

## **We believe that we can have woods AND soccer fields.**

**We are not against soccer fields!** We whole-heartedly support the GEYS programs. Our own young children will be in GE soccer soon and many supporters of Ackerman Woods are soccer families too. Here are some things about the proposed soccer fields in Ackerman Woods that you might not be aware of:

1. Ackerman Woods is a low point in the area, with 80 acres of stormwater draining to the wetlands. There are wetland areas to the south and north of the proposed fields. Many of the trees that currently stand in the area for the proposed fields are trees that prefer wet areas. The two proposed fields will be placed in this wet area, and one of the fields is being designed as a stormwater detention basin. The project would involve limited use of the smaller field because of planned flooding on that field. This would have a negative effect on the availability of these fields for practice and/or games during the spring and fall.
2. We have had a landscape architect, who is an expert in athletic fields and has designed many recreational and professional athletic fields, review these plans. In his expert opinion, these will be wet, muddy fields. The under drains that the Park District has recently added to the plans only run around the edge of the field and are not perforated. With no drainage under the field, only water that flows across the entire field will drain. The plans call for less than a one percent slope cross-slope on the large field, which is more appropriate for a paved surface – not a native soil athletic field that relies on gravity flow for drainage. Once the soil on these fields gets wet it is going to take a long time to dry out. This design ignores the recommendations made in 2004 by the Park District's *own* consultant.

Additionally, the Park District plans do not show that the stumps from the trees will be dug out. If the stumps and major roots from hundreds of mature trees remain buried in the soil they will eventually rot out and leave an uneven surface on the field. This can cause a hazardous condition for the children unless the surface is well maintained and is rehabilitated on a regular basis. The grading plan for the fields shows fill areas as deep as four feet. Unless this fill is placed in shallow lifts and compacted to the density of the undisturbed soils, differential settlement will occur over time and distort the playing surface. Doesn't the soccer program deserve fields that stand a chance of being dry and safe when our children need them?

3. Canceling and rescheduling games due to unplayable fields is a waste of resources and causes coordination problems for staff and participants. It is often more cost-effective to improve existing fields to maximize their availability rather than building new fields.
4. The Park District has not done any facilities usage studies for the soccer program. Without this study, they do not know whether their existing fields are being used optimally or how many new fields are needed. With 1,500 children involved in the program, isn't it entirely possible that we need more than just two new fields?
5. The Park District is removing two soccer fields to construct the new Ackerman Sports Facility. The Park District has not studied any other locations for these replacement fields, except in the middle of the woods and wetlands. The Park District owns hundreds of acres of land in our community. The Park District also has a budget to buy new land in the community. Why can't we consider other locations for soccer fields? Why is Ackerman Woods our **ONLY** option?

The Park District says that the soccer program is a priority, but yet they have acres of flat, dry land at Maryknoll Park set aside for future projects such as a sculpture park, an outdoor theater and a refrigerated ice rink. There are no plans to include soccer facilities there. Before we commit taxpayers' money to these new projects, we need to make sure that existing programs are properly maintained and our natural resources are protected.

We'd appreciate your help in encouraging the Park District to take a more thoughtful and considered examination of the whole project. Surely, there are many options for meeting the needs of the soccer program. Why can't we have woods AND more soccer fields? **The current proposal is not a good plan. As a community, we can do better!**