

Oak Park's Collaboration Corner

A collaborative communication created by Oak Park's six local government agencies.



Collaboration Corner is a new newsletter insert offering readers updates on initiatives cooperatively designed to improve the quality of life for everyone in Oak Park. The work of Oak Park's six local government agencies is featured. For more information, contact agencies listed in each article.



OAK PARK PUBLIC
LIBRARY



OAK PARK
TOWNSHIP



PARK DISTRICT
of OAK PARK

Collaboration leads to community health plan

The Oak Park Health Department, with key community partners, has completed its community health needs assessment and plan, known as the IPLAN. Built over the course of 2022 via community activities and surveys, the IPLAN is required of all state-certified health departments and provides priority areas, goals and activities to improve the health outcomes of Oak Park residents.

The four priority areas in the plan are:

- Access to Care
- Mental Health and Substance Use
- Built and Natural Environment
- Gun Violence

A core IPLAN team made up of representatives from the Oak Park Health Department, Oak Park Board of Health, Park District of Oak Park, Oak Park Township, Community Mental Health Board of Oak Park Township, Rush Oak Park Hospital and River Forest Township helped guide the process from start to finish. The core team also gathered input from a wide range of additional stakeholders in the community.

Learn more about the details of the plan and next steps at www.oak-park.us/IPLAN22. Members of the community are also invited to reach out to the Health Department at 708.358.5480 or health@oak-park.us with any questions about the plan or ways to get more involved in public health initiatives.

Intergovernmental agreements reflect shared commitment to school safety and racial equity

The Village of Oak Park partnered with District 97 and District 200 this fall to develop an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) that satisfies the need to adhere to state law while providing a safe, equitable learning environment for all students.

Village Manager Kevin Jackson, District 97 Superintendent Ushma Shah and District 200 Superintendent Greg Johnson led the tri-agency effort to balance calls for schools safety and racial equity by formally defining the relationship between the schools and local police.

Key provisions of the IGA include:

- **Ensuring compliance** with the district’s and the police department’s legal obligations, concerning the sharing of information between the agencies;
- **Designating which individuals**, both within the districts and the police department, may be privy to shared information;
- **Establishing clear limitations** on and procedures for the handling of criminal activity and police matters within the school buildings, to the extent such is necessary; and
- **Ensuring compliance** with the requirement under state law that a law enforcement officer serve on the District 97 and District 200 threat assessment teams.

While the IGA is required by existing law, and statutes referenced in the IGA are non-negotiable legal requirements, neither agreement extends law enforcement involvement in Oak Park schools beyond what is required by law and/or expectations outlined in existing school board policy.

The three agencies took part in a robust

IGA development process over the course of several months. After discussing the IGA with all three boards in October, the lead administrators for the three bodies met to compile, theme, and respond to more than 50 questions received by their governing boards. The questions and answers are available here: bit.ly/3UvVQzi.

To ensure both school safety and racial equity, agency leaders collaborated with equity leads from each of the three agencies, along with the chief of police, to ensure the agreement aligned to shared values and beliefs, namely, that school safety and emergency preparedness planning must be holistic, systems-based, strategic, youth-centered and anchored in racial justice.

As all three agencies begin to implement the IGA, successful implementation will require a commitment to continuous learning and improvement in order to create a more equitable school system.

After each incident of contacting the police, schools will conduct an after-action review to ensure that all district policies and procedures were followed with fidelity and that schools are upholding their commitment to minimizing the role of law enforcement in our schools. Data, including student demographics, will be reviewed internally on an annual basis.

Per the IGA, the two school districts and the village will also meet annually to review the goals and objectives of the agreement and ensure that all parties are upholding their roles and responsibilities as outlined.

To view the IGA between the village and District 97, visit <https://bit.ly/3BHfyRZ>
To view the IGA between the village and District 200, visit <http://bit.ly/3jiOqm2>

High school, park district collaborate on athletic fields

With roughly 200 student athletes, the girls and boys track teams comprise the largest, most diverse extracurricular activity at Oak Park and River Forest High School. Unfortunately, though, the high school does not have a regulation track on campus. A long-standing agreement with Concordia University Chicago has allowed the teams to use its track in River Forest, but the agreement ends this year, with no option to renew.

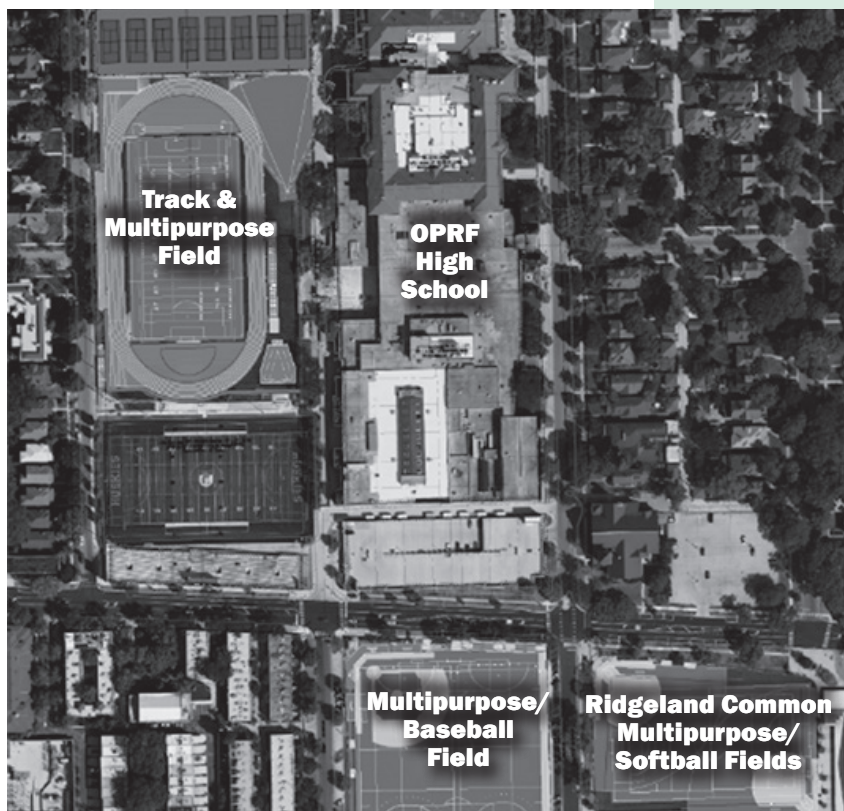
The news that the teams would be losing access to Concordia's track prompted discussions between the high school and the Park District of Oak Park (PDOP), who already had an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) about sharing facilities. Could a new agreement be created to address the track problem?

Indeed it could. With input from a variety of stakeholder groups, OPRFHS and PDOP came up with a plan to redesign several athletic fields in order to accommodate a regulation-size track on the high school's campus.

The new design includes:

- **A 400-meter track** between the OPRFHS tennis courts and football stadium. The track will surround a multipurpose turf field and include space for pole vault, long jump, and shot put.
- **A new multipurpose turf field** on the high school's Lake Street field. In spring, the field will be used for OPRFHS baseball.
- **Renovated multipurpose turf fields** at Ridgeland Common, which will be used in spring by the OPRFHS softball program.

Under the new IGA, which both boards approved in the fall, the OPRFHS physical education and softball programs will have expanded use of the Ridgeland Common field, while PDOP programs will have increased



access to the high school's fields. OPRFHS will fund improvements to the Ridgeland Common fields, including replacing the turf, which is at the end of its useful life, and installing two new scoreboards, security cameras, and additional netting.

Expanding the use of lights on the Lake Street field until 10 p.m. was required to make the sharing agreement work, so the high school worked with the Village of Oak Park, which approved a new special-use permit allowing the later time for lights out.

The project is slated to begin this spring, with the school district paying the total cost of \$17.3 million from existing cash reserves. (Note that because the project encompasses several items that already were part of the district's 10-Year Maintenance Plan, it represents approximately \$14.4 million of new expenditures.) The work is expected to be completed in fall 2023.



The Oak Park Public Library and the Collaboration for Early Childhood work together to create unique hands-on resources and virtual learning experiences for the youngest members of our community, their caregivers and their families.

Learn more about their video series at <http://bit.ly/3G7HAZv> and see a list of their Early Learning Kits available for checkout at <https://bit.ly/3YCs4vS>

Working together to engage & support our community's youth

The Collaboration for Early Childhood is a community-driven organization, supported by Oak Park's six government entities, that cultivates the development of the whole child, birth to age five, by engaging families, local organizations, early childhood educators, caregivers, and health providers to create equitable, nurturing, and interconnected systems of support. The Collaboration serves as the community's main point of contact for referrals to free preschool, home visiting programs, and "all things early childhood." It provides professional development and support to early learning professionals and offers free workshops and leadership opportunities for parents and caregivers.

The Collaboration regularly reports to the Village of Oak Park, School District 97, and School District 200 and the library about the state of early childhood in Oak Park as part of its agreement to provide a comprehensive, coordinated approach to a field that is traditionally fragmented. Anyone looking for local child care can access the Collaboration's Early Childhood Resource Directory which lists child care centers, preschools, and family child care programs, and/or can call or text for personalized assistance, including referrals for early intervention services. For more information, visit collab4kids.org.

The Youth Engagement Program (YEP), managed by the Oak Park Township Youth and Family Services and financially supported by all government entities, is a collaboration whose goal is to provide a holistic approach to support the mental health and wellness of youth ages 6-18 in our community. The program has been in place since 1996 and has been recognized from the Illinois Lieutenant Governor's Offices as a "shared service best practice."

The YEP program is free and designed to provide supportive services, including individual and group counseling and mentoring, to youth as they navigate complex trauma, crisis, anxiety/depression, behavioral issues, gang involvement, or any pressing needs of youth.

YEP supports local entities in providing staff training in crisis management, de-escalation techniques, and cultural responsiveness. Additionally, YEP partners with agencies to co-develop programming and events aimed at engaging youth in safe and healthy activities and events. Ultimately, YEP aims to help youth live life in their greatest capacity and dismantle any barriers that exist to help them. For more information, visit oakparktownship.org/youth-services.