



Executive Summary

Orleans Community Center Feasibility Study

October, 2022



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Overview

- Our charge:
 - Understand current and future programming needs and requirements for a community center that will serve all ages, interests, and abilities
- Fact finding mission as Orleans dips its toes in the water:
 - What does Orleans have?
 - What does Orleans want?
 - What could a community center be?
 - Recommendations for moving forward
- This summary represents the observations and recommendations of the Community Center Feasibility Task Force. [For further study details and exciting architectural concepts, refer to the Abacus Architects + Planners report](#)

Overview

- Task Force made up of representatives from key community areas:
 - Council on Aging Committee
 - Planning Board
 - Recreation Advisory Committee
 - Cultural District Committee
 - Parents of OES and NRMS students
 - Select Board
 - At-Large
 - Keith Campbell
 - Alice Thomason Van Oot
 - Tracy Murphy
 - Bonny Campbell-Runyon
 - Tracy Murphy, Steve Kaser
 - Andrea Shaw Reed
 - Jamie Balliett (Library), Fritz Luft (Chair)
- Worked with Abacus Architects + Planners from Boston

What We've Done

- Completed questionnaires followed by interviews and facility tours with key program providers:
 - COA, Library, OES + after school program, NRMS, Old Fire House, Recreation Dept.
- Administered Resident Survey
 - 419 respondents; strong representation
- Developed general conceptual building designs
 - Small, medium and large; with and without COA
 - Also, a hypothetical test fit design for a site familiar to Orleans residents
- Held Community Outreach Workshop
 - 39 community members plus the Task Force = **47 total**
 - Ages well distributed relative to town demographics
 - A presentation was delivered, followed by active group exercises

What We've Learned – Survey

- Solid Community Center support across age groups

Age Range	Likelihood of Supporting a Community Center - By Age			Total Positive	Respondants	
	Very Likely	Likely	Somewhat Likely		Answered	Skipped*
25-45	74%	8%	8%	89%	93	44
46-64	71%	11%	7%	89%	116	54
65+	52%	16%	10%	78%	158	31

* Note that the number of respondents who skipped the question was consistent with other survey questions that requested opinions.

- Many interests revealed but a few stand out
 - **GYM is #1** → →
 - Multi-purpose and fitness rooms
 - Art space

Age Range	Interest in Gym	Respondants	
	Yes	Answered	Skipped
25-45	74%	93	44
46-64	66%	116	54
65+ *	34%	158	31
Overall	53%	305	144

* Interestingly, among 65+, a "great room" got 46% interest, the highest of any choice. **Gyms serve as great rooms!**

- Peripheral location, walkable to center strongly preferred

RANKING	High to Low preference			TOTAL
	1	2	3	
Right in the center of town - near other activities although there might be less parking and more traffic	24.60% 62	31.75% 80	43.65% 110	252
On the periphery of the Town Center - still walkable from other activities but where there might be more parking and open space	54.58% 143	40.46% 106	4.96% 13	262
Away from the Town Center where there is likely to be less traffic, more parking and open space	24.52% 64	24.52% 64	50.96% 133	261

What We've Learned – Community Workshop

- Overall findings were consistent with survey results although interest in gym was more muted.
- Multi-generational facility is greatly favored
 - 61% for multi-generational facility
 - 22% for multi-generational facility with special attention to youth
- Strong sentiment for a facility that creates a sense of community

What We've Learned – Town Facilities/Programs

- The COA is a pleasant, functional space that, due to deed restrictions, can only be used for senior activities
 - Some shortcomings but overall, serves the needs
 - There is long term concern over sea level rise but timing and severity not clear
- The Library is planning a building replacement that includes addition of several meeting rooms of varying functions and sizes
 - Includes dedicated 'tween and teen study areas
- The Old Fire House hosts a variety of community activities and classes with one small multi-purpose room, a warming kitchen, and a 'tween hangout
- The DPW has a large, attractive space – presents an opportunity during off-hours

What We've Learned – Town Facilities/Programs

- The Nauset Regional Middle School has many excellent rooms suitable for evening and weekend classes, club meetings, and social events.
 - Art rooms, teaching kitchen, wood shop, cafeteria w/adjacent courtyard, 550+ seat auditorium.
 - Also a gym although access is limited due to heavy and irregular scheduling of evenings and Saturdays
 - A request form with price sheet is available on the Nauset Schools home page
 - There is history of community access that was interrupted by Covid-19. Can be restarted.
- Recreation Dept.
 - Limited and narrowly focused programming
 - Sports equipment storage is inconvenient and remote from related programs (athletic facilities)
 - Has considerable operational challenges that need to be addressed.
 - A town Recreation Department Organizational study is underway

What We've Learned – Misc.

- Orleans is lacking coordinated activity planning, scheduling, and promotion of programs and events.
- Key data and reports from this study are posted on the town website.

PROJECT FINDINGS AND SUMMARY

Task Force Misc. Information

Current Orleans Facility and Programming Questionnaire

Community Center Survey

Newspaper Articles

Community Workshop

Abacus Architects Introductory Documents

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Community Center Feasibility Task Force

Members

Name	Title
Jamie Balliett	Member At Large
Fritz Luft	Member At Large
Keith Campbell	Council On Aging Representative
Bonny Campbell-Runyon	Cultural District Committee Representative
Tracy Murphy	OES Parent Representative
Steve Kaser	NRMS Parent Representative
Andrea Shaw Reed	Select Board Representative
Alice Thomason Van Oot	Planning Board Representative

Meeting

- As Needed-Please Check Town Calendar
- Town Hall

Agendas & Minutes

Agendas are available prior to the meetings. Minutes are available following approval.

Recent Meeting Videos

Committee Charge

Conclusions

- There is broad interest in building a community center in Orleans
- This study is a good first step; developing background information, engaging the community and identifying steps to move this effort forward.
- There are significant challenges to moving forward with planning a community center building at this time:
 - High priority town projects competing for funds
 - Other local activities are taking place that may impact community center sizing and design details
 - Library building replacement which will add meeting rooms
 - Old Fire House renovation
 - Uncertainty regarding long term COA flooding risk
 - Recreation and community center efforts in Eastham and Brewster
 - Orleans Recreation Dept Organizational assessment
 - **A suitable building site is currently not available**
 - Building design concepts from this study reflect Orleans' needs and wants but are generic in execution

Conclusions

- While not fulfilling all long-term benefits of having a multi-generational community center, Orleans has public facilities suitable for use on an interim basis to expand recreational and cultural programs.
- **BOTTOM LINE:** This study presents a thorough overview of the Orleans recreational landscape, facilities, and community priorities. It provides recommendations that lay the foundation for future community center work.

General Recommendations

- In future work, think about community activities as being split between two facilities:
 - Library for intellectual and social “sitting” activities
 - Community Center for physical and social “standing” activities (including “messy art”)

This means that Community Center design decisions will assume that rooms for lectures, books clubs, mentoring, tutoring, counselling . . . etc. will be part of the Library building and not considered in Community Center planning.
- Lay foundation for a future Community Center by expanding recreational and cultural programs in Orleans using existing facilities
 - Would build management and programming infrastructure for eventual Community Center
 - Would enhance the history of program usage to guide Community Center planning and design

General Recommendations

- Eventual Community Center design work should consider provisions for adding a COA in the future
 - Long term economic benefit in sharing of spaces, staff and operating expenses
 - Daily hours of COA usage mesh well with other user groups, allowing high utilization rates
 - Long-term viability of the current COA due to flooding from sea level rise should be considered and further studied
 - Would be highly wasteful to later build a separate new COA with redundant facilities and operating expenses
 - A multi-generational facility was strongly favored in community outreach workshop
 - COA would facilitate inter-generational activities including tutoring and mentoring
 - Community Center designs should allow phased construction with COA section to be built later; size any land purchase accordingly

Recommendations - Near Term Actions

- Hire a Director of Community Life
 - A full-time, long-term position
 - Demonstrate strong administrative, organizational, and communication skills
 - Arrange access to appropriate building spaces for all programs (outside of COA)
 - Integrate programs across all program providers, serving all demographic groups
 - Develop and maintain a master schedule of activities in Orleans; public and quasi-public non-profit
 - Expand and maintain community life social media presence
 - Obtain and tabulate program attendance to build a history which will guide definition and planning of a community center
 - As eventual community center Director, work for community center realization and lead development efforts
- Hire a full-time Recreation Dept. Director
 - Demonstrate strong administrative, organizational, and communication
 - Expand Recreation Dept. responsibilities to include cultural & art programs
 - Build recreational, cultural, and art programs using existing Orleans facilities and working closely with the Director of Community Life on program mix
 - Take a hands-on approach to running programs
 - Be responsive to community inputs including those from the Recreation Advisory Committee

Recommendations – Near Term Actions

- Streamline procedures for after-hours access to OES, NRMS, DPW, and Library meeting spaces
 - For both town programs and private events - typical of community centers
 - Create a [budget](#) for the required custodial and security staffing
 - Advertise space availability to community members
- Install Recreation Dept. storage facilities adjacent to OES and NRMS.
- Increase Recreation Dept. staffing to two full time personnel including the Director described above.
 - Consistent with the majority of neighboring towns
- Ask Select Board to direct the Recreation Department Organizational study team to consider this task force's findings and recommendations
- Make Town acquisition of a suitable building site a high priority
 - Sized to allow for an integrated multi-generational facility with COA; target 2-1/2 to 4 acres.