

New Calgary YMCA not your average rec centre

BY MATTHEW SILVER SEPTEMBER 8, 2016

This Saturday is the Grand Opening of the Remington YMCA in Quarry Park, and the ceremony will be a satisfying end to a long journey on the part of community groups that lobbied for the new facility.



A rendering of the new recreation facility set to open in Quarry Park this summer.

JENNIFER FRIESEN / FOR METRO

Stephanie Campbell is a member of the Southeast Community Recreation Society (SECRS), the group that got the project in motion, and she said that there was a desperate need for recreational facilities in the southeast.

“We had nothing. We didn’t even have a rink,” she said.

Campbell also said that the city couldn’t provide infrastructure to match the growth of the surrounding area, but now that residents of Quarry Park can exercise and socialize at a state-of-the-art facility, she says the community feels complete.

Along with more traditional amenities like a gym and a pool, the building features a universal locker room, which is designed to accommodate all genders.

Ken Lima-Coehlo, vice president of marketing and communications for YMCA, said that whether you're a dad with two kids, the caregiver for an elderly person, or a member of the LGBTQ community, you have access to a friendly changing environment.

The facility has been in operation since Canada Day, and Lima-Coehlo, who lives in the neighbourhood, said that the public response has been excellent so far. "They came in droves," he said laughingly.

In fact, demand was so high that the YMCA had sold 600 memberships before tours of the building even started. Now there are almost 4,000 members, and that number continues to climb.

Lima-Coehlo said the YMCA strives to make memberships as affordable as possible, a policy that goes back 150 years, and nobody is turned away because of financial need.

YMCA Strong Kids, an annual fundraising program, raised \$1.5 million last year to provide resources for children looking to play. Access to the library has been a boost for YMCA's Playing to Learn initiative, which helps create learning opportunities for children to explore and discover.

The Grand Opening will take place on at 1 p.m., and feature a speech from Mayor Naheed Nenshi, and Ward 12 Councillor Shane Keating.