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Omaha Central High School Foundation to create legacy walkway

By [Erin Duffly](#) / World-Herald staff writer

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In a bid to honor its alumni and past staff while creating a usable monument, the Omaha Central High School Foundation is embarking on a project to create a legacy walkway and plaza outside the high school.

“Our alumni are just so involved,” said Central High Foundation Executive Director Michele Roberts. “They’re connected, they treasure their education at Central, their education at Omaha Public Schools, and they want to give back, and they want to be remembered here.”

For two years, committees of alumni, current students, Central staff and other community members have been brainstorming different projects that would allow alumni to give back to their alma mater while getting a little recognition of their own — beyond a plaque stuck in a back hallway.

“We want people to come over to our campus and see our story of the Omaha Public Schools and Central High School, and say ‘Henry Fonda, yup, he graduated from here.’”

(NFL running back) Gale Sayers, yup. (Nobel Prize-winning economist) Lawrence Klein, yup, he went here,” Roberts said.

The plaza and walkway were designed by Central grads James Dahlin and Adrian Ferguson, of Dahlin Studio and Urban Alchemy, as well as landscape architect Dropseed Studio and civil engineering firm Ehrhart Griffin and Associates.

“They understand the building, they understand the history,” Roberts said of Dahlin and Ferguson.

The walkway would begin at Dodge Street and lead to a stately courtyard, lined by columns and benches, that would open up to a columned stage, where Central could hold outdoor ceremonies or students and alumni could gather to pose for photos.

A screen behind the stage and the columns and benches would have spaces for engraved plaques that could honor alumni or favorite teachers. Slivers of green space would become educator recognition gardens.

“I don’t think we can possibly foresee all the uses for it,” Central Principal Ed Bennett said.

The foundation envisions two future phases to add two new entryways to the school. Committee members asked Dahlin and Ferguson for a classic design, one that would pay homage to Central’s French Renaissance architecture. The building sits on the site of the former Nebraska Territorial Capitol Building and is included in the National Register of Historic Places. The high school itself was founded in 1854.

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Preliminary estimates peg the cost of the project at \$500,000, which will come from private donations.

The plan is to break ground on the project by June and finish by the start of the 2014-15 school year. Bennett and members of the Central High Foundation gave a brief presentation on the project at the OPS school board meeting Monday; they do not need approval from the board, because only private funds will be used.



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Erin covers education, primarily Omaha Public Schools.

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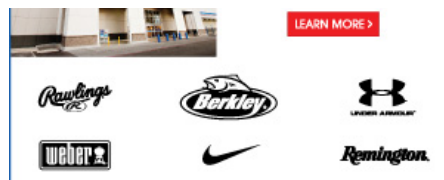
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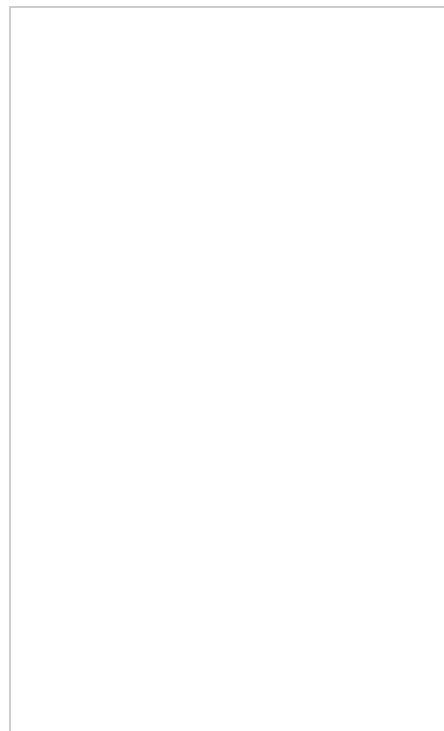
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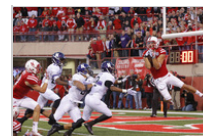


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