

Accessibility Working Group (AWG)
Preliminary Consultation Report
Re: Crystal Pool and Wellness Centre Replacement Project

March 25, 2018

This report is the result of the AWG's March 5, 2018 meeting with Thomas Soulliere, Director of Parks, Recreation and Facilities, Navdeep Sidhu, Assistant Director of Parks, Recreation and Facilities, Adam Fawkes, Associate Architect, HCMA Architecture + Design, Zubin Shroff, Architect, HCMA Architecture + Design and Doug Nutting, Executive Director Recreation Integration Victoria.

The goal of this consultation was to give feedback on the conceptual design for the Crystal Pool rebuild. As an accessible description of the conceptual design was not provided prior to the meeting, much of the meeting time was taken up in describing the drawings for those who could not see them.

Recommendation 1: Going forward, the Project should ensure information and engagement accessibility, so that members of the public with disabilities can comment individually and that information can be readily shared within specific disability communities. A written description should be made available electronically and accompany all on-line drawings.

It is apparent to the AWG that decisions that potentially affect accessibility for persons with disabilities may occur at all stages of the project: conceptual design; materials used to finish floors, walls, ceilings etc.; colour schemes; furnishings such as counters; fittings and equipment; policies; staff a training; and public awareness. At the one hour March 5 meeting the AWG was only able to raise some of its initial concerns regarding the project as a whole and the conceptual design in particular. As a result, the AWG has concluded that on-going consultation will be necessary if the project's principles of "barrier-free" and "inclusive" are to be truly reflected in the facility design and operations.

The AWG is not just another stakeholder on par with members of the general public. It has a mandated responsibility for identifying barriers and solutions. Thus, its involvement should be an important on-going part of the City's undertakings to make the facility barrier-free.

The Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification™ (RHFAC) assesses for physical barriers in the built environment and addresses the needs of those with mobility, vision and hearing challenges. It is AWG's role to view the overall accessibility of the facility and speak for those persons with less known or understood disabilities not addressed by the RHFAC as well as address barriers which can arise from policies and procedures.

Recommendation 2: To ensure that AWG feedback can be incorporated effectively the AWG recommends that the project staff:

- **Consult the AWG at all stages of the project in a timely manner;**

- **Inform AWG of the project recommendations (including an explanation as to why an AWG recommendation is not being incorporated) prior to presenting them to Council, enabling AWG to provide further information; and,**
- **Report all of AWG's recommendations to Council including those which are not being recommended by the project.**

At the March 5 meeting, the presenters were asked to list the disability groups which had been consulted to date and the accessibility concerns they raised. The answer was quite general and no written documentation was presented. At this point, the AWG is not able to validate the project's accessibility claims, due to lack of information about accessibility analysis and measures. We feel a written analysis is necessary for the project to be able to substantiate its claims of a fully-accessible, inclusive, barrier-free facility. At this point, we have insufficient information to allow us to accept such statements. Before we meet again, we would appreciate receiving a document that sets out major categories of disabilities considered and explains what features the design has for each.

Recommendation 3: That the Project undertakes a comprehensive accessibility study (if not already undertaken) of research and consultation to look at potential barriers and *mitigations for a wide variety of disabilities* and provide documentation of this study so that those affected can comment.

In the spring of 2017 the AWG and the City undertook an accessibility survey to determine barriers which currently exist for persons with disabilities accessing City facilities including Crystal Pool. This survey has not yet been fully analyzed or reported as no City resources are available to do so. The AWG has not undertaken this analysis due to privacy concerns.

Recommendation 4: That the Project access information in the results of the Accessibility Survey in a privacy-protecting way.

To date there has been no mention, with regards to the project in general or the conceptual plans in particular, about making this facility one that is inclusive of employees with disabilities. There was no mention at the March 5 meeting about staff areas of the new facility. It sends a powerful message to users if they learn that potential staff with disabilities have been taken into consideration. Further, potential federal government funding sources may look for accessible employment opportunities from applicants.

Recommendation 5: That the project:

- **consider the needs of staff with disabilities when designing the staff-only areas of the facility;**
- **Document staff with disabilities considerations at all stages of the project; and,**
- **Research government funding which may be available for facilities promoting employment of persons with disabilities.**

The following concerns/potential barriers and recommendations/solutions stem directly from the discussions at the March 5 meeting.

Concern/Potential Barrier: Lack of privacy due to glass walls adjacent to the pool and fitness area. Persons with disabilities may have different body features or do things in a different way that draws

attention, and therefore generally do not wish to be watched when exercising or swimming and may choose not to use the facility if not addressed. The project may find that other vulnerable groups such as women escaping violence are similarly affected.

Recommendation/Possible Solutions:

- 1. Use frosted glass (at least for bottom part of the window) which will promote natural light but not spectators.**
- 2. Install blinds/window coverings which can be closed during specified times or activities.**
- 3. Install one-way glass in areas where the view from within is desired.**
- 4. Include some opaque walled exercise areas**

Concern/Potential Barrier: Glass walls creating glare and hazard for persons with low vision. If the environment limits an individual's ability to navigate independently, safely and comfortably they may choose not to visit the facility.

Recommendations/Potential Solutions:

- 1. Where glass is to be used, use tinted or no-glare glass.**
- 2. Use decals to help distinguish where glass is located.**
- 3. Employ tactile warnings such as truncated domes for hazards such as glass walls.**

Concern/Potential Barrier: Way finding is not just about text and picture signage. For persons with vision challenges, way finding must include both visual and non-visual cues and promote maximum independence.

Recommendations/Potential Solutions:

- 1. Delineate the pathway to a particular area using specific floor finishings which can be easily detected under foot or by a white cane.**
- 2. Use changes in floor texture to indicate thresholds.**
- 3. Choose colour schemes with a theme (e.g. all men's change room doors painted blue, Womens painted pink or red and universal painted yellow).**
- 4. Ensure all signage on doors has both contrasting raised print and Braille.**
- 5. Install iBeacons or other similar technology**

Concern/Potential Barrier: Décor such as striped walls/ceilings may set off an episode for persons with epilepsy or autism. Current conceptual design drawing indicates a hanging valance on overhang over a walkway with a repeating vertical stripe which could set off a rhythmic flashing as people walk past.

Recommendation/Potential Solution:

- 1. Use solid (unbusy) décor**
- 2. Choose colour schemes which are known to be soothing.**
- 3. Balance need for contrast for those with low vision with needs of those with autism/epilepsy**

Concern/Potential Barrier: Large open lobby area. Large open noisy areas can be problematic and disorienting for persons with autism and behavioral or mental health challenges as well as for those who rely on their hearing to navigate. They also increase the risk of persons with environmental disabilities and food allergies to exposure to allergens from food and those allergens brought in by other patrons such as scents and pet dander.

Recommendations/Potential Solutions:

1. **Wall off the public open area from the access from the entrance to the control admission area.**
2. **Install an additional entrance which avoids the need to encounter the lobby area or reduces exposure.**
3. **Implement design solutions to physically separate the food consumption area from other areas, and hand wash stations at the exit.**
4. **Install noise dampening features.**

Concern/Potential Barrier: Smaller change rooms.

Recommendation/Potential Solutions: Have been addressed as it was explained that the universal change rooms can be used by anyone and that the total change room area is in fact larger than the existing facility.

1. **Public education as to the use of the universal changing facilities.**

Concern/Potential Barrier: Pool temperature. Water which is too cold can cause spasms for some persons with spinal cord injuries and other disabilities.

Recommendation/Potential Solutions: Have already been addressed as leisure/therapy pool will be warmer than the existing pool and the project is considering installing two hot tubs which will be set at different temperatures.

1. **Install two hot tubs set at different temperatures, both with ramp access and ensure that the differences are communicated in accessible ways.**

Concerns/Potential Barriers: If food is to be sold/encouraged, those with food allergies will be at risk and may choose to avoid the facility in order to stay safe. Some potential solutions will also benefit people who are immunocompromised because they will not only stem the spread of allergens but also pathogens. Hand washing will also decrease the need for hand sanitizer, which introduces contaminants into the air, helping those with environmental sensitivities and scent allergies.

Recommendations/Potential Solutions:

1. **Introduce design solutions such as a pony wall to delineate an approved food consumption area, with a hand wash station with paper towel for wiping tables at the exit.**
2. **Because compliance with any food-related restrictions can be expected to be low, install hand wash stations outside washrooms and throughout the building (may be cost-effective to add adjacent to water fill stations).**
3. **Further policies will be required.**
4. **Ensure that surfaces in common areas are readily cleaned of food traces. That applies to any soft seating – although hard seating such as molded plastic is preferable.**
5. **Ensure that very smooth, easily cleaned surfaces are used on surfaces people commonly touch, so they are readily cleaned.**
6. **Introduce as many touchless features as possible, so that doors can be opened, taps and soap can be accessed, lockers can be swiped, etc., without picking up allergens and contaminants. Large slide-locks on bathroom doors that can be operated by the heel of the hand or elbows will help a variety of people avoid contaminants and also those with arthritis.**

Concern/Potential Barrier: Counter height shown in conceptual drawings all at one height.

Recommendations/Potential Solution:

- 1. Install one lower counter or portion of counter at lower height and ensure that it has full functionality, such as a til or computer.**
- 2. ensure that counter spaces in dressing rooms are also installed at various heights**

Concern/Potential Barrier: Amount of chlorine needed and chloramine gas produced when chlorine mixes with urine, creating a barrier for those with various lung conditions, asthma and environmental allergies and exacerbating eczema and other skin conditions. Note: exposure to chlorine is known to cause allergies in children.

Recommendations/Potential Solutions: Have partially addressed this with ventilation and UV filtration but additional measures can be taken to encourage swimmers to use the washroom rather than the pool to relieve themselves.

- 1. Install washrooms which can be accessed directly from the pool deck.**
- 2. In installing the water surface ventilation, ensure that it does not chill people using the pool so that their muscles seize up**
- 3. Research and brainstorm additional design features which will help to keep the pool clean, such as foot baths (with accessible by-passes) and walk-through showers.**