



Assignment 3

Herb Willsmore
May 6, 1974
CP-247

— 1 —

Memorandum

To: Michael B. Toitz
From: Herb Willsmore

After evaluating the cost effectiveness study it appears that the approach was somewhat inappropriate to the situation at hand. The approach seems inappropriate in that the methodology used was very sequential and cumulative. Each step in the analysis was very dependent on the resolution in the problem inherent in the step before it. Good program planning usually involves a set of simultaneous steps in the solution of each part of the overall question or problem at hand. In this cost effectiveness study, the team of experts appear to have sat down and made an incredible number of assumptions and decisions which are crucial to the analysis of such a problem and that, for the sake of good planning, require the use or inclusion of a collective set of values from the community. In addition, there were several steps which appear to have been left out completely which I feel must be included for a really thorough analysis. They are:

1. Evaluation of the need in the community for swimming opportunities in the context of the overall needs of the community.
2. Investigation of the political and financial feasibility; crucial in view of the magnitude of the anticipated project.
3. Identification of potential sites and the dislocations associated with each, i.e., impact analysis.

The weakest feature of the study was the manner in which the objective function was interpreted. The nature of the objective function, is inevitably

— 2 —

and inextricably linked to the remaining parts of any analysis. The interpretation of the objective function used in the study was never legitimized in my mind. It would be legitimate only if it were arrived at through a process which afforded citizens in the community the opportunity to express their views. Further the proposal to improve swimming opportunities should be offered for your examination in the context of the realities in terms of political and fiscal. You must ask yourselves and your neighbors how badly the project is needed in relation to the other needs in the community. We all know that if the schools in your community are going to be brought up to the standards of the community they are going to need all the financial resources they can get. There are other pressing needs in your community, ranging from the bad roads to local health and other human services. These are serious considerations, none of which were addressed in the cost effectiveness study.

Now ask yourselves, was the objective function correctly formulated? Is the objective to provide to all who will avail themselves of the adequate swimming opportunities? It is quite clear that there is an expressed demand in the Brownsville community. But that is only a small part of the total model neighborhood. Was the study team correct in assuming that every section of the community needs a swimming pool within 1 1/2 miles of their home? Is this the only way to fill the need however you perceive it? The study team let assumptions answer these questions. If this project is going to evolve as one which will meet your specifications you must have input in answering the above questions. I suggest you request the county initiate a combination

— 3 —

of survey research and group meetings to begin a process that will offer legitimate answers to these questions. In addition I think that whoever writes future reports concerning this problem be required to include an investigation into the questions concerning the political and financial feasibility of any alternatives which may finally be generated.

There is one other question that sticks out in my mind about the study - what is the mechanism or process that is responsible for the astoundingly low attendance rate (.8%) in the poor black community in relation to the upper-middle black and white community. There is something going on here that is worth looking into. The study team did not even comment on the low usage rate. Your model neighborhood is quite similar in demographic characteristics to the neighborhood in question and yet rather than use the .8% rate for describing potential demand the team used what appears to be a simple average of the rates in the poor and upper-middle white/black neighborhoods. This seems odd and suggests that perhaps the study team was less interested in gaining familiarity with the way your community operates and how this might effect the statement of need and generation of alternatives than in combining a neat package of facts and figures.

Another weakness of the study is the fact that neither actual nor potential sites were not identified. Is one to take for granted that there will be the six or even three ideal sites available? I think not. The availability of sites is a question that could affect the feasibility and cost of the entire project. The report includes demolition as a cost. What about the people who would have to relocate? Would they in fact be willing to move; at what cost? In short I think the entire problem must be reexamined in a manner that would address the questions I have raised above.