

# A playground for everyone: Alton breaks ground on new inclusive play area

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**ALTON** - Ground was broken Thursday afternoon at the upcoming inclusive play area at Gordon Moore Park.

Alton Parks and Recreation Director Michael Haynes said the play area should open by the middle of June, after approximately six weeks of work. He said the weather must hold for at least five or six days, however, before work can really continue, but said all of the equipment has already been attained by the city. When it is completed, children of any ability will be able to play in the area, which will have play equipment accessible to everyone. With as many as 10 percent of children in the area having at least one disability, Haynes said it will be the only park within 30 miles, which will allow children of any ability to be able to play together.

"This project is unlike anything else that we've done here in town," Haynes said at the dedication. "It's more cutting-edge and more all-inclusive. It was kind of a pipe dream when I heard of these kinds of playgrounds."

Haynes said Gordon Moore has "recreation for everyone" in mind, adding Moore would not want to see the park stay the same after 40 years, instead Haynes insisted Moore would have liked to have seen the park progress with the ever-changing times."

The inclusive play area is part of several initiatives taking place at Gordon Moore Park, and it came with a \$300,000 price tag. That funding was provided through a \$125,000 matching grant from the Illinois Park and Recreation Association, Playcore and their affiliates GameTime and Cunningham Recreation, according to a release from the City of Alton. Phillips 66 also partnered with the city, and donated an additional \$125,000 toward the playground project.



"We are truly lucky to have such a wonderful opportunity placed in front of us with the donation from Phillips 66, and the grant from the Illinois Park and Recreation Association," Alton Mayor Brant Walker said in a release.

Phillips 66 Director of Government and Community Relations Melissa Erker also spoke at the groundbreaking Thursday afternoon.

"Truly this is an example of how we can improve lives in our own community, and we're so proud to be able to do that," Erker said. "We're proud to be a part of this project. This project not only gives back to Alton, but gives back to our entire region."

She said Gordon Moore Park is a "jewel" for Alton, but said people from across the area utilize it for sporting, recreation, and even as a setting for pictures.

"The playground has a very forward approach for what our community needs," she said.

She said the playground fits into the mission of Phillips 66 to increase and celebrate diversity, adding it will be a welcoming environment to all area children.



Haynes said the city administration was essential to the park's success. Mayor Walker said the playground is only a portion of upcoming updates to Gordon Moore Park. He said the work would not be possible without Haynes's dedication or the private-public partnerships from entities such as Phillips 66 and Liberty Bank.

IMPACT Executive Director Cathy Contarino was also an essential part of the playground's process. Haynes said Contarino assisted in selecting the equipment and advising the city what was needed. She thanked the City of Alton and said the inclusive park was a mark toward the future of Alton.

