

Community Recreation Center: FAQ's

Why should Oak Park build a Community Recreation Center?

Based on national standards, a community with a population size of Oak Park should have between 260 and 520 acres of green space to accommodate residents' needs for programs serving people of all ages and abilities, sports, and passive recreation, such as walking and playing in parks. The Park District of Oak Park has only 83 acres of green space and is landlocked with no green space available for additional park space to meet our community's needs. In addition to limited park space, Oak Park lacks adequate communal space for organized meetings and activities as well as informal gathering spaces to build resident connections with our community. With the expected growth in Village population, the Park District is working on plans to meet the current and future recreational needs of all residents. The availability of a Community Recreation Center will help to ensure that we are reaching our broad audience of residents.

Who will the Community Recreation Center serve?

All Oak Park residents will have free access to the walking track. More senior residents will benefit from the indoor track to provide safe walking conditions regardless of the weather and pickleball will be available during daytime hours for our active adults. Free open gym will be available immediately after school to students in grades 6-12 who are Oak Park residents. As you know, these are the times our youth are at risk of making bad choices. These facility and programming additions help the Park District provide year-round opportunities for segments of our population that are currently not being served.

How much will the Community Recreation Center cost?

The funding of the facility will be divided into two phases. Phase One (cost \$18 million) will consist of a gymnasium, indoor walking track and fitness center, as well as underground parking. Phase Two (cost \$5 million) will add an Aquatics Center with indoor swimming pools for lap swim, leisure and warm water therapy.

Why is there not a pool in Phase One?

Pools are expensive to build and maintain. The Park District plans to meet the most needs of Oak Park residents in Phase One. However, the pool could be built in Phase One if a donor(s) provides the \$5M in additional capital funds necessary for its construction.

Will the building of a Community Recreation Center increase property taxes?

No, the Center's construction and operations will not increase property taxes. Annual operating costs will be covered by revenues generated within the facility. Construction will be heavily supported by private, philanthropic contributions and possible grant dollars.

How will the cost of building the Community Recreation Center be funded?

The Parks Foundation will lead the fundraising for this facility. Once the community interest was established in 2015, the Park District planned for a contribution of \$5 million of its Capital Funds toward this project. The remaining funds will be secured through partnerships such as the Oak Park Mental Health Board (\$1.5 million) and through grants and gifts from foundations, corporations and individuals who believe in the Park District's mission and are committed to serving the needs of all of our residents, especially those that are not currently being served.

Who is the Parks Foundation?

The Parks Foundation of Oak Park is a volunteer organization that is chartered with the State of Illinois as a 501(c)3 charitable organization, founded in December of 2012. Contributions to the Parks Foundation are tax deductible in accordance with state and federal laws.

The Parks Foundation mission is to collaborate with Oak Park residents, community groups, and partner organizations to support exceptional and extraordinary projects that enhance our parks and community life.

An independent entity, the Parks Foundation coordinates closely with the Park District of Oak Park to address community health, fitness, recreation, and park needs and to promote giving opportunities to support extraordinary projects within the Park District of Oak Park. The Parks Foundation Board and its Development Committee has organized a task force to assist in raising funds specifically for a Community Recreation Center to serve diverse needs and support the health and wellness of Oak Park residents.

Why a capital campaign?

The Park District Board of Commissioners agreed that this approach by the Parks Foundation allows the Park District to meet the desired facility needs of Oak Park residents without raising property taxes. It also provides opportunities for businesses, foundations, and individuals to directly invest in healthy, recreational pursuits of residents, as well as community-building needs of our residents. Ultimately, the Community Recreation Center will result in a stronger, more connected community.

Why did the Park District not work with D200 on a shared facility?

Both entities have engaged in several study sessions over the years, including recently to seek how a single, new facility could be shared to meet all needs of both taxing bodies. It was determined that the high school's needs for students and the park district needs could not be solved with a single facility. That said, the two entities currently share facilities and will continue to do so to best meet the needs of Oak Park residents without duplication and unnecessary costs, whenever possible.

When will the Community Recreation Center be built?

The Park District will make a determination on a building schedule based on the success of a capital campaign. The timeline is dependent on the Parks Foundation's fundraising efforts. We would love to declare that the facility will open in 2021, but the opening date is based on fundraising success.