

The Multiple Benefits of Co-Located Public Venues.

CONCEPT.

“Multiple Benefits” is a great concept in normal times; in times of economic stress, it is an exceptional concept. The basic idea is that a single action can produce more than one benefit. One dollar of expense, if thoughtfully expended, can produce more than one dollar’s worth of value, or benefit. Consider:

- “Killing two birds with one stone” [Apologies to birders.]
- Taking one action and getting more than one beneficial outcome.
- Using one unit of input to produce more than one unit of output.
- Monetizing by-products as second-effort products that would otherwise be a cost of production.

Much like mixed-use developments, multi-modal transportation systems, diverse housing stocks and biologically diverse landscapes, multiple benefits thrive in an atmosphere of diversity.

Co-location of synergistic activities produces multiple benefits. Schools next to libraries, fire stations next to ball fields, museums next to community centers all create community value in excess of the value of the individual venues. People visit one place and find they would like to see what’s next door.

COMMONALITY OF MISSION.

Community education venues, i.e., schools, theaters, museums, galleries and parks, all have an education mission blended with entertainment, exercise and socialization which are undoubtedly part of the picture and in some cases even primary. But the commonality of their shared missions leads to common participants, facilities, networks and funding sources. What if distinct and usually separate educational, cultural and recreational organizations coordinated their efforts and collaborated in a holistic manner?

CO-LOCATIONS.

At a minimum, every community educational organization should be searching for opportunities to co-locate facilities, possibly even share facilities. The savings are great, the cross-marketing opportunities are big and the collaboration on programming is highly beneficial.

THE BENEFITS OF ORGANIZATIONAL COLLABORATION.

Better is the full integration of organizations. At the end of the day, boards of directors and administrators of the several community educational venues can reap multiple benefits:

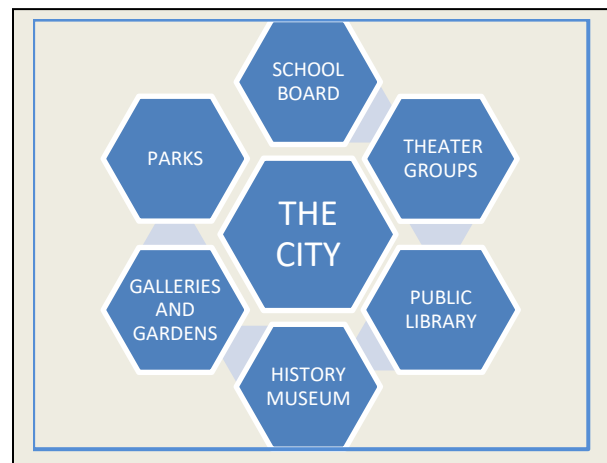
- Co-located facilities with shared infrastructure costs reduce individual venue expenses.
- Coordinated calendars eliminate conflicting event dates.
- Coordinated membership lists facilitate cross-marketing, allow discounts for members of multiple organizations and create a comradery between performers such as the ballet and the symphony.

- Supporting activities, such as restaurants, can take advantage of a multi-venue complex to offer food and beverage services.
- Museum, theater and other venue retail shops can be coordinated in purchasing terms, off-site joint locations and shared branding opportunities.
- Economic development benefits are great; businesses making location decisions to stay put or move from another community to find comfort in a community that has a unified approach to its educational and cultural activities. It attracts owners and employees.

Timing is important. Facilities cannot be relocated at a whim. Sharing of valuable membership information does not happen absent trust between organizations. Coordinated fund raising events happen slowly. But with purpose and trust, partnerships can be built, tested, adjusted and implemented. Over the life of the city, facilities become outdated offering an opportunity to re-locate newly constructed facilities that make sense.

THE CRITICAL ORGANIZATIONS are generally public or institutional, but in creative communities, the private sector gets to participate. The usual public entities involved are:

- The public school system,
- The public library,
- The local history museum,
- Public galleries and gardens,
- The parks and recreation board,
- The community theater groups, and
- Any like-minded private institution interested in participating in a collaborative public system.



Designing outdoor performance stages and amphitheaters into parks, ballfields, schools and museums offers even more opportunity for joint programming.

The city is in the prime position to instigate conversations and programs that encourage and facilitate co-locations. An activist city can co-locate its own facilities and activities and invite others to join in. Downtowns are natural co-location sites; suburban sites require more work. Shops and restaurants would be a big bonus.

THREE EXAMPLES of co-locations with multiple venues follow. Each required vision and leadership by the public entities involved.

- College Park FL Community Center
- Greenwood Lakes Community Center
- The Maitland Ballfield Complex

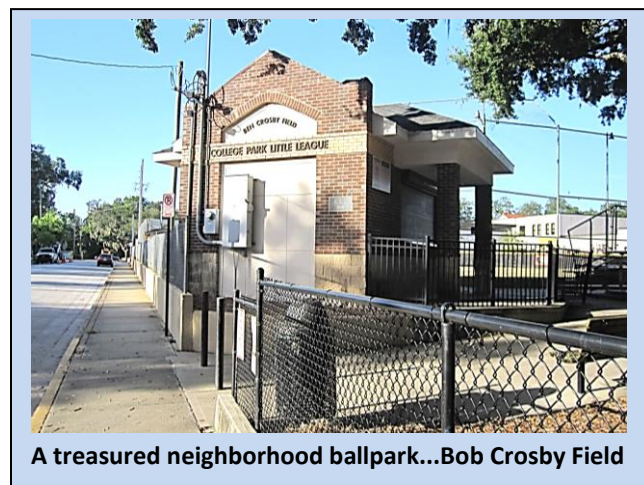
College Park FL Community Center



The College Park Community Center is within a neighborhood having single-family homes, duplexes and small apartment buildings. The town center is less than a quarter mile to the west.

The 9-acre site hosts:

1. The Princeton Elementary School,
2. Fire Station No. 3,
3. College Park Community Center & Community Pool,
4. The Princeton Park, and
5. Bob Crosby Field, home of College Park Little League.



A treasured neighborhood ballpark...Bob Crosby Field

Greenwood Lakes Community Center

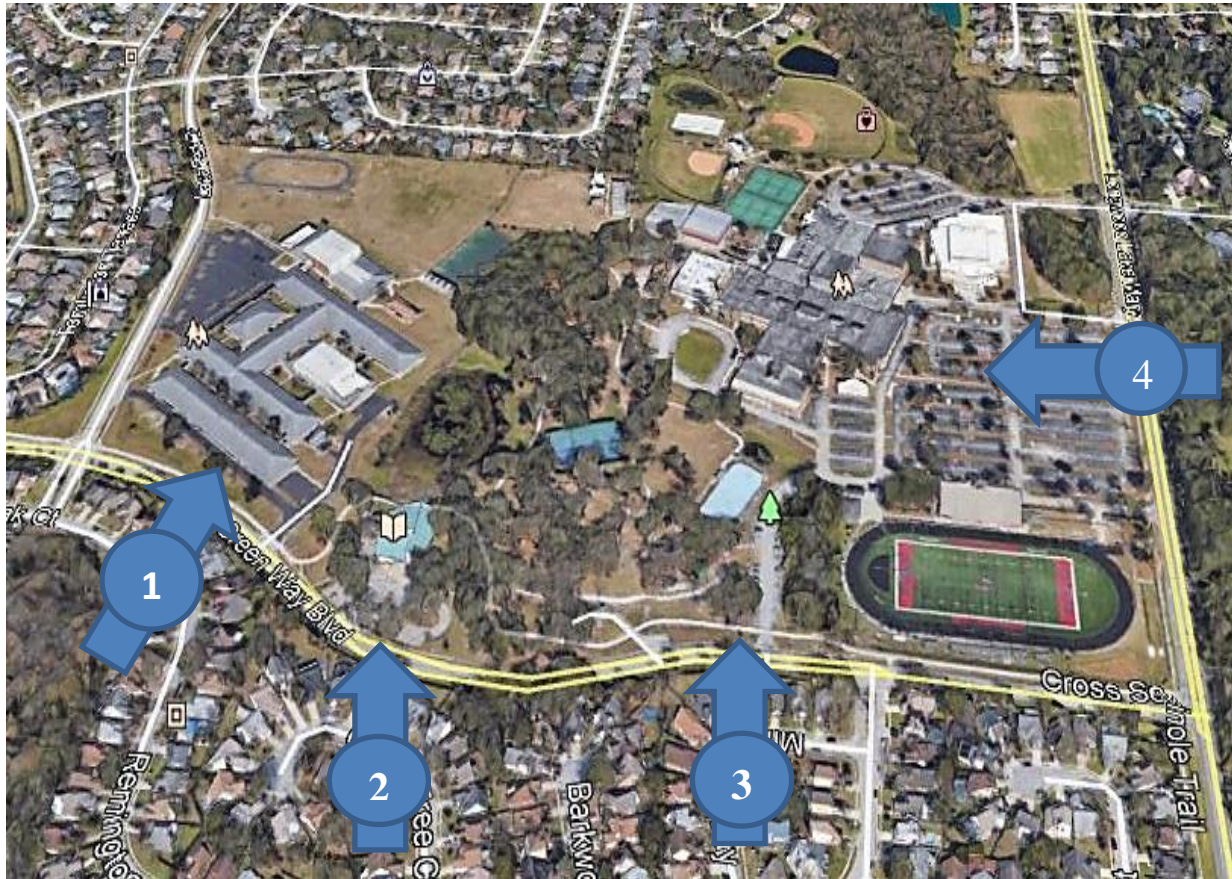


Photo from Google Earth

The Greenwood Lakes PUD was initiated in the 1970s. Lands were reserved for several community assets, including:

1. Greenwood Lakes Middle School,
2. Northwest [Seminole County] Public Library,
3. Greenwood Lakes Park with “easygoing public park offering a trailhead, a roller-hockey rink, playgrounds & picnic facilities”, and
4. Lake Mary High School.

The Maitland Ballfield Complex



First Station #47 at the top left [1]; public works water plant top right [2] plus ball fields and a concession building. Photo from Google Earth.

The City of Maitland married two ideas in 1990: they had surplus land at the Keller Road Public Works site, home to their water plant [2] and Fire Station #47 [1]; and they needed a little league field for residents. The result of their co-location thinking was The Maitland Ballfield Complex. It has two 200' baseball fields, one 300' field with restrooms and a concession stand. This is the primary home site for Maitland Little League.

When the Forest City Little League club lost access to their fields, the Maitland Little League opened their fields to the neighboring club. Now two clubs call the Maitland Complex their home.

The trick was collaborative thinking. The City Council overcame the natural instincts of the public works department, the fire department and the recreation department to focus on their individual missions and, instead, produced a single facility that provides multiple services and multiple community benefits; all on one site.