



Kansas City Goes All In On "We Are 26" FIFA World Cup 26™ Host City Brand, Announces Nonprofit Organization to Lead Effort

Kansas City, Mo. – May 18, 2023 – Kansas City announced the formation of [KC2026](#) and its Board of Directors, made up of business executives, civic leaders and elected officials.

A nonprofit organization overseeing strategy and delivering host city duties for FIFA World Cup 26™, KC2026 will plan, construct and implement all aspects of Kansas City's largest sports and fan engagement event in the region's history.

Ahead of Kansas City's KC2026 press conference announcement, and for the first time ever, FIFA unveiled unique localized tournament branding for each Host City for the FIFA World Cup 26™. Known as a sports-centric city, and in true KC style, the market went all in on the brand unveil with real-time activations at iconic landmarks and assets including Union Station Kansas City, Mill Creek Park, the KC Streetcar, the National WWI Museum and Memorial, digital displays across the metro, as well as brand colors proudly displayed across the city's skyline.

Kansas City's Host City branded assets for FIFA World Cup 26™ are available at [this link](#).

"This is a proud moment for Kansas City. The FIFA World Cup 26™ will bring jobs to our residents, generate hundreds of millions of dollars for our region, and will illustrate on a global stage what we've known for some time: Kansas City is the soccer capital of America. I can't wait to welcome the world to Kansas City," said **Mayor Quinton Lucas**.

KC2026 announced today that it has already secured funding from Missouri and commitments of private support from key Kansas City organizations.

"We couldn't be more excited to host the FIFA World Cup 26™. We know KC2026 is sure to make this a world-class event in a world-class city for sports fans here at home and around the world," said **Missouri Governor Mike Parson**. "From Super Bowl Champions to hosting the NFL Draft to being the first city to construct a National Women's Soccer League stadium, Kansas City is THE place to be. Now with the World Cup, this means even more infrastructure investment, business development, talent recruitment,

and economic growth for Kansas City, and we look forward to KC2026 adding to the tremendous success we are seeing.”

“Bringing the FIFA World Cup 26™ to the Kansas City Metro Region was a bi-state effort that will boost the Kansas economy and show the world all that our state has to offer,” said **Kansas Governor Laura Kelly**. I’m delighted that a great team is being assembled to coordinate planning efforts over the next three years, and I look forward to continuing to make the necessary investments to get Kansas City ready for this great opportunity.”

The organization will work closely with FIFA officials to ensure compliance with the event guidelines and standards. The KC2026 Board of Directors will lead fundraising efforts, as well as engage with various stakeholders, including government entities, community organizations, sponsors and volunteers to ensure that all preparations are in place for the event.

“Kansas City is an ideal market to host the world’s largest sports event in 2026, and we needed an organization that could deliver on our host city responsibilities and continue to showcase KC as premier sports, business and talent destination,” said **Karen Daniel, President of KC2026 Executive Committee and Board of Directors**. “This is Kansas City’s moment and KC2026, alongside many partners across the region, is moving intentionally and with great focus to bring to fruition an event that will shape our community’s future for generations to come.”

“It’s an honor to have one of Jackson County’s most recognizable amenities showcased under the bright lights of the biggest international sports stage,” said **Jackson County Executive Frank White, Jr.** “At our stadium, countless fans have witnessed unbelievable plays by talented athletes and concert performances by iconic entertainers, including Taylor Swift and soon to include Beyoncé. We are excited to add to that list of star-studded excitement when we welcome tens of thousands of people for the World Cup. Without the support of Jackson County taxpayers, this amazing facility would not exist.”

The KC2026 organization is led by a Board of Directors and key leaders including Kansas City Mayor Quinton Lucas, and honorary board co-chairs Clark Hunt, Chairman and CEO, Kansas City Chiefs and Cliff Illig, Principal Owner, Sporting Kansas City.

KC2026 Board of Directors include:

- Executive Committee:
 - Karen Daniel, KC2026 Board President, Chief Financial Officer, Black & Veatch (*retired*)
 - Neal Sharma, KC2026 Board Vice President, President, dentsu shop & Co-Founder and Former CEO, DEG
 - Jake Reid, KC2026 Board Vice President, President and CEO, Sporting Kansas City
 - Kathy Nelson, KC2026 Board Secretary, President and CEO, Kansas City Sports Commission and Visit KC

- Esther George, KC2026 Board Treasurer, President and CEO, Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City (2011-2023)
- Board Members:
 - Mayra Aguirre, President, Hall Family Foundation
 - David Johnston, County Administrator, Unified Government of Wyandotte County/Kansas City, Kansas
 - Mike Kelly, Chairman, Johnson County Board of County Commissioners
 - Matt Kenny, Executive Vice President - Operations and Events, Kansas City Chiefs
 - Angie Long, Co-Owner, Kansas City Current
 - Brian Platt, City Manager, Kansas City
 - Joe Reardon, President and CEO, Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce
 - Senator John Rizzo, State of Missouri
 - Jim Rowland, Executive Director, Jackson County Sports Complex Authority
 - Morgan Said, Chief of Staff - Office of the Mayor, Kansas City
 - Senator Dinah Sykes, State of Kansas
 - Frank White Jr., Jackson County Executive, Jackson County, Missouri

Kansas City is known for its central location, robust infrastructure, fan engagement, lifestyle amenities and connectivity, making it a key market within the FIFA World Cup 26™ destinations. Details on the number of matches Kansas City will host, along with expected attendance, will be announced later in 2023.

“This morning’s FIFA World Cup 26™ host city brand launch and the announcement of KC2026 is an important milestone that brings us one step closer to making this dream a reality,” said **Clark Hunt, Chairman and CEO of the Kansas City Chiefs**. “This is a tremendous opportunity for our community. Fans from every corner of the world will be introduced to our city and our region, and they will see what makes Kansas City such a great place to live, work and play.”

An inclusive sports city with an unparalleled passion for soccer, Kansas City has earned recognition as the Soccer Capital of America. The Kansas City region has invested more than \$600 million in soccer facilities in the last 15 years, including the KC Current stadium opening in 2024 - the world’s largest investment in professional women’s soccer. In addition, the KC2026 bid received endorsements from nine youth soccer state associations throughout the Midwest.

“Bringing the FIFA World Cup 26™ to Kansas City is the result of the collaboration between our professional sports teams, local and state public officials and civic leaders,” said **Cliff Illig, Principal Owner of Sporting Kansas City**. “Fan experience and hospitality are the essence of Kansas City standing out as a premier destination for major events. Our soccer infrastructure is unmatched in North America, and we look forward to seeing our community welcome fans from around the world to the Soccer Capital of America.”

Kansas City, proudly known as the Heart of America, is the nation's most centrally located major metropolitan area with 55 million people within a day's drive and both coasts within a three-hour flight.

The FIFA World Cup™ is the largest and most prestigious single-sport event in the world and is followed by billions of fans all over the world. FIFA World Cup 26™ will be jointly hosted by 16 cities spread amongst America, Canada & Mexico and is the first-ever tournament with 48 teams competing for the title of World Champion.

About KC2026

A nonprofit organization overseeing strategy and delivering host city duties for FIFA World Cup 26™, KC2026 will plan, construct and implement all aspects of Kansas City's largest sports and fan engagement event in the region's history. Learn more at www.KansasCityFWC26.com

About Greater Kansas City

Home to 2.5 million people, Kansas City is a vibrant metro in the heart of the U.S., known as the "KC Heartland." An all-new single terminal at Kansas City International Airport welcomes guests by air, while 85% of the U.S. is less than a two-day drive away. The region's red-hot sports culture is embraced every season, headlined by the Kansas City Chiefs, Kansas City Royals, Major League Soccer's Sporting Kansas City, and the National Women's Soccer League's Kansas City Current.

Home to renowned arts and culture, experience live entertainment in Downtown Kansas City's Power & Light District, as well as 40 jazz clubs throughout the area. Find food from James Beard award-winning chefs and sample true KC tradition at more than 100 barbecue restaurants across the metro. Dive into some of the country's most significant historical moments at KC's treasured institutions, from the National WWI Museum and Memorial and the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Museum to the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum and the American Jazz Museum. Learn more at www.KC.org

###

CONTACT:

Elliott Scott
Kansas City Sports Commission
escott@sportkc.org
417.838.1650

Laura (Patriquin) Phillips
KCADC
phillips@thinkkc.com
207.712.4517

Melissa Kozakiewicz
City of Kansas City
melissa.kozakiewicz@kcmo.org
816.914.3303