



## NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
October 12, 2017

Contact: John Crooks  
(865) 223-4513

### **EMERALD YOUTH LONSDALE PROPOSAL ADVANCES TO CITY COUNCIL**

*Local families to purchase property to build neighborhood multipurpose complex for city youth*

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. – For the past several months, Emerald Youth Foundation has sought approval from multiple public entities to build a new neighborhood multipurpose complex for youth in the heart of the Lonsdale community.

Thus far, the project has received approval from the Knox County Board of Education, the Knox County Commission, and will seek approval by Knoxville City Council later this month at the meeting slated for October 24.

The complex will be situated on land along Texas Avenue between Stonewall and Sherman Streets, currently owned by the City of Knoxville, as well as a portion of property next to Sam E. Hill Preschool adjacent to Lonsdale Homes. The complex will be a connection point for youth and community development in a neighborhood that has been under-resourced for decades.

Pending approval by Knoxville City Council, the land will be purchased and developed into an approximately \$8 million-dollar multipurpose facility and sports complex generously funded by the personal foundations of Elisabeth and Bill Sansom and Dee and Jimmy Haslam. In addition to purchasing the land itself, each family foundation will contribute roughly half the construction costs. The property will then be leased to Emerald Youth for \$1 a year.

Both families have existing relationships with Emerald Youth Foundation and are excited about the long-term investment in the Lonsdale neighborhood.

“Jimmy and I have been deeply moved – not only by what is happening in our city, but by the idea that we can actually help change the trajectory for young people in Knoxville. This project is just one piece of Emerald’s comprehensive strategy to engaging young people and building leaders for our city,” said Dee Haslam, who has been connected to Emerald Youth for more than 20 years and serves as a member of Emerald Youth’s board of trustees.

---continued---

Elisabeth and Bill Sansom first connected with Emerald Youth as guests at its annual prayer breakfast, but their involvement in neighborhood programs with young people goes back much further. In fact, Elisabeth has served as a volunteer with different ministries in Mechanicsville and Lonsdale for over two decades, and through that work she developed a deep love for friends in both neighborhoods. Over the years as Emerald grew, so did the Sansoms' desire to make an even bigger impact, which resulted in the fulfillment of Bill's dream of a play space and the development of the Sansom Sports Complex on Dale Avenue that opened in 2015.

"It is a real joy to walk alongside an organization like Emerald Youth as they work to impact the lives of children and families in our city," said Bill Sansom. "The existing facility on Dale Avenue has been a great partnership for our family, and we have been pleased with Emerald's commitment to operating it with excellence and with Christian values. We believe that this new project in Lonsdale will be truly transformational – not just for the neighborhood itself, but for the lives of those who will utilize it."

Kathryn Eggleston, daughter of Bill and Elisabeth Sansom and member of Emerald Youth's board of trustees, says the project has the potential to be a game changer for Lonsdale. "This project provides great opportunities for Lonsdale families to continue to be together, building relationships and community while providing a fabulous place for children to learn, play and grow through the EYF programs and just being kids."

"We remain committed to children in the heart of our city and look forward to engaging even more deeply with families in Lonsdale," said Emerald Youth Foundation President and CEO Steve Diggs. "I am especially grateful to the Sansom and Haslam families and their steadfast care for young people in Knoxville's urban neighborhoods and hope the community will follow their lead to support children in our city."

"Their involvement in this project ensures a stable ownership structure that will provide for the long-term sustainability of this facility," Diggs continued. "This has been our facilities model for many years, and it means that it will be in the neighborhood for a long, long time."

Mayor Madeline Rogero said the project is a great example of partnership between the public, private and nonprofit sectors. "I am so grateful to the Haslam and Sansom families for their long-term commitment to our city," Mayor Rogero said. "They have shown again and again how much they care for the young people of Knoxville. With their support and the leadership of Emerald Youth Foundation, this complex will serve the Lonsdale community for many years to come."

---continued---

During this process, well over 500 neighborhood stakeholders have been engaged through community listening sessions, door-to-door conversations and other meetings. Neighborhood engagement is being led by Kevin DuBose, director of Christian Community Development for Emerald Youth. Throughout construction, as well as after the facility is open, neighborhood engagement will continue – formally and informally.

Dr. Joseph Smith, pastor of New Friendship Missionary Baptist Church, conveyed excitement felt in the Lonsdale neighborhood. “The proposal put forth by Emerald will not only bring transformation to an entire city block, it will bring hope to an entire neighborhood. And because hope is contagious, our entire city will benefit from the vitality and a sense of place created in Lonsdale,” Smith said.

The Lonsdale project is part of a larger, comprehensive strategy deployed by Emerald Youth Foundation to impact the lives of the 12,000 young people living in the heart of Knoxville.

### **About the Proposed Multipurpose Complex in Lonsdale**

Emerald Youth is proposing a more than 30,000 square foot multipurpose facility for the community featuring a learning center; two full-size gymnasiums with basketball courts, locker rooms, concessions and kitchen; fitness area with weight room, dance/aerobics room and cardio theater; assembly room for gatherings; and a performing arts area with practice rooms. The project also includes two multipurpose synthetic turf fields for soccer, flag football and other sports.

### **About Emerald Youth Foundation**

Emerald Youth Foundation is a Christian, urban youth ministry that serves more than 2,000 children, teens and young adults each year in the heart of Knoxville, Tennessee. Emerald Youth works with a coalition of churches and faith-based organizations to implement its programs that include: JustLead – a youth leadership program with after-school, discipleship, education and health components; and Emerald Youth Sports – an outreach in partnership with Fellowship of Christian Athletes featuring baseball, basketball, volleyball, track and field, soccer and swimming.

###