

## NFL Grassroots Program installs artificial turf at Martin Luther King Jr. Park

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Those with connections to Richmond know that it is filled with breathtaking waterfront views and has a history of producing top athletes such as track and field star Sharonda Williams and former baseball great Willie McGee.



Photos by Z'ma Wyatt

From left: Oakland Raiders legend Jim Otto; Joan Davis, president and CEO of the Richmond Children's Foundation; Mayor Gayle McLaughlin; Rhonda Harris; Otheree Christian; Stephanie Forbes, executive director of Bay Area LISC; Bill Lindsey, Richmond city manager; Maxine Fisher; Mark Torres, president of the Richmond Eagles football team; and Jael Myrick, field representative for Assemblywoman Nancy Skinner.

However, many of the playgrounds where these premier athletes got their start have suffered as many urban facilities in the area have.

The city of Richmond, the Richmond Children's Foundation and the Oakland Raiders have partnered to provide a safer park by installing artificial turf at Martin Luther King Jr. Park, located at 360 Harbour Way South. A celebration for the new field took place Tuesday in Richmond and featured Raiders legend Jim Otto, local leaders and families from the area who use the park.

“It is our great pleasure to once again work with the NFL Grassroots Program to provide a place for the community to engage in outdoor activity,” said Oakland Raiders Chief Executive Amy Trask.



Mayor Gayle McLaughlin, Jim Otto and the Richmond Eagles Football team, the Raiderettes, family members and friends

The Raiders, the NFL Youth Football Fund and Local Initiatives Support Corporation awarded the \$200,000 grant as a part of its National Football League Grassroots Program, which for more than 11 years has constructed nearly 200 football fields in underserved neighborhoods across the country.

“These fields help us make an impact where assistance is most needed and provide a tangible sign of our Youth Football Fund in action,” said NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell.



Mayor Gayle McLaughlin welcomes the community during the ceremony at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Park.

The new turf installation at MLK Jr. Park football field is the heart and soul of the Nystrom United Revitalization Effort — also known as NURVE — a community effort to revitalize the Nystrom neighborhood, which will link two adjacent schools and serve as the heartbeat of the community.

Local Initiatives Support Corporation identifies local, nonprofit and neighborhood agencies that have an interest in building or refurbishing football fields in schools and parks that are underserved.

“We are proud to support projects that give youngsters a safe place to play and bring families and neighborhoods together,” Goodell said.

— Felicia Purcell-McDaniel, Globe Sports Editor