



## Frequently Asked Questions

# White Oaks Park Concept Plan

### What is a Concept Plan?

A Concept Plan is a vision for the future development of a park or facility of the Park District. It is designed to act as the “framework” for what the park or facility should look like when updated. It guides infrastructure decisions and makes recommendations for improvements and seeks to provide direction on how space in the park could be organized to attract and benefit park users.

### Who prepared this Concept Plan?

The proposed Concept Plan was prepared by a team consisting of Park District staff and a hired land planning/park landscape architectural firm, Altamanu. Staff members representing administrative, recreation and park maintenance and the consultants studied the park and developed the plan with public and board input.

### What credentials does Altamanu have?

Altamanu is an award winning, certified Landscape Architecture, Urban Design and Planning firm based in Chicago and Oak Park Illinois. They believe design is a multidisciplinary process that involves all strata of our environment, including landscape architecture and its interface with ecology and concern for the community. The two principals for creating this Concept Plan, John Mac Manus and Josephine Bellalta, share 40 years of experience of designing and building public spaces. Their varied backgrounds include planning and design of parks, schools, institutional campuses, streetscapes, roadways and public spaces in the Chicago area and nationally. Altamanu has been awarded numerous accolades for design and development of public spaces.

### What steps were taken to develop this plan and how was the community engaged?

The Concept Plan has been under development for nine months starting back in June 2016. In addition to staff workshops and meetings, the Park District has held focus groups, two community meetings (7/27/16 & 1/25/17) and a number of meetings with City Planning Department personnel. The Park Board has been provided monthly updates at its regular monthly meetings. Throughout this time span, verbal and written comments have been solicited and received from the public and conveyed to the Park Board. The plan and presentations made have been posted on the Park District website through the plan’s creation. Currently, the proposed plan is on display at the Recreation Complex with question and comment cards made available for the community to be engaged.

### What are the major features being proposed in the Concept Plan?

The Concept Plan provides features and amenities to enhance the park user experience. In addition, the plan attempts to retain the current and historical uses (trails, scout camping, shelter, challenge exercise courses and trails) while also adding new recreational opportunities (environmental art, arboreal adventure and spartan course, new programming shelter, open meadow, and boardwalks).

### What changes are being proposed to the Dog Area and why?

The Concept Plan modifies the dog area so that user concerns are addressed and the user experience is improved. These changes include improved drainage, better surfacing (crushed granite), higher fences, picnic tables on concrete pads, clearly designated areas (large & small dog) and protection systems for the trees. The Concept Plan also calls for the dog area to be regulated through a pass/permit system. Repeated concerns from users, residents and law enforcement over the use of the dog area brought forth recommendations for the area to be regulated and better controlled. The modified dog area will not move any closer to adjacent residences than today.

### What changes are being proposed to the Trails?

The Concept Plan recommends improvements to the trail system by making more pathways and placing them in areas that can better orient and educate users to the splendor of the natural features (wetlands, diversity of trees, etc.) of the site. The plan calls for both passive and active trails to be created as well as improving the already existing trails.

### What is a Spartan Course?

Residents suggested that the park include both passive and active recreational opportunities for people to enjoy when visiting the park. One recommendation is to install a Spartan Course. A Spartan Course is a trail that includes ground level physical natural elements demanding navigation (i.e. tree stumps to jump from/to, small boulders to climb over, tree limbs to crawl under, etc.). Runners as well as walkers could use the course to exercise in a more natural and exciting manner.

### What is the Scout Camping Area?

Traditionally, the local scouts have used White Oaks Park for evening and overnight activities periodically in the late spring, summer and early fall months. This includes camp fires, environmental skill development sessions and overnight camp outs. To honor these past traditions and allow controlled access to the park, a designated area would be re-established for this purpose, away from any residences. Camping activities would be carefully controlled through use permits and would be limited to protect the park and respect the neighborhood.

### What steps will be taken to protect the environment

The plan calls for the removal of invasive species and letting the natural seed bank to flourish bringing spring ephemerals and understory growth. After the woodlands are improved over time, flowering trees and shrubs would be added around the larger bodies of water. New pathways and boardwalks can be provided so the public can access the wetlands and get a closer but environmentally friendly look at what the natural elements of the park provide.

### What is an Adventure Challenge Course in the Trees?

This new park feature is only being examined at this point. An adventure challenge course in the trees, also known as an arboreal adventure course, places people 16 to 60 feet above ground in tree trails. Participants choose their own self guided course and engage in a combination of obstacles as they maneuver their way through different trails with a progressive degree of challenges. Children (7 years and older), teens, adults and even seniors can participate provided they are at least 40lbs pounds and

can reach 66" with their hands when both heels are flat on the floor. The course would have the ability to accommodate patrons with special needs and programmed accordingly.

Is the Arboreal Challenge Course safe?

The entire course is ACCT (Association for Challenge Course Technology) certified and managed by certified staff. Safety equipment is required and provided including helmets, harnesses, belays and gloves. All guests participate in safety training and a practice session before being permitted on the trails. The entire course features a 100% ON BELAY Quick Trekker System (an anchoring system to prevent falls). Participants have the thrill of working through the courses with the security of knowing that they are 100% on the safety line from start to finish.

When would the course be open and how close would it come to the park residents?

The course would be open, weather permitting, spring, summer and fall during daylight hours and as demand calls. No lights, other than for security at the entrance to the course would be installed. The course would be placed in the northwest section of the park far away from any residences and cover about 3 to 5 acres in total. The entire park is 18 acres, so the course would take up less than a quarter of the park site.

Will the course harm the environment, especially the trees if constructed?

No, the course would be constructed so as to not harm the trees or natural flora and fauna of the site. Construction of course platforms and safety lines does not require any drilling or tree penetration. All hardware is fitted through compression with protective padding around the trees which is adjusted periodically, allowing the trees to grow naturally and uninhibited. In addition, course access points are limited so participants don't interfere with the flora and fauna below.

Are any other sites being considered for the Arbor Adventure Challenge Course?

Yes, the Park District is examining Franzen Grove as a possible alternate site.

What are the plans for the Cabin/Nature Center

The Cabin Nature Center needs further study and plans call for a closer examination of its structural integrity and potential for renovation and the costs associated. Currently closed to the public for safety and non-compliant ADA issues, the facility is used for Park District storage. A recent community wide survey inquired as to the residents opinions on preservation vs. removal was inconclusive. As a result, staff has proposed funding for a study to be commissioned to examine the necessitated costs to bring the facility into compliance and the best uses for the facility. The concept plan suggests that the facility be redeveloped for easier maintenance and public access and that a shelter with restrooms be added and adjoined to the cabin.

Would there be costs to use the park once developed?

The majority of the park would be free of charge, other than the Dog Area and Arbor Adventure Challenge Course. The Dog Area will likely require users to purchase an annual pass to help defray the development and management costs. The Arbor Adventure Challenge Course would be managed by a third party vendor who would charge for its use, allowing them to recover the costs incurred for its construction. This vendor would have total responsibility for maintenance and cover all liability issues.

The Park District plans to negotiate affordable opportunities for local residents to access the course at reduced rates.

How would the Concept Plan be funded if developed?

At present, there is no financial plan for the concept plan to be developed. If approved by the Park Board, the Park District will begin exploring the costs to develop the plan and possible funding sources for construction over time.

When might the Concept Plan be constructed?

Since no funding has been earmarked nor a more detailed development plan created, it is likely that the Concept Plan won't be realized anytime soon. However, the Park Board may likely phase in parts of the plan as funding and resources come available.

Where do I direct any questions that I may have?

Questions can be directed to our Executive Director, Matthew Ellmann. He can be reached at 630/595-9333 or at [mellmann@wooddaleparkdistrict.org](mailto:mellmann@wooddaleparkdistrict.org).

How can my opinions and thoughts be expressed?

The Park District welcomes resident input and encourages citizens to express their opinions, suggestions and ideas regarding the parks and recreation facilities, programs and services provided. E-mails can be sent to either the Executive Director at ([mellmann@wooddaleparkdistrict.org](mailto:mellmann@wooddaleparkdistrict.org)) or the Board President ([dlange@wooddaleparkdistrict.org](mailto:dlange@wooddaleparkdistrict.org)), or comments can be delivered in person during the public comment section of each monthly board meeting. Board meeting dates, times and locations are posted on the agencies website ([www.wdparks.org](http://www.wdparks.org)).