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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
Joint-Use Library

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Vista Grande Library is the City of Casa Grande's newest library branch, that not only serves the reading and leisure needs of city residents but also the essential academic and recreational needs of students, teachers, and staff at Vista Grande High School. The library was developed under a joint-use agreement between the City of Casa Grande and the Casa Grande Union High School District. It was the first such joint-use project between a school district and the City of Casa Grande, an achievement that allowed for extensive cost savings that have proven extremely valuable during these economic times. Because of the joint-use agreement, the cost-effective nature of the Vista Grande Library allowed for the library to utilize new technology in library operations.

Background & Need

Casa Grande is a dynamic community, a modern city with a 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.



As a result of Casa Grande's unprecedented growth the city was faced with higher demand for services and infrastructure. Casa Grande had for many years operated only one library. Mary Johnson, the city's Community Services Director, stated at a city council meeting prior to the opening of Vista Grande Library that never-before-seen records for library use were being set at the Main Library. The need for an additional library branch grew as residential development pushed the city boundaries further and further from the center of the city.

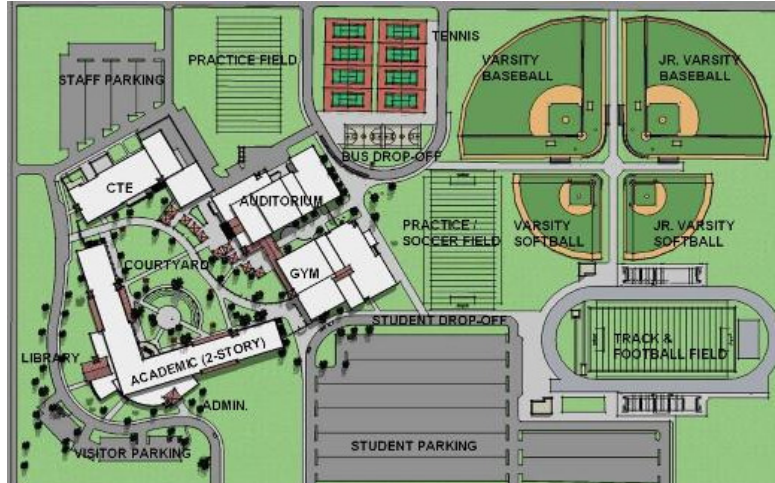
Innovation

Long before construction began at the Vista Grande Library, Casa Grande City Manager Jim Thompson initiated quarterly meetings with school officials in order to strengthen the relationship and communication between the city and school districts. These quarterly meetings brought about a greater exchange of information between the school districts and the city and led to discussions about creating efficiencies and working together wherever possible. From those discussions, the city learned of Casa Grande Union High School District's plans to construct a new high school. This revelation offered a unique opportunity for both the high school district and the city to work together and develop a library that would meet each of their needs.

A joint-use agreement was developed between the school district and the city that called for the construction of a 16,000 square-foot library facility, which would be incorporated within the high school campus. The library would serve a dual use by meeting the needs of the high school and those of the general public. The new library would have a dedicated door, located on the visitor parking side of the school, through which the general public would be able to enter the library. High school students and staff would have their own secure entry through the school.

Lastly, the opening of the Vista Grande Library coincided with the city library system's inclusion within the county's integrated library system, thereby providing access to catalogues of all libraries within the county and other participating jurisdictions. It greatly expands the city's library catalogue and allows users to search and request books and other items from other libraries in the county. This also increases the capabilities of the library that the school district could not have enjoyed prior to its partnership with the city.

The major challenge to developing the joint-use library was the development of an intergovernmental agreement between the City of Casa Grande and the Casa Grande Union High School District. From the city's perspective, the intergovernmental agreement required a great deal of involvement from the City Manager, City Attorney and various other staff members. In August of 2007, an intergovernmental agreement regarding the costs of construction, operation, and maintenance of the joint-use library was approved by the Casa Grande Union High School District Governing Board and the City of Casa Grande City Council.



Key provisions of the agreement included shared costs for design and construction, furnishings and accessories, utilities, and staffing. In addition, the school district would be responsible for providing custodial service and maintenance of the physical facility.

Benefits and Impact

Casa Grande Union High School District considered building a media center and library at the new high school but realized that the size of the library could be tripled if it partnered with the city to build and operate it as a joint-use library facility. From the school district's perspective, having a joint-use library facility on their high school campus would enhance the level of service offered to their students, faculty, and staff. Additionally, a joint-use library strengthened the high school's connection to the community. Through the innovation of the joint-use library, users who may not have otherwise had ties to the high school, such as senior citizens, could now share in some of the high school's events and activities.

Cost for the library was \$4 million, a figure that was shared equally between the school district and the city. Its development is viewed as an effective use of tax dollars and an investment that is

far less expensive than if the City were to build its own library. The community and residents have been extremely supportive of the new library and the partnership it created between the school district and the city. The city has continued to work on community outreach for the library in an effort to inform residents, especially senior citizens, who may live closer to the Vista Grande Library than the Main Library.

Lessons Learned

The greatest lesson to be learned from this project is that great rewards come from working together. By striving to meet common goals, public organizations can come together to create products that achieve higher service levels than would be possible through individual projects. Synergy exists when good people come together!

Champions

The true champions of this innovation were the City Manager and the Community Services Department, particularly Director Mary Johnson, and the city's dedicated library staff. The Planning and Development Department and the Public Works Department assisted greatly throughout the construction of the project.

