



**Date:** December 29, 2011

**To:** Thomas J. Bonfield, City Manager  
**Through:** Theodore L. Voorhees, Deputy City Manager  
**From:** Beth S. Timson, Assistant Director, Parks and Recreation  
**Subject:** Response to Citizen Matters/Vivian Wang at January 5, 2012 Work Session

In 2010, the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) conducted park user counts on 15 parks in the City, using a nationally-recognized protocol for collecting that data. Staff found that some low user counts could potentially justify re-purposing or even selling some significantly underused City parks.

However, of the 15 parks in which user counts were made, 11 have some type of deed encumbrance—either state or federal—that is difficult to remove and prohibits a change of use or a sale. The ROI from the costs of the required legal work to remove the encumbrance would not be justified by the savings in maintenance costs; and several of the sites are essentially unsalable because they are undevelopable.

In order to increase park use and reduce City costs, DPR has been working to find appropriate citizen groups to partner with the City to bring more desirable activities into these underused parks. As examples: (1) the Oakwood Neighborhood Association has adopted Oakwood Park and has had several community workdays and community events in the park; (2) the New Hope Creek Corridor Advisory Commission has formed a subgroup, the Friends of Sandy Creek Park, and it has had workdays on the site, created a website, and has worked with the City to get grant funding for a park upgrade; and (3) staff are discussing now with a local church the possibility of having community garden spaces in White Oak Park this coming season.

DPR feels that the study on re-purposing underused parks has resulted in developments that are somewhat different from those originally envisioned but even more positive in the long run.