

Renewal of Britannia Community Services Centre Pertinent Content from Background Documents

October, 2014 by Jim LeMaistre

“Community Centre Renewal Plan”, November 9, 2001

“This report focuses on the capital needs of the Park Board’s 22 community centres¹ as one component of a more ambitious and wide-ranging commitment to longer range capital planning.” (p. 1)
(¹ Britannia Community Centre has not been included in the analysis as its operating and capital budgets are the responsibility of the Britannia Community Services Society.)

“The Need for Renewal (pp.9-12)

“The public benefit which community centres represent underscores the need for their renewal. A program of long range redevelopment of the centres has emerged as an organizational priority over the past few years, triggered by three converging factors:

1. *“Ageing infrastructure:* Vancouver’s first generation of community centres are now at or over the half century mark. Several of those which have not been upgraded significantly over the years are due for major rebuilding. Those which have been renovated, in whole or in part, may yet have serious structural or mechanical shortcomings. The system overall is showing its age.

“The ageing process affects the physical condition of the centres, but that is only part of the issue. Equally problematic is the fact that centres designed for the programs and operating practices of the 1950s and 1960s do not adequately meet present or future demands for leisure services. They are dated in both appearance and function, with one or more of the following deficits being at issue:

- Inadequate pedestrian, parking and service access;
- Unwelcoming and poorly defined entry ways;
- Constrained reception/lobby areas;
- Inefficient and confusing building layouts -- poor internal and external connections;
- Limited or no visibility from circulation areas of activity spaces;
- Advantage not taken of views and park settings.

2. *“Sustainable service delivery:* The public sector is increasingly under pressure to do “more with less” (and may in some circumstances have to provide “less with less”). Thus the efficiency and effectiveness of community centre operations will be subjected to higher standards of accountability. Various kinds of operating inefficiencies are built in to our older facilities, such as the following:

- Duplicate reception areas for adjoining recreation facilities;
- Physical limits to programming options: rooms too small, too narrow, irregularly shaped, with low ceilings and inappropriate floor, wall and ceiling surfaces;
- Limited storage and difficult maintenance access to engineering systems;
- Poor insulation and inefficient mechanical systems;
- Past expansions and renovations have compromised the overall layout and systemic functioning re: cleaning, heating, cooling, supervision, etc.

3. *“Population growth demands:* Vancouver has grown dramatically over the past fifteen years and this trend is expected to continue. City planning for growth is currently predicated on a growth target, set in the GVRD Liveable Region Strategy and subsequently endorsed by Council, of another 100,000 residents over the period 1996 - 2021. This growth implies a need to increase service capacity, either by enlarging existing centres or by building new facilities.

“About half of total population growth has already been addressed in the context of major projects around the downtown core, mainly through the construction of the Roundhouse and Coal Harbour community centres. For this purpose, service needs were calculated at 2.29 square feet per capita, based on a benchmarking of total facility space (in community centres, rinks and pools) to city population at the time the major projects were initiated.

“The remaining half of growth demand has been met to some extent and should continue to be accommodated by increases to the capacity of existing centres, rather than through the construction of new facilities, except given a scenario where a new and unserved residential neighbourhood is created with a population greater than 20,000.

“This ratio of one community centre for every 20,000 population (1:20,000) represents an average level of service achieved in Vancouver up to the mid 1980s. Since then, the city’s population has increased significantly, but so too has the average size of community centres. With the full population growth planned for, the new level of service will be in the order of 1:27,500.

“Renewal Principles

“Planning for renewal opens up a range of questions as to the kind of system of community centres we wish to achieve, beyond remedying the list of deficiencies identified above. The following set of principles is proposed to guide the renewal process:

“Community centres will remain neighbourhood scaled operations. Greater efficiencies could be realized through a transition to fewer but larger recreation facilities, but this plan does not propose such a consolidation for the following reasons:

- Many of the programs and services of community centres are oriented to neighbourhood needs and priorities;
- Residents express strong support when surveyed (e.g., Marktrend, 1998) for the idea of community centres as centres of community;
- The decentralized model supports the CityPlan Vision of neighbourhoods where people work and recreate close to where they live;
- Significant investment has already been made in renewal projects.

“Where feasible, community centres will be co-located with other services. The order of priority as to the nature of these services will be:

- *Park Board recreation and support facilities;*
- *Services of other City departments and boards;*
- *public non-profit;*
- *public-private partnerships.*

“Co-location of community centres with complementary facilities is proposed as a means to achieve efficiencies of scale while maintaining a commitment to neighbourhood based service delivery. Such an approach is consistent with what is in place in our larger recreation complexes, and in those centres

attached to public schools or combined with other civic amenities (e.g., Thunderbird, Strathcona, West End). The renewal process should further explore opportunities for co-location, within carefully defined policy limits, with the public non-profit and private sectors.

“Community Centre activity spaces will be designed to support intensive use and high quality programming and to have the flexibility to meet new program demands: Some degree of specialized design is required by the nature of the programming, for example:

- full-sized gymnasias with adequate ceiling heights;
- childcare spaces which meet regulatory standards;
- craft rooms with appropriate lighting, plumbing fixtures, electrical supply, and ventilation.

“In addition, **every centre should have a number of multi-purpose rooms** — spaces which can be adapted to suit a wide range of current and future uses. Key considerations are human comfort (light, heating, ventilation, appearance), physical layout (size, shape, openness) and durability (floor, walls, ceiling, mechanical systems & controls).

“Community centres will be designed in consultation with the end users, including programming and maintenance staff, and Association partners.

“Community centres will be built to an adequate level of seismic resistance, consistent with their designation as emergency reception centres. Life-safety building code upgrades will be done in the course of each major renewal project and shall take priority over programming enhancement or expansion objectives.

“Community centres will be accessible and welcoming environments: Community centres are public spaces, intended for sharing by all members of the community. An objective of renewal will be to eliminate barriers to participation affecting persons of differing abilities. Building design will also emphasize visibility of program activity (achieved, for example, with glazing in doors and walls, and with temporary screening used to whenever privacy or control of light levels is needed). Lobbies and public lounge areas will be large and comfortable, to facilitate interaction between users and to support the centres’ functioning as neighbourhood gathering places.

“Community centres premises will be safe and secure: Reception counters will be directly connected to the public entrance(s), clearly identifiable. and have clear lines of sight across public circulation areas. Blind spots in the building layout will be reduced to the maximum extent possible. The openness and visibility of program areas will enhance effective supervision by staff.

“Community centres will be constructed on principles of sustainability: The design and construction of facilities will make use of “green building” technologies and processes to ensure responsible use of building materials, reduced use of water and discharge of sewage, and high standards of energy efficiency. Materials and equipment will be chosen to minimize the life cycle cost of the building.

“Community centre renewal will accommodate the anticipated population growth for the city: The new centres (Roundhouse and Coal Harbour) and additions to other centres represent about one half to two-thirds of the additional community centre space required to serve the projected increased demand. Further increases to community centre capacity should be achieved through a combination of the following strategies:

- Employing facility management and scheduling technologies to maximize use of existing program spaces;

- Reconfiguring buildings within their existing footprints to create more flexible and attractive program spaces; and lastly
- Adding floorspace to some centres.” (pp. 9-12)

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