

Category: 7 – Best Building Project – Specialty Contractor (Over \$10 Million)

Contractor: Encore Electric

Project Name: McGregor Square

Just a few short years ago, the space between Denver and Coors Field was quiet, save for the few months of professional baseball. Now, Denver’s Lower Downtown neighborhood has been transformed by the McGregor Square Development, a mixed-use space that opened in the spring of 2021. Baseball fans eagerly awaited the evolution of the area southwest of Coors Field along with Denver residents who were simply looking forward to new restaurants, shopping, and a revitalized community atmosphere. Teammates from Encore Electric helped to complete the project design and managed the electrical construction, life safety systems, and technology solutions including security, access control, networking and audio-visual infrastructure.

“This project is essentially the Rockies Entertainment District,” said Ken Cogan, Project Manager for Encore Electric on the project. “It extends the Union Station vibe all the way to Coors Field and merges those two downtown landmarks.” The project includes three new structures, including a 176-room hotel, 104 condo residences, mixed-use commercial office space and retail. Baseball fans and tourists can also find the new home for the Colorado Rockies Hall of Fame.

This project has a special place in the heart of many Encore Electric team members and their passion translates to a lot of excitement around this project. Stan Gittens, project manager at Encore Electric, compared the size and complexity of the McGregor Square project to the Gaylord of the Rockies project, due to the size and complexity of both. “Construction on both projects started before design was complete, with Encore assisting with the completion of design to help keep the projects within the budgets and schedules already established,” he said.

Joe McAleer, a member of Encore Electric’s preconstruction team, described the project as ‘once in a lifetime.’ Because this project is a design assist project, preconstruction was heavily involved and responsible for maintaining and updating the budget for McGregor Square. Encore Electric’s preconstruction team was challenged with finding ways to reduce costs while delivering on the owner’s vision.

“This was a great example of the ‘One Encore’ internal mantra and the value that such an approach brings to our clients,” said Brandon Fleury, manager of preconstruction services for Technology Solutions at Encore Electric. “This was also displayed throughout an extensive preconstruction process where all parties at Encore worked together across the board.”

"From our Construction Management team to our Audio-Visual team, this project requires us to be firing on all cylinders, with synergy between all Encore departments," said Hunter Lasko, Technology Solutions Project Manager for Encore Electric.

Life safety systems for a high-rise building project this size is paramount. Encore Electric’s solution includes three separate fire command centers with three networked fire alarm control panels for each separate building. Because parking and common areas will be shared by hotel guests and residents, these systems must also be interconnected. The Encore Electric team was asked to keep the spirit of baseball alive in every space, while considering life safety and egress. Encore Electric worked closely with general contractor partner Hensel Phelps to organize all of the construction trades to meet life safety needs and called for all-hands-on-deck to create a solution.

Although the project has technology designers, Encore Electric’s Technology Solutions team was heavily involved in the design of both telecom and security. There has been extensive collaboration between the technology designers from Hensel Phelps and Encore Electric. Technology is integrated in every part of the project. The residential tower access control is mobile device-enabled as well as the parking, fitness, pool and condo facilities. McGregor Square houses a large format video screen in the plaza, where guests can catch any sports event at just about any time.

It isn’t only about baseball, as residents of McGregor Square will benefit from a “WELL-certified” lifestyle – a program that defines quality living conditions for factors such as ambient noise, traffic, light color/intensity, humidity and pollution. An array of sensors constantly measures nineteen environmental conditions and feeds those to university researchers, who are pioneering new ground for green city planning.

As the project rounded third and headed for home, site work moved into full swing. Where Rockies fans once dodged a dimly lit parking lot, they now parade down Wynkoop Walkway

under theater quality festoon lighting, amid massive, twenty-four-foot-tall interactive monoliths honoring their favorite Rockies stars.

All of this adds up to a project that will attract thousands of people to the area on gamedays and was vital in attracting the 2021 Major League Baseball All-Star Game to Denver. The Colorado Rockies are without a doubt one of the pioneers in this area, as these current investments in contributing to the community will pay dividends at the end of a very tough and exhausting pandemic.

Their forward use of technology on the project has also contributed to moving the industry forward. The GPON system in use across the McGregor site is a relatively new emerging technology. This GPON system brings fiberoptic cabling directly to the edge locations such as hotel rooms, residences and offices, which reduces the amount of physical cabling infrastructure in the ceiling spaces, as the system uses single strand bi-directional fiber cable to feed edge devices that then disperse connectivity in the space via local category cabling runs.

All those environmental controls require a lot of infrastructure and the Encore Electric team had to pull off more than one squeeze play to make it happen. For instance, feeding a double-ended unit substation located on the roof of the office required some creativity and preplanning, as the equipment manufacturer wanted nothing to do with penetrating the roof.

“The eleven, four-inch elbows which would have been required at each point was impractical in the space between floors, so an uncommon solution was required,” said Cogan. “Using cable bus, technically cable tray engineered for optimum current-carrying capacity, combined with some custom “shepherd’s hook” ninety-degree elbows, (Encore Electric Foreman) Chad Reece’s one-line team managed to push that elephant through the eye of the needle.”

“The key to success on this project has been teamwork and the team’s flexibility and openness to change,” said Cogan. “Hensel Phelps has done a fantastic job of putting together the right group, not just Encore, but all the parts and pieces.”

Encore Electric teammates also tried their best to highlight the project and spread a little pandemic cheer during construction. Dustin Cahill, an Encore electrician, decked all of the cranes out with purple lighting by personally climbing out to the end of each corner of the cranes and hanging them.

Virtual Design & Prefabrication Director, Samantha Hamilton, has been involved in the McGregor Square project from the beginning. The VDC team created 3D models of layout points and routing information so that field crews could keep up with the fast pace of this project. Hamilton has a personal tie to the project as well, bringing with her a deep passion for baseball and the Colorado Rockies. “Though I’m not a Colorado native, I grew up in Missouri as a diehard baseball fan,” said Samantha. “I remember sitting on the combine at my family farm with my uncle listening to Jack Buck announce the Cardinals games when I was a little girl.”

There are also various networked totems around the site that will display Rockies player and team information. The totems are networked fabricated structures along the Wynkoop walkway that incorporate speakers, lights, and a display. Two of the totem locations also house a broadcast connection that allows for live 2-way feeds between the walkway, the plaza and even the stadium. This tie-in allows for an integrated experience between the two facilities and carries the baseball theme through the walkways that carry heavy foot traffic between the stadium and lower downtown areas.

The scope of work performed by Encore Technology Solutions and our vendor partners at McGregor Square is truly amazing. At first glance, this could have been deemed as a rather daunting scope of work, even just based on the massive scale of the site. However, our teams finished strong and delivered a quality product. From the motion activated speakers to the audio-visual systems at the rooftop pool deck, it all contributes to an overall ambience that makes you really feel the downtown Denver and Ballpark vibe. The integration with the plaza sound system was labor-intensive but extremely worth it once you hear it all turned on. It is truly concert level sound. The integration of two separate access control systems in the hotel spaces functions seamlessly.

All of these pieces together allow the aesthetic quality of design to fill and fit seamlessly with the function at McGregor Square. The Encore Electric team had one of the biggest jobs on the site – not only to provide power to the entire area, but to also make sure that all the technology solutions were functioning correctly. Guests at McGregor Square will undoubtedly be awed by the scale of digital signage, lighting and entertainment options, all powered by the Encore Electric team.









