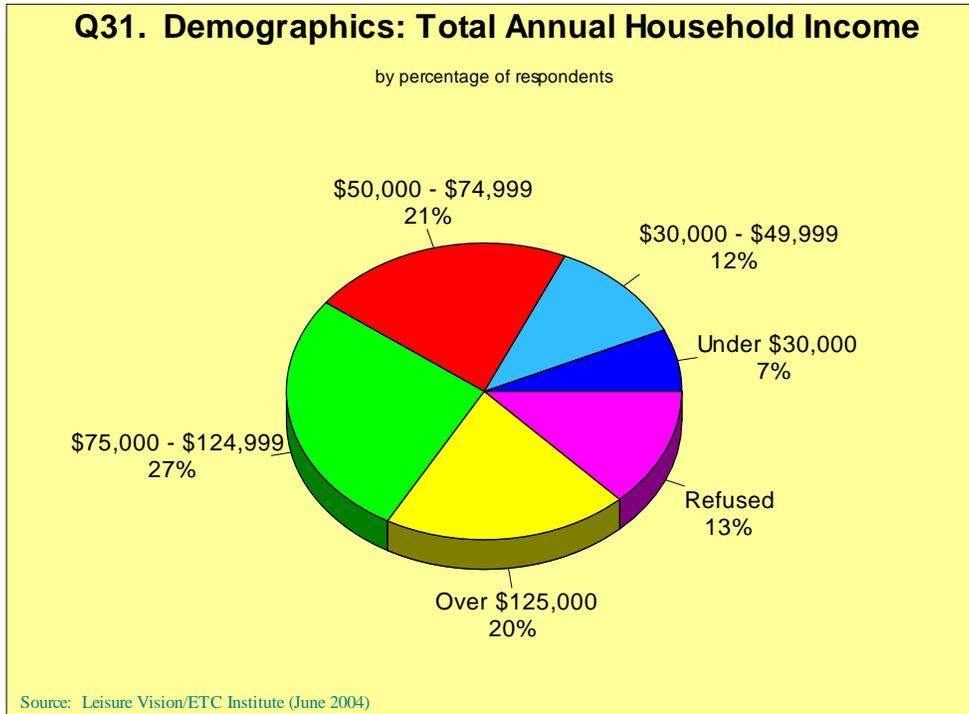
Demographics (Continued)



Demographics (Continued)



Demographics (Continued)



Park District Citizen Committee
Minutes & Reports



PARK DISTRICT OF OAK PARK **COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN**



Park District Citizen Committee Meeting Minutes September 29, 2003

In Attendance: Chair Doug Varn, Jessica Bullock, Laura Kaufman, Susan Kurtenbach, Gail Moran, John Mullins, Patience Nelson, Rickey Sain Sr., David Stannard, Kathy Stohr, Katie Kelly, Mary Kay O'Grady, Rich Shoum, Julie Samuels, David Kindler, Gary Balling, Diane Stanke

- I. **Welcome** – Commissioner David Kindler, Park Board Liaison to the Citizen Committee, welcomed all present to the first meeting of the Park District Citizen Committee. He extended his thanks to all for volunteering for this committee and assisting in developing the Comprehensive Plan.
- II. **Citizen Committee Overview** – Chairperson Doug Varn welcomed everyone and explained what the responsibilities of the Infrastructure Committee were and how they differ from the PDCC. The PDCC is not responsible for completing a report but rather to see that all the right questions get asked throughout the Comprehensive Plan's development. Members of the PDCC should act as a sounding board as ideas and opinions are presented and keep the consultants and staff accountable for their decisions. Finally, when the final report is completed, it will be the responsibility of the PDCC to go out into the community to explain what has been accomplished.
- III. **PDCC Member Introduction** – Everyone present introduced themselves and explained their backgrounds and fields of expertise.
- IV. **Master Plan Overview and Next Steps** – Executive Director Gary Balling presented a brief presentation introducing the team of consultants and providing an overview of the project. He reminded everyone of the upcoming Strategic Directions Workshop to be held Thursday, October 9 at 6:30pm at Village Hall, Community Room 101.
- V. **Closing Remarks** – Gail Moran asked if it would be beneficial to read the Infrastructure Report. Doug encouraged all PDCC members to read it. Copies will be available behind the registration desk at the Administration Building, 218 Madison, beginning Monday October 6. We will also bring copies to the Strategic Directions Workshop. Doug also said we will need to set up a park tour in the near future for all PDCC members.

Next Meeting – Monday, October 27 at 7pm at Temporary Barrie Center



PARK DISTRICT OF OAK PARK
COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN



Park District Citizen Committee
Meeting Minutes
October 27, 2003

In Attendance: Chair Doug Varn, Marty Bracco, Jessica Bullock, Laura Kaufman, Susan Kurtenbach, Gail Moran, John Mullins, Patience Nelson, Rickey Sain Sr., David Stannard, Kathy Stohr, Katie Kelly, Rich Shoum, David Kindler, Gary Balling, Diane Stanke

- I. **Welcome** – The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm by Chair Doug Varn. He discussed the need to create a quality survey to collect data from many different types of users and non-users from all over Oak Park.
- II. **Overview of Strategic Directions Workshop** – Gary Balling called to the committee's attention some of the items included in the meeting packet. Laura Kaufman asked to see some examples of other intergovernmental agreements. Gary reviewed the Power Point presentation from the Strategic Directions Workshop. Katie Kelly stated that Shaker Heights, OH may have been mentioned as a benchmark agency because the Oak Park school district is in a consortium with seven other school districts including Shaker Heights. Patience Nelson asked how we cover our programming costs. Gary explained that community-wide program costs (ie. big special events) are completely subsidized, costs of all general recreation programs are recovered plus 10% and revenues facility program costs are recovered plus 25%. Gail Moran asked for a discussion on how the Comprehensive Plan will affect Barrie Park. David Kindler and Gary Balling explained that this project is on track and at this point should not be affected by the Comprehensive Plan. Oak Lawn was suggested as a possible benchmark agency due to many similarities with Oak Park in terms of population and EAV.
- III. **Community Survey Discussion** – Doug Varn initiated a discussion on what should be included in the community survey. The following was suggested:
 - Competition:** Who is our competition and why are people going outside the District? Why are people not using our parks, programs or facilities?
 - What can we offer to bring people in?** For example, Forest Park offered River Forest residents use of their pool on Wednesday evenings at resident rates.
 - Value** – What do they value and do they find value in Park District programs?
 - Geographic divisions** - What groups do we serve geographically? How are we divided by centers? How far are you willing to travel?

Hypothetical situations – Scenarios should be developed for the survey based on the issues that surfaced in the focus groups, stakeholder interviews and public forums

Balancing needs vs. funding – One committee person expressed that she didn't want funding to be the main theme of the survey while another member felt we need to find out what people want, if they are willing to pay for what they want and how much they are willing to pay.

Avoid alienating questions – Make sure the survey contains a mix of questions for different demographic and user groups and make sure the type and tone of the questions are not off-putting to any groups.

Facilities (centers) – How many, what kind and where? There was concern expressed that these questions should not be posed as to make it sound as though we have an agenda.

Miscellaneous – The group is concerned with how we will advertise the survey. Doug would like the group to receive a copy of the results of the Naperville survey.

- IV. **Closing Remarks** – Doug wrapped up the discussion and asked anyone who is interested in working on a subcommittee to develop the survey to email him. Gary pointed out we may need to organize a subcommittee for benchmarking and governance also. Doug passed out copies of a sample community survey done by Leisure Vision. The meeting was adjourned at 8:30pm. John Seaton offered a tour of the Conservatory Center.

Next Meeting – Monday, November 24 at 7pm – Field Center, 935 Woodbine
(Park in the Mann School parking lot located on the west side of the school and the east side of the center which you can enter off of Woodbine. Woodbine is a one way street going east.)



PARK DISTRICT OF OAK PARK
COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN



Park District Citizen Committee
Meeting Minutes
November 24, 2003

In Attendance: Chair Doug Varn, Marty Bracco, Jessica Bullock, Laura Kaufman, Susan Kurtenbach, Gail Moran, John Mullins, Patience Nelson, Rickey Sain Sr., David Stannard, Kathy Stohr, Katie Kelly, Mary Kay O'Grady, Rich Shoum, David Kindler, Mark Gartland, Julie Samuels, Sharon Patchak-Layman, Peter Dowd, Barbara Ebner, Gary Balling, Lisa Lightcap, Diane Stanke

- I. **Welcome** – The meeting was called to order at 7:04pm by Chair Doug Varn who swiftly reviewed the evening's agenda. Doug reported the formation of a survey subcommittee whose members include Kathy Stohr, Rich Shoum, Barbara Ebner, Peter Dowd and himself.
- II. **Demographics Presentation by Dick Barrett** – Doug introduced Dick Barrett, a UIC Professor and an authority on demographics. Mr. Barrett distributed and reviewed demographic information from the 2000 Census Report. Dick explained that the question regarding race in the 2000 Census was worded differently resulting in information that may not be totally accurate. He predicted the Hispanic population in Oak Park may rapidly expand in the next 10 years.
He recommended that the demographic questions regarding age be grouped in 5-year increments, emphasizing that age and gender questions are significant to ask. Dick also recommended rewording the race/ethnicity question on the draft survey. He suggested that we include in the final CP report an appendix to show that the response rate for the survey was a good statistical representation of our community. Generally 50 responses provide a satisfactory confidence level for a particular group. Doug and Gary made a note to speak with Ron Vine about how he will ensure an acceptable sample representation.
Kathy Stohr volunteered to reword the survey question regarding daycare. A short discussion ensued regarding how the map of Oak Park will be broken down into areas. Some suggestions included community policing areas, school districts, community centers, or census tracts.
Dick explained why he thought Evanston and Elmhurst would be good benchmark communities and why Berwyn would not. Some suggested criteria to use in selecting benchmark communities include median household income, percent of renters vs. owners, and percent of bachelor degrees and higher. He warned that population density information can be skewed by cemeteries, forest preserves, etc. Useful

information can be found on the internet at the Northern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC).

III. Benchmarking – Doug discussed the benchmark information emailed to all committee members. Jessica Bullock is the chair of the benchmark subcommittee. If anyone would like to volunteer for this subcommittee or has comments or suggestions regarding the information, contact Jessica.

IV. Community Survey Discussion – Doug prefaced the survey discussion with the fact that this document is a working draft and all comments and ideas are welcome. He stated that a transportation question was mistakenly omitted but would be added to the survey. The key idea to keep in mind is that we want to make sure that the relevant issues are addressed in the survey so that we can collect useful data. A few comments and ideas included:

Neighborhood Centers: Do most people have a strong attachment to these facilities and do they walk to them?

Survey Categories: Kathy Stohr recommended 3 broad survey categories including space (ie. open, passive and active space), facilities and programs.

Consistency of terms – A couple of attendees emphasized the importance of using the same terms consistently. Does the term parks refer to open space only or to facilities also? Do leisure activities, recreation programs and classes all refer to the same thing?

Final survey question – A lively discussion ensued regarding the final survey question. Everyone agreed it needs to be reworded at the very least or possibly eliminated.

A myriad of other questions were scrutinized and recommendations were made. Gail Moran thanked everyone for their hard work in developing the survey so far.

V. Closing Remarks – Doug wrapped up the discussion and thanked all in attendance. The survey subcommittee will be meeting again on December 1. We are aiming to mail the surveys around January 2. The meeting was adjourned at 10:00pm.

Next Meeting – Monday, December 22 at 7pm – Carroll Center, 1125 Kenilworth
(Carroll Center is located 2 blocks west of Oak Park Avenue and 1 block north of Roosevelt Road. You can park on Kenilworth, which is on the east side of the building)



PARK DISTRICT OF OAK PARK
COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN



Park District Citizen Committee
Meeting Minutes
December 22, 2003

In Attendance: Chair Doug Varn, Marty Bracco, Gail Moran, Rickey Sain Sr., David Stannard, Mary Kay O'Grady, Rich Shoum, David Boulanger, Gary Balling, Diane Stanke

- I. **Welcome** – The meeting was called to order at 7:10pm by Chair Doug Varn. Dave Stannard made a motion to approve the minutes of November 24, 2003. Gail Moran second the motion and it was passed by a unanimous voice vote.
- II. **Community Survey** – Doug reviewed the survey, identifying questions that focused on the key issues of community centers and funding. He also noted questions that were asked as a benchmark to national responses. Tentatively the survey is scheduled to be mailed by January 5. The group decided to delete the marketing question (which asked how residents found out about the Park District) and replace it with the original transportation question. Mary Kay suggested we include a map of facilities with park addresses on the back side. This idea will be explored with the consultants.
- III. **Benchmarking** – Gail explained how the list of criteria was narrowed down to six items. After January 1, all agencies gathered will be rated by criteria and a report will be generated to bring the list down to fifteen. Rick Kuner is helping with this process. The objective of the benchmark survey is to compare what resources and facilities other agencies similar to ours have to what we currently have. A separate best practices survey is also being developed.
- IV. **Governance and Best Practices** – After the first of the year a new subcommittee will be formed to look at how other agencies have developed their intergovernmental agreements. Patience Nelson will be the chair of this subcommittee. Committee members should email Patience if interested in joining this subcommittee.
- V. **Youth Outreach** – Doug reported Wynetta Johnson recently organized a meeting to discuss the development of a teen center. At this meeting John Williams commented that having a stand alone teen center may be very difficult but he feels teens need a place to go. We discussed focusing on youth in the survey and decided that this area would require its own survey. This topic will be addressed further at a later time.
- VI. **Closing Remarks** – Gary invited all committee members and resources to the Illinois Parks and Recreation Conference on January 22 between 3:00 and 6:00pm to visit the exhibit hall. The exhibit area showcases the latest equipment, supplies, ideas and services available to park and recreation agencies. The conference will be held at the

Hyatt Regency Chicago on Wacker Drive. If you are interested in attending, please email Diane. Doug wrapped up the discussion and thanked all in attendance. The meeting was adjourned at 8:13pm.

Next Meeting – Monday, January 26 at 7pm – Cheney Mansion, 220 N. Euclid
*(Cheney Mansion is located 2 blocks north of Lake Street on the east side of Euclid.
Parking is on the street.)*



PARK DISTRICT OF OAK PARK
COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN



Park District Citizen Committee
Meeting Minutes
January 26, 2004

Cheney Mansion, 220 N. Euclid

In Attendance: Chair Doug Varn, Marty Bracco, David Stannard, Mary Kay O'Grady, Laura Kaufman, Patience Nelson, Katie Kelly, Susan Kurtenbach, Jessica Bullock, John Mullins, Kathy Stohr, David Kindler, Mark Gartland, Gary Balling, Kent Newton, Diane Stanke

- I. **Welcome** – The meeting was called to order at 7pm.
- II. **Approval of Minutes** – Motion was made to approve minutes by Susan Kurtenbach. Second by Katie Kelly. Passed by a unanimous voice vote.
- III. **Benchmarking** – Benchmarking surveys are out. Gary is contacting all agencies to encourage them to complete it. Gary said it was interesting to view these organizations' websites. Surveys are due February 27.
- IV. **Community Survey** – We have received 450 surveys to date. Leisure Vision will begin to do follow-up calls at the end of the week.
- V. **Governance** – Doug, Gary, and Patience discussed that the governance subcommittee should narrow down the 4 proposed governance models. Leisure Vision will meet with this subcommittee during the day on February 23 and make a report to the entire committee that evening. Currently the subcommittee will look at the interests of each entity and analyze which model would secure the best interest of the citizens. Doug said we need to look at the governance issue from all angles and consider other alternatives. David emphasized that the issue of governance needs to be decided upon early in the process. Gary explained that he will not be involved in the process but rather leave it up to Leisure Vision and the subcommittee and ultimately the committee to make a recommendation. Patience stated that we need to look at the most efficient model. Mary Kay inquired about what model would require a vote by our citizens. David responded that the first 3 models would not require an election but it would be a requirement if the last model was selected. The committee discussed the funds transfer from the Village to Park District. It was explained that it is the responsibility of the PDCC is to make a recommendation, however, it is up to the PDOP and VOP to determine how the recommendation will be carried out.
- VI. **Finance Presentation** – Kent Newton presented an overview of Park District finances. Numerous questions were fielded from the group and the discussion

provided PDCC members with a sound understanding of the past and current financial position of the District.

- VII. Closing Remarks** – Ron Vine and Ron Secrist from Leisure Vision will be attending the next PDCC meeting to discuss survey results and governance. The meeting adjourned at 9pm.

Next Meeting – Monday, February 23 at 7pm – Pleasant Home, 217 S. Home Street
(Pleasant Home is located at the corner of Pleasant and Home Streets, 3 blocks east of Harlem and 3 blocks north of Madison. Parking is on the street.)



PARK DISTRICT OF OAK PARK **COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN**



Park District Citizen Committee Meeting Minutes February 23, 2004

Pleasant Home, 217 S. Home

In Attendance: Chair Doug Varn, Marty Bracco, David Stannard, Laura Kaufman, Patience Nelson, Katie Kelly, Susan Kurtenbach, John Mullins, Rickey Sain, Sr., Kathy Stohr, Gail Moran, David Kindler, Mark Gartland, Tom Phillion, Craig Failor, Gary Balling, Mike Grandy, Kent Newton, Lisa, Lightcap, Diane Stanke

Guest Speakers: Ron Vine and Ron Secrist, Leisure Vision

- I. **Welcome** – The meeting was called to order at 7:05pm.
- II. **Approval of Minutes** – Motion was made by Kathy Stohr and seconded by Laura Kaufman to approve the minutes of January 26, 2004. The motion passed by a unanimous voice vote.
- III. **Governance** – Patience Nelson reported the Governance subcommittee met Monday, February 16 with Carl Swenson, Village Manager, and Gary Balling, Park District Executive Director, to get a perspective on the current Village/Park District agreement. A new Intergovernmental Agreement should exhibit clarity and accountability, tie accountability to revenue authority, and be sustainable. This morning, the group met with Ron Vine and Ron Secrist to discuss authority and funding. There are 4 more meetings scheduled for this subcommittee.
- IV. **Benchmarking** – Eighteen benchmarking surveys were mailed out in January and 8 have been returned with commitments from 3 more agencies to complete and return their surveys. Communities we have received surveys from include: Berwyn Park District, North Berwyn Park District, Skokie Park District, Evanston Parks and Recreation, Des Plaines Park District, Westmont Park District, Forest Park Park District, and Mt. Prospect Park District. Surveys are due February 27.
- V. **Governance presentation by Ron Secrist** – Ron presented the four factors being evaluated to determine the Foundation for Governance including:
 - **Community Survey:** which identifies Citizen Needs & Desires
 - **Stakeholders, Focus Groups, Forums:** The input from this group is very important because these individuals are more aware and involved in the community and identified key issues and concerns
 - **Benchmarking Survey:** This information is forthcoming.

- **Vision/Leadership for a Better Oak Park:** We need to look at where we want to be, then look at the past and present and determine how to get there.

He then discussed the 4 priorities identified by the stakeholder meetings and focus groups including:

1. Funding
2. Citizen Priorities/Needs
3. Governance
4. Unified Approach/Intent by Village, School Districts and Park District

Leisure Vision has identified 4 governance models to be discussed and evaluated by the Governance Subcommittee. These models are not unique in themselves, but rather are on a continuum with common themes. The Governance Committee received a list of 15 criteria of a successful community parks and recreation organization. The committee needs to review, reflect and determine which the most important criteria are by ranking them. Then, they will evaluate each model based on the most important criteria. Ron explained that a likely occurrence could be the creation of a hybrid model, taking different parts from each of the models to create a unique model specifically to fit our needs in Oak Park.

VI. Preliminary Results of Citizen Survey Presentation by Ron Vine – Ron explained the survey questions were based on feedback from stakeholder interviews, focus groups and public forums. To date we have received 802 completed surveys. Ron is currently cross tabbing the information based on key factors including gender, age, household size, ages of household members, ethnicity, home owners and renters, years lived in Oak Park, household income, users vs. non-users, tax support and voting. They are also being compared to national averages utilizing the data received by Leisure Vision in surveying over 200 park and recreation agencies across the nation. Ron also compared the data collected with census figures to ensure we had a good representation of Oak Park residents. Ron noted that information is still preliminary and copies distributed are stamped draft. Ron presented 16 findings as follows:

#1 – Usage of parks is high with average satisfaction

#2 – Participation in Programs is significantly higher than national benchmarks with average satisfaction

#3 – The Park District of Oak Park is the primary provider of services

#4 – Residents have a need for a wide range of parks and facilities

#5 – For a wide range of parks and facilities, needs are not fully met

Ron will compare teens needs not being met regarding facilities with the national average.

#6 – Walking/biking trails, neighborhood parks, and outdoor pools are the most important facilities to respondent households

#7 – A high percent of households use the neighborhood centers with most usage being infrequent

#8 – Nearly 50% of respondents have some level of support for converting some centers into specialty centers with high percentage of respondents being not sure

#9 – Respondents are mixed regarding cutting back operating hours of neighborhood centers to save money for other activities

Ron was asked to cross tab what type of users were the ones supportive of cutting back hours at centers.

#10 – There is some level of support for ALL CIP projects with highest support for Ridgeland Common

#11 – Across all cross tabular areas, there is continued support for partnering
Ron will determine who the non-supporters and the not sure respondents are.

#12 – There is interest in a wide variety of improvements and new indoor spaces with particular importance for fitness spaces and water

#13 – Respondents are mixed on how to move forward on indoor spaces over the next few years

#14 – Respondents would allocate 60% of \$100 to improvements with remainder for new parks, trails, and facilities

#15 – More than 70% of the respondents would be willing to pay some additional property taxes to fund projects most important to their household

#16 – 50% of respondents would vote in favor or might vote in favor in a bond election to fund projects most important to their household with a high level of respondents being not sure

VII. Review of Timeline, Identify Upcoming Issues & Tasks: Gary stated that we will need to organize a Communication Working Group to inform and educate our residents. We are right on target with the project's timeline. An Indoor Space Working Group, lead by Marty Bracco, is being organized to delve into these issues. If anyone is interested in participating on this subcommittee, please contact Marty or Doug. Gary asked all PDCC members to review the survey results presented, organize any questions you may have and send them to Doug or Gary to pass on to Ron. Gary brought to the group's attention the intentions of Governor Blagojevich to put the OSLAD program on holiday which is a major concern of all IL park and recreation agencies and specifically to Oak Park who would look to this program to fund future park renovation projects. Gary encouraged the group to contact any

legislators or decision makers they know to explain the importance of this program.

Doug and Gary explained that the Comprehensive Plan is looking at the larger issues in the Park District and that the next step (not included with the Comprehensive Plan) would be to create individual site master plans for all parks. We need to manage the public's expectations of the results of the comprehensive plan and inform our residents that individual site plans are not part of this comprehensive process. We are looking at community interests and setting a general direction for the District.

VIII. Closing Remarks – Doug thanked everyone for their involvement. The meeting was adjourned at 9:00pm.

Next Meeting – Monday, March 29 at 7:00pm, Hedges Administration Center, 218 Madison St.



PARK DISTRICT OF OAK PARK
COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN



Park District Citizen Committee
Meeting Minutes
March 29, 2004

Hedges Administration Center, 218 Madison Street

In Attendance: Chair Doug Varn, Marty Bracco, Laura Kaufman, Patience Nelson, Katie Kelly, Susan Kurtenbach, John Mullins, Jessica Bullock, Rickey Sain, Sr., Mary Kay O'Grady, Kathy Stohr, Gail Moran, Galen Gockel, David Kindler, Mark Gartland, Gary Balling, Diane Stanke

- I. **Welcome** – The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm.
- II. **Approval of Minutes** – Motion was made by Gail Moran and seconded by Susan Kurtenbach to approve the minutes of February 23, 2004. The motion passed by a unanimous voice vote.
- III. **Survey** – There are still a few surveys being submitted. Currently we have received 827. We are still one or two short in the demographic areas of 18 to 34 year olds and renters. We received 4 binders with survey cross tab information. If you would like to look at one of these binders, call Diane or Gary. The information in these binders is based on data from 824 surveys.
- IV. **Benchmarking** – On Tuesday, April 13, Ron Vine will be in Oak Park during the day to present information to the Benchmarking Subcommittee from the 13 benchmark surveys received. Ron suggested this information would also be pertinent for the Governance Subcommittee as well. The majority of agencies who completed benchmark surveys are from Illinois.
- V. **Governance** – On April 20 a conference call between the Governance Subcommittee and Ron Secrist will take place. Patience Nelson reported that this Subcommittee has been meeting for the last 6 weeks reviewing the established criteria and comparing it to the governance models. They will need to regroup after the April 13 benchmarking meeting to prepare for the April 20 conference call to take place at 9:45am with Ron Secrist. Gary offered that if anyone can't attend, we could set up a dial in call.
- VI. **Indoor Spaces** – Members of this Committee toured Field Center and the old Barrie Center. Some members also visited Cheney Mansion for the Daddy Daughter Sweetheart Dance. They will be analyzing data to develop recommendations as to what facilities are currently needed. On Monday, May 10, Ron Vine and Jeff King will be in Oak Park. They will meet with the Indoor Spaces Subcommittee at 6:00pm and then a special Park District Citizen Committee meeting will be held at 7:30pm.

A question was asked regarding what the final report will look like and a discussion ensued. David Kindler would like a commentary to be created describing what the decision-making process was for the group as well as thought processes, input received and other important information. Katie Kelly added that we should report why we agreed or didn't agree with the recommendations made by Leisure Vision and that PDCC comments should be added to each section of the completed report. Gary Balling reminded the group that currently we are in the information gathering stage (Stage 2) and that the next stage will include analyzing the findings and making recommendations. The Concensus Workshop, planned later in the process, will present data to the PDCC, the Village Trustees and Park Commissioners for discussion. As the process plays out, it will become clearer how the reports will be compiled.

- VII. Community Outreach** – Doug Varn stated that we will need to take the results of the Comprehensive Master Plan to the Community at the conclusion of the process. Currently School Districts 200 and 97, the Township, and the League of Women's Voters have viewed the Strategic Directions power point presentation. Doug volunteered to begin pulling PDCC information together. The group agreed that a communication plan needs to be developed which should include utilizing the Park District brochure, VOP FYI newsletter, press conferences, and Channel 6. Katie Kelly volunteered to chair this subcommittee. Mary Kay O'Grady and Diane Stanke would like to be members.
- VIII. Closing Remarks** – Doug thanked everyone for their involvement. The meeting was adjourned at 8:30pm with a motion by Gail Moran and second by Jessica Bullock.

Next Meeting – Monday, April 26 at 7:00pm, Stevenson Center, 49 Lake Street at Taylor, 3 blocks west of Austin Boulevard – parking is on the street



PARK DISTRICT OF OAK PARK
COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN



Park District Citizen Committee
Meeting Minutes
April 26, 2004
Stevenson Center

In Attendance: Chair Doug Varn, Marty Bracco, David Stannard, Mary Kay O'Grady, Susan Kurtenbach, Jessica Bullock, Rickey Sain, Sr., John Mullins, Gail Moran, Kathy Stohr, Kurt Mackey, David Kindler, Mark Gartland, Gary Balling, Diane Stanke

- I. **Welcome** – The meeting was called to order at 7:03pm by Chair Doug Varn.
- II. **Approval of Minutes** – Motion was made to approve minutes by Gail Moran. Second by Susan Kurtenbach. Passed by a unanimous voice vote.
- III. **Benchmarking** – Gary reminded everyone that the benchmark presentation was a preliminary presentation. He reminded everyone that on Monday, May 10, Ron Vine and Jeff King will be in town covering:
 - Indoor spaces information
 - Benchmark
 - Next Steps

Gary reviewed the Benchmark Power Point presented by Ron Vine on April 13. Doug reminded us that the results of the benchmark survey are only one of the tools we will use to develop the plan and that some of the information is relevant and some is not. He stressed that Oak Park is unique and we must consider all the information and then decide what's important.

Some questions regarding the preliminary results were asked. Doug asked for everyone to send comments to him and he will organize them and send them on to Ron Vine.

David Kindler stated that we need to present 4 or 5 of the most important points to the public from the benchmarking information. There is too much information to share all of it and the message will get lost. Kathy Stohr voiced her concern that she hopes we aren't selecting data in order to support a forgone conclusion that we need

one giant mega center. John Mullins stated that we aren't making any decisions until all of the information is in. We aren't in a situation to make any recommendations yet. David Kindler feels that it is time for a dialogue to discuss our community's needs and our current facilities and services. Doug Varn stressed that the data collected is going to drive our decisions and that not until all the information is in will we be able to develop a plan.

- IV. Governance** – Dave Stannard reported the Governance Subcommittee has held several meetings to discuss the 4 models presented by Ron Secrist. Currently the Subcommittee is looking at 2 models. The first model would have the Park District completely under Village control. The second model would be for a total division of services between the Park District and the Village. The subcommittee felt that these two models provided for ownership and accountability. Dave reviewed the nine criteria used to evaluate the 4 models. He stated that the model with the Park District and Village completely separate would be a harder road to take but there would be better long term sustainability with this model. The model with the Village taking over the Park District would be a good financial move but would hamper the Park District's ability to operate and to attract good staff.

The group discussed that the PDCC needs to recommend the best model for Oak Park without taking into account finances and logistics. Mary Kay O'Grady pointed out that Oak Park is the only agency in the benchmark study to have a hybrid governance model in that we have a unique intergovernmental agreement with the Village. We are now waiting for Leisure Vision's recommendation. Dave reported that the phone call with Ron Secrist went well. Ron Secrist quizzed the Subcommittee members on how they arrived at certain conclusions.

- V. Indoor Spaces** – The Subcommittee is picking up speed as they begin to look at data They are focusing on information identifying unmet needs of our residents.
- VI. Final Remarks** - The next PDCC meeting is May 10 at 7:30pm at the Oak Park Conservatory with an Indoor Spaces Subcommittee preceding this meeting at 6pm. Mark your calendars for a tentative Consensus Building Workshop on June 28 with Leisure Vision, Village of Oak Park, Park District of Oak Park and the PDCC. On Saturday, May 15, members of the PDCC are invited to a tour of the Levy Center in Evanston and the Niles Family Health and Fitness Center. We will be leaving Rehm Pool parking lot at 8:15am and returning around 12noon. Email Lisa Lightcap if you re interested at lisal@oakparkparks.com. Another tour may be set up to tour a park/school facility in Channahon. Kurt Mackey recommended a tour of an Oswego facility which is a cooperative effort between the high school and the park district.

David Kindler gave an overview of the presentation made by the Park District to the Village of Oak Park regarding Stevenson Park redevelopment. These sport areas could be available by mid-September.

Gail reported that David Kindler made a suggestion to have a bike tour of our parks – with it ending at Scoville with a concert. There was concern that logistics and traffic will have to be worked out.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45pm

Note: *A special PDCC meeting will take place on Monday, May 17 at the Administrative Center, 218 Madison at 7pm for anyone who can make it. This meeting was actually planned at the May 10 meeting. It will be held to discuss the information presented by Ron Vine and Jeff King regarding indoor spaces. There will also be a regular PDCC meeting on Monday, May 24 at 7pm at Stevenson Center, 49 Lake Street.*



PARK DISTRICT OF OAK PARK **COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN**



Park District Citizen Committee Meeting Minutes May 10, 2004

The Oak Park Conservatory, 615 Garfield Street

In Attendance: Chair Doug Varn, Marty Bracco, Gail Moran, David Stannard, Laura Kaufman, Patience Nelson, Katie Kelly, Susan Kurtenbach, John Mullins, Mark Gartland, Tom Philion, David Kindler, Mike Grandy, Lisa, Lightcap, Kent Newton, Gary Balling, Tim Kelly, Diane Stanke, Rich Shoum, Lesley Gilmore, Bob Franzen, Kathy Grayson, and Kurt Mackey

Guest Speakers: Ron Vine, Leisure Vision and Jeff King, Ballard*King and Associates

- I. **Welcome** – The meeting was called to order at 7:40 by Doug Varn.
- II. Ron Vine introduced Jeff King, an authority on recreation facilities from Ballard* King and Associates.

Some of the findings from the Power Point included:

- Five out of six facilities identified in the survey as important are outdoors facilities, however, 63% of tax dollars are spent on indoor spaces.
- Oak Park Conservatory was the number one facility identified for importance.
- 13% of households use centers several times per week.
- If a person uses one center, they usually use more than one.
- Fitness and indoor ice identified as most important current indoor spaces for improvement/expansion.
- Indoor running/walking path was the number one new indoor space desired.
- The Community Center model is not efficient or effective.

Why current model doesn't work:

1. Duplication of programs – Community Centers competing amongst themselves
2. Staffing costs driven by multiple locations
3. Administrative overhead

4. Neighborhood focus has changed (we are mobile, 46% of people drive to facilities)
5. Program spaces are not what people want
6. Condition of centers (deferred maintenance)
7. Drain on existing operating resources
8. Tax costs are disproportionate to benefits

Recommendations:

- Convert 1-3 centers into specialized facilities
- Convert 1-2 to centers into Not For Profit facilities
- Restructure operations (one employee responsible for more than one facility)
- Expand centers by schools
- Build a new community center

Ron Vine and Jeff King asked the committee to compile a list of 2 or 3 of the best recommendations from the list above or new ideas not listed that they can look into in depth.

Doug Varn summarized that the current governance model and the current delivery of programs and services is not working, which we knew at the start of this process. We also know status quo is not acceptable option. There are many unmet needs identified in the community survey. The solution to addressing these unmet needs is expensive. We can take two tracks, either go directly to the community or we can maximize efficiencies throughout the District and then address the list of unmet needs. Dave Stannard added that not only should we focus on meeting current needs but address future needs also. John Mullins commented that the staff is doing a great job in getting the budget in control but asked how much longer can we continue without a major change? Doug Varn and John Mullins observed that the staff has made extraordinary changes in the last few years regarding District operations.

Gail Moran stated she is not surprised by the outcome of the indoor spaces study. We need to look at the big picture and agree that it's costly to operate the centers. Gail likes the number of options suggested; plenty of flexibility. Patience Nelson felt that some features Jeff King presented from other park and recreation facilities were extravagant. She wants to find out what facilities the schools have available and see if we can partner with the schools to meet community needs. A brief

discussion ensued regarding the Multiplex to be built in Oak Park. Jeff King commented that this facility will cater to a certain clientele just as the YMCA does and other similar facilities in Oak Park. Susan Kurtenbach stated that we need to take care of what we currently do before we make major changes.

Katie Kelly commented that we need deeper understanding of program demands on a center by center basis, we need better differentiation between center usage and usage of park areas around them, and we need more information on program duplication.

It was suggested that Bret Fahnstrom, Manager of Community Centers, and Greg Evans, Manager of Adult and Senior Leisure Services, attend one of our next meetings.

Ron Vine said it is obvious that the Community Center situation needs to be addressed.

Doug would like to meet next Monday, May 17 at 7pm at 218 Madison to discuss what was presented this evening. Whoever can make it is welcome to attend. Doug reminded everyone that there will be a facility tour to Evanston and Niles this Saturday, May 15 departing at 8:15am from Rehm Park.

Tim Kelly emphasized that we need to work within our current economy. Gary Balling said he's glad we are discussing these issues and that there were no surprises in the findings presented tonight. Dave Kindler added that change is difficult but once accepted, it opens up many possibilities. We can then talk about what could be.

III. The meeting was adjourned at 9:40pm

Upcoming PDCC Meetings:

Monday, May 17, 2004, at 7pm, at the Administration Center, 218 Madison

Monday, May 24, at 7pm at Stevenson Center, 49 Lake Street



PARK DISTRICT OF OAK PARK
COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN



Park District Citizen Committee
Meeting Minutes
May 24, 2004

Stevenson Center, 49 East Lake Street

In Attendance: Chair Doug Varn, Marty Bracco, Jessica Bullock, Laura Kaufman, Susan Kurtenbach, Gail Moran, John Mullins, Patience Nelson, Kathy Stohr, Katie Kelly, and Mary Kay O'Grady

Board & Staff: David Kindler, Gary Balling, Diane Stanke

Visitors: Rich Shoum, Sharon Patchak-Layman

I. Welcome – Minutes from the May 10 meeting were approved.

Doug reported the schedule is getting pushed back. Consensus workshops will probably be held later in July. The Indoor Spaces Subcommittee and Governance Subcommittee still have more to do. Doug would like to hear where the consultants are at regarding governance and would like the committee to think about it as well.

The PDCC is taking an active role in this process and we care about the final report and solid recommendations from the Consultant Team.

II. Park District Update

Gary stated the packet of information prepared for this meeting includes information about the centers and their programs.

The PDCC should be providing Leisure Vision with guidance but the final recommendations should be made by Leisure Vision. This process is consultant-driven with the PDCC providing guidance in the process. Gary read the responsibilities of the PDCC as written in the project scope and recruitment brochure. All input goes to the consultants who will make recommendations. These recommendations will be discussed at the consensus building meeting. Laura Kaufman said she wants the opportunity to react to the consultants recommendations. Everyone agreed the process has been extremely open. The PDCC, Park Board and Village Board will consider acceptance of the Plan after recommendations are made by Leisure Vision.

Gary informed the group that we will be getting information a week in advance of the consensus meeting to review it. Likely the consensus workshop will be held in late July.

Currently:

- Gilmore Franzen is analyzing facilities as part of the facility inventory process.
- Leisure Vision is updating benchmark statistics with Kettering, Ohio information
- Green Play is completing trending analysis

Gail would like to give indoor spaces information to Leisure Vision. She met with District 97, OPRFHS, and the YMCA, and will be meeting with the Oak Park Health Dept. to get an inventory of space – what we have regarding indoor fitness space and the feasibility of partnerships. She has found willingness to partner, but not a lot of room to maneuver. District 97 and OPRFHS are used extensively. There may be a couple of areas in which to partner but most space is spoken for or inadequate. School District 97's philosophy is that they meet the needs of the school district first and the Park District second which is an ideal situation.

III. Indoor Spaces Report

Marty Bracco reported on all the facilities the group has visited. He discussed the recent tours to the Levy Center in Evanston and Niles Family Fitness Center and each facility's features and usage.

Marty also reviewed the swimming pool report he prepared.

John Mullins reported on usage of the Ridgeland Common Ice Rink. He reviewed the history of the building and approached the evaluation with the question – "How can the Park District earn more money at RC?"

Currently the rink is short – not a standard size for professional skating competition. We have a short skating season. The facility was not built for warm weather.

John spoke with many hockey players and concluded from these discussions that an **IDEAL** situation is to have:

- 1) 2 rinks – with a small rink for 3 on 3 tournaments, lessons, etc.
- 2) Larger stands for spectators
- 3) Exercise room for club teams (with cardio and weight equipment)
- 4) At least 4 locker rooms for tournament use
- 5) Sky boxes or above-ice viewing rooms (which can be used for party rooms)
- 6) Selling alcohol in this area would be a plus but is not likely
- 7) Underground parking at RC
- 8) Year-round facility not necessary but would be nice
- 9) Move fields to other side to create more building space

Our rink is truly a community-centered rink. Laura recommended that John speak with ice skating participants.

A discussion ensued about the indoor playground. Gary stated it would be ideal to get a gymnastics program at RC to complement the ice skating program. The current situation is that Ridgeland Common is in need of major repairs and decisions need to be made.

Susan Kurtenbach reported on Fine Arts and the Conservatory. She interviewed John Seaton who explained:

- The Conservatory has close to 20,000 walk-in visitors plus school children for a total of 30,000 users.
- FOPCON provides great support to this facility.
- OPC has numerous maintenance needs which are expensive due to its historical significance
- Currently the Conservatory is home to \$1 million worth of plants and it does not have a backup generator.

Rentals are very big at the Conservatory. John said he would like to add a garden with a water feature and expand the facility in the immediate areas. The ideal plan would be to vacate the alley and purchase the homes on the other side of the alley to double the space of the facility. Gary added that an ideal situation would be have the seniors at the Conservatory.

Susan reported she did not get far in researching the area of Fine Arts. Members of the group gave her numerous ideas of people to contact to collect further information

Gail Moran report that she met with Park District staff to assess the current inventory of indoor fitness space since fitness is high on the list of unmet needs. She met with District 97 to learn about current space, utilization rates, and what might be available to partner. She also met with District 200 and will meet with Oak Park Health Department to find out from a wellness perspective what Oak Park should have.

IV. Communications Subcommittee Report

Katie Kelly gave an update on the Communications Subcommittee. A list serve is currently being created. She encouraged people to pass the list serve information on to your personal email lists to encourage people to subscribe and receive regular updates on the work of the PDCC and the progress of the Comprehensive Plan.

Gary asked the Survey Subcommittee to suggest possible cross-tabs. We need more definition of what we need. Gary also received geocoding information. Laura asked if consultants are looking at population projections with so much building going on.

IV. Closing Remarks

Doug distributed a 2 page handout. The first page was information presented by Leisure Vision on May 10 including current scenarios, options and solutions and recommendations. The second page reframed the solutions and options for to Leisure Vision.

A discussion ensued regarding collecting outdoor needs information. We need outdoor facility needs information and we need an explanation of how Leisure Vision came to the recommendation for a multi-use facility. We will ask Leisure Vision if we need an outdoor spaces subcommittee.

Gary discussed the project scope regarding Leisure Vision's inventory of current facilities and completing a SWOT analysis. Also we need a comparison of our facilities to national standards.

Katie posed the questions, "How do we get Leisure Vision to balance the needs we are meeting with the needs we aren't meeting? Will the report address how we can build on our strengths? How do we keep the good things and what do we do well?"

All agreed that the report has to be program-driven. Early Childhood, After-school Programs, Day Camps, Gymnastics – how do we build on our successes?

Any comments on Doug's information please send to Doug by Thursday, May 27, 2004.

Meeting adjourned at 9:05pm.

Next Meeting – Monday, June 28 at 7:00pm, Field Center, 935 Woodbine

(Park in the Mann School parking lot located on the west side of the school off Berkshire. Berkshire is a one way street going east. Walk across the grass to the center.)



PARK DISTRICT OF OAK PARK
COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN



Park District Citizen Committee
Meeting Minutes
June 28, 2004

Field Center, 935 Woodbine

In Attendance: Chair Doug Varn, Marty Bracco, Jessica Bullock, Laura Kaufman, Gail Moran, John Mullins, Patience Nelson, Kathy Stohr, Rickey Sain, Sr., Kurt Mackey

Staff: Gary Balling, Diane Stanke

I. Welcome – Call to order at 7:05pm. Minutes from the May 24 meeting were approved with a motion by Doug Varn and second by Laura Kaufman.

II. Park District Update

Doug Varn discussed his communications with the Save the Recs group including the meeting held at the library as well as the Hundred Mom March. Our main concern is making sure the information dispersed from this group is accurate. The PDCC has worked to be responsive to this group.

Doug is working on a set of guiding principles regarding the development of the Comprehensive Plan. These principles will state what we want to see reflected in this plan and what lens we are looking through. These principles will help all concerned to speak concisely about the Comprehensive Plan and bring consistency to our message. Laura Kaufman and Kathy Stohr both stated that people they speak with are not aware of the actual cost of repairs to our facilities. It's obvious as we write the principles, we need a general statement about the condition of the facilities. It was also suggested that we need to state that the members of the PDCC are citizens who are program participants and facility users. Gail Moran suggested that the bullet points (principles) are broad, encompassing all facilities, not specific ones.

Doug Varn explained to the group that he attended a meeting with Gary and school district representatives. He also went with Tim Kelly to meet with John Williams at the Township to discuss getting youth at risk involved in programs. The Township would like see cooperation and

partnering between the Park District, Senior Services and Youth Services. Everyone agreed that partnerships should be one of the principles.

II. Indoor Spaces Report

Doug asked if the entire committee would like to see information before it is sent to Ron Vine and everyone agreed.

III. Leisure Vision Update

The last few weeks were spent discussing the scope of the project. The local newspapers reported the PDCC would be making recommendations when in fact this is the responsibility of Leisure Vision. Gary asked Ron Vine to study the neighborhood centers more. Jeff King from Ballard*King will be visiting Oak Park for a day to meet with each of the Center Directors and Bret Fahnstrom, Manager of Center Directors.

Gary is confident that we are going to get a good final product due to revisions made to the scope.

In the original scope, a SWOT analysis was included for all facilities. Now we are also asking Leisure Vision to develop standards regarding the number of baseball fields, soccer fields, dog parks, skate parks, etc. These standards will be established based on benchmark and survey results. Gary explained that Ron Vine has completed extra work not included in the original scope such as more stakeholder interviews and focus groups, the collection of more benchmark surveys and more site visits. Although the establishment of standards will be an additional expense, it will be well worth the added cost.

Architects Carol Yetken and Gilmore Franzen are beginning the facility inventory.

Laura Kaufman and Patience Nelson expressed concerns regarding the lack of time made available to discuss the consultant's preliminary reports and ask the consultants questions. Patience would like a dialogue with the consultants.

All PDCC members in attendance agreed they would like the consensus building information ahead of time so that they can meet as a group to discuss it and create questions. September 13 is the date tentatively scheduled for the Consensus Building Workshop. Leisure Vision will bring recommendations in draft form to this meeting. The PDCC will get information at least one week prior to the workshop; however, two weeks before (August 30) is most desirable.

IV. Closing Remarks

The group passed around and discussed a letter from Theresa Lipo regarding a request to look at some Chicago Park District facilities. Kathy Stohr recommended responding that we selected our benchmark communities carefully and that the recreation centers are in no imminent danger of being torn down. If more information on historic preservation, Theresa Lipo will be contacted.

The PDCC discussed the need to be prepared so that when we are contacted by different special interest groups, we have established procedures to respond. Doug Varn reminded the group that part of the PDCC's responsibility is to take the report to the public so we can anticipate discussing the results with many different special interest groups.

Diane Stanke will add Theresa Lipo to the list serve.

Doug Varn will or already has emailed or called anyone who took the time to write a thoughtful letter to him regarding the Comprehensive Plan.

The group discussed the need to distinguish between neighborhood centers and neighborhood programming. Doug Varn discussed the two long standing traditions in Oak Park. First, Oak Park is nationally recognized for District 97 and the localized schools model which became popular in the late 60s and early 70s. Second, Oak Park is known for its recreation center delivery model. Due to the recreation center tradition, the planning process is an emotional issue.

Gail Moran stated that we are so focused on indoor spaces, perhaps we have forgotten about outdoor spaces. She proposed that we study outdoor spaces more. Gary Balling said CYLA Design Associates is going to look at outdoor spaces.

Doug Varn is going to meet with a resident who volunteered to review the community survey raw data. Doug thanked everyone for the good discussion.

Meeting adjourned at 9:05pm.

Next Meeting – Monday, August 30 – 7pm - Oak Park Conservatory, 615 Garfield



PARK DISTRICT OF OAK PARK
COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN



Park District Citizen Committee
Meeting Minutes
September 7, 2004

The Oak Park Conservatory, 615 Garfield Street

In Attendance: Chair Doug Varn, Kathy Stohr, Rickey Sain, Sr., John Mullins, Kurt Mackey, Susan Kurtenbach, Gail Moran, Patience Nelson, Mary Kay O'Grady, Laura Kaufman, Jessica Bullock, Marty Bracco

Staff: Gary Balling, David Kindler, Diane Stanke, Lisa Lightcap

Visitors: Holly Anderson

I. Welcome – Doug Varn called the meeting to order at 7:10pm.

Gail made a motion to approve the minutes of June 28, 2004. Rickey seconded the motion.

The Cap the Ike discussion was deferred until the display boards arrived

II. Project Update – Doug Varn

Doug Varn asked the group to please review the draft documents. Any substantive comments should be given to Lisa Lightcap who will forward the information to Leisure Vision. Kathy Stohr asked about how trending information is tied into the whole report. Gary explained that this information is leading up to the final report. Laura Kaufman wanted to know trending information specifically as it relates to Oak Park. Kathy wants to “connect the dots” between survey results and national trends.

Gail sought confirmation that the information we now have is not the final report and that the PDCC will be able to review the final report before the consensus workshop. (Later in the meeting this was confirmed.)

Governance Draft: Doug explained PDCC deliberately has not discussed or come to a conclusion on governance so as not to get ahead of Leisure Vision. Part of the governance plan asks for an action plan. We need to discuss what happens after October 25. Doug asked the group to consider whether they would like to go forward with the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan. He explained the Park District needs some consistency with community input and would like to see some PDCC members continue on in the process. If you are interested, contact Doug.

Doug asked each working group to complete a report following the outline he included in the meeting packet. We need a record of what each group discussed and considered. This information should be submitted by October 25.

The Communications Subcommittee needs to meet to develop a message to be communicated once the consensus workshop has taken place. The PDCC is responsible for accountability in the comprehensive planning process. Once the plan is in place, Gary Balling hopes for ownership from the PDCC who will be expected to do community outreach.

Kathy Stohr inquired as to what will be the final recommendations? Where is the District going? What are the issues? She wants to discuss key issues at the consensus workshop rather than dwell on small issues. Doug assured the group that they will have a draft report by around October 1 so the PDCC has time to read, digest, and prepare their own comments and questions.

III. Governance – Patience Nelson

Patience gave an overview of the Governance Subcommittee's decision-making process. She explained four models were given to the subcommittee by Leisure Vision. The Subcommittee evaluated each model using the 15 factors provided by Leisure Vision. The Subcommittee regrouped and prioritized these factors, then each was assigned a weight. They applied the factors to each of the four models, eliminating two hybrid models due to accountability and sustainability issues. A Village-operated parks and recreation department and an independent Park District were the two models left. The subcommittee moved toward the independent Park District model because such a system would be run by Parks and Recreation experts who can implement a vision. In the opinion of the Governance Subcommittee, this seems to be the best governance model.

A Governance Plan was reviewed by Patience:

Model – Independent PD recommended by subcommittee and Leisure Vision

Action Plan – Blueprint (how to) transition to new governance model – needs to be action plan that subcommittee and Leisure Vision agree on.

Sustainability

-Raising and managing resources

-Consultant recommendation

-Other options?

Patience believes sustainability should be part of Action Plan, not a separate step.

Leisure Vision recommended the Village of Oak Park give the Park District money (village transfer money) for the next three years. Leisure Vision community center operating costs will decrease within the next three years so each year less money is allocated to operating expenses and more money is allocated to capital projects.

Patience believes there are many different ways to achieve sustainability. She thinks Leisure Vision should have provided a number of options instead of just one. Another option she discussed was to allow the Village of Oak Park and the Park District to develop an Action Plan and other options to raise revenues and ultimately achieve sustainability. We need more options than the one Leisure Vision has provided.

Gary explained that the Leisure Vision solution is difficult because our fund balance is **so low**. Taking away \$1.5 million annually from the operating budget will be tough.

Doug said he wants the PDCC to come to a consensus on a model of governance and agree that we need an Action Plan.

Gary explained that village transfer funds are spent on the 7 recreation centers, Dole Center, and Senior programs. He went on to explain the governance issue dates back to 1955 when the first report on this subject was issued; in 1967 another report was issued; this topic was also discussed in the 1980's. Even when the Park District and the Recreation Department were two separate entities, they were under funded. The tax dollars used for the Village transfer are already being collected.

Jessica asked if we are going to ask Leisure Vision for more options or if this should be left up to the Park District Board.

Patience said options for sustainability should be congruent with the vision statement which is not completed.

Kathy said the Village transfer needs to be addressed.

Laura stated that if the Village agrees that the model recommended for governance is the independent Park District model then the Village is committed to helping the Park District become sustainable. David said his conversations with VOP Trustees regarding this issue are accompanied with a discussion of money however the Village can't support the Park District forever. We need to come up with a financially responsible agreement.

Doug asked the group if they supported the independent model of governance. He received a unanimous response in support of this governance model.

Laura stated that the PDCC needs to emphasize to the Village that they expect the VOP to help the Park District become independent and viable. However, the group agreed that if the Park District became

independent, it could not depend upon the Village for financial support ad infinite, i.e. the Park District cannot be independent while being subsidized - or have it both ways.

Doug will draft a consensus statement regarding consensus of the group regarding governance. He acknowledged the option presented by Leisure Vision was not well received by the group.

David reminded everyone that the reason we hired independent consultants was to look at issues in a new light.

IV. Internal Spaces – No report

V. Benchmarking – No report

VI. Outdoor Spaces

Gail and Mary Kay are interested in this subcommittee. They will meet on September 20 for a Standards Workshop with Carol Yetken and Ron Vine.

VII. Survey – No report

VIII. Cap the Ike Report.

Gail and Kurt represented the Cap the Ike Commission and presented three concepts which were discussed by the group.

Meeting adjourned at 9:37pm

Upcoming Meetings:

Standards Meeting (tentative) October 6, 7pm, Administration Center

PDCC Meeting, Saturday, October 23, 8am, Oak Park Conservatory

Consensus Building Workshop – Monday, October 25, 6:30-9:30pm at Village Hall in Room 101.

***SWOT Analysis of Parks and
Recreation Facilities***

OAK PARK PARKS AND RECREATION COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN



SITE INVENTORY



CYLA Design Associates, Inc.
September 7, 2004

INTRODUCTION

As a complement to the community survey compiled earlier this year, CYLA Design Associates, Inc., conducted assessments of the recreational features and site amenities of twenty Park District properties in July of 2004. In addition, eleven school sites were visited to acknowledge the contribution of their recreational assets to the community. Buildings were not included in the scope of this review.

The Site Inventory consists of one condensed report for each site plus three overall summaries - one for the major park recreational features, a second for park amenities, and the third for the school sites.

Twenty-two categories of recreational features and twenty-three categories of site amenities were inventoried and broadly evaluated for condition. The condition assessments, though subjective, were included to better describe the general quality of each feature and their contribution to the recreational experience.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

In general, the parks appeared neat and in good repair. Each site seemed to be benefiting from routine landscape maintenance. Litter and vandalism were rarely in evidence.

Recreational Facilities

Although the Park District provides a diverse range of recreational experiences, a few features were naturally more common than others. Fifteen of the twenty park sites offered some collection of play apparatus for children under twelve, as did eight of the school sites, almost invariably of brightly colored metal construction. Most equipment is newer and in good to excellent condition.

Sixteen parks had a field center or other featured building. Multi-purpose fields could be found at twelve park sites; eight of these included one or more skinned infields with backstops. Tennis courts were the next most commonly encountered feature, at seven sites with 26 courts total. Nearly all the fields and courts were rated "good" or "fair" (buildings were not rated). Multi-purpose fields associated with the elementary schools, in contrast, were rated "fair" to "poor".

Site Amenities

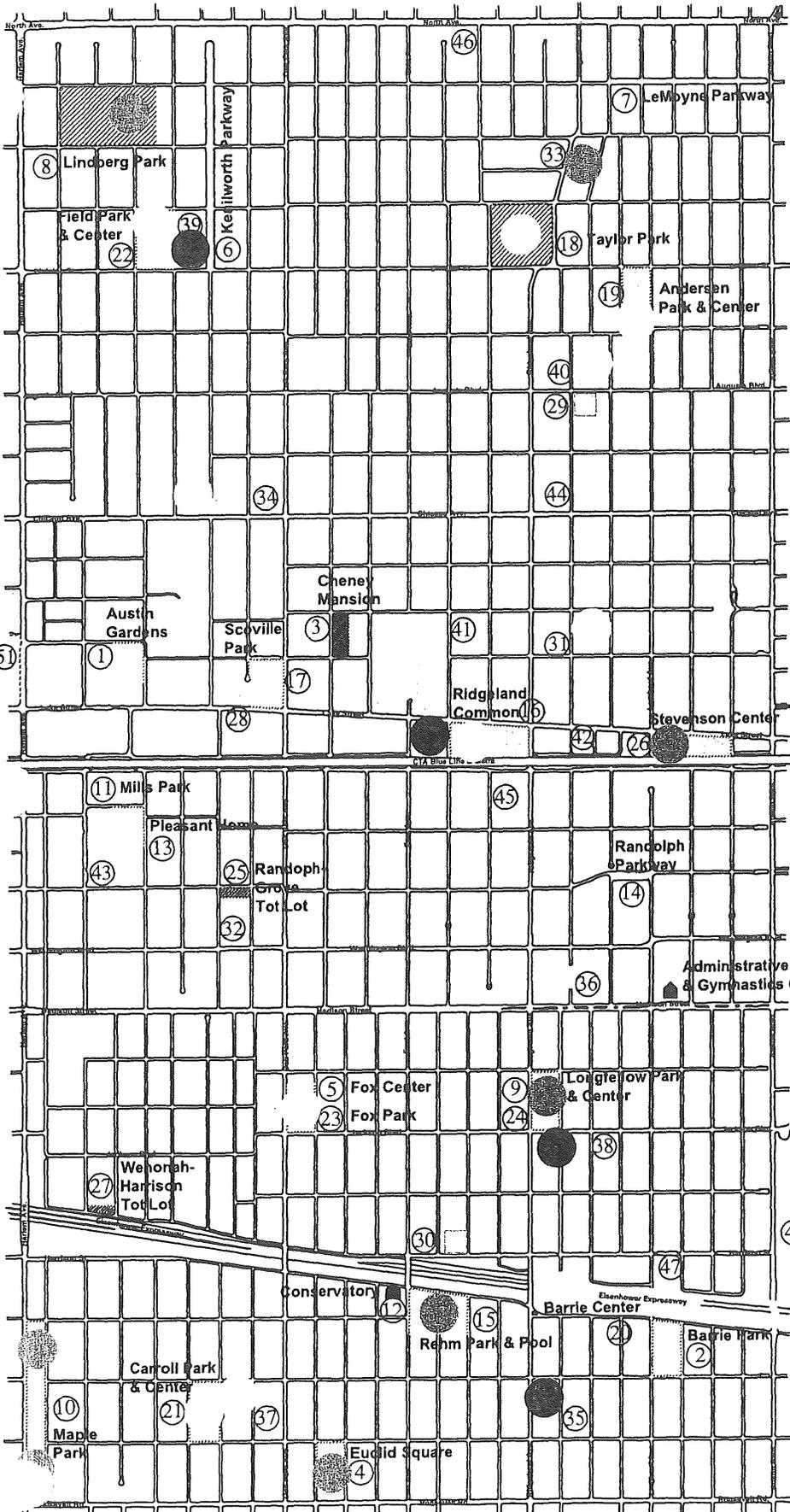
Site furnishings such as benches, trash receptacles, and bike racks varied in style, material, age, and condition. Ratings of "excellent" to "poor" were widely represented. Though it is difficult to generalize, it is apparent that site furnishings are widely used by the public.

Walkways and other pavements are present at every park site. Concrete is the most common paving material and usually rated "good".

Trees in mowed lawn and shrub beds are ubiquitous; about half the parks also offered special plantings, either annual display beds, naturalized areas, or heritage trees. Plantings, overall, received good ratings although pruning and landscape maintenance of shrubs was often deficient.

Some turf suffers from heavy wear. Except for the five sites with automatic irrigation systems, the extensive lawn areas would affect the impressions of the parks for the worse during drought stress.

Lighting was provided at nearly every site, usually a standardized pole-mounted luminaire. Effectiveness and distribution of the lighting varied from park to park.



CONDITION

- EXCELLENT
- GOOD
- FAIR
- POOR

PARK DISTRICT FACILITIES

- 1 Austin Gardens
- 2 Barrie Park
- 3 Cheney Mansion
- 4 Euclid Square
- 5 Fox Park
- 6 Kenilworth Parkway
- 7 LeMoynes Parkway
- 8 Lindberg Park
- 9 Longfellow Park
- 10 Maple Park
- 11 Mills Park
- 12 Conservatory
- 13 Pleasant Home
- 14 Randolph Parkway
- 15 Rehm Park & Pool
- 16 Ridgeland Common
- 17 Scoville Park
- 18 Taylor Park

VILLAGE OF OAK PARK FACILITIES

- 19 Andersen Park & Center
- 20 Barrie Center
- 21 Carroll Park & Center
- 22 Field Park & Center
- 23 Fox Center
- 24 Longfellow Center
- 25 Randolph-Grove Tot Lot
- 26 Stevenson Center
- 27 Wenonah-Harrison Tot Lot

OTHER COMMUNITY FACILITIES

- 28 Main Library
- 29 Dole Library Center
- 30 Maze Library
- 31 Beye School
- 32 Brooks Junior HS
- 33 Hatch School
- 34 Holmes School
- 35 Irving School
- 36 Julian Junior HS
- 37 Lincoln School
- 38 Longfellow School
- 39 Mann School
- 40 Whittier School
- 41 OPRF High School

PRIVATE FACILITIES

- 42 O.P. Tennis & Raquetball
- 43 Oak Park YMCA
- 44 Oak Park Yoga Center
- 45 Tai Chi Tao Center
- 46 Oak Park Children's Museum
- 47 Akido - Yoga Center

OTHER AREA FACILITIES

- 48 Columbus Park
- 49 Concordia University
- 50 Dominican University
- 51 Cook County Forest Preserve

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- 1 Austin Gardens
- 2 Barrie Park
- 3 Cheney Mansion
- 4 Euclid Square
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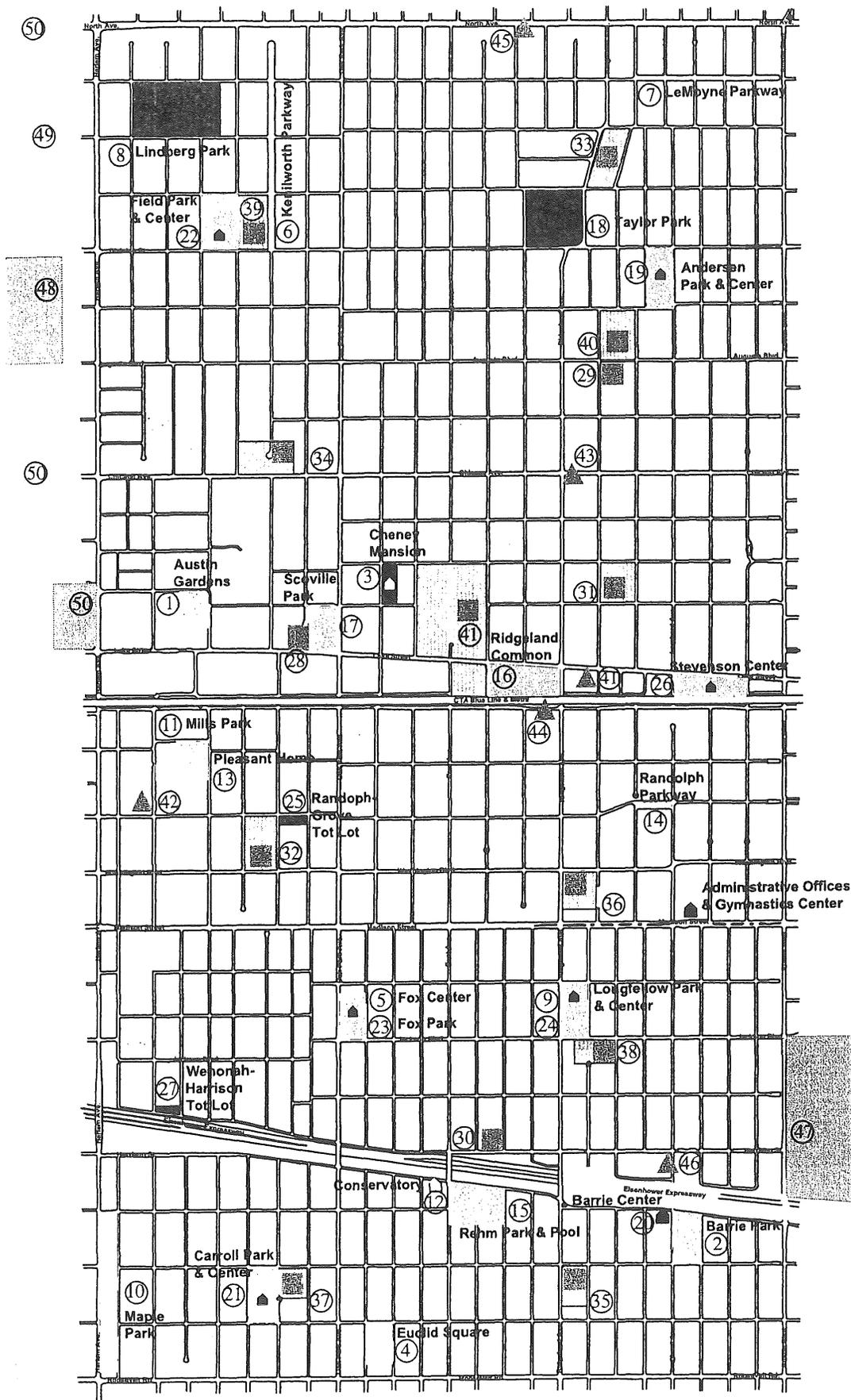
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- 32 Brooks Junior HS
- 33 Hatch School
- 34 Holmes School
- 35 Irving School
- 36 Julian Junior HS
- 37 Lincoln School
- 38 Longfellow School
- 39 Mann School
- 40 Whittier School
- 41 Oak Park - River Forest H.S.

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- 42 Oak Park YMCA
- 43 Oak Park Yoga Center
- 44 Tai Chi Tao Center
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- 46 Akido - Yoga Center

OTHER AREA FACILITIES

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- 50 Cook County Forest Preserve



Park District Oak Park - Summary of Site Inventories : MAJOR FEATURES

Rev 9/20/2004

Recreational Feature E = Excellent G = Good F = Fair P = Poor		Park District Oak Park Facilities																	TOTALS						
		Anderson Park & Center	Austin Gardens	Barrie Park & Center (under const)	Carroll Park & Center	Cheney Mansion	Conservatory	Euclid Square	Field Park & Center	Fox Park	Lindberg Park	Longfellow Park & Center	Maple Park	Mills Park & Pleasant Home	Randolph-Grove Tot Lot	Rehm Park & Pool	Ridgeland Common	Scoville Park	Stevenson Park	Taylor Park	Wenonah-Harrison Tot Lot	Total Quantity	Excellent	Good	Fair
Fields & Courts	Multipurpose Field	1-F		1 new	1-F		1-G	2-F	1-F	2-G	1-G	2-G			1-G	1-F		1-G	1-F		16	1	8	7	
	60' infield/backstop-Soft/baseball			1 new	1-F		1-G	2-G	1-P		1-G	2-G				2-F		1-G			12	1	7	3	1
	90' infield/backstop-Baseball									2-G											2		2		
	Football Field																				0				
	Soccer Field																			1-G	1		1		
	Volleyball Court																				2			2	
	Tennis Court			2 new ¹			4-F			3-F	3-G	3-G, 1-F			3-F		3-G		6-G		26	2	15	11	
	Basketball Court-full											1-G									1		1		
	Basketball Court-half			2					1-P	1-G		1-P							2-E		3	1	1		1
	Running Track																				0				
Special Site Features	Swimming Pool														1-E	1-E				2	2				
	Field Center / Other Building	1	1	1	1	3	2		1	1	1	1	1	1	2	3	1	1	2		24				
	Terrace	1-G				2-G			1-P	1-G		1-G				1-G				7		6		1	
	Shelter / Gazebo																			0		0			
	Ice Rink (indoor & outdoor)										1-G				1-F	1-G			1-G	4		3	1		
	Sledding Hill			1-E												1-F			1-E	3	2		1		
	Picnic Area													1-G	1-G	1-F			1-G	5		4	1		
	Parking Lot														2-F	1-F				3			3		
Skateboard Park																		1	1	new					
Play Apparatus	Equipment/under 8 yrs of age	1-G		1-E	1-E		1-E	1-F	1-G	1-E	1-E	1-E		1-G	1-E		1-G	1-E	1-G	1-E	15	9	5	1	
	Equipment/over 8 yrs of age	1-G		1-E					1-E	1-G		1-E			1-E			1-E		7	5	2			
	Individual Equipment				E		G		G		E	E		E	E			E							
	Spray Pool									1-G		1-E								2	1	1			

Park District Oak Park - Summary of Site Inventories : LANDSCAPE & AMENITIES

Recreational Feature E = Excellent G = Good F = Fair P = Poor		Park District Oak Park Facilities																		TOTALS						
		Anderson Park & Center	Austin Gardens	Barrie Park & Center	Carroll Park & Center	Cheney Mansion	Conservatory	Euclid Square	Field Park & Center	Fox Park	Linberg Park	Longfellow Park & Center	Maple Park	Mills Park & Pleasant Home	Randolph-Grove Tot Lot	Rehm Park & Pool	Ridgeland Common	Scoville Park	Stevenson Park	Taylor Park	Wenonah-Harrison Tot Lot	Total Quantity	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Site Furniture	Bench	3-F	10-E,P		2-F	5-G	1-F	8-G,F	6-G	5-F	14-G	5-G	6-F	7-P	3-F	14-G		19-E,G,P		16-F	3-F	127	11	55	43	18
	Bike rack	2-G			1-P			1-F		2-G	6-G,F	3-F	3-F			6-E,F	6-P		1	3-G		34	3	11	13	7
	Trash Container	1-G	11-G		3-F			3-F	3-F	5-F	24-F	5-F	6-F	2-P	1-P	8-G,F	22-F	8-G	8-G,F	8-G	1-F	119		34	79	3
	Recycling	1-F			1-G		1-G		1-F	1-G	1-G	1-G				1-G	2-F	1-G	1	1-G		13		9	4	
	Drinking Fountain		1-G		1-G		1-G	1-G			3-G	1-G			1-G	1-G	5-G	1-E	3-E,P	3-G	1-G	23	2	19		2
	Flagpole	1-E			1-G		1-G		1-G	1-G	1-G	1-G				1-G	1-G	1-F	1	1-E		12	2	9	1	
Lighting	Pathway	3	9-G		2-G			9-G	5-G	5-G	25-G	6-G	2	12-G		9-G		17-G	9-E	16-E		129	25	104		
	Athletic Field / Court							1-G				4-G	4	1		16-G	8-G					34		34		
	Parking Lot					F											3-G					4		3	1	
	Floodlights																					0				
Walks	Public sidewalks	G	G		G	G,F	G	E,G	G	G		G	G	G	F	G	G	G	2-E	G	G					
	Interior walks (paved)	E	G		E,P	E,F		G	G	G	E,G	G,F	G,F	G	G	E,G		G	E	E	G					
	Trails and paths (unpaved)		G			F						F														
Landscape	Trees in mowed turf	G	E,G,F,P		G	G	G	G	G	G,F	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G					
	Shrub planting	F	F		F	G,F	F		G,F,P	G	G	G	G	G		G,F	G	F	G	F	G					
	Natural area		G				G				G															
	Annual / Perennial bed	P			F	G,F	G			G	G	G	F			G	G	G	G	2-G						
	Sculpture or other feature	G	E		2-G		3-G		G						G		G	E,G								
	Containerized / Special					G	5-G										G									
	Heritage Tree	1-E				G			G		G		G			G	G	G		G						
	Irrigation System										X						X	X		X		5				
	Berms							G	G				G		P							4		3		1
	Other	Fencing	F	E		G,F,P	F,P	F	G	F	G,F	G	E,G,F	F	F	G	G	F-P	G	E,G						
Site Identification Sign	1-G	1-G		2-G,F	G	G	G	G	G	2-G	3-G	2-G	2-G	2-P	2-F	2-G	4-G,F	2-E,G	2-G	3-G	2-G	36	1	28	5	2
Port-a-potty							F					1-E									2	1			1	

SITE UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Park District Oak Park - Summary of Site Inventories : MAJOR FEATURES

Rev 9/20/2004

Recreational Feature E = Excellent G = Good F = Fair P = Poor		School District 97 and 200 Facilities											TOTALS				
		Beye School	Brooks Junior HS	Hatch School	Holmes School	Irving School	Julian Junior HS	Lincoln School	Longfellow School	Mann School	Oak Park - River Forest HS	Whittier School	Total Quantity	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Field and Court Sports	Multipurpose Field	1-F		1-G	1-F	1-P		1-F	1-P	1-P	1-E	1-F	9	1	1	4	3
	Baseball- 60' infield/backstop	2-F	1-G	2-G	1-G	1-F	1-P					1-F, 1-P	10		4	4	2
	Baseball-90' infield/backstop										3-E		3	3			
	Football Field										2-G		2		2		
	Soccer Field										1-G		1		1		
	Tennis Court										8-G		8		8		
	Basketball Court-full							2-P					2				2
	Basketball Court-half	2-F			1-F				2-F				5			5	
	Running Track										1-E		1	1			
Play Apparatus	Equipment/under 8 yrs of age									1-G		1			1		
	Equipment/over 8 yrs of age	1-E		1-E	1-G	3-E		1-G	1-E, G	2-G		1-E, 1-G	13	7	6		
	Individual Equipment					E		G	F	G							

*Analysis of Community Centers
and Historic Homes*

Background

The Park District of Oak Park faces major challenges in addressing budgetary issues. There are three primary funding sources for the Park District, taxes, transfer from the Village of Oak Park and fees/charges for programs. The Park District is limited by increasing the amount of property taxes that can be levied by the Property Tax Extension Limitation (PTELL). This same provision also sets limits on the annual levy for debt service. Currently the Park District has three outstanding bonds with a repayment scheduled to retire in 2006 (\$263,000 per year) and 2008 (\$220,000 per year).

The Park District of Oak Park does have considerable opportunities to increase tax revenues from existing and new tax sources through voter elections. Revenues from existing park district tax sources can increase as much as \$1,514,496 annually through voter elections and new sources of tax support can add to this, as well as voter approved expenditures for capital projects. The Park District has not brought any issues before the voters in at least 21 years.

The Village of Oak Park contributes funding annually to offset the operational cost of the seven community centers managed by the Park District. The transfer of funding is tied to the consumer price index and has remained relatively consistent the last few years. The balance of funding for the Park District comes from fees and charges for programs and activities offered through the Park District.

The limits and constraints of the existing funding sources for the Park District and the Park District's inaction in pursuing voter approved opportunities to increase tax support has created stress on the existing resources. One fall out from the budgetary constraints has been the deferred maintenance practice employed over the past several years. Under funding the capital repair and maintenance program for the Park District has resulted in not only a lengthy list of needs but poor facility conditions that impact participation and image of the Park District. A 2002 Capital Improvement Study conducted by a citizen committee identified almost 14 million dollars in capital improvement needs for the District. The policy of deferring maintenance will grow exponentially as facilities continue to age and equipment deteriorates.

Another challenged created by the funding limitations is a reduction in the Fund Balance for the Park District. The Fund balance has slipped to a 10% level, well below the desired level of 25%. Under funding the reserve account puts the financial integrity of the Park District in jeopardy. A primary reason for the overall Fund Balance being at 10% is that the Revenue Facilities Fund is carrying a negative fund balance of (\$820,102) due in large part to the aquatic facilities not meeting their revenue goals as part of the 1996 Alternative Revenue Bond. This is further discussed in other sections of this report. Under funding the reserve account puts the financial integrity of the Park District in jeopardy.

Analysis of Community Centers and Historic Homes

The financial situation of the Park District is similar to what many school districts and municipalities are facing around the country today. As existing revenue sources stay status quo or are reduced, the challenge is to develop new sources of revenue while ensuring that all cost effective and service effective means to reduce operating and administrative costs are explored.

The Consultant Team believes that the financial challenges facing the District go beyond what an increase in fees and charges can correct. Certainly there is a need to pursue voter approved tax revenues for capital projects and other areas of high citizen need. This issue is discussed further in other aspects of this Master Plan report. Additionally, the Park District must examine every facet of operations, including some difficult choices to cost effectively reduce operating and administrative costs. We believe that by aggressively pursuing these cost savings the Park District will be in a better position to ask residents of the community to support voter approved tax increases.

The Assessment Process

The assessment of the current system of delivering parks and recreation services included several different public engagement tools to gather and quantify information including:

Stakeholder Interviews. Members of the Leisure Vision consulting team conducted 33 separate stakeholder interviews with elected and appointed representatives of the Village, Park Board members, representatives of private businesses, non-profit organizations and other public entities in Oak Park.

Focus Groups. Members of the Leisure Vision consulting team conducted six different focus groups including indoor sport organizations, special properties, outdoor sports interest, senior citizens, community center users and service organizations. In addition, Jeff King, with the Leisure Vision consulting team conducted focus group interviews with the Community Center Directors. The intent of these focus group meetings was to gain a better understanding of the role and function each center, understand the market served, understand the responsibilities of each Director and listen to ideas and suggestions the Directors have about cost saving steps and possible consolidation of center operations. A summary of the community center director's interviews is included in the last section of this report.

Community Survey. Leisure Vision compiled the results of 824 completed surveys. The survey had a full range of usage patterns, needs, priorities and funding questions. The intent of the survey was to gain a greater understanding of parks and recreation needs and attitude of a cross section of the community. The survey was a statistical valid sampling of households in the Village of Oak Park.

Analysis of Community Centers and Historic Homes

Park District Citizen Committee Reports - The Park District Citizen Committee (PDCC) report compiled held a number of public meetings and assembled several financial, programming, and assessment reports regarding the 7 community centers, which the Consultant Team reviewed. The Consultant Team appreciates the extensive time put into these activities by members of the PDCC

Park District of Oak Park Financial and Programming Records – The consulting team reviewed of comprehensive financial, programming and management reports compiled by Park District of Oak Park staff. The review included individual center’s budget information; historic trends; direct, administrative, and programming costs/revenues budget information; indirect expenses and revenue reports; revenue and expense comparisons; and Comprehensive Revenue Policy.

Benchmark Survey. Leisure Vision conducted a benchmark survey of 13 other communities that were identified through the stakeholder interviews and Park Board as communities that had a similar quality of life and other characteristics consistent to Oak Park. A broad range of questions were asked regarding the number and type of parks and trails, the number and type of indoor and outdoor facilities, partnerships, operating and capital budgets.

Site Visits. Members of the Leisure Vision consulting team conducted site inspection of Park District facilities including Anderson, Barrie, Carroll, Fox, Stevenson, Field and Longfellow recreation centers; Austin Gardens, Euclid Square, Maple Park, Randolph and Wenonah Tot Lots, Taylor Park and Mills Park, Chaney Mansion, Pleasant Home, Conservatory, Dole Center, Gymnastic Center, Rehm Pool and Ridgeland Commons. In addition, alternative service providers in the Village of Oak Park were also visited including the Oak Park Athletic Club, Oak Park YMCA and Temple Fitness.

History of Community Centers

Carroll Recreation Center was built in the 1920's and was expanded in the 1960's. In the early 1980,s the center was renovated. Carroll is adjacent to Lincoln Elementary School and is one of the smaller recreation centers. Anderson Recreation Center is the oldest in the Park District and serves the most ethnically and racially diverse areas in Oak Park. Stevenson Recreation Center is one of the larger recreation centers and recent renovation included a skate park and outdoor basketball courts. Stevenson has a 2,500 S.F. activity room. Longfellow Recreation Center is one of the newest community centers built in the 1960's. Longfellow, one of the larger community centers in Oak Park at about 3,500 S.F. is adjacent to the Longfellow Elementary School. Fox Recreation Center is a duplicate of Longfellow Recreation Center design and was built at the same. Fox is the most centrally located recreation center and is very popular for birthday parties. Field Recreation Center is the smallest recreation center in Oak Park and is adjacent to Mann School. Barrie Recreation Center is somewhat typical of the older sites in the Park District. Barrie was expanded in the 1960's, then renovated in the 1980's and is currently under another renovation.

With the exception of the renovation planned at the Barrie Community Center and the new components added to Stevenson Community Center, the community centers are in need of repair and renovation. Most of the community centers do not meet ADA facility standards on accessibility and are showing signs of deterioration. The benchmark survey asked a question regarding how much money per year is allocated to a capital improvement program. The average amount allocated for capital improvements in the other benchmark communities is \$1,390,000 per year. The Park District of Oak Park was one of three other benchmark communities that do not have money allocated for capital improvements.

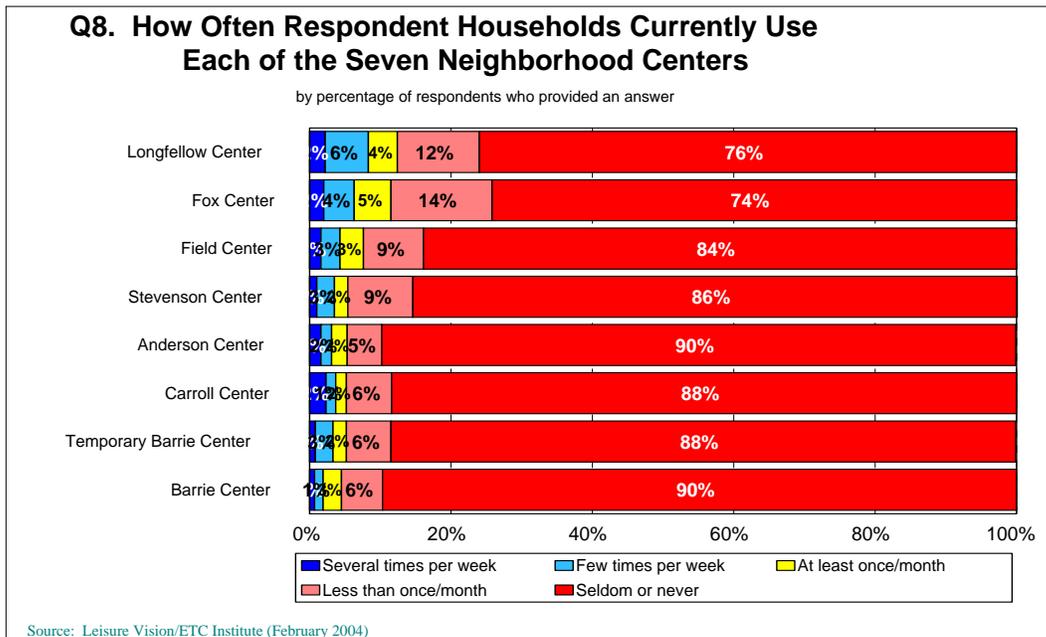
The benchmark survey of 13 comparable communities asked a question regarding whether the parks and recreation agency had a long range capital improvement program, and if so how much money each year is allocated to the capital improvement program.

A majority of benchmarked agencies did have a long-range capital improvement program, with the average length being 5 years. The average benchmarked community (with a long-range capital improvement program) invests \$21,074 per 1,000 in population. This would compute to an average capital improvement program of \$1.1 million in Oak Park. Currently, even without a long-range capital improvement program, Oak Park is investing \$600,000 per year in debt service for capital improvements. By 2007, this amount will be only \$217,000 due to the series of 1996 Alternative Revenue Bond being retired.

The Objective

A major focus of the master planning process was analysis of the current system of delivering parks and recreation services through the seven community centers. This analysis was conducted to answer key questions regarding the efficiencies and effectiveness of the current service delivery model and recommend options as appropriate. Key questions that were addressed in our analysis include:

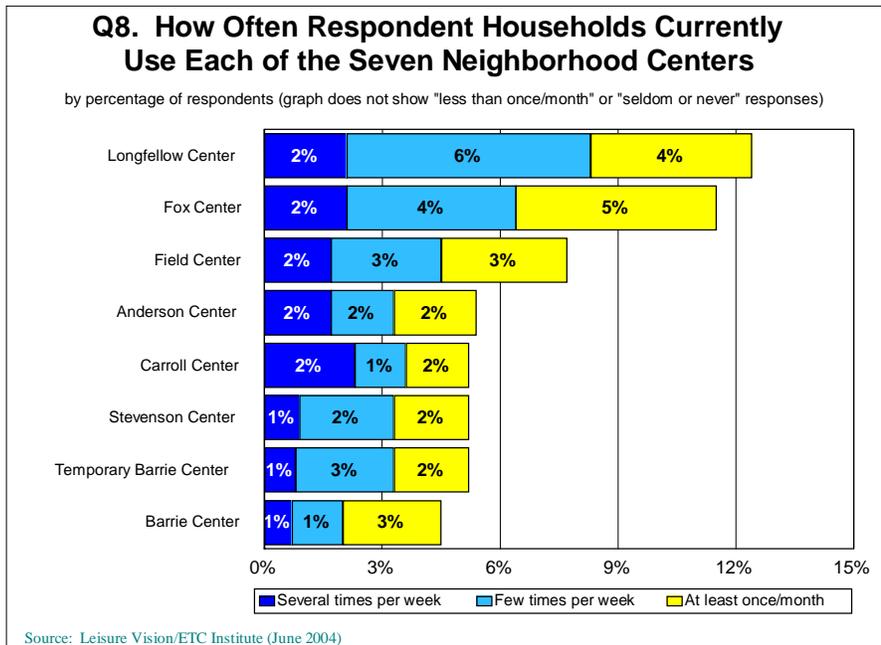
1. **How many households use the community center and for what purposes?** Results from the community survey indicate that use of the seven community centers range from 10%-24% (use the community centers less than once per month to several times per week) of the respondents. This clearly suggests that a large percentage of the respondents, 74%-90% depending on which center, are seldom or never used. The table below highlights the results.



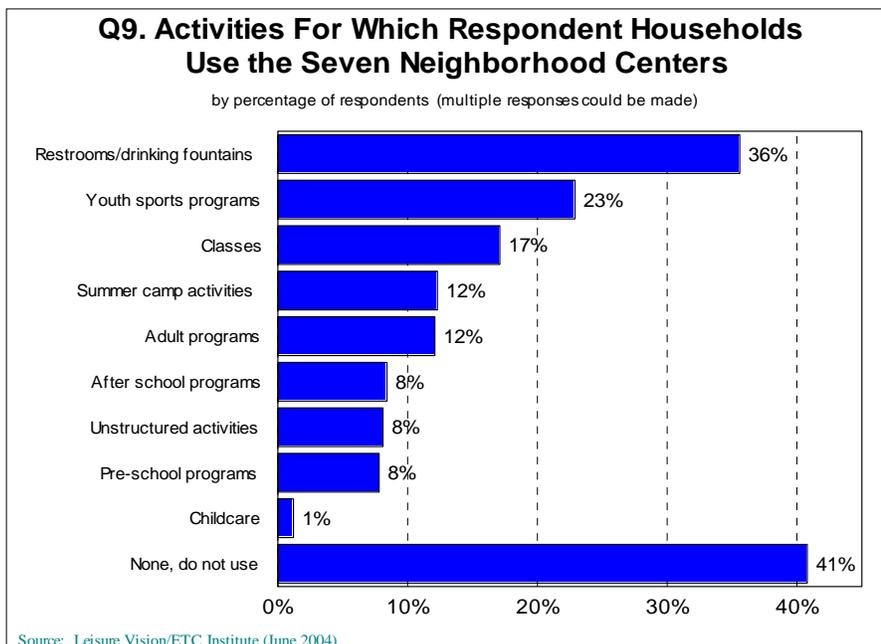
The consultants frequently heard during the stakeholder meetings and focus groups that the existing community centers do not serve families. The facilities provide activities for young people but lack the components for a family to participate in activities together. The community centers also lack ADA accessibility and are not considered ADA friendly facilities. Several people reported to the consultants a desire to have a large multi-purpose center preferably in the middle of the Park District.

Analysis of Community Centers and Historic Homes

The following table highlights the frequency of use from the respondents that indicated that they are using the community centers. Although the use of the community centers may be low, there is a great deal of passion and loyalty from the people who are using the centers.



Lastly, the survey asked the respondents that use the community centers to rank the reasons for use. Surprisingly, use of the community centers for restrooms were ranked as the top reason respondents use the community center.



2. **Do the community centers serve specific neighborhoods or village wide purposes?**

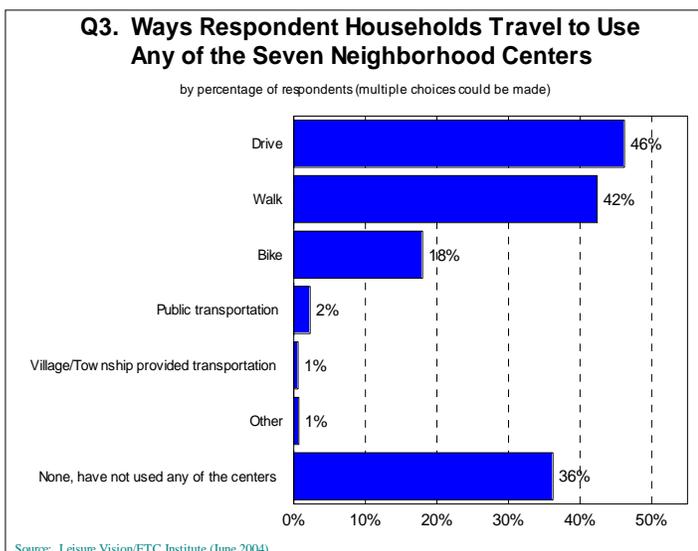
Results from interviews with community center staff, results of the needs assessment survey, and observations from the consultant team would indicate that the centers serve both specific neighborhood purposes and village wide purposes.

Jeff King, President of Ballard*King & Associates conducted interviews with each center director. Each director shared his/her belief that a high percentage of program participants came from a geographical area close to each community center that can be interpreted as neighborhood. At the same time, no records are kept at any of the centers tracking the percent of participants who come from specific areas nor do any of the centers have specific geographic boundaries that serve as their market.

Some centers directors reported that participation households were consistent to elementary school location and boundaries. Many programs offered at the community centers including; after school programs, pre-school programs, no school programs and summer camp, by their nature draw participants that are in close proximity to the center. Other programs offered through the centers, including sports and special events, have a tendency to draw from a larger geographical area.

When mapping out the geographical area for each center it is clear that there is significant overlap in the southern portion of the Village. There are four community centers that are south of Madison. The map below highlights the community centers and their individual geographical service area.

Information from the citizen survey indicated that a majority of those who use the community centers use more than one center. As illustrated below, those who use the centers are equally as likely to drive (46%) as walk (42%) to use the centers. Again, this walking, biking, and driving to use the centers indicates both a neighborhood and village wide service market.



Analysis of Community Centers and Historic Homes

3. ***How much money is spent in the operation of the community centers?*** The Park District of Oak Park spends a considerable portion of their total budget on the operations and staffing of the community centers. In 2003, the community centers accounted for 13% of the Park District expenses while generating only 2% of the revenue. The table below identifies the cost and revenue generated by the community centers in 2003.

Category	2003 Budget
Direct Center Cost	\$638,430
Administrative Cost	\$375,023
Program Revenue	\$225,211
Net Income (Loss)	(\$788,242)

A closer look at the operation of the community centers reveal that the Field has the highest recovery rate. The recovery rate for each center is listed in the table below.

Facility	2003 Cost Recovery
Field	47%
Fox	43%
Stevenson	38%
Barrie	34%
Longfellow	28%
Anderson	26%
Carroll	24%

Analysis of Community Centers and Historic Homes

4. **Does the present community center model of service delivery work?** The current model of service is failing for numerous reasons including:

A. Duplication of services. Many of the programs at each community center are the same. To a certain degree the community centers are competing with themselves for program participants. Program occupancy rates for the community centers range from 17% to 85% of capacity. Management has extended a great deal of latitude to the community center directors to develop programming. Some community center directors reported that they look at what has been successful in the past year and look at what the other centers are offering in determining what programs to offer at their center. This duplication of programs inhibits efficiency and restricts the ability to reach full potential in revenues. Financially it is more efficient to compress the participants into fewer classes. The staff costs for each center to run this program, regardless if the class has a minimum number of participants or maximum number of participants, is the same. If fewer classes are held the cost of instructors drop and the net revenue increases because classes are running at a higher occupancy rate. This efficiency will help improve the cost recovery rate at each center.

B. Staff costs are the single biggest cost at each center. Each of the seven community centers has a full-time director assigned to the building and various part-time instructors and supervisors to assist with monitoring and programming the building in the evening and weekends. Personnel costs are ranging from 77.8% to 88.3% of the community center budgets. The mean percentage is 84%. Typically personnel cost in a community center range from 60-75% of the total facility budget.

About 30% of the community center budget and staff costs are allocated to outdoor sports. The single biggest contributor to the cost of operation outdoor sports through the centers is the Park District philosophy of having paid coaches.

C. Hours needed for staffing vary by season. The community center directors were asked to estimate the amount of time they spent in the center on a weekly basis. It was clear from this question that the amount of time spent in the center varies greatly between summer and the school year. The average percent of time community center directors spent in the centers during the school year is 45%. This percentage drops to 30% during the summer months.

Analysis of Community Centers and Historic Homes

D. High administrative overhead. The administrative overhead costs for operating the centers appear high. Analysis of the 2003 budget reveals that 37% of the total community center budget is associated with administrative costs as the table below illustrates. There does not appear to be a method in place to accurately identify and distribute administrative cost on a Park District wide basis.

Category	2003 Budget
Direct Cost	\$669,881
Administrative Cost	\$375,032
Total Community Center Costs	\$1,013,546
Percent of Administrative Cost	37%

E. The neighborhood focus is changing. Community focus and interest by the residents is changing. At one time the community centers were the hub of neighborhood activity. Today there is less emphasis on the neighborhood aspect of the centers. For some, double income families are so busy that recreation activities have a lower priority, especially if it requires another trip out of the house in the evening. Some families may be looking for activities for the entire family to participate in together, which the existing community centers are lacking. For others, personal fitness is important and the community centers do not have facilities or equipment to meet their needs. Statistically, exercise with equipment ranks third in popularity based on the National Sporting Goods Association (NSGA) data. In addition, aerobics, weight training, exercise walking/jogging are all activities ranked in the top 10 in popularity but are not available through the Park District. The survey validates the importance of exercise for residents of the Park District. 52% of survey respondents indicated there is a need for a fitness and exercise component.

F. The community centers are putting financial strain on the Park District budget. The community centers accounted for about 12% (\$669,881) of the total Park District budget of \$8,115,513 in 2003. At the same time, community center revenue accounted for only 2.5% (\$207,436) of the \$8,115,513 revenue generated by the Park District.

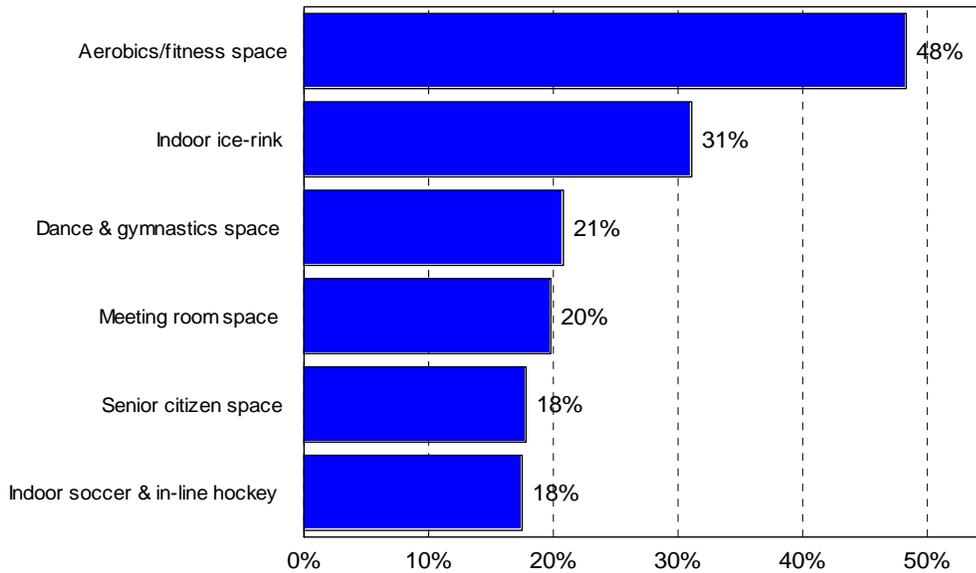
G. The community centers do not have the types of programming spaces that are of highest importance to the community. The Consultant Team has visited with some people who feel that the problems at the community centers are a result of poor programming. While we certainly agree that that programming could be improved, even with this improved programming, the centers do not have the types of programming spaces to meet the highest priority needs of the community.

Analysis of Community Centers and Historic Homes

The chart below indicates the community priorities for *expanding existing indoor programming spaces*. The highest priority spaces are spaces that are at the Dole Center and Ridgeland Commons and not at the existing 7 community centers.

Q16. Expanded Existing Indoor Programming Spaces Respondent Households Would Use

by percentage of respondents (multiple choices could be made)

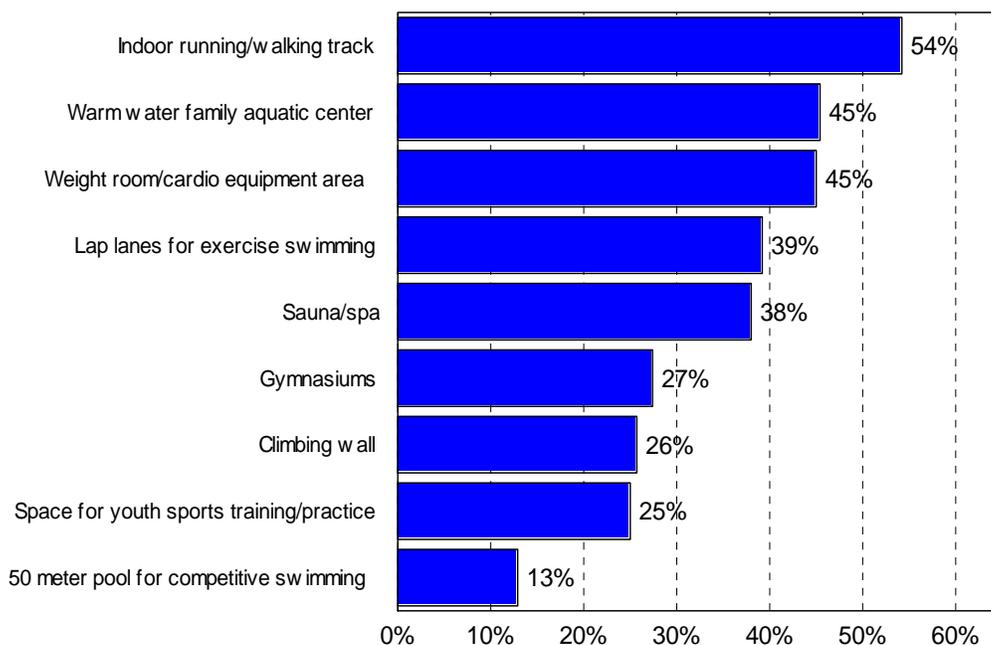


Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (June 2004)

Additionally, the citizen survey asked community priorities for *developing new indoor programming spaces*. These new indoor programming spaces are indicated below. Again, the types of programming spaces (and related programming) that are high priorities can not be offered at the community centers nor cost effectively be added.

Q16. New Indoor Programming Spaces Respondent Households Would Use

by percentage of respondents (multiple choices could be made)



Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (June 2004)

H. Results of the “Indoor Spaces Report” conducted by the Park District Citizen Committee. The PDCC report summary comments indicated “The current facilities of Park District do not provide sufficient or adequate space for the Park District of the future. Regardless of the means, the end must be additional space for indoor fitness. The Park District can put to use its community center space, but that space will not adequately address the future demands of the public for indoor programming and, as shown by the survey results, does not adequately meet those demands at present”.

Analysis of Community Centers and Historic Homes

I. The Park District is spending a disproportionate amount of its tax revenues and Village transfer revenues on the 7 community center operations. This does not allow sufficient revenues to be allocated to other operations and capital areas of high community importance. The chart below shows tax support for various major service areas in the Park District. Tax support for the community centers is derived from Park District taxes and revenues from the Village Transfer. The total tax support for the community centers is nearly \$500,000 more than for parks and sports programs combined. 30% of household respondents to the community survey rated small neighborhood parks as one of the 4 most important parks and recreation facilities to their households as compared to 9% for community centers. The amount of tax support for the community centers is more than is received for the Conservatory, Dole Center, swimming pools, Ridgeland Commons Ice Arena, the 2 historic properties, and the Gymnastics Center combined.

Park District of Oak Park

<u>MAJOR SERVICE AREA</u>	<u>Total Tax Support</u>	<u>Percent Tax Support of Service</u>	<u>Percent Relationship of Tax Support To Community Centers</u>
Community Centers	\$1,326,795	37.27%	
Parks (Open space and sports)	\$842,859	23.68%	64%
Conservatory	\$341,724	9.60%	26%
Dole Center	\$251,838	7.07%	19%
Swimming Pools	\$298,661	8.39%	23%
Ice/Arena	\$166,227	4.67%	13%
Historic Properties	\$117,030	3.29%	9%
Adult Recreation	\$95,665	2.69%	7%
Early Childhood and Summer Camps	\$63,411	1.78%	5%
Gymnastics Center	\$55,693	1.56%	4%
Total	\$3,558,903	100.00%	

Source: Park District of Oak Park and Leisure Vision

Although the community center model in Oak Park is failing one cannot overlook the tradition and emotional attachment residents have for the community centers. The community center model is one of the qualities of life issues that help make the Village of Oak Park a unique place to live. That being stated, there are a number of options the Park District should considering in determining the future operating plans for the community centers.

Options for the Community Centers

A. Consolidate Community Center Management. This option would keep ALL 7 community centers open and operated by the Park District and would save tax costs by consolidating community center management. A few key features of this option:

- ◆ This option links one of the smaller community centers with a larger center for management. By transferring 3 of the smaller community center management responsibilities to the larger centers will save between \$124,000 and \$167,000 per year in management salaries and fringe benefits. The annual savings from consolidation could fund some of the capital needs for the Park District without raising taxes or passing a referendum.
- ◆ Jeff King conducted interviews with all the community center directors. One of the questions the consultants asked of the directors was if combining some of the centers and consolidating management staff would work. Almost unanimously, the directors felt that combining some of the centers is feasible. One of the challenges facing this type of transition is dealing with the emotional aspect of laying off or terminating some community director positions. Some directors indicated that there is an expectation of higher pay for the added responsibility of managing multiple centers and increased responsibility. Another challenge is that some of the center director's indicated a need to re-structure some of their administrative responsibilities to make combining facilities possible.
- ◆ This option for consolidating management will have no impact on existing programs and services offered at the centers. The same activities, programs and schedule will remain as they are today.
- ◆ Another recommendation the consultants heard from the community center director's interviews was to re-examine the need for supervision of the community centers in the evenings. The Park District provides supervision at each center in the evening to supervise public meetings and organization conducting meetings. It should be noted that many of the organizations using the community centers in the evening are not paying a fee or rental. One community center director reported that drop-in participation is low and many times no one shows up to use the facility.
- ◆ The Park District should also consider developing a policy for key check out for handling evening reservations at the community centers, especially the on-going reservations that occur. Having someone representing the reserving organization/group check out a key from the Park District office could eliminate the need for staffing the centers in the evening. A few directors reported the primary function and responsibility for staff in the evening is babysitting the groups. Eliminating part-time supervision in the evening (Monday-Friday) could save between \$41,000 and \$47,000 per year in part time salary cost.

Analysis of Community Centers and Historic Homes

B. Park District Operations of 4 Community Centers and Converting 3 of the Community Centers to a Not-For-Profit (NFP) Operation.

This option involves the Park District self-operating 4 of the existing community centers as it would in Option A with enhanced management of operations. The remaining 3 community centers would be leased to various community non-profit providers to provide specialized services, i.e. teen centers, senior adults, etc. in win-win partnerships with the Park District. A few key features of this option:

- ◆ This option involves transferring management responsibility for one or more of the community centers to a Not-For-Profit organization. One of the benefits of this option is that use of the centers would be more targeted rather than duplicating services at each of the existing seven centers. The needs assessment survey and master planning process have identified many areas of unmet community needs. The Park District is currently visiting with several community organizations that have expertise in some of these programming areas.
- ◆ The consulting team suggests in this option that the Park District pursue partnerships with non-profit provider(s) that have the Park District pay for the initial capital improvements to the community center to get it into condition for the non-profit organizations. A non-profit organization could then lease the facilities from the Park District and pay all operating costs for the facilities, and put a percent of revenues into a sinking fund to cover future maintenance and capital costs. Therefore the Park District's costs (and taxpayers) costs will be limited to capital expenses with operating costs picked up by the non-profit operator.
- ◆ Except for the initial capital requirements this option will have the same impact as closing one of the centers from a financial perspective. The estimated saving by converting one of the community centers to a NFP will range between \$76,000 and \$110,000 per year for one center to \$153,000 - \$206,000 per year for two centers, and \$245,000 - \$300,000 per year for three centers depending which center(s) is converted.
- ◆ This option will have an some initial impact on the existing Park District programs for indoor activities including pre-school, after school and sports programs, but the consultant team believes these programs can be cost effectively absorbed at the remaining 4 Park District operated community centers. All outdoor programs could remain intact and any NFP use of the park facilities adjacent to the community centers would be handle through central reservations based on availability.

Analysis of Community Centers and Historic Homes

C. Park District Operations of 4 Community Centers, (Including 2 of These As Specialty Centers and Converting 3 of the Community Centers to a Not-For-Profit (NFP) Operation.

This option builds on the recommendations Option B, with the additional benefit of converting two of the four Park District operated community centers into specialty facilities. A few key features of this option include:

- ◆ The Park District would self operate four of the community centers and partner with local non-profit organizations on the operations of the remaining 3 community centers
- ◆ In addition, this option includes converting two of the existing centers into specialty centers. One of the specialty centers should be a fitness center of approximately 8,000 square feet including a cardiovascular workout area and equipment, exercise machines, aerobic/dance room, spinning room and locker rooms. Fitness needs in the community are under-served and there was a great deal of support through the survey process to provide a fitness component. 48% of the survey household respondents indicated that they would use an aerobics/fitness space. Fitness is one component that will drive membership and revenue for the Park District.

D. Development of A Large Multipurpose Recreation Center. One trend in the delivery of recreation services around the country has been the emergence of multipurpose, multi-generational recreation centers. For many communities, a large recreation center has proven to be an efficient method of delivering recreation service. Based on market research conducted by Ballard*King and Associates at community recreation centers across the United States, the following represents the basic benchmarks.

- ◆ The majority of community recreation centers that are being built today are between 65,000 and 75,000 square feet. Most centers include three primary components A) A pool area usually with competitive and leisure amenities, B) Multipurpose gymnasium space, and C) Weight/cardiovascular equipment area. In addition, most centers also have group exercise rooms, drop-in childcare, and classroom and/or community spaces.
- ◆ For most centers to have an opportunity to cover operating expenses with revenues, they must have a service population of at least 50,000 and an aggressive fee structure.
- ◆ Most centers that are between 65,000 and 75,000 square feet have an operating budget of between \$1,500,000 and \$2,000,000 annually. Nearly 60% of the operating costs are from personnel services, followed by approximately 28% for contractual services, 10% for commodities, and 2% for capital replacement.
- ◆ For centers that serve a more urban population and have a market driven fee structure, they should be able to recover 70% to 100% of operating expenses. For centers in more rural areas the recovery rate is generally 50% to 75%. Facilities that can consistently cover all of their operating expenses with revenues are rare. The first true benchmark year of operation does not occur until the third full year of operation.

Analysis of Community Centers and Historic Homes

- ◆ The majority of centers of the size noted (and in an urban environment) above average daily paid attendance of 800 to as much as 1,000 per day. These centers will also typically sell between 800 and 1,500 annual passes (depending on the fee structure and marketing program).
- ◆ It is common for most centers to have a three-tiered fee structure that offers daily, extended visit (usually punch cards) passes, and annual passes. In urban areas it is common to have resident and non-resident fees. Non-resident rates can run anywhere between 25% to 50% higher than the resident rate. Daily rates for residents average between \$3.00 and \$6.00 for adults, \$3.00 and \$4.00 for youth and the same for seniors. Annual rates for residents average between \$200 and \$300 for adults, and \$100 and \$200 for youth and seniors. Family annual passes tend to be heavily discounted and run between \$400 and \$800.
- ◆ Most centers are open an average of 100 hours a week, with weekday hours being 6:00am to 10:00pm, Saturdays 8:00am to 8:00pm and Sundays from noon to 8:00pm. Often hours are shorter during the summer months.

Note: These statistics vary by regions of the country.

Overall Analysis and Recommendation

There are two major obstacles facing the Park District of Oak Park's development of a large community recreation center.

- ◆ First, the District is not in a financial position to take on the financial costs to develop a large recreation center. While the Consultant Team believes the operating costs in tax dollars from such a facility would be considerably less than in being paid for the 7 community centers, the capital costs would be substantial. Given the other critical needs of the Park District we do not believe the right time for this type of facility.
- ◆ Perhaps just as important is the fact the Park District lacks an adequate space to construct a recreation center. Any recreation center construction would drastically reduce the amount of green space in the existing park system or buying a property large enough would add significantly to the cost of constructing a new facility.

As a result, the Leisure Vision consulting team does not feel the development of a large recreation center in Oak Park fits at this time. However, one option that merits consideration in the future (5 to 10 years out) is the possibility of expanding and renovating Ridgeland Commons. The ice arena is short (185 feet) by industry standards and the building infrastructure and equipment is in need of major repair. There is a possibility to complete the necessary repairs and upgrades to Ridgeland Commons while at the same time planning to expand the facility to incorporate other program areas (fitness area, gym, weight room, classrooms, etc). There may

Analysis of Community Centers and Historic Homes

also be a possibility of enclosing the Pool to incorporate a swimming component into the expansion plans.

However, accommodating any expansion of Ridgeland Commons will result in a losing the ball field space adjacent to the facility. The consultant team does not recommend this occur, as there is already a shortage of sports facilities in Oak Park. Should the Park District move forward in the development of additional sports facilities at other locations, this option may be more feasible. This entire option would have been more feasible if the Park District would have moved forward on a partnership with the High School District and Village to vacant Scoville Avenue. The Consultant Team believes it might be reasonable to put this location back on the table at some future date.

Regardless of which option, or variation, the Park District implements there is a potential for phasing the reorganization over an extended period, which we would recommend to be between 1-3 years. Making small incremental changes as staff turnover and attrition occurs is a reasonable implementation plan, and should allow these changes to occur without laying off any present staff. The full financial benefits of reorganization will take longer to fully develop in this manner, but the Consultant Team would recommend a 1-3 year phase in so as not to cause any staff lay-offs.

It should be noted that at the time of this Master Plan report, two of the seven community center director positions are vacant. The Park District is therefore well on its way to being able to implement these recommendations.

Analysis of Community Centers and Historic Homes

Budget Analysis

Several budget scenarios were examined to estimate the financial impact different options would have on the community center program area. The options selected for further analysis were taken directly from the options outlined above. Each budget option includes a summary an estimated net impact from implementation and each option was developed using the 2003 as a reference point.

2003 Community Center Budgets

	Anderson	Barrie	Carroll	Field	Fox	Longfellow	Stevenson	Total
Director	41,032	30,025	29,575	43,635	34,800	33,939	29,130	\$242,136
Supervisor	17,550	13,460	16,050	14,700	15,500	16,550	17,950	\$111,760
Custodial	9,000	7,000	9,000	9,000	9,000	9,000	9,000	\$ 61,000
Uniforms	600	600	600	600	600	600	600	\$ 4,200
Spec. Agency	850	850	850	850	850	850	850	\$ 5,950
Instructors	10,879	11,569	8,045	27,204	12,144	14,044	14,056	\$ 97,941
Officials	3,150	3,150	3,150	3,150	3,150	3,150	3,150	\$ 22,050
Supplies	2,100	4,350	2,319	3,442	3,535	1,735	1,910	\$ 19,391
Contract Serv.	400	1,220	442	1,560	976	1,200	1,180	\$ 6,978
Transportation	75	0	75	450	200	563	263	\$ 1,626
Utilities	7,000	5,000	6,400	6,000	11,000	14,000	16,000	\$ 65,400
Total Expense	\$92,636	\$77,224	\$76,506	\$110,591	\$91,755	\$95,631	\$94,089	\$638,432
Revenue	\$24,534	\$26,567	\$18,354	\$52,073	\$39,672	\$27,634	\$36,377	\$225,211

Analysis of Community Centers and Historic Homes

Option One - Consolidated Option without Evening Supervision

	Anderson	Barrie	Carroll	Field	Fox	Longfellow	Stevenson	Total
Director	0	0	0	43,635	34,800	33,939	29,130	\$141,504
Supervisors	8,816	4,724	7,314	5,937	6,764	7,814	9,214	\$ 50,583
Custodial	9,000	7,000	9,000	9,000	9,000	9,000	9,000	\$ 61,000
Uniforms	600	600	600	600	600	600	600	\$ 4,200
Spec. Agency	850	850	850	850	850	850	850	\$ 5,950
Instructors	10,879	11,569	8,045	27,204	12,144	14,044	14,056	\$ 97,941
Officials	3,150	3,150	3,150	3,150	3,150	3,150	3,150	\$ 22,050
Supplies	2,100	4,350	2,319	3,442	3,535	1,735	1,910	\$ 19,391
Contract Serv.	400	1,220	442	1,560	976	1,200	1,180	\$ 6,978
Transportation	75	0	75	450	200	563	263	\$ 1,626
Utilities	7,000	5,000	6,400	6,000	11,000	14,000	16,000	\$ 65,400
Total Expense	\$42,870	\$38,463	\$38,195	\$101,828	\$83,019	\$86,895	\$85,353	\$476,623
Revenue	\$24,534	\$26,567	\$18,354	\$52,073	\$39,672	\$27,634	\$36,377	\$225,211

Comparison

	<u>Expenses</u>	<u>Revenue</u>	<u>Difference</u>
2003 Budget	\$638,432	\$225,211	(\$413,221)
Option One	\$476,623	\$225,211	(\$251,412)
Net Tax Savings on Direct Costs			\$161,809

Net Impact on Community Centers:

Number of Community Centers operated by the Park District 7

Analysis of Community Centers and Historic Homes

Option Two – Park District Operating 4 Community Centers and Converting 3 of the Community Centers to a Not-For-Profit (NFP) Operation. This option incorporates the savings from Option One. This table is for illustrative purposes and is not intended as a recommendation as to which centers are operated as a NFP.

	Anderson	Barrie	Carroll	Field	Fox	Longfellow	Stevenson	Total
Director	0	0	0	43,635	34,800	33,939	29,130	\$141,504
Supervisor	0	0	0	5,937	6,764	7,814	9,214	\$ 29,729
Custodial	0	0	0	9,000	9,000	9,000	9,000	\$ 36,000
Uniforms	0	0	0	600	600	600	600	\$ 2,400
Spec. Agency	0	0	0	850	850	850	850	\$ 3,400
Instructors	0	0	0	27,204	12,144	14,044	14,056	\$ 67,448
Officials	0	0	0	3,150	3,150	3,150	3,150	\$ 12,600
Supplies	0	0	0	3,442	3,535	1,735	1,910	\$ 10,622
Contract Serv.	0	0	0	1,560	976	1,200	1,180	\$ 4,916
Transportation	0	0	0	450	200	563	263	\$ 1,476
Utilities	0	0	0	6,000	11,000	14,000	16,000	\$ 47,000
Total Expense	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$110,591	\$91,755	\$95,631	\$94,089	\$392,066
Revenue	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$65,964	\$53,563	\$41,525	\$50,268	\$211,320

Comparison

	<u>Expenses</u>	<u>Revenue</u>	<u>Difference</u>	
2003 Budget	\$638,432	\$225,211	(\$413,221)	Option
Two	\$357,095	\$211,320	(\$145,775)	
Net Tax Savings on Direct Costs			\$267,446	

Net Impact on Community Centers:

Number of Community Centers operated by the Park District.	4
Number of Community Centers operated by a NFP.	3

Analysis of Community Centers and Historic Homes

Option Three - Park District Operations of 4 Community Centers, (Including 2 of These As Specialty Centers and Converting 3 of the Community Centers to a Not-For-Profit (NFP) Operation. This option incorporates the savings from Option Two. This table is for illustrative purposes and is not intended as a recommendation as to which centers are converted to specialty centers.

	Anderson	Barrie	Carroll	Field	Fox	Longfellow	Stevenson	Total
Director	0	0	0	43,635	34,800	45,000	35,000	\$158,435
Front Desk	0	0	0	0	0	42,432	0	\$ 42,432
Fitness Attend	0	0	0	0	0	22,048	0	\$ 22,048
Gym Attend	0	0	0	0	0	0	17,290	\$ 17,290
Instructors	0	0	0	0	0	50,400	45,600	\$ 96,000
Supervisor	0	0	0	5,937	6,764	0	0	\$ 12,701
Custodial	0	0	0	9,000	9,000	9,000	9,000	\$ 36,000
Uniforms	0	0	0	600	600	1,500	1,000	\$ 3,700
Spec. Agency	0	0	0	850	850	850	850	\$ 3,400
Instructors	0	0	0	27,204	12,144	1,996	1,899	\$ 43,243
Officials	0	0	0	3,150	3,150	850	850	\$ 8,000
Supplies	0	0	0	3,442	3,535	15,000	5,000	\$ 26,977
Contract Serv.	0	0	0	1,560	976	5,200	1,180	\$ 8,916
Transportation	0	0	0	450	200	563	263	\$ 1,476
Utilities	0	0	0	6,000	11,000	36,000	45,000	\$ 98,000
Total Expense	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$101,828	\$83,019	\$230,839	\$162,932	\$578,618
Revenue	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$65,964	\$53,563	\$ 3,900	\$ 4,035	\$127,462
Specialty	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$392,544	\$81,600	\$474,144
Total Revenue	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$65,964	\$53,563	\$396,444	\$85,635	\$601,606

Comparison

	<u>Expenses</u>	<u>Revenue</u>	<u>Difference</u>
2003 Budget	\$638,432	\$225,211	(\$413,221)
Option Three	\$578,618	\$601,606	\$22,988
Net Tax Savings on Direct Costs			\$390,233

Net Impact on Community Centers:

Number of Community Centers operated by the Park District. 4*

Number of Community Centers operated by a NFP. 3

*2 of the 4 Community Centers converted to Specialty Centers

Additional Potential Savings from Administrative Costs

Each of the above options is based on only those costs and revenues from the direct operations of the 7 community centers. It is anticipated that additional opportunities for cost and tax savings may occur through each of the 3 options. As previously mentioned, administrative costs for the 7 community centers appears high. The Park District has made a concerted effort to address cost issues in the entire Park District over the past few years. The consultant team would encourage the Park District to continue these efforts and conduct a thorough analysis of the administrative cost savings which can additionally be realized through the 3 options.

Overall Conclusions and Recommendations

There is no question that there is not an established need to continue to operate 7 community centers. The financial reality facing the Park District and the relatively small market niche that the community centers serve raises questions on continuing to operate the centers as status quo. The community survey conducted clearly indicates that the community focus has changed. When factoring the financial position of the community centers, use patterns and survey results, it appears a major structure change is needed in delivering community center services.

Members of the Leisure Vision consulting team recommends that the Park District should reduce the number of community centers that it operates from 7 to 4. We believe this move on behalf of the Park District would reflect meeting community needs while at the same time reflect a proportionate share of tax dollars being used to support the community centers. This change will enhance the financial picture for the Park District and provide the funding necessary for much needed capital repairs.

The Park District could either continue programming the four community centers as it is currently or convert two of the centers for specialty purposes. There is certainly a community need to convert one of the centers for fitness programming. Either of these options for programming the four community centers is far superior to current operations.

Each of the remaining three community centers could be adapted to other areas of community needs through partnerships with local non-profits or closed down. The consultant team certainly believes there is sufficient community needs and interests on the part of other community organizations to develop partnerships for the operations of the remaining 3 centers.

The consultant team believes that the model the Park District should pursue in any partnerships with non-profit providers would be one where the taxpayers would pay for the initial capital improvements to the community center to get it into condition for the non-profit organizations. A non-profit organization could then lease the facilities from the Park District and pay all operating costs for the facilities, and put a percent of revenues into a sinking fund to cover future maintenance and capital costs.

Analysis of Community Centers and Historic Homes

The consultant team recognizes that the possibility exists that the Park District will not be able to develop partnerships with community organizations for the operations of the 3 community centers. Should that occur, we would recommend that those centers where a partnership cannot be developed be closed. We recognize that closing any of the community centers will evoke many emotions. However, it does not make financial sense for the Park District to operate and allocate tax dollars for more than 4 community centers, given the other critical needs in the community.

The Park district will get some relief in 2006 when the aquatic debt service is retired. This action will change the financial picture of the Park District significantly providing the Park District avoids the temptation to fund capital improvements through bonding. This will free up about \$263,000 per year. In addition, the Park District will retire general obligation debt of about \$220,000 per year in 2008. This debt is tax supported and can be re-issued in 2008 for other Park District projects.

Regardless of which option, or variation, the Park District chooses, there is a need to develop an accurate method for identifying administrative cost and a consistent method of distributing the administrative cost back to the various program areas and fee structure. Care must be exercised to keep administrative costs as low as possible to avoid the perception that the administration is out of control. Administration cost account for almost 21% of the total Park District budget.

Last, the consultants heard that access and usage of the schools varies by location. The relationship that each community center direct develops with the individual school staff appears to have a direct correlation to access. None of the center directors interviewed by the consultants indicated there was a formal agreement with the school district covering use of facilities. The consulting team feels that there should be some form of inter-governmental agreement in place that provides clear and consistent use of school facilities.

Analysis of Community Centers and Historic Homes

Community Center Director Interviews

*Conducted by Jeff King, President of Ballard*King and Associates*

A series of 17 questions were asked to each Director. The responses are listed after each question. In addition, the manager that oversees the recreation center was interviewed to gain an administrative perspective on the centers operations.

1. *What are the geographic boundaries for your community center programming area, i.e. who do you market to?*

See map that has all the service areas for the community centers.

Anderson: 80% from the neighborhood area. Used to get more non-residents

Stevens: 70% from Beye School area. Also drawing kids from Chicago because the proximity to the park.

Barrie Center: S.E. Park Neighborhood Association- primarily Irving School

Longfellow: 75% from the immediate neighborhood.

Fox: 70% from the neighborhood.

Ascension Catholic School

School uses Fox for enrichment and recreation spaces.

Field: 70% from the immediate neighborhood (Mann School)

2. *Are your boundaries just in the neighborhood or village wide? Do citizens living in the neighborhood get first priority for programs before opening it up to the entire community?*

Anderson: Generally first come; first serve. Some programs are closed (pre-school programs). 80% of registration comes from the neighborhood.

Stevens: First come; first serve but residents get first opportunity.

Barrie: First come; first serve – most of participants are within walking distance to center.

Longfellow: First come; first serve for both residents and non-residents.

Fox: First come; first serve with residents getting the first opportunity to sign up.

Field: First come; first serve basis.

Analysis of Community Centers and Historic Homes

3. What are the use patterns and trends over the past five years?

Anderson: Participation is on the rise. Getting more aggressive making sure that programs run. Programs would not run if the Director were not aggressive.

Stevens: Growth in sports.
Arts and crafts won't go at Stevens
Summer programs are difficult to fill.

Barrie: Lower because of construction of new center.
Organized sports is declining
Individual activities are on the rise

Longfellow: Arts and crafts is declining
Indoor sports continue to be strong

Fox: Losing participants to specialty centers
Losing kids after 4th grade, especially girls

Field: Sports leagues have remained strong
Maxing out on Pre-School programs

4. How is the program schedule developed for your center?

Anderson: Has autonomy to develop his own program schedule.

Stevens: Has autonomy to design programs that fit the market (neighborhood)

Barrie: Has Autonomy for developing programs
Bases programs on comments from parents/PTO and School

Longfellow: Programs that have been strong in the past
Driven by comments from participants
Reading publications/info from other Districts.

Fox: Based on a yearly schedule; sports, classes, and downtime for Manager

Analysis of Community Centers and Historic Homes

5. *How do you come up with the needs for programming at the center? (Are they generated by the center, Park District or Village?)*

Anderson: Survey existing users and check what is successful at other centers.
Offer programs to the strength/background of the staff.
Never has worked with the Village.

Stevens: Existing programs with high use (outdoor sports)
New Skate Park and BB courts provide new opportunities

Barrie: Driven by comments from participants.

Longfellow: Program evaluations
Past participation
Overall gut feel

Fox: What worked last year
What parents want
What is popular (i.e. Sponge Bob)

Field: Look at previous season
Review participation levels

6. *Have you seen the results of the needs assessment survey? What are your reactions?*

Anderson: Yes. Thought the comment about combining the center operations
and saving \$200,000 per year was overstated

Stevens: Yes. Were 800 people a true representation of our community?
However, agrees with many aspects of the survey results.

Barrie: Yes. Feels that some questions overlapped and created confusion (i.e. pre-
school vs. after school programs)

Longfellow: Yes. Questions about programs were confusing. Did the respondents
know if the program they responded to was really a program in that area?
For example, some respondents may have responded to a pre-school
program that was really a day camp

Fox: Yes

Field: No. How can 600 samples accurately reflect the community?

Analysis of Community Centers and Historic Homes

7. *How are the needs of your users different than those of other community centers?*

Anderson: Same as the other centers but some centers have stronger programs
(i.e. floor hockey)

Stevens: Volume of people – primarily lower income clients.

Barrie: Feels all the centers are the same.

Longfellow: Fox is more oriented to arts and crafts
Longfellow serves “Middle America”
Sports are strong at Longfellow more so than other centers

Fox: Serve different clientele
Participants are held to a higher standard at Fox
Most participants are from the Catholic School

Field: Most centers offer the same programs at basically the same time.
More neighborhoods draw to Field than other centers.

8. *Are there any indoor recreation facilities and programs you feel should be developed or improved in the Park District of Oak Park?*

Anderson: Gymnasium use in schools is prohibitive – space is a problem.
Expand another gym space onto Hatch Elementary School.
Possibility of a community wide recreation center.
Access to school spaces during the holidays would help create time for more programs.

Stevens: Having two offices does not make sense
No e-mail at the centers.
Youth sports are poorly run. High school kids should not be coaching.
Perception of the community centers is lacking (i.e. spectators sitting on the floor).
Youth/adult fitness center with exercise equipment is needed.

Barrie: Cannot offer the type of programs that could generate more money
because of facility limitations.
Adult Fitness (with equipment) is lacking

Longfellow: Multi-Sport (indoor) facility needed
Gymnasium (2)
Adult fitness
Swimming

Analysis of Community Centers and Historic Homes

Expansion of indoor leagues is at the mercy of the Schools
Scheduling meetings with the School District prior to the school year
has helped reduce scheduling conflicts.
Centers do not have access to the registration system (computer) from
the center. Directors must travel to the main office – wastes time

Fox: Fox has priority and has great access at Assention School – even before
evening rentals/sports groups

Field: Aquatic operation and adult activities.

District should look closer at the other departments and not just the
recreation centers.

If camp operations are consolidated it should fall to someone to the camp
program area and not the center directors to run.

9. What is your operating budget for the center?

Anderson: See print out

Stevens: See print out

Barrie: See print out

Longfellow: See print out

Fox: See print out

Field: See print out

10. What are your sources of revenue? How much revenue id derived from fees?

Anderson: See print out

Stevens: See print out. Kent develops the fees.

Barrie: See print out.

Longfellow: See print out. Try to charge an extra 15%-25% for administrative overhead.

Fox: Use Bret's chart to determine fees.

Field: Bret has revenue/fee matrix to fill out that establish the fees.

11. What programs and activities is your biggest source of revenue?

Anderson: Kiddy Camp

Floor Hockey

Pre-School Sports Classes

Analysis of Community Centers and Historic Homes

Stevens: Youth Sports
Pre-School Soccer
Peewee Soccer, Hockey and Basketball

Barrie: Sports leagues
Floor Hockey, Soccer, T-Ball and Flag Football
After School programs

Longfellow: Sports leagues
Summer sports camps
Martial arts
Pre-School sports

Fox: Holiday programs
Pre-School programs
Camps

Field: Kiddy Camp
Pre-School programs
Sports leagues
Action camps

12. How is your center and program budget developed?

Anderson: Worksheets to estimate participants and program supplies
Budget sheets (provided by Kent) provide direction on what the fees should be.

Stevens: Estimate classes
Estimate cost/revenues
Submit to Bret for approval

Barrie: Estimate program cost/revenues
Submit for approval
Only estimate program cost – facility cost are developed by Bret/Kent

Longfellow: Look at the past year
Estimate classes, instructors and program supplies
Submit to Bret for approval

Fox: Spreadsheet with revenue
Insert estimated fees

Analysis of Community Centers and Historic Homes

Estimate the number of classes
Add management overhead

Field: Determine how many classes to offer
Estimate cost for staff and supplies
Review previous year
Submit to Bret

13. What do you feel are your five (5) key job responsibilities?

Anderson: 1. Supervision of staff (10 part-time staff members)
 2. Programming
 3. Budget
 4. Instructing classes (2 per season)
 5. Community relations (distributing flyers and recruitment)

Stevens: 1. Center operations
 2. Sport camps/clinics
 3. Skate park/BB courts
 4. Facility rentals
 5. Programming

Barrie: 1. Programming
 2. Supervising coaches/staff
 3. Sports leagues
 4. Center staff scheduling/payroll
 5. Administrative functions

Longfellow: 1. Supervision of part-time staff
 2. Programming of classes
 3. Maintenance of programs
 4. Training of staff
 5. Rentals

Fox: 1. Running quality programs
 2. Maintain fiscal responsibility
 3. Running quality special events
 4. Positive role model for staff
 5. Sense of humor

Analysis of Community Centers and Historic Homes

- Field:
1. Programming
 2. Staffing (hiring, payroll, etc.)
 3. Budget
 4. Supervising staff
 5. Administration (registration/phone calls)

14. Who is your immediate supervisor?

Anderson: Bret
Stevens: Bret
Barrie: Bret
Longfellow: Bret
Fox: Bret
Field: Bret

15. What percent of an average week is spent in each of the following areas?

Summer/School year

Anderson

- 50%/50% Time in the Center
0%/20% Time spent teaching classes
50%/20% Time outside the Center on administrative matters for the Park District
0%/10% Time outside the Center meeting with community members, participants

Stevens

- 50%/20% Time in the Center
0%/0% Time spent teaching classes
40%/50% Time outside the Center on administrative matters for the Park District
10%/30% Time outside the Center meeting with community members, participants

Barrie

- 15%/25% Time in the Center
25%/30% Time spent teaching classes
50%/35% Time outside the Center on administrative matters for the Park District
10%/10% Time outside the Center meeting with community members, participants

Longfellow

- 75%/40% Time in the Center
0%/20% Time spent teaching classes
25%/40% Time outside the Center on administrative matters for the Park District
0%/20% Time outside the Center meeting with community members, participants

Analysis of Community Centers and Historic Homes

Fox

15%/15% Time in the Center

65%/45% Time spent teaching classes

15%/33% Time outside the Center on administrative matters for the Park District

5%/7% Time outside the Center meeting with community members, participants

Note: Not included are the 4-10 hours of planning done at home each week.

Field

70%/50% Time in the Center

10%/20% Time spent teaching classes

20%/10% Time outside the Center on administrative matters for the Park District

0%/20% Time outside the Center meeting with community members, participants

16. What ideas do you have for reducing operating cost Park District wide to create capital funding within the existing budget level?

Anderson: Reduce hours of operation for drop-in. Hours could be cut from 60 hours to 45 hours in the summer with no impact to our users. School year hours could also be reduced.
Duplication of classes. Fewer classes might improve efficiency and improve return.

Stevens: Too many center director
No room for growth within organization
Do not need center directors working downtown
Potential for /youth baseball association/youth soccer association to run District's programs.

Barrie: Prices are under-valued
Need to explore modifying the fee policy
Operating a service – not a business

Longfellow: Reduce drop-in hours
Eliminate building supervision in the evenings for meetings
Community groups do not want to pay rental rates.

Fox: Inventory control is needed. Too much stuff/duplication of supplies
Arts and Craft supplies are all over the place
District spends \$5,000 for custodial services when staff cleans their own building

Analysis of Community Centers and Historic Homes

Community groups do not pay to use facility
Volunteer base is under-utilized

Field: Need to look at the entire operation – there are other cost saving steps that can be found.
Some centers are over-staffed
Charity manages some of the day camp programs now – she could handle day camps for the entire District. This would improve continuity and consistency of the program.

17. Can any of the community centers be combined? Why or why not?

Anderson: Specialty centers could work
Centers could be and should be more efficient. People will be offended if any centers are closed.
Must keep the public informed

Stevens: Definitely could be done – perhaps even three centers per center director
Would not run multiple centers without an increase in pay.
Look at specializing by activity area (i.e. athletics, pre-school).
Anderson is most likely candidate to close if District closed a facility.

Barrie: Combining could be done - however some redistribution of responsibilities would be required.
Idea of having a non-profit operate the center has potential.
All recreation programs/departments should look at consolidation.

Longfellow: Combining would work.
Compensation for managing multiple facilities should be greater.
Need a higher caliber part-time staff to make combining work.
Communication with the public will improve acceptance with closing a facility.
Criteria for closing a facility should factor the centers that are centrally located versus the centers near the community borders.

Fox: Some centers do not have the same volume of classes. Perhaps those could be consolidated.
Some centers could lose a Director without a major impact.

Field: Consolidating planning efforts would reduce/eliminate duplication of Services.
Need for higher caliber staff to combine facilities.

Analysis of Community Centers and Historic Homes

Depends upon which centers are combined.
Criteria for closing a center should be based on a cost versus revenue assessment.

Program Manager:

Staff has been defensive and fearful of losing their jobs. Gary has assured everyone that no one will be losing his/her job.

Have discussed possibility of consolidating from 7 centers to 5 centers.

Trying to move Directors to a 75% administrative function and 25% teaching.

Having Director's teach saves in instructors wages.

More coordination by program areas is needed between Greg, Charity and Bret.

Implementing administrative cost into fee structure for programs (15%-25%). Staff is trying to shoot for a 25% cost recovery beyond the direct program costs.

Utility costs are based on a percentage.

Re-structure of the District is going to happen.

Opportunity to add on to a school facility would expand programming possibilities.

Having a non-profit organization run a center(s) would work but will the community support the concept? Access for Park District programs is an issue if someone else managed the center. Excluding green space from any cooperative agreement will benefit the Park District. A large percentage of District programs are outdoor programs.

Outdoor programs are the cash cow for most centers.

Staff members are assigned to a center every time sports leagues are played.

Historic Facilities Review

It is not unique for a Parks and Recreation agency to have a museum in their system. What is unique about the Park District of Oak Park is that there are two museum type facilities, one that is a historic landmark (Pleasant Home). The Cheney Mansion is operated on an enterprise fund or self supported basis. Wedding receptions, corporate meetings, antique shows, flower shows and holiday functions generate a bulk of the revenue for Cheney Mansion.

The full-time supervisor at Cheney is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the mansion and coordinates the schedule of activities, rentals and events. Unlike the facility rentals and meeting room use of the community centers, scheduling and reserving the Cheney Mansion is much more detailed and requires more time and expertise to coordinate the user group/individual needs. Staffing levels match the responsibility and requirements of management and operation of the Cheney Mansion and no major changes are recommended at this time. The Park District could benefit from the development of a “Friends” organization to assist with future capital needs of the Cheney Mansion.

The rental rates for the Cheney Mansion appear to be market driven. A wedding reception cost \$2,800 and the reserving party has a list of ala Carte offerings with appropriate rental fees. Corporate events range from \$400 for a half-day to \$1,600 for a corporate party. Again there are a number of ala Carte offerings to enhance the corporate rental. Reduced rental rates are available for Oak Park residents along with rental rates for Oak Park Corporations, Not-for-Profit organizations and weekend rates. The reservation form is available via the web page for Cheney Mansion along with other useful information about the mansion.

The historic Pleasant Home offers public tours, rentals and limited programming. The Pleasant Home Foundation operates the home, however, the Park District contributes to the maintenance of the home. The Pleasant Home’s second and third floor serve as home for the Historic Society of Oak Park and River Forest. Revenue collected and expenses to maintain the Pleasant Home have a minimal impact on the overall park District budget. However, the Pleasant Home Foundation should be responsible for all operating cost of the Pleasant Home. The close proximity to the YMCA provides some unique collaborative partnering opportunities. Leasing a portion of the lower level of the Pleasant Home to the YMCA could provide the funding necessary for the Foundation to operate without assistance from the Park District.

*National Trends for
Parks and Recreation*

Trends Affecting Parks and Recreation

Demographic Changes:

Baby Boomers & Their Impact on Leisure Services in the United States

The greatest trend found in recreation is not a particular sport but rather a sport participant. Baby boomers, defined as anyone born between 1946 and 1964, consist of 76 million people. By 2005 an estimated 42 percent of baby boomers will be over 50 years of age. Below are statistical data on boomers and implications on recreational services for this influential group. Information regarding other age cohorts follows.

Demographics of Baby Boomers

- Median income level is \$51,700
- 68% of Boomers are married
- Most Boomers are well educated, with 50% having at least two years of college
- An estimated 23% of boomers will not be financially prepared for retirement
- With an almost 20 year age gap, it should be noted that Baby Boomers are a diverse group with regards to social behavior and attitudes

Lifestyle of Baby Boomers

- Known to work hard, play hard, and spend hard
- Place value on exercise and fitness
- Time viewed as a precious commodity
- Less interest in civic engagements (low rate of volunteerism)
- Do not associate with being “old”
- Retirement viewed as “mid-life”
- Tend to participate in more individualized activities rather than group events

Implications of Baby Boomer Trends for Recreation

- Increased demand for well-equipped fitness centers
- Movement away from “senior” related programs such as bridge and shuffleboard since many Boomers associate these with being “old”
- Swimming pools better utilized by programs like water walking, water aerobics, and active lap swimming
- Increased demand for on-going educational classes to create life-long hobbies
- Increased interest in computer courses from basic application to Web site design
- Length and timing of programs should be compressed
- Workshops preferable to six- or eight- week classes, weekend and night classes popular
- Increased interest in outdoor recreation and maintaining parks and open space
- Continued interest in arts and entertainment

Other Age Cohorts and Their Impact on Leisure Services in the United States

Matures

This generation consists of those born prior to 1946. For this age group, survival was a way of life as many grew up during World War II. Sayings such as “a penny saved is a penny earned” and “an honest day’s work for an honest day’s pay” are firmly implanted in their approach to life and they enter jobs with very strong beliefs about hard work and ethics. This era was a man’s economy, women had limited positions in the workplace and their place was “in the home.” This generation returned from WWII to produce the Baby Boom and began building a new peace-time economy.

Lifestyle of Matures:

- They are dedicated to a job once they take it
- They are respectful of authority, even if it sometimes frustrates them
- They place duty before pleasure
- Patience is a virtue. They are willing to wait for the delayed reward
- Honor and integrity are critical parts of their being
- They are reluctant to challenge the system
- They are resistant to change and will tend to avoid it

Generation X

People in this generation were born between 1965 and 1980. They learned resourcefulness at an early age as most grew up in a house where both parents had careers. Xers entered a world with social turmoil with the assassination of JFK, anti-war protests, Watergate, inflation, and massive layoffs. As a result of this they have become a generation skeptical of traditional practices and beliefs. With their ability to deal with uncertainty and an emphasis on working to live, rather than living to work, they will continue to transform the way business is done.

Lifestyle of Generation X:

- Xers work to live rather than live to work
- Jobs are viewed within the context of a contract, not a lifetime commitment
- Clear and consistent expectations are essential
- Providing the opportunity to grow will lengthen tenure
- A sense of contribution while having fun will keep an Xer productive
- Earning money is only one part of a larger equation which includes contribution to the whole
- To them, versatility of skills & experiences ensures employability

The Millennials

Those in this generation were born between 1981 and 1999. Millennials have grown up in a world where beliefs about family and society have been compromised. Media has taught them that they can challenge every convention and individual. They are growing up in a time of unprecedented growth in U.S. economy and development of technology. They are born into cell phones, pagers, and the Internet. Many enter jobs with what employers are calling a disturbing lack of basic skills, yet they are able to navigate software programs that intimidate those in their 40's. As Millennials continue to grow up in this new world of terrorism, technology, and situational ethics, they will bring to the table new expectations and perceptions that older generations never dreamed possible.

Lifestyle of Millennials:

- They have been conditioned to live in the moment
- They are used to the immediacy of technology and expect everything with it
- Clear and consistent expectations are essential to ensure productivity
- They earn money for the purpose of immediate consumption
- They will demonstrate respect only after they have been treated with respect
- They have grown up learning to question everything
- As a generation, they are astoundingly diverse demographically

Recreation Participation Trends:

Table 1

Recreation Activities for Adults 55 and Older Based on Frequent Participation in 2002

Activity	Days Per Year	Participants
Fitness Walking	100 +	6,515,000
Stretching	100 +	4,107,000
Treadmill Exercise	100 +	3,887, 000
Golf	25 +	3,646,000
Freshwater Fishing	15 +	1,903,000
R.V. Camping	15 +	1,736,000
Lifting Free Weights	100 +	1,735,000
Bowling	25 +	1,725,000
Day Hiking	15 +	1,545,000
Weight/Resistance Machines	100 +	1,513,000
Stationary Cycling	100 +	1,298,000

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Running/Jogging	100 +	870,000
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Source: American Sports Data, Inc.

Table 2
National Recreation Participation in 2002
Top Ten Activities Ranked by Total Participation

Sport	Total Participation (in Millions)	Percent Change From 1997
Exercise Walking	82.2	7.7%
Camping (vacation/overnight)	55.4	18.9%
Swimming	54.7	-8.2%
Exercising with Equipment	50.2	4.9%
Fishing	44.2	-1.2%
Bowling	43.9	-1.9%
Bicycle Riding	41.4	-8.3%
Billiards/Pool	35.3	-2.0%
Hiking	30.5	7.7%
Aerobic Exercise	29.0	10.6%

Source: National Sporting Goods Association

Table 3
National Recreation Participation in 2002 of Selected Sports
Ranked by Percent Change from 1997 to 2002

Sport	Total Participation (in Millions)	Percent Change 2001 to 2002	Percent Change 1997 to 2002
Snowboarding	5.6	4.6%	98.5%
Skateboarding	9.7	0.4%	52.6%
Hunting with Firearms	19.5	1.6%	14.4%
Aerobic Exercise	29.0	10.4%	10.6%
Hiking	30.5	17.0%	7.7%
Exercise Walking	82.2	5.0%	7.7%
Canoeing	7.6	11.5%	7.1%
Swimming	54.7	-0.2%	-8.2%
Martial Arts	4.2	-18.3%	-14.4%

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In-Line Skating	18.8	-2.0%	-29.0%
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Source: National Sporting Goods Association

Table 4
National Youth Participation in Selected Sports
Comparison by Age Group 2001 vs. 1991

Sport	Total Percent Change since 1991 (Ages 7-17)	Total Percent Change since 1991 (Ages 7-11)	Total Percent Change since 1991 (Ages 12-17)
Baseball	-10.2%	-10.7%	-15.4%
Basketball	7.5%	27.8%	-2.4%
Bicycle Riding	-27.7%	-11.9%	-22.3%
Fishing	-6.5%	17.8%	10.9%
Golf	7.7%	32.0%	32.7%
Ice Hockey	21.2%	84.5%	-14.8%
Roller Hockey	51.9%	101.1%	19.4%
Soccer	39.0%	56.8%	7.1%
In-line Skating	163.1%	154.2%	138.6%
Softball	-32.7%	5.4%	-46.6%

Source: National Sporting Goods Association

Lifestyle Practices:

- More women than men participate in fitness programs outside the home.
- Baby boomers have no intention of “slowing down” in retirement. Many will work part-time, change careers, or create new businesses during this time.
- Americans have less leisure time than 5 years ago, but recognize the intrinsic and extrinsic value of recreation and leisure more than ever.
- The greater the household income, the more likely that members started a new recreational activity in the last year, and patronized public parks and recreation services.
- Participation in structured programmed activities has decreased.
- Action sports (in-line skating, snowboarding, skateboarding, etc.) are the strongest area of growth in the sporting goods industry, they represent at least 10 percent of the 15 percent of the sporting goods industry, less interest in traditional team sports from younger generations.
- Americans are participating in less of a variety of activities.

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- American's feel a majority of their free time occurs during the weekdays, weekends are jammed with chores that are put off during the week.
- Currently, opportunities for park and recreation participation are greater in mid-sized cities, as opposed to smaller or larger cities.
- Americans spend more than \$300 billion on recreation annually.
- The average recreation fee that people are willing to pay is slightly over \$12. However, the more satisfied they are with the experience, the more they are willing to pay.
- Choices for recreational activities continue to grow with malls, school activities, entertainment centers (Dave and Buster's, Adventure Golf, etc.), movie complexes, IMAX, skate parks, etc.
- Many homes today are designed as central entertainment centers with televisions, computers, home fitness equipment, workshop and hobby areas, etc.
- On average, Americans watch more than four hours of television a day.
- 77% of personal computer owners come out from behind their monitors for some time outdoors at least once a month.
- Young adults and Americans with annual household incomes of \$50,000 or more are more inclined than the total public to engage in outdoor activity frequently.
- Frequency of outdoor activity appears to increase as household income increases, the most socially and politically active group in the nation are the most recreationally active.
- 62% of families in which both spouses work find time to balance the responsibilities of two jobs and the home and still make time for an outing at least once a month.
- The top four free-time activities for all American for the last decade have been and remain: watching television, reading, socializing with friends and family, and shopping. Swimming and walking are the only two physical activities that make the top ten list.

Recreation Programming:

- People have less unstructured time, so length of programs and sessions should be reduced.
- Activities are moving towards unstructured, individual, and drop-in programs.
- Information technologies allow for the design and customizing of recreation and fitness activities (reducing the need for a "standard package").
- Adults are moving away from teams to more individual activities.
- Increasing demand for self-directed activities, with less reliance on instructors and more flexible timing.

National Trends for Parks and Recreation

- Increased demand for family programs and more programs for girls and women.
- Increased pressure to open traditional male sports to females.
- More activities are being adapted for disabled participants. Programs should strive to be “universally” accessible.
- Fitness and wellness are viewed as a lifestyle that stresses the integration of mental, physical, and spiritual well-being.
- Programs need to encompass a whole “experience”, as people look to add quality to the basic recreation activity with depth, self-fulfillment, and self-expression.
- People desire quality over quantity - a first class experience in the form of excellent customer service, programs, and facilities.
- According to SGMA International, 6 of the 15 most popular activities for children are team sports.

Recreation Facilities:

- The current national trend is toward a “one-stop” facility to serve all ages. Large, multi purpose regional centers help increase cost recovery, promote retention, and encourage cross-use.
- Agencies across the U.S. are increasing revenue production and cost recovery.
- Amenities that are becoming “typical” as opposed to alternative:
 - Leisure and therapeutic pools
 - Multi-purpose, large regional centers (65,000 to 125,000+ sq. ft.) for all ages/abilities with all amenities in one place. This design saves on staff costs, encourages retention and participation, and saves on operating expenses due to economies of scale.
 - Interactive game rooms
 - Nature centers/outdoor recreation and education centers
 - Regional playground for all ages of youth
 - In-line hockey and skate parks
 - Partnerships with private or other agencies
 - Indoor walking tracks
 - Themed décor
- Amenities that are still considered “alternative” but increasing in popularity:
 - Climbing walls
 - BMX tracks and indoor soccer
 - Cultural art facilities

Recreation and Park Administration:

- Level of subsidy for programs is lessening and more “enterprise” activities are being developed, thereby allowing subsidy to be used more appropriately.
- Agencies are hiring consultants for master planning, feasibility, and strategic/policy plans.
- Recreation programmers and administrators are being involved at the beginning of the planning process.
- Information technology allows for tracking and reporting.
- Pricing is often done by peak, off-peak, and off-season rates.
- More agencies are partnering with private, public, and non-profit groups.
- Organization is structured away from specific geographic units into agency-wide sections for athletics, youth/teen sports, seniors, facilities, parks, planning, etc.

Master Planning Processes:

- Most parks and recreation master planning and other long-range planning processes consider a 20 year, or longer, horizon to assure an adequate vision to move from existing conditions to a desired future. However, the plan itself is most often written for a 5-year period requiring a major update at that time interval. In this age of information, mobility, and ever changing advancements in technology, it is impossible with any acceptable degree of reliability to predict demographics, interests, and how technology will change the way we live, work and play much beyond the 5 year timeframe. The 5-year timeframe also coincides with a typical timeframe for an agency’s Capital Improvement Program (CIP).
- Most parks and recreation master planning and other long-range planning processes rely on the mission and vision statements developed as a result of the development of the plan and its public process to guide and drive the facilities, programs and operation of the organization.
- Traditional master planning efforts relied heavily on national level of service standards for the provision of parks and facilities (number of acres or number of facilities/1000 population). Due to unique circumstances in most communities, including but not limited to things such as climate, other providers, exposure to trends, demographics, etc, today’s master planning efforts rely much less on pre-determined standards, and much more on fresh citizen input, often through community surveys that reach current users as well as non-users of park and recreation systems, supplemented by community open houses, focus groups and stakeholder interviews.
- Early master planning efforts did a good job identifying the initial one-time costs associated with capital improvements. Today’s master plans consider the ongoing operating costs and potential revenue generation of equal importance. In addition, plans are identifying traditional and alternative funding sources for projects.

Urban Communities:

- Cities are moving from public to private space; creating less of a community environment and loss of social capital.
- Civic life requires settings in which people meet as equals, the most significant amenity that the city can offer potential residents is a public realm where people can meet.
- Most studies reveal that access to open space is one of the keys to a satisfactory quality of life. A recent IDNR survey, Public Attitudes Toward Open Space Initiatives in Illinois, finds that 57 percent of people believe open space is important to their quality of life.
- Property values are typically higher for property near parks and open spaces.
- One study ranks Illinois 48th in open space per capita, another study has Illinois 39th in people per managed acres of conservation land.

Medical Advancements:

- Regular moderate sports playing adds 1.25 years to the life expectancy of a 45-54 year old man.
- One study found that the U.S. could save \$20 billion a year in health care costs if every sedentary American walked an hour a day.
- It is estimated that nearly 250,000 deaths per year in the United States are attributed to lack of exercise.
- Research has shown that more than 50 percent of the adult population is overweight and that one in four is obese. Youths (18 and younger) today are also less active than previous generations with the result that one in four is overweight.
- Overall, regular physical exercise is considered to be the “best medicine” since it is inexpensive, has no side effects, can be shared with others and is health promoting as well as disease preventing.
- Some research has demonstrated exercise to be more effective than a tranquilizer drug, and a number of studies of trait anxiety found a meaningful difference between the effectiveness of exercise and other forms of treatment on anxiety levels.
- Physical activity has been linked to slowing of the onset of HIV-related symptoms, including decrement of natural killer cells.
- Kaiser Permanente partners with HealthCare Dimensions Incorporated to offer the SilverSneakers Fitness Program for seniors to promote an active lifestyle and reduce healthcare costs. The program is beneficial for the following reasons:
 - Participation: Senior-friendly programming is designed to reduce barriers to participation and engage seniors in physical activity.

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- **Risk Reduction**: Increasing the physical activity in seniors reduces their risk for higher claims costs.
- **Health Status**: Regular physical activity improves measures of independence and functional health status among seniors.
- **Claims Impact**: Reducing risk and improving health through increased physical activity and social interactions reduces pharmaceutical and medical claims costs.
- Each additional mile walked or run by a sedentary person would give him/her an extra 21 minutes of life and save society an average of 34 cents in medical and other costs.

Partnerships:

- Recreation agencies are forming strategic alliances with health, social services, and educational agencies to offer more comprehensive health and wellness assistance.
- A survey of Illinois park and recreation directors and administrators showed that:
 - A majority of respondents (72 percent) agree that they would prefer a partnership with a professional health care provider.
 - An overwhelmingly majority of respondents (83%) agree that they would consider developing a partnership to increase membership and programs. Fewer than half (39%) currently have a professional partnership with another agency.
 - Of the participants who would consider developing a partnership, a large majority (72%) would prefer a partnership with a professional health care provider such as a hospital.
 - More than half (64%) would partner with a non-profit organization such as the YMCA, municipality or school.
 - More than a third (38%) would consider partnering with a professional management corporation.
 - More than three-quarters (81%) would want to remain in control of the management of the facility when developing a professional partnership with another agency.
 - Approximately 50 percent of individuals that are referred to the health care providers at Streamwood Illinois' public facility become new members.

Programming for Pre-School Age Youngsters:

- Local park and recreation agencies are reportedly finding great success in programming for the pre-school age child by responding to parent feedback and desires. The requests tend to center around opportunities to expose a child to a variety of activities to learn what the child may be interested in, and opportunities for interaction outside the child's own home. Popular requests include:
 - Family programming for tot, starting at age 9 months, with an adult, are increasingly popular (in particular: swimming, gymnastics, cooking, music, art,

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story time, special one time holiday classes such as Father's Day gift or card making)

- Daytime activities for “at home” parents
 - Activities for families to support home-schooling
 - Activities for child only from 24-36 months (art, music, story time)
 - Little tot sports for ages 4-5 (soccer is popular)
- A British medical study found that although the average three year old is consuming more calories a day than 25 years ago, physical activity has decreased, resulting in 200 extra “unburned” calories per day.
 - A Kaiser Family Foundation study found that “according to their parents, children age 6 and under spend an average of two hours a day with screen media (TV, DVDs, videos, computers, video games) – about the same amount of time they spend outside.”

Employment Practices:

- Researchers found that adherence to a work-based physical activity program increased as a result of an incentive based intervention. In addition there were significant improvements in cardiovascular efficiency and work capacity.
- Of Boulder, CO's 1,200 employees, 600 are members of their employee wellness program. Program data show that members of the program have reduced their blood pressure, heart rate, body weight, and body fat, and have increased their morale, strength, and flexibility. The number of workplace injuries has gone down significantly since the program began. The program is a cooperative effort between the Human Resources and Parks and Recreation Departments, making use of the Parks and Recreation facilities and programs.

Illinois-Specific Trends:

Demographics

- After stagnant population change between 1980 and 1990 the state gained almost one million new residents during the decade of the 1990's. Total population in Illinois in 2000 was 12,419,293. This is a positive change of 8.6 percent from the 1990 population count. Nearly 86 percent of Illinois' population lives within the states 10 metropolitan areas, defined by the US Census, that compromise 30% of the state's land area.

Environmental Practices

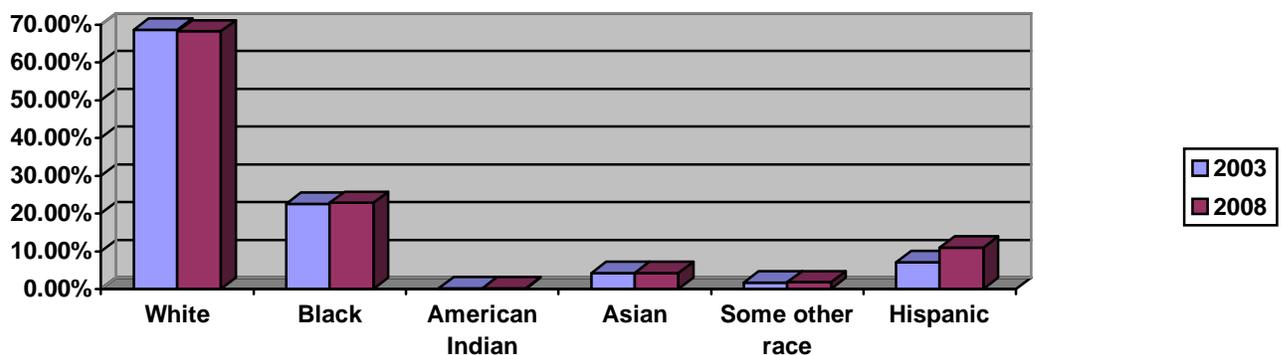
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- Open space can reduce the need for urban infrastructure such as storm water management and water treatment facilities.
- Illinois' land and water resources continue to face development pressure – primarily from urban sprawl – at a time when the need for outdoor recreation opportunities is already far greater than available resources.
- Using land cover data and geo-referenced biological data, IDNR determined where the most biological rich areas of the state are located. These areas are viewed as prime candidates for public-private partnerships that merge natural resource stewardship with compatible economic and recreational development.

Oak Park Specific Trends:

Ethnic Trends

- The Village of Oak Park has a dynamic and diverse population. The population will be experiencing changes in the coming years. The highest percent of change is for the Hispanic population with an expected growth rate of 53.1% between 2003 and 2008. This is a significant change in that no other population group will experience more than a 2% change in the same time period. The only group expected to decrease will be the White population with a projected decline of -1.1% over the next 5 years.



Other Perceived Programming Trends and Observations

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- Children don't use playgrounds as much as they have in the past, yet a lot of money is invested into them.
- People enjoy activities that they can do with their pets, so programs and facilities that include them are becoming increasingly popular.
- Sports such as Cricket, Lacrosse, and Dodgeball are increasing in participation.
- Soft Adventure programming for the new "active" adult population including rock climbing, hiking, white water rafting, etc. so grandparents are able to attend multi-generational programs and facilities and be close to their families.
- Programs offered in different ways such as video and through the internet.
- Home repair/ Interior decorating programs increasing in popularity.
- Carbohydrate diets and the increased focus on eating habits.
- Non-competitive programs for kids, including Yoga.
- The competitive pressures to get into college, perhaps a summer camp for Oak Park kids to get into the best schools would be of interest to people.
- Programs related to the problem with obesity.

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Comparative Communities
Benchmarking

***Village of Oak Park and Park District of Oak Park
Benchmarking Survey of Comparative Park Agencies
Parks, Facilities, Staffing and Budgeting***

Methodology

Leisure Vision administered a comparative analysis Benchmarking Survey for the Village of Oak Park and the Park District of Oak Park to other park and recreation agencies as part of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

The purpose of the Benchmarking Survey was to better understand how the Park District of Oak Park compared to other park and recreation agencies for a wide range of issues impacting the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Issues covered on the survey included: types, numbers, and acres of parks and open space available; types, numbers and miles of trails available; types and numbers of outdoor recreation facilities; types and numbers of indoor recreation facilities; revenues from taxes, fees and charges; staffing costs; cooperative use agreements; capital budgets, etc.

The Benchmarking Survey was developed by Leisure Vision in consultation with officials with the Village of Oak Park, the Park District of Oak Park, and the Park District Citizen Committee. The final survey was five pages in length and contained 21 questions, many with multiple components.

The Park District Citizen Committee coordinated the identification of communities to participate in the Benchmarking Survey. The initial universe of communities for participation in the Benchmarking Survey came from input received in the Stakeholder Interviews. Twenty-two (22) agencies received Benchmarking Surveys and thirteen (13) agencies returned their surveys. The contracted goal was to have at least 10 agencies participate in the survey. A Technical Memorandum regarding the process for identifying the communities that received surveys is contained at the end of this section of the report.

Each agency identified to participate in the survey was mailed a packet of information which included: a letter inviting them to participate, the Benchmarking Survey to be filled out, definitions of park types, and a stamped self-addressed return envelope to Leisure Vision. Agencies were given the option of returning the survey by mail or fax to Leisure Vision. Approximately three weeks after the surveys were mailed, follow-up phone calls were made to each agency that had not returned a survey to encourage their participation.

Comparative Communities Benchmarking

Completed Benchmarking Surveys were received from 13 agencies. Agencies that participated in the benchmarking survey included:

- Des Plaines Park District, Illinois
- Park District of Forest Park, Illinois
- Skokie Park District, Illinois
- Evanston Parks, Forestry & Rec, Illinois
- North Berwyn Park District, Illinois
- Westmont Park District, Illinois
- Berwyn Park District, Illinois
- Mount Prospect Park District, Illinois
- Palatine Park District, Illinois
- Hoffman Estates Park District, Illinois
- Royal Oak Parks & Recreation, Michigan
- Brooklyn Recreation & Parks, Minnesota
- Kettering Parks, Rec & Cultural Arts, Ohio

The average community size in the benchmarking comparison is 54,792 citizens, compared to Oak Park's population of 52,524. To assure the most accurate of comparisons, appropriate information was presented both as per actual numbers (i.e. acres of parks, numbers of outdoor facilities, capital budgets, etc.) and by dividing these numbers by @1,000 population. An additional analysis was conducted to divide revenue from fees, taxes, and staffing costs by acres of parks in each system.

This report includes the following five sections: 1) an executive summary of Benchmarking Survey findings; 2) charts and graphs of survey results; 3) benchmarking results showing Oak Park compared to the benchmarking average and results for each agency (both actual and per 1,000 citizens); 4) names and addresses of organizations that responded to the survey; and 5) a copy of the survey document.

Major Findings

Parks and Open Space Areas

The Park District of Oak Park has 27 park sites and 83.34 total acres of parkland, with the average park size being 3.09 acres. Nearly half of their park sites are neighborhood parks (12 parks), and over 75% of their acres of parkland are made up of community parks (38.69 acres) and neighborhood parks (28.96 acres). Oak Park has 1.59 acres of parkland @ 1,000 population.

The average benchmarked agency has 35.7 park sites and 398.25 total acres of parkland, with the average park size being 11.16 acres. Over half of their park sites are neighborhood parks (22 parks), and approximately two-thirds of their acres of parkland are made up of neighborhood parks (134.99 acres) and community parks (127.96 acres). The average benchmarked agency has 7.27 acres of parkland @ 1,000 population.

Trails

The Park District of Oak Park has 3.05 total miles of trails and .06 miles of trails @ 1,000 population, while the average benchmarked agency has 23 total miles of trails, and .42 miles of trails @ 1,000 population.

Outdoor Recreation Facilities

Comparative Communities Benchmarking

The Park District of Oak Park has a total of 89 outdoor recreation facilities and 1.694 outdoor recreation facilities @ 1,000 population. Over half of their outdoor facilities are made up of tennis courts (27 facilities) and playgrounds (21 facilities).

The average benchmarked agency has a total of 125.5 facilities and 2.290 outdoor recreation facilities @ 1,000 population. The outdoor recreation facilities that the average benchmarked agency has the most of include: playgrounds (25.5 facilities), tennis courts (18.5 facilities), and park shelters/picnic areas (13 facilities).

Indoor Recreation Facilities

The Park District of Oak Park maintains a total of 13 indoor recreation facilities and .248 indoor recreation facilities @ 1,000 population, while the average benchmarked agency has a total of 10.1 indoor recreation facilities and .184 indoor recreation facilities @ 1,000 population. Oak Park has more horticultural centers, historic facilities/museums, ice-arenas, and gymnastics centers @ 1,000 population than the average benchmarked agency. Oak Park has less indoor tennis centers, soccer centers, teen centers, fitness centers, and senior centers @ 1,000 population than the average benchmarked agency.

Indoor Community/Recreation Centers and Field Houses (Spaces and Sizes)

The Park District of Oak Park has a total of 14 different types of spaces within its indoor community centers (field houses) and .267 spaces within its indoor community centers (field houses) @ 1,000 population. Of these spaces, the vast majority are meeting rooms. The average benchmarked agency has a total of 15.7 spaces within its indoor community/recreation centers and field houses and .288 spaces @ 1,000 population.

The largest community center or field house in Oak Park is 6,410 square feet, and the smallest is 4,456 square feet. The largest community center or field house of the average benchmarked community is 67,111 square feet, and the smallest is 12,192 square feet.

Annual Revenues from Taxes and Fees/Charges

Annual tax revenues for the Park District of Oak Park in 2003 (including the Village transfer) were \$3,582,000 or \$68,197 @ 1,000 population. Annual tax revenues were \$42,981 @ each acre of parkland in Oak Park. Annual tax revenues in the average benchmarked agency in 2003 were \$4,333,815 or \$88,252 @ 1,000 population. Annual tax revenues were \$31,862 @ each acre of parkland in the average benchmarked agency.

Annual fees and charges revenues for the Park District of Oak Park in 2003 were \$3,178,670 or \$60,518 @ 1,000 population. Annual fees and charges revenues were \$38,141 @ each acre of parkland in Oak Park.

Annual fees and charges revenues in the average benchmarked agency in 2003 were \$3,590,832 or

Comparative Communities Benchmarking

\$65,241 @ 1,000 population. Annual fees and charges revenues were \$16,467 @ each acre of parkland in the average benchmarked agency.

Annual Staffing Costs

The Park District of Oak Park invested 61% of its operating budget in staffing costs in 2003. Staffing costs were \$74,708 @ 1,000 population and \$47,084 @ each acre of parkland in Oak Park.

The average benchmarked agency invested 42% of its operating budget in staffing costs in 2003. Staffing costs were \$70,040 @ 1,000 population and \$17,423 @ each acre of parkland in the average benchmarked agency.

Cooperative Use Agreements

The Park District of Oak Park has 12 partnerships out of a total of 15 potential partnership opportunities that organizations can partner with local schools, other local units of government and non-profits in the development, use, and funding of parks and recreation facilities. The average benchmarked community has 7.5 partnerships. The Park District of Oak Park is the only agency that does not have written partnership(s) with local schools.

Capital Budget

Revenue bonds are Oak Park's highest source of revenue for parks and recreation capital projects. General obligation funds are their 2nd highest source of revenue for capital projects, and property taxes are their 3rd highest source of revenue.

Seventy-seven percent (77%) of benchmarked agencies listed general obligation funds as one of their top three sources of revenue for parks and recreation capital projects. There are three other sources of revenue that over 30% of benchmarked agencies listed as one of their top three sources of revenue for parks and recreation capital projects: land and water conservation fund (46%); property taxes (46%); and community development block grants (31%).

The Park District of Oak Park does not have a long-range capital improvement program. A majority of benchmarked agencies do have a long-range capital improvement program, with the average length being 5 years. The average benchmarked community (with a long-range capital improvement program) invests \$21,074 @ 1,000 population in their program.

*Park District of Oak Park
Capital Financing Services*

Park District of Oak Park Capital Financing Services

POTENTIAL CAPITAL INVESTMENT SOURCES

An identification and evaluation of financing alternatives and methods for implementation of the capital recommendations was conducted as part of the study. The process included:

- ∃ Identification and definition of potential funding sources.
- ∃ Identification of rating criteria.
- ∃ Rating of each potential funding source as per its ability to serve as a principal funding source for the projects.

Each potential funding source could earn a maximum of 30 points. Based on this point scale, seven (7) different methods of funding projects are recommended for implementation/further consideration. The recommended funding sources include a wide range of local, state and national tax and non-tax funding methods. Some sources may require changes in park district policies, state legislation, etc.

<u>Source</u>	<u>Points Received</u>	<u>Major Source of Funding</u>
Property Taxes-Increase Corporate Levy	30 pts.	Local Taxes
Voter Approved Increase in Debt Service Levy Limit	25 pts.	Local Taxes
Interlocal Agreements	24 pts.	Public/Non-Profit/User Fees
Private Gifts/Park Foundation	22 pts.	Private Gifts
Grants	22 pts.	Federal/State
Non-Referendum Debt Service	22 pts.	Local Taxes
Recreation Service Fund	18 pts.	User Fees

The following pages describe in depth each potential funding source, whether the Park District of Oak Park is currently making use of the potential funding source, a rating criteria and a matrix for the funding sources.

TYPES AND DEFINITIONS

Parks System projects are funded in a multitude of manners. Indicated are sixteen (16) separate methods of financing projects used in various communities to be considered for usage in funding parks and recreation projects. These methods and their definitions follow.

Dedication/Development Fees: Fees assessed for the development of residential and/or commercial properties with the proceeds to be used for parks and recreation purposes, such as open space acquisition, community park site development, neighborhood parks development, regional parks development, etc.

Currently the Park District of Oak Park does not use this funding source.

Foundations/Gifts: Dollars raised from tax-exempt, non-profit organizations established with private donations in promotion of specific causes, activities or issues. Offers a variety of means to fund capital projects, including capital campaigns, gift catalogs, fund raisers, endowments, sales of items, etc.

Currently the Park District of Oak Park does use this funding source, although it creates little current revenues. One source that has been successful is the Austin Trust. The Austin Trust is established for extraordinary maintenance and recreation activities at Austin Gardens. The interest generates about \$12,000.00 annually. The Memorial Trust has contributed over 400 trees to our parks.

The Consultant Team believes that private fund-raising and gifts are a major potential source of funding projects for the park system, particularly those that have historic significance in the community.

To act upon this potential the Consultant Team recommends the establishment of a Park District Foundation, which would act similarly to a community foundation. Many park systems across the country are turning to private fund-raising as a major source of revenue development, particularly for specific projects.

While the Park District can accept gifts within its current structure, development of a foundation board will allow the Park District to bring in new community members that are focused on private fund-raising. Just as with any other revenue source, those organizations that articulate a clear case statement of need for private fund-raising dollars, set specific targets and revenue types for their fund-raising efforts, develop policies that create incentives for fund-raising, and go about reaching those goals in a strategic manner are most successful.

The Park District can also establish incentives for community organizations to raise private fund-raising dollars. For example, the Topeka Parks and Recreation Department had a policy whereby the Park District would match with tax dollars any moneys raised by private organizations for

Park District of Oak Park Capital Financing Services

parks and recreation purposes. Within three years more than \$3.5 million in private fund-raising revenues had been raised or pledged.

Recreation Service Fee: This is a dedicated user fee which can be established by a Park District for the purpose of constructing and maintaining recreation facilities. The fee can apply to all organized activities that require a reservation of some type, or other purposes as defined by the Park District. Examples of such activities include adult basketball, volleyball, and softball leagues, youth baseball, soccer, and softball leagues, and special interest classes. The fee allows participants an opportunity to contribute towards the upkeep of facilities being used.

A Recreation Service Fee was recently implemented by the Park District. This is a recommendation that came out of the Infrastructure Committee Report and was referred to as a “CIP Surcharge”. The Park District has implemented a \$5 per participant fee through various partnership agreements, i.e. OPRF Pony Baseball, Oak Park-River Forest Strikers Soccer Club, Inc., the Windmills, Oak Park Youth Baseball/Softball, etc.

The current Participant Fee is an excellent partnership project which can also be improved. Current language in the contracts between the Park District and the various non-profit organizations indicate that “the Required Fee shall be applied by the Park District for park improvements and for extraordinary park maintenance, as determined solely by the Park District.” None of the partnership agreements spell out specific projects that the Park District and community organizations can partner on developing.

With the results of the master plan in hand, the Consultant Team would recommend that each agreement include a written long term plan on how the facilities utilized by the community organizations can be improved. We would recommend these be joint decisions and not decisions that are determined solely by the Park District. The Consultant Team would also recommend that the Park District consider developing multi-year contracts rather than yearly contracts. These multi-year contracts will allow both organizations to plan better and provide incentives for private contributions that might not be available without clear direction on how the dollars will be used.

Community Development Block Grants: These are federal grants which are distributed to cities and can be used for a wide variety of municipal projects within designated geographic areas which meet program guidelines, such as income levels for area residents.

Currently the Park District of Oak Park does not use this funding source.

Voter Approved Increase in Non-Referendum Debt Service Levy Limit: Bonded indebtedness issued with the approval of the electorate for capital improvements and general public improvements with the proceeds paid back through the property tax base of the community over the specified period of time. In the case of the Park District of Oak Park these bonds would be for projects over and above the limit established through the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law (PTELL). The limit was established in 1994 at \$219,000. The

Park District of Oak Park Capital Financing Services

PTELL provides that the Park District may only increase its tax levy limit amount through referendum.

The Park District of Oak Park does not currently have any voter approved long term debt. The Park District has not brought any debt issues to the voters in at least 21 years. The Park District has prepared information that shows that a bond proceed (example) for the maximum debt of \$32,980,309 would increase the property tax rate by \$.23 per \$100 of EAV over the next twenty years. This would generate \$2,646,425 in revenue each year to pay off the bonds. It is imperative that the scheduling of the debt service be tied into the realistic life of the project(s) being funded.

Industrial Development Bonds: Specialized revenue bonds issued on behalf of privately-owned, self-supporting facilities.

Currently the Park District of Oak Park does not use this funding source.

Property Tax: Tax levied on the assessed valuation of all non-exempt real and personal property.

Property taxes are the major source of funding operations for the Park District. The Park District has a number of existing tax sources including corporate, museum, and recreation.

The Park District of Oak Park has considerable opportunities to increase tax revenues from existing and new tax sources through voter elections. Revenues from existing park district tax sources can increase as much as \$1,514,496 annually through voter elections and would increase the property tax rate by \$.132.

New sources of tax support can add to this. For example, a new Conservatory Tax could generate as much as \$573,571 annually through an increase in the property tax rate of \$.050.

The Parks Infrastructure Committee recommended holding a voter election to increase the Corporate tax levy rate with the additional dollars, with the public understanding that a portion of the tax levy would be dedicated for capital improvements and the remaining for daily operations.

Revenues can increase as much as \$2,877,878 annually through voter elections from a \$.25 per \$100 of EAV tax increase.

Repeatedly during the master plan process, the need and desire to have one or more voter elections for raising revenues was raised by Park District officials and citizens, including suggestions to raise revenues from the current Museum Tax or create a new Conservatory Tax to support the Conservatory and a citizen vote on future funding of the centers.

Park District of Oak Park Capital Financing Services

Hotel, Motel and Restaurant Tax: Tax based on gross receipts from charges and meal services which may be used to build and operate sports fields, regional parks, golf courses, tennis courts and other special park and recreation facilities.

The Park District of Oak Park does not currently have a hotel, motel, and restaurant tax. However, the community benefits from regional facilities such as the Conservatory, Pleasant Home, Cheney Mansion, Ridgeland Common, and Austin Gardens.

Non-Referendum Debt Service Deferred Bonds: The PTELL establishes a limit on non-referendum bonds that the Park District may levy annually for debt service. The limit was established in 1994 at \$219,000.

Along with the Alternative Revenue Series 1996 Bonds, this has been the principal source the Park District has used to provide capital improvements. All of the current debt will be retired by 2008.

Grants: A variety of special grants currently exist through the Federal and State governmental systems. Grants are available for a wide range of projects. Federal grants have been historically more available for outdoor recreation, parks, and trails projects than indoor projects. State and federal grants require local matching funds of various amounts. The Open Space and Land Acquisition Grants administered by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources are very achievable but require site master plans and a 50% match. This grant option was used in 1998 at Lindberg Park.

The Park District of Oak Park has used grants in the past and recently received an Illinois Public Museum Capital Grant for \$40,000. *The Friends of the Oak Park Conservatory provided a \$80,000 match to the Park District for the Illinois Public Museum Capital Grant.*

Sales Tax: Tax on the retail sales of taxable goods and services.

The Park District of Oak Park does not currently have a sales tax dedicated to parks and recreation improvements. Sales tax funding of parks and recreation projects is one of the fastest growing funding sources for projects and is frequently used in Missouri, Kansas and other states for funding major parks and recreation initiatives. Often times this funding source comes with a sunset clause, i.e. the tax expires after a set amount of time.

The tax is often more popular with voters than property tax initiatives, since a portion of the tax is paid for by non-residents who shop in a community, use community services, etc. but do not pay property taxes.

Local Option Income Tax: This is a source of funding for parks and recreation projects that allows local units of government, i.e. counties and cities, to assess an income tax on wages earned by those who work or live within the limits of their community.

Park District of Oak Park Capital Financing Services

The Park District of Oak Park does not currently have a local option income tax.

Special Improvement District/Benefit District: Taxing districts established to provide funds for certain types of improvements which benefit a specific group of affected properties. Improvements may include landscaping, the erection of fountains, the acquisition of art, and supplemental services for improvement and promotion, including recreation and cultural enhancements.

The Park District of Oak Park does not currently have any special improvement districts/benefit districts.

Annual Appropriation/Leasehold Financing: This more complex financing structure requires use of a third party to the debt, construct the facility and retain title until the debt is retired. The Park District enters into a lease agreement with the third party, with annual lease payments equal to the debt service requirements. The debt issued by the third party is considered less secure than general obligation bonds of the Park District, and therefore are more costly. Since the debt is issued by a separate corporation, they do not impact the Park District's debt limitations and does not require a vote. However, the Park District is not entitled to levy property taxes to service the debt. The annual lease payments must be appropriated from existing revenues.

The Park District of Oak Park does not currently have any leasehold financing.

Interlocal Agreement: Contractual relationships entered into between two or more local units of government and/or between a local unit of government and a non-profit organization for the joint usage/development of sports fields, regional parks, or other facilities.

The Park District of Oak Park has an extensive range of interlocal agreements with non-profit providers and other public agencies. Information from the benchmarking survey shows that the Park District of Oak Park has 12 partnerships out of a total of 15 potential partnership opportunities that organizations can partner with local schools, other local units of government and non-profits in the development, use, and funding of parks and recreation facilities. The average benchmarked community has 7.5 partnerships.

The Park District of Oak Park is the only agency that does not have written partnership(s) with local schools. This is a significant weakness that should be corrected with a fully independent park district. The Consultant Team has previously spelled out recommendations to enhance current partnerships with youth sports organizations and other non-profit partners through developing multi-year agreements with specific capital improvement long range plans spelled out in the agreements to be jointly implemented and funded.

Park District of Oak Park Capital Financing Services

The Park District Citizen's Committee has strongly encouraged the Park District to aggressively pursue new, and to enhance existing partnerships with other community organizations (the Village of Oak Park, District #97, District #200, the Township of Oak Park, the Oak Park Library, the YMCA, etc.) in providing facilities and programs.

The Consultant Team strongly endorses this direction and would additionally encourage the Park District to reach out into regional partnerships with other local units of government, forest preserve districts, etc. that are mutually beneficial. For example, the Park District might forge regional alliances for the development of youth sports facilities. Many teams in Oak Park play many games, etc. outside of Oak Park due to a lack of facilities and space. The Park District might also consider regional alliances to take advantage of the drawing power it has with some special facilities, particularly the Oak Park Conservatory and Ridgeland Commons.

Revenue Bonds: Bonds used for capital projects which will generate revenue for debt service where fees can be set aside to support repayment of the bond.

The Park District of Oak Park currently has an Alternative Revenue Series 1996 Bond in the amount of \$2 million with the source of revenue to repay the bonds being pool revenues. This \$2 million bond issue was issued to fund improvements to Rehm Pool and additionally for improvements at the Ridgeland Commons Pool. The Bonds were issued based on a 3 to 2 vote of the Park Board. Bond costs were supposed to be paid through increases in pool revenues.

However, pool revenues have not increased sufficiently to cover bond payments, necessitating paying parts of these bonds from other sources. Since 1997 and through the end of 2003, pool expenses including debt service have exceeded pool revenue by \$1,560,953. The fund balance for revenue facilities has only declined by \$881,543 because the other departments included in the revenue facilities fund have had positive results.

The Alternative Revenue Bond will be paid off in 2006. The Consultant Team does not recommend that the Park District use this form of funding for any capital projects in the foreseeable future.

Private Concessionaires: Contract with a private business to provide and operate desirable recreational activities financed, constructed and operated by the private sector with additional compensation paid to the Park District.

The Park District of Oak Park does not currently have any private concessionaire agreements.

Park District of Oak Park Capital Financing Services

Definitions of Rating Criteria

The following criteria were used in evaluating potential funding sources to renovate and/or build capital projects in Oak Park.

- 1 - Presently/Potentially Used By the Park District-** Is the funding source presently or potentially being used or being developed? The more a funding source mirrors present usage, the more points it received.
- 2 - Compatibility With Other Park District Sources and Policies-** Is the funding source compatible with other funding sources and policies? Those funding sources that were received higher points.
- 3 - Traditional Source of Funding Projects-** Is the funding source traditionally used for the types of projects being operated or recommended for the Parks System? The better suited the funding source is for such projects, the more points it received.
- 4 - Source Used By Other Communities -** Is the funding source used by other Park Districts and Agencies? The more the source is used by other agencies, the more points it received.
- 5 - Potential Source of Substantial Funding -** Considerable revenues will be needed to construct the Parks System. Therefore, the greater a revenue source's potential to raise substantial funding, the more points it received.

Point System

Criteria 1-4 were rated on a scale of 0 - 5 (with 5 being the highest rating and 0 the lowest). Criteria #5 (Potential Source of Substantial Funding) was rated on a scale of 0 - 10 (10 the highest and 0 the lowest). This was done to give extra weight for a source's potential ability to raise significant revenues.

Point ratings for each of the criteria were as follows:

1. Presently Used by the Park District

<u>Points</u>	<u>Definition</u>
5 pts	Yes being used
3 pts	In progress of developing
1 pt	Used in past
0 pts	Not used

2. Compatibility with other Park District Revenue Sources

<u>Points</u>	<u>Definition</u>
5 pts	Yes
0 pts	No

3. Traditional Source of Funding Projects

<u>Points</u>	<u>Definition</u>
5 pts	Very much
3 pts	Often
1 pt	Occasionally
0 pts	Seldom/Never

4. Source Used By Other Communities

<u>Points</u>	<u>Definition</u>
5 pts	Very often
3 pts	Often
1 pt	Occasionally
0 pts	Seldom/Never

5. Potential Source of Substantial Funding

<u>Points</u>	<u>Definition</u>
10	Very High
6	High
2	Moderate
0	Low

The following page shows a graph of the potential funding sources and ratings.

Park District of Oak Park Capital Financing Services

Rating of Potential Financing Sources	Presently Used By Park District	Compatible With Other Policies	Traditional Source of Funding	Source Used By Other Communities	Potential Source of Substantial Funding	Point Total
<i>Source of Funds</i>						
Dedication Development Fee	0	5	0	3	2	10
Foundations/Gifts	5	5	3	3	6	22
Recreation Service Fund	5	5	3	3	2	18
Community Development Block Grants	1	5	1	1	6	14
Voter Approved Increase in Debt Service Levy Limit	0	5	5	5	10	25
Industrial Development Bonds	0	0	1	1	2	4
Property Taxes-Corporate Levy	5	5	5	5	10	30
Hotel, Motel, and Restaurant Tax	0	5	0	1	6	12
Non-Referendum Debt Service Deferred Bonds	5	5	5	5	2	22
Grants	1	5	5	5	6	22
Sales Tax	0	5	0	1	6	12
Local Option Income Tax	0	0	0	1	2	3
Special Improvement District/Benefit District	0	0	1	1	2	4
Annual Appropriation/Leasehold Financing	0	5	1	1	2	9
Interlocal Agreement	5	5	3	5	6	24
Revenue Bonds	5	5	1	1	2	14
Private Concessions	0	0	1	3	2	6

Park District Fund Balances

The Park District’s fund balances have decreased substantially over the past 10 years. This finding was initially pointed out in the Infrastructure Committee’s report. The Year 2002 and Year 2003 fund balances for the Park District both for the Operating Funds and for Total Funds are the lowest in the past 10 years. The Year 2003 fund balances did show an increase over 2002 for both the Total Fund and Operating Fund.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Fund Balance</u>	<u>Operating Fund Total</u>
1994	\$1,432,038	\$820,730
1995	\$2,022,890	\$1,122,382
1996	\$3,588,607	\$1,724,685
1997	\$2,321,266	\$1,690,262
1998	\$3,552,079	\$1,081,952
1999	\$2,576,227	\$711,450
2000	\$1,235,054	\$609,803
2001	\$951,445	\$711,956
2002	\$571,989	\$503,139
2003	\$623,363	\$525,737

Source: Park District of Oak Park and Leisure Vision

Why Have the Fund Balances Decreased

The Consultant Team has worked extensively with Park District officials to understand the principal reasons that the fund balances have decreased. These efforts have shown that the principal reason for the reduced fund balance is the 1996 Alternative Revenue Bond issue not meeting its revenue goals.

This \$2 million bond issue was issued to fund improvements to Rehm Pool and additionally for improvements at the Ridgeland Commons Pool. The Bonds were issued based on a 3 to 2 vote of the Park Board. Bond costs were supposed to be paid through increases in pool revenues.

However, pool revenues have not increased sufficiently to cover bond payments. Through the end of 2003, pool expenses including debt service have exceeded pool revenues by \$1,560,953 since 1997. Pool revenues are accounted for under the Revenue Facilities fund.

Park District of Oak Park Capital Financing Services

Over the past 10 years the fund balance in Revenue Facilities has decreased over \$750,000. Revenue Facilities is one of 10 Funds listed under “Operating Funds”. As indicated in the chart below, in 1994 the Revenue Facilities Fund had a balance of -\$59,143. ***In 2003 the Revenue Facilities Fund had a balance of -\$822,848.***

<u>Year</u>	<u>Revenue Facilities</u>
1994	-\$59,143
1995	\$55,217
1996	\$43,059
1997	-\$28,327
1998	-\$53,472
1999	-\$237,447
2000	-\$349,615
2001	-\$459,885
2002	-\$657,832
2003	-\$822,848

Source: Park District of Oak Park

The Revenue Facilities Fund is used to account for revenues and expenditures related to programs that are not directly tax supported, including outdoor pools, indoor ice-arena, gymnastics, recreation programming for adults, preschoolers, and summer camps. The deficit in the Revenue Facilities Fund would be even greater except for positive revenue generation in other areas of the Revenue Facilities Fund and other actions that the Park District has taken.

Collectively, the other 9 Funds listed under “Operating Funds” have shown an increase in their fund balances of over \$450,000 since 1994.

Additional Financing Trends and Analysis

Over the past 10 years, funding for operations has increased at a consistent pace. Expenditures for the operating budget have increased 46% comparing year 2003 to year 1992. Operating expenditures were \$1,984,286 higher in 2003 than in 1992. Of this total, payroll expenses were \$943,978 higher in 2003 than in 1992.

During this same period of time, debt expenses have remained fairly constant. Debt expenses were \$72,839 higher in 2003 than in 1992. Expenditures for Debt has increased 14% comparing year 2003 to year 1992.

During this same period of time, capital expenses increased rapidly until year 2000 and have declined even more rapidly since then. Capital expenses were \$49,495 lower in 2003 than in 1992. Expenditures for Capital expenses has decreased 34% comparing year 2003 to year 1992.

Over the past 10 years, revenues from Park District taxes, Park District fees, and rental revenues have increased at a faster pace than revenues from Village transfers. From 1992 to 2003 revenues from taxes collected for the Park District have increased 65.53% and revenues from fees and rental revenues have increased 60.16%. During that same time revenues from Village Transfer have increased 25.95%. It should be noted that fees from Village Transfer are tied into a formula negotiated between the Park District and Village. The Park District has not requested an increase in that formula during this period.

The Park District's deferred capital maintenance issues are a result of years of under-funding. It is clear that the Park District has, for at least the past 10 years, severely under funded its capital maintenance needs. No comprehensive maintenance plan was ever developed until the work of the Infrastructure Committee. Projects were initiated, but they were done on an individual basis, with little regard to how the project fit into the overall priorities for the Park system.

Importantly, this under-funding of capital projects existed for both Park District owned and operated facilities and Village owned facilities that the Park District managed through the Inter-governmental agreement. As a condition of that agreement, the Park District has responsibility for maintaining the 7 community centers.

Park District of Oak Park Capital Financing Services

In the Consultant Team’s opinion, the Park District needs to reallocate its operating resources based on identified community needs. The Park District is spending a disproportionate amount of its tax revenues and Village transfer revenues on the 7 community center operations. This does not allow sufficient revenues to be allocated to other operations and capital areas of high community importance.

The chart below shows tax support for direct and indirect expenses for various major service areas in the Park District. Tax support for the community centers is derived from Park District taxes and revenues from the current Village Transfer. The total tax support for the community centers is nearly \$500,000 more than for parks and sports programs combined. 30% of household respondents to the community survey rated small neighborhood parks as one of the 4 most important parks and recreation facilities to their households as compared to 9% for community centers. The amount of tax support for the community centers is more than what is received for the Conservatory, Dole Center, swimming pools, Ridgeland Commons Ice Arena, the 2 historic properties, and the Gymnastics Center combined.

Park District of Oak Park

<u>MAJOR SERVICE AREA</u>	<u>Total Tax Support</u>	<u>Percent Tax Support of Service</u>	<u>Percent Relationship of Tax Support To Community Centers</u>
Community Centers	\$1,326,795	37.27%	
Parks (Open space and sports)	\$842,859	23.68%	64%
Conservatory	\$341,724	9.60%	26%
Dole Center	\$251,838	7.07%	19%
Swimming Pools	\$298,661	8.39%	23%
Ice/Arena	\$166,227	4.67%	13%
Historic Properties	\$117,030	3.29%	9%
Adult Recreation	\$95,665	2.69%	7%
Early Childhood and Summer Camps	\$63,411	1.78%	5%
Gymnastics Center	\$55,693	1.56%	4%
Total	\$3,558,903	100.00%	

Source: Park District of Oak Park and Leisure Vision

*Analysis and Recommendations
on Governance*

OAK PARK GOVERNANCE

A significant aspect of the Master Planning process is to evaluate and discuss the appropriate system of governance to effectuate the desired future of the community for its parks and recreation system.

The Leisure Vision consultant team developed four alternative models of governance specific to Oak Park. The proposed models were reviewed by the project Steering Committee and the sub-committee on Governance. Following review and understanding of the alternative models, the consultant team proposed using “Measures of Excellence in a Park System” as developed by the Trust for Public Lands. These measures were supplemented with additional evaluative factors for measuring the effectiveness of a governance system that the consultant team had experience with in other communities that we’ve served.

The sub-committee on governance thoroughly discussed the proposed 15 factors for evaluating governance models and recommended that the consultant team use the following nine (which incorporated all 15 elements proposed, but grouped some together under a broader category) to test the alternative governance models:

1. VISION

The ability to provide a clear sense of purpose to the community about the parks and recreation system and goals.

2. PLANNING & COMMUNITY INPUT

The ability to effectively plan and involve the community in parks and recreation issues.

3. SUFFICIENT ASSETS

The ability to provide the specific assets of land, staff, and equipment to meet the parks and recreation systems’ goals.

4. SERVICE DELIVERY

The systems’ responsibility to deliver quality services of the highest priority to the citizens. Quality services are defined as including the following evaluative factors: a) equitable access, b) user satisfaction, c) safety, and d) professional staff.

5. CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

The ability to attract citizen input and leadership into the park and recreation system.

Analysis and Recommendations on Governance

6. COMMUNITY BENEFITS

The ability to provide benefits beyond the borders of the parks, i.e. improving home and property values.

7. PARTNERING

The ability to effectively leverage other community assets.

8. SUSTAINABILITY

The ability to raise sufficient resources to meet the goals of the parks and recreation system.

9. ACCESS TO DECISION MAKERS

The ability for community members to meet, visit and influence decision makers regarding parks and recreation issues facing the individual and/or the community.

Each of the above nine evaluative factors was then assigned a weight of importance. On a 1 to 5 scale of importance, with 5 being most important and 1 least, the evaluative factors of *VISION, PLANNING & COMMUNITY INPUT, SERVICE DELIVERY, CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT, AND SUSTAINABILITY* were assigned weights of 5. *SUFFICIENT ASSETS, PARTNERING and ACCESS TO DECISION MAKERS* were assigned a weighting value of 4 and *COMMUNITY BENEFITS* was assigned a weight of 3.

ALTERNATIVE MODELS OF GOVERNANCE

The four alternative models of governance were then evaluated using the above criteria and the assigned weighting. The four models of governance were identified as follows:

Model 1: Enhanced Partnering Status Quo

Description: This Model would result in a park system that is still managed by the Park District of Oak Park in partnership with the Village and two School Districts with enhanced partnering relationships.

Under this Model:

The Park District of Oak Park would remain in existence

The Village of Oak Park would continue to own the Community Centers

The Village of Oak Park would continue providing funding to the Park District under an improved contract

The Park District of Oak Park would continue to have available its current tax and non-tax funding sources

The Park District of Oak Park would continue to partner with the Village and School Districts under improved partnering agreements.

Citizens of Oak Park would directly elect Park Board members

Model 2: Independent Park District-Ownership of Community Centers and Grounds, with Enhanced Partnering Relationships with Community Providers

Description: This Model would result in the Village of Oak Park transferring ownership of the Community Centers and grounds to the Park District of Oak Park and work to increase partnering efforts with other community providers.

Under this Model:

The Park District of Oak Park would remain in existence

The Village of Oak Park would transfer ownership of the Community Centers and grounds to the Park District of Oak Park

The Village of Oak Park would discontinue providing funding to the Park District for operations of the Community Centers and the contract would be dissolved

Analysis and Recommendations on Governance

The Park District of Oak Park in partnership with other community providers would develop new models for leveraging public, non-profit, and private sector resources.

The Park District of Oak Park would continue to have available its current tax and non-tax funding sources

Citizens of Oak Park would directly elect Park Board members

Model 3: Independent Park District-Ownership and Operations of Community Centers and Grounds by Village, With Partnering Relationships with Community Providers

Description: This Model would result in the Village of Oak Park and Park District of Oak Park allowing the contractual agreement to expire without being renewed, and transfer operations of the Community Centers to the Village of Oak Park, while leaving the remainder of the Park District of Oak Park intact.

Under this Model:

The Park District of Oak Park would remain in existence

The Village of Oak Park and Park District of Oak Park would discontinue their contractual relationship involving the Community Centers

The Village of Oak Park would discontinue providing funding to the Park District for operations of the Community Centers

The Village of Oak Park would take over operations of the Community Centers, either for their current usage or different usage

The Village of Oak Park and the Park District of Oak Park in partnership with other community providers would develop new models for leveraging public, non-profit, and private sector resources.

The Park District of Oak Park would continue to have available its current tax and non-tax funding sources, with the exception of the tax revenues and fee revenues from the Community Centers

Citizens of Oak Park would directly elect Park Board members

Analysis and Recommendations on Governance

Model 4: Village Operated Parks and Recreation System

Description: This Model would result in the Park District of Oak Park being disbanded and total operations of Parks and Recreation being transferred under Village management.

Under this Model:

The Park District of Oak Park would cease to exist

The Village of Oak Park and Park District of Oak Park would discontinue their contractual relationship involving the Community Centers

The Village of Oak Park would take over all operations of the Park system including the Community Centers

The Village of Oak Park may provide funding of the Community Centers through dollars allocated for parks and recreation

The Village of Oak Park in partnership with other community providers would develop new models for leveraging public, non-profit, and private sector resources.

The taxing authority for parks and recreation that only exists through a Park District would discontinue

Citizens of Oak Park would cease to elect Park Board members

PREFERRED MODELS OF GOVERNANCE

Both the consultant team and the sub-committee on governance independently and concurrently agreed that two of the four alternative models of governance (Model 2: Independent Park District and Model 4: Village Operated Parks & Recreation System) stood out and deserved additional study and consideration. While there are compelling arguments for recommending either of the models and the quantitative assessment is very close between the two, it is recommended that the community pursue the Independent Park District form of delivery of parks and recreation services (Model 2) to pursue the preferred vision of the community.

Under this preferred model, the Village of Oak Park and the Park District would allow the current contractual agreement pertaining to the ownership and operation of the seven community centers to expire and enter into negotiations for the transferring of ownership and operation of the centers to the Park District. Accompanying this transfer of facilities would be a proposed three year annual contribution from the Village to the Park District, a significant portion of which the consultant team recommends becomes the basis of a Capital Improvements Plan for the District, thus partially addressing years of no funding for necessary facility improvements within the system.

Analysis and Recommendations on Governance

The three-year annual transfer of funds from the Village to the District should be earmarked both for capital and operating purposes with operating funds declining each year. For example, the three year transfer of funds could be structured as follows: Year 1, 75% operating purposes, 25% capital funding, Year 2, 50% to both operating and capital purposes, and Year 3 25% for operations and 75% for capital improvements.

Thus we recommend the centers and accompanying land be transferred along with \$4.8 to \$6 million to be used to create a Parks & Recreation Capital Improvements Program and to assist in park operations as described above.

It is not anticipated that the Village would be asked for any further long-term annual contributions to the District for day to day parks and recreation operations. However, future partnership agreements between the Village, Park District and other community organizations are strongly encouraged in order to accomplish a specific project or address an unmet community need as identified in the community survey.

It is vital that the Park District immediately research and carefully consider and prioritize the appropriate tax rate and bonding authority to achieve the parks and recreation system needs and goals for the future without reliance upon Village operational funding.

The consultants believe that one of the most critical factors the Park District must face is the issue of *Sustainability*---raising and appropriately managing the resources necessary to achieve the objectives of an excellent parks and recreation system that the community desires and deserves. In recent years, one could not conclude that Park District leadership has excelled in this critical area of governance. As a result, there is much “catching up” to be done and it will be a significant challenge to overcome multiple years of under funding and attention to potentially beneficial cooperative ventures.

It is imperative the “fully independent” Park District, now fully responsible and accountable for the provision of quality parks and recreation services to the community and charged with achieving the preferred future, to aggressively seek new models of cooperation with other community providers of leisure-related services and leverage public, non-profit, and private sector resources to achieve the objectives of a well rounded parks and recreation program. This is a big commitment that the District must embrace and be fully prepared to accept.

Focusing on an enhanced partnering strategy accomplishes at least two major objectives. First, local organizations and governmental partners can be effective providers of parks and recreation services, relieving the Park District of some administrative costs and financial overhead responsibilities. In addition, collaborating with community user group organizations and Village institutions fosters support and commitment, creating bonds that become highly beneficial when seeking tax revenue support from the electorate.

The facility sharing and use relationship with the two local school districts is absolutely critical, and new, mutually beneficial and strong cooperative agreements between these entities is of paramount importance to achieve community desires.

THE ROLE OF VILLAGE ELDERS

The consultant team is highly complimentary of the current practice of the administrators of the Village, Park District, two School Districts and the Library regularly meeting and discussing mutual challenges and cooperative efforts. We recommend this practice be expanded in two ways for purposes of implementing the parks and recreation master plan.

First, we suggest the top elected official of each entity join their appointed administrators in attending these meetings on at least a quarterly basis. It is the partnership of elected and appointed leaders that often transcend differences between organizations and those leaders, with the support of the remainder of the governing board members can achieve new solutions and approaches to critical parks and recreation master plan issues, hopefully avoiding paralysis and inaction on important pending issues. Meetings need to be substantive---more than “reporting sessions”. Key cooperative ventures need to be thoroughly discussed and the basis for agreement “hashed out” in these sessions.

Secondly, we suggest the combined body of entities that now regularly meet, select two to three “Village elders” to join the group for all meetings pertaining to the parks and recreation master plan and contribute to the dialogue. These “elders” would be individuals who have served Oak Park in the past and are readily recognized as “wise leaders” who think first, foremost and only about the betterment of Oak Park. Fortunately, it has been the consultant team’s experience that every community possesses individuals of this caliber. They have served the community with distinction, have achieved their leadership status, have no “axes to grind”, have given unselfishly of themselves to the community and they embody the very essence of the community and the good things it stands for.

It has been our experience that the presence of elders tends to provide an overriding calm and “let’s do the right thing here” attitude to a group of leaders who are often challenged by the “here and now” of events and circumstances. In our opinion, this approach will be critical to accomplishing the objectives of the parks and recreation master plan.

TAXING AUTHORITY AND ELECTIONS

The Park District model of governance has an array of “Tax Revenue Options” that the Park District of Oak Park can use in order to fund annual operations and capital projects. These “Tax Revenue Options” include revenue sources that the Park District of Oak Park is currently using, i.e. Corporate, Museum, Recreation, Audit, and Handicap Fund and revenue sources that the Park District of Oak Park is not-currently using, i.e. Conservatory Tax, Paving and Lighting Tax, etc.

The current tax rate from all sources being used (without debt) is .168 and generates \$1,930,500 annually. In all of the “Tax Revenue Options” being used, the current tax rates are below the maximum rates allowed. These maximum rates can be authorized with voter approval and at their current maximum levels would generate an additional \$1,513,496 annually.

Analysis and Recommendations on Governance

Additionally revenues could be realized through voter approved elections for “Tax Revenue Options” not currently being used. For example, as indicated above, the Park District of Oak Park does not currently have a Conservatory Tax. The maximum annual revenue that could be realized from such a tax is \$573,571.

The Consultant team believes that having voters participate in these funding decisions is a benefit of the independent Park District model for Oak Park. According to Park District officials, voters in Oak Park have not had an opportunity to vote on any Park District ballot measure for at least 21 years.

Prior to that, on July 28, 1970 a special referendum “asking the voters of the Park District for authorization to levy an additional tax of .05% for all corporate purposes was defeated 994 “no” votes to 675 “yes” votes. A referendum with four propositions was proposed and defeated on August 24, 1968.

The last voter approved tax measure for the Park District of Oak Park was held on June 8, 1964, over 40 years ago. That tax measure to establish a rate limitation of 10 cents per \$100 valuation was passed with 963 “yes” votes and 233 “no” votes.

RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The independent Park District or Village operation of parks and recreation services models were preferred over other models primarily because both systems of governance clearly assign responsibility and accountability to a governing body. While the consultant team strongly recommends partnership agreements and cooperation among governmental entities, we prefer that whatever the form of governance ultimately selected, that citizens know to whom to advocate and approach and it is clear who the fiscally responsible entity for the services provided is. We suggest that either organization (Park District or Village) has the authority and ability to appropriate adequate funding (in consultation with the electorate) to achieve the long-term goals of the Oak Park parks and recreation system.

The Park District Board is representative of the “resident experts” in parks and recreation matters. They, unlike the Village Board, are not encumbered with the significant and sometimes over-bearing responsibility of addressing a myriad of critical and wide ranging issues that face a dynamic community like Oak Park. It is our opinion that the Park District Board can more adequately and in more depth address specific parks and recreation related matters that face the community. Given full accountability for meeting the parks and recreation needs of the community while standing for election enables Oak Park resident’s desirable access to a specific group of leaders who are in touch with the issues and control the resources that may affect them. Alternatively, it is incumbent upon the Park District Board, who may not garner the attention and community exposure that is given to the Village Board, to clearly “stand out and get out” into the community and clearly communicate it’s purpose for existence and how it can assist the community in achieving a better parks and recreation system in the future.

Analysis and Recommendations on Governance

The system of governance has a responsibility for educating and informing the community of the different entities that provide services and engage the community in dialogue as well as the election process. Done effectively, the highly involved citizenry that is so evident in Oak Park will not be confused as to who is responsible and accountable for the provision of parks and recreation services and those same informed residents will be better served by men and women who are elected by their constituents to focus on the community's parks and recreation assets and future.

While the consultant team will readily admit there is no perfect system of governance, we believe, based upon our conduct of interviews, surveys, and analysis of the Oak Park system that the Independent Park District model offers the best long-term strategy to maximize citizen access, establish the closest positive relationship with the Oak Park electorate about parks and recreation issues and pursue a focused preferred future for the parks and recreation system.

Short term, the Village model may achieve faster and more immediate beneficial results for parks and recreation improvements because of accessibility to needed resources to address funding gaps and needs. The Village government may also be more sensitive and understanding of the under-served population of the community. However, longer term, the dedication and pursuit of challenges specific to only parks and recreation related issues is best served by a tightly focused entity which is represented by the Park District model. That said, the Park District must, among other things, sharpen its sensitivity to seeking out and addressing the needs of portions of the community who may not regularly engage in public discourse.

The consultant team recommends that the Park District prepare **a three-year operating action plan**, subject to review by the consultant team, which would ultimately be presented to the Village Board for review and comment. This plan, anticipated to take three to four months to fully develop, would be the blueprint for transitioning to the new form of governance and would identify the specific actions and strategies that the Park District anticipates taking to achieve appropriate long-term funding needs, potential cooperative ventures, forms of service delivery and suggested forums for citizen involvement in the important decisions and trade-offs that are expected to be addressed.

Basis for Funding Recommendation

The Consultant Team's recommendations for Governance contained three major interconnected recommendations: 1) An Independent Park District as the form of Government; 2) That the Village pay to the Park District a sum of between \$4.8 - \$6 million over a 3 year period; and 3) That the Park District develop a 3 year operating plan. Please accept the following as regarding the 2nd and 3rd recommendations.

\$4.8 - \$6 million over a 3 year period

This recommendation would have the Village pay to the Park District a sum that is more than they are legally required to do over a 3 year period and then not require any addition financial support for an Independent Park District.

Neither the Park District or Village is legally bound to any agreement past the current one. The Village and Park District can simply not renew the agreement, in which case the responsibility for the 7 community centers would return to the Village. The Park District allocates \$1.18 million of the Village's \$1.6 million transfer to the community centers. Of that total approximately \$500,000 is allocated to Direct Center Costs, while the remaining nearly \$700,000 is allocated to various Indirect and Administrative Costs for the Centers.

If the Village retakes responsibility for the centers, it is clear to the Consultant Team that their costs would not approach the \$1.18 million currently appropriated. The Village would have the same options to operate all 7 centers with a more cost effective management structure, to convert 2-3 of the centers to non-profit operations, or to close some of the 7 centers that the Park District has. Additionally, the Village could choose to contract out the management of some/all of the centers to a third party, such as a non-profit provider, etc.

All of these actions would reduce the Village's costs for the community centers, some with significant reductions. Results from the Master Plan clearly indicate to the Consultant Team that there is no recreation need to operate the 7 community centers and the allocations to the centers exceed the benefits received. The Village, acting in the best interests of the wise usage of tax dollars would not, in our opinion, spend nearly \$1.2 million per year in tax dollars on the centers.

Since the Village had and still has the option of rejecting the governance recommendation, to ask them to pay far in excess over the next 3 years what they are legally required to do, could have them reject the recommendation.

This recommendation would have the Park District receive from the Village a sum that is more than they are required over the next three years and that can be used to jump start the master plan, while giving the Park District adequate time to bring to the voters tax packages.

Analysis and Recommendations on Governance

The Park District of Oak Park has considerable opportunities to increase tax revenues from existing and new tax sources through voter elections. Revenues from existing park district tax sources can increase as much as \$1,514,496 annually through voter elections and new sources of tax support can add to this. For example, a new Conservatory Tax could generate as much as \$573,571 annually. The Park District has not brought any issues before the voters in at least 21 years. The Consultant Team believes that having voters participate in these funding decisions is a benefit of an independent park district.

The Infrastructure Committee called for a voter election. Repeatedly during the master plan process, the need and desire to have one or more voter elections for raising revenues was raised by Park District officials and citizens, including administrative staff of the Park District suggestions to raise revenues from a Museum Tax to support the Conservatory and a citizen vote on future funding of the centers. Some have suggested having voter elections as early as April 2005.

A few additional points:

While the Consultant Team believes that the Independent Park District model is the best model, we do not believe it is the cheapest model. Certainly, there are administrative costs for the Park District model that would not exist under the Village model. For example, there would be no need in the Village model for a “Superintendent of Business Operations” position as is in the Park District. Over the past 4 years, total administrative costs for the Park District have increased more than \$100,000 per year, representing 50% of the total staffing cost growth for the entire Park District. The Consultant Team has previously recommended opportunities for other cost savings as relates to salaries and wages.

In our opinion, the Village should not be required to allocate tax payer dollars for administrative and salary expenses for a Park District model that would not be required in a Village model.

While the Park District has depleted fund-balances, particularly in its Revenue Fund, this shortfall was caused by decisions of the Park District relative to the issuance of the 1996 Alternative Revenue Bonds. That decision has led to Fund Balances in Revenue Facilities of nearly \$800,000 less than in 1994. Pool net results with debt services are \$1,560,953 less than projected through the 1996 Alternative Revenue Bonds. Collectively, the other 9 funds in the Park District listed under “Operating Funds” have shown an increase in their fund balances of over \$450,000 since 1994.

Based on numerous communications to the Consultant Team from the Finance Director and Executive Director it appears that the Park District feels that there is a “trend” for the Fund Balances to improve. Additionally, the last of the Bond Payments for the Alternative Revenue Bonds will be made in 2006. After that, the Park District will free up significant dollars that have been used to make up for revenue shortfalls from the Alternative Revenue Bond issue for other purposes.

Analysis and Recommendations on Governance

The Consultant Teams recommendations will provide funding to the Park District through this 2006 timeline. We do not believe that the Village should be required to allocate funds to the Park District to improve its fund balance, when the cause of these difficulties were actions of a previous Park Board, under the advice of a previous Parks and Recreation Director.

The Park District has not spent sufficient money since 1980 on the maintenance of the 7 community centers. The \$1.6 million allocated from the Village is supposed to include monies for the maintenance of the 7 community centers. It is clear that sufficient dollars were not allocated for these purposes, but rather were spent on other areas. In a sense, if the dollars that are allocated from the Village to the Park District are used for improvements to the community centers, the Village is paying for some of those improvements twice. First, with allocations since 1980 they have not been sufficiently used for maintenance of the centers, and now with the additionally requested allocation.

When Should the Three Years Start?

The Consultant Team has no specific recommendation on when the three year period should begin. We would indicate that it was our feeling that the three (3) year period should provide an opportunity for at least one if not two voter elections to be held. We have frequently heard a desire from some to hold a voter election as soon as April of 2005. We believe the earliest that an election should be held is November of 2005 or possibly April of 2006. It is also our recommendation that any election be held in November or April so as to maximize the number of residents who have an opportunity to vote.

The Three Year Operating Action Plan

The Consultant Team has recommended a three (3) year operating action plan be developed by the Park District to serve as a blueprint for transitioning to the new form of governance. This action plan will identify the specific actions and strategies that the Park District anticipates taking to achieve appropriate long-term funding needs (voter elections), potential cooperative ventures, forms of service delivery, and suggested forums for continued citizen involvement.

A Consultant Team only recommends actions. We encourage the independent Park District to take responsibility for implementing the master plan. Through this they can take ownership on those recommendations they accept fully, reshape recommendations that they feel need refining, and possibly reject some recommendations and bring before the community their fresh ideas for improvements. We simply feel that the community needs to understand where their leadership stands. We also believe that by articulating those positions the Village and Park District will both benefit in the transitioning period.

Analysis and Recommendations on Governance

The Future of Park District and Village Cooperation

We believe and encourage the Park District and Village to use the development of an independent Park District as a springboard for forging new and better partnerships for their citizens. This is articulated in our Governance recommendations. One only has to look towards the opportunities presented by the new open space available sports facilities on elementary school property or the Cap the Ike project that envisions greatly expanded areas for walking, biking and use of open space as examples of future partnering opportunities. Both of these opportunities were led by Village efforts. It is citizens of Oak Park who will benefit from these efforts if the Village and Park District can come together and make it happen. We anticipate and hope that other opportunities will also continue to occur to be acted upon.

Ronald A. Vine, President, Leisure Vision
Ronald A. Secrist, Senior Consultant

*2010 Community Attitude and
Interest Citizen Survey*

2010 Community Survey Executive Summary Report

Overview of the Methodology

During the fall of 2010, Leisure Vision conducted a Community Survey for the Park District of Oak Park. The purpose of the survey was to help identify parks and recreation needs and establish priorities for the future development of facilities, programs and services within the community. The survey was designed to obtain statistically valid results from households throughout the Park District of Oak Park. The survey was administered by a combination of mail and phone.

Leisure Vision worked extensively with Park District of Oak Park officials in the development of the survey questionnaire. This work allowed the survey to be tailored to issues of strategic importance to effectively plan the future system.

Leisure Vision mailed surveys to a random sample of 5,000 households throughout the Park District of Oak Park. Approximately three days after the surveys were mailed, each household that received a survey also received an automated voice message encouraging them to complete the survey. In addition, about two weeks after the surveys were mailed, Leisure Vision began contacting households by phone. Those who indicated they had not returned the survey were given the option of completing it by phone.

The goal is to obtain a total of at least 1,000 completed surveys from Park District of Oak Park households. This goal was far exceeded, with a total of 1,251 surveys having been completed. The results of the random sample of 1,251 households have a 95% level of confidence with a precision of at least +/-3.4%. The survey results were weighted so that the demographics of survey respondents were very similar to the demographics of Oak Park, based on the U.S. Census, for all demographic questions on the survey.

The following pages summarize major survey findings.

Major Survey Findings

- **Visiting Park District Parks.** Eighty-five percent (85%) of households have visited Park District of Oak Park parks during the past year. This is significantly higher than the national benchmarking average of 72%, and higher than the Illinois benchmarking average of 77%.

Of the 85% of households that have visited Park District parks during the past year, 85% rated the physical condition of the parks they've visited as either excellent (31%) or good (54%).

- **Participation in Park District Programs.** Thirty-eight percent (38%) of households have participated in Park District of Oak Park programs during the past 12 months. This is higher than the national benchmarking average of 30%, and slightly lower than the Illinois benchmarking average of 39%.

Of the 38% of households that have participated in Park District programs during the past year, 89% rated the quality of the programs as either excellent (36%) or good (53%).

- **Level of Satisfaction with Programs/Facilities for Various Age Groups.** Seventy-nine percent (79%) of households are either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the current level of programming and facilities serving elementary school youth grades K-5th. The other age groups that received the highest satisfaction ratings for the current level of programming and facilities are: pre-school age children (70%), adults ages 25-64 (68%), senior adults ages 65+ (66%), and families (64%).

- **Need for Parks and Recreation Facilities.** The parks and recreation facilities that the highest percentage of households have a need for are: walking trails (74%), nature center/trails (60%), Oak Park Conservatory (58%), indoor fitness and exercise facilities (51%), outdoor recreational pools (50%), community gardens (47%), indoor swimming pool (45%), and indoor running track/walking track (44%).

- **Most Important Parks and Recreation Facilities.** Based on the sum of their top four choices, the parks and recreation facilities that households rated as the most important are: walking trails (36%), nature center/trails (23%), indoor swimming pool (23%), Oak Park Conservatory (21%), indoor fitness and exercise facilities (21%), outdoor recreational pools (21%), playgrounds (19%), and community gardens (19%).

- **Gymnastics Facility.** Seven percent (7%) of households have used the Park District gymnastics facility or enrolled in the gymnastics programs during the past year. In addition, 13% of households have used the facility or enrolled in programs more than a year ago, and 80% have not used the facility or enrolled in programs.
- **Ridgeland Common Facilities.** The facilities that the highest percentage of households have used at Ridgeland Common during the past 12 months are: parking lot (47%), restrooms (44%), 50-meter outdoor pool (38%), indoor ice rink (31%), concession stand (30%), and sled hill (30%).
- **Level of Satisfaction with Ridgeland Common Facilities.** Fifty-seven percent (57%) of households are either very satisfied (23%) or somewhat satisfied (34%) with the facilities they have used at Ridgeland Common. Twenty-five percent (25%) of households are either somewhat dissatisfied (16%) or very dissatisfied (9%) with the facilities they have used at Ridgeland Common, and 18% indicated “neutral”.
- **Ways Respondents Learn about Park District Plans, Programs and Activities.** The most frequently mentioned ways that respondents learn about Park District of Oak Park plans, programs and activities are: the Park District brochure (78%), the newspaper (41%), from friends and neighbors (39%), and the Park District website (38%).
- **Master Planning Process Involvement.** Fifty-two percent (52%) of households are not aware of the master plan process, 39% have not attended a master plan meeting but have heard or read about the master plans, and 9% have attended a master plan meeting.
- **Level of Satisfaction with the Park District Managing Capital Resources.** Forty-four percent (44%) of households are either very satisfied (16%) or somewhat satisfied (28%) with how the Park District has managed its capital resources. Only 9% of households are either somewhat dissatisfied (6%) or very dissatisfied (3%) with how the Park District has managed its capital resources. In addition, 17% indicated “neutral” and 30% indicated “don’t know”.
- **Park District Impact on Health.** Forty-eight percent (48%) of respondents feel that the Park District helps them to maintain a healthy lifestyle, and 14% feel the Park District has improved their health or the health of someone in their household. In addition, 16% of respondents feel the Park District makes little difference, and 15% feel the Park District makes no difference. The remaining 7% indicated “don’t know”.

- **Level of Satisfaction with Various Parks and Recreation Services.** The Park District parks and recreation services that the highest percentage of households are either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with are: availability of information about Park District programs and facilities (74%), accessibility of facilities (72%), quality of early childhood programs for ages 6 and under (69%), and quality of youth programs (68%).
- **Most Important Parks and Recreation Services.** Based on the sum of their top two choices, the Park District parks and recreation services that households rated as the most important are: quality of youth programs (28%), quality of adult programs (23%), quality of early childhood programs for ages 6 and under (14%), quality of programs/facilities for adults ages 55+ (14%), and fees charged for recreation programs (14%).
- **Level of Satisfaction with the Overall Value Received from the Park District.** Sixty-two percent (62%) of households are either very satisfied (26%) or somewhat satisfied (36%) with the overall value their household receives from the Park District of Oak Park. Only 8% of households are either somewhat dissatisfied (5%) or very dissatisfied (3%) with the Park District. In addition, 16% of respondents rated the Park District as “neutral”, and 14% indicated “don’t know”.
- **Level of Support for Repairing/Maintaining Ridgeland Common.** Sixty-nine percent (69%) of households are either very supportive (44%) or somewhat supportive (25%) of repairing and maintaining Ridgeland Common and not building a new facility. In addition, 15% of households are not supportive of repairing and maintaining Ridgeland Common, and 16% indicated “not sure”.
- **Level of Support for Building a New Ridgeland Common with an Outdoor Swimming Pool.** Twenty-six percent (26%) of households are either very supportive (9%) or somewhat supportive (17%) of building a new Ridgeland Common with an outdoor swimming pool. In addition, 51% of households are not supportive of building a new Ridgeland Common with an outdoor swimming pool, and 23% indicated “not sure”.
- **Level of Support for Building a New Ridgeland Common with an Indoor Ice Arena.** Fifteen percent (15%) of households are either very supportive (4%) or somewhat supportive (11%) of building a new Ridgeland Common with an indoor ice arena. In addition, 64% of households are not supportive of building a new Ridgeland Common with an indoor ice arena, and 21% indicated “not sure”.

- **Level of Support for Building a New Ridgeland Common with an Outdoor Swimming Pool and Indoor Ice Arena.** Forty-five percent (45%) of households are either very supportive (22%) or somewhat supportive (23%) of building a new Ridgeland Common with an outdoor swimming pool and an indoor ice arena. In addition, 31% of households are not supportive of building a new Ridgeland Common with an outdoor swimming pool and an indoor ice arena, and 24% indicated “not sure”.

- **Level of Support for Building a New Ridgeland Common with an Outdoor Swimming Pool, Indoor Ice Arena and Other Amenities.** Thirty-five percent (35%) of households are either very supportive (20%) or somewhat supportive (15%) of building a new Ridgeland Common with an outdoor swimming pool, an indoor ice arena, and other amenities. In addition, 45% of households are not supportive of building a new Ridgeland Common with an outdoor swimming pool, an indoor ice arena and other amenities, and 20% indicated “not sure”.

- **Ridgeland Common Options Most Supported.** Based on the sum of their top two choices, the options for Ridgeland Common that households most support are: repair and maintain Ridgeland Common and don’t build a new facility (60%), build a new Ridgeland Common with an outdoor swimming pool and an indoor ice arena (40%), and build a new Ridgeland Common with an outdoor swimming pool, an indoor ice arena, and other new amenities (31%). It should also be noted that repair and maintain Ridgeland Common had by a wide margin the highest percentage of respondents select it as their first choice as the option they most support.

National and Illinois Benchmarking

Since 1998, Leisure Vision (a division of ETC Institute) has conducted household surveys for needs assessments, feasibility studies, customer satisfaction, fees and charges comparisons, and other parks and recreation issues in more than 600 communities in over 46 states across the country.

The results of these surveys has provided an unparalleled data base of information to compare responses from household residents in client communities to “National Averages” and therefore provide a unique tool to “assist organizations in better decision making.”

Communities within the data base include a full-range of municipal and county governments from 20,000 in population through over 1 million in population. They include communities in warm weather climates and cold weather climates, mature communities and some of the fastest growing cities and counties in the country.

Communities within the following states are included within the National Benchmarking data base.

- **Arizona**
- **Arkansas**
- **California**
- **Colorado**
- **Connecticut**
- **Florida**
- **Georgia**
- **Kansas**
- **Kentucky**
- **Idaho**
- **Illinois**
- **Indiana**
- **Iowa**
- **Maine**
- **Massachusetts**
- **Michigan**
- **Minnesota**
- **Mississippi**
- **Missouri**
- **Montana**
- **Nevada**
- **New Hampshire**
- **New Jersey**
- **North Carolina**
- **Ohio**
- **Oklahoma**
- **Oregon**
- **Pennsylvania**
- **Rhode Island**
- **South Carolina**
- **Texas**
- **Utah**
- **Vermont**
- **Virginia**
- **Washington**
- **Wyoming**

“National Averages” have been developed for numerous strategically important parks and recreation planning and management issues including: customer satisfaction and usage of parks and programs; methods for receiving marketing information; reasons that prevent members of households from using parks and recreation facilities more often; priority recreation programs, parks, facilities and trails to improve or develop; priority programming spaces to have in planned community centers and aquatic facilities; potential attendance for planned indoor community centers and outdoor aquatic centers; etc.

The National Benchmarking Average includes the results of numerous communities from the State of Illinois. Results from household responses in the Park District of Oak Park were compared to the National Benchmarking Average, as well as the average of those communities with the State of Illinois to gain further strategic information. A summary of all tabular comparisons are shown on pages 3-6.

Note: The benchmarking data contained in this report is protected intellectual property. Any reproduction of the benchmarking information in this report by persons or organizations not directly affiliated with the Park District of Oak Park is not authorized without written consent from Leisure Vision/ETC Institute.

Parks and Recreation Benchmarking for Needs Assessment Surveys

	Oak Park	Illinois Average	National Average
Have you or members of your household visited any City/County/ Park District <u>parks</u> over the past year?			
Yes	85%	77%	72%
No	15%	23%	28%
How would you rate the quality of all the <u>parks</u> you've visited?			
Excellent	31%	36%	31%
Good	54%	53%	54%
Fair	14%	10%	12%
Poor	1%	1%	2%
Don't know	0%	0%	1%
Have you or members of your household participated in City/County/Park District recreation <u>programs</u> during the past year?			
Yes	38%	39%	30%
No	62%	61%	70%
How would you rate the quality of all the <u>recreation programs</u> you've participated in?			
Excellent	36%	37%	34%
Good	53%	53%	54%
Fair	10%	8%	10%
Poor	1%	1%	2%
Don't Know	0%	1%	1%

Parks and Recreation Benchmarking for Needs Assessment Surveys

	Oak Park	Illinois Average	National Average
Parks and recreation facilities that respondent households have a need for			
Walking trails	74%	73%	69%
Nature center/trails	60%	56%	55%
Oak Park Conservatory	58%	NA	NA
Indoor fitness and exercise facilities	51%	48%	46%
Outdoor recreational pools	50%	51%	44%
Community gardens	47%	NA	NA
Indoor swimming pool	45%	46%	44%
Indoor running/walking track	44%	44%	41%
Playgrounds	39%	45%	43%
Indoor ice skating facility	38%	30%	25%
Cheney Mansion	37%	NA	NA
Fine arts facility	37%	34%	35%
Passive areas	35%	NA	NA
Outdoor lap/competitive pools	35%	31%	28%
Outdoor tennis courts	35%	31%	26%
Pleasant Home	32%	NA	NA
Dog parks	30%	25%	26%
Indoor gymnasiums	29%	26%	26%
Outdoor ice skating facility	29%	25%	27%
Baseball and softball fields	27%	29%	28%
Facilities for seniors	27%	20%	23%
Soccer fields	25%	22%	22%
Teen facilities	23%	19%	19%
Outdoor basketball courts	22%	23%	24%
Outdoor volleyball courts	19%	15%	17%
Gymnastics facility	19%	17%	15%
Outdoor sports fields with synthetic turf	14%	NA	NA
Football fields	12%	10%	14%
Skateboarding park	12%	12%	13%

Parks and Recreation Benchmarking for Needs Assessment Surveys

	Oak Park	Illinois Average	National Average
Most important parks and recreation <u>facilities</u> (sum of top choices)			
Walking trails	36%	43%	42%
Nature center/trails	23%	21%	20%
Indoor swimming pool	23%	20%	17%
Oak Park Conservatory	21%	NA	NA
Indoor fitness and exercise facilities	21%	23%	19%
Outdoor recreational pools	21%	24%	18%
Playgrounds	19%	21%	21%
Community gardens	19%	NA	NA
Indoor running/walking track	15%	17%	15%
Dog parks	13%	12%	12%
Soccer fields	12%	9%	8%
Fine arts facility	11%	10%	11%
Indoor ice skating facility	10%	8%	6%
Outdoor tennis courts	9%	8%	7%
Baseball and softball fields	9%	13%	12%
Passive areas	8%	NA	NA
Facilities for seniors	7%	8%	9%
Outdoor lap/competitive pools	7%	9%	8%
Pleasant Home	6%	NA	NA
Cheney Mansion	5%	NA	NA
Outdoor basketball courts	5%	4%	5%
Outdoor ice skating facility	4%	5%	6%
Teen facilities	4%	5%	5%
Gymnastics facility	4%	3%	4%
Indoor gymnasiums	3%	6%	7%
Football fields	3%	2%	3%
Outdoor sports fields with synthetic turf	2%	NA	NA
Skateboarding park	2%	2%	3%
Outdoor volleyball courts	2%	1%	3%

Parks and Recreation Benchmarking for Needs Assessment Surveys

	Oak Park	Illinois Average	National Average
Ways respondents learn about recreation programs and activities			
Park District brochure	78%	77%	53%
Newspaper	41%	33%	40%
From friends and neighbors	39%	36%	42%
Park District website	38%	23%	16%
Materials at Park District facilities	18%	19%	18%
School fliers/newsletters	13%	19%	17%
Park District e-newsletter	12%	NA	NA
Promotions at Park District events	7%	11%	13%
Conversations with Park District staff	5%	7%	6%
Social media e.g. Facebook and Twitter	3%	NA	NA
Satisfaction with the overall value received from the parks and recreation department			
Very Satisfied	26%	31%	26%
Somewhat Satisfied	36%	35%	35%
Neutral	16%	17%	19%
Somewhat Dissatisfied	5%	5%	5%
Very Dissatisfied	3%	4%	3%
Don't Know	14%	10%	12%

Summary of Recommendations

Strategic Work Product #1: Governance

The Leisure Vision consultant team developed four alternative models of governance specific to Oak Park. The proposed models were reviewed by the project Steering Committee and the sub-committee on Governance. Following review and understanding of the alternative models, the consultant team proposed using “Measures of Excellence in a Park System” as developed by the Trust for Public Lands. These measures were supplemented with additional evaluative factors for measuring the effectiveness of a governance system that the consultant team had experience with in other communities that we’ve served.

The sub-committee on governance thoroughly discussed the proposed 15 factors for evaluating governance models and recommended that the consultant team use the following nine (which incorporated all 15 elements proposed, but grouped some together under a broader category) to test the alternative governance models:

1. VISION

The ability to provide a clear sense of purpose to the community about the parks and recreation system and goals.

2. PLANNING & COMMUNITY INPUT

The ability to effectively plan and involve the community in parks and recreation issues.

3. SUFFICIENT ASSETS

The ability to provide the specific assets of land, staff, and equipment to meet the parks and recreation systems’ goals.

4. SERVICE DELIVERY

The systems’ responsibility to deliver quality services of the highest priority to the citizens. Quality services are defined as including the following evaluative factors: a) equitable access, b) user satisfaction, c) safety, and d) professional staff.

5. CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

The ability to attract citizen input and leadership into the park and recreation system.

6. COMMUNITY BENEFITS

The ability to provide benefits beyond the borders of the parks, i.e. improving home and property values.

7. PARTNERING

The ability to effectively leverage other community assets.

8. SUSTAINABILITY

The ability to raise sufficient resources to meet the goals of the parks and recreation system.

9. ACCESS TO DECISION MAKERS

The ability for community members to meet, visit and influence decision makers regarding parks and recreation issues facing the individual and/or the community.

Each of the above nine evaluative factors was then assigned a weight of importance. On a 1 to 5 scale of importance, with 5 being most important and 1 least, the evaluative factors of *VISION, PLANNING & COMMUNITY INPUT, SERVICE DELIVERY, CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT, AND SUTAINABILITY* were assigned weights of 5. *SUFFICIENT ASSETS, PARTNERING and ACCESS TO DECISION MAKERS* were assigned a weighting value of 4 and *COMMUNITY BENEFITS* was assigned a weight of 3.

The Matrix on the following page shows the results from the four governance models that were evaluated:

Model 1: Enhanced Partnering Status Quo

Description: This Model would result in a park system that is still managed by the Park District of Oak Park in partnership with the Village and two School Districts with enhanced partnering relationships.

Model 2: Independent Park District-Ownership of Community Centers and Grounds, with Enhanced Partnering Relationships with Community Providers

Description: This Model would result in the Village of Oak Park transferring ownership of the Community Centers and grounds to the Park District of Oak Park and work to increase partnering efforts with other community providers.

Model 3: Independent Park District-Ownership and Operations of Community Centers and Grounds by Village, With Partnering Relationships with Community Providers

Description: This Model would result in the Village of Oak Park and Park District of Oak Park allowing the contractual agreement to expire without being renewed, and transfer operations of the Community Centers to the Village of Oak Park, while leaving the remainder of the Park District of Oak Park intact.

Model 4: Village Operated Parks and Recreation System

Description: This Model would result in the Park District of Oak Park being disbanded and total operations of Parks and Recreation being transferred under Village management.

Evaluating Governance in the Oak Park Park System

April 2004 Assessment

<u>Evaluation Factors</u>	Importance Weight	Points Per Model Current System	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
<i>Vision-ability to provide a clear sense of purpose</i>	5	3 (15)	3 (15)	5 (25)	3 (15)	4 (20)
<i>Planning and community input-ability to effectively plan and involve the community</i>	5	4 (20)	4 (20)	5 (25)	3 (15)	5 (25)
<i>Sufficient assets-ability to provide sufficient assets of land, staff and equipment (assets that are owned)</i>	4	3 (12)	3 (12)	5 (20)	4 (16)	4 (16)
<i>Service Delivery -ability to deliver services of highest priority to citizens including: equitable access, user satisfaction, safety, and professional staff.</i>	5	4 (20)	4 (20)	5 (25)	4 (20)	5 (25)
<i>Citizen involvement - ability to attract citizen input and leadership into the park system</i>	5	4 (20)	4 (20)	5 (25)	4 (20)	5 (25)
<i>Community Benefits-Ability to provide benefits beyond the borders of the parks, i.e. improve residential values, etc.</i>	3	3 (9)	4 (12)	4 (12)	4 (12)	4 (12)
<i>Partnering-ability to effectively leverage other community assets</i>	4	3 (12)	4 (16)	5 (20)	4 (16)	5 (20)
<i>Sustainability-ability to raise sufficient resources to meet the systems goals, resources to manage assets.</i>	5	3 (15)	3 (15)	4 (20)	3 (15)	5 (25)
<i>Access to decision makers-ability for community members to meet and visit with decision makers regarding park issues</i>	4	4 (16)	3 (12)	5 (20)	2 (8)	4 (16)
Total Points		139	142	192	137	184

Importance Weight 1-5

The following recommendations are offered for Governance:

1.1 An Independent Park District Model of Government should be implemented to operate parks and recreation services in Oak Park.

Both the consultant team and the sub-committee on governance independently and concurrently agreed that two of the four alternative models of governance (Model 2: Independent Park District and Model 4: Village Operated Parks & Recreation System) stood out from the four models that were evaluated and deserved additional study and consideration. While there are compelling arguments for recommending either of the models and the quantitative assessment is very close between the two, it is recommended that the community pursue the Independent Park District form of delivery of parks and recreation services (Model 2) to pursue the preferred vision of the community.

Under this preferred model, the Village of Oak Park and the Park District would allow the current contractual agreement pertaining to the ownership and operation of the seven community centers to expire and enter into negotiations for the transferring of ownership and operation of the centers to the Park District.

The independent Park District or Village operation of parks and recreation services models were preferred over other models primarily because both systems of governance clearly assign responsibility and accountability to a governing body. While the consultant team strongly recommends partnership agreements and cooperation among governmental entities, we prefer that whatever the form of governance ultimately selected, that citizens know to whom to advocate and approach and it is clear who the fiscally responsible entity for the services provided is. We suggest that either organization (Park District or Village) has the authority and ability to appropriate adequate funding (in consultation with the electorate) to achieve the long-term goals of the Oak Park parks and recreation system.

The Park District Board is representative of the “resident experts” in parks and recreation matters. They, unlike the Village Board, are not encumbered with the significant and sometimes over-bearing responsibility of addressing a myriad of critical and wide ranging issues that face a dynamic community like Oak Park. It is our opinion that the Park District Board can more adequately and in more depth address specific parks and recreation related matters that face the community.

Given full accountability for meeting the parks and recreation needs of the community while standing for election enables Oak Park resident’s desirable access to a specific group of leaders who are in touch with the issues and control the resources that may affect them. Alternatively, it is incumbent upon the Park District Board, who may not garner the attention and community exposure that is given to the Village Board, to clearly “stand out and get out” into the community and clearly communicate it’s purpose for existence and how it can assist the community in achieving a better parks and recreation system in the future.

The system of governance has a responsibility for educating and informing the community of the different entities that provide services and engage the community in dialogue as well as the election process. Done effectively, the highly involved citizenry that is so evident in Oak Park will not be confused as to who is responsible and accountable for the provision of parks and recreation services and those same informed residents will be better served by men and women who are elected by their constituents to focus on the community's parks and recreation assets and future.

While the consultant team will readily admit there is no perfect system of governance, we believe, based upon our conduct of interviews, surveys, and analysis of the Oak Park system that the Independent Park District model offers the best long-term strategy to maximize citizen access, establish the closest positive relationship with the Oak Park electorate about parks and recreation issues and pursue a focused preferred future for the parks and recreation system.

Short term, the Village model may achieve faster and more immediate beneficial results for parks and recreation improvements because of accessibility to needed resources to address funding gaps and needs. The Village government may also be more sensitive and understanding of the under-served population of the community. However, longer term, the dedication and pursuit of challenges specific to only parks and recreation related issues is best served by a tightly focused entity which is represented by the Park District model. That said, the Park District must, among other things, sharpen its sensitivity to seeking out and addressing the needs of portions of the community who may not regularly engage in public discourse.

1.2 The Village of Oak Park should make a three year contribution to the Park District of Oak Park, a significant portion of which the Consultant Team recommends becomes the basis of a Capital Improvements Plan for the District

Upon letting the existing agreement expire and accompanying the transfer of facilities would be a proposed three year annual contribution from the Village to the Park District. The Consultant Team additionally proposes that a significant portion of this contribution becomes the basis of a Capital Improvements Plan for the District, thus partially addressing years of no funding for necessary facility improvements within the system.

The three-year annual transfer of funds from the Village to the District should be earmarked both for capital and operating purposes with operating funds declining each year. For example, the three year transfer of funds could be structured as follows: Year 1, 75% operating purposes, 25% capital funding, Year 2, 50% to both operating and capital purposes, and Year 3 25% for operations and 75% for capital improvements.

Thus we recommend the centers and accompanying land be transferred along with \$4.8 to \$6 million to be used to create a Parks & Recreation Capital Improvements Program and to assist in park operations as described above.

Basis for the Funding Recommendation

This recommendation would have the Village pay to the Park District a sum that is more than they are legally required to do over a 3 year period and then not require any addition financial support for an Independent Park District.

Neither the Park District or Village is legally bound to any agreement past the current one. The Village and Park District can simply not renew the agreement in which case the responsibility for the 7 community centers would return to the Village. The Park District allocates \$1.18 million of the Village's \$1.6 million transfer to the community centers. Of that total approximately \$500,000 is allocated to Direct Center Costs, while the remaining nearly \$700,000 is allocated to various Indirect and Administrative Costs for the Centers.

If the Village retakes responsibility for the centers, it is clear to the Consultant Team that their costs would not approach the \$1.18 million currently appropriated. The Village would have the same options to operate all 7 centers with a more cost effective management structure, to convert 2-3 of the centers to non-profit operations, or to close some of the 7 centers that the Park District has. Additionally, the Village could choose to contract out the management of some/all of the centers to a third party, such as a non-profit provider, etc.

All of these actions would reduce the Village's costs for the community centers, some with significantly reductions. Results from the Master Plan clearly indicate to the Consultant Team that there is no recreation need to operate the 7 community centers and the allocations to the centers exceed the benefits received. The Village, acting in the best interests of the wise usage of tax dollars would not in our opinion spend nearly \$1.2 million per year in tax dollars on the centers.

Since the Village had and still has the option of rejecting the governance recommendation, to ask them to pay far in excess over the next 3 years what they are legally required to do, could have them reject the recommendation.

This recommendation would have the Park District receive from the Village a sum that is more than they are required over the next three years and that can be used to jump start the master plan, while giving the Park District adequate time to bring to the voters tax packages.

The Park District of Oak Park has considerable opportunities to increase tax revenues from existing and new tax sources through voter elections. Revenues from existing park district tax sources can increase as much as \$1,514,496 annually through voter elections and new sources of tax support can add to this. For example, a new Conservatory Tax could generate as much as \$573,571 annually. The Park District has not brought any issues before the voters in at least 21 years. The Consultant Team believes that having voters participate in these funding decisions is a benefit of an independent park district.

Summary of Recommendations

The Infrastructure Committee called for a voter election. Repeatedly during the master plan process, the need and desire to have one or more voter elections for raising revenues was raised by Park District officials and citizens, including administrative staff of the Park District suggestions to raise revenues from a Museum Tax to support the Conservatory and a citizen vote on future funding of the centers. Some have suggested having voter elections as early as April 2004.

While the Consultant Team believes that the Independent Park District model is the best model, we do not believe it is the cheapest model. Certainly, there are administrative costs for the Park District model that would not exist under the Village model. For example, there would be no need in the Village model for a “Superintendent of Business Operations” position as is in the Park District. Over the past 4 years, total administrative costs for the Park District have increased more than \$100,000 per year, representing 50% of the total staffing cost growth for the entire Park District. The Consultant Team has previously recommended opportunities for other cost savings as relates to salaries and wages.

In our opinion, the Village should not be required to allocate tax payer dollars for administrative and salary expenses for a Park District model that would not be required in a Village model.

While the Park District has depleted fund-balances, particularly in its Revenue Fund, this shortfall was caused by decisions of the Park District relative to the issuance of the 1996 Alternative Revenue Bonds. That decision has led to Fund Balances in Revenue Facilities of nearly \$800,000 less than in 1994. Pool Net results with debt services are \$1,560,953 less than projected through the 1996 Alternative Revenue Bonds. Collectively, the other 9 Funds in the Park District listed under “Operating Funds” have shown an increase in their fund balances of over \$450,000 since 1994.

Based on numerous communications to the Consultant Team from the Finance Director and Executive Director, the Park District feels that there is a “Trend” for the Fund Balances to improve. The Consultant Team agrees with that assessment. Additionally, the last of the Bond Payments for the Alternative Revenue Bonds will be made in 2006. After that, the Park District will free up significant dollars that have been used to make up for revenue shortfalls from the Alternative Revenue Bond issue for other purposes.

The Consultant Teams recommendations will provide funding to the Park District through this 2006 timeline. We do not believe that the Village should be required to allocate funds to the Park District to improve its fund balance, when the cause of these difficulties were actions of a previous Park Board, under the advice of a previous Parks and Recreation Director.

The Park District has not spent sufficient money since 1980 on the maintenance of the 7 community centers. The \$1.6 million allocated from the Village is supposed to include go monies for the maintenance of the 7 community centers. It is clear that sufficient dollars were not allocated for these purposes, but rather were spent on other areas. In a sense if the dollars that are allocated from the Village to the Park District are used for improvements to the community centers, the Village is paying for some of those improvements twice. First, with allocations since 1980 they have not been sufficiently used for maintenance of the centers, and now with the additionally requested allocation.

1.3 The Park District of Oak Park and Village of Oak Park should set the tone for enhanced partnering efforts in the community.

It is not anticipated that the Village would be asked for any further long-term annual contributions to the District for day to day parks and recreation operations. However, future partnership agreements between the Village, Park District and other community organizations are strongly encouraged in order to accomplish a specific project or address an unmet community need as identified in the community survey.

The Consultant Team believes and encourages the Park District and Village to use the development of an independent Park District as a springboard for forging new and better partnerships for her citizens. This is articulated in our Governance recommendations. One only has to look towards the opportunities presented by the new open space available sports facilities on elementary school property or the Cap the Ike project that envisions greatly expanded areas for walking, biking and use of open space as examples of future partnering opportunities. Both of these opportunities were led by Village efforts. It is citizens of Oak Park who will benefit from these efforts if the Village and Park District can come together and make it happen. We anticipate and hope that other opportunities will also continue to occur to be acted upon.

1.4 The Park District of Oak Park should prepare a 3 year operating action plan that details how the Park District of Oak Park will move forward on implementing the recommendations of the Master Plan.

The Consultant Team recommends that a three (3) year operating action plan be developed by the Park District to serve as a blueprint for transitioning to the new form of governance. This action plan will identify the specific actions and strategies that the Park District anticipates taking to achieve appropriate long-term funding needs (voter elections), potential cooperative ventures, forms of service delivery, and suggested forums for continued citizen involvement.

The action plan will empower the independent Park District to take responsibility for implementing the master plan. Through this they can take ownership on those recommendations they accept fully, reshape recommendations that they feel need refining,

and possibly reject some recommendations and bring before the community their fresh ideas for improvements. The consultant team believes that the community needs to understand where their leadership stands. We also believe that by articulately those positions the Village and Park District will both benefit in the transitioning period.

1.5 The Park District of Oak should adopt by Board action the “Vision Statement” developed in the Master Plan.

An important aspect of planning for and articulating the future of an organization lies in the entity’s leadership clearly “charting a course” and then sharing that course with those that are served by the organization. Spending significant time discussing and writing the group’s vision for the future, as well as the values or “code of conduct” that the leadership will embrace to achieve the developed vision and preferred future, and creating an easy to articulate statement of mission or purpose is a wise and valuable investment. These statements help to bond and “ground” the organization’s leadership, giving them a constant reminder of the higher goal they are pursuing as well as a means of communicating their actions to those impacted by their leadership.

Using information gleaned from interviews, the assessment of community needs, research into past policies and practices and conducting a “visioning workshop” with the Subcommittee on Governance, the Consultant Team developed the following draft Vision, Values and Mission statements that may be further reviewed by the Park District Board and adopted.

THE VISION OF OAK PARK’S PARK SYSTEM

Oak Park’s parks system provides open space and recreation opportunities for all Oak Park residents and we will work persistently to ensure the availability of these quality parks, recreation programs and facilities for generations to come. We strive to provide an excellent parks and recreation system that is deeply integrated into the distinctive Oak Park living experience. We envision the recognition of our parks system by Oak Park residents as a major contributor to the enhanced quality of life that exists in the Village. We value and respect our history, our civic involvement and the Oak Park tradition of innovation and we will strongly consider these factors as we plan for the future.

We believe that citizen participation and access to their parks and recreation programs is paramount. The parks system will conduct the public’s business in an open, communicative and self-evaluative fashion. We will reach out to populations that are underserved and we will continually seek feedback and take corrective measures as we strive for excellence.

We believe the key to achieving and maintaining an excellent parks and recreation system lies in creating partnerships with other community agencies to provide services in a seamless fashion. These critical partnerships are both within and external to Oak Park’s

Summary of Recommendations

boundaries. Who is providing the program or service is secondary to the quality and the diversity of the offerings. We promise, in collaboration with our partners to balance development and maintenance of quality parks and facilities with the preservation of open space. In addition we pledge to offer innovative, high quality programs that provide significant benefits to participants, residents, the environment, the local economy and our overall community.

THE VALUES OF OAK PARK'S PARK SYSTEM

In striving for excellence, we are committed to:

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION - We will demonstrate attentiveness to our customers' needs by routinely soliciting public input and feedback and welcoming ideas and input. Our processes and procedures will facilitate and reflect open and effective communication.

INCLUSION - We will recognize and appreciate our community's diverse population and we will strive to provide parks and recreation opportunities to all, regardless of economic means or physical ability.

FUNDING - We will aggressively pursue economic sustainability and stability through sound fiscal management and efficient use of resources.

PARTNERSHIPS - We pledge to work effectively with others, establishing and strengthening bonds with governmental entities as well as other community organizations and user groups for the betterment of the community.

CUSTOMER SERVICE AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT - We will demonstrate the highest standards of ethical conduct, treating everyone with courtesy and respect and recognizing diverse opinions and needs. We will actively listen and respond to requests in a prompt and respectful manner.

PLANNING - We will design long-term strategies and set measurable goals while proactively seeking positive solutions to problems and challenges.

EVALUATION - We will maintain an on-going process of evaluating our performance and effectiveness and we will measure the success of implemented policies and strategies.

SAFETY - We will actively implement sound safety practices in our facilities and in all aspects of our work, ensuring a safe environment for users and employees of the parks system.

We will value every citizen contact and pursue each as an opportunity to demonstrate these highly regarded values.

MISSION

In partnership with the community we provide quality parks and recreation experiences for the residents of Oak Park.

1.6 The Park District of Oak Park should appoint 2-3 “Village Elders” to work with the Park District in the implementation of the Master Plan.

The Consultant Team is highly complimentary of the current practice of the administrators of the Village, Park District, two School Districts and the Library regularly meeting and discussing mutual challenges and cooperative efforts. We recommend this practice be expanded in two ways for purposes of implementing the parks and recreation master plan.

First, we suggest the top elected official of each entity join their appointed administrators in attending these meetings on at least a quarterly basis. It is the partnership of elected and appointed leaders that often transcend differences between organizations and those leaders, with the support of the remainder of the governing board members can achieve new solutions and approaches to critical parks and recreation master plan issues, hopefully avoiding paralysis and inaction on important pending issues. Meetings need to be substantive---more than “reporting sessions”. Key cooperative ventures need to be thoroughly discussed and the basis for agreement “hashed out” in these sessions.

Secondly, we suggest the combined body of entities that now regularly meet, select two to three “Village elders” to join the group for all meetings pertaining to the parks and recreation master plan and contribute to the dialogue. These “elders” would be individuals who have served Oak Park in the past and are readily recognized as “wise leaders” who think first, foremost and only about the betterment of Oak Park. Fortunately, it has been the consultant team’s experience that every community possesses individuals of this caliber. They have served the community with distinction, have achieved their leadership status, have no “axes to grind”, have given unselfishly of themselves to the community and they embody the very essence of the community and the good things it stands for.

It has been our experience that the presence of elders tends to provide an overriding calm and “let’s do the right thing here” attitude to a group of leaders who are often challenged by the “here and now” of events and circumstances. In our opinion, this approach will be critical to accomplishing the objectives of the parks and recreation master plan.

Strategic Work Product #2: Park District Financing

It is vital that the Park District carefully consider and prioritize the appropriate tax rate and bonding authority to achieve the parks and recreation system needs and goals for the future without reliance upon Village operational funding, as well as other non-tax sources of funding. This should take place in the Action Plan being developed by the Park District.

The consultants believe that one of the most critical factors the Park District must face is the issue of *Sustainability*---raising and appropriately managing the resources necessary to achieve the objectives of an excellent parks and recreation system that the community desires and deserves. In recent years, one could not conclude that Park District leadership has excelled in this critical area of governance. As a result, there is much “catching up” to be done and it will be a significant challenge to overcome multiple years of under funding and attention to potentially beneficial cooperative ventures.

Towards these objectives the following recommendations are offered:

2.1 The Park District of Oak Park should aggressively move forward in increasing non-tax sources of funding for capital projects.

Chapter 10 of the Master Plan summarizes a full-range of recommended non-tax sources of funding for capital projects. Some of these recommendations are for new sources of revenue while others are expansions of existing sources of revenue. These sources include:

- ◆ *Private fund-raising, including development of a Park District Foundation* - Currently the Park District of Oak Park does use private fund-raising, although it creates little current revenues. One source that has been successful is the Austin Trust. The Austin Trust is established for extraordinary maintenance and recreation activities at Austin Gardens. The interest generates about \$12,000.00 annually. The Memorial Trust has contributed over 400 trees to our parks.

The Consultant Team believes that private fund-raising and gifts are a major potential source of funding projects for the park system, particularly those that have historic significance in the community.

To act upon this potential the Consultant Team recommends the establishment of a Park District Foundation, which would act similarly to a community foundation. Many Park systems across the country are turning to private fund-raising as a major source of revenue development, particularly for specific projects.

While the Park District can accept gifts within its current structure, development of a foundation board will allow the Park District to bring in new community members that are focused on private fund-raising. Just as with any other revenue source, those organizations that articulate a clear case statement of need for private fund-raising

Summary of Recommendations

dollars, set specific targets and revenue types for their fund-raising efforts, develop policies that create incentives for fund-raising, and go about reaching those goals in a strategic manner are most successful.

Aggressively raising revenues from private sources can serve as a catalyst and be used as matching sources for grants. Equally important, aggressively raising revenues from private sources will further illustrate to tax payers that local tax dollars are only a piece of a comprehensive revenue policy for the Park District.

The Park District can also establish incentives for community organizations to raise private fund-raising dollars. For example, the Topeka Parks and Recreation Department had a policy whereby the Park District would match with tax dollars any moneys raised by private organizations for parks and recreation purposes. Within three years more than \$3.5 million in private fund-raising revenues had been raised or pledged.

- ◆ *Recreation Service Fee:* This is a dedicated user fee which can apply to all organized activities which require a reservation of some type, or other purposes as defined by the Park District. Examples of such activities include adult basketball, volleyball, and softball leagues, youth baseball, soccer, and softball leagues, and special interest classes. The fee allows participants an opportunity to contribute towards the upkeep of facilities being used.

A Recreation Service Fee was recently implemented by the Park District. This is a recommendation that came out of the Infrastructure Committee Report and was referred to as a “CIP Surcharge”. The Park District has implemented a \$5 per participant fee through various partnership agreements, i.e. OPRF Pony Baseball, Oak Park-River Forest Strikers Soccer Club, Inc., the Windmills, Oak Park Youth Baseball/Softball, etc.

The current Participant Fee is an excellent partnership project which can also be improved. Current language in the contracts between the Park District and the various non-profit organizations indicate that “the Required Fee shall be applied by the Park District for park improvements and for extraordinary park maintenance, as determined solely by the Park District.” None of the partnership agreements spell out specific projects that the Park District and community organizations can partner on developing.

With the results of the master plan in hand, the Consultant Team would recommend that each agreement include a written long term plan on how the facilities utilized by the community organizations can be improved. We would recommend these be joint decisions and not decisions that are determined solely by the Park District. The Consultant Team would also recommend that the Park District consider developing multi-year contracts rather than yearly contracts. These multi-year contracts will allow

Summary of Recommendations

both organizations to plan better and provide incentives for private contributions that might not be available without clear direction on how the dollars will be used.

- ◆ *Interlocal Agreements:* Contractual relationships entered into between two or more local units of government and/or between a local unit of government and a non-profit organization for the joint usage/development of sports fields, regional parks, or other facilities.

The Park District of Oak Park has an extensive range of interlocal agreements with non-profit providers and other public agencies. Information from the benchmarking survey shows that the Park District of Oak Park has 12 partnerships out of a total of 15 potential partnership opportunities that organizations can partner with local schools, other local units of government and non-profits in the development, use, and funding of parks and recreation facilities. The average benchmarked community has 7.5 partnerships.

It is imperative the “fully independent” Park District aggressively seek new models of cooperation with other community providers and regional partners to achieve the objectives of the Master Plan. Our recommendations in this area will be more fully described under the partnership section.

- ◆ *Grants:* A variety of special grants currently exist through the Federal and State governmental systems. Grants are available for a wide range of projects. Federal grants have been historically more available for outdoor recreation, parks, and trails projects than indoor projects. State and federal grants require local matching funds of various amounts. The Open Space and Land Acquisition Grants administered by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources are very achievable but require site master plans and a 50% match. This grant option was used in 1998 at Lindberg Park.

The Park District of Oak Park has used grants in the past and recently received an Illinois Public Museum Capital Grant for \$40,000. *The Friends of the Oak Park Conservatory provided a \$80,000 match to the Park District for the Illinois Public Museum Capital Grant.*

Some of the identified areas of citizen needs, such as walking and running trails are excellent new areas to pursuing grants. The consultant team believes this is a revenue source that could be increased substantially.

2.2 The Park District of Oak Park should aggressively move forward in increasing tax sources of funding for capital projects

The Park District of Oak Park has under-funded capital project needs for a number of years. Repeatedly during the master plan process, the need to have one or more voter elections for raising revenues was raised by Park District officials and citizens. The Park District has not brought any issues before the voters in at least 21 years. The Consultant Team believes that having voters participate in these funding decisions is a benefit of an independent park district.

The following tax sources of funding projects are recommended:

- ◆ *Property Taxes:* Tax levied on the assessed valuation of all non-exempt real and personal property. Property taxes are the major source of funding operations of the Park District. The Park District has a number of existing tax sources including corporate, museum, and recreation.

The Park District of Oak Park has considerable opportunities to increase tax revenues from existing and new tax sources through voter elections. Revenues from existing park district tax sources can increase as much as \$1,514,496 annually through voter elections and would increase the property tax rate by \$.132.

New sources of tax support can add to this. For example, a new Conservatory Tax could generate as much as \$573,571 annually through an increase in the property tax rate of \$.050. We believe that given the importance of the Oak Park Conservatory this would be a very appropriate funding source.

The Parks Infrastructure Committee recommended holding a voter election to increase the Corporate tax levy rate with the additional dollars, with the public understanding that a portion of the tax levy would be dedicated for capital improvements and the remaining for daily operations. These revenues can increase as much as \$2,877,878 annually through voter elections from a \$.25 per \$100 of EAV tax increase. The Consultant Team supports this action.

- ◆ *Non-Referendum Debt Service Deferred Bonds:* The PTELL establishes a limit on non-referendum bonds that the Park District may levy annually for debt service. The limit was established in 1994 at \$219,000.

Along with the Alternative Revenue Series 1996 Bonds, this has been the principal source the Park District has used to provide capital improvements. All of the current debt will be retired by 2008. The Consultant Team recommends this source of funding be continued.

- ◆ *Referendum to Increase the Debt Service Levy Limit:* This is a voter approved increase in the debt service levy limit in order to pay for specific projects. The Park District of Oak Park does not currently have any voter approved long term debt.

The Park District has prepared information that shows that a bond proceed (example) for the maximum debt of \$32,980,309 would increase the property tax rate by \$.23 per \$100 of EAV over the next twenty years. This would generate \$2,646,425 in revenue each year to pay off the bonds. It is imperative that the scheduling of the debt service be tied into the realistic life of the project(s) being funded.

The Consultant Team recommends that the 3 Year Action Plan which is being developed by the Park District contains the specific projects from the Master Plan which are of the highest community priority to bring before the voters.

2.3 The Park District of Oak Park should reallocate operating dollars consistent with areas identified as high importance and priorities in the Master Plan.

The Master Plan has shown that in some cases the current allocation of operating dollars to specific service areas by the Park District is not consistent with community priorities. As one example, it is clear that additional dollars, resources, and strategic direction need to be allocated to the care and maintenance of neighborhood parks.

In the Consultant Team’s opinion, the Park District needs to reallocate its operating resources based on identified community needs. The Park District is spending a disproportionate amount of its tax revenues and the current Village transfer revenues on the 7 community center operations. This does not allow sufficient revenues to be allocated to other operations and capital areas of high community importance.

The chart below shows tax support for direct and indirect expenses for various major service areas in the Park District. Tax support for the community centers is derived from Park District taxes and revenues from the current Village Transfer. The total tax support for the community centers is nearly \$500,000 more than for parks and sports programs combined. 30% of household respondents to the community survey rated small neighborhood parks as one of the 4 most important parks and recreation facilities to their households as compared to 9% for community centers. The amount of tax support for the community centers is more than is received for the Conservatory, Dole Center, swimming pools, Ridgeland Commons Ice Arena, the 2 historic properties, and the Gymnastics Center combined.

Park District of Oak Park

<u>MAJOR SERVICE AREA</u>	<u>Total Tax Support</u>	<u>Percent Tax Support of Service</u>	<u>Percent Relationship of Tax Support To Community Centers</u>
Community Centers	\$1,326,795	37.27%	
Parks (Open space and sports)	\$842,859	23.68%	64%
Conservatory	\$341,724	9.60%	26%
Dole Center	\$251,838	7.07%	19%
Swimming Pools	\$298,661	8.39%	23%
Ice/Arena	\$166,227	4.67%	13%
Historic Properties	\$117,030	3.29%	9%
Adult Recreation	\$95,665	2.69%	7%
Early Childhood and Summer Camps	\$63,411	1.78%	5%
Gymnastics Center	\$55,693	1.56%	4%
Total	\$3,558,903	100.00%	

Source: Park District of Oak Park and Leisure Vision

The Consultant Team recommends that the Park Board and staff reallocate operating dollars consistent with areas identified as community priorities. We would additionally recommend that the Park District under its “Tax Support By Service Area” costs and revenue tracking break out Park Maintenance and Sports Fields into their own Service Areas, so that the costs and revenues for each of these important citizen services can be tracked.

2.4 The Park District of Oak Park should develop “Board Policies” for assessing administrative costs for parks and recreation facilities and programs.

The Consultant Team agrees with the tracking of administrative costs for parks and recreation facilities and programs as identified in the current practices of the Park District. However, currently these costs can be charged or not charged off to specific programs, facilities, etc by administrative actions. The Consultant Team believes that the practices for assessing administrative costs should be governed through Board policy and would recommend these policies be adopted.

2.5 The Park District of Oak Park should consider a review and some modifications in its Comprehensive Revenue Policy.

The Park District of Oak Park adopted its first Comprehensive Revenue Policy in January of 2002. The policy document indicates that “this policy will be reviewed on an annual basis to guarantee that the changing needs of the community continue to be addressed. The Consultant Team would recommend in the next review that the policy that does not allow advertising in Park District publications being reviewed. Many Park systems are paying portions of the costs for publishing their brochures, etc. through advertising revenues. We believe this would be a new and important source of revenue for the Park District.

Additionally, we would recommend that the next review of the Comprehensive Revenue Policy include a written overview of the impact the policy has made on revenue generation. Overall, the Park District does an excellent job in generating revenues from program fees, facilities, etc as we have indicated under the benchmarking chapter of the Master Plan. On a percentage basis, we have not seen clear evidence that the Comprehensive Revenue Policy has had a substantial impact on the amount of revenue that is being received. For example, revenues from the pools over the past two years is only up a little over 1%.

2.6 The Park District of Oak Park should reallocate the majority of dollars saved through staffing recommendations towards funding capital projects.

Chapter 7 of this Master Plan “Draft Report” outlines a number of steps the Park District can take to save staffing costs in the operations of facilities. These recommended reorganization actions would recognize a minimum of \$124,000 to over \$250,000 in savings from staffing costs per year just on the direct costs of operating the community centers.

Regardless of which option or variation the Park District implements there is a potential for phasing the reorganization over an extended period, which we would recommend to be between 1-3 years. Making small incremental changes as staff turnover and attrition occurs is a reasonable implementation plan, and should allow these changes to occur without laying off any present staff. The full financial benefits of reorganization will take longer to fully develop in this manner, but the Consultant Team would recommend a 1-3 year phase in so as not to cause any staff lay-offs.

The Consultant Team recommends reallocating the majority of dollars saved in these actions towards funding capital projects. For example, if these actions resulted in a minimum of \$150,000 in savings per year, over 5 years \$750,000 in capital projects could be funded. We believe that this action would further illustrate to the community the prudent fiscal steps the Park District is taking and benefit the Park District when it goes out for a tax increase voter election.

2.7 The Park District of Oak Park should develop a full written report regarding the performance of the 1996 Alternative Revenue Bond Issue.

As has been noted in Chapter 10 of this “Draft Master Plan Report”, the Park District’s fund balances have decreased substantially over the past 10 years. This finding was initially pointed out in the Infrastructure Committee’s report. The Year 2002 and Year 2003 fund balances for the Park District both for the Operating Funds and for Total Funds are the lowest in the past 10 years. The Year 2003 fund balances did show an increase over 2002 for both the Total Fund and Operating Fund.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Fund Balance</u>	<u>Operating Fund Total</u>
1994	\$1,432,038	\$820,730
1995	\$2,022,890	\$1,122,382
1996	\$3,588,607	\$1,724,685
1997	\$2,321,266	\$1,690,262
1998	\$3,552,079	\$1,081,952
1999	\$2,576,227	\$711,450
2000	\$1,235,054	\$609,803
2001	\$951,445	\$711,956
2002	\$571,989	\$503,139
2003	\$623,363	\$525,737

Source: Park District of Oak Park and Leisure Vision

The Consultant Team has worked extensively with Park District officials to understand the principal reasons that the fund balances have decreased. These efforts have shown that the principal reason for the reduced fund balance is the 1996 Alternative Revenue Bond issue not meeting its revenue goals.

It should be noted that no current Park District Board members or top administrative staff were with the Park District when the 1996 Alternative Revenue Bond was issued. This is a situation they inherited and have had to correct.

This \$2 million bond issue was issued to fund improvements to Rehm Pool and additionally for improvements at the Ridgeland Commons Pool. The Bonds were issued based on a 3 to 2 vote of the Park Board. Bond costs were supposed to be paid through increases in pool revenues.

However, pool revenues have not increased sufficiently to cover bond payments. Through the end of 2003, pool expenses including debt service have exceeded pool revenues by \$1,560,953 since 1997. Pool revenues are accounted for under the Revenue Facilities fund.

Summary of Recommendations

Over the past 10 years the fund balance in Revenue Facilities has decreased over \$750,000. Revenue Facilities is one of 10 Funds listed under “Operating Funds”. As indicated in the chart below, in 1994 the Revenue Facilities Fund had a balance of -\$59,143. *In 2003 the Revenue Facilities Fund had a balance of -\$822,848.*

<u>Year</u>	<u>Revenue Facilities</u>
1994	-\$59,143
1995	\$55,217
1996	\$43,059
1997	-\$28,327
1998	-\$53,472
1999	-\$237,447
2000	-\$349,615
2001	-\$459,885
2002	-\$657,832
2003	-\$822,848

Source: Park District of Oak Park

The Revenue Facilities Fund is used to account for revenues and expenditures related to programs that are not directly tax supported including outdoor pools, indoor ice-arena, gymnastics, recreation programming for adults, preschoolers, and summer camps. The deficit in the Revenue Facilities Fund would be even greater except for positive revenue generation in other areas of the Revenue Facilities Fund and other actions that the Park District has taken.

Collectively, the other 9 Funds listed under “Operating Funds” have shown an increase in their fund balances of over \$450,000 since 1994.

The performance of the 1996 Alternative Revenue Bond was not considered in the Infrastructure Committee’s report. This information is newly developed for the Master Plan. Given the great importance of the Park District’s fund balances and the considerable impact on the fund balances by the 1996 Alternative Revenue Bond Issue we would recommend that the Park District prepare a written report regarding the history of this issue, what occurred, the corrective actions that the Park District needed to take, and any recommended policy changes that the Park Board either has taken or will take in the future.

Strategic Work Product #3: Community Centers and Historic Properties

A major focus of the master planning process was analysis of the current system of delivering parks and recreation services through the seven community centers. This analysis was conducted to answer key questions regarding the efficiencies and effectiveness of the current service delivery model and recommend options as appropriate. Chapter 7 of the “Draft Master Plan” contains a full analysis of the seven community centers.

The key question to be addressed in the analysis centered around “*Does the present community center model of service delivery work?*” In the opinion of the Consultant Team, the current model of service is failing for numerous reasons including:

Duplication of services. Many of the programs at each community center are the same. To a certain degree the community centers are competing with themselves for program participants. Program occupancy rates for the community centers range from 17% to 85% of capacity. This duplication of programs inhibits efficiency and restricts the ability to reach full potential in revenues.

Financially it is more efficient to compress the participants into fewer classes. The staff costs for each center to run this program, regardless if the class has a minimum number of participants or maximum number of participants, is the same. If fewer classes are held the cost of instructors drop and the net revenue increases because classes are running at a higher occupancy rate. This efficiency will help improve the cost recovery rate at each center.

Staff costs are the single biggest cost at each center. Each of the seven community centers has a full-time director assigned to the building and various part-time instructors and supervisors to assist with monitoring and programming the building in the evening and weekends. Personnel costs are ranging from 77.8% to 88.3% of the community center budgets. The mean percentage is 84%. Typically personnel cost in a community center range from 60-75% of the total facility budget.

About 30% of the community center budget and staff costs are allocated to outdoor sports. The single biggest contributor to the cost of operation outdoor sports through the centers is the Park District philosophy of having paid coaches.

High administrative overhead. The administrative overhead costs for operating the centers appear high. Analysis of the 2003 budget reveals that 37% of the total community center budget is associated with administrative costs. There does not appear to be a method in place to accurately identify and distribute administrative cost on a Park District wide basis.

The neighborhood focus is changing. Community focus and interest by the residents is changing. At one time the community centers were the hub of neighborhood activity. Today there is less emphasis on the neighborhood aspect of the centers. Some families may be looking for activities for the entire family to participate in together, which the existing community centers are lacking.

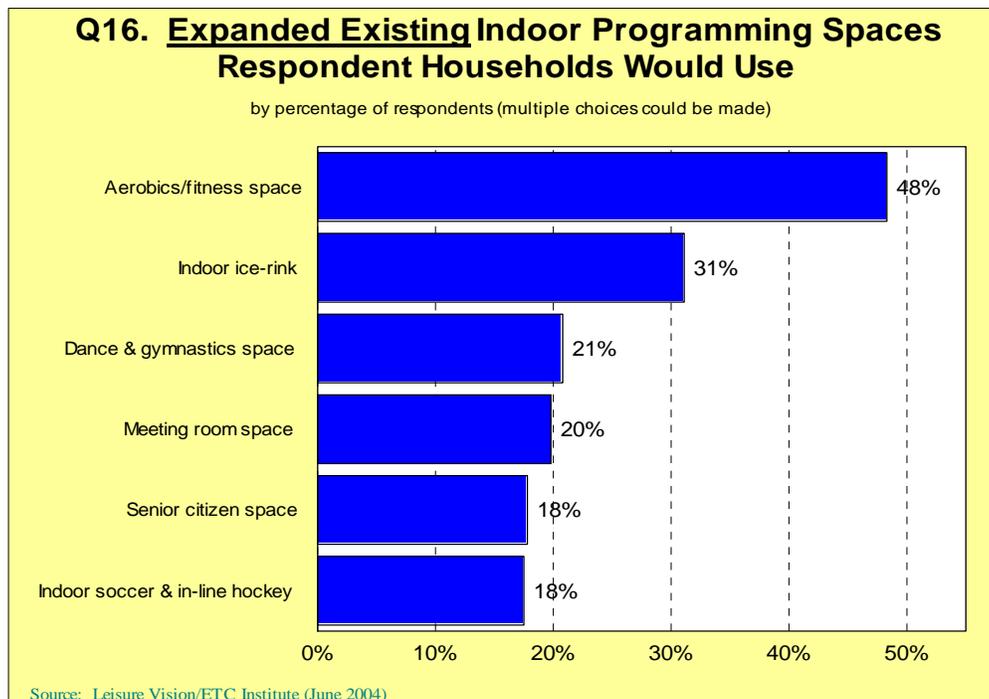
Summary of Recommendations

For others, personal fitness is important and the community centers do not have facilities or equipment to meet their needs. Statistically, exercise with equipment ranks third in popularity based on the National Sporting Goods Association (NSGA) data. The survey validates the importance of exercise for residents of the Park District. 52% of survey respondents indicated there is a need for a fitness and exercise component.

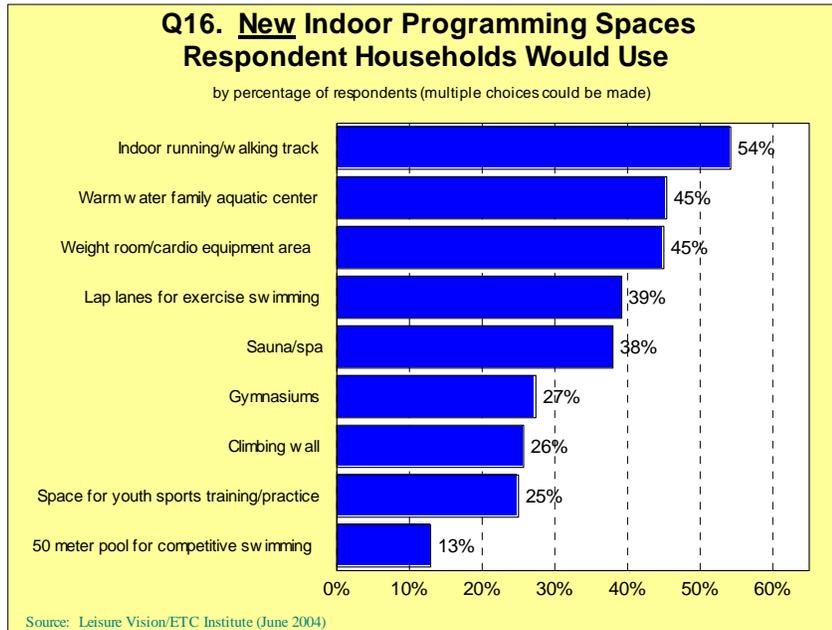
The community centers are putting financial strain on the Park District budget. The community centers accounted for about 12% (\$669,881) of the total Park District budget of \$8,115,513 in 2003. At the same time, community center revenue accounted for only 2.5% (\$207,436) of the \$8,115,513 revenue generated by the Park District.

The community centers do not have the types of programming spaces that are of highest importance to the community. The Consultant Team has visited with some people who feel that the problems at the community centers are a result of poor programming. While we certainly agree that that programming could be improved, even with this improved programming, the centers do not have the types of programming spaces to meet the highest priority needs of the community.

The chart below indicates the community priorities for *expanding existing indoor programming spaces*. The highest priority spaces are spaces that are at the Dole Center and Ridgeland Commons and not at the existing 7 community centers.



Additionally, the citizen survey asked community priorities for *developing new indoor programming spaces*. These new indoor programming spaces are indicated below. Again, the types of programming spaces (and related programming) that are high priorities can not be offered at the community centers nor in most cases cost effectively be added.



Results of the “Indoor Spaces Report” conducted by the Park District Citizen Committee. The PDCC report summary comments indicated “The current facilities of Park District do not provide sufficient or adequate space for the Park District of the future. Regardless of the means, the end must be additional space for indoor fitness. The Park District can put to use its community center space, but that space will not adequately address the future demands of the public for indoor programming and, as shown by the survey results, does not adequately meet those demands at present”.

The Park District is spending a disproportionate amount of its tax revenues and the current Village transfer revenues on the 7 community center operations. This does not allow sufficient revenues to be allocated to other operations and capital areas of high community importance. Tax support for the community centers is derived from Park District taxes and revenues from the current Village Transfer. The total tax support for the community centers is nearly \$500,000 more than for parks and sports programs combined. 30% of household respondents to the community survey rated small neighborhood parks as one of the 4 most important parks and recreation facilities to their households as compared to 9% for community centers. The amount of tax support for the community centers is more than is received for the Conservatory, Dole Center, swimming pools, Ridgeland Commons Ice Arena, the 2 historic properties, and the Gymnastics Center combined.

Although the community center model in Oak Park is failing one cannot overlook the tradition and emotional attachment residents have for the community centers. The community center model is one of the qualities of life issues that help make the Village of Oak Park a unique place to live.

That being stated, there are a number of options the Park District should considering in determining the future operating plans for the community centers. The following recommendations are offered:

3.1 The Park District of Oak Park should self-operate 4 community centers.

There is no question that there is not an established need to continue to operate 7 community centers. The financial reality facing the Park District and the relatively small market niche that the community centers serve raises questions on continuing to operate the centers as status quo. The community survey conducted clearly indicates that the community focus has changed. When factoring the financial position of the community centers, use patterns and survey results, it appears a major structure change is needed in delivering community center services.

Members of the Leisure Vision consulting team recommends that the Park District should reduce the number of community centers that it operates from 7 to 4. We believe this move on behalf of the Park District would reflect meeting community needs while at the same time reflect a proportionate share of tax dollars being used to support the community centers. This change will enhance the financial picture for the Park District and provide the funding necessary for much needed capital repairs.

The Park District could either continue programming the four community centers as it is currently or convert two of the centers for specialty purposes. There is certainly a community need to convert one of the centers for fitness programming. Either of these options for programming the four community centers is far superior to current operations.

Detailed line item budgets and revenue estimates have been prepared for this recommendation and are contained in Chapter 7 under Options 2 and Options 3 for the community centers. The Consultant Team estimates annual tax savings from Direct Costs of between \$267,000 (Option 1) and \$390,000 (Option 2) from the 2003 Park District budget by implementing this recommendation.

3.2 The Park District of Oak Park should partner with community providers in the operations of the remaining 3 community centers.

Each of the remaining three community centers could be adapted to other areas of community needs through partnerships with local non-profits. The Consultant Team certainly believes there is sufficient community needs and interests on the part of other

community organizations to develop partnerships for the operations of the remaining 3 centers.

The Consultant Team believes that the model the Park District should pursue in any partnerships with non-profit providers would be one where the taxpayers would pay for the initial capital improvements to the community center to get it into condition for the non-profit organizations. A non-profit organization could then lease the facilities from the Park District and pay all operating costs for the facilities, and put a percent of revenues into a sinking fund to cover future maintenance and capital costs.

The Consultant Team recognizes that the possibility exists that the Park District will not be able to develop partnerships with community organizations for the operations of the 3 community centers. Should that occur, we would recommend that those centers where a partnership cannot be developed be closed. We recognize that closing any of the community centers will evoke many emotions. However, it does not make financial sense for the Park District to operate and allocate tax dollars for more than 4 community centers, given the other critical needs in the community.

3.3 The Park District of Oak Park should reduce direct administrative costs for operating the community centers.

The tax savings and options listed in Recommendation 3.1 do not include any cost savings associated with direct administrative costs or other administrative costs. Each of the options is based on only those costs and revenues from the direct operations of the 7 community centers.

The administrative overhead costs for operating the centers appear high. Analysis of the 2003 budget reveals that 37% of the total community center budget is associated with administrative costs as the table below illustrates. There does not appear to be a method in place to accurately identify and distribute administrative cost on a Park District wide basis.

Category	2003 Budget
Direct Cost	\$669,881
Administrative Cost	\$375,032
Total Community Center Costs	\$1,013,546
Percent of Administrative Cost	37%

The Park District has made a concerted effort to address cost issues in the entire Park District over the past few years. The Consultant Team would encourage the Park District to continue these efforts and conduct a thorough analysis of the administrative cost savings which can additionally be realized through the recommended options.

3.4 The Consultant Team does not recommend that the Park District of Oak Park pursue developing a large community recreation center at this time.

Many of the indoor spaces that are of high priority of Oak Park residents could be accommodated through the development of a large community recreation center. Residents of the community have shown support for the operations of Village wide facilities, through their support for Ridgeland Commons the Dole Center and other Village wide facilities.

There are two major obstacles facing the Park District of Oak Park's development of a large community recreation center.

First, the District is not in a financial position to take on the financial costs to develop a large recreation center. While the Consultant Team believes the operating costs in tax dollars from such a facility would be considerably less than in being paid for the 7 community centers, the capital costs would be substantial. Given the other critical needs of the Park District we do not believe the right time for this type of facility.

Perhaps just as important is the fact the Park District lacks an adequate space to construct a recreation center. Any recreation center construction would drastically reduce the amount of green space in the existing park system or buying a property large enough would add significantly to the cost of constructing a new facility.

As a result, the Consulting Team does not feel the development of a large recreation center in Oak Park fits at this time. However, one option that merits consideration in the future (5 to 10 years out) is the possibility of expanding and renovating Ridgeland Commons. The ice arena is short (185 feet) by industry standards and the building infrastructure and equipment is in need of major repair. There is a possibility to complete the necessary repairs and upgrades to Ridgeland Commons while at the same time planning to expand the facility to incorporate other program areas (fitness area, gym, weight room, classrooms, etc). There may also be a possibility of enclosing the Pool to incorporate a swimming component into the expansion plans.

However, accommodating any expansion of Ridgeland Commons will result in a losing the ball field space adjacent to the facility. The Consultant Team does not recommend this occur currently, as there is already a shortage of sports facilities in Oak Park. Should the Park District move forward in the development of additional sports facilities at other locations, this option may be more feasible. This entire option may have been more feasible if the Park District would have moved forward on a partnership with the High School District and Village to vacant Scoville Avenue. The Consultant Team believes it might be reasonable to put this location back on the table at some future date.

3.5 The Park District should continue to operate the Historic Homes and put increased emphasis on private fund-raising activities.

48% of household respondents to the citizen survey indicated they have a need for the two historic homes. 11% of household respondents indicated that Cheney Mansion and Pleasant Home were among the 4 most important parks and recreation facilities to their households, which is slightly higher than the 9% of household respondents that ranked the community centers among their 4 most important parks and recreation facilities. Total annual tax support for the operations of the two facilities is approximately \$117,000, which is among the lowest tax support for any Park District operations.

At the same time, 72% of household respondents who had a need for the historic homes indicated that the facilities 100% met their needs and only 1% indicated that the facilities do not meet their needs at all. Allocating \$1.9 million to address capital improvements for Pleasant Home, Mills Park, and Cheney Mansion was the lowest rated capital improvement that household respondents would support with their tax dollars of all the improvements recommended in the Infrastructure Committee report.

The Consultant Team believes that capital improvements for both historic homes should be strongly based on private fund-raising efforts. The Consultant Team would recommend that the agreement with the Pleasant Home Foundation includes a written long term plan on how the facility can be improved, including a funding strategy that concentrates on the raising of private fund-raising dollars leveraged by tax dollars. We would suggest that these efforts, along with the improvements to Cheney Mansion and Mills Park recommended by the Infrastructure Committee be one of the focuses of the newly formed Park Foundation, working in partnership with the Pleasant Home Foundation.

Strategic Work Product #4: On-Going Citizen Involvement

Until recently active citizen involvement has not been stressed by the Park District of Oak Park. This was particularly true during the period between 1990 and 2000. It is no coincidence that this same period of time saw a substantial decline in the conditions for many of the Park District facilities.

On at least one occasion, the Park District did not go forward with a vote on a major capital improvement project, because of concern that the election would not be won. The resulting decision by the Park Board to issue the 1996 Alternative Revenue Bond issue has been previously discussed and had a severe negative impact on the current park system.

By 2000, it had been over 35 years since a successful voter election in the Park District and at least 15 years since voters had an opportunity to go to the polls to vote on a tax increase to fund services. That situation along with an aging infrastructure, the negative impact on the Revenue Facilities Fund of the 1996 Alternative Revenue Bond, and other strategic management, financial, and planning issues led to the Park District forming in September of 2001, a citizen's advisory committee called the "Infrastructure Committee" whose mission was "to inventory and assess the district's properties and make recommendations to the Board of Park Commissioners regarding immediate and long-range capital planning".

The result of the Infrastructure Committee's work was a proposed capital improvement program that was presented to the Board of Commissioners in November 2002. One of the major recommendations included in this plan was to develop a comprehensive plan that would include a vision statement and an examination of the neighborhood-based community recreation center philosophy.

The current master planning efforts has thousands of Oak Park citizens, under the leadership of the Park District of Oak Park and the Village of Oak Park and including the Park District Citizens Committee, several hundred citizens involved in stakeholder interviews and focus groups, and a statistically valid survey that was completed by 824 survey respondents in Oak Park. The results of the statistically valid survey have a 95% level of confidence with a precision of at least +/-3.4%.

It is extremely important that the Park District of Oak Park maintains and increases the involvement of Oak Park citizens as the District moves forward on implementing the Master Plan. Towards that objective, the following recommendations are offered:

4.1 The Park District of Oak Park should hold a citizen election for purposes of funding recommended improvements to the parks and recreation system.

Summary of Recommendations

The Park District has not brought any issues before the voters in at least 21 years. The Consultant Team believes that having voters participate in these funding decisions is a benefit of an independent park district.

The Infrastructure Committee called for a voter election. Repeatedly during the master plan process, the need and desire to have one or more voter elections for raising revenues was raised by Park District officials and citizens, including administrative staff of the Park District suggestions to raise revenues from a Museum Tax to support the Conservatory and a citizen vote on future funding of the centers. Some have suggested having voter elections as early as April 2004.

The Consultant Team does not recommend holding elections as early as April 2004. We believe that a more appropriate time frame would be either in November of 2004 or April of 2005. It will take at least 3 months for the Park District to complete its 3 year action plan and capital plan. We believe that the Park District should take a minimum of 9 months sharing this plan with the community.

It is important to note that while there has been tremendous community involvement in the Master Planning process, the results from the citizen survey indicate that just 25% of respondents would “vote in favor” of a bond referendum to fund the development and operations of the types of parks, aquatic, historic and recreation facilities most important to their household. An additional 24% of households indicated they “might vote in favor”, with 33% responding “not sure” and 18% responding “vote against”.

The percent of households indicating “vote in favor” is very low for a successful bond election. At the same time with 57% of households indicating “might vote in favor” or “not sure” it is important that they are fully educated about the reasons for the issue and the benefits to the community.

Last, we believe that it is in the best interest of the Park District and the entire community that the election be held on a date that maximizes the opportunity for citizens to vote in the election.

4.2 The Park District of Oak Park should form a broad base Oak Park Master Plan Election Committee to work with the Park District on the voter election.

On-going citizen involvement in educating and informing the entire Oak Park community will be particularly important to ensure a successful voter election. Towards that objective, we would recommend that the Park District of Oak Park form a broad base Oak Park Master Plan Election Committee to work with the Park District on the voter election. We believe the Park District should immediately get started on forming this committee.

Certainly citizens who have been involved with the Master Plan to-date, whether through the Park District Citizen Committee, focus groups, stakeholder interviews, public forums,

or the Infrastructure Committee should form a strong base for this committee. At the same time, we believe the Park District will need to reach out beyond this existing base to be successful. It will be particularly important to bring onto the committee individuals who have worked on previous successful public voter elections. The Village elders should be of great assistance in the formation of the Master Plan Election Committee.

4.3 The Park District of Oak Park should form a Park District Foundation.

As previously noted, the Consultant Team believes that private fund-raising and gifts are a major potential source of funding projects for the park system, particularly those that have historic significance in the community.

To act upon this potential the Consultant Team has recommended the establishment of a Park District Foundation, which would act similarly to a community foundation. Many Park systems across the country are turning to private fund-raising as a major source of revenue development, particularly for specific projects.

Equally important, aggressively raising revenues from private sources will further illustrate to tax payers that local tax dollars are only a piece of a comprehensive revenue policy for the Park District.

4.4 The Park District of Oak Park should as a normal business practice solicit both qualitative and quantitative citizen input.

Public input has been the cornerstone of the Master Planning process. It is clear that the Park Board and the administrative staff of the Park District see the value of public involvement. We would strongly encourage the Park Board to actively consider and act upon additional on-going methods for both qualitative and quantitative citizen involvement in future Park District planning, management, programming, and financial decision making.

Strategic Work Product #5: Partnerships

The Park District of Oak Park has an extensive range of interlocal agreements with non-profit providers and other public agencies. Information from the benchmarking survey shows that the Park District of Oak Park has 12 partnerships out of a total of 15 potential partnership opportunities that organizations can partner with local schools, other local units of government and non-profits in the development, use, and funding of parks and recreation facilities. The average benchmarked community has 7.5 partnerships.

It is imperative the “fully independent” Park District, now fully responsible and accountable for the provision of quality parks and recreation services to the community and charged with achieving the preferred future, aggressively seek new models of cooperation with other community providers of leisure-related services and leverage public, non-profit, and private sector resources to achieve the objectives of a well rounded parks and recreation program. This is a big commitment that the District must embrace and be fully prepared to accept.

Focusing on an enhanced partnering strategy accomplishes at least two major objectives. First, local organizations and governmental partners can be effective providers of parks and recreation services, relieving the Park District of some administrative costs and financial overhead responsibilities. In addition, collaborating with community user group organizations and Village institutions fosters support and commitment, creating bonds that become highly beneficial when seeking tax revenue support from the electorate.

The following recommendations are offered:

5.1 The Park District of Oak Park should aggressively pursue new partnerships with community and regional providers.

The Park District Citizen’s Committee has strongly encouraged the Park District to aggressively pursue new, and to enhance existing partnerships with other community organizations (the Village of Oak Park, District #97, District #200, the Township of Oak Park, the Oak Park Library, the YMCA, etc.) in providing facilities and programs.

The Consultant Team strongly endorses this direction and would additionally encourage the Park District to reach out into regional partnerships with other local units of government, forest preserve districts, etc. that are mutually beneficial. For example, the Park District might forge regional alliances for the development of youth sports facilities. Many teams in Oak Park play many games, etc. outside of Oak Park due to a lack of facilities and space. The Park District might also consider regional alliances to take advantage of the drawing power it has with some special facilities, particularly the Oak Park Conservatory and Ridgeland Commons.

5.2 The Park District of Oak Park should jointly develop, fund, and manage long range capital plans with community providers.

As previously mentioned the Park District has done a very good job in developing written partnerships with community providers. We believe these agreements can be improved to act upon recommendations of the Master Plan.

For example a Participant Fee was recently implemented by the Park District. This is a recommendation that came out of the Infrastructure Committee Report and was referred to as a “CIP Surcharge”. The Park District has implemented a \$5 per participant fee through various written partnership agreements, i.e. OPRF Pony Baseball, Oak Park-River Forest Strikers Soccer Club, Inc., the Windmills, Oak Park Youth Baseball/Softball, etc.

The current Participant Fee is an excellent partnership project which can also be improved. Current language in the contracts between the Park District and the various non-profit organizations indicate that “the Required Fee shall be applied by the Park District for park improvements and for extraordinary park maintenance, as determined solely by the Park District.” None of the partnership agreements spell out specific projects that the Park District and community organizations can partner on developing.

With the results of the master plan in hand, the Consultant Team would recommend that each agreement include a written long term plan on how the facilities utilized by the community organizations can be improved. We would recommend these be joint decisions and not decisions that are determined solely by the Park District. The Consultant Team would also recommend that the Park District consider developing multi-year contracts rather than yearly contracts. These multi-year contracts will allow both organizations to plan better and provide incentives for private contributions that might not be available without clear direction on how the dollars will be used.

This same recommendation should be adopted in other written agreements of the Park District, i.e. Pleasant Home.

5.3 The Park District of Oak Park should enter into a partnership with the school districts and Village for use of school properties.

The facility sharing and use relationship with the two local school districts is absolutely critical, and new, mutually beneficial and strong cooperative agreements between these entities is of paramount importance to achieve community desires.

Of all the agencies that participated in the benchmarking survey, the Park District of Oak Park was the only agency that does not have written partnership(s) with local schools. This is a significant weakness that should be corrected with a fully independent park district. The Consultant Team has previously spelled out recommendations to enhance current partnerships with youth sports organizations and other non-profit partners, through

Summary of Recommendations

developing multi-year agreements with specific capital improvement long range plans spelled out in the agreements to be jointly implemented and funded.

The Park District should aggressively move forward in developing written interlocal partnership agreements with both local school districts. In particular we believe it would be extremely important for the Park District to become a full partner with the Village and Elementary School District 97 on the new partnership agreement allowing for recreational usage of school properties. We believe this partnership would be very beneficial in providing available land for the development and expansion of needed youth sports facilities.

Strategic Work Product #6: Parks and Recreation Facility Priorities

A number of Master Plan activities focused on assessments of existing parks and recreation facilities, opportunities for new parks and recreation facilities, and in particular community priorities. These activities included:

SWOT Analysis - An assessment of the recreational facilities and site amenities of twenty Park District properties by CYLA Design Associates as well as eleven school sites. This assessment is included in Chapter 6 of this “Draft Master Plan”. The site inventory consists of one condensed report for each site plus three overall summaries—one for the major park recreational features, a second for park amenities, and the third for the school sites.

Twenty-two categories of recreational facilities and twenty-three categories of site amenities were inventoried and broadly evaluated for condition. The condition assessments, through subjective, were included to better describe the general quality of each feature and their contribution to the recreational experience.

Needs Assessment Citizen Survey – A statistically valid random sampling survey conducted of 824 households in Oak Park during January and February of 2004. The results from the survey have a 95% level of confidence with a precision of +/-3.4%. Questions on the survey focused on usage, needs, unmet needs and establishing priorities for the future development of parks and recreation facilities and services within the Oak Park community as well as the funding of the improvements. The survey was administered by a combination of mail and phone.

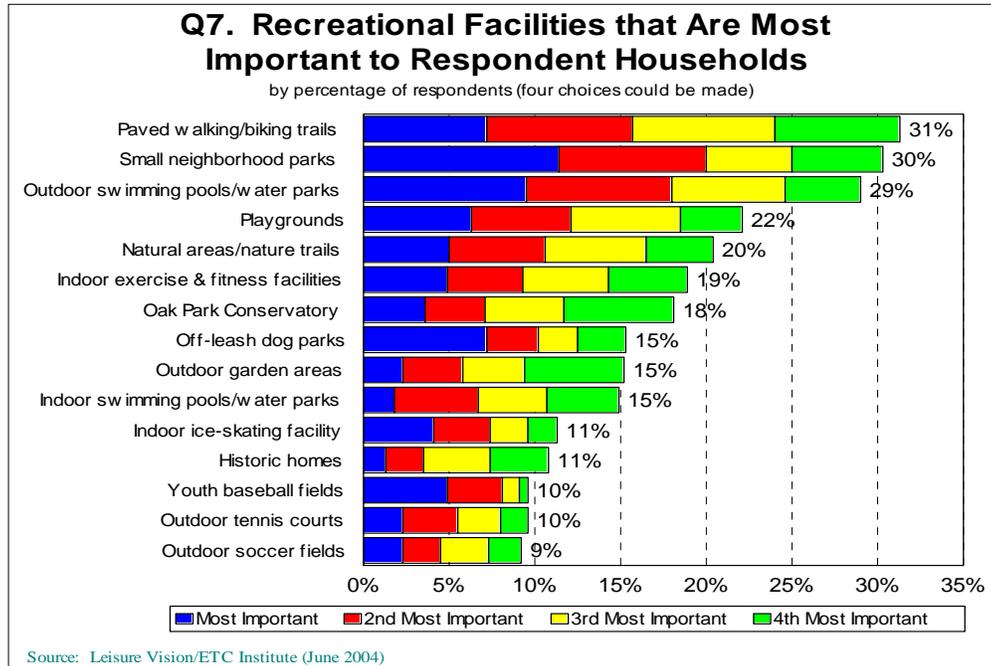
Comparative Communities Benchmarking Survey - This activity included a comprehensive benchmarking survey of 13 communities comparable to the Park District of Oak Park. The Park District Citizen Committee coordinated the identification of communities to participate in the Benchmarking Survey. Topics covered on the survey included: types, numbers, and acres of parks and open space available; types and numbers of outdoor recreation facilities; types and numbers of indoor recreation facilities; revenues from taxes, fees and charges; staffing costs; cooperative use agreements; capital budgets, etc.

Parks and Recreation Standards for Oak Park - This activity includes the development of “Standards Unique to Oak Park” for 29 different outdoor and indoor programming spaces identified from Question #6 in the needs assessment survey. The Consultant Team is working with a sub-committee of the Park District Citizens Committee on these standards. This activity was added as an additional service for the Master Plan and is still being completed.

The following recommendations are offered:

6.1 The Park District of Oak Park should address areas of high citizen need in the action plan and capital improvement plan.

Twenty-nine existing recreational facilities were evaluated in the citizen survey. Respondents were asked to indicate the four facilities that were of highest importance to their household. The following facilities ranked in the top 15 most important parks and facilities to resident households and should be a focus of the action plan and capital improvement plan. In particular the Park District should concentrate efforts on improvements to neighborhood parks.



6.2 The Park District of Oak Park should address deficiencies in the numbers and quality of athletic fields in the action plan and capital improvement plan.

The Park District is seriously deficient in the number of sports fields, particularly for youth sports that are available in Oak Park. Benchmarking comparisons with similar communities indicate that Oak Park is particularly deficient in the numbers of junior and regulation soccer fields and somewhat deficient in the numbers of youth softball fields. 50% of the available fields for sports in Oak Park are composed of multipurpose fields. Preliminary findings by the Sub-Committee on Standards for Oak Park suggest that the Park District is currently deficient up to 16 sports fields of all types.

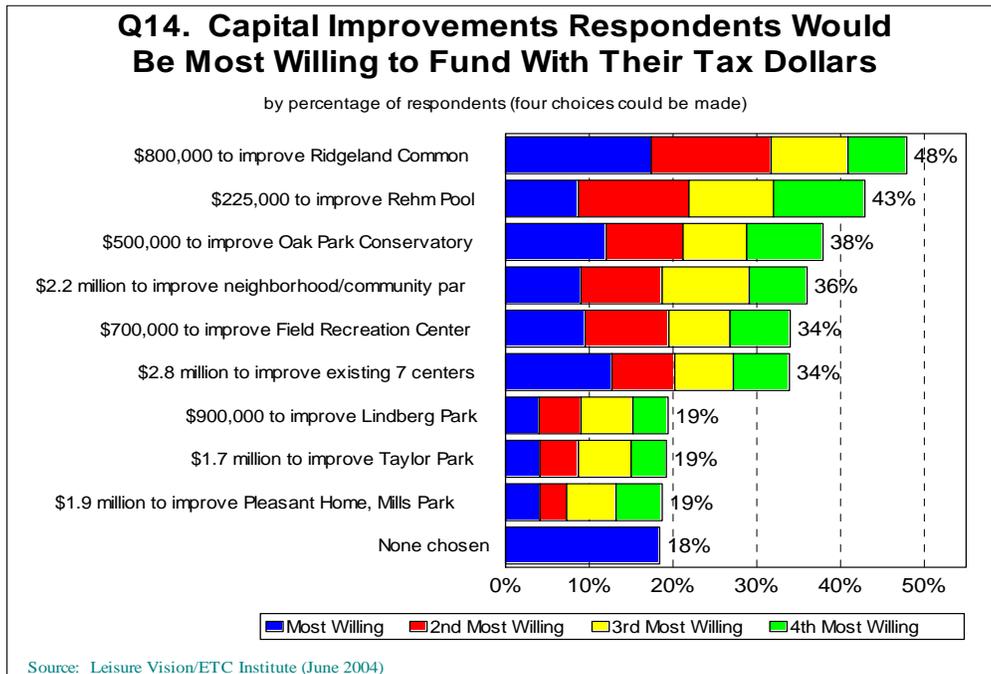
As one way of addressing these needs, we would recommend that the Park District work with the Village and Elementary School District 97 on the development of needed sports fields on these properties. This action will also potentially free up some green space on existing parks. We would additionally recommend that the Park District reach out into regional partnerships with other local units of government, forest preserve districts, etc. that are mutually beneficial. Many teams in Oak Park play games, etc. outside of Oak Park due to a lack of facilities and space.

6.3 The Park District of Oak Park needs to upgrade park maintenance.

83% of respondent households to the survey have visited Park District of Oak Park parks over the past year. This is a very high percentage of usage. Only 24% of respondents indicated they would rate the condition of parks as excellent. This is a lower percentage than the average of other Illinois communities (31%) we have surveyed and also lower than national averages (29%). The results of the SWOT analysis also show significant opportunities to upgrade the conditions of facilities. Neighborhood parks is clearly a high priority for citizens in Oak Park.

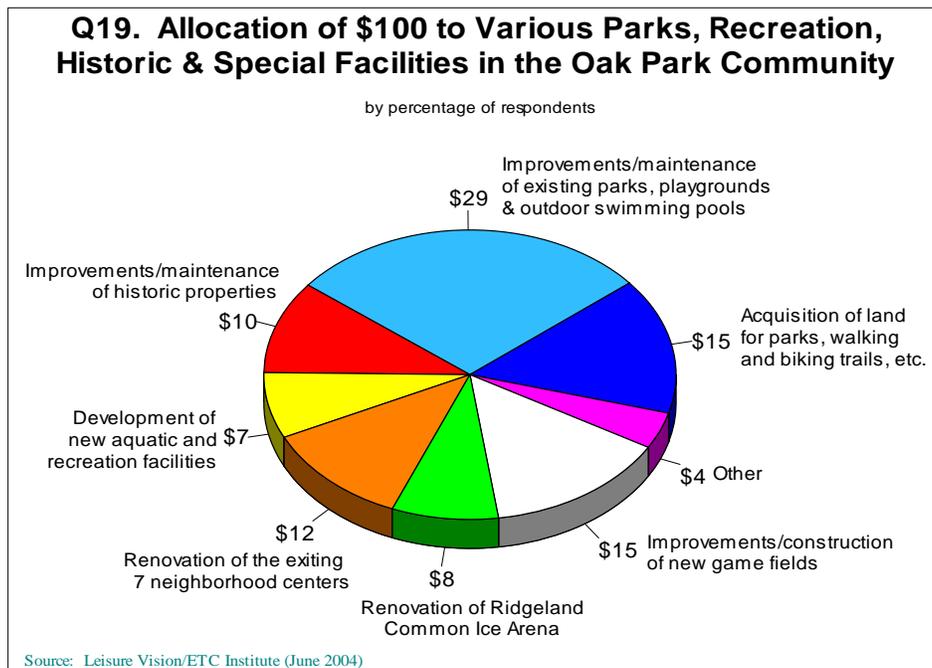
6.4 Improving Ridgeland Commons is an area of high community importance.

48% of respondent households to the survey indicated that allocating \$800,000 to improve Ridgeland Commons was one of their top 4 choices to fund with tax dollars for existing facilities. \$225,000 to improve Rehm Pool and \$500,000 to address capital improvements for the Oak Park Conservatory were the next two highest supported improvements. The dollar amounts for the improvements came out of the work of the Parks Infrastructure Committee



6.5 The Action Plan for Capital Improvements needs to be well balanced.

Improvements/maintenance of existing parks, playgrounds, and outdoor pools is clearly the most important direction for the Park District. At the same time 15% of respondents supported allocating 15% of new tax funding to the acquisition of land for parks, walking and biking trails and an additional 15% for the improvements/construction of new game fields for sports. This would suggest support for reaching out for partnerships with the school districts and on a regional basis for sports fields as previously recommended.



6.6 The Park District should recognize that funding improvements to Parks and Recreation Facilities is of importance to the Oak Park.

78% of respondents to the citizen survey indicated that funding improvements to parks and recreation facilities was either “very important (34%) or “somewhat important” (44%) compared to other priorities for Oak Park. Only 10% of respondents indicated improvements were “not important”. Clearly Oak Park residents would like to see the Park District aggressively move forward on a comprehensive approach to addressing improving the system. We believe this includes a capital investment funding plan that is balanced through tax revenues, non-tax revenues and savings from operations.

*Oak Park Planning Guidelines for
Public Recreational Facilities*



MEMORANDUM

218 Madison Street
Oak Park, IL 60302
(708) 383-0002
www.oakparkparks.com

To: Tom Phillion, Buildings & Grounds Committee

From: Gary Balling, Executive Director

RE: Oak Park Planning Guidelines for Recreation Facilities

Date: May 1, 2006

STATEMENT

The proposed Oak Park Parks and Recreation Planning Guidelines for Recreation Facilities evolved from the comprehensive planning process and were established by members of the Park District Citizen Committee (PDCC). These guidelines are unique to Oak Park and will be considered during all park planning projects and are necessary for most grant applications.

DISCUSSION

Leisure Vision administered a Benchmarking Survey to thirteen park and recreation agencies identified by the PDCC. The purpose of the Benchmarking Survey was to better understand how the Park District or Oak Park compared to other park and recreation agencies for a wide range of issues impacting the Park and Recreation Master Plan. Issues covered in the survey included types, numbers, and areas of parks and open space available; types, numbers and miles of trails available; types and numbers of outdoor recreation facilities; types and numbers of indoor recreation facilities; as well as budgeting, staffing, cooperatives capital budgets, etc. A Standards Subcommittee of the PDCC was formed to utilize this benchmarking information to develop Park District parks and recreation standards.

The Subcommittee began work on the parks and recreation standards late in the Comprehensive Planning process and they were still being developed when the Comprehensive Plan was completed in October 2004. Just as it was difficult to identify benchmark communities similar to Oak Park, it also became challenging to compare the parks and recreation facilities of these benchmark communities with current Park District facilities. To develop standards based on the benchmark information was not practical because of the limited amount of open space available in Oak Park. Instead, members of the Park District Citizen Committee used the benchmark information as one source of input, along with the citizen use and demand data from the Community Survey, and a knowledge of the practical physical constraints in Oak Park, in developing a set of general facility demand indicators incorporated into the proposed Oak Park Planning Guidelines for Recreation Facilities. These guidelines are unique to Oak Park.

RECOMMENDATION

The Board of Park Commissioners is requested to approve the Proposed Oak Park Planning Guidelines for Recreation Facilities. These Guidelines are meant to assist in planning but are not an absolute blue print. They must be taken into account when considering a total, well-rounded system of parks and recreation areas and will be used as a resource in all Park District planning processes.

Oak Park Planning Guidelines for Public Recreational Facilities

Population of Oak Park

2004 52524
2013 52104

	2004 Data Used to Develop Standards					Board Approved Oak Park Standards per 1000 in Population	Current Results (as of September 2013)			
	Total in Oak Park	Total in Oak Park (per 1000 in Population)	Average in Benchmarked Communities (per 1000 in Population)	Priority in Oak Park Citizen Survey (out of 29)	Oak Park Citizen Priorities Compared to National Average		Total in Oak Park	Total Needed to Meet Oak Park Standards (Based on Current Population)	Deficit/Surplus	Change in Past 10 Years
Total Park & Facility Area¹ (in acres)	92.52	1.587	7.268	-	-	2.000	95.15	104.21	-9.06	3%
Parks (in acres)										
Neighborhood parks ¹	31.93	0.608	2.464	2	-2%	0.750	33.94	39.08	-5.14	6%
Community parks	57.25	1.090	2.335	-	-	1.200	57.25	62.52	-5.27	0%
Outdoor Active Facilities										
Swimming pools	2	0.038	0.031	3	+11%	0.038	2	1.98	0.02	0%
Tennis courts	26	0.495	0.338	14	+3%	0.381	23	19.85	3.15	-12%
Basketball courts (half courts) ²	9	0.171	0.224	20	equal	0.228	7	11.88	-4.88	-22%
Skateboard areas	0	0.000	0.015	24	-1%	0.019	1	0.99	0.01	100%
Ice skating and hockey (seasonal)	3	0.057	0.066	25	-2%	0.057	3	2.97	0.03	0%
Inline hockey/floor hockey rink	0.50	0.000	0.004	29	-2%	0.010	0.50	0.49	0.01	0%
Fitness trails (in miles)	0.00	0.000	0.049	-	-	0.076	0.00	4.00	-4.00	0%
Cross country ski trails (in miles)	0.00	0.000	0.148	-	-	0.038	0.00	2.00	-2.00	0%
On-Street Bikeways/Bikelanes ³ (in miles)	0.00	0.000	0.091	-	-	0.067	4.50	3.60	0.90	100%
Outdoor Sports Fields										
Softball/Youth baseball diamonds ¹	21	0.400	0.401	13	equal	0.381	19	19.85	-0.85	-10%
Baseball diamonds (90 ft.)	2	0.038	0.047	13	equal	0.076	2	3.96	-1.96	0%
Multi-purpose/Youth soccer fields ¹	22	0.419	0.183	15	equal	0.446	23	23.24	-0.24	5%
Soccer fields (regulation)	1	0.038	0.120	15	equal	0.095	4	4.95	-0.92	292%
Outdoor Passive Facilities										
Playgrounds ¹	25	0.475	0.465	4	-2%	0.457	25	23.81	1.19	0%
Spray pads	2	0.038	0.015	3	+11%	0.038	4	1.98	2.02	100%
Off-leash dog parks	0	0.000	0.011	8	+5%	0.038	2	1.98	0.02	100%
Garden/natural areas (in acres)	5.42	0.103	0.001	9	+5%	0.120	5.80	6.25	-0.45	7%
Picnic shelters/areas	5	0.095	0.237	19	-15%	0.171	8	8.91	-0.91	60%
Walking/biking paths (in miles)	1.23	0.023	0.046	1	-10%	0.268	6.09	13.96	-7.87	395%
Indoor Active Facilities										
Multipurpose rooms	15	0.286	0.037	16	-4%	0.286	16	14.90	1.10	7%
Gymnasiums ²	3.40	0.076	0.029	18	-2%	0.076	3.16	3.96	-0.80	-7%
Exercise and fitness rooms	1	0.000	0.022	6	equal	0.057	1	2.97	-1.97	0%
Ice skating and hockey	1	0.019	0.005	11	+5%	0.038	1	1.98	-0.98	0%
Swimming pools/waterparks ²	0	0.000	0.004	10	-1%	0.038	0.10	1.98	-1.88	100%
Soccer fields (seasonal)	1	0.000	0.004	26	-3%	0.019	1	0.99	0.08	7%
Gymnastics center (in sq ft)	7600	144.7	0.015	27	-	289.4	18670	15078.4	3591.6	146%
Indoor Passive Facilities										
Historic homes	2	0.038	0.015	12	+2%	0.038	2	1.98	0.02	0%
Nature/Environmental centers	1	0.019	0.004	7	-	0.019	1	0.99	0.01	0%
Fine arts facilities	1	0.000	0.004	17	-2%	0.019	1	0.99	0.01	0%
Facilities for seniors	0	0.000	0.005	21	-4%	0.038	0	1.98	-1.98	0%
Facilities for teens	0	0.000	0.004	22	-1%	0.038	1	1.98	-0.98	100%

NOTES:

¹ Because they are generally open to the public and available for use by the Park District and its affiliates, District 97 fields and playgrounds are included in this count.

² Because access to non-Park District owned facilities is sometimes limited, they are only included in counts when specifically available to the Park District/public unless otherwise noted. Each of these counts is based on average annual availability (with any numbers less than "1" meaning partial availability to the Park District).

³ Managed by the Village of Oak Park

Park & Recreation Facility Additions & Improvements Completed since 2004

Priority in Citizen Survey		Type of Facility	Increases in Number of Facilities	Upgrades to Current Facilities	Scheduled Additions/Upgrades in CIP
2004	2010				
1	1	Walking/biking paths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total miles of paths increased by 4.86 miles (395%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Path improvements made at Austin Gardens, Fox Center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional paths will be added in Lindberg and Carroll Parks in 2014, Stevenson Park in 2015, and Maple Park in 2016. Existing paths will be improved in Austin Gardens in 2015 and Field Park in 2017.
2	-	Neighborhood parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional land purchased to increase size of Carroll Park Additional land developed at Randolph Tot Lot 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greenspace redeveloped at 2 schools with partnership Full renovation of 2 neighborhood parks Phase 1 of master plans completed at 6 neighborhood parks Remediation project completed at Barrie Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase 1 of master plan will be completed at Stevenson Park in 2015. Phase 2 of master plans will be completed at Carroll Park and Fox Park in 2014, Andersen Park in 2016, and Field Park and Longfellow Park in 2017.
3	6 (Recreational) 18 (Lap/Competitive)	Outdoor swimming pools/spray pads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Splash pads added to 2 parks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 new play features added to Rehm Pool Splash Pad renovated/upgraded at 2 parks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New play feature will be added at Rehm Pool in 2016.
4	7	Playgrounds		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New playground equipment installed and/or improvements made at 10 parks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New playground equipment will be installed in Lindberg Park in 2014, Stevenson Park in 2015, and Maple Park in 2016.
5 (Nature Areas) 9 (Gardens)	8 (Gardens) 16 (Passive Areas)	Natural areas/nature trails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New natural areas added at 3 parks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New garden installed at Conservatory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New garden will be added in Austin Gardens in 2015.
6	5	Exercise and fitness rooms			
7	2 (Nature Center) 4 (Conservatory)	Nature/Environmental centers		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building improvements made at Conservatory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental Center to be built in Austin Gardens in 2015. Entrance and building improvements will be made at the Conservatory in 2015.
8	10	Off-leash dog parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dog parks added to 2 parks 		
10	3	Indoor swimming pools/waterparks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to 2 indoor pools secured through partnerships with local schools 		
11	13	Indoor Ice skating and hockey			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ice rink size will be expanded at Ridgeland Common in 2014 Ice rink season will be extended to year-round in 2014
12	19 (Pleasant Home) 20 (Cheney)	Historic homes		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building improvements made at 2 historic homes Fencing restoration completed at 2 historic homes Walkway upgrades made at Cheney 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building improvements will be made at Pleasant Home in 2015 and 2017. The greenhouse at Cheney Mansion will be restored in 2014.
13 (Youth Baseball) 23 (Youth Softball) 28 (Adult Softball)	15	Softball/Baseball Diamonds		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ball diamonds improvements made at 5 parks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ball diamond improvements will be made at Carroll Park, Fox Park, Lindberg Park, and Longfellow Park in 2014; Stevenson Park in 2015; and Maple Park in 2016.
14	14	Tennis courts		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tennis court replacement at 3 parks New tennis court lighting installed at 3 parks Tennis courts resealed at 2 parks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tennis court improvements will be made at Lindberg Park in 2014 and Longfellow Park in 2017.
15	11	Soccer fields		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Soccer field improvements made at 2 parks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Soccer field improvements will be made at Lindberg Park and Taylor Park in 2014, Stevenson Park in 2015, and Andersen Park and Maple Park in 2016.
16	-	Multipurpose rooms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New multipurpose rooms added at GRC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 rooms remodeled, including new windows Elevator added at Longfellow Park to make lower level multipurpose room accessible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An additional room will be added at Ridgeland Common in 2014
17	12	Fine arts facilities			
18	25	Gymnasiums			
19	-	Picnic shelters/areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New picnic shelters added at 2 parks New picnic area added at 1 park 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional shelters to be built in Lindberg Park in 2014 and Maple Park in 2016
20	21	Outdoor basketball courts		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basketball court improvements at 3 parks 	
21	17	Facilities for seniors			
22	23	Facilities for teens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New teen center opened in Stevenson Park 		
24	28	Skateboard areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New skate park added in Stevenson Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skate park equipment upgrades made 	
25	22	Outdoor ice skating and hockey		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New outdoor rink equipment purchased at 1 park 	
26	-	Indoor soccer fields (seasonal)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Turf was replaced 	
27	24	Gymnastics center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New gymnastics center opened in 2013, more than doubling the size of the former site 		
29	-	Inline hockey/floor hockey rink	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New inline hockey court added in Barrie Park 		

Park & Recreation Facility Additions & Improvements Completed since 2004

Priority in Citizen Survey		Type of Facility	Increases in Number of Facilities	Upgrades to Current Facilities	Scheduled Additions/Upgrades in CIP
2004	2010				
-	9	Indoor running/walking track			
-	26	Football Fields			
-	27	Synthetic Turf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synthetic Turf was added at a school site due to a partnership between the Park District and School District. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synthetic Turf fields will be added at Ridgeland Common in 2014 and Stevenson Park in 2015.
-	29	Outdoor Volleyball Courts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 new sand volleyball courts were added to replace 1 former court. • New outdoor standard volleyball court was added. 		
-	-	Overall Park & Facility Acreage			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$200,000/year set aside to purchase property that may become available in the future
-	-	Community Parks		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full renovation of 3 community parks • Phase 1 of master plan completed at 2 community parks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full renovation of Lindberg Park and Ridgeland Common in 2014 and Austin Gardens in 2015. • Phase 2 of master plan of Maple Park to be completed in 2016 and Rehm Park in 2018.
-	-	Fitness trails			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Health walk" components to be added at Lindberg Park in 2015
-	-	Cross country ski trails			
-	-	On-Street Bikeways/Bikelanes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4.5 miles of bike lanes added in Oak Park 		

