



Agenda Report

DATE: OCTOBER 15, 2024

TO: CITY COUNCIL

FROM: PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
ARTS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

SUBJECT: NEW AQUATIC AND COMMUNITY CENTER AT HEATHER FARM PARK:
DESIGN DEVELOPMENT PRESENTATION PACKAGE

STATEMENT OF ISSUE:

The replacement of the existing swim center and community center at Heather Farm Park with a new combined facility is a City Council priority. Staff is seeking Council direction on the updated Design Development Presentation Package, and this meeting will focus on the recommended options of exterior building materials, landscape plan and planting palette, recreational pool play structure, and updated site plan for the new facility.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Provide direction to staff on the Heather Farm Aquatic and Community Center Design Development Package elements requiring Council decisions necessary to move the project into the construction documentation phase:

- Updated Project Site Plan
- Exterior Building Materials Palette
- Landscape Planting Palette and Plan
- Recreational Pool Play Structure

BACKGROUND:

Project Initiation

The Heather Farm Aquatic and Community Center project was initiated in June 2023 after the conclusion of the first phases of the Your Parks, Your Future (YPYF) project in February 2023 and following passage of Measure O, a ten-year, ½ cent sales tax, that provides funding for several community programs and improvements, including this project.

Project Assumptions and Principles

A set of project assumptions and principles were developed to guide the design of the future facility and accepted by Council on September 19, 2023, and are shown in Attachment A. These were prepared based on input from Council at the July 18, 2023 meeting and the principles established during the development of the Conceptual Site Plan, at the site of the current community center, as approved by Council in February 2023.

Overall Project Timeline

Below is a summary of the estimated timeline for the design and construction of the Heather Farm Park facility:

1. ***Design Process, Community Engagement & CEQA Documentation - September 2023 to April 2025:*** This phase of the work includes the creation of detailed design documents, such as landscape plans, floor plans, pool plans, building elevations and materials selection, as well as the required environmental documents.
2. ***Construction – Fall 2025- 2027:*** The existing Community Center will be demolished for the new combined facility to be built at that site, the cement pond will be modified to provide additional space for the new facility and the Clarke Swim Center is projected to remain open to the public until construction is complete.

Schematic Design Presentation Package

On February 7, 2023, City Council gave direction to proceed with the design and construction of the combined Aquatics and Community Center facility at the existing community center site in Heather Farm Park. The design phase of the project began in September 2023 and is expected to be completed in April 2025. The first step in the design phase was the preparation of the schematic design presentation package, which consisted of two building floor plan schemes, a site plan, and perspective illustrations.

Design Review Commission Input

The Design Review Commission (DRC) met on January 17, 2024, and provided comments on the schematic designs to the project team, and comments were taken into consideration at the design development phase, as shown below.

Item	Feedback	Changes Made During Design Development
Building Site Plan	Preference was expressed for the building scheme with an orientation toward the pond.	The building site plan was developed further.
Roof Design	Comments were made regarding the standing seam roof type and configuration of the roof lines.	The roof massing was further developed.
Onsite Traffic Circulation	Concerns were expressed regarding the queuing and the drop off area.	The queuing, drop off and parking areas were studied by a third-party traffic engineer and the City's traffic

		engineers, and modifications were made to the schematic design, including the use of angled parking and the incorporation of current ADA drop off requirements.
Parking	It was suggested that the parking spaces along the north entrance of the site be changed to angled parking to help reduce congestion while entering the site.	Angled parking spaces have been integrated into the plan to improve traffic flow and alleviate congestion at the site entrance.
Pool Configuration	Suggestion to partner with the Walnut Creek Aquatic Foundation to refine suggestions for the schematic design of the pools.	Staff worked with the Walnut Creek Aquatics Foundation and received input on, and support for, the current pool design configuration.
Exterior Surface	It was suggested that utilizing a mix of more practical materials for exterior surfaces would be more economical and easier to maintain.	An exterior building materials palette was developed, which includes options for economical and more easily maintainable materials.
Exposed Ceiling and High Windows	It was suggested that more permanent shade features be implemented to help reduce the impacts of sun exposure.	Additional shading structures have been incorporated into the current design.

Park, Recreation, and Open Space Commission Input

The Park, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Commission met on January 9 and February 5, 2024 and provided comments on the schematic designs to the project team and comments were taken into consideration at the design development phase, as shown below.

Item	Feedback	Changes Made During Design Development
Storage	Minimal storage space in relation to facility size	Additional storage areas have been incorporated into both the community center and aquatics areas of the current design.
Shading Structures	It was suggested that more permanent shade features be implemented to help reduce the impacts of sun exposure.	Additional shading structures have been incorporated into the current facility design.

Windows	A comment was made regarding whether the windows of the community center would have UV protection/shades to allow for non-disruptive sun exposure and minimize reflections from the lake.	Windows all have operable shades, and additionally, large, and/or high window expanses
Flagpole and Bike Racks	It was suggested to designate a location for a flagpole, along with nearby spots for bike racks.	Locations for a flagpole and bike racks have been incorporated into the design.
Low Permanent Fencing	It was recommended to install an aesthetically pleasing, low permanent fence around the pond to help control and mitigate issues caused by the geese.	Fencing around the pond has been incorporated into the design.
Recreational Pool	Comments were made about modifying the recreational pool to have deeper water.	The recreational pool has been expanded and deepened to accommodate swim team needs and the optional bulkhead was removed from the 50M pool to provide funds for this change.
Water Depth	A comment was made regarding deep water in both pools being a need for the Aquanuts artistic swim team and an integral part of introducing a variety of different aquatic recreation activities to the community.	The recreational pool has been expanded and deepened to accommodate swim team needs and the optional bulkhead was removed from the 50 meter pool to provide funds for this change.
Location of Aquatic Changing Rooms	It was suggested that the aquatic changing rooms be relocated to a more accessible and visible location for easier access and convenience to patrons entering the facility.	The aquatics changing rooms were relocated near the facility entrance.
Balance of Community Pool Needs	Suggestion to partner with the Walnut Creek Aquatic Foundation to refine plans for the schematic design of the pools.	Staff partnered with the Walnut Creek Aquatic Foundation to finalize the schematic design for the pools and deck area.

City Council Direction

During three City Council meetings beginning in February and concluding in April 2024, Council provided direction on the following elements of the schematic design package: the site plan, preferred building scheme, architectural style of the building, layout, specifications of the two pools, and the outdoor event and gathering spaces. More specifically, Council directed staff to pursue the following:

- Design building Site Plan Scheme A, with roof enhancements to be more artistic, expressive, and symmetrical.
- Implement the schematic design package, as presented on April 16, 2024, and supported by the Walnut Creek Foundation, for the new aquatic facility at Heather Farm Park.
- Build the community center to LEED Silver equivalent (as opposed to getting LEED USGBC certification) with support for future battery storage add-on features.
- Upgrade the new building to an operational Emergency Operations Center (EOC) capability.
- Transition the project into design development phase.

DISCUSSION:

A. Community Feedback

Following City Council's April 2024 direction, staff and the project team started implementing preliminary design development concepts. During the design development phase and continuing the City's commitment to seek public input, the team sought feedback from key stakeholders as well as public meetings.

Stakeholder Feedback on Preliminary Design Development Concepts

The project team met with the following key stakeholders at two separate meetings in July 2024 to share and receive feedback on the updated site plans for the community center and aquatic facility, proposed building materials, and proposed landscape plan and planting palette. The following is a summary of the stakeholder input on the preliminary design development concepts:

Environmental Focus Group:

- The Gardens at Heather Farm Park
- Mt. Diablo Audubon Society / Bird Alliance
- Open Space Foundation
- Friends of the Creek

The environmental focus group expressed interest in design elements such as the planting palette and considerations for how the design will impact the natural environment and wildlife. The group raised concerns regarding the need for incorporating solar panels and bird-safe glass at the facility. Additionally, they highlighted issues related to the tree selection within the landscape palette, provided a list of preferred landscaping materials and inquired about strategies to mitigate potential noise from the pool deck. They also provided a list of suggested landscaping materials, including an emphasis on natives.

The impact of this project on urban forestry involves both the removal of existing trees and the planting of new ones. Specifically, the construction of the new aquatic and community center on a site that currently includes open park land will result in the necessary removal of approximately 120 trees. To offset this, the project is estimated to plant approximately 60 new trees as part of the landscaping improvements around the new facilities. Additionally, the City will be mitigating the reduction in trees by enhancing Heather Farm Park with 140 more native trees, including Valley Oaks, Live Oaks, Buckeyes, and Willows, for a total net increase of 80 trees. The City will prioritize sourcing these native plants from local nurseries, and this tree plan has been shared with the Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation.

Aquatics Focus Group:

- Walnut Creek Aquatic Foundation
- Walnut Creek Aquanuts, Masters, Aquabears and Swim Club

The aquatics focus group expressed interest in shade placement, seating arrangements, and amenities like power supply and Wi-Fi availability on the pool deck to support large community events. The group was pleased with the overall design and provided feedback on how the new facility can best accommodate existing events like Aquanuts shows and the All-City swim meet.

B. Commissioner Feedback

1. Design Review Commission Feedback on Preliminary Design Development Concepts

The DRC met on September 4, 2024 and provided comments on the design development presentation package:

- Clarity of Architectural Intent: It was recommended that exterior materials be applied rigorously to clarify and reinforce the design intent that underpins the articulation of the program volumes.
- Material Costs: Support was expressed for scaling back on expensive materials to offer a chance to allocate resources more effectively, such as opting for metal panels instead of shingle roofing.
- Preference Towards Exterior Materials Palette A: The Commission expressed a preference for Palette A, noting that the lighter materials in Palette B are likely to cause uncomfortable glare by reflecting too much light, and be more susceptible to showing wear and tear over time.
- Planting Palette: It was recommended that the project team explore the inclusion of more native plant/tree options in the planting palette, with a particular focus on incorporating native trees where possible.
- Expressivity Within Materials: A suggestion was made to use more distinctive and expressive materials already found with the materials palette in areas that are frequently visited and interacted with.

- LEED Rating: Committing to a LEED Silver equivalency was emphasized to ensure that our design adheres to rigorous sustainability and energy efficiency standards.
- Site Plan: Received feedback that the recent improvements to the aquatics area are excellent, with a strong connection between the building, entry, gathering spaces, pond, and playground, and an appreciation for the path around the pond and the public overlooks.

2. Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Commission Feedback on Preliminary Design Development Concepts

The PROS Commission met on September 9, 2024 and provided the following comments on the designs:

- Recreational Pool Play Structure: The commission expressed dissatisfaction with the barnyard aesthetic and provided the recommendation to incorporate a more meaningful aesthetic by including elements from the park, such as lily pads and frogs.
- Preference Towards Exterior Materials Palette A: The Commission expressed a preference for Palette A, noting that the lighter materials in Palette B are likely to cause uncomfortable glare by reflecting too much light, be more susceptible to showing wear and tear over time, and may require more frequent cleaning to maintain a presentable appearance.
- Planting Palette: It was recommended that the project team explore the inclusion of more native plant/tree options in the planting palette, with a particular focus on incorporating native trees where possible and continue consulting with environmental specialists, the Open Space Foundation, and other stakeholder groups while utilizing external resources as a neutral source.
- Sustainability: There is a strong appreciation for the efforts to achieve LEED Silver equivalency. The commission expressed that the extensive sustainability initiatives are highly valued.
- Aquatics Center: A concern was raised regarding potential challenges associated with the expansion and growth of recreational events due to size limitations. The relocation of locker rooms and finding a location for the outdoor showers was appreciated.
- Community Center: It was emphasized that the building should be accessible to both casual users and those without reservations for specific amenities.
- Site Plan: Received feedback that the site plan is well thought out, beautiful, creative, and practical. The commission expressed appreciation for its consideration of user needs.

C. Design Development Presentation Package

The Design Development Presentation Package now incorporates feedback received since April 2024 and consists of the following materials:

- Updated Site Plan
- Updated Park, Building and Planting Plan
- Exterior Building Materials Palette
- Plant Palette
- Updated Pool Plans and Recreational Pool Play Structure

These are each described in detail below:

Updated Project Site Plan (Attachment B.1)

Since the plan was last presented to the DRC, PROS and City Council earlier this year, the following key changes and developments were made to the Site and Building Design during the Design Development Phase:

- Updated vehicular circulation and parking design
- Building plan and massing optimizations to blend Schematic Design Options A&B, weighted toward Scheme A
- Public seating areas at entries, drop off and pond edge
- Maximized pool deck with plentiful shade, seating, outdoor showers and storage areas

Updated Park Plan, Building Plan and Planting Plans (Attachments B.2-B.5)

- Aquatics Wing plan and massing modifications to allow changing rooms to sit closer to the main aquatics' entry
- Development of building systems and finishes, including trellises, shade louvers, deep overhangs, wall assemblies and exposed structural systems at the atrium and lakeside room
- Planting plan with delineation of plant type zones
- Tree Plan

Exterior Building Materials Palette (Attachment C.1)

Palette A is recommended due to its earthier colors that blend better with the natural park setting than the lighter colors in Palette B. The community input received strongly preferred natural-looking materials. The medium dark tones of Palette A will not produce as much glare from reflected sunlight, particularly at the pool deck, and will also show wear and tear less over time compared with the lighter palette.

- Natural exterior cladding materials including:
 - Wood cladding, trellises, benches, and exposed wood structure
 - Large format, stone-inspired porcelain tile cladding
 - Plaster Cement wall finish
 - Metal and/or asphalt shingle roofing
 - Metal window mullions and exposed metal structure
 - Ground-face, large aggregate concrete masonry blocks
 - Corten weathering steel accents (window surrounds, landscape features)

Plant Palette (Attachment C.2)

- Four planting zones, including:
 - Entry area, with a mix of native and accent plants
 - Event garden area, with showier, all-white blooming plants for backdrop
 - Riparian area, with native riparian-appropriate plants
 - Pool deck area, with hearty plants that can withstand exposure

Pool Design Update and Recreational Pool Play Structure (Attachments B.6, C.3)

- The pool design has been updated to include a larger and deeper 8-lane, 25 meter pool area incorporated into the recreational pool. This will allow for additional practice area for the artistic swimming and competitive swim teams. It will also allow for the continuance of an annual Walnut Creek Masters' 25-meter swim meet.
- The updated pool design incorporates a larger area surrounding the pools than the existing Clarke Swim Center:

	Current Clarke Swim Center Size	Proposed New Facility Size
Pool Deck	35,846 SF	43,000 SF
Landscaped Area	35,961 SF	36,000 SF

- The aquatics designer prepared a rendering of the proposed aquatics play structure, which is expected to be a popular and valuable amenity for the community within the recreation pool. The attached representative sample (*Attachment C.3*) incorporates PROS Commissioners’ preference for an aquatic life themed structure and allows for individual features to be selected or swapped with other amenities during this design phase. Play features that have been prioritized by staff and the design team include:
 - Interactive spray and bubbler features for smaller children
 - Dump bucket
 - Non-enclosed slides
 - Nature and farm themes

Perspective Views (Attachments D1-D8):

The key features depicted in the perspective views include:

- Aerial view looking east (D1.A-B)
- Aerial view looking west (D2.A-B)
- Entry Sequence – two material color options (D3.A-B)
- Aquatics Wing – two material color options (D4.A-B)
- Pond Side with Terraces – two material color options (D5.A-B)
- Lakeside Room with views to the pond (D6)
- Atrium space with informal seating and views through the entry (D7)
- Aquatics Classroom (D8)

On Site Pedestrian and Vehicle Traffic Circulation and Parking (Attachment E)

- The project site is surrounded on all sides, complicating pedestrian and vehicle circulation and limiting available options.
- The queuing, drop off and parking areas were studied by a third-party traffic engineer and the City’s traffic engineers, and modifications were made to the schematic design and are incorporated into the Design Development Package.
- Staff and design team continues to work with Contra Costa Fire Protection District regarding access to the site.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The adopted project budget is \$77 million. The recommended options as shown are all within the 2023 budget allocation. The project team continues to monitor and research a number of construction and soft costs pressures that could increase the overall project costs in the future. These cost pressures are typical of projects of this magnitude and noted for the Council's awareness. The project team will continue to monitor and will return to Council if any recommended budgetary adjustments are necessary.

NEXT STEPS:

1. Construction Documentation Phase (fall 2024-summer 2025): Develop and plan check finalize detailed architectural and engineering plans.
2. Bidding Process (summer/fall 2025): Prequalification, prepare bid documents and solicitation, , evaluate contractor bids, and award contracts based on qualifications.
3. Construction Phase (fall 2025-2027): Finalize contractual obligations, mobilize construction teams, monitor progress, and complete the project while managing the budget and ensuring quality control.

DOCUMENTS:

- A. Project Assumptions and Principles
- B. Design Development Presentation Plans
 - B.1 Project Site Plan
 - B.2 Park Plan
 - B.3 Building Plan
 - B.4 Planting Plan
 - B.5 Tree Plan
 - B.6 Updated Pool Plans
- C. Design Development Presentation Palettes
 - C.1 Exterior Building Materials Palette
 - C.2 Plant Palette
 - C.3 Recreational Pool Play Structure Schematic
- D. Design Development Presentation Renderings
 - D1.A-B Aerial East
 - D2.A-B Aerial West
 - D3.A-B Entry Sequence
 - D4.A-B Aquatics Wing
 - D5.A-B Pond Side Terraces
 - D6 Lakeside Room
 - D7 Atrium
 - D8 Aquatics Classroom
- E. Parking and Circulation Plan

CITY COUNCIL ACTION RECOMMENDED:

Provide direction to staff on the Heather Farm Aquatic and Community Center Design Development Package elements requiring Council decisions necessary to move the project into the construction documentation phase:

- Updated Project Site Plan
- Exterior Building Materials Palette
- Landscape Planting Palette and Plan
- Recreational Pool Play Structure

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