



# CHAPTER 1: CONTEXT



City of Detroit  
**Parks & Recreation Strategic Plan**  
2022-2032





## OVERVIEW

The first chapter of the Detroit Parks & Recreation Strategic Plan provides context for understanding the plan and how it was created. The following describes Detroit's system of parks and recreation sites through the years and the driving forces behind the plan. Detroit's Parks and Recreation Division (DPRD) strives to invest equitably in the City's system by prioritizing park need, setting targets for improvement, and creating strategies to address Detroit needs and priorities. This section includes:

1. How to Use This Document
2. What is the Parks & Rec Strategic Plan
3. History of the Parks & Rec System
4. Parks & Rec System Today
5. The Impacts of COVID-19
5. Parks & Rec System Inventory

# How to Use This Document

*The 2022 Parks & Recreation Strategic Plan creates a comprehensive vision for Detroit's parks and recreation system and DPRD's recommendations for the next 10 years and beyond. While chapters may be viewed separately, the plan was created as a holistic document that connects best practices in equity, public health, access, and the environment with the resounding voices of Detroiters.*

In which chapter can I find...



## **Chapter 1: Context**

- History of the parks & recreation system
- How COVID-19 has affected Detroiters and their park use
- Inventory of park types, recreation centers, & other sites



## **Chapter 2: Vision & Engagement**

- Vision, Goals, & Objectives
- Community engagement overview
- PRSP Survey and Community Needs Assessment findings
- Summary of focus groups



## **Chapter 3: Strategies**

- Proposed strategies for improving the parks & rec system
- Design Insights: helpful vignettes on innovative park design
- Maps of system amenities
- Table of strategies for quick reference



## **Chapter 4: Implementation & Targets**

- Division descriptions and associated timelines, costs, & targets
- Descriptions of targets & worksheet
- Target progress bars



## **Chapter 5: Analysis & Prioritization**

- Analysis of 10-minute walk access to parks and rec centers
- Analysis of demographics & the metric of park investment need
- Prioritization process & Find My Park's Metric



## **Chapter 6: Capital Plans**

- When & how will walkable parks be improved
- When & how will destination parks be improved
- Investment needs for marinas, golf courses, & cemeteries
- Investment needs for greenways
- When & how will recreation centers & sites be improved





## What is the Parks & Recreation Strategic Plan?

Every five years the **Detroit Parks & Recreation Division (DPRD)** updates **Detroit's parks and recreation plan**. The primary objective for the plan is to create a vision for the next 10 years and a blueprint for investment in the parks and recreation system that thoughtfully incorporates financial sustainability. This document also fulfills State funding requirements that enable DPRD to pursue grants. The process of creating this plan is also an opportunity to better understand and plan for community needs and desires.

Each chapter represents a step in the planning process and **Chapter 1 is the starting line**. Chapter 1 describes the history and present role of the parks and recreation system, providing a basis for understanding the many assets that make up the parks and recreation system. Chapter 2 begins with DPRD's overarching vision and main goals for improving Detroit's parks and recreation system. Each goal can be reached through implementable strategies set forth in Chapter



*Freshly painted start line at Zussman Park 2021*



3 and progress may be evaluated by the achievement of targets, set forth in Chapter 4. Each step of the planning process integrated community engagement, from information gathering, to strategy development, to reviewing. A robust analysis of community characteristics in Chapter 5 informs the capital plans, or the proposed phased funding for all parks and recreational sites, in Chapter 6. Additional information about each process can be found in the corresponding appendices available by request.

**What makes this plan **unique** from previous plans is the **scope** and the emphasis on **equity**.**

**In terms of scope, it provides for not only parks and recreation centers, but also greenways, cultural sites, programs, and maintenance, all of which were beyond the scope of the previous parks improvement plan.**

**In terms of equity, DPRD has used an equity framework to shape decisions and meaningfully prioritize investments.** Across the country, low-income individuals, and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) historically have had less access to parks and green space. Studies show that the significant disparities in environmental quality and health outcomes faced by these

communities can be related to this lack of access. With this in mind, DPRD intentionally centered equity within its frameworks of investment, throughout the two-year long plan development process.

**DPRD aims to be a leader in providing access to parks, green spaces, and other recreational opportunities.** The plan prioritizes investments that will increase access to parks and recreational opportunities for those who need it most. This includes youth and seniors, low-income individuals, BIPOC, as well as those in areas with disparities in health outcomes and environmental quality. DPRD aligned its approach with national best practice, using the Trust for Public Land's equity-based metric approach as a model.



*Park Development assembling a basketball hoop.*





## A Brief History of the Parks System

Detroit's parks system, like the City itself, has seen **vast changes in its long history**, dating back to a time before this land became known as Detroit.

**Prior to European settlements, the Anishinaabe Three Fires nations established their villages along the Detroit River** living off the land. By 1701, French and British settlers arrived developing the fur pelt trade to increase their wealth. Early Detroit consisted of a small fort and trading post at the foot of the Detroit River. In 1805, a devastating fire would destroy this compound, laying the foundation for a future, industrial city.

Detroit's initial park system was laid out as an Act of Congress in 1806. Small patches of land for public use were established as mere show pieces, not leisure. The original parks which remain in downtown Detroit today are Harmonie (formerly North Park), Grand Circus, and Campus Martius.

**As the 1800s progressed, interest in developing raw land into parks grew slowly.** The City of Detroit's first Committee on Parks was appointed on May 30, 1854. In 1871, the Board of Park Commissioners and the Board of Boulevard Commissioners were appointed to plan parkland and a roadway to surround the city. A rivalry ensued and in 1879 these two boards were combined into one group: The Commission of Parks and Boulevards. Detroit was growing and getting organized.

Dedicated parks during this period came as donations from wealthy landowners; earmarked as "forever parkland" often with stipulations of upkeep and naming. Stanton and Macomb; Cass and Perrien Park are among these. The acquisition of 900-acre Belle Isle in 1879 from the Campau family marked the City's first major park



purchase. Across decades, this jewel of the Detroit River was developed from raw land into a wonderland of recreation with unique structures and artwork, while maintaining the natural beauty of hardwood forests, wildlife, and tranquility. Detroiters continue to enjoy its cultural and recreational use today.

**In the early years of the 1900s, Detroit made strides towards industrializing** while a national recreation movement gained steam. Recreation was still considered a luxury and ideas of dedicated playgrounds were met

with denied funding and opposition from city leaders. In Detroit, a strong call for organized play arose from the voices and hearts of Detroit women. Canadian transplant and suffragist, Clara Arthur, advocated hard for children's recreation. Her efforts bore fruit in the form of the first dedicated playground at the Russell school in 1903. Arthur was nicknamed "the mother of the playground"; a park and bath house became namesakes to honor her activism.

In 1914, a Charter Amendment vote rendered the formation of a 10-member Recreation Commission comprised of city officials and citizens. Attorney and children's advocate Ira Waite Jayne headed the Commission and later became a longstanding Detroit judge. His first efforts were to rope off streets as safe play areas for children. By the year's end, Detroit owned 46 acres for playground use.



*The Recreation Department crafted imaginative climb-ons using materials donated by local utility companies.*



*Aerial of Belle Isle.*

**In the 1920s Detroit began acquiring larger swaths of park land:** River Rouge Park – 1200 acres and Chandler Park – 230 acres through condemnation. Golf courses were quickly established at both parks. Grand plans for development were laid out, yet progress was slowed by the Great Depression and WWII. Federal work programs in the 1930s provided a two-fold gift by creating jobs in park infrastructure to lay roads and sewer mains, and to build comfort stations and tennis courts.



The introduction of a new Department of Parks and Recreation ushered in the 1940s. A singular superintendent and termed park commissioners strategically planned and developed Detroit's recreation offerings and companion parklands. Detroit's Park system flourished with acquisitions of new property. In 1951, Detroit's recreational areas boasted over 5,500 acres.

**Nationally, Detroit would become one of the most robust and innovative parks systems** during the 1950s and 1960s. Partnerships formed with local agencies, newspapers, schools, and philanthropists creating innovative programming serving every demographic. Detroit's storybook playgrounds created from re-used materials would become a model for other cities across the nation. Dance, choir, theater, and music were offered in parks, rec centers, and after-school programming. Detroit opened the nation's first indoor / outdoor public pool at Patton Park and the nation's first artificial ice rink dedicated for speed skating at Farwell Field. A concrete velodrome was built in Dorais Field to accommodate bicycle clubs. The department created customized programs for the physically challenged and blind. Robust offerings for Detroit's growing senior population included swimming, camping, painting, and foreign language education.



*Detroit Junior Olympics were a highlight of summer recreation programming for decades.*

While fiscal downturns and population shifts taxed the City of Detroit, the Department of Parks and Recreation remained creative to stabilize offerings and keep the parks system intact.

**Today, Detroit boasts over 300 parks** in a cycle of systematic renewal. Recreation offerings are strong and growing. Parkland ranges from pocket green spaces servicing neighborhoods to a 20,000 sq ft. Detroit riverfront skatepark, to Rouge Park, a 1200-acre pristine hardwood forest in the middle of an urban center offering sports and youth urban camping opportunities. Detroit Parks and Recreation looks forward to the next 100 years of recreation stewardship and beyond.

**We hold our city motto close:**

**“Speramus meliora; resurget cineribus”**

**- We hope for better things; it will rise from the ashes, as Detroit did in 1805.**





## The Parks & Recreation System Today

### Demographic Changes

Since the founding of Detroit over 300 years ago, broad demographic changes have occurred, continually shaping the City and its parks and recreation system. Detroit is a majority minority City with a diverse population including a substantial Black population, many recent and former immigrant communities, and a rich history of indigenous populations. Even since the last plan in 2017, populations have shifted as people continue to seek prosperity and growth. Overall, the population is slightly lower than the last census, however many neighborhoods are seeing growth to match recent reinvestment. While Detroit has faced unique challenges like blight and vacancy, these challenges have grown into opportunities for local communities to take back their spaces and create the Detroit they envision, as evidenced by the truly unique urban farming movement and other tremendous beautification efforts across the city. Shifts in population mean a need for continued efforts by DPRD to create programs and amenities to suit communities in today's Detroit; it is also an opportunity for Detroit to reclaim its historic title as one of the most innovative and progressive park and recreation systems in the country.



## Recent Changes to Detroit Parks & Rec Division

Since the last city-wide parks and rec plan was released in 2017, a number of structural changes have taken place in the Parks and Recreation department(s). The Recreation Department merged within the larger General Services Department (GSD) that manages city-wide operations, such as fleet, facilities, and grounds maintenance. The new Parks & Rec Division within GSD has additional support and coordination from other GSD divisions and the merger brought together all programming, capital improvements, and maintenance under one department. Additionally, a new Office of Sustainability has been established to further sustainability initiatives across divisions. The Office of Sustainability developed a Climate



*Youth playing in a segment of the Joe Louis Greenway.*

Action Plan, referenced throughout this document, which highlights climate threats and potential strategies to address them.

In addition, since 2017 greenways have been incorporated into the Parks and Recreation system. The term “greenways” is used throughout the Detroit region to refer to a network of protected, shared-use paths that connect destinations within and between neighborhoods. Trails have always been part of Detroit’s park system, but greenways address the broader access and connection needs between parks and other recreation facilities, as well as places of work and commercial destinations across the City.

## Progress Since the 2017 Parks & Rec Improvement Plan (PRIP)

Since the last Parks & Rec Improvement Plan released in January of 2017, the Parks & Recreation division has accomplished a series of its recommendations. Notably, a few months after the plan released, the Mayor allocated \$12 million in unspent bond funds to cover the first phase of the PRIP’s Capital Improvement Plan; this phase was nicknamed the “Neighborhood 40”. In the first 18-months from the plan’s launch, 40 neighborhood parks across the city received full renovations, many of which had not seen improvements since the 1960s. Building on that success, phases 2 and 3 of the Capital Improvement Plan were launched, investing in regional and community sized parks with multiple sport offerings to increase access and exposure for Detroit youth to a variety of sports and play. Philanthropic donations and state grants added to the City’s Bond funds to make these ‘Multi-Sport Hubs’ a reality.



Additionally, the Capital Improvement Plan was expanded from the 2017 PRIP, to include the Strategic Neighborhood Fund (SNF) projects. The SNF program was a cross-departmental initiative to simultaneously invest in ten neighborhoods across the City, to create affordable housing, improve retail corridors and streetscapes, and create a major park improvement to bring about catalytic change for the neighborhood. In each SNF neighborhood, one park project was chosen to help bring that catalytic change, while simultaneously investing in affordable housing to ensure any unintended gentrification from the improvements would not displace current and long term residents. The program raised over \$21 million for parks, with the City contributing a third and corporations and major philanthropic donors contributing the remaining two-thirds.

**In addition to these capital improvements, the City has made progress through key partnerships,** such as the Detroit Audubon. In the 2017 PRIP one of the recommendations was to focus City investments in areas where the most residents lived, and put parks in areas with low population density or limited access on a passive park list called Community Open Spaces (COS).

Detroit Audubon partnered with Parks and Rec on six of these COS sites to create bird meadows, which have brought increased community stewardship, and wildlife use. Other strategic partnerships include collaboration with Wayne County on connecting Detroiters to the Hines drive park system through a Rouge River Greenway, as well as a partnership with Metroparks to bring swimming classes and resources for Detroit youth.



*Bird meadow in Eliza Howell Park.*



*Youth swimming at Brennan Pool.*



## The Impacts of COVID-19

**The ongoing COVID pandemic has drastically affected many areas of Detroiters' lives, including how residents use their park system.** There is extensive academic research on the benefits of parks to public health and wellbeing, and the pandemic has made these findings clearer than ever. While state mandated shutdowns limited people's opportunities to interact, parks and other outdoor public spaces became vital spaces in which people could safely socialize, exercise, and destress.

**Parks have never been so important to the public as during the pandemic,** when park use across the country skyrocketed. According to a study by Larson et. Al., people were 23 times more likely to use a park during the COVID-19 pandemic than before. There were additional challenges with maintenance associated with the dramatic increase in park use, such as trash removal. Recreation Centers also faced a drastic impact; during the first year of the pandemic, all Detroit recreation centers were closed for typical public use, but remained in operation as critical emergency resource centers, including food distribution hubs, testing and vaccination centers, and even one center as an overflow homeless shelter. This highlights the importance for the parks and recreation system to be versatile and adaptable in times of crisis, and how essential parks and rec centers are to Detroiters.



**The COVID-19 pandemic has also changed where and how people work.**

As many people have worked and continue to work from home, neighborhood parks have become vital places to recover from frequent screen time. Traditional places of work, such as downtown, have also seen a dramatic change as more residential spaces replace offices and there are more people living downtown than ever before. The traditional plaza-style downtown parks now also serve as neighborhood parks for residents, creating a need for new amenities such as playgrounds and dog parks.



*Dog Park*

**The COVID-19 pandemic also impacted the way that DPRD created this Strategic plan.** The City of Detroit initiated the 10-year update to the Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan (PRSP) during the COVID-19 pandemic. When the planning process started, no one knew how long the pandemic would last or the extent of the impact on Detroit. Detroiters have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic with over 124,000 confirmed cases and over 3,400 deaths as of March 2022.



*Walkers at Farwell Park*

**Based on research done by the Trust for Public Land (TPL),** it is clear that both nationally and locally, communities of color, the same communities that were disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, have less access to park space than predominantly White communities. Specifically in Detroit, residents in neighborhoods of color have access to 25% less park space per person than the City's average and 41% less than those in White neighborhoods. These inequities have been linked to disparities in health outcomes and environmental quality as well. This motivated DPRD to champion equity in its planning process and form the metric of park need based on TPL's innovative tool.

Throughout the pandemic and the PRSP planning process, it has been clear that parks and green spaces have played a critical role in providing safe places for people to gather, exercise, and find joy during a time of uncertainty and social isolation. The increase in usage of parks throughout the pandemic helped the City prioritize its strategic investment in parks and recreation facilities over the next ten years to better and more equitably serve Detroit residents.

**Reflecting the community, its characteristics, needs, and desires, has always been central to DPRD’s planning process.**

Typically, many types of public engagement take place in person in parks and public spaces. Meetings are held in recreation centers, with materials to facilitate discussion and collect feedback, as well as friendly faces to answer questions and foster thoughtful engagement. When the COVID-19 pandemic made in-person engagement unfeasible, DPRD quickly adapted. Typical activities were moved to virtual platforms via online surveys and Zoom meetings. DPRD’s proactive adjustment to virtual engagement enabled Detroiters to play this vital role in the planning process while maintaining safety and comfort. Nonetheless, DPRD eagerly reincorporated to its robust in-person engagement style to a hybrid strategy for public review and park improvement meetings. The following chapter provides more information about the engagement process and findings, framing and informing the rest of the plan for the next 10 years and beyond.



*Community engagement for the East Riverfront Asset Study.*



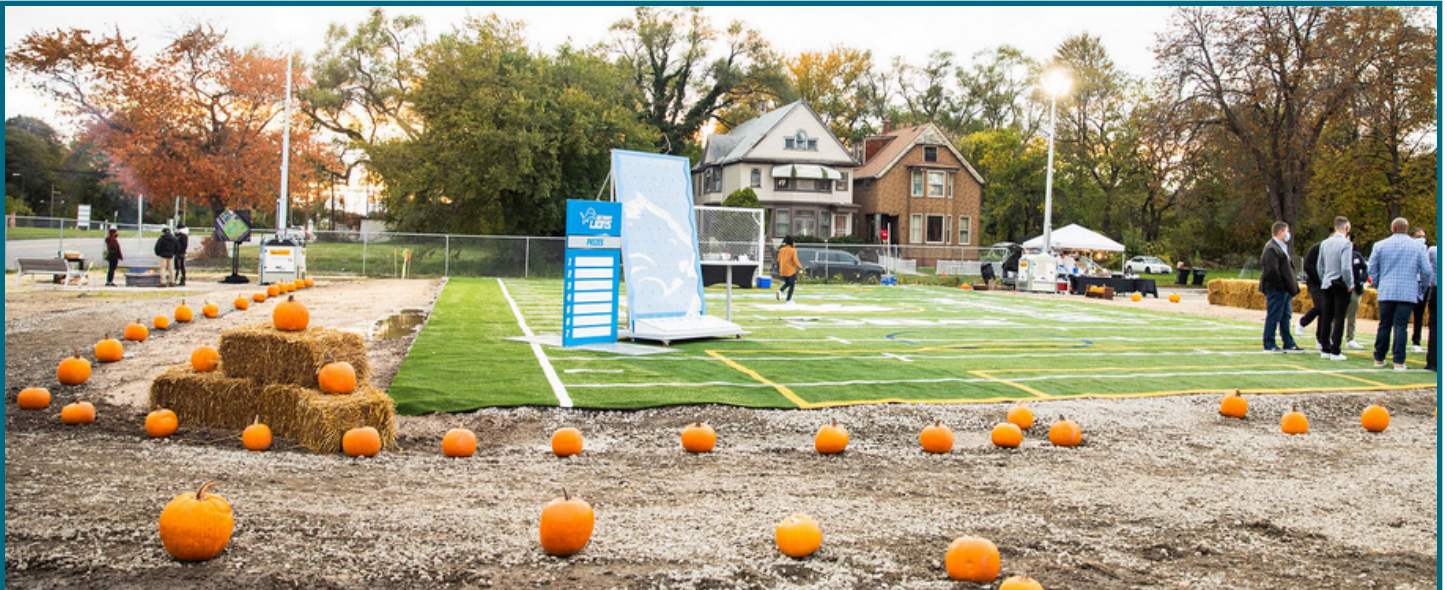


## INVENTORY

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Detroit's parks and recreation system is made up of many different kinds of parks and recreational facilities. To understand the appropriate uses and investments for each, DPRD uses a system of categories, which are useful for determining park investments, maintenance schedules, programming opportunities and limitations, and capacity. This section serves as an inventory with descriptions of the different types of parks and recreation facilities throughout Detroit that are owned by the City and operated either by the City or by partner organizations. Also included are a count of parks within each size category and an overview of current recreational facilities and associated partner organizations, where applicable.





## PARK CATEGORIES BY SIZE & SPECIAL USE

*DPRD oversees a large parks system with a great variety in the size, amenities, and characteristics of parks. All parks are categorized by size and several parks are categorized by their special use opportunities. This section is a guide for creating park investments, programs, and partnerships.*

### **Categories by Size**

Parks are categorized by size, ranging from smallest to largest as follows: mini, neighborhood, community, and regional. These categories determine the types of amenities and programs suitable to each park. For example, Zussman is a neighborhood park by size, and has amenities typical of that type of park.

### **Categories for Special Use**

Parks are also categorized by use. While most parks are for general use, some parks have special features such as waterfront access or school partnerships. These categories help determine what types of use-specific investments should be made to maximize unique opportunities. As an example, Erma Henderson Park is a riverfront park by use, as well as a Community park by size. Some special use parks may be leased and maintained by partner organizations, but are still considered an integral part of the parks system.

### **Non-park Passive Green Spaces**

DPRD also manages many passive green spaces. These are properties owned by the City, not intended for active recreation, but retained for passive purposes. While some areas are landscaped, others receive minimal maintenance. All green areas are important to local habitats and ecosystem health.

### **Guide to How Amenities are Distributed in Parks**

No one likes a dirty bathroom. Keeping park amenities, like bathrooms, clean and in good repair requires continual dedication of staff and resources. To most efficiently allocate resources, these amenities should be in highest-use park spaces. See page 12 for further information.



# CATEGORIES BY SIZE

## MINI PARKS

### Description & Goals

Mini parks, less than an acre in size, serve as a smaller version of neighborhood parks in dense residential areas where acquisition of larger acreage is not presently feasible. Mini parks may also be located in commercial areas to serve day-time visitors. While these parks tend to be too small to support many amenities, they are an excellent resource for getting outside for some fresh air, movement, and social connection. Mini parks are classified as walkable parks, which serve the neighborhood around the park.

### Characteristics

**Size:** Less than 1 acre

**Current # of parks:** 88

### Programs:

Community-led special events

**Maintenance:** high need

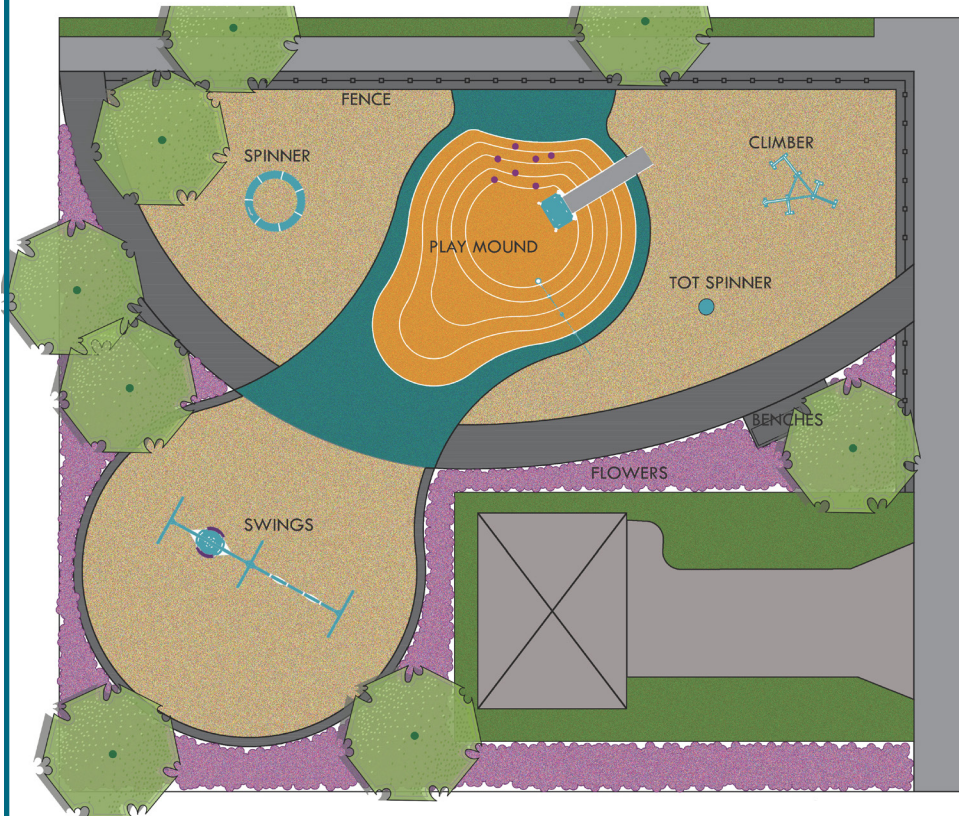
### Water & restrooms:

Not recommended for this park type

### Typical Amenities

- Tot Lot
- Playground
- Open play space

## EXAMPLE: 4th & CALUMET PARK



## DETROIT'S MINI PARKS



Above: Weiss Park,  
Three Mile- Munich Park  
Below: Tarnow-Kirkwood Park



# NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

## Description & Goals

Neighborhood parks, between 1 and 10 acres in size, are the basic unit within the system and serve as the recreational and social activity point of the neighborhood. These parks promote informal active and passive recreation. Safe routes to the park are essential because these are classified as walkable parks, which serve the neighborhood around the park.

## Characteristics

**Size:** 1 to 10 acres

**Current # of parks:** 164

### Programs:

Community-led special events, family picnics, neighborhood sports practice

### Maintenance:

Moderate per-acre needs

### Water & restrooms:

Not recommended, heavy use sites may receive portable toilets based on need

## Typical Amenities

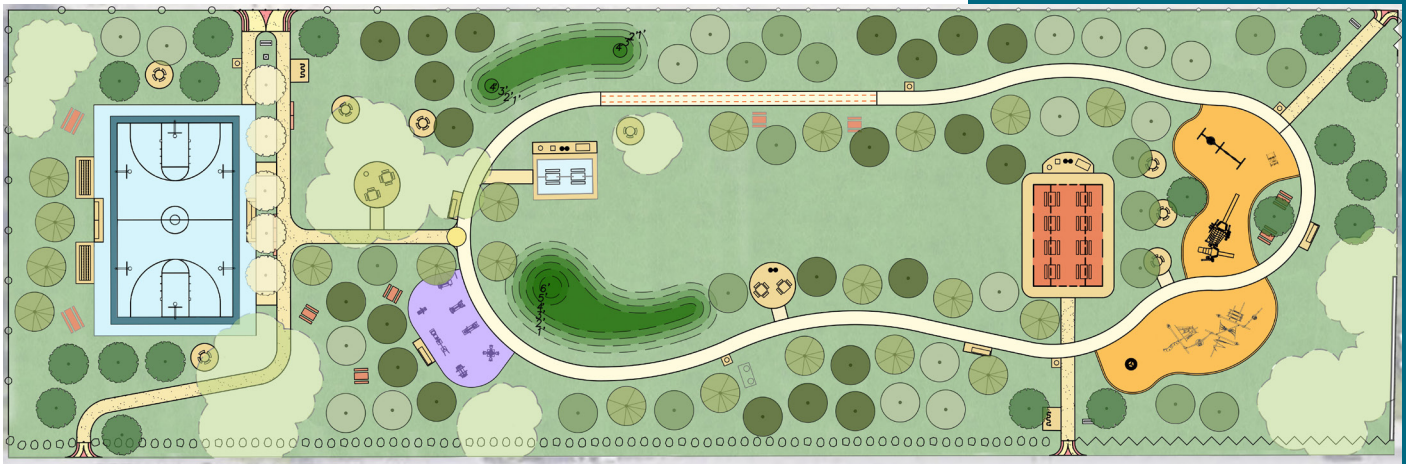
- and may include:
- Mini park amenities
  - Walking loops
  - Basketball
  - Picnic tables or benches

## DETROIT'S NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS



Above: Stage at Gordon Park, Zussman Park  
Below: Mallet Park

## EXAMPLE: ZUSSMAN PARK



## Standards & Exceptions

Typically neighborhood size parks are not big enough to support the use of a picnic shelter. Zussman features a great number of amenities for its size, including a picnic shelter. Some parks will have slight deviations from the design standards if it is determined that the special characteristic is needed and is cost effective.





# COMMUNITY PARKS

## Description & Goals

Community parks, ranging from over 10 to under 50 acres in size, serve a broader recreational purpose than neighborhood parks and have amenities that serve a greater number of people and recreational needs. These parks should be bikeable and serve the recreational needs of multiple nearby neighborhoods. Community parks can accommodate larger events due to their size and variety of amenities. They may also be important locations for habitat preservation. These parks are typically classified as walkable parks, which serve the neighborhood around the park.

## Characteristics

**Size:** Over 10 up to 50 acres

**Current # of parks:** 37

### Programs:

Special events, family picnics / reunions, sports leagues

### Maintenance:

Mostly low to moderate needs, some areas of high need

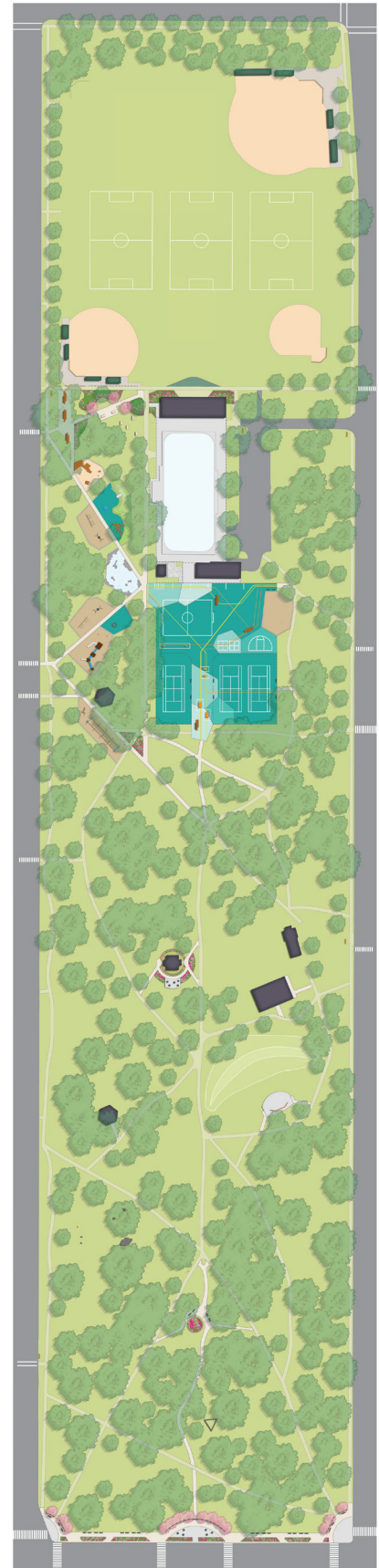
### Water & restrooms:

Recommended for heavy use areas; Open from Memorial Day to Labor Day, serviced daily

## Typical Amenities

- Mini and neighborhood park amenities
- Picnic shelter
- Sports fields
- Fitness area
- Parking lot
- Restrooms
- Passive area

## EXAMPLE: CLARK PARK



## DETROIT'S COMMUNITY PARKS



Left: Soccer at Romanowski Park  
Right: Splashpad at Jayne



# REGIONAL PARKS

## Description & Goals

Regional parks, over 50 acres in size, are large, urban parks reachable by public transit, car, bike, and even on foot for nearby residents. They serve a broader range of recreational needs, including more specialized needs, than community parks. These parks can accommodate very large groups and events, and often have special amenities not seen in smaller parks. Their focus is on meeting recreational needs of the community, serving residents across the city, and preserving unique landscapes, open spaces, and the largest natural areas within the city. These parks are classified as destination parks.

## Characteristics

**Size:** Over 50 acres

**Current # of parks:** 14

### Programs:

Large special events, picnics / reunions, sports leagues

**Maintenance:** combination of high need, low need, and special maintenance areas

### Water & restrooms:

Recommended for heavy use areas; Open from Memorial Day to Labor Day, serviced daily

## Typical Amenities

- Mini, neighborhood, and community park amenities and may include:

- Concessions
- Large natural areas with trails
- Amphitheater or stage
- Picnic shelter (large / multiple)
- Parking (multiple lots)
- Speciality amenities such as:
  - Archery
  - Ice rink
  - Camp areas



## EXAMPLE: PALMER PARK

## DETROIT'S REGIONAL PARKS



Above: Palmer Woods, Belle Isle Conservatory  
Below: Rouge Park, Patton Park





# PARKS BY SPECIAL USE

## PARTNERED PUBLIC SPACES



**Private Parks** can be opportunities to unlock resources and further partnerships between the City and private providers. These spaces, when green, can be a vital part of Detroit's ecological services system, improving health and resiliency. Many of these spaces are available for public use in some capacity and provide specialty amenities. While they are important parts of the City's parks system, their limited access means they cannot replace public parks.

**School Parks** can either be city-owned parks leased long term by a school, or school owned sites that serve as a park for the neighborhood. These parks can be a great partnership opportunity, encouraging active play and expanded programming. They can be efficient solutions for areas lacking available parkland, as long as public access can be ensured. School parks can look like Community or Neighborhood parks, depending on the size and any preexisting amenities, such as sports fields and walking paths.



## RIVERFRONT PARKS

### The Riverfront Park As A Destination

Public spaces on the waterfront provide access to the Detroit River for scenic viewing, relaxation, and a wide variety of recreational opportunities. Riverfront parks typically offer marinas, boat access, fishing opportunities, covered and open picnic areas, bathrooms, and accessibility through a variety of transit options. These destination parks draw visitors from across the city and region. Many are operated and maintained by private partners. For more information, see the Capital Plan for Destination Parks in Chapter 6 and the ERAS in the Appendices.

### DETROIT'S RIVERFRONT PARKS

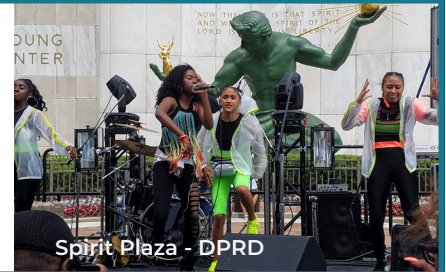


### EXAMPLE: A. B. FORD PARK



## NON-PARK PUBLIC SPACES

**Plazas** are public open spaces under the care of DPRD and partners, such as Detroit Downtown Partnership, which feature more paved surfaces than vegetation in dense, high-use areas. These multipurpose spaces are a great resource for hosting events, and provide space for public relaxation and enjoyment of Detroit's downtown and commercial areas. Plazas typically feature public art, seating, concessions, and landscaping.

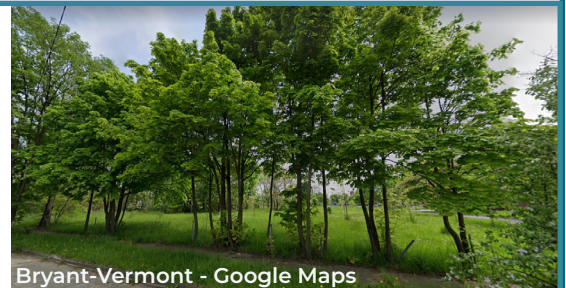


## NON-PARK PASSIVE GREEN SPACES



**Boulevards and Medians** are landscaped open spaces that stretch through many Detroit neighborhoods. While these green spaces do not typically offer amenities beyond signage, they can be a great place to display neighborhood pride through landscaping. These areas can also add to the city's tree canopy cover, stormwater mitigation, and overall beautification.

**Community Open Spaces** (or COS parks) are typically small green spaces located in areas unsuitable for traditional active recreation, yet still serve as important parts of our parks system. With the help of partners, these spaces can be used for forest buffers, meadows, preservation areas, and passive uses. The spaces are maintained four times per cutting season unless a project dictates otherwise.



**Green Buffers** are a type of parkland usually without any amenity and not intended for use by the public. These spaces can be a natural barrier between industrial, rail lines, or high traffic areas and Detroiters' homes. Green buffers typically feature trees and vegetation which can provide benefits to residents including flood prevention, natural stormwater run-off filtration, lower urban temperatures, and improved ambient air quality.



# GUIDE: HOW AMENITIES ARE DISTRIBUTED

## What's the Deal with Bathrooms?

Bathrooms belong in parks with frequent and long-stay visits. The following activities create heavy, prolonged park use and may be well served by portable or permanent bathrooms.

- Splash pads
- Concessions & food trucks
- Heavy use picnic shelters
- Sports fields used by leagues
- Frequent programming such as:
  - Movies in the park
  - Summer lunch program

To encourage year-round park use, this plan recommends that select bathroom sites get year-round service, such as those with winter activities.

## What about Parking?

Detroit's goal is to ensure that all residents are within a 10-minute walk of a park. Smaller parks enable residents to access green space near their homes, therefore parking is not necessary and may attract congestion and noise. Larger parks with specialty amenities are likely to bring residents from throughout the city for a day trip, making parking a necessary amenity.

## And Picnic Shelters?

Picnic shelters encourage large events that can be too noisy and crowded for smaller parks in residential areas. Their benefits are more suitable to larger parks where shelters can be situated away from residences and wrap-around services, like bathrooms and parking, are provided.

## What about Dog Parks?

Dog parks are suitable for communities within Detroit with many dog owners and community members in support of having a dog park. Most dog parks will be located in regional parks so that visitors from far and wide can take advantage of this amenity.

## And Skate Parks?

Skate Parks are special amenities growing in popularity in recent years. These versatile areas can provide fun for skateboarders, bikers, rollerbladers, and other visitors of all ages. Where there is not room or budget to install a full skate park, DPRD may be able to add skate design elements to walking paths and plazas. Skate park features may also be placed above green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) features to increase utility of space.



Picnic shelter and skatepark near playground at Riverside.



## RECREATIONAL FACILITY CATEGORIES

Detroit Parks and Recreation oversees many facilities for recreational opportunities. In addition to City-operated and partner-run recreation centers, the City also maintains a variety of special use facilities and venues. This section describes current recreational facilities.

### **Recreation Centers**

Recreation Centers are indoor facilities ranging in size and amenities that are offered. The City owns these centers and operates many of them, striving to provide a balance of active and passive programs to engage the minds and bodies of Detroiters. The City's programs provide a base of recreational opportunities, which is often supplemented by partner programming.

### **City-Owned, Partner Operated**

Partner-operated centers, while owned by the City, are operated by individual partner organizations. Partners bring expanded programming opportunities and often focus programming to the community's specific recreational interests or serve a high-need population, such as youth or seniors.

### **Specialty Facilities and Venues**

Specialty recreation facilities are small, single-function facilities such as the Brennan Pool or the Rouge Stables. These facilities provide unique opportunities that may attract residents from across the City. Venue facilities are outdoor public spaces that serve the region for events of various sizes. These facilities may be partnered or City-operated and have a wide range of amenities that are offered.



# REC FACILITY INVENTORY

## COMMUNITY RECREATION CENTERS



**Current:**

Adams-Butzel, Butzel Family, Clemente, Coleman Young, Crowell, Farwell, Heilmann, Kemeny, Lasky, Patton, Williams

**Coming soon:**

Brennan Rec Expansion, Chandler, Dexter-Elmhurst, The Center at A.B. Ford Park, and Rogell

## PARTNERED RECREATION CENTERS



**Center Name**

Clark  
 Considine  
 Lipke  
 Palmer  
 Tindal

**Partner Organization**

Clark Park Coalition  
 Historic Little Rock Family Life  
 S.A.Y. Play  
 People for Palmer Park  
 Healthy Kidz Inc.

Northwest Activities Center is cooperatively run.

## SPECIALTY FACILITIES & VENUES



**Specialty Facilities**

Palmer Nature Center, “the DEN”  
 Rouge Stables  
 Tolan Velodrome  
 Balduck Park Building  
 Eastside Tennis at Balduck  
 Palmer Tennis Center  
 Barcus Tennis Center at Farwell

**Venues**

Aretha Franklin  
 Hart Plaza  
 Historic Fort Wayne