

Outdoor fitness park an alternative to gym culture

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Lorne Cowan works out at Calgary's first outdoor fitness park for adults in Briar Hill-Hounsfield Heights. (CBC)

Calgarians intimidated by traditional fitness facilities can now exercise at any hour of the day in the open air thanks to the city's first adult outdoor fitness park, which opened this week.

The gym is located directly north of Louise Riley Library at 1904 14th Ave. N.W. It is open to the public 24 hours a day all year at no cost and has 11 vandal- and weather-proof exercise stations.

The gym was developed after two local residents made a proposal to the community association of Hounsfield Heights-Briar Hill in northwest Calgary.

The gym was completed in August and officially opened Sunday.

Lorne Cowan first saw such a gym operating in B.C. and thought its \$58,000 price tag was well worth it.

"This facility is open all year round, and it is drop-in — anybody can just come in," said Cowan.

The gym was built by Fitness Outdoors, an Olds, Alta.-based company with offices in Vancouver, Hope, Edmonton, and Calgary.

Eric Daniel, the company's southern Alberta representative, said there are already close to a dozen such outdoor fitness facilities in the Red Deer area.

Daniel said they used "powder-coated steel, galvanized steel, tamper-proof bolts, sealed bearings, which allows them to winterize."

"There are a lot of people who are afraid to go to gyms," said Daniel. "They're afraid of, you know, you gotta wear certain clothes, you gotta be in a certain shape already to go to the gym."

"This is an opportunity where people can train at their leisure. There's no gym hours; there's no class times you have to make. There are people who train on these things at 10:30 or 11 o'clock at night."

Each exercise station is free-standing and open for use by anyone over the age of 16. There is a central instruction panel on how to use the equipment.