



portsoken community centre

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1.0 Description

As part of a wider mixed-use development currently under construction at the Minories site in Aldgate, City of London Corporation is to be provided with a shell at the base of the development to house a community facility. This is also to replace the existing Portsoken Health and Community Centre, colloquially known as the 'Green Box'. The current structure is built of shipping containers and was originally intended to be a temporary structure; at present it has outlived its expected life span. The proposed space is approximately 300m² set across a ground and mezzanine level with some ancillary basement spaces for storage and services. The fit-out of the community centre shell is due to take place in the summer of 2020.

2.0 Brief

In January 2019, Studio Partington were appointed by City of London to investigate the 'spatial design' of the internal fit out of the community facility. The following outline brief has been developed and defined as a culmination of a series of meetings and consultations between Studio Partington, City of London and various stakeholders.

2.1 General spatial requirements

The new Portsoken Community Centre needs to be a multi-purpose and multi-functional centre, with the ability to offer a variety of activities and spaces for the centre's users. Overall and more general requirements are for a single large open space to be used for larger groups, events or activities, with smaller ancillary spaces that can be used by other users for other activities. The centre should offer ample storage space(s) for the users and activities hosted in the centre. Above all spaces should be flexible and have potential to be used for multiple purposes, this includes being able to divide or open up spaces by means of movable walls for different needs.

2.2 Specific spatial / programme requirements

- Large open space is able to facilitate large activity equipment e.g. table tennis, table football, pool table, etc.
- An informal meeting space, or 'Chill-out zone', with hot-desking capability, this would become an informal space for residents to work, meet and engage with one another
- 1:1 consultation suites for advice surgeries, these need to offer adequate and relevant office facilities/amenities
- A meeting room that can be booked or used for small user groups
- A small 'domestic' sized kitchen offering a tea/coffee point, with a capacity to tend to a one-off event e.g. the Resident's Christmas Dinner, etc.

- Or alternatively a small community-run café
- A small fitness suite offering a small selection of static fitness equipment; this could also be used as a rehearsal space for drama, music and/or dance
- Another space that would be a workshop or 'make space', this could be a hireable space where external operators can offer a variety of activities or classes for example recording and producing music or videos, digital fabrication, I.T. classes, etc.

2.3 Specific amenity / facility requirements

- The new Portsoken Centre should be a 21st Century 'digitally sophisticated' facility; this means:
 - Modern I.T. resources and audio-visual equipment
 - All services should be easy to set-up, access and maintain
 - There should be adequate Wi-Fi within the centre
 - Ample power outlets
- Physical amenities should also reflect a contemporary social climate:
 - Encouraging bike users with secure external bike storage
 - Drinking fountains for users
 - WC facilities should be genderless and unisex with the use of 'super loos' (*tbc with CoL*)
 - Inclusion of unisex baby changing facilities
- The centre needs to have ample storage space; this includes:
 - Possible 'cage' storage for each user group that could be easily movable
 - Creative storage solutions e.g. using an area in the basement if possible
 - Making sure the storage is big enough for large items e.g. foldable table tennis tables, large tables, folding chairs, etc.

2.4 Wider context

On a smaller scale whilst providing a social environment for a wide range of users, an identity and USP for this new facility needs to be established. On a wider scale this community centre needs to be a catalyst for bridging different communities within the area together, a connection between the predominately office environment surrounding the residential estate, also connecting users of Artizan Street Library and Community Centre with the users of the Portsoken Community Centre. The centre should be an impetus for creating a 'network' of community centres that work to compliment one another as opposed to compete with one another.

distribution:	Carol Boswarthack	City of London Corporation
	Jason Hayes	City of London Corporation
	Simon Cribbens	City of London Corporation
	File	Studio Partington