



VII. COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

High quality community facilities and resources contribute significantly to the quality of life of residents in Oak Forest. Many of the facilities highlighted in this section are described in more detail in the May 2007 *Background Report*.

EXISTING FACILITIES AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

Educational Facilities

There are six public school districts that serve Oak Forest. Of these school districts, four have schools located within the boundaries of Oak Forest. These include seven pre-elementary and elementary schools, two junior high schools and one high school. There are also three private schools within Oak Forest. Higher education is provided at South Suburban College University and College Center. Residents west of Ridgeland Avenue are part of the Moraine Valley College District.

Public Facilities

Public facilities include those maintained and operated by the City of Oak Forest's various departments and utility operators.

City Administration: The Oak Forest Municipal Center, located at 15440 S. Central Avenue, houses the Clerk's office, administrative functions, police department, fire department, local cable access channel, and the Oak Forest Chamber of Commerce office.

Public Works and Utilities: The Oak Forest Public Works Department provides a variety of services, including maintenance and repair of City streets, water and sewer services, maintenance of City buildings





VII. COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

and grounds, and operation and maintenance of the senior bus service. In addition to water and sewer service provided by the City, the following utility providers serve Oak Forest:

- Electric: Commonwealth Edison
- Natural Gas: Northern Illinois Gas Company (NICOR)
- Cable/Internet: Comcast Corporation and WOW Cable
- Telephone/Internet: AT & T, Sprint MCI, and Comcast (phone).

Police Department: The City is served by the Oak Forest Police Department. The Police Department is located at the Oak Forest Municipal Center. Among the programs that the Police Department participates in is the Oak Forest Crime Free Multi-Housing Program.

Fire Protection: The Oak Forest Fire Department has its offices in the Oak Forest Municipal Center. The department currently operates two fire stations: Station 1 located at 5620 James Drive and Station 2 located at 4907 W. 167th Street. It also oversees Emergency Management Agency (EMA) operations at 5301 West 157th Street.

Public Library: The Acorn Public Library District serves the City of Oak Forest from its facility located at 15624 S. Central Avenue, along with serving some adjacent unincorporated areas.

Post Office: The U.S. post office is located at 15811 Central Avenue.

Recreation and Open Space Resources

There are several key recreational resources within the City that are primarily operated by the Oak Forest Park District and Cook County Forest Preserve District.

The Oak Forest Park District is an independent municipal agency with the same boundaries as the City, which owns or leases and maintains twenty community and neighborhood parks located throughout the community totaling approximately 72 acres, excluding the Gaelic Park soccer fields. The Park District also has a full-service health and fitness center located at 15601 S. Central Avenue.

The forest preserves surrounding the City are maintained by the Cook County Forest Preserve District (CCFPD). These areas serve a





VII. COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

vital environmental protection and recreational function for the City and the entire region. They offer diverse natural areas for hiking, biking, equestrian activities, cross-country skiing and observation of wildlife. In addition, the George W. Dunne National Golf Course and Forest Preserve National Golf Club are located at 16310 South Central Avenue.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND OPEN SPACE FRAMEWORK

Figure 7: Community Facilities and Open Space Framework on the following page graphically depicts proposed changes over the next ten to fifteen years, to complement the Goal and Policies. It is expected that existing public, institutional, and parks and open space uses will remain largely unchanged, and no changes are anticipated in Forest Preserve District boundaries over the time frame of the Plan.

Key features of the Community Facilities and Open Space Framework include the following:

- A new Oak Forest Metra Station will be constructed at the existing station location as part of the "Gateway" redevelopment at the intersection of Cicero Avenue and 159th Street.
- Future facility expansion or upgrades that may be pursued by the City and/or other public agencies include:
 - Enhancements to the Acorn Public Library on the current site.
 - Improvements to the gravel parking lot at the Oak Forest High School property.

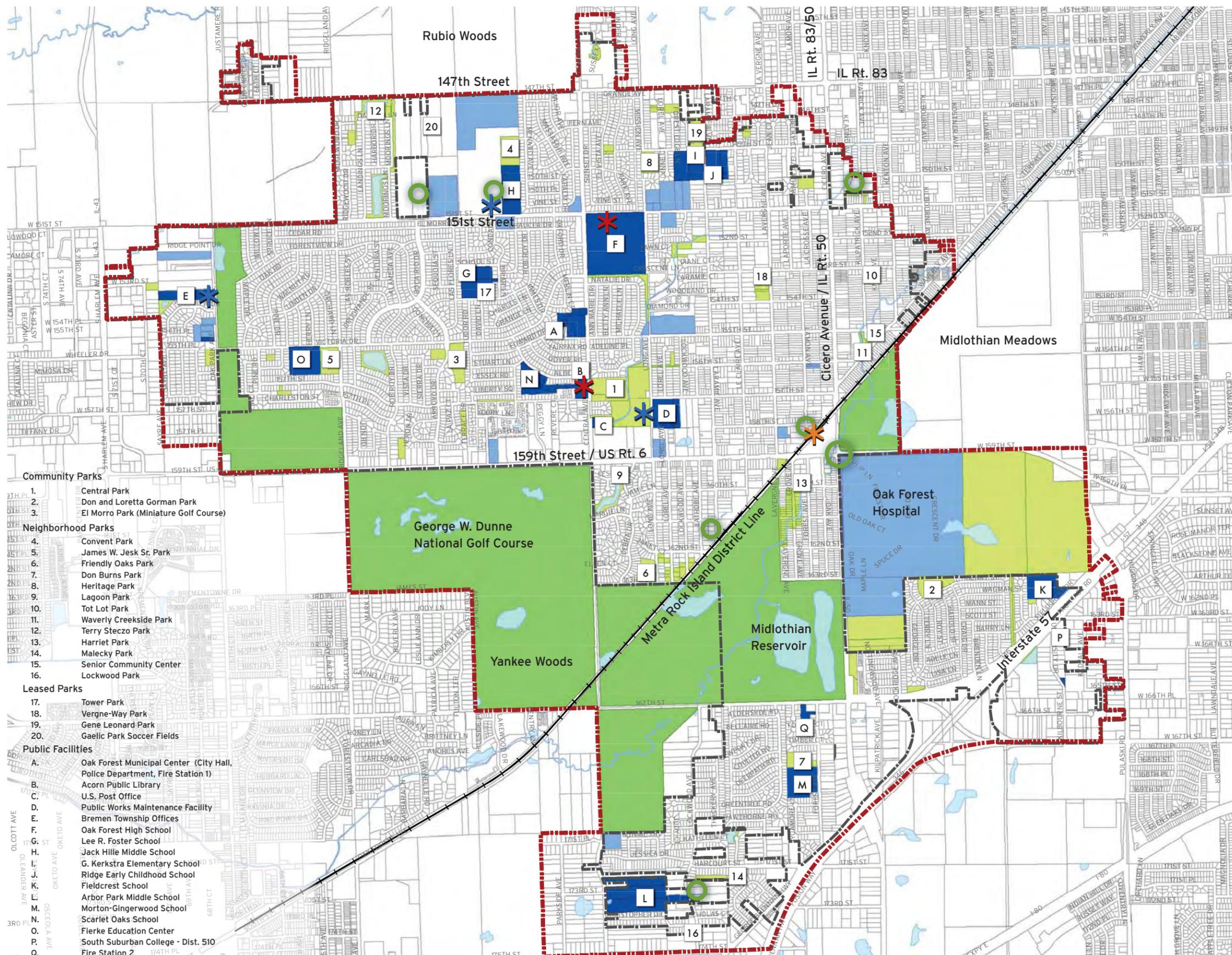


FIGURE 7

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND OPEN SPACE FRAMEWORK

LEGEND

-  City Boundary
-  Planning Area Boundary
-  Forest Preserve
-  Water Bodies
- Land Uses**
-  Public
-  Institutional
-  Parks and Open Space
-  Future Facility Expansion or Upgrade (on-site)
-  New Metra Station
-  Potential site for new public facility (general location)
-  Potential site for new public park/ open space (general location)



- Community Parks**
1. Central Park
 2. Don and Loretta Gorman Park
 3. El Morro Park (Miniature Golf Course)
- Neighborhood Parks**
4. Convent Park
 5. James W. Jesk Sr. Park
 6. Friendly Oaks Park
 7. Don Burns Park
 8. Heritage Park
 9. Lagoon Park
 10. Tot Lot Park
 11. Waverly Creekside Park
 12. Terry Steczo Park
 13. Harriet Park
 14. Malecky Park
 15. Senior Community Center
 16. Lockwood Park
- Leased Parks**
17. Tower Park
 18. Vergne-Way Park
 19. Gene Leonard Park
 20. Gaelic Park Soccer Fields
- Public Facilities**
- A. Oak Forest Municipal Center (City Hall, Police Department, Fire Station 1)
 - B. Acorn Public Library
 - C. U.S. Post Office
 - D. Public Works Maintenance Facility
 - E. Bremen Township Offices
 - F. Oak Forest High School
 - G. Lee R. Foster School
 - H. Jack Hille Middle School
 - I. G. Kerkstra Elementary School
 - J. Ridge Early Childhood School
 - K. Fieldcrest School
 - L. Arbor Park Middle School
 - M. Morton-Gingerwood School
 - N. Scarlet Oaks School
 - O. Fierke Education Center
 - P. South Suburban College - Dist. 510
 - Q. Fire Station 2



VII. COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

- Potential sites for new public facilities have been highlighted on the Framework Plan. As redevelopment is considered in these areas, the potential need to set aside sites for public use should be carefully considered. Potential new public facility needs that have been identified by the community include:
 - Additional room for senior activities;
 - a public pool / aquatic center.
- Potential sites for new public parks or open space have also been highlighted on the Framework Plan. As development of remaining vacant parcels is considered, and as redevelopment occurs in the Oak Forest Metra Station area, park space should be integrated into the developments to serve both new residents and existing neighborhoods nearby. In addition, areas of environmental sensitivity that are not conducive to development should be considered for more passive, natural open space preservation.

GOALS AND POLICIES

The City's existing services and facilities reflect those of a mature, built-out community. The Community Facilities and Services Goals and Policies reflect the need to meet emerging demands from changing demographics, recreational trends, and typical replacement needs.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES GOAL # 1

Ensure high quality and responsive municipal, educational, recreational, library, and utility services to all residents of the City of Oak Forest.

Policies:

1. Maintain and enhance relationships between the City and other service providers to continue to offer cost-effective, quality services to all residents.
2. Ensure that new public sites and buildings are well-designed and enhance the City's image.
3. Improve connections among the various public uses located on Central Avenue.





VII. COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

4. Continue to make necessary improvements to the water and sewer system to maintain adequate service for all areas of the City.
5. Identify appropriate locations to permit expansion of facilities to meet the growing needs of the Public Works Department.
6. Work with outside utility providers to ensure adequate and reliable electrical, natural gas and telecommunications infrastructure to serve all areas of the City.
7. Monitor and upgrade utility services as redevelopment occurs, requiring private sector investment in upgrades necessitated by new construction.
8. Encourage and support youth, senior, and bi-lingual programs and activities as part of an ongoing effort to better serve these growing segments of the Oak Forest community.
9. Improve communication, marketing, and promotion of available community programs and services to increase awareness and participation of Oak Forest residents.
10. Work with other agencies to provide services such as senior and youth programs to City residents that are currently not offered by the City or that are in need of expansion. Shared services can prove to be more beneficial and efficient for the City.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES GOAL # 2

Encourage the preservation and ongoing enhancement of the park, open space and recreation system to serve the evolving needs of Oak Forest residents.

Policies:

1. Connect regional and local open space and recreation systems to realize their full use potential through new construction and extension of bikeways and strategic open space acquisition and dedication, in cooperation with the Oak Forest Park District and the Cook County Forest Preserve District.
2. Monitor local community needs and perceptions and develop new recreational facilities and services which respond to specific desires of City residents, in cooperation with the Oak Forest Park District.
3. Work with other entities to explore alternatives for a larger, more centrally located shared senior center.
4. Integrate parks and recreational uses into existing and new residential neighborhoods as opportunities arise, to serve as visual amenities and facilitate non-vehicular access.

