



OUR FEATURED FACILITY

Finding a facility that will fascinate the whole family can be quite the endeavour. In Kelowna however, it will soon be easy. With the new H²O Adventure and Fitness Centre targeting to open soon, residents and tourists alike can start getting pumped.

Reid Oddleifson, partnership development manager for the City of Kelowna, says this new facility stands above all other aquatic centres in the province. “There’s only one, and that’s the H²O Adventure and Fitness Centre, that has the leisure water components, and that has such a huge capacity for fun and thrill and enjoyment and exercise.”



Before this new facility, Kelowna had two aquatic centres, one built in the early ‘70s and the other built in the early ‘80s. Oddleifson said the community has grown remarkably since then and because of increased public demand a new facility was needed.

Features at the new 96,000-square-foot facility include a 50-metre swimming pool, whirlpools, a fitness centre and an indoor water park. The water park, which is the largest in B.C. and the second largest in Canada, has water slides, a river-run and Canada’s first Flowrider, a standing wave that simulates an ocean wave.

The eight-lane, 50-metre tank at the new facility can be converted into a 25-metre swimming pool allowing simultaneous activities such as length swimming, synchronized swimming and water polo. An adjustable floor allows deeper water for advanced programs and competitive swimming, as well as shallow water for a variety of children’s programs and people with a disability. The Olympic length pool will accommodate kayaking, scuba and springboard diving. Oddleifson says the public has had a lot to do with deciding which features would be incorporated into the new facility.

“The amount of public input on the design elements and the size and scope of the facility has been remarkable,” says Oddleifson. He notes that there were extensive public processes to help determine what was wanted and needed at the new aquatic centre. This included public surveys, open houses, displays in the mall, and displays in other public facilities. An online market research tool was also developed to aid in collecting information.

Wayne Bilawchuk, construction manager with PCL Constructors Westcoast Inc. says the teamwork involved in this project made it stand out compared with traditional projects. “The project came alive through an integrated design team process which is unique. It involves the owner, the designer, the contractor and the end user, all sitting at a table to develop the plan.” And this plan has become one that will appeal to a large number in the community according to Jim Waugh with the Appin-Bute Group, project manager of the development. “I’ve done a lot of projects over the years, and I believe this one will have the largest community benefit impact.”

But the project did come with its fair share of challenges. Terry Barkley of Cannon Design, the architectural firm of record, says the site had severe sub-grade problems due to water and settlement. To overcome these issues they

had to raise the building up out of the ground, ultimately leaving the 50-meter pool above ground. Staying on budget with such an extensive list of elements was also a challenge. Much of the available money and time spent on design had to be focused indoors in order to satisfy the plans.

“Only by a great amount of valued engineering by PCL and the various consultants did we manage to simplify the remainder of the building sufficiently so that no aquatic elements that were desired for the public was left out,” says Barkley. “Being able to achieve that within the budget was a great task.” Bilawchuk notes that the project started at a time when the market was extremely busy and costs were on the rise, which made staying on budget even more difficult.

Oddleifson says the new fitness centre will be incredible for all sort of exercising. “It has almost anything you can think of for a modern fitness centre. The equipment is going to be the biggest and best in the Valley.” The 10,000-square-foot centre will have free-weights, strength building machines and aerobic machines, such as stationary bikes and treadmills. Plus it will have 2,500 square feet of aerobic studios with a sprung wood floor for classes. The water park will also host a series of waterslides, one of which is meant for cruising down in an inner tube. Oddleifson believes the river-run will be a big hit for those traveling on floating devices, as the water speed can be changed for different levels of excitement.

But the feature that will steal the most attention may just be the Flowrider, according to Oddleifson. Found around the world in resort areas and on cruise ships, none have found their way to Canada thus far, until now. Bilawchuk agrees that this feature will get a lot of attention. “Riders go on a boogie board and actually surf while stationary. The snowboarders out here are going to love it.”

Barkley says he is pleased with the development of the project at this stage. He says they have hit their budget targets and all the testing so far has worked out perfectly. Waugh says the construction has also gone very well. “It’s been a very smooth project. PCL has been an excellent general contractor to work with.” Bilawchuk says the



project has had a great team of sub-trades and consultants. “There’s been good co-operation from the owner and this all came about starting with the integrated design team.”

Barkley says the City of Kelowna wanted to create a recreation facility that would serve the citizens of Kelowna and the Mission Recreation Park area extremely well. But he says they also wanted to achieve an iconic centre that would attract tourists and serve as an economic driver. With the finishing touches now being put on the facility, Barkley says the element-packed interior will definitely attract water enthusiasts. “We’re expecting a rather large reaction from the public to it.”

Oddleifson hopes beyond entertainment value, that the facility will allow the community to enjoy a healthier way of living. “This facility will be a remarkable opportunity for people to prioritize more physical activity in their lives and in their routines. The variety of things you can do in the facility that can contribute to a healthy, active lifestyle is very significant.”

Article written by Reid Oddleifson, Partnership & Development Manager, City of Kelowna

