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CITY OF GARDNER AWARDED \$252,000 PARC GRANT FOR NEW PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT AT OVILA CASE PLAYGROUND

Replaces former wooden structure that was removed due to safety concerns

GARDNER, MA – The City of Gardner is proud to announce that it has been awarded **\$252,000** from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) through the **Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) Grant Program**. This funding will allow Gardner to purchase and install modern, safe playground equipment at **Ovila Case Playground in Ward 2**, replacing the aging wooden structure that the City removed in 2023 due to unsafe conditions.

Mayor **Michael J. Nicholson** expressed his deep personal connection to this project:

“I remember playing at Ovila Case Playground as a kid—it was one of those places that really helped shape my memories of growing up here in Gardner. With this new equipment, I hope our younger residents will have the same opportunity to create memories that will last a lifetime, just like so many of us did.”

Ward 2 City Councilor Dana Heath, whose district includes Ovila Case, celebrated the impact of this investment:

“I'm thrilled to see this funding dedicated to enhancing Ovila Case Playground. Playgrounds are more than just places to play—they're vital for childhood development, community connection, and healthy lifestyles. This grant will help ensure that our children have a safe and joyful environment to grow, explore, and make lasting memories.”

The PARC Grant Program, administered by EEA's Division of Conservation Services, supports local governments in creating and renovating parks, playgrounds, and public recreational spaces. It's designed to promote outdoor recreation, equitable access to green space, and community resilience. This year's awards come as part of a larger investment by the Healey-Driscoll Administration, which recently announced more than \$12 million in PARC, LAND

(Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity), and Conservation Partnership grants to benefit open space, parks, and natural lands across nearly 40 of the 351 Massachusetts municipalities.

State **Representative Jon Zlotnik** also praised the grant, underscoring the role of state leadership:

“The state’s support through the PARC Grant Program has been instrumental in helping make projects like this a reality in Gardner. Investments in public spaces like Ovila Case Playground strengthen our neighborhoods and provide real benefits to families and the community as a whole.”

Mayor Nicholson went on to note that the Ovila Case project is part of a broader strategy to expand and modernize recreation in Gardner:

“Over the past few years, the City has invested heavily in recreation—from resurfacing our public tennis courts, creating a new disc golf course and pickleball court, upgrading playgrounds at Baily Brook and Pulaski Parks, modernizing equipment at Bickford Playground, and installing walking trails along our bike path and around our playgrounds,” said **Mayor Mike Nicholson**.

“This investment in Ovila Case is the next step in our upgrade plan so that our residents can continue to lead active, healthy, and connected lives in Gardner.”

The City of Gardner plans to begin the design and procurement phase soon, with installation of the new playground equipment expected in 2026, pending final plans and contractor selection.