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CINCINNATI'S WASHINGTON PARK SELECTED AS A "FRONTLINE PARK" BY CITY PARKS ALLIANCE

Washington, D.C. – Washington Park in Cincinnati, OH has been named a "Frontline Park" by the national urban park advocacy organization City Parks Alliance.

Each month, City Parks Alliance recognizes a "Frontline Park" to promote and highlight inspiring examples of urban park excellence, innovation, and stewardship across the country. The program also seeks to highlight examples of the challenges facing our cities' parks as a result of shrinking municipal budgets, land use pressures, and urban neighborhood decay.

"We selected Washington Park for recognition because it exemplifies the power of partnerships to create and maintain urban parks that build community and make our cities sustainable and vibrant," said Catherine Nagel, Executive Director of City Parks Alliance. "We hope that, by shining the spotlight on this park, we can raise awareness about both the necessity and the promise of these kinds of partnerships to spur investment in our nation's urban parks."

Located in the historic Over-the-Rhine neighborhood, Washington Park has been through its share of changes since the city first acquired the land in 1855, then being used as a cemetery. After relocating the cemetery plots to a more suitable location, the city began park construction in the 1860s, adding features like footpaths, wading pools, bandstands, and other activities to draw visitors from the surrounding neighborhood. The park and neighborhood entered a period of decline after the Great Depression and World War II, and by the end of the twentieth century, Over-the-Rhine had changed from a vibrant community to one of America's poorest and most run-down neighborhoods. Lack of investment led to the deterioration of many park features, and there was little inclination to make changes and improvements to the park. With property values at rock bottom, developers purchased distressed properties and began the process of redeveloping Over-the-Rhine, which is believed to be the largest, most intact urban historic district in the United States.

In 2006, the Cincinnati Park Board, partnering with the Cincinnati City Center Development Corporation (3CDC) launched the planning process for a \$48 million renovation and expansion of Washington Park. Directed by the Park Board and 3CDC, the project was based on a master plan created through an extensive public participation process. It resulted in the transformation of Washington Park from six acres to an eight-acre urban sanctuary. Enhancements were made to the historic southern section of the park, and new features were added within the two-acre extension of the park to the north. Improvements included a performance pavilion and a civic

green of more than an acre over the top of an underground parking garage that serves residents, businesses, performance venues, and park visitors. Numerous sustainable features were built into the park including green roofs, the city's first "dry-wells," which reduce the amount of stormwater runoff that infiltrates the aging sewer infrastructure, and the reuse of original stone walls and pillars. Other attractions included an 18,000 square foot playground with climbing walls based on historic Cincinnati architecture, and a replica canal boat set in a water channel. The park also features a large, unique, interactive fountain, a restored bandstand, a plaza facing the Music Hall, an enclosed dog park, and floral displays.

Re-opened to the public in 2012, Washington Park has quickly become an anchor in Over-the-Rhine, and an integral part of the neighborhood's remarkable transformation from urban cautionary tale to one of the best developments in the United States. The park has spurred new economic development around it, and it now better serves its diverse community and a new population of visitors drawn to its extensive program of concerts, movies, educational programs and special events.

"We are honored to have Washington Park recognized as a 'Frontline Park' by City Parks Alliance," said Cincinnati Parks Director Willie Carden. "Washington Park is a testament to how strong partnership efforts can have far-reaching benefits and transform neighborhoods."

Washington Park is being featured on CPA's website, www.cityparksalliance.org during the month of June. The "Frontline Parks" program is made possible with generous support from DuMor, Inc. (www.dumor.com) and PlayCore (www.playcore.com).

About City Parks Alliance

City Parks Alliance is the only independent, nationwide membership organization solely dedicated to urban parks. It unites and serves a growing network of hundreds of civic and community leaders, government agencies, park and recreation authorities, funders and others working to create healthy and sustainable parks and green spaces. CPA's vision is that everyone in urban America will live within walking distance of a park that is clean, safe and vibrant.

www.cityparksalliance.org

About the Cincinnati Park Board

The mission of the Cincinnati Park Board is to conserve, manage, sustain, and enhance parks' natural and cultural resources and public greenspace for the enjoyment, enlightenment and enrichment of the Cincinnati community. Cincinnati Parks manages more than 10 percent of city land, including five regional and 70 neighborhood parks and 34 nature preserves. Cincinnati Parks also maintains parkways and neighborhood gateways in addition to managing Cincinnati's Street Tree program on 1,000 miles of city streets. The Cincinnati Park Board operates five nature centers, an arboretum and one of the largest public plant conservatories in the country. Their public art collection is the Midwest's largest.

www.cincinnatiiparks.com

About the Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation

The Cincinnati Center City Development Corp. (3CDC) is a non-profit, real estate development and finance organization focused on strategically revitalizing Cincinnati's downtown urban core with a focus on strengthening the core assets of downtown by revitalizing and connecting the Fountain Square District, the Central Business District and Over-the-Rhine (OTR).

<http://www.3cdc.org>

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