

**RECREATION
FACILITY
DEVELOPMENT
PLAN
FY 1997-2010**

2003 UPDATE



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION
2003
*draft***

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The 2003 update is divided into 2 sections; the first dealing with the Community Recreation Centers and the second addressing the Aquatic Facility needs. Each contains its own Executive Summary and conclusions.

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*COMMUNITY
RECREATION
CENTERS
2003 UPDATE*

MONTGOMERY COUNTY VISION STATEMENT

"Helping to make Montgomery County the best place to be through efficient, effective, and responsive government that delivers quality services"

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

We Will Provide Excellence in Government by:

**Insisting upon customer satisfaction
Ensuring high value for tax dollars
Adhering to the highest ethical standards
Appreciating diversity
Being open, accessible, and responsive**

**Empowering and supporting employees
Striving for continuous improvement
Working together as a team
Being accountable**

~~Department of Recreation's Mission~~

~~The Mission of the Department of Recreation is to provide and maintain quality programs and facilities that meet the recreational, social, cultural and physical needs of a diverse and changing community. This mission recognizes the importance of vision and flexibility in responding to the complex evolution of the communities that comprise Montgomery County.~~

~~The mission also recognizes that facilities, adequate in both size and number, are essential to the success of recreation and leisure service objectives.~~

Department of Recreation's Mission

The public service mission of the Montgomery County department of recreation is to emphasize TEAM WORK, OBJECTIVITY, GROWTH, IMAGINATION, VALUE, AND EXCELLENCE in everything we do in providing diverse recreation and leisure services for all of our communities.

The acronym TO GIVE represents our commitment to achieving this mission.

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN - 1997

In 1988, the Department of Recreation completed a Community Recreation Centers Study. This study was endorsed by the County Executive and forwarded to the County Council to be used as a guide for future Capital Improvements Program (CIP) projects. The 1988 study called for the development of a prototype community center of 22,500 to 23,500 net square feet to serve a population unit of 40,000 to 50,000 people. That study called for new centers to be developed in the Long Branch, Germantown, I-29 corridor, Kensington/N. Bethesda, Colesville/White Oak, and Silver Spring communities. Long Branch, Germantown, and the I-29 Corridor were the highest priorities of the Department and, in fact, are in the FY 95-2000 approved CIP. Additional centers have not yet been recommended by the Executive or Council.

The new Plan serves four primary purposes:

- To update the 1988 study and make necessary revisions to the proposed size and features of a prototype center and the population to be served.
- To provide a thorough presentation of the needs and benefits of community recreation facilities and the importance they serve in Montgomery County as community focal points.
- To elevate the status of the original report from a study to a formal plan providing an opportunity for community input.
- To set parameters of an optimal facility that blends operational histories of existing facilities, with community input of current and future service desires, within a reasonable cost structure.

The Recreation Department recommends the County Executive and the County Council endorse this Community Recreation Center Long Range Plan as a guide to future Capital Improvement Programs.

This plan also acknowledges the use of other spaces, (including public schools and private facilities), which are necessary to address recreational needs. Community recreation centers included in this document will also be referenced in the update of the (M-NCPPC) Park, Recreation Open Space Plan.

PURPOSE OF THE 2003 UPDATES

Over the last several years it has become apparent that much of the 1997 plan's recommended actions were being completed. In order for the plan to remain current it needed to have both accomplishments and changing conditions recognized in the text. This update is not intended to be a "new" plan, that will come with future efforts in FY 09. Rather these revisions are intended only to present current information in order that the plan can effectively complete its required tasks through 2010. Minor incidental corrections for editorial, chronological, and grammatical correctness were made without notation. New or altered narratives were incorporated only where necessary to provide clarification or critical new information and are highlighted in this draft via the use of bold italics in large type.

In some cases conditions have changed for better or worse and in some cases accelerated, decelerated or significantly altered the need for the task. In other regards, the effect of accomplishing one of the Plan's tasks has initiated another change or altered the utility of the task. This update attempts to incorporate all of these changes but as with all things it can not be absolute. The evaluation of existing conditions and community circumstances will always be included as a major part of the Departments decision making process.

DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION COMMUNITY RECREATION CENTERS FACILITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose and Value of the Centers to the Community

The purpose of the long range plan is to update and revise the Department's 1988 facility recommendations and to provide a thorough presentation of the needs and importance of community centers to the County. Its purpose is also to provide a formal plan that can act as a guide to the County Executive and Council regarding future Capital Improvement Program decisions.

The plan recalls the 1988 Commission on the Future report which cites "community identity" as a major problem in Montgomery County and "strongly endorse(s) neighborhood magnet centers, which serve as a hub for neighborhood activities, and serve as a meeting place for conversation, recreation and leisure."

Key demographic and socio-economic need indicators are provided. These include projected 2010 population figures for the high priority senior adult (206,140) **218,000** and children and youth (181,860) **265,356** groups. Several key values and benefits of centers for the community as well as for families and individuals are noted. These include: creating critical community focal points, offering activities that strengthen the family unit, promoting health and wellness, reducing isolation and facilitating social and cultural interaction, providing positive alternatives to drug and alcohol use, enhancing public safety, and promoting economic growth and vitality.

Nationally, community recreation facilities have either a social/arts, fitness/sports or multipurpose focus. There is a definite trend in the public sector towards larger, multipurpose centers. One recent study found that new facilities average just over 50,000 square feet, typically include indoor pools and racquetball courts and serve approximately 42,000 residents. In Montgomery County, the public policy of maximizing community use of school facilities coupled with the large number of private sector leisure service providers has allowed for public community centers to be more limited in size.

History of Centers in the County

The lack of a comprehensive plan has led to a wide assortment of centers currently in the County. Several are very small and were built many years ago with Federal funds. They are both limiting in the quality of programs that can be offered and tend to isolate the communities that they serve.

Since the Department began developing centers in 1977 with the Bauer Drive facility it has continued to promote multipurpose type centers in the 20,000 to 23,000 square foot range. The philosophy of the Department is not to promote specialized facilities to serve specific age groups, but to develop a sufficient number of facilities that are sized and designed with proper versatility to serve all age groups near the communities where they live. The Department does note however, that the sheer magnitude in the numbers of senior adults who will be residing in the County beyond 2010 may warrant the addition of one or more centers devoted to seniors like the existing Schweinhaut and Holiday Park centers. **2010 will require additional program and activity space.**

The Future; the Prototype Building and Site

The Department of Recreation proposes that the prototype community center be one that maximizes program flexibility and provides an opportunity to adapt to changing community demographics and leisure interests. The centers will be ~~only slightly larger (24,000 net square feet)~~ **(33,000+/- net square feet)** than the Department has developed during the past decade and will incorporate features that will save capital, operating and maintenance costs.

~~The breakdown of space includes: Administrative and Support (4300 net square feet), Sports and Fitness (9600), Social Activities and Dance (6400), Arts (1600) Community Meeting (1600), and Partnership Space (500).~~ **A detailed breakdown of space requirements is contained in Attachment # 1, "Community Recreation Center Program of Requirements".**

As a priority, the center should be located in a **publicly owned**, park-like setting; on a piece of land that is large enough to support active outdoor play space, including ball fields and courts. ~~In non-urban areas,~~ Typically ten acres or more is desirable **the required minimum.**

Wherever practical, other public facilities may be co-located on site with the community center. These could include other recreation/park amenities such as outdoor or indoor pools or skating rinks or facilities serving other public needs such as libraries or child care centers. It is important that the site be accessible. It should have good visibility, be served by public

very important that centers be located where they can be most effective in generating and sustaining community identity

The Number and Location of Facilities

Years ago, the National Recreation and Parks Association standard for development of community recreation facilities called for one center of 25,000 net square feet for every population unit of 20,000 people. This would require a total of 42 facilities to serve the projected population over the next two decades.

Recently park and recreation professionals have stated that such standards do not take budgeting, land availability, and specific community needs under consideration. In 1996, NRPA's current guidelines were provided in the publication Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines (1996). This publication kept what was working from past versions and developed a planning oriented approach that small and large communities can use to best plan the future of parks and recreation in their unique community - with citizen and stakeholder involvement. A quote that best sums up why the past way of identifying national standards was revised is "Neither NRPA nor the American Academy for Park & Recreation Administration can state categorically what standard is best for all communities".

Based on the rationale that we will maintain the public policy of maximizing community use of public school buildings and will not compete with private sector leisure providers, the Department recommends a departure from this *a* national standard. It is recommended that one center of 24,000 ~~33,000~~ net square feet be developed for every *optimum* 30,000 unit of population. *Currently, this would require approximately 35 total centers. Ten are in operation and 8 are in the development schedule through FY2010. In addition, 6 Neighborhood Recreation Centers and the Center for Cultural Diversity are also in place.* This will require the addition of ~~18~~ *11* new facilities to meet current demand. ~~, with eleven of them recommended for construction by the year 2010.~~ *The 30,000 population number is an ideal minimum. It is clearly understood that based on factors of financial and space capacity, the average center will serve a wider range of populations in most cases.*

Development Criteria and Sequencing

The criteria and sequencing is based upon extensive input from two years of public forums that were conducted by Recreation staff and Recreation Advisory Boards. The public forum information lead to the development of the most equitable and logical criteria and sequencing

were conducted by Recreation staff and Recreation Advisory Boards. The public forum information lead to the development of the most equitable and logical criteria and sequencing to meet the concerns of the effected communities.

- Population density that is currently un-served by existing facilities;
- Geographically isolated communities;
- Population socio-economic make-up, with communities of more children, higher diversity and/or fewer leisure options, being given priority;
- The availability of time sensitive cost-savings opportunities, such as Federal grants, private sector donations or dedications, or efficiencies in construction costs by joining projects; and
- Expressed interest and support from specific communities.

The Department is recommending that the County strive for the same rate of development of community centers as it has sustained throughout the past few years of its most difficult economic times. After the Germantown, Fairland, East County and Rosemary Hills (*Gwendolyn E. Coffield*) centers which are approved in the current CIP, the Department recommends the following sequence of development:

Damascus	White Oak /Kemp Mill
Mid County	<i>Kemp Mill</i>
North Bethesda	West County
North Potomac	Kensington

The 2003 Update further recommends the following for inclusion in the CIP.

- *“New” POR for CRCs FY05-future*
- *Wheaton(Rplcmnt) FY 05-10*
- *Gilchrist CCD FY05-10*
- *NRCs Rehabilitation FY05-10*
 - Scotland*
 - Plum Gar*
 - Clara Barton*
 - Good Hope*
 - Wheaton*
- *CRCs Renovations FY05-10*
 - Upper County Renovation*
 - Potomac Renovation*
 - Leland Renovation*

(More detailed information is provided in later sections of the text)

Renovation/Modernization of Neighborhood Centers

Six existing neighborhood centers are considerably smaller than the recommended prototype. Some offer little opportunity for future expansion while others have this potential.

The Department recommends that an assessment of each of these centers be completed within the next three years to determine the feasibility and desirability of renovation/ expansion. *This review should include extensive community involvement.* Once completed, the Department of Recreation should recommend the relative priority of these projects in relation to the development of new centers. Separate Project Description Forms should be included in the CIP for each of the renovation projects.

After completing the above recommended assessment, several factors advise against the development and continued operation of Neighborhood Recreation Centers. As noted in the report, in most cases they are as costly to operate and maintain as the full sized Community Recreation Centers but are only capable of serving a small portion of the CRC's population base. It is reasonable that a single CRC could serve an area requiring several NRCs. The continued growth of programs requires larger spaces and more of them in each facility. The availability and cost of multiple sites in a single community also make the NRCs very impractical.

RECOMMENDATION -

Neighborhood Recreation Centers

Whenever possible the Department should opt to provide community recreation services from a Community Recreation Center. These are generally large regional facilities servicing communities of more than 30,000 population. Ideally, the CRC Program of Requirements should be followed in order to provide all facilities at single locations. Existing NRCs should continue to be evaluated regularly as their operation continues serving the smaller population base. It is not appropriate, at this time, to discontinue the operation of any of the existing NRCs.

In some circumstances, opportunities will present that involve existing facilities available for conversion such as unused schools. In other situations, land development requirements may provide sites or constructed amenities that could be utilized as community centers to varying degrees. While each of these opportunities should be fully explored on a case by case basis, the basic components of the POR should be considered as the standard.

In urban, heavily developed areas it may not be possible to acquire all of the property necessary to meet the complete outdoor POR criteria. The Department needs to be flexible in looking at these opportunities and to include in its evaluation other existing and proposed facilities suitable for public recreation. It may be necessary to look to creative space solutions such as roof-top play surfaces in order to meet the community's needs.

Fiscal Impact

~~The fiscal impact of the recommended long range plan is comprised of two elements: one time capital costs and on-going, annual operating costs. The capital project costs include planning, design, construction and furnishing the seven prototype facilities. This total capital cost is estimated at \$39.8 million. By comparison, the combined cost of all of these facilities is less than the cost of one high school or one jail.~~

~~Debt service will comprise about 75% of the total additional annual cost of new community centers. This cost is eliminated when the bond financing is ultimately paid off. Exclusive of debt service, the net annual operating cost of a new center (including all staffing, maintenance and utilities) is approximately \$295,000. This cost also is much less on average than operating other public facilities.~~

The fiscal impact of the recommended long range plan is comprised of two elements: one time capital costs and on-going, annual operating costs. The capital project costs include planning, design, construction and furnishing a Community Recreation Center and site. This total capital cost is currently averaging approximately ten million dollars. The expanded POR specifications add approximately two and one-half to three million dollars. Current annual rates of inflation for development activities are estimated to be in the 2-3% range.

Debt service will comprise about 75% of the total annual operating cost of new community centers. This cost is eliminated when the bond financing is ultimately paid off. Exclusive of debt service, the required net annual operating cost of a center (including all staffing, programs, supplies & materials, maintenance, utilities, etc) is approximately \$495,570.00. This is also affected by annual inflation at a rate of 2-3 %.

CONCLUSIONS

Purpose: To update the report, not prepare a new Plan.

Recommendations :

- **Modify basic centers to approximately 33,000 n.s.f. in order to better serve the user populations including incorporating seniors not previously included.**
- **Locate centers on minimum 10 acre, publicly owned, park-like parcels wherever possible.**
- **Explore opportunities for co-locating centers with other compatible public building functions.**
- **Focus on developing/maintaining community identity and ease of public access.**
- **Develop approximately 8 centers to meet current population requirements.**
- **Consider four additional projects in the Plan Update for the FY 05-10 Capital Improvement program:**
 - **New Program Of Requirements for future Centers**
 - **Wheaton/Rafferty/ Gilchrist Center (Wheaton replacement)**
 - **Neighborhood Recreation Center rehabilitation project**
 - **Community Recreation Center renovation project**
- **Consider full funding for capital development including the new POR, actual operating costs, and Planned Lifecycle Asset Replacement / building maintenance costs over the life of the structure, including inflation.**