

## \$12M Training Center Being Built

By [Ray Huard](#)

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Renderings courtesy of Pacific Building Group.

Access Youth Academy is building a \$12 million squash training and education center.

A nonprofit agency that uses the sport of squash to motivate under-served youths to excel in school is building a \$12 million school and training center in Chollas View in Southeast San Diego.

With Pacific Building Group as the general contractor, Access Youth Academy's center will include a training section with eight squash courts along with classrooms for educational programs.

"It will be a beacon of light in that community," said Renato Paiva, executive director of Access Youth Academy.

Squash has a reputation of being "very much a white privilege game" that only rich people play, Paiva said. His goal is to change that, to use squash as a means of helping underprivileged students

The 21,000 complex at 704 Euclid Ave. will become a U.S. Squash Community Affiliate – the first on the West Coast – when it opens in June 2021.

The two-story building will be divided into two wings with a glass-walled entry and open reception and lounge area that will have ceilings reaching to 24 feet.

The north wing will have lockers, shower rooms and seven European-design singles squash courts and one doubles court with a glassed-in catwalk overlooking the courts.

The rear of the north wing includes five roll-up garage doors.

“It kind of opens the building to the outdoors,” Slater said.

The south wing will include two classrooms, storage, and a larger area divided by operable partitions that will include a computer room, a college preparatory room and instructional space on the ground level.

It also will include a 1,000 square-foot open gallery and space to display awards, 12 open offices, two private offices, a large conference room, and a staff kitchen/breakroom.

The building will open onto a concrete courtyard with additional seating and a parking lot with 36 spaces.

Founded in 2006, Access Youth Academy provides students with an after-school program from seventh grade through high school with support through college and two years after students finish college.

## **Something Different**

The project is a first for Pacific Building Group, said Susie Slater, project manager.

“Nobody’s ever built this on the West Coast,” Slater said.

The company has built a number of schools and recreation projects, but never a squash center.

“We’re having to evaluate each position to make sure it’s conducive to play,” Slater said. “One of the things that surprised me is the ball is very hard and they hit it very hard, over 100 miles per hour. It’s a lot of force. We evaluated that and decided to put some pretty heavy duty cages around the sprinklers. That was kind of a unique condition to this.”

## **The Sport**

The game of squash is similar to racquet ball, although the racquets it’s played with are bigger and the balls are smaller and harder.

“It’s a great sport for beginners, intermediate, all the way up to the higher levels,” Paiva said.

Squash has a strong following on the East Coast and in Europe but not so much on the West Coast.

The seven singles squash courts will be 21 feet wide by 32 feet deep. The doubles court will be 25 feet wide by 44 feet deep.

The back wall will be glass and about seven feet tall. The three sidewalls will be wood.

“The concrete floor that we poured had pretty tight tolerances because the court has to meet certain dimensions in order to be certified,” Slater said.

The final wood flooring that will be installed on top of the concrete is similar to a basketball court, but the flooring for this project will be imported from Germany,” Slater said.

“There’s only a couple of companies that do this. It’s a plank floor. It comes as boards, they we lay down the boards,” Slater said.

## **The Program**

Access Youth Academy has partnered with Kipp Adelante Preparatory Academy, a nearby charter school for elementary and middle school students that Pacific Building Group also built.

A native of Brazil, Paiva joined Access Youth Academy in May 2007 after serving as assistant squash coach at Harvard University and the University of Southern California.

The academy has an enrollment of 120 students and has been leasing space at The Preuss School UCSD, a charter high school in La Jolla, Paiva said.

Once the new center opens, Paiva said he hopes to serve about 1,300 students through a variety of programs.

“With this facility, we’re going to basically triple the amount of impact we have with our after-school programs. In addition, we’re going to have the opportunity with the new facility to serve many more kids in different capacities,” Paiva said.

Paiva has ambitious goals for the new center.

Eventually, he said it could become a hub for squash on the West Coast, especially if squash becomes an Olympic sport.

“There’s a high probability that not only Team USA, but teams from around the world are going to be using our facility as their training center,” Paiva said.

Link to the article is here: <https://www.sdbj.com/news/2020/nov/30/12m-training-center-being-built/>