**Southern Rec Center Grand Opening**

# **February 23, 2024 Southern Recreation Center**

Today is one of those landmark occasions that residents of Palm Coast will remember forever. As the proud Mayor of this City, I welcome all of you to experience your awesome new Southern Recreation Center and Lehigh Trailhead. You’ll find this facility to be the ultimate space to play, learn, de-stress, and connect.

Before we begin, I’d like to share that this project started as a strategic priority of your City Council back in 2017. This community has a rich sports history and this new destination will further enhance our experience.

Now, to get us started, I’d like to raise this small tumbler of and toast to the triumphant success of the Southern Recreation Center. (RAISE A TOAST) Redefined Foods will be serving these fresh samples tonight, along with their pesto cream lasagna. They will be operating our concession beginning the first week in March.

Redefined Foods is just one of the outstanding amenities to enjoy at your new Center. This is an 11,500 square foot indoor/outdoor wonderland with a spacious social lobby, outdoor seating area with views of tennis and

pickleball courts, men’s and women’s deluxe locker rooms, community multi-purpose rooms for events and parties and viewing balconies. In a short time period, Parks and Recreation is planning to host their own weekly social get-togethers.

And very soon, you’ll be seeing construction for 5 new HydroGrid clay tennis courts with one premium stadium court for tournament play.

There’s so much more to this complex than just tennis and pickleball. As you enter from Belle Terre Parkway, you’ll find a completely expanded trailhead to the popular Lehigh Trail. There’s extended parking and sparkling new restrooms. You will soon see abundant produce growing in our community gardens, you can bring your dog to play at our small dog or large dog parks or you can walk, hike or bike the Trail.

The entire Southern Recreation Center project was designed to meet prestigious Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (or LEED) standards. We’re proud of the use of reflective materials in construction designed to combat heat and the 201 solar panels that will be projected to cover most of the electricity costs and the recycled furniture you see here today. And through the optimization of low-flow water fixtures, energy efficiency, and solar, we’re proud to provide this beautiful amenity to our community.

But the most important component of this 63-acre facility is that your City Council authorized construction without spending **one single penny of your tax dollars.** Our community partners played the most crucial role. Flagler County’s Tourist Development Council approved a $739,158 grant for the Center. FPL supplied an easement and The Florida Department of Transportation contributed $1,240,000.00 to the trailhead. Additional funds came from the State Road 100 Redevelopment Agency and the Park Impact fees all of us pay to participate in recreation programs.

On behalf of Vice Mayor Ed Danko and Council Members Nick Klufas, Theresa Pontieri and Cathy Heighter, I want to recognize the construction experts behind this complex: here’s to Architects Ohlson Lavoie Corporation and Gilbane Building Company for design and construction of the Southern Recreation Center and to Paul Culver Construction and CPH for design and construction of the Lehigh Trail component. Their careful and meticulous attention to detail illustrates how they value our quality of life in Palm Coast as much as our residents.

I’d like to conclude my address with this quote:

 **“Community recreation centers are vital third spaces. They're not work, they're not home. They're amazing places where groups of people can learn, de-stress, and connect.”**

Tonight, let’s dedicate this Southern Recreation Center as your Third Space in Palm Coast. A trio of life’s fulfillments. Thank You.