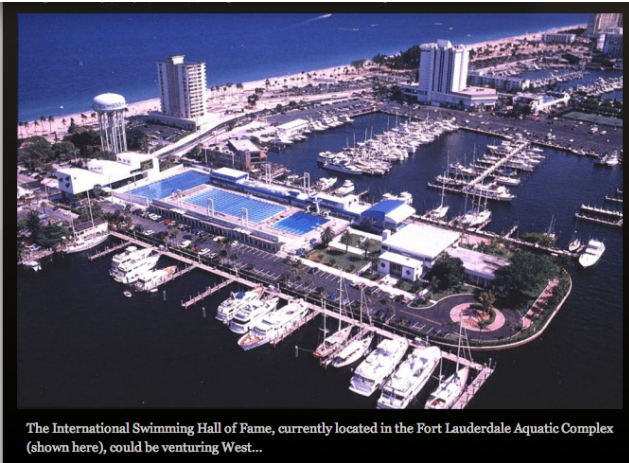


# INTERNATIONAL SWIMMING HALL OF FAME COULD MOVE TO CALIFORNIA

Morgan Priestley | May 15th, 2013 | Categories: Featured, News, Uncategorized

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The International Swimming Hall of Fame, currently located in the Fort Lauderdale Aquatic Complex (shown here), could be venturing West...

The International Swimming Hall of Fame, currently located in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, may be relocating to Santa Clara, California once the lease for its museum, first opened in 1965, expires in 2015. Hall of Fame officials are dissatisfied with the planned redesign of the aging Fort Lauderdale Aquatic Complex and its swimming pools, citing it would move the museum to an unappealing building in a poor location, and would fail to attract

more visitors to the site.

***“It has been a disappointment to see that the city of Fort Lauderdale does not think we have value. We love Fort Lauderdale and would like to stay, but I have a fiduciary duty to put it where it can thrive and fulfill its mission, and that requires a business model that works.” – ISHOF president and CEO Bruce Wigo.***

The site was a long-time destination for numerous national and international competitions, but the outdated facility has recently struggled to secure major events or draw significant traffic. In September 2012, after years of battling over financials, the City Commission gave the critical go-ahead to move forward with a \$32.4 million renovation of the Fort Lauderdale Aquatic Complex, which includes a massive overhaul of the facility’s two Olympic-size pools, as well as relocating the diving pool atop a four-story parking garage. Wigo and other officials, however, believe the plans aren’t enough to keep up with community desires.

***“We are still exploring our options, but it isn’t going well with Fort Lauderdale and hasn’t for years. Is it time to move on and make it new again? We want to find a place where it can work.” –Bruce Wigo***

He has a point; when the aquatic complex first opened in 1965, it was easily the

best facility in the region, with a location that couldn't be beat. Today, there are 18 50-meter pools in Broward County alone and the population center has shifted further west, and FLAC couldn't maintain its popularity. The result: an average \$1.2 million-per-year loss in recent years.

When Wigo was hired in 2005 after rescuing USA Water Polo from near-bankruptcy, the nonprofit ISHOF was on the brink of failure, with many former aquatic stars (including Mark Spitz and Donna de Varona) asking for their memorabilia to be removed from the neglected museum. In his eight years at the helm, Wigo has streamlined the budget down to \$600,000 (about half of what it was) and secured significant funds from numerous donors.

Santa Clara—spearheaded by Santa Clara Blue and Gold Ribbon Commission co-chairs Patrick Yam (founder of the Menlo Park, Calif., venture capital firm Sensei Partners) and Gideon Yu (49ers president and former Facebook CFO)—has pledged to raise \$10 million for ISHOF's relocation, as well as offer a \$2 million endowment. One of the commission's primary goals is to upgrade the George Haines International Swim Center, home pool to highly-competitive swim, dive, and synchronized swimming teams, as well as the host to a yearly USA Swimming Grand Prix meet. In its heyday, the pool was the training facility for a number of legends, including Legends de Varona, Spitz, Don Schollander, Pablo Morales and Mike Bottom.

The Hall holds a massive collection from all aquatic sports, including exhibits on Johnny Weismuller, Buster Crabbe, and Greg Louganis. Memorabilia, such as Spitz's starting blocks, Jenny Thompson's medals, uniforms, antique swimwear, and loads of archival material are also present in the Hall.