Parks and open spaces are critical to our city’s well-being. While COVID-19 caused unimaginable devastation to communities across the five boroughs, our parks - the most fundamentally democratic and accessible public resources - remained open and available to New Yorkers who relied heavily on these public spaces as their backyards and community living rooms. While parks were overwhelmed with record visitors seeking safety, solace, exercise and relaxation, the pandemic highlighted the deep inequity in our parks system, with lower income and majority BIPOC residents having smaller and fewer parks and reduced resources in their communities.

Our city’s Parks Department is severely underfunded. It relies on the generosity of hundreds of grassroots volunteers and nonprofit organizations, both large and small, to help maintain and activate our parks. These organizations often raise money through events -- small neighborhood gatherings, dinners, family days - for their sustenance. No public gatherings meant no events and the loss of millions of dollars in support precisely when parks needed them most. Several conservancies and park group leaders formed the NYC Parks and Open Space Partners coalition, leaning on each other for support and working together to boost awareness of the funding needs to help keep public spaces clean, green, and well-maintained.

Two months later, in May 2020, a forward-thinking collective of national, family, and community foundations launched the NYC Green Relief & Recovery Fund to support stewardship organizations caring for New York City’s parks and open spaces. The pooled Fund responded to the most urgent needs facing the City’s parks and open spaces while spurring decision-makers to address ongoing systemic challenges and provide adequate funding to maintain and improve them. I am in awe of the funders’ sensitivity, deep understanding, and enormous compassion in the face of tremendous need.

The Fund, originally meant to sunset after three years, was a lifeline of financial support for open spaces and stewardship groups during a time of unprecedented use and need, ultimately having an impact on millions of New Yorkers who use their local green spaces. It is my great honor and privilege to report on the outcomes of the NYC Green Relief & Recovery Fund and share more about some of the projects supported by the Fund. More importantly, I am thrilled to report on the resiliency New Yorkers demonstrated by coming together to care for our city in a time of great need.

As we move forward, we’re thrilled to transform the emergency response program into the NYC Green Fund - a long-term campaign to provide financial, network, and technical support for open space stewards.

Heather Lubov
Executive Director
City Parks Foundation
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The NYC Green Relief & Recovery Fund aimed to increase parks and open space equity by prioritizing grant-making in low-income or minority communities and targeting environmental justice areas. These low-income or minority communities are more vulnerable to potential environmental injustices due to systemic racism and inequitable resource distribution. These conditions have led to underinvestment in climate-resilient spaces such as parks, open spaces, and tree canopies, which provide environmental benefits like temperature regulation and air purification.

**HOW MUCH WAS DISTRIBUTED?**
- Over $8.6 million distributed
- 325 micro-grants made to volunteer-run organizations
- 184 grants made to open-space nonprofits
- 26 grants awarded for systems change efforts

**WHAT DID GRANTS SUPPORT?**
- Debris removal and basic maintenance
- Personal protective equipment and sanitation supplies
- Volunteer-led stewardship projects
- Landscape maintenance and horticultural care
- Workforce development programs in green spaces
- Employee retention efforts
- Public programming to support community health and wellbeing
- Awareness-building around the funding needed to create an equitable open space system
- Improved access to open space

**WHERE DID THE FUNDING GO?**
- Bronx: 109 grants
- Brooklyn: 132 grants
- Manhattan: 135 grants
- Queens: 88 grants
- Staten Island: 32 grants
- Multi-borough: 39 grants
As NYC went into pandemic lockdown, open space stewards came together as the NYC Parks and Open Spaces Partners coalition (POSP) to ensure their respective open spaces -- large and small -- remained available for all New Yorkers. All coalition members played a role, from documenting conditions via the “Report on COVID-19 Impact on Open Space,” and fundraising together to highlighting programmatic needs and identifying advocacy and legislative priorities. The POSP coalition continues to grow and evolve as a critical way to identify and address current and emerging organizational and managerial issues for nonprofit leaders, ensure members have a place to candidly discuss challenges and successes, and identify top needs for the sector.

The pooled NYC Green Relief & Recovery Fund was led by unofficial co-chairs Amy Freitag, formerly President of the J.M. Kaplan Fund and now President of the New York Community Trust, and Arturo Garcia-Costas, Senior Program Officer, Local, National and International Environment, New York Community Trust. The group of funders, many of whom were strangers to one another before the Fund’s creation, worked together to boost awareness of the Fund, review projects, and creatively fund as many projects as possible. The pooled Fund was set up to be responsive to the needs of the open space sector and shifted based on priorities identified through sector convenings.

Although Central Park Conservancy, led by President Betsy Smith, also faced funding shortfalls that strained the organization’s ability to maintain New York’s most visible park, it contributed significant in-kind support to the Fund by providing talented meeting facilitators and researchers who documented current conditions to help inform funding decisions, producing the NYC Green Fund Literature Review in 2020 and the New Parks Era: A Collective Vision for Open Space report in New York City in 2022.

City Parks Foundation took on the role of grants administrator for the Fund. Emily Sherrod, Director of Partnership Development, served as project leader, in coordination with Sabina Saragoussi, Director of Partnerships for Parks. Staff members from across City Parks Foundation and Partnerships for Parks helped to contribute to the NYC Green Relief & Recovery Fund and make this work possible, including:

Simon Chu
Caroline Chen
Rebecca Cohen
Yaisa Coronado
Jeanna Chin
Kelly Doyle
Ted Enoch
Billy Fidler
Farren Islam
Rosemary Jorda
Sheri Signer
Tomasia Kastner
Nicole Keiser
Michele Leyko
Jean Mallol
Mike Mullaley
Patrick Nylen
Christina Pettit
Ellie Plass
Cameron Robello
Shari Rose
Nina Richards
Lupe Sanchez
Lindsey Sierra
Chrissy Word
Stemming from the high demand we have seen for the NYC Green Relief & Recovery Fund, the NYC Parks and Open Space Partners coalition, and their success meeting the varied needs of parks and groups, we are now transforming the three-year NYC Green Relief & Recovery Fund from an emergency response program into a long-term campaign to provide financial, network, and technical support for open space stewards. Our goal is to create a resilient and equitable New York City parks ecosystem that supports the well-being of all New Yorkers.

In a survey of more than 420 community park groups and other stakeholders, taken during the 3-year term of the Fund, we identified the most overwhelming concern groups have is “funding and fundraising,” while the most common goal that groups share is a desire to “engage their community in more public events.” In analyzing the inadequacies and inconsistencies of support systems for parks and stewardship groups, we recognize that significant support is needed for the future of these spaces in NYC and that an expanded NYC Green Fund can make a substantial and lasting impact.

With the understanding that private funding cannot and should not replace adequate public support for parks, we are moving away from providing funding for maintenance and operations that kept parks open during the emergency and shifting to supporting programming and activations of green space, including stewardship, environmental action, organizational capacity building, youth development, health and wellness, and arts and culture.

We are also improving the sustainability of the NYC Parks and Open Space Partners coalition (POSP) members by offering critical management services to help support their work through training opportunities; facilitating communication between groups; offering organizational Infrastructure support and shared resources, such as HR, finance, joint memberships, vetted vendors, and more; and, of course, funding, which includes both NYC Green Fund grants but also educational activities that galvanize adequate public support.

For more information and to contribute to the NYC Green Fund, please contact:

Billy Fidler
NYC Green Fund Campaign Director, City Parks Foundation
BFidler@cityparksfoundation.org
Project Harmony, INC. is a volunteer-driven neighborhood organization devoted to the well-being and sustainability of the environment and community in Central Harlem. Since 1985, Project Harmony has been active in local revitalization efforts, cleaning up vacant lots and transforming them into gardens and woodlands, and hosting environmental programs emphasizing youth, food security, and social justice.

An NYC Green Relief and Recovery Fund grant in 2021 helped Project Harmony to create a beautiful and productive garden, process over 3,000 pounds of vegetable waste into compost, and host a small farm stand that provided organic vegetables to the community - a much-needed offering during a time of high food insecurity. Harlem resident Bonita said, "I cannot imagine life without this garden and all it offers in this community, raising my two daughters!"

ProjectHarmonynyc.org
Drawing on restoration efforts dating back to 1974, the Bronx River Alliance was formed in 2001 with support from Partnerships for Parks, a joint program of City Parks Foundation and NYC Parks, to act as a coordinated voice for the river. They work collaboratively with partners to protect, improve and restore the Bronx River and build a continuous greenway, creating a healthy, ecological, recreational, educational and economic resource for many Bronx communities.

In 2020, the NYC Green Relief and Recovery Fund enabled the Bronx River Alliance to launch the EELS Internship program, which provides paid learning opportunities to Bronx youth. In 2021, Lehman College joined as a partner, allowing participants to receive transferable college credit and a stipend. Support from the Fund supported the purchase of PPE and supplies such as individual binoculars to run programs safely, along with keeping staffing intact. Bronx River Alliance staff noted, “Teachers this year were desperately searching for a way to get their students outside. Through the Green Fund, we were able to deliver outdoor opportunities in a safe manner. One student reported that “this trip is so much fun!”

BronxRiver.org
Brooklyn Greenway Initiative (BGI) is a nonprofit organization committed to the development, establishment, and long-term stewardship of the Brooklyn Waterfront Greenway – a 26-mile protected and landscaped route for pedestrians and cyclists of all ages and abilities.

With support from the NYC Green Relief and Recovery Fund in 2022, Brooklyn Greenways Initiative formalized the NYC Greenways Coalition, composed of more than 40 nonprofit, community, advocacy, and stewardship organizations working to plan and implement the 400-mile citywide greenway network. This unique coalition, combining a citywide planning focus with a neighborhood-by-neighborhood understanding of NYC’s greenway needs and challenges, is a new and remarkably effective voice for equity-driven greenway planning across all five boroughs, boosting awareness of a new citywide greenway master plan, securing federal funding, and hosting the first-of-its-kind NYC Greenways Coalition Summit and Greenways Week.

BrooklynGreenway.org
NYC Green Fund
$8.6 Million in Grants
2020-2023

*With an additional 39 Multi-Borough Grants
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Friends of Abandoned Cemeteries Inc
Friends of Alice Austen House, Inc.
Friends of Alley Pond Park
Friends of Aqueduct Walk
Friends of Art Park Alliance Inc.
Friends of Asse Levy Park
Friends of Astin Jacobo / Mapes Baseball Field
Friends of Astoria Heights Park
Friends Of Benninger Playground
Friends of Brookville Park/National Association of University Women
Friends of Brower Park
Friends of Bushwick Inlet Park
Friends of Colonel Young Park/Malcolm X Community Improvement Association
Friends of Cooper Park
Friends of Corlears Hook Park
Friends of Dag Hammarskjold Plaza
Friends of Devoe Park
Friends of Downtown Parks NYC, Inc.
Friends of Francis Lewis Park
Friends of Gantry Plaza State Park
Friends of Garden Kitchen Lab
Friends of Gulick Park
Friends of Hudson River Park
Friends of Inwood Hill Park
Friends of J Hood Wright Park
Friends of John Hancock Children’s Playground
Friends of John Hancock Park
Friends of Juniper Valley Park
Friends of MacDonald Park
Friends of Mariners Harbor
Friends of Montgomery Triangle Park
Friends of Morningside Park, Inc.
Friends of Mosholou Parkland
Friends of Noonan Playground
Friends of North Pacific Playground and Garden
Friends of Olmsted Beil House Inc.
Friends of Pelham Parkway
Friends of Pier 35
Friends of Rochdale Parks
Friends of Saratoga Park
Friends of Sherman Creek Conservancy Inc.
Friends of Soundview Park
Friends of St. Andrews Playground
Friends of St. Mary’s Park
Friends of St. Nicholas Park

Friends Of Straus Park, Inc.
Friends of Summit Playground
Friends of the High Line
Friends Of Thomas J Cuite Park
Friends of Tompkinsville Park
Friends of Transmitter Park
Friends of Tremont Park
Friends of Verdi Square, Inc.
Future Star Productions
Garden of Happiness
Gates Garden
Good Shepherds Community Garden
Governors Island Alliance Inc.
Gowanus Canal Conservancy
RAIN Coalition
Grant Ave Community Garden
Greater TriAngular Civic Association
Green and Blue Eco Care
Green Guerillas, Inc
Green Oasis Community Garden
Green-Wood Historic Fund
Greenbelt Conservancy
Greene Garden
GreenSpace @ President St
GrowBrooklynGreen
Guardians of Flushing Bay
Hamilton Grange
Harlem Grown, Inc.
Harlem One Stop Inc.
Harlem River Community Rowing
Harlem Rose Garden
Hattie Carthan Community Garden
Havemeyer Garden Association
Hill Street Community Garden
Historic House Trust of New York City
HomeGrown Parks Volunteers
Hope Steven Garden
HQ Tennis Foundation
HUB Third Avenue Merchant District Management Association, Inc.
Hudson River Community Sailing
Hudson River Park Friends
Hunters Point Parks Conservancy
I.S. 318 Project Roots Community Garden
Imani Community Garden
Ingersoll Garden of Eden
Jackie Robinson Park Conservancy
Jackson Forest Community Garden
Jackson Heights Beautification Group
Jacob H. Schiff Playground Neighborhood Association
James Baldwin Outdoor Learning Center
JumpShots Over GunShots
Kelly Street Block Association
Kelly Street Garden
Kew Kids
Kingsbridge Heights Community Center
Kissena Synergy Velodrome Friends Group
Know Waste Lands Community Garden
La Plaza Cultural Armando Perez Community Garden
Lewis Latimer House Museum
Lincoln Road Garden Volunteers
Long Live Linden
Lower East Side Ecology Center
Lydia's Magic Garden
M'Finda Kalunga Community Garden
Malcolm X Boulevard Beautification Group
Manhattan Land Trust
Marcus Garvey Dog Run
Marcus Meets Malcolm
Maria Hernandez Park Dog Run Pack
Marine Park Alliance
Melrose New Generation Community Garden
Mill Brook Garden
Minetta Churchill Partners
Mobilization for Change Garden
Moffat Street Community Garden
Moore Jackson Community Garden
Morning Glory Garden
Morningside Park Conservancy
Morris-Jumel Community Garden
Morris-Jumel Mansion
Mott Haven - Port Morris Community Land Stewards
Mujeres en Movimiento
Municipal Art Society of New York
Muslim Volunteers for New York
My Friends Place NY
Myrtle Avenue BID
Natural Areas Conservancy
Natural Resources Protective Association
Neighbors United of West 132nd Street Block Association
New Settlement
New York City Mountain Bike Association
New York Community League
New York Restoration Project
New Yorkers for Parks
Newkirk Community Garden
Newtown Creek Alliance
North Brooklyn Parks Alliance
North Longfellow United Block Association
Not Just Hoops, Inc.
NYC H2O
NYCHA-Dewitt Clinton Houses
NYRP: The Herb Garden
NYSoM Group
O'Dwyer Gardens Resident Association
Olivet Heavenly Harvest
Open Space Alliance for North Brooklyn
Owl's Head Park Volunteers
Pacific Street Brooklyn Bears Community Garden
Padre Plaza Success Community Garden
Paradise Community Garden NY
Parent-Child Relationship Association
Parque de Tranquilidad
Phoenix Community Garden
Port Richmond Strong Civic Association
Project Harmony
Prospect Cemetery Association
Prospect Heights Community Farm
Prospect Park Alliance
Queens Botanical Garden
Queens County Farm Museum
Queens Economic Development Corporation
Rainbow Garden of Life and Health
Randall's Island Park Alliance
Red Hook Conservancy
Ridgewood Community Garden
River Garden
Riverdale Main Streets Alliance
Riverside Park Conservancy
Roberto Clemente Community Garden
Rockaway Development & Revitalization Corporation
Roots Unbound
Saint Nicholas Dog Run
Salsa Stories
Savoy Park Tenants Association
Seagirt Ave. & Friends Block Association
SEQ Cleanup
Seward Park Conservancy
Slow Food NYC
Small Bubbles
Smiling Hogshead, inc
Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden
Socrates Sculpture Park
South Bronx Skateboarding
South Bronx Unite
Southern Queens Park Association
St. Nicholas Miracle Garden
Staten Island Therapeutic Gardens
Staten Island Urban Center
Stewards for Shore Pkwy
Stewards of Ewen Park
Stewards of Henry Hudson Park
Street Lab
Success Garden Community Group
Sun Wind and Shade Oasis Community Garden
Sunnyside Community Garden
Sunnyside District Management Association
Sunset Park Tree Care
Sustainable South Bronx
Sutton Place Parks Conservancy
Take Back the Bronx
Teddy Bear Project
The Alley Pond Striders New York
The Black Feminist Project
The Bronx is Blooming
The Brotherhood/Sister Sol
The Campaign Against Hunger
The Community Serenity Garden
The Compost Collective
The Dog Run at Saint Nicholas Park
The Essence Of Jayce
The Forest Park Trust
The Friends of Brownsville Parks
The Friends of Governors Island
The Garden by the Bay
The Good Life Garden
The HOPE Program
The Horticultural Society of New York
The Morningside Park Conservancy
The Nettwork Inc
The New York State Marine Education Association
The Parkside Plaza Committee
The Trust for Public Land
TRASH project
Tree of Life Organic Garden
Triple R. Garden
Two Bridges Tower Tenant Assoc./Friends of Pier 35
Two Coves Community Garden
Ujamaa Garden
Union Street Garden
United Community Centers, Inc
United Sports League
Urban Cultivated
Urban Design Forum
Van Cortlandt Park Alliance
Van Duzer Street Civic Association
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Volunteers for Springfield Park, Inc
W. 132nd St. Community Garden
Wakefield4change
Walt L. Shamel Community Garden
Walton Park Community Garden
Warren-St Marks Community Garden
Washington Heights & Inwood Food Council
Washington Houses Gardens
Washington Square Park Conservancy
Waterfront Alliance
WE STAY/Nos Quedamos, Inc.
West 103rd Street Open Street Community Coalition
West 123 St Community Garden
West 132nd St. Block Association
West 132nd Street Community Garden
William B. Washington Memorial Garden
Women of Woodlawn
Woodbine Street Block Association & Garden
Woodlawn Collective
Woodycrest Community Garden
Wycoff Farmhouse Museum & Friends of the Lott House
Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice
NYC PARKS AND OPEN SPACE PARTNERS COALITION

In April 2020, a group of open space leaders came together for peer advice and coordination - evolving into the NYC Parks and Open Space Partners coalition. The coalition works to organize, elevate, and sustain a community of practice amongst organizations dedicated to caring for our City’s open spaces. The coalition fosters a network of peer support, shares ideas to address common challenges, amplifies advocacy efforts, and offers concrete technical assistance and guidance in service of an equitable and resilient parks system for all New Yorkers.

We give thanks to the current and former members of the coalition, including:

- Alliance for Flushing Meadows Corona Park
- Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum
- Broadway Mall Association
- Bronx River Alliance
- Brooklyn Botanic Garden
- Brooklyn Bridge Park Conservancy
- Brooklyn Greenway Initiative
- Brooklyn Queens Land Trust
- Central Park Conservancy
- Christodora
- City Parks Foundation
- Elizabeth Street Garden
- El Puente
- Fort Greene Park Conservancy
- Freshkills Park Alliance
- Friends of Brownsville Parks
- Friends of the East River Esplanade
- The Friends of Governors Island
- Friends of the High Line
- Friends of Morningside Park
- Friends of St. Nicholas Park
- Gowanus Canal Conservancy
- Green Guerillas
- GrowNYC
- Historic House Trust
- Hudson River Park Friends
- Hudson River Park Sailing
- Hudson River Park Trust
- Hunters Point Parks Conservancy
- Jackie Robinson Park Conservancy
- Jamaica Bay-Rockaway Parks Conservancy
- King Manor
- Lewis Latimer House
- Local Nature Lab
- Madison Square Park Conservancy
- Marcus Garvey Park Alliance
- Marine Park Alliance
- Merchant House Museum
- Morris Jumel Mansion
- National Wildlife Federation
- Natural Areas Conservancy
- New York Restoration Project
- New Yorkers for Parks
- North Brooklyn Parks Alliance
- Prospect Park Alliance
- NYC Audubon
- Queens County Farm Museum
- Randall's Island Park Alliance
- Riverside Park Conservancy
- Staten Island Urban Center
- The Trust for Public Land
- Union Square Partnership
- Van Cortlandt Park Alliance
- Washington Square Park Conservancy
- Wyckoff House Museum
A MAJOR THANK YOU

The NYC Green Relief & Recovery Fund would not have been possible without generous private support provided by:

- The Albert Giving Fund
- Altman Foundation
- Booth Ferris Foundation
- Charina Fund
- Con Edison
- Doris Duke Charitable Foundation
- Essex Avenue Foundation
- The J.M. Kaplan Fund
- The JPB Foundation
- Klein Family Foundation
- Leon Levy Foundation
- The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust
- Libra Fund
- Lily Auchincloss Foundation
- The Monarch Foundation
- The New York Community Trust
- Prospect Hill Foundation
- The Charles H. Revson Foundation
- Rockefeller Brothers Fund
- Seachange Capital Partners
- Stavros Niarchos Foundation
- The Thompson Family Foundation
- Tiffany & Co. Foundation
- And many philanthropic individuals

We would also like to thank Nancy Raybin for her fundraising guidance, Anne Townsend for her coaching support, and Salt, a think tank and consultancy focused on real and meaningful change, for their partnership in developing our impact assessment tool.
PRESS ANNOUNCEMENTS

Equity and Innovation in NYC's Parks and Open Spaces
(March 23, 2023)

City Parks Foundation Grants $1.8M to 154 Organizations Supporting NYC's Parks and Open Spaces Through NYC Green Relief & Recovery Fund and Green / Arts LIVE Grant Programs
(August 9, 2022)

NYC Green Relief & Recovery Fund Grants $503,000 to 7 Organizations Promoting Equity in NYC’s Parks and Open Spaces
(February 10, 2022)

NYC Green Relief & Recovery Fund Announces $150,000 in Grants for 112 Grassroots Volunteer Groups Caring for Parks and Green Spaces across NYC
(September 20, 2021)

City Parks Foundation Announces 109 Grants through NYC Green Relief & Recovery Fund and GREEN / ARTS LIVE NYC
(July 8, 2021)

NYC Green Relief & Recovery Fund Announces $845,000 in Grants to Address Systemic Weaknesses in the Stewardship of the City’s Parks and Open Space System
(March 4, 2021)

NYC Green Relief & Recovery Fund Announces $347,500 in Support for 128 Grassroots Volunteer Groups and 4 Nonprofits in Caring for Parks and Open Spaces in NYC in Second Round of Funding; Three New Funders Have Signed on to Support the Growing Fund, Total Estimated Need is $40 Million
(August 5, 2020)

NYC Green Relief & Recovery Fund Announces Support for 62 Nonprofits Caring for Parks and Open Spaces in NYC in First Round of Funding; Six New Funders Have Signed on to Support the Growing Fund, Total Estimated Need is $40 Million
(June 17, 2020)

Foundations seed COVID-19 Relief and Recovery Fund to Support Nonprofits Caring for NYC Parks and Green Spaces
(May 21, 2020)
ABOUT CITY PARKS FOUNDATION

At City Parks Foundation, we are dedicated to invigorating and transforming parks into dynamic, vibrant centers of urban life through sports, arts, community building and education programs for all New Yorkers. Our programs - located in more than 300 parks, recreation centers and public schools across New York City - reach over 275,000 people each year.

Our ethos is simple: thriving parks mean thriving communities.

ABOUT PARTNERSHIPS FOR PARKS

Grants to volunteer-run organizations are administered by Partnerships for Parks, a unique public-private partnership between City Parks Foundation and NYC Parks that supports and champions neighborhood volunteers by giving them the tools they need to advocate and care for their neighborhood parks and green spaces. More information about Partnerships for Parks is available at www.partnershipsforparks.org.

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