

# FIRCREST COMMUNITY CENTER

PRE-DESIGN ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING STUDY

AUGUST 2016

PREPARED FOR CITY OF FIRCREST



**a|r|c** ARCHITECTS

AQUATICS: COUNSILMAN-HUNSAKER

LANDSCAPE: BRUCE DEES

CIVIL ENGINEERING: AHBL

STRUCTURAL: PCS STRUCTURAL SOLUTIONS

MECHANICAL: INTERFACE ENGINEERING

ELECTRICAL: TRAVIS FITZMAURICE & ASSOCIATES

ESTIMATING: DCW COST MANAGEMENT

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....</b>	<b>03</b>
• Process and Goals	
• Design Strategies	
• Recommendation	
<b>2. ARCHITECTURAL ASSESSMENT.....</b>	<b>09</b>
• Assessment of Parks, Center and Pool	
• Program and Meeting Summary	
<b>3. DESIGN STRATEGIES .....</b>	<b>13</b>
• Strategy One	
• Strategy Two	
• Strategy Three	
• Strategy Four	
<b>4. ASSESSMENT &amp; BASIS OF DESIGN .....</b>	<b>23</b>
• Structural	
• Mechanical	
• Electrical	
• Civil	
<b>5. APPENDIX .....</b>	<b>25</b>
• Estimate	
• Presentation	
• City Council Work Session, 11.16.15	
• City Council Work Session, 3.21.16	
• Public Open house, 3.30.16	
• Combined City Council and Public Meeting, 5.16.16	
• Aquatic Program Meeting Notes	
• Community Center Program Meeting Notes	
• Soils Report	
• Material Testing Report	





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Process and Goals
- Design Strategies
- Recommendation





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fircrest Community Center and Pool are located in the heart of the City and are vital to the community. The City of Fircrest worked with ARC Architects and its consultant team to investigate design options for improving the Fircrest Community Center and Community Pool. The study provides guidance and strategies for future design. Each strategy enhances programming and use, considers integrating on-going use with proposed improvements, and addresses current code requirements.

The design team included architectural, aquatic, and landscape design and geotechnical, civil, structural, mechanical, and electrical engineering, as well as estimating expertise. All firms were present for in-field investigations and documentation prior to doing any of their engineering and design work.

### PROCESS AND GOALS

ARC Architects worked with the City's steering committee on design options, which were called strategies in our meetings. The committee was knowledgeable about program needs and maintenance and operation challenges of the current center and pool. The design strategies were to address:

- Improved approach to and movement through the center.
- Improved programming for the center, with particular focus on improving youth and senior spaces.
- Analysis of the existing pool, pool deck, and pool mechanical, along with design ideas that improve operations and meet public expectations.
- Civil and landscape site design associated with the design strategies.
- Structural upgrades to meet current codes.
- Mechanical and electrical system upgrades to meet codes and enhance comfort.
- Project costs.

The committee also provided the structure and opportunities for engaging City Council and the public. There were four such opportunities:

- City Council Work Session, November 16, 2015. This was an introduction to Council of the project and design team, discussion of concerns and community needs.
- City Council Work Session, March 21, 2016. The first three design strategies were presented.
- Public Open House, March 30, 2016. The same three strategies were presented for input.
- Combined City Council and Public Meeting, May 16, 2016. Design refinements, based on Council and public input, were presented along with the fourth design strategy.

## DESIGN STRATEGIES

Four design strategies were considered in assessing how best to address needed improvements to the Fircrest Community Center and Community Pool. Each design strategy enhances programming and use, considers integrating on-going use with proposed improvements, and addresses current code requirements. Among the improvements are improved functionality, circulation, accessibility, and visibility, and energy and seismic codes. Each strategy includes an estimate for budgeting purposes, in today's dollars.

The strategies, listed below, are described in greater detail in the Section 3, which also outlines the recommendation to replace the pool in the short term and replace the community center in the long term. The best design strategy for this approach is Strategy 4.

**Strategy 1** – New Pool and Bathhouse, Renovation of Center 9,700 sf Center, 3,400 sf Bathhouse

Estimated Costs (Spring 2016)

Construction costs	\$6,879,000
Soft costs	\$2,751,600
Total (project costs)	<b>\$9,630,600</b>

**Strategy 2** – New Pool and Bathhouse, Renovation and Addition to Center 11,800 sf Center, 3,400 sf Bathhouse

Estimated Costs (Spring 2016)

Construction costs	\$ 8,700,000 (building and site)
Soft costs	\$ 3,480,000
Project costs	<b>\$ 12,180,000</b>

**Strategy 3** – New Pool and Bathhouse, New Center along Electron Way 14,000 sf Center, 3,400 sf Bathhouse

Estimated Costs (Spring 2016)

Construction costs	\$ 9,300,000 (building and site)
Soft costs	\$ 3,700,000
Project costs	<b>\$ 13,000,000</b>

**Strategy 4** – New Pool and Bathhouse, New Center along Contra Costa Avenue 13,000 sf Center, 3,400 sf Bathhouse

Estimated Costs (Spring 2016)

Construction costs	\$ 8,900,000 (building and site)
Soft costs	\$ 3,600,000
Project costs	<b>\$ 12,500,000</b>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### POOL

There is widespread recognition of the issues associated with the existing pool: un-level deck, un-level skimmers, leaking liner or piping or both, pool length that isn't quite 25 yards, aged mechanical equipment, and a design that doesn't account for the hydrology of the site. The cost of renovating the pool approaches the cost of a new pool that fixes these problems and has more useful amenities. For these reasons, it is recommended that the pool be replaced with a new pool with a new 50-year lifespan.

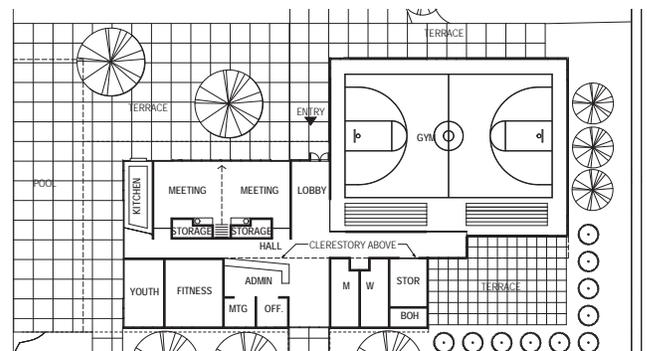
### COMMUNITY CENTER

Residents have consistently expressed an interest in an improved community center. How to reach that goal is the key determinant for selecting a way forward. For Strategies 1 and 2, the costs for improving the center are too significant for a 50-year old building that will continue to have shortcomings. We do not feel the building is worth the kind of investment necessary to make it work well and bring it up to code.

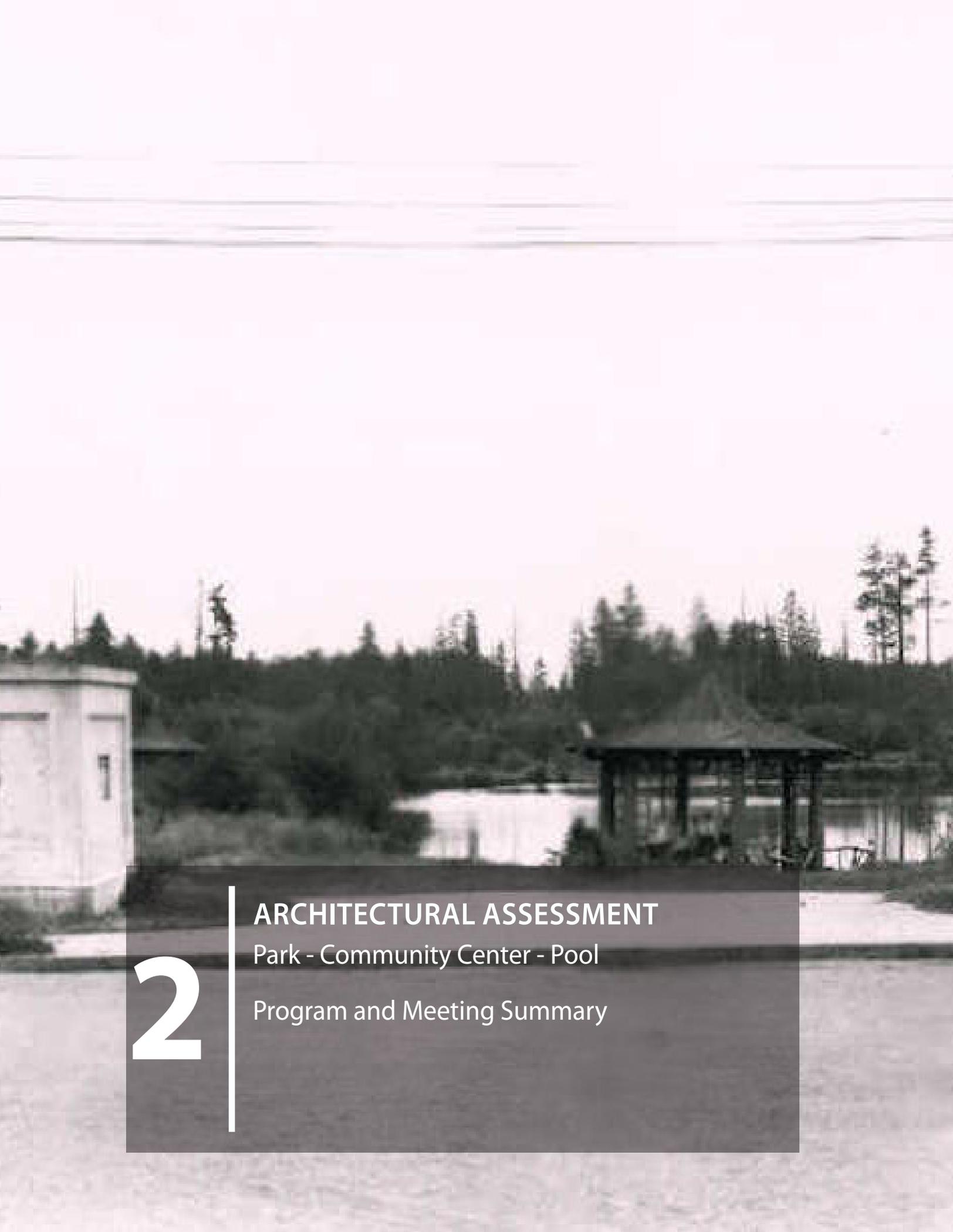
Strategy 3 provides the city with a new pool and new center but requires that both be built as part of the same construction project. The challenge with this option is that residents and electeds will need to find the funding for a project with an estimated \$13,000,000 project budget.

**For these reasons we recommend Strategy 4 as it allows for design and construction of two smaller projects.**

The pool, which has a project budget of about \$3,500,000, can be replaced soon. The new community center, which has a project budget of about \$9,000,000, can be built when there is support for funding it. In the interim, the center can operate as it does now. The benefit of this strategy is that the city and its residents get a new pool and new center, each with new 50-year life spans, and the funding efforts to build them has greater flexibility.





A grayscale photograph of a park. In the foreground, there is a paved area. To the left, a portion of a light-colored building is visible. In the middle ground, a wooden gazebo with a dark roof stands on a paved path. Behind the gazebo, there is a body of water, possibly a pond or a small lake. The background is filled with a dense forest of tall, thin trees under a bright sky.

# 2

## ARCHITECTURAL ASSESSMENT

Park - Community Center - Pool

Program and Meeting Summary

# ARCHITECTURAL ASSESSMENT

## OVERVIEW OF EXISTING FACILITIES

### PARK

The Fircrest Community Center and Community Pool occupy the southwest corner of Fircrest Regents Park. The park is used for community and private events, movies in the park nights, and baseball, soccer and pick-up basketball. There are community built and funded park structures. The beneficial connections between these uses and the community center and pool are obvious to the public and electeds: Keeping the center and the pool in the park is a given.

The park is in the location of the former Spring Lake. The lake was filled in to create the park which left the park with a high water table. There is an underdrain system to address this, but the high water table – at about 3' below the surface - continues to be a characteristic of the site.



Historic Photograph of Original Construction



Historic Photograph of Spring Lake



Historic Photograph of Community Center



Historic Photograph of Fircrest



Current Photograph of Regents Park



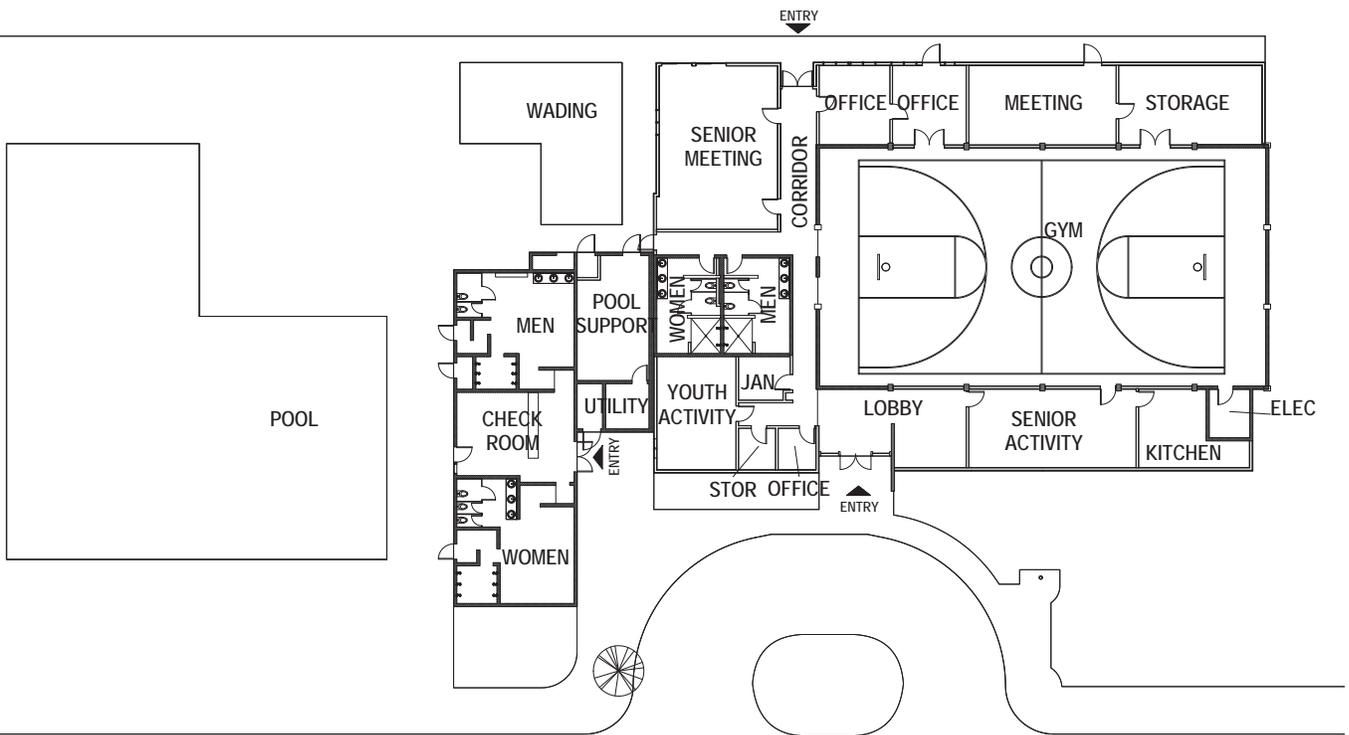
Aerial photograph of Regents Park, Pool, and Community Center

## COMMUNITY CENTER ASSESSMENT

The community center was built in the early 1960's. It was designed by Walter Widmyer, an architect that designed other buildings in Fircrest and nearby Tacoma and elsewhere in the Puget Sound area. He was a respected architect who designed in a contemporary Northwest style. The center was a good example of this aesthetic with its regular structural grid, exposed beams, large expanses of glass, and composition of concrete block and wood siding. He and his wife lived in Fircrest.

The center gets a lot of use and people do like the building. However, previous renovations have compromised functionality: staff can't easily monitor entrances or hallways; you go through the gym to get to some rooms; the Youth Room is not visible to staff; and the entry at the parking lot looks and feels like a back door. The gym has a "junior high" basketball court which is smaller than a "high school" court, the standard for most new community centers.

The building had issues with a leaking roof which led to architecturally unfortunate additions and changes including a gabled roof, filling in and changing window sizes and detailing, and losing nearly all of the interest of the original design's natural wood and concrete block walls. With the exception of an interesting wall at the main entry and the beams in the gym, none of the original design integrity remains.



Floor Plan of the Community Center



View from west side with drop off court



Main west side entry



Gymnasium with minimal side courts



Main lobby with masonry wall



Reception and Offices



Meeting Room with serving kitchen

## POOL ASSESSMENT

The pool, built in the early 1970's, is an L-shaped, 6-lane lap pool with a deep diving tank area. It is a cherished and heavily used public amenity. It supports competitive training but is too short to be used for official swim meets. It is an outdoor pool which fits the needs of Fircrest residents. There is a separate wading pool that is available to the public free of charge.

The pool is over 40 years old and it has suffered from the site's high water table. The pool was emptied for maintenance and the hydrostatic pressure pushed the empty tank upwards. As a result the pool no longer drains properly and the skimmers and deck are uneven. The pool is losing considerable amounts of water through either the liner or piping.

The pool is served by an addition to the community center that accommodates aquatic center staff, public locker rooms, and pool mechanical equipment. The entry to the pool is not easily accessed from the parking lot, though it is easily accessed from the street. The locker rooms are open, lacking the privacy that the public expects in today's facilities. There are no family changing rooms and the design doesn't meet current ADA accessibility requirements. With the exception of a relatively new boiler, the pool mechanical equipment is at the end of its useful life.



## PROGRAMMING & MEETINGS

The committee also provided the structure and opportunities for engaging City Council and the public. There were four such opportunities:

- City Council Work Session, November 16, 2015. This was an introduction to Council of the project and design team, discussion of concerns and community needs.
- City Council Work Session, March 21, 2016. The first three design strategies were presented.
- Public Open House, March 30, 2016. The same three strategies were presented for input.
- Combined City Council and Public Meeting, May 16, 2016. Design refinements, based on Council and public input, were presented along with the fourth design strategy.

Through these meetings the team explored programming options, design strategies, cost estimates and budgets for future renovations and development.

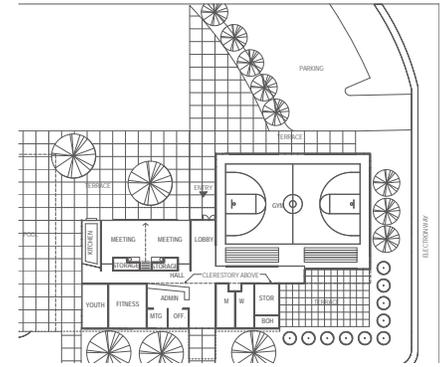
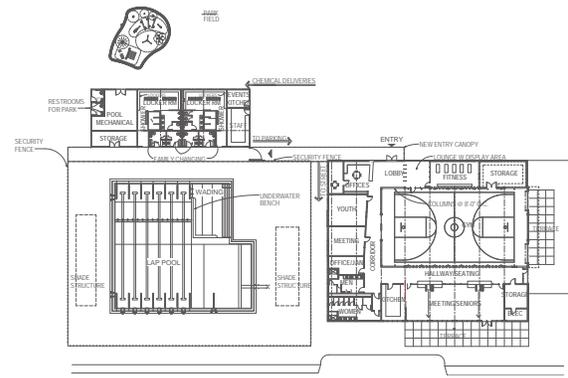
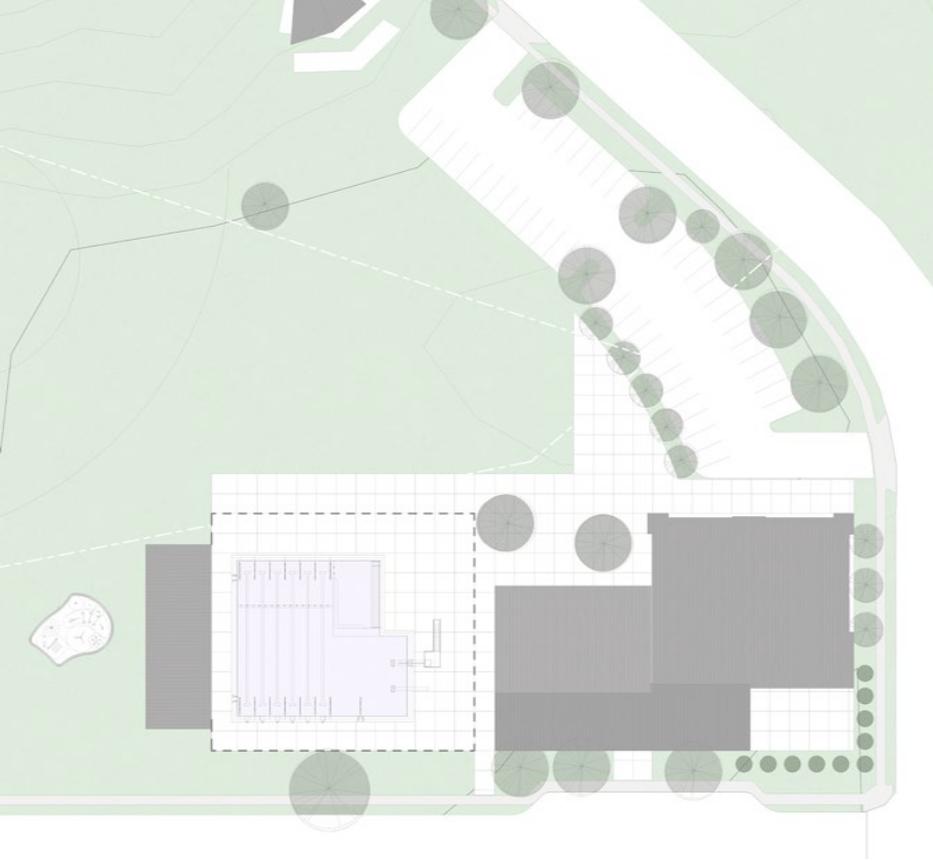
**Public input and City Council considerations were the drivers in the decision making process.**

The design team met with the community center staff and steering committee to review existing program and potential future programs. See meeting notes in the appendix for details.

- The community center programs a wide variety of programs and special events throughout the year. The facility could provide more options and events with a larger meeting rooms and a full size gymnasium with regulation side courts.
- The connection to the park & pool is important.
- The current layout restricts the staff's ability to have visual oversight of the primary spaces and hallways.
- The pool supports a competitive swim team, swim lessons, recreation and community events. A 6 lane 25 yard competition pool is required for the community. Swim lessons would be better facilitated with more shallow water and wider entry stairs.
- The wading pool is currently free and important amenity for the park. At the public meeting, the preference was for a splash play area that is free to the public.

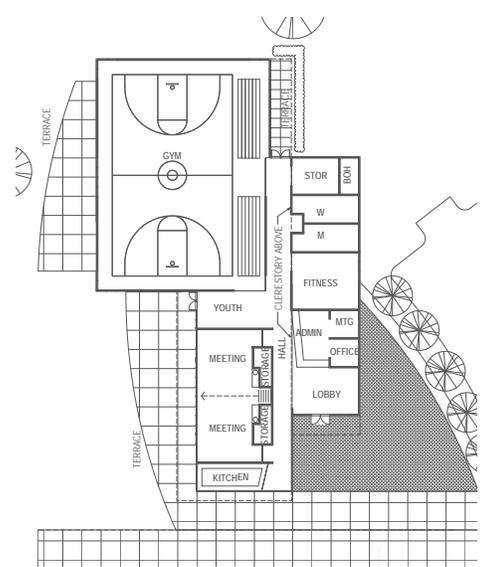
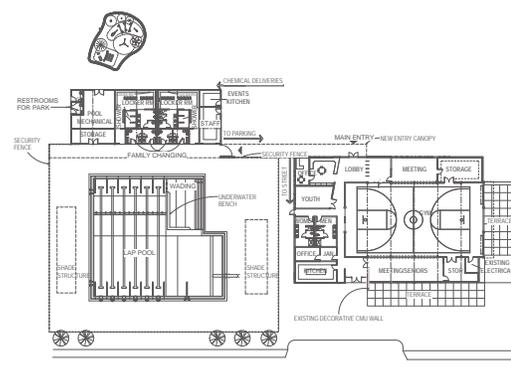
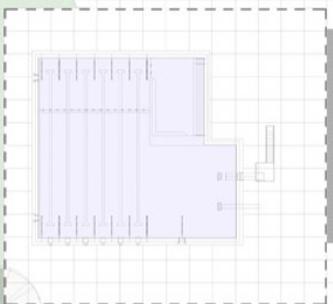






# 3 DESIGN STRATEGIES

- Strategy One
- Strategy Two
- Strategy Three
- Strategy Four



The four design strategies are described below. Each includes a new 6-lane lap pool with diving well and wading area, a new spray park (an amenity that the public can use for free), and a stand-alone bathhouse. The reasoning is that the cost of renovating the existing pool is in the range of 75% of the cost of a new pool and it would still have many of the same problems the existing pool has.

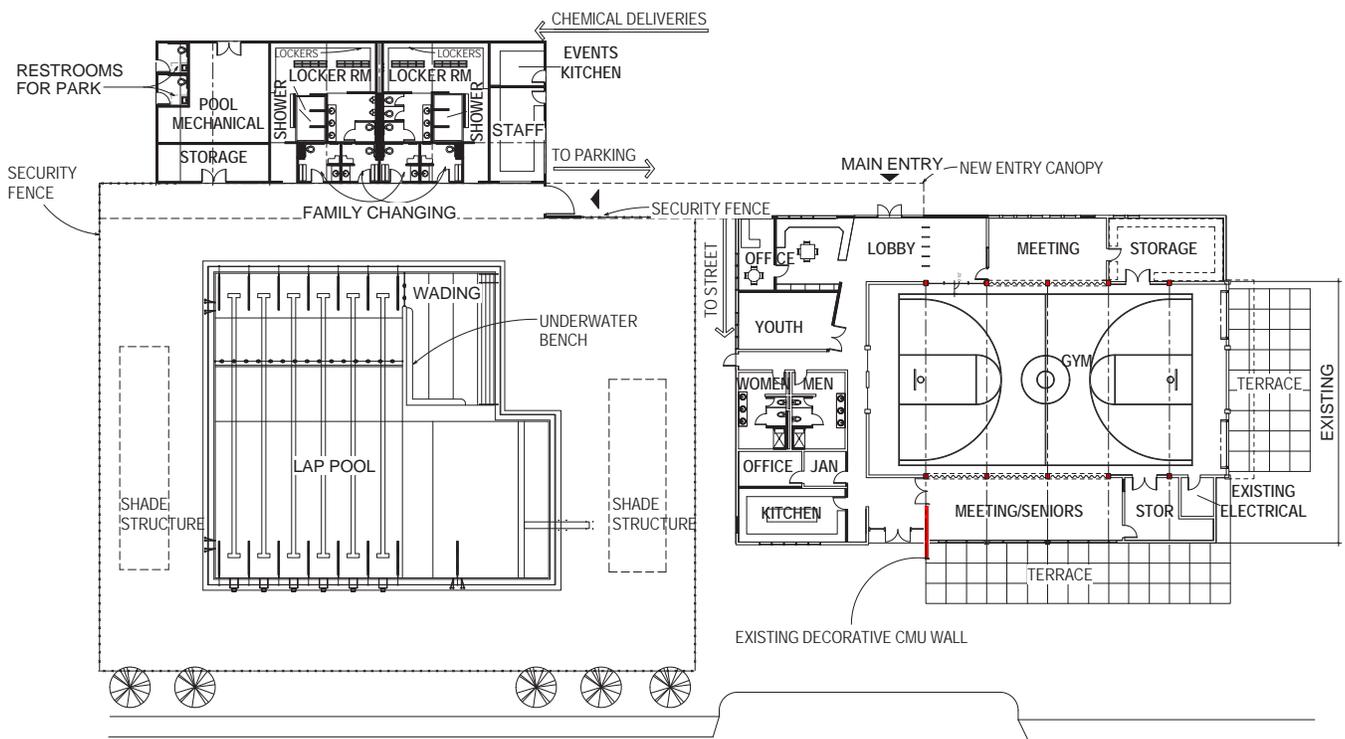
**STRATEGY 1 – New Pool and Bathhouse and Renovation of Existing Center**

9,700 sf Center, 3,400 sf Bathhouse

The center’s exterior stays close to what it is now, with new paint that accentuates some features of the building. New windows are provided at the east and west and a roll-up door provides access to a new terrace south of the gym. On the inside upgraded lighting and mechanical improve comfort and energy use, and new finishes provide a fresh aesthetic. The structural improvements are limited.

Estimated Costs (Spring 2016)

- Construction costs \$ 6,879,000
- Soft costs \$ 2,751,600
- Total (project costs) \$ 9,630,600



CITY OF FIRCREST  
**FIRCREST COMMUNITY CENTER**  
 RENOVATION CONCEPT  
 MAY 10, 2016



Pros

- Improved site design with events lawn and trees, creating a park-like setting
- New and improved aquatic facilities, with restrooms that can be used by park visitors
- Improved entry and parking relationship
- Improved supervision, and flow of patrons and visitors
- East and west walls of the gym are removed to provide space for spectator seating
- The Center has an updated aesthetic inside and the possibility of a new color scheme on the outside.
- Mechanical and electrical upgrades improve comfort and performance.
- Construction of the pool can occur off season; a swim season need not be lost.

Cons

- No interesting or useful indoor connections to the park
- Relatively small Multi-Purpose rooms; no great indoor event space
- Gym has narrow sidelines and court is small and not a standard size
- Structural upgrades are minimal. Concrete block walls at the gym and restrooms are anchored to the roof structure, which is not a full seismic/structural upgrade.
- The restroom improvements do not bring the fixture counts up to code.
- Renovation of the Community Center is extensive and will require that it be closed during construction.
- A significant amount of money is spent renovating a 50-year old building with shortcomings.

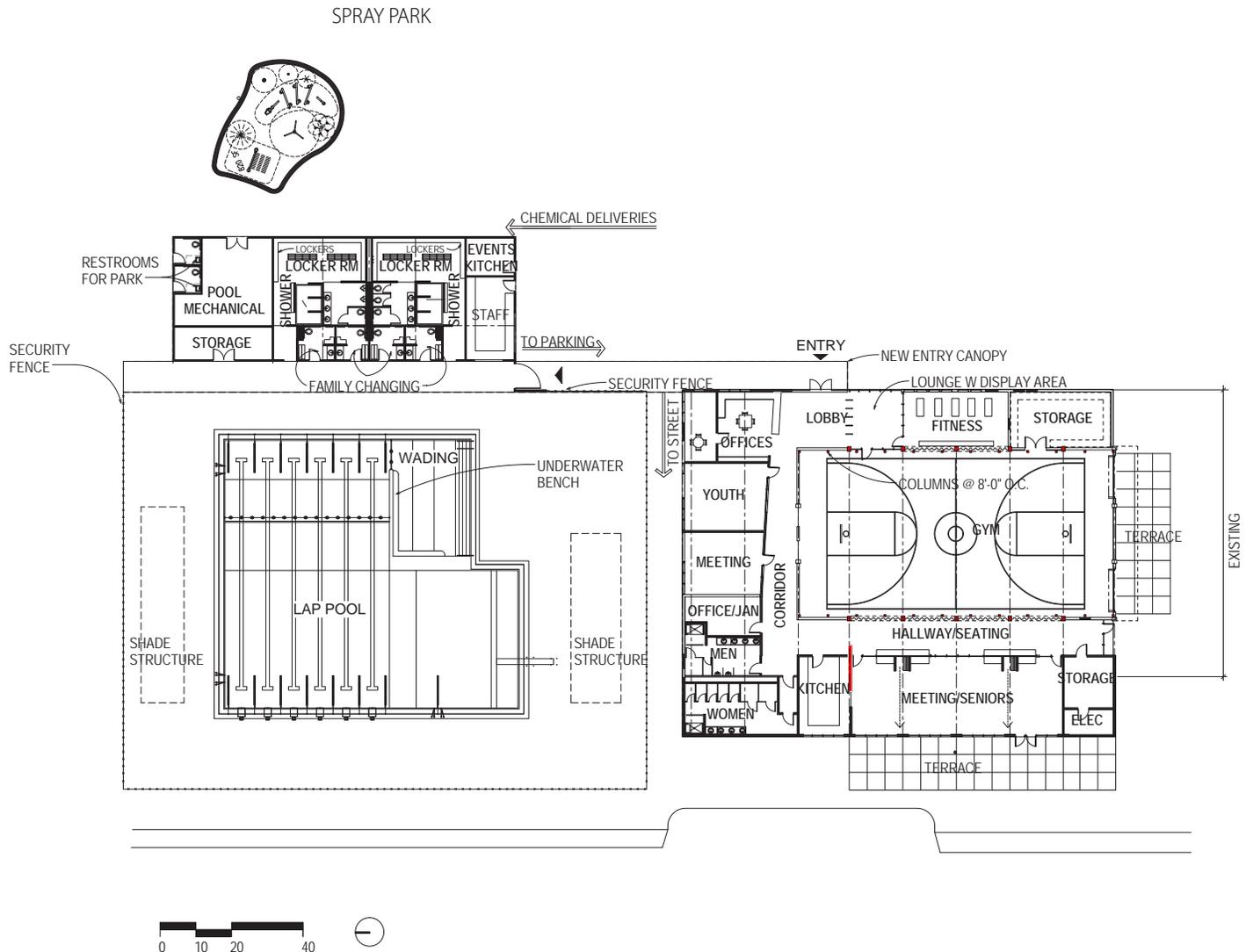
**Strategy 2** – New Pool and Bathhouse, Renovation and Addition to Existing Center

11,800 sf Center and 3,400 sf Bathhouse

This provides similar enhancements as Strategy 1, but with a one story addition to the west. The addition provides a new kitchen that can easily serve activities in the gym and in a new, larger Meeting/Seniors room that is divisible into three smaller spaces. There are new restrooms that bring the fixture count up to code.

Estimated Costs (Fall 2015):

- Construction costs \$ 8,700,000
- Soft costs \$ 3,480,000
- Project costs \$ 12,180,000



CITY OF FIRCREST  
**FIRCREST COMMUNITY CENTER**  
 ADDITION CONCEPT  
 MAY 10, 2016



Pros

- All of the Pros associated with Strategy 1 with the following additions
- East wall of the gym is removed and a new hallway to the south provide space for spectator seating
- The Center has an updated aesthetic inside and the addition provides an opportunity to re-introduce the aesthetic of the original building.
- The Meetings/Seniors room is large enough to handle significant gatherings which can improve fee generation.
- Structural upgrades provide a full seismic/structural upgrade.
- Plumbing fixture counts are code compliant
- Construction of the pool can occur off season; a swim season need not be lost.

Cons

- No interesting or useful indoor connections to the park
- Gym has narrow sidelines and court is small and not a standard size. The structural upgrades include new steel columns that encroach further on the court sidelines.
- Renovation of the Community Center is extensive and will require that it be closed during construction.
- A significant amount of money is spent renovating a 50-year old building with shortcomings.

**Strategy 3** – New Pool and Bathhouse with New Center along Electron Way

14,000 sf Center and 3,400 sf Bathhouse

The Center is organized around a single, easily supervised hallway that gets natural daylight from high windows. It provides access to new appropriately sized rooms. The Youth, Meeting and Gym spaces connect to the park, as does the kitchen which can have a service window for outdoor events. The gym has a high school / college sized basketball court (50' wide x 84' long) with ample sidelines, space for spectators, and the ability to have full-court and half-court games. The location of the building preserves the existing Pavilion.

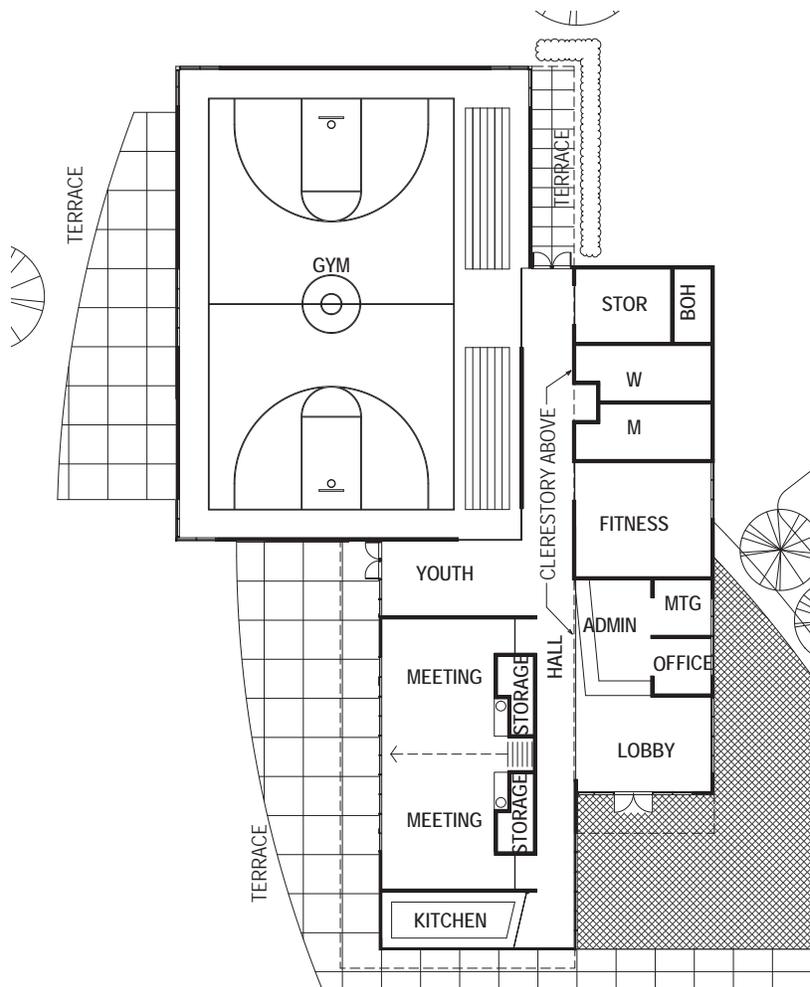
It is envisioned that the new center would be built first, followed by razing of the existing center and pool, followed by construction of the new pool and bathhouse.

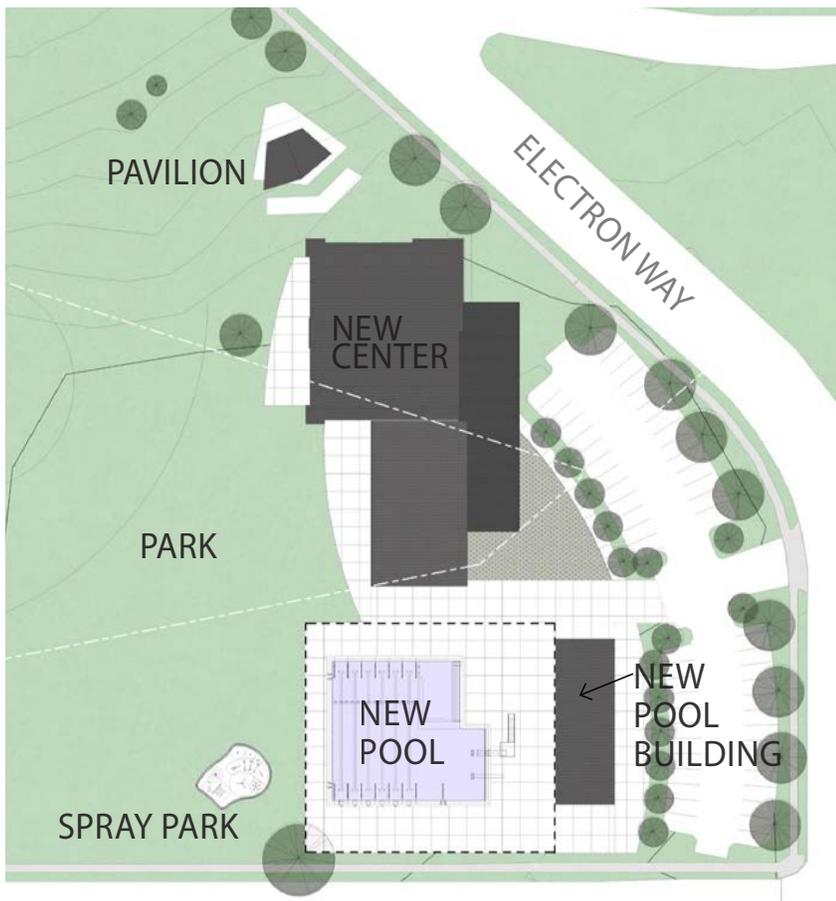
The location of the new center is in an area of the site that has considerable fill. Special foundation design - for example pin piles and grade beams – will likely be required.

The aesthetic of the new building needs much study and input. Appropriate design directions include 1) picking up on the aesthetic of William Widmyer’s original design for the early 1960’s and 2) a park architecture aesthetic that builds off of the traditions of Frederick Law Olmstead.

Estimated Costs (Spring 2016):

- Construction costs \$ 9,300,000
- Soft costs \$ 3,700,000
- Project costs \$ 13,000,000





Pros

- The site areas around the pool and center can be designed to fit the park setting
- New and improved aquatic facilities, with restrooms that can be used by park visitors
- The central hallway makes supervision and patron flow extremely easy
- The gym is sized right and has connections to the park that allow for indoor/outdoor shared use. Acoustics and AV at the gym can be designed so that it can be used for events other than sports.
- The Meetings/Seniors room is large enough to be used for weddings and similar events. It also connects to the park.
- The new center can be built while the existing center and pool remain operational.
- Razing of the existing pool and center and construction of the new pool and bathhouse can occur off season; a swim season need not be lost.
- The cost is relatively close to Option 2 and the city gets a center with a new 50-year life.

Cons

- The building is located on fill which requires special foundations, for example piles and grade-beams, which incur additional costs.
- The location of the building affects views of the parks from homes along Electron Way.
- Those with a personal history with the existing center may feel a loss when it is razed. Including design elements similar to Widmyer's design can help alleviate this concern.

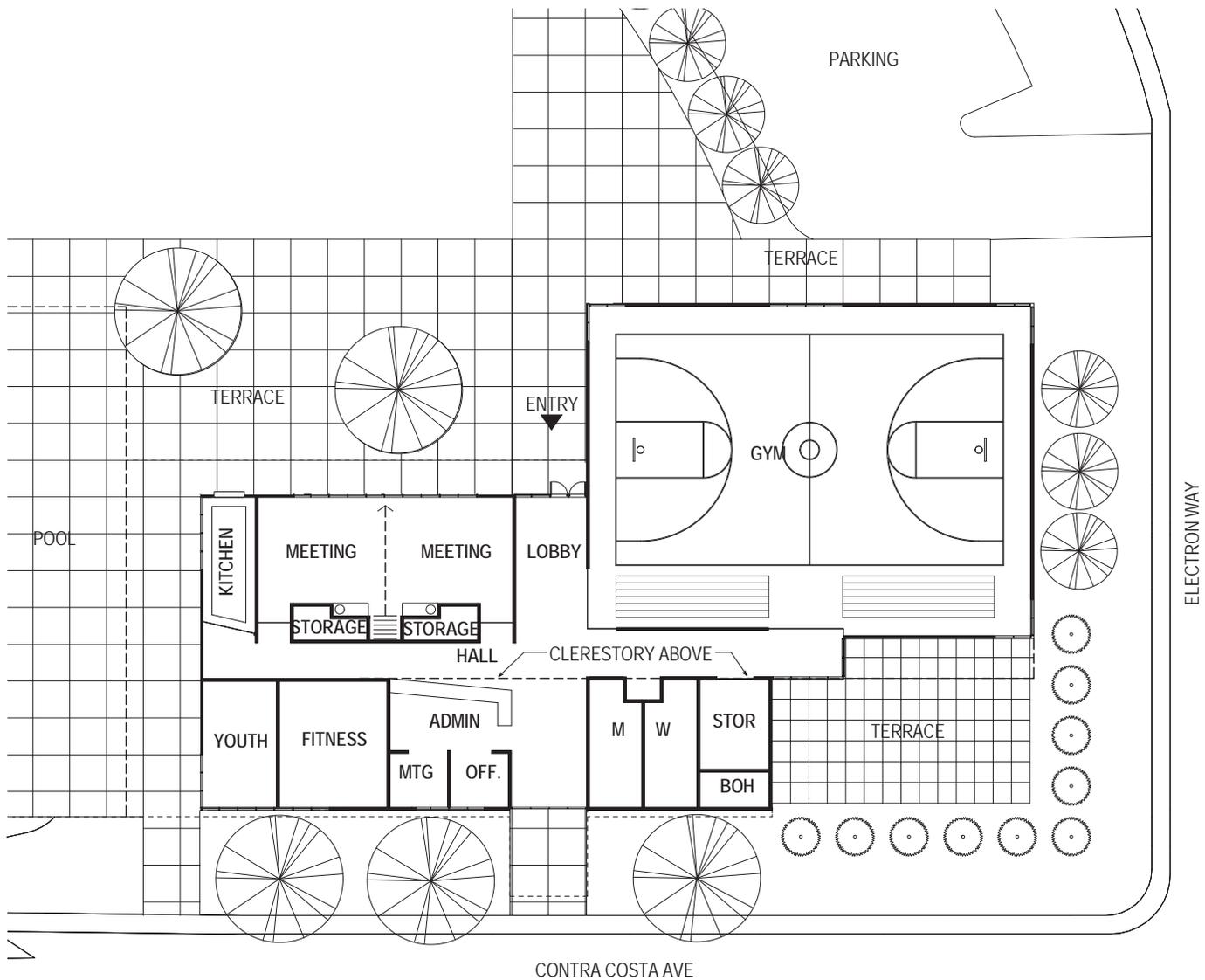
**Strategy 4** – New Pool and Bathhouse, New Center along Contra Costa Avenue

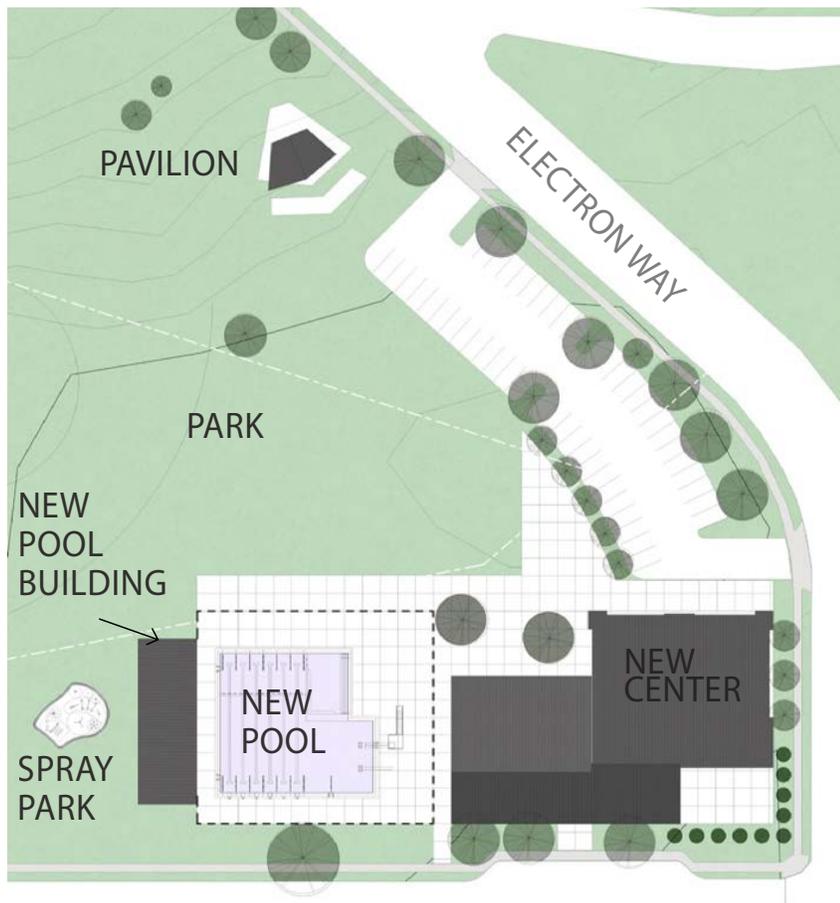
13,000 sf Center and 3,400 sf Bathhouse

Strategy 4 locates the new pool and new center in their current locations. The center has all of the characteristics of Strategy 3 with the added benefit of a centrally located entry that serves the park and the street sides of the building. The aesthetic ideas are the same as those for Strategy 3. There are significant benefits with the strategy, as noted below.

Estimated Costs (Spring 2016):

- Construction costs \$ 8,900,000
- Soft costs \$ 3,700,000
- Project costs \$12,500,000





Pros

- All of the Pros associated with Strategy 3 with the following additions
- Standard foundations can be used since there is no fill in this part of the site
- The city gets a new pool with a new 50-year life span soon, without committing now to a new center
- The city gets a new center with a 50-year life span when timing and support are right for funding it.

Cons

- Those with a personal history with the existing center may feel a loss when it is razed. Including design elements similar to Widmyer's design can help alleviate this concern.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### POOL

There is widespread recognition of the issues associated with the existing pool: un-level deck, un-level skimmers, leaking liner or piping or both, pool length that isn't quite 25 yards, aged mechanical equipment, and a design that does not account for the hydrology of the site. The cost of renovating the pool approaches the cost of a new pool that fixes these problems and has more useful amenities. For these reasons, it is recommended that the pool be replaced with a new pool with a new 50-year lifespan.

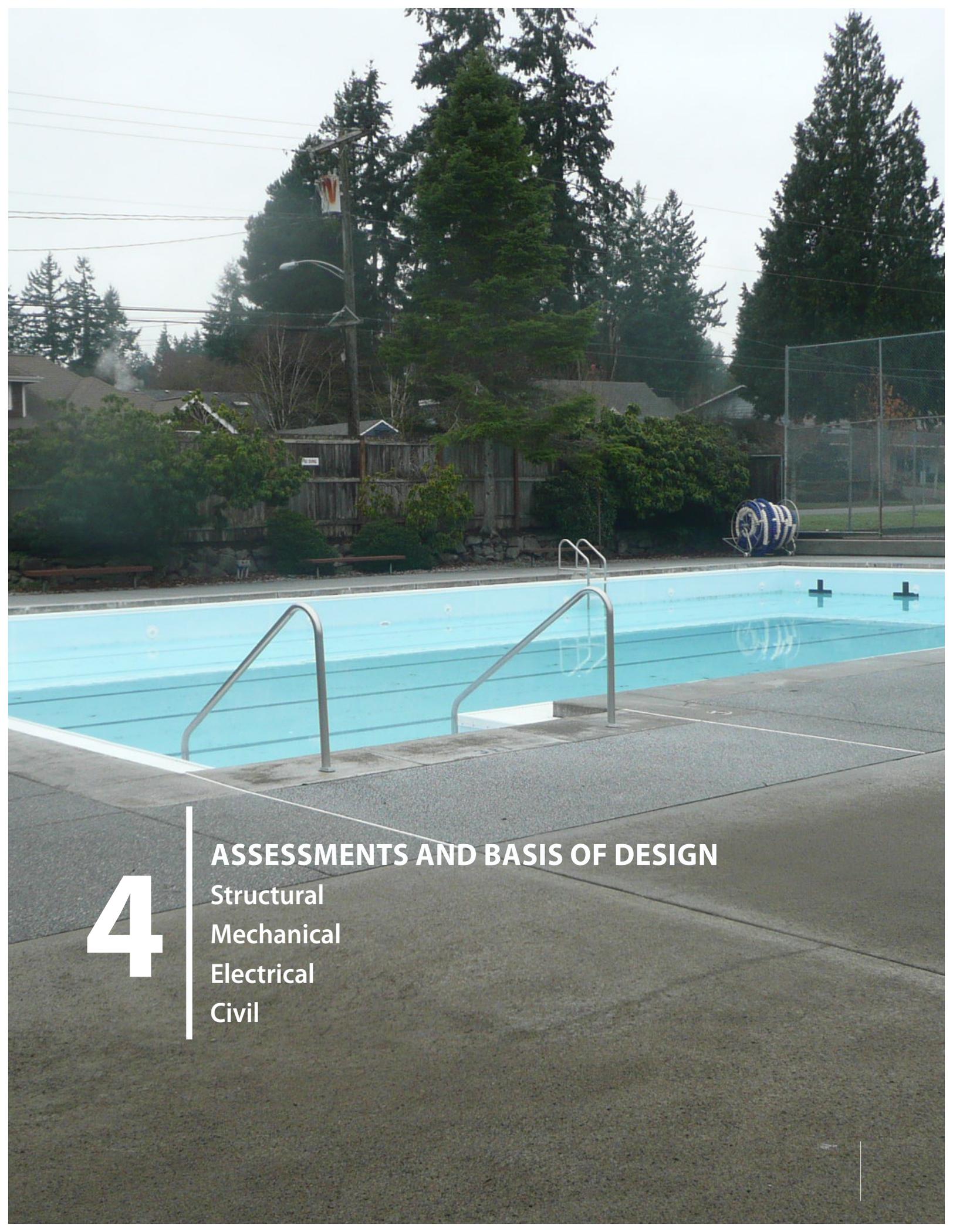
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Strategy 3 provides the city with a new pool and new center but requires that both be built as part of the same construction project. The challenge with this option is that residents and electeds will need to find the funding for a project with an estimated \$13,000,000 project budget.

**For these reasons - we recommend Strategy 4 as it allows for design and construction of two smaller projects.**

The pool, which has a project budget of about \$3,500,000, can be replaced soon. The new community center, which has a project budget of about \$9,000,000, can be built when there is support for funding it. In the interim, the center can operate as it does now. The benefit of this strategy is that the city and its residents get a new pool and new center, each with new 50-year life spans, and the funding efforts to build them has greater flexibility.



# 4

## ASSESSMENTS AND BASIS OF DESIGN

- Structural
- Mechanical
- Electrical
- Civil





# 5

## APPENDIX

- Estimate
- Presentations
- Aquatic Program Meeting Notes
- Community Center Program Meeting Notes
- Soils Report
- Material Testing Report



