

Long-Range Program & Property Plan

Additional Q & A

Q: What is meant by “destination” location?

A: This will be a location that girls visit by choice, not because of convenience or because it's the only site available. It will be safe and desirable because it offers many of the attributes that have been suggested in the feedback surveys. It is a place where girls want to spend time; a place with best-in-class, mission-focused, girl-centered facilities. Destination locations are exciting locations that provide the activities girls like; locations that offer unique features, both environmentally and through the actual facilities found there; they offer different types of venues with programs that address girls' different ages, interests and preferences. Girls want to learn in ways and places that are fun and energizing; and they want to go to these places and stay overnight.

Q: Did girls specifically ask for an urban leadership center? How did the survey feedback lead to that decision?

A: This decision was made based on conceptual feedback from the respondents, best practices in studying what other councils and organizations are doing, plus overall facility needs. Specifically, the survey pointed to the need for:

- integrated services
- strong Girl Scout presence in the community
- linkage and access to community resources and partnerships
- staff located in the same facilities where services are provided in order to support girls and adults effectively
- consolidation of expenses to maximize resources
- girls' desire for a different kind of space for activities that meet their needs and interests but can't be offered in our current camp settings

Q: What features will the new urban leadership center include?

A: Details will be formulated once the standing Program Committee is enacted and a Master Plan is created. The primary feature is space that integrates program, shop and staff support. This consolidation will enable effective, cost-efficient interaction between girls and adults.

Q: What were the Board's criteria for making a decision? Did the Board consider any options to selling property?

A: Absolutely! But, based on assessment criteria, some properties feel short. As explained at the February 7 and April 4 presentations to delegates, the Board's criteria were:

- destination: Does the property currently possess the attributes necessary to attract a troop or group, based on girls' preferences and best-in-class camp experiences?
- program match: Does the property have the ability to deliver desired programming?
- usage: What is the property's capacity and cost, and to what extent is the property being used?
- previous plans: What efforts have previously been attempted to enhance the property?
- partnerships: What opportunities exist for local collaboration to leverage resources associated with property management?

Q: What will the procedures be for continuing to use the properties until they sell?

A: Council summer programming will continue through summer 2009 as planned according to the current summer program booklet. Details on how to use properties that are designated for sale are being created now and will be posted on the Web site as soon as they are available.

Q: Did you consider volunteer needs in making this decision?

A: From the beginning, volunteer input was solicited and utilized. The plan was based on membership & community input, financial & trend data, property usage & capacity, and potential for improvements & partnerships in providing programming to meet girls' needs & interests. As the plan progresses forward, look for new & improved methods to support volunteers as strongly & conveniently as possible.

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Q: How will volunteers be supported after offices are closed?

A: Volunteers will be increasingly and conveniently supported by the staff and with the aid of technology. More of our community development managers will be out based, and more readily accessible. Services such as the shop (Girlz Gear) and the resource library will be available at both our Greenville and Columbia centers. Adult training/learning opportunities and girl program activities will be offered both at our facilities and at other locations throughout our 22-county jurisdiction thanks to the generous support of a wide range of local community partners. This is an evolving plan and details will be posted regularly on the Web site.

Q: With Camp Congaree closing, won't it be difficult to get into Camp WaBak since there are no other camps in the Columbia area?

A: The program/property plan calls for site expansion of Camp WaBak facilities and the creation of new partnerships in the Midlands area so that more girls can participate in activities at any given time.

In addition, we're exploring a partnership to use the two resident summer camps in Eastern South Carolina called Low Country and Sandy Ridge. We are also looking into transportation options that would include the use of chartered buses.

Camp Low Country (formerly known as Richmond Plantation) is located 35 miles north of Charleston. It's 15 miles east of Moncks Corner on SC 402, five miles south of Cordesville. This 153-acre property is on the National Register of Historic Places. In addition to the hunting lodge and outbuildings constructed in 1927, Girl Scouts can experience outstanding examples of ecological and natural resources, open space and scenic sites.

Sandy Ridge is in Marlboro County near Bennettsville. It's approximately 40 miles north of Florence. Located on 500 acres of natural forest with two lakes, it also has a lodge and air-conditioned dining hall.

Q: Can Camp Low Country accommodate more people when Camp Congaree closes? Will it cost our girls more because we're from a different council?

A: We're working on the details for summer 2010 and will share them as soon as we have them.

Q: Will the cost of using council properties remain affordable? Will costs of summer camp programs remain affordable?

A: One of the benefits of the plan is reducing the cost of camp maintenance, repairs & associated costs in order to redirect those dollars to programming, which includes keeping direct costs for participants as low as possible. Of all facilities and programs explored, our fees remain in the lowest 25%; and our underwriting of the expense in the highest 25%. Proceeds from the cookie sale underwrite summer camp programs.

Q: Will the council help transport our girls to outdoor activities/programs? To destination properties?

A: The need for transportation options was clear in research. Busing, scheduled trips and similar alternatives need further exploration.

Q: An African-American camp was sold a while ago and the widely-held understanding is that the proceeds were to support the construction of a hut or house to commemorate the African-American woman for whom the camp was named. What happened to that plan?

A: Called Camp Dickson, it was part of the former Congaree Area Council. The camp was sold in 1997 and proceeds were set aside by the board of directors. Plans for a new unit were designed in 2005, but plans to build in 2006 were put on hold when SC was accepted as a pilot member for realignment. All property plans were put on hold in each of the three councils. Depending upon programming needs, this may be an indoor or outdoor unit.

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Q: When the logging was performed several years ago at Camp Congaree, wasn't the money supposed to be reinvested back in that camp?

A: Before the merger, all four councils now comprising Mountains to Midlands had major projects in the works that went on hold when the realignment process began. Funds from timbering were invested and remain in the same account as Camp Dickson sale proceeds. As the councils realigned, all board-determined projects were put on hold with funds to support future property plan. Donor-restricted gifts will always be honored.

Q: What will happen to physical structures/features that are memorials or in honor of individuals at properties to be sold?

A: It is the intent to preserve in a meaningful manner the physical legacies and history that exists. Although a property may be closed, we want to carry special memories forward. While each site's amenities are being reviewed for possibilities, no definite plan has been made; your suggestions are encouraged and your participation in this process is needed. Email your input by visiting our Web site, www.gssc-mm.org; then click on sheseesthefuture.org.

Q: Why can't we just keep things the way they have always been?

A: All actions are steps in the process to make Girl Scouting a high-capacity, relevant, accessible and sustainable organization for girls' personal growth & leadership development. First we realigned; next we defined our focus and created our strategy map for reaching our goals for girls; then we developed a property plan to empower us to integrate property with programming. The property plan allows us to redirect property costs to program. Our aim is not just to provide quantity sites but, rather, quality and improved sites.

We welcome your comments & feedback at all times. For an easy way to offer input and ask questions, go to our Web site, www.gssc-mm.org, and click on sheseesthefuture.org.