



WASHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC FIELD RENOVATION

Washington High School's outdoor athletic space is in desperate need of repairs and updates. The students and the Sherman Park residents deserve a great place to meet, compete, exercise, and play. We have been working with students, staff, and residents to make it happen. With \$2.3 million we will be able to put in an artificial turf field, a rubberized 400-meter track and basketball courts. Common Ground has committed to raising nearly half of the money and has gotten Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) to agree to pay the remainder.

Common Ground has raised over \$862,000 for construction (see list of funders on page 2) and MPS is planning to use COVID recovery dollars to fund the remainder of this project. We aim to have this space ready for students and residents by the end of 2022 when hopefully the COVID-19 crisis will be over, and people will be seeking positive and healthy ways to come together. Outdoor spaces for learning and recreation are more important than ever.

This is an opportunity to create a valuable school and community resource and invest in this underserved neighborhood. Projects like this reduce the opportunity gap between wealthier, white youth in the suburbs and low-income students of color.

Washington High School boasts quality Information Technology, Culinary Arts, and Advanced Placement academic programs, but also faces significant challenges to engage many of its students, resulting in higher-than-average dropout rates and low overall academic performance for too many kids. While academics take priority, a quality athletic field should be an essential part of any effort to engage students. We know from previous studies that these facilities and related student activities provide invaluable lessons in self-discipline, conflict resolution, leadership and teamwork.

The current outdoor athletic facilities at Washington are unsafe and often unusable. The football/soccer field is plagued with potholes and frequent floods. The track teams cannot use the hard asphalt track with their spikes and must travel to another school, losing valuable practice time. The field also serves the neighborhood, including the nearby Boys and Girls Club, and, for many area kids, the deteriorating field, basketball hoops, and inadequate track are the only available athletic facilities. We want to expand opportunities for Washington High School students and the surrounding neighborhood by improving Washington's outdoor athletic facilities. Our kids deserve better.

The plan is to create a first-rate, multipurpose athletic field to serve WHS students and the community (during non-school hours). Based on discussions with athletic staff and students at WHS and the Sherman Park community, features of the new playfield would include:

- A 400-meter rubberized track with straightaway starting lanes
- A rectangular, artificial turf, multi-purpose field that can be used for football, soccer, lacrosse, and more
- Two half-court basketball courts
- Environmental enhancements, including stormwater storage and treatment

Common Ground is a non-partisan alliance of 42 congregations, schools, non-profits, and small businesses, which addresses major social problems in Southeastern Wisconsin.

Common Ground has been working to revitalize the Sherman Park neighborhood for over 14 years. Eight Common Ground member institutions are in Sherman Park. Working with them and Sherman Park residents, we leveraged \$33.8 million from five major banks to rehabilitate 91 foreclosed, abandoned homes in the neighborhood. The sale of these homes has put over \$200,000 of annual property taxes back on the city tax rolls.



Sherman Park businesses, organizations, and residents have put in over \$80,000 toward this:

- Center Street Business Improvement District
- Sherman Park Community Association / Sherman Park Neighborhood Improvement District #4
- Community Baptist Church of Greater Milwaukee
- Educators Credit Union
- WHS Alumni Association
- Many Sherman Park residents

Others in the broader community have put their money and support into this project:

- Common Ground and it's [42 member organizations](#)
- Greater Milwaukee Foundation
- Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District
- Fund for Lake Michigan
- Milwaukee Public Schools
- National Football League / Green Bay Packers
- Kohl Philanthropies