



CITY OF SAN MATEO

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Agenda Report

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TO: City Council
FROM: Alex Khojikian, City Manager
PREPARED BY: Public Works and Parks and Recreation Departments
MEETING DATE: November 18, 2024
SUBJECT: Review of City Pools: Current Status, Assessments, and Future Plans

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive a report on the condition assessments of the Martin Luther King Pool and Joinville Swim Center and provide feedback on a comprehensive action plan for maintenance, upgrades, and potential partnerships for continued operations.

BACKGROUND:

The City of San Mateo's primary aquatic facilities, the Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) Pool and Joinville Swim Center, have served the community for over five decades. However, both facilities are experiencing structural degradation and systemic operational challenges due to outdated infrastructure. Major issues include water leakage, obsolete mechanical systems, and accessibility shortcomings, which, if unaddressed, could compromise community access and safety. This report presents the history, current conditions, and recommended upgrades needed to continue offering safe, functional facilities.

HISTORY OF THE POOLS

Joinville Swim Center (2111 Kehoe Avenue)

The Joinville Swim Center, established in 1968, includes a six-lane, 25-meter competitive pool and a smaller pool that share a single filtration system. The facility has undergone periodic updates since its construction through the late 1990s, including re-plastering, filtration upgrades, chemical treatment transitions, and chemical injection system updates. A 2000 facility assessment revealed that both pools' operational lifespans required substantial upgrades or a complete replacement for continued service. The facility has structural defects, has mechanical and plumbing system issues, is generally undersized with limited lifeguard space, inadequate storage space, and lacks a family changing room, is in need of electrical service upgrades, and has suboptimal paths-of-travel between the locker rooms, family restrooms, and shower facilities, which impacts service quality and accessibility.

Martin Luther King Jr. Pool (725 Monte Diablo)

Constructed in 1969, MLK Pool includes a large 27-ft by 36-ft pool and a small 20-ft by 16-ft wading pool that share a single filtration system. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the facility disinfection systems and water heaters were updated to sustain operations. Nonetheless, MLK Pool continues to face numerous challenges, including structural wear, limited mobility access between the pools and locker rooms, and water filtration and circulation issues, all of which hinder the facility's ability to serve the community effectively and meet modern safety and accessibility standards. In addition, the locker rooms have issues with poor drainage and inadequate ventilation, which have led to peeling of paint on ceilings and other wear and tear. Improvements to the locker room will improve the user experience and extend the operational lifespan of the facility.

USAGE, REVENUE, AND EXPENSES

Both pools have shown consistent usage over the past three years, although only operating seasonally, primarily serving youth swimmers and community programs. Each pool also faces substantial demand for group swim lessons, evidenced by significant waitlists. In the 2020 Community Survey Report where residents were specifically asked about aquatics activities and programs, approximately 60% responded they were very or somewhat interested. In the same survey, providing a new recreation facility with pools or replacing existing pools were considered either a high or medium priority to more than half of the respondents in the community.

- Joinville Swim Center: Generates approximately \$68,000 annually with operational costs around \$256,000. Even with an annual average of 1,100 enrollments in group lessons, there is still a high demand resulting in an average waitlist of 600 people annually.
- MLK Pool: Annual revenue is about \$48,000 with \$232,000 in expenses. MLK has an annual average of 890 group lesson enrollments, and an average waitlist of 630, reflecting unmet community demand. This past year, youth participation surged from 694 to 947 enrollments.

These patterns underscore a need for improved facilities and operational efficiency to better serve residents. The Parks and Recreation Department is reviewing and updating its fiscal sustainability policy and as such, will be evaluating the subsidy associated with aquatic programming.

CURRENT STATUS AND ASSESSMENTS

In early 2024, ELS Architecture and Urban Design (ELS) performed detailed assessments (attached) of both pool facilities to determine the scope and preliminary costs of necessary upgrades for safety, compliance, and sustainability. The MLK assessment also evaluated how the facility can align with the City's mission for the facility to function as a resilience center that can provide temporary food and shelter to displaced residents in the event of a local emergency. Key findings and recommendations are provided below. Recommended improvements are divided into two categories: Priority 1 improvements are essential to the functioning of the facility, and Priority 2 improvements are important but may not be essential.

Joinville Swim Center

Joinville faces pressing operational and structural challenges, threatening its safety and functionality:

- Leaks and Structural Damage: Persistent water leaks are causing ground seepage, potentially leading to more significant structural deterioration. Cracked pool decks and sinking areas in the southeast section require immediate intervention.
- Aging and Noncompliant Equipment: Essential equipment such as the sand filters and boiler are beyond their functional lifespans, impacting water quality and efficiency. The water filtrations system should not comingle the water of the two pools and are required to have separate systems.
- Safety Compliance: Exit paths, locker rooms, exit gates, panic hardware, and other facility features are not compliant with current accessibility and emergency standards.

Priority 1 Improvements:

- Redo pool deck and drainage
- New pool equipment and pool repairs, including an addition of about 625 square feet to house new equipment
- Include an additional 125 square feet for a new family changing room
- Provide new exits from the pool deck, including pathways and gates with panic hardware
- New paint throughout
- New automatic door operators at exits from locker rooms to pool deck
- New high/low drinking fountains on pool deck
- New accessible shower in men's locker room, with new tiled walls
- New water-efficient plumbing fixtures
- Replace mechanical equipment and water heaters
- Structural priority 1 upgrades

Priority 2 Improvements:

- Remodel and reconfigure locker rooms with new showers, lockers, benches and plumbing fixtures, including at least one family changing room.
- New plumbing fixtures, including minimum 3 toilets and 3 urinals for men, 4 toilets for women, 3 lavatories each. 4

showers each for men and women.

- New lighting
- New all-electric pool equipment and new electrical service
- Structural priority 2 and 3 upgrades

Total Planning-Level Project Budget to deliver Priority 1 and 2 Improvements: \$14.354 million. This includes ELS's construction cost estimate of \$7.867 million and additional City-estimated soft costs (design, project/construction management, permitting, environmental, health department compliance, etc.) of \$3.154 million and a risk-based contingency (30 percent) of \$3.312 million.

Martin Luther King Jr. Pool

MLK Pool faces similar issues to Joinville, with additional safety hazards:

- **Structural Integrity:** Cracked pool decks and a rusted gas line in the mechanical room pose severe safety risks and need immediate attention.
- **Outdated Systems:** The sand filter and mechanical equipment have surpassed their service lives, while a leaking roof requires prompt repair to prevent further damage.
- **Safety and Accessibility:** Inadequate mobility accommodations and locker room configurations fall short of current ADA requirements.

Priority 1 Improvements:

- Redo pool deck and drainage. Provide transition for 6" level change between interior and exterior with ramps and railings.
- New pool equipment and pool repairs. Note: this includes an addition of about 525 square feet to house new equipment.
- Provide for new exits from pool deck, including pathways and gates with panic hardware
- New automatic door operators at exits from locker rooms to pool deck.
- Complete remodel of existing locker room/office area. Provide new accessible facilities, fixtures, finishes, lighting, interior walls.
- New water-efficient plumbing fixtures in locker rooms. Minimum 2 toilets and 2 urinals for men and 2 toilets for women with 2 lavatories for each and 2 showers for each.
- Replace mechanical equipment and water heaters
- Structural priority 1 upgrades
- Allowance for roof repairs – City staff have identified ongoing issues with roof leaking and water accumulation within the layers of the roof assembly.

Priority 2 Improvements:

- All-electric pool equipment and electrical service upgrade.
- New all-electric kitchen meeting health department requirements for commercial kitchen, including grease trap, three-compartment sink, handwash sink, dry storage, new floor and wall finishes and washable ceiling finish.
- New lighting throughout
- New courtyard paving and drainage
- Structural priority 2 upgrades

Resiliency Improvements:

- Electric water heating (included with Priority 1)
- Add solar panels to all roof areas (included with Priority 1)
- Standby power system (see electrical assessment—included with Priority 1)

Total Planning-Level Project Budget to deliver Priority 1, 2, and Resiliency Improvements: \$19.066 million. This includes ELS's construction cost estimate of \$12.664 million and additional City-estimated soft costs (design, project/construction management, planning review/approval, permitting, environmental, health department compliance, etc.) of \$2.910 million and a risk-based contingency (30 percent) of \$3.492 million.

PLANS FOR THE COMING YEAR

The Public Works and Parks and Recreation Departments propose a phased approach to repair and upgrade the facilities.

- Immediate Term (2025 and 2026 Summers):
 - Joinville: Implement critical emergency repairs to maintain safe conditions and operate the pool facilities during the peak summer season. This includes replastering critical cracks.
 - MLK: Ensure uninterrupted operation by completing emergency repairs to keep service available to the community. This includes replacing the sand filter and a chemical pump.
 - Anticipated costs for immediate term improvements at both sites is estimated at \$500k.
- Short Term:
 - Joinville: After the 2025 summer operations complete, Joinville Pool will need to undergo code compliance upgrades. This would include a full replastering of the pool, separate filtration systems for the two pools, and upgrades to changing rooms. This would be focused on necessary improvements to extend the useful life of the pool through the remainder of the City's lease period (through 2040) for the adjacent park lands from the San Mateo Foster City School District. Initial costs for detailed scoping of the necessary improvements are estimated at \$200k. Costs for the upgrades, to extend the useful life of this facility for an additional 10-15 years, are likely in excess of \$2 million.
 - MLK: Solicit proposals for community engagement and visioning for a new pool, resilience center, locker rooms, electrified equipment, and code-compliant filtration systems. Initial cost estimates for the visioning/engagement process are \$200k.
- Long Term:
 - Joinville: With Joinville's lease set to expire in 2040, strategic discussions are required to determine the future of the facility, and potential operational models and facility options. This may include looking at contract operators of aquatic operations and programming as an option for providing year-round programming as opposed to just seasonal.
 - MLK: Establish the King Center as a community resiliency center, which will serve as both a community resource and emergency response facility. This long-term vision supports the broader city goals to enhance community infrastructure for climate resilience and public health. The City received a directed federal earmark of \$850k toward this effort.

EXPLORING PARTNERSHIPS WITH LOCAL INSTITUTIONS

In preparation for potential facility closures during renovations, the Parks and Recreation Department has engaged San Mateo High School, Aragon High School, Hillsdale High School, Serra High School, Highlands Recreation Center, Peninsula Jewish Community Center, King Swim Academy, Elks Lodge, and the College of San Mateo Aquatics. So far, Highlands Recreation Center, Elks Lodge and San Mateo High School have expressed interest in collaborating to provide swimming lessons and recreational swim opportunities, if needed. San Mateo High School is the most likely backup choice due to the location in the North Central area. Operating out of San Mateo High School would incur a pool rental rate of \$187/hour, plus a charge for at least 4 hours/day of a Certified Pool Operator (\$60/hour) to test and maintain the pool's chemical levels. Total cost for use of the San Mateo High School pool in Summer 2025 for full programming both weekdays and weekends would be approximately \$100,000 to \$150,000. Should staff determine it is not possible to open the MLK pool, staff will return with an agreement for council approval at a future meeting with the details and costs associated.

FEEDBACK FROM CITY COUNCIL:

Staff is seeking feedback from Council on three questions

1. Does Council support taking the necessary steps to make immediate-term improvements at both Joinville and MLK pools to allow for operation of aquatic programming in Summer 2025? This will require an appropriation of \$500k from reserves as there is not existing budget to implement these improvements. Costs may increase as additional critical issues may surface as the improvements are being made.

2. Does Council support scoping the necessary upgrades to extend the useful life of the Joinville facility to coincide with the remainder of the City's lease period for the adjacent parkland (2040)? This will require an appropriation of \$200k from reserves as there is not existing budget to perform this scoping assessment. A further appropriation, likely over \$2 million, is anticipated to implement the necessary upgrades.
3. Does Council support initiating a community engagement and visioning process for upgrading the MLK facility to include pool renovations and upgrades to serve as the City's resilience center? This will require an appropriation of \$200k from reserves for this effort as there is not existing budget to perform this engagement/visioning process. Initial estimates, as detailed above, are approximately \$19 million for a full-scale renovation of the pool and addition of resilience features.

BUDGET IMPACT:

There is no budget impact for providing feedback on this item. Any direction regarding appropriation of funds would be brought before the Council for consideration at a separate meeting. It should be noted that the City received federal earmark funding in the amount of \$850,000 for MLK resiliency center improvements. For any substantial multi-million-dollar upgrades to City facilities, the City would likely have to pursue a future revenue measure.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:

This study session on pool conditions is not a project subject to CEQA, because it is an organizational or administrative activity that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment. (CEQA Guidelines Section 15378(b)(5).)

NOTICE PROVIDED

All meeting noticing requirements were met.

ATTACHMENTS

- Att 1 – Joinville Swim Center Pool Assessment Report
- Att 2 – King Pool Assessment Report
- Att 3 – Usage and Financial Data

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