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- Photo of Northgate Park is courtesy of Portland Parks & Recreation, Portland, OR
- Rendering: Aerial image of a design concept for the future North Portland Aquatic Center at Northgate Park. View is looking northeast with frontage on N. Fessenden Street. Courtesy of PP&R and ELS Architecture



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New Aquatic Center To Be Built at Northgate Park in North Portland

Extensive community engagement continues

(Portland, OR) –

After extensive community feedback and with equity factors being the deciding criteria, Culture and Livability Commissioner Dan Ryan and Portland Parks & Recreation Director Adena Long announced the new [North Portland Aquatic Center](#) will be built at [Northgate Park](#). Commissioner Ryan and City leadership thank neighbors and project stakeholders for their continued input and advocacy. Meanwhile, Portland Parks & Recreation's ([PP&R](#)) community engagement efforts for the future facility will continue.

“The new aquatic facility will address historical gaps in access and service quality for North Portland communities,” said Commissioner Ryan. “The area north and west of Portsmouth hasn’t had a major parks public infrastructure project like this in decades. The Northgate Park site will be accessible and transformative for a densely populated neighborhood with a significant number of neighbors who earn low incomes.”

North Portland's diverse and growing population is currently without a public pool. That means approximately 70,000 people – including roughly 18,000 people of color and roughly 11,000 people earning low incomes – are currently without a place to learn to swim, do water aerobics, or exercise. The new aquatic center will fill that gap in service.

"I speak on behalf of the Pacific Islander community," says Portlander Ronnie Faavae. "We are in full support of the aquatic center [being built at] Northgate. This area has been a home for our community, and this asset will bring joy and opportunity to 'true' North Portland."

"As a 25-year St. Johns resident, OHSU nurse, and head swimming coach at Roosevelt High School, I'm delighted and look forward to having a site where our community can enjoy all the health and safety benefits pools provide," says Derrell Wheeler, a project advisory committee member. "The North Portland Aquatic Center at Northgate Park is a life-changing project that makes me proud to live in a place where we can all pull together to create something wonderful!"

Commissioner Ryan and Director Long also announced the other two sites considered, Columbia Park and University Park, will also receive improvements. The specifics of those park enhancements will be informed by further community engagement but could include the replacement of the old Columbia Pool building with new park amenities at Columbia Park and sports fields improvements at University Park.

The North Portland Aquatic Center continues with robust community engagement, an effort which began in March of 2022. Throughout this process, the community-driven site criteria were clear:

- Ensure accessibility, including for people who walk or wheel, for people coming from dense, lower-income neighborhoods
- Ensure accessibility for people who use public transportation
- Ensure the location is near community resources doing work with vulnerable populations (schools, community-based organizations, federally subsidized housing, community centers)

- Minimize harmful neighborhood and ecological effects of the project on the site

“For too long our kids have had to leave their community in order to have the amazing opportunities others have readily available to them,” says Herman Greene, Portland Public Schools Board Member (Zone 4). “It sends a message, that if you want better opportunities [then] you have to leave your community; and that should not be the case. Having this aquatics center at Northgate Park provides exposure, access and opportunity to our community, our school swim programs, and more. More importantly, it sends a message to our families and community—that we are investing in their future.”

“I’m very excited for the project to keep moving forward, and for Northgate Park to be the future home of one of the biggest projects in Portland Parks & Recreation’s history!” says Jenny Eckart Hoyt, another member of the project advisory committee. “I’m so proud to witness the inclusive and collaborative process thus far. As a mom of a child with significant disabilities, I’m grateful that nostalgia and familiarity were not factors in this process. Projects that will be used for the next 100 years need to be approached with the lens of being accessible to people who have been underserved for far too long.”

“I am very excited about this announcement,” says Marshall Haskins, Portland Public Schools Senior Director of Athletics. “Northgate Park is central to many schools, and we can work with the Parks Bureau to incorporate swim lessons into our PE [physical education] classes to eliminate the swimming proficiency gap for children of color—in addition to building strong aquatics programs in the community.”

“All Portland children deserve access to joyful, engaging, and safe experiences,” says Portland Public Schools Superintendent Guadalupe Guerrero. “I fully support the Northgate Park site for the new aquatics center. Portland Parks & Recreation is essential to the health and livability of families and neighborhoods. This new aquatic center ensures North Portland children have direct access to water safety classes and lifelong recreation opportunities.”

NEXT STEPS

PP&R is working with the design team to update the project schedule and will announce the next community workshop date soon.

Now that a site has been selected, the design team and PP&R staff will update the potential cost estimates for the aquatic center and refining the program size to the site parameters. As of now, \$31.7 million in funding has been secured. Commissioner Ryan and PP&R will continue to work with community partners to explore options to completely fund the project.

The City and Commissioner Ryan envision the future aquatic center as a hub of community life that will strengthen social ties and promote a sense of belonging.

For more information on the upcoming North Portland Aquatic Center, visit the [project page](#).

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