



AUBURN UNIVERSITY RECREATION AND WELLNESS CENTER

Cost of project: **\$54 million**
 Square footage: **240,000 square feet**
 Indoor track length: **1/3 mile (536 meters)**
 Student population: **25,000**
 Facility users: **Students, staff and faculty**
 Capacity: **4,000 patrons per day**
 Opening day: **August 19, 2013**

(USA)

THE NEW RECREATION AND WELLNESS CENTER OF AUBURN UNIVERSITY IS A SIGHT TO APPLAUSE. ITS HEART IS A CUSTOM MONDO ORANGE JOGGING TRACK.

“The recreation and wellness center has been getting incredible use. They have a seventy percent participation rate on campus contributing significantly to the student life there, and it is also a terrific benefit for recruiting.” says James Braam, vice president and director, sports + recreation + entertainment for HOK

A STRUCTURE WITHOUT PRECEDENT

When the administrators of Auburn University in Auburn, Alabama began the process of adding a new recreation facility to the campus, it is unlikely they could have envisioned the unique end result they received. But thanks to the creative team at **HOK Architects** (formerly 360 Architects) and help from their own students, they can proudly say they have a one-of-a-kind facility – a **240,000 square-foot** fitness complex featuring a **winding, elevated, one-third of a mile** indoor jogging/walking track complete with a corkscrew component that is the first of its kind in North America.

DESIGN IT AND THEY WILL COME.

The recreation and wellness center includes something for everyone. A **five story fitness tower** offers many options for exercise including **mind-body studios** on the top floor, cycling one floor down, a **circuit** on the level below and **six courts** on the ground floor. The signature piece to the complex is the **large orange track** that dominates the building and is a show stopper from the moment people enter the complex.

The concept for the track was driven by the students from Auburn University. “Involving the students was a good thing,” says **James Braam**, vice president and director, sports + recreation + entertainment for HOK. “They wanted something that was completely different and unique so they challenged us to come up with a truly creative design. We gave them several options on jogging tracks but when we proposed the corkscrew, the decision was unanimous. They were excited and said ‘yes, that’s what we want’.”



NOT YOUR ORDINARY WORKOUT

One interesting thing about this track is having different routes people can take. "That was another important thing for the students," says Braam. "They want to create their own workout instead of just walking on the treadmill for half an hour. On this track you can run around four courts, six courts or you can run the full one third of a mile. When you are running on the flat track in the gym and reach the incline on the corkscrew, it's a fantastic feeling.

"You can do combinations of laps as well so if you want to keep doing more of the interval hill, you can run your lap short and keep coming back or change the route as you go. It's also pretty rare to have an indoor jogging track where you make both left and right hand turns. Because we wanted to be sure safety was a priority, we designed it like a freeway with on ramps and off ramps so you could see where you're going."

Because the track runs through the entire building it is almost like taking an amusement park ride. Participants get **a tour through the entire facility** as they run or walk and they can see the different activities available or watch other people working out.

IT'S A LIFESTYLE

Braam says it has been fascinating to see how a project like this creates a student lifestyle and has transformed Auburn University beyond just being an educational facility. "The recreation and wellness center has been getting incredible use. They have a seventy percent participation rate on campus contributing significantly to the student life there, and it is also a terrific benefit for recruiting." He adds the entire facility is **ADA (American Disabilities Act)** **a c c e s s i b l e .**

The design of the recreation and wellness center incorporates the **school colors** of orange and blue with the track itself being solid orange, creating a dramatic focal point everywhere in the building. **Landscape graphics** were added to the walls using photographs of the forest areas around the city of Auburn. "We used the photo murals because running one third of a mile track is a long way. The idea was to bring the outdoors in and make you feel like you're running through the forest," says Braam. Other nature murals bring the relaxing theme to selected areas of the building.

MONDO MAKES THE GRADE

Several high quality product surfaces for flooring and the elevated track were considered and ultimately Mondo was selected, **Sport Impact** and **Super X**. Its ease of maintenance and proven longevity of both the flooring and track are highly desirable. The administration members at Auburn, like all universities, are always aware of budget versus value with anything they install. Mondo products are helping attain those long term goals and provide cost-effective maintenance schedules.

Mondo rolled goods were used throughout the facility and the color choices not only tied in with the school colors, they also blended into the added décor. "The flooring really did accent the track because the fitness areas were done in beautiful hues of greens and greys that are meant to complement the orange track rather than compete with it. The colors also tied in to the beautiful murals."

AN INSIDER'S VIEW

Jennifer Jarvis, executive director of campus recreation and Auburn University alumna is more than thrilled with the completion of the recreation and wellness center. "It is an amazing addition to the campus and I pinch myself almost every day that I get to work here. Pictures do not do it justice – you have to experience it in person." She says in addition to the track and workout areas, **the center also offers five climbing options** – two 50-foot climbing towers, two bouldering caves – indoor and outdoor, and a climbing wall at the leisure activity pool.

"We also have a beautiful area in the building called the Livingston courtyard that is covered with about 150 different species of plants and a fountain," says Jarvis. "You can go outside, but you are still within the confines of the facility. It's a very calming place where people can get away from all the activity or stress of studying and relax in tranquil surroundings."

She says the entire building has a big wow factor, but every day she finds she has a different favorite part of building. "It's pretty incredible. We are very blessed and humbled to have such a wonderful addition to the Auburn campus."

In March 2015, Auburn University hosted its first big conference at the recreation and wellness center, with over 30 schools from across the southeast region of the country in attendance.





