



May 2019

## Neighborhood Park Engagement Summary—Willowbrook Park

### Process

CWPD embarked on an effort to get neighbor input and opinion about their local, neighborhood park. It started with a guided-discussion in September of 2018. The main question was, “*What would entice neighbors to visit Willowbrook Park more often?*” Domokur Architects/Environmental Design led the group conversation in the fall, and followed with a compilation of the comments and the data about the immediate neighborhood.

From that meeting Domokur presented a report to the Park District showing the desired elements, ranked in order of importance. The report was accompanied by a concept layout of the park, based on the residents’ comments.

### Verification

In May of 2019, all neighbors were invited to come to the park to have a look at the concept layout, and to take a look at the priorities from the fall event. An estimated 16 families, including children attended the May session. About 30-40 people, in all, attended. They were asked to look at pictures representing possible improvements, and the concept drawing. Some of the families had not attended the fall meeting. At least four had moved to the neighborhood in the past six months.

The neighbors’ comments on May 2 are summarized as follows:

- Regarding the concept, 12 marked “*Great*” and four marked “*Okay*”. None rated it “*Not so good.*”
- The top rated suggestions were the same top rated from the fall, as follows:
  - Playground Improvement
  - Natural play (ground) area
  - Pedestrian Path
  - Improved Creek Access
- Closely behind the top four were: More Trees and New Bridge (at creek crossing).
- From conversation in the fall, attendees were asked in May about having programs in the park. Fourteen checked “*Yes, Please!*” or “*I’m OK with that.*” Only one said, “*No, thank you.*”

### Patterns and General Consensus

Simultaneous to the Willowbrook process, CWPD conducted a neighborhood engagement process at Pelbrook Park, using a different consultant. While there were specific differences and preferences regarding the future of the two parks, there were many similarities. Patterns from the two groups’ input may give good overall direction for the future of neighborhood parks. The similarities can be listed as follows:

- Un-interrupted, lawn space for open play is valued for a variety of self-directed play (Frisbee, touch football, tag, etc.)
- Both groups see the neighborhood parks as places for children to play, and for parents/grandparents to visit with children
- People like shade trees in the parks, especially around the playgrounds
- Where the playground is set well back from the street/sidewalk, a paved path from sidewalk to playground is highly desired (for strollers, toddlers, older people, bicycles, wagons, etc.)

In addition, residents at both parks were effusive with their thanks and expression of appreciation for a process that actively sought their input and ideas.

### **Next Steps Recommended for Willowbrook Park**

In 2019:

1. Pave a path to the playground and at the same time, resurface the existing sport court.
2. Add playground features, beginning with a new natural play area adjacent to the existing playground
3. Investigate better, easier, safer creek crossing options; and, in doing so, design for easier, safer access to creek.
4. Tree plantings in fall.

Follow up improvements may include additional tree planting, hard surface play court, bike racks, and activities.