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Get fit

East Village's Fit Athletic offers top trainers, best equipment and breathtaking views

By RACHEL CROMIDAS | DOWNTOWN NEWS

The concrete floors of Fit Athletic are bare except for a dusty rubber exercise ball, suggesting that a moving crew may be the only locals to get any exercise inside San Diego's newest fitness and health center for now.

But when Fit Athletic opens this month, it promises to be the first luxury fitness club in the East Village, the Downtown's largest developing residential community.

Petco Park, the Omni Hotel and several newly built residential and office towers are already located in the East Village, and if the dozens of joggers and dog-walkers that take to the streets on weekend afternoons are any indication, the district is also home to a growing number of fitness enthusiasts in need of a permanent workout space as well.

This was the observation Scott Lutwak made when he decided to build his second fitness club in the East Village's ballpark district.

"San Diego was the city that we thought had the greatest potential but was the most underserved," Lutwak said. "San Diego was the number one choice [location] to build an upscale, urban gym for young professionals ages 25 to 50."

Lutwak also owns two gyms in Houston, one of which has been named Houston's best gym for the past three years. The other is under construction and will open in the fall.

According to Lutwak, his San Diego facility will have more amenities and much more space in the studio and locker rooms than the Houston club.

Lutwak said that patrons to San Diego's Fit Athletic will be able to relax and exercise in three outdoor areas absent from his Houston gym. They include a garden terrace, a deck for stretching and a 40-foot lap pool with a projector for nightly movie showings.

Fit Athletic, located in the DiamondView Tower at 350 10th Ave., boasts a 40,000-square-foot exercise studio on the tower's second floor and a 4,000-square-foot lobby and juice bar at ground level.

Lutwak has planned a layout of the second floor that features five

separate fitness circuits, each with machines by manufacturers like Life Fitness, Cybex and Technogym.

But the most adrenaline-inducing aspect of this loftlike studio gym is its ballpark view, which stretches 900 feet from the club's outdoor decks straight down Petco Park's center field.

"When you're in the gym, you're basically in the ballpark," Lutwak said. "We're practically going to be handing out mitts when people are on the treadmill."

Nonetheless, when creating the club's layout, Lutwak said he recognized that many gymgoers want "a choice of experiences" besides the high-energy atmosphere created during game-time in the ballpark or intense exercise classes.

"It's hard to relax if the pool is next to the aerobics room," Lutwak explained, which is why the two destinations will be separated by a transitional walkway with low-energy music and decor.

"That's also the reason why we have a yoga space outside and a yoga studio inside," he said.

In addition to the yoga studio, the second floor of Fit Athletic will be divided into separate studios for Pilates, aerobics, martial arts and spin classes, which Lutwak said will each take place five times a day.

"Having different group fitness rooms that kind of run on their own really frees up the weight room and the machines," said Brandon Buzarde, one of 33 personal trainers hired by Fit Athletic.

"You'll get a lot of different pockets that offer variety for both training and convenience."

Buzarde, who currently works out in the small gym inside his downtown condo until Fit Athletic opens this fall, believes that Downtown San Diego lacks major health club venues.

"There are a lot of near-misses, but there is not a major facility that accommodates the urban professional crowd as well as the professional athlete," Buzarde said.

Like Buzarde, many health-conscious residents of the East Village exercise right inside the neighborhood's residential tow-

ers, many of which contain fitness studios with cardiovascular workout machines and weights.

Maggie Oden is one such resident, who says that despite her proximity to the DiamondView Tower she doesn't believe she'll be joining Fit Athletic.

"The pool looks really appealing," she added, "But otherwise, we're just making do with the gym that we already have, which is pretty good."

According to Oden, several residents of her complex also hire personal trainers to assist them in the gym.

Whether or not residents are interested, Lutwak is not the only fitness center director to pinpoint the East Village as a prime location.

Chris Snook will also be opening a studio in the East Village this September called Define, which he describes as a "lifestyle enhancement center," at 11th Avenue and Park Boulevard.

According to Snook, Define's CEO, Define is a smaller venue than Fit Athletic – with a 600-member capacity as opposed to Fit Athletic's 6,000 – and plans to provide clients with a combination of personal fitness training and business consultations with the goal of improving their quality of life.

Define's amenities will include "corporate business coaching and social happy hours. We target people that will never go to a health club, or go to one and decide they want something a little different," Snook explained.

"Fit [Athletic] delivers a nice, high-end fitness experience and we deliver a high-end lifestyle experience that includes fitness."

However, it's because of this that Snook believes Define is not in direct competition with Fit Athletic.

"To me, Fit [Athletic] is not a competitor," Snook said, "Because what they're going to do and what we're going to do for the East Village and Downtown is different, but it's going to be complementary."

For more information, or to become a member of Fit Athletic, visit fitathletic.com.

For more information, or to become a member of Define SD, visit definesd.com. ■