

# **Park District of Oak Park Ridgeland Common Master Plan**

Public Meeting Number One  
Monday, December 3, 2007

## Agenda

- Welcome
- Introductions
- Process and Schedule
- Site Analysis
- Communications
- Public Input
- Closing Comments

December 2007



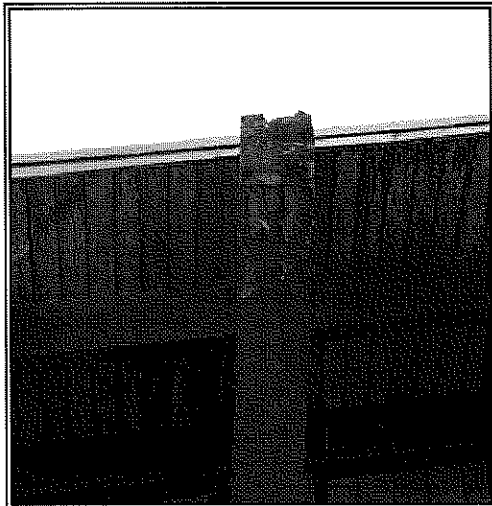
## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recent Park District of Oak Park master planning and capital improvement initiatives called for a master plan for Ridgeland Common to be prepared in 2007. However, the Park District determined that a technical assessment of Ridgeland Common facilities would be required before such a master plan could be prepared. The TD&A Team was hired to conduct this assessment, and included Thompson Dyke & Associates, Ltd., Counsilman - Hunsaker & Associates, General Energy Corporation and Ehlike Lonigro Architects, Ltd. Detailed site assessments of all of Ridgeland Common facility systems were performed by the TD&A Team members in February and March of 2007 with the assistance of Park District Staff.



*Despite the fact that Ridgeland Common has become physically and functionally obsolete, it continues to provide a home to many popular events and programs for Oak Park residents.*

Ridgeland Common is a 6.06 acre heavily used park and recreation site. It contains a 35,000 square foot main building built in 1962 that includes a 27,000 square foot ice rink/indoor soccer field. It also features a 50-meter outdoor pool, two lighted ball fields, a sled hill and a recently provided dog friendly area. Ridgeland Common serves many special user groups and organizations and has seen continued expansion of programming and usage but no substantial renovations with the exception of a few required building system replacements over the years. As time goes on, its systems continue to age and maintenance costs keep rising.

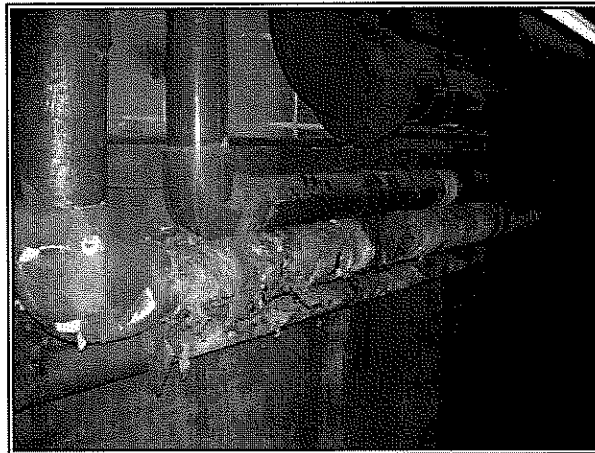


*A deteriorated beam end, identified in the architectural assessment, illustrates the need for substantial repairs at Ridgeland Common.*

The TD&A Team began the assessment process with extensive data gathering. Data was obtained through Park District and Village staff interviews, community meetings, key citizen phone interviews, a focus group, special user group interviews and questionnaire results.

The TD&A Team then conducted a detailed technical assessment of all of Ridgeland Common's mechanical systems, architectural/structural systems, pool and

aquatic systems and a park site analysis. The Team concluded that extensive renovation of most of Ridgeland Common is needed within a 5-year time span. The Team also determined that the Park District should carefully consider the substantial costs of renovating existing improvements versus building a new facility. The Team found that even if it is renovated/repared, Ridgeland Common's facilities are functionally obsolete. Ridgeland Common no longer represents the "flagship" facility it formerly did and lacks the flexibility to meet new programming needs. The total cost of the renovations/repairs recommended is estimated between \$9.01 Million and \$9.73 Million in 2007 dollars.



*Building systems in disrepair are a common sight at Ridgeland Common and cause many day to day maintenance issues. Unfortunately, undertaking extensive renovation/repair is costly and time consuming.*

Accordingly, the Team concludes that Ridgeland Common has outlived its useful life. While renovations/repairs can be undertaken, the Team believes it does not make sense to renovate/repair a facility that is *physically and functionally obsolete*. It is recommended that the Park District carefully considers the findings, recommendations and estimated costs in any decisions on extending the useful life of Ridgeland Common. Regardless, the ultimate decision on whether to renovate/repair Ridgeland Common or to replace it with new facilities will require long and short-term sacrifice by all of those now using Ridgeland Common.

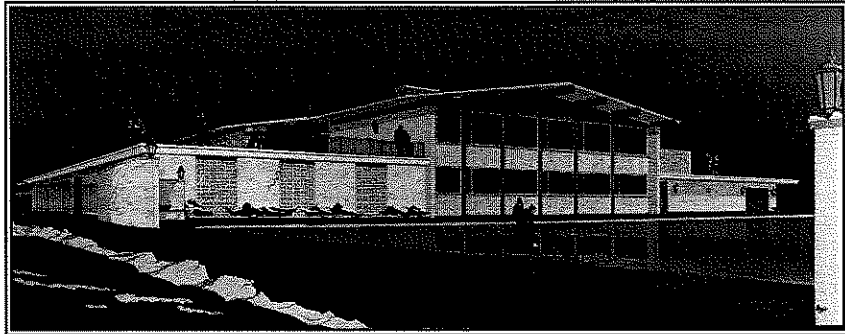
## HISTORY OF RIDGELAND COMMON

The following is a summary of the history of Ridgeland Common, compiled from several sources obtained during the data gathering phase of the Study (including the Park District website, newspaper articles from the Oak Leaves and Wednesday Journal; interviews with persons involved in the construction of the present improvements and a history document provided by William Hamilton of the Park District Staff):

- In 1912, the Park District of Oak Park was established and the Ridgeland Common site, commonly known as the “Old Cricket Grounds,” was purchased for \$135,637 from Charles B. Scoville.

The park was designed by noted Landscape Architect, Jens Jensen.

- In 1914, Ridgeland Common was enlarged to almost



double its former size with the acquisition of property lying west

*Originally designed by Jack E. Barclay, Architect and Engineer, Ridgeland Common was seen as a “flagship” recreation center for the Park District of Oak Park in the 1960’s. Since that time many activities and programs have*

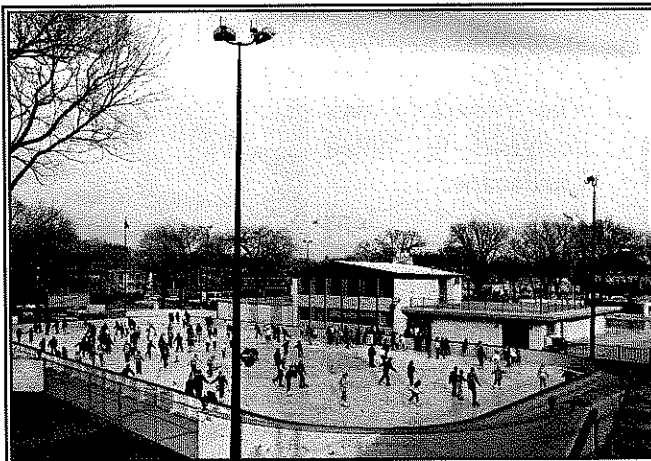
of Elmwood to Scoville. This parcel was formerly used as a storage yard for a public service company but had been proposed for residential development. The potential development of the site prompted its acquisition.

- In 1923, toboggan slides were erected and a skating pond was built at Ridgeland Common.
- In 1936, park buildings and comfort stations were constructed.
- In 1962, the existing building at Ridgeland Common was built. The building and other improvements were designed by local architect, Jack Barclay. Site improvements included a seasonal outdoor 50-meter competitive swimming pool with attached 12 foot diving well and a separate wading pool located on the east side of the building. Also constructed was an open outdoor ice rink measuring 85 x 185 feet providing seasonal ice-skating. The Rink’s refrigeration was originally designed as a traditional system with a dedicated cooling tower. However, to reduce cost, the swimming pool was utilized in lieu of the cooling tower because the swimming and skating seasons did not overlap. This unique design provides the added benefit of protecting the pool during winter months because it contains water that is typically warmer than ambient temperature. When new, the Ridgeland Common building contained locker rooms, mechanical rooms and facility administrative offices for functions at the site but little else.
- In 1965, the rink was further improved when a roof with skylights was constructed to cover the ice. The roof was supported by brick walls and columns, but the Rink was not fully enclosed and remained unheated. At that time, bleachers were also added on the west side of the Rink and radiant heaters were installed over the bleachers. The player’s

box was moved to the east side of the Rink. The Chicago Black Hawks used the Ridgeland Common Rink as a practice facility during this time period.

- Also in 1965, baseball/softball fields were installed on the west side of the building. These fields were the first lighted athletic fields in the Park District system. In addition, two basketball courts, a hand ball court and a sled hill were constructed on the southwest side of the site.
- From 1965 to 1982 there were few changes to the Ridgeland Common site and building.

- In 1982, the main building and the Rink received some updating and improvements. The front entrance doors were moved north to their current location, the upper lobby was tiled and new light fixtures were installed. The Rink was fully enclosed and received a forced air heating system, a dehumidification system, a roof-mounted exhaust system and a new PA/music system was installed. Glass was added to the front of the facility and the remaining openings in the brick walls were filled with fiberglass (Kalwall) panels. The Pool's filter system received an upgrade with the installation of 40 new filter grids to replace the original grids.



*Ridgeland Common was originally constructed with an outdoor ice rink, which was fully enclosed in 1982. Since that time refrigeration equipment encased in the rink structure continues to deteriorate.*

- In 1985, the original refrigeration system was replaced. Three New York 100-ton compressors were installed and related equipment was also replaced at this time. A new Zamboni ice machine was purchased to replace an aging model.
- In 1993, the pools were experiencing serious signs of aging and a renovation was considered. The pool decks were severely cracked and heaving, locker rooms were old and worn and steel pool pipes were beginning to deteriorate and lead to break downs.
- After a lengthy planning process, in the Fall of 1995, major pool renovations were initiated. While the basic shell of the main pool was in good condition, all decks, were replaced, all steel supply and return pipes were replaced with "Schedule 80" plastic pipe and the supply and return lines were relocated. Once this work was complete, the concrete decks above the pipes were replaced. In addition, the wading pool was completely replaced with a zero edge pool featuring a spray pad feature, and an independent filtration and heating system was installed to separate it from the main pool's filter system. In order for all of this construction work to be undertaken over the Fall and Winter months, the Pool had to be drained and could no longer function as the cooling tower for the Rink refrigeration equipment. An evaporative condenser had to be installed and operated during construction. However, this temporary system was not ideal and presented many mechanical issues. Nevertheless, the rink was functional for the full season with little service interruption. Work on both of these pools was completed and they opened in May of 1996. Once construction was completed, the evaporative condenser was taken out of service (but remains on the adult deck) and the

rink's refrigeration system was converted back to its former pool-based configuration for the following year. Unfortunately, additional renovations identified in the planning process were not undertaken due to fiscal constraints and were put off to a future date. Deferred projects included locker room renovation and filter renovation.

- In 2000, the locker room lockers were added, ADA accessible bathrooms were created and new shower facilities installed. Tile floors and walls were replaced and drop ceilings added. Much needed office space was added in an existing hallway and hockey locker rooms were constructed on the south side of the rink to reduce wear and tear on the new pool lockers. In addition, a storage area and coaches' room were added in the southwest corner of the Rink.
- In 2002 the main pool pump was replaced and the motor was rebuilt.
- In 2004 a Comprehensive Plan and Capital Improvement Plan were prepared indicating Ridgeland Common as an aging facility in need of comprehensive study.
- In 2006 the temporary dog friendly facility at Ridgeland Common was constructed in the area that formerly was used for basketball courts and a handball court. Dogs are also authorized to be off leash on the ballfields on weekend mornings under the "Dog Park Plus" program.

## **USES AND USERS SERVED AT RIDGELAND COMMON**

Ridgeland Common is a major resource for the Park District, many other Oak Park jurisdictions/institutions and provides facilities for many special recreation organizations and user groups. Facilities at Ridgeland Common are heavily used and the following major users/events were identified by Park District Staff during the preparation of this Report:

### **Ridgeland Common Swimming Pools**

- Approximately 40,000 to 55,000 patrons per year use the pool during public swims, family swims and special events. Yearly attendance can vary greatly depending on weather conditions.
- Approximately 10,000 – 12,000 individual Pool Passes are issued each year allowing pass holders to use both Park District pools (Ridgeland Common and Rehm).
- The 50-meter pool is the summer practice and home meet site for The Oak Park Swimmers (TOPS) which typically has 250 members, holds several meets and hosts an annual Father's Day meet involving 700-800 swimmers.
- Lap swimming is available each day.
- Approximately 250 day-campers in three different programs use the Pool each day and it is also used by approximately 30-35 persons (including Staff) from the West Suburban Special Recreation Association (WSSRA) Summer Camp.
- Swimming lessons for up to 800 participants are provided each season.
- Teen special events, kayaking and scuba diving instruction and water polo are also held at the Pool.

### **Ridgeland Common Ice Rink/Arena**

- Approximately 12,000 skaters utilize the Rink during Weekly Public Skating Hours.
- Approximately 900 participants receive skating lessons each year.
- Approximately 300 skaters participate in the yearly Ice Show in late winter.
- Approximately 350 youths and adults participate in recreational and travel programs.
- Serves as "home ice" for both the Oak Park River Forest High School and Fenwick High School hockey programs (6 teams total) for practice and games.
- Each week, seven private groups rent the rink for events.
- Is available for birthday parties and other rental events.

### **Indoor Soccer (in the Ice Arena in Summer Months)**

- Park District adult soccer leagues, consisting of both Coed and Men's Leagues use the facility.
- Youth soccer lessons are offered.
- Group rental of the soccer surface for parties or events is offered.

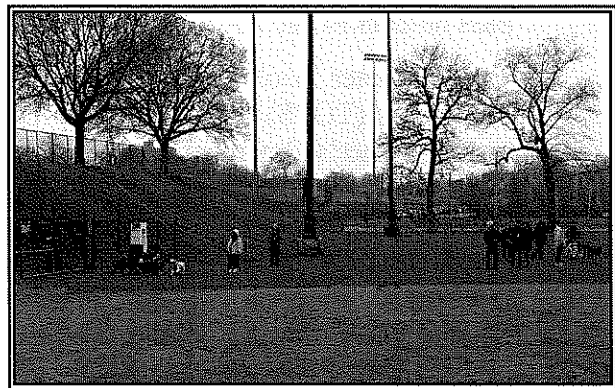
- Approximately 900 summer sports camp participants use the Arena during weekdays.
- Junior high soccer practice takes place on Sunday evenings.

### **Baseball/Softball Fields**

- Between 1,800 and 1,900 participants of Oak Park Youth Baseball and Windmills utilize the fields each year.
- A July 4<sup>th</sup> Baseball championship tournament is held there each year.
- 800-900 players in Park District adult softball leagues use the fields.
- Oak Park River Forest High School softball, lacrosse and band practice takes place on the fields.
- AYSO soccer practice and games take place at the field.
- The fields and adjacent sled hill are utilized as a dog park during weekend mornings.

### **Dog Friendly Areas (Dog Park)**

- Some 300 residents of Oak Park are licensed to use the fenced Dog Park and expanded Dog Park Plus areas (weekends only).



*The Dog Park and Dog Park Plus provide a popular recreational and social outlet for canines and their human companions. This use shares scarce park space with other park users.*

### **Sled Hill**

- Is used extensively when weather permits (approximately five weeks each year).