

Recreation & Community Services Reorganization

Draft: Last Revised 4/2/2013

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Recreation & Community Services Department is continually evaluating the programs and classes offered to the community as well as managing and evaluating facility uses. Evaluation is done through community correspondences and inquiries, class participation numbers, waiting lists, and trends in the industry. Trends can be seen in the offerings in other cities, professional publications such as those from the California Parks and Recreation Society (CPRS), and networking with other professionals in Parks, Recreation, and Community Services.

From staff's evaluation of programs and facility uses there are three areas that need to be addressed: (1) After School Child Care for first through fifth graders; (2) Teen Services; and (3) Senior Services. The needs assessment and recommendations to follow are an attempt to address these three areas in a relatively short timeline.

The City purchased the property next door to the Senior Center for the purpose of expanding the Senior Center; however, the \$2.4 million project remains unfunded. Recommendations in this proposal include renovating the "Senior Center House" for programming now rather than wait for funding to become available through grants, a bond measure, etc. Staff has applied for grants, but to date those grants were awarded to lower income and more underserved areas.

As part of the needs assessment, there is a clear need for additional after school care for first through fifth graders. The City's Friendship Club at Ocean View Park hosts the first through fifth grade after school program. Conversely, fewer and fewer teens are interested or available for after school recreation programs and despite many efforts from staff to revamp and keep relevant the teen program, the numbers remain low. The after school teen program is held at the Memorial Park facility. Staff is recommending moving the after school Teen program to the Senior Center House during weekday afternoons and expanding the Child Care after school program to the Memorial Park facility offering a second facility for first through fifth graders.

Most of the participants for the after school teen program are sixth graders from Albany Middle School. Given the location of the Senior Center House participants could continue to walk to the after school program. Although the teen program would use the facility in the weekday afternoons, programs for

seniors would expand by having the Senior Center House in the mornings, early afternoons, evening, weekends, and summers.

Costs for renovating the Senior Center House could be recovered in the first year. Moreover, renovating the house for immediate use not only expands Senior Services and Child Care Services, but also improves cost recovery. Revenue projections by expanding services would increase by \$135,000 with an increase in expenses of \$35,000 annually. The cost to renovate the Senior Center House is approximately \$79,000. Costs of the renovation may decrease as the estimate includes all work being contracted out. The Public Works Director is reviewing the list of renovations in an effort to find ways City staff can assist with the project and decrease the cost of renovations.

Staff is in the process of getting initial feedback for the proposed changes prior to presenting the information to the Parks and Recreation Commission on April 11. A full list of community outreach is on page 9.

CHILD CARE, TEEN, AND SENIOR SERVICES NEEDS ASSESSMENT

From staff's evaluation of programs and facility uses there are three areas that need to be addressed: (1) After School Child Care for first through fifth graders; (2) Teen Services; and (3) Senior Services. The needs assessment and recommendations to follow are an attempt to address these three areas in a relatively short timeline.

Child Care Services

In the past three years the Friendship Club, which provides after school care and summer camps for first through fifth graders, has had a waiting list for children needing after school care. In the last two years, the waiting list has been as long as 30 families. Currently, the Friendship Club after school program is hosted at Ocean View Park in two portable buildings operating at capacity with 65 children enrolled.

Each weekday afternoon staff uses City vans to transport children from the Marin Elementary and Cornell Elementary schools. Because of the close proximity of Ocean View Elementary to the child care center, staff walks with the children each day from the school to the child care center.

Staff has been working towards finding ways to expand the after school care program in an effort to accommodate those children on the waiting list. The City added a second portable to the site 3 years ago and there is no other space at the Ocean View site to expand the facility.

Teens Services

Over the past several years, teen participation in the after school care program and the Friday night Teen Nights has declined. The majority of youth participating in the program are sixth graders. Staff has been creative and innovative in their efforts to develop programs that would draw more youth; however, the numbers of participants remains low.

In the fall of 2010, the Teen Center was moved from Ocean View Park to Memorial Park. The facility at Memorial Park was more conducive to teens and given that Memorial Park is closer to Albany Middle School, students can walk to the Center after school. Staff added enrichment classes to the after school choices for students which included music, art, technology, film making, cooking, etc. Still the number of participants has remained low. As of February 2013, there are 10 students enrolled, 5 students are enrolled 5 days per week, and 5 students are enrolled for 3 days per week.

Staff has advertised through the Activity Guide, which is delivered to over 8,000 homes in Albany, on the City's website, Twitter, and Facebook accounts. Staff has also reached out to the middle school and the Albany YMCA to create partnerships and raise awareness of the offerings for teens in Albany. The Albany YMCA is currently showing low numbers in the Teen after school programs as well.

Senior Services

For the past several years, the Senior Center has been bursting at the seams with approximately 2,500 visits on a monthly basis. Demand for the center's classes and vital services has been high, and will only increase with the aging of the Baby Boomer generation, which regional census projections indicate will increase by 165% in 20 years (Association of Bay Area Governments). In addition to services offered on-site, the center is used to provide essential food assistance services to seniors. The Albany Senior Center provides approximately 5,640 congregate dinners and 6,450 Meals on Wheels meals to homebound seniors, and distributes over 1,200 grocery bags of food to low-income seniors.

Currently at the Senior Center, there are only two rooms available for programming, a multipurpose room (1100 sf) and a classroom (600 sf). The lobby is used as another programming area when no other spaces are available. For example, the center's game program has recently been moved to accommodate the free Income tax preparation program during the months of February – April. Unfortunately, when the games program uses the front lobby area, the noise created from having a gathering in the lobby interferes with front desk operations and the work of staff in nearby offices as well as limits passage for seniors

especially those with limited mobility who must use scooters, wheelchairs, or walkers. Seniors who benefit from dropping in to socialize and enjoy the book exchange area and use computers are also impacted since the book exchange area and computers are also located in the front lobby.

Another issue is the lack of adequate space for the provision of services that require one-on-one consultations. For example, podiatry services are held in the small classroom which prevents the use of the classroom for larger class sizes. Using the classroom for the delivery of services is not an efficient way to use the space, but to respect the privacy of seniors; there are no other options at this time. Additionally, in order to provide Health Insurance, Medicare Counseling, staff members must regularly give up their office space for an entire afternoon which prevents staff from accessing their files, computers and supplies

In 2008 the City purchased the property next door to the Senior Center for the purpose expanding the Senior Center into the newly purchased parcel. In order to maximize the space available, the original plan was to demolish the house and expand the existing building. Staff prepared a grant application for Proposition 84 that would have funded the \$2.4 million project. In both the first and second phases of the grant, the Albany Senior Center Expansion project was not awarded the grant. Those projects that were awarded with Proposition 84 funds were located in more severely underserved and low-income areas. Staff continues to look for grant opportunities. The house is currently being used for storage only.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MEETING NEEDS

The primary issue for resolving the needs assessed, is the need for more space. Staff is recommending a three step approach: (1) renovating the house purchased by the City in 2008 as a way of creating more usable space for programming; (2) shifting facility uses; and (3) reorganizing staff responsibilities. By implementing these three steps, cost recovery for Teens, Child Care, and Senior Services is improved.

Recommendations for Teen Services

Staff is recommending that with the proposed renovations to the Senior Center the after school teen program move to the Senior Center House and use the facility from 2pm to 6pm on weekdays (on Wednesdays the program would start earlier as the school day on Wednesdays is shorter). This would leave mornings, early afternoons, evenings, weekends, and summers for Senior Services and other adult programs. More information regarding the advantages to senior services by renovating the house for immediate use is in the Senior Services section on page 7.

Analysis

Currently, the Albany Teen Center is subsidized by the general fund by approximately 82%. Finding a more cost effective way to serve teens as well providing programs and space that will meet their needs is a top priority. By moving the after school teen program to the Senior Center House, the estimated subsidy to the general fund is projected to be 50%, assuming the same level of current participation, 10 students. However, capacity for the Senior Center House is 30, allowing room for future growth. Given the location of the Senior Center House, students could continue walking each day from the middle school. The cost of using the Senior Center House for teens is less than using the Memorial Park facility as the Senior Center House is smaller and the costs would be shared with the Senior Center.

A reorganization of full-time and part-time staff will also reduce costs for the Teen budget. The proposed changes include a shifting of responsibilities among the Recreation Coordinators that will allow the Recreation Coordinator now working at the Senior Center to oversee the after school teen program. The current staff member who oversees the teen program is also responsible for the City's cable division, the City's audio visual needs, assists with the City's community services events as well as assists with the City's website and IT divisions. Given that there is a salary difference between the two staff members, the portion of the Recreation Coordinator's salary allotted to the Teen budget will be less than the current supervisor's. The salary of the staff member overseeing Cable, et al would be divided among the divisions in which he works; Cable, IT, and Community Services Special Events.

Another benefit to the teen program is the availability and proximity of the Senior Center's Recreation Coordinator. The current teen center supervisor's responsibilities require him to be at other City facilities on a regular basis. The Recreation Coordinator's job duties at the Senior Center do not require him to spend time at other facilities on a regular basis allowing him to be on site as he oversees the day-to-day operations of the after school teen program. It should be noted that the City has dedicated part-time staff who work with and care for the teens after school. The full-time Recreation Coordinator would oversee and supervise the part-time staff as he shares his time between teens and senior services. Additionally, by shifting responsibilities among the other three Recreation Coordinators, the Recreation Coordinator overseeing the Teen Center will have sufficient time to supervise the Teen Center programs.

Should the proposed changes take place, more staff time will be allotted to the much needed additional IT support. Council and staff have committed to upgrading IT services and IT services was listed as one of the top three areas of focus in the most recently approved budget cycle. Given that both staff members are excited about the possibility of their change in job responsibilities, the energy and ideas for improvements would no doubt create positive change.

Already staff has begun to brainstorm on the possible programs that would benefit both seniors and teens made possible by a shared facility that is located next to the Senior Center. All middle-school students in the Albany Unified School District are required to volunteer a number of hours per year. With the Senior Center next door volunteer opportunities at the Senior Center could include serving meals during the afternoon congregate meals program and providing assistance with computer/Ipad tutoring, a service in high demand by seniors. The backyard of the Senior Center House which is in the process of being renovated by volunteers also presents an opportunity for cross-generational programming. Fruit trees have been planted and an edible garden is in the works. Teens would have the opportunity to help with the gardening and use the food produced in their daily snacks.

Although seniors do not have a requirement for volunteer hours, many enjoy volunteering and working with youth. As older adults retire or move to part-time employment, studies have shown that they hope to have more time to “give back” to their communities or become involved in meaningful and purposeful activities. New intergenerational programming will honor our older residents as a valuable community resource, providing opportunities for them to share their skills, talents and knowledge with each other, with young people through tutoring and gardening sessions (as examples), and with the community at large.

Cross generational programs have been offered in the past with Teens and Seniors which have been successful and well-received. Events included teens introducing seniors to the Wii and cooking a spaghetti dinner together.

Another benefit of having the after school teen program at the Senior Center House is the close proximity to the Community Center and Library. Staff will be working on ways to partner with the Library as well as use the Community Center to expand after school offerings. The Community Center/Library is two blocks from the Senior Center House.

It should be noted that low participation in after school teen programs is more the norm than the exception. In a recent article published in Mercury News.com regarding Teen Centers in Pleasant Hill and Newark, both cities are struggling for higher teen participation. Similar to Albany’s program Pleasant Hill and Newark offer enrichment classes as part of the after school program. Newark has a gym, swimming pool, pool tables, and computers, yet the attendance in Newark is about 10 kids per day. Pleasant Hill is shooting for 50-60 per afternoon, but average around 20. Pleasant Hill offered a free trial to inspire students to try out the afterschool program, but still participation remains low. The Recreation Coordinator from Newark offered an explanation by stating that, "In this tech age they are still able to stay connected to their friends with their cellphones and through Facebook, when five years ago that

wasn't the case," she said. "There's not the same push from kids to be in the same place with their friends." Regardless of the possible reason teens are not participating, staff will continue to work towards finding new and interesting ways to program for teens after school.

Recommendations for Senior Services

As mentioned previously, staff is recommending renovating the Senior Center House for immediate use to accommodate much needed expansion of Senior Services.

Analysis

Given the needs described above in senior services, having more space would allow for much needed expansion in services not to mention ease the crowding when programs overlap. The space at the Senior Center House is ideal for the smaller programs and would free-up space that could be used for larger group programs at the existing Senior Center. Moreover, the space at the Senior Center House could be used for those programs that need more privacy and would alleviate the need for staff to move out of their offices.

Recently, Council the City of Albany took over the remaining Albany Unified School District adult school classes. Having more space either by freeing up space at the Senior Center or having more space at the Senior Center House, would help accommodate the extra classes the City is now offering.

Currently the cost recovery for Senior Services for the General Fund is 43%. With the expansion cost recovery is projected to be 50%. Although the cost recovery improvement is not huge, the expansion in services would be significant. The renovation of the house would promote access to a spectrum of affordable and wellness-focused services and activities for seniors, improving the social condition of the entire community by engaging and integrating seniors in the social fabric of everyday life in our city.

Recommendations for After School Childcare

Staff is recommending that Memorial Park be used as a "satellite site" for the Friendship Club After School Program.

Analysis

By moving the after school teen program from Memorial Park to the Senior Center House, the Memorial Park facility could be used as a "satellite" site for the child care after school program, thus, eliminating the waiting list. Creating a satellite site would require more part-time staff, but would not require more full-time staff. Given that the infrastructure for the child care program is in place with a full-time

supervisor, the cost of creating a nearby satellite site would improve cost recovery. Currently, the cost recovery for the after school child care program is 96%, with the satellite site the program becomes 100% cost recovered. Moreover, the satellite program could not only accommodate the children on the waiting list, but could expand if needed. After the proposed expansion for first through fifth graders, staff will evaluate if space allows for kindergarteners to be added to the program as the City gets many requests to do so each year. The capacity of the Memorial facility is 50.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

By expanding programs and facilities as proposed, it is projected that revenue will increase by \$135,000; however, expenses will only increase by \$35,000. By investing \$79,000 into the Senior Center House the City not only expands much needed services, but also makes a net of \$100,000 per year more in revenue, thus, decreasing the amount the General Fund subsidizes these three programs.

CONCLUSION

As the needs change for community services, it is imperative that the City identify the changes and move towards providing the services that meet the community's needs. Teens have options after school and after school care for teens has become less of a need in Albany. Traditionally it is the sixth graders that are enrolled in the after school program. Seventh and eighth graders are more independent and typically do not need or want after school care.

On the other hand, after school care for first through fifth graders has increased partly due to The Village closing Kids Korner, a fourth and fifth grade after school program, and partly due to the fact that the City's after school care program continues to gain popularity as a reliable, safe, fun place for elementary school children. By having such a good model and tenured staff implementing the program, the expectation is that the quality of the program, should the City choose to have a satellite site, will continue to meet the high standards that currently exist.

Given the increase in our senior population, there continues to be a growing need for more services and expanding current services. Although the ideal situation would be to implement the original plan for expanding the current Senior Center into the next door parcel, due to lack of funding, it is not an option at this time and is more than likely not going to be an option for several more years. By expending the onetime cost of renovating the Senior Center House for immediate use, the City would be able to expand services needed by the community and improve cost recovery.

Proposed Community Engagement Process/Timeline

ITEM	DATE
Isabelle and Penelope to meet with FOAS (Friends of Albany Seniors)	FOAS meetings: April 3, 10:30am
Spaghetti dinner with 5 th grade parents: Staff will be asking for feedback on proposed changes, and inviting to attend PR Commission meeting in April	March 27, 2013 (no one signed up to attend; therefore, it was cancelled)
Needs Assessment Report sent to those enrolled in Friendship Club and the Teen Center asking for feedback and encouraging participants to attend the April 11, Commission meeting	Report sent to participants on Monday, April 1, 2013
Needs Assessment and Recommendation Report sent to Library staff	Sent April 1, 2013
Announcement for Parks and Recreation Commission meeting including agenda items sent to Around Your Block and Nextdoor participants	Announcement sent Tuesday, April 2, 2013
Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting:	April 11, 2013
Council	April 15, May 6, or June 3, 2013
Renovation of Senior Center House	Begin June 2013 (earlier if possible)
Teen Center moves to Senior Center House	August 12, 2013
Readying Memorial Site for Friendship Club	August 12, 2013
Teen Center program begins at Senior Center House	First day of 2013/2014 school year, August 27
Satellite Friendship Club begins at Memorial Park	First day of 2013/2014 school year, August 27