

Detroit breaks ground on \$40 million Rouge Park stormwater project

SARAH RAHAL | The Detroit News

Detroit — The Detroit Water and Sewerage Department broke ground Thursday on the construction of a \$40 million project to redirect rainwater and snowmelt from a far-westside neighborhood.

Department WSD Director Gary Brown said during an announcement at Rouge Park that two new detention basins will be implemented to filter stormwater and discharge it into the Rouge River. The project will divert millions of gallons of stormwater runoff and snowmelt annually, redirecting will allow Detroit to be a more climate-resilient city, he said.

The project, which has been in the design phase the last three years, includes water mains and lead service-line replacements. It's expected to be completed in 2027.





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"The goal is to have a neighborhood-wide water and sewer system upgrade based on DWSD assessing the condition of the current pipes and other assets," Brown said. "New to this project for DWSD is the disconnection of downspouts and redirecting the rainwater onto the lawns from houses that have not done this yet to remove more water from our sewer system."

Lisa Wallick, DWSD director for stormwater and permitting, said the wet-weather treatment project will manage runoff from 218 acres with about 1,200 homes just west of Rouge Park.

The basins will be placed on the north side near Constance and another on the south side between Majestic and Sawyer, about five miles of storm sewer total through the neighborhood, Wallick said. The basins will allow sediment to settle before it is discharged to the Rouge River. "By doing this, we are eliminating millions of gallons of untreated combined sewerage from entering the park and river," Wallick said.

About 15,000 feet of water mains needs to be replaced, along with 400 lead service lines. The project will rehabilitate 20,000 feet of sewer and upgrade or repair about 100 catchbasins and manholes.

Funding for the project is coming partially from city bonds, while about \$32 million is coming from suburban counties of Oakland and Macomb. In an arrangement through the state environmental department, the suburban counties will be given more capacity in Detroit's connected sewer facility for the funding.

Leaders made the announcement nearing the one-year anniversary of historic flooding in the area during summer 2021.



Gary Brown, director of the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department, said the project should lessen the load on Detroit's sewage treatment facilities during heavy rainfall.

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"Many residents were concerned about our infrastructure. They lost memorabilia and valuables they will never be able to get back," said District 7 Councilman Fred Durhal III. "Not to mention their health was jeopardize based on the flooding, so today is a great day... The \$40 million that will go here to help revitalize and fix our infrastructure here in the far-west area is just a start. Redirecting the water ensures that our residents basements are not flooded and that they can have a great quality of life here."

Detroit-based Major Contracting is the primary contractor on this project and will begin preparations for the new sewer piping related to the detention basins. The effort will not support the nearby Dearborn Heights community, Brown said.

The effort is in the DWSD's green infrastructure program, which began with bio-retention gardens in city parks and vacant parcels. The first project was completed in November at the nearby Charles Wright Academy on Berg Road.



another project. So, it's a win-win for Oakland, Macomb and the city of Detroit," Brown said.



Two new detention basins will divert rainwater to prevent flooding.
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