

Proposal for the Planning of the Operational Structure of the Symons Recreational Complex, Richland Center, WI

Executive Summary: This proposal analyzes the most effective operational structure for the Symons Recreational Complex, considering public vs. private ownership, the potential acquisition of adjacent facilities, and alternative management by entities like the Richland School District, the YMCA, or another entity. The goal is to identify a structure that ensures the complex's long-term sustainability and maximizes its benefit to the community.

Current Situation Analysis: The Symons Recreational Complex currently serves Richland Center and Richland County, offering various recreational opportunities. Understanding the current usage patterns, financial status, and community needs is crucial. A detailed assessment should be conducted, including:

- **Usage Data:** Analyze facility usage (e.g., number of visitors, program participation) to understand peak times, popular activities, and unmet demand.
- **Financial Analysis:** Review current revenue streams (e.g., memberships, rentals, concessions) and expenses (e.g., maintenance, staffing, utilities). Identify areas for cost optimization and revenue generation.
- **Community Survey:** Gather feedback from residents regarding their satisfaction with the complex, desired improvements, and willingness to support different operational models.
- **Competitive Analysis:** Evaluate other recreational facilities in the region to understand their offerings, pricing, and operational strategies.

Ownership and Operational Models:

1. Continued Public Ownership (City/County):

- **Advantages:** Maintains community control, potential for tax support, aligns with public service mission.
- **Disadvantages:** Potential for bureaucratic inefficiencies, limited flexibility in responding to market changes, funding can be subject to political cycles.

2. Richland School District Operation:

- **Advantages:** Potential synergies with school programs, access to student volunteers, shared resources (e.g., maintenance staff).
- **Disadvantages:** Potential conflicts with school schedules, may not be equipped to manage diverse recreational programs, funding could compete with educational priorities.

3. YMCA Operation:

- Advantages: Expertise in recreational facility management, established membership base, access to national resources and best practices, potential for fundraising and grant opportunities.
- Disadvantages: May prioritize membership revenue over community access, potential for conflicts with existing local recreation programs.

4. Public-Private Partnership:

- Advantages: Combines public oversight with private sector expertise, potential for increased efficiency and innovation, access to private funding.
- Disadvantages: Requires careful negotiation and contract management, potential for profit-driven decisions to conflict with community needs.

Acquisition of Adjacent Facilities: Acquiring the gymnasium and tennis courts from the former UW-Richland campus presents both opportunities and challenges.

- Advantages: Expands the complex's offerings, potential to attract new users, economies of scale in operations.
- Disadvantages: Requires capital investment, potential for increased operating costs, careful assessment of the condition and suitability of the facilities.

Recommendation: Based on preliminary analysis, a public-private partnership or YMCA operation appears to offer the most promising avenues for long-term success. Both models provide access to expertise in recreational facility management and offer greater flexibility than solely public operation.

- Public-Private Partnership: This option allows the City and County to retain some control while leveraging the efficiency and innovation of a private operator. A detailed RFP (Request for Proposal) process would be essential to select the best partner.
- YMCA Operation: Partnering with the YMCA could bring significant benefits in terms of management expertise, program development, and access to resources. A thorough due diligence process would be necessary to ensure alignment with community needs and to negotiate a fair agreement.

Key Factors for Long-Term Success:

- Financial Sustainability: Develop a diversified revenue model that includes memberships, program fees, rentals, sponsorships, and grants. Control operating costs through energy efficiency measures, streamlined staffing, and preventative maintenance.
- Community Engagement: Actively solicit community input and involve residents in decision-making. Offer programs that meet the needs of diverse populations.
- Marketing and Promotion: Develop a comprehensive marketing strategy to raise awareness of the complex and its programs.
- Facility Maintenance and Upgrades: Invest in regular maintenance and upgrades to ensure the facility remains attractive and functional.



City of Richland Center
450 S. Main Street
Richland Center, WI 53581
608-647-3466

- Professional Management: Employ qualified and experienced staff to manage the complex effectively.

Next Steps:

- Detailed Assessment: Conduct the comprehensive assessment outlined in the Current Situation Analysis.
- Feasibility Study: Evaluate the financial and operational feasibility of the preferred operational models.
- Stakeholder Engagement: Engage with community members, elected officials, and potential partners to gather feedback and build consensus.
- RFP Development (if applicable): If a public-private partnership is pursued, develop a detailed RFP to solicit proposals from qualified operators.
- Negotiation and Implementation: Negotiate a contract with the selected partner and develop an implementation plan.

Conclusion: The Symons Recreational Complex is a valuable community asset. By carefully considering the various operational models and engaging with stakeholders, Richland Center and Richland County can ensure the complex's long-term sustainability and maximize its benefit to the community. A thorough assessment and feasibility study are crucial next steps in this process.