

**Aquatics Master Plan
Aqua Fitness Focus Group
Notes from August 22, 2011 Focus Group Meeting**

Overview

The Columbia Association is developing an Aquatics Master Plan, a comprehensive plan that documents existing conditions of Columbia's aquatics facilities and programs; assesses the future needs of residents and other users; and makes recommendations for future investments in aquatics venues and associated programs. This 10- to 20-year plan will set the frame for how CA invests in our aquatics facilities for years to come. The process began earlier this year and is anticipated to be completed by year's end.

How do Focus Groups Fit into the Master Planning Process

There are many opportunities to be involved in the planning process and many ways to stay informed as the plan is developed. There will be community-wide workshops during the plan's development. The first set of these were held in March. Focus groups are small group discussions that complement the larger community meetings and focus on the needs and ideas of specific aquatics user groups. Each focus group is anticipated to meet once.

This focus group brought together a small group of residents involved with the Aqua Fitness program. The facilitated session lasted approximately 90 minutes. Participants were asked a series of open ended questions. The discussion points are noted here.

Question 1: What do you like best about CA aquatics facilities/programs?

Answers 1:

Facilities

- They are close proximity to where I live!
- Convenient location
- One can participate in both shallow or deep water fitness at the same facility
- Personal touch at the Swim Center (Wild Lake) because it's just a pool and not a fitness club
- Look forward going to the Swim Center – social and friendly!
- Did not enjoy Supreme Sports Club because of the water temperature
- Changing rooms at Supreme Sports Club are much cleaner than the Swim Center
- Columbia offers us access to a variety of facilities that no other place does

Programs

- Classes are offered 7 days a week, variety of opportunities for everyone.
- A friendly staff makes for an enjoyable experience
- Summer program is great, love the outdoor program!
- There is a good variety of classes
- Different teachers, different teaching style make classes exciting and fun
- Different/ new teaching strategies, tips are beneficial and always welcome
- More classes should be offered during evening/ night time- giving people who work opportunity to attend

Question 2: What are your thoughts on improving facilities/programs for aqua fitness swimmers?

Answers 2:

Facilities

- Swim Center should be cleaner
- The Swim Center is not as clean in the evening as it is in the morning
- When the classes coincide with other swim teams, it gets overcrowded and the kids leave the Swim Center dirty
- Glad that they got rid of the rusty scale
- Wall clocks are not in sync; why not go for an atomic clock.
- Supreme Sports Club – water temperature is cold
- Supreme Sports Club has cold temperature, something should be done

Programs

- Classes are getting overcrowded, need more space
- It's been busy this summer, more Seniors participating and taking classes
- Create and enforce rules for members doing laps and deep water fitness
- Too many rules complicate things
- Supreme Sports Club offer few evening classes and Swim Teams get priority. Would like to see more evening and night classes.
- More classes are being offered in the evening and getting cancelled. Some members prefer classes early in the morning.
- Not many seniors attending because of the untimely schedule of classes.
- Proper advertising/ communication tends to get people in e.g. drop-in, free introductory classes.

- Deep water fitness – one lane or pool section should be reserved with signage so that people can enjoy at all times.

Question 3: Have you observed other aquatics programs that you think CA should emulate to enhance the aquatics program for aqua fitness swimmers?

Answers 3:

- Observed just one, aqua class for elders.

Question 4: As you know, our indoor facilities are in high demand for a number of user groups. What solutions do you have for addressing the demand for indoor pool/aquatics time?

Answers 4:

- Build another pool
- Swim Center – 8am class is popular and full. Offer another morning class to accommodate everyone.

Question 5: One idea is to cover/enclose one of our outdoor pools to expand our indoor capacity. What are your thoughts on this?

Answers 5:

- Build a big, deeper pool
- Pool sharing done in a civil manner is good

Question 6: There are a number of outdoor pools throughout the community that are sparsely attended. What are your ideas to increase community participation at these facilities?

Answers 6:

- Locust Park has done a wonderful job of having senior time
- Offer classes before 9:30am
- Offer pool parties, reduced membership fees to attract more people
- Population of Columbia is aging, get medical staff involved to encourage patients to attend the pools – medical fitness

Question 7: Pools are community gathering places. If some of the sparsely attended pools were to be repurposed over time to other types of community facilities, what ideas do you have on what would garner community interest and participation?

Answers 7:

- CA pools are attractive enough!
- Don't take away outdoor pools because people love outdoor pools
- Huntington Pool closes early

- CA should have one designated pool for fitness classes and one for lap swimmers only
- Game room for kids
- Group activities

Other comments

- Athletic Club- the equipment is old
- Columbia Gym is new and cleaner but a long commute
- Add another gym
- Allow members to use the pool facilities (when available) for small gatherings, picnics, group meetings etc.
- Kim – the facility has visibly improved ever since she's been there
- Connie - does a great job at the Swim Center