

Jason Hare 0:07

All right. Hello everybody. My name is Jason Hare. Welcome to Making An Impact, a series of conversations hosted by Scioto Properties that center in and around the disability community. Today, we're going to be talking construction, specifically a very interesting project in Tyler, Texas. To add to this discussion, we're going to be joined by Bill Lepper Scioto's Construction Project Manager, and Kyle Cox of Cox Design/Build in Giddings, Texas. Before we dive in, let's learn a little bit about our guests. As a graduate of the Ohio State University Bill Lepper served as president of Wallick Construction prior to his time at Scioto. There, he was involved with over 250 projects totaling over \$1 billion. Yes, that's with a B, in 13 different states. He holds a general contracting license in South Carolina, North Carolina, Ohio, and Indiana and is truly been an amazing asset to the team is at Scioto as they build their projects nationwide. Bill, we're really excited to have you here.

Bill Lepper 1:01

Thanks, Jason.

Jason Hare 1:03

And we'll introduce Kyle. Kyle is the owner of Cox Design/Build, Kyle graduated from Texas Tech. And he's been a registered architect for over 20 years at Cox Design Build. Kyle provides architectural design and construction services for custom residential homes and light commercial projects. And Kyle, great to have you as well.

Kyle Cox 1:20

Thank you. I'm glad to be here.

Jason Hare 1:22

Absolutely. All right. So let's dive in. Bill, can you tell us a little bit about the project down in Tyler?

Bill Lepper 1:28

Yeah, Jason, this, this project consists of an activity center, that's about 3000 square feet. And then on either side of the activity center, there are two eight-bedroom homes. Each of those homes are 3700 square feet, for full bathrooms, located on about two acres of property,

Jason Hare 1:53

That's awesome. So are the Activity Center and the homes connected, or are they just connected via walkway,

Bill Lepper 1:58

They're connected via walkway as a short distance. Yeah, and that the activity center is right in between, you know, both homes.

Jason Hare 2:07

So it sounds like the layout plays kind of a really key role in supporting not only the lives of the residents but also kind of making the staff's lives a little easier. Is that correct?

Bill Lepper 2:17

Yeah, I kind of feel like it's a... if you will, a small campus type setting with easy access, beautiful setting, but an easy walk to the activity center, where you know, in the activity center, there's speech therapy, occupational therapy, behavioral therapy, just a really nice facility, you know, again, within walking distance of each of the homes.

Jason Hare 2:42

Right, and this will probably be you know, where we we talked to Kyle here, but not being from Tyler, Bill, you know, how did you find the design and construction team, because I imagine that the provider approached, Scioto, and kind of let out an idea of what they were looking to do. And then it's on you to try to figure out how to make that idea come to life. So how did you start with finding not only somebody to design it, but somebody to build it as well?

Bill Lepper 3:09

Yeah, so great question. We, the provider, you know, we worked hand in hand with them. And we actually completed a similar project in the home size in in Mount Prospect, Illinois. So that was a good baseline if you will. And then so we've we recently completed a project in Fresno, California, and talked to the builder/architect out there, and they gave Kyle as a reference. Good contact. So hooked up with Kyle, he took the... the Mount Prospect floor plan, and what we wanted to do is kind of stick with the... that floor plan, but on the exterior, how could we make it fit into that existing community, the up and coming area, you know, surrounding us. So Kyle, you know, kind of redesigned the exterior to blend right in with the existing neighborhood.

Jason Hare 4:05

That's super cool. And Kyle, is this different from what you would do I say more on a regular basis at Cox Design-Build?

Kyle Cox 4:14

Well, it's, it's a little bit more, you know, on the commercial side, I'm primarily residential and the group that recommended me or I was kind of connected to we have worked together. But it's a little... yeah, it's a little bit in scope, it's a little bit more than you know, a bit larger than what I typically do but the ...you know, the build and design and everything was right, right up my alley.

Jason Hare 4:45

Right? Well, even though it kind of differed a little bit from what you did. You know, I guess might be more in the wheelhouse I know, just based on the feedback that I've seen and also the videos and pictures. Very glad that you're a part of this whole layout. out and design. And, you know, in terms of when you actually did design the project, I know that the property, I know that the provider is going to have a decent amount of input. But was there anything that you kept in the back of your mind when designing it as a goal for the property?

Kyle Cox 5:17

Well, like... like Bill was saying, you know how to fit it into the, to the area and Tyler, you

know, and so, our architectural team, they did a really good job of blending it into the site. And, you know, where Tyler is, is on the edge of what they call the pine curtain in Texas. So there's a lot of pine trees, and half, or maybe a third of the lot was, you know, 90 130 foot tall pine trees. So we had to cut into that site and kind of, you know, try to blend it into the... to the surrounding landscape.

Jason Hare 5:57

So you were mentioning it, maybe it was your build that this was sort of a tried and true layout from something done in Illinois. Is that correct?

Bill Lepper 6:07

That's correct. And Jason to add to that, so basically the floor plan, similar to the project we did in... in Illinois, but I think the unique thing with this and I credit Kyle for it, what could we do inside without changing the footprint to really make it special and... and bring natural light in. So if you look at the two homes, in the elevation, there is not skylights, but a huge, Kyle...the what you... you design there in the center, it brings in beautiful, natural light, it's a huge open space, it really, I think really sets it apart from some of the other things we've completed.

Kyle Cox 6:51

Yeah, we wanted to, we wanted to bring in some natural light, because the way that the home is laid out, it's, it's got gotta have a corridor down in the middle. And it's got doors at both ends, but there is no windows directly accessing that area. So we put a, what we call just a light cupola that lets in natural light, like right over the kitchen, and it is working out fabulously so far.

Jason Hare 7:16

And you know, one thing that I love about this... this project is it is very purpose-built, it definitely serves a purpose for individuals who, again, have a traumatic brain injury, which typically have more medical needs or behavioral health needs. So there's definitely an aspect of the property that is serving a purpose. But what you guys have done is, you know, not only did you incorporate it, as you mentioned into a community, you've also taken some aspects that really make it stand out that you make the property special, you know, it's not necessarily a place for somebody to just rehab. But it's also a place for somebody to feel comfortable, and somebody to feel, you know, that... that their services are being done outside of a hospital and in a community. And that's ultimately a very important thing to not only the residents but the providers as well.

Bill Lepper 8:06

Yeah. And Jason... by... could add the part of the design too, we were sensitive to the folks and the staff that would be on the property. And what I mean by that we have adequate parking, and a kind of unique thing, each home, we ...we built a portico share off the home, so inclement weather, whatever, it's a circle drive, and it comes up, you know, you unload or load at that point, but it's just a really unique design. You know, again, easy access, a DA compliant access, but plenty of parking, and the circular drives are just really special to each of the homes.

Jason Hare 8:50

Yeah. And this might be outside of both of your purview when it comes to the project. But in terms of licensing, and this is from a state perspective, do you know if this was a challenge to get a layout like this done, and the reason I ask is sometimes and it depends on the state that you're in, you might have a max of six occupants or a maximum of eight occupants, and it's generally a concentration thing, that some states will want less of a concentration for residents than others. So given that there's sort of a higher concentration here, but again, it's serving a sort of a campus purpose. Do you know if it was a challenge in Texas to get this approved?

Bill Lepper 9:29

So Jason, I believe, you know, working with our provider, with their help, we were able to determine that no, that wouldn't... wouldn't be a challenge. Although I credit to Kyle and his team, his third party consultants are specialties in this type of facility and Kyle, I'll let you speak about the group and how you've had inspections and they route and reviewed the plans and... and the whole premise of this was to make the licensing uneventful when we complete the project, so we have experts on board with that, that's called did you want to speak to that?

Kyle Cox 10:12

Yeah, we have a consultant out of Boston working with us without mentioning any names he, he worked with the provider on previous projects ...on an, on a six-bedroom too or a 12-bedroom project in Austin. And we brought him on board to spearhead in front of the regular regulatory agency that we have to deal with here in Texas. But he has reviewed the plans, and then he has already just recently come out and reviewed at you know, topout stays, before we do drywall, and then a report, we've talked about different things. So by having him on board, it is... it is really going to help us at the end, when we deliver the product, you know, when we're trying to get our certificate of occupancy and... and get through the approval from the state, I think it's going to ...it's going to smooth things over and help us slide through and hopefully get our... get our approval so they can open the facility in a timely manner.

Jason Hare 11:18

Right. And what I love about that is just the amount of value that you two have added to this project. And I think that speaks volumes, what you just said. So you know, kind of looking at and this maybe sticks a little bit to the licensing theme, but more from a permitting question. And Kyle, I'll start with you. This has been arguably or 2020 has been arguably one of the most challenging years to build based on the pandemic. So has the design and permitting process been affected by that?

Kyle Cox 11:48

Well, yeah, tremendously...this has been, you know, you look back on 2020 it's, it's kind of a fog, I guess, you know, just when we first started this project, we did it, we did all the design, everything via... via Zoom, phone calls, and, and the entire permitting process. I didn't even go into the city of Tyler and everything was done online. It took longer, significantly longer to get the permit, but you know, we got it. And it's, you know, we've pretty much done everything from the computer and sitting in front of the computer like we

already are right now until construction started. So it's, it's something I've never done before, you know, the meeting in person and, and, you know, just going in and talking to people in different... different aspects of the job just didn't happen. We just weren't able to do it. So it's been a pretty amazing, it's pretty amazing to look back and see what we've done. And, and a pretty, pretty reasonable amount of time really. So yeah, I mean, it definitely has affected as tremendously as far as a pandemic goes.

Jason Hare 13:03

And Bill, kind of a very similar question to you. How is the construction process in the pricing been affected by the pandemic?

Bill Lepper 13:12

Actually, as somewhat, but fortunately, we designed and Kyle was able to lock up most of his pricing then, before the pandemic hit. I would say our duration for this project is nine months. And looks like we'll be on target for that which again, my hats are off to Kyle being creative. There's been a shortage of supplies, lumber prices have increased. Windows have been difficult to get, appliances difficult to get. But because of Kyle's planning and his expertise, he's been able to, you know, overcome those obstacles. And so we're on target to complete a schedule.

Jason Hare 13:55

That's great. Man, rockstar team. Well, the last two questions and this, this first one will be for both of you. And I'll start with you, Bill. What is your favorite part of working with the provider on this project?

Bill Lepper 14:08

They know what they want. There's no hesitation if Kyle and I have a, you know, a question that needs answered or, or a comment about this, or... there's an answer. They know, they know what they want. They've been in business for several years. And it's just good to work with a professional team all of us, you know, including the provider, but just an outstanding group to work with.

Jason Hare 14:33

Right. And that's arguably can't say enough of that whenever there's consistency, and there's not any kind of back and forth that makes a lot of lives easier. And so I guess I'll pose the same thing to you, Kyle, do you have a favorite part of working with a provider here?

Kyle Cox 14:48

Well, yeah, the local I mean, I don't know if you know the story, but when the pandemic hit, they had most of their... I guess, users or the tenants that would be in this facility were in... were in a hospital and Tyler for several locations. And when the pandemic hit, they were dislodged, and they had to move them out of the hospital for, for various reasons, got sent up to Dallas, San Antonio and Austin, scattered everywhere and pretty much just disbanded. The facility here in Tyler left one person, and she is going to be the operator of the facility, it's been, it's been pretty, it's going to be pretty rewarding. In the end, I think I've been,... I've had her out to the site a couple times, I have her hardhat that she comes out

and wears when she comes on site. But she... she is excited, as can be, that's going to be my you know, with any kind of design-build process, it's the best part is in the end, when you hand it over and see the joy of people and, and knowing what they've gone through in getting these people back in in the facility is going to be you know, something to see. I think so. Right?

Bill Lepper 15:59

Yeah. And Jason to add to that, so the, you know, if you can imagine 16 families have been affected. So not only the residents of the facility, but, but their families locally there and Tyler. So as Kyle mentioned, you know, being in Dallas, San Antonio, and everything, we're excited as much as they are to get them back and reunited with their families. So we're looking forward to the grand opening.

Jason Hare 16:26

What a great point to both of you guys. Because it's funny, not only are people rooting for you guys, as I kind of mentioned earlier on social media, you know, because we get a lot of comments and a lot of interest in this project. So not only are you getting rooted ... on social media, but there's a whole backstory and the whole reason that you guys are doing this project you have, as you said, Bill, the families are rooting you guys on and the staff and the residents themselves. And it's again, it's just a very cool thing to, to hear how you guys have really added so much value to this and what it's going to become at the end. And, you know, so kind of for a final question, you know, from your experience on this project, do you have any ideas in the future to potentially streamline it in other locations? And maybe it's, I mean, nine months is insane. So it kind of sounds like you guys have streamlined it pretty well. But is there any takeaways that you would, you would take from this?

Bill Lepper 17:21

I think the takeaways for me, Jason is one how amazing it was to bring, you know, I didn't know Kyle a year ago, didn't know his team a year ago. But bring those resources together into the end be able to design something like this, I would not love nothing better than to keep this team you know, together and go on to the next project in Tyler's surrounding states. We've got a great team in place, why change it up? And I think with that, and knowing the team players, you know, we could even do bigger and greater and better things. Right.

Jason Hare 17:56

Well, you know, thanks so much, guys. That, that kind of wraps it up for, for what I wanted to, to kind of get with you guys on and to, again, give a huge thank you, Bill. And Kyle, thank you so much for joining me today. I really appreciate it.

Bill Lepper 18:10

Thanks, Jason.

Kyle Cox 18:11

Thank you. Thanks, Jason for having us.

Jason Hare 18:13

And thanks to everybody who tuned in to listen to this, we're gonna have a breakdown of this conversation uploaded to our blog at scioto.com. That's s-c-i-o-t-o dot com. There, you can find additional conversations and information for the disability community. Make sure you join us next time where we're going to meet with Kate McNulty of ANCOR and we're going to learn what's going on in her world. Make sure you sign up for our email list to ensure that you're up to date on our new podcast. And until then remember to make an impact with everything that you do. Again, my name is Jason Hare. Have a great week. So long, everybody!