



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council Members

THROUGH: Stephanie Hayden-Howard, LMSW, Assistant City Manager

FROM: Adrienne Sturup, Director, Austin Public Health *Adrienne Sturup*

DATE: April 8, 2024

SUBJECT: **Staff Report on an Intergenerational Resource and Activity Center (Resolution No. 20221208-059)**

On December 8, 2022, the City Council passed [Resolution No. 20221208-059](#) relating to an Intergenerational Resource and Activity Center (IRAC) directing the City Manager to:

- A. Partner with City departments and the Intergenerational Day Center (IDC) Advisory Group to work towards the implementation of an IRAC that will address the need for resources and provide a better quality of life for the fast-growing older adult and low-income population of Austin, while also addressing the needs of child care in the 78702 zip code and surrounding areas.
- B. Work with the IDC Advisory Group to identify licenses, certifications, and funding resources, including, but not limited to, public-private partnerships, creative financing options, revenue generation at the property, and other potential means required for an IRAC, and return to Council with proposals that ensure compliance with any requirements, legal or otherwise, necessary to fund an IRAC at the Nash Hernandez Building.
- C. Conduct community stakeholder engagement meetings to gather input on initiating a pilot IRAC partnership program at the Nash Hernandez Building and at the locations recommended by the Parks and Recreation Department.

Key Findings

Community Engagement – Austin Public Health (APH) and the Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) conducted community engagement about the possibility of locating an IRAC at the four locations specified in the resolution: Nash Hernandez Building, Rudy Mendez Recreation Center, George Morales Dove Springs Recreation Center, and Dittmar Recreation Center. There was no clear consensus among participants as to whether they wanted intergenerational programming and/or a full IRAC. Should one of the four locations under consideration become a full-time IRAC, participants preferred locating it at Nash Hernandez over the other sites.

Legal Considerations – The City is prohibited from providing physical healthcare and our Law Department advised that an IRAC not include physical healthcare services if it is located on City property. The primary programming model for older adults identified by the IRAC Advisory Group includes physical healthcare services. For this reason, if the IRAC is to be located on City property, the IRAC advisory group must identify aging services that do not include physical healthcare.

Locating an IRAC on PARD property requires APH to sponsor and PARD to facilitate a Chapter 26 process that conducts a public hearing to utilize parkland for a use other than park, recreation area, or wildlife refuge because there is no other feasible option. The Chapter 26 consideration requires a Parks and Recreation Board recommendation to the City Council, a City Council public hearing, and an affirmative vote of the City Council to use parkland for a non-parkland purpose.

Space – The child care experts on the IRAC Advisory Group revised the model for the child care program that is included in the IRAC plan. The revised model would require 6,244 interior sq. ft., which is significantly more space than was originally planned. At the Nash Hernandez Building, this would leave less than 3,000 interior sq. ft which would likely not be enough space for the other IRAC components such as older adult services, intergenerational programming, offices, and circulation. The IRAC plans need to be further revised if an IRAC is to fit at the Nash Hernandez Building, or another location needs to be considered.

Vision Plan – As the IRAC Advisory Group's plans for the IRAC are further clarified, staff will revisit with the Law Department whether the plans conflict with the Vision Plan. There is disagreement among community members as to whether an IRAC aligns with the original intent of the Holly Shores/Edward Rendon Sr. Vision Plan that encompasses the Nash Hernandez Building.

City staff, key stakeholders, and the IRAC Advisory Group will continue to meet to discuss these decisions. As this work progresses, staff will provide Council with updates on the status of the work with the IRAC Advisory Group toward the implementation of an IRAC. The attached report provides more comprehensive information on the work completed to date.

Should you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me at (512) 972-5010 or Adrienne.Sturup@austintexas.gov, or Kimberly McNeeley at (512) 974-6722 or Kimberly.McNeeley@austintexas.gov.

cc: Jesús Garza, Interim City Manager
Anne Morgan, City Attorney
Kimberly McNeeley, Director, Parks and Recreation Department

Attachment: Intergenerational Resource and Activity Center Resolution Response Report

Intergenerational Resource and Activity Center Resolution Response Report

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I. Background

In 2018, City Council passed [Resolution No. 20181018-041](#) directing staff to explore an adult day center at City-owned facilities. The Parks and Recreation Department responded by examining PARD facilities in the identified areas and conducting a feasibility study of the Nash Hernandez Building. That was followed by Council [Resolution No. 20221208-059](#), to which this report responds.

II. Community Engagement

The Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) led the community engagement process, in partnership with Austin Public Health (APH) to better understand the views of community members about initiating a pilot IRAC partnership program at Nash Hernandez Building, George Morales Dove Springs Recreation Center, Rudy Mendez Recreation Center, or Dittmar Recreation Center. These four sites are located in Council Districts 2 and 3. Between May 10 and June 26, 2023, staff conducted a community survey, held six pop-up events, and held a virtual community meeting to gather input. Community engagement opportunities were promoted through flyers at each of the locations, posted on the [project webpage](#), and emailed to stakeholders focused on older adults and early childhood.

The survey was open for from May 10 through June 26, 2023, to gather feedback on possible locations for intergenerational programming and an intergenerational center. Full results can be seen [here](#). There were 159 respondents and there were 223 comments typed into the open comment sections of the survey. Respondents were residents of all 10 Council districts, along with some who do not reside in Austin. Of the respondents who answered demographic questions: 44% were White, 29% were Hispanic or Latinx, 15% were Asian or Asian American, 12% were Black or African American; 44% had an annual income under \$75k and 56% had income over \$75k; they ranged in age from 18 to 75+; and 31% of respondents have children under 18 who live with them.

When asked if they support the concept of an IRAC, 73% responded yes, 15% responded no, and 12% were unsure. Support was lower among respondents from Council Districts 2 and 3 where the four sites are located, with 61% responding yes, 22% responding no, and 17% unsure. Respondents were split about whether they themselves would participate in an IRAC, although the number of responses to that question was low, at 62. A focused review of responses from Districts 2 and 3 showed the main difference among overall responses was on the final question: “If you have children (11-18) or will have, how interested are you in your pre-teen or teen participating?” District 2 and 3 participants responded with 56% not interested, 22% somewhat interested, and 22% very interested, compared to overall responses showing 37% not interested and 39% very interested. Respondents overall showed slightly more interest in intergenerational programming and activities rather than an IRAC when comparing levels of interest across age groups.

The City held six pop-up engagement opportunities between May 18 and June 16, 2023, including one at the Montopolis Recreation and Community Center, one at George Morales Dove Springs Recreation Center, three at Mendez Recreation Center, and one at Dittmar Recreation Center, due to its proximity to the Nash Hernandez Building. Pop-ups consisted of PARD and APH staff engaging with visitors regarding their thoughts and questions about an IRAC. The City team spoke with approximately 100 individuals at the pop-ups. People expressed interest in and curiosity about what an intergenerational

center could be like. Interest was split among individuals about whether they want only an early childhood center or only a center for older adults versus an intergenerational site. Some people expressed concern about safety and staffing in an IRAC, and a strong desire for free or low-cost services was identified as a need.

The City hosted a virtual community engagement meeting on June 20, 2023, which had 27 attendees. Participants heard presentations about the four identified sites, information and potential examples about programming for older adults and children, and a presentation from a representative of the IRAC Advisory Group about the group's vision for the Nash Hernandez Building. Attendees mostly asked clarifying questions. A few attendees expressed frustration because it seemed to them that a decision had already been made to have an IRAC at Nash Hernandez. Notably, representatives from the neighborhood around the Nash Hernandez Building were not in attendance.

Overall, the results from the community engagement process showed that the community is split on whether they want an IRAC. However, per the comments in the survey, when given the choice between the four specified locations, most preferred the Nash Hernandez Building since, at that location, an IRAC would not displace current PARD programming, given that it is currently unoccupied.

III. Child Care Component

A. Child Care Deserts

Staff consulted [Children At Risk's child care desert maps](#) to determine whether the PARD facilities specified in the resolution have enough affordable, high-quality child care to meet the demand or if they are in zip codes considered child care deserts. Child care deserts are areas where the demand for child care is three times more than the child care supply. None of the zip codes of focus are child care deserts. The 78745 zip code where the Dittmar Recreation Center is located is not a child care desert in any sense. The zip codes in which Nash Hernandez, and the Mendez, Dove Springs, and Gus Garcia Recreation Centers, are located – 78702, 78744, and 78753 – are considered subsidized child care deserts, Texas Rising Star quality-rated child care deserts, and Texas Rising Star 4-star high-quality child care deserts. This means that these areas do not have enough subsidized child care, quality-rated child care, or high-quality-rated child care seats to meet the demand among low-income working parents of young children.

Child care desert status of four zip codes in Austin

Zip Code	City facility	Overall child care desert?	Subsidized child care desert?	Texas Rising Star quality-rated desert?	Texas Rising Star 4-star high-quality rated desert?
78702	Mendez Rec Center, Nash Hernandez Bldg.	x	✓	✓	✓
78744	Dove Springs Rec Center	x	✓	✓	✓
78745	Dittmar Rec Center	x	x	x	x
78753	Gus Garcia Rec Center	x	✓	✓	✓

B. Sustainable Model for an IRAC Child care Program

The IRAC Advisory Group envisioned the IRAC to include a child care program for children under the age of five. APH staff worked with two members of the IRAC Advisory Group who are child care experts, one of whom is the Executive Director of a child care program the Advisory Group has identified as the potential operator of the IRAC child care program. The staff and these experts formed a child care workgroup. These experts see the IRAC as an innovative idea and are excited about the possibility of having an IRAC in Austin that includes a high-quality child care program. However, they had concerns that prior versions of the IRAC Advisory Group's plan for the child care program would not be financially sustainable for any child care program operator.

They revised key components of the IRAC child care plan – the number of classrooms, variety of ages to be served, number of children served, and the amount of space necessary to provide high-quality care to the number of children – to develop a model that would be more feasible and sustainable for the operator and better meet community needs.

Because many eligible families with 3 and 4-year-olds will elect to send their children to free Pre-K in the public school system, it was determined that rather than focusing solely on this age group, the program should also serve infants and toddlers, which are the age groups for which high-quality, affordable child care is most scarce. Per the revised plan, the program would serve 68 children up to 4-years-old, in 6 classrooms.

Following space standards for high-quality child care from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the child care experts determined the child care program would need 2,250 sq. ft. of outdoor space and 6244 sq. ft. of indoor space, which is significantly larger than originally envisioned by the IRAC Advisory Group. The Nash Hernandez Building has 9,000 usable sq. ft. of indoor space, so that would leave less than 3,000 sq. ft. of space for programming for older adults, intergenerational activities, offices, an elevator, stairs, etc., which would likely not be enough space.

In planning the child care model, the child care experts based the staff-to-child ratios and estimate that 25-30% of enrolled children would have subsidized tuition, while 70-75% would pay full tuition, and that subsidies may be accepted from a variety of sources, including Texas Workforce Commission/Workforce Solutions Capital Area, Head Start, sliding scale fees, etc. The program's operating hours would most likely be 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. Because operating a child care program as part of an IRAC would be a new, innovative endeavor, it would not be feasible for the operator to also offer drop-in care, or care on evenings and weekends.

C. Child care Program Costs and Funding

The child care experts also estimated the start-up funding that would be needed for the program. Low teacher-to-child ratios are needed to meet high-quality standards. Staffing makes up the largest portion of a child care program budget. As scoped, the program would employ 12 full-time lead teachers, 3 part-time assistant teachers, a full-time director, a full-time admin support person, and a 75 %-time family specialist. Salaries for these staff is estimated at \$894,000 per year.

The child care experts estimate the program would need \$600,000 in start-up funding for furnishings, toys, and classroom materials; the construction of a natural Outdoor Learning Environment (OLE) that is accessible to children of varying abilities; and the purchase of a van to transport children. The program would also need an estimated cost of \$1 million for operational support over a minimum of two years until it reaches full enrollment, which is projected to occur in year three. The IRAC Advisory Group would need to build these funding needs into any fundraising efforts they undertake to launch an IRAC.

D. Child care Licensing

The child care program in the IRAC would need to be licensed through Texas Health and Human Services Child care Regulation by complying with [Texas minimum standards for child care programs](#). APH staff and the child care experts from the Advisory Group, met with Texas Health and Human Services Child care Regulation staff to discuss considerations for operating a child care program as part of an IRAC.

To comply with the Texas Administrative Code Chapter 745, Subchapter F, on background checks. Per Subchapter 745, everyone over the age of 13 "who is regularly or frequently present" at the child care operation must undergo a background check. Therefore, all older adults enrolled in the IRAC who participate in intergenerational activities would need to complete a background check. No drop-in visitors to the IRAC would be allowed to participate in the intergenerational activities. Whenever children in care are participating in intergenerational activities, they would always be under the supervision of their child care teachers.

Texas Administrative Code Chapter 746.4215, Subchapter T, provides specific criteria and written plans that must be in place and followed when a child care program shares a building with other programs and services. The child care program within an IRAC would have a defined licensed child care space both indoors and out that is separate from the rest of the facility. The licensed indoor space would include the 6244 square feet of indoor space described above, as well as an intergenerational activity room.

Child care Regulation advises that any intergenerational activities that take place outside of the licensed child care space could be conducted following the rules for field trips, which require parent permission and increased ratios of supervision. If the IRAC were to be located at the Nash Hernandez Building, activities that take place close to the building but outside the licensed child care space, such as in the nearby food forest, would be treated as walking field trips. The children could not do any activities at Lady Bird Lake, per licensing rules.

IV. Legal Considerations

A. Chapter 26 Process

Pursuant to Chapter 26 of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Code, the taking or use of parkland for something other than a park, recreation area, or wildlife refuge requires the City to conduct a Chapter 26 hearing. Several of the program activities planned for the IRAC do not relate to park or recreation purposes. For that reason, if a decision is made to implement an IRAC at Nash Hernandez, APH will need to submit a Chapter 26 application to PARD. During the public hearing, Council must determine that there is no feasible or prudent alternative to the use or taking of land, and that the program or project includes all reasonable planning to minimize harm to the land as a park and recreation area (Tex. Parks & Wildlife Code § 26.001). If Council were to approve a Chapter 26 application, PARD would charge mitigation fees for the taking of the parkland. Those fees are likely to be high and would have to be factored in to the IRAC Advisory Group's fundraising efforts.

B. Health Care and Mental Health Care on City Property

Staff consulted with the Law Department to understand the types of programs or services that can be provided to older adults at the Nash Hernandez Building if an IRAC were to be located there. The Law Department advised that the City is prohibited from providing healthcare services (per Tex. Health & Safety Code §§ 281.043-281.046 [Vernon 2010]; Tex. Const. art. IV, §§ 4, 9). For this reason, the Law Department recommends that if an IRAC were to be located on City property, it only offer activities that serve a City public purpose and do not fall within the list of legally prohibited activities, such as the rendition of physical healthcare services. The Law Department concluded that the City can provide mental health services at an IRAC located on City-owned property either directly or indirectly by contracting a service provider or their subcontractor, as authorized by Article IX, Section 13 of the Texas Constitution.

C. Holly Shores/Edward Rendon Sr. Vision Plan

Questions have been raised as to whether the use of the Nash Hernandez Building for an IRAC conflicts with the [Holly Shores/Edward Rendon Sr. Vision Plan](#). The Vision Plan highlights that the building would have:

“shared community spaces that might include: a community meeting and dining space; a commercial learning demonstration kitchen that can be a center for learning healthy meal preparation; publicly-accessible rest rooms and healthy food and drink vending. This program

could be linked to community permaculture and “food forest” areas in the western part of the park between the RBJ Center and I35, adjacent to the existing community gardens.”

The Law Department determined that the proposed IRAC program activities listed in Appendix A are consistent with the term “shared community spaces” described in the Vision Plan. However, given that programming is not finalized, the precise use of space is yet to be determined.

In addition, there is disagreement among community members as to whether an IRAC aligns with the Vision Plan. Members of the IRAC Advisory Group believe it does, while staff has received other feedback from other community members that the intent at the time the Vision Plan was written did not contemplate the limited dedicated use as described by the IRAC. In August 2023, the East César Chavez Neighborhood Association and Plan Contact Team wrote a letter to Mayor and Council expressing that they would like other options for the Nash Hernandez building to be explored, beyond an IRAC. In December 2023, members of the East Town Lake Citizens Neighborhood Association expressed to the City Manager and City staff their opposition to using the Nash Hernandez Building for an IRAC. They want the building to have space that is open to the community for uses like meetings, art, and cultural events, and do not see the IRAC as being in alignment with the Vision Plan. Some members of these neighborhood associations participated in the creation of the Vision Plan.

V. Aging Adult Care Component

A working group comprised of APH staff and members of the IRAC Advisory Group was assembled to explore the older adult services that would be provided at the IRAC. After numerous meetings and conversations aimed at identifying the older adult services proposed at the IRAC, a list has been developed of what APH staff believe the services could potentially look like (**Appendix A**).

The IRAC Advisory Group’s original proposal included an Adult Day Health Center for older adults with AGE of Central Texas (AGE) identified as the primary provider implementing that model. AGE’s program model has components that could be considered physical healthcare, which is prohibited in a City-owned facility. Staff informed the IRAC Advisory Group of this limitation and the Advisory Group plans to consider a different program model for the older adults. Because this model has not been finalized, the required licensure for the older adult component cannot be confirmed at this time.

The IRAC Advisory Group has reported that the IRAC will serve up to 50 older adults daily. However, it is not clear if this would be feasible and sustainable due to limited usable space at the Nash Hernandez Building, a dual level floorplan, concerns around ample space for parking, and the low reimbursement from funding sources of low-income participants. There are also remaining questions about whether this is a feasible use of City property as it is a costly project and will only serve a small number of individuals. Further, stakeholders have expressed concern about the building’s space capacity to adequately serve the vision of the IRAC Advisory Group’s hope for intergenerational programming.

VI. Next Steps

The IRAC Advisory Group plans to consider a new program model for older adult services in an IRAC that does not entail the provision of physical health care. APH staff will continue meeting with the IRAC Advisory group to get clarity on what that model would include. The Advisory Group also plans to further discuss what modifications need to be made to the IRAC plan as a result of the revised child care which includes an increased number of children served and increased space needs. As this planning proceeds, staff will provide updated information to Council so that decisions can be made about whether the City will proceed with the implementation of an IRAC at Nash Hernandez or elsewhere.

Appendix A – Proposed Intergenerational Resource and Activity Center Programming

A. Outdoor Activities

- Gardening
- Exercise Activities – Tai-Chi, Dance, Yoga, Chair Volleyball
- Games – Board games, card games
- Music and Singing – Listening by CD, streaming, or live music
- Bird Watching
- Outings and Excursions
- Arts and Crafts – painting, quilting, photography

B. Aging Support Services

- Nutrition education
- Therapeutic Services – Meditation, Pet therapy, art therapy
- Tele-Behavioral Health Screenings
- Case Management
- Resource Navigation
- Respite Services

C. Intergenerational Programming

- Library Corner – reading stories
- Blocks
- Leading educational sessions (Higher Functioning Older Adults) – art, science, math
- Singing, Dancing, Movement Activities
- Scavenger Hunts
- Cooking
- Gardening
- Games – Bingo, cards
- Field Trips

Source: Memo emailed to Austin Public Health from Lori Rentería on August 8, 2023, with subject, “A Framework for the Older Adults Working Group for an Intergenerational Resource and Activity Center at the Nash Hernandez, Sr. building”