



**CITY OF SALINAS**  
**LIBRARY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMISSION**

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**DATE:** MARCH 11, 2026

**DEPARTMENT:** LIBRARY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

**FROM:** KRISTAN LUNDQUIST, LCS DIRECTOR

**BY:** ANA AMBRIZ, REC-PARK SUPERINTENDENT

**TITLE:** DISTRICT 5 RECREATION CENTER FEASIBILITY STUDY AND SITE PLAN DESIGN

RECOMMENDED MOTION:

A motion recommending that the Salinas City Council accept the District 5 Recreation Center Feasibility Study and Site Plan Design for CIP 9342 at Northgate Neighborhood Park.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

On May 10, 2022, the City Council approved an \$8.1 million reserve to build a Recreation Center in City Council District 5. On March 11, 2025, the City Council appropriated those funds to CIP 9342 to initiate a feasibility study for the proposed project at Northgate Neighborhood Park.

Staff, in collaboration with ABA Studios, have now completed the District 5 Recreation Center Feasibility Study and Site Plan Design. This effort included extensive community engagement, site analysis, conceptual planning, and cost estimates for the recreation center and associated park improvements.

Staff recommends that the City Council accept the District 5 Recreation Center Feasibility Study and Site Plan Design for Northgate Neighborhood Park, allowing the project to proceed into environmental review and subsequent design development phases.

BACKGROUND:

The Library & Community Services Department and the Fire Department initially explored a shared-site concept for a new fire station and recreation center in City Council District 5, identifying Laurel Park as a potential location based on fire service response goals and safety considerations.

In February 2022, the City submitted a \$20 million request to Assemblymember Rivas' office for State funding to support the fire station and park improvements, contingent upon the City funding approximately \$8 million for the recreation center component of the project. The City did not

receive State funding for the project. Recognizing that District 5 is the only City Council District without a recreation center, the City Council moved forward with the appropriation of \$8.1 million to support the development of a recreation center within the district.

Following the State funding determination, staff conducted community outreach, including surveys and a community meeting to identify the most appropriate site for a new recreation center. This process led to the selection of Northgate Neighborhood Park as the preferred location.

The City currently operates seven recreation centers citywide; however, none are located within City Council District 5. Development of a recreation center in District 5 would expand equitable access to youth programs, senior services, and community gathering space, and provide critical recreational opportunities for residents.

As an initial step in advancing the District 5 Recreation Center at Northgate Neighborhood Park, in February of 2025 the City entered into an agreement with ABA Studios to conduct a comprehensive feasibility study and conceptual site plan design. The feasibility study included a two-pronged process: robust community engagement to define program needs and priorities, coupled with a site feasibility analysis to evaluate exciting site conditions, suitability, accessibility, potential site constraints and how the identified interior and exterior program elements could best be situated within the park.

A critical phase of the feasibility study was establishing a vision for the recreation center and identifying community needs. ABA Studios and City staff facilitated an in-person community meeting to gather input on desired spaces, programs and potential park improvements. This effort was supported by an electronic survey and pop-up events, resulting in feedback from over 627 residents combined. Based on the workshop, pop-up events and survey findings, ABA prepared a key findings summary and developed a draft interior and exterior space program for the proposed recreation center, reflecting community priorities and project goals (Attachment A).

Key findings from the engagement process included the need for standalone restrooms, outdoor recreational areas, and dedicated teen spaces (Teen Lounge). Residents also emphasized the importance of family and community empowerment programs, as well as health and wellness resources.

Following the visioning and needs assessment, and informed technical evaluation of the site, ABA explored a variety of prototypes to address community concerns surrounding parking and building placement within the park. The prototypes were evaluated for functionality, site compatibility, and cost. The illustration below highlights the prototypes explored with 5 determined to be most suitable and aligned with the project's budget.

**Exploration** - Studied many options.

**Informed Option** - One best location for building & parking for cost effectiveness & preservation of open space.

**Phasing** - Create an initial phase 1 that is within budget while establishing a "master" plan for future improvements.



Prototype 5 was further developed into two design options, which were presented to the community through an in-person meeting, electronic survey, and pop-up activities. Both design options incorporated a phased approach. Phase I, highlighted in white, includes construction of the recreation center, parking (though not required by code), landscaping, and either an amphitheater or picnic area. Phase II represents potential long-term improvements that could be implemented if additional funding becomes available. Having a comprehensive park concept provides the City with a clear framework to pursue grant funding opportunities.

Community members were asked to evaluate each design concept based on flexibility and functionality, preservation of open space, and the overall concept. Both options were well received, and this engagement effort reached more than 1,316 residents.



Overall, Option 1 was the community’s preferred design; however, when considering feedback from District 5 residents specifically, Option 2 emerged as the preferred option and is staff’s recommended Site Plan Design to proceed forward with into the next phases of the design process.



Throughout this process, staff prioritized developing a design that is responsive to community needs while remaining aligned with available funding. Ensuring that the proposed improvements could be realistically delivered within the project’s established budget.

CEQA CONSIDERATION:

*Not a Project.* The City of Salinas has determined that the proposed action is not a project as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (CEQA Guidelines Section 15378).

CALIFORNIA GOVERNMENT CODE §84308 APPLIES:

No.

STRATEGIC PLAN INITIATIVE:

This action supports the City Council Strategic Plan in the following areas:

**Infrastructure:** Continue to invest in recreational and public facilities that strengthen community assets and enhance quality of life.

**Youth and Seniors:** Improve, expand, and develop youth and senior facilities and programs to better serve the needs of the community.

**City Services:** Promote equitable access to City services, foster inclusive development, provide high-quality customer service, and engage residents through meaningful communication and outreach.

DEPARTMENTAL COORDINATION:

The Library & Community Services Department has taken the lead in the feasibility study and community engagement efforts for the District 5 Recreation Center project. Moving forward, LCS will continue to work closely with Public Works and Community Development throughout the entitlement, bidding, and construction phases of the project.

FISCAL AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT:

The previously appropriated \$8.1 million to CIP 9342 funded the feasibility and site plan design phase for the recreation center at Northgate Neighborhood Park. Acceptance of the Feasibility Study and Site Plan Design does not appropriate additional funds for the project.

ATTACHMENTS:

Feasibility Study and Site Pan Design Presentation