

1. Executive Summary

Introduction

The Harry Sprinker Recreation Center (SRC) is a major facility within the Pierce County regional park system. The SRC provides facilities for active recreation both indoors and outside. The 105-acre site where SRC is located also contains the Breseman Forest, a passive recreation area. Together, these areas constitute the study area for this Master Site Plan. The SRC and associated outdoor areas are immediately adjacent to two other major facilities in the County's regional park system, Spanaway Park and Lake Spanaway Golf Course.

The County's park system is operated in accordance with the *Comprehensive Park and Recreation Plan* (Parks Plan). The Parks Plan provides general direction and guidance for both facilities and programs. The Parks Plan does not contain site specific plans for each of the County's properties. These site-specific plans have been prepared, modified and implemented as needed over the decades. The original 1975 site plan for SRC has continued to govern development of the site with only a few modifications, such as Spire Rock and the imminent reconfiguration of the outdoor track area.

In response to a variety of proposals, concepts and ideas regarding future activities involving the SRC and adjacent grounds over the last few years, the County Executive and County Council decided to initiate a formal process to develop an updated Master Site Plan for the Sprinker Recreation Center. This report constitutes the first portion of the process, with an emphasis on presenting both an analysis of current conditions and a range of viable options to consider before proceeding into the second portion of the Master Site Plan.



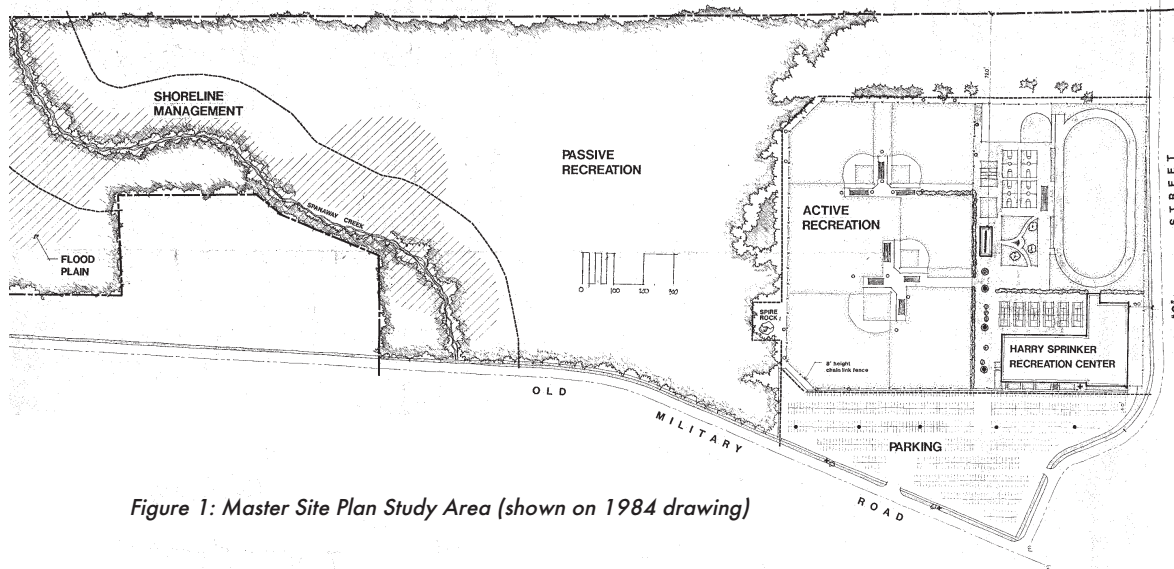


Figure 1: Master Site Plan Study Area (shown on 1984 drawing)

COUNTY COUNCIL RESOLUTION

The Sprinker Recreation Center Master Site Plan Phase I was prepared at the request of the Pierce County Council in Resolution R99-90S (See Appendix A for the full resolution), stating:

A RESOLUTION OF THE PIERCE COUNTY COUNCIL REQUESTING THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION SERVICES DEVELOP A MASTER SITE PLAN FOR THE SPRINKER RECREATION CENTER; A DRAFT REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP) TO SEEK ALTERNATIVES, TO INCLUDE PRIVATE VENDORS; A RECOMMENDED PROCESS FOR PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ON THE REVIEW OF THE VENDOR PROPOSALS; AND SETTING A DATE FOR REPORTING TO THE COUNCIL.

Citing the importance of SRC as an asset to the citizens of Pierce County, Resolution R99-90S further states that:

- The County parks and recreation facilities should be as financially self-supporting as possible;
- All citizens should have access to County supported recreational facilities and programs;
- The current Center operations require an annual subsidy of approximately \$630,000 from the County General Fund;

- The County Council wishes to explore way of improving self support and reducing the General Fund subsidies associated with the Center’s operation by examining alternatives for future management and utilization of SRC; and
- A Master Site Plan for the Center has not been done and would provide the County and citizens with a useful framework within which to design the future of the Center
- The Master Site Plan should include broad public input

The goals of the Master Site Plan for the SRC were established in the resolution:

1. Meeting the long-term recreational interests of the citizens of the County, including changing needs over time
2. Improving the financial self support for the Center and reducing the reliance on the General Fund.

Resolution R99-90S further indicates that upon completion of the Master Site Plan, the Council may wish to assess the feasibility of continued Department operation of programs at the Center in relation to alternatives involving private vendors.

To that end, the Plan was to describe options and/or proposals for the preferred approach(es) to future options at the Center. The Pierce County Executive would forward and recommend an action strategy to the Council.

In addition, the resolution called for inclusion of a Draft RFP to include private contractors to manage recreational programs at the Center in the event this option was selected. See Appendix B for Draft RFP material.

PLANNING PROCESS

As directed by Pierce County Council, the Department undertook the preparation of the SRC Master Site Plan in the last half of 1999. To prepare the Master Site Plan, analyses of historic and existing conditions were conducted, including ownership, prior planning activities, physical conditions (architectural, structural, mechanical, plumbing, etc.), recreation use and needs, and benefit cost. At the same time, the public involvement and input process was initiated including structured stakeholder interviews, public presentations (County and other organizations), and an Open House. Formal and informal public input has been summarized and presented in this report. See Appendix F for summary information.

Ownership Analysis

Pierce County acquired the site that now contains both the Sprinker Recreation Center and the Breseman Forest in March 1959. The acquisition of the site was part of a multi-property conveyance from the Metropolitan Park District of Tacoma to Pierce County. This complicated conveyance included properties that have been developed over the intervening years into significant park and recreation facilities including Lake Spanaway Golf Course, Spanaway Park, American Lake South (Harry Todd Park), and Sprinker Recreation Center.

The conveyance contains a number of specific deed restrictions over the use of the various properties. The deed specifies that all of these covenants "shall run with the land". The various properties "shall be used for park and recreation purposes only". In addition, the deed restrictions prohibit Pierce County from selling or conveying most of properties, including much of the Sprinker Recreation Center and Breseman Forest site. Pierce County may sell other portions of the property "on the condition that proceeds of said sale shall be applied to and used exclusively for the development and maintenance.....of the Spanaway Park property, over and above the yearly amount of money budgeted by the County of Pierce for the maintenance of said recreation area".

In July 1982, Pierce County Fire Protection District No. 7 acquired .60 acres in the southwest corner of the Sprinker Recreation Center site "for the purpose of constructing a satellite fire station". The agreement noted that "funding is currently not available for the construction of the station but it is the intention of the District to proceed with the project at a future date". Until the District proceeds with construction of the fire station, the agreement provides the County with continued use of the site for vehicle parking for the Sprinker Recreation Center. Given the time that has transpired, and the current standards for siting new fire protection facilities, the County should initiate discussions with the District about the status of the satellite fire station and if possible, the potential reacquisition of this small parcel.

Existing Utilization

The Harry Sprinker Recreation Center is located on C Street and Old Military Road in the Parkland area of unincorporated Pierce County. The Center's site has an irregular rectangular shape, which encompasses approximately 105 acres of active

and passive recreation, shoreline management and flood plain areas. Combined street frontage is approximately 4200 feet.

The active recreation area consists of approximately 86,000 square feet of building area (the Recreation Center and concession stand) and 35 acres of outdoor activities. The outdoor active recreation area includes:

- 6 Outdoor tennis courts
- 4 Outdoor pickleball courts
- Track and field area (undergoing reconfiguration in 2000)
- Batting cages
- Horseshoe pits
- 4 Outdoor basketball courts
- Play area
- 970 space parking lot
- Spire Rock (climbing rocks)
- Walking Trails
- Multipurpose fields:
 - 8 for softball/baseball
 - 4 for football/soccer

Facilities Analysis

The facilities analysis focused on building condition and systems, including structural evaluation, mechanical and electrical systems analysis, code analysis, hazardous materials evaluation, and civil engineering evaluation of the outdoor recreation facilities.

Facilities Use/Recreation Needs Analysis

The Facilities Use/Recreation Needs Analysis identified and analyzed use trends of SRC facilities since the facility was built in 1976 .

Benefit Cost Analysis

The benefit cost analysis evaluated the existing facility operations, analyzed similar facilities, and evaluated alternative operational approaches. The recreation use/needs analysis analyzed user trends of the various facilities at SRC and identified recreational needs in the County that could potentially be located at SRC.

Public Involvement Process

The formal public involvement process for this portion of the Master Site Plan study included 19 structured stakeholder interview sessions involving more than fifty (50) individuals, and a public Open House, conducted on January 20, 2000 involving more than 160 individuals. The informal process included meetings with groups and organizations like the Chambers of Commerce and the Teen Advisory Committee, numerous phone calls, letters and e-mails. A sizable (and growing) mailing list has been prepared in conjunction with this process, and will be used throughout the planning and implementation process.

Summary of Findings

Site Ownership

- Pierce County should continue the ownership and use of the Sprinker Recreation Center and Breseman Forest site for parks and recreation purposes in accordance with the deed restrictions and should initiate discussions with Fire Protection District No. 7 about the status of the satellite fire station and the potential reacquisition of the District's .60 acre parcel.

Building and Site Facilities Evaluation

- SRC is in relatively good condition given its age and the degree of maintenance that has occurred in the last 3 decades (fields since 1969, Center since 1976).
- Currently the facility is considered in compliance with building codes, however, upgrades to meet current code standards will need to be made as renovations are undertaken.
- Immediate improvements should be made for life safety and public accessibility reasons (See Chapter 4, Action Plan)
- The remainder of the recommended improvements in the near and long term should be accomplished in a phased manner.

Facilities Use/Recreation Needs Analysis

- The total volume of use increased by 498% between 1976 and 1998, which is approximately 2.9 times faster than the increase in County population.
- Baseball and softball activities increased the most in recent years. Tennis also increased, but to a lesser degree. Ice arena activities remained relatively constant which reflects that the arena is scheduled to capacity. The ice arena is most heavily used during prime evening and weekend times. Other outdoor activities declined significantly.
- It should be determined whether rink facilities can be expanded, possibly by adding a second sheet to accommodate increased user volumes and activities.
- In 1998, the skating rink accounted for 38% of all use, baseball and softball fields accounted for 27% of all use, and the tennis courts accounted for 16% of all use. The rink was closed for some weeks during 1998 to allow renovations, which may have resulted in lower rates than usual. Classrooms, meeting rooms, the nursery, and arts and crafts rooms accounted for 10% of all use, with track and field (3%), handball/racquetball courts (2%), soccer/football fields (2%), and all other facilities accounted for the remaining 9% of all use.
- It should be determined whether baseball/softball facilities can be expanded.
- It should be determined whether the indoor tennis demand potential can be accommodated by enclosing/covering the existing outdoor courts.
- The Center's classrooms, meeting rooms, arts and crafts, child care facility, and other community spaces provide for a significant volume of use. However, the volume of use seems to have peaked in 1996, and has declined slightly since. These spaces are not unique to SRC.
- The football, track, and soccer fields are significantly underutilized. Unlike the baseball/softball field complex, these fields were not developed to competition quality, nor of a sufficient number to support tournaments, competitions, or even large volume use. Nor are the fields unique to the Center or County. This type of facility may be better provided at another County, school, or even a joint venture project site. The track/field area could be redeveloped for other higher volume Center activities.
- The handball/racquetball courts are somewhat used, even though they are provided without other ancillary physical conditioning and indoor gymnasium activities. However, they represent a relatively small percent of user volume activity compared to the other functions at the Center. Like the football, track,

and soccer fields they are not a unique function and could be better provided elsewhere in association with a full conditioning or gymnasium complex.

- Spire Rock, pickleball and basketball courts, and the grounds in general provide suitable supporting space to the other events being conducted at the site and Center. They are important park elements even though they do not generate significant (or measurable) volumes of use. They may be relocated or reconfigured, however, to accommodate the other higher volume activities.
- Indoor soccer represents another unique function that could be added to the Center, if physically and financially feasible. Like the ice arena and indoor tennis facility public dedicated/indoor soccer facilities are not generally provided elsewhere within the County or region. Indoor soccer programs are often provided within gymnasiums. Indoor soccer could provide another destination type activity broadening the Center's user populations and expanding its unique opportunities so long as the use does not displace established ice arena and indoor tennis.

Benefit Cost Analysis

- SRC provides a unique mix of facilities that no other known public recreation facilities provide, particularly, the combination of indoor ice skating and tennis facilities; there is strong demand for these facilities.
- The ice arena is the most heavily used facility at SRC, followed by the outdoor playfields and the tennis facilities, respectively.
- The ice arena is effectively at capacity, while the indoor tennis courts are in use approximately 55 percent of the available hours.
- The ratio of operating revenue to operating expense at SRC has been in the 60 percent range in recent years and has been in the 70 percent range in previous years. Seventy per cent is generally a strong performance for a public recreation facility.
- The fees charged by SRC are comparable to fees charged by competitive facilities in those instances where the charge is based on usage.
- The comparison of SRC with other facilities demonstrated a strong demand for ice activities throughout the region. The demand for indoor tennis facilities is not quite so strong, but SRC is the only non-membership facility available to the public in the region.
- While it is possible to improve the financial performance of SRC at the margins, through minor increases in fees, and savings from operational efficiencies, the

net effect of all such adjustments might be a reduction in subsidy in any given year of up to \$100,000.

- Alternatives to public management and operation of SRC are financially viable because ice activities are generally supported by strong association programs and tennis lends itself to a monthly fee structure. However, there is a clear trade-off between reduced recreation subsidies in the case of the private vendor approach; and the preservation of the facility assets, the public accountability, and the open access to all members of the public under the public management options.

Public Outreach

- Public involvement has been integral to the evaluation of Sprinker Recreation Center.
- Public involvement and input has been a regular and ongoing process for the SRC. Three public meetings were conducted between June 1998 and April 1999 to gather input on potential opportunities for service enhancements. The public involvement process for this portion of the Master Site Plan study included 19 structured stakeholder interview sessions involving more than fifty (50) individuals, and a public Open House, conducted on January 29, 2000 involving more than 160 individuals. The informal process included meetings with groups and organizations like the Chamber of Commerce, and the Teen Advisory Committee and numerous phone calls, letters, and e-mails.
- SRC is truly unique as a public facility providing both indoor skating and tennis, and particularly that it provides both of these. The Center is valued in the community and heavily used. It is the only public recreation center in the vicinity.
- There is overwhelming public support for Pierce County to continue to operate SRC. Only a handful of comments out of hundreds supported private operation of the facility.
- If changes are made to SRC, they should be improvements and additions, not a reduction of facilities and programs.
- Emphasis for additional facilities was on a second sheet of ice, improvements to the tennis facility, and the addition of support areas such as restrooms, hallways, and training rooms. Support areas such as restrooms, hallways, and training rooms should be improved and/or provided. Outdoor tennis facilities need to be improved for safety and attractiveness.

- Youth facilities and programs are needed in the Parkland/Spanaway area. The Pierce County Youth Assessment reports that youth in this area of the County are at greater risk than in most others areas. Additional youth programs and safe places to gather would in part address this issue.
- SRC would be a good start-up location for a Boys and Girls Club as a building tenant. Space is needed for a computer lab and programs. A gymnasium is desirable. In the long term, the SRC site may be suitable for an independent Boys and Girls Club building, as a site tenant.
- The existing facilities could be used more efficiently, in terms of space utilization, public programs, and energy efficiency. Some outdoor areas could be reprogrammed to more fully use the entire site.
- A number of groups and entities are waiting to proceed with plans depending upon the outcome of this analysis and the County's determination on this planning effort, and on the future operation/management direction chosen.
- The Center needs better connections to the surrounding neighborhoods and to Spanaway Park through sidewalks, pathways, and crossings.
- Local schools, colleges and sports clubs utilize SRC fields to provide sports programs.
- The trails on site and Breseman Forest are underused due to lack of amenities. New trails should be provided to replace the impending removal of the track.

Action Plan

Action Plan Recommendations are presented in the following groups:

- **Immediate Actions for Facilities Improvements**
actions to improve access and life safety at SRC
- **Operations and Management direction**
Determine operations and management direction before undertaking long term planning for SRC
- **Create a Vision for SRC**
Once operation and management decision is made, create a Vision for long term use and development of SRC
- **Continue with Phase II of the Master Site Plan process**
Long term plan to implement the Vision

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

Immediate Facilities Improvements

While the facility is in good condition given its age, methods of construction, and the operation and maintenance over the last 30 years, the following facility improvements are needed for public safety and accessibility as soon as practical. These immediate improvements are based upon the conclusions from the facilities analysis. (Please see Chapter 2 for full details).

Non-construction/Minor improvements

- Clear hallway for exit requirements
- Provide occupancy signs
- Supply cups near drinking fountains per regulations
- Add grease interceptor to second floor kitchen, if required
- Install emergency lighting for racquetball courts

Repairs

- Replace flashing at metal/masonry building joints
- Repair masonry cracks at elevator
- Investigate causes and then repair slab cracking

- Replace drainage system and surfaces in outdoor playground area
- Clean, snake, and repair damaged downspouts and connections
- Repair missing or damaged floor tile in multi-purpose rooms.

Access/ADA/Codes

- Upgrade stairs, exits, and restrooms. Provide ramps and ADA plumbing fixtures per requirements.
- Upgrade utility and power service distribution
- Replace playground equipment
- Widen fire access lane in northeast parking lot
- Correct parking lot for ADA access including striping, signage, and removal of extruded curb
- Install backflow prevention devices in the irrigation system, or separate the sources.

Safety

- Fireproof columns in tennis facility
- Conduct formal seismic analysis and improve structure
- Improve ventilation of heat sources per code
- Provide fire/smoke dampers at area separation walls
- Install check valve at connection to Parkland Water System
- Test and replace drinking fountain backflow devices

Efficiency

- Upgrade lighting and remove PCB ballasts

CREATE A VISION FOR SRC

Once the operations and management direction is determined, the County should fully develop the Vision for SRC which will guide its long term use and development.

The Vision would determine:

- The type of facility that SRC will become and will emphasize, such as a community center for the surrounding area, a regional recreation center providing unique programs, etc

- How future physical improvements will be focused
- Which changes will allow the greatest public use and create the greatest value for the facility and the County

OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT

The next step would be to make a decision regarding future operations and management of SRC. Before making the decision, the Executive recommends that there be a joint Executive/County Council public meeting held in the community to hear public opinion. The meeting would be held at SRC or in the vicinity.

Based upon the analyses and the goals identified by the County Council in Resolution R99-90S, Management Option 2 is recommended:

Continue County operation and pursue additional private vendors for programs and activities

This option was selected because it best appears to meet and balance the mutual goals of:

- Reduction of subsidy level
- Assure continued broad public access to an affordable recreation facilities and programs
- Assure protection of County's property and facility assets
- Provide stability for existing vendors and allow enhancements to move forward
- Ability to pursue more efficient use of facilities

(Please see Chapter 2 for full details.)

CONTINUE PLANNING PROCESS WITH PHASE II

Based upon the conclusions reached from the background analyses and the public involvement process and the vision created for SRC, the County should continue this planning process into the Master Site Plan Phase II.

Looking toward the longer term future, the Master Site Plan Phase II would be the preparation of a long term Plan to further pursue in detail:

- The goal of making the facility more economically self-sufficient

- How to continue to improve and potentially expand the facilities, uses, and services provided at SRC in a phased, programmed manner.

The Master Site Plan Phase II would require additional time and expenditure (12-18 months) to complete. The Master Site Plan Phase II should include the following components:

Operations and Management

With a preferred option selected, management and operations should be further analyzed in terms of:

- Fees/Rate structure and cost recovery
- Addition of vendor services
- Marketing opportunities
- Staffing Efficiencies
- Operational efficiencies in terms of energy, security, and other issues.
- More efficient use of the entire site for both active and passive recreation

Facilities Improvements

Building and Site Improvements will need to be programmed in a phased manner in conjunction with preparation of the County's Capital Facilities Plan and *Comprehensive Park and Recreation Plan*.

Major investments such as the replacement of the mechanical systems for the ice arena will need to be made in the mid- to long-term and are of a size and scale to warrant programming well in advance of the eventual failure of the system due to age.

Building Improvements

Additional needed building improvements are outlined and prioritized in Chapter 2. Those priorities will need to be incorporated into the final plan in conjunction with recommendations for facility expansion.

Efficiency Measures

The following measures are recommended to improve the efficiency of existing operations.

- Investigate relocation of activities within the building such as the concessions/retail sales activities, improvements to the Rainier Room, addition of a catering kitchen, and the conversion of preschool room to other activities
- Conversion of racquetball courts to other uses

Improved Aesthetics and Marketability

The following actions are recommended to improve the marketing and appeal of SRC:

- Parking lot landscaping
- Improved signage program
- Exploration of sponsorship opportunities

Additional Facilities or Expansion of Facilities

Expansion of facilities should be examined in terms of the priorities identified during this planning process such as:

Higher Priority

Facilities that received the most support during the public involvement process and stakeholder interviews include:

- A second sheet of ice and related training and spectator facilities
- Improvement of existing indoor tennis courts lighting (energy efficiency) and surfacing. Add additional indoor/covered courts
- A gymnasium/indoor soccer facility
- Upgraded restrooms and locker rooms
- A weight/fitness training facility
- Lighted outdoor playfields and tennis courts
- Addition of youth facilities, perhaps a Boys and Girls Club

Lower Priority

Facilities that were mentioned but received lower levels of support during the public involvement process and stakeholder interviews include:

- A swimming pool
- Addition of skateboard area
- Create new walking areas to replace the running track
- A BMX area
- Training facilities to support skating programs
- Reacquire portion of site owned by the Fire District
- An all-weather athletic field surface
- Alternate parking lot access

Additional Programs

The following programs should be further evaluated for addition to SRC:

- Expand Youth Programs
- Add weight training/additional fitness programs
- Training programs for skaters
- Parenting classes