**CITY OF HARTFORD**

**NEWS RELEASE**

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Date: February 20, 2024 Contact(s): Linnea Rader, Interim City Manager

City of Hartford

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**Hartford City Council Submits for SPARK Grant**

**THE CITY OF HARTFORD WANTS YOU TO KNOW…**

The City of Hartford has submitted for grant funding through the SPARK grant program to make improvements to Ely Park. SPARK grants are available to local communities to create, renovate and redevelop public recreation opportunities for residents and visitors – especially those communities whose economies and health were hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. The City of Hartford has been identified as one of those communities.

Following the City’s survey of residents and public meeting, the City was able to identify the needs and desires of the community to submit a basic plan for the SPARK grant funding. This initial plan is not anything set in stone, but identifies the basic plan from which we will work with our City residents, City Council, and Engineers when and if we are approved for grant funding. This initial plan includes:

* A natural barrier along the west and northwest sides of the park which will have openings to allow passage.
* A parking lot along Michigan Avenue for additional parking with additional sidewalks that connect the parking lot to the other sidewalks and pavilion to ensure those with disabilities can access and enjoy more of the park.
* Improvements to the pavilion possibly including roll up doors to allow for use during inclement weather, a concert state, picnic tables, game tables, and or a movie screen. Again, these are all possible additions, meaning not all may be included in the final plan.
* Improvements to the bathroom including paint, doors, and potentially heat to allow for better use of the restroom facilities so they may be used more throughout the year.
* Additional lighting throughout the park to make it more inviting and safer.
* Additional benches for seating for the various park events.
* Updated landscaping throughout the park.
* The possible addition of a pickleball area and outdoor game areas.
* A small playground with shade in the area around the bathroom on the property without a playground restriction on the deed.

All of these potential additions to Ely Park are designed to support the needs of the community in as many ways as possible. Our intent is to ensure that areas for community events such as the Strawberry Festival do not have diminished space, that Concerts in the Park have additional amenities for attendees to enjoy, and our residents can utilize the restrooms during spring/fall events, just to name a few of the proposals that were considered.

We thank everyone that took the survey and attended the public meeting. We look forward to working with you further to enhance our City if we are awarded this great grant opportunity.