



RECREATION CENTER vs. COMMUNITY CENTER - What's the Difference?

For many, a “recreation center” and “community center” mean the same thing since there are some overlaps in terms of amenities. However, in Fairfax County, they are different not only in overall amenities and services offered, but also in potential funding assistance, ownership, and accountability.

The Fairfax County Park Authority owns and operates nine (9) recreation centers, branded RECenters (more info at: fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/recenter). Park Authority RECenters offer a host of fitness and active-life options for everyone including pools, exercise and dance classes, weight rooms, personal trainers, sports, courts (tennis, racquetball, and basketball) trails, and parks. As the table below shows, the Hunter Mill District, Reston's district, has NO County-funded recreation facility while multi-million-dollar renovations at three other County recreation centers are currently in progress. The newest RECenter, [Cub Run](#) in Chantilly, was opened in 2005. It has a 25-meter leisure entertainment pool with two (2) slides and a water playground.

FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY RECREATION CENTERS BY DISTRICT										
District	Braddock	Sully	Mount Vernon	Mount Vernon	Lee	Providence	Mason	Springfield	Dranesville	Hunter Mill
Facility Name	Audrey Moore	Cub Run	Geo Wash	Mt Vernon	Lee District	Oak Marr	Providence	South Run	Spring Hill	
Location	Annandale	Chantilly	Alexandria	Alexandria	Franconia	Oakton	Falls Church	Springfield	McLean	Reston
Leisure Pool		X								
25 Meter Pool		X	X	X			X	X	X	
50 Meter Pool	X				X	X				
Sauna	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Spa		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Fitness Rooms	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	
Spin Studio	X	X			X	X	X			
Meeting Rooms	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	
Field House								X		
Gymnasium	X				X					
Ice Arena				X						
Playroom					X					
Pottery Lab	X									
Racquetball, Handball, Volleyball	X				X	X	X	X	X	
Squash Courts	X									
Tennis Courts	X		X		X			X		

This Section Is BLANK Because Hunter Mill District, (aka) Reston, Has No County Funded Rec Centers Like The Other Districts

On the other hand, there are 10 (ten) [Fairfax County - funded Community Centers](#)¹ that offer programs for adults, children, teens, and active seniors including after-school, mentoring, and sports programs. These community centers fall under the Fairfax County Neighborhood and Community Services Department and make rooms available for community meetings, classes, socials and weddings. Although some have basketball courts or fitness centers, the primary purpose of a community center is social rather than recreational. In 2006, Reston gained its first County-funded community center thanks to strong advocacy by a few Restonians - the Southgate Community Center - albeit smaller when compared with the other nine (9) centers and focused on serving the neighborhood community.

1 <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/neighborhood-community-services/community-centers>



The towns of Vienna and Herndon have community centers which are outside of the scope of this document.

All of the Fairfax County RECenters and Community Centers described above are funded by County taxes, user and program fees except two (2) Community Centers that are self-funded by the districts through special tax levies. In 1970, the McLean Community Center (MCC) was built and is funded by residents of Greater McLean for their use through a real estate tax surcharge, the result of a bond referendum (Small District 1A-Dranesville). The Center also receives money from fees and charges, and relies on volunteers, gifts, and donations to offer or expand its programs. An eleven-member Governing Board, elected by the citizens of the district and appointed by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, oversees the Center's budget and operations. McLean residents also enjoy a County-funded RECenter.

In 1979, the Reston community agreed to create a special tax district (Small Tax District #5) to build and maintain the [Reston Community Center](#) with its focus on the arts, events and special classes. Refer to RCA's Reston 411 Series [2014.1](#) for more on RCC funding.

Groups within and outside of Reston are lobbying for a recreation center on par with the larger County RECenters to be built in Reston. It will be a regional resource if it includes a 50-meter swimming pool as has been proposed by the RCC Board of Governors. With the projected population growth of the Hunter Mill District, the question is not if, but when and where. The key question to answer is who should fund it.

As Reston continues to grow and develop, its citizens will be asked to weigh in on various decisions, either by vote or by input to our County Supervisor. It is more important than ever to understand how items are funded and what we should expect from the larger region of which we are part. The outcomes will affect you and our community now and for generations to come.

The Reston Citizens Association (RCA) is a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation, founded in 1967. RCA is the only community-wide, non-partisan, and action-oriented organization in which everyone that lives, works and plays in Reston has a voice.

This note was developed based upon publicly available data, which have been appropriately referenced. RCA assumes that the data published by the Fairfax County have been reasonably prepared and verified for accuracies. This note also does not represent a comprehensive discussion of the RECenters and Community Centers, their amenities, operations, governance and funding nor does it describe the unique and specific features of those centers.

updated July 2018