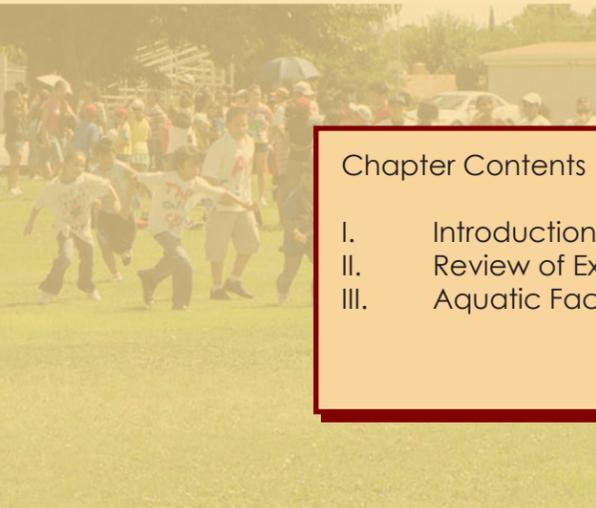
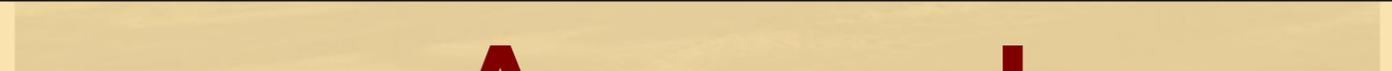


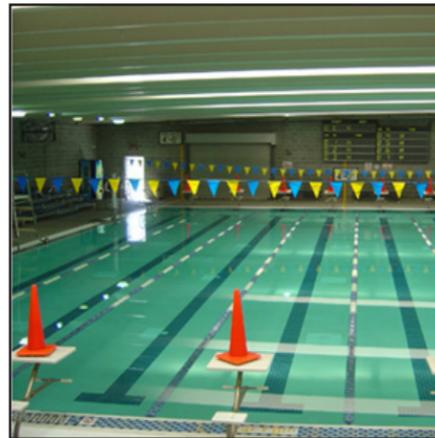
CHAPTER 6:

AQUATICS ISSUES

Chapter Contents

- I. Introduction
- II. Review of Existing Pools
- III. Aquatic Facility Types for El Paso





Existing pools in El Paso include the indoor “water park” features at Armijo, the traditional indoor lap pool at Hawkins, and a traditional rectangular pool at Nations Tobin.

I. Introduction

El Paso has a well developed system of pools. Given the dry desert heat, aquatic facilities are a popular recreation feature. The current system includes ten indoor pools and four outdoor pools. Citywide, the system includes one pool to serve every 46,365 residents in 2012. By the year 2020, that ratio will fall to one City pool for every 51,264 residents.

The City of El Paso is a primary provider of aquatic facilities, including use by public school swim teams and private swimming clubs. El Paso County provides one pool located at Ascarate Park. A 50 meter pool operated by the Tigua Nation closed in Spring 2012, removing a vitally needed competition pool from the local inventory. The Socorro Independent School District owns and operates one pool; this is the only school district within the City limits to offer an aquatic facility.

Most of the outdoor pools are at least 35 years old, and two of the indoor pools are that old. The trend toward indoor pools started with the enclosure of outdoor pools in the early 1980's.

Key Desirable Characteristics in Today's Pools

As in many other aspects of recreation, aquatic facilities are rapidly evolving and changing. The advent of pure leisure pools began in earnest in the 1990's with simple water slides and mushroom spray features. Today's pools are a far cry from the simple rectangular shape of the past. Today's pools place a high emphasis on entertainment and the idea of having fun while swimming. To add to the entertainment factor, pools with zero depth entry zones, lazy rivers, long slides with significant drops and interactive water play features are often added.

Aquatic Facility Users in El Paso

El Paso's aquatic facilities need to accommodate all of the following distinct user groups:

- **Swimming for fitness** – Lap swimming is a popular exercise, especially among older adults.
- **Swimming instruction and water aerobics** - Instruction swim for all ages and abilities.

- **Competitive swimming** – Competitive swimming is a fast growing sport, especially at the high school level. For competitions, regulation pool lengths with lanes and specific pool depths are required. Competition pool dimensions are compatible with fitness swimming, but are increasingly less adaptable to leisure swimming.
- **Leisure Swimming and Water Play** – These users, especially children and young adults, swim and play in pool areas for fun. Shallow depths for less experienced swimmers are critical, as are fun activities and features to make the swimming experience more enjoyable.
- **Non-guarded interactive water spray feature** – zero depth water spraygrounds are becoming more popular because of their lower capital costs and low operational costs (since they are typically unguarded). Young children in particular enjoy playing in these at a neighborhood level.

II. A Review of Existing Pools

The tables on the following pages review existing pools in El Paso. The City's pools are all simple rectangular pools, some of which have been enclosed over time. Even more recent pool renovation efforts, such as at the Marty Robbins Pool, maintained a simple rectangular shape as part of an extensive renovation effort that repaired the pool enclosure.

Armijo Aquatics Center, located in the Central area near downtown El Paso, is the one facility that most closely resembles today's leisure pool prototype. This pool has both the rectangular pool and a leisure pool with zero depth and a water slide.

The distribution of pools is shown on the map, and a review of each existing pool in El Paso is included. Actions for each pool generally indicate major renovations or replacements. Smaller upgrades or maintenance should be addressed on an annual basis as needed and are generally not noted in this review.

Ascarate outdoor pool, operated by El Paso County, is included in the illustration, as is the Socorro ISD pool.



Table 6.1
City Operated Indoor Pools in El Paso in 2012

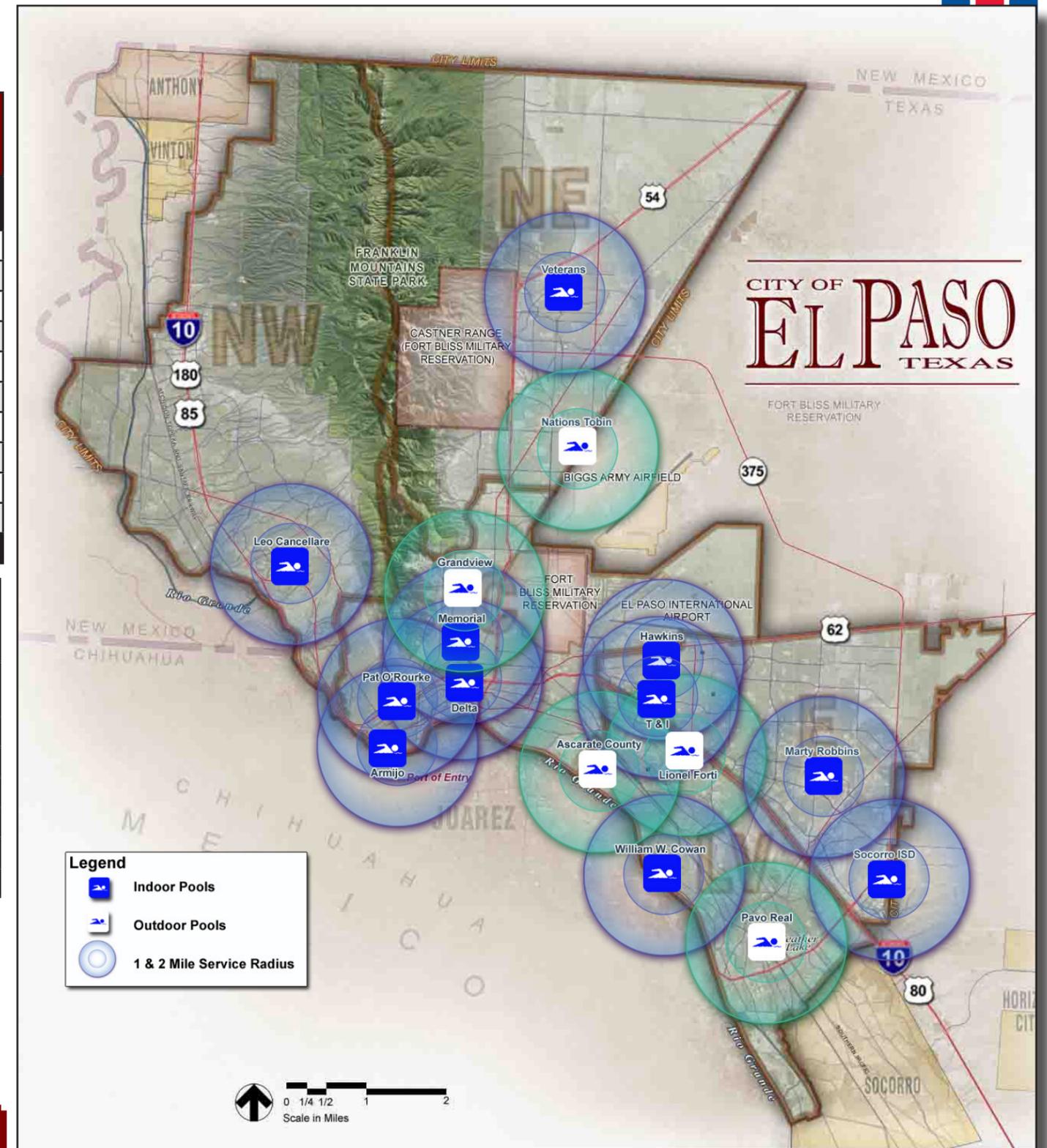
Pool Name	Planning Area	Address	Yr. Built	Yr. Last Renovated	Size of Bldg.*	Pool Surface Area
Armijo	C	911 S. Ochoa	2001	2003	33,834	3,900
Delta	C	4451 Delta Dr.	2004	NA	12,000	2,625
Hawkins	E	1500 Hawkins	1981	1997	12,756	4,764
Leo Cancellare	NW	650 Wallenberg Dr.	1976	2005	10,450	4,764
Marty Robbins	E	11600 Vista del Sol Dr.	1992	2005	12,605	4,764
Memorial	C	3200 Federal	1980	2006	13,000	3,825
Pat O'Rourke	C	901 N. Virginia St.	2010	New	36,315	2,652
T&I	E	9031 Viscount	1984	NA	27,000	880
William W. Cowan	MV	8100 Independence	1992	NA	13,163	4,764
Veterans	NE	5301 Salem Dr.	1977	2003	11,799	4,764
Total					182,922	37,702

Table 6.2
City Operated Outdoor Pools in El Paso in 2012

Pool Name	Planning Area	Address	Yr. Built	Yr. Last Renovated	Size of Bldg.*	Pool Surface Area
Grandview	C	3100 Jefferson	1977	2005	3,300	7,564
Lionel Forti	MV	1225 Giles	1960	2007	2,496	4,724
Nations Tobin	NE	8831 Railroad Dr.	1960	2003	2,496	4,724
Pavo Real	MV	110 Presa Pl.	1974	2008	3,552	12,600
Total					11,844	29,612

* Size of building refers to bath house

Location of existing pools in El Paso





Level of Service for Pools in the City

The City currently has 14 pools with a surface area of 67,314 square feet. At the level of service recommended for use by the City (25 s.f. per bather) the City's pools can accommodate 2,693 bathers at one time, or less than 0.50% of the total population in 2010. The recommended target level of accommodation should be close to 0.75% of the population, ultimately requiring a significant increase in the City's pool capacity to over 120,000 s.f.

Table 6.3 Aquatics - Level of Service Analysis Summary								
Planning Area	Current Pool Surface Area	Target Level of Service (LOS)	Population 2010		Projected Population 2020		Projected Population 2030	
			Current Area Needed	% of target LOS	Projected Area Needed	% of target LOS	Projected Area Needed	% of target LOS
Northeast	9,488 s.f. (2 pools)	25 s.f. for 0.75% of population	19,512 s.f.	49%	23,719 s.f.	40%	32,432 s.f.	29%
East	10,408 s.f. (3 pools)	25 s.f. for 0.75% of population	35,854 s.f.	29%	39,844 s.f.	26%	48,203 s.f.	22%
Mission Valley	22,088 s.f. (3 pools)	25 s.f. for 0.75% of population	20,361 s.f.	108%	21,131 s.f.	105%	22,679 s.f.	97%
Central	20,566 s.f. (5 pools)	25 s.f. for 0.75% of population	23,513 s.f.	87%	23,906 s.f.	86%	25,299 s.f.	81%
Northwest	4,764 s.f. (1 pool)	25 s.f. for 0.75% of population	22,469 s.f.	21%	25,969 s.f.	18%	31,095 s.f.	15%
Citywide	67,314 s.f.		121,710 s.f.	55%	134,569 s.f.	50%	159,708 s.f.	42%



Northeast Area Pools

The Northeast has two pools, Nations Tobin outdoor pool and the indoor pool at Veterans Park. With a population of over 104,000 residents, the area has one City pool for every 52,000 residents. This ratio is 89% of the citywide average.

Both pools are basic in design and are aging. Eventual replacement with a large regional aquatics complex that includes both leisure, "water park," and lap swimming components is recommended in the future. As such, only minor improvements to these pools to maintain their functionality for traditional swimming and fitness activities are recommended until they can be fully updated or replaced with more modern pools.

Nations Tobin Outdoor Pool

Year Built: 1960

Location: Nations Tobin Park

Year Last Renovated: 2003

Key Characteristics: The pool is over 50 years old, and even with renovations is showing its age. The pool is relatively small, and has only one amenity feature.

Recommendations for this pool: Within the next 15 years, consider removing the existing pool and developing a larger family aquatic center in this area.

Priority Level: High

Veterans Indoor Pool

Year Built: 1977

Location: Veterans Park

Year Last Renovated: 2003

Key Characteristics: The pool is a simple rectangle configuration, and even with renovations is over 30 years old. The pool has no amenity features and limited deck area. The skylight roof features give the pool a light and airy feeling. Locker rooms are dated.

Recommendations for this pool: Continue to operate for the next decade, but with only minor repairs to keep functioning. Plan for eventual replacement of this pool with a full aquatics center that serves the far northeast area of the City.

Priority Level: High





East Area Pools

The East area has three pools, all indoor facilities. The T&I pool is specifically designed for water therapy, and therefore has a specific user base. Counting the other two pools serving a population of over 191,000 residents, the area has one pool for every 80,500 residents. This ratio is only 58% of the citywide average, leaving the area incredibly underserved. All pools in the area are traditional rectangular lane pools.

A major family aquatic center is strongly needed in East El Paso. The aquatic facility should combine competitive, "water park" and fitness swimming facilities, and a location in the new Eastside Regional Park should be considered. Given the larger population that this area serves, none of the existing pools should be closed, but ultimately new pools will be needed to replace these facilities as they age.



Marty Robbins Indoor Pool

Year Built: 1992
 Location: Marty Robbins Park
 Year Last Renovated: 2005

Key Characteristics: The pool is a simple enclosed rectangle configuration. Locker room renovations somewhat improved the interior configuration, but the entry area is still unattractive. Party areas were added on the perimeter.

Recommendations for this pool: No changes over the next decade. Minor maintenance and changing room adjustments should be conducted to facilitate use of the facility.

Priority Level: High

Hawkins Indoor Pool

Year Built: 1981
 Location: Hawkins Park
 Year Last Renovated: 1997

Key Characteristics: The pool is 30+ years old with a plain, rectangle design. The pool has limited deck space and no amenity features.

Recommendations for this pool: Continue to operate for fitness swimming and for water safety instruction. Enhance entryway if possible. In the future, replace with aquatic center.

Priority Level: Medium

T & I (Training and Instruction) Indoor Pool

Year Built: 1984
 Location: Vista Del Valle Park
 Year Last Renovated: None

Key Characteristics: T&I is a small pool set up for water based therapy activities. It serves a vital role as the only such public facility in the City. The pool is approaching 30 years old, and will continue to require frequent attention to keep it in working condition.

Recommendations for this pool: No major changes over the next decade. Continue to monitor and upgrade the pool and mechanical components where necessary.

Priority Level: Medium



Mission Valley Pools

The Mission Valley area has three pools, two outdoor and one indoor. With a population of over 108,000 residents, the area has one pool for every 36,000 residents. The resulting 129% ratio is above the citywide average; however it is still below standards.

Pools in this area are traditional rectangular facilities, and are heavily used.



William W. Cowan Indoor Pool

Year Built: 1992

Location: Shawver Park

Year Last Renovated: None

Key Characteristics: At 20 years old, this pool is one of the younger facilities in El Paso's inventory. It is a traditional rectangular indoor pool with limited deck space and no water play facilities.

Recommendations for this pool: Continue to operate this pool as a much needed facility for the area. Longer term, consider upgrading this pool into a new multi-faceted aquatics facility.

Priority Level: Medium to Low

Lionel Forti Outdoor Pool

Year Built: 1960

Location: Lionel Forti Park

Year Last Renovated: 2007

Key Characteristics: This outdoor pool is over 50 years old, but has been renovated within the past 10 years. Interactive water spray features, a slide and shade coverings have been installed and have significantly increased use of the pool.

Recommendations for this pool: Continue to operate, and upgrade as necessary to attract usage.

Priority Level: Medium

Pavo Real Outdoor Pool

Year Built: 1974

Location: Pavo Real Park

Year Last Renovated: 2008

Key Characteristics: The pool is a rectangular 50 meter pool with a diving area and some water play features. The pool serves a major portion of the Mission Valley area. Long term, this pool could be converted into an aquatic center for much of the entire Mission Valley planning area.

Recommendations for this pool: Continue to operate, and program to enlarge and convert into Aquatic Center. The Pavo Real pool should eventually contain both lap swimming and leisure pool facilities.

Priority Level: High to Medium



Central Area Pools

The Central area has five City operated pools, four indoor and one outdoor. With a population of over 125,000 residents, the area has one pool for approximately every 25,000 residents. The resulting 185% ratio is the highest in the City and is well above the citywide average of one pool for every 46,365 residents.

The Central area was home to the oldest pool in the City, Chelsea Pool, which was closed in Spring 2012 due to structural degradation. Chelsea Pool will be replaced with funds from the 2012 bond, though likely on a larger site.



Delta Indoor Pool

Year Built: 2004
Location: 4451 Delta Dr.
Year Last Renovated: None

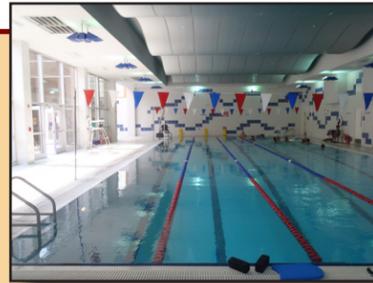
Key Characteristics: Pool is one of the newer ones in the City's inventory. It is a rectangular design.

Recommendations for this pool: No changes over the next decade.

Priority Level: Low

Pat O'Rourke Indoor Pool

Year Built: 2009
Location: Pat O'Rourke Center
Year Last Renovated: None



Key Characteristics: Pool was renovated as part of the building conversion from a YMCA to a City recreation center. It includes 6 lanes for lap swimming.

Recommendations for this pool: No changes over the next decade.

Priority Level: Low

Memorial Indoor Pool

Year Built: 1980
Location: Memorial Park
Year Last Renovated: 2006



Key Characteristics: The pool was completely rebuilt, enclosed, and re-opened in 2006. It continues the traditional lap pool model found throughout the City.

Recommendations for this pool: No changes over the next decade.

Priority Level: Low

Armijo Indoor Pool

Year Built: 2001
Location: Armijo Park
Year Last Renovated: 2003



Key Characteristics: The Armijo Pool is a good prototype for other indoor pools in the City. The pool has adjacent turf gathering areas, amenity features including slides, zero depth entry, and interactive water spray features, and is airy and sunny with large glass walls. This facility is larger than the other indoor pools.

Recommendations for this pool: No major changes required.

Priority Level: Low

Grandview Outdoor Pool

Year Built: 1977
Location: Grandview Park
Year Last Renovated: 2005



Key Characteristics: Grandview is a traditional rectangular lap pool. The pool has no amenity features, but does incorporate shade structures around the pool.

Recommendations for this pool: Install interactive water spray feature adjacent to this pool, and expand deck area.

Priority Level: High



Northwest Area Pools

The Northwest area currently has one pool, Leo Cancellare, for the more than 119,000 residents of the area. This ratio is 38% of the citywide average. **This area has the highest need for additional City operated pools.**

Leo Cancellare (Galatzan) Indoor Pool

Year Built: 1976

Location: Galatzan Park

Year Last Renovated: 2005

Key Characteristics: The pool consists of the traditional enclosed rectangle, and lacks amenity features.

Recommendations for this pool: Improve the entryway. The pool is suffering from structural degradation. Consider replacing the pool with a more elaborate family aquatic center.

Priority Level: High



III. Aquatic Facility Types for El Paso

Due to severe fiscal constraints, El Paso has focused on developing lower cost pool facilities over the years, and has not replaced older facilities. This Plan strongly urges the City to begin to implement a new generation of aquatic facilities that are truly multi-generational and that focus as much on leisure users as on fitness users.

Two new and extremely popular types of aquatic facilities have been built throughout the United States, but have not been developed in El Paso. These include family aquatic centers, or mini "water parks," and interactive water spray features.

Family Aquatic Centers – Relevant examples of family aquatic centers can be found in Odessa or Baytown, Texas or in Edmund, Oklahoma. These facilities are large with multiple pools, include large slides, zero depth "beach-like" areas, playgrounds surrounded by water, as well as traditional lap pools for fitness buffs. In the Southwest, they are typically placed outdoors. Unlike most pools, they can generate enough in gate revenue to meet their annual operational costs. El Paso could support one to two (Central, to serve all of the City, or east and west) of these facilities.

Interactive water spray features – These facilities range from simple and low cost (\$400,000 +/-) facilities with a few water cannons and dumping buckets, to elaborate water play areas with multiple jets, dumping buckets, interactive nozzles, valves and fountains. These facilities are attractive because they engage younger users, have no standing water and therefore typically do not have lifeguards on duty, and can be built in neighborhood settings. They typically are also much lower in cost than a new community swimming pool. This plan recommends that at least one of these features be developed in each planning area of the City over the next 10+ years.

Competition Facilities

Currently, El Paso is one of the largest cities in the United States without a premier competition pool facility. The 50 meter, indoor pool operated by the Tigua Nation closed in 2012. The need for one to two premier competition facilities is clearly evident, with high school teams as well as



Family Aquatic Center in Odessa, Texas features slides, a lazy river, outdoor party areas and lanes for fitness swimming. (Odessa photos on this page by Halff Associates Inc.)



City operated aquatics center in Cedar Rapids, Iowa (photo courtesy of Waters Edge Aquatic Design, Lenexa Kansas)



Typical interactive water spray feature in a community park setting in *Norman (Oklahoma)* that includes dump-buckets and sprays. Note variety of ages participating in play activities. (All photos this page by Halff Associates Inc.)

private club teams not having locations for competitions. Indoor pools such as Memorial and Cowan have been used for meets, but deck space in these facilities is inadequate for large numbers of swimmers and spectators.

Considering the school districts in the area and the popularity of swimming both for fitness and competition, the City of El Paso should pursue the construction of one or two premier competition natatoriums. This facility should be geared for practice with multiple lanes, as well as sized for both metric and yard dimensions and could also include a diving pool. The facility should be enclosed to allow winter use.

This Plan recommends that the natatoriums be built with the following considerations:

- That they be part of an aquatics complex that includes leisure components;
- That they include some participation for capital construction costs by area school districts to help defray the high cost of the facilities and help provide the resources to create first class facilities;
- That user fees for both public school and private swim teams are enough to help defer the high cost of operating these pools. Detailed feasibility studies should be conducted to determine the operational costs and how best to help address those costs; and
- Recognizing that end users will be subsidized to some degree, the City of El Paso must provide sufficient annual operations resources to staff and maintain these new competition pools in excellent condition.

Comparable model facilities include the Conroe Independent School District natatorium in Shenandoah, Texas; the Grapevine ISD natatorium in Grapevine, Texas; and the Josh Davis Natatorium in San Antonio, Texas. All were built and are operated by local school districts.