



News Release

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Union Street Pocket Park opens following ceremony

Mayor Alonzo Jones joined other members of City Council and local officials today in a ribbon cutting ceremony to mark the opening of the Union Street Pocket Park in the heart of the River District.

Located at 121-123 South Union St. next to The Bee boutique hotel, the urban park provides an open space for people to gather.

“As you can see, it is a short walk from the governmental offices, the courthouse, many businesses and places of residence,” Jones said. “For those who work or live nearby, and for those who come to shop, this park offers a place to step outside, take a break from their work, enjoy lunch, or simply to relax and enjoy the outdoors.”

Jones said the park also will serve everyone in the city.

“Much like the nearby Main Street Plaza and JTI Fountain, in this space, you will be able to gather with family and friends, take photos by this fountain, admire the architectural features that have been preserved, and learn about the rich history of this property. It can serve as a small event space or a place for company meetings.”

The park can be reserved for events by contacting the Parks and Recreation Department, which will manage the park. The park is open from dawn until dusk.

In May 2019, the Industrial Development Authority (IDA) purchased the property, which was the former Knights of Pythias Building. It was part of the original plans for The Bee hotel, but the Pythias building was deemed unsafe and demolished because of to a culvert issue under the property. Last month, the IDA donated the property to the City of Danville as construction on the park neared completion.

The building was built in the late 19th century for the New and Miller Carriage Co., which sold carriages and harnesses on the first floor. The basement was a stable where



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horses were tied to be watered and fed while their owners attended tobacco auctions or conducted other business downtown.

Trenda Leavitt, a landscape architect who founded Beechgrove Design in Moneta, designed the space to honor the former building's history and provide amenities for contemporary life.

"Union Street Park is a stunning space replete with historic and modern character," Leavitt said. "A stable, where horses once rested, has been reimagined into a space for people to rest; reflect on the past; enjoy trees, water, sunshine and shade; socialize; work; have a meal; and celebrate life's milestones."

The hand-laid stone wall on the west side fronting South Union Street and brick walls are part of the original walls of the New & Miller building. They were stabilized and left in their original state to show floor divisions, beam locations, staircases, and paint layers. These walls provide backdrops for photography.

An alley in the rear of the park can be reconfigured into outdoor rooms and are ideal for working, parties, meetings, lunches and dinners, dancing, and a backstage for theater or musical events.

Timber beams and steel posts are among the original materials salvaged from the original structure and have been incorporated into the park. A brick and granite mounting block has been constructed on the south wall and provides an ideal location for prom, wedding, graduation, and family photography as well as informal seating. Mounting blocks were used to mount horses.

Contemporary design elements include wheelchair lift accessibility; furniture and spaces for mobile work, outdoor dining and meetings; site furniture constructed from recycled materials and made in the USA; a tree grove; and a modern minimalist steel water sculpture designed by artist Randy Bolander of Centerport, N.Y.

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