



CLARKSON PARK PROGRESS UPDATE

Renovating Clarkson Park has been a project in the making for quite some time. If you've been to the park in the last month you've noticed all the activity as this project has become a reality. In early September, we started with demolition of the playground and picnic shelter.

The plan is to complete the project by the end of April 2021.

Background

In January 2014, the Park District adopted a comprehensive strategic plan which was developed through a community survey and focus group meetings. Replacing the Clarkson Park shelter and playground and adding a splash pad were identified among the top priorities following a renovation of the Community Center.

In 2017, the Park District began to hear from a group of residents who used the park regularly that it may be time for improvements. Following that feedback, we held a series of meetings to gather additional community input and determine if the 2014 priorities aligned with resident's suggestions.

At those meetings, we heard that residents still wanted a new playground, to add a splash pad and more ADA equipment, and thought adding a band shell would be a great idea. However, the Park District's capital funds at that time couldn't cover the potential capital cost for these renovations since the Community Center renovation and expanded Fitness Center had just been completed in June of 2016. With a new goal clearly identified by the community, the District once again began to set aside funds for the future Clarkson Park renovation.

Funding

I'm excited to share that since 2017 our capital funds have been replenished due to the continued success of our programming and our fiscal responsibility over the last few years. In fact, this \$1.5 million project will be funded with \$700,000 from the Park District's capital fund. The rest of the funding will come from a \$400,000 OSLAD grant from the State of Illinois and a commitment of \$400,000 from the Northfield Parks Foundation.

Grant Money

In 2019, we were fortunate to receive a \$400,000 OSLAD (Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development) grant from the State of Illinois. This was a very competitive process in which all project elements were scored to award monies. Any items past their useful life helped make the funding worthwhile. In our case, both the playground and picnic shelter are past their useful life, but more on that in a minute. We also applied for a State Fast Track grant that looked at shovel-ready projects but in August 2020, we learned that we didn't get this grant.

Northfield Parks Foundation

The Northfield Parks Foundation has secured in excess of \$300,000 to date thanks to the generosity of our community. The Balin family has committed to a significant contribution with naming rights to the new band shell. Other naming rights opportunities are still available for the picnic shelter, splash pad, and playground, and all donations are greatly appreciated.

Why is the project happening now?

With everything going on in the world right now, this could be a question you're asking -- why now? There are several reasons why the Park Board of Commissioners approved this project and awarded contracts in August 2020.

Funding

When the State of Illinois awards an OSLAD grant, you're given two years to complete the project or those monies are lost, so in our case our \$400,00 grant funding is available as long as the Clarkson Park renovation is completed by April 30, 2021. If we don't renovate Clarkson Park now, we'll lose this grant money.

When the pandemic hit, we explored the possibility of an extension of the OLSLAD grant but no extensions would be accepted by the State of Illinois. As mentioned, we also applied for the State's new Fast Track grant meant for shovel-ready projects that would stimulate the economy but weren't selected.

Infrastructure Needs

In 2018, we started Market & Music, our summer concert series. The event has been extremely popular and fostered a greater sense of community among our residents. Residents of all ages have enjoyed these Wednesday evenings in the park, but we found a great need for infrastructure improvements to support this and our other events including our annual State Fair/Ribfest. The renovation of the picnic shelter and addition of a band shell will enhance these events and more for many years to come.

Playground

Playground equipment's useful life is 15-20 years and the Clarkson Park playground equipment has been enjoyed by our community for the last 19 years. As you can imagine, playground equipment, as most things, has changed over the last 20 years. Playgrounds have become more accessible, adventurous and creative. Our residents wanted a more fun, challenging playground at our only playground facility. Our new playground provides this experience and will also have a poured-in-place solid surface that is more accessible for all users.

We're very excited to be able to undertake the renovation of Clarkson Park, the heart of our community, and believe that this project will further enhance our Village and our lives. I can't wait to see you at the park, enjoying the new amenities by gathering around the new splash pad water feature, enjoying the picnic shelter, and exploring the new playground.

What to Expect/Project Timeline

September-October 2020

Demolition and excavation have been completed.

October-November 2020

The playground equipment and picnic shelter have been ordered and are expected to be on-site the last week of October or first week in November.

Framing work and installation for the concrete and paving work of the sidewalks, splash pad, and picnic shelter should hopefully be completed by the second week of November.

November-December 2020

Our plan is to have the playground and picnic shelter installed by the end of November and the band shell completed by December.

The poured-in-place surface will be installed if the weather stays above 45-50 degrees for several days. If not, this work will be completed in the spring of 2021.

April 2021

The entire Clarkson Park renovation will be completed by the end of April 2021.

Stay in Touch and Up-to-date on the Renovation & More

The Park District has continued to communicate information on this project in a variety of ways to reach as many residents as possible. Information can be found on our website, northfieldparks.org, as well as through social media and e-mail blasts.

For updates on the Clarkson Park renovation, special events, unique programs and other late-breaking news, sign up for our email blasts [here](#) or at northfieldparks.org (sign up link on the website footer) and follow us on Facebook and Instagram.

If you have any questions, always feel free to contact me directly.

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