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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Groundbreaking Event Dedicates New Park in English Avenue Community

Atlanta, GA, August 23, 2018 – Today, Park Pride and The Conservation Fund, together with Chattahoochee Riverkeeper, the City of Atlanta, and representatives from the English Avenue community, held a groundbreaking ceremony for the long-anticipated English Avenue greenspace formerly known as Boone Park West (located at Joseph E. Boone Boulevard and Oliver Street). City of Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms presided over the dedication ceremony where she, along with Atlanta City Councilmember Ivory Lee Young, Jr. and Department of Parks and Recreation Commissioner Amy Phuong, revealed the park's official new name—the Kathryn Johnston Memorial Park.

English Avenue, situated within the Proctor Creek Watershed, has long suffered from damaging combined sewer overflows related to stormwater runoff, economic disinvestment, social and educational challenges, and lack of greenspace. Since 2009, Park Pride and The Conservation Fund have worked collaboratively with English Avenue neighbors and stakeholders to transform neglected spaces into vibrant public parks that benefit the community, the environment, and the economy.

Through an eight-month, community-directed process facilitated by Park Pride, a park masterplan was created with a community steering committee and the input of hundreds of area residents.

“It was really important to us—the members of the steering committee, Park Pride, and The Conservation Fund—to make sure we received as much input from the community as possible,” said Andrew White, Park Pride’s Director of Park Visioning. “While this park will mitigate flooding in the neighborhood, it more importantly has the potential to become the heart of the English Avenue community; the visioning process helps to ensure that the park will meet the needs of the people who live here and will become a beloved greenspace.”

This new community park is part of The Conservation Fund’s national Parks with Purpose program, centered on equitable development ideals. These new parks provide more than just a safe place for kids to play and families to gather; they also provide workforce training and employment for area residents, reduce flooding by capturing and absorbing stormwater, support environmental education opportunities, and even grow healthy food by incorporating edible landscaping.

“We believe successful conservation should provide long-term community benefits,” said Shannon Lee, The Conservation Fund’s Urban Conservation Manager. “Today’s groundbreaking is an important step forward, together with Park Pride, City of Atlanta, community residents and many other Atlanta partners, to build on our successful model that leverages partnerships, funding, community assets, and expertise to create important Parks with Purpose.”

Several partner organizations are playing key roles in bringing Kathryn Johnston Memorial Park to fruition, including the City of Atlanta's Departments of Parks and Recreation and Watershed Management, the City of Atlanta's Office of Resilience, West Atlanta Watershed Alliance, ECO-Action, Community Improvement Association, The Proctor Creek Stewardship Council, Greening Youth Foundation, English Avenue Neighborhood Association, and University Community Development Corporation.

"Atlanta's Parks and Recreation Department is proud to join in the groundbreaking for the new Kathryn Johnston Park," stated City of Atlanta Department of Parks and Recreation Commissioner Amy Phuong. "Strong collaborations with community members and partner organizations help shape our parks and recreation centers, and this park is no different. As Atlanta continues to grow, we remain diligent in our focus on building strong communities by providing exceptional parks, programs, and facilities."

Kathryn Johnston Memorial Park is the third in a series of parks proposed in the [Proctor Creek North Avenue Green Infrastructure Vision](#) (Park Pride, 2010) to address stormwater runoff. The park is expected to help manage up to 3.5 million gallons of stormwater per year by capturing runoff from adjacent streets and routing the water into a series of rain gardens, stormwater swales, and underground chambers. These features will clean and detain the stormwater, helping to mitigate combined sewer overflow events and reduce local flooding.

"Proctor Creek has historically been one of metro Atlanta's most polluted waterways. Drastic improvements have been made in recent years, but we still have a long way to go," explains Chattahoochee Riverkeeper, Jason Ulseth. "The innovative stormwater controls installed in Kathryn Johnston Memorial Park are another step towards reclaiming Proctor Creek."

Additionally, once the construction of the park is complete, Kathryn Johnston Memorial Park will serve as a valuable amenity to the community, providing residents of English Avenue with a place to relax, exercise, play with their families, and meet their neighbors. The park will also restore natural habitat and increase the health of the neighborhood's biodiversity.

"Community residents have been engaged every step of the way in developing the plans for this new park," stated Tony Torrence, founder of the Community Improvement Association and Co-Chair of the Proctor Street Stewardship Council. "For a project to truly be community-supported, residents must be at the table as full participants to address our challenges head on and find sustainable solutions that meet the needs of our community." Torrence is also an English Avenue neighborhood resident.

However, the significance of Kathryn Johnston Memorial Park goes beyond the physical improvements to infrastructure and the quality of life benefits provided by a park as it preserves the legacy of English Avenue resident, Kathryn Johnston, in perpetuity. On November 21, 2006, Johnston, a 92-year-old grandmother, was tragically killed by members of the Atlanta Police Department who executed an illegal "no knock warrant" to her home on Neal Street, just one block away from the park that now bears her name. Johnston's sacrifice, which resulted in the repeal of a law that allowed for the arrest of any citizen without "probable cause," will be memorialized within Kathryn Johnston Memorial Park and will serve as a constant reminder of the ongoing efforts to ensure that Atlantans not only remember her contributions to her community, but continue to work towards the prevention of future tragedies together.

"It is my esteemed honor to commemorate the life and legacy of Kathryn Johnston," stated Atlanta City Council Member Ivory Lee Young, Jr., "a 92-year-old resident of this community tragically killed in the

privacy of her home defending herself against a few law enforcement officers sworn to protect and serve but instead took her life. This tragedy never should have happened and should never be forgotten. This tragedy forced needed reforms within the Atlanta Police Department. Eliminating the Disorderly Conduct 6 (DC6) code section, revising procedures for obtaining warrants, and the formation of the Atlanta Citizens Review Board were a few of the reforms. The dedication of this park memorializes Kathryn Johnston who made an indelible mark on this community and this city.”

Kathryn Johnston Memorial Park would not be possible without the significant contributions from generous donors, including: The AEC Trust, Anonymous, Atlanta Department of Parks and Recreation, Atlanta Mayor’s Office of Sustainability, Bonnevill Environmental Foundation, Chattahoochee Riverkeeper, The Coca-Cola Company, The Coca-Cola Foundation, Cox Automotive, Dorothy & Charlie Yates Family Fund, Environmental Protection Agency, Georgia Aquarium, Georgia-Pacific Foundation, The Home Depot Foundation, The Imlay Foundation, Invest Atlanta, National Recreation & Parks Association, Park Pride, Pisces Foundation, PNC Bank, Project Reinvest, SunTrust Foundation, Turner Foundation, U-Haul, and the U.S. Forest Service.

About Park Pride

Founded in 1989, Park Pride is the Atlanta-based nonprofit that engages communities to activate the power of parks. Working with over 110 local Friends of the Park groups, Park Pride provides leadership and services to help communities realize their dreams for neighborhood parks that support healthy people, strong neighborhoods, vibrant business districts, a robust economy and a healthy environment. Park Pride is active in greenspace advocacy and educating both civic leaders and the public about the benefits of parks, and annually hosts the Parks and Greenspace Conference. Learn more about Park Pride at parkpride.org.

About The Conservation Fund

At The Conservation Fund, we make conservation work for America. By creating solutions that make environmental and economic sense, we are redefining conservation to demonstrate its essential role in our future prosperity. Top-ranked for efficiency and effectiveness, we have worked in all 50 states since 1985 to protect more than 8 million acres of land. www.conservationfund.org

About Chattahoochee Riverkeeper

CRK’s mission is to protect and preserve the Chattahoochee River, its lakes and tributaries for the people, fish and wildlife that depend upon it. For more information about Chattahoochee Riverkeeper, call Melanie Baird, Communications and Marketing Manager, at 404.352.9828, or visit chattahoochee.org