Alameda Community,

On June 8th, the City of Alameda and ELS Architecture and Urban Design facilitated the second of a two-part community workshop series to develop the design of the Alameda Aquatic Center. Similar attendance as Workshop #1, nearly 50 people gathered for Workshop #2 at the Albert H. DeWitt Officers' Club, (O'Club) as ELS and City Staff shared the program direction for a 2-pool concept voted the favorite scheme through 1400+ community responses to the online survey. The community responses were gathered via a survey presented in-person at the Mastik Senior Center and the Alameda after-school program on May 29th, at the Encinal Swim Center during a swim meet on the weekend of June 1st and the same survey was accessible via QR code at various locations throughout Alameda, as well as the City's website and several social media sites. The online survey received 1336 responses, while the in-person outreach efforts collected another 59 responses. In total, 75% of the responses were in favor of a two-pool concept with a 30m pool + activity pool over a the 50m pool.

To further refine the preferred aquatic center concept presented at Workshop #2, the City and ELS seek input from those who could not attend in person via another online survey that went live on Saturday, June 8th and will close at the end of June. The input collected from workshop attendees and the survey will be integrated into design options that will be presented to the Rec and Park Commission on July 11th and to City Council on July 16th

The Alameda Aquatic Center project is funded in the amount of $30 million, 50% from the General Fund Unassigned Reserves and 50% financed by a Certificate of Participation. It will be built at the west end of Jean Sweeney Open Space Park and will include either two pools (an activity pool + a 30m competition pool) or a 50m pool. Supporting the pools will be a one-story aquatic building that includes lobby, admin offices, locker rooms, community room, and the pool equipment room. With an entry on the east side of the site, the City and ELS are working with a wind consultant to design a wind barrier to keep the pool deck comfortable. The design is anticipated to be greenhouse gas emission free, consistent and in support of Alameda's Climate Action Plan, and is slated to be completed and ready for construction April, 2025; a grand opening is scheduled for late summer 2026.

During Workshop # 2 the City and ELS presented the unique opportunity of designing an aquatic center to fit within the $30M budget. The aquatic center must meet the needs of the Alameda community as a whole and help facilitate city programming. Currently the City is under a shared agreement with AUSD to operate programs during times when there is no school programming, giving the City's limited access and control. Other pools in the community require membership fees that outprice many in Alameda. Pool space is in high demand by all generations in Alameda for swim lessons, summer camps, adaptive needs classes, swim teams, dive teams, water polo, lap swimming, aerobics classes, and senior health and rehabilitation programming. The multigenerational programming is at the heart of the debate of two-pools vs the 50m pool.

The plan for Workshop #2 was to further refine the two-pool scheme, and while progress was made, the debate in the room of 50 attendees, similar to Workshop #1, primarily still revolved around the initial concept of two-pools (30m competition pool + an activity pool) or a 50m pool. The room was divided with those in support of the 50m and those in support of two-pools. A potential third option could be a 50m pool + activity pool, which would provide the most versatile programming; but unfortunately, this exceeds the current planned budget significantly. No final decision has been made, and the conversation continues.

Other areas of discussion included the layout of the activity pool. three options for the potential activity pool were presented including; a 3-lap lane option with a beach entry and bubbler features, a 3-lap lane option with large teaching steps and a beach entry, or a 4-lap lane option with a slightly smaller beach entry feature. The room again seemed divided with the desire for family features pitted against the need for additional lane space.

The workshop attendees were also asked about their preferred layout of the locker rooms. Both the option for separate men's and women's locker rooms plus two all-user changing rooms and the option of a larger all-user locker room with private changing, toilet and shower rooms, plus two all-user changing rooms were presented. There were many concerned attendees on both sides of this topic, but in general, the room seemed open to the all-user locker room layout.

Preferred design and activities for the front entry plaza, community meeting room, internal lawn spaces were discussed. There was a strong desire for native planting considerations, keeping true to the open space, and supplying ample shade areas for people to gather.

Lastly, the topics of water temperatures and lane widths were discussed. Water temperature is a highly debated topic and unfortunately large bodies of water are hard to adjust in a short time frame, nor is it usually energy efficient to do so. In general, the competition pool, either 30m or 50m, would be kept on the cooler side while the activity pool would be kept warmer. Temperature is a personal preference and the City's desire is to pick a temperature that, on average, makes the most people in the community happy.

The lane width discussion is more complicated. If people swim only one or two people per lane, smaller widths work and the total number of lanes is increased. However, if people are going to circle swim, wider lanes make it easier to do all four competitive strokes without the fear of hitting one another. As the number of swimmers in a lane increases, it becomes more cumbersome to pass by other swimmers in the lane if needed. The competition pool will, at least, have a section that meets the minimum 7' width required by USA Swimming. Typically, competitive pools at high school and college level throughout California have 8' width lanes. The question to the community was should the entire pool have the same width lanes, all at 7-9' widths, or, depending on competition layouts, should there be a combination of lane widths. In general, the attendees spoke to either all 8' widths or coming up with a combination that meets both the competitive swimmers and water polo needs while also increasing lanes for general lap swim.

The slide show presentation from Workshop #2 is available on the Alameda City Website.
https://www.alamedaca.gov/Departments/Recreation-Parks/Alameda-Aquatic-Center

If you missed Alameda Aquatic Center's Workshop #2 or if you would like to make additional comments, you can view the questions asked in the workshop #2 and type your comments in the space provided in the online survey: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/AlamedaAquaticCenterWorkshop2. The online survey will be available until 7pm on Friday June 14th.

For this project's next steps, the City and ELS will continue to advance the programming and conceptual design effort. The input collected from the Community Engagement Series: Workshop #1 and #2 will be integrated into design options that will be presented to the Rec and Park Commission on July 11th and to City Council on July 16th

We appreciate our community's readiness to attend these important workshops. Your thoughts are invaluable to this process.

Thanks,
The City of Alameda and the ELS Team