

May 31, 2004

My View: Thomas J. Geisse

A reasonable plan for Pike soccer fields May 31, 2004

Recent media coverage of the new Pike Youth Sports Complex at Eagle Creek Park promoted the individual agendas of a handful of neighbors concerned about the location of the entrance. It failed to include all the facts. It failed to include comment from Indy Parks or other interested parties. No groups or identified individuals are opposed to the development of this land into a beautiful park and greenway trail. The alternate entrance location was carefully considered and then rejected as the less-safe location more than three years ago. Here is my view. On an abandoned old bean field just south of West 56th Street and Reed Road, Indy Parks and Pike Youth Soccer Club are constructing a youth soccer complex and the first mile of the new Eagle Creek Greenway. Over the last 15 years, Pike Township has seen phenomenal growth. During this time, participation by children in Indy Parks' licensed Pike Soccer Club became so popular the need for new soccer fields was obvious. It is now critical. With 1,500 young soccer players each season, the program outgrew Northwestway Park, the second largest park in Pike Township. In recent years there also has been a huge influx of adult soccer players who need a place to play in the northwest part of the county. The demand for sports fields in Pike Township far exceeds supply. The construction and use of 21 new soccer fields in Eagle Creek Park will allow expanded recreational opportunities for other users at Northwestway Park.

In meeting after meeting, month after month, year after year, the Youth Soccer Complex and greenway design team sought, gained and considered input from every conceivable group and dozens of individuals. Input from the Eagle Creek Park Foundation and its Citizens Advisory Board was valuable. In all cases, Indy Parks gave consideration to the input and balanced it against adverse effects on other aspects of the plans. Indy Parks far exceeded my expectations as a citizen in its efforts to listen to every voice. They did it patiently and with graciousness. Pike Soccer Club has, since 1979, been a proven steward of our community's youth. Over the last decade it has helped maintain and operate soccer fields at Northwestway Park. Now, for the next 20 years and more, Pike Soccer Club will serve as steward of parkland, which many citizens feel connected to by its proximity to Eagle Creek Park. Most soccer fields in Indiana are simply wide-open grassy areas with few, if any, trees. Once construction is under way, the public can satisfy themselves to see that this 21-field complex has, remarkably, saved nearly every tree, left the Mayor's Gardens intact, retained isolated wetlands, observed best management practices for retention ponds, and carefully thought through safety issues for motorists, bicyclists, soccer players, and our young people.

Just like at Northwestway Park, connecting walking trails are provided within the complex. Here is a shining example of city government and Indy Parks getting the job done. Citizens of all ages use the city's 167 parks through fun, safe and structured activities. We are blessed that Indianapolis has a nationally accredited, award-winning park system committed to meeting the growing recreational and leisure needs of our community through quality services, programs and facilities.

Geisse is president of the 6,000-member Pike Youth Soccer Club Inc. and owner of Geisse Marketing.

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Pictures of entrance May 31, 2004 on website