

## Owls Nest Park Reconstruction One Step Closer to Reality

Thanks to the efforts of the Cincinnati Park Board, the Owls' Nest Advisory Council, and a number of generous individuals and local companies, work on the first phase of the new master plan for Owls Nest Park is now underway. The Owls Nest Advisory Council, a neighborhood volunteer group, worked with the Park Board and area community councils to develop a master plan for revitalizing the park, and that plan is being implemented.

Owls' Nest Park sits on 10 acres bridging the East Walnut Hills, and Evanston communities, adjacent to the O'Bryonville Business District. While the north end of the park has fallen into decline and has been underutilized over the past several years, the plan will transform the north end of the park and allow the park to meet its potential as a gathering place, a place of leisure, a recreational area and an economic generator for the business district.

The Master Plan for Owls' Nest Park envisions:

- A continuous pathway system which builds on the park's existing walks
- New recreational activities
- New lighting
- A major playground
- Renovating the ball field in such a way that the outfield will double as a soccer/football practice field
- New half court basketball courts and basket-shooting areas
- Improved picnic and seating areas
- A new entrance plaza along Fairfax Avenue
- A nature study area and amphitheatre in the grove on the west side of the park

The goal of these improvements is to create a better sense of a single park, bring more activity to the park, create a better venue for community gatherings and special programs and to ultimately knit together the surrounding neighborhoods.

Starting the week of September 10, clearing and fill operations are scheduled to commence. A former ball field in a low area of the park off of Fairfax Avenue is to be raised up to the level of the street, providing better access and visibility for the north end of the park. In order to make this dramatic change, topsoil is being removed, vegetation cleared, and many truckloads of dirt will be brought to the site, spread and compacted.

Cincinnati Parks has received several large commitments of free or reduced cost services and materials. Fill is being donated by Bear Creek Capital and MaximCrane, with thousands of yards of dirt being hauled and donated from a Kenwood construction site. Vegetation removal is being done at reduced cost by Doug Evans Landscape. Topsoil stripping was donated by Keith Glaser. The project landscape architect, Meisner & Associates/Land Vision, has not only donated a significant amount of their time developing the master plan, but they have also been instrumental in securing the fill donation.

Another boon to the project is coming from the Metropolitan Sewer District (MSD). They have agreed to fund the proposed rain gardens. These areas will absorb rainfall and replenish the groundwater at the site, rather than channel storm water into sewers, adding to the burden of the sewer system and of treatment of storm water.

The Cincinnati Park Board is contributing over \$600,000 toward the first phase of the master plan and to date, over \$200,000 has been pledged or received from private donors, \$90,000 has been committed by the Cincinnati Recreation Commission, and The Cincinnati Reds Fund has pledged \$25,000 to the project. Jennie Rosenthal Berliant, Co-Chair of the Owls' Nest Advisory Council, along with Rae Vuic, said, "The spirit of community engagement and donor participation has been tremendous so far, we know that this revitalized park will benefit many neighbors and businesses. A safe, open, well utilized green space joining such diverse neighborhoods is exactly the sort of project we'd love to see happening in pockets all over the city."