

Austin Business Journal - July 23, 2007
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Kyle leaders put an emphasis on amenities as employers pour in

Austin Business Journal - July 20, 2007 by [Kate Harrington](#) ABJ Staff

The city of Kyle has been pulling in major employers over the last year, with Seton Family of Hospitals, SCC Development Co. and RSI Inc. planning to bring projects and thousands of new jobs. Now the town just south of Austin has turned its attention to another project it hopes will help continue to attract employers and residents.

The Kyle City Council has hired an architect and contractor to build Kyle's recreation center, estimated to be a \$16 million, 75,000-square-foot project. Kerry Urbanowicz, Kyle's director of parks and recreation, says the center is currently on track for completion by the end of 2009, and that the council's current goal is to hold a bond election in November 2008 to help finance the center.

San Antonio-based Marmon Mok Architecture will be the project's architect, with Kentucky firm Brand Stetter Carroll as a consultant. Houston-based SpawGlass will be the project's general contractor.

A concept that has been lurking in the background of the city's master plan for years, the recreation center will likely require membership like the city's existing public pool. Preliminary plans include a competition-size swimming pool, basketball courts, outdoor playing fields and trails, a food court and an outdoor amphitheater as part of the center. Urbanowicz says the city hasn't selected a site for the center yet.

While a recreation center provides current residents with a common entertainment venue, it also helps attract economic development projects, analysts say.

"Kyle, and they understand this, needs to focus on providing services and amenities in the city that their residents and labor force want," says Sean Garretson, a planner with TIP Strategies Inc., the company authoring an economic development plan for the city of Kyle. "Those types of amenities will be talent attractors for them -- they attract potential workers."

Over the past three years, the city has focused on more basic amenities: creating a transportation master plan that ushered in the extension of FM 1626 and FM 150 and diversifying the city's water supply. But Diana Blank, Kyle's economic development director, says recreation is one basic service the city still had yet to tackle.

"It's one of those things people are still going out of town to fulfill that we'd like to keep within the scopes of the city limits," Blank says. "It adds to the quality of life, and those are things that professionals looking at this area will be looking for. It will definitely be an addition to the economic development growth of the community."

Kyle's neighbor to the north, Buda, scored a recreation venue this summer when a 30,000-square-foot YMCA opened in May. It's a feature Buda Economic Development Corp. President Warren Ketteman expects will help Buda attract businesses.

Ketteman says a community that offers amenities such as parks, pools and recreation centers pulls in larger employers who are interested in their employees' quality of life.

"Growing economically is a direct result of growing residentially," he says.

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