

The Village Of Wellington Aquatics Center

Designing for competition, community, and continuity

BY SAM ELSHEIKH



For more than 40 years, the Wellington Aquatics Complex (Fla.) served as a cornerstone of competitive swimming, diving, and recreational aquatics for the Village of Wellington. Generations of residents learned to swim, trained, and gathered there, making the facility a deeply ingrained part of the community's identity.

As participation grew and aquatic programming evolved, the Village recognized that the existing complex could no longer fully support modern expectations for safety, accessibility, flexibility, and competition. Rather than a simple replacement, Wellington sought a comprehensive reinvestment, one that would honor the facility's legacy while positioning the community for the future.

Completed in 2025, the Wellington Aquatics Center represents that next chapter. Designed by OLC and constructed by Wharton-Smith, Inc., the \$30-million



project delivers a modern aquatic destination that balances elite competitive performance with inclusive, community-focused design.

A Program Shaped By Performance and Access

From the earliest planning discussions, the Village's priorities were clear: create a facility capable of hosting high-level aquatic competition while remaining approachable, welcoming, and operationally efficient for everyday use. Achieving that balance required a program that could support multiple user groups simultaneously without compromise.

The heart of the facility is a 64-meter competition pool equipped with a movable bulkhead, allowing staff to



quickly adapt the pool for long-course training, short-course competition, diving, and water polo. The pool begins at a depth of 6 feet 8 inches and slopes to 13 feet at the deep end, supporting springboard diving with two 1-meter and two 3-meter diving boards. Integrated timing systems and a scoreboard ensure the facility meets the technical requirements for competitive events while supporting daily training needs.

Equally critical to the program is the recreation and multi-purpose pool, designed to welcome users of all ages and abilities. A zero-depth entry creates an intuitive and accessible arrival point for families, seniors, and learn-to-swim participants. Interactive play structures and spray features activate the shallow zones, while a 2-foot to 3-foot open-water play area with a basketball hoop encourages casual recreation and social engagement.

A dedicated six-lane, 25-yard pool supports swim lessons, aquatic fitness, warm-ups, and instructional

programming and allows the Village to run concurrent programs efficiently while keeping the competition pool available for meets and training.

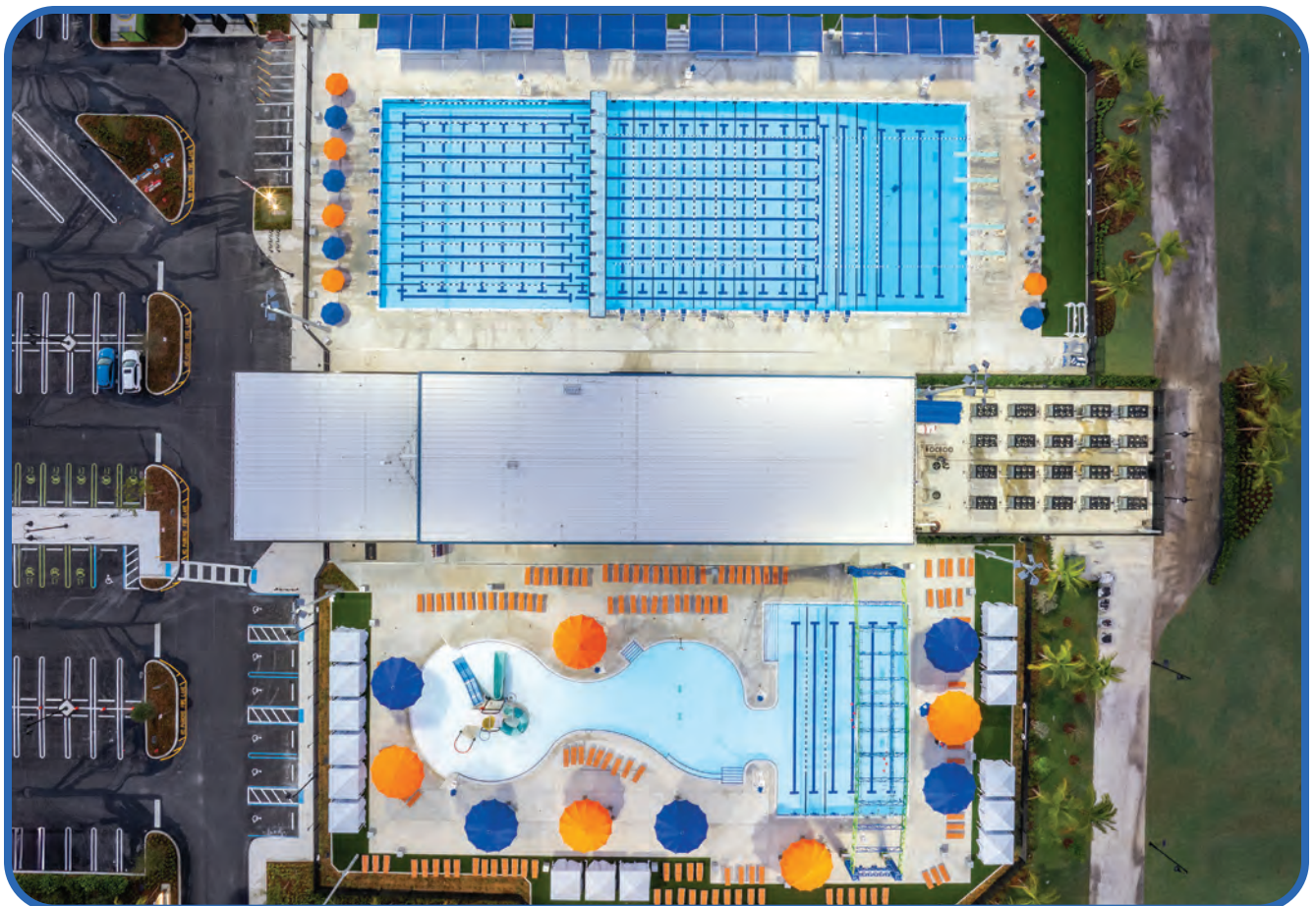
Expanding Aquatics Beyond The Traditional Model

One of the defining features of the Wellington Aquatics Center is the inclusion of a double-course Ninja Cross system, the first installation of its kind in Florida. This feature reflects a broader shift in municipal aquatics toward more diverse, experience-driven programming.

From a design standpoint, integrating the Ninja Cross system required careful coordination to ensure it could coexist with the aquatic center's competitive uses without disrupting operations. The system introduces a dynamic, high-energy element that expands programming opportunities during off-peak hours while maximizing the Village's overall investment.

Architecture That Supports Operations and Experience

While the pools anchor the program, the success of the facility depends on how well the supporting spaces function daily. The 7,500-square-foot, air-conditioned





pool house was designed to streamline operations, improve supervision, and enhance the overall user experience.

The building includes locker rooms, family changing rooms, administrative offices, a concession stand, and a dedicated party room. Clear separation between wet and dry circulation zones improves safety and durability, while intuitive layouts allow staff to efficiently monitor activity during both routine operations and large-scale events. The locker rooms were designed with flexibility in mind, enabling operators to divide each locker room into two distinct zones, separating recreational users from competitive swimmers.

A covered drop-off establishes a welcoming arrival sequence and improves traffic flow during swim meets, camps, and community events. Durable materials and finishes were selected throughout to withstand heavy use while maintaining a civic presence appropriate for a long-term public facility.

Site Design For Comfort, Visibility, and Flexibility

The site design extends the architectural experience beyond the pool house, creating an environment that supports comfort, visibility, and flexibility. Generous deck areas accommodate swimmers and spectators without congestion, while shade structures, umbrellas,

and rentable cabanas provide relief from South Florida's climate.

Spectator seating is strategically positioned to maintain clear sightlines to competition areas, enhancing the experience for families and event attendees alike. A turf area with tent anchors is located behind the bleachers, allowing swim teams to congregate without consuming deck space or obstructing spectators' views. A separate equipment yard supports efficient operations and reduces visual clutter, while dedicated parking for vehicles, buses, and bicycles reinforces the facility's role as both a neighborhood amenity and a regional destination.

The overall site organization allows the Village to scale operations up or down, whether hosting a major swim meet or serving local families on a weekday afternoon.

Designing For Continuity

A guiding principle of OLC's approach to aquatic design is continuity. Municipal facilities must remain relevant as programming evolves, participation shifts, and new activities emerge. At Wellington, flexibility was embedded throughout the design, from pool configurations and deck layouts to infrastructure and support spaces.

The movable bulkhead, multi-purpose instructional



pool, and diversified programming zones allow the Village to adjust schedules, expand offerings, and respond to future demand without major reinvestment. Outdoor amenities, including shade structures and cabanas, were planned to allow for future expansion or reconfiguration as needs change.

“Our goal at Wellington was to design a facility that could perform at the highest competitive level while still feeling welcoming and accessible to the entire community. When those two objectives are aligned, you create a building that truly lasts,” says Maged Elsheikh, OLC Project Manager.

Construction Through Collaboration

Delivering a project of this scale and technical complexity required a collaborative approach. Wharton-Smith, Inc., serving as Construction Manager, worked closely with OLC and the Village throughout design and construction to maintain quality, manage costs, and address the unique challenges inherent to aquatic facilities.

Early coordination between the design and construction teams allowed for efficient resolution of constructability considerations, careful sequencing of specialized aquatic systems, and consistent

communication with Village stakeholders. This collaborative process was essential in delivering a high-performance facility that meets both operational and community expectations.

Community Impact And Regional Presence

Since opening, the Wellington Aquatics Center has strengthened the Village’s aquatic programming and expanded opportunities for youth development, fitness, and community engagement. The facility supports competitive swim teams, diving programs, water polo, instructional





classes, camps, and recreational users of all ages and abilities.

At a regional level, the center positions Wellington as a destination for aquatic events, drawing athletes and families from across South Florida and beyond. These events generate economic activity while showcasing the Village's commitment to investing in high-quality public facilities.

Most importantly, the Wellington Aquatics Center ensures that a beloved community asset has been thoughtfully reimagined as a modern, high-performing public facility at the heart of the Village Park sports and recreation campus. The new aquatic center will continue to serve its purpose, reimagined for today, designed for tomorrow, and built to support generations to come. **PRB+**

Key Project Details

- **Project:** Wellington Aquatics Center
- **Location:** Wellington, Fla.
- **Client:** Village of Wellington
- **Architect:** OLC Architecture, Interiors, and Aquatics
- **General Contractor:** Wharton-Smith
- **Facility Size:** 7,500-s.f. pool house + Outdoor Aquatics
- **Construction Cost:** \$30 million
- **Completed:** 2025

Sam Elsheikh is President and Senior Principal at OLC, bringing over 25 years of experience in the planning and design of municipal, commercial, resort, athletic, and healthcare facilities across the U.S.