

Brand New and Waiting to Help Papillion Recover

Eric White — April 22, 2020



Aerial photo of courtesy Papillion Landing

Papillion, NE — Already the crown jewel of the Papillion parks system and certain to take its place as the gold standard for community recreation centers throughout Nebraska, three phases of the Papillion Landing project are now complete. Residents have been enjoying the Field House since its opening in November of 2018 and the outdoor turf field since the fall of 2019. Now, construction on the Community Recreation Center is also complete. Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, Papillion Landing was closed, cancelling the official ribbon cutting event for the Community Recreation Center just one day before it was planned to take place.

“The Landing was built to help meet the community needs,” says Event Center and Recreation Marketing Manager, Michaela Salkeld, “Not just for a fitness facility, but also for space for community organizations to utilize for practices, tournaments and games which they may not have been able to otherwise host.”

The multi-purpose Community Recreation Center is a sprawling facility featuring three distinct areas. In the community area guests will find amenities including a digital library, a community gym and a coffee bar which will be open to the public. In the Membership area guests will find a huge multi-purpose gymnasium, an indoor aquatic center, an indoor walking track, cardio and weight-lifting areas and much more. The final area, called the Chrysalis Event Center, offers rental space for gatherings, corporate meetings, training, remote workspace and other events from 2 to 300 people.

The city of Papillion has been working towards making Papillion Landing a reality for well over a decade. To establish Papillion's park system as a key feature of the community, Papillion funded a study to index their existing recreation areas and discover their capacity moving into the future. They found the addition of Papillion Landing plus other planned parks would cover those needs through 2030. In 2016 Papillion passed a .5% sales tax increase to raise the \$61.5 million in funding needed for the project. Groundbreaking took place in 2017.

As the Covid-19 pandemic began to ramp up in January, the Papillion Landing director and the city of Papillion began daily briefings. With the ribbon cutting event at the Community Recreation Center scheduled for Friday March 13th and facilities closing nationwide, it was clear some tough decisions needed to be made. On Thursday the 12th the ribbon cutting postponement was announced. The next day, based on NHS guidance, the city of Papillion indefinitely closed all parks and recreation facilities which included cancelling all planned activities and leagues at Papillion Landing.

When asked about the closure, Director of Communications for the city of Papillion, Trenton Albers expressed the most concern for the Papillion Landing employees. "The toughest impact has probably been to staffing. Papillion Landing requires a lot of part time staff, including managers, attendants and lifeguards, and we were working to build up that team. This has certainly been a set back to that as those positions are now laid off." The full-time employees are still working either remotely or in the office but socially distanced from the few others in the building.

Since the closure, Papillion Landing has worked hard to help the residents of Papillion stay active by posting daily challenges, games and exercise videos on their Facebook page. Salkeld says that many of these virtual engagements put in place during the closure will continue even after the pandemic has passed.

Even though the facilities are new, the closure has also prompted a new focus on deep cleaning. "We will continue with the high levels of sanitation and processes which get implemented to ensure our members and community feel safe while at the Community Center." Salkeld reports. "Once we are able to re-open we will make sure we remain in compliance with any DHM's or City guidelines to ensure community, employee and member safety and health."

Despite the closure, construction on the next phase continues as a series of softball fields are being built on the property. Albers says the city of Papillion is looking forward to brighter days.

More information, including memberships which are available on an annual or monthly basis, can be found on the Papillion Landing website. <https://www.papillion.org/835/Papillion-Landing>

Daily Covid-19 updates, virtual activities and challenges are available on the Papillion Landing Facebook page. <https://www.facebook.com/PapillionLanding>