



To: Mayor and City Council
From: Brian Phillips, Assistant City Manager
Date: August 9, 2022
Subject: Summary of DNR/DOT Meeting Regarding Mitigation Funding

At the July 12, 2022 City Council meeting, City staff provided a report regarding the environmental contamination at 122 North Oak Avenue, which is being pursued as a potential site for the construction of the Fitch Family Indoor Aquatic Center. This property is owned by the Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT). At that time, City staff indicated that a meeting was planned between City staff, DOT, and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to discuss potential opportunities to obtain grant funding to offset expenses incurred in mitigating the contamination.

On July 28, City staff (Parks and Recreation Director Keith Abraham and Assistant City Manager Brian Phillips) met on a Teams call with representatives of the DNR and DOT. DNR staff outlined three potential avenues for the City to obtain funding to offset expenses related to the contamination:

1. DNR Brownfield Program – This is funding up to \$25,000 from DNR to complete activities such as phase I/II site assessments, asbestos and lead abatement, or other environmental-related activities. Receiving funding through this program does not require that the site be cleaned up entirely. However, as City staff has reported previously to the City Council, the City’s potential expenses related to mitigation at the site exceed a million dollars.
2. Federal Brownfield Program – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency provides funding opportunities once per year for brownfield assessment and cleanup, with much larger potential awards (\$500,000-\$5,000,000). With federal infrastructure money recently infused into the program, the cost match normally required in the program could potentially be waived. DNR staff believed that an application to this program for the 122 North Oak site would be competitive.
To be eligible, the site would need to be enrolled in the Iowa Land Recycling Program. This action would require cleaning the site up to a “residential

standard” (i.e., suitable for residing on the property). However, there are three caveats with this program that could make an application from the City challenging to complete:

- 1) Applications are typically due in December each year, with awards announced in May and entry into the program in November. This would involve a considerable delay compared to the City’s desired construction timeframe (it would likely delay the opening of the facility by a year).
 - 2) The City would have to own the property to apply, or at least have an ironclad purchase agreement to acquire it. The program is designed to protect EPA from awarding funds based on applicant subterfuge; the requirements to own the property are strict to avoid granting funds to an improper recipient.
 - 3) DNR staff indicated that generally, EPA wants to fund projects that clean up the contamination entirely, not just part of it. This is simpler when the contamination is isolated on one property, but at this site, the contamination source affects several properties. It would be necessary to define the entire area of contamination and ask other affected property owners if they would like to be included in the cleanup project. There is no obligation on their part to agree to join in, but they would need to be asked. If adjacent owners take up the offer to clean up, it could be very costly to remediate the whole area.
3. The third program DNR suggested considering is an Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) redevelopment tax credit program, which provides up to \$1.5 million in assistance per property. However, this program does not appear to be applicable to cities. It might be possible to work with a third party to be an intermediary to receive the tax credits in exchange for delivering a constructed aquatic center project on a clean site, but it would be extremely complicated to do so, if IEDA would even approve it.

An additional idea mentioned by DNR staff is to consider installing a pump-and-treat system in the northeast corner of the site (where the contamination is located) and clean the groundwater before it could be drawn into the basin or building. This would result in a substantially smaller volume of water requiring treatment as compared to

treating the water that will likely collect in the pool excavation when construction begins.

Follow-up DNR Information:

Following the meeting, City staff consulted further with DNR staff regarding the funding opportunities and other details discussed during the July 28 meeting. At City staff's inquiry, DNR staff clarified that expenses already incurred by the City for the Phase I and Phase II evaluations would not be eligible for reimbursement if the City applied for the DNR Brownfield Program, since these expenses would have occurred before the grant performance period, if awarded.

City staff also requested DNR's opinion regarding the likelihood that the geothermal wells would be required by DNR to be double-cased, given what is currently known about the geothermal well location and the contamination location and characteristics. DNR indicated that there is not enough information at this time to determine what construction requirements would apply. These requirements would depend on the type of system proposed (closed loop vs. pump and inject), and other details. A thorough review of the site would need to be conducted by DNR to determine the requirements. However, due to the benzene, the DNR Private Well Program would require strict construction standards in order to provide protection to the buried sand and gravel aquifer.

DNR also clarified that its requirements regarding allowed water piping materials would not apply if the line in question is only a service line and not a water main. If a water main was located in the area, DNR permitting would be required.

DNR staff also advised the following:

“To your questions about whether it would be a good idea to double case the geothermal wells and to avoid PVC piping for the building even if those items are not required, DNR would say the following: DNR can't provide comment on what the City of Ames should do in regards to going above and beyond the requirements of DNR rules. If the City of Ames would like to go above and beyond DNR requirements, that would be a decision that the City of Ames should make with City staff, its architect, and its environmental consultant.

Additionally, on the phone, you and I had discussed the possibility of installation of a pump and treat system at the NE corner of the site. While DNR can't recommend a particular system or design, we have seen numerous

sites where this type of system has worked for conditions similar to those at the 122 N Oak Ave property (DOT property). Again, this is a decision that would have to be made by the City of Ames in consultation with City staff, its architect and its environmental consultant.”

DNR staff provided an example proposal for a pump and treat system similar to what would likely be used at the DOT site. This proposal indicated a cost range of \$78,572.85 - \$93,834.70 for one year of treatment, monitoring, and reporting.

Additional Public Feedback Received:

The City Council was provided with written feedback regarding the potential indoor aquatic center location (DOT site, O’Neil Park, or other potential locations) at the July 26 Council meeting. Written feedback regarding the indoor aquatic center location that has been received since the July 26 City Council meeting has been attached below.

ATTACHMENT 1

FITCH FAMILY AQUATIC CENTER LOCATION E-MAILS

RECEIVED AFTER JULY 26 STAFF REPORT

From: Larry Conley <vmconley19540716@icloud.com>

Sent: Friday, July 29, 2022 9:11 AM

To: Abraham, Keith <keith.abraham@cityofames.org>

Subject: Aquatic Center

Has anyone given any thought or investigated the possibility of “doming” the current Furman facility?

This idea has been brought up before and discussed with RDG Planning and Design who are the architects for the Fitch Family Indoor Aquatic Center. Below are some of the thoughts as to why this would be difficult to do:

- *Furman is near a flood plain that set some tight limits on what we could do, where to build, etc. If this is converted to an indoor we would need more space for mechanical rooms, etc. I don't think we can go toward the creek so would need to build into the hillside?*
- *You would need to close down for 1 year to build the enclosure.*
- *The existing buildings are not built for year round use. These would most likely need to be demolished and replaced with new. This is for the office area, changing, and pool equipment.*
- *It is a challenge to build over something and will increase the cost of construction.*
- *There might not be enough available site to also get a walking track and multiuse room on the site.*
- *You would lose a true outdoor pool. The city would then only have an indoor pool with outdoor current channel and slide? Depending on if you enclosed just the 50M and play pool and left the others outdoors.*
- *If you wanted to enclose all of the existing bodies of water, it would be very costly to build and operate.*
- *An outdoor facility is usually spread out more than an indoor facility and therefore when you enclose the outdoor you end up with more space inside. Therefore operating cost might be higher.*
- *We would need to check parking requirements for an indoor vs an outdoor.*
- *As you build the enclosure you would also have to move some of the underground piping.*

Let me know if you have any further questions.

Thanks and have a great weekend!

From: Tom Schultz <tom.tschultz@gmail.com>

Sent: Monday, August 1, 2022 8:51 AM

To: Abraham, Keith <keith.abraham@cityofames.org>

Subject: Please remind me when the Aquatic Center item will be on the agenda again. Thank you.

Tom,

Council discussed this on July 26 but did not make any decisions. They will discuss again at the August 9 meeting at 6:00 PM.

Let me know if you have any further questions!

From: Bob & Kathy Best <bobbest1126@yahoo.com>

Sent: Friday, July 29, 2022 6:09 PM

To: Abraham, Keith <keith.abraham@cityofames.org>

Subject: Aquatic Center

Please keep me on your email list for pool updates.

Thank you,

Bob Best

PS. ? Why is putting a retractable roof on the Furman Pool not an option?

Bob,

I will put you on the list.

Regarding the Furman Aquatic Center, below are comments received from RDG Planning and Design regarding enclosing it:

- *Furman is near a flood plain that set some tight limits on what we could do, where to build, etc. If this is converted to an indoor we would need more space for mechanical rooms, etc. I don't think we can go toward the creek so would need to build into the hillside?*
- *You would need to close down for 1 year to build the enclosure.*

- *The existing buildings are not built for year round use. These would most likely need to be demolished and replaced with new. This is for the office area, changing, and pool equipment.*
- *It is a challenge to build over something and will increase the cost of construction.*
- *There might not be enough available site to also get a walking track and multiuse room on the site.*
- *You would lose a true outdoor pool. The city would then only have an indoor pool with outdoor current channel and slide? Depending on if you enclosed just the 50M and play pool and left the others outdoors.*
- *If you wanted to enclose all of the existing bodies of water, it would be very costly to build and operate.*
- *An outdoor facility is usually spread out more than an indoor facility and therefore when you enclose the outdoor you end up with more space inside. Therefore operating cost might be higher.*
- *We would need to check parking requirements for an indoor vs an outdoor.*
- *As you build the enclosure you would also have to move some of the underground piping.*

Let me know if you have any further questions. Thanks and have a great day!

From: webmaster@cityofames.org <webmaster@cityofames.org>

Sent: Sunday, July 31, 2022 10:04 AM

To: Ames Park Rec <amesparkrec@cityofames.org>

Subject: City of Ames, IA : Comments/Questions from the web

A new entry to a form/survey has been submitted.

Form Name: Parks and Recreation Questions/Comments

Date & Time: 07/31/2022 10:03 AM

Survey Details

1. Please enter contact information			
FIRST NAME	Cathy	LAST NAME	Mather
2. Please enter your question or comment here:			
PLEASE don't take green space away to build an indoor aquatic center! There has to be other choices. Ames green spaces help to make this community special - unique! O'Neil Park needs to remain a park.			
3. Would you like to be contacted by Ames Parks and Recreation staff?			
<input type="radio"/> YES			
E-Mail (If reply is requested)	Cathjean75@gmail.com		
Phone (If reply is requested)	Not answered		

Thank you,
City of Ames, IA

Cathy,

Thank you for your comments related to the proposed indoor aquatic center! They will be passed on to City Council for consideration. If you have any questions, please contact me.

Have a great day!

From: Roxanne Thompson <rjthomps60@gmail.com>

Sent: Tuesday, August 2, 2022 8:53 AM

To: Abraham, Keith <keith.abraham@cityofames.org>

Subject: Ames Aquatic Center planning and decision making email list

Good morning, Keith. I will appreciate it if you will add me to the mailing list re updates in planning for the Ames Aquatic Center. I greatly appreciate the work that you, your

colleagues and the City Council are putting in to make the Aquatic Center (including hopefully the walking track 😊) a reality!

Best,

Roxanne Thompson

Roxanne,

I will add you to the list and forward a newsletter that went out yesterday.

Thanks and have a great day!

From: Joyce Russell <jmriowa@gmail.com>

Sent: Tuesday, August 2, 2022 12:04 PM

To: Abraham, Keith <keith.abraham@cityofames.org>

Subject: Aquatic Center Site

Hello,

Please add me to the email list for information on siting the new aquatic center.

Joyce Russell

Joyce,

I will add you to the list and send you a newsletter that went out yesterday.

Have a great day!

From: Mark Clipsham <mc@architecturebysynthesis.com>

Sent: Saturday, July 30, 2022 11:11 AM

To: Abraham, Keith <keith.abraham@cityofames.org>

Subject: indoor pool

Why not put it next to the outdoor pool at the bottom of the road up to the high school? Share some parking. Mostly different seasons and user groups. Being near the high school couldn't hurt.

Good luck,

Mark Clipsham (Principal)

(architect/active PA/all project types/residential/specific types elsewhere)

Architecture By Synthesis

1552 X Ave

Ames, IA 50014

515 450 2538

mc@architecturebysynthesis.com

architecturebysynthesis.com

Architecture is about people and their desired relationship with their environment.

The project is the manifestation, of the relationship, of all the people involved in the project.

Mark,

Thank you for the question!

This has been reviewed in the past and poses some challenges such as most of that area is either in the flood way or flood way fringe. The current project is part of a designated 75 acre Reinvestment District designed to help revitalize the downtown and Lincoln Way Corridor. As of right now, City Council has only asked staff to look for potential areas in close proximity to the existing Reinvestment District boundaries which the Furman Aquatic Center site does not fall within these parameters.

Let me know if you have further questions. Have a great day!

From: Mark Clipsham <mc@architecturebysynthesis.com>

Keith,

Sure. Municipal projects in Ames just seem to take a long time to realize. The city tends to get in its own way.

Best wishes,

Mark Clipsham (Principal)

Thanks Mark!

From: Louis Banitt <doclouie1932@gmail.com>

Sent: Monday, August 1, 2022 1:44 PM

To: Abraham, Keith <keith.abraham@cityofames.org>

Subject: pool

Hi

Thanks for the input.

I wonder if the mitigation cost might be worth it if the delays and other sites prove to be at least as expensive or less suitable.

I understand the hesitancy of the people surrounding O'Neil Park.

I also am familiar with the site adjacent to Brookside park and at first glance it looks doable.

Bus lines can be rerouted!

Louie

Louis Banitt

doclouie1932@gmail.com

2514 Kellogg Ave

Ames, IA 50010-4863

515-232-1122

Dr. Banitt,

Thank you for the feedback! These are all things that will need to be considered when making a decision as to where to locate the indoor aquatic center.

Have a great day!

From: susieqjaguar1969@aol.com <susieqjaguar1969@aol.com>

Sent: Monday, August 1, 2022 6:56 PM

To: Schainker, Steve <steve.schainker@cityofames.org>; Haila, John <john.haila@cityofames.org>; Corrieri, Amber <amber.corrieri@amescitycouncil.org>; Beatty-Hansen, Bronwyn <bronwyn.beattyhansen@amescitycouncil.org>; dleeson@city.ames.ia.us; arollins@city.ames.ia.us; Betcher, Gloria <gloria.betcher@amescitycouncil.org>; Whitlock, Nicole <nicole.whitlock@amescitycouncil.org>; Junck, Rachel <rachel.junck@amescitycouncil.org>; Gartin, Tim <tim.gartin@amescitycouncil.org>; Abraham, Keith <keith.abraham@cityofames.org>

Subject: Institutional memory

Council, Mayor, City Manager and P&R Director,

In the early/mid 1960's, while getting my initial degree from Iowa State, my good friend's widowed mother lived in the brick apartments facing O'Neil Park. I got to know that area of

Ames well. When I returned to Ames in the early 1970's, I began teaching for the Ames School District. I say this to establish my Institutional Memory (over 50 years) in this community where I've chosen to make my home.

When I began teaching in Ames, there were 10 elementary schools in Ames. They anchored our neighborhoods. (Although the population has grown, we now have five).

The reason I bring this to your attention, is that the O'Neil Park neighborhood lost that anchor (Lincoln School), and that area of town has certainly felt the repercussions. Add to that, the buildup of University Blvd. and other structures, culminating in the flooding & removal of homes, further reducing the number of affordable homes in their community. Further adding to distress for the people living in the close-knit South part of Ames, S 4th Street has become a morass of vehicles, traffic & overflow parking, during ISU athletic events,

I hope that each of you, Council, Mayor, City Manager and P&R Director, take all this into consideration. The choices the City has made, over time, has already hit the O'Neil Park community hard. The residents do not deserve to have their pocket-park taken from them, as well.

Respectfully,

Susie Petra

Susie,

Thank you for the additional comments related to the O'Neil Park neighborhood!

Have a great day!

From: Renee Van Marel <rvanmarel@agleader.com>

Sent: Thursday, August 4, 2022 12:44 PM

To: Abraham, Keith <keith.abraham@cityofames.org>

Subject: Preserving O'Neil Park

Greetings Keith,

My name is Renee Van Marel. My husband Ross and I have lived at 213 S Hazel Ave for nearly 32 years. Ross and I are opposed to building anything on the O'Neil Park site. I could list a lot of reasons for you, but many of them were voiced at the last council meeting and I agreed with all of them.

O'Neil Park is just around the corner from our home. Every day I see families that live in our community using the park. Would these same people use an indoor aquatic center, yes maybe they would, but please take the O'Neil Park site off the list of acceptable building site options.

I am in favor of the indoor walking track portion; I don't swim but I do walk and run. The idea that the cost of cleanup at the DOT site makes the track portion too costly sounds like an excuse to me. I believe the Fitch Indoor Aquatic Center would be a great addition to Ames, but not if it destroys a neighborhood park and green space that are valuable to the community currently. Please preserve O'Neil Park in it's current location.

Thank you for your service to our community and for taking the time to consider my thoughts,

Renee Van Marel
213 S Hazel Ave
Ames IA 50010
515-460-4793

Renee,

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts regarding a potential location for the proposed indoor aquatic center! I will pass them on to City Council.

Have a great day!

From: Jonathan and Sarah Bunge <jsbunge@hotmail.com>

Sent: Wednesday, August 3, 2022 3:20 PM

To: City Council and Mayor <mayorcouncil@amescitycouncil.org>

Cc: Abraham, Keith <keith.abraham@cityofames.org>

Subject: Indoor Aquatic Center

Greetings Mr. Mayor, City Council members, and Mr. Abraham,

My wife, son, and I live at 226 S. Maple Ave., directly across the street from O'Neil Park. The park was a strong positive factor in our choice to move into the Oak-to-Riverside neighborhood. We have loved using the park's amenities. These amenities have grown over the years, which has drawn more people to use and fall in love with O'Neil Park. We have witnessed the countless ways this park benefits the city. There is hardly a day that goes by

without the park being used for a parks-and-rec youth sports practice or game, a pickup game of basketball, soccer, cricket, or frisbee made up of college students from the surrounding apartments, or a picnic for local church groups, stay-at-home-parent group play dates, DOT employees, YSS gatherings, and S. Oak apartment inhabitants. I do not believe a new O'Neil Park will thrive and be as active as the current park.

I wish to share more questions and comments regarding the Indoor Aquatic Center being proposed for O'Neil Park. I ask the city to consider removing O'Neil Park from the list of proposed alternative sites.

My questions are:

1. How can the city decide on a new site for the aquatic center if that site currently sits outside of the proposed redevelopment area? Shouldn't the city be doing its homework first by resubmitting a proposal for amended borders of the redevelopment area? How can O'Neil be chosen without it being in an amended redevelopment zone first approved by the state? I believe this is an example of, "putting the cart before the horse."
- 2.
3. How can the city decide to bulldoze one city park before it has the approved the plans of relocating and developing a new park nearby? Again, "putting the cart before the horse."
3. How can the city in good faith claim to be bulldozing a park in the name of redevelopment? Urban redevelopment is a tool for giving land a new life when it's no longer useful, wanted, or attractive. There's nothing useless, unwanted, or unattractive about O'Neil Park. However, as I drive east on Lincoln Way between Kellogg and Dayton Avenues, I see a huge swath of central business corridor properties that are undeveloped, vacated, or run down and are, one could argue, an eye soar to our town.
- 4.
5. How can the city be mindful of carbon footprints with a pledge to be carbon-neutral and then take away green space? I ask you to be honest with yourselves and residents of this town and examine how this plan follows the council's own initiatives to be carbon-neutral. It's meaningless fluff if you don't back up your words and commitments with actions.
- 6.
7. Is the city willing to risk the decay of the Oak-to-Riverside neighborhood if O'Neil Park is moved? I truly believe our neighborhood would slowly choke from increased traffic volumes, lower property values, and a less desirable atmosphere. The short-term gain of building this facility in O'Neil Park is not worth the long-term risk of reducing our neighborhood's residential attractiveness and viability. This neighborhood is already a mix of middle- to low-income families. Taking away the heart of the neighborhood and replacing it with an eye sore would drive out those who can afford to leave the neighborhood over time.

6. Has the city thought about the public safety risks of having O'Neil Park moved to the west? Many homeless people inhabit the riverbanks along loway Creek. I have encountered homeless men and women using the picnic tables in the greenspace as a bed when walking through the greenspace. I believe a new park along the creek would increase the chance of misunderstandings between those people using the space, potentially leading to violence in the area. O'Neil Park is much safer environment, especially for woman and children, in its current location.
- 7.
8. How would a new park squeeze into the long, narrow green space near loway Creek? There's no easy way to reach the park via car, as streets to the north are dead ends, and property to the south is privately-owned. There isn't adequate current parking that can handle the capacity for homeowners and park patrons. Roads and parking would have to be developed, which would further decrease the amount of land available for a park. You'd be violating your carbon pledge because you'd have to pave over greenspace to develop a new park, parking, etc.
- 9.
10. Have any of you walked through the area along loway Creek on a home football game Saturday? The private property to the south, which is used for game-day parking, fills up and the greenspace to the north is overrun by many visitors who set up tents, etc. I have watched many tailgating vehicles ignore posted signs asking vehicles to not drive through the greenspace. This would be a huge safety hazard for park patrons.
9. Has the city considered how it would monitor and police football game attendees from parking in the lot of the aquatic center if located at O'Neil Park, both in its current and possible future location along loway Creek?
10. Does the city realize that O'Neil Park functions as an outdoor living room for the many people who live in the apartments along S. Oak Ave, and for the students living in the complexes along S. 4th St. to the west of S. Maple Ave? I have visited with several people who live in the S. Oak apartments while living in my house for the past eleven years. Many are students, low-income, minorities, or young families. In my opinion, taking away this park would make those apartments less desirable to future renters.

In the spirit of compromise, the city should consider incorporating parts of the current O'Neil Park into the plans for the new Indoor Aquatic Center should O'Neil Park be chosen. This would allow a "mini-park" to still exist for the neighborhood. This would show the city is acting in good faith by balancing the wishes of the property's original owner and the many

neighbors and other citizens who do not want the park to be disturbed, with the needs of the city to build this facility. My ideas include:

1. Leave as many existing trees as possible.
- 2.
3. Leave the basketball court and playgrounds intact.
- 4.
5. Leave a strip of land for picnic tables between trees on the north side of the park along S. 3rd St, as currently set up.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this important issue.

Jonathan Bunge

Jonathan,

The questions you have posed will be considered by City Council as it discusses the location of the proposed indoor aquatic center.

Thank you for taking the time to share these questions along with your thoughts and comments!

From: Judith Lemish <judamiser@aol.com>

Sent: Tuesday, August 2, 2022 9:47 AM

To: Abraham, Keith <keith.abraham@cityofames.org>

Cc: Haila, John <john.haila@cityofames.org>; Betcher, Gloria <gloria.betcher@amescitycouncil.org>; Gartin, Tim <tim.gartin@amescitycouncil.org>; Rollins, Anita <anita.rollins@amescitycouncil.org>; Junck, Rachel <rachel.junck@amescitycouncil.org>; Corrieri, Amber <amber.corrieri@amescitycouncil.org>; Beatty-Hansen, Bronwyn <bronwyn.beattyhansen@amescitycouncil.org>

Subject: Decision on Pool Location

In the email I got from parks and rec you sent out, you mentioned the August 9th council meeting. I'm not sure exactly if a decision is being made that night by council or not? Will more input from the community be allowed to be presented by email before this Friday or in person at the meeting? Will a decision be made at end of August then if comments are allowed?

It seems a little vague at this point. Also no mention of other possibilities is mentioned very well, if at all. The O'Neil site is referenced as if it is the only best choice we have (?).

I must be honest now, I am not very pleased with this whole process! Taking free-for-use recreational green park space and trading it for hard surfaced fee-for-use recreation space is wrong. This seems to be a slippery slope. Ames is pitting different uses for this space against one another instead of coming up with an alternative site. A site that has no emotional feelings, history or neighborhood importance attached to it!

Judith Lemish
327 S. Maple

Judy,

Thanks for your questions and comments!

City Council will be accepting comments at its August 9 meeting with no decision being made on the site location. At its August 23 meeting, City Council will discuss amongst itself and likely make a decision on the site location. No public input will be invited at the August 23 meeting. Corresponding with the Mayor and City Council via email is also an option for communicating your comments and concerns.

The information sent in the newsletter on Monday was in response to Council's request to share information from the last two Council meetings with as many residents as possible. Staff has also distributed a press release and put information out through the City's social media outlets in response to this request.

Please contact us if you have any further questions.

From: Eryn Shriver <shriver3@gmail.com>

Sent: Friday, August 5, 2022 10:16 AM

To: City Council and Mayor <mayorcouncil@amescitycouncil.org>; Abraham, Keith <keith.abraham@cityofames.org>

Subject: Thoughts on the new aquatic center

Dear Mayor Haila and Ames City Council,

I am writing today to present four points I think are important to consider when making the decision on where to place the new aquatic center. I will attempt to stick with the facts and limit my emotional response. After all, this is not a referendum on whether or not we like parks. We all like parks. It is a financial, strategic, sustainability, and marketing decision. The questions you may be considering are about the budget and final costs, what amenities we can make available to Ames citizens as well as market to neighboring towns, the safety of all aquatic center users and getting the most "Bang for your buck." I will address each of these.

First, I would address the misunderstanding regarding the comparison between building Miracle Park at Inis Grove and building the aquatic center at O'Neil Park. When Miracle park was completed it opened a much needed space for members of our community. It also retained much of the green space, walking trails, wooded areas, and playground equipment originally part of Inis Grove Park. If the aquatic center is located on O'Neil Park, it would take up 100% of the space, not a portion of the park, the entire park. I have heard it being said that the city should simply put the pool in a corner of O'Neil Park. O'Neil Park is nearly the same exact size as the original site on Oak Ave. The current plans for Oak Ave. pave the entire north half of the lot for parking and the building takes up nearly all the southern portion of the lot. The size of facility the city is considering would not fit in a portion of O'Neil Park, it would take up the entirety of the space.

Next, I'd like to address the issue of usage. The Council was enthusiastic about the numbers Mr. Abraham shared about pool usage and what we might expect with a new facility. These are documented numbers from admissions data. Many friends and neighbors of the park shared stories of frequent to constant use of the park by the community. However, these stories are anecdotal and cannot be properly quantified. If park usage is an important metric for making this decision, then a proper usage study should be commissioned. Mr. Abraham said that he has driven by O'Neil Park and noticed no users from time to time. I would share that at different times over the years my children have been the only ones on the equipment at Brookside, Bandshell, Inis Grove, and Emma McCarthy Lee Parks in Ames. One drive-by cannot quantify the usage of a space. For instance, just last month there were nearly 500 people in O'Neil Park to watch the fireworks and celebrate the 4th of July. Did you know the fireworks are perfectly visible from O'Neil Park? Again, if usage is important to the decision-making process, please request a proper usage study to determine what we are actually exchanging for 50,000 pool users.

There are two safety issues I want to raise. First regarding the suggestion that the O'Neil Park play equipment be moved to the green space west of its current location and east of loway Creek. While from a distance or on a static map, this looks like a big empty green area, I'd like to remind everyone why it is that way. There used to be single family homes in that area. After repeated flooding, the homes were condemned by this city and torn down, with the caveat that no new construction be located there. Just because it is green does not mean it is a suitable space for a park. Walking across the footbridge the other night I thought about how many woodchips (or whatever base material is used) would wash into the creek year after year. And how much sand and silt would infiltrate the play equipment. I wondered what material would be used for the play structures that would not succumb to the elements after only a few years. For the safety of our kids and families, a full survey of the site to determine soil contaminants, existing underground infrastructure, (spoiler: there are still manhole covers, storm drains and at least one fire plug), and options for base material that will not infect our creek when it washes away should be performed before any decision is made on moving the O'Neil Park play structures to this location.

The other safety concern has more to do with public perception. I have been asked if I thought the public would embrace the Oak Ave. site knowing it had been contaminated. The answer to that lies in the hundreds of kids, including my own, who play baseball and soccer at Hunziker Youth Sports Complex. The Ames city council on it's current website

assures us that the area that is now Hunziker Youth Sports Complex and the Ames Dog Park are perfectly safe for use after they mitigated the radiation leak from back in the 1950's. All of the radioactive ground material was removed and multiple testing has shown the area to be safe. With proper mitigation of the Oak Ave. site, I have no doubt that the city will be able to assure us of the safety of the pool as well.

Finally, the issue of money. It was noted at the last meeting that with the extra cost of cleaning up the Oak Ave. site, there would not be enough money to include the indoor walking track and community space. But, locating the center on the O'Neil Park site, would give us the most "Bang for our Buck!" I would remind the Council that nothing in the Fitch Family Aquatic Center will be free of charge. If I remember correctly, the cost of an annual family membership at the 13th St. proposed center was in the realm of \$700 per year. There are hundreds of families in Ames that will never come up with that kind of cash to use the facility. So, really we are talking about exchanging O'Neil Park, a free, quality amenity that is open and available to all Ames residents and the wider community, for an expensive, limited-access, amenity that is available only to those who can come up with the cash. I do not find this to be an equitable exchange.

Mr. Abraham said in the last meeting that the mitigation cost could be anywhere from \$350,000 to \$1.2 million. This is, of course, on top of the \$2.9 million purchase price of the Oak Ave. property. In a quick internet search, I and others have found there are many additional grants available for this type of site restoration. Also, I quote directly from the AGENDA ... AND REGULAR MEETING OF THE AMES CITY COUNCIL, JULY 12, 2022, pg 18, "5. Possibility of Grant Funding – DOT administrators have offered to help the City by arranging a meeting with IDNR officials regarding the possibility of grant funding to address environmental contamination at this site. If this meeting is able to be arranged prior to the July 26 Council meeting, staff will report back regarding the discussions and outcomes." In a project of this size and scope, the mitigation costs are not unreasonable, and the DOT has offered to help find additional grant money to pay for it.

I have spent significant time considering this situation over the past few weeks. And it still concerns me greatly that the O'Neil Park site is even under consideration. The ethical imperative to clean the Oak Ave. site and make it useful again along with the offer by the DOT to assist in securing grant money to cover the cost should be enough to close this topic and write up the purchase offer for the Oak Ave. site. This City Council includes environmental sustainability as a core value. What is more sustainable than making an unusable space usable again? While this value is not on the agenda until later this year, the Council included, "...and continue pursuing targets of opportunity to achieve greenhouse gas reduction" as part of the stated plan, (City Council Values, Goals and Tasks, February 15, 2022, pg 5, Goal 1). THIS is our opportunity to walk the talk.

I am opposed to the use of O'Neil Park as the site of the aquatic center. I would like to see the Council direct staff to begin the purchase process for the Oak Ave. site. I would also encourage the Council to authorize staff to accept the assistance of the DOT to secure additional grant money to cover the cost of mitigation.

Thank you,

Eryn Shriver
202 S. Maple Ave.
Ames resident since 1994,
Oak-Riverside neighborhood since 1998.

From: Jan Schneider <jschn53@msn.com>

Sent: Friday, August 5, 2022 12:11 PM

To: Haila, John <john.haila@cityofames.org>; Abraham, Keith <keith.abraham@cityofames.org>; Betcher, Gloria <gloria.betcher@amescitycouncil.org>; Gartin, Tim <tim.gartin@amescitycouncil.org>; Rollins, Anita <anita.rollins@amescitycouncil.org>; Junck, Rachel <rachel.junck@amescitycouncil.org>; Beatty-Hansen, Bronwyn <bronwyn.beattyhansen@amescitycouncil.org>; Corrieri, Amber <amber.corrieri@amescitycouncil.org>

Subject: O'Neil Park

Mr. Mayor, Mr. Abraham, members of the city council:

I am writing today to express my strong opposition to siting the Fitch Family Aquatic Center in O'Neil Park. While I support the need for a facility of that kind in Ames, I believe there are other sites that would suffice without destroying an existing green space.

In spite of many changes over the years, our neighborhood has been relatively stable, due to several factors: easy access to downtown and the commercial area on Lincoln Way east of Grand Avenue, the presence of two CyRide stops on Lincoln Way and South Fourth and Hazel Avenue, and the addition of the nearby ISU Athletic Complex. Of equal importance to this stability, I believe, has been the presence of the green space provided by O'Neil park, which not only provides a place for people to gather and enjoy the outdoors, but a visually pleasant and restful spot in the middle of this residential/light industrial area. While our neighborhood is not considered upscale, it is an area that provides affordable housing for many people, the need for which has been acknowledged by Ames leaders. I find it ironic, therefore, and somewhat hypocritical, that the city which boasts of its beautiful and accessible park system as a "quality of life" amenity is considering destroying one of these parks in order to add yet more cement and building to this site.

In addition, I have a somewhat personal but relevant interest in this discussion. My husband and I have lived in the O'Neil family home on South Hazel Avenue since 1971; we bought it from the O'Neil family after Clem O'Neil's death. During those fifty years, we learned something about the man who built the house and have come to the conclusion that the house itself reflects his character and values. The house is unpretentious but built of brick and cement, sturdy materials meant for long and comfortable use as a home to raise a family. The lot is generous with trees, bushes and other greenery, perfect for children to play and for adults to enjoy being outside with nature. It seems to me that the gift of the park also reflects these values—a comfortable, long lasting place for families to enjoy in the

same way. I think it would be disrespectful of the O'Neil family legacy and contribution to the city of Ames to replace such a generous gift with a building and parking lots.

Sincerely,

Jan Schneider
209 South Hazel Avenue
Ames, IA 50010
jschn53@msn.com
515-231-1044

Jan,

Thank you for providing your thoughts and comments regarding O'Neil Park!