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**FAIRMOUNT PARK CONSERVANCY BREAKS GROUND ON NEW PROJECT IN
CENTENNIAL DISTRICT OF FAIRMOUNT PARK
Collaboration with City of Philadelphia, Foundations, Community Groups**

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Philadelphia, PA – April 20, 2017 – Today Fairmount Park Conservancy started construction on the first phase of its Centennial Commons project, which is designed to create a more welcoming public space along Parkside Avenue in West Fairmount Park. The new layout designed by Studio | Bryan Hanes will include innovative play spaces for kids and young people, seating and picnic areas, landscaping, a rain garden, and better access to the park for neighbors and visitors to nearby cultural institutions.

At the groundbreaking ceremony, **Fairmount Park Conservancy, in partnership with the City of Philadelphia including Philadelphia Parks & Recreation, Philadelphia Water Department, Philadelphia Commerce Department, and Philadelphia**



Streets Department, announced the award of a contract to Seravilli, Inc., for construction to begin immediately and be completed in Fall 2017.

Centennial Commons is part of the national Reimagining the Civic Commons initiative, which seeks to counter growing economic and social fragmentation in our cities by revitalizing and connecting parks, libraries, community centers and other public spaces. In 2015, Philadelphia's

Fairmount Park Conservancy and local partners embarked on a three-year, \$11 million pilot project of Reimagining the Civic Commons, supported by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and the William Penn Foundation. The project has since added additional partners and expanded to four other cities.

Phase 1 of the Centennial Commons project, called “Parkside Neighborhood Edge,” will make it easier for pedestrians to cross Parkside Avenue, where they will be able to rest on new bench swings and benches or stroll among new ornamental plantings and trees – including 68 new shade trees and over 42 species of perennials, grasses, and shrubs covering 67,000 square feet.

“The Centennial Commons project was designed and developed through a hugely collaborative process with the community, with the goal of making Fairmount Park more welcoming and responsive to all of the neighbors who live around it,” said **Rick Magder, executive director of Fairmount Park Conservancy**. “The Parkside Neighborhood Edge phase merges the line between the neighborhood and the park itself, as part of our ongoing effort to reimagine this open area into one of the city’s most dynamic civic spaces.”

Redevelopment of the site – which was the central hub of the Centennial Exhibition of 1876 but has been under-supported for decades – was made possible by an initial gift of \$5.4 million from the William Penn Foundation to Fairmount Park Conservancy, supplemented by a \$1 million capital contribution from Knight Foundation. The project involves an extraordinary collaboration among city agencies.

“Centennial Commons is an outstanding example of what happens when our public agencies work together to bring innovative projects to our Parks and Recreation facilities,” said **Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney**. “I want to thank the leadership at Parks and Recreation, Water Department, Streets Department, and Commerce Department for sharing my vision for a cleaner, greener city for all Philadelphia residents. I also want to thank Fairmount Park Conservancy, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, and William Penn Foundation for their leadership on the Centennial Commons project.”

“I am thrilled to gather with community members today to begin the transformation of West Fairmount Park through the Parkside Neighborhood Edge phase of the project,” said **Philadelphia Parks and Recreation Commissioner Kathryn Ott Lovell**. “This project will make the park safer and more inviting for neighbors of West Fairmount Park and it is just the beginning of our efforts to forge a stronger connection between Parkside residents and the wonderful West Fairmount Park.”

Philadelphia Water Department provided \$1 million in funding for the construction of systems that will divert stormwater from the city’s aging sewer infrastructure. Philadelphia Department of Commerce committed just over \$250,000 toward enhanced streetscaping along Parkside Avenue. Philadelphia Streets Department will assist in designing and reviewing street improvements valued at approximately \$50,000 to create safer pedestrian crossings and calm traffic on the avenue. Philadelphia Parks & Recreation, which provided valuable input on the project’s design, has committed to maintaining the landscaping and public amenities to high standards.

With funding from the Reimagining the Civic Commons initiative, Fairmount Park Conservancy was able to establish productive partnerships with community organizations such as Centennial Parkside Community Development Corporation, Parkside Association of Philadelphia, and Business Association of West Parkside. The partnerships work two ways: enabling Fairmount Park Conservancy to receive input from the community on aspects of the project like design and local hiring and providing support and training to help local leaders make positive change in their communities – not just in the parks.

“The neighbors are genuinely excited about having a ‘park within the park,’” said **Joyce Smith, Vice-President, Board, Centennial Parkside CDC & Viola Street Residents Association**. “It’s not very often that a densely populated community sees a field transformed into an inviting area for rest and recreation.”

Looking ahead, Fairmount Park Conservancy will continue to fundraise for future phases of Centennial Commons, including the “Youth Area” for 5-12 year-olds featuring nature play areas, water features, and a skate ribbon beside Kelly Pool.

About Fairmount Park Conservancy

Fairmount Park Conservancy exists to champion Philadelphia's parks. We lead capital projects and historic preservation efforts, foster neighborhood park stewardship, attract and leverage investments, and develop innovative programs throughout the 10,200 acres that include Fairmount Park and more than 100 neighborhood parks around the city. Philadelphia has one of the largest urban park systems in the world, providing residents with extensive health, environmental, social, economic and cultural benefits – including access to some of the region's most famous attractions. For more information, please visit myphillypark.org, join us at facebook.com/fairmountparkconservancy, and follow us on Instagram and Twitter @myphillypark.

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Editor's Note: Download high-resolution renderings of the project design here: <http://bit.ly/ConservancyPressKit>.