



COMMUNITY CENTER TASK FORCE REPORT TO THE BLOOMINGTON CITY COUNCIL

OCTOBER 10, 2016

Background

The Bloomington City Council created the Community Center Task Force to study the potential future of a new community center. The current Creekside Community Center occupies a former elementary school built in 1960 at the corner of Penn Avenue South and West 98th Street. The facility serves a wide variety of programming and activities, with approximately 110,000 visits annually. While the facility itself has been well-maintained, it suffers from serviceability, flexibility and thermal issues typical of buildings constructed in its era. In addition, there are recurring issues with overcrowding, lack of adequate storage and limited opportunities for expansion of present programs and addition of new ones.

In 2015, Hammel, Green and Abrahamson, Inc. (HGA) completed a community center needs assessment at the direction of the City Council (see Attachment A). Following an analysis of existing demands for services and demographics of the community, the firm produced recommendations for desired programming in a community center facility. The needs assessment report described the community's wants and desires for a multi-use community center that expands programming opportunities for Bloomington residents. HGA's report also provided cost metrics for construction and operation to help inform the City as it determined the potential value of a new facility.

In August 2015, the City Council directed that a task force be appointed to study the 2015 community center report and provide feedback on the potential future of a new community center. The Community Center Task Force was charged with examining the issue and providing the City Council with a framework for helping them make decisions regarding the potential future of a new community center.

By definition, the Community Center Task Force was a time-specific, project-specific group working to a focused outcome. The Task Force consisted of 17 individuals with approximately 80 percent being community members and 20 percent staff (see Attachment B). Employee members were appointed by the City Manager. Community representatives of the Task Force were selected by the City Council and reflect the general Bloomington community, the School District, the Bloomington business community, the Creekside Senior Program, youth athletic organizations and members of Bloomington's diverse community as well as the City Council and its advisory boards and commissions. Alternate representatives were also appointed by the City Council. Task Force meetings were facilitated by Irina Fursman, a facilitator with HueLife. City staff members Brent Massmann and Eric Schoon assisted with the facilitation.

The Task Force's work included the following elements:

- Examine an analysis of the existing Creekside Community Center building;
- Study market analysis data and community center facility trends;
- Consider space needs for existing and future programs and services;
- Review proposed programming and space allocations for a new community center;
- Study cost estimates and budget considerations for a new community center;
- Examine potential site alternatives; and
- Provide feedback to the City Council.

While the City Council maintains decision-making authority, the findings and input of the community-based Task Force are expected to factor into the City's future planning and decision-making processes regarding a potential community center.

The Task Force was asked to provide feedback on the following subjects with respect to a new community center:

1. Community needs and wants
2. Space considerations
3. Satellite community centers or a stand-alone approach
4. Potential site alternatives
5. Potential partnerships, both public and private
6. Fiscal implications

Topics of discussion included, among other things, the current state and usage of the Creekside Community Center; recreational and public gathering spaces currently offered in Bloomington community center facility trends; space needs for existing and future programs and services; construction and operations cost estimates; and financial considerations for a potential community center.

Community Center Task Force Meeting Summary

The Task Force met seven times between April and August 2016. The group also participated in a tour of community centers in Eagan, Eden Prairie and Maple Grove. To promote transparency, all Task Force meetings were open to the public.

The topics of discussion and outcomes for each meeting are described below. Complete minutes from each meeting are attached (see Attachment C).

April 4, 2016:

The Task Force's first meeting centered on having the task force members get to know each other, start building trust and understand the overall context of their work. Staff delivered a presentation on the current community center's history as well as background on the 2015 HGA needs assessment report. Task Force members finalized their charge and established the protocols for working together.

May 3, 2016:

The Task Force reviewed the expectations about its charge that were produced at the previous meeting and reached agreement on its final charge (see Attachment D). Members also made final revisions to the expectations for how they would conduct themselves that were developed at their first meeting (see Attachment E.) The Task Force began its review of the HGA needs assessment report by identifying areas of clarity and concern within the building assessment and market analysis chapters.

May 10, 2016:

Task Force members toured three area community centers in Eagan, Eden Prairie and Maple Grove. All three facilities have gymnasiums, large multipurpose meeting rooms, fitness centers and indoor playgrounds. Eden Prairie and Maple Grove also offer aquatics amenities. Maple Grove's center is an example of a public-private partnership with Life Time Fitness. Background information on each facility is attached (see Attachment F).

June 7, 2016:

Members of the Task Force viewed a video that briefly reviewed the community centers they toured on May 10 and reflected on their learnings, sharing their insights discovered during their visits. The Task Force reviewed the space needs sections of the HGA needs assessment. That was followed by a discussion of the question, "What are the community needs that we are trying to address in Bloomington?" Small groups identified common themes and categories for the needs that a community center could fulfill.

June 22, 2016:

The Task Force revisited its work on the needs that a community center could satisfy from the previous meeting. Prior to the meeting, members had received a map of Bloomington community amenities (see Attachment G), results from an informal survey of students at Jefferson and Kennedy high schools (see attachment H), an updated "Community Center Questions and Answers" document (see Attachment I), and a list of metro area community

center facilities (see Attachment J). Small groups were asked to identify what was becoming clearer and what needed more clarity. A key insight noted by all three groups was that they felt it was no longer an option to keep Creekside operating as a community center due to its escalating financial needs and lack of building flexibility. The Task Force then reflected on its discussion at the June 7 meeting regarding needs that a community center could, and should, fulfill (see Attachment K). Members generated the following categories of needs:

- One stop shop
- Low cost fitness programs
- Attracting and retaining all ages, families and diverse community
- Year round/indoor space
- Serve current Creekside users
- Community gathering spaces
- Community image

July 19, 2016:

The Task Force reviewed the seven community needs that were identified at the previous meeting and determined that the three most important categories were:

- Attracting and retaining all ages including families, the diverse community and Creekside users
- Providing a year round facility with indoor and outdoor spaces
- Providing community gathering spaces that create a sense of community

The Task Force previewed seven potential sites for a community center developed by staff (see Attachment L.) Key criteria that staff considered when identifying possible sites included: Central location with at least 8 – 10 acres, no or low cost site, access to public transit and trails and property with room to expand. Members deliberated the merits of those sites as well as other potential properties in Bloomington.

August 16, 2016:

The Task Force catalogued criteria for a successful community center based on the three core pillars that were identified at the July 19 meeting (see Attachment M). Chief Financial Officer Lori Economy-Scholler discussed the financial implications of a community center, using HGA's cost estimates. The models presented were with and without an aquatics facility included as part of the community center (see Attachments N and O). The Task Force also analyzed potential site alternatives, reviewing the assets, benefits, gaps and negative consequences for each location. The group pinpointed potential partnership and funding options for each site.

August 22, 2016:

The final meeting of the Community Center Task Force focused on developing recommendations on the potential of a new community center to the City Council. Following discussion about how the members felt about their work to date, the Task Force split into five small groups to work on the following areas: Community needs and wants, space considerations, potential site alternatives, potential partnerships, and fiscal implications. The small groups reported their draft recommendations to the full group, which discussed and modified the recommendations. At the end of the meeting, a subcommittee made up of Dennis Kane, Lenny

Schmitz and Diann Kirby volunteered to fine-tune the draft document and submit it via e-mail to the Task Force for final review, editing and approval.

Community Center Task Force Recommendations

Community Needs and Wants

The Task Force recommends replacing the existing Creekside Community Center with a facility with indoor and outdoor spaces that attract and retain people of all ages, families, diverse community members and current Creekside users that would also provide gathering spaces that create a sense of community. In addition to an indoor pool and child play area, the facility should also include a large multi-use space with commercial kitchen facilities, gymnasium(s), an indoor walking/jogging track and smaller flexible spaces for various programs such as fitness, fine arts and crafts, youth activities and current and new community center programs, and a coffee shop.

The Task Force also recommends targeted outreach to the community at events such as the Farmers' Market and Heritage Days to get a better understanding of the needs of the entire community for a community center. In addition to the teen survey conducted at Kennedy and Jefferson high schools, other survey work would be very helpful to determine the needs and wants of the community.

Space Considerations

The Task Force recommends a new community center facility that would house current and proposed community center programs. The community center should include large community amenities such as a large meeting room with a commercial kitchen and stage, indoor play space, gym space, an aquatics facility, meeting rooms and flexible use spaces and exterior gathering spaces. The task force reviewed all the potential amenities listed in the HGA needs assessment and determined that select amenities were not a current priority for inclusion in the community center (i.e., domed field house, Public Health, Motor Vehicle).

Furthermore, the Task Force believes the current Creekside building is no longer a viable option and that making major improvements to the building are not worth the return on investment. This was illustrated by the HGA assessment, facility condition and energy use reports on Creekside and the financial costs to update the existing building.

The Task Force recommends that the City get feedback from the community to better understand the space needed in a new community center. Community surveys and focus groups would help provide information on recreational trends, community interests and current recreational amenities. The Task Force also recommends that the City Council visit Creekside Community Center to gain greater insights into the facility's environment and needs. The Task Force acknowledges that Creekside offers a unique place for residents, especially seniors and individuals with disabilities, who are seeking to be active outside the house, interact with others, retain friendships and receive meals and additional services through Human Services and other agencies housed at Creekside. The design and architecture of the building should take into consideration the programs that will be offered to allow for both active and passive usage and to reduce potential user conflicts.

The City Council is urged to study the fiscal challenges for users to determine if programming would be fee-based vs. no cost (or a combination of the two); the outcome could have a significant impact on the end users, especially older adults and individuals with disabilities. When it comes to senior programming, Creekside programs are currently open to any and all older adults and persons with disabilities who want to utilize the facility with no entrance fees and limited program costs.

Potential Site Alternatives

The Task Force recommends a single community center location with adequate space for a new community center with additional space for outdoor amenities and public gathering spaces. Eight sites were identified as potential locations. Of these, the sites deemed most viable were more closely evaluated and discussed. The Task Force recommends further study of the following potential sites: Girard Lake Park, former Lincoln High School, Tarnhill Park, Harrison Park and Creekside Community Center/Creekside Park. The Task Force believes that the criteria for final site selection should consider the costs for acquisition, construction, soil and wetland mitigation, other environmental challenges and demolition of any existing buildings. Other considerations should include neighborhood impact, central location, access to public transportation and potential partnerships. The Task Force believes there are a variety of options that could be explored with the above identified sites to make them viable. The Task Force recommends additional focused review specifically of the site review issue as it is a critical component of a successful new community center.

Additionally, the current Creekside site should not only be viewed as a potential new location, but also considered an asset with value that could be used to offset the cost of construction and land acquisition either by selling or swapping the property if applicable.

The Task Force sees the new community center as a powerful asset for Bloomington's socio-economic growth and development. Expectations are that the new community center will stimulate community revitalization, attract and engage users of all ages and benefit local businesses looking to hire talented employees and enhance their business within the city.

Potential Partnerships

The City Council should think creatively and strongly consider public and non-public partners, contributors and providers to prevent tax dollars from being the sole funding source, not only for construction but also to support the ongoing operational costs of a community center.

Options to consider or explore further include:

- Construction and development opportunities:
 - Joint or shared building – Options could include locating other city or county functions in the facility such as Motor Vehicle Licensing, Public Health and private and nonprofit organizations.

- Donations and naming rights – Large philanthropic donations are encouraged that may include naming rights similar to the Schneider Theater, TCF Bank Stadium, Target Field or US Bank Stadium. Donations could also include facility sponsorships as well as outright large and small donations.
- Operational partnerships opportunities:
 - Concession and catering contracts – Partnerships could be established to generate revenue to help sustain operating costs with local companies or national corporations. Class instruction – Classes could be provided by outside agencies such as ISD 271 Community Education.
 - Event sponsors and partnerships – Specific events at the community center such as health fairs, 5k runs, or other events could be sponsored similar to the City’s Summer Fete and Egg Hunt events.

It is important to note that partnerships need to be well-thought-out, negotiated and fit within the community’s needs and wants for the facility. They should also be well-aligned with the community center's overall goals and objectives and selected in such a way as to enrich programming options and access for all Bloomington residents.

Fiscal Implications

The City Council is urged to consider and explore bonding and all other financing options available to the City for a new community center. As noted earlier, the Task Force recommends building a new community center that meets the current and future needs and wants of the community and helps attract new residents and businesses. As a result, the Task Force’s preference would be to build the community center in its entirety vs. breaking up the project into multiple phases that may or may not be built over time. The Task Force does realize this might not be feasible due to budget constraints and concerns, and if this is the case, the Council could consider a phased-in approach.

The Task Force also recommends selecting a site and designing the building with room for expansion to include items that are not part of the current recommendation as illustrated by the construction projections and the HGA needs assessment.

The Task Force advises strong operational and program management to help plan, direct, evaluate and oversee the community center project. Duties would include working directly with partners, sponsors and donors (both cash and in-kind). Other duties would include developing corporate gifting, fundraising, and other revenue enhancement options such as rentals, memberships, day passes, vendors and service lease options. This effort should create and maintain a strong framework built around partnerships, such as developing criteria and guidelines and consolidating services where possible to decrease overall City costs.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Community Center Task Force submits this report to the City Council with the following stipulations:

- The Task Force was fully cognizant of and embraced its purpose to study the 2015 community center needs assessment report and provide feedback to the City Council on the potential future of a new community center. This is not intended to be a final, all-encompassing report but rather a set of recommendations based on the group's work over the past several months.
- The Task Force feels this is an ongoing effort that will need much more study as this is a complex project. Areas in which the Task Force advocates further research and analysis include:
 - Partnerships, especially as they relate to the construction of the building. If the City finds an interested partner(s), much more discussion would be required to learn about their needs and wants and how they would complement the facility and the community. Due to time constraints, the Task Force feels that a limited amount of time was spent discussing the larger topic of funding for a community center given the significant costs of construction and the accompanying ongoing operational costs. More research is needed on this subject. As a result, the Task Force cannot make a full recommendation in the area of financial and partnership opportunities.
 - The Task Force believes there is a need for more input from the community as a whole including feedback from families, seniors, persons with disabilities, Creekside users, businesses and the numerous ethnic and cultural groups in Bloomington. Gathering this feedback would ensure that the community's needs and wants for a new facility are fully understood and incorporated into the design.
 - Site location and selection will require significant additional discussion and could be impacted by a variety of factors, including but not limited to:
 - Potential partnerships
 - Suitability of a site
 - Environmental and neighborhood impacts
 - Property acquisition and/or exchange opportunities and options

The Community Center Task Force is grateful to the City Council for the opportunity to serve the City of Bloomington in this process. If necessary, the Task Force is willing and interested to undertake additional assignments regarding a potential new community center as needed and desired by the City Council.

Respectfully submitted to the City Council by the members of the Community Center Task Force,

Maureen Bartolotta, *School District representative*
Dan Cripe, *Creekside Senior Program representative*
Tammy Galvin, *Youth athletic organizations representative*
Olivia Haaland, *Youth representative*
Dennis Kane, *Human Rights Commission representative*
Diann Kirby, *City staff representative*
Joshua Korthouse, *Advisory Board of Health representative*
Mary Anne Josephson, *Creekside Senior Program representative*
MaryAnne London, *Community representative*
Jake Martin, *Youth representative*
Jon Oleson, *City Council representative*
Lorinda Pearson, *City staff representative*
Randy Quale, *City staff representative*
Maureen Scallen Failor, *Business representative*
John Schatzlein, *Diverse community representative*
Lenny Schmitz, *Parks, Arts and Recreation Commission representative*
John Stanley, *Community representative*
Lyle Abeln, *Creekside Senior Program representative (alternate)*
Michelle La Beau, *Creekside Senior Program representative (alternate)*
Jared Leese, *Human Rights Commission representative (alternate)*
Dwayne Lowman, *City Council representative (alternate)*
Cindy McKenzie, *Advisory Board of Health representative (alternate)*
Savannah Salato, *Youth representative (alternate)*
Ann Marie Terpstra, *School District representative (alternate)*
Mark Thorson, *Business representative (alternate)*
Chuck Walter, *Community representative (alternate)*
Charles Woldum, *Youth athletic organizations representative (alternate)*

Attachments

- A) Bloomington Community Center Needs Assessment, HGA, April 27, 2016
- B) Community Center Task Force Members Listing
- C) Community Center Task Force meeting minutes, April 4 – August 22, 2016
- D) Community Center Task Force Charge, June 7, 2016
- E) Community Center Task Force Expectations
- F) Community Center Fact Sheets – Eagan, Eden Prairie, Maple Grove
- G) Bloomington Community Amenities Map
- H) Bloomington High School Student Survey Results, May 2016
- I) Community Center Questions and Answers
- J) Metro Area Community/Recreation Center Amenities and Demographics, July 19, 2016
- K) Community Needs Addressed by Community Center in Bloomington, June 22, 2016
- L) Potential Community Center Sites
- M) 3 Major Pillars of Needs Addressed by a Community Center, July 19, 2016
- N) HGA Community Center Construction Estimate, April 20, 2015
- O) Community Center Construction Financial Projections, August 16, 2016