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**J. Robert Havlick Award**  
**For Innovation in Local Government**  
**And**  
**Thomas H. Muehlenbeck Award**  
**For Excellence in Local Government**



***City of Casa Grande, Arizona***  
***The Casa Grande Performance Institute***

Submitted by:  
Jim Thompson, City Manager  
City of Casa Grande  
510 E. Florence Blvd.  
Casa Grande, Arizona 85122  
Telephone: (520) 421-8600  
Fax: (520) 421-8604  
[JimT@CasaGrandeAZ.gov](mailto:JimT@CasaGrandeAZ.gov)

The Casa Grande Performance Institute (CGPI) is a public/private partnership between the City of Casa Grande and the Francisco Grande Hotel & Resort. Located on 50 acres of land adjacent to the Francisco Grande Hotel, the CGPI is a state-of-the-art, multi-discipline facility whose scope of operations and activities stretches 365 days a year. The CGPI currently includes six football and soccer fields, and a 59,000 square foot training facility that houses an 11,200 square foot weight-training exercise area, eight semi-private therapy centers, and enough classrooms, locker rooms, meeting rooms, and laundry facilities for four teams. The facility caters to the athletic development of a wide range of athletes from amateur to professional. Two United Football League (UFL) and four Major League Soccer (MLS) teams (including the 2009 UFL champion Las Vegas Locomotives and the 2009 MLS champion Real Salt Lake) currently train at the CGPI during the year. Proaxis Therapy: Innovative Therapy Resource, a nationally and internationally recognized leader in sports medicine, training, performance and therapy, leads the CGPI's physical rehabilitation facilities, which are expected to be among the best in the country. Blue Entertainment Sport Television (BEST) will help provide national exposure for the CGPI and drive professional athletes/clients to Casa Grande for physical rehabilitation and performance training. The training academy will soon provide world-class instructional programs in soccer, tennis, football, golf, and physical and mental conditioning for children from 7 to 18 years old. The training academy will also host national and international tournaments. In addition, through Athletes' Performance, has fast become the preferred place for athletes to go to raise their game. Through years of research and experience working with thousands of athletes across various sports and levels, Athletes' Performance has developed programs with sustainable health and performance benefits.

### **Background**

Casa Grande is a dynamic community, a modern city with rural heritage and old-fashioned values. Its economic base is a mix of retail trade, factory outlet shopping, manufacturing and agriculture. Founded in 1879, Casa Grande was named for the famous Hohokam Indian ruins which are located 20 miles northeast of the city. Strategically located midway between Phoenix and Tucson, at the intersection of two interstate highways (I-8 and I-10), the city has grown to be the largest community in Pinal County. The city has experienced tremendous growth in the last decade. Although it took 120 years to build infrastructure and support its first 19,000 residents, Casa Grande had only 5-years to be able to sustain an additional 19,000 residents. The city currently boasts a year-round population of approximately 46,000 residents, with an additional 10,000 long-term visitors during the winter months.

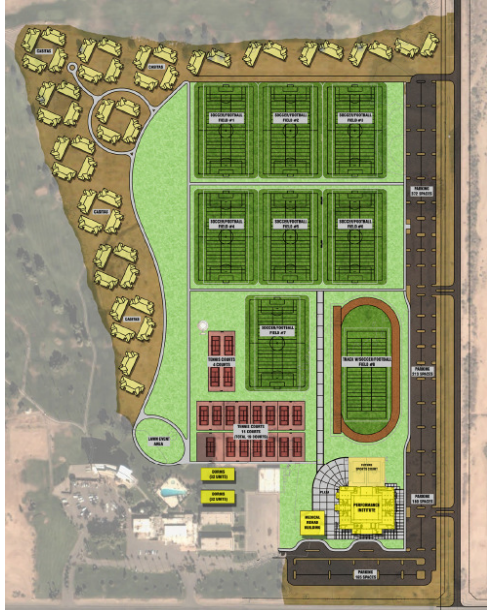
During this rapid growth period, the city found itself in need of finding ways to develop additional sports fields in order to meet the increasing demand of the community and its youth. However, with the sharp decline in available funds to develop these fields, the city had been unable to keep up with this demand. A recent Parks and Recreation and citizen survey noted the need for more fields for our youth sports programs.

City administration looked at innovative ways to approach this issue by reaching out to the community and local businesses in order to come up with solutions to this problem. As a result of these efforts, the city was contacted by the owner of the Francisco Grande regarding the

possibility of negotiating with the United Football League (UFL) to locate at Francisco Grande for a training facility. The city and Francisco Grande began discussions with UFL representatives in 2008. The UFL stated that they were very interested in bringing two of their teams to Casa Grande to train before the season started, but hadn't decided yet on whether or not they wanted to launch their league in 2009 or 2010. In early 2009, they decided that they wanted to launch the league in September that same year. This resulted in the city having to compress our construction schedule and led to only six of the eight fields being completed before the UFL teams arrived.

**Who has benefited from the innovation?**

Local businesses and the city have benefited from an estimated \$2,000,000 in additional local spending and tax revenue that has been generated from the startup of the CGPI, and residents have also been able to take full advantage of fields. The city has also benefited from donations that have been made by the UFL and its players. Moving forward, the year round operations and events that will take place at the CGPI will infuse new life into every facet of the city's economy. The UFL, MLS, and numerous tournaments will bring hundreds of players, their families and friends, and spectators to Casa Grande who will fill hotels, eat at restaurants, shop in local stores, and ultimately generate an estimated \$6,000,000 annually additional local spending and \$250,000 annually in new tax revenue to the city. In addition, the increased media exposure will not only help establish Casa Grande as a destination for sports fans and recreation lovers, but also help to spur even more economic growth as businesses and service-related industries look to build and/or expand in the community in order to take advantage of the energy surrounding the CGPI.



The CGPI is also expected to have a significant positive impact on our community by igniting greater interest and participation in sports and fitness among the youth of our community who will have complete access to new and much-needed professional-grade soccer and football fields; the kind that enables them to train and compete most effectively in their chosen sports. The youth and members of the Casa Grande community and surrounding area will also have access to the physical therapy and rehabilitation facilities.

Throughout each school year the training academy will host 250 talented local youths in performance camps involving tennis, golf, soccer, football and basketball. In the summer, 250 local children will be able to participate in similar performance camps each week. In order to assist with the cost of these camps, local youth will be eligible to earn scholarships to the training academy, or attend on a substantially-reduced tuition plan. Ultimately, all of these children will be able to play and learn from some of the world's best athletes. This experience of training and competing at a world-class level will create a heightened sense of self-worth and belonging, and provide the kind of national and international exposure that will allow them to more readily contemplate new and expanded horizons. The

training academy will also make a contribution to the local economy as the families of the training academy's students will spend months at a time living in the area and therefore will either be renting homes or hotel rooms, dining out, and shopping in the community.

The community will further benefit from the professional environment surrounding the CGPI. Clinics taught by professional coaches will be held for the local coaches, and exhibition games involving professional athletes that residents can attend and meet the players. The opportunity to watch professional athletes play, to train with them and their coaches, the exposure to other youth from around the world, and ability to have access to the finest facilities in the country, will help increase community pride. This also provides local youth with the feeling that they can be part of something special and will hopefully lead them to turn their energy to getting more involved in positive experiences instead of pursuing less constructive pastimes.

**How was the innovation initiated and implemented?**

The innovation was initiated by the City Manager, the owner of the Francisco Grande Hotel & Resort, and representatives of the UFL. The city finalized the annexation of the Francisco Grande property and entered into agreements with the Francisco Grande and the UFL. Bonds were approved and the city council voted to extend the existing two-tenths of a cent sales tax for city parks and recreation that was originally scheduled to be expire in 2009. Once this was accomplished, the city moved forward with the construction of the fields and the training facility and was able to complete the construction of the facility in only 97 days.

**What risks were associated with planning and developing the innovation?**

Initially, the CGPI had to compete with a perception that it was part of a private group's effort to have the city fund a baseball stadium in order to lure a Major League baseball team for Spring Training. The stadium project came with a hefty price tag of \$105,000,000, and the proposal put forth by the private business venture called for the city to increase the sales tax in order to help fund it. Increasing the sales tax was not a popular idea, so staff had to work to ensure that the public understood that the funding for the CGPI would not include any additional taxes in order to avoid any negative publicity and/or opposition by members of the community and the city council. The main risk associated with the building of the CGPI was whether or not the city would be able to attract enough teams, clients, and events in order to justify the city \$20,000,000 investment in this project as opposed to spending the money to develop other sports fields throughout the community.

**What was the environment in which the innovation was created?**

Public pressure to address the shortage of adequate sports fields and youth programs has made these issues a top priority of the City Council. With significantly reduced revenues and the reality of budget cuts, staff faced a daunting challenge of trying to maintain the levels of service with fewer resources while still trying to achieve the city council's goals.

The city council itself was initially divided on the project, voting 5 to 2 in support of the CGPI. The main concerns expressed by the two council members who voted against the CGPI were related to financing the \$20M for the project in these economically tough times, whether or not the city would be able to recoup its investment, and the liabilities associated with such a project. There were also some concerns related to the additional strain that this project would place on

city staff and resources. However, the financial guarantee that the city will receive at least \$7M over 10 years from the Francisco Grande and the commitment by the UFL and the MLS to utilize the CGPI for their training camps, and possibility for team tryouts in the future, has helped to alleviate the concerns related to the return on the city's investment.

### **Current Environment**



The United Football League utilized the CGPI to house the California and Las Vegas Teams during their inaugural season in 2009. The Las Vegas team went on to win the league championship in November. Both teams are expected to be back in Casa Grande in late June 2010.

The city's two youth football leagues have utilized the CGPI for their weekly games. The CGPI was ultimately selected to host games in the leagues' post-season tournaments, and held numerous championship games. The CGPI became a very popular location to play and games for next season are already being scheduled.

On February 2010, marks the arrival of MLS as numerous teams from begin their training season at the CGPI. The Seattle Sounders, Vancouver Whitecaps, Real Salt Lake, and Colorado Rapids are each expected to utilizing the facility in anticipation of the upcoming season.



### **What were the execution costs and savings?**

The cost of the CGPI was \$20,000,000 and is being paid for with tax bonds, which are expected to be repaid through lease proceeds, and a portion of the city's two-tenths of a cent sales tax that is used to pay for recreation related programs and projects. Under a 20-year facility lease and use agreement, the Francisco Grande Hotel & Resort would be responsible for the operation and maintenance of the CGPI. The city also entered into a Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) with the UFL that required the League to pay for two synthetic fields, repay the city for one of the fields over four years, provide some assistance with lighting of the fields, pay a non-refundable twenty-five thousand dollar deposit upfront, and commit to stay in Casa Grande for five years.

### **What lessons were learned that could be shared with other local governments?**

For projects with compressed construction time lines, it is essential that all of the best people are actively involved in the project development. Problem solvers need to work alongside decision makers, so that each can quickly address any issues that may arise, understanding the options, and making the correct decision instantaneously.

### **Which department and/or individuals championed the innovation?**

The City Manager's Office was the main driving force for bringing about the CGPI and managing the construction of the facilities.