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**For Immediate Release**

**SPARK announces 40<sup>th</sup> year celebration with \$10 million campaign to build/  
“reSPARK” 40 school parks in four years in the Greater Houston area**

***The Kinder Foundation, Houston Endowment, and The Brown Foundation have donated \$8 million***

**HOUSTON, September 20, 2023** – To commemorate 40 years of building community parks, SPARK School Park Program today announced a \$10 million campaign to build 40 school parks in four years in the Greater Houston area, including 20 new and 20 “reSPARK’ed” parks. The announcement was made during a press conference at the Julia Ideson Building at the Houston Public Library with Mayor Sylvester Turner, elected officials, SPARK board members, major donors and other stakeholders in attendance. It is anticipated that several of the 16 initial parks identified in the campaign will be dedicated during SPARK Week, November 13-17.

The Kinder Foundation, founded by Nancy and Rich Kinder, and Houston Endowment have each provided \$3.5 million in funding, while \$1 million has been donated by The Brown Foundation. The campaign for SPARK’s 40 new parks now enters the public phase, with \$8 million to fund the 40 parks already secured.

“SPARK is indebted to private donors and the City of Houston for generously supporting our continued efforts to positively impact Houston’s green infrastructure by transforming school playgrounds into community parks,” says Kathleen Ownby, executive director of SPARK. “It’s more important than ever that families, children and other community members have access to parks and greenspaces close to home for their physical and mental well-being.”

“The City of Houston is proud to support this ambitious campaign to build 40 SPARK Parks in four years as an extension of our Houston Parks Master Plan calling for all citizens to be within one half mile or a 10-minute walk of a park or greenspace,” says City of Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner. “An investment in SPARK Parks in identified areas of need provides untold benefits to people of all ages and walks of life. I congratulate SPARK on 40 years of improving Houston-area neighborhoods ecologically and aesthetically.”

Founded in 1983 by then-Houston City Council Member Eleanor Tinsley, SPARK was created to develop neighborhood parks, and therefore increase access to greenspace, by utilizing land on public school grounds. Today, there are more than 150 active SPARK parks in the Houston/Harris and Fort Bend County area.

“Park equity is very important, and SPARK continues to create equal access to parks throughout the greater Houston area,” says Nancy Kinder, CEO of Kinder Foundation. “It is our pleasure to support SPARK and their ambitious plan to improve and create 40 parks in four years.”

“Parks are essential to a thriving community — they provide a place for neighbors to connect, promote physical activity, contribute to neighborhood character and pride, and are good for the environment,” says Ann B. Stern, president and CEO of Houston Endowment. “Houston Endowment has supported SPARK’s transformative work for 30 years, and we are proud to continue that legacy today and help SPARK give more Houstonians access to a quality park in their neighborhood. “

SPARK Parks are found in 18 different school districts and charter schools throughout the Houston, Harris County and Fort Bend County areas. Each park is unique, with its design based on the ideas and needs of the school and surrounding neighborhoods and with input from the school’s PTA/PTO, civic clubs and community members. While all of the parks are different, a typical park consists of modular playground equipment, a walking trail, benches, picnic tables, trees, an outdoor classroom, and a public art component.

#### New SPARK Parks:

- Rosa Parks Elementary – Fort Bend ISD
- Martin Elementary – Alief ISD
- Miller Intermediate – Alief ISD
- Mading Elementary reSPARK – Houston ISD
- Beverly Hills Intermediate – Pasadena ISD
- Askew Elementary – Houston ISD
- Pearl Hall Elementary – Pasadena ISD
- Holmsley Elementary – CyFair ISD
- Wilchester Elementary – Spring Branch ISD

#### Parks to be ReSPARK’ed:

- Edison Middle reSPARK – Houston ISD
- Port Houston Elementary reSPARK – Houston ISD
- Baker Montessori reSPARK – Houston ISD
- Cornelius Elementary reSPARK – Houston ISD
- Hollibrook Elementary ReSPARK – Spring Branch ISD
- Travis Elementary reSPARK – Houston ISD
- Rodriguez Elementary reSPARK – Houston ISD

For more information about SPARK Parks, please visit [www.sparkpark.org](http://www.sparkpark.org).

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**Link to photos [here](#)**

*Photo credit: Tom Callins*