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PHILADELPHIA'S FAIRMOUNT PARK CONSERVANCY TO ADVANCE RESIDENT PARTICIPATION IN SHAPING PUBLIC SPACES WITH \$3.28 MILLION FROM KNIGHT FOUNDATION

City and nonprofit partners will help support expansive civic engagement strategy

PHILADELPHIA – November 4, 2017 – At today's celebration of LOVE Your Park Fall Service Day in Norris Square, Knight Foundation announced \$3.28 million in new funding to Fairmount Park Conservancy to support a citywide civic engagement strategy that will allow residents to shape activities in Philadelphia's public spaces. The new investment is inspired by the Philadelphia's Rebuild initiative, which plans to invest \$500 million in capital improvement of parks, recreation centers, and libraries. Knight funding will help the Conservancy advance a network of public and nonprofit partners – including Philadelphia Parks & Recreation, Philadelphia Parks Alliance and Free Library of Philadelphia – to build community participation around public spaces, mobilizing residents as co-creators in shaping their neighborhoods.

"I appreciate Knight Foundation's continued investment in revitalizing and activating Philadelphia's public spaces," said Philadelphia **Mayor Jim Kenney**. "It takes visionary and committed partners like Knight Foundation to advance this very important work. Every neighborhood deserves a clean park for its residents to enjoy and a safe playground for its children to play in."

Mayor Kenney added, “Thanks to the many volunteers here at Norris Park and parks around the city, Philly Parks & Recreation is getting a big hand helping to maintain these essential public spaces.”

Knight’s support comes on the heels of the foundation’s investment in Fairmount Park Conservancy for the [Reimagining the Civic Commons initiative](#), which began as a demonstration project co-funded by the William Penn Foundation in Philadelphia. The initiative has since expanded to four other cities. Knight selected the Conservancy for that initial project largely owing to the nonprofit’s track record of working collaboratively with public and private partners, particularly its longstanding partnership with Philadelphia Parks & Recreation and a network of 100+ volunteer groups through the City’s Park Stewardship Program.

Sam Gill, Knight Foundation’s Vice President, Communities and Impact, said “We believe this is a fantastic opportunity for the people who live in Philadelphia to determine its future.”

Knight Foundation’s program director for Philadelphia, Patrick Morgan, elaborated. “The neighborhood library, park or recreation center are spaces where strangers come together, where we learn about each other across backgrounds and income levels, and where neighbors and local decision-makers converge to create positive community change. Giving people the opportunity to shape these spaces is essential to creating a stronger, more vibrant Philadelphia. This new effort aims to do just that with the help of Fairmount Conservancy and a network of partners that are invested in the city’s growth.”

Mr. Morgan noted that the new, citywide civic engagement initiative is also an opportunity to scale lessons and insights from the national Reimagining the Civic Commons initiative.

With new Knight support, Fairmount Park Conservancy and its partners will advance training and activities to jumpstart citywide participation and energy around public assets; programs will be developed with the needs and preferences of residents in mind. In addition, the Conservancy will

work to develop fun, fast pop-up projects to experiment, gather insights, and get residents of all kinds involved. Capacity workshops will help identify new community leaders and enlist them as allies in building engagement.

"We are grateful for this investment from the Knight Foundation in the work of the Conservancy and its partners," said **Jamie Gauthier, Executive Director of Fairmount Park Conservancy**. "It validates our belief that the power of organized and engaged resident leaders is crucial to the upkeep, sustenance, and vitality of public spaces within our neighborhoods, as well as to the health of our very city. We look forward to working, as a collective, to strengthen the ability for residents to shape neighborhood investment, in anticipation of the historic investment brought by Rebuild."

Philadelphia Parks & Recreation Commissioner Kathryn Ott Lovell also expressed her appreciation. "I am thrilled that Knight Foundation has decided to make this significant investment into civic engagement programming for our public spaces," said **Ott Lovell**. "It is imperative that we work with community members in an intentional and strategic way to help shape the future of the city's parks and recreation facilities. I look forward to working with Fairmount Park Conservancy and Knight Foundation to build on Parks & Recreation's existing community engagement programs."

Knight Foundation's investment will help Fairmount Park Conservancy, Parks & Recreation, and their partners leverage the Rebuild initiative so that Philadelphia will have an even stronger system of neighborhood leaders to care for the newly renovated sites and ensure that their programming is responsive and inclusive.

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About Knight Foundation: Knight Foundation is a national foundation with strong local roots. We invest in journalism, in the arts, and in the success of cities where brothers John S. and James L. Knight once published newspapers. Our goal is to foster informed and engaged communities, which we believe are essential for a healthy democracy. For more, visit knightfoundation.org.

About Fairmount Park Conservancy: The 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. For more information, please visit myphillypark.org, join us at facebook.com/fairmountparkconservancy, and follow us on Instagram and Twitter @myphillypark.