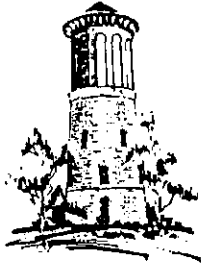


Western Springs Park District Open Space Master Plan

WESTERN SPRINGS PARK DISTRICT OPEN SPACE MASTER PLAN CHAPTER III STANDARDS

A. Types of Parks and Functions Within the Village

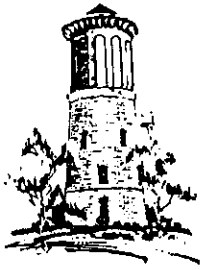
A community is best served by having a variety of types of parks and other green spaces that are strategically located throughout the community and that are readily accessible to all of the users that live within that community. Currently the Western Springs Park District provides four types of parks. They are tot lots or mini parks, neighborhood parks, school parks, and a community park. A fifth category of park known as a regional park is, to some extent, provided by a Cook County Forest Preserve area known as Bemis Woods which is located north of the Village. This park features picnic groves for organized picnic events, large green areas that can be used for casual recreational activities, a toboggan slide, and a variety of hiking trails going through natural grassland and wooded areas. It also features a paved bicycle trail that currently begins in Bemis woods and leads to Brookfield Zoo in the Village of Brookfield. A proposed central bikeway that would wind down through the Village of Western Springs would link up with the bicycle trail in Bemis woods. At this time there are no established athletic fields or related facilities that can be used for any organized sports of any kind in Bemis Woods.



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Another type of park that is currently very popular in many communities is the sports complex. Neither the Western Springs Park District nor the immediate surrounding villages provide this type of park. The sports complex classification includes facilities such as ballfields, soccer fields, football fields, outdoor and indoor skating rinks for both ice skating and in-line roller skating, tennis courts, hardcourts, and volleyball courts. Trails within the complex should provide easy access to all of the facilities and at the same time provide walking paths for exercise and recreation. Ideally group picnic areas and picnic shelters should also be included. Support facilities would include multipurpose buildings, restrooms, and ample parking areas to accommodate the greater demands that such a facility would require. Field lighting for nighttime games should not be located in close proximity to nearby residents. Sports complexes should be developed in cooperation with the governing bodies of the sports which will be using the facility.

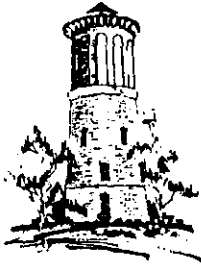
MINI PARKS: Tot lots or mini-parks are small parks less than one or two acres in size that serve a surrounding area covering a 1/4 mile radius surrounding the park. Because of their small size and limited parking they are typically not used for programmed recreational activities. These small playlots cater to younger children up to 10 years of age. The presence of modern composite play structures in these parks provides a variety and quality of playground activity that is not found in backyard equipment. Sand or preferably woodchip fall zones provide a high level of safety. Benches and picnic tables provide comfortable seating for adults and help to encourage socialization among neighbors in a community. Some of the larger mini-parks, where more acreage is available, have tennis courts with



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included basketball rims that provide additional recreational opportunities for children, teenagers, and adults. Unimproved softball fields may also be present. In a couple of locations 1/2 size soccer fields are available for use as both open grass areas and for organized play, although limited to smaller children. However, due to their small size these areas are less threatening to younger children and do provide a workable alternative that helps to ease the impact on the larger soccer fields located within the community. Currently Western Springs has four Tot lots ranging in size from .9 to 2.1 acres.

NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS: Neighborhood Parks are larger community parks, ideally ranging in size from 5 to 15 acres, that service a surrounding area covering a 1/2 mile radius uninterrupted by non-residential roads and other physical barriers. Ideally the park should be centrally located within the service area. Neighborhood parks should be developed for both passive and active recreation activities and should be geared specifically for those living in the service area. As a rule, active recreational facilities should consume 50% of the park's acreage with the remaining 50% used for passive activities, reserve, and natural areas. Neighborhood parks feature the developed playground areas, and passive seating and picnic areas similar to those found in the tot lots. Additionally they also have larger open fields available for organized soccer, little league baseball, organized softball, and may also feature tennis courts and basketball courts. Because neighborhood parks are larger and have more organized sports activities it would be desirable to have 7 to 10 off street parking spaces, but at this time none of the sites have any parking available. From time to time congestion due to parking on the surrounding streets does occur which is actually more of a safety concern

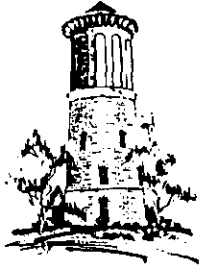


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especially where there are small children involved. Currently Western Springs has three parks that fall into the category of neighborhood parks. Ridgewood park, at four acres, is shy of the lower limit of 5 acres but it does meet the other criteria of a neighborhood park. In terms of being centrally located within their service area, two of the neighborhood parks in Western Springs meet this criteria, Springdale park, which is bordered along one long side of its rectangular perimeter by Wolf Road, does not.

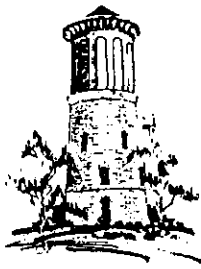
SCHOOL PARKS: A school park is a park that shares a land site with a school or is adjacent to a school and whose resources are available for use by that school. In many ways these parks share most of the aforementioned characteristics of the neighborhood parks and thus serve a function similar to the neighborhood parks. However their close proximity to elementary schools makes them available to the schools for use as athletic fields. This might have a negative impact on the condition and usability of those fields, most notably, in the Spring and Fall. There are three school parks in the WSPD. In terms of being centrally located within their service areas both Laidlaw park and Forest Hills park meet that standard. Field park does not, as it is bordered along its southern edge by Hillgrove Avenue which runs along the Burlington Northern Railroad tracks.

COMMUNITY PARKS: Community parks are larger in size and serve a greater range of recreational needs than neighborhood parks. The optimal size of a community park is between 20 and 50 acres. Its focus is on meeting the recreational needs of a large portion of the community and also preserving unique landscapes and open spaces. The service area for a



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community park should be from 1/2 to 3 miles in radius. The park site should be serviced by arterial streets and should be strategically located within the community so as to provide ease of access throughout the service area. Recreational facilities include many of those that are offered at tot lots, neighborhood parks, and school parks but at a greater service level than is needed at the smaller parks. It must be remembered that for nearby residents the community park will serve the same function as the neighborhood park. Playground areas are still a necessary component of this type of park if it is to be attractive to all users keeping in mind, however, that more equipment is needed. In order to provide a safe environment for toddlers it is a good idea to establish a playground area for them that is kept separate from areas for older children. Lighted tennis courts and baseball diamonds are more feasible due to the larger land area available, although the impact of nighttime lighting on the surrounding community still needs to be considered. Full size soccer fields and football fields can be readily accommodated and should be planned so that the fields' boundaries can be shifted to minimize the impact on high wear areas. Other recreational facilities that might round out the menu would be volleyball courts, shuffleboard courts, horseshoe pits, and archery ranges. More community oriented facilities can also be provided such as: picnic shelters adjoining more extensive picnic areas, hiking trails that provide pedestrian access to all areas of the park, and concession areas to service programmed athletic activities. Community parks can also provide winter recreational activities such as ice skating, hockey, sledding, and cross country skiing. However, these activities are very weather dependent and cannot be counted on.

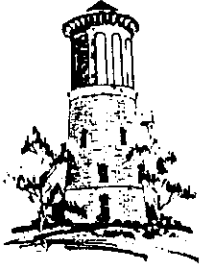


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In a community park the distribution of land between active and passive recreation, reserve, ornamentation, natural areas, and maintenance areas has to be determined on a site by site basis. Parking lots should be provided and should be strategically placed within the park to provide easy access to all areas of the park. Western Springs has one community park, Spring Rock Park, which is 42 acres in size. It is located along the western boundary of the village just south of the Burlington Railroad Tracks and East of the Tri-State Tollway.

B. DESCRIPTION OF AN OPEN SPACE SYSTEM

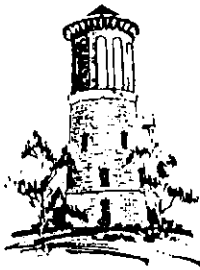
The need for open space in urban areas, the preservation and maintenance of natural areas, and the recreational demands of urban dwellers have led to the development of parks at the national, state, regional, and local level. Historically the pioneering efforts of three giants, Frederick Law Olmstead, Joseph Lee, and John Muir, led to many of the park, recreation, and conservation programs that we enjoy today. Frederick Law Olmstead and his team of landscape architects created Central Park in New York City in 1850 whose success led to the development of other parks in major metropolitan areas. These early parks set the standards for parks throughout the country. Around the same time, Joseph Lee was establishing the children's Sand Gardens in Boston, Massachusetts. Joseph Lee went on to form the Playground Association of America in 1906. The Playground Association was responsible for developing some of the first recorded recreation space standards in the United States. John Muir, a noted naturalist, explorer, and writer led the forest conservation and national park movement in the United



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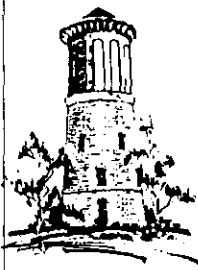
States. In concert with his good friend President Theodore Roosevelt, 148 million acres of forest reserves were set aside, and Yosemite and Sequoia National parks were established. The aforementioned needs that these early pioneers envisioned have become more relevant today as our population increases and the rapid rates of social, economic, and technological changes escalate.

Open space that is well distributed within an urban population area is a valid and necessary use of land. Its' use should be in concert with, and not competition with, other uses such as infrastructure, industrial, commercial, and residential. Open space is defined as land and/ or aquatic areas that can serve the multiple land use functions of providing park development and recreation opportunities, conserving natural areas and easing the congestion within an urban setting. A holistic approach to planning would be to view the entire urban area as a park that within its boundaries would have industrial, commercial, and residential developments. Strategically placed within the community would be a network of parks, open spaces, and greenways that would serve the communities' recreational requirements and that would be responsive to changing needs and demographic patterns. Publicly owned open spaces are found at many governmental levels going all the way from the national level and on down through state, county, and local levels. The creation of an open space system should take all of these levels into account so as not to waste resources duplicating already existing recreational opportunities.



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Historically open space system planning has relied on national standards such as the accepted national and regional standard of 10 acres/1000 persons. This standard applies only to recreation areas that are located within, or are adjacent to, the population center in question. It does not include county, state, or national parks, or public school areas, or golf courses. ("Parks, Recreation and Open Space Standards and Guidelines" published by the National Recreation and Park Association, June 1983.) The Village of Western Springs with total park acreage of 84 acres and a population of 12,000 people has a ratio of 7 acres/1000 persons, which is well shy of the 10 acre standard. However the lack of available open space and the exorbitant price of any available land make it unlikely that this ratio will change significantly any time in the near future. For the purposes of planning it is probably in the best interest of the WSPD to rely less on an absolute national standard regarding total acreage and instead to rely on increasing community self-direction. When this is done the number of acres for park and recreation land and the types of facilities that are needed are based on what the citizens determine is best for their community. Indeed this is the newer approach that is encouraged by the National Recreation and Park Association as outlined in "Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines", December 1995. It is important to note that this approach still relies heavily on established standards and guidelines that are related to factors such as facility size, site planning, and community usage patterns. There are also additional factors within each village that must be factored into any planning scenario. Anticipated changes in a communities demographics, the rising popularity of certain sports within a given area, and the emergence of entirely new recreational activities can all have a serious



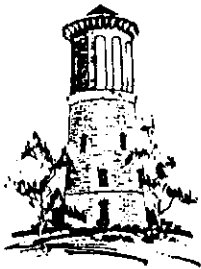
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impact on planning an open space system. Ten years ago it would have been almost impossible to anticipate the explosive growth and popularity of in-line skating and yet today it has become an important planning consideration.

C. PARKS AS PART OF AN OVERALL OPEN SPACE MASTER PLAN

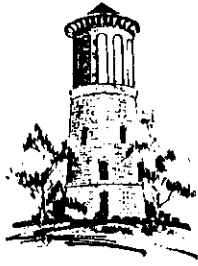
The Western Springs Park District must be cognizant of the contributions to the open space system made by our local school districts, the school and park districts in the surrounding villages of LaGrange Park, LaGrange, Indian Head Park, and Hinsdale, and to the contributions made by the Cook County Forest Preserve District. Private sector contributions can also be a component of an open space system.

Some of the local elementary and middle schools have playgrounds, but their use is primarily geared to the needs of their own physical education departments that utilize the facilities for most of the year. Any use that they would get beyond that would be mostly for casual recreation and not for any type of organized sports. Lyons Township High School is divided into two separate campuses and has substantial amounts of open space available. However, the demands of their physical education programs in addition to those of all of their athletic teams leave little room for any significant community use. In looking for solutions to our neighboring villages, all of which are mature, established, and open land poor, we have found that they are facing many of the same challenges that we face in Western Springs. The two large private sector contributions in the area are made by the



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LaGrange Country Club, which is private, and the Timber Trails Golf Course, which is semi-private. Timber Trails can be considered to provide a substantially greater amount of recreational activities to the area residents simply because it is more available to the public. When all of these factors are considered it becomes apparent that the main responsibility of the Western Springs Park District is to manage, develop, and maintain the existing parks in Western Springs in such a way as to maximize their use now and into the future. The Park Board of the Western Springs Park District is committed to accomplishing these efforts in partnership with the citizens of Western Springs, the Village of Western Springs, and the employees of the Western Springs Park District.



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III. Recommended Standards for Selected Outdoor Recreational Facilities Based on population figure of 12,000

Facility	Min. Standard per 1000 population	Min. 1997 Standard for Western Springs	Existing Facilities for WSPD	Remarks
Ball diamonds:				
Lighted Baseball	1/12,000	1	0	1 Proposed for Springrock Park
Baseball	1/2,000	6	6	Note #1
Softball	1/3,000	4	4	Note #2
Playfields:				
Full size Soccer	1/4,000	3	2	Note #3
Football	1/12000	1	0	1 Proposed for Springrock Park
Small Soccer	1/1500	8	8	Note #4
Courts:				
Tennis	1/1,000	12	15	Note #5
Basketball	1/3,000	4	4	Springrock courts need resurfacing
Volleyball (sand)	1/6,000	2	1	1 Proposed
Sledding Hill:	1/10,000	1	1	Flat hill for sleds -no tobogganing
Playgrounds:	1/1,000	12	11	6 playgrounds need new fall zones.
Trails:			(.4 miles total)	
Bike/Jogging	1/3,000	4	3	1/2 mile proposed for Springrock
Gymnasium:	1/10,000	2	1	School gym use is very limited
Ice Skating:				
Indoors	1/30,000	0.4	0	Note #6
Outdoors	1/5,000	2.5	0	Requires flat surface and board
In-line Skating:				
Outdoors	1/5,000	2.5	0	Very high demand within our village

Note #1- 4 Springrock fields have poor drainage and remain wet for long periods of time

Note #2- 2 Springrock fields have poor drainage and remain wet for long periods of time.

Note #3- 1 new field proposed for Springrock park. Existing Springrock field is extremely wet.

Note #4- 3 of 8 fields are wet. These fields are heavily used by younger players and for practice.

Note #5- 4 courts need resurfacing. Potentially some courts might be converted to other use.

Note #6- Would require a cooperative venture with several other villages.