

In response to a recently published Park District “Fact Sheet” regarding Ackerman Woods:

Project Purpose/Benefits:

- For the Village:
 - This creates a regional storm water facility for as many as 10 parcels by allowing the water to flow through a residential area already identified by the village engineer as plagued with water problems.
 - This does not drain the area on the south side of the Stacy’s Corners intersection where the Historical Society Park will be located. Banners and holiday decorations are unrelated to drainage.
 - The 2001 Comprehensive Plan does not include a recommendation to drain the area to Ackerman Park. In fact, in a memo regarding the storm water storage plans, the village engineer identified the area east of Main street as having “severe drainage problems” and, in fact, recommended a storm water detention facility at Emerson and Forest Avenues, at the north end of the Stacy’s Corners area, which would be preferable to the one that was constructed adjacent to the Walgreen’s development. Additionally, the Comprehensive Plan recommends revitalizing Stacy’s Corners as a “neighborhood service area, a showcase for local history and an attractive gateway to the Glen Ellyn community.” Note that the Plan recommends *revitalizing* the area, not increasing development that would further impact drainage and traffic congestion in an area closely surrounded by residential neighborhoods, a public grade school and a private grade school.

- For the Park District:
 - Stacy Park, and the rest of the identified area, could be served by a storm water detention facility to the north, as suggested by the village engineer in 2001.
 - Provides two new soccer fields which are not anticipated to be reliably dry
 - The Park District is “donating” publicly owned land for the purpose of draining commercial sites which should be responsible for their own drainage. There may not be much out-of-pocket cost for the Park District; however the loss of an historic native woodland will be at a great environmental and cultural cost to the community.

- For the Public:
 - The loss of native woodland is *a great cost* to the residents. Particularly since the types of trees in this area already take up thousands of gallons of water and provide food and shelter to native birds and animals. Additionally, pursuit of an alternative storm water facility at the recommended location at Emerson and Forest could be a financial gain for the community.

- Many residents have expressed concern that increased commercial development at Five Corners would result in competing with the already struggling main commercial area in the heart of town.
- Further development of the area rather than renovation of existing sites would cause an even more commercial, cluttered appearance to the northern gateway to the village.
- More empty stores are an eyesore and add to the burden of empty retail spaces throughout the village.

Tree Removal: Over 340 trees are to be removed for this project.

- Many of the trees scattered around the perimeter of Ackerman Park are undesirable, invasive varieties. However, the woodland that will be demolished is a native wood that is a remnant of the original Babcock Grove that attracted the area's earliest settlers. The 2-acre woods includes many desirable native trees, such as walnut, black cherry, American elm, ash and cottonwood, all of which are varieties that do well in areas that are periodically wet. The topography of the area includes a ravine and small creek, and the woods are abutted by a wetland area. Some invasive species have been identified; although on the whole, the woods are surprisingly healthy. In spite of complete neglect, only minimal work would be needed to restore these woods to their natural condition.
- Although the Park District has increased the number of trees to be planted in the park, this does not take the place of an existing ecosystem that has been in place long before the first settlers arrived.
- The citizen advocacy group (www.saveackermanwoods.com) and supporting groups such as Citizens for Glen Ellyn Preservation (www.glenellynpreservation.org), and the representative from the Morton Arboretum, and Sierra Club members who have inspected the site, have not identified the site as old growth woods. In fact, these tree varieties are not nearly as long-lived as the burr oak, the well-known prairie tree that lives well over 200 years. In fact their shorter life-cycle is an intrinsic part of the on-going ecosystem, as fallen trees and branches become what are known as “nurse logs,” providing protection for new seedlings and enriching the soil. Healthy forests are not tidy places like suburban lawns and parkways. However, an 80 year old walnut will have already far surpassed the life-span of popular landscape trees such as maples and ash that are so prevalent throughout the village.

Regional Storm Water in the Village:

- There are no residents arguing that the commercial properties at Stacy's Corners should not be served by a regional storm water basin.
- Revitalization of the existing businesses at Stacy's Corners would increase the value of those commercial properties. However, further development at the expense of a last piece of wooded land on public land erodes the character of the community, at a time when more and more of the community forest is being lost to development on private property.

- Starting August 1, DuPage County is amending the County Storm Water Ordinance to come into compliance with the requirements of the Federal Clean Water Act, due to the poor condition of county rivers and streams. Some of these new rules are stricter than local ordinances, and local governments are being educated so that they can begin to comply. Under the county requirements, all commercial properties will be responsible for their own runoff. Additionally, wetlands, woodlands, natural plantings, rain gardens, etc. will be encouraged both on commercial and private properties as they are effective methods in containing run-off and filtering pollutants. It is a concern that the cutting down of publicly-owned woods to accommodate water run-off from commercial properties conflicts with the spirit of the pending county ordinances.
- Placing a storm water detention area at the village engineer's recommended site, at Emerson and Forest, would serve more than just the Walgreen's property.
- Destruction of a native wood for the purpose of a water detention area is not in the spirit of the new county ordinance, even if it is allowable.

Quality of Trees:

- Black walnuts are a desirable native tree that, unfortunately, due to the village's weak tree ordinance are not protected, nor are any tree varieties protected, even the beloved native burr oak. Protection is completely voluntary and any tree, even an undesirable, invasive variety could be designated as protected if the property owner wishes it to be. In the same light, property owners may choose to take down any tree, even majestic 200 year old oaks. However, in the recommended amendments to the Tree Preservation Ordinance, which were presented by the Village Environmental Commission last year, walnuts, oaks and other desirable varieties that stand on the unbuildable part of any property would be protected. Specific tree varieties, including walnuts, are already identified as "significant trees" by the village ordinance but this designation does not offer any protection. Understandably, many residents are confused by this peculiar idea of protection.
- Village Code considers many of the trees in the wood in Ackerman Park to be undesirable; however, these are undesirable varieties for urban landscape use. Other than the non-native invasive varieties, trees such as walnut, American elm, cottonwood and white ash, are highly desirable in a semi-wet location as they not only survive periods of standing water, they act as natural filters and storage systems for thousands of gallons of water. Obviously, the trees in this woodland have not posed a maintenance liability to the Park District as the woods have not been in any way maintained. In fact, the Park District has allowed the dumping of construction debris in the woods and adjoining wetlands, in violation of the DuPage County Floodplain Protection Ordinance.

Private Property:

The Park District is, indeed, not a private property owner. The open lands of our parks, both maintained and wild, are the property of the citizens of the Village of Glen Ellyn and are held in their trust. Residents expect the Park District commissioners and staff to be exemplary in their treatment and protection of trees. Just because they have “the right” to destroy 342 trees does not mean that action is commendable or acceptable.

Tree Preservation Plan:

The Park District supplied identification of the trees that it planned to remove

Public Hearing:

A public hearing was not required for the removal of the woods. However, given the environmental impact of this project, residents feel that the Park District should have chosen to make the results of its project more public. Although the project was “mentioned” at numerous public hearings and meetings, clearly the majority of residents were ignorant of the planned results. Even citizen advocates who attended Plan Commission and Village Board meetings did not realize the full extent of the plan. Although meetings are public, it is not reasonable to expect residents to attend the many different commission meetings and workshops that take place every week. The Park District newsletter, A potential resource for educating the public, did not mention that 342 trees would be cut down in its discussion of planned construction at Ackerman.