

# FAQ SHEET FOR RECREATION CENTER

## Frequently Asked Questions for Recreation Center Discussion

### **Why is the Frankfort Park District considering a new Recreation Center?**

Many of our indoor facilities have reached the end of their useful life. The Founders Community Center, originally built as a school over 100 years ago, requires major infrastructure repairs such as roofing, HVAC, and plumbing. Additionally, its layout limits the types of programs that can be offered.

The Park District's current tax revenue is not enough to cover these large-scale renovations or construct a new facility. That's why the Park District is exploring options, including the possibility of a voter-approved property tax increase to fund improvements.

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### **Will the Park District pursue a referendum for Recreation Center project, and will it increase property taxes?**

Currently, no decision has been made regarding placing a formal vote on the ballot. The ongoing community engagement process, including surveys, aims to assess public support and gather feedback. Insights gained from these efforts will inform the Park District Board and staff as they navigate this decision-making process. If a referendum was presented to fund a project or increase operating funding, it would result in an increase in property taxes.

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### **Why not just renovate current facilities?**

The Park District is considering both renovation and new construction. The Founders Center, when it was a school, underwent multiple additions, but its design limits functionality for a Recreation Center. Also, expanding on the current site is difficult due to parking and stormwater regulations. Renovation would still require substantial funding, so residents are being surveyed to see if they support a new, modern facility that meets today's needs.

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### **Why doesn't the Park District use Lincoln-Way North or East facilities?**

While Frankfort Square Park District has an agreement with District 210 to use Lincoln-Way North (excluding the pool), the building is not located within Frankfort Park District boundaries. The facility lacks air conditioning in the field house and would require significant investment to renovate for our recreational needs—costs that exceed the proposed new facility options.

Access to Lincoln-Way East has been reduced since the district has downsized. The school now requires more space for its own programs, limiting community use including no access to the Park District to use the pool. The pool at LW North remains closed.

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### **Why should Residents trust the Park District with more funding?**

The Park District operates with a very modest budget in relation to the number of assets managed. Despite limited funding, the Park District works hard to stretch every dollar, prioritize critical needs, and seek grants and sponsorships. The proposed increase would allow us to better maintain parks and facilities and fund new community amenities.

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### **Where would a new facility be built?**

In 2014, the Park District purchased 11 acres at the NW corner of LaGrange and Laraway Roads as a potential site. While this location is being considered, other options are also being explored.

Feedback from Heritage Knolls residents has been received regarding traffic and are evaluating solutions to minimize impacts if the project moves forward at that location.



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## **Would there be fees to use a new facility?**

Yes, there would be free access to certain amenities. Residents would have no charge to use of the walking track and designated “free days” for other areas. Program and membership fees would apply, with higher rates for non-residents.

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## **What would memberships cost?**

Membership pricing has not yet been finalized. If the project proceeds, proposed rates will be shared before any vote. Rates are anticipated to be in line with neighboring community-based facilities such as the Oaks in Mokena or Tinley Park’s recreation centers.

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## **What is the estimated time frame for building a new facility?**

If a referendum is presented to voters and is approved, the design and construction phases are expected to take approximately two and a half years.

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## **What is the Park District considering in the referendum?**

Consideration to put a referendum on the ballot is to provide funding needed to renovate or build a new facility, and to support ongoing maintenance and improvements of existing parks and operations.

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## **Concerns surrounding high property taxes are prevalent; why seek an increase right now?**

The Park District understands the financial burdens faced by Frankfort and Illinois residents regarding property taxes. However, it represents a relatively small portion of the overall tax bill. Limited funding from property tax revenue hampers the ability to maintain district assets adequately. The Park District’s revenue is bound by the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law (PTELL), enacted in 1991, which has restricted tax rate flexibility compared to prior years.

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## **What would happen if there is no support for a tax rate increase to build and support a Recreation Center?**

Without additional funding for construction or renovations, the current property tax levy will be allocated solely for repairs, delaying much-needed projects. A number of existing playgrounds exceed 20 years of operation and are in need of attention. Existing funds will focus on the most critical issues, but the ongoing funding level will not improve the quality of facilities or offerings. Efforts have been made to reduce operational costs, such as reducing mowing frequency in neighborhood parks, and special events rely on sponsorships and local partnerships. The Park District continues to seek grants from the State of Illinois to assist with repairs and renovations.

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## **Why raise property taxes when they’re already high?**

It is understood that property taxes are a concern. The Park District receives approximately 2.7% of the average local property tax bill—one of the smallest shares among taxing bodies. Due to state tax caps (PTELL), our ability to raise revenue is extremely limited unless residents approve a tax increase through a referendum. The intention is to fund the maintenance of the existing assets or find out if there is support to construct a new facility.

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## **Why not increase user fees instead?**

The Park District charge fees for recreation programs, and those fees help cover program costs. Maintenance of parks and facilities is funded through property taxes, and the Park District is capped by law known as PTELL in how much money can be collected. A referendum is the only way to secure the funding needed to manage current or build new facilities.



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## **Doesn't the Village of Frankfort manage the parks?**

The Village of Frankfort owns and manages Breidert Green and Prairie Park located in downtown Frankfort. However, the Village of Frankfort is a separate taxing entity with an independently elected Board. The Frankfort Park District has a five-member elected Board of Commissioners. The Park District is responsible for maintaining 20 park locations which encompasses 300 acres of park space including the larger regional parks which include Commissioners and Main Park. The Park District owns the Founders Center and Susan Puent Building.

## **Why doesn't the Village help fund the construction of a new Recreation Center?**

The Village of Frankfort and the Park District are separate taxing bodies, each collecting property taxes to support their operations. A park district is a local Special Purpose district, established to provide and maintain public parks and recreational facilities within a defined geographic area. The Village has numerous areas including but not limited to Public Safety, Public Works, Buildings and more to manage with their portion of the tax levy.

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## **Where does the Park District get its funding?**

Our funding comes from:

- Property taxes
- Program and rental fees
- State grants (which are actively pursued and have successfully secured)

The Park District does NOT receive sales tax, income tax, or utility tax revenues like the Village does.

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## **Why doesn't the Park District have funding like School District 157C?**

School District 157C passed a referendum in 2000 that doubled their tax rate resulting in increased property tax collections. District 157C current rate is 3.2494%, compared to the Park District's 0.1739%. The School District could choose not to collect their full tax levy; however, they need that funding for their operations.

This past year, District 157C completed a \$48 million dollar renovation of Chelsea School. The Park District would have to save every dollar of the annual property tax levy for 24 years to fund a \$48 million building renovation.

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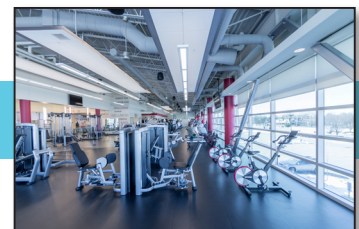
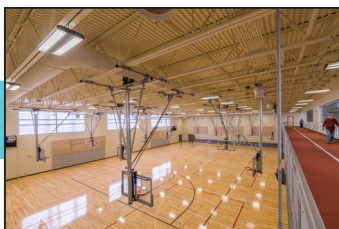
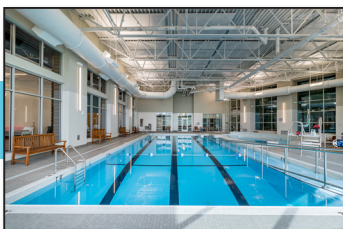
## **Have more questions?**

✉ Email: [gassett@frankfortparks.org](mailto:gassett@frankfortparks.org)

☎ Call: 815-469-9400

Your questions help us build a stronger, more informed community.

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The Park District hosted an Open House regarding this topic. The information from that meeting including a video, frequently asked questions and additional information can be found on the Park District's website.