



For Immediate Release

## **Keeneland Makes Historic Announcement: Construction of a New Paddock Building and Enhancements to the Saddling Paddock**

*Project will add new guest experiences for racing, sales and year-round events while providing a safer and more spacious saddling area for horses and riders*

**LEXINGTON, KY (Oct. 18, 2023)** – Keeneland officials today announced plans for major capital investment projects highlighted by the construction of a permanent Paddock Building and a reimagined saddling experience. Located alongside the Keeneland Paddock and Walking Ring, the new Paddock Building will expand viewing and dining experiences available to the public during Keeneland’s two signature race meets, enhance hospitality during Keeneland’s Thoroughbred auctions and provide exceptional new venues for special events year-round. Furthering Keeneland’s culture of equine safety, the saddling stalls will be repositioned to provide the safest environment possible for equine and human participants and to give fans an unmatched view of the Saddling Paddock.

Construction is scheduled to begin in January 2024 at the conclusion of Keeneland’s January Horses of All Ages Sale. Plans are to complete the project in the Fall of 2025. Keeneland’s race meets and sales will continue at full capacity during construction.

“Keeneland’s founding mission is to be a model race track, to invest in the future of our sport, to enrich our Central Kentucky community and to always do what is best for the horse,” Keeneland President and CEO Shannon Arvin said. “This project is central to our mission because it will allow us to welcome more fans and give them a variety of world-class experiences during our race meets and beyond. The improvements to our saddling processes are not only functional in providing more space for horses and horsemen, but the results will offer unobstructed views to showcase the beauty and pageantry of our equine and human athletes.”

The three-level building is planned in the current footprint of the Keeneland administrative building and Jockeys Quarters and will extend the entire length of the Paddock and Walking Ring. The new venue will feature a variety of ticketed experiences available to the public, including traditional sit-down dining, new bar concepts, a panoramic rooftop and more. The Paddock Building will include a reconfigured East Gate entrance that will align with Keeneland Boulevard while expanding the area inside the gates around the historic Sycamore tree. Additionally, a new Jockeys Quarters will be housed

within the building, providing fans a unique experience in which jockeys will walk directly through the venue before each race.

“We spent a great deal of time looking at racing venues and sports facilities around the world for inspiration.” Arvin said. “We also talked to our stakeholders and fans to understand what they love most about spending a day at Keeneland, whether it be during racing, sales or another occasion. Keeneland’s fans are the best in the industry, and we know the demand for tickets is often greater than the supply. This new facility will allow us to provide a variety of unique experiences allowing more fans to enjoy the finest hospitality in sports.”

To accommodate the Paddock Building, a two-story operations building is planned for construction within walking distance of the race track. The new facility will enable Keeneland to consolidate core business and operations teams under one roof in an updated work environment. As part of the project scope, plans are also in development for an on-site Visitors Center.

These new structures will be architecturally consistent with the track’s existing Clubhouse and Grandstand and feature the two-over-two pattern of stonework unique to Keeneland. This seamless integration into Keeneland’s campus will enhance the patron experience while also maintaining the qualities and traditions that are beloved by so many in Central Kentucky and beyond.

The capital project is the largest undertaken since Keeneland opened nearly 90 years ago and marks the first major construction at the track since Keeneland Library was built in 2002.

Keeneland is working with state and local government to secure incentive funds to support the project, which is expected to cost nearly \$93 million. Today, upon the recommendation of the Tourism, Arts and Heritage Cabinet, Keeneland received preliminary approval from the Kentucky Tourism Development Finance Authority (KT DFA) for incentives to support the project totaling up to \$23.2 million.

“Keeneland is a historic destination for our local families and travelers, and this exciting investment will create more opportunities for everyone to enjoy, while boosting our signature horse racing industry and Kentucky’s \$12.9 billion tourism industry,” said Gov. Andy Beshear. “The horse racing industry is as indispensable to our economy as it is to our culture, and after a record-breaking year for tourism in 2022, leaders like Keeneland are going to help ensure Kentucky’s success continues for years to come.”

“We’re thrilled to see Keeneland’s investment in expanding their facilities in Lexington, which will further strengthen Kentucky’s already prestigious horse industry,” said Tourism, Arts and Heritage Cabinet Secretary Lindy Casebier. “This significant investment is a testament to the state’s continued growth and momentum in the tourism sector, showcasing Kentucky’s ability to deliver top-notch experiences to visitors from all over the world.”

“When Keeneland makes changes – and that doesn’t happen very often – they are always done with excellence,” Mayor Linda Gorton said. “Keeneland attracts thousands of tourists to our community, who fill up our restaurants and our hotels. With this change, Keeneland will be able to welcome even more guests.”

Global design firm [Populous](#) is serving as lead architect and will carry out exterior and interior architecture and design, landscape design and experiential branding for the project. The Populous team, through its vast expertise creating world-class equestrian facilities, race courses and exhibitions buildings coupled with its rich history of developing immersive entertainment venues, has focused on weaving the beauty and traditions of Keeneland and the majesty and safety of the horse throughout the design.

“Keeneland is a national treasure and Populous is honored to support the emerging needs of horsemen and guests through these thoughtful design solutions while creating a new vantage point for future generations to enjoy all that Keeneland has to offer,” said Mason Paoli, Principal, Interior Design Director, Populous. “This project offers a unique opportunity to combine our deep background in the sports, entertainment and hospitality sectors to create these one-of-a-kind spaces for fans and patrons in reverence to the horse, further extending Keeneland’s timeless mission and legacy in the sport.”

Opened in 1936, Keeneland unites world-class Thoroughbred racing and industry-leading sales under one mission-driven entity. Keeneland hosted the Breeders’ Cup World Championships in 2015, 2020 and 2022. The track’s renowned grounds were designated a National Historic Landmark in 1986. The site also has been a location for major motion pictures, including films about Seabiscuit and Secretariat.

Keeneland’s race meets attract fans from all 50 states, and buyers and sellers from across the U.S. and some 50 countries participate in Keeneland’s four Thoroughbred auctions. Keeneland racing and sales generate nearly \$600 million in annual economic impact to Fayette County.

“VisitLEX is thrilled with Keeneland’s plans for expanded seating and enhanced visitor experiences,” said VisitLEX President Mary Quinn Ramer. “Keeneland is investing in the future and this project ensures that visitors will continue to choose Lexington for world-class Thoroughbred racing. We are excited to welcome even more visitors to town to experience the magic of Keeneland.”

In addition to the new Paddock Building and improvements, Keeneland plans to make future announcements in furtherance of its mission to enhance racing and sales and the health and well-being of the horse.

“This exciting project will be the first in a number of enhancements to our trackside experience, sales facilities and the backstretch community,” said Arvin. “This is an investment in the advancement of Keeneland’s mission: to strengthen our industry and the future of our sport for generations to come.”

## **About Keeneland**

Since its first race meet more than 85 years ago, the Keeneland Association has devoted itself to the health and vibrancy of the Thoroughbred industry. The world's largest Thoroughbred auction house, Keeneland conducts five sales a year, in January, April, September and November. Graduates of Keeneland sales dominate racing across the globe at every level. In April and October, Keeneland offers some of the highest caliber and richest Thoroughbred racing in the world. Keeneland hosted the Breeders' Cup World Championships in 2015, 2020 and 2022. Uniquely structured, Keeneland is a privately held company with a not-for-profit mission that returns its earnings to the industry and the community in the form of higher purses and millions of dollars donated in support of horse industry initiatives and charitable contributions for education, research, and health and human services throughout Central Kentucky. Keeneland also maintains the Keeneland Library, a world-renowned public research institution with the mission of preserving information about the Thoroughbred industry. To learn more, visit [Keeneland.com](http://Keeneland.com).

## **About Populous**

Populous is a global design firm that designs the places where people love to be together, like the Olympics, World Cups and Super Bowls. Over the last 40 years, the firm has designed more than 3,000 projects worth \$40 billion across emerging and established markets. Populous' comprehensive services include architecture, interior design, event planning and overlay, branded environments, wayfinding, and graphics, planning and urban design, landscape architecture, aviation and transport design, hotels and hospitality, and sustainable design consulting. Populous has offices on four continents with regional centers in Kansas City, London, and Brisbane. For more information visit [www.populous.com](http://www.populous.com).

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