

**CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION**

Update on the Aquatic Center Feasibility Study

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**DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL****INFORMATION  
ONLY**

Staff seeks to update Council on the progress to date, including the status of potential partnerships and a summary of future policy and financial decisions related to the Aquatics Center Feasibility Study, should the City decide to proceed with a new aquatic center. Staff seeks feedback on the information being developed and next steps to inform future Council decisions.

**RECOMMENDATION**

N/A

**BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS**

Built in 1970, the existing Bellevue Aquatic Center has served Bellevue's 140,000 residents for nearly 50 years, but its age and capacity are inadequate to meet current and future demand for aquatic programming in Bellevue. The City is currently evaluating alternatives and partnership opportunities to develop a new, year-round aquatic facility that considers the full-range of activity and demographic market segments associated with contemporary, state-of-the-art aquatic facilities (Attachment A).

As part of the 2007-2008 budget, Council approved funding to complete a feasibility study for a new aquatic facility. 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. A public outreach effort included stakeholder meetings, focus groups, and a public interest survey.

The study was presented to Council in March 2009. Council expressed support for a high profile, comprehensive aquatic facility (Option D: Regional Aquatic Center) and directed staff to explore regional partnerships with adjacent cities, school districts, and King County. Staff reported back to Council in early 2010 that, after a thorough review, these potential partners were not prepared to pursue a project at that time. Because of the general lack of partner interest coupled with the severe impacts of the recession, Bellevue ceased further exploration of aquatics alternatives.

Since 2010, the cities of Redmond and Kirkland have been independently exploring aquatics alternatives. In 2015, the City of Kirkland placed an aquatic center ballot measure before voters that ultimately failed. The City of Redmond recently completed a comprehensive public recreation facilities study.

In 2017, King County Parks convened a process to explore the viability of a regional approach for filling the aquatic facilities gap on the Eastside. King County Councilmember Claudia Balducci secured an appropriation of \$2M to work toward a regional solution. This process is not complete and all parties

continue to meet.

On May 1, 2017, staff presented the aquatics issue to Council and were directed to continue to evaluate both a regional alternative and a Bellevue option. This work would also include exploring additional public/private partnerships and identifying potential locations.

On May 21, 2018, the City Council approved a Resolution authorizing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between King County and the cities of Bellevue, Kirkland, and Redmond to continue exploring the feasibility of a regional approach to developing aquatics facilities and to coordinate on a public aquatics assessment.

On November 19, 2018, the City Council approved a Resolution authorizing a professional services agreement with ARC Architects to provide technical evaluation and support for an Aquatics Center Feasibility Study Update for the City of Bellevue. The study will develop more precise and updated technical information to assist the City in determining whether, and to what extent, the City wishes to proceed with a new aquatic center, including project scale and scope, estimated costs, site feasibility, financing and operational plan, and public outreach and communications.

An aquatics facility addresses several strategic target areas of Council's adopted vision: great places where you want to be, economic development, regional leadership, and high quality built and natural environment. City Council Vision Priority 2018-2020 states that following the staff report, determine whether to explore the possibility of a regional aquatic center in Bellevue (Priority #13).

### **Bellevue Partnership Interests**

Partnerships to build and operate an aquatic facility have been encouraged with private non-profit organizations, private for-profit companies, and other public agencies who share common goals and objectives. The viability of partnerships can be evaluated based on whether they enhance the likelihood of meeting the current and future demand for aquatic facilities and programs. Partnerships should be consistent with and support the underlying principle of universal public access. Program capacity should be distributed equitably, and fee structures should not pose a barrier to public participation. Staff has explored potential partnerships with the following groups and additional work in this area remains necessary:

- The Bellevue School District (BSD) previously submitted a letter of interest to the City of Bellevue to meet the needs of their student athletes. It is expected that capital contributions would come through a future Bellevue School District voter initiative, and the District is in the early stages of gathering community input on long-term capital funding needs.
- Bellevue College has expressed an interest in the possibility of siting an aquatic facility on their campus as a means of enhancing student services and exploring potential curriculum programs around health and wellness. The City has been asked to discuss the Aquatic Center Feasibility Study and potential college interests and participation in the study at the Bellevue College Board of Trustees meeting on April 24.
- The City remains open and interested in pursuing public-private partnerships and attracting corporate sponsorships that directly advance the goal of an Aquatic Center. There have been preliminary discussions with several health care providers exploring potential partnerships for the

warm water therapy pool and wellness/fitness/rehabilitation components of a comprehensive aquatic center. Some initial feedback suggests that there needs to be more specificity about the scale, scope, and location of an aquatic center and clarity about the process and timing for public investments.

- The cities of Kirkland, Redmond, Bellevue, and King County have continued to meet to share respective interests and explore regional partnership opportunities. The regional group is in the process of identifying potential sites for multiple facilities and more precisely defining what aquatic elements would be featured in each site. It is expected that the King County report will be completed before the end of 2019.
- Staff anticipates strong interest from national, state, and regional competitive aquatics organizations. It is believed that this project advocacy might generate additional partnership opportunities beyond those described above.

### **Bellevue Feasibility Study Update**

The City of Bellevue is planning a contemporary, state-of-the-art health and wellness facility that meets the aquatics needs of the community and potential partner groups. This facility will not only meet core aquatics needs but will be a place that promotes community health and wellness through medically integrated fitness. The facility will be culturally inclusive, operationally sustainable, and a vibrant hub for the entire community. The facility will serve the full range of fitness, recreation, health, wellness, and competitive programs for all ages, abilities, and backgrounds. This includes a 50-meter pool with movable bulkheads, deep water, therapy/wellness, lesson program pool, and leisure pool. This is essentially the regional model described in 2009, updated to reflect contemporary needs and best practice recommendations of the consultants and in concert with the needs of partners. Key issues include the extent of dry-side features and specific needs of partners which were not fully developed in the 2009 study. The overall goal is to develop an optimal mix of features that meets program needs while balancing operating and capital investments.

This study will develop more precise information necessary to assist Council in determining whether, and under what circumstances, to proceed with an Aquatic Center, and includes the following tasks:

- Finalize the scale and scope of the program elements and prepare a schematic drawing and architectural rendering.
- Update the estimated capital costs by program element as well as by identification of potential cost recovery strategies.
- Update the estimated operating cost performance by program element.
- Conduct a site feasibility analysis for several sites.
- Develop a financing and operational plan that could include public/private/nonprofit partnerships.
- Prepare communication tools and conduct a public outreach meeting and presentation.
- Provide information on how existing pools and aquatic facilities in the region may be impacted by a new aquatics center.

ARC Architects is the prime consultant for the City's feasibility update and was a key member of the team that helped the City of Bellevue and SPLASH with the 2009 study. ARC Architects is well known

for recreation and community facilities throughout the region having completed more than 50 community center programming and design projects. ARC has compiled a strong team with extensive experience in the nuances of aquatic, community, and student centers both regionally and nationally including:

- Ballard\*King (B\*K) – with over 20 years of experience, B\*K has developed numerous aquatic feasibility studies for communities, and colleges/universities around the country. B\*K has first-hand experience working in our region and is fluent in national trends. They have a strong track record for successful cost recovery, operating cost, and business planning studies.
- Aquatic Design Group (ADG) – with a national reputation for aquatics facilities that are program-rich, creative, and buildable (both physically and economically), ADG’s collaborative approach will benefit the process to ensure that multiple aquatic programs and synergies are explored.
- The ARC team also includes local firms that will provide civil engineering, transportation engineering, and cost estimating services.

Staff is also working closely with SplashForward, a community advocacy group and stakeholder that provides a deep knowledge and experience of the aquatics landscape. SplashForward has also secured the services of the Isaac Sports Group (ISG). ISG has knowledge and experience in competitive swimming, managing aquatic programs and facilities, business and marketing, program development, operational sustainability and partnership development.

### **Site Needs/Preferred Locations**

Based on the 2009 Bellevue study, approximately four to seven acres are needed to develop a comprehensive aquatic facility. This estimate ranges from approximately four acres with structured parking to seven acres with surface parking. The scope of the Bellevue Aquatic Center Feasibility Study Update includes site feasibility analysis for several sites including:

- Bellevue College Campus—the Bellevue College updated master plan reserved space for a community partnership and college officials have indicated a willingness to explore this idea further.
- Grand Connection—refers to City-owned property (Lincoln Center) along the Grand Connection and as part of the Wilburton commercial area redevelopment.
- Marymoor Park—refers to the larger County regional park and the Bellevue Utilities site which contains three ballfields. Use of the Bellevue Utilities site would require fair market value compensation.
- Airfield Park (formerly Eastgate Area Property)—a City-owned park parcel whose development was included in the 2008 Bellevue Parks & Natural Areas Levy. The City is currently working toward a master plan including an athletic complex and general outdoor recreation facilities.

The above sites were previously evaluated in the 2009 study or specifically discussed during City Council presentations on an Aquatic Center. Sites were evaluated for the following criteria: location to population, relationship to other facilities, convenience, site cost and ownership, size and capacity for expansion, zoning/land use, constructability, utilities availability, and partnership potential. Kirkland, Redmond, and King County are also in the process of identifying other potential sites that would work either for their own needs or in collaboration on a regional approach. The Bellevue Feasibility Study

Update remains open to considering additional sites that are identified over the next several months, including sites identified by the City or the interests of one of the partner groups.

**Future Decisions/Next Steps**

| Future Council Decisions:            | Information Being Developed:   |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Scale and Scope of Facility          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capital and Operating costs by program element</li> <li>• Schematic drawings and architectural renderings</li> <li>• Public Outreach and Market Analysis</li> </ul>                               |
| Preferred Location                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyze locations identified using scoring matrix of key factors</li> </ul>   |
| Operating Model/Governance Structure | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review other facilities/best practices and develop proposed operational plan</li> <li>• Business Points/Partnership Agreements</li> <li>• Continue to participate in KC Regional Study</li> </ul> |
| Funding Mechanisms                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment of Financial Sustainability</li> <li>• Review potential funding mix including partnerships, voter initiatives</li> <li>• King County Park Levy</li> </ul>                              |

**Next Steps:**

- Review Aquatic Center Preliminary Program/Design/Financials (September-October 2019)
- Review Final Study (December-January 2020)
- Additional work on Partnership Agreements, Governance Structure, and Funding Mix (To Be Determined based on specific interests and timelines of partner groups)

**POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS**

**Policy Impact**

Comprehensive Plan: Parks, Recreation & Open Space Element

- 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.

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environment. City Council Vision Priority 2018-2020 states that following the staff report, determine whether to explore the possibility of a regional aquatic center in Bellevue (Priority #13).

**Fiscal Impact**

Funding for the Bellevue Aquatics Center Feasibility Study Update and the King County Regional MOU is included in CIP Plan No. G-114, Regional Aquatic Center Study, in the adopted 2019-2025 CIP Plan.

**OPTIONS**

N/A

**ATTACHMENTS & AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS**

- A. Bellevue Aquatic Center Concepts
- B. Seattle Times article
- C. CIP Project Description

**AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY**

2009 Bellevue Aquatic Center Feasibility Study