

Jumping In: Examining Public Perceptions of Urban Swimming in Halifax Harbour

Anika Riopel - Bachelor of Arts I Combined Honours Environment, Sustainability and Society & Theatre Arts
 Supervisor Dr. Tarah Wright, Department of Environmental Science

Background

- A Pre 1980's
Public swimming in the Harbour
- B 1980- 2004
Higher levels of contaminants - beach closures
- C 2004-2008
3 new wastewater treatments plants are build
- D 2010
Data indicates that water is safe for recreational use



"What is the public's current perception of the suitability of the Halifax waterfront for swimming, and what is their feedback to swimming infrastructure proposals?"

Methods

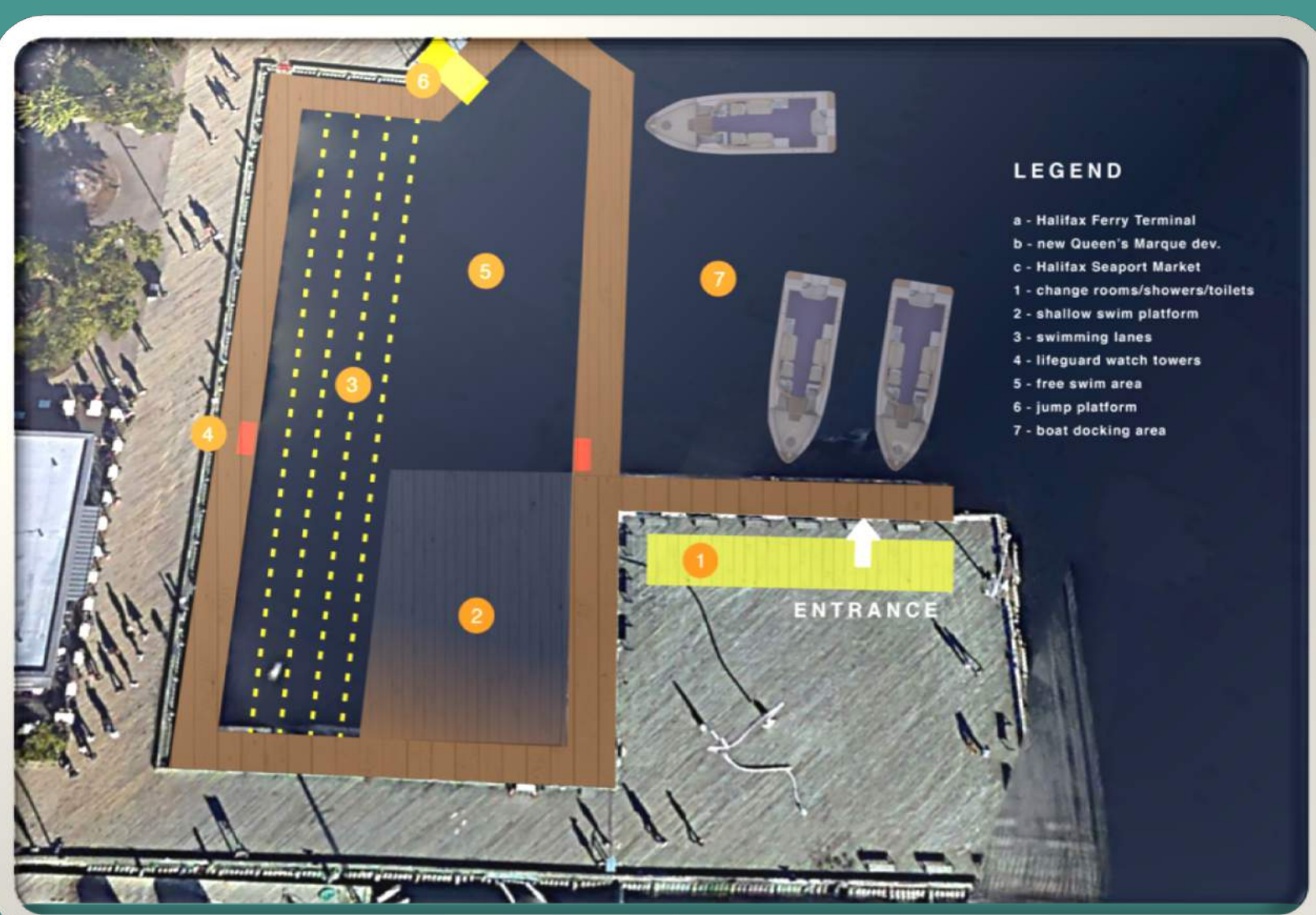
Community Based Social Marketing (CBSM) focuses on finding ways to create a desired behavior change. The first step is to develop an understanding of the perceived barriers and benefits to the adoption of the desired behavior.



Results

339 Surveys

91% support building swimming infrastructure on the Halifax Waterfront



While there is support for infrastructure, there are also concerns:

Concerns for Swimming Safety	% of comments
Water quality	26%
Boat traffic	22%
Nature (cold temp., currents, weather)	12%
No concerns	7%
Lifeguards/emergency services	7%

As well, there is lots of feedback on the swimming visualizations:

Like	%	Improve	%
Barrier from boats	18%	Additional features like waterslide & lounge chairs	22%
Accessible for all (ramp/shallow bottom)	8%	No changes suggested	18%
Change rooms, showers & washrooms	8%	More water quality information	10%
Jump platform	8%	Barriers & docks	10%
Swim lanes	7%	More lifeguards	7%

Recommendations

Following the CBSM framework, the surveys were analysed to determine the barriers and benefits of urban swimming in Halifax based on public's perception of the suitability of the Halifax Waterfront waterfront for swimming and the feedback to the swimming infrastructure proposals. This allowed for the development of the following strategic recommendations for a pilot.

Recommendations based on perceived barriers & feedback:

- Posted onsite water quality information
- Barrier separating swimmers from marine vessels
- Accessible design (ramps & shallow areas)
- Showers, change rooms and lockers
- Fun features (jump platform, waterslide, sauna etc.)
- Onsite Lifeguards

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