

# Fresno City Council OKs plan to restore Granite Park sports fields

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It's time to play ball at Granite Park.

The Fresno City Council sealed a deal on Thursday with a pair of local businessmen to revive the failed sports facility on Cedar Avenue, about a mile south of Fresno State, into new fields of dreams for young athletes. It will be open to the public, too.

"This is historic," said Fresno City Council Member Paul Caprioglio, who represents the area. "I'm almost ready to cry."

The council, in a 6-0 vote with Council Member Esmeralda Soria absent, approved a 25-year lease and service agreement with Central Valley Community Sports Foundation, a nonprofit whose board includes the developers – Terance Frazier and TJ Cox.

Mayor Ashley Swearengin and other city leaders first announced the deal during a Sept. 17 news conference at the weedy and rundown baseball fields in east-central Fresno.

Plans include a fourth full-sized field with press box and 150 covered stadium seats, two NCAA-size basketball/volleyball courts, a 6,000-square-foot, two-story restaurant and eight sand volleyball courts.

The two men plan a \$2.7 million renovation of the existing three fields and will add a fourth one. They will build a new restaurant and structures to shade other sports activities including basketball and volleyball. Construction is slated to start in January and finish by summer 2016.

The city, which owns the property, will pay the foundation \$150,000 a year for 10 years to help with programming, staffing and maintenance. The city now spends \$104,000 a year to keep the property from being blighted, said City Manager Bruce Rudd in his presentation to the council Thursday.

While there is a modest investment in the project, there is no risk to City Hall. City leaders have learned their lesson. Ten years ago, the city co-signed the park's \$5 million bank loan and the developer went belly up. The mayor, Caprioglio and others have made it their mission to fix what happened and find a solution.

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Developer Terance Frazier

Proposals to turn the complex into soccer fields, a wakeboard complex and other recreational centers over the last decade always had a common theme – developers asked the city to pay for it, to make the guarantee, said Council Member Lee Brand.

"It's our responsibility as a city to find a solution," Brand said. "This is the best effort I've seen to find that solution. It's a redemption for a mistake that was made."



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Frazier and Cox both attended the meeting but didn't say much, leaving the council members to ask questions if they wished. After the vote, they quietly left the meeting room.

"This is when the real work begins," Frazier said with a big grin. "I can take off the tie and put on the boots."

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