

Susquehanna County community members seek a healthier connected community and focuses on opioid prevention opportunities

A group of committed community members pitched the idea of a community recreation center years ago to a group of superintendents in the county and received a very positive response. Ideas of what a facility like this could be for the residents in the county was extensive. Job fairs, a fitness center, an indoor walking track, mentor programs, community club space, Silver Sneakers, as well as youth sports leagues were some of the many possibilities that were discussed. It would need to be multi-purpose and multi-generational. After that meeting, there was a big question...where do we start?

The starting point would be a feasibility study to analyze the need. After investigating companies that specialized in conducting these studies, it was decided that the best option would be the Sports Facility Advisory (SFA). This company had excellent credentials to execute these steps as well as a great history of planning and optimizing these types of facilities all throughout the US. The cost of the study was \$5000. School districts and municipalities were approached for some seed money to complete this step. The positive response from these organizations was overwhelming. After learning what the Susquehanna County Recreation Center, (SCRC), was all about, four out of six school districts wanted to help as well as nine municipalities (many using their Act 13 monies). The Community Foundation of the Endless Mountains offered to help manage the money until the SCRC could set up their own account.

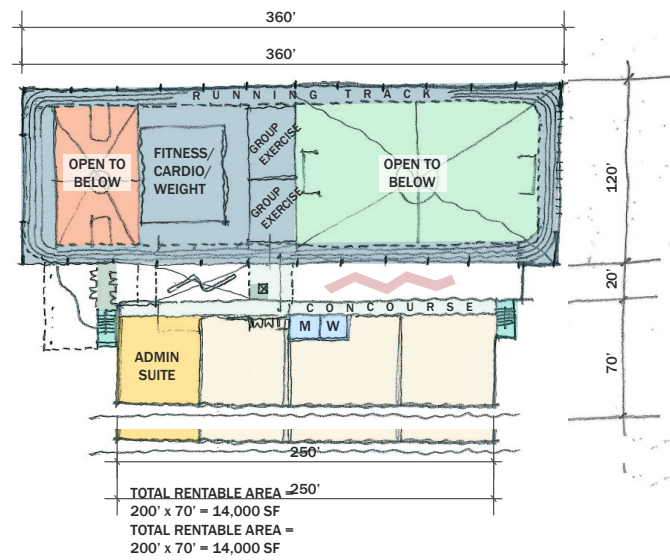
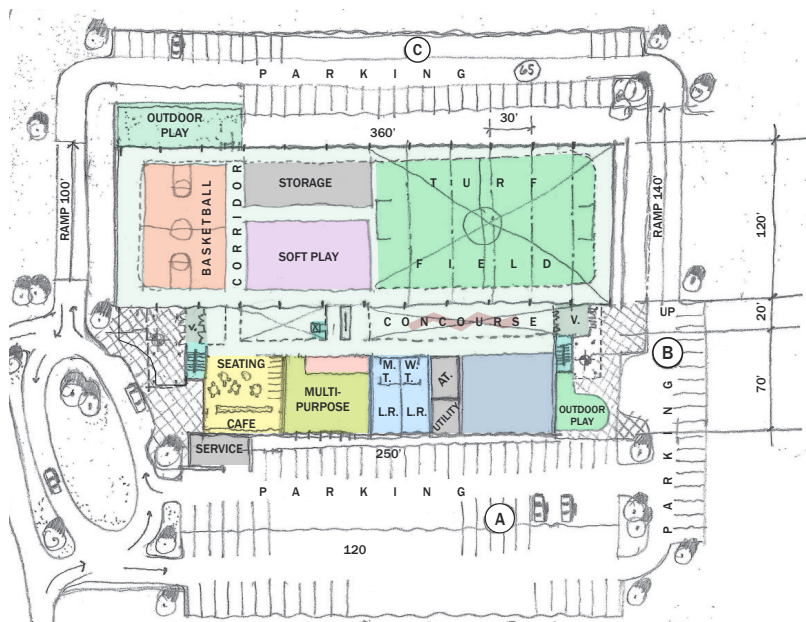


There were two primary goals that were non negotiable; first, to increase the health and wellness opportunities socially, emotionally and physically for Susquehanna County and second to be sure it was a self-sustaining business. After it was determined that there was a large need and also a way to have a self-sustaining business model,

the organization continued to move forward. They then applied for 501(c)(3) status in order to be deemed a charitable organization that serves the community and also has tax benefits to people or individuals who donate.

Next, the SCRC partnered with the Sports Facility Advisory to outline a very detailed business plan, pro forma, that identified all revenue opportunities and the expenses associated with those opportunities. This would be the backbone of the self-sustaining business plan. The SFA used their very large database to determine what the different price points would be for the SCRC. This allowed the SCRC to know what the cost estimate for the facility would be as well as the proper pricing for the customers. By becoming a 501(c)(3) organization, they could focus on keeping those costs as low as possible.

With each step the organization took, there would have to be money available to complete it. Fundraising was and continues to be a key component. A group of very motivated community members stepped up once again to share this project with many more individuals and businesses in the area. A volunteer group was able to run an event that raises \$30,000-\$35,000 a year in order to keep taking the necessary steps to move forward. Big business donors such as Wilder Diamond Blades, Barhite Excavating and Summit Ridge Farms have invested tens of thousands of dollars into this project to ensure its movement forward. Most recently Southwestern Energy gave a very large contribution of \$16,500. The project has continued to progress because of these very generous businesses as well as many others.



300. x 10. = 3,000 SF
 10171 RENTABLE AREA =



The most frequently asked question the SCRC has heard is, “Where is it going to be?”. Location has always been discussed and multiple offers have been made to donate land. This was extremely humbling to the organization because it showed that everyone wanted it close in proximity to them. After analyzing each site with the help of Tompkins Engineering and Hemmler & Camayd Architects, it was decided that the Kingsley location donated by the Mountain View School District would be the best fit physically and economically.

The location announcement was a huge step forward and allowed the organization to move forward with the schematic design process. Hemmler & Camayd Architects was hired to complete this step and is currently in the process of completing this phase. Next, it will go to a CM firm, Sordoni Construction, for a budget. This will allow the organization to put a very detailed number on the cost of the facility. This is a critical step in the funding of the facility which will likely be from multiple sources. The SCRC is investigating opportunities from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, USDA Rural Development, Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program as well as many others. The SCRC has applied to DCED for a NAP(Neighborhood Assistance Program) to help with the next phase. Business and individuals with state tax liability could receive great tax credits by donating to the SCRC. There will also be a capital campaign for this project. The SCRC is encouraging any individuals or businesses that would like to be involved to reach out to them.



The state and county officials are starting to see the vision for this project. The contagious energy from the dedicated community members behind the SCRC has showed the local and state government agencies the hard work they are willing to put in to achieve their goal of having a facility that promotes health, wellness, and community connection. “Partnering with families for a better future,” is the SCRC motto and they have done just that. The SCRC isn’t waiting until it is constructed to make a difference in

the community. It is doing that already by running events multiple times a year. With each person that participates, the SCRC is encouraged that it is changing lives in the community. When individuals take advantage of these opportunities, they are funneling their energy into very healthy activities instead of harmful ones including opioid addiction. This is where the SCRC shows their commitment to prevention.

The Susquehanna County Recreation Center is continuing to move forward with the help of the community, elected officials and businesses. This project is going to require everyone playing their part in order to achieve success. Mark Hyman once stated, "The power of community to create health is far greater than any physician, clinic, or hospital". The SCRC wants to make this vision very clear- its individuals deeply care about the community in which they live and want to see it thrive. Having a facility such as this in the county would be such an asset socially, emotionally, and economically. Please consider getting involved.

To learn more about the SCRC project please visit www.suscorec.org or contact Ashley Kilmer alkilmer_32@yahoo.com.