



Assessing the Need: Community Recreation Input

By Leadership Steamboat Class, March 21, 2007

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. Dialogue Before Decision wants to hear from you. What do you want to know about the Community Recreation Center issue? Please submit your questions, comments, and ideas to dialoguebeforedecision@hotmail.com

This week, we are looking at our area's recreational needs.

Last month, Greenplay LLC and Barker Rinker Seacat Architecture, consultants hired by the City of Steamboat Springs, held a series of public meetings. They asked residents their thoughts about current recreation strengths and what recreation opportunities are missing from Steamboat Springs. Participants' responses varied widely but some common themes prevailed.

The overall sentiment is that Steamboat Springs is a very athletic and engaged community. This has led to indoor facilities being either overbooked or inadequate. While outdoor opportunities abound a variety of community members expressed frustration with what has been continually missing. When Chris Dropinski of Greenplay LLC was asked about the obvious gaps in Steamboat she replied "We are clearly hearing youth and teens are underserved or in inadequate facilities". Chuck Musgrave, with Barker Rinker Seacat Architecture, added that there are not enough areas for indoor recreation.

Jim Bronner, a Steamboat Springs High School coach noted, "There have been several occasions this past winter when a group of kids were kicking a soccer ball in one of the gyms before we used the gym for basketball practice. Unfortunately when it was time for practice we had to ask them to leave." Susan Petersen, of the City's Parks and Recreation Division agrees there is a lack of space for team sports practice and general recreation for children and adults. Susan commented that they must limit "all the adult sports leagues... due to limited gym space available through the schools. Generally speaking we turn away anywhere from 3-5 teams..."

The need for more youth recreation areas is echoed by Libby Foster, Executive Director of Partners in Routt County. "As we all know, this town is expensive, and to make ends meet, people work hard and sometimes have several jobs... As a result, many children and teens are left alone for long periods of time. Ideally, I imagine the recreation center offering affordable programming, and an opportunity for youth to hang out and participate in unorganized or organized sports and activities. I think it is in this community's best interest not to forget about these children and youth." Community input repeatedly regarded the condition and the space constraints of the City run "Igloo", used for Afterschool Action and Summer Day Camps as lacking.

With the demographics of Steamboat Springs changing, some see a need for a "multi-generational facility." Dace Kramer, program coordinator of the Northwest Colorado Visiting Nurse Association's Aging Well program, stated, "a healthy aging community

is a healthy community for all.” She believes that some of her “young-old clients” would benefit from classes and weight equipment designed for the growing and aging baby boomer population.

Shannon Lukens a local parent and member of Citizens for a Community Recreation Center believes that “Being a world class community, we deserve a first class recreation and fitness facility for all age groups. When we travel around the state for our kids’ sporting events, we see smaller communities that have much better facilities than what Steamboat Springs has. We need an indoor swimming facility for training, recreation, and rehabilitation. Ideally, families should be able to go to one location for an all inclusive recreational and/or training experience. Yes, we all would like to be able to do everything outdoors but the fact is we cannot always do that because of the climate in which we live. We just need more indoor space.”

In next week’s article Dialogue Before Decision will look at some other Colorado town’s recreations centers.