



AQUATICS MASTER PLAN

March 29 & 30, 2011 Kick-off Workshops

Summary Report on Participant Comments and Ideas

Introduction

The Columbia Association sponsored two kick-off workshops for the Aquatics Master Plan in March 2011. The workshops were held from 7 to 8:30 PM on March 29 at the Other Barn and March 30 at the Hawthorn Center. The two workshops allowed for participants to attend the workshop most convenient for them. The design and content of both workshops was the same.

The workshops included a presentation on the history, capital cost, use, visitation and current state of aquatic facilities in Columbia as well as information on demographic change. The presentation also explained the reason for undertaking an aquatics master plan at this time, its goals, timeframe and ways in which the public can be involved. The presentation can be viewed at

<http://www.columbiaassociation.com/aquaticsmasterplan/AquaWorkshp33011final.pdf>.

Following the presentation, participants took part in small group discussions each led by a facilitator and assisted by note taker. Each small group was asked the same set of questions three specific questions followed by a more open ended question to gather the participants' other comments related to aquatics.

The workshops were well attended, with approximately 40 participants at the Other Barn and 30 at Hawthorn Center. Attendees provided numerous suggestions for CA aquatic

facilities and programs in both the short- and long-term. The answers to the questions and associated small group discussions are summarized in this report. ***The actual responses are provided in Attachment 1, which includes all the comments each participant wrote on their individual comment sheets plus the comments recorded by the note taker at each table discussion.***

March Workshop Participant Comments – Highlights

The following are highlights of the comments made by workshop participants in response to each question. For the full inventory of comments made, please consult Attachment 1 to this report.

Question 1: Based on what you know and have learned tonight about demographic and other trends, how do you think our aquatic facilities should change in the next 10-20 years?

The most common answer was to plan aquatic facilities around the needs of Columbia’s “aging population”. This included ideas about “adults-only” pools and senior exercise classes. A few people suggested closing pools with low attendance, while most others wanted to find ways for these pools to stay open.. Participants suggested a number of ways to increase attendance at these pools, such as providing more themed pools — “women’s-only pools” — and enclosing the pools to have more indoor facilities that service residents year-round.

Another widely-held view by participants was to add a 50 meter (Olympic size) pool. This would assist swim teams and other competitive swimmers to practice in a regulation-sized facility.

Question 2: In your opinion, what factors or characteristics influence you the most to use certain pools (indoor and outdoor) rather than others? And conversely, what influences you not to use certain pools?

Three common themes emerged from this question: availability, location, and water temperature. Many respondents stated that they choose to attend pools that consistently have lanes available and that do not get overcrowded. Respondents to this question stated that pool location in close proximity to their home affected how often they use a pool. Respondents also stated that the pool’s water temperature affected its attractiveness.

Other answers that did not fall into those categories but received a number of responses are sense of community and cleanliness of the pool. Participants wanted to attend a pool that created a sense of community and where they had a more personal experience and attended pools that they experienced to be clean and well-kept.

Question 3: For outdoor pools with low visitation, what changes would you recommend?

Answers to this question varied significantly, from moving “activities” to the low visitation pools to generate more attendance and closing the lowest performing pools. Activity suggestions include continuing and expanding the practice of holding the swim team practices, general aquatic exercise classes and renting these facilities for parties.

Other widely supported recommendations included expanding the pools themes such as “single-sex pools”, “adults-only” and “lap swimming only”; lowering membership costs at low attendance pools and extending operational hours. Respondents thought that expanding the pool hours earlier in the morning would aid triathletes, swim teams, and lap swimmers.

Question 4: Other Comments?

While many participants reiterated statements from the previous questions, there were additional ideas suggested in response to this question. One was using social media such as Twitter and Facebook to provide real-time status updates on pool hours, early closings because of weather or other events, and lane availability.

Follow-up Workshop Evaluation Survey

Following the workshops, Columbia Association contacted each of the participants who had provided an email address and asked them to complete a survey to gain insight into how the participants perceived and valued the workshops. Twenty-seven of the 59 participants who provided emails addresses responded to the survey. This represents a very good 46% response rate. Overall, the views expressed in the survey of workshop participants were very positive. All respondents (27/27) answered “Yes” to the question “Did you find the workshop to be of value overall?” and 26 out of 27 respondents said they would be willing to attend future Aquatics Master Plan events. **Attachment 2 to**

this report includes the full results of the follow-up survey including the answers to other questions.

Wrap-up and Next Steps

The Aquatics Master Plan kick-off workshops appear to have been a success based on the attendance and robust participation at the workshops and the subsequent evaluation survey results. All the comments are being reviewed carefully as part of the first phase of the planning process, which includes understanding existing conditions, trends, and identifying issues.

As the master planning process continues, Columbia Association will be developing options for aquatics investments to accommodate future community needs. The comments received to date will be considered in the development and analysis of the options. The options will be reviewed with the public at another set of workshops several months from now. Following review and analysis of the options and the development of a preferred alternative, a draft master plan will be developed. This too will be reviewed with the public and subsequently revised and forwarded on to the Board of Directors by the end of the year.