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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Celebration of Montbello Open Space Park and Environmental Learning for Kids Education Center Groundbreaking

DENVER, Jun 9, 2021 – Today, Executive Director of Denver Parks and Recreation (DPR) Happy Haynes, Councilwoman Stacie Gilmore (Dist. 11), Trust for Public Land (TPL) Director Jim Petterson, and the Environmental Learning for Kids (ELK) board, staff and youth celebrated the official opening of the Montbello Open Space Park and groundbreaking for the ELK Education Center in Montbello. The 5.5-acre open space park and education center site is located at East 46th Avenue and Albrook Drive, near Peoria Street and Interstate 70 in the heart of northeast Denver's Montbello neighborhood.

ELK, TPL and DPR have worked together to transform a once neglected property into a natural open space and outdoor learning laboratory. The Montbello Open Space and Education Center

will serve as a home for ELK and as far northeast Denver's community epicenter fostering science, stewardship, and outdoor recreational activities.

"The creation of the natural open space significantly increases outdoor recreational and environmental education opportunities for the entire community," said Happy Haynes, Executive Director of Denver Parks and Recreation. "The education facility will provide greatly needed programs that introduce underserved youth and their families to nature all within a 10-minute walk of their homes."

The open space project restored 4.5 acres of undeveloped parkland designed specifically to mimic the native short-grass prairie ecosystem; employs green infrastructure techniques to improve storm water flow; improves water and environmental quality; and improves wildlife habitat in this arid urban landscape. The open space features native play areas as well as a climbing boulder funded by The North Face. The Open Space was designed by Mundus Bishop in partnership with Anderson Hallas Architects and constructed by Sky Blue Builders and Colorado Total Maintenance. The art features on the site were designed and constructed by Chevo Studios.

"The Montbello Open Space & ELK Education Center will transform this neighborhood, providing an under-resourced and diverse urban community environmental, educational, and health benefits for many generations to come," said Loretta Pineda, Executive Director of ELK. "The project brought together diverse and highly committed supporters across so many sectors – government, energy, conservation and business and the outdoor recreation industry. This shows that together, we find common ground in the work that we do to raise our young people and community."

The ELK Education Center will have indoor and outdoor multipurpose areas for educational programming and youth and family engagement, office space and storage. The building's architectural character is contemporary in form but also contextual with the immediate landscape of the Montbello Open Space Park. The building will be a welcoming community feature, while being a modest model for environmental design. It will connect with the textures and colors of the surrounding restored prairie. The building creates an open inviting place for the community. The building is designed by Page Architects and will be constructed by Turner Construction.

Working with DPR, TPL purchased the 5.5-acre property in 2012 to secure the site and prevent it from being developed into a 12-story commercial building. The land was transferred to the City and County of Denver in 2014 using funds raised by TPL, ELK, and DPR. Those interested in donating to the ELK Education Center or youth programs can find more information at <http://elkkids.org>.



Denver Parks & Recreation

As stewards of a legacy park system, Denver Parks and Recreation (DPR) is dedicated to customer service and enhancing the health of residents and the environment through innovative programs and safe, beautiful and sustainable places. The DPR system includes 30 recreation centers and nearly 20,000 acres of urban and mountain parkland including off-street trails, parkways and natural areas. For more information, visit www.denvergov.org/parksandrecreation, check us out on [YouTube](#), like us on [Facebook](#) and follow us on [Twitter](#).

Environmental Learning for Kids

Environmental Learning for Kids (ELK) is a Denver-based, 501(c) 3 organization established in 1996 to address the growing need to introduce and educate Colorado's urban youth about science, leadership, and careers. Twenty-five years later, ELK continues to provide strong educational support, good role models, and opportunities for positive community action for youth, helping them to become engaged, productive, and successful leaders. For more information about ELK please visit www.elkkids.org.

The Trust for Public Land

The Trust for Public Land was founded in 1972 by a diverse coalition that believed all people need and deserve access to nature and the outdoors, close to home, in the cities and communities where they live, as a matter of health, equity, and justice. While many conservation organizations set aside wildlands for biodiversity or habitat restoration, our founders sought to bring the benefits of parks and nature to the places, people, and communities that needed them most. www.tpl.org

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