



AGENDA MATERIAL

DATE 4-20-21 ITEM NO. CC 7

Pima County Board of Supervisors
130 W Congress St, 5th Floor
Tucson, AZ 85701

As the President of the Tucson Junior Roadrunners Youth Hockey Association, and on behalf of more than 250 member families, I am writing to seek your support of the proposed Predevelopment Services Agreement between Pima County and Knott Development relating to the development of Kino District.

Going back 10 years, youth hockey in Pima County was a niche community; there were seasons that we had fewer than 30 players in the entire program. At the time, our membership consisted primarily of the children of transplants who grew up playing hockey themselves and who understand the value to a child of a team-first sport like hockey. Having lost the only public rink in Tucson years before, it looked like that was going to be our lot in life, the bottom rung of the Tucson youth sports ladder. But five years ago, a shift in organizational leadership and a new player development-focused approach quickly renewed the association's momentum, resulting in significant attention for youth hockey within the Tucson community. Families who had never known of the existence of a youth hockey program started getting excited about the sport. Soon after, we began working with the NHL to run the Little Howlers Learn-to-Skate program, outfitting new skaters, and providing them with instruction from USA Hockey certified coaches - all in hopes of spurring grass-roots interest in a sport that is anathema to the desert.

Today, having seen growth of more than 325% over the past 5 years, we are bursting at the seams, serving 264 children just last season alone, and being recognized by USA Hockey as a leader in growing the sport of hockey at the youth levels and achieving the following milestones:

- #2 in percentage growth among all US NHL/AHL markets
- #1 in percentage growth in girls and women registered (all US NHL/AHL markets)
- #1 in percentage growth in 8-and-under skaters (all US NHL/AHL markets)

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We now have the first generation of Southern Arizona youngsters in decades who are growing up playing hockey. Our growth has been so pronounced that we have more hockey players than we have ice to put them on. With the TCC being the only ice facility in the region, we are faced with a tough decision: turn away new players, or over-crowd the ice and compromise the quality of our instruction. As an expanding program with a track record of growth and success, we know that the most important thing is to get kids on the ice, so that's what we do. But the risk of having our growth plateau due to the constraints of limited ice availability is something that we now must prepare for. Our growth has long since surpassed the capacity that the TCC facility can support.

But to think of youth hockey as something that only happens on the ice would be an oversimplification. A rapidly expanding and evolving hockey community (including a booming amateur-adult hockey league, who share the same limited ice) requires more than sheets of ice. It requires a community-oriented facility with consistent year-round access to ice. It requires locker rooms and equipment storage, reception and concessions; none of which are available at the TCC. Without a full-time ice-sports facility, those needs will go unmet. Already, our players are displaced during much of the spring, lacking any practice or game availability; to speak nothing of a complete shutdown during summer months - leaving Phoenix as the nearest option for youth hockey, adult amateur hockey, and figure skating, and taking talented young Southern Arizona athletes to other parts of the state to participate in their sport.

With our organization's growth and success, we no longer need to worry about having enough players to form a team. Now, our sights are firmly set on finding the right partner whose vision for a community-driven, year-round, public ice facility matches our own. Having worked with Knott Development for the last two years, we could not have asked for a better partner. Frank Knott has proven himself to be the rare combination of acumen, experience, and passion. As a hockey parent himself, Frank has seen the needs and the challenges of youth hockey programming first-hand and understands the importance of a year-round, comprehensive



facility. Most importantly, Frank engaged our Association early on, ensuring that his proposal met the needs of our program and the Southern Arizona hockey community. Having seen various developers come and go within the Tucson market, we stand in support of Knott Development's plan for Kino District. It is the right plan for our community's needs both now and in the future.

Not only is Frank passionate to give Pima County a leading facility for ice sports, but he has demonstrated his dedication to the greater Southern Arizona community by committing to the establishment of the Athletics Inclusion Foundation: a charitable foundation whose mission it will be to dismantle the barriers standing in the way of children getting involved in sports. The Foundation will be able to reach communities that have historically been underrepresented in sports, and particularly in hockey. Conversations have already begun to design programming to engage the Indigenous and Latinx, as well as programming to reach LGBTQ+ athletes, displaced and foster youth, and disabled and seeing-impaired youth. The Foundation will be capable of financially supporting the purchase of player equipment, specialized training tools, and ice time to bring life-changing programming to these communities and to the young athletes and their families who may struggle to meet the financial burden of youth sports.

As our organization continues to expand out into Southern Arizona's amazingly diverse community, we reflect that diversity on the ice. Our efforts are exemplified by the fact that we have more young women and girls playing the sport than ever before and a world-class player and Olympic silver-medalist like Lindsey Fry, who is a regular fixture in Tucson hockey, putting on free hockey clinics just for girls. Frank Knott and Knott Development not only share our vision for youth hockey in Southern Arizona, but our vision of diversity, inclusion, and representation in hockey. We are pleased that Frank has committed the Foundation's resources to helping us realize our vision.

Tucson youth hockey is no longer a niche community. Now, everywhere you go in Tucson, if you mention hockey, someone will tell you that they have a neighbor, or cousin, or niece, or co-



worker who plays hockey. That anonymous youth hockey club from a decade ago is in the rearview mirror and our future could be very bright in the hands of Pima County and Knott Development. On behalf of the thousands of hockey players, children, families, and fans, I implore you, please support this Predevelopment Services Agreement, and be the force that positively impacts our community and this region for generations to come.

Jeremy Bow

President – Board of Directors

Tucson Junior Roadrunners