

COMMUNITY CENTERS

# Creating a Wellness Culture

HMC  
Architects

# Meet Our Experts



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## Kyle Peterson

COMMUNITY + CULTURE PRACTICE LEADER

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**As HMC's community + culture practice leader and managing principal for HMC's San Diego office, Kyle has a passion for supporting the specific needs of communities through public buildings.** With over 20 years of experience, he works closely with city planners, communities, and contractors—using comprehensive surveys and evidence-based design to create purposeful, cost-effective civic buildings and centers.

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## James Krueger

DIRECTOR OF DESIGN

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**James is the director of design at HMC Architects and leads design work and teams across California and in multiple practices.** With over 20 years of experience, James brings a depth of experience and unique design perspective to his projects. What inspires James' work is the idea that everything HMC builds has a positive impact on the lives of each client. In a firm that focuses primarily on education, healthcare, and civic markets, the facilities that HMC creates are focused on improving the fabric of the communities they serve.

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Empowering youth.  
Strengthening neighborhoods.  
Providing life-enriching  
programs for a beautiful,  
livable community. Parks and  
recreation centers are more than  
amenities. They serve as leaders  
in community wellbeing.

While pressure from the pandemic wanes, we are experiencing high mental and physical illness associated with long-term health conditions, unhealthy lifestyles, and an aging population. The isolation that came with the pandemic has affected our society in profound ways, and many communities are fractured.

As we struggle to make sense of the changing world, we must use this moment to invest in design's restorative power as a public good. To create places that offer meaningful connections and support. Places that are not just good-looking, but good for us.



A woman with dark curly hair, wearing a light blue surgical face mask and a dark grey tank top, is climbing a rock wall. She is using colorful climbing holds: a large red one at the top left, a green one she is currently holding, and another green one below it. Her right arm is extended upwards, reaching for a hold further up the wall. The background shows more of the rock wall with various other holds in different colors like purple, yellow, and black. The lighting is bright, suggesting an indoor climbing gym.

**“There is no power  
for change greater  
than a community  
discovering what it  
cares about.”**

Margaret J. Wheatley,  
American author



# IT'S ABOUT PEOPLE.

***A community is not necessarily a place or a building. It's a feeling of belonging and relationships among others with common interests.***

People have a great need for one another. And in their community, they feel a sense of trust, safety, and caring.

While a community is not necessarily a building, a community center acts as a neighborhood focal point for people of all ages.

These spaces:

- Promote socialization, relationships, and mutual support
- Help to develop a sense of self-reliance, social responsibility, and cohesion within the community
- Empower individuals and families in solving community problems and improving the quality of community life.

Community centers provide valuable context and environments for their communities because they provide us a **sense of place** and **belonging** and often fill the gaps in much-needed human and social services.



City of Los Banos Community Center



# IT'S ABOUT POSITIVE IMPACT.

***When neighbors share a sense of community, residents are more likely to feel safe and secure, and they have a lower fear of crime than those where there is no sense of community.***

That's a powerful statement. And that's why these centers are critical for a vibrant, healthy community—they provide opportunities for active living and recreation in a safe, inclusive environment. These facilities become essential to personal health and wellness by creating a positive atmosphere, thereby reducing reliance on healthcare and other costly social services. This, in turn, can boost the local economy and contribute to overall economic development. Now more than ever, these centers can be a beacon of social responsibility for their residents, leading the way in educating about health, nutrition, and general well-being.

Community centers can make a lasting, positive impact in many ways, including:

## **UNITING A COMMUNITY**

Community centers are multi-purpose hubs that connect people from all walks of life and offer different things for different people. The social bonds created help build strong, safe, and inclusive communities, and promote social interaction, volunteerism, and civic pride.

## **PROMOTING HEALTHY LIVING**

Physical activity has decreased disease risk, improved physical and mental well-being, and lowered the risk of injuries and premature death. A community center provides ways to be healthy and stay active.

## **COMBATING LONELINESS**

Studies show that nearly one-fifth of the population feels lonely all the time or often. Community centers provide a space for routine visits, events, and socialization for all community members, young and old. From youth soccer games to weekly farmers' markets, community centers offer regular opportunities to come together as a group and form connections with fellow locals.

## **CHILDCARE AND REDUCED YOUTH CRIME RATES**

Many sports complexes have included areas for after-school childcare to keep kids out of an empty home while their parents are working. This period, roughly between 3 to 6 p.m., is a peak time for juvenile crime. According to a study by the YMCA of USA, teens who do not participate in after-school programs are three times more likely to skip classes, experiment with drugs and alcohol, and be sexually active. Additionally, recreation and sports facilities offer summer programs that can help further physical and mental growth in kids, which can benefit families tremendously.





City of Irvine Quail Hill Community Park



### INCREASING PROPERTY VALUE

Recreation centers, as part of a park system, drive property value increases. According to a report by the University of Washington, homes within a quarter mile of a park are 10 percent more valuable on average. Recreation centers and parks are often viewed as a symbol of community pride and active recreation centers offer abundant activities that enhance the lives of those around them.

### BOOSTING STUDENTS PERFORMANCE

Recreation center programs can be a critical part of increasing student achievement. A variety of studies indicate this, including ones done by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and The After-School Corporation, among others. After-school programs can positively impact classroom behavior, test scores, and reading and math achievement. After-school programs have also been shown to enhance experiential learning.

### PROVIDING MUCH-NEEDED EVENT SPACE

When it comes to weddings and other family and social gatherings, community centers provide people with a cost-effective facility to hire out space that's likely right in their neighborhood.

### PUBLIC SAFETY

Among the great programs offered at recreation centers throughout the country, ones that promote safety, including CPR and first aid classes, are among the most important. Many recreation centers offer swimming lessons for children and adults at little cost, along with courses on water safety. Additionally, recreation centers provide a meeting space for community members to discuss important issues such as crime prevention and disaster preparation.

### PROVIDING VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Community centers can offer a respite from day-to-day life with opportunities to volunteer. This gives people a chance to build their confidence and be part of a team, meet new friends, and learn new skills they can take into other aspects of their lives.







# IT'S ABOUT RESONATING WITH THE COMMUNITIES IT'S MEANT TO SERVE.

***There is no question that these centers are priceless amenities.***

From spaces that promote artistic explorations and health-focused activities to event spaces that can be leased out for weddings and other various-sized events, these community resources provide value that extends far beyond the walls of each facility. These opportunities are vital to creating a connected, vibrant, and active community.

The following are three case studies of HMC-designed community centers that exhibit our mission—***Design for Good.***



**40,300**  
SF

## The Town of Mammoth Lakes Community Recreation Center

**100k**  
PROJECTED  
ANNUAL VISITS**2023**  
COMPLETION  
DATE

The Town of Mammoth Lakes, located in the Eastern Sierra Nevada Mountains, is known for the beautiful landscape's myriad outdoor recreational opportunities, such as skiing, snowboarding, hiking, and fishing. While all these activities occur outdoors, there are limited options for indoor recreational activities, especially during times of inclement weather. To keep the town's residents and visitors entertained during these times, and to attract new visitors, the new Community Recreation Center (CRC) provides 40,300 SF of interior conditioned space for indoor recreational opportunities, including an Olympic-sized ice rink.

Open all year, the CRC will meet the mission of the Parks and Recreation Department to provide multipurpose, year-round indoor and outdoor recreation opportunities accessible to all residents and visitors. The goal is to create a recreation destination that encompasses a wide variety of complementary, high-quality, and affordable recreation activities all in one location in the vibrant downtown area.

The CRC will unify the community by delivering a recreation destination that will encourage and facilitate social interaction and provide enhanced and innovative program offerings that promote healthy and active lifestyles for all ages, all while allowing for the passive enjoyment of the nearby Mammoth Creek Park.



The town has been actively searching for a permanent home for a covered ice rink and multi-use facility for over twenty years. The CRC replaced an existing, smaller outdoor ice rink that was in poor condition due to its age and unusable for most of the winter due to extreme weather conditions.

HMC teamed with Sprung Structures to design a tensile structure that provides a cost-effective 140-foot clear-span building that met the town's challenging seismic conditions and heavy snow loads. The kit-of-parts Sprung system allowed for quick erection of its prefabricated structural components and skin to ensure that the building is dried-in before winter snows halt construction activities.

HMC incorporated the town's color scheme along with prominent signage to customize the exterior skin of the CRC and brand it as a civic building. We strategically placed the building on the southwest corner of the existing Mammoth Creek Park site to mitigate noise from neighboring homes, maximize views and parking, and enhance the use of the existing playground, field, and trails.

HMC worked closely with specialty consultants in the programming and design of the ice rink to ensure that it would function adequately in Mammoth's climate and meet all the requirements of competitive figure skating and ice hockey, from youth leagues to potentially Olympic and National Hockey League. Aside from competitive events, the CRC will also be open to the community and its visitors for public skating and will feature rentals and concessions.

The CRC will welcome new skaters to the ice for public skate sessions, curling, broomball, figure skating, and hockey. As time passes, residents will enroll themselves and their children in advanced figure skating and hockey sessions while the adult hockey league swells to an advanced league. Mammoth Lakes Youth Hockey will introduce more and more kids of all ages to the ice while building travel teams and hosting several multi-day tournaments welcoming teams from around the state. Locker and team rooms allow for the athletes to change into and out of their equipment onsite.

The town's thousands of winter visitors will enjoy an indoor skating experience on professionally maintained ice, and, over time, will become regular skaters bringing their family and friends. The CRC will infuse a lifelong love of skating in youth, adults, and the young at heart.

The CRC serves as a space for the community to gather in all seasons for recreational activities and features multi-modal sports opportunities. In the summer, the Olympic-sized arena will be transformed into a fully programmable and multi-use 20,000 SF Rec Zones, serving as the base camp for the town's expanding Parks and Recreation Department summer camps and programs.

The Rec Zone includes a portable sports floor that can be placed in the ice rink area to allow for community-use basketball, volleyball, futsal, and pickleball. Additionally, the town's Parks and Recreation department has also discussed the possibility of holding concerts and farmer's markets within the wide-open space of the CRC.

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***Combined with community-driven and professionally branded programming, the new Community Recreation Center operated by the Parks and Recreation Department will be a game-changer for recreation in Mammoth Lakes.”***

**Stuart Brown**  
Parks and Recreation  
Director

“

***The entire project was designed to emphasize programming, ensuring programming informs the design. All components of the project were designed to be complementary to and with each other, including connecting with natural features of the park.”***

**Betsy Truax**, chair,  
Mammoth Lakes  
Recreation Commission









“

*The guiding principle builds from the ‘A Town Within a Park’ concept to deliver residents and visitors high-quality, complementary recreation facilities in the vibrant downtown area.”*

**John Wentworth**  
Mammoth Lakes Town  
Council





# 12,700 SF Santee Community Center

**\$13.7**  
million

PROJECT  
COST

The city of Santee in Southern California has been developing a number of public amenities as part of their comprehensive master plan, including the recently completed Mast Park, and the newly planned Santee Community Center designed by HMC Architects.

Seen as the architectural jewel of the park system, the Santee Community Center sits directly next to Woodglen Vista Creek, a water shed of the San Diego River natural waterway system. This special site allows this facility to be seen as a gateway to nature, and to the park system it serves. The design team worked closely with the city to develop a rich program that offers flexible spaces of various sizes that can be used for several different functions throughout the year.

**71%**

ENERGY USE  
REDUCTION

**2025**

COMPLETION  
DATE









“

***The clear choice was HMC Architects. Their approach to the design was exactly in line with the City of Santee's goals and setting.”***

**Bill Maertz,**  
Director of Community  
Services Departments,  
City of Santee

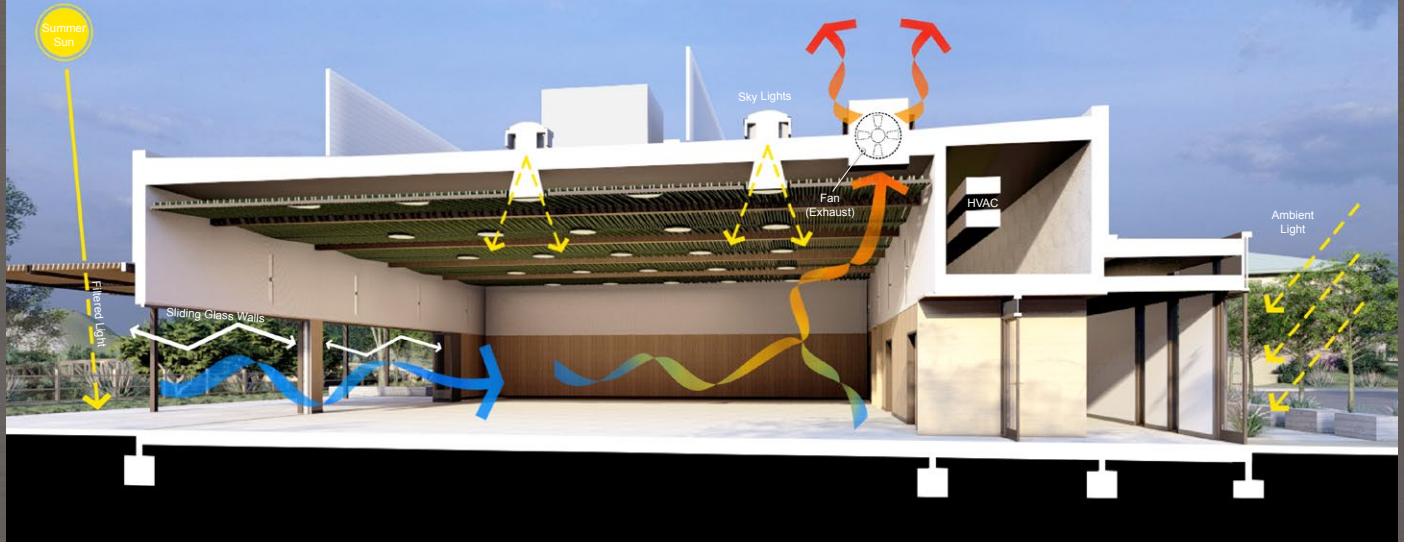
There are a number of different community groups that have been considered in the design, including spaces for teens and senior activities. All of the event spaces overlook the creek and frame views to nature creating a biophilic environment, that inspires.

Sliding glass walls allow daylight and fresh air to permeate, creating a healthy interior environment for all. Outdoor patios and shade structures extend to the south offering relief from the summer sun, and native landscaping dapples the edges of the site naturally transitioning to the banks of the creek.

These outdoor spaces are designed to allow for various uses and create swing/expansion space for the event rooms. The two-story entry/lobby space allows access to the event center on the second level with a large outdoor deck that allows for unobstructed views of the creek and sunsets.



**PERSPECTIVE SECTION  
THROUGH EVENT CENTER  
(LOOKING WEST)**



**PERSPECTIVE SECTION  
THROUGH LOBBY  
(LOOKING WEST)**







# 19,000

SF

## Quail Hill Community Center

248k

RESIDENTS  
SERVED

2018

COMPLETION  
DATE

In the city of Irvine, California, the Quail Hill Community Center serves as another gateway that connects to the Irvine Open Space Preserve, a designated natural landmark. This community center is one of the largest in the area and serves to bring the region together through education and exploration.

The goal in the design of this facility was to create connected indoor and outdoor spaces that offer various activities, programs and classes—all connected to nature. Many of the lessons offered focus on educating visitors about the local flora and fauna and connecting users to the local trail system that extends through the Quail Hill Loop Trail leading to the coast.





Given the educational goals, it was essential to incorporate a sustainable approach to the site and building design. The design team incorporated several strategies to reduce energy and water use including solar panel arrays, high-efficiency LED lighting, low water use fixtures, and native landscaping. These strategies resulted in a LEED Gold certification through the U.S. Green Building Council. Inside the building, we created four key program zones: an exercise room for wellness activities such as dance and yoga classes; classrooms for early childhood education and other special interest classes; a space for fine arts camps and adult art classes; and a rentable conference center for large training events, weddings, and other group activities.

Outdoor spaces include interpretive gardens, interactive components for educational opportunities, and a playground for adventure play. The new community center facilitates learning, play and exploration—ultimately contributing to the education and well-being of the more than 300,000 residents it serves.









A community center is the most outward expression of a city's investment in their residents. They are places that bring the community together and become the heart of the town in which they reside.

We are proud to help our clients fulfill their vision, and to create meaningful and flexible community centers that stand the test of time.



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## design for good.

Founded with the purpose of anticipating community needs, HMC aims to create designs that have a positive impact, now and into the future.

We focus primarily on opportunities to have the most direct contribution to communities — through healthcare, education, and civic spaces.

Learn more at  
[hmcarchitects.com](http://hmcarchitects.com)

