

# Hot Stuff About Swimming Pools 2007

**T**his is the sixth year that *PM* has published its swimming pool section in the December issue. The pools that are featured are owned and operated by local governments. In the August and September issues, readers were invited to share pool stories and photos. Here are the contributions the magazine received.

## **BANNING, CALIFORNIA**

It's no secret that Banning (population 30,641) is booming, and its spike in population means that more and more families are moving into the area, searching for ways to entertain themselves and battling the desert heat.

A short walk from the downtown is Banning's newest facility, the Repplier Park Aquatic Center. This \$4.2 million midtown oasis meets the recreational needs of local families and improves the city's existing community services programming. Since its June 2007 opening, the pool has provided a haven for Banning's youth, a shelter from the heat, and a friendly welcome to groups of youngsters who come for community swim classes.

Emphasis on fun and family are the key ingredients in the success of the pool complex. The center's amenities include two pool slides and a group of water features to go along with concessions, lockers, and office buildings; restroom facilities; trellises; and overhead lighting.

The centerpiece, however, is the pool itself. The beach-entrance, infinity pool is so named because swimmers can walk right in without the hassles of clamoring down steps or creating huge, awkward splashes and because there are no visible walls surrounding the water.





**Banning, California's newest facility, the Repplier Park Aquatic Center, features an infinity pool entrance that allows swimmers to walk into the pool without using steps.**

Banning's former facility was going to require major renovations in order to meet current state health department standards and to conform to the city's parks and recreation master plan. The alternative to this extensive work was to build a new complex from the ground up.

The project site was later earmarked to include an additional competition pool, but the construction of a similar pool at nearby Banning High School allowed the city to re-engineer the project to accommodate a splash pad inside the complex. Admission prices have not changed since, remaining at 65 cents per person.

The Repplier Park Aquatic Center project stayed afloat thanks to contributions by generous agencies. Nearly \$1 million was provided through a community development block grant sponsored by the Riverside County Economic Development Agency. Most of the remainder was allocated to the city through state park bond proceeds, parkland development funds, federal appropriations, donations from the Morongo Band of Mission Indians and the Laura May Stewart Foundation, and fundraising performed by the Pass Stingrays and Congressman Jerry Lewis.

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#### **CLAYTON, MISSOURI**

Clayton (population 15,000) is a thriving urban center, and the 149,000-square-foot Center of Clayton was built in partnership with the Clayton school district. The Center of Clayton is the proud home of two year-round indoor pools. An additional seasonal outdoor aquatic facility is located in Shaw Park, a park of almost 50 acres in the heart of the city.

The center houses an eight-lane, 25-yard competition pool with two,

one-meter diving boards as well as a leisure pool that boasts a lazy river, a slide, tumble buckets, and a vortex. The indoor facility enables the aquatic department to offer year-round programming, recreational swim, and extensive lap swimming. Aquatic programs enroll more than 4,000 participants in the immediate and surrounding community area each year.

As a result of the city and school district partnership, Clayton High School students use the center's aquatic facilities for their swim, dive, and water polo teams. As a whole, this facility serves the recreational, sport, and wellness needs of Clayton's residents and corporate citizens.

Shaw Park Pool has been owned and operated by the city since its opening in 1937. Rebuilt in 2003 and renamed the Shaw Park Aquatic Center, this outdoor pool also serves the recreational and competitive needs of the community. The rebuilt pool has retained the design and the traditional pool structure that has served it well for the past 70 years. It offers the only outdoor 10-meter diving platform in Missouri.

With four springboards; a dive tower; an eight-lane, 50-meter competition pool; and a recreational children's pool, Shaw Park Aquatic Center offers a beautiful and unique



**Clayton, Missouri's Shaw Park Aquatic Center was built in 2003. Clayton High School's students also use Shaw Park for their swim, dive, and water polo teams.**



setting for recreational and competitive swimming and diving.

—Patty DeForrest

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## DERBY, KANSAS

Bringing the architect's conceptual design into reality, engineers' plans incorporated the rustic river theme throughout all elements of Rock River Rapids Aquatic Park in Derby, Kansas (population 21,000). This is not just an attraction, but an experience! The unique landscaping includes a "cracked earth" design stamped in the concrete of the entry plaza, meandering pathways throughout the complex connecting wooden bridges with the pools, and rustic sheds with tin roofs that give the park a woody facade although its amenities are modern.

Rough-hewn cedar signage inside and outside the park carries the theme consistently throughout the area, while several dry "river beds" lined with river rock wind throughout the park's interior landscape. Even the entry plaza, the bathhouse, the concessions area, administrative offices, and the slide tube storage shelter share the same integrated design with exposed wood beams and metal roof details.

Rock River Rapids distinguishes itself from other projects as not only a community showpiece but also as a venue for community building. Rock River Rapids Aquatic Park is a result of the efforts of a grassroots committee called the Supporters of Aquatic Center (SOAC) as well as city staff, Water's Edge Aquatic Design, and the Derby Recreation Commission.

The pool project was originally conceived as a replacement for Derby's aging 40-year-old municipal pool. Built at a time when the Derby community was home to approximately 6,500 residents, the old pool was a traditional design whose outmoded novelty and aging infrastructure made it an increasing burden and inadequate for the needs of Derby's current 21,000+ population.

Meanwhile, aquatic parks had emerged as a movement in municipal pool design. The concept of a commu-



The Derby, Kansas, Rock River Rapids Aquatic Park includes a 1,000-gallon water dumping bucket in the kids' play area, numerous slides, and the lazy river, shown here.

nity-oriented facility was especially relevant in Derby. As a bedroom community located southeast of Wichita, Derby has experienced aggressive growth recently.

Derby's status as a bedroom community and its rapid growth caused Derby to evolve without a downtown district, the "heart" of comparable communities. While the resilient business sector has thrived along Derby's retail corridors, the community is otherwise without one of the classic cornerstones of community identity and interaction. So, community spaces in Derby like the municipal swimming pool become more important for creating a sense of community.

With this in mind, SOAC approached the Derby City Council in December 2001 with the goal of building a showcase water park. The council appointed a mix of citizens, staff members, and elected officials to serve on exploratory and design committees. Derby's citizens approved a dedicated one-half-cent tax in the November 2002 election, which was in addition to the state and county sales taxes already being collected. Construction of the \$7 million facility began on July 10, 2003, and was officially completed in September 2005. More than 300,000 visitors have enjoyed Derby's newest amenity and showpiece of engineering and design.

To the Derby community, Rock

River Rapids represents an opportunity for economic development, bringing additional revenue into the community through local restaurants, retail stores, and other services. It also represents jobs, employing 80 staff members, and the creation of an alternative destination in south central Kansas, drawing visitors from across the state as well as from Oklahoma, Missouri, and Colorado.

Most important, Rock River Rapids represents a sense of place for a blossoming city and stands as an example of how municipal engineering can help create community.

—Mandy Wagner

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## HERMISTON, OREGON

On July 31, 2004, the Hermiston Family Aquatic Center opened its doors to the public for the first time. On that city council-sponsored weekend, more than 5,000 community members visited the facility. Since then, the facility has been averaging 85,000 visitors a year, indicating that it is popular in this community of 15,000.

A seasonal facility, operating Memorial Day through Labor Day, the aquatic center's emphasis has been on quality programming, including swim lessons, aquatic fitness, and special events. The midweek, noon fitness classes often are overflowing with 60





**Among the features of the Hermiston [Oregon] Family Aquatic Center is a 150-foot current channel. It also includes interactive spray features and a 108-foot open slide.**

to 70 participants. The swim lesson program had nearly 1,200 students in 2007, and the first August special event of 2007, Treasure Island for Kids, saw more than 250 youth participate in a scavenger hunt throughout the facility. Further evidence of the quality of these programs came in 2006 when Aquatics International named the facility the best public sector waterpark serving a 50,000 to 100,000 annual attendance.

As one of the largest summer part-time employers in the community—77 employees in 2007—the aquatic center offers employees a welcoming and challenging work environment. Opportunities abound for employees through a proficiency-based pay scale. Employees have the opportunity to get additional training throughout their employment and are rewarded with pay increases as new skills proficiency is demonstrated.

Groups of employees, such as lifeguards and instructors, are also rewarded collectively when goals are met through the positive reward system. Management maintains an open-door policy and a work environment that allows employees to advance in responsibility and compensation, as they desire.

Receiving a facility design award in 2006 from the Oregon Recreation and

Parks Association, the facility blends into and complements its natural setting. Sharp angles and the split-face block construction of the bathhouse and reception area mimic the adjacent Hermiston Butte. The zero-depth entry welcomes all ages to the multi-use pool, which includes interactive spray features, a 108-foot open slide, and a 150-foot current channel.

All ages can enjoy the fully accessible 50-meter pool featuring six lanes and a one-meter diving board; teenag-

ers and adults can participate in lap swimming and water aerobics. Parents with toddlers find the uncrowded and consistent depth of the toddler pool welcoming for their children, who are experiencing pools for the first time. With nearly 15,000 square feet of surface area, the facility is one of the largest in the Northwest.

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## **LAWRENCE, KANSAS**

Ask the citizens of Lawrence, Kansas (population 90,000) what they would like in a swimming pool and they'll tell you exactly what they want. And what they asked for was exactly what they got—a pool for high-end competition and training and a pool that is fun for the kids and families.

The Lawrence Indoor Aquatic Center (LIAC) is a 53,000-square-foot indoor aquatic facility that opened to the public on June 2, 2001. Costing \$9.5 million, the facility includes an Olympic size competition pool with spectator space plus a separate leisure pool with zero-depth entry, floating play features, water sprays, and a waterslide. Annual attendance averages 120,000 competitive and recreational swimmers.

Conveniently located doors con-



**The Lawrence [Kansas] Indoor Aquatic Center was built in partnership with the local school district, and a tunnel connects the aquatic facility with the Lawrence Free State High School. Coexistence is not a problem.**



nect the competition and leisure pools, allowing patrons to pass from one pool to the other easily. But because the pools are separate, such multiple events as swim meets, birthday parties, and business meetings can all happen at the same time. Ensuring this coexistence was a hot-button issue with both competitive and leisure swimmers.

An important partnership with the local school district helped make this community aquatic facility a reality. A generous donation of five acres next to a new high school permitted planning for a municipally owned and operated facility that would be attached to Lawrence Free State High School. A tunnel connects the buildings, and the aquatic center is home to the high school's swimming and diving teams and various physical education and health classes. Although the buildings are attached, they operate separately. The school district rents space for swimming pool use but is not directly responsible for operational costs.

Benefits to the school district include having a convenient, top-notch competitive swimming venue available for district athletes without the overhead costs of an aquatic facility. At the same time, the city of Lawrence was able to build a municipal facility in a growing neighborhood without having to purchase costly land. The city also benefits from a long-term rental contract for the use of its pools by the school district.

Funding for construction and operations was secured through a countywide one cent sales tax adopted in 1994. This sales tax does not have a sunset date. Not only was this tax collection allowed to fund construction, but it also is able to cover operational shortfalls on an ongoing basis. Community leaders realized early in the project that this aquatic facility could not be self-supporting, but they understood this to be not only an investment in bricks and mortar but also in continued operations for generations to come.

—Jimmy Gibbs, CPRP

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**Shakopee, Minnesota, re-created a lake getaway when it opened its sand bottom, chlorinated swimming pool in 1969. In 2006-2007, the city gave the facility a facelift and a new name, the Shakopee SandVenture Aquatic Park.**

### SHAKOPEE, MINNESOTA

Minnesotans love the outdoors—Minnesota is the “land of 10,000 lakes”—especially during the summer months. Shakopee (population 33,000; located in the Twin Cities metropolitan area) re-created the family fun of a lake getaway when it opened its sand-bottom, chlorinated swimming pool in 1969. In 2006–2007, the city gave the facility a facelift and a new name, Shakopee SandVenture Aquatic Park.

Originally known as the Shakopee municipal swimming pool, the facility was first used as a pool and bathhouse in the summer and an ice skating rink and warming house in the winter. It was built to provide residents with a safer and cleaner alternative to swimming in the Minnesota River, which borders the north side of the city. Although the original bathhouse is now gone and ice skating was discontinued when the sand filtration system was installed, the pool itself has been a source of summer fun for several generations of families.

The pool is an oval measuring 268 feet by 224 feet, and it holds between 800,000 and 1 million gallons of chlorinated water. As its name indicates, it boasts a sand beach surrounding a sand bottom pool, similar to many area lakes. The pool's zero-depth entry eases out to a five-foot depth, letting

visitors of all ages enjoy the water. Adventurous guests can try out the 300-foot waterslide, two 12-foot drop slides, and a diving board, all located in a section of the pool that is 12 feet deep.

An improved water quality and chlorination system was installed in 1999–2000. The facility's 2006–2007 renovations included constructing a new support building, which houses a concession stand, family changing rooms, men's and women's locker rooms, a picnic area, and staff storage and support areas.

Other updates included installation of new playground equipment and a sand play area for kids. All of the renovations were financed through the city's capital improvement project budget, which means that residents were not faced with a tax increase or levies specifically for those projects.

During the summer months (June through mid-August), more than 22,000 guests visit the aquatic park, and approximately 400 children take swimming lessons at the site. SandVenture's 55 staff members, of which 45 are lifeguards, help make this swimming adventure safe and enjoyable for all guests.

To add to the excitement, special events take place all summer long. At the annual beach party, guests can





**The zero depth leisure pool with aquatic playground at the Jim Allen Aquatic Center in Shawnee, Kansas, features a 350-gallon conch shell dump bucket, three slides, water guns, geysers, and many other water play features.**

enjoy a DJ, a luau, games, and contests. One of the most interesting events is the Goldfish Hunt on the last day of operation. Toward the end of the day, 500 goldfish are dropped into the pool, and kids go "fishing" with their nets and buckets. Guests get to keep what they catch.

SandVenture Aquatic Park's sand bottom pool and beaches, water-slides, and summer activities make it a favorite destination for many local families.

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## SHAWNEE, KANSAS

Splash Cove at the Jim Allen Aquatic Center in Shawnee, Kansas (population 57,000) opened on May 26, 2007. This aquatic center was the result of a citywide aquatic feasibility study conducted in 2000. The existing East

Pool, built in 1962, was functionally obsolete and needed to be replaced with a new-generation pool. The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and parks and recreation staff worked with aquatic and design companies to design a new aquatic venue. The group also worked with the neighboring Wonderscope Children's Museum to create a three-block area of fun for children. This area includes Splash Cove, Wonderscope, and the Sister Cities Park.

The Splash Cove facility includes an administration building housing offices, first aid services, concessions, storage rooms, pump rooms, and a bathhouse complete with women's and men's locker rooms and family changing rooms. The complex has two pools—a zero-depth-entry leisure pool with playground, instructional area, and slide plunge; and a kiddie wave pool. The entire complex is themed to "Under the Sea." The pool

area is also equipped with WiFi, so while kids are splashing and having fun, parents can have free Internet access and an opportunity to get their work done.

Splash Cove is a great place for kids and parents to spend their summer days. Shawnee has a partnership with Wonderscope, which is the children's museum located just behind the new pool. Kids can enjoy the hands-on exhibits and programs that the museum offers and then go to Splash Cove for fun in the sun. The city and Wonderscope have partnered to offer deals for their members: Wonderscope members can receive the resident rate of \$5 per day for Splash Cove, and visitors to Splash Cove can receive \$1 off the regular daily admission at Wonderscope. Both the city and the museum also offer discounts on annual memberships.

This project is special to the community and especially to residents who live or work in the downtown area. In the past, downtown Shawnee was the city's central business district, where residents satisfied their everyday shopping and business needs. As in other cities across America, suburban-style shopping changed all that. Supermarkets, office buildings, and one-stop shopping pulled customers to scattered locations and away from the heart of Shawnee. The downtown lost its relevance and had little practical purpose.

The city's challenge was to re-create that relevance and purpose and bring people back downtown. In 2002, the Shawnee Downtown Partnership was created, and the revitalization of downtown Shawnee began. This project has significantly contributed to this mission of creating a vibrant downtown.

Numerous focus groups and meetings were held to gain community input on how downtown should look and feel. This area has been created by the whole community, and it has become something the whole community can enjoy.

Since completion of the pool, two new businesses have located next door to the facility—a new ice cream



shop and a new café! This area has enhanced the downtown and has helped create a true sense of community!

—Sara Singer

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## ST. ALBERT, ALBERTA, CANADA

St. Albert (population 58,000) is located in central Alberta and has the pleasure of experiencing only seven hours of darkness in the summer and the displeasure of having only 10 hours of light in the winter. The community, however, offers its residents an exceptional diversity of aquatic experiences.

They enjoy the Grosvenor Outdoor Pool, the Fountain Park Recreation Centre, the Woodlands Water Play Park, and the brand new Landrex Water Play Centre at Servus Credit Union Place, the largest recreation facility of its kind in western Canada.

**Grosvenor Outdoor Pool.** In 1967, St. Albert's first outdoor swimming pool—Grosvenor Pool—was built. It is 25 meters in length and has a separate diving tank. Each summer for 39 years, an average of 25,000 patrons spent hot summer days at the outdoor pool until the facility was fully renovated in 2006.

One of the goals of the upgrade was to preserve the history of the pool. Children learning to swim today are able to share the same outdoor experience that their parents and grandparents did when they learned to swim at this facility.

As the town grew into a city, Fountain Park Recreation Centre, a 2,500-square-meter facility, was built in 1978. It included a 25-meter, eight-lane tank; a small pool for preschoolers learning to swim; four racquetball courts; a sauna; and meeting rooms.

Fountain Park Recreation Centre served St. Albert well for 22 years, and in 2000 it was expanded and renovated to increase the size of the facility to 4,200 square meters. Additions included a 25-meter, eight-lane competition pool, an 8,900-gallon whirlpool with television viewing, a large steam room, a sauna, and a giant water slide.

The changes also included converting the existing 25-meter pool to a leisure space with a peninsula, a diving platform, a cove with jets and sprays, and a special-needs access ramp. Three of the racquetball courts were converted to meeting rooms, a dance studio, and a children's indoor playground.

The center now offers four separate bodies of water at four different tem-

peratures and can accommodate up to 650 bathers at once. There are lots of viewing areas, a cozy café with a fireplace, and an outside deck. This facility houses the largest learn-to-swim and advanced swimming programs in the province, is home to four swim clubs, runs 40 drop-in water fitness classes per week, and provides opportunities for recreational swimming and rental space.

**Woodlands Water Play Park.** In 1995, the Woodlands Water Play Park—the first spray park of its kind in western Canada—was built. This free-access park quickly achieved overwhelming regional popularity beyond its capacity. In 2006, the facility was completely renovated to a new 1,100-square-meter splash pad divided into three individual play zones with 21 central spray features.

The spray features were specifically designed to accommodate children of all ages and abilities. This park is one of the largest zero-depth spray parks in North America, serving up to 2,000 patrons on its busiest days during the summer season.

**Landrex Water Play Centre.** In 2006, the city of St. Albert built another leisure facility called the Servus Credit Union Place. Servus Place is the largest recreation facility of its kind in western Canada and includes a water play center designed for all ages. The center boasts more than 25 spray and water features, a river ride, and two giant waterslides.

Nonswimmers can relax in the sauna, steam room, or one of the two large whirlpools. This water facility complements the other amenities in the building that accommodate health and fitness, indoor sports, court activities, the track and training center, ice arenas, meeting rooms, and an active living kitchen.

The city's aquatics team of 170 permanent and part-time members has the pleasure of operating and maintaining these wonderful facilities. For further information on St. Albert's aquatic facilities, contact Edith Martin, manager of aquatic



The Grosvenor Outdoor Pool is among four aquatic facilities available to the citizens of St. Albert, Alberta, Canada.





**The Tippecanoe Family Aquatic Center in Tipp City, Ohio, is one facility that came out of the city's first parks and open space master plan.**

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### **TIPP CITY, OHIO**

After completing an exhaustive analysis of its parks and recreation facilities in 2002, Tipp City, Ohio (population 10,000), adopted its first parks and open space master plan. Central to the plan was replacing the city's 50-year-old municipal pool—a conventional rectangular cold-water pool with no concessions and a less than modern bathhouse. In addition, the city had been regularly subsidizing the pool's operation from its general fund, which amounted to between \$40,000 and \$50,000 per year.

To address the need to replace the pool and invest in other park facilities in the community as recommended in the plan, citizens approved an increase in their municipal income tax rate of 0.25 percent for a 10-year period, beginning January 1, 2003. With the pool project as the centerpiece of a planned \$10 million park improvement program, design work began in 2003; this was followed by construction in 2004 of the new pool facility—to be named the Tippecanoe

Family Aquatic Center in honor of the city's founding name.

The facility was completed and opened to the public on Memorial Day weekend in 2005. The aquatic center—the first of its type in the northern Dayton, Ohio, metropolitan area—includes two swimming pools: a traditional lap pool with two diving boards and a zero-depth-entry pool. The entry pool has a central play structure, including a 300-gallon dumping bucket and two-speed water

slides. The facility also has water park spray grounds and an attractive bathhouse and concession facility.

What distinguishes the Tippecanoe Family Aquatic Center from other outdoor aquatic facilities is the integration of the surrounding century-old park into the design of the facility. During the design phase, community input emphasized that few of the mature trees should be cut down to accommodate the facility.

As a result, project architects took special care to design around these towering trees, which now provide a complement of shade and greenery not found in many modern water parks today. More than 60,000 residents and visitors use the center each year, and complaints about cold water early in the season have vanished because the water can be heated now.

The city contracts out the management and operation and has nearly eliminated any subsidies from the general fund to cover operations. Strong support from the community and the facility's popularity with patrons of all ages from the whole northern metro area have meant that the aquatic center has met or even exceeded the city's expectations.

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## **PM Fast Facts**

### **The ICMA Fund for Professional Management**

- In 2006, ICMA had 8,500 members, 576 of whom made contributions to the Fund. The average donation was \$149.
- The number of donors increased by 5 percent from 2005 to 2006, and the total amount of donations increased 21 percent.
- During the first eight months of 2007, the Fund supported citizens' groups in six communities (totaling 2.6 million citizens) as part of campaigns to adopt or retain the council-manager plan and professional local government.

To learn more about the Fund, visit [icma.org/fund](http://icma.org/fund) or contact Gary Cannon at [icma.org](http://icma.org); 803/786-0816.