



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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City of Owatonna Conducting a Community Center Facilities Planning Process

Residents are encouraged to visit OurCommunityOurCenter.org to learn more about the initiative and stay informed and engaged

OWATONNA, Minn., Sept. 4, 2024 - The City of Owatonna is conducting a facilities planning process to explore options for building a new community center.

"For years, residents have expressed the need for a community center in Owatonna," said Jenna Tuma, Assistant City Administrator. "The facilities planning process will carefully evaluate every aspect of building and maintaining a new community center that would serve our residents and community for years to come."

Engagement and feedback from community members are essential to the facilities planning process. As one of the first steps in this initiative, the City has formed a Community Center Task Force. The Task Force includes community members with different backgrounds, experiences and interests, City Council members and representatives from the Owatonna Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism, Owatonna School District and Steele County. City staff and representatives from ICS, a firm specializing in facilities planning, will support the Task Force's work.

"The Community Center Task Force is an essential first step in our planning process. With their diverse views and local experience, this group will help plan the activities, amenities and services based on community feedback on what is most desired in a community center," Tuma said. The Task Force will begin by evaluating feedback from a June 2024 survey in which 740 community members shared almost 700 ideas with over 17,000 comments and ratings for the amenities and activities they would like to see in a community center. The survey results indicate the community's highest priorities are:

- Year-round recreation opportunities through indoor playgrounds, gyms, sports courts and event spaces.
- Aquatic facilities that provide year-round opportunities for health and wellness, swimming lessons and general enjoyment.
- Services and facilities that appeal to youth, children and families including opportunities for childcare options and inclusive play areas.
- Fitness and wellness spaces including a fitness center, walking track and classes offered at various times to accommodate different schedules.

- Multi-purpose spaces for meetings, cultural events and community activities and gatherings.

Over the next 12-18 months, the Task Force will help develop a plan for a community center. Community members will also have opportunities to share their input throughout the planning process. With the Task Force's guidance and feedback from the community, the City aims to create a plan that reflects community members' needs, promotes the health of people of all ages and provides a place for learning, socializing and connecting.

The City has created a dedicated website, OurCommunityOurCenter.org, to serve as an informational resource for this initiative. It provides an overview of the steps the City is taking toward exploring a new community center, answers to frequently asked questions and information on the City's broader facilities management efforts and projects. The website will be regularly updated with information on the facilities planning process and how residents can engage.

Community members are encouraged to visit OurCommunityOurCenter.org to learn more about the facilities planning process for a new community center. Questions and feedback can be submitted through a Connect Form on the website, or by emailing communitycenter@owatonna.gov.

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