Appendix H: Partnership Assessment

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A significant number of new aquatic and recreation centers now involve some form of partnership with other community organizations and aquatic service providers. For partnerships to be effective the following must occur:

- Must actively pursue and sell the benefits.
- Weigh the benefits vs. the price.
- Must have a shared vision.
- Does not compromise the project's mission statement.
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- May have to meet differing needs and expectations.
- Development and operations requirements must be clearly defined.

For many projects, a partnership can bring additional resources to the facility and allows for a more comprehensive center to be developed. A partnership can also provide additional programs, services, or potential clients for a center or to assist with operations.

An important step in determining the feasibility of developing a new Bellevue Aquatic Center is to assess the partnering opportunities that exist with organizations that have indicated interest in pursuing the project. The level of partnerships will certainly vary with the final facility option that is developed.

Option A – This option is the least likely to attract or require a partnership. It is doubtful that a primary partner will have interest in the project. A few secondary partners may be available.

Option B – This option should be able to attract both primary and secondary partners, but the development and operation of the aquatic center would not be dependent on any primary partners being part of the project.

Option C – Much like Option B, there will most likely be interest in the project from both primary and secondary partners. Having the participation of primary partners would be beneficial but not essential.

Option D – With the size and magnitude of this option, attracting at least one key primary partner will be essential, and there will need to be a significant number of secondary partners as well.

Option E – In order to make this option a reality, there will need to be multiple primary partners and an extensive number of secondary partners. In addition, the importance of support partners for this option becomes much more critical.

Through interviews associated with the market analysis portion of the study a number of organizations and entities were identified as possible partners for such a project.

- Bellevue Community College
- Bellevue School District
- King County
- Bellevue Chamber of Commerce
- Greater Seattle YMCA
- Northwest Center
- Neighboring School Districts
- Neighboring Communities
- USA Swimming
- Swim, diving, water polo and other teams
- Medical providers
- Business and corporate community

After reviewing the partnering assessment for each organization, the partnerships can be categorized into three possible levels. The following is a general summary of the partnership assessment and recommendations for how to proceed with partnering on the proposed new aquatic center.

Primary or Equity Project Partners
These would be the main partners in the project who have the most interest, the ability to fund, and a willingness to be a part of the development and operation of the facility.

If the City of Bellevue is the majority project funding agency, then it should be expected that operational responsibility and control will remain with the City. With an established Parks and Community Services Department, the City has the capability of operating the center under an agreement with any other primary partners.

Center programs and services could be coordinated with existing City aquatic programs to provide a more comprehensive offering of services to Bellevue residents. This option gives most of the direct control of the center's operations to the City, which could cause potential problems with other partners; but does provide the most realistic operating structure.

If a true partnership is formed for the new aquatic center with a primary partner, then a number of operations options may need to be explored. Regardless of the operating agency, an oversight committee made up with representatives of all primary partner organizations may need to be established to guide operations.

- *Greater Seattle YMCA* – The YMCA has expressed an interest in exploring a possible partnership with the City of Bellevue to develop a new aquatic center. The YMCA has indicated a possible capital interest in the project, but this could not occur before 2010 at the earliest. Any significant capital contribution would require a fundraising campaign, and the aquatic center would have to compete with other YMCA projects for funding. If the YMCA makes a capital

contribution to the project, then they would also require to have the operational responsibility for the center as well. This would require a well-detailed operating agreement between the City, YMCA, and any other partners.

- *Northwest Center* – The Northwest Center has an interest in being the operator of the center and could possibly bring a limited amount of capital dollars ($5 million maximum) to the project. However, their partnership and financial contribution would be dependent on the Northwest Center being the operator of the center. This would require a well-detailed operating agreement between the City, NW Center, and any other partners.
- *Bellevue Community College* –BCC indicated that they were willing to look at a possible partnership to develop a new aquatic center. They may be able to fund a small portion of the project ($1-$2 million), through a matching state grant, but this would require competition with other state needs for funding. BCC would also be interested in possibly using the center for physical education, community education, and other specialty programs, but the facility would have to be located within close proximity to their campus.
- *Bellevue School District* – The Bellevue School District indicated a strong interest in having an aquatic center that would allow their swim, dive, and water polo teams to practice, and would allow for their aquatics meets to be held in Bellevue. They have indicated that although they would not be able to contribute capital funds or land for the facility, they would be willing to pay market rates for use of the center.
- *Neighboring Communities* – Several communities that are located in the Eastside expressed an interest in a possible partnership to develop a regional aquatic center. There was also an indication that a limited level of capital funding might also be available. These communities included:

    - City of Sammamish – Indicated their interest is dependent on a site that is close to Sammamish. There might be a possibility for limited capital funding, but also an interest in providing operational assistance.
    - City of Redmond – Also indicated that their level of interest in a partnership is dependent on a site that is close to Redmond. There is some indication that there may be some ability to provide capital funding on a small level.

- *Private Business* – Although they have not yet been clearly identified, it must be realized that the larger project options (C through E) will in all probability require some form of a partnership with private business to ultimately fund the center. Once the project has been further defined, then there should be a well coordinated effort to develop a number of partnerships with the corporate and business community.

At this stage, there appears to be a limited number of primary (equity) partners for the project, and each comes with very specific qualifiers. Any significant partners from the non-profit sector will more than likely require that their organization serve as the operator of the facility.

Site is also another major requirement of a partnership. Having the facility located close to the partnering organization, good visibility, and easy access to and from the center is critical. As a result of these requirements, it may be difficult to have multiple primary partners. Only one organization can be responsible for the operation of the facility and the site will either enhance or eliminate other partners. It is also apparent that most capital funding from potential partners may require a long term plan to obtain these funds, with no guarantee that the these funds will ultimately be available.

Secondary Project Partners

These organizations have a direct interest in the project, but not to the same level as the primary partners. Capital funding for the project is unlikely, but there can be some assistance with program and service delivery.

- *School Districts* – Several of the neighboring school districts have express interest in the use of a new aquatic center on the Eastside. However, there was no indication of any level of capital funding that would be available at this time, and most have specific requirements on use and location. These school districts included:
    - *Issaquah School District* – Since the Issaquah School District does not have a pool, they are heavily dependent on other aquatic facilities on the Eastside. While they would prefer to utilize a pool in Issaquah or Sammamish, a new aquatic center that is on the I-90 corridor would serve their needs. At this time, the ISD would be willing to pay for pool time.
    - *Lake Washington School District* – If the aquatic center is located in relative close proximity to the high schools in the Lake Washington School District, then there would be an interest in purchasing pool time for the swim, dive, and water polo teams.
    - *Other School Districts* – With the general shortage of pool time on the Eastside, other school districts in the area have indicated at least an initial interest in possibly purchasing pool time at a new aquatic center. However, distance from the site and traffic concerns may impact some use numbers.

- *Club Swim, Dive, Water Polo and Synchronized Swim Teams* – There is a large number of aquatic clubs on the Eastside and a well recognized shortage of indoor pool time. Most all of the clubs that were contacted indicated a strong desire to utilize a new aquatic center for practices and meets. They are willing to pay market rates for pool time. These clubs would also be able to host meets and provide volunteers for these events at the center.

- *Medical Groups* – Although there were limited discussions with actual medical service providers, there was a strong indication that there is no real wellness/therapy pools (beyond the existing Bellevue Aquatic Center) located on the Eastside. If the new aquatic center included a wellness/therapy component, then there would be a significant demand for this and a willingness to pay

reasonable rates for its use. Several of the organizations have also indicated a willingness to serve as a contract program provider of water based fitness and wellness classes for the center.

The key factor with the secondary partners is the willingness to purchase pool time at a new aquatic center. While these partners are not able to assist with the capital funding for the facility's development, as on-going users of the facility, they would provide a solid revenue stream for the center and help to establish the meet and event market.

It will be critical for the life of the center to sign these partners to long term use contracts (2 to 3 years) for the various pool elements. The number of secondary partners will need to continue to grow and develop. However, with the larger and more diverse program options being considered for the aquatic center, there will need to be a plan established to assure that there is enough available pool time to accommodate a significant number of partners.

Support Partners
These organizations support the concept of the aquatics center project, but would see limited to no direct involvement in the development or operation of the center.

- *USA Swimming* – As the governing body for competitive swimming in the United States, USA Swimming understands the need and demand for additional aquatic facilities in the Eastside. This group would be instrumental in bringing swim teams and other aquatic users to the center; their support will be essential, if regional and national level swim meets are to be attracted to the center.

- *King County* – There was concern expressed regarding possible competition that a new aquatic center might provide for the King County Aquatic Center. But if this issue could be overcome, then the County would be supportive of a new aquatic center in the Eastside.

- *Bellevue Chamber of Commerce* – While there is some concern about how a project of this magnitude would be funded, the economic benefits that such a facility would bring to the business community could result in the chamber being a support partner - not only in the development of the center, but also as an organization that can help promote the center to attract regional and national events.

Support partners have limited direct impact on the development and operation of the aquatic center, but their involvement in the process should still be a priority to build overall awareness of the project. Additionally, they would be able to assist with the planning and promotion of the events and activities that would take place there.

As the new aquatic center becomes closer to reality, the opportunities for partnering will increase. A well written partnership agreement will need to be executed between any

organizations involved in the project that clearly outlines the capital funding requirements, project ownership, priorities of use/pricing, operating structure, facility maintenance, and long-term capital funding sources. These agreements should be in place prior to committing to begin construction of the project.