

LEWIS DIUGUID JUNE 21, 2016 10:53 AM

# Berkley Park to become more appealing with new amenities, including sand volleyball courts

## HIGHLIGHTS

The riverfront park keeps growing in its attractions

Young people will gravitate more to the public space by the Missouri River



BY LEWIS DIUGUID  
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As more people move downtown, they'll need more shared public space, where they can have low-cost fun and enjoy the openness of being outdoors.

Richard L. Berkley Riverfront Park just north of the River Market will soon see the additions of six sand volleyball courts and two kickball fields. That will do a lot to attract more young people who want to have fun and enjoy playing with others along the Missouri River.

The 17-acre park is between the Christopher "Kit" Bond and Heart of America Bridge. It also is within walking distance of the Isle of Capri Casino. The park, a former landfill for construction debris, was like downtown — unappealing and deserted — but its potential as a riverfront attraction changed that.

The park was dedicated in October 1998 with a wide path running alongside the river and a lot of green space. Signs tell the story of the river, how the area was settled and the city's rise from it.

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Berkley Park has plenty of picnic tables and a bicycling, walking and jogging trail that connect it to the River Market, which also has undergone a development renaissance. Let's also not leave out the new streetcar, which began operating in May bringing more people to the area from Crown Center and downtown to eat, drink, shop and have fun without worries about parking.

Young people living in the area use the park every day for exercise, walk dogs, picnic during lunchtime and dinnertime, and play games in the fields. The sand volleyball courts and kickball fields will be located at the east end of the park near the Isle of Capri Casino.

Port KC is financing the \$200,000 project, The Kansas City Star reports.

The new amenities enabling people to have fun with others is not just a daytime thing. LED lights will illuminate the courts for nighttime play.

People can play badminton, croquet or other outdoor games in the park. Sand volleyball courts have been popular attractions in other areas like Martin City and Westport.

They should be equally appealing at Berkley Park, which is a natural draw for young people. Truck vendors selling food, alcoholic beverages, coffee and soft drinks could make some money if they were to set up at the park near the courts.

Their success could be a sales tax revenue stream for the city, too.

The riverfront is expected to also see the construction soon of nearly 400 luxury apartments, ample parking and retail development, making the area even more attractive for young urban professionals or empty nesters in the suburbs wanting to move into the city.

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