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## Jackson Square ice rink, turf field facility project gets key funding; work to start in 2013

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By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

Construction on a long-awaited ice rink and turf field facility in Jackson Square is expected to begin in spring 2013, after the project received its first major funding commitment, developers announced this week.

The state recently allocated \$5.6 million to the project that will build a 38,000 square-foot recreation center as part of a massive, ongoing redevelopment effort at a key crossroads between Boston's Roxbury and Jamaica Plain neighborhoods.

A private fund-raising effort will begin early next year to secure the additional money needed to start construction on the project that officials have estimated in recent months will cost a total of \$16 million, according to Urban Edge, the nonprofit community development organization leading the effort.

After years of delay, the recreation center will fulfill a promise by local elected officials to replace two indoor area ice skating venues, the Cass and Kelly rinks

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Officials to replace two indoor area ice skating venues, the Cass and Kelly Rinks, which were each built in the 1960s and shuttered by the state in the late 1980s due to neglect and budget constraints.

The Cass center in Roxbury reopened this past summer as a multi-functional recreational center offering a wide array of sport and activity options, but no surface for ice skating or ice hockey. The old Kelly Rink was torn down after its closure. A temporary, outdoor replacement for it is situated in another section of Jamaica Plain and open for 10 weeks of the year.

The new Jackson Square Recreation Center will include an ice rink open seven months annually, an indoor turf field available for use the other five months, an indoor walking track above the ice and turf surface, function rooms, a video arcade, and a facility serving healthy snacks, development officials said.

“I am delighted that the Commonwealth has committed substantial funding to ensure the Jackson Square Recreation Center is built,” Mayor Thomas M. Menino said in a statement from Urban Edge. “Having a place to engage youth from Roxbury and Jamaica Plan year-round is critical to the neighborhood, and the new facility is a key component to the revitalization of Jackson Square.”

The Friends of the Kelly Rink organization has long urged the state to support a new facility.

“We’re thrilled this funding has come through,” Steve Glickel, vice president of the friends group said in the statement. “This is the culmination of 14 years of advocacy. We’ve been struggling and working to provide this opportunity for the youth of our community, and it looks like our dreams are about to become a reality.”

The facility designed by Boston-based architectural firm Bargmann Hendrie+Archetype, Inc. will be built in an area that is in the midst of a 14-building, \$250-million redevelopment.

The Jackson Square Partners, a collaboration of three local nonprofits – Urban Edge, the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation, and the Hyde Square Task Force – is leading the quarter-billion dollar development initiative that was drafted by the community over a decade of planning with the hope of revitalizing Jackson Square, which is highlighted currently by its

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busy Orange Line MBTA station.

The square where Columbus Avenue and Centre Street intersect was one of the areas of Boston where economic development has suffered from demolition done decades ago to make room for an extension of Interstate 95, which was planned to run through there, but, after public outcry, never built.

“This is a huge win for young people in and around the Jackson Square area,” State Rep. Liz Malia said in the statement. “This project is not only a major part of the overall revitalization of Jackson Square. It will also provide immediate economic development opportunities and long-term youth jobs.”

Construction on new retail and housing facilities there, the first pieces of the major multi-phase redevelopment initiative, [began over the summer](#).

The recreation center plans [won approval](#) from the city’s redevelopment authority earlier this year and zoning variances received city approval last week.

“We have worked on this vital community project for a very long time, and now thanks to the Commonwealth we will have some real momentum to see the doors open to youth and the rest of the community in the near future,” Chrystal Kornegay, president and CEO of Urban Edge, said in the statement.

Jackson Square Partners met with community leaders and groups, city and state organizations and potential users of the facility over the last two years, according to Urban Edge.

Officials say the new center “will be affordable, accessible, and financially sustainable, and it will create job opportunities for youth and other residents of the neighborhood.”

“This project reflects the incredible promise and ingenuity of the Jamaica Plain community, and of folks like the Friends of the Kelly Rink, who have organized for so long to get a permanent structure,” State Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz said in the statement. “The Jackson Square recreation center will complement the recently completed Cass Center and close a gap in the accessibility that local youth and families have to the kind of organized recreational and after-school activities enjoyed in wealthier communities.”

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