

## **PHA Partners with the City to Break Ground on Lucien E. Blackwell Community Center in West Philadelphia**

*Center is named after the late U.S. Congressman and City Councilman*

**(Philadelphia, PA – May 12, 2017)**—The Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA) broke ground today on the long-awaited Lucien E. Blackwell Community Center, on the site of the West Philadelphia public housing development that also bears the name of the late congressman and city councilman.

“This is a development that we and the City have wanted to build for a very long time, but the circumstances only allowed us to move forward at this point,” said PHA President and CEO Kelvin A. Jeremiah. “We are excited that residents of the Mill Creek neighborhood and Lucien E. Blackwell Homes will soon have this modern community gathering space. It reflects PHA’s commitment to improving the quality of life in neighborhoods across the city in a variety of ways. I want to thank Mayor Jim Kenney, Councilwoman Jannie Blackwell and the Department of Parks and Recreation for working with us to make this construction possible.”

The building, located at the intersection of 47th and Aspen Streets, will cover approximately 12,000 square feet. It will feature a regulation size basketball/volleyball court, warming kitchen, community room, and outdoor patio. The site will also contain parking spaces and an INDEGO bike station, and have LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification. The City will operate the facility and collaborate with PHA on the programming.

“This center, once completed, will become a pillar of the community, very much like the man for whom it will be named,” Mayor Kenney said. “Lu left Council for Congress just as I was beginning my Council service so we never had the opportunity to work together there but I was very much aware of his trailblazing accomplishments. This center will live on as yet another of his and Councilwoman Blackwell’s contributions to serving this community.”

Councilwoman Jannie L. Blackwell, widow of Lucien and a former PHA commissioner, secured \$2 million from the City as part of the \$6.3 million construction cost. “This community center has been fought for since 2001,” Blackwell said. “We are so grateful to finally have the opportunity to get this community center started so that we can fulfill our commitment to the neighborhood, to the community, and certainly to the legacy of Lucien Blackwell.”

JD Bravo Company, a 100 percent disabled veteran Minority Business Enterprise, is handling construction of the center and has agreed to make 30 percent of its hires low- or very-low income residents under the federal Section 3 program. The development will take one year to complete. This is the next to last phase of redevelopment of the former Mill Creek housing project under a former federal program called HOPE VI, which enabled PHA to rid the neighborhood of old style public housing. PHA completed the last of 685 units of new family-style homes in 2008, both on the former Mill Creek site and in the surrounding area.

The final segment of the development is a park to be built by the City next to the new community center. The City plans to begin construction this fall. The new park will complement the community center with space for the residents of Mill Creek and the surrounding neighborhood.

*The Philadelphia Housing Authority’s mission is to open doors to affordable housing, economic opportunity and safe, sustainable communities to benefit Philadelphia residents with low incomes. Read more at [www.pha.phila.gov](http://www.pha.phila.gov).*