



MARINERS CENTRE EXPANSION ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS:
WHAT WE HEARD REPORT

THIS REPORT WAS PREPARED BY IRIS COMMUNICATIONS ON BEHALF OF THE MARINERS CENTRE.

It is based on the feedback and perspective solicited from community members impacted by and interested in the Mariners Centre expansion project. The engagement process consisted of a broad-based set of in-person and digital feedback opportunities and targeted engagement with various impacted stakeholder groups.

During the consultations, it was noted to participants that all feedback would be recorded by staff and anonymized to protect individual privacy and confidentiality. Iris Communications has prepared this report with these privacy considerations in mind and ensured that all commentary and information is kept strictly confidential.

We would like to acknowledge and thank the many community participants who engaged with us and the Mariners Centre throughout the engagement process. In addition, we would like to recognize the contributions and support of Mariners Centre staff including CEO Dorgam Hideib, existing facility users, and staff from the various municipalities.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Between November and December 2023, the Mariners Centre conducted a comprehensive community engagement process to get the community's perspective on the facility's new design and receive feedback on how it could be improved.

The engagement process started in March 2021, when the Mariners Centre Board of Directors executed a community survey to collect ideas and suggestions in several areas to ensure the best possible concept for the Mariners Centre expansion to match the needs of the residents of southwestern Nova Scotia. In total, the survey received 887 responses.

The following preferences for facility additions were identified in order of priority:

- **Aquatics Centre** (Including Leisure Pool & Six-Lane Competitive Pool)
- **Fitness Centre**
- **Walking Track**
- **Gymnasium**
- **Indoor Track**
- **Increased Multipurpose Space**

With the community's needs in mind, the Mariners Centre expansion design went to a review in July 2023 and was selected a month later. Public engagement on the design was designated for Fall 2023 as part of the overall expansion plan.

These community engagement efforts included information pop-up sessions and a broader public engagement session. Additionally, a recorded presentation of the proposed design was shared on the Yarmouth Mariners Centre Facebook page and the Mariners Centre website. An anonymous feedback submission function was attached to the presentation recording on the dedicated Mariners Centre Expansion page. This webpage also included

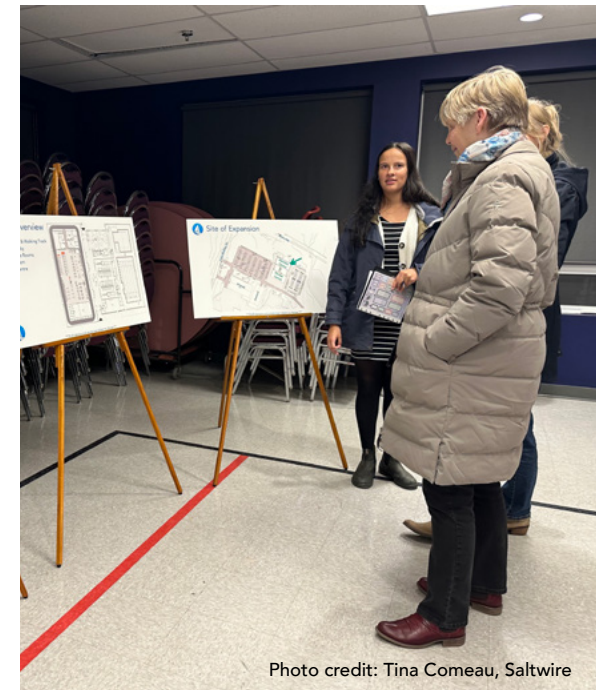


Photo credit: Tina Comeau, Saltwire



a FAQ page dedicated to the expansion as well as additional details on funding and previous updates and milestones related to the project.

These sessions were held at the existing Mariners Centre facility, Mariners on Main, the West Pubnico Legion, and Yarmouth Consolidated Memorial High School. The virtual recording shared on Facebook was boosted with the intention of targeting all platform users in the Municipality of the District of Yarmouth, the Town of Yarmouth, and the Municipality of the District of Argyle. This approach was designed to reach the broadest possible audience.

Approximately 200 residents were engaged

directly through the information pop-up sessions and the broader public engagement session. This included representatives from provincial and municipal governments. Each session began with a presentation from a Mariners Centre representative followed by a discussion and Q&A. Additionally, our recorded presentation was viewed over 200 times on Facebook and our Mariners Centre Expansion webpage received nearly 500 visits. This generated over 75 digital feedback submissions.

In addition to the in-person and digital public information sessions and consultation opportunities, numerous targeted stakeholder sessions were held to solicit the perspective of directly impacted communities and groups.

These sessions, consisting of roughly 5-10 stakeholders each, included (but were not limited to):

- Mariners Centre Staff (including Mariners on Main, and Fitness Instructors)
- Mariners Centre Existing Groups (including fitness class participants, arena users, aquatic and gym facility users)
- Equity-Seeking Groups (including 2SLGBTQ+, African Nova Scotians, Acadiens and Acadia First Nation)
- Demographic Groups (including youth, women, adult and senior representatives)



Photo credit: Tina Comeau, Saltwire





FROM THE ENTIRE ENGAGEMENT PROCESS, THE FOLLOWING KEY THEMES EMERGED:

FACILITY DESIGN AND FUNCTIONALITY

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Throughout the engagement sessions, residents expressed a collective enthusiasm for the upgraded amenities, which include a walking track, an upgraded fitness facility, versatile multipurpose spaces, and a modern aquatics facility.

AQUATICS CENTRE

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There was a notable sense of anticipation and excitement regarding the new aquatics centre. Residents expect this facility to be well-designed and capable of hosting various aquatic activities, including regional swimming competitions, swimming lessons, aquatic therapy, and group fitness.

CONCERNS AND OMISSIONS

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During the sessions, residents and fitness facility users expressed concerns about the absence of dedicated gym space, acknowledging its role as a core element in the current Mariners on Main offerings. The impact on basketball, volleyball, racquetball, and pickleball was a common sentiment, along with the absence of a sauna and cold plunge elements.

A CAMPUS-STYLE HUB

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The community emphasized the Mariners Centre's role in enhancing community well-being and maintaining strong social connections. Residents want a facility that meets current needs and positions Yarmouth as an attractive place for professionals, healthcare workers, and individuals contributing to the local economy.

INCLUSIVITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

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A prevalent theme is the community's appreciation for the commitment to inclusivity and accessibility. The desire for a facility that adheres to contemporary environmental and physical accessibility standards is a shared priority among residents.

FUNDRAISING

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Community members expressed a keen interest in understanding the fundraising efforts made to date and the allocation of funds to the project from all levels of government.



INTRODUCTION

The Mariners Centre has been an integral part of Yarmouth residents' lives for over two decades, serving as a hub for fitness, sports, recreation, economic trade support, and community gatherings. The Centre's vision is to significantly enhance its impact on the community's well-being, aiming to attract and retain professionals, healthcare workers, and contributors to the local economy.

This What We Heard Report (WWHR) summarizes the input from residents and other stakeholders in engagement sessions held between November and December 2023. The engagement sessions aimed to gain greater insight into the community's perspective and consider all feedback before finalizing the design.

In consultation with the Mariners Centre Expansion Board, the architects will refer to this input and other vital factors before making a final decision on the building's design.





HOW WE GOT HERE



In October of 2022, a substantial portion of the funding for the Mariners Centre expansion came through a federal allocation of \$15.9 million, designated explicitly for recreational infrastructure. The money was earmarked for the Mariners Centre expansion and cannot be redirected for other purposes.

The provincial government allocated \$4 million to the project, while the collaborative efforts of the three municipal stakeholders— the Town of Yarmouth and the Municipalities of the District

of Yarmouth and Argyle—resulted in a combined contribution of \$10 million.

Despite the work of the engineering and design team in aligning the project with community priorities, there has been a significant shift in the cost landscape. Initially conceived as a \$30 million expansion, the project’s price tag has now been adjusted to \$36 million due to an increase in inflation, the cost of materials and labour shortages. To address this increase and ensure that no features are compromised due to inflationary pressures, a

local community fundraising committee has pledged to raise \$6 million.

The committee aims to surpass this target by raising \$10 million to match the local contribution from the municipal units. This effort is geared towards securing the necessary resources for successfully realizing the expanded Mariners Centre.





ENGAGEMENT SESSION FEEDBACK



A central focus of the community engagement portion of the Mariners Centre expansion timeline was to reach as many current users and community stakeholders as possible. The engagement sessions were broken up into the following categories:

Targeted stakeholder outreach

Pop-up information sessions

Community engagement session

Digital engagement opportunities

All targeted stakeholder sessions occurred at either the Mariners Centre or Mariners on Main between November and December 2023. The pop-up information sessions took place at the same facilities, as well as the West Pubnico Legion and Yarmouth Consolidated Memorial High School. The timing of the sessions varied to allow as many people as possible to participate (ex., morning, lunchtime, afternoon, and evening). The sessions occurred in an Open House format with Mariners Centre CEO Dorgam Hideib in attendance to answer questions, present, and speak directly with stakeholders. A notetaker was present at each of the sessions, as

well. Participants were promised anonymity as part of the process, with a focus primarily on how they could best feel included in the new space.

The following themes represent a compilation of what was discussed throughout the entirety of the sessions. Not all themes were discussed during each session.



Photo credit: Tina Comeau, Saltwire (photos 1&3)

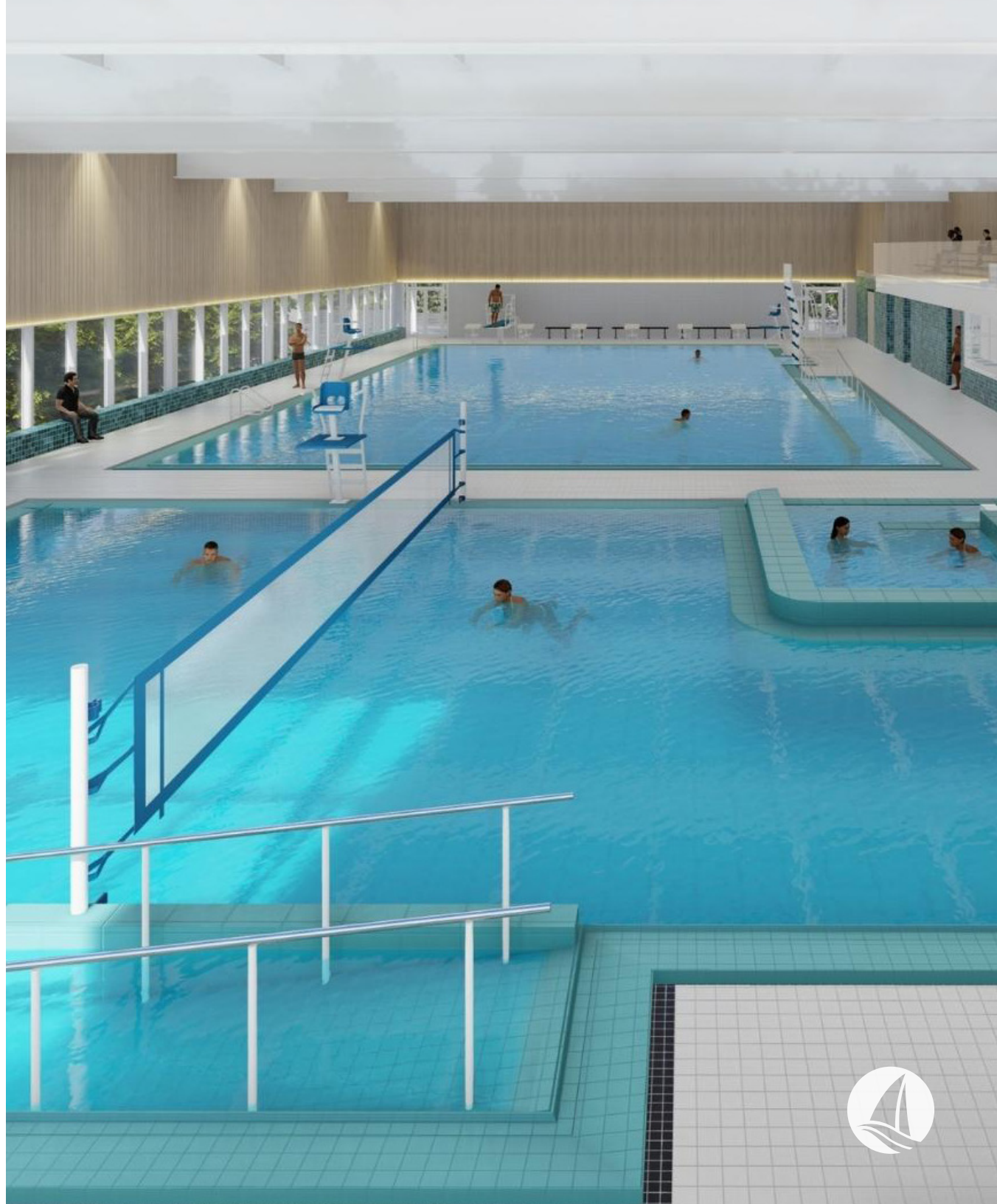




AQUATICS CENTRE

Most feedback about the Aquatics Centre indicated positive expectations for a community-oriented pool accessible to diverse age groups.

There was enthusiasm surrounding the facility's versatility, with the ability to simultaneously accommodate events like swimming lessons, lane swimming, and aquafit. The inclusion of things like galley seating and fun features like an in-pool basketball hoop and volleyball net were also well received. Wheelchair accessibility was appreciated, particularly regarding bench seating for seniors. However, concerns were raised about whether the pool can be regarded as "fully accessible" if it doesn't take into consideration those who are visually or cognitively impaired. There were also concerns about whether there would be enough swim instructors to accommodate the larger space.





FITNESS CENTRE

Members of the public who took part in the engagement sessions expressed excitement for a fitness centre that will improve upon what is currently available at Mariners on Main.

There was strong approval for a space that caters to a diverse range of individuals, from children to seniors, with particular praise for including a walking track. However, concerns were raised about how runners could utilize a space dedicated to walkers. There were also concerns about the limited studio space compared to what's currently available at Mariners on Main.

A prominent concern during several engagement sessions was how the collapsing walls in the studios would affect sound isolation. Current users of Mariners of Main felt if permanent walls were not in place, noise from each studio would drown each other out.

Additional challenges with the Fitness Centre involve the logistics of moving spin bikes and the exclusion of a dedicated youth facility space.



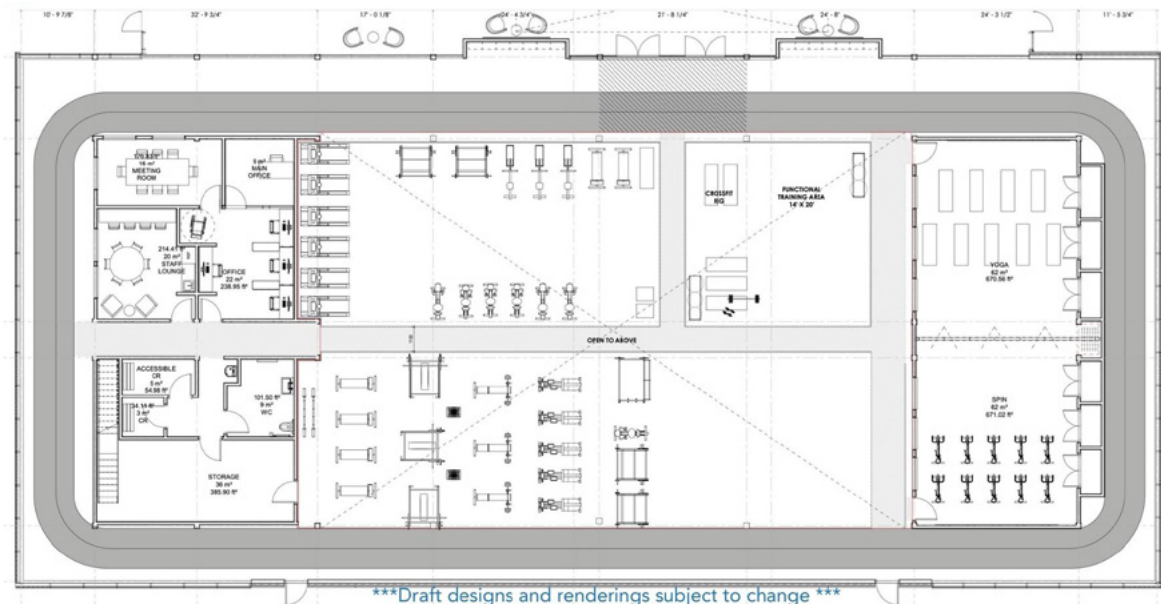


Constructive Feedback/Suggestions

- Consider soundproofing options in the fitness rooms (especially for those participating in yoga).
- Consider a wall that moves lengthwise, up and down the room, to allow for different sized spaces (however, an acknowledgment that this would impact soundproofing).
- New fitness equipment (bikes/weights) will be necessary by the time the building is complete. Equipment is too targeted towards seniors and accessibility rather than youth and athletes. More squatting, Olympic, and powerlifting equipment would be a welcome addition.
- Fitness classes fill up quickly, so there won't be much time for non-fitness-related activities.



- Include free weights in both the studio space and fitness centre.
- Include a digital clock in studio spaces that fitness instructors can manually start and stop so instructors and participants can see how much time remains in different intervals.
- Include as many mirrors as possible in the studio space.
- Ensure the flooring in the studio space accommodates cross-training, plyometric jump training, medicine ball, and sled work.
- Ensure the area between the fitness centre and the walking track is open for air circulation.
- Ensure there is an easy way to control the temperature to prevent the fitness centre from becoming too humid.
- Include seating around the walking track so users can take breaks if needed.
- The free weights and plate-loaded machines should be closer as they're currently too far apart.
- The washrooms to the left of the fitness area should be easier to access.
- Include a food bar with protein shakes.





UNIVERSAL DRESSING ROOM

Feedback on the universal dressing rooms revealed a wide range of perspectives. Members of the public were generally pleased with their size and the overall concept, recognizing the importance of inclusivity and the need for such spaces. Their inclusivity for various demographics, including gender non-conforming youth, was also seen as a positive by many.

However, several members of the community raised concerns with the concept of universal dressing rooms. Community members emphasized that while everyone can use these spaces, not everyone may feel comfortable doing so. Certain participants called for separate gendered spaces, similar to what is currently in place at Mariners on Main, expressing concerns about safety, comfort, and potential incidents of sexual assault. The need for a women-only area was highlighted by several community members, both in person and via email. They highlighted cultural differences and safety concerns. The feedback addressed potential issues such as predators, grooming, and human trafficking, urging the need for a well-defined plan for incident reports and security measures. There were also comments on losing the ability to socialize in the change room.



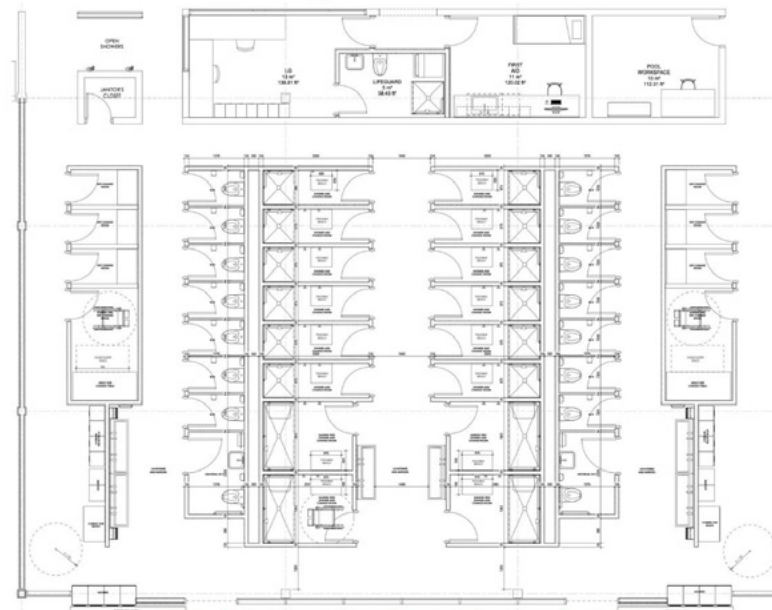


UNIVERSAL DRESSING ROOM



Constructive Feedback/Suggestions

- Include an area with separate gendered washrooms, along with the universal design.
- Include a space for women for safety, security, and cultural purposes.
- Include an education component to how the universal changerooms and washrooms will operate.
- Security cameras in the hallways to ensure participants' safety.
- Add stools for children/people of short stature to access the sinks.
- Add panic alarms in case of slips and falls.
- Ensure doors for changing cubicles are sealed at the top and bottom to eliminate the possibility of recording individuals who are changing.
- Ensure strong and well-defined processes for user complaints and rule enforcement.



***Draft designs and renderings subject to change ***



MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM

There was generally positive feedback on the proposed multipurpose spaces.

Participants were pleased with the collapsible wall feature that increases the room's capacity to 80, allowing for larger gatherings. Additional feedback and suggestions focused on elements to be included within the space and potential programming/service offering uses for the space.



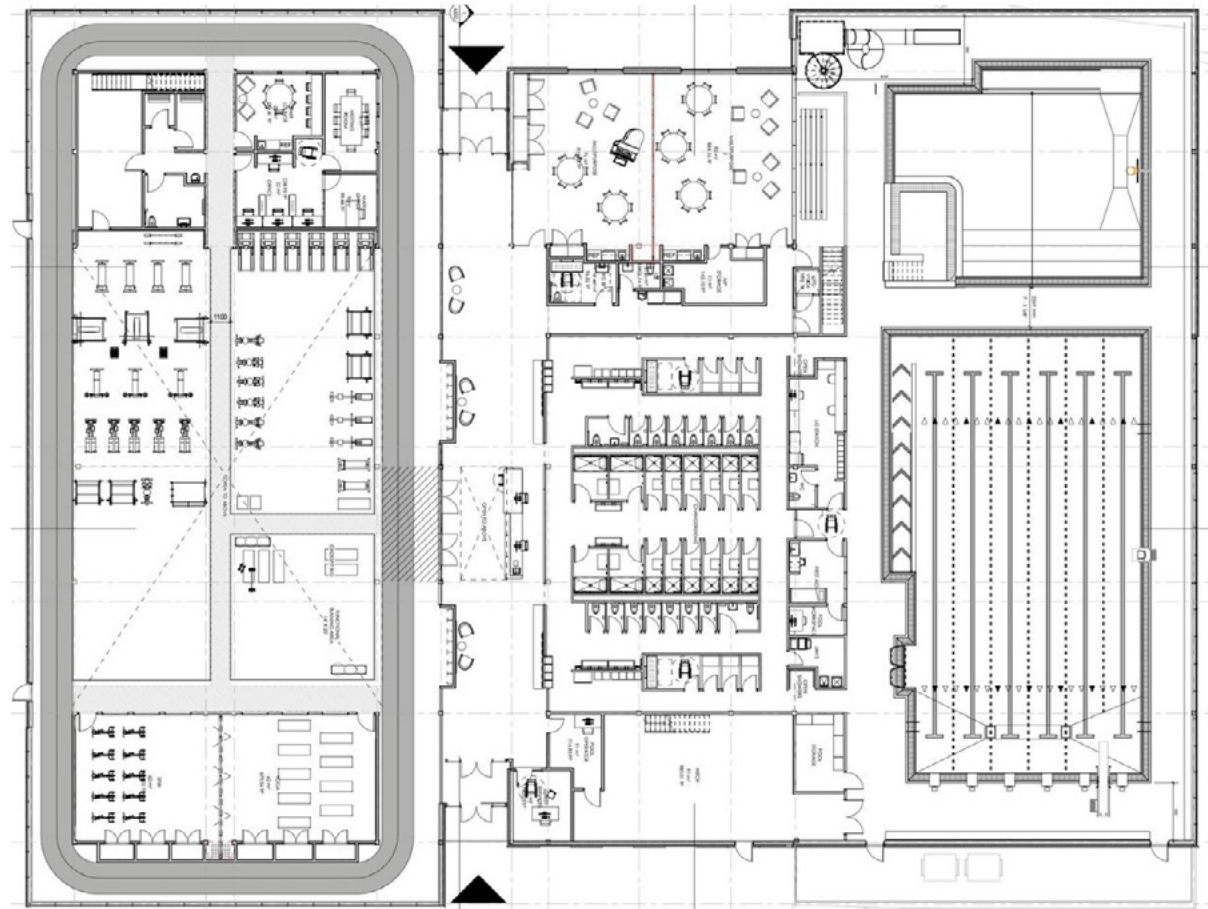


MULTIPURPOSE SPACE



Constructive Feedback/Suggestions

- The multipurpose space could include couches, café tables, outlets, and homework stalls.
- The space could also be used for a mini gym for youth, a designated family space, parent and tot activities, or childcare while facility users are working out.
- Include additional activities for youth, such as foosball and ping pong, board games, card games, and video games.
- Ensure all doors are sliding (in the multipurpose space and throughout the building) to accommodate those with physical limitations.
- Ensure the doors are sensor-activated rather than pushing a button to open.



***Draft designs and renderings subject to change ***

FACILITY OVERVIEW

Fitness centre and walking track
Two-entry lobby
Multi-purpose rooms
Dressing room
Aquatics centre



COMMON AREA/ LOBBY

The central theme that arose when it came to the lobby of the new Mariners Centre design was the loss of activities like foosball and ping pong.

Participants felt this would result in youth having fewer things to do compared to what they can do currently at Mariners on Main.



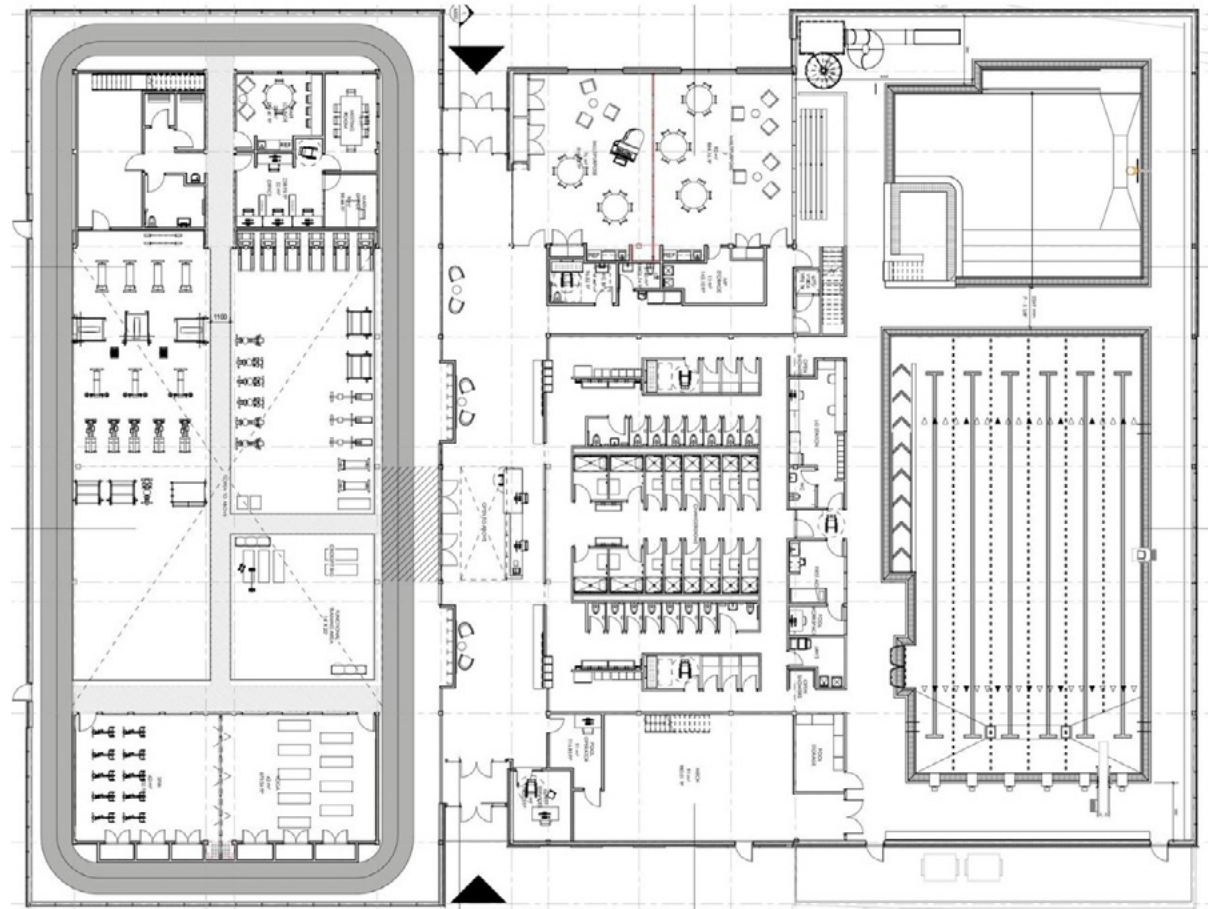


COMMON AREA/LOBBY



Constructive Feedback/Suggestions

- Do not include permanent tables or chairs – or tables or chairs that are fixed together – to accommodate those with accessibility needs.
- Include some chairs with arms and some without.
- Healthy food options should be available for youth.
- Microphone at the front desk so the person who is the service attendant can be heard.



***Draft designs and renderings subject to change ***

FACILITY OVERVIEW

Fitness centre and walking track
Two-entry lobby
Multi-purpose rooms
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Aquatics centre



LACK OF GYMNASIUM

Several residents and stakeholder groups raised concerns over the lack of gymnasium space in the new design during the engagement sessions.

Participants said the omission would seriously impact Yarmouth's basketball, volleyball, racquetball, squash, and pickleball communities. Others added that the lack of a gymnasium would be exacerbated by the lack of a community field house, where children can play flag football and dry land training for baseball. One participant highlighted that Yarmouth residents are leaving our community because they don't have proper space for these activities. The pickleball community was particularly frustrated, as they say the sport has grown in popularity in recent years, especially for Yarmouth's demographic. There was, however, optimism that if the Mariners Centre inevitably becomes a campus-style hub, future plans could include spaces for pickleball and similar activities. Participants requested the Mariners Centre commit to working with community organizations to lobby for a gymnasium/common space that everybody can use.

Constructive Feedback/Suggestions

- School gyms are often tied up so there's no available times for community basketball groups or pick-up games. We need to have a space for these activities that is open to the public and not rented.
- Gymnasium space for basketball, volleyball, racquetball, squash and pickleball must be a priority in the next phase of the expansion.





BUILDING

When it comes to the design of the expanded Mariners Centre as a whole, members of the public were pleased to see it as a standalone structure rather than an expanded version of the arena that is currently in place.

One participant called it “a one-stop shop for the entire family.” However, there were a few concerns raised about the new fitness facility being further away from those living near Mariners on Main.





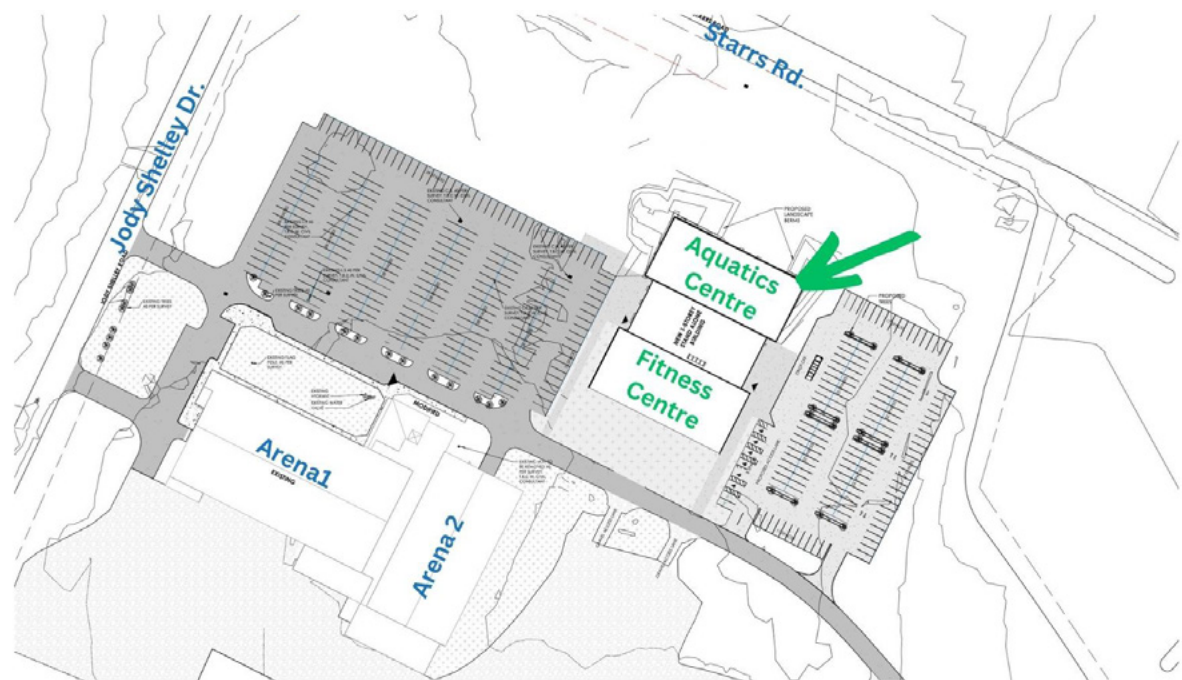
Constructive Feedback/Suggestions

- Determine utilities and drainage for the entire site (including possible future buildings) before any work gets done.
- Spend a lot on insulation to make it economical to operate.
- Include a garage door access to the pool mechanical room.
- Implement easy access to lighting over the pool from the roof for repair and replacements.
- Consider several lighting options throughout the building, including gentle and dimmable lights.
- Consider a pitched roof rather than a flat roof to avoid leaks.
- Include solar panels.
- Consider the acoustics for people who are hard of hearing.
- Consider those with sensory and auditory needs by including surface finishing for echo/reverb.
- Include audible signal light indicators throughout the building so those with visual and auditory impairments can seamlessly move throughout the building.
- Include directional tactile indicators for visual impairment and not just braille. Engage a visual

impairment expert to ensure all avenues are explored.

- Get a construction company to look at the final designs to see if any swaps can be made to save money.
- Update the exterior of the current Mariners Centre so it doesn't look too different from the new facility.
- Consider expanding to the other side of Jody Shelley Drive (depending on who owns the land).

- Consider the inclusion of a Sports Hall of Fame to highlight the athletics feats of Yarmouth's athletes over the years.
- Contact Tri-County Women's Centre once the design is complete to ensure there is a trauma-informed perspective to the facility's rules and regulations.



Draft designs and renderings subject to change

PARKING

The central themes around parking focused on safety, accessibility and adequate space at the existing Mariners Centre – especially during Junior A hockey games.

Participants felt that there currently is not enough accessible parking at the facility, and that accessibility should be a strong consideration in the expansion. Other comments focused on alternative transit considerations, such as space for bike storage, creating a new bus stop at the facility, and efficient design for drop-off.

Constructive Feedback/Suggestions

- Include a new exit/entry directly onto Starrs Road to help avoid traffic congestion/challenges during event days.
- Leverage parking where the facility already has gravel on the exhibition grounds.
- Work with the Town of Yarmouth to include a bus stop closer to the new building.
- Include additional accessible parking on both sides of the facility.
- Make parking specific to the building users are utilizing (Aquatics/Fitness Centre vs. rink)
- Include a circular drop-off area, similar to what's at primary schools.
- Include more bike racks than what are currently in place, as well as an indoor space for safe bicycle storage.



GENERAL

Beyond feedback on the various rooms and spaces there were general suggestions on service offerings within the new facility.

Many existing users – families in particular – highlighted the amount of time they spend at the facility and their desire for supportive service, including childcare and healthy food options. These were framed as both services of need and potential revenue generators for the facility. There was fear that if the Mariners Centre does not consider revenue generators this will be made up for by increasing membership costs.

Constructive Feedback/Suggestions

- The new facility should offer healthy food options.
- Consider daycare options. This is both a need for families and a major source of income for the centre.
- Consider a café or food service in the expansion. Without revenue generators membership costs will rise.
- Have a familiarization session with the candidates who want to run for municipal council so they can go door knocking and spread the word about the new design and its features.



OUTSTANDING QUESTIONS

The following questions were raised during the engagement process.

They will be reviewed and responded to in the public facing What We Heard Report and added to the public facing FAQ document on the Mariners Centre website in early 2024.

What is the pool depth requirement for competitions?

How do you get the wheelchair out of the water?

What is the capacity for each of the pools?

How many people will be using the pool during prime time?

There is a safety concern with navigating between the two buildings. How will this be addressed?

How wide is the track?

How many people do you estimate will use the track at prime time?

How many square feet is the building?

Lobby: How will you control access to paying vs. not paying people?

How long would it take to evacuate the building?

How flexible are we in the movement of walls?

NEXT STEPS

The Mariners Centre expansion engagement sessions generated insightful community feedback and identified several common themes. It is now up to the Mariners Centre Expansion Board and project committee to review the information and feedback collected throughout this engagement and determine which design elements can be incorporated. .

This What We Heard Report will guide the project architects in finalizing the design, aligning it with community expectations while addressing specific concerns where possible. A public-facing What We Heard Report will be issued in early 2024 that identifies changes made as a direct result of the community's input.

