



**A**s a part of the planning process, three different community outreach components were completed: (1) Community Workshop; and, (2) Stakeholder Interviews, and (3) Goals Workshop. These outreach efforts are summarized in this section, along with a review of findings from the *2004 Community Survey*, conducted by Western Illinois University, an independent survey conducted during the Master Plan's planning process.

Based on these community outreach exercises, the following themes emerged:

### ***A Geographically Divided Community***

Historically, the Fox River has divided the Geneva Community into east and west. However, residential growth within Blackberry Township combined with development and traffic along Randall Road has created a new east and west barrier in the community, a barrier that has no bridge or safe pedestrian crossing point. Survey results also showed that the households west of Randall Road are younger and consist of families with more small children. The survey also showed that participation in Park District activities was not hindered by pedestrian barriers.

### ***Special Use Facilities***

A wish list of a number of special-use facilities was heard throughout the community workshop and the key person interviews. Facilities desired by one or more participants throughout the community outreach exercises include: a gymnasium, an indoor pool (in cooperation with a school district or other public agency), an expansion to the current outdoor pool, a dog park, and a cultural arts facility. The survey reported that a majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with expanding the pool, developing a new recreation center/fitness center/gymnasium, and additional athletic fields.

### ***Growth***

As the Community continues to experience growth, land available for parks and recreation will be at a premium. The survey reports strong support for acquiring

additional parkland. The Geneva Park District must anticipate the impacts of growth on its services and develop a plan to serve future populations.

### ***Serving All Demographics***

Despite a number of programs specifically geared to teens and older adults, the community outreach exercises generated concerns that these demographics were not being adequately served by the Geneva Park District.

### ***Community Workshop***

To provide direction and input, and to assist with the Geneva Park District's Master Plan, the Geneva Park District and its Consultant conducted a Community Workshop with interested residents on December 3, 2003. The workshop was held at the Community Center located at Sunset Park. Approximately 15 people attended and participated in the workshop. The workshop was designed to encourage residents and stakeholders to communicate their concerns and feelings about the Park District and the Master Plan during the early stages of the Planning Process.

Overall, the feedback and comments received were positive, an indication that the Geneva Park District is doing an excellent job in its role as a provider of recreation to the community.

An overwhelming majority of participants rated the park and recreation experience in Geneva as "excellent." The wide variety of programs, the staff and instructors of the Park District, the facilities and the parks were largely responsible for the positive opinions of the Park District.

Important issues and weaknesses confronting the Park District, as identified by the participants, included growth, trails, continued school district cooperation, teenage programming, a dog park, an indoor pool, and park maintenance.

A recurring theme throughout much of the community workshop was the issue of transportation and

connectivity.

Other notable comments heard by more than one participant during the meeting included connecting the east and west sides of the community, the underutilization of Island Park, cooperative programs and relations, and cultural arts/performing center. Growth and teens were further identified as important concerns or issues to be considered throughout the planning process.

Below is a summary of the results of the Community Workshop. The summary reflects the opinions and comments stated during workshop dialogue and includes input submitted to the Consultant via the workshop questionnaire. The responses are listed in order of frequency. The number in parenthesis indicates the number of times a response was heard during the workshop.

**1. How would you rate the park and recreation experience in Geneva?**

- 73% Excellent
- 20% Good
- 7% Fair
- 0% Poor

**Positive**

- Wide variety/number of programs (7)
- Staff/Instructors (4)
- Facilities (3)
- Parkland (2)
- Compared to other park districts (1)
- Good value (1)
- New fitness center (1)
- Park District meets needs of residents (1)
- Peck Farm (1)
- Pool addition (1)
- Positive feedback (1)
- Programs build skills (1)
- Summer music (1)

**Negative**

- Subsidized by tax dollars (1)

- Lack of facilities (1)

**2. List five issues/weaknesses confronting the park and recreation system of Geneva?**

- Growth (5)
- Trails/Trail system (5)
- Continued School District cooperation (4)
- Teens/High School & Jr. High (4)
- Dog park (3)
- Indoor pool (3)
- Park maintenance (3)
- Additional open space purchases (2)
- Connecting East/West of community (2)
- Golf course (2)
- Improved relationship with Affiliates (2)
- Island Park is not utilizing its full potential (2)
- Performing arts facility (band shell/theatre) (2)
- Program times not convenient (2)
- Recreation programming space/gym (2)
- Custodial at community center (1)
- Do not “over do” Peck Farm (1)
- Funding (1)
- Lack of shade at new parks (1)
- Loss of the “center” of town (1)
- More facilities at Peck Farm (1)
- More flowers (1)
- No weaknesses (1)
- Park District subsidizes programs (1)
- Parking at major events (1)
- Restrooms/fountains in parks (1)
- Variety in parks (1)

**3. What are the three most important issues discussed thus far?**

- Connect East/West of the community (8)
- Underutilization of Island Park (6)
- Cooperative programs/relationships (4)
- Cultural/Performing Arts Center/facility (4)
- Growth (4)
- Teens (4)
- More programming space/gym (3)
- More variety in parks/playgrounds (3)
- Bike trails (1)
- Fountains/restrooms (1)

- Purchase of more open space (1)
- Shade (1)

**4. Are there any programs or facilities that the Geneva Park District should provide more of? Are there any programs or facilities that the Park District is not providing that it could/should provide?**

- Cooperative School/Park Pool (4)
- Cultural facilities (4)
- More variety/themes in parks (4)
- Cultural programs (3)
- After-school programs (2)
- Dog Park (2)
- Golf course (2)
- More programming space/gym (2)
- Rock climbing (2)
- Trails (2)
- Water playground (2)
- Competitive vs. Non-competitive (1)
- Daycare (1)
- Fitness challenges (1)
- Fountains/restrooms (1)
- Gardening/landscaping info (1)
- Mileage markers on trails (1)
- Paintball (1)
- Tai Chi (1)
- Tennis courts (1)

**5. If you had the power and the resources to undertake one project or improvement to the parks and recreation of Geneva, what would it be?**

- Cultural/Civic facility (4)
- Gymnasium at Peck Farm (3)
- Golf Course (2)
- Purchase more open space (2)
- After school program (1)
- Better usage of Island Park (band shell) (1)
- Climbing wall (1)
- Connect East/West of the community (1)
- In-line skating (1)
- Trails (1)

**6. What are the primary assets and advantages of the park and recreation system of Geneva?**

- Large number/wide range of programs (7)
- Number of parks/parkland (6)

- Instructors/staff (5)
- Peck Farm (4)
- Fitness center (3)
- Community involvement (2)
- Island Park (2)
- Pool upgrades (2)
- Clean parks (1)
- Communication with residents (1)
- Community interest (1)
- Focus on land acquisition (1)
- Innovative (1)
- Location of parks (1)
- Maintenance/upkeep (1)
- Riverfront property (1)
- Senior programs/facilities (1)
- Summer concerts (1)
- Timing/scheduling (1)
- Trails (1)

**Key Person Interviews**

For the Key Person Interview component of the *Master Plan*, the Consultant contacted ten stakeholders for interviews.

The stakeholders interviewed represented varying interests and insights into the Geneva Park District. In general, the objective of stakeholder interviews is to obtain candid, first-hand views about conditions within the Geneva Community and discuss issues and potentials that should be taken into consideration as part of the planning for the future.

Face-to-face interviews were utilized to obtain feedback from stakeholders. Each interviewee was given a brief overview of the purpose of the study and asked a series of questions regarding the Geneva Community and the Geneva Park District's Parks and Open Space Master Plan.

It is important to emphasize that the interviews represent the personal opinions of a limited number of people within the community. They should not be interpreted as findings of fact or as conclusions

and recommendations by the Consultant. However, the interviews do highlight several locally perceived issues and concerns that should be addressed in the Master Plan.

Listed below are summaries of the major issues and comments based on feedback heard throughout the interview responses. The issues are ranked in order of importance, as indicated by the frequency of each response. The major issues listed below are followed by a list of comments that were received by only one or two stakeholders.

**1. How would you describe the park and recreation experience in Geneva?**

Evolving/Improving (2); Responsive to the needs of the community (2); Matured (2); Excellent (2); Quality Parks (2); Exceptional Programs (2); Growth has placed expectations; Focused (doing less better); Good reputation; Growing; Exceeds NRPA Standards; Staff - run by professionals; Top Notch; Clean; Organized; Comprehensive; Progressive; Unique; Supportive Residents; Leadership; Hidden Treasure.

**2. What are the primary assets and advantages of the park and recreation system of Geneva?**

Staff (5); Peck Farm (4); Residents (3); Leadership (3); Well Maintained (2); Opportunities for all ages (2); Experienced (2); Wheeler Park (2); Listens to the public (2); Relationships with other public organizations (2); Board (2); Open Space; Accessible; Safe; Swimming Pool; Intimate; Quick to respond; Butterfly Garden; Skate park; Seniors Programs; Bike Paths; Knows their residents; Budget Conscious; Smart; Island Park; Don't take retention ponds for parks; Family Oriented.

**3. What are the primary weaknesses and disadvantages of the park and recreation system of Geneva?**

Teens do not like to do Park District stuff (3); Programs are not advanced (2); Website is not kept current; Trails do not connect to park sites; Too independent; Senior programs should be publicized; Pool

is too shallow; People don't read program guides; Parents are coaches - favor their kids; Overlap in services; No cultural arts; Kaneville Road Extension; Decisions should be made with entire community's best interest in mind; Confusing boundaries; Concern over taxes; Community is disconnected; Communication with Board is difficult; "Artificial" Inter-Governmental meetings.

**4. Are there any programs or facilities that the Geneva Park District should provide more of?**

Teens (4); Indoor gym (2); Cultural Arts Center (2); Park District provides everything; Pool is too crowded; Trips; Tennis Court west of Randall; Indoor pool.

**5. Are there any under served geographic areas in terms or parkland?**

Tennis (5); Seniors; Advanced level of programs; Connecting bike trails - cannot get from park to park; Safe access across Randall Road; Baseball fields; East side of Geneva - east of the river; Arts; West of Randall Road; Pool west of Randall Road; Eaglebrook.

**6. Other than the programs and parks within the community, how are the recreational needs of the Geneva community being addressed?**

St. Charles Park District (3); Athletic affiliates (Geneva Baseball, Tri-City Soccer) (2); Schools (Elementary and High School) (2); Delnor Wellness Center (2); Public/Private Golf Courses; Bike Trail (Forest Preserve and other Park Districts); Batavia.

**7. In your opinion what nearby communities are doing an excellent job in providing recreation and open space opportunities to their residents?**

St. Charles (4); Batavia (2); Fox Valley (2); Bartlett; Rockford; Kane County Forest Preserve.

**8. If you had the power and the resources to undertake one project or improvement to the parks and recreation of Geneva, what would it be?**

Gymnasium/Community Center (4); Theatre (3);

Purchase the 6th Street School for a Community Center (2); Acquire all land west of Peck Road for Open Space; Park District Golf Course; Teen Center; Facilities west of Randall; Downtown Community Center; Swimming Pool; Acquire land.

### **Other Comments**

Basketball season is too short; Continue to seek community input; Keep being innovative; Kids day at fitness center - do a day where they just teach kids how to use equipment and get them hooked; Park District could outgrow Sunset Park/Community Center facility; Park District provides plenty of opportunities, people don't take advantage of them; Park District should play a more instilling role in the community; Park District should talk to the Search Institute and build asset building into their programs; Pool needs to be shared, not just the GPD's pool; Pool should not be built by the Geneva Park District; Special recreation is well served; Survey results should be posted on the website and shared with the community.

### **Goals Workshop**

On Wednesday, June 30, a workshop was conducted with the residents of the Geneva Park District to establish goals for recreation provision within the community. The purpose of the meeting was to identify benchmarks and goals for each type of recreation facility within the community. Participants were asked to rate their satisfaction of recreation provision in the community and brainstorm ideas and facilities needed to better serve the community. The results of this workshop are presented below, organized by facility.

### **Backstops**

The general consensus of participants at the workshop was that pick-up activities by local youths had declined in popularity. Participants agreed however, that it was still important to provide facilities for unstructured recreation, and that a backstop was a low-cost option, and that they should. There was some concern that these facilities can be problematic if

they are heavily used, particularly as game or practice fields by teams. Since these facilities are recommended for neighborhood parks where programming is undesirable, precautions should be taken to limit the use of the facility to unstructured play by a very local population.

### **Ball Fields**

The discussion regarding ball fields concerned each of the 3 different types of fields: baseball fields, softball fields, and Little League fields. Residents agreed that parents are willing to take their children to, or participate in, any field within the community. Consequently, no service area standards should be established for baseball fields. Participants were also of the opinion that the current level of service was sufficient and that new fields should only be built as the community grows, to maintain the current level of service.

### **Basketball Courts**

Residents believe that basketball courts within neighborhood parks generate traffic and visitors from other parts of the community. Consequently, they suggest that these facilities be developed in parks better suited for their impacts, such as community parks, schools, and sports complexes. Once again there was consensus that participation in unstructured recreation has declined, and that existing courts are not well utilized. Additionally, basketball is one of the few facilities that homeowners can accommodate on their driveways. Therefore, there was a general sentiment that the current amount of facilities was suitable for both current and future populations.

### **Dog Parks**

Participants acknowledged that dog parks have increased in popularity, particularly within the region. Although dogs are permitted in all parks, the desire for a specialized facility was expressed by a small contingent of those in attendance. The Forest Preserve District is currently working to address the demand for this facility.

### ***Fishing***

The Fox River represents an excellent resource for boating and fishing within the Geneva community. Although the community was indifferent in regards to fishing facilities, they are a low-cost option to expanding the number of recreational activities in the community. The participants agreed that the Park District should continue to seek opportunities for fishing piers along the Fox River.

### ***Football/Soccer***

Due to similar field sizes and compatible schedules, football and soccer was combined for discussion. All agreed that parents are willing to take their children to any field within the community to play soccer, football or take part in cheerleading. Consequently, no service area standards should be established for football or soccer fields. However, both users of the facilities and the community as a whole have indicated the current number of fields is insufficient. Simply stated, more fields are needed to support these recreational activities and programs.

### ***Golf***

The participants of the workshop agreed that the demand for golf within the community was sufficiently addressed by the private sector. However, they did also note that golf was a potential revenue opportunity and could subsidize other programs, thus expanding the recreational activities available to the community.

### ***Ice Skating***

Residents of the Geneva Park District indicate that milder winters have shortened the ice skating season, and the climate controlled ice skating facility at Fox Valley Ice Arena has addressed a portion of the demand for skating in the community. Consequently, participants agreed that the current number of facilities is sufficient to meet the needs of the current population, and that another facility may be needed in the future to accommodate western residential growth.

### ***Jogging/Exercise Trails***

The community expressed a desire to provide these facilities in all neighborhood parks, where there is sufficient park space to accommodate the facility.

### ***Multi-Purpose Trails***

Participants agreed that the Fox River Trail is a true “gem” and that the Geneva Park District should continue to work cooperatively with the City of Geneva to provide as many possible connections to the trail.

### ***Picnic/Shade Shelters***

Utilization of current rental picnic shelters is not at capacity, and a large number of reservations are made by non-residents. The Park District should direct efforts to increasing the utilization of existing facilities before a new facility is constructed. Smaller picnicking areas and shelters available at any time for all residents are appropriate for all neighborhood parks and provide needed shade within these parks. If new picnic/shade shelters are constructed by the District, the community expressed a desire to operate large, rental picnic shelters within community parks, with residents receiving priority scheduling.

### ***Playgrounds/Play Equipment***

The workshop attendees recognize that playgrounds and play equipment are the building block of recreation in the Geneva Park system, and often provide the first play experiences within the Geneva Park District. They suggest that the existing Park District policy should remain untouched, with new playgrounds installed in new neighborhoods to maintain the existing level of service as the community experiences growth.

### ***Gymnasiums***

There was consensus among the workshop participants that lack of indoor programmable/gymnasium space was impacting the Park District’s ability to adequately provide recreation to the community. Consequently, there was overwhelming support for the Park District to continue to pursue plans for a

gymnasium at Peck Farm.

### **Skate Park**

The skate park at South Street Athletic Fields proved difficult to develop, despite the rapidly growing popularity of the sport. Although the facility experienced some opposition, many of community fears have been unfounded. Currently, one facility is intended to serve the entire community, however, as Geneva continues to grow, the residents recognize that a second facility, or installation of smaller skate facilities in other parks, may be necessary.

### **Swimming/Aquatic Facilities**

The residents acknowledge that indoor swimming pools are expensive to build, maintain, and operate. Residents also acknowledge that the Geneva Park District cannot afford to operate an indoor swimming pool without tax support for construction and on-going operation and maintenance. However, there was interest in local/smaller scale water playgrounds that could prove to be a cost-effective way for the Park District to expand its provision of water recreation.

### **Tennis Courts**

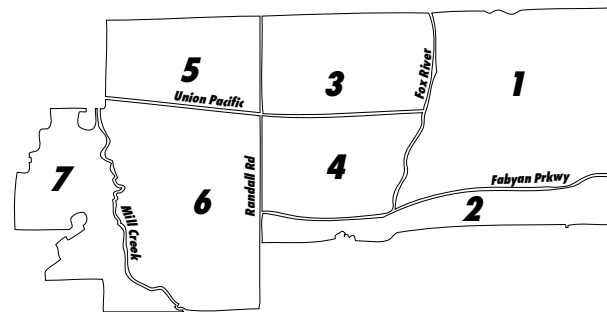
There was sentiment that the existing number of tennis courts could sufficiently provide for tennis within the community, especially due to the fact that new developments can include tennis courts for their residents.

### **Community Survey**

A *Community Survey* has been conducted by Western Illinois University and the results of the survey have been compiled, analyzed and presented to the Geneva Park District in report format. A systematic random sample of 3,300 households was drawn from a complete list of households within the Park District and surveys were mailed to those households in early February 2004, along with a postage paid envelope for return to Western Illinois University. Follow-up reminders were done through the local media. The actual return rate of valid surveys was 29% (957), pro-

viding Western Illinois University with a statistically valid random sample that will allow the Park District to make generalizations about its population.

The Community Interest Survey designated 7 geographic areas within the Park District to help determine local specific interests and concerns. The boundaries used to establish these areas consist of physical pedestrian barriers (i.e. the Fox River, the Union Pacific Railway, Randall Road, Fabyan Parkway, and Mill Creek), which prevent walking between the areas. The seven community areas are shown below.



The *Community Survey Report*, presented to the Geneva Park District in the Spring of 2004, presents the results of the survey, along with an analysis of the results of each question. Listed below are inferences that can be made from the survey findings that have been taken into consideration throughout the development of this Master Plan.

- The survey reported that there are more households in Regions 5, 6 and 7 that have families with youth and teens. Region 7 however, has the fewest amount of teens, but the highest percentage of children 11 years old and younger. The high proportion of youth in these areas may serve as an indication that parks in these areas may require more amenities for smaller children.
- The trail network is enormously popular within the community. Over 70% of the population has used the trail system in the last year, and 1/3 of the population utilized the trail system 10 or more times. Despite a large number of youths in the households, Regions 5, 6 and 7 used the trail system less frequently than other areas. This serves as an indication that distance to the trail system impacts the usage. Regions 5, 6 & 7 are located

west of Randall Road, farthest away from the trail system.

- Residents in Regions 4 & 7 registered more frequently for Park District programs than residents from other areas. While the number of children in each household is the probable cause of the frequent participation in programs from Region 7, it is likely that the registrations from Region 4 are strongly associated with the proximity to the Park District's primary programming facilities. The Geneva Community Center, Sunset Pool, and Sunset Racquetball and Fitness Center are located in Region 4.
- The Community Survey Analysis states, "The proportion of households prevented from involvement in Geneva Park District was not influenced by region". This indicates that community issues, such as Randall Road and new growth on the west side of the community, are not influencing utilization of the Park District.
- Households with the presence of one or more youth/teen were most likely to cite "Program was full" as a reason for not utilizing the Geneva Park District. It is probable that the lack of indoor programmable space is a reason for this trend.
- Ratings of Adult Athletics, and Gymnastics and Tumbling left "considerable room for improvement." Respondents in each case cited "Excellent" less than "Fair" or "Poor". There are many factors that could be attributed to the poor program satisfaction in these areas. Further study should determine if the lack of programmable space or fields are the reasons.
- Nearly 90% of respondents visited a Geneva Park District Park during the past year. Nearly half of the respondents visited a park 10 or more times. Region 2 had the highest percentage of respondents that did not visit a park site. The poor visitation of parks by Region 2 residents is likely due to the fact that Region 2 has fewer acres of parkland than any other area.
- Utilization of Park District facilities was also very high. Over 71% of respondents indicated that one or more members of their households had visited a Park District facility in the past year, and over half of the respondents do so at a frequent level. Region 7, which could be considered furthest away from some of the more popular facilities, including Sunset Pool, the Geneva Community Center, and the Sunset Racquetball and Fitness Center, had the highest amount of households (50.7%) that utilized Park District facilities 10 or more times. This could serve as another indication that community issues, such as Randall Road and new growth on west side of the community, are not negatively affecting the utilization of the Park District.
- Nearly half of the respondents expressed a desire to increase the amount of aquatic programs. The absence of a programmable indoor facility means that Sunset Pool would have to accommodate this expressed demand. Although Sunset Pool has undergone recent expansion, space is still inadequate to accommodate additional programming. Another phase of pool expansion would likely be necessary to accommodate the expressed community demand.
- There was considerable support for increasing Youth Athletics. Thirty-five percent of respondents expressed a desire to increase Youth Athletics. A similar number of respondents showed support for increasing Adult Athletics. The increase of athletic programs will impact the amount of fields and facilities needed within the community.
- Overall, there was an overwhelming desire expressed by survey respondents to increase programming. There was strong support for increasing Teen Programs, Adult Programs, Youth Programs, Camps, Nature/Environmental Programs, Family Programs, Cultural Arts Programs, and Active Programs for 50+. Expanding these programs would require a significant amount of programmable space, most of which would be indoors. Additional indoor facilities may be required to meet the apparent demand.
- The community strongly supports the acquisition of land for future parks and facilities. The community also strongly supports the Park District's role in maintaining natural areas and open spaces. There was no regional variation to this initiative, indicating that all residents feel that the Geneva Park District should acquire open space, both for recreation and open space benefits, before it is lost to development.

- The community strongly supports upgrading neighborhood parks, expanding the trail system within the community, expanding Peck Farm, and planting more trees and shrubs within the parks. When asked to identify the highest priority, maintaining natural areas and open spaces ranked first. However, it should be noted that a larger percentage of residents in Regions 5, 6 & 7 ranked linking to the trail system as the highest priority in comparison to other areas. This is another indication that the distance to the existing trail network is affecting the utilization of the facility by these residents. Implementation of all of these actions could be incorporated into the new Master Plan.
- Overall, the community desires additional park district facilities. Over half of the respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed with expanding the pool, 60% supported additional athletic fields, 60% also supported the development of a new recreation center/fitness center/gymnasiums. Highest priority from the respondents was more or less split between expanding the pool and development of the recreation center. The Peck Farm Master Plan recommends construction of a gymnasium on the north section of Peck Farm Park. The *Gymnasium Plan* located on Page 52 supports this recommendation.