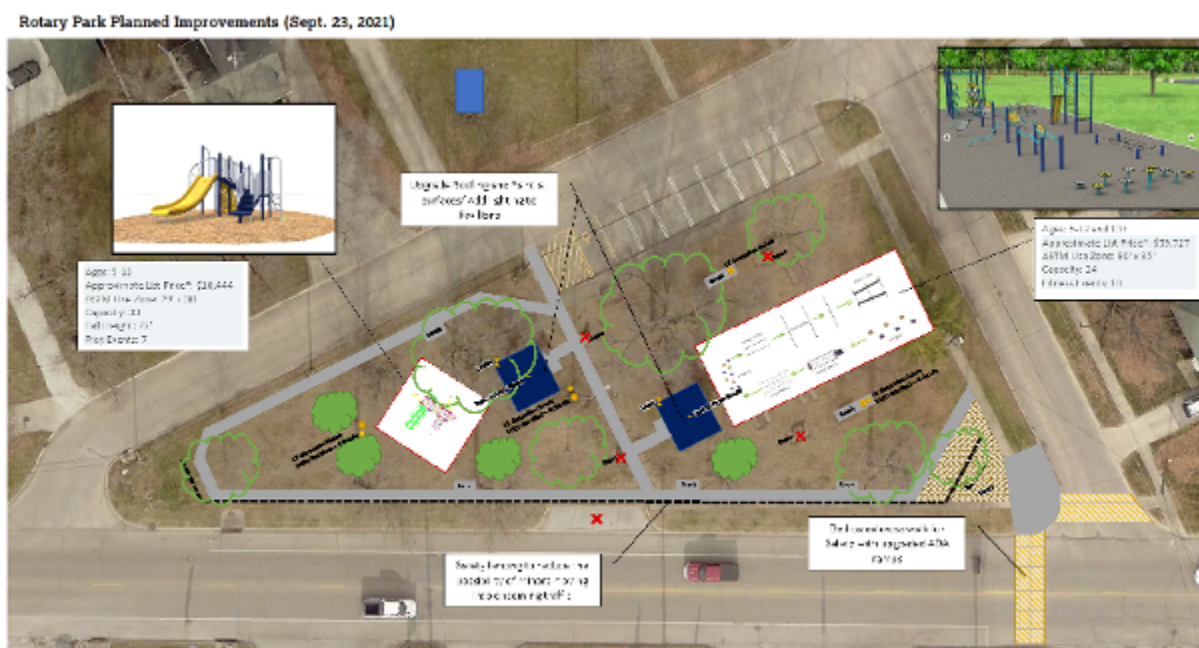


For the Lions Club/Wittman Park complex, located along North Jefferson Street on the district's east side, plans call for the rehabilitation of its basketball courts, installation of a National Fitness Court, pickleball and sand volleyball courts, ADA-compliant

playground equipment, a splash pad, an outdoor performance amphitheater with hillside seating, fire pit areas, a new concession building with accompanying restrooms, upgraded parking and sidewalks, with lighting and security improvements.

Rotary Park, located on Route 16 on the city's west side across from McCarry's Dairyland, has plans for the installation of new playground features for all ages to enjoy as well as an added children's agility course targeting ages 5 to 12. Installation of safety fencing along the park's border along Illinois Route 16, a dedicated crosswalk, and ADA-compliant ramping are also part of the planned upgrades for Rotary Park, as is added lighting, upgraded benches, and roofing/painting upgrades to the existing pavilions.



Recently opened across from Jerseyville Stadium Theater on East Pearl Street, City Center Park is a fully functional event space with plans to accommodate food trucks and a variety of entertainment, community activities, and events with an added public address system and tented space capabilities. City Center Park offers green space and planting beds along with children's activity stations and increased parking amenities, with electric vehicle charging stations nearby as well.

The creation of an additional new gathering space is also part of the plans. To be known as Liberty Mini Park Downtown, this space, at the corner of South State and West Arch Streets, will be at the heart of the Jerseyville Historic City Center District. With a city water tower as its backdrop, this future concept park is planned to provide an entertainment area, green space, and another place for the community to gather.

Public Property Commissioner Zach Crawford is at the forefront of bringing these planned parks and recreation improvements to the City of Jerseyville. Since his first days as a Jerseyville City Council member, Crawford has been pushing for expanded recreational opportunities for young families and upgrading park facilities.

“From the time that I became Public Property Commissioner in 2019, my focus has been on improving the quality and offerings in our community parks,” Crawford said. “The development at Lions Club and Wittman Park is just the beginning.”

Crawford pointed out that the city’s parks and recreation programming and offerings are crucial components to Jerseyville becoming recognized as a prosperous and vibrant community.

“Realtors throughout the area will attest that in today’s world, all demographics – young professionals, families, and retirees – are looking at recreational opportunities and park spaces when deciding on where they choose to live and work. In turn, homes and properties in these communities are more desirable and have higher resale value,” said Crawford.

“These added quality-of-life improvements Jerseyville has to offer also supports business recruitment efforts for strong and robust economic development,” Crawford added. “Building on the recruitment of residents and businesses, the area is, in turn, able to create a niche for visitor spending. This benefits the local shops, restaurants, hotels, and from a city standpoint, adds a boost to both property and sales taxes.”

“The resurgence of our downtown, through the hard work and ideas of so many talented people, truly has been inspiring. Jerseyville has always been my home, and I wouldn’t change that for the world. It’s a very special place to me. If we continue to build on this momentum, Jerseyville has some very realistic opportunities to rebrand itself and showcase to others, just how special of a place it really is,” Crawford said.

Many of Jerseyville’s planned park improvements have been made possible through public-private partnerships, from city funds and from several private donors. And as public property commissioner, Crawford continues exploring ways to increase this kind of funding, including the possibility of forming a Parks and Recreation Foundation.

“Often, we hear frustration from Jerseyville residents because we don’t have parks and recreation facilities here like those in neighboring counties,” explained Shari Albrecht, executive director for the Jerseyville Economic Development Council (JEDC). “For example, neighboring Godfrey is part of a larger Madison County parks district, with access to dedicated tax dollars in additional funding. Godfrey also has access to parks-specific grant funding through Madison County.”

“Jerseyville is not part of any park district. There are no tax dollars earmarked directly for parks and recreation. Any money spent for upgrades must come from the city’s general fund. Zach is looking at options for increased revenue for parks and recreation without taking tax dollars from other much-needed city projects. One option he is exploring is this creation of a Parks and Recreation Foundation, allowing for tax-deductible donations that could be for specific park projects or for general park funding,” Albrecht said further.

“The bottom line is that parks are a good financial investment for our community,” Crawford further noted. “As part of the city’s long-term capital improvement plan, increased recreational opportunities for residents and visitors of all ages are a key priority.”

“The Lions Club/Wittman Park complex has a variety of current offerings, from playground equipment to picnic shelters to a walking trail. Various components of the park are nearing the end of their useful life and in need of renovation,” noted Public Works Director Bob Manns.

“This park’s planned improvement project will occur in phases. Phase 1 includes pickleball, basketball, and sand volleyball, all expected to be completed by mid-2022. Phase 1 also includes the addition of an outdoor fitness court,” Manns said further. “We are currently working on site preparation and concrete slab construction, with the physical construction of the fitness court elements and opening expected in Spring 2022.”

Jerseyville Parks and Recreation Director Tyler Hermens said that the planned addition of the National Fitness Court at the Lions Club/Wittman Park complex will allow users to enjoy the outdoors while staying physically fit. “The fitness court program also comes with its own app, free to download, that provides workouts and information on the equipment/fitness court itself. “

“It is our hope to establish some workout classes, led by appropriately certified individuals from organizations in Jerseyville. In addition, we will explore avenues of partnership with the local school district and parochial schools for use through their athletic/physical education programs. Ultimately, we hope to see the fitness court be something multiple groups can enjoy and be proud of within Jerseyville,” Hermens added.

To learn more about the Jerseyville Historic City Center District’s destination branding initiative and development plans, or for information about the Jerseyville Economic Development Council, contact Shari Albrecht, sharialbrecht@jedc-il.us, 618/639-5332, or visit jedc-il.us online.

