

April 22, 2015



Southwest Airlines Takes Heart Of The Community Program Nationwide

Six U.S. cities to receive new public spaces to strengthen community ties; Balboa Park in San Diego, Plaza at Pratt & Light in Baltimore open new public spaces today

DALLAS, April 22, 2015 /PRNewswire/ -- Today, [Southwest Airlines](#) (NYSE: LUV) grew its multi-year commitment to placemaking and local community development, announcing that six cities across the U.S. will receive [Heart of the Community](#) grants to reimagine and activate important, underutilized local public spaces.

In conjunction with Earth Day, Southwest Airlines Employees will complete environmentally-focused volunteer projects in many of the *Heart of the Community* cities. Placemaking, an emerging movement with environmentalist roots, positions public spaces as an engine for urban development, serving as a catalyst for building sustainable, healthy, inclusive, and economically viable neighborhoods.

Southwest's lead partner, [Project for Public Spaces](#) (PPS), has refined the participatory placemaking process for more than 40 years. Now in the second official year of the program, two former *Heart of the Community* grant recipients open spaces today in **Baltimore** and **San Diego** and ongoing projects in **Chicago** and **Houston** will open later this year. Three transformative pilot projects in **Detroit**, **Providence**, and **San Antonio** gave strong credence to the connecting and catalytic power of placemaking.

Throughout 2015, the following six public spaces will be developed, programmed, and activated as part of the Southwest program:

- Albuquerque, New Mexico: **Civic Plaza**
- Ft. Myers, Florida: **Cornog Plaza**
- Jacksonville, Florida: **Hemming Park**
- Milwaukee, Wisconsin: **4MKE: 4th Street and Wisconsin Avenue**
- Portland, Maine: **Congress Square Park**
- St. Louis, Missouri: **Strauss Park**

"Cities are more than destinations—they are places of human connections and livelihood," said Gary Kelly, Chairman, President, and CEO of Southwest Airlines. "Our Purpose at Southwest is to connect People to what's important in their lives. What better way to do that than by helping to create more access to our public spaces where communities can come together?"

Strengthened by broad community participation and engagement, placemaking incorporates the planning, design, management, and program development for public spaces as a means to advance vibrant, sustainable communities. Placemaking strengthens the connection between people and the places they share. For the past half-century, common urban

problems, like traffic-dominated streets, unused parks, and isolated, underperforming capital improvement projects have led to increased feelings of social isolation and division.

"The best way to build a sustainable world is by focusing on Place," said Fred Kent, Founder and President of PPS. "Placemaking is more than how we design public spaces—it is a means by which people are collectively and intentionally shaping their environment and building deep and lasting community ties. Placemaking turns our approaches to land-use, transportation, governance, and the environment upside-down by asking people what they fundamentally need in a public space and empowering them to be a part of the development process."

These six *Heart of the Community* spaces were selected through a competitive application process. Proposed projects are evaluated in terms of preliminary work and preparedness, capacity for local impact, potential for large-scale public-private partnerships, and strength of the commitment demonstrated by local partners.

Nonprofit organizations in each of the cities will administer the local grants. Partners include **DowntownABQ MainStreet Initiative, Lee County Library System, Friends of Hemming Park, Creative Alliance Milwaukee, Friends of Congress Square Park and Grand Center, Inc.** As a part of the *Heart of the Community* grant, each local partner will receive technical assistance from PPS to set a clear vision and programming platform, activating the space. The grant also funds a variety of physical amenities, such as tables and chairs, outdoor reading rooms, and information kiosks – bringing new life and vibrancy to public spaces.

Read more about the key role public spaces play in community building: [Places in the Making](#), an MIT whitepaper. Southwest's ongoing commitment, via Employee volunteering and the *Heart of the Community* grants, is to award \$1 million in 2015 across the six cities in order to aid their placemaking projects.

ABOUT SOUTHWEST AIRLINES CO.

In its 44th year of service, Dallas-based Southwest Airlines (NYSE: LUV) continues to differentiate itself from other air carriers with exemplary Customer Service delivered by more than 46,000 Employees to more than 100 million Customers annually. Southwest operates more than 3,600 flights a day, serving 94 destinations across the United States and six additional countries. Southwest service to Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, begins in June 2015; and subject to government approvals, service to Belize City, Belize begins in October 2015.

Based on the U.S. Department of Transportation's most recent data, Southwest Airlines is the nation's largest carrier in terms of originating domestic passengers boarded. The Company operates the largest fleet of Boeing aircraft in the world, the majority of which are equipped with satellite-based WiFi providing gate-to-gate connectivity while over the United States. That connectivity enables Customers to use their personal devices to access streaming music provided by Beats Music or to view video on-demand movies and television shows, as well as nearly 20 channels of free, live TV compliments of our valued Partners. Southwest is the only major U.S. airline to offer bags fly free® (first and second checked pieces of luggage, size and weight limits apply) to everyone, and there are never reservation change fees, although fare differences might apply. In 2014, the airline proudly unveiled a bold new look: *Heart*. The new aircraft livery, airport experience, and logo, showcase the dedication of Southwest Employees to connect Customers with what's important in their lives.

From its first flights on June 18, 1971, Southwest Airlines launched an era of unprecedented affordability in air travel described by the U.S. Department of Transportation as "The Southwest Effect," a lowering of fares and increase in passenger traffic whenever the carrier enters new markets. With 42 consecutive years of profitability, Southwest is one of the most honored airlines in the world, known for a triple bottom line approach that contributes to the carrier's performance and productivity, the importance of its People and the communities they serve, and an overall commitment to efficiency and the planet. The 2013 Southwest Airlines One Report™ can be found at Southwest.com/citizenship.

Book Southwest Airlines' low fares online at Southwest.com or by phone at 800-I-FLY-SWA.

About Project for Public Spaces

Project for Public Spaces is a nonprofit planning, design and educational organization dedicated to helping people create and sustain public spaces that build stronger communities. Its pioneering Placemaking approach helps citizens transform their public spaces into vital places that highlight local assets, spur rejuvenation and serve common needs. PPS was founded in 1975 to apply and expand on the work of William (Holly) Whyte, the author of *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*. Since then, the organization has completed projects in over 3000 communities in 43 countries and all 50 US states and are the premier center for best practices, information and resources on Placemaking. www.pps.org and www.pps.org/heart-of-the-community

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