

The leadership, both public and private, in Hobbs, New Mexico has been strategically building the community for the last 2 decades under an overall premise and with the intended goal that Hobbs could grow to be a community that not only provided a superb quality of life to its residents, but could also attract new families into the area to work and raise their children for the long term. This mission has resulted in several very large projects within the community over the last 10 years, many of which were great partnerships between 2 entities, usually a combination of public and private sector investors. However, the project that has surpassed all of the others in respect to the unique and large-scale impact of the framework of the partnerships, as well as the example that has been set as a result, will likely be the trademark facility of the community in coming years and the poster child of multi-level public/private partnerships across the country. It is called the Center of Recreational Excellence, or the C.O.R.E.

Quality of life is what drove six partners to gather around the table over four years ago to first begin talks of a recreational facility for the Hobbs community and surrounding municipalities. This facility would ideally benefit all demographics, as well as provide a place where a multitude of interests will be encouraged and developed for residents of the county and guests who come to Hobbs to experience it.

The partners who began brainstorming for this project represented the City of Hobbs, the J.F Maddox Foundation (the largest private family foundation in New Mexico), New Mexico Junior College, the Hobbs Municipal Schools, the Lea County government, and the University of the Southwest, a local private four-year college. They all recognized that the value of their individual contributions could go much further when joined with the others. Each entity had

specific goals they hoped to accomplish, however each knew that if they put their resources and desires together to create one, they could build what would become one of the largest, most advanced and definitely most impressive facilities in the country for recreational and community enjoyment.

This is where the idea of the C.O.R.E. was born, but the hard work of designing and funding the creation and on-going operation of such a concept became the task at hand, and an undertaking of large proportions, which required the utmost commitment by the partners. The strategy for each entity and their purpose for involvement was clear to all from the beginning of the process.

The City would be providing a topnotch recreational facility to their citizens, as well as an economic driver to the community, as out of town visitors were anticipated due to the unique and grandiose nature of the facility. The J. F Maddox Foundation had been spending millions of dollars in Lea County for decades as a family run foundation dedicated to improving the quality of life in Lea County.

New Mexico Junior College (NMJC) had been operating an indoor therapy pool for many years as well, and had a large quantity of classes and programs that operated out of it. It badly needed repair or reconstruction in order to continue its services. The Hobbs Municipal Schools had been maintaining and utilizing an indoor natatorium for athletic and public use for decades and had also come to the conclusion that mass amounts of money would need to be invested into the facility in order to continue use, or an entirely new facility would need to be built.

Lea County also valued the quality of life that all of their residents would have access to

if the facility were built in a central location. Finally, the University of the Southwest (USW) had high hopes to not only provide their existing students with more amenities and features during their years in Hobbs, but they also sought to expand their athletic programs to include a swimming and diving team, but would need facilities to train the athletes, of which they currently did not have easy access to.

Once it was agreed that all partners were on board with this exciting and large scale endeavor, they began to identify a design team. After a team was assembled, members from each partnership entity, as well as invited guests from the public, and experts from the design team researched similar facilities across the country and toured communities that had relatively new recreation centers. They were able to see first-hand what they liked, listen to lessons learned, and ultimately be able to identify exactly what they would like to see in the facility that was to be built in Hobbs, NM.

The city was committed to being one of the largest contributors financially from a capital perspective at \$25 million, but it would also invest the most after completion of the project, as they would be responsible for the on-going operation of the facility once opened. The J.F Maddox Foundation was the next largest contributor as they would account for a similarly large amount of the projects capital requirements at \$27.5 million. The NMJC was able to allot \$10 million to the project after the confirmation from a general bond election which secured \$5 million of their contribution, which had earmarked the approved funds for the use of the facility. The public schools would contribute \$1 million instead of building a new natatorium of their own. The county was willing to commit to annual contributions to the operations of the facility in the amount of \$300,000 per year. And finally, the USW committed

to providing students workers and other such resources for operational benefit once the facility was running.

With all of these commitments, the partners gathered month after month with the guidance of the design team and prioritized the wants and needs of the facility and its stakeholders. The “must haves”, the “would like to haves” and the “if we have no budgetary constraints wish list” were all established and over the period of a year, the multiple pieces of the puzzle began to emerge. Finally, in late 2015, the components were finalized and the drawings were created. The 163,000 square foot Center of Recreational Excellence was completed on paper and the ground breaking date was set for early fall.

The building is now well on its way and has taken shape in all of its grandeur. We feel the partnerships that were required to build this facility is truly a story in itself, and the success of the multiple public and private entities coming together to create something of such magnitude and impact is pioneering and insightful. The gathering of minds and goals and the success of the outcome, as it is currently coming to fruition before our eyes, demonstrates such extreme value in its example, as many other city leaders can now model similar projects after. We believe whole-heartedly that for these reasons, this project is a very worthy nominee for the Community Partnership Award, even in its current state. The real lessons learned and analysis of the success of this program revolves around the ingenuity and willingness of the leaders from each entity to keep their eye on the common goals and on the belief that they could do so much more if they all worked together than if they attempted to individually meet their own needs to reach the desired outcome.

While the C.O.R.E. as a building will complete construction in Spring of 2018, we feel the community partnership was a concept that was fully implemented by the end of 2015. The incredible show of trust and unity among multiple entities, guided by pioneers and committed, passionate lovers of their community and organizations, were able to create something that Hobbs, NM will be proud of for many, many years to come. The most impactful result of these partnerships is the collaborative spirit that has created a greater quality of life in our community.