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The *Academy of Business Research Journal* is an interdisciplinary journal dealing with issues in business and education. Any Best Paper award at an Academy of Business Research conference will automatically be placed into the review process for possible acceptance into the *Academy of Business Research Journal*. Direct submissions to the *Academy of Business Research Journal* are reviewed on a continuing basis. Submissions may be made by submitting a copy of your article either in Microsoft Word or PDF format to info@academyofbusinessresearch.com.

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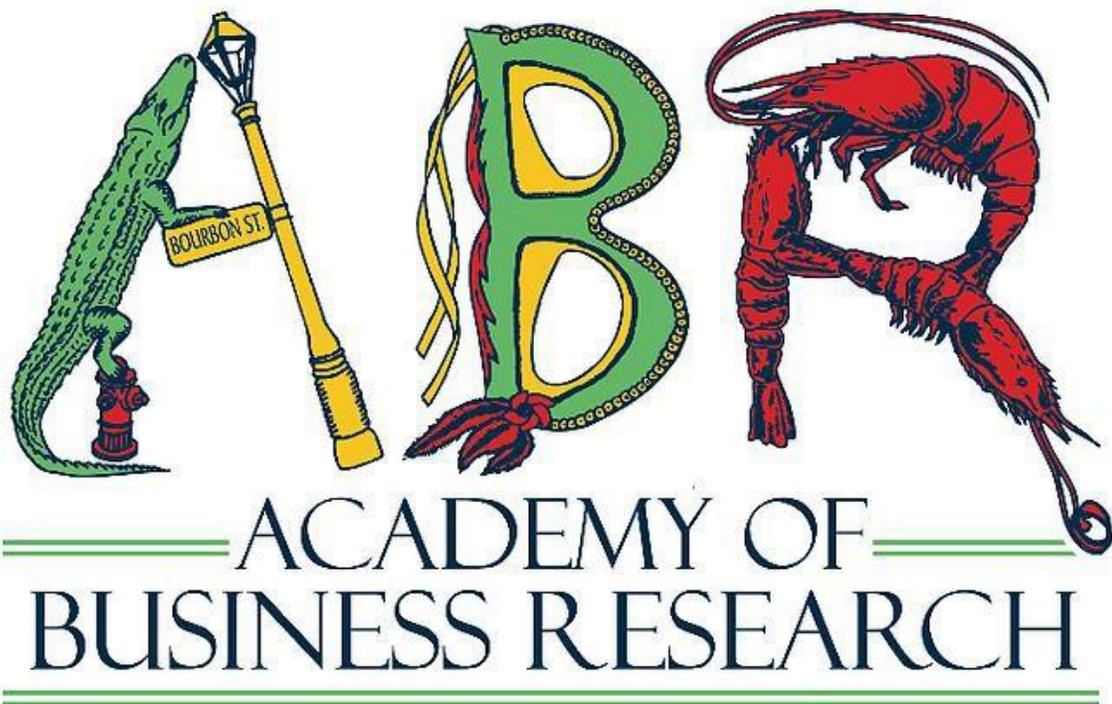
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Brooks City-Base: The Astute Rebranding of a National Icon

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ABSTRACT

From 1917 to 2011, Brooks City-Base served as a landmark of San Antonio and the United States Air Force, until its mandated closure, a casualty of military restructuring of functions and operations. Leading up to its demise and to avert any future considerations for closure, local and state officials lobbied the Pentagon towards a novel City-Base agreement. Accordingly, stakeholders pioneered a plan to partner with the City of San Antonio, thus, chartering a unique public-private, shared operating expenses relationship, the first of its type for any military installation in the nation. As an incentive, Pentagon officials encouraged San Antonio officials towards a transformation of acquired Brooks City-Base real estate into a business, research, and technology park that might, at that time, complement military operations. Faced with the ultimate decision to shutter military operations, Brooks City-Base alternated to marketing its commercial park complex. However, plagued with somewhat steady but tepid growth, anxious policy makers in local government strived for a more forward-thinking and ingeniously aggressive approach. In response, Brooks City-Base emerged a master-planned, mixed-use community, which boasts commercial, retail, and residential properties. Moreover, salaries at Brooks City-Base remain competitive, averaging \$50,000 a year. This case study presents innovative approaches championed by decision-makers, which may be adopted for the revitalization of inner cities, applicable markets, or potential business models.

Keywords: Revitalization; Mixed-use Community; Restructuring; Community-planning

Introduction

For more than 300 years, the City of San Antonio has continually enjoyed a mutually unique bond with the military community. As one of the only cities with a large population of active duty and retired service-members, San Antonio is affectionately known as Military City, USA. Spanish missionaries settled the city in the 1700s, which today ranks as second largest in Texas, and eighth largest in the Nation. With a booming population of over one million residents, San Antonio is less than a day's drive to Austin, Dallas, Houston, and the Gulf of Mexico (Martin, et al., 2002).

Over the years, the city has emerged as a leader in biotechnology, health care, international trade, and tourism. On the technological front, San Antonio has reported significant gains in the cybersecurity, manufacturing, telecommunications, and research and development sectors (Clevenger,

2016). A pillar of research and development, Southeast San Antonio has marveled in the pioneering successes and innovations advanced at the former Brooks Air Force Base (Brooks AFB).

This relationship dates back to 1917, when the Army Air Corps established Brooks Field as one of the many facilities where cadets attended flight training. This mission continued for more than thirty years, but when the United States Air Force (USAF) became an independent branch of the military services in 1947, military leaders renamed the site Brooks AFB (HABS TX-3521, 2017). Despite decades of contributions by the military and civilian workforce to medical and aerospace research, the 1995 Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) recommended Brooks and other bases for closure (Alcott, 2017). The intent of these proposals was to streamline government spending; however, a final review by the panel resulted in the removal of Brooks AFB from the list of recommended installations.

Over time, local leaders considered the impact that the closure of Brooks AFB might have on the San Antonio. In 1999, San Antonio officials proposed to the United States Congress and the State of Texas, an innovative solution. A first of its type in the Nation was approved and the creation of the Brooks City-Base (BC-B) concept began. The strategic goal was to forestall any future consideration of closing Brooks by advancing the appointment of the Brooks Development Authority (BDA), an oversight committee established by the San Antonio City Council. While stakeholders approved this measure in 2001, members of the 2005 BRAC endorsed a timely drawdown and closure of Brooks AFB. Hence, after 94 years of continual operation in South San Antonio, BC-B ceased operations on September 15, 2011 (The Evolution of Brooks, 2017).

Confronted with an uncertain future, members of the BDA shifted their sights towards reutilization of the 1,300-acre military installation. Their plan was to create a business, technology, and industrial park complex. Bolstered by the visionary approach of former San Antonio Mayor Ed Garza, such strategy fit perfectly into his innovative plan, the 2002 South Side Initiative (SSI). Also known as City South, this plan effectively energized the BC-B transformation. Once a bustling military installation, Brooks is now a master planned community consisting of many services that include retail, residential, office space, and institutions of higher learning (Dimmick, 2013).

Historical Background

Nested seven miles southeast of San Antonio, the 1,300 acre tract of land was secured by the United States Army in 1917, as the country entered World War I, to form a flight instructor training facility named Gosport Field. The namesake of the site was the Gosport method, which was a flexible speaking tube used by flight instructors to communicate corrective actions to trainees during flight training. Months later, as a result of the tragic loss of San Antonio native, Cadet Sidney Brooks Jr., on February 4, 1918, the site was renamed Brooks Field in honor of his legacy (Huddleston, 2015). Within a year, U.S. Army Air Corps military officials proposed a realignment of training missions from advanced pilot instruction to balloon and airship training. Yet, within three years, core functions were once again reverted to aircrew flight training (Alcott, 2017).

Among the more than 1,400 trainees who graduated from Brooks, were legendary aviators Charles Lindbergh, Claire L. Chenault, Lester Maitland, and Jimmy Doolittle. In the 1920s, Brooks also

supported the School of Aviation Medicine, paratrooper warfare, and special tactics warfare. The latter proved invaluable to combat operations for warriors in World War II. The site of the first mass paratrooper drop in U.S. military history, Brooks continually evolved in the 1940s, with the adoption of aerial observation, combat observer, and advanced flight instruction training (Alcott, 2017).

Tasked with a new focus in 1945, military leaders reassigned missions from training to tactical operations. However, with the 1947 announcement of an independent USAF, the site regained its core function of training, and acquired the coveted USAF Security Service, a provider of communications intelligence training to crypto analysts, radio intercept operators, and Russian language analysts. The base also contributed immensely to advancements in manned flights and space medicine studies, and served as home to the USAF Research Laboratory, USAF Occupational and Environmental Health Laboratory, and the USAF Drug Testing Laboratory (Alcott, 2017).

The Research and Aerospace Medicine Era

The launch of space exploration in the 1950s afforded new opportunities for Brooks. Flight operations ended in 1959, and a transformation towards medical research, development, and education was born. With the incorporation of the School of Aviation Medicine in 1959, Brooks became home to Headquarters, Aerospace Medical Center, a move that strengthened relations between the U.S. Space Program and the School of Aviation Medicine (Alcott, 2017). For Russia, the 1957 launch of Sputnik, months before the U.S. Explorer space mission, marked a new age in space exploration, as the former entered the world stage with the orbit of Yuri Gagarin, the first human traveler to enter outer space (Christenson, 2015).

Led by controversial former Nazi German scientist Dr. Hubertus Strughold, USAF scientists at the School of Aviation Medicine researched the effects a mission to the moon might have on endurance of the human body. Cautiously, Dr. Strughold guided the painstaking task of life-support apparatus development and medical research, critical to manned travel and survival of astronauts in outer space (Christenson, 2015). His intellect contributed greatly to the U.S. Space Program, and preceded the founding of National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1958 (HABS TX-3521, 2017).

Meanwhile, Americans continued shaping the space program from the ground up. Spending seven days inside a pressurized chamber at Randolph AFB, test subject USAF Airman First Class Donald Farrell simulated the confines of space travel, while enclosed in a cabin the size of a small, walk-in closet. His 168 hours in the cabin known as Terrela 1 or Little Earth consisted of scheduled experiments; researchers awoke him in patterns of four and a half hours to test for mood, judgment, alertness, and fatigue (Christenson, 2015).

Essentially, these experiments shed an analysis on reactions of the human body to environmental conditions similar to those experienced if living in a space capsule. At the end of his study, Farrell emerged from Terrela 1 to be greeted by Senate Majority Leader Lyndon Baines Johnson. The first ever chairperson of the Space Committee, Johnson lauded Farrell and proudly proclaimed, “You have given us our greatest hope of peace in this world” a historical event that garnered national

media attention, as the New York Times classified Farrell as the “first space traveler” of the United States (Christenson, 2015).

At the request of the newly formed NASA, researchers at the USAF School of Aerospace Medicine warned the agency of findings discovered in previous research, revealing how the use of pure oxygen significantly increases the risk of fire, if used in the spacecraft environment. However, because the agency had previously relied on pure oxygen in their work on the Apollo I and Gemini capsules, NASA challenged those findings. This decision proved catastrophic, and contributed to the January 27, 1967 loss of Apollo astronauts Gus Grissom, Edward H. White III, and Roger B. Chafee, in a flash fire aboard their space capsule.

Days later, a similar blaze at Brooks claimed the lives of USAF Airmen First Class Richard Harmon and William Bartley Jr. While confined in a ground based cabin, the Airmen breathed a pure oxygen atmosphere, similar to that of the Apollo astronauts. A setback for the U.S. space program, this tragedy forced a system redesign that relied on a mix of 21% oxygen and 78% nitrogen, similar to the atmosphere breathed on earth, to mitigate the risk of human loss under similar circumstances (Christenson, 2015).

Brooks AFB, the hallmark of the space program, cemented a legacy that earned the respect and admiration of America and its allies. One of the strongest supporters of the space program, President John F. Kennedy, visited the base on November 21, 1963, to inaugurate the USAF School of Aerospace Medicine and the Aerospace Medicine Center. Moreover, Kennedy gracefully saluted the outstanding group of pioneers that contributed to space missions, a memorable event that became his final official act as leader of the free world (Christenson, 2015).

The Brooks City-Base Transition

As a result of an exclusive land-sharing agreement, outlining more than \$7 million in reported savings to the Pentagon annually, local leaders expected to solidify the long-term future of BC-B. With the military ceasing operations, BDA officials assumed the management of infrastructure projects, and the challenging tasks of recruiting businesses to the former installation. As part of the SSI proposed by former Mayor Ed Garza, the San Antonio City Council approved the annexation of more than 35,000 acres, which amounted to nearly 60 square miles of land that experienced minimal growth across the San Antonio metropolitan area.

Surprisingly, the Toyota Motor Corporation announced in February 2003 that it had closed on more than 2,000 acres in a designated SSI area of South San Antonio, to construct its newest manufacturing plant in North America (Price, 2004). Spurred by the Toyota commitment and an emphasis on rural and cultural integrity, stakeholders enacted a plan crafted by the Washington, D.C. based Urban Land Institute (ULI) to promote growth in South San Antonio, particularly, with areas where people could live, shop, learn, and work, all within a five mile radius (Price, 2004).

In their assessments, ULI consultants emphasized that stakeholders should mastermind a South Side identity, by teaming with local colleges and school districts, to effectively advance regional educational initiatives. ULI also proposed the future hiring of independent planning, design, and

market potential teams, to commission a master plan for a study, geared towards shaping a community-based vision, while serving as a metric for refining previously fielded recommendations. Consultants also urged that with exceptions, implementation of such large-scale master plans might require adjustments over lengthy periods. As a result, proper planning should entail a phased approach, for accommodations in infrastructure and future development of cost effective areas (Martin, et al., 2002).

Both the Toyota announcement and in-depth report from ULI helped, to some extent, frame the direction for Tom Rumora, the first-ever Executive Director of the BDA. Initially, Rumora contracted with advertiser KGBTexas to provide strategic and marketing guidance for the only city-base in the nation (Bailey, 2005). In 2003, the BDA also enlisted teams of consultants, advisors, and contractors from more than 20 organizations, all recognized in industry as “best in their respective fields,” to accelerate and maximize the potential of BC-B facilities (San Antonio Business Journal, 2003).

Rumora presided over the \$10.5 million Goliad Road to BC-B intersection access project, engineered to alleviate flooding in problem areas. The result was renewed public interest in the 570,000 square foot real estate development. Rumora also provided oversight for major infrastructure improvements, notably, upgrades to electrical grids, and water supply and telecommunications systems (San Antonio Business Journal, 2004). He also facilitated property leases with HOLT CAT, one of the largest Caterpillar equipment dealers in the country, and with CDO Technologies, with home offices in Dayton, OH.

In 2005, Rumora tendered his resignation and was subsequently replaced by former San Antonio City Manager Alex Briseño, as interim BDA director. Within a year, Donald Jakeway was appointed executive director of the authority. Mr. Jakeway managed the \$50 million extension of South New Braunfels Avenue, an infrastructure upgrade vital to securing future high visibility projects, specifically, the proposed construction of Mission Trail Baptist Hospital at BC-B. With a new approach, Jakeway opted for acquiring tenants with specialties in the biosciences, health care, research and development, technology, and aerospace industries. Markedly, Jakeway converged on pursuing long-term, self-sustaining economic development opportunities, and embraced the marketing of BC-B as a world-class hub for technology and research (Elizarraras, 2008).

In spite of the Great Recession, growth at Brooks improved under Jakeway’s leadership. In addition to officiating the ceremonial opening of the Brooks Academy of Science and Engineering Charter School, Jakeway presided over the inauguration of a \$24.5 million Regional Emergency Operations Center (San Antonio Business Journal, 2006). Further, he rebranded the former military family housing into the Heritage Oaks civilian community, and inked a successful partnership with NRP Group, LLC to develop a new 300-unit residential complex. These and other impactful business decisions translated into incentives for retailers, who respectively, populated the northern edge of City-Base with big box stores and restaurants (Jefferson, 2013).

While Jakeway claimed numerous successes for BC-B and Southeast San Antonio, he too tendered his resignation after seven years on the job, handing control to Roland Lozano, as interim executive director. According to BDA Chairman Manuel Pelaez-Prada, while a renewed search for chief executive was in place, a consensus existed that the incumbent possess certain salient traits,

specifically in the areas of “temperament, personality, and interpersonal skills” and an ability to “get projects in front of the right people and get them done” (Jefferson, 2013).

Teamed with head-hunting firm Deacon Recruiting, BDA officials launched a national search, which produced 6,000 candidate applications. From this pool of candidates, 400 were interviewed, and five were selected as finalists. BDA decision-makers expanded their mindset beyond hiring any uniquely qualified candidate, but instead, hoped to secure the services of a proven and competent leader, capable of elevating the City-Base vision to a higher level. Pointedly, Chairman Pelaez-Prada stated, the new CEO should share a “passion for the mission, passion for San Antonio, and particularly, passion for the Southeast Side of San Antonio” (Loyd, 2013).

Nearly a year after the departure of Jakeway, BDA officials appointed Mr. Leo Gomez as President and CEO of BC-B. Prior to this appointment, Gomez served as vice president of public and government affairs for Spurs Sports and Entertainment, and chairman of San Antonio for Growth on the Eastside. With proven accomplishments across San Antonio, Gomez fit the mold of that passionate who could reinvigorate the vision of the new BC-B. Well connected in business circles, Gomez once led the San Antonio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and served as vice president of public affairs for the Greater San Antonio Chamber of Commerce.

Gomez’s impressive record of accomplishments includes the acquisition, planning, and construction of the AT&T Center, and the large-scale effort to devise win-win incentives that influenced the relocation of twenty-one parts suppliers to the proximities of the Toyota Motors Manufacturing facility. At BC-B, Gomez advanced a new culture and strategic mindset that forged a visionary approach, and inherent passion for piloting the former military base towards a higher level.

The Revitalization of Brooks City-Base

Newly minted as President and CEO, Gomez assured the preservation of military history at the former installation. In continued reverence to Sidney J. Brooks Jr., the headstone at the memorial site is adorned with a bronze eagle. In addition, the legacy of another national historic landmark referred to as Hangar 9, which stands in its original location since constructed in 1917, is maintained (Huddleston, 2015). In contrast, Gomez and the board of trustees diverted from the decades old ambition of creating a research, science, and technology park, and launched a forward thinking effort that linked future strategy to actual market indicators (Rivard, 2015).

In response, BDA officials chartered a new mission statement, the result was a radical transformation that catapulted unprecedented growth on BC-B and Southeast San Antonio communities. Rooted in the new strategy was a request for qualifications, which when reviewed by the BDA, resulted in an award for contracted services with real estate firm Live Oak-Gottesman of Austin Texas, as master developers of the City-Base project. The result was a mixed-use community centered on residential, retail, and commercial development. This, officials believed, would reverse a longstanding elusive effort of persuading employers to the Southside to boost employment as never experienced before.

Charged with a new master plan, BDA officials devised a new model to advance future development under a concept of “one district at a time” (Silva, 2014). Matt Whelan, principal at Live Oak Gottesman, explained the new land use plan as inclusive to existing businesses and partnerships at Brooks, whose legacy provides a solid foundation so City-Base may achieve its maximum potential. First, a convergence of high-density development, primarily apartments, retail, and schools would be allocated to District A, along with the new School of Osteopathic Medicine at the University of the Incarnate Word (UIW). In the second segment, District B includes a campus of UIW, adjacent to the newly constructed Mission Trail Baptist Hospital. Lastly, sitting on approximately 600 acres is District C, an economic development segment where residents and employers could experience the vibrant lifestyle of this mixed-use, master planned community. Moreover, Gomez elucidated, revenues generated in Districts A and B might create incentives, attractive to firms considering future tenancy in District C (Silva, 2014).

The revolutionary effects of this revamped master plan paid off handsomely; evident by the non-stop growth and prosperity at BC-B and Southeast San Antonio. At the conclusion of military operations in 2011 and departure of Jakeway in 2013, tenants at BC-B numbered around 20 at the business, science, and technology park. On the contrary, Gomez is committed to doubling this number in scope, as more businesses contemplate migration towards this South San Antonio community. With a workforce of 4,600 employees, BC-B has almost doubled that of the approximate 2,700 working at the former base in its military heyday. Besides, Gomez has set the bold prediction of doubling the number of jobs to approximately 9,000 over the next seven years (Rivard, 2015).

True to its heritage, the dynamic revitalization of BC-B and Southeast San Antonio has been phenomenal. Growth continues at its fastest pace since the departure of military forces in 2011. Essentially, BC-B has emerged as a medical care and research stronghold. Its diverse portfolio includes alliances with medical, pharmaceuticals, renewable energy, and higher education partners. With the addition of Brooks Medical Plaza, BC-B expands its medical profile with specialized clinics, complementing the daily operations of UIW and Mission Trails Baptist Hospital. Further, San Antonio and BC-B holds the special distinction of being the only city in the State of Texas with both University of Texas and Texas A&M campuses.

Conclusion

With the BC-B transition to the Gomez era, some stakeholders raised concerns about the shift from the decades old plan for developing a business, research, and technology park to a mixed-used community. Some expected, at best effort, progressive growth. But, in a reversal of the status-quo, Gomez and BDA officials employed a radical change, listened to the market, and advanced a new beginning, culminating to a master planned, mixed-use community.

As a public-private partnership, BC-B delivers unique incentives to potential partners as presented below (Incentives and Partnerships, 2017):

Tax-Free Land. The campus is exempt from property tax as long as Brooks retains fee simple title to the property. BC-B works with clients to develop projects that take maximum advantage of this benefit.

Flexible Financing. As the owner and developer, BC-B can structure project financing in a variety of ways, ensuring a project structure that makes the most financial sense for clients.

Less Red Tape. The BC-B Board of Directors has legislative authority over development on the property. The result is a streamlined approach to procurement and the ability to accelerate project development schedules.

Build-to-Suit. BC-B offers over 750 acres of land for development.

Established design and development standards. The Brooks design and development standards create a clear strategy for development on the campus, which gives an added layer of confidence to new project development.

In addition, BC-B has established tenancy and ownership agreements with more than 40 businesses and organizations, producing an annual revenue of \$8.6 million and more than 3,000 jobs with average salaries of \$50,000 annually (Carneiro, 2017). Surely, the revolutionary decision to reverse an embedded course of action faced significant risk. However, Gomez and BDA officials delivered a game-changer; a successful business model for reutilization of former military installations or underutilized areas in the United States or markets overseas.

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