



Perris Press Release

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Construction Begins on New Aquatics Center

Perris officials joined counterparts from neighboring communities and Riverside County Tuesday to break ground on a 12-acre, \$25-million aquatics center that will attract Olympic-caliber athletes, create hundreds of temporary and permanent jobs and increase the demand and value of commercial real estate throughout the region.

The Perris-Menifee Aquatic Center lies directly across from the Big League Dreams baseball fields, creating an athletic complex second to none in southwest Riverside County, said Supervisor Marion Ashley, who took part in the ground-breaking.

Ashley and Supervisor Jeff Stone worked together to make possible a regional swimming and water-sports complex that serves both Perris and Menifee, surrounding unincorporated communities and nearby cities like Moreno Valley, Hemet and Murrieta.

Plans on the regional aquatics center began about four years ago and the project barely survived being



Perris Mayor Pro-Tem Al Landers stands in front of a schematic of the 12-acre, \$25-million center, what he calls a "great, great facility."

terminated when the state of California killed off redevelopment agencies and pocketed those funds to help ease its own budget woes, Ashley said.

He predicted the center will be used by high schools and swim clubs for miles around, as many campuses do not have their own swimming pools and likely won't be able to build them in the foreseeable future.

About 100 people from Perris, Menifee, Riverside County, the Riverside County Economic Development Agency, the Riverside County Regional Park and Open Space District, Eastern Municipal Water District and officials from several school districts attended Tuesday's ceremony. Site work on the aquatic center already is underway. Construction is expected to be completed in about a year.

The Perris-Menifee Aquatic Center is expected to create about 215 jobs during construction. Once operational, the center will employ about 35 permanent positions and another 100 or so during the peak summer months, including 70 lifeguard slots.

"I have never seen such a large crowd so happy at a ground-breaking," he said. "This project will not only attract top swimmers to its Olympic-size pool, but it will foster economic activity in Perris, Menifee and neighboring communities."

Ashley said the complex is modeled after a similar aquatic center in Jurupa that is known as "The Cove." But the Perris Valley complex boasts a bigger pool—50-meters to 35-meters—and amenities like several water slides. He said the favored name of the Perris Valley center is the "Drop Zone," noting that it is near the world-famous Perris Valley Skydiving Center, one of the premiere parachuting locations in the world.

Noting the triple-digit temperatures, Supervisor Stone said the aquatics center will provide a place for "our kids to recreate, have fun and cool down."

For top-notch swimmers, he said the center "provides the infrastructure for Olympic-quality athletes in the Perris Valley." Stone said he was pleased to work with Ashley to create a project that serves not just one supervisorial district but the entire region.

"This is another wonderful amenity for this region," Stone said. "It will allow property values to go up and create additional demand for commercial property."

The Olympic-size pool will be 50-meters long and 25-yards wide—wide enough that two swimming teams can practice without interfering with each other. The pool includes a one-meter and three-meter high diving boards. Four water slides will be open for youngsters taller than 42 inches. The complex also includes a man-made river for floating, a flow-rider wave machine and sand volleyball courts.

Perris Mayor Daryl Busch called the ground-breaking "one special day," because so many agencies worked together to create something great for the whole area. Busch noted several Perris High School swimmers attended the ground-breaking.

"These kids inspire us now, and in the future," he said. "That's what this is all about—the future."

Perris Mayor Pro-Tem Al Landers lauded the spirit of cooperation between Perris and Menifee officials for bringing the communities together to help each other.

"We should celebrate our successes," Landers said. "This is going to be great for kids interested in recreation and top athletes. It's a great, great facility."

Perris City Councilwoman Rita Rogers said Perris continues to move forward with innovative and far-reaching projects even while the national and state economies remain sluggish.

"It's an outstanding day for Perris residents," she said. "We continue our commitment to great projects that keep us on the forefront even during these difficult times."

Perris City Councilwoman Joanne Evans said she wishes the aquatics center had been opened when her children were young. They had to go to the ocean to swim.

"Wow, this is going to be terrific," Evans said. "I commend everyone who has dedicated so much of their time to make this happen. It will make life better for the ones who are coming after us."

Tuesday's audience included Marcus Schlesinger, a 2009 graduate of Perris High School who tried out for the U.S. Olympic swimming team this summer, and the parents of Lucas Ransom, a Perris High School swimmer killed by a shark while surfing in 2010.

Schlesinger, 20, said he believes the new aquatic center will introduce many youngsters to swimming. He tried out in the 100-meter freestyle and 100-meter butterfly competition in Omaha, where swimmers like Michael Phelps and Misty Franklin also participated.

"It's going to be an awesome improvement," Schlesinger said. "It will be a lot for the sport of swimming."

Matt Ransom, Lucas Ransom's dad, also praised Perris officials for bringing the center to the area.

"Upper-level kids will have a top-level facility in which to train," Matt Ransom said.



Riverside County Supervisor Marion Ashley addresses the crowd at Tuesday's ground-breaking for the Perris-Menifee Aquatic Center. The center will foster economic activity while providing first-rate facilities.



Perris Mayor Daryl Busch discusses the aquatic center with Katie Keyes, a local historian and member of the Perris Valley Historical and Museum Association.



Perris, Menifee and Riverside County officials toss the ceremonial first shovel of dirt at Tuesday's ground-breaking ceremony.



A line of earth-haulers stands ready to transform the vacant field on Trumble Road into a world-class aquatic center.