



National Recreation and Park Association

MARVIN GAYE PARK FACTSHEET

Park Facts

- Marvin Gaye Park is a 1.6-mile-long common area located in Northeast Washington, DC
- The park system is the longest municipal park in Washington, D.C
- Formally called Watts Branch Park, the area was officially rededicated as Marvin Gaye Park on April 2, 2006, what would have been the singer's 67th birthday
- Over 600 families live in park's adjacent neighborhoods
- The area was once dubbed "Needle Park" due to rampant drug use within its borders
- Over the past five years, 24,000 volunteers led by the NRPA and Washington Parks & People have helped clean up the park
- Volunteers have removed more than 3.5 million pounds of trash, 9,000 hypodermic needles and 78 abandoned cars from the stream and its surrounding land
- Over 1,000 native trees have been replanted
- In 2008, the city closed a nearby methadone clinic that drew hundreds of drug addicts to the area
- One activist calls the area the "east-of-the-river equivalent of Rock Creek Park"
- The revitalized park will feature new, state-of-the-art playground equipment, a permanent mosaic honoring 200 community heroes, job training for hundreds of youth and ex-offenders, a youth-run farmer's market, a Marvin Gaye Amphitheater, and 1.6 miles of newly-rebuilt hiker/biker trails
- Generous contributors have donated over \$300,000 to make the Marvin Gaye Park project possible, including Playworld Systems, Playcore, Landscape Structures and Kompan
- Other supporters include the city's Health Department and Parks and Recreation Department, the Anacostia Waterfront Corp., and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Historical Facts

- Marvin Gaye grew up in East Capitol Dwellings, at #12 60th Street, NE, near the east end of the park. He would sit beside the stream, write songs and sing.
- The nearby Crystal Lounge, now turned into a booming community center, was where the future Motown superstar had one of his first performances.
- In 1961, the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. called on area residents to join him in a sit-in at a downtown lunch counter.
- On May 18, 1966, Lady Bird Johnson rededicated the park in her "Keep America Beautiful" campaign. Helping to plant a wildflower meadow, she told the crowd: "No one more than the residents of this area know what magic has been wrought here at Watts Branch."