

## APV completes transformation of Vance Harmon Park in Poinciana

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Yarielys Mavi Rosario, 8, left, enjoys the swings at the children play area at Vance Harmon Park in Poinciana. [ PIERRE DUCHARME/THE LEDGER ]



Chino Medal, front, puts the ball in play during hand ball match with Tyshawn Phelps at the three-wall court that is part of Vance Harmon Park in Poinciana. [ PIERRE DUCHARME/THE LEDGER ]



The second phase of a \$10.2 million project, which included funding from Osceola County and grants, became open to the public last week. Vance Harmon Park is the signature amenity for the Association of Poinciana Villages. [ PIERRE DUCHARME/THE LEDGER ]

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**POINCIANA — Vance Harmon Park’s transformation is complete.**

**The second phase of a \$10.2 million project, which included funding from Osceola County and grants, became open to the public last week. Vance Harmon Park is the signature amenity for the Association of Poinciana Villages.**

**“Being in the heart of Poinciana and having this type of facilities is amazing,” said Mark Maldonado, general manager for APV. “We believe this will help bring a sense of pride to our community. For me, it’s a joy and it’s a blessing.”**

**The first phase, which included the Mary Jane Arrington Aquatic Center and Gymnasium, was completed in late May. The second of the two phases includes a football field, renovated softball diamond, beach volleyball court, two additional basketball courts with nets for tennis or pickleball, a dog park and two playgrounds.**

**“The playgrounds have new technology with a rubber floor surface,” Maldonado said. “It’s really an added safety for the kids. It’s not just a beautiful park, but it adds value to the community.”**

**With two playgrounds, one side is dedicated to activities for toddlers while the other is for school-aged children and includes amenities compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Between the two are five total pavilions that can each be reserved for \$85. APV is a community of about 27,000 homeowners that spans parts of Polk and Osceola counties.**

“It’s been great, mostly for the young people,” said Candido Santiago, 47, who hopes to start a unicycle club in Poinciana. “It gets them out of the house and away from the video games. I can tell you that it’s been used a lot so far.”

The renovated softball field includes batting cages in the back while the football facility will be the home of the Poinciana Predators youth program. Both have brand-new scoreboards.

“We’re going to work to promote in-house leagues,” Maldonado said. “We want to make sure we have a broad range of sports and to promote family activities.”

The dog park is the second in APV territory with a fence separating two sides of the park. One side, Maldonado said, is intended for smaller dogs while the other is for larger dogs. For dog owners, Maldonado said, it could serve as a substitute to having to walk pets down busy main roads.

“It’s very cool. I love it,” said Alex Williams, 29, who used to have to take his greyhound/lab mix to the other park in the community. “This is closer and I like this one a lot better.”

The father of an 8-year-old son, Williams said he’s also gotten a lot of use out of other amenities like the basketball courts and playgrounds. Steve Pepe, 60, said his only gripes were the mixed-use courts that had four nets for tennis or pickleball splitting two full basketball courts.

“To me, this is ridiculous,” Pepe said. “They should have either made it a basketball court or a tennis court. Someone could back into a pole and get hurt. I think the rest looks really nice.”

Maldonado said the process to make Vance Harmon Park what it is now started in 2013. There was a master planning process with residents’ input that helped bring the project to fruition. Maldonado said he wasn’t sure that any renovations had been made at the location since the initial construction of the basketball, handball and tennis courts.

“It was somewhat abandoned,” he said. “We were maintaining it, but it just sort of sat here. The infrastructure wasn’t there. We needed to have some investment.”

The completion of the two phases of the project, Maldonado said, has made Poinciana a more attractive place to live and for developers. Maldonado said inquiries from builders has picked up for single-family homes inside of APV, as has commercial development around it.

“It’s a growing economy again with construction,” Maldonado said. “You have options here. We have nice houses at the right price, and now, nice amenities. You drive through here Monday through Friday after school and the place is packed. There are a lot of beautiful, positive things going on in Poinciana.”