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## Variety of parks facilities upgrade options scoped

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How a yearslong planning process for San Mateo parks facilities can incorporate Bay Meadows residents' concerns about the impact of a proposed multi-use facility in their neighborhood and balance much-needed upgrades with new revenue-generation opportunities for parks across the city were among the priorities the City Council weighed at a study session this week.

Up for review by councilmembers were options for upgrading a range of park facilities throughout the city as well as the effects of only making minor renovations to existing facilities, many of which Parks and Recreation Director Sheila Canzian said are reaching some 50 years in age. Part of a process to implement the Recreation Facilities Strategic Plan adopted in 2016, the planning effort is aimed at determining which specific park resources to include at key recreation sites throughout the city and meet recreation goals outlined in the strategic plan.

A "preferred" plan including the construction of a lifestyle center at the Bay Meadows Community Park, the replacement of facilities at the Martin Luther King Jr. Center at 725 Monte

Diablo Ave. and a renovation of the Beresford Recreation Center at 2720 Alameda de las Pulgas, among other upgrades, is expected to cost some \$162 million, said Jill Eyres of Group 4 Architecture Research + Planning, a consulting firm hired by the city. Eyres added an off-site parking garage for a lifestyle center at Bay Meadows could cost some \$20 million based on the assumptions outlined in this option.

A plan to keep parks facilities largely at “status quo” and implement less intensive upgrades — including replacement of the Martin Luther King Jr. Center with largely the same design as its current building and a master planning process for the Bay Meadows Community Park — could cost \$92.5 million and fall short of goals outlined in the strategic plan, she said. An alternative with scaled-back changes such as an aquatics center with no gymnasium or active fitness resources at the Bay Meadows Community Park, among other facilities upgrades, is estimated to cost \$150 million, said Eyres.

Vanessa Sewell was among several Bay Meadows residents who voiced concerns about the impact of building a lifestyle center at Bay Meadows Community Park, pegging a study of parking at the site as a priority. Other Bay Meadows residents who attended urged officials to consider the cost of building and operating a lifestyle center and advocated for open space at the Bay Meadows Community Park.

“In addition to a park planning process, I think the first major thing that needs to be done is figure out the parking,” said Sewell, according to a video of the meeting. “We know it’s going to be an expensive process, but it’s a necessity.”

The Bay Meadows Community Park currently features a full-size soccer field, lawn area and a walking path, among other amenities, according to the city's webpage for the park, and Eyres explained even the "status quo" alternative would include funds for off-site parking at the Bay Meadows Community Park.

Though Eyres acknowledged most off-site and under-building parking alternatives would be very costly, she and Canzian explained they have discussed the potential for partnering with The Nueva School's San Mateo campus at 131 E. 28th Ave. or the San Mateo County Event Center at 1346 Saratoga Drive to provide off-site parking spaces for the proposed expanded facilities at the park. Acknowledging Event Center officials are currently undergoing a master planning process for a hotel, offices and parking to be built at the site, City Manager Larry Patterson said they have so far been open to discussing a possible collaboration but have not yet determined the parking needs for the site.

As a mother of three, Sewell identified a need for licensed preschool facilities given wait lists for private preschools in San Mateo are yearslong, and also wasn't convinced aquatics facilities rose to the top as a priority in a community survey conducted in June. The survey was aimed at gathering feedback on a range of resources that could be included or expanded in six parks across the city, and Sewell noted a renovation of the Martin Luther King Jr. Center with an indoor pool may address a desire survey respondents expressed for year-round access to pools.

Councilman Joe Goethals also wondered if pools that could

accommodate indoor and outdoor activity had been considered for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center and the Joinville Center, which are both currently equipped with outdoor seasonal pools, as part of the planning process. Paul Council, a special projects manager for the city, explained the Joinville Center is not being considered for a pool and the Martin Luther King Jr. Center pool would remain an outdoor seasonal pool in the proposed changes.

Canzian explained officials did not see a demand for three aquatics facilities in the city, and noted residents of the North Central neighborhood wanted to retain a pool nearby while the Joinville Swim Center at 2111 Kehoe Ave. attracts residents from several neighborhoods across the city. She also explained that because it was designated a community park, the park space at Bay Meadows could include a number of uses, such as athletic games, a pool, picnic areas and performance spaces, among other uses, and that a lifestyle center had been pegged as a deficit in the city during the last General Plan update.

Councilmembers also discussed how parks and recreation operating costs might be offset by the revenue generated by a new mix of facilities. Ken Ballard, a recreation and facility planning consultant hired by the city, said child care facilities tend to be the greatest revenue generators, while lifestyle centers do fairly well in generating revenue since fitness programs can offset the more expensive aquatics center costs.

Due to time, officials continued the session to January to allow for more residential input and consideration.

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