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Market Street Section of Brickline Greenway to Feature Iconic Public Art Monument Commemorating Mill Creek Valley Neighborhood

Local Artist Damon Davis' Work Designed to Drive Discussion Around St. Louis' Past, While Building a More Connected, Inclusive Future

St. Louis, MO, October 15, 2021: Big changes are coming to Market Street in the City of St. Louis. Currently being designed, the one-mile stretch of the Brickline Greenway from Harris-Stowe State University to the St. Louis CITY SC Stadium is one the newest additions to the network of paved, accessible pathways from regional public agency Great Rivers Greenway. Linking this section of the greenway will be a powerful public art installation from St. Louis resident and nationally-acclaimed artist, Damon Davis. Informed by a four-year community engagement process, Great Rivers Greenway is spearheading the effort to elevate the Mill Creek Valley story through Davis' art with support from its community partners.

Davis' work will honor Mill Creek Valley, which was a predominantly Black neighborhood whose residents were displaced during the city's demolition of the Midtown area in the late 1950s. The greenway and artwork in St. Louis CITY SC Stadium District from 20th to 22nd Streets will begin construction this fall and open with the stadium in 2023. The project's many partners are collaborating to invite people to connect with, and share stories from, the past while envisioning a more connected and inclusive future.

The once-vibrant Mill Creek Valley neighborhood was home to 20,000 residents, 800+ businesses and 40+ houses of worship before city officials declared that the 450 acres (size of five Arch rounds) would be fully demolished in the name of "urban renewal".

"Mill Creek Valley was a thriving Black community, with businesses and nightlife, arts community and a range of socio-economic classes. The narrative of it being a blighted community – it was neglected for a reason, slum-ified so that the excuse could be used to pave over it," explains post-disciplinary artist Damon Davis. "I'm designing a series of pedestals and portals to represent hourglasses that hold time (represented by soil) still, displayed at the top. Just like the soil, we can excavate the stories of these people and put them on literal pedestals for the whole world to see, acknowledge and start a conversation about their stories."

The greenway segment along Market from Compton Ave. to 20th Street is in design now, to be constructed in phases over the next two years, linking major institutions and small businesses alike along the route.

"We are so grateful to have these wonderful, willing partners all along the way," said Susan Trautman, CEO of Great Rivers Greenway. "St. Louis CITY SC is building and caring for a significant portion of Damon's artwork on their plaza and the landscaping will outline where the homes once stood on that block. The Taylor family further invested in the rest of the greenway with a challenge grant to support our fundraising efforts, which is critical to our success. Harris-Stowe State University will host and care for a portion of the installation on their campus and of course, we're partnering with the City of St. Louis throughout the project, as the greenway is in their right of way."



The new Major League Soccer stadium is providing a key platform to drive exposure and discussion around the artwork as the Southwest corner of the stadium will house eight of the pedestals and a display with a map and quotes from Mill Creek Valley residents.

“St. Louis CITY SC has always been committed to being an exceptional club and neighbor, and with our stadium district overlapping the footprint of the Mill Creek Valley neighborhood, we knew it was important to acknowledge the hard truths of the past,” said Khalia Collier, VP of Community Relations for St. Louis CITY SC. “We have to learn from what came before so we can envision a better way toward growth and revitalization together that includes all St. Louisans.”

Davis’ permanent installation will be part of the Counterpublic civic arts exhibition in 2023 which drives national discussion and attention around a number of St. Louis’ contemporary art projects, as well, with a series of programs and events to interpret the stories and activate the space. This installation will stretch throughout that one mile, linking to historic sites on the campus of Harris-Stowe State University, some of the only remaining structures from Mill Creek Valley. These include the Henry Givens Administration Building, (formerly Vashon High School), renovated Stars Park (former home of the Negro baseball league) and Vashon Community Center, being renovated into the Don and Heide Wolff Jazz Institute and National Black Radio Hall of fame.

“This was one of only four Black-only recreational centers in 1936 segregated St. Louis; it was a source of joy and play, cultural events and community gatherings,” said Dr. Terence Finley, Vice President and CFO of Harris-Stowe State University. “This greenway and art project are a natural extension of what we’re doing on campus to connect to and celebrate our collective past.”

This segment -- from Harris-Stowe State University to the St. Louis CITY SC Stadium -- is one part of the overall Brickline Greenway, which proposes up to 20 miles of pathways, linking up to 17 neighborhoods connecting Forest Park, Gateway Arch National Park, Fairground Park, Tower Grove Park and hundreds of destinations in between. Great Rivers Greenway’s mission for the project is to work with partners to ensure that the path is a catalyst for equitable economic development, creating a vibrant space for people to gather, explore and connect to the city and each other.

“The Brickline Greenway, both the project and the process, is driven by what we’ve heard from thousands of community members about rebuilding civic trust,” said Susan Trautman. “With Damon, our design team and partners like author Vivian Gibson, The Griot Museum and Missouri Historical Society, we have been listening to many former residents and researching the history to make sure we get this right – and we would love to hear from anyone with connections to this neighborhood!”

Residents of the region are invited to engage with virtual resources and programs to learn more about the past, present and future of this area and share their stories of connections to this place. For more information about the upcoming virtual book discussion on November 17, to schedule a listening session or to subscribe for project updates, visit www.BricklineGreenway.org.

“St. Louis has an opportunity to do things differently with the Brickline Greenway,” said Mayor Tishaura O. Jones, City of St. Louis. “I encourage residents across the region to learn about Mill Creek Valley and participate in all of these projects – your voices matter to this work.”

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Brickline Greenway/Great Rivers Greenway

Brickline Greenway is a bold vision to connect people and our city's most treasured places, creating inspiring experiences and equitable opportunities for growth. This will be a network of up to 20 miles of greenways, linking up to 17 neighborhoods in the City of St. Louis, connecting Forest Park to the Gateway Arch National Park, Fairground Park to Tower Grove Park and hundreds of destinations in between.

www.BricklineGreenway.org

Great Rivers Greenway is a public agency, created by a vote of the people in St. Louis City, St. Louis County and St. Charles County in the year 2000 to create a sales tax dedicated to parks and greenways. The mission is to make the St. Louis region a more vibrant place to live, work and play by developing a regional network of greenways with partners and communities, enhancing healthy habitats and watersheds along the way. Whether you walk, run, ride a bike, roll a wheelchair or push a stroller, there are 128 miles of greenways and counting for you to explore and enjoy! More at www.GreatRiversGreenway.org

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St. Louis CITY SC

St. Louis CITY SC, one of the few majority female-led ownership groups in all of professional sports, was awarded Major League Soccer's 28th expansion team in 2019. The St. Louis-based ownership unveiled the club's crest, logo and branding in 2020 and will take the pitch for their historic, inaugural season in 2023. Currently, St. Louis CITY is constructing an STL Made 22,500-seat world-class soccer-specific stadium, practice facility and team headquarters all within the same urban campus in St. Louis' Downtown West District to create a 24/7/365 fan experience that is furthering St. Louis' continued growth and revitalization.

To stay up to date with St. Louis CITY SC, visit STLCITYSC.com and follow the club on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

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Harris-Stowe State University

Harris-Stowe State University (HSSU), located in midtown St. Louis offers the most affordable bachelor's degree in the state of Missouri. The University is a fully accredited four-year institution with more than 50 majors, minors and certificate program options in education, business and arts and sciences. Harris-Stowe's mission is to provide outstanding educational opportunities for individuals seeking a rich and engaging academic experience. HSSU's programs are designed to nurture intellectual curiosity and build authentic skills that prepare students for leadership roles in a global society.

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HARRIS-STOWE
STATE UNIVERSITY



Damon Davis / Post-Disciplinary Artist - Heartache and Paint

Damon Davis is a post-disciplinary artist based in St. Louis, Missouri. His work spans across a spectrum of creative mediums to tell stories exploring how identity is informed by power and mythology. He is well known for his body of work, *Darker Gods*, which explores Afro-surrealist manifestations of Black culture. Davis is a Firelight Media, Sundance Labs, TED, and Kennedy Center Citizen Artist Fellow. He is founder and creative director of St. Louis-based music label/ artist collective FarFetched and his work is featured in the permanent collection at the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture.

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Vivian Gibson / *Last Children of Mill Creek*

Vivian Gibson was raised on Bernard Street in Mill Creek Valley. She started writing stories about her childhood memories after retiring at age sixty-six. Her debut memoir, *The Last Children of Mill Creek* was published in 2020.

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Counterpublic 2023

Counterpublic is a large-scale civic exhibition that weaves contemporary art into the daily life of St. Louis. Organized by The Luminary and held for three months every three years, Counterpublic addresses pressing questions, historical legacies, and the possibilities of the city's future through responsive artistic projects. Working in public places, cultural institutions, historic houses, and community gathering spaces, Counterpublic commissions dozens of artists, collectives, and community organizers to make and present works in St. Louis that engage the city's histories and imagine new futures. Counterpublic's second edition will run from April 15 to July 15, 2023. Counterpublic 2023 will follow the footprint of Jefferson Avenue as it charts the pulses of the city from the Southern Riverfront through the Brickline Greenway at Market Street to St. Louis Avenue in North St. Louis.

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