

THE LOCAL

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ith a last name like Winter, it's a fun coincidence that Michael Winter is so passionate about ice hockey. He grew up playing hockey in St. Louis, and now the North Palm Beach resident is looking to bring the sport to sunny South Florida.

Winter, who founded the Palm Beach North Athletic Foundation, is developing a new, state-of-the-art ice-skating facility at Plant Drive Park in Palm Beach Gardens. The \$40 million project, slated to open in summer 2026, will feature two National Hockey League-size rinks to be used for a variety of sports including youth hockey, figure skating, curling, and public skating, "The fact that hockey is so popular tells you how fun it is," he says. "We want to provide local kids with the opportunity to play in a cost-effective manner."

The facility will also host the Gretzky Hockey School, founded by NHL legend Wayne Gretzky and his son Ty. The school was started by the Gretzkys in 2014 and holds youth hockey camps in cities across the country. "Being able to bring more hockey to South Florida is a great opportunity for the sport to continue to grow," says Wayne, who resides in the Palm Beach area. "We have coached a lot of kids from Florida who have traveled to our school in other cities, and to open a school right here in Florida is going to be a dream come true." pbnsportsplex.com; gretzkybockeyschool.com —Valerie Staggs