

**Kirkland Aquatic, Recreation, and Community Center  
Project Background  
March 2015**

**2001 - 2007**

The community's desire for indoor recreation, aquatics and gathering space has been well documented, beginning with the Kirkland's Parks, Recreation and Open space Plan (PROS) and an Indoor Recreation Needs Survey in 2001. That led in 2007 to completion of an Indoor Recreation Feasibility Study which resulted in a proposal for a multi-purpose community recreation and aquatic center of up to 93,000 square feet. The proposed recreation center was added to the Parks' Capital Improvement Program as an unfunded project.

In the intervening fourteen years since 2001, Kirkland's population has more than doubled while the amount of indoor recreation and aquatics space has stayed the same. Kirkland's two community centers, the Peter Kirk Community Center and the North Kirkland Community Center, are programmed to capacity and lack many of the features desired by users, such as fitness facilities, gymnasiums and meeting space. In addition, learn-to-swim programs at both the City's Peter Kirk Pool and at the Lake Washington School District's Aquatic Center at Juanita High School are frequently filled and experience long waiting lists.

**2011-2012**

In order to resolve some of the funding needs for park capital investments and deferred maintenance, the Kirkland City Council convened a citizen panel representing a broad cross section of the community in 2011. Known as the Parks Funding Exploratory Committee (PFEC), the panel recommended a series of investments which eventually were approved by voters as part of a 2012 Parks Levy. The PFEC evaluated whether to include an aquatics facility in the 2012 ballot measure. Ultimately the PFEC recommended not including a pool facility in the ballot measure for several reasons. In general, there were too many unknowns about the project, such as how much it would cost, where would it be located and what would it cost to operate. These questions couldn't be answered in time to get a package to the 2012 ballot. In addition, the LWSD had yet to decide whether the Juanita pool would be replaced in 2014 and the PFEC felt that funding it in the 2012 levy would be premature. Finally, the cost of including an indoor aquatic facility would either make the ballot measure too large, or require significant cuts to the rest of the capital projects in the levy. The initial purpose of the parks levy was to restore maintenance and operations resources for Kirkland parks, so the PFEC was not interested in such a large capital component, and the other capital projects were deemed to be more urgent. In the end, the PFEC recommended that the City pursue an indoor aquatics facility in 2021 when the existing Parks bonds were retired and when the capital projects included in the 2012 Parks Levy would be completed. The City Council concurred with those recommendations and did not include an indoor aquatics facility in the 2012 Parks Levy which was passed by the voters.

**2013 – 2014**

**August 2013: School District proposes closure of Juanita Aquatic Center**

In August of 2013 the City Council received input from citizens and members of the Lake Washington School District (LWSD) Board of Directors regarding the potential closure of the Juanita High School swimming pool, known as the Juanita Aquatic Center. The testimony asked that the City of Kirkland consider participating in the building of a new aquatic facility to replace Juanita. Kirkland is a key potential partner because the pool is the only public year-round aquatic facility in the Kirkland community, and is utilized extensively not just by students, but by residents for competitive swimming, youth and adult swim lessons, fitness, and recreation. Other partners could include entities such as Redmond, Bothell, Evergreen Health, Wave Aquatics, and Northwest University.

The District had determined that the facility was nearing the end of its useful life and that a renovated or new pool would not be included in a future school bond measure to replace the high school. A school ballot measure was scheduled for February 2014, and if passed would cause the LWSD to close the pool early as 2017, leaving Kirkland residents without access to a public year-round swimming pool in our community.

In September 2013 the LWSD Board adopted a resolution (**Exhibit A**) affirming its intent to enter into future pool partnerships with cities and/or other interested entities. The resolution also authorized directing an undetermined amount of unspent funds from the District's 2006 capital bond measure towards a portion of future pool facility project(s) enabling use by high school swim and dive teams. The District estimated that \$10 to \$12 million would remain once all the school projects are completed. However, these funds would be necessary for other District purposes should the proposed 2014 bond measure fail.

#### September 2013: City Adds Indoor Recreation Facility to Work Plan

In response, the City Council passed Resolution 5003 (**Exhibit B**) in September 2013 adding the issue to the City's official work plan, with the objective to "partner with the Lake Washington School District and other interested public and private organizations to explore options for replacing the Juanita Aquatic Center by 2017". The City Council also authorized new funding for consultation, planning and community outreach.

#### December 2013: Initial Sites Identified

Assuming that a new pool would likely need to be placed on existing Kirkland-owned properties to save both money and time, Kirkland staff initially suggested that the following sites be considered as potential sites, after an initial assessment of all City-owned properties:

- Existing outdoor Peter Kirk Pool site in Peter Kirk Park
- The North Kirkland Community Center
- Mark Twain Park
- Juanita Beach Park (northern section)
- Snyder's Corner

In December of 2013 the City Council reviewed the proposed sites and directed staff to remove the existing pool site at Peter Kirk Park from consideration. At the same time, the Council asked staff to analyze the former Albertson's grocery store site in the Juanita area.

#### January 2014: Site Selection Narrowed

In January 2014, the City Council received a staff report providing preliminary analysis of the identified sites, and directed staff to further investigate and study the following three sites:

1. Juanita Beach Park (north side); Juanita Neighborhood
2. North Kirkland Community Center; Juanita Neighborhood
3. South Norway Hill Park; Kingsgate Neighborhood

The Council passed Resolution 5029 (**Exhibit C**) to guide Park Board and staff, including completion of the following tasks:

- Design a facility to serve the needs of the Lake Washington School District swim and dive teams as well as the broadest possible general public population;
- Conduct outreach with the community and potential project partners on possible facility components as well as siting preferences;

- Complete feasibility and cost analysis for converting Peter Kirk Pool to year-round use by 2017 as an interim solution;
- Provide a report to the City Council with recommendations from the Park Board on facility components and siting by no later than April 1, 2014.

The City Council also directed staff to continue to explore other siting opportunities beyond the three identified study sites. Specifically, Council expressed interest in St. Edward State Park in Kenmore as well as the Totem Lake Malls property

#### February 2014: School Bond Measure Fails Twice

In February 2014 the LWSD Capital Facilities Bond Measure did not pass. It received 58% approval, just short of the 60% needed. At their March 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting, the School Board voted to place a \$404 million bond measure on the April 22 ballot. This measure would allow the district to address its critical and urgent need to build new schools and classrooms and support growing enrollment and avoid overcrowding, including the re-build and expansion of Juanita High School. The plan to re-build and expand Juanita High School would again not include replacing the Juanita Aquatic Center. Despite the February School bond failing, LWSD Superintendent Pierce communicated that the District's commitment as expressed in their September 2013 Resolution had not changed should the April measure pass.

Unfortunately the April 22 school bond measure also failed to be approved by voters, leaving the future of the Aquatic Center in further doubt.

#### March 2014: Initial Site Analysis Conclusions and Facility Component Recommendations

Based upon the site analysis and technical siting criteria, in March of 2014 the consultant team and staff concluded that Juanita Beach Park was the site best-suited for a new facility. This was in terms of access, site development cost, impact to the surrounding neighborhood, and aesthetics. The consultant team's assessment, based on the technical criteria, was that Juanita Beach Park was the most centrally located site, had the best public transit access, and was large enough to accommodate the building and parking without requiring multi-level parking. The consultant team concluded that the scale of the building would fit better with surrounding multi-family and commercial buildings, and the site would provide a prominent location with visibility that will enhance revenue generation and cost recovery.

While the Park Board acknowledged the technical advantages that the Juanita Beach Park site may have for siting a new recreation facility, at their March 2014 meeting the Board instead recommended the North Kirkland Community Center & Park Site as the preferred location for the following reasons:

- The north side of Juanita Beach Park was viewed as a valuable and irreplaceable green space in an increasingly dense part of the Kirkland community (i.e. Juanita Village and surrounds).
- Citizens were already accustomed to use of the NKCC Park Site for indoor recreation facility use, and continued use of the site for a community facility would be less disruptive.
- Traffic issues were anticipated to be less acute on N.E. 124<sup>th</sup> as opposed to Juanita Drive.
- Of the three sites studied, the North Kirkland Community Center & Park Site was most preferred by citizens who had participated in public outreach efforts.

The Park Board also recommended that the City proceed with planning for a full Recreation & Aquatic Center with 50-meter pool with the following reasons presented:

- There was a demonstrated need in the Kirkland community for more indoor recreation space, including general recreation space needs, active fitness facilities, gymnasiums, and swimming.
- Existing programs and facilities are at maximum capacity.
- Development of a larger facility would move the community closer to meeting its level of service goals for indoor recreation space.

- A multi-use Recreation & Aquatic Center would offer the best cost recovery potential and that the City's on-going general fund subsidy of over \$200,000 annually for NKCC would potentially be eliminated with a new, well-designed facility taking its place.
- A 50-meter pool would provide the most flexibility for aquatic programming and better meets current and future Kirkland community needs. Such a pool could also entice regional partners for capital investment and as regular facility users.

The proposed space components of the facility would meet the broadest needs and interests of Kirkland residents and would include:

- Recreation pool with waterslides, sprays and moving current channel
- Competition/lap pool
- Locker rooms
- Family and special needs locker rooms
- Meeting/Birthday party room
- Gymnasium
- Fitness center
- Wood floor studio
- Child watch room
- Community Hall
- Kitchen
- Art studio
- Dance room
- Program classrooms
- Management/operation spaces

#### April 2014: Sites Narrowed to Juanita Beach and NKCC

On April 1, 2014, the City Council was presented with recommendations from the Park Board on siting preferences for a potential new recreation facility as well as recommendations for a preferred facility type. The Council expressed interest in continuing to explore a multi-faceted community recreation & aquatic facility with the possible inclusion of a 50-meter competitive pool. The City Council also authorized staff to continue to pursue potential project partners and to conduct further community outreach.

The Council authorized the Park Board and staff to conduct additional analyses of two sites: Juanita Beach Park and the North Kirkland Community Center & Park (NKCC) site. Additional technical analyses for both sites would include conducting an environmental assessment, completion of traffic studies, building massing studies, and additional cost estimating. Evaluation of the potential closure of a portion of 103<sup>rd</sup> Ave NE to accommodate a new facility at the NKCC site would also be conducted. A resolution (5050, **Exhibit D**) authorizing staff and the Park Board to conduct these tasks was approved.

#### September 2014: Final Report is Presented

In September of 2014 a final report was completed by the City's consultant team (The Sports Management Group) and featured the following information:

- Consultant Recommendations
- Space Program & Financial Performance
- Site Analyses
- Traffic Assessments
- Concept Designs with Cost Estimates
- Public Process Summary
- Funding Options
- Technical Reports

At their September 2014 meeting the Park Board reviewed the consultant report, received comment from interested citizens and developed a series of recommendations to the City Council, which included:

#### A. Park Board Facility Recommendations

As a result of extensive community, stakeholder, and program user input, an evaluation of the City's existing recreation programs and facilities, and an assessment of market conditions, the Park Board recommended the facility, henceforth known as the Aquatic, Recreation, and Community (ARC) Center, would include a community hall/banquet facility, caterer's kitchen/classroom, party room, arts rooms, gymnasium space, fitness room, studios, activity room, recreation pool, lap pool, hot tub, coffee bar, locker rooms, administrative office and other support spaces. The base facility size to accommodate these spaces was an estimated 87,000 square feet. The Park Board emphasized that the broad mix of facility components provided the greatest opportunity for the facility to annually generate the revenue sufficient to offset program and operating expenses, thus (as projected) eliminating a need for the facility to receive an ongoing general fund tax support.

Recommendation on specific facility components included:

1. Lap Pool Size:

A 32-meter x 13-lane competition/lap pool was determined by staff and the consultant as the "right size" based on a comparative analysis of features and benefits. However, the Park Board believed that the City should consider not only current demand but also the future aquatic needs of the growing Kirkland community. As a result, the Park Board recommended the 50-meter lap pool option, with the addition of a movable bulkhead to enhance operational flexibility.

2. Gymnasium Size:

To meet on-going demand for active indoor recreation space in Kirkland, the consultant provided an option and a recommendation to increase the size of the gym to accommodate two courts with an elevated walking/jogging track, or design the project to allow space for a future expansion. The Park Board concurred and recommended that the facility should include these as a base component of the ARC Center.

3. Community Hall:

The community hall would provide opportunities for local organizations, groups, and families to hold their larger events in Kirkland, rather than in surrounding communities. The consultant had included provisions for a facility serving up to 250 persons. The Park Board believed this to be insufficient capacity for many desired local events, and recommended increasing the Community Hall capacity to accommodate 300 persons, and also recommends incorporating an outdoor or roof-top deck as a desirable feature.

4. Energy and Environmental Design:

The Park Board recommended that the ARC Center should be designed to achieve a minimum LEED Silver certification. LEED, or Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design, is a green building certification program that recognizes best-in-class building strategies and practices.

With the addition of the recommended optional space components and features, the size of the ARC Center as recommended by the Park Board would total approximately 104,200 square feet.

B. Park Board Siting Recommendations

A comparative analysis of the NKCC and Juanita Beach sites completed by the consultant team and staff concluded that Juanita Beach was the site that best addressed the siting criteria developed for the project. These criteria included:

- |                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| ✓ Site Capacity (Size)          | ✓ Site Aesthetics                         |
| ✓ Central Location              | ✓ Neighborhood Context & Impacts          |
| ✓ Prominent Siting & Visibility | ✓ Scale Relative to Neighboring Buildings |
| ✓ Availability of Utilities     | ✓ Surrounding Land Uses                   |
| ✓ Soils & Construction Costs    | ✓ Access to Public Transportation         |
| ✓ Zoning Implications           | ✓ Access for Non-Motorized                |
| ✓ Adequate Parking Capacity     |   |

- ✓ Transportation
- ✓ Impacts on Existing Landscape
- ✓ Costs for Demolition & Relocation
- ✓ Required Grading

#### NKCC Site

Park Board members generally concurred with the consultant's findings that the NKCC site was not suitable for the proposed ARC Center. Primary concerns stressed by the Board were the insufficient size of the property and that the proposed facility would be out of scale with the surrounding predominantly single-family residential neighborhood.

#### Juanita Beach Site

The Park Board acknowledged the advantages of the Juanita Beach site relative to the NKCC site, particularly its size, setting, and scale/relationship to surrounding land uses. However, Park Board members expressed strong reservations about use of the site for the ARC Center. Park Board members identified these major concerns:

- Loss of important historical park open space;
- Perception that traffic congestion would worsen and could not be adequately mitigated;
- Opposition expressed by some neighbors, the neighborhood association, and historic preservation advocates;
- Selection of a controversial site could jeopardize a future ballot initiative.

#### Search for New Site Recommended by Park Board

The Park Board recommended that the City Council renew the search for a private site which would meet the needs of the project and generate broad community support. The Board recognized that acquisition of a private site could significantly increase project costs and take additional time. Nonetheless, the Board recommended that the City Council direct staff and the Board to spend more time with the community to explore other site options one last time.

The Park Board recommended that the City proceed expeditiously on the site selection process and that the City Council establish a timetable and deadline for final site selection. This timetable and deadline for site selection could perhaps be determined as a result of the Council's preferred timing for a potential funding ballot measure.

On September 16, 2014 the City Council was presented with the consultant's findings and conclusions related to the proposed ARC Center. The Council also received recommendations from the Park Board on siting preferences and desired facility components. As recommended by the Park Board, the Council expressed interest in pursuing possible alternative private sites for the ARC Center to be considered in addition to the north (ballfield) side of Juanita Beach and the North Kirkland Community Center. The City Council also expressed interest in having staff conduct additional broad community outreach and further pursue partnership opportunities. Resolution 5076 (**Exhibit E**) authorizing staff and the Park Board to conduct these tasks and providing additional funding was approved in October 2014.

A final report was scheduled to be considered by the Park Board and City Council in March of 2015.

Attachments