



Next Level

Facility upgrades, programs make Novi Ice Arena a skating hub



The arcade is out. A spacious lobby is in.

Fluorescent lights are gone. LEDs have arrived

Good-bye outdated design. Hello computer kiosks.

Welcome to the Novi Ice Arena, a skating hub that's keeping pace with industry trends, while delivering the environmental quality and programs customers want.

Over the last few years the facility, managed by Suburban Sports Group, has undergone numerous upgrades to keep energy costs down and equipment in working condition. Changes have included two new boilers, all new roof decking and 120 existing light fixtures retrofitted for LED bulbs. Refrigeration system improvements are in the works and a new Zamboni will be

on the ice this fiscal year.

"We've done a good job recently both with the city and the arena to be able to continually fund our capital project budget," says Kris Barnes, arena manager. "So, it's important we have a budget and a plan and a funding process so we can

stay ahead of these projects and continue to upgrade the arena, whether it's a customer service interaction upgrade or it's an energy reduction upgrade or

an equipment upgrade."

Skaters likely don't notice a new boiler or condenser tower, but they benefit from the upgrades every time they sit in the spectator area or glide onto the ice.

"Ice arenas are unique. It's a spectator sport, so you want the air temperature to be at least as comfortable as possible. But you also have a 17,000-square-foot slab of

Novi
ICE ARENA

ice that you need to keep frozen for the skaters who are using it. So, you need to heat a space, but you're also cooling and in the summer you're pumping in air conditioning, at least into the lobby area. We try to do our best to balance it."

NEW TRAINING AREA

A new training room, which opened last year, allows hockey players, figure skaters, and ice dancers to go from ice to work-out routine all under one roof. Mirrors, a ballet barre and other equipment give skaters a chance to practice moves off the ice and work on physical conditioning. Micki Freier, skating director, said the space draws ballroom dance coaches, ballet instructors, even a mime who teaches facial expressions, to work

with ice dancing and figure skaters.

"Part of it was keeping up with the competition and also providing our customer base another space within the building they can utilize," Barnes says. "I asked our hockey customers what they'd like to see in the room. I had conversations with our skating groups. What we try to do is have it as broad as possible so everyone can enjoy it."

Another upgrade with universal appeal targeted the arcade that had been part of the lobby since the building opened in 1998. As technology evolved and handheld games, smartphones, and tablets proliferated, fewer skaters and spectators used the arcade. It was removed to make way for more seating and open space that can be used for birthday parties and other celebrations.

Upgrading the arena's front desk improved aesthetics, and ensures the building maintains "a good look that meets the city's standards," Barnes says. The new computer kiosks allow customers to register for classes, club membership or ice time online.

"It's almost like a self-checkout at the grocery store. Some people want to do it (register) themselves, but still be able to ask questions."



PROGRAMMING

Barnes says Learn to Skate is the most important program at the arena because it helps develop new skaters and helps grow the arena's offerings.

Freier has revamped the preschool skating class this year and expanded the "freestyle" Learn to Skate class from 30 to 60 minutes.

"It's going to be more interactive. It's going to be a lot of fun," she says, describing the preschool session.

The expanded freestyle class will include a 10-minute warm-up and will give skaters a taste of synchronized skating, ice dance, and hockey.

Freier also plans to start a class, "Learn to Compete," in January 2017 for beginning skaters.

"The opportunities are endless here. We have an adult hockey league program that is huge, every night basically," Freier says. "We have every level of hockey and

we also have our hockey development program."

Figure skaters and ice dancers can take private lessons at the arena through the Skating Club of Novi. Both Freier and Barnes credit coach Igor Shpilband for making Novi Ice Arena a major training center for high caliber ice dancing teams. Freier says 15 teams, some coming from outside the U.S., train with Shpilband.

"They train here because of him," Freier says, adding that a split between Shpilband and his coaching partner four years ago prompted his search for a new arena.

"We worked with him on setting up a schedule and giving him the capability to coach in the arena," Barnes says. "He brought some teams and continues to add teams when and where he can. That has been nice for us having that caliber of athlete in the arena."

For more about the arena, its facilities and programs, visit noviicearena.com.

