

07.29.19

# Asian American Resource Center Master Plan Narrative

The Asian American Resource Center (AARC) Master Plan is intended to provide an overall plan that demonstrates the future development potential for the current AARC site. The project is located on a 15-acre City owned property along Cameron Road in Austin, Texas. The design team has created a framework for the spatial arrangement of buildings and programmatic pieces reasonably expected for the future needs of the AARC site. As with any Master Plan, some flexibility has been inserted into the plan to allow for future changes within the program.

This Master Plan was tied to a bond passed in the 2018 election, which allotted approximately \$7 million dollars to the project. Due to the limitations of the bond funding the Master Plan focuses on the immediate needs of the AARC, while providing a framework for future development. The design team estimated that the work shown in the Master Plan for Phase 2 would cost between \$15 – \$20 million if construction was completed by 2025.

The Master Plan is divided into three areas of focus based on when construction was completed or will be completed. Phase 1 represents the existing facility, completed in 2013. Phase 2 involves slight repairs/modifications to the existing facility as well as the addition of a new Performance Theater with additional classrooms, support spaces and community focused outdoor spaces to be completed in 2025. Future development will contain all other requested programmatic pieces that can be reasonably served by the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PARC). No date is set for design or construction of the future development beyond Phase 2 and it may be split into multiple phases.

## **Key Components of the Master Plan Phase 2:**

PARC focused on adding uses that complement the existing programs at the AARC. These uses were developed from public feedback during the public outreach portion and include the top seven public requests which have been included in Phase 2 and future development. The main program pieces of Phase 2 include the following: repairs to the existing building, adding partitions to the existing ballroom to allow conversion to classroom spaces, the construction of a new Performance Theater that accommodates 500 non-fixed theater seats or 450 guests at tables and a raised stage, green/dressing rooms, classrooms, secured gallery space, un-secured public gallery space, and related support and storage spaces. The new Performance Theater would be situated across from the existing facility and would create an outdoor courtyard between them capable of hosting performances and large communal gatherings. The internal floor plan, including the seating layout will be addressed during the design phase.

With the proposed uses, Phase 2 could add up to 220 parking spaces, although by Land Development Code standards only 187 spaces would be required for the build-out of all phases. It should be noted that the lack of parking during large events has been brought up numerous times by stakeholders. Currently, the City property located south of the AARC has allowed AARC visitors the use of their parking lot as overflow parking during large events. PARC staff has agreed to formalize this arrangement in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between PARC and the Building Services Department. In an effort to facilitate safe passage between both sites, PARC is committed to providing a pedestrian bridge and vehicular bridge between the two sites.

### **A Summary of the Master Plan Process:**

PARD developed an extensive Community Engagement process in partnership with the City of Austin's Community Engagement Office. A total of ten small focus groups were held with 154 participants. Additionally, surveys were conducted at the site, during events, and on SpeakUp Austin. (See Addendum A: Community Engagement Report for details.) The vast majority of the participants requested a Performing Arts Theater which reflected the top choice of an earlier independent survey conducted by the non-profit The Network of Asian American Organizations.

A series of public meetings were planned to process the public's expressed desires for the AARC, reflect them in schematic drawings and solicit community feedback.

At the first public meeting the results of the Community Engagement process were presented and responded to through three conceptual Feasibility Studies that reflected the public's desires. The three Studies focused on the best potential development footprints for the project based on site analysis. This included a consideration for the imminent change in flood plain zones, changing the AARC's 100 year flood plain areas into 25 year flood plains. Additional consideration was paid for the number of large trees that are distributed throughout the site.

The second public meeting presented themes we heard from the first meeting, including the program uses that the community gave the highest priority. By the third meeting, we distilled that feedback down to two concepts. Both concepts showed the same size of building and same program uses but differed in their approach to site circulation and orientation. The main feedback from the third meeting was to think larger than the budget the recently approved bond would allow and provide more of the requested program space. Several members of the community noted that fundraising can be utilized to make up the difference as it was done when the original building was constructed.

The fourth and final community meeting presented a single site plan that combined the best of the two previous options per community input. The draft Master Plan shown at the last meeting included about 50% more program space than previously shown for each phase.

### **Opportunities for Future Development:**

Future development will contain a variety of other requested programmatic pieces such as main entry/drop off court, nature play area, sculpture garden, community garden, covered pavilion, pedestrian and vehicular bridge, creek overlooks, boardwalk, nature trail, and future buildings that can accommodate a variety of support uses that can be reasonably served by PARD.

During this process some ideas were discussed including the possibility of incorporating housing, private retail and private office uses. Supporting this idea, an increased building height is desired to allow for a mixed-use development arrangement of uses. Although these ideas were not identified as a high priority during the public input and engagement process they should be included in future design discussions regarding the development and buildout of the AARC site, but the discussion should not ignore or undermine the public input process that was completed by PARD.

These ideas were not included or excluded in this Master Plan because they are outside the purview of this process due to zoning, land ownership and PARD's operational standards and mission. Opportunities for funding this wider range of future private development mixed-uses will depend on several factors. Private partnerships and funding could be explored, but that could require selling portions of the 15-acre city owned property or work within PARD's existing concessions and contracts division to provide any number of PARD related uses.

Additionally, there was some discussion about the potential for parking garage on the City's Rutherford campus to serve both the AARC and City departments located at Rutherford. This was also beyond the scope of this Master Plan.

PARD's objective in this Master Plan process was to understand the extent to which the site can be further developed to the benefit of the Asian American Pacific Islander community as well as the community of Austin as a whole. Based on public input and engagement with the community the Master Plan identifies the expansion of specific community programming that will utilize flexible indoor and outdoor facilities. The Master Plan addresses these specific programming needs and identifies the ability to expand the center to accommodate the future needs of the community.