

PRESS RELEASE

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Partnership Grows Home Field Pride At Central Academy *KCPS and City of Kansas City investing \$1.2 million in Central Park*

Kansas City, Sept. 1, 2016: Football coaches bark orders on a muggy Wednesday afternoon and about three dozen Central Academy of Excellence scholar-athletes in white, Eagle-emblazoned helmets, blue jerseys and practice shorts run drills, digging their cleated footwear into the water-logged green and brown turf of their home field.

Their home will soon get a major makeover as a result of a partnership between Kansas City Public Schools, Central students and staff, community leaders and The City of Kansas City. As he watches the football squad maneuver, Central Activities Director and Junior Army Reserve Officer Training Corps Instructor, Maj. Stevie Brooks smiles slightly when he thinks about what the Central Park improvement project will mean for the school and the neighborhood.

"It gives these kids a sense of pride in their home field," Maj. Brooks says. "We're talking about a new spirit, a new attitude. This is an investment in the future of our kids."

Central Academy students use the park athletic facilities thanks to an agreement between KCPS and the City's Department of Parks and Recreation. The \$1.2 million in improvements will include a new track and the conversion of the existing field into a regulation-size football and soccer field with high-quality turf. It is anticipated that the Central Park athletic facility project will be completed by the summer of 2017.

In April 2016, The City of Kansas City and Kansas City Public Schools announced their combined investment for upgrades to the Central Park athletic facilities. At the celebration, City leaders ceremonially gave students a check representing a \$400,000 investment of 3rd District Public Improvement Advisory Committee (PIAC) funds. Central students then presented a ceremonial "thank you" card to the City's representatives.



Several hundred Central Academy students signed a petition that helped the project earn a recommendation from the 3rd District PIAC and approval from the City Council.

“Our students showed real leadership in making this happen,” Maj. Brooks said. “More than 400 of them signed the petition.”

The city recently delivered its portion of the project investment. The next step is approval by the KCPS School Board of the cooperative agreement with KC Parks & Rec and acceptance of the funds at the Board’s Sept. 28 meeting.

KCPS is adding about \$800,000 of its own money into the joint project, which began to take shape in the fall of 2015 after both City and KCPS officials recognized that there was an opportunity to use PIAC funds to improve the park.

This is one of the largest investments in a single project that has ever been approved by a district-level PIAC in Kansas City. Maj. Brooks pointed out that the improvement project will benefit the entire community because many neighbors use Central Park, including patrons of the Linwood Family YMCA, which is currently co-located in the Central building.

“This is a community-wide project,” Maj. Brooks said. “We’re going to have families from all over who are coming here to take advantage of what are going to be some of the best athletic facilities in the city. It’s going to be amazing.”