

Yesterday & Today: Marinette Recreation Center



Marinette Recreation Center as it appeared in January 1985, and as it appears today. The overall facility has been expanded over the years with additional buildings and outdoor amenities added. The palm trees, however, have grown much taller. A cell-phone tower -- non-existent in 1985 -- disguised as a tree today towers over the recreational facility.

DEVCO appeases residents with addition of Marinette

Marinette Recreation Center was the seventh – and last – recreation center constructed in Sun City by the Del Webb Development Company (DEVCO).

Located on the northeast corner of 99th Avenue and Union Hills Drive, the center officially opened to residents in 1979. But behind its history, lies one of the more contentious chapters in an otherwise serene Sun City history.

In the late 1970s, DEVCO began constructing homes north of Bell Road in what is commonly referred to as Phase 3. Original marketing materials claimed a new recreation center would be built on 99th Avenue and Union Hills Drive to serve those living in Phase 3.

A few years earlier, however, DEVCO had constructed the community's largest, most elaborate – and most expensive -- recreation center. Bell Recreation Center, which opened in 1976, resulted in major cost overruns for DEVCO – so much so that the company quietly cancelled plans to build the new proposed center for Phase 3.

New homebuyers, as expected, were not happy when they found out about the company's intentions. A loud outcry forced DEVCO to appease angry residents by quickly constructing a small, but functional,

center on the original site earmarked for a recreational facility. Compared to the Sun City's other recreation centers, the new facility was merely a shell of a building that left much to be desired in terms of landscaping, amenities, and personality.

The result was a clear reflection of DEVCO's business strategy at the time: The company was wrapping up its involvement in Sun City and had already turned its full attention to building its newest community, Sun City West.

Originally called Union Hills Recreation Center, the facility's name was later changed to Marinette so to avoid confusion with Union Hills Country Club located a short distance away.

When it initially opened, the 8,000 square-foot facility had two meeting rooms, four tennis courts and a swimming pool heated by bottled gas and only useable during warmer months.

Once DEVCO handed the center over to residents in 1980, the Recreation Centers of Sun City, Inc. immediately began making upgrades. Additional buildings, clubrooms, a kitchen, lighted bocce courts and a jogging track were added over the next 10 years.

Today, Marinette Recreation Center boasts a state-of-the-art fitness center, an outdoor spa, rubberized walking track, pickleball and basketball courts.