

Indoor-Outdoor Appeal

By Jeff Brauer

The town of Castle Rock, Colo., developed the Miller Activity Complex (MAC) to meet the needs of a growing 65,000-resident community. The MAC blends recreation and entertainment through indoor sports and self-directed youth recreation. The project was inspired through an interactive public process, constrained by the requirement of relying on user fees to fund operations without subsidy, to ensure the continued success of the existing recreation center.

Perhaps the most important factor related to the MAC's success is the facility's location and prominence within the 300-acre Philip S. Miller Park. The park is located only two-thirds of a mile from Interstate 25 and creates a campus-like setting, with the MAC serving as the anchor. The park provides everything from self-directed outdoor





amphitheater and a facility rental called the Millhouse provide public gathering spaces and can host an array of community events.

So Much To Do

The MAC features a 10,000-square-foot indoor pool, a two-story indoor playground, an 85-foot by 185-foot indoor field with dasher boards, a 75-foot by 100-foot practice field with drop-down batting nets, an 18-hole golf simulator, and 500 square feet of trampolines. The fabric pool cover includes four, large, rollup-garage sunshine doors that can be opened to outdoor patios and a scenic greenbelt when outside temperatures allow. These facilities are supported by staff offices, two party rooms, vending area, team locker rooms, family and pool locker rooms, and lounge area with a fireplace, comfortable seating, televisions, and games. Three building types enclose 64,000 square feet of indoor recreation space, including a pre-engineered metal building, traditional masonry construction, and a fabric, aluminum frame-supported structure. These materials were selected to deliver a cost-effective building that has both functionality and aesthetics.

This symbiotic relationship between unique indoor





The Project Team

The project was developed through a construction manager/general contractor project delivery method to ensure close collaboration between the town, architect Sink Combs Dethlefs, a landscape architect, and park designer BHA Design, Inc., and general contractor Turner Construction. The MAC was an integral part of the first phase of the entire park project, and a substantial amount of earthwork and utility infrastructure was required prior to construction. The team worked to accelerate the project in order to mitigate inflationary price increases by issuing several Guaranteed Maximum Price contracts so grading, utilities, and long-lead time procurement could





throughout the dynamic design process.

The Price Tag

The cost of the building was approximately \$12 million, or roughly \$190 per square foot in 2013, barring site infrastructure. The two most significant factors influencing the cost of the facility were soil conditions and topography. Soil improvement through the use of rammed, aggregate piers designed to support a spread-footing foundation was the most cost-effective way to address the challenge of depth to bedrock on a fill site. The park's topography also created the need for a walkout design with a 15-foot grade separation between levels. The grade change required the addition of an elevator, railings, staircases, and large concrete walls and footings, adding to the visual character, play value, and function—but at a price. Nine-million dollars of the capital construction cost was funded through issuing Certificates of Participation using collateral agreements on existing town facilities. Parks and recreation impact-fee fund revenues were committed for repayment on the bond debt over a 20-year term, resulting in an annual debt





recreation staff members have met the 100-percent cost-recovery goal since the doors opened, not including debt service from capital development. In 2016, operating costs included personnel, supplies, utilities, and contract labor for a total annual expenditure of \$1,082,407. In the same year, revenues offset costs from a number of sources, including pro shop sales, admissions, field rentals, birthday parties, vending, athletic programming, and swim lessons for a total revenue of \$1,174,019. The remaining balance was applied to 2017 capital replacement and interdepartmental management fees.

The MAC sees over 100,000 admissions annually, along with additional organized- and athletic-field reservation users and spectators. This high rate of admissions can be attributed to multiple options for entry fees as well as flexibility in facility hours. The facility is open from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily, excluding major holidays. The MAC is available for use after hours for adult sports, lock-ins, or special overnight programs. This flexibility creates opportunity for additional revenue.



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Lessons Learned

Three years of operation have allowed staff members to reflect on ways to improve the facility. First, high demand of the full-sized field indicates the desire for two full-sized fields. Team locker rooms are underutilized, indicating that space could have been used for some activity with a higher demand. The dormers on the pre-engineered roof are prone to leakage and difficult to fix. Exposed insulation, lacking nets or dashers as a blockade, has become littered with holes from lacrosse balls. Lastly, inexpensive florescent lighting has become a target for unsupervised teenagers.

Additionally, due to the facility's high visitation rates, staffing needs have proven substantial. In a typical month, two full-time and over 100 part-time





to 46 lifeguards, eight party hosts, two athletic-league supervisors, 13 learn-to-swim instructors, one learn-to-swim coordinator, and four custodial staff members. The monthly personnel budget is roughly \$28,000 for part-time workers, who earn on average \$11.79 per hour.

Offering a recreational hub within a park that's proven to be a regional draw has created a unique way of meeting operational cost-recovery. An innovative facility design, coupled with the collaborative approach between the municipality and private contractors, has led to practical, cost-effective construction practices, resulting in a cherished space within the community.

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