
WALKER AREA COMMUNITY CENTER

STRATEGIC PLAN – *Revised & Board Approved November 13th, 2013*

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1. **PURPOSE:** The purpose of this Strategic Plan is to share information with our clients, partners, and potential donors. It discloses our mission, goals and objectives, services, partnerships and financial history. Our Corporate Book complements this document and is available upon request. Additional information is available and questions can be answered by visiting our website www.walkerwacc.com

2. **INTRODUCTION:** The Walker Area Community Center (WACC) is a 501c3 non-profit organization that was established in 2000 in response to a need to provide a safe and healthy environment for youth and the broader community in ways that improve our overall wellness and strengthen our local economies. The WACC was completed in 2007. It is the only community center in the Leech Lake Area, providing a wide range of services to enhance the community, and the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, especially the youth. The WACC was built with a variety of donations; and day-to-day operations are currently supported by memberships, partnerships and donations. The WACC serves an area contiguous with the boundaries of School District 113, roughly 25 miles in any direction from the hub of Walker. As of Oct 1, 2013, enrollment at Walker-Hackensack-Akeley school was at 754 students in grades K-12. Of those students, 49% receive free/reduced lunches. Young people in our community face many complex social forces, some of which include poverty and lack of access to supportive programs and services. Youth-serving organizations, such as the WACC, need to be adequately

equipped to be supportive, caring and challenging in a positive way.*

Currently, the WACC has over 75,000 user visits annually by people who utilize the gymnasium, fitness center, meeting spaces, and our civic arena. We have established effective collaborations with a wide range of civic and recreational partners to address issues focused within impoverished communities. This is accomplished by providing adult programs, fitness and sports, youth programming, and meeting & gathering spaces.

**(From Developmental Assets: A Profile of Your Youth for Walker-Hackensack-Akeley School District © 2013 by Search Institute, Minneapolis, MN. Data collected with the survey Search Institute Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors, copyright © 1996, 2012, Search Institute, Minneapolis, MN.)*

3. MISSION AND GOALS

- a. **Mission statement:** It is our mission to provide civic, cultural, educational and recreational opportunities that support balanced and healthy communities.
- b. **Goals and objectives:** The goals and objectives for the WACC identify where we want to be in the future and how we will get there. The WACC Board of Directors will monitor progress towards objectives annually or more frequently if needed. Adjustments to the objective list and the measures and timelines will be made as appropriate.
 - i. **Goal #1. To provide programming opportunities to best meet the diverse interests of youth and adults in the Leech Lake area. Objectives for Goal #1:**
 1. Increase and sustain programming partnerships with civic, recreational, sport and youth groups, including the Walker Hackensack Akeley School District and Community Education and community partners listed in section 4C.
 2. Increase number of programs and participants in those programs
 3. Increase fitness memberships.
 - ii. **Goal #2. To partner with business, government and other civic entities to maintain and improve professional relationships supporting economic growth and opportunities in the Leech Lake Area. Objectives for Goal #2:**
 1. Outreach to businesses for additional partnership or funding opportunities
 2. Annually update a strategic plan and publish an annual report
 3. Provide trained professional staff and volunteers
 4. Attend annual township and city meetings
 - iii. **Goal #3. To maintain the WACC as a viable entity that is able to meet its financial commitments. Objectives for Goal #3:**

1. Seek opportunities to pay off debt through capital campaigns, large donations and building naming rights.
2. Pursue grant opportunities
3. Maintain a Board of Directors with combined experience and resources to increase capacity in fundraising, marketing and overall management.
4. Raise funds through the signature events to support our programs and services

iv. Goal #4. To provide a quality building and presentable grounds. Objectives for Goal #4:

1. Finish construction of grounds and parking lot
2. Resolve building maintenance issues.
3. Provide for additions and improvements

4. PROGRAMS, SERVICES & PARTNERSHIPS:

- a. **PROGRAMS:** The WACC provides youth-friendly facilities in collaboration with the Boys & Girls Club of the Leech Lake Area, targeting the after-school and off-school time periods. The WACC also provides adult fitness programs including aerobic classes, strength training and personal training services in the fitness center. Most of these activities are available to the community at a low or very reasonable cost. More information is available on the WACC website.
- b. **SERVICES:** The WACC provides a wide range of services to the local community and is listed below. Details on each service can found in the appendix. Many of these services are not available to the community in any other location.
 - i. Fitness Center and Gymnasium
 - ii. Ice Arena & Outdoor Rink
 - iii. Rotary Meeting Room
 - iv. Ringle Library
 - v. Room Rentals
- c. **COMMUNITY CENTER PARTNERSHIPS:** The WACC sustains on-site programming partnerships with civic, recreational, sport and youth groups, including the organizations below:
 - i. Boys and Girls Club of the Leech Lake Area
 - ii. Walker Youth Hockey Association
 - iii. Walker Curling Club
 - iv. Rotary International
 - v. Zumba Fitness Classes
 - vi. Silver Sneakers Program
 - vii. Just for Kix Dance Program

5. FUND RAISING

- a. **History of Fundraising for the WACC:** Two groups joined forces, Leech Lake Area Youth Hockey and Project Future, a Blandin Foundation community planning committee, to consider the development of a community center. By the year 2000, a private non-profit corporation had been founded, with a board of directors. In 2000, a professional consultant was hired to evaluate the project. The conclusion was that the project was attainable and the timing was right. The board of directors decided to operate a capital campaign on its own. Many challenges were obstacles to success and the time needed to secure funds and support was long. In 2006, with funds and pledges amounting to \$2,005,000, the board voted to begin the project. During the construction and opening phase, an additional \$700,000 was raised. The initial project cost inflated from 2000 – 2007 to a final cost of \$4.6 million, but after the first year of operation, 59% of the project was funded. Efforts have been ongoing, to the present, to raise capital funds to reduce the debt on the facility. The community members and local businesses contributed \$1,975,000 to the project. Major entities that also contributed were Blandin Foundation and the State of Minnesota, DEED.

An additional Capital Campaign was conducted in 2010: The One Thousand 100s Capital Campaign is a 5-year plan to obtain 1000 pledges of \$100 per year for 5 years. Participants chose how many shares they wanted to pledge. One share would be \$100 per year for 5 years; two shares would be \$200 per year for 5 years and so on. Community Center naming rights were available for a contribution of \$1,000,000 or more. The campaign launched on July 4th, 2010. Informational brochures were mailed to the school district mailing list and a website was created with information about the campaign with an option to pledge online through PayPal. Individual asks were made by the board, staff and volunteers. In addition, the campaign was featured at a large event held at the WACC. Campaign participants were featured in the paper each week and a “wall of fame” was established inside the WACC with photos and testimonials of participants. The campaign ran for approximately 6 months. 183 pledges were collected from the community. In addition, an anonymous donor and the First National Bank made two large donations both in the amount of \$25,000. Total money raised in the first year was \$77,826. Letters are sent to pledgers in January each year for pledge renewals until their 5-year pledge is up. Less than 2% of pledges didn’t renew in the second year. \$43,000 is expected per year for the remaining years, this would include the same donation from First National Bank of Walker in the amount of \$25,000. Campaign will end in 2015.

- b. **WACC Signature Events:** The WACC hosts 5 signature events per year. Details information on each event can be found in the appendix.
 - i. Polar Pout Plunge
 - ii. Home & Leisure Expo
 - iii. WACC Golf Classic
 - iv. Chase The Police Triathlon
 - v. Walker North Country Marathon

6. **COMMUNICATIONS:** The maintenance and expansion of WACC services and support is dependent upon communications. The mission, past successes and future goals need to be shared and understood. In addition, for day-to-day programming and services, community members need to be kept aware of what is going on. Efforts to date include:

- a. **Website** – The Center maintains an excellent, up-to-date website at www.walkerwacc.com
- b. **Newsletter** – WACC members, partners and volunteers are kept current through the use of an e-newsletter that is managed through a paid service called Constant Contact. Monthly newsletters are sent in addition to occasional news blasts.
- c. **Community Ed Brochure** – Twice a year the local Community Education program produces a brochure that is received by all households in the area. The WACC provides content for this brochure on its program offerings and services.
- d. **Newspaper** – The Walker Pilot, the weekly newspaper produced for the area routinely contains both articles and advertisements for the WACC. Every week there is some information that can be found on upcoming opportunities at the center. The Pilot often runs articles and ads for no cost to the WACC.
- e. **Flyers & Posters** – Events at the WACC are advertised with full-color posters at the WACC and around town.
- f. **Mailed Media** – Letters, postcards and brochures are sent for specific events.
- g. Published Annual Report
- h. Presence and participation in city and township meetings
- i. Occasional public meetings

7. **ORGANIZATION, PERSONNEL AND STAFFING:** A Board of Directors runs the WACC. The Board is organized under two documents: the Bylaws of the Board of Directors and the Rules of the Board of Directors. Additionally, each board member is required to sign a Board Letter of Agreement that lists roles and responsibilities of the members. All WACC Board members are unpaid volunteers. The Board is the deciding body regarding policy making and general guidance for implementation of policy at the WACC. Finance and personnel matters must be brought to the Board for discussion and approval. These expectations are contained

in the Bylaws and Rules of the Board, which are available upon request. The board operates under direction from committees made up of board members. The WACC currently has four paid staff. They include an Operation Manager, two part time office support staff and a janitor. Primary oversight of the paid staff is the responsibility of the Personnel Committee. Duties and responsibilities of the paid staff are located in the Rules of the Board of Directors, position descriptions and Employee Handbook. There are approximately 25 volunteers currently working at the WACC. They perform a variety of duties including office support, general cleaning and maintenance and interacting with members, partners and guests. WACC volunteers contribute approximately 2,000 hours of time per year.

The WACC is currently applying to be a Certified Charitable Organization under the rules and regulations required by the Charities Review Council, a Minnesota organization that provides tools and resources to charitable donors. When an organization meets all “27 Accountability Standards”, they earn the “Meets Standards” seal. The organization is then added to the Council’s website and newsletter, providing the public with a detailed list of comprehensive information about the most trustworthy nonprofits.

8. **CORPORATE BOOK:** The following documents are available by request for more detailed information.

- a. 501c3 Non-Profit Status Document
- b. Board Bylaws
- c. Board Rules of Operation
- d. Employee Handbook
- e. Volunteer Program Guidelines
- f. Facility Use Manual
- g. Center Rental Agreement

9. **SUMMARY:** The WACC is a dynamic and important part of the community. It provides important services and opportunities for young people, adults, retirees, part time residents, full time residents and visitors. It is important that we find ways to ensure the financial health of the Center. That is our biggest challenge. It is through constant attention to this issue that solutions will be found. The WACC has tremendous support from families, civic organizations, sporting organizations, volunteers and individual members. It will be through the hard work and dedication of these people and groups that the WACC will continue to be able to provide the programs that the community has come to depend on.

10. **APPENDIX:**

a. **SERVICES THE COMMUNITY CENTER PROVIDES:**

- i. **Fitness Center and Gymnasium** - The Jack & Gloria Bieloh Fitness Center & Gymnasium has a complete line of cardiovascular, free-weights, assisted lifting machines and other equipment for a safe and effective exercise routine. The most modern exercise systems have been incorporated to optimize your time and workout efficiency. Our fitness center hours change by season. Our fitness center offers the following amenities:
 1. Free Weights
 2. Resistance Equipment
 3. Stretching Area
 4. Treadmills
 5. Stationary Bikes
 6. Elliptical Machines
 7. Step Machines
 8. Locker Rooms
 9. Fitness Evaluations
 10. Personal Training
 11. Vending Machines
 12. Gymnasium

- ii. **Ice Arena & Outdoor Rink** -The Walker Area Community Center is home to Walker Youth Hockey as well as the Walker Curling Club. In addition to these clubs, we offer open skating times and a variety of intramural leagues. Ice hockey is a key activity at the WACC. Not only does the ice arena meet the needs to local teams, it also provides a place for the local leagues to host tournaments and events. These events bring many people and families to the Leech Lake area, which provides an important economic impact to the community. An outdoor rink is made available to the entire community through collaboration with the City of Walker. During the off-season, the indoor arena is used for the Home & Leisure Expo and available to rent for large events.

- iii. **Rotary Meeting Room** - The Walker Rotary International Club meets every Tuesday at Noon in the Rotary Room. Other times, the Rotary Room is available for rental for parties, meetings and any other function. The Rotary Room comfortably seats 150 and is located directly next to the kitchen. A serving area is available between the kitchen and Rotary Room. There is a variety of audio-visual equipment available in the Rotary Room. Also located outside of the exterior doors is are several picnic tables with umbrellas for outdoor seating. Rotary International has also been a large donor to the WACC.

- iv. **Ringle Library** – A library room was built in the memory of Dr. Ringle, a local doctor who served the needs of the Walker area for 46 year. This room is warm and welcoming and is available for the pleasure and enjoyment of guests and members. The Ringle family donated the final construction and contents of the room.
- v. **Room Rentals:** The Walker Area Community Center can accommodate social events, fundraisers, holiday parties, wedding receptions or any other celebrations. The WACC offers both traditional and non-traditional sites to host events. The Ringle Library is suitable for up to 20 guests and features a fireplace, soft seating and a touch of home. The Rotary Room is suitable for gatherings up to 250 people. For non-traditional setting, the multi-sport court can be set up to accommodate dinner, dancing and entertainment. Business meetings, sales rallies, trade shows and employee appreciation events area all possible at this versatile facility. The WACC offers wonderful and unique meeting and reception space. The staff provides hands on approach to assure that your event successful. The WACC can also help design a day of activities for member's employees with a slightly competitive edge as they compete as teams or individuals in volleyball, pickle-ball, dodge ball or maybe a puck-shooting contest.

b. WACC SIGNATURE EVENTS

- i. **Polar Pout Plunge:** The Polar Pout Plunge was started in 2004 in conjunction with the International Eelpout Festival, which has taken place in Walker since 1979. Individuals and teams collect money from sponsors and take turns jumping into a hole in the ice on Leech Lake. The minimum cost to participate is \$50. All profits go directly to the WACC. The event is judged and winners are chosen in a variety of categories. Prizes given are Moondance tickets and event apparel. Prizes are also earned by collecting money. The event was originally called the Walker Polar Plunge but changed their name in 2010 due to copyright issues with the Special Olympics Polar Plunge. The Polar Pout Plunge is organized and coordinated by an outside committee of community members and past WACC board members. None of the committee members are paid. This event has received national recognition. Net proceeds range from \$30-40k. Website: www.polarpoutplunge.com
- ii. **WACC Golf Classic:** The WACC Golf Classic was started in 2003. It was originally named The Walker Area Community Center Golf Benefit & Dinner and was renamed The WACC Golf Classic in 2011. The event is held at Tianna Golf Course and is coordinated by an outside committee of WACC board members and community members. Approximately 30 four-person teams pay a fee to golf and have dinner. On-course games also raise funds as well as hole-sponsorships and a silent auction. None of the committee members are paid. Net proceeds range from \$15-20k. Website: www.walkerareacommunitycenter.com/golf.htm

- iii. **Chase The Police Triathlon:** The triathlon was started in 2009 by Walker police officer, Jesse LeBlanc. He wanted to create an athletic event that honored servicemen and women, and also raise funds for the WACC. The course starts at Walker City Park, where police, EMS, and military personnel start the race with the first wave. Once the police and EMS personnel are on their way with their “head start,” the racers will then start the race and “chase” the police, attempting to catch up to them and finish the race before them. Around 400 participants pay a race registration fee, and sponsorships are also recruited to help raise funds. The Chase the Police Triathlon is organized and coordinated by an outside committee of community members and one WACC board member. None of the committee members are paid. Net proceeds range from \$10-15k. Website: www.walkertriathlon.com
- iv. **Home & Leisure Expo:** The first Home & Leisure Expo will take place in April 2014. The event replaces the Lions Home & Garden Show, which was held in the WACC arena for several years until the Lions decided to no longer continue their event. A vast array of home improvement, remodeling, sport and leisure companies is expected to showcase their quality products and services at the annual event. The event is organized and coordinated by the Operations Manager and volunteers. Net proceeds are expected to range \$2-3K. Website: www.waccexpo.com
- v. **Walker North Country Marathon:** The Walker North Country Marathon was started in 1982 and owned by an independent race director. In 2010, the event was given to the Walker Area Community Center and includes: Full Marathon, Half Marathon, 10k Fun Run/Walk and Kids Fun Run. The course starts and finishes at the WHA High School. Partnerships have been established with the school district to provide a registration location for the races and bussing services for the Half-Marathon. Around 500 participants pay a race registration fee, and sponsorships are also recruited. The night before the race, a spaghetti-feed is held at the WACC for a small fee. The Walker North Country Marathon is organized and coordinated by an outside committee of community members. Net proceeds range from \$3-4k. Website: www.walkernorthcountrymarathon.com