

Wascana Pool Design Update

Date	February 12, 2020
To	Executive Committee
From	City Planning & Community Development
Service Area	Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services
Item No.	EX20-6

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Executive Committee:

Receive and file this report.

ISSUE

In response to priorities set out in the Recreation Master Plan (RMP) and the need to replace outdoor pool facilities that have reached their end of life, Council approved the renewal of Wascana Pool as part of the 2019 budget deliberations. Over the past year, Administration undertook extensive public and stakeholder consultation on the design of an outdoor aquatic facility that would meet the needs of Regina residents city-wide, increase participation rates, and enhance the park experience.

The project has reached the design concept stage. The intent of this report is to provide City Council and the public with an update on the public consultation findings (Appendix A), a summary of the public open house results (Appendix B) and an illustration of a design concept (Appendix C). The design concept will continue to evolve over the coming weeks into a detailed design and will include further consultation with the Provincial Capital Commission's Architectural Advisory Committee.

Results from public and stakeholder engagement demonstrate a wide community interest in a renewed facility and a diversity of preferences in terms of desired experience and features at the pool site. As such, the design concept has been developed to serve a broad audience allowing for several categories of aquatic services outlined in the RMP, including:

recreational swimming, skill development, fitness swimming, sport training, water orientation for toddlers, and respite from summer heat. With this broad range of amenities, the design concept also considers the seasonal nature of outdoor pools, as an aquatics amenity that is complementary to the indoor pool program, which offers year-round access. The design concept also respects the existing footprint as closely as possible, minimizes the impact on trees, and incorporates design elements that are in harmony with the architecture of Wascana Park. The inclusive change room/washroom spaces are also designed to remove barriers to families, those who experience disability, and those who do not wish to use gender identified spaces.

Highlights of the design include:

- Two separate pool basins that include a leisure pool with various recreation amenities (including a lazy river, toddler zone, water slides, and zero depth entry) and a 25-metre by 25-metre pool (including ten lanes, one- and three-metre diving boards, and climbing wall), that allows for varied water temperatures to suit the needs of different pool users. This enables flexibility to deliver various programs throughout the facility concurrently.
- A potential accessible play structure and spray pad outside of the pool fencing, allowing for an extension of unstructured use beyond normal pool hours in addition to providing potential programming space.
- A concession that can also be accessed outside of the pool space by park users.
- Pavilion style support buildings designed in harmony with the landscape and architecture that exists within the park. These buildings will feature inclusive and accessible showers, change spaces, and customer service areas.

Administration has tried to balance needs across many segments of the city's population with this design, however, Administration has heard interest from citizens who swim lanes and some sport user groups that a 50-metre rectangular pool is required to best meet their needs. Administration acknowledges that, with this design concept, a plan is required to better address the needs of these stakeholder groups into the future. This report discusses an approach to address the needs of this segment in the short and long term.

IMPACTS

Accessibility Impact

One of the recommendations of the RMP is to reduce barriers and foster inclusion throughout the recreation delivery system. The design concept developed for Wascana Pool supports this recommendation by meeting the broadest range of needs possible across many segments of the population. This approach has involved extensive public engagement to provide a facility that is accessible and inclusive throughout the facility's lifecycle.

To assist with this objective, Administration consulted the Accessibility Advisory Committee as well as other inclusion stakeholders throughout the design process. Accessibility and inclusion highlights include:

- Universal change rooms and washrooms, two of which will include accessible

- change amenities, an overhead ceiling lift and accessible shower station;
- Zero depth entry and ramps into the pool basins;
- An inventory of water wheelchairs, which will be made available to the public;
- Accessibility lifts in all pools;
- Visual and tactile markers throughout the facility, as well as other wayfinding options;
- Separate main pool basins – including a warmer leisure pool and cooler lap pool – to meet the temperature needs of various population segments;
- An accessible entrance wicket; and,
- Accessible parking.

This principle of accessibility and inclusion will extend beyond the design phase and will influence program planning and operations.

Environmental Impacts

The footprint of the design concept increases the footprint of the facility relative to the former Wascana Pool, as shown in Appendix C. Careful consideration has been made throughout the design process to minimize the impact on footprint and trees. Wherever possible, trees will be relocated. Any trees that can not be relocated will be replaced at a three to one ratio in collaboration with the Provincial Capital Commission. At this time, it is anticipated that up to 69 trees will be affected with the proposed design.

As part of the due diligence for construction in Wascana Park, an environmental assessment was completed, and no other environmental impacts were noted.

Sustainability Impacts

The new Wascana Pool facility will be designed and constructed to contemporary energy, environmental and sustainability standards. As part of the schematic design process, the project team considered sustainable strategies that would decrease the overall environmental footprint of the facility while providing the employees and public with a healthy and comfortable environment. Similar to the infrastructure elements, the next phase of design will further explore sustainability solutions to be incorporated into the facility. The following are currently known sustainable elements that will be included:

- Water Conservation
 - Pool water filtration system that reduces the amount of water consumption compared to that of a traditional pool
 - Low consumption plumbing fixtures
- Energy Conservation and Emissions Reduction
 - High-efficient pool and domestic water heating plant
 - LED lighting
 - Variable speed pool pumps
- Environmental
 - Use of low carbon footprint and low VOC construction materials
 - Waste minimization strategy during construction
 - Recycling program

Options that will be explored further in the next phase of design include:

- Water Conservation
 - Rainwater harvesting that could be used for park irrigation
 - Pool cover or surface film to reduce evaporation
- Energy Conservation and Emissions Reduction
 - Pool cover or surface film to reduce heat loss
 - Solar power generation and solar heating
- Environmental
 - Pool water disinfection systems

Financial Impact

The design concept for the pool included in this report is within the approved 2020 General Capital Budget of \$15 million. When the design process moves into the detailed design stage, Administration will begin to determine operating, maintenance and programming costs for the facility and will share information with Council through the 2021 operating budget process.

Policy Impacts

The design concept aligns with the City's RMP. The RMP states that Regina's outdoor pools do not meet the needs and expectations of residents for modern leisure aquatics and program/fitness facilities. To address this shortfall, it recommends providing a city-wide outdoor facility in Wascana Park with a variety of aquatic and non-aquatic play amenities.

OTHER OPTIONS

As discussed in the issues section of this report, Administration heard interest from lane swimmers and some sport user groups, who at the current facility comprise approximately 30 per cent of customers, that a 50-metre rectangular pool is required to best meet their needs. To respond, Administration has explored two other options, provided below. It should be noted that the analysis for these options includes a high-level concept plan rather than the more detailed concept.

Option 2 – Replace Wascana Pool with a single 50-metre pool basin with a few leisure elements incorporated into the design

This option, as depicted in figure 1 below, involves construction of a single rectangular pool, similar to what existed previously, along with a few play amenities such as a water slide tower, diving boards and a climbing wall.

Figure 1 - 50 metre pool



The following are the pros and cons of this option:

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Serves sport user groups and lane swimmers, who prefer longer distances to train for competitive events or for general leisure; - Minimizes change to existing footprint; requires approximately 5,940 sm rather than 6,400 sm for the design concept; - Impacts 63 trees (rather than 69 in the proposed design concept). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does not align with the feedback received through public engagement and previous research and engagement gathered for the RMP; - Does not provide a contemporary recreation facility with new elements that would attract a larger customer base, which is in line with the City's goal to increase participation in healthy recreation activities and to maximize the use of costly infrastructure; - Does not allow for the degree of flexibility in programming that would be achievable through two separate pool basins with differing amenities and water temperatures; - Does not allow for the broad range of accessibility features to accommodate the aging population and persons experiencing mobility disabilities.

This option is not consistent with leading practice in the recreation sector, whereby municipalities have added a broad range of contemporary leisure elements to their outdoor pools to increase participation. Examples of municipalities that have taken this approach include Lethbridge and Winnipeg, both of which have reported that participation has increased substantially as a result of the more modern facilities by providing new opportunities not currently available.

Option 3 – Expand the 25-metre pool to a 50-metre pool in the Design Concept

A third option, as illustrated in figure 2 below, would involve expanding the 25-metre pool in the design concept to a 50-metre pool, while also maintaining the leisure space. Such a design would meet the priority needs identified by the public at large and would also better address the interests of the lane swimmers and sport user groups.

Figure 2 - Leisure space + 50 metre pool



The following are the pros and cons of this option:

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Maintains the two pool basins, which:<ul style="list-style-type: none">o Provides flexibility in programming that would only be achievable through two separate pool basins with differing amenities and water temperatures;o Maintains the leisure amenities that align with the public feedback received through the RMP engagement process and the engagement specific to outdoor pools;o Provides a contemporary recreation facility with new elements that would attract a larger customer base, in line with the City's goal to increase participation in healthy recreation activities and to maximize the use of costly infrastructure;o Allows for the broad range of accessibility features to accommodate the aging population and persons with disabilities;o Serves the broadest range of need possible;- Provides a 50 m lane swimming option, which better meets the needs of lane swimmers and sport user groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Significantly expands the existing footprint, requiring approximately 8,075 sm rather than 6,400 sm for the proposed design concept;- Impacts approximately 76 trees (rather than 69 in the proposed design concept);- It is estimated to require a minimum of \$4.5M in additional capital funding and an increase to operating costs of approximately 30 per cent;- Requires an extended timeline to undertake additional consultation with the Provincial Capital Commission as well as design work to minimize the impact on the footprint and trees.

This option was not pursued by Administration because it is outside of the project scope, requiring an adjustment to timelines, footprint and budget. Instead, a longer-term, year-round solution to meet the needs of lane swimmers and sport user groups is forthcoming.

COMMUNICATIONS

Administration undertook an extensive communications and engagement plan to collect resident feedback to inform decision making in the Wascana Pool renewal project. This included a multi-touchpoint approach to engagement that focused on understanding citizen expectations for experience and features at a renewed site and the renewed site fit within the park. At each stage, input was gathered to inform the next phase of planning.

1. Market research was conducted in March 2019 to gauge community interest in and perceptions of the pool renewal. The results showed general support, with 70 per cent indicating support for a new outdoor aquatic facility in Wascana Park and 76 per cent indicating they are likely to use a renewed facility.

2. An online survey was conducted in June 2019 to identify residents' expectations for a renewed facility, specifically related to their expected experience at the pool and fit within the park. Approximately 4,200 residents responded to the survey. Respondents showed a great interest in the renewed pool with 91 per cent indicating they would visit the renewed facility. Results demonstrated an interest in a broader, more diverse experience at the pool that includes expanded green space and more water features focused on family. The consultant also held stakeholder engagement sessions with aquatic and accessibility groups to gather their feedback on the pool renewal.
3. In November 2019, public feedback was again gathered online and at an open house to solicit resident preferences for pool basin design and expectations for likelihood to use specific features. Over 5,300 residents responded to the survey, which includes 94 respondents who completed the survey at the open house. Findings from this engagement confirmed broad community interest and a range of preferences for experiences and features at the pool. While the vast majority of respondents favour a multi-use pool, some current user groups have a strong preference for a site that focuses on lane swimming.

To ensure that residents were aware of the engagement opportunity and that feedback was received from a diversity of voices, a variety of marketing and communications tactics were used to reach a broad range of resident perspectives, including:

June 2019 Engagement

- Online advertising campaign
- 300 posters throughout the city—including City facilities
- Advertisement in Eagle Feather News
- Public service announcement to all local media outlets
- Posts on City of Regina social media channels and promotion on Regina.ca
- Email to stakeholder organizations
- Email to residents who had signed up for Wascana Pool renewal updates

November Engagement

- Online advertising campaign
- Poster boards in all three major recreation facilities and at City Hall
- On site digital surveys at major recreation facilities
- Advertisement in Eagle Feather News
- Public service announcement to all local media outlets regarding online survey and open house
- Posts to City of Regina social media channels and on Regina.ca
- Email to stakeholder organizations
- Email to residents who had signed up for Wascana Pool renewal regarding online survey and open house

Interest in a renewed facility remains strong across the broader community, as demonstrated in the high participation rates in engagement opportunities.

Project updates, including reports on engagement results, are provided by email to stakeholders and residents who have indicated an interest in the renewal project, and to the public on Regina.ca and through City social media channels.

DISCUSSION

Background

Since the 1950s, the City of Regina has offered an outdoor pool program that provides residents with an opportunity to participate in healthy outdoor recreation activities. In many communities, these facilities have become welcoming community hubs, where citizens gather to socialize with their neighbours, while also finding respite from the summer heat. The program includes five outdoor pools, which have served the community well beyond their original anticipated lifespan.

Due to the age of the outdoor pool infrastructure, in 2014, Administration reported to Council on the condition of the pools, seeking direction on the future of the outdoor pool program. After considering various options, and in response to public interest in keeping all outdoor pools open, Council decided that the future of the outdoor pool program would be informed by a refresh of the RMP. The purpose of this approach was to enable Council to make an informed decision on the future of outdoor pools in the context of all the investments required to support a broader range of recreation services as determined by citizen-based priorities.

Development of the RMP, which was approved by Council in 2019, included an extensive jurisdictional review and consultation process. The RMP confirmed that outdoor pools are a highly valued recreation amenity in Regina. However, the research also revealed that residents desire a more contemporary experience that provides a broader range of features – such as slides, a lazy river and spray toys - typically available in newer publicly owned pools across Canada. Therefore, the RMP recommended that the City focus on rebuilding Wascana Pool as a centrally located, easily accessed, city-wide facility, featuring a variety of contemporary amenities that serves all age groups. This recommendation is also consistent with the Wascana Centre's Master Plan, which speaks to the Wascana Pool and its surrounding area as an important recreation hub. A key principle of the Wascana Master Plan involves enhancement of recreation opportunities.

Subsequently, through the 2019 budget process, Council approved a multi-year capital project to design and construct a renewed Wascana Pool, consistent with the recommendations of the RMP. The Provincial Capital Commission has been engaged throughout the process.

Public Engagement Research Results

As detailed above in the Communications section, Administration initiated a multi-phase engagement process that solicited input from the general public and stakeholders, with a goal of acquiring a broad input from generations of current and future pool users. Public engagement findings demonstrate a broad community interest in a renewed facility and a diversity in preferences for experiences and features at the facility. This is consistent with what was heard through the engagement on the RMP.

The most recent engagement focused on pool basin design. This engagement included an online survey as well as an open house. More than 5,300 residents responded to this survey, including 94 who attended the open house. Highlights include:

- The majority of respondents (53 per cent) indicated a preference for a separate lane pool and leisure pool;
- Survey respondents identified they are most likely to use a hot tub (78 per cent), lazy river (76 per cent) and water slides (73 per cent);
- Thrill features (such as climbing walls and zip lines) and lane swimming rated at 61 per cent and 53 per cent respectively;
- When asked whether there were any other comments, 14 per cent of respondents commented on the desire for a 50-metre rectangular pool for lane swimming; and,
- Others mentioned the need to incorporate shade, seating and a concession in the new design, as well as the need for the City to build an indoor pool that could be used year-round.

The public open house on November 12, 2019, provided residents with an in-person opportunity to give feedback in the same format as the online survey. Approximately 94 residents attended the open house and indicated a stronger preference for a separate lane and leisure pool (71 per cent) and strongly favoured lane swimming (92 per cent) as their preferred feature.

Plans to Address Lane Swimming Needs

In order to balance the diverse interests and expectations heard through the engagement process, Administration and its consulting team have developed a design concept for Wascana Pool that includes both a 25-metre ten lane pool, as well as a leisure pool. These two pools allow for varied water temperatures that suit the needs of different pool users, enabling Administration to deliver various programs throughout the facility concurrently. Administration is confident that this design meets the broadest range of needs possible while minimizing any change from the existing footprint of the former Wascana Pool.

Administration acknowledges that this approach does not fully address the needs expressed by lane swimmers and some sport user groups. Some citizens have suggested that Administration's design takes away a former service that provided capacity to train for 50-metre competitive events. It should be noted that the former Wascana Pool was not

designed as a competitive facility. It was 42.7-metres in length, and it is only within the last decade that the pool was made available with painted lanes and ropes for swimming the 42.7-metre distance. The proposed design concept balances needs by allowing for diverse programming that meets the broadest range of community interest and also provides the most opportunities from an accessibility and inclusion perspective. However, Administration also acknowledges that a plan is required to better address the needs of lane swimmers and sport user groups into the future and is proposing both short- and long-term plans to address their interests.

a) Short Term

Administration has completed a preliminary review of opportunities for lane swimming to be provided in other aquatics facilities, both indoor and outdoor. Based on the initial analysis, lane swimming opportunities will be increased at pools throughout the city. Administration will modify programming at the remaining outdoor pools as well as the Lawson Aquatic Centre to allow for additional lane swimming. Public swim times will be adjusted at Regent and Massey Pools, and shutdown periods will be significantly reduced for indoor pools in 2020, to reduce the impact for the 2020 season. Administration will also work with aquatics groups in the lead up to the summer to adjust schedules to accommodate the 2020 season.

When Wascana Pool reopens, Administration plans to continue the program changes at some pools, such as the Lawson Aquatic Centre. This will allow for an overall increase in the number of lane hours available for both 25-metre and 50-metre lane swimming.

b) Long Term

Administration is recommending that the need for additional 50-metre lane swimming opportunities be addressed through the proposed indoor aquatics facility that is identified as a top priority in the RMP. This approach creates an opportunity for customers to access the additional pool capacity on a year-round basis, rather than during the short outdoor season, which maximizes the investment's benefit to the community.

Currently, the City's five-year capital plan includes funding in 2024 for a feasibility study regarding a new indoor aquatic facility. With the recent passing of a 0.5 per cent dedicated mill rate for recreation, Administration will adjust the timing of the study to be initiated in 2021. It is anticipated that the study could be started in 2021 and completed in 2022. The study will include a proposed timeline and financing plan.

DECISION HISTORY

On December 11, 2018 City Council approved the multi-year General Capital Budget which included the rebuild of Wascana Pool. (*CM 18-15 - 2019 General and Utility Operating Budget and 2019 - 2023 General and Utility Capital Plan*)

The recommendation in this report is within the delegated authority of Executive Committee.

Respectfully Submitted,



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Respectfully Submitted,



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ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A - Wascana Pool Renewal Public Engagement Report (November 22 2019)
Appendix B - Public Open House Results
Appendix C - Design Concept