

# Flatwater Pool Brainstorm Summary

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SEPTEMBER 26, 2019

**FOR CITY OF CALGARY RECREATION  
BY CIVIC INNOVATION YYC**



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# Flatwater Pools

## Challenge

On July 23, 2019, Administration presented Council with a proposed package on how to meet the required reduction to the 2019 budget. Included in this, Administration identified stopping service at the Inglewood and Beltline recreation facilities as the least-harm way to reduce expenditures from Calgary Recreation's budget. Council at that time, did not approve the closure of the pools but directed Administration to investigate business continuity options. On September 30, Council reiterated this, directing Administration to continue their analysis and leave no stone unturned to explore business continuity options for the two facilities.

## How We Responded

City of Calgary Recreation approached Civic Innovation YYC to co-design and lead a workshop on behalf of Calgary Recreation at the Inglewood Community Association on September 26 2019 from 4 - 5:30 p.m.

This session was comprised of some user groups and catchment area community organizations who presented to the Standing Policy Committee on Community and Protective Services on September 11, 2019, and or people who made written submission to Council or individual members of Council.

## The Purpose

The purpose of this session was to brainstorm business continuity ideas for the Inglewood Aquatic Centre and Beltline Aquatic & Fitness Centre, which will serve as one of several inputs into the development of the report back to Council in November 2019.

## Flatwater Pools Brainstorm Session Participants

- + **Tamara Marajh**, Beltline Neighbourhood Association
- + **Rob Gairns**, Beltline Neighbourhood Association
- + **Karl Gossen**, Calgary Dolphins Swim Club
- + **Louise Riley**, Calgary Dolphins Swim Club
- + **Philip McCutcheon**, CommunityWise Resource Centre
- + **Linda Poetz**, Inner City Coalition, Bridgeland-Riverside Community Association
- + **Phil Levson**, Inglewood Community Association
- + **Suzanne Leacock**, Inglewood Community Association, YYC Save the Pools
- + **Heather Stewart-MacLean**, Manager Strategic Business Services, The City of Calgary



# Problem Mapping

## IDENTIFYING THE NEEDS AND INSIGHTS FROM CITIZEN GROUPS AND BRAINSTORM PARTICIPANTS

### How We Got There

Civic Innovation YYC began the session with Problem Mapping to clarify the information gathered to date, and set a clear foundation for idea generation.

The Problem Map was pre-populated with the information that was presented to Council in the Public Hearing by citizens and emailed to Councillors. Participants were then given the opportunity to review the Problem Map and add

any needs the facilities are currently serving, user insights, and perceived constraints of addressing the challenge, based on their understanding.

### Users



### Needs Identified By the Community

- + Build community connections
- + Experience affordable recreation options
- + Affordable spaces for community gatherings and community organizations
- + Affordable exercise opportunities, year-round
- + Develop the life skill of swimming
- + Practice aquatic sports and other recreational programs
- + Unstructured play opportunities

# Problem Mapping

## CONTINUED

### User Insights

- + There are multiple **ways to measure the impact** of a community asset (in addition to use numbers)
- + Some users prefer **single-use facilities**
- + **The walkability** of communities matter to residents
- + Some current pool renters are **willing to pay more** for access to resource
- + Inner-city residents pay **higher taxes** than suburban residents
- + The City is open to exploring creative **options**
- + The Inglewood area is poised for **increased density** in the coming years and the Beltline is already the densest neighbourhood in the city
- + Some individuals do not perceive Repsol Sport Centre and the Gray Family Eau Claire YMCA as **family-friendly amenities** (e.g. expensive, too cold, no rope swings/climbing wall, etc.)
- + The **change in hours and programming** at the Inglewood pool may have affected access and use
- + Inglewood Pool is the only **indoor recreation** facility in Inglewood/Ramsay/Bridgeland
- + Include other public/private facilities that receive tax dollars to **compare value per use**
- + There are long-term concerns around operating recreational facilities in terms of **financial sustainability**
- + Make conscious decisions around **wants and needs**, these two pools fall under the needs category for certain user groups
- + Beltline pool has **no parking** and **no elevator accessibility**
- + Smaller sized pools are helpful for programs because coaches can better monitor pool users

for **increased safety**

- + **Larger recreation centers are overwhelming** for kids and adults with disabilities to navigate the facility independently

### Perceived Constraints

- + City-wide **budget reductions**
- + Significant **capital investment** required to keep the two facilities open
- + Recreation's new/current **mandate for service**
- + **No space** on sites for added amenities
- + **Time pressure** is especially challenging for some community groups and community associations to respond and plan for alternative arrangements
- + **January 1 shut down** of pools is not based on the fiscal year of some not-for-profit organizations and/or alternative pool facilities that run on the April 1-March 31 fiscal year. This is a challenge for organizations that need to sign contracts for annual pool use



# How Might We

## PRIORITIZING THREE *HOW MIGHT WE* QUESTIONS FOR IDEA GENERATION

### How We Got There

Participants reviewed the Problem Map, and each participant voted on their top three needs to focus the ideation efforts. The aggregated top three needs were converted into “How Might We” questions to support ideation. This format of questioning helps open up dialogue and actionable ideas around addressing the needs.

The group brainstormed ideas, considering the following three perspectives:

1. Options to continue service at the specific facilities (e.g. alternate operator at no cost to The City)
2. Alternate uses for the impacted sites that would provide similar benefits to the communities/users (e.g. other types of recreation opportunity or community programs)
3. Service continuity options for impacted user groups (e.g. alternate locations to accommodate groups)



**How might we create opportunities to build community connections?**



**How might we create affordable spaces for organizations and community gatherings?**



**How might we create opportunities for affordable and physically accessible recreation?**

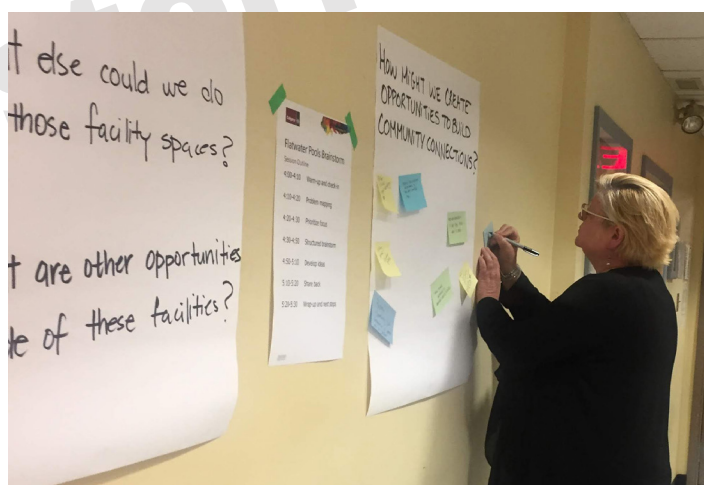
# Ideas Generated

A LIST OF EACH IDEA GENERATED FOR THE *HOW MIGHT WE* QUESTION



## How might we create opportunities to build community connections?

- + Better utilize signs – advertising
- + Engage public-private organizations to hold and host events at the pools
- + Build up more school group usage
- + More media/advertising of what the spaces have to offer
- + Coffee groups and volunteer groups
- + Keep it public
- + Host community activities such as BBQs and swimming or Run and Swim Group
- + Offer discounts for groups such as housing collectives (Horizon Housing, YWCA, EXIT)
- + Public-private partnerships, sponsored events and activities
- + Re-vamp programs (e.g. Swim and walk)
- + Ask the community and users about what they want and get them excited about the potential of the pool's future
- + Host pay what you can nights
- + Restart the Community Hub conversation to operate out of Beltline
- + New community meet-ups to generate higher usage of existing facilities





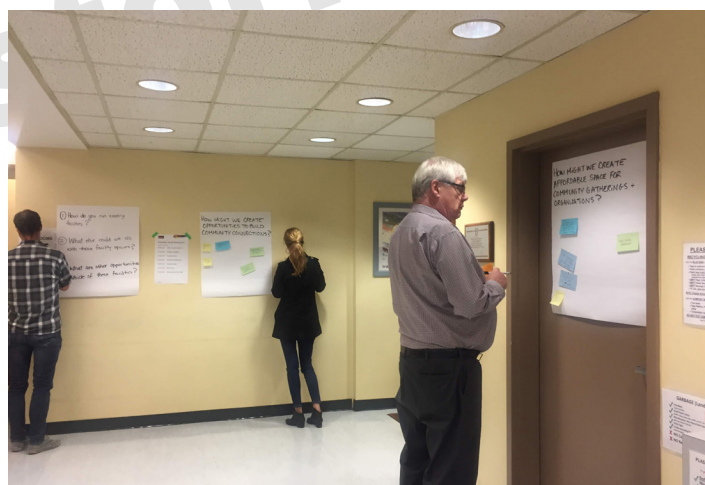
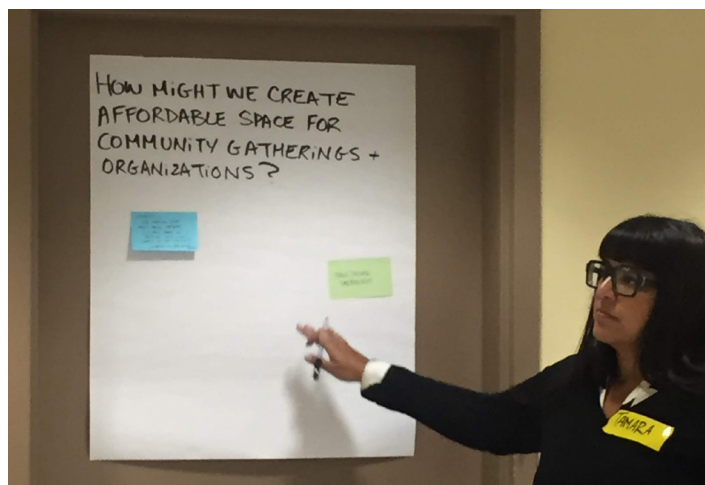
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## How might we create affordable spaces for organizations and community gatherings?

- + It exists...the potential users aren't being targeted (e.g. many people in Beltline don't know what's at the facility).
- + Marketing, PR, social media
- + Reach out to the community to find out what the needs and opportunities are
- + Make the community a part of the process
- + Seek corporate sponsorships and facility naming for advertising (same as Scotiabank Saddledome)
- + Sell advertising in the buildings like in the hockey arenas
- + Public-private partnerships
- + Create a way for community members to become owners of the facilities
- + Explore opportunities for alternate use of the Beltline Recreation Centre. Relinquish operation to others, such as communities.
- + Recreation could still deliver public recreation programs at other times
- + Explore more private groups utilizing facilities to generate income
- + Invest in community engagement with the coordinator of the site (Beltline)





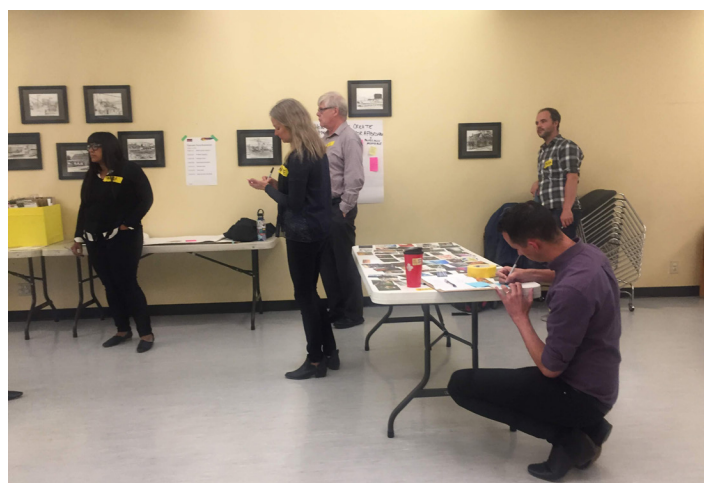
# Ideas Generated

## A LIST OF EACH IDEA GENERATED FOR THE *HOW MIGHT WE* QUESTION



### **How might we create opportunities for affordable and physically accessible recreation?**

- + Add onto the building, more space
- + Modify and tailor metrics that The City uses to 'justify' a recreation facility
  - Catchment area (8-9km doesn't make sense from a walkability factor)
  - Users
  - Modality of access
  - Size
  - Facility with modifications might be sufficient
- + Operate only during busy hours such as evening, and early mornings (split shifts)
- + Charge higher fees
- + Increase the use of pool and facilities by consulting with users and potential users and asking them what would bring them out
- + Increase rates for non-community groups to offset costs
- + Charge users slightly more so that the facility can be viable
- + Utilize spaces in addition to pool such as BBQ & swim night, or fitness equipment
- + Offer yoga classes in the green spaces outside
- + Reconsider the 50/50 recoverability
- + Take into account broad social return on investment in recoverability factor
- + Many people are unaware of what is available
- + Marketing
- + Subsidize costs for community members or specialized groups at other facilities
- + Operate at more user-friendly hours (evenings please)
- + Extend existing hours and make the facility more attractive, more classes, more facility use opportunities could increase use



# Prioritized Ideas

## A DETAILED DESCRIPTION, RISKS AND BENEFITS OF KEY IDEAS GENERATED BY EACH PARTICIPANT

### SPLIT-SHIFTS

Operate pools on a 'split-shift' only during busy times of the day. I believe this would be early mornings, evenings and weekends. Close for middle of the day.

### MARKET THE POOLS

Better marketing of pool to generate more usage (more signs, posters, etc.)

#### What benefits should the idea have?

- + Saves staff cost which is usually the most significant part of an operating cost

#### What risks are involved?

- + Some staff will not like the "perceived" inconvenience of a split-shift, but look for staff that want to work part-time

#### What further exploration might be required?

- + Define busy vs. low usage times for each pool which will be different for each facility

#### What gets you excited about this idea?

- + Cost savings to contribute to a decision to keep a pool open

#### What benefits should the idea have?

- + Awareness of what programs are offered and how it differs from other pools
- + More community members using pool and feeling pride in their community pool
- + More people travelling from different areas of the city because of the benefit of the pool
- + More usage means less subsidization

#### What risks are involved?

- + Overcrowding
- + Spending more money
- + Too many private bookings and less time available for community members

#### What further exploration might be required?

- + Costs involved
- + Where advertising is most effective
- + What has been offered in the past

#### What gets you excited about this idea?

- + Many people don't use the pool because they are not aware
- + Inglewood Pool is unique for groups and parties
- + Also great for sports programs, school programs
- + Many people may not be aware of that





## MAKE POOLS ATTRACTIVE

**Increase use of the facilities by extending hours, providing more classes, introducing other uses. Consult with potential users on what would make the facility more attractive to them.**

### **What benefits should the idea have?**

- + Pools remain open to the public
- + More people use the facility
- + Revenues increase
- + Community connections happen
- + Physical and mental health improve

### **What risks are involved?**

- + Potential users may have no interest
- + Use might not increase
- + Revenues do not increase

### **What further exploration might be required?**

- + Research to determine what users want and what other potential users and user groups exist
- + Research in other cities to see how they do it

### **What gets you excited about this idea?**

- + Potential for the facility to remain viable and benefit the community
- + Community taking ownership of the use of the pool

## BELTLINE RE-PURPOSING

**Enter into partnerships with others. Beltline has unique opportunities for realizing the social value of the facility as well as unique challenges of cost recoverability and underutilization. Perhaps opening up operation and control to others could be explored to include a broad range of social services which do have public benefit.**

### **What benefits should the idea have?**

- + Recreation as a business unit could still offer public programming opportunities at times
- + Saves The City money in operating costs
- + Innovative

### **What risks are involved?**

- + Anyone being able to manage multi-user, multi-purpose facilities
- + That the best-equipped partners tend to support efforts of gentrification which harms marginalized and low-income peoples' experiences in any neighbourhood

### **What further exploration might be required?**

- + Stakeholder engagement

### **What gets you excited about this idea?**

- + Honestly, there is dire need of community groups in the area to have access to affordable, inclusive, welcoming and culturally relevant spaces

# Prioritized Ideas

## CONTINUED

### EXCITE THE COMMUNITY

**Get the community excited about the potential for the pool's future.**

### SPONSORSHIPS

**Seek corporate sponsorships including selling advertising and forming public-private partnerships.**

#### **What benefits should the idea have?**

- + Re-looking at space, place and opportunities for the building on usage
- + Increased awareness
- + Interest will build on possibilities of types of uses and hours
- + Capacity building and connection forming opportunities

#### **What risks are involved?**

- + They wouldn't get excited
- + May require funding

#### **What further exploration might be required?**

- + Many of these ideas developed on the sticky notes during this session could build on this

#### **What gets you excited about this idea?**

- + Building upon what is there
- + Utilization of the old site and helping to maintain the land and increase usage
- + Wellness for the community and people

#### **What benefits should the idea have?**

- + Could bring more attention and recognition to the facilities and therefore generate more revenue
- + Facilities may be able to operate without increased users
- + Takes the 'business burden' off Recreation

#### **What risks are involved?**

- + Could be little benefit to the sponsor
- + Might be challenging to encourage these sponsorships - they may need an incentive
- + Social value to existing and low-income users

#### **What further exploration might be required?**

- + Are there interested companies that already exist
- + Provide incentives to those private sponsors

#### **What gets you excited about this idea?**

- + Could mean keeping these facilities open for current users
- + Brings attention to these facilities as assets to our communities





## INCREASE USER BASE

Use social media, events and partnerships with public organizations and private groups and companies to increase awareness that the Beltline Pool exists, awareness that there are also other facilities and user rates. This will drive up revenue and help make the facility more viable.

### What benefits should the idea have?

- + Pools remain open to the public
- + More people use the facility
- + Revenues increase
- + Community connections happen
- + Physical and mental health improve

### What risks are involved?

- + Potential users may have no interest
- + Use might not increase
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### What further exploration might be required?

- + Research to determine what users want and what other potential users and user groups exist
- + Research in other cities to see how they do it

### What gets you excited about this idea?

- + Potential for the facility to remain viable and benefit the community
- + Community taking ownership of the use of the pool



# City of Calgary Recreation Next Steps

- + The information will be used as one input into the November report back to Council.
- + The City of Calgary Recreation team will take a closer look at the ideas the group prioritized to the degree possible in the time available
- + The report back to Council is currently scheduled to go to the Priorities and Finance Committee on Nov 5 and to Council on Nov 18





# Civic Innovation YYC

**Civic Innovation YYC exists to accelerate collaboration, build innovation capacities and design bold explorations into complex problems.**

## **Our Purpose**

We build the capacity of City of Calgary employees to embrace risk and tackle complex problems using trusted design methodology and scrappy adaptability. We shift the status quo by keeping humans at the centre of everything we do.

## **Our Vision**

We envision a City where civic employees are human-centred in their thinking, collaborative by nature, and boldly experiment to design a better Calgary with citizens.

## **Our Strategies**

We concentrate our work in three key strategic areas:

### **+ Collaborate & Collide**

We create opportunities to work better together. We design connections between people and projects across The City and citizen groups to respond to complex challenges.

### **+ Build Capacity**

We enhance our clients' ability to effectively collaborate, design and innovate using experiential professional learning and consulting.

### **+ Design for Innovation**

We use research, data synthesis and design thinking to support The City to embrace risk and experimentation as opportunities to improve services for citizens.





