

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**



**Wilmington Aquatic Center & ACCESS of Wilmington Buildings  
to anchor the new Olsen Farm Recreation Village**

Wilmington, NC (December 7, 2024) - The Wilmington Aquatic Center and ACCESS Inclusive Recreation Center will be the heart of the new Olsen Farm Recreation Village, a transformative development on the historic Olsen Farm adjacent to I-40 at Murrayville Road. Thanks to the generosity of Peggy Olsen and Chip Hicks, this vibrant, park-like destination will serve as a welcoming gateway to Wilmington.

Chip Hicks, continuing over twenty-five years of development of Olsen Farm including the Olsen Farm Soccer Fields and Olsen Park, is excited for the next phase with the 135-acre recreation village. "Olsen Farm has a strong history serving our community, and we're taking that legacy to the next level," said Hicks. Designed with leading experts including LaBella Associates and Sports Facilities Companies, the village integrates trails, green spaces and gathering areas to foster a cohesive and inclusive recreational community.

This growing coastal region urgently needs inclusive and expanded sports and fitness facilities. One in three North Carolinians are living with a disability and face elevated risks of serious health conditions (CDC). Combined with drowning as a leading cause of death for young children and individuals with autism (American Red Cross), the Wilmington Aquatic Center and ACCESS Inclusive Recreation Center are essential to improving health, safety and quality of life for the entire region.

The Wilmington Aquatic Center (WAC) will host instructional, therapeutic, recreational and competitive swim programs in its multiple pools, including indoor and outdoor 50 meter Olympic-size pools. WAC will offer swim lessons for all ages and abilities, aquatic therapy, lifeguard, first responder and military training. As a training hub for high school and age group swim teams, masters swimmers and triathletes, WAC will address a critical need in New Hanover County, whose public schools lack aquatic facilities. Local resident and WAC Spokesperson, Olympic Gold and Silver Medalist and former World Record Holder in the 100 meter backstroke, Kathleen Baker emphasized, "By providing space where everyone can learn water safety, build confidence and discover the joy of swimming, the WAC can save lives and create an opportunity for athletes of all levels to reach their potential right here at home."

ACCESS of Wilmington is thrilled to expand its mission across I-40 from its Miracle Field at MegaCorp Stadium in Olsen Park with the ACCESS Inclusive Recreation Center. Since 2013, ACCESS has provided outdoor adaptive sports, recreation and fitness for children, adults and Veterans with disabilities ages 2-100, and is opening the Veterans program to serve First Responders. "Everyone deserves a healthy, active, and connected life," said ACCESS Board Chair Barbara Biehner. "In our new building, we will break down even more barriers and empower people of all abilities to thrive year-round."

For more information:

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