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Permagrams: Photo Installations Add New Perspective to Vacant Lots

Trenton, NJ – Riffing on the visual stories and connections people build through social media, a new Isles project, Permagrams, will bring pop-up photo installations to vacant lots on Spring, Passaic, West State, and Fowler Streets. The installations feature photographs by two young Trenton-based artists, Bentrice Jusu and S. Bola Okoya, taken during the Six Oh Nine Project Photowalk through the neighborhood on June 10th, and intermix Trenton youth style with scenes from a regular Saturday.



On Passaic Street. Photo: Bentrice Jusu.



The church. Photo: S. Bola Okoya



On Passaic Street. Photo: S. Bola Okoya.

“All the photos were taken in or near the places where they are installed,” explains Iana Dikidjieva, who organized the project on behalf of Isles, “and they invite people to come into these spaces and see them in a new way, through the lens of young people in Trenton.”

The main installation site is at the stone church at the corner of Prospect and Spring Streets, built in 1875 and most recently used as the Imani Community Church, which has been vacant since the early 2000s. The City of Trenton acquired the property through tax foreclosure in 2015 and issued an RFP for its redevelopment, but was unable to find a buyer in a position to bring it back to life.

The public is invited to a **garden party at the site on Friday, June 30th, from 5-7 pm**, to launch the Permagrams installation and brainstorm about the future of the church property.

“We’d like to reopen the community conversation around this remarkable historic building,” says Julia Taylor, Deputy Operations Officer at Isles. “If redeveloped with the right vision, it could become a real

asset for the neighborhood, for Trenton, and even for the region – but as a first step, it needs urgent stabilization before it deteriorates further.”

The Permagrams project is part of a series of pop-up activities and installations to reactivate vacant spaces and spark a change of perspective in and about the Trenton Historic Development Collaborative (THDC) neighborhood, which extends from West State and Willow Streets to Rutherford and Hermitage Avenues. Previous pop-ups have included the Parklet @Cafe 128, the Passaic Street Classic Block Party, and support for the creation and programming of the Candlelight’s Garden, a converted shipping container art space on a once-vacant lot. Other ongoing work includes the upcoming demolition of multiple vacant buildings; the beautification of 30+ vacant lots and four parks; and a range of services designed to meet resident and stakeholder priorities.

The installation was designed by Iana Dikidjieva and Jon Gordon, and built by Isles’ Clean & Green team, which beautifies vacant lots and parks in three Trenton neighborhoods through landscaping and other installations. The project is supported by funds from the New Jersey Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit program.

About Isles:

Founded in 1981, Isles, Inc. is a community development and environmental organization in Trenton, New Jersey. With a mission to foster self-reliant families and healthy, sustainable communities, Isles designs and develops effective services that support this mission and share what they learn with others who can make a difference. Beyond its central New Jersey base, Isles works to influence policy and practices that support healthy, self-help agendas. For more information, visit www.isles.org.

About the THDC

The Trenton Historic Development Collaborative (THDC) is a coalition of stakeholders convened by Shiloh Community Development Corporation in 2006. The collaborative includes more than 40 neighborhood organizations, business, and residents who are committed to working together to revitalize their community.

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