

# Village of Oak Park

## ARPA Community Request Application

### 1. Project name (if you have more than one project, use a separate impact sheet for each):

Reimbursement of funding for PDOP's Capital Improvement Plan due to loss revenues

2. **Contact Person:** Jan Arnold, Executive Director  
**Email:** jan.arnold@pdop.org

### Agency Overview:

### 3. Please describe your agency and your organization's mission and/or operations

The Park District of Oak Park could be viewed as the largest public health institution in Oak Park as we provide and maintain 25 public park and facility spaces as well as provide recreational opportunities for the community. As a result, the Park District plays a large role in supporting physical and mental health in the community as well as providing space to build community.

While the Park District does collect tax revenue, a large part of its operations is supported by revenue generated from fees and charges for programs and services offered to the community. This revenue allows the Park District to deliver programs and services as well as support the District's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

The CIP is driven by our Park Master Plans and thus reflects our institution's goals of sustainability, social equity, and community engagement, and providing great value to residents. It is through continued investment in our CIP that we will continue to achieve our goals in these areas.

PDOP Mission: "In partnership with the community, we enrich lives by providing meaningful experiences through programs, parks, and facilities."

### 4. For your most recently ended fiscal year, provide the following:

- a. Total revenues - \$31,317,471.58\*
- b. Total expenses - \$19,036,760.07
- c. Included in total expenses, how much was for salaries/benefits? - \$7,070,581.67
- d. Total ending cash and liquid investments - \$24,415,706.60\*

\*It's important to note that both of these figures include large cash inflows that are not part of normal operations. The District received \$2.5 million in donations from the Parks Foundation for the CRC, \$800,000 for a prepaid lease agreement with the Community Mental Health Board, and \$6,004,705.20 in debt proceeds all in 2021 (the District does not regularly issue debt). These figures make the revenue and cash balances look \$9.3 million higher than they normally would, and \$6 million of that will need to be repaid by the District in the future. Also note, that these numbers are unaudited and from Fiscal Year 2021. The District is asking for reimbursement for lost revenues in 2020 – where the District had budgeted for a surplus of \$100,000, and ended the year with a net loss of nearly \$450,000 – without making the \$2 million capital transfer.

**5. Are there similar non-profit or private organization that perform essentially the same services as your agency? If so, please list them.**

No, the Park District provides playgrounds and parks that are maintained for all individuals use at no charge. Playgrounds and parks provide spaces for families, neighbors and friends to gather to participate in activities that support both physical and mental health.

Additionally, as a government entity that focuses on public health, we provide multiple opportunities for members of the community to engage and improve their quality of life, not just those with means to pay, including outdoor fitness equipment and walking paths. The Park District also offer substantial scholarships and childcare discounts as well as a wide variety of free programs for residents.

*Collaboration & Community Partnerships*

**6. Do you have partners that you are collaborating with to support this program financially or in other ways? Name them and the support you will receive from them.**

We continuously seek the advice and collaboration of many community partners when working on Park Master plans. One of our most important partners in this aspect is West Suburban Special Recreation Association (WSSRA) who helps us to establish best practices around accessibility in our plans. We also work with social workers and interventionists at Oak Park Township in order to ensure that parks are welcoming and our staff utilizes best practices in non-police intervention and response. We also value our relationship with Plan It Green in building our sustainability goals.

Additionally, we rely heavily on grant fund from various partners for reaching our capital improvement goals. The State of Illinois provides grants through the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (OSLAD and PARC), which have both provided substantial support for park renovation and improvement while the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation (ICECF) continues to be a strong partner in meeting our clean energy goals. Each of these funding partners requires an agency funding commitment. Thus, the ARPA funds as part of our CIP, could be used to provide matching funds for future grant opportunities.

Lastly, we partner with the library to host events and provide the book bike in the parks, we partner with the township to assist with engagement of youth, we partner with D97 to use parks for recess and school activities, we partner with D200 to use park space for athletics and arts activities and we provide park spaces for community events such as Day In Our Village.

**Project Narrative:**

**7. Please describe or attach to this form a description of your proposed program.**

Covid resulted in massive closures of Park District facilities and programs. When we were able to reopen the programs, the size of the classes was reduced, leading to additional losses in program fees and facility use revenue. Prior to 2020 the Park District funded itself primarily by user fees. In 2020 the pandemic lowered revenues by \$6 million. 2021 was better, but user fees were still below pre-pandemic levels by \$2.5 million. In 2022 we have had \$24K in program cancellations subsequent to the recent vaccine mandate requirement.

In response to the revenue shortfalls, the Park District took several actions including laying off staff, postponing capital projects, and delaying operational purchases. We also did not make the annual transfer to our Capital Improvement Plan in 2020, which is our largest unmitigated loss due to the pandemic. Thus, our request.

Funding from the Park District's Capital Improvement Plan is used for facility upgrades, park renovations, fleet replacements, green initiatives, technology upgrades, and more. Not receiving these funds would delay the Park District's ability to move forward at the same pace for playground and park improvements at both Barrie and Anderson Park as well as delay investments to our sustainability efforts.

The Park District uses a best in class master planning process in order to establish and achieve our goals and drive investment within our CIP. Each park master plan is updated at least once every 10-years and involves extensive community feedback and engagement efforts. These efforts ensure that the master plans include the needs of all residents from the highly engaged park neighbors to the much more difficult to reach apartment dwellers several blocks away. Our engagement efforts include surveys and community meetings, which result in plan documents that staff and the board can use to allocate resources.

The Park District's CIP reflects the policies set by the board. Our sustainability plans encourage forward thinking approaches to green energy and water retention when planning and constructing parks and facilities for the future. Our equity policy has driven us to explore how systemic racism has affected park design and allocation of resources. Additionally, our ADA transition plan is a component of our planning process and provide direction each time we invest in a park or facility to ensure they become more accessible and inclusive for individuals with unique abilities.

### **Approach/Impact/Goals**

#### **8. How does the proposed initiative address immediate or delayed public health, economic or other community harms resulting from or exacerbated by the Covid-19 public health emergency?**

Our parks have taken on a new level of significance during COVID. People have relied on our green space for social activities as well as relief from isolation and anxiety that the pandemic has brought. Our parks have seen heavier use than at any time in known history at the same time when our budget was significantly impacted due to programming cancellations and capacity constraints. ARPA funding will allow PDOP to continue to meet the needs of residents at a level that is comparable to a level that would have occurred if COVID had not happened.

The requested funding is to replace dollars that were not able to be earned and thus transferred into our Capital Improvement Fund due to facility shutdowns and/or class size reductions in 2020, 2021 and 2022 caused directly from Covid mitigations.

#### **9. Describe overall program goals**

Our goal is to continue to serve the parks and recreation needs of the community and to align our parks and facilities with values such as inclusion, sustainability, social equity, and affordability that are held by all members of the community. Investment in our Capital Improvement Plan is how PDOP reaches its goals in social equity, inclusion, sustainability, accessibility, and value offered to residents.

The Park District's Capital Improvement Plan is a five-year plan that allocates funds to our 25 parks and facilities to ensure the safety and functionality of our parks, facilities and fleet. Additionally, the funds are used to support sustainability projects to include installation of geothermal, solar, bioswales, etc.

## **Program Eligibility:**

### *Strategic Goals*

#### **10. Can you describe a link with this proposed program and the Village Board's goals?**

The Park District of Oak Park is governed by a board elected by the same residents as elect the Village Board. Each board's values reflect the community's values and as a result are strikingly similar.

Goal: Increase opportunities for community engagement - PDOP utilizes a best in class master planning process in order to evaluate the needs and benefit of any capital investment. The Capital Improvement Plan is how we adapt the parks to the needs identified during the master planning process.

Goal: Value Community Safety: Our master plans plan for resolution of any safety concerns in parks ensuring that issues such as lighting and line of sight issues are addressed. The Park District also work with the Oak Park Township to ensure that our park staff are trained in non-police intervention and response to issues whenever possible. We make every effort to ensure that park space is safe and welcoming for all residents.

Goal: Serve as a leader in racial equity. Park District of Oak Park approved an equity policy in 2019 and as a result our staff has been charged with building anti-racist learnings into park master plans. Staff have participated in CROAR training as well as held "Safe Talks" on racism and LatinX for all full-time PDOP staff.

Goal: Support Vibrant and Diverse Neighborhoods: There is no greater way to support vibrant and diverse neighborhoods than to support investment in local parks. These funds will directly help infrastructure recovery from the effects of COVID and prevent the impacts of COVID from creating lasting negative effects on our park system.

Goal: Invest in a Sustainable Future: The park district is fully committed to a sustainable future. Our board has committed to a wide variety of sustainability initiative. Recent projects in the CIP include passive house designed for the Carroll Center (only the second proven net zero building in Illinois), geothermal systems in Pleasant Home, solar panels on almost every available Park District roof, LED lighting inside and outside and a focus on pollinators and native plantings throughout our system. Future projects will include battery powered vehicles and chargers, additional solar panels, water retention features for supporting irrigation and designing building renovations as net-zero.

Lastly, the Village's goals of affordability and increased community engagement can in part be achieved when you provide community spaces such as parks, playgrounds and splash pads to engage with family, friends and neighbors for no fee.

### *Community Benefit*

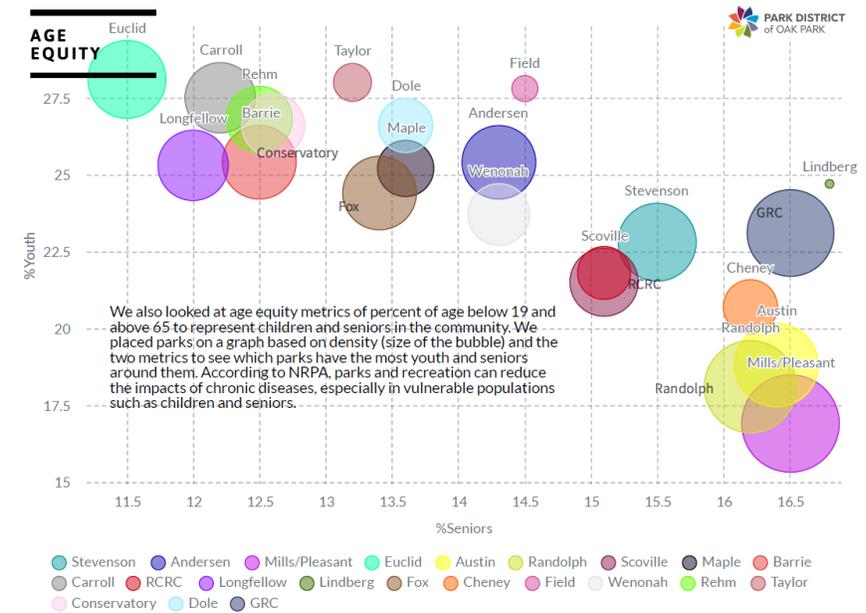
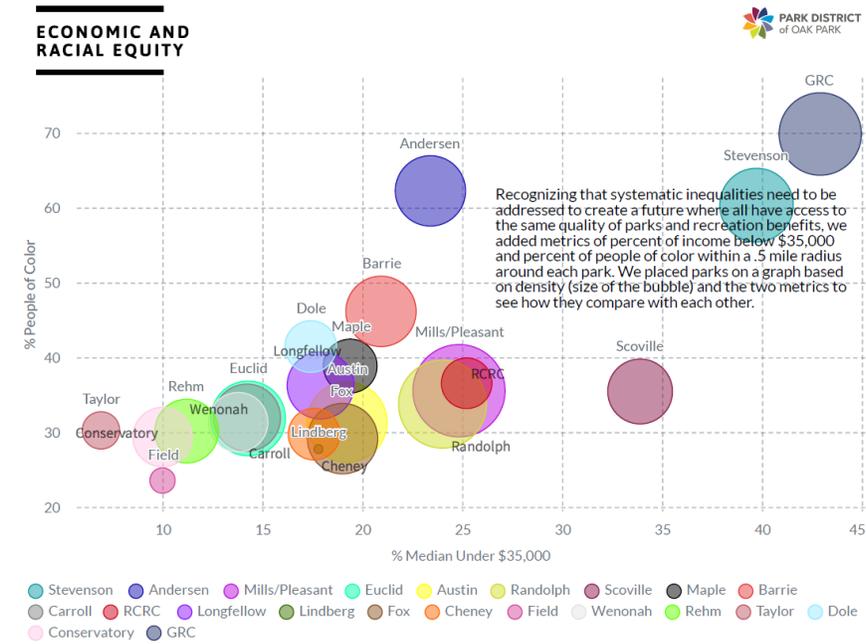
#### **11. Describe the residents impacted (#, age) and over what duration; Is this program for low-moderate income recipients?**

Playgrounds and parks are open 365 days a year and are available at no cost to the individuals using the space for exercise, family building, relaxation, etc. Two upcoming park improvement projects, Anderson and Barrie, happen to be neighborhoods serving a large portion of Oak Park's black and brown residents. Our research shows that lower income residents are less likely to travel in order to visit a park and thus the condition and amenities of their neighborhood park gains added importance.

Additionally, Oak Park has over 53,000 residents that are using our limited 83 acres. According to national standards for park space a population of 53,000 should have over 260 acres, hence the need to constantly invest in these properties due to the heavy use. Additionally, numerous individuals from surrounding communities also use are parks and playgrounds.

*Race Equity Impact*

**12. What racial/ethnic groups are currently most advantaged and most disadvantaged by the issues this proposal seeks to address?**



All ages, races and economic levels use the playgrounds, splash pads and parks in Oak Park and PDOP looks to support and serve all of its residents.

**13. What positive impacts on equality and inclusion, if any, could result from this proposal? What racial/ethnic groups could benefit? Will it reduce disparities or discrimination?**

***Reference back to question 12 for the demographics of Oak Park residents by park location.***

This funding will allow PDOP to continue the progress toward our park master plan implementation. Although it is difficult to quantify exactly which elements this money might fund, PDOP's work in anti-racist practices pre-dates the passing of an equity policy in 2019. Community engagement work has determined that systemic racism is evident in how fences and sidewalks are designed, where resources are located, and what activities are available. Our master plans include these learnings and when funding is available in the CIP the plans will become reality bringing our learnings and park improvements to engage and welcome the community.

Parks, playgrounds and splash pads are places where everyone can participate and there is no financial barrier. We look at playgrounds as a great representation of our community and our users come in all shapes, sizes and colors. Playgrounds are places where no one knows or cares if you live in a mansion or an apartment or if your parent is lawyer or a waiter. The Park District offers low-cost rentals of picnic shelter to support family gatherings and celebrations. Users of the parks in Oak Park are not limited to Oak Park residents. Our facilities attract residents from Chicago, Berwyn, Forrest Park, River Forest and more as they are clean, safe and enjoyable. Relationships are developed and community is built on playgrounds.

**PDOP's Value of Inclusivity:** "We will actively and intentionally value multiple layers of human characteristics and view such differences as strengths, while striving for equity among all identities to be able to be authentic, to feel safe and to be respected in our programs, parks and facilities."

#### **Measures & Reporting**

**14. Do you have program success indicators and progress benchmarks (list them)**

PDOP uses an online system to gather, analyze, and utilize various data points to guide our decision-making. MPower, our internal performance management system, provides an objective and quantifiable way to see success and identify areas for improvement. We meet quarterly to assess progress and when necessary adjust.

The Park District of Oak Park track our budget, strategic and comprehensive master plan goals via our online dashboard ( <https://www.pdop.org/performance/> ), which is available to our residents via our website.

Our capital investments are monitored using our annual park report cards. All parks and facilities are successful when the amenities are functioning and the space is clean and safe. Our park report card is updated annually with inspections throughout the year. The report card measures the functionality of the park based on water fountains, play equipment, trash, etc. and provides a letter grade. This information is utilized with determine where the Capital Improvement Funds are allocated.

**15. How would you describe the impact to the community? How will these impacts be documented and evaluated that you are meeting the intended goals and community benefits? Please provide examples.**

Quality parks increase community engagement as well as home values. Ensuring that the parks and playgrounds can be updated on a regular basis impact the community's quality of life. The mental and physical health of community members are both incredibly important to a vibrant and thriving community and parks/playgrounds play an essential role.

The receipt of the \$2m for our capital improvement plan will result in both the Andersen and Barrie Park having playground improvements at least one-year earlier than currently projected in the CIP due to the delay from lost revenue.

### **Project Cost**

16.

**Total Project cost:** N/A. This request is not for a specific project it is to replace the fund from the CIP to support all the Park Districts capital needs.

**Total ARPA request:** \$2,000,000

### **17. Provide timetable when funds will be spent:**

The funding will be spent between 2023-2024 for various capital needs including improvement projects to include Andersen and Barrie parks.

If funds are received, staff will update the Capital Improvement Plan and present to the board for approval. This plan will include renovation of Andersen Park in 2023 and Barrie Park in 2024 with work beginning immediately in order to reach these goals and maximize the benefit gained from the funds.

Once the board approves the updated CIP, staff will reach out to potential state and private funding partners to determine any relevant funding opportunities and grant cycles. These opportunities will drive decisions related to the scope and type of work that can be accomplished in these Master Plan Updates.

Once funding is secured, staff will retain necessary design expertise and will create design and bid specs for the project. Soon after, work will begin.

A full accounting of eligible capital expenses can be presented to the Village of Oak Park at the end of each fiscal year to meet any reporting requirements that the village has.

### **18. Do you need all the grant funds in one distribution?**

No. PDOP could support a \$1m reimbursement in 2022 and another \$1m in 2023.

### **Project Sustainability**

**19. Do you have a plan to keep this initiative in place once the one-time ARPA funds are used? Please describe.**

Yes, the Park District allocates a set amount of tax dollars to the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) each year as well as transfers funds from our program fees collected. It is the loss of program fees that has resulted in the \$2M shortfall in the Park District CIP. Once programming returns to normal levels, PDOP will again have the ability to transfer excess funds generated from program fees and normal funding levels will resume.

### **Timetable:**

**20. Provide a comprehensive timeline to implement your proposed program and what is the duration of the program**

The funds will be added to the Park District's Capital Improvement Fund and allocated for capital needs per our five-year CIP. The CIP is reviewed annually in July and approved by the Park Board. If the \$2m is allocated to the Park District these funds will be calculated into the funds available for projects in 2023 and 2024, which would allow playground improvement to be accomplished at least one year earlier than currently scheduled and in line with previous plans, which were delayed due to lost revenue.

**Andersen Playground Improvement: Planning 2022/Bidding 2023/ Construction 2023**  
**Barrie Playground Improvement: Planning 2023/Bidding 2024/ Construction 2024**

**Other:**

21.

**If you don't receive the funds, what are the impacts and will the program not occur in the future?**

Failure to receive these funds would set back planned master plan improvements at Anderson and Barrie as well as any subsequent projects. Master plan improvements account for a planned obsolescence of some park equipment, especially in playgrounds, so we will enter a period of deferred maintenance in our parks until we are able to find additional funding and cost-savings to get back on track. This means some equipment might break without an available replacement and some equipment might be decommissioned as it reaches the end of its useful life. We will also not be realizing our goals of social equity, green infrastructure, and carbon neutrality as soon as we had hoped.

**What would be your plan to get this program running without ARPA assistance?**

PDOP has a very strong track record in applying securing external grants. Most grant have a matching fund requirement, which is funded through our CIP. Hence, having a fully funded CIP is critical for seeking and securing grant funds to assist with the cost of capital improvements throughout our park system. As a result of the \$2m loss to the CIP, it will take years to rebuild the fund balance based on the current increase in wages and the inflation cost of goods. The playground and park improvements will be delayed for the amount of time that is required to assemble the funds necessary.

22.

**Can your program or a portion of your project wait until January 2023 to coincide with the anticipated next phase of community ARPA requests? What would be lost if this program waited until 2023? Do you have a plan to make up this loss?**

The requested funding can be paid to the Park District in two installments. One in 2022 for \$1m and the other \$1m in 2023. Knowing that the funds will be allocated to the Park District will allow the Park Board to plan accurately for these capital projects.

23.

**Are you requesting ARPA funding from other agencies for this program?** No, we are requesting lost revenue funding from the Village of Oak Park to support our capital improvement planning for the residents of Oak Park.

**Are you requesting ARPA funding from other agencies for other programs?** Yes, funding has been requested to support the CRC from the State of Illinois through a granting process.