

## **Lakeview Recreation Center raises the curtain on Sun City's second decade**

When Sun City initially opened in 1960, its original boundaries were restricted to land south of Grand Avenue. Due to the community's tremendous popularity, within seven years, the Del Webb Development Company (DEVCO) was on pace to sell most of its available lots and the company eventually made the decision to "jump the tracks" and expand Sun City north of Grand Avenue.

In 1968, DEVCO announced plans to begin a "second phase" of Sun City. This new phase would be bolder and architecturally more elaborate to appeal to a new generation of retirees.

Phase II would include several features that would drastically set it apart from the design of the original Sun City south of Grand Avenue – and structures that remain iconic images central to the community's identity.

Sun City residents were given a preview of the Phase II homes during an "Exposition for Living" celebration in October 1968 that featured a waterskiing demonstration on the newly created Viewpoint Lake. The "60 Series" of model homes – 18 models that incorporated single-family homes, patio homes, garden apartments and duplexes – would open to the public in 1969.

In addition to the man-made lake, other innovative elements first introduced to Sun City with the creation of Phase II was the community's first hospital, the elaborate Lakes Club, a hilltop gazebo and park and a signature feature that would set Sun City apart from nearly every other residential project in Arizona: circular streets.

Most important: The new development would also include Sun City's fourth recreation center. Built along the shoreline of the new Viewpoint Lake, the new recreation center would be called Lakeview.

But first, the center needed approval from residents of the newly created Sun City Community Association (later the Recreation Centers of Sun City, Inc.), which recently consolidated ownership of the existing amenities into one entity, thus allowing all residents to any facility of their choice. DEVCO would build the

facility, but only if Sun City residents agreed to accept, own and pay for the new facility after completion.

On Dec. 5, 1968, residents voted overwhelmingly to accept Lakeview – 2,206-271.

Groundbreaking ceremonies for the \$1.7 million recreation center were held April 16, 1969. The center would be located on the northeast corner of Thunderbird Road and 107<sup>th</sup> Avenue (soon to be renamed Del Webb Boulevard north of Grand Avenue).

That same year, work began on the \$4.5 million Walter Boswell Memorial Hospital to be located on the south side of Thunderbird Road. The 99-bed hospital would open its first two towers in November 1970.

Phase II required DEVCO to employ a totally new massive grading system to build the new facilities – and to build them quickly. Excavation from the lake was used for the hospital pad as well as for the surrounding subdivision lots and the elevated park to be built at the recreation center.

Lakeview Recreation Center officially opened Jan. 3, 1970, and kicked off a month-long celebration to mark Sun City's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. By then, Sun City had 14,000 residents and was the 12<sup>th</sup> largest community in Arizona. Within a year, its soaring population would make it the ninth largest in Arizona!

Located on 15 acres, Lakeview was twice as large as any other existing facility in Sun City. Its design was a drastic departure from the “institutional” look common to most resort-oriented communities. The two-story building surrounded a circular pool that offered colorful shade screens covering a cabana area accessed by a ramp rather than steps.

The new facility contained meeting rooms and club rooms for arts and crafts. There was an exercise room and a large therapy pool that could accommodate 12 people at one time!

Lawn bowling, mini-golf and covered shuffleboard courts were offered, as well as – for the first time in Sun City – tennis courts! The elaborate 18-hole mini-golf was built using synthetic grass.

Located along 1,500 feet of Viewpoint Lake shoreline, residents were able to enjoy boating and fishing. A raised park approximately 50 feet high with Arizona native

trees and plants included a serpentine walkway without steps leading to a gazebo and waterfall on top. The waterfall flowed down to a pond surrounded by a picnic area with tables and barbecues.

In 1971, ping pong tables were installed on the outdoor patio overlooking the lake, and the community's very first 16-lane bowling alley opened adjacent to the center in 1971.

The response to the entire complex from residents, Vacation Special visitors and prospects were overwhelmingly positive. A record 196,000 people visited the Sun City sales office in 1970!

The building itself has remained similar to how it looked in the 1970s, although the complex and surrounding amenities have been upgraded and improved over the years. Today, Lakeview Recreation Center is the corporate headquarters for the Recreation Centers of Sun City, Inc. and home to the board of directors, human resources and cardholder services.