

Winnipeg's Best-Kept Secret: A Community Development Vision For Sherbrook Pool



By Ali Millar & Lissie Rappaport



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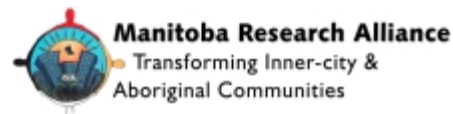
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Cover art: This undated cartoon by artist Lew Saw of the Winnipeg Tribune illustrates the popularity of the Sherbrook Pool on a hot summer day.



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Introduction

This paper examines the benefits of recreation for communities, with a specific focus on the benefits to, and barriers faced by marginalized and low-income communities. An extensive review of the available literature reveals that recreation produces enormous benefits for individuals, communities, and society as a whole. Low-income and marginalized communities often benefit the most from recreation, yet also face the most extensive barriers to participation.

In the context of this research, this paper examines the role of Sherbrook Pool and how the Pool can provide the known benefits of recreation to the West Central community, as well as tackle some of the known barriers to participation and access. The paper examines some of the benefits of Sherbrook Pool relative to other City of Winnipeg pools, and the ways in which it can provide a holistic range of services not simply through its role as a swimming pool, but as an integral part of the community.

Sherbrook Pool has offered accessible recreation to individuals and families for over seventy-five years. Built during the Depression, Sherbrook Pool was established out of recognition that investment in recreation would not only serve as an economic stimulus, but would also increase community engagement and participation in recreation

and sport. In more recent years, the Pool has suffered from political and financial disinvestment as civic policy makers began to see it in more narrow terms, as an expense, rather than the earlier and broader vision of the Pool as an asset. This study calls for a return to this earlier type of thinking as it examines Sherbrook Pool through a holistic community development lens.

Looking at the Pool within the context of community development, this paper argues that the Pool can provide accessible recreation opportunities, and can also be 're-imagined' as an integral part of a holistic, asset-based community development approach for the West Central community. The inner city is often seen through a 'deficit lens,' focusing on problems such as poverty, unemployment, crime and so on, in the area. A different lens is to identify the strengths in a community, the assets, and build on those. Asset-based community development aims to build from within the community, using the assets that are already there as the basis of a community development strategy. This paper argues that Sherbrook Pool is an asset, not a deficit, in the West Central area. The City of Winnipeg sees it as an expense on their financial statements; this paper argues that the better way is to see it as an asset for the community.

Another asset in West Central is the strong

network of community-based organizations (CBOs). This paper argues that the way to build on strengths is to connect the Sherbrook Pool with other CBOs in the area. Through the establishment of partnerships with some of these CBOs, Sherbrook Pool can be less isolated from, and more integrated with, its surrounding community. It can reach out to the community, and respond more effectively to the community's diverse needs. In this way, Sherbrook Pool is seen as more than a pool; it is seen as a central part of an integrated and holistic strategy of community development and capacity building for the West Central area.

The recommendations that are offered in this study are based on interviews with twenty-one leaders in the West Central area, and are rooted in this new vision for the Sherbrook Pool. The interview findings are consistent with the scholarly literature. Both confirm that the extensive benefits and cost-savings that arise from investment in recreation far outweigh the costs. In this light, we all benefit by Sherbrook Pool becoming more than Winnipeg's best-kept secret.

Methodology

We used a three-part method in preparing this report: a literature review; interviews with key informants; and the collection of data relating to the West Central area generally, and to Sherbrook Pool specifically.

An extensive review of literature pertaining to recreation and its benefits was conducted. The review examined benefits of recreation to: individuals—seniors, children, youth

(youth-at-risk and young girls), people with disabilities and newcomers; low income and inner-city communities; and to society generally. The review concluded with an examination of some of the most significant barriers to participation in recreation for different segments of the population.

Twenty-one interviews were conducted over a period of six months with individuals involved in the West Central community. These included people involved in recreational programming and community development work, City of Winnipeg employees, and individuals familiar with Sherbrook Pool. Key informants were selected through consultation with the research advisory group, which included University of Winnipeg Professor Jim Silver and Christine Common-Singh, a member of Friends of Sherbrook Pool. A list of interviewees and organizations consulted is included in Appendix I.

Interviewees were asked to comment on the benefits of recreation to individuals and the community, the availability of recreation programs and/or facilities in the West Central area, as well as their relationship with Sherbrook Pool (for a guide of interview questions, please see Appendix II). Each interview was digitally recorded and transcribed by the researchers. Before commencing with the interview, all participants were informed of the intended use of the research, that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any point without consequence, and signed and received copies of a consent form. The research project received ethics approval from the University of Winnipeg.

Literature Review

There is a substantial body of literature detailing the many benefits of recreation. Indeed, that there are considerable benefits—to individuals, to families and to entire communities—would appear to be indisputable. The following summarizes some of the literature on the benefits of recreation and active living, looking first at the literature on the benefits to individuals, and then at the benefits to communities and to society at large. For the latter the focus is on the role recreation and active living play in: the promotion of social capital and overcoming social exclusion; the reduction of crime; improvements to health; poverty reduction; and improvements to our economic well-being. The section concludes with a discussion of some of the barriers to participation in recreation and sport as identified in the literature.

Benefits to Individuals

A significant body of literature demonstrates clearly that physical activity leads to improved health in individuals. The benefits extend beyond physical health to over-all improvements in personal well-being and quality of life.

I. Physical Health

The benefits of recreation to individuals in terms of physical health are considerable, and there are therefore enormous costs to individuals not participating. Yet, it is estimated that 51 percent of Canadians are physically inactive (Mulholland, 2008); for children and youth, the percentage of those inactive increases to 90%, according to the guidelines established by Canada's Physical Activity Guide (Active & Healthy Kids, 2008). The consequences of Canadians' inactivity are staggering. Research shows that physical inactivity is the primary factor leading to cardiovas-

cular disease, and the second greatest contributor to death and disability in Canada (Mulholland, 2008).

Physical activity is crucial to reducing rates of obesity, which is on the rise in Canada especially among children. Individuals who are obese are at greater risk than the rest of the population for disability, disease, and premature death (Mulholland, 2008; Active & Healthy Kids, 2008). Physical activity also greatly reduces individuals' risk of stroke, osteoporosis, and cancers—specifically in the colon, breast, and lungs (CPRA, 1997; Mulholland, 2008). In addition to stemming the occurrence of these diseases, physical activity improves skeletal health and helps to lower blood pressure (CPRA, 1997).

II. Quality of Life

In addition to its physical benefits, recreation improves overall quality of life and mental health, providing specific benefits to seniors, children/youth, youth-at-risk of deviant behaviour, young women, and people with disabilities.

Seniors

Seniors' involvement in recreation minimizes the effects of diseases associated with aging and promotes healthy aging not only by keeping seniors active, but also by diminishing the social isolation that they often face (CPRA, 1997; Doiron, 1997; Mulholland, 2008). Participating in recreational programs helps seniors to live more independently, "enjoy life to the fullest, make new friends and feel good about themselves" (Doiron, 1997, p. 29). Recreation and physical activity has been shown to add up to two years to life expectancy for active individuals (CPRA, 1997).

Children and Youth

In addition to improved physical health, children and youth benefit immensely from involvement in recreation in various other ways. Individuals who are active at a young age are more likely to remain active later in life, and “regular participation in physical activity during the early years has been cited as the factor that will have the greatest impact on an individual’s lifespan and quality of life” (Active Healthy Kids Canada, 2008, p.29).

Participation in “structured recreational activities outside the home promotes healthy child development, attachment to a positive peer group, self-esteem and skill development, and is a critical method to prevent emotional and behavioural problems” (Totten, 2007, p. 12). It is the ideal site for children to develop motor skills, social skills, physical capacity, creativity, and leadership skills (CPRA, 1997; Mulholland, 2008; Totten, 2007).

Involvement in sport and recreation also correlates with improvement in school-related skills, such as task-performance and problem solving, and increased attendance, engagement, and interest at school, as well as helping reduce high-school drop-out rates (Boys & Girls Club, 2007; CPRA, 1994; Mulholland, 2008; Totten, 2007). Participating in recreation is also a means by which youth develop skills and values that contribute to greater participation in the workforce.

Recreational programming provides children and youth with positive role models, a sense of belonging, and opportunities to build relationships (Torjman, 2004). Recreation has been shown to “reduce depression, anxiety and stress, loneliness, self-destructive behaviour, and crime, and it plays a fundamental role in healthy growth” (Boys & Girls Club, 2007, p. 15).

Research also shows that children as early as preschool age, who demonstrate “difficult

temperaments, early onset aggression, antisocial behaviour and social difficulties [who] are at high risk for serious and violent offending paths” can be swayed away from such a path with early intervention that includes recreation to foster resiliency (Totten, 2004 quoted in CPRA, 2008c)

Youth-at-risk

Involvement in recreation is especially beneficial for youth-at-risk, defined generally as individuals who because of any number of possible factors within their personal life, with family, friends, school and the community, find themselves at greater risk of deviant behaviour (CPRA, 1994). Recreation greatly reduces the precursors to deviant behaviour, which include, among others, boredom, alienation, loneliness, and depression (Bembry, 1998; Boys & Girls Club, 2007; CPRA, 1994, 1997, 2001; Torjman, 2004). Participating in sport and recreation helps to increase self-esteem and confidence, promotes a sense of self-worth, lifts emotions and reduces anxiety:

Self esteem leads to confidence and skill building; by performing a skill correctly, it gives a sense of power and control to positively effect one’s esteem or self-image. The feeling of knowing how and receiving praise has a profound effect on the human condition... If you have high self-esteem, you have an ability to make good friends, you care about yourself and others, you are responsible, you enjoy learning, you are proud of what you do, you can handle failure, you can share your feelings (Bembry, 1998, p. 30).

Providing youth with recreation and a positive environment can lead to a reduction in the incidence of deviant behaviour, can lead to a positive transformation in the lives of youth-at-risk, and can empower entire communities.

Girls and Women

Young women and girls benefit immensely from participating in recreation programming, in terms of both physical and mental health. Physical activity greatly reduces the risk of diseases such as osteoporosis, which women are more vulnerable to developing (Mulholland, 2008). Young women are also more vulnerable to depression and other self-esteem issues than young men; regular participation can help empower young girls, enhance their self-esteem, and improve their overall quality of life (Active Healthy Kids Canada, 2008; Mulholland, 2008).

Women's involvement in sport and recreation challenges gender norms and stereotypes:

Sport participation can also help to undermine traditional gender stereotypes concerning academic aptitude, as studies have shown that girls' engagement in sport is linked to improved performance in science and mathematics. There is also evidence suggesting that sport participation can contribute to more generalized feelings of empowerment among girls and women. In many settings, adolescent girls may be encouraged to view their bodies as sexual reproductive resources for men, rather than sources of strength for themselves. Positive sport experiences can help to offset these influences, enabling girls to develop a greater sense of ownership of their bodies and a stronger sense of identity and self-direction (Mulholland, 2008, p. 26).

Involvement in recreation helps to empower individual women and young girls, and contributes to the breaking down of women's marginalization in society generally, and sport and academia specifically.

People with Disabilities

People who are differently-abled face many

barriers to full inclusion in society; involvement in recreation helps to break down some of these barriers. Participation allows individuals to receive the proven benefits of recreation, including acquisition of social and mental skills and improvement in overall quality of life. It also helps to dismantle stigmas and perceptions of people with disabilities by "focusing attention on their abilities and moving their disability from the perceptual foreground into the background. Able-bodied people encounter people with disabilities in a positive context that challenges their fundamental assumptions about what people with disabilities can or cannot do" (Mulholland, 2008, p.44). Recreation participation can lead to empowerment for the individual, as well as a more inclusive and connected community. These benefits have particular resonance with populations in the inner city of many cities, including Winnipeg, where a disproportionate percentage of people living with disabilities live (Stienstra & Wiebe, 2004).

Benefits to Communities and Society

I. Family Health and Stability

Recreation contributes to positive self-image, self-confidence, and relationship skills, such as cooperation and communication, skills that individuals involved in recreation can carry with them for the rest of their lives. These psycho-social benefits, discussed in more detail in the previous section, extend from the personal to relational, and contribute to the building of more positive relationships with peers, friends, and family. Relationships, notably within families, become stronger, healthier and more stable when family members participate in recreation together. This is true for relationships between child and parent as well as among partners (CPRA, 1997; Totten, 2007).

II. Reduction of Crime

Benefits of recreation to individuals extend beyond immediate relationships to the community as a whole. There is a substantial body of research demonstrating that participating in recreation correlates with reductions in crime, and in anti-social and self-destructive behaviours such as substance abuse, vandalism, early school drop out and unsafe sex (Bartlett et. al., 2004; CPRA, 1997; Boys & Girls Club, 2007, 2008a/b; Mulholland, 2008; Totten, 2007). Participation in positive, skill-building, structured recreational programs with the presence of positive role models, can significantly lower the risk for youth-at-risk of gang involvement or criminal behaviour (Boys & Girls Club, 2007; Mulholland, 2008, Totten, 2007). Opportunities to participate in skill-building programs in the presence of positive adult role models offer constructive, positive alternatives for youth (Boys & Girls Club, 2007; CPRA, 2001; Totten 2007).

III. Social Capital

In addition to recreation as a crime prevention tool, there is also a rich literature on how recreation and sport foster social capital, social inclusion, mutual understanding and trust within communities and across ethnic, cultural, or socio-economic backgrounds, a growing concern as cities become increasingly diverse, dynamic entities. Mulholland (2008), in her recent study *What Sport Can Do: The True Sport Report*, notes that not only are they promoters of good health, but sport and recreation are “an even more powerful means of building social capital” (p. xv). Social capital in communities “create[s] a sense of community, encourages active citizenship, and foster[s] trust, reciprocity, and a sense of community” (p. 40) and as a result helps create safer, vibrant, livable neighbourhoods.

Social capital is also an important aspect of building more inclusive communities.

People who are marginalized or excluded often suffer from multiple problems. These arise from a lack of human capital (e.g., confidence, self-esteem, education, employment skills) and the social capital that enables individuals to access the people, resources, and institutional help they need to tackle challenges and realize opportunities in their lives. Because sport can help individuals to both enhance their capacities and participate in broader social networks, it offers an important means of helping to redress these gaps at the individual and societal level. This has important implications for many groups in Canadian society who are currently not full participants in Canada’s social, economic and cultural life (Mulholland, 2008, p. 42).

Within the context of social capital, recreation is seen as facilitating ‘bonding,’ ‘bridging,’ and ‘linking’ social capital, through its capacity to strengthen relationships within families and communities, to link people across boundaries (territorial, psychological, societal), thus engendering trust and social cohesion, and to connect individuals at risk of isolation with potentially helpful community-based organizations or services (Mulholland, 2008, p. 41). Studies reveal that recreation and sport, because of their capacity to build trust, connection and understanding, can act as a vehicle for smoother settlement experiences for newcomers (Mulholland, 2008).

IV. Cost-Saving: Crime

Taxpayers are better off with improved access to recreation for low-income families. For each dollar spent on quality programs, more than a dollar’s worth of benefits are generated. Investments in the voluntary recreation sector can achieve substantial savings to the publicly funded health, social and corrections systems

while at the same time improving the quality of people's lives. Yet, despite the undeniable health and social savings of providing no-cost or low-cost recreation activities, Canada lags at least two decades behind the policies and practices of other countries and regions (Totten, 2007, p. 5).

The above quote is selected from one of many studies in a growing body of research which demonstrates that providing adequate, accessible recreation pays for itself, through reductions in costs to society in health, crime and poverty. Studies in Ontario and Calgary, for example, report that the cost-savings and benefits to society are so significant that they argue for free recreational programs and opportunities for all low-income individuals, and there are many examples where such advice has been embodied into policy (Totten, 2007; Bartlett, et al., 2004).

Boys & Girls Club (2008b, p. 4) note how society benefits from adequate recreation programs for youth:

Out-of-School programs can address risky and expensive (for society) behaviours in two ways. First, out-of-school programs keep youth busy during hours that they are most likely to get into trouble. Second, such programs provide relationship-based activities that assist young people to be active and healthy, and to have access to caring adults who can provide the support they need to succeed. Active children are more likely to be healthy – physically, emotionally, and socially – are less likely to commit crimes, and are more likely to stay in school and succeed later in life.

According to studies by the Boys & Girls Club of Canada (2008b, p. 1), social interventions that include recreational programs which offer skill-building opportunities and positive relationships can reduce 25-50 percent of crime within 10 years for individuals. Crime

prevention through recreational programming is an efficient use of societal resources, evidenced by a study by the International Centre for the Prevention of Crime (1999) which found: "it cost tax-payers seven times more to achieve a 10 percent reduction in crime through incarceration, rather than through social development" (cited in Boys & Girls Club, 2008b, p. 1). The costs of the judicial system and incarceration are huge in comparison to the costs of preventative measures such as investing in more accessible, creative, and adequate recreation opportunities.

Cost-benefit analyses of this are currently receiving increasing attention across Canada. Studies in Ontario, cited in the Canada Parks and Recreation (2001, p.41) study, found that the benefit of implementing a free recreation program "greatly exceeded the cost of mounting the program itself" due to the immediate decrease in vandalism, police and arson costs. Alternative measures to address crime are not expensive when compared with the long run costs of neglecting to address the root causes of crime in a preventative fashion.

V. Cost-Saving: Health

Parallel to the role recreation can play in reducing costs of crime to society is the reduction in health costs. The multitude of health-related benefits (both physical and psychological) to active individuals in turn significantly reduce costs to the health care system. Although there are different estimates regarding how much increased physical activity reduces health care costs directly and indirectly, all are considerable. The Boys & Girls Club (2008b) study as well as the Mulholland (2008) study report that the total indirect and direct costs of physical inactivity to the health care system is \$5.3 billion annually; a 10% increase in physical activity would lead to a reduction of \$150 million dollars in direct health costs alone (Mulholland, 2008). The benefits of rec-

reaction to family and psychological health reduce the related costs in health and social services, for example psychological services and foster care (CPRA 1997; Browne et al, 1998; Totten, 2007).

VI. Cost-Saving: Poverty

Besides the reduction in health and crime-related costs, recreation also has been shown to reduce the costs of poverty to society. A landmark study by Gina Browne et al., (1998) found that for ‘psychologically disordered’ children of families relying on social assistance, recreational services alone were responsible for a 10 percent exit from social assistance, and led also to increased social, physical and school-related success for the children, a reduction in social and health services (such as child psychology), and decreased cost to health and judicial sectors (Browne et al, 1998; CPRA, 2008d; Torjman, 2004; Totten, 2007). For low-income families recreation is seen as an ‘effective and economical way’ to better their lives (CPRA, 2008a, p. 1).

VII. Economic Development and Productivity

Lastly, recreation contributes to economic development and economic productivity in the workforce. The presence of recreation facilities and opportunities benefit local economies, and contribute to community economic development particularly in disadvantaged or marginalized communities (CPRA, 1997; Mulholland, 2008).

Numerous studies correlate recreation with increased workforce participation and performance. Adults are able to concentrate and attend work more with the assurance that their children are safe and in supervised programs (Boys & Girls Club, 2007); and participation in recreation for workers contributes directly to increased productivity, performance, less absenteeism and reduced worker turn-over

(CPRA, 1997; 2008c; Grantham, 1997; Mulholland, 2008). Youth who participate in recreation gain a wide range of skills that better equip them for entering the workforce—academic performance and attendance; creativity and problem solving capabilities; tolerance, understanding, respect; and cooperation and teamwork skills (CPRA, 1997; 2008b; Boys & Girls Club, 2008b; Mulholland, 2008). They also in many instances are able to gain direct skills that may lead to employment and/or volunteering.

Research clearly demonstrates that creating opportunities for individuals to participate and connect with their community through recreational programming, can help provide individuals with tools needed to transform their own lives. Their families and communities, and society as a whole, benefit from the resultant stronger, healthier, more resilient individuals and communities.

Barriers to Participation

Despite all the proven benefits of physical activity and recreation there are substantial barriers, especially for low-income individuals and communities, to participation.

I. Low-Income Individuals and Single-Parent Families

The *cost* of recreation programs is the number one barrier to all individuals and families accessing recreation and its identified benefits. This is especially so for low-income individuals and families who not only are particularly burdened by costs, but also often live in communities with fewer recreation facilities (Active & Healthy Kids 2008; Boys & Girls Club, 2007; CPRA, 1994; 2001; Frisby et al, 2005; Totten, 2007). Low-income communities are often physically removed from the benefits of recreation by the absence of programs and facilities in their neighbourhoods, as well as

having limited access to transportation. In a study by the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (CPRA) that examined the relationship between youth-at-risk and recreation, every focus group and interview identified cost and transportation as the two main barriers to families accessing recreation, with one parent stating, “it will soon be just the rich that will be able to have their kids involved” (CPRA, 1994, p.66). Furthermore, within the past few years there has been a reduction in available free programming, while costs of programs have been rising:

Virtually all municipalities charged entrance fees for aquatics, athletics, arts, after-school, and drop-in programs. In almost every case, the amount charged was higher than what it was five years prior to the study. In the 167 municipal recreation departments in the study, user fees were a major deterrent to children and youth participation in drop-in and after-school programs. Although 85 percent of these departments reported that they made efforts to increase participation of low-income people, subsidies were capped at a certain level, thereby excluding access to many families and children in need (Totten, 2007, p. 11).

In this same study, along with several others, families state that a lack of awareness of programs, the benefits of recreation, and awareness of fee-waivers or subsidies, presents another barrier to participation (CPRA, 2001; Forsyth, 2001; Frisby et al, 2005; Torjman, 2004). These issues, as this paper will argue later, are particularly relevant to this study of the Sherbrook Pool. The increasing user-fees, decreasing availability of free programs, and inaccessibility of facilities “works against low-income mothers [and families]” (Forsyth, 2001, p.60). Single-parents themselves are also restricted from participation because of a lack of available child-care and time to commit to recreation (Frisby et al, 2005).

While cost, transportation, lack of facilities, and lack of awareness of programs present physical barriers to individuals’ and families’ participation, there are also significant social and attitudinal barriers:

To understand constraints on leisure it would seem to be essential to pay attention to social structure and to social theory. This includes paying attention to the influence of social class (as indicated, for example, by income and occupation as well as relationship to the paid labour market), as well as the influence of age and gender.... It is not the fact of being female, or being elderly or unemployed per se which is the constraint, but rather the way in which this social location is experienced in society (Shaw et al, 1991, p. 299).

As stated earlier, women are marginalized from participation in recreation because of issues of self-esteem and gender stereotypes. Similarly, low-income individuals and families are marginalized and excluded from full participation. Isolation that has been institutionalized within society – as a result of race, class, gender, age, ability, or other factors – is mirrored in the exclusion of these groups from recreation.

Thus, while the literature shows that low-income families and communities are groups that could benefit most from recreation, they also face some of the most significant barriers to involvement.

II. Newcomer and Aboriginal Families

While low-income individuals and families face many physical and social barriers to participation, newcomer and Aboriginal families face many of the same barriers, only accentuated, as they are often over-represented in poverty and lower-income neighbourhoods. These families also face cultural, social, and attitudinal barriers to participa-

tion. Cultural and language barriers exacerbate communication challenges, further limiting these families' involvement (Active Healthy Kids Canada, 2008). Families' participation is also negatively effected by social isolation, not only because they are over-represented in low-income communities, but also because of the impact that institutionalized racism has had on society (Active Healthy Kids Canada, 2008).

Existing literature on the subject clearly states that opportunities to participate in sport and

recreation produce multiple benefits to individuals, families, communities and society. Evidence in the literature also shows that low-income neighbourhoods particularly benefit from access to sport and recreational opportunities, thus it is an irony that neighbourhoods which would benefit the most from accessible recreational opportunities, face the worst barriers. Among these barriers is the lack of nearby facilities, making the case for the Sherbrook Pool, located in Winnipeg's low-income West Central area, especially important.

Case Study: Sherbrook Pool

History

Just north of Portage Avenue on Sherbrook Street, Sherbrook Pool stands, a historically designated Winnipeg landmark and one of Canada's only remaining "Public Baths." For more than seventy-five years Sherbrook Pool has provided residents of the surrounding area and whole of Winnipeg with accessible recreation and sports. Built in 1931 to contribute to the public good, Sherbrook Pool quickly became a hub of community participation, interaction and pride. It appears that civic decision makers of the time were aware that investment in recreation and social supports would provide economic as well as social benefits. Free swimming was made readily available to families and individuals who under the financial strain of the Depression would likely have been unable to afford such activities otherwise.

As the decades passed and the city gradually expanded into the suburbs, the neighbourhoods surrounding Sherbrook Pool started to decline and support and funding for the Pool followed suit. However, the facility, in spite of its declining priority as a city-wide destination and as a candidate for civic attention, remained an extremely popular and important resource for residents in the nearby neighbourhoods.

Early in the 1990s, Sherbrook Pool was slated for closing and demolition due to declining attendance and economic considerations with respect to its age and cost of restoration and preservation (FOSP, 2000). Aware of the broad range of social as well as economic value of the pool, community leaders, pool users and residents came together to support the preservation of Sherbrook Pool.

The Struggle to Save Sherbrook Pool

In 1992 Friends of Sherbrook Pool (FOSP), a charitable, non-profit, membership-based organization of volunteers was established to ensure the continued sustainability and further development of the pool and its programming (C. Common-Singh, interview, July 29, 2009). Successful lobbying by FOSP gained the critical support of Mayor Susan Thompson and her top advisors which led to a successful FOSP application for Federal/Provincial Infrastructure funding to upgrade the pool with the City of Winnipeg contributing as a partner (City of Winnipeg, 1994; FOSP, 2000). The tri-level agreement was for a two-phase restoration, stabilization and improvement of the entire facility.

In 1995 Winnipeg City Council approved \$1.2 million in the Capital Budget for the project. It was to be paid in five yearly installments of \$240,000, with renovations and refurbishment to be completed by 1999. The city contribution would trigger the release of the Infrastructure grant (FOSP, 2000).

In 1996 the first two allocations from the City were matched with a \$500,000 Infrastructure contribution and the Phase One undertaking went underway (FOSP, 2000). Stabilization of the foundations, exterior walls, new windows throughout and vapor barrier requirements were all completed by 1997 (C. Common-Singh, interview, July 29, 2009; FOSP, 2000).

Since the longevity and integrity of Phase One depended on the implementation of Phase Two (mechanical and interior spaces), FOSP was eager to ensure the remaining funds would be released promptly. Despite its commitment the City did not release the remaining \$700,000 (FOSP, 2000), and the funds ap-

pear to have been diverted elsewhere (C. Common-Singh, interview, July 29, 2009). Recent City Council decisions to allocate Capital funding towards the development of a Private Sector Indoor Water Park (City of Winnipeg, 2009b) rather than to the restoration of existing water facilities demonstrates that the struggle to obtain consistent, reliable support from the City is far from over.

Despite prior waves of political neglect, and lack of support for the final phase of structural upgrades, Sherbrook Pool has remained, much to the credit of the perseverance of Friends of Sherbrook Pool, residents, volunteers and pool users. Friends of Sherbrook Pool, with support from the Winnipeg Foundation and individual donors, has established Kidswim (free swimming lessons to local children and youth), the Sherbrook Sharks Swim Club, a weekly time block of free admission, and has built a fully equipped weight/exercise room (C. Common-Singh, interview, July 29, 2009). Providing accessible recreational programs which extend to those who might otherwise be excluded by circumstance, these programs, along with other specific elements of the pool itself are considered assets in the area, and offer advantages over other pools and recreation facilities in the city.

The Surrounding Community

Located on Sherbrook Street, just south of Ellice Avenue, Sherbrook Pool stands in the heart of the West-Central area, defined for the

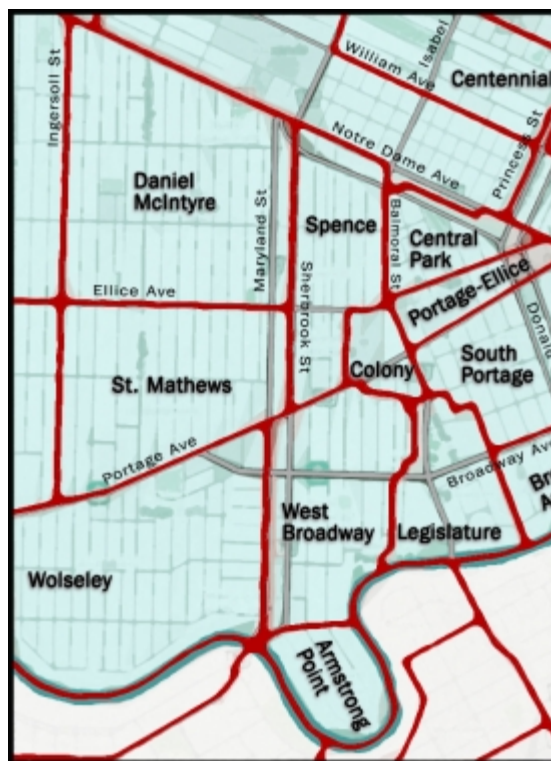


Figure I. West Central Community

purposes of this study as including the neighbourhoods of Spence, Daniel MacIntyre, St. Mathews, Central Park, and West Broadway in Winnipeg.

In many respects the area demonstrates characteristics of a typical inner-city neighbourhood: lower average incomes, higher incidence of low-income, and higher proportions of single mothers (who, on average, are more likely to live in poverty), Aboriginal peoples and newcomers. The neighbourhoods in the area report higher unemployment rates, and

Table I. Select 2006 Census Data (Statistics Canada)

	City of Winnipeg	West Central
2006 Total Population	633,451	28,685
Aboriginal identity	10.20%	21.76%
Visible minority	16.30%	39.84%
Proportion of Female Sole-Parents	16.20%	31.21%
Unemployment Rate	5.20%	10.20%
% of pop. who do not drive to work	32.00%	58.77%
Incidence of low income pre-taxes (2005)	14.90%	47.48%

a lower percentage of individuals who drive to work (see Table I). Taken together, demographics and socio-economic data such as these suggest populations which are disadvantaged and marginalized by current societal, economic and political systems; such communities are frequently stigmatized.

As is often the pattern in inner-city neighbourhoods, the area has witnessed a gradual decline and relocation of its resources. This is a particular problem in low-income neighbourhoods such as these, where local resources play a vital role in community health and stability, noted by Erika Wiebe, community development worker in West Central:

...I think any neighbourhood needs to be well-rounded, so it needs to have a good balance of different kinds of resources available for community people. And especially in inner-city neighbourhoods where people are low income, they travel very locally, like within blocks is their life, pretty much, except that they might take the bus down to Polo Park or Walmart every now and then, but most of them don't have vehicles, some can't afford lots, can't afford bus fare, and a lot don't have a phone. So that means that their lives are very local (E. Wiebe, interview, February 23, 2009).

When lives are lived very locally, and transport is made difficult, local resources become especially important.

Despite the inherent challenges to community and individual health under conditions set by such socio-economic, structural and political forces, West Central is vibrant and well-connected. Reverend Cathy Campbell from St. Matthews-Maryland Anglican Church describes some of the attributes of the community:

...It's diverse, and it's just gifted in all sorts of ways. You know, does it face challenges?

Sure, but rarely in my life have I been able to be in such a diverse community. And if you love people, it's great! Old and young from every part of the world, from every corner of Manitoba. There's tremendous goodness here... That's the source of abundance in your life (C. Campbell, interview, January 30, 2009).

Reflecting the diversity of its populations, West Central is home to an array of community-based organizations (CBOs) and initiatives, which build on the positive assets of the community and contribute significantly and in various ways to individual, family and community empowerment, resiliency and creativity.

Community associations and programs are playing increasingly important roles in supporting healthy child development, as "they complement the institutions of family and school by providing opportunities and resources that other institutions are often unable to provide" (Boys & Girls Club, 2008a, p. 3). Not restricted to children and youth, CBOs and local initiatives offer a variety of benefits to individuals and families through support, advocacy, education, resources, and space to organize, express and build capacity. As such, they contribute significantly and in different ways to community development, community economic development, mobilization, reclamation and transformation at the individual and collective level. Ultimately these opportunities, resources and space can assist in larger struggles against the dominant social, economic, political and colonial structures which perpetuate cyclical and systemic poverty, disadvantage and exclusion. The following list provides a mere sample of the many successful, diverse community-based organizations in the area:

- Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre
- West Central Women's Resource Centre
- Spence Neighbourhood Association (SNA)

- Central Park Women's Resource Centre
- International Centre
- Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba (IRCOM)
- Wolseley Family Place
- West Broadway Community Ministry
- Art City
- Clinic Community Health Centre
- Lions Manor/Lions Club
- Women's Health Clinic
- Canadian Muslim Women's Institute
- Welcome Place

There are also a number of community-based organizations, programs and initiatives that provide recreation in the area. The following list represents some organizations and programs that play a role within the broader network of recreation in the area:

- Boys and Girls Club
- West Central Community Program
- Magnus Eliason Recreation Centre (MERC)
- Kids Korner
- Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba (IRCOM)
- Spence Neighbourhood Association (SNA)
- Broadway Neighbourhood Centre
- Sport Programs in Inner City Neighbourhoods (SPIN)

Having opportunities for individuals and families to participate in recreation is undoubtedly beneficial to those participating and to the community at large, as revealed in the literature review. The same views on the importance of recreation that are expressed in the research-based literature were mirrored in our interviews with individuals involved in the West Central area. The literature's identified barriers to participation were also shown to be the same barriers that the West Central community faces to accessing recreation generally, and Sherbrook Pool specifically.

I think recreational activities for anyone is really important, the social aspects are

really positive, especially with youth. But, in the inner city I think they are more important because they don't get those... a lot of kids don't have opportunities like they do in other areas, and so, without these recreational activities... the kids have nothing to do. And a lot of them don't have positive home environments, or don't have a home environment they can be in after school, so without these youth programs, they would be forced to be on the street (J. Mahmood, interview, January 21, 2009).

...you know, a healthy community is a safe community, right? The programs for the youth it helps with self-esteem, it helps with energy, it helps with time-management, it helps too as far as making friends and fitting in. There's all sorts of things they can learn. It's great for the community because of, you know, if the youth are happy, [we have] better spirits, better mood[s], all that kind of stuff (L. Mullhall, interview, February 9, 2009).

The biggest problem we're facing is gang and drug issues in this neighbourhood, kids are very active, they want to do a lot of things, and gang groups are ahead of us, they start to recruit kids at the age of 12, 13 and 14 telling them 'you're too young, you cannot get arrested, you're not gonna get a criminal record, you can get money, the government, you know nobody's going to employ you but we're able to give you money,' and this kind of things, you know they tempt them with very flashy things. So kids not having programs, it's easy for them to go into that kind of different alternative. So the availability of facilities and the availability of programs will reduce the level of insecurity in the neighbourhood... (A. Ahmed, interview, February 17, 2009).

The interview findings support the benefits

and barriers to recreation discussed in the literature. Based on an understanding of the benefits of and barriers to accessible recreation the discussion that follows examines the role Sherbrook Pool currently plays in providing accessible recreation in the area, and what changes in the future could occur to address some of the barriers. In order to do this successfully, it is useful to view Sherbrook Pool within the context of the broader community, re-imagining it as not just as a pool, but as an integral part of a holistic, asset-based approach to community development.

Sherbrook Pool Within the Community

When viewed through the lens of community development, Sherbrook Pool can be seen as an asset in the West Central area; it is a safe, available, affordable, and accessible site for recreation. This is especially important in an area like West Central, which has experienced the consequence of municipal disinvestment, and the relocation of some of its valued recreation facilities. In our interviews, some interviewees commented that there *are* recreational programs and facilities in the area, while many others added that there was a definite need for additional opportunities.

So, is there a need for kid's and for recreational opportunities in this part of the city? Absolutely! At this point, I don't think you could put in too much, what we have right now is way, way, way too little (C. Campbell, interview, January 30, 2009).

In this context, Sherbrook Pool appears as an indisputable asset to the community; the facility itself already exists, and although programming may need to expand to better respond to the surrounding community, the facility offers an opportunity to do so. When considering Sherbrook Pool as part of a network of recreation activities and initiatives

in the area, one can think creatively about future possibilities that would expand on the benefits Sherbrook Pool provides to the community.

Sherbrook Pool is not only considered an asset for simply being an available facility in the area, but also because it serves as an accessible site of recreation, where the concept of 'accessibility' differs for various individuals and groups in the city. For some, accessible can mean just the presence of programs or facilities; for others, it could mean available parking or proximity to public transportation. For many in the West Central area, accessibility is frequently equated with walk-ability. The need for local resources, particularly recreation facilities, was articulated by the majority of interviewees.

And so... you know it's not good enough to say 'well we've got a swimming pool 15 blocks away.' You need local resources.... So, generally speaking, I think recreation is just one of the many kinds of activities or resources that have to be available in neighbourhoods—particularly in inner-city neighbourhoods they have to be very local and close-by. So it's a very important service (E. Wiebe, interview, February 23, 2009).

Then, if you really want to get me going, you talk about the consolidation of all good rec. space up in that Sargent street big sports centre, *how, how*, is a 6, or 7, or 8 or 10 or 11 or 12 year old from *this* neighbourhood going to get there!? *How* are they going to get there?! Their parents don't have cars; what are they going to do, walk?! It's probably a mile and a half or two miles away, across several big busy streets, how are they going to get there? It is madness! Absolute madness to have pulled it all into one big centre up there. *These* are the kids that need it. Do we have lots of kids? We have decent numbers of

kids, hmm? And if you ignore the kids, the kids will make themselves visible, the kids will demand attention. And we have had instances when some of these groups, floating groups of kids, turn and start vandalizing the neighbourhood. Then, you end up with all this anger at the kids, well that's not okay! (C. Campbell, interview, January 30, 2009).

I know that in our several fights to keep Sherbrook pool, you look at the map and you know you've got Sherbrook Pool and there's Sargent [Park Pool/Cindy Klassen Centre] over there, and its only that far on the map, but it's the whole thing too. People who used to shop at Sargent and Wall, well you just gotta go to Sargent and Maryland, and well it's not that easy, right? Distances certainly do make a difference (M. Titheridge, interview, January 23, 2009).

Embedded in the notion of accessibility are also concerns over gangs, particularly for those who feel crossing certain geographic boundaries in the area becomes a safety concern:

Some of the kids because of gang situations or bullying if you're from this side of Portage or you're from that side of Portage you can't cross, right? Or if you cross you could end up getting beaten up by people for no apparent reason, so those are things that become obstacles... (L. Mullhall, interview, February 9, 2009).

Many interviewees pointed to recent changes in the area that have generated concern among many residents. Both the recent closure of Galaxy Roller Rink on Portage, and the expanding University of Winnipeg campus were frequently mentioned. Specific attention to the inaccessibility of the University of Winnipeg's Duckworth Centre was common to many interviews.

When considering accessibility, one must also consider attitudinal barriers that may hinder access. Different groups of people may face different attitudinal barriers including, but certainly not limited to, newcomers (who might also face a language and/or cultural barrier) and differently-abled people (who might also face physical barriers):

Not only that, accessibility also includes attitude, what's the people in the venue going to be like when you get in there. Do they treat the people with disabilities with indifference? Totally ignore them? (B. Muloin, interview, February 19 2009).

While all these issues of accessibility must be considered, so too must the issue of affordability. Often, the largest barriers to recreation are the costs involved (see page 8, above). So, for many communities—the West Central area included—accessible means affordable, and more often than not, affordable recreation means free.

So again, just given the nature of our neighbourhood, and the level of poverty, if you're going to make it accessible, it has to be almost free, if not free (J. Hogue, interview, February 19, 2009).

[Sherbrook Pool is] a cool place, it needs to be here... there isn't another one in this neighbourhood, if you added up the radius, where is it? Sargent Park? And can they afford the fees? No! It should always be that Sherbrook Pool is here... (S. Taylor, interview, February, 17, 2009).

To build on the assets of the surrounding area and the benefits that Sherbrook Pool provides to the area, it needs to be seen as more than just a pool; it as an important part of this network of recreation activities and initiatives within the area. Mentioned in almost every interview is also the critical issue of lack of green space in the downtown area, and thus, a lack of space for the community to organ-

ize. Sherbrook Pool, already providing important programming and opportunities to the neighbourhood, can increase its capacity to serve as a community hub. In this way, Sherbrook Pool could not only contribute to the recreation network in the West Central area, but also be a part of a holistic community development approach for the area.

The Benefits of Sherbrook Pool

Do we need Sherbrook Pool? We need Sherbrook Pool *and*; we need Sherbrook Pool *plus* (C. Campbell, interview, January 30, 2009).

There was strong consensus amongst all the interviewees that there is a need for Sherbrook Pool in the West Central area. It is considered an asset which, if lost, would be to the detriment of the numerous groups and individual pool users and to the community.

Recent data collected from the City of Winnipeg show that for a community pool, Sherbrook is well used and accessed by many within the neighbourhood and from all over

the city (see Table II). Free swim times, especially, appear to be well accessed and the pool is packed to capacity during these hours (Friends of Sherbrook Pool, 2005).

These data make it clear that Sherbrook Pool is a well-used asset in the West Central community. It is recognized as such by our interviewees and users of the pool. As a site of accessible recreation in a low-income area, it provides many benefits to the community. But the pool itself also offers *particular* benefits, which set it apart from other pools and sites of recreation in Winnipeg.

I. Accessible and Affordable Programming

The Kidswim program, developed by FOSP, offers free swimming lessons to children and youth in the area who would not otherwise have access to this important life skill. Participants come from three schools in the area – Sister MacNamara, John M. King, and Greenway – and there is a high demand for the program, expressed by families in the surrounding communities. Since the program’s development in 1994, over 2500 chil-

Table II. Sherbrook Pool Data

Attendance Figures					
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Aquatic Instruction	14,265	5,660	4,934	13,660	10,660
Public Swim	27,229	24,689	21,798	31,144	29,045
Total	50,559	38,131*	33,709*	51,210	49,110

* From our research, we believe the drop in Sherbrook Pool’s attendance in 2005/06 is a result of the Pool being closed for some renovations.

2008 Detailed	
Total Facility Attendance	49,110 visits
General Facility Admission/Public Swim (includes Free Swim)	29,045
Swim Lesson Attendance	10,660
Register Active Living	3,060
Schools	764
Free Swim	7,275

dren in the area have registered, with approximately 1780 of those having completed the program. In 2009, the program is expected to be used by approximately 200 children (data courtesy of FOSP).

As stated in the literature review, having structured, accessible recreation in low-income areas has enormous benefits to the individuals involved, as well as society as a whole. Children and youth are provided with a safe and supportive environment to develop motor, social, cognitive, and leadership skills:

Recreation and play are particularly important for child development; promoting the acquisition of motor skills, social skills and creativity, and the development of intellectual capacity. Recreation, sports, and arts and culture build self-esteem and positive self-image for children and young people. They provide safe, developmental opportunities for latch-key children after school. Programs in these areas help build social skills and stimulate participation in community life, thereby producing leaders who serve their communities (Torjman, 2008, p.18).

Kidswim, an example of such a structured skill-building program, provides an optimal space for skill development, positive socialization and, because it is a subsidized program, families do not face the financial barrier.

Kidswim is... very important, you know, by now we kind of take it for granted 'cause it's been there for a while, but that's a very important service for kids to have, not only to give them something to do, which is key, really when people don't have a lot of options for recreation that they have something to do, but it's also a skill-building activity; it's a safety related thing so that kids are prepared when they go out with schools to lakes and that sort of thing; it's a health-related

thing—it promotes, you know, healthy living—that kind of thing; and it connects kids with their community too, so it's a very important program (E. Wiebe, interview, February 23, 2009).

Sherbrook Pool also offers free open swim times and loonie/toonie (\$1 entry for children/\$2 entry for adults) swims. Some of the City's other pools also offer loonie/toonie or free swims, but these are very limited hours (on average, two hours/week); Sherbrook Pool, by contrast, offers, on average, loonie/toonie swims eight hours/week and free swims five hours/week (City of Winnipeg, 2009a). The majority of free/loonie/toonie swim times are during non-school hours, on several days of the week. Our interviews with individuals speaking on behalf of populations they were in close contact with, revealed the free swim times are well used and there was a strong perception that the social benefits of this service reached far beyond the calculations of revenue lost by providing free admission.

And I've been when it's free swim time and sometimes the place is just a zoo, it's just packed, and there's kids that come there without their parents, it's a safe place for them to come, there's kids that come there without bathing suits, they're swimming in their shorts. But it gives them an option, a good option, and so it's very important (E. Wiebe, interview, February 23, 2009).

As mentioned earlier, the availability of free programming is important to the community's well-being; this is especially beneficial to local youth. Kidswim and free swim times provide skill-building opportunities, as well as the physical and psycho-social benefits of recreation, as noted in the literature. Studies have demonstrated that the total incidence of crime is higher in the neighbourhoods included in the West Central area than for Winnipeg as a whole (Fitzgerald et al. 2004); there-

fore, having opportunities for youth-at-risk or for youth in general is positive, particularly when provided in a structured, skill-building way, with the presence of positive role models (Totten, 2007).

Sherbrook Pool, with support from FOSP, also runs the Sherbrook Sharks Swim Club, and throughout the years has offered water polo, synchronized swimming, and a range of other programming.

II. Warm Water

Sherbrook Pool is also known to have a warmer water temperature, compared to other pools in the city. As noted by a number of interviewees, the warm water offers particular benefits to seniors, families, and people with various medical conditions.

The warm water [helps] people who have arthritis, who have fibromyalgia, who have physical ailments the older you get, your ailments [are] helped by it being warm (W. Matysiak, interview, February 23, 2009).

Because of the warmer water, Sherbrook Pool has become the site of a number of therapeutic aqua programs. A quick look in the most recent *Leisure Guide* lists the following Aquafit classes: Baby and Me, Multiple Sclerosis, Arthritis, Arthritic Aquafit (twice weekly), Fibromyalgia (twice weekly) and Stretch/Stroke Correction (2009). A number of these programs are only offered at the one location in the city—Sherbrook Pool.

III. Neighbourhood Pool

Many of our families walk, many of our families can't get [to regional recreational facilities]. Or, if they can, it's a short stint, it's not hours [walking]. It's not about these multiplexes, it's about community, and it's about community development. It's about maintaining things in the community so

people know their community and know the people that go there (S. Taylor, interview, February 17, 2009).

A handful of interviewees mentioned having used, or continuing to use Sherbrook Pool in their programming, often citing the size and location as being the prime reasons for choosing it over other facilities, such as Cindy Klassen Centre (Sargent Park Pool). Mark Titheridge, long-time director of the West Central Community Program states the benefits of Sherbrook's size:

But, if I'm taking kids swimming I much prefer Sherbrook because it's much easier to supervise kids. If you're taking kids to Sargent Park you're going up and down all the time, watching your non-swimmers and your lemmings jumping off the cliff (interview, January 23, 2009).

Along with supervision, the size of Sherbrook Pool was noted by many interviewees as offering particular benefits in its neighbourhood feel, offering familiarity and space conducive to building relationships with staff and among pool users. In this way, Sherbrook Pool provides more than just a single tank pool with limited potential. It creates a space for community engagement.

Particularly because of its size and location, but also because of the water temperature, Sherbrook Pool has the ability to respond to special individual or group interests, demonstrated by the abundant therapeutic programs offered. Considered in this context, Sherbrook Pool can be established as a niche pool, offering tailored programs that respond to the different and changing needs of the communities it serves.

Looking at the Pool within an asset-based community development strategy, the location and size of the pool is not a limitation, but rather an asset that can be built upon.

Obstacles Facing Sherbrook Pool

Despite the many positive opportunities it currently provides, Sherbrook Pool continues to face constraints to program expansion and its ability to fulfill its capacity as a community hub and provider of accessible recreation. Some of the most visible and frequently cited constraints will be discussed here.

I. The 'city's best-kept secret'

Although used by a number of groups and individuals in the area, interviewees generally felt that Sherbrook could be used more. Much of this is attributable to obstacles facing Sherbrook Pool, a primary one being public awareness. Perhaps as a result of the sea of political and media attention given to the new Cindy Klassen Centre, and perhaps in part simply because of its age, Sherbrook Pool has become the 'city's best kept secret.' Having slipped into the background of public consciousness, many in the West Central area do not know it exists, still exists, or even where it is. Many interviewees noted that even its sign, 'Public Baths' may be misleading to the public, and that the 'Sherbrook Pool' sign is camouflaged into the southern wall.

If you ever notice the sign that says Sherbrook Pool that's on the building, have you seen it? Well, you can't because it's the same colour as the walls. Its golden brown, and the walls are brick, and guess what colour they are? Golden brown! So, if you aren't looking, you don't know you're in Sherbrook Pool! The only signs is the 'Baths', eh? Sherbrook Baths. So there is a sign there, City of Winnipeg, Sherbrook Swimming Pool, but you can't see it because it's the same colour! So a lot of people say, 'well, Sherbrook Pool, where is it?'

(W. Matysiak, interview, February 23, 2009).

...I'm sure there are people living perhaps not next to the pool but within stone-throw away from the pool that aren't even aware that it's there (M. Titheridge, interview, January 23, 2009).

I think for example, like there are very few people who know there is a swimming pool at Sherbrook, especially most of the newcomer families don't know... (A. Ahmed, interview, February 17, 2009).

Besides simply not knowing that the pool exists, many do not know there is a gym facility upstairs, or what programming is offered. Current promotion of the Pool has been limited to the City's *Leisure Guide*, a relatively ineffective communication tool in the West Central area, as Dan Prokopchuk, Manager of the City of Winnipeg's Community Development and Recreation Services Division notes:

[Our communication] is our *Leisure Guide*, and we have found it is not effective, at least I don't believe it is, we don't have the stats to say that, but I don't believe our *Leisure Guide* [is effective]... the way it is presently formatted, and being almost a hundred page guide... [Also,] a lot of our free programs aren't identified in there because it's our market-driven programs that are in there. So, we need a different type of vehicle to communicate which types of programs are available in the inner city, and it has to be much different than the *Leisure Guide*, and we're just working on that right now (interview, March 2, 2009).

In addition to the lack of public awareness, there is also an issue of accessibility. Here, accessibility needs to be thought of in broad terms, encompassing transportation, distances, costs as well as in terms of how cultural, language, and attitudinal barriers prevent some groups from using the Pool. While Sherbrook Pool was noted by interviewees as

being generally perceived as more accessible than other centres in Winnipeg, there are still barriers to access that different groups face.

Issues of accessibility also need to be thought of in a physical way. Sherbrook Pool currently offers programming for specialized groups, and has great potential to expand on this, as will be discussed later. In order for the pool to be more accessible to differently-abled people, physical and attitudinal barriers must be targeted.

When you throw out the word ‘accessibility’ and ‘venue’ it means so much more to [people with disabilities] and like I said, accessibility is ‘is there a place that I can get Handi-Transit to drop me off?’ It’s not just about, ‘can a standard wheelchair fit through the door and is there a rail in the bathroom and a wide door in the bathroom’ (D. Day, interview, February 19, 2009).

Due to the limits in scope of this paper—the focus was not on what physical barriers Sherbrook Pool as a facility may present to differently-abled people—it is strongly recommended that further research in this area be conducted to better serve the West Central and wider community.

II. Inconsistency

Interviewees also suggested that confusion around the Pool schedule limits use. The hours that the pool is open for free and loonie/toonie swims change season-to-season, and without a permanent, reliable presence, Sherbrook Pool is not able to adequately support the community.

That’s another thing, you know, you talk about consistency, the one thing that isn’t consistent are the pool hours—you know, public swim, public access, you know, I’m not even sure if you can go swimming after school... (M. Titheridge, interview, January 23, 2009).

III. Affordability

Although Sherbrook Pool offers many hours of free and loonie/toonie swims, affordability was mentioned as a barrier for groups involved with providing recreation by a number of interviewees. This may speak to the cost of swimming in general, or swimming at non-subsidized hours, or a lack of information about the reduced/free admission offered.

I think one of the barriers, one of the most difficult things we have is making sure the children and youth know what types of choices are available. Whether they are programs you have to register for like sports, for example it could be soccer or hockey, it’s making sure the youth and children know those opportunities exist. Because, what’ll often happen is, families are so concerned with their physiological needs, like getting food on the table, they’re not thinking about registering their child to participate in a recreation program. So, as an eight-year-old, if your parent isn’t taking you to register, how do you even get involved? So, a lot of that falls upon a lot of the organizations that exist in the inner city to make sure these children and youth have an opportunity to know what choices there are in the area of recreation programming. So I think that’s a major barrier (D. Prokopchuck, interview, March 2, 2009).

The City, I mean, when you talk to the City they’ll tell you that people on social assistance with a letter from their worker can have their fees for lessons waived but you’ll never see that published in the *Leisure Guide* or a sign put up at the pool, you know that it’s a best-kept secret—same thing as the gym at Sherbrook pool (M. Titheridge, interview, January 23, 2009).

Obstacles such as these which constitute barriers can be effectively addressed if Sherbrook

Pool starts to be seen in a different light, through a community development lens. By interacting with the community and building on both the pool's assets and those of the community, Sherbrook can begin to expand in what it currently offers.

Re-Imagining Sherbrook Pool

It is useful to re-imagine Sherbrook Pool by seeing it not just as an individual, stand-alone facility, but rather as part of a holistic, asset-based community development strategy. As such, Sherbrook Pool would help foster inclusion, connect the neighbourhood, and could offer creative programs that meet needs of individuals and families in the community.

This concept for a community-based model of recreation contrasts with earlier political and ideological positions of the City of Winnipeg, illustrated by the Public Use Facilities Study (PUFS) Report (2004). The PUFS Report's calculations and recommendations demonstrate the kind of thinking that has long dominated City politics. The PUFS Report recommended the closure of community centres, libraries and city pools, deemed 'surplus' in their respective neighbourhoods based on narrow economic calculations. Although not completely implemented at the institutional level, PUFS declares that it "must be an action plan not just another report" (City of Winnipeg, 2004a, p. 63), and many of the centres declared 'surplus' have in fact been closed, including the West End library (which was amalgamated into the new Cindy Klassen Centre). Sherbrook Pool was included in this 'surplus' category, and the report stated that, "single tank indoor pools no longer fit the vision" (Ibid, p.66) of the proposed action plan for recreation in Winnipeg.

The PUFS vision is based on a suburban model of recreation: recommending the closure of many smaller facilities and their amalgamations into a smaller number of larger facili-

ties. Whatever its merits, the model assumes that people have access to cars to get to the new, more distant facilities. Many residents in the West Central area and in the inner-city generally do not have cars (see Table I). The PUFS model, which requires traveling distances, does not fit the reality of life in many communities in the inner city. While the report notes that "higher needs neighbourhoods cannot be treated in the same manner as the suburbs" (p.62), they fail to recognize this issue in their 'vision'. The PUFS Report's recommendations are based on a narrow calculation of costs and benefits, which largely ignores the vast body of literature reviewed above, which makes clear the many broader benefits of access to sport and recreation facilities and programs.

Fortunately the City of Winnipeg Community Development and Recreation Services Department has started to shift away from this model, towards a more community-based service delivery model, one which understands and celebrates differences across communities, and is rooted in an understanding of the importance of local resources and local recreation opportunities for residents. While still new and still in the process of being implemented, and thus difficult to assess, we feel this apparent shift in ideology and service delivery model offers great promise for the future of Sherbrook Pool. Dan Prokopchuk, Manager of the City of Winnipeg Community Development and Recreation Services Department, explains the new community-based model:

...in each geographic area, we are going to have what we're calling integrated teams, so I will have the recreation technician, I will have the pool supervisor, whatever the pool is, say Sherbrook Pool, the pool supervisor will be part of the integrated team, as well as a community development worker and a community resource coordinator. So, those

individuals will be responsible to work with the community, and that will help us use the facilities better than what they're currently used for. And you bring up Sherbrook Pool, so my pool supervisor will be out in the community asking everybody, 'what are some great opportunities that we can look at, at Sherbrook Pool? What are some different ways of doing things that we can do at Sherbrook Pool?' (interview, March 2, 2009).

Considering Sherbrook Pool as an asset in the area, which offers opportunity to build on many of the strengths of the neighbourhood, within a holistic vision of community development, opens up possibilities for the future. While there is evidence that the City's Recreation Department is beginning to see recreation through a community development lens, the struggle to save Sherbrook Pool is far from over; the fight that FOSP began in 1992 is still being fought. While PUFs has not been com-

pletely implemented, many of the study's recommended closures (centres deemed 'surplus') *have* occurred. Moreover, the City's second phase of dollars for the restoration project remains missing and no further capital funds to complete its refurbishing have been announced for Sherbrook Pool.

Based on this way of re-imagining it, Sherbrook Pool emerges as a critical component of the West Central community. Working as part of an integrated community-based network, with a strong community outreach component, it can offer essential services and programs to the diverse populations it serves. It should no longer be seen as just a pool, nor judged solely on its narrowly-defined economic merit. Sherbrook Pool is more than a single-tank pool with limited economic prospects. It is an integral part of the community, and despite the obstacles it faces, there is much potential to expand on its social, economic, individual and collective benefits.

Recommendations

Rooted in an understanding of benefits of and barriers to accessible recreation discussed in the literature and echoed in the interviews, the following discussion uses this information not only to see the Sherbrook Pool within the context of community but also to think creatively about the opportunities that exist for the future. It is useful if we no longer see Sherbrook as simply a pool, but rather as one crucial piece in a network of facilities and programs that serve the community and build on its strengths in a holistic way.

One way to do this would be through the establishment of partnerships with different organizations within the West Central area that already offer programming to diverse communities. Through our interviews with representatives of some of these organizations, the idea of partnerships came up several times. The following section summarizes some ideas that have arisen from the research, and proposes recommendations for Sherbrook Pool and the City of Winnipeg to pursue in the future.

As community consultations were not exhaustive, these are merely suggestions. Further discussions with the community, and more specifically with users and potential users of the Pool would produce additional sound ideas for using Sherbrook Pool to benefit the community. Despite this fact, we believe there is a great opportunity, and need, for Sherbrook Pool to implement tailored programming in partnership with a series of community-based organizations in the area so that it can respond effectively to the diverse (and changing) needs of the West-Central community.

I. Outreach

One of the main obstacles facing Sherbrook Pool is the lack of awareness of both its presence as a facility in general, and the various programs offered within. There is an opportunity to make itself known again to the wider public. Addressing barriers of communication and misinformation could be achieved through community outreach, communication campaigns, and reasserting its presence in the neighbourhood, instead of relying on the cliché, ‘build it and they will come,’ for this has proved to be less than successful. What is needed is the development of a community outreach worker/team to develop relationships with the community, and to work with community members and community-based organizations to develop new partnerships for programs that will produce the benefits that the literature shows are possible.

There are very few people who know there is a swimming pool at Sherbrook, especially most of the newcomer families don’t know, so bringing for example people from Sherbrook to come out to community meetings to be able to tell them there’s this swimming pool and there’s, for example, this certain open time where we have subsidized fees... so bringing more of an outreach kind of a thing to reach the communities, it will make it easier. Right now, the way things are it’s only specific [parts] of the communities that have had access with swimming pools and know about swimming, that use that kind of a swimming pool. People that are not necessarily that used to swimming are not aware of what’s happening. So, for [Sherbrook Pool] to reach out to the community

more often, to tell them what's going on at the swimming pool, what kind of programs are offered there, and also training the staff at the swimming pool to be able to respond in a more culturally sensitive way to the people who have different backgrounds will make it more easier (A. Ahmed, interview, February 17, 2009).

A community outreach team can increase awareness of Sherbrook Pool and the programs offered, and also increase accessibility. The team could target some of the factors that lead to this lack of awareness, such as English language skills, illiteracy, social isolation, and all other issues of accessibility. The team would also allow the community to put a face to Sherbrook, and build relationships with the Pool's staff.

When you think creatively, it's like having a community developer that's on the streets, someone that's present to the kids that can go to their homes and connect in this world... lot's of people can say, "well the programs here, it's available. It's just your problem you're not coming and using our program." But, if there's huge cultural gaps and misunderstandings, and concerns about safety, and neglect... just plain ordinary families in crisis, could we not reach out? Could we not think of ways of building relationships? So, to come to the pool or to come to the rec. program is just easier, becomes more possible. We have, I believe, an obligation to reach out, right? To go the extra step, the extra mile, to make it, 'it's not you guys come and fit us, it's we're here to build an awesome community' (C. Campbell, interview, January 30, 2009).

We also recommend a new sign for the Pool in order for Sherbrook to reestablish itself in

the neighbourhood, as this was articulated as a significant contributor to the lack of awareness by the general public.

The signs are there, but they could use a sign that says "Sherbrook Pool"! A nice billboard, angled because it's a one-way street into the end of that parking lot here that says 'Hey! Sherbrook Pool! Historic Site!'...whatever you want to put, because a lot of people don't know that this place, one, still operates, and two, where it is (W. Matysiak, interview, February 23, 2009).

II. Free Swim & Loonie/Toonie Swim

The free swim times and loonie/toonie swims at Sherbrook Pool are among the Centre's greatest assets as these hours help to diminish the cost barriers. Frequently mentioned by interviewees was concern over both the inconsistency and infrequency of these programs. The hours that the Pool is open for these reduced costs change season to season, and are therefore not a constant support for the community. If the Pool is to serve as an adequate support for the community, consistent hours are an advantage.

Also noted by interviewees was the lack of information accessed by the *Leisure Guide*. While the City does have some programs in place for waiving fees, these are not widely known in the community. Also a concern for families is the requirements around fee waivers, where families have to fill out forms admitting they are poor:

And it's really weird, because how do you waive fees with dignity and respect? There's an element, do I have to say I'm poor to get fees waived?... What happened to universal services? (S. Taylor, interview, February 17, 2009).

Instead of requiring families to fill out forms to have their fees waived, more classes could

be offered in connection with schools or other community-based recreation programs.

III. Therapeutic Swim Programs

Sherbrook Pool, because of its size and water temperature, has become the site of several therapeutic swim classes, catering to different communities (seniors, people with MS, arthritis, fibromyalgia, etc.). These are very successful and provide great support to the individuals involved:

So, some of these people, for example with MS, might take them an hour to get there in the morning, like to get out of bed, get dressed, come, wait for Handi-Transit. Then they get undressed there with their helpers, swim for forty-five minutes—that whole forty-five minute class might take three hours of their day just to get there and back, and it's an outing for them. So, that's why I think those programs are doing really well, cause they all socialize, they know each other for a long time. And they give each other moral support (Anonymous, interview, May 6, 2009).

While these classes are already offered, there is still much potential to expand in this area, specifically to seniors. This program could be offered in partnership with the two large near-by seniors' residences—Lions Manor and Lions Club. As stated in the literature, swimming—especially in a warm water pool—can offer great benefits to seniors.

Partnerships with the near-by senior complexes could be strengthened, and Sherbrook could develop programs to supplement ones that are already offered by the organizations. This could allow the Pool to be more readily used by this community, producing the significant benefits to seniors that are identified in the literature.

Programming for individuals with MS, arthritis, and fibromyalgia appear to be very well used, and these should therefore continue to be supported.

IV. Women-Only Time

I think you have to look at gender too, gender is a big factor to me. Most programming is geared around youth, which most of the time, generically speaking, it's boys, so it's like where's the girls? Where's the girls' activities? It's always lacking. So, to me, there's always gender differences.... I find that girls stand on the line and look, while boys do; I hate that. So, I want programs that are really geared around gender. So, if there's a barrier, gender is it. (S. Taylor, interview, February 17, 2009).

As stated in the literature review, women and young girls benefit significantly and in various ways from physical activity, yet, as the above quote suggests, face several barriers to participation in recreation. This is particularly the case for swimming. Women face societal pressures regarding body image, resulting in low self-esteem and because of this, some do not feel comfortable in bathing suits in public. Having a specific time at Sherbrook Pool that is open to women only, with only female staff, could help minimize some of the barriers to women's participation. Specified women-only times have proved to be successful at the West Central Women's Resource Centre:

When we started our [Liking Me] program [for young girls, which focuses on body image, self confidence, and gender stereotypes,] they said how important it is to have a girls-only time. And we've heard that from women here. Like, [during] some of [the Centre's] hours... we only welcome women during that time, like men are not

allowed to be in the Centre at certain times that we're open. And that has been a total request from the neighbourhood... that is continually asked for (J. Hogue, interview, February 19, 2009).

Having a specified women-only time also provides access to swimming for Muslim women, who, for religious reasons, are not able to use public pools that are open to both men and women. Many people from the West Central community support a program featuring women-only time:

One of the ways is creating programs, for example, girls from the Muslim faith for example will not go swimming unless there are no men around there. So creating a time when only girls can come for swimming will be able to support more girls to come out.... Open access is quite a problem for families from those kind of faiths... Yeah, just like one day when it's open to girls only, where there are girl lifeguards only, and no men, will be able to attract a lot of people I'm sure... (A. Ahmed, interview, February 17, 2009).

[There are] cultural barriers definitely for newcomers who are from African countries and Muslim women because they have requested times—because they can't have men present... So, that's a cultural difference right? So how do you accommodate that? That's what Sherbrook Pool could accommodate.... [And other] women? Totally. We have lots of women that go swimming in t-shirts and cut-offs because they're very self-conscious of their bodies (S. Taylor, interview, February 17, 2009).

The women-only time could be both open swim time, such as aqua-fit or swimming classes. The classes and programming could

be offered in partnership with other organizations such as IRCOM, International Centre, West Central Women's Resource Centre, Wolseley Family Place, etc. The swimming lessons could also be paired with classes focused on women in Canadian society and/or life-skills for newcomers, and support groups for women regarding body-image.

V. *Family Programming*

Concern over the lack of space and time for families to access recreational programs together was consistently mentioned during interviews. There are some programs available to children/youth, as well as some open to older individuals and seniors, but there is very little available space for families to participate together.

But maybe I would say, the priority should be on family recreation spaces, so good child care space, and maybe a big enough area that parents and kids could get together... I mean I think if you're going to create new programming it would make most sense to be around parents and kids... (E. Wiebe, interview, February 23, 2009).

The programming could either be offered as a joint activity or parallel-programming. Joint programming would allow parents to connect to their kids, as well as other families in the neighbourhood.

[One obstacle is] a disconnection with parents; you know, we wish more parents would come and check out the programming that they're sending or that their kids are attending to, they may or may not be aware of where their children are... One of the things I have certainly noticed over the years is both parents and the children's ability to play has diminished, or gone. You know the use of

imagination to be able to play amongst yourself without a referee or rules or a structure... There's lots, and perhaps even more organized play than there was previously, but what has been lost is the recreational play, just the running around outside, playing with friends, street hockey, running around the field that type of thing... we've had several family fun nights and we've put in the position an open gym and given them [parents] an opportunity to, you know, here's a skipping rope, you know, here's a ball and hoop and that sort of thing and parents are very, very reluctant to... you know they'll sit and watch somebody else play with their kids. I think parents undervalue you know, the playing with your kids, the good times you know, that constitutes (M. Titheridge, interview, January 23, 2009).

Parallel-programming would allow for families to come out and do things together, while still allowing them to focus on their individual interests.

Oh I think one area I would really like to see promoted is family recreation. And it doesn't have to be—you know, certainly I'd like to see families do an activity together—but I think there would also be great benefit in what I call parallel-programming—where you go to the same site or to adjoining sites together then perhaps the smallest children go into daycare, the teenagers there go to the gym, um, there's perhaps an activity you know pop goes on the computer, you know that kind of a thing... (M. Titheridge, interview, January 23, 2009).

The development of parallel-programming could also allow the parents' programs to be

focused not only on physical activity, but also on broader life skills, such as parenting and nutrition.

So it will be able to create some sort of relationship between the parents and their kids being parents are able to access this type of facility and being able to take their kids out and then kids are able to say that my parents have given me access to recreational facilities... [also,] the active sports supports families with healthy lifestyles. Families who are coming from the tropical parts of the world are used to consuming foods that are rich in carbs and fats, and they come here where physical activity is limited and they continue to consume the same cultural foods which may not be as healthy as other foods will be and it will take a long time for an immigrant family to be introduced to more healthy Canadian foods than being able to consume the food they're used to being able to consume in their home countries... so it helps a lot even towards their health (A. Ahmed, interview, February 17, 2009).

As indicated by the above quote, this kind of programming offers particular benefits for newcomer families, new Aboriginal families moving in from reserves, as well as other families living in the inner city who do not normally have access to fresh and healthy foods. Stated in the literature are clear benefits to family health and stability for those who participate together. These programs could be offered in partnerships with community organizations, which could include newcomer organizations (eg. IRCOM, International Centre), Aboriginal organizations (Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata), parent support centres (Wolseley Family Place, West Central Women's Resource Centre), and others involved in recreation programs (Spence Neighbourhood Centre, Broadway Neighbourhood Centre).

VI. Safewalk/Carpool

Neighbourhood safety and transportation barriers also limit accessibility. Safety concerns found in the neighbourhoods surrounding the Sherbrook Pool can prevent children from accessing programs even if they live within walking distance. In the winter inaccessibility may increase because it is often dark before after-school hours (4-6 pm) are over. Therefore, after-school swim programs that are open to children and youth in the area may not be fully utilized because of safety reasons.

Sherbrook Pool could develop a Safewalk program or a van/carpool system similar to those used in other organizations that drives through the neighbourhood picking children up from home or school, bringing them to the pool, and then bringing them home again.

So, how do you make it accessible to people, to children? Creating safety; maybe you need to get a van like Rossbrook House has, and they pick up the kids and they take them. That would be a cool thing, Sherbrook Pool could do that; just have a van that goes around and picks them up and says, 'hey, come! We have fun!' (S. Taylor, interview, February 17, 2009).

Many community organizations in the inner city have implemented some form of safewalk/carpool program because it provides a safe form of transportation for the children, as well as helps to diminish attitudinal barriers or fear. Some children may not feel comfortable coming alone to the Pool to swim; coming with a group of children and a responsible role model, with whom they have a relationship, can help diminish some of this fear. Moreover, it would relieve responsibility from parents, who may find it very difficult to fit recreation for their children into their own schedules.

These safety programs could be developed in conjunction with after-school swimming classes or free swim, both of which could be provided in partnership with other youth-serving CBOs (see recommendation IV).

In partnership with Sherbrook Pool and the City of Winnipeg, these youth-serving CBOs could also be a site to train 'safe-walkers', where older youth in the area could become trained in leadership skills and neighbourhood safety.

If I were designing the perfect Sherbrook Pool expanded site, I might put a community police office in there, or a West End Biz Patrol office, you know to try to bring those two communities closer together, so it isn't a fear-based thing... (C. Campbell, interview, January 30, 2009).

Communication and relationship-building between inner-city communities and the Winnipeg Police Service is a critical issue in the city. Perhaps this training program could also be a site where local youth are given the opportunity to begin this communication with the Police service, and officers are given the opportunity to build relationships with local youth. Sherbrook Pool, in partnership with several other CBOs, could begin to take steps toward this partnership.

VII. Programming for Single-Parents

Many interviewees called for more programming aimed specifically for single-parents, the majority of whom are single-moms, and frequently mentioned a particular desire for programs aimed at young moms. Single-mothers face many obstacles and are often at-risk of becoming socially isolated. Having tailored programming available to new moms, young moms, and single-parents in general would provide a comfortable and

supportive environment and a range of associated benefits to participants.

Yeah, and there's a lot of young parents in the neighbourhood here, and it would be a nice way for them to connect with each other, and maybe have coffee after, and be a support for each other that way, and be out with the kids (Community school employee, interview, March 16, 2009).

The programs could focus on post-natal therapy and exercise, utilize both the pool and the weight room, while also providing emotional support to the participants. It could be partnered with parenting classes, perhaps through West Central Women's Resource Centre, Ma Mawi, or other centres that provide services to parents and families. Childcare would obviously be a priority to this program, and could be offered by the West Central Women's Resource Centre's child-minding program to contribute to the development of local resources and support local employment.

VIII. Lifeguard Training

Lifeguard training for youth, an idea that arose a number of times during the interviews has been implemented to some extent in the past (Youth Guard), but currently is not offered. As a community economic development (CED) initiative, the subsidized program would produce compounding benefits to the area.

[Sherbrook Pool] can develop their instructors, their bronze crosses, by saying it's free if you help teach for us... and you know how much it costs to take a program now-a-days? You're talking two or three hundred dollars, and then your instructor is two or three hundred. So, these kids who get it for reduced or free, [they] can come back and teach your 'I-can-learn-to-swim' and your speed-swimming classes... And we lose a lot of people because they

can't afford it. Let's face it, you take swimming lessons when you're small... and if you continue it, it's a nice part-time job. Lifeguards get paid \$15-16 an hour. You do have to keep up your awards, do a few things for it, it's not like you can take anybody off the street to be a lifeguard or a swimming instructor, right? So, it's a skilled profession. And the more people you get involved and the easier it is for kids who don't have that opportunity, like the core area, the better it is, for them (W. Matysiak, interview, February 23, 2009).

The program would provide youth with a supportive environment and train them to become lifeguards. They would then become the teachers, lifeguards, and staff at Sherbrook Pool, and the users would see familiar faces in the staff. The program would build on the assets of the youth in the area, who would then become mentors and role models for the younger children. The initiative would keep human resource development within the local community, and provide local youth with well-paid employment, and therefore be consistent with CED principles. It would put youth on a positive life-course, give them a sense of purpose in their individual lives, the ability to contribute to their community, and develop leadership skills. Subsidizing the program would allow youth in the area to access training and employment that many are marginalized from because of the high costs of enrollment. This program could be developed in partnership with youth-serving organizations such as Spence Neighbourhood Centre or Broadway Neighbourhood Centre. It would target a gap in programming for older youth in regards to job and skills training, that was identified by some of our interviewees:

I think there's a gap in programming. I think there seems to be a lot of stuff for the younger kids, but not enough for the in-

between-kids, [like] maybe around 12 to at least 15, maybe 16 [years old]. Because when you get to be 16 you can already get a Social Insurance Number and start working. So, that would be something to do, and plus you're earning money. So, to me there's kind of a gap. And you see a lot of kids, they just don't know what to do. And a lot of these places, the centres, that have computer rooms seem to close maybe before 8:00 pm. So what are they going to do with all their time? And what if the kids are not in school? Not all kids are in school. Society needs to come up with a solution to that, in that it's meeting them where they're at and getting them engaged (J. Hay, interview, June 23, 2009).

IX. Multi-purpose

Sherbrook Pool is not and will not be a multiplex facility like the Cindy Klassen Centre, or other larger regional facilities, but that does not mean it cannot be well used, and offer a range of unique programs and services for the community. Indeed, as a niche pool Sherbrook Pool offers particular advantages over regional facilities. As many of the above recommendations show, we do not propose that Sherbrook Pool simply offer swimming lessons, but rather that it offer holistic support to its users. The current facility, although small, does have available space that could be used and developed. Further examination on the physical site, to generate ideas of what adjustments or changes could be done to more fully utilize the space, is recommended.

X. Friends of Sherbrook Pool

Friends of Sherbrook Pool (FOSP) is vitally important to Sherbrook Pool's existence, and currently contributes immensely, and in various ways, to the Pool. We believe that the capacity of FOSP could be enhanced if it were

to expand to become a network of the organizations and groups that exist in the West-Central area. We suggest FOSP expand to include representatives from the diverse community organizations and groups in the area, schools, as well as from users of the Pool itself. This integrated and representative approach to program development is similar to the City's new community-based program delivery system and FOSP could *mirror* the City's integrated team of community representatives and *supplement* the community-based approach. These two teams could work together, share resources and knowledge, and reach consensus on what the community wants and needs from the site, and how Sherbrook Pool (FOSP/City of Winnipeg) can respond. This structure allows for, and demands, continual community consultations, and would also provide the space for the community to discuss where there are gaps in programming. It would allow FOSP, and subsequently Sherbrook Pool, to respond effectively to the diverse and changing needs of the community that it is a part of. Through this new structure, programs would be developed by the community, for the community. This structure would also be a great support for our proposed idea of partnerships, as it would facilitate communication between the Pool (the City) and community organizations. We believe partnerships are important because they change the Pool's position from a City of Winnipeg site, to a community resource.

We don't have to go to the citizens of Winnipeg to say, what should happen at Sherbrook Pool, it's much more localized than that. People in Spence and in Daniel Mac, even West Broadway, and St. Matthews look at it truly as their pool, so there's some ownership there, so we have to make sure we listen to what everyone says (D. Prokopchuk, interview, March 2, 2009).

This proposed structure would also have the added advantage of dismantling Sherbrook Pool as 'the city's best kept secret.' The community would be involved in developing and implementing what occurs at the Pool, and would therefore *know* what occurs there. The proposed community outreach team would support the work and discussions of FOSP, and each individual involved in FOSP would serve as a contact and connection to the diverse groups in the area, perhaps in a similar fashion as other successful programs in the area have done:

When I think of what successful groups in the neighbourhood have done, like, for example there's a "Building Belonging" program at Magnus Eliason Recreation

Centre, they go door-to-door, knock on doors, talk to parents and tell them 'there's this going on, and kids are welcome to come.' So door-to-door is important, I think going through existing resources, so like, if Sherbrook Pool had the personnel that was in a position that they could do that, like go through the West Central Women's Resource Centre downstairs where there's already a natural gathering of community people going on. Like go there, go to the schools, go to churches, go to the other community organizations. Yeah I'm not sure there's been a lot of you know, networking, community building, community linkages (E. Wiebe, interview, February 23, 2009).

Conclusion

The extensive body of literature on recreation—both the far-reaching benefits of participation and the various barriers which obstruct access to such benefits—supported by personal experiences and realities of residents in the West Central area suggest that Sherbrook Pool is a valuable asset in the West Central area in a number of ways. Sherbrook Pool continues to offer accessible recreation to its surrounding area. The benefits provided by the Pool itself extend beyond this when the facility is considered as part of the existing network of recreational programs and initiatives in the area; as part of a broader vision of holistic community development and empowerment.

Once seen in this light, opportunities emerge for creative, responsive and effective programs, tailored to respond to the diverse needs and desires of the surrounding area. The recommendations offered in this report are rooted in an understanding of the complex issues faced by different groups or

populations in the West Central area. With knowledge gained from the interviews with key informants as well as from the research-based literature, these recommendations aim to increase the accessibility of Sherbrook Pool, as well as its capacity to serve as a niche pool, responding to the diverse populations it serves.

This paper calls on civic decision makers to continue with the emerging community-based service delivery approach to recreation in Winnipeg, and return to earlier understandings of the social and economic benefits of adequate investment in recreation, particularly in lower-income neighbourhoods.

Community-based recreation is an integral part of a broader strategy of community development. As a strong component of the broader strategy, Sherbrook Pool can become a vital part of the West-Central and wider community, and break away from being Winnipeg's best-kept secret.

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Appendix I

List of Interviewees

1. Abdi Ahmed, Program Coordinator, Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba (IRCOM)
 2. Janice Barren, Community Outreach Worker, Gordon Bell High School
 3. Cathy Campbell, Reverend, St. Matthews-Maryland Anglican Church
 4. Christine Common-Singh, Member, Friends of Sherbrook Pool
 5. Derek Day, Adult Program Coordinator, Society for Manitobans with Disabilities
 6. Joan Hay, Community Helper, Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre
 7. Jackie Hogue, Executive Director, West Central Women's Resource Centre
 8. Jamil Mahmood, Youth Coordinator, Spence Neighbourhood Association
 9. Werner Matysiak, former Sherbrook Pool/City of Winnipeg Employee
 10. Lawrence 'Spatch' Mullhall, Programs Manager, Broadway Neighbourhood Centre
 11. Bill Muloin, Child & Youth Program Coordinator, Society for Manitobans with Disabilities
 12. Dan Prokopchuk, Manager, City of Winnipeg's Community Development and Recreation Services Division
 13. Sharon Taylor, Executive Director, Wolseley Family Place
 14. Mark Titheridge, Executive Director, West Central Community Program
 15. Erika Wiebe, Community Development Worker, Neighbourhoods Alive!/ Editor of West Central Streets
- * As well as six others who wished to remain anonymous;
- * Other informal consultations were conducted with individuals involved in recreation, the West Central neighbourhoods and/or the inner city

Appendix II

Interview Questions

1. Could you comment on how your position is related to recreation in the inner-city?
2. a) From your experience, do you feel that there are benefits for individuals to participating in recreation in the inner city? If so, what are they?
b) Do you think there are benefits of recreation for the community as a whole? If yes, please comment.
3. a) Do you feel there are any obstacles or challenges that (name of place of employment), and more generally, other recreational facilities face in the inner city? (e.g. resources, funding etc.)
b) What do you think could help overcome these obstacles?
4. a) Do you, or have you in the past, use(d) Sherbrook Pool in your programming? Why or why not?
b) (i) If you use the Pool, are there any changes and/or upgrades (facility, programming, etc.,) you would like to see happen to the Pool site? If so, what?
(ii) If you do not use the Pool, are there any changes and/or upgrades that you would like to see happen in order to make use of it? If so, what are they?
c) Do you know if the children/youth/residents/folks you work with use Sherbrook Pool outside of your programming?
5. Can you comment on the state of recreational facilities in the inner city (availability, accessibility, adequacy, etc.)? Can you comment specifically about the West-Central area?
6. If there is a lack of adequate and/or accessible facilities in the area, how do you think this might affect the residents of the neighbourhoods, the community as a whole?
7. Do you have any additional comments, generally about recreation?
8. Do you have anything else you would like to add to the interview?

Demographic Information:

- i) Do you work in the neighbourhood/ Where do you work?
- ii) Do you live in the neighbourhood?
- iii) How long have you been working in the inner city; how long at this particular job or in recreation in general?