

The greatest degree of inner tranquility comes from the development of love and compassion. The more we care for the happiness of others, the greater is our own sense of well-being.

- Tenzin Gyatso, 14th Dalai Lama

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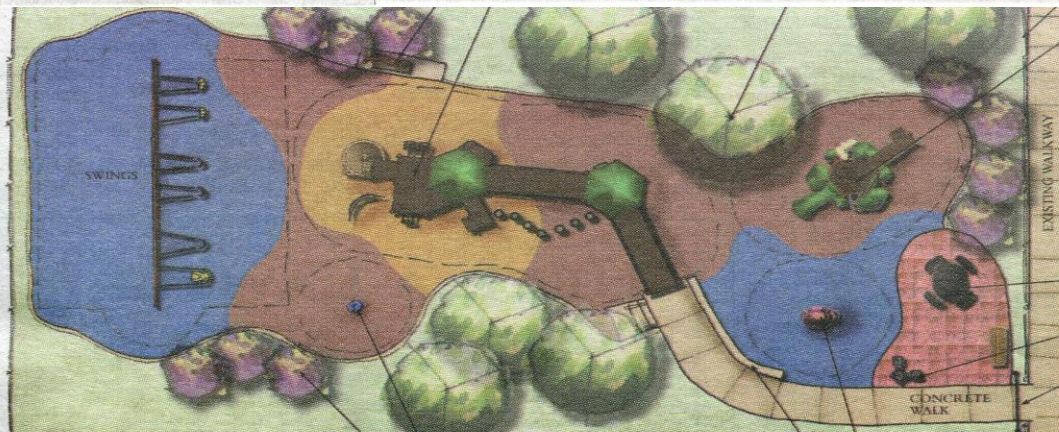
NEWS OF LINCOLN PARK, LAKE VIEW, NORTH CENTER & LINCOLN SQUARE

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\$450,000 is needed to upgrade Merryman Playlot Park at 3736 N. Marshfield in Lake View.

Merryman Park renovation in the works

BY PETER VON BUOL

The Merryman Park Advisory Council, a community organization which supports Merryman Playlot Park at 3736 N. Marshfield, has formed its own non-profit organization and is now able to accept donations to help raise the \$450,000 needed to renovate and restore the half-century old park.

Located on a quiet, residential street in the Lakeview neighborhood, the fifth-of-an acre park has long been popular among families with small children. A recent study by the Chicago Park District, however, had found the park's playground equipment of swings, slides and tunnels to be in need of a major update. The park's last renovation had been in 1982 and had last been resurfaced in 1990.

According to a spokesperson at the park district, the bark surfacing under the playlot equipment is outdated as it impedes stroller and wheel-chair usage. It is also not as forgiving to children who fall down as newer rubberized surfaces are. The bark may also hide broken glass and other dangers. Unfortunately, the newer rubbery soft-surfacing material, is very costly.

"A big cost of the renovation will be the soft-surface. It's more than half of the cost of the project," said Erin McGuire, Park Supervisor at Sheil Park which also oversees the playlot and who was in attendance at a recent meeting.

In addition, the park does not have adequate equipment for children with special-needs. While the park has six swings (three for toddlers and three for older children), none are suitable for children with special needs.

Two versions of the park's redesign are posted on the group's web site <http://merrymanpark.com>. In both versions, the park's trees remain in place but its swing-set will be moved from the front of the park to the rear of the park. There will be two sets of playground equipment. One set will cater to small children and the second set will be designed for older children (5-12). Another feature will appeal to both groups. In addition, ornamental fencing and an arch entry-way will also be installed. The new park design will also feature a picnic table.

On the evening of July 27, the park's advisory

council met at the park to discuss its plans for raising awareness about their project and fundraising ideas to help pay for the restoration.

According to Rebecca Maxcy, the advocacy group's president, her group has begun to send out a fund-raising letter to raise awareness about the project. For a \$100 donation, supporters will soon receive a window-cling which will enable local residents and businesses to identify themselves as park supporters. Next year, her group is planning to raise funds through

the sale of personalized brick-paving stones which will eventually be installed within the park. Other fund-raising options discussed at the meeting were operating a lemonade-stand in front of the higher-foot-traffic Sheil Park during a Chicago Cubs game

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The bark surfacing under the playlot equipment is outdated as it impedes stroller and wheel-chair usage.

- Photo by Peter von Buol

and possibly hosting an off-site performance of Chicago's Midnight Circus (a popular fund-raiser for Chicago parks and which is known for its European-style circus acts).

The next meeting of the park advisory council will be held at the park on Tuesday, August 24 (rain date Wednesday, August 25).

According to the park district's web site, the park honors Theron W. Merryman (1897-1967), a former alderman of what was then the 45th Ward. A veteran of World War I, Merryman had been a sanitary-engineer by profession and had also been past-president of the National Association of Master Plumbers.