Fitzgerald, Officials Celebrate New South Park Permeable Parking Lot with Ribbon Cutting

PITTSBURGH – County Executive Rich Fitzgerald was joined today by state and county officials, along with county staff representing the Parks, Public Works and Facilities Management departments in cutting the ribbon and opening a new 2.5-acre permeable parking lot in South Park. The new parking lot, which accommodates 125 vehicles and has five ADA-accessible spaces, replaces a deteriorated asphalt parking lot above the fairgrounds oval near the intersection of Brownsville Road and Corrigan Drive.

“One of most important responsibilities we have is to act as stewards of our wonderful county parks and the infrastructure within them,” Fitzgerald said. “This project not only improves an area of South Park that was in disrepair and provides a nice place for folks to park their vehicle. It also helps protect the environment around it. Stormwater affects us all, and the strategic use of resources to better manage it, including investments like this one, enhances our quality of life.

The project began on June 21, 2021. It involved demolition of the previous parking lot followed by installation of a 64,980-square foot gravel bed with more than 210,000 concrete pavers, often referred to as paving stones, placed on top. Stormwater will flow into the open joints between each paver and into the gravel bed, which can hold 89,000 gallons of water at any given time. The stormwater will then be slowly absorbed into the ground. On the previous parking lot, stormwater drained into inlets and ended up in nearby Catfish Run.

The parking lot is anticipated to capture 95% of all rain that falls on it or about 2.5 million gallons of stormwater annually. That’s enough water to fill 18.9 million water bottles. Stormwater is expected to leave the parking lot only during intense storms. For example, in 2019, the area received nearly 53 inches of rain – the third most ever recorded. If the new parking lot had existed then, modeling suggests only two rainfalls would have resulted in stormwater leaving the site.

The project also includes the planting of nearly 100 trees at the site as well as the installation of perimeter garden beds and two large rain gardens containing native plants, walkways, and benches. A section of a new walkway between Corrigan Drive and the fairgrounds buildings is expected to be finished over the next month, and additional landscaping work and site touchups will be completed during the spring.

“We believe that as the trees and plants begin to grow and bloom, this parking lot will become a place where visitors will want to hangout, relax, and admire the beauty,” said Fitzgerald. “Turning this into a destination was truly a collaborative effort, involving the Allegheny County Parks Foundation, four county departments, and the support of local partners. It is yet another example of what can be accomplished when we work together to solve a problem.”

The $2.4 million cost of construction is partially paid for by the Health Department Landfill Trust Fund. The $125,639 cost of design, which was done by Ethos Collaborative of Pittsburgh, was partially paid for by the Allegheny County Parks Foundation, which received a Growing Greener Grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Construction was led by Public Works and done by Michael Facchiano Contracting (contractor) as well as SB Thomas & Associates (construction management and inspection).