

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION

Update on the Aquatics Center Feasibility Study including recommendations for a preferred concept plan and site, partnership opportunities and direction on next steps.

Michael Shiosaki, Director, 452-5377

Pam Fehrman, Park Planning & Development Manager, 452-4326

Ken Kroeger, Project Manager, 452-4624

Parks & Community Services

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL

DIRECTION

Staff will update Council on the Bellevue Aquatic Center Feasibility Study, including a preferred concept plan and site, and partnership opportunities. Staff seeks direction on next steps.

RECOMMENDATION

Direct staff to develop a Memorandum of Understanding to partner with SplashForward for fundraising efforts and to continue moving the project forward using the Bellevue Airfield Park as the preferred site with the preferred concept plan, including conducting SEPA environmental review and updating the master plan for Bellevue Airfield Park through a community engagement process.

BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS

The existing Bellevue Aquatic Center (Odle Pool) has served Bellevue's 140,000 residents for over 50 years, and no longer meets current or future demand for aquatics in Bellevue. The City conducted a Feasibility Study to evaluate the opportunities for the development a new aquatic facility that considers a full range of activities associated with contemporary, state-of-the-art centers.

Technical evaluations for a new Bellevue Aquatic Center (BAC) began in November 2018 and the findings of the Aquatics Feasibility study were presented at Council on August 3, 2020. Additionally, the Council received a Feasibility Study authored by SplashForward (SF) a non-profit aquatic advocacy organization. SF's mission is to provide our community with an inclusive year-round aquatic health and wellness facility with affordable access to aquatic programming so that everyone can be safe in the water, drownings are prevented, community connections fostered, and the community can enjoy a lifetime of healthy lifestyle opportunities.

Although there are some differences in the feasibility reports, both studies are intended to assist the City in determining whether to proceed with a new aquatics center (BAC) including project scale and scope, estimated capital and operating costs, site analysis, financing, and operational options.

At the August 3, 2020, meeting Council unanimously supported a new BAC and desired that the project maintains forward momentum. Council directed Staff to continue work to:

1. Develop an Aquatic Facility Recommended Concept Plan;
2. Continue identifying public/private partnership opportunities;

3. Recommended a site; and
4. Identify costs to support next steps.

Recommended Concept Plan

City staff and SF have worked together to develop a single recommended concept plan (Attachment A). Staff and SF are recommending as a preferred alternative an approximate 130,000 square foot, state-of-the-art facility that meets the aquatics needs of the Bellevue community, potential partner groups, and that will be a center that promotes community health and wellness. The facility would serve the full range of fitness, recreation, health and wellness, as well as competitive aquatics programs for all ages, range of abilities, and backgrounds. Key program elements include a 50-meter pool with movable bulkheads, separate deep-water tank, therapy/wellness pool, a lesson/program pool, and leisure pool amenities. Dry side spaces are included to support both the aquatic programming and community use including, but not limited to: fitness spaces, community use rooms, lockers, lobby, spectator seating; storage, concessions, staff offices, maintenance space, and other flexible use spaces. This Plan and future reports and development work will continue to evaluate and address equitable access, environmental stewardship, and the potential for partnerships.

Partnership Interests

Pursuing partnerships and corporate sponsors to advance the goal of the BAC project will benefit the project. Partnerships to build and operate an aquatic facility have been encouraged with both private and public agencies who share common interests. Partnership development will require working with following groups:

- The Bellevue School District (BSD) continues to support the City's endeavor to develop the BAC to help meet the needs of their competitive aquatics programs and is exploring capital funding options.
- Several area health care providers have suggested the need for more specificity about the scale, scope, timing, and location of a facility before discussing potential partnerships or contributions.
- Kirkland, Redmond, and King County have continued to share respective interests and explore regional partnership opportunities. This includes applying for a currently available King County Parks Aquatic Facility planning grant.
- There is increasing interest from competitive aquatics organizations in a new aquatic center. This project advocacy may generate additional partnership opportunities and contributions.

Recommended Fundraising Partnership

City staff and SF have worked to develop a single recommended concept plan, and have also worked to communicate aquatic needs, concepts, and engage potential funding partners. This community advocacy group and stakeholders worked closely with staff providing substantial contributions with their aquatic knowledge, research, and experience. Further, SF has been a recipient of an Amazon Grant of \$100,000 to support aquatic needs.

Staff is recommending a Memorandum of Understanding with SF to help assess fundraising potential and support the City's future efforts towards securing public funds for the construction of the new BAC. SF is committed to conducting a fundraising effort, with the initial efforts to be focused on a fundraising feasibility report and marketing & fundraising plan.

Recommended Site Location

Recognizing the primary importance of locating a site for the new BAC, Council directed staff to evaluate and recommend a preferred site. Furthermore, Council eliminated from further consideration two identified site options in the 2020 Feasibility Report at City owned parcels at Marymoor Park and Lincoln Center, preferring the new aquatic facility be sited at Bellevue College, Bellevue Airfield Park, or another yet to be identified site within Bellevue city limits.

Based on the 2020 Feasibility study, approximately 10 to 11 acres are needed to develop a comprehensive aquatic facility. Available acquisition property opportunities large enough to support an Aquatic Facility have been regularly reviewed. The cost of property and limited parcels on the market of that size have made an option that includes acquisition of a new site the costliest and least preferred option.

Staff has met with Bellevue College staff on a regular basis throughout the past year. The Bellevue College site offers partnership opportunities, access, and a prominent location just off I-90 that is well served by public transportation. Additional college program requirements of a gym and structured parking garage add an estimated \$14 million in additional capital costs, as well as additional operation and maintenance costs to develop on the College campus compared to Bellevue Airfield Park.

Therefore, Staff is recommending advancing the City-owned 27-acre Bellevue Airfield Park as the preferred alternative to be used in the SEPA process for the new BAC site. The site is sufficiently large enough to accommodate the recommended concept plan and parking can be met in a combination of new on-site parking and existing parking agreements with adjacent properties. Integrating the BAC into Bellevue Airfield Park development could offer expanded complementary outdoor recreation opportunities. There is good access from I-90, presenting limited traffic impacts to adjacent neighborhoods and there are adequate public transit services in the area. Work with our design and engineering teams have helped refine costs associated with landfill development, making the Bellevue Airfield Park site the most economically feasible.

Cost Estimate Update

Work to inform estimated landfill and site development costs at Bellevue Airfield Park has been conducted by our design team. The updated total project cost for the Recommended Concept Plan (in 2021 dollars) is estimated to be \$125M at Bellevue Airfield Park. These costs do not include Odle Pool renovation costs or park development beyond the Bellevue Aquatic Center. These costs include the estimated capital construction costs of approximately \$90M. As the project moves forward, it is important to note that the anticipated construction inflation per year is projected to be 5 percent annually based on current trends. If the project were to begin construction in 2026 the total project cost would be estimated to be \$155M.

Several different funding sources will likely be needed for the BAC to become a reality. While a partnership and final funding recommendations are unknown currently, the 2020 Feasibility Study Appendix H provides a high-level overview. Possible funding sources, include voter initiatives, City tax options, grants, and alternative funding approaches such as partnership contributions, and fundraising.

Next Steps

The incremental refinement of partnership development, building program, project design and

estimated costs are needed. The recommended next steps to help inform City Council's deliberations towards determining whether, and under what circumstances to proceed are:

- Formalize a partnership agreement with SF via a Memorandum of Understanding to initiate an Aquatic Facility Fundraising Feasibility Study and Fundraising Plan;
- Initiate a Bellevue Airfield Park Master Plan update to include an aquatic facility;
- Enter into architectural and engineering professional services contracts, such as architectural, engineering, and environmental, to support the master plan update;
- Refine financing and operational plans that could include public/private/nonprofit partnerships;
- Develop partnership interests and agreements, governance structure, and funding mix to be determined based on specific interests and timelines of partner groups;
- Apply for planning grant funds including the King County Parks Aquatic Facility Grant Funding; and
- Identify funding sources to support the master planning update that are estimated at \$750k. Staff are currently reviewing options for funding this work.

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.

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. The City Council Vision Priority 2018-2020 also identifies determining "whether to explore the possibility of a regional aquatic center in Bellevue" as Priority #13 on the list of 3-Year Priorities.

Fiscal Impact

Funds needed to support the master planning update that are estimated at \$750k. Staff are currently reviewing options for funding this work.

OPTIONS

1. Direct staff to develop a Memorandum of Understanding to partner with SplashForward for fundraising efforts and to continue moving the project forward using the Bellevue Airfield Park as the preferred site, including conducting SEPA environmental review and updating the master plan for Bellevue Airfield Park through a community engagement process.
2. Provide alternative direction to staff.

ATTACHMENTS & AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS

A. Aquatic Recommended Concept Plan

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY

2020 Bellevue Aquatic Center Feasibility Study