

Feb 12, 2024 | [School & Community Engagement Subcommittee Meeting](#)

Attendees: Les Kutz, Ashley Withers, Tim Bartlett, Derek Liebert, Keenan Portis, Julie Nieset, Reba Daniels, Tomas Delgado, Tammy Masters,

Overview

- Initial meeting was held on 11/13/23 but did not have a lot of participation; so this will be counted as the first meeting
- Weaver and Prairie Parks background and history
 - The acquisition of Weaver was ~ 20 years ago (Grant was in 2002)
 - Can the Urbana Park District find a site that can combine our athletics and natural areas? (UPD acquired Weaver Park site for a mixed-use purpose and master planned it to work with Prairie Park to support a variety of needs)
 - Other districts have higher quality athletic programs (Normal, Champaign, Decatur, Springfield) these sites have a variety of athletics and some have amenities that also serve a shared use purpose for natural areas.
 - Schools have changed, we cannot gain access to school grounds for public use
 - Shared site (future transportation for bike corridors, KRT trail head, natural areas, and athletics)
 - Weaver and Prairie Parks are classified as a signature park; it is a destination that people come to
 - Wetland was a success for Scottswood Subdivision (there was flooding prior and this is why the wetland was created)
 - Concepts from the first master plan was a shared site with prairie, woodlands, and active recreation
 - Creating a way for people to visit Weaver and Prairie Parks (Health & Wellness Center and athletics) is the way to bring more awareness to nature aspects that the parks have to offer
 - Most park projects work in 5-10 year phases, Weaver and Prairie Parks operated differently due to the lack of resources and opportunities in the past. We now have a great opportunity and resources to continue what we started with our 2005 Master Plan for Weaver and Prairie Parks

- Our mission is not solely focused on conserving and preserving natural resources like a forest preserve district. We value our natural areas but we aim to round out our parks by providing a little bit of everything for all of Urbana
- Leaving Weaver and Prairie Park alone and not doing anything is not something that is feasible for us; that is not the plan we are aiming for
- Making a plan to get out of county property; we cannot apply grants to short term leased or rented property
- Buying other land is off the table; we are lacking the resources and we have land that we bought for this which is Weaver and Prairie Parks
- Weaver and Prairie Parks is surrounded by a high hope neighborhood and UPD capitalized by buying the land for future development for athletics and natural areas
- The board wants to see UPD, steering committees and residents come together to make a plan for Weaver and Prairie, but not to leave it alone. The goal is a shared use site that provides for many interests and needs.

KRT and ITEP

- Updates on planning process for KRT and ITEP
 - Continue to meet and talk with the 4 different subcommittee groups
 - Continue to stay updated on all aspects of Weaver & Prairie
 - Weaver and Prairie Parks are what UPD consider a long term, long plan park; related to Meadowbrook in the way it progressed over the years
 - Continue to talk with commissioners; get everyone's ideas and then continue our process with Farnsworth
 - Bringing together Weaver and Prairie to make an 80 acre signature park; for example, Meadowbrook and Crystal Lake Park are considered signature parks
 - UPD is hoping this park can bring in people and expand Urbana; we need a bigger tax base and development along route 130 is a priority
 - Review of Round 1 Trails & KRT Subcommittee meeting minutes – staff will send out for committee review
 - Approximately \$1M of the \$11.2 million from ITEP will be purposed to build the trailhead

FAQs

- **Q1: What do residents of Weaver Park neighborhoods prefer? Baseball/soccer fields with lights & fencing, nightly summer noise or a larger natural area with a Meadowbrook Park-like path with a few soccer fields?**
- **A: The Urbana Park District will be engaging with its School and Community subcommittee to evaluate preferences.**
 - **Ashley**
 - What engagement did we do for Meadowbrook Park?
 - Derek - SPLASH – Students at UMS, King, Leal, after-school hours. Also sought feedback at special events.
 - **Reba (Resident near Aspen Courts Townhouses)** - Neighborhood around Weaver and Prairie Park is not quiet anyway, you'll hear people talking, having cookouts, etc...
 - What time will all programming like softball and soccer end at night?
 - Usually have a cutoff time if games go beyond sunset
 - **Ashley**- Dodson St possibly would have more noise even with an addition of athletic fields
 - **Derek** - Community engagement around Weaver and Prairie Parks - Sticky dot activity
 - **Les** - Would be willing to help facilitate some exercises
- **Tammy**
 - Connect Country Squire with survey monkey notification list
 - Neighborhood listserv
- **Tim**
 - Meadowbrook neighbors necessarily did not want a signature park with a sculpture garden in their backyard but it's what the community needed at the time. Same thing here, we need athletic courts on this side of Urbana
- **Tim**
 - There are some logical barriers that hinder folks from getting to Weaver and Prairie; University Ave, Main St.
- **Tomas**

- Farm to School Program - serving local food in school meals, engaging students in school gardening activities, and educating students about food, agriculture, and nutrition
- Provide students with access to healthy, locally-grown food during the school day
- Over 70 children tend the garden
- Harvest event for end of the year
- Students are particularly interested in agriculture
- Farm to School Program - USDA grant that the health department gives out
- There are current barriers between champaign and Urbana in securing nutrient foods
- Funding has been going towards garden programs at school sites
- Very significant that we are receiving this award, it is quite competitive
- Food produced is fairly diverse
 - **Ashley** - How do they manage in the summer? Where does produce go?
 - **Tomas** - Produce is channeled into backpack programs, solidarity gardens
 - **Tim** - Can you plant what you like? Is it prescribed?
 - **Tomas** - Plant whatever you want, school can't procure the food; it takes a few steps in order for them to actually use the food
- **Q2: Is it possible to get input from the nationally known and respected U of I Landscape Architecture Professor David Hayes? (Also, an Urbana resident)**
- **A: Yes, staff reached out to David Hayes who already has some park district-led design studios within the landscape architecture department that looked at the Weaver and Prairie and surrounding landscape from a multi-dimensional perspective. David expressed an interest in having the department reengage to look at this “Super-Block” that includes park, school, and county lands. Additionally, the district has engaged with Diversity Research Lab on community needs with a focus on underrepresented neighborhoods including those surrounding Weaver and Prairie Parks. Additionally, the park district has worked with two international/national landscape architecture firms on developing plans for these sites. SmithGroup worked on the 2005 master plan and Farnsworth is working on the current update.**
 - **Tim** - our idea is to encourage the school and county to engage and work with us

- **Q3: What is the role of Steering Committees in such focus groups and community processes? Are these circles to mutually discern to enhance best practices and catalyze enthusiasm for eco-cultural wellness, or go along with and advocate for predetermined and previous agendas and ideas for the UPD?**
- **A: The Steering Committee is to help develop a shared plan that represents a variety of stakeholders and community input.**
 - **Tim** - This is typically how we operate, we come out with a plan, we expect to work on it and engage in conversations that will help us collaborate ideas
- **Q4: Are the neighborhoods surrounding Weaver and Prairie Parks in the city of Urbana or unincorporated areas?**
- **A: The areas south of Weaver and Prairie Parks are in the city. The areas to the east are unincorporated. The area to the north is a mixture of the two. We serve in-district and out of district families.**
 - **Tim** - What's driving our concern is a history of loss of fields due to leased lands
 - We would like to stop seeing amenities go away by investing and creating athletic spaces that we own
 - **Ashley** - Who owns the high school baseball field located in Prairie Park?
 - **Derek** – The UPD owns it but a small portion of it is county land
 - Homefield for Urbana Tiger baseball; USD116 is currently leasing and they have put a lot of work into it
 - **Tomas** - When is the county moving out of Brookens? When do outdoor leases end?
 - **Tim** - I am unsure, current agreement ends in 2026 but County could end sooner
 - **Ashley** - RPC intends to stay there
 - **Tomas** - If there is a new owner for Brookens, and you haven't developed Weaver or Prairie, are you renewing the lease?
 - **Tim** - Yes, we would have no other options
 - **Tomas** - Next steps to develop Weaver, if you could?
 - **Tim** - Outdoor amenities and getting soccer fields established; phase 4 will take a number of years due to the cost
 - **Tomas** - There is funding allotted?

- **Tim** - We still have a shortfall on current Health and Wellness Center; KRT trailhead and pavilion will move forward; would ask county for any support
 - **Derek** - County contributed \$500,000 toward Health and Wellness facility
- **Q5: Why are the Urbana school grounds fenced off and closed and unavailable for neighborhood use?**
- **A: Urbana School District basketball hoops and playgrounds are currently closed to the public for security purposes.**
- **Q6: Do school classes from DPW require advanced permission slips from parents or school officials to use Weaver and Prairie Park amenities?**
- **A: No—teachers can simply let the front office know and then take the class to the park to sketch nature subjects for an art class as an example.**
 - **Derek** - Les, what would the process look like for wanting to take a group of kids out to Weaver and Prairie Parks? Are permission slips necessary?
 - **Les** - If I were to take a class out to the prairie, I would just let the office know
 - We've gone out there multiple times already to do prairie art

Next Meeting

- TBD
- Contact whoever we need to in the school district in order to do exercises that gain ideas from kids
- We have the need to address some pressing issues

Feb 26, 2024 | [Athletics & Active Recreation Subcommittee Meeting](#)

Attendees: Janet Fros, Mel Fros, Tim Bartlett, Keenan Portis, Derek Liebert, Phil Anders, Corky Emberson, Ben Kapp, George Hardebeck, Steve Miller (Randy Trufa),

Overview

- Previous Athletics & Active Recreation Subcommittee meeting
 - Park Classification Breakdown

KRT and ITEP

- Updates on planning process for KRT and ITEP
 - Continue to meet and talk with the 4 different subcommittee groups
 - Continue to stay updated on all aspects of Weaver & Prairie Parks
 - Continue to talk with commissioners; get everyone's ideas and then continue our process with Farnsworth
 - Review of Round 1 Trails & KRT Subcommittee meeting minutes – staff will send out for subcommittee review
 - Approximately \$1M of the \$11.2 million from ITEP will be purposed to build the trailhead
 - Aggressive timeline; complete by fall 2025
 - Interviewing design teams Thursday, February 29th
 - Working with KRT committee to discuss what fits in this project
 - ITEP- How can we minimize impact to Weaver Park natural resources; limiting meandering into prairie, stay closer to tree lines; evaluate need for and different types of lighting?
 - George -Trying to do whatever we can to make it special without using as much as natural area as we can
 - Connecting with heartland pathways
 - Recognizing indigenous people here by a physical act; want to do more than just the standard

- ITEP alternative - Doing art within the trail itself - leaf prints swirling with colors, shadows of animal prints- something that is in the cement
- Little frogs along the wetland to hint at an idea to watch out for other species that occupy the natural areas at Weaver and Prairie Parks
- Mosaic around Health and Wellness facility, leaving room for future designs/development

FAQs

- Reviewing FAQs relating to Athletics & Active Recreation Subcommittee
 - **Q1: How many weeks or months will the softball/baseball fields be in use during the year? For soccer?**
 - **A: Softball/baseball fields have potential use from March through the beginning of November. Soccer fields still have the potential to be used year around depending on type of use for open space activities such as: soccer, frisbee golf, lacrosse, open play, and events.**
 - Corky E. - Biggest challenge is rotating the soccer fields The fields at Brookens have drainage and swells, making it difficult to rotate
 - George H. - How hard is it to move the goal posts to rotate fields?
 - Corky - It's easy to do that but the problem is finding the space to rotate the fields
 - Phil A. - The ground by the goal posts gets the worst out of the whole field
 - George H. - Corky, could you possibly get together with a few of us who don't understand the athletic aspect of design and implementation, or the ecological cost of space. The higher we can keep that ecological well-being, the better we can take care of our natural areas
 - Corky - Yes, Rich our grounds supervisor could join us as well to discuss the need for field rotation
 - Derek - Phil, you mention you shift fields instead of rotating?
 - Phil - From my experience coaching Uni, shifting the fields works better than rotating, 15 yards to the east and to the west was enough to move the goal box for the grass to recover from use. Also keep preferred sun orientation.

- Corky - That may help us at Weaver because at Brookens there's no room to shift the fields
 - Corky - ADA audit calls for a concrete pathway to park features and programs now so we have to account for that on top of rotating the field
- **Q2: Approximately how many Urbana community members does UPD foresee using the two proposed baseball/softball fields in the proposed plan and what are their demographics in age, UPD program vs outside club, and residency? For Soccer?**
- **A: Soccer is our biggest youth program as reflected in the attached chart. Additionally, we are aware that we have a lot of drop-in soccer use by the international adult community. Softball fields are used for programmatic and facilitation of kickball and all ages softball/baseball are reflected on the chart. The district does not keep detailed records of demographics for facilitated outside use. All program use is predominantly resident but we do welcome non-resident use at non-resident rates. As a part of our "You Belong Here" strategic pillar we are continuing to strive to attract non-residents through scholarships and new program offerings.**

<i>Outdoor Programs</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>2021</i>	<i>2022</i>	<i>2023</i>	<i>Totals</i>
Wood Bat Baseball	120	104	134	115	97	89	659
Fall Soccer	166	163	73	195	227	161	985
Spring Soccer	165	191	4	138	227	278	1003
Fall Sharkies	42	39	19	51	57	56	264
Spring Sharkies	37	51	0	49	83	76	296
T-Ball	57	69	0	54	61	68	309
Pony	105	150	0	105	105	75	540
Summer Adult Kickball	245	175	0	75	115	125	735
Fall Adult Kickball	175	105	0	75	0	85	440
Outside Teams/Users	11,952	11,241	1,239	6,742	9,715	6,202	47091
Outside Reservations	293	345	43	170	237	203	1291
Tom Jones Challenger League	360	360	0	360	360	360	1800
CU Kiwanis Little League	Not our program	Not our program	Not our program	Not our program	Not our program	Not our program	
USD 116/UHS/UMS -grade 6	Not our program	Not our program	Not our program	Not our program	Not our program	Not our program	
<small>R/T/W/Variety; Softball, Baseball, Soccer, Cross Country</small>	Not our program	Not our program	Not our program	Not our program	Not our program	Not our program	

- **A: Outside Teams/Users and Reservation are 85-87% Baseball/Softball, 10-12% Soccer, 2% Cricket, 1% Lacrosse. Baseball and Softball usage has declined since the removal of the 2 Prairie Park softball fields.**
- **A: Currently Ambucs and Canaday get the most use as they are the only fields that can accommodate multiple base distance.**

- **A: Prairie Park Baseball Field is a HS/College level field that can only accommodate HS and College level teams. - 90 foot bases, and a grass infield does not work for softball or youth baseball.**
- **A: Canaday Park - Isn't park district owned, and has a short 211' fence. It can accommodate a variety of younger youth softball and baseball teams, as well as Adult Kickball, and booked out quickly last season.**
- **A: Ambucs Park – isn't park district owned. It can accommodate pretty much anyone as well, but it is used by Challenger 2 days of the week during the busiest time of the year in addition to Kickball, Pony League, etc.**
- **A: A "softball" field with similar dimensions to the former Prairie fields can accommodate T-Ball, Baseball, Softball, Kickball, and more at all levels of play—this is what is proposed for Weaver Park.**
 - **Corky E. - Adding two ball fields is replacing what we lost at Prairie Park due to the development of the Health and Wellness Center**
 - Want to be able to offer a quality recreation space and find a way to get youth and family from the surrounding neighborhoods over to Weaver and Prairie to give those an opportunity to a recreational space
 - **George H. - Ambucs is leased? Could softball be played at Ambucs?**
 - Corky E. - Sanitary District owned
 - Tim B. - Challenging to get to Ambucs for those without transportation
 - Corky E. - Very limited at Ambucs because there is only one softball field
 - Corky E. - We need two softball fields that are together for programming tournaments
 - **George - Any possibility on High Cross Rd?**
- **Q3: What are the days and times that the athletic fields planned at Weaver Park will be available for public use?**
- **A: Soccer field availability would be open throughout the weekday from sunrise to sunset and also available after games on weekend mornings.**
- **A: Softball availability would be open based upon request and programming with a 10pm limit. To limit adverse effects after dark, the**

Urbana Park District is planning to use dark sky lighting and neighbor cut offs to contain lighting within the boundary of use.

- George H. - Anyway to keep the fields closer to the school and away from the natural areas?
- Randy - Will there be lights be in a certain area, lighted skatepark is desirable - skateboarders get any chance they get to skate and some can't until 5pm so lights are necessary
 - Corky - I believe we would clump all activities together that require lights
- Randy - I would like to see some of the art that George is mentioning, applied to the skatepark. Something along the lines of concrete art.
- **Q4: What are the types of and rates of applications of herbicides and pesticides UPD uses or plans to use on turf and athletic fields?**
- **A: UPD follows integrated pest management which means that we use as little as chemical as necessary to achieve our desired condition. For soccer we don't use herbicides with any regularity but we do fertilize. For softball we fertilize once in the spring and once in the fall. For Herbicides we do one broadleaf application in May and we spray the fence lines with glyphosate 3-4 times per year. We use the same approach at the Outdoor Aquatic Center with broad leaves and fertilization and we do the same fence line treatment throughout the district. All use is at the labeled rate for the various products.**

Softball/Baseball Fertilization

- Fertilize one time in the spring and one time in the fall.
- Spring: 19-0-6 slow-release fertilizer w/Dimension (crabgrass pre-emergent)

Fall: 24-0-11 slow-release fertilizer

Softball/Baseball Herbicide Spraying

- One broadleaf weed application in May, with Trimec (2, 4-D). (Performed by a lawn care company)
- Spray the fence lines with glyphosate three or four times a year.

Spot spray weeds on the "skinned" area of the infields with glyphosate as needed, generally every 4-8 weeks, depending on weed pressure

- **Q5: What is the estimated total yearly cost of maintaining and providing baseball/softball fields? (labor, maintenance, lighting costs, insurance, umpires, etc.) What is the same cost for soccer? Also, the estimated cost of creating baseball/softball fields and soccer fields?**
- **A: All umpire/referee fees are covered in program costs and rental fees; ultimately, this is no extra cost to the UPD operating budget. One of the deliverables that will be provided by Farnsworth is the construction cost for all the ballfields as well as other park improvements.**
- **A: The fees for umpires and officials come out of the league entry fees. If we hosted a tournament, they would be covered by the tournament entry fees. The only way officials or umpires will cost the Urbana Park District extra money is if we are offering a free program. We currently charge for light usage at rentals as well. Aside from typical weekly maintenance most fees are covered. If they want the fields prepped for games or tournaments that are charged as well.**

Prairie Softball Fields (PN & PS), two former

Estimated Operations Costs

Staff Wages	\$4,000
Fertilizer	\$636
Grass Seed & Sod	\$570
Liner (chalk & paint)	\$678
Chemicals	\$400
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	\$6,284

Prairie & Brookens soccer fields, existing soccer

Estimated Operations Costs

Staff Wages	\$5,600
Fertilizer	\$1,200
Grass Seed & Sod	\$665

Liner (paint)

\$1,680

\$9,145

- Corky E. - We have more land for soccer so that is why the price is slighted in that way
 - George H. - Could we add existing soccer costs?
 - Derek L. - Sure
 - Derek L. - There is a product that goes under fences that may help block weeds instead of spraying
 - Phil A. - At other soccer fields, there's so much application that my shoes are orange when I'm done; I've never had that happen at an Urbana Park District
 - Tim B. - We've heard numerous times that we should just build artificial fields?
 - Tim B. - That would sort of create another problem for us
 - George H. - Can be toxic and end up in a landfill
 - George H. - Do people use clovers to deter weed problems?
 - Corky E. - There are tons of clovers at Brookens
 - Mel F. - Would love to continue the tradition of using community members/residents to help officiate; it brings people together
 - Ben - My kids and I do officiating, the knowledge is learnable by anyone, you do not need to be licensed
 - Ben - Location of Weaver and Prairie Parks are very well suited for those underrepresented groups that we want to join our programs
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- **Q6: How does time play into these concerns, given that soccer leases are said to be sound until 2026 - can the Public help secure this or better, while seeking solutions?**
 - **A: Soccer is the largest youth recreation sport we have and our development concerns hinges on what Champaign County decides to do with their land. UPD has to prepare and have plans in place because we don't know the time frame of the County's movement. Additionally, the**

County could give us notice before 2026 of their need for the land within 60 days. UPD needs to develop soccer fields as soon as possible.

- George H. - Would it be amenable to transition this land into Urbana Park District land?
- Corky E. - UPD and The county have a very good relationship; however, the county has their own business and financial considerations
- George H. - The more support and encouragement we get from community members and us; the more likelihood the County would be willing to help secure that land for the Urbana Park District
- Tim B. - Since 2005, athletics have been under the impression that Weaver and Prairie Parks would be built for soccer and athletic fields. We've been promising this and it wouldn't be fair to take that away from those who looked forward to it
- George H. - I understand that pressure; but, recognizing the state of our planet can create education and awareness. Creating channels for participation for how we heal our planet from leadership at a place like this
- Phil A. - If options 1 or 2 gets selected; or, if you get something more favorable to you George; after this decision is made, I would love to be a part of some other push to raise money for properties
- George H. - Larger places that are connected to corridors are amazing
- George H. - this has the capacity and potential to be an amazing hub, but when you narrow it down it's being cut off by something that can kill the wildlife
- Mel F. - To George: What you're saying is that this mixture of athletics and natural areas will not be effective?
- George H. - We have a relationship to the beings on this planet and they have a right to be here; we've lost 99.9% of our natural areas already

Next Meeting

- Discussing next steps
 - 1. Trying to find out what we're missing from an athletic standpoint

- Phil A. - Might be useful to put together a document for those who don't understand the needs from an athletic perspective
- George H. - Handball - you can play by yourself; and get the exercise you need
 - Diversifying; gardens, food forests...
- Derek L. - Established a goal of getting into the schools with the School and Community Engagement Subcommittee
 - A lot of interest in reaching the underserved community
 - Working with the Dreame academy...
- 2. Is there interest in getting ready to engage with designers again
 - Derek L. - Bring committee as a whole back together to review subcommittee work with designers
 - George H. - Good to keep in mind to look at other designs as well
- 3. General subcommittee support for reconvening the entire stakeholder committee group
- Date and time
 - TBD

Jan 10, 2024 | [Trails & Kickapoo Rail Trail Subcommittee Meeting](#)

Attendees: Derek L., Tim B., Cork E., Keenan P., Phil A., John Z., George H., Tammy M., Mary W., Jeff Y.

Overview/Previous Meeting

- Previous Trails & KRT Subcommittee Meeting
 - Discussed briefly about some of the ongoing work with KRT and ITEP projects
 - ITEP construction will be complete by the end of 2025; KRT construction will should be complete by end of 2025 as well.
 - Discussed Trails & KRT related FAQs that we've been hearing from stakeholder committee members
 - First trail leg connecting Urbana along Main St spur was created approximately 5 years ago
 - ITEP will bring second leg of trail connection that will go down Baker's Lane and connect with the future KRT trail extension north of Bakers Lane.

KRT and ITEP

- Updates on planning process for KRT and ITEP
 - Continue to meet and talk with the 4 different subcommittee groups
 - Continue to stay updated on all aspects of Weaver & Prairie
 - Weaver and Prairie Parks are what UPD consider a long term, long plan park; related to Meadowbrook in the way it progressed over the years
 - Continue to talk with commissioners; get everyone's ideas and then continue our process with Farnsworth
 - Bringing together Weaver and Prairie to make an 80-acre signature park; for example, Meadowbrook and Crystal Lake Park are considered signature parks
 - UPD is hoping this park can bring in people and expand Urbana; we need a bigger tax base and development along route 130 is a priority
 - Review of Round 1 Trails & KRT Subcommittee meeting minutes—staff will send out for committee review

FAQs

- Reviewing current FAQs relating to Trails & KRT Subcommittee
 1. **Q1. Has UPD asked the Kickapoo Rail Trail stakeholders which they would prefer? A quality natural area to begin or end their trails with a few soccer fields or a lesser quality/acreage Weaver Park natural area with baseball/softball field lights with considerable steel fencing and manicured turf.**
 2. **A: At the first trails subcommittee meeting this was discussed briefly and members were open to either application and suggested some active use near the trailhead pavilion could be welcome. The subcommittee will continue to discuss as we prepare for master plan updates.**
 - **George H.** - Weaver Watch Dogs has 1300 signatures for a petition to not include sports field in the Weaver and Prairie Natural areas
 - Doing recreation in natural areas should be healthy ones, giving more sense of wonder and providing education
 - Lights can attract bugs and this can cause a loss in biodiversity
 - Question whether we need to have sports fields at Weaver and Prairie Parks
 - America's top pastime is walking and running
 - "You belong here" – One of UPDs Strategic Goals
 - If everyone belongs here then where are the indigenous peoples at our table?
 3. **Mary W.**
 - It's all about compromise; not everybody gets everything that they want all the time
 - Coming from a trailhead standpoint; it will be a marvelous asset to the community. Natural area or athletic fields, it will still be beneficial to the surrounding communities
 - Great job to the Urbana Park District in organizing the Stakeholder Committee meetings to hear everyone's opinions
 4. **Bob V.**
 - Having the trailhead at the start of prairie is a positive for those who like to gaze at scenery
 - I am concerned that we will keep building on to what we have currently

- I want to see prairie right at the entrance
- The larger the area, the more species we'll have; we just can't move things around, it's not that simple
- Want to be careful about cutting the prairie down; it will be less effective if we cut too much; keep it together much as possible
- Sport fields can fit in with the prairie; I think it'll work great, but you might have to sacrifice a baseball diamond
- Trailhead is great; keep the prairie preserved around the trailhead

5. Derek L.

- Trailhead next to a soccer field could provide an open turf area for individuals that need space to stretch, layout, etc... Also, overflow for trailhead related events and activities.
- **Q2. Can the ITEP Baker's Lane trail route be adjusted to go less into the prairie?**
 - **A: Yes, the trail can be adjusted to stay closer to the tree line. The shade of the trees will be an asset and the prairie will be less impacted. The trail does require some additional grading for drainage and will have a turf mowed shoulder. Actual locations where it meanders through the tree line will be evaluated to minimize impact to the trees.**

1. Bob V.

- Keep it close to the tree, it would be nice to go on a walk and look up at the trees
- Don't want to over strip the trees, be careful of cutting down too many trees

2. John Z.

- Trail alignment in Weaver and Prairie Parks is a matter to be finalized and designed
- We need to find right compromise for the direction of the trail; could be weaving between trees
- Drainageway will cross and go under the trail at one point; balance of minimizing the impacts and managing the grade
- Will do a tree evaluation with arborists, so we can preserve high quality trees and eliminate the trees we do not want to keep if they are invasive or unsafe near a trail

3. **Mary W.**

- Are these trees that should be kept? Certain trees?
 - Derek: Walked the trees about 15 years ago; there are some trees that are considered invasive that we can take out and there are also trees that we want to keep
 - Derek: We have also done a couple phases of clearing some of the invasive brush under the trees.

● **Q3. Are lights required for the ITEP Baker's Lane trail?**

- **A: Lights are included in the grant but are not required. Because the trail will be a transportation link from Washington Ave to Main Street, lights would make it safer for evening use. Lights that are being considered are night sky friendly and offer neighbor cutoff shields that can limit light trespass away from the trail. Pole lights or bollards are both under consideration. The First Ave trail lights between Windsor Ave and Curtis Rd have good light boundary design and are motion activated for example.**

1. **Phil A.**

- Jeff Y. brought this up – example on First Ave., south of Windsor. It is quite impressive. 15ft pole lights. Light does not bleed off the trail

2. **Mary W.**

- Speaking on the trail lights on First Ave...
 - Motion activated and will get brighter as you approach
 - Quality and designs of lights now are better than when it's used to be

3. **Derek L.**

- Speaking on the trail lights on First Ave...
- Very subtle change of lighting from bright to dim
- Missoula, Montana has a dark sky ordinance; trail lights have cutoffs and they have had no complaints from neighbors

4. **Tim B.**

- UPDAC pavilions lights are pretty subtle

- We're going to need lights for parking lots, pavilions, so we need to recognize that more lighting will be needed at reasonable spots; minimal lighting for safety. We do not want a completely dark park.
- We have to be conscious of existing neighbors; don't want to flood neighbors with unnecessary lighting

5. Bob V.

- Keep as much of the park dark as possible; you can stargaze at Weaver and Prairie as of now with minimal light pollution
- **Q4. Why was a premier trailhead facility planned for at Weaver Park? Are there equal alternatives to locating the trailhead facility at another location instead of at Weaver Park?**
 - **A: A Premier trailhead was chosen for Weaver because it is the Signature Park in Urbana closest to the KRT and is of a size that could support large community events like a run or even a marathon. There are no other regional parks as close to the trail or with as much potential for trail support as Weaver Park. The trailhead will benefit the community by having a safe location to access the trail and can provide additional free activities and amenities for folks arriving or departing from Urbana including restrooms, water, bike tools, environmental education and more. The KRT Friends group has additionally acquired land north of Weaver as a connection to the KRT and is working with other communities to improve the trail user experience along its route.**

1. Bob V.

- Now purchased property that is located across the street from Weaver and Prairie; how long will it take for the district to make an access.
 - Derek: This is part of our ITEP grant, so hoping within 2 years

2. Tim B.

- Friends of KRT group is working with St Joseph to establish a trailhead; we encourage trailheads along the KRT to make connections where people can stop and rest in between their journeys.

3. George H.

- Are we covering the layout of the trailhead?
 - Derek: not currently but it is on our schedule to hire designers and to begin working that information out.

- **Q5. Will the 24.5 miles KRT greenway provide ecological benefits to parks and areas near Weaver Park?**

- **A:** As a corridor park with trees, prairie, and other naturalized vegetation, the KRT greenway will provide the same benefits as other parks by improving air, water, and soil quality, urban cooling/shade, and capturing carbon dioxide. Additionally, linear parks like the KRT greenway can provide wildlife corridors by linking habitats through which wildlife can safely move. Click [here](#) to learn more about these benefits.

1. Bob V.

- Corridors are vital for animals; animals will cross the street and get squashed
- Corridors magnify the value of what its connected to

2. George H.

- We need to have corridors; this might slow down mass extinction amongst animals
- Any type of intentions of saving local genotypes and making connections will be beneficial

- **Q6.** What does the Urbana Park District Trails Master Plan recommend for Weaver and how would trails there be beneficial to residents?

- **A:** The UPD trails master plan and the 2005 master plan calls for loop trails around the periphery of Weaver and Prairie Parks, an east-west connector trail through the center of Weaver offering smaller loops, they also call fora natural area mowed trail within Weaver. In addition to these trails, the Urbana Park District must meet accessibility requirements specific to intended park uses and programs. Trails will be of benefit to residents and neighbors, pedestrians and cyclists, who want to engage in active lifestyle outdoor activities and will provide safe access for people of all abilities.



1. Tammy M.

- My thoughts... The Urbana Park District created this prairie in the first place and recreation has been in the works for many years so the Park District should have the most sway to what happens with it. However, I love that deep attention is being made to listen to community members
- Excited as a resident to take a walk; when we go for walks it's usually around the neighborhoods and not the natural areas because it's hard to traverse. Love the idea of having walkways like the ones at Meadowbrook Park

2. George H.

- Is there a place for keeping it quiet? Baker's Lane will have a lot of fast traffic. Can we keep slower traffic in the other trails at Weaver and Prairie Parks?
- Can we do something to make the trail infrastructure feel more natural? Maybe choosing a material that looks more natural? Permeable trails?
- Surface of walking and running matters; It can impact users greatly.
- Outdoor classroom or gathering space that can be artfully done; "Weaver Wonders Spirit"
- Including trails in a way that feels more artful and could be a very kind of different experience with what we see at Meadowbrook
- The more unnatural it feels the more it can take something away.... Feeling more natural can be more of a benefit of the atmosphere of Weaver and Prairie Parks. We don't want to lose that sense of wonder.
- Make ADA carts accessible for the public to use on trails and other terrain
- I like the idea of skateboards, but don't want to have them zip through the hard surface trails; So, what can we do to slow that down?
- Water diverter across the trail, grade changes
- Signs about having a quiet trail might deter skateboarders from using hard surface trails
- People who have enjoyed the quietness in Weaver and Prairie Park might not like the fast travel the hard surface trails will bring.

- Are the mowed paths that go right through Weaver intentional?
 - Derek: Those are fire breaks for when we do a burn
- More fragmentation can decrease wildlife

3. Bob V.

- Gravel path is not any more natural than a concrete path
- Not a lot of fast traffic at Meadowbrook Park which has hard surface paths; you don't see a lot of skateboarders

4. Corky E.

- If we get a skatepark that's where our skateboarders will be

5. Tim B.

- Hierarchy of trails – selecting the right location and materials
 - Park routes - major features
 - Soft trails - quiet audience, nature experience,
- Trails are often good burn breaks
- Roger Digges explains that trails are welcoming; it crosses cultures; it's a welcoming gesture
- Trails can be a part of “You belong Here”
- Interpretation – most international students claimed that hardscape trails can give you a border of where to be

6. Phil A.

- Potential to connect to street traffic
- How do you see dogs on the paved trails?
 - Derek: Paved paths we welcome them
 - We don't want them on mowed paths in natural areas; they tend to mark territory. This is something we are revisiting with our natural areas committee to see if this is the correct approach

Next Meeting

- Discussing next steps

- Second round of subcommittee meetings
- Reconvening as a whole committee (all stakeholder members)
- Status of how we feel?
 - George – this is a special location; if we do have room to make it special... do things more artfully... and being aware of the things we can move into overtime
 - Panels that have native language as you're entering
 - We are in a place where we should be recognizing the indigenous people of the land
 - We can do things to send a healthier message; say who we are and do things that are much more harmonious
 - Are there indigenous people in our area that we can connect with?
- Date and time
 - TBD

Mar 4, 2024 | [Natural Resources & Environment Subcommittee Meeting](#)

Attendees: Derek L., Tim B., Corky E., Keenan P., Savannah D., George H., Julie N., Bob V., Matt B., Henry P., Phil A., Chris B., Zak S.

Overview

- Previous Natural Resources & Environment Subcommittee meeting
 - Derek L. - Minutes of previous stakeholder meeting on UPD planning website
- Research on wetland and grassland bird habitat
 - Henry P. - Status of birds as it relates to wetland and grassland habitat
 - Henry P. - If we were to move forward with the proposed plan
 - Wetland birds will be not as affected as the grassland birds with the proposed development of Weaver and Prairie Parks
 - Grassland birds - a general consensus- grassland birds are doing poorly in general- biggest thing that impacts birds is the size of the grassland - avoid fragmentation of existing grasslands
 - Could expect certain grassland bird species to disappear from Weaver Park
 - Birds can still breed in small patches but area-sensitive grassland species will have a negative effect on the population with a reduction in patch size
 - Essentially, if the plan goes forward - wetland birds species won't be as affected as grassland species if we take out half of the habitat
 - A lot of the habitat at Weaver is used for migration and not mating
 - Serves a conservation purpose for migrating birds - not exactly built for breeding
 - Grassland birds are among the most rapidly declining species; habitat loss is the primary factor that's threatening these grassland birds
 - Zak S. - Other species that are declining; meadowlark, savanna sparrows, Nelson's sparrow, sora rails, Virginia rail, yellow rail, cattle egret, whippoorwill, grasshopper sparrow, rusty blackbird

- Rare species population declining due to minimal specific habitat needs
- Derek L. - A lot of the birds Zak is mentioning are wetland species and hopefully buffering can minimize negative effects on population – would like to do a deep dive on grassland birds to see what we can do there
- Derek L. - To Henry P. - Curious if the habitat at Perkin's replicates and expands upon any of that from Weaver Park. Comparing and contrasting UPD with forest preserve district - park district does not always have the space for habitat to support area-sensitive species; forest preserves have more space to host rare species in a habitat
- Derek L. - We want to provide a place for people to learn at these bird watching sites - we don't know much about the bird population at Perkins Road site and encourage more studies and monitoring there while we continue to look at the grassland birds situation at weaver park
- Henry P. - Thank you to UPD for taking the time to deal with all its stakeholders to get the right outcome for what's needed
- Henry P. - It's important to focus on something like Perkins Rd Site, Derek and park district helped make Weaver, it's a restored area; any possibility to grow grassland it should be a priority
- George H. - We could have a place that has more diversity and not cut down any of the grassland that we're trying to develop over
- George H. - I would love to see wet woods and dry woods - all of this can be educational - we need to shoot for more education of development
- George H. - Ecological restoration is part of a boom where people are visiting larger natural areas
 - Henry P. - You have a lot of good points there, we're losing these habitats more and more
- Henry P. - If we think about all the district natural areas - can we make up for anything we lose at Weaver Park?
- George H. - Initial Outdoor Courts and Fields survey did not give a whole lot of thought of natural areas

- Chris B. - I noticed when I was clearing invasive species, I saw woodcocks, individually and breeding. Would they be affected by fragmentation caused by athletic fields?
 - Henry P. - Yes, they would negatively be affected by grassland loss.
 - Savannah D. - Woodcocks use grassland as mating ground, they like a graduation of habitat
- Julie N. - What attracts wetland birds?
 - Zak S. - Optimistic for breeding vs migrating
 - Henry P. - This particular habitat is not huge so it's hard to generalize what exactly attracts birds to Weaver Park
- **Urbana Park District Natural Areas needs assessment**
- Matt B.
 - We are interested in talking to professionals/ecologist to help us get an idea of the most suffering habitats and noting the ones that are in dire need and implementing more of those from the survey
 - We also want a public survey with options
 - Usage barriers to entry; how can we get more people out to the park to experience our natural areas
 - What is important data to collect?
 - What type of natural area do you want more of?
 - How can natural areas be enhanced?
 - Share research and questions for planned natural areas focused survey
 - Please share anything regarding our natural areas
 - Julie N. - It could be the public does not know about certain aspects of UPDs natural areas, so it might be in our interest to educate them on things they might not like simply because they don't know about it
 - George H. - Having a square of importance; Urgent, Important not urgent, and Not urgent, and Important and urgent assess that some things are more urgent and some things are still important
 - George H. - Might move into a situation where we can use a lot more native foods.

- Phil A. - In the process of thinking about what data would be interesting to people... I wouldn't do that but instead focus on the data you find useful... present that, then you won't be constantly changing your data scheme. People might still learn new things... a lot of potential to get data and model them in different ways. Whatever is useful to however we find it, do not conform to just what the public wants. What do you find useful?
- Matt B. - To get the data that would be useful for me to collect; I'll need the opinion of the public
- Savannah D. - Reporting species anytime new species pop-up in Urbana
- Chris B. - I've spent 30 years working in design in different ways, industrial, ceramic, You start to see how things work, every day I ride my bike past Meadowbrook and yesterday I saw so many different people doing different things. I have a vision for Weaver Park, a loop trail that's akin to Meadowbrook Park. Having those softball fields will diminish that experience to the people who use that trail at Weaver Park. Softball fields will affect those areas negatively. So please leave those softball fields out of the plan; It would benefit the community and KRT group

KRT and ITEP

- Updates on planning process for KRT and ITEP
- Continue to meet and talk with the 4 different subcommittee groups
- Continue to stay updated on all aspects of Weaver & Prairie Parks
- Completed interviews of design teams
 - Design team is ERA for ITEP trail and Farnsworth for KRT trailhead
- Eager to get back with Farnsworth because we need to know where the trailhead facility needs to go; we need construction started by 2025 and complete by fall
- Review of Round 2 Trails & KRT Subcommittee meeting minutes - staff will send out for committee review

FAQs

- Reviewing FAQs relating to Natural Resources & Environment Subcommittee
 - *Short on time; UPD will send out and request please review FAQs document on your on time*

Next Meeting

- Discussing next steps

- Derek L. - Community engagement with schools surrounding Weaver Park, sticky dot activities, by end of March
- Derek L. - Are we ready to go back to the design stages?
- Julie N. - We need to wait on that - we're lacking diversity in our stakeholder community meetings
 - Corky - Urbana Neighborhood Connections and Dream Academy should help us with more engagement
 - Chris B. - Would be nice to have more diversity before moving on; there is a lack of representation
 - Talked to 6 people from the community surrounding Weaver and they weren't aware what was happening
 - Derek L. – We are doing engagement at the schools surrounding Weaver and Prairie Parks—we will flyer surrounding neighborhoods to engage with those residents that are not represented
 - Julie N. - Lots of people in the earlier survey that wanted trails, natural areas... and we haven't discussed any of those options yet
 - Chris B. - 1400 people signing a petition is some kind of feedback
 - George H. - Does the survey state the facts about implementing sports fields? How clear are we going to be in these surveys?
 - Encourage us to ask those questions to the public
 - People who have signed that petition may not have experienced everything in this process
 - People don't want to receive just three options and have to decide
 - Corky E. - 20 years ago we did have a master plan with ballfields and that's why the land was bought
 - Derek L. - let us think about what we talked about today, we do recognize and appreciate that Urbana Park District treasures natural areas
 - Julie N. - What we have, athletic wise, is serving a decent amount of the community, so do we really need more?
- Date and time

- Taking the time to go over what we heard today and will reconvene as an entire stakeholder committee

May 20, 2024 | [Weaver & Prairie Parks Stakeholder Committee Meeting](#)

Attendees: Phil A., Tim B., Matt B., Corky E., Janet F., Mel F., George H., Derek L., Jeff M., Julie N., Keenan P., Andy R., Riley J., Bob V., Ashley W., Mary W.

Initial Public Input Survey and Focus Group (Derek L.)

- Reviewing Urbana Outdoor Courts, Fields, and Amenities Survey—emailed separately
- Focus Group Summary—emailed separately
- Heat Map Survey Data—emailed separately
- Parking and accessibility were the biggest concern for soccer
- Brookens' lease ending was not released to the public before the survey, so people were under the impression that Brookens soccer fields location and quantity were going to be okay to use in the future

Steering Committee Discussions (Derek L.)

- All subcommittee minutes are up to date
- Natural resource survey will go out in the next few days
 - A chance for professionals and public to give feedback about natural areas within the Urbana Park District
- Steering Committee Summary—emailed separately

Public and School Engagement Results (Derek L. and Keenan P.)

- Julie N. - I heard from a teacher that during engagement at Dr. Preston Williams, the engagement seemed a little rushed and that there was not much time for discussion
 - Keenan P. - Given the time we had, we did our best to ensure the children understood what options they were picking from and encouraged them to take their time to look at all the options and not just one particular amenity

Summary of Steering Committee Input To-Date—emailed separately

- Entire Committee
 - Brookens lease ends 2026
 - Two new Grant: ITEP/Bakers Lane Trail and KRT Trailhead pavilion
- Natural Resources & Environment
 - Protect core grassland if possible
 - Need survey to assess what is needed district-wide (coming soon)
- Athletics & Active Recreation
 - Soccer is a top recreational amenity and is threatened by the loss of Brookens
 - Grouping active recreation elements that need lighting
- Trails & KRT

- Bakers Lane trails will stay west of bioswale in Weaver; will not cut through at all
 - Need for dark sky lighting along trail
- School & Community Engagement
 - Expanded engagement to public schools and afterschool programs

Softball Ball Field Possibility (Derek L.)

- Potential to construct a softball field in AMBUCS Park to accommodate for the loss of softball fields in the Weaver & Prairie Parks Master Plan
 - Mary W. - Does the park district own the land at AMBUCS?
 - Derek L. - We do but a much longer lease than Brookens
 - Mary W. - A very great consideration to put a softball field at AMBUCS
 - Ashley W. - It would be nice having softball in a location that can accommodate transportation
 - Tim B. still need to work with stakeholders at AMBUCS Park.

Discussion of Plan Update Options (Jeff M.)

- 3 concepts
- 46.9 acres of natural area
- 12.7 acres of turf
- 4 large soccer fields and two smaller soccer fields
- Option 1
 - Parking along west property line replacing lower quality plantings (150 spots)
 - 4 large soccer fields; one north in natural areas
 - Trying to keep soccer far from wetland
 - North - Trailhead facility, existing parking lot, turf (overflow parking), smaller event area - 15000-20000 sqft.
 - Prairie Park
 - Health and Wellness Center plus amenities including sled hill
 - Everything won't happen at once; we'll phase things so we are not just adding 8 pickleball courts at once. We'll start with 4 and so on. This will allow adjustments to be made if we see a decline in pickleball for example.
- Option 2
 - Tried to keep parking centralized in this option; thinking about a busy soccer weekend. Parking would go south of soccer fields that are located in the turf portion of Weaver Park
 - Centralized overflow parking that could also be used for events/activities
 - 130 parking spaces and 45 overflow spaces
- **Julie N.** - Do we need to review the data a little bit more to ensure that we want to add things like pickle ball and sand volleyball?

- **Corky E.** - The most recent engagement does not reflect the need for pickleball. It is more of an older crowd in the initial community-wide survey that has requested pickleball, so it is not as popular with the school and youth groups we have recently done engagement for.
 - **Mary W.** - What kind of events do you guys envision wedged in between soccer?
 - **Tim B.** - Kite flying events, league events and other programming opportunities
 - **Mel F.** - To keep the two smaller soccer fields away from the wetland, maybe move them more to the northwest of the site. West of the wetland
 - **Derek L.** - We can think more about buffering the wetland on the southeast side
 - **Phil A.** - How long would it take to grade the land for soccer up along the West side?
 - Jeff M. - You would be looking at least two years
 - **George H.** - Longer term picture – conversation with the county to get land closer to Lierrman over time - we could get food forests, softball fields, etc... over on that land
 - Option 3
 - In this option, the sled hill gets taken out for flexibility
 - Soccer staying in turf area and not entering natural areas
 - Two smaller soccer fields moved to prairie in place of the sled hill
 - Event space, now between soccer fields in turf area; but, also overflow parking can help prevent soccer balls from going into the wetland
 - Combining skate park with splash pad in one area creates this “18 and under fun zone” that will be attractive for programming and keeping that age group in a specific area
 - **Ashley W.** - Will the skatepark be fenced off? My concern being children running into the skatepark area and getting injured
 - **Derek L.** - We've looked at concepts that are fenced off and are discussing options
 - **Tim B.** - Removing sled hill gives us more space instead of buying, leasing, and renting new land
 - **George H.** Will the sound from prairie park affect the natural area? Do we need some sort of buffer?
 - **Ashley W.** - How often do soccer programs combine older and younger kids in the same field? My thoughts being... What if you are a parent and one kid is on the smaller field in Prairie but the other is playing at the larger field in Weaver?
 - **Mel F.** - All ages can practice and play at the same time but on different fields
 - **Bob V.** - I really like this concept. It does not impede on the Marsh

- **Jeff M.** - Near the splash pad and skatepark there will be a restroom facility
- **Matt B.** - Layout provides minimal impacts to the existing prairies at the site
- **Mel F.** - I like it; but, will have to be done in phases. Might take a while to remove the sled hill. I am excited!
- **Tim B.** - Pickleball and volleyball could be flopped with the smaller soccer fields
- **George H.**- A lot of water to be picked up around where the bioswale drains in Weaver
- **Julie N.** - Can we pull some of that event space in the north to the west to decrease the amount of prairie being affected
 - **Matt B.** - You get evening and afternoon shade in that event space by moving it to the west
- **George H.** - A slight berm along the north end of the soccer fields could be beneficial to protect the wetland and stop soccer balls from entering
- **Tim B.** - Let's remember that option 3 is totally reliant on getting rid of that sled hill
- **Mel F.** - What materials are used for the parking areas around the soccer fields in Weaver?
 - **Derek L.** - I expect those to be concrete and the event space turf, possibly some permeable paving
- **Next Steps**
 - Present plan updates to UPDAC and NAC, then to Board for review before a larger community open house.

Comments/Questions

- **George H.** - Keeping Amphibians in mind around the wetland when talking about space needed
 - We should not drive the Kickapoo name (KRT); we should be serious about representing Kickapoo nations in other ways
 - This can be sensitive to natives that are here and possibly returning
 - Still keeping an environment that feels natural while also making it a place for athletics
 - Green over gray infrastructure and design
 - KRT head can be really special for recognizing Kickapoo nations
 - Having food forests near something like Weaver and Prairie can spark educational opportunities that can increase awareness... there is a national and global movement of food forests
 - **Tim B.** - This is not an ideal site for a food forest. Spoke with the University and they seemed interested in a central location like the Arboretum for a potential food forest

- **Mary W.** - How much management is required for a food forest?
 - **Derek L.** - From examples like Bloomington-Normal, it takes a lot of management to keep things running
- **Phil A.** - Will there be nets to stop soccer balls from going into the wetland?
 - **Corky E.** - We've seen examples of nets at a park in Charleston
 - **Ashley W.** - I would be concerned about birds flying into nets
- **Julie N.**
 - There's a swale to the east of the wetland that can potentially cause flooding near soccer fields
- **Julie N.** - We're still making decisions without anyone from the neighborhood being here and still lacking diversity within the group
 - **Tim B.** - We've found it best for UPD to go to neighbors rather than having people come to us; that's just how things worked out
 - **Derek L.** - We did our best to connect with neighbors during our recent engagements and especially during the parent teacher conferences at Dr. Preston L. Williams. We can bring updated plans back to our outreach groups as well.
- **Tim B.** - Open house at the school could be a great opportunity for close Weaver and Prairie Parks neighbors to give input
- **Tim B.** - Very important to realize that this will take years to develop so the master plan can change multiple times like Meadowbrook and Crystal Lake Park. We changed the whole concept from 25 years ago so it's possible it will happen in the next 20-25 years as well