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*View a virtual tour of the new site [here](#).*

**Cherry Hill’s Reedbird Park Becomes Future Destination of ‘Super’ Rec Center**

*Baltimore City Recreation and Parks announces the start of construction of its first regional recreation complex*

**BALTIMORE**—Today, [Baltimore City Recreation and Parks \(BCRP\)](#) officially announced the start of construction for the Middle Branch Fitness and Wellness Center at Cherry Hill and its adjacent multi-purpose, state-of-the-art playing field at Reedbird Park. These community facilities in South Baltimore are part of a long-term plan to transform 11 miles of shoreline along the Middle Branch of the Patapsco into a network of world-class parks, trails, and public recreation opportunities.

“As a product of East Baltimore recreation centers, it is one of my main goals to constantly grow and improve the city’s recreation options,” said Mayor Bernard C. ‘Jack’ Young. “The new Middle Branch Fitness and Wellness Center will not only serve as the recreation hub for the South Baltimore communities but will also reimagine the way Baltimore City enjoys recreation as a whole.”

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The 35,000-square-foot fitness and wellness center will include three pools; a community room; fitness studios; a gymnasium with a basketball court; a maker space; an indoor walking track; and more. The \$23.1 million center will serve as one of the city's premier regional hubs for indoor and outdoor recreation, with ties to existing trail networks, including the Gwynns Falls Trail and the Middle Branch Trail. The fitness center is scheduled to open in 2022. Future plans for the 'super' rec center site also include three additional grass fields, a playground, walking trails, a fishing pier, a dog park, basketball courts, new lighting, and a field house.

"Baltimore City Recreation and Parks is honored by the opportunity to bring Baltimore its first-ever regional recreation facility," said BCRP executive director, Reginald Moore. "We look forward to the day when this new center becomes Baltimore's standard of recreation."

[The Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation](#) and its partners are responsible for constructing an 83,000-square-foot synthetic surface field next to the fitness center, to be called "BGE Field presented by KELLY." This is the 100<sup>th</sup> park of its kind constructed by the Foundation and its partners nationwide. The \$2.25 million multi-purpose field will provide a safe, clean space for team sports, including baseball, soccer, lacrosse, football, and flag football. BCRP will operate a variety of after-school sports programs and the Ripken Foundation will run its Badges for Baseball program. In addition to the corporate and individual sponsors, funding for the field is provided by the City of Baltimore and the South Baltimore Gateway Partnership (SBGP).

"The fact that we have been able to build one hundred of these beautiful and transformational parks in areas of need across the country makes me really proud," said Cal Ripken, Jr., co-founder of the Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation and baseball's all-time Iron Man. "It is extra special and only fitting that field number one hundred is right here in Baltimore, serving kids in our city." Ripken added, "When we started the Foundation 19 years ago in the name of dad, we never imagined that we would have had this kind of impact, and it is with the help of many terrific donors and partners like BGE, KELLY, Baltimore City Recreation and Parks, South Baltimore Gateway Partnership, Horseshoe Casino Baltimore, and the State of Maryland, that we are able to accomplish this and continue to make a difference for kids." The field is expected to be completed in the spring of 2021.

Funding for the Fitness and Wellness Center includes City and State bonds, Community Development Block Grant funds, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources' Program Open Space, a surtax on Horseshoe Casino's table games for City recreation programs, and Casino Local Impact Fund Grants overseen by SBGP and by the City through the Casino Local Development Council.

"We're thrilled to see local grants from Horseshoe and casino gaming in Maryland have such a positive and tangible impact for the residents of South Baltimore," said Horseshoe Baltimore Senior Vice President and General Manager Randy Conroy. "It is exciting to see construction begin on this world-class facility, which will play a critical role in promoting health, fitness and fun for the entire community."

Senate President Bill Ferguson (Maryland 46<sup>th</sup>), who represents Cherry Hill said, "This is what elected leaders from South Baltimore envisioned when bringing casino gaming to Maryland. Beyond the thousands of jobs created, we're targeting the economic benefits to expanding opportunities and improving health, education and quality of life for the communities that surround the casinos."

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“We are transforming the Middle Branch into Baltimore’s next great waterfront,” said Brad Rogers, executive director of SBGP. “The community said they wanted a place where kids can play and adults can be healthy. By working together, we have made this dream a reality.”

A celebratory groundbreaking ceremony will take place at Reedbird Park on Monday, September 21 at 1pm.

**About Baltimore City Recreation and Parks:**

Baltimore City Recreation and Parks (BCRP) is Baltimore’s leading provider of affordable, year-round recreational activities. BCRP builds a stronger Baltimore one community at a time through conservation, well-being and social equity. BCRP manages and maintains 263 parks, 43 recreation centers, 25 miles of biking and hiking trails and approximately 4,700 acres of parkland. To learn more about our programs and services, visit <http://bcrp.baltimorecity.gov/>.

**About the Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation:** The mission of the Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation is to help to build character and teach critical life lessons to at-risk young people living in America’s most distressed communities. Since 2001, the Ripken Foundation has worked to implement youth development programs across the country to underserved kids teaching a character education curriculum on the field and in the classroom. Brothers Bill and Cal Ripken, Jr., co-founded the Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation as a tribute to their father’s devotion to teaching life skills and lessons through sports. The Youth Development Park Initiative creates clean, safe places for kids to play on synthetic surface fields that promote healthy living in an outdoor recreational space with positive adult mentors. Since 2009, the Ripken Foundation has completed 96 field across the country in 26 states. In 2019, the Foundation impacted over 1.5 million kids teaching life skills and character education programs. For more information, visit [www.RipkenFoundation.org](http://www.RipkenFoundation.org). Follow @CalRipkenSrFdn on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

**About the South Baltimore Gateway Partnership:** SBGP was established in 2016 to help implement the South Baltimore Gateway Master Plan, a sweeping plan to improve neighborhoods near the Horseshoe Casino Baltimore, with funding provided by the Local Impact Grants generated by video lottery terminals at the three major casinos in Maryland. Under its Strategic Plan, SBGP works to improve the vitality of its communities by focusing on three crucial elements of the South Baltimore Gateway Master Plan: Community Development and Revitalization, Environmental Sustainability, and Health and Wellness. To achieve the agenda laid out in the Strategic Plan, SBGP has established three interrelated program areas: Community Grants, Enhanced Services, and Transformational Projects. SBGP is not an agency of the City of Baltimore or the State of Maryland. It is governed by a Board of Directors comprised of residents of the district and representatives of businesses located in the district. Learn more at [www.sbgpartnership.org](http://www.sbgpartnership.org).

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