

Owners close sports complex after 3 years

Financial challenges included new state energy mandates, higher taxes

BY MATT GEIGER

BUSINESSDEN

Chris Herron and Alan Herron are walking away from their community sports center just three years after it opened.

"For just us — we are not a big-time real estate investment company — it was just too much," Chris Herron said.

The couple opened Achieve Sports Center at 22675 E. Aurora Parkway in January 2023 and sold the 58,000-square-foot complex last month for \$9 million to Red Rocks Church. Chris Herron said she poured close to \$2 million into the building, adding turf and courts into what had been a Safeway.

At its peak, the business employed a staff of 120 and the Herrons were recognized as the U.S. Small Business Administration's business people of the year for Colorado. Achieve Sports mainly focused on youth programming, but parents and senior citizens also used the space.

The Herrons purchased the property for \$6.1 million in September 2021. The couple didn't have investors.

"We had so much space that we could really make a huge impact in a lot of ways," Chris Herron said.

But a litany of financial challenges plagued the operation. The interest rate on their property rose from 4% to 8%; property taxes were \$224,000 in 2026.

Additionally, the city opened a 75,000-square-foot recreation center 12 minutes up the road right around the time Achieve opened its doors, adding more competition into the market.

Other factors included impending state regulations on energy efficiency that would've required a "tremendous" amount of investment into the property to meet certain benchmarks, Chris Herron said.

"We would not ask our families what we would (have to) charge them to sustain a facility like that," she said.

Achieve Sports began with a gymnastics center at 3460 S. Fairplay Way, also in Aurora, back in 2013. The couple decided to expand their operations with the addition of a sports complex once the gymnastics operation got so popular that it needed to wait-list participants.

"We did this as a big, hairy, audacious goal — the BHAG," she said. "We put everything we had into it."

The pair remodeled the entire building, from eight new rooftop HVAC units to a gym overlooking the gymnastics facilities for parents to work out in while watching their children. Sports played inside ranged from lacrosse to soccer to golf.

The 2025 tax bill, and a failed appeal to lower the amount owed, pushed the Herrons to sell the property.

They tried to sell to someone who would lease back to them, so they could keep operating. But Chris Herron said there were no takers on that.

Red Rocks Church emerged as the buyer. The organization operates four suburban Denver locations along with one in Austin, Texas, and in Brussels, Belgium. The Herrons meanwhile, are excited to get back to focusing on gymnastics full time. But the loss of the center continues to weigh heavily on them.

"It'll be different now," Chris Herron said. "We're going to still have the same philosophy and operate for the benefit of the kids, but it's on a smaller scale, that's for sure."