



Columbia Pool Closure Frequently Asked Questions

Updated April 22, 2022

1. Why did Portland Parks & Recreation (PP&R) initially close Columbia Pool?

- At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in Oregon in March 2020, based on guidance from public health authorities and direction from elected officials, Columbia Pool closed temporarily. The same was true for all other City community centers and aquatic facilities.

2. Why is Columbia Pool still closed?

- In 2021, an independent structural engineering firm inspected the pool building before it was to be reopened as COVID-19 restrictions eased. This work was part of ongoing inspection efforts by the City to ensure public safety. The independent structural engineer recommended keeping Columbia Pool closed due to serious life and safety hazards.

3. Why not fix Columbia Pool?

- PP&R does not have funding to complete the additional inspections required to understand the full scope of life and safety hazards of the nearly 100-year-old pool. Given this, Parks Commissioner Rubio has asked Portland Parks & Recreation to engage the North Portland community around the future North Portland Aquatics Center and 1.5 million dollars in funding allocated by Council to increase North Portland residents' current access to aquatic facilities, and to answer questions about Columbia Pool.

Due to years of historic budget cuts and underfunding of an aging parks system, PP&R is now faced with a \$500 million major maintenance backlog across the whole citywide system. Without a long-term funding mechanism to address maintenance in the community's park system, Portlanders will lose one in five park assets in the next fifteen years. Columbia Pool is just one piece of infrastructure that is impacted by the maintenance backlog that PP&R has brought to City Council's attention through the Bureau's [Sustainable Future](#) effort.

4. How much would it cost to fix Columbia Pool?

- Significant further inspection and assessment would be needed to understand the full scope of life and safety hazards at Columbia Pool, and the assessment alone is estimated to be at least \$500,000. After nearly 100 years of operations, Columbia Pool would require further structural evaluation, seismic evaluation, a condensation and infiltration review, and facility renovation review of mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems. Any costs associated with further inspections or rehabilitation of Columbia Pool, or any other failing parks infrastructure, can fluctuate based on inflation, supply chain issues, and COVID effects like the depleted workforce. At this time, repair costs are roughly estimated to be \$5 to \$10 million.

5. Could PP&R install a bubble covering for outdoor pools at Peninsula or Pier Park (or to replace roof at Columbia Pool)?

- A bubble, also referred to as an air-supported structure or air dome, is basically covering a large area with a fabric sheet that must be anchored to a concrete grade beam around the perimeter of the area and continually inflated with pressurized air.

Covering any of Parks' existing outdoor pools or replacing Columbia pool's roof with a bubble would be categorically unsustainable due to excessive maintenance requirements, high operation costs, and vulnerability to high winds and heavy snowfall. In addition, it would require building a separate dry facility to store and protect the fabric in the summers. Neither Pier or Peninsula pools were designed to operate year around, consequently, new HVAC systems for the pools, offices, and locker rooms would need to be installed if operational hours were extended past summer. Adding a bubble would also trigger additional ADA and seismic upgrades. While bubbles may be less costly to purchase, the expense of installing and maintaining the structure offsets any initial savings.

6. Why can't PP&R use the \$1.5 million in additional funding to start fixing Columbia Pool?

- In November 2021, City Council approved \$1.5 million in one-time resources to explore interim solutions to provide North Portlanders increased access to other aquatic facilities while the North Portland Indoor Aquatic Center is being developed. City Council appropriated the funding for operating and not capital expenses. PP&R will solicit community input on a list of ten proposed strategies from people living in North Portland. This community engagement process will run concurrently with the North Portland Aquatic Center planning.

7. Why didn't PP&R use money from the Parks Replacement Bond to assess and repair Columbia Pool?

- When voters passed the [Parks Replacement Bond](#) in November 2014, they approved ballot language that called for renovations for three specific pools in North/NE Portland: Peninsula Pool, Matt Dishman Pool, and Grant Pool. The combined total to renovate these three public pools was about \$7 million, and renovations were completed in 2016 (Dishman and Grant) and 2019 (Peninsula).

8. Where can we go to swim or take swim lessons?

- Other PP&R pools in North and Northeast Portland. Thanks to voters' support for the [Parks Replacement Bond](#), the renovated Peninsula Pool will again be open this summer with an expanded shallow area for beginning swimmers, a rebuilt pool, deck lighting and increased ADA accessibility. Matt Dishman's indoor pool was resurfaced and the spa/jacuzzi was expanded, doubling capacity.

9. If you can't fix Columbia Pool, what are your plans for the building?

- Currently, PP&R does not have plans for the building. The outcomes of the future [North Portland Indoor Aquatic Center](#) will likely influence further plans for the building as Columbia Park and Columbia Annex are both potential sites for the new aquatic facility. Ultimately, the future of the building would be a policy decision made by the Commissioner-in-Charge of Parks – currently, Commissioner Carmen Rubio.