

TABLE OF EXPERTS

PROJECTS TRANSFORMING COLORADO



Not every construction project will create a significant impact to a community. There are a few, however, that possess the potential to transform a community, if not their state.

The McGregor Square project, built on the former Colorado Rockies parking lot in LoDo, and Colorado Springs' Weidner Field — home of the Switchbacks Football Club — are new, unique projects that stand to attract thousands to their respective cities. The two efforts share a common partner, Comcast Business, which has provided state-of-the-art technologies that help set Weidner Field and McGregor Square a cut above most new developments in the Centennial State.

"Projects Transforming Colorado" was the theme of a Denver Business Journal Table of Experts panel discussion, sponsored by Comcast Business. The virtual event, which attracted more than 100 participants, was hosted by **Kevin Pitts, Publisher and Market President for the Denver Business Journal**. This conversation has been condensed and edited for clarity.

Panelists included:

Nick Ragain, president of the Colorado Springs Switchbacks Football Club, a professional soccer team. The athletic organization joined with local business partner Dean Weidner to build the \$42 million stadium and outdoor concert venue in downtown Colorado Springs.

Patrick Walsh, CEO and General Manager, McGregor Square. As the principal owner of D&P of Colorado, which focuses on investing in real estate and private companies, Walsh joined the McGregor Square team in 2017. Part of the development opened recently

on the former Colorado Rockies parking lot at the corner of 20th and Wazee Streets in LoDo.

Stephanie Rideau, Senior Director, Business Development, Comcast Mountain West Region. Comcast partnered with the Colorado Springs Switchbacks Football Club and McGregor Square to provide critical, reliable connectivity for the communities enjoying these innovative new developments in Denver and Colorado Springs.

Comcast Business is investing millions in Colorado to build a state-of-the-art network to help deliver a full suite of broadband, video, voice, home management and business products to the residents and businesses of the community.

KEVIN PITTS
Publisher and Market President, Denver Business Journal

"These two development projects are transforming downtown Denver and Colorado Springs," said Pitts. "Comcast Business is investing millions in Colorado to build a state-of-the art network to help deliver a full suite of broadband, video, voice, home management and business products to the residents and businesses of the community. Today, we're going to take a closer look at these projects. McGregor Square, adjacent to Coors Field, turned a parking lot into a multi-use urban experience with something for everybody,

including residences, a hotel, office space and interactive experiences for fans."

"The Colorado Springs Switchback Football Club," continued Pitts, "built a state-of-the art soccer stadium and concert venue that transformed the Colorado Springs downtown area, with a complete fan experience, along with a renewed sense of excitement and an economic shot in the arm for the city and surrounding businesses."

Q&A **Pitts: Let's start with a softball question. Nick and Patrick, you are natives of Colorado. Patrick, you grew up near Greeley and Nick grew up in Idaho Springs — home to the most iconic high school football field in Colorado, the Gold Diggers Stadium. What are some of the reasons you decided to stay in Colorado?**

Ragain: For me, being in Colorado was about family and the outdoors — the same reasons why a lot of people moved here. I wanted my kids to grow up in this type of environment.

Walsh: My answer is very similar to Nick's. I moved back here 12 years ago, and I think Denver and Colorado, in general, are awesome. In two hours — you can be skiing. It's also about the outdoors and the 300 days of sunshine. LoDo is very special to the Rockies because it's their home base. I've seen LoDo grow and it's a great part of town. I wouldn't want to live anywhere else.

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DON IRELAND

McGregor Square adjacent to Coors Field turned a parking lot into a multi-use urban experience.

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Rideau: As a recent transplant, I'm thrilled to be here. I knew there would be opportunities for me in Colorado. I have a young daughter, so I also looked at this as an opportunity for me to grow without the need to move her again. I came here from Pittsburgh, where the weather is 300 days of gloom — so I absolutely love the sunshine here, as well as the outdoor activities. I'm really happy to be here in Colorado.

Pitts: The new Weidner Field marks a highpoint for the Colorado Springs Switchbacks Football Club. It is one of only two premier stadiums built within the past year for the USL Championship. It holds approximately 3,000 more fans than the previous field and 5,500 more concert fans than Red Rocks. McGregor Square, much like Union Station and Coors Field, will change the way people use and experience downtown Denver. What was the vision and evolution for these projects?

Ragain: My family has experienced how professional sports can be transformative for communities. A common connection on this panel today is that some of that experience started at Coors Field. I once worked at a large design firm in Wheat

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PATRICK WALSH
CEO/General Manager,
McGregor Square

Ridge. We created blueprints for large stadiums across the country and I went to stadium openings. The Colorado Springs Switchbacks Football Club exist as a giveback to the great community of Colorado Springs and to the residents of Colorado. The opportunity for Colorado Springs started with the Regional Tourism Act, which generated \$120 million for different projects. Our family and a business partner, who joined us later, invested a significant amount to build Weidner Field. A lot of this is a community investment. There is a cultural evolution and development around sports, sports venues and concerts, so we're really excited to be here.

Walsh: To give a little background on our project, the Rockies were scheduled to renew our lease. We did an analysis about Coors Field to keep it a world-class facility for the next 30 years. We determined we needed about \$200 million in improvements to keep it as a great place to see a baseball game. Traditionally, there would be a sales tax used to generate that income. However, where everything is at currently, we didn't think that would be the correct avenue to put it on taxpayers. The Rockies didn't want to put \$200 million into a building they don't own, so we came up with the idea to develop the west lot to generate money — so the taxpayers or the Rockies didn't get

burdened with the cost. Our projection, over the next 30 years, is that McGregor Square should generate \$120 million that will go back into Coors Field. We wanted to do something that was transformational.

For our development, it's the public space. We have three buildings — a hotel, residential housing, and retail space. The real thing we wanted to do for LoDo was to be able to hold public events. We have a nice 80-by-20-foot LED screen. People can watch live events. We're going to have movie nights, too. It's a great public space for downtown. A lot of downtowns don't have anything like this — it's something we felt Denver was missing. We are hoping to fill that void. We focused on making this a very safe, family-friendly, fun public space for Denver residents and Coloradoans.

Pitts: Comcast Business is delivering increased bandwidth and high-performance connectivity to help upgrade a digital gameday experience. What is the vision, from a technology standpoint, for these two projects?

Rideau: These are two very exciting projects in which Comcast Business was able to power possibilities. When we looked at these opportunities, we wanted to create a better fan experience and connect people to more of what they want. At McGregor

Square, you can live, work and play. For the Colorado Springs Switchbacks Football Club, Comcast Business provides business VoIP and services in addition to fast, reliable wi-fi inside the stadium, which is very important.

When we talked to Nick about this project, we talked about making the fan experience memorable. He also wanted fans to have access to experiences such as mobile ticketing- where fans can buy and sell tickets, purchase merchandise and order concessions without leaving their seats. This all can happen from their mobile device. Comcast Business provides that wi-fi technology to make this interactive game-day experience possible.

When Patrick spoke about McGregor Square, he used the term transformational. McGregor Square is one of our most advanced projects from a live, work or play perspective. Comcast Business provided the connectivity, wi-fi and the X1entertainment operating system for hospitality. When you look at a broadband experience with an enhanced network, we delivered the increased bandwidth for use by residents. If you look at the McGregor Square residential tower, it is the most advanced Internet of Things (IoT) technology we have. It enables people to control automatic lights, door locks, and window shade controls from their devices.

Pitts: Patrick, can you talk more about this technology and the fan experience?

Walsh: Stephanie highlighted a lot of those points. When we were planning this project two or three years ago, we went to

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PROJECTS TRANSFORMING COLORADO PANEL



NICK RAGAIN
President, Colorado Springs Switchbacks FC

Nick Ragain grew up near Idaho Springs, Colorado, home to the iconic Gold Digger Stadium. Prior to his current role as president of the Colorado Springs Switchbacks FC, he managed Musco Sports Lighting's Colorado and Wyoming markets, served on the Clear Creek Metropolitan Recreation District board, and owned a digital marketing company. Since 2014, Nick Ragain has been working to grow a franchise, a league, and a sport in Colorado Springs.



STEPHANIE RIDEAU
Sr. Director Business Development, Comcast Cable Corporation

Stephanie Sapp Rideau is the Sr. Director, Business Development for Comcast in the Mountain West Region. She leads the newly formed Business Development organization, which is the integration of the Residential and Comcast Business Market and Business Development teams. In her role, she focuses on accelerating growth opportunities for Comcast Business and Residential Sales by driving effectiveness in network expansion and external partnerships.



PATRICK WALSH
CEO/General Manager, McGregor Square

Patrick Walsh is a native Coloradoan born in Greeley, Colorado. Prior to joining the executive development team for McGregor Square, Patrick was the principal owner of D & P of Colorado which focuses on investing in real estate and private companies across a variety of industries. Patrick joined the McGregor Square team in 2017 and will be the CEO/General Manager of the project when it opens in early 2021.



MODERATOR: KEVIN PITTS
Publisher and Market President, Denver Business Journal

Kevin currently serves as president and publisher of Denver Business Journal, overseeing total operations and strategy for the media company. Prior to joining Denver Business Journal, Kevin served American City Business Journals over the last two decades as publisher of Charlotte Business Journal, vice president for Philadelphia Business Journal, and publisher of East Bay Business Times in California.

1-2H DISPLAY AD

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Philadelphia, which is where Comcast's headquarters is located. They had so many cool technologies under one roof. Having Comcast as a one-stop shop for cutting-edge technology was a priority for us. The feedback from our residents and business owners have been overwhelming. It's at a point where they say the wonder how they lived without these things at their previous residences. Obviously, reliability and speed are important, as well, for the entire project. We wanted a seamless transition whether you're up in an office or in one of the residences in the plaza, Comcast Business hit it out of the park for us.

Ragain: When Comcast Business did a bid on our systems, they were extremely competitive, which made it an easy decision for us. We have 6GB of service in our venue. For a Super Bowl or similar big event, 14 to 17GB is the type of data consumption you normally see. With the click of a button, we can move up from 6 to 20GB because of what Comcast Business designed for us. We have a lot of capacity to grow.

One of the things that slowed us down in the project was the canopy construction. Our wi-fi access points are mounted on those canopies. It's been awesome to watch the Comcast team work on it — they actually have to weld additional arms and structures to the canopies. We had about 15 percent of those points not installed yet but we've had three games so far this season. However, there have been zero complaints and we keep trying to push our fans to use the mobile application — for ticketing, to look up information, or to watch videos.

Pitts: Comcast has its largest employee base in Colorado — outside of its Philadelphia headquarters. Comcast already has invested millions in building out its network in Colorado. Stephanie, can you share the reason for this? Why Colorado?

Rideau: Colorado is definitely a growth area. We have close to 10,000 employees here in the state, including headquarter, divisional and regional employees. Comcast recently invested \$1.3 billion in technology and infrastructure in Colorado to support our growth of the business.

Pitts: We all know projects never go exactly as planned. Can you share some of the challenges and hurdles you had to overcome to bring these projects to fruition?

Walsh: We started this project around 2016 and broke ground in October 2018. A big curveball was Covid. Our #1 priority was to keep everybody safe. Overall, we tried to be nimble and pivot our strategy depending on the current situation. That's why we needed partners, like Comcast Business. We're a first-time developer, therefore it was learn-as-we-go and change where it made sense. Besides Covid, there really wasn't anything major for us, just little day-to-day items.

Rideau: These were efforts of great collaborations with great partners. When you have large projects like these, it's not unusual to have challenges as you work with different vendors and try to meet deadlines. When Covid arrived, our world changed. For us, that meant challenges in meeting new protocols. There were delays in materials and schedules. There were times when some of our vendors couldn't travel to help us with some of the technologies.

When we look specifically at McGregor Square — where people live, work and play — it's such a

transformational project. There are always some minor bumps in the road but overall, the project went very well.

Ragain: Having a good plan, great partners and a little bit of luck is what brought our project together. Certainly, there are always things that come up with a project like this.

Pitts: What are some of the lessons learned from these projects? What are some of the things you wish you'd have thought about sooner? If you could go back in time, what would you have changed?

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STEPHANIE RIDEAU

Sr. Director Business Development,
Comcast Cable Corporation

Walsh: I think we got the big things right. We really focused on the operating ease of this. As Nick alluded, doing this project was an extension of our stadium. We did this in the form of a 365-days sort of plan. If we hadn't done this project, we still would've been busy year-round with the baseball season. One of the real focuses was to create a place that's used 365 days a year. That was important to us and I think we got that correct. We have a hotel, offices, residences and retail. I think we did well on the big things. The public space is just now starting to get activated. The feedback we're getting is that space will be great.

The biggest thing we learned was this was a complete collaboration. When things happened, we could all get on the phone and talk things through. Little things always come up but, on the major things, we did a good job. When you do the big things right, you get past the little things.

Rideau: When you have a good plan in place and stakeholder engagement, it's all about setting the right expectations. It's been wonderful working with the Colorado Springs Switchbacks Football Club and McGregor Square.

Ragain: Specifically, we wish we'd reviewed and double-checked what the building code and wind speed our canopy structures were designed for. We still have some work going on in the stadium. We have great partners, Perkins & Will, on the design side. They handled the situation that was challenging. Some projects require new thinking and opportunities. We had a pretty tight budget. It started as a \$29 million project but ended up as a \$42 million project. We shifted gears and the partnership invested more money in the stadium. We had some situations — like deciding to spend \$4.5 million for the sculpture at the street corner. However, we still didn't have cup holders for some of the seats. We've tried to balance things but having great partners helps get these things across the finish line. We're not quite across the finish line yet but we'll be there soon.”

Pitts: You've underscored the need for collaboration. Obviously, it took a lot to pull off these projects. Could you talk a little more about your key partners?

Rideau: We really worked with the utility companies, specifically, Colorado Springs Utilities. We worked with them on when utilities were going to be installed, understanding when we could work and collaborate with them — from an efficiency standpoint. That can really save time when we work together. We also worked with the Southwest Downtown Improvement District in Colorado Springs to help understand how this stadium would transform downtown Colorado Springs. We asked how Comcast could be a stronger partner today and, in the future, so we could understand the challenges and opportunities from the local businesses and residents. We talked to the Metro Denver Chamber of Commerce as well to gain perspective on how these projects could impact Denver. When you understand the heart of your community, and listen to your small business owners, you can better understand the impact a project can have. You need the right product and the right partnership available. Of course, our partners at McGregor Square, including the contractors, as well as the Switchbacks in Colorado Springs got back to us when we had questions. There was a timeliness with them in helping to get answers for us. They were all great partners.

Ragain: The fun, exciting and sometimes challenging aspect of urban development is that you do have so many partners. We sit in the middle of a \$3 billion improvement that's planned for the next 25 years in Colorado Springs. We have some neighboring businesses that have been here for a while and others have popped up in the last few years.

One of the things our community wanted to understand was parking. Because we have great community partners, we're all on the same page that we want to create a fun, exciting experience and magnetizing place to be. With a great partner in the City of Colorado Springs, we have twice the amount of parking available within an 11-minute walk of the stadium. In the future, the city can bond against that volume and build (additional) parking structures as we drive demand. The businesses and residents were on board with the idea of driving volume, which will justify investment in different infrastructures.

Walsh: Our first partner really is the community around us. When we first had the idea for this project, we engaged with the local neighborhood. We got some great ideas from the community. We talked with our immediate neighbors on Wynkoop Street and made some adjustments based on our conversation. We wanted this project to complement the neighborhood and to avoid looking like we just dropped in three new buildings that didn't blend in. We wanted to take some elements from the ballpark and LoDo. In my opinion, anyone who works on the project or touches it becomes a partner because they're in it with us.

Pitts: What's next for Comcast, in terms of other investments you're making in Colorado?

Rideau: We look at things from a business aspect as well as a community standpoint. As you may know, Comcast has a longstanding commitment to our network and bridging digital equity. When we look at things from a technology perspective, we want to stay ahead of our customers' needs. We are moving forward to achieving 10G connectivity. This year, in Colorado alone, our employees conducted the first-ever, live lab test of the full-duplex DOCSIS system on chip. It will pave the way for Comcast to deliver multi-gig upload and download speeds over its network. It's really exciting that we will be able to deliver that ultra-fast service today, while simultaneously building capacity for future needs.



DON IRELAND

Weidner Field, home of the Switchbacks Football Club, is a new soccer stadium and concert venue in downtown Colorado Springs.

At Comcast, we are committed to building digital equity. As we talk about these exciting projects, we can't ignore the fact that there are some residents who don't have access to broadband internet in their homes. There are children who don't have the opportunity to participate in distant learning in their home because of the lack of a home connection. We have a program, called Internet Essentials. Since the program was launched in 2011, more than 480,000 Colorado residents signed up for Internet Essentials, which provides internet for low-income families. We know that's not enough. Sometimes, a home is not a great place to do long-distance learning. So, we have invested in a Lift Zone program for community centers and nonprofit partners, which provides free WiFi connectivity for students and the community. People can use these Lift Zone locations to get online, look jobs and continue their distance learning. They provide a safe place for people to connect.

We also continue to invest in our small-business communities. We have a program called Comcast RISE, which you can learn more about at www.comcastrise.com. It was created to help small businesses owned by people of color that might have been hit especially hard during the pandemic. It's a multi-year investment to provide marketing, creative, media and technology support to

“Our project is about inspiring, developing and growing. Creating and inspiring community is at our core.

NICK RAGAIN

President, Colorado Springs Switchbacks FC

these small business owners and help them become more competitive.

We're continuing to invest in our network and infrastructure to see where we have pockets of opportunity. We're continuing to invest in accelerating digital equity and generating economic impact in Colorado.

Pitts: What is the one thing you want readers to know about the transformational aspect of these projects?

Ragain: From a Colorado Springs' standpoint, there is more than \$3 billion in investment planned for downtown Colorado Springs in the coming years. We certainly can't take all the credit because there's a lot of people involved. We're excited about the volume of traffic we'll help drive into the community. Our project is about inspiring, developing and growing. Creating and inspiring community is at our core. There will be about 1,000 apartment units being built within the next five years across the street from us. We're already a tourist town but hope to further develop our own culture. I'm excited to be part of it because it is transformational.

Walsh: Three years ago, McGregor Square was just a parking lot. To take that from where it was and create three

great buildings with public space and a hotel — managed by our partner, Sage — is incredible. This project creates thousands of jobs and a ton of tax revenue. It's really transformed this block the way others have in Denver. Union Station was the big kick-off for all the development in LoDo and the Dairy Block had an impact, too. With the public-space nature of McGregor Square, we'll create a very fun space. That has been very important to us. We have set this up to be a very successful space where a lot of people can have a lot of fun. This will be a very special place. We hope everyone thinks this is transformational, the way we do.

Rideau: I think of two things when I think of transformational. One is: how can we deliver faster and more reliable speeds as we serve our customers? The other is, as we continue to work on mixed-use developments, how do we continue to invest in the community, in the businesses and people? That's how we look to transform the community, by providing the network and bridging the digital divide in every way.

- Edited by Don Ireland