

City Centre Community Centre and Aquatics and Older Adults Facilities

With all the important community facility projects on the Parks Recreation and Cultural list, it is gratifying to see the top support shown for city centre community facilities.

It is also wonderful to see support for aquatics and older adult facilities and the concept that all these facilities can all be clustered near the southeast corner of Minoru Park.

This Minoru Park southeast corner offers the opportunity to integrate all these facilities around a central plaza running from Minoru Oval to the Library Cultural Centre, and only a short walk further to City Hall. It offers the opportunity for all family members to go to the area and find something, or many things of interest. A Richmond sports, recreation, and cultural services mall!

Minoru southeast offers 3 building sites which at densities typical in the area could also be vertically developed to include housing for seniors and the mobility challenged, while hiding the parking needed underneath.

Facilities placed here would be within walking distance of more residents living nearby than any other existing area in the City, and also be useable by nearby workers including City staff.

Additionally, if a facility were located directly east of the arena, the heat shed from the arena cooling tower would be free heat to the new facility.

In addition to the three potential building footprints in southeast Minoru Park, there are also 2 sites at Brighthouse Park – the Caring Place south lot, and the Brighthouse fieldhouse and parking lot. The existing Caring Place south parking lot could contain expanded Caring Place facilities, seniors housing, and fieldhouse facilities, all over covered parking. The existing fieldhouse /east parking lot has the same options, but if the fieldhouse /caretaker were relocated in facilities built on the southwest corner over parking, the existing fieldhouse parkland could be reclaimed which increases Brighthouse Park options.

Some may suggest that because a complete city centre community centre is long overdue it must now be rushed to completion as quickly as possible. I suggest instead that comprehensive public consultation is still the best way to plan facilities that are the best match to community needs now, and yet also properly anticipate community needs for the next 50 years.

The time required to properly plan these facilities will also allow the City time to complete the Oval and other challenging current projects, develop partnerships with other levels of government for projects on these sites, and embark on this work with proper focus.

Thank you to those in the community, parks, council, local newspapers, and other groups for their support for a city centre community centre, and to the school district for ongoing facility access in the interim. Like you all, I look forward to the next phase of City Centre public consultation and facility planning.

Peter Mitchell