



# Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Community organizations champion residents' vision for outdoor gym in Victoria Park

Kitchener, ON – An outpouring of community support has helped a group of passionate Kitchener residents make their vision for an outdoor gym in Victoria Park a reality. The resident-led, city-supported project, which was awarded a \$20,000 Placemaking Challenge Grant in 2017 through the city's Love My Hood Neighbourhood Strategy, reached its fundraising goal of \$69,000 thanks to the support of community organizations like the Kitchener Rangers Junior "A" Hockey Club, who serves as the project's title sponsor, and the Kitchener Sports Association.

"This project reflects what Love My Hood is all about," added Ward 9 Councillor, Debbie Chapman. "The outdoor gym will be a great resource that will boost healthy living in our community. I commend the volunteers who secured the funding for this initiative."

With additional contributions from The Rotary Club of Kitchener and Price Chiropractic and Fitness, and as the recipient of the Wilfrid Laurier and Sun Life Financial Centre Physically Active Communities grant, the inclusive and interactive multi-use space will move forward with fall 2019 as the expected completion date.

"Along with the YMCA and City of Kitchener, we are thrilled to have so many other community partners and businesses supporting this outdoor fitness park," said Barbara Ward, steering committee member. "We thank everyone involved so far in contributing to this project and guiding this outdoor fitness park. In the true spirit of this project, we are excited to continue collaborating with the community as we begin the next phase."

The gym, which will be located in Victoria Park at the entrance of the Iron Horse Trail, will feature various types of equipment that will allow Kitchener residents of varying abilities and ages to participate in fitness activities in an open, natural setting.

"Physical activity and exercise are key in maintaining strong athletic abilities, which is crucial to the Kitchener Rangers hockey operations," said Michelle Benevides, director of marketing and communications at Kitchener Rangers Hockey Club. "It's also important in building a healthy community. The fitness park will be a unique space to enjoy the outdoors and complete activities you would normally need to do indoors at a gym. A space that doesn't require a membership fee and a place where everyone is welcome. We're proud to be a partner on this initiative."

The project's steering committee, comprised of local volunteers, is working in cooperation with the YMCA of Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo, as well as the City of Kitchener's Neighbourhood Development Office to host a variety of programming at the outdoor gym including yoga and circuit training. Intended as a hub of physical activity and fitness, the space will also encourage a greater sense of connection, belonging and well-being in the community.

"The YMCA is committed to building a healthy community and believes that fitness and recreation opportunities should be accessible to all," said Peter Sweeney, CEO of the YMCA of Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo. "We are pleased to partner on this exciting initiative to enhance our community well-being."

With a steering committee in place to guide the project, an advisory committee has also been formed to provide feedback and consultation on the gym's equipment and to include a diversity of voices in the decision making process. The steering committee is engaging youth, older adults, as well as members of the community with mobility challenges to incorporate their unique perspectives into the gym's final design.

**For More Information:**

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