Lift Ev’ry Voice and Sing Park
Jacksonville, FL

Lift Ev’ry Voice and Sing Park honors two of Jacksonville’s most famous residents, James Weldon Johnson and John Rosamond Johnson. The Johnson brothers wrote “Lift Ev’ry Voice and Sing,” often called the Black National Anthem, at their home in the LaVilla neighborhood between 1900 and 1905. Designed by world-renowned MacArthur Foundation “Genius Grant” recipient Walter Hood, the park incorporates elements of the Johnson brothers’ and LaVilla’s cultural and built history while making space for a more inclusive future.
LaVilla was one of the first urbanized Gullah Geechee communities to emerge in the early 18th century as enslaved people fled bondage. It eventually became the place that anyone who was not white and Protestant lived and worked; the Jewish, Cuban, Syrian, Chinese, and other immigrants who alongside the African-Americans called LaVilla home turned it into the Harlem of the South. It was a hotbed of creativity, commerce and life. LaVilla boasted thriving theaters, family homes, taverns and flophouses. At its cultural peak, live music reverberated through the streets, filling the neighborhood with the sounds of jazz and blues. Greats including Dizzy Gillespie, Louis Armstrong and Billie Holiday got their starts in LaVilla. Ray Charles, fresh from the St. Augustine School for the Blind, hustled for gigs in LaVilla. The smell of fresh bread emanating from the Jewish New York Star Bakery signaled arrival to the neighborhood for the many visitors pouring from the nearby train station. Special places served LaVilla’s past and are imperative to help build a vibrant future for the neighborhood, its residents and visitors.

Lift Ev’ry Voice and Sing Park
At a Glance
• Located in historic LaVilla neighborhood in Jacksonville, Florida on the site of the Johnson brothers’ home
• Designated a city park in 2015
• Located at the entrance of the “Emerald Trail” pedestrian and bicycling greenway
• Nearby the newly opened Jacksonville Regional Transportation Center, housing the city’s primary bus terminal, monorail station and transportation offices
• Adjacent to affordable loft-style apartments breaking ground soon

Lift Ev’ry Voice and Sing Park
At a Glance

September 2020
Design reveal, Fundraising begins

Spring/Summer 2021
Park design complete, Bid for construction

2021
Construction

Late 2022/Early 2023
Grand opening