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**CHRISTIE ADMINISTRATION PARTNERS WITH TRUST FOR
PUBLIC LAND TO ENHANCE PARKS, RECREATION IN NEWARK**
PHASE II OF NEWARK PARK RENOVATIONS COMPLETED

TRENTON - The \$5 million second phase of the redevelopment of Jesse Allen Park in Newark's Central Ward was celebrated today with a ribbon cutting ceremony at the park, which is getting a major recreational and landscaping makeover that will benefit the local community, especially youths who live and attend school nearby, said Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Bob Martin.

The newly redeveloped 3.2-acre section of the park, located along Muhammad Ali Avenue and partly financed by the state's Green Acres Program, features a host of new amenities including a playground, water play area, basketball courts, sports lighting, an exercise course, game tables, new landscaping, more trees, walking paths and seating areas.

Jesse Allen Park, named in honor of former Newark Second Ward Councilman Jesse Allen, is Newark's second-largest city-owned park. It serves more than 18,000 people who live within a half-mile radius, including students who attend the nearby Louise A. Spencer Elementary School.

"This is another example of the Christie Administration's commitment to our urban areas, to redevelop these communities and upgrade the quality of life for our residents who live there," said Commissioner Martin. "This particular site is located in a densely populated area that does not have a lot of useable green spaces. This park serves as a backyard to many people who live here or go to school nearby."

"It will now provide a safe place for sports and recreation, and a place to breathe and think and just enjoy the outdoors," said Commissioner Martin. "It will benefit an overburdened community that deals with the cumulative impacts of traffic and noise and development, offering a refuge right down the street."

"After years of effort by many, it is gratifying to see the community's vision for a redeveloped Jesse Allen Park taking shape," added Anthony Cucchi, the Trust for Public Land's New Jersey State Director. "Designed by children, families, and seniors in the area, we are creating a neighborhood asset that will get us one step closer to meeting the critical need for outdoor recreation and wellness in this community."

The DEP's Green Acres Program contributed \$1.2 million to the project through grants of \$500,000 to Newark, \$470,000 to the Trust for Public Land, and \$200,000 to the Boys & Girls Club of Newark. The city of Newark contributed \$1.7 million to the project, while the U.S.

Department of Housing and Urban Development provided a \$1.2 million Community Development Program block grant.

Other funding came from a variety of public and private sources, including, the Essex County Recreation & Open Space Trust Fund, Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, Victoria Foundation, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Healthcare Foundation of New Jersey, Kresge Foundation, MetLife Foundation, Garnier, the New York Jets, the Schumann Fund for New Jersey, Alexandra's Playground, and the Charles Emil Thenen Foundation.

In the early 1970s, Green Acres provided a grant of \$154,000 to help Newark buy the 8.1 acre parcel that is now Jesse Allen Park. An additional grant of \$432,000 was later awarded to the city for the original park development project. The Trust for Public Land, in concert with the city, has been instrumental in moving the project along in recent years, particularly in the current three-step design and construction phases.

The first phase of renovations to the southern section of the park, which is adjacent to the Boys & Girls Club of Newark, was completed in 2009, and included new facilities for basketball, volleyball, tennis, and skateboarding. Planned phase III renovations, which could begin next year, would replace a deteriorated grass field with safe, durable synthetic turf to accommodate football, soccer, and baseball.

“We have made the dream of a quality, modern park in the heart of our Central Ward a reality thanks to the partnership we have built with The Trust for Public Land and the creativity and input of the Central Ward community,” said Newark Mayor Cory Booker. “We are creating positive social change by improving the quality of life for every resident of our community and manifesting the spiritual strength that enables us to transform our city into a national leader in urban transformation.”

The amenities featured in the new Jesse Allen Park were designed in collaboration with local residents and community groups including the Friends of Jesse Allen Park, Newark Public Schools, the Boys & Girls Club of Newark, and the Springfield/Belmont Super Neighborhood Council. The landscape architect for the project was Hatch Mott MacDonald, with construction done by The Shauger Group, Inc.

For more information on the DEP's Green Acres Program, please visit:

<http://www.nj.gov/dep/greenacres/>

For more information on the Trust for Public Land, please visit: <http://www.tpl.org/what-we-do/where-we-work/new-jersey>