

Running down a dream

New Garden City track complete

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GARDEN CITY

The new track at Garden City Collegiate is a runner's dream. Crisp white paint lays out the lanes on a pristine surface, covered in crimson rubber.

The project was recently finished, with help from city councillors Devi Sharma (Old Kildonan) and Brian Mayes (St. Vital), who chipped in a combined \$200,000.

The rest of the funding for the roughly million-dollar project came from the Seven Oaks School Division.

"I'm pretty ecstatic," said Grade 12 student Jorja Wiens, captain of the cross country team. "I've been a runner for most of my life, and I've been running on very crumbled tracks for at least five years. Having this in our town and not having to drive 40 minutes away is something really great."

Wiens said the track used to be in such bad shape she'd worry about rolling an ankle. But on Wednesday she flew down the lane with no such worry and a grin on her face.

After 19 months of pandemic stresses, an outdoor running facility where students can get together, get moving and just have some fun is what was needed, said Wiens.

"Everybody's in way better spirits," she said.



Photo by Cody Sellar

Cross-country team captain Jorja Wiens zips down the centre lane.

Seven Oaks superintendent Brian O'Leary was feeling good about it, too.

"It feels actually way, way better," he said.

The school's old asphalt track was warped and cracked, so it was ripped out. When reinstalled, it was moved over to allow for additional parking at the Seven Oaks Performing Arts Centre, which is adjacent to the high school.

The asphalt was then rubberized to ensure its durability,

and the rough surface improves traction.

While the track lies behind Garden City Collegiate, O'Leary said it serves the broader community.

"You'll find people on this track at seven in the morning and find people on the track at nine at night, then you'll find school classes using it all day long," he said.

Track and field is a particularly good investment because of the accessibility of track sports, O'Leary said. All it takes is a pair of shoes and a little determination.

"Nobody's ever cut from a track team, so it really is an ideal sport. You can have kids who are training and competing at a really high level and kids who just want to improve their basic fitness," O'Leary said.

Sharma said she was happy to be able to help the project along.

"It has been a great pleasure to collaborate with Seven Oaks School Division," she said. Like O'Leary, Sharma pointed to how the track can improve life in the community for all residents.

"When we partner in projects like this, improving our spaces in school facilities, it really benefits the school community but also the neighbourhood at large," she said.

Sharma commended her colleague Mayes for spearheading the council's involvement. Sharma said Mayes visited all school running tracks in the city before the two councillors teamed up to provide aid for the Garden City Collegiate project.