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Construction underway on community-designed public plaza in Parkland neighborhood

Parkland Plaza will provide outdoor venue and natural playground to community

Louisville, KY (September 25, 2021) – Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer, Councilwoman Jessica Green (D-1), community partners and Parkland residents gathered Saturday for a ceremonial groundbreaking for Parkland Plaza, a new community-designed public space in the heart of the Parkland neighborhood.

Community members are working together to transform a vacant and underutilized asphalt parking lot, located at 2757 Dumesnil St. and adjacent to the Parkland Community Garden. Construction is scheduled to begin in mid-October to create a green oasis that will serve as a community venue and green space, and an additional lot that will be transformed into a natural playground.

“Parkland Plaza is the perfect example of community coming together to create something beautiful and functional for the benefit of all Louisvillians, and particularly Parkland residents. This project would not be possible without the residents of the Parkland neighborhood and our many fantastic nonprofit and private partners,” said Mayor Fischer. “I want to thank everyone who has been involved in the creation of Parkland Plaza for their hard work.”

The \$187,000 project is a partnership between residents of Parkland, the Parkland Business and Development Association, 1200 LLC, Center For Neighborhoods, TreesLouisville, and Louisville Metro Government. Louisville Metro Government committed \$44,000 to the project.

Other funders include Partners for Places, the Community Foundation of Louisville, the Arbor Day Foundation, Louisville Metro Council District 1, Fund for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, Schneider Electric Foundation, the Louisville NAACP, Louisville Water Company, Signarama Downtown, and many in-kind contributions from the listed partners as well as Gresham Smith, WorK Architecture + Design, GuardTop, Trane, Beltline Electric, and Realm Construction.

“Parkland is a historic and beautiful neighborhood. I am thrilled about the groundbreaking of the Parkland Plaza,” said District 1 Councilwoman Jessica Green. “The idea of taking a vacant and abandoned lot and turning it into cultural plaza for families, is the true definition of *Parkland Rising*. Every day, we are working hard to restore Parkland to its original glory. The Parkland Plaza is integral to the success and revitalization of this neighborhood that we all love.”

The project was born out of community visioning work that began with the resident-driven Parkland Neighborhood Plan in 2016, and Center for Neighborhoods renewed community engagement through its Better Block Louisville program in 2019. Through community meetings, canvassing, and engaging 75 volunteers and 250 resident attendees, the Center for Neighborhoods built out a temporary installation of the community's vision for the plaza.

Community members have articulated their desire for a vibrant and activated civic space at the heart of Parkland's historic town center that builds on the significant civil rights legacy of this area and the ongoing work to reinvigorate the historic business district, while simultaneously providing a green and happy place for nearby families to gather and play. The addition of the natural playground area is a direct response to wishes from community residents and area childcare facilities.

"Center For Neighborhoods is happy to partner with Parkland residents to see their vision for the plaza and playground come to fruition. Center For Neighborhoods is always in it for the long haul. This is what it means to stick with neighbors and support them in implementing their full community vision," said Dr. Mellone Long, Executive Director of Center for Neighborhoods.

Tamika Jackson, speaking on behalf of the Parkland Business and Development Association, stated, "We are excited to see the collective vision of Parkland Plaza come to reality. The Parkland Plaza will continue to be instrumental in the momentum to enhance the Historic Parkland Corridor and surrounding area into a more thriving, self-sustaining community. We are truly grateful for those who laid the foundation before us, and those that have joined and embraced us in this journey to improve the quality of life in the Parkland community."

Once complete, Parkland Plaza will support community culture, safe recreation, and inclusive economic development. Louisville Metro has signed an agreement with 1200 LLC, allowing the company to provide community programming on the site.

"As a musician, I've experienced world-class outdoor gathering spaces from Louisville to Leicester. It's a dream to have one in my childhood neighborhood. Parkland Plaza will be the cultural center of Black Louisville," said Jecorey Arthur, Founder of 1200 LLC.

A mural by local artist Victor Sweatt also will border the plaza. It will reflect the "Parkland Love" theme established by community visioning and will showcase historic Parkland figures and scenery, a public natural playground with native plants, natural materials, and creative play will be constructed in an adjacent land bank lot..

"The play space is going to be very special and serve the community in a big way," said Cindi Sullivan, Executive Director of TreesLouisville. "This project has created so much energy, positivity, and momentum. Partners and contractors have gone above and beyond with their generosity and support. I hope this project can help spur more opportunities like this to make more sustainable neighborhoods projects."

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The plaza construction will include removing the parking lot asphalt and replacing it with grass, new trees, and native plants. A community stage and seating will be installed, and a new parking lot will be constructed and coated in CoolSeal, a sealcoat for asphalt that lowers surface temperatures and combats urban heat island effects. This is the first piloted project in Louisville from GuardTop, which makes CoolSeal, and the national nonprofit Global Cool Cities Alliance.

National support for the Parkland Plaza project includes: TreesLouisville receiving a \$42,000 matching grant from Partners for Places a joint effort by The Funders Network (TFN) and the Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN). Partners for Places' general grant program is supported by The JPB Foundation, Kendeda Fund, The Kresge Foundation, New York Community Trust, and the Pisces Foundation.

View renderings of Parkland Plaza at www.parklandplaza.com.

Learn more about Center For Neighborhoods' Better Block Louisville program in Parkland at www.centerforneighborhoods.org/better-block.

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