

# Healthier Together

Building Community Health and Wellness Together

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Jefferson County, Washington

August 2022

## **Community Health and Wellness Facility Port Townsend, Jefferson County**

### **PURPOSE:**

To provide long-term infrastructure and opportunities for improving community health and wellness by building on previous collaborative efforts and meeting the evolving needs of our community. To reengage previous partners and the community to establish a health and wellness center with a modern aquatic's component.

### **CURRENT CONDITIONS**

Opportunities to live an active and healthy life play a vital role in every community.

In 2019, Jefferson Public Health, the City of Port Townsend, and Jefferson Healthcare collaborated on a [Community Health Assessment \(CHA\)](#) county-wide. After a robust community process and gathering of data, the study concluded that stress, income, physical activity, health problems, and housing were the five top challenges for our community. In addition, the State of Washington publishes [census tract demographic information](#) comparing statewide statistics. This demographic data shows that Port Townsend and Jefferson County median household income is below the statewide average, the disabled population is above the state average, and the mortality rate is above the state average. The State Recreation Conservation Office uses these indicators to determine the vulnerability of a community and prioritize funding for parks, recreation, and health and wellness opportunities based on these statistics.

Jefferson County, Jefferson Healthcare, Port Townsend School District, the Port of Port Townsend, the YMCA (used throughout this document as the Y), the Jefferson Aquatics Coalition, and the City each play a part in the provision of opportunities for health and wellness. Whether providing access to healthcare, essential services, access to prevention, quality of life opportunities, education, or access to health and fitness, each of these components is necessary for a healthy community.

Provision of assets and opportunities that promote healthy lifestyles keep people both physically and mentally healthy, promote greater mental well-being, and are critical for childhood development. Providing opportunities for community wellness helps sustain a community and supports economic activity, employment creation, attraction, and retention. Employees are more likely to locate near high-quality parks and recreation amenities. Providing these amenities also creates a high value to stay in the area, and often leads to increased home and economic opportunities. These types of programs and amenities are also often a leading source for first jobs for youth and young adults.

An aquatics facility in a community can provide both preventative care and health and fitness for all ages. Providing the opportunity for every child to learn to swim is a health and safety issue for a community surrounded by water. Providing water fitness, a warm water therapy pool, and access to lap swimming helps people age gracefully and live a healthy lifestyle. The current Mountain View pool, circa 1963, is beyond its useful life and is being operated and maintained by the city and the Y. The City continues to invest in the pool to extend its useful life, but this will not continue to be sufficient for optimal, up-to-date needs, and the growth of the community in East Jefferson County. The Jefferson County Community Center, operated by the County runs the cooperative play school, teen drop-in center, parks and recreation basketball, and a myriad of community uses. The PT Senior Center operates upstairs in the community center. Jefferson County community center plays a key role in the community but is limited in its capacity.

The previously mentioned partners have an opportunity to learn from our past conversations, collaborate on a present planning process and address the needs of our community. The time is crucial and ideal for providing a community health and wellness facility to contribute to the well-being of everyone in Jefferson County.

## BACKGROUND

There have been many efforts over the past decades to plan for and rebuild the pool and/or a community health and wellness facility for Port Townsend, East Jefferson County, and Jefferson County as a whole. This background focuses on just the last two decades. Concentrated efforts were made in 2001 by the city, 2008 by a nonprofit, 2012 by the County, 2014- 2018 by the Y and Hospital District, and efforts have been stalled since the pandemic. In each of these cases, the efforts did not have the full attention or investment from all community partners. The brief exploration of these processes will help us all learn that the establishment of a health and wellness facility will take the whole community. This is a heavy lift and collaboration is essential.

In 2001, the city commissioned an analysis of the current pool and the possibility of adding a second tank, an aerobics/training area to the facility, childcare, and a hot tub. It was recommended to perform various maintenance items, and the various upgrades and additions were costed at approximately \$5m. The city opted to not go forward with the expense.

In 2008, *Make Waves!*, a local nonprofit, engaged in a planning effort that recommended a 33,837 square foot facility, including a lap pool, warm water exercise, kids play pool, hot tub, fitness and exercise areas, daycare, youth activity center, gym, racquetball courts, locker rooms, and an administrative area. The estimated cost was \$7.2M. *Make Waves!* sited the facility at Kah Tai Lagoon. Siting it at Kah Tai Lagoon Nature Park was met with fierce opposition. This effort failed and *Make Waves!* abandoned the plan in 2012.

In 2012, the City commissioned another analysis of the current pool and funded some repair efforts. These included a new liner, new lighting in the natatorium, repairs to the deck, a new HVAC system, replacement of the oil-fired boilers with efficient propane-fired boilers, and improvements for code compliance. The costs were funded by the \$3.6M Mountain View Improvement bond which was approved by 71.4% of the voters in February 2015.

In 2013, the County led an effort to explore the option to establish a Metropolitan Parks District in East Jefferson County. It was anticipated that the funding and operation of a new pool facility would be part of any MPD. The task force concluded that there was not adequate public support for voter authorization of an MPD and the task force and effort were abandoned.

In 2014, building on conversations between the Y and Jefferson Healthcare, the North Olympic Development Council secured funding from the EPA for a community engagement and planning effort to create a vision for a wellness and aquatic center with therapeutic, medical facilities. Many community partners and federal and state agencies participated in the effort, which resulted in a stated need for a wellness and resilience center. This would include an aquatics component. The Jefferson County Aquatics Coalition was added to the effort. The Y commissioned a feasibility study that demonstrated considerable public support for a Jefferson County Y facility. There was considerable support to site this facility at the Mountain View Commons, which brought the City and School District into the conversation. Spanning the next few years, the Y commissioned a facility design study and capital campaign study. The estimated cost for the design was \$25M. The capital campaign study concluded that (a) it was unlikely that \$25M could be raised and (b) that the Y did not have the organizational capacity to undertake the project. The Y decided to take over the operations of the Sequim Aquatic Recreation Center and prioritized this at this time. Both of these developments ended this effort.

The years 2016-2017 bought a different vision to the community, to capitalize on possible federal funding. The scope of the Community Health and Wellness Center expanded to include use as a Community Resiliency and Recovery Center. It was decided to have all the partners join in an MOU. The partners included the city, PT School District, Jefferson Healthcare, the County, and the YMCA. The Y was designated the lead.

In 2018-2020 the North Olympic Y started work as the leader of this effort. They hired a consultant to help lead the effort. The final design effort culminated in a recommendation to demolish the current pool and build a 43,000-45,000 square foot facility, with a two-pool natatorium, gym, and dry space on the same site. It was proposed that 50% of the cost come from a Metropolitan Park District with the corresponding boundaries of the Port Townsend School District. The remaining 50% would be from the Y capital campaign (25%) and state capital grants and contributions to local public entities (25%). The plan met with some trepidation from the community stakeholders and government leaders, and the local aquatic community because it would take aquatics offline during demolition and construction. This plan failed for a lack of support.

In 2019-2020, the city implemented a Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) planning process that culminated in an adopted plan in March 2020. This was parallel to the Y process

mentioned above, and the plan did not delve into the community's needs or desires. The plan states:

*The city is currently engaged in a multi-agency discussion about the development of a new, full-service YMCA that would include an updated and more modern aquatic center to replace Mountain View Pool. Proposed funding mechanisms for the project include a Metropolitan Park District. Given this process has been underway for several years, this PROS Plan was not purposed with exploring the viability of the proposed YMCA but, rather, to focus more exclusively on the other components of the City's parks and recreation system so decisions regarding funding options, partnerships, facilities, and recreation programming could be made more holistically. Additional public involvement and elected official discussions about Mountain View Pool and future investments in city parks and recreation are forthcoming and should be informed in part by this PROS Plan. (Pages 100-101).*

In 2021, the pool facility failed on a few fronts. The city was able to provide significant upgrades over the past few years to keep it open. In addition, although the City contracted with the Y for operations, the facility maintenance responsibilities are still the responsibility of the City. The current pool is in poor condition and is on its last legs. To continue efforts and funding to keep the Mountain View pool operational is not a prudent use of city Funds. It is an ideal time to reconsider this possibility within the community. With many leadership changes, the boost from ARPA funds allowing Port Townsend to hire someone to take the lead on this project, and the rekindled collaboration of partners, the City is committed to seizing the opportunity of alignment to jump-start another planning effort to establish a community health and wellness center for the area. The City also acknowledges that to build a new facility for the community, it will take public, private, nonprofit, and residents to assist with this effort. The city seeks to work with and influence partners to collaborate on this massive effort for this community for our collective and enduring benefit.

## COLLABORATION

As stated previously, the planning and construction of a Community Health and Wellness Center is a massive undertaking that will take many partners to accomplish. Potential partners for this effort include the City of Port Townsend, Jefferson County, Jefferson Healthcare Hospital District, Port Townsend School District, the Olympic Peninsula YMCA, the Port of Port Townsend, and the Jefferson Aquatic Coalition.

Initial discussions show support for each of these entities at differing levels. The City of Port Townsend will take the lead, as mentioned previously, on an initial planning effort to assess partners' support, launch a planning effort with the partners and the community, finalize concepts for a new facility, site this facility, identify elements of potential financing, and poll the community for tolerance to assist in the financing.

## PLANNING

The community planning effort will include concepts, research, and feasibility for siting, costing, and managing expectations, an implementation plan, including financing, and polling for any

community financing initiatives that may be needed. The planning effort will be a multi-phased effort culminating in a final report and implementation plan that will be transmitted to each public entity, the community, and stakeholders. It will identify the next steps for implementation and the roles and responsibilities of each public entity. It will be necessary to hire an architect to work with the team to accomplish the above-mentioned objectives. This plan contemplates that each partner will contribute to the overall cost of this work. It is recommended that the partners enter an Interlocal Agreement to solidify roles, responsibilities, and any financial contributions for this planning effort. These partners will make up the stakeholder's guiding committee for this effort. In addition, the Jefferson Aquatic Coalition, Jefferson Community Foundation, EDC Team Jefferson, and others could be key participants as part of this process.

The planning effort will include five phases, outlined below. Each phase will engage a robust community outreach effort, including digital media, print/graphics, and interactive forums.

Phase 1: Identify guiding principles for the planning process

Phase 2: First concept planning, siting options and feasibility

Phase 3: Feedback on concepts

Phase 4: Finalize concepts, Implementation planning

Phase 5: Financial planning, including polling if needed.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Role of the stakeholders:

- Regular meeting attendance: stakeholder meetings and public meetings.
- Listening to what you hear from the community and representing the desire of the wider community in this stakeholder group.
- Guiding project team (not decision making)
- Sharing your ideas with the Project team and stakeholders
- Presenting with the project team at Parks Board and City Council meetings, partner boards, and commissions.
- Be a facilitator for break-out groups at larger meetings.
- Lead intercept events as needed.

Goals of Phase 1 Community Engagement:

- Review of PROS plan, Community Strategic Plan, and previous efforts
- Facilitate focus/interest groups to develop key criteria/principles to guide the community discussion.
- Align the key criteria/principles with previous planning efforts, and community discussions.

Goals of Phase 2 Community Engagement:

- Review the pool and community center’s current status and most recent efforts
- Start the concept process of what current needs and desires for a health and wellness center.
- Solicit feedback on a vision
- Architect starts to draft concepts.

Goals of Phase 3 Community Engagement:

- Reflect on 2-3 Concept plans by the architect.
- Interactive process, what do the partners and community like, what do they not like.
- Public input to guide final designs and decide on the preferred concept.
- Finalize siting.

Goals of Phase 4: Final concepts, Implementation plan

- Gather feedback on concept plan (s)
- Cost out the concept plan with the selected site
- Put together implementation and financial plan.
- Each partner entity presents a final plan to elected officials.
- Poll the community for financing if necessary.

Goals for Phase 5:

- Solidify Financial Plan
- Solicit financial commitments from partners
- Implement Financial Plan
- Plan for next steps for implementation

## TIMING/MILESTONES

<b>Task</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>End Date</b>	<b>Owner</b>
Engage and solicit support from partners	Administrative	8-9/2022	PT
Roles, responsibilities, financial commitment from partners, ILA, solidify other stakeholders	Administrative	9-10/22	PT
RFP and award of bid for Architect/ contractor	Administrative	10/2022	PT
Phase 1 Community Outreach Develop key criteria/principles Financial Planning	Focus Groups	11-12/22	PT

Phase 2 Public Outreach Community Vision/Concept Ideas Financial Planning	Public Involvement	1-2/2023	SH, Contractor
Evaluate Data, Develop Concept options to share with the partners, community	Conceptual Design	3/23	SH, Contractor
Phase 3 Public Outreach (Evaluate Concepts/Options) Gather feedback Financial Planning	Public Involvement	4/2023	Team
Phase 4 Final concepts, implementation planning. Financial Planning.	Conceptual Design	5/2023	Team
Phase 5 Financial Planning, possible polling. Final Concepts reports are transmitted to all boards of all partners.	Public Involvement	6/23	Team
Next Steps Planning	Planning	7/23	Team

## COMMUNITY READINESS

The establishment of a community health and wellness facility has been discussed for decades. The common thread through previous planning efforts is the strong desire voiced by the community for a facility. Failed attempts over the past quarter century have demonstrated that this is a heavy lift requiring all public entities to engage in the process and collaborate on implementation.

The establishment of a health and wellness center, the rebuilding of the pool, and the access to amenities that help our residents live a healthy life represent an unsatiated need for decades met in the present time with a crescendo of community readiness. While there are many other related needs and priorities, this one is at the center of the need and integrates with numerous related initiatives and activities. It is clear that for our community and region to be accessible to and work for families and young people, for seniors, and in efforts to minimize disproportionate health-related risks and realities, a facility is needed.

A strong partnership is key for this initiative to move forward, with continued collaboration for the good of the whole of our community; we are all healthier together.