

FUTURE AQUATICS CENTER

Location yet to be Determined

A group of citizens has been active in the pursuit of a public or public/private indoor aquatics center for Gastonia and Gaston County for quite a few years. Gastonia lacks an indoor standard competitive sports aquatics facility, which several communities in the region possess. Advocates of an aquatics center maintain that such a facility would give us an Olympic class 50 meter by 25 yard athletic pool with diving facilities providing a much needed venue for competitive water sports; a leisure pool providing adult and senior recreation as well as slides and other play features for families and children; and, would provide a significant boost to local tourism by attracting regional meets and other activities. There are 25-yard pools at both the Gastonia Main Family YMCA center and the Belmont/Stowe YMCA. There is a small athletic pool at Belmont Abby College. With the exception of Webb Street School, none of the public schools have pools. High School swim teams must use these private pools for practice and limited competition, as do community teams such as the Gaston Gators. The Gastonia Y also has a second, shallow warmer therapy/recreational pool.



SOURCE:
Water
Technology,
Inc with
Ballard*King &
Associates
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Recognizing the aquatics need, the City Council agreed to provide, in FY 2002, \$10,000 to match with a greater amount of privately raised funds to undertake a feasibility study. Water Technology, Inc with Ballard*King & Associates was hired to work with a citizens committee in undertaking a feasibility study and concept plan for a local aquatics center.

The report was issued on December 14, 2002. The Executive Summary of the report is reprinted in the appendix herein. What follows in this section are some of the critical elements of the report from Water Technology, Inc with Ballard*King & Associates. It is important to note that the aquatics study recommended not just aquatics facilities, but also health and fitness facilities together with amenities similar to that of a community recreation center, plus a typical YMCA facility. In undertaking the aquatics study, the consultant evaluated other recreational needs of the city (e.g., community recreation center(s) in the southeast, more athletic fields, etc.). The additional facilities were also part of the market analysis supporting the facility and are thus, important for the market success of any envisioned major aquatics center. Therefore, the recommended facility, at \$13,000,000 (+ land) provides for some of the same facilities recommended in this plan. It is estimated that about \$7,000,000 of the aquatics center is involved with these additional facilities. The report proposed this facility be both tax/tax paid bond as well as membership dues supported.

NEEDS (Source: Gastonia Feasibility Report, Water Technology, Inc with Ballard*King & Associates)

- United States Swimming swim teams need 50-meter swimming pool length for Long Course competition from April through August. The teams require 25-yard swimming pool length for Short Course competition from September through March.
- High School swim teams require 25-yard swimming pool length and one meter diving from September through May.
- Diving teams require one meter and three-meter springboards and 10, 7.5, 5, 3 and 1-meter platforms to attract national meets. A water depth of 16'-5" minimum (usually constructed 17'-0") is required for 10 meter platform diving.
- Support spaces of locker rooms; weight training room and coaches offices will also be needed. A complete space program follows this summary.
- While the swim teams need deep water for competitive swimming and diving, they also need shallow water for instruction. This may be best provided in two separate pools; however, it is possible to utilize a movable floor within the main pool to vary the depth from zero to 7 feet deep.
- Spectator seating for 1,000 people or more should be provided in order to provide adequate seating for regional meets. Many existing pools in the region that Gastonia would be competing against have seating capacities in the 800 to 1,500 range. For local meets seating for 500 to 800 would be adequate.
- The swim team needs the water temperature to be around 81 to 82 degrees for practice and 79 to 80 degrees for meets. Instruction and recreational swimming needs water temperature in the range of 84 to 88 degrees. Therapy pool water temperature is usually 88 to 93°. Two separate pools can only provide this. The ideal water temperature for diving is 86 degrees.
- Most communities are building deep-water competition pools and shallow water instructional/recreational pools. The warm, shallow pools provide for family recreation, water walking for seniors, aquatic aerobics, swim instruction, and a warm up/warm down area for competitive swimming. The deep-water competition pool and the shallow water recreation pools are complementary.
- Other important recreational needs in the City include additional baseball and soccer fields, gymnasium, jogging track, fitness center, community meeting rooms and aerobics rooms.

FACTS (Source: Gastonia Feasibility Report, Water Technology, Inc with Ballard*King & Associates)

- Existing indoor pools in Gastonia are limited to one 25-yard pool. The indoor swimming pool market demand is under served by public and private facilities. The high school swim teams are allowed to swim at Stowe YMCA in Mt. Holly and the Gastonia Central YMCA. The Gaston Gators are allowed to swim at the Gastonia Central YMCA only.

- There is one USA Swimming team of about 90 swimmers total. Team membership has been as high as 104. Some members have been lost to neighboring towns where better swimming facilities exist.
- The City of Gastonia has a population of about 69,000 with over 190,000 in the County.
- There are three public high schools and one private high school in the City of Gastonia: Highland Tech, Ashbrook, Hunter Huss and Gaston Day School. There are six other high schools in the County: Forestview (50% of students live in City), Cherryville, Bessemer City, East Gaston, North Gaston and South Point in Belmont. Seven of the high schools have swim teams with a total of 250 swimmers.
- Water depths of 0 to 3 ½ feet are ideal for recreation programs. Floor based exercise programs use water depths of 3 ½ feet to 4 ½ feet. Competitive swimming needs a minimum of 6 feet of water for racing starts and 13 feet for springboard diving. Deep-water exercise requires 6 to 7 feet water depth. Platform diving requires a minimum depth of 16' -5".
- Eight potential sites for the aquatic center were identified, visited and photographed for this study.
- There are two country club pools at Cramer Mountain Country Club and Gaston Country Club that have outdoor pools and summer league swim teams. There is an existing City outdoor Pool at Lineberger Park. Other pools exist at Gardner Park, Robinwood Swim Club, Erwin Center, Wesley Acres and Southampton Swim Club.
- About 50% of projects like this being developed around the country have some sort of partnership involvement. Potential partners for aquatic centers include municipalities, YMCA's, counties, universities, school districts, hospitals and orthopedic medical practices. Partners may participate in initial construction, as users or as operators.
- There are six recreation centers in the City. Two of the recreation centers have gyms only. Four of the centers have gyms, adult activities and playing fields. No modern indoor municipal recreation center with gyms, pool, fitness center, aerobics, meeting rooms and other activities exists in Gaston County, although the Gastonia Central YMCA and Stowe YMCA in Belmont- Mt. Holly fulfill some of the needs.

CONCEPTS (Source: Gastonia Feasibility Report, Water Technology, Inc with Ballard*King & Associates)

- Primary emphasis in this study was to use a building program that would achieve maximum cost recovery for the City. It will take more initial construction dollars to build a **recreation center** instead of an aquatic center; however, we concur with the committee's conclusion that it makes more sense to build a recreation center that would come close to complete cost recovery than to build an aquatic center that would require additional subsidy. A major allocation of building area has been dedicated to a 5,040 SF weight/cardiovascular fitness center and 12,480 SF gymnasium. The inclusion of this space is critical to meeting the dry land

training needs of competitive swimmers as well as providing a broader recreational appeal to the general public. It should be recognized that the fitness space in a center would generate more revenue dollars per square foot than any other amenity.

- **The concept presented in drawing form at the back of the (aquatics) report** provides an indoor 50-meter by 25 yard pool that would have two movable bulkheads. There would also be gallery level seating for 1,100 spectators. A leisure pool of 7,500 SF is also included. A fitness center, gymnasium, jogging track and an aerobics room would also be available. Support spaces would include locker rooms, concession area, meeting/party room/classroom areas, babysitting and an administration area. **Building size – 81,744 SF first floor footprint with 9,668 SF in a second floor mezzanine, total area.**
- Additional **outdoor recreation spaces** were included: four soccer fields and four baseball fields. These were included in the project because of the critical need in the City for these additional recreational facilities. It is beneficial to locate indoor and outdoor recreational facilities together for the convenience of families who may have members participating in different activities at one location rather than spread through the City. This kind of community recreation center builds on its synergy to allow parents to participate in fitness activities while children attend sports practice.

At the same time the Gaston County YMCA was proposing to build a new facility in southeast Gastonia. The YMCA decided that if a 50-meter pool (essential to the aquatic center concept as maintained by its advocates and the report) were to be built and operated, that public support would be necessary. Otherwise, it would build another 25-yard pool. Early in 2004, the Gastonia City Council voted affirmatively to work with the YMCA in locating this new facility at Martha Rivers Park; however, for various reasons this potential concept, involving a land donation to the YMCA has not proceeded further. The YMCA fitness center and pools are dues supported facilities. If the City decides to place the YMCA, a membership/dues facility, at Martha Rivers Park, it should not be done as a substitute for a free-access public recreation center. One or two recreation centers will still be needed in the southeast. One attractive alternative could be for the Aquatics center development be done as a joint venture between an aquatics center private non-profit, the YMCA and the Gaston County Schools (for schools athletic purposes). It may be difficult to expect voter bond referendum support for a facility that is operated on a membership/dues basis. In the cost figures above a six million dollar option is listed as the cost to add a public aquatics center to either of two proposed new community centers.

Source: Gastonia Feasibility Report,
Water Technology, Inc with
Ballard*King & Associates

SECTION III - CONSTRUCTION COST

The following are estimates of construction cost. Project Development, or “Soft Costs” have been added to these raw construction costs, or “hard costs”. Project Development Costs usually add 15 to 20% to the construction cost.

OPINION OF PROBABLE CONSTRUCTION COST	
Building, Type II Precast Concrete, 64,390 SF x \$60/SF =	\$ 3,863,400
Second Floor Mezzanine Space, 9,668 SF x \$45/SF=	435,060
Building, Type III Structures Unlimited, 17,354 SF x \$175/SF=	3,036,950
50 M by 25 YD Pool, 12,934 SF x \$90/SF =	1,164,060
Leisure Pool, = 7,500 SF x \$130/SF=\$975,000 + \$300,000 waterslide and water features	1,275,000
Bulkheads, 2 x 75 ft. x \$1200/LF =	180,000
Timing System and Scoreboard	56,000
Soccer Fields, 4 each x \$100,000=	400,000
Baseball Fields, 4 each x \$100,000=	400,000
Parking Lot/Drives/Curbs, 500 cars x 400 SF x \$1.25/SF =	250,000
Paving/Sidewalk 1500 SF @ \$4.00/SF =	6,000
Lawn and Landscaping	60,000
Utilities	100,000
CONSTRUCTION COST TOTAL – (\$109.51/SF plus outdoor fields, parking, landscaping, walks and utilities.)	\$ 11,226,470

TOTAL DEVELOPMENT COSTS	
Architect/Engineer Fees, \$ 11,226,470 @ 8.0% =	\$898,000
A/E Reimbursables	30,000
Bidding Contingency, \$ 11,226,470 @ 5% =	561,000
Survey, Geotechnical Investigation, Testing	50,000
Furniture, Fixtures & Equipment (non-pool items)	100,000
Telephone, computer cabling	18,000
Bid Advertising & Reproduction of Bidding Documents	15,000
DEVELOPMENT COST	\$ 1,672,000
CONSTRUCTION COST	\$ 11,226,470
TOTAL DEVELOPMENT COST	\$ 12,898,470