For Immediate Release

"Brick-pulling" to Begin Park Central Square Restoration

A “brick pulling” ceremony — in lieu of a traditional groundbreaking — will be held on Park Central Square at 4 p.m., Friday, Nov. 5. The event will mark the beginning of a yearlong project to restore the inner Square to the design originally intended by renowned landscape architect Lawrence Halprin and his team in the early 1970s.

The renovated design will be more open and inviting to pedestrians and will mesh with the pedestrian-friendly design of the improved streetscape surrounding the Square, which was completed last fall. The project includes the removal of non-historical additions that weren’t intended by Halprin & Associates, plus the replacement of elements that have been lost during the last four decades. Select new infrastructure additions will bring the space into the modern age, including improved lighting and greater accessibility for all. The new additions will be incorporated in a historically sensitive way, and have been approved by the Missouri State Historic Preservation Office. The project will restore what was, in Halprin’s words, “an active space for public assembly, devoted to pedestrians and their needs and comforts.”

Even before it was remade by one of America’s premiere modern landscape architects, Springfield’s town square was the site of numerous historical episodes including the shootout between “Wild” Bill Hickok and Dave Tutt in 1865, the Trail of Tears, the Butterfield Overland Stage route, and Route 66. Throughout much of the 20th century it was the heart of commerce and shopping in southwest Missouri. It was added to the National Register of Historic Places in February of this year.

Aged and worn pavers in the center of the Square will be replaced, as will seating blocks that were removed many years ago. The fountain, a centerpiece of the Halprin design, will be fully refurbished and equipped with modern, energy-efficient components. Several trees planted in the years since the original design will be removed. However, many more trees that were intended in the original design will be planted. When the project is complete, there will be twice as many trees in Park Central Square as there are today.

The $1.78 million project will be completed with at least $1.2 million from a Department of Housing and Urban Development Economic Development Initiative grant. The remainder will be paid for by the voter-approved ¼-cent Sales Tax for Capital Improvements. The general contractor is Carson-Mitchell, Inc. Plans were prepared by Butler-Rosenbury & Partners, Inc.

For more information about the restoration, contact: Phil Broyles, Co-Interim Director of Public Works, (417) 864-1950.

About Lawrence Halprin

One of the world’s leading landscape architects and environmental planners, Lawrence Halprin (1916-2009) was long at the forefront of urban design innovation in the United States. His practice comprises a catalogue of leading-edge environmental design in projects ranging from inner urban centers to National Parks. His reputation was built on over sixty years of expanding expectations for the environmental realm.
His major works include the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial in Washington; D.C., Ghiradelli Square and Levi Plaza in San Francisco; Freeway Park in Seattle; the Haas Promenade in Jerusalem, and the 52-acre approach to Yosemite Falls in Yosemite National Park.

Source: lawrencehalprin.org