



Back: Historic photo of children cooling off in the Santa Rita Pool 1932.
Left: View of bath house and pool, facing west, prior to demolition in 2025.

Santa Rita Pool & Bath House

The first City of Tucson public swimming pool.

Between 1930 and 2025, this site was home to the The Santa Rita Pool and Bath House. Originally called Southside Park in 1903.

Early amenities of the park included grass, a hedgerow around the park, playground equipment, benches and a grandstand. In 1915, a citywide renaming of all city parks officially changed the name to Santa Rita Park.

In 1930, the City of Tucson built its first municipal pool here. The pool and bath house facility included a

120-foot by 45-foot pool, two separate dressing rooms, and a chlorinated filter system. The City employed two lifeguards and a “lady attendant” to assure public safety and the smooth operation of the facility. Sometime around 1980, a shallow kiddie pool was added and the dressing rooms were converted into storage spaces.

The pool remained open until sometime between 2005 and 2006, when it was permanently closed to the public. The remaining infrastructure was demolished in 2026 as part of the park’s redesign.



Desegregation of Public Swimming Pools

Prior to the 1960s, most US pools were segregated by race, class, or gender and Tucson was no exception. Women and men were often not allowed to swim together, and each gender was restricted to scheduled times throughout the week. By 1913, restrictions based on sex were removed, and segregation of public pool facilities was largely based on race or ethnicity. While the City of Tucson did not formalize pool segregation through local ordinances, they did practice de facto segregation, restricting public pools to certain groups either through individual swim days for Mexican Americans or African Americans, or through establishing pools in certain neighborhoods, and restricting pool use in other areas. The 1960 era of landmark civil rights rulings began the slow process of integration in many public facilities, including integration of Santa Rita Pool & Bath House.