

To: Hermosa Beach City Council
From: Hermosa Beach Civic Facilities Advisory Group
Subject: Considerations for future civic infrastructure planning
Date: July 15th, 2025



Summary

The Civic Facilities Advisory Group was formed to aid the City Manager in assessing Hermosa Beach's aging civic infrastructure and advising the City Council on potential solutions. The group includes a diverse cross-section of the community: accomplished architects, engineers, public policy professionals, a former Superintendent of Public Works and City Manager, and engaged residents from a wide range of backgrounds. This memo and planned presentation to the Council represents the final product of this group. We hope this information is helpful to the council and have appreciated the opportunity to serve our community in this capacity.

While we often disagreed on specific details and approaches, we are all united by a deep love for Hermosa Beach and a shared commitment to ensuring it remains the "Best Little Beach City." We approached this process with clear eyes, open minds, and a dedication to finding solutions that balance the needs and concerns of the whole community in a fiscally responsible and thoughtful way. Over the past eight months, we have spent countless hours in meetings, tours, and document reviews, and the respectful, open dialogue we've shared throughout this process is, in our view, a reflection of what makes Hermosa Beach special—respect, service, and neighborliness.

Over eight months of site visits, study reviews, and dialogue, our group reached consensus in the following areas:

- **The City Yard is the most urgent infrastructure need** and must be fully replaced. We support the Council's decision to move forward with design planning, and recognize this means any major work on the Civic Center will have to wait several years.
- **The Police Department is the most critically deficient facility after the yard**, lacking safe evidence storage, confidential public spaces, and modern digital infrastructure.
- **Three primary options merit further study:** (1) renovation and modest expansion of existing facilities; (2) new construction of either a consolidated Civic Center on the Public Storage site/adjacent city-owned land; 3) hybrid option of a new police facility on the Public Storage site with renovation of the existing Civic Center for expanded City Hall use.
- **Additional information is needed to chart a fiscally responsible path forward**, including whether renovation is structurally and operationally viable at a cost that justifies forgoing new construction; what a new Civic Center would actually cost; and what financing and redevelopment options could help offset those costs while being desirable to the community.
- **Public trust will be essential.** Successful delivery of the City Yard project is a necessary first step to demonstrate the City's ability to manage large-scale infrastructure investments.

This is both a pressing challenge and a long-term opportunity for Hermosa Beach. Right now, most Public Works service calls are for the City's own aging facilities—and this burden is only expected to grow, further reducing staff capacity to serve the community. This problem won't go away if we ignore it. We must continue to plan and address it, even if we believe now is not the most opportune moment. With careful planning, transparent communication, and meaningful community engagement, the City can ensure its civic facilities are a source of pride for generations to come.

The state of our current facilities

Through public tours, review of past facilities condition assessments, and direct conversations with city employees, we consistently heard concerns about the serious shortcomings of Hermosa Beach's civic facilities. As a group, we agree these are not abstract or cosmetic issues—they are real, urgent problems that can directly compromise public service, operational efficiency, and community safety.

After the City Yard, we view the Police Department as the most severely challenged facility. The building reflects the needs of a different era—an era when DNA evidence didn't need refrigeration and Police Departments didn't require dedicated computer stations with multiple monitors for video analysis and inter-agency coordination. Evidence storage is dangerously outdated, and the jail cells, though not at capacity due to changes in Los Angeles County's pre-arraignment release protocols, remain functionally inadequate by modern standards. The issue is not just space—it is that the data systems, storage, and infrastructure to properly investigate crimes and maintain evidence are simply not sufficient in the current building.

One of the most alarming issues is the lack of confidentiality in the Police Department's waiting area, where victims can inadvertently come into contact with suspects being released from jail. This is not just a design flaw—it is a direct threat to the wellbeing of our most vulnerable residents.

City Hall is crowded and in many ways inefficient for modern city operations, though how inefficient is subject to debate. The current layout fragments city services across disconnected spaces, creating confusion for residents and operational silos among departments. We concur with staff assessments that this lack of physical cohesion undermines interdepartmental coordination, particularly for complex permitting and code compliance tasks that now require far more cross-department collaboration. A fundamental issue at the Civic Center is space. Employees consider the facilities too small for the current needs due to the increasing burden on staff to manage and comply with regulations that grow more complex every year. An increased need for transparency in policing and city management has added to staff workload and file management requirements. Some of this may be addressable through greater remote work arrangements, which staff should further study.

The small waiting rooms often push residents into outdoor hallways, creating an unprofessional and uncomfortable experience for the public. Bathrooms are located in the middle of office spaces, creating privacy issues and employee discomfort. These are not minor inconveniences—they affect morale, recruitment, and the city's ability to present itself as a modern, capable organization.

The civic center's plumbing and electrical systems are deteriorating, and the facilities lack a comprehensive fire suppression system. Except for a few pendant fire sprinkler heads near the exit stairs, the building is largely unsprinklered, increasing risk in the event of a fire. Fire extinguishers are in place and properly tagged, but the overall system is outdated and insufficient. Through tours of the Police Station's server room, evidence locker, and other areas, we have seen evidence of water damage and potential fire hazards that public works should investigate immediately for the safety risks to employees and potential disruption to operations and performance. City Hall was constructed decades ago and does not meet modern seismic codes. In the event of an earthquake, the risk to staff and the public is significant.

We also heard from staff that while Hermosa Beach has attracted exceptional talent, it may become increasingly difficult to recruit and retain employees within these deteriorating facilities. Though this is partly speculative and more data is needed, we believe this is a reasonable concern when competing with neighboring cities that offer more modern work environments.

Finally, we acknowledge that not all of the city's operational challenges are tied to physical structures. Some inefficiencies, such as the need for digitization and improved customer service systems, could be addressed through administrative action regardless of whether facilities are renovated or replaced. We recommend that the Interim City Manager continue to explore these solutions in parallel with any facility planning.

Implications of moving forward with new City Yard construction

Early in our process, our group unanimously agreed that the City Yard is the most urgent and overwhelming challenge facing current city operations and that it would require complete replacement. We applaud the Council's decision to move forward with design planning for a new City Yard as part of the FY 2025-2026 adopted budget.

Given that this decision has been made, we will not revisit the extensive discussions we had about why the current City Yard is no longer viable. However, it is important to highlight several downstream implications of proceeding with this project.

Since the new yard will be constructed on the site of the existing yard, interim staging for public works operations will be required. We recommend utilizing the public storage site as a temporary staging area during construction, which would preclude other uses of this site during construction, which will also entail the loss of over \$250,000 of annual revenue.

The FY 2025-2026 budget includes \$1 million for design work and \$900,000 in a reserve fund for the yard, but construction funding has not yet been identified. City staff have provided a preliminary order-of-magnitude cost estimate of approximately \$20 million for the project, which will likely strain the City's public works resources and capital project pipeline for the foreseeable future.

Given these constraints, we believe any major renovation or new construction is unlikely to proceed until the yard is completed—a timeline that could extend several years. The City will likely need to take a "one big project at a time" approach. Nonetheless, we strongly recommend that the Council and staff continue long-term planning for the civic center and ensure that basic maintenance of existing facilities continues in the meantime, regardless of which path is ultimately chosen. It must be noted that the status quo also carries the risk of escalating costs.

In the June 10 budget study session, staff presented sobering projections that Hermosa Beach may face structural budget deficits in the coming years—modeling indicates the potential for a \$4.2 million annual deficit by Fiscal Year 2030-2031, which is roughly the point when the City Yard project may be completed and further action on the civic center could become feasible. This projected fiscal environment has major implications for the decision-making process. While new civic facilities may offer operational improvements and customer service benefits, they could prove financially out of reach if budget pressures continue to mount. The city will need to seriously weigh the trade-offs between the desirability of new construction and the fiscal prudence of renovation or modest expansion.

We also view the City Yard project as a critical litmus test for the city's ability to deliver a large-scale infrastructure project on time and on budget. Public trust in the city's fiscal management will be key to advancing any future civic facility projects. Our group spent considerable time discussing community perceptions of the city's financial stewardship, and while opinions vary, we all recognize the failure of the 2024 sales tax measure as a significant indicator of public skepticism regarding city spending. Successfully completing the City Yard project could meaningfully strengthen public confidence, which will be essential regardless of which direction future Councils decide to pursue for the Civic Center.

Two paths forward: new renovation vs new construction

Our group was tasked with assessing the feasibility and desirability of various redevelopment options for Hermosa Beach's civic facilities. This was a challenging exercise due to substantial gaps in available technical information. We relied heavily on prior studies, including Fullerton Consulting's analysis, the 2016 McGrath study, and the 2015 Facilities Needs Assessment, as well as our own professional backgrounds, experiences, and knowledge of Hermosa Beach.

After our review of the six main options presented, we reached consensus on narrowing our focus on two primary paths: renovating and modestly expanding the current civic facilities footprint or constructing a new, consolidated civic center on the public storage lot that would include the Police Department, City Hall, and possibly the Public Library.

Renovation and moderate expansion of existing facilities

The 2016 McGrath study found that with thoughtful renovations, the existing City Hall and Police Station could potentially remain serviceable for another 50 years (now approximately 40 years remaining). This finding warrants further exploration, as renovation may offer a more affordable path relative to new

construction, [though is not without the risk of cost escalation as well]. The possibility of modest vertical expansion of the Police Station should be technically validated and assessed, and the city should review as-built plans if they can be found. Limited expansion into Bard Street or other adjacent city-controlled land, and internal reconfigurations to improve space efficiency should all be carefully studied to understand whether these adjustments could meet the city's needs for the foreseeable future at significantly lower cost than building new. For instance, in our conversations with the Police Chief, it was noted that additional space on the current roof could open up opportunities for the reuse of current 1st-floor office space for a victim intake room.

Renovation could preserve the continuity of the existing civic aesthetic, which may appeal to some residents, though we also heard from others who feel the current City Hall is outdated and uninviting. Additional public outreach would help clarify community preferences on this issue. Renovation would also likely come with substantial challenges. It would require complex, phased construction while maintaining city operations in a space-constrained environment, which could create significant disruption to both staff and the public. Renovating with staff and services still occupying the site is inherently difficult and could strain already limited working space.

The scale of investment required for renovation and modest expansion may still be substantial. Renovation may limit the city's ability to leverage new revenue streams from redevelopment of the existing civic center footprint, though the city could still pursue redevelopment of other parcels, such as Lot A, Lot D, or the public storage site to help offset costs.

We believe the city should further explore whether a renovation and expansion plan can be delivered at a cost low enough to justify forgoing the benefits of a newly constructed facility.

Several key questions must be answered before proceeding further:

- Are the 2023 revised space needs assessments the bare minimum for high-quality service delivery and employee safety/morale?
- How much on-site workspace is truly necessary, particularly given the modern shift to remote and hybrid work models?
- Is vertical expansion a structurally viable option?
- Can essential city functions continue during renovation?
 - Where would police functions and city functions occur during a major renovation and what is the cost of temporary facilities?
- What are the environmental and soil remediation liabilities associated with major renovation or expansion on the current site?
- What financing options might be available to offset renovation costs?
- With renovation and modest expansion, how long can we expect our current facilities to last?

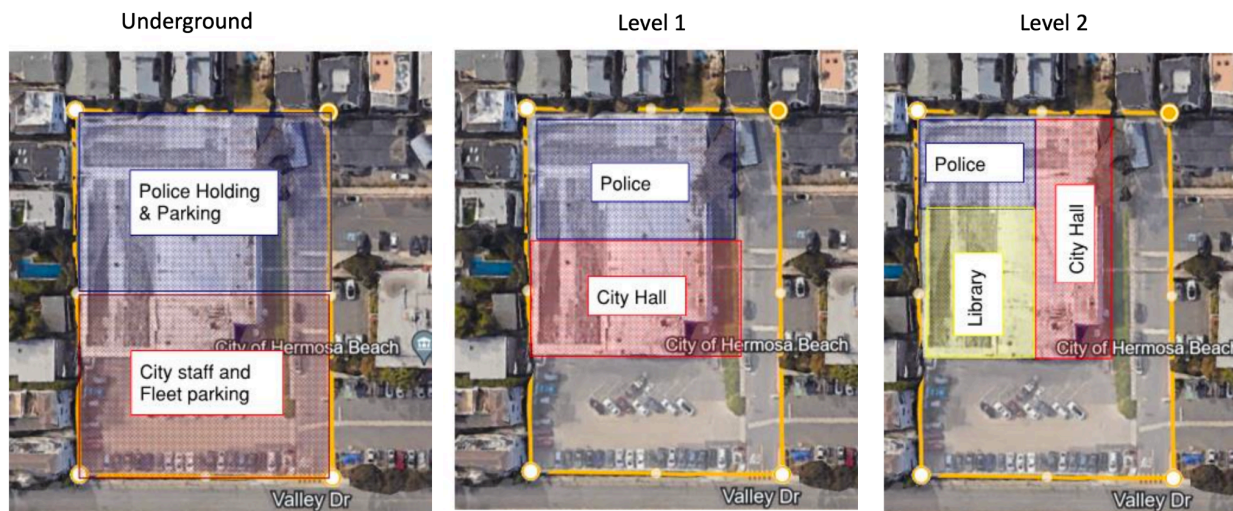
Without answers to these questions, the city cannot make an informed decision about whether renovation is a viable path. Future investments in this project should focus on nuts and bolts answers to

these questions, which proved beyond the scope of the contracts awarded to Jeff Fullerton Consulting and the Lee Andrews group.

New construction on the Public Storage site

With the information available, we found the most promising of the new construction solutions to be a compact, modern, consolidated civic center and Police Station on the public storage lot and/or adjacent city-owned property. This design would consolidate City Hall and Police Department operations into a contiguous, space-efficient structure purpose-built for modern public safety and operational needs. While the future of the Public Library requires further deliberation, \$4 million is already available for its renovation, which will likely proceed independently. As such, the Public Library is not included in our analysis of this option.

As part of our analysis, we considered options that would prioritize minimized disruption during construction, highest and best use of space for community and administrative needs, maintenance of community access during renovations, and strategic placement of City Hall and police where they are best situated to serve the public. A basic footprint of this option (see below) was provided by Fullerton Consulting and shows the basic contours of what this option may entail, though it goes without saying that far more detail is needed to assess the true feasibility or desirability of this option. It is important to note that while we view the Police Department as a higher priority for new construction, the potential cost savings and efficiency of consolidation were compelling.



The biggest benefit of new construction is the potential for a maximally efficient civic center that enables employees to provide the best possible services to the public in a comfortable work environment that is aesthetically pleasing and enjoyable for the public to visit. The biggest drawback of new construction is the cost, which is substantial by any estimate. Fullerton Consulting provided our group with a series of very rough cost estimates on what a newly constructed civic center could cost Hermosa Beach. The following table outlines some of the information we received, and our assessment of that information.

Note: these numbers are rough estimates based on numerous assumptions and should be treated as the basis for discussion and benchmarking. The difficult reality is that the city would have to spend more money to get a cost estimate that has any real fidelity.

Fullerton Consulting Estimates			Views of Civic Facilities Advisory Group
Size of New Civic Center	Police	31,610	We agree the city needs more space; however, the specific requirements should be more thoroughly justified. Given the growing potential for remote work where appropriate, the city should explore how proposed space needs can be further reduced.
	City Hall	21,772	
	Total	53,382	
Cost	Cost/SF	\$1,250	Fullerton Consulting's \$1,250 per square foot estimate is based on recent civic center projects in comparable California towns. However, Hermosa Beach's unique needs and footprint could drive costs higher or lower. We should apply lessons from the City Yard reconstruction and pursue a more precise estimate when the time comes. This number is low fidelity and should be used only directionally, we have low confidence in it.
	Total Est. Cost	\$66,727,500	
Financing	Est. Municipal Interest Rate	4.50%	These bond figures are based on current rates and are subject to change in the coming years. While potential cost offsets from new revenue and reduced annual maintenance compared to current aging facilities may reduce the city's annual liability, public financing will still likely be required to service the bond.
	Bond Term (years)	30	
	Annual Payment	\$4,096,504	

Consolidation of the civic center on the public storage lot opens the possibility of new uses for the roughly 2 acres that the current City Hall, Police Station, and Public Library sites sit on (not including fire department), which could create valuable new revenue sources that offset annual bond financing costs. While we are under no illusions that this would be a simple process—we expect any changes to downtown to be contentious—any feasibility analysis should consider the opportunities for new sources of revenue, and center the preferences of Hermosa residents.

Given our group's identification of the Police Department as the top facility priority—and recognizing limited financial resources—a standalone or hybrid Police Station on the Public Storage lot may warrant consideration alongside full consolidation. This could open up the current Police Station for City Hall expansion as well. While a hybrid model could help alleviate space constraints, it would not address the broader deficiencies at City Hall. Although this option was not presented by Fullerton Consulting, we believe it merits future consideration.

The city should undertake a full market assessment to determine what redevelopment configurations would best serve the community and generate sustainable revenue. This assessment could evaluate parking structure, retail/dining, public amenity, and other public-private combinations (for example, some members of the public have advocated for a public pool on the civic center site). Hotel development had been suggested in past public discussions. We concluded that a hotel on the current

civic center footprint would likely be highly unappealing to the community and should not be pursued. A market assessment should also help answer the following questions:

- What is the commercial demand and potential revenue from developing other city-owned lots (such as Lot A) to help offset costs?
- How much annual lease revenue or business tax growth could redevelopment generate?
- To what extent could redevelopment help address the city's parking challenges?
- What other sources of capital (e.g. grants) are available to support this project?
- What remaining costs would need to be financed through bond proceeds, and what level of public support exists?

Concluding thoughts

One of the reasons this advisory group was formed was to provide a diverse, cost-effective way for the city to begin gauging public sentiment on the future of Hermosa Beach's civic facilities. Going forward, similar advisory panels may be a valuable, cost-effective tool for providing ongoing community feedback. Any future changes to the civic center will inevitably spark strong opinions. It will be the responsibility of the Council to fairly represent these views and of city staff to ensure broad, effective outreach across all segments of the community.

We also believe there is a baseline issue of public awareness. Many residents do not fully understand the challenges facing the current civic facilities or what this study process has actually entailed. The City should thoughtfully consider how to improve public education on the condition of its facilities and the hard trade-offs involved, without steering public opinion toward any particular outcome.

Revitalizing Hermosa Beach civic facilities to better meet the needs of residents, enhance city services, and strengthen our downtown core should be a priority for the City Council. These are hard choices, but with thoughtful planning and community engagement, we can ensure Hermosa Beach's civic infrastructure is a model of community pride for decades to come. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Members of the Hermosa Beach Civic Facilities Advisory Group

Tom Bakaly
Claudia Berman
Ira Ellman
Eric Oakes
Mike Flaherty
Scott Hayes
Eric Horne
Rick Koenig

Lauren Pizer-Mains
Jim Rosenberger
Jennifer Rosenfeld