

SQUASH MAD

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'Youth coming alive' through groundbreaking Bronx squash project



By **RJ Mitchell** October 26, 2023 0



GLUCK+ CitySquash Courts at South Bronx in NYC PIC: Supplied

A \$10million project which is positioning squash front and centre of a pioneering move to help South Bronx youth shine in New York can be revealed by Squash Mad. CitySquash is a brand new ground-up project located in the NYC neighbourhood and a non-profit after-school programme.

Now, the Julian H. Robertson Jr. CitySquash Center, which has

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sport – primarily squash – for the Bronx youth.

The ground-breaking ceremony took place this month with CitySquash’s intensive, year-round programming including squash, tutoring, mentoring, community service, travel, high school placement, college prep, career services and more.

Subsequently GLUCK+ have designed a 15,000 SF (square feet) facility on a modest 10,000 SF urban lot under a \$10 million budget with CitySquash selecting a 6-court, single phase development option.



CitySquash Executive Director Terence Li told *Squash Mad*:
“When this building opens it will give life. We’re going to grow, serving over 500 students a year.

“It is going to be the platform from which the extraordinary talents and dedication of Bronx youth is going to shine through as they break barriers, chase their dreams, and continue to inspire the community and world around us.

happen.”

CitySquash was created in 2002 by Sanford Schwartz and inspired by the success of similar programmes in Boston and Harlem while Schwartz worked to build a partnership with Fordham University in the Bronx and the neighbouring Middle School 45.

When it came to just what makes squash unique to achieving CitySquash’s goals by comparison to other sports Li said: “Core to CitySquash’s theory of change is that sport can play a unique role in one’s personal development. Besides the health benefits of committing oneself to regular exercise, regimented training instils in individuals qualities like discipline, perseverance, and self-confidence.

“According to psychologist Dr Robert Brooks, learning a new sport or skill can build an ‘island of competence’, an area that has the potential to be a source of pride and accomplishment. This, in turn, builds self-efficacy, a belief that students can achieve their goals through effective effort.



vehicle in enabling CitySquash team members to fulfil their academic potential.

“While in the United States, the sport has had a close link to elite academic institutions at high school and college levels. Team members who excel at squash are able to benefit from opportunities and access that would otherwise not be available to them.”

When it came to the buy-in of the local Bronx community Li says there is a strong partnership with Fordham University, where it launched its programme in 2002. Fordham has given access to their squash courts and classrooms for two decades and many of its volunteers also come from Fordham.

“Along with all the logistical support,” adds Li, “we believe that it is meaningful to expose our students to the campus of this elite university that exists right in their neighbourhood. It helps make college seem more accessible and attainable.”

Of course with squash finally to be included in the 2028 LA Olympics, Li is hopeful there will be a positive kickback for CitySquash and other US inner city projects. He said: “Squash is such an international game and so we feel it truly belongs in the Olympics where nations from around the world gather to celebrate a love of sport.

“We know that working towards an Olympic team is something that gives many young people drive, hope and excitement and so does rooting for an Olympic team.

“With squash now finally to be in the Olympics, it will also give the sport a wider audience and access to watching top matches, which would certainly grow the interest in and passion for squash.”

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put the building blocks in place: “We believe the building should feel like a warm and welcoming place for learning and competing. The entrance and path from street to squash courts should feel inclusive and inviting and when you arrive you should feel you are at and part of the beating centre of City Squash.

“The central stair, open to both squash courts and open offices, is the physical heart or as we say colloquially in our office, ‘the belly button’ of City Squash.

“When you play, coach, and spectate on the squash level you feel like you are immersed in a world of squash. Standing in the centre of the squash courts you should be able to see and experience multiple games at the same time from different vantage points, so that your learning and engagement is both personally enlightening and part of a culture.





*Terence Li, Executive Director of CitySquash and Bronx Borough President
Vanessa Gibson*

“So the building itself, in its outward public expression, becomes a beacon for squash in the local community.

“But there is no one inspiration for the design and in fact most of the inspiration comes from the organisation itself, an inclusive and very high touch after school program that uses both sports and academics as ways to reach and affect kids’ lives.”

Yet as Kaplan revealed there is innovation at the heart of the project: “That said the façade is a kind of billboard for squash and active youth engagement. It moves and changes as you walk. For this we looked at billboard design and the old fashioned ‘lenticular’ prints used to make 3D glasses and photographs that flicker or move.

“Really the building, at its heart, is youth coming alive through squash.”

Which surely is the perfect way to sum up CitySquash and what it hopes to bring to the Bronx.