

## INTRODUCTION

SPLASHForward (“SF”) is a nonprofit 501(c)3 community advocacy group, aquatics thought leader and private fundraising partner spearheading the effort to bring a public world class aquatic center and satellite facilities to the Eastside. SPLASHForward is a 2017 revitalization and broadened effort of the nonprofit Swimming Pools for Leisure, Active Sports and Health (SPLASH) efforts started in 2006. SF has broadened the original SPLASH initiative, built on the work done with the City of Bellevue and the 2009 *Bellevue Aquatics Feasibility Study* and engaged with regional aquatics efforts. SF aims to go beyond just meeting the immediate and basic aquatics and wellness needs of the community. SF envisions an aquatic center as an accessible, culturally inclusive, operationally efficient and vibrant hub built on a foundation of lasting local partnerships for many generations to come. SF’s advocacy serves the broad aquatic needs of the region for a full range of fitness, recreation, health, wellness, and competitive aquatics programs for all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.

SPLASHForward believes...

- *Communities are stronger when we have places to be active and social together*
- *Aquatics activities keep people of all ages and abilities active and healthy*
- *Our region is in great need of accessible state of the art public aquatics facilities that serve everyone’s needs*

***An Aquatic Center should not be just another pool.*** The SPLASHForward vision includes...

- A design-forward, community experience where everyone belongs
- A gathering place of pride and equity for our community
- A place that promotes health, wellness, and personal growth through aquatic fitness, sport, recreation, and lifestyle activities and services
- An affordable, operationally efficient and sustainable facility

A broader presentation of SPLASHForward’s Vision, Opportunities, and Advocacy is included in this Report as part of Attachment #1. The SPLASHForward Vision and Advocacy are also reflected in the SPLASHForward Public Comment for the August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020 Bellevue City Council (included in Attachment #1). Attachment #1 also includes a Regional Timeline and Opportunity Summary which captures the history of efforts to build a new public aquatic facility in Bellevue and the Eastside leading up to the current Bellevue and Regional efforts.

Over the past year and a half, SPLASHForward has conducted a deep regional aquatics analysis alongside the work of the City of Bellevue (the “City”) and the Regional Aquatics Group. This work is contained in the comprehensive SPLASHForward report (the “Report”). This Executive Summary of the Report presents the key findings and analysis plus a summary of Next Steps in the development of a major Aquatic Center in Bellevue. SPLASHForward’s intention has been to complement, enhance, and strengthen the City and Regional government resources, analysis, and conclusions by bringing together key stakeholders, engaging the public and facilitating partnerships.

SPLASHForward has facilitated the relationship with Bellevue School District (“BSD”) and been a strong advocate for their needs. SPLASHForward has developed strong relationships throughout the community to bring the voices of all potential aquatic and community stakeholders to the City and Regional aquatic facility development process.

The great need is well understood and documented in the recent **Regional Aquatics Report** (October 2019) led by King County in partnership with Bellevue, Redmond and Kirkland (the Regional Aquatics Group”) and the **Bellevue Aquatics Center Feasibility Study Update** (the “2020 BAC Study”) led by the ARC Architects (“ARC”) completed in June 2020. No new public aquatic facilities have been built in Bellevue and the Eastside since the 1970’s. King County’s population has increased by more than one million people, including over 200,000 on the Eastside. Bellevue’s population has increased nearly two and half times since 1970 to the current population of 148,000+, swelling to 239,000+ in the day driven by Bellevue businesses, significantly increasing the aquatic user base by an additional 61%. Our communities remain woefully underserved for public affordable access to basic swimming lessons and water safety programming, yet we are surrounded by water. Opportunities have been and continue to be lost for our diverse and active youth, adult, family, senior, and special needs communities. We need to better serve all of these constituencies in new aquatic facilities. Affordable public access to all ranges of programming is paramount.

Isaac Sports Group (“ISG”), a nationally recognized aquatics consultant, was hired by SPLASHForward (collectively “SF/ISG”) in January of 2019 to conduct the City and regional aquatics analysis (the “Study”) which is integrated into this Report. This Report includes an analysis of existing Bellevue aquatic facilities and programs, outreach to stakeholders and user groups, the definition of preferred design aquatic elements, sample programming models and schedules, a full operational analysis and budget projections, and an event model and economic impact statement. Local and national facilities and program research has included funding sources, operational models, partnerships, programming development, usage data, and overall best practices. The report also reviews the City’s ARC 2020 Feasibility Study (the “City/ARC 2020 Study) and expands on many elements of this City/ARC 2020 Study. SPLASHForward’s work along with that of the City of Bellevue and the Regional Aquatics Group, will help make the case for public/private partnerships, broad based funding, and operational sustainability that are critical to successfully realizing much needed new public aquatic centers.

The following goals, objectives, and elements were established in commissioning this Study and developing this Report.

1. Understand and analyze current aquatics environment and overall City and Regional market
2. Review and analyze existing aquatic facilities and programs in the City, the Eastside, and throughout the overall region
  - a. Including specific analysis of the existing Bellevue Aquatic Center at Odle School (“BAC/Odle”)
3. Initiate stakeholder engagement and outreach to identify stakeholder program and facility needs and identify and develop partnership and user group opportunities
4. Identify, develop, and quantify City and Regional program and use needs, demands, and opportunities
5. Develop a preliminary Program Model and Schedule Matrix based on the Market Analysis and stakeholder, user groups and potential partner input

6. Develop projected management and staffing model for the Aquatic Center
7. Develop projected financial operating projections for the Aquatic Center
8. Develop projected competitive event model for the Aquatic Center in conjunction with local and regional sport user groups and sport governing bodies
9. Develop Economic Impact analysis for the proposed Aquatic Center based on the Event Model developed in the Study
10. Collaborate with the City and the ARC Team to support the City/ARC 2020 Bellevue Aquatics Feasibility Study Update
11. Based on the Program Model, review the design options in the 2009 Bellevue Feasibility Study and work in coordination with the City in developing and reviewing the *City/ARC 2020 Bellevue Aquatics Feasibility Study Update* design options
12. Based on the Program Model, input from stakeholders, and the review of the 2009 Study and the City/ARC 2020 City process, develop a *SPLASHForward* Preferred Design Option for the Aquatic Center
13. Identify potential facility and programming updates, renovation, and repurposing of the existing Bellevue Aquatic Center at Odle School
14. Review and analyze the *City/ARC 2020 Bellevue Aquatics Feasibility Study Update* Draft and Final Reports
  - a. Program Model
  - b. Design Concepts
  - c. Staffing Recommendations
  - d. Financial/Business Operating Model
  - e. Economic Impact
15. Work with King County, the Regional Aquatics Group, the City, and stakeholders to best define, differentiate, and integrate local community and regional aquatic facility and program needs and opportunities
16. Develop and identify site criteria and provide deeper analysis of the potential for a Bellevue College siting
17. Identify examples of regional and national Best In Class facilities and partnership models and best practice operations to inform design, identify partnership potential, and develop management models for the Aquatic Center
18. Develop *SF* and ISG recommended next steps in the Aquatic Center development process

### The Bellevue Health and Aquatic Center

It has been a key understanding throughout the entire process that the need for an aquatic center is closely tied to the need for overall community health and wellness. In addition to the aquatic elements, this Study Report as well as the City’s Feasibility Study, include significant facility components to support fitness, wellness, and community programming in both aquatic and ‘dry’ activities and programs, from fitness, senior, therapy, rehab, and outreach programs that support the broadest range of residents as possible. Such a facility as envisioned in this Study and Report align closely with many of the Human Services objectives and initiatives of the City.

Identifying the importance of communicating the significant value and benefits of Health and Wellness and community aspects of the aquatic center project, *SPLASHForward* is using the following working branding of the potential facility to capture the inclusivity of the aquatic center:

### **“BELLEVUE HEALTH AND AQUATIC CENTER”**

For convenience, the Bellevue Health and Aquatic Center will be referred to in this Report as either the “BHAC” or simply the “Aquatic Center.”

### Organization of Report

This SF/ISG Report is organized roughly in the order of progression through the Study. The Report progresses through the analysis of Goals and Objectives into the Program Analysis and Development then leads into the Design Development. Following the Design Section, the Report analyzes Project Cost, Management and Staffing, Financial Analysis leading into Funding, Next Steps, and Keys to Success. There are many cross references between Sections since this progression is not truly a linear process, but the underlying approach focuses on the philosophy that *Program Precedes Design*. There is also some duplication of key data in different Sections where relevant. The report is designed as an integrated whole, but specific Sections and corresponding Attachments can be utilized individually during the Next Steps of the development process.

### Using the Report

The report is forward looking, providing information to help support the key City Staff driven Next Steps in the development process. Specific information and detail in the report are critical in the Next Steps in partner development, site analysis, donor development, funding structure, and other key elements. The report provides information and a road map on Next Steps while also providing in depth reference information not only for the Next Steps but for actual programming, management, and opening of a new aquatic facility in Bellevue.

### SPLASHForward Moving Forward

*SPLASHForward* is committed as an advocacy and collaborative partner in the ongoing development of a new Aquatic Center and future satellite aquatic facilities on the Eastside. Building on *SF*'s work to date and based on the abundant opportunities and game changing potential for a new BHAC identified in this Report, *SPLASHForward* is committed to raising private funding and helping develop the public/private partnerships necessary to realize this Aquatic Center and the needed satellite facilities. *SPLASHForward* is committed to further supporting and collaborating with the City of Bellevue, the Bellevue School District, King County and our Regional Aquatics Group comprised of Bellevue, Redmond and Kirkland to take the next steps as outlined in this Report and summarized in the Conclusion.

# **SPLASHForward ACTION and STUDY METHODOLOGY and** **TIMELINE**

SPLASHForward began its advocacy, research, and networking activities in 2017, building on the work of its predecessor SPLASH and the 2009 Bellevue Aquatic Center Feasibility Study. From that beginning in 2017 SF research, community engagement, and project initiatives has included:

- Incorporate as a not for profit 501(c)3 corporation in 2018
- Assemble a strong Board of Directors made up of aquatic and community leaders and volunteers with a strong interest in the community and a passion for aquatics and health and wellness
  - ***The SPLASHForward Board of Directors is listed in Attachment #2***
- Raise seed funds to engage professional consulting services and support project education and community outreach
- Identify and engage aquatic and community stakeholders, organizations, and individuals with a strong interest in aquatics to identify needs and opportunities
- Initial engagement with the Bellevue School District
- Initial engagement with a majority of the current Bellevue Aquatic Center/Odle user groups and outside program providers
- Develop a broad base of supporters, including:
  - Current and potential BAC/Odle and new Aquatic Center user groups
  - Aquatic sport teams and organizations in Bellevue, the Eastside, and the region
    - Club and high school teams in swimming, water polo, diving, artistic swimming, masters swimming, open water swimming, triathlon, and Special Olympics
    - High Teams and Booster Clubs
    - Local and Regional sport governing bodies
    - Special Olympics of Washington
    - Boys and Girls Club of Bellevue
    - MidLakes Swim League
  - Community, senior, and youth organizations
    - Including Boys and Girls Club of Bellevue, Jubilee Reach, and Eastside Neighbors Network (seniors) among others
  - Bellevue College
  - ***The ever growing list of organizations and aquatic stakeholders interviewed and actively engaged as part of the SPLASHForward research and the ISG Study to date is included in this report at Attachment #3***
- Study and analyze existing aquatic facilities and programs in Bellevue, the Eastside, and the overall region, including engagement with facility management
  - Public facilities
  - Private neighborhood pools
  - YMCA and health club facilities
- Review of Bellevue Parks & Open Space System Plan
- Develop relationships and communication with the City of Bellevue, King County, and Regional Aquatic Group aquatic and recreation leadership and staff

- Research regional and national best in class facilities relevant to the Bellevue Aquatic Center or a Regional Aquatic Center

The strong interest in a potential major aquatic center in Bellevue led *SPLASHForward* to begin a fundraising campaign in 2018 to generate seed money to support their advocacy efforts, to provide funds to engage outside professional consultants, and to support information campaigns and community meetings. The seed money fundraising campaign generated support from a wide range of sport teams, organizations, businesses, and individuals.

In January of 2019 *SPLASHForward* retained the Isaac Sports Group to conduct a Feasibility Study for an aquatic center in Bellevue or the Eastside. This Feasibility Study focused on the Needs, Opportunities, Program, Design, Management, and Financial Analysis needed to best understand the feasibility and viability of a new aquatic center. ISG partnered with *SPLASHForward* to use a wide variety of resources and methods to conduct the analysis and determine recommendations for the aquatic facilities and overall aquatic programming and design for a new Aquatic Center. The ISG Project Team was led by Stu Isaac, President of ISG. ISG made several trips to the Bellevue area, including:

- January, 2019
- April, 2019
- October, 2019: 2 Trips
- February, 2020

These trips included the following activities, meetings, and research:

- *SPLASHForward* Board Meetings
- Several general stakeholder and public informational and discussion meetings
- Regular meetings with Bellevue Parks Staff and City Councilmembers
  - Virtual Meetings with Bellevue Parks Staff, *SPLASHForward*, and ISG occurred initially on a regular biweekly basis beginning in the summer of 2019 and continuing on a regular basis
  - Including meetings with the City's ARC Architects Feasibility Study Project Team
  - Includes meetings with past and current Bellevue Aquatic Center/Odle management and staff
  - Included presentation of *SF/ISG* preliminary findings throughout the *SF/ISG* Study and review and discussion of the City Study preliminary designs and operating projections
- Informational meetings with potential partners or donors
- ***Meetings with the user groups, community groups, organizations, and individuals listed in Attachment #3***
- Meetings with aquatic sport team coaches and leadership and sport governing bodies
- Meetings with representatives of the Bellevue School District
  - Included attending several high school team practices and meetings with team coaches
- Meeting with representatives of Bellevue College
- Meetings with Visit Bellevue and the Seattle Sports Commission
- Meeting with the Executive Director of Special Olympics of Washington
- Meeting with Executive Director of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Bellevue

- Visits to the existing Bellevue Aquatic Center at Odle School
- Visits to private neighborhood and community pools in Bellevue
- Visits to public and private pools in Eastside communities and Mercer Island
- Visit to King County Aquatic Center

Market Research included:

- Review of 2009 Bellevue Aquatic Center Feasibility Study
- Demographic review of City and Regional
- Market analysis of current aquatic and fitness facility and program fees and costs'
- Specific aquatic program participation and demand at local aquatic facilities
- Analysis of current rental rates of team training space in facilities throughout the region and nationally
- Engage and meet with Provincial and National Aquatic Sport Federations
- Detailed review of historic and current Bellevue Aquatic Center/Odle programs, schedule, outside user/rental groups, operating budgets, mechanical systems, and repair/renovation costs and history
- Analysis of current aquatic competition event calendar, participation, demand, and economic impact
- Analysis of current Bellevue and Eastside team training facilities and schedules

The following *SF/ISG* Study preliminary findings and analysis were presented to the City and the City/ARC Study 2020 Team in the summer of 2019 and fall of 2019 with updated versions presented in February 2020.

- Projected Schedule Matrix for three design options
- Projected Event calendar, revenue analysis, and economic impact projections for three design options
- Financial Operating analysis for three design options
  - Including suggested staffing model
- Comparative design/space allocations for four options
- Analysis of seating and deck space based on event models for four options
- Market analysis of aquatic and fitness center membership, user fees, and swim lesson class rates
- Best in Class regional and national facilities
- Aquatic Team usage, schedule, and rental fee projections, broken down by specific teams and user groups for two design options

Throughout this Study ISG incorporated examples, programs, and data from best practice facilities and programs around the country as well as new and forward looking trends in aquatic fitness, recreation, and sport programming. Based on these trends and data and the market research, local and regional stakeholder input, City input, *SF/ISG* analysis, and ISG facility study and management experience plus vetting by leading aquatic facility managers in the country the SPLASHForward Preferred designs and the final financial operating projections and event models were developed.