

From the Hillsdale News:

Fulton Park Center Faces Closure

The Fulton Park Community Center, home to seven pre-school programs and a host of other activities, is on the City's budget chopping block, but a group of neighborhood parents are working to keep the budget axe from falling.

Parents who say a closure next July would be a huge loss for the surrounding community are planning to attend a budget meeting on Monday, Jan. 9, to express their concern and to support the center. The meeting is at 6:30 p.m. at the Multnomah County Board Room, 501 SE Hawthorne (at Grand).

Closing the center would save the City \$79,634, the shortfall in what the building brings in rentals. In the 2010-2011 fiscal year rentals brought in \$232,278.

The center employs two and a half positions. According to Mark Ross, spokesperson for Portland Parks and Recreation, the small center is one of the least used in the system.

The building, at 68 SW Miles Street, is next to the Fulton Park community gardens just off Barbur Boulevard.

The closure has been recommended by the Portland Parks & Recreation Budget Advisory Committee. Parks Director Mike Abbaté and Parks Commissioner Nick Fish are reviewing the recommendation before making their own to Mayor Sam Adams.

In a press release, Fish said proposed cuts are a symptom of "the continuing down economy." "(The cuts are) especially difficult in light of the fact that our parks and recreation system was recently selected as the best managed in the nation."

The final budget will be decided in May by the City Council.

Spokesperson Ross said that if the center is closed, it would be "mothballed" and possibly reopened when the economy improves.

Lorie Crowell, a neighbor and parent, said the center "is a big part" of neighborhood life for her and dozens of other parents and children. Her son, Copper, attends preschool at the center and her husband, Dan, plays volleyball there. Crowell said concerned parents can e-mail her at loriecsb@yahoo.com

Another parent of pre-school children, Tai Dustan, said her "heart sank" when she heard of the possible closure. She and other parents have started a [Facebook page](#), "Save Fulton Park Community Center and Preschool."

If the center closes, the nearest similar facility is Southwest Community Center in Gabriel Park, which Crowell says is too far away and quite crowded. The equally distant Multnomah Arts Center doesn't offer the same kinds of programs, she added.

She said SWCC also lacks the intimate, "fabulous" feel of the Fulton Park center, a former elementary school built in 1914 and purchased from the school district by the City in 1958.