

Banta Center Member Questions - 4/24/2025

Why are you talking Banta when a new building is not even designated yet?

The RFP process and subsequent rezoning approvals by the Plan Commission and City Council will take several months. Therefore, timely dissemination of information to prospective buyers is crucial, as these transactions typically require a significant timeframe. Furthermore, any interested party must agree to allow Valpo Parks and senior programming to continue operating in the building without interruption for up to five years.

Name of new proposed building (or campus):

Old McGill Factory

Exact address?

909 Lafayette Street

Proposed new space? (sq ft) vs. current Banta:

The proposed new building is 225,000 square feet with the new “Banta” taking up roughly 10,000 square feet. The current Banta building is 14,184 square feet.

Increased cost of membership?

Cost has not been determined at this time.

Other tenants in the building with us?

The proposed new building is being considered for a variety of activities, including senior programming, youth programming, sports facilities, rental halls, and indoor play areas.

**What is a reasonable time frame for the transition to occur to the McGill/Regal Bldg?
3 yrs/5 yrs/7 yrs?**

Valpo Parks estimates 2-3 years.

Senior center would take up what percentage of the new building?

Roughly 4.5%.

What other purposes/organizations would take up the balance of the building?

The proposed new building is being considered for a variety of activities, including senior programming, youth programming, sports facilities, rental halls, and indoor play areas.

Does the Parks Department NEED to sell the Banta Center? Do they need the capital from a sale? Or just future cost avoidance?

Future cost avoidance is the primary reason.

What is the projected cost required to bring the McGill/Regal Bldg up to code and usability?

The project is estimated to cost roughly \$20,000,000.

Does the rezoning of the Banta building affect the zoning status of the surrounding homes? (It would be nice to be notified of meetings via mail or phone call or text not everyone is here every day to get notifications. Thank you.).

No, rezoning the building has no effect on the zoning status of the homes surrounding the Banta Center.

IF – we move to McGill – would it be a shared facility?

Yes.

If so, what other activities would be involved at that facility?

The proposed new building is being considered for a variety of activities, including senior programming, youth programming, sports facilities, rental halls, and indoor play areas.

Can we have a new building without heating and air conditioning problems?

Yes. That is the goal.

The Mayor finds grants for other citizens of Valpo, can't something be found for seniors?

Valpo Parks actively seeks grants for all activities, seniors included.

Does the senior center need to be run by Valpo Parks?

It certainly doesn't need to be run by Valpo Parks; however, we do feel as if we are equipped to run it well.

Why wasn't the Urschel property donation used?

The Valpo Parks Board returned the donated land near the YMCA to the Urschel Development Corporation due to the terms of the agreement approved in April 2023. This agreement stipulated the transfer of 4.78 acres for the construction of an Adult Center for Enrichment, with the project to be completed within sixty months of the closing date. Given these terms and the Park Board's revised position on the project, the land was deemed no longer necessary for Valpo Parks' current strategic direction.

How have the government cuts affected Banta services? Banta Center is part of the Valpo Parks system which is a government entity.

Currently, government cuts have not affected our ability to effectively operate a senior center.

Porter County/Center Township will always be included?

That is the intention of Valpo Parks, however, Porter County and Center Township are separate entities that would also need to agree on continuing the relationship.

With property tax cuts probable how does this affect your plans to change location. The Parks Budget will probably be reduced.

While the City of Valparaiso maintains a strong financial position, the upcoming property tax cuts will lead to a reduction in Valpo Parks' annual property tax revenue, the exact impact of which is currently being assessed. The Banta Center currently incurs an annual operating loss of \$100,000. Relocating senior programming and integrating it with revenue-generating operations is projected to yield a positive financial outcome. Importantly, the construction costs associated with the new location are not anticipated to be impacted by these property tax reductions.

Are there any other buildings available for public meetings in the Banta neighborhood?

Valpo Parks is committed to collaborating with the Neighborhood Association to find a new location for their monthly meetings. Regarding the availability of other City-owned buildings within the neighborhood, there are currently none.

Are we solving someone else's problems vis-à-vis McGill's? Asbestos removal? Drainage? More bathrooms and parking near the entrance? Compatible for socializing informally?

To ensure accessibility for all, any new facility will be designed and equipped with all necessary and legally required amenities for full ADA compliance.

Biggest problem – shrinking Park Department budget over time. Even though it has its own Board, etc., there used to be a cap on the total percentage raise on living. Is that still true? Are other city services putting downward pressure on the Park Department budget?

While Valpo Parks receives a portion of the City of Valparaiso's property tax revenue (allocated by City Administration based on several criteria), our funding model is unique in its diversification. We also rely on significant revenue from user fees, rental fees, sponsorships, grants, and other sources.

Second biggest problem – citywide – you can't know what it's like to be old unless you are old or can you? The whole city could use training in androgyny: teaching and interacting with elderly people.

We appreciate that perspective; however, our experience suggests a different possibility. We believe that empathy, coupled with appropriate training and practical engagement, enables individuals regardless of age to build meaningful connections with older adults.