

Community Leadership Interview Report

Limited Assessment of Community Support for the Development of a Mountain Home Community Recreation Center

Provided by Judy Mayne and Laura Foreman, Co - chairs
of the Program and Facilities Sub Committee
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Interviewers:

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Community Leadership Development Committee and
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Disclaimer:

The information contained in this report is one small part of an overall process to determine the need and support for a community recreational center. This is not intended to be a stand alone report. It will be combined with information from a broad based community survey, site visits, additional interviews and third party market and feasibility studies. All information will be processed and discussed by a volunteer community member committee representing diverse perspectives. Additional input is welcomed and can be provided by contacting the co-chairs of this committee or the listed YMCA staff members.



YMCA

We build strong kids,
strong families, strong communities.

Introduction

The citizens of Elmore County and the City of Mountain Home have long desired an increase in the amount of available recreational opportunities. Central to these desires has been the possibility of building or acquiring a facility from which these recreational opportunities would be delivered. The Western Elmore County Recreation District (WECRD) was formed to provide a funding mechanism and oversight of the development of programs and a possible facility. WERCD contracted with the Treasure Valley Family YMCA in September of 2009 to provide guidance and leadership to a community ownership development process. This process is intended to build broad based community ownership and will result in a recommendation that provides a sustainable, affordable option to meet the recreational needs of Western Elmore County. The process is inclusive, transparent and will engage a broad and diverse group of residents.

A Community Leadership Development Committee (CLDC) was formed to govern the process and ensure that the goals of inclusion, transparency and effectiveness are met. Alan Bernensolo and Mark Hiddleston were identified as top leaders within the community and were recruited to lead the CLDC. Members were identified and recruited and two of three subcommittee were formed – the Programs and Facilities subcommittee chaired by Judy Mayne and Laura Foreman and the Communications subcommittee chaired by Jack Walborn and Jeff Johnson. The third sub-committee, Budget and Finance will be formed later in the process.

Each of these sub-committees has a specific role to play, and no one report or group will solely determine the end recommendation. The information from these interviews will be used to help shape a community survey that will reach as many citizens as possible. Results from the survey and community leadership interviews will be reported back to the public at multiple town hall meetings. The public will have a chance to verify and challenge the information presented. Having validated the results at the town hall meeting, a recommended plan will be tested through a third party market survey. The results from the survey will be statistically valid. At this point the CLDC will be able to confidently recommend a course of action which may include developing programs and/or facilities to meet the identified community needs. The entirety of the process is meant to involve a broad section of the community and to be open and transparent to the general public. Participation by interested community members is always welcomed.

One of the first tasks of the Programs and Facilities Subcommittee was to identify and interview a cross section of other community leadership to identify unmet needs and gain awareness of successful programs that already exist. This input will help to identify potential partners and shape the final recommendation of the CLDC.

Twenty-eight people were identified and scheduled to be interviewed. Twenty-seven (29 individuals) of these interviews were successfully completed by members of the Programs and Facility Subcommittee and YMCA staff on January 19 and 22. Each interview was approximately 30 minutes in length. A copy of the questions used is included at the end of this report.

The following pages enumerate the objectives of the study, summary of responses to interview questions, observations and closing comments.

We would like to extend thanks to Laura Foreman and the staff of the Hampton Inn for their hospitality in providing the location and refreshments for the interviews. Their staff was very gracious and extremely helpful in accommodating so many interviews.

Objectives

The specific objectives to be achieved during this interview process were as follows:

1. To provide a solid base of information and feedback from a diverse group of community leaders that can augment the Programs and Facility Sub-Committee members insights as they make the important decisions regarding the types of programs and services that should be offered in the community.
2. To gauge the need for a community recreation center and relative importance in the opinion of selected community leaders.
3. To identify the gap between the programs and recreational opportunities that currently exist and those desired by the community.
4. To identify possible collaborations and partners in the community
5. To identify challenges and gather input regarding the best way to overcome these barriers.

Community Leaders Interviewed January 19 and 22, 2009

Russ Anderson	City Government
Dr. Scott Baldrige	Family Practice
Stephanie Bergh	Motocross/Equine/business
Tracy and John Bideganeta	Optimist/business Leaders
Deb Brito	Parks and Rec.
Nikki Cruser	Hacker Middle School Principal
Officer Dan Dack	Mountain Home Police
Dan Davis	Pastor
Ray DeMeyer	Business
Maria Gaytan (not available)	ESL/School District
Tony Haberland	BMX Community
Robin Hawks	Motor cross/Extreme Sports Community
Trish Hendrickson	Parks and Rec

Tamzy House	Tennis
Alain Isaac	City Government
Dave Kellerman	Archery Club
Linda Ketterling	Ag Business/Chamber
Tom Lindsay	Boy Scouts
Jose Madarieta	McKenna Charter School
Barry Peterson	Business/Equine
Mary Ann Peterson	4-H
Mike Pope/Todd Mc Curry	Equine Community
Ruth Ada Powell	Senior Center
Wendy Pugh	El Ada
Tara Reilly	Home School
Officer Natalie Rodgers	Mountain Home Police
Geoff Shroeder	City Government
Rich Uriquidi	Schools/City Government

Observations

Based on these interviews and our YMCA knowledge and experience, we are making the following observations. We ask you to consider the following:

Observations

1. There is a great deal of interest in increasing the services provided to the community. Those interviewed were eager to share ideas and opinions.
2. The community is growing impatient and clear communication of a vision and course of action that leads to results is crucial.
3. Selecting the right location and/or providing transportation is a primary consideration in serving the community.
4. There was strong support for a place where the community can gather for meetings, special events and performances. Flexibility of space will be key.
5. The YMCA enjoys a positive reputation among those interviewed.
6. There are some strong existing providers of services in the community. There was some concern expressed about competition. This project should take care to work with these providers to create mutually beneficial partnerships. The appropriate location will provide services in an area of the community where these resources are needed.

Summary of Responses to Interview Questions

Each question is stated in bold. A summary of the responses follows. This report is not intended to provide statistical information. When appropriate, a sampling of specific comments has been included. Duplicate comments were combined in order to make the report shorter and more readable.

1. Do you feel that your community needs a Community Recreation Center? Why or Why not?

An overwhelming majority of the leaders interviewed stated that a community center was a much needed addition to the community. Of the 27 people interviewed 16 were asked to rate the importance of a recreation center on a scale of 1 – 10, with 10 being the highest rating. 15 gave a rating of 7 or above, with one rating of zero. The average rating of all 16 was 8.2.

- Need has been established in previous need assessments.
- Need center for arts, choir, plays
- An Equestrian Center would have a lot of interest
- All my children's friends say there is nothing to do
- We do not need a pool!
- The dependence on schools places an unfair burden
- Care needs to be taken to not compete with private health clubs
- As a law enforcement officer, I feel a center is very important
- Current youth center is in a terrible location, Location of a recreation center will be very important.
- Pool is not important in the beginning and can be phased in later.
- The Youth Center does not come close to filling need

- Our community needs something to help us all become healthier.
- There is a big drug problem in our community. A community Center would reduce this.
- We don't need a center and the community will not support it. We have the base facilities and private providers.
- The problems with the school bond make the recreation center more important.
- There is nothing to do but the movie theater in the winter.
- There is no need – there are 4 gyms in town already.
- There is a big gap in wellness opportunities. There are not a lot of places for the common person to go. People don't participate in sports the way they used to.
- City takes on a lot of responsibility. Would be nice to “shift” this – would prefer no duplicity of services
- Need for a safe place for youth.
- Yes, but not in support of tax dollars needed to sustain the facility.
- Need for afterschool programs.
- Meet the needs of programs that the schools have to cut.

2. If yes, how important is it to you that it is a YMCA?

The answers to this question were appropriately mixed. Many of those interviewed do not have direct personal experiences with the Y. Those that have experience responded very positively to the possibility of further YMCA involvement in program and facility management. Regardless of the Y's involvement, the majority of responses indicated that an outside, experienced organization would be helpful if not required to make the effort successful.

- YMCA brings experience and management
- The Y knows what works
- I don't have a lot of direct YMCA experience
- The YMCA has structure and is recognizable
- I am very excited about the YMCA
- I am very unhappy about WERCD. I don't know a lot about the YMCA
- I have been a member in Boise in the past. I think it is very important that the Y be involved.
- It isn't a deal breaker for me if the Y is involved.
- Let's not recreate the wheel.
- We need the experience and support. I have been involved in Y's in other parts of the country. This can work!
- The Recreation District is a disaster. We need help from somewhere.
- The Y would add legitimacy and credibility. There is too much that has happened behind the community's back.
- It would be nice to have a Y, but I am worried about competition.
- The positive branding would be important to success.
- It is not that important WECRD is doing fine.
- Without the Y a center will not happen.

3. What kinds of programs are currently offered in your community for:

Mountain home is a very outdoor oriented community. The location makes many outdoor recreation opportunities available, especially during the summer months. Several respondents noted the lack of opportunities from October to April. Most of those interviewed recognized the base facilities as an asset to a portion of the community, but reported that access was either too difficult due to distance or security to satisfy much of the total community need. The Parks and Recreation department was noted multiple times for the outstanding job that is done with very limited resources. The community is very resourceful at stretching resources and using existing facilities.

Youth?

City recreation programs are strong
The city recreation programs are outstanding!
4H, optimist, youth baseball
Cultural dance groups – Latino, Basque
Youth sports
We need to get parks and recreation more resources.
Rodeo
Moto cross
Outdoor swimming pool – crowded and popular but I don't take my kids. It is a day care with water. Bullying and other negative activities take place.
Methods of movement dance studio
I love our outdoor swimming pool.
Youth have everything they need. It is the parent's responsibility.
Ski bus trips provide a great service to many youth and families.
Boise is an extension of Mountain Home. People can drive to get what they need.
The Youth Center is chaotic, too many troubled kids.
Soccer, Football, Cheerleading, programs
Parades
Boy and Girl Scouts
DeMolay
AFB Facilities
Activities through the schools

Families?

- Nothing for families to do together
- Access to the base is difficult or limited
- There are no parenting classes
- Churches?
- We have several good parks available to families
- Library
- Golf
- We offer a lot for a community of our size and need to work together.
- Outdoor Walking/Biking Path

Adults?

- Parks and recreation sports leagues
- I don't know of adult activities in our community
- Legacy Park
- Auto/Motorcycle Clubs
- Golf Leagues
- Senior Center

4. What programs would you like to have that are not now available?

There were a variety of programs mentioned here. A significant amount of emphasis was placed on youth development and programming, especially in programs that offer non competitive or non athletic options. There was a clear desire to have a place for community groups to meet and gather. The need for an auditorium was mentioned multiple times. This may be driven by the auditorium that was proposed in the 2nd phase of a school bond. The immediate need for an aquatic center was not clear, with several interviewees expressing interest in aquatic programs, but others concerned about the construction and operating cost of this facility. There was a clear desire to collaborate with existing programs, especially Parks and Rec and a need to centralize information about smaller programs and clubs in the area.

- Central meeting place
- Auditorium/drama programs
- Walking track
- Indoor activity
- Weight room/workout area
- Parenting classes
- Youth swim team
- We need programs focused on the non-team sports oriented youth.
- Need self help courses like financial management and personal development
- Centralized registration and communication for all programs
- I really worry about youth in the evenings, summer and on weekends.
- Multi use facility
- Indoor arena
- Urban war fare for teens – paintball, airsoft
- I have what I need and if others look, they do to. They can drive to Boise.
- Youth development programs, hangout with positive values and education
- Music lessons
- Tutoring and afterschool programming.
- Family oriented lifetime sports activities.
- I am not a big fan of parks and rec. We need something to supplement what they offer.
- Cooking classes would be a great offering.
- Indoor playground and places for kids and families.
- We do not need an indoor pool
- Arts and refinement activities are needed.
- We need programs for 5th and 6th graders after school.
- We need to keep kids busy and need more non athletic programs.
- Water aerobics
- Agricultural Programs
- Opportunities for seniors to interact/mentor different age groups
- More Progressive programs for when kids get older or more advanced in their skills

Specific Facility Requests:

A specific question regarding facility features was not asked, but we have included specific requests of features if they were mentioned in responses to other questions.

- Pool (8)
- Auditorium (6)
- Gyms (6)
- Walking track (6)
- Weights/cardio/workout (6)
- Gathering/Meeting space (4)
- Indoor playground (4)

- Teen Center (4)
- Racquetball/handball (3)
- Climbing wall (2)
- Indoor Tennis (2)
- Skating – roller and ice (2)
- Indoor Archery
- Equestrian Center
- Bowling alley
- Ping Pong/Pool Tables
- Gymnastics
- Multi-purpose indoor arena that meets various needs including horse, expo, baseball, soccer, tennis, meetings.

5. Are there some special groups in the community who need more help and attention?

Many leaders identified the need to serve the population that cannot easily gain access to the AFB facilities. There are existing programs that serve segments of the population (youth center, senior center), but the majority reported that these centers were unable to adequately meet the need. The location, size and lack of supervision were cited as inadequacies of the youth center. The Senior Center needs more indoor recreation space and the ability to reach “younger” seniors. Awareness and communication of those programs available was identified as something to improve.

- Seniors/Retired
- Seniors have good offerings through the senior center, do not duplicate them.
- The whole community needs more
- Middle schoolers age 10 – 14
- Teens
- There are several small clubs that would benefit from more meeting/activity space and centralized communication and registration.
- I think there are a lot of programs, but people don’t know about them
- The overweight population. Obesity and diabetes are growing epidemics.
- Need to make sure the programs and facilities are affordable. Our community has a lot of low income families.
- Families
- Youth
- We need to devote more resources to our vets.
- Current outdoor swimming pool is expensive to operate and crowded
- Need to reach the “non-sporting” community

6. What are the strengths of this community?

Those interviewed cited community pride, the small town nature, and caring and welcoming attitude of the citizens as a primary strength.

- Sense of community
- Small town living
- Strong Church groups – LDS and Nazarene
- Parks and recreation
- Marathon Cheese is very supportive.
- Police presence
- Volunteerism
- Mountain Home Arts Council
- Optimist Park

- There is a small group of people who are willing to get involved and donate.
- Support for our military
- We have incredible diversity. This is strength.
- Very little social stratification. Everyone is welcome.
- McKenna School
- Plenty of outdoor recreation opportunities close by

7. What challenges do you think a Community Center or YMCA in this community would face?

The community leaders we interviewed were very open and candid with the challenges that will be faced as the project moves forward. The major hurdle to be overcome is the feeling of animosity and distrust associated with perceptions regarding the WECD. Several cited that they believe the project is on the right path now and applauded the openness and inclusion of the interview process. If a facility is built, care needs to be taken to make sure that the facility that the community says it wants is affordable to construct and can be sustained. Programs need to be affordable to the median income and subsidy should be available so that everyone can participate.

Affordable rates

- Determining actual needs from wants
- Getting the older generation that has money to help fund the center would be a challenge.
- Ongoing cash flow/funding
- Strong sense of distrust of recreation district
- Serving transient population
- Perception that needs are being met through the MHAFB.
- Transportation
- Must be clean, well maintained and professional
- There is a negative attitude in this community that has been fueled by our experience with the Recreation District.
- Informing and educating the community about how the programs and center will help the community will be a challenge.
- Making sure whatever is built is used to the fullest potential.
- Changing the “It’s cool to be drunk and rowdy” to an “It’s cool to be positive and healthy” mentality.
- The elite running the town are out of touch with what the community needs.
- Parks and recreation is territorial and difficult to work with.
- The military personnel would use an “in-town’ recreation center.
- Just getting something built. The school bond failure is a negative.
- 4 fitness places would go out of business. They are supporters of the chamber.
- The negative public perception caused by WECD and the recall effort.
- Small population base
- Turnover of population base.
- Hesitancy to get involved in leadership.
- Retired population with fixed incomes.
- Lack of voice of mainstream – “getting them to speak up”.
- A facility that is phased would be a good idea. Start small and then grow as the community uses it more.

8. Do you have any other comments or opinions recreational opportunities you would like to share?

The process undertaken by the CLDC garnered a lot of support from those interviewed. However, the community is impatient and wants to see a clear vision and course of action that leads to tangible progress and service delivery. A partnership or collaborative relationship with Park and Recreation would be very beneficial. The location and/or the ability to transport those most needing the services are essential.

- Community wants to see progress and be kept informed
- Demonstrate that we have been heard and communicate a vision – soon.
- There needs to be a sense of urgency regarding this project
- Make sure and tie parks and recreation into this effort.
- Location will be very important
- We must be the most surveyed town in America – need progress. These interviews are a great way to engage the community.
- Need to communicate a vision and a realistic game plan to achieve it.
- The facility should be phased.
- The current outdoor pool is unsafe and unsupervised.
- The dollars collected by WERCD are just sitting there. Let's put them to use. How about a fitness trail at Legacy Park?
- How does this project fit in with Urban Renewal District plans?
- We don't need to entertain people. It is an individual responsibility, not a right that needs to be provided.
- If I had more time I would file a lawsuit against the WERCD.
- People will contribute time and money if they see the benefit.
- Phase the construction. Start small and build on success.
- We need to build a platform for successful living early in life. Teach them while they are young.
- Combine Park and Recreation, Youth Center and the new Recreation Center.
- The location of the land owned by WECRD is ideal.
- Needs to be a YMCA - Feels strongly that the WECRED needs to honor their word and proceed with the recommendations of the CLDC and the YMCA.
- Optimist Park would be good a great location for the Y or Recreation Center.

Closing Comments and Next Steps

We would like to express our thanks to the Programs and Facilities Subcommittee for your involvement, patience and cooperation in this developmental process. A broad-based community survey will be conducted by the Communications and Community Ownership Sub-committee and that information, along with this report, will be used by the Programs and Facilities Sub-committee to determine recommendations to be given to the CLDC.