

Central City Lot To Be Transformed Into Architectural Playground

4-7-15



NEW ORLEANS – A groundbreaking took place at 10:00 a.m. this morning, Tuesday, April 7, 2015, at 2828 Thalia St. in Central City – the future site of an architectural playground.

PlayBuild, an educational non-profit focused on teaching kids about design and architecture, is partnering with New Orleans Contracting Firm, Palmisano Contractors, to turn the Central City eyesore into an innovative new playground. The new PlayBuild play space will host programs and classes to teach neighborhood kids and school children about design through experiential play and hands-on art activities.

In 2013, PlayBuild turned the overgrown, blighted Thalia Street lot into an outdoor classroom, hosting neighborhood charter schools for after school lessons and field trips. The non-profit's recent partnership with Palmisano Contractors will fulfill the dream of a permanent playground, tied to PlayBuild's mission of creating dynamic spaces for kids to learn and play. Palmisano will build out the site with assistance from its network of construction partners, delivering a six-figure investment to the community.

The site will feature open green space for free play as well as benches, tables and seating for more structured classroom-style lessons. In the space, PlayBuild will host building and construction-related play activities with blocks and other learning toys as well as design-themed arts and crafts. The site will also feature a small garden. From its current state the site will also be upgraded with electricity, plumbing facilities and wifi. PlayBuild plans to host local kids and school groups on weekdays and during after-school hours along with special events on the weekends.

"Since the beginning our vision has been to create a dynamic and exciting destination for our Central City block and for the neighboring families and schools in the vicinity" said Angela Kyle, co-founder of PlayBuild. "Kids need safe and accessible play environments. PlayBuild delivers on that need. Our play environment is also a learning environment where kids can be inspired and appreciate the richness of New Orleans architecture and the local culture and history of their neighborhoods and their city."

"We are thrilled to partner with Palmisano on the final phase of the site development for 2828 Thalia St.," Kyle said. "Since the beginning, Wesley and his team have demonstrated an unwavering commitment to helping us bring this project to fruition. They have mobilized their network of partners and brought their unparalleled professionalism and project management expertise to bear on making the project a success. We cannot thank them enough for believing in our mission and bringing us one step closer to the execution of our vision."

Wesley Palmisano, owner of Palmisano Contractors, says he's also happy with the partnership. "We searched our surrounding neighborhood for a local cause that has a true impact in our community," Palmisano said. "PlayBuild's programming is unique because it concentrates on educating kids about architecture and construction, which made it a great fit for us. We're very excited to take an active role in the revitalization of Central City and helping to provide a vital service for kids."

PlayBuild is a two-year old educational non-profit co-founded by Angela Kyle and Charlotte Jones and based in Central City, New Orleans. PlayBuild's mission is to transform under-utilized urban spaces into exciting kid-friendly environments for play and learning. PlayBuild has received local and national attention for their innovative model, which uses hands-on activities to teach kids about architecture and design. PlayBuild partners with charter elementary schools and community organizations to reach kids 4-12. In just under two years through school partnerships and community outreach PlayBuild has engaged over 1,000 local kids.

In 2012, PlayBuild was named a Top 10 semi-finalist in the 2012 PitchNOLA Lots of Progress contest. The organization received grant support in 2013 from KaBoom and Dr. Pepper Snapple and in 2014 from the Jazz and Heritage Foundation. PlayBuild was named a semi-finalist in the 2014 LEGO Foundation and Ashoka Changemakers Re-Imagine Learning Challenge, a global competition to identify social innovators working at the intersection of learning and play. In September 2014, PlayBuild was voted one of New Orleans' favorite education start-ups in the NOLA.com education entrepreneur challenge.

PlayBuild is a registered non-profit corporation in the state of Louisiana. For charitable purposes and to accept tax-exempt donations, the organization operates under the fiscal umbrella of Neighborhoods Partnership Network (NPN), a registered 501c(3).

Palmisano Contractors is a cutting edge general contractor, with New Orleans roots dating back to 1950, delivering a wide range of project types regionally. Today, the third-generation company is forging a new building tradition, led by a tenured team of construction professionals. Palmisano Contractors specializes in a collaborative delivery process that guides each project from concept to completion. The company maintains a smaller size and low overhead while having the financial strength necessary to complete larger projects.