

DETROIT

NATIVE SUN

Detroit is transforming 11 neighborhood parks

Nearly \$20 million in improvements will bring new playgrounds, trails, sports courts and gathering spaces to neighborhoods across the city.

Detroit residents will soon have more places to play, exercise, gather and enjoy nature as major improvements move forward at 11 neighborhood parks.

The City is investing \$19.85 million across the projects, which range from new playgrounds and walking paths to a BMX bike park, expanded green space and better connections to surrounding neighborhoods. Some improvements were completed this summer, while others will begin construction later this year or in 2027.

The upgrades were shaped through community engagement with the block clubs, neighborhood associations, schools, businesses and organizations that use the parks.

"Strong, vibrant neighborhoods are ones that have convenient access to high-quality parks," Mayor Mary Sheffield said. "As my administration continues to focus on neighborhood-level investment, improving our network of neighborhood parks is going to be an important part of this work, to improve the quality of life for longtime Detroiters."

Here's what residents can expect.

More accessible places for children to play. Several projects are designed to create more inclusive and age-appropriate play spaces.

At Eliza Howell Park in District 1, a new nature play area will be accessible to children with disabilities and their caregivers. Construction on the \$1 million project is expected to begin this fall.

Hasse Emery Park in District 3 will receive a toddler-focused playground and "tot town," offering a play space designed specifically for younger children.

Heilmann Park, also in District 3, will gain accessible play features, exercise equipment and new basketball and tennis courts. The improvements will also create a stronger connection between the nearby school and recreation center.

New ways to get outside and stay active. The improvements will expand recreational options beyond traditional playgrounds and sports fields.

Dorais Park in District 3 is being transformed into Detroit's first BMX bike and nature park. The \$1.5 million project will include multi-use trails and is expected to be completed this fall.

At Farwell Park, residents can now use more than a mile of improved asphalt pathways, including a large walking loop. The completed \$2 million project also includes tennis court improvements and a new playground.

Peterson Park in District 2 reopened in July with a nature play area, splash pad, playground, picnic tables and an updated tennis court.

Jayne-Lasky Park in District 3 is being planned to include a multi-sport court and improved connections around the Lasky Recreation Center. Construction is expected to begin in spring 2027.

Some projects will significantly expand the role parks play as gathering places.

MLK Park in District 5 is set to triple in size through a \$2.5 million renovation and expansion. The project will add a playground, parking, horseshoe area, picnic amenities, seating, trees and landscaping while preserving the history of MLK Plaza.

Cass Park in District 6 will receive improved walkways and a new plaza connecting the park with the neighboring high school. Plans also include a new "chill zone" where students and other residents can gather.

Simanek Park in District 7 is undergoing a complete \$3 million renovation featuring a nature play area, sports fields, playgrounds, shelters and stormwater management improvements. Construction is expected to be completed in summer 2027.

Detroit Fire Department highlights 54th

Junior Fire Cadet Class during Hands-On Training Day

The public joined members of the Detroit Fire Department (DFD) at the Walter P. Harris Regional Training Center for a behind-the-scenes look at the 54th Junior Fire Cadet class as participants put weeks of classroom instruction into action during their annual hands-on training day.

A total of 31 Detroit youth, now three weeks into the six-week summer program, demonstrated the firefighting and emergency response skills they have been learning, offering a glimpse into one of the department's longest-running youth development initiatives in partnership with Grow Detroit's Young Talent (GDYT).

The Junior Fire Cadet Program has introduced thousands of young Detroiters to the fire service while instilling discipline, teamwork, confidence, and a commitment to serving others. Since 2015, the program has partnered with GDYT, connecting participants with meaningful paid summer employment and career exploration opportunities.

"This program is about so much more than preparing future fire department members, it's about investing in Detroit's future," said Executive Fire Commissioner Chuck Simms. "Every summer, we have the opportunity to build relationships with young people, help them discover their potential, and show them what it means to lead through service. The success of this program year after year is a direct reflection of the incredible dedication of our Community Relations and Training Division staff, along with our outstanding partnership with Grow De-

troit's Young Talent. Together, we're giving these young men and women experiences and life skills that will benefit them no matter what career path they choose.

"Throughout the six-week program, cadets receive instruction in both firefighting and emergency medical skills while also participating in financial literacy workshops, public speaking, job readiness training, and mental health management. The program also includes a college tour and active shooter response training led by the Detroit Police Department.

Grow Detroit's Young Talent is providing 8,000 summer employment opportunities this year for Detroit residents ages 14 to 24, exposing participants to careers in technology, energy, civic and community service, public safety, and many other industries.

"Grow Detroit's Young Talent is committed to building Detroit's future workforce by listening to our young people and understanding what they need to succeed," said Stephanie Nixon, Chief Program Services Officer for Detroit Employment Solutions Corporation (DESC). "We work with our employer partners to create meaningful experiences that allow participants to build confidence and develop real-world skills. We want every young person in Detroit who wants a job to have one and would love to double the number of Detroit youth served each summer through GDYT. To this end, we are always looking to engage new employers who are excited to inspire our youth."



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