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**For Immediate Release**

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## **COMMUNITY PARTNERS ANNOUNCE TOYOTA TRINITY STORMWATER PARK PROJECT NEXT PHASE LAUNCH & TITLE SPONSOR**

Community partners announced the title sponsor and launch of the next phase of the Toyota Trinity Stormwater Park Project.

The next phase of the project involves the installation of the storm water storage facility and water line replacement, along with the development of an urban park space.

The park is being developed as a collaborative effort between the City of Evansville, Evansville Water and Sewer Utility, the University of Evansville (UE) Center for Innovation & Change, and Toyota.

"This is a testament to our community's collaborative spirit," said Mayor Lloyd Winnecke. "Our schools, water utility, businesses, architects and designers came together to provide a unique, sustainable solution to improve our city's infrastructure and quality of life."

Over the past four years, UE student Robert Lopez has taken lead on the project, working with several community partners both as a high school student and now through a college ChangeLab course.

Lopez and classmate, Caro Haynie, pitched the project during UE's High School Changemaker Challenge when they were juniors at Bosse High School.

"Working on this park has been nothing short of a life-changing experience," Lopez said. "Starting as a junior in high school, I've been able to take this idea from sketches on a whiteboard, to presenting a virtual 3D walk through to the Mayor, and UE's Center has been there the whole way. Without this project and the amazing team at the Center, I wouldn't be who I am or where I am today. I only hope that someday I can inspire someone the way they inspired me and help them change their community too."

Mike Labitzke, former lead Project Director for Evansville Water & Sewer Utility, served as one of Lopez's ChangeLab coaches for several semesters. His initial concept for a park on top of water filtration was shared with UE's Center, who then pitched the idea to Lopez's AP Biology class at Bosse High School. The team never stopped working on the project.

"We are excited about our partnership with the University of Evansville on what will become the city's largest green infrastructure," said EWSU Executive Director Lane Young. "This project allows us to be good stewards of our environment by diverting millions of gallons of sewage overflow away from the

Ohio River while preserving historic relics from the former Trinity Catholic Church and incorporating them into an urban garden for our community to enjoy.”

The park will be fully accessible, with fitness and other programming provided by the University, which is Indiana’s only Ashoka Changemaker Campus.

“The collaboration with so many different parts of the community elevates the impact,” said UE President Christopher M. Pietruszkiewicz. “UE is so pleased to do our part in advancing our community, and reinforce that our students, like Robert, demonstrate how we bring academics to life to solve real world issues.”

Toyota has been named the title sponsor and will work with Lopez and the UE Center for Innovation & Change to identify additional green space funding opportunities from corporations and individuals. Toyota has sponsored each High School Changemaker Challenge at UE, including the 2022 challenge that is currently underway.

“We are extremely honored to be the lead supporter on such a transformative project,” said Ted Brown, vice president of administration at Toyota Indiana. “Robert’s vision for an innovative solution—to what many may have considered a standard infrastructure project—shows leadership, vision and pride for his community. That’s why programs like UE’s Changemaker Challenge are so vital to the evolution and growth of our region, and why we at Toyota Indiana continue to support those efforts. We want to challenge those in our communities to seek out opportunities to pioneer ideas for our future like Robert did, so that together we can build a better future.”

#### **About Trinity Stormwater Park Project**

The storm water project will divert approximately 25 acres of downtown storm water runoff from the combined sewer system to reduce combined sewer overflows (CSO) to the Ohio River as part of the City’s CSO Long Term Control Plan. The first phase of the project involved demolition of the buildings on the former Holy Trinity Church property, located at 3rd Street and Court Street in Downtown Evansville, with materials salvaged including the plinth, some limestone and stained-glass. These materials will be incorporated into the design of the park. The next phase involves storm sewer and storage facility construction below ground to collect storm water runoff and promote infiltration into the sand and gravel layers below grade at the church site. This next phase will also involve finalizing design and construction of the top side amenities, and designing some of the wellness programs to be offered.

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