

CITY OF PHILADELPHIA PENNSYLVANIA

OFFICE OF THE CONTROLLER

**Review of Safety Measures at Philadelphia's
Water Recreational Facilities**

Parks & Recreation

August 2017

City Controller
Alan Butkovitz



Promoting honest, efficient & fully accountable government



Review of Safety Measures at Philadelphia's Water Recreational Facilities

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Why the Controller's Office Conducted the Review

The City Controller's Office issued a 2014 review of swimming pools and spray grounds maintained by the City of Philadelphia that found the majority, almost 70 percent, of the more than 80 locations were maintained in a safe and secure environment. By performing on-site inspections at every facility during the peak summer swimming season, the Controller's Office again reviewed the recreational water sites to ascertain whether any hazardous conditions existed.

What the Controller's Office Found

Of the total 81 pools and spray grounds maintained by the city, the Controller's Office found that 30 were observed to have a safe, secure environment for both swimmers and visitors. This is 24 less facilities than what was observed three years ago, indicating a significant deterioration in conditions throughout the various locations.

While the remaining 51 pool and spray ground facilities contained conditions that ranged from minor to potentially hazardous, these items could be corrected if appropriate actions are taken. Some of the noteworthy findings included the following:

- The pools at Mander and M.L King had electrical cords submerged in water in areas accessible by visitors and staff, creating potential shock hazard.
- 25 pools contained uneven or broken concrete in the pool deck areas, creating tripping hazards
- 10 locations contained blocked drains that resulted in standing water and slipping hazards
- The Morris Estate pool had a broken ladder marked with yellow caution tape, which blocked egress from the pool. This was the same condition observed in 2014.

What the Controller's Office Recommends

With less than half of the city's water recreational locations observed in a safe, secure manner, the Controller's Office recommends Parks and Recreation take actions to address the conditions found at identified swimming pools and spray grounds. These recommendations can be found at the conclusion of the report.

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INTRODUCTION

Objective, Scope and Methodology

The City Controller's Office issued a 2014 review of swimming pools and spray grounds maintained by the City of Philadelphia that found 54 of the 81 locations were maintained in a safe and secure environment. The majority of findings included conditions that ranged from minor to potentially hazardous such as uneven concrete that created tripping hazards, improper storage of chemicals in areas accessible by visitors and blocked drains that presented slipping hazards.

Based on the findings from the previous report, the Controller's Office conducted a follow-up review during July 2017. The Controller's inspectors performed on-site inspections at every swimming pool and spray ground, which are playgrounds equipped with water features like sprinklers and splash pads, during the peak summer swimming season and ascertained whether any hazardous conditions existed.

During the time of the inspections, a July 9, 2017, Philadelphia Inquirer article highlighted issues at various swimming pools and indicated that \$100 million was needed for repairs at all pools, according to the Parks and Recreation Commissioner. This heightened the need to assess the conditions at every facility and provide Parks and Recreation with an independent review that it can utilize when prioritizing facility repairs and securing proper funding.

The Controller's Office visited every swimming pool and spray ground location during hours that they were scheduled to be open to the public. The Controller's investigators utilized a list of safety and compliance checks to examine the following:

1. Was the facility open when investigators arrived and how many people were waiting in line to enter the facility
2. Did the facility post operational hours and rules in a visible, public location
3. How many lifeguards were on duty and were they actively watching the swimmers
4. Was life saving equipment present and located near lifeguards in case of an emergency
5. Observe water clarity and examine current pH level charts
6. Was there construction or debris in areas traversed by swimmers or visitors

Along with employing a checklist, the Controller's investigators interviewed facility staff to determine if water safety inspections were being conducted. Additionally, investigators documented conditions and issues observed with photographs.

FINDINGS

Majority of Water Recreation Facilities Contained Conditions that Need Addressed

During the latest on-site visits, the Controller's investigators found 51 of the total 81 swimming pools and spray grounds contained conditions that ranged from minor to potentially hazardous. In the City Controller's 2014 review, there were 27 facilities that required attention and repairs, marking a significant increase in deterioration over the last three years.

While there was a spike in the number of locations needing repairs, the investigators did observe life guards actively monitoring the swimming pools and immediate surrounding areas lead to the water at all facilities. Additionally, life-saving equipment was present at all the locations, the hours and regulations were clearly posted with the exception of two pools, and the Water Safety Inspections reports (WSI) were being appropriately conducted by Parks and Recreation staff at all facilities.

Conditions that Need to be Addressed

General Conditions

Electrical Shock Hazards: Investigators noted two pools that had electric cords submerged in standing water along cement decks in areas that were accessible to visitors and staff. This is of particular concern because of a 2014 electrical-shock incident at the O'Connor Pool, which resulted in three children being sent to the hospital. After this incident, Parks and Recreation instituted additional measures and protocols to prevent reoccurrence.

While on-site at the pools, the Controller's investigators safely moved the electrical cords from the standing water and reported it to the individual facilities.

Tripping Hazards: Investigators observed broken concrete and missing caulking that formed areas of uneven pavement. This created tripping hazards in areas where visitors and staff walk. In some instances, the uneven pavement caused standing water, resulting in slipping hazards. Another tripping hazard was observed at one swimming pool where a safety line was tied from the perimeter fence on either end of the pool and running across pool deck area. This same hazard was noted in our previous review in 2014.

Broken Equipment: Investigators found broken, missing and loose pool ladders that were marked with yellow caution tape. This condition was identified in the 2014 report. Several locations also contained significant paint peeling from the base of the pools.

Water Safety: The pH levels at all pools were checked within hours of the investigators' visits. The pH levels recorded were within the normal range (7.2 to 7.8)¹ at 30 pools. The remaining 43 were outside the normal range, with eight of them greater than the acceptable range of 0.4.

¹ Generally accepted range according to www.ehow.com

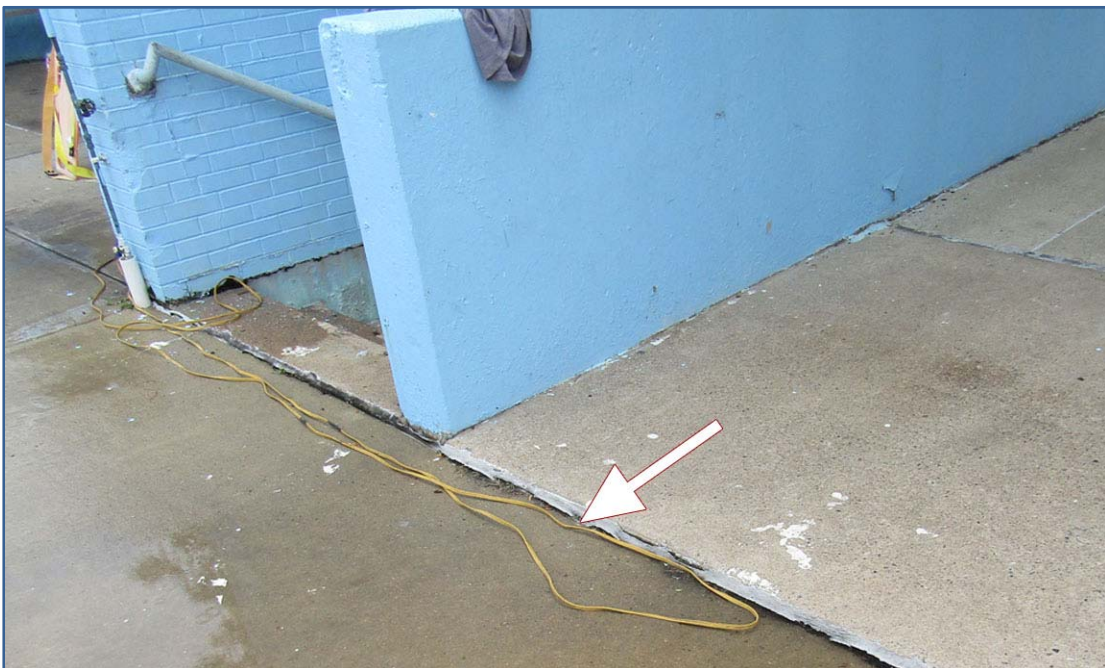
Examples of Site-Specific Conditions

The following conditions were observed at the specific water recreation facility:

Mander Pool – Electrical Hazard (Extension cord in standing water)



Martin Luther King Pool – Electrical Hazard



Mander Pool – Broken Decking Along Pool Edge



Stinger Square – Uneven Pavement, Tripping Hazard



Morris Estate – Broken Ladder (same condition existed in 2104)



Lincoln Pool – Rusted Diving Equipment



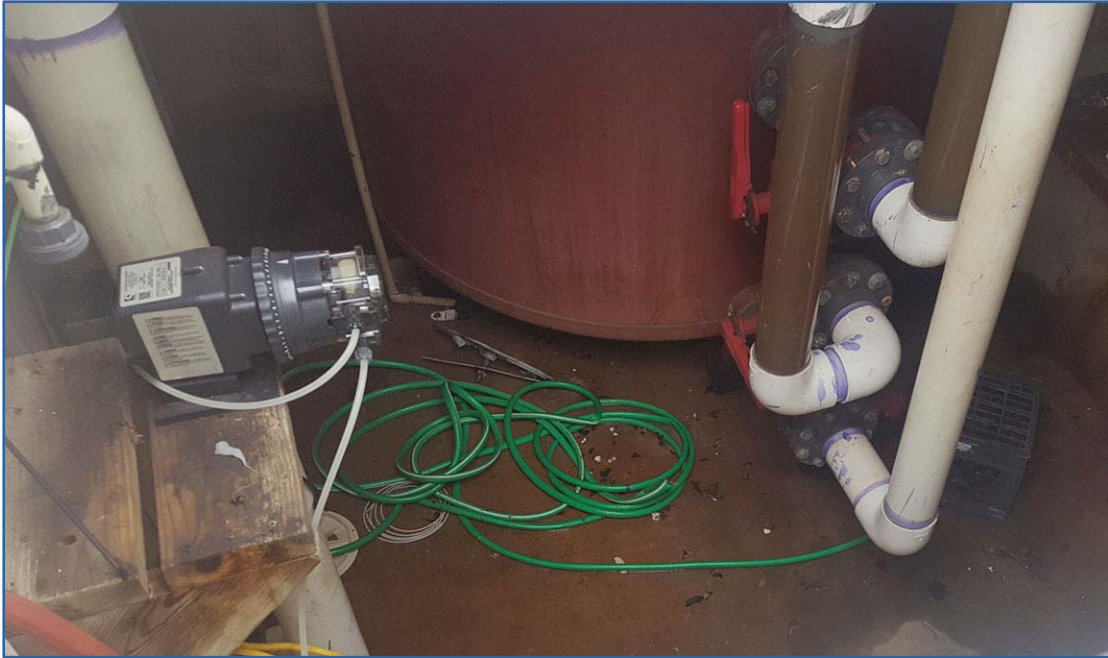
39th & Olive Playground – Pool Pump Leaks



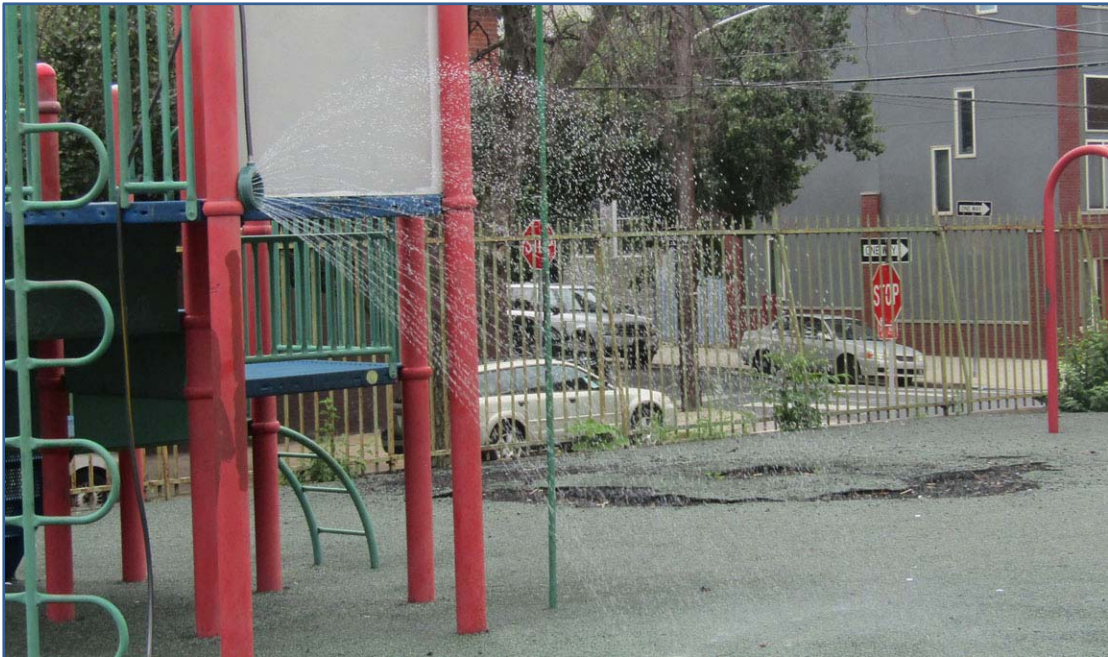
39th & Olive Playground – Pump Leaks Water onto Adjacent Sidewalk



East Poplar – Pump Room Fills with Water



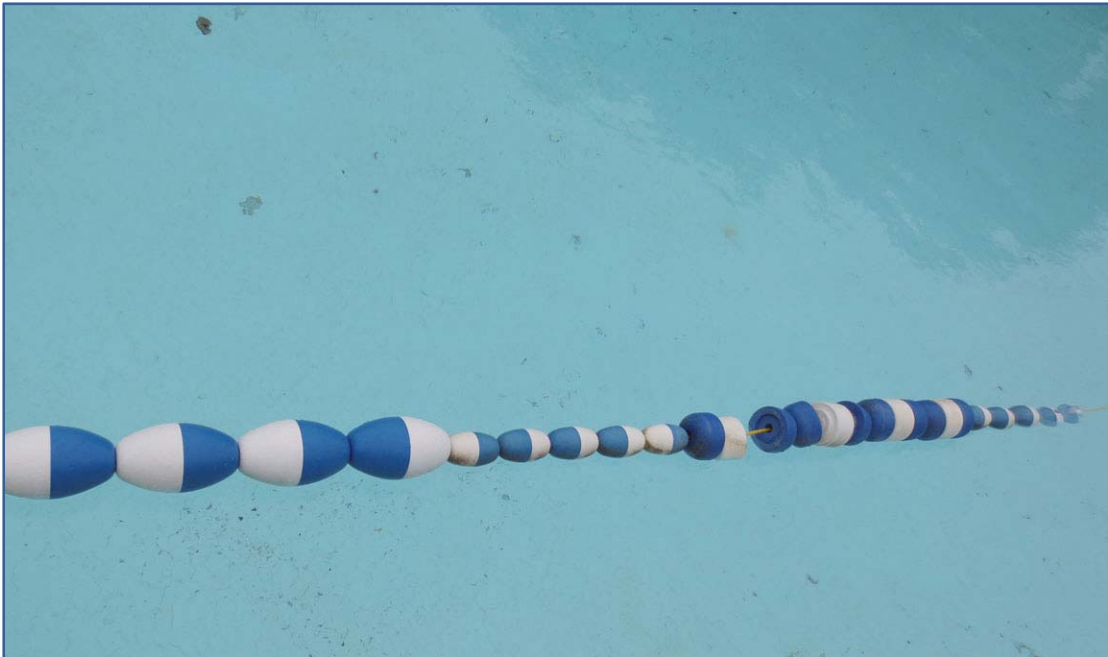
Hancock Spray Ground – Holes in Matting Around Spray Area, Tripping Hazard



Houseman Pool – Paint Peeling



Belfield Pool – Paint Peeling



RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations

With more than half of the city's pool and spray grounds needing some level of maintenance, the City Controller's Office recommends that Parks and Recreation prioritize the list of repairs by location and potential costs. This will assist the Department in budgeting the appropriate funds for each repair as well as emphasize the need to obtain additional financial resources to maintain the pools and spray grounds in the future.

For specific conditions identified in the latest review, we recommend management take the following actions:

- Ensure all pool employees are aware of and actively prevent electrical hazards
- Repair broken pool ladders and egress from the pool
- Repair broken and uneven concrete areas of the pool deck - tripping hazard
- Remove all tripping hazards from the pool deck area – safety lines and other objects
- Repair clogged drains in the pool deck area – prevent slipping injuries
- Painting of the pools concrete surface

Table A - List of Pools and Hazards Found

	Facility	Uneven Pavement/Tripping Hazard	Clogged Drains/Slipping Hazard	Paint Peeling	Other
1.	39 th & Olive	X			rope tied to fence and other side of the pool, fence missing bolts at bottom of post, chemical room has leaking water and it drains into adjacent street
2.	48 th & Woodland				Spray ground partially functioning as equipment is not properly working
3.	American Legion	X		X	Pool leaks, rusted grate
4.	Amos				Open electrical box behind the pool, fencing rusted and bent
5.	Anderson			X	Pool leaks, fencing does not close properly
6.	Athletic	X			Fencing needs to be extended to block spray park from pool
7.	Barry				Pump leaks
8.	Belfield	X		X	
9.	Bridesburg				Pool leaks
10.	Cherashore				Pool leaks, weak fence, leaning, bathrooms need attention
11.	Cione	X			
12.	Cruz	X	X		Loose ladder into pool
13.	Dendy				Loose ladder with rope tied to the ladder
14.	East Poplar	X			Fence with hole was covered up with wood, pump leaks and it has to be emptied into a bucket
15.	Feltonville	X			Rope tied to ladder and to the other side of the pool, water fountain does not work
16.	Finnegan		X		Loose ladder, chlorine pump needs to be replaced, cold and hot water in boys bathroom not regulated
17.	Fox Chase	X	X	X	
18.	Francisville	X	X		Spray park does not work
19.	Gathers	X	X		Vent not properly covered in boys bathroom
20.	Hancock	X	X		Padding around the sprinkler torn
21.	Heitzman	X			The bathroom facilities, Port-O-Potties need cleaned
22.	Houseman			X	


23.	Hunting Park			X	Clogged shower in the boys bathroom
24.	Jacobs	X	X		Cracks on the pool deck
25.	Kinsessing		X		Water handle missing
26.	Lackman			X	Signs missing
27.	Lee	X			Sink missing in the girls bathroom, short life guard staff
28.	Lincoln				Rust located in the diving area
29.	Lonnie			X	
30.	Mander	X	X		Electrical wire submerged in water in common area
31.	McVeigh				Missing signs, staff indicated they were requested three years ago
32.	Mill Creek	X		X	Short life guard staff, restroom toilets not working
33.	M.L. King	X		X	Electrical wire submerged in water
34.	Myers (Southwest)	X		X	Inside and outside drains overflow, needs new signs which were requested for years, and a water fountain needs to be removed
35.	Mitchell	X			
36.	Morris	X			Broken ladder
37.	Murphy				Ladder missing
38.	Northern Liberties	X			Cement missing in corner of pool covered up with a mat and bathroom door was missing in the boy's bathroom
39.	O'Connor				Broken shower head for rinsing when entering and exiting the pool
40.	Penrose	X		X	Surrounding wall of recreation center is cracked, uncovered vent in the boy's bathroom, rust on grates and pool overflows
41.	Piccoli				Pool leaks, needs security, cracked pavement
42.	Pickett			X	Loose ladder, missing arm on life guard stand
43.	Pleasant	X			
44.	Sayre				Rust falls into the pool from the ceiling
45.	Scanlon		X		


46.	Schmidt			X	Opening on side of fence
47.	Simpson				pH level testing machine broken
48.	Smith				Spray ground partially functioning with some equipment not working properly
49.	Stinger				New tent and umbrella needed, fencing needs repairs
50.	Tustin	X		X	Life guard stand and fencing needs repaired, water pump leaks into the adjacent street
51.	Ziehler	X			Grate at bottom of the pool only has one screw holding it in place
Total		25	10	15	


Table B – PH Testing Levels at Pools Visited

POOL NAME / LOCATION	PH TEST LEVEL
12TH & Cambria 2900-30 N. 11TH ST	7.1
39th & Olive 700-14 N. 39th St.	7
American Legion Playground 6201 Torresdale Ave	7
Amos Playground 1817-59 N. 16TH st	7
Anderson Rec Center 740 S. 17th st	7.1
Athletic Rec Center 1401-55 N. 26TH ST	8.1
Awbury Playground 6101 Ardleigh st	7.6
Baker Playground 5431-43 Lansdowne Ave.	7.9
Barry Playground 1800 Johnston St.	8.4
Belfield Rec Center 2109 W. Chew Ave.	7.2
Bridesburgh Rec Center 4625 Richmond st.	6.7
Carousel House Rec Center 1701 Belmont Ave.	7.6
Cherashore Playground 851-951 W. Olney Ave	7.1
Chew Playground 1800 Washington Ave.	7.1
Christy Rec Center 728 S. 55TH ST.	7.6
Cione Playground 2600 E. Aramingo Ave.	7.0
Cobbs Creek Rec Center 280 Cobbs Creek Parkway	7.3
Cohocksink Rec Center 2889 Cedar Ave.	7.1
Cruz Playground 1401 N. 06TH ST	7.1
Dendy Playground 1501-39 N. 10TH ST	6.6
East Poplar Playground 820 N. 08TH ST	6.9
Feltonville Rec Center 231-37 E. Wyoming Ave.	7.2
Ford Rec Center 609 Snyder Ave.	7.1
Fox Chase Rec Center 7901 Ridgeway st.	7.1
Francisville Playground 1737-39 Francis St.	7
Gathers Rec Center 2501-19 W. Diamond st.	6.9
Hancock Playground 147 Master st.	7.1
Heitzman Rec Center 2136 Castor Ave.	7.2
Hillside Rec Center 201 Fountain St.	7.3
Houseman Rec Center 5091 Summerdale Ave.	6.5
Hunting Park Rec Center 900 Hunting Park Ave.	7.1
J. Finnegan Playground 6801 Grovers Ave.	7.4
Jacobs Playground 4500 Linden Ave.	7
Jardel Rec Center 1400 Cottman Ave.	7.1
Kelly Pool 42nd & Parkside Ave.	7.5
Kendrick Rec Center 5822-24 Ridge Ave.	7.2

Color Code


Within Acceptable Range (7.2 to 7.8) 


Within .4 of Acceptable Range 

Greater than .4 of Acceptable Range 

POOL NAME / LOCATION	PH TEST LEVEL
King, ML Rec Center 2101-35 Cecil B. Moore Ave.	7.5
Kingsessing Rec Center 4901 Kingsessing Ave.	7.2
Lackman Playground 1101 Bartlett st.	7
Lawncrest Rec Center 6000 Rising Sun Ave.	7.4
Lee Cultural Center 4328 Haverford Ave.	7.7
Lincoln Rec Center Rowland Ave	7.4
Young, Lonnie Rec Center 1100 E. Chelton Ave.	7.3
Mander Playground 2140 N. 33rd st.	7.1
McVeigh Rec Cener 400-64 E. Ontario st.	6.6
Mill Creek 743-81 N. 48TH ST	7
Mitchell Playground 3700 Whitehall Lane	7.3
Moore, Cecil B. Rec Center 2020-50 W. Lehigh Ave.	7.2
Morris Estates Playground 1610 W. Chelton Ave.	8.3
Murphy Rec Center 300 Shunk st.	7.6
Myers, Francis J. Rec Center 5800 Chester Ave.	7.6
Myers, Max Playground 1601 Hellerman st	7.8
Northern Liberties 321 Fairmount Ave.	7.3
O'Conner Pool 26th & South Sts.	7
Penrose Playground 1101 W. Susquehanna Ave.	8.3
Piccoli playground 1501 E. Bristol st.	7.1
Pickett Rec Center 5700 Wayne Ave	7.5
Pleasant Playground 6720 Boyer St.	7
Ridgeway Pool 901-23 S. Broad St.	6.5
Sacks Playground 400 Washington Ave	7.1
Samuel Rec Center 3539 Gaul st.	7.0
Sayre Morris Rec Center 5835 Spruce st.	7.8
Scanlon Rec Center 1099 E. Venango St.	7.7
Schmit Playground 113-23 W. Ontario st.	6.9
Shepard Rec Center 5700 Haverford Ave.	7.5
Shuler Playground 3000 N. 27TH ST.	7.0
Simpson Rec Center 1010 Arrott St.	6.8
Stinger Square Rec Center 3200 Dickinson st.	7.5
Tustin Playground 5901-29 W. Columbia Ave.	6.9
Vare Rec Center 2600 Morris st	7.2
Vogt Rec Center 4131 Unruh Ave.	7.3
Waterloo Rec Center 2501 Waterloo st.	6.9
Ziehler 200-64 E Olney Ave.	6.8

Color Code

Within Acceptable Range (7.2 to 8.0) 

Within .4 of Acceptable Range 

Greater than .4 of Acceptable Range 