



A PLACE TO BELONG

SUPPORT FOR AN OAK PARK COMMUNITY RECREATION CENTER



SAFE HEALTHY CONNECTED
SAFE HEALTHY
HEALTHY CONNECTED
SAFE HEALTHY
CONNECTED SAFE
HEALTHY CONNECTED
SAFE HEALTHY

A VISION FOR INCLUSION AND EQUITY

Oak Park is a place for all to feel welcome: to be safe, to be healthy, and to feel a sense of belonging.

Many decades ago, the Village took action to embrace equity for all and establish our community values of strength in diversity. Ever since then, Oak Park has been committed to its inclusive mission.

Today, the challenge of achieving inclusivity and equity continues. Our diverse collection of families presents different recreation and fitness needs, and although Oak Park enjoys many park district services and amenities—including two outdoor pools, parks, an indoor ice rink, a gymnastics center, tennis courts and nearly 3,000 programs—local residents lack access to a gymnasium, fitness facility, indoor walking track, or a multi-generational community center that serves families and individuals including our growing senior population.

The best way to serve children is by serving families. In Oak Park, studies show that the demand for affordable after-school enrichment programming far exceeds the supply. Further, many seniors seek places to socialize and stay active. We believe this void is intensifying and it impairs our community's ability to achieve inclusivity and equity. In accordance with Oak Park's tradition of trailblazing social progress, a leadership collective of caring people is engaged in an action agenda to make a positive impact in the long-term health and vibrancy of our community.

The Parks Foundation of Oak Park, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization working closely with the Park District of Oak Park, is striving to meet the diverse needs of residents of all ages, abilities, backgrounds, and economic status by constructing a Community Recreation Center that appeals to all demographics. The Parks Foundation believes that a Community Recreation Center will be an engine for social equality and make a significant contribution to the health and wellness of our community.

OUR COMMUNITY NEEDS

- A safe place for youth of all ages to go immediately after school
- A year-round, indoor walking track that Oak Park residents of all ages can access at no cost
- A place for Oak Park youth to access mental health services and creative social-emotional programming
- Group classes and fitness opportunities for individuals and families
- A place for teen programming on weekends and evenings
- A place to bring our community together and make connections to build and strengthen community bonds



Artist's rendering of Community Recreation Center



RECEPTION

MORE THAN A SPACE

The growth and development of residents results from a synchronized blend of community-based opportunities to engage in activities and learning. Community-based experiences build social connections among residents and help youth weave a sense of identity and belonging. Consequently, recreation and fitness are important sources of social capital that generate returns for generations. The Park District of Oak Park seeks to serve the recreational needs of more than 52,000 residents, yet it doesn't have the gymnasium space for many health and sports activities or community gatherings that our community needs and desires.

Because all residents can benefit from access to affordable recreation and fitness opportunities, the Parks Foundation of Oak Park aspires to offer options for a fitness center, indoor track, childcare, and community programming space.

COMMUNITIES BENEFIT FROM RECREATION CENTERS

Studies show that having a Community Recreation Center fosters a cohesive sense of community and provides a space for friends, neighbors and family to connect and build multi-generational ties. In a nationally published paper, "The Benefits of a Recreation Centre," Mario Pistone of Parkin Architects Ltd. shares that: "(By building) a great recreation center, a community is building a crèche for tomorrow's leaders. Through inclusion and shared successes, sports venues harness the unifying power of play, which can dissolve perceived differences based on gender, physical ability, sexual orientation, religion and culture. Facilities that foster community programs build leadership skills. Team and group-based activities develop participation and social cohesion. They also build skills for community dialogue."

**FACILITIES THAT
FOSTER
COMMUNITY
PROGRAMS BUILD
LEADERSHIP SKILLS.**

**A COMMUNITY
RECREATION
CENTER OFFERS
SOMETHING FOR
EVERYONE**

- A safe, supervised public space for youth
- Group classes and opportunities for infants and parents
- Sports leagues for all age groups
- Programming and accommodations for individuals with developmental and physical disabilities
- Engaging, low-impact activities for senior citizens

ANSWERING THE COMMUNITY CALL

THE VOICE OF OAK PARK

In 2016, a feasibility study was conducted in partnership with six Oak Park government entities (Village, D97, D200, Library, Township, and the Park District) which definitively demonstrated that residents want a community recreation center in Oak Park.

Since 2010, survey results in the Oak Park community have consistently shown that the top five facility requests are:

- An indoor walking/running track
- Indoor gymnasium space
- Fitness facilities
- Indoor Pool
- Arts facilities

OUR VULNERABLE COMMUNITY

In addition, the Oak Park Township Mental Health Board has repeatedly heard youth expressing a need for non-traditional locations to seek mental health services discreetly and without stigma.

Our ice rink and gymnastics team programs can require a high level of investment in equipment and/or training, which can act as a deterrent to lower-income families.

We're working to make sure that every Oak Park resident can access recreational enrichment opportunities to nurture their mind, body, and spirit through scholarship funding. The Community Recreation Center will offer amenities such as a walking track and basketball court which do not require specialized training or equipment.

**WE'RE WORKING
TO MAKE SURE
THAT EVERY OAK
PARK RESIDENT
CAN NURTURE
THEIR MIND, BODY,
AND SPIRIT.**





BUILT BY OUR COMMUNITY, NOT A TAX INCREASE

BY US, FOR US

The call for a Community Recreation Center is driven by members of our community, answering a long term request to fill a community need. The Parks Foundation of Oak Park is committed to primarily funding this project with grants and charitable donations. In addition, the operating costs of the facility will be funded by user fees. The Capital Campaign is spearheaded by a group of local residents, donors and volunteers committed to the achievement of this bold, transformative project.

The Park District of Oak Park has spent the last five years expanding program offerings, but only 32 percent of Oak Park households participate in District programs. Through multiple surveys, residents have repeatedly expressed a desire for basketball courts, an indoor walking track, and a fitness center. The Parks Foundation believes if we answer the call for these facility needs, more residents will engage in the many programs and opportunities offered by the Park District.

FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Many Oak Park residents are feeling financial pressure from increasing property taxes. The Parks Foundation of Oak Park and the Park District are listening to these community concerns, and are committed to using existing resources in conjunction with a Capital Campaign to build a much-needed Community Recreation Center.

HELPING LOCAL ECONOMIES FLOURISH

The Community Recreation Center will be located on Madison Avenue east of Ridgeland Avenue. The one-acre property site, which was donated to the Parks Foundation, will serve as an anchor to an area of Oak Park that can benefit from revitalization. The neighborhood includes many apartment dwellers for whom the Park District has identified service gaps in our program offerings. In addition, the Community Recreation Center will be located within 1.2 miles of both public middle schools. By bringing residents and program participants to the Center, we will encourage increased use of local businesses, attract new businesses, and have a positive impact on the local economy.

A PLACE FOR EVERYONE

In Oak Park, many residents have difficulty accessing or using our current programming, because our limited facilities inhibit the delivery of programs and accommodations that connect with their needs. A thoughtfully planned Community Recreation Center will expand our multigenerational audience of users and make a meaningful difference in their lives.

AFTER-SCHOOL NEEDS

According to Little, Wimer, and Weiss from the Harvard Family Research Project, after-school programs make a significant impact on children's lives. Their decade-long research and evaluation studies confirm that positive after-school activities provide academic support, improve social skills, create a sense of belonging, build confidence, provide safety and supervision during at-risk hours, and encourage youth to spend their energies in healthy, productive ways.

Studies indicate that juvenile criminal rates can decrease by up to 25 percent when a community has a recreation center for youth. Oak Park currently has limited safe supervised spaces for youth to congregate and engage, which research shows is associated with experimentation of drugs and alcohol. The Community Recreation Center can help address these challenges by providing spaces and programs that engage youth in positive peer networks under the supervision of caring, mentoring adults who volunteer or work as Park District staff.

FAMILY FITNESS

The Community Recreation Center can help entire families improve their health and fitness. Our residents have diverse individual needs, and facilities such as an indoor walking track and a full-service fitness center can serve a broad range of abilities and experience.

AFTER-RETIREMENT NEEDS

On the other side of the age spectrum, the over-60 population continues to grow in Oak Park. Our active residents seek daytime recreational opportunities, such as an indoor walking track and gymnasium space for fitness activities and the increasingly popular sport of "pickleball."

Retirees often find themselves struggling with social isolation and an increasingly sedentary lifestyle. The senior population requires and deserves opportunities to engage their minds, form new social connections, and keep physically active in healthy, age-appropriate activities.

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COMMUNITY NEEDS

The need to provide affordable adult fitness opportunities as well as additional space to support team and individual sport endeavors is very real in our community.

Additionally, making community connections at all ages is critical. A Community Recreation Center is an open and inviting public facility that allows for these community connections to be made through an organic process. The amenities of the Community Recreation Center are not duplicated in our parks system. This much-needed facility will allow our Park District to extend services to Oak Park's diverse population, reach underserved residents and help strengthen our community bonds.

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POPULATION, REACH UNDERSERVED
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COMMUNITY BONDS.**





A PLACE TO BELONG CAMPAIGN
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