

# **STUCK-IN-NEUTRAL, WASHINGTON**

## **2008 Draft Action Plan**

**Concept ⇨ Consensus ⇨ Informed Decisions ⇨ Action**

Renovation and Possible Expansion of  
Recreational / Community Center

**Strategic Considerations and Options**  
Immediate and Long-term, Growing Needs

- I. Situational Analysis
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  - c. Timeline

## I. SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS – Stuck-in-Neutral, Washington

- **Recreation / Community Center**  
30 year-old popular Recreation Center in severe need of renovation –small gymnasium, limited meeting space, game rooms, children’s programming, after school programming.
- **Lots of talk, but no Action**  
10 years of discussion, planning, debates around Recreation Center and Possible expansion (more meeting space? Add Senior center? Multi-use aquatics center? etc.)
- **City Profile**  
Middle-sized, middle-income, middle-of-the-road politically
- **Growth Potential**  
Annexation plans, vote in 2010 that would add 30% more to the population
- **Finance Overview**  
Strong sales tax revenues - Significant council funding authority remaining
- **City Leadership**  
Cautious, fiscally conservative Council and Mayor. New Mayor – determined to forge a decision one way or the other. Not sure best way to get there.
- **General Satisfaction with Stuck-in-neutral**  
Citizens generally satisfied with quality of services offered by City of Stuck-in-Neutral
- **City / Public Engagement**  
City Government operates fairly close to the vest – not much public outreach or engagement, except for Council meetings.
- **Annexation**  
City anticipates going to voters in 2009 for Annexation – perhaps nearly doubling the population and significantly expanding tax base of Stuck-in-Neutral.
- **Limited Citizen Engagement in Civic Issues**  
Citizens, stakeholder, civic and business leaders haven’t been engaged; limited experience coming together around civic issues, priorities and funding
- **No Current Public Opinion Data to Guide**  
No significant polling research conducted in recent years to measure public interest and willingness to fund renovation and/or expansion of the community / recreation center
- **Other Capital Needs**  
Stuck-in-Neutral is growing and anticipates a number of other major Capital projects over the next decade – including the possibilities of: City Hall; additional parks and open space acquisition; pedestrian / sidewalk improvements; criminal justice center.
- **Limited Ballot Experience**  
City has limited experience putting funding measures on the ballot and passing. Last measure was 30 years ago.

## I. **SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS –RECREATION / COMMUNITY CENTER**

- **Community Centerpiece**  
Recreation center is a central feature in the community, source of significant community pride
- **Community not Asked since 1976**  
Aquatic center supported by Bond that passed over 30 years ago
- **Serious Needs**  
Recreation center in serious need of repairs, renovation (\$7-8 million) – facility has not been funded to adequately maintain – major physical / systems needs: roof, windows, severe leaks, mildew, ventilation etc.
- **No public discussion / engagement**  
There's been almost no public discussion or engagement around the Recreation facility, renovations, or possible expansion for last 5 years – entirely internal city discussion/ debate.
- **Finance Options yet to be presented / discussed / debated**  
There's been little discussion among Council about appropriate finance options - balancing other needs and exploring City's existing taxing authority as well as a possible bond measure
- **Emerging Internal Consensus on Rec/Community Center Priority**  
Current Council seems to have emerging consensus that it's time for action around the Community Center – but not sure how to get to there. They're looking for an action plan that identifies the question that must be answered, the next steps and a sequential timeline, and how to better inform and involve the public.
- **Property Tax Increase too Much?**  
Levy Measure alone could be several hundred dollars a year for the average Stuck-in-Neutral homeowner.
- **What Resonates?**  
Lack of understanding about what resonates most or motivates the public around the renovation/expansion of the Recreation Community Center - how best to describe, talk with, and help educate the public. No real citizen engagement or public opinion research to guide the issue and leadership.

## I. SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS - QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED

- **Finance Options?** To Council? Public?
- **City Authority / Ballot Measure?** City funding authority AND/OR ballot measure?
- **Bond or Levy?** Bond v. Levy Ballot measure?
- **Size and Scope?** Size and Scope of expanded Recreation/Community Center
- **Cost?** Cost of Recreation / Community Center?
- **Phased or All at once?** Staged Renovation v. All at once?
- **Current / Future Tax Base?** Current Tax Base v. Future Tax Base – Post Annexation?
- **Property Tax Level?** Cost for average homeowner ? Cost after Annexation? Cost if city uses other taxing authority?
- **Site?** Public Consensus / Concerns on Site Location?
- **Renovation?** Public Consensus / Concerns on Renovation?
- **Expansion?** Public Consensus / Concerns on Expansion and scope?
- **Financing?** Public Consensus / Concerns on Financing
- **First things first?** Public Consensus / Concerns on Renovation first or All-at-once expansion
- **Annexation?** Public Consensus / Concerns on impact of Annexation, Costs, Users
- **Phased? Public Opinion** re: Renovate first? Renovate and Expand? Scope of Expansion?
- **Priorities? Public Opinion** re: Recreation/Community Center in context of other priorities?
- **Economy? Public Opinion** re: Add'l taxes voted in 08, Economy –Direction
- **Timing? Public Opinion** re: Now v. wait -- annexation, expansion of taxbase and users
- **Finance Balance? Public Opinion** re: Finance plan – balancing taxing authority and ballot measure
- **Willingness to pay? Public Opinion** re: How much willing to pay in add'l property taxes?
- **Awareness of Needs? - Public Opinion** re: Awareness of existing needs
- **What Resonates? Public Opinion** -- How to best discuss and address the issues voters care about around renovation/expansion of Recreation/ Community Center

## II.

### STRATEGIC GOAL

- **Renovated AND Expanded Recreation and Community Center**  
Successfully renovate AND expand recreation / community center to address growing needs and priorities in the community – Update recreation facilities; add senior center and programming; additional community gathering/programming space; multi-use aquatic center.

### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- **Community Consensus**  
Engage citizens in the renovation / expansion of a Recreation Community Center – making sure citizens embrace the plan as their own – helping to build community consensus and broad public support
- **No Surprises**  
Adequately vet a proposed renovation and expansion plan with the public to answer questions, build awareness with public, address doubts and concerns -- in advance of a possible ballot measure. No surprises.
- **Fiscally responsible, do-able and publicly acceptable plan**  
Pursue fiscally responsible, “do-able,” and publicly acceptable finance plan for renovation and expansion – balancing existing city authority and/or ballot funding measure
- **Balanced City Priorities**  
Appropriately balance Recreation Community Center capital costs with other city needs and priorities

### III. STRATEGIES

- **Action Plan**  
Develop Strategic Action Plan for '08
- **Finance Options**  
Fully Explore Finance Options
- **Public Engagement**  
Build Public Awareness / Outreach / Engagement / Feedback
- **Research**  
Conduct Public Opinion Research in coordination with public outreach
- **Consensus-building**  
Build Internal City Consensus AND Community Consensus
- **Informed Decisions**  
Make informed decisions regarding finance options and scope of renovation/  
expansion
- **Deeper Community Involvement**  
Determine "What it Takes" -- Deeper Civic / Business Community Involvement and  
awareness of what it will take to pass possible ballot measure – separate from the  
City