

## **City of Aurora 2020 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)**

### **Walters Park Wellness Walk Improvements**

#### **Fox Valley Park District Position Statement- July 28, 2020**

Good Afternoon. On behalf of the Board of Commissioners of the Fox Valley Park District I am speaking today on the importance of the Community Development Block Grant funding for the Aurora community.

The Fox Valley Park District is committed to our community partnership with VNA Health Care for the construction and operation of the Walters Park “Wellness Walk”. With the primary funding mechanism for the project being CDBG funds, the Park District is grateful for the City of Aurora’s support of this innovative health and wellness project and the integrated VNA-led wellness initiative. However, now more than ever, is the time to construct and activate the Wellness Walk facility.

As our community faces serious health issues including rising rates of chronic disease, an increased prevalence of sedentary lifestyles and poor nutrition habits, the Park District’s Wellness Walk collaboration with VNA is dedicated to ensuring that our most vulnerable residents have safe and free access to quality recreational facilities that expand access to evidence-based health prevention programs that increase physical activity and reduce chronic disease and, by doing so, reduce the risk of health disparities.

Based on our three pillar approach to our parks mission which is Health & Wellness, Conservation & Sustainability, and the third pillar of Social Equity, this collaborative effort with the City of Aurora, VNA Health Care and the Fox Valley Park District meets national award winning criteria of which our community always leads.

In its Aurora clinics, VNA delivers primary care services to a vulnerable population of over 39,000 individuals with little or no insurance. Approximately 55% of these individuals have been diagnosed with a chronic disease and many have co-morbidities; these include obesity, diabetes and heart disease. Approximately 5,000 of these individuals will be referred into VNA’s wellness programs in Aurora where they will be engaged in evidence-based chronic disease prevention and self-management classes. The Wellness Walk will be a centerpiece of these classes. VNA will establish a physical activity prescription program highlighting the Wellness Walk while underscoring the importance of individuals getting at least 30 minutes of exercise per day and emphasizing the availability of this safe, free space designed for their use in such close proximity to their medical campus on Highland Avenue. The Fox Valley Park District and VNA will also work together to offer staff-led programs that will include free activities such as yoga, weight loss and stress reduction support groups, and parenting programs highlighting the positive role-modeling of physical activity of parents alongside their children. Moreover, the

Fox Valley Park District and VNA envision the facility and programmatic aspects of this collaboration to be transferable to other sites in the future. This diverse population has limited resources to afford health club memberships and personal trainers. This program supports the pillar of Health & Wellness through Social Equity which is free access to exercise in a public park as their individual right and not a privilege.

While experts are still learning much about the spread and impacts of Covid-19, we do know that the health issues facing many VNA clientele, and many of our residents, leave them more vulnerable to infection and unfortunate outcomes. At the same time, good health correlates to a stronger immune system. The outdoor exercise equipment featured as part of the Wellness Walk would be free of charge, open to all the public and remains the safest fitness environment. Together with the VNA programming and comprehensive health related education, we have the opportunity now to fight Covid-19 and push back on its impacts through this proactive public health initiative. Therefore, the Fox Valley Park District strongly urges the City of Aurora to remain committed to the urgency of this project and direct the committed CDBG funding to the project as soon as funds are available.

In closing, I would like to thank and recognize the leadership of the City of Aurora for their support of VNA Health Care Network on the main campus of Highland Avenue and on Farnsworth Avenue. This initiative along with streetscape beautification of the Highland corridor are quality investments in our neighborhoods through your leadership as Aldermen that has been proven with past evidence and continues to be the spirit of Aurora in the future.

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**From:** CDBGInfo  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 30, 2020 5:20 PM  
**To:** Palmquist, Jeff  
**Cc:** Ragona, Chris  
**Subject:** CDBG-2020-09- Fox Valley Park District - Walters Park Project  
**Attachments:** CDBG statement- Walter Park Wellness Walk kmn edit.docx

Dear Mr. Palmquist,

Thank you for sharing the Fox Valley Park District's attached statement with regard to the Community Development Division's proposed Substantial Amendment 2020-#2. We also appreciate Mr. Pilmer's statement on behalf of the Board of Commissioners of the Fox Valley Park District that was shared during today's public hearing for Substantial Amendment 2020-#2.

The City of Aurora's Community Development Division receives Community Development Block Grant and HOME Investment Partnership funds annually to provide resources to residents, businesses, and nonprofit agencies for a variety of projects. The City opens its CDBG and HOME funded programs to all qualifying residents, businesses, and nonprofit agencies regardless of race and ethnicity. Throughout the years, the City has provided funding for single-family rehabilitation emergency repairs, affordable rental housing developments, down payment assistance, homelessness prevention, youth and senior services, workforce development, community development infrastructure investments as well as assistance to small businesses for economic development investment. Due to the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic, the Community Development Division has recommended the re/allocation of funds over the course of the last several months to assist non-profits, small businesses, and residents facing unanticipated financial and/or operational challenges due to effects of COVID-19. In response to the City's immediate community needs resulting from the pandemic, some projects originally approved for 2020 funding have been recommended to receive 2021 set-aside funding to complete their respective projects.

Please do not hesitate to let us know if you have any additional comments.

Thank you,  
Community Development Division



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