

## The Need (and Time) for an Indoor Olympic-sized Pool in Chapel Hill

**Local population is growing, pool space is not.** The current population in the Town of Chapel Hill is approaching 100,000, incorporated and unincorporated. Nearby Durham has 250,000, and Raleigh over 10 million. Pittsboro and southern Chapel Hill are booming, with Alamance County not far behind. Our general area is one of the fastest growing in the country with a deluge of housing units on the way.

Swimming pools in the area have been full for over a decade. No current pool is larger than 12 lanes (short course yards or 25y) and often split further between multiple uses simultaneously. No pool building of note is currently planned. There's more wide-ranging aquatic programming for more age ranges being offered than ever before, thus current pools in the area are caught trying to do a little of everything to meet needs. There's just not enough lane space for it to be done well, certainly not while increasing population.

**Swimming is popular and beneficial. Always has been, always will be.** How big a sport/activity is swimming? At one time swimming was the most-participated-in sport in the world according to the Guinness Book of Records. UNC has a learn-to-swim requirement for graduation. Swimming is a low-impact, lifetime aerobic exercise utilizing muscles throughout the entire body. It's often useful for those no longer able to do other physical activities. Participating in swimming promotes valuable life skills such as teamwork, goal setting, time management, accepting success/failure, nutrition, and health & fitness. Swimming promotes diversity, inherently and through strong diversity outreach programs sponsored by both the USA & North Carolina Swimming governing bodies.

Nearly 3000 local children (and growing) participate in the Chapel Hill and Durham Summer Swim Leagues every summer. The State of North Carolina has large and growing participation in high school swimming as 9000 swimmers represented almost 300 schools in high school swimming during the 2016-17 season. Chapel Hill, East Chapel Hill, and Carrboro High Schools all have large men's & women's swim teams with rich traditions. Swimming is increasing in popularity at public and private schools in Orange County, as well as most other public and private schools nearby in Durham, Alamance, Chatham, and Wake counties. Homeschoolers also utilize aquatics in their curriculum.

North Carolina has exceptionally strong year-round competitive swimming. Currently 10,000 athletes from over 70 clubs across the state are registered with North Carolina Swimming. Both NC Swimming and USA Swimming stress diversity programming. Swimmers from NC have represented at the highest levels of NCAA and international competition, including the Olympic games. NC hosts numerous in-season and championship meets throughout the state each year. The ACC Swimming Championships are held in Greensboro and they're also bidding for 2020 USA Olympic Team Trials.

This is a lot of swimmers/swimming in North Carolina! But these large numbers are hidden in Summer Leagues, High School, and USA Swimming teams outside of most Park & Rec data etc, and are typically unknown to the public. It's critical at this juncture that Task Force and Town Council members understand and take seriously the demand and potential for local indoor competitive pool space.

**Already Big in Sports Tourism.** The sport of swimming brings big tourism dollars to any area. A weekend swim meet can last 2-4 days and bring 300-1,200 participants, almost always with additional family members in tow. Swim families book hotel rooms, dine out, and buy groceries, gas, clothing, etc. during their stay. They visit local attractions, movie theaters, and college campuses and bookstores. They develop meaningful rituals, favorite restaurants, personal connections, to an area that become part of their family forever, whether in town for another swim meet, coming back to visit, or one day moving to an area.

Chapel Hill currently attracts very few swim meets. Instead swim families in the Chapel Hill area drive to other NC cities or towns to spend their money at meets, aquatic facilities, hotels, restaurants, retail, recreation, etc. In recent years the local option for hosting most swim meets has been diminishing or is obsolete. The closest long course pools (LC or 50m Olympic size) with separate warm down space are in Raleigh, Greensboro, and Charlotte. Thus all state LC swim meets for youth, college, and adult swimmers happen only in those cities. As an amateur sports capital in America, Chapel Hill should have an aquatic facility to meet the needs of it's local swim community and capitalize on the vast participation in the sport of swimming within our state. The Durham Summer Swim League hosted championships in Greensboro for example! But LC pools like Greensboro are shooting for National level meets like

Olympic Trials. There's a growing need for a town like Chapel Hill to focus more on state and local needs. We certainly have much to offer and gain from swim meet tourism and continued overall athletic branding.

**Addressing the issue.** A new aquatic facility in Chapel Hill would support 3-6 local high school swim programs, a 500+ member local year-round team, augment our learn-to-swim programs for all ages, supplement adult fitness swim classes, and would host approximately 8 weekend swim meets per calendar year of mixed 25y and 50m format. An aquatic facility focused on meeting competitive swimming needs and meet hosting would free up local, currently crowded facilities for better overall distribution of the more community-based family and individual programming like lap swimming, adult aquacize, etc. The ability to host meets allows for key swim meets to be held in Chapel Hill year-round, with peak months being Oct-Dec, Jan-Mar, and May-July.

### **The Pool We Propose**

**Attached Scheme.** Attached please find a simple example layout on the AL Property of an indoor Swim Center, an indoor gym, a community arts space, and a possible extra building option near Ephesus Elementary School. This scheme was done gratis for ToCH by an architect willing to be further involved in discussion or action towards this goal. Egress was minimized on the property while meeting emergency needs. Foot/Bike Paths are marked. The nature trail area in back is intact, as is potential for corporate use on Legion Rd.

The pool being considered is a 30,000+ sqft footprint for aquatics. We're interested in exploring the advantages to a shared locker room situation, most likely with an indoor double gym for a variety of recreation programs to maximize use and minimize costs. The pool would be 50m (Olympic size) with separate pool allowing for the hosting of any statewide swim meet, yet shying away from a commitment to larger meets which require significant bleacher area and increase building costs. A 50m size provides twice as many 25y lanes as the Homestead pool for example, so would bring to the community the benefit of two Homestead-sized pools in one. Existing demand will cause it to fill the first year (or sooner), but it's designed to handle community needs for decades to come.

**Green Building.** The building(s) would be as green as any in the country, a hopeful model for indoor pools to come. We hope to have a building that blends with the ridgeline and forest setting behind it and the sloping open space in front with unprecedented efficiency in energy use and operation. It would be an anchoring presence to the property. On the practical side, strong green features are cost saving in operation and hopefully approaching cost equivalency in construction. (All new structures in Chapel Hill should be green). We're working with local leaders in greening: from design to construction to operations to maintenance. While we learn from all over the world, we believe we have the talent in and around Chapel Hill to best meet the needs and fit the culture of our local communities.

**There are ways.** All too often there's not enough time and effort spent to bring people and ways to the table for solution-oriented and can do conversations on such large projects. This could be a beneficial public-private partnership adding much to the community. Examples show this to be of win-win-win potential. Buildings as large as those mentioned above can only be considered on a unique property such as American Legion, so please research this option fully now...Thank You for your time & consideration.

- 1. AQUATICS  
25,000 sf.
- 2. REC / SPORTS  
10,000 sf.
- 3. ARTS  
20,000 sf.

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