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Refreshing, Sustainable Space for Recreation Coming

By Cathy Tyson

The Manzanita room will get more than a facelift in the new year. Look for the demolition and replacement of this multi-use building at the Lafayette Community Center in the fall of 2014, after the busy summer recreation programs wrap up.

Park, Trails and Recreation commissioners weighed the options earlier in the year, considering whether to do an extensive remodel on the 60-year-old structure or simply tear down the old building and start from scratch. They decided, and the City Council agreed, that the start-fresh option, which provided the most benefits to residents at a reasonable cost, would be better in the long run than a simple remodel. The contemporary design by project architect Alan Cross of Proto, Inc. delivers a fresh, expanded space to accommodate a wide range of uses from hectic Camp Awesome to dog training classes to weddings.

Cross came up with an economical yet sustainable facility that provides flexibility. He described the project as a challenge with a fair amount of "healthy dialogue" about competing objectives; basketball games don't necessarily need the same kind of ambiance as a birthday party. The sleek 5,000 square foot design benefitted from input on users' perspectives with an emphasis on durability. He feels the design reflects the "spirit, vitality and excitement" the city is looking for, with double-duty features like transparent panels incorporated into the walls that will let in natural light during the day, and provide a warm glow for a lantern effect at night.

The \$1.8 million estimated cost will be funded exclusively through development fees paid by developers along with voter-approved Measure WW Funds that can only be used for improving parks, trails and recreational facilities, along with an anticipated contribution from the Lafayette Community Foundation. Funding was approved by a vote of the City Council.

The project has been approved, subject to conditions. One of the conditions is that a subset of design review commissioners will continue to give feedback for minor tweaks of the project.

"We received insightful comments during the design process and feel the project has benefited from Design Review Commission input," said Jennifer Russell, director of parks, trails and recreation. She added that staff "is excited by this project and we look forward to developing cost-effective, sustainable solutions for the building systems. I have always considered the Lafayette Community Center a major asset for our residents and offering them a brand new building is a good investment."

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