

9.0 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 was not included as part of the consultation strategy. As it is deemed to be a better vehicle for testing acceptability rather than developing complex 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.

9.1 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	Sport Manitoba (aquatics)
East Kildonan-Transcona Library Advisory Committee	Sport Manitoba (gymnasium sports)
Friends of the Public Library	Sport Manitoba (ice sports)
Friends of Sherbrook Pool	Sport Manitoba (various sport reps)
Library Advisory Committee Chairs	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	Rossbrook House
City of Winnipeg Organized Crime Unit	Sargent Park Pool Improvement Team
Gordon Bell School Youth Program	Sport Manitoba (gymnastics)
Kinsmen Reh-Fit Centre	Sport Manitoba (soccer)
Manitoba Libraries Consortium	Sport Manitoba (tennis)
Manitoba Metis Federation	University of Manitoba Health, Leisure, and Human Performance Research Institute
Needs Inc. Centre for War Affected Families	Winnipeg Health Regional Authority
The “Y”	The Radie Centre
The Manitoba Association of School Trustess	The General Council of Winnipeg Community Centres
City of Winnipeg Community Services	City of Winnipeg Public Works
Destination Winnipeg	WASAC
Seven Oaks Wellness Centre	

The results of the stakeholder and public consultation are presented in the following sections. A topical summary is presented in section 9.2, which synthesizes and summarizes all of the information gathered through the qualitative research interviews. 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.

9.2 Topical Summaries

The following topical summaries are based on the results from the stakeholder interviews and stakeholder focus groups. The results are categorized into eight chapters representing some of the significant themes that emerged through this portion of the consultation process: the Mayor and Councillors; library services, sports, Aboriginal, downtown, wellness, youth, immigrants, and people with disabilities.

9.2.1 Interviews with Mayor Glen Murray and City Councillors

Mayor Glen Murray and eleven of fifteen City Councillors were interviewed. The following is a synopsis of their comments. Many councillors expressed similar sentiments and concerns throughout the process. The following is both a synopsis and synthesis 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 parochial perspective, an approach 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 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's 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.

9.2.2 Library Services

Interviews were conducted with a variety of library groups including the Chairs of the Library Advisory Committees, the Manitoba Library Consortium, the City of Winnipeg Manager of Library Services, and the Friends of the Public Library, and the Winnipeg Library Board. The telephone survey also contained questions about library usage.

Libraries have traditionally been thought of as places of knowledge, and more specifically, as a place to borrow books. While this understanding still holds true in part, today libraries have begun to expand their role and breadth of service to the community. For example, most libraries now offer internet access for the public, meeting spaces for community groups, reading groups, and children's programs. This change in library service has provided both an opportunity and a challenge for public libraries. An opportunity has been identified in expanding the role of the library to offer more services, thereby attracting more users. This often results in an increase in use of traditional library services in addition to the new services being offered. However, a challenge has also been created since expanded services result in more demand for staff, resources, and physical space. The following discussion outlines some of the current trends in library service and the effect that these changes are having on the public library system.

The rapid increase in the use of the internet has changed the shape of many aspects of daily life including education, business, and leisure. Although one may expect that technology has affected libraries negatively, the introduction of the computer and the internet has not resulted in a reduction in library use, but rather has increased the type of service that public libraries provide. Most libraries now offer public access computers and many libraries have started to offer introductory computer classes. This has been increased to an even greater degree with the introduction of Government On-Line (GOL) services. A substantial portion of government services and information are now offered on-line. For those without access to a home or work computer, the library has become the place for the public to access government information. Plan Winnipeg recognizes this trend in **Policy 4D-02ii** by noting the need to *expand the introduction of technological resources and electronic access to information*.

A second notable increase in library service provision is being driven by the public school system. As public schools face reductions in funding for library service and acquisitions, the public library has begun to fill that role by providing more curriculum-based information resources and text-oriented holdings. While increased public library usage by school-age children may be positive, it has also increased the role of the library and the need for different types of holdings without a corresponding increase in funding.

Third, libraries are seen as more than information centres, they also provide public spaces for neighbourhoods to gather and socialize. This includes providing space for users to stay and read and some libraries have even expanded their services by offering cafes, gift shops, and activities for families and children. In addition, many libraries also offer public space that can be used for meetings.

Fourth, libraries also provide valuable services to the community through literacy programming, and programming aimed at new immigrants who are participating in ESL classes. Plan Winnipeg

Policies 2A-04 and 2A-05 encourage both the provision of literacy programs, and services to new immigrants to the city.

In addition to the above changes in the scope of library service provision, there have also been some studies undertaken on the economic spin-offs created by libraries in addition to the social and intellectual benefits they provide. Businesses located in close proximity to the library may benefit from the traffic generated from the library. The library also provides businesses with information resources needed for their operations. In an increasingly information-oriented and knowledge-based economy, accessibility to information is a key factor in determining the success of local business and the overall success of a community.

Due to the above noted increases in services provided by libraries, many libraries are experiencing difficulty meeting demand with current staff. Programs are often popular but cannot be expanded due to the lack of staff to operate them or the lack of physical space within existing facilities.

9.2.3 General Council of Winnipeg Community Centres (GCWCC) Task Force

A task force was struck by GCWCC to investigate ways and means to align the current community centre portfolio with the “market” and thereby strengthening the community centre movement. Aging facilities, lack of volunteers, demographic shifts and changing citizen expectations have all had a significant impact on Community Centres. It is generally acknowledged that there are too many Community Centres in Winnipeg, resulting in market saturation and fragmentations. There is a significant disparity between the strongest and weakest community centres. The work of the task force hopes to address this disparity.

9.2.4 Sports

The City of Winnipeg operates and maintains several facilities that provide access for residents to ice time, pool time, and gymnasium time. These facilities serve the general public for recreation, as well as a wide variety of sport user groups from the developmental level to the national competitive level. A number of sessions were held with Sport Manitoba representative from aquatics, ice sports, and gymnasium sports including: swimming, diving, water polo, synchro swim, hockey, ringette, figure skating, speedskating, basketball, soccer, and gymnastics. In addition, a session was held with representatives from Aboriginal sports organizations to gather feedback on their needs for sports and recreation.

A key distinction must be made between recreation and sport services. From a facility and programming perspective, recreation activities serve the general public by providing facilities for lifestyle and fitness activities such as aquafit classes, aerobics, weight training, and public skating. Sports activities focus on developing athletes through progressive stages for competitive purposes. City facilities are provided for the use of both recreation and sport users in the City. Sport Manitoba focuses on providing sport programs from entry-level ‘Learn to’ programs, through to the development and training of national athletes. As a result, there is demand from both user groups to access the same City facilities to meet their needs. Interviews with Sport Manitoba representatives raised the following general concerns:

Aquatics:

Within the aquatic sports, the majority of the issues and concerns relate to the Pan Am Pool and its use as both a competitive and public use facility. The Pan Am Pool is the only facility in the City system that is able to accommodate national level training and competitions. At the same time, the facility is serving a community function for the geographical area by providing fitness classes and open lane swimming, as well as weight training and cardiovascular equipment. Various aquatic sports share the concern over competing for time and space in the same facility, and also have concerns unique to their sport. For example, water polo training activities can be accommodated at other pools such as Sargent Park, however, the configuration of the pool results in increased rental costs since 7 lanes must be rented to meet the size requirements, whereas the Pan Am Pool is configured such that only 4 lanes need to be rented. In addition, the use of two facilities requires that duplicate equipment be purchased for each facility, or that equipment be transferred from one facility to another.

Similar to the above, Pan Am Pool is the only national level diving facility in the City with a 10m board. Learn to Dive and developmental programs can be operated from other pools with 1m and 3m boards.

Synchro swim has also had difficulty securing appropriate facilities for practice. Again, the Pan Am Pool is the facility of choice since it is sized to meet competitive regulations. However, with the demand for space in the pool from both recreation and competitive users, synchro has begun to use other private facilities to meet their needs. There is a concern that a facility that was built for sport has become focused on recreation, thus creating conflicts between user groups.

Ice Sports:

There are four ice sport groups that require access to City facilities: hockey; figure skating; ringette; and speedskating. Hockey tends to have good access to all facilities, which may come at the expense of other ice sports. The most significant concern for hockey is that the increase in female hockey has led to an increase in the need for additional change rooms for female athletes and officials. A concern was also expressed regarding the number of facilities in the south and west area of the City that have increasing demand for programs.

In contrast to the level of service that hockey enjoys, figure skating has experienced difficulty in accessing facilities that are suited to their needs. A conflict arises between hockey and figure skating due to the different ice temperature requirements (hockey uses colder, harder ice), which underscores the desire for figure skating to have a designated rink for their sport. Another major concern for this sport is the difficulty in booking facilities. Generally, large blocks of time are required to rent ice time due to the requirement to staff facilities; therefore, competitive skaters cannot access facilities for short periods (1-2 hours) during the day. This creates a situation where facilities are not being used when there may be demand for them. There was a concern raised that there seemed to be no opportunity to plan with the City in terms of facility needs and there is a desire to create partnerships to resolve these issues.

Speedskating's most significant issue is the lack of a national level facility in the City. This restricts their ability to host national level events within the City. Essentially, the lack of

facilities for training and competition are the main concern. It was also noted that the City does not have any broomball or spongy leagues due to the lack of available ice time to accommodate the variety of ice sports. Ringette noted similar concerns regarding access to blocks of appropriate ice time at a reasonable cost and quality facilities, as hockey gets first pick of the prime arenas.

Soccer:

The Manitoba Soccer Association represents the interests of Winnipeg Youth Soccer Association as well as a number of competitive and recreational Senior Men's and Women's soccer leagues. There has been significant growth in soccer generally, both for recreation and as a competitive sport, in particular indoor soccer has seen dramatic growth in recent years. This growth has resulted in a lack of facilities which has become a major concern of soccer groups. There is a desire to create a multi-pitch indoor soccer complex that can also offer additional services and attractions to users. Since indoor soccer fields can be operated year-round and the fields can handle much more play than outdoor fields, there is potential to develop indoor soccer facilities that are economically viable. It was suggested that a central location could serve the immediate demand and that a long-range plan for additional regional facilities in other quadrants of the City could be undertaken in the future.

Gymnasium sports:

Basketball was the only gymnasium sport able to attend the session, however, the concerns of volleyball and badminton were represented by Sport Manitoba. A subsequent conversation was also held with gymnastics. The most significant issue regarding gymnasium sports is organizational. Since the gym sports use school facilities for practice times, the application of joint use facility agreements is key. It was noted that different school divisions, and even schools within divisions can have very different methods of booking facilities and also charge different rates for facility use.

In terms of facility use, there are some policies regarding who has priority to access school facilities. For example, school uses take first priority, followed by the City, national groups (Scouts, Guides, Cubs or Brownies), and finally non-national groups like the Minor Basketball Association. A concern was expressed with respect to this system since a priority group may be accessing a gym facility for uses that do not require a gym. This is seen as an inefficient use of space when teams are trying to secure enough practice time. Furthermore, because local principals and custodians may not want outside groups using the facilities, there may be no access at all to specific gyms. It was suggested that a dialogue between the province and schools, the City, and sports users be undertaken to reach a standard agreement that is acceptable to all stakeholders.

General Comments:

Throughout the interview process, all groups raised the concern that there has not been an opportunity for sports, recreation, facility operators, and the City to have a dialogue regarding facility use, booking, and priorities. Although upgraded and/or new facilities were often suggested, the overriding concern about the efficient and appropriate use of existing facilities

became a significant theme. This discussion led to questions regarding the extent of the mandate of the City of Winnipeg with regards to recreation and sport. For example, the City operates several facilities that offer recreational programs to the general public for fitness and lifestyle. In addition, sport user groups require the use of the same facilities, which creates scheduling conflicts. It is unclear which of these two mandates receive what priority. Participation in recreation activities to foster a healthy lifestyle is a key factor in long-term wellness of the population and in preventative healthcare. Plan Winnipeg recognizes the need for active living and the provision of leisure services in **Policies 5D-01 and 5D-02**. In addition to recreational opportunities, participation in developmental and competitive sport has been shown to be a key factor in the development of life skills and leadership. The benefits of these two interests must be balanced so that they are not lost due to systemic barriers.

9.2.5 Aboriginal Community

There are many societal issues to be dealt within the Aboriginal communities that extend well beyond the provision of facilities including the perception of inclusion; the practical and economic accessibility of programs; health; culture and identity. The Municipal Aboriginal Pathways (MAPS) begins the process of speaking to these issues and the role of the City.

In a broader sense, several Aboriginal groups and individuals who were consulted indicated that existing City facilities are not meeting the needs of the community and that there are often systemic barriers to Aboriginal participation in sport and recreation. A desire was expressed for more general purpose facilities that focus less on sport, and more on recreation, such as multi-use facilities with meeting rooms, drop-in areas, etc. There was discussion around the positive and negative aspects of establishing a facility geared specifically toward Aboriginals that could be staffed by members of the community. Concerns were expressed that as suburban facilities are built, inner city facilities will be closed, thus reducing access even further. The need to maintain a facility that is accessible in terms of location and cost, and provides the appropriate staffing and programming for the Aboriginal community, and preferably by the Aboriginal community, is necessary. Plan Winnipeg supports this concept in **Policy 2A-03** which promotes self-reliant Aboriginal communities.

One of the key locations that were discussed was the Old Exhibition grounds site adjacent to McPhillips. This site is currently used for softball, however, it was noted that some of the fields are in poor condition and there are no amenities at the facility (washrooms, bleachers, etc.). Despite the poor condition of the facilities, the location was said to be good in terms of accessibility by foot or by bus.

The goals and objectives of the Winnipeg Aboriginal Sports Achievement Centre (WASAC) can be built upon to develop such a facility. The City's Municipal Aboriginal Pathways document First Steps discusses the success of WASAC and the need to extend the initiatives from programs and services to infrastructure as well. A model of such a facility that was cited as successful is the White Buffalo Youth Lodge in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. This facility offers a wide variety of programs and services that are open to all, and are based on a holistic approach to health including the emotional, spiritual, mental, and physical. A facility such as this that would

meet the needs of the community and foster a positive atmosphere of learning and health is considered necessary in Winnipeg as the Aboriginal population increases.

9.2.6 Downtown

Although the trend in sport and recreation facilities has shifted toward favouring large, multi-use facilities that are located regionally within a city, the needs of residents and facility users in the downtown may differ from this model. Several interviewees representing residents of the inner city suggested that providing smaller, more neighbourhood-based facilities would better serve the needs of the community.

A number of reasons for this difference were noted. First, it was suggested that residents of the inner city often rely on transit or walking to access services and facilities. Therefore, one large facility serving an entire region may not be accessible to a number of residents, particularly children. This issue also arose in discussions with youth.

There were also some concerns expressed regarding safety at downtown facilities. However, it was suggested that this concern could be addressed through appropriate staffing levels and training.

Some respondents indicated that there is a need for unstructured activities for youth in the inner city, and that a large, multi-use facility may not be able to provide such a service. Further, it was suggested that large facilities may be intimidating, particularly for immigrants to the city, or for Aboriginals that have recently moved to the city from small communities. Since facilities in the downtown area will provide a level of service for at-risk youth, ensuring accessibility is a key factor. Plan Winnipeg encourages the provision of recreation alternative for at-risk youth in **Policy 4A-05**.

In contrast to facilities that serve the needs of the residents of downtown, some interviewees also suggested that locating a city-wide facility, in the downtown area, would provide a positive opportunity to revitalize the area and encourage Winnipeggers to visit downtown. The contrasting goals of providing regional-type facilities, as well as small neighbourhood-based facilities to serve the residents of the downtown must be balanced.

9.2.7 Health and Wellness

The concept of wellness and preventative health care has become a more mainstream approach to personal health. It has been recognized that the long-term benefits of an active lifestyle can prevent illness, and also save on health care costs over time. Representatives involved in health and wellness facilities and programs stressed the need for facilities that focus on holistic approaches to health for all ages, and the role that access to wellness facilities plays in quality of life for all citizens.

Generally speaking, the private / public not-for-profit providers of services, The Y, the Radie Centre, The Reh-Fit Centre, Seven Oaks Wellness Centre, have all developed a market niche and a focus. In the case of The Y, it was establishing this clear sense of purpose that turned the

corporation around. Although there is dialogue between the City and these providers on a somewhat sporadic basis, there is not a sense of “partnership.”

9.2.8 Youth

Two groups of youth were involved in a mapping exercise of their neighbourhood and a discussion of facilities that they use or would like to have access to. Having the ability to access facilities easily by foot or by bus was a key concern for youth. Having to walk long distances or cycle on dangerous streets tended to reduce the potential use of a facility, and increase reliance on parents for transportation. Having the opportunity to take part in a variety of unstructured activities was also mentioned by youth (e.g. open gym times, computer access etc.). A multi-use facility may serve this demand, although the cost to access such a facility must be taken into consideration.

9.2.9 Joint-Use Agreements with School Divisions

A number of Joint-Use Agreements currently exist between the City and the various School Divisions. These agreements need to be reviewed and standardized to the extent possible from both a contractual and implementation basis. School divisions are facing the same challenges as the City with respect to aging infrastructure, some of which is also functionally obsolete and this certainly impacts the level of implementation of the current agreements.

Gymnasiums still represent the most beneficial opportunity for sharing facilities provided that access and security issues can be addressed. There is very little sharing of library facilities, primarily for reasons of safety and security of the school children.

9.2.10 Immigrants

Access to recreational facilities is instrumental in integrating new residents of the city. The presence of a single point of contact for information and resources can provide a reference point for families, thus increasing their level of comfort in the city, and the likelihood of future participation in activities. The ability for youth to become involved in constructive activities is also a significant consideration.

It was noted that access to facilities is often difficult due to financial constraints and lack of transportation. Having facilities located centrally, and on major transit routes may help to alleviate the transportation issue. Further, Plan Winnipeg **Policy 2A-02** promotes equitable access to facilities by facilitating access to financial support where there is an inability to pay.

9.2.11 Persons with Disabilities

Telephone conversations with several people representing persons with disabilities revealed a need for increased accessibility to sport and recreation. Plan Winnipeg acknowledges this need in **Policy 2A-02** which promotes equitable access by eliminating physical barriers and promoting

universal design. It was noted that accessibility must extend beyond accessing the facility, to having equipment that can be used by people with wheelchairs and similar equipment.

Similar to other sports representatives, the programming of space was raised as an issue, and it was noted that access to reasonable times is difficult at many facilities. It was also noted that cost is often a factor for disabled people living on a fixed income, however, the need to provide access facilities to ensure quality of life must be a priority.

9.2.12 Supporting Sport as Tourism

Various interests have identified the growing economic driver of ‘sport tourism’. This intra/inter provincial activity of sport and leisure Event Hosting has a significant tourist-spending spin-off. In some cases such as World Junior Hockey, World Curling or Pan-American Games, the magnitude of preparation and the scope of facilities is much different. At issue is whether Winnipeg is positioned to “play” in this area of the mid-sized city sport tourism business.

9.3 Random Phone Survey

Probe Research Inc. conducted a telephone survey in March 2004 as part of the Omnibus Survey. The survey instrument and detailed results are found in Appendix P. Some of the key results from the survey are as follows:

The first part of the survey focused on library services. 54% of respondents indicated that they had visited a public library in the past year. Age, education, income, and the presence of children at home were all factors that increased the rate of participation in the library system. The highest usage was in the 18-34 year old category with 60% of respondents indicating they had been to a library in the past year. 64% of respondents with children at home had used the library in the last twelve months.

The majority of respondents indicated that they visited the library on weekdays in the afternoon. However, it must be noted that the time of day visited may be due in part to the hours and days the library is open, rather than due to preference.

In terms of programs and services, the majority of respondents (69%) indicated that borrowing books was the service they valued the most. The focus on borrowing books increased with the respondents’ age, with 84% of people aged 55+ indicating borrowing books was the most valued service. This focus on book lending maybe a result of older respondents maintaining a more traditional view of the role of the library. In contrast, younger respondents and respondents with children at home cited computer and web surfing, video lending, and children’s programs as valued services in addition to book borrowing.

The second part of the survey focused on sport and recreation facilities the City of Winnipeg. 33% of respondents indicated that they use either a private or public recreation facility. The majority (29%) use private membership clubs such as Shapes or the Winnipeg Winter Club, with Community centres and Community Facilities each receiving 18% of the respondents’ mentions. The results differed by geographic area, with 44% of respondents in the southeast using the

YMCA and 34% of respondents in the northeast using a City facility. In the core area, 30% of respondents use a Community Centre. Respondents with children at home and respondents with incomes under \$30,000 were also significant users of Community Centres.

The third part of the survey focused on the concept of a multi-plex facility, and the move toward replacing aging infrastructure with new, but perhaps fewer, consolidated facilities. 68% of respondents indicated that they were either very interested or somewhat interested in a multi-plex facility. The most support came from people in the 18-34 year old category, those with children at home, and respondents with high incomes. In terms of travel time to such a facility, the median for most categories was 15 minutes, with the average response being closer to a 20 minute time-distance.

When questioned about changing the approach to community recreation facilities, and having fewer but better facilities, 55% of respondents indicated that they either strongly or moderately support the idea, while 17% stated that it would depend on the circumstances. Support for the idea was high among 18-34 year olds, people with children at home, and respondents with incomes over \$60,000. Support diminished somewhat in respondents with lower education and lower incomes.

The final question of the survey allowed respondents to indicate what type of facilities Winnipeg is either missing, or need more of. Since only one-third of total respondents use any private or public recreation facilities, it is not surprising that a large proportion of respondents (42%) indicated 'Nothing' or 'Don't Know' to this question. Despite this anomaly, having more sports facilities (general), more swimming pools, wave pools/hot tubs, and more recreational facilities/indoor track/gym, were the most popular responses.

9.4 Demographic Focus Groups

Three focus groups were held to gather feedback on the proposed plan for delivering recreation, leisure, and library services in the City of Winnipeg. Each session began with a review of 'What We Have' for facilities, and a presentation of the vision 'What We Want'.

Three focus group sessions were held at the offices of ND LEA on March 23rd, 24th and 25th. Helen Maupin, an independent facilitator with no previous involvement on the project, facilitated the focus groups. The focus groups were selected to represent a broad cross-section of the public in a representative setting. The first focus group (March 23rd) was comprised of seniors, the second focus group (March 24th) was comprised of young adults with no children, and the third focus group (March 25th) was comprised of adults with children. At each of the focus group sessions, Helen Maupin walked the group through the ACTIVE policy framework. Carmine Militano (ND LEA) then provided an overview of the existing facilities infrastructure and the described the four new building blocks for the new vision – the Community Campus, the Urban Oasis, water play (Spray Pads) and sport pods. The members of the focus groups were asked to provide input with respect to the building blocks, their preference, and their order of priority with respect to importance and their order of priority with respect to urgency. The following is a summary of their responses.

Summary of Public Focus Group Sessions

Despite the differing demographic and socio-economic make-up of the focus groups, there were many common sentiments. They all acknowledged that change was necessary.

The Community Campus was seen by all three focus groups as the top priority both from a sense of importance and a sense of urgency. The seniors group felt most strongly that there has been a decrease in the sense of community and that inter-generational contact is necessary to restore some of that sense of community. Safety and coordination of transportation services such as handi-transit were seen as being essential to ensuring the success of the Community Campus. The ‘adults with children’ focus group was excited about the opportunity to integrate a number of service providers and stakeholders in the Community Campuses. Co-locating the sport pods, while not essential to the Community Campus concept, was seen as beneficial by this group as it would provide a recreation / leisure opportunity for parents while their children are at practice. The young adults group sensed the potential in the Community Campus but not surprisingly, didn’t feel as strong a need as the other two groups.

All three focus groups chose the enhancement of neighbourhood water play / skateboard parks as the second highest priority. The importance of having facilities that were equally accessible to all citizens was stressed. The value of summer amenities cannot be measured in time alone. These facilities are a visible sign of commitment to family recreation and leisure. The ‘young adults’ group stressed that providing youth with a sense of place at the skateboard parks would also enhance their sense of “ownership”.

All three focus groups were supportive of the Urban Oasis concept, particularly in a winter city. The ‘young adults’ focus group felt that the construction of an Urban Oasis in the inner city / Downtown would in fact be a top priority provided that it was affordable for the people in the adjoining neighbourhoods. Affordability, a commitment to Downtown, and sustainability were themes often expressed by this focus group.

The ‘adults with children’ focus group felt that parochial views by some groups could be an obstacle in implementing change. Some of the participants perceive that Community Centres are behaving in an evermore-independent manner.

All groups expressed a very strong sentiment that facilities should not be built if adequate funds are not available for ongoing maintenance.