**Category:** 1– Contribution to the Community

**Specialty Contractor:** JHL Constructors | Weifield Group Contracting | Heartland Acoustics | Associated Building Specialties

**Project Name:**  Lawrence Street Community Center

Located near Coors Field and next door to Denver Rescue Mission’s shelter facility at Park Avenue and Lawrence in the Arapahoe Square district, the Lawrence Street Community Center (LSCC) broke ground in January, 2015, and provides a safe place for the homeless to gather and receive needed services during the daytime before the Denver Rescue Mission’s shelter opens for the evening. The facility provides meals, access to clean drinking water, bathrooms, showers, washers and dryers, and information about housing and health services that help people get back on their feet. The one-story facility also features a state-of-the-art commercial kitchen, a 216-seat dining area and an enclosed courtyard.

In a January 27, 2015 CBS Denver article, Brad Meuli, President and CEO of the Denver Rescue Mission, said: “It’s a safe place so people don’t have to be in an alley or in the street. They can come in, we can try to connect them to services.”

***Special Needs Met***

Both JHL and Weifield have been supporters of the Denver Rescue Mission for many years. JHL’s founder, John Hachmeister, has served on DRM’s Board of Directors for multiple terms and JHL has made financial contributions to the DRM for nearly two decades. Weifield’s annual client appreciation/company anniversary party has raised over $10,000 each year to DRM. Both firms send employee teams to serve and sponsor lunch for the DRM community multiple times per year and Weifield does resume/interview prep with DRM program participants and has recruited many into their electrical apprenticeship program, which pays for participants’ four-year apprenticeship schooling and helps them to start a new career in the electrical field.

This project was jointly developed and built with private and public investments; as such, there were mandated SBE and other requirements.  JHL’s team not only met the SBE requirement of 22%, but far exceeded this requirement and achieved 43%, which impressed DURA and city officials.  JHL reached out to the City & County of Denver’s certified directory of subcontractors and coordinated procurement programs with numerous local minority contractor associations to accomplish project goals.

“JHL and their team of subcontractors were incredible and demonstrated tremendous integrity, flexibility, and professionalism throughout a very difficult political environment and in very tough working conditions,” said Dave Schunk, Denver Rescue Mission Chief Financial Officer.

***Company Participation in Support of DRM***

JHL donated over $25,000 in preconstruction services to the project; Weifield donated their preconstruction design time and a portion of their electrical services, as well. Weifield also helped to orchestrate no-cost solutions from industry partners, Straightedge Engineering, who donated electrical engineering on the project, and QED – who did the lighting design at no cost.

“Our team provided the very best solution that DRM could afford in a fully transparent process. The goal of design was to provide a fully functioning electrical solution that would best serve the homeless community while maintaining the project budget,” said Jim Dent, Preconstruction Director and lead designer

“Safety, security and cost were the biggest factors here,” said Courtney Allen, QED Lighting Designer.

On November 23, 2015, the center opened to the public.

“We had to be done by Thanksgiving because Denver Rescue Mission had to serve Thanksgiving dinner in the facility,” said Christian Wangaard, Project Manager. “We finished a few days before the deadline.”

***Large Community Impact***

This facility has changed the community for the better by providing permanent reduction in homelessness, violence, and street camping in Downtown Denver.  The project has also increased property values nearby and provided positive, healthy development of this often forgotten population.

The LSCC offers a much needed safe place of dignity for men and women and for those most disadvantaged, including those with mental illness and those with physical handicaps. The facility serves over 1,600 meals on an average day (700 more meals served than before the facility was opened), provides bathrooms and showers for men and women (a first for women in the area), and offers laundry and day programs. The LSSC provides legal assistance, police reporting, mental illness support, job readiness support, ADA access, and many other programs, as well.

The LSCC also allows people experiencing homelessness an opportunity to learn how to participate in DRM’s long-term New Life Program and STAR Transitional Programs. Through New Life, DRM’s staff works to help individuals make a lasting life change via a path to sobriety. The STAR Transitional Program helps participants achieve self-sufficiency and permanent housing through life skills, career development and computer skills workshops.

A critical need for the homeless community is having the ability to charge their mobile phones. Weifield’s solution included a plethora of duplex receptacles within the courtyard that participants can utilize for charging, with heavy duty receptacle covers that would withstand abuse and weather hazards while reducing maintenance for DRM’s staff.

The cafeteria was designed to shine at angles to create an interesting look and facilitate maximum comfort level by avoiding an “institutional” feel. Additionally, the outside fence has stone columns every 20 feet and sidewalk lighting was placed inside those columns – so Weifield needed to choose non-glare (but vandal-proof) fixtures for maximum light with minimum glare. From courtyard lights to the cafeteria lighting—the comfort and safety of all of the people utilizing the facility were paramount.

***Community Value for Decades to Come***

The Lawrence Street Community Center helps people in dire need to become self-sufficient citizens. The roots of the Denver Rescue Mission began in 1892 with the establishment of a shelter that served as a rescue home for women. With the opening of the Lawrence Street Community Center, Denver Rescue Mission has expanded its ability to serve Downtown’s homeless community.

The Lawrence Street Community Center was celebrated at the 55th Annual Downtown Denver Awards this past April, as one of six transformational projects that have had the most significant impact on the center city. The following project information was provided in this award detail:

*“In its first 90 days, 4,000 people accessed resources at the center. Signaling its cleanliness, safety and level of dignity, more women and people with disabilities are seeking services than ever before.*

*Committed to its role as a good neighbor, the Denver Rescue Mission worked closely with the Ballpark neighborhood and the City to balance the needs of the neighborhood while serving a vulnerable population.*

*‘The Lawrence Street Community Center helps meet basic needs and expands our capacity to guide, counsel, train and encourage homeless individuals to become productive, self-sufficient citizens,’ says Brad Meuli, President and CEO of the Denver Rescue Mission. ‘It gives us more opportunities to reach more people, and we are excited about what this means to the future of our city.’”*

***Working Together for Safety***

Safety was priority number one on this project resulting in zero lost time hours.  Weekly meetings with both ownership and the design team, along with separate weekly meetings with subcontractors, always began with a safety discussion and expectations on a daily basis as well as asking the question, “How can we make the jobsite safer?”  No one (visitors or workers) was allowed on site without proper PPE. “Tool box” safety talks were required by all subcontractors on a weekly basis and JHL’s independent safety consultant inspected the site on a regular basis, providing another set of eyes looking per the possibility of any unsafe conditions.  All workers were required to attend a project safety orientation prior to working on site.

       Weifield dedicated more than 300 hours to safety throughout the course of this project and experienced no accidents, safety incidents, down time/lost time or violations in meeting project deadlines. Weifield’s corporate safety program requires Field Superintendents to implement effective safety procedures throughout the duration of every project. A primary focus of our Project Safety Plan (PSP) is achieve “Target Zero,” which is a goal of experiencing no (zero) incidents and no (zero) injuries with work tasks. Our PSP outlines all safety and health requirements developed by Weifield, focusing on relevant issues of the project.

       Weifield worked hand-in-hand with JHL to achieve quality and safety goals, particularly in the wall layout areas where the concrete was poured and ensuring our pipe layout was correct. We held daily huddles and participated in JHL’s subcontractor meetings on a regular basis. Weifield pushed the schedule as hard as we could to stay ahead of JHL’s overall plan and ensure they didn’t need to catch up in any areas due to schedule slips.

       Overall, it was a 10-month construction process for this project, starting in late November, 2015. There were several weather events to overcome in the winter of 2015, involving heavy snow accumulation – but the team was to navigate these hurdles to success through our attention to safety and quality and via our strong partnership with JHL.

“On a personal level, it was fulfilling to be a part of this project; this was a small way to just help out and work together on achieving this new facility for the community,” said Dent.

