

November 10, 2021

To: Parks and Recreation Commission

From: Recreational Opportunities Ad Hoc – Jeff LaMere, Keith Reckdahl, Anne Cribbs

The Palo Alto Park and Recreation Commission Recreational Opportunities Ad Hoc Committee recommends:

Approval from the PRC for the Concept and Site for a Palo Alto City Gymnasium based on a proposed conceptual estimate of \$25,000,000. Upon approval, project description to be presented to Palo Alto City Council.

Background: The Park and Recreation Master plan was accepted in 2017. It clearly outlines the need for a city owned gym. Our goal with this discussion is to discuss our vision of a city owned gym. The gym is in the concept stage. The Ad Hoc shared an initial memo with the Community Services staff. We have included their questions to be answered.

Many documents have been produced about building a City Gym.

- A) Palo Alto Parks Master Plan – March 2017 Draft or [https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/files/assets/public/public-works/engineering-services/webpages/pe-13003-parks-master-plan/palo-alto_parks_master-plan_021618\[small\].pdf](https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/files/assets/public/public-works/engineering-services/webpages/pe-13003-parks-master-plan/palo-alto_parks_master-plan_021618[small].pdf)
- B) Negative Declaration Palo Alto Parks and Recreation Master Plan Attachment A, pp 24, 2.9.0 High Priority Projects
- C) Cubberley Planning –Cubberley report 10/05/19 <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1i8ANgSJKDxxtfolZ0g9AJpISOpUQ974P/view>
- D) Palo Alto Park and Recreation Commission Recreational Opportunities Ad Hoc reports to full commission during monthly ad hoc reports
- E) Concordia Community Study/Cubberley <https://www.pausd.org/about-us/committees-task-forces/cubberley-master-plan>
- F) Included in Commission work plan which was presented to City Council and approved in May 2021.

G) Meeting with City Manager – May 2021 – to discuss recreational opportunities

Overview: The City of Palo Alto does not own a City Gym. Currently there is a recreational court pavilion and two smaller gyms – A & B at Cubberley Community Center. At least three Master plans for Cubberley Community Center (a former high school) have been discussed, the first discussion took place in 1991. While the Palo Alto community is supportive of re-building Cubberley as a Community Center – the joint ownership by PAUSD and City of Palo Alto makes planning and implementation difficult.

A new gym is included in the 2017 City of Palo Alto Park and Recreation Master Plan. The Ad Hoc Recreational Opportunities believes that the gym will need to be privately funded in a partnership with the City of Palo Alto, as was the recently completed Palo Alto Junior Museum.

The Recreation Opportunities Ad Hoc Committee is responsible for reviewing both recreation programs and facilities. We are concerned with both building and maintaining facilities for current and future use, gender and ethnic diversity and programs for underserved in our community.

At this time, we recognize there is NO money in the City of Palo Alto budget for facilities and little time for city staff to consider and implement potential programs and creation of new facilities.

However, the new JMZ provides a roadmap for success. First the vision was defined and plans were created. A lead donor came forward with a pledge of \$15,000,000. The Friends of the JMZ committed to raise \$10,000,000.

During the building phase, The Friends of the JMZ leased the property from the City of Palo Alto. An operating agreement was created, which will be a good model for the *Friends of the City Gym* and can be modified to address some of the unexpected issues during the building. The Friends of the JMZ worked together with the city attorney and Community Services staff on this operating agreement. The JMZ will open in November 2021. The Friends of the JMZ will return ownership of the JMZ to the City of Palo Alto.

We understand the City currently has similar projects in development and realize that these projects must be prioritized for staff time and resources. Projects include the First Tee at the Baylands Golf Course, the Roth Building, the Skatepark and the new JMZ. Each of these projects have stakeholders as listed below:

First Tee – First Tee of Silicon Valley

Roth Building – Palo Alto History Museum – all community

The Skatepark – funding to come from the stakeholders

The JMZ – would like to understand what additional time and resources will be needed from the City.

10/5 Acres – sports organization who use playing fields

The Palo Alto Recreation Foundation and the Friends of the Parks have both indicated they are interested in helping with this much needed City Gym.

Several gyms – city, school and private - in the area were reviewed to provide examples – cost, acreage, facilities.

Initially three key decisions must be made

- a. Location
- b. Facilities Requirements
- c. Cost and Community fundraising capacity. (The community has an excellent record of creating and funding projects for future generations)

Project Description - Location

Several locations were reviewed. They are listed below.

1. Greer Park – area 4
2. Mitchell Park – to include bowl and current field house area
3. 10.5 acres with possibility to include the current Baylands Athletic Center bringing the acres available to 22 acres.
4. Cubberley – using the 8 acres controlled/owned by the City of Palo Alto. (The Ad Hoc is doubtful that a City Gym could move forward at Cubberley at this time due to uncertainty about plans for the property although recently PAUSD revised their planning moving away from a traditional high school, housing and relocating PAUSD administrative offices to Cubberley. This has not yet been approved by the School Board.

5. Ventura Master Plan with planning now in progress. Ventura area is underserved in park and recreation facilities. Obtaining more land contiguous to Boulware Park to accommodate the gym could be considered.
6. Real estate currently controlled by the City of Palo Alto which could be repurposed due to effects of the Covid Pandemic.

The Ad Hoc recommends these two locations:

1. 10.5 acres with the option to include the current Baylands Athletic Center, bringing the available acres to 22 acres to create a city sports complex.
2. Ventura area Master plan and park area.

Project Description – Facility Needs

The list below is based on discussion with user groups, city staff, community sports organizations and commission members.

What a gym needs -

Three basketball sized courts

Sports - basketball, volleyball, pickleball, indoor soccer, badminton, table tennis - appropriate lines on floor and equipment storage

Restrooms

Changing rooms (not including showers which could be optional)

Administrative offices

Exercise rooms including yoga, Zumba, cardiac programs

Meeting room/classrooms

Project description – COST - Potential cost range of these facilities – \$11,000,000 – \$29,000,000 -

Based on survey of gyms in area including

- a. Burgess Gym, Menlo Park
- b. Pinewood Gym, Palo Alto
- c. Castilleja Gym, Palo Alto
- d. Menlo School Gym, Menlo Park
- e. Maples Pavilion Practice Gym, Stanford.

Next steps: We are anxious to proceed with a location discussion and site Planning. Circulation and parking will be dependent upon site chosen as will architecture and the ability to continue traditions of Palo Alto. In addition, referencing and evaluation of sustainability guidelines for the project in accordance with the Palo Alto Sustainability Guidelines must be observed during design and construction.

Landscape

- Preserve existing mature trees.
- Energy-efficient site lighting should be building-directed, and produce a safe environment and clear site orientation.
- Planting and irrigation design should be consistent with Palo Alto's water conservation policies and any Palo Alto landscape design guidelines.

Schedule for Discussion

This project will be presented to the Park and Recreation Commission in November 2021 for support. It will then proceed to City Manager and City Council. Given expected approvals, plus an analysis of community fundraising capacity and capability, the project is could be completed in 2024.

Cost and Funding

Based on review of cost of other gyms in the area, we have a chart of land needed and cost of building. We also recommend a feasibility study to determine our community fundraising capacity. As indicated, we anticipate a capital campaign and an operating endowment.

City staff recommendations

Included below are the questions asked by City Staff. They are important questions that must be answered.

The total project cost is estimated at \$25,000,000.

Once approved, we will provide detailed costs, organization, partnership information and funding information.

The cost of Operations and Maintenance are important to include in this discussion. Confirming average costs with experts in our area, will help us

understand the full amount of funding to be raised. There should be a discussion about the possibility of this facility being operated by a non-city group to reduce burden on City Staff.

But the first step is to outline our vision, understand the initiative and will needed to accomplish the creation of a city gym, pick a location and continue to gather community support and resources.

Again, The Park and Recreation Master plan was accepted in 2017. It clearly cites the need for a city owned gym. Our goal with this discussion is to discuss a vision of a gym for the future. The gym is in the concept stage.

We have included the city staff comments and questions in this report to help all of us understand this undertaking.

1. What is the fundraising time line? Once the City Council approves of the vision and the concept (location, gym description, cost, agreement with the city), the customary path is to identify a lead donor, and confirm support from community sports groups. Friends of the Palo Alto Parks and the Palo Alto Recreation Foundation are both 501 c3 non- profits which are able to receive contributions in support of a gym. Once the project is approved – location, gym description and cost along with an agreement with the City – we believe a lead donor will step forward. We assume that we can find experts for cost escalation should the project not happen for some years.
2. Explain the Business Plan and include an explanation of how the costs were developed. Please include the design costs, permitting costs, CEQA reviews, parking requirements (space and costs).
3. What are the on-going operating costs for the facility – staffing, programming, maintenance, landscaping, utilities and more. Note: Fundraising would include an endowment to pay for ongoing expenses.
4. How would the gym be operated? There have been discussions about private operator, which is an option, to be determined based on interest.

5. What are the alternative uses for the sites being considered? Is there a preferred alternative?
6. What are the expectations of City Staff during the planning phase?
Including planning, public outreach, design, permit approval, CEQA.

We appreciate the questions of city staff, and believe the first step is the discussion and approval of the full commission to recommend this project to the City Council.

Thank you in advance for your consideration. This is an important discussion to have for Palo Alto's youth and the future. The Ad Hoc and the PRC believes that there are many resources in our community and working together we can achieve our goal of a city gym for Palo Alto, as outlined in the Master Plan.