"James A. Graaskamp was born in Milwaukee on June 17, 1933 and died April 22, 1988. The articulate, outspoken professor, who chaired the Department of Real Estate and Urban Land Economics of the University of Wisconsin School of Business, was acclaimed nationally in the field of land development and was adored by his students, who fondly called him "Chief."

Paralyzed below the neck by polio at 17, Professor Graaskamp was instrumental in establishing the UW-Madison McBurney Resource Center for persons with disabilities. He shrugged off his own disability as a "materials handling problem." Committed to sound urban redevelopment, he believed that efficient land use must be a social priority and that the "highest and best use" of land represents an ethical commitment of resources to future generations.

The James A. Graaskamp Park was designed by neighborhood residents and local activists as a universally accessible playscape in honor of the "Chief."

- First fully-accessible playground in Wisconsin
- Created in 1989 with neighborhood influence
- In the middle of a residential street within a quiet neighborhood
MDC’s James A. Graaskamp Park to be Redesigned by UW-Madison Students in 2018-19!

Tucked into a historic residential neighborhood at 1953 East Mifflin St. in Madison, Wisconsin is the James A. Graaskamp Park. Dedicated to the “Chief” on October 15, 1989, the park was the first fully accessible park in the State of Wisconsin.

Madison Development Corporation (MDC), a provider of reasonably priced workforce housing in Dane County, privately owns and manages the park along with 40 units of affordable housing they acquired on the site. The Avenue is located at 1954 E Washington Ave in Madison. 27 units are located in the renovated former UW Hospital’s neurological building on the site and the remaining 12 units are in two buildings facing the park. The park is small - only ¼ acre - but MDC intends to slightly increase the size and significantly update the park to reflect the story of the Chief’s remarkable life.

Tom Landgraf, Senior Lecturer in the Wisconsin School of Business' Department of Real Estate and Urban Land Economics, and Jim LaGro, Professor of Planning & Landscape Architecture, will be leading the students in the redesign effort and will engage both the neighbors and UW alum in the project. We would welcome assistance from UW Alumni over the next 12 to 24 months as we proceed with the redesign. Please email Lorrie Heinemann, MDC President & CEO, of your interest to be a part of the project and we’ll add you to our Graaskamp Park update list for status reports and upcoming events.

8-unit, 1953 Mifflin Street

Picnic Area

Two of the park's swings

Slides with climbing hill