



Community Recreation Center: Opportunities for partnership

By Leadership Steamboat

The 2006-07 class of Leadership Steamboat presents its community forum Dialogue Before Decision. This forum is designed to encourage engaged and informed decision makers by connecting our community to information and purposeful dialogue on issues vital to the future of the Valley.

With Steamboat's ample resources, creative minds, and talented people, there are many opportunities for partnerships to leverage impact. One issue that could be addressed through partnering is recreation needs. Such collaboration could address where to locate recreation facilities and how to provide identified program priorities.

An August 2006 Ballard King survey reported that 65% of Steamboat Spring's residents surveyed support the general concept of a Community Recreation Center. The survey offered one view of how amenities, facilities, or programs could be provided. Many residents envision one Recreation Center to meet all of the needs. Others feel that these functions can be provided in a decentralized manner and through the formation of partnerships.

One of the most visible partnerships could be with the Old Town Hot Springs. According to Pat Carney, Executive Director, there are many possibilities to divide the amenities wanted in the community. "The Old Town Hot Springs is willing to share the water at their facility", she said. Carney sees a need for indoor water and youth programs. She submits the Old Town Hot Springs as an entity with expertise in water and the City as an entity with expertise in youth programs. Carney believes there is an opportunity to work together with the City. The Old Town Hot Springs is going forward with plans to renovate the pool area and add two new water slides; however, this doesn't include the addition of an indoor pool.

Another possible partnership that has been discussed is one with the Steamboat Springs School District. The School District has land near Strawberry Park Elementary that some feel is a perfect place for a gymnasium for public use. The limitation on the School District is the school must use its funds for educational purposes. The City has funded changes to the architectural plans for the new Soda Creek Elementary School to provide storage space and possibly room for a staff desk for the City run Youth Programs.

Bette Vandahl, a local business owner and parent, would like to see more discussion on a possible City and School collaboration for a gym at Strawberry Park. Vandahl is also a member of the City Council-appointed Recreational Needs Exploratory Committee, which has met twice since inception. Vandahl has visited recreational centers in other communities and believes they are underutilized. She envisions a solution involving better use of the facilities we already have to meet community needs. For example, she

cites a proposal to build a room for birthday parties at the ice arena. As most birthday parties would be in the evening and on weekends, such a room could also be used by preschools on weekdays. She believes money would be more wisely spent on qualified people and programs, not on bricks and mortar.

Possible partnerships are plentiful and could include private business, the medical community, developers, landowners, and nonprofits. Greenplay LLC, the consulting firm hired by the City, has proposed the City adopt a formal partnership policy. Such a policy would be designed to create a public process and level playing field for those who would like to partner with the City. Each party would have to benefit for a partnership to be considered. It is expected that this policy will be part of the formal recommendations made to the City by Greenplay.

Representatives from some of these potential partners, along with the City's consultants, a member of the Recreational Needs Exploratory Committee, and others have been invited to sit on the panel for Dialogue Before Decision's forum on Wednesday, May 2, 2007 at the Steamboat Mountain Theater beginning at 7 p.m. Meaningful dialogue engages all voices in the conversation. Leadership Steamboat asks that everyone interested in community recreation needs and solutions attend to learn and ask questions. If you have questions that you believe should be covered by the forum, please email them to dialoguebeforedecision@hotmail.com.