

HOW COOL IS THIS RINK!

The huge new City Ice Pavilion in L.I.C. is great place to skate

BY BRENDAN BROSH
PHOTOS BY ANDREW SAVULICH

LONG ISLAND City is now home to the city's only rooftop ice skating rink.

City Ice Pavilion, which features a 17,000-square-foot National Hockey League-size skating rink, opened its doors for its 2009/10 season last week.

The facility, on 32nd Place, is only two blocks from the 7 train on Queens Blvd. and close to the Long Island Expressway.

"This part of Queens and Brooklyn has been underserved," said developer Erik Ekstein. "There are 2.5 million people and no place to skate."

The rink is already home to 30 adult and 15 youth hockey teams, Ekstein said. It's also open to the general public, figure skaters, people who want to learn how to skate and birthday parties.

The facility, topped off by a 34,000-square-foot bubble dome, will be open nearly year-round, closing only for a portion of the summer for maintenance.

For parents and players lugging equipment, it includes a parking area.

City Ice Pavilion will employ roughly 20 full-time staffers along with scores of part-time ice skating instructors.

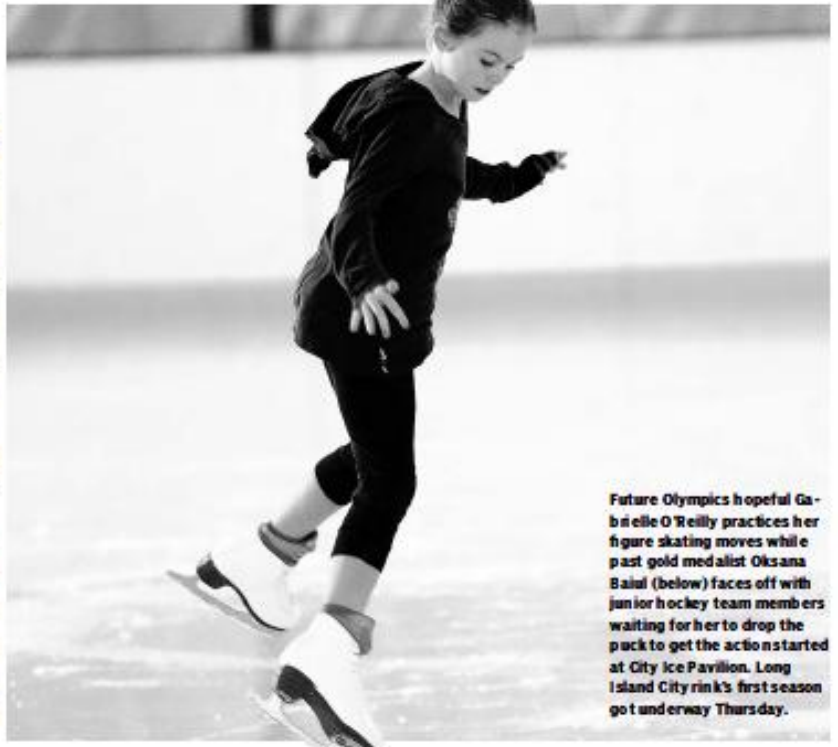
"If you're a skater, the City Ice Pavilion is a comfortable place to be," said Ron Kraut, a fixture in the skating community who served as project manager during construction. "The collection of professionals who teach there is incredible."

Olympic figure skating gold medalist Oksana Baiul and New York Rangers defenseman Michael Del Zotto were on hand when the facility opened Thursday.

Planning for the City Ice Pavilion got underway in 2006 and groundbreaking took place in July 2008, Kraut said.

For Ekstein, opening the rink is a dream come true.

"I was a frustrated hockey player who always had to leave the city to play hockey," he said. "Now skaters in this area have a place to call home."



Future Olympics hopeful Gabrielle O'Reilly practices her figure skating moves while past gold medalist Oksana Baiul (below) faces off with junior hockey team members waiting for her to drop the puck to get the action started at City Ice Pavilion. Long Island City rink's first season got underway Thursday.





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With 15 youth hockey teams waiting to take the ice, it's time to cut the ribbon at City Ice Pavilion in Long Island City. On hand (inset, l.-r.) are contractor Ron Kraut, City Councilman-elect Jimmy Van Bramer, Olympian Oksana Baiul, Pavilion president Erik Ekstein and Howard Jacobs, marketing.