

AQUATIC CENTERS

Bringing Life to Communities

HMC
Architects

Meet Our Experts



Brad Glassick
MANAGING PRINCIPAL

While at HMC, Brad has specialized in aquatic, athletic, and recreation facilities of all types and levels. He has taken aquatic facilities, gymnasiums, and dedicated track arenas, among others, through all phases of planning, design, and construction. Brad understands the intricacies of recreation planning and the technical aspects of constructing these facilities.

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Simon Solis
DESIGN PRINCIPAL

Simon's 20+ years of experience includes a diverse collection of projects with a particular focus on aquatic and recreation spaces. As a designer, he believes in the positive effect design can have on communities and is passionate about increasing recreation spaces in underserved areas that lack these kinds of opportunities.

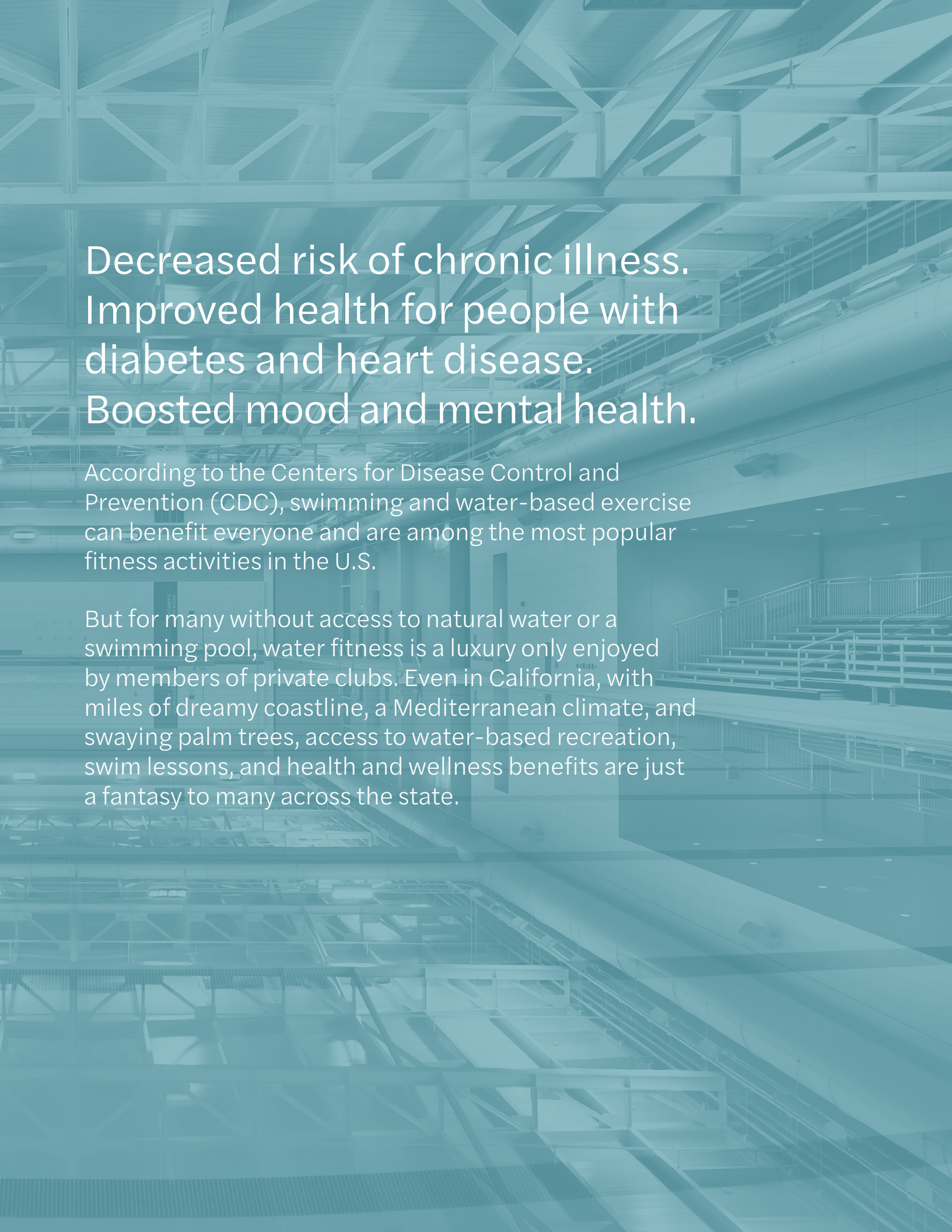
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Jonathan Orr
SENIOR PROJECT DESIGNER

As a designer with HMC, Jon has served many aquatic and recreation clients. A father to a quickly growing, active toddler, he is interested in increasing access to public swim courses and pools. Jon focuses on designing these facilities to be safe and functional for all users, while preserving the spirit behind their use.

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Decreased risk of chronic illness.
Improved health for people with
diabetes and heart disease.
Boosted mood and mental health.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), swimming and water-based exercise can benefit everyone and are among the most popular fitness activities in the U.S.

But for many without access to natural water or a swimming pool, water fitness is a luxury only enjoyed by members of private clubs. Even in California, with miles of dreamy coastline, a Mediterranean climate, and swaying palm trees, access to water-based recreation, swim lessons, and health and wellness benefits are just a fantasy to many across the state.



Colorado TIME SYSTEMS.		Colorado TIME SYSTEMS.	
HOME	GUEST	LENGTHS	
LANE PLACE	TIME	LANE PLACE	T

HMC-designed Aquatic Center in Los Angeles, California

WORKING TOWARD WELLNESS EQUITY.

According to the National Institutes of Health, health equity is the state in which everyone can attain full health potential, and no one is disadvantaged from achieving this potential because of social position or any other socially defined circumstance.

Community aquatic facilities are vital in filling this gap and creating a more equitable future for people in diverse neighborhoods where significant space, economic, or climate challenges limit swimming pool access.

Investing in new facilities that nurture public health and well-being seems like a given. After all, the scientific community has clearly established the benefits of physical activity for educational outcomes and illness prevention. Public aquatic facilities provide multi-generational benefits in health, wellness, water safety training, and recreational access.

A swimmer wearing a white swim cap and goggles is captured mid-stroke in a swimming pool. The swimmer's arms are extended forward, and water is splashing around their head. The background shows a blurred view of the pool deck and a lifeguard stand.

**“We believe it’s
important for kids of
all social and economic
levels to have access to
water, and our facility
helps provide that.”**

Marc Ruh, Associate Athletic
Director, and Head Swim
Coach at Mt. SAC

BREATHING LIFE INTO THE COMMUNITY.

Public aquatic programs support and benefit the communities that host them in a myriad of ways:

- These programs provide multi-generational health and wellness offerings to the community (swim lessons, summer camps, serving as cooling centers, senior fitness/water aerobics classes, and swimming as fitness training).
- Water safety programs help save lives. According to the CDC, there are [strong racial and economic disparities](#) in access to these programs and the risk of death by drowning. Creating more public facilities can help address disparities in private aquatics availability and improve access equity.
- Aquatics programs allow the community to come together for play, competition, fitness and learning at all ages.
- Community swim programs at educational facilities create a stronger relationship with the host community, increasing access, public engagement, and recruitment into higher education opportunities.



“I love the idea that the design is iconic. It is going to be beautiful 50 years from now.”

Robert Lombardo,
Council Member at
Town of Yucca Valley

HMC-designed Aquatic Center in Manteca, California

RESONATING WITH THE COMMUNITIES IT'S MEANT TO SERVE.

A well-considered design can mitigate many hurdles to creating these facilities in more challenging locations and climates:

- A thoughtful approach can establish a deeply contextual relationship between the facility's architecture and the community that considers it a part of their home, raise public awareness and engagement, and elevate public aquatics programs to become a source of civic pride.
- An indoor natatorium may make more sense in some locations by allowing greatly extended operating hours and seasons (Remember: not all of California is a coastal community).
- Creating an experience that feels like it belongs in your neighborhood is the key to a durable and successful facility.
- Every location is unique. Next-door neighbors, historical relationships, climatic conditions, and economic factors all shape a truly contextual design.
- Connection to context creates a facility that enhances the community rather than being seen as a nuisance (overcoming NIMBYism). Your facility should speak to who you are and feel a part of the landscape and town in which it resides.
- One size does not fit all. Some facilities may require an iconic presence in the landscape, others may respond to adjacent architectural precedents, and others may need to be discrete members of a quiet neighborhood. Often one project may need to do all these things, depending on which side of the site you are approaching from.



A SPOTLIGHT ON SAFETY.

Providing water safety skills and swimming lessons to California communities abound with access to natural bodies of water is a matter of public safety.

The critical nature of these programs is evidenced in the fact that drowning is already the leading cause of death for children ages one to four and second leading for ages five to 14. Additionally, for every child under 18 who dies from drowning, another seven receive emergency department care for non-fatal drowning, which can lead to brain damage and other serious outcomes, including long-term disability.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, community pools were closed or had limited access. With community aquatics programs less available, many states saw a spike in drownings which is already the leading cause of death in children one to four and the second leading cause of death in children between the ages of five and 14, according to the CDC.



HMC-designed Aquatic Center in Riverside, California



Renderings by HMC Architects

45,690 SF

San Gabriel Aquatic Center

\$25
million

PROJECT
COST

\$675

COST PER SF

Located in the city of La Puente, the new San Gabriel Valley Aquatic Center is envisioned as a bridge connecting residents of an underserved community to a vibrant wellness amenity featuring recreational and competitive swim programs and expanded community park space. The driving force behind this project arose from an analysis of regional needs for aquatic recreation in the West Puente Valley, which revealed a fast-growing youth population coupled with lower-than-average swimming access and a lack of pools in the area. Program details were derived from a series of community meetings and focus groups with input from over 200 multi-lingual surveys and community conversations led by Active San Gabriel Valley, a nonprofit with a mission to support a more sustainable, equitable, and livable San Gabriel Valley.

The Aquatic Center sits squarely between a quiet residential neighborhood to the West, Allen J. Martin Park to the North, Temple Academy, and a future community theatre to the East. These diverse spaces surrounding the project require the site planning to be informed by noise and activity levels. Natural resources like wind, water, and sun have also helped shape the project and its placement on the site. The park side design is centered around the 'Bridge,' a strong connector that runs through the Aquatic Center site and connects to the existing Allen J. Martin Park at the North. Site programming includes a lush pollinator garden, a kids' adventure zone, and a series of exercise stations that flow via a loose series of circular zones reminiscent of air bubbles at play in active waters.



The pool building is elevated three feet above natural grade with a terraced viewing area and perimeter bleacher seating covered with shaded fabric tensile structures. The recreation pool will have more casual seating opportunities, including shaded picnic tables, chaise lounges, and flexible artificial turf panels, enhancing user experience and comfort. The wavelike articulation of the building's rooflines is inspired on three levels by community context; the movement of an active water's surface, the skyline of undulating ridges and valleys of the community homes, and the tectonic formations of the San Gabriel Mountains that dominate the region. Each wave flows in response to the function, performance, and desire to enhance the experience.







“

As a lifelong resident of the San Gabriel Valley, I understand firsthand how underserved the region is regarding swimming facilities and programming. Access to public swimming pools in underserved areas is a matter of equity.”

Hilda Solis
L.A. County Supervisor,
1st District



38,000 SF Yucca Valley Aquatic and Recreation Center

\$30.5 million

PROJECT
COST

2024

COMPLETION
DATE

Without a doubt, the high desert landscape of Yucca Valley is rich in beauty. It is, however, sometimes a harsh climate, with high solar radiation, wide-ranging temperatures, and regular bouts of fierce wind. The indigenous people in this region have long known and mimicked the practices of the wildlife in the area—seeking a more hospitable microclimate is key to thriving in this unique place. The dramatic topography of the Yucca Valley landscape presents numerous changes throughout the day and season and provides refuge from the heat, sun, and cold winds.

Similarly, the design of this facility seeks to respond to climatic conditions to create a more comfortable environment for users. The aquatic program is housed within an indoor natatorium, extending the swim program schedule from only 8-10 weeks each year into a year-round offering available to all in the community. This is incredibly impactful in a community where the median income is 39 percent lower than the state average, and residential pool access is dramatically lower than in more affluent desert communities such as Palm Springs.





Renderings by HMC Architects

Critical decisions in the construction and layout of mechanical systems seek to minimize the chances of condensation and the buildup of humid and chlorinated air within the building. Careful consideration of the envelope of the pool space gathers daylight from the North and South, while minimizing glare from the West. When outdoor conditions are good, the building opens to the outdoors to expand the available pool deck space, while using the mass of the building to protect this outdoor space from prevailing wind patterns and hot afternoon sun.

In addition to optimizing energy performance, the community made clear that they wanted an architectural design that was iconic and intrinsically connected to the identity of the Town of Yucca Valley. The massing and exterior materiality of the building were informed by the rugged beauty of the surrounding desert ridgelines that define Yucca Valley, while playful accents and a welcoming character invite community members to come and explore the many programs and amenities offered. Making the building feel like it belongs in this close-knit community and establishing a sense of identity and lasting ownership was critical to community engagement and pride in this new Aquatic and Recreation Center.



**“It’s a lot more than
just a swimming pool.
It’s something that will
help build more
community here.”**

Rick Denison,
Mayor Pro Tem
Town of Yucca Valley



28,000

GSF

Mt. San Antonio College Aquatic Center

2023
COMPLETION
DATE

Community swim programs at Mt. San Antonio College (Mt. SAC) date back nearly to the formation of the college. In the early 1960s, when Mt. SAC was still a relatively new educational institution in Southern California, a significant expansion of housing in the region produced new neighborhoods in every direction, creating a substantial need for access to swim programs. Mt. SAC recognized this and created the first community swim program in the area, with the college's athletics staff acting as the first swim instructors. Marc Ruh, Mt. SAC's current Associate Athletic Director and Head Swim Coach, recalls learning to swim in the 1960's in the original campus pool at the age of three, as his father was one of the original swim instructors for the Mt. SAC swim program.

Six decades later, this still vibrant and vital community program has been immensely bolstered by a new Aquatic Center that will serve the local population for generations to come. Community swim programs at Mt. SAC currently serve an estimated 3,000 people per year, drawing from the college district's surrounding neighborhoods and beyond. To accomplish the robust array of programs, Mt. SAC has formed long-lasting partnerships with several local aquatic organizations that facilitate programs, instruction, and team sports. Offering programs from swim lessons to competitive water polo, diving, and plenty in between, Mt. SAC sees its community programs as an opportunity to equip its youth with athletic skills.



Skills gained at a young age can lead to educational scholarships and recruitment opportunities, and high school athletes are more likely to get college degrees. Health and wellness-centered programs such as free and casual lap swimming, open water techniques, weight loss through exercise, and low-impact strength and endurance training are all vital programs. They are particularly popular with the community's adult and senior population.

The new aquatics complex includes a 60-meter (all-deep) competition pool with two movable bulkheads, a 30-meter (shallow to deep) teaching and diving pool with a portable bulkhead, four competition diving boards, and a heated therapy pool. The new pools increase overall water surface area by 80 percent over the prior facilities and allow the college to offer on-site diving programs. A vastly increased pool deck provides a variety of areas for out-of-pool instruction and demonstration, family and team staging areas, and several lawn and terraced seating areas for a casual experience.

Above the pool deck, a 2,000-seat bleacher level surrounds the pools on three sides. A new pedestrian bridge integrated with the design creates a direct pathway between the new Aquatic Center and the campus public transportation transit hub, providing access to the facility for underserved populations relying more heavily on public transportation.

A key guiding influence in the design process was that the nature and spirit of athletic competition inspire the expression of the architecture. The nature of athletics is dynamic and active. Every event and competition is centered on motion; whether moving an object or moving oneself, the goal is always achieved dynamically. This can be seen in the projects sweeping roofs, brick patterning, metal paneling, color selections, and other finish materials common to the campus, but patterned uniquely to express movement.





“

I can't wait to go jump in the pool, watch a swim competition, and see the high schools using the space. With all the opportunities for the community to gather for special events, just walking by will be a treat.”

Robert Lombardo
Council Member, Town of Yucca Valley

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design for good.

Founded with the purpose of anticipating community needs, HMC aims to create designs that have a positive impact, now and into the future.

We focus primarily on opportunities to have the most direct contribution to communities—through healthcare, education, and civic spaces.

Learn more at
hmcarchitects.com

