

# Boomtown

**I**n the post-pandemic world of family entertainment, reinvestment equals reassurance.

For Boomers Parks, working through and eventually beyond the times of COVID, the measures taken to ensure safety go far beyond the fun and games purveyed.

Tim Murphy, CEO of Irvine, California-based [Boomers Parks](#) led a private equity acquisition of what is now an eight-park venture across three states, with a California roster now including Boomers Irvine, Santa Maria, Livermore, Modesto and SpeedZone Los Angeles.

The stable also includes Sahara Sam's Water Park in West Berlin, New Jersey, as well as



***In the last year punctured by the pandemic, new ownership at Boomers has invested \$7M for upgrades in equipment and pristine maintenance at the national Family Entertainment Center as the entertainment model for returning customers.***

Boomers Boca Raton and Big Kahuna's Water and Adventure Park in Destin, Florida.

Working with regional restrictions and closure mandates across the peak pandemic timeline, the CEO used the time to plan and prep for respective re-openings, and doing so with an assurance to guests that Boomers was taking extra steps to ensure that safe times equaled good times for park clientele.

"One of the first things we did was really talk about safety with both our guests and our team members; that was the focus," says Murphy. "And we've implemented more measures than what the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) has required."

Taking temperatures, installing social distancing signage and ensuring masks are all part of park protocols; additionally, enhanced sanitizing of games and rides and bringing on additional staff to pay enhanced attention to cleaning surfaces ranging from handrails to door handles and golf clubs to go-karts is all part of Boomers' overt attention to sanitized detail.

"It's something we go over with our teams daily," Murphy says, "and to ensure to everybody that this isn't something that stops from one day to the next – it's uninterrupted."

Via ample, new research and customer surveys, Murphy -- with over three decades in the restaurant industry, including six+ years at Disney – is overseeing a philosophy of clean and pristine



across all facets.

"Another of the first things we've focused on with capital expenditures is re-doing the bathrooms; people want to see and feel that cleanliness," says the CEO. "Bathrooms -- specifically for mothers -- can really be one of the things that turns off families when it's not an element which is not properly taken care of. There's no bigger turn-off for moms and families than going into an old or broken-down restroom; it's one of the first comment that comes up."

Sanitation has met with spending for Boomers. In the past year-plus, the new ownership has re-invested nearly \$7 million for upgrades in equipment safety and maintenance. And the color green isn't alone on the new Boomers' spectrum, as the parks have also enjoyed a rebrand with new logo and blue and red color scheme.

**S**uch re-imagination of the Family Entertainment Center (FEC) space finds Murphy oft-asking: "What would Disney do?" His answers are going far beyond wipe downs and washrooms as Boomers' makeover includes updating time-worn, seasonal pricing strategies, and creating an experience to savor for all ages of guests, from little kids to

tweens to their parents.

"As we're coming out of the pandemic, we recognized it as a time to make these changes," he says. "It's about creating an experience. As a numbers guy, yes, it's about, 'Where do you make your money?' and 'Who is your guest coming in, and what are their wants and needs?'"

"That's been the approach toward the refreshing of the concept. Sure, the younger kids will come into a park and be enamored by bright lights and cool stuff, but we also need to ensure this is an experience for older kids, for moms and dads, for corporate outings."

A pair of prime focuses for Boomers can be seen via a food menu overhaul and full alcohol licenses at five of eight parks; per the latter, the new "Boomers Backyard" experience at several locales provides ample sit-back and lounge chair space to check out the day's sporting events on big screens while enjoying a beer, wine or cocktail.

"And people want these different foods; if the food is good, people will come back," Murphy adds. "So, we've upgraded our menus with new items including flatbreads and sliders, along



with different flavor profiles. We still have the family favorites and classics like the pizza, hot dogs and popcorn, but we've gone in a different direction to appease what many folks are looking for. Why? Because we want them to stay longer."

Early returns suggest the approach is worth the ride, as, according to Murphy, Boomers is seeing a nearly 60 percent increase in check average. The cleaner spaces and freshened menus are working in concert with a pent-up demand for families to get back out of the house after a year of quarantining.

"People are absolutely itching to get back out into the world – all over the U.S., and we're seeing that at all of our parks," Murphy says. "And, it's interesting that we're also seeing people come from farther distances.

"Traditionally, FEC's operate with guests coming from a 20-mile radius. We're now seeing guests from 100 miles away. And we're also seeing people spend a bit more than they have

before, with the family entertainment industry getting a bigger share of the pie."

As Murphy and his crew aim to acquire more parks and enhance the new Boomers roster, he believes that post-pandemic business for successful FECs will see permanent changes brought on by the COVID months.

"I see this as a shift in how people will do things moving forward, especially relating to the cleanliness," he concludes. "Think back prior to the pandemic and the lack of cleanliness in a lot of arcades, and that can go for any park.

"But I think this *expectation* – especially for the guests we're going after – is here to stay. Because of the pandemic, people have a pent-up demand to come out and expect these new measures that we implemented." — By Judd Spicer, Senior Writer, California Business Journal

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