

# Family recreational

• Construction is expected to begin in 2009

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."

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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

"One of the great advantages is that one parent can be with two children of 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. For those who simply want to relax or tan at pool side, the aquatic center will be equipped with plenty of benches, tables, chairs and shaded umbrella areas to escape the afternoon sun.

"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. In addition, new uses will be developed. As an example, the lazy river will be used for water walking against the current as a part of water aerobic classes.

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

"Young families in particular will enjoy the convenience of a family changing area to get ready for a day at the pool," Rose added.

Like the new public library, the family aquatic center will be jointly funded by private donors and the city of Grinnell. 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 project, the city of Grinnell is the primary funder of Lion's Park, the cam-

# aquatic center on tap in Grinnell

raising efforts on the new aquatic center. Behrens noted, however, that a new concession 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 mainte-

nance. The development of the aquatic center is the perfect opportunity for a new fresh start," said Russ Crawford, president of the Grinnell Lion's Club.

Local fundraising efforts to support development of the new aquatic center

are now getting underway and are expected to continue through late summer. 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.

