



City of Litchfield Park Recreation Center *Community Assessment*

Summary Report July 2007

**Prepared by the
Partnership for Community Development**



July 31, 2007

Darryl H. Crossman
City Manager
City of Litchfield Park
214 W. Wigwam Blvd.
Litchfield Park, AZ 85340

Re: Litchfield Park Recreation Center Community Assessment
Final Report and Executive Summary
Services Agreement No. 07-067747

Dear Mr. Crossman:

Attached are five copies of the Final Summary Report, with a separately bound Executive Summary, for the Litchfield Park Recreation Center Community Assessment project. These final documents contain all of the changes requested by the City's Recreation Subcommittee, the last of which was transmitted to ASU on July 10, 2007. I have also included, as requested by the Subcommittee, a memorandum with recommendations for further consideration. Please distribute copies of both the Final Report and the Executive Summary, along with the memorandum, to each of the three members of the Recreation Subcommittee.

Rick Knopf and I appreciate the opportunity to have worked with you, the Recreation Subcommittee, Assistant City Manager Sonny Culbreth, and all of the wonderful residents of Litchfield Park who participated in the focus groups and community meetings. If you have any questions, or would like to discuss the themes and recommendations from this community assessment, please contact us.

Thank you again for your assistance and best wishes in moving forward as you finalize your future plans for the Litchfield Park Recreation Center.

Sincerely,




Peggy O'Sullivan
Assistant Director

c:

Rick Knopf
John Hepburn
Cheryl Lee

MEMORANDUM

TO: Recreation Subcommittee
City of Litchfield Park,

FROM: Peggy O'Sullivan 
Assistant Director

DATE: July 13, 2007

SUBJECT: Recommendations for the Litchfield Park Recreation Center

As requested, I am providing this separate memorandum outlining further recommendations related to the Litchfield Park Recreation Center.

- **Invest in computerization.** Over the past few months, the City Council and members of the public have had many questions about the actual usage patterns at the Rec Center. Rumors began to circulate, which were hard to dispel since it was difficult to obtain good data. City staff have had to compile data on usage patterns by hand, which is cumbersome, costly, and introduces potential for error. Given the crucial importance of accurate data and the difficulty of obtaining this data manually, it seems prudent to invest in a new computerized registration and tracking system. This could be implemented with an automated membership pass card system to replace the less-accurate paper punch card method. Having this computerized system would enable the City to more efficiently collect accurate data on usage patterns and generate the kinds of reports the Council and community are most interested in.

A computerized system would also make it easier to evaluate Rec Center use by residents and nonresidents, as well as by program, by time of day and by time of year. With computerization, resident usage patterns could be further analyzed according to neighborhood and age characteristics. This system will also provide vital data to assess the level of community support for new programs or expanded hours. In addition, the City could create an email listserve. Many residents participating in the focus groups and community meetings provided their email addresses. The City could generate an email distribution list from these records. This would be an easy and low-cost way to send out announcements about the Rec Center and its programs. The opportunity to join the listserve could also be made available on the City's webpage.

- **Reconsider the preschool lease.** Given that it appears that few Litchfield Park residents are currently using the preschool, and that the community has expressed such strong interest in more meeting and classroom space, the Council should consider not renewing this lease. The space currently occupied by the preschool could be converted to a gathering place for

meetings and classes, which would meet an expressed need and serve more local residents. Moreover, although many participants in the Community Assessment questioned the value of the preschool in the Rec Center, no one identified the preschool as a vital community need.

- **Hire a consultant to identify improvement options for the Rec Center.** The results of the Community Assessment indicate that there is strong support for keeping the Rec Center in its current location and in investing in upgrading the facility. Therefore, the City should consider hiring a consultant to help in developing alternative design plans for the Rec Center. These options can range from the minimum level of improvements (upgrading the restrooms, painting the building, adding a spray play area, resurfacing the pool, etc.) all the way to tearing down the current structure, expanding the pool, adding a diving platform and building a new facility — and various options in between these two extremes. This consultant could also develop schematic design plans for these different alternatives, including parking impacts, and provide preliminary cost estimates. In addition, the consultant should take into consideration the need for additional space to accommodate existing and proposed staff, as well as other administrative and operating functions, equipment storage, etc.
- **Develop cost/benefit analyses for all options.** Once 3-5 alternatives have been developed, the City, with the help of the consultant, should identify the specific benefits as well as the estimated costs of each alternative. The City can also compare estimates to available and projected revenues and determine the shortfall for each alternative design. As it develops these budget forecasts, the City should take into consideration the need for additional staff (at competitive salaries) in order to ensure the quality of future Rec Center operations.
- **Clarify the City's financial policy regarding revenue generation and funding support.** The City Council is encouraged to clarify how much revenue the Rec Center should be expected to generate, as well as to establish the minimum level of financial support this facility will receive from the City. Clarifying this financial policy will facilitate future budget deliberations. Under the Council/Manager form of government, the Council's role should be to establish policy expectations for the Rec Center, but then delegate this operational responsibility to the City Manager and his designees. This will help the Council avoid becoming mired in the details of departmental operations and keep its perspective at the broader policy level.
- **Assess feasibility of financing alternatives.** The Council should solicit further community input as it pertains to raising the funds necessary to construct the proposed Rec Center improvements. Residents most frequently mentioned private funding and property taxes, but other options include improvement districts, targeted sales tax, bond initiatives and private contributions. The impact on the average household could be computed and presented along with what will be gained by the proposed expenditure. A consultant also might be hired to

conduct a financial feasibility study that identifies potential donors, estimates the amount of funds that might be raised privately, and recommends strategies to secure additional external financial support.

- **Gauge citizen support for design alternatives and financing options.** After the consultant presents the design documents, the City may want to conduct a follow-up survey to gauge the level of citizen support for the various conceptual designs and financing options. This could be done via a written questionnaire, telephone survey or on-line response system.

ASU's Partnership for Community Development could provide this service for the City as reflected in the proposal options we submitted on November 1, 2006. However, please note that ASU's indirect cost rate needs to be added to those initial estimates, and is projected to be set at 36% in the near future.

Another viable option for the City is to consider that there are existing private firms that conduct citizen surveys exclusively. They may be able to gear up to offer this service within a short time frame and at a reasonable cost. Behavioral Research Center is such a firm, and it has an excellent reputation. Their website is <http://brc-research.com/>.

Dr. Bruce Merrill with ASU's Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication is a nationally recognized pollster, who also has extensive experience in conducting public opinion surveys. More information on Dr. Merrill can be found at <http://cronkite.asu.edu/faculty/merrillbio.html>.

The Rec Subcommittee or City Council might want to invite these experts to attend a future meeting to explore potential options.

Regarding future surveys, we would be remiss if we did not raise the important issue of sampling size and its relationship to cost. We recognize that the Rec Subcommittee has a strong desire to obtain representative data at the detailed neighborhood level. However, this desire for detail needs to be balanced with increasing costs. There are approximately 2,500 households in the City of Litchfield Park. If the City were to conduct a survey representative of all households on a citywide basis, it would need a sample size of approximately 335 households. We would recommend that the City do an over-sample with a total of 500 responses to allow for sufficient response rates.

However, if the City wants to obtain a representative sample for each of the nine neighborhoods, the sample size will have to increase dramatically in order to yield a statistically valid result for these smaller areas. For example, if we assume that each neighborhood is approximately equal in size (and this may not be the case) with approximately 100 households each, the City would need a sample size of about 80 for each of the 9 neighborhoods. That would result in a total sample size of 720 (80 x 9) households.

Memorandum
Page Four

At a minimum, we would recommend responses be obtained from at least 50 households in each neighborhood in order to make statistically valid inferences. However, in order to get this many responses, it may be necessary to further increase the sample size, as well as to plan for several follow-ups and possibly require pollsters to go door-to-door. Obviously, if the project becomes more labor-intensive, it will be more expensive.

In summary, if the City wants representative data at the neighborhood level versus on a citywide basis, the number of households that must be surveyed more than doubles: from a minimum of 335 to 720. With over-sampling to compensate for lower response rates, the total sample size could easily increase from 500 to over 1,000 households. When factoring in the follow-up that may be necessary, this could increase the costs of this project considerably. Therefore, we recommend that the City talk with several firms that specialize in citizen surveys in order to better understand the tradeoffs between precision and cost, so that the City can determine the most feasible approach for Litchfield Park.

If you have any questions about these recommendations, please let us know.

City of Litchfield Park Recreation Center Community Assessment Table of Contents

Executive Summary

1. Background	2
2. Use and Limitations of Focus Groups.....	3
3. Methodology.....	4
<i>Focus Groups.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Community Meetings.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Facilitation</i>	<i>6</i>
4. Process Used	6
<i>Session Introductions.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Focus Group Questions</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Community Meeting Process</i>	<i>9</i>
5. Citizen Participation.....	10
<i>Participation in Focus Groups</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Participation in Community Meetings.....</i>	<i>15</i>
6. Interpreting Results	19
7. Age Group Responses.....	19
8. Common Themes	21
<i>Key Findings</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Additional Observations</i>	<i>23</i>
9. Summary.....	26
10. Appendix Items.....	27

City of Litchfield Park Recreation Center Community Assessment *Executive Summary*

Background

For many years, the Litchfield Park Recreation Center has provided recreational programs and services to the residents in and around Litchfield Park. While the Recreation Center (also known locally as “The Rec” or “Rec Center”) was state-of-the-art when it was originally constructed, the physical facility has not been significantly improved during the past forty years. In addition, the West Valley has grown dramatically since the Recreation Center was first established. Today, there are many other recreational facilities, both public and private, located within a few miles of Litchfield Park. As a result, local residents now have convenient access to a greater array of recreational program alternatives than when the Rec Center was first constructed.

In March 2006, the Litchfield Park City Council arranged for Ballard King and Associates to conduct a comprehensive financial and operational audit of the Litchfield Park Recreation Center and Swimming Pool. There had been concern among some City Council members that the Rec Center was serving fewer and fewer residents, while growing a larger and larger subsidy. Ballard King conducted research for a period of several months, and turned in its final report on August 15, 2006. That report identified opportunities to improve the operational efficiency of the Recreation Center. It also outlined several alternative management scenarios and suggested that the City of Litchfield clarify its future role in providing recreation services.

Note: This report contains anecdotal information based upon conversations with nearly 80 Litchfield Park residents. While an effort was made to include citizens from different neighborhoods and various age groups, participants in the focus groups and community meetings were not randomly selected from among all households in Litchfield Park. This means that the results of the focus groups and community meetings cannot be construed as representing the views of all Litchfield Park residents. Rather, these sessions were designed to solicit ideas from a broad cross-section of citizens, so that this valuable feedback from local residents could be considered by the City’s Recreation Subcommittee.

At the same time, the Recreation, Arts and Parks Commission (RAPCOM) of Litchfield Park conducted a survey of local residents to assess citizen satisfaction with existing recreational programs, parks, and facilities throughout the community, as well as to obtain general information about recreation interests. This survey was mailed to each household in Litchfield Park. The results of the citizen survey were also summarized in the final Ballard King audit report.

In the fall of 2006, the Litchfield City Council formed the Recreation Subcommittee to review and evaluate the audit and to formulate recommendations for the Recreation Center. The “Rec” Subcommittee, as it is also known, consists of three members: Councilwoman Marcie Ellis, Councilman Tim Blake, and Dave Schwake, RAPCOM Chair. Upon reviewing the results from the citizen survey and audit report, the Rec Subcommittee identified the need for more specific

information as to a) the priority the community put on having a Rec Center and b) if residents felt the Center was important, the kinds of programs that would interest and specifically serve Litchfield Park residents. That way, when the Recreation Subcommittee recommended whether to maintain, update, and/or rebuild the Center, the programs the citizens wanted would inform the Subcommittee as to the kind of facility necessary to deliver those programs.

In November 2007, the Rec Subcommittee sought the expertise of ASU's Partnership for Community Development to conduct a community assessment focused on the Litchfield Park Recreation Center. The Partnership is part of the College of Human Services at Arizona State University. Its mission is to assist local governments, non-profits, businesses, and educational agencies in addressing critical community needs. This report, prepared by ASU, documents the results of the City of Litchfield Park Recreation Center Community Assessment project.

Focus Group Sessions

ASU's Partnership for Community Development, on behalf of the City of Litchfield Park, initiated the Litchfield Park Recreation Center Community Assessment project in early 2007. The Rec Subcommittee agreed to utilize focus groups to obtain more in-depth, qualitative opinion data from community residents. Because the Rec Subcommittee felt strongly that it wanted to hear from all residents of Litchfield Park, they decided to hold focus group sessions by age group. In addition, the Subcommittee wanted to hear from residents who lived in all parts of Litchfield Park. In preparation for the focus group sessions, the Rec Subcommittee generated a comprehensive list of potential participants representing a cross section of community residents in terms of four age groupings and nine established neighborhood areas. In addition, announcements were placed in the local newspaper and information made available at the January 27, 2007, Annual Town Hall, encouraging any interested resident to add their name to the pool of potential focus group participants. All citizens were invited to add their names to the pool, excepting City Council and Commission members and their relatives. Thus, while not a scientifically random sample, the final list of 221 residents was created with the intent to solicit broad participation from the community as a whole.

The Rec Subcommittee provided the list of potential focus group participants to ASU, who contacted Litchfield Park residents and invited them to attend one of the eight scheduled focus group sessions. All sessions were held at the Litchfield Park Elementary School. Two sessions were arranged for each age group, as shown in the following schedule:

- 12-25 yrs: Tuesday, February 27 or Wednesday, March 7; evenings.
- 26-45 yrs: Thursday, February 22 or Tuesday, March 6; evenings.
- 46-65 yrs: Thursday, February 15 or Wednesday, February 28; evenings.
- 65+ years: Saturday, February 24; one in the morning and one in the afternoon.

Each focus group session was conducted as a conversation with up to 12 residents. Sessions lasted from 1½ to 2 hours. Sessions were informal and designed to elicit more in-depth responses than are possible with a written survey. ASU facilitated these conversations based upon a set of question prompts that were developed with input from the Rec Subcommittee.

Residents were asked to share their responses to questions related to the following topics:

- Current Perceptions and Usage of the Rec Center
- Alternative Future Scenarios for the Rec Center
- Ideas for New Programs and Facility Improvements
- Financing Strategies

Community Meetings

In addition to the eight focus groups, two open community meetings were held to gather additional input from Litchfield Park residents. These sessions were scheduled for 9-10:30 a.m. and 1-2:30 p.m. on Saturday, March 10, 2007. The community meetings were also held at the Litchfield Park Elementary School.

Unlike the focus groups, these sessions were open to the general public. An announcement of these open community meetings was included in the local newspaper. In addition, the Rec Subcommittee members also publicized this opportunity to interested citizens, through phone calls, emails and other interactions.

Citizen Participation

In total, fifty-eight citizens participated in the eight focus groups and twenty-one residents attended the two open community meetings. Thus, a total of seventy-nine citizens participated in these community conversations about the Recreation Center. City staff subsequently compared the list of residents with the Rec Center's utilization records. It is interesting to note that approximately half of these residents had participated in Rec Center programs at one time or another, while the other half had not used the Rec Center or its programs at all (according to City records).

Despite valiant attempts to reach all neighborhoods and age groups, some neighborhoods and age groups were underrepresented in the focus groups and community meetings. Specifically, there were fewer participants in the age groups ranging from ages 12-25 and 26-45. Of the nine Litchfield Park neighborhoods identified for this project, participation from four of them (identified as Neighborhoods 1, 5, 6, and 9 on the map included in the Appendix of the full report) was lower than the other neighborhoods.

Interpreting Results

The results of this Community Assessment are based upon the conversations held with residents during the focus groups and community meetings. While this information is useful and richly detailed, caution is needed in interpreting the results as indicative of the opinions of every resident in Litchfield Park.

As noted above, the pool of potential focus group participants was generated from two sources: a) the Litchfield Park Recreation Subcommittee and b) respondents to notices that were posted in the *West Valley View* and other outlets. In addition, participation in the community meetings was open to any interested resident. Because participants in the focus groups and community meetings were not randomly selected from among all of the 2,500 (approximately) households in Litchfield Park, the results cannot be considered to be a statistically valid sample of the total population. In other words, the opinions expressed by the 79 citizens participating in the community assessment cannot be interpreted as representing the views of all Litchfield Park citizens. Nevertheless, the issues and concerns raised by participants were strikingly similar across all groups. This lends credibility to the notion that the common themes, if not held by all residents, are characteristic of a substantial number of Litchfield Park citizens.

The results of the focus groups and community meetings have provided valuable citizen feedback to the Recreation Subcommittee, which will consider this information in formulating recommendations to the City Council about policies and priorities for future recreation services. In addition, the focus group results can be used to guide the development of any scientifically valid community surveys that might be conducted in the future.

A summary of the results from the focus groups and community meetings is provided below. Information is first summarized in terms of general age group comments, followed by thematic statements that were common to all groups.

Age Group Responses

Conversations with local residents reveal that their current impression is that the Rec Center is used most frequently by the youngest (i.e., those under age 20) and the oldest (i.e., those over age 65) residents in Litchfield Park. Interests in recreational activities vary somewhat across the lifespan. These general trends as expressed by focus group participants are briefly summarized in the following table. (The Appendix in the full report contains a list of more specific comments about recreational needs and interests for each age group.)

Rec Center Usage and Interests by Age Group

Age Group	Usage of Rec Center	Recreational Interests
12-19*	<p>Used most frequently by young children during school breaks and summer. Many young teens were active in swimming and the swim team. However, usage drops off after age 16, when teens are able to drive and go outside the community for recreation.</p> <p><i>Note: *There were no participants between the ages of 20 and 26.</i></p>	<p>Swimming is the most important activity, especially for those involved in the swim team. Tennis, other team sports, and sport camps are also mentioned. Teens also noted that "a place to hang out would be nice".</p>
26-45	<p>Not used much by these adults, but their children use the facility for youth activities. Parents of young children may spend time at the pool while their children are swimming. This provides a valuable opportunity to socialize with other parents.</p>	<p>This group stressed the importance of having a safe place to drop off children. If good day care was available, more of them might work out at the Rec. Many in this age group are so busy with work and family that it is hard for them to find the time to exercise. Extended hours might serve this group, as well as activities geared to families. Recognize that some adults in this age group are single and interested in socializing and learning with other local residents.</p>
46-65	<p>Used less frequently by this age group. Most residents in this group used the facility when their own children, many of whom are now grown, were young. Parents of teenagers may still support youth competitive sports at the Rec Center. A few adults in this age group currently participate in water therapy.</p>	<p>Most in this age group are still actively working and have limited free time for exercise. Extended hours might serve this group. These residents were also interested in activities that promote social interaction across generations and foster lifelong learning.</p>
65+	<p>Used more frequently by this age group, especially those participating in swimming and water therapy.</p>	<p>Many in this group value lap swimming and would benefit from more water therapy programs. They are also interested in having a place to meet with other older adults for "senior center" activities such as card games, socializing, and lifelong learning. Those residents with limited mobility would like to see pool improvements that make it easier to get in and out of the water.</p>

Common Themes

Residents participating in the focus groups and community meetings, whether actively using the Rec Center or not, were virtually unanimous in their sense that the Rec Center is of central importance to Litchfield Park. Impressions of the current facility and services, as well as their ideas about future programs were similar among all the age groups. No specific preferences by specific neighborhood were identified.

Following are the key findings and other observations that emerged from these community conversations. These statements reflect the general opinions of the majority — but not necessarily *all* — of the 79 participants in the Community Assessment. For further explanation of these comments, as well as identification of any dissenting points of view, please refer to the full document.

Key Findings

- The majority of respondents would like to see the Rec Center re-conceptualized as a multi-generational Community Center, and perhaps renamed to reflect its importance to Litchfield Park.
- Those residents who have used the Rec Center consider the current facility to be outdated, undersized and unattractive. The pool, exercise room and restrooms/showers were most often cited as needing improvement.
- The majority of participants think that the Rec Center should be upgraded and expanded, but without losing its small-town character.
- Virtually all respondents view the Rec Center as an important symbol of the Litchfield Park community.
- The majority of participants want the Rec Center to remain downtown.
- Most respondents think there is a need for more community meeting space in Litchfield Park.
- Many residents are interested in greater opportunities for lifelong learning.
- Most indicated that Rec Center should receive some financial support from the City.

Additional Observations

- Most respondents had high regard for the Rec Center's current programs and special events.
- The vast majority of participants see the pool as a vital part of the Rec Center, and emphasized its importance for the youth competitive swimming programs.
- Those who have participated in Rec Center programs felt that the staff at the Rec Center have been a tremendous asset.
- Most residents believe that the Rec Center does not presently serve the entire community. The overall impression is that it is predominantly used by the youngest and oldest residents, but not by most residents aged 20-65.
- The majority of participants want to see the Rec Center continue — whether they use the current facility or not.
- According to the majority of participants, maintaining the status quo is not a viable option.
- Many residents questioned the value of the preschool program at the Rec Center.
- Many respondents expressed tentative support for new funding to improve the Rec Center.
- Residents suggested that the Library building might provide an opportunity to expand the Rec Center.

Summary

The common themes that emerged from this Community Assessment of nearly 80 residents reveal that the Rec Center is important to many residents in Litchfield Park, and has played a key role, especially for the youth, in the community. However, participants believe that the current facility is outdated and in dire need of improvement. They would like to see improvements to enhance the pool and upgrade the exercise room and restrooms/showers. In addition, residents expressed a desire for more community meeting space and opportunities to promote lifelong learning. In this regard, they thought that if the adjoining County Library moves, this building would provide an excellent opportunity to augment the Rec Center facilities. **Ultimately, many would like to see the Rec Center re-conceptualized, and perhaps renamed, as a multi-generational Community Center in an updated facility that can respond to the community as a whole.**

While residents expressed a desire for new improvements, they seemed acutely aware that any major renovations will be expensive and may require new sources of funding. Many residents expressed tentative support for financing that would make these desired Rec Center improvements possible.

In summary, residents expressed appreciation for the opportunity to share their thoughts and ideas with the City Council. Many participants thought that the next steps would be for the Council to develop more specific alternative conceptual designs and cost estimates for the Litchfield Park Recreation Center. From this analysis, the City might identify a final set of 3-5 improvement options for the Rec Center, along with pros and cons for each alternative, as well as funding implications. This information could then be presented back to the community for further review and comment. Many of the residents who participated in the Litchfield Park Recreation Center Community Assessment offered to assist the Council in their further exploration of alternative ways to meet the community's future recreation needs.

City of Litchfield Park Recreation Center Community Assessment Summary of 2007 Focus Groups and Community Meetings

1. Background

For many years, the Litchfield Park Recreation Center has provided recreational programs and services to the residents in and around Litchfield Park. While the Recreation Center (also known locally as “The Rec” or “Rec Center”) was state-of-the-art when it was originally constructed, the physical facility has not been significantly improved during the past forty years. In addition, the West Valley has grown dramatically since the Recreation Center was first established. Today, there are many other recreational facilities, both public and private, located within a few miles of Litchfield Park. As a result, local residents now have convenient access to a greater array of recreational program alternatives than when the Rec Center was first constructed.

In March 2006, the Litchfield Park City Council arranged for Ballard King and Associates to conduct a comprehensive financial and operational audit of the Litchfield Park Recreation Center and Swimming Pool. There had been concern among some City Council members that the Rec Center was serving fewer and fewer residents, while growing a larger and larger subsidy. Ballard King conducted research for a period of several months, and turned in its final report on August 15, 2006. That report identified opportunities to improve the operational efficiency of the Recreation Center. It also outlined several alternative management scenarios and suggested that the City of Litchfield clarify its future role in providing recreation services.

Note: This report contains anecdotal information based upon conversations with nearly 80 Litchfield Park residents. While an effort was made to include citizens from different neighborhoods and various age groups, participants in the focus groups and community meetings were not randomly selected from among all households in Litchfield Park. This means that the results of the focus groups and community meetings cannot be construed as representing the views of all Litchfield Park residents. Rather, these sessions were designed to solicit ideas from a broad cross-section of citizens, so that this valuable feedback from local residents could be considered by the City’s Recreation Subcommittee.

At the same time, the Recreation, Arts and Parks Commission (RAPCOM) of Litchfield Park conducted a survey of local residents to assess citizen satisfaction with existing recreational programs, parks, and facilities throughout the community, as well as to obtain general information about recreation interests. This survey was mailed to each household in Litchfield Park. The results of the citizen survey were also summarized in the final Ballard King audit report.

In the fall of 2006, the Litchfield City Council formed the Recreation Subcommittee to review and evaluate the audit and to formulate recommendations for the Recreation Center. The “Rec” Subcommittee, as it is also known, consists of three members: Councilwoman Marcie Ellis, Councilman Tim Blake, and Dave Schwake, RAPCOM Chair. Upon reviewing the results from the citizen survey and audit report, the Rec Subcommittee identified the need for more specific information as to a) the priority the community put on having a Rec Center and b) if residents felt the Center was important, the kinds of programs that would interest and specifically serve

Litchfield Park residents. That way, when the Recreation Subcommittee recommended whether to maintain, update, and/or rebuild the Center, the programs the citizens wanted would inform the Subcommittee as to the kind of facility necessary to deliver those programs.

In November 2007, the Rec Subcommittee sought the expertise of ASU's Partnership for Community Development to conduct a community assessment focused on the Litchfield Park Recreation Center. The Partnership is part of the College of Human Services at Arizona State University. Its mission is to assist local governments, non-profits, businesses, and educational agencies in addressing critical community needs.

The Recreation Subcommittee, in discussions with PCD, determined that the most effective way to solicit community responses for this project would be to invite residents to participate in informal conversations, known as focus groups.

ASU's Partnership for Community Development, on behalf of the City of Litchfield Park, initiated the Litchfield Park Recreation Center Community Assessment project in early 2007. Eight focus groups were held at the Litchfield Park Elementary School during February and March. Altogether, fifty-eight citizens participated in these conversations about the Recreation Center.

On Saturday, March 10, ASU's PCD conducted two community meetings, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. These were also held at the Elementary School. Twenty-one residents attended these open community meetings.

In total, seventy-nine citizens participated in these conversations about the Recreation Center. This report, prepared by PCD, documents the results of the City of Litchfield Park Recreation Center Community Assessment project.

2. Use and Limitations of Focus Groups

The Litchfield Park Rec Subcommittee decided to utilize focus groups to obtain more in-depth, qualitative opinion data from community residents. Focus groups have several advantages over written surveys. They can be conducted more quickly than the time required to design, distribute, and analyze the results of a quantitative survey.

Focus groups are typically conducted with 8 -12 participants in sessions lasting between one and two hours. A facilitator guides the group's discussion based on a set of question prompts. Sessions are informal and designed to elicit more in-depth responses than are possible with a written survey. Using an example from Litchfield Park's most recent written survey, respondents were asked to rate various recreation programs on a scale of *Very Satisfied*, *Somewhat Satisfied*, *Somewhat Dissatisfied* or *Very Dissatisfied*. These static responses are then tallied to report percentages of satisfaction rates.

In contrast, focus group participants respond to open questions, such as "*How would you assess current services?*" Rather than providing a simple answer, participants engage in a conversation about what they like, what they dislike and, often most importantly, *why* they feel they way they

do. Another advantage of focus groups is that if a participant does not understand a question, they can ask the facilitator for clarification. This minimizes errors and contributes to more accurate responses. In addition, the facilitator can ask a follow-up question to clarify a respondent's meaning or to probe an issue more deeply.

Focus group results are usually presented in more qualitative terms, by reporting common themes that emerged from the conversations. In contrast, the results of questionnaires are often documented on a quantitative basis, with numbers and percentages. Thus, focus groups provide a means of capturing citizen responses in much richer detail and with greater dimensionality than is possible with survey data.

On the other hand, surveys are conducted using a statistically valid, randomly selected, sample of the total population. If sufficient citizen questionnaires within the sample set are completed and returned, survey results provide a high degree of accuracy. Results can be interpreted as being representative of the entire community. This allows one to draw conclusions about the population as a whole — plus or minus a certain percentage of error.

In summary, focus groups are useful for quickly obtaining valuable community feedback. Moreover, the results of focus groups can also be used to guide development of any formal citizen surveys that might be conducted in the future.

3. Methodology

ASU's Partnership for Community Development was contracted by the City of Litchfield Park to gain resident input about the Litchfield Park Recreation Center and its programming. Resident input was gathered through a series of eight focus group sessions and two community meetings. The methodology employed for both types of forums is described below.

Focus Groups

The Rec Subcommittee decided to utilize focus groups to obtain more in-depth, qualitative opinion data from community residents. Because the Rec Subcommittee felt strongly that it wanted to hear from all residents of Litchfield Park, they decided to hold focus group sessions by age group. In addition, the Subcommittee wanted to hear from residents who lived in all parts of Litchfield Park. For the purposes of the Recreation Center Community Assessment project, the Subcommittee identified nine neighborhood areas within the incorporated city limits. A map showing the location of these neighborhoods is included in the Appendix.

For this project, focus groups were organized to gather the insights of four generalized age groups: youth/teens (ages 12-25), families with young children (ages 26-45), families with teens (ages 45-65), and older adults (ages 65+). A total of eight focus groups were scheduled during the months of February and March 2007. Two focus groups were planned for each age group.

The focus group sessions were arranged to be held at the Litchfield Elementary School in their Media Center. This facility was only available on selected weeknights after 6:00 p.m. and on Saturdays during the day. PCD staff thus scheduled the evening sessions for the focus groups

with youth/teens, families with young children, and families with teens. These evening focus groups were scheduled from 7:00 – 8:30 p.m. on a variety of weeknights. The two focus groups for older adults were scheduled from 9:00 – 10:30 a.m. and from 1:00 – 2:30 p.m. on Saturday, February 24, 2007.

In preparation for the focus group sessions, the Rec Subcommittee generated a comprehensive list of potential participants representing a cross-section of community residents in terms of the four age groupings and nine established neighborhood areas. In addition, public announcements were placed in the City's newsletter, *CityLine*, and in the local newspaper, *West Valley View*, encouraging any interested resident to add their name to the pool of potential focus group participants. All citizens were invited to add their names to the pool, excepting City Council and Commission members and their relatives. The City Council also provided an opportunity for citizens to sign up for this opportunity at the City of Litchfield Park's Annual Town Hall, which was held on January 27, 2007.

The final Potential Participant List contained 221 names: 24 youth/teens, 43 families with young children, 70 families with teens, and 84 older adults. Thus, while not a scientifically random sample, the final list of 221 residents was created with the intent to solicit broad participation from the community as a whole.

The Potential Participant List, which consisted of names, phone numbers, addresses, and age-group designation, was provided to PCD. PCD staff added the appropriate numeric neighborhood code for each name in the pool based upon the map provided by the Rec Subcommittee (included in the Appendix). PCD staff first sorted the names on the Potential Participant List by age, and then by neighborhood. PCD staff then randomly selected participants from the Potential Participant List to contact regarding participation in the assessment. In the beginning, 25 participants were selected from each age group, so that 13 people would be invited to attend each focus group session. That way, if several people dropped out, the focus group would still be large enough to allow for sufficient participation.

Phone call invitations began on February 9, 2007. PCD staff contacted the selected respondents using the telephone number provided by the City to request their participation in the assessment. However, after contacting the initially selected group, PCD staff experienced low and slow responses to inquiries for participation. As a result, they decided to increase the potential participant base to include all individuals listed on the Potential Participant List. Staff also informed the Rec Subcommittee of the potential low number of participants. PCD staff telephoned each person on the list at least once, with many receiving two or more calls about the assessment.

PCD staff asked potential participants to confirm their intentions to attend one of the two focus groups scheduled for their age group:

- 12-25 yrs: Tuesday, February 27 or Wednesday, March 7; evenings.
- 26-45 yrs: Thursday, February 22 or Tuesday, March 6; evenings.
- 46-65 yrs: Thursday, February 15 or Wednesday, February 28; evenings.
- 65+ years: Saturday, February 24; one in the morning and one in the afternoon.

PCD staff also tracked confirmations. A summary of this extensive outreach to Litchfield Park residents is depicted in the table included in the next section of this report.

Community Meetings

In addition to the eight focus groups, two open community meetings were held to gather additional input from Litchfield Park residents. These sessions were scheduled for 9-10:30 a.m. and 1-2:30 p.m. on Saturday, March 10, 2007. The community meetings were also held at the Litchfield Park Elementary School.

Unlike the focus groups, these sessions were open to the general public. An announcement of these open community meetings was included in the local newspaper. In addition, the Rec Subcommittee members also publicized this opportunity to interested citizens, through phone calls, emails and other interactions.

Residents who were invited to participate in the focus groups, but were unable to participate on the dates meetings had been scheduled, were also informed of the community meetings. In this way, all residents on the original Potential Participant List had an additional opportunity to provide input on the Recreation Center.

Facilitation

Peggy O'Sullivan, PCD's Assistant Director, served as facilitator for all of the focus group sessions, as well as the community meetings. As a result, all sessions were conducted by the same facilitator. She also prepared this summary report.

4. Process Used

Session Introductions

At the start of each session, the facilitator welcomed residents and explained that Arizona State University's Partnership for Community Development had been retained by the City of Litchfield Park to obtain citizen input about the Litchfield Park Recreation Center. She added that ASU would be conducting a total of eight focus groups and two community meetings.

She also informed residents that the City Council had formed the Recreation Subcommittee, comprised of three members: Councilwoman Marcie Ellis, Councilman Tim Blake, and Recreation Committee Chair, Dave Schwake. As part of their consideration of plans for the Recreation Center, the Rec Subcommittee wanted to hear more from local residents. In particular, they wanted to know how local residents felt about the Rec Center currently, and if they had any ideas about new programs or services.

The facilitator stressed that neither the Rec Subcommittee nor the City Council had any specific plans for the Rec Center at this time. Rather, they genuinely wanted to hear from local residents before considering alternatives. The facilitator also assured participants that their individual

responses would be kept confidential. What would be reported were the general themes and patterns that emerged from the conversations.

Participants also had an opportunity to ask questions before and during the focus group session. Often, residents wanted to know what would happen next. The facilitator explained that a summary report would be provided to the Rec Subcommittee. She added that the Subcommittee planned to review the focus group findings in conjunction with the Council's deliberations on the next fiscal year's budget.

Each participant also received a one-page handout on existing programs and services currently offered by the Rec Center. This handout was created based upon information provided on February 15, 2007, by Sonny Culbreth, Assistant City Manager. A copy of this handout is provided in the Appendix.

Focus Group Questions

Each focus group session was conducted as a conversation with up to 12 residents. Sessions lasted from 1½ to 2 hours. Sessions were informal and designed to elicit more in-depth responses than are possible with a written survey. PCD facilitated these conversations based upon a set of question prompts that were developed with input from the Rec Subcommittee. Residents were asked to share their responses to questions related to the following topics:

- Current Perceptions and Usage of the Rec Center
- Alternative Future Scenarios for the Rec Center
- Ideas for New Programs and Facility Improvements
- Financing Strategies

Each focus group responded to the same general questions, although they may have been presented in a different order depending upon the flow of the group conversation. Following is a complete list of the questions that guided these focus group conversations.

Focus Group Questions

1. What do you like to do for fun and recreation?
2. Do you currently use the Litchfield Park Rec Center?
 - a. If yes, what programs and services do you use?
 - b. If no, why not?
3. What is your current impression of the Rec Center, in terms of the existing facility and current program offerings?
4. What has been your experience with Rec Center employees?
5. Today, there are many more recreation opportunities available to Litchfield Park residents than when the Rec Center was first constructed. Do you think the Rec Center is still needed? If the Rec Center were to be closed, would you be impacted?
6. Is continuing to operate the Rec Center as it is today — that is, with no new programs or facility improvements — a viable option? Why or why not?
7. If the City decided to upgrade the Rec Center or create a new facility, should they build something similar to the other new public and private facilities in the surrounding area (e.g., the YMCA, the Goodyear City Park, LA Fitness, Lifetime Fitness, etc.)?
8. If the City were to develop new recreational programs, what would you like to see? Please focus on those programs or services that you would actually use.
9. If the Council were to renovate the existing Rec Center or build new facilities, what improvements would you like to see? (Caveat: Since we do not know the cost of any new construction, nor do we know whether adequate funding is available, these ideas may not be feasible. Thus, any discussion of facility improvements must be seen as hypothetical at this point.)
10. Without talking about specific budget numbers, which of the following budget philosophies do you think would be most appropriate for the Rec Center?
 - a. The Rec Center should generate sufficient revenues through user fees to cover its own operating expenses.
 - b. The Rec Center should be operated as a money-making enterprise and return a net profit to the City.

Focus Group Questions

- c. The Rec Center should generate revenues to cover some of its operating expenses. However, the City should subsidize a portion of the Rec Center's budget because it benefits the community overall.
 - d. The Rec Center should be largely supported by the City's budget (i.e., local taxpayers).
11. There will always be more worthwhile ideas than there is available public funding. Therefore, the City Council, just like your family, has to make tough decisions to balance the budget. Given that funds are limited, how would you pay for recreation programs and improvements?
12. Do you have any other comments or ideas about the Rec Center or recreation, in general?
13. If you had to describe what you like about the City of Litchfield Park in just a few words, what would you say?

Community Meeting Process

The facilitator provided an introduction to community meeting attendees that was similar to that given to the focus group participants. In addition, attendees were asked if they resided within the current city limits of the City of Litchfield Park. A map showing the existing incorporated boundary was available for those who wished to check their location. All participants at both the morning and afternoon community meetings verbally indicated that they lived within the incorporated city limits. They also provided their addresses and email contact information on the sign-in sheet.

The facilitator provided an oral summary of the general themes that emerged from the eight previously held focus groups. Community members had an opportunity to comment on and add to these ideas.

The facilitator explained that residents of the middle-age group, that is, working adults aged 26 – 46, were not well represented in the focus groups. Since several individuals present at the community meetings appeared to be members of this age group, the facilitator requested that they offer general comments about the Rec Center and their ideas for needed programs. (Note: Participants were not asked to disclose their age at the community meetings.)

5. Citizen Participation

In total, fifty-eight citizens participated in the eight focus groups and twenty-one residents attended the two open community meetings. Thus, a total of seventy-nine citizens participated in these community conversations about the Recreation Center. Following is a summary of citizen participation in both types of forums.

Participation in Focus Groups

Eight focus groups were held during February and March 2007, to solicit resident feedback about the Litchfield Park Recreation Center. All of the focus group sessions were held at the Litchfield Elementary School in the Community Resource Room (library). A total of 58 citizens attended these eight meetings. The following table shows the dates, times and attendance for each of focus group.

Despite valiant attempts to reach all neighborhoods and age groups, some neighborhoods and age groups were underrepresented in the focus groups and community meetings. Specifically, there were fewer participants in the age groups ranging from ages 12-25 and 26-45. Of the nine Litchfield Park neighborhoods identified for this project, participation from four of them (identified as Neighborhoods 1, 5, 6, and 9 on the map included in the Appendix) was lower than the other neighborhoods.

Participation in Focus Groups

Focus Group Session	Date	Time	Age Group	Number of Participants		
				Invited	Confirmed	Actual
1	Thursday, February 15, 2007	7:00 PM- 8:30 PM	46-65	70	8	3
2	Thursday, February 22, 2007	7:00 PM- 8:30 PM	26-45	41	4	5
3	Saturday, February 24, 2007	9:00 AM- 10:30 AM	65+	83	15	10
4	Saturday, February 24, 2007	1:00 PM- 2:30 PM	65+	83	13	7
5	Tuesday, February 27, 2007	7:00 PM- 8:30 PM	12-25	24	8	7
6	Wednesday, February 28, 2007	7:00 PM- 8:30 PM	46-65	70	16	11
7	Tuesday, March 6, 2007	7:00 PM- 8:30 PM	26-45	41	4	6
8	Wednesday, March 7, 2007	7:00 PM- 8:30 PM	12-25	24	7	9

The above table shows that although many residents verbally confirmed that they would attend a particular session, actual turnout was typically lower than expected, especially for the first session. Some residents showed up that had not been anticipated. Rather than turn them away, the facilitator welcomed them and encouraged them to stay, because their feedback was important. A few others were unable to attend their originally assigned session, but showed up at a different time. A copy of the sign-in sheets for all eight focus groups was provided to the City Recreation Subcommittee.

In general, most people attended the session that was arranged for their age group. In one case, some teens came to a session for older residents, so their comments were added to the aggregate responses for all youth.

The following tables and charts show focus group participation by age group and neighborhood.

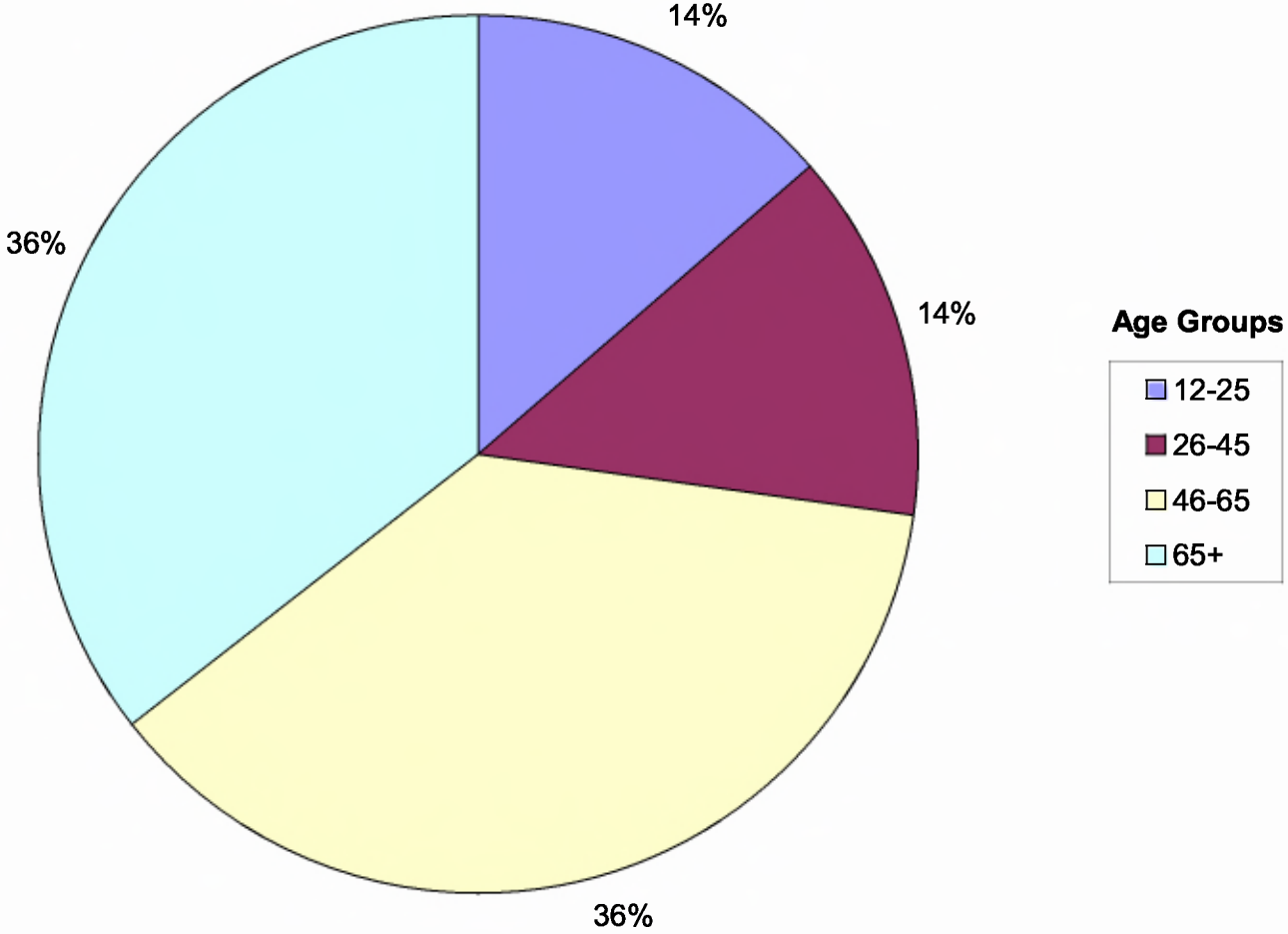
Focus Group Participation by Age Group

Age Group	Number of Participants	% of Total Participants
12-25	8	14
26-45	8	14
46-65	22	38
65+	20	34
Total	58	100

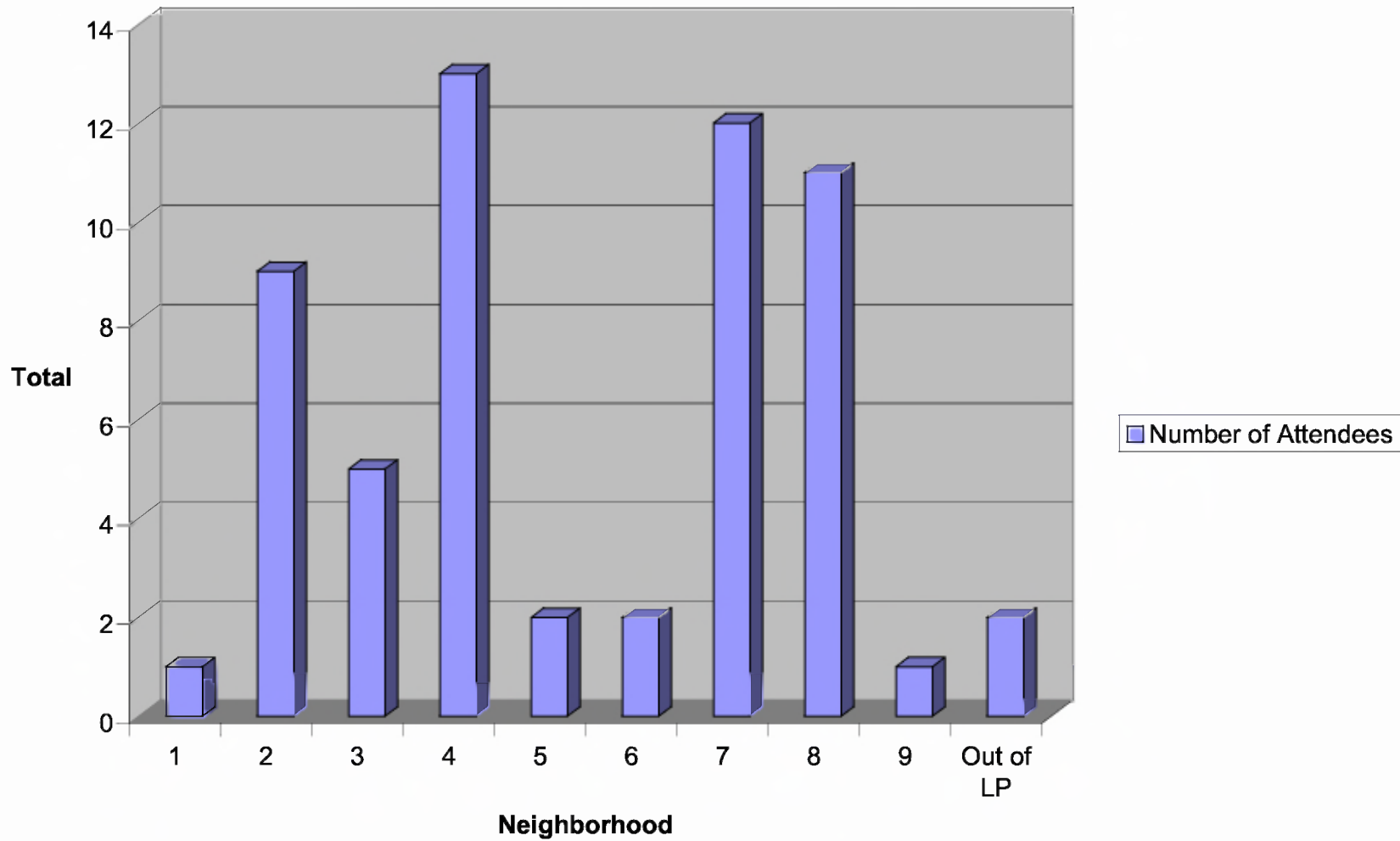
Focus Group Participation by Neighborhood

Neighborhood	Number of Participants	% of Total Participants
1	1	2
2	9	16
3	5	9
4	13	22
5	2	3
6	2	3
7	12	21
8	11	19
9	1	2
<i>Not in City</i>	2	3
Total	58	100

Focus Group Participation by Age Group



Focus Group Participants by Neighborhood



Participation in Community Meetings

Two community meetings were scheduled after the eight focus groups. These meetings were held on Saturday, March 10, 2007, and were also conducted at the Litchfield Elementary School's Media Center (library). Ten people attended the morning session and eleven came for the afternoon session. In total, 21 residents participated in the open community sessions. Copies of the sign-in sheets for both sessions were provided to the Rec Subcommittee. The following table shows the dates, times and attendance.

Participation in Community Meetings

Community Meetings	Date	Time	Age Group	Number of Participants		
				<i>Invited</i>	<i>Confirmed</i>	<i>Actual</i>
1	Saturday March 10, 2007	9:00 AM- 10:30 AM	open	N/A	4	10
2	Saturday March 10, 2007	1:00 PM- 2:30 PM	open	N/A	5	11

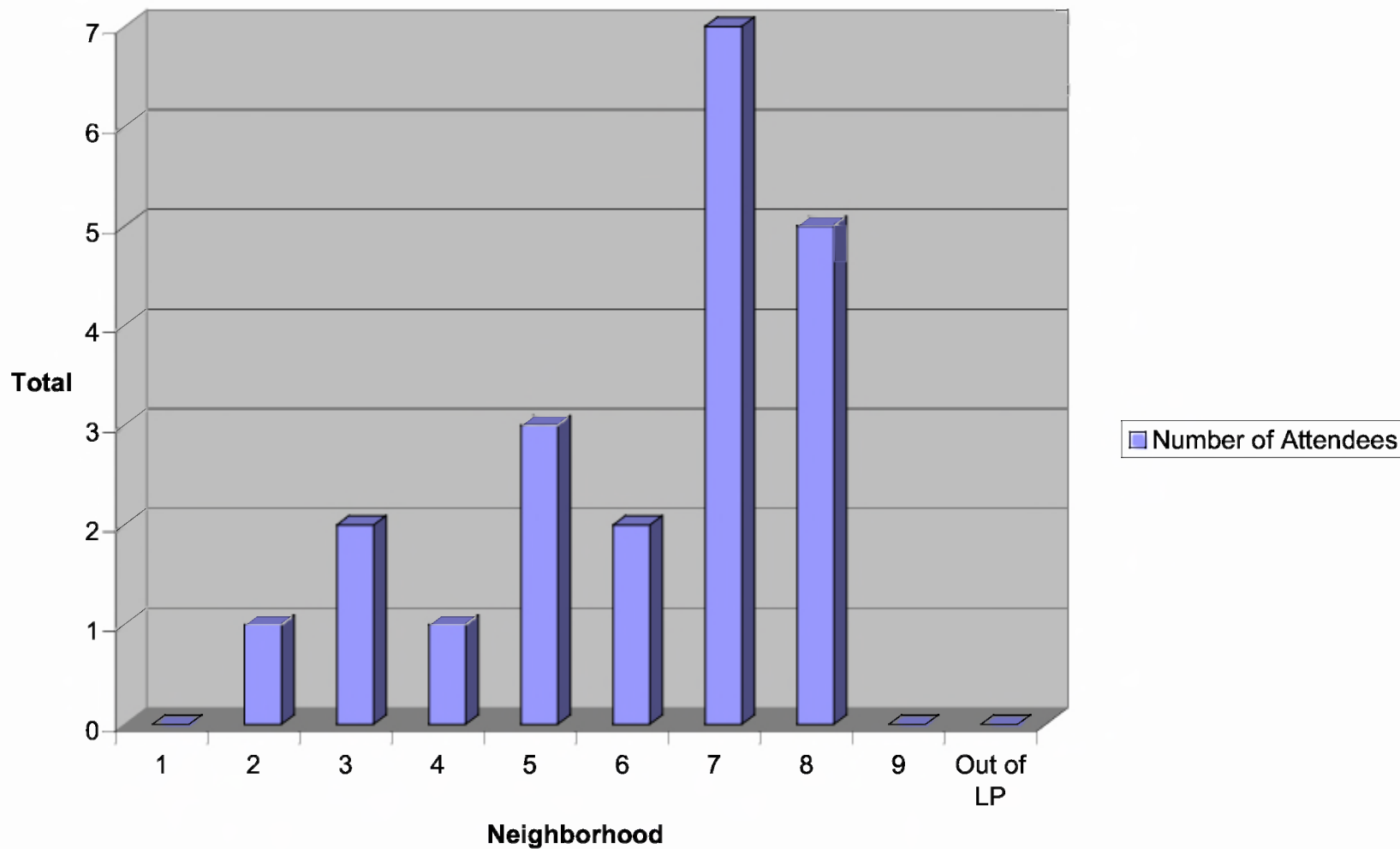
Participation by neighborhood is shown below. Age information was not provided, since these meetings were open to anyone in the community regardless of age.

Community Meeting Participation by Neighborhood

Neighborhood	Number of Participants	% of Total Participants
1	0	0
2	1	5
3	2	10
4	1	5
5	3	14
6	2	10
7	7	33
8	5	24
9	0	0
<i>Not in City</i>	0	0
Total	21	101*

* does not add up to 100% due to rounding

Community Meeting Participants by Neighborhood



6. *Interpreting Results*

The results of this Community Assessment are based upon the conversations held with residents during the focus groups and community meetings. While this information is useful and richly detailed, caution is needed in interpreting the results as indicative of the opinions of every resident in Litchfield Park.

As noted above, the pool of potential focus group participants was generated from two sources: a) the Litchfield Park Recreation Subcommittee and b) respondents to notices that were posted in the *West Valley View* and other outlets. In addition, participation in the community meetings was open to any interested resident. Because participants in the focus groups and community meetings were not randomly selected from among all of the 2,500 (approximately) households in Litchfield Park, the results cannot be considered to be a statistically valid sample of the total population. In other words, the opinions expressed by the 79 citizens participating in the community assessment cannot be interpreted as representing the views of all Litchfield Park citizens. Nevertheless, the issues and concerns raised by participants were strikingly similar across all groups. This lends credibility to the notion that the common themes, if not held by all residents, are characteristic of a substantial number of Litchfield Park citizens.

City staff subsequently compared the list of residents with the Rec Center's utilization records. It is interesting to note that approximately half of these residents had participated in Rec Center programs at one time or another, while the other half had not used the Rec Center or its programs at all (according to City records).

A summary of the results from the focus groups and community meetings is provided below. Information is first summarized in terms of general age group comments, followed by thematic statements that were common to all groups.

7. Age Group Responses

Although the focus groups were organized by age, responses were surprisingly similar across all age groups. Interestingly, each age group, while speaking of their own needs, was also very interested and concerned about the other age groups. Most agreed that the Litchfield Park Recreation Center, known locally as “the Rec” or “the Rec Center”, should be a multi-generational facility that serves all of the residents of Litchfield Park. They also expressed a desire for increased opportunities for activities that foster greater interaction across age groups. Residents as a whole seemed to recognize that each age cohort has something to give – and something to gain – from the other age groups.

As noted previously, there were fewer residents from the younger age groups, so these results may not be typical of others in that age range. In particular, there were no residents older than age 19 at the focus groups scheduled for residents aged 12-25. Also, the community meetings were open to all ages, so comments from these sessions were more general, rather than specific to a particular age group.

Conversations with local residents reveal that their current impression is that the Rec Center is used most frequently by the youngest (i.e., those under age 20) and the oldest (i.e., those over age 65) residents in Litchfield Park. Interests in recreational activities vary somewhat across the lifespan. These general trends as expressed by focus group participants are briefly summarized in the following table. The Appendix contains a list of more specific comments about recreational needs and interests for each age group.

Rec Center Usage and Interests by Age Group

Age Group	Usage of Rec Center	Recreational Interests
12-19*	<p>Used most frequently by young children during school breaks and summer. Many young teens were active in swimming and the swim team. However, usage drops off after age 16, when teens are able to drive and go outside the community for recreation.</p> <p><i>Note: *There were no participants between the ages of 20 and 26.</i></p>	<p>Swimming is the most important activity, especially for those involved in the swim team. Tennis, other team sports, and sport camps are also mentioned. Teens also noted that "a place to hang out would be nice".</p>
26-45	<p>Not used much by these adults, but their children use the facility for youth activities. Parents of young children may spend time at the pool while their children are swimming. This provides a valuable opportunity to socialize with other parents.</p>	<p>This group stressed the importance of having a safe place to drop off children. If good day care was available, more of them might work out at the Rec. Many in this age group are so busy with work and family that it is hard for them to find the time to exercise. Extended hours might serve this group, as well as activities geared to families. Recognize that some adults in this age group are single and interested in socializing and learning with other local residents.</p>
46-65	<p>Used less frequently by this age group. Most residents in this group used the facility when their own children, many of whom are now grown, were young. Parents of teenagers may still support youth competitive sports at the Rec Center. A few adults in this age group currently participate in water therapy.</p>	<p>Most in this age group are still actively working and have limited free time for exercise. Extended hours might serve this group. These residents were also interested in activities that promote social interaction across generations and foster lifelong learning.</p>
65+	<p>Used more frequently by this age group, especially those participating in swimming and water therapy.</p>	<p>Many in this group value lap swimming and would benefit from more water therapy programs. They are also interested in having a place to meet with other older adults for "senior center" activities such as card games, socializing, and lifelong learning. Those residents with limited mobility would like to see pool improvements that make it easier to get in and out of the water.</p>

8. Common Themes

Residents participating in the focus groups and community meetings, whether actively using the Rec Center or not, were virtually unanimous in their sense that the Rec Center is of central importance to Litchfield Park. Impressions of the current facility and services, as well as their ideas about future programs were similar among all the age groups. No specific preferences by neighborhood area were identified.

Following are the key findings and other observations that emerged from these community conversations. These statements reflect the general opinions of the majority — but not necessarily *all* — of the 79 participants in the Community Assessment. If there were differing opinions, these are noted in the Counterpoint section below each common theme. More detailed comments from the focus groups and community meetings are provided in the Appendix.

Key Findings

- **The majority of respondents would like to see the Rec Center re-conceptualized as a multi-generational Community Center, and perhaps renamed to reflect its importance to Litchfield Park.**

Residents expressed their sense that the Rec Center is more than just a place to work out. It can be a community gathering place that brings residents together. It should serve all residents across the lifespan, from childhood until old age. Many spoke of their desire for more opportunities to interact across generations. Several people suggested that the Rec be renamed to Community Center to reflect its true purpose.

Counterpoint: Although the preschool fits under a multi-generational model, many respondents questioned continuing this use, given the need for more community meeting space.

Counterpoint: Several respondents did not like the idea of changing the name to Community Center.

- **Those residents who have used the Rec Center consider the current facility to be outdated, undersized and unattractive. The pool, exercise room and restrooms/showers were most often cited as needing improvement.**

Although the Rec was once a state-of-the art recreation center, it is now woefully out of date. During the summer, the pool is overcrowded. There is no shade. The children's wading pool is not very appealing and there are no interactive activities. Overall, residents described the building as dimly lit, too small and generally unattractive. Residents most frequently noted that restrooms, showers and locker rooms are in dire need of renovation. Some expressed concern about safety and sanitation. Also, the weight room is too small and the exercise equipment can only accommodate a few people at a time.

Counterpoint: A few residents had not been to the facility in years and could not comment on current conditions.

Counterpoint: Most residents acknowledged that the feasibility of these improvements will depend upon site and budget limitations.

- **The majority of participants think that the Rec Center should be upgraded and expanded, but without losing its small-town character.**

High quality is a trademark of Litchfield Park. Right now, that is not reflected in Rec Center building. However, Litchfield Park does not need to create a large, new facility such as the YMCA or LA Fitness. No one wants anything on this scale. Rather, the Rec needs to be modernized, while still retaining its small-town, more intimate appeal. Residents noted that remodeling the bathrooms, locker rooms and the weight room were essential. They also wondered about the feasibility of expanding the pool and adding slides and water play areas.

Counterpoint: A few residents were not in favor of spending more money on improving the Rec facility.

- **Virtually all respondents view the Rec Center as an important symbol of the Litchfield Park community.**

Virtually all the participants indicated that the Rec Center has been a valuable community resource, and has especially benefited the children of Litchfield Park. The facility has great symbolic value beyond its function as a facility for sports and recreation. For many residents, the Rec represents the heart of the Litchfield Park community. Participants talked about the unique characteristics that brought them – and keep them – feeling connected to this special community. More information about resident impressions of the community is included in the Appendix.

Counterpoint: A few residents indicated that the Rec Center is no longer important to them.

- **The majority of participants want the Rec Center to remain downtown.**

Keeping the Rec Center in its current downtown location in the Litchfield Park City Center is vitally important. Many residents view the Rec as “the heart” of the community. They feel it is imperative that this facility remain accessible and within walking or biking distance for most residents.

Counterpoint: None noted.

- **Most respondents think there is a need for more community meeting space in Litchfield Park.**

Residents indicated that there is a great need for more public gathering places in the community. There is virtually no good place to hold community meetings, social gatherings, classes, clubs, or just a public space to "hang out". They would like to see the Rec Center expanded to include at least one classroom or community meeting space.

Counterpoint: None noted.

- **Many residents are interested in greater opportunities for lifelong learning.**

Overall, the Rec Center should identify a few new programs or niche areas based on what local residents want, and then do them really well. Many residents expressed interest in programs geared toward lifelong learning, such as having classes offered by Estrella Mountain Community College or ASU. In addition, many local residents have special expertise and may be available to offer a fun workshop or class at minimal cost. However, the Rec would need to add a classroom if it were to offer more adult learning programs.

Counterpoint: None noted.

- **Most indicated that Rec Center should receive some financial support from the City.**

Regarding funding for the Rec Center, it was nearly unanimous that the Rec should not be expected to pay for itself. Because it is such an important community asset, most residents thought that it should be subsidized to some extent by the City.

Counterpoint: A few residents disagreed that the Rec Center should be publicly supported and thought that it should pay its own way. While most respondents agreed that the Rec merited public support, they were not prepared to comment on the degree of financial support that would be appropriate without more budgetary information.

Counterpoint: Several participants noted that they would not support expensive new programs.

Additional Observations

- **Most respondents had high regard for the Rec Center's current programs and special events.**

Many people indicated that the programs currently offered at the Rec Center are of high quality. The swimming, tennis and water aerobics were most frequently mentioned as having excellent instructors. Additionally, everyone enjoys the special events

coordinated through the Rec Center, such as the Fourth of July Fireworks, Art in the Park, outdoor concerts, etc. All residents — in every age group — said that they regularly attend these special events and look forward to them.

Counterpoint: None.

- **The vast majority of participants sees the pool as a vital part of the Rec Center, and emphasized its importance for the youth competitive swimming programs.**

Having a Rec Center without the pool would be inconceivable. There is a rich legacy of youth competitive swimming in this community. Many people reported that their association with the La Guardos swim team had long-lasting positive impacts on their lives. Because the pool is central to Litchfield's history, character and lifestyle, residents felt that it must remain the focal point of the Rec Center. However, residents noted that the pool is too crowded during the summer months.

Counterpoint: A small number of participants indicated that they prefer to use their own backyard pools or pools at other facilities.

- **Those who have participated in Rec Center programs felt that the staff at the Rec Center have been a tremendous asset.**

At every focus group, participants had nothing but positive things to say about the staff at the Rec Center. Residents noted that many of the employees have been there for years and they know the community's residents well. They are kind and make everyone feel welcome. Many residents shared personal stories about how Sonny Culbreth, Mary, Ralph and others have touched their lives in significant ways. Respondents frequently attributed their life-long appreciation for health and fitness to their childhood experiences at the Rec Center.

Counterpoint: A few residents had no comments because they had not used the Rec Center.

- **Most residents believe that the Rec Center does not presently serve the entire community. The overall impression is that it is predominantly used by the youngest and oldest residents, but not by most residents aged 20-65.**

The Rec Center primarily serves the youth of Litchfield Park, especially those who are actively involved in swimming during the summer months. There is a small group of older adults who regularly enjoy the water exercise and therapy classes. In addition, the preschool which leases space at the Rec Center serves the youngest children. However, most adults do not feel the Rec Center offers programs that met their needs.

Counterpoint: Many residents questioned the value of the preschool given the need for other uses. They wondered how many local families are served by this program.

- **The majority of participants want to see the Rec Center continue — whether they use the current facility or not.**

Even though there are now more options for recreational services than when the Rec Center was first built, virtually all residents want to see the Rec Center continue in some capacity. If the Rec Center were to be closed, many would feel a tremendous sense of loss, even if they have not used the facility in many years.

Counterpoint: A handful of residents stated that they would not be impacted if the Rec Center were to close.

- **According to the majority of participants, maintaining the status quo is not a viable option.**

If the Recreation Center is kept as it is without any significant improvements, it will continue to lose patrons. To do nothing, in the words of several residents, would "*force the Rec to die a slow death*".

Counterpoint: Some residents indicated that the swimming program should continue whether the overall facility is improved or not.

- **Many residents questioned the value of the preschool program at the Rec Center.**

Because meeting and classroom space is so valuable, a lot of people wondered about the decision to lease space at the Rec Center for the preschool. Older residents recalled that this space was once available for meetings and private receptions, and feel that this need for meeting space may be more important than whatever lease revenues the preschool is providing to the City. Most residents indicated that more information is needed to assess the pros and cons of keeping the preschool at the Rec Center.

Counterpoint: Several participants expressed concern that the preschool may fulfill an important need for working families and children in the community.

- **Many respondents expressed tentative support for new funding to improve the Rec Center.**

Many people indicated that it may be time to look at creating new sources of funding such as a property tax or special bond initiative to finance needed improvements at the Rec Center. Participants thought that residents might support such a measure if they knew that it would result in specific facility upgrades and program expansion.

Counterpoint: A few residents were opposed to any increase in their property taxes. Some indicated that it would depend upon the amount. Most indicated that they were tentatively in favor of some form of new funding, but needed more information about projected costs and impacts before they could support such a measure.

- **Residents suggested that the Library building might provide an opportunity to expand the Rec Center.**

Everyone understands that the public library has become too crowded so that Maricopa County may relocate this facility. While many residents said that they will feel a great sense of loss if this happens, it could provide a unique opportunity. Since this building is located just north of the Rec Center it could provide valuable meeting and classroom space. The City of Litchfield Park should explore the possibility of acquiring this building, in the event that the County decides to move the Library.

Counterpoint: None noted.

9. Summary

The common themes that emerged from this Community Assessment of nearly 80 residents reveal that the Rec Center is important to many residents in Litchfield Park, and has played a key role, especially for the youth, in the community. However, participants believe that the current facility is outdated and in dire need of improvement. They would like to see improvements to enhance the pool and upgrade the exercise room and restrooms/showers. In addition, residents expressed a desire for more community meeting space and opportunities to promote lifelong learning. In this regard, they thought that if the adjoining County Library moves, this building would provide an excellent opportunity to augment the Rec Center facilities. **Ultimately, many would like to see the Rec Center re-conceptualized, and perhaps renamed, as a multi-generational Community Center in an updated facility that can respond to the community as a whole.**

While residents expressed a desire for new improvements, they seemed acutely aware that any major renovations will be expensive and may require new sources of funding. Many residents expressed tentative support for financing that would make these desired Rec Center improvements possible.

The results of the focus groups and community meetings have provided valuable citizen feedback to the Recreation Subcommittee, which will consider this information in formulating recommendations to the City Council about policies and priorities for future recreation services. In addition, the focus group results can be used to guide the development of any scientifically valid community surveys that might be conducted in the future.

In summary, residents expressed appreciation for the opportunity to share their thoughts and ideas with the City Council. Many participants thought that the next steps would be for the Council to develop more specific alternative conceptual designs and cost estimates for the Litchfield Park Recreation Center. From this analysis, the City might identify a final set of 3-5 improvement options for the Rec Center, along with pros and cons for each alternative, as well as funding implications. This information could then be presented back to the community for further review and comment. Many of the residents who participated in the Litchfield Park Recreation Center Community Assessment offered to assist the Council in their further exploration of alternative ways to meet the community's future recreation needs.

10. Appendix Items

- Appendix #1: Map of Litchfield Park Neighborhoods*
- Appendix #2: List of Current Recreation Center Programs*
- Appendix #3: Specific Age Group Responses*
- Appendix #4: Detailed Community Responses*
- Appendix #5: Overall Recommendations from Final Community Meeting*
- Appendix #6: Copies of Index Cards from Open Community Meetings*
- Appendix #7: Community Perceptions of Litchfield Park*

Appendix #1

Map of Litchfield Park Neighborhoods

Appendix #2

List of Current Recreation Center Programs

Litchfield Park Recreation Center

Existing Facilities

The Litchfield Park Recreation Center is 40 years old. The physical features have not been significantly changed or improved since they were initially constructed. The current facilities include:

- 6 - lane "L" shaped 25 yd. heated **Lap Pool**
- 19'x11' warm water **Therapy Pool**
- Circular children's **Wading Pool**.
- 2 outdoor lighted **Tennis Courts**
- Outdoor lighted **Basketball Court**
- **Preschool/Community Room**
- Small **Exercise Room** with a Sauna and a 10-station universal **Gym**.

Current Programs

The Litchfield Park Recreation Center currently offers the following programs and activities.

- **Aquatics:**
 - *Learn-to-Swim* Classes for all ages and all levels. (Primary focus is on youth lessons)
 - Summer Swim Team
 - Life Guard Classes
 - Water Aerobics (year round)
 - Specialty Water Exercise classes (year round)
 - Individual Therapy Classes taught by the Recreation Center Manager.
- **Youth & Adult Recreation**
 - **Preschool Classes** for ages 3, 4, & 5. Meets for 9 months: September-May
 - Mini Camp: **Half-day Summer Camps** for ages 4 – 10.
 - **Summer Day Camp:** All-day Camp for ages 6-11. (six weeks in the summer)
 - **School Break Camps:** All-day Camps for Youth (ages 6-11) during school breaks
 - **Tennis Lessons** for all ages, year round.
 - *Let's Exercise Adult Exercise Class* - meets mornings and afternoons, works in the weight room, and takes long walks. Also includes *Quality of Life* exercises.
- **Youth Sports:**
 - Co-ed Basketball, 3 seasons; 9 months of the year. --300 youth per season.
 - Fall Flag Football, ages 8 - 12 about --110 youth
 - Spring Soccer: ages 6-14 -- about 400 youth
 - T-Ball, ages 3 & 4. Fall, Introductory Baseball.
- **Adult Sports:**
 - Co-ed Soccer, Winter/Spring League, about 200 participants

Other Partnership Activities:

- Youth and Adult Ice Skating at Desert Schools Coyote Center
- Aquatics classes with Estrella Mt. Community College and Luke AFB
- Youth Art Classes, Lilly Putt (local youth art class studio)

Senior Citizens Program:

We have an active Senior Citizen's program that meets a minimum of one time per month. It also offers additional trips and outings during the month. This is a social group only.

Appendix #3

Specific Age Group Responses

Appendix 3: Specific Age Group Responses

Most of the comments made during the focus group conversations were similar across age groups. However, there were a few remarks that were specific to a particular age group. These are noted below.

Youth (Ages 12-19)

Although the focus groups for young people included ages 12 -25, no one was older than 19. The comments of these teens were similar to those of the other age groups, but the following activities and ideas were more specific to this age group.

In addition to the general activities that all residents enjoyed, the teens mentioned these recreation activities specifically.

- Gymnastics
- Basketball
- Rock climbing: Some of us would like a rock-climbing wall
- Mountain bike-riding
- Trail riding
- Dirt bike riding in the desert
- Soccer
- Competitive swimming
- Movies
- Singing
- Reading
- Sketching
- Scrap-booking
- Chess

Litchfield Park teens had the following observations about the Rec Center as it is now and suggestions for how it can best serve young people in the future.

- We need a place to do homework, especially if the library moves.
- When we were little kids, a lot of us remember running down the hall to the locker rooms after swimming. This is because the locker room is so small, that if you didn't get there first, it would take forever to get out of there. The hallway is dimly lit and we were running in bare, wet feet. Many of us slipped and fell during these sprints to the locker room. Although this was years ago, the City should look into this from a safety standpoint.
- We all remember that we had the freedom to ride our bikes or walk to the Rec. Kids in other towns don't have that luxury. It is so important to have that time before you get a driver's license when you have the freedom and safety to explore. Keep that for future

Litchfield Park kids.

- The people down there know us by name. That's nice. It made us feel safe. We know the world "outside the walls" won't be like that.
- Some of us went to the preschool in the Rec when we were very young, although we don't remember much about it. It just shows that the Rec was part of our lives from the beginning.
- We know that Litchfield Park was a good place to grow up. We have good memories. The Rec is part of that. We know we are lucky compared to other kids.
- We plan to leave Litchfield Park after graduation, either to go to college, the military, get work experience, or see the world. But, a lot of us might come back when we are older.
- We know the older adults care about us. We are not surprised to hear that they want more interaction with teenagers.
- I already feel part of the legacy. I am teaching swimming to the next generation of little kids. I remember being one of those little kids. I know that one day, some of them will be on the swim team, doing what I am doing.
- We also know adults who used to be involved with swimming when they were little. Now, their kids are learning to swim and want to be on the team. So, there's three generations linked together.
- We have a lot of friends from Millennium High School. They don't all live within the walls of Litchfield Park. They should be able to come here, too.
- We were too little to go, but we remember that the town once organized a teen center, but it was in a trailer by the school. It was out of the way, so no one wanted to go there.
- Once we have wheels— or our friends do— we want to get out of here. The malls are a fun place to go.
- Once young people get their driver's licenses, they want to explore outside the town and will look for activity outside Litchfield Park. Don't count on us, those of us aged 15-18, as the major focus of programs. We might stop by, but the Rec won't be our focus. Don't think there is anything wrong. It's just that our interests are expanding and we are beginning to think about what our lives will be like when we leave home.

Young Adults (Ages 26-45)

There were not many participants in the focus groups for the age group of 26-45. People noted that they are too busy working and taking care of their families. Following are comments from

those who did attend the focus groups, as well as some comments from older adults looking back on this important, but hectic time when their children were young.

- I like the Gold Gym, because I feel more motivated to work out there. I like the convenience.
- We need a place to drop off kids.
- Anything to get kids out of the house.
- I don't know why I don't use the Rec. I guess I just don't think about it being there. If I knew that there were some fun activities going on, I might be more inclined to go down there.
- Mothers need a chance to relax and socialize while children are playing. Having a shady place to sit while kids are in the pool would help.
- I often go out to Estrella Mountain College to workout. It's a great place to exercise. I would not consider using the Rec as it is now, but if we had a nice facility here, I would do my workouts here.
- I used to play tennis, but the surface on the courts was so bad, I gave up going there. (When someone explained that the courts have now been resurfaced, this person noted that they may start coming again.)
- As I was walking down for this meeting, I met someone who grew up here. She looked to be in her 30's. I asked her what her thoughts were about the Rec. She indicated that she didn't know what was going on. She thought the Rec was just for the kid's summer swim program. So this suggests that the Rec may need to do more advertising and outreach. Or it may mean that some adults are not accustomed to looking to the Rec as a source of fun activities.
- I think the Rec is great for kids, but I didn't think there was anything for adults.
- I would be sad to see the Rec Center go, especially for the kids because they need a place to play. I don't think we should take that away from them.
- I enjoy playing tennis at the Rec on Tuesday nights.
- Several mentioned the high quality of instruction they had received for tennis and exercise training.
- Another person mentioned working out regularly in the weight room.
- Sometimes, there will only be one person in the workout room.

- Some of us in this age group are single and don't have kids. Yet, we want to feel connected to the community, too.
- The weight room is functional, but not a pleasant place to work out. Frankly, it doesn't smell very good. It smells like a locker room, sweat and dirty socks.
- I like the Rec because it is a place where I can be real. It isn't a pick-up place like some gym clubs. I don't have to dress up and try to impress anyone. I love that it is not far away from my home. I can put on my sweats and run down there for a workout if I want to. I feel comfortable and free to be myself. It is almost like working out in a family rec room. Whatever we do, let's keep that casual atmosphere, that come-as-you-are familiarity.
- The universal machine cannot accommodate more than three people at a time. It is also hard to get on the treadmill.
- Some of the people who work out at the Rec are not local residents, but professional working people who like the small town ambience and find that it helps them unwind after a stressful workday.
- When my family moved here, we didn't know anyone. The Rec made it easy to meet new people and make new friends. This was especially important for high-school-aged new residents.
- I will always feel grateful to the staff at the Rec. When my son was a teenager, the staff took a personal interest in him. They got him involved in swimming and later he joined the swim team. Swimming has become a passion for him, which he has kept into adulthood. The staff also got him involved in tennis. The attention that this young person received came at a crucial time, because his life was headed in a bad direction. Their support and caring literally changed my son's life. I know he is not the only child who has been positively affected by the staff at the Rec.
- One of the participants, a single parent, shared that the Rec has been a lifesaver: I am grateful for the family pass because it is affordable at \$42 a month.
- Litchfield Park needs to build on its strengths. One of the things the Rec does so well is provide personal attention to members. Why not capitalize on this and offer customized health and wellness coaching for residents?
- I would love to have a personal coach who could design a unique workout plan to meet my individual fitness goals. If the Rec offered this service, and advertised it in the *West Valley View*, I bet a lot of people would use it.
- Working parents know that they can trust that if their kids go to the Rec, they will be safe and involved in constructive activities.

- Offer childcare for parents that want to come down and work out. The Rec would need to have a qualified person to watch out for kids, but that would be a tremendous help for working parents who are pressed for time.
- A lot of us grew up here. We left, but now that we have kids, we want them to grow up here, too. There are a lot of people coming back into the community as adults.
- We also want to be around our parents, who are older now.
- I want my kids to have what I had. I realize now how important community is. When I was little, I took it for granted.
- My experiences with the swim team changed my life. Even though I don't compete anymore, I have made physical exercise a regular part of my daily routine.
- I think Sonny and the others helped me appreciate the importance of physical fitness as part of being a healthy, happy person.
- I wasn't raised here, but came here for swim meets because I was on the swim team from a different Arizona high school. I was always impressed with how much this community supported the swim team, even though it was such a small town. Now that I am an adult with kids of my own, I thought this would be a great place to raise my family.

Adults (Ages 45-64)

This group had few needs or comments that were specific to this age group. In other words, their opinions are reflected in the aggregate findings. The most specific comments for this age group were as follows:

- Many of us have not used the Rec for years.
- We have memories of what it was like when it was new.
- Once our children grew up, we haven't been back.
- Sometimes we go down to the Rec when our grandchildren come to visit.
- Just because we don't use the Rec for ourselves, doesn't mean we don't want it to be there for other families.
- Provide activities that are not just weightlifting, not just conventional sports and recreation, but classes about lifestyle, wellness, well-being, how to get fit, etc.
- We don't think of ourselves as "old". A lot of us are still working and still actively involved with activities of all kinds.

- We are the aging baby boomers. Our view of life as older adults is not like that of past generations. We are redefining this part of our lives.

Older Adults (Ages 65+)

The oldest group of Litchfield Park residents had many ideas to share. Their thoughts were very similar to those of other residents. However, they had the following specific comments.

- Seniors need a place to play cards.
- Some older people cannot drive, live alone and need transportation. The community has become their family.
- We need Dial-a-Ride services or volunteers to pick up our older residents so they can participate in social activities.
- Many seniors are active adults. Most of us walk regularly every day.
- Keeping the Rec Center within walking distance of most residents is important for those elderly residents who can no longer drive, but are still mobile. It contributes greatly to their sense of independence.
- We like to play cards. Offer walk-in Bridge classes.
- Offer more special, small group programs such as water aerobics.
- We, more than younger people, understand the importance of staying physically fit. This is directly related to keeping our minds open and high-functioning.
- We are concerned that many young people today do not understand the importance of exercise. The growing obesity problem in this country is something we need to turn around or today's young people will not have healthy or happy lives when they are older adults.
- The heated pool is essential.
- Many of us need a ramp or something to make it easier to enter and exit the pool. Some of us have difficulty with the steps.
- Water-based activities are important as we age because our joints can no longer absorb the impact of running or intense physical exertion. The buoyancy of the water gives us incredible freedom and maintains our mobility.

- When one loses a spouse, especially if they have been together for many years, there is a devastating sense of loss. Widowed residents need social connections to stay emotionally healthy. We need to reach out to isolated seniors and get them involved in social activities.
- Those older adults who are caring for a spouse with serious illness are under terrible strain and need support.
- We have a lot of collective wisdom that we want to share.
- Many of us are long time residents and we are the keepers of the history of the Litchfield Park and the West Valley.
- Even though we look old, we still feel young on the inside.

Appendix #4

Detailed Community Responses

Appendix # 4

Detailed Community Responses

Following are examples of specific comments that were frequently mentioned in all eight focus groups and at the two community meetings. These more detailed comments provided the basis for identification of the overall Common Themes which are presented in the main document. These specific community responses are organized as follows:

- 1. Current Recreational Activities**
- 2. Current Impressions of the Rec Center**
- 3. Pool Improvements**
- 4. Water Play**
- 5. Water Therapy**
- 6. Shading**
- 7. Appearance & Aesthetics**
- 8. Weight Room**
- 9. Community Meeting Space**
- 10. Other Facility Improvements**
- 11. Classes and Programs**
- 12. Marketing and Outreach**
- 13. Possible Operational Improvements**
- 14. Financing Ideas**
- 15. Other Comments on the Rec Center**
- 16. Other Recreation Suggestions**
- 17. Other Comments Not Directly Related to Recreation**

1. *Current Recreational Activities*

Residents in all groups frequently mentioned the following as activities they enjoy.

- Bike riding
- Hiking in the White Tank Mountains
- Tennis
- Football, Pop Warner
- Baseball and softball. Little League
- Walking
- Soccer
- Any activity to get out of the house — for kids
- The La Guardos swim team is so important to this community.

2. *Current Impressions of the Rec Center*

- Very convenient
- A place to do homework
- It is way under capacity.

- Currently, the Rec Center is dark and dim.
- It is not aesthetically pleasing.
- The Rec Center is the heart of Litchfield Park.
- Sonny has been awesome.
- Mary is also very friendly.
- Ralph is a great instructor.
- A place to drop kids off.
- Kids can walk or ride to the Rec on their own.
- The Rec Center serves as a third place. Our first place is home. Our second place is work or school. The third place then is another living space that we can go to, and that's what the Rec is.
- I don't go there to work out.
- Many of the Rec Center staff have been there for 20 years. They are excellent.
- I worry about compatibility of babies and small children from the preschool so close to the pool.
- I really enjoy the tennis lessons.
- Competition for swim lanes in the summer is very high.
- I am not sure when there are good times of the day for walk-ins.
- The water aerobics and exercise classes are superb.
- The heated pool is a big plus, especially in the winter.
- The wading pool is not used very much.
- The wading pool is boring.
- I was unaware that Coed Soccer had started up. I would like to do that. The information I have on the Rec's programs must be dated.
- The Rec is a symbolic representation of the Litchfield Park community.
- Currently the Rec is not attractive, it is dingy and dirty. I wouldn't want to walk in there with bare feet.
- It is extremely important for kids to have the freedom to ride their bikes or walk to the Rec. They need to have a good place to go within the community where they are safe to explore. The Rec's location is so great, because younger kids do not have to cross any major streets.
- Many of us have used the Rec for years. Once our children grew up, we haven't been back. But that doesn't mean we don't want it to be there for other young families.
- Some years ago, the diving board was removed. That was a big loss.
- The pool is great. However, there's too much demand in the summer.
- The special events that are coordinated through the Rec Center are wonderful, such as Art in the Park, Christmas at the Wigwam, open air concerts, etc.
- Every one from all age groups loves the special events and look forward to them. The community events have a truly multigenerational appeal. They are also great for families. Even the teenagers go.
- I have not been down to the Rec for many years. I used to go down there when my children were little, but now they're grown up and gone.
- In reality, the Rec serves the very young, our youth, especially those who become involved in the swim team, and some of our older residents, such as the group that meets regularly for water aerobics.

- At the time the Rec was built, there was nothing else around. It became a recreation center, not just for LP residents, but for everyone in the sparsely populated west Valley. That is no longer true.

3. Pool Improvements

- Expand number of lanes for the pool. There are now 300 kids on the swim team, but only 6 lanes. It is too small.
- The pool needs to be repaired, resurfaced and repainted. The pool has a lot of cracks that need to be filled in.
- We need to appreciate that we have an outdoor pool. Many of the other private gyms have indoor pools.
- Make it easier to get in and out of the pool, other than steps.
- Will it be too costly to expand the pool?
- Add a water slide for the main pool.
- Bring back the diving boards. We could then have a diving team. If we can't have a diving board, at least give us a slide.
- Put in a graduated depth pool. We like the ocean style, where you can wade in and the floor gently slopes to get deeper and deeper. That works for little kids, those who just want to get wet and cool off, as well as works for the experienced swimmers.
- The pool needs at least 8 lanes.
- Older adults and others with impaired mobility need enhanced access to the swimming pool. Right now, it is very difficult to climb in and out. People need something to hold on to for balance.
- A new graduated depth pool would provide greater ease of entry and exit.
- Is there adequate room available to expand the pool and make it deeper? It would be great to have a diving board again. At least, we need a slide.
- We are concerned that the pool has become too crowded. I won't take my grandson down there anymore. It's just too much trouble to only have a tiny piece of the pool.
- People are coming from Luke. They are coming from all over. We need to find a way to alleviate the crowded conditions. Maybe the demand is not such a problem now that there are other facilities.
- The pool needs to be improved. Ideally, we would like to have a diving platform if there is adequate room and water depth to comply with safety standards. If not, then at least a slide would be more fun.
- The City should consider upgrading the pool so that it has an "ocean effect". Also known as "zero depth entry", this means that one end of the pool starts out very shallow and as you walk toward the other end, it gradually becomes deeper. This would allow people to segregate themselves according to their preferred depth. This kind of entry would help older residents who have had difficulty climbing in and out. Also, very young children can play in the shallow end.
- The pool is also important for our competitive swimming program and for those who are after a serious aerobic workout versus those who just want to play around in the water. However, during the summer, the lap lanes are very crowded, and there are more people who want to use them than can be accommodated. Some older adults noted that they feel guilty taking up a lane for their own lap swimming when the younger competitors need the lane for training.

4. *Water Play*

- Add a play pool for little kids. (Look at the Y)
- Eliminate the baby pool. Put in a more interactive water play area with buckets and fountains. A spray area would be more fun for the little kids.
- For the smaller kids, it would be nice to have more slides and water features, where kids can run and play.

5. *Water Therapy*

- Water therapies are not just for the elderly, but it also benefits younger residents recovering from injuries.
- Offer more special, small group programs such as water aerobics.
- Physical therapy.
- Water therapy, massage and water exercises.
- Physical therapy would be a great addition. All of us can use some help with flexibility, regardless of our age.
- Exercise becomes even more important as our population gets older. In order to maintain a healthy body and mind, our elderly residents need access to recreational activities, such as water aerobics and other therapies. The heated pool is very important to our older residents.

6. *Shading and Landscaping*

- Put in some more grass.
- Add tables and umbrellas around the pool, so people could go just to sit outside. Parents could watch their kids in a pleasant environment.
- Add more grassy areas around the pool with tables and umbrellas for shade. People could come down for a picnic. Young parents could watch their children.
- Put in more flowers

7. *Appearance and Aesthetics*

- Make the Rec more aesthetically appealing.
- Whatever the Rec does, it needs to be of quality.
- Add some color.
- The green fence around the tennis court is not very attractive.
- Make the Rec more attractive to new residents. Those of us with a history have a sentimental attachment. If you just moved here, you would not feel that.
- The Rec needs to be a more attractive place for people to come.
- The Rec needs to be brightened up.
- It needs to provide a pleasant and more attractive environment.

8. *Weight Room*

- The weight room is too small and outdated.
- Add a treadmill.

- Put in some stationary bikes.
- If the Rec is to serve the middle generation, the City will need to improve the center. It does not need to be on the level of a commercial gym, such as LA Fitness. But, the Rec out to have a real work-out room with weights and other equipment. It needs to provide a pleasant and more attractive environment, and offer a greater array of exercise and wellness classes, such as fencing and yoga. In other words, if the Rec is to attract working adults, it must be more than a room with weights.
- Upgrade and enlarge the weight room.
- The Rec Center can provide opportunities for all our residents to get exercise that we all need.

9. Community Meeting Space

- Add an outdoor café.
- We need a place to go to kill time.
- We need a community room.
- Having a place to hang out is important.
- We need an informal community gathering place.
- Have a room with fun stuff, like Fozz ball, arcade video, pool tables, ping pong.
- We need a place to hang out. We need a room with informal recreation activities such as pool and ping-pong tables. Not with structured classes, but just a place to go when we feel like being with other people.
- I'd like a place to go when I feel like bring around other people.
- I'd like a place to meet people and find someone to play card games with.
- Make an Internet café, where people could have WiFi access and computers to use.
- Also, serve coffee. We don't want to hurt the downtown businesses, so maybe we could make arrangements for coffee with local restaurants.
- We need a place to go to.
- We need a community living room.
- Ability to rent facility and pool for receptions and special events
- The School has served as our community center.
- More social events. Social activities.
- Senior activities. There is an active group, but they need a place to meet. (The Litchfield Park senior group has been talking about holding joint events with the Goodyear senior organization.)
- Offer more community arts activities.
- The Rec Center can be a place where we can gather and enjoy the benefits of community that brought us here.
- I become concerned when I hear people talking about making the Rec more exclusive and not allowing anyone outside the city limits to participate. If people want exclusivity, they can join the Wigwam. If you want the benefits of community, then keep the Rec open to others.
- The community needs a meeting room as a place to hang out with pool tables, ping-pong tables, etc.

- There are opportunities for older residents to become "grandparents" to young people in the community who don't have an older relative living nearby. Many families today do not experience the benefits of multigenerational extended families.
- Since the area has grown so rapidly, there are new human service agencies and programs available for our residents that people don't know about. Having people available to support us when we are in need is in keeping with our close community character.
- Don't assume that just because this is a small town, that everyone knows everyone else. That may be true for those who grew up here or who have been in the community a long time. But there are a few of us who have moved here from other places, and it is not as easy to make new friends as you might think. That is another reason that the Rec can be a place where people can congregate. It provides opportunities for new residents to meet others.
- If someone has lost a spouse, they need support. We need to think of the Rec in terms of changing requirements as we go through life. A common theme is the need to maintain and make new social connections. Research is showing that this is essential to mental and emotional health at every age.
- If the library moves, it would be nice if the Rec could fulfill the function of having flyers available about programs and services available in the area. There may be a need for centralized information and referral location that people can go to when facing a crisis or unexpected family situation where they need help and support. Examples: someone's mother falls and needs transportation, a father discovers his son is using drugs, or someone becomes the primary caretaker of an ailing spouse or family member. These are times when people need help and support. Volunteers might be available to staff this function.
- Form a citizen advisory commission who can work with the City Council and make recommendations about specific plans and programs for the Rec. This group could also serve as advocates for any new funding.

10. *Other Facility Improvements*

- The counter area is too small. When there are registration deadlines, everything backs up. Those of us who just want to walk in have to wait too long.
- Improve security at the entrance.
- The restrooms and locker rooms need renovation and upgrading.
- The kitchen also needs to be remodeled
- The locker rooms need to be improved.
- Tear out the showers and locker rooms and redo them.
- The Rec needs to be improved, but keep it small-scale.
- Put in more lighting.
- If the building were improved, since space is limited, could it go up? Are there currently height restrictions in place that would preclude this?
- Most of us are not particularly sentimental about the building itself. Most of us think it could be torn down. Just rebuild it on the current site! The location of the Rec is what really matters. It needs to stay downtown.
- We are concerned about parking. If the Rec expands programs to the point where it draws many additional people, there may not be adequate parking. The needs for increased parking need to be studied if there is to be any expansion.

- Make it a Multi-use Complex
- Make sure that there will be room for parking.
- It needs to be modernized.
- The facility is deteriorating.
- Some expressed concern about the need for parking with any expansion.
- Some suggested that improved signage might raise awareness of the Rec Center. One person agreed noting that they had to ask someone where it was.
- Provide space for community meetings and classes.
- If space is limited, can the Rec be built up? What about compliance with the height ordinance?
- Overall, the Rec needs to be modernized.

11. *Classes and Programs*

- Watercolor class
- Creative activities
- Travel programs
- Adult learning
- Life-long learning
- A place to get messy with the arts
- Not be age restricted.
- Children's theater
- Need qualified child care, not just a teenager.
- Yoga for everyone.
- Provide activities that are not just weightlifting, not just conventional sports and recreation, but classes about lifestyle, wellness, well-being, how to get fit, etc.
- Organize a walking club.
- Offer more evening activities, especially in the summer.
- Have more aerobic classes, with qualified instructors.
- More art classes. My 12-year old said that there is one type of activity that she loves, but can't get anywhere else right now, and that's Art.
- Music classes.
- Bring in professional high-quality instructors, not just a 16-year old.
- Hire a professional trainer. Have a few programs and do them well. Art theater, performance art, media productions.
- Book clubs and discussion groups.
- Cross-cultural experiences
- More arts and crafts.
- Outdoor music.
- Dances.
- Music lessons.
- A place where young people can develop life skills such as a babysitting certification, money management, how to become a caddie, social etiquette, career opportunities.
- Organize a Toastmasters group, with participants from all ages: 16 to 60 in the same group.
- Fun runs

- Family movies
- Cakewalk
- We want to promote multigenerational lifelong learning. Maybe we could establish a mentoring program to help younger residents learn about different career opportunities.
- I would like to see more lifelong learning activities. We could bring in professors from the Estrella Mountain community college or ASU.
- The cost of offering new learning programs would not have to be a big expenditure. Unlike physical exercise programs, there would be no expensive equipment to purchase. Basically, the costs would be for an instructor and use of a classroom.
- Keep classes small.
- Provide more family-oriented activities.
- Continue to support the Swim Team and youth swimming.
- After-school programs for latchkey kids.
- Other youth sports (in addition to swimming).
- Art classes, a place to get messy.
- Bike rentals, including tandems and four-seat bicycles.
- Provide jitney pedestrian transportation. Hire youth to pick up elder residents who can't walk and bring them to the Rec.
- Mini-marathons.
- Fun classes.
- More swimming lessons, especially for the children.
- Hiking class with the group hike activities.
- Diet and exercise classes.
- Card games, especially for the Bridge Club.
- Bike-riding club.
- Bridge instruction.
- Art instruction.
- More activities for seniors.
- Tin Man training.
- Personal training and coaching.
- Social groups around:
 - Hiking
 - Cooking
 - Pilates
 - Walking
 - Computers
 - Knitting and other handwork.
- Offer child care for parents while they attend classes or exercise.
- Support groups for young mothers.
- Offer computer classes for all ages.
- Have classes on travel experiences.
- One of the Rec's greatest strengths has been the genuine personal attention that the staff have given to everyone who has used it over the years. Why not build upon this strength and provide personalized coaching for fitness or health and wellness?

- Most of the members of our Bridge Club were originally from Litchfield Park. However, as our community grew, the Bridge Club began to have more people from surrounding communities. Actually, I enjoy the chance to meet others. It brings an infusion of new people and new ideas.
- There is not much programming for the middle generations aged 25-65. Most people in this category are working and therefore, the time they have available for recreation is limited. Many in this age group are also raising children, so they have even less free time. This group would also be interested in family-oriented activities. They would benefit from opportunities to work out if quality child-care was available.
- We would also like to have a classroom and the capacity to offer computer skills training.
- Look at offering different kinds of physical exercise classes, such as fencing. Also aerobic classes and yoga. Not just weight room.
- Capture oral history- continue to record the memories of those who have lived a long time in the Litchfield area.
- Celebrate the stories of those competitive swimmers who went on to compete in college or at the national level. Provide a display case with trophies and ribbons.
- Capture stories of those who have had life-changing experiences due to their involvement with swimming. Also stories of those who grew up in Litchfield and have now returned to the community to raise their own families.
- Promote walking and bike riding for all residents.
- Offer other fitness events for all ages: Walk-a-Bout, fun runs, bike rides.

12. Marketing and Outreach

- We need more of a reason to go down there. There are two components to this:
 1. There has to be some interesting activity that entices one to go to the Rec. and
 2. People will go if they think that other people will be there. So, it is a chance to interact socially.
- The Rec needs a marketing plan.
- Develop a 12-month marketing campaign.
- Improve and expand offerings and people will come.
- Advertising fliers and posters for Rec activities could be placed in the library, in the stores, in the schools and in the post office.
- Some of us would be willing to post flyers on residents' doors while we are out walking or bike riding.
- Perhaps we need more coverage in the *West Valley View* and in the Southwest edition of the *Arizona Republic*.
- We could put a suggestion box in the library and at the Rec Center, where people could offer ideas for new programs.
- Get the word out better. Create a Rec Club flyer to show what is offered.
- Improved signage might help remind people that the Rec is there for them.
- The Rec could also create and mail out postcards reminding people of current and new programs.
- Other participants questioned the need to invest in more marketing. They felt that the current advertising methods are adequate. This includes the website, the regular *CityLine* newsletters and the seasonal Rec Center newsprint schedule that is sent out to all residents.

- Residents should be able to sign up for e-mail notification of current activities and events. This would be an inexpensive way to keep people informed. The City can start with the e-mail addresses of the residents who attended the community meetings.
- Older residents can help advertise the Rec's program. We don't really need to embark in a major advertising campaign. The newsletter and newsprint schedule that go out to all residents are fine. Those of us who love to walk and ride our bikes could even put fliers on the doors of local residents if that would help.
- Word-of-mouth is the best form of advertising. If something is fun, it will attract people. If people come, it will attract more people because it will seem like a popular thing to do. Think of the restaurant with a full parking lot. If there are a lot of cars, we assume it is a great place to eat. People are the draw. Fencing classes are an example.

13. Possible Operational Improvements

- It needs to be well-managed
- Schedules need to be coordinated.
- We need more information on peak times, usage by age, usage by program at different times of the day, in order to build in a schedule with appropriate classes.
- Eliminate bottlenecks for registration during peak times.
- Look at current operational expenses for ideas to improve efficiency and reduce cost.
- Computerization could be the way to get more accurate data on usage patterns.
- We like to see usage data, including residents versus nonresident breakdowns.
- In order to ensure that Litchfield residents have the first opportunity to access the Rec programs before non-residents, there could be an early registration period for residents only. Then, after a certain date, any remaining spaces would be available to anyone-residents and nonresidents alike.
- Extended hours would enable more working residents to utilize the Rec Center. By the time people get home from work, especially if they commute, it will be after 6:00 p.m. But if the gym were open later, or if a class was offered at 7:00 p.m., they will be more likely to attend. Others said that if the Rec were open earlier, such as 6:00 am. They would be able to work out before they go into the office. The convenience and unpretentious atmosphere would likely draw more middle generation residents.
- Extended hours in the morning and evening to accommodate the schedules of working people.
- Is the Rec overpopulated? What is its capacity, especially for the pool?
- Many people don't use the Rec during the winter. What are the actual usage rates at that time? Would it be financially worthwhile to stop heating the pool, or close it during the winter?
- Regarding winter usage, what about the seniors who need the heated pool for therapy? What about the latchkey kids who need a safe place to go after school until their parents get home from work?
- Some people were concerned that Rec activities should be restricted for the people of Litchfield Park only. However, others pointed out the practicality that the population is too small to support a center on its own.
- Obtain more information on the percentage of residents versus nonresidents who are using the pool and other programs now.

- We would like to see more information about the budget. How much money does the Rec take in? How much is required for operations? What are the sources of revenues?
- How much more will it cost in staffing to support expanded programs? Could volunteers be used?
- Where is the break-even point between program costs and revenue generated?
- There have been a lot of rumors floating around about how many people use the Rec and how much it costs to operate. The City needs to provide residents with accurate information to help us understand the current operating situation.
- Looking at the usage patterns would be helpful, especially if we look at extended hours. Maybe staff could be scheduled differently based upon peak times.
- Another issue is our own community demographics. How does our current population break down, in terms of age? What will our population look like in 5, 10 and 20 years? Will our future needs be different than our current needs based upon projected population numbers and age characteristics?
- Accountability statistics are needed in order to communicate that the Rec Center is being run effectively. This is essential before we look at increasing funding.
- We need more information about our current and projected demographics in order to better anticipate the needs for recreation by age cohort.
- In order to ensure that Litchfield residents have the first opportunity to access the Rec programs before non-residents, there could be an early registration period for residents only. Then, after a certain date, any remaining spaces would be available to anyone-residents and nonresidents alike.
- In order to serve more of the middle generation, most of whom work, the Rec should have extended hours. By the time people get home from work, especially if they commute, it will be after 6:00 p.m. But if the gym were open later, or if a class was offered at 7:00 p.m., they will be more likely to attend. Others said that if the Rec were open earlier, such as 6:00 am. They would be able to work out before they go into the office. The convenience and unpretentious atmosphere would likely draw more middle generation residents.
- We like the automated pass card system used by most private clubs. That provides more accurate usage data.

14. *Financing Ideas*

- The Rec should generate revenues, but not be expected to cover its own costs. If it breaks even, that would be nice.
- Have community fundraisers, such as an arts and crafts festival.
- Secure professional business sponsorship, such as from the medical and dental offices.
- Why spend more money on more surveys and more studies? Why spend money on automation when those dollars could go toward exercise equipment?
- Devote a percentage of new development fees for the Rec.
- Pursue grants for senior activities
- Spend money on making improvements rather than conducting more citizen surveys or studies.
- The City should look into partnerships with Little League and the American Youth Soccer Organization. Other cities get money from them. Also look into partnering with the schools. Offer partners concession stands at special events.

- This community would be willing to provide more specific recommendations, but we need better information on costs associated with these improvements and new programs.
- We need to assess benefits compared to cost. We need a Cost-Benefit Analysis.
- Compare current operations and budget with other jurisdictions.
- What are the current revenue streams? What are our current sales tax revenues? What revenues are projected?
- Some of us think the City has no money. Others think there is a lot of funding that could be used. What is the truth?
- Partner with other organizations.
- Look into corporate sponsorship.
- A few people mentioned their concern that the Council not spend money on more studies, but should use these funds to improve the Rec.
- Continue to charge higher fees for nonresidents.
- Hold fundraisers.
- Have annual user passes. Provide discounts for families.
- Raise rates for nonresidents who are not paying taxes that support the City of Litchfield Park.
- Many of us would be willing to pay some additional amount of money to improve the Rec Center. However, we need more information before we could make this commitment.
- The current fee structure should be reexamined. People who use the facility directly should continue to pay user fees. For example, people pay a fee to swim or to take a class. These fees may need to be increased. The current fees are well below market rate. Thus, even a modest increase could generate significant revenue.
- Fees should not be increased unless or until the facility is upgraded. Otherwise, the Rec may lose more paying customers.
- The City could also increase program fees. However, this should not be done until there are some improvements.
- The ideas for new programs we have discussed do not have to be expensive. They can draw upon the unique talents of our community. People will come if they know they will have a chance to interact with other local residents.
- Re-examine the fee structure and look at the differential rate for residents versus non-residents. Non-residents should pay higher fees because they have not contributed to the community funding.
- We need to face the reality that we are a small population. If we restrict programs exclusively to local Litchfield Park residents (i.e., within the city limits), we will not be able to afford many programs. We should not reject the involvement of non-residents, because they help keep costs lower for our local people.
- One way to ensure that local residents have priority is to allow an early registration period for Litchfield Park residents. That would give our residents the first chance to attend any new classes or programs. Then after a certain period, registration could be opened to anyone, residents and non-residents alike. We could even have a lower course fee during early registration as an incentive.
- Explore private sponsorship for new classes or programs.
- Solicit more business support. The Rec programs provide good advertising and exposure. For example, Art in the Park has tremendous business support. Solicit support from local medical, dental and real estate offices. Also, approach the builders.

- What kinds of grants are available?
- Quality of life — this is the most important consideration. With everything we are discussing, we can't just limit our consideration to costs. The Rec Center has the potential to significantly contribute to our quality of life. This intangible can't be quantified in dollars.
- Many of us were around when Litchfield Park was originally incorporated. At that time, there was no support for a property tax. But, times are different now. A lot of us would be willing to support a property tax to fund improvements to the Rec.
- Frankly, if the Rec Center is upgraded or renovated, this may be an important amenity for our community as a whole. This would probably increase all of our property values. Therefore, if we had to pay more in taxes, it might be a fair trade-off.
- Many people have benefited from the Rec over the years and we should find a way to raise the necessary funds in order to make these recreational opportunities available to future generations.
- One idea that the City could borrow from the commercial gyms is the fee payment structure. There can be a price to become a member that is paid on an annual or monthly basis. Automated deductions are another option. The Rec Center could have an initiation fee for new members. Have a special annual membership fee with discounts on class fees.
- Another idea is that all residents become members automatically because the City has provided the improvements through the city budget. However, they would pay user fees for any classes or programs they utilized.
- The City could also increase program fees. However, this should not be done until there are some improvements.
- Encourage Litchfield School to use the Rec for athletic programs. (Some thought that they already do this.)
- Litchfield Park formed a Rotary Club in 2007. Members of this new chapter are interested in doing something that will benefit the overall community. This is an opportunity for the Rec.
- Have a Rec Free Day
- Increase rates for nonresidents. Nonresidents can help pay for programs we cannot afford as a town of only a few thousand people. As long as we balance programming to make sure Rec meets the needs of the residents primarily.
- Another idea is to identify certain neighborhoods or developments in the surrounding area and offer these residents a special rate to become members of the Rec.

15. *Other Comments on the Rec Center*

- We really want to see some improvements — as soon as possible!
- Overall attitudes need to change. A mind shift is required. The Council has to stop thinking of the Rec Center as a liability and see it as an asset that's very important to this community.
- Up until this point, the Rec has been a hidden value.
- Really, we should call it the Community Center versus the Rec Center.

- Maintain the Rec as a Community Center. The Rec needs to be seen for its importance as a connecting part of our community. It is a resource, not a liability! We need to shift our perspectives and see it as an important asset, not like a street light that has to be maintained!
- The Rec is a historic part of the West Valley.
- A few of the teens recalled attending the preschool when they were very young. It has been there longer than most people thought. People in all groups wondered about how many local children the preschool serves. Their impression is that this space was leased to the preschool because the Rec needed the money. So, people wondered how much revenue it brings in. This needs to be compared with the loss of this space for other purposes.
- Overall, new activities should be designed to foster a sense of community.
- Make it a Community Center.
- The Rec Center is important part of our community. As it is improved, it needs to maintain its small-town feeling: friendly, great place to come, and a safe place for children.
- The Rec has played an important role in our children's lives and has been an essential ingredient in creating a feeling of connection.
- To relocate the Rec away from downtown would be like ripping out the heart of downtown.
- No matter what, the Rec needs to stay in the center core.
- A lot of us would be strongly opposed to seeing the Rec go. We have talked about organizing a campaign to oust the Council, if that happens.
- If the Rec closed, it would not impact us personally, but we know it would impact others. We don't want to see this happen.
- The ultimate the purpose of the Rec Center should not be just to serve kids or a few seniors. It should be for everyone.
- If the Rec is to truly be an intergenerational center, then having the preschool makes sense, because it is serving our youngest residents.
- Save the Rec!
- Many people have felt an increasing sense of loss due to the many changes that have transpired in the downtown area over the years. The formerly vibrant retail district is no more. Many people have died or left. Churches have been closed. The Rec has not been upgraded. Now, it appears likely that the County Library will move away from the city center. If the Rec were to move or be closed down, it would be a devastating blow to many. Several residents noted that they are now feeling a sense of urgency for protecting the good things that are left and not taking them for granted.
- When the Rec was first built, it was state-of-the-art. Back then, many people did not have backyard pools. Now, almost everyone does. However, this has not made the Rec obsolete. People have more choices now and the Rec provides a social community function. Also, competitive swimming cannot be supported from backyard pools.

- The Rec is one of the first places that people show to visitors. It appears on our flyers. Realtors point it out to prospective buyers. We used to have a facility that everyone felt proud of. Now, it is less desirable. If we don't give it a face lift, as well as expand and improve it to bring it up to date, it will become even more marginal. If we don't keep it up, it could actually cause our property values to decline. Litchfield has always been known as a quality place. Our Rec Center should be a reflection of that quality. Let's make it something we can be proud of again.
- The Council needs to appreciate that the Rec Center has an intangible value to us in the community. What it has offered --and what could be offered in the future -- are very important to this community and its residents. The Rec is too important to allow it to deteriorate.
- Offer quality child care.
- We really do think that the Rec should concentrate on the services that people in Litchfield Park want, as opposed to what other people in the West Valley might be interested in. There are many other options available for them now.
- The Rec is a focal point for our community.
- If the City of Litchfield Park decides to close down the Rec Center, it would be "a moral slap in the face" to our residents.
- One person commented that if the current Litchfield residents decided not to pay for improvements to the Rec Center or to allow it to close down, that would be an "act of extreme selfishness".

16. *Other Recreation Suggestions*

- Some of the bike trails sometimes hard to find or don't connect properly.
- A Par Course in the park would be nice.
- Is Scout Park the only park that is not dedicated to the city?

17. *Other Comments Not Directly Related to Recreation*

- What is happening with City Hall? The City Council needs better meeting space, too. Are they planning to move or fix up the historic building?
- Look into the cost of acquiring what had been the St. Thomas Aquinas Church. Is the vacant church building an option for the city? If they purchased it, how much money would it take to renovate that building?
- Quality is everything and is part of what Litchfield Park stands and has to strive for in everything that we do.
- Think outside the box.
- Focus on value-added activities.
- Our population is only 4,400. What is our current age breakout?
- Check out acquiring the Library building. The land belongs to the City, but the Library Guild owns the building.
- The City of Litchfield Park should look at other successful small communities as examples, such as Redmond, Washington; Boulder, Colorado; and Durango, Colorado. Get ideas of what we could look like in the future.

- We want to hear the outcome of last year's citizen surveys and these focus groups.
- Many of us are concerned about the relocation of the County library. But if it goes, can the City use this space?
- People do not like the roundabouts.
- This recent street maintenance effort was not well done.
- Our streets are in need of improvement
- Many people hate the circles or roundabouts, whatever you call them.
- Most of the adults indicated that they intend to remain in Litchfield Park for the rest of our lives (or for as long as they can). Even some of the teens noted that they might come back when they were older.
- We have something others long for.
- In the future, our core downtown area will be even more precious. With all the new development that is occurring around us, our historic center becomes increasingly rare and special.
- How many people own their homes versus rent them now? Does this matter? How many families with young children do we have?
- If the library is relocated, we lose a lot. This will leave a big hole.
- We need to recognize the importance of the Wigwam.
- We already have what people in Verrado are seeking.
- Litchfield could become like Encanto Park and be a truly special place.
- Many people shared stories about people coming "back home to Litchfield". These are people who grew up here, but they are returning as adults to raise their own families in this special place. Now that they are older, they recognize and appreciate all that they were given from other adults in the community. These people are now much older. So, it is now their turn to step into a leadership role. The former children feel strongly about their responsibility to continue the legacy of service. They feel a strong desire to give back to the next generation of Litchfield youth.
- We need to recognize the importance of the Wigwam to Litchfield Park. If they were ever to pull out of our community, it would be a terrible loss.
- The Wigwam has been an asset to our community in many ways. One benefit is the chance to interact with the Wigwam guests, many of whom participate in our community events. The opportunity to interact with visitors from around the world has enriched our small community.
- What we have here is special, and if we want to keep it, we need to protect it.
- When Verrado first opened, I, like many people, went out to check it out. It is beautiful. However, as I listened to their plans to create a strong sense of community in Verrado, I realized that we already have that — right here in Litchfield Park.
- Most of the adults indicated that they intend to remain in Litchfield Park for the rest of our lives (or for as long as they can). Even some of the teens noted that they might come back when they were older.
- In the future, our core downtown area will be even more precious. With all the new development that is occurring around us, our historic center becomes increasingly rare and special.

- Litchfield Park has always been an oasis. We used to be alone out in the desert. Now, we are an oasis of calm, surrounded by a hectic city.
- Many people in the area have a Litchfield Park Zip Code, and therefore think that they live in the city. I have to explain to people all the time that they don't. This is a perception problem.
- Another example of a good community effort is the Pebble Creek Care Bears project.

Appendix #5

Overall Recommendations from Final Community Meeting

Appendix 5: Overall Recommendations from Final Community Meeting

Participants at the final community meeting offered these overall observations and recommendations.

- The Swim Team has been such a big part of the lives of so many of our young people. We need to keep that opportunity going for our future youth.
- When the Rec was first built, it was state-of-the-art. Back then, many people did not have backyard pools. Now, almost everyone does. However, this has not made the Rec obsolete. People have more choices now and the Rec provides a social community function. Also, competitive swimming cannot be supported from backyard pools.
- The Rec is one of the first places that people show to visitors. It appears on our flyers. Realtors point it out to prospective buyers. We used to have a facility that everyone felt proud of. Now, it is less desirable. If we don't give it a face lift, as well as expand and improve it to bring it up to date, it will become even more marginal. If we don't keep it up, it could actually cause our property values to decline. Litchfield has always been known as a quality place. Our Rec Center should be a reflection of that quality. Let's make it something we can be proud of again.
- The Council needs to appreciate that the Rec Center has an intangible value to us in the community. What it has offered and could provide in the future is very important to our community and the lives of our residents. The Rec is too important to allow it to deteriorate.
- We recommend that the City appoint a special citizens committee to help review options for the Rec in terms of necessary improvements, cost estimates and financing alternatives. Many of us to be willing to serve on such a committee.
- This citizen group can work with the City Council and the City staff in exploring options and helping to present the pros and cons to the community. Once several alternatives have been identified, the City should hold a community open house to present the different options to community residents.

Based upon all the information available thus far, participants in the last community meeting had three recommendations for immediate action that would require minimal financial investment. These recommendations in order of priority include:

1. Retain the swim program for the benefit of Litchfield Park kids.
2. Create some community meeting space and offer additional programs that would serve our community.
3. Develop new water-based therapy programs.

Appendix #6

Copies of Index Cards from Community Meetings

1. Ocean marathon or triathlon training
+

2. Kids swimming programs/
After school programs

3. Social events
mommy time
stay at home moms

4. Physical therapy

5. water massage

Programs should be unique if you are
competing w/ Lifetime Fitness

maybe co-insiding
w/ a children's
program happening
at the time for
working adults/parents

To Keep the Rec open + more interesting: Following suggestion

1. More efficient management
2. More, better advertisement to older Residents for the health benefits at the pool. Possible • small property tax.
3. The City Council could cut costs on some crazy planning + expenses w. planting + maintaining those totally stupid Traffic circles, especially the Needle circle.
4. Have a plan go steady. Neolin

1. Need to advertise programs that are available.
2. Senior citizen programs other than activities: tennis, basket ball etc.
3. More space for fitness center, better equipment. Beginners can hurt themselves if they do not know how to use the equipment.
4. If you restrict Rec. Center to L.P. it will fail.

- Provide Personal
Wt. training (wts. work
out, diet coaching).

- Build up and expand
EXERCISE area.

Increase

- Hours of operation:
open early 6:00; close 9:00.
over