



YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago
1030 W. Van Buren St.
Chicago, IL 60607

November 19, 2025

Mr. Brad Wilson
Executive Director
Naperville Park District
320 W. Jackson Ave.
Naperville, IL 60540

President Leslie Ruffing & Commissioners
Board of Commissioners
Naperville Park District
320 W. Jackson Ave.
Naperville, IL 60540

Dear Director Wilson, President Ruffing, and Commissioners:

In our capacity as stewards of the YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago, its Fry Family YMCA, and its former Kroehler YMCA, which have served the Naperville community since 1910, we write today asking the Naperville Park District to respectfully pause their proposed expansion plans and not move ahead with a referendum in March of 2026.

Instead, we ask the District to rethink its plans and collaborate with partners from across the community to scale and adjust its proposed facility improvement plan. The Fry Family YMCA agrees Naperville needs more indoor recreation space—but not through a plan like this.

Proceeding to a referendum at this time will be divisive, and we believe there is a smarter way forward.

We acknowledge that the closure of the Kroehler YMCA and other facilities created service gaps for residents, especially those in central and east Naperville. Closing Kroehler was a difficult decision, but it was necessary given that its operations were not financially viable.

However, responding to the closures of community-focused fitness facilities and pools in central Naperville by building a large, \$120 million, 3-pool aquatic facility next to existing ones doesn't solve the problem—it creates new challenges.

Our operations in Naperville predate the establishment of the Naperville Park District. In the decades since, we've collaborated, respecting our unique missions, and worked to avoid overlap in services, programming, and facilities.

The cooperation between our two locally focused organizations has resulted in the delivery of impactful programs, services, amenities, and facilities, all while remaining pragmatic stewards of the community and its resources.

Avoiding the costly duplication of facilities and programming has served Naperville well and has likewise enhanced the community's quality of life. That is why we question whether the current proposal is the right one to pursue.

The District's pending plan spends 86% of the referendum resources south of 95th Street to construct a 138,000-square-foot fitness and aquatic complex at Frontier Park. The proposed facility is 3,800 feet from the Fry Family YMCA, which has served the community since 1995, and is approximately 4,100 feet from a new private facility under construction. There are numerous other operations across the community offering various forms of fitness, recreation, training, and wellness services, as



well. Accordingly, geographically concentrating similar facilities in south Naperville will not ease community concerns about facility closures in central or north Naperville.

For months, many of our members and community partners have asked the YMCA for our opinion on the proposed indoor recreation center at Frontier Park. After attending numerous meetings and upon careful consideration and deliberation, we conclude that the District's plan should be refined, scaled, and modified to better meet the evolving needs of the community.

Given that the District is currently soliciting community opinion, we felt compelled to add our voice to the ongoing community dialogue:

- **Affordability is Essential to Healthy Living:** Naperville is a thriving community, but affordability is increasingly a concern for more residents. Every property owner in Naperville will have to financially support the \$120 million indoor recreation and three-pool facility, regardless of whether they use it or its programming. A \$135 million bond, at 5.0% interest for 20 years, will carry significant expenses to homeowners and taxpayers. The total cost to the community will likely exceed \$215 million over the next two decades, depending on how the bond is structured.

If the District moves forward, a generation of Naperville residents would be required to financially support the indoor recreation and aquatic center in south Naperville through increased property taxes, adding to the burden and cost of living in the community.

- **Membership Costs & Accessibility:** The scale and scope of the proposed Frontier Park center differ from those of the existing Fort Hill facility. Despite requiring every property owner to pay increased property taxes, there will also be a substantive monthly membership fee and other program fees:

	Existing: Fort Hill	Proposed Facility: Fitness-Only	Proposed Facility: Fitness & Aquatics
Individual	\$35	\$40 (+14%)	\$75 (+114%)
Household	\$84	\$96 (+14%)	\$180 (+114%)
Senior	\$29	\$34 (+17%)	\$64 (+121%)

Under this proposed structure, the total annual cost for a family living in a home valued at \$600,000, including household membership and property tax increases, would exceed \$2,300. An individual living in a \$500,000 residence would pay over \$1,000 annually for an individual fitness and aquatics membership, including increases in property taxes.

While a lower membership rate would address affordability concerns, it would increase the risk of the facility losing money annually, requiring greater property tax subsidies. A membership at a facility subsidized in part by property taxes, but comparable in price to neighboring



private or non-profit operators, raises concerns about the target market that the facility is intended to serve.

A YMCA membership is portable and can be used at any facility across the country. Other private operators offer similar arrangements, which is a benefit to individuals or families who choose this model. The Park District membership can only be used at the two facilities in Naperville.

- **By The Numbers:** The Fry Family YMCA is aware of the pressures and operating challenges faced by indoor recreation and aquatic facilities in south Naperville and across the community. Recent facility closures are cautionary lessons. Given the substantial commitment of taxpayer resources to the project, we question the wisdom and financial viability of centralizing three fitness facilities with pools, practically next door to each other, south of 95th Street.

The District estimates that the Frontier Park center will break even by year three, but the publicly available budgets of other fitness, recreation, and aquatic facilities suggest a more complex picture.

We reviewed the most recent financial statements of the Fox Valley Park District's Vaughn Athletic Center, Romeoville Aquatic Center, and the Waukegan Park District's Field House Sports, Fitness & Aquatics Center at Hinkston Park. Each facility is unique, but they all share a commonality: they are operating at a loss and require substantial intergovernmental transfers from property taxes to stay open.

This observation isn't a critique of these operations or communities; it's a reflection of the difficulty of sustainably operating indoor aquatics and recreation facilities.

The District is already raising property taxes and program fees to fund its upcoming budget. We believe the current expansion proposal carries substantial execution risk given its scope and cost.

- **Future Facilities Across Naperville:** If this plan proceeds at the current scale and scope, the District will have limited capacity to add facilities and programming that address indoor recreation needs in central and north Naperville. This reality raises concerns about these areas of town remaining underserved, potentially for decades to come.

Reserving resources for opportunities that may come along is prudent community planning.

The Fry Family YMCA supports new facilities, but they must be in the right place, at the right time, and serve the whole community. We are committed to helping shape a more thoughtful and effective solution—one that grows through collaboration, not by duplicating buildings, programs, and services in proximity to one another.



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Over the years, we have discussed how the Fry Family YMCA could be augmented to assist the Park District in providing indoor recreation in south Naperville. We remain willing to explore further whether this type of partnership could be a more cost-effective solution for adding indoor space south of 95th Street and for reserving community resources for future central and east Naperville expansions. We remain open to thoroughly vetting this opportunity.

While we have a difference of opinion at the moment, we remain deeply grateful for our decades-long partnership. We know that we will continue to collaborate for the benefit of the families and residents we serve.

Thank you for your service to the community and for considering our opinion on this matter.

Sincerely,

Erika Wood
Executive Director
Fry Family YMCA

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