

January 21, 2025 Community Meeting

Question	Response
what is the park dist. priority? Is it to minimize the distance one has to walk to pick-up/drop-off their child, or is it to maximize the safety of the park for everyone of all ages? It has to be one or the other.	The Park District priorities accessibility and safety.
How and when was this decision made by the Park District and why was this not put out to vote by the community?	<p>As part of the 2006 initial Field Center Master Plan, the center was designated for "phasing out." In 2014, during the District's Comprehensive Master Planning process, it was recommended that the Field Center be demolished due to its condition, no later than 2024. In 2016, parents of Mann students requested that the Park District provide afterschool care at the Field Center due to limited availability in other programs and growing demand. This request shifted the focus from demolishing the building to the need for a new structure. The demand for afterschool care continues, alongside an increased demand for youth introductory dance programs.</p> <p>During the 2023 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) discussion, a recommendation was made to host a design competition for the replacement of the Field Center. In the spring of 2024, the design competition was launched and covered in the Wednesday Journal, as well as posted on the Park District's website and social media. The competition was held as a blind submission process and overseen by a group of seven local architects, designers, sustainability experts, and construction professionals. The community was invited to provide feedback on the 26 submissions displayed at the CRC. (More information on the design competition can be found on the Park District's website: https://pdop.org/about/field-center-design-competition/)</p>
What prompted this upgrade?	See above
This proposal came up exactly when? Who proposed it? What committee recommended it and when did that occur??	See above
How does the play equipment play into the revision. Will this part of OP have equipment similar to other investments in the Village?	The playground equipment will be selected with input from Mann students. The structures will be suitable for ages 3 to 12, which aligns with the current age range for the existing playground.
Who from the neighborhood was asked to be on the committee that judged the proposals??	The information about the committee can be found at https://pdop.org/about/field-center-design-competition/ . All of the architects on the committee are from Oak Park.
Will the building / play equipment still serve as the gated boundary for the park?	The west side of the park, along the alley, as well as the north side along Berkshire will still have fencing.

<p>Has the PD run a traffic study in the streets surrounding this area? If so, when will it be released?</p>	<p>Our engineers reached out to village staff regarding their most recent traffic study, which identified the main concerns as being around school drop-off and pickup times. There is some traffic on Berkshire in the early evening, but it is not considered a high-traffic area. Staff recently had conversations with the Village engineers about the new Vision Zero Plan for traffic and pedestrian safety. This site, being adjacent to both a school and a park, is a top priority for the plan, and measures will be taken to address some of the concerns noted here.</p>
<p>The existing NW corner is an accessible nature area already. Why replace the existing nature area with manufactured "natural" playground equipment?</p>	<p>The District would create a similar natural space in an alternate location, similar to the one originally created on the north side of Field Park. The Park District is considering a mix of natural elements paired with manufactured play equipment, as we have done in other parks, to provide a variety of play options for children. Manufactured play equipment, like what is currently at the park, is the most heavily used amenity. This equipment withstands heavy usage, has a longer lifespan, provides safe play, offers accessible and sensory options, and includes challenging features that support youth development.</p>
<p>Who is paying for this plan?</p>	<p>The cost of the project is funded through the Park District's Capital Improvement Plan.</p>
<p>Was Lindberg Park considered as a location for the new center? If not, why not? It is much larger than Field Park and the impact of a center in Lindberg would be smaller.</p>	<p>Lindberg was not considered as the center is needed for Afterschool and the students are across the field in Mann School.</p>
<p>Is the enlarged structure to service children from the Mann area or will there be increased traffic as parents drive to Field from other areas to pick up their kids?</p>	<p>The additional space is intended to serve Mann students for afterschool care. The entire community will have access to the camp, dance, and other program offerings.</p>
<p>THIS WILL ADD TRAFFIC</p>	<p>Afterschool traffic congestion should actually be reduced, as more kids will be walking to the Field Center, and parents will typically be picking up their children between 4:30 and 6 p.m.</p>
<p>I am hopeful that the plan includes lights for the parks to make them safer at night. Lights would increase opportunities and hours for use of the large field space at Mann for the various community sports that use the fields.</p>	<p>Additional lights will be added around the walkways and playgrounds. The addition of sports lights, if accepted as part of the plan, will require Village zoning approval.</p>
<p>Lindberg is so close— and not sharing space with school— why was Lindberg not considered?</p>	<p>Lindberg was not considered, as the center is needed for afterschool care, and the students are across the field at Mann School. Busing children from another site would increase costs and traffic.</p>

<p>why is it necessary to have park district offices in this building and a dance studio? There is a beautiful new CRC that could be utilized. Sounds like the building is going to be built - could it be significantly smaller? The green space - besides sports fields- will be very limited.</p>	<p>The building is sized to support the program needs of afterschool care and other offerings. The original design competition square footage for the building was 5,300 sq. ft., which was reduced to 4,600 sq. ft. as the minimum required to support programming. There are no staff offices in this building.</p>
<p>Could you provide a comparison of current green space / hardscape to proposed affected area? I'm looking forward to seeing investment in our quadrant of the Village.</p>	<p>New Impervious Surface: 4,967 Bldg. Footprint & 1,202 Sidewalk = 6,169 Sq Ft New Permeable Surface: 1,300 Entrance Plaza Sq Ft New Green Area: 2,879 from play area, 2,518 from old center, 493 removal of alley drop off & 553 reduction of sidewalk south side = 6,442 Sq Ft</p>
<p>Traffic on Berkshire and Woodbine is an absolute nightmare with school and sporting events. Would there be considerations of no parking zones on these streets to relieve the residents in these areas during heaving traffic times?</p>	<p>The Park District will work with the Village of Oak Park on traffic and pedestrian crossing issues. Village and Park District staff have connected on this matter, and plans are underway to address current traffic concerns and improve pedestrian safety in the short term.</p>
<p>How many trees will you be removing?</p>	<p>Depending on location it varies: Option A is 6 and Option B is 12.</p>
<p>Is there a way to update the existing Field Center without having to close it and lose the current after school care?</p>	<p>The building is in too poor condition to be reused. There is a high demand for afterschool care, and the Park District is responding to that need. The discussed options allow the current building to remain operational while the new facility is being built, ensuring that families are not displaced.</p>
<p>How many more students and athletes will be brought to the park? How late will sports be played. We live near the park. We do not need night games.</p>	<p>There will be approximately 30 additional afterschool children from Mann using the Field Center. The typical program size for dance and theater is between 15 and 20.</p>
<p>Is it net tree loss? Or before accounting for the new trees planted?</p>	<p>The tree loss is <u>before</u> the Park District adds tree planting to the park.</p>
<p>The current playground is amazing and it seems pretty new. What a waste to scrap that. Shame to really contribute to our carbon footprint to destroy something in great shape and replace it..</p>	<p>The playground was installed in 2008. Unfortunately, many pieces of the playground equipment are obsolete, which creates the need for replacement. The surfacing and many of the playground components have been repaired and replaced over the years to ensure safety. That said, the typical lifespan of a playground is 8 to 10 years. Our team does an excellent job of maintaining the facility, which helps extend its life to 15 years or more.</p>

Why not use the alley and reconfigure the side gate to allow for entrance?	Using the alley for pick up and drop off is not feasible. It is much too narrow.
Are the after school programs held at Field playground or at Man. school?	The Park District offers afterschool programs for Mann students at the Field Center. Other organizations provide afterschool programs inside Mann School.
Can the alley be expanded to allow for a through alley standing zone and drop-off, moving south to north?	The alley is narrower than most alleys in Oak Park, and taking park space to expand it is not practical. There are also many utilities along the edge of the alley that would be difficult to move without prohibitive costs.
Which of the specific trees will be lost in each of the plans?	Option A: 2 Sweetgum, 2 Norway Maples, 1 Poplar and 1 Walnut; Option B: 2 Sweetgum, 3 London Plane, 1 Honey Locust, 3 Austrian Pine, 1 Linden, 1 Pin Oak and 1 Walnut
Where will Clubhouse be housed during construction? Assuming it's not done by August	The proposed sites do not impact the current structure. Therefore, afterschool care will continue at the existing Field Center while the new facility is under construction.
Will there be any measures to keep people from using the Alley for drop off?	If Option B is selected, the Park District will post signage.
As resident, Mann parent, and Clubhouse parent, I am in favor of updated amenities for our children, and the ability to create more opportunity for afterschool care for working parents while accommodating park area for kids.	We anticipate approximately 30 additional afterschool students, with 15 to 20 participants in each of the dance and performing arts programs we would offer. Most of these programs would take place on weekends, with some occurring in the mornings depending on the age group being served.
How much additional traffic is expected. At the first meeting you said ~30 more students. And that you had not approached the school. Any movement using the school?	The Park District met with the school regarding the sports field lights, as some of the poles would be on school-owned property. We also discussed the use of Mann School and confirmed that other afterschool programs are utilizing their large spaces.
Why not use Mann elementary school for the dance studio. You're ignoring that the drive behind the whole project is to build a dance studio/recital center. If you want a new building why not build a second level over the gym or the multi-purpose south area? Then the new "footprint" is ZERO and we keep all the green space and trees.	Based on the age and condition of the existing building, adding a level is not an option. The primary driver is the need for additional afterschool space. An added benefit is the opportunity for more dance and performing arts space for Oak Park youth.
Could you not add the lights without this building?	The addition of sports lighting has no impact on the building. These are two separate amenities for the park.

<p>Access for children (and adult parents) with disabilities was brought up by the architects and administration. Has any thought been given to that with respect to plan B</p>	<p>Accessibility for all of our projects is a top priority for the Park District and is a central focus in everything we do. Our goal is not just to comply with the ADA, but to exceed those guidelines and ensure we are thoughtful and proactive in providing access for all.</p>
<p>Would love to see lights on the field areas, and maybe if it spills to the newer basketball hoops that were gifted by parents of Mann school fundraising efforts. Having a well-lit space to play (or sled?) for neighborhood children after sunset would be a great bonus!</p>	<p>The lighting plan has not been created yet. However, we could certainly explore the opportunity to add lighting for those amenities.</p>
<p>Why are the proposed baseball field lights on the diagram aimed towards the homes on the west side of the park rather than toward Mann school where they would disturb fewer residents?</p>	<p>The lighting has not yet been planned. The depiction shows a proposed location for light poles. The lighting would be directed at the field, not toward the homes.</p>
<p>What are the dimensions of the new field center? 90 feet long by 50 feet wide and 2 stories tall 20 feet would block the sight lines into the park and the school. Option B is a much better plan than Option A from a safety standpoint. Having the front entrance right on the street is a safety risk for all the community.</p>	<p>The new Field Center size was determined through a thorough process that assessed the space needed to support the programming requirements at the center. This included square footage amounts tied to childcare standards and building usage. All of this was based on program demands from our residents and studied in collaboration with our design firm. The approximate size is 90' x 50', and it will be a one-story building.</p>
<p>The footprint of the building is massive. Was a below grade or bermed-building considered to mitigate its visual bulk and density? How could this project INCREASE the amount of functional internal programmed space AND exterior green space?</p>	<p>The facility is similar in size and scale to many of the surrounding residential homes. The building is designed to accommodate the programming needs of the community. The proposed exterior materials are unique and intended to blend with the natural surroundings. It will be constructed using rammed earth, made from locally sourced materials.</p>
<p>Would you please explain the berm play options in plan A and plan B? It seems that in Plan A, the berm abuts the building, so cuts off a huge amount of the ways to play on, with and around the berm.</p>	<p>In Option A, the berm will be cut where the building meets, and additional berms will be created to the south, providing ample play options. Option B remains unchanged.</p>
<p>Will we be blocking the Alley from the Park with plan B?</p>	<p>No, there will need to be access similar to the current access to the facility.</p>

Will we be able to vote on our favorite plan?	The Park District Board of Commissioners makes the decision on the plan, as they are the elected officials. As I shared last night, we will involve the Mann students in the selection of playground equipment when we reach that stage of the project.
How will this new building impact the water pressure and sewer services for the surrounding neighborhood?	There will be no impact. The District will be required to install new service to the center, regardless of its location.
Will the PD float bonds?	No, the funding is already available in the current Capital Improvement Plan.
Will the park board take into consideration all the Community's comments and preferred plan into consideration?	The Park Board is definitely taking feedback into consideration and thanks the community for their thoughts, concerns, feedback, and support for the many features.
Why not rebuild in the same space, 2-3 story if needed (including basement like Fox and Longfellow)?	The current location has not been identified as the best option due to several factors, including access to the building and memorial trees.
Was a below grade or bermed-building considered to mitigate its visual bulk and density? How could this project INCREASE the amount of functional internal programmed space AND exterior green space?	Option A has the building built into the berm, meaning the building will not sit on top of the berm but rather within it. The second question is unclear.
You keep referring to future uses. What is this building to be used for? What capacity?	The building will primarily serve as a space for afterschool programs for Mann students, summer day camp, youth dance, and youth performing arts. Afterschool will be the largest program, and it will not exceed 60 students. Exact numbers will be determined after the final design is approved.
Can the alley be expanded to allow for a through alley standing zone and drop-off, moving south to north?	Expanding the alley has not been identified as a solution.
Why hasn't Lindberg been considered? It has so much more space than Field.	Lindberg was not considered, as the center is needed for afterschool programs, and the students are across the field at Mann School.
Is there a Park Board election in March 2025?	Yes. There are two seats open for the election on April 1, 2025
Can the community attend the meeting on the 30th? Time? Location?	Yes, public comment is held at the beginning of the meeting. Individuals are given three minutes to address the Board, with a maximum of 30 minutes per topic. The meeting begins at 7:30 p.m., and you must sign in if you wish to speak before the meeting starts. The meeting will be held at 218 Madison.

Our taxes went up dramatically this past year. I hope taxes won't have to be raised for this. If the cash is already there how about a reserve for the future?	The funding for this facility is already included in the budget as part of our Capital Improvement Plan.
Will we be able to vote on our favorite plan?	The Park District Board of Commissioners makes the decision on the plan, as they are the elected officials. As I shared last night, we will engage the Mann students in the selection of playground equipment when we reach that point in the project.
Will the lights be installed for use this spring?	No, the sports field lighting will need to go through the zoning process with the Village. Additionally, the current budget does not include funding for lighting, so if approved, that expense will need to be incorporated into our future Capital Improvement Plan.
What is the cost/ budget?	The Capital Improvement Plan has a total of \$4M allocated for the building, playground, and park improvements.
Is this childcare center? My kids attended childcare in Mann School	The Field Center will continue to offer afterschool programming for Mann students.
Is there any consideration of making the soccer field turf in any of these scenarios?	There has been no discussion about replacing the grass turf with synthetic turf at this location.
What is the frequency of use for the dance program?	We have not developed programming for the space at this time, but typically, the classes are 30-50 minutes long. We traditionally offer these programs on weekends and some weekday mornings.
What is the cost of the project?	The project has not yet been bid, so we do not have the exact cost. That said, the Capital Improvement Plan has a total of \$4M allocated for the building, playground, and park improvements.
What is the timeline for completion once approved by board? How long would construction take?	Staff hopes to go out to bid in March, with approval in June. We aim to start construction in June or July. The projected completion is approximately 12 months, weather dependent.
In plan A there's more of an open zone behind the building. Is there a safety hazard with that area being hard to monitor due to the placement of the building?	The northwest corner is still quite large, even with the building in Option A. We will definitely look further into this concern.
Can you please comment on traffic and how the park district plans to work with the Village of Oak Park to address the concerns of the residents in the immediate surrounding area?	The Park District will be working with the Village on traffic calming and pedestrian crossings. The Village has the expertise in this area.
Does Plan B leave the NW corner as it presently is (berm, trees, gazebo)?	That is correct, Option B has no impact on the northwest corner. That said, there will be some impact on the northeast portion, where the current playground is located.

could there be some playground equipment added for kids with disabilities?	Yes, we always consider equipment that is not only ADA-compliant but also inclusive in design to engage youth of all abilities.
Will the Park District Board take into account community petitions and comments made here?	The Park Board is actively taking feedback into consideration.
Will a formal traffic study be conducted? The PDOP responses about traffic concerns do not reflect the reality of what we experience as residents.	This project does not require a traffic study, just as the Carroll Park Building did not require one. That said, we have had engineers and staff observe traffic along Berkshire at various times (before, during, and after school hours).