

Opinion: Mountain Park finally has the pool it long envisioned

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Too many swimmers, not enough pools. For years, that's been the lament in two river towns, Lake Oswego and West Linn, despite water, water everywhere. Regardless of much discussion in both cities, a community pool has remained an elusive dream for years.

But in one community, Lake Oswego's **Mountain Park**, the homeowners association bucked the odds and opened a state-of-the-art community pool for its 8,500 residents in late March. After more than five years, it's exactly as envisioned for the community's fast-growing young families as well as its older population.

Realizing the dream wasn't easy.

For 35 years, Mountain Park's Olympic-sized 50-meter pool had delighted generations of residents, attracting international Olympians in training and plenty of dedicated local swimmers. For years, I joined the many who did laps, water aerobics and water walking, on a regular basis.

But the old pool had long outlived its life expectancy and was forced to close in 2005 with no replacement in sight. Swimmers scattered, seeking water elsewhere, and a poolside culture of camaraderie ended, with the exception of one small splinter group that continued water aerobics at **Lake Oswego High School's** aging pool.

For former swimmers, the large empty hole that once was a busy pool sat untouched for years and seemed to symbolize what had been taken away. For a while, it appeared the huge hollow shell might be covered over and pool dreams ended. An inventive staff even used the empty pool as a Halloween staging area for a mystical "pool ghoul," a headless swimmer rumored to be seen roaming the halls.

An attempt to persuade the populace to replace the pool and remodel the large aging clubhouse in Mountain Park failed. Eventually a resolute board and new manager teamed up to try again to sell the community on a major overhaul of an aging clubhouse and replacement of the old pool with a new aquatic center. Despite a tanking economy, the efforts of staff and board and the hard work of many community volunteers paid off and residents finally approved the renovation.

With voter approval, exciting new plans evolved for a modern aquatic center taking into account the many young families moving into Mountain Park. Work was completed in March.

The final dream center includes a leisure pool with a water slide and other features, a 25-yard three-lane lap pool and an adult therapeutic spa. Both pools offer a portable pool lift to help those with limited access.

When Mountain Park received **an award from Clackamas County for sustainability** in its center at the annual meeting last month, the pool was applauded for its use of variable speed motors and the latest ultraviolet

technology to complement the chemical treatment of the water.

Years ago, one Mountain Park old-timer who used the pool daily for swimming laps told of the lifesaving qualities of a pool in the homeowners' newsletter. Her husband, she said, would not be alive today without the benefit of regular swimming after open-heart surgery. There's also nothing better to relieve stress, she said. "The water holds you up in more ways than one!"

Dreams sometimes stay dreams, especially during hard times. But Lake Oswego's Mountain Park Homeowners Association has shown that good things can happen with perseverance. Maybe other communities will also find a way.

-- Syd Kanitz

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