

## Lee and Lively Swimming Pools

### History, Timeline & Attendance

Lee and Lively Park swimming pools have been an Irving community staple for the better part of six decades with over three generations of Irving residents have enjoyed the use of these aquatic facilities.

The Lively Park Swimming Pool opened in 1959 and consists of a trapezoid shaped pool with a separate children's pool, though it's connected to the main pool's filtration system. Its depth profile ranges from 3 feet to 12 feet and the pool holds approximately 262,000 gallons. The Lee Park Swimming Pool opened in 1964 and consists of an "L-Shaped" pool with a separate children's pool, though it's connected to the main pool's filtration system. Its depth profile ranges from 3 feet to 8 feet and the pool holds 180,000 gallons. (Councilman Hunsaker, 2022, p.7&11)

Both swimming pools are currently not operational due to a variety of factors including facility disrepair, community attendance and staffing availability. To understand the recent history of the facility closures, below is the timeline that preceded the last full year of operation in 2019:

**Oct. 2019**     [A Parks and Recreation Masterplan](#) was adopted by the Irving City Council. This plan highlighted the operational challenges and poor attendance of the seasonal traditional pools. A recommendation was made to explore moving away from the traditional swimming pool model to more modern aquatic amenities:

*"One of the biggest challenges facing the city's outdoor traditional pools is the excessive maintenance they require due to age as well as declining attendance, especially in recent years which has created an excessive cost per visitor to these pools. Irving currently has two outdoor Family aquatic centers (Cimarron and West Irving) which reflects the current municipal model of providing outdoor aquatics to its citizens. Family Aquatic Centers combine play and fitness for all ages and serves as the first introduction of aquatics to young children. The attendance disparity between these pools and the traditional pools in Irving present a compelling case for a broader look at the future of aquatics for Irving. ....The factors discussed above suggest that a strategic approach to aquatics could address not only improvements to efficiencies, but also aging facility concerns. One near-term recommendation is to phase out the under-performing traditional outdoor pools that have significant issues and replace them with more modern aquatic amenities."* (Halff Associates Inc., 2019, p. 135)

**Nov. 2019**     Per the recommendations of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the Parks and Recreation Department committed to operating the traditional seasonal pools until a plan could be developed for the future of the facilities.

**Mar. 2020**     Mandatory closures of swimming pools were enacted by the state government to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

**Apr. 2020**     Swimming pools remained closed due to COVID-19 mandates as businesses began resuming operations. Part-time lifeguards in Irving were furloughed or reassigned to work in other areas.

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*“People shall avoid visiting bars, gyms, public swimming pools, interactive amusement venues such as bowling alleys and video arcades, massage establishments, tattoo studios, piercing studios, or cosmetology salons.”*

(Executive Order GA-18, 2020)

**Jun. 2020** The City of Irving was able to re-acquire some of the part-time staff that was furloughed in May. Many of the part-time lifeguards chose not to return to work due to concerns over the spread of COVID-19. A small number of seasonal lifeguard positions were filled. The seasonal water parks were scheduled to be open on a limited basis for Irving residents by online appointment only up to 25% of the maximum capacity of the facilities. The traditional seasonal pools (Lee, Lively, Senter) were not opened due to the lack of staffing.

*“Swimming pools; provided, however, that (1) indoor swimming pools may operate at up to 25 percent of the total listed occupancy of the pool facility; (ii) outdoor swimming pools may operate at up to 25 percent of normal operating limits as determined by the pool operator; and (iii) local public swimming pools may so operate only if permitted by the local government.”* (Executive Order GA-21, 2020)

**Jul. 2020** The seasonal pools were closed due to the increased number of COVID-19 cases in the area by the City of Irving. This was also the case of most of the municipalities in the North Texas area.

**Feb. 2021** North Texas experienced a winter storm in which temperatures did not rise above freezing for three days in a row. The storm was designated a statewide FEMA disaster. The power outages and freezing weather caused extensive damage at Lee Park Pool with multiple burst plumbing fixtures.

**May 2021** Due to the extensive damage of the winter storm and the challenges of recruiting seasonal staff post COVID-19 restrictions, the decision was made not to open the traditional seasonal pools to staff the seasonal water parks.

**May 2021** Irving voters approved a bond proposition that included the future replacement of Senter Park Pool

**Jun. 2021** Multiple aquatic facilities across the nation were not operable due to the lack of lifeguards in the workforce.

**Aug. 2021** Due to the damages sustained during the winter storm, disrepair of the facilities, and concerns over state code compliance an assessment of Lee and Lively Park pools were requested. This assessment was requested to identify facility issues, present options to make the facilities functional and make recommendations on the future of the facilities.

**May 2022** Due to the state of the Lee Park and Lively Park pools and continued nationwide challenges in the recruitment of lifeguards, the decision was made not to open either facility for the summer season.

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**May 2022** A completed assessment of Lee Park Pool and Lively Park Pool was presented to the City of Irving. This assessment highlighted several structural and state code compliance issues with both facilities. Options were provided to correct all the deficiencies and the cost of repairs ranged from 5.2 million to 6 million dollars to complete both facilities. The assessment also highlighted the relevance of operating traditional “Box Style” seasonal pools.

*“Functional Assessment: Today’s expectation for an outdoor aquatic facility has drastically changed from that of the late 1950s and early 1960s when both swimming pools first opened.*

*a. While most outdoor family aquatic centers will still incorporate lap lanes, it typically depends on the number of competitive swimmers within the immediate area. Neither of these pools have lap lanes which can also be multipurposed for open recreational water and prove to be very functional for a variety of aquatic activities.*

*b. Recreational water has taken a more freeform shape as opposed to the traditional rectangular pools of this era. It’s common for these pools to have multiple zones that include a zero-beach entry, waterslide plunge areas, moving water such as a current channel or lazy river, inflatable crossing activities and deep-water amenities such as climbing walls, drop slides and diving boards or platforms.*

*c. Mechanical systems have also been updated to address the requirements set forth in the CDC’s Model Aquatic Health Code. These include increased turnover rates and secondary disinfection systems to benefit water chemistry maintenance and help ensure healthy water for pool patrons.” (Councilman Hunsaker, 2022, p.20)*

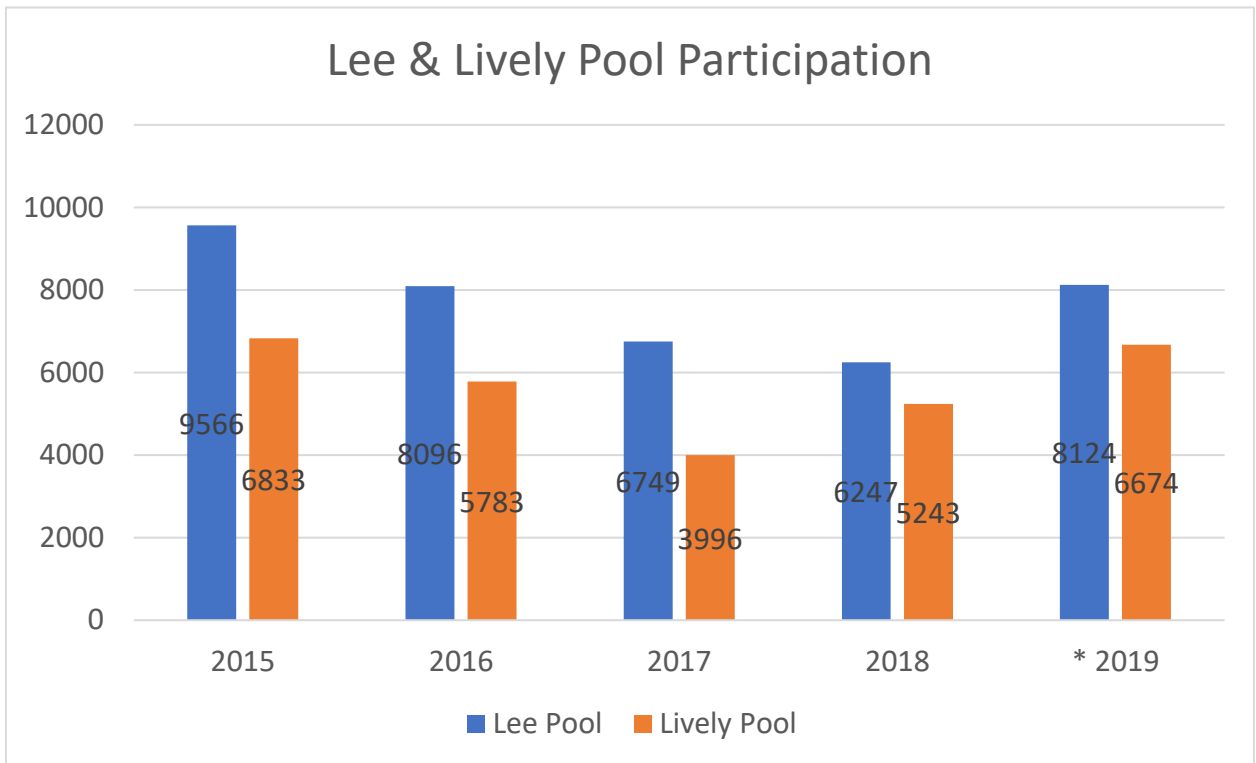
**Aug. 2022** Lee Park Pool was drained due to continual water loss, poor circulation, mosquito mitigation and general safety concerns.

**Dec. 2022** A public information campaign will begin to provide Irving residents the information on the current state of the seasonal aquatic facilities.

### **Swimming Pool Attendance**

When evaluating the state of the Lee and Lively swimming pools, daily attendance serves as a good metric to determine public interest in the facilities. Both pools have seen a steady decline in participation for over five years. Attendance numbers have shown a slight increase in 2019 due to aquatic programs being held exclusively at Lee and Lively pool, but daily attendance during open swim was lower than the year prior.

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#### *Attendance Relative to Staffing*

During 2018, the last year of operation that did not include aquatic programs, both Lee and Lively pools were open for an average of 42 hours a week, for 10 weeks. In a typical shift, both swimming pools require on average of 7 staff members to efficiently open the facilities. When considering the attendance numbers for that year for both facilities, Lee Pool averaged 15 patrons per hour or approximately 2 patrons for every staff member. Lively Pool averaged 12 patrons per hour or slightly less than 2 patrons per staff member.

#### *Aquatic Staffing*

When taking into account the future of aquatic operations, the ability to recruit, hire and train staff is essential. The inability to recruit lifeguards has become a national issue with many municipalities choosing to temporarily close facilities or drastically limit the hours of operation. In 2022, the City of Irving required 86 seasonal staff members to operate the seasonal aquatic facilities. Even with a robust recruitment initiative, the City was only able to hire and train 37 employees, leaving 57% of the required positions vacant. The permanent part-time positions are now 96% full, which is an optimistic sign for the next summer season, but recruitment will be an ongoing challenge for the near future.