

## Russell-wide Book Club set to launch this fall

A new and exciting initiative designed to get more people reading is coming to the Russell neighborhood. Called "Russell Reads," this community-wide book club will be open to people of all ages and will encourage residents to read preselected and age appropriate books each month. This effort is being led by Urban Strategies, the non-profit organization leading the People component of the Vision Russell/ Beecher Terrace Choice Neighborhood grant initiative.

"Russell Reads is a fun way to engage the entire family in an activity that helps to boost literacy skills in our children, while further connecting residents to the many resources and amenities becoming available within the neighborhood," said TaLonda Holland, Senior Project Manager for Urban Strategies. Russell Reads will be launched this fall.

To learn more about this program, please visit [www.visionrussell.org](http://www.visionrussell.org).

## Passport hosting neighborhood open house

**Passport Health Plan** is hosting a Neighborhood Open House to share the latest renderings of their new 18-acre headquarters at the corner of 18th and Broadway. This project is currently under construction and is expected to be complete by early 2020. This event will be held on Wednesday, September 26th from 5:00 - 7:00 p.m. at the Passport Construction Center located at A-1 Plaza, 2028 W. Broadway and is open to the public. Light refreshments will be served.

To get the latest information about the project visit: [www.passportwellbeing.com](http://www.passportwellbeing.com).

**PASSPORT**  
HEALTH AND WELL-BEING CAMPUS

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# Russell Choice Neighborhood Initiative Newsletter

## Demolition underway at Beecher Terrace

After some initial delays, demolition work has finally begun on the northeastern corner of the Beecher Terrace site. A total of nine residential buildings located between 9th and 10th streets near Jefferson Street are included in this first phase of demolition, which will make way for the first phase of housing redevelopment. The Mini-Versity West Downtown Child Development Center will remain open during demolition and hopes to expand their current campus in conjunction with Beecher's redevelopment.



*Cardinal Demolition Company, on-site work underway.*

Contractors also will be upgrading the site's infrastructure during this initial phase of demolition, which will be completed by early 2019 and immediately followed by the construction of a new four-story building for residents age 55 and over. The building will feature 117 energy-efficient one and two-bedroom apartments and a variety of amenities that support healthy lifestyles, such as a fitness center and a bicycle repair station.

In conjunction with demolition, there will be a three-week archaeological excavation at the site. During this period, a trained team from Corn Island Archaeology will work to recover artifacts that will be displayed and shared with the public. The team will also be on hand to answer questions about the findings or the site's historic past.

The public is encouraged to stop by the site to learn more about the archaeological work. Look for signage marking the excavation area. For a map showing where the digging will take place, along videos and photos of recovered artifacts, please visit [www.visionrussell.org](http://www.visionrussell.org).

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## Profile: Lavel White

For over a year, Lavel White has been documenting the changes taking place within the Russell neighborhood. As the videographer charged with capturing the transformation taking place at Beecher Terrace, White has interviewed dozens of people who have lived, worked or have another connection to the housing site. But now, in his new role as a community outreach specialist in Mayor Fischer's Office for Safe and Healthy Neighborhoods, White is helping to bring about many of the improvements taking place in Russell, in addition to capturing them on film.

"My focus is engaging residents living in the "Zones of Hope" - which includes the Russell, Newburg, Parkland, Shawnee and California communities – "in programs that can help improve their quality of life and their neighborhoods," said White. "Whether it is identifying job opportunities that can improve their standard of living, or helping to reduce some of the violence and gang activity in the area, the priority is making these communities better and safer for everyone."

A native Louisvillian, White is no stranger to some of the needs within the area. Growing up, he lived in Beecher Terrace, Sheppard Square and other parts of west Louisville. White also has relatives who have advocated for some of the changes that are occurring in the area.

"I view this role as a continuation of my past efforts to connect and engage residents in the changes taking place," said White. "The outreach we are doing is and will continue to make a difference."


One opportunity to make a difference will come through a fellowship program that is being led by the Office of Safe and Healthy Neighborhoods. Called "Black Men Thrive", the program is open to males between the ages of 22 to 26 who have had some interaction with the criminal justice system and are committed to providing leadership to their city through civic engagement and community driven initiatives. The two-year program is a partnership between Louisville Metro, Cities United, Louisville Urban League, New Legacy, HEAT Time and 15,000 Degrees. Participants are provided with career training, college courses and, if needed, assistance with child care and other services that support the family. Participants will also be mentored and receive an annual salary of \$30,000. After the successful completion of the program, graduates will be placed in a full-time job with Louisville Metro Government. The fellowship program hopes to graduate 30 fellows, and is being funded by the William R. Kenan, Jr. Charitable Trust. White sees efforts like these as an opportunity to provide residents, particularly those who may have a criminal record, with a second chance.

"Everyone wants an opportunity for a decent job and a chance to support their family. Programs like this can be life changing" said White. "I'm thrilled to be doing work that will help change people's lives."

For more information about the fellowship program please visit <https://bit.ly/2LVJi5H> or contact Amber Burns at (502) 381-9671.

### Beecher Terrace documentary set to debut

Lavel White of *BluBoi Entertainment* will be debuting his documentary film "The Beecher Terrace Story" in 2019. His 30-minute film will detail the incredible history and stories of residents, stakeholders and lovers of the Beecher Terrace community. Please contact Lavel White at (502) 472-7941 or via email at [bluboient@hotmail.com](mailto:bluboient@hotmail.com) to learn more about this project.





Lavel White poses at Beecher Terrace—a place he once called home. As the new community relations outreach specialist for Mayor Fischer's Office of Safe and Healthy Neighborhoods, White will be working throughout the Russell Neighborhood to support programs that are focused on reducing crime and bringing additional resources to the area.

## Local groups seek to make the Russell neighborhood a place of promise

Efforts to transform the Russell area just received a major boost thanks to a \$5 million grant from the William R. Kenan, Jr. Charitable Trust. Called "Russell: A Place of Promise," the grant is focused on wealth creation within the Russell neighborhood that does not result in displacement. The initiative aims to create affordable housing, new jobs, businesses and community gathering spots, as well as whole-community health.

Russell residents and key stakeholders will play a key role in developing a path forward through an on-going robust community engagement effort that will shape and decide on desired outcomes. "Russell is at the cusp of significant redevelopment and this initiative will further enhance efforts underway," said Mayor Greg Fischer. "We will be intentional about ensuring that this investment benefits existing residents while bringing much needed capital to the Russell community."

Russell: A Place of Promise is being co-led by Anthony Smith, executive director of Cities United, and Theresa Zawacki who currently serves as senior policy advisor for Louisville Forward. The effort recognizes the rich cultural history of the Russell neighborhood and the decades long disinvestment and discrimination that led to its steady decline. The initiative is expected to build on the momentum taking place throughout the area including the new \$130 million headquarters for Passport Health Plan; the Louisville Urban League's planned \$30 million investment in an indoor track and multisport complex on the Heritage West site; the \$29.5 million Choice Neighborhood grant that is being leveraged with more than \$200 million in additional investment to redevelop the Beecher Terrace site, and the new \$35 million branch of the YMCA that is currently under construction.

An initial advisory board has been created to provide oversight to the Place of Promise initiative, with the goal of including additional Russell residents and stakeholders to ensure that the grant's outcomes reflect the community's desires. The community is invited to learn more about this initiative at the following upcoming meetings:

- **Tuesday, August 28th from 5:00 - 7:30 p.m., Joshua Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church**
- **Thursday, August 30th from 5:00 - 7:30 p.m., Baxter Community Center**
- **Saturday, September 8th from 11:30 - 1:00 p.m., location TBD**

For additional information about the grant or these meetings, please email [info@citiesunited.org](mailto:info@citiesunited.org).

## Louisville Urban League brings miniature golf to Broadway

Thanks to the opening of a miniature golf course, west Louisville now has a new place that families can use to help improve their skills and further pursue their passion for this popular game. The Louisville Urban League (LUL) recently opened the course next to their headquarters on West Broadway and welcomes the community to enjoy this investment in fun.

The new 18-hole course is free and open to the community. LUL will provide the clubs and golf balls to anyone with an ID or a deposit of a personal item.



Hours of operation may vary, but most days the course will be open until at least 4:00 p.m.