



Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan Update

September 9, 2003

A general introduction to the Oak Park Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan was held on Tuesday, September 9, for the community members who had expressed interest in serving on the Park District Citizen Committee (PDCC). Over 35 individuals had applied to fill the 11 positions provided for in agreement between the Village of Oak Park and the Park District of Oak Park.

It was explained that the purpose of the PDCC is assisting and supporting the planning process and the consultant team, ensuring maximum community input. It will not be involved in identifying or recommending specific programs or facility improvements. The 11 members will be selected based on the skills and areas of expertise identified in the earlier public notices – generally emphasizing planning and community outreach. Because the impressive depth and breadth of collective experience offered by the community members who offered to serve on the PDCC, it is hoped that they will stay involved even if not selected for the PDCC. All of those interested will be provided with regular progress reports, will be invited to PDCC meetings, and may be asked to help in specific situations where their particular expertise is appropriate.

The meeting was held to explain in detail the role of the PDCC and to provide prospective members with both background information and an overview of the Comprehensive Master Plan process. Mr. Rick Kuner, as Chairperson of the Park District Infrastructure Committee, summarized the findings of the group's November, 2002 Report, and explained the current state of the Park District's facilities and systems. As the result of many years of under-funded capital and maintenance budgets, the Park District is faced with almost \$14 million in expenses to bring the existing facilities up to a state-of-good-repair.

The recently initiated Comprehensive Master Plan is the approach chosen to determine the best way to address the problem and, incorporating the desires of the community, set the direction for the future of parks and recreation programs in Oak Park. Mr. Ron Vine of Leisure Visions, who heads the Comprehensive Master Plan consultant team, outlined a very inclusive information gathering process that began on September 9 and, over 3 days, combined interviews with community and business leaders, focus groups made up of special interest and user groups, and community public forums – an outreach process that included almost 300 community members.

After the initially gathered information is reviewed and evaluated, it will be used to develop a village-wide survey of approximately 2500 homes later this fall that will, in turn, be the statistically valid basis for planning the future direction of parks and recreation programs in Oak Park.

The entire Comprehensive Master Plan process is expected to take about 9-10 months. The end product will be a set of recommendations, supported by a remarkably comprehensive input process and statistically valid citizen survey results, that will identify the wishes of the citizens of Oak Park as it relates to the role they see for recreation programs and park facilities in the future of the community.

###