



**City Council Agenda Report**  
**Meeting Date:** December 20, 2011  
**Department:** Management Services

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**SUBJECT:**

CIVIC CENTER CONCEPTUAL PLAN

**RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):**

Affirm Civic Center Project Planning Principles and provide input on the Civic Center Conceptual Plan.

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

Tonight, the City has reached an important milestone in delivering a permanent Civic Center – Lake Forest’s 100 Year Home – as City Council reviews an updated Needs Assessment and Program Report (Attachment 1) and Conceptual Site Plan and Programmatic Budget (Attachment 2). The conceptual plan envisions facilities that address many of the community’s unmet needs – including a meeting center, dedicated senior center, performing arts theater, and emergency operations center. To maximize utility and usage, each facility is programmed to accommodate multiple uses. To truly reflect the unique history and character of Lake Forest, the conceptual plan emphasizes the natural beauty that defines our community, making nature and the outdoors more available and accessible for everyday civic life.

Staff will present for the City Council’s review the project scope and objectives, data collection methods, project assumptions, conceptual site plan, and next steps. After the presentation, staff is seeking the City Council’s affirmation on the project planning principles used to create the concept plan, as well as the Council’s input on the conceptual plan. Planning principles used to develop the conceptual plan envision a Civic Center that:

- a. Reflects Lake Forest – Emphasize the pastoral landscape, natural topography, and unique history that set Lake Forest apart from its neighbors.
- b. Is a Destination – Develop the Civic Center complex as a “destination” through the site location, architecture, and landscaping – especially as more of the traditional, in-person government transactions (i.e., records requests, payment for permits, etc.) become optional in today’s online world.

- c. Provides New Amenities – Prioritize services at the Civic Center currently unavailable to the community.
- d. Accommodates Multiple Uses – Design the Civic Center buildings and amenities to accommodate multiple uses whenever possible.

Pending Council's affirmation of the identified project planning principles, staff will begin working on refining any identified areas. Tonight's feedback will allow the consultant to refine the conceptual plan and begin preparing a preliminary scoping budget for the project. In upcoming months, the Council will review updated cash flow projections for all of the Opportunities Study Area public facilities projects and decide the City's fiscal capabilities and priorities.

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## **BACKGROUND:**

Twenty years ago, friends, neighbors and civic leaders came together to bring about the incorporation of Lake Forest to maintain its unique heritage, history, and community. Throughout the City's twenty-year history, civic leaders have consistently responded to the needs and wants of the community through the delivery of quality public services. Past and present City leaders have been deliberate and fiscally conservative, as they have grown the city, upholding their commitments to public safety, parks and recreation facilities, and City streets and infrastructure. These efforts have placed the City in a strong position to capitalize on the opportunity to provide a permanent civic center to the community – a collection of facilities and amenities that can serve the citizens of Lake Forest for the next 100 years.

At the May 17, 2011, City Council meeting, the City Council discussed Civic Center service goals and associated amenities, focusing upon two questions:

- What do you want to do there?
- What do you want it to look like?

The City Council discussed their desire to move forward with this project in light of the upcoming 2014 expiration of the current City Hall lease, as well as the current favorable construction market. From the beginning of the project, the City Council was eager to engage the community to collect their feedback and input. The City Council also discussed the following project goals based upon the City's General Plan and Values:

- Be the heart of the City, bringing various communities together.
- Address unmet community needs through the provision of facilities and

amenities.

- Promote public safety and community policing.
- Maintain a connection with the pastoral landscape, natural topography, and unique history that defines Lake Forest.
- Customize customer service to be right-sized for current and future needs.

Based upon this feedback, staff proposed to validate and refresh sections of the 2004 Facilities Needs Analysis related to the Civic Center – including the Needs Assessment, Facilities Program, Conceptual Design, and Project Budget sections. The City Council awarded a contract to Griffin Structures, Inc., for the needs assessment project at the August 16, 2011, meeting.

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## **DISCUSSION:**

Seventeen years ago, City leaders first stated a goal of providing a permanent Civic Center to the community. Over time, the City has carefully documented the values, goals, objectives, and decisions related to the Civic Center in the General Plan, the Five Year Strategic Plan, and the OSA Business Plan. Now, at this important juncture in the City's history, the City has reached a significant milestone in delivering a permanent Civic Center – Lake Forest's 100 Year Home.

### **Section I – Project Approach & Community Input**

The update to the needs assessment started in late August and was completed in December 2011. Project deliverables included a full report (Attachments 1 and 2) providing a needs assessment, facilities program, conceptual site plan, and programmatic budget. After working with Griffin Structures, staff identified the following facilities: Community Center/Senior Center, Performing Arts Theater/Council Chambers, Community Policing/Emergency Operations Center (EOC), and Administrative Offices.

#### Project Approach

Initially, staff instructed the consultant to update the Civic Center conceptual plan assuming a generic nine-acre project site. In October, the City Council approved the Sports Park Master Plan, which did not include any passive civic uses, such as a meeting center or an administrative building. Therefore, to maximize the usefulness of the conceptual plan and related project estimates, staff instructed the consultant to specifically plan for the site identified in the Irvine Ranch Water District Development Agreement (located at the Serrano Summit development) to be dedicated to the City for the development of a Civic Center. The conceptual plan created by the consultant is based upon the elevations and topography of

this nine-acre site, which is identified as the future site of the Civic Center in the Five Year Strategic Plan, adopted by the City Council in August 2011.

Although the conceptual plan makes the assumption of the use of the 9-acre Serrano Summit site, it is important to note that this program and conceptual plan can be modified for placement on alternative sites that meet the size standards and other requirements such as City ownership. Many of the direct (construction costs) would be transferable based upon square footage requirements, with adjustments made to the indirect costs based upon specific site constraints and opportunities.

### Community Feedback

The Lake Forest Civic Center project will be one of the most enduring legacies that today's leaders leave for future generations. A project of this scope and magnitude requires a deliberate, thoughtful approach to each step of the process. During the pre-design phase, staff's goal was to clearly identify the needs and wants of the community utilizing three feedback mechanisms – a City Council workshop, an online survey (Attachment 4), and a community workshop (Attachment 5). The online survey and community workshop results echoed the Council's input. After reviewing and analyzing the feedback, the following overarching themes emerged:

- Provide a focal point for the City – a community gathering spot.
- Plan for a flexible facility – one that is adaptable to multiple uses.
- Ensure a large number of residents can benefit from any given amenity.
- Incorporate outdoor spaces into the design.
- Public safety should be a priority.

### **Section II: Conceptual Plan – Community Center/Senior Center, Council Chambers/Performing Arts Theater, Community Policing/EOC, and Administrative Offices**

Based upon City Council feedback, community feedback, and programming requirements, a conceptual plan has been developed for the Civic Center that proposes a Community Center/Senior Center, Council Chambers/Performing Arts Theater, Community Policing/Emergency Operations Center, and Administrative Offices. In addition to showing feasible building massing, access and circulation along with parking areas, the conceptual plan also focuses on site design considerations.

The proposed site offers a number of unique features, creating abundant opportunities for visitors to engage with the natural environment. The plan complements the existing landscape and topography, and works to make the

Civic Center complex buildings an extension of their natural surroundings. The elevation of the site, combined with the surrounding open spaces and backdrop of mountain ranges, presents panoramic vistas of Lake Forest. The site offers access to existing trails, as well as the opportunity to enjoy the outdoor spaces through patios, covered breezeways, and outdoor furnishings. Nestled in the hills of Lake Forest, the site is close enough to the hustle and bustle of Lake Forest's thriving neighborhoods and business communities to be convenient, but removed enough to provide a sense of destination.

### Community Center/Senior Center

The one-story community center provides an amenity to the community that has long been desired, and will be the heart of the Civic Center. A purpose-built meeting center envisions facilities and amenities for various community groups, including business groups, residents, and visitors. The current program identifies three (3) conference rooms and three (3) configurable event spaces ranging in size from 480 sq. ft. to 7,500 sq. ft. Services offered could include conference rooms, training rooms, exhibition space, special events space, and banquet space. With its own commercial-grade kitchen, the Community Center could offer on-site catering from light refreshments to full sit-down, multi-course dinners. It is envisioned to become a focal point in the community, providing a unique, local destination venue in Lake Forest.

The primary purpose of a senior center is to enhance the quality of life of older adults, by supporting their efforts to keep active and preserve their independence by promoting wellness, personal fulfillment, and self-esteem. A key purpose of a senior center is to provide a place where older adults can meet with their peers and benefit from City-sponsored programming. The Senior Center program envisions distinct spaces for seniors designed for the unique needs of seniors, including a dedicated entrance, lobby, lavatory facility, multi-purpose banquet hall, arts and crafts room, computer room, wellness center, as well as a catering kitchen.

During the planning process, these two facilities were co-located under a common roof, within a single-story building programmed at just under 33,000 square feet.

### Performing Arts Theater/City Council Chambers

Based upon community feedback, an affordable and accessible performing arts theater is desired in Lake Forest. A multi-function, one-story City Council Chambers provides a unique opportunity to provide an amenity to the community while maximizing facility use. Many of the potential future requirements for the Chambers related to the broadcasting and videotaping of meetings coincide with

audio/visual requirements associated with a performing arts theater. Although it would be prohibitively expensive and almost impossible to outfit the facility to be the “perfect” space for both uses, the goal of the proposed building is to provide a thoughtfully-designed solution that meets the majority of requirements for both uses. Taking advantage of technology, the stage is programmed to “pop-up” from the dais area, raked seating would be shared by both uses, and the closed session conference room could double as a backstage. A comfortable lobby area allows for a small ticket office, as well as room for concessions. This single-story building is programmed at just over 15,000 square feet.

### Community Policing/Emergency Operations Center

Providing quality police services have been a longstanding commitment of Lake Forest’s civic leaders. The footprint placed on the conceptual site plan represents a two-story building, co-located with the administrative offices. The proposed facility seeks to provide amenities that will grow along with the needs of Lake Forest Police Services over time, and is currently programmed to be more than twice as large as the existing facility. Proposed amenities include a dedicated reception area, conference room, secured parking, showers, locker room, and fitness facility. In addition, the proposed conference room is programmed for dual use, to act as an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) if the need arises. An EOC is a critical emergency resource, developing and maintaining awareness of an emergency for decision makers and coordinating support for emergency responders. This facility is co-located with the administrative building, and is programmed as a two-story building at just over 8,000 square feet.

### Administrative Offices

The footprint placed on the conceptual site plan represents a two-story building, co-located with the Community Policing/Emergency Operations Center facility. The administrative offices are intended to coordinate with the surrounding facilities without being a focal point. Tucked into the north portion of the site, the administrative offices would not be the dominant or prominent feature in the Civic Center complex.

Programming of the administrative offices involved detailed data collection through physical surveys of current operations, interviews with staff, and industry-recognized space standards. Further, in determining facilities and space requirements, consideration was given to new technologies that are not currently utilized, but should be accommodated in a future Civic Center. This facility is programmed as a two-story building at just under 39,000 square feet.

In the future, technological innovations will change the way the community accesses city services. The administrative offices of the Civic Center will

continue to offer services such as records requests, encroachment permits, and class registrations. However, these services will also be available on-line for the ease and convenience of the public. The administrative offices will no longer be the primary destination when visiting the Civic Center; rather, the major trip generators are anticipated to be the Community Center/Senior Center, Performing Arts Theater, and Community Policing.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Imagine Lake Forest's 100 Year Home – the Civic Center of tomorrow. With the steady progression of technology, civic life as we know it is transforming on a daily basis. It seems that almost every day another transaction-oriented service is placed online, whether it be registering for classes or applying for permit inspections, all aimed at increasing the ease and convenience for residents and businesses. With this transformation come new opportunities for Lake Forest to define the new era of civic life – an era marked by the personal and social side of civic life. Just imagine a day in the life of the Civic Center – a job fair in the morning, a senior lunch and bingo at noon, a dress rehearsal for the high school musical in the afternoon, and a City Council meeting in the evening. These are just a sampling of the experiences community members could access on a regular basis as part of Lake Forest's new civic center.

Pending Council's affirmation of the identified project planning principles, staff will begin working on refining any identified areas. Tonight's feedback will allow the consultant to refine the conceptual plan and begin preparing a preliminary scoping budget for the project. In upcoming months, the Council will review updated cash flow projections for all of the Opportunities Study Area public facilities projects and decide the City's fiscal capabilities and priorities.

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## **FISCAL IMPACT:**

There is minimal fiscal impact associated with the Recommended Action.

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## **ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Lake Forest Civic Center Public Facilities Needs Assessment Project – Report 1: Needs Assessment and Program
2. Lake Forest Civic Center Public Facilities Needs Assessment Project – Report 2: Conceptual Site Plan and Programmatic Budget

3. Lake Forest Civic Center Conceptual Plan Documents
4. Online Survey Results
5. Community Workshop Comments

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