ANC Visits to Other Community Centers

January 9-13, 2017

 **Deanwood Recreation Center** (1350 49th Street, NE) -- Patrick Williams, Andrea Rosen, Carolyn Cook, Bob Perry, and Randy Speck visited the Deanwood Recreation Center and Library on January 9, 2017. Toni Thompson, DPR's Chief, Community Relations, met us and, with Area Manager, Monica Clark-Phillips, showed us around.

 Deanwood was built in 2010 on the site of a small field house. The 63,000-square-foot Center is located near the Deanwood Metro stop, across from the Ron Brown College Prep High School, and is co-located with the Deanwood Neighborhood Library. (For comparison, DPR reports that the Chevy Chase Community Center is 32,527 square feet and was built in 1960 with no significant changes to the building since then, although some work was done in the late 1990s.) The Recreation Center includes a sports field, swimming pool, early learning center, senior center (but not a wellness center), gymnasium, and a number of meeting or specialty rooms. By agreement with DPS, some of the facilities (including the sports field and the gym until Ron Brown's gym is again operational) are shared with the high school.

 DPR began the planning for the Recreation center with community meetings. It then prepared preliminary plans and drawings that were further reviewed and refined through additional community meetings to arrive at a consensus. Because the library is located in the same building, they also needed to get DC Public Library to agree on the design.

 The early learning center is in a separate part of the building and focuses on an after-school program from 3:30 pm until 6:00 pm. With three classrooms opening off a wide corridor that also serves as a play space (the floor is energetically patterned), there is a separate space for toddlers, ages three to five (with appropriately scaled facilities). Next to the classrooms is an outdoor “play lot” with a commodious sandbox. The classrooms incorporate facilities for light food preparation, and open child-sized restroom facilities. This space is also used during the summer for children's camp. Most of the activities during the school year are after school, so it was deserted when we were there. The early learning center wing also contains a full kitchen with two refrigerators (to accommodate campers’ meals during the summer), a teachers’ lounge with a sink and refrigerator, and adult restrooms.

 DPR emphasized that in looking at the space to be built for a community/recreation center, it is important to consider whether the facility is adequately staffed (“build in the cost of staffing”). Deanwood has five recreation staff, but they need eight to operate adequately.

 There is a separate room in the Center that focuses on senior activities, and it is open from 9:00 am to 5:30 pm, Monday-Friday. Gary Williams, the senior recreation manager, indicated that 10 to 15 seniors normally use that space in the mornings, and about 25 seniors are regulars at the Center. They have a full range of senior activities, including bingo, card and board games, crafts, movies, and unstructured "leisure and social" time. The Center also plans trips with seniors to special events (e.g., to the National Museum of African American History and Culture, or a boat ride on the Anacostia), to purchase craft materials, or to a movie. DPR arranges and provides the transportation, but participants must pay their own expenses.

 Seniors may also have exercise activities in the gym or various other activities scheduled in the multipurpose room. (We saw about two dozen seniors getting ready for an exercise class in the multi-purpose room when we were there. However, staff noted that when the community center in Kenilworth reopens, much of this population will return there.) There is also a separate space to help with senior housing.

 The fitness center is equipped with a variety of exercise equipment and is open from 9:00 am to 8:30 pm. The equipment appeared to need some maintenance but was being used when we were there. We were told that the fitness room is due to be expanded (taking over the game room).

 The multipurpose or community room can accommodate 50 or 60 for meetings. It gets extensive use for community meetings, classes (e.g., exercises during the day or boxing some nights), zumba on Saturdays, and private parties. There is a small adjacent kitchen with a stove that can be used by the community (i.e., it is not restricted to use by DPR staff).

 The indoor swimming pool is particularly impressive, with a "zero-entry" pool that permits the disabled or toddlers to enter the pool without steps or assistance and a one-half-size Olympic pool. The facilities also include a long water slide. The pool was undergoing maintenance when we were there (appropriate for this time of year). It undoubtedly gets extensive use most of the year. The pool has its own large glassed-in check-in desk, separate from a sweeping semicircular security desk at that end of the building.

 Other specifically designated rooms include a game room (with no distinguishing characteristics); a music room; a computer lab with about a dozen computers (open most days from 10:00 am to 8:30 pm; free computer classes are taught here); two study rooms; a small meeting room; an office where one can apply for and pick up DC One cards (staffed by that agency); and a broadcasting room where residents can learn broadcasting and where the seniors operate the Deanwood radio station. The Center also includes DPR office space.

 The one-story library, was, according to DPR Deputy Director Stokes, was an afterthought. It was originally envisioned as only one room, but the community wanted a larger library, and it was expanded (which may account for the lack of optimal design between the two facilities). The Library is sited at the farthest end of the building from the pool, has an extensive section for children with books, with a circular space rimmed by bleachers and children's computers. Another part of the open space is defined as a teen area. One of three libraries in the city that are co-located, the Deanwood library is DCPL’s smallest branch, at only 7200 square feet. By contrast, according to the 2011 "DC Public Library Services and Facilities: A Framework for Continuing Success," Appendix H, the Chevy Chase library is a "large" library at 24,000 square feet (though it doesn't seem quite that large). The Deanwood Library does not have its own meeting rooms but can use meeting rooms in the Recreation Center when it is open and if they are available. There is a problem with the difference in hours between the library, which is open on Sundays, and the Recreation Center, which is closed. The Library has only one small staff restroom, which must be made available to patrons when the Recreation Center is closed, and no water fountain of its own. Also, because the library and the Recreation Center share an entrance, they had to install a makeshift gate to the Recreation Center to close off the reception desk when the Center is closed but the library is open. The less-than-seamless integration of the library and recreation center was attributed by a librarian to the fact that DCPL was not involved in the planning early in the process.

**Raymond Recreation Center** (3725 10th Street, NW) -- Patrick Williams, Robert Gordon, Deean Rubin, and Randy Speck toured the Raymond Recreation Center on January 12, 2017, with DPR Deputy Director John Stokes.

 The Center was completed in 2013 on the site of a small field house and had a budget of $11 million (though Director Stokes thought that the final cost was $13 or $14 million). It consists of a two-story building with about 23,650 square feet, a playground, a sports field, an outdoor basketball court, and a tennis court. It is co-located with Raymond Elementary, which can be accessed directly on both the first and second floors. The school uses the DPR facilities, primarily the indoor gym. There is a surface parking lot across the street. The Petworth Metro stop is about two blocks away. The building's security system requires that all visitors must be buzzed-in or must have a security card.

 The first floor includes a game room, a fitness room, a computer lab, and the gym. The "game room" is more a generic room that could be used for any purpose. The computer lab included 13 desktop computers. Director Stokes indicated that they offer courses and programs in the computer lab, but they are moving away from having a fixed computer lab to permitting patrons to sign out a computer and go elsewhere in the building to use it (e.g., to a lounge). He said the wifi at Raymond is better than at most recreation/community centers, but they are seeking to improve connectivity in all the DPR facilities by installing cell boosters.

 The fitness room was fully equipped with cardio and resistance equipment that seemed to be new or at least very well maintained. There is no trainer (a sign said "No Personal Trainers") and no formal classes in the fitness room. Director Stokes said, however, that where there is a strong interest -- as at the Ft. Stevens Recreation Center -- they have organized fitness classes for seniors. One person was using a treadmill when we were there.

 The full-size gym includes folding bleachers and scoreboards so that it can be used for games as well for practice or more informal play. The gym has a divider that permits it to be split into two spaces. When we were there, it was being used by the tiny tots coop and a senior walking laps, but Director Stokes said that it is used for a wide range of sports (e.g., basketball, volleyball), art shows, conferences, music performances, movies, and other events. The gym may also be used for "community time," which would be unstructured so that residents may have pick-up games or any other activity they wish. He said that the gym is in great demand, and stays open until 11:00 pm in order to meet the community's needs. Generally, he said that demand for indoor gyms exceeds the existing supply. We encouraged Director Stokes to consider a memorandum of understanding with DPS so that the community may take greater advantage of Lafayette's new gym when it is not being used by the school

 There appeared to be only a couple of DPR staff on the site. Director Stokes said that DPR is increasing its staff now and expects to hire 50 additional people city-wide in a variety of positions.

 On the second floor, the open space had a number of spin cycles that are used for spin classes. There is a large kitchen that has a full-size stove, refrigerators, dishwasher, microwave, and a lot of cabinet storage space. This is considered a training kitchen, and they conduct a number of nutrition classes, particularly for teens. This is part of a larger nutrition program at recreation centers (e.g., a community garden at the Berry Farm Recreation Center in Ward 8), and in the summer, they bus kids from other neighborhoods to Raymond for nutrition training.

 Adjacent to the kitchen is a large multi-purpose room. It has a divider and two entrances so that it can be partitioned into two smaller rooms, as needed. The multi-purpose room can be used for trainings, community meetings, or parties (where it can be rented for about $100 per hour). Director Stokes indicated that this room gets a lot of use.

 The Senior room on the second floor did not appear to be used for that purpose. It was cluttered with stacks of chairs and boxes. The room has a small sink. Director Stokes acknowledged that it was not heavily used, and usage would depend on demand. If there is demand (as there was at Deanwood), DPR would provide staffing for seniors.

 The "Arts and Crafts" room was being used for the tiny tots coop and was filled with children's equipment and toys. That room also includes a sink.

 Raymond does not include a performance space per se -- e.g., a stage where plays or other performances might take place. We discussed the need for a stage like the one that currently exists at Chevy Chase and whether a lower stage (like the one in Lafayette's cafeteria/auditorium) might provide more flexibility.

 Deean suggested that we might also look at the Silver Spring Civic Building at Veterans Plaza for additional ideas about what a community center might include. See [**http://www.silverspringdowntown.com/go/silver-spring-civic-building-and-veterans-plaza**](http://www.silverspringdowntown.com/go/silver-spring-civic-building-and-veterans-plaza).

**Rosedale Community Center** (1701 Gales Street, NE) -- Patrick Williams, Ted Gest, Chris Frombroluti, Carolyn Cook, Andrea Rosen, Jay Thal, Samantha Nolan, and Randy Speck toured the Rosedale Community Center on January 13, 2017, with DPR Deputy Director John Stokes and Area Manager, Monica Clark-Phillips.

 The Rosedale Community Center, which opened in May 2013, replaced a small field house and has 26,200 square feet on one level. It is co-located with the Rosedale Library; and a charter school, the Community College Preparatory Academy, is across the street. There is a small parking lot with about ten spaces (four of which are for handicapped). Though she was not involved in the outreach for this Center, Ms. Clark-Phillips indicated that DPR tries to provide what the community wants in its community/recreation center, and the facilities were designed with the community needs in mind. She did not have usage information for the center, though DPR is planning to launch a data collection system that would track usage.

 The outdoor spaces include a full-size sports field for football, soccer, lacrosse, and other activities; a swimming pool; a walled "fitness bar" area for exercises, accessible from the game room/lounge; a "theme" playground (based on the District's monuments); and a basketball court. The center has no security for entering the building except in the summer when there is security for entrance to the outdoor swimming pool. (Many DPR centers require a security card for entry.) There are accessible bathrooms near the sports field, so that it isn't necessary to go into the center (e.g., when the center is closed on Sundays), and a storage room for field equipment, also accessible without entering the center.

 The entrance lobby is quite spacious and much of the wall space is glazed, letting in ample natural light. One can see straight through to the outdoor pool opposite the entrance. There is a ping pong table in the entrance lobby and there had once been a pool table. Two offices, one for staff and the other for the use of the chief of DPR’s Community Recreation Division (Toni Thompson) are near the entrance. Also just off the lobby is a game room/lounge in which three of the four walls are glass. It is used after school for homework. There is a TV screen that is used to DVD show movies (not connected to cable).

 The fitness room is well equipped with cardio equipment but not much resistance exercise equipment, all in good condition. A staffer facilitates circuit training incorporating the equipment into cardio and resistance routines. There is a boxing room in the back with all the necessary accouterments where they conduct boxing classes. Inexplicably, the staff “kitchenette” is located just off the exercise room so that the only access is through the room. The showers and lockers are also down a hall, not particularly nearby.

 The gym is full size with bleachers and scoreboards and protective wall padding. We met a nearby resident, Paul Rivas, who said that the gym is not used much during the day, but is a "circus" after school. (Rivas wrote an article in the Hill Rag about the Rosedale gym, <http://www.capitalcommunitynews.com/content/new-guy-finds-culture-shock-and-community-rosedale-hoops-game>). There is an "old folks" game in the gym on Saturdays and wheelchair basketball on Wednesdays.

 The outdoor pool is extremely popular in the summer. There are swim classes for all ages (including mothers and babies), recreation camp, and a special needs camp. The pool includes both an adult pool with several slides and a large kiddie pool.

 A craft room includes a sink and extensive counter and storage space so that it can be used for other purposes as well. It has been used for parties and baby showers as well as craft classes. Pottery-making facilities are not included.

 The computer lab contains 12 computers and a TV screen that can be used for teaching purposes and for conducting classes. One person was using a computer when we were there. The computer lab has visual access into the library via interior windows as well as a connecting door with the library, but it is locked and has no door knobs. Apparently, it was designed with this connection for future shared use between the library and the center. Currently, operational concerns (e.g., security, different operating hours) prevent any real sharing of these computer resources even though the facilities are built to permit sharing.

 The kitchen includes a suite of commercial food prep equipment: Triple sink with integrated drain-board, six-burner Garland gas stove, True refrigerator, commercial dishwasher, and a freestanding ice-maker, as well as a separate refrigerator for the summer feeding program. The community center also serves “Full Fresh Supper” for children at 5:30 pm; the meals come in prepared, and the staff assembles them. The kitchen is adjacent to the multipurpose room and has a small pass-through window (which can be shuttered) into the multipurpose room.

The multipurpose room is relatively small, about 32 feet by 21 feet. It can be divided into two rooms, each of which would be quite small as meeting rooms. A very large flat-screen TV hangs on the wall of the multipurpose room.

 The seniors’ room, replete with cabinets and counter space, was not being used, other than for storage of items for summer children’s programs. Director Stokes attributed the minimal use by seniors to a lack of demand, but he acknowledged that a staff person devoted to seniors could stimulate a demand that has not yet been tapped. Director Stokes said that DPS is "discussing" the possibility of a seniors staff person at the Chevy Chase Community Center, but no decision has been made.

Situated at one end of the community center building, Rosedale Library, which opened in October 2012, is small (5,000 square feet) and was another afterthought (like Deanwood) that was added to the Community Center based on community requests. Previously, the community used two library kiosks, but these were closed, and the closest existing libraries were still some distance away. It occupies one floor beneath a soaring gymnasium-like ceiling; three out of four tall walls are glazed and the remaining wall is shared with the Community Center. Some of the integrated window shades have broken and the cost of repairing them is prohibitive.

Rosedale is the only co-located library that has its own entrance, which is a positive feature for library usage. Most community/recreation centers require people to sign in to enter and thereby access the library, which alienates some potential library users.

There are 12 general computers (all of which were being actively used), four more dedicated to teens (Apples; not being used at that time of day), and a printer (for which there is a charge). A small children’s area contains a small round table and a bench. The library has its own restrooms (which are especially heavily used on Sundays when the center is closed, despite the availability of outdoor restrooms) and a staff workroom. The branch manager does not have her own office, so when she conducts employee reviews, for example, they may need to meet outdoors for privacy.

The library has no meeting rooms of its own, but library staff are usually able to get meeting rooms at the center, even with short notice. They use the center's meeting rooms for summer reading programs, coordinating with camp programs. They can also conduct a book club meeting in the center's meeting rooms at no charge.The library and the center collaborate on special events (e.g., book readings that have a large audience can use the gym in the center). The branch manager, Eboni Henry, said that having a built-in audience for library programs is one advantage of the proximity of the library to the center.

She noted, however, that the library still receives calls from the public about reserving library meeting rooms, even though Rosedale is not listed as an option on the on-line library-meeting-room reservation system. She mentioned, too, that caseworkers and their clients meet at tables in the general library space, which offers little privacy.

Ms. Henry reports that noise is the library’s #1 issue. The design and materials of the building itself amplify sound. Sound intrudes from the community center (one section of the shared wall is not ceiling height, and on the other side is a room within the center), although some soundproofing has been added to try to reduce the amount of sound traveling between the center and the library. Sound from the athletic field behind the library also penetrates. Because the library is open later than the community center, young people energized from playing sports will bring their high spirits to the library after the center closes, where it is difficult to maintain quiet.

Another issue the library grapples with is temperature. The library is at the end of the line for the single HVAC unit, which is located at the opposite end of the building in the community center. The library only warms up in the winter some hours after opening and the reverse in the summer, conditions that are exacerbated by the fact that the facilities keep different schedules (the library is open longer days and on Sunday, when the community center is closed).

Reportedly all three co-located libraries face challenges stemming from the fact that the library facilities don’t belong to DCPL. The libraries depend on DGS to fix things that are broken, and DGS is slow to make repairs.