

New London Community Recreation Center

Public Engagement Follow-up: Frequently Asked Questions



Who will this community recreation center prioritize?

New London residents come first. Spaces and programming will prioritize youth and seniors while offering flexibility to ensure a diversity of demands can be met.

Operating a high-quality community recreation center can be costly, and city leadership understands the importance of ensuring long-term financial sustainability. One key requirement is to make sure that using the center is financially accessible to all New Londoners while also not putting a burden on the City's General Fund. To be self-sufficient, the center will need to be entrepreneurial and creatively generate other revenue through the rental of program elements. Some program elements will have a regional draw to attract outside users and paying groups (e.g. host tournaments and events) in which New Londoners would also be participants. New London residents will remain the priority.

What might the building include?

The preliminary concept for the center includes a 2-court gymnasium with an elevate track as an add-alternate; a natatorium with lap, leisure, and therapeutic water features; a fitness center; multipurpose rooms and lounge space; and an outdoor recreation element. Because meeting New London community demand is so important, the scale of the center needs to be large enough to prioritize community use and revenue-generating uses simultaneously. Other potential specialized spaces include a computer lab and a kitchen.

The community has also shared great ideas that are now being considered:

- A food option and eating space
- An outside gathering space or amphitheater, potentially covered
- A community garden, working with FRESH New London

What would I be able to do at the center?

The program will include lots of flexible spaces to provide opportunities to participate in many different activities. This includes: open recreation / "pickup" play, team practices, competitions, meets, classes, clinics, basketball, volleyball, futsal, swim lessons, lap swimming, youth camps, senior aquatics classes, strength and cardio training, group fitness classes, boot camps, personal training, yoga, aerobics, study halls, academic enrichment, music, arts, community events, meetings, gaming, and social gatherings, among others.

The project concept spaces would also be flexible to accommodate partnerships with local organizations to provide specialized services for career education, social services, health and wellness, and other civic services.

What is currently not being considered for the Center?

The goal of the Community Recreation Center is to complement, not duplicate, the existing facilities in New London. The current concept does not include building additional tennis courts, baseball diamonds, or track and field facilities, which are already available elsewhere in the City.

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What site options were considered?

We considered a long list of potential sites including 126 Green St., 234 Bank St., Bates Woods Park, Crystal Ave/Riverside Park, Ocean Beach Park, Caulkins Park, Edgerton School property, and Fort Trumbull. The following sites were eliminated in the preliminary phase, and the rest we analyzed in more detail. A common limitation is the requirement to provide new park space elsewhere whenever an existing green park space is developed.

- Crystal Ave/ Riverside Park: Zoning issue (Industrial); north of 95 limited access; green park space replacement requirement
- Ocean Beach Park: low proximity to population center, green park space replacement requirement
- Caulkins Park: green park space replacement requirement

What is the most practical site?

Fort Trumbull is the most practical site because it accommodates the ideal building program footprint at the lowest cost with minimal development hurdles. The City already owns the site, and the location also supports existing and new development in the area.

We've heard that some members of the community perceive Fort Trumbull as lacking in accessibility, particularly for non-drivers. This is an important consideration, and we will analyze potential accessibility improvements for any site. These could include bus route updates, pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, the City's upcoming micro-mobility program, and more.

What sites are potentially suitable but may require tradeoffs?

Bates Woods and the Edgerton property are being analyzed further. Both have locational benefits of being near New London High School and existing fields and development, but they also include **additional risk that may impact the ability to meet the community's recreation demands.**

Both Bates Woods and the Edgerton property would require major tradeoffs in program, budget, or quality. Due to demolition, abatement, tree clearing, and slope mitigation, both would be much more expensive to develop. Smaller sites and higher development costs also mean that the building program would have to be reduced. Without enough space or amenities, the center would struggle to accommodate the New London community while also generating revenue to be self-sufficient.

What's coming next?

B&D will model financial and economic impacts and complete a more detailed analysis of site-specific tradeoffs. We will integrate feedback from the council and community meeting. We still want to hear from you! Please send any questions, feedback, or ideas to jstarz@newlondonct.net, subject line "Community Recreation Center Comment" by November 13. The action plan for the Community Recreation Center will be presented at year's end.

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Public Engagement Follow-up: Community Meeting Poll Results

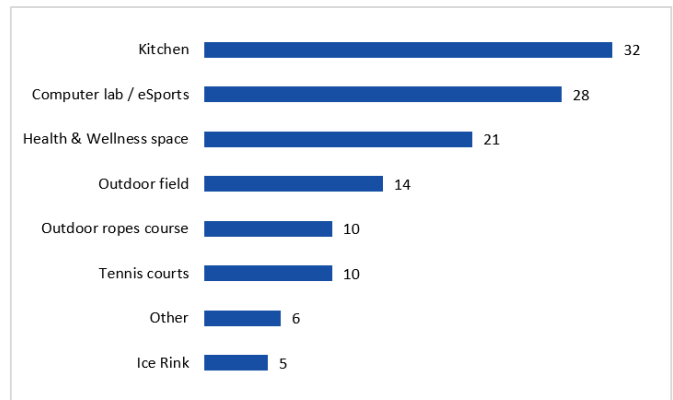


Below are the results of the poll questions asked during the community meeting on Wednesday, 10/20/20. They help Brailsford & Dunlavey understand what the community is interested in and where B&D should focus their research and detailed analysis. This was not a statistically valid sample, so these numbers are not necessarily representative of New London as a whole. There were ~40 to 50 responses for each question. The results should be interpreted as an interesting look into the community meeting, not as a precise numerical conclusion.

How do you usually get around?



Which of these secondary program elements could be important for the New London Community Recreation Center to offer? (Participants could select multiple)



Which site criteria is the most important to you?



What is more important to you?



A center that includes all of the program elements you want to use

A center that is located closest to you even if the program is reduced

What area do you live in?		Where is your place of work?			Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
District 1 (North)	10%	I work in a neighboring town	15%	Gym	96%	4%	-
District 2 (Central)	23%	I work in New London	74%	Pool	84%	10%	6%
District 3 (South)	41%	I work somewhere else	3%	Fitness Center	61%	31%	8%
Other	26%	Other	8%	Multipurpose	82%	14%	4%

Values-Based Criteria	Strongly Agree	Partially Agree	Do not agree
The center vision is a combination of a traditional community center and a recreation center, which must accommodate demand for the most popular activities and prioritize youth development .	73%	24%	2%
The physical building should signify the City's commitment to community wellbeing and achieve bold architectural expression via building form and experience, rather than the liberal use of expensive materials .	63%	37%	-
Every New London resident should be accommodated regardless of their ability to pay .	90%	10%	-
The center management must be aggressively entrepreneurial and pursue opportunities to generate speculative revenue for the sake of cross-subsidizing programs for low- and moderate-income residents.	63%	32%	5%