



Press Release

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Historic Emancipation Park To Be Rededicated Following Completion of \$33.6 Million Renovation

Mayor Sylvester Turner will lead the rededication ceremony of Emancipation Park, together with OST/Almeda Redevelopment Corridors TIRZ#7, Emancipation Park Conservancy and the Houston Parks and Recreation Department, on Saturday, June 17, 2017, at 11:00 a.m. A day long festival (10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.) will be held in conjunction with the rededication.

“The rededication of Emancipation Park is a day for celebration for Third Ward and for all of Houston. The renovation is an example of how public private partnerships working together can make dramatic differences in a neighborhood park,” said Mayor Sylvester Turner. “We would like to extend a special thank you to all of our funding partners. The improvements that we see today at Emancipation Park would not have been possible without their financial support.”

The \$33.6 Million dollar renovation was made possible with funding from the OST/Almeda Redevelopment Corridors-Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone No. 7 (TIRZ#7), Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, Houston Endowment, Kinder Foundation, Timken Foundation of Canton and the City of Houston. The groundbreaking for the park renovation took place in October 2013.

“The OST/Almeda Corridors Redevelopment Authority is elated to have had the opportunity to play a part in revitalizing this historic park, which remains as a major cultural focus within the Third Ward community and the city of Houston,” said Theola Petteway, the Authority’s Executive Director. “We recognize that it is helping to spark the redevelopment process within our community and help bring back businesses and residents to the area. We appreciate the City of Houston and all of our collaborative partners who helped bring this vision to fruition.”

The Houston Parks and Recreation Department entered into an agreement with Emancipation Park Conservancy (EPC), established in 2016, authorizing the joint operations, maintenance and programming of Emancipation Park. The Conservancy will work in conjunction with the department to enhance the experience for visitors to the park.

The Emancipation Park Conservancy Chairman of the Board Ramon Manning said, “This rededication ceremony has been a long time coming and we can’t be more thrilled to finally be making this historic park and green space destination available for all to enjoy. As the stewards of this community treasure, we, the Conservancy, appreciate the commitment of our funding partners and the patience the community has exercised with this worthwhile initiative. Our unwavering desire is for Emancipation Park to serve as a vibrant community showpiece for the many constituencies we serve.”

The renovations at Emancipation Park were designed by Philip Freelon, of Perkins +Will Architects (formerly Freelon Group). Freelon's design achievements include cultural, civic and academic projects for some of America's most respected cultural institutions, including the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture on the National Mall. The projects' goals were to create a beautiful and functional park for the residents of Third Ward, to be a catalyst for local development, and to become a draw for national and international visitors.

"Today, Emancipation Park takes its place among the best park properties in the country. We offer our thanks to the founding fathers who boldly embraced their future to purchase this land long before the city created a parks department," said Lisa Johnson, Interim Director, Houston Parks and Recreation Department. "We also offer our thanks today to all of our partners, to future park users and to all the visitors that we believe will come to visit Emancipation Park. We hope they will all cherish and embrace the history and beauty of the park."

The scope of work included:

- A new recreation center (16,110 SF) complete with a gymnasium, weight room, classroom, lobby and reception area, restrooms, office and storage space. The building is designed to have access to an outdoor stage area which will be built when additional funding becomes available.
- The existing community center was renovated and restored to more closely resemble the original design and honors the historical importance of the building (built during 1938-1939) and creates a functional facility for the community. The building provides meeting spaces, lobby area, office, restrooms, servery and kitchen. The stage area, referred to as the Blessings Theater, was restored and provides space for small outdoor or indoor performances.
- The swimming pool was removed and replaced with a modern pool and the existing pool house was renovated and air-conditioned so that it can be used during special events.
- All buildings are LEED Certified (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) and the project also integrates sustainable site design and low impact development principles that include site storm water management, which includes pervious paving, bio swales, and underground detention. An underground rainwater harvesting tank captures excessive site runoff and stores water that is being reused for irrigation purposes. All lighting is energy efficient and utilizes LED fixtures. A comprehensive ground loop, geothermal HVAC system was installed to serve all three park buildings.
- Parking is on the perimeter of the park (excluding Elgin) and additional land was purchased for an off-site parking lot on Tuam, which also serves as detention.
- Other features include an entry plaza, a splash pad, a playground, walking trail, porch-like covered areas, and several picnic areas. The baseball field, tennis and basketball courts were replaced and upgraded.

About the OST/Almeda Redevelopment Corridors TIRZ#7

The OST/Almeda Redevelopment Corridors TIRZ #7 is organized for the purpose of aiding, assisting and acting on behalf of the City in the performance of its governmental function to promote the common good and general welfare of the area included in Reinvestment Zone #7 and neighboring areas; and to promote, develop, encourage and maintain housing, educational facilities, employment, commerce and economies development in the City of Houston.

About the Emancipation Park Conservancy

The Emancipation Park Conservancy is a 501 (c) (3) organization with a mission of preserving, funding and protecting the rich cultural legacy of Emancipation Park. Under contract with the City of Houston, the Conservancy is responsible for providing strategic oversight and direction, and fundraising to support programs, services and activities, maintenance and operations, as well as managing food concessions. More at www.emancipationparkconservancy.org.

About the Houston Parks and Recreation Department

The Houston Parks and Recreation Department (H.P.A.R.D.) stewards and manages over 37,851 acres of parkland and greenspace for the City of Houston and develops and implements recreational programming for citizens of all abilities. For more information on the Houston Parks and Recreation Department, call (832) 395-7022 or visit www.houstonparks.org.