



Acton Family Network
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AFN Thoughts on a Community Center:

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What is AFN?

The Acton Family Network (AFN) is a non-profit organization run by parents working together to increase and improve local resources for families with young children in Acton and surrounding communities. AFN offers themed family parties throughout the year, monthly story and craft hours, adult book group, day trips, mom & me and dad & me events, family outings, ongoing playgroups, babysitting co-ops, a fun and informative newsletter, and much more. AFN is affiliated with First Connections and the Justice Resource Institute.

Is there a need for a town community center?

As a group, the board of AFN overwhelmingly feels that a community center for the entire community would prove to be a real asset to the town of Acton for the following reasons:

- Currently, the only locations available for community group use are the meeting rooms in the library and the common areas at in the AB schools and local churches. These spaces are limited and can be costly for non-profit organizations such as AFN. For example, it costs AFN \$400 to rent the gym at RJ Grey JR High for the Halloween party.
- Several Acton groups, including the school PTOs, the schools themselves, church groups, scouts, AFN, sports groups and local theater groups currently utilize, and therefore compete, for these limited facilities for meetings, activities and events. Timing of these events can be difficult with so many groups needing the same space.
- For AFN in particular, the library is not well suited for activities involving children unless we are outside. As a group, we have also had some difficulties with library staff when holding events in the library / town hall area (e.g., our bi-annual Tag Sale) and have since moved these events away from the library all together.
- The community center would also serve as a central location where families moving into the area (or those currently in the area) could get information about all groups present within the community. This information is not currently centralized and its availability could make Acton a more attractive choice when looking for a new home.

The building of a community center would offer groups like AFN a central place to hold meetings, activities and events for our members and the community of Acton. This localization would also enable AFN the opportunity to interact with other groups within the community who would also utilize the center. This interaction could lead to the building of relationships among the different Acton community groups, hopefully resulting in strengthening of community bonds and the offering of new activities and events for all the members of the Acton community.

What would we like to see in a community center?

There are several items that would be on our "wish list" for a community center:

- Several large multipurpose rooms where large, community-wide events could be held.
- Several other meeting areas for smaller groups, such as group governing boards.
- A small office space where group records, forms and other group related information could be centrally located.
- A central "community center office" where community groups could leave information about the group itself and any upcoming events for current and future community members.
- A space suitable for arts and crafts groups, particularly those with children involved.
- A performance area for local theater groups, whether for practicing or performing (could be incorporated with the large multipurpose room).
- An outdoor play space for kids. An indoor play space for the winter would be great too!
- A full service kitchen (not staffed) would also be nice for meetings and other events held within the community center.