

Hamtramck Parks Conservancy

Annual Report 2024

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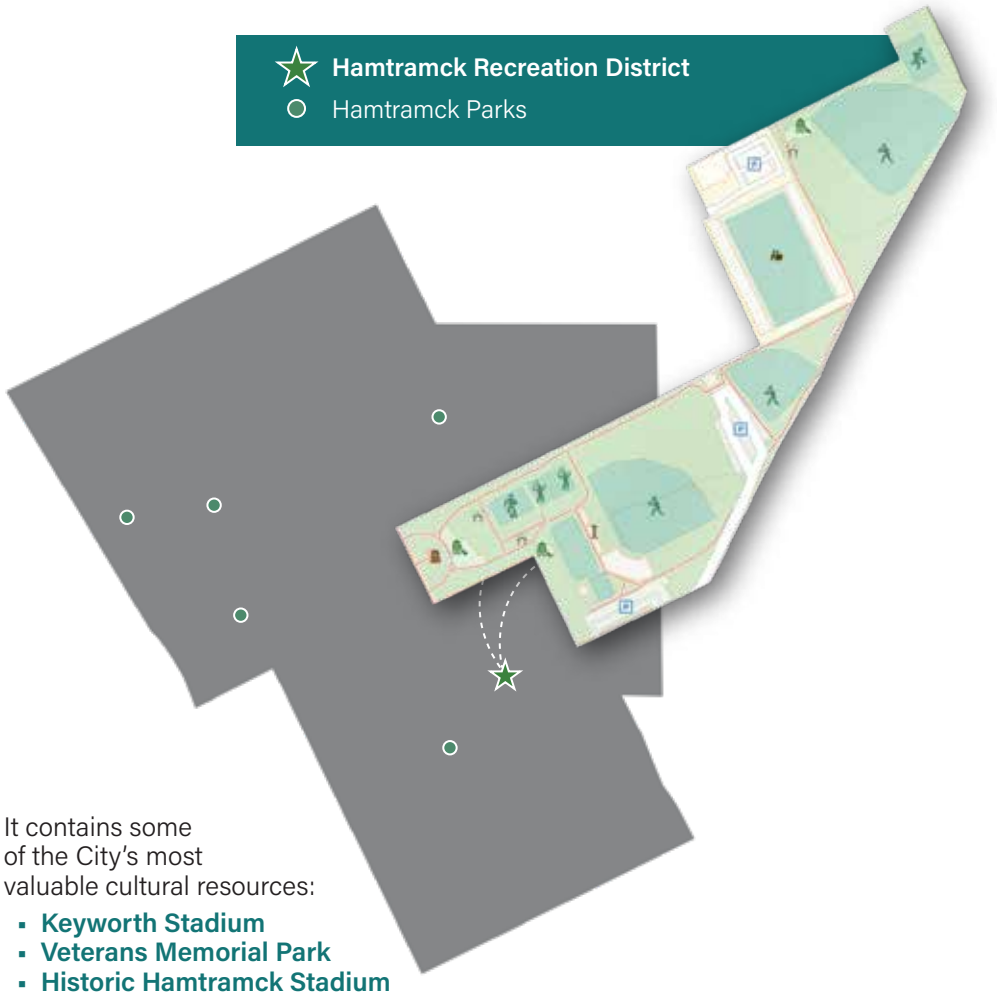
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The **Hamtramck Recreation District (HRD)** is the City's largest green space and public asset, 26-acres jointly owned by the City of Hamtramck and Hamtramck Public Schools.



It contains some of the City's most valuable cultural resources:

- **Keyworth Stadium**
- **Veterans Memorial Park**
- **Historic Hamtramck Stadium**

With other amenities including:

- **Zatkoff Playground and KABOOM! Playscape**
- **"The Wall" tennis practice wall**
- **Turkey Stearnes and Pinky Deras Baseball Fields and associated batting cages**
- **Soccer arena**
- **Tennis courts**
- **Sand volleyball courts**
- **Futsal court**
- **Walking Path**
- **Pavilions**
- **Outdoor patio adjacent to Yemen Café**

Trees and vegetation provide many benefits to park users; they improve air quality, filter storm water, reduce environmental health hazards, and help to relieve the urban heat island effect

**Recommendation report for parks and beautification efforts prepared by Eastern Michigan University's Center for Health Disparities Innovations and Studies*



Comprises **86%** of the City's total **public parkland**

**Hamtramck Recreation District Plan*

Sees **138,300** visitors annually



**Southeast Michigan Council of Governments Placer.ai data for Veterans Park 2024*

Adults and youth living close to a public park are likely to have higher physical activity levels, which have compounding benefits on physical health

Improving immune function, mental health, quality of sleep, attention; reducing stress, anxiety, depression

**Recommendation report for parks and beautification efforts prepared by Eastern Michigan University's Center for Health Disparities Innovations and Studies 2024*

Letter from the Executive Director

Greetings,

"A day at the park." What feelings does that phrase conjure up? For me it sounds relaxing, soothing, and maybe a bit aspirational. For as many people that plan day-long picnics or events at one of our beautiful spaces, there are many, many more whose regular park experience is enjoying a walk or a seat after a long work shift, or a quick jaunt to let the kids burn off some energy at the playground.

One of the great joys of stewarding Hamtramck's parks is observing the myriad ways they are used, and by extension what they mean in people's lives. The excitement of a young person scoring their first soccer goal is a "memory maker", but it is just one type among the range of experiences that our parks afford, many seemingly more mundane but not less valuable.

The Hamtramck Parks Conservancy occupies a special position to facilitate the serendipity coming from our parks that we all cherish. 2024 has truly been a banner year, as we continue to build an organization that will take Hamtramck to new heights. "Building" has been a watchword this year in more ways than one, as our capital program was especially active at Veterans Park. Please read further for more explanation.

Finally, a special acknowledgment is due to our organization's founding funders. The Zatkoff Family Legacy Fund, the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, and the William Davidson Foundation have been intimately involved in laying the groundwork for the HPC and seeding its sustainability. The community is indebted to these generous and forward-thinking partners whose investments have broken new ground in the long story of parks in Hamtramck.

On behalf of our staff, Board, and volunteers, I thank you for your involvement in our parks, and can't wait to see you in 2025!

Thomas Habitz
Executive Director



Hamtramck Parks Conservancy

A collaboration between

Board of Directors

Konrad Maziarz	Jim Larson-Shidler	Amanda Jaczkowski
Max Garbarino	Abdulmalik Algahaim	Tom Niczay
Sean Mann	Jason Eddleston	Craig Daniels

Thomas Habitz
Executive Director

Alicia Chiaravalli
Director of Programming & Communications





Hamtramck is a destination on the new federal holiday, and the Hamtramck Parks Conservancy (HPC) was proud to host the **3rd Annual Juneteenth Celebration** with the Friends of Historic Hamtramck Stadium. Negro Leagues history was a theme of the day, as Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist, State Rep. Helena Scott, and other local dignitaries were on hand to enshrine the Negro League holiday across the state. Other festivities included the Turkey Stearnes Multidisciplinary Art Contest, Home Run Derby with scholarship awards, and a tribute ballgame with local RBI teams.

Programming Highlights

Thank you to sponsors **DTE Energy Foundation**, **Turkey Stearnes Foundation**, and the **Coville-Triest Family Foundation**. Thank you also to all the volunteers.




















Historic Hamtramck Stadium bleachers received a **new coat of stain** this summer thanks to the generosity of GM Student Corps and GM Cares volunteers.





HPC continued a partnership between the Hamtramck Recreation Department and the United States Tennis Association (USTA), which offered **tennis lessons** to Hamtramck youth.





Historic Hamtramck Stadium continues to receive national notoriety and a plethora of visitors, especially in 2024 with Major League Baseball's announcement of the integration of statistics from the major Negro League era. Turkey Stearnes Field **hosted 120 ballgames** of all kinds, and is the home field of the Hamtramck Cosmos. The field continues to be beautifully maintained by the Hamtramck Stadium Grounds Crew led by Tom Derry, and the schedule managed by Director of Baseball Operations, Mike Wilson. Pinky Deras Field, with its new grass infield, hosted many games as well and is the homefield of the Hamtramck Grays.

Programming Highlights





Alicia Chiaravalli joined HPC as the **Director of Programming and Communications** late this year. Her hire marks the first HPC staff dedicated to programming. She brings a wealth of experience in environmental sciences, land use, playground design, and recreation. Alicia is looking forward to connecting with community members to learn more as we craft a fun and diverse calendar for 2025.





When HPC partnered with KABOOM! in 2023 to construct a beautiful new set of playscapes, the project was not formally completed until the artistic portion was installed nearby. Well-known local artist Dennis Orlowski was selected to produce a **mural of Hamtramck's children at play**. He used children in the area as models so that their identity and style would come to life. The mural is located on the back wall of Keyworth Stadium. Thank you to KABOOM! for funding additional elements of beautification that support the playground, and to Dennis for his fine work.



Until this Summer, **bike racks in Veterans Park** have been located deeper in the park and have been less visible and accessible. This new rack holds at least five bikes and is conveniently located to serve visitors to both the park and local businesses nearby.

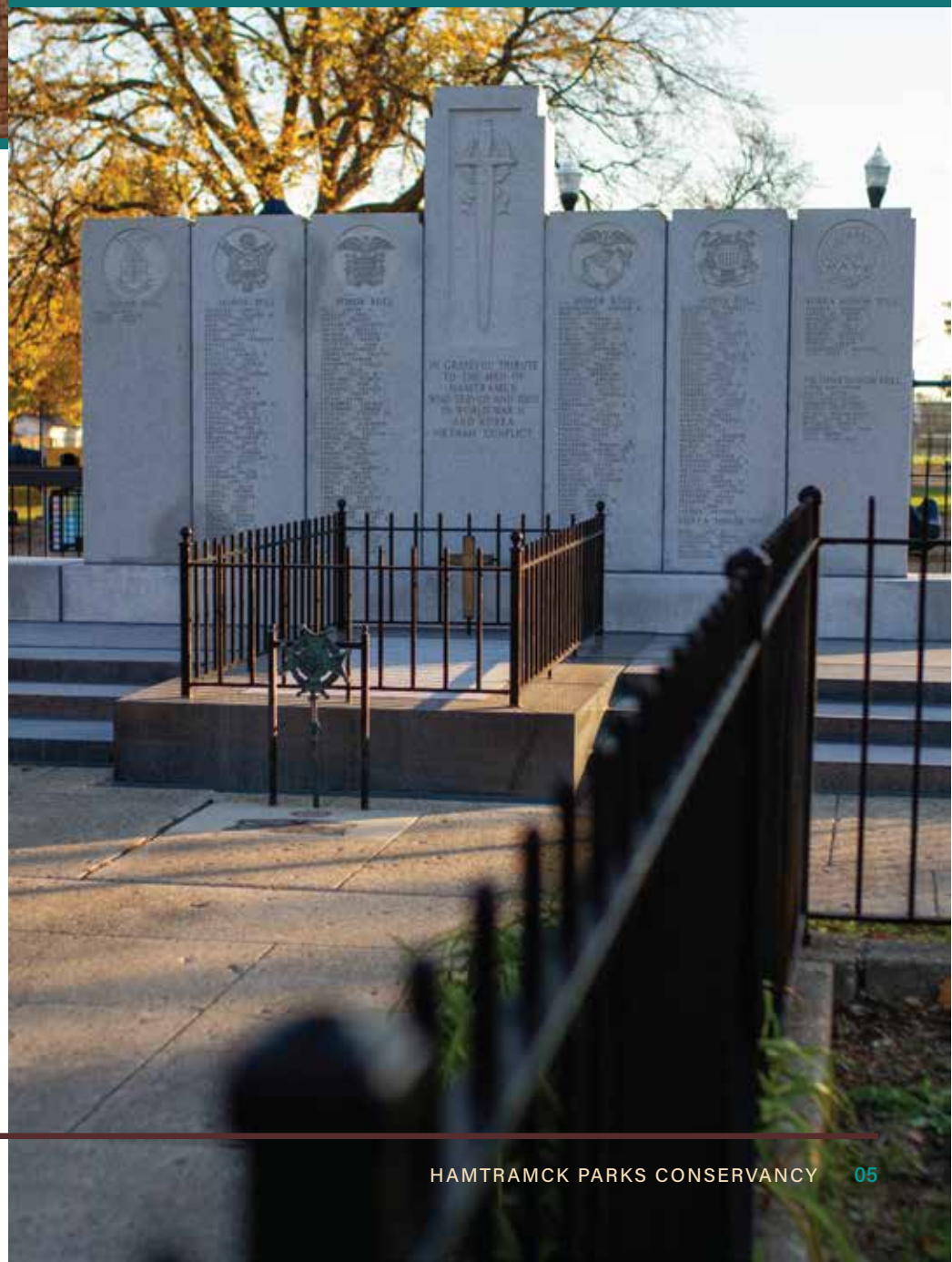


HPC was pleased to partner with the Friends of Historic Hamtramck Stadium to be part of the City's new lightpole banner program. **New banners** have sprung up along Jos Campau Ave with the distinctive "Discover Hamtramck" brand identity, with sponsored organization logos on selected banners. The area closest to Veterans Park has alternating HPC and FHHS logos.



The Hamtramck Veterans Memorial is one of the City's solemn sites of remembrance, honoring our fallen soldiers, and our namesake. In recent years, the beautiful stone has shifted and shone signs of other wear, so HPC **invested in some critical repairs** and a professional "glow up". The makeover is a dramatic improvement that befits our town's heroes.

Construction and Improvements





Following the restoration of the famous "Tennis Wall" in 2023, more Hamtramck tennis history was memorialized in 2024 with the installation of a **plaque officially designating the Veterans Park courts as the "Hoxie Tennis Courts."** With generous support from Mr. Walter Oehrlein and Mr. Greg Kowalski, the Hoxie Memorial Committee worked with HPC to install this beautiful monument which highlights the illustrious legacy of the tennis program.







The grand opening of the **formal dedication of the Elaine & Roger Zatkoff Playground** was held on a glorious day in June. Dozens of members of the Zatkoff family were present to cut the ribbon, and also to recognize the opening of the Roger Zatkoff exhibit at the Hamtramck Historical Museum. The installation is a extensive set of playscapes that are being especially enjoyed by younger children, and those with accessibility challenges. The playground has been rapidly embraced by all of Hamtramck, and has become the most popular destination in Veterans Park.











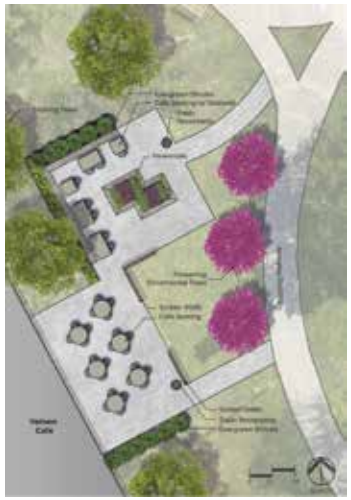
The home field of the Little League championship teams of Hamtramck was located in deep center field of what is now Turkey Stearnes Field, and not used for many years. HPC removed the obsolete dugouts and lighting system, in order to put focus on…



The soon-to-be-named **Pinky Deras Field** across the parking lot. This softball/youth baseball field has gotten a beautiful makeover thanks to the Coville-Triest Family Foundation. A new grass infield and portable mound have been installed, and fence repairs were also completed. The town's only summer youth baseball team, the Hamtramck Grays, called this field home and enjoyed a banner season!

Construction and Improvements





An idea a few years in the making is nearing completion in Veterans Park! An **outdoor patio serving the public and patrons to local businesses** is being constructed by HPC, with support from the Yemen Café. This beautiful new space will be landscaped and lighted, and filled with tables and chairs to allow visitors to enjoy food in the park. This is poised to become a popular meeting place and focal point within this busy park.





Left: Patio concept rendering. Right: Recent project progress.

Looking Toward **the Future**

HPC is a **partner with the City of Hamtramck** on major construction projects at Veterans Park.

Hamtramck Stadium: Construction in 2025 will complete the renovation of the buildings beneath the historic grandstand to add restroom, locker room, and other functional space. HPC is a strong voice in this process to ensure the funds aggregated from multiple sources are the most beneficial for the historic stadium.

Parking lots and access: The City has received a state allocation of funding to replace Veterans Park's two parking lots, and the access road connecting them. HPC is assisting with management of the funding and construction projects, and advocating for streets and alleys adjacent to our parks.

We look forward to reporting on these transformational projects in the 2025 annual report!





In June, HPC worked with community stakeholders and the TEN X TEN landscape architecture and urban design practice to develop an update to the Hamtramck Recreation District Plan. Two future concepts -- for a Green Alley walking and biking trail, and Arena athletic fields development – were given greater consideration.

Key engagement themes:

- Care and attention for the park
- Safety throughout the park
- Space and programs for women
- Visibility, branding, and signage
- Celebrate all cultures with events

"The future of the HRD envisions a **safe** and **accessible** park, an activated and **peaceful** place that welcomes all of Hamtramck's residents and visitors from Detroit and beyond. The park will be a place to **engage history**, celebrate diverse **cultures** and **traditions**, and adapt to a broad range of uses **throughout the seasons** and for years to come."

To those **supporting our work**

As 2024 draws to close, it is most fitting to give special thanks to two of our major founding funders: the **Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation**, and the **William Davidson Foundation**. By providing startup support to the HPC, they have provided a firm foundation to grow our mission and to see their impact multiplied for years to come. We especially acknowledge their thought leadership in developing the Hamtramck Recreation District plan and conservancy model, and supporting multi-year sustainability.

Our immense gratitude is also expressed to the **Zatkoff Family Legacy Fund**. Multiple years of major support have also sustained HPC's startup and sustainability, and produced important, personalized projects such as the Elaine & Roger Zatkoff Playground. We thank the family members for the way they are honoring a beautiful legacy through the community and HPC.

RALPH C. WILSON, JR. FOUNDATION

WILLIAM DAVIDSON FOUNDATION

ZATKOFF FAMILY LEGACY FUND

An investment in the Hamtramck Parks Conservancy is an investment in one of America's most important communities, in a highly impactful way. Our work supports our youth and families, celebrates our history, and brings us all closer together.

Support HPC

hamtramckparks.com/get-involved/

Hamtramck Parks Conservancy

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