

SUSTAINABLE GREAT PARK "POWER PLANT" • ANIMAL CARE CENTER EXPANSION • MICROSOFT UBISOFT DEAL

IRVINE

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Sofía and Silvia

SOFÍA VALDÉS RELEASES SUPER-PERSONAL EP SILVIA

By Brett Callwood



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CITY OKS \$25 MILLION FOR IRVINE ANIMAL CARE CENTER EXPANSION

BY EVAN J. LANCASTER

City leaders approved a \$25 million expansion project for the Irvine Animal Care Center on Tuesday, Aug. 8, which will bring new facilities and site improvements to the center's main campus located on Oak Canyon. With more than 650 visitors per week, volunteers are welcoming the expansion project, which will be the facility's first upgrade in more than 40 years.

The project will include the construction of a new 5,000 square foot entry building that will feature a lobby and retail space, and a new 3,800 square foot clinical building, which will house a surgery room, along with examination and recovery rooms.

Other aspects of the expansion project will include adding a patio to the existing feline and small animal building, the creation of an open office workspace for the center's volunteers and employees, and the expansion of the existing kennel spaces. The capital improvement project will also add an area that will help isolate sick animals from the general population.

The \$25 million expansion project will also bring renovations to Irvine's Operations Support Facility, which is located directly across from the Irvine Animal Care Center. While the OSF is mainly used for storage, the project will add a new fueling island in the area of Irvine Central Bark, the center's dog park.

Staff reports indicate the dog park will be relocated to Oak Creek Community Park, which is currently undergoing an

expansion. A proposed new dog path trail along the site's western edge will connect to the existing Walnut Trail for access.

More than a dozen community members, many of them IACC volunteers, submitted e-comments in support of the expansion project.

Dan Ferrari, who has lived in Irvine for more than 40 years and been an IACC volunteer for more than a decade, said air conditioning will be a welcome upgrade to the aging facilities.

"I am so excited over the progress of the project. The addition of a modern clinic, air conditioning in the dog buildings, and a welcoming entrance for the public are things to be proud of. The renovation of the kennels is badly needed, as is the addition of a proper indoor classroom space, out of the weather and away from the street noise, where staff and volunteers can come together for training, events, and to provide community education," Ferrari wrote. "I appreciate the design effort to keep the grass and trees, and retain the Center's park-like environment."

However, while the project's anticipated renovations come with a hefty price tag, the final product will result in an overall reduction of kennels at the site, according to a staff report.

Per the project's initial study, while kennels will be expanded in size, the expansion will remove 30 kennels from the site. Construction is set to begin this fall, with completion of the project expected by winter 2026.



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IRVINE SELECTS SIX DISTRICT FOCUS MAPS FOR PUBLIC HEARING

AS IRVINE PREPARES FOR A POTENTIAL SHIFT TO DISTRICT ELECTIONS IN 2024, THE IRVINE CITY COUNCIL WILL FOCUS ON SIX POTENTIAL MAPS FOR CONSIDERATION.

BY EVAN J. LANCASTER

Since outreach began in April, the Irvine community has submitted dozens of draft maps for the composition of potential election districts in Irvine. With a total of 43 community-generated draft maps submitted, Irvine City Council Members on Tuesday, July 11, narrowed the total down to six focus maps, which will become the subject of two additional public hearings on district elections in September and October.

Dr. Justin Levitt, Vice President of the National Demographics Corp., said that he was impressed with the amount of feedback and community involvement he has seen in the map drafting process. “We actually received, I think, more maps in this initial round than I’ve seen in a process before. We received 43 maps from the community – including five single district maps, five not population-balanced maps,” he said. “Then we have two more maps that have questionable legality, one of them only has three districts, that are each supposed to be for two members, and we have one map that is not reasonably compact.”

Of the 43 maps, Levitt explained that 13 of the submitted draft maps were unusable due to not meeting the state and federal criteria. In terms of criteria regarding state and federal requirements, districts within the draft maps must maintain an equal population of approximately 50,000 residents, have easily identifiable neighborhoods and

be generally compact.

“Some of these require a good deal of discussion. For example, the Federal Voting Rights Act requires us to look at protected class communities, like Asian-American or Latinos – but it doesn’t require it,” he explained. “You must balance it with factors like communities of interest and neighborhoods – so, some of these require some engagement on whether or not a map is good in terms of meeting those requirements.”

For context, the term communities of interest is identified by the California Citizens Redistricting Commission as, “a contiguous population which shares common social and economic interests that should be included within a single district for purposes of its effective and fair representation.” The Congressional Research Service defines the aspect of compactness as a district “that would tend to have fairly smooth boundaries, or resemble a standard geometric shape.” The agency adds that compactness is often used to combat gerrymandering during the redistricting process.

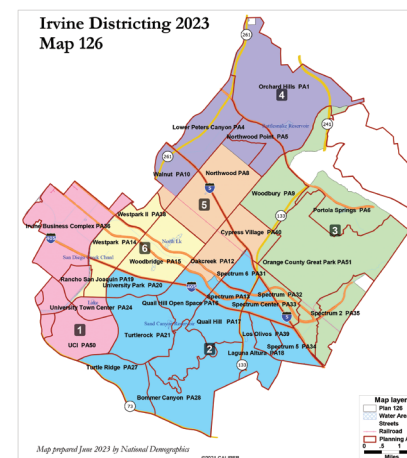
In preparation for the city’s upcoming public hearing on Tuesday, Sept. 12, Irvine Mayor Farrah Khan asked City Council Members to verbally list their three map choices, with reasoning.

With a total of 30 potential draft maps, the six district focus maps were selected by linking the common selection between each Council Member’s top three map choices.

While not yet finalized, Levitt explained that the six new focus maps create an opportunity to eliminate unwanted district concepts or expand on particular concepts of interest.

“If we don’t like a concept or think that a concept doesn’t work for Irvine, then it allows us to talk about several maps all together,” he said. “One of the things we can do, going into our public hearings in September and October, is really combine maps, put them together in different ways.”

Focus Maps in Detail



Map 126

District 1: The district bordering Irvine’s western edge, contains the UC Irvine area and Irvine Business Complex.
District 2: Bordered by California State

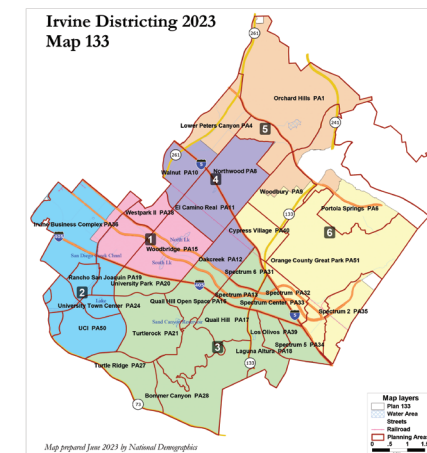
Route 73 at the southern end and Interstate 5 near Irvine Spectrum at the east. This district includes University Park, Bommer Canyon, Turtle Rock, and the Quail Hill Open Space.

District 3: East of the Interstate-5, including Great Park, Portola Springs and Woodbury.

District 4: The district borders Irvine’s northern edge, includes California State Route 261 north through Orchard Hills, including Northwood Point.

District 5: This district is the central most district and contains Northwood, Cypress Village and Oak Creek.

District 6: West of District 5, containing Westpark, Woodbridge and Rancho San Joaquin.



Map 133

District 1: This district contains Westpark and Woodbridge in between Interstate 405 and Interstate 5.

District 2: The district borders Irvine’s western edge, contains the UC Irvine area, Irvine Business Complex, and Rancho San Joaquin.

District 3: Bordered by California State Route 73 at the southern end and Interstate 5 near Irvine Spectrum at the east. This district includes University Park, Bommer Canyon, Turtle Rock, Quail Hill and the Quail Hill Open Space.

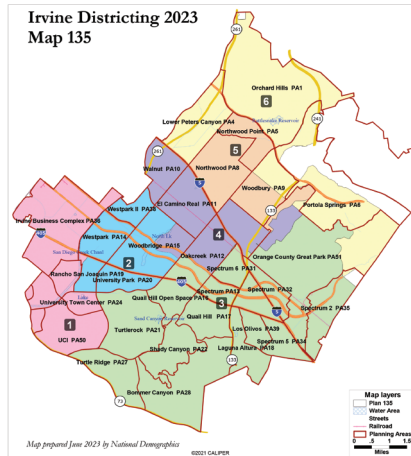
District 4: This district contains Walnut near Interstate 5 and California State Route 261, Northwood at the northern border and Oak Creek at its southern border.

District 5: The northernmost district, contains Orchard Hills and Lower Peters

NEWS

Canyon, between the California State Routes 261 and 241.

District 6: The district on Irvine's eastern border, with Interstate 5 at its western boundary. This district contains the Great Park, the majority of Cypress Village, Woodbury and Portola Springs.



Map 135

District 1: The district borders Irvine's western edge, contains the UC Irvine area and Irvine Business Complex.

District 2: West of Irvine Business Complex, containing Westpark, Woodbridge, University Park and Rancho San Joaquin.

District 3: Bordered by California State Route 73 at the southern end and Interstate 5 near Irvine Spectrum at the east. This district includes University Park, Bommer Canyon, Turtle Rock, Quail Hill and the Quail Hill Open Space.

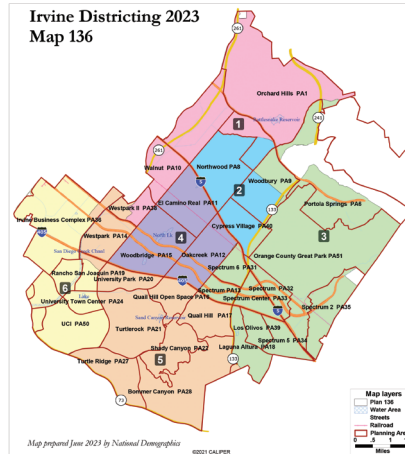
District 4: Bordered by Interstate 5 at the north, and Oak Creek at the South, this district contains Walnut, El Camino Real and Oak Creek.

District 5: South of Orchard Hills, east of Lower Peters Canyon, this district is north of Interstate 5, containing Northwood Point, Northwood and Woodbury.

District 6: Bordering Irvine's northern edge, this district contains Orchard Hills and Lower Peters Canyon, and Portola Springs.

Map 136

District 1: The district borders Irvine's northern edge, includes California State



Route 261 north through Orchard Hills, and Walnut.

District 2: Borders the southern edge of Orchard Hills, includes Northwood, Woodbury and a portion of Cypress Village.

District 3: The most eastern district, includes the Great Park, Portola Springs and the Irvine Spectrum. Bordered by California State Route 133 on its most western edge

District 4: Placed in between the Interstate 5 at its northern border and the Interstate 405 at its southern border, District 4 includes El Camino Real, Oak Creek and Woodbridge.

District 5: Bordered by California State Route 73 and the California State Route 133 to the West. This district includes University Park, Bommer Canyon, Turtle Rock, and the Quail Hill Open Space.

District 6: The district borders Irvine's western edge, contains the UC Irvine area, Irvine Business Complex and Rancho San Joaquin.

Map 138

District 1: The district borders Irvine's western edge, contains the UC Irvine area and Irvine Business Complex.

District 2: West of Irvine Business Complex, containing Westpark, Woodbridge, University Park and Rancho San Joaquin.

District 3: Bordered by California State Route 73 to the south, District 3 stretches west to the Great Park bordering Portola Springs.

District 4: Bordered by Interstate 5 at its northern end, this district covers El



Camino Real, Walnut, Woodbridge and Oak Creek.

District 5: West of Interstate 5 in between the California State Route 261 at the east and the Great Park at its western border.

District 6: The district bordering Irvine's northern edge, includes California State Route 261 north through Orchard Hills, and Lower Peters Canyon.

Map 144

District 1: Located at Irvine's northern edge, contains Orchard Hills, Lower Peters Canyon and Northwood Point.

District 2: Located at Irvine's eastern boundary, bordered by Interstate 5 at its western border. This district contains the Great Park, Portola Springs and Cypress Village.

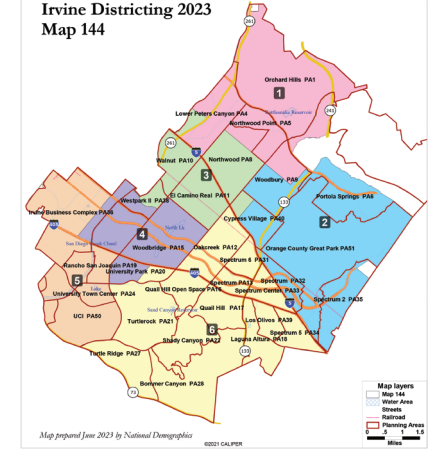
District 3: South of Orchard Hills, grouping Walnut, Northwood and El Camino Real with a portion of California State Route 261 to the west and Interstate 5 splitting its midpoint.

District 4: West of Oak Creek, bordering interstate 405 at the south. This district is home to Westpark II and Woodbridge.

District 5: The district borders Irvine's western edge, contains the UC Irvine area and Irvine Business Complex.

District 6: Bordered by California State Route 73 and the California State Route 133 to the West. This district includes University Park, Bommer Canyon, Turtle Rock, and the Quail Hill Open Space.

Of particular note, Levitt pointed out that Map 144 was drawn and submitted



by the city's demographer – National Demographics Association – based on feedback from the City Council.

"Map 144, one of our NDC maps, is one of the only maps that has two majority Asian-American districts by citizen voting age population – it was something we wanted to show you," he said. "There's a broad variation. We're not just trying to focus on that percentage, but we did want to show you at least one map that has two majority Asian districts."

Levitt added that the boundaries in Map 144 divide about eight neighborhoods, whereas the other maps divide fewer neighborhoods.

In February, the Council agreed to add a measure to the March 2024 midterm ballot that would allow residents to vote on how the city conducts its elections process. Now, with two public hearings left, Irvine continues to encourage residents to submit feedback and suggestions, both in terms of community generated submissions on DrawIrvine.org, or feedback on the six selected focus maps.

If enacted by voters on the March 2024 ballot, district elections will expand the Irvine City Council from five to seven seats, and will also set district boundaries for city council candidates. The mayor's seat will continue as an at-large appointment.

Currently, Irvine is the largest city in Orange County that uses at-large elections.

Irvine's final hearing on potential district composition maps is scheduled for Oct. 10 at 6 p.m.

SOFIA AND SILVIA

SOFÍA VALDÉS RELEASES SUPER-PERSONAL EP *SILVIA*

BY BRETT CALLWOOD

Panamanian musician Sofía Valdés isn't particularly happy right now. When we chat with her via Zoom, she's professional and polite, friendly even, but you couldn't call her vibe "happy." All becomes clear when we ask about her move to Los Angeles from Panama.

As it turns out, she's been here for about two years, but she properly moved all her stuff to L.A. a year ago. When we ask her about the transition, her initial response is to say everything you'd expect – that this is the place to be for musicians, everything happens here, all of the producers and writers are here, etc. But then, in a flash of frustration, she decides to be totally honest.

"I have to be here, honestly," she says. "I want to be home in Panama. I don't want to be here, but whatever. That's the truth. I'm not homesick; I moved out of home when I was 15, so I understand. I get how it goes. But I'm definitely very bored. I have good friends. Great friends. But they're very busy people. I don't have a car, so I have to Uber everywhere, so a lot of my money goes to Uber. I want to save money, so I stay home and then I don't have a life. I can't do anything. So I stay at home a lot to save money, but also I'm very bored. I Facetime my Panamanian friends all the time like, 'Hey.' They're like, 'You should be doing something.' But because I just finished the EP, I didn't have that much to do."

Valdés has based herself in Burbank, and it's clear that she's having trouble navigating in and around the area on foot. It would be easy to be dismissive of the problems of someone who has been signed to a major like Warner and relocated to Los Angeles. Many people might think that they'd love to have these problems. But coming to a different country and then feeling isolated

has to suck.

She has come a long way though – literally and figuratively. She was just 8 when she started playing guitar and discovered that she had a gift.

"I was not really good at anything else," Valdés says. "My mom was very serious about it very quickly. She was like, 'OK, so this is what you do.' So that was very early on. I understood that this was what I was going to do. By 13, I was writing my songs and performing in little bars. It would be like, you couldn't go if you were under 18, but the guys would be nice and let me play there. So it was always a very serious thing for me."

Valdés wrote her first EP when she was 18, her second when she was 20, and she's 23 now as *Silvia* is released.

"I think at my age, three years are a lot," she says. "In your twenties, every year is a really big change. So I feel like I've changed a lot as a person in many ways. I think you can hear it in the music on the third one. I know what I want, and I'm not scared of putting my foot down. That's something that is hard to do."

Silvia is a lovely slab of work – introspective, poetic lyrics and music that spans the gamut between '90s alt-pop, contemporary singer/songwriter, and traditional Cuban and Panamanian.

"Early days, when I was very young my mom would be playing like Black Eyed Peas, while my dad would be playing the Beatles," Valdés says. "So there'll probably be a mix of that era but also the Beatles and older music was also there. Then a lot of Cuban music. My great grandfather was a Cuban musician. He grew up around a lot of Cuban and Panamanian music. That was played a lot. For this EP specifically, I tried remembering my great grandparents' music. I'm interested in the vibe, the aura. What was that? I



OLIVIA PARKER AND PARKER HAO

MUSIC



OLIVIA PARKER AND PARKER HAO

don't know because I never got to meet them. But I find them so interesting. For this EP, I feel like I just let myself be the inspiration. That sounds so annoying, but it's true."

There are a couple of moments on the EP where you can pick out a Radiohead inspiration, then Fiona Apple. Valdés also points to Maddy Starr and Björk as influences. Meanwhile, she says that there isn't really a music scene back in Panama.

"That's why I have to be here; I really have no other choice," she says. "But

lately there has been, little by little, a music scene coming up. Which is really cool to watch. I think there's so much talent in Panama that it gives space for so many people to be great and make a living out of it. People just have to go for it, and I think now they are. It's cool that that's going on, but still. One day I'm gonna go back – so many people are talented and it's such a big part of the culture, that it's like, I don't understand why we don't have a bigger industry."

The "Silvia" of the EP title is Silvia De Grasse, Valdés' great-grandmother,

a musician who died shortly after a concert. Valdés' great-grandfather also was a musician and, both surreally and tragically, he died of a heart attack on stage. Their influence weighs heavily on this EP.

"Silvia was the thing that connected all of it without me even knowing it," Valdés says. "This entire time, I would go back to listening to my great grandparents' music, thinking what am I doing, why am I doing this, is this worth my mental health? But it was super interesting for me that they dedicated

their life to music. It was something bigger than them. And I do think that going through that, they also understood that whatever they were feeling in the moment, there was something bigger. I kept that in mind – there was something bigger than me feeling dad in this second. Silvia was a big calming idea for me."

Valdés is planning on dropping another EP, the second half of an album, very soon. For now, we just hope she can settle in.

Sofia Valdés' Silvia is out now.

SUSTAINABLE APPROACH OPTS TO TURN GREAT PARK INTO "POWER PLANT"

LEADERS IN IRVINE WERE RECENTLY BRIEFED ON THE SUSTAINABLE APPROACHES THAT WILL BE INCORPORATED INTO THE GREAT PARK OVER THE NEXT DECADE.

EVAN J. LANCASTER

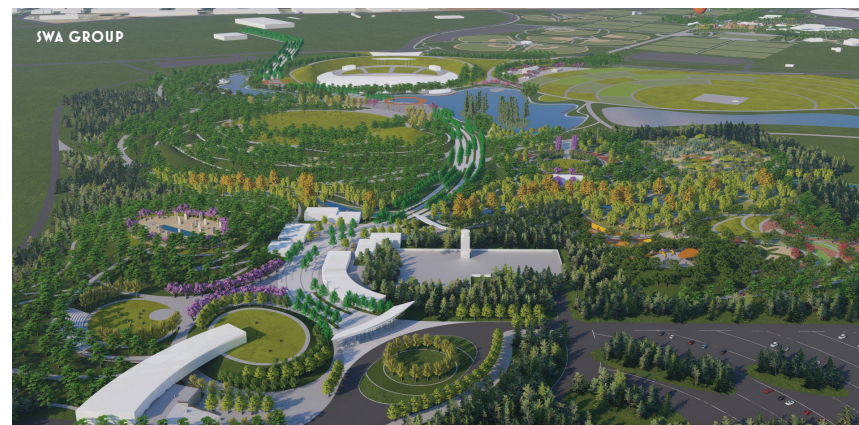
From autonomous lawn mowers, multiple acres of self-filtering wetlands, and solar panel-lined parking lots and rooftops, head architects of Irvine's \$1 billion Great Park Framework Plan say once completed, the site has the potential to become a regional power source.

Sean O'Malley, Managing Principal of SWA Architects, the project's lead design firm, recently likened the park's state-of-the-art design to a "suburban power plant" explaining that by focusing on the aspect of carbon reduction, the park's features will not only have the capabilities to offset carbon, but produce surplus energy.

"Energy – this is where we can make the greatest end roads in sustainability," he said. "We think we can make more power than we use here at the park. So, this park could essentially become a power plant for the region."

On Tuesday, Aug. 8, O'Malley presented plans for sustainability within the Great Park to its Board of Directors. In his presentation, O'Malley expressed optimism regarding a five pronged approach to sustainability – specifically carbon reduction – from the sourcing of low carbon building materials, the planting of native vegetation, the collection of stormwater and even considerations for advanced anaerobic digestion systems that would treat waste on site and reduce landfill capacity.

"At the park's foundation are the materials themselves," he said. "We need to be very careful how we choose materials



to make sure we are doing our part in terms of sustainability. In this case sustainability means carbon reduction, both in terms of how the material is made, how it's shipped – and, like the forest, how it can absorb the carbon on site," O'Malley said.

While still in the early stages of construction, O'Malley explained that with carbon reduction as a core goal, the Great Park's sustainable features will include the complete reuse of concrete from the former Marine Corps Air Station El Toro runway, and enough solar technology to produce more than 38 million kilowatt hours of power annually.

O'Malley added that the project's proposed 38 million kilowatt hours of power is equal to approximately 167,000 trees.

Aside from the inclusion of solar, and native, carbon-offsetting vegetation, the SWA design will also rely considerably

on recycling water and stormwater collection.

At the heart of the 1,300 acre park, a 22-acre lake and wetland region will become an additional source for rainwater collection. The city also plans to use the lake's recycled water for irrigation.

The project will feature naturally filtering terraced wetlands surrounding the lake, which O'Malley said will serve as a permanent educational aspect for the public.

"This lake will be a mix of both recycled water and stormwater," he said. "Another critical element is the wetlands – you're rising up in grade as you get closer to the botanical gardens to the north. That gives us an opportunity to have these stepped wetlands that acts as this natural filtration system."

O'Malley added that lake water will be pumped to the top wetland terrace,

flowing downward from wetland to wetland via engineered waterfalls. The public will be able to watch this natural filter working in "real time," he said.

Leaders in Irvine are already anticipating the lake becoming a core recreational feature of the park, with the potential to offer fishing and boating in various regions.

Irvine City Manager Oliver Chi explained that the city is currently working to determine what is possible in terms of marine recreation.

"In terms of the fish and wildlife, there will be that particular feature we need to work through how that will work in terms of stocking the lake and access to fishing. Once it is stocked, there's the natural reproductive cycle of fish living in and growing in this marine environment," Chi explained. "We spent a tremendous amount of time thinking about how every 120 to 250 feet there's gonna be a different activity base along the edges of the lake, so there will be platforms that extend into the lake. There will be wetland interactive areas and we're also looking at boating activities on the lake, the exact type and use of what kind of boats that we have is getting worked through."

Irvine City Council Member Dr. Kathleen Treseder questioned the reliability of storm water collection, considering that California is undoubtedly familiar with the effects of drought.

"Do we have a plan in place for what we might do if we have a drought or keep the water at the level we are planning for?" Treseder asked.

Chi explained that the city is working with the Irvine Ranch Water District to ensure the project is making the best use of its water resources.

"The good news for Irvine, we have one of the most advanced recycled water programs anywhere in the country. In fact, we generate so much recycled water that IRWD is now undertaking the siphon reservoir expansion project," Chi explained. "In order to store more of that water, given that we are looking at drawing on a reusable source at this point, all modeling indicates we should be in really good shape even in the event of a drought given that we're not pulling from the local groundwater source."

NEWS

MICROSOFT HOPEFUL NEW UBISOFT DEAL WILL CALM UK REGULATORS

AFTER EXTENDING ITS \$69 BILLION DEAL WITH BLIZZARD LAST MONTH, MICROSOFT LOOKS TO SATISFY UK AUTHORITIES WITH A NEW CLOUD STREAMING AGREEMENT WITH FRENCH VIDEO GAME PUBLISHER UBISOFT.

EVAN J. LANCASTER



ONUR BINAY/UNSPLASH

Microsoft and Ubisoft have announced a new 15-year agreement that will give Ubisoft complete cloud streaming rights to Call of Duty and all other Activision Blizzard titles, effective once the \$69 billion Microsoft-Activision-Blizzard acquisition closes.

Last month, Microsoft and Activision Blizzard agreed to extend the highly anticipated acquisition deadline to Oct. 18. Now the Windows publisher must satisfy the concerns of the UK-based Competition and Markets Authority, or

face billions in costly termination fees.

Despite Microsoft's recent victory against a Federal Trade Commission lawsuit in July, there is still uncertainty surrounding the outcome of the Xbox manufacturer's quest to acquire Activision Blizzard.

Brad Smith, President and Chairman of Microsoft, told MSNBC that he was hopeful that the new restructuring of cloud streaming rights would satisfy the concerns of all parties involved.

"I think hope is on the horizon. We have worked very hard, most recently to ad-

dress the concerns of the UK Competition Markets Authority, that's what led us to make a big decision a week ago to spin out the cloud game streaming rights to Ubisoft, an important French games publisher," he said. "We prevailed in court in the United States, we've ensured that we continue to comply even while we spin out these rights to Ubisoft. Our commitments in the European Union as the CMA in the UK said there's no greenlight, but they will review our proposal and I'm hopeful that by the middle of October, we may just see this come together."

In a recently published Microsoft Blog post Smith explained that the inclusion of Ubisoft seeks to directly address concerns outlined by the CMA.

"As a result of the agreement with Ubisoft, Microsoft believes its proposed acquisition of Activision Blizzard presents a substantially different transaction under UK law than the transaction Microsoft submitted for the CMA's consideration in 2022," he wrote. "The agreement provides Ubisoft with a unique opportunity to commercialize the distribution of games via cloud streaming. The agreement will enable Ubisoft to innovate and encourage different business models in the licensing and pricing of these games on cloud streaming services worldwide."

Per the terms of the near \$70 billion acquisition, Microsoft could pay a termination fee of \$4.5 billion if the deal "does not close" by Sept. 15.

Additional details related to the extension of the agreement:

- Activision Blizzard is entitled to pay \$0.99 per share to its shareholders.
- Both parties have agreed that the deal termination fee is not subject to any condition other than failure to close.
- If the deal does not close by August 29, 2023 the termination fee payable by Microsoft if the agreement is terminated will increase from \$3 billion to \$3.5 billion. If the deal does not close by September 15, 2023, it will increase from \$3.5 billion to \$4.5 billion. Any termination fee will only be paid if the deal fails to close.

Chris Early, Senior Vice President, Strategic Partnerships and Business Development at Ubisoft, said the deal will undoubtedly bring more options to gamers.

"We're dedicated to delivering amazing experiences to our players wherever they choose to play," Early said. "Over the past 15 years we've built and honed our online services and distribution ecosystem into one of the most complete in the industry. Today's deal will give players even more opportunities to access and enjoy some of the biggest brands in gaming."

While Ubisoft is the most recent to join Microsoft's list of partnerships, the Xbox creator has continued to forge relationships with gaming giants, most notably with Nintendo, NVIDIA, Ubitus and Boostroid in March.