

www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/suburbs/des\_plaines/ct-des-plaines-apache-park-nw-tl-0123-2-20140118,0,5464931.story

## chicagotribune.com

### Apache Park residents urged to band together for clout

By Bob Chiarito

Special to the Tribune

3:11 PM CST, January 18, 2014

Residents near Apache Park have learned of plans to install an adventure play area, community gardens and soccer and baseball fields, among other improvements to the space now called "gang-ridden and dark," but also heard they may need to band together to get more done. advertisement

As for those who live in town house in the area bordered by Manheim Road, Lee Street, Oakton Street and Touhy Avenue, a consultant hired in the fall said they would have a lot more power if they organized and formed a homeowners' association.

The ideas, presented recently by project manager Scott Goldstein, of Evanston-based Teska Associates, were based on a survey of residents and input from a steering committee comprised of residents and city and park district officials.

Other plans for the park on Pine Street near Manheim Road and Prospect Avenue include improving lighting and building a multi-use path, a fitness trail, a parking lot with landscaping and a gathering plaza with native plantings, seating and a water fountain.

Felipe Cortes, an area resident who attended the meeting, said while he welcomes the changes, more is needed.

"The area definitely needs some beautification," Cortes said. "Sometimes it can change the culture, but we have to work on a lot of things besides making the park pretty. I'd like to see more after-school programs for the kids in the area. We need more than light posts and swings. We need programs."

Goldstein presented several plans that would improve the town house area adjacent to the park. The biggest challenges there seem to be parking, lighting, cleanliness and uniformity of the residences, a poor road circulation pattern that creates difficulties for residents and emergency vehicles and safe crossings at major streets, Goldstein said.

He told the residents that forming a homeowners' association is important to addressing these issues and may ultimately be required before the city fixes sidewalks and other things.

Fifth Ward Ald. James Brookman echoed Goldstein, saying that "associations have a lot more power to get ordinances passed rather than random people. Associations give credibility and are attractive to groups that give grants."

Brookman, who worked nearly 30 years as a Des Plaines firefighter, said the area is "very tough to fight fires in because there is only one way in and one way out and not all the town houses have their address displayed the same way."

Parking also is a challenge to emergency vehicles and to residents, Brookman said.

"Some people have claimed common area parking spots by putting a fence around it and saying it's mine. It's like the Wild West," he said.

Town house resident Stella Montes said getting residents to form a homeowners' association will take time and cited a recent failure to remove snow as proof.

"We had a hard time getting people together to remove the snow," Montes said. "There's a lot of older residents, some from different cultures. There are trust issues."

While Teska will provide advice to residents on how to form an association, associate Michael Blue said the residents are going to have to want to do it for themselves.

"They are going to have to organize and go door to door. If we did it or the city did it, residents probably wouldn't buy in," Blue said. "There's a big difference between the city knocking on your door and your neighbor knocking on your door."

Eighth ward resident Candee Cole said she attended the meeting because "I have an all-for-one and one-for-all mentality. This is an exciting time for change and I feel confident it will be pulled together."

Goldstein also presented ideas such as building a new strip mall - Gateway Plaza - near Prospect Avenue and Manheim Road; developing a campus plan for the block that houses St. Stephen Catholic Church; and building bike routes. He and other Teska associates then spoke with any residents who had concerns.

He said the next step is for the steering committee to meet again sometime in February and then have another meeting for residents a month later. After that, Teska plans to outline resources, timeline and early actions and present a final plan to the city council.

In the meantime, residents can continue the dialogue with Teska Associates and the Apache neighborhood steering committee through its website, Blue said.

[triblocaltips@tribune.com](mailto:triblocaltips@tribune.com)

**Twitter:** [@TribLocal](https://twitter.com/TribLocal)

Copyright © 2014 Chicago Tribune Company, LLC