

Milwaukee Alderman Murphy: Rebuilt DeBack Playground wins Mayor's Design Award

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Marcus DeBack Playground – rebuilt at 2461 N. 55th St. as part of the MKE Plays initiative – received a 2017 Mayor's Design Award during a special ceremony yesterday.

According to **Alderman Michael J. Murphy**, who founded MKE Plays to help rebuild many of Milwaukee's most deteriorated playgrounds and parks, the design award was an "affirmation" for the hard work and collaboration that went into the Marcus DeBack Playground's rebirth.

"The heartfelt work and planning put in by Marcus' mother (Lisa Ettienne), the neighbors, MKE Plays and all of the stakeholders was recognized in the form of a Mayor's Design Award," Alderman Murphy said.

"This is truly high recognition and a very proud moment for the neighborhood, for the City of Milwaukee and MKE Plays," he said.

Since 1997, the Mayor's Design Award has recognized design excellence throughout the City of Milwaukee. Projects are selected for adding value to their neighborhoods by contributing to the urban fabric and the character of their surroundings.

In 1996, Wright Street Playground was renamed for **Marcus DeBack**, a nine-year-old boy and innocent bystander who was shot and killed on the playground while

leading a younger boy away from violence which had erupted on the basketball court.

With the help of Marcus' mother, the Uptown Crossing Neighborhood Association, and local residents, MKE Plays has helped restore the playground as a symbol of the positive change happening in the community. It features a 90-foot zipline, walking track, fitness equipment, permeable pavement basketball courts, challenging toddler elements, and a 10-foot tall rope dome, all selected based on resident input.

Alderman Murphy's MKE Plays initiative seeks private financial support and resident participation in the park reconstruction process. While the initial goal for MKE Plays was to reconstruct 12 parks over three years (2015-17) and raise \$1 million for these projects, in just 18 months the program has leveraged more than \$1.475 million to be used at 14 locations across the city.