

GRETZKY'S 'GREAT' VISION

Hockey Royalty Joins Forces to Bring Ice Sports to Palm Beach Gardens

National Hockey League legend Wayne Gretzky is skating in to lend support to a new project bringing ice sports to Palm Beach Gardens.

The Palm Beach North Athletic Foundation is leading a public-private partnership to develop a state-of-the-art ice-skating facility featuring at least two National Hockey League sized rinks.

The City of Palm Beach Gardens voted in favor of a 40-year lease agreement at a recent City Council meeting, clearing the way for PBNAF to develop and operate the facility at Plant Drive Park.

They hope to offer something for everyone in the community, all ages and abilities, including youth hockey, figure skating, public skating, adult leagues, curling, and even sled hockey.

They will also offer a full-service restaurant and sports bar, a retail store, training space, academy space, and a dedicated medical space sponsored by the Hospital for Special Surgery.

"We are thrilled to partner with the City of Palm Beach Gardens, and we thank our many constituents in the community that have supported us and made this partnership possible," says PBNAF Founder and President Michael Winter. "As members of this special community, we are looking forward to a long and re-

warding relationship with the city and its residents."

This red-hot project is also getting support from renowned leaders in ice hockey, including hockey coach and philanthropist Larry Robbins and NHL's "The Great One" Wayne Gretzky.

Gretzky plans to host the "Gretzky Hockey School" at the new ice rink. Founded in 2014 by he and his son Ty Gretzky, it's one of the premier hockey schools in the world.

"Together with my son, we're honored to expand the reach of our hockey school to more residents in Palm Beach County," said Gretzky. "Hockey has the power to unite communities, and we are thrilled to be a part of bringing that unity to even more people to cultivate a new era of hockey enthusiasts."

Gretzky played 20 seasons in the National Hockey League from 1979 to 1999 and has been widely named the greatest ice hockey player of all time by sports writers, players, and the NHL. To this day, Gretzky holds the record for most career goals, assists, and points scored in NHL history and is in the Hockey Hall of Fame.

Robbins is CEO of Glenview Capital Management and a passionate hockey enthusiast. He was a player and captain at the University of Pennsylvania. For 18 years, he coached youth hockey in New Jersey and for eight years, he owned the Chicago Steel, a powerhouse in junior hockey.

He and the Robbins Family Foundation committed a substantial leadership gift to PBNAF to ensure the project's timeline will be achieved.

"My wife Sarahmay and I are thrilled to relocate our family to Palm Beach Gardens, an active, hardworking and optimistic community whose only shortcoming is a current lack of ice-skating facilities to serve the growing base of passionate hockey players and figure skaters," said Robbins. "We are thrilled to partner with Mike, Tucker, Wayne and the entire PBNAF team and family to bring this new centerpiece of the community to life, while creating a platform for our youth to enjoy and learn the critical values of persistence, teamwork, passion and purpose."

PBNAF officials say they and their supporters are excited to create a sense of unity and recreation through ice sports in the South Florida community. And they even have their sights set on bigger and better, hoping to include a third NHL-sized ice rink at some point.

The current Palm Beach Gardens project is expected to be skate-worthy by the summer of 2026. Better sharpen your skates! ■



TOP: Wayne Gretzky with a student at his hockey school. ABOVE: Palm Beach North Athletic Foundation is developing an ice-skating facility in Palm Beach Gardens.

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