

May 1, 2017

**CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION ITEM**

**SUBJECT**

As a result of the 2017 Council retreat, members have requested a report from staff to provide the context of aquatics demand and existing aquatics services in Bellevue.

**STAFF CONTACTS**

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**POLICY ISSUES**

**Comprehensive Plan**

PA-3. Equitably distribute a variety of parks, community centers and other indoor and outdoor recreation facilities throughout the city.

PA-8. Develop partnerships with other public agencies and the private sector to provide parks, open space, and cultural and recreation facilities in the city.

PA-15. Encourage the development of facilities for special purpose recreation.

PA-25. Promote partnerships with public and private service providers to meet cultural, recreational, and social needs of the community.

**DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL**

**ACTION**

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**DIRECTION**

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**INFORMATION ONLY**

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Staff seeks feedback whether to further explore alternatives to improve aquatic facilities and programs or maintain the status quo.

**Key Questions**

- Should staff explore a regional approach that includes adjacent cities and possibly King County or explore a local approach (Bellevue only) and what scale and scope of aquatic facility should it be? Both options include the possibility of public, non-profit and for profit partners.
- Do the current and future states of aquatic facilities in Bellevue and the region warrant further dedication of city resources to precisely define alternative solutions to present to Council for action?
- At the regional level, what should Bellevue's role be in developing regional alternatives and participation in potential solutions?
- Is the Council open to considering both private and public partnerships? What would be the principles and fiscal parameters for such a partnership?
- Is the Council willing to consider new funding sources such as a public vote?
- What alternative/s should be the focus of further study?

**BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS**

In 2006, the City was approached by a local non-profit organization, Swimming Pools for Leisure, Active Sports, and Health (SPLASH), whose mission it was to advocate for the development of aquatic facilities to meet the needs of the region. SPLASH was seeking to bring together community partners to plan, construct, and operate a multi-purpose aquatic complex for all ages, ranges of health, level of experiences, and recreational and athletic interests. As part of the 2007-08 budget, Council approved funding to complete a feasibility study for a new aquatic facility.

The 2009 study (Attachment A) was intended to assist the City Council in reaching a decision, and was considered a starting point for further exploration of the concept of a major aquatic facility in Bellevue. The study: 1) explored a range of facility options with estimated financial performance; 2) analyzed the current aquatic market; 3) conducted a preliminary site analysis; and 4) explored a range of financing options. An extensive public outreach effort included stakeholder meetings, focus groups and a public interest survey.

The study was presented to Council in March 2009. As a result of the presentation, Council expressed general support for a major aquatic facility and directed staff to explore regional partnerships with adjacent cities and King County. Staff reported back to Council in early 2010, that after a thorough review, neighboring cities were not ready to pursue a partnership at that time. Since 2010, the City Council has not yet determined if, or to what extent, it supports the development of an aquatic center.

#### The State of Aquatics in the Area

In Bellevue, community aquatics has been provided by one public Forward Thrust pool (now Bellevue Aquatic Center), eight private neighborhood swimming pools, two non-profit fitness facility pools, and four private fitness facility pools. These facilities were built in the 1950's through the 1970's. They are in various conditions with some in need of significant renovation or replacement. When these facilities were built, Bellevue's population was less than 50,000. Today, Bellevue's population is approximately 139,400 and no new aquatic facilities have been added.

Some of the significant findings of the 2009 study are listed below:

- Market analysis, stakeholder feedback, focus groups, and the public interest survey recognized the need for additional aquatic facilities to serve Bellevue and the Eastside.
- The local competitive swimming community is very active. In 2009, 4,277 families were members of private outdoor pools in Bellevue, and 3,640 swimmers participated in 26 Eastside swim clubs.
- Most existing facility conditions are outdated and do not serve the area's aquatic needs well; plans for repairs or replacement present significant challenges and increase the possibility of fewer usable facilities going forward.
- Most area high schools, including those in Bellevue, do not have their own pools, and rely on other aquatic facilities to serve their competitive swim programs, requiring students to travel long distances for meets and practices.
- Growth in many local aquatics organizations/programs is constrained due to a lack of pool time and space. The demand is increasing.
- This area, and the State of Washington in general, has been slow to respond to a number of national industry trends in the delivery of aquatic services, which include:
  - the advent of the leisure pool, which incorporates a variety of recreational amenities into the aquatic experience, focusing on children and families;

- the increased importance of the raised-temperature therapy pool for relaxation, socialization, and rehabilitation; and
- the popularity of full-service recreational center that includes an aquatics component along with other amenities such as sports, fitness, and other community-based programs.

Who are the customers? The aquatic community today consists of a wide variety of user types with widely differing facility requirements. Some segments require very specific sizes, shapes, and water temperatures, while others can adapt to many environments:

- Leisure/recreation – provides the widest array of facility options that include zero-depth entry, water slides, seating area, decks, and play apparatus.
- Instructional and fitness – includes learn-to-swim and lifesaving programs, fitness classes, and lap swimming. Requires deeper (4'-5') water and generous deck space for instruction. Large amount of open water with lap lanes preferred.
- Therapy/rehabilitation – requires warm, shallow water and easy access.
- Competitive programs – swimming, diving, and water polo each require specific length, width, depth, and water temperature, and are often incompatible with other aquatic activities. Depending on the level of competition, spectator seating may be required.

Public efforts in the region since 2009 include the following. It should be noted, however, that these facilities do not serve Bellevue or the Eastside.

- Snohomish Aquatic Center – School District-owned and operated, built on School District land (2008 Bond). They were planning to partner with the YMCA for operations but the partnership dissolved shortly before opening.
- Lynnwood Recreation Center & Pool – City-owned and operated, \$25M- 2010. Renovation/construction project funded by Councilmanic Bonds. Added a leisure pool, weight room, offices, and renovated the community center.
- Sammamish Community and Aquatic Center – City-owned and YMCA operated. Total cost \$33.8M, City provided property + \$25M to construct, YMCA- \$5M to construct, YMCA/City Operating Agreement- 25-year lease to operate and maintain.
- City of Seattle - Rainier Beach Community Center & Pool – City-owned and operated, \$25 M, Leisure pool and community center.

The only Eastside effort since 2009 was the City of Kirkland's 2015 ballot measure to construct a multi-use community center/pool facility which failed in a public vote.

### Site Analysis

The 2009 study did not recommend a specific site for an aquatic center, but compared the merits of candidate locations based on criteria deemed important to the success of an aquatic facility. Seven locations were analyzed, including four City-owned properties, one King County-owned property, and two other areas. Today, some of these site options may no longer be available and no site presently has been identified for any future options. Further review of site options would have to take place if Council wishes to proceed.

### Two Approaches

#### a. Regional

It is clear through the 2009 study, that the limited number of aquatic facilities and impacts of their declining conditions are a regional problem. The cities of Bellevue, Redmond and Kirkland and King County have recently been exploring the idea of developing a set of aquatics facilities that serve the needs of the Eastside as a whole versus each agency pursuing

its needs individually. This approach would require a joint funding, operating, and governance structure. Several mechanisms could be reviewed; Interlocal Agreements, Metropolitan Park District, Public Facilities District.

b. Bellevue

With a population of 139,400, Bellevue's aquatic needs are as similar and diverse as the regional needs. Bellevue could support development of aquatic facilities that would be on the scale and scope similar to a regional facility. The public outreach, funding, location, and partnership assessment process would be a similar process to that of a regional effort.

**Partnership & Financing Options**

To continue actively pursuing aquatic facility solutions, the City will need to assume a leadership role in support of a concept and be willing to make certain commitments such as:

1. Support of a voter initiative on either a local or regional level.
2. Explore partnerships. Recent renewed interest in aquatics facilities has resulted in:
  - Discussions with the cities of Redmond, Kirkland and King County. King County has allocated \$2 million to study the feasibility of enhancing aquatics on the Eastside.
  - The YMCA has mentioned an interest in redevelopment of their Bel-Red YMCA site.
  - Bellevue College recently adopted a campus master plan that identifies a possible community partnership.
  - The interest of school districts serving the Eastside should be revisited.
  - Depending on the components, other partnerships that could be explored are the health care industry and potential corporate sponsorships.

**OPTIONS**

N/A

**NEXT STEPS**

1. Prepare documentation for future direction based on the following options:
  - a. Regional Approach - Further evaluate a regional aquatics partnership with the cities of Redmond, Kirkland and King County to include a set of new aquatic facilities to serve geographic areas on the Eastside.
  - b. Bellevue Approach - Further evaluate a Bellevue option that would include the full range of aquatic market segments.

**RECOMMENDATION**

N/A

**ATTACHMENT**

A. Executive Summary- 2009 Bellevue Aquatic Center Final Feasibility Study

**AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL DOCUMENT LIBRARY**

Final Draft – Bellevue Aquatic Center Feasibility Study