

Water slide, lazy river on tap for new Grinnell aquatic center

By Melissa Hayes
Aquatic Center Committee

A new family aquatic center with water slides, geysers, and a "lazy river" is at the heart of an expanded recreational campus planned in Grinnell that will encompass the Grinnell Area Recreational Trail and a revamped Lion's Park.

"We have created a completely different feeling and atmosphere not only with the pool plans but with the entire adjacent area," said City Manager Russ Behrens. "The whole site will lend itself to more recreational options, including biking, swimming, picnicking, and family reunions."

Eventually, the recreational campus will connect the bike trail, Bailey Park, Lion's Park (adjacent to current pool),

Grinnell High School, and Iowa Valley Community College-Grinnell.

The new aquatic center--the focal

point of the plans--is being designed as a multi-functional facility that promises fun, fitness, adventure, and relaxation for all patrons. The facility will include everything from 10 traditional lap lanes for fitness buffs and competitive swimmers to an interactive play area with

fountains and geysers for the community's youngest paddlers.

"It will provide children of all ages a safe, low-cost entertainment choice that will keep them active all day long on summer days," Behrens said.

Instead of traveling to aquatic centers in Newton, Marshalltown, or Tama-Toldeo, area residents can stay close to home.

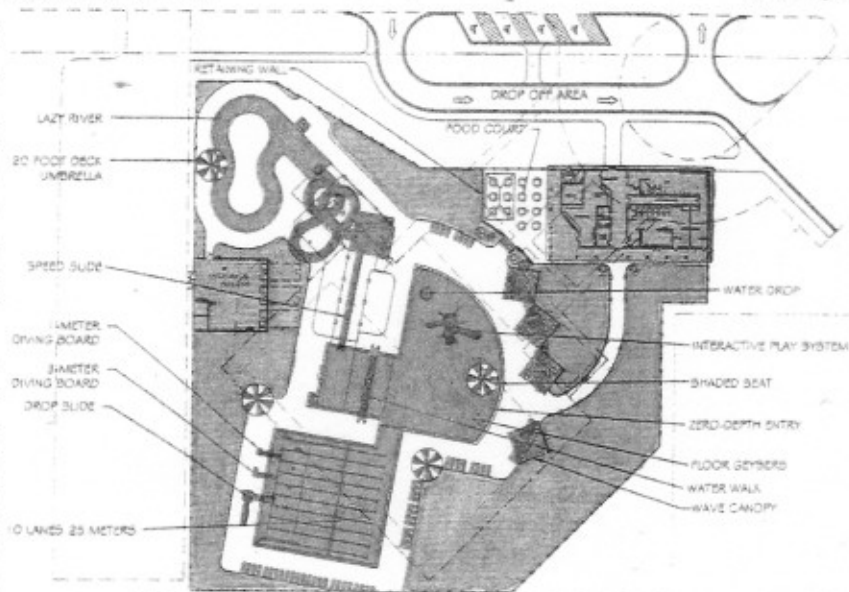
Pool plans call for zero-depth entry, creating a more inviting environment for people of all ages, abilities, and fitness levels. Zero-depth entry allows people to walk directly into the water, enabling them

to venture as deep as they feel comfortable.

"One of the great advantages is that one parent can be with two children of

Swimming pool

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New swimming pool will be easy to navigate with 'zero-depth entry'

Swimming pool

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different ages and abilities," Behrens said. "Individuals with limited mobility or fear of the water will be able to more fully enjoy themselves."

Older children and adults will find plenty of heart-pounding adventure coasting down a tube slide that dumps into a 2,258 square foot "lazy river" or steaming down a speed slide that empties into a receiving pool--also the site of a water walk.

Swimmers who can navigate deeper water can plunge into the pool on a drop slide that empties into the lap lanes or

jump or dive off the low or high diving boards.

"The amount of quality deck space, green space, and shaded areas is one of the biggest improvements with the aquatic center design," Behrens said. "Our current facility has absolutely no shaded areas for swimmers to escape the sun."

The familiar uses of the current swimming pool will remain the same at the new aquatic center, notes Kelly Rose, who begins her new post April 14 as the city's recreation director.

"We'll continue to offer American Red Cross swimming lessons, lap swimming, water aerobics, swim team practices, and

private rentals," Rose said.

Rose said a new bathhouse will offer family changing areas along with 10 new men's and women's shower stalls.

The project's total cost is currently estimated at \$6 million. The city of Grinnell has allocated \$3 million in local option sales tax proceeds while a newly formed campaign committee has pledged to raise the balance through contributions from private donors, businesses, corporations, and foundations.

With the city of Grinnell funding the redevelopment of Lion's Park, the campaign committee is focusing its fundraising efforts on the new aquatic center. Behrens noted, however, that a new con-

cession stand will be built to serve both pool and park patrons.

"We have been wrestling with the park for a long time as far as maintenance. The development of the aquatic center is the perfect opportunity for a new fresh start," said Russ Crawford, president-elect of the Grinnell Lion's Club.

A number of benefit events are planned for late spring and summer to help expand public awareness and encourage private donor support. The campaign committee hopes to reach its goal and complete its funding appeal by early fall, so the city can begin construction in August 2009 creating a more inviting environment

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