



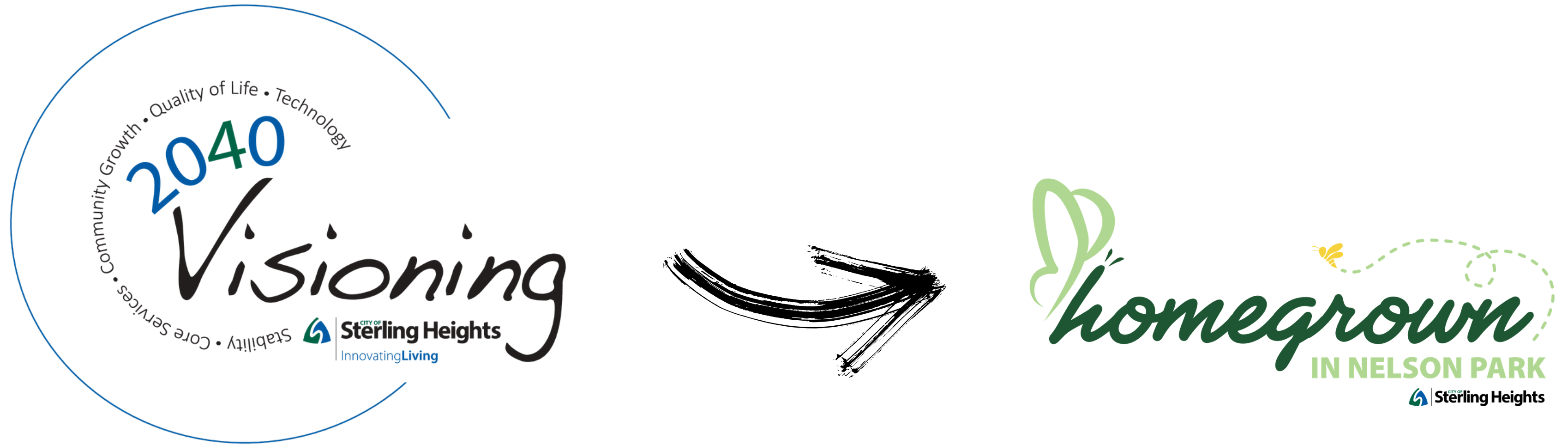
homegrown

IN NELSON PARK



How Sterling Heights transformed an underdeveloped park into a home grown center of community wealth.





Our Vision: An inclusive, vibrant community that is safe, active and sustainable.

Our Guiding Principles:

- A city that is exceptionally maintained, sustainable, and environmentally responsible
- Educational and recreational opportunities and programming for all ages, abilities and interests
- Plentiful and diverse housing and green spaces available for existing and new residents
- A city engaged with residents and businesses through innovative channels and technology
- Vibrant and attractive areas with unique offerings and focal points
- An accessible city that is connected with a robust system of pathways and trails




A park transformed through creativity



Creative enhancements at Sterling Heights' Nelson Park have turned a neighborhood park into a year-round learning, health, culture and sustainability hub, built with community partners on the foundation of community wealth building in a way that is replicable in any community.

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A replicable, scalable project for any community



This type of project is scalable because it is not dependent on a single facility or funding level. Communities can begin with a modest garden, seating area, native landscaping and educational signage, then expand over time through grants, sponsorships and partnerships. The model is flexible enough to work in a neighborhood park, schoolyard, civic campus or vacant lot, while still advancing shared goals around education, health, culture, sustainability and community connection.

For example, a community with limited resources could begin with just a few raised beds, one ADA-accessible bed, native landscaping, a bench or two and volunteer-led gardening workshops in partnership with a local school or garden club.





Lifelong Learning

The garden supports education and training from young childhood all the way to adult learners. Educational programming includes learning how to care for and cultivate plants, opportunities for guided tours and presentations at a Conservatory and interpretive signage throughout covering ecosystems, microforests, indigenous species and more. There is even a public/private partnership with Dutton Farms, sponsored by Genisys Credit Union, to help teach clients with developmental disabilities life skills and how to grow their own produce.



Public Health

Nelson Park enhancements have had a positive impact on public health by increasing access to fresh, healthy produce while remaining active through the process of gardening. The included microforest provides cleaner air and reduces heat island effect. In addition, improvements have had a positive impact on residents' mental health through the creation of an outdoor social gathering space for informal meetups or organized Yoga events as well as opportunities for exercise via gardening and the walking trail. Our ADA beds and trails mean these benefits are accessible to all.

Arts and Culture



Informal Cultural Gatherings

A pavilion has provided a gathering spot that promotes informal cultural gatherings for the Chaldean elders and other cultures from adjacent neighborhoods who play backgammon and socialize.



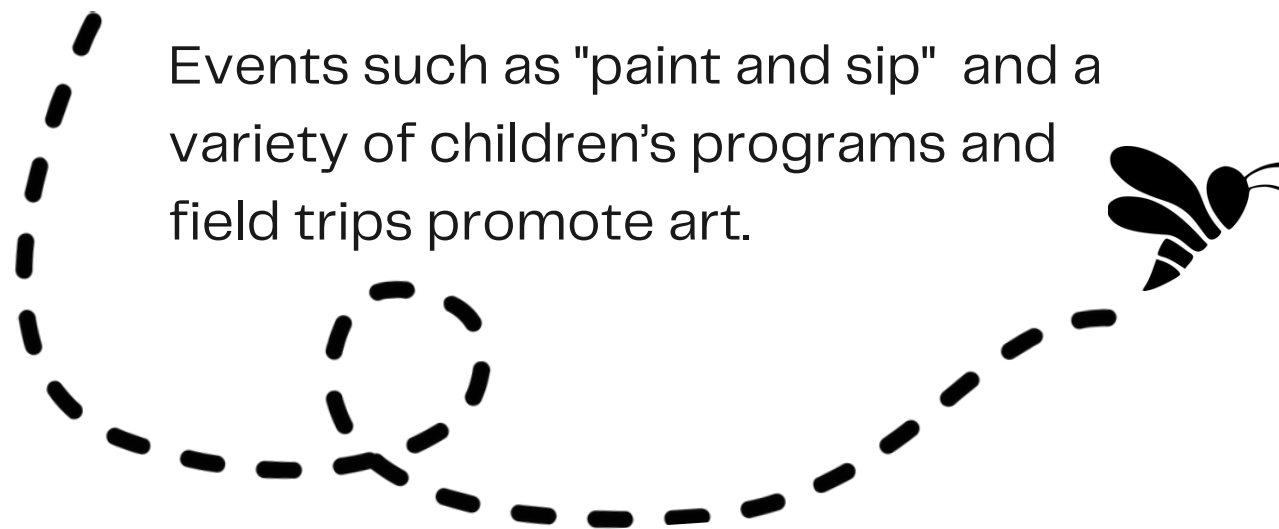
Special Events

Events such as "paint and sip" and a variety of children's programs and field trips promote art.



Benches and Children's Garden

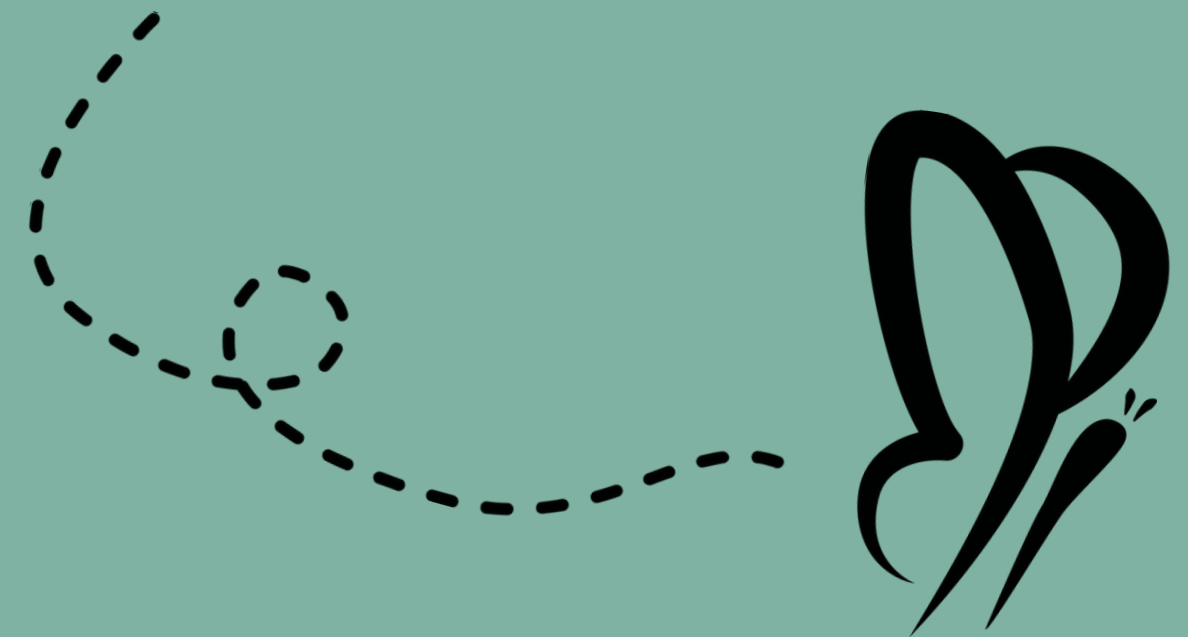
Respite benches and the Children's Garden were leveraged as a place to incorporate public art by having local artists paint benches and the raised bed.





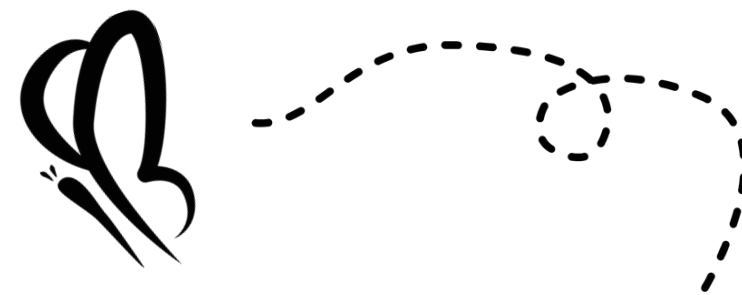
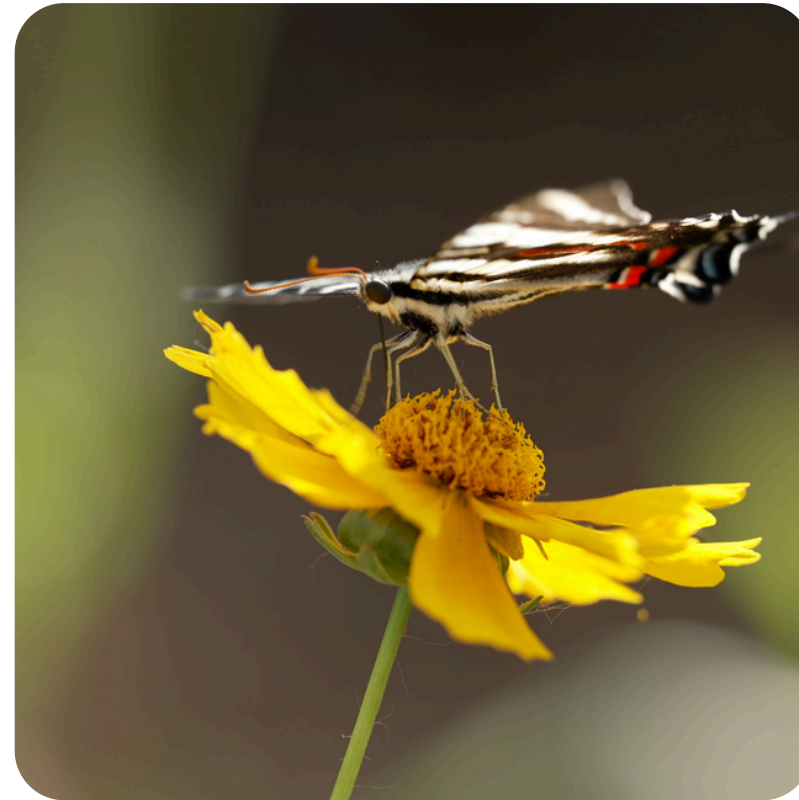
Financial Security

Homegrown in Nelson Park has enhanced financial security by creating jobs, and the investment has improved property values surrounding the project. In addition, the community garden provides a renewable resource for food, providing local groups – like Cranbrook Youth Group and Vibe Credit Union – the opportunity to donate food back to the local community from their bed(s) and food drives.



Sustainability and Infrastructure

The project was built to have a positive impact on our community's sustainability. We upcycled retired wind turbines for respite seating, added a microforest and a grove of trees and even partnered with Biggby to recycle their used coffee grounds for compost. All park landscaping is native to attract pollinators and provide natural stormwater mitigation, there is an apiary and a conservatory, no invasive plants are allowed in garden beds, and no fertilizers or chemicals are permitted.





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Something has quietly, but impactfully, taken root in Sterling Heights.

1:30 sizzle reel