

9 years ago as City Centre directors we looked at the ground floor of the Aberdeen Mall hotel plans as a potential location for a City Centre Community Centre.

That's before the Richmond Olympic Oval was even being considered.

5 years ago I helped write the Facility Investment Evaluation report outlining the need for community centres for the 40,000+ residents in City Centre. We were listed as priority 1. At the time the Seniors Centre Board members joked that by the time our facility was built I'd be one of them.

A community centre was earmarked for the Quintet project on Firbridge Road, but then the 2008 recession hit.

I've participated in open houses about these facilities, and a season ago I had an opportunity to participate with many others in a charette to generate the community centre design. This facility has been a very long time coming for the residents of City Centre and its completion is still almost 3 years away.

The facility has many great features:

A striking entrance and 3 storey staircase suitable for wedding photos and receptions,
Co-location with Trinity Western University which potentially offers sharing options,
4 separate areas with separate washrooms which allows multiple concurrent events,
Adjacent combinable rooms which allow scalable events.
Additionally, there may be ability to share Quintet facilities and provide them program support.

Having previously participated in the designs for the Langara student centre, AMS student building renovations, and various condominium community centres I knew adaptability is important.

However, there are still a few challenges to this design and location and agreement:

The fitness centre layout is pinched by an adjacent washroom (much like the local art gallery) and additional minor redesign is desirable if possible,

Entrances show steps and a ramp is desirable for the disabled and for event loading, as are double doors at a non public loading entrance,

There is only 1 area the size of a badminton court which is over a floor high so recreational sports opportunities will be limited,

There is not a significant sized plaza outside so public events or recreation like basketball, or road hockey are limited.

The area is also leased space and the City has to expect that its initial subsidized rent will escalate very substantially when this downtown lease ends in 25 years. The City should have a permanent plan for serving its downtown residents. Over the long term, leasing City facilities does not make sense when compared to owning them.

Nevertheless, this facility can be a wonderful community facility for downtown residents for the next 25 years.

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Ship to Shore 2012

The Float relocation to Imperial Landing from Garry Point Park helps return the latter to its previous only slightly improved state. It provides a much closer connection to and opportunity to use and showcase the related facilities nearby at Britannia Shipyard.

It provides the opportunity to stretch out the SalmonFest Labour Day to a weekend which might help moderate July 1st congestion in Steveston.

I also see that there is the possibility that the float may subsequently be used for local residents fishing. This expands the resident linear park connection with the river and would be a nice gesture for a town that was built on the commercial fishing industry, and has so many retired fishers.

I also note that daytime and overnight (short term) moorage may be possible, via a ticket purchased from a parking type machine. I've previously proposed a similar arrangement for short term RV parking at a couple locations in Richmond, and I think this could also increase local tourism options.

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Alexandra Natural Park

This land should be checked to determine if it has unique sensitive ecological merit.

Additionally, Alderbridge Road is just west of the Highway 91 end and traffic is still travelling quickly so the park land north-south crossing must synchronize with the traffic light at #4 Road.

If this land is not needed for parkland given the amount of adjacent parkland the City has now acquired, it must be remembered that the City Centre area is still overall deficient in parkland and recreation opportunities, and slated to double in population in the next generation.

Richmond must continue to look for other parkette and recreation opportunities along the densifying Canada Line corridor.

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