

Alberta O. Jones Park EV Rideshare Project



#BecauseOfAlbertaJones © 2023 Josh Bleecker with Louisville Visual Art

A Mobility Justice Initiative



City parks are powerful tools that strengthen the fabric of urban communities, positively impact health and the environment, and spur economic revitalization.

Yet in economically challenged communities of color—where their benefits are most needed—park amenities are often the most limited. That is why the Parks Alliance of Louisville is working to drive equitable investment in our public greenspaces to elevate the wellbeing of all people.

Alberta O. Jones Park, emerging in West Louisville’s California Neighborhood, is poised to achieve these goals. Through the collaboration of residents and community partners, 20 acres of vacant and abandoned property just south of Broadway will be transformed into a vibrant greenspace to serve this predominately Black community. Construction of the first five acres is scheduled for completion by June 2024.

The need is great. Less than 1% of the California Neighborhood is dedicated to parks and greenspace, while 29% is industrial. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, the residential area immediately contiguous to the park (Census Tract 18/population 1,207), has extremely poor air quality—in the 99th percentile for particulate matter, ozone, air toxic cancer, and respiratory risk.

Moreover, decades of systemic disinvestment and racist policies have created significant economic challenges. The Kentucky State Data Center reports that in 2020, this area had a median household income of just \$21,143, with 47% of households living below the poverty line. The unemployment rate was 20% compared to 5% for Jefferson County.

Alberta O. Jones Park goes well beyond adding much-needed public greenspace. It has become the catalyst to meet many pressing neighborhood needs: rebuilding streets and sidewalks, adding public Wi-Fi in a digital desert, and delivering extensive free home repairs to preserve homeownership and prevent “green gentrification.”

Now, a group of committed partners is combining their collective expertise to address significant transportation gaps in the California Neighborhood—where just 39% of households have access to a vehicle.

Change Today Change Tomorrow, Jewish Family & Career Services (JFCS), Louisville Sustainability Council, and the Parks Alliance of Louisville seek funding to launch the Alberta O. Jones EV Rideshare Project, a mobility justice initiative designed to bring the community greater access to convenient and clean transportation.

Alberta Jones was a trailblazer from West Louisville. She was the first Black person to attend the University of Louisville’s School of Law, the first Black woman to pass the Kentucky Bar exam, and the first woman appointed a city attorney in Jefferson County. Tragically, her body was found in the Ohio River in August 1965 and her murder remains unsolved. The new park and EV rideshare project honor Jones’ lifelong pursuit of civil rights and social justice.



Project Overview

Across the United States, innovative programs are popping up to provide mobility solutions in communities where income is low, air quality is poor, and transportation options are limited.

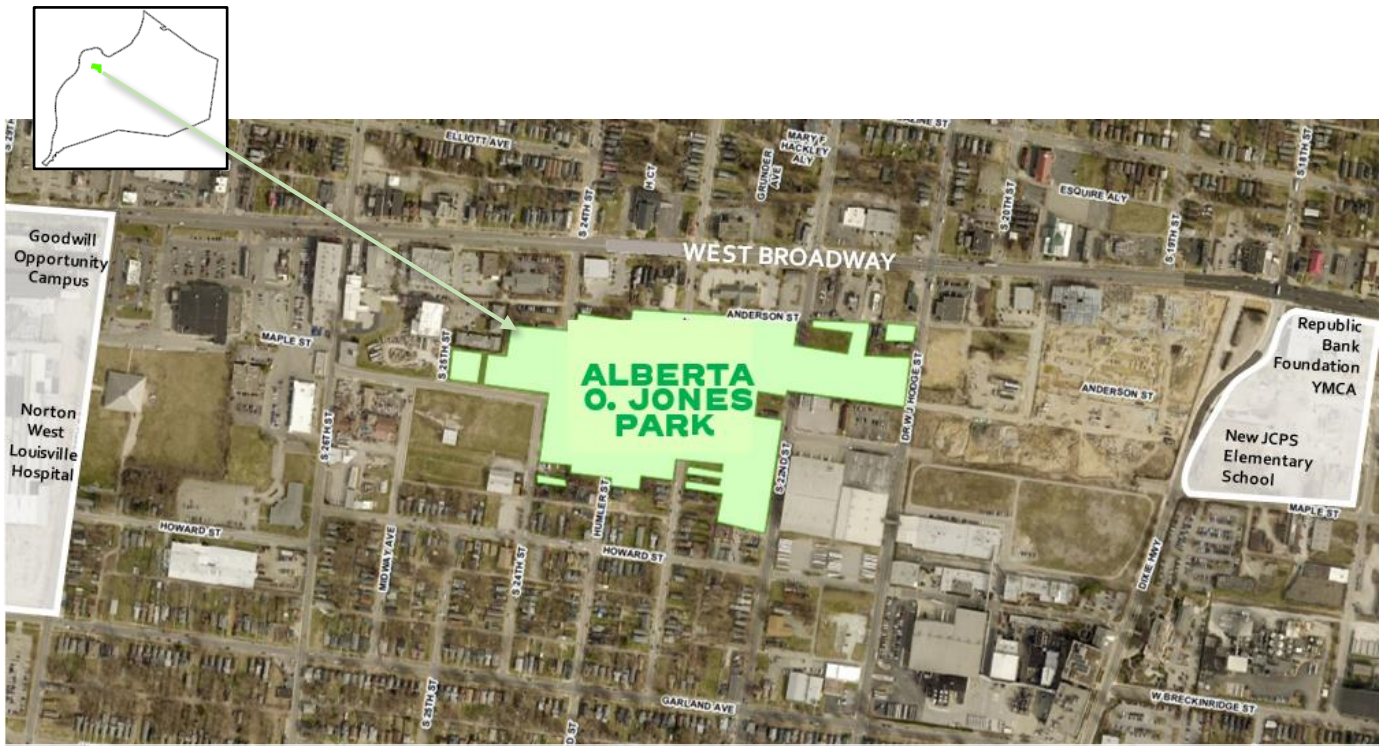
The Alberta O. Jones EV Rideshare Project is Louisville's first such initiative. Focused on the people of the California Neighborhood—particularly residents living near the new park along Maple Street between Dr. W.J. Hodge and 24th Streets—this community-led electric vehicle (EV) ridesharing service will provide convenient, affordable, and eco-friendly transportation. Ultimately it is a mobility justice initiative that will improve access to essential services, reduce costs, and mitigate serious environmental issues.

The project partners propose to launch a pilot in June 2024 to include:

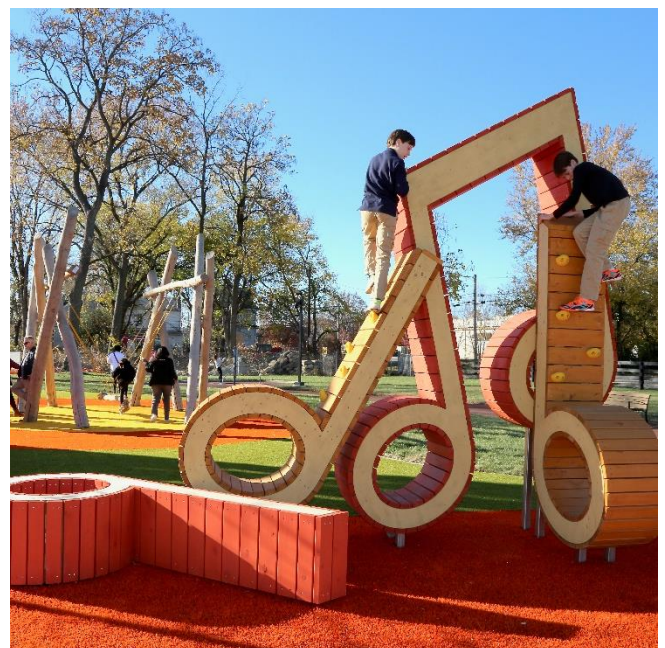
- Two dedicated electric vehicles
- Two full-time drivers from the West Louisville community
- Two new dual-level public EV chargers within the park boundary

During the first year, the program will aim to provide free transportation for up to 40 households in the California Neighborhood. Participants will be able to travel to a variety of destinations within a roughly 20-mile radius of the park to include the grocery store, medical appointments, work, and other essential places. Participants will schedule rides in advance by phone, with drivers available Tuesday through Saturday from 7am to 8pm. The EVs will be sized to transport up to four people, making the pilot accessible to families with children. As usage and community needs are better understood, the project can expand to serve more West Louisville residents, working within the constraints of the initial number of drivers and EVs.

Data will be collected to better understand the community's needs and to inform program expansion—for example when there is peak demand, the typical destination types and distances, and the number of riders. This will enable the partners to refine the program to serve more people, increase hours of operation, and grow the destinations served. Future phases could include adoption of an app to book rideshares and partnerships with local businesses to offer EV ridesharing vans to transport people to jobs at their facilities. This would not only increase economic opportunities for residents, but help employers address pressing workforce shortages.



Alberta O. Jones Park is located in the California Neighborhood just east of the new Goodwill Opportunity Campus. Below are renderings of the playground.



The Partners and Their Roles



Change Today, Change Tomorrow (CTCT) is a nonprofit based in the California Neighborhood established in 2019 to support West Louisville residents in the areas of food justice, public health, and community engagement. Led by a Black woman, CTCT will survey clients to identify community needs and recruit the pilot participants. It will manage the day-to-day operation of this service to include supervision of drivers. CTCT’s leadership is crucial to ensure the EV rideshare program is anchored and “owned” by people in the community.



The Parks Alliance of Louisville’s mission is to drive equitable investment in our city’s public parks to elevate the wellbeing of the entire community. The Alliance supports more than 100 parks and community centers—two-thirds located in underserved neighborhoods. Leveraging the power of collaboration, the Alliance sees parks as powerful tools to strengthen communities, improve health and the environment, and spur economic revitalization. The Alliance will spearhead community engagement, own and insure the EVs, and employ the drivers who will be leased to CTCT.



The Louisville Sustainability Council (LSC) connects communities, convenes strategically, and creates programs, events, and resources for a sustainable and equitable future. The organization will provide technical support including assistance with the installation of charging stations and consultation on the selection and upkeep of vehicles.



Jewish Family and Career Services (JFCS), a social service nonprofit founded in 1908, offers a fee-based transportation program for older adults that has operated successfully for decades. JFCS will serve as the project’s fiscal agent and provide technical support to guide implementation to include guiding the development of policies and procedures and creating data tools to gather resident feedback, monitor vehicle use, mileage, and energy consumption. During the pilot, JFCS will manage financial contributions and disbursements, and handle grant reporting requirements.

FACTS AT A GLANCE

Transportation Needs:

- **Limited Public Transportation.** West Louisville faces inadequate public transportation options, including limited bus routes, infrequent service, and insufficient coverage. The existing public transportation system often fails to meet the needs of residents, particularly in connecting with major employers, educational institutions, healthcare facilities, and retailers. In addition, there are limited options for grocery stores and medical centers within walking distance, making it difficult to meet basic needs.
- **Lack of Active Transportation Infrastructure.** Active modes of transportation like walking and cycling are severely impeded by inadequate sidewalks, few bike lanes, and poorly lit streets. This lack of infrastructure makes it challenging for residents to engage in active transportation and leads to a reliance on automobiles.
- **Affordability.** Many residents in West Louisville face financial constraints that make owning a vehicle unaffordable. High costs of car ownership—including gas, insurance, maintenance, and parking fees—limit transportation options and perpetuate poverty. Furthermore, insurance rates are significantly higher for non-white people, causing additional financial burdens.
- **Limited Accessibility for People with Disabilities.** Inadequate infrastructure for people living with mobility challenges or disabilities pose significant challenges. This includes lack of wheelchair ramps, accessible vehicles, and auditory signals at crosswalks.

Underlying Causes of Transportation Disparities:

- **Historical Disinvestment.** West Louisville has a history of disinvestment, including redlining, discriminatory housing practices, and limited infrastructure development. These factors have contributed to limited access to transportation resources, resulting in long-standing disparities.
- **Socioeconomic Factors.** The area has a higher concentration of low-income households which restricts residents' ability to afford private vehicles or alternative modes of transportation. This limits access to jobs and educational institutions, exacerbating the economic challenges faced by residents.
- **Racial Disparities.** West Louisville has a predominantly Black population and transportation disparities can be attributed to systemic racial inequities. Discriminatory practices and policies have disproportionately affected marginalized communities, leading to unequal access to transportation options.
- **Planning and Policy Decisions.** Transportation planning and policy decisions often neglect the needs of marginalized communities. Insufficient investment in public transportation infrastructure, limited engagement with community stakeholders, and a lack of equitable distribution of resources contribute to West Louisville's transportation disparities.

Environmental Benefits of Electric Vehicles for Ridesharing:

- **Reduced greenhouse gas emissions.** EVs produce zero tailpipe emissions, meaning they do not emit pollutants like carbon dioxide (CO₂), nitrogen oxides (NO_x), or particulate matter. By replacing conventional internal combustion engine vehicles with electric ones in ride-sharing programs, the overall emissions from transportation can be significantly reduced, contributing to improved air quality.
- **Lower carbon footprint.** EVs are more energy-efficient than internal combustion engine vehicles. They have higher energy conversion efficiency, with less energy wasted during operation. As the electric grid transitions to cleaner sources of power generation (such as renewable energy), the carbon footprint associated with EV charging further decreases. Ridesharing programs that use EVs can help accelerate the adoption of cleaner energy sources for transportation.
- **Noise pollution reduction.** Electric vehicles are much quieter than traditional vehicles. Ridesharing programs that use EVs can help reduce noise pollution in urban areas, providing a quieter and more pleasant environment for residents.
- **Improved air quality.** According to the Metro Department of Public Health and Wellness, 30.3% of West Louisville residents live with symptoms or illness caused by outdoor air pollution, compared to just 16% in East Louisville. This contributes to poor health and an average life expectancy that is up to 13 years shorter in West Louisville. EV ridesharing programs can help mitigate health issues related to poor air quality, such as respiratory problems and cardiovascular diseases.

We Need Your Support

The project partners seek charitable investment to launch this EV Rideshare Project. This project sets the stage for an innovative, community-led solution to transportation barriers while prioritizing environmental sustainability. By providing convenient and free transportation, we aim to enhance access to essential services, reduce transportation costs, and contribute to a cleaner and healthier community.

Your participation will demonstrate a commitment to improving the quality of life for West Louisville residents while creating a model for sustainable transportation initiatives in other neighborhoods.