

Newton Parks, Recreation & Culture Department
246 Dudley Road, Newton, MA 02459
Office: (617) 796-1500
parks@newtonma.gov
Nicole Banks, Commissioner



December 9, 2022

To: City Council
CC: Mayor Ruthanne Fuller
Josh Morse, Public Buildings Commissioner
From: Nicole Banks, Commissioner
Re: Gath Pool 4.0, a revised design

Dear City Councilors,

The goal of the Gath Pool project has been to best meet the needs and interests of the recreational, league, lap swimmers and walkers, while creating a wonderful, inclusive, welcoming, and universally accessible asset for all residents. In some cases, the needs and interests of one group intersected, requiring careful review of how best to achieve a most favorable design for all.

While we knew there were opportunities and challenges associated with a two-pool versus one-pool approach, we initially felt that the best approach for the project included a single contiguous pool design. We listened carefully throughout the community outreach process, small stakeholder group listening sessions, and the normal review process with the various boards and commissions. We heard from these groups that there was an openness for more compromise, that everyone truly wanted to see the best possible design outcome. With this support and encouragement, we went back to the drawing board to test various design approaches to see if we could achieve an improved design without sacrificing our project goals and objectives. Through this public process, and informed by ample community input, our design has evolved.

Working with our design team from BH+A, we have found a way to address our goals and objectives, while also creating a two-pool design that will work better for all stakeholders. While this approach is slightly more expensive to construct and operate, it will yield a finished product that simply checks more boxes for everyone. We have taken this new design back to key stakeholders for preliminary feedback and are heartened by their initial assessment. As with the previous one-pool design, the new “Gath Pool 4.0” two-pool design has elements that require some compromise between different stakeholders. All of the compromises have been emphatically embraced to allow for this optimal design. The new pool design and all previous project materials can be viewed at www.newtonma.gov/gathpoolproject.

Great community projects are a product of solid communication, collaboration, openness to compromise, and evolution of thought. Being responsive to the community is good governance, and we are blessed to have such a passionate and dedicated city. We appreciate the dedicated groups and individuals who have been working tirelessly to help improve the design for our community. In this spirit of openness, we will be presenting the new design to the Commission on Disability this week and back to the Parks and Recreation Commission later this month for a public hearing. With their support we will bring the project back to the Community Preservation Committee to request their support to fund the project. In addition to CPA funds, we have \$1M in ARPA funds and \$400K in state funds (thanks to Rep. Kay Khan) that will help make this project possible. Ultimately, this project will come before the City Council for final funding approval.

We will be moving quickly to advance this design so that we may start construction immediately after the 2023 swim season concludes, with our goal of opening the new pool for the start of the 2024 swim season.

Respectfully,

Nicole Banks, Commissioner

Gath Pool design 4.0

