



Reinventing Central Park: A New Third Place in the City of Hillsboro, Illinois

Proposed and written by:

City of Hillsboro
Natural Resources Committee
Imagine Hillsboro, Parks & Rec Committee

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The Vision

Central Park is located at the heart of Hillsboro, two blocks east of a downtown that is undergoing a significant renaissance through the work of young people who are buying and rehabilitating buildings to create a different future for the town.

The park is situated on land that has played a significant role in the town's history. A natural spring located on the land provided water to the town for its first 75 years of existence. In 1903, the town built a puddle wall, still visible today, that created the first lake that supplied Hillsboro with water. It is now a city owned park that stands to play another significant role in Hillsboro's transformation.



Central Park, which is close to the city's Challacombe House Park, includes a public swimming pool built in 1937 by the WPA, concession stand and pickle ball courts for the summer months. In October 2019, the "Pawsboro 620-K9"

dog park opened after a community-led effort raised \$18,000 for its construction. Central Park is poised to be the nexus point of our planned hiking and running trails that will run throughout the city.

The Need

"Hillsboro is on a roll, and people are stepping up to add exciting and new businesses and attractions to our community. As a father of two small children, I feel there is a serious need for a community space that serves all ages and adds a sense of pride back to a town currently lacking a proper park, playground and green space for general use. The revitalization and rebranding of Central Park will offer a space for children to be children, adults to exercise and gather, events to take place, etc., as well as offer a new attraction for those outside of our community. This will benefit the existing businesses and restaurants in a town that is on the rise! We should give families from Hillsboro and the surrounding area a place to be proud of -- a place to explore, learn, grow, adventure and enjoy for years to come!"

Brian Limbaugh, Central Park Sub-Committee

While these developments are positive steps forward, the park and the city are in desperate need for a centralized and modern space for people to congregate, let their kids play, and to socialize with their neighbors. In response to that need, the head of the Natural Resources Committee, Kendra Wright, and Jim May, superintendent for Hillsboro Parks and Recreation, gathered a group of younger citizens to develop a plan for the park's old baseball diamond and open field situated north of the pool. The group formed a sub-committee to oversee the redevelopment of this area.



Their vision is to make Central Park a "third place" in Hillsboro where its citizens can play, rest and meet others while forming relationships that will help transform the future of Hillsboro.

The committee met over the course of two months to determine how Central Park redevelopment could serve the needs of the city and formulate a plan to best meet those needs. They concluded that a reinvented Central Park could also play a significant role in economic development by attracting people and businesses to the community.



Develop More Third Places for the City

In the landmark book, *The Great Good Place*, sociologist Ray Oldenberg describes the nature of third places as "... a third place is one in which the presence of a 'regular' is always welcome, although never required. Membership is a simple, fluid process of frequent social contact, renewed each time by choice of the people involved. Eventually, social bonds develop through a type of informal intimacy. The important aspect of these relationships is that they occur outside of any commitment and exist solely in the realm of basic human respect."

The Central Park Reinvention Committee believes that third places are an absolute necessity in helping Hillsboro to renew itself. In the past, people relied on traditional social structures to develop those connections. However, generations after the Baby Boomers are less inclined to join formal social clubs and would rather meet people in coffee houses, art galleries, school functions, or informal gatherings in public spaces, most especially in parks.

While Hillsboro has some outdoor spaces for people to congregate, there is no central location where citizens can meet on an informal basis, kids can play and develop social bonds. Indeed, many of our families are forced to find parks in other towns, and thus erase a vital opportunity to build community in Hillsboro. The committee believes this is a significant problem that affects all levels of our city life — from the formality of volunteering for civic organizations to informal getting to know our neighbors. A reinvented Central Park could go along way to address this gap in our social structures.

Economic Development

The Central Park Committee believes the proposed development should be a significant piece of the city's economic development strategy as the town thinks through how to keep our current businesses and attract new businesses.

While economic considerations are often the chief reasons that companies move into town, other reasons are just as important, especially their employees' quality of life. Numerous media outlets, from *The Wall Street Journal* to small town publications, have run articles describing companies that believe that giving money to their local communities is a smart investment to keep their employees healthier and happier — and it helps in retaining the best talent. These companies want to see a vibrant and risk-taking community that is willing to make a significant investment in its future. The Central Park Committee believes the proposed redevelopment will demonstrate Hillsboro's concern for small businesses and their employees.

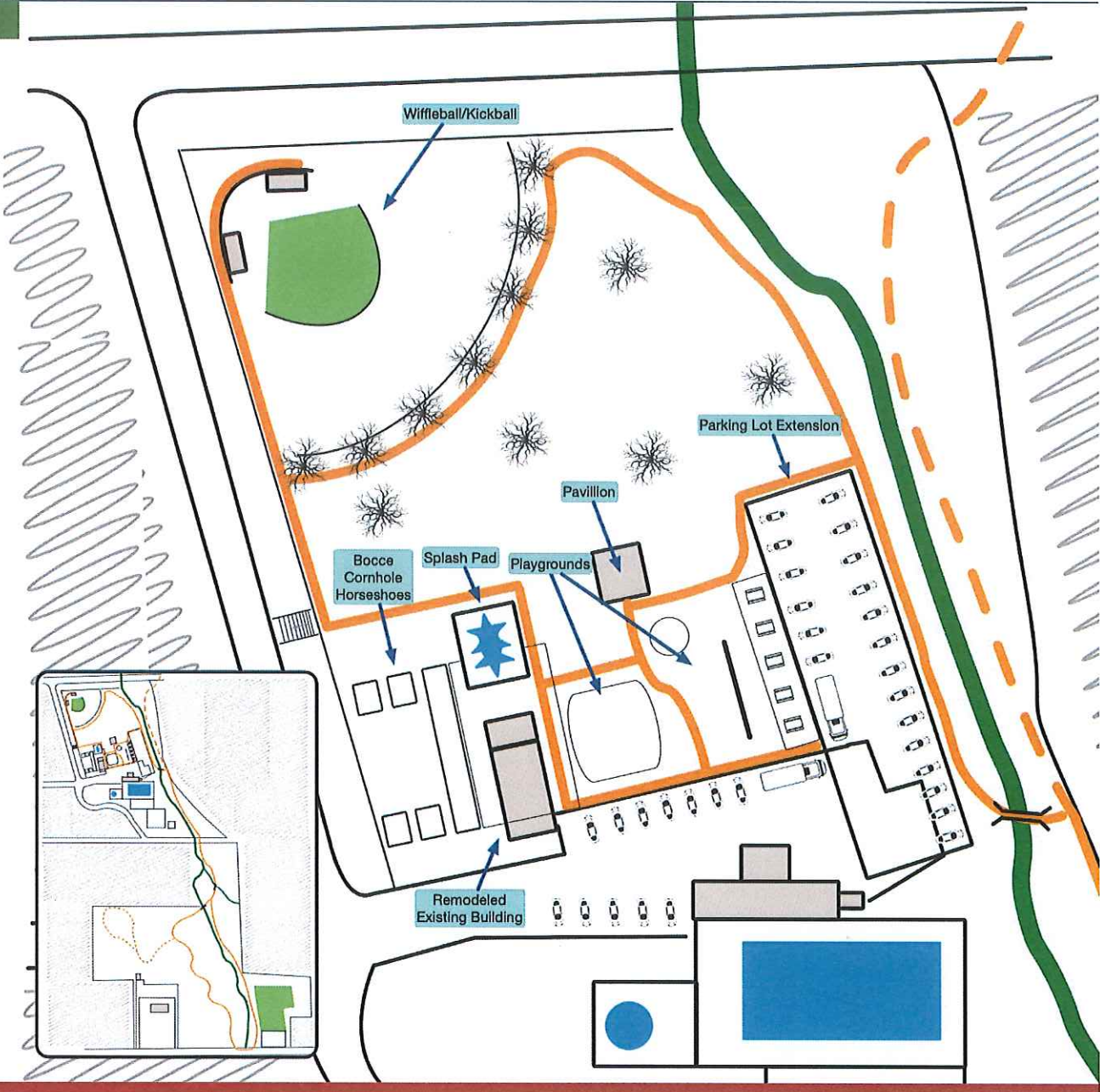
Currently, our young families are going out of town to play in other parks. They most likely will buy gas, groceries or eat out in another town, thus taking much needed revenue out of the Hillsboro economy. While people will still leave Hillsboro for a variety of activities, the committee believes that giving people a reinvented Central Park will go a long way to helping our citizens see Hillsboro as a place to stay, relax and play.

Attract People from Outside Community

Hillsboro 2040, the upcoming strategic plan, states a commitment to attract people to our town as tourists and also as potential citizens. Also, as the city develops its marketing for tourism, the Central Park Reinvention could be a key component of those efforts.

The committee recognizes that building an all inclusive playground is vital. Many children in our region have differing abilities and additional needs in their daily life. Many parents and those who may want to move here will flock to a playground designed with special-needs children in mind. The Central Park Committee believes this project should be a demonstration of the community's values and inclusive spirit.

Proposed Layout for North Part of Reinvented Central Park



Project Overview

The Central Park Committee met over the course of two months, sorting through plans, ideas and presentations to come up with the best project for Central Park. They met with the head of the Parks and Recreation department, Jim May, the chairperson of the Natural Resources Committee, Kendra Wright, and the community planner of Hillsboro, Jonathan Weyer, who gave them guidance and helped them form a comprehensive plan for the old ball field in Central

Park. They decided to work with NuToys, a company that specializes in helping organizations pick individual playground pieces to suit the community's needs.

The committee divided the plan into four stages, complete with separate dollar figures for each as well as a grand total for the whole project. The stages are not meant to be time frames, but rather markers for fundraising. Two or more stages could easily be done simultaneously, provided the funding is adequate.

Stage 1: All Inclusive Playground for Ages 5-12

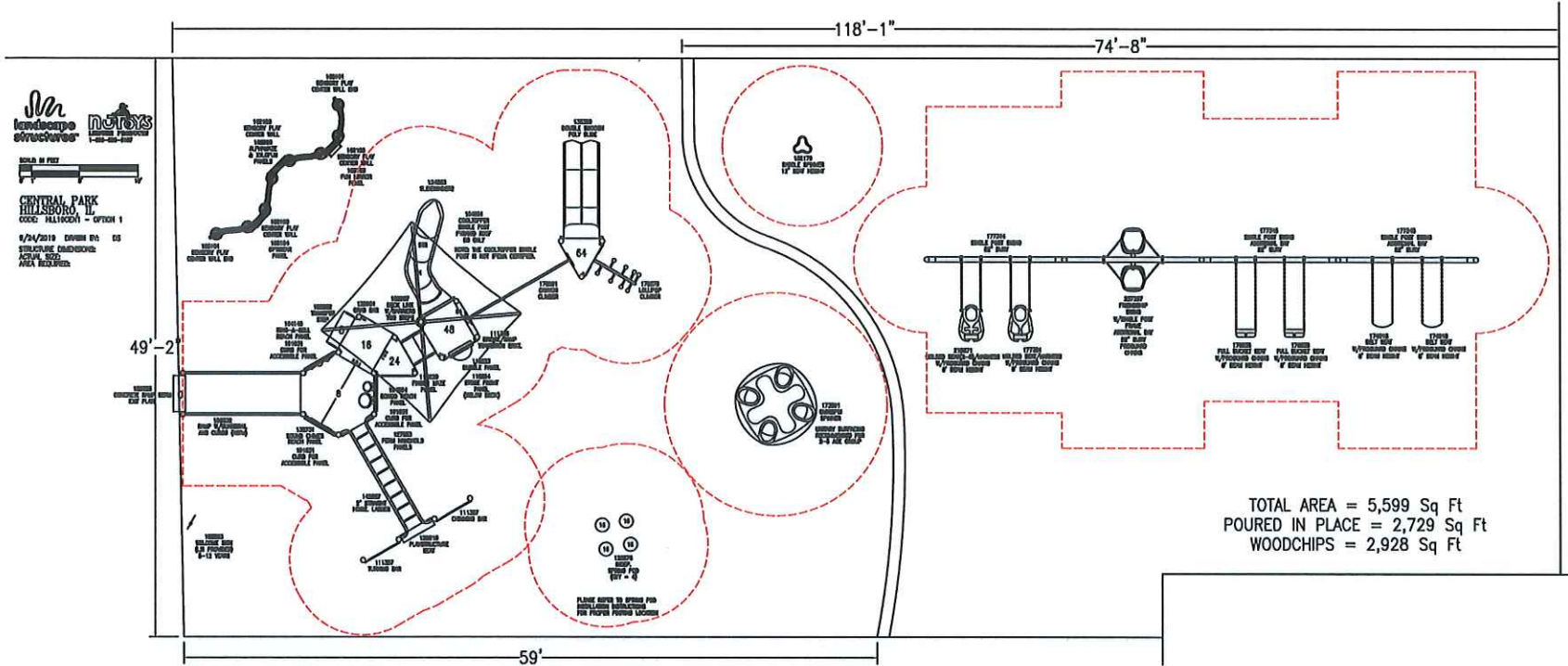
The playground will be an all inclusive playground that will seek to be ADA compliant and accessible for all the children in the Hillsboro area. It will include slides, climbing experiences, interactive panels, monkey bars, wheelchair ramp, saddle spinner and a three-panel sensory wall. Further, it will include a seven-place swing set complete with multi-user swings, two full bucket seats, two ADA compliant swings and one friendship swing.

The ground will be padded with a wood carpet, ADA compliant, and a pour-in-place surface that is safe for possible falls and spills.

Equipment Subtotal	\$73,165
Wood Carpet	\$5,502
Pour-in-Place Surface	\$40,775
Cost For Stage 1	\$122,847



Playground Design





Stage 2: Splash Pad

Splash pads are fast becoming more popular than swimming pools in urban and rural areas. It requires less supervision for smaller children, and children have more freedom to roam and play. It is more accessible to children with different abilities who can find more freedom in a splash pad setting.

Adults can find more time to talk with one another and participate in the fun as well. They are able to interact more as they keep an eye on their children, and this encourages more social interaction.

The closest splash pad is in Edwardsville, 45 miles from Hillsboro. A Central Park splash pad will attract people from our region to travel here and bring their economic power to the town.

The splash pad itself will include 17 jets, step pad activators and timing mechanisms to save water, and will be designed by NuToys to fit the space in the Central Park ball field area.

Total Stage 2 Cost Plus Freight \$142.530

Stage 3: Infrastructure (Trees, Sidewalks, Fences, Benches)

The Central Park Committee worked with John Wright to create a design for the park to incorporate all elements, such as trees, sidewalks, paths, fences and benches. They believe that little details matter and separate “basic” parks from “community changing” parks.

The committee wants individual members of the community to participate in the park’s reinvention by sponsoring items in the park. To this end, they determined that benches and trees would be the best way for the community to get involved. The funding section of this document breaks down specific donor levels for businesses and individuals.

Trails	\$5,000
Fencing	\$4,454
Sidewalk	\$15,000
Parking Lot Pavement	\$5,000
Pavilion	\$15,000
Restrooms	\$5,000
Signage.....	\$1,000
Playground Supervisor.....	\$2,200
Landscaping	\$5,000
Installation & Labor	\$15,000
Miscellaneous.....	\$5,000
Total for Infastructure	\$77,745

Stage 4: Wiffle Ball / Kick Ball Diamond

The backstop and dugouts on the old ball field are falling apart and in need of serious repair. The committee discussed several options, from redoing the backstop and dugouts to taking them down completely.

They decided to keep the area as a ball field with simple dugouts and backstops as well as a fence in the outfield. This would allow for kick ball games, t-ball, practice and wiffle ball or kick ball games. The field will be designed for common use and not for organized baseball games. *This plan is still in the design phase.*

Estimated Cost \$12,000

**Grand Total
Estimated Cost for
Project with Cushion
\$360,000**

Funding

The committee recognizes that funding this project will take a coordinated community effort that will involve the City, Imagine Hillsboro, businesses, corporations and individuals doing their part to make it happen. After consultation with area leaders and business partners, the committee came up with the following structure of funding that will involve several different components. This plan is still in the design phase.

Corporate Tiers

- Platinum: \$50,000 or more
- Gold: \$25,000
- Silver: \$10,000
- Bronze: \$5,000

Private Individual Tiers

- Citizen: \$1,000
- Partner: \$500
- Friend: \$100

Buy a Piece of the Park

- Trash Can: \$455
- Bench: \$620
- Table: \$600
- Trees: \$400

Fundraisers

The committee will be approaching various civic groups to hold fundraisers throughout the course of the campaign, such as a night at the Opera House Brewery, trivia bowls, duck races and fun runs.

Source of Pride

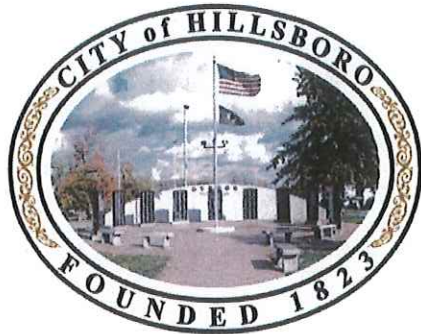
The Central Park Committee believes that the reinvention of the park should be a community-wide effort rather than relying on city workers or paid hands to do the work. They will be asking the entire town, businesses, service groups, schools and individual citizens to help with reinvention of the park. Jim May, superintendent of Parks and Recreation, will oversee the construction and installation.

After the project is done, the committee wants the entire community to take pride in what has been accomplished and be able to tell others that the entire town worked together to make it happen.



Contact Information

The Central Park Reinvention Committee is committed to making a new third place in Hillsboro that will enable our citizens to play, help their kids and get to know their neighbors. This is a vital piece of Hillsboro's present and future. We welcome any input and ideas as we move forward.



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