

HOORAY!

More New SPARK Parks Are on the Way

The nonprofit will debut 15 new parks and update 15 more over the next four years.

By [Gwendolyn Knapp](#) • 1/14/2021 at 6:00am



The new SPARK park at Horn Elementary in Alief.

IMAGE: [COURTESY OF SPARK](#)

HERE'S A LITTLE POSITIVE PARKS NEWS FOR THE NEW YEAR: The Houston Endowment and Kinder Foundation have re-committed to supporting efforts to mitigate “park deserts” throughout Greater Houston by funding more projects from SPARK, the Houston nonprofit that was founded by Eleanor Tinsley in 1983, which transforms public school playgrounds into community parks.

Spark has successfully introduced 25 new parks (and updated five more) in our region since 2016, thanks in part to previous funding from the Houston Endowment and Kinder Foundation. These parks, spread across 12 independent school districts, including three charter schools, have allowed more than 82,000 Harris County residents to gain easier access—a ten-minute walk—to a greenspace.

A new follow-up investment from the Houston Endowment and Kinder Foundation will allow SPARK to create 15 more parks and update 15 more over the next four years.

Currently SPARK has a total of 150 active community parks in 17 different school districts throughout the Houston area.

And there is definitely a need for more parks—a 2020 [report](#) by the Trust for Public Land ranked Houston 78th of 100 large U.S. cities in terms of greenspace access, noting that only 61 percent of our city's 2.3 million residents live within 10-minutes of a park.

SPARK is hoping to boost that number to 75 percent by 2040, which would allow more than half a million people to access parks more easily. It has received over \$2 million in public and private funding, including the lead grants from the Houston Endowment and Kinder Institute, to pursue the project.

Want to see a SPARK park in person? Head to Horn Elementary in Alief. Students here raised over \$7,500 through popcorn sales, a sponsored mural project, and more fundraising efforts; Alief Independent School District kicked in \$9,000; the Harris County Precinct 1 contributed \$10,000; and SPARK sponsored the rest of the \$300,000 park that provided new playground equipment, a mosaic mural, a covered outdoor classroom with several picnic tables, and a scenic walking trail, as well as nearby soccer fields. It truly is built by and for the community.

Head to sparkpark.org to find more parks in your neighborhood.

(source: <https://www.houstoniamag.com/travel-and-outdoors/2021/01/new-spark-parks-houston-projects-2021>)