

## Orleans Community Center Feasibility Task Force: Survey Summary

The Task Force has surveyed facilities in town that offer programming offerings similar to that of a community center. The team sought to identify existing facilities and programming and where shortcomings exist that could be addressed by a community center.

Six locations were studied in depth with both a five page paper survey and guided site visits: The Council on Aging, the Old Fire House Community Center, the Snow Library, the Recreation Department, the Nauset Regional Middle School, and the Orleans Elementary School.

The survey results were impressive: a 64-page document that examines everything from the basics of what each property has (square footage, room types) to the types of programs and even parking spaces. This summary seeks to highlight key existing conditions and should prove useful as a community center design is envisioned.

### 1. Council on Aging:

An estimated 1,856 seniors used the COA (amassing a total of 33,433 experiences) in 2019 in the 5,732 square foot facility built in 2000. The COA has 15 rooms. There are 5 full time, 4 permanent part time (with benefits) and 11 part time (no benefits) employees and a total budget of \$771,669 (FY22). The parking lot has 85 spaces. Facility use is very high. Estimates range between 80% and 100% based on timing. A full spectrum of classes is offered but the deed for the donated land upon which the COA is built limits activities for senior citizens only. Thus, the multi-purpose room cannot be used for other age evening activities despite being empty. The same applies to the gardens and surrounding walkway. Much of the COA's most popular and space consuming programming are its spectrum of exercise classes that take place in a configurable multi-purpose room that is shared with most other programming.

**KEY FINDINGS:** Including a dedicated fitness facility and multipurpose room(s) suitable for exercise and educational classes in a community center would allow some of this COA programming to move from the senior center, relieving current space pressure and making room for expanded senior programming of other types.

### 2. Snow Library:

The library, built in 1954 and added onto in 1977 and 1992, is the most heavily used building in town (up to 500 visits a day) and has 139,453 items and 6,798 card-holders (3,596 are Orleans residents). An estimated 15,400 individuals attended library events in 2019 at the 16,568 square foot facility. The library has a total of 11 public rooms. There are 4 full time and 13 part time (no benefits) employees and a total budget of \$673,992 (FY22). Library use is very high (85 to 100% capacity) and demand for spaces outstrips availability, resulting in many groups seeking meeting space being turned away. The popular large Craine Room (100 person capacity) is booked out for months. The parking lot is very small with only 45 spaces after a lot renovation is finished in 2022.

**KEY FINDINGS:** The library conducted a needs assessment in 2019 and found numerous physical plant deficiencies and space shortcomings (not enough rooms or general use results in too much noise). It also found numerous code violations, including no fire suppression system. The report concluded that the library was near the end of its useful life and that a 32,000 square facility is needed to accommodate the current town needs. The select board recently endorsed a feasibility study for a new library to be completed in FY2024. While creating a layout with wall separation to reduce sound travel is a main goal, the library is in need of several more meeting rooms, ranging from tutoring rooms to medium/large sized ones. The footprint of the current library is limited and the new facility is expected to be located on the same lot so a community center could provide several rooms that the library is in need of.

3. Old Firehouse Community Center:

Built in 1925 as a town fire station, this small property (2,660 square feet) has 7 rooms and houses the Orleans Chamber of Commerce, Orleans Community Partnership, Nauset Together We Can, numerous public events as well as public bathrooms and an alternative middle school afterschool program. Rental fees and donations pay for the majority of the costs to maintain this property. There are no paid employees. Programming includes a range of nonprofit meetings, dog training classes, blood drives, art installations, girl scouts, Chamber events, and Recreation Dept programming. The Orleans Community Partnership has played a central role in overseeing the facility as well as an effort to seek town funds to heavily renovate the property.

**KEY FINDINGS:** This is a popular facility in the heart of town and Parish Park but the Old Fire House is severely limited due to space constraints. Its largest 23' x 34' meeting/multipurpose room is a modest facility that has provided a surprising amount of programming punch. For example, Nauset Together We Can (all volunteer staff) has helped middle school kids with several programming efforts with an aim to prevent drug and alcohol exposure/abuse. In planning a community center, the list of activities hosted at the Fire House should be closely reviewed. Some would most likely move to a new community center but there are other activities that might best remain in the heart of town.

4. Recreation Department:

The town Recreation Department currently has one year round employee (three quarter time) and numerous seasonal positions who run a spectrum of a few dozen seasonal programs for all ages, including soccer clinics, fitness classes, ice skating, pickle ball games, yoga classes, and summer day camp. While the department does have an office at the new Public Works building, its perennial challenge is a lack of town space for programming, requiring it to use the Orleans Elementary School, Nauset Regional Middle School, and other properties for most of its offerings. This requires staff to set

up and take down all events in other facilities and carry equipment to and from the DPW property on a daily basis.

**KEY FINDINGS:** The DPW has been working to increase the Recreation director position to full time and add a part time assistant to offer more programming. During a site visit at the DPW, staff discussed their challenges and indicated a considerable need for a community center building that could host a variety of indoor recreational spaces including a full sized gymnasium, locker room/bathroom spaces, multiple meeting rooms capable of supporting a diversity of classes/events, significant storage for equipment, a dedicated weight/fitness room, a welcoming lobby/social area, and outdoor space (basketball court and other amenities) to support some additional programming. As of now, the department does not have priority scheduling privileges (because it relies on other organizations facilities) and this is considered a major impediment.

5. The Orleans Elementary School:

OES currently serves 162 students between Kindergarten and 5<sup>th</sup> grade in a 52,984 square foot building built in 1956 but modernized to its current footprint in 1988. The 32-room facility has 7 rooms used by the community, including a 5,184 square foot gymnasium (with a capacity of 600). OES has 46 full time and 5 part time employees with a budget of \$4.3 million for FY 22. The Orleans After School Activities Program (OASAP) is a major user in the afternoons/vacations/during the summer and the Orleans Recreation Program also runs evening/vacation/weekend/summer programs here.

**KEY FINDINGS:** OES plays a critical role as a space provider for after school, vacation, and summer programming needs. But all the spaces used by OASAP and Orleans Recreation need to be set up and taken down daily and storage space is severely limited or not available.

6. Nauset Regional Middle School:

Built in 1937 as the town's high/middle school, this 120,000 square foot building was substantially renovated into a regional middle school in 1991. Serving 580 students in grades 6 through 8, it has 97 rooms, 7 of which are used for regular community events. The 7,800 square foot auditorium can host 723 people and a large gymnasium with 8,450 square feet and bleachers can support events up to 1,065 people. Town meetings are often held here. The parking lots around the middle school provide 290 spaces. Users of the school property include the Orleans Firebirds Baseball Team, Orleans Recreation Department, the Town of Orleans, and multiple smaller organizations. Small fees are charged to some users of the school.

**KEY FINDINGS:** While the NRMS gym is the largest in town, limits in use to afterschool or the recreational department doesn't allow for sufficient family free play, preschool use, or adult sports like soccer or indoor pickle ball. Broader public use of the property is a challenge due to safety concerns. Adding a community center gym (and adequate storage) would open a host of additional and welcome recreational opportunities that aren't available now.

---

### Other Key Organizations

#### **The Orleans After School Activities Program (OASAP) <http://orleansafterschool.com/>**

Established to offer working families high quality after school care for Orleans Elementary School students (K-5<sup>th</sup> grade), OASAP currently hosts up to 52 kids per day, with a total of 100 registered students. This daily number represents almost twenty percent of the total OES enrollment. A waiting list of ten families exists due to staffing limits. OASAP also provides both summer and vacation programming.

#### **Nauset Together We Can <https://nausettogetherwecan.org/>**

Founded more than 20 years ago as a nonprofit to help youth through a range of afterschool and recreational programming, this all volunteer corps has played an essential role engaging middle schoolers (grades 6-8), especially on the topic of drug/alcohol exposure/abuse. They also run the Finch Skate Park on the Middle School property fields.

#### **Friends of Snow Library <https://friendsofsnowlibrary.org/>**

This nonprofit organization provides a critical service for the library, providing fundraising for library purchases such as books and supplies as well as a range of events such a children's programming and the very popular Lifetime Learning Series. Designed to help the library where town funding falls short, this model has also proven very successful with community centers nationwide.

**Existing Conditions Survey Results Summary**

<b>Facility</b>	<b>Room Description</b>	<b>Size (sq. ft)</b>	<b>Capacity (seated)</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>COA (5,732 sq. ft)</b>	Multi-purpose #1	1,575	70 (with tables)	These rooms are connected via moveable walls that allow multiple configurations.
	Multi-purpose #2	370	25	
	Multi-purpose #3	339	25	
<b>Old Firehouse (2,660 sq. ft)</b>	Main room	782	--	Multi-purpose
	Kid's hangout room	350 (estimated)	10	Currently light usage but heavier before Covid.
<b>Library (16,568 sq. ft)</b>	Craine Gallery	960 + 350 balcony	100 + 24 balcony	
	Cape Cod Room	252	10	
	Trustees Room	234	11	
	Mezzanine	1,588	25 at tables	Hangout for kids
<b>OES</b>	Gym (5,184 sf)	¾ sized gym	--	No bleachers.
<b>NRHS</b>	Gym (8,450 sf)	Full sized gym	--	With bleachers.
<b>Recreation Dept.</b>	No dedicated facility	Uses OES, NRMS, and outdoor locations.		OES gym: After 5:30 PM M-F, ½ day Sat. NRMS gym: 6-8 PM M-F, all day Sat.