

An Oak Park Opportunity



For over 50 years, the schoolyard at Washington Irving School has been paved in asphalt. The *Irving Schoolyard Project* seeks to transform this blight — 80,000 square feet of blacktop — into a safe and environmentally-responsible recreation area that will yield benefits for the entire community.



An Opportunity for Everyone



Washington Irving Elementary School – 1125 S. Cuyler

The Irving Schoolyard Project offers a comprehensive plan to remove blacktop, restore native plantings, create outdoor gathering places, and provide safe and accessible recreational areas to meet the education, health and wellness needs of current and future students, neighbors and community members.

- An artificial turf multi-purpose athletic field will provide much-needed space to local sports and recreation groups that currently compete for limited space to engage children in formal and informal sporting activities.
- Multiple outdoor classrooms, nestled between prairie plants and adjacent to rain gardens, will offer teachers myriad opportunities to incorporate the environment into their curricula. Community groups and neighbors will also benefit from new gathering places in a park-like setting outside school hours.
- A reading garden, bordered by birdhouses, ornamental trees and planting beds, will offer a comfortable outdoor space for individual and small group learning activities.
- Two basketball half-courts and four-square courts will engage children and families in games and recreation.
- Custom and traditional playground equipment will offer accessible, safe and creative play opportunities for children of all ages.

“The plan is a sensation of landscape architecture, play areas as well as a bold declaration of the Irving community’s faith in the future.”

Wednesday Journal, July 6th 2011

Located along Ridgeland Avenue, a key gateway into Oak Park, and in a neighborhood that is attracting families with young children, Irving School is a vital asset in the southeast Oak Park community. Several core principles guide the *Irving Schoolyard Project*, which puts into action an ambitious plan for what was once a school—and community—for which high expectations were not the norm:

Innovative Learning Experiences—

The *Irving Schoolyard Project* establishes an outdoor classroom for students by offering a number of innovative curricular opportunities in numerous areas of interest to students, teachers and families.

Health, Safety and Wellness—

The *Irving Schoolyard Project* responds to the increased need for safe places for children to play before, during and after school. Its inspired landscape design creates creative and diverse areas for children and families to play.

Accessibility—

The *Irving Schoolyard Project* respects the unique physical, cognitive and social emotional needs of all children, and will provide accessible opportunities for children to play, learn and develop.

Sustainability & Environmental Responsibility—

The *Irving Schoolyard Project* will dramatically improve Irving’s environmental footprint by incorporating rain gardens, permeable pavers, natural construction materials, and a construction plan that prioritizes water reclamation.

“Irving School... has momentum with a strong and respected principal in John Hodge, a determined PTO, rising test scores and it sits in the midst of a re-energized community which has embraced the school.”

Wednesday Journal, July 6th 2011



Join us!

The *Irving Schoolyard Project* has been led by a dedicated team of Irving School parents, administrators, teachers and staff. During nearly seven years of active planning, the team has gathered input from District 97 administrators, southeast Oak Park residents, community leaders, and landscape design & engineering experts to ensure that the vision for the Irving Schoolyard responds to the needs of the surrounding community.

A revitalized schoolyard will improve the quality of education for Irving children as well as the quality of life for community members in this vibrant neighborhood. This model of an urban ecological schoolyard will be an inspiration to all who visit, whether that means children during the school day, visiting sports teams, or neighbors looking for a relaxing place to gather.

The *Irving Schoolyard Project* is an opportunity whose time has come. We invite you to join us in making our vision for the *Irving Schoolyard Project* a reality.



Photos by Frank Pinc

Irving students & staff stand up for green on Earth Day!

Please contact:

For more information about naming opportunities and ways to get involved with the *Irving Schoolyard Project*, visit us at www.irvingschoolyard.com and follow us on Facebook and Twitter.