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Mayor Fulop and JCRA Announce \$10 Million Construction to Begin Next Week to Complete Berry Lane Park in 2015 Years Ahead of Schedule

Ambitious Plan will Convert 17-acre Brownfield into Jersey City’s Largest Municipal Park as Fulop Administration Continues to Enhance Quality of Life in Previously Overlooked Neighborhoods

JERSEY CITY – Mayor Steven M. Fulop and the **Jersey City Redevelopment Agency** announced today that **major \$10 million construction** will begin next week to complete **Berry Lane Park**, the **City’s largest municipal park**, by the end of 2015 and years ahead of schedule.

Berry Lane Park is an ambitious project that will ultimately transform a 17-acre brownfield of former rail yards, junkyards and industrial facilities into a **dynamic recreational facility** in the heart of the city as part of Mayor Fulop’s commitment to invest in and enhance the quality of life of previously overlooked neighborhoods.

Last week, the JCRA board awarded a \$7 million construction contract to Flanagan Contracting Group with work scheduled to begin on Berry Lane Park the week of February 2nd. An additional \$3 million will be spent on park equipment and planning costs, with the vast majority of funding being grant dollars.

“Berry Lane Park is one of our most exciting projects because we are literally turning an industrial wasteland into a recreational jewel for our residents,” said **Mayor Fulop**. “This neighborhood had been overlooked for years, which is why we fast-tracked construction and aggressively sought grants to complete the park far ahead of schedule. Now residents of Bergen-Lafayette and the entire city can begin enjoying the park this year.”

The park will include two basketball courts, two tennis courts, a baseball field, a soccer field, a dog run, a spray park, a skatepark, an adult fitness course and a playground. These active recreation components will provide opportunities to this neighborhood where more than 60 percent of residents are children under 18 years of age.

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Additional passive recreation areas – including a total of nearly 700 new trees, sitting areas, and a rain garden – will also be included in the park. The park’s design also incorporates historical features of the former Morris Canal, including the first portion of the Morris Canal Greenway to be built in Jersey City.

When complete, the project will result in a **nine percent increase in the amount of recreational open space** in Jersey City. According to a **Trust for Public Land** study, Jersey City is ranked fourth in the nation for total park acreage as a percentage of total land in high-density urban areas following New York City, Washington, D.C., and San Francisco.

“Bergen-Lafayette has been waiting for this park for years and this administration has now brought us to the finish line,” said **Ward F Councilwoman Diane Coleman**. “Whether it’s tennis, basketball, baseball, or soccer, it will be great to see the hundreds of children enjoying these activities right in their own neighborhood.”

Since taking office, Mayor Fulop has made **investing in parks a priority** with \$6 million - primarily grant funding - allocated to improve 12 parks throughout the city. Berry Lane has been an administration priority, with the JCRA seeking grant funding to move the project to completion on an aggressive schedule.

In 2014, the City completed renovations to Mary Benson Park and Leonard Gordon Playground. Boyd-McGuinness Park is currently under construction in Ward B and renovations to five additional parks are scheduled for 2015, including Columbia Park, First Street Park, and the playground at Pershing Field Park.

“Parks are essential to the social, economic and physical well-being of urban residents and neighborhoods, and are necessary for a strong, stable and vibrant community,” said **Donal Malone, associate professor of sociology and urban studies at Saint Peter’s University**. “They are places for children and families to connect with nature and each other and promote a sense of pride in a community. Well-run parks reduce crime and improve health and fitness by providing recreational opportunities. Berry Lane Park marks the beginning of the restoration of Bergen-Lafayette to become the thriving community it once was.”

In October, the City was awarded a \$5 million grant from the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (EDA) for the completion of Berry Lane Park, allowing the park to be completed in one phase and much sooner than originally planned. The award, which the City aggressively pursued, is the maximum amount an applicant can receive.

The EDA grant will be used toward the ball fields, courts, tree planting, landscaping, paths and other amenities. The City is also utilizing **\$1.3 million of Green Acres** funding to acquire the final parcels of lands to complete Berry Lane Park in Bergen-Lafayette.

Earlier phases, consisting of environmental remediation, grading, demolition, drainage installation, new sidewalks, and lighting were completed in 2013 and 2014.

All media inquiries should be directed to Jennifer Morrill, Press Secretary for Mayor Steven M. Fulop at 201-547-4836 or 201-376-0699.///

Rendering of Berry Lane Park:

