



DISCUSSION ITEMS

Agenda Item # 7

AGENDA REPORT SUMMARY

Meeting Date: February 14, 2017

Subject: Senior Program at Grant Community Center

Prepared by: Manny A. Hernandez, Recreation & Community Services Director

Approved by: Chris Jordan, City Manager

Attachment(s):

1. Letter: Revised Recommendations Regarding the Senior Program at Grant Park

Initiated by:

Senior Commission

Fiscal Impact:

None

Environmental Review:

Not applicable

Policy Question(s) for Council Consideration:

- None

Summary:

- Does the Council wish to explore the cost of installing a commercial kitchen in the Grant Community Center as one of the facility improvements?

Staff Recommendation:

Receive a report from the Senior Commission on Senior Programming at Grant Community Center and provide staff direction on possible research into the feasibility of installing a certified commercial kitchen at Grant Community Center.



Subject: Senior Program at Grant Community Center

Purpose

Receive report on Senior Commission recommendations for the Senior Program at the Grant Community Center and direct staff accordingly.

Background

In FY 2014/15 the Recreation & Community Services Department implemented a pilot expansion Senior Program at the Grant Community Center. The pilot program was initiated by community members that showed an interest in seeing senior services provided in that area. These community members provided their services as volunteers to make the program possible with minimal City staff. The pilot program operated from October 29, 2014 to June 30, 2015. In July 2015, the Senior Program at Grant Community Center was added to the Recreation & Community Services Department's regular program offerings. The Program at the Grant Park Community Center now takes place on Mondays and Wednesdays between 10am–2pm and consists of social activities like card games, discussion groups, fitness classes and general interaction between seniors.

At the September 12, 2016 regular meeting, the Senior Commission was asked to evaluate the Senior program events and activities at both Hillview and Grant Community Centers. The Senior Commission felt that evaluating and making recommendations on the program would be appropriate and provide valuable insight for staff. The Senior Commission created a subcommittee to address this.

Discussion/Analysis

Grant Community Center is comprised of two separate buildings, a Multipurpose building and an Activity Room building. Since the Senior Program at Grant became part of regular Senior Programming, some modifications have been made with the intent to make the program successful. The Senior Commission subcommittee spent three months visiting and participating in the Senior Program and interacting with participants. The subcommittee then compiled their information and shared it with the entire Senior Commission for approval. At its January 9, 2017 meeting, the Senior Commission finalized and approved a letter that outlines recommendations in four areas that they felt will further improve the Senior Program at that the Grant Community Center.

The first Commission recommendation is to bring the Grant Community Center facility up to date as soon as possible. City staff is currently in the middle of making facility improvements at this location and have already completed some of the items. The City has completed the:

- roof replacement project for the activity room building
- exterior painting of both buildings
- purchase and installation of window dressings in the Multipurpose Room



Subject: Senior Program at Grant Community Center

Additional facility improvements that are planned and are within the approved budget for the Grant Community Center include the following:

- Multipurpose lounge area acoustical improvements: The current senior lounge area is located in the Grant Multipurpose Room, adjacent to the kitchen. There are acoustic issues that make it very difficult to hear when there are different sources of noise at the same time. Installation of fabric-covered panels to mitigate this acoustic issue is currently scheduled for February 2017.
- Men's/Women's restroom improvements: The current restrooms attached to the activity room building are in need of improvements and currently not fully American with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant. Remodeling of the two restrooms will improve the facilities for all park and Community Center patrons while bringing them into ADA compliance as part of the City's ADA Transition Plan. These improvements are planned for Spring of 2017.
- Multipurpose Room flooring: The existing flooring in the Multipurpose Room is glue-down, linoleum. Staff is planning to install a padded laminate flooring that will be more attractive and better suited for fitness and dance programming. The flooring plan is being finalized and the target for installation is late Summer 2017.
- Activity Room building improvements: There are various improvements and updates that need to be made to the four-room Activity Room building. At this time, planned improvements include interior painting/wall improvements, window dressings, new flooring, and sink counter updates. Staff is targeting Fall 2017 for these improvements.

Also within the current approved budget is to update the kitchen in the Multipurpose Room building. The current plan includes refreshing the counters, sink, refrigerator and small appliances. These upgrades would not allow for public food preparation. The installation of a certified commercial kitchen, as recommended by the Senior Commission, is anticipated to have large budget implications. A certified commercial kitchen must meet specified building codes, appliance requirements, preparation space needs, and are subject to public health inspections. A consultant would be required to determine all the needs and to provide an estimate on the total cost of such a project. The installation of a commercial kitchen may also impact the current senior lounge space in the Multipurpose Room.

The second Senior Commission recommendation is to create a permanent Senior Lounge in one of the current activity rooms. The Commission's goal for this dedicated senior space is to create a space similar to what is available at the Hillview Community Center. Room 10 at Hillview is available for senior socialization and activity five days a week. Having a dedicated room like this at Grant would allow the flexibility to expand the hours of operation at Grant as needed.



Subject: Senior Program at Grant Community Center

The four activity rooms at Grant Community Center are well used at this current time. Classrooms 1-3 are used for many different programs and rentals throughout the year. Room 4 is used Monday - Friday by the private Petits Confettis French immersion school. The French School is a licensed preschool and has been using this room for a few years. The school rents the room from the City on a year-to-year basis, with their current reservation approved through July 28, 2017. The Recreation & Community Services Department will not be approving the school's request for use of Room 4 in 2017-2018 in order to convert the room to a Senior Program lounge similar to Room 10 at Hillview. Currently, the use of the Multipurpose Room and the other three activity rooms is high and social space for seniors is not always available outside of the current Senior Program schedule.

The Senior Commission is also recommending the addition of a new program coordinator to the Recreation & Community Services staff to manage programming at Grant. The Commission's intent is to have high-level support for the Senior Program at Grant in order to have the capacity to expand the program as needed. The Senior Program is currently managed by one full-time Recreation Coordinator and staffed by 3-4 part-time staff. Staff intends to review the request for the additional Coordinator position when we develop next year's budget.

The final Commission request is to involve Grant Park volunteers and participants in planning. The Commission has identified that the participants at the Grant Community Center are a great resource for input to staff on program and facility improvements. There are several users of the Grant Community Center facility. Users include fitness classes, martial arts class, youth camps, contract special interest classes, and renters such as church groups and Scouts in addition to the Senior Program. The facility is also used for City meetings.

Options

- 1) Direct staff to do further investigation into the full cost of converting the kitchen at Grant Community Center into a certified commercial kitchen.

Advantages: Understand the true cost of installing a commercial kitchen at Grant Community Center.

Disadvantages: None

- 2) Direct staff to follow the original plan of updating the kitchen at Grant Community Center as a non-commercial kitchen.

Advantages: Cost to update kitchen in current configuration is within the originally approved budget for improvements.



Subject: Senior Program at Grant Community Center

Disadvantages: Grant Community Center kitchen renovations will not allow for preparation and service of food to the public.

Recommendation

The staff recommends Option 1.

Date: January 5, 2017

To: Senior Commission Members

CC: Manny Hernandez, Jaime Chew, and Cheri Anderson

From: Gary Anderson, Tracie Murray, and Bert Vincent

Subject: Revised Recommendations regarding the Senior Program at Grant Park

Over the past three months, our Senior Commission subcommittee concerned with the programs for seniors at Grant Park and Hillview has been focusing on the near-term status of the program at Grant Park as it is currently being managed by the Recreation and Community Services Department and the Grant Park volunteers.

One of our members, Bert Vincent, has been active in the Grant Park programs for most of the past two years, and Tracie and I have visited both the Monday and Wednesday activities on many occasions. We have also had a number of discussions with R&CS staff members Manny Hernandez, Jaime Chew, and Cheri Anderson, had informal contact with members of the previous senior commissions and the Parks & Recreation Commission, and had numerous conversations with volunteers and participants in the program.

We have been very impressed with the quality and diversity of the programs that have been developed by Grant Park volunteers with the assistance of Cheri and her predecessor Candace Avina in the R&CS. Wednesdays attract an average of about 60 participants every week, about the same as use Hillview on a daily basis, many walking to the center. Volunteers have organized two exercise sessions, a language class, several tables of bridge, frequent speaker programs and a greatly appreciated meal service that includes a combination of catered meals and potluck weeks managed by the volunteers under staff supervision. Many Grant Park members mention this lunch as the high point of their week.

The Monday programs, added in 2016, are being well received and participation is increasing, with 20-30 seniors on average taking advantage of a discussion group, a language practice session, and informal tables of bridge, with participants bringing snacks to supplement the department coffee service.

In the course of that work, we've observed, suggested and encouraged a number of changes that the R&CS has made led by Cheri as the new Senior Programs Supervisor. In particular, she has been working with the volunteers at Grant Park to make sure that all of them are properly registered as City of Los Altos volunteers. In addition, she has reviewed the background and qualifications of the individuals who are teaching classes, all on a volunteer basis, and gotten them formal status as contractors to the city in the classes they are teaching or leading. As a consequence of this work, the Grant Park senior program activities are consistent with City policies to cover out-of-pocket costs on activities, as is the case at Hillview where some activities are free and some have a related charge, though right now all activities at Grant Park are still free to participants. Beginning this month, meal charges at both centers are on a "suggested donation requested but not required" basis.

We believe that the City should continue to support the Grant Park senior activities and expand the days that the center is open, subject to availability of staff and demand, since the program is a great fit to the size of the facilities and the characteristics of the neighborhood.

Recommendations To facilitate maintenance of the momentum established by the senior program volunteers at Grant Park we are making the following five recommendations:

Bring the Grant Park facility up to date as soon as possible

As noted in the facilities survey in 2016, The Grant Park buildings are sound and the layout with a multipurpose building and four classrooms is appropriate for current uses. We have been informed that R&CS plans to improve the physical multipurpose building facilities and recommend that this work be completed as soon as possible. Plans include a new flooring system suitable for exercise, athletic and dance use, and upgraded bathrooms. To support the range of activities the buildings can support, we also recommend that a small commercial-grade kitchen should be installed, as well as upgraded electrical, audio/visual and internet capabilities. If this is accomplished, not only will the senior program benefit, but the other programs that use that facility would also benefit. In addition, if the Hillview project goes forward, the Grant Park facilities would be more suitable to handle some of the Hillview activities on an interim basis.

Create a permanent Senior Lounge in one of the current classrooms

The senior lounge within the multipurpose building that was created two years ago is a pleasant space, but it is only available on Wednesdays when other Senior Program activities are using the multipurpose room. We support R&CS plans to set aside Classroom 4 for use as a senior lounge on a permanent basis as soon as the part-time commercial pre-school program vacates that space. We also recommend that the Senior Program be given priority for use of the contiguous classroom, similar to the layout at Hillview, so that classes and discussion groups can be held in the adjoining room while the lounge is used for quieter activities.

Add a program coordinator to R&CS staff to manage Grant Park activities

With the Grant Park Program now serving nearly as many seniors in the southern part of the city on days when it is open as the Hillview program serves, we strongly support proposed plans for the addition of a staff member to coordinate activities, maintain communications with volunteers, and plan activities for Senior Program members at the Grant Park facilities. With expanded access to facilities and coordination of activities, we believe the Grant Park program can continue to expand in days and activities, serving the large number of seniors who live near this neighborhood-oriented venue.

Involve Grant Park volunteers and participants in planning

As work goes forward to improve the Grant Park facilities and expand the programs, we strongly recommend that the Grant Park volunteers, instructors and class leaders, and program participants be involved in the planning. Active involvement by those who use the center on a weekly basis, many with relevant experience, would help assure that the facilities actually address real needs in a meaningful way. That would also give the participants and leaders a feeling of ownership in the facilities and programs, continuing recent progress towards integration of the Grant Park activities into the overall Los Altos Senior Program.