

Frequently Asked Questions

Southern Prairie Activity & Recreation Center for Wellness

Who was in charge of developing plans for the wellness center? How were conclusions reached?

In the fall of 2023, Wahpeton Mayor Brett Lambrecht formed the mayor's ad hoc committee, approved by the Wahpeton city council, to study the feasibility of constructing a comprehensive wellness and community center. The ad hoc committee is comprised of 10 members: Zach Hatting, Amanda Fisher, Dr. Rod Flanigan, Julie Rosenberg, Brian Watson, Roger Jensen, Brad Edwardson, Stacia Henningsen, Kelly McNary and Michael Kaiser.

For several months, members of the ad hoc committee broke down into sub-committees to study, in detail, the different programming options for the facility. Over 50 volunteers donated their time to participate in the subcommittees in which many hours of discussion and research took place to reach conclusions that were recommended to the ad hoc committee. The ad hoc committee then took those conclusions to JLG Architects and preliminary floor plans were created.

Have any experts been engaged to reach this point?

Ballard*King & Associates was hired to provide a feasibility study, operational assessment and market review. They conducted a market review to assess anticipated participation at a recreation and wellness facility in our area, extending beyond the Wahpeton community to an approximate 45-minute drive time. [View the full report from Ballard*King.](#)

Ballard*King & Associates was established in 1992 by Ken Ballard and Jeff King in response to the need for market-driven and reality-based planning for recreation facilities. With over 70 combined years of facility management and planning experience in the collegiate, public, non-profit and private sector, their consulting firm has completed over 700 projects in 50 states and has working relationships with more than 100 architects coast-to-coast. They have been the recipient of five Athletic Business Facilities of Merit Awards.

JLG Architects was hired to draft a modern design focused on accessibility, usability and efficiency. Established in Grand Forks in 1989, they specialize in urban design, master planning and architectural design for sports/recreation facilities, universities, K-12 schools and more. Their work is award-winning, earning numerous honors on projects spanning the Midwest.

[View the design by JLG Architects.](#)

When will the wellness center potentially be built?

Pending a positive vote by registered voters in the City of Wahpeton and adequate fundraising with a goal of \$10,000,000; a construction timeline will be determined. There would then be two phases: design and construction. Those timelines could reach 12-18 months.

How much will the facility cost to build?

JLG Architects drafted preliminary plans for the facility based on the committee's research and suggestions. Applying current value cost estimations to the preliminary plans, it is estimated that the facility will cost approximately \$30 million to build. The current design has been evaluated by construction professionals, and their estimates validated our budget to construct the current plans created by JLG. The exact dollar amount will not be determined until the project is brought to a final bidding process.

How will the construction of the wellness center be funded?

Funding efforts include a combination of naming rights, in-kind donations, fundraising, and potential partnerships and grants, as well as an approved 1% sales tax increase, which will be voted upon by registered voters in the City of Wahpeton.

Pending the passage of the 1% sales tax increase at a special election, the sales tax would be applied to tangible personal property according to North Dakota law. Current law excludes food, medical supplies, prescribed medications, cars and farm machinery from sales tax. Based on current rates and spending, the facility would take about 25 years to pay off.

Is the 1% sales tax going to have a sunset?

The ballot language that was proposed does not include a sunset in the tax but it's important to note that sales tax can be invoked by a vote of the people and can be eliminated by a vote of the people.

Is fundraising taking place currently?

Yes, a fundraising campaign has begun and is currently taking place. To date, 37 requests have been prepared and we have multiple verbally confirmed pledges. Conversations are currently taking place for the naming rights of the facility. For a complete list of naming rights opportunities and their values please reach out to our committee through the website, www.wahpetonwellnesscenter.org.

When is the special election scheduled for?

A special election is scheduled for April 29th, 2025.

Where will the wellness center be located?

North Dakota State College of Science has offered an ideal location and a long-term lease agreement at \$1 per year. This piece of property borders 14th Avenue and 11th Street, adjacent to Blikre Activity Center. The building would be owned by the city and would NOT be connected to the Blikre Activity Center. The city and NDSCS have worked together on a draft lease agreement which is nearly complete and looking to be signed in the very near future.

A comprehensive site study was conducted in 2023, in which the NDSCS property was compared to the proposed Homestead Development and Chahinkapa park. The site study was based on a weighted scoring system which analyzed:

- Site ownership and current status
- Cost to develop
- Access to public infrastructure
- Visibility and branding potential
- Site size and layout
- Accessibility for vehicles and pedestrians
- Synergy with future planning
- Adjacent land use capability

The NDSCS property scored the highest and was therefore selected as the preferred location.

Why is a wellness center important for Wahpeton?

The wellness center addresses critical issues in the Wahpeton region. [A recent article in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*](#) highlighted alarming national statistics showing that 74% of American adults and nearly 40% of children are overweight or obese, and more than 1 in 6 adults are experiencing

depression. The proposed center will provide essential physical, mental and nutritional education and resources to combat these challenges.

That said, there are many positive factors coming together to make now the time to make this vision a reality. In addition to the enduring conversations stretching back more than a decade, we have an ideal location offered by NDSCS for a nominal sum. Further:

- There is no similar wellness facility in the region that includes an indoor play park, gymnasiums, multi-purpose space, public gathering areas and education space. A comprehensive wellness and community center also creates an opportunity to become a destination for sports tourism, benefiting businesses throughout the community.
- According to the studies conducted by Ballard*King & Associates, the market for local indoor wellness activity exists. Our community's largest population segments are seniors and young children. A wellness center would provide important - and currently nonexistent - opportunities for wellness year-round and would be especially beneficial for these groups.
- The Chahinkapa Park swimming pool is very near the end of its useful life and currently requires an annual subsidy of approximately \$65-75,000 for just two months of operation. Not only is this a drain on resources, but it also leaves opportunities for youth activity and healthy development hanging in the balance.

How will ongoing operations be funded? Who will manage the facility?

Future operations would be funded with available grants and partnerships, as well as memberships and rental fees. These types of facilities have an industry standard cost recovery of 60-80%. The operational budget study conducted by Ballard*King, however, estimates that the proposed Wahpeton facility would run at a cost recovery of 93-99%. The committee has worked closely with similar facilities to understand their operations and funding.

The city would be the owner of the facility and through a joint powers agreement, Wahpeton Parks and Recreation would be the operator. Brad Edwardson, director of Wahpeton Parks & Recreation, has spent a great deal of time studying the Ballard King operational model and has created a plan designed for Wahpeton Parks and Recreation to operate the facility. The Parks & Rec plan utilizes efficiencies and incorporates their already existing budget to reduce costs.

For more information, see the operations report from Ballard*King & Associates and the Wahpeton Parks & Recreation report available on the website.

What will be included in the center?

In a 2021 survey of the community, the top three amenities requested were an indoor play park, a walking track and an aquatics center. The proposed design includes all of these, as well as gymnasiums, indoor turf, community/party rooms, fitness areas, administrative offices, a community kitchen, public gathering space and the 1901 Club.

In addition to the amenities offered, great potential exists for a wide range of classes and programs.

Potential Programming – Turf

- ✓ Movie Night and Picnic; Mommy-and-Me or Daddy-and--Me events
- ✓ Inflatables
- ✓ Yard Game Tournaments
- ✓ Easter Egg Hunt
- ✓ Recreation Programs - flag football, soccer, lacrosse, kickball, archery
- ✓ Indoor practice facility - baseball, softball, football, soccer, track and field, golf

- ✓ Strength and conditioning training, athletic training

Potential Programming - Community Room

- ✓ Public Space – no membership required
- ✓ Benefits, Holiday Parties, Group Events
- ✓ Kids Health Camps
- ✓ Art Classes
- ✓ Home Economics and Community Education Classes
- ✓ Game Nights

Potential Programming – Kitchen

- ✓ Cooking Classes, Events and Competitions
- ✓ Healthy Cooking Demonstrations
- ✓ 1901 Club Meal Program
- ✓ Summer Lunch Meal Program

Potential Programming - Aquatics Center & Indoor Play Park

- ✓ Year-round Swimming
- ✓ Swimming Lessons
- ✓ Dive in Movie
- ✓ Water Aerobics and classes
- ✓ Accessible and Inclusive Play Structures
- ✓ Year round play with a one-of-a-kind play structure in our region

What's the 1901 Club?

In an effort to upgrade and expand their efforts for a new generation of seniors, Southeast Senior Services is proposing a partnership with the new facility to offer improved programming, space and accessibility. They hope to re-brand their organization from the Senior Center to the 1901 Club.

Is SPARC the official name of the facility?

Southern Prairie Activity & Recreation Center – SPARC – is the acronym given to the project by the ad hoc committee as a working title. This name was carefully selected from multiple options through the marketing committee then voted on by the ad hoc committee. We thought this name resonated with the impact the wellness center will have on the community and act as a SPARC for fitness, growth, wellness and quality of life.

The formal name of the facility will be determined with the naming rights sponsor.

Is the design for the wellness center complete?

Currently, this concept is showing all programming options listed above. The final design will be completed upon a successful vote and will be in full compliance with local codes and ADA requirements.

How much will it cost to use the facility?

Many factors will impact the fee structure, and every effort is being made to keep costs low for users and families. The facility will be a not for profit facility and the goal will be to price memberships as affordable as possible while maintaining the facility's sustainability. Fees have yet to be determined, but a preliminary estimate as part of the Operational Analysis provided by Ballard*King & Associates projected approximate monthly costs:

- Youth/Student = \$30

Last updated March 05, 2025

- Adult = \$50
- Household = \$90
- Senior = \$30
- Senior +1 = \$45

The committee is working to ensure scholarships for low-income children, families and seniors can be provided as they currently are for parks and recreation activities. Other ideas to ensure the wellness center is available to everyone who wishes to use it include a sliding fee scale, corporate sponsorships or set hours with open use. The committee is also working closely with similar facilities to gather information on fee structures and accessibility. The discussion is ongoing.

Fees for the 1901 Club (senior programming and meals) will be separate – those who wish to participate in those activities will not be required to purchase a membership for the entire facility. The commercial kitchen and community/party rooms will be handled similarly.

Are there areas in the center that a community member may use without a membership?

Yes. The concept, at this time, allows for entering the facility at its main entrance with direct access to the community room. It will not be required to have a membership or to check-in at the front desk to enter the community room. The community room will have the ability to split into multiple spaces and have multiple functions. During weekday mornings and afternoons, it will serve as a lobby, gathering space and dining space for the facility and provides direct access to the 1901 club. In the evenings and on weekends it can be divided to be used for events, classes or gatherings. More research will be conducted to maximize the function of this space in future design phases.

The 1901 Club (senior programming and meals) plans to partner with the facility to host their activities. The commercial kitchen space and community/party rooms will be available to rent, with rental fees to be determined, for meetings, events and parties. These spaces were designed with flexibility in mind and the high potential for a wide variety of activities and entities to use the space.

Will scholarship programs be offered to low-income households?

Through Wahpeton Parks and Recreation, scholarships are currently offered to households interested in planned activities and athletics. The same opportunities will be offered for the Wellness Center.

We do not want to assume that low-income families are not interested in opportunities to improve overall health and wellness.

Will the Wellness Center affect outdoor recreation within our community?

The ability to move outdoor activities to indoor options, rather than cancel, will help skill development, mental health and physical health.

A wellness center will allow people to choose which activities they prefer and not be stopped by long, cold North Dakota winters and other inclement weather.

What are the plans for the future use of the current Community Center and all of the activities/events it is/has been used for?

There are local parties that have expressed interest in acquiring the current Community Center if it becomes available. Currently, the activities and events that are held there are a main priority for our committee, and it is the plan to maintain these events at the new, larger facility/location.

Why isn't a sheet of ice for hockey and figure skaters included in the preliminary design?

A second sheet of ice for our community is currently included in the offerings within the Infinity

Center which is to be located in Breckenridge, MN.

What is the Infinity Center?

The Infinity Center is a facility being planned in Breckenridge that is tournament-based and event-centered, rather than a membership driven facility like the SPARC. The group planning the Infinity Center has been in close contact with members of our ad hoc committee for several years. Our goal is to have complimentary amenities and to not compete with one another.

Will there be an opportunity to ask questions at a public forum?

Yes, a public forum is being planned and will be at the Wahpeton Community Center. Information pertaining to the project will be displayed and committee members and city officials will be available to answer any questions. Please check our website or follow the Facebook group for the date which will be determined soon.

***As questions arise and the project moves forward, this FAQ will be updated with new information.**