

6.0 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Many approaches have been used to incorporate the views of citizens in the formulation of public policy. The complexity of the challenges associated with this project led the consultants to employ a number of consultation vehicles as the various publics and stakeholders all have perspectives and special interests that are important to the Study. Since the development and formulation of complex policy strategies is best conducted through a process of deliberative inquiry, a variety of survey and consultation vehicles were utilized including personal interviews, targeted stakeholder focus groups, public focus groups, and a phone survey. Meetings were also held with special interest groups and various ‘experts’ directly and indirectly involved with the delivery of leisure/sport/recreation/wellness programs. The public forum/town hall meeting type of consultation is deemed to be a better vehicle for testing acceptability rather than developing complex strategy and as such was not included as part of the consultation strategy

The result was that essential information was garnered through a forum of meaningful and respectful dialogue. The methodology described below outlines how this wide array of inputs were solicited, distilled and incorporated into the formulation of the recommendations

6.1 Methodology and Results

Interviews – The purpose of the key stakeholder interviews was to pose key questions in order to gather qualitative information regarding stakeholder’s assessment of their respective facilities.

Targeted Stakeholder Focus Group Sessions – The purpose of the stakeholder focus group sessions was to generate group discussion as a means of gathering qualitative information regarding stakeholder’s assessment of their respective facilities.

Public Focus Groups – The purpose of the public focus groups (including seniors, young adults and parents) was to ask questions in greater detail both with respect to needs and potential strategies for transforming the community facilities model in Winnipeg. The focus groups included a broader cross-section of the population in a representative setting. Participants were asked to comment on two key items: the consultant team’s assessment of current trends related to facility types (wading pools, outdoor hockey rinks, regional pools, etc.) and the consultant team’s decision-making framework for the rationalization of facilities (e.g. convert wading pools to a reduced number spray parks, replace local indoor pools with an indoor leisure pool, etc.). Youth from two schools in the city were also included in the consultation process to gather information on facilities that they use in their neighbourhood, and to determine if there were facilities that they would like to use but were not available.

Random Phone Survey - The purpose of the phone survey was to gather information with respect to public use of community facilities and trends in use, and to gauge public opinion regarding the ‘potential trade-off’ model (between a greater number of facilities that are not well-suited to respond to today’s needs versus fewer facilities that are better able to respond to current and future trends). The phone survey is meant to build upon other surveys previously conducted by the City (e.g. the Citizen Satisfaction survey).

A total of ten focus group sessions were held with groups representing sport, recreation, and leisure in the city.

- Aboriginal Sports
- East Kildonan-Transcona Library Advisory Committee
- Friends of the Public Library
- Friends of Sherbrook Pool
- Library Advisory Committee Chairs
- Sport Manitoba (aquatics)
- Sport Manitoba (gymnasium sports)
- Sport Manitoba (ice sports)
- Sport Manitoba (various sport reps)
- Youth

A total of twenty-three interviews were held with groups (some on multiple occasions) representing sport, recreation, and leisure in the city.

- Citizens with disabilities
- City of Winnipeg Organized Crime Unit
- Gordon Bell School Youth Program
- Kinsmen Reh-Fit Centre
- Manitoba Libraries Consortium
- Manitoba Metis Federation
- Needs Inc. Centre for War Affected Families
- The “Y”
- The Manitoba Association of School Trustess
- City of Winnipeg Community Services
- Destination Winnipeg
- Seven Oaks Wellness Centre
- Rossbrook House
- Sargent Park Pool Improvement Team
- Sport Manitoba (gymnastics)
- Sport Manitoba (soccer)
- Sport Manitoba (tennis)
- University of Manitoba Health, Leisure, and Human Performance Research Institute
- Winnipeg Health Regional Authority
- The Radie Centre
- The General Council of Winnipeg Community Centres
- City of Winnipeg Public Works
- WASAC

One of the recurring themes throughout this process was the need for the City of Winnipeg to take a leadership role in recreation, leisure and library services. This is not meant to imply that the City be the sole and direct provider of services and facilities but rather it facilitates interaction and dialogue between all the major stakeholders and service providers to minimize duplication and address gaps in the marketplace.

The following is a synopsis of recurring themes that emerged throughout the public and stakeholder consultation process:

- The City must define and assume its rightful leadership role in the delivery of recreation, leisure and library services and facilities.
- Recreation, leisure and library services are an essential contributor to a City's image and its citizens' quality of life.
- Municipal Aboriginal Pathways is an excellent starting point. The standard "formula" for the provision of facilities and services cannot be applied with respect to the Aboriginal population given the significant societal challenges faced by the communities.
- Major improvement and major rehabilitation neighbourhoods must be treated in a different manner than the suburbs.
- The City's role in the delivery of sports, grassroots and high performance needs to be clarified. Additionally, the City's relationship with the sport federations must be strengthened.
- The current infrastructure is not only aging and in need of repair, it has significant functional deficiencies.
- Health and wellness requires an integrated multi-disciplinary approach.
- The time has come for investment into multi-use, inter-generational facilities.
- The public is accepting of fewer, better facilities.
- If you can't maintain it, don't build it.
- The Community Campus concept was deemed to be the top priority followed by the improvement and enhancement of amenities such as spray pads and skateboard parks.

Interviews were conducted with Mayor Glen Murray and eleven of fifteen Councillors. Many councillors expressed similar sentiments and concerns throughout the process. The following is a synopsis of their comments:

- The City must define its leadership role in the provision of recreation, leisure and library infrastructure. This infrastructure is a key element in establishing a sense of place, a sense of community. Amenities and lifestyle opportunities contribute significantly to the

quality of life of a City. In many cases they are seen as entitlements by its' citizens as they've agreed to support this infrastructure through the tax base.

- A comprehensive decision framework is required in order to assess the viability of proposals. Without an overall strategy and plan, it is difficult if not impossible to assess the viability of the many “one-of” proposals that are received. The only alternative is to assess the proposals from a parochial perspective, an approach that is often the target of criticism. As a result, the distribution of capital dollars at a neighbourhood level appears to be somewhat haphazard, creating a “What about us?” sentiment in adjoining neighbourhoods.
- Facilities appear to be a “medium” priority with the public at this time. This is not surprising as the public generally gets used to what they have, leading to high satisfaction ratings. (Note: This comment was made prior to the New Deal dialogue that significantly raised awareness with respect to infrastructure issues among the general public.)
- It is understood that the infrastructure problem will amplify and intensify over time. As facilities deteriorate, there will be a noticeable lessening of the quality of life in the community. Deterioration of facilities leads to disrespect. However, it is also acknowledged that continued investment into facilities that no longer meet the needs of the public is a classic case of diminishing returns.
- We can no longer sustain a planning model for this infrastructure that dates back to the 1960's. We must recognize and address the changes in demographics, family dynamics a reduction in volunteerism, a decreased emphasis on competitive sports, and people's expectations. The construction of inter-generational, multi-use facilities that address some of these concerns is a high priority.
- We must remember that not everyone can go to the “lake”. Affordability and accessibility are key. Higher needs neighbourhoods cannot be treated in the same manner as the suburbs. For instance, in many cases they cannot raise the “matching funds” necessary to access grant monies. There is also a general lack of awareness in these neighbourhoods with respect to program offerings. The Leisure Guide may not be the most effective means of communication in these areas and alternative communication methods should be investigated.
- We must find a way to engage those people who do not perceive that they have a “voice” at the decision table e.g. teens and new immigrants.
- The plan should address opportunities for the private sector to provide supporting amenities such as food and beverage services.
- Legacy facilities have taught us that contribution to capital only by other levels of government without a corresponding commitment to continued operations is not sustainable. Don't build it if you can't afford to maintain it.

- We must engage the other levels of government both in funding the infrastructure and in developing agreements to share infrastructure (e.g. shared use of school facilities).
- The go-forward plan must also integrate planning and transportation issues to ensure that the investment is leveraged to the maximum benefit of Winnipeggers.
- The plan must be affordable both in the short and long term.
- Recreation, leisure and library infrastructure is a key component in positioning Winnipeg as a city of choice. PUFs cannot be driven solely by the need to reduce costs. Investment in quality of life amenities is necessary in this day and age for a city to remain competitive.
- The public will be sceptical of any plan that has an initial focus only rationalization. It is essential to show quick and positive results relative to the proposed changes. If there is going to be pain, we need a painkiller. In the same breath, we must be careful not to overreach the rhetoric. We must do what we say we are going to do in a relatively short time frame. Keeping the public fully informed is key when it involves any change to this infrastructure.
- The Public Use Facilities Study must be an action plan, not just another report. An effective roll-out plan will be essential to its success.