

Hills plans for changes at neighborhood park

By Joanna Maliszewski
staff writer

Ira Ranesbottom welcomes new efforts to return Waldron Park across the street from her southeast Farmington Hills house, to a neighborhood park, bringing some peace and serenity to her life.

"I have endured damage to my house, sleepless nights, attempted vandalism of my vehicles," Ranesbottom said.

After more than a year of debate, city officials will soon institute some changes at the 2 1/2-acre park at Waldron and Independence streets.

"The objective is to give the neighborhood park back to the neighbor-

hood," said Floyd DuFresne, president of Olde Town/Meadowbrook Heights Homeowners Association.

The primary change that has pitted neighbors against neighbors is in the park's small nine-space parking lot, generally considered a gathering spot for rowdy and noisy teens. A basketball court shares the existing parking lot.

The nine-space lot will be reduced to only two parking spaces, both to be designated handicapped parking. The two spaces will be tried for the next year, "to see if that doesn't satisfy the need," city manager William Costick said.

MANY NEARBY park residents

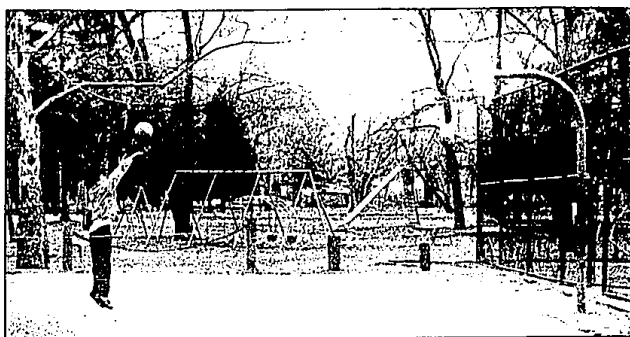
support the restricted spaces, with further changes. "I think that two parking spots would be plenty. But I would also like to see them relocate them more to the center of the park," resident Walt Hayward said.

Patrons who are handicapped would have an easier time of reaching the park's interior if the parking spaces were more toward the center, residents said.

DuFresne said that while he is personally opposed to the parking spaces, the homeowners association board of directors favors the change. "I don't think it's going to be enforceable," he said.

The homeowners association supports moving the parking spaces toward the park's center. "The board is supportive of the seniors in the community. We're supportive of the children in our community. And we want to do what's in their best interest," DuFresne said.

The parking lot was closed last year at residents' requests as a



Tony Liang of Farmington Hills shoots baskets at Waldron Park in Farmington Hills' Olde Town area.

means of reducing problems. After the lot was closed, however, residents complained of congested streets and cars that blocked their driveways.

Residents have complained that the parking lot attracts youths who hang out and cause trouble in the

park, whose name is expected to be changed to Olde Town Park.

Farmington Hills police tallied 25 incidents in the park, with the most labeled as public nuisances, followed by adult loitering and parking complaints.

THE REMAINING nine changes, which are expected to be completed sometime in the summer, are:

- Installing a new sign bearing the park's new name. As in the city's other parks, stone pillars and motif will be used. A flagpole will be installed next to the sign.

- Summer fun center of activities for children led by a parks and recreation staff person for eight weeks.

- Beefed up police patrols of the park, based on residents' complaints about aggravating activities that have occurred at the park in the past.

- Park watch program will be expanded to additional patrols by parks and recreation staff.

- William Grace Elementary basketball equipment will be improved for the nearby school. The damaged backboards and standards will be replaced.

- A new basketball half-court will be built where Waldron Park's existing ice rink is. The new court will replace the existing one that shares the parking lot.

- A picnic shelter will be built for picnics and for fun center use.

- Tot lot play equipment will be added to the existing playground equipment.

- More picnic tables and grills will be bought.

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