

Community Garden Plots FAQ's

Why is a portion of the garden plots along West Street being considered for athletic field development?

Field space used for Naperville Central High School athletic teams was reduced several years ago with the loss of leased field areas just south of the current varsity football practice area. Field space will be further reduced when the lease for two practice football and discus field areas ends with the Naperville Cemetery in 2009. The Cemetery owns the property currently used by NCHS for football, discus and PE classes. The loss of this property will result in no longer having a place to practice and play games on the two fields. Some of this problem will be ameliorated when improvements to NCHS's stadium are completed in late fall of 2009. The stadium will have synthetic turf, which will allow it to be used continually throughout the day and through rainy seasons and sports seasons, however, this will not solve the entire problem of lack of field space. Some teams will be forced to move further into existing Knoch Park fields or move elsewhere. Further exacerbating the problem is boys' and girls' lacrosse, which is expected to become an official IHSA-sanctioned sport in the future. This means there will be an additional shortage of field space near NCHS.

Are there alternatives to developing athletic fields at the garden plots?

Yes – Both School District 203 and the Park District continue to evaluate options to address the need for athletic field space. Several options will be reviewed during a series of Community Engagement meetings in late October and early November. Advantages and disadvantages of each option will be evaluated.

Has a decision been made to relocate garden plots from the West St. location?

No – During a review of the Caroline Martin Mitchell (CMM) properties and development of a master plan for the areas, several ideas were shared that include the relocation and improvements to a portion of the Community Garden Plots. School District 203 has asked the Naperville Park District to participate in a public process to explore the potential development of athletic fields on a portion of the garden plots. All discussions regarding the Community Garden Plots have been conceptual and any decisions regarding the relocation of plots will take place after the completion of an extensive community input process.

What is the Caroline Martin Mitchell Master Campus Plan Recommendation for the Garden Plots?

The Master Campus Plan recommends the following “*Specific Property Recommendations*” under Section 5 of the report: “*The Park District should continue to consider improvements to this site that will cater to the growing demands of athletic users, without sacrificing the needs of gardeners and unduly impacting adjacent land uses. Efforts should continue to solicit public input on modifications to this property prior to seeking any formal approval for changes through the Naperville City Council.*”

Why have changes to Sportsman’s Park and Von Oven Scout Reservation not been considered?

Both Sportsman’s Park and Von Oven Scout Reservation were reviewed as part of the Caroline Martin Mitchell study. Similar to the garden plots, the above properties are owned by the City of Naperville. Concepts and considerations for these properties were proposed and presented during the planning process. It was concluded that Sportsman’s Park and Von Oven Scout Reservation create a natural, wooded wildlife habitat in central Naperville, and that opportunities to increase public use of these areas exist through the development of a trail network between the properties. Alternate development of these sites was not recommended in order to maintain the existing wooded nature of these areas.

Why were gardeners not represented as a landowner/lease tenant during the initial phase of the Caroline Martin Mitchell study?

The initial phase of the Caroline Martin Mitchell study included a review of the properties by several of the landowners and lease tenants. Participants in the initial phase included the City of Naperville, Naperville Park District, School District 203, Naper Settlement, Edward Hospital, Naperville Cemetery Association, Naperville Sportsman’s Club and Von Oven Scout Reservation. Nearly all of the organizations included in the initial phase own or lease portions of the Caroline Martin Mitchell properties and act as representatives for their individual user groups. Organizations such as the Naperville Sportsman’s Club, which does not own or lease property in the area, functions through a formalized agreement with the Park District for the operation of the trapshooting program. As a Park District activity the garden plots were represented by the Naperville Park District during this phase of the study. The Park District was open to exploring potential changes on all of the CMM properties that it owns and manages, however, the District maintained that any programs or activities impacted by a change to the CMM properties must have the ability to be replaced or relocated.

Similar to Knoch Park athletic field users, gardeners were provided opportunities to participate in the public input sessions held on November 10, 2007 by the League of Women Voters and on February 26 and June 19, 2008 by the City of Naperville. All public comments received from these meetings were incorporated into the final Master Campus Plan. The Master Campus Plan recommendation states that additional public input is needed on the garden plots area prior to requesting any recommended changes to the site from City Council. The public input process affords gardeners the opportunity to provide feedback separate from the Caroline Martin Mitchell study and specific to the Garden Plots property.

Who makes the final decision regarding the relocation of garden plots from West Street?

Any decision to relocate and develop a portion of the garden plots would need the support of the Naperville Community Unit School District 203 Board and Naperville Park District Board of Commissioners. In addition, since the garden plots property is owned by the City of Naperville any changes to the current use of the property would also require approval by City Council. Recommendations to these governing bodies would only take place after the completion of an extensive public input process.

What garden plots would be relocated? Where would they be placed?

The initial concept plans presented during the Caroline Martin Mitchell planning process suggest the development of athletic field space, landscaping and a walking/biking trail in the northern area of the garden plots. Approximately 370 garden plots would be relocated to areas in the southern portion of the West St garden plots and to DuPage River Park, located near the corner of Royce Rd and S Naper Blvd. Based on the initial concepts over 100 additional garden plots would be available to the community with room to expand. The initial concepts may be viewed on the Naperville Park District website at www.napervilleparks.org

Both the Park District and School District 203 continue to identify options that will be considered as we work through the upcoming public input process. In addition to DuPage River Park the Park District has also identified an undeveloped park site located near the corner of 248th Street and Wolfs Crossing Road as another potential site for future garden plots. The undeveloped park is called Southwest Community Park and consists of over 30 acres of land that is currently being farmed.

Are the proposed DuPage River Park Garden Plots located in the floodplain?

No – The development of any garden plots at DuPage River Park would take place outside of the floodplain. The area proposed on the initial concept is above the floodplain.

Would the proposed West Street garden plots be developed in wetlands?

No – As part of the evaluation of the proposed garden plot locations the Park District completed a wetland delineation study of the area to the west of the southern garden plots. Wetlands are present in the area to the west; however, the development of garden plots in this area could be completed without impacting the wetlands.

What are the soil conditions at the proposed garden plots locations?

Soil sampling at DuPage River Park has been completed. Overall, the soil is in good condition to support gardening at the proposed site. Approximately 12 to 13 inches of topsoil exist with soil pH that is very good for our area at 6.6 to 6.7. Organic matter of 3.6% to 4.0% is within the recommended levels. It is recommended that gypsum and lime be added to the soil, which is a common recommendation for this area and could be completed prior to use of the area for gardening. Potash levels are low, however, this is an area that can be addressed prior to the development of any garden plots. It is the Park District's understanding that area proposed for future garden plots was at one time farmed.

The soil at the Southwest Community Park location has not been sampled, however, the undeveloped park site has been leased as farmland for several years. The park site was farmed as recently as 2008.

If some of the garden plots are relocated, would a growing season be lost?

No – new garden plots would be constructed prior to the relocation of any current garden plots. A growing season would not be lost.

What is the public process?

Naperville Community Unit School District 203 and the Naperville Park District will host three community engagement meetings to gather public feedback on site concepts for the proposed future use of the Garden Plots property along West Street. Each of the three meetings will be identical in format, with staff from both School District 203 and the Naperville Park District in attendance. Attendees can expect an open house format beginning with a brief overview presentation to outline the issues, concept drawings displayed, options outlined, and participant feedback taken for further consideration.

Each Community Engagement Meeting will be held from **7 - 8:30 p.m.** on:

Wednesday, October 29

District 203 Administrative Center
203 W. Hillside Avenue

Monday, November 10

Alfred Rubin Riverwalk Community Center
305 W. Jackson Avenue

Wednesday, November 12

District 203 Administrative Center
203 W. Hillside Avenue

In addition, the Naperville Park District will be completing a survey of all gardeners who participated in the garden plots program in 2008. The survey will be mailed to each garden plots household and will ask participants a series of questions. The garden plots survey will also be available on the Park District's website.

What are the next steps?

Following the community engagement meetings, School District 203 and the Naperville Park District will work cooperatively to compile community feedback. The Naperville Park District will analyze the data received from the garden plots survey.

Both School District 203 and the Park District will engage their respective boards to come to a decision of what course of action to take. These boards will make the determination whether or not any recommendations will be made to City Council for their consideration and action.

How will updates continue to be communicated to gardeners?

Updates will be provided to gardeners through use of the garden plots email database. If you know of someone who would like to be added to the email database please have them contact the Park District at (630) 848-5000. Copies of mailings and emails communicated to gardeners will also continue to be placed on the Park District website at www.napervilleparks.org under the "Upcoming Community Meetings and Significant Projects" section. In addition, mailings will also be sent to gardeners to announce public meetings where the garden plots are an agenda item.