



Frequently Asked Questions: Aquatic Center

Why is the Board of Commissioners considering an Aquatic Center project?

The Cherokee County Parks & Recreation Master Plan developed with citizen involvement in 2003-04 identified parks and recreational needs over a ten year period – from 2005 to 2014, including greenspace, playgrounds, baseball/softball fields, soccer fields, and “recreation center/aquatic center” to mention a few. In August 2004, the Board of Commissioners adopted a resolution to ask voters to consider a 6-year extension of the Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) for capital projects, which included \$16.8 million for parks and recreation projects – \$5.2 million of which was earmarked for an “aquatics and/or other facilities”. In November, 2004 the citizens of Cherokee County approved the referendum by a vote of 55.96% to 44.04%.

In 2008, the Board of Commissioners discussed the demand for parks and recreation and a Recreation Summit was conducted to solicit public input regarding the Parks & Recreation Master Plan. Following public input, the Board of Commissioners adopted a resolution to ask voters to consider a \$90 million park bond. While the Master Plan and Summit identified and prioritized various park and recreation project needs, an independent citizens group was formed to educate the public and solicit support for the park bond, including developing a Parks for Cherokee web site (<http://parkbond.cherokeega.com/>) that included a description of projects and the impact on property taxes. In November, 2008 the citizens of Cherokee County approved the referendum by a vote of 61.74% to 38.26%.

What is included in the Aquatic Center?

The Cherokee County Aquatic Center (CCAC) – a proposed 48,000 square foot indoor aquatic facility with an additional 18,000 square foot outdoor leisure pool and deck area– will serve Cherokee County families and provide an asset to the immediate surrounding community and Cherokee County as a whole. The center will add a new dimension of recreation opportunities; providing a full range of aquatic programming including competitive and recreational swimming opportunities, learn-to-swim programs, aqua therapy, aquatic exercise classes and more.

The CCAC will include the following amenities:

- Indoor 50-meter competition pool with spectator seating for 700
- Indoor 25-yard recreational pool (therapy, exercise & instruction with warmer water)
- Indoor poolside classrooms / party rooms
- Spacious lobby and seating areas with pool overlook
- Outdoor leisure pool with multiple features, large deck and pavilions
- Concession stand serving both indoor and outdoor components
- Generous locker rooms and family restrooms

Why is the Board of Commission (BOC) required to spend the park bond monies? Can the BOC use the monies to repay the debt?

There are some citizens who claim that the “money does not have to be spent” and “can be used to repay the debt”. Roger Murray, Bond Legal Counsel, addressed both issues: 1) OCGA Section 36-82-4.2 requires that the Board determine that (i) the purpose stated in the notice of election has been satisfied, (ii) the purpose stated in the notice is no longer necessary or (iii) circumstances have changed such that the expenditure of the bond proceeds is no longer practicable or feasible prior to using bond proceeds to repay debt. It would be unreasonable for the Board to make one of these determinations in the instant case. The notice of election stated that the bond proceeds would be used for the “purchase, construction and improvement of parks, recreational land, facilities and equipment, including green space.” It would be disingenuous for the Board to determine that the purpose stated in the notice has been satisfied or that the purpose is no longer necessary. Furthermore, the mere fact that the Board would have to levy less than one mill is hardly evidence that the expenditure is no longer practicable or feasible. The voters approved a tax increase when they authorized the bonds. The will of the voters must be carried out. 2) The Bond Resolution prohibits the use of

bond proceeds to repay debt unless the “projects” have been completed. The projects originally contemplated have not been completed.

Will property taxes increase if user fees are not sufficient to pay for the operations of the Aquatic Center?

The aquatic center business plan establishes a fee schedule, marketing plan, organizational structure and staffing plan as well as a financial plan for the facility. These elements are based on consultation with Robert McCallister, our operations consultant and comparisons to historical data from similar public and private facilities in the surrounding area. Initial projections indicated a cost recovery for the CCAC of approximately 89% through the first three years. In an effort to shift the burden from the tax digest to the end users, fees were raised to reflect a budget of nearly full cost recovery.

Based on the business plan developed by Mr. McCallister, a funding shortfall during the first 3-years of operation will total \$96,045: \$52,365 shortfall in year 1; \$54,776 shortfall in year 2; and, a \$10,685 surplus in year 3. The goal is to ensure there will be no shortfall, but if a shortfall exists every effort will be made to cover the shortfall within the Recreation & Parks Agency Budget without the need to raise property taxes.

For more information regarding the business plan, please visit the county web site transparency page by selecting the following link:

http://www.cherokeega.com/transparency/documents/CCAC%20Business%20Plan_FINAL.pdf

What is the economic impact of an aquatic center in a community?

According to a study conducted by Georgia Southern University, the Splash in the Boro Family Water Park & Aquatic Center (Splash) located in Statesboro/Bulloch County has a positive economic impact for the local economy in that:

1. The facility draws a significant amount of non-county visitors into Bulloch County based upon survey results of full paid admissions.
2. The total economic impact of Splash is estimated at \$8.6 million in gross county output and 161 jobs in the existing economy are related to Splash over the summer.

3. The economic impact increased significantly between 2008 and 2009. The total increase was \$3.6 million or 64% to Gross County Output and 62 more jobs (a 63% increase) was added Splash's employment impact.
4. The attraction reinforces the emergence of Bulloch County (and Statesboro) as a regional economic center of growth.

According to an article in the *Times-Georgian*, a single weekend swim meet held in Carrollton, Georgia last year had an economic impact of \$1.13 million, according to Jonathan Dorsey, executive director of the Carrollton Area Convention and Visitors Bureau — and he expects it to be in that ballpark again this year. <http://times-georgian.com/bookmark/14780118>

What is the construction cost of the Aquatic Center and what is the estimated date of opening?

The County opened the bids from the 4 shortlisted and prequalified general contractors, and New South Construction is the lower bidder and is UNDER our construction bid budget of \$16,150,000.00. The Board of Commissioners awarded a contract to New South Construction.

Bids results are below:

New South:	\$15,683,000.00
Juneau:	\$16,673,000.00
Brasfield Gorrie:	\$16,725,000.00
Gay Construction:	\$16,832,000.00

The goal is to open the facility in March/April, 2013.

Does Cherokee County have the sufficient demographics to support an aquatic facility of this nature?

Table 1. Public Aquatic Centers in Local Counties					
	Gwinnett	Cobb	Hall	Forsyth	Cherokee
2010 Population	805,321	688,078	179,684	175,511	214,346
2010 Population (5-18 yr olds)	172,339	127,294	35,577	38,086	42,655
Households	254,515	250,395	56,272	54,161	71,826
Median Household Income	\$ 58,732	\$ 62,893	\$ 49,334	\$ 84,567	\$ 66,972
Number of Aquatic Centers	5	4	1	1	1
2010 Total Daily Admissions	264,386	198,647	74,594 ³	TBD ¹	63,000 ²
Residents per Aquatic Center	161,064	172,020	179,684	175,511	214,346
Children 5-18 per Aquatic Center	34,468	31,824	35,577	38,086	42,655
Households per Aquatic Center	50,903	62,599	56,272	54,161	71,826
Daily Admissions / 1,000 Residents	328	289	415	-	294
Daily Admissions / 100 Children	153	156	210	-	148
Daily Admissions / 100 Households	104	79	133	-	88

¹ Attendance for Forsyth is TBD. Facility opened June 20, 2011.

² Attendance shown for Cherokee is based on year 3 projections. Year 1 projections: 39,690. Year 2 projections: 56,700.

³ Attendance for Hall County is based on the 2009 Annual Report.

Table 1 above shows the 2010 U.S. Census numbers from each locale as well as the number of aquatic centers and the number of aquatic center visits in each county. The average number of residents per aquatic center for all four counties is 172,085 and the average number of school-aged children per aquatic center is 34,989. **With a current population of approximately 215,000 and school-aged children numbering more than 42,000, Cherokee County exceeds these numbers and appears to have sufficient population to support a similar facility.** Additionally, the median household income for Cherokee County compares favorably with that of the other counties; \$66,972 versus an average of \$63,882.

Finally, the actual per capita visits for residents, children and households seen in the other locales is consistent with the attendance necessary to achieve the projected break-even point. Note that these numbers are not available for the City of Cumming (Forsyth County) because this facility has only been open for 3 months. However, initial reports indicate they will exceed their projected attendance for year one.