

Grayhawk Park in the Dark: Improve Safety by Adding Lights

Summary

This proposal is a request to improve the lighting in and around the park in the Grayhawk neighborhood. Other than the park area, the neighborhood design includes many light posts that automatically turn on at night. Each night these lights shine in the darkness; however, the park remains completely dark because that area does not have lights. This darkness causes a problem for nearby residents. As residents pass by the park, the extreme darkness prevents them from safely seeing what is in front of them or lurking for them within the park. As a Grayhawk resident, I hear neighbors mention their safety concerns about the dark park, and the Grayhawk Home Owners Association (HOA) can alleviate these concerns by adding lights to that area.

Lights and installation will cost \$7,000 – \$33,000. The cost varies depending on the number of lights, labor, and supplies, but the benefits are worth the cost. After installation, residents will feel safer because the lighted area allows them to see where they are walking, as well as increasing their probability of seeing any potential danger. By adding lights, the HOA improves safety conditions, helps residents feel at ease when walking after dark, and may even deter criminals. Also, park areas with lights may impress prospective families who are shopping for homes in the Grayhawk neighborhood.

Current Problem: Park is Too Dark at Night

Many families live in the Grayhawk neighborhood and these residents are often outside after dark. Several residents walk in or near the park area, which has a playground, landscaping, trashcans, and a large field. This area stretches between Stevens Point Drive, Merrimac Drive, Valley Mills Drive, and an alley. At night, the surrounding streets and houses are somewhat lighted, but these lights do not illuminate the park. Residents have expressed concerns about the lighting because

- **wild animals roam** in the darkness and may have rabies
- **criminals may lurk** in the darkness
- **they or their family members may stumble and fall** when they cannot see where they are walking

Dangerous situations might occur for residents who come across wild animals because these animals could carry diseases or attack. At nightfall, residents see coyotes and bobcats roam the neighborhood and these animals do not appear afraid of people. These wild animals could attack if they become hungry, injured, or threatened. Also, an animal caught in September tested positive for rabies (Grayhawk Community Website). These animals use quiet and quick movements, which put residents at a disadvantage. At night, anyone walking a pet or jogging near the dark park may encounter danger by crossing paths with one of these wild animals.

Without lights, residents walking around the park cannot see these animals; therefore, they might unknowingly head towards one of these animals.

Criminals might consider the park an ideal location because the area has no lights. These criminals can move between the streets and alleys or lurk in the area without being detected. This year, criminals set fire to 5 houses in this neighborhood, and each fire started at night. The last house fire started in the alley, where the property was darkest. This kind of crime has not occurred in the park yet, but nearby residents fear what could happen in the dark area.

The unlit area creates further safety problems for pedestrians because they cannot see where they are walking. This problem increases their chances of stumbling and falling. Often walkers pass



Figure 1: Trashcan and Proximity to Sidewalk. The trashcan in this image is located on the south side of the park and several feet from the sidewalk.

by this park because of the central location, and a few may walk into the park to dispose of trash. The park has two trashcans: one for regular trash and one for pet waste. Unfortunately, both trashcans are located approximately 12 feet away from the sidewalk. The main trashcan is shown in **Figure 1**, and the other trashcan is approximately two feet to the north of the one in the image. Anyone walking at night, must step off the unlit sidewalk and walk onto the dark field to reach either trashcan.

Proposed Solution: Add Lights in Park

According to the Frisco Police Department, street lights deter criminal activity because criminals generally stray from lighted areas (Lieutenant Penny Mince.) Therefore, new lights for the park could deter criminals from damaging property or lurking in the area. Due to the criminal activity and safety concerns mentioned in the Current Problem section, the HOA will want to consider installing 3 lights in this dark area. The new lights are indicated as red squares in **Figure 2**, and categorized as either

- necessary lights (1): south of playground; near trashcans and alley entrance;
- suggested lights (2): west of playground; far east of playground;

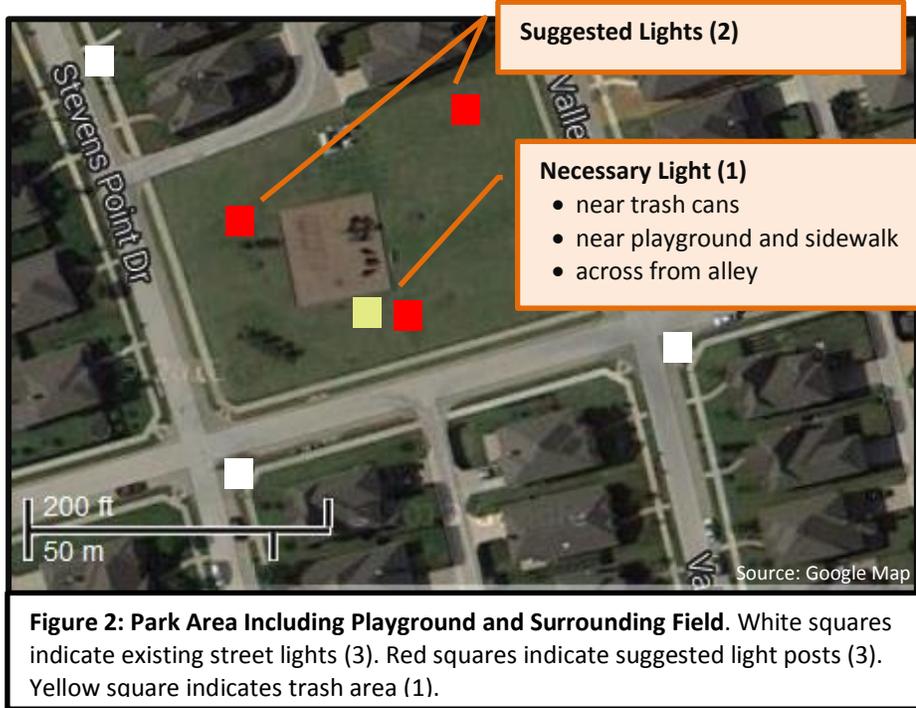
The park needs all 3 lights to shine over the area at night, but the light on the southern portion of the park is most necessary because of its proximity to common areas.

Choose the Right Size

Due to the size of this area, 3 strategically placed light posts should distribute enough light to see the sidewalk, trashcans, and into the park. This light is also called a street light and the same type of light is indicated in **Figure 2**.

Smaller light types will not distribute enough light to illuminate such a large area. This area is approximately 308 feet by 200 feet, which is enough space for 6

residential lots; however the park does not appear to have utility lines through it. The City of Frisco engineer, Joel Fitts, confirmed that the electric company can install lighting even if the park was not originally set-up with utility lines. Prior to installation, the electric company requires the HOA to agree to pay for the installation.



Initiate the Installation Process

The entire process may take several months as it moves through multiple phases. These phases are described in **Table 1** below.

Table 1: Phases for Adding Lights to the Park

Phases	Descriptions
Grayhawk HOA Consent	The HOA consents to the possibility of adding lights
City of Frisco Approval	The city approves lights for the location
CoServ Electric Inspection	The electric company surveys location and provides cost/time estimate
Contract Agreement	The HOA agrees to allow for and pay for the installation
Calendar Schedule	The HOA and electric company schedule a day/time to begin installing the lights
Light Installation	The electric company installs the lights

Budget

The costs to add lights impact the HOA budget. **Table 2** contains estimated costs for installing lights in the park area.

Table 2: Budget Options for Adding Lights to the Park

Options for Lights*	Days to Install**	Cost to HOA***
3 light posts	14 – 56	\$21,000 - \$33,000
2 light posts	9 – 38	\$14,000 - \$22,000
1 light post	5 – 19	\$7,000 - \$11,000

*Each option includes required supplies, labor, and installation.

**The length shown reflects the average timeframe to complete the actual installation based on previous installations. Installations are scheduled months in advance after contracts are signed.

***Costs vary due to the amount of labor involved.

The above estimations for costs came from Joel Fitts, Senior Traffic Engineer with the City of Frisco. The estimations for timeframes came from Wesley Wright, Engineer in Training with the City of Frisco. The timeframes reflect installations only, and these estimates do not include the time to inspect or perform other phases mentioned in **Table 1**. All estimates pertain to light posts, and no other lights.

Conclusion

As a resident of the Grayhawk neighborhood, I urge the HOA to add lights to the park mentioned in this proposal. By adding 3 lights, the HOA will reduce some of the safety concerns felt by residents. With the HOA's help, this park can become a pleasant area for residents to walk by and enjoy after nightfall. I look forward to seeing the new light posts and walking in the lighted area at night.

References

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