

Niles Community Teen Center  
4/15/09



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# Teen Center Expansion Proposal

*"WHERE PEOPLE COUNT."*

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# I. SUMMARY

Over the past year and a half, the Niles Teen Center at Golf Mill Mall has sustained record levels of attendance and participation with over 4,000 visits over the past year with a daily average of 18 teens. We attribute this success to the Village's quality recreational and educational services, accessible public transit system, and a growing popularity for alternative afterschool activities exacerbated by the deepening economic climate.

In 2001, based on a community survey, the Village of Niles decided that this project was in the best interest of the community. This was based on proven research about the benefits and rewards of similar afterschool programs. The National League of Cities states that "most juvenile crime is committed between 2:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m." and that "the after school hours are prime times for teenage sexual activity, drug and alcohol use and automobile accidents". Research from Texas A&M University states that teen centers benefit a community by encouraging healthy lifestyles, creating safer communities, encouraging educational achievement and supporting the economic well-being of their communities" (Appendix A)

However, staff is more and more frequently turning teen center members away at the door because of space limitations. Overcrowding is a good problem to have, but there is a real concern among staff due to the potential for an unsafe environment.

In an effort to continue effective and safe services for current and future teen members in the Niles community, we recommend taking advantage of a rare opportunity to expand into an adjacent unit within the mall that will be vacant in May 2009.

Expansion into this space will be completed with donated labor and materials from Home Depot, donated computers, furniture and books from the Niles Public Library, \$2500 from Wal-Mart's Community Giving Program and through other community donations and fundraising. This project will require an estimated annual cost increase to the Village of Niles of \$5,937 for rent and utilities.

# II. Project Description

The Niles Community Teen Center is one of only a few teen centers in the country to be located with in a fully operating shopping center. Our location at Golf Mill Shopping Center provides numerous benefits including easy access to public transportation routes, high public visibility and foot-traffic, mall security officers and video surveillance cameras, assistance from the mall marketing department and close proximity to numerous local schools. The Niles Community Teen Center attracts regional and national attention from the community and retail mall leadership for this innovative approach to youth services.

The teen center has experienced tremendous success since our reorganization and relocation in August 2007. On an average day, we serve about 20 teens in a 1512 square foot facility. We have seen a one day attendance high of 45 teens. Interest has grown to the point that some teens are limiting their attendance because of the lack of space and equipment. The teen center has about 250 current members and is constantly growing. In the youth services business, this is a great problem to have. While success is definitely shown in attendance numbers, it is also shown through the individual connections formed with other teens and staff. Staff has provided teen and adult job assistance, suicide and abuse interventions, and counseling referrals to Niles Family Services, development of proper study habits, and gang prevention.

The teen center staff offers services that address the wide variety of needs and interests of today's teenage population, their parents and the community at-large to include recreational trips and activities, a drop-in program with video and table games, educational programs and speakers, a representative board of teens called the Niles Youth Council, community service events, fundraisers, social and fitness-oriented activities, intergenerational programs, and counseling resources.

### III. Why Expansion is Necessary

- Safety- Higher numbers of teens can create an unsafe environment, lead to fights and disagreements, lead to damage of teen center property and lead to theft of personal and teen center property.
- Community Relations- Higher numbers of teens can lead to disturbances with mall retailers and patrons.
- Loss of expansion space- If the Golf Mill Mall rents the unoccupied adjacent space to another tenant, the opportunity to expand could be lost for at least 1 if not 10-20 years. With expanding the current space no longer an option, the next option would be relocation to another space within the mall or to a totally different building at a much higher cost.
- Decrease in numbers served- Some youth attend the teen center infrequently or stop coming all together because of the lack of space and limited equipment options on busy days. The youth coordinator has purposefully reduced his recruitment efforts because of the high number of teens and low availability of space and equipment.
- One of the goals of the NTC is to offer homework assistance. With limited work space and higher volume and activity levels, this goal is severely impeded.
- Another goal of the NTC is to work with other community stakeholders. Some community organizations have approached the youth coordinator with suggestions for programs or activities. He has had to turn them down on the simple fact that due to space limitations, we couldn't accommodate their suggestions.

## IV. Project Goals

- Continue to create diverse, innovative, affordable, and age-appropriate recreation opportunities for teens.
- To offer a safe place for teens to study and socialize.
- Actively recruit new members and make special efforts to integrate, involve, and retain these members.
- Expose members to recreational, educational, and family support opportunities.
- Provide increased educational programming, workshops, seminars and speakers.
- Increase teen literacy through book discussions, tutoring, homework assistance, and mentoring.
- Increase recreational opportunities.
- Provide educational resources and reading recreation area.
- Encourage greater inter-agency cooperation

## V. Suburban Teen Center Research

- Comparison based on size of facility- The Niles Teen Center currently has 1512 square feet of space. This is on the small size compared to almost all of the other teen centers which range from 1050 square feet to as large as 18,000 square feet. Those centers with small teen spaces are all attached to or part of a larger facility which are open to teen usage and not considered in these numbers. (i.e. park district administration buildings or other buildings owned by the park districts or municipal governments)

The Niles Teen Center has an average of 1 teen to every 75 square feet. On a high day, this could be reduced to 1 teen to every 38 square feet. Most other teen centers offer between 100 and 200 square feet per teen in attendance on an average day. On high days, for most facilities that ratio is reduced to 50 to 135 square feet per teen.

- Comparison of teen center attendance- The NTC places in the middle range for teen attendance. On an average day, we will have 20 teens (8 on a low day and 45 on a high day). The Elgin Teen Center serves about 2 teens per day and I would consider it to be under-performing program due to its location. Most of the other centers are considered to be successful programs, serving anywhere from 12 to 100 teens on an average day. A key component to serving a high volume of teens is having the space for them to go and staffing to supervise.
- Comparison of teen programs- The NTC provides a comprehensive youth services program. For the comparatively low number of staff, we offer programs equal to, if not of higher quality than, some other teen centers.

The Niles Youth Coordinator has gained some great ideas from his research which could be replicated for this community.

- Suburban Chicago Teen Center Research Information- The Youth Coordinator has assembled a summary research chart, specific reports, color photographs and additional information on each teen center in a binder which is available for review.

## VI. Detailed Contributions of Community Stakeholders

### 1) Home Depot- estimated value \$30,000

- Frame a 4' wide door opening into from computer lab to new space
- Frame for Front Entrance with fire door and panic bar
- New glass in partition wall between existing space and adjacent space
- Demolition interior walls in new space
- Reconfigure bathroom/ storage area
- New glass in partition walls between existing space and new space
- Install new Flooring
- Prepare, prime and paint all walls in the new space

### 2) Golf Mill Shopping Center- estimated value \$3,000

- Steel entry door
- 2-4 pieces of tempered glass windows- 4 feet by 6 feet
- Cap off extra plumbing, remove utility sink, install hot water tank for bathroom
- Replace damaged/ mismatched ceiling tiles
- Replace mismatched diffusers on ceiling light fixtures

### 3) Niles Public Library- estimated value \$13,500

- 20 computers w/ flat screen monitor, keyboard and mouse
- Books, DVD's, video games to circulate (bulk loan)
- 4 blue cloth wooden chairs, 1 blue cloth wooden ottoman, 4 brown plastic and metal chairs, 3 maroon office chairs
- 1 computer table, 1 printer stand, 6 large wooden study tables, 1 smaller utility table, 1 metal rolling desk, 1 bookcase

#### 4) Wal-Mart Community Giving Program- \$2500

- Funds will be used to purchase additional items for the Teen Center which could include couches, chairs, or televisions

#### 5) Power Play Grant- estimated cost to be spent from grant \$500

- Grant from the IPRA (Illinois Park and Recreation Association) is designated for fitness activities. Funds will be used to purchase a Wii video game system, WiiFit video game and additional “active” games

## VII. Continuing Costs of Proposal

Heat- Nicor – Currently about \$55 per month x 12 and will increase to about \$80 per month or additional \$300/ year.

Rent at Golf Mill – Currently \$778/ month for 1,512 sq. ft. to \$1,350 for 2,513 sq. ft. or an additional \$5,637/ year.

Estimated total annual cost increase with Nicor Gas and Golf Mill Rent is \$5,937/ year.

## VIII. Timeline

Date	Description of Work
April 28	Proposal provided to Village Board
	Contact newspapers with news release
	Contact area schools for story in their last edition of newsletter
	Seek additional funding support
June 8 to 12	Construction and build out of adjacent space
June	Furnish new space and install new equipment
June 21-22	Night in the Mall Lock-in
July 4, 2009	Niles 4 <sup>th</sup> of July Parade and Park District Festival
August 2009	News release that new Teen Center arriving soon
	Press Release for Grand Opening
August 25	Schools back in session
	Village tour of new facility
Late August/ early Sept.	Grand Opening of Teen Center Expansion

## IX. Evaluation of New Space

We will be able to evaluate the success of the expansion plan by collecting information on:

Increase in memberships and increase in the number of teens served at the teen center

Increase in the number of participants in teen center programs and events

Teen and Family surveys

# Appendix A.

## Why Afterschool Activities Needed

A document from the National League of Cities states that:

- “Eight million children between 5 and 14 go home to empty houses on a regular basis. For communities across America, these unsupervised hours after school mean heightened risks and missed opportunities.”
  - Most juvenile crime is committed between 2:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. with the crime rate tripling in the first hour after school is out;
  - The after school hours are also prime times for teenage sexual activity, drug and alcohol use, and automobile accidents;
  - Afterschool programs provide a safe environment where youth can engage in fun and constructive activities, while also contributing to worker productivity by reassuring parents that their children are in a supervised setting with caring adults;
  - Afterschool hours provide an ideal time to reinforce children’s learning gains and supplement the academic curriculum offered at school.
- Many cities have created afterschool programs to promote learning, keep children out of trouble and meet the needs of working parents. Municipal leaders can strengthen afterschool programs by:
  - Promoting partnerships that make it possible to forge a shared vision of afterschool challenges and opportunities;
  - Building public will to sustain a strong municipal role in the development of a local afterschool system over time;
  - Assessing local resources and needs through surveys and data analysis;
  - Improving quality so that programs effectively deliver the promises of safety, academic achievement, and cultural enrichment;
  - Broadening access to ensure that all children, including those from low-income families and neighborhoods and diverse cultural backgrounds, have opportunities to participate; and
  - Financing a citywide system for afterschool opportunities supports stability and long-term growth.
- In each of these areas, municipal officials can play leadership roles by focusing public attention on key issues, convening major stakeholders, and setting an agenda for city wide progress.”  
([www.nlc.org/iyef/education/afterschool/index.aspx](http://www.nlc.org/iyef/education/afterschool/index.aspx))

A document from the Park District of Oak Park proposing the establishment of a teen center in their community states:

- Dedicated teen spaces result in increased teen participation at facilities and in registered programs. A study (<http://www.rpts.tamu.edu/Faculty/Witt/NavySanDiego.pdf>) was completed by Texas A&M University in 2002 concerning teen participation at seven different Navy community centers in the San Diego area. In order to increase teen participation at these centers, a full-time teen coordinator was placed at each center and the number of teen programs and program hours were increased at each center. Dedicated teen spaces were also developed at four of the centers.

After only one year, each center saw an increase in teen participation. However, centers with dedicated teen spaces received 40% more teen registrations than those centers without teen spaces. Additionally, individual teens spent much more time per week at centers with teen spaces. Teens visited centers without teen spaces on an average of one day per week. Teens visited centers with teen spaces on an average of four days per week – an increase of three additional days per week. It is evident that the addition of a dedicated teen space would make a big impact not only on teen participation in one of our facilities, but also on teen program registration as drop-in activities often serve as an entry to more structured activities.

- Teen centers encourage healthy lifestyles for teens. Because of the nature of teen centers, they often bring together access to sports and physical activities as well as advice and information regarding support services from center staff and experts invited to visit and/or participate at the teen centers. Access is usually available to information on issues such as healthy eating, smoking, drugs, alcohol, sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy, eating disorders, relationships, and depression which promotes healthy lifestyle choices among teens.
- Teen centers create safer communities for both youth and adults. Teen centers provide positive activities that have the potential to divert teens from anti-social or criminal behavior. Besides just offering programs that keep teens “off the streets,” well-supported centers are able to provide an opportunity for referrals for teenagers in need of intervention and special support. Teen center staff and programs also help teens develop the confidence and social skills needed to learn to negotiate and solve difficult situations without violence.
- Teen centers encourage educational achievement. Teen centers and programs (such as art classes and college tours) are able to engage teens in a way that the traditional school environment usually does not. At a teen center, teens have multiple opportunities to get involved in a group setting and take part in making decisions that affect the center – an experience that may encourage them to become more involved in clubs and sports at their own schools and churches. Additionally, teen centers offer a relaxed and secure place to work on school work if they need to.
- Teen centers support economic well-being in their communities. Teen centers provide inexpensive safe places for teens to be while their parents are working. Most teen centers provide programs that help teens develop the skills and confidence they will need to increase their own employability in the future. Meaningful leisure services also reduce the high cost of vandalism and criminal activity.

# Appendix B

## Current Teen Center Floor Plan



# Appendix C

## Proposed Teen Center Floor Plan



# Appendix D

## Teen Center Member Survey

25 Teens Surveyed (August 2008 – March 2009)

### What do you like MOST about the Niles Teen Center?

- The field trips and almost all of the staff
- I like going on all the trips and going to the movie nights every month
- The homework help and just somewhere to go to hang out
- I like everything about it
- I like the game systems
- It's fun
- Everything
- The trips
- All the people that come to the Teen Center
- All the games
- I like the Xbox 360
- All the homework help the staff gives
- The thing I like most is that I don't have to spend my time at home and not even get my homework done (meaning not doing hw at home)
- People are not bothering you like at home
- The games and activities
- Everything & computer & hw help
- The people and the things to play
- The game "Skate"
- All of the different game and systems.
- The most thing I like is I have fun and there is funny people
- The guitar hero tournaments and the supervisors hanging out with all the kids.
- Playtime
- It's nearby and there are lots of games
- The Teen Center allows for one to keep occupied, especially when there is nothing to occupy idle time (distraction)
- The Media

### What do you like LEAST about the Niles Teen Center?

- Not enough trips and not enough space
- I don't like how little it is
- Both the limited space and the limits of the activities (due to the limited space)
- Nothing
- Sometimes I get in trouble
- I don't like how the Teen Center doesn't have enough room
- Its small
- Nothing at all
- It's not big enough
- The limited space that we have
- Other than the size I think it is fine
- The least thing is that there is less room to play
- It's too small
- Its fine and dandy to me
- The computers, they are slow
- All the *People* magazines
- Has less room in there
- What I like least is that there are more kids coming here and there isn't enough room
- I have all the game systems (at home)
- It's too small
- They are not open Monday's and Saturday's

### **Why do you think we need an expansion?**

- The provided space is too limited for the number of occupants. Moreover, with an increase in floor space, there would exist the ability for more activities for the teens to participate in, thus reducing the inactivity of the teens.
- Because there is not enough room and if there is a lot of kids, it gets too cramped.
- So more people can sign up and to have more fun with more space.
- Because when a lot of people come it gets crowded and very loud. With the new space it would be more open where we could play more games and more fun.
- I think more time, more games, more space and more movies
- So we can have more space, more video games, and an actual study area!
- More stuff
- So we can get more things
- So it is less crowded
- We need more room because lots of people are joining
- So we have more time to hang out with our friends
- So it will be bigger and we will have more space to play.
- So there would be more room so it wouldn't be so crowded and no one would fight over the video games because there would be more of them.
- We need to have a bigger space because its way crowded
- Its way too crowded
- So we can have more room in the teen center, and to have more game systems.
- So we can have more room and stuff
- For more people to join & activities
- Because there will be more space for more activities
- So we can get more games, walk around more without falling over people.
- We need an expansion so that we can have more room for things that we are getting for the teen center.
- There isn't enough space
- I don't consider it
- So it will be bigger and we will have more space to play
- Because when it gets crowded only like 30 people can come and then people will get turned down and people will get mad and I don't like getting tossed.

### **What has the Niles Teen Center done for you?**

- Stay off the streets and not do bad things
- The Teen Center gave me a place to do homework, made friends, and someone to talk to.
- It made me a happier person
- Gives me somewhere to go and made my life funner. Mostly everything
- Gave me help with homework and more places to go and make friends.
- They have a lot of fun things to do.
- It gave me a place to go and helped me with my homework and raised my grades at school.
- Let me not be bored at home and helps with homework
- It gave me a place to play when I get bored
- One more place to hang out with my friends
- The staff helps me with a lot of my homework and helps me understand it better.
- Everything
- I actually do my homework now and my math grade is going up. Before I was too lazy to do my homework and I got disturbed.
- Help me with my h.w.
- It gave me a place where I can hang out with friends and play games
- It has created a place for me to do homework, fun, and friends
- Entertainment and helps me
- They help me with my hw
- Helped with my homework and some though times in my life
- Helped with homework
- Made my life more pleasant and exciting
- The Teen Center has allowed for a place to distract from the boredom and monotony of an otherwise empty day
- Made me President (of Youth Council)

**If you could change three (3) things at the Teen Center, what would they be?**

- More Trips and more games
- Expansion
- More space to move around
- More trips each month like bowling and go-karting
- A pool table
- Expansion
- Skate days and Skate games
- A pool table
- Bigger place
- More games
- Replace the PS2 with a PS3
- Get another Xbox 360/ Wii
- Go on more trips/ Karaoke
- Everything
- I have more room/ Expansion
- Extended hours (even though you have a life and a family)
- More trips!
- A pet squirrel
- As previously mentioned, the size of the space could be improved
- As a result of increased space, more activities (desired) would then be able to be introduced
- The resources granted to the Teen Center could be supplemented by such items as transportation equipment. From thus, there would be the ability for the Teen Center to plan more off-location activities
- Nothing
- Have kids get only 1 strike (then they are out of the Teen Center for not behaving – not like 10 chances)
- More tournaments
- Have all the counselors (from Family Services) stop asking us all questions
- More room for an expansion
- More video games like racing game (for example: Need for Speed Undercover)
- More field trips like go karts
- To have more games
- Get bigger TV
- Get new board games
- Get a Wii or PS3
- Better trips
- Get World Tour set
- Make bigger
- More games
- Better computers
- Get new furniture
- New game consoles
- Better computers & bigger TV
- I would first get newer furniture because this is really old and starting to rip
- I would get more video game systems because there aren't enough here
- I would get an electronic scanning system so that we don't have to sign in every time
- More days open
- A better way to sign the sheets taking less time (for in and out of the Teen Center)
- Get the bigger space next door by the movie theater so that we could run around.
- I would want it to be open more days each week (Monday and Saturday)
- I would want RockBand
- I would want a Wii

# Appendix E

## Suburban Chicago Teen Center Research Chart