

SUMMARY OF THE CITY OF BOULDER
AQUATICS FEASIBILITY PLAN
DATED APRIL 22, 2015
PERTAINING TO WARM WATER FACILITIES

by
THE CITY OF BOULDER PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD

MAY 18, 2015

On April 22, 2015, the City of Boulder Parks and Recreation Department ("P&R") released the final draft of its Aquatics Feasibility Plan (AFP). The AFP was reviewed and commented upon by the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board ("PRAB") on April 27, 2015, and again on May 18, 2015. At both meetings, several users of Mapleton Pool spoke to PRAB about the need for a warm water facility in Boulder and their personal dependence on a full-size warm water pool for their own health and wellness. Mapleton Pool is located on the former Boulder Community Hospital ("BCH") campus, which BCH sold in December 2014 to developers. Mapleton Hill Investors (MHI) now own the property. BCH has leased back the pool from MHI through December 31, 2015, and continues to keep it open to the general public four days a week (Wednesdays and weekends excluded).

The Mission of the City of Boulder Parks and Recreation (P&R) is to promote "the health and well-being of the entire Boulder community by collaboratively providing high-quality parks, facilities and programs." (Mission Statement, P&R website.) Among PRAB's duties and responsibilities is to offer advice and consultation to City Council and city departments on the acquisition, construction, and maintenance of city park property and to coordinate policy on the development and use of recreational facilities. (PRAB website.)

The AFP made the following findings relevant to the needs of senior adults, disabled adults and disabled children for a warm water therapeutic and wellness facility in Boulder:

- One of the demographic groups in Boulder whose aquatics needs are *not* being met by existing City facilities and programs is that of the adult population (55+). The AFP summarizes this unmet need, based on community input, as "A desire for warm water

amenities to meet therapeutic needs of users with physical and mental disabilities as well as facilitate aquatics lessons and programs for all ages (youth and older adults).” (AFP at 3.)

- According to the AFP, “by 2019, it is projected that the active adult population (55+) will become the second highest age segment in Boulder. This group is projected to make up 22% of the population.” (AFP at 14-15.)
- Also, “[i]t is anticipated that the makeup of the population [of Boulder] will change as it is expected to age and become more diverse and affluent over the next five years ... with household income levels rising by nearly 20%.” (AFP at 16, 17.)
- While the AFP acknowledges that “the Great Recession inhibited [P&R’s] ability to expand on the strong foundation that was established in the last decade of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century,” nevertheless it “is strategically positioned to successfully manage itself forward within the ‘aquatic’ niche that it fills in Boulder. With its balanced demographics buoyed by the University of Colorado, the niche that it has carved out as the leader of aquatic facilities and programs, and the strength of the national and local participation trends in swimming, the market in which the City of Boulder’s aquatic division operates is primed to become a hotbed for aquatics, both now and well into the future.” (AFP at 65.)

The AFP further finds that “The only current provider [in Boulder] of a warm-water facility for the purposes of therapeutic and rehabilitative services is Boulder Community Health. ***This facility is reportedly going to close in December 2015.*** (AFP at 18.) (Emphasis added.) The AFP considers “closure of Mapleton warm water wellness pool at end of 2015” as both a “threat” and an “opportunity.” (AFP at 63, 64.)

- Among the “key recommendations” made by the consultants to the AFP project is that the P&R staff focus on “areas of greatest need of programs and services ... as identified through community engagement” including “Warm Water Wellness.” (AFP at 40.); and
- The AFP describes the benefits of warm water exercise for “active senior adults” as follows:
 - “Swimming is one of the best exercise and social environments available to seniors. It is safe and easy on the body, allowing people to move their bodies without bearing their weight. It is an ideal way for seniors to get in shape and improve their overall wellbeing. For some disabled and seniors, water gives them a sense of freedom as they freely move around in the water.”

- “An aquatic fitness class is a great social outlet for seniors. Warm water lap lanes and wellness pools provide popular warm water activities such as silver sneakers, aqua restore (stay young with water) low impact aqua fitness, aqua walking, and underwater bikes” (AFP at 44.)

However, P & R is constrained by budget limitations that inhibit increases in programming or capital improvements to fill the impending gap in warm water therapeutic and wellness facilities before the fast-approaching closing of the BCH Mapleton Pool on December 31, 2015.

Nevertheless, the AFP places needed warm water therapeutic and wellness activities and increased warm water facilities in the "action" category, which describes the extra services and/or capital improvements "that *should be undertaken when additional funding is available.*" (AFP at 66.) (Emphasis added.)

- “This includes strategically enhancing existing programs, beginning new alternative programs, adding new positions, or making other strategic changes that would require additional operational or capital funding.” (AFP at 66.);
- The AFP states unequivocally that with respect to these enhancements, "in coordination with the CMO, PRAB, and City Council, [P&R] would evaluate and analyze potential sources of additional revenue, including but not limited to capital bond funding, partnerships, program income, grants, and existing or new taxes." (AFP at 66.)

For these reasons, PRAB has adopted the following Resolution requesting that the Boulder City Council authorize P&R to evaluate and analyze potential sources of revenue to fund replacement of the Mapleton Therapeutic and Wellness Pool.

Respectfully submitted,

Boulder Parks and Recreation Advisory Board

By _____
Mike Conroy, Chair Date _____