



**Redevelopment of the Homer
Education & Recreation Campus
(HERC)**

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REDEVELOPMENT OF THE HOMER EDUCATION & RECREATION CAMPUS (HERC)

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Executive Summary

The City of Homer owns a 4.3-acre parcel known as the Homer Education & Recreation Campus (HERC) at the northwest corner of West Pioneer Avenue and the Sterling Highway. Located in the Central Business zoning district, the site is in a key location that anchors downtown. As the entrance to Pioneer Avenue, the intersection serves as a gateway to the commercial district and hosts spectacular views of the ocean. The parcel currently is occupied by a former school, former maintenance and operation building, skate park, stream/wetland, and parking lot.

Numerous possibilities have been explored by several different groups of people for redevelopment. The City of Homer had decided to explore one of these alternatives that would redevelop the HERC into a community recreation facility. Recent increases in federal grant and/or infrastructure funding may provide the City the opportunity to pursue redevelopment of the HERC.

Recent community engagement efforts found that demand for a refurbished HERC facility is high and has increased since 2015. The demand for additional indoor recreation facilities is also high and has increased since 2015.

At this time, no prospective tenants were identified who are able to commit to renting or leasing space at the facility.

Market analysis demonstrates that a demand exists for a gym, convention/event space, and multi-purpose space.

Two conceptual building designs based on a simple building program were completed.

- HERC A includes a gym, stage, multi-purpose room, reception/lobby, and commercial kitchen.
- HERC B includes all the elements of HERC A, and adds a café, lease space and 2nd floor “outdoor” space.

Two site plans based on the building designs were completed. Their focus is on providing a ‘statement’ visual experience that could draw people into downtown by providing a focused gathering place for activity complemented by a large lawn/greenspace to host a variety of outdoor events.



Abbreviations

ADA	Americans with Disability Act
City	City of Homer
HERC	Homer Education & Recreation Campus
PARC	Parks, Art, Recreation, and Culture
SPARC	South Peninsula Athletic & Recreation Center



1.0 INTRODUCTION

The City of Homer (City) owns a 4.3-acre parcel known as the Homer Education & Recreation Campus (HERC) at the northwest corner of West Pioneer Avenue and the Sterling Highway. Located in the Central Business zoning district, the site is in a key location that anchors downtown. As the entrance to Pioneer Avenue, the intersection serves as a gateway to the commercial district and hosts spectacular views of the ocean (Figure 1). The parcel currently is occupied by a former school, former maintenance and operation building, skate park, stream/wetland, and parking lot (Figure 2).

Numerous possibilities have been explored by several different groups of people for redevelopment. The City had decided to explore one of these alternatives that would redevelop the HERC into a community recreation facility. Recent increases in federal grant and/or infrastructure funding may provide the City the opportunity to pursue redevelopment of the HERC.

Before the City can prepare an application for federal funds, there needs to be a clear plan of what activities would be available, and a business plan to ensure the facility is affordable to construct and operate. The HERC has been the subject of previous reports and studies, which have recommended demolishing the existing building and constructing something new. This report documents the process used to develop conceptual site and building designs for that recommendation.



REDEVELOPMENT OF THE HOMER EDUCATION & RECREATION CAMPUS (HERC)

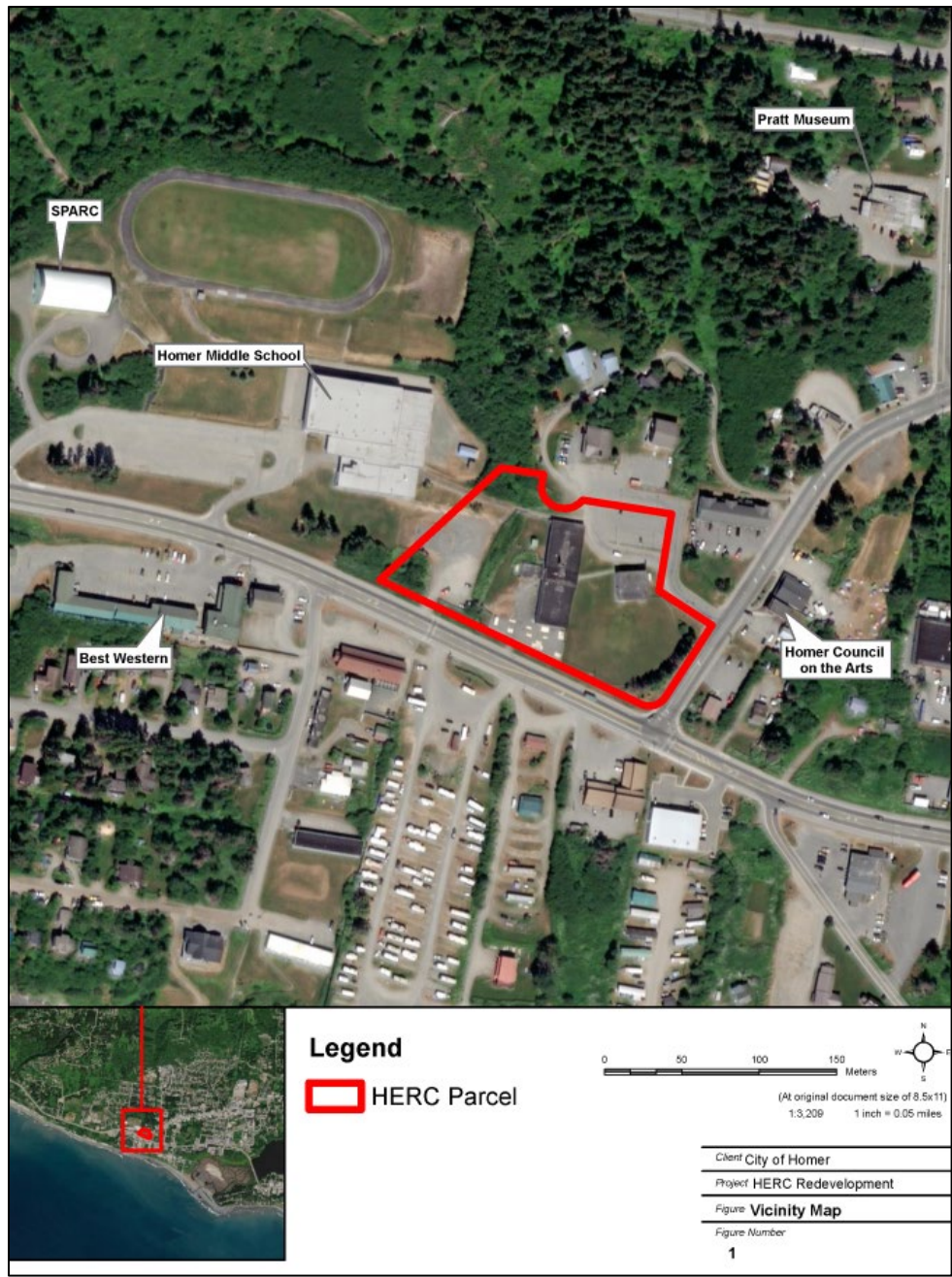


Figure 1. Vicinity Map



REDEVELOPMENT OF THE HOMER EDUCATION & RECREATION CAMPUS (HERC)

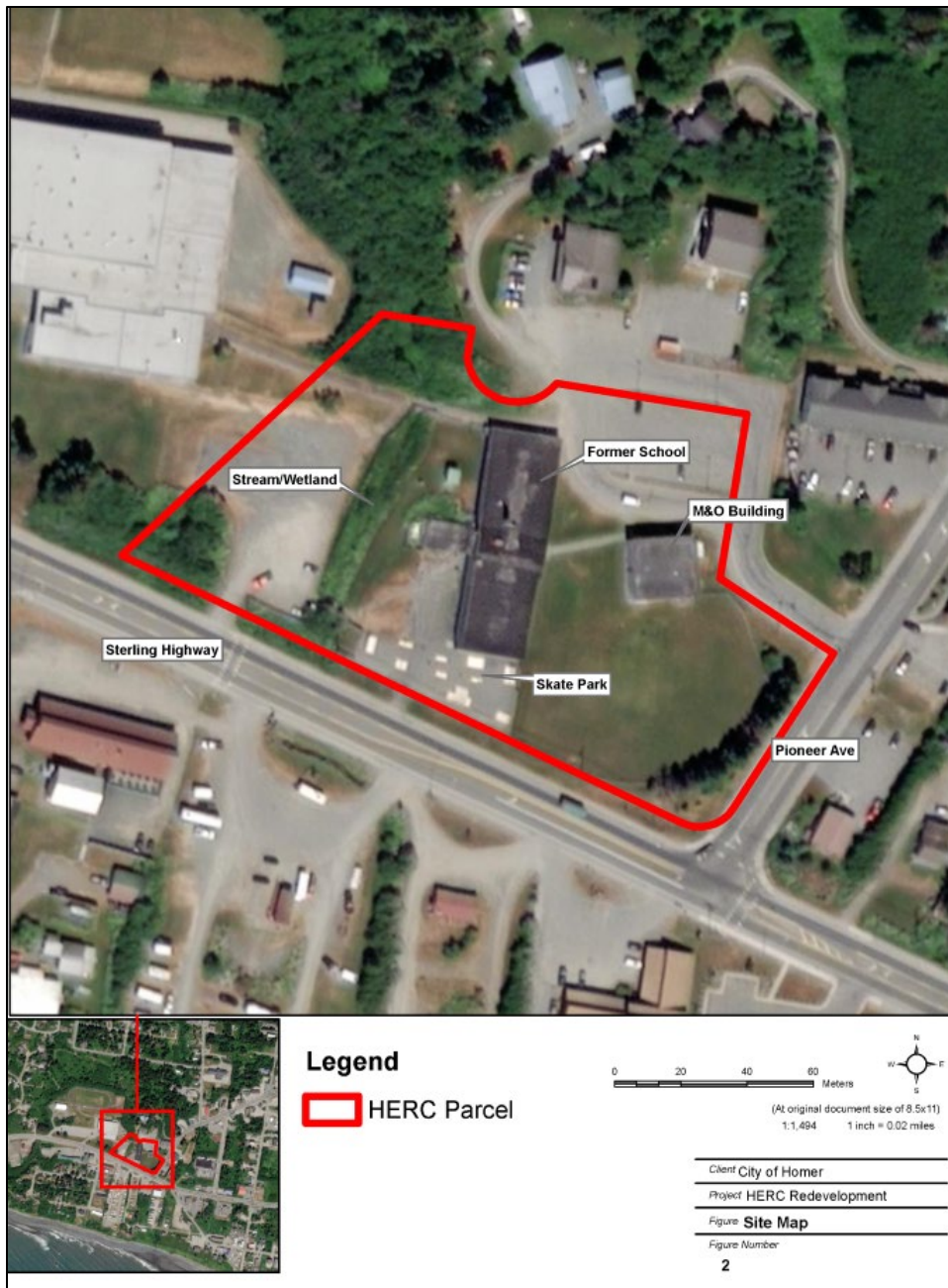


Figure 2. Site Map



2.0 PREVIOUS ANALYSIS

The original parcel was developed in 1956 and hosts two buildings: the former Homer School, and a separate former maintenance and operations school building. The Kenai Peninsula Borough conveyed ownership of the property to the City in 1998 to allow public use of the gym and associated restrooms. The gymnasium was used as the Homer Clubhouse, a former program run by the Boys and Girls Club of the Kenai Peninsula. The gym and another room in the building has also been used for City of Homer Community Recreation programs. The classroom wing once housed space for the Kachemak Bay Campus of University of Alaska Anchorage (until 2011). The HERC has also provided temporary office space for City employees during remodel work on other City buildings. The operations building is now used by the City's Public Works department.



Figure 3. Images of the existing HERC (City of Homer 2018)

2.1 2018 HERC TASK FORCE

In 2018, the City's HERC Task Force issued a report with recommendations for the parcel (City of Homer 2018). The report included planning level cost estimates to renovate, and/or demolish and construct new facilities. The report found that both buildings require material renovations/repairs to extend usefulness. The report recommended further analysis prior to any substantial construction funding. In the interim, the report recommended continued use of the gym, while keeping the remaining facilities in a warm static status.



In early 2019, to evaluate the potential for renovation of the current building, the City Council underwent a procurement process to allow tenants to rent space at the current facility. Four parties indicated interest in leasing space (i.e., Bunnell Streets Art Center, City of Homer Community Recreation Program, Fireweed Academy, and K-Bay Martial Athletics). The City then issued a Request for Proposals for a third party to manage, improve, and lease the HERC to the potential tenants, but no responses were received. As a result of this lack of interest, the City is looking to demolish and construct a new facility at the location.

2.2 2015 PARC NEEDS ASSESSMENT

In 2015, the City completed a Parks, Art, Recreation, and Culture (PARC) Needs Assessment (Agnew Beck Consulting 2015). The goal of this project was to prioritize the needs and determine the resources for the community’s PARC needs. The report included a needs assessment and potential financing requirements for a new recreational facility.

The assessment found that the most significant need, in 2015, was for indoor space for active recreation, arts, youth activities, and community events. The assessment also found that in the short-term, the community preferred utilizing existing resources to meet those needs.

The 2015 assessment provided a concept of a HERC-like facility (Figure 4) with a combined multi-purpose room that would serve as a gym, convention center, and theater, surrounded by an indoor walking track (Agnew Beck Consulting 2015). Additional space would be allocated for auxiliary programming, with smaller rooms for flexible uses. Outside of the building, development would support an outdoor amphitheater and community garden.

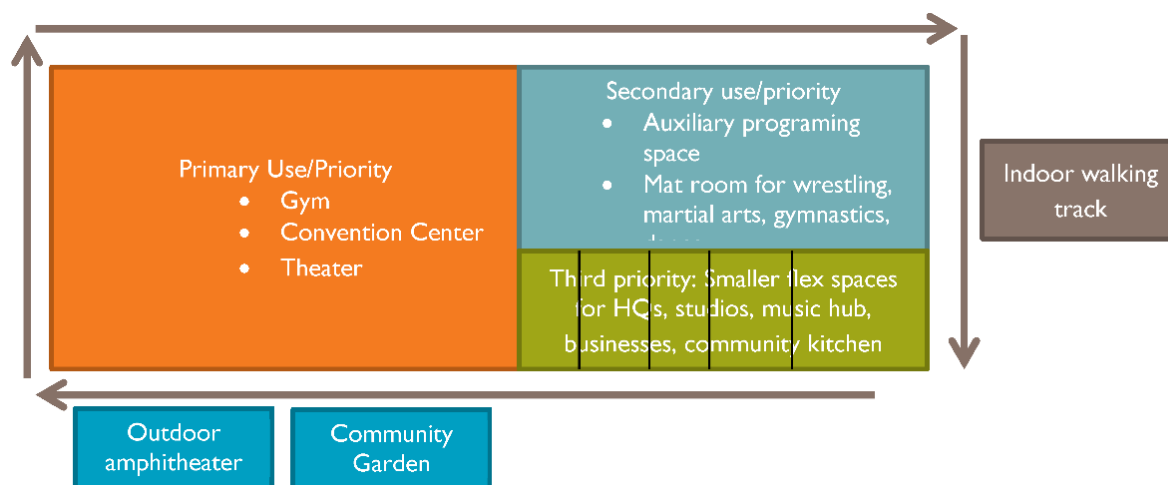


Figure 4. 2015 PARC Assessment Concept

In response to the 2015 needs assessment, the Homer SPARC (South Peninsula Athletic & Recreation Center) was created. This indoor space is a soft-sided dome. The SPARC is smaller than the 2015 PARC Assessment Concept but provides multi-purpose space to use as a gym and activity center.



3.0 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement was conducted to update the 2015 PARC Needs Assessment findings about the recreation center. This was accomplished through City Council work sessions, public engagement sessions, and an internet-based survey.

3.1 CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION

A public work session was held with the City Council on December 6, 2021. This provided an opportunity for a discussion with the City Council on their vision for the current effort on the HERC redevelopment. The City Council, and the public, provided input on facility priorities, potential attributes (e.g., gym, theater), and potential funding mechanisms.

3.2 PRE-DESIGN PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Two public engagement sessions were held:

- January 4, 2022, at 10 AM – Noon at the HERC Gymnasium
- January 8, 2022, at Noon – 2 PM at the Homer Public Library's Fireplace Lounge

During the public engagement sessions, facility users, City Council members, and the public discussed with project staff the HERC redevelopment, potential ideas for the facility, and potential funding mechanisms.

3.3 ANCHOR TENANT INTERVIEWS

The project also interviewed potential anchor tenants in the community. Some federal grants require the building redevelopment to stimulate economic development. The application for those grants must describe tenants who would rent or lease part of the facility. These tenant rents and user fees would help fund operations of the facility, and the business activity would stimulate the local economy.

Through the public engagement process, the project team set up interviews in January 2022 with a number of potential tenants.

After discussions with the potential tenants, none were identified who could commit to a lease of the facility. Many stakeholders expressed an interest in renting space for future activities but were not able to commit to contracting at this time.

Discussions with the theater stakeholders described a desire for space with a single use as theater, with the acoustics and ambiance to host classical music, theater, and other productions. The desire includes dedicated, permanent space for dressing rooms, props, and other technical theater facilities. Concern was expressed about multi-purpose facilities because of acoustics, user experience, and requirements to convert space (such as tearing down sets) to accommodate other uses during the day. Revenue income would be focused on small per use fees per event (less than \$500).



Dance and art stakeholders described a desire for multi-purpose rooms. This space was discussed as rentable classroom sized multi-purpose space suitable for hosting smaller non-gym activities. These might include social groups, teaching, or space to engage in art/dance beyond the capacity of users' home square footage. A multi-purpose space that can be used for dance is also desired. Revenue income would be focused on per use fees for each activity.

Discussions with social services stakeholders described the demand for using a gym, multi-purpose rooms, and classrooms to facilitate community programming, youth activities, and childcare. Potential contributions might be in-kind labor to manage programming or providing staff roles as vocational training opportunities (e.g., front desk). Long term, regular programming (e.g., after school programs) could generate steady rental income.

Multiple users discussed the demand for an event space with a commercial kitchen. This discussion focused on HERC's strategic position in the community and its potential for enhancing economic activity in downtown Homer. Homer currently does not have an ideal central venue for events and conventions. This type of place could host the many local festivals, weddings, conventions, and other community events desired by Homer residents and visitors. Paired with this demand is the desire for a commercial kitchen and some level of food/beverage service to act as a hub for the community and further enable facility events. Revenue would be generated from renting out the kitchen and event space, with potential steady revenue from food/beverage service.

3.4 2022 INTERNET SURVEY

To help understand the demand for activities at the site; a statistically significant, self-selected internet survey was taken in December 2021 and January 2022. 480 people completed the survey, providing a >95% confidence level and a margin of error better than plus-or-minus 5%.

The opinions of participants may be different than the average citizens of Homer because the survey was self-selected, rather than random, i.e., participants who were interested in providing an opinion about the recreation center are more likely to have responded to the survey than the average person. Survey results are located in Appendix A.

2022 findings included:

- 83% view availability of recreation as Important or Very Important (67% for arts).
- 43% participate in art or recreation 3-5 times per week, 31% once per week, and 11% daily.
- 68% don't recreate more because desired programs and facilities don't exist in the area.
- 68% view a redesigned HERC as an important facility, and would be willing to contribute on average, several hundred dollars a year per household through both user fees and increased taxes.



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- Preferred funding sources are: “Reallocate Existing Funds” (29%), “Sales Tax” (24%), “Property Tax” (14%). Six percent did not support funding the facility. The remaining responses were not sure or desired other funding sources.
- 62% Strongly or Mildly Favor creation of a service area to help pay for the facility, similar to Nikiski and Seldovia, 16% Oppose a Service Area, and the rest are unsure or have no opinion.
- 68% would rent an event space for weddings, family reunions, or parties.
- Businesses responded that they would be interested in help funding the HERC by renting facilities. The most popular facilities included:
 - o Multi-Purpose Room
 - o Commercial Kitchen
 - o Convention Center
 - o Fitness Center
- 66% thought it was “Extremely” or “Very Important” to have a multi-use facility to bring in conventions, exhibitions, and other facilities; 23% thought it was “Important;” while 10% thought it was “Not Important.”
- 70% thought that there were events that they attend elsewhere which would occur in Homer (e.g., Alaska Chamber, conventions, fairs, festivals).
- Respondents’ current activities are spread over many categories (Table 1). The five most popular are: gym workouts (weights, treadmill), swimming, lifelong learning (e.g., college, folk school, workshops), yoga/tai chi/meditation, and indoor walking.
- The demand for desired activities is high (Table 1). The five most popular are: lifelong learning, functional art (e.g., jewelry, pottery, stained glass), gym workouts (e.g., weights, treadmill), yoga/tai chi/meditation, and indoor walking.



Table 1. 2022 Community Activities (Top 10, Indoor)

Activity (Current)	Responses	Activity (Desired)	Responses
Gym (weights, treadmill)	40%	Lifelong learning (e.g., college, folk school, workshops)	51%
Swimming	39%	Functional art (e.g., jewelry, pottery, stained glass)	50%
Lifelong learning	38%	Gym (e.g., weights, treadmill)	47%
Yoga/tai chi/meditation	37%	Yoga/tai chi/meditation	43%
Indoor walking	34%	Indoor walking	41%
Cooking	31%	Cooking	38%
Performance arts	30%	Visual arts (e.g., drawing, painting)	38%
Card and board games	24%	Performance arts (e.g., music, dance, theater)	37%
Visual arts	23%	Indoor climbing/bouldering	35%
Literary Arts	21%	Fiber arts (e.g., sewing, knitting, quilting)	31%

Table 2. 2022 Community Activities (Top 10, Outdoor)

Activity (Current)	Responses	Activity (Desired)	Responses
Walking	77%	Walking	50%
Beachcombing	69%	Wild food harvesting	48%
Gardening	65%	Outdoor education (e.g., natural science)	45%
Camping	61%	Gardening	45%
Recreational fishing	60%	Festivals	43%
Cross country skiing	51%	Bicycling	42%
Wild food harvesting	51%	Cross country skiing	40%
Bicycling	48%	Recreational boating	39%
Recreational boating	46%	Camping	38%
Festivals	44%	Public art (e.g., murals, sculpture and conceptual art)	34%



3.5 2022 SURVEY VS 2015 SURVEY

One of the most interesting aspects of this project was the ability to compare the results from the 2015 PARC Needs Assessment survey and this 2022 survey. The 2015 survey results are available at Agnew Beck Consulting (2015) and in Appendix A. This comparison allows insight into how the community responses have changed. To help inform the decision-making process, the following discussion focuses on round numbers and executive level summaries.

- The support to build a new HERC has significantly increased (from 30% to 70%). While non-significant, opposition has decreased from 40% of respondents to less than 10%; and moderates have decreased from 30% to 10%.
- The demand for programs and facilities has increased. The concern about the lack of programming/facilities is significantly higher (from 25% to 70%) and is cited as the primary item preventing more recreation from occurring. The cost being too expensive is the second most cited reason for preventing more recreation.
- The support for HERC funding is remarkably similar, with the same distribution of people expressing Yes/No/Maybe/Not Sure (70%/20%/5%/5%).
- The only significant change in preference of funding is favorability of a sales tax increase. Most respondents still prefer “Reappropriation” (29%), followed by “Sales Tax” (23%). Other funding preferences (“Property Tax” [15%], “Other Tax” [10%]) have not changed. The number of respondents selecting “Don’t Fund” has (non-significantly) dropped from 18% to 6%.
- Creation of a Service Area has less opposition. The only significant change is an increase in “Neutral” from 3% to 15%, which has come from non-significant drops in “Strong Opposition” and “Mild Opposition” (which dropped from 36% to 16%).
- The current activities are similar. The significant differences are all in increases for yoga/tai chi/meditation, indoor walking, cooking, card and board games, and pickleball.
- The demand for desired activities is greater and is spread over many categories.
- The number of days per week people participate in activities has changed; with once-per-week participation significantly increasing. Once-per-day decreased (26% to 11%, a non-significant amount). (Both may be a result of Covid-19).

3.6 PRE-DESIGN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

Community engagement found that demand for a refurbished HERC facility is high and has increased since 2015. The demand for additional indoor recreation facilities is also high and has increased since 2015. At this early stage of the project, the current opposition is less than opposition in 2015, especially the opposition against raising revenue (e.g., use of a Service Area).



4.0 MARKET ANALYSIS

This chapter compares demands documented in Chapter 3, Community Engagement, with the existing facilities in Homer. Demand focused on gyms/multi-purpose rooms, convention/event space, and space for youth/senior programming. Theater was also included in this chapter due to the active number of community groups engaged in theater and their interest in evaluating the market for a new facility.

This analysis is based on the 2015 PARC Assessment, which was updated to 2022 conditions (Table 2).

Table 3. Community Needs and Existing Resources

Needs	Existing Resources	Advantages	Disadvantages
Gym/Multi-purpose Room	SPARC, HERC, High School, Middle School	Low financial cost.	Schools are closed to the public during summer and school hours. Lack of staffing during non-school hours. Conflicting use at night.
Convention/Event Space	Land's End, Bidarka Hotel, Islands and Ocean, Kevin Bell Ice Arena (with flooring), Pratt Museum	Meeting rooms are available.	Facilities are often primarily used for other functions, lacking traditional convention center amenities.
100 – 200 seats theater	Mariner Theater (499 cap.), Pier One (100 cap.), Homer Theater (220 cap.), Homer Council on the Arts (70 cap.)	Many existing theaters are available.	Many are too large for moderate sized events. Private theaters may not offer the same amenities as public facilities.
Space and programming for youth, seniors, disabled	High School, Senior Center, Library, Islands and Ocean, Homer Council on the Arts, Pratt Museum, Kevin Bell Arena, Pool, Schools, private businesses.	Many potential areas are available, particularly for specific events.	Existing facilities typically are not set up for permanent programming.

4.1 GYM/MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM

There is strong demand for a gym/multi-purpose room that can support a broad range of activities. The public engagement found that recreation was viewed as an important activity, and that 68% of respondents would be willing to contribute revenue (e.g., taxes, user fees) to fund a new facility.

This finding matches the 2015 PARC assessment. Since that time, the SPARC was constructed, providing a soft-sided gym/multi-purpose room for Homer. Rather than satisfying demand, the SPARC appears to have stimulated even more demand for similar facilities. Other existing facilities in Homer include the HERC, schools, and private businesses but have not been able to meet the demand. Schools are typically closed during the summer and occupied during school hours, limiting availability for the general public. Private businesses can be more expensive and often lack a larger space for sports (e.g., pickleball).



The gym/multi-purpose room should be able to accommodate a broad range of user activities. The demand for activities is spread over many categories, and the space must be able to accommodate multiple activities.

A smaller room or set of multi-purpose rooms may be appropriate to add to the larger gym concept. Many responses from the public engagement survey indicated a demand for multi-function, classroom-sized space, which could be used for small groups, yoga, card games, parties, workshops, dance, and other functions.

4.2 CONVENTION/EVENT SPACE

There is no dedicated convention or event space in Homer. Local hotels and theaters do provide space that can accommodate small group use, but a single community center for larger gatherings does not exist. Homer is home to many seasonal festivals, destination weddings, and other gatherings, each of which must solve their need for space in creative ways, including hosting gatherings in parking lots, churches, bars, or schools. Public engagement survey respondents indicated a demand for creating a space that can host conventions, weddings, and other visitor type events that serve to stimulate economic activity.

One viable pathway to meet this need is to design the HERC multi-purpose space to also be convertible for convention settings, with appropriate décor and infrastructure. This could take advantage of the views and central location of the site.

4.3 100 – 200 PERSON THEATER

The Homer area currently has multiple theaters, including large (e.g., 500 seats), moderate (100, 200 seats) and small (e.g., 70 seats) facilities. Some of the theaters are reaching end of life or are not particularly well suited for acoustic events such as classical music, poetry, or acting.

Discussions with local stakeholders confirmed an active arts community with a desire to have a modern dedicated theater space for 100-200 seats. It was important to stakeholders that the theater have acoustics to support music, poetry reading, recording, and acting. Some stakeholders were reluctant to endorse a multi-purpose room with an integrated stage due to impacts on acoustics and performance ambiance (e.g., seating quality, intangible experience). Other stakeholders stated that any stage space was important, even if it was in a multi-purpose room.

The community engagement survey demonstrated that performance arts was ranked as the seventh most important activity, with 30% of respondents indicating they currently participate in these activities.

Conversations with local stakeholders indicated that they are often just able to pay limited fees to current school theaters (less than \$300 – \$500 per event, average 12 events per year). A single-purpose theater would have a large initial cost, potentially costing as much or more than a gym or an entire multi-purpose facility. There are also limited funds to operate a facility, and the community engagement survey revealed demand for multi-use space to support many activities.



At this time, a multi-purpose space with an integrated stage design was incorporated for the planned HERC. Space has also been set aside on the parcel for a separate building which could be built for a single use facility in the future. This could be for a theater, childcare center, or other community service venue.

4.4 SPACE AND PROGRAMMING FOR YOUTH, SENIORS, DISABLED

Community engagement survey responses indicated a demand for indoor space to increase the opportunity for community programs. Specifically, demand was for multi-purpose rooms for group settings. Significant numbers of respondents indicated that a lack of space was a primary obstacle to engaging in more activities. These users also indicated a willingness to pay for these activities through a combination of increased taxes and/or user fees.



5.0 CONCEPT DESIGN GUIDELINES

This design team was tasked by the City with creating two building concepts and two site plans to help guide alternative analysis for the recreation center. To build these concepts, the City provided the following guidelines to the design team.

5.1 BUILDING CONCEPT GUIDELINES

Initially, the City asked for two building concepts to be developed: a smaller HERC A and larger HERC B.

HERC A

- Gym: Basketball court with bleachers, locker room/changing room.
 - Court sized the same as one high school basketball court, or
 - Larger gym with two basketball courts.
- Stage integrated into gym.
- Multi-purpose room, with dividers. Large enough to have a group fitness class in one part, with another smaller user group in another.
- Commercial kitchen.
- Staff offices and main reception/office. Welcoming desk and greeting area for events.
- Mechanical space preferred downstairs.
- Covered front entrance.
- Exterior restroom preferred.
- Covered area off of atrium preferred.
- No specific event/conference space. These activities would be accommodated in the above multi-purpose rooms.

HERC B

This concept would include all HERC A features, plus the following:

- Approximately 3,600 square feet of leasable space, available to accommodate a mixture of uses
 - Prefer spaces to have individual entrances (i.e., for leasing), if possible.
- Conference center space
- Second floor café or restaurant space
 - Potential use of the roof for events



5.2 SITE PLAN GUIDELINES

Initially, two site plans were developed, and were guided by these principles:

- Requirements
 - o A real statement building, able to draw people into downtown and be a focus of activity
 - o Large lawn/greenspace for outdoor events
 - o Maintain the skatepark, but can be moved to a different location on the lot
 - o 2 Basketball courts/pickleball courts
 - o Outdoor restroom
- Strong desires
 - o Identify a location for a new 4,000 square ft building (e.g., theater, daycare), in addition to the multi-purpose facility
 - o Solar power generation
 - o Greenspace
 - A usable lawn for activities, as big as feasible
 - Passive day use area on the south side of the property, for views, sun, picnic tables
 - Active play area next to the gym. Small playground element – with just a few features (e.g., monkey bars, swings). Not intended as an attraction, but to occupy users already on site doing other activities
 - Rain garden/creek/green infrastructure amenity.
 - Low maintenance landscaping
 - o Property Access
 - Heated pathway between the parking lot to main entrance
 - Pathway around property accessing Pioneer Avenue, and Sterling Highway.
 - Connect to middle school or keep the existing connection.
 - Consider lighting (e.g., pathways, building lights)
 - Space for future fitness trail/activity stations.
 - o Transportation
 - 2 Transit/summer trolley/taxi/load/unload zones.
 - Pull through for drop off/loading



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- Additional, but lower priority, desires
 - o Space for outdoor games (e.g., disc golf, grass or sand volleyball court)
 - o Dog bathroom area to encourage space for pets using adjacent vet. Do not want a full-fledged dog park.
 - o Electric Vehicle charging
 - o Bikes: bike racks, storage lockers, space for bike rental kiosk
 - o Digital screen/mural on side of building. Art, and outdoor movie nights.
 - o Energy efficient/Green building



6.0 BUILDING CONCEPTS

6.1 BUILDING STRATEGIES

The building concept (Appendix B, C) is to provide a multi-use recreation center for Homer, taking advantage of the strategic location and views to build a strong community asset.

The building concept focused on a two-story facility. There is an elevation change between the parking lot and the lower portion of the parcel. The main entrance needs to be located at the same topographic level as the parking lot, to facilitate accessibility for all users. The space for large rooms (e.g., gym, multi-purpose rooms) is located at a lower level than the parking lot. A two-level building provides the best transition from the top parking level to the ground floor, where most activities will be located.

A 3+ story building was explored as a potential concept that would reduce the building footprint on the parcel. This would stack the gym, multi-purpose rooms, offices, and kitchen on separate floors. This concept was discarded for both internal and external design reasons. Internally, the circulation between spaces would be hampered by having to transition between floors and make hosting large events difficult. Externally, this did not follow the Community Design Manual objectives (DOWL 2004) to fit the building into its setting with the natural topography. In addition, there are few multi-story structures in Homer, and three floors might not fit with the visual character of the surrounding street scape.

A one-story building was also explored but determined to be not practical due to the cost and large amounts of earthwork that would be required on the sloping site.

A two-story facility offers the best alternative for the site topography. In both HERC A and HERC B, users enter the building on the upper floor and are oriented by the architecture towards the views of Kachemak Bay. A welcoming desk/office would be located near the entrance to welcome users and monitor access to the facility. Program elements, such as the track, could be accessed directly from the upper floor.

Most building users would proceed down to the ground floor using the stairs or the elevator. This ground floor would have a large lobby space and direct access to the lawn and other outdoor spaces. This lobby space could accommodate receptions, welcome users for events, and provide a strong, desirable visual statement upon entering the building. On either side of the lobby space would be a gym and a multi-purpose room. This layout allows the facility to be used for separate independent activities or be combined for large singular events.

6.2 HERC A

The HERC A design is for a smaller facility, focused on a gym, multi-purpose room, and commercial kitchen. The main entrance has a vestibule for welcoming users and to act as an access control point.

This central area would have views of Kachemak Bay from the upper floor, and the double height space would provide an architectural statement for the facility. The lower-level lobby space can informally serve as a gathering area during day-to-day operations. It can also act as a central hub for large activities that utilize the entire facility (e.g., conferences, sport events).



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To the east is a multi-purpose room, specifically designed with high ceilings to host a variety of activities. This room would have large windows to allow users to view Kachemak Bay. The room would be multi-functional, allowing their use to adapt as community interest changes. The uses may be educational, exercise, conferences, and private events.

Adjacent to the multi-purpose room is a commercial kitchen. Stakeholder engagement input revealed that demand exists for a commercial kitchen in Homer. This kitchen could be used to support events occurring in other areas of the facility. It is also designed to function as an independent, rentable space for culinary interests.

To the west of the lobby space is a large gym, with basketball and pickleball courts. The gym has an integrated stage, locker rooms, space for bleachers and an elevated track. This gym can be set up to host a variety of events, and the stage can host medium-sized performances.

The integrated stage can be designed for many performance type activities and accommodate the demand for appropriate acoustics and lighting that was specifically identified in the stakeholder interviews. The project budget will be the primary driver for acoustic treatment options in the stage and gym. The lobby could also be enhanced with acoustic treatments to facilitate use of that space for small-group performances.

Solar panels can be mounted on either HERC A or HERC B, either at the initial project construction, or later as a value added project.

6.3 HERC B

The HERC B design includes all of the features of HERC A, with additional space that could be leased to a tenant, a café, and “rooftop” seating on the upper floor.

The tenant space is above the multi-purpose room would have views over Kachemak Bay. As a result, the high ceilings envisioned for the HERC A multi-purpose room would be lowered to a more typical ceiling height for HERC B option.

A tenant space would be positioned adjacent to the main entrance vestibule and have direct access to the parking lot to allow the business to operate independently from the larger facility. Patrons of the café space would enjoy the views of Kachemak Bay and the increased foot traffic could provide additional revenue to offset operation and maintenance costs. The café could install their own food service equipment or utilize the ground floor commercial kitchen.

The upper floor leasable space is specifically not designed so that it will not limit potential uses. This could be leased by any type of business (e.g., childcare, exercise studio, larger restaurant). Until it is leased, the space would serve as a conference center, event hall, or multi-purpose room. This room would also have direct access to the parking lot and be situated to operate independently from the larger facility.

Adjacent to the café and leasable space is a gathering “rooftop” space. This provides a “rooftop” style area for facility patrons, capitalizing on the view of Kachemak Bay. It is designed to be able to support



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either the café, leasable space, or both (as tenants desire). Instead of being an open “rooftop” space, the design could also be enclosed and heated, allowing a multi-season room for patrons to enjoy the views of Kachemak Bay.



7.0 SITE PLANS

7.1 EXISTING CONDITIONS

The site plans (Appendix D) had to incorporate two major factors:

- A stream/wetland runs through the property and has a 15-foot conservation easement around the feature. This feature is also reported to periodically overflow its banks.
- The topography of the ground is sloping moderately.

The primary vehicle access to the parcel is from Pioneer Ave, with optional secondary access from the Sterling Highway. In 2020 (latest data available), Pioneer Ave received 3,750 average daily vehicles, and the Sterling Highway receives 8,750 average daily vehicles (DOT&PF 2022).

Existing pedestrian site access surrounds the eastern and southern parcel boundaries. This provides access along the Sterling Highway and along Pioneer Ave. Pedestrian access is also provided to the Homer Middle School, on the west side of the parcel. One access route is provided across the stream/wetland feature.

Noise from both the Sterling Highway and Pioneer Ave is significant. Both Pioneer Ave and the Sterling Highway are loud, busy streets. They are also both the primary commercial trucking routes through Homer.

Viewsheds are particularly valuable on the parcel, with views of Kachemak Bay and the surrounding mountains. The green lawn helps frame the foreground views. Viewsheds are impacted by the Sterling Highway, commercial development along the highway, and overhead utilities. Some of these impacts are mitigated by the steep topographic drop between the parcel and the sidewalk along the Sterling Highway.

The parcel abuts the intersection of Pioneer Ave and the Sterling Highway, acting as the gateway into downtown. There are large, beautiful trees currently planted along this corner. From the Sterling Highway, these trees block the view into both the parcel and downtown. Currently, this is a positive attribute, providing screening of aged infrastructure. With parcel redevelopment, a new strategy may be appropriate, focused on drawing users into both the parcel and downtown (rather than screening them away). Opening up the sightlines would allow travelers along the Sterling Highway to see, anticipate, and be drawn into Central Business District Homer and to the Town Center.

Outside temperatures can be cold, even during the summer. Stakeholders report that when the sun is out, Homer is subjected to a day breeze of 10-20 knots, typically from 1 PM to 6 PM. The parcel is exposed to the prevailing winds from the northeast and can be extremely chilly when sunny. On non-sunny days, the ambient temperature is cool.



7.2 SITE PLAN STRATEGIES

The site plan concepts augment the building, and provide the layout, viewshed, and site access to enhance use of the parcel. One major goal is to build an inviting parcel, generating interest from passing vehicles to explore downtown.

The site plans locate the building as far north as practical. Parking currently exists along the north of the parcel, and all strategies take advantage of the existing parking lots. Placing the building close to the parking lots enhances winter access to the building entrance and maximizes greenspace.

Stakeholders wanted to maximize the preservation of the existing lawn. This is complicated by the large gym, which hosts two indoor basketball courts. The size of this building limits the possible outdoor recreation facilities on the parcel. The site plans maintained as much of the lawn as practical. This provides an important foreground to frame the views of Kachemak Bay. The site plans also allow some sneak views to Pioneer Avenue, to remind visitors that the heart of downtown is located just a short walk away.

The site plans protect the wetland/stream and provide access across it. The wetland/stream feature on the property has been reported by stakeholders to occasionally overflow, or “bulge.” The site plans recommend development of a rain garden, which can be a value-added feature whose design can accommodate changes in water level following storm events.

The site design incorporates Americans with Disability Act (ADA) design principals. Site access from the parking lot was kept short, to ease access into the building. The topography of the parcel is steep, potentially impacting trail design. No survey topography is currently available of the resolution to address ADA specifications of trail design. When the project enters into engineering and design, trails the site can be adjusted to ensure they meet current accessibility standards and connect to Homers larger trail.



8.0 REFERENCES

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APPENDIX A

Survey Results

APPENDIX B

Building Plans

APPENDIX C

Massing Diagrams

APPENDIX D

Site Plans