



MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Park Commissioners

THROUGH: Jack C. Wilson, Executive Director

FROM: Shon Sylvia, Director of Recreation and Community Services

SUBJECT: People's Community Center and Pool Update

DATE: May 26, 2009

Executive Summary:

People's Community Center has significant structural issues over the pool portion of the building. Although we have some data about the necessary upgrades needed to the building, the City is currently doing a comprehensive building audit as part of the revised MPT & City inter-local agreement and facility transition plan. This audit will be completed in August.

In addition, the City and Park District staff has been working collaboratively to better understand the type of use the community wants within this space versus simply replacing the same amenity within the current footprint. The following report will give the background, findings of a community-base survey and public process and make recommendations of next steps.

Background:

People's Center, a City of Tacoma owned facility operated by Metro Parks under contract, was built in 1979 with a recent remodel of the Center's Lobby in 2001. During an engineering assessment in preparation for 2005 Bond improvements for Peoples Center, ORB Architects identified significant structural issues in the pool portion of the building.

Moisture issues and the chemical makeup of the pool environment, which is highly corrosive to metal, were identified as primary causes for the deterioration of this area of the building. Replacement of the inadequate ventilation system and major structural repairs, including replacement of the natatorium roof and exterior walls, are cited among the needed repairs.

These significant structural issues were not visible to the naked eye and only identified through the use of infrared equipment during the engineering assessment of the building. The preliminary amount for the pool building repairs is anticipated to run between \$1.5m to \$1.8m. However, these estimated costs are relative to a new superstructure over the current pool and deck footprint. The cost will be higher in order to accommodate expansion for wider pool decks or major upgrades related to ADA enhancements and expanded program offerings.

The pool was closed in 2008 for an indefinite length of time, in the interest of user safety. Alternative programming options are being identified for current pool users. In addition, we have secured a partnership with YMCA to accommodate swimming downtown and at Pearl Street. No other programming will be impacted as the pool area is the only space considered to be a safety risk.

The 2005 Park Improvement Bond identified \$1.5 million for general facility upgrades. There is no other designated funding specific to the pool and available bond funding is not adequate to cover all critical repairs. The center has many infrastructure needs which extend beyond the pool area. Working with staff and current center users-- a new roof, plumbing upgrades, flooring, window and door replacements,

security enhancements and replacement of the heavily used basketball court are among just a few of the needed facility upgrades that have been identified.

Building audit and transition plan:

The City is underway with a comprehensive building audit to better understand the current condition of the asset and to bring the facility up to a certain standard prior to transferring the property to MPT. The audit is scheduled for completion in August. There is a transition team with representation from both agencies that will be reviewing the findings and recommending what renovations and capital repairs are needed in a prioritized fashion. These recommendations will be integrated as part of the transition plan and the goal is to have the findings in front of the park board and city council by year-end.

Community findings and program priorities:

Metro Parks and City staff have discussed an approach towards the public process for gathering information regarding the pool at People's Community Center. We have updated the public at large on the issues with the pool structure and discussed any issues and concerns they have with programs or amenities on site. Metro Parks Tacoma staff took the lead and facilitated the process. We updated stakeholders and the neighborhood council, held a neighborhood open house at Peoples, met with 180 teens at Jason Lee Middle School and reviewed cross-tabs from a scientific community-based survey to better understand the community's wants and desires.

Open house/neighborhood pool survey:

In April, we held an open house with 25-30 community members attending to share their views and ideas with staff. Appreciative of current renovations scheduled for the building, the overwhelming response was that they also want to include swimming as part of the program and for the pool to be renovated.

Additional comments were made that the current pool building was unwelcoming and needed windows or a garage door that could have outdoor access. They discussed additional aquatic amenities, such as a slide, that would draw more neighborhood kids.

Finally, they wanted a longer-term solution and to work with the community to build a new, state-of-the-art center. They realized that this would not happen overnight; however they want this to be considered within both agencies' planning processes. They recommended having a steering committee made up of residents and community stakeholders to assist with both being part of the current renovation project and helping develop a campaign for securing funds to help build a pool and this new center.

Youth voice:

In May, 180 students from Jason Lee Middle School also confirmed wanting a pool for their community and shared their thoughts of the type of pool they wanted at People Center:

- Deeper pool
- Big water slides
- Spiral slides
- Hot tub
- Lots of hot water for the shower
- Water toys
- Pipe that shoots water (amenities found at a spray ground)
- Indoor and outdoor pool
- Pool with large deck area
- Lots of windows

Tacoma community-at-large:

The community-based survey additionally supported the need for water-based recreation facilities and activities were also considered to be important, with the feeling expressed by half the

respondents who indicated that it was important to have water features like spray grounds in parks and 65% of the respondents indicated that it was important to have swimming pools in Tacoma.

NW planning quadrant

Looking at the survey respondents comments of what facilities/activities are most valued, the top five indoor activities are: 1. weight/strength training; 2. outside/indoor courts for basketball, tennis or volleyball; 3. cardio activities; 4. **swimming/leisure pools**; 5. fitness/health centers.

Looking at the survey respondents of what current and likely future users do and what they consider important, the top five indoor activities are: 1. outside/indoor courts for basketball, tennis or volleyball; 2. **swimming/leisure pools**; 3. cardio activities; 4. fitness/health centers; 5. arts and crafts/painting/pottery.

Recommendations:

After reviewing the City's strategic planning documents and the recent report from AngelouEconomics, downtown-- the Martin Luther King (MLK) District corridor is considered a priority for reinvestment. The report highlights a goal to stimulate investor interest in downtown Tacoma and to focus public investment on strategic nodes within downtown. MLK District node identifies short-term movement for visioning and planning with mid-term priorities placed on infrastructure.

In addition, with the construction of St. Joseph's Hospital and revitalization of this neighborhood—a renovated community center is consistent and needed for this area. This center will continue to offer programs that meet diverse community needs, including all ages abilities, family compositions, social-economic and cultural backgrounds. From our research, the center should also include a family-oriented warm water pool. The pool needs to be ADA compliant and should include additional leisure pool features, such as a slide and spray features. The following are action steps for the inter-local transition team, City staff and City elected officials consideration:

- Short-term (6-12 months):
 - Develop a community building steering committee with monthly meetings with MPT staff liaison
 - City facilities & transition team: perform a building audit; determine feasibility and desire of preserving and reinforcing the current pool building structure; isolate the condition of current pool mechanical and infrastructure
 - City to identify issues regarding ADA compliance
 - Develop a RFP for pool architect/aquatic specialists; identify funding source for architects & engineers
 - Begin process identifying potential funding sources for a pool renovation with a minimum range of \$2-2.5 million dollars
- Mid-term (1-3 years):
 - City planning staff to work with transition team to: understand findings from building audit, work with MPT for public process and select firm to develop a concept & design plan for pool
 - Confirm costs of pool renovation; layout funding strategies and secure funds
 - Work with neighboring hospital to incorporate potential rehab and therapy programs within aquatic program
 - Build pool and appropriate infrastructure
 - Begin implementing additional longer-term items identified within transition plan that will transform building into positive community & economic asset

Additional Information:

Please contact Shon Sylvia at 305-1072 for any further questions.