



# Polk County

An idea whose time has come.



**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

## About the YMCA

The YMCA is a leading not-for-profit organization committed to helping people and communities to learn, grow and thrive. Across the US, the Y engages with 21 million members in more than 10,000 neighborhoods.

The YMCA works to strengthen communities and their citizens, by providing programs on youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility.



## Philosophy and Beliefs

With a charge to strengthen the foundations of the community, the Y is a place for all to belong, serving people of all ages, genders, abilities, races, orientations, ethnicities, and socio-economic backgrounds.

Like all YMCA's, the Y of Greater Spartanburg serves all, regardless of ability to pay. Last year, one in three kids who attended summer camp received assistance. In 2022 alone, \$49,796 of financial assistance was provided to program participants in Polk County.

## Polk County's Connection with the YMCA

The YMCA of Greater Spartanburg began serving in 1869. It was formally chartered in 1903 and serves multiple outreach program sites including three full-service YMCA facilities in Spartanburg County. Many citizens of the region hold fond memories of Camp Skyuka, which was operated by the Spartanburg YMCA as early as 1954. The camp, which was sold in 1980, was on Polk County's own White Oak Mountain.



Polk County citizens and community leaders have discussed the need and desire for a designated community YMCA for three decades. In 2023, this is **an idea whose time has come**. Residents are feeling the excitement building!





## **Building a YMCA in Polk County**

With a desire to strengthen local public recreation programs, Polk County entered into an agreement with the YMCA of Greater Spartanburg in March of 2021. The collaborative programs have been very successful and experienced substantial growth in participation and services over these two years. In 2022 the Y served over 1,000 Polk County residents in youth sports, aquatics, summer day camps, swimming lessons, and adult sports nights. Since then, the Polk County Y email list has been rapidly growing.



In June of 2021, Polk County appointed 10 individuals to serve on a Polk County YMCA Community Recreation Development Committee (YMCA Development Committee). Active since then, the committee has focused on location, planning, function, and funding. A subcommittee identified a seven-acre site at the intersection of Highways 74 and 108 in Columbus. That land is set to be donated, solidifying the first milestone toward making the Polk County YMCA facility a reality.

## **Progress to Date and Promises for the Future**

### **Conducting Research**

In the research phase, the YMCA Development Committee surveyed citizens of the county. Over 3,000 Polk County residents provided feedback and desires. Key findings included:

- **80%** are likely to join the YMCA
- **62%** will drive up to 20 minutes to use the facility
- **34%** are interested in summer camp for kids
- **21%** are interested in after-school programs

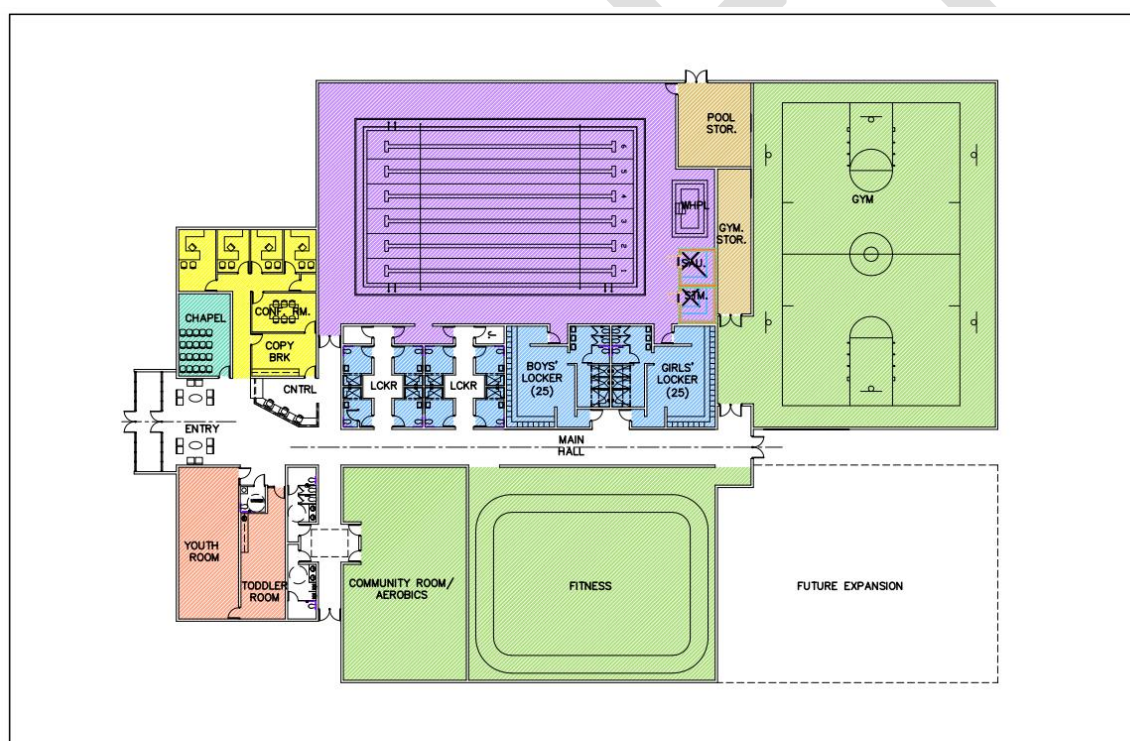
Highest interests are:

- Indoor pool
- Indoor track
- Fitness center
- Group exercise classes

### **Prioritizing Amenities**

With the survey feedback and additional data, the team was able to prioritize facility and program needs. The comprehensive design for the 30,000+ square foot YMCA facility is anticipated to include the following:

- **Six-lane pool** equipped for swim lessons, water aerobics, lap swimming, team competition and family recreational swimming.
- **Multi-sport gymnasium:** basketball, pickleball, volleyball, youth & adult sports, etc.
- **Wellness center** with state-of-the-art cardio and strength training equipment.
- **Indoor walking track**
- **Full locker rooms** for men and women with additional special needs/family restrooms
- **Group exercise studio** equipped for yoga, Zumba, spin, etc.
- **Community Room** for meetings and multipurpose special events
- **Quiet room** for personal reflection and spiritual wellness
- **Welcoming reception** / social gathering area with secure check-in
- **Childwatch space** to engage children while parents participate in Y programming.
- **Ample parking**



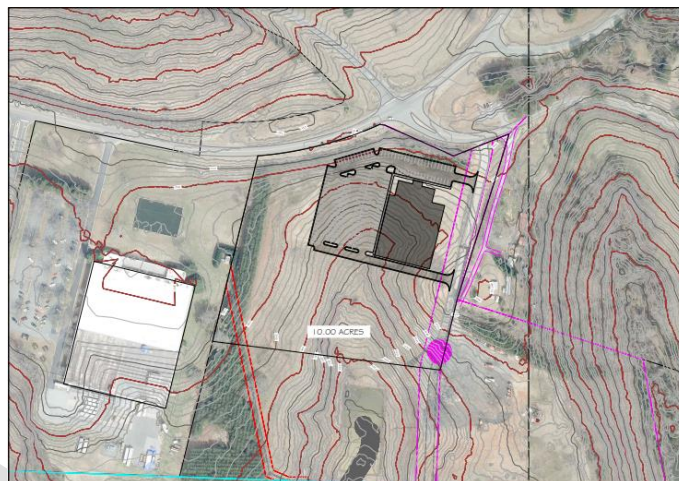
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### Polk County YMCA Floor Plan



## **Location**

The Polk County YMCA site is centrally located at the intersection of Hwy 108 and Fox Mountain Road with visibility and access from Highway 74. This location is ideal for easy access via major highways to all residents of Polk County along with residents of Landrum, Campobello, Inman, Chesnee, and Lake Bowen area.



## **Pool**

While the pool is far from the only significant part of the facility, it is a key programming feature. The YMCA will offer the county's largest and most accessible indoor pool. Heated for comfort, the six-lane aquatic center will meet plenty of need.

Swimming is a popular leisure activity. Aquatic activities are both fun and healthy. Children love to play in water. Youth and adults enjoy healthy exercise with lap swimming. Seniors thrive with low-impact aquatic exercise. Schools compete with swim teams and host fun, competitive meets.

Whether residents enjoy aquatic activities or not, swimming skills are critical. Every able-bodied person should know how to swim. Drownings are one of the leading causes of accidental death and are highly preventable. Teaching youth how to swim is a necessity, not a luxury.

## **Critical Societal Issues: YMCA Solutions**

The 2021 Polk County Community Health Assessment identified several areas of concern in our community in which the YMCA will make a difference.



## Encouraging Healthy Living

**Challenge:** Healthy eating and active living, together improve everyone's lives. Health disparities are a huge concern in Polk County. Obesity rates are alarmingly high at 66%. Only 26% of surveyed individuals reported meeting daily physical activity recommendations, and 17% reported spending no leisure time in physical activity. Fewer than 10% of individuals report eating the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables every day. Low income and people living in rural areas are more likely to be obese. A lack of access to childcare resources contributes to the problem. One of the most significant prevention strategies for chronic diseases is physical activity. It is vital for healthy aging.

**Y Solution:** The YMCA will meet residents' needs for affordable, safe, and inclusive indoor recreational space. The Y offers structured opportunities for physical activity and nutrition education through land and water exercise in a positive, encouraging atmosphere where people find the support, they need to form lifelong healthy habits. The programs and services offered by the YMCA reduce rates of chronic disease and help entire communities become healthier.

## Prioritizing Mental Health

**Challenge:** Mental health was identified as the top priority with a need for social/emotional support systems for people of all ages. Covid-19 exacerbated the crisis. Social isolation has increased, contributing to disconnection from friends, family, and community. Suicide rates in the county have been rising for a decade. Families in poverty, food insecurity and access to services are contributing factors.

**Y Solution:** The YMCA connects individuals and families providing a safe and affordable gathering place where people of all backgrounds, ages, and income levels can participate in structured programs focused on building a healthier spirit, mind, and body together.

## Combatting Substance Abuse

**Challenge:** Substance abuse, another contributor to mental health issues, is a growing concern in Polk County. The Community Health Assessment identified that 55% of participants' lives have been negatively affected by substance abuse by self or someone else. A lack of recreational and educational programs for children has been identified as a root cause of the growing substance misuse challenge.

**Y Solution:** The YMCA's character values of caring, respect, honesty, and responsibility guide youth to make healthy choices. The Y supports out-of-school time year-round through structured recreational and educational programs like after-school, summer day camp, swim teams, and youth sports leagues.

## **Outcomes: More than bricks and mortar**

This project is more than bricks and mortar – it is about people. From childhood to seniors, it is about access, inclusion, and building a better community of us.

The Polk County YMCA will provide hope and a societal return on investment. The immeasurable community impact is delivered through:

- Reinforcing positive societal values for both children and adults
- Providing role models for youth
- Providing families a safe place for their children during working hours
- Building leadership, critical thinking, and group dynamic skills
- Facilitating and encouraging people of different ages and backgrounds to learn about each other and enjoy being together
- Affecting economic development in the county by adding attractive amenities for prospective business investors
- Bolstering workforce development by assisting the development of healthy employees, reducing absenteeism, and healthcare costs
- Strengthening talent attraction through corporate wellness and employee membership programs.
- Addressing the summer learning loss that more often impacts children in poverty.
- Expanding childcare programs to support working families.

### **Health and Emotional Wellness for Seniors**

At 32%, the senior population within Polk County is a growing segment. The average age in Polk County is 54. There are increasing numbers of second homes with residents who seek healthy living lifestyles. While there may be private fitness facilities, a more affordable option, with social engagement and programs for active seniors is offered through the YMCA. With the county's most accessible indoor pool, healthy aquatic activity will be available year-round for all.



### **Increasing Social Connectedness**

The character of a community comes from its people. The YMCA is a powerful advocate for social connectedness. As the Y builds healthier spirits, minds, and bodies, so too does the spirit, mind, and body of Polk County.

Much more than a gym, the YMCA is a cause-driven nonprofit that will become an anchor of gathering and community pride. A community hub for individuals to socialize and interact, the Polk County Y will offer unique and specialty programs which may otherwise not be available within the county.

- The Livestrong program will expand in Polk County to assist cancer survivors returning to physical activities after treatment.
- Lifeguard training classes will provide expanded employment opportunities.
- Summer day camps will continue to grow at school sites in Polk County.
- Structured year-round educational and recreational programs for youth that build resilience and combat the effects of ACES (Adverse Childhood Experiences).

The Polk County YMCA is community-centered. It is expected to become a most popular community gathering point. The Y brings people together in a comfortable welcoming environment for all.

### **Healthy and Welcoming Space**

The psychology of space includes the understanding that the brain reacts to the geometry of the space we occupy. It further acknowledges that interior design can inspire confidence, empathy, pride, creativity, security and energy. Polk County's YMCA will offer welcoming and comforting public spaces. Whether through physical activity, classes, camps, the pool, or community gatherings, the Y facility will provide healthy environments for expanding the physical, mental, and emotional health of all visitors.



Human connection adds to personal growth. Camp counselors, fitness instructors, coaches, and others, become role models and equip participants for success. Certainly for youth, the Y delivers a holistic approach to personal growth while preparing younger citizens for adult life with well-rounded experiences. Inclusively engaging with others during adolescence sets the stage for positive relationships throughout life.



No matter the age or skill level of the participant, the YMCA will foster a support system.

## **The Time Has Come!**

### **Collaboration & Partnerships**

No single entity can build the character or strengthen a community on its own. The Polk County YMCA will be successful because of partners who share similar desires and can collaborate for the benefit of all. To date, these organizations, with more to come, are already committed and exploring deeper collaborative partnerships with the Y.

- Polk County Government: expanded recreation services
- YMCA Development Committee and two subcommittees
- Polk County Schools: summer camp programming at local school sites
- St. Luke's Hospital: Livestrong cancer survivor program, employee memberships
- Polk County Community Foundation: Feasibility assessment ensuring game-changing community long-term benefit

Countless additional partners, collaborators and donors are expected to invest resources and energy in long-term YMCA deliverables within Polk County.

### **Budget**

<b>Total Project Cost</b>	<b>\$13,400,000</b>
<b><u>Current Commitments</u></b>	
Land Donation	\$1,400,000
Equipment (Greater Spartanburg YMCA)	\$500,000
<b><u>Capital Campaign</u></b>	<b>\$11,500,000</b>

### **Additional Notes**

Key program areas of the Y such as the gym, pool, wellness center, child watch, and community room are expected to attract naming opportunities and inquiries are welcome.

Like other branches of the Spartanburg Y, the Polk County YMCA will have a local advisory board as well as representation on the Greater Spartanburg Y Board of Directors.

We know that the generosity of others is essential for our existence. The Y is accessible to everyone, regardless of their ability to pay. Supporters cover these scholarships through an annual fund drive. Capital campaign resources

would be committed solely to building the Polk County YMCA facility and enhancing programming services.

With funding committed and bearing weather delays, it is estimated that the Polk County YMCA could be open for business in late 2025.

## An Extraordinary Opportunity

Share this vision for youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility:

- ✓ When a kid runs and plays on a field, enjoying the fun of team experience
- ✓ When families cheer and hug their child after a game
- ✓ When a mentor in summer camp or after school inspires a child
- ✓ When the community comes together for a common good
- ✓ When children are playing so much together they can't stop laughing
- ✓ When an adult leaves the Y after a workout feeling great
- ✓ When seniors connect and enjoy interacting while active
- ✓ When residents of all ages, genders, ethnicities, and abilities come together at a warm community gathering

There really is no other organization like the YMCA. Community leaders have prioritized bringing the Y to Polk County. With high collaboration, committed partnerships, and strong leadership, **now is the time** to make the Polk County YMCA a reality. We are bringing passion and foresight to meeting the youth development and healthy living role, by creating a new permanent YMCA facility. A modern, attractive, state of the art facility will permanently strengthen the health of the community and our residents. **We believe that in 2023, the Polk County YMCA is indeed an idea whose time has come!**

## Leadership

### Polk County Commissioners

- Tommy Melton, Chairman
- Myron Yoder, Vice-Chairman
- Paul (Little) Beiler
- David Moore
- Andre Overholt

### Additional Support

- Ange High, Polk County
- Cassie Lloyd, YMCA of Greater Spartanburg

### Polk County YMCA Development Committee

- Michael Baughman, Parsec Financial: Chair
- Paul (Little) Beiler, Polk County
- Rick Calles, YMCA of Greater Spartanburg
- Ray Gasperson, CETA
- Aaron Greene, Polk County Schools
- Tommy Melton, Polk County
- Dionne James, Tryon Estates
- Marche Pittman, Polk County
- LeToya McBride, YMCA of Greater Spartanburg
- Sharon Decker, Tryon International Equestrian Center

