B. Community Activity Facility Survey

The CRD conducted a survey of Ortonville and Big Stone Lake Area during the July 2002, Big Stone County Fair, in conjunction with the University’s Tourism Center. Survey respondents identified a strong need for a new community activity facility in Ortonville at the foot of Big Stone Lake. With 187 completed surveys, residents of all ages were able to express their opinions about community needs for programs, services and facilities. The following are some of the important points:

- Big Stone County Fair identified a need for a new community activity facility in Ortonville at the foot of Big Stone Lake.
- More than one-half (58.9%) of respondents indicated that they were somewhat or very supportive of a community activity facility in Ortonville to address community needs.
- Respondents 65 years or older were significantly less supportive of a community activity facility when compared to all other respondents.
- Respondents felt that teens (38.4%) would benefit most from a community activity center followed by young adults (16.4%), adults (15.1%), children (10.1%), seniors (9.4%), pre-teens (8.8%), and special populations (1.9%), respectively.
- Overall, residents believed that the amount of current community programs and activities about right (52.9%).
- Residents felt that pre-teens (58.6%), young adults (57.1%), and teens (46.9%) have too few programs or activities available to them.

Survey respondents believed that the MOST IMPORTANT items for a community activity facility were:
- Emergency assistance / services
- Educational programs
- Summer activities for school-age kids
- Children’s play equipment
- Recreational space for teens
- Swimming lessons

Four items constitute the SECOND tier of priorities:
- Hiking trails
- Sports programs
- Picnic areas
- Job training services

Seven items comprise the THIRD tier:
- Athletic fields
- Boat launch
- Computer programs
- Courts (tennis, basketball)
- Pre-school day care
- Multi-purpose activity
- Meeting space
The six items that make up the FOURTH tier are:
- Organized winter activities
- Health/wellness programs
- Weight/fitness room
- Marina
- Indoor pool
- Adult day care

Finally, respondents anticipated using a community activity facility.
- The vast majority of respondents (83.4%) indicated that they, themselves, would use a community activity facility occasionally or daily.
- Even more respondents felt that other members of their household would use the facility occasionally or daily (84.4%).

Survey responses were divided into age categories. The following breakdown identifies the activities most desired in a community facility by age group:

**Programs**
Under 18 – sports programs, organized winter activities, water related activities, educational programs
18-29 years – swimming lessons, educational programs, computer programs, sports programs
30-39 years – swimming lessons, educational programs, sports programs, computer programs
40-49 years – swimming lessons, educational programs, computer programs, health/wellness programs
50-64 years – educational programs, swimming lessons, sports programs, health/wellness programs
65+ years – Educational programs, computer programs, sports programs, organized winter activities

**Services**
Under 18 – summer activity for kids, emergency training, after school enrichment, job training services
18-29 years – emergency assistance, summer activity for kids, pre-school day care, job training services
30-39 years – summer activity for kids, emergency training, job training services, pre-school day care
40-49 years – emergency training, job training services, summer activity for kids, pre-school day care
50-64 years – summer activity for kids, job training services, adult day care, pre-school day care
65+ years – job training services, summer activity for kids, pre-school day care, emergency training

**Indoor Facilities**
Under 18 – weight/fitness room, indoor pool, recreational space for teens, multi-purpose activity room
18-29 years – multi-purpose activity room, recreational space for teens, meeting space, performing arts space
30-39 years – recreational space for teens, weight/fitness room, multi-purpose activity room, meeting space
40-49 years – recreational space for teens, tourist information/meeting area, multi-purpose activity room
50-64 years – meeting space, recreational space for teens, indoor pool, kitchen facilities
65+ years – meeting space, multi-purpose activity room, recreational space for teens, tourist information/meeting area

**Outdoor Facilities**
Under 18 – athletic fields, tennis and basketball courts, hiking trails, picnic areas
18-29 years – hiking trails, boat launch, children’s play equipment, marina
30-39 years – children’s play equipment, athletic fields, tennis and basketball courts, picnic areas
40-49 years – athletic fields, hiking trails, children’s play equipment, picnic areas
50-64 years – children’s play equipment, hiking trails, boat launch, athletic fields
65+ years – hiking trails, picnic areas, boat launch, athletic fields
C. Evaluation of Existing Ortonville Programs for Youths:
In order to determine the specific needs for a Community Activity Facility in Ortonville, CRD has contacted the primary existing sources for youth activities. These can be summarized as follows:

**Bonanza Education Center** (focus on natural processes, seasonal changes, native species, ecology, history, botany)
- School/church/interest group nature hikes, field trips, classes by appointment
- Survival skills training classes
- Seasonal outdoor recreation programs (including snowshoeing, hiking, cross country skiing, camping, canoeing, sledding)
- Craft/hobby classes (snowshoe construction, photography, etc.)
- Seasonal special events days

**Ortonville Community Education**
- GED/ACT Preparation
- Basic computer training
- Fitness/recreation (including use of the weight room, training machines, karate classes)
- Aquatics (Pools for winter classes located in other communities. Classes include water safety, lifeguarding, scuba training. Ortonville Community Pool used for swimming lessons, etc. during summer.)
- Crafts/hobby classes
- Web-based training (Internet businesses, self improvement, etc.)
- Seasonal youth sports (baseball, softball, t-ball, gymnastics, basketball, golf, summer sports camps)

**U of M Extension**
- 4H Youth Program
- Web-based education (adult education, agriculture certifications, master gardening, parental training, etc.)

Activities not apparently provided by existing programs
- Adult sports leagues
- Winter/school year break camp/sports programs for youth
- Indoor pool access, except in Milbank, SD
- Classroom based adult education/crafts & hobby classes (versus web-based programs)
- Seniors day programs
- Big Brothers/Big Sisters/Little Brothers/Little Sisters programs
- Few art classes (adult or youth)
- Performance/theater type space

The CRD conclusion is that the existing programs do not meet the needs as expressed by the survey respondents, and an organized and regionally oriented Community Activity Facility at the foot of the lake would have great positive impact on quality of life for children and young adults.
D. Program Requirements for Community Activity Facility

To answer the question as to “what can we provide our children and young adults to improve their quality of life”, the CRD has developed a list of the indoor facilities desired by the under 18 and 18-29 year groups. The top of the list includes a weight/fitness room; indoor pool; recreational space for teens; multi-purpose room; meeting spaces; and performing arts spaces.

Overall, the facilities requested by the younger age groups are not much different from older age groups. Older age groups also expressed interest in banquet facilities and pre-school day care.

Based on the priorities identified, the top preferences by age group, and comparison with existing facilities and programs in Ortonville, the following needs have been developed by CRD as a program for a Community Activity Facility. These have been quantified in size and grouping to assist the decision making process. Options are included to allow the facility to be constructed in phases contingent on funding.

Indoor Activity Spaces:

A. First Group: (minimal program)

Administrative Areas:
- Director's Office 180
- Staff 2 @ 100 200
- Workroom/storage 200

Lobby/Public Areas:
- Lobby 200
- Reception/info area 150
- Lounge areas 500
- Toilets 2 @ 750 1,500

Educational/Service areas:
- Meeting Rooms 4 @ 500 2,000
- Computer Room 600
- Teen Center 1,200
- Storage 600
- Pre-school day care 1,500

Fitness areas:
- Multi-purpose Activity Room 6,000 (possibly including a climbing wall)
- Fitness/Exercise Room 1,500
- Lockers/showers 2,500

Operations/Maintenance Areas:
- Mechanical/Electrical 1,400
- Storage 500
- Janitorial 500
- Receiving/recycling 300

21,530 NSF x 1.20 = 25,836 GSF

B. Second Group: (highly desired elements)

Educational/Service areas:
- Arts & Crafts Room 600
- Adult day care 600
- Banquet Room 300 @ 15 4,500
- Serving kitchen 600
- Gift Shop 300
- Coffee Shop 300
6,900 NSF x 1.10 = 7,590 GSF

Fitness areas:
- Aquatic Center 15,000 (including slides and other attraction elements)
15,000 NSF x 1.10 = 16,500 GSF

C. Third Group: (specialized interests)
Fitness areas:
- Ice Rink 20,000
- Lockers/concessions 3,500
23,500 NSF x 1.10 = 25,850 GSF

Outdoor Activity Areas:
- Children's Play Equipment
- Picnic areas
- Hiking Trails
- Basketball and Tennis Courts
- Boat Launch
- Marina/Safe Harbor
E. Concept Description and Image Sketches:
The following concept sketches for the foot of the lake have been prepared to illustrate the idea of constructing a safe harbor with marine services, improve Lakeside Park, and build a Community Activity Facility and related site development as a link between Big Stone Lake and the downtown.

The notion is that by providing for the needs of children and young adults and developing the foot of the lake, the quality of life in the Big Stone Lake area will be improved. If you have a strong quality of life you are more likely to attract a labor force, and it in turn will attract economic development. Tourism will also be affected because the Tourism Center has learned that the reasons tourists are attracted to an area are the same reasons people like to live there.

The site plan and floor plan drawings show all three program groups (minimal, highly desired and specialized program areas) for the Community Activity Facility as CRD determined from the survey. They illustrate that there is adequate land available (if acquired and controlled by the City of Ortonville) and the possibility of constructing the facility in stages as funding allows.

The architectural concept for the facility organizes all of the functions along a sky lighted interior “Pedestrian Street” as an indoor gathering place. The street contains lounge areas, interior planting, and informational services with fitness functions located along the north side, visually connecting with Lakeside Park, and educational/service functions along the south side adjacent to CSAH 30. Entry points are at both ends and in the middle from each side.

The end of the pedestrian street at the foot-of-the-lake would be anchored with gift shop, coffee shop and food related functions, while the end nearest downtown would be anchored with a new Ortonville City Hall and Fire/Police Station. Housing development is suggested across First Street for market rate apartments for young adults and adjacent to the expanded grocery store for independent living for senior citizens. The potential for a new hockey arena is shown to the east of the transmission station. Both the Community Activity Facility and the hockey arena would share parking along CSAH 30. Parking at the foot of the lake should also be considered for a trail head for regional bicycle and hiking trails to the north along Big Stone Lake to Big Stone State Park, west to Big Stone City, and to the south along the Minnesota River to the National Wildlife Refuge.

Pedestrian enhancements along Jefferson and Madison to Second Street are suggested to highlight connections to the Central Business District. The potential to rehabilitate the historic Columbian Hotel and designation of Main Street as an historic district are strong ideas to further enhance the downtown business climate as a regional destination. The historic designation would assist property owners in finding funding for rehabilitation of historic structures. We also feel that in the long-term it would be good to relocate the Big Stone County Historic Museum to the lakefront where so much of its history took place. If the historic passenger boat, currently sitting under a roof canopy on top of the bluff at the museum, was restored and relaunched as an excursion boat, an incredible tourist attraction would develop.

Downtown businesses along Second Street should take advantage of their elevated view of the lake. New entrances from the alleys on the lakeside with building improvements to enhance visual appearance and views to the lake are all possible. Lighting, storefront improvement, signage and landscaping along the main shopping street should be done to help define “way finding” for visitors and enhance lake/downtown connections - particularly along Washington, Jefferson, Madison and Monroe.

The following sketches illustrate the long-range design concept for a Community Activity Facility. It is important to understand that the facility can be constructed in stages as funding allows. The City, however, should acquire control of the land and be the leader/manager in implementing this regional idea forward.
F. Capital Costs

Construction costs for the Community Activity Facility will vary depending on the type of spaces that are included and the amount of parking and site work. Based on costs of other similar facilities in Minnesota, the average square foot construction costs for good quality spaces (including projected cost inflation to the year 2004). The costs also include related site development and parking for 150 cars:

- Aquatics cost: $172/sf
- Multi-purpose gym, fitness and support* costs: $119/sf (*Lobby/entry/circulation, aerobics, fitness, running track, racquetball, food service and banquet, classrooms and meeting areas, and offices)
- Ice arena cost: $81/sf

Based on these square foot costs the construction cost for each group is estimated as follows:

**First Group (minimal program) consisting of:**
\[ 25,836 \text{ GSF} \times $119/\text{SF} = $3,074,484 \]

**Second Group (highly desired elements) consisting of:**
\[ 7,590 \text{ GSF} \times $119/\text{SF} = $903,210 \]
\[ 16,500 \text{ GSF} \times $172/\text{SF} = $2,830,000 \]

**Third Group (specialized interests) consisting of:**
\[ 25,850 \text{ GSF} \times $81/\text{SF} = $2,093,850 \]

To arrive at the project cost add 20% to the construction cost to cover contingencies, furnishings and equipment, professional fees, special testing, and Owner's administrative costs. The project cost is the total cost of the project, including construction:

**First Group (minimal program) consisting of:**
\[ 25,836 \text{ GSF} = $3,074,484 \times 1.20 = $3,689,380 \]

**Second Group (highly desired elements) consisting of:**
\[ 7,590 \text{ GSF} = $903,210 \times 1.20 = 851,088 \]
\[ 16,500 \text{ GSF} = $2,830,000 \times 1.20 = $3,096,000 \]

**Third Group (specialized interests) consisting of:**
\[ 25,850 \text{ GSF} = $2,093,850 \times 1.20 = $2,512,620 \]

With parking shared with the Community Activity Facility, a Safe Harbor/Marina for 25-30 slips, with boat launching, tie-ups and marine services/fuel station, is expected to cost approximately $1.2 million.

A privately owned restaurant could be integrated into a combined Community Activity Facility and Safe Harbor. Additional commercial development, such as an expanded grocery store and improvements to the downtown, could also be promoted with this development.
G. Summary

CRD has prepared this study and made the recommendations in response to the two important questions asked by the BCIP Steering Committee:

One: How can the foot of Big Stone Lake be developed (actively or passively), utilized and maintained so as to maximally enhance the economic vitality and quality of life of Ortonville and the region?

The CRD believes that construction of a new Community Activity Facility, where shown on the drawing, along with a small marina/safe harbor and relocated museum and restored excursion boat, will benefit the community by improving its year-round recreational potential for youths and young adults, and by bringing in new tourists and visitors who currently do not consider Big Stone Lake as a destination. The future economic well being of the Big Stone region is dependent on a strong quality of life. If people consider it an appealing place to live, it is more likely new businesses will be attracted to the area because of the available work force.

Two: What can we provide our children and young adults to improve their quality of life?

We believe that the August 2002 survey accurately represented the needs of children and young adults. It is vital that amenities be available if they want to live and work in the region, and that they become actively involved in the community as citizens. When the Community Activity Facility project moves forward, teens and young adults should be included in the planning and design process to help shape the final design and construction and provide a link to other youths in the region.

Two other potentials to be considered that could positively impact on quality of life and economic development in the Big Stone Lake area include:

1. Encourage the development of dairy agriculture within Big Stone County. Due to the relative low population density in rural areas around Ortonville, new dairy facilities are likely to have strong community support. Because of all of the related dairy services and sub-contracting that can take place, it will contribute to the economics of the region. The CRD is currently involved on a project with the Minnesota Milk Producers Association (with a LCMR grant from the State Legislature) to develop strategies for animal agriculture in the rural landscape that protects the ecological integrity of the landscape, sustains a viable income and life-style for participants and contributes to the community at large. These strategies can be made available to the County.

2. Encourage Big Stone County and Traverse County to work together to enhance tourism. On either side of a continental divide, Big Stone Lake is the source of the Minnesota River, and Lake Traverse is the source of the Red River. Draining in opposite directions with a diverse geological and cultural history, much can be accomplished to develop quality of life and promote tourism to the region. In addition, the designation of Highway 28 as a scenic route offers the potential to extend the route into Traverse County via Highway 27. These designations could provide additional funding sources. The CRD is currently involved on a research study with Traverse County (also funded by the Blandin Foundation) focusing on Lake Traverse and the cities of Wheaton and Browns Valley. When that study is completed a joint meeting of the two counties should be organized to explore areas of mutual interest with the goal to develop a Memorandum of Understanding for future discussion and action.
Conclusion:
Located along the historic Yellowstone Trail, the unique geological and cultural history and visual qualities of the Big Stone Lake Area need to be the cornerstones for quality of life and future economic development. The cities of Ortonville and Big Stone City are vital to the economic health and quality of life in the Big Stone Lake region. The economic future of Big Stone County is dependent on economic development in these two cities and enhancing agriculture throughout the region.

We hope the plans and ideas that are illustrated in this report for new development at the foot of the lake meet the expectations of the community and are embraced by local decision-makers and private developers. There are a variety of ways and different design concepts that could be explored to accomplish the intentions for development at the foot of the lake.

We hope that the private development community can work with local and regional economic development agencies as well as with elected officials in Big Stone County, Ortonville and Big Stone City. The concepts and ideas outlined in this report need to be nurtured forward in order to provide a positive effect on children and youth and quality of life in the Big Stone Lake Area community. The Center for Rural Design will be available as a design resource to review and comment on development proposals.