Hamtramck plans to enliven 26-acre park area with Wilson foundation grant

ANNALISE FRANK

Veteran's Memorial Park campus includes Detroit City FC's home base, Keyworth Stadium, and historic Hamtramck Stadium

$800,000 grant goes to master plan and community engagement overseen by Michigan Municipal League

Planning process started this month and goes through early 2020

Plans are under way to renovate historic Hamtramck Stadium. The property is located on the Veteran's Memorial Park campus, which is to be renovated and activated under a plan that the Michigan Municipal League is creating.

An $807,200 Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation grant will help create a plan to fix up a major public space in Hamtramck that includes the home turf of Detroit City FC.

The city of Hamtramck and its public school district have engaged the Michigan Municipal League to lead an effort to renovate, maintain and activate the 26-acre Veteran's Memorial Park campus, according to a news release.

The league, which lobbies for municipalities, is announcing the grant Wednesday. The money will fund creation of a master plan and community engagement process — as well as one
other piece that will be announced at the Wednesday event. The overall goals are to create more opportunities for physical activity, and draw in more businesses and visitors to the city.

"We see this as a transformative project for Hamtramck," said Gisgie Gendreau, president of the Michigan Municipal League Foundation, the league's fundraising arm that assists it with big projects.

Veteran's Memorial Park is home to Keyworth Stadium, where Detroit City FC plays.

The team has renovated the stadium over the past several years. It has a raucous fan base and averaged 5,946 fans per home match this past season.

"We see our role as somebody who brings tens of thousands of people to that neighborhood every summer and, hopefully, raising the profile of this public space across the region and beyond," DCFC CEO Sean Mann said.

The vast park area also includes a playground, open spaces and historic Hamtramck Stadium. The nonprofit Friends of Historic Hamtramck Stadium is spearheading a renovation of that stadium, which was built in 1930. It and DCFC have been involved in the municipal league's efforts, Gendreau said.

The league started work this month and plans to create its plan for how to more effectively use the Veteran's Memorial Park campus by early 2020. It'll hire contractors and begin community engagement in the coming year.

"(The city of Hamtramck) and the school district had an idea of developing this area to provide more opportunities for children and families to have more physical activity," Gendreau said. "So they had been talking and they asked us if we would work with them, because of the league's expertise in what we call placemaking, and being able to look at the area and talk to the community and really come in and have a meaningful conversation with residents about their needs and expectations."

The grant doesn't include money for physically implementing the league's proposal. The city, school district and other partners would need to make the recommended moves. Gendreau said she wasn't yet sure if the league would be involved in that part.

Hamtramck Public Schools owns Keyworth Stadium and leases to Detroit City FC. The stadium is used for a range of school and community activities, as well as for the soccer team's games.
Detroit City FC plans a yet-to-be-revealed announcement as part of a Wednesday event at Keyworth Stadium announcing the grant from the Detroit-based Wilson foundation.

The foundation released a report last summer that identified challenges and opportunities in the metro Detroit region for youth sports and recreation activities. It included Hamtramck, according to Gendreau.

Inline Play