

# Renewal of Britannia Community Services Centre Pertinent Content from Background Documents

October, 2014 by Jim LeMaistre

## “Aquatic Services Review”, November 2001 and “2011 Pool Assessment Study”, Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation

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As can be seen by the date of the first report (2001), much of its content has been superseded by events since its writing. An update report, entitled “2011 Pool Assessment Study” was completed in 2011 and its pertinent content is summarized separately below.

### First report : “Aquatic Services Review”, November 2001

“Executive Summary (pp. 2 – 4)

#### **Objective**

“In July 2000 Roger **Hughes + Partners** Architects, in conjunction with **PERC** and a full team of engineers, were charged with developing an imaginative and comprehensive 10-15 year strategy to reconfigure the Park Board’s aquatic services and facilities to meet current and future local and city-wide needs in a cost-effective and fiscally sustainable manner.

#### **“Public Survey**

“The Consultants conducted a random **public mail-out survey** in January 2001 which indicated, with notable consistency across demographics, that:

- two thirds of the 309 respondents use swimming pools, primarily for recreation, fitness and learn-to-swim lessons
- more than half the respondents cited the need for new or improved swimming pools in Vancouver
- more than half the respondents were willing to support some level of tax increase for swimming pools
- **there was strong agreement that everyone benefits from public swimming and that pools are essential to the quality of life in Vancouver**

#### **“Facilities Assessment**

“The consultant team in concert with Park Board staff assessed, on a comparative basis, the condition of the major existing indoor and outdoor pool facilities. The indoor facilities, averaging 32 years in age, were found to be in varying condition but as a body were assessed to be **reaching the end of their useful lifespan in the next 10 years**. Structurally, 3 of 9 were scored “high priority” on the NRC seismic priority index. **Facilities were ranked according to their overall condition and the urgency of their need for attention** as follows:

- **Percy Norman (most urgent)**
- Killarney
- Renfrew
- VAC
- Kerrisdale
- **Britannia**
- Kensington
- Lord Byng
- **Templeton (least urgent)**

“The major outdoor facilities, with significantly less infrastructure, were assessed to be in better overall condition.

“**System Issues** Among key System Issues affecting the delivery of aquatic services are:

- total **system usage**, currently around 1,400,000 swims per year, although theoretical *capacity* including maximum use of off-peak time could be up to 2,000,000 swims
- **operating costs**, with the recovery rate for indoor pools at about 44%, average cost per swim at \$4.57, revenue at \$2.10 and net public subsidy at \$2.47.
- these subsidy and recovery rates are significantly poorer than in surrounding communities that have invested in new aquatic complexes

“**Functionality Issues** shaping newer facilities and working to limit the practical lifespan of aquatics facilities, including **Accessibility, Health Issues, Flexibility, Regulation Standards, Play Features, and Sustainability**

“**Enhancement Strategies**

“Service Enhancement Strategies were based on the description of an optimal service profile stemming from public survey input, proposing:

- the development of **recreational swimming in a centralized model**
- the maintenance of **basic lessons, fitness and training swimming in a decentralized (neighbourhood) model** correlating generally with the current distribution of facilities in Vancouver
- **an increase of 70% in pool usage over the next 10 years** (current usage 1,400,000 swims per year plus 700,000 for latent demand/swimmers returning to the system plus 300,000 for population growth equals target usage of 2,400,000) this increase represents a change from the current 2.5 swims per capita per year to approximately 4 swims per capita per year, in line with the low end of the range for Western Canadian centres.

“**Public Display of Options**

“Based on the Service Enhancement Strategies and some basic limiting Assumptions, the team generated a **series of schematic Options for reconfiguring Vancouver’s Aquatic System**. The Options ranged from de-centralized to centralized systems, complete with comparative data on uses, costs, and capacity. The Options were presented to the two staffed public displays in popular central shopping malls, and subsequently at displays and staffed Open Houses in eight Park Board facilities. Public comments on preferences were solicited, recorded and tabulated. The results showed, again with remarkable consistency:

- **overwhelming support for doing something substantial** in the way of reinvestment in different swimming pools
- **Options 2 and 4 were by far the preferred options**, regardless of display location and demographics of respondents
- **there is public support for the idea of at least one large, multi-purpose aquatic centre** in addition to a number of neighbourhood pools distributed around the city.

“**Recommendations**

“The consultant team recommends:

- **substantial reinvestment in the aquatic system immediately and continuing over the next ten years** (in the order of \$26 to \$28 million initially, \$50 to \$52 million total)
- **providing capacity for up to 2.4 million swims per year**, prioritizing recreational swimming, and optimizing fitness swimming (lanes), swim lessons, therapeutic swimming, swim club training and other rentals.

- a **combination of neighbourhood, community, and city-wide facilities**, such that the majority of Vancouver residents will live within about 2-3 km of a public indoor pool
- **implementation in two or more phases starting now** and continuing intensively over the next ten years.

### ***“Implementation***

“The preceding recommendations can best be implemented in two phases **based on the urgency of need of the existing aquatic facilities**, and based on combining facility types to achieve maximum initial public impact and valuable usership statistics relevant to subsequent development.

#### **Phase 1 (immediate):**

- *Percy Norman Redeveloped as a City-Wide Pool*
- *Killarney Redeveloped as a Community Pool*
- *Renfrew Redeveloped as a Neighbourhood Pool*

#### **“Assessment:**

“Once the Phase I facilities are operational, study user data to determine if Phase 1 is working in practice, and use projections are confirmed or exceeded, then proceed with:

#### **“Phase 2 (completed within the next 10 years)**

- *VAC Redeveloped as a Community Pool*
- *Kerrisdale Redeveloped as a Neighbourhood Pool*
- *Lord Byng Redeveloped as a Neighbourhood Pool*
- *Templeton Redeveloped as a Neighbourhood Pool*

“The City could choose to close Britannia and/or Kensington as surplus capacity or continue their operation. We recommend that the decision on these two facilities be deferred until the Assessment of Phase 1 operations, at which point usage figures will provide further direction.

#### ***“Competition Facility***

“The need for quality regulation training accommodation for swim clubs is a priority.

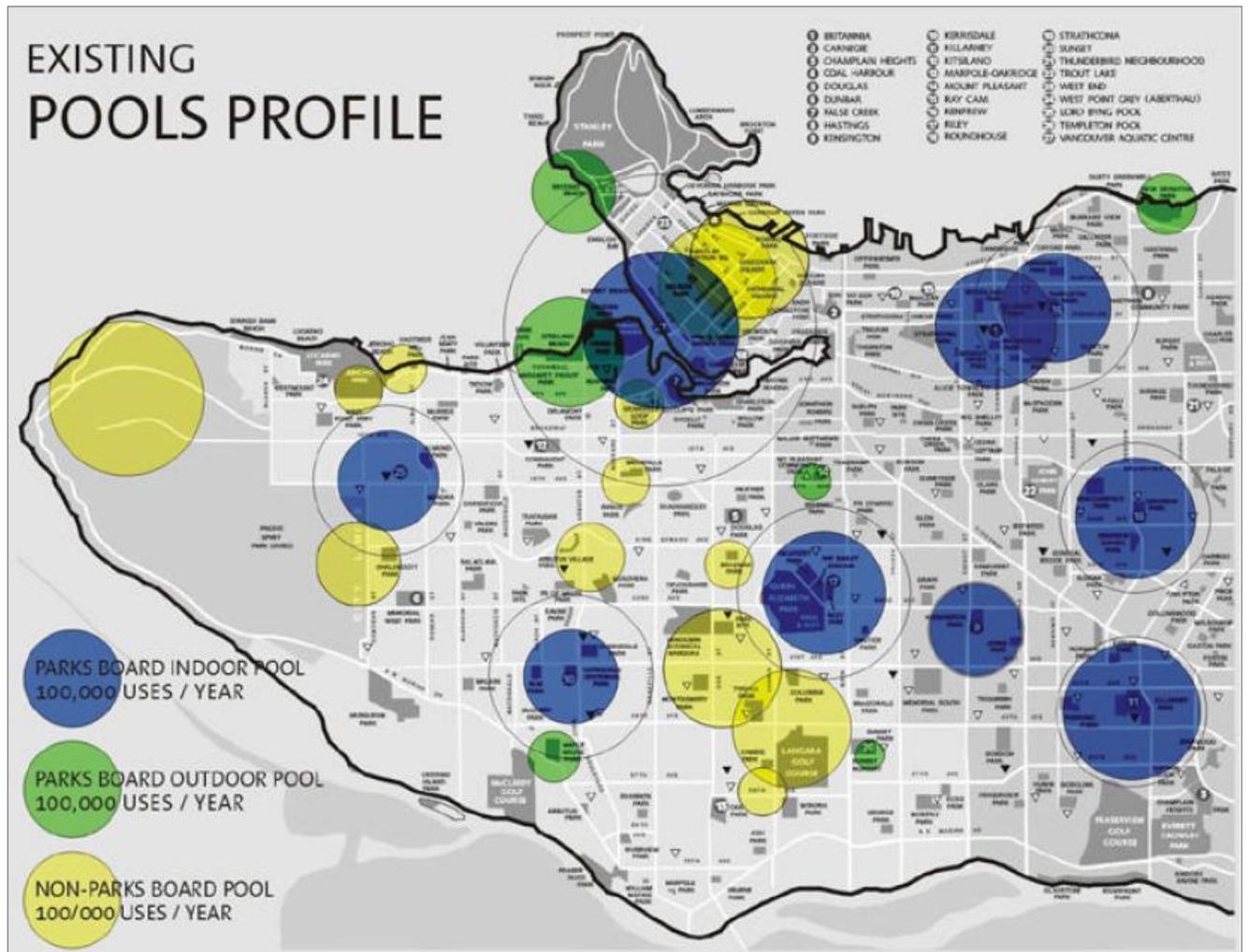
The need for a high level competition facility is debatable, given the number of competition facilities in the Lower Mainland and the Province which now compete to bring major events into BC.

The team recommends that **quality training provisions for swim clubs, to appropriate regulation standards**, be incorporated into all new or retrofit projects. The team further recommends that the Park Board not attempt to compete with the surrounding communities and Vancouver Island for the highest level of competitive events. Instead, **the major competitions should be left to existing or planned competition pools in the region and the province.**

#### ***“Outdoor Pools***

“**The existing major outdoor pools** (Kitsilano, Second Beach, New Brighton and Maple Grove) **should be maintained for long term operation.** Mount Pleasant and Sunset outdoor pools should be closed as they wear out and as new indoor/outdoor opportunities are developed to replace them. No new stand-alone outdoor pools should be developed.”

END of Executive Summary



Pools in 2001 (p. 23)

(following text is from pp. 34 – 37)

### “Functionality Issues

Vancouver’s pools reflect the era of their construction in terms of the policies and attitudes governing aquatics facilities. Newer facilities have been shaped by more current approaches, and pool users and owners are drawn to facilities featuring many recent developments, including:

### “Accessibility

- barrier-free access to buildings, washrooms and changing facilities, including accommodation for patrons using wheelchairs, with or without attendants, and also for patrons using gurneys, scooters or other specialized equipment
- zero-beach areas and entries to recreational tanks, especially important to the very young and their caregivers
- ramps and lifts for barrier-free access to recreational, fitness, and therapeutic tanks
- old style recessed wall gutters make access for the very young and old and people with disabilities difficult

### **“Family Changerooms**

- this significant development, adopted across the board in newer aquatic facilities, did not exist at the time Vancouver’s pools were built
- family changerooms accommodate the full range of patron groups, including parents with young children of the opposite sex, parents or caregivers with infants or toddlers, and people with disabilities
- a high priority in retrofitting existing pools – some facilities such as Templeton, in recognition of the demand, have installed provisional family change rooms in other available spaces

### **“Health Regulations**

- BC’s Health Act is out of date and is scheduled for re-issue
- although most of Vancouver’s pools conform to the requirements of the Health Act, current good practice, especially regarding turn-over rates, exceeds the requirements of the Act
- some of the older pools may not satisfy an updated Health Act
- the Act currently requires constant skimming at gutters, which is not satisfied by gutters which are constantly flooded

### **“Health and Wellness**

- an aging population bulge has placed new emphasis on programs such as Aquafit and on therapeutic use of pools
- such programs and uses come with specialized requirements for pool depth, water temperature, and access

### **“Alternative Disinfection**

- alternatives such as ozone which reduce chlorine levels are becoming more popular
- increasing awareness of health issues and an increasing number of chemical sensitivities reduce chlorine’s attractiveness to the public, while intensive pool use, especially by young children, continues to demand vigilant disinfection

### **“Multi-Use**

- patrons are increasingly drawn to facilities where different activities – often in different tanks – are offered simultaneously
- the combination of adults length swimming or fitness room activities with children’s lessons or recreational swimming is particularly popular
- also true to some extent for pool facilities combined with other cultural/recreational facilities

### **“Flexibility**

- new emerging or newly-popularized watersports (synchronized swimming, synchronized diving, water polo, aquafit, kayaking, scuba diving, babies programs, etc.) stretch the limits of what older facilities can accommodate
- newer facilities in their layout, sizing, technical systems and storage provisions more often have the flexibility to accommodate the full range of activities

### **“Regulation Standards**

- Regulation Standards (FINA, Swim Canada etc.) for competitive sport are constantly evolving
- pools conforming to current standards are important not only for competition but for regular swim club training (which comprises many more swims)
- most of the regulation standards are relatively easy to incorporate into new facilities but arduous to retrofit into existing ones

### **“Sustainability**

- at the time when most of Vancouver’s pool were built, energy efficiency was a minor consideration and single wythe concrete block walls and single glazing were the norm
- the City is likely to adopt the provincial version of the LEEDS guidelines to conserve resources and reduce energy costs; this will be an economically sound program involving payback
- current practice stresses sustainability as the norm, the same standards are hard to attain in existing buildings without significant intervention

### **“Guarding**

- until recently health regulations and staffing policies favoured fixed lifeguard stations
- current policies promote roving guards conducting checks on different areas at fixed intervals, and are more conducive to free-flowing spatial arrangements (although roving guards increase the cost of supervision)

### **“Play Features**

- the availability of fun and safe pool play features, including water slides, continues to increase
- such features are big draws for families with children, who will extend their travel time to “destination” facilities with water slides, wave pools, and interactive play features
- the nature of play features requiring piping, power, grounding, shallow water and additional space makes them difficult to retrofit in existing facilities; although some newer child-powered features are the exceptions

### **“Daylighting**

- staff who have been in the system since the sixties will confirm that the prevailing opinion through the seventies was that significant areas of window openings or glazed walls would create glare off the water and interfere with lifeguarding
- the resulting bunker-like building type is not appealing to current sensibilities, nor does it allow passers-by a vision of the life inside the buildings
- the popular success of recent projects such as Eileen Dailly in Burnaby and Walnut Grove in Langley is in part due to the combination of thermally efficient glazing technology, north-facing glazing, and park-like settings with open views; the bright daylit spaces and display of life is more attractive than preceding blank walls
- in associated categories, “green” building technology including aspects such as natural ventilation is rapidly gaining popularity among facility users and owners

### **“Programming Trends**

Discussions with Vancouver aquatics staff and review of usage data confirm that there is currently more demand than available capacity in the areas of:

- recreational swimming (existing pools don’t lend themselves to recreational swimming in relation to expectations set in new facilities in surrounding communities)
- fitness swimming (demand for adult lane swimming is growing)
- swim lessons (even though usage data shows a decline, there are waiting lists during “peak” times)
- rentals to groups (swim clubs and other renters want more time than they can get during “peak” hours)
- therapeutic uses (rehabilitation, specialized programs, warm water activities are in high and growing demand)

“The above categories are listed in priority order with the first on the list having much more demand than supply in terms of number of swims. For example, because swim clubs only constitute five percent of all swims at present, even an increase of 20% of time allotted to them represents only a one percent

increase in the total number of swims. On the other hand, recreational swims in Vancouver are quite low on a per capita basis with very significant potential to “grow” this category if the proper facilities are provided.”

(pp. 39 – 40)

### **“Re-distribution of Services**

“The issue of distribution of services is tied to the issue of centralization vs decentralization, ..... In a centralized model (1 to 4 facilities city-wide), central locations, remote from each other and accessible by car and transit are required. In a decentralized model (5 to 10 facilities city-wide), a good spread of locations related to neighbourhood infrastructure is required. The current distribution of facilities, not co-incidentally, is a good example of a decentralized system. The **anomalies are the Templeton / Britannia proximity**, and possibly Kensington’s location in the midst of other facilities. The south slope area, between Oak and Main south of 49th, does not have any City pools however the YMCA pool at Langara College serves for basic public swimming and a new facility might duplicate services.

“Generally denser areas are served by more facilities, and generally facilities are located within 2-3 km of all parts of the City (a half-hour walk, 15 minute cycle, or 6 minute drive). The team did not see the need for significant re-distribution of services, unless a centralized model for all services is indicated. Further, a review of all potential sites with the Park Board concluded, again not coincidentally, that pool facilities already occupied most of the preferred sites (preferred in terms of size, transit and vehicular access, visibility, and convergence with other types of facilities). Above and beyond the current distribution, future implementation strategies might address the need for facilities in areas subject to development or densification. Implicit in the development of new facilities on non-pool sites are the issues of pool closures and/or surplus capacity.

“The locations of the 3 major seaside outdoor pools describe a centralized model, as per the service profile, skewed by the availability of suitable (seaside) waterfront, with one western, one central, and one eastern facility.”

### **Reconfiguration Options** (p. 41)

#### **“Assumptions “A Vision for the Future”**

In order to envision real Options for the future of Vancouver’s Swimming Pools, the following Assumptions have been made:

- **The City of Vancouver will continue to provide Aquatic Services**
- **Vancouver’s major outdoor pools will be retained as a valuable feature unique to the city**

Outdoor swimming represents 16% of Public Pool usage in Vancouver

The major outdoor pools – Kitsilano, Second Beach, New Brighton and Maple Grove – are popular, viable operations that will continue to provide a pleasurable summer swimming experience

Two secondary outdoor pools – Mount Pleasant and Sunset – are in poor condition and will be phased out within 5 – 10 years

- **The provision of Aquatic Services will be based on surveyed public demand and usership trends, specifically:**

#### **Indoor Fun / Recreational swims will be *Centralized* (1 to 4 facilities citywide)**

This category represents 52% of public pool usage in Vancouver

Survey information indicates that people will travel farther for a special recreational swimming experience

#### **Indoor Skills Development, Fitness / Health / Wellness, and Training swims will be**

**Decentralized (7 to 10 facilities citywide)**

These categories represent 47% of public pool usage in Vancouver  
Lessons, classes, therapy, lane swimming and training will continue to be available on a neighbourhood basis

- **The ability to host competition events could be incorporated into any of the future**

**Options**

- **Reconfiguration Options will represent a total system capacity of 2,000,000 to 2,500,000 indoor swims per year**

The initial increase will fulfill the latent demand for aquatic services seen in public survey results, including swimmers currently using services outside Vancouver. This capacity will initially accommodate 40% (15% latent, 15% from other facilities, and 10% at least for population growth over 10 – 15 years) more than the current system usage of 1,400,000 indoor swims per year.”

**“Building Blocks for the Future”** (p. 42)

The “Building Blocks” of a reconfigured indoor Aquatic System, as illustrated on the Reconfiguration Options, are:

**"A" Renovated Neighbourhood Pool**

renovated existing facility  
single rectangular tank  
200,000 swims per year  
approximate Capital Cost \$1.5 to 5 million\*

**NEIGHBOURHOOD POOL**

**"B" Upgraded and Expanded Neighbourhood Pool**

expanded existing facility  
larger rectangular tank  
additional leisure tank  
additional “specialty”  
(such as therapy, diving, longer length or outdoor swimming)  
400,000 swims per year  
approximate Capital Cost \$6 to 9 million\*

**COMMUNITY POOL**

**"C" New Multi-Purpose Aquatic Centre**

New multi-purpose “destination” facility  
large rectangular tank  
additional large leisure tank with play features  
additional small therapy or other tank  
additional space for dry land instruction, massage, physio, fitness  
special features (water slide, shallow entry, deckside café)  
750,000 swims per year  
approximate Capital Cost \$12 to 14 million\*

**CITY-WIDE POOL**

“\*including hard costs and consulting but not DSC’s, staff time and other project soft costs; the low end of the scale for A and B facilities represents a maintenance option rather than a full rebuild”

**“What we have now** (i.e., in 2001) (From p. 45)

- The City operates: 9 indoor pools and 6 outdoor pools.
- Average age of pools is 32 years; the last new indoor facility was built in 1979.
- Facilities do not comply with current codes for earthquake safety or current health requirements for new buildings.
- Of 1,360,000 indoor swims per year:
  - 52% are recreational,
  - 26% are skills development,
  - 16% are fitness/ wellness,
  - 1% are competition events.
- The system is subsidized at \$3,150,000 per year or \$2.54 per indoor swim.”

**Reconfiguration Option 2** (from p. 49)

- ONE new multi-purpose aquatic centre (785,000 swims/year)
- 8 renovated neighbourhood pools (200,000 swims/year each)
- ONE indoor neighbourhood pool closed
- 9 indoor facilities total
- Travel distance to nearest facility maximum 3 km
- Capacity (swims per year) = 2,400,000
- Capital cost = \$45 M
- Operating cost = \$3.6 M
- Subsidy per swim = \$2.00

**Reconfiguration Option 4** (from page 51)

- ONE new multi-purpose aquatic centre (750,000 swims/year)
- 2 upgraded and expanded neighbourhood pools (400,000 swims/year each)
- 4 renovated neighbourhood pools (200,000 swims/year each)
- 3 neighbourhood pools closed
- 7 indoor facilities total
- Travel distance to nearest facility 3-4 km
- Capacity (swims per year) = 2,400,000
- Capital cost = \$44 M
- Operating cost = \$3.2 M
- Subsidy/swim = \$1.75

**Recommendation** (p. 60)

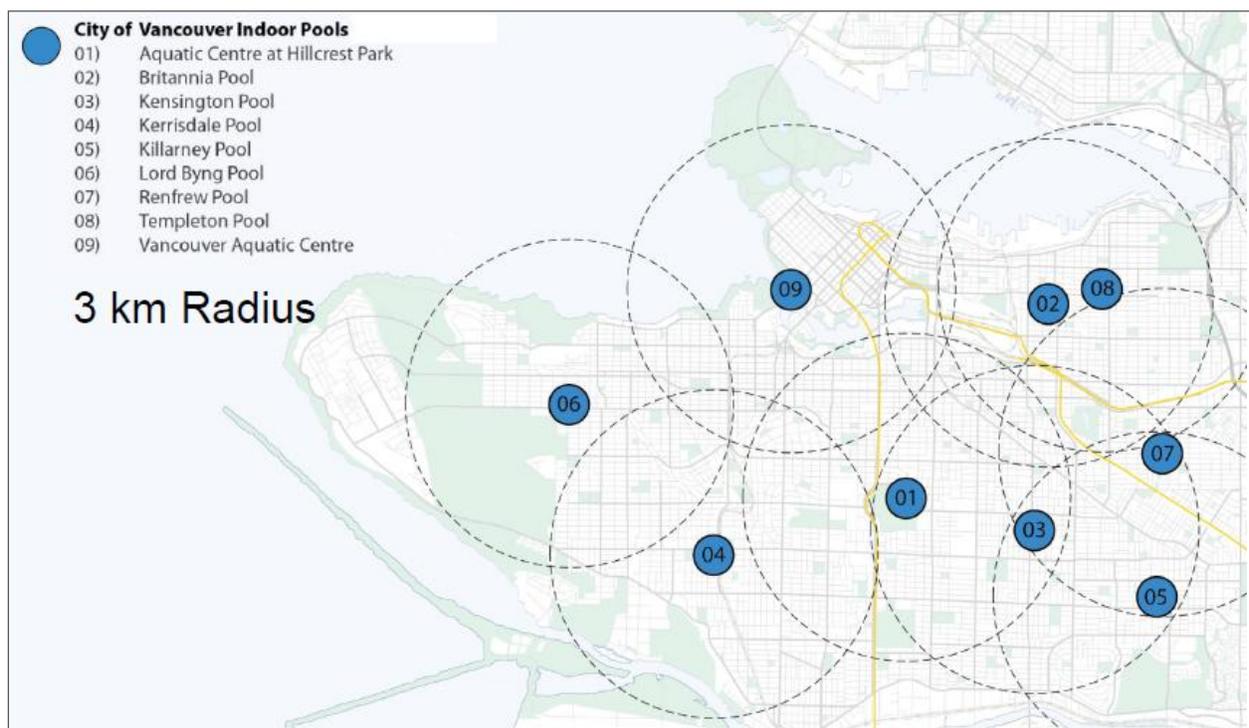
“Collectively, the pools must be located such that **almost all residents of the city will live within about 2-3 km of a public indoor pool** (a half-hour walk, 15 minute cycle, or 6 minute drive). That means that there will be between seven and nine indoor pool facilities in total. There will be at least six and possibly as many as eight of the neighbourhood pools liberally distributed throughout the city, possibly one or two community level pools (perhaps one on each side of the city) and at least one city-wide pool centrally located so as to be accessible to all city residents, and representing a centralized model for Recreational Swimming.”

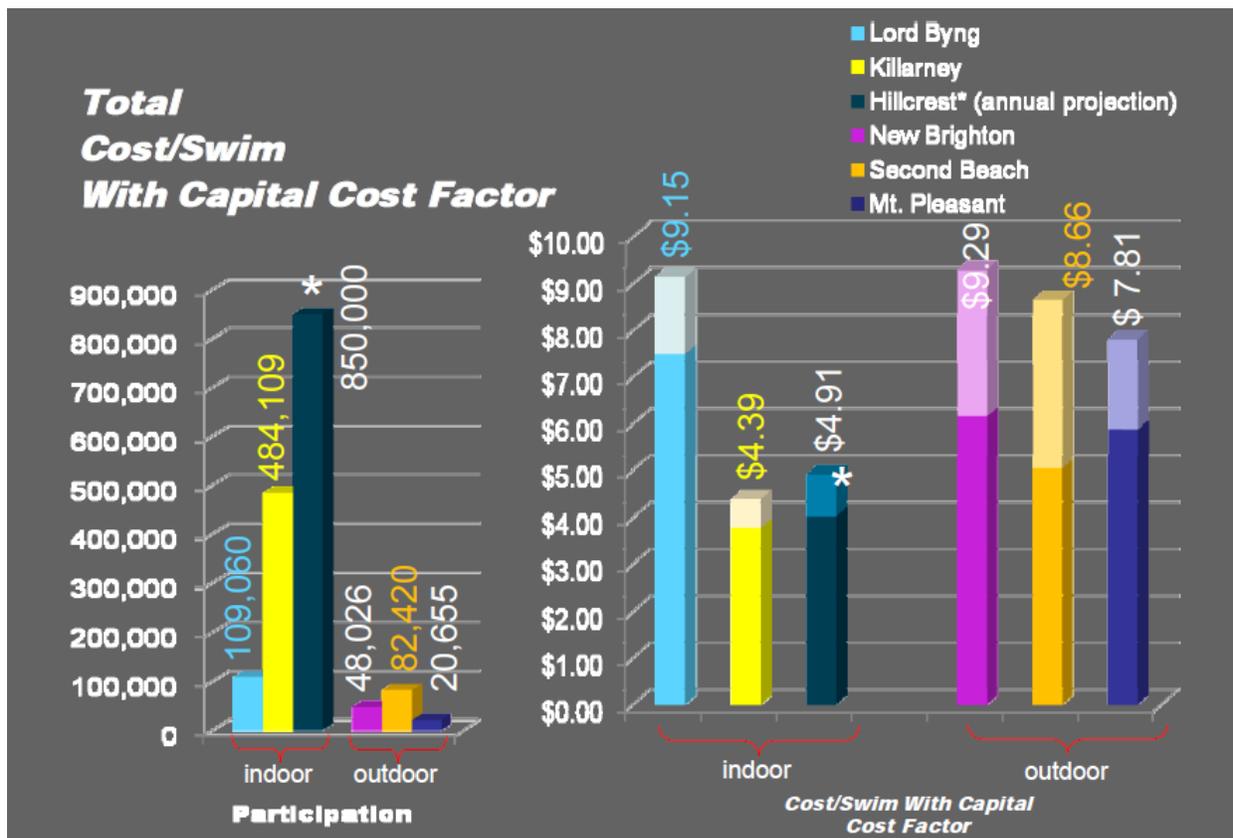
## Second Report – “2011 Pool Assessment Study”

This study reviewed and evaluated data for the existing pools in the Park Board system, in 2010- 2011. These notes are based on prints of slides in a presentation to the P & E Committee of the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation on June 2, 2011.

Since the 2001 Aquatic Services Review of 2001, the Renfrew Pool had been renovated, a new community pool had been added at Killarney, and a new city-wide/destination pool had been opened at Hillcrest Park. The 2010-11 study not only updated the progress of the 2001 Aquatic Services Review, it reviewed use, operating cost, and subsidy data for existing pools for 3 indoor and 3 outdoor pools. It identified next steps for future aquatic facility renewal.

2001 Recommendations	Insights to Date
Build one each of neighbourhood, community and city-wide aquatic facilities	2001 Aquatic plan is working and first phase complete with Renfrew, Killarney & Hillcrest
Maintain 4 major outdoor pools	Second Beach, Kits Beach, New Brighton and Maple Grove continue to be unique outdoor destinations
Phase out stand alone outdoor pools, build future ones in combination with indoor pools	Standalone outdoor pools are more expensive per swim; facilities with indoor and outdoor combined take advantage of overlapping operating costs
Increase no. of swims annually from 1.4M to 2.4M	No. of swims has increased to 2.4M in 2010
Locate aquatic facilities within 2 to 3 km of residents	Aquatic network is accessible and use patterns show longer stays & family participation
Prioritise recreational swim opportunities & optimize fitness, therapy, swim club & rental use	Development of leisure aquatic facilities has increased opportunities & participation
Decrease operating cost & subsidy per swim	Per swim operating costs & subsidies have decreased due to addition of new facilities





### Benefits of Combined Indoor / Outdoor Aquatic Facility

- Higher number of swim opportunities and swim participants
- Lower cost per swim
- Extended outdoor season
- Shared staff-guarding, maintenance customer service
- Shared operations systems-admissions, marketing, program development
- Shared infrastructure-facility, change rooms
- Shared mechanical systems
- Access to services, amenities and features

### 2011 Pool Assessment Study Key Finding

#### 1. Aquatic Use and Capacity

- Maximizing opportunities for participation in aquatics is important (increasing no. of swims for best value).
- Both indoor and outdoor aquatic experiences are valued.
- 2.4M swims per year (4 swims per capita) is the 2010 baseline.
- Variety and proximity of facilities is an important factor in planning aquatic facilities.
- Waterfront beaches contribute significantly to aquatic opportunities in the city.

#### 2. Delivery Model & Operations

- Future aquatic planning and redevelopment needs to be done in context of the city-wide aquatic network.
- Co-location of facilities provides new recreation opportunities and financial and operating synergies.

- Managing operating costs and finding efficiencies combined with increased participation is desirable across the network.
- Stand alone single purpose facilities are more costly to operate and less effective in meeting varying community needs.

### 3. Aquatic Facilities and Infrastructure

- Ongoing investment is needed in the 4 unique outdoor aquatic facilities.
- Spray parks are preferable to wading pools due to regulations.
- Ongoing maintenance of aquatic infrastructure.
- Possible future aquatic redevelopment:
  - Community pool in northeast sector (e.g. Britannia)
  - Community pool on west side (e.g. Kerrisdale)
  - Vancouver Aquatic Centre replacement (unique opportunity)
- Explore opportunities to incorporate outdoor components into future indoor pool renewal.

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