

## For Immediate Release

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# Downtown Alton Gets New Healthy Happy Entrance

*Illinois Lt. Governor, Local Officials Help Break Ground for New Public Park*

**Alton, IL - July 22, 2019** –Downtown Alton is getting a new entrance to the city, and it's designed to showcase Alton's aspiration to be the healthiest and happiest city on the Mississippi River.

Today, Illinois Lieutenant Governor Juliana Stratton, Representative Monica Bristow, Alton Mayor Brant Walker, and about two dozen Alton residents and local business owners joined Jayne and John Simmons for the groundbreaking of a new community park next to The Jacoby Arts Center on Broadway.

"We are so pleased Lt. Governor Stratton, Representative Bristow, and Mayor Brant could join the community today for such an important event," said John Simmons.

"Parks and green spaces are essential to healthy and happy communities, which is why we chose this park as one of the first development opportunities in the revitalization of downtown Alton," said Jayne Simmons. "Spaces like these are great places for people to unwind, play, get exercise, take a break and spend time together." Jayne Simmons said the working name for the space is "Park Park." (Get it? Now it's a parking lot and it will soon be transformed into a community park?)

"I am so proud of all that Alton is doing to improve the lives of its residents and people in neighboring communities," said Lt. Governor Stratton. "As we think about community development, public spaces are an important component of ensuring a high quality of life. I have learned so much about what Alton is doing and can't wait to share what Alton is doing with communities across our state."

"I couldn't be more pleased about the plans to transform this high-profile space into a community park," said Mayor Brant Walker. "It's incredible to know the 'front door' of downtown Alton will finally welcome residents and guests in a way that represents the spirit of our community."

The design of Park Park includes places for children to play, open spaces to gather, beautiful trees, flowers and other plantings. The design will allow The Jacoby Art Center to spill out into the park, which will provide a unique space for private parties, weddings, gallery openings and performances. Colorful park renderings were on display at the groundbreaking and provided an illustration of what Park Park could look like.

Research shows that city parks and open spaces improve our physical and mental health, strengthen communities, and make cities and neighborhoods more attractive places to live and work. Open recreation and unique entertainment spaces like community parks can also attract tourists. Parks and open spaces can host festivals, concerts, family reunions and athletic events, bringing additional boosts to the local economy.

Lt. Governor Stratton and her staff were in Alton Monday for a “listening tour” in an event coordinated through Alton Main Street and Jayne and John Simmons. Stratton began her day on the 6th floor at the Simmons, Hanly and Conroy Law Firm, overlooking the landscape of downtown Alton. In a casual yet beautiful setting, Stratton listened intently to the opportunities, obstacles and aspirations of people who live and work in Alton.

“We had great discussion today about the future of Alton and our aspirations to revitalize the downtown area,” John Simmons said. “Lt. Governor Stratton shared her support for these types of private/public partnerships and the importance of collaboration to fostering a thriving downstate Illinois.” The City of Alton donated part of the land used for the park, and Jayne and John Simmons purchased the remaining land in 2019 to ensure the space was open and spacious enough to create a dramatic entrance to downtown.

The park is expected to be completed sometime next summer.

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