

# SAMMAMISH

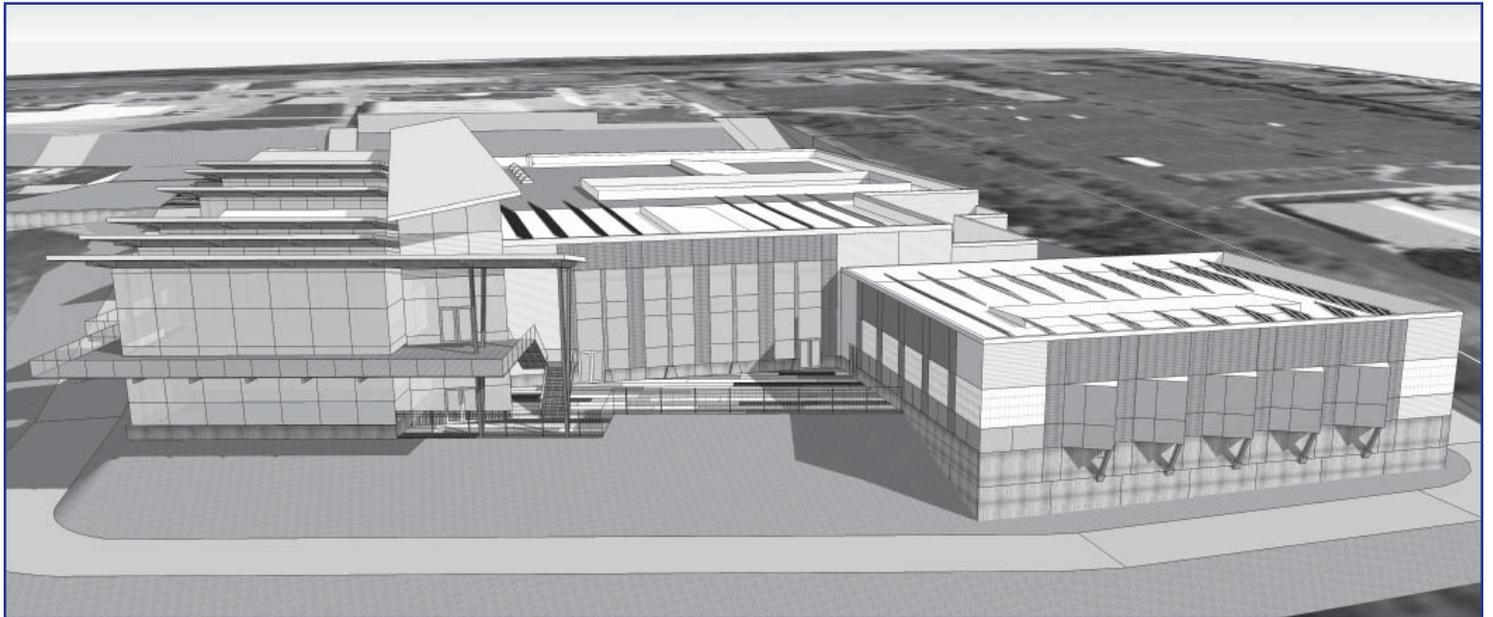
ISSUE 110

CITY NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2011

## Consultant recommends \$44 million community center

**PLUS \$20 MILLION FOR UNDERGROUND PARKING GARAGE AND ROAD IMPROVEMENTS THAT WOULD ALSO SERVE CIVIC CAMPUS**



*The western face of a potential community center as recommended by Barker Rinker Seacat.*

Sammamish voters will ask themselves some interesting questions in 2012. Who should be president? Who should be governor?

But the biggest question next year may be the following: Do I want a terrific new community center enough to raise my own taxes?

That's the question that hung in the air last month as residents and the City Council got their first look at the results of a feasibility study conducted by Bark-

er Rinker Seacat (BRS), a Denver-based architectural and consulting firm.

The recommendation from BRS: A \$44 million community center featuring pools, gymnasiums, fitness studios, locker rooms, meeting rooms and lounges – plus a weight room, spin area and kid's party room, among other things.

"Although it's based on months of community feedback, the BRS recommendation is just a starting point," City

Manager Ben Yazici said. "The Council will look at it carefully, and ultimately, nothing like this will be built unless Sammamish voters approve it."

It's not even certain the community center will make it onto the ballot. It's possible the City Council, after reviewing the funding options, may decide to shelve the whole idea.

"In our public meetings, some

*See COMMUNITY, pg. 4*

**MAYOR'S MESSAGE**

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*Story on page x*

**XXXXXXXXXX**

*Story on page x*

# MAYOR'S MESSAGE



*Don Gerend  
Mayor*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Don Gerend". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "D".

# CITY OF SAMMAMISH

*COMMUNITY, cont. from pg. 1*  
residents are very excited about the facility while others are very worried about the cost,” Yazici said. “I think our councilmembers experience those same exact feelings when they look at this project.”

The BRS recommendation follows a lengthy public process featuring meetings, focus groups, and other methods of ascertaining community priorities. The BRS feasibility study also included a site, funding and market analysis.

If it's built, the new facility would rest on a 9-acre site just west of City Hall and the new library. In addition to \$44 million for the community center, the BRS recommendation also calls for a \$16 million underground parking garage and \$4 million in road improvements, both of which would also serve City Hall

and the rest of the civic campus. Taken together, the three elements would add up to \$64 million.

“An investment of this size is something the community needs to look at very realistically,” Yazici said. “As the Council reviews these elements, looks at different sizes and shapes, and examines the funding options, we'll make sure that our residents receive accurate information.

“This is a process that should be driven by facts and values. In a decision this big, there shouldn't be any room for wishful thinking.

“I urge everyone to go to the city website and look at the BRS recom-



*Seniors at a community center in Golden, Colorado.*

mendation in detail. The presentation they gave residents and the Council is right there for everyone to see.”

(Go to [www.ci.sammamish.wa.us](http://www.ci.sammamish.wa.us) and click on the Community Center banner at the top of the home page.)

Yazici emphasizes that there are still many questions to be answered regarding funding:

- Do we pay off the necessary bond by raising property taxes?
- Or do we pay it off with a new utility tax?
- Should the bond pay for the community center building only?
- Or should it also cover the cost of the garage and road improvements?
- How do we pay for operating costs that exceed the amount of money taken in through user fees?

As the Council and public processes continue, the answers to those questions will come into sharper focus. And if the Council decides to put the community center to a public vote, Yazici says the funding details, and the impact on individual households, will be crystal clear before election day.



*Aquatic facilities at a community center in Salem, Oregon.*

*Next page:  
More on the community center*

## Paying for construction

### PROPERTY TAX OR UTILITY TAX?

If voters approve the community center project, and a 20-year bond to fund construction, they will also have to approve a payment plan for the bond.

Should the bond be paid off through an increase in property taxes? Or should it be paid off with a new utility tax? Furthermore, should the bond pay for all construction, or should existing revenues pay for part of the project?

Although clarity is on the way, for now, the city is limited to sketching out possible scenarios. Here are two options on a \$50 million bond:

#### Bond Assumptions:

**\$50 million bond**  
**20-year term**  
**AAA credit rating**  
**4.16 true interest rate**

#### Property Tax:

For 20 years, the owners of a \$520,000 home would pay additional property taxes in the amount of:

**\$234 per year, or**  
**\$19.50 per month, or**  
**64 cents per day**

#### Utility tax:

For 20 years, a utility tax rate of 3.92% would cost a typical household:

**\$249 per year, or**  
**\$20.75 per month, or**  
**68 cents per day**

(Note: Unlike most other Washington cities, Sammamish does not currently have a utility tax. After 20 years, a future Council would decide whether or not to continue the utility tax.)

## Paying for operations

If the city were to construct the recommended community center, BRS estimates it would cost \$2,950,000 per year to staff and operate the facility. Most of that sum would be offset by user fees, with BRS estimating that the facility would bring in \$2,683,000 in revenue. That 91 percent “recovery rate” would require the city to pay for – or subsidize – the other nine percent on an annual basis. Based on these numbers, that would translate into an annual subsidy of \$267,000. BRS notes that the subsidy would be cut to \$167,000 per year if the competitive pool were removed from the design.

A very preliminary user fee structure developed by BRS can be seen in the chart below:

#### Potential use and membership fees (For residents and non-residents)

	Daily res/non-res		Monthly res/non-res		Annual res/non-res	
<b>Youth (3-17)</b>	\$5	\$6.50	\$34	\$43	\$400	\$500
<b>Adult</b>	\$7	\$9	\$47	\$59	\$550	\$690
<b>Couple</b>	n/a	n/a	\$61	\$77	\$715	\$895
<b>Senior (65+)</b>	\$5	\$6.50	\$34	\$43	\$400	\$500
<b>Senior couple</b>	n/a	n/a	\$45	\$56	\$520	\$650
<b>Family</b>	n/a	n/a	\$77	\$97	\$900	\$1,125



*Community center pool in Augusta, Georgia.*

## Community's wish list produces top-notch proposal

RESIDENTS SPOKE UP DURING FIVE MONTHS OF FOCUS GROUPS, PUBLIC MEETINGS

Based on public input, most residents would like to see a generous list of amenities in a Sammamish community center. As one focus group participant put it: "Go big, or go home."

But that sentiment is now balanced by its financial implications: The community's wish list, as currently configured, would cost in the vicinity of \$44 million. An additional \$20 million would be needed for road improvements and an underground parking lot that would also serve City Hall and the rest of the civic campus.

"The recommendation from Bark-

er Rinker Seacat (BRS) reflects the priorities and wishes of the community," Parks Director Jessi Richardson said. "Now residents need to figure out if they 'wish' to pay for it."

Features and activities envisioned in the BRS recommendation include :

- Two gymnasiums
- Two fitness studios
- Child watch room
- Community room
- Leisure pool
- Pool party room
- Competitive pool
- Swim lessons

- Lap swim
- Open/family swim
- Water exercise classes
- Indoor playground
- Weight room
- Running track
- Locker rooms
- Cardio exercise equipment
- Classroom
- Commercial kitchen
- Dining space
- Senior lounge

### Community Center Q & A on page 6

#### Next steps:

- Council receives final report in September
- Council reviews, adjusts BRS recommendation
  - Council decides whether to place community center on ballot
  - If placed on ballot, residents vote on community center in 2012 special election



*Community center in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho*



*Child-watch room in Broomfield, Colorado*



*Aerobics in Macomb Township, Michigan*

## Community Center Q & A with City Manager

**Q:** After listening to Sammamish residents for five months, the consultant recommended a \$44 million community center? What's your reaction?

**A:** I think my reaction mirrors the feedback we've received from residents. Man, that's a great looking facility! And, man, that's quite a bit of money.

**Q:** There's an additional recommendation to spend \$20 million on road

improvements and underground parking, correct?

**A:** That's right. The roads and garage will also serve City Hall and the rest of the civic campus, but the total recom-



*Ben Yazici  
City Manager*

mendation from the consultant adds up to \$64 million.

**Q:** What are the arguments you hear in favor of a large investment like that?

**A:** People of all ages say the community needs a central gathering place where residents can exercise, swim, play cards, take a class, play volleyball, get something to eat, and socialize. They say it will really bring the community together in a healthy, positive way.

**Q:** What arguments do you hear against the investment?

**A:** Understandably, people are very concerned about the expense. And some object to paying higher taxes for a facility they may not use.

**Q:** How is this going to be settled?

**A:** Over the next few months, the council will review the feasibility study report and recommendation. We may also do a statistically valid survey to see how the community as a whole feels about the recommendation. Some-

times, the people who come to the meetings, as invaluable as they are, don't represent a typical cross section of the community.

**Q:** Will it be put to a vote of the people?

**A:** Nothing will be built without voter approval. But it's possible the Council could decide not to proceed with the project. In that case, the idea would be dropped before anything got on the ballot.

**Q:** If the Council puts it on the ballot, when would residents get to vote?

**A:** Not until 2012. This is something the community needs to think about for a while.

**Q:** Barker Rinker Seacat (BRS) made the recommendation. What can you tell us about them?

**A:** BRS is an architectural and consulting firm out of Denver that specializes in these kinds of public buildings. They have a reputation for being the best. I think they inspired a lot of confidence among residents who attended the public input meetings.

**Q:** As an architectural firm, isn't BRS inclined to find every project feasible?

**A:** Maybe. But this decision will be made by Sammamish residents, not BRS. They do a lot of feasibility studies around the country. In the majority of those cases, nothing is ever built.

**Q:** How do you respond to individuals who say these kinds of facilities and services should be left to private business?

**A:** I respond by saying the community may very well agree with you. This is a philosophical question that's been discussed since we first became a country. Parks, libraries, community centers – why not let the private economy

provide those things? If this gets on the ballot, it will be interesting to see which side of that argument our residents come down on.

**Q:** Why has a community center landed on the front burner in 2011?

**A:** Two main reasons. Our Council members have heard a steady drumbeat of requests for a community center from residents over the past few years. And when we gauge community priorities through our statistically valid surveys, a community center is always at or near the top.

**Q:** But shouldn't we wait until the economy gets stronger?

**A:** That may be exactly what residents decide. Increasing property taxes or installing a utility tax may not make sense to people when times are tight. On the other hand, facilities like this are a lot less expensive to build during tough times. Contractor bids come in millions of dollars lower when they're struggling to find work. And low interest rates dramatically reduce the debt service on a bond.

**Q:** Does the city have any plans to partner with the YMCA or any other entity on this project?

**A:** There are a number of entities that could get involved at one level or another, especially in the operational phase. But, so far, we haven't met with anyone who wants to help pay for construction in a significant way. If that were to change, we'd certainly be open to it.

**Q:** How is this going to play out?

**A:** I'm confident residents will make a realistic decision, bringing the facts and figures into balance with their values and enthusiasms. We'll see what kind of democratic result is produced here in the great city of Sammamish.

# CITY CALENDAR

## AUGUST

*Tuesday, Aug. 2*

National Night Out  
& Kid's Performance, 12-3 p.m.  
City Hall Plaza

*Wednesday, Aug. 3*

Farmers Market, 4-8 p.m.  
Parks and Rec Comm Mtg, 6:30-9:30 p.m.

*Thursday, Aug. 4*

Concert in the Park, 6:30-8 p.m.

*Wednesday, Aug. 10*

Farmers Market, 4-8 p.m.

*Thursday, Aug. 11*

Concert in the Park, 6:30-8 p.m.  
Comm Garden Steering Committee,  
6:30-8 p.m.

*Friday, Aug. 12*

Sammamish Nights, 6-10 p.m.  
City Hall

*Saturday, Aug. 13*

Sammamish Days, 11 a.m.-3 p.m.  
City Hall

*Monday, Aug. 15*

Arts Commission Meeting, 6:30 p.m.

*Tuesday, Aug. 16*

Kids First Noontime Performance, East  
Sammamish Park

*Wednesday, Aug. 17*

Farmers Market, 4-8 p.m.  
Sammi Splash Exhibition, 6-7:30 p.m.  
Marionwood

*Thursday, Aug. 18*

Concert in the Park, 6:30-8 p.m.

*Saturday, Aug. 20*

Sammamish Walks, 10 a.m.-12 p.m.  
Grand Ridge Trail

*Wednesday, Aug. 24*

Farmers Market, 4-8 p.m.

*Thursday, Aug. 25*

Concert in the Park, 6:30-8 p.m.

*Monday, Aug. 29*

Kids First Noontime Performance  
Ebright Creek Park

*Wednesday, Aug. 31*

Farmers Market, 4-8 p.m.

## SEPTEMBER

*Thursday, Sept. 1*

Planning Comm Mtg, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

*Monday, Sept. 5*

Labor Day, city offices closed

*Tuesday, Sept. 6*

City Council Meeting, 6:30-10 p.m.

*Wednesday, Sept. 7*

Farmers Market, 4-8 p.m.  
Parks and Rec Comm Mtg, 6:30 p.m.

*Thursday, Sept. 8*

Comm Garden Steering Committee,  
6:30-8 p.m.

*Saturday, Sept. 10*

Documentary Film - "Painted Life,"  
1-4 p.m., City Hall

*Tuesday, Sept. 13*

City Council Study Session, 6:30 p.m.

*Wednesday, Sept. 14*

Farmers Market, 4-8 p.m.

*Thursday, Sept. 15*

Planning Comm Mtg, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

*Saturday, Sept. 17*

Sammamish Walks, 10 a.m.-12 p.m.  
Beaver Lake Lodge

*Monday, Sept. 19*

Finance Committee Mtg, 5:30 p.m.  
Arts Commission Mtg, 6:30-8:30 p.m.  
City Council Meeting, 6:30-10 p.m.

*Tuesday, Sept. 20*

City Council Council Office Hour,  
5:30-6:30 p.m.

*Wednesday, Sept. 21*

Farmers Market, 4-8 p.m.

*Thursday, Sept. 22*

Planning Comm Mtg, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

*Wednesday, Sept. 28*

Farmers Market, 4-8 p.m.

### PLEASE NOTE:

All meetings and events at City Hall, unless otherwise noted. Times, dates and locations are subject to change. Please consult the city website for the most current information.



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Councilmember*



*John James  
Councilmember*



*Mark Cross  
Councilmember*



*Michele Petitti  
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Lyman Howard	Dep City Mgr/Finance Dir
Kamuron Gurol	Com Dev Dir/Asst City Mgr
Laura Philpot	Public Works Director
Jessi Richardson	Parks & Rec Director
Mike Sauerwein	Admin Services Director
Melonie Anderson	City Clerk
Nathan Elledge	Police Chief
Lee Soptich	Fire Chief
Bruce Disend	City Attorney

**Newsletter suggestions or concerns?  
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425-295-0555**

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