

## Vision for a new urban park

The new Lower Dexter Park was initially conceived as a solution to egress problems, where adjacent buildings' renovations needed more access points to meet modern fire codes. That need provided a unique opportunity to preserve and celebrate a piece of Montgomery's unique history connected to Mrs. Parks' legacy, while creating a special public space in a revitalizing downtown.

The project was designed by Chambless King Architects and constructed by Liberty Construction, both based in Montgomery, Alabama.

The new façade replicates the look of the historic 1940s design. It is held up with piers drilled 25 feet deep and a steel sub-frame. The street-level area will remain completely open to connect the street for visitors and passers-by. Facing Dexter Avenue, most of the large vitrolite glass tiles were carefully salvaged from the original facade along with 80 of the 114 large glass blocks in the center window.

To reduce wind load on the free-standing façade structure and maximize breeze and



light, the window frames are recreated but the glazing was not reintroduced. A deck floats and flows like an observation space so not to interrupt views to reduce lateral side pressure on neighboring building basements. Planting strips at the back and on some edges are filled with native grasses to create movement, places for benches and to increase drainage away from adjacent buildings.

The decking is garapa hardwood that is naturally resistant to decay and insects. It was chosen because of its 30-year life span without the need for preservatives and low maintenance costs. The landscaping throughout the park are native southern grasses that require little maintenance and can withstand the area's typical dry summers. At the rear of the park is a larger open area.

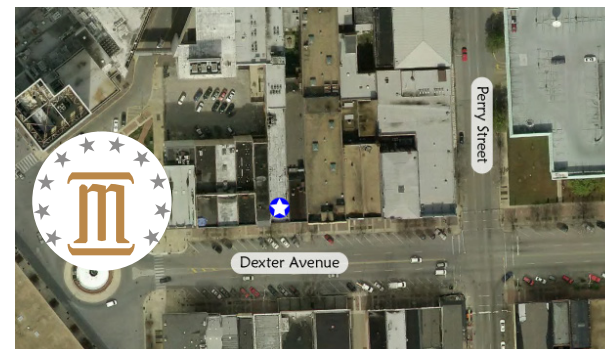


Opened in 2018, this pocket park creates an intimate, unique community space for downtown residents, workers and visitors to enjoy. Seating and lighting throughout the park provide a special place to mingle, read and even perhaps even to reflect on the history of Montgomery and Dexter Avenue.

Just inside the façade is a limestone paver engraved with the words of Rosa Parks, placed to honor her contributions to the modern civil rights movement and recognize the significance of the new space. It reads:

*"I would like to be known as a person who is concerned about freedom and equality and justice and prosperity for all people."*

## Park Location



# Lower Dexter Park



A new City park at  
29 Dexter Avenue



The City of Montgomery has built a very special public pocket park on one of the lots where the Montgomery Fair Department Store once stood. Rosa Parks was an assistant to a tailor for the Montgomery Fair. On December 1, 1955, Mrs. Parks left her seamstress work in the Alterations Department, which was located on the upper floors of the Arcade, she got on a city bus and she helped set in motion events that would bring about universal concerns for human rights.

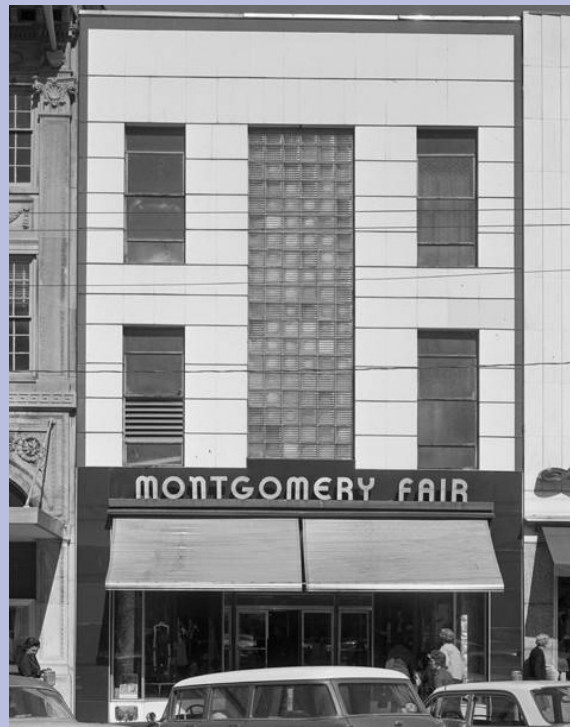
The Montgomery Fair operated in 1868 as Pollack's Dollar Store at the corner of Dexter Avenue and Perry Street, one of the city's first department stores. In the early 1900s, Pollack's was bought out by New York merchants. In 1907, a new 146,000 square foot, four-story building opened on Court Street. It also had entrances on Monroe Street and Dexter Avenue.

In the Dexter Avenue "Arcade" shoppers could find cosmetics, gloves, leather goods, hosiery, umbrellas, silverware, records and Teen Town departments.



As shown in the photo below, the façade was updated in the 1940s with the addition of vitrolite tile (pigmented, structural glass) and glass block indicative of the art-deco style of architecture popular during the early 20th century.

The department store stopped downtown operations in the mid-1960s. When 24



North Court Street burned down in 1984 it left behind parts of two adjoining, damaged annex buildings. One, at 22 Monroe Street was converted in recent years to residential lofts above ground floor commercial. The other is now 29 Dexter Avenue. The Dexter side was largely abandoned as you can see from the photo below from 2014.



In 2010, the City purchased what was left of the Montgomery Fair Arcade and several other historic buildings on Dexter Avenue through grant funds from the State of Alabama. The City took great steps to try and preserve the Arcade building; however, two structural engineers determined it was unsafe and no longer sound.

While the goal was to sell the buildings to private developers for rehabilitation, the opportunity to create public greenspace at 29 Dexter would emerge.



The former Montgomery Fair Arcade was deconstructed in 2014. The City worked with crews to carefully remove the vitrolite tiles and deco glass block to salvage and store them, for re-use on the new replica façade when reconstruction began in 2017, as shown in the photo above.