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**Nature Play Comes to Russell Lee Park**

*Louisville Parks Foundation looking for feedback*

In keeping with a play trend sweeping the nation, the Louisville Parks Foundation (LPF) has installed a “pop-up” nature play area in Russell Lee Park adjacent to the traditional play structure LPF funded in 2017. Now through the end of September, LPF will gather feedback on the area from parents and children before committing resources to install nature playgrounds in other public parks. The new play area has no metal or painted surfaces and was created with all-natural materials, most of which were repurposed from Louisville Parks and Recreation.

LPF has been working for several months with Louisville Parks and Recreation, Children at Play Network, and Booker Design Collaborative to learn more about the benefits of nature play and is now ready to test this model with the most important audience, children.  “We want to hear from the community, specifically the children,” said Louisville Parks Foundation CEO Brooke Pardue. “As we decide whether or not to move forward in other parks with this model, the children will be our best guide, and will provide critical feedback on what they like, don’t like, and what they would like to see in the future.”

The play area is constructed of logs, tree stumps, river rock, and mulch strategically placed to encourage physical activity and stimulate imagination. These organic materials will utilize children’s natural instincts to interact with each other, and nature. Studies show nature playgrounds are more likely to increase gross motor skills, reduce health risks, improve interactions with adults, and reduce the symptoms of hyperactivity disorder and aggression.

EZ Construction, a Louisville-based company with more than 45 years of experience working in local parks, partnered with LPF to construct the nature play area. “I consider it an honor for EZ Construction to be chosen as part of the team to help design and install one of the first public natural playgrounds in Louisville,” said President Ed Davis. “We were impressed with the work the Louisville Parks Foundation was doing and wanted to donate our time and energy to make this happen in Russell Lee Park.  A worthy cause, indeed."

To provide input or to read more LPF’s nature play initiative, visit <https://www.lpfky.org/current-projects>.

**ABOUT THE PARTNERS**

The Louisville Parks Foundation (LPF)’s mission is to inspire donors to invest in our 120+ public parks and recreational facilities – for present and future generations. LPF was formed as a non-profit in December 2005 to support parks and community programs not funded by other local non-profits. In 2013, the Louisville Jack O’Lantern Spectacular opened in Iroquois Park and the producers of the show partnered with the Louisville Parks Foundation, which became the recipient of the proceeds. Since then, the Foundation has completed major projects in California, Lannan, and Russell Lee parks, installed a 5-a-side turf soccer field at Beechmont, a 7-a-side turf field in William Harrison Park and built the first “skate spot” in the Midwest at Breslin Park. The Foundation is currently constructing an additional turf soccer field in Wyandotte Park, and just completed a nature playground at Russell Lee. For more information, visit [www.lpfky.org](http://www.lpfky.org).

Louisville Parks and Recreation, a nationally accredited parks and recreation agency, manages 120 parks and six parkways on more than 13,000 acres of land, and operates recreation programs for all ages. Its mission, as a Nationally Accredited Parks and Recreation agency, is to connect people to places and opportunities that support and grow a sustainable community. The mission is accomplished by taking care of all parks properties and creating new ones, by providing safe and diverse recreational programs, and by protecting our public lands and resources for future generations. [www.bestparksever.com](http://www.bestparksever.com)

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