

2010 Resident Feedback Aquatic Facilities



Research Results

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I. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

In November 2010, Strathcona County conducted a series of research inquiries with its urban and rural residents in order to obtain perceptions from *those whose household members had not used the County's aquatic facilities anytime within the past 3 years*. The purpose of this research was to understand barriers to participation for aquatic activities. There were also several questions pertaining to new potential programs that could be offered at the aquatic facilities, as well as how residents who are not using the facilities obtain information about County recreation services.

Obtaining primary data from the residents themselves will provide Strathcona County Recreation Parks and Culture with information that will help the department in its current and future programming at aquatic facilities for both urban and rural residents. This report will provide a comprehensive review of all steps undertaken in the development and implementation of the survey, as well as a detailed summary of the results. A review of the methodology associated in the development and implementation of the survey can be found in the next section of this report.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Sampling Design for the Telephone Survey

The sample frame used in this study were residents of Strathcona County who were 18 years of age or older. The sample frame incorporated a statistical proportion estimate of 0.5, which assumes that there is a homogeneous mixture of attitudes and opinions about the quality of life in Strathcona County. A 95% confidence interval was established for this study, which is standard for any public opinion study that utilizes a random sample of residents.

The sample frame consisted of 400 people and was reflective of the proportionate distribution of where residents lived within Strathcona County. As such, 70% of the sample came from the urban¹ area, while 30% came from rural parts of the County. The sample frame provided overall results² accurate to within $\pm 4.9\%$, 19 times out of 20. In terms of gender breakdowns, it was intended to get feedback from equal numbers of male and female residents. However, by the conclusion of fielding, responses came from 41.5% males and 58.5% females.

Respondents were contacted by telephone between November 16th and December 1st 2010. Strathcona County derived telephone numbers from the Select Phone Canadian Edition database and randomized them for this study. Trained interviewers from Banister Research & Consulting Inc. made all telephone calls under supervised conditions. Each questionnaire took an average of 8 minutes to complete. The data was analyzed by Strathcona County's Corporate Planning Department using SPSS for Windows.

¹ In this report, the urban component of Strathcona County is Sherwood Park.

² The $\pm 4.9\%$ is the *margin of error* associated with this study and refers to the potential percentage spread that exists within answers to particular questions. This means that an answer could be up to 4.9% higher or lower than what is reported.

B. The Questionnaire

The questionnaire used in this study was created specifically for this study. It included:

- A series of 10 questions pertaining to the awareness of aquatic programs, the reasons for not using the indoor aquatic facilities, the level of interest in existing and potential aquatic programs and the potential use of the County's aquatic facilities in the future;
- Three questions pertaining to outdoor spray parks;
- One question on the methods used by the sample frame for this study on the methods that they use to get information about recreation opportunities in Strathcona County; and
- Four demographic questions were also included to determine whether different viewpoints existed on the basis of one or more of these classifications for any of the survey questions associated with this questionnaire. The primary demographic used for analysis was potential differences between urban and rural residents.

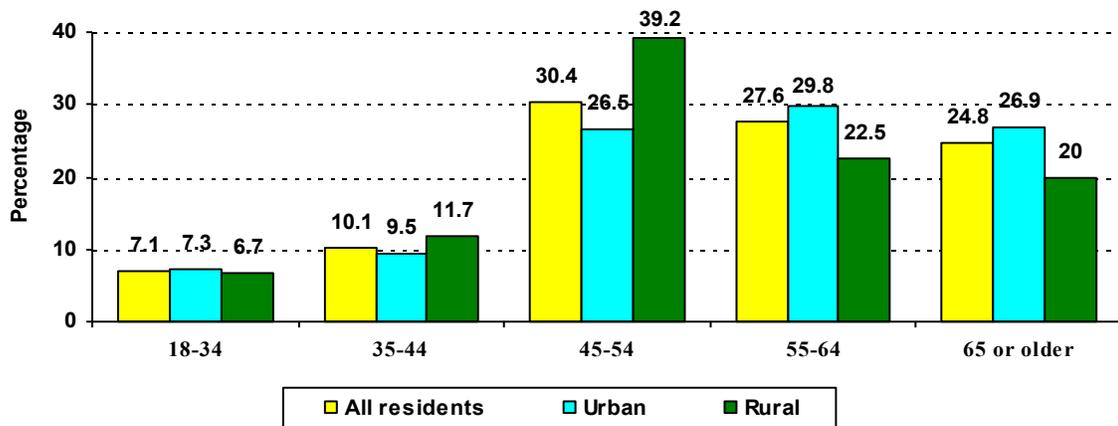
III. RESULTS

This section of the report presents a summary of the results associated with the perceptions and awareness of residents. Most of the comparisons associated with the questions from the survey will have urban/rural comparisons. However, an explanation of the age/household composition of the sample for this study is highlighted in the next section of this report, as it does reveal some distinctive aspects of the sample of residents who are non-aquatic users at the present time.

A. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents from this Study

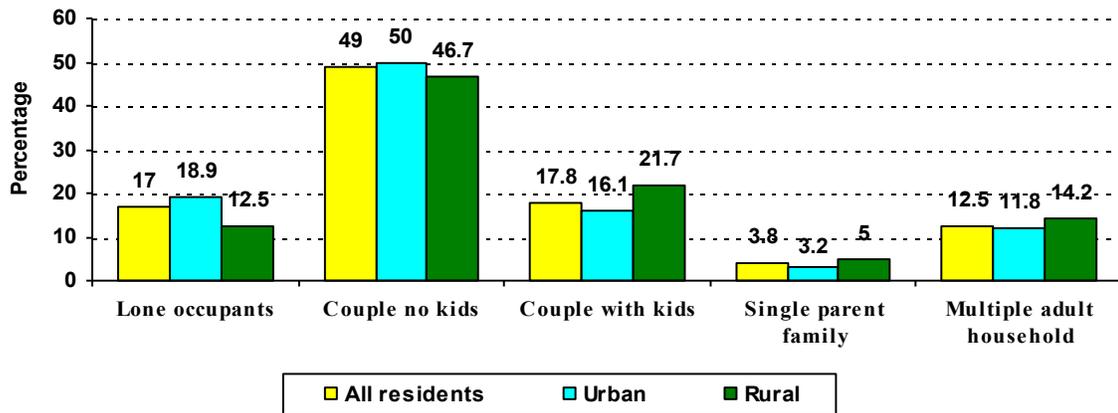
Given that the responses from this study were from residents (and their families) who were not using the aquatic facilities, a breakdown of age and family status of the respondents is shown in Figures 1 and 2. It can be seen in figure 1 that over half of the overall sample were aged 55 or older, with only 7.1% of the sample being residents who were under 35 years of age. A higher proportion of rural residents were aged 45 to 54 compared to the urban respondents.

FIGURE 1
Age of Respondents



In figure 2, it can be seen that the majority of households of non-aquatic users did not have children living in them. Most of the households were couples with no children, single adults or multiple adults. Furthermore, it was found that 66% of the couples with no children households were made up of adults who were aged 55 or older. Overall, only 8.2% of households contacted for this study were couples with no kids who were under 45 years of age.

FIGURE 2
Family Status of Respondents



B. Awareness and Use/Non-Use of Existing Aquatic Programs

Figure 3 presents a breakdown of the level of awareness of the current aquatic programs by those residents who were no longer using the County’s indoor facilities. In general, urban residents were more aware of facility features and programs than rural residents – the biggest gap that was seen between residents was with respect to lane swimming and the whirlpool/steam room and sauna facilities.

FIGURE 3
Awareness of Existing Aquatic Programs/Facility Features

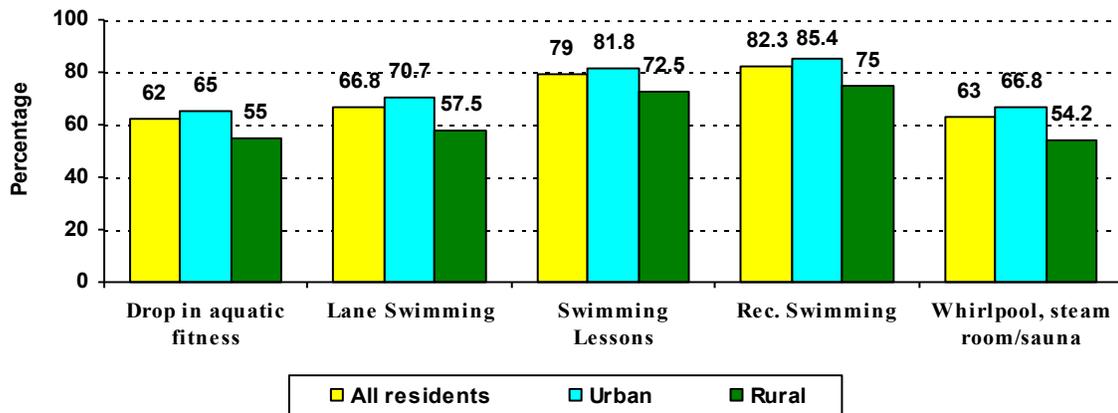
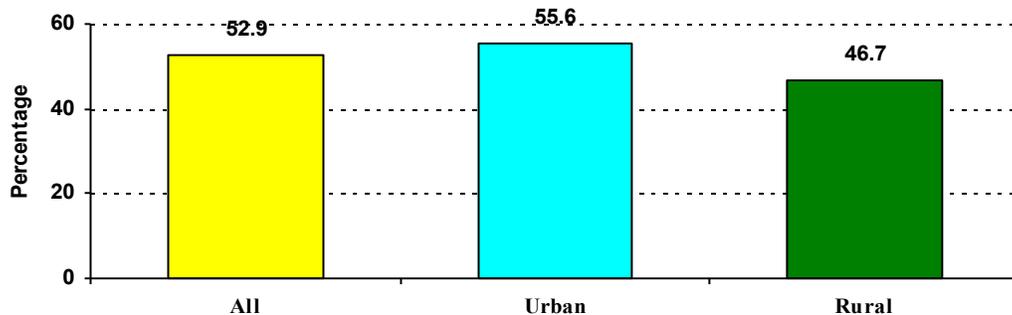


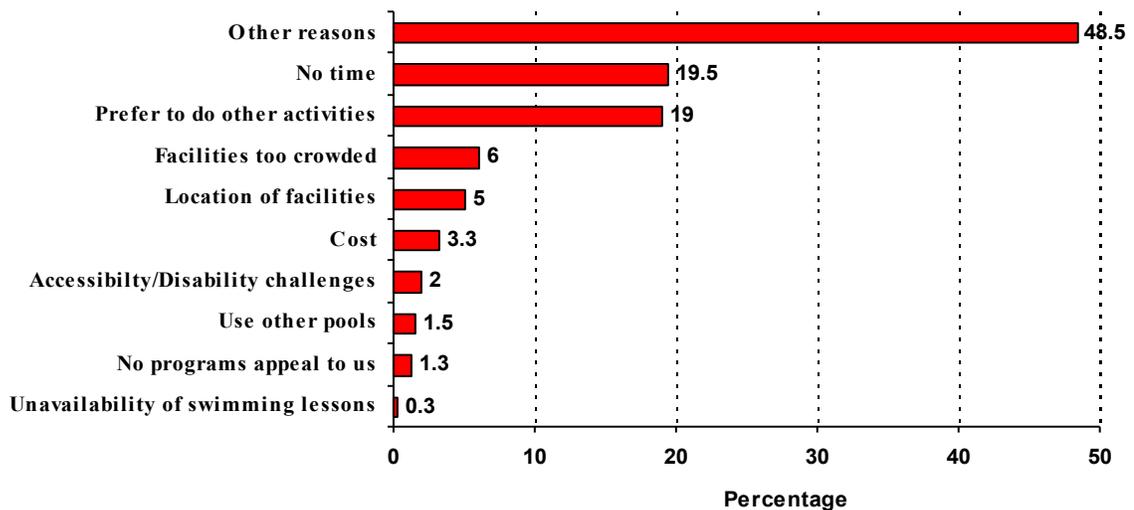
Figure 4 reveals that overall, 52.9% of residents from this sample had previously used the aquatic facilities at Kinsmen or Millennium Place. Prior use was slightly higher for urban residents compared to rural residents

FIGURE 4
Prior use of Kinsmen and/or Millennium Place for Aquatics



Reasons for not making use of the County's Aquatic Facilities are summarized in Figure 5 for all residents. The majority of the 48.5% "other reasons category" consisted of resident who either did not swim, who no longer had children at home who made use of the aquatic facilities, or who felt they were *too old* to make use of the aquatic facilities. A few of these residents also cited allergies to the chemicals used in pools (that they remembered) such as chlorine. Other factors noted in Figure 5 included a perception of no time to swim or a preference to do other activities.

FIGURE 5
Awareness of Existing Aquatic Programs/Facility Features

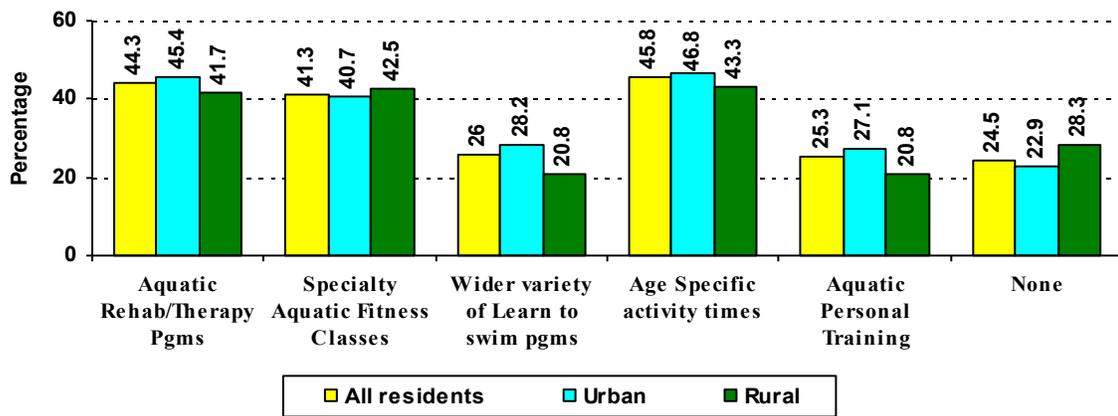


Overall, 16% of residents mentioned features that they had seen in other indoor aquatic facilities that would be important for Strathcona County residents to consider for future aquatics amenities. Suggestions included having *a steam room, less chlorine in the water, deep water aerobics, handicap capabilities, more waterslides, and areas for seniors only (or dedicated time exclusively for seniors)*.

C. Perceptions toward New Aquatic Programs

Residents were asked a series of questions about new potential aquatic programs for County facilities. Residents were initially asked to indicate whether they or other members of their household might be interested in 5 other programs. It can be seen in Figure 6 that interest was generally the highest for *aquatic rehab/therapy programs, specialty aquatic fitness classes and age specific activity times*. About a quarter of residents were not interested in any of these programs. This is understandable, given that the majority of respondents to this survey were older adults. There were no major differences seen between urban and rural residents.

FIGURE 6
Awareness of Existing Aquatic Programs/Facility Features



Residents were also asked to put a priority on specific future aquatic programs. The results from all residents, regardless of where they reside, is shown in Figure 7. The highest priority was for *recreational swimming availability, swimming lesson availability, and accessibility for people with disabilities*. When asked which of the five programs should be set as the first priority, residents were not as sure. Overall, it can be seen in Figure 8 that *recreational swimming availability* was the highest, followed closely by *swimming lesson availability*. There were no differences seen in this ranking of first priorities by geographic location.

FIGURE 7
Prioritizing Future Potential Aquatic Programs

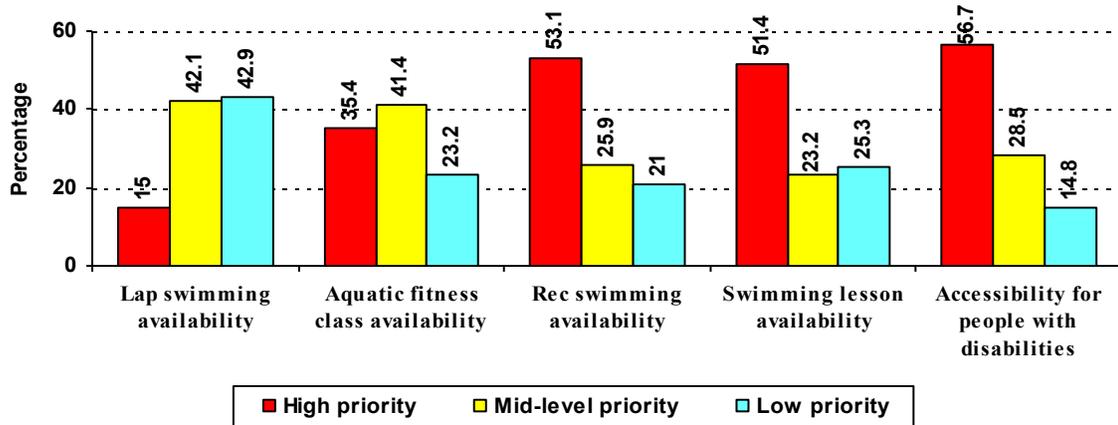
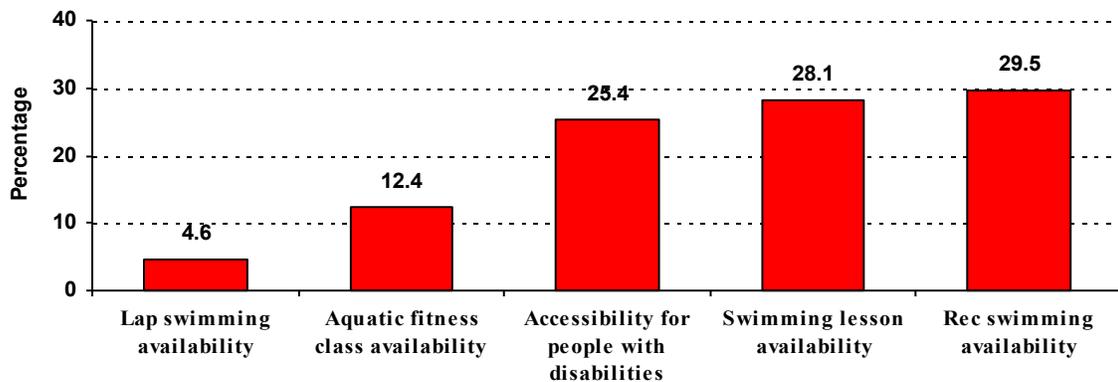


FIGURE 8
Which Aquatic Program Should be the County’s First Priority



Overall, 63.3% of residents thought they might try using Strathcona County’s indoor aquatic facilities within the next two years. From a geographic perspective, more people living in Sherwood Park were considering this (65.7%) compared to those living in Rural Strathcona (57.3%).

Residents were asked what the County could do to encourage non-users and members of their family to make use of the County’s aquatic facilities. Overall, 46.5% could not be convinced to try them at all, either because they couldn’t think of anything, or because they were non-swimmers and were not interested in learning to swim. Some had other suggestions, including free promotions or discounts, or having more programs or varied times in the programs. Concern for security and safety

were also occasionally mentioned. A full list can be found in the open-ended comments section at the end of this document.

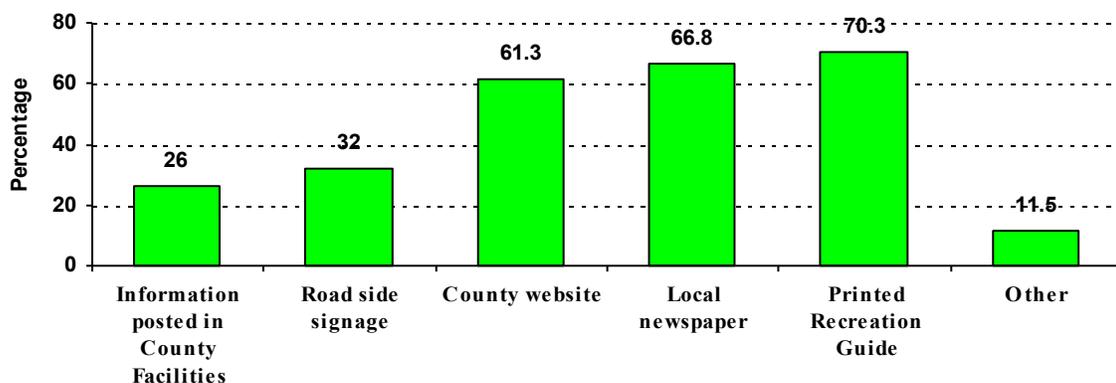
D. Awareness of Outdoor Spray Parks

Overall, 59.9% of residents were currently aware of the outdoor spray parks that operate in Sherwood Park during the summer months. Furthermore, 9.8% of residents are traveling to other municipalities to make use of the outdoor spray parks during the summer. Many of the locations are outside the capital region, referring to municipalities that the residents are visiting during summer vacation. Closer to home, spray parks mentioned by residents included locations in St. Albert, various locations in Edmonton (Millwoods, Mill Creek, Castledowns, Kinsmen, the Legislative grounds), Beaumont and Fort Saskatchewan.

E. Source of Information about Recreation Opportunities in Strathcona County

All residents were asked to indicate how they get information about recreation opportunities in Strathcona County. It can be seen in Figure 9 that the printed recreation guide continues to be the most popular source, followed closely by information in the local newspaper (The Sherwood Park/Strathcona County News). Other sources of information included *word of mouth* and *telephoning the recreation facilities for information*.

FIGURE 9
Source of Information about Recreation Opportunities in Strathcona County



IV. OPEN ENDED COMMENTS

Suggestions for Getting People to Try the County's Aquatic Facilities

- Be more accessible for residents and would like it to be more affordable for the residents for them paying taxes that already pay for it in taxes.
- Don't tie the pools with specialized groups and free up both pools especially the Kinsman Leisure Centre for family swimming.

Passes/Discounts/Promotions

- Better information to outlying areas.
- advertise more / give discounts / Continue with the advertising through local publications (comments by 7 people)
- more information
- more information
- I assume they put that information in their Leisure books and I have to say I have not looked. Maybe they need some feature articles in the local newspaper about the facilities.
- more pamphlets in mail and advertising to the homes
- have better media coverage
- Free drop-in tryout or two
- free membership for a month
- free pass for a day to come try it
- free pass, increase lessons.
- free passes
- Free transit to Millennium Place would encourage us to use aquatic facilities.
- free trial for a week or two, just to see if we like it.
- free trial offer
- free trial pass
- free trial passes
- give a trial free pass
- give introductory free pass for 3 times
- lower costs
- coupons
- Coupons/passes that you could buy.
- deal on a 10-pass, building a habit, availability for times for workers evening and morning
- likes promotions for a couple of days free/
- lower costs-families to go cheaper (specific day?)/seniors need lower cost
- lower my taxes
- lower taxes/more garbage pickup/take away cameras at intersections/better freeway system
- lower the price for seniors
- lower the price for some things - like drop in.
- lower the taxes
- lower their costs/offer a family membership/
- make it accessible to people with low incomes, I am an old age pensioner. that I could have access to facilities at a lower price at a reasonable time would be acceptable
- make it cheaper, more available times.
- Make it cheaper.
- Make it easier to get in and deal with overcrowding.
- Make it free.
- make it less expensive
- make people more aware of when there aquatic aqua sizes classes are on
- make the fees more accessible for seniors. were on low income
- Make the public more aware of the programs that they have and do this more often.
- make them free

- Have a promotional program i.e.. like "The 12 Days of Christmas" which was held at Kinsmen. You paid \$20 and brought a food bank donation with full access to the facility for a 12 day period.
- I think that the cost should be lowered and the pools could be warmer.
- if cost is appropriate
- Introductory trial
- its expensive for drop in/
- Maybe a free day of swimming or something like that would encourage us to use the facilities.
- Maybe a free day or event to encourage people to experience the facility might encourage people to use the facility on a regular basis.
- Maybe have a free promotion. Free trial for a month
- not make it so expensive
- Offer a menu of services people could try out for free. The sauna and steam facilities should be available to seniors for a very nominal cost instead of a general admission price.
- Offer a special price.
- offer free introduction family swim
- offer free passes
- less expensive
- two for one coupons, family day pass
- we would consider if we had some incentives that were cost related.
- offer limited free day pass so that people could go in and try it and see how they like it .
- offer reduced rates for certain times.
- one day pass - trail pass - guest
- Open houses
- Pamphlets with free swimming plans and more info.
- Perhaps a free trial pass could generate fresh interest and awareness of existing programmes
- Personal advertisement to each home and a complimentary pass
- price consideration could be lowered
- promo days, buy one get one free. something to draw some interest that isn't just regular times
- promotion
- Promotions.
- put out gift certificates, you can go and try it free one time, etc.
- Send a discount coupon in the mail
- sending flyers (recreation flyers)
- Senior rates.
- Special offer
- Specials of some sort.
- they could give me free passes. have a sample class for aqua sizing
- they could have a better way of giving punch passes. if you could get a 10 or 20 punch pass with no time limit on it. as well they could have separate change rooms for people with disabilities. more availability of lane swimming time.
- a better price on a pass for multiple visits.
- buy one, get one free!
- drop admission fees

Programs/Facility Features

- Midmorning is my good time - availability.
- get better quality management and train workers better
- get older age swimming lessons, timing recreational swimming
- get rid of the chlorine in the swimming pools
- get some sort of specials on that give people a good price
- increase security at the centres

- group activities and swim training for seniors, warm water tank for seniors
- Have a large block of time for recreational swimming
- have a lower costing family plan, maybe a yearly plan/ maybe more change rooms or washrooms, especially more disability change rooms
- have a place for her daughter with disabilities to help her muscles
- Have better times for aqua fitness
- have more times available outside of work times.
- Have openings in the evenings and weekends that are more adult oriented.
- have private group programs for heavy people, so we are not embarrassed
- I am interested in one on one fitness, like one on one swimming lessons.
- increase availability of recreational swimming time
- Increase the value for multiple use passes.
- Increase water temperature
- introduce time for small children up to 2 years
- I think for our family it boils down to availability in regards to the times of the lessons and availability to the public.
- if I had more information about the features or what was available for seniors with disability, I might be tempted to get out there and see what it is about.
- If there were programs for specific age groups and for people with limitations i.e. arthritis.
- just availability of age specific programs, opportunities of programs
- warm pool
- Warm up the pool
- Warm up the pool.
- warmer water for little kids
- water slides
- water temperature in pools....nothing else
- just have more knowledge of the facilities available to public
- Keep offering the existing programs
- lessen the admission price, also more flexible hours for adult swim or families. I don't like going when there is a bunch of kids there, I would like more flexibility for adults
- lessons for seniors or adults that don't swim very well.
- let people know what programs are available, mail out or flyers
- let people know what's available out there
- make them more easily accessible during the week during the week at certain times you cannot get into it for swimming.
- Making the facility safer (e.g. vehicles in the parking lot) would encourage us to use the facility more.
- More accessible for people with disabilities
- More activities and more opportunities for seniors. If they organized a seniors groups or club. I like getting together and chatting and exercising and maybe water exercise.
- more advertising; more than local guide. The recreational guide features only Caucasian peoples; able, fit bodies; should represent the community - multi cultured, ethnicity , ability
- More aquatic clubs, classes- time for people.
- More availability of times due to shift work.
- More availability to personalized swim programs.
- More flexible in the hours
- it would be highly beneficial for myself if there was a fitness class specific for your age
- keep away children- too noisy
- Keep making them available.
- They should provide more structured lessons and an emphasis on therapeutic programs.
- They would have to prove that they have cleanliness so you don't pick up athlete's foot or Plantar warts.
- time and availability
- time availability. multi passes

- Times need to be available at night
- timing
- timing and cost improvements
- to be open more often, a lot of times they are closed.
- Too busy and noisy at Strathcona County facilities
- more special programs for parents & children
- More things for retirees
- offering classes in the evenings, better availability of classes
- older "learn-to-swim" age groups
- open more in the evening
- Early morning lane swimming might encourage us to use the facilities.
- easier access to pool (for people with disabilities) i.e. for lane swimming
- flexibility /Flexible time
- for wife more aquatic fitness
- diving boards at Millennium Place
- build more of them, there is not sufficient facilities for Sherwood Park and the Park continues to grow
- change there dressing room facilities for me so I can change my son without him going into the men's facility by himself.
- Disability or rehabilitation activities would seem to encourage me or my household to use facilities.
- Asking about hot tub
- availability - the facilities are not available at times that are convenient for me
- availability of fitness classes
- Availability of more aquatic classes/
- availability on the machines and less crowding
- availability-make more accessible for more people
- allow me to wear water shoes.
- adult swimming times/ adapt the pools for different age groups (2)
- accessible to boats
- Providing me with a wet suit because of the rash.
- put more hours in.
- scuba program certification would be very interesting
- seniors swimming program
- swim times for different age groups
- Their schedule, better access to timing
- They have to have big water slides and a wave pool. Pool side bar for Juices.
- They need to ensure to me that I will not be bombarded by children. and they need to have appropriate time for adults and allocated time for children/
- Strathcona County should design a facility such as The ACT in Rundle Park in Edmonton which specifically deals with people with handicaps
- They have to advertise water fitness class and include some kind of free or cheap trial period.
- They should have more time set aside for recreational swimming and especially evening swimming for older people, so that they are not in conflict with juvenile swimming.
- they should make swimming classes more available.

Transportation/Location Issues

- I don't think they'd send buses out here, so nothing really
- no way of transportation
- Nothing. Location is the concern. We use the facility in Fort Saskatchewan.
- Provide transportation/ needs more staff/
- tell him it's available and transportation is available/older to be helped/
- try putting them in a new location near South East of the county