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Spigot fence: A swimmer rinses off after a dip at the Snowmass Rec Center.

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The Swim Team

The Snowmass Recreation Center and Pool's green design makes for guiltless fun.

by Linda Hayes

"Snowmass was growing so quickly; the town was crying out for a recreation facility."

It took a village (and then some) to plan and build the new Snowmass Village Recreation Center and Community Pool off busy Brush Creek Road. When it opened last September, the architectural standard for the entire Snowmass Village entryway was set...and the local community got a splashy new place to play.

"Snowmass was growing so quickly; the town was crying out for a recreation facility," says Valerie Alexander, co-owner of Bluegreen, the Aspen-based landscape-architecture firm that, as longtime consultant to the Town of Snowmass Village (TOSV), coordinated the development team.

Funding from a series of bond issues was in place (topped off by a \$1 million contribution from the Snowmass Base Village developers and a \$40,000 grant that Bluegreen earned from the Community Office of Resource Efficiency to supplement a solar-heating system).

Still, in typical Roaring Fork Valley fashion, construction costs were on the rise. "We needed to move fast to stay on budget," Alexander explains. "We had one shot to do it, and we had to do it right."

A major stipulation—that the entire entity be sustainable and employ efficient green building design—came from the TOSV. "The town's philosophy is to be conscious of reducing energy use," says Hunt Walker, TOSV public works director. "The Council supports green building and recycling. We wanted the rec center to be symbolic of what can be done."

To that end, architects, planners, contractors, civil engineers, and numerous community and expert consultants were brought on board early to help keep costs down. The project was sited with sensitivity to surrounding geological landforms and wetlands, as well as to take advantage of dramatic Snowmass

“Tumble buckets” fill with water, then tip it into the pool (or, playfully, over swimmers’ heads), waterspouts spurt like fountains, and downspouts pour like waterfalls.



Get your feet wet: The main entry to the rec center pool



In and out: The main hall and the view from the waterslide over the pool

mountain views. A paved multipurpose trail was engineered to encourage alternate transportation, and a custom saline-purification system was designed to reduce the level of chlorine and other chemicals in the pools. “We made it easy for people to be environmentally responsible,” says Alexander.

The experience begins with the landscape design, which incorporates native plants and trees and an irrigation system of rain chains that channel rooftop water into gravel pits. Pockets of ornamental sage, lavender, and lilies, as well as a grove of native poplars, are planted at the entrance. Clusters of evergreens provide separation from the street.

Like the paths leading up to it, the deck surrounding the pool area is poured and scored concrete the color of wet sand. Planters and certain perimeter walls are board-formed concrete designed with a vertical-line pattern to resemble reclaimed timber and barnwood benches and siding. A custom fence surrounds the pool. Many of these materials were chosen for their link to Snowmass’ mining and agricultural days, as well as for their affordability.

That said, colorful water features in the 2,275-square-foot, 62,000-gallon leisure pool add a contemporary edge. “Tumble buckets” fill with water, then tip it into the pool (or, playfully, over swimmers’ heads), waterspouts spurt like fountains, and downspouts pour like waterfalls. There’s also a semisubmerged bubble rock for climbing, a water cave, and a 120-foot-long waterslide, the stairway to which is nestled within a natural earth berm.

Swimming opportunities also include a two-lane, 25-yard lap pool that doubles as a heat sink, where excess heat from the building can be transferred to lessen air-conditioning and heating costs. A wading pool for tots and a bubbling hot tub round out

the pool area.

The low-profile 8,169-square-foot fitness center—which houses a 2,400-square-foot workout area, as well as men’s, women’s, and family locker rooms—was designed by Basalt-based Hagman Architects. “We wanted to meet the town’s goal of being low-impact, sustainable, and green but still be rooted to the area’s past,” says Hagman associate partner and project leader Tony Major of the design.

The long, gabled roofline, materials like recycled barnwood, and details such as a corrugated-metal-clad concession that resembles an old shepherd’s wagon give a nod to Colorado’s heritage. Passive energy systems, including solar panels on the roof, a central stone wall that absorbs heat during the day and radiates it at night, and low-maintenance materials—such as structural insulated panels, Glu-lams (load-bearing glue-laminated timber beams), expansive glazed windows, and nontoxic paints—are all up to the U.S. Green Building Council’s Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design standards. As it moves into its first summer of operation, the rec center’s success is clear. “The town and everyone involved really collaborated and never lost sight of quality,” says Alexander. “People are really wowed.”

Landscape Architects: Valerie Alexander and Anna Boeschstein of Bluegreen, Aspen

Architect: Tony Major of Hagman Architects, Basalt

General Contractor: Matt Underwood of Weitz Company, Glenwood

Pool Contractor: Marshall Foote of Colorado Poolsapes, Glenwood Springs

Mechanical and Structural Engineers: Dave Houghton of Resource Engineering Group, Crested Butte

Solar Engineering: Mike Tierney of Aspen Solar, Aspen