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The Village Of Wellington Aquatics Center

***Designing for competition,
community, and continuity***

By Brianne Sanchez

Swimming More Sustainably

Eco-friendly elements improve operating efficiency at new aquatic facilities



Coloradans who love to swim, splash, and soak with a view of Mount Sopris will soon do all three more sustainably at a new Carbondale Aquatics Center, scheduled to open in May 2026. The Western Slope's first all-electric aquatic facility replaces a crumbling, vinyl-lined 1970s-era pool, fulfilling long-term goals within the town's parks master plan.

Carbondale trustees and staff, including Parks & Recreation Director Eric Brendlinger, chose to pursue sustainable solutions that capitalize on the 300 days of sunshine this mountain community enjoys. In 2008, Carbondale installed 288 solar panels on the roof of its certified LEED Platinum Recreation and Community Center. Designing a new, \$9-million aquatic facility presented an opportunity to think even more ambitiously. Local architecture firm Land+Shelter collaborated with sustainability consultants to create plans for a more accessible, universal-design concept with net-zero-ready mechanical components.

“It’s a forward-thinking small town when it comes to climate goals and electrification of public buildings,” Brendlinger says. “We are cognizant of our energy use and how we use taxpayer dollars to build public facilities. If you do things right, you can save money on long-term operations.”

Pumping Up The Heat

The facility is not going to be producing any greenhouse gases to heat water or to heat and cool the building,” Brendlinger says. “We’re trusting the air-source, heat-pump technology.”

Carbondale intentionally cut gas lines to the facility during construction and selected multipurpose, bifacial solar panels that can absorb energy from both sides to bring energy production on-site and provide shade as part of a trellis. Six AquaCal® Great Big Bopper® air-pump water heaters installed on the roof serve a lap pool, entertainment pool with aquatic play elements, and poolhouse. A sixth pump is dedicated to a 16-person spa, which will be kept at 104 degrees.

“We heard quite a large demand for warm water, especially for recovery,” Brendlinger says. “Not everybody can afford to have a hot tub in their backyard, so this is a great amenity that the public really wanted. Having three bodies of water, they’re each going to serve a different purpose and be able to operate simultaneously, increasing our summer capacity.”



William N. Pennington
Moana Springs
Community Aquatics & Fitness Center



Expanding Pool Programming

New and additional pool spaces will also enhance programming. Since the community sits at the confluence of the Crystal and Roaring Fork Rivers, rec leaders hope to offer kayak lessons. That's something they couldn't provide in the vinyl-lined former facility. A regional swim team is also slated to return, using Carbondale's aquatic center as its home pool.

"We can bring back some scuba training, and we'll have a springboard, so we can bring back some diving," Brendlinger says. "We also have a climbing wall that will be over the deep end, and so people can do what they call deep-water soloing, where you climb up the climbing wall without a rope and drop into the deep end when you let go."

Brian Froelich joined Carbondale's Parks & Recreation staff as aquatics and health and wellness coordinator after the previous pool closed and construction was underway. The fundraising process, which involved a "Let's Make a Splash" capital campaign, helped him build relationships, and helped the community develop a sense of shared ownership for the project. It also closed a budget gap from increased material costs that exceeded the bond measure and grant funds.

"I'm super proud of the community to step up," he says. "Everybody's going to feel like they're part of it."

Reno's Moana Springs Project

Sustainability was also a major driver of design in Reno, Nev. Recreation leaders set out to restore an aquatic facility in an area where natural hot springs and an early 20th-century resort attracted visitors from near and far. That site then served the Moana Recreation Complex before being redeveloped into soccer fields and other facilities.

"Our goal was to provide a multi-generational aquatic center that balances competitive needs with family-friendly recreation," says Parks & Recreation Manager Danny Gleich.

The 52,000-square-foot Moana Springs Community Aquatics & Fitness Center, which opened in September 2024, reflects the community's most consistently requested features: a 50-meter competition pool, a zero-depth entry pool, an outdoor soaking pool, and a lazy river. As outreach continued, the facility's size and scope evolved to incorporate an enlarged main pool and the addition of a 5,000-square-foot exercise center on the mezzanine.



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“The facility had to integrate cleanly into an active park setting, requiring tree preservation, coordination with existing recreation uses, and careful building placement,” Gleich says. “Through value engineering, materials, structural systems, and phasing were adjusted to maintain the approved budget while delivering the full program.”



Sustainability Savings

Reno’s civic leaders saw how incorporating sustainability at the concept stage pays dividends—both in operating efficiency and cost control. High-performance concrete wall panels, deep roof overhangs, and natural daylighting reduce cooling and lighting loads. Rooftop solar infrastructure was supported in part by grant funding, and the facility features EV charging and transit-friendly site access. Mechanical systems promote energy efficiency and enable future renewable integration. The site sits atop a previously used geothermal well and was designed to accommodate geothermal heat exchange equipment if a new well is developed.



“These decisions help lower long-term operating costs while aligning with the city’s broader environmental goals,” says Justin George, senior civil engineer for the City of Reno.

The \$53-million Moana Springs Community Aquatics & Fitness Center project was funded through a combination of city capital funds, tax-exempt general obligation bonds, a federal grant for solar infrastructure support, and private contributions. A key component included a \$9-million donation from the William N. Pennington Foundation. Thoughtful material and system choices helped keep the project within budget without compromising quality, and additional private-sector gifts helped fund equipment and amenities. The City of Reno collaborated with Van Woert Bigotti Architects, CORE Construction, and DOWL engineering to complete the project.

Inspired Solutions

Carbondale, Col. and Reno, Nev. represent just two examples of many in which innovative approaches led to remarkable aquatic centers. In small mountain communities and regional recreation hubs, opting for environmentally friendly design helped attract investors and improve the facility’s long-term sustainability. **PRB+**

Brianne Sanchez is a full-time freelance writer, mom, and outdoor enthusiast based in Des Moines, Iowa. She loves to write about people making a positive impact in their communities.

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