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MacGregor Park Renovation Will Breathe New Life into Third Ward Area

A multimillion-dollar community-driven transformation is set to revitalize this historic Houston gem.

By [Uvie Bikomo](#) • January 17, 2024



The renovations for MacGregor Park are being made from residents' feedback to the Houston Parks Board.

IMAGE: COURTESY HOUSTON PARKS BOARD

MACGREGOR PARK, A HISTORIC GEM and cornerstone of [southeast Houston](#) since the 1920s, is getting a much-needed \$54 million facelift. This ambitious project isn't just about a fresh coat of paint; it aims to modernize the park while staying true to its roots.



A remodeled community plaza for visitors to relax is part of the MacGregor Park renovation.

IMAGE: COURTESY HOUSTON PARKS BOARD

With \$27 million in funding from the Kinder Foundation, the Houston Parks Board plans to [revitalize the park](#) over the course of five years. Gone are the days of fragmented experiences and vehicular intrusion. A new access point off Old Spanish Trail will offer a welcoming front entrance to the park, while the internal road system will be minimized, reclaiming precious space for greenery and resident gatherings.

The activities available at the park will also receive a modernized touch. Nielson says a state-of-the-art tennis center with 16 new courts to replace the old ones and spectator areas will attract tournaments and celebrate Houston's illustrious tennis legacy, home to past greats like Zina Garrison and Lori McNeil.



The tennis center at the park will be completely renovated with all the courts replaced with newer ones.

IMAGE: COURTESY HOUSTON PARKS BOARD

Meanwhile, a modernized baseball field with covered stands will offer a homerun experience for all ages, and a new youth multipurpose field will provide space for impromptu games and events. Families and fitness enthusiasts will rejoice in the renovated pool, which will remain the city's deepest, catering to both leisure and lifeguard training.



The new renovations are being made keeping every visiting guest's age in mind.

IMAGE: COURTESY HOUSTON PARKS BOARD

But MacGregor Park's heart remains firmly rooted in its community. The historic neighborhood center and basketball pavilion where many "Phi Slama Jama" played (the nickname for the University of Houston's men's basketball team from 1982 to 1984) will be preserved and integrated into the new design, carrying a torch of past glories into the future. A new youth multipurpose field will also be available to park guests for pickup football and soccer games.

Sustainability, too, takes center stage in this ambitious project. Increased green space, environmentally friendly construction practices, and even a unique amphitheater embracing the Brays Bayou are testaments to a commitment to responsible growth. "We're netting more green space back to the park versus what is paved or impervious today," Nielson notes.

The "floodable" amphitheater, a nod to Houston's unique relationship with water, will serve as a versatile space for events and performances. Its innovative design will allow it to be flood-resistant, Nielson says, meaning it won't be damageable by floodwaters and would be easy to clean up after such an event, which is all-too-common in Houston.

MacGregor Park's transformation won't happen overnight. Nielson says they're looking at a five-year plan, doing it in phases to ensure continued access and enjoyment for park users throughout the process. This renovation is [one of many recent projects](#) aiming to beautify Houston, from Memorial Park's Eastern Glades and Land Bridge additions to the changes [coming this year to Hermann Park](#).



The Houston Parks Board hopes to have all the renovations completed by the end of 2029.

IMAGE: COURTESY HOUSTON PARKS BOARD

“We want to bring it up to the level of the other signature parks in the city,” says Nielson, “but also maintain its unique character and sense of place.”

With this vision, come 2029, MacGregor Park is set to be completely transformed, ensuring that the park will continue to be a cherished gem for generations to come.