



# COVID-19 PRESS RELEASE



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**For Immediate Release**

May 14, 2020

## Health and Safety Priority One: Plano Parks & Recreation to Open Pools, Rec Centers on Limited Basis

Plano Parks and Recreation is pleased to announce the re-opening the Plano Aquatic Center and Carpenter Park, Liberty, Oak Point and Tom Muehlenbeck Recreation Centers on June 1 for members only, with limited amenities.

The amenities will be limited to:

- Walking/Running track
- Fitness area (no free weights)
- Lap swimming only – Hours may vary from recreation center hours.

Our outdoor pools, including Jack Carter Pool, will remain closed for the summer. This was a difficult decision for us to make since we recognize the popularity of Plano's public swimming pools, and the respite they would provide individuals and families who have been sheltering in place for the past few months.

The safety of our patrons and employees is our number one consideration. If we were going to open our outdoor pools for the summer, we would do so only if we felt we could comply with the recommended health and safety guidance of the CDC, the national aquatics associations, and other public health organizations. After many weeks of discussion, the challenges we did not feel we could overcome were as follows:

- Enforcement of physical distancing between children and youth
- The ability to hire a sufficient number of lifeguards when the number willing to perform lifeguard duties in this environment is very low.
- The ability to recruit, hire, train and certify enough aquatic staff while in the midst of a hiring freeze
- The cost of adding additional employees needed to clean and sanitize common areas such as lounge chairs, hand railings, and aquatic play features on a regular basis, and monitor social distancing of patrons.

"We understand the seriousness of this decision and how this will impact so many of our residents," said Ron Smith, Director of Parks and Recreation. "But in the interest of public safety and where we are right now in our fight against the Coronavirus, we feel this is the right decision."

We made the decision to open indoor pools for lap swimming only because of our ability to control the environment and in the process keep both patrons and employees safe. In addition, indoor pools open for lap swimming would not necessitate the need to hire additional staff. In the current economic state, this would save the City more than \$600,000.

The CDC states there is no evidence that COVID-19 is transmitted through water. In fact, the chemicals in our pools will kill most germs. The problem lies when people get out of the pool, and are roaming about on the deck, sitting on the lounge chairs, touching the hand rails on the stairs leading in and out of the pool, or on the stairs leading up the slides. We can no way effectively clean all these areas as often as we should.

The Sam Johnson Recreation Center for Adults 50+ will not reopen until there is confirmation from state and local public health officials that there is no widespread community transmission of COVID-19.

“We cannot say it enough—the health of our patrons and employees are our first priority,” said Susie Hergenrader, Recreation Services Manager. “Every decision we make is in consideration of the well-being of those most important to us – our members and our employees. We want to be sure the approach we take is thoughtful, and is one that provides a safe environment for all upon opening.”

We realize these are difficult times for everyone. That’s why we put our patrons’ memberships on hold since March 16, 2020 when our facilities closed. Beginning June 1, when we re-open, all memberships will be extended by the number of days left on memberships when we closed. For instance, if a member had 88 days left on their annual membership when we temporarily closed, they will still have 88 days left when we open on June 1. Monthly auto renewals will renew after the added number of days left on the membership have been used. We are also allowing people to cancel their memberships and put the credit on their Parks and Recreation account.

Our recreation centers will look quite different when reopening. Plexiglas shields will be in place at the check-in counters. Cash and checks will not be accepted, only credit cards. Staff will be wearing face masks. Floor decals will indicate where to stand if there is a wait. Locker rooms will not be accessible until authorized by the Governor. Not all fitness equipment will be available. Only one swimmer will be allowed in each lane. We will continue to monitor the pandemic and when it is deemed safe to do so, we will move to the next phase of operations, one that will allow access to additional amenities.

As we reopen, there will be specific protocols in place for staff and patrons to enhance safety.

Due to the challenge of ensuring all children adhere to the physical distancing requirements in place, summer day camps have been canceled. Any registrations that have already taken place will be fully refunded. Some specialized camps at the recreation centers may be held in July and August with modifications.

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**Editor’s Note:** We encourage our members and news media to visit our [FAQ's](#) and our website at [planoparks.org](http://planoparks.org) for more information.

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**About Plano**

Plano, Texas, is the largest city in Collin County with a population of 283,700 as of January 2019. Incorporated in 1873, the city is located 20 miles north of Dallas. Niche and AreaVibes recently named Plano as one of the Best Cities to Live in America. Forbes designated Plano one of America's safest cities. The City offers a high quality of life that includes nationally recognized schools, award-winning parks, and sustainability initiatives and a wide variety of multi-cultural neighborhoods appealing to families, young singles and retirees. Plano is home to the headquarters or regional operations of major corporations such as Toyota, Liberty Mutual, JPMorgan Chase Boeing Global Services, Fannie Mae, FedEx Office, JC Penney, Rent-A-Center, Cinemark Holdings, Denbury Resources and Alliance Data Systems. Our dynamic community features excellent restaurants, vibrant shopping and entertainment venues, a lively historic downtown district and active local arts scene. Easy access to DART light rail and major highways makes Plano a convenient place to live, work and visit. To learn more about Plano, go to our website at [plano.gov](http://plano.gov).