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# Plainfield Center For Excellence Final Community Engagement Report



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# INTRODUCTION

In early 2022, the Economic Development Department began the community engagement and research planning process for the the Plainfield Center for Excellence project.

The proposed space for the Center for Excellence is the former Plainfield YMCA building at 518 Watchung Avenue, also known as Block 835 Lot 4. *(See Figure 1)*

The following sections of this report will address the methodology and findings of the community research conducted by the Planning Division in partnership with local Plainfield stakeholders.

The goal of this report is to inform the program of activities for the design of the Plainfield Center for Excellence.



**Figure 1 : 518 Watchung Avenue**

# METHODOLOGY

## This section outlines the methodology and community engagement strategy for the Plainfield Center for Excellence.

To quantify and prioritize community interest in a local recreational-style facility, surveys were administered in-person (on paper) and electronically via the City's website and the QR Code placed on physical surveys. Surveys were offered in both English and Spanish. (See Figure 2a)

Additionally, 2 public charrettes were held at St. Mary's Church and Plainfield High School. In 15-minute intervals, participants answered three questions: *What time of day would you be most inclined to visit the center? What resources and amenities would you like to see at this center? How would you like the space to be designed?* Participants answered these questions on 3 large flip charts and were given the opportunity to prioritize their preferences with color-coded stickers. At the conclusion, facilitators offered an additional board for general input to capture additional trends in community interests.

Finally, in a targeted effort to increase participation from Hispanic residents and stakeholders, surveys were recirculated at St. Mary's Church and administered at local restaurants by planning staff.



Figure 2a : Charrette Flyer & QR Code

A screenshot of a Google Form titled "Center for Excellence". The form asks for an email address (belaybrooks20@gmail.com) and a required question "How old are you?" with radio button options: "12 and under", "13-17", "18-22", "22-32", "55+", and "Other:". Below this is another required question "Do you have dependents?" with radio button options: "Yes", "If yes, how many?", and "No".

Figure 2b: Online Survey via Google Forms

# FINDINGS

This section summarizes the key findings of the data collected for the Plainfield Center For Excellence.

01

## **66 Surveys were collected in total.**

Of the total surveys completed, majority of them were distributed in the charrettes. Hence, preferred activities may be dominated by information collected between the two sessions. This total number also included the targeted effort to reach Hispanic residents and stakeholders. 36 percent of initial respondents were between the ages of 33 and 54. 22 percent of initial respondents were 55 or older. 48 percent had dependents. In the focus group of 15 Hispanic residents 40 percent were between ages 22 and 32. 61 percent of them had dependents.

02

## **Preferred Time Of Facility Use - 5PM to 9PM**

58 percent of initial respondents reported that they were most likely to utilize the center between the 5pm to 9pm. Of the 15 respondents in the most recent focus group, 80 percent also reported preferred time of use to be after 5pm. Secondly, preferred use times between 5am and 12 pm were reported at 24 percent in the initial research group and 20 percent in the Hispanic focus group.

03

## **Active Recreation Programing for The Center**

Programing interests presented a more widespread dispersion of active recreation. 30 percent of initial respondents reported exercise; 26 percent reported yoga; 20 percent swimming; and 20 percent dance/zumba. Also noteworthy, 6 out of 15 respondents in the Hispanic focus group did not opt for swimming as a programming preference. However, 100 percent of the group reported a pool as a priority feature of the center.

04

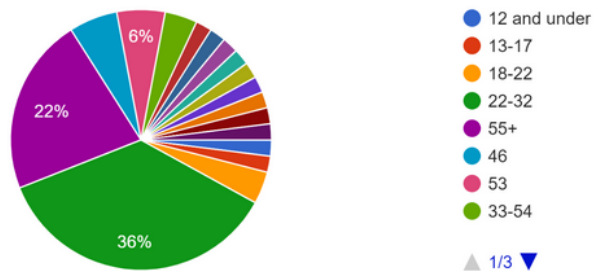
## **Preferred Design Features and Amenities**

80 percent of respondents reported a swimming pool as a priority feature. Secondly, 60 percent preferred a basketball court and 54 percent. Finally, a rock wall, commercial kitchen, workshop space and a media center were at nearly equal in preference at between 44 and 48 percent.

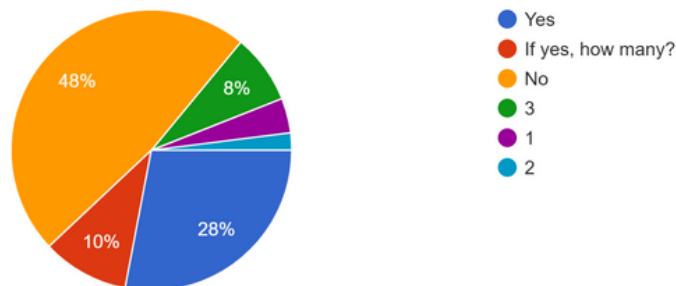
# FINDINGS (CONTINUED)

This section presents visual representations of the reported key findings.

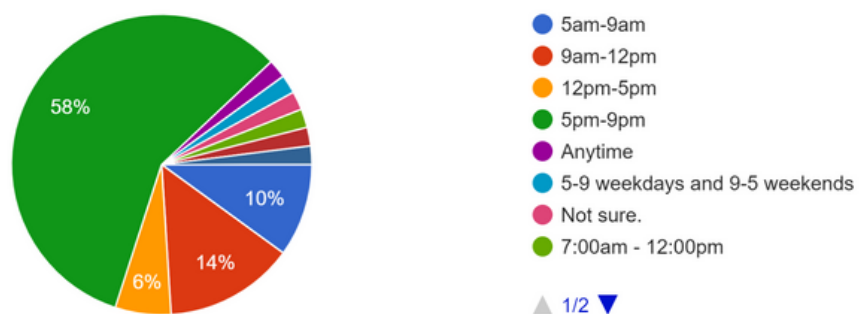
How old are you?  
50 responses



Do you have dependents?  
50 responses



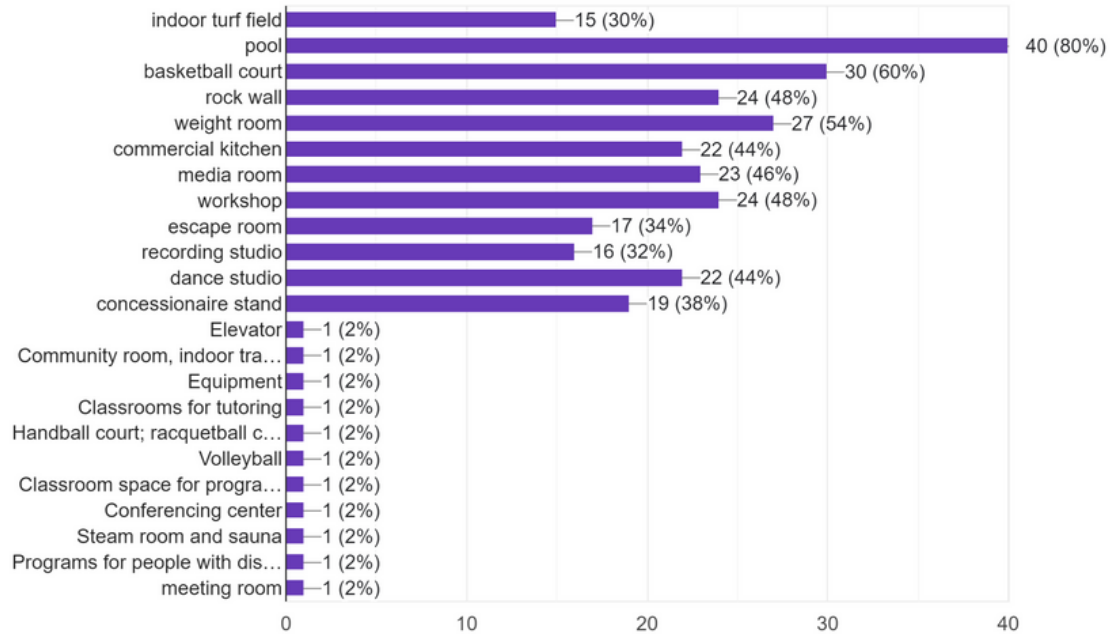
What time of day are you most likely to use the center?  
50 responses



# FINDINGS (CONTINUED)

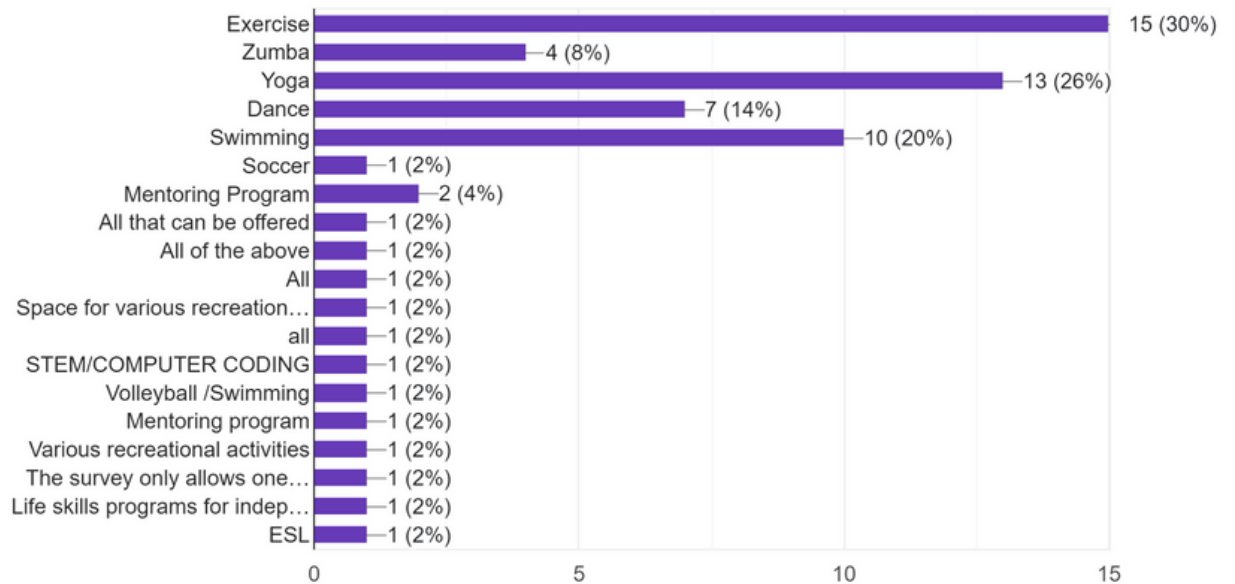
What resources would you like to see?

50 responses



What classes would you like to see provided?

50 responses



# CHARRETTE SUMMARY

This section summarizes the findings in of the public Charrette exercises not captured in surveys

01

## Prioritize Multipurpose Room

Participants overwhelmingly prioritize multipurpose room on day 1 and 2 of the charrette exercises. Secondly, a career training center, indoor field, social services, arts center, greenspace and a security desk were reported with narrow separation in percentage range.

02

## Preferred Time Of Facility Use - After 5PM

In addition to participants highly prioritizing use after 5pm, 76 percent reported that weekend hours should be 7am to 7pm.

03

## Youth Development and Active Programming For the Center

60 percent of participants prioritized youth development services and active programming for the Center. Secondly, outdoor activity and open space, fitness courses, and a stem innovation center were reported as additional priority programming.



# CHARRETTE SUMMARY (CONTINUED)

This section lists general additional comments made by charrette attendees at the conclusion of the session.

## QUESTIONS

COST TO USE? COST TO BUILD? LOCATION? COST TO  
FURNISH & EQUIP? COST IMPACT TO TAXPAYERS?  
HOW WILL THE CENTER BE FUNDED? (INCLUDING THE  
PURCHASE/BLDG...)  
HOW WILL WE PAY FOR THE CENTER?  
WHAT ARE THE ANTICIPATED FEES AND COSTS FOR THE  
CITY?

## PROGRAMS/ACTIVITIES

TAI-CHI AND WATER AEROBICS FOR SENIORS  
WELLNESS CENTER  
HOME – ECONOMICS  
SIMPLE HOME FIX IT CLASSES  
STIMULATING AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS  
MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES  
AFTERSCHOOL  
VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES  
LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES THAT HIGHLIGHTS ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS  
AND INTEREST.  
COVID TOOK AWAY THE ABILITY FOR CHILDREN TO COMMUNICATE ON A  
SOCIAL LEVEL. THEY CAN'T PASS JOB INTERVIEWS, TYPE WITHOUT USING  
SHORT TEXT AS THEY DO WHEN THEY TEXT ON THE PHONE. WE NEED TO  
RE-EDUCATE OUR CHILDREN.

## SERVICES/OPPORTUNITIES

BABYSITTING FOR CITY COUNCIL EVENTS AND OTHER TOWN EVENTS  
VOLUNTEERING /SCHOOL CREDITS TO ENCOURAGE USE.  
SUMMER CAMP FOR KIDS  
HIRING CHILDREN FROM PLAINFIELD  
COMMUNITY SERVICES FOR PLAINFIELD CHILDREN  
INTERVENTION PROGRAMS  
TUTORING PROGRAMS  
TRADE SKILL EXPLORATION OPPORTUNITIES  
GED CLASSES  
CONVERSATIONAL SPANISH CLASSES

# CHARRETTE SUMMARY (CONTINUED)

## ROOMS AND SPACE

LOCKERS  
CONCESSIONS  
TRAMPOLINE PARK  
LASER TAG  
ESCAPE ROOM  
TV ROOM  
GAME ROOM

PLEASE UTILIZING MULTIPLE SPACES THROUGHOUT THE CITY, SITES LIKE THE OLD YWCA AND YMCA ARE GREAT LOCATIONS THAT CAN BE REPURPOSED. WE ALSO WANT AT LEAST 2 NEW CONSTRUCTION TO PROVIDE STATE OF THE ART FACILITIES.

I THINK A PRIORITY FOR THIS CENTER SHOULD BE PROVIDING A SAFE SPACE AND OUTLET FOR YOUNG MEN STUDENTS/KIDS

QUIET STUDY ROOMS  
MULTIPURPOSE ROOMS

SHOULD ACCOMMODATE 40-50 PEOPLE TO TRULY BE MULTIPURPOSE  
DEDICATED SPACES SHOULD BE WELL VETTED. NOT ALL SPACES ARE TRULY NECESSARY.

PROVIDE FOR MULTIPLE ROOMS TO BE USED BY COMMUNITY AND ORGANIZATIONS  
ENVIRONMENTAL INTERVENTIONS

SOLAR CANOPY

RAIN GARDEN+ NATIVE PLANTING AND LANDSCAPING

WATER REUSE  
PASSIVE HVAC  
PERMEABLE PAVEMENT  
SHADED BUS STOPS  
COMMUNITY BUS RUNNING LOOPS  
BIKE PARKING  
MODEL AFTER WOODBRIDGE AND CRANFORD

# COMPARATIVE PRICE ANALYSIS

This section summarizes the price models for neighboring recreation centers across Northern and Central New Jersey.

Woodbridge Community Center			
Residential Membership Rate	Joiner's Fee	Yearly Fee	Monthly Fee
Youth (0-12)	N/A	\$ 68.00	N/A
Teen (13-17)	\$ 35.00	\$ 153.00	\$ 12.75
Young Adult (18-26)	\$ 35.00	\$ 240.00	\$ 20.00
Adult (27-61)	\$ 75.00	\$ 387.00	\$ 32.25
Senior Rate (60 Retried or 62+)	\$ 35.00	\$ 153.00	\$ 12.75
Family	\$ 75.00	\$ 612.00	\$ 51.00
One Parent Family	\$ 75.00	\$ 423.00	\$ 35.25
Non- Resident Membership Rate	Joiner's Fee	Yearly Fee	Monthly Fee
Youth (0-12)	N/A	\$ 90.00	N/A
Teen (13-17)	\$ 50.00	\$ 189.00	\$ 15.75
Young Adult (18-26)	\$ 50.00	\$ 315.00	\$ 26.25
Adult (27-61)	\$ 95.00	\$ 480.00	\$ 40.00
Senior Rate	\$ 50.00	\$ 189.00	\$ 15.75
Family	\$ 75.00	\$ 612.00	\$ 51.00
One Parent Family	\$ 75.00	\$ 423.00	\$ 35.25

Piscataway Community Center			
Residential Membership Rate	Joiner's Fee	Yearly Fee	Monthly Fee
Youth (0-12)	N/A	\$60.00 - \$90.00*	N/A
Teen (13-17)	\$ 29.00	N/A	\$ 18.00
Young Adult (18-29)	\$ 29.00	N/A	\$ 25.00
Adult (30-62)	\$ 49.00	N/A	\$ 35.00
Senior Rate (62+)	\$29.00 - \$49.00*	N/A	\$25.00 - \$50.00*
Family	\$ 49.00	N/A	\$65.00 - \$75.00
One Parent Family	\$ 75.00	\$ 423.00	\$ 35.25
Daily Guest Pass Rate (By Age)	With Member	Without Member	
Youth (0-12)	\$ 5.00	Must be accompanied by a member*	
Teen (13-17)	\$ 8.00	Must be accompanied by a member*	
Adult (18-61)	\$ 10.00	\$ 15.00	
Senior Rate (62+)	\$ 8.00	\$ 15.00	
Spray Park Adult (18+)	\$ 7.00	N/A	
Spray Park Child (2-17)	\$ 10.00	N/A	

# COMPARATIVE PRICE ANALYSIS (CON.)

This section summarizes the price models for neighboring recreation centers across Northern and Central New Jersey.

## Montclair YMCA

Membership Rate	Joiner's Fee	Monthly Fee	Yearly Fee
Youth (0-12)	N/A	\$ 15.00	\$ 180.00
Teen (13-17)	N/A	\$ 25.00	\$ 300.00
Young Adult (18-25)	\$ 40.00	\$ 50.00	\$ 480.00
Adult (24 -64)	\$ 100.00	\$ 65.00	\$ 780.00
Seniors (65+)	\$ 100.00	\$ 44.00	\$ 528.00
Senior Couple (62+)	\$ 50.00	\$ 85.00	N/A
Family	\$ 100.00	\$ 105.00	N/A

## Greater Somerset County YMCA

Residential Membership Rate	Joiner's Fee	Monthly Fee
Youth (0-12)	\$ 23.00	\$ 25.00
Teen (13-17)	\$ 41.00	\$ 50.00
Young Adult (18-23)	\$ 55.00	\$ 65.00
Adult (24 -64)	\$ 100.00	\$ 84.00
Senior Rate (62+)	\$ 62.00	\$ 75.00
Family	\$ 126.00	\$ 150.00
One Parent Family	\$ 101.00	\$ 120.00

# COMPARATIVE PRICE ANALYSIS (CON.)

This section summarizes the price models for neighboring recreation centers across Northern and Central New Jersey.

Average Rates By Category (Reccomended)							
Membership Class	Monthly	Daily	Yearly	Joiner's Fee			
Youth (0-12)	\$ 11.25	\$ 5.00	\$ 122.00	\$ 23.00			
Teen (13-17)	\$ 96.00	\$ 8.00	\$ 230.00	\$ 26.25			
Young Adult (18-25)	\$ 38.25	\$ 10.00	\$ 360.00	\$ 39.75			
Adult (24 thru Pre -Senior)	\$ 54.06	\$ 12.50	\$ 630.00	\$ 81.00			
Senior Rate	\$ 43.35	\$ 8.00	\$ 340.50	\$ 49.25			
Family	\$ 76.50	N/A	N/A	\$ 87.50			
One parent family	\$ 67.63	N/A	N/A	\$ 87.75			

## THINGS TO CONSIDER.....

- 100% of Neighboring Centers Offer A Senior Discount
- Uncommon for a youth Joiner fee
- Daily Fees are only outlined by 2 facilities
- Yearly fee is uncommon. Much more common to charge monthly (as-needed basis)
- Yearly fee should remain the same for one Parent Family

# Conclusion

This presents key takeaways, trends, and considerations for the design of the Center For Excellence

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In conclusion, the discovery phase of the Center For Excellence Project presented some anticipated findings, while also providing data that should warrant the reconsideration of our position on the provision of certain services, such as child care. Key takeaways include:

- Despite the fact that recreational activities exist across Plainfield via the School District, the Recreation Department, and Small Fitness spaces, participants still believe a centralized location is more ideal; and the duplication of services/programs/activities does not serve as a deterrent.
- Over 40 percent of respondents indicated that they had dependents. Consequently, it was reflected in the high prioritization of child care and youth development services. A balanced approach should be considered here.
- Active recreation space was an anticipated priority; however, those most highly valued will present a spatial concern at the existing YMCA Facility if they were considered in the design at equal scale.
- Investment in a centralized Employment training and development space should be considered by the City if not in the Center For Excellence.

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# End of Report