

Memorandum

Date: July 1, 2025
To: Amy Wilson
From: Greg Weykamp
Subject: Harbor Centre Marina Pool Analysis

Distribution:

Amy,

The Harbor Centre Marina Market Analysis report we prepared outlines a wide range of marina program elements and amenities that are found within the marinas within the study area as a means of determining which elements are essentially required for a marina to be successful, and which elements are optional. Page 17 covers this topic as follows:

“Successful marinas are judged by the quality of their docks and services, the type and capacity of utilities provided, and landside amenities including the quality of the landscape, parking, and boat launch facilities.

As it relates to the impact on the market analysis, very few of the elements considered are optional. Simply put, a modern marina must have adequate parking, shore power suitable for the energy demands of the boats accommodated, water, and sanitary pump-out. Amenities such as showers, restrooms, laundry, Wi-Fi, ship’s store, and boater lounges are expected, and they must be kept exceptionally clean and well-maintained at all times. Nearly all of the marinas in the market study area presented standard amenities, (i.e., laundry, showers). The distinction between marinas is made in the overall quality of the marina facilities, and the age of the amenities.

Other elements that make a difference to marina finances and operations, but not necessarily the popularity of the marina among seasonal boaters, include boat launches, lift/haul-out service, on-site repairs, and boat rental.”

Please note that pools are not even listed in this section, as they are amenities that are very rarely found in municipal marinas on the Great Lakes. They are very maintenance intensive and not considered essential to traditional marina operations. They also present a significant health and safety liability and require certifications and training not generally found in marina operations staff. It is much more common to find pools in yacht clubs, and private marinas that offer amenities comparable to yacht clubs. These amenities include restaurants and other food services and outdoor bars, and youth programs such as junior sailing schools, summer activity camps, and swim teams. All of these programs require additional staffing well beyond what a traditional marina operation can support – most importantly appropriately trained and certified life guards - and these additional programs generate significant revenues that cover the cost of constructing, operating, and maintaining a pool.



Of the municipal marinas included in the study, only Harbor Center and Reef Pointe Marina currently offer pools. There is no correlation between occupancy in the facilities with pools as compared to other facilities without pools, and our work with the marina staff that operate pools indicates they are often the highest maintenance element in the entire marina while not generating sufficient revenue to cover these costs.

In our work with the State of Michigan on the Statewide Harbor Facility Analysis, we studied all 87 state owned and funded marinas, which generally includes every municipal marina in the state. Only one of those marinas has a pool, and that facility was formerly a private marina that reverted to public ownership after it faced financial difficulties. There are at least two marinas that have splash pads adjacent to the marinas, only one of which is managed and maintained by marina staff. The others are managed and maintained by parks staff.

In summary, we do not recommend providing a pool at Harbor Centre Marina, nor do we recommend them in nearly all municipal marina operations due to the liability and high cost of construction, maintenance, and operations. Municipal marina staff rarely have the training and certifications to manage the pool, and the costs of providing a pool are not covered by increased occupancy or higher rates in traditional marinas without extensive youth programming, sail clubs, and/or restaurants. A splash pad would be a possible alternative that has much lower liability, but they still have significant maintenance requirements.
