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City East Providence rolls out improvements to recreation facilities - by Roberto DaSilva

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The city of East Providence understands that livability is a crucial, but often neglected, part of economic development. For a community to succeed it must be a place where people want to invest and do business, but also live and play. Businesses of all types and sizes benefit from being located where their workforce want to live. With this knowledge, the city is currently renovating several recreational facilities throughout the community.

The most substantial of these investments is the new East Providence Community Center. Partially funded through a Congressional Appropriation and a grant from the Rhode Island Pandemic Recovery Office, this proposed facility will include basketball courts, exercise facilities and classroom space to be used for workforce development and other activities. The facility will be adjacent to both the East Providence Senior Center and new East Providence High School, making it a benefit to residents of all ages. Construction is expected to be complete by the fall of 2026.

Another exciting development is the recent award of a \$2 million Congressional Appropriations request for the Pierce Stadium and Athletic Complex. This facility has been home to major community events for nearly 100 years. Funds will be used to install a synthetic turf field and new walking track as well as various handicap accessibility improvements. The city is also starting substantial renovations to the Kent Heights Recreation Facility. Partially funded through a R.I. Department of Environmental Management grant, the project will include an extensive handicap accessible play facility. Equipment is designed to serve very young children up to teens and even adults. The project also includes improvements to site drainage and landscaping, and a new walking path.

The city is investing in upgrades to play equipment at several other parks including Hull St. Park, Vintner Ave. Park and Sabin Point Park. Grassy Plains Park in the Riverside section of the city is an example of a facility which has been transformed through grant funding with visitation far exceeding that from a few years ago. Trail construction at Grassy Plains is expected to begin this year. Lighting is also being added to the Riverside Middle School athletic field using grant funds from the R.I.

Infrastructure Bank. The city is also making substantial investments to Crescent Park, home to the historic Loeff Carousel. The historic carousel is being restored and a concession building and other enhancements are being added. This work is in addition to the significant funds the city has spent addressing the coastal erosion that threatens the park. The city was recently awarded \$1.8 million from the R.I. Infrastructure Bank to address erosion issues at Crescent Park. The city is also investing in enhancing the experience of visitors to the East Bay Bike Path in Riverside Sq. including public art, lighting, patio spaces, a portable stage and sound system. The city is confident that these improvements will be enjoyed by local residents for years to come.

Roberto DaSilva is the mayor of the city of East Providence, R.I.

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