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Robin Buckson / The Detroit News

**All Saints Neighborhood Center executive director Dennis Nordmoe opens the gate of the organization's park in southwest Detroit, which is scheduled to open in June.**

Church enriches a Detroit community with center, park

All Saints, neighbors hope a playground gives families a safe place to play nearby.

By Judy Lin / The Detroit News

**DETROIT** -- Something exciting is happening four doors down from LaTanya Hollander's home in southwest Detroit.

The All Saints Neighborhood Center is constructing a \$200,000 neighborhood park in a community short on kid-friendly activities and facilities. And that means Hollander and her children can't wait for the park's unveiling in June.

"I'm disabled, so I can't drive anywhere. It would be great because I could walk a few blocks with the children," said the 36-year-old mother of four. "There's going to be a shaded area where I'll be able to sit in the shade and watch the children play."

Dennis Nordmoe, executive director of the All Saints Neighborhood Center, said the project began in 1998 after residents expressed a need for a park as the first step toward fostering a healthier community. With the help of donors, including a \$7,000 gift from one family, the All Saints Church purchased eight lots on the 1400 block of Mullane.

So far, 75 percent of the work has been completed. Nearly all the concrete work is finished, and landscaping will be added once the weather warms, Nordmoe said.

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**All Saints Church also renovated an old church, turning it into a neighborhood center; a day care is planned as well.**

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Once the playground -- which will also feature a playscape and an in-line skating track -- opens in June, planners hope it will provide young children with a place to play soccer, volleyball and hockey. Right now, the closest park is Patton Park, about a half-mile away -- too far for many young children in the neighborhood.

"Young kids aren't expected to go that far on their own. (Patton Park) gets a lot of adult activity with soccer leagues on weekends, but we really needed something in the neighborhood," Nordmoe said.

The new park is the church's latest community project. For years, the church has been investing in the community center across the street from the planned park. All Saints rescued a 1920s Lithuanian Catholic chapel and, with the help of public and private donations, has poured more than \$750,000 into the building.

Nordmoe says the church couldn't have tackled the park through fund-raisers alone. ABC Demolition Co. hauled out debris, the Edward C. Levy concrete company paved the in-line skating track for free, and Wayne County funded \$200,000 through its community parks program.

The city of Detroit was absent from the project. Nordmoe said that when the project was pitched to former Mayor Dennis Archer's administration, the City Council refused to fund it.

"The law department deemed the city had too much risk exposure with its large number of parks, and it wanted to reduce, rather than expand, the number of small parks in the city system," Nordmoe said.

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