



Community Legacy Committee

Project Summary

Context:

The Community Legacy Committee was established with the mission of transforming the St. Mary's High School campus, located at 1500 Block Line Road, into a hub of healthy living for both students and the wider community. Building on pre-existing relationships with local partners such as the Kitchener Public Library, Peter Hallman Ballyard, City of Kitchener, and Waterloo Region Boxing Academy, the committee is dedicated to providing a public use facility free of charge for recreation.

This facility will feature a multi-use court as a place in which people of different ages, abilities, and interests can come together to engage in a healthy and active lifestyle. The court, replacing the current dilapidated tennis facility, will feature cutting edge Mateflex technology that will provide a sustainable surface for any number of activities from community gatherings and games to sports such as basketball, ball hockey, tennis, and pickleball. The campus will add a green gym beside the multi-use court to allow youth to work out and develop strength and endurance. In addition, a frisbee golf course will complete a planned walking trail. The long-term goal will be to provide lights for extended play and training after hours and create a space for activity in a high-density neighbourhood.

Early implementations to date for improving the campus have included the beautification of gardens, planters and the creation of a community greenhouse. Long term plans include the pursuit of a six-lane track and turf field. The multi-use court is a bridge between these two stages of community development.

Beyond the immediate school community, the campus is also a hub for community agencies such as the Kitchener Public Library, Family & Children's Services. It is a two-minute walk from a new Light Rail ("ION") Transit Station and is adjacent to both the Peter Hallman Ball Yard and the Activa Sportsplex. The broader vision of the school as a place for the community to engage in healthy and active living drives a planning and implementation process that is coordinating with the Waterloo Region Public Health Department to consult with the broader community and engage in consultation and coordination with the City of Kitchener and the residents/business owners.

The campus hub is immediately central to high density high rise building which are home to a community upwards of three thousand people. These apartment building are surrounded by limited free and green space; the campus hub would be of great use for these residents engaging in an active lifestyle.

Vision:

Recognizing the importance of the local school as a community hub, the SMHS Legacy Committee is committed to making St. Mary's High School a place *for* the community rather than simply a place *in* the community.

Premised on the belief that communities are at their best when they are healthy, active, and engaged in physical activity, the court is one component in a vision of serving a diverse community populated by newcomers to Canada, aged people and youth, as well as those with a variety of abilities. Many of these people live in high-density housing with little space to be outdoors and engage in physical play and activity; the school campus can offers' this possibility.

While many projects offer opportunities for particular constituents to benefit, the advantage of the Community Legacy status Multi use Court is, first and foremost, the diversity of people who will be able to use it including socio-economic, ability, age and interest. More so, the court is a part of a long-term plan to offer the St. Mary's campus as more than a place *in* the community but *rather a place for the community*. Using the school as a hub offers the possibility for community transformation.

Timelines:

The project fits seamlessly with the implementation of complementary projects and can easily be available for school and community use by the opening of the 2020 academic year. Further development of the immediate campus will continue as St. Mary's continues to create spaces for the community to come together and engage in physical play and ongoing wellness.

The multi-use court will have an immediate impact with a short implementation calendar offering a community and school space for physical activity and well-being. The project is physically sustainable as the Mateflex tiles are incredibly wear-resistant and, in the rare case that there is damage, single tiles can be easily replaced without having to tear up the entire court. While there will be some work required to remove existing fencing and prepare the ground for installation of the tiles, the modular nature of the Mateflex product will make for easy installation. Likewise, the green gym and frisbee golf course can be quickly erected and the walking trail will be coordinated with the City of Kitchener's trail plan.

The legacy of the court as a part of a long term plan to develop the St. Mary's campus as a hub for the community to participate in ongoing physical play offers even greater possibilities for engagement and wellness. The multi-use court will be an early success, bringing the community to our campus, raising the profile of the long-term project, and providing early and ongoing data regarding usage and scheduling concerns.

By cooperating with municipal departments (a process already employed in the community use of sports fields and school buildings) the responsibility for development, maintenance, and visioning can be shared between school and local constituents. The project is aptly named "Legacy" as it is part of a long-term vision for creating a community hub that will last beyond the immediate generation of organizers. Planning and maintenance structures are institutionalized in school and Board processes and will be amplified as implementation continues.

Additional Considerations:

While there is a clear pathway to the planning and installation of the multi-use court as well as for the ongoing maintenance of the facility and the pursuit of a broader community project, the ongoing organization will require conversation and coordination with community agencies outside of the school itself (e.g. the Kitchener Public Library would be responsible for loaning materials). The vision of a welcoming and inclusive space that encourages people to be healthy and engaged in physical activity requires that they feel safe in the space. Future plans for more outdoor lighting will be an important reward component. The way in which the particular "use" of the multi-use court be determined outside of school hours. The City of Kitchener Recreation Department has experience in this area and their input and direction will be critical. So too will be the selection and storage of playing equipment that is reliable and long lasting. We are confident that these challenges can be met in partnership with our local community members.