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**EMBARGOED UNTIL 1 PM, OCTOBER 6**

## **Fairmount Park Conservancy and City of Philadelphia Announce New Designs, Funding for FDR Park**

**October 6, 2021 (PHILADELPHIA, PA)** – Fairmount Park Conservancy, the City of Philadelphia, elected officials, and the Friends of FDR Park today unveiled new designs for the future Welcome Center and a world-class destination play space at FDR Park and announced significant city investment in the future of the iconic South Philadelphia park.

The City's \$50 million investment, to be distributed over the next five years, is a significant step in advancing the implementation of the [\\$250 million FDR Park Master Plan](#). A portion of the city funding will go toward the Gateway Phase, which is underway with its first two signature projects: the park's first-ever Welcome Center and a world-class destination play space.

"Safe, high quality places to play are the foundation of strong and healthy communities," said **Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney**. "The City's \$50 million commitment to FDR Park is an investment in the many diverse communities that call this park home. The hard work being done today will deliver a modern, safe, and welcoming FDR Park for future generations of Philadelphians to enjoy."



### **The Welcome Center**

The Gateway Phase of the Master Plan will enhance the visitor experience at FDR Park by restoring and transforming the 5,500 square foot guardhouse at the Broad Street and Pattison Avenue entrance into a Welcome Center.

In 2021, with support of \$3 million in state of Pennsylvania Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program grant funds and \$1 million from the City of Philadelphia's capital budget, Fairmount Park Conservancy and Philadelphia Parks & Recreation engaged the planning and design firm WRT to design the park's first-ever Welcome Center as the hub for all park activities.

The Welcome Center will include:

- An open-air courtyard to serve as a community gathering space

- A staffed information center where visitors will be able to find out about upcoming events, rent equipment to use in the park, and sign up for park permits
- Food and beverage vendors
- Restrooms
- A 30-person co-working space for park staff and community partners

The Welcome Center will also transform the existing stables into a 4,000-square-foot cafe and 6,700-square-foot event space overlooking Pattison Lagoon. This project will also include making repairs to the riparian edge of the lagoon, allowing visitors to enjoy water views.

“FDR Park is one of the most diverse and dynamic green spaces in our City,” said **Kathryn Ott Lovell, Commissioner, Philadelphia Parks & Recreation**. “The Master Plan is a true once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to harness the passion residents have for this park and build a sustainable and vibrant future for FDR Park. The Welcome Center and Play Area will offer high-quality park amenities that encourage visitors to extend their stay and come back more often to enjoy all that FDR has to offer.”

### **The Children’s Play Area: South Philadelphia’s Destination Play Space**

Next to the Welcome Center will be a world-class destination play space that encourages nature play for all ages and abilities. Throughout the year-long master planning process, the project planners heard from the community that they wanted to see more nature and more play at FDR Park. In addition, throughout summer 2021, children and caregivers shared via workshops and online engagement that they wanted to see a variety of play spaces and features that encourage children to climb, swing, and explore.

Based on this feedback, WRT designed the new play space to allow park-goers of all ages and abilities “wonder and wander” around the two-acre site, which will include:

- A mega-swing set with 30 swings, designed for all ages overlooking the Pattison Lagoon
- Nature-based play equipment including spinners, log and boulder scrambles, and treehouses
- Rolling hills with slides
- Barrier-free adventure paths
- A picnic area with pavilions
- Seat walls located under shady groves overlooking the play area
- New landscaping featuring beautiful native and pollinator-friendly plantings

“Fairmount Park Conservancy has been committed to bringing more nature and more play to FDR Park since day one, and we could not be more excited to get to work to make this iconic play space and Welcome Center a reality,” says **Maura McCarthy, Ph.D., Executive Director of Fairmount Park Conservancy**. “We also know that the people are what make FDR Park so special, so we look forward to continuing to work with the FDR Park community to bring these spaces to life serving everyone in the best way possible.”

Design of the Children’s Play Area was funded by a \$250,000 grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, which was matched by a \$250,000 contribution from Fairmount Park Conservancy.

### **Next Steps at FDR Park**

With the design phase for the Welcome Center and the play space complete, the two projects will go out for bid in spring 2022 and break ground in summer 2022. Summer 2023 is the expected completion date for the play space, with the Welcome Center opening to follow in fall 2023.

**Fairmount Park Conservancy seeks community feedback on the future programming of the Welcome Center and the play space. Participants are encouraged to complete a short survey to share their thoughts:** <https://myphillypark.org/fdr-park>

In addition, the design phase of the final project of the Gateway, Pattison Plaza at Broad Street and Pattison Avenue, is scheduled to begin in 2022.

### **About FDR Park**

FDR Park is Philadelphia's iconic 348-acre park carved out of the tidal marshes in South Philadelphia. FDR Park was designed by the Olmsted Brothers in 1914, and opened in 1921 as League Island Park. In 1926, the park hosted the national Sesquicentennial Exhibition and several grand civic buildings, including the iconic Boathouse, opened for the first time. The Park is a designated Historic District by the Philadelphia Historical Commission. Today, FDR Park hosts a playground, 4 baseball diamonds, a renowned skate park, a network of lakes, and the American Swedish Historical Museum. After engaging with nearly 3,000 community members and stakeholders, in 2019 Philadelphia Parks & Recreation, the Fairmount Park Conservancy and Friends of FDR Park published a Master Plan to reimagine a historic Olmsted Park to serve 21st century Philadelphians. The plan offers an ecologically sustainable vision for FDR Park that inspires investment, meets the needs of all users today and tomorrow, and focuses on resiliency in the face of a changing climate. Learn more at <https://myphillypark.org/fdr-park>.

**Download high-resolution images and renderings here:** <http://bit.ly/ConservancyPressKit>.

**Fairmount Park Conservancy** is the non-profit champion of 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](http://myphillypark.org), join us @myphillypark on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).

**Philadelphia Parks & Recreation (PPR)** advances the prosperity of the city and the progress of her people through stewardship of nearly 10,200 acres of public land and waterways, and management of 500 recreation buildings, 166 miles of trail, and 250 playgrounds. PPR offers safe, enjoyable recreation, environmental and cultural programs and events throughout Philadelphia's parks and recreation system. PPR promotes the well-being and growth of the city's residents by connecting them to the natural world, to each other and to fun, physical and social opportunities. In 2017, Philadelphia Parks & Recreation Commissioner Kathryn Ott Lovell, set about implementing the park system's first strategic plan: Our Path to 2020 and Beyond. As a result, PPR is undertaking a period of historic change, setting the department on a course to become a modern, equitable and exceptional parks and recreation system. Visit us at [www.phila.gov/parksandrec](http://www.phila.gov/parksandrec), and follow @philaparkandrec on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram.

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*Design renderings by WRT*