

Orlando opens Luminary Green, a park at the center of Creative Village

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VIPs pose for a photo during the ribbon-cutting ceremony for Orlando newest park, Luminary Green, on Tuesday, August 30, 2022. The 2.3 acre park is located at the Creative Village. (Ricardo Ramirez Buxeda/Orlando Sentinel)

Creative Village, Orlando's digital media and education center of the future, now has a park that will pay homage to its past.

Privacy fences are now down revealing Luminary Green, the 2.3-acre park surrounded by apartments, UCF and Valencia College's joint downtown campus, and Electronic Arts' new studio.

Mayor Buddy Dyer and other city officials cut the ribbon Tuesday afternoon in front of large white letters that spell out “Orlando” in front of an artistic white trellis. The styrofoam letters on display were a placeholder, and permanent ones will be added soon, officials said.

More than 100 city employees as well as workers at EA, UCF, Valencia and other businesses were on hand. A giant video board affixed to the EA building played footage from its Madden 23 video game, which was released this month and is made in its Orlando studio on Amelia Street west of I-4.

The park is mainly open lawn space, with concrete paths with light fixtures and, to be installed later this year, a dozen landmarks posthumously honoring community trailblazers and neighborhood leaders.

“We wanted a gathering place where people from EA can come mix with people from the [Florida Interactive Entertainment Academy], from Valencia, from UCF, the residents, people who are coming to have lunch over here,” Dyer said. “Beyond that, this will honor people who have come before us and have contributed in large measure to where we are today in terms of Parramore and the surrounding neighborhoods.”



Orlando newest park, Luminary Green, on Tuesday, August 30, 2022. The 2.3 acre park is located at the Creative Village. (High-dynamic-range composite image by Ricardo Ramirez Buxeda/ Orlando Sentinel) (Orlando Sentinel)

More luminaries will be added to the park over time. The initial class includes former city commissioners Daisy Lynum and Nap Ford, as well as community leader Vinnie

Cannady, Dr. Ozell “Billy” Green who ran Green’s Pharmacy in Parramore, and the Rev. Nathaniel Green Staggers, who led Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church.

The markings will be roughly seven feet tall and made of steel with lighting. A QR code on the landmarks will link to a webpage with more information about the person honored.

City Commissioner Regina Hill, who represents Parramore and downtown on the city council, said nearby neighborhoods are talking about hosting events at Luminary Green, and the park could host farmer’s markets and other gatherings to benefit Creative Village residents.

“This is why Creative Village does not have walls and fences because it’s open to everyone,” she said.

The completion of the park closes the book on the first phase of developing Creative Village, said Craig Ustler, the Village developer. The UCF campus opened in 2019 bringing about 8,000 students and staff to the area, where the Amway Arena once stood. Amelia Court, a building of affordable housing, opened as well with mixed-income communities rising soon after on the 68-acre village.

The next phase will include 600 more beds of student housing, as well as another affordable housing development being constructed by Atlantic Housing and Bank of America, he said. Also on tap is a mixed-use office-hotel-apartment concept and a separate office building southeast of the park.

To be determined is the future use of the Bob Carr Theater, which will include keeping the brick and guts of the 95-year-old building that once hosted performances by Elvis Presley.



Ribbon cutting ceremony for Orlando newest park, Luminary Green, on Tuesday, August 30, 2022. The 2.3 acre park is located at the Creative Village. The 'Orlando' letters are temporary ones — the final version with color-changing LED lights will be installed mid-September. (High-dynamic-range composite image by Ricardo Ramirez Buxeda/ Orlando Sentinel) (Orlando Sentinel)

“We’re not trying to knock it down, but if you think about some of the old cities you’ve been to that have cool old buildings like, say in Brooklyn, New York, they adaptively reuse, renovate, reinvigorate those buildings,” he said.

Dyer said he hopes to see more businesses come to Creative Village, as well as expansion by UCF.

“This is everything and more than we anticipated, and really we’re only about halfway developed in the things we’re going to do,” he said.

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