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New Washington Manor facilities open

[Oakland Tribune](#), [Dec 3, 2006](#) by [Martin Ricard](#)

SAN LEANDRO -- The Washington Manor neighborhood got some major upgrades Saturday when two long-anticipated city facilities opened their doors.

The Manor Branch Library, which after

44 years outgrew its facility, has replaced the original library building built there in 1962.

The San Leandro Family Aquatics Center was completely rebuilt and will now be open year-round with several pools, a two-story waterslide and other improved amenities.

Residents are anticipating the two facilities will bring in new opportunities to enjoy San Leandro without having to look outside the city for recreation, fun and better quality of life.

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"The Manor has been part of the community since the '50s, and we've done very little improvement in that area," Mayor Shelia Young said last week. "So it's a huge investment and huge improvement for the Manor."

Washington Manor, commonly known as "the Manor," was annexed to San Leandro in 1957, increasing the city by 1,900 acres. At the time it was built, the Manor was one of the largest housing tracts in the Bay Area, according to the city's general plan. Today it is home to about one in every six residents.

The expansion of the neighborhood also has attracted a growing interest in giving certain areas of the city a makeover. Although budget cuts have stalled some city projects, the Manor received the luck of the draw when it was selected for

improvements to both the library and aquatics center.

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The library received a \$5.9 million facelift with the help of Proposition 14, which provided major funding for construction at libraries throughout the state.

Serving 28,000 residents and nine area schools, the branch library has now quadrupled in size with 30 new computers, an expanded children's area and even a fireplace for families to sit around and read with their children.

The new facade also was intended to draw people from the outside in, said Library Services Director David Bohne.

The aquatics center will probably be the neighborhood's best attraction. Although it won't be open for swimming until late spring, the city is hoping it will bring kids back to the Manor to play by creating a recreation center not seen in other neighborhoods.

In 2000, a task force made up of city staff, recreation and park commissioners, school district staff and residents decided to completely reconstruct the Manor pool formerly at Washington Manor Park.

In addition to the pool and waterslide, the aquatics center now has a squirt gun area, waterfall and a zero-depth entrance. But the center still will not have a competitive pool.

"It's going to be huge, not just for San Leandro," City Councilwoman Joyce Starosciak, whose district includes the Manor, said in a phone interview, "but for the San Lorenzo School District and all the surrounding communities."

Still, while both facilities received grand praise Saturday, City Councilwoman-elect Diana Souza feels they hold even more potential.

She has been championing to get a competitive pool installed at the aquatics center. When that is done, she said, the Manor will have everything it needs.

"My continued goal is to get the competitive pool added back into that facility," Souza said.

"But I'm very happy the aquatics center is making the progress that it is. ... Now kids will definitely have something more to do than just splash around in the water."

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