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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 16, 2025

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF PUERTO RICAN ARTS AND CULTURE BREAKS GROUND ON OUTDOOR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING SPACE AND SCULPTURE GARDEN

*New Space Expands Cultural and Educational Offerings, Fosters Creativity
in Open-Air Environment*

CHICAGO, Illinois (July 16, 2025) – Celebrating its 25th anniversary year in 2025, the **National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts and Culture** today announced that the construction of a new Outdoor Educational Programming Space and Sculpture Garden has begun. The space, designed by award-winning landscape architecture firm Site Design Group, Ltd., will serve as a welcoming space for the community to gather, participate in Museum programming, workshops, and events, and learn more about the island and its people.



“As the only museum outside of Puerto Rico dedicated to preserving the arts and culture of the Puerto Rican people and diaspora, we dedicate this new outdoor education space and sculpture garden to the indigenous Puerto Rican tribes who would gather in circles to learn, celebrate and build community,” said **Billy Ocasio**, Chief Executive Officer of the National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts and Culture. “We have worked with countless partners and stakeholders to bring this vision to reality, and we look forward to bringing Puerto Rican people from Chicago and across the globe to congregate in our beautiful outdoor space.”

The Outdoor Educational Programming Space has been intentionally crafted to meet the diverse needs of all Museum guests, with accessibility, the natural landscape, and cultural relevance at the heart of the design. The space will feature a carefully planned layout, including moveable seating areas for flexible programming, catenary lights for illumination, a rain garden that acts as a buffer between the parking lot and the programming area, as well as lawn areas with shade trees and mounded planting.

Among the key features of the space are a concrete mural wall depicting the history of Puerto Rican migration to Chicago; sculpture pedestals; and a batey, an outdoor classroom inspired by the Taino Indigenous people of the island. Throughout the design, native plantings reflective of the prairie-style landscape are incorporated in tribute to Jens Jensen, a renowned landscape architect with ties to Indigenous people in the Midwest.

Plans for construction moved forward following a December 2024 community meeting, where the concept was presented and won unanimous approval. The project has earned the support of the City of Chicago, the Chicago Park District, Preservation Chicago, the Chicago Landmarks Commission, Landmarks Illinois, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, and the State Historical Preservation Office, and the Puerto Rican Agenda.

“The Chicago Park District welcomes the NMPRAC’s new outdoor educational programming space and looks forward to the completion of this wonderful addition to Humboldt Park,” said Chicago Park District General Superintendent and CEO **Carlos Ramirez-Rosa**. “In addition to enhancing the historic features of the museum and surrounding parkland, the new outdoor space and garden will support the expansion of cultural programs and other opportunities that uplift the tapestry of rich Puerto Rican history and culture in our parks and city.”

“This new space will be a welcome addition to our Humboldt Park community and landscape,” said Alderperson **Jessie Fuentes** (26th Ward). “Watching the community come together in support of such a worthy project demonstrates that this will be a well-loved, well-used space for years to come.”

“The outdoor arts garden is a natural extension of NMPRAC’s mission, a place where Puerto Rican heritage is celebrated not only through exhibitions but also through vibrant programming and colorful landscapes. Inspired by the legacy of Jens Jenson, the Museum brings together art, nature, and people in ways that empower the community,” said **Mejay Gula**, Senior Project Manager at site design.

Funding for the project comes from the State of Illinois, the Chicago Parks District, State Representative Lilian Jiménez, State Senator Omar Aquino, and Alderperson Jessie Fuentes. The project is overseen by Wheeler Kearns Architects, with partners including site design, EVA Design and Engineering, CGi, and Blackwood Group.

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Images available for download at [National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts & Culture Media Center at this link](#)

ABOUT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF PUERTO RICAN ARTS & CULTURE

The National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts & Culture (3015 W. Division St. in Chicago’s Humboldt Park neighborhood) is the only national museum outside of Puerto Rico dedicated to interpreting the arts and culture of the Puerto Rican people. Founded in 2000, it is housed in the historic landmark Humboldt Park Stables and Receptory, near the Paseo Boricua. For more information: <https://nmprac.org/>