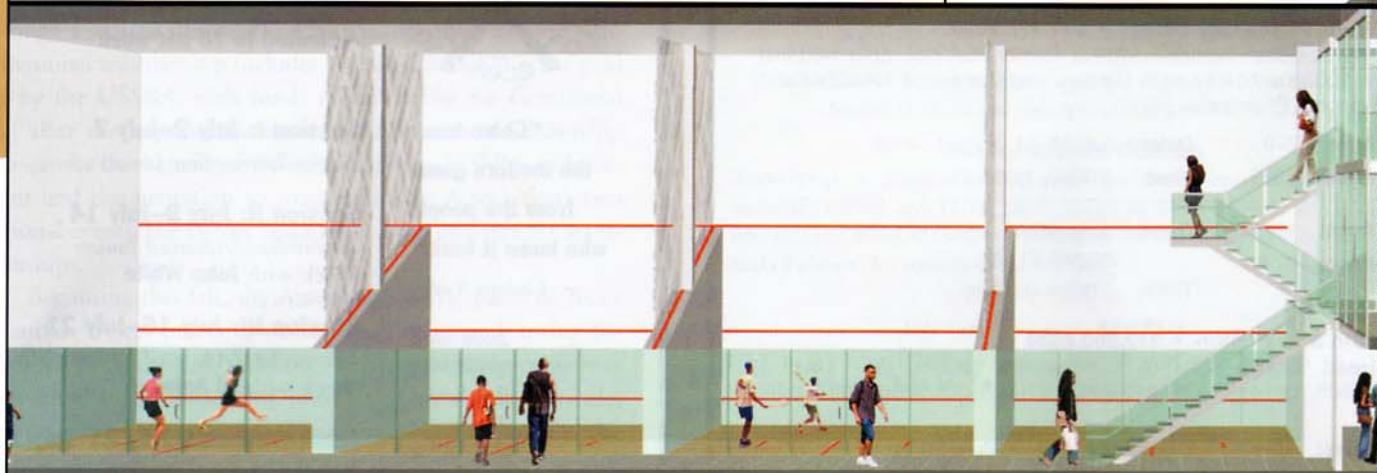


UNDER CONSTRUCTION

StreetSquash getting permanent home

by Kirsten Carlson



Artist's rendition by Damer Architects

In an era where most non-profits are literally begging for funds and agencies like the Red Cross are always falling short, how on earth did an urban squash program raise 10 million dollars for a new facility in just over a year? The answer to that brain teaser is that generous individuals, corporations and foundations believed in an outstanding program and wanted to see it live up to its full potential.

StreetSquash in New York City broke ground on an 18,700 square foot facility

in Harlem in the summer of 2005. The Stephen L. Green StreetSquash Community Center will contain eight squash courts—more than any other facility in New York City—as well as four classrooms, a library, a workout area, locker rooms and administrative offices for 14 StreetSquash staff members. The new facility will give the program a permanent home and allow StreetSquash to greatly expand the number of kids they reach each year.

“It will be an enormous increase,”

said StreetSquash founder and executive director George Polsky. “Because we own the space, it will further our initiative 24 hours a day.”

StreetSquash currently has 80 kids in its after school program, where they receive 75 minutes of academic support and 75 minutes of squash instruction from staff and volunteers at least three days per week. They also meet on Saturdays for a variety of activities including community service projects. Once the facility is open, that number should go

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up to between 120 and 140 kids. The College Prep program is expected to serve 100 students annually and the Summer Discovery and Youth Employment Program will reach 300 children each year.

A new endeavor that StreetSquash will take on is the Physical Education for Public Schools Program. Coming from schools around the community to get some gym time at the center, StreetSquash is aiming to reach 500 children each school year with the program.

"We will run gym programs for

the public schools that don't have gym space," said Polsky. "The gym time will be squash. All the schools will be within walking or subway distance. We purposely picked a space that was very near public schools."

The Center is being built right in the middle of Harlem, on 115th between Lenox Avenue and Fifth Avenue.

"The other thing that is significant is that the biggest squash center in New York City is being built in Central Harlem," Polsky said. "When 10 years ago,

people would have said, 'What are you doing? You're crazy.' With all the urban squash programs coming up, it says a lot about the future direction of the game. It will be available to people it has not been readily available to in the past."

The Center will occupy the bottom three floors of a 13-story building with the goal of opening in Spring 2008.

As for ongoing fundraising efforts, StreetSquash plans to raise another three million dollars for the project. Nine million will go towards the building of the Center, while four million will make up an endowment to pay for the increased annual budget.

For more information about this project, visit www.streetsquash.org.

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