

Frequently Asked Questions

(posted Sept. 2009 and updated as needed)

How does the Property Plan reinvest in programming for girls?

The #1 benefit of the strategic property plan is aligning property to meet girls' programmatic needs and interests. It allows the council to save money and redirect funds from administration to services. There is great opportunity to reallocate the savings generated by divesting some properties to the benefit of programs. Our properties will be destination sites that deliver best-in-class activities our girls said they want.

How did the council end up with so much property?

Property resources are a key component in fulfilling our mission of providing personal growth and leadership development programming for girls. The reason for holding property in Girl Scouting is for delivering program to girls.

Properties have been acquired over the years as Girl Scout programming needs have grown. Some properties may have been donated by generous supporters. All of the property holdings of our 4 legacy councils came to Mountains to Midlands as part of the council realignment beginning in 2007 and completed in 2008.

How does budget tie in with the Long Range Program & Property Plan?

The Long Range Program & Property Plan committee was formed in March 2008. From the beginning, its #1 objective was to align property to meet girls' programmatic needs and interests. It allows the council to save money and redirect funds from administration and overhead to direct services. There is great opportunity to reinvest savings, potentially 10%-15% of our operating budget, generated by divesting some properties.

On a national level, an average of 10%-15% of the operating budget goes towards property and related program expenses. We are spending 32% and half of that is related to our four service centers. (With the closing of the Mauldin Service Center, there are now three service centers.) The other half supports our outdoor facilities.

In addition, Girl Scout councils are not immune to economic downturns. Our investments dropped as low as 33% during the most recent recession.

With today's national economic crisis and depressed real estate market, is now really the best time to move forward with this plan?

Our organization, like families, businesses and other non-profits across the nation, is reassessing how we spend our dollars. We have obtained appraisals on all sites and will insure stewardship of future sales. Now more than ever, we have to be smart, focused and innovative in allocating our limited resources. For us this has meant a careful study of the properties we hold and how to use them more wisely.

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

Absolutely! But, based on assessment criteria, some properties fell short. As explained at the February 7 and April 4, 2009, 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?

Did you consider volunteer needs in making this decision?

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.

How are volunteers supported after an office closing?

Volunteers are increasingly and conveniently supported by the staff and with the aid of technology. More of our community development managers are out-based, and more readily accessible. Services such as the shop (Girlz Gear) and the resource library are available at our Greenville, Spartanburg and Columbia centers. Adult training/learning opportunities and girl program activities are offered at all three facilities and at other locations throughout our 22-county jurisdiction thanks to the generous support of a wide range of local community partners.

How does selling the Mauldin Service Center and merging with the Greenville Corporate Headquarters help the overall strategic property plan and budget?

First, the Mauldin building is available for sale because it's owned by the council without

a mortgage or lease. In the case with the Greenville and Columbia offices, we have multi-year leases that can't be broken. Being only six miles from headquarters, most volunteers and staff currently familiar with the Mauldin Service Center won't be required to drive an additional distance. Also, a commitment was made to the Board of Directors during the research process that our council would maintain a Greenville presence.

In addition, our largest expenditure is staffing. By proceeding with selling the Mauldin building, duplicate staff positions have been eliminated which will reduce overhead.

With upfitting and the Mauldin consolidation completed at Corporate Headquarters, now known as the Greenville Service Center and Corporate Headquarters, September 8, 2009 was the opening day for the Volunteer Resource Center/Girlz Gear Shop. Based on feedback from members, the phone system has been streamlined so that a live voice answers calls more often than in the past. All 800-number and general office calls for Greenville, Spartanburg and Columbia, now ring directly into the Greenville office. The receptionist and support staff are in place to answer calls as quickly as possible and to direct them as requested. Direct-dial calls remain the most efficient way to reach specific staff members.

An additional 850-sq. ft. room is newly-leased space from Activant. We thank Activant for its generosity made with the sublease arrangement and in-kind support. Located at the main entrance of the building, the current office door remains the entrance. The front half is used as the Girlz Gear Shop and the back half as a Volunteer Resource Center. A folding wall divides both sections. As you walk through the Girlz Gear Shop and enter the Volunteer Resource Center section, a computer, copier and multi-functional printer are on the left. In addition, a new 22'-Mobile Work Center with six computer hookups has been installed for community-based staff.

Until it sells, the Mauldin site will maintain a phone, primarily for the purpose of outgoing calls, including emergency use by troops utilizing the site for troop meetings. It will still be cleaned, have staff storage, and be available to troops.

The Mauldin Regional Service Center Closing Ceremony was held on September 27, 2009 as a tribute to the legacy and special memories of those who worked and attended activities there. It was well attended by current and previous board members, girl and adult members, staff and community partners. [Click here to see a few highlights from that event.](#)

What is meant by “destination” location?

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.

Tell me more about an urban leadership center.

The proposed Columbia Urban Leadership Center will serve as our indoor program destination facility focused on a variety of group gatherings, sizes, and programs. Girls envision spaces for specialty arts, an indoor climbing wall, overnight facilities such as dormitories or indoor "cabins," a multi-purpose room for more than 300 people, a girls-only lounge, a Girlz Gear shop and even office space to bring staff support closer to our girl and adult members.

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

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' desires for a different kind of space for activities that meet their needs and interests but can't be offered in our current camp settings

What features will the new urban leadership center include?

Details will be formulated now that 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.

I understand that the "modern" girl wants new things, but what are you going to do about preserving the core values of Girl Scouts—the things that make our organization unique?

This whole initiative is about being true to our mission of providing personal growth and leadership development programs for girls. The property plan allows us to create the right surroundings for fostering that mission. The contemporary interests of today's girls are some of the very same activities that Girl Scouting has provided for generations. We aim to provide those programs in the best, most appealing and functional facilities we can.

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

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. There was ample space for all interested girls to register for Camp WaBak this summer.

Camp Occaneechi--Through a partnership with the YMCA of Columbia/Lexington County Branch, girls entering grades 1-6 have the opportunity to enjoy resident camp in the Midlands. The camp features swimming, canoeing, horseback riding, a low ropes course and many other program options.

In addition, in partnership with Girl Scouts of Eastern South Carolina, girls from our council are able to experience camp with our sister Girl Scouts from the coastal area of South Carolina at Camp Low Country and Sandy Ridge Girl Scout Program and Training Center.

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

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.

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

The need for transportation options was clear in research. This summer, transportation support to camp sessions is being offered to families that request it and qualify for it. Busing, scheduled trips and similar alternatives are receiving further exploration.

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?

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 legacy councils. Funds made available through property sales will be used to support the current program and property plan.

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

Before the merger, the legacy 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 other property sale proceeds. As the councils realigned, all board-determined projects were put on hold. The new program and property plan for the merged council will determine future property development activities.

What happens to physical structures/features that are memorials or in honor of individuals at properties to be sold?

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.

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

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.

What is the status on Camp Drew?

Camp Drew has been sold to a neighboring property owner in Union County for their personal use and land buffer. This 10.8-acre facility now joins our McCormick property on the 'sold' list as we progress in our efforts to achieve our strategic integrated program and property plan approved by the Board of Directors in March, 2009.

We have been watching the usage and reservations of all of our facilities that are for sale to insure troops are not negatively impacted in their future program plans. As Camp Drew has no pending reservations, the sale was effective in early June 2010.

While Camp Croft, Veterans Memorial, and Foster Park Lake are nearby outdoor facilities for Girl Scout use, Camp Ponderosa remains available for day camps or group overnights within a short drive distance. Please call our Information and Referral Desk for details, 864-208-2704, or speak directly with our council's Community Development Manager, Sara McCutcheon, 803-944-3146, if there is any assistance we can provide.

Has the McCormick lot been sold?

The sale of this small 1.25 acre lot was finalized on December 22, 2009. Located in a residentially-zoned area in McCormick County, it was neither developed nor used for

any Girl Scout programs. It did not have infrastructure or meet land use restrictions for recreational activities.

What is the status on selling the Mauldin Service Center?

- It is on the market with a *For Sale* sign posted in front. For general questions, please contact Vic Greene, Director of Facilities & Property, at 864.770.1419 or vgreene@gssc-mm.org.
- Until it sells, the Mauldin site continues to maintain a phone, primarily for the purpose of outgoing calls, including emergency use by troops utilizing the site for troop meetings. It is still cleaned, has staff storage, and the program center is available to troops.

What is the status of Camp Mary Elizabeth/Spartanburg Service Center?

Thanks to the generosity of the Caman Group, an in-kind donation allows us to keep the Spartanburg Service Center open and operating at its current location on Blackstock Rd. instead of moving it to Camp Mary Elizabeth. Their willingness to renegotiate our lease agreement has resulted in a lower fee so we will be able to continue our focus on direct services for girls while maintaining staffing support, volunteer work areas and a program center.

What is the status of the Columbia Service Center?

We are in year four of a 10-year lease. We are in the process of investigating options with the owner as well as three sub-lease options: 1) Sublet the entire building and move to a more cost-efficient and convenient location with easier access that is more visible in the community; 2) Sublet in a shared situation where some resources, such as a receptionist, maintenance and kitchen, are used by both organizations; 3) Sublet a portion of the space to an independent organization in which there are no shared resources. As outlined in the program and property plan, a committee will be formed to determine options for the girl leadership center with a recommendation anticipated by year-end.

Who are the Ad Hoc Property Committee members? (This committee is a component of the overall property plan and not to be confused with the Urban Leadership Center committee.)

Charged with the oversight and execution of the property component of the Program and Property Plan, the co-chairs are Mark James (Columbia) and Rebecca Lever (Greer). Members include Wade Mullins (Columbia), Miriam Pflug (Spartanburg), and Jean Shew (Greenville). Kim Hutzell (staff) and Vic Greene (staff) will participate with Board Chair Karen Mitchell as ex-officio members. Their charge is to manage and execute the property component of the Long Range Program and Property Plan as approved by the Board of Directors in March 2009. This board-level governance committee is focused on effective property utilization and financial responsibility in

meeting the identified quality programmatic needs of girls. Key duties, tasks and expected outcomes of this committee include but are not limited to:

- Improvements, maintaining, leasing, and divesting of facilities based on the priorities and strategies of the council as well as all property research, site detail, and appraisals.
- Identify key parameters for the divestment decision-making process.
- For properties that are scheduled for divestment:
 - Determine key components of the RFP for potential broker services to:
 - List/sell properties
 - Represent the council
 - Arrangement for sub-letting space
 - Review presentation of top selected RFPs received
 - Select company/s to represent the organization through this process
 - Act on recommendations from staff and/or broker based on sale information
 - Represent the Board of Directors for any action on property offers; if offers are identified outside the parameters of authority, formulate recommendation to the Board of Directors for further action
 - Review and act upon any major improvements that cost \$5,000-\$25,000 with Board reporting; recommendations for Board action in excess of \$25,000.
- Create a timeline of work for key tasks as listed above. This chart of work shall list tasks to be accomplished and approximate timelines for completion.

What is the best way to get updates on the continued program and property plan progress?

Log onto www.sheseesthefuture.org. (Click on “News” in the box located in the upper left section.)