

## Choice Health & Fitness Center

Grand Forks, North Dakota

**A**fter a feasibility study commissioned by the Grand Forks Park District and Altru Health System, as well as a grassroots fundraising effort to support a new health and fitness facility, the new \$23.4 million Choice Health & Fitness Center opened in September 2012.

The Forks Area Health & Wellness Committee (FAHWC) was created by volunteers and the Park District staff not only to raise funds, but also to identify the community's health and wellness needs. The original mission of the committee—to integrate fitness, medical and behavioral health, nutrition, arts, recreation and research under one roof—has been realized in a thoughtfully designed, 164,000-square-foot facility. The first new building of this type in Grand Forks in many years, the intent was to appeal to a wide variety of people. The diversity of stakeholders was expressed in the interior and exterior architecture, while still tying into the surrounding context.

The site has two main access points. The goal was to create a strong visual anchor for the neighborhood while honoring Grand Forks' agricultural history through architectural forms such as pitched roofs, simple slopes, a combination of masonry, metal panels and glass on the exterior and the use of earthy colors and warm tones on the interior. The glass wall of the aquatic center creates a sense of anticipation at the entry, and the sweeping expanse of the atrium spine welcomes members and visitors with exciting visual cues.

The large facility is broken up into smaller-scale, more pedestrian areas for a variety of uses. A strong axial element cuts through the building's center and serves as an ordering device to organize program spaces, infuse daylight deep within the building and serve as circulation and wayfinding.

Unique partnerships helped build confidence for the project. For example, a partnership between the park district and a nonprofit local

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MARK SCHLANSER, EAPC



YMCA developed a membership-sharing concept, wherein those who join either Choice Health & Fitness or the Altru Family YMCA become members of both. Altru Health System provides on-site medical services within 11,000 square feet of leased space, including physical therapy, nutrition and diet services, sports medicine and more. The USDA-ARS Grand Forks Human Nutrition Research Center also uses space within the facility as part of a satellite laboratory.

The community's response has been staggering. To date, membership has jumped from 8 percent of the community to 19 percent, which equates to nearly 11,500 people using both Choice Health & Fitness and the Altru Family YMCA, crushing initial membership projections for 2013.

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### SUBMITTED BY

Ohlson Lavoie Collaborative,  
Denver

SIZE: 164,000 square feet  
PROJECT COST: \$23.4 million

#### QUICK TOUR:

- 2-court gymnasium
- Open fitness and free weight areas
- 4 group exercise/multipurpose rooms
- 3 racquetball courts
- Indoor leisure pool with zero-depth entry, waterslides, play structures, lazy river
- Indoor 3-lane lap/exercise pool
- Kids Zone childcare and activity area
- Men's, women's and assisted changing/locker rooms
- 6 indoor tennis courts with observation mezzanine
- Deli/café
- Retail shop
- Party rooms
- 2 community meeting rooms with demonstration kitchen
- Elevated 1/7-mile walk/jog track
- Fitness assessment area
- Medical Suite for Altru Health Systems
- Truyu Medical and Day Spa
- USDA Human Nutrition Lab

FOR MORE INFORMATION: [www.choicehf.com](http://www.choicehf.com)

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