



November 24, 2009

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Englewood Community Center

A touchstone of Englewood is the diversity of population. Mackay Park, located in the center of town, has provided a common meeting ground for all of our citizens during the warmer months. Englewood is missing a year-round venue for citizens of different generations, religions and backgrounds to join together in recreational, artistic, educational and social activities.

Englewood had a wide variety of community programs and locations. The Depot Square railroad station served as a children's play center, showing movies on Saturdays and providing dancing lessons. The various school buildings stayed open to provide after hours athletic facilities for the young. The Social Service Federation building, originally formulated as Community House still caters to a wide variety of needs for the young, elderly and infirm. These activities are now in short or disjointed supply in Englewood, and there is no central information source to identify them and guide our citizens to them.

The need for a center or centers of community activity is evident, and the Planning Board recognizes several ways of

meeting this need:

1. Creating a central community center, housed in a dedicated building.
2. Working with the Englewood School system to create a centralized community center that is funded by and also functions as part of the public school system.
3. Utilizing existing resources in the community and have a central programming arm to provide a coherent and comprehensive program.

The first two options are long-term solutions while the third is a short-term possibility. Each of the above options has a variety of advantages and disadvantages. In these difficult economic times, the third option may provide a viable way to implement community-wide programs now.

A New Community Center

A number of surrounding communities have recognized the same needs as discussed above and have addressed them by developing and financing a centralized community center. In particular, the towns of Teaneck and Edge-

water are examples of towns with central community centers. A central community center must serve a variety of interests, and must be identifiable as a facility that is easily accessible to all and to which all are welcomed. In a community as diverse as Englewood, a central common location would be advantageous to the success of a center and permit Englewood youth to walk to the center.

A Community Center in the School System

The Englewood School System has expanded and reconstructed the public school facilities. Using the school facilities as a community center coupled with the City owned facilities offers the community access to greater funding (part of any Englewood school facility program will be financed by the State of New Jersey) and the facility will be familiar to a large number of Englewood's young people. With funding provided by the City as a whole, the community center could draw on the resources of the school system (teachers and supplies such as computers, art and photography equipment, etc.) while be administered as an independent program. Such a center could be a pathway for more community involvement in the public school system.

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Use Existing Resources

Within the public school system there are currently six gymnasiums and hundreds of classrooms and other spaces that are largely unutilized for non-school hours during the day, evenings and weekends. The new Greico School (at Durie Avenue) was constructed in a manner that permits access to the Gymnasium and some classroom space while limiting access to other parts of the building. This space is immediately available, and provided there is a centralized programming effort, it offers a viable short-term solution. The advantages of this option include immediate access, a small capital expenditure (equipment would still be required), and the full utilization of existing facilities. The creation of such a program would also give Englewood experience allowing a simple and more successful transition to a long-term solution.

City Hall Building

Currently, the City is reviewing the renovation of the municipal building on Van Brunt Street. This building is in the geographic center of the City and is easily accessible using public transportation and also the newly started trolley shuttle system. The design of the renovated facility includes a considerable number of

public spaces including a place of assembly and private meeting rooms. The use of City Hall together with a comprehensive community program in the schools could provide a short-term immediate solution for a Community Center.

The Ice Skating Rink

In 1984, the City of Englewood leased the Rink in Mackay Park to a private vendor. This lease expires in 2009 and the City is exploring its options with regard to this facility. The future of the rink is important to all residents of Englewood, the immediately surrounding community and the Central Business District. The future use of the rink potentially impacts Mackay Park in a substantial manner. It is therefore important to carefully review the future of the rink. Towards this end



View of the Mackay Park Skating Rink

the City Council has engaged a consultant to review alternative uses for the rink and the Planning Board recommends that the Master Plan should revisit this issue within 60 days after completion of the study. The Planning Board takes no position at this time on the future use of the Skating Rink

Community Center Findings

The Board concluded that there was insufficient information for the Board to come to a definitive conclusion in the absence of further study and hearings.

Liberty School Findings

The Board notes that the City of Englewood has commissioned a study of the Liberty School which was not available to be considered by the Board at the time of the hearing. The Board found that this matter was of public importance and warranted further hearings and study by the Planning Board and warranted the scheduling of further hearings within 60 to 90 days from the adoption of the resolution.