



The Canyon Aqua Park was built to replace an aging, 60-year-old pool that was no longer a big draw for the local community.

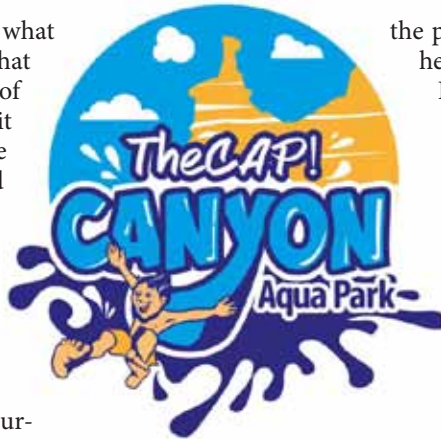


By Amanda Rogers

The Story of the Canyon Aqua Park

The City of Canyon, Texas, comes to the end of a successful development journey to deliver a much-needed aquatic center for area residents.

Community pools aren't what they used to be. At least that was the message the City of Canyon was receiving when it was becoming evident that the large swimming pool it maintained was near the point of disrepair. A new facility would have to be built, but a standard pool wouldn't be enough. The public, and the market, was ready for a new step. A family aquatic center would be just the thing to not only provide a service for the community, but also bring in tourist dollars from those visiting from the area.



Embarking on the development journey

Like many communities in the 1950s, the City of Canyon in Texas built a large swimming pool. That pool was a \$500,000 project and, for a small West Texas community, it was a major investment. For more than 60 years the pool served Canyon residents and surrounding communities well. As the years went by, the facility began to look a little rough around the edges, but City and summer pool staff were able to perform the necessary maintenance to keep

the pool open. A fresh coat of paint each summer helped hide the wear and tear of 60 years of use.

However, as the years went by, attendance at the pool began to drop and that fresh coat of paint just wasn't able to hide the fact that the facility was operating on borrowed time.

"The 60-year-old pool was falling apart. It needed a new plaster job, the heater always had trouble and the diving boards required maintenance to keep them operational," said Andrew Neighbors, facility manager.

In 2010 a new parks director, Brian Noel, was hired and he quickly became aware of the fact that the facility had certainly

lived well past its life expectancy. Plans for a future facility needed to be made before the pool reached a point that it would not be cost effective or safe to keep it open. Soon the director and pool manager were engaging in regular conversations related to the future of the facility.

However, conversations only take a project so far. In the summer of 2012, the mayor of Canyon appointed a committee to look at the pool and study the options associated with the building of a new facility. It quickly became obvious to the committee that the pool had reached a point that it was beyond repair, outdated and, unless the community was prepared for life without a pool, it was time to consider a new facility. Committee members visited the managers and staff of various family aquatic parks in the region and gathered information related to operation of these facilities. After meeting with a consultant to develop an estimated cost for a facility, the committee presented its findings to the City Commission.

"At that time the committee recommended that the City Commission consider moving forward with a feasibility study to determine the aquatic needs of the community and probable cost of a new facility," said Jon Behrens, assistant city manager of special projects for the City of





The new facility opened on July 17, 2017 with the official opening announcement going out via Facebook to more than 9,500 followers.



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Canyon, who also served as a committee member at the time.

Although the commission took no action after receiving the study, in the fall of 2014 the City Commission asked city staff to develop a RFQ for an aquatic facility feasibility study. The team of Kimley-Horn & Associates and Counsilman-Hunsaker were selected to complete this study. Stakeholder and committee meetings were held as the study team gathered the information they needed to prepare the feasibility study.

"The work that went into this study was critical in the development of the aquatic center. This study found that from a fiscal standpoint, the Canyon area could certainly support a family aquatic center and that a high level of community support already existed for a new facility," Behrens said.

City staff members attended the 2014 World Waterpark Association Symposium & Trade Show to gather information related to the construction, maintenance and operation of family aquatic centers. That led to the City Commission moving forward by placing a \$6 million bond election on the November 2015 ballot.

"The City produced informational materials related to the facility and stakeholders, including the local swim team and worked to build support for the building of the facility," Behrens said.

Citizens approved the bond, agreeing to a 19 percent tax increase, equivalent to 7 cents per \$100 valuation. Before the month was over, the City had issued an RFQ for the design and construction of a new \$6 million family aquatic center. Kimley-Horn & Associates was selected to design and manage the construction process for the new Canyon facility in December of 2015. With a goal to begin construction at the completion of the summer 2016 swim season, the City and Kimley-Horn were on a very tight schedule. Due to the work knowledge that Kimley-Horn gained through the feasibility study process and City staff's early research related to aquatic facilities, the design process moved rapidly. City staff continued to rely on stakeholders and the Parks Committee to make sound decisions within a short period of time.

Through a competitive bidding process, a contractor, JC Commercial of Lewisville, Texas, was selected in September 2016. The project's construction bids exceeded the previous cost estimates.

"We went out for bids about the time construction cost in Texas were on the rise. We had included as much in our design as possi-

ble, so now it was time to take a hard look at the project," Behrens said. Before construction could begin the City, Kimley-Horn and the JC Commercial had to work through some value engineering and lowered the total cost by over \$450,000.

"Through careful reviewing of the project, the City was able to identify multiple aesthetic items that could be eliminated or changed without having to reduce any of the fun factor associated with the facility," said Brian Noel, parks director.

Once the target cost was reached a notice to proceed was issued on October 6, 2016.

"The Texas Panhandle can be a tough place for contractors to work in the winter, but the winter we had in 2017 was pretty mild," Noel said. "The contractor was able to avoid many weather-related delays."

City staff was working with Kimley-Horn on a daily basis throughout the winter as selections of various items were made. Acapulco Pools, the pool contractor, worked closely with JC Commercial as they coordinated each phase of the project.

Building the public's interest in Canyon Aqua Park

While construction continued, so did the curiosity of the public. The City utilized social media, mainly Facebook, to keep the community updated on the project's progress. Pictures were posted regularly and a live video stream provided viewers with a 24/7 view of the facility. Staff researched and demoed multiple point-of-sale products in an attempt to find the product that best met the City's needs. Eventually, Gatemaster was selected as the product that would be used in the facility. Once this selection was made, staff was training weekly with Gatemaster and working on implementation of this robust point of sale system.

"The City conducted a naming contest for the facility, and we received more than 40 suggestions in the process," Noel said. "The Parks Committee was ultimately responsible for sending a name to the City Commission. They were looking for a name that could be easily remembered and would look unique when published or printed. The committee chose Canyon Aqua Park with the idea in mind that it would most often be referred to as 'The CAP.' The name fully told what the facility was, but also could be easily referred to in an abbreviated way."

The Commission approved the name and the facility was then known as Canyon Aqua Park—or The CAP.

"For multiple reasons the contractor was unable to meet the initial opening day projection. Once again, we used social media to keep followers updated on the facilities progress. Staff members were interviewed multiple times during the delays and continued to remind viewers that the park would be great, even though construction was going slower than anticipated," Behrens said. "We wanted them to follow the CAP Facebook page to keep updated on a possible opening date."

Neighbors continued to train staff at the park during the delay.

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CANYON AQUA PARK, ALSO KNOWN AS "THE CAP"

1201 19TH ST, CANYON, TEXAS 79015

WEB SITE: CANYONTX.COM /
CANYONAQUAPARK.COM

OWNERS: CITY OF CANYON

ADMISSION PRICES: \$8.00 ADMISSION
AND FREE FOR 3 AND UNDER

DATES OPEN: MEMORIAL DAY-LABOR DAY
SIZE/ACRES: 6 ACRES

CAPACITY: 600

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES: 70

YEAR-ROUND: 1 PART-TIME
SEASONAL: 66

FUTURE EXPANSION PLANS:

IF PROJECTED ATTENDANCE IS REACHED
OVER THE NEXT TWO YEARS, THE STAFF
PLANS TO ENTER INTO PLANNING
STAGES FOR THE ADDITION OF THREE OR
FOUR ELEMENTS TO THE PARK.

UNIQUE PARK PROGRAMS: THE PARK
HOSTS TWO SPECIAL NEEDS NIGHTS
OVER THE SUMMER THAT ARE FREE FOR
PARTICIPANTS AND CAREGIVERS.

Suppliers

DEVELOPMENT/DESIGN: KIMLEY-
HORN & ASSOCIATES; COUNSILMAN-
HUNSAKER

CONSULTANTS: MARK HATCHEL AND
AUSTIN POWERS, KIMLEY-HORN & ASSOCIATES

CONSTRUCTION: JC COMMERCIAL;
ACAPULCO POOLS

WATERSLIDES: SPLASHTACULAR

TUBES: ZEBEC

**CHILDREN'S INTERACTIVE PLAY
STRUCTURE:** VORTEX

FURNITURE: SKYS THE LIMIT LOUNGERS

LOCKERS: AMERICAN LOCKER
SECURITY SYSTEMS

POOL AND/OR DECK COATINGS:
KOOLCOTE COMMERCIAL & DIAMOND
BRIGHT

FILTRATION EQUIPMENT: POLTANK
FILTERS

PUMPS: SCHNEIDER VFD

CHEMICAL: PULSAR

CHEMICAL CONTROLLERS: BECS

SHADE SYSTEM: SHADE SYSTEMS

ADMISSION SYSTEM: GATEMASTER

UNIFORMS: THE LIFEGUARD STORE



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Those staff members that needed extra hours during the delay were given opportunities to assist the Parks Department at they laid grass sod, installed irrigation and landscaped the facility. By providing these hours to those staff members who requested them, Neighbors was able to avoid losing any staff members prior to opening.

"One comment we've heard time and time again is that our lifeguards are very well trained, and pool staff is extremely courteous," Noel said. "Andrew (Neighbors) hired a great group of people and was able to train them very well and often. It really showed once we opened, and the public took notice."

The CAP was opened one night prior to its public opening to host City staff and their families.

"This soft opening allowed the CAP staff the opportunity to test their procedures and provided them with the opportunity to see the facility in operation," Behrens said. "This event also provided City staff with the opportunity to experience the facility and to share their positive thoughts with others in the community."

Opening day was officially announced on the CAP Facebook page on July 19, 2017. It was staff's goal to reward the 9,500 Facebook followers with the first notification that the facility was opening that day.

"The opening message was shared hundreds of times and the CAP opened at noon with a line of guest eagerly waiting to enter," Behrens said.

"Although the CAP did not have a full season in 2017, the attendance numbers were right on target and guest reviews have been outstanding. Like any new facility there are changes that staff will make for the 2018 season. The delayed opening shortened the season, which also allowed additional time for the staff to focus on the mechanical operation of the facility, which will certainly benefit them in the future."

The CAP celebrates a successful first season

While the former City pool averaged 150 people a day, the CAP reached its capacity of 600 people several times throughout the short season.

"A waterpark has something for everyone. Every age group is able to enjoy the amenities with a leisure river, speed slides, kids' playground with zero depth entry, diving boards and a basketball goal," Neighbors said. "Waterparks are something that families have had to travel hours to go and enjoy, but that's not the case anymore. To be able to experience that in our community is pretty special. The CAP provides great entertainment for the whole family with whatever floats your boat: adrenaline rides, relaxing rides, chilling in the sun, great food and a safe, family-friendly environment."

Not only did the CAP bring a boost in attendance and sales for the City of Canyon itself, but also to the community overall.

"I've had businesses tell me they knew when the CAP was open because people were constantly coming in to get snacks or supplies," Noel said. "Not only has it been great for the City, but also a huge benefit for local businesses."

City staff anticipates that if attendance meets projections over the next two years, an expansion will be the next step for the CAP.

"It seems like a long journey, from meetings in 2012 to opening day in 2017," Behrens said. "The process that the City of Canyon followed was one that ended with a successful facility in which the community can be proud." •

AMANDA ROGERS IS A CLERK IN THE BUSINESS OFFICE AND MANAGES SOCIAL MEDIA FOR THE CITY OF CANYON. SHE IS A GRADUATE OF WEST TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY WITH A BACHELOR OF ARTS DEGREE IN AASS COMMUNICATION. HER CAREER EXPERIENCE INCLUDES SERVING AS AN EDITOR FOR NEWSPAPERS IN TEXAS AND ALASKA. SHE LIVES IN CANYON WITH HER HUSBAND AND DAUGHTER.

