

Camas ponders beloved pool's future

Crown Park facility in need of expensive upgrades



(http://16749-presscdn-0-94.pagely.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/52866-nabes-camas-pool_03.jpg)

Seth Albert, 21, manager at Camas Municipal Pool, chats with lifeguard Laura Teames while keeping an eye on a busy pool. (Amanda Cowan/The Columbian)



(http://16749-presscdn-0-94.pagely.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/52866-nabes-camas-pool_03.jpg)

Lifeguard and water safety instructor Luke Albert keeps an eye on Seth, the pool manager. His grandfather, Tom Wallenborn, managed the pool for decades.

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By **Susan Parrish** ([/author/sparrish](#)), Columbian Education Reporter

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6

Crown Park and Camas Municipal Pool

- 120 N.E. 17th Ave., Camas.
- Pool opened in 1954; city is starting master planning process for the pool and park in the fall.
- Look for updates at www.ci.camass.wa.us (<http://www.ci.camass.wa.us>).

swimming pool, but also for Crown Park in the fall.

"We have an aging swimming pool that we are holding together," said Camas City Manager Pete Capell. "It's expensive to maintain. At this point, we don't have anything concrete, except that the community uses and loves the pool. It's a priority to maintain a pool in Camas."

The 7.4-acre park is just up the hill from downtown and a short walk from the old Camas High School and across Everett Street from Top Burger, still a popular burger-and-milkshake joint.

Crown Park touts more than just the swimming pool and kiddie pool. The park's amenities include a picnic shelter, playground, baseball diamond, a hoop for half-court basketball, two tennis courts and Scout Hall, a building available for use by nonprofit groups. The only flushing toilets are inside the pool building. Porta-potties are set up near the pool and the picnic shelter.

The park is a community gathering spot for Easter egg hunts, concerts, outdoor movies and festivals. It's also a place for family picnics and for neighborhood kids to walk or ride their bikes for swimming, pick-up baseball and basketball games, and hanging out with friends.

Master plan

The process of creating a master plan is lengthy and will cost money. The city will start by hiring a consultant to work with staff, the Parks and Recreation Commission and a citizen advisory committee to develop a plan for updating the park and pool. The plan will look at the entire site and its amenities, including mature trees and parking, which for the park is on-street. The process also will include community input, Capell said.

The next step will be to consider funding options to pay for renovations. Capell estimated it would cost from \$1 million to \$2.5 million to upgrade just the swimming pool.

"Many of our (city) council members grew up there and are very committed to the pool," said Capell. "But it's getting harder and harder to keep it up. The concrete's old. We seal it all the time. There's leakage and problems with heating and pipes."

CAMAS — Standing on the edge of the deep end, a girl lifted her blue goggles and shouted: "Lillian! Watch me belly flop!"



Then as promised, she jumped and landed in the pool with a splash.

It's the sound of summer that has rung out for generations at the Camas Municipal Pool in Crown Park.

The outdoor pool, its bare-bones changing rooms with showers and restrooms were built in 1954. It appears they haven't been updated since, despite the hundreds of swimmers who use the facility all summer.

That will be changing soon. The city of Camas will start to update the master plan not only for the

In 2014 the city considered solving its pool problem by purchasing LaCamas Swim & Sport, a private facility in the Grass Valley area about 3 miles northwest of Crown Park. But the site wasn't ideal. Capell said city officials were concerned that it would be challenging for kids and adults who walk or bike to the pool at Crown Park to reach LaCamas Swim & Sport.

When the city looked at the possibility of acquiring LaCamas Swim & Sport, they considered that the community center amenities would help subsidize the cost of operating the swimming pool. But in the end, the plan was scrapped.

As the city moves into the master planning process, the options for the pool range from building a new pool someplace else or doing major improvements to the pool in Crown Park, Capell said. But he was clear that there won't be money to maintain the existing pool and build another pool at another site, such as on Prune Hill. The swimming pool simply doesn't pay for itself.

"We have to subsidize the pool. It doesn't make enough money to keep up the operating costs," Capell said.

From another era

Camas Municipal Pool is the only public outdoor swimming pool in Clark County, but other Pacific Northwest communities have maintained outdoor pools built in another era. As Camas moves forward in considering the future of its beloved swimming pool, it can look to these vintage pools for inspiration.

Seattle's Colman Pool, tucked in between the beach and wooded Lincoln Park, is filled with saltwater and has been a summer staple since its dedication July 4, 1941. Portland also maintains several outdoor pools from yesteryear. The oldest, Sellwood Pool in Sellwood Park, opened in 1910. Spokane, which has much colder winters, maintains a handful of outdoor pools, including Comstock, which opened July 1, 1938.

Brooks Fujihara's family moved to Camas from Oahu about a year ago. He said his wife brings their four children to the swimming pool and the park often; it was his first visit. As he supervised his kids on the old playground equipment, his biggest complaint about the park: "It needs bathrooms. Not porta-potties."

Seth Albert, 21, pool manager, has been swimming here since he was a kid.

"When I was first learning to swim, I almost drowned here," Albert said. "A lifeguard jumped in and saved me."

Albert became a lifeguard and worked at the pool. His younger brother, Luke Albert, a senior at Camas High School, sat in the tall lifeguard chair watching over the pool's activity. He was joined by five other lifeguards.

Their grandfather, Tom Wallenborn, 78, started working as a lifeguard at the pool when he was 16. He made 50 cents per hour. From 1973 to 1978, he was the pool manager. The retired Camas teacher, administrator and coach remembers the pool fondly.

"It was a great place to work. I was lifeguarding with a lot of my friends. We had a swim team my sophomore year," Wallenborn said. "The pool looks pretty much the same. The locker rooms haven't changed. The same old concrete cold showers."

Sitting poolside in a plastic chair, Deana Lyle from Washougal was watching her daughters in the pool. She's been bringing them to the pool every summer for 16 years.

"We come here at least once a week if not more," Lyle said.

Karen Gibson from Camas sprayed sunscreen on her son, Max Gibson, 5. She also was supervising daughter, Sammy Gibson, 10 and her friends, Sammy Preston, 10 and Mia Henrichs, 14. Gibson has been bringing her kids to the pool "at least a couple times a week" since her family moved to Camas 12 years ago.

"We've also come to the concerts. The kids have done outdoor movies here with friends," Gibson said.

Sufficiently slathered in sunscreen, Max headed back to the pool, but not before blurting out his favorite part about the Camas pool: "Diving! It's really deep over there!"



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Greg Johnson

Camas and East county need a real pool facility. Crown park pool is not a standard pool length. Its in the best interest of our community to build a new facility with proper stands for spectators. I grew up in Gresham and every highschool and Mt Hood community college has a public pool. We have 0 in East county. We are a well off community and there is no excuse why we don't have appropriate facilities.

Like · Reply · 1 · 1y



Matt Matsuura · National Accounts Manager at Coloplast

Keep the pool! Maybe update it so it isn't so costly to maintain. But I have to say I've come to love the bare bones no frills style of it. Something to remind us of what life used to be like. I first learned to swim there, hung out all the time there when I was a kid then later worked there teaching and guarding. Keep the pool!

Like · Reply · 3 · 1y



Isaac Brody · Montana Western

I think it shouldn't matter if the pool earns enough money to support it self and all the repairs. The city should foot the bill to keep some sort of pool in Camas. Having a city pool keeps the people in the community happy and it would be nice to see some of the huge amount of tax dollars go to somethings besides the next school!