

Bismarck Parks and Recreation District

Frequently Asked Questions about a proposed Indoor Community Recreation Complex in Bismarck

What would be in this Bismarck Parks and Recreation District (BPRD) facility?

At this time, the amenities in this facility would include the following:

- Six tennis courts (with room for future expansion)
- Five pickleball courts (with room for future expansion)
- Four racquetball courts
- An indoor turf field for soccer, lacrosse, baseball, football, softball, and open play space for family activities.
- Gymnastics space
- An ice arena (with room for future expansion) with seating for 2,500. The surface could also be used for non-ice activities like roller skating, roller hockey and community events and activities.
- Two gymnasiums (with room for future expansion) for basketball, volleyball or family activities.
- A walking track with both level surfaces and an “adventure track” with changing elevations.
- Group fitness space; cardio and weights space.
- Community rooms for meetings, group gatherings, educational opportunities, crafts, cards and conversation
- An indoor playground
- A climbing wall
- Concessions/coffee shop

How did you come up with these particular facility features?

- A Facilities Master Plan was launched in January 2019 and studied four facilities; VFW Sports Center, Wachter Aquatic Complex, BSC Aquatic & Wellness Center and the Capital Racquet & Fitness Center. The study, conducted by a nationally recognized consultant and local architectural firm, looked at the facilities, current community offerings, recreation trends and gaps and community demographics. Information was gathered through public input sessions, meetings with stakeholders, user groups and staff. A statistically valid survey and an open invitation survey were conducted.
- Capital Racquet & Fitness Center was identified as the highest need of the four facilities studied due to facility infrastructure, accessibility and program capacities. Expansion at that facility's current site are not possible due to the facility's age and land locked location. This proposed recreation complex would replace the program elements of Capital Racquet & Fitness Center as well as provide for the other needs that were identified in the community survey.

What about the other facilities you studied; VFW Sports Center, Wachter Aquatic Complex and the BSC Aquatic & Wellness Center?

- BPRD is using the community survey as a guide to address the most pressing need, which is to replace the 1979 Capital

Racquet & Fitness Center. There are not any aquatics features in this new complex. BPRD will continue to address other facility needs at the VFW Sports Center, Wachter Aquatic Complex and the BSC Aquatic & Wellness Center through the annual budgeting and planning process. The needs of the other facilities were clearly identified and heard. The survey said BPRD should plan for future growth, understand community interests AND take care of existing facilities.

What else did you learn from the Facilities Master Plan?

- One of the recommendations of the Facilities Master Plan was to conduct a Feasibility Study for a new indoor community recreation complex that would include the facility features that the public desires, as well as facility costs, potential locations and options on how to pay for a facility like this. That process was started in August of 2019. Public input sessions were held in October and November to present conceptual plans, take additional public comment, make adjustments based on input and present a final Feasibility Study report to the Board of Park Commissioners in December 2019.

Where do you plan on building this facility?

- The community input that was gathered indicated a preference for a North/Northeast Bismarck location. Four possible sites include the areas near Sunrise Center, Silver Ranch, Missouri Valley Complex and Section 9. A site with a minimum of 25 acres will be needed for a facility of this size. A final site location decision has not been made at this time.

Who is going to be able to use this indoor recreation complex?

- Anyone and everyone would be able to use this complex, whether they live in Bismarck-Mandan or in the surrounding area of Burleigh County, or are visiting from out of town. All ages and abilities would be welcome. There would be membership rates put into place as well as daily use fees. BPRD would strive to make the facility affordable and accessible to all.

Besides all the features, what else did BPRD take into consideration with this new facility?

The community feedback and surveys clearly say that BPRD should focus on the following:

- Provide family-oriented activities
- Provide affordable and accessible activities and facilities to all
- Provide a high level of safety and security
- These statements are providing the guiding principles for the development of an indoor recreation complex. These core concepts are tied closely to BPRD's Vision: Be the leader and premier provider of public parks, programs, facilities and leisure services. The BPRD Mission: Work with the community to provide residents and visitors the highest quality park, program, facility and event experience. The Core Purpose of BPRD: Provide affordable, accessible, and sustainable public park and recreation services.

Don't we have enough facilities in Bismarck? There are already ice rinks and indoor tennis courts and other private fitness facilities.

- Bismarck is very fortunate to have many diverse recreational facilities. BPRD facilities are close to or at capacity with our current population. As we know, Bismarck is growing. More and more individuals and families want to move here and want to have quality of life amenities and offerings and to explore a variety of recreational experiences. Recreational facilities impact the quality of life in Bismarck and assist in workforce attraction and retention. Recreation facilities also have an economic impact and provide another reason for visitors to come to Bismarck as a destination for shopping, eating and recreating.

Why can't you remodel big spaces that are available, like the former Herberger's or Sears or the K-Mart building?

- We understand there are some larger spaces that are available in Bismarck, but none of them meet the total needs of what was identified in the community survey and public feedback sessions; to have a large, multi-purpose and multi-use facility that can serve many uses and many audiences. The available retail spaces aren't able to do that.

The big question – How much will this cost?

- This is always a difficult question. Right now these costs are estimates, but are estimates based on the best calculations and current costs available. A budget range of low, mid and high costs are \$108 million to \$114 million and the high of \$120 million. This includes construction, permits, bonds, insurance, construction testing, contingencies, the purchase of the land, escalation factors, furnishing the facility and professional fees. The target is \$108 million.

Why not make the facility smaller so it costs less?

- This has been considered, but the feedback from the public input sessions actually asked for MORE in this facility; eight tennis courts, not six; two sheets of ice, not one; four gyms, not two. It would be nice to meet all those expectations and community desires, but there is an associated cost, so this facility size was a "meet in the middle" concept, taking into consideration Bismarck's growing population and growing enrollment in Bismarck public and private schools. This facility would meet the needs of Bismarck residents and visitors and is also designed for expansion and growth in the future.

What are some options on how to pay for this?

- That very important question was asked in the Facilities Master Plan. Some of the options on how to pay for a large recreation complex include increasing property tax for Bismarck residents, increase user fees, sell bonds, implement a city sales tax, apply for grants and seek out public/private partnerships. The survey results favored public/private partnerships, which means using a combination of private fundraising and public funds, like a sales tax.
- This \$108 million project cannot be funded just through traditional methods, like budgeting and fundraising. BPRD has a strong track record of private fundraising for facility upgrades and improvements (like the Bismarck Municipal Ballpark, the Capital Ice Complex and eight additional softball fields at Cottonwood Park), but again, this large of a facility, in order to be built in a timely and efficient manner, requires fundraising and an additional public funding source, like a sales tax.

So, let's say this facility gets built using a combination of donations and sales tax. Will this facility be able to pay for itself?

- BPRD staff looked at the costs to operate current facilities, including staff and all operational costs. Total operating costs for the new indoor recreation complex are estimated to be about \$3.1 million. These operating costs are planned to be funded at 85% from generated revenue (rental fees, membership fees, etc.) and 15% from the existing park district levy. Please note that these revenue projections and costs are based on the current fee structure and prices for 2020.

How much of sales tax are you talking about? How much can you raise privately?

- A half-cent sales tax is being discussed. The half-cent would sunset (that is stop) when the bonds to finance up to \$108 million in costs to construct an indoor community recreation complex are paid in full.
- In addition, a capital campaign committee will work to raise a minimum of 5-10% of the project cost.

What kind of impact does a half cent have on a household in Bismarck?

- According to the North Dakota Tax Department's 2018 State and Local Taxes report, a family of three earning \$50,000 would expect to pay \$66 more per year (\$5.50 per month) in sales tax with a 1/2 cent increase.

Where does Bismarck rank right now in its sales tax percentage, in compared with say, Fargo, Grand Forks, Minot and Mandan?

- Currently, the breakdown looks like this: Bismarck: 7%; Fargo: 7.5%; Grand Forks: 7.25%; Minot: 7.5% and Mandan: 7.25%

Who will benefit from this proposed indoor recreation complex?

- Everyone. The features, programs, spaces and activities being discussed could be used by the senior population, youth, teens, toddlers – people of all ages. This complex would create all kinds of new recreational programming space and social spaces, for people to meet, gather, move, learn and grow. This complex can impact the quality of life in Bismarck regardless of age or ability. It could offer a place to be healthy, meet friends, try a new activity, spend time with other family members, have fun or learn something new.

Vision

Be the leader and premier provider of public parks, programs, facilities and leisure services

Mission

Work with the community to provide residents and visitors the highest quality park, program, facility and event experience.

Core Purpose

Provide affordable, accessible, and sustainable public park and recreation services.

Core Values

Accountability
Diversity
Collaboration
Integrity
Community
Professionalism

Questions?

For more information, contact bisparks@bisparcs.org.



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