

**MINUTES
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS
FARMINGTON HILLS CITY COUNCIL
STUDY SESSION
CITY HALL – COUNCIL CHAMBERS
NOVEMBER 24, 2025 – 6:00PM**

The study session of the Farmington Hills City Council was called to order by Mayor Rich at 6:00pm.

Councilmembers Present: Aldred, Boleware, Bridges, Dwyer, Knol, Rich and Starkman

Councilmembers Absent: None

Others Present: City Manager Mekjian, Assistant City Manager Mondora, City Clerk Lindahl, Directors Aranowski, Rushlow, Schnackel and Skrobola and City Attorney Joppich

DISCUSSION ON SITE SELECTION FOR THE NEW ACTIVITIES CENTER

Mayor Rich explained that Council will hear and discuss a presentation regarding site selection for the new activities center. Public comment will be taken during the regular City Council meeting that will immediately follow this study session.

City Manager Mekjian introduced the project team:

Evan Eleff, Sports Facilities Corporation
Charles Hart, Hubbell, Roth & Clark (HRC)
Ellen Schnackel, Special Services Director

History and timeline

- A pre-pandemic accrual study evaluated capital replacement and improvement needs for the Costick Center (2018 dollars).
- During the pandemic, Counsilman-Hunsaker performed an audit of the pool systems (2021 dollars).
- In 2023, the focus shifted to evaluating a full replacement of the Costick Center rather than only improvements. At that time, the recommended replacement location was at or adjacent to The Hawk.
- The City reengaged Sports Facilities Corporation in April 2025 to support broader strategic planning for Special Services, with the new activities center as a major component.
- The earlier Costick improvement estimates totaled approximately \$13.5 million in 2018 dollars; the estimated range is now \$22–\$27 million. These improvements would not extend the Costick Center’s lifespan by several decades; rather, they would provide an additional 5–15 years, depending on conditions.
- In contrast, full replacement estimated costs, adjusted for post-pandemic construction inflation—during which construction costs increased approximately 55% and continued escalating at 4–5% annually—is approximately \$27.2 million.
- A replacement facility would be smaller than the aging Costick Center yet better aligned with the needs of the 50-and-better community, offer programming flexibility, and would represent a 40–50-year investment.
- Three locations for a new facility had been reviewed: the existing Costick Center site, The Hawk site, and a potential partnership opportunity at the Oakland Community College (OCC) campus. No matter the location, the Costick Center will not be closed during construction.

Community engagement

Over six months, staff and consultants collected feedback through public listening sessions, focus groups, interviews, on site assistance with an online survey, and digital and in-person submission opportunities. Community feedback, operational data, and trends analysis helped inform the assessment.

Four major themes emerged from community engagement:

1. Location preferences:

Residents expressed opposition to locating the senior activity center on the second or third floor of The Hawk, or attaching it to The Hawk facility. Reasons included a strong preference for a dedicated building with its own parking and easy at-grade access, consistent with what is experienced at the Costick Center. Many older adults emphasized the need for a single-story building and avoidance of stairs or elevator dependency.

2. Physical facility needs:

Residents acknowledged their affection for the Costick Center while simultaneously recognizing its deteriorating condition. They identified several core elements they want in a new facility:

- A pool supporting lap swimming, therapy use, and group exercise
- Gym courts, particularly for pickleball
- An indoor walking track for safe, year-round use
- Multipurpose rooms for group exercise (both dry and aquatic)
- Comfortable social spaces, including a lounge or coffee area
- A single-story layout to ease accessibility

3. Programs and services:

Residents repeatedly emphasized the importance of maintaining continuity in staffing due to the strong relationships formed with both full-time and part-time staff. Many respondents also noted that because the city's 50-and-better population includes residents still working full-time, program offerings should include expanded evening and weekend availability. Additional requests included expanded educational programming, guest speakers, and short-session specialty classes.

4. Affordability:

Residents expressed sensitivity to cost. They value the city's current low-cost, high-quality programming and free services. While understanding that taxes may be part of any capital investment strategy, they stressed the importance of fiscal responsibility and careful consideration of funding mechanisms, including partnerships, alternative funding sources, and potential debt strategies.

Recap of site options

Site locations were evaluated in terms of 10-, 15-, 20-, and 30-minute drive-time populations. While the three sites differ somewhat within a 10-minute radius, demographic characteristics become nearly identical at the 15-minute and greater distances. The 10-minute drive-time population is a significant factor, particularly because many 50-and-better participants prefer not to drive long distances.

OCC Site:

Key Benefits:

- Largest population within 10-minute service area of the three sites
- Creates opportunity for integrated education initiatives (e.g., health sciences)
- Can utilize existing infrastructure (traffic signal, parking, and utilities)
- Maximizes opportunity for land sale and property tax income
- Offers "dedicated space" feel during peak 50 & Better program times

Key Challenges:

- Expected to require land lease
- Limited site control by City (e.g., use of shared parking)
- Reduces operational efficiency opportunities
- Will require brief adjustment period for new recreation location

Costick Center Site:

Key Benefits:

- Established, preferred location for 50 & Better participants
- Creates partnership opportunities with Rose Senior Living
- Can utilize existing infrastructure (parking and utilities)
- Maintains “dedicated space” feel during peak 50 & Better program times

Key Challenges:

- Smallest population within 10-minute service area of the three sites
- Reduction of land sale income opportunity
- Reduction of property tax income opportunity

The Hawk Site:

Key Benefits:

- Creates opportunity for operational efficiencies (maintenance, staffing and programming)
- Creates a central campus/community hub for active recreation and service offerings
- Maximizes opportunity for land sale and property tax income (if Costick is sold)
- If standalone option is chosen, maintains “dedicated space” feel during peak 50 & Better program times. *Note: A third-floor location at The Hawk is not feasible due to structural limits and the need for extensive renovation and is no longer being considered.*

Key Challenges:

- Non standalone options reduce feeling of a “dedicated space” during peak 50 & Better programming if attached to the Hawk
- Requires additional parking
- May reduce outdoor program opportunities

Chuck Hart, HRC, explained that HRC was brought in to evaluate The Hawk site.

- The third-floor option is structurally infeasible because it would require raising the roof, relocating HVAC and mechanical equipment, and performing extensive structural reinforcement. Additionally, The Hawk would be shut down during construction. The third floor was therefore eliminated as an option.
- HRC next evaluated two alternatives, referred to as Options A and B on the provided aerial maps, involving structures connected to The Hawk by elevated crosswalks. Both would require rebuilding the existing parking lot and constructing retaining walls and grade separations due to elevation differences. These concepts would involve substantial site work and add up to \$10 million compared to a standalone building. Options A and B were not recommended.
- HRC then evaluated standalone building concepts at the southern area of The Hawk campus, identified as Options C and D. Option D depicted both a one-story and two-story potential footprint.

Access to a standalone facility in Option D would be supported by a dedicated access road leading to the southeast corner of the site, and which would connect to the existing pedestrian bridge. This

configuration would allow direct ingress and egress to a signalized intersection on 12 Mile Road, reducing the need for seniors to navigate through the main east parking lot.

Mr. Eleff added that the space labeled “Senior Parking and Amenities” in Option D represented more area than would be required strictly for parking. The area could incorporate green space, small event lawns, or other amenities as part of a Hawk campus master plan, rather than being a large expanse of asphalt. Activation of the southeast corner could create a more integrated campus experience while still offering a dedicated environment for senior services.

The consultant team recommended that The Hawk site continue to be evaluated, with a full master-planning effort to address parking, amenities, pedestrian circulation, outdoor spaces, and integration with existing Hawk programming.

Feasibility assessment

Construction of the new activity center was estimated at approximately \$30 million regardless of location. Additional considerations included:

- Hawk site access improvements: approximately \$2.5 million for new roadway and access features.
- OCC site: would require a land lease, with costs currently unknown and still requiring discussion with OCC leadership.
- Costick Center land sale: if the city retains one-third of the property for a new building, estimated net proceeds are \$2 million; if the property is fully vacated due to relocation to OCC or The Hawk, proceeds could be approximately \$3 million.
- Property tax generation: partial redevelopment of the Costick Center site would yield approximately \$500,000 annually; full redevelopment if the center relocates elsewhere could generate roughly \$750,000 annually.
- Operational efficiencies: a new center located at The Hawk could save approximately \$300,000 annually due to shared maintenance, staffing, and programming resources, resulting in an estimated \$1.5 million in savings over five years.

Comparative development cost implications for the three evaluated sites

Combining all factors, the consultant team projected estimated net five-year comparative costs as follows:

- Costick Center site: \$27.5 million
- OCC site: \$26.25 million (not including land-lease payments)
- The Hawk site: \$27.25 million

All three sites were comparatively close in total cost when considering both expenditures and offsetting revenue/savings projections.

Proposed timeline

Following initial Council direction on site selection, a funding strategy phase would likely require approximately 12 months. During the same period, a Hawk campus master plan was recommended. Design and cost estimating would follow, lasting approximately four months, overlapping with a construction RFP process. Site preparation could take three to four months, with building construction estimated at approximately 18 months. Furniture, fixtures, and equipment installation would occur in the final months, followed by a soft opening and grand opening.

Overall, depending on funding timing, the full project could take approximately three and a half to four years to complete.

Staff comments

Director Schnackel noted her long history with the Costick Center and emphasized the importance of maintaining uninterrupted services for adults 50 and better during any transition.

Special Services leadership, in collaboration with the City Manager, Finance Department, HRC, and Sports Facilities Companies, recommended constructing a new standalone activities center on The Hawk campus, for two primary reasons as already discussed:

1. Operational efficiencies, including labor, equipment, and material optimization; cost effectiveness through consolidation; and streamlined workflows, in total realizing \$300,000/year.
2. Alignment with the City's mission, values, and goals related to placemaking and creating a community hub.

Director Schnackel reiterated that the Costick Center will remain open until the new facility is complete.

Q&A

Q. Would there be operational efficiencies if the new facility were located at the Costick Center site?

A. No. The Costick Center site functions as a standalone campus without shared staff or maintenance. By contrast, The Hawk site could save approximately \$300,000 per year due to staffing and resource consolidation.

Q. Please review the land sale benefits.

A. If one-third of the Costick Center property were retained for a new building, estimated tax revenue from redevelopment of the remaining land would be approximately \$500,000 annually. If the Costick site were fully redeveloped due to relocation, the annual taxable value could rise to approximately \$750,000.

Q. Did the consultants give weight to qualitative factors, such as seniors' long-standing connection to the Costick Center? Can qualitative considerations be quantified?

A. Qualitative considerations such as history, continuity, and emotional attachment are important but are difficult to quantify numerically. Council must weigh these intangibles alongside measurable data.

Q. Please explain more about the 10-minute drive-time population difference.

A. Updated demographic data showed approximately 63,000 people within 10 minutes of the Costick Center, compared to 81,000 for The Hawk and 91,000 for the OCC site. While the difference does not dramatically alter financial projections, it does affect the potential number of users during both senior and non-senior programming times.

Q. Why did HRC only evaluate The Hawk site and not the Costick Center site?

A. The Hawk site presented greater engineering uncertainty, including (at the onset) potential reuse of the third floor. HRC was therefore engaged specifically to determine feasibility at The Hawk, while the Costick Center site was already well understood and would require more straightforward new construction without structural complexities.

- Q. Regarding Option D, how would vehicles access the new facility from the existing signalized entrance on 12 Mile Road?
- A. The precise alignment of the access road would be determined during a full master-planning process, but the general concept involves a dedicated roadway around the perimeter of the property, separate from the main Hawk traffic pattern. The intended roadway would involve turning right immediately upon entering from 12 Mile Road, opposite current access to The Hawk.
- Q. Could the access roadway incorporate a separated walking or biking path?
- A. Vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian access could be included, and the pedestrian path would connect to the existing pedestrian bridge.
- Q. Please compare Options C and D, both of which are potential standalone building sites south/southeast of The Hawk.
- A. Option C provides the opportunity for a direct covered or indoor walkway connection to The Hawk, while Option D offers a more secluded, dedicated feel, separated from the activity and higher traffic of the main building. Option D would require a longer roadway but would provide expanded parking space, whereas Option C may create limitations on the amount of available parking area.
- Q. Is there usage data by age group at The Hawk?
- A. Although not all program participants have age-tracked data, fitness pass data showed more than 5,600 pass holders, with 22 percent aged 50 or better. In October alone, more than 1,500 swipes were recorded from users aged 50 and better. Additionally, the Society for Older Active Retirees (SOAR) operates on the third floor and draws several hundred people daily. Additional data could be gathered through class registrations.

Regarding Options C and D, Mr. Eleff cautioned that the project team was not recommending one option over the other at this stage. A full site master plan should be completed if Council chooses The Hawk, including environmental and geotechnical reviews and engagement of a landscape architect experienced in recreation planning. Both options require further study before a definitive choice can be made.

- Q. Survey responses show the Costick Center grounds as a preferred location, and the financial comparison between building at the Costick Center site versus building at The Hawk reflected only a \$250,000 difference. Could the City's finance director explain the claimed \$300,000 annual operational savings anticipated if the new facility were located at The Hawk?
- A. Finance Director Skrobola confirmed that the City had evaluated the operational savings from several perspectives and found the \$300K estimate reasonable, given the significant efficiencies achieved by operating a centralized facility rather than two separate campuses. The greatest financial advantage comes from consolidation.
- Q. Should drive-time data or programming availability be more influential in determining the best location?
- A. Programming, user experience, and what the community is accustomed to are the primary drivers. While increased population within a 10-minute radius can support additional usage, the revenue and expense projections for all three sites were not significantly different and therefore site selection should not be based solely on drive-time data.
- Q. Would Options C and D provide identical services and programming?

A. Yes.

Q. Could more age-based data usage at The Hawk be provided?

A. Fitness pass holders were the easiest to identify in terms of age. Age-based data for drop-in pickleball, concerts, and other activities is limited, but staff could analyze time-of-day swipe patterns to provide more information.

Q. Please provide more information regarding traffic patterns and roadway access at The Hawk. Seniors need access without congestion.

A. This concern underscores the need for a comprehensive campus-wide master plan, including parking distribution, wayfinding, pedestrian flow, and access to amenities such as pickleball and tennis.

Q. Is the preliminary \$2.5M roadway estimate reliable?

A. The estimate is reasonable if the roadway remains close to existing parking areas, but costs could increase significantly if the road must extend into sloped or wooded areas. Rerouting the road partially through the parking lot would reduce the need for retaining walls but would require rebuilding lost parking elsewhere.

Q. Please address the potential loss of outdoor sports fields if Option D is chosen.

A. Many sports programs previously held at Costick have already shifted to Founders Sports Park or other sites. However, it is important to preserve green space to ensure that summer day camps continue to have outdoor areas at The Hawk. Master planning will determine how to replace or relocate activities while maintaining high-quality youth sports programming.

Q. Please address naming rights as a potential funding source. Would naming rights at The Hawk, located along I-696, be more valuable than at the Costick Center site?

A. Freeway visibility dramatically increases impressions and therefore add sponsorship value. Also, because The Hawk attracts residents of all ages, naming rights would appeal to a broader range of sponsors for that building than for a senior-only facility.

Concluding remarks

City Manager Mekjian said that this evening's discussion was intentionally high-level and that much more detailed evaluation would occur if Council directed staff to pursue preliminary engineering, architectural review, and master planning for The Hawk site. He highlighted that operational savings would affect back-of-house operations such as maintenance, snow removal, lifeguard scheduling, and administrative staffing—not the public-facing senior services staff. Mekjian emphasized that Council's decision must consider the 50–60-year lifecycle of the new facility.

Mayor Rich summarized the discussion, noting that Council appeared to have no remaining interest in the OCC site. Remaining options were rebuilding at the Costick Center or developing the new facility at location C or D on The Hawk campus. She proposed that, during the regular meeting, Council might consider authorizing a budget amendment enabling the City Manager to begin the master planning and engineering study for the Hawk site while retaining the Costick Center property as a backup option until more information is obtained.

Council indicated general support for proceeding with such a study but asked that the Finance Department provide greater clarity regarding operational efficiencies, which appeared to be the primary advantage of relocating to The Hawk.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Rich closed discussion and adjourned the meeting at 7:25pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carly Lindahl, City Clerk