

BROADCAST TRANSCRIPT

Date April 12, 2006
Time 08:00 AM - 08:50 AM
Station WTIC-AM Channel 1080
Location Hartford/New Haven, Conn.
Program Ray Dunaway

RAY DUNAWAY, co-host:

The other thing that we've been missing for a while is hockey and, I guess, our dear mayor, Eddie Perez, has been in Minneapolis and--good morning.

Mayor EDDIE PEREZ (Mayor of Hartford): Good morning, Ray, good morning, Diane.

DIANE SMITH, co-host:

Good morning, Mayor.

DUNAWAY: So you want to give us some good news too? We could use a little more.

Mr. PEREZ: Yeah, I--actually, I'm out here in Minnesota today, they had lost hockey and they rallied back, largely around the mayor, Mayor Pullman, who's now a senator, rallied the community together and we've been meeting with the owners.

I should say the municipal team and the owners and the folks downtown here have been giving us some little lessons learned, how they did it, what were some of the things that they would even do better but this thing is working.

We went to a game last night and toured the facility and this morning we're going to meet with some more community leaders and business leaders to talk a little bit about how they did it and what are the bumps that we need to worry about. So there's some lessons learned here on the ground.

It's a great, great facility and I see some real possibilities for Hartford.

SMITH: Mayor, what kind of parallels do you see or differences that would possibly lead to this maybe being sort of a blueprint or not?

Mr. PEREZ: Well, the type of facility that they did here and the way they did it, it's a multi-use, it's more than just hockey. The acoustics and you can have concerts so it's a multi-use facility.

The second thing is is that the way they designed the facility, it doesn't look like a coliseum. It doesn't even

look like a coliseum.

DUNAWAY: Really?

Mr. PEREZ: It's not the Civic Center, it looks like a signature building downtown. They put a low grade from about 25 feet lower than the old Civic Center that they've had. It's the new Civic Center. And Ray, would you believe there's a Holiday Inn and a 12b Parcel, just like in Hartford.

DUNAWAY: Wow.

Mr. PEREZ: Yet to be developed. The site, what they did is, it's a multiplex site because it's attached to the--they have a small convention center; they have a performing arts venue also.

Because of the location of the site they were able to do some more creative things than just hockey and I think we're going to have that in Hartford. We don't have a big 20-acre site out in the middle of like Grant Field, they're going to have to do it in the heart of the city and theirs is in the heart of the city.

When you have 18,000 folks come in and they've had a sell-out consecutive sales...

SMITH: That was going to be my next question, Mayor, which is how do they market it so that, of course, I would think that city has a pretty strong hockey tradition to begin with, so maybe they have a little bit of a leg up there but how do they market it that seems to work well if they're getting sell-out crowds?

Mr. PEREZ: I think the part of this is that they have a significant corporate support. And they have corporate rate support not only from their own city, there's two cities in the metro area, and corporate support from day one has been key and that's one of the things that I think we're going to have to look at.

And I think they did not limit it to the businesses in the--like, we wouldn't limit it to the Greater Hartford area, they've got some state reach as well. They got a lot of national folks engaged in the arena and I think part of this was that they did it quickly, that's the other key here, they did not spend a lot of time--they got some momentum. The mayor and the folks at the state partnered up and were able to do it.

There are a lot of similarities to Hartford, obviously the hockey base here is a lot different than Hartford. But there was a group of people that they tapped into local entrepreneurs who were part of making sure that this is--

One of the things about the facility is it is a city, local flavored facility. It's very well done, I was very impressed with the way that the architect and the team on the ground made it a Minnesota facility, made it a multi-purpose facility.

And then Nolan Arena--

DUNAWAY: We've got to go here in a second, it sounds here to me, in about 30 seconds here, it sounds to me as if you're looking probably towards the idea of building something new as opposed to sort of retrofitting the Civic Center?

Mr. PEREZ: Actually, Ray, no. I think that there's a--from what I saw last night, I'm going to see some more stuff tonight--this morning, no, I think that there's a possibility of retrofitting the existing facility because of the type that they began with. The retrofitting may be building it there and doing a lot--doing something significant to retrofit it.

DUNAWAY: OK, Mayor, thank you much for coming on, good luck out there, enjoy your stay.

Mr. PEREZ: Thanks a lot.

DUNAWAY: See you when you get back.

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