

## I. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

### **Impetus for Study**

In 2002, at the request of the Board of Commissioners of the Park District of Oak Park (Park District), the Oak Park Parks Infrastructure Citizens Committee prepared a report entitled “Proposed Capital Improvement Program, November 2002.” This report identified key facilities in the Park District system suffering from significant deferred maintenance. The findings were based on the Committee’s inventory and assessment of existing conditions at each facility. Recommendations to address these conditions were developed by the Committee and corresponding priorities were assigned for their implementation. The report also provided some system-wide recommendations for the entire Park District. These included the preparation of a Comprehensive Plan for the entire Park District system, a Capital Improvement Plan to direct Park District capital expenditures and individual park master plans for each Park District park/facility.

Based on these recommendations, the Park District developed the recommended Plan and Capital Improvement Plan and, in early 2005, the “Comprehensive Plan and Five Year Capital Improvement Plan” were implemented to facilitate park renovation and improvements throughout the 26 facilities/80 acres of land constituting the Park District system. Recommended funding for the various renovations/improvements in the 2005 Capital Improvement Plan was also identified. The principal funding source for recommended improvements is tax revenues generated by a 2005-tax rate increase. This tax increase was championed by the Park District “Renew Our Park” Citizens Committee and received substantial support from Oak Park residents. The increase was proposed by the Park District to replace an annual fund transfer from the Village of Oak Park, and was aimed at funding a substantial portion of the 2005 Capital Improvement Plan. The referendum authorizing the increase was supported by more than 62% of Park District voters.

As with the 2002 Parks Infrastructure Committee report, the 2005 Capital Improvement Plan recommends that the Park District prepare park master plans for each park/facility in the Park District system including Ridgeland Common. The 2005 Capital Improvement Plan also includes a schedule that identifies the year in which each park/facility master plan should be prepared. That schedule calls for a master plan for Ridgeland Common to be prepared in 2007. However, the Park District has determined that a technical assessment of the present condition of Ridgeland Common facilities is required before such a master plan can be prepared. This assessment will identify deficiencies at Ridgeland Common and include cost estimates for the necessary renovation /repairs to extend its useful life. The assessment will provide the information necessary for the Park District to decide whether these improvements to Ridgeland Common make economic sense. This decision represents a “threshold question” that must be answered before a master plan for Ridgeland Common can be prepared.

In order to evaluate the present condition of Ridgeland Common’s physical, mechanical, electrical, aquatic, structural and architectural systems and provide cost estimates for such renovation/repair, specialized consulting expertise is required. Specialized expertise in the fields of mechanical systems, electrical systems, structural engineering, architecture, aquatics, landscape architecture and urban planning is required so that a comprehensive “snapshot” of present conditions at Ridgeland Common can be compiled.

To that end, in late November of 2006, the Park District prepared and distributed a Request for Proposals soliciting the assistance of consultants qualified to conduct such an assessment of Ridgeland Common. After review of the proposals received, in February of 2007, the TD&A Team was selected to provide these assessment services for the Park District.

### **The TD&A Team**

The TD&A Team consists of Thompson Dyke & Associates, Ltd. (team leader, public input facilitation and site assessment), Counsilman - Hunsaker & Associates (aquatics assessment) General Energy Corporation (mechanical and electrical systems assessment) and Ehlke Lonigro Architects, Ltd. (architectural assessment). A diagram, entitled "Figure 1: Consultant Team Organization Chart" depicts the structure of the working structure of the TD&A Team.

Detailed site assessments of all of Ridgeland Commons facility systems were performed by all TD&A Team members in February and March of 2007 with the assistance of Park District Staff. This Report summarizes the results of the Team's findings.

## **II. PROJECT CONTEXT**

### **The Park District of Oak Park**

The Park District operates a park and recreation system that includes 26 parks/facilities on 80 acres of land. The Park District was established in 1912 and is celebrating its 95<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. It operates a mature facility system that includes seven community centers, a fitness center with three studios, a gymnastics center, a conservatory, two historic homes, two 50-meter outdoor swimming pools, one of which is located at Ridgeland Common, an indoor ice area, two sled hills, 28 outdoor tennis courts and numerous playfields and picnic areas. Ridgeland Common is the fifth largest park in the Park District system.



*Despite the fact that Ridgeland Common is in need of extensive renovation, the facility offers many important recreational amenities and programs to Oak Park residents and the surrounding community.*

Many mature communities developed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, such as Oak Park, are severely deficient in terms of the amount of open space that is provided for residents. Utilizing the 2000 Census population of 52,524, the Park District system provides a parkland to population ratio of only 1.52 acres/1,000 persons. While Oak Park is fully developed but experiencing some redevelopment, it is generally recommended that such mature communities provide a minimum of 8-10 acres/1,000 persons. However, some additional open space exists in Oak Park that is owned by other jurisdictions/institutions and has the practical effect of raising that ratio somewhat. Communities with open space

shortages of this magnitude, such as Oak Park, must resort to over-programming their existing parks/facilities and competition for limited resources frequently leads to conflict between competing interests.

To its credit, the Park District and its residents have accepted the challenges posed by these shortages and through negotiation and sensitivity for the wide range of needs and interests harbored by its residents, has managed to develop a recreation program for its parks/facilities that reasonably satisfies its residents. However, many Park District facilities, including Ridgeland Common, are aging and have been subject to deferred maintenance as the result of limited financial resources prior to the approval of the 2005 tax increase. These conditions at Ridgeland Common have been further exacerbated by the popularity of its programs, over programming of the facility, required sharing of limited space by non-complementary uses and a history of sharing these limited resources with other jurisdictions/institutions, including Oak Park River Forest High School and Fenwick High School.

### **Physical Description of Ridgeland Common**

Ridgeland Common is a 6.06 acre improved park site containing a building with 35,000 square feet of floor area. The Ice Rink contains 27,000 square feet of building area and the balance of the building contains 8,000 square feet of floor area. Ridgeland Common is located at the southwest corner of Lake Street and Ridgeland Avenue. It is bounded by Scoville Avenue on the west, Lake Street on the north, Ridgeland Avenue on the east and a railroad embankment on the south. Not only is Ridgeland Common centrally located within Oak Park, it is conveniently located on two major streets. It lies southeast of the Oak Park River Forest High School and a 300 space municipal parking structure operated by the High School. The High School recently installed practice fields with artificial turf immediately west of Ridgeland Common, across Scoville. Ridgeland Common is also accessible from an existing CTA Green Line El stop located at Ridgeland Avenue just south of Lake.

An existing off street parking lot at Ridgeland Common contains 33 parking spaces including two handicap spaces. There are also 15 parallel parking spaces on Lake Street abutting the site and 12 parallel and 20 diagonal parking spaces on Scoville Avenue abutting the site. Parking on Ridgeland abutting the site is restricted as a result of its proximity to the Lake/Ridgeland intersection, the location of the Ridgeland Common parking lot exit on Ridgeland, an additional access drive to the site located immediately north of the rail embankment and sight clearance restrictions posed by the embankment. Based on input from patrons, when parking is not available in the Ridgeland Common parking lot, drivers typically exit the parking lot and drive south on Ridgeland, west on South Boulevard and north on Scoville in search of street parking before using the parking structure if it is available. The 300 space municipal garage located at the northwest corner of Scoville and Lake provides High School parking during the day, is available for Ridgeland Common parking during the evening and weekends but is not used much. While the parking structure is located “kitty corner” from the northwest corner of the Ridgeland Common site, it is not considered convenient for many users who consider it too far away from the Ridgeland Common building or inconvenient.

Across Lake Street to the north is the large Pilgrim Church parking lot that was available for use by visitors to Ridgeland Common but that agreement has lapsed as a result of cost efficiencies and under utilization. The Farmers Market in the Church lot on Saturday mornings creates parking problems at Ridgeland Common. An aerial photograph of

Ridgeland Common, entitled “Aerial Photo of Existing Conditions” is attached as a Report Exhibit with major improvements labeled.

As described in the 2002 Proposed Capital Improvement Program Ridgeland Common serves as the “workhorse” venue for Park District sports fields and contains many of the Park District’s most important improvements. These include one of the two District lighted ball fields and its only indoor Ice Rink. The Ice Rink is also used for indoor soccer and day camp activities during summer months. These facilities are heavily used each day and are integral to activities provided by the Park District. The Ice Rink is also utilized by other key institutions in Oak Park including Oak Park River Forest High School, Fenwick High School and various sport associations and recreation interest groups (including AYSO, Bronco Baseball, Youth Baseball, TOPS, and others). Ridgeland Common also provides one of the District’s two 50-meter outdoor pools, a wading pool and spray pad, dog friendly area/program, one of three Park District sled hills and serves as home to three popular summer day camps.



*Parking is often limited at Ridgeland Common, especially at peak times when programming overlaps. Finding a parking space in the lot becomes almost impossible and Ridgeland Common users must park on surrounding streets.*

### III. DATA GATHERING

Substantial effort was expended gathering data to form the basis for the conclusions contained in this report. The specialized expertise provided by TD&A Team members was supplemented by extensive input from those who know the building best; persons previously involved with Ridgeland Common, Park District Staff and those who use the facilities on a regular basis. In addition, countless documents were provided to the Team by Park District Staff to provide background and context.

The following formal data gathering tasks were completed as part of the Study:

#### **Staff Interviews**

A series of Staff interviews were arranged by Park District Staff and took place at Ridgeland Common on February 14, 2007 from 1 PM to 5PM. Meeting notes from those interviews are included as “Appendix 1” and attendees are noted.

#### **Interviews with Selected Village Staff**

A meeting was arranged to interview various Village Staff on February 21, 2007 at 4 PM in the Comstock Room. Meeting notes from that interview are included in this Report as “Appendix 2” and attendees are noted.

### **Community Meeting**

A publicized Community Meeting was held on February 21, 2007 at 7:00 PM in the Ridgeland Common Comstock Room. A meeting announcement prepared by Park District Staff and two different sets of meeting notes from that meeting are included in this Report as “Appendix 3.” One set of these minutes was prepared by TD&A and another was prepared by the Park District Citizen Committee.

### **Phone Interviews with Various Citizens Familiar with Ridgeland Common**

Four individuals with substantial historic experience with Ridgeland Common were identified by Park District Staff and interviewed by phone. These included the architect for the major facilities at Ridgeland Common, the former Park District Executive Director, the Director of the Chamber of Commerce and a former Park District Board member. Notes from those phone interviews are included in this Report as “Appendix 4.”

### **Phone Interviews with Village Staff**

Some Village Staff members scheduled to be interviewed on February 14, 2007 were not available at that time. They were interviewed by phone at a later date. Notes from those interviews are included in this Report as “Appendix 5.”

### **Focus Group Input**

A focus group comprised of representatives of various organizations that utilize Ridgeland Common extensively and individuals who use it on a regular basis. This focus group was conducted at the John Hedges Administrative Center, on March 7, 2007 from 7 PM to 8:40 PM. Notes from that focus group are included in this Report as “Appendix 6.”

### **Special User Interviews**

Special user interviews with representatives of organizations and others who use Ridgeland Common on a regular basis were conducted at the John Hedges Administrative Center, on March 14, 2007 from 4:30 PM to 8:30 PM. Notes from these interviews are included in this Report as “Appendix 7.”

### **Questionnaire Results**

An informal Questionnaire soliciting opinions on various aspects of Ridgeland Common was prepared by the Park District, distributed at various meetings/interviews and was available via the Park District website. A copy of the Questionnaire is included in this Report as “Appendix 8.” The intent of the Questionnaire was to gain input from citizens that could not attend the Community Meeting or desired to provide greater detail. Although the Questionnaire and subsequent responses do not constitute a statistically significant study, Park District Staff prepared a compilation of the responses contained in the 27 questionnaires returned to the Park District by the response deadline. This compilation of responses is presented on a copy of the Questionnaire utilized and is entitled “Summary of Ridgeland Common Existing Conditions Study Questionnaire Results” is also included in “Appendix 8.”

The following general observations are provided by the TD&A Team and the reader is encouraged to review the entire Park District Summary for a more comprehensive understanding of the results:

- Respondents tended to be older, long-time residents of Oak Park who use Ridgeland Common often.
- A third or more of respondents use Ridgeland Common's Pool, Ice Rink and/or baseball/softball fields.
- Of all the facilities at Ridgeland Common, the Comstock Room, indoor soccer and Ice Rink were generally rated in the worst physical condition.
- Ten respondents rated the Pool in "fair" to poor condition (1 or 2 rating) and ten rated the pool in satisfactory to good condition (3 or 4 rating).
- Thirteen respondents rated the ballfields in satisfactory or better physical condition (3 or 4 rating) and twelve respondents rated the dog park in satisfactory or better physical condition (3 or 4 rating).
- No respondents rated conditions at Ridgeland Common as excellent (5 rating).
- Priorities assigned by respondents to a variety of potential Ridgeland Common improvements varied substantially. However, Ice Rink and ballfield improvements tended to be assigned first or second of three possible priorities and Pool improvements and building/locker room improvements tended to be assigned second or third priorities.
- Respondents had varying views as to the present status of Ridgeland Common's useful life. Of those responding, 12 suggested that Ridgeland Common is now at the end of its useful life and 2 suggested that it is nearing the end of its useful life. One respondent indicated it "may have 10 years left" (but also remarked "It needs to grow with the needs of the Community"). Finally, only one respondent suggested that Ridgeland Common could have over 10 years of remaining useful life provided it is "rehabbed."

Based on our analysis of the input received in all of the Data Gathering efforts summarized above, we conclude that Ridgeland Common is now perceived by its users as being at, or even past, its useful life. It is also perceived as being at capacity (or exceeding its capacity) in terms of the number of programs offered and the number of program participants that use Ridgeland Common.

The program capacity achieved at Ridgeland Common is the result of "careful orchestration" by Park District Staff. However, operation of this facility at this level of program capacity is beginning to create some friction points and is indicative of overuse. Deferred maintenance and its impact on facilities and competition for scarce resources at Ridgeland Common are exacerbating these perceptions.

Many of those interviewed mentioned the need for sacrifice by their organization or in the programs offered. Most indicated a willingness to make compromises so that other programs could be offered to meet the needs of other Oak Park residents. While they are proud of the Ridgeland Common history and "small town environment/character" provided, many have visited other facilities in the area and expressed frustration that better facilities with more modern amenities are not offered in Oak Park. It was suggested that achieving the quality of some of the facilities offered in neighboring communities should be a goal for the Park District to consider in decisions on Ridgeland Common.

## IV. EXISTING CONDITIONS

### Introduction

While it was hailed as the Park District's flagship recreation center when its major improvements were completed in 1962, with the exception of the phased enclosure of the Ice Rink and the replacement of some components of its major systems, substantial renovation of Ridgeland Common has not taken place. In this same time period, residents of the District have increasingly demanded more of Ridgeland Common. In 2007, the Park District is providing both a variety of programs and a level of usage at Ridgeland Common that could not have been imagined when the site was purchased in 1912 and contemplated when it was improved in 1962. This combination of aging facilities and overuse is further explored below.

### 2002 Parks Infrastructure Committee Findings

In its 2002 "Proposed Capital Improvement Program" the Parks Infrastructure Committee identified the need for numerous renovations/repairs for Ridgeland Common. Various repair and improvement projects were described, assigned an implementation priority and some renovations/repairs for major projects were accompanied by a cost estimate. The costs provided were for renovations/repairs slated to take place within five years of 2002 (by 2007). These costs totaled \$815,000 (in 2002 dollars). In addition, the Ice Rink's refrigeration system was recommended for replacement in 2007 to 2010 at an estimated additional cost of \$750,000. However, the Committee suggested that before the refrigeration system was replaced, policy direction from the District Board should be obtained as to how the Rink should be used in the future and whether a larger regulation sized rink should be constructed.

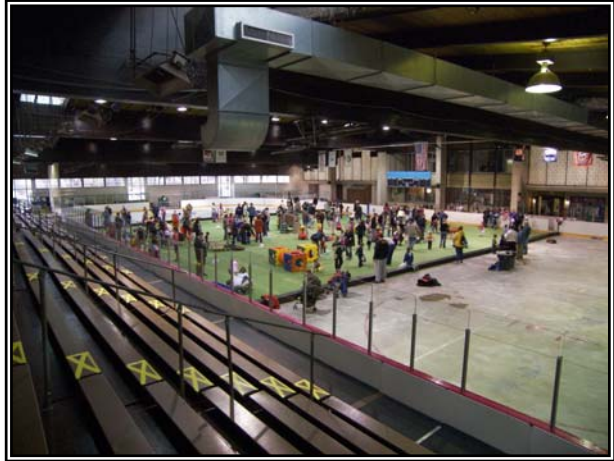


*Lighted fields allow Ridgeland Common to be utilized for evening and night baseball and softball programming. These lighted fields serve a majority of adult softball leagues.*

Since the 2002 Report was prepared, only one of the major improvements recommended in the 2002 Report has been partially completed. A used ice-resurfacing machine was purchased in 2005 in lieu of the new machine recommended.

## 2007 Existing Conditions

Since the 2002 Infrastructure Committee Report was prepared, Ridgeland Common has continued to deteriorate. Despite the expenditure of substantial repair expense and Staff effort to address various facility problems as they arise, its major systems are aging, deteriorating and have become obsolete. With uncertainty over the remaining useful life of Ridgeland Common in recent years, with few exceptions, only basic maintenance has occurred at Ridgeland Common. These exceptions generally arose from the need for repair but include construction of an updated wading pool, installation of the spray pad, a minor overhaul of the ballfield lighting system, the construction of new Team Locker rooms, a minor reconfiguration of floor space to create more administrative office space, the replacement of most of the Pool deck and replacement of the piping underneath the replaced deck. Failure of major systems has become more frequent and expensive to address as these systems continue to age.



The ingenuity utilized by Staff in overcoming Ridgeland Common's existing conditions and maximizing the number of programs provided is reflected in the popularity of Ridgeland Common programs. It also demonstrates a general trend in recreation; residents have increasing expectations of recreation providers. The overuse and over-programming of Ridgeland Common in response to these expectations requires the staging of various programs and major events and operating seasons that no longer meet the needs of its users. For example, the use of the Pool as a component of the Ice Rink refrigeration system means that the Rink can not be open when most hockey programs begin seasonal activities in late summer.

*Space is limited at Ridgeland Common and program uses are often non-complementary. Overcrowding, programming conflicts and congestion often result.*

## Impact of Existing Conditions on Staff and Program Participants

Present conditions at Ridgeland Common require substantial effort and time to be expended by Staff, volunteers and users merely to keep existing systems operating so that present programs can be offered. Additional time and expense must also be incurred to overcome basic building shortcomings. For example, due to a lack of adequate building storage, many stored program items must be relocated several times each year as available storage space arises with program/season changes. Other building shortcomings were identified by Staff, volunteers and facility users that further highlight the inefficient and costly manner programs must be offered at Ridgeland Common. These include the need to convert the Pool from cooling tower for swimming and reverse the process each year and typical Staff support areas/features are not provided. Administrative inefficiencies arise as a result of office locations that are remote from the facilities to which they relate. Access control for those obtaining pool passes is compromised by office layout deficiencies.

Program participants are also affected by building shortcomings and layout. As a result of the location of the front desk where entry is controlled, all Ice Rink patrons must completely exit the Rink at the conclusion of an ice program even if they are participating in the following program. Furthermore, no dedicated handicap accessible meeting room is available at Ridgeland Common. Only the second floor Comstock Room, accessible only by stairs, is suitable for meetings but is also heavily programmed.

The Park District is also constrained by present conditions/facilities at Ridgeland Common because its major improvements are difficult to utilize for alternative uses due to program popularity/level of usage, age of the facilities, antiquated design, incompatibility with other programs and the high maintenance/low efficiency required for existing systems.

The combination of aging equipment throughout Ridgeland Common and deferred maintenance has resulted in major system failures in recent years that includes electrical outages, water leaks, a lack of potable water and inadequate heating and air conditioning. Additional system failures will continue unless these systems are renovated/repared.

The impact of these failures on operations at Ridgeland Common is increasing and beginning to affect the Park District's ability to provide its existing programming. Failures in major systems have required cancellation of programs and major events in past years. Recently, the 2007 Ice Show was almost cancelled less than an hour before it was to start as the result of a major water line leak that resulted in water entering the Ridgeland Common's basement equipment room in close proximity to the building's high voltage electrical panels. Major renovation/repair of virtually all of Ridgeland Common systems will be required to minimize these failures and their impact on programs and scheduled events in the future.

### **Impact of Existing Conditions on the Park District Budget**

As the Ridgeland Common Facility continues to age the Park District has experienced increases in costs in the operation of Ridgeland Common as a result of increased repair and replacement costs, maintenance Staff time/costs and utility costs. Unexpected repairs have become more common place and they affect the Park District's ability to control established budgets. As a result of higher than expected expenses to undertake maintain the facilities, in many years line items such as property repair or building materials many planned improvements have been forgone in order to keep actual costs in line with the budget. The following tables summarize the difference in budgeted and actual repair, maintenance operations and utilities for the Park District's pools and its Ice Rink. Unfortunately, budget Estimates were not available for 1996 and 1997. It is important to note that the Park District operates two pools (Ridgeland Common and Rehm) and budgets/expenses are, in some cases co-mingled. However, because both pools are at least 40 years old, the data does illustrate a trend



*Deferred maintenance costs the Park District thousands of dollars each year and is the source of many system failures. These system failures are beginning to affect the Park District's programming on an increasing basis.*

toward increasing repairs, maintenance and utilities, as well as the difficulty in budgeting for the increased costs associated with the operation of aging facilities. Weather conditions each year have been highly variable and affect pool usage and these costs significantly.

Budget Year	Property Repair Budget	Property Repair Actual	Building Material Budget	Building Material Actual	Maint. Staff Budget	Maint. Staff Actual	Estimated Utilities Budget	Utilities Actual
2006	\$31,900	\$34,745	\$24,750	\$38,132	\$35,928	\$45,539	\$78,825	\$79,184
2005	\$28,000	\$38,067	\$18,750	\$29,194	\$28,000	\$38,659	\$73,550	\$70,530
2004	\$34,000	\$25,990	\$17,750	\$20,808	\$24,900	\$30,657	\$69,000	\$77,162
2003	\$53,000	\$60,980	\$17,000	\$22,840	\$27,500	\$41,863	\$62,500	\$77,408
2002	\$20,000	\$24,833	\$17,000	\$18,404	\$21,200	\$36,488	\$60,000	\$87,412
2001	\$30,000	\$25,673	\$16,500	\$23,087	\$20,000	\$27,064	\$61,000	\$68,296
2000	\$24,300	\$25,472	\$13,500	\$17,437	\$18,000	\$22,057	\$54,200	\$63,273
1999	\$21,500	\$22,466	\$12,700	\$15,434	\$18,000	\$20,360	\$51,600	\$65,704
1998	\$21,000	\$21,218	\$14,825	\$15,599	\$15,000	\$18,889	\$50,300	\$62,758
1997		\$23,945		\$16,202		\$20,997		\$63,157
1996		\$17,155		\$17,492		\$14,257		\$53,313

The following table shows the same data for the Ice Rink. The reader is cautioned that because the Rink's ice season straddles budget years and the Park District's budget year begins each January 1st, some costs actually incurred in one year may be reflected in a different year. It is also important to note that weather conditions each year have a significant affect on Ice Rink costs.

Budget Year	Property Repair Budget	Property Repair Actual	Building Material Budget	Building Material Actual	Maint. Staff Budget	Maint. Staff Actual	Estimated Utilities Budget	Utilities Actual
2006	\$27,100	\$41,564	\$8,500	\$14,857	\$17,212	\$22,566	\$115,705	\$136,235
2005	\$27,000	\$34,740	\$8,500	\$7,616	\$14,800	\$19,190	\$109,050	\$86,307
2004	\$27,000	\$29,158	\$8,500	\$8,214	\$13,000	\$18,232	\$100,000	\$93,638
2003	\$27,000	\$30,424	\$8,500	\$9,865	\$12,150	\$18,901	\$95,500	\$100,630
2002	\$35,000	\$55,994	\$7,000	\$10,110	\$10,000	\$14,982	\$99,700	\$92,001
2001	\$27,000	\$17,725	\$7,200	\$6,740	\$10,000	\$11,781	\$92,000	\$106,729
2000	\$22,000	\$23,511	\$7,200	\$9,507	\$10,000	\$11,419	\$91,300	\$87,456
1999	\$19,000	\$35,091	\$7,200	\$7,757	\$8,165	\$11,397	\$94,000	\$90,914
1998	\$25,000	\$21,642	\$6,800	\$6,691	\$7,500	\$8,929	\$88,500	\$91,858
1997		\$36,239		\$27,900		\$9,896		\$105,518
1996		\$45,392		\$9,133		\$8,655		\$108,995

The figures in both of the above tables demonstrate increasing repair, maintenance and utility costs, as well as a continuing gap between budgeted and actual maintenance/operations costs.

As a result of historically tight fiscal conditions, in many cases, a “band-aid” approach to repairs and necessary replacement has been required to keep the budget in control. In 2006, the pools and Ice Rink required major repairs/replacement for the Rink’s roof, heating systems, water pipe replacement (\$20,000 was spent in 2006 on water pipe repairs with additional leaks still arising), radiator unit replacement, doors/door frame failures, mechanical equipment failures, refrigeration system failures and the repair of underground pipe breaks. Most of the significant mechanical systems are 20 to 42 years old. Major costs reflected in the above tables associated with equipment failure include:

- In 2003 substantial expenses were charged to the Property Repair category of the pool budget related to required repair of a large number of leaks and the replacement of the pool circulation pump.
- In 2002 there a large charge to the Property Repair category of the Ice Rink budget was required to repair a significant failure in refrigeration equipment. As a result of this failure, a new compressor had to be installed and an evaporator unit repaired.

Materials and hardware purchases have also increased in recent years as a result of the increased repairs and the replacement of equipment that is required. Staff costs for maintenance are also increasing at a rate that exceeds increases in the costs of living increases as a result of the amount of work that is required to prepare Ridgeland Common’s facilities for the different seasons in addition to the day to day operational demands of the facilities.

Utility costs are also rising at Ridgeland Common as a result of rate increases (particularly large increase in electric and gas expenses in 2006) and aging and inefficient systems. The heating and lighting systems are particularly inefficient and the lack of facility insulation at Ridgeland Common exacerbates energy use.

## V. TD&A TEAM FINDINGS

### Summary of Mechanical and Electrical System Assessment and Costs

An assessment of all of Ridgeland Common’s mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems was conducted by General Energy Corporation (GEC) located in Oak Park. Its assessment is based on a review of various documents, plans and records provided by Park District Staff, a lengthy inspection and its specific expertise in electrical and mechanical system design and operation. A detailed itemization of all recommended electrical and mechanical renovations/repairs, recent energy consumption, priorities and estimated costs is included in Table 8: Summary of Costs for Recommended Improvements table that follows and is fully documented in GEC’s complete report that can be found in “Appendix 9” of this Report.

<b>Table 3: Summary of Mechanical and Electrical Estimated Costs</b>	
Mechanical Subtotal	\$1,398,000
Electrical Subtotal	\$349,000
<b>Combined Mechanical and Electrical Subtotal</b>	<b>\$1,747,000</b>
A/E Fee (10%)	\$174,700
Contingency (15%)	\$262,050

<b>Total Mechanical and Electrical Estimated Costs</b>	<b>\$2,183,750</b>
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***Mechanical and Electrical Assessment and Cost Conclusion:*** Substantial costs will be expended making the building more compliant with current codes and standards. While some of the costs associated with recommended minor renovation/repair items can be slightly reduced by utilizing Park District Staff, the remaining costs are substantial. The Park District should carefully evaluate whether the existing Ridgeland Common building and Ice Rink/Arena best meet its needs before expending the \$2.18 Million to update/improve its mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems as recommended in the GEC Report.

### **Summary of Architectural and Structural Assessment and Costs**

A thorough assessment of Ridgeland Common building condition, visible structural elements and layout was conducted by Ehlke Lonigro Associates, Ltd. (ELA) located in Arlington Heights. ELA's assessment is based on several inspections of Ridgeland Common and its specific expertise in public building design, rehabilitation and construction. A detailed itemization of all recommended structural and architectural renovations/repairs, priorities and estimated costs is included in Table 6: Summary of Costs for Recommended Improvements table that follows and is fully documented in ELA's complete report that can be found in "Appendix 10" of this Report. ELA's report also includes two options. Option 1 represents a modest reconfiguration of the existing lobby/Pool Locker Room/Pool entrance to create more office, Staff and storage space. Option 2 represents a small expansion of the Rink's structure and the reconfiguration of its layout so that the concrete slab that must be replaced as part of the new Rink refrigeration system can be relocated and slightly lengthened to provide a regulation sized rink. The existing locker rooms and bleachers now located south of the Rink will be eliminated and the area west of the Rink devoted to Rink operations and equipment. New bleachers with new locker rooms below will also be constructed on the east side of the Rink.

Architectural Subtotal	\$3,574,000
Structural Subtotal	\$10,000
<b>Combined Architectural and Structural Subtotal</b>	<b>\$3,584,000</b>
A/E Fee (10%)	\$358,400
Contingency (15%)	\$537,600
<b>Total Architectural and Structural Estimated Costs</b>	<b>\$4,480,000</b>
Architectural Options 1 & 2 (including A/E and Contingency)	\$666,250
<b>Total Arch., Structural and Options 1&amp;2 Estimated Costs</b>	<b>\$5,146,200</b>

***Architectural and Structural Assessment and Cost Conclusion:*** In the Conclusion section of its report (see Page 12), ELA notes that Ridgeland Common no longer represents the "flagship facility" contemplate whether a new facility at Ridgeland Common can better meet the needs of users now and in the future.

**Summary of Aquatic Assessment and Costs**

A detailed assessment of Ridgeland Common’s 50-meter Pool, Wading Pool and related systems/equipment was conducted by Counsilman - Hunsaker & Associates (CH) located in St. Louis. CH’s assessment is based on a lengthy inspection of Ridgeland Common’s aquatic facilities and its specific expertise in aquatic operation and design. A detailed itemization of all recommended aquatic renovations/repairs, priorities and estimated costs is included in Table 8: Summary of Costs for Recommended Improvements table that follows and is fully documented in CH’s complete report that can be found in “Appendix 11” of this Report.

<b>Table 5: Summary of Aquatic Estimated Costs</b>	
50-meter Pool Subtotal	\$1,348,000
Wading Pool Subtotal	\$76,940
<b>Combined 50-meter and Wading Pool Subtotal</b>	<b>\$1,190,358</b>
A/E Fee (10%)	\$119,036
Contingency (15%)	\$178,554
<b>Total Aquatic Estimated Costs</b>	<b>\$1,487,947</b>

*Aquatics Assessment and Cost Conclusion:* In the Recommendations section of its report (see Page 12), CH notes that significant items need to be addressed to extend the useful life of the 50-meter Pool. CH further notes that “...extending the life of a pool with concrete that is already 46 years old is not the appropriate choice even if it is in relatively good shape today.” CH finds that “...replacing the pools at Ridgeland Common is recommended.” CH observes that such replacement may offer a more family-oriented aquatic facility to be constructed that has the potential to increase usage sufficiently to recover increased costs.



*Even though the Ridgeland Common pool is a fully functioning 50-meter competition pool, the facility is experiencing decreased use as residents begin to frequent more modern facilities in neighboring communities.*

**Summary of Park Site Assessment and Costs**

A detailed assessment of the Ridgeland Common site, non-aquatic outdoor facilities and site landscaping was conducted by Thompson-Dyke & Associates, Ltd. (TD&A) located in Chicago. TD&A’s assessment is based on an inspection and its specific expertise in landscape architecture, park design and urban planning. A detailed itemization of all recommended aquatic renovations/repairs, priorities and estimated costs is included in Table 6: Summary of Costs for Recommended Improvements table that follows and is fully documented in TD&A’s complete report that can be found in Appendix 12 of this Report.

<b>Table 6: Summary of Park Site Estimated Costs</b>	
Site Subtotal	\$730,000
A/E Fee (10%)	\$73,000
Contingency (15%)	\$109,500
<b>Total Site Estimated Costs</b>	<b>\$912,500</b>

**Park Site Assessment and Cost Conclusion:** In the initial Summary of its report (see Page 12), TD&A notes that “Overall the site is showing its age and has not received major updates and renovations in the last 45 years.” TD&A recommends that the Park District carefully evaluate whether the existing Ridgeland Common site and building best meet its needs before expending the renovation/repair costs to update the Park site.

### Synthesis of TD&A Team Findings

In preparing this study, the TD&A Team has identified substantial and serious deficiencies in Ridgeland Common’s basic building systems and facilities. Virtually all of the Ridgeland Common’s basic building systems must be replaced to extend its useful life. These systems are essential and must operate dependably in order for Ridgeland Common’s present program offering to be offered. They are very expensive to replace and are usually only noticed when they malfunction and are in need of repair. The typical user of facilities at Ridgeland Common arrives at the facility expecting quality ice, lights that work, protection from the elements, a Pool with water that is safe for swimming, etc.

While the Team has identified and estimated the costs of numerous recommended renovations/repairs that are itemized and prioritized in Table 8: Summary of Costs for the Recommended Improvements table that follows, these costs include a significant number of replacements of major facility systems. As a result of their importance in the day to day operations of Ridgeland Common and related considerations, almost all of these repairs are recommended to be completed within the next five years.

Major renovations/repairs recommended include the following:

- Replacement of the Rink’s roof and skylights and installation of insulation.
- Replacement of the Rink’s lighting.
- Replacement of substantial portions of the Rink’s walls and installation of insulation.
- Replacement of the Rink refrigeration system (requires a new concrete slab) and installation of a dedicated cooling tower.
- Installation of a new HVAC system to air condition the Rink and entire building.
- Replacement of the Rink’s existing pneumatic controls.
- Replacement of the fire alarm system and the installation of fire sprinklers throughout the building.
- Replacement of the Pool filtration system, piping.

- Replacement of the Pool room equipment, pump, motor, filter, flow meter valves piping, gauges and chemical equipment.
- Replacement of the Wading Pool piping, valves and heater.
- Replacement of the Wading Pool filter, valves and chemical equipment.
- Installation of a new Pool solar heating system to supplement the existing boilers.
- Replacement of the existing hot water chemical treatment system.
- Replacement of the entire electrical system including installation and/or relocation of new panels, wiring and conduit.
- Reconfiguration of the diving well's slope and depth to meet present standards (its present configuration is "grandfathered in").
- Replacement of the Pool's back and concession decks.
- Installation of an elevator and other improvements to make the entire facility handicap accessible.
- Replacement of the ballfield lighting system.
- Replacement of the ballfield irrigation system.



*Despite recent renovations, many common areas at Ridgeland Common are in need of repair or replacement.*

Many other deficiencies are noted and renovation/repair of other items are also recommended. The reader is encouraged to review the attached Table 8: Summary of Costs for Recommended Improvements that follows this section as well as the individual reports from each Team member that are included as Appendices to this Report.

### **Total Estimated Costs of Recommendations**

The total estimated cost of the renovations/repairs now recommended is between \$9.01 Million and \$9.73 Million. An itemized description of all renovations/repairs and their costs is contained in Table 8.

The \$9.01 Million estimated cost includes the basic recommended improvements necessary to extend the useful life of Ridgeland Common so that it can continue to house existing programs, rectify some serious building deficiencies and modestly enhance the Ridgeland Common environment for its users. As a result of the importance of these systems to extending the useful life of Ridgeland Common as well as its day to day program offerings, a majority of these renovations/repairs are recommended to be completed in the next five years.

The \$9.73 Million figure will accomplish the same improvements but also add two modest additional improvements to the existing Ridgeland Common building. These optional improvements will address some of the operational problems attributable to the present

building layout, improve building conditions, add storage and office space and increase the size of the existing Ice Rink. The specific improvements provided in each option are summarized in Table 6: Summary of Costs for Recommended Improvements Table as Options 1 and 2 and further described in detail in ELA's complete report, attached hereto as "Appendix 10." A summary of total estimated costs is provided in the following table that also provides a recommended priority/phasing for each improvement.

<b>Table 7: Total Costs - All Recommendations</b>				
<b>All Recommendations</b>		<b>High Priority Need (1-2 yrs.)</b>	<b>Medium Priority Need (3-5 yrs.)</b>	<b>Low Priority Need (6-10 yrs.)</b>
1	Subtotal Mechanical and Electrical Costs.	\$1,129,000	\$618,000	\$0
2	Subtotal Arch. and Structural Costs (Excluding Options 1 & 2)	\$2,010,000	\$794,000	\$780,000
3	Subtotal 50-Meter and Wading Pool Costs.	\$898,012	\$292,346	\$0
4	Subtotal Park Site Costs.	\$150,000	\$350,000	\$230,000
<b>All Subtotal Costs by Phase</b>		<b>\$4,187,012</b>	<b>\$2,054,346</b>	<b>\$1,010,000</b>
A/E Fee (10%)		\$418,701	\$205,435	\$101,000
Contingency (15%)		\$628,052	\$308,152	\$151,500
<b>Total Costs by Phase (Excludes Arch. Options 1 &amp; 2)</b>		<b>\$5,233,765</b>	<b>\$2,567,933</b>	<b>\$1,262,500</b>
<b>Total Costs (Excludes Arch. Options 1 &amp; 2) - All Phases</b>		<b>\$9,064,197</b>		
1	Architectural Options 1&2 (including 10% A/E & 15% Cont.)	\$0	\$666,250	\$0
<b>Total Costs Including Arch. Options 1 &amp; 2 - All Phases</b>		<b>\$9,730,447</b>		

In addition to correcting serious deficiencies in basic building systems and slightly enhancing program participant experience at Ridgeland Common, the renovations/repairs recommended by the Team may also reduce some Staff, maintenance and energy costs. However, those reductions are extremely difficult to estimate until present hourly responsibilities are identified and projections prepared of how those responsibilities will be affected by new systems. The recommendations are principally aimed at bringing Ridgeland Common into conformance with selected modern codes/standards, and extending its useful life. They will also improve safety, improve privacy for Pool users, provide limited Staff support space, increase storage and moderately improve the appearance of the building interior and site. However, even if all of the recommendations are implemented, the TD&A Team concludes that an improved Ridgeland Common will not provide sufficient flexibility to permit the introduction of major new programs. Furthermore, these recommended improvements do not substantially increase program space, and the building and site are already programmed to capacity. Instead, the recommendations reflect the Team's opinion of cost effective improvements necessary for the Park District to continue to extend Ridgeland Common's useful life so that present programs can continue to be offered at present levels.

It is also important to note that the recommended renovation/repairs will not address some of Ridgeland Common's other substantial problems including a lack of adequate parking, inadequate drop-off area, inadequate Ice Rink skater staging area, lack of space to add additional baseball amenities and provision of many of the modern features expected by recreation consumers today. In many of the Team's interviews of those using Ridgeland

Common facilities frequently, interviewees were aware of migration to other nearby facilities by former Park District program participants. This migration is attributed to Ridgeland Common's present deteriorating condition, its antiquated design and the lack of modern features/amenities offered in competing facilities. Interviewees expect this migration to continue and increase unless Ridgeland Common facilities are renovated/repaired **and upgraded** to a level that can match or exceed the quality of other facilities nearby.

### **The Impact of Not Undertaking the Improvements**

While the Park District can continue to defer maintenance and avoid the expenditures required to complete the other renovation/repairs recommended, we believe that such an action will require continually increased Staff and District resources and more frequent and serious Ridgeland Common system failures will result. These failures will affect Ridgeland Common's program offerings when they occur and likely require the cancellation of its scheduled events with greater frequency.

### **Preservation and Character at Ridgeland Common**

The original plan for Ridgeland Common was prepared by noted Landscape Architect Jens Jensen in 1913. However, improvements since that time have all but eliminated the original design features from that Plan. Only some of the mature trees at Ridgeland Common and the large play field now occupied by the ballfields might be considered remnants from the original plan.

Many comments from Ridgeland Common users highlighted its value in enhancing Oak Park's character and unique quality of life. Ridgeland Common elicits fond memories for many that have used it over the years. It continues to provide unique recreational facilities and experiences for its users. The desire to replicate the existing character/feel of Ridgeland Common was suggested for any renovations/repairs or even replacement facilities should this option be selected.

In all of the public input and interview sessions feedback was solicited by the Team as to whether

those queried considered Ridgeland Common to be an architectural or historic site worthy of preservation. No comments were received calling for the preservation of its present improvements for historic or architectural reasons. Nevertheless, the Park District might consider documenting the importance of Ridgeland Common to Oak Park and this importance could be featured in the design of renovated/repaired areas or featured in any replacement facilities.



*Ridgeland Common is home to a Spanish American War Memorial and several other memorial plaques. These memorials illustrate the importance of the Ridgeland Common site to Oak Park residents.*

### Ridgeland Common's Useful Life

The TD&A Team concludes that Ridgeland Common has outlived its useful life. Based on lengthy site inspections, substantial public input from users and Staff and the Team's expertise in planning, designing and operating similar facilities, the Team has identified renovations/repairs of its major systems that can extend its useful life. However, the estimated cost for this extension is almost \$10 Million and the Team believes that an expenditure of this magnitude on outdated facilities with basic shortcomings is simply not prudent.

Even with the renovation/repairs recommended, other components of the building/facility not renovated/repaired will continue to age and deteriorate. For example, the recommended renovation/repairs to the 50-meter Pool does not include the replacement of its 45-year-old concrete shell because the shell appears to be in relatively good condition at present (CH recommends that the Park District confirm this present condition through core sampling).

Regardless, this concrete will continue to age and eventually will require increasing maintenance and eventual replacement. Furthermore, while the existing Pool design is attractive for competitive and lap swimming, it does not fulfill the needs of a broad cross section of recreational swimmers who prefer a variety of aquatic features such as those at a modern aquatic center. The introduction of such features to the existing pool would probably detract from its suitability for competition. Similarly, the condition of the Ice Rink and user experience will be improved if the recommended renovations/repairs are completed. However, these renovations/repairs will not improve vehicular circulation, the lack of on-site parking and its limited seasonal availability and these elements will continue to adversely affect the user experience for skaters and spectators.



*An outdated floor plan results in congestion and circulation issues in the building. Over - programming and program overlap exacerbate these problems, particularly at peak usage*

These examples illustrate some of the inherent design compromise required in retrofitting antiquated facilities. The TD&A Team concludes that unless a comprehensive approach is undertaken to improve all aspects of Ridgeland Common, its popularity will continue to decline.

These examples illustrate some of the inherent design compromise required in retrofitting antiquated facilities. The TD&A Team concludes that unless a comprehensive approach is undertaken to improve all aspects of Ridgeland Common, its popularity will continue to decline.

The need to satisfy modern life safety, construction and accessibility codes adds substantially to the costs required to extend Ridgeland Common's useful life. These include the installation of fire sprinklers throughout the building, making Ridgeland Common more energy efficient, replacing systems that rely on materials that pose health and environmental risks and making Ridgeland Common handicap accessible. The cost of installing such improvements in existing buildings is substantially higher than installing them during construction of a new facility.

While all of these contributing factors affecting the useful life of Ridgeland Common have evolved slowly over the last 45 years, they now conspire to suggest that the building has simply outlived its useful life.

### **Physical and Functional Obsolescence**

Extending the useful life of the existing facilities at Ridgeland Common can be realized by implementing the recommended renovations/repairs at substantial cost. However, it is our belief that it does not make sense to renovate/repair a facility that is now already physically and functionally obsolete.

For purposes of this study, physical obsolescence describes a condition in which deficiencies in a building/facility's condition requires substantially all of its major systems to be renovated, repaired or replaced to extend its useful life.

Functional obsolescence relates to how well a building/facility can be used for its intended purpose. Functional obsolescence arises when a building/facility's antiquated design, physical layout and/or physical condition impose substantial constraints on how well it fulfills its intended purpose. Functional obsolescence can also result from a combination of inflexible design characteristics making desired program revisions or facility enhancements difficult to accomplish. To maximize useful life and avoid premature functional obsolescence, modern recreation buildings/facilities are designed to provide flexible elements such as multi-purpose rooms and gymnasiums. With such flexible elements, program changes can be introduced with minimal cost, effort and impact on other programs provided in the facility. This flexibility is not incorporated into the improvements at Ridgeland Common to a meaningful extent and contributes to its functional obsolescence.

## **VI. TD&A TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

Based on our findings, the TD&A Team concludes that Ridgeland Common is both physically and functionally obsolete and should be replaced rather than renovated/repared. This obsolescence is exacerbated by a variety of factors including: basic aging of its major components/systems, deferred maintenance over its 45 year life span, the popularity of programs offered at Ridgeland Common, substantial overuse/over-programming of Ridgeland Common in recent years, a changing/aging patron base, evolving recreation interests, competition from other more modern facilities in the Oak Park area, migration of program participants to other facilities (and its negative impact on facility revenues) and increasing expectations of Park District residents. Further exacerbating this obsolescence are increasing energy costs, antiquated and inefficient basic systems located throughout Ridgeland Common, constantly increasing maintenance costs as existing components/systems fail and the need for costly repairs/renovation in the next several years if the useful life of existing facilities are to be extended.

It is recommended that the Park District carefully consider the findings, recommendations and estimated costs contained in this Report and appendices in any decisions on extending the useful life of Ridgeland Common.

## **Collaboration**

Consistent with the Park District's Mission, Vision and Values, we suggest that any decision also involve continuing communication, collaboration and partnerships with other jurisdictions, special interest groups and the surrounding neighborhood.

## **Continuing the Present Ridgeland Common Program**

The TD&A Team also recommends that the Park District carefully consider whether all of the facilities now located at Ridgeland Common should be completely replaced at Ridgeland Common and/or relocated elsewhere before incurring the substantial renovation/repair expenses identified.

## **Public Input/Policies**

We recommend that consideration of whether the Park District should expend the estimated costs identified herein to extend the useful life of Ridgeland Common should be predicated on:

- Substantial public input.
- Detailed analysis of continuing demand/market for the renovated/repared facilities.
- Consensus on whether renovated/repared Ridgeland Common facilities meet the needs of a broad cross section of District residents.

To assist in the consideration of these issues, a series of policies were developed to supplement the overarching policies of the District. They are included in this Report as "Appendix 13."

The decision to renovate/repair Ridgeland Common or replace it with new facilities will require substantial collaboration with its present users, dialogue with residents and will be difficult and time consuming. We believe that this decision must be aimed at ensuring the type of facilities at Ridgeland Common best meet the needs of a broad cross section of Oak Park residents now and into the future. The ultimate decision on whether to renovate/repair Ridgeland Common or to replace it with new facilities will require short and long term sacrifices and the sharing of those sacrifices by all of those now using Ridgeland Common. This decision requires informed residents and consensus on meeting long term needs. Based on our experiences with the District Board, Park District Staff, others involved with the activities at Ridgeland Common, we are confident these groups are particularly well suited to make a decision appropriate for Oak Park.

A summary of the findings and recommendations contained in this Report were presented in a 2<sup>nd</sup> Community Meeting held on May 16, 2007 at Ridgeland Common. The Park District Meeting Announcement Flyer and meeting minutes prepared by the Park District Citizen Committee are included in this Report as "Appendix 14."

## **VII. EXHIBITS**

Exhibits to this Report begin on the following page.