

## CHAPTER ONE : FACILITY SURVEY



Figure 1 Durango Parks and Recreation facilities and potential sites

### 1.1 OVERVIEW

In August 2018, Barker Rinker Seacat Architecture and PROS Consulting staff toured Durango recreation facilities and related sites in order to assess current condition and future potential in conjunction with the ongoing Parks, Open Space, Trails and Recreation Master Planning effort. The focus of the tour was on existing structures, and several potential sites were also visited in order to familiarize the team with them. Each building and site are illustrated below along with a review of needs and potential solutions.

1.1.1 DURANGO COMMUNITY RECREATION CENTER

2700 Main Avenue, Durango, CO 81301

The Recreation Center is a comprehensive 71,557 SF athletic and aquatics center constructed in 2001. The facility is constructed between Main Avenue and the Animas River at the north end of the historic LaPlata County Fairgrounds. The site is shared with several County-owned ball fields and the rodeo grounds, Boys and Girls Club and exposition building. 206 parking spaces are allocated to the Recreation Center, with additional parking nearby for the adjacent ballfields and fairgrounds.



Figure 2 Pickleball players at the Durango Community Recreation Center

The Recreation Center features a variety of athletic and community spaces including lap and leisure pools, a spa, gymnasium, fitness area, a group exercise classroom, a jog-walk track, locker rooms, community rooms, a classroom, catering kitchen, child care room, locker and toilet rooms and administration and storage areas. The building is fully sprinklered and meets accessibility guidelines. It is of masonry and steel construction and is in good condition.

**Summary:**

There is room on the site to add between 6,000 and 12,000 SF on one-to-two floors to the existing building. Generally, this sort of facility requires a square foot of parking for every square foot of building added, or about 40 spaces for discussion purposes and ideally more considering the popularity of the facility. There is space for perhaps 20-30 spaces between the existing amphitheater and parking lot.

**PICKLEBALL**

According to legend, pickleball was conceived by a family whose dog—named Pickle—would shag stray balls. For years in the 90s, this sport was confined to the northwest: few outside Seattle and Portland heard about it but it has spread across the nation like wild fire in the past decade, taking over gyms everywhere. The game is played with paddles on a badminton court, usually with a portable net. It is particularly popular with the active aging though it also has adherents among the younger set. No matter the age, these folks are passionate about their game, and setting aside court time for pickleball is becoming a great way to fill gym space during mornings when gym use is low.

1.1.2 MASON CENTER

301 E. 12th Street, Durango, CO 81301

The Mason Center is a former school dating to 1955 located at the north end of the East 3rd Avenue parkway and purchased by Durango in 1995. The facility is 17,886 SF and includes a lobby area, a single-story classroom wing to the north and a two-story classroom wing to the south. A small gymnasium is located on the west side of the lobby.

The west edge of the lot along East 3rd Avenue serves as a neighborhood park with a large lawn, playground and two tennis courts. There are 31 parking spaces along the west edge of the site and in the courtyard on the south side of the building.



Figure 3 A classroom at the Mason Center

The gymnasium housed the gymnastics program, which was recently moved to the Bodo property: Currently the gym is used for storage. The site hosts many of the child care programs in summer months and during school holidays. Other portions of the building are used to store seasonal program materials, and a portion is used as temporary office space.

The classroom wings appear to be of wood construction with a steel frame. Each wing includes 3-4 classrooms, some of which have been subdivided and modified for other uses. The wings are constructed on different levels accessed by stairs. There is no ramp or elevator, and the building does not comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines. There are numerous code issues. The gymnasium is a pre-engineered metal building with an elementary-size basketball court. There is minimal distance between the game line and exterior wall, and structure intrudes into this zone, both hazards. The building is of an age where asbestos and lead paint were commonly used construction materials; though contained at this time abatement is a concern. There are numerous roof leaks.

**Summary:**

Overall the building is in poor condition and the cost to make the building serviceable and address abatement will be considerable. It has served the City well in a variety of functions and it is time to consider retiring this facility. Neighbors will likely oppose other uses, and the best course may be to demolish the building and expand the park.

**AGING STRUCTURES**

*Frequently clients are asking for input on old structures: will this building be a good fit for the new use? Many old structures feature level changes and other ADA challenges; they were constructed before personal computers and the internet and thus lack an electronic backbone; or they lack the insulation and windows and doors that meet current energy codes. If the building has been well maintained, is structurally sound and has spaces that can be adapted to the new need, reuse is a resource-smart opportunity. Conversely, a poorly maintained building that needs considerable work on the roof and walls, a fire suppression system or the other noted upgrades may cost more than starting with new construction.*

### 1.1.3 FORMER CHAMBER OF COMMERCE BUILDING

111 S. Camino Del Rio, Durango, CO 81303

The former 3,950 SF Chamber of Commerce building is located in Santa Rita Park, adjacent to the Animas River Trail. This is a wood frame building with a small second level was constructed in 1987 and currently used as temporary office and laboratory space for the adjacent Wastewater Treatment Plant. Parking is shared with Santa Rita Park which has approximately 131 paved and dirt overflow parking spaces in addition to RV/bus parking. The building is of an age that it is unlikely to contain hazardous materials and it is in good condition.



*Figure 4 The former Chamber of Commerce Building*

The light construction is more suited to commercial office space than public uses. Removing walls to create larger community uses may compromise the structure. The main level is 2,800 SF and the 1,150 SF upper level is accessed via a single stair and there is no elevator. New construction at the Wastewater Treatment Plant and Water Reclamation Facility Administration Offices includes public access toilets, currently provided in this building.

#### Summary:

The best course may be to remove this structure and replace it with a “community barn” or park pavilion more conducive to current and future park uses. Alternate uses could relate to the new Water Reclamation Facility, trail system or perhaps as a rental space for community events (the rooms are really too small, though, being intended as offices and small meeting rooms).

1.1.4 CHAPMAN HILL RINK

500 Florida Road, Durango, CO 81301

The current facility features a partially enclosed 200 x 100-foot building to accommodate a 185 x 87 foot sheet of ice with dasher boards, changing room, skate sharpening room, and spectator seating. A pavilion has been constructed on the south side of the ice rink and features skate rental and food concessions, along with a large lobby, and four changing rooms. Support areas including storage, mechanical room and Zamboni parking are located on the north end of the arena. The site has 74 parking spaces, plus a loading area and drop-off.



Figure 5 Chapman Hill Rink ice arena

The ice sheet is enclosed with a pre-engineered metal building roof structure that includes a roof and enclosed wall panels on the west side; the east wall remains open to the air. Insulation and a low-e fabric have been added to the roof structure to reduce daytime heat gain from the roof and improve the ice quality. The additions to the north and south are of masonry construction. Though the underground spring has caused uneven settlement over time, generally the building is in good condition.

The ice is maintained for about six months each year, from October through March, and the concrete slab is used for roller skating and other dry events during the other six months. The site hosts the child care program in summer months and during school holidays. The facility draws participants from the region, but routine users are generally from Durango.

The City has purchased the property to the north, and there appears to be adequate space to add an area equal to a second sheet of ice on the property. Parking remains a concern, however, the land to the north could accommodate approximately 87 parking spaces according to a preliminary design completed by the City Engineer.

**Summary**

A more detailed analysis would be required to determine if a second sheet of ice and adequate parking in the range of 70-100 spaces is feasible. Care will need to be given to the foundation design given the underground springs nearby and the tendency for this area to be cold, both of which have caused this site to be a local winter sport destination.

**ICE FACILITIES**  
*Indoor ice rinks are a growing recreation need throughout the country. They are spaces that are some of the most heavily utilized throughout the early morning and evenings with the growth of youth hockey programs, adult leagues, figure skating, and curling in the United States. The design of these spaces requires proper consideration regarding access for both participants and spectators, lobby areas, and support spaces. There are specific needs that are particular to ice rink environments that need to be considered to minimize utility expenses and to provide a comfortable setting for all users.*

### 1.1.5 DURANGO GYMNASTICS

144 Bodo Dr, Durango, CO 81303

Durango recently moved the gymnastics program to the current 11,710 SF facility in the Bodo Business Park. The facility is located in a remodeled warehouse, a pre-engineered metal building constructed in 1978. The building features a small lobby, office spaces, toilets, changing rooms, a spectator area and party room, and three high-bay areas containing gymnastics apparatus, including a foam block pit for tumbling. There is a mezzanine with views to the gymnastics floor below and a classroom accessed via a stair.

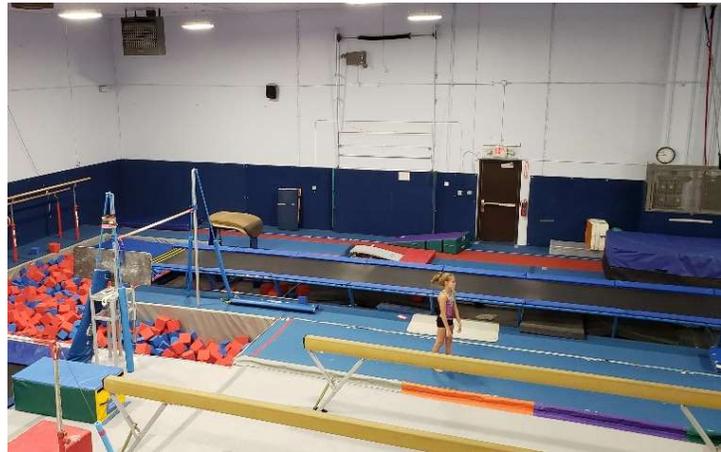


Figure 6 Durango Gymnastics

The site includes 29 parking spaces with an additional 15 remote parking spaces shared with La Plata Electric Association.

The City purchased the building in 2016 and remodeled the facility that was opened to the public in 2017. The building is in good condition: it is remote from neighborhoods and the layout of spaces can make it difficult to supervise all areas from a single location.



#### Summary

The building serves the program well. Though the site is remote from residential areas and not convenient to bike to, the clientele served is focused and amenable to a vehicle destination. Gymnastics is a popular activity, and the community would like still more space.

#### GYMNASTICS

*Built-to-suit gymnastics facilities demand thoughtful layout of the apparatus to maintain safety zones. Foam pits and recessed trampolines need floor slab depressions. The large mat for the floor exercise should be centrally located to optimize supervision to all apparatus areas. Ideally a spectator area is provided outside the floor and depending upon scheduling the space may also be opened up for parties and other rentals with the proper supervision.*

1.1.6 OTHER SITES



Figure 7 The view north from the Durango Mesa site

Two other sites are under consideration for future facilities: Three Springs Community Park and Durango Mesa Park.

The Three Springs Community Park site is on the east edge of the development along Wilson Gulch Drive. This 75-acre property is currently owned by GRVP, LLC, developer of the Three Springs subdivision, and the site is intended to be dedicated to the City and developed as a park with amenities to serve both the adjacent neighborhood and the community.

Durango Mesa Park is the top of the mesa east of State Highway 3 and across the Animas River from the Durango Mall. The Mesa is being donated to the City and County by the property owners and is the subject of a visionary master plan that promises a series of diverse four-season uses including a variety of fields, trails, outdoor performance venues and the relocation of the County Fairgrounds. Durango Mesa Park currently has a single access point and limited utilities in place. The adopted Durango Mesa Area Plan illustrates the phased development of the site.

A vacant retail space at the Durango Mall has also been promoted for consideration. Retail spaces have a column spacing and ceiling height that are not conducive to recreation uses: the roof/ ceiling is too high for single story uses and too low for gymnasium or inclusion of a mezzanine or second floor. Structural modifications can be disruptive. Also, the City would lease the space and have less long-term control. We recommend this space not receive further consideration.



**OUTDOOR SYNTHETIC TURF**  
 For more than the last decade outdoor sports turf products have been the play surface of choice for many communities. It offers a uniform play surface with low maintenance and performance in all types of weather. The versatility of these fields offers an advantage of not needing rest and recovery periods, they can be striped for multiple sports with ease to minimize operations and can quickly be turned over between activities. Additionally, in areas where water use reduction is a priority it is an ideal solution by significantly reducing or eliminating the need for irrigation.

## CHAPTER TWO : FACILITY RECOMMENDATIONS

### 2.1 OVERVIEW

The Durango Community Recreation Center is well used, and the community desire for additional fitness and gymnasium space is well documented. Durango hosts a vibrant biking community and indoor cycling attendance is well above national norms. As in many communities, pickleball participation is surging, and this activity was not on the radar until the last ten years.

The City hosts an extensive child care program which caters to working parents, generally after school, school breaks and during the summer. The Gametime childcare programs are hosted at the Mason Center, Recreation Center and Chapman Hill sites, and there continues to be strong demand with approximately 17,000 participants. The Mason Center provides essential child care services, but the highest and best use for this site is as a neighborhood park. The Recreation Center provides on-site child care for users to access while using the facility.

The Chapman Hill site has a rich winter sports heritage. Plans are in place to improve the ski hill, and the rink has extensive ice programming during winter months. Due to the site and construction of the existing ice slab, ice is removed from April to September, and though a variety of programs like roller skating and roller derby are popular during the summer season, the rink is underutilized during these months. The space is not ideal for Pickleball, and the ceiling is too low for indoor soccer, though there is some support for indoor turf. There is demand for a second sheet of ice during winter months and a desire for year-round ice in Durango. The City has purchased the property to the north, and the existing building could easily be expanded to the north. Space for parking, locker rooms and guest amenities needs to be confirmed though there appears to be adequate area for these new amenities.

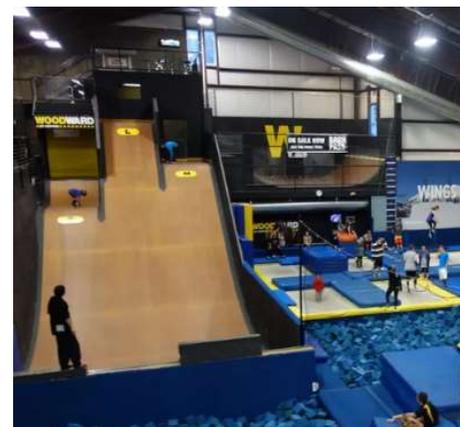
The gymnastics program has a strong following and the City's commitment is demonstrated by the new facility in Bodo. The Bodo neighborhood has developed as a commercial, warehouse and office park. The existing building was built as a storage building and in the long term, the location may be better suited as a storage facility that is centrally located to the parks and recreation system.

There is also a need for additional outdoor fields—in particular synthetic turf—and storage to support the leagues that use these fields. Durango Parks and Recreation also supports a number of community seasonal and annual special events that require equipment storage.



#### CHILD CARE

*Child care programs require, durable flexible space to serve a variety of age groups. The space needs soft, cleanable flooring, daylight and ideally a fridge for lunches during day camps. Outside, open play areas and a safe drop-off area for groups to board vans for field trips is a must.*



#### AERIAL CENTER

*The Woodward Copper Aerial Center (at Copper Mountain) is a for-profit venture focused on training skiers and snow boarders aerial skills. There may also be crossover for gymnastics and diving. The activities require a large open space with high ceilings and access to raised platforms for jumps and simulated ski slopes. Small classrooms need to be provided to meet with groups and provide dryland training. A similar facility could be a good fit for Durango as it is proximate to extreme skiing sites in the San Juans.*

In consideration of community surveys, staff input and consultant review the indoor space needs include:

- Childcare
- Year-round sheet of ice
- Artificial turf fields
- Long-term gymnastics solution
- Fitness/ Wellness/ Gymnasium space
- Address aging structures
- Move storage to a centralized location
- Outdoor waterpark
- Indoor turf facility
- Trail connectivity



#### INDOOR FIELDHOUSE

*Indoor turf fieldhouses are some of the most highly adaptable spaces for athletics. A myriad of sports and activities can be played in them throughout the year. Turf spaces can come in many different configurations including the traditional hockey rink sized turf in dasher boards to more open environments without walls. The application for what type of space is right for you depends on your goals and utilization, is it more for competition or training? It also depends on the type of turf to be utilized where it no longer must have rubber granules for cushion. There are even palletized products that can now be used to overlay gymnasium floor surfaces for even more program flexibility when the products are properly specified to work in concert with one another.*

## 2.2 POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

Staff and the Consultants reviewed several options in concert with how each option addressed the identified needs.

- Durango Community Recreation Center—expand the existing recreation center to provide additional fitness and group exercise space. Add an auxiliary gymnasium for additional pickleball space and provide additional classrooms to support the childcare need. This solution addresses the need for childcare and fitness/wellness/gymnasium space.
- Mason Center—demolish and convert to a park. This solution will address aging infrastructure.

- Santa Rita Park/Former Chamber of Commerce building—Demolish and construct a park pavilion. This solution will address aging infrastructure. Alternatively, consider uses of the building to support the operations of the Water Reclamation Facility.
- Chapman Hill—construct a second sheet of year-round ice to the north, with the ability to convert the existing seasonal rink to hybrid turf and indoor aerial skills during the summer months. This solution will address the need for childcare, providing a second sheet of ice and indoor turf.
- Durango Gymnastics—move gymnastics program to Three Springs and convert the existing facility to a central storage location for Parks and Recreation. This solution will address aging infrastructure and the need to provide a centralized storage location.
- Three Springs Community Park site—construct a new indoor community center featuring fitness, wellness, gymnastics and childcare spaces. This would be adjacent to new outdoor turf fields and an outdoor, seasonal waterpark. This solution will address the needs for childcare, artificial turf fields, long-term gymnastics facility, fitness/wellness/gymnasium space, waterpark, indoor turf, and trail connectivity.
- Durango Mesa Park—as suggested in the Durango Mesa Area Plan, construct new outdoor sports complex intended as a destination site to host tournaments and special events. This solution will address needs for artificial turf fields, fitness/wellness/gymnasium space, and trail connectivity in addition to other community priorities identified in the Area Plan.



#### **EQUIPMENT STORAGE**

*To paraphrase Rodney Dangerfield, “storage doesn’t get any respect!” We cannot afford to design every space for a single use, so we need to provide storage for equipment not being used. This is not expensive space to construct and maintain but is often undersized in favor of constructing other program areas: no client has told us they have enough storage. Basic requirements include a sealed floor and painted walls—to keep down the dust—and area lights with occupancy sensors to save energy.*



#### **OUTDOOR WATERPARK**

*Many Parks Districts have outdoor water parks with a variety of leisure-focused features that operate from Memorial Day to Labor Day. These facilities tend to emphasize water play over competition and may be used for learn-to-swim programs. No similar facility is located near Durango: starting with basic features and the opportunity for future expansion will result in a destination site with regional appeal. Due to the short season and high attendance, these facilities often recover most of their costs despite the need for a large life guard staff.*

<p><b>Santa Rita Park/Former Chamber of Commerce</b> (Meets Needs #6)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convert to Park Space + Pavilion</li> </ul>	<p><b>Needs</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Childcare</li> <li>2. Year round sheet of ice</li> <li>3. Artificial turf fields</li> <li>4. Long term gymnastics solution</li> <li>5. Fitness/ wellness/ gym space</li> <li>6. Address aging structures</li> <li>7. Move storage to centralized location</li> <li>8. Outdoor Waterpark</li> <li>9. Indoor turf facility</li> <li>10. Trail connectivity</li> </ol>
<p><b>Three Springs Community Park</b> (Meets Needs #1 #4 #5 #8 #9 #10)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indoor Community Center (Fitness / Wellness / Gym + Childcare)</li> <li>• Indoor and Outdoor Turf Fields / Sport Courts (Pickleball)</li> <li>• Water Park</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Existing Recreation Center</b> (Meets Needs #1 and #6)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand to provide for childcare and fitness</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Gymnastics Center</b> (Meets Needs #6 and #7)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convert to Central Storage</li> <li>• Move Gymnastics to Three Springs Recreation Center</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Mason Center</b> (Meets Needs #6)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demolish building and convert to park</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Chapman Hill</b> (Meets Needs #1 #2 #9)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional Sheet of Ice + Hybrid Indoor Turf</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Durango Mesa Park</b> (Meets Needs #3 #10)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sports Complex</li> <li>• Timing dependent upon transfer of ownership to the City</li> </ul>	

### 2.3 SOLUTION PRIORITY

The order of improvements will ultimately be decided by the community and available funding however the recommended priority of solutions is as follows:

1. Santa Rita Park/Former Chamber of Commerce building removal during the redevelopment of Santa Rita Park.
2. Three Springs Community Park facility is dependent upon voter approval for funding of a bond using the existing dedicated 2015 Half Cent Sales Tax.
3. If the community is not supportive of bonding for the development of a new facility in Three Springs, expand the existing Durango Community Recreation Center.
4. Gymnastics Center could be relocated to a new facility in Three Springs and the existing Durango Gymnastics building could be repurposed as storage. If the community is not supportive of a bond for the new facility, Durango Gymnastics would remain in Bodo.
5. Mason Center building would be removed and the existing childcare program would be provided at either the new recreation facility in Three Springs or the expanded existing Recreation Center. Storage would be incorporated into either the repurposed building in Bodo or the expansion to the existing Recreation Center.
6. Chapman Hill addition to incorporate a second sheet of year-round ice would be contingent upon available future funding.
7. Durango Mesa Park is primarily envisioned as an outdoor venue with phased development and the timing is contingent upon the land transfer to the City and available future funding.

In summary, the recommended solutions are prioritized according to a combination of meeting the number of needs to be addressed and the prerequisite to build new spaces before programs can move from existing spaces to be repurposed.