

August 9, 2021

To: Derek Rogers, Director Lawrence Parks and Recreation  
Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Members

From: Barry Shalinsky, President East Lawrence Neighborhood Association  
East Lawrence Neighborhood Association Board Members

RE: Support for recognition of La Yarda

Dear Derek and Board:

The East Lawrence Neighborhood Association is writing to lend our support to the request by Nora Murphy to have the La Yarda site memorialized in some way. La Yarda is important to the cultural heritage of local families of Mexican descent, to the history of East Lawrence, and to Lawrence as a whole.

This idea is in alignment with the Unmistakable Identity theme included in the current Lawrence Strategic Plan.

Nora mentioned leasing the site from BNSF or acquiring the site to create a park or memorial marker, such as a plaque. Due to the site's proximity to the Warehouse Arts District and the future route of the Lawrence Loop here in East Lawrence, creating a connected public space seems fitting.

Expanding on the idea of a park or plaza, a public art installation designed in partnership with members of the Mexican-American community might highlight La Yarda history in a compelling way. Sound and video content could be re-purposed from the oral histories of La Yarda residents captured in 2006, and from the La Yarda documentary film that is currently in production.

Making visible the diversity of populations who call Lawrence home sends a strong message that Lawrence is welcoming to all and is working to ensure social equity by recognizing minority groups and celebrating their contributions to the community.

We encourage the Parks and Recreation Department to begin discussions with BNSF at the earliest opportunity to investigate leasing or acquiring the La Yarda site for this purpose.

Sincerely,

Barry Shalinsky  
President, East Lawrence Neighborhood Association