The Corporation of the City of Courtenay

Staff Report

To:	Council	**File No.:**	5335-20
From:	**Director of Infrastructure & Environmental Engineering**	**Date:**	September 10, 2025
Subject:	**Courtenay and District Memorial Outdoor Pool – Public Engagement**		

PURPOSE:
To provide Council with an update on the options analysis for the Courtenay and District Memorial Outdoor Pool and seek direction to proceed to the public engagement portion of the analysis.

BACKGROUND:
The Courtenay and District Memorial Outdoor Pool is one of the oldest pools of its kind in British Columbia and has played a significant role in the community since July 1st, 1949. The original 25-meter pool is made of cast-in-place walls and slabs. The pool has had several upgrades throughout the years, including the addition of the wading pool in 1959 and change rooms and multipurpose area in 1979.

Owned, maintained, and operated by the City, the Courtenay and District Memorial Outdoor Pool is in its 76th year of operation. It has reached the end of its useful life and requires significant capital investment in the form of repair, renovation, or replacement in order to continue operating and serving Courtenay and the Comox Valley into the future.

In partnership with the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD), an Aquatic Needs Strategy was completed in 2023 to provide a 25-year vision and 10-year implementation plan for the future of indoor and outdoor aquatics in the Comox Valley. The Aquatic Needs Strategy identified the outdoor pool as an important community asset that should be maintained both from an aquatic services and community amenity perspective.

Based on the findings and recommendations of the Aquatic Needs Strategy, the City undertook a public engagement to assess the public's response to the facility options put forward for the future of the outdoor pool by the Aquatic Needs Strategy. As per the Courtenay and District Memorial Outdoor Pool *What We Heard Report* (2024), results demonstrated that the preferred option is to maintain the Outdoor Pool at its current location and maintain the current service level while addressing identified issues with the facility, with the next most supported option being a significant renewal of the outdoor pool at its current location. Only 4% of respondents indicated their preferred option was the permanent closure of the outdoor pool.

Both the Aquatic Needs Strategy and the Outdoor Pool public engagement have clearly and consistently demonstrated that the Courtenay and District Memorial Outdoor Pool is a valued community asset, even by those residents who do not use its programs and services. It is clear from the public's response that there is strong support for outdoor aquatic services in Courtenay and the Comox Valley, and strong support

for the continued provision of an outdoor pool, with the preference being to maintain it at its current location through repair, renovation, or replacement with a new pool facility.

On January 24, 2024, Council directed staff to begin an Options Analysis for the future of the outdoor pool. City Staff proceeded to public RFP later in 2024, receiving a healthy response of four qualified proposals. Notice of award was issued on February 5th to the successful proponent, FaulknerBrowns Architects, a BC-based firm with significant experience in pool and other community-centred infrastructure design and development.

DISCUSSION:

At the outset of the Options Analysis process, the project architect hosted a Values Management Workshop with staff across multiple City departments to determine the values that should drive this project, with the eight primary objectives noted below agreed upon.

Figure 1: Courtenay and District Memorial Outdoor Pool Project Primary Objectives

With these objectives in place to assess options, the analysis proceeded looking at the three options as directed by Council. Note that the options analysis included the consideration of the costs and impacts of decommissioning the pool to support a fulsome comparative analysis.

1. **Repair** – to perform the critical repairs and improvements which maintain the short-term (approximately 5-10 year) operations of the pool.
2. **Renovate** – a broader renovation of the existing facility, addressing building code requirements, and accessibility & sustainability concerns, while leaving the existing basin in place (approximately 10-20 year lifespan).
3. **Replace** – fully replacing the existing facility with a modernized one which meets the assessed needs of the community, completely refreshing its life cycle (approximately a 40+ year lifespan).
4. **Decommission** – complete removal of the facility, preparing the area for future alternative uses.

Existing Considerations

Across all of the above-noted options, there are some consistent considerations due to the existing condition of the facility and its location.

Existing Facility

A thorough review of the existing facility in conjunction with previous facilities reviews performed between 2015 – 2023 shows that, despite maintenance performed by staff and contractors, the pool has reached the end of its useful service life. To highlight some more significant issues:

- The existing basin loses a significant amount of water during operation, shows multiple stress cracks along its walls, and exhibits failing construction joints.
- The concrete pool deck is experiencing both delamination and cracking throughout and presents a safety and tripping hazard.
- There are current code failures and shortcomings across mechanical, electrical, and building envelope systems.
- Although accessibility compliance is a long-term aspiration that is difficult to improve within the confines of the existing building, barrier-free access is limited, especially in the washroom and change room facilities.
- Lastly, there are Health Act Regulation compliance concerns that, while generally do not present immediate undue safety concerns, have been highlighted by Island Health. Island Health's stated requirements included immediate repairs to the lap pool (which have been completed), facility closure of the wading pool, and a requirement for an engineered 'Action Plan' to further address facility issues.

Figure 2: Stress fractures along pool basin wall.

Figure 3: Cracked and uneven pool deck with sealing.

In addition to existing facility concerns, the location of the Memorial Outdoor Pool presents some notable design and risk considerations. Without urgent repair, renovation, or replacement, the Courtenay and District Memorial Outdoor Pool faces continued service disruptions due to maintenance needs and potential imminent closure, either planned or unplanned.

Flood Construction Level (FCL)

The existing site, for which the existing pool deck sits at approximately 4.0m geodetic elevation, is located within the *Floodplain of the Courtenay, Puntledge, and Tsolum Rivers* as identified in the City's current Floodplain Management Bylaw No. 1743, 1991.

In August 2024, City staff brought forward to Council an updated Flood Management Plan with recommendations to be considered for future updates to the Floodplain Management Bylaw. While this report recommends utilizing floodway land for recreational uses, it also suggests accommodations be made such as construction above Flood Construction Level (FCL) proposed in the document (with the existing site at approximately 6.0m) and/or other floodproofing measures for city-owned facilities where that is not possible, such as for the Repair and Renovate options.

Archaeological

According to Provincial Remote Access to Archaeological (RAAD) mapping, the existing site is within the bounds of a previous Archaeological Overview Assessment (AOA) CAMPRI ID# 638, which indicates a high potential for archaeological significance. This potential is evidenced by the nearby registered archaeological site DkSf-64 (2012), less than 100m west from the existing basin towards the current tennis courts, which found evidence of pre-contact cultural materials, subsurface shell midden, and subsurface worked fauna.

Pending a site-specific AOA performed by a qualified professional, it is likely that works within this site will require both a Heritage Inspection Permit (HIP) and a Site Alteration Permit (SAP) under the Heritage Conservation Act. These permits are considered very long-lead time items, with nearby projects currently requiring one- to two-year lead times for procurement. In addition to the HIP and SAP permits, due to the cultural significance of potential findings, a K'ómoks First Nation Cultural Heritage Investigation Permit (CHIP) would also be required.

Environmental

With works planned in an environmentally sensitive area, including within the 30m riparian area of the Tsolum River and its watershed, Federal and Provincial permitting or notifications may be required under:

- Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO)'s Fisheries Act;
- Ministry of Forests (formally FLNRO)'s Water Sustainability Act and Wildlife Act;
- Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC)'s Species at Risk Act;
- Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy's Contaminated Sites Regulation (potential for hazardous materials used during 1940s and 1970s construction); or
- Other regulatory body considerations as directed by a qualified environmental professional.

All construction activities and methodologies would need to be in compliance with both an Environmental Management Plan (EMP) and a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) prepared by qualified professionals, with an on-site environmental monitor required to ensure such compliance.

Access and Vehicular Parking

Existing parking demand at the Lewis Centre exceeds availability, resulting in a busy parking lot and patron frustration. Currently, the parking lot is limited to 91 off-street spaces, with an additional 16 spaces plus overflow at the western end of Lewis Park and 52 more spaces available at Simms Millennium Park. Vehicular access to the Lewis Centre parking lot is currently via unidirectional accesses (one entry-only and one exit-only, plus an additional exit-only option near the Lewis Centre front drop-off) off the busy Old Island Highway, including an opposing left-hand turn lane for northbound entry traffic.

While improvements to parking have been considered outside the scope of the Repair, Renovate, and Decommission options, the Replace option offers the opportunity to expand the existing parking lot, which is further discussed within that section below.

Options Analysis

Repair

The Repair option is intended to perform the critical repairs and improvements which maintain the short-term (approximately 5-10 year) operations of the pool. This includes efforts to bring the pool into compliance with health code standards and address immediate safety and operations concerns.

This option proposes a significant upgrade to the pool basin and deck. The entire pool deck would be demolished and rebuilt. The repairs will sandblast and remove the thick layer of annually applied coating from the pool basin and replace it with a new coating, complete with three-year warranty. New cold joints will be applied to better control fractures caused by differential settlement, and a new flush gutter system will be installed. Addressing the existing pool leakage concerns should significantly reduce GHG output, as the water heating system accounts for much of the facility's energy usage. Further improvements to the existing basin would include a new filtration system complete with new piping, removal of the existing sump, and other necessary facility improvements.

Outside of the pool basin, a newly poured pool deck with broom finish is included in this option. To comply with code regulations, installation of individual 1.5 hour rated mechanical rooms, each with dedicated exhaust, and new cove wall base in the changeroom facilities will be completed.

This plan proposes that the existing wading pool along with its systems be decommissioned, as maintaining this portion of the facility incurs additional capital costs. Further, it should be noted that this option does not meet all required mechanical, electrical, or building code requirements, and does not make improvements to accessibility and inclusivity (which are significantly lacking, specifically in the change and washrooms); and does not enhance diversity and equity or community health and wellbeing, and in fact reduces these with the removal of the wading pool.

The initial capital cost of this option is estimated at **$5,000,000**, with an estimated lifespan of 5 years.

Renovate

The Renovate option furthers the improvements proposed in the Repair option, offering a broader renovation of the existing facility which addresses building code requirements as well as accessibility and sustainability concerns, further extending the lifespan to approximately 10-20 years.

This option includes all elements in the Repair option, including treatments to the existing pool basin and a new concrete perimeter slab. The other significant difference between the Repair and Renovate options is the replacement of the current changerooms and showers with an all-new amenity building. The reception area is also upgraded in this option. This building would be fully BC Building Code and Island Health compliant and include both universal and gendered accessible change and washroom facilities.

This option improves on the Repair option by further addressing mechanical, electrical, and building code requirements, making significant improvements to accessibility and inclusivity, and fostering diversity and equity through the addition of universal change and washroom facilities.

Additional upgrades to support community health and well-being can be included through the replacement of the wading pool with a beach entry wading pool, offering accessible aquatic options that also meet the needs of young children and families. This is not included in the capital cost below and is estimated between $500,000 and $1,000,000 in additional costs.

The initial capital cost of this option is estimated at **$13,000,000**, with an estimated lifespan of 10-20 years.

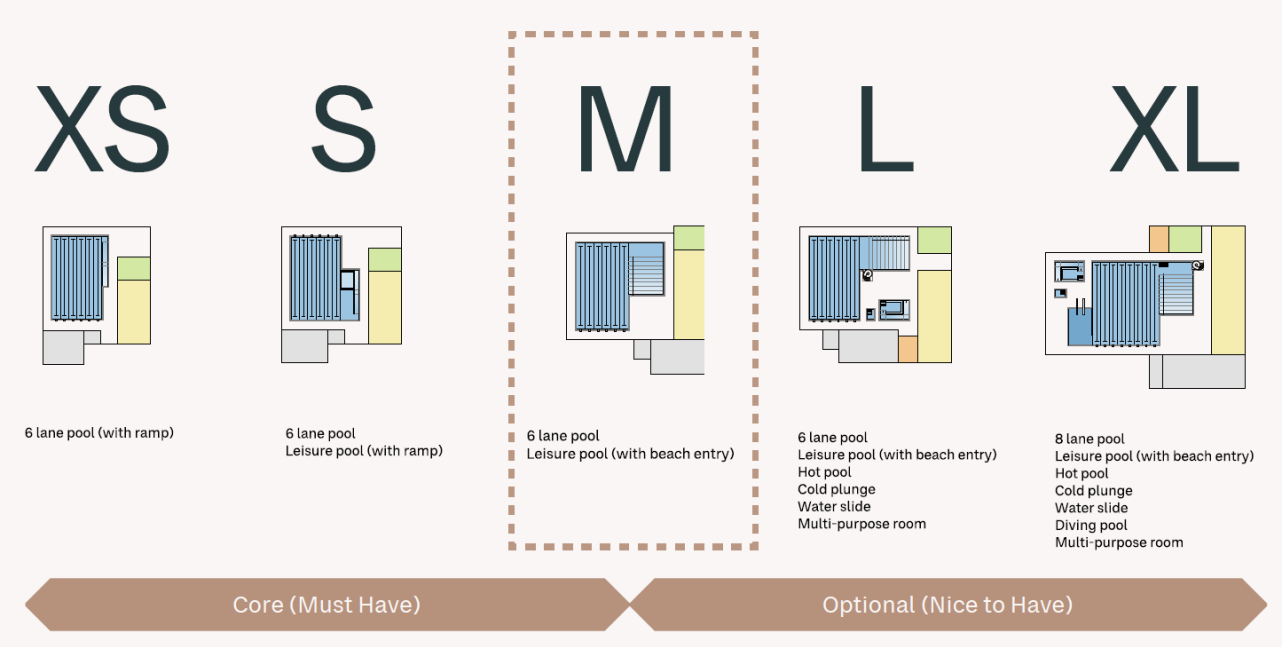
Replace

The Replace option proposes fully replacing the existing facility with a modernized outdoor pool that meets the needs of the community, completely refreshing its life cycle.

For this option, a review of findings from the Aquatic Needs Strategy, which included an analysis of community usership and needs, was performed to assess what range of facility should be considered. Core program and amenity requirements, such as a six-lane 25-metre lane pool, a leisure pool with ramp entry, barrier-free accessibility, universal and gendered change and washroom facilities, staff administrative space, and a multi-purpose room which could see year-round usage, were considered key needs of the facility. Other facility options such as a wading pool, lazy river, deep end, cold plunge, and hot pool, were considered as not necessary or not necessarily striking a balance between community needs and cost effectiveness.

Based on this review, a “medium” sized facility was selected as a best fit.

Figure 4: Conceptual facility sizing options.



This new facility would include a six-lane 25-metre lane pool, a shallow (ranging from 0m to 1.0m) leisure pool with both stair & ramp access and potential water features, a new mechanical / electrical / storage building, and a new administrative, changeroom and multi-purpose room building. All new buildings and systems would be designed to meet all current BC Building Code and Island Health regulations. This option substantially meets all of the eight primary objectives detailed earlier in this report. The pool bather load would increase from 200 people to 300 people in this option.

As discussed previously, it is currently proposed that the new facility be designed to meet the FCL as noted in the City's 2024 Flood Management Plan, which would result in raising the entire site approximately 2 metres. Retaining walls and terracing would be used to raise the facility. Landscaping and garden beds would be used to help blend the facility into its surroundings. Ramp accesses would be used to provide access to the pool. The ramps would be constructed to AAA (all ages and abilities) accessibility and building code standards would be used. Buildings may sit atop exposed concrete foundation walls, and with sloped earthworks utilized to bring elevations up where possible. The existing Lewis Park multi-use path would need to be similarly raised, with potential need for handrailing along its northern (river) side.

The existing Lewis Centre parking lot consists of 91 spaces that are shared between the Lewis Centre, Memorial Pool, and other Lewis Park users. This parking lot is currently very well used and is often over capacity. With the potential bather loading increasing from 200 to 300, the parking demand for the Memorial Pool will similarly increase from 40 to 60 stalls based on the Courtenay Zoning Bylaw 2500, 2007 allotment for fitness facilities for the pool alone. As a result, the Replace option presents an opportunity to relocate the existing spray park and playground facility to existing greenspace at the rear (western) side of the pool, allowing a parking expansion to add between 25 – 40 additional spaces, conveniently located along Old Island Highway. Future design efforts may also look at this expansion as an opportunity for

improved vehicular access, although it is currently assumed that this would be difficult given the proximity to the Ryan Road intersection and its dedicated right turn lane from northbound Old Island Highway. It is noted that the current Financial Plan identifies the need to complete a Park Plan for both Lewis and Simms Parks in 2027, with funding for park improvements, including playground renewal, identified in 2028.

The initial capital cost of this option is estimated at **$32,000,000**, with an estimated lifespan of 40+ years.

As noted in other areas of the report, the complexities with constructing the facility to meet the new flood construction levels (2m higher than the current site), and the possibility for impacts due to the proximity to the river and potential archaeological concerns all contribute to estimated project costs and contingencies, with more information in the Financial Implications section of the report.

Figure 5: Conceptual design plan view of Replace option.

Decommission

The Decommission option includes complete removal of the facility, preparing the area for future alternative uses. This option is currently proposed to remove all elements of the site and reinstate it to grade, leaving the area for future uses. It includes the construction of a modest washroom and electrical building to replace essential systems housed in the existing pool facility that serve the public, the playground and water park. This is seen as an important comparative option as it encapsulates the efforts and costs to be considered if neither of the first three options are pursued. Additional funding would be required to identify and construct future uses at this location.

The initial capital cost of this option is estimated at **$1,600,000**.

Public Engagement

The next step in this Options Analysis is to gather feedback from the public regarding the options proposed in this report associated with each of the repair, renovate, replace, and decommission options. For such an important community asset, it is imperative that the public have an opportunity to learn more about the considerations for each option, including the life cycle expectations and impacts, and provide their valuable input into the pool's future.

As such, the following engagement is proposed:

1. **Online Display of Concept Designs and Cost Estimates** – Hosted on the City's website beginning mid-September 2025
2. **Information Boards at the Memorial Outdoor Pool and Lewis Centre** – On display from mid-September 2025
3. **Public Engagement Survey** – Available online from mid-September 2025 until mid-October 2025
4. **In-Person Open House Event** – Sessions at two Courtenay locations (dates to be confirmed)

Following the completion of the public engagement process, a "What We Heard" report will be developed to capture the feedback and input garnered. This input will contribute to the finalization of the Options Analysis, including recommendations, that will be presented to Council in the fall for consideration.

Schedule Considerations

While it is difficult to provide an accurate full-scope timeline given the limited current progress of the project, including heavy dependency on long-lead time items such as potential permitting processes, the following shows approximate timeframes for when the noted options may be able to proceed to tender:

1. **Repair Option – Q3 2027.**

It's expected that this design would take approximately one year to complete, which would be planned for 2026 with construction scheduled for summer 2027, pending budget approval.

There is permitting risk with this option. Although the work would be confined to the existing building site, the location is within 30m of the riparian zone (close proximity). This will require permitting with both provincial and federal governments. Additional environmental study work will be required to inform the permitting process and support permit applications.

Like all options presented, this project requires approval from Island Health, the authority responsible for regulating public pool operations. Because Island Health's approval is outside Council's control, it introduces additional complexity and can result in schedule delays and higher costs.

The pool could remain open during design but would need to close during construction, likely for one season. Much of the work would need to take place in good weather. While field investigations haven't yet been completed, the site is believed to have a high groundwater table. If confirmed, this would create poor working conditions during winter months, as the site would need constant pumping to remain dry.

2. Renovate Option – Q3 2027

It's also expected that this design would take approximately one year to complete, which would be planned for 2026, with construction scheduled for summer 2027 pending budget approval.

This option has many of the same permitting timelines as detailed in the Repair option. The construction scope is larger, but it's expected that the pool would still only need to be closed for one season.

3. Replace Option – Q3 2028

This option involves full redevelopment of the pool facility and surrounding areas. The new facility would be significantly larger, and construction would have a much larger footprint. As a result, both permitting requirements and the potential for delays are greater.

In addition to environmental approvals, this site is a known archaeological area. Although the likelihood of significant findings is low, archaeological investigations and permitting would still be required, with at least one year needed for approvals. This creates additional cost and schedule risk.

The pool could remain open during design but would close for construction, likely for two full seasons given the scale of work.

The longer design and permitting timeline also provides additional time for staff to pursue external funding opportunities, such as grants and or funding from the Comox Valley Regional District.

4. Decommission Option – Q3 2027

The decommission option is the simplest option in terms of design and construction. If this option is chosen, it would be scheduled for the summer of 2027.

POLICY ANALYSIS:

The Memorial pool is located within Lewis Park, which is identified as a centralized, high-intensity regional recreation destination in both the Parks and Recreation Master Plan (PRMP) and the Official Community Plan (OCP). The OCP supports maintaining and investing in these facilities to serve the community's indoor and outdoor recreation needs. The PRMP aims to help realize the goals of the OCP, which include providing more nature spaces and opportunities for people to engage in them

The OCP sets out the following policies:

- Parks and Recreation Objective 2: Recreation amenities, services, and programming are expanded and enhanced to support increased health, wellness, and social connections for all residents
- LU 16: Prioritize infrastructure investment using a multiple bottom line decision-making approach based generally on the following parameters and priorities:
    a. High-growth areas;
    b. Public health and safety;
    c. Environmental responsibility;
    d. Regulatory need;
    e. Asset management principles;

f. Economic efficiencies and impact, such as partnerships, project coordination, and economic spinoffs

- PR 3: Ensure appropriate and sufficient parklands, play spaces, and recreation infrastructure are provided as a form of essential social and ecological infrastructure to meet the needs of the community and accommodate growth.
- PR 13: Maintain and invest in Lewis Recreation, Lewis and Sims Parks as centralized, high–intensity regional recreation destinations intended to serve the indoor and outdoor recreation needs of the community
- PR 14: Continue to review plans for expansion or renovation of existing recreational facilities in accordance with the Parks and Recreation master plan and particularly within the Town and Neighbourhood Centres and Corridors.

Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Recommendation 4.1.3: Plan for the short-term operation and long-term replacement of the outdoor pool with a communications and engagement process.

- Provide information to the community regarding the age and condition of the outdoor pool, the challenges of the location, and the maintenance and capital improvement costs.
- Undertake a feasibility study for replacing the outdoor pool activities.
- Consult with the community regarding the options identified in the feasibility study.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Class D capital cost estimates for each of the four options are presented below. A Class D cost estimate is a preliminary estimate which, due to little or no site information, indicates the approximate magnitude of cost for the project. It is used in developing long-term capital plans for preliminary discussion of proposed capital projects. The estimates were prepared by a professional quantity surveyor with experience in aquatic and community facility projects. The estimates were informed by:

- Input from the project architect and sub-consultants, including mechanical and structural engineers;
- A detailed review of conceptual designs for each option; and
- Independent review and feedback from a contractor with experience delivering similar facilities.

The cost estimates were based on the estimated size and components of the pool as they are understood at this early stage. While there is always uncertainty in early-stage cost estimates, this process has incorporated multiple professional perspectives to improve reliability. At this stage, costs should still be viewed as order-of-magnitude estimates intended to support comparison between options, rather than as definitive budgets.

It should be noted that neither the design team nor city staff have control over the cost of labour, materials, or equipment, over the Contractor's methods of determining bid prices, or over competitive market conditions. The current construction market remains active, bringing with it a volatility in tender price levels.

Included in each option are contingency values as recommended by our design and cost estimating team, as follows:

- There is 20% *Design Contingency* built into the design fee for all four options
- There is 10% *Construction Contingency* in both the repair and renovate (options 1 and 2) and 5% *Construction Contingency* in the new build and decommission options. The lesser contingency values are used as these options are expected to have less risk when building new rather than renovating existing facilities.
- There is a 20% *Project Contingency* included on all options.

The 20% Project Contingency is at the discretion of City staff. The value of this contingency reflects a balance. Staff are mindful not to inflate estimates unnecessarily, while also recognizing the risks associated with "unknown unknowns" that arise in complex projects, especially at early stages. The replacement of an outdoor pool is a relatively unique project type, particularly on Vancouver Island. The proximity to sensitive environmental areas and the required permitting associated with this work, the proximity to known archaeological areas, unknown ground conditions, as well as unknowns related to the construction and site conditions of a 76-year-old pool, all inform the staff decision to include a 20% project contingency at this time.

Options	**Time of construction**	**Estimated Total Costs to year of construction**	**Total Value of Contingency**
Option 1 - Repair	Q3 2027	$5,243,426	$1,651,937
Option 2 - Renovate	Q3 2027	$13,305,490	$4,261,406
Option 3 - Replace	Q3 2028	$32,526,685	$9,187,247
Option 4 - Decommission	Q3 2027	$1,595,932	$460,389

These estimates represent the best available information at this stage of the project. To increase the accuracy beyond a Class D level, it would be necessary to advance the design for each option significantly. This would require additional investment of time, funding and resources before Council and the public have had an opportunity to consider the range of options. Proceeding to detailed design for multiple options is not considered an efficient use of resources at this early stage.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS:

Planning for the future of the Courtenay and District Memorial Outdoor Pool is a strategic priority and incorporated into the work plans of Infrastructure & Environmental Engineering and Recreation, Culture, and Community Services, with Infrastructure & Environmental Engineering leading the Options Analysis. Recreation, Culture, and Community Services are the operators of the outdoor pool and are the strategic leaders on this project.

Consultants with technical knowledge specific to this work have been utilized as required.

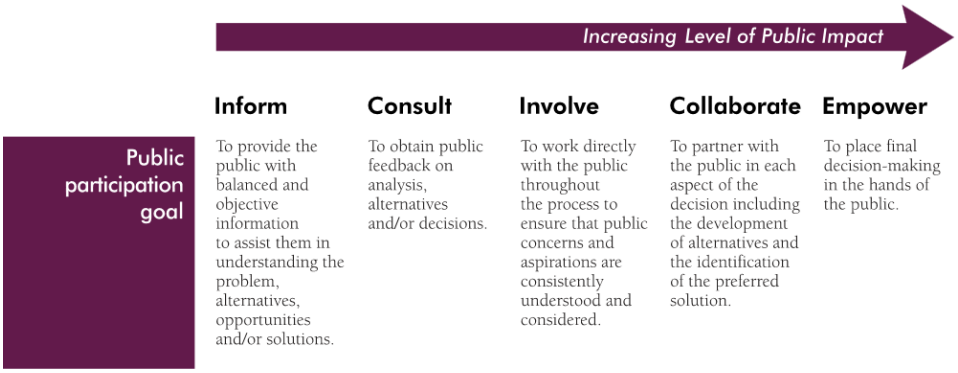
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES REFERENCE:

This initiative addresses the following strategic priorities:

- Parks and Recreation - Complete recreation facilities need assessments and capital improvements: Florence Filberg Centre, Courtenay & District Memorial Outdoor Pool, Lewis Centre
- Parks and Recreation - Optimize active public spaces to respond to density increases and increased park use
- Parks and Recreation - Review recreation programs and engage with community on current and future needs, changing demographics

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

Staff would inform and consult with the public based on the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation:



OPTIONS:

1. THAT Council direct staff to proceed with public engagement in order to receive feedback on the Courtenay and District Memorial Outdoor Pool Options Analysis,

   AND THAT staff report back to Council at a later date with the findings of the public engagement.

2. THAT Council direct staff not to engage with the public at this time and provide alternative direction to staff.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. PRESENTATION - Memorial Outdoor Pool Options Analysis Council Presentation

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Susie Saunders, Director of Recreation, Culture, and Community Services
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