

## Hammond city officials hold groundbreaking ceremony for Edison Park project

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By Lauren Cross

HAMMOND – Living steps away from the under-construction Edison Park, 4th District Councilman Bill Emerson said he was awakened last week by the sound of a pneumatic drill busting up the concrete.

"It's the sound of getting things done," Emerson said Tuesday as he, Parks and Recreation Administrator Mark Heintz, Mayor Thomas McDermott Jr., and others gathered at Edison Park during the city's official groundbreaking ceremony for the start of the project.

"We've lived in this neighborhood, my family and I, for 38 years, and this is a great project," Emerson said.

Earlier this year, the City Council approved a \$8.7-million bond issue to remodel the Pulaski Park pool but demolish and re-purpose the city's other public pools at Edison, Martin Luther King and Hessville parks.

When the city announced the closure of its city pools last year, officials reasoned that the pools were widely underused and the necessary emergency repairs would have been incredibly costly to bring them up to code.

Edison Park, at Madison Avenue and Mulberry Street, is the first of the four major renovation projects.

McDermott said plans call for the addition of two artificial turf sports courts/soccer fields, a skate spot, an agility adventure zone, concrete cornhole/beanbag stations, porch swings, new lighting and playground equipment, increased on-site parking and the widening of sidewalks. Eighty new trees will also be planted, he said.

"Overall, it's a unique park to help Hammond become a destination for recreation," he said.

Mamie Moore, of Hammond, said she grew up swimming in the Edison Park pool, which is being demolished to make way for a sports complex.

She said she and her good friend, Sheila Stevenson, of Hammond, both of whom attended Tuesday's groundbreaking event, are looking forward to walking at the park, thanks to the widened sidewalks and improved street lighting.

"I'm excited to see what it looks like when it's finished," Moore said.

During the groundbreaking, workers with the Merrillville-based Gough Construction, the general contractor, could be seen tearing into the pool with large excavators. MCR Partners/HWC Engineering is the design team for this project.

Construction should be completed by the end of October, weather permitting.

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