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Populous-Designed Esports Campus “The Block” Revealed in Philadelphia as Nerd Street Gamers Celebrates Public Opening

First of its kind Esports Campus Houses Localhost Location and will Include Nerd Street Gamers’ Corporate Headquarters and Local Esports Team Training Facility

Kansas City, MO – November 18, 2021– Global design firm Populous worked with digital content and esports facilities/event company Nerd Street Gamers (Nerd Street) to create a high-tech community gaming center at the historic Netrality Building at 401 North Broad St. in Philadelphia, Pa. The 40,000-square-foot location, dubbed “The Block,” will be home to Nerd Street’s newest Localhost venue, a 20,000-square-foot space dedicated to esports, streaming and broadcasting, and will provide the space and technology to power programs for educational institutions and local organizations. The remaining square footage will be built out to serve as a practice facility for the local esports franchise, The Soniqs, as well as the firm’s global headquarters, both slated to open in 2022.



Populous led the design of The Block using its global esports experience to combine intentional spaces with flexibility, brand activation and a focus on drawing people together through the love of gaming. This Localhost location offers public access to hourly gameplay, tournaments and summer camps as well as online content production and broadcasting.

“The design of this space is based on Nerd Street’s goal to create a gaming landmark that furthers inclusivity and opportunity,” said Brian Mirakian, senior principal at Populous. “Our team worked with Nerd Street to deliver an adaptable, innovative and creative space for anyone to game, build their brand, interact with friends or get involved in the larger esports community.”

Populous and Nerd Street’s branding and operations experts worked closely to create a strategic vision for the Localhost brand in step with Nerd Street’s business model and corporate mission. Every aspect of the space was thoughtfully curated through a collaborative process resulting in a facility that will be used as a model for Localhost locations across the country.

At the heart of creating a replicable nationwide model was development of a robust set of programmatic, environmental, signage and interior design standards, which Populous created in collaboration with Nerd Street. The elements come together seamlessly, acting as a guide for implementing the brand consistently across different media, platforms and spaces, while also retaining a local community feel.

The Localhost location is built into the ground floor of the 1.3-million-square-foot landmark Terminal Commerce Building in downtown Philadelphia, activating the streetscape at a retail level and creating an exciting new entertainment destination. Populous designed the lobby to welcome visitors with sleek and contemporary styling that speaks to Nerd Street’s brand and represents the start of great experiential moments at The Block and across the country at future Localhost locations.

Designed to be experienced as a series of flexible and adaptable spaces that offer a superior gaming and entertainment experience, “The Block” provides the community with advanced technology solutions for competitive gaming, content production and streaming. An uber-sophisticated LAN center offers multiple long-haul and metro fiber routes to support a near-zero lag time for gamers and content producers who may not typically have access to that level of technology.

“Gaming is a burgeoning business sector with more than two-thirds of the American population — 227 million people on average — playing video games on a daily basis,” said Mirakian. “Accessibility is central to the cultural growth of the esports sector, and bringing this high-tech gathering experience to communities which otherwise would not have access to such advanced technology is something woven into our DNA at Populous.”

The space offers between 118 and 135 PC gaming setups in an area known as “The Pit,” a space where players can game during tournaments, or the general public can come in and use on off days. The location also offers a stage for finalist-level gaming between teams or players who spend tournaments battling it out. The event space in the center of the room is flexible and can seat up to a few hundred people, as gaming setups in The Pit are

moveable. While the layout will change from location to location, the design aesthetic and flexibility will remain consistent in future Localhost spaces. The LAN station and console desks as well as the stage and its setup are designed to meet the needs of the competitive gaming community while providing ample space for seated spectators, themes which will carry over to subsequent Localhost locations.

This particular space is designed to allow Nerd Street to continue delivering award-winning broadcasts, videos and other esports content. The second floor of “The Block” will house The Soniqs pro esports team’s home training facility, opening next year, as well as production studios that power Nerd Street’s Emmy Award-winning shows, as seen on ESPN and NBC Sports.

About Populous

Populous is a global architectural design firm that creates the spaces where people love to be together, like the Olympics, World Cups and Super Bowls. Our more than 3,000 projects live at the intersection of sports, entertainment, arts and culture to amplify emotional connection and belonging. Since 1983, the firm has been connecting people and place through services such as architecture, interior design, event planning, brand activation, wayfinding, urban planning, aviation design and sustainable design consulting. Populous has offices on four continents and regional centers in Kansas City, London and Brisbane. Learn more at www.populous.com.

About Nerd Street Gamers

Nerd Street is a national network of esports facilities and events dedicated to powering competitive opportunities for gamers. The company promotes greater access to the esports industry, laying a national framework for esports talent development and high-quality gaming tournaments. Through Localhost, its gaming and esports centers across the country, the company provides opportunities for gamers of all ages and skill levels to participate in esports tournaments, camps, team training, private events, and hourly play for a wide variety of video games. Nerd Street has received backing from Five Below, Comcast Spectacor, SeventySix Capital, Elevate Ventures, angel investor George Miller, and Founders Fund.