

7.23.14

Dear Worthington City Council –

As members of the Parks and Recreation Commission we feel compelled to put in writing our thoughts and recommendations regarding the use of land at the UMCH property on North High Street in Worthington.

Over the last several months the Commission members met with Lee Brown, Director of the City's Planning & Building Department and members of the community group, W.A.R.D to discuss the UMCH property. We also walked the site and discussed potential uses for the area. We were energized and excited by all the possible benefits to the community if additional green space is dedicated to Parks.

As you know, we have an exceptional Parks and Recreation system in Worthington. However, we are lacking in some areas, and we see possibilities for short term and long-term use at the UMCH property. Undeveloped land in Worthington is very limited. Opportunities to add recreation features currently absent from the City are even more limited. The UMCH property is unique in its location, size and proximity to Old Worthington and to the surrounding neighborhoods and could be utilized for community events such as concerts, art shows, taste of Worthington, and other gatherings that strengthen Worthington's core values.

Some of the ideas the Commission discussed based on feedback from residents in their communities included:

- preservation of wildlife and specifically Tucker Run
- a pond or lake to regulate storm water and be utilized for outdoor education including fishing, kayaking, canoeing, and stand up paddle board
- natural play structures for children and residents
- public access to large open green spaces for soccer, picnics, and community events
- walking trails with connectivity to High Street
- a splash park
- shelter house or houses with restrooms (able to be reserved by community members)
- ice skating and hockey rink (possible winter use for the pond)
- amphitheater or community performance space

In a perfect world we would like for the site to be 100% parkland and recreation space available for community access and events. We would be remiss as representatives of the community and the Parks and Recreation Commission if we did not state our ideal vision of the UMCH property.

With that said, we realize that the city and the parks department have limited resources to purchase and to maintain such a large parcel of land. However, if UMCH was willing to donate the land we would ask that City Council take it, and over the next several years we would find a way to maintain it and develop it into recreational or community spaces.

If the land is sold to a developer the Commission asks that City Council make every effort possible to reserve a large portion of the land (through zoning or purchase or otherwise) for parks and recreation and community space.

In closing, the Commission recognizes and appreciates City Council's obligation to consider a number of factors in addition to parks and recreation, but we wanted Council to know that we are strong proponents of designating the largest area possible for parks and recreation and community space

Sincerely-

Worthington Parks and Recreation Commission

*Michele Miller*

*Laura Ball*

*Bob Burpee*

*Rob Wendling*

*Dan Armitage*

*Peter Calamari*

*Dave Kessler*

*Zoe Gregory-Tims*