



New Fitness Zone at Zuni Park brings community together to get active and have fun

By Annie Zdrojewski

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DENVER – The park at 51st and Zuni, in the Chaffee Park neighborhood of Denver, just received an upgrade that will benefit the community by providing an easy, accessible way for individuals and families to get fit. The park – which has a variety of amenities including a playground, walking trails and fantastic view of the Denver skyline – is now home to brand new outdoor Fitness Zone equipment.

The Fitness Zone is an outdoor gym that was developed as part of a partnership with Cultivate Health at Regis University and The Trust for Public Land, who installed the equipment in March in coordination with Denver Parks and Recreation. The Trust for Public Land Fitness Zone program puts outdoor gyms where they are needed most. Installed in existing parks, the top-quality exercise gear is free and easy to use, appropriate for teens and adults of all levels of fitness, and resistant to weather and vandalism.

The Trust for Public Land introduced Denver to this innovative amenity in 2013 to help make the most of the city's parks. Ten Fitness Zones have been, or will soon be, installed in parks across the metro area. These state-of-the-art outdoor gyms play an important role in removing barriers to physical activity by ensuring that individuals of all ages have access to parks that offer quality exercise opportunities needed to support fitness and health.

With the help of the Chaffee Park community, the Trust for Public Land researched which fitness machines would benefit community members most. Regis University student physical therapists then developed circuit training recommendations that will help residents get an effective, full-body workout.

"It's a really amazing park," said Linnea Bjorkman, the healthy living coordinator for Cultivate Health. "The residents have been looking for ways to activate that park more. It's a huge priority and we listened to what the residents want. We want to do what's most beneficial to them and their goals for improving their health."



In Chaffee Park, residents see the new Fitness Zone as an opportunity to connect with each other, get outside and get active. Installed next to the playground, with a variety of weight-lifting and cardiovascular equipment, the Fitness Zone is a convenient and fun way to get the whole family moving.

Neighborhood Voice: Nola

Nola Miguel, her husband Andy, and kids Leo and Soleen, have lived in the neighborhood for seven years. They use the park every day – whether it’s walking the dog on the peaceful path around the park or monkeying around on the playground. Nola has noticed a recent uptick in the usage of the park, and the addition of the Fitness Zone will be another reason for residents to use this multi-functional outdoor space.

Nola shared, “On nice days, the park is really busy. It hasn’t always been that way. The Fitness Zone will help bring more people out, help neighbors meet each other and provide older kids with something to do as well.”

The family was involved in the Fitness Zone project from the beginning and participated in the public planning meetings, where 7-year-old Leo had a voice in picking out the Fitness Zone equipment. Nola said, “He was interested in anything you can hang on!”

Nola shared her enthusiasm for the Fitness Zone and the benefits it will have for their family and the community. “The proximity to the playground is nice, so Leo can transition to the Fitness Zone as he gets older. The location is great because I can watch both kids and work out with my son. It promotes health for my whole family.”

Neighborhood Voice: Jesse

Newer to the neighborhood, Jesse Goldsmith bought a home in Chaffee Park last July. He described the park as a vibrant neighborhood asset stating, “The park gets pretty good use, with people playing softball, kids at soccer practice and a nice picnic area.”

An active Coloradan, he uses local recreation centers in the winter, but in the summer months, prefers to exercise outside at the park. On a typical day, he will jog five blocks to the park, do a few laps, and after his jog, use the monkey bars on the playground to do pull-ups and push-ups.

Jesse said, “Although playing with the kids is fun, it will be nice to have a dedicated area to work out. The park also has a sneaky good view of downtown from the top of the hill, so it’ll be a nice spot to work out with a really nice view.”



Neighborhood Voice: Kenia

Kenia Kuchle, who lives a few blocks from the park and also has a very active family, sees the Fitness Zone as an opportunity to exercise and potentially save money on a gym membership. She said, "We go to the gym, but this is exciting to us because it is outside. We may even let the gym membership go in the summers."

Kenia is also looking forward to this new public space so she can exercise with friends. "I used to have a group of girlfriends over to work out together in the house and we ran out of space, but now we can get together at the park on Saturdays and do the workout."

Kenia's daughters, Giselle and Evelyn, may be even more excited than their parents. Kenia said, "Before this, we didn't really like to go to the park, because we preferred to go to bigger parks that have more things for the girls. Now, it's going to be a better environment for the whole family." Several of the exercise machines are ADA compliant, and she mentioned that this will be great for her niece, who is in a wheelchair. She said, "It's always something good when it's exercise and your health, and great for all of the kids."

Join the community celebration!

A "Let's Get Physical" event will kick off the grand opening of the Fitness Zone, at 51st and Zuni, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. on April 2. The event will include zumba, pilates and yoga sessions, aerialists, children's activities, live entertainment and Colombian food from the La Chiva food truck. Regis University physical therapy students will be available to provide guidance on circuit training and instruction on how to use the Fitness Zone equipment most effectively. All are welcomed to attend.

For more information on Cultivate Health, Fitness Zones and related projects, visit <http://www.regis.edu/Community-Gateway/Cultivate-Health.aspx>.