

League of Women Voters opposed to plan for YMCA in Tuhey Park

Muncie Star Press

While the League of Women Voters of Muncie-Delaware County supports the YMCA and its mission and applauds its efforts to soundly marshal its resources for the future, we oppose the city leasing Tuhey Park to the YMCA for development. Once covered with asphalt and the footprint of a large building, the green space would not easily be recoverable if/when the lease ends.

We base our opposition on longstanding positions of the League of Women Voters of the United States as well as the Muncie Vision 2021 Plan.

In its 100-year history, the League has demonstrated its belief that responsible citizens should educate themselves and participate in public decision-making. We believe that responsible government should be responsive to the will of the people and ensure transparency, accountability, positive community impact and preservation of the common good when considering the transfer of governmental services, assets and/or functions to the private sector.

The Tuhey Park plan would reduce public green space, bring considerably more traffic and pollution, trade grass for asphalt for the 300 parking spaces and reduce the opportunity for redeveloping public access park amenities.

The Vision 2021 Plan developed with considerable community input has as its first two goals Enrich Quality of Life and Enrich Quality of Place. Muncie parks, including neighborhood parks, were cited as assets of this community that contribute to quality of place. As we increase trails and encourage more residents to walk or bike and participate in wellness activities (to which the YMCA contributes), we should not be reducing the options but, if possible,

increasing them. Tuhey Park is easily accessible from downtown and the White River Greenway and a short stint from the Cardinal Greenway. But it is also a neighborhood park, and used by neighborhood residents.

Consolidating and locating a new YMCA is also a social justice issue. As Mayor Ridenour noted, “To meet its mission the YMCA should be in the center of the city for easy access to all 14 bus routes.” Tuhey Park is not downtown (as mapmaker Andy Shears has observed.)

We would add that accessibility to all neighborhoods and community members who currently enjoy the benefits of the YMCA facilities should be considered. Essentially replacing a free-access public park with a fee-access private entity, despite the token relocated playground, would serve the interests of a few at the expense of the common good.

One site rendition shown in the YMCA project announcement on Nov. 23 makes it abundantly clear that Tuhey would make an attractive selling point for the new condos across a pedestrian bridge. The League would like to see additional effort expended to find a suitable location downtown — perhaps even replacing the old jail. A number of alternatives are available for consideration at savetuhey.org.

— *Submitted by Linda Hanson, spokesperson for the League of Women Voters of Muncie-Delaware County*