



Commissioner Carmen Rubio  
City of Portland

February 11, 2022

Senator Fred Girod, Co-Chair  
Representative Paul Holvey, Co-Chair  
Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

**RE: North Portland Aquatic Center Project**

Dear Co-Chairs Girod and Holvey, and Members of the Subcommittee,

North Portland's diverse and rapidly-growing population does not have a public year-round pool. That is 70,000 people – including approximately 18,000 people of color and roughly 11,000 experiencing poverty – without an amenity found in most communities.

That absence can have tragic ramifications. Without access to a pool to have swim lessons, kids may not learn to swim. Researchers have confirmed that children of color are far less likely to know how to swim and, far worse, identified an unacceptable public health outcome: children of color drown at a higher rate than white kids. Portland Parks & Recreation (PP&R) has been working with community partners to diversify our aquatic workforce, make swim lesson more welcoming, and reduce the cost barriers – but those changes are ineffective if there is not a swimming facility nearby.

You can ensure that North Portland has a pool where kids can learn to swim and where our older adults can exercise, located within a center that provides space for community to come together. A center like this could also provide a community anchor, and jobs—first, construction and later, recreation and programming—for adults and youth. It could meet wider exercise and recreation needs, provide space for affordable childcare, and host classes and camps. Further, the facility could also serve as an emergency resiliency hub for situations ranging from earthquakes to extreme weather.

We ask that you help make this dream a reality for North Portland residents.

If you invest in a North Portland Aquatic Center, we are prepared to get to work. Last April, the City set aside \$11.7 million in system development charges – the largest dedication ever – to this project. These funds will cover design, permitting, and robust public engagement to begin in the coming months. We are now prepared to increase

our match to \$16.7 million if the Legislature allocates \$33.3 million in capital construction bonds for the project. Already, PP&R is building on 2018 studies into three possible sites that could support a center serving the estimated 83,000 people that will live in the area by 2035.

Working with North Portlanders, PP&R will collaboratively plan the site and develop a facility that meets the community's needs. We will ensure the new aquatic center is a truly public facility in which residents have a strong sense of belonging and ownership.

This center will meet a glaring and long-overdue community need and provide valuable experiences to underserved communities that have historically been excluded from public pools.

Sincerely,



Carmen Rubio  
Parks Commissioner, Portland City Council



Adena Long  
Portland Parks & Recreation Director