

October 23, 2010 by email.

Dear Councilor,

I am writing to oppose the proposed conversion of program areas in the Green Lake Community Center (GLCC) to offices for Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) staff.

Reasons for continuing the GLCC as a public-access resource include the large number of visits it currently receives; the recent increase in residential housing and young families in our urban village, which imply increasing future utilization; and the integrating function GLCC serves in a diverse community that extends beyond the bounds of the Green Lake neighborhood. [Details below.]

**Need for office space not a result of budget crisis.** DPR management says the conversion to offices is a response to the current budget crisis and the lack of alternative, affordable office space. In reality, DPR knew long ago it had to vacate the South Lake Union building, and GLCC is not the only affordable office space in the City.

**Other City-owned spaces are available.** Members of our community who work at the Seattle Municipal Tower tell us there are many empty offices. In addition, DPR owns empty brick buildings that were Bachelor Officer Quarters, i.e., small living spaces, at Magnusen Park. Just around the corner from GLCC, on Ravenna Blvd, is the John Marshall School, which the Seattle School District closed just last year. There does not seem to be any shortage of available City-owned spaces that could be used, without dislocating any community's services.

**Green Lake is already the walking, residential urban neighborhood** that city planners are trying to create in other parts of the City. One of my neighbors, with two children under 3 yrs, noted how hard she and her husband worked to buy their "tiny" Green Lake house, on a "tiny" lot, and how often the toddler drop-in room at GLCC had helped her maintain "sanity", because when she was running out of patience during the long, rainy winter, she could put the children in the stroller, walk to GLCC, and allow them to run-around and scream and yell, along with all the other kids.

**The toddler drop-in room grossed \$15,000 last year, at \$2/visit, an average of 25 visits/day.**

**The Green Lake neighborhood is attracting more families with children.** Of the 19 houses that share my alley, not one had resident children when I moved here 13 years ago; now seven houses have resident children. A few years ago, neighbors fought hard to keep Daniel Bagley elementary school at the north end of Green Lake, only one block from Aurora Ave. This past year, it was decided to reopen the MacDonald Elementary School, at the south end of Green Lake, because of the increasing school-age population. In between is the Green Lake Elementary School, which received a distinguished Great Schools rating of 8.

**Growth demand for school space indicates an urban area that is attracting resident families.** These families, and their children, come together in the Community Center. Many more people visit the Green Lake Community Center than just those of us who live in the neighborhood, because it is located within the most visited municipal park in the state (according to the Urban Land Institute).

According to the **October, 2009 analysis of DPD permit data, Green Lake was at 94% of the 2024 target** for growth in residential construction, higher than any other hub/urban village, even with the largest construction project (the big hole in the ground) on hold. Only the urban centers of Ballard, Uptown, and the Commercial Core had higher percentages of “2024 target met”. At the time of the report, residential construction in Green Lake was already permitted to 139% of the 2024 target. Again, this suggests an increasing future demand for programs at the Community Center. Why would you replace class areas and drop-in spaces with offices, when there is an increasing need for these human services?

Jeff Skinner, Senior Recreation Specialist at GLCC, tells me **the youth basketball league (ages 8-18) operated from 3:30 – 9:00 last year, and had 14 teams or about 140 participants**, composed of a very diverse population, from Roosevelt and Stanford High Schools. He also notes, that while there are many Moms who drop-in with toddlers, **the biggest population served at GLCC is young adults**, who come to play basketball and volleyball. In addition, he **sees 50-60 men and 10-12 women who rent towels for \$.50 and use the hygiene center for showers**. Most of this population is homeless and dependent upon the GLCC for restrooms and showers. Aren’t these all activities we want to encourage?

And last, **there is the issue of parking**. If only people from the immediate neighborhood were using Green Lake Park and CC, there wouldn’t be such difficulty finding parking in front of the Community Center. There isn’t enough parking now, and adding 24 office workers to the site can only make it worse. The (Evans) pool at GLCC is one of the more used indoor pools in the City, and people are often frantically searching for parking. Evans pool has classes for handicapped swimmers, and special equipment for swimmers in wheel chairs; who often struggle to find a parking space now. Losing 10 or more spaces to office workers will mean more park-goers parking on the street in the nearby business area. This is likely to hurt local businesses.

Finally, **the most important consideration is the finality of moving offices into GLCC**. Once the investment is made to construct offices, it is unlikely they will move for many years, even after the budget rebounds. What are all the people who come to Green Lake for the 3-day “walk for the cure”, or the cross-lake swim, or the Battle at the Lake (outdoor) basketball tournament, or just to use the pool, the trail, the playing fields, to walk the dog, or have a picnic, going to do when there isn’t anyone in the Community Center to answer questions, to fix an over-flowing toilet, or to give directions to the nearest hospital, or the nearest Community Center?

I hope you will agree that Green Lake Community Center is not the appropriate location for DPR offices, or any other offices.

Sincerely,

Gayle Garman

[street address]

Green Lake Resident. Community Center, and Pool, user.