



# Riverside Park Conservancy

2018 Annual Report

Working side by side



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## From the President & CEO

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I was honored to take the helm as President & CEO of Riverside Park Conservancy in May 2018, and this organization is doing more, and doing better, than any time in its 32-year history. *The New York Times* this year credited the Conservancy for restoring Riverside Park to its original greatness, and we are aspiring to go much further.

Working side by side by Riverside, we continued to restore key areas of the Park, like the Pollinator Meadow and Bird Sanctuary between 116th and 120th Streets. We also took the first steps to create a green barrier - with plants and shrubs - between the Park and the Henry Hudson Parkway from 75th to 77th Streets, and to restore the entire south slope from 72nd to 79th Streets.

We are nearly finished renovating the Field House at 102nd Street. This Moses-era structure was once burned out and abandoned. The Conservancy stepped in, and is restoring it to its original glory. Soon it will be a center of community activity - from sports events to community meetings and celebrations. And we took steps to restore the area around the Amiable Child Monument, a humble memory of a 5 year old child who fell to his death on the site in 1797. In the shadow of Grant's Tomb, it had gone unrecognized and neglected for years.

We also hosted 284 free events, entertaining 39,679 New Yorkers. Over 1,000 kids participated in our summer sports camp. And we continue to enjoy the support of approximately 6,000 volunteers every year - who last year offered 40,132 hours of their time to protect Riverside Park. And our field team of gardeners, natural areas stewards, and ballfield crews worked throughout the Park, from 59th Street up to the George Washington Bridge.

The Riverside Park Conservancy is today stronger than ever, and poised to do even more good for this beloved public space that is in our care. I want to thank you for your support, and hope we can continue to count on you.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Daniel R. Garodnick  
President & CEO



## From the Board Chair

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As a result of a dedicated, multi-year effort by the Board, 2018 was a transformational year. In May, we welcomed our new President & CEO, Daniel R. Garodnick, who comes with a distinguished record of public service and success in the private sector. As a three-term NY City Council Member, Dan negotiated the largest affordable housing preservation deal in NYC history, spearheaded the rezoning of midtown Manhattan, and authored NYC's first Green Energy Code. Dan is a seasoned and passionate advocate for quality of life in New York City. His vision and leadership ensure a beautiful and sustainable future for Riverside Park!

The Conservancy's impact on the Park continues to grow significantly, as our team expertly maintains habitats and features such as the Pollinator Meadow, the Bird Sanctuary and our woodland slopes, as well as ball fields, playgrounds, dog runs, a skate park, specialty gardens and historical monuments. We are proud to partner with the NYC Parks Department to steward this spectacular six-mile stretch of the Manhattan Waterfront Greenway.

Every year, the Conservancy co-sponsors Summer on the Hudson, a free series of over 250 public events. Six years ago, we began our Multi-Sport Camp, which now hosts over 1,000 campers each summer. The Conservancy provides scholarships to 20% of campers, with no child turned away for lack of funds. This spring, we introduced a unique play structure in River Run Playground specifically designed for children with spatial challenges. As expected, this piece is a nexus of collaborative play and is a great hit with every kid in the playground!

Over the next year, we look forward to working with our public partners to repair and to improve aging infrastructure within Riverside Park. The mission of Riverside Park Conservancy is both stewardship and advocacy, and we aim to deliver on both fronts for the Park.

New Yorkers are the lucky beneficiaries of Frederick Law Olmsted's deeply held belief that parks should play an important role in our democracy. I believe there is no better place in New York City to experience Olmsted's legacy than along the regal banks of the mighty Hudson River. I hope you will come soon and often to enjoy the magnificence of Riverside Park!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lori Lennon Bassman".

Lori Lennon Bassman, M.D.  
Chair, Riverside Park Conservancy



## From the Commissioner

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As the backyard for millions of New Yorkers, healthy parks are essential spaces for neighbors to play and connect with one another. Developing and caring for vibrant public spaces is a key way we promote health and happiness, and partners like the Riverside Park Conservancy help NYC Parks preserve and enrich some of our most beloved park spaces.

The Conservancy has grown significantly since its start in 1986, and through that growth, it has taken on a substantial amount of responsibility for the care of, Riverside Park and Riverside Park South, and neighboring Sakura, West Harlem Piers, and Fort Washington parks. It has also developed an expertise in horticulture and athletic field care, applied to the benefit of numerous natural areas and ballfields throughout the park.

In 2018, we were pleased to welcome the Conservancy's new President & CEO, Daniel R. Garodnick. Alongside Mr. Garodnick's arrival, the Conservancy underwent an organizational rebranding and released a new eye-catching logo and tagline "Working side by Riverside." In the spirit of these words, the Conservancy has undertaken a number of significant projects across the spectrum of horticulture, natural areas, and art restorations this year.

NYC Parks is grateful to have a strong partner in Riverside Park Conservancy. We are excited to see its continued growth, and to embark on another year together as caretakers for these treasured spaces.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Mitchell J. Silver". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Mitchell J. Silver, FAICP, Hon. ASLA  
Commissioner  
NYC Department of Parks & Recreation



## From the Mayor

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In a city where towering skyscrapers dominate the landscape, every patch of green matters to our residents. New Yorkers cherish each inch of the parks, beaches, and other verdant spaces that enrich our built environment, and ensuring that all people, in every neighborhood, have access to these vital community hubs is an essential component of our efforts to make New York the fairest big city in America.

My administration is committed to protecting, revitalizing, and improving our outdoor spaces, a goal we could not achieve without the incredible stewardship of the Riverside Park Conservancy. For more than three decades, the Conservancy has taken on the work of maintaining Riverside Park and five adjoining parks, and today, under the leadership of President and Chief Executive Officer Dan Garodnick, RPC remains poised to not only tackle the 21st-century challenges facing this New York City treasure, but to ensure that it continues to thrive.

RPC's impressive growth over the last year has enabled it to advance many critical projects, including the restoration of the South Slope and the area around the Amiable Child Monument, the creation of a green barrier between the park and the Henry Hudson Parkway, the development of the Pollinator Meadow and Bird Sanctuary, and the effort to renovate the Field House. Working side by side with Riverside, as its new tagline goes, RPC and our city are ready to partner together in helping this family of parks better serve its community and become even more resilient.

Riverside Park has always been one of the jewels in the crown of New York City, and we remain grateful to the Conservancy for its unwavering commitment to preserving it for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Bill de Blasio  
Mayor of New York City





# Riverside Park Conservancy Impact

# Working side by Riverside



Riverside Park Conservancy's work extends for six miles along the Hudson River, serving the Upper West Side, West Harlem, Hamilton Heights and Washington Heights.

Restoring, maintaining, and improving this unique 400-acre stretch of parkland is only possible when conservancy, city, and community work side by side. A park alongside the Hudson River presents special challenges, such as storm damage, ecological challenges, and erosion. Not to mention the additional stresses of having a highway and a railroad running through it.

Not only do we care for Riverside Park, but also Fort Washington Park, West Harlem Piers Park, Sakura Park, and Riverside Park South. While our name is Riverside Park Conservancy, we care for six miles of parkland from 59th Street to the George Washington Bridge.

We work side by side with the New York City Parks Department. While our daily tasks may differ, our goal is the same - to provide you with a better, safer, more enjoyable park experience. Throughout all four seasons, we work with a volunteer corps of loyal partners. Last year alone, our dedicated volunteers logged more than 40,000 hours of weeding, pruning, planting, painting, and picking up. We need you by our side. Private donations make up nearly 50% of the Park's yearly operating costs. Thanks to the generosity of neighbors and Park lovers like you, we remain true to our mission.



Volunteers work side by side with our team to enhance the Park's horticulture.



Conservancy staff are dedicated to providing year-round care for every inch of Riverside Park.



RIVERSIDE PARK  
CONSERVANCY

# By the Numbers

2018 was a year full of accomplishments and growth for the Conservancy.

## 32 YRS

of care from Riverside Park Conservancy—thanks to your support.

## 50%

of Riverside Park's operations are funded by private donations

## 48K

flowers, shrubs and trees planted

## 80K+

80,000 hours of horticultural care for six miles of Hudson River waterfront and adjacent parkland

## 6.6M+

in private donations raised

## 40K

spectators entertained at free Summer on the Hudson series



**The Future of Riverside Park is Bright**

# Keep an Eye Out

As Riverside Park Conservancy rises to meet the challenge of caring for a 21st Century park, we have upgraded our brand to raise public awareness of our unique role as a private partner to Riverside Park and the New York City Parks Department.

Working with Steve and Barbara Zammarchi, in conjunction with Applied Design Works, the Conservancy successfully developed a new aesthetic and gave new life to its ongoing mission.

Keep an eye out and you will see the brilliant gold of the honeylocust's fall leaves – throughout the year – on Riverside Park Conservancy signage and materials. The vibrant hue inspires bold ideas and embodies our revitalized commitment to Riverside Park.



The beautiful and historic honeylocust trees can be found throughout the entire Park.



Freddie Fernandez, Conservancy Ball Field Technician, installing a banner in fall of 2018.



You can find bright new banners throughout the Park.



**Riverside Park Conservancy**



Think of us as the alpha dog of the dog runs.

Donate. Volunteer.

- [riversideparknyc.org](http://riversideparknyc.org)
- [riversideparkconservancy](https://www.facebook.com/riversideparkconservancy)
- [riversideparkNYC](https://www.instagram.com/riversideparkNYC)
- [riversideparkNYC](https://www.youtube.com/riversideparkNYC)

Working side by Riverside



NYC Parks

**Riverside Park Conservancy**



Think of us as Eleanor Roosevelt's personal secretary.

Donate. Volunteer.

- [riversideparknyc.org](http://riversideparknyc.org)
- [riversideparkconservancy](https://www.facebook.com/riversideparkconservancy)
- [riversideparkNYC](https://www.instagram.com/riversideparkNYC)
- [riversideparkNYC](https://www.youtube.com/riversideparkNYC)

Working side by Riverside



NYC Parks

**Riverside Park Conservancy**



Think of us as the helicopter parents of every park playground.

Donate. Volunteer.

- [riversideparknyc.org](http://riversideparknyc.org)
- [riversideparkconservancy](https://www.facebook.com/riversideparkconservancy)
- [riversideparkNYC](https://www.instagram.com/riversideparkNYC)
- [riversideparkNYC](https://www.youtube.com/riversideparkNYC)

Working side by Riverside



NYC Parks

**Riverside Park Conservancy**



Think of us as Mother Nature's controlling mother.

Donate. Volunteer.

- [riversideparknyc.org](http://riversideparknyc.org)
- [riversideparkconservancy](https://www.facebook.com/riversideparkconservancy)
- [riversideparkNYC](https://www.instagram.com/riversideparkNYC)
- [riversideparkNYC](https://www.youtube.com/riversideparkNYC)

Working side by Riverside



NYC Parks

Another set of branded banners are expected in spring 2019.



# 2018 Priority Projects

# Greenway Slope Restoration



Before: The unmaintained slopes were overgrown with invasive species in some areas, with patches of bare soil in others.



After: A volunteer group joined Conservancy staff to undertake the initial cleanup and planting; the Conservancy's Irrigation Specialist installed an irrigation system to carefully water the new plantings.

The Greenway Slope Restoration project focuses on sustaining and advancing our restoration work in the sloped areas of Riverside Park, highlighting the historic Olmsted wall in some areas and disguising the Moses-era highway in others. Utilizing these slopes is a proactive way to protect Riverside Park and the Hudson River from the negative impact of human activities. The implementation of this project mitigates erosion damage and reduces nitrified water flows into the Hudson River. Our aim in the sloped area from 72nd to 84th Streets is to dampen the impact of the highway for park users and to support the wildlife that migrate, forage, and inhabit the area. This initiative ultimately enables the Conservancy to be the best neighbor it can be to the land, the community, and the Hudson River.

In order to carry out these objectives, our field staff works diligently to remove invasive species that choke out existing plants and trees; plant native or appropriate species that support a healthy ecosystem; and sustain ornamental horticulture that contributes directly to the continued beautification of Riverside Park.

# Highway Cover Tree Planting



New trees wait to be planted along the highway.

New York City is a heavily populated and traveled metropolis. In areas of Riverside Park, the Henry Hudson Parkway is directly adjacent to the parkland. Car traffic is visible in areas in the West 70s, and has a direct impact on the park user experience. In 2018, the Conservancy began establishing a privacy line of tree cover. These new trees result in both immediate and long-term benefits – enhancing the daily park user experience while mitigating erosion from storm water runoff, filtering pollutants from the air, and providing shade for park users.

Tree and shrub planting is being executed in phases, with constant monitoring and care over the course of several seasons to ensure the tree line's success and vitality. Working side by side with the New York City Parks Department's Landscape Architect, we chose a mix of resilient native and ornamental species informed by the surrounding landscape.

As part of a large scale, park-wide beautification project, volunteers also added bulbs around the highway cover planting. We have received significant positive community feedback about this project, and are ecstatic to have the first section in place. This is a very tangible park improvement that decreases noise and visual pollution for park users while contributing valuable benefits for the climate and the ecosystem.

# River Run Playground Installation



Margaret Bracken, Riverside Park Landscape Architect, John Herrold, Riverside Park Administrator, and Bill Castro, Manhattan Borough Commissioner, join kids from the neighborhood to welcome the cubes with an official ribbon-cutting ceremony.

The Conservancy installed new play equipment in River Run Playground in the spring of 2018. Thanks to the fundraising and advocacy efforts of the Conservancy and the community-led Hippo Playground Project, this popular family destination now has modern and engaging “play cubes” for children to use year-round. This exciting new development demonstrates the way that grassroots advocacy can lead to real results in the Park and in its playgrounds.

Growing up in New York City is an undoubtedly unique experience, and the importance of outdoor play for the physical, mental, and sociological health of young children in this urban environment cannot be overstated. Located at 83rd Street and Riverside Park, River Run Playground provides a safe and enjoyable recreational space for local families and visitors alike.

# 97th Street Step Ramp



The Step Ramp was rendered unusable, and the Conservancy was able to restore access in just two weeks.

In the summer of 2018, the 97th Street Step Ramp was badly damaged in a flash flood caused by heavy rainfall. Rather than wait for this important access point to be repaired – sometime, someday – the Conservancy used its own funds to repair the Step Ramp as quickly as possible.

Working side by side with the NYC Parks Department, the Conservancy successfully replaced the bluestone pavers and installed a new concrete foundation. Full access was restored within two weeks. As the reality of climate change continues to increase the severity of storms, urban parks and their infrastructure need more support than ever; Riverside Park’s position as a waterfront park makes these factors all the more urgent. The success of our work on the 97th Street Step Ramp is just one example of how we support the Park’s infrastructure with long-term sustainability in mind.

# Field House Renovation



Renewed access to the staircase at 102nd Street will transform the area.



The front of the Field House exterior is now complete.

The 102nd Street Field House renovation project is central to advancing the restoration of this historic Park and building community involvement by providing additional indoor programming space. A completed Field House will provide the more than 2.8 million visitors who explore Riverside Park every year with a premier, year-round facility, and expand our active recreation, programming, and community development capacity.

Through our 20-year partnership with park users, donors, and elected officials, Riverside Park's central athletic area was largely restored. Opening the 102nd Street Field House is the next – and critical – step. The Field House was completed in 1937, renovated in 1964, and gutted by fire in the 1970s. It sat empty for more than forty years, but its restoration, a joint effort between the Conservancy and New York City Parks Department, is now near completion. When completed, the Field House will provide Riverside Park with a large indoor space suitable for all-season use.





In 2018, major renovations –including an entirely new floor – were made to the interior of the Field House.

It will anchor recreational activities, including our Summer Sports Camp and Summer on the Hudson series, and provide desperately needed public bathrooms adjacent to the busy athletic fields, which are used by thousands of park users year-round. The Conservancy also plans to offer a variety of free cultural, educational, and health and fitness programs that will make the Field House a buzzing center of activity for the entire community.

As a result of the Conservancy's advocacy efforts, in the summer of 2018, the City allocated the necessary funds to repair the 102nd Street Staircase, which will directly impact the accessibility of this area for park users.

# Bird Sanctuary



Danny Molinaro, Natural Areas Steward, took soil samples and collected data before making a plan and choosing plant species for the area.



In December, we began to see an Evening Grosbeak in the Bird Sanctuary. It is rare to see this species in New York City, and we were excited to see it perching in Riverside Park.

The Bird Sanctuary is part of our long-term restoration efforts in Riverside Park's northern tier between 116th and 125th Streets. Our aim in this area is to enhance this space as a woodland habitat that supports the abundant species of migratory birds, bees, butterflies, and insects that migrate, forage, and inhabit the region; support water quality of the Hudson River; increase ecological diversity; and educate the surrounding community as active stewards of natural areas - improving the ecological health of Riverside Park as a whole.

The Conservancy hired a Natural Areas Steward in 2018 who is responsible for the ongoing care and monitoring of Riverside Park's natural woodland Bird Sanctuary and for developing the adjacent Pollinator Meadow. Our Natural Areas Steward is a restoration professional whose expertise has given us the capacity to carry out ecological work plans, doing our part to sustain Manhattan's forested areas and to improve regional habitat for wildlife.

In 2018 we completed an inventory of forest vegetation, tested the condition of the soil, and ran a survey of historical bird and insect data. We are actively removing invasive species and, in the Bird Sanctuary, installing hearty species to allow wildlife to flourish.



Volunteers assisted Conservancy Natural Areas Steward in woodland restoration and path maintenance.



The Bird Sanctuary is an important habitat for several species.

Our Natural Areas Steward works side by side with community volunteers to implement our restoration goals and to provide ongoing maintenance. There are two volunteer programs on site: a monthly Woodland Team, and a seasonal Teen Corps of local high school students. Both of these programs partner with regular volunteers who learn about the ecology of Riverside Park through hands-on experience, and helped us to exceed our goals of preserving this area.

# Pollinator Meadow



There was great potential to increase the habitat value of this swath of land.



The first phase of planting in the Pollinator Meadow proved successful, and prepared the soil to support a diverse selection of perennials.

In conjunction with our ongoing work to restore and care for Riverside Park's important woodland area, in 2018 we made significant progress in our ongoing work to establish a complementary Pollinator Meadow directly north of the 119th Tennis Courts along the Henry Hudson Parkway.

The Pollinator Meadow will be completed in phases, and has already created ecological and aesthetic value out of a formerly unhealthy and unused swath of parkland. Much like the Bird Sanctuary, the Pollinator Meadow provides vital habitat for pollinators and serves as an important piece of the city-wide and regional ecosystem.

We began the project by collecting data about the existing conditions of the landscape and testing the soil. This enabled us to select appropriate species that could effectively out-compete the existing invasive species and continue to thrive next to a busy highway.

In 2018, with the help of volunteers, we successfully completed the initial seeding phase by sowing a native "cover crop," which effectively suppresses the growth of weeds and actively builds the health of the soil. The "cover crop" primes the Meadow for the next phase of planting, which will include a diverse array of tough perennial species.



The Meadow has plenty of pollinator visitors throughout the season.



Milkweed is one of the Monarch butterfly's favorite plants.



Teen Corps members helped to maintain the Meadow during the summer.

# Amiable Child Monument Site Restoration



A new fence was installed in the fall of 2018.

This unique New York City monument marks the site of what was one of the few private burial sites on public land within the five boroughs. It belongs to St. Claire Pollock (the namesake of nearby St. Clair Place), a child who died on July 15, 1797 at age five, probably. This historic monument is a humble and touching tribute to a young boy who never had the opportunity to grow into adulthood. However, it has been overlooked for many years, and the surrounding parkland left unmanaged and overgrown. In 2018, the Conservancy invested its resources to give this special monument the time and care it so deserves. We began implementing our plan to cultivate an inviting and sustainable landscape, to provide consistent maintenance of the garden beds, to develop a welcoming access point for people entering the park, and to foster a greater respect for this cherished piece of New York City's history.

In the early spring, we cleaned up the area, removing debris, garbage, and weeds, and planted a new garden in the formerly-barren areas surrounding the monument. After planting, we hand-watered and monitored the new plantings to ensure establishment during the summer months. Native plant material appropriate for the site conditions was carefully selected to adorn the area with attractive flowers and foliage to create seasonal interest, and by fall, it was clear in the lush green of a flourishing garden that our plans for the area had taken root.



This was the condition of the area around the Amiable Child Monument before the Conservancy began its work.



This was the condition after we had given it some TLC.





**Think of us as the Overseers of  
Olmsted's Vision**

# Park Operations: Zone Gardener Initiative

Riverside Park Conservancy was born from a collective effort by local volunteers 32 years ago, and we will never lose touch with this history. The Zone Gardener Program, launched in 2010, serves to professionalize and expand our reach. Our professional gardeners bring a unique expertise and passion to preserve, protect, and care for the Park's health and beauty, and their presence has been crucial to help strengthen the Conservancy's role as an extension of the local community. Our gardeners are on the frontlines of the Conservancy's mission, as they frequently interact and communicate with Park visitors, and are responsible for significant advancements in Riverside Park's condition since the program began in 2010.

Our Gardeners are each responsible for the maintenance of a section ("Zone") of Riverside Park that best aligns with their particular expertise, interests, and skill set. Gardeners also collaborate with ParkTender volunteers in their Zones and lead group volunteer projects throughout the Park.

The Conservancy aims to continue growing our team of passionate professional gardeners and field staff, who provide top-quality care to all six miles of parkland and interact with volunteers and park visitors every day.



Avalon, Zone Gardener, meets Roberta, Conservancy volunteer, on a weekly basis to discuss progress and plans for the garden bed she helps maintain at 72nd Street.



Conservancy field staff prepare for the annual MulchFest community volunteer event.

# Park Operation Profiles

Here are some profiles from our team in 2018:



## Avalon, Gardener

Zone: 72nd Street - 89th Street

"Every Friday morning, I make time to meet up with the volunteers in my zone. They do so much in their gardens - they really love it. This Park is very big, and taking care of it is hard work - so when people come up to me, and comment on how beautiful it looks, or the changes they're seeing - it makes it all worth it."

## Chelsea, Gardener

Zone: 95th Street - 120th Street

"Even micro spaces are ecological spaces. I want to welcome the community into the Park, engage people - to encourage curiosity, and not just about plants you can eat!"



## LaKisha, Gardener

Zone: 84th Street - 95th Street

"When I started doing this kind of work, I wanted to know why we were planting certain plants in certain places - what the bigger goal was. I remember sticking my hands into a pile of mulch, smelling it, asking why it was steaming. I was full of questions. When we're gone, this will still be here, and we've got to treat it as such."



# Riverside Valley Community Garden (“Jenny’s Garden”)



Kevin Prado, Conservancy Gardener, Laurie Kindred, a Riverside Valley Community Garden volunteer, Jenny Benitez, North Park Outreach Coordinator, and Dan Garodnick, President & CEO, bring fresh vegetables to the Broadway Presbyterian Church.

In the early 1980s, a local resident named Jenny Benitez recognized the potential in a neglected and dangerous area between 135th and 143rd Streets. At that time, the landscape was covered in garbage and debris, and was a popular location for drug use. With the help of neighborhood volunteers, Benitez established planting beds on the slopes along pathways and constructed sixteen small garden beds for gardeners in the community to use. The mission of Riverside Valley Community Garden, commonly referred to as “Jenny’s Garden,” is to provide the surrounding community with direct access to urban horticulture and agriculture. The food that is harvested from the garden plots is often distributed to those in need at local churches and soup kitchens.



Riverside Valley Community Garden is a beautiful and beloved part of the community.

Jenny's success was an important turning point for the northern portion of Riverside Park, and the Conservancy has taken great inspiration from her work as we continue growing our Grassroots Volunteer Program. This garden is an interactive, shared community space for people of all ages and backgrounds. The long term aim is to provide public access to the natural history and landscape of New York City through hands-on involvement in gardening and restoration efforts. Historically, Riverside Valley Community Garden faced a severe lack of funding, but with the support of the Conservancy, the space and its caretakers have seen remarkable and steady improvement.

In the summer of 2018, Amtrak sprayed herbicides as a way to manage weeds on the nearby train tracks. The poison from the herbicides infiltrated Riverside Valley Community Garden, effectively killing many of the vegetables and plants and contaminating the soil. Riverside Park Conservancy, working with Jenny Benitez and the Riverside Valley Community Garden volunteers, swiftly addressed the issue by cleaning up the damage, rebuilding the raised beds, and removing the soil from all the raised beds to replace it with fresh, healthy soil. Rebuilding the beds, purchasing new soil, and allocating staff time to address the incident was an unforeseen emergency expense. With care and close monitoring, the garden will be fully restored. Volunteers and the Conservancy continue to advocate to Amtrak for reparations and to discourage future applications of the harmful herbicide.

# Public Art Partnerships



*Viewfinding*  
Photo courtesy of the artist, Sarah E. Brook



*Tear of the Cloud*  
Photo courtesy of The Architect's Newspaper

Riverside Park Conservancy collaborates with New York City Parks Department's Art in the Parks program and other community partners to actively encourage, promote, and host public art installations in Riverside Park every year.

In 2018, the Conservancy's Summer on the Hudson program partnered with NYC Parks Department Art in the Parks program to host *Viewfinding*, a vibrant installation by artist Sarah E. Brook located on the shore of the Hudson River at 67th Street in Riverside Park South. *Viewfinding* is an interactive art piece that was created through a collaboration of queer poets from the community. In June, Summer on the Hudson promoted and hosted a celebratory opening event, where the poets held a live reading at the site of the artwork. Throughout the year, park users frequently photographed and appreciated the piece on social media.

In the fall of 2018, the Conservancy partnered with Public Art Fund to host Tony Oursler's *Tear of the Cloud*, a 3-week interactive art installation in Riverside Park South. This experimental, multi-media experience utilized the 69th Street Gantry Bridge, one of Riverside Park's landmarks - and the Hudson River itself - to project sounds and images and weave together historical and contemporary narratives inspired by the Hudson River region. In October, the Conservancy and Public Art Fund hosted a special evening event to launch this fascinating public art installation.

# Advocacy



Lynda Tower, Vice President of Operations, testifying for NYC Forests at City Hall



Nicole Brostoff, Senior Development Officer, testified before the Committee on Standards and Ethics about proposed legislation.

In 2018, Riverside Park Conservancy took a more active role in advocating for public support of improvements throughout all six miles of Riverside Park. We successfully worked with local City Councilmember Helen Rosenthal, who allocated funding in the City budget to install new paving at Crabapple Grove. We also advocated – along with Borough President Gale Brewer and Councilmember Rosenthal – for the funding to repair the stairs at 102nd Street. Mayor de Blasio and Parks Commissioner Silver came through and delivered the necessary funds to complete the project.

In December 2018, Conservancy President & CEO Dan Garodnick walked in the Park with Deputy Mayor Alicia Glen to demonstrate the severe flooding that occurs after precipitation. We are currently pushing the City to fund major, necessary infrastructure repairs for several pathways, bathrooms, and staircases in various locations.

In October, the Conservancy joined 17 other conservancies and environmental organizations to advocate for New York City's 7,300 acres of forests, of which Riverside Park has 60 acres, and to support the Natural Areas Conservancy's Forest Management Framework. Lynda Tower, Vice President of Operations, communicated our view of Riverside Park – and all urban green spaces – as essential New York City infrastructure, and the ecological and social importance of providing adequate and ongoing care.

In December, Senior Development Officer Nicole Brostoff testified before the City Council's Committee on Standards & Ethics about proposed legislation affecting the fundraising abilities of park conservancies. Throughout the year, the Conservancy team increased the frequency of its email and social media communications, providing information on upcoming events, ongoing park projects, and wildlife. We made sure to send out important announcements about closures, capital work, and safety advisories in the instance of exceptional weather.





# Riverside Park South

# Riverside Park South Overview



Riverside Park South will be completed in six phases.

Designed by Thomas Balsley & Associates, Riverside Park South was to be built in six stages, which broke ground in November 1998. In April 2001, Phase I of Riverside Park South, a 7-acre section from 68th to 72nd Streets, was officially opened to the public.

This section includes a soccer field, basketball courts, handball courts, and a recreational pier at 70th Street. Phase II stretches along the river from 65th Street to 70th Street. This area includes two plazas, one at 66th Street and the other at 68th Street, and a natural riprap shoreline. Phase III is another waterfront section of the Park that extends from 62nd Street to 65th Street. It was opened in August 2006 to the sound of train whistles, and Phase IV, the southernmost section of the park, opened in 2008 with the driving of a “golden spike” in front of a 60-year-old, 95-ton historic locomotive in honor of the site’s former use as a railyard. This locomotive is the historic centerpiece of the plaza along the waterfront between 59th to 62nd Streets.

The final two stages, Phase V and Phase VI, encompass the area east of the highway between 59th and 67th Streets; once this portion of the project is complete, Riverside Park South will encompass a total of 32 acres of waterfront parkland. Work on Phase V started in fall 2016 and is scheduled to be complete in 2019. As of the printing of this report, Phase VI is currently in the bidding process.

# Riverside Park South Outreach



New trees were planted as part of Phase V in the fall of 2018.

In 2018 Riverside Park Conservancy took a more active role in advocating with the New York City Parks Department and the private contractor to ensure that this work gets done as quickly as possible.

In the fall of 2018, the Conservancy sent out a mailing to park users and residents to address the most frequently asked questions from the public regarding Riverside Park South. This mailing included a comprehensive overview of the history, complications, progress, and current state of this section of the park. It effectively opened a dialogue with stakeholders and further cemented the Conservancy's role as a liaison for the community.



Benches were installed as Phase V work continued in the winter.



The Conservancy sent a mailing to address frequently asked questions about Riverside Park South.



# Special Events and Public Programming

# Summer on the Hudson

Summer on the Hudson is an annual outdoor arts and culture festival held in Riverside Park from 59th to 181st Streets. Launched in 2001, Summer on the Hudson is co-sponsored by the Riverside Park Conservancy and the New York City Parks Department. This public programming series offers a wide range of concerts, movies, health and wellness classes, educational workshops, family programs, and other outdoor events.

The season begins in May and ends in October. In 2018, Summer on the Hudson hosted 284 popular events throughout the six months. All programming is free and open to the public with the aim of bringing quality arts programming to six miles of diverse neighborhoods on the west side of Manhattan.



Summer on the Hudson distributed 15,000 copies of the 2018 brochure.



Amplified Sunday concerts take place on Pier I every Sunday in July.



Families enjoy musical storytime at the Locomotive Lawn Live series.

# Multi-Sport Summer Camp

Launched in summer 2013, the Conservancy's Multi-Sport Summer Camp provides an opportunity for young people between the ages of 4-16 to spend their summer days outside at a high-quality camp in Riverside Park. The Conservancy provides scholarships for families that need financial assistance to ensure that the Camp is fully inclusive for all who seek to participate. 20% of our campers received full or partial need-based scholarships provided by the Conservancy.

Riverside Park Conservancy partners with three providers to operate the Camp: Kids of Summer, C. Oliveira Soccer Academy, and Riverside Clay Tennis Association. We offer baseball, basketball, flag football, soccer and tennis. In 2018, 1,027 children attended the Camp at an average rate of 168 campers per day and 2 weeks per camper, which equates to 2,070 total enrollment slots filled throughout the season. Children from all over New York City travel to Riverside Park to attend this popular camp.



The Basketball Director instructs on dribbling skills.



Kids between the ages of 4 - 16 enjoy our camp.



Campers have the option of participating in several sports.

# Spring Benefit: Six Miles of Magnificence

On June 5th, 2018, the Conservancy held its annual spring benefit at Sakura Park and the International House of New York. The New York weather was pristine and the guests enjoyed cocktails and live music in Sakura Park before gathering in the International House to honor David Goldstick, Conservancy Board Member and long-standing volunteer who transformed the Warsaw Ghetto Memorial gardens in Riverside Park, and continues to dotingly care for the area today.



Dan Garodnick, Conservancy President & CEO, with event host Wendy Whelan.



The live auction was a smashing success.



The band led guests into the International House for dinner.





Live music floated through Sakura Park during cocktail hour.



Honoree David Goldstick received the Robert M. Morgenthau Citizenship Award for his service as a Trustee and volunteer for Riverside Park.



Guests prepared for the paddle-raise auction.



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**Over 6,000 Volunteers**

# Dedicated Volunteers



Some of the “Underpass Ladies” have been maintaining the once-neglected slopes near 91st Street since the 1980s.



Snow Corps volunteers ensure that the Park is accessible no matter what the weather brings.

Riverside Park would not be where it is today – a place of beauty, community enjoyment, and successful environmental stewardship – without loyal grassroots volunteers and Conservancy Gardeners who continue to expand their reach. Since the 1980s, local volunteers have been caring for the Park’s health and beauty with a sense of purpose and pride. They communicate with visitors and locals alike about all the Park has to offer, whether it is to describe a new planting or simply to give directions.

Our volunteer program is expansive and unique, and includes volunteers of all ages and skill levels. From ParkRovers who volunteer at various sites as needs emerge, to ParkTenders who make a long-term commitment to care regularly for an assigned area, active park stewardship is encouraged and supported. The Conservancy provides horticultural supplies, offers free training sessions and workshops, and coordinates activities between volunteers and the New York City Parks Department to ensure common goals are met. Many live close by and have spent years investing their time and energy into nurturing specific areas as if it is their own backyard.



Volunteers assist with planting appropriate species in wooded areas.

In 2018, 258 recurring volunteers collectively contributed more than half of our 40,000 volunteer hours to the upkeep and beautification of Riverside Park. Our ParkTender program enabled over 90 areas in the Park to be completely maintained by volunteers, who are deeply connected and committed to Riverside Park. They work side by side with our field staff throughout all four seasons.

During the winter, the Conservancy has an all-volunteer “Snow Corps” emergency response crew. Members of the community join with park operations staff on the day of a storm to help clear entrances and staircases and keep Riverside Park safe and accessible all year round.

# Teen Corps Program

Every summer, as part of our Teen Corps Program, Riverside Park Conservancy provides an experiential learning program for local teenagers interested in horticulture and urban ecology. Teen Corps members work closely with our Gardeners to maintain key horticultural sites, to care for spring plantings, to prepare Park areas for fall plantings, and to keep the Park safe, clean, and healthy.

All high school teens (rising freshmen through graduating seniors) are welcome to apply. This program focuses on providing opportunities for teens from underserved neighborhoods in Manhattan, providing a stipend and invaluable experience with hands-on stewardship of public parkland.

In 2018, our 10 Teen Corps members worked every Tuesday and Thursday in Riverside Park's Bird Sanctuary. They were an integral part of the progress in this area, assisting with clearing trails, invasive vine removal, and maintaining the new plantings. If you are interested in joining the Teen Corps, email us at [grassroots@riversideparknyc.org](mailto:grassroots@riversideparknyc.org).



Teen Corps members assist with woodland path maintenance.



2018 Teen Corps study and care for the Bird Sanctuary's woodland habitat.



The group proudly displays an enormous Porcelain berry root after removing it from the woodland.



The summer was full of discoveries.



Teen Corps members studied ecology to deepen their understanding of the work.

# Group Volunteers and Projects



New York Cares volunteers help take care of the Park on a bi-weekly basis.

Spending time volunteering in the Park is a great way for local organizations, corporate groups, and schools to foster community building both within their group and within the Riverside Park community. We accommodate groups ranging in size from 10-50 people – several times a week, in the spring and summer – and also regularly work with larger groups of over 100 individuals. Groups can choose to volunteer in the park on an ongoing basis, several times a year, or just once per year, and donate a certain amount to the Conservancy to participate in various types of work.

Projects are tailored to meet each group’s interests and capabilities, and activities depend on the time of year and current Park priorities. In addition to these specific group projects, the Conservancy hosts community-wide volunteer events every month.





Volunteers help plant garden beds around 148th Street.



Leaf clean-up is always a fun fall activity in the Park.



Some volunteer groups come to help out in the Park several times during the season.

# 2018 Community Volunteer Events



In 2018 Volunteers helped paint the iron fences, playground equipment, and light posts throughout the Park.

## January 6th | MulchFest

As part of a city-wide effort to “treecycle” trees from the holiday season, neighborhood residents and Conservancy staff gathered 1,342 holiday trees at 83rd Street in Riverside Park to be recycled into mulch that was used to nourish Riverside Drive’s street trees and gardens in the Park all year long.

## April 14th | It’s My Park Day

Volunteers participated in various projects like weeding, mulching, trash cleanup, and other maintenance tasks throughout all six miles of Riverside Park.

## May 5th & September 15th | Coastal Cleanups

Riverside Park Conservancy works side by side with several organizations, including Trash Hero, Riverkeeper, and the American Littoral Society, to participate in coastal cleanup events throughout the year. Whether our events are part of global (International Coastal Cleanup), regional (Riverkeeper Sweep) or local (Trash Hero monthly clean-ups) efforts, we have one goal – keep the Hudson River shoreline clean!



Volunteers raked leaves throughout the Park

## June 16th | Paint the Park Black

Volunteers helped paint the iron fences, playground equipment, and light posts throughout the Park.

## September 29th | National Public Lands Day

National Public Lands Day is the nation's largest, single-day volunteer effort for public land. In Riverside Park, volunteers participated in garbage cleanup and garden maintenance in the northern areas of the Park.

## October 13th | It's My Park Day

Volunteers helped with fall Park projects on this city-wide day of NYC park volunteerism. Activities ranged from spreading woodchips, weeding, planting and picking up debris, to a whole host of other beautification efforts.

## November 17th | Leaf Lift

Volunteers raked leaves off of our pathways, high-traffic areas, and lawns to prevent them from clogging storm drains, making pathways slippery, and smothering the grass. All leaves were added to Riverside Park's compost pile and turned into valuable mulch for use throughout the Park.

# User Groups



Volunteers help to periodically refresh the surface of the dog runs.



The Hippo Playground Halloween Parade is a much-anticipated annual family event.

Proof of the importance of Riverside Park in the lives of New Yorkers is found in the hundreds of people who have committed their time and energy to supporting the Park on an ongoing basis. We have volunteer-led “User Groups,” which are organized by community members who maintain, fundraise, program, and advocate for our dog runs, playgrounds, gardens, and monuments. Riverside Park Conservancy serves as the fiscal sponsor for the User Groups, and supports them in their efforts. We act as a liaison to the NYC Parks Department and other public officials, assist with outreach and mailings, engage and oversee contractors, and help promote these park users’ activities in these spaces. By way of example, User Groups care for all five dog runs in Riverside Park, the Joan of Arc Monument and the surrounding parkland, the Garden People’s Garden, and Hippo Playground.



The Dog Run 142 Committee has been advocating with the City for funding to make capital improvements to the run.

Of note, in 2018, our User Groups continued working all year round to care for these areas. Notable progress was made by the Dog Run 142 Committee, where volunteers organized to begin advocating for City funding toward major capital improvements for the run's fencing, gate, and footing. The Joan of Arc Statue Committee held its second annual fête at Joan of Arc Island to raise awareness about the history of the Monument, and the Committee's efforts to both preserve the Monument and care for the surrounding parkland. The Hippo Playground Project held its annual Spring Fair and Halloween Parade, which were, as always, joyous days for the community.



# Financials

**RIVERSIDE PARK CONSERVANCY, INC. AND AFFILIATE**

**Consolidated Statement of Financial Position**

**Assets**

	<b>December 31</b>	
	<b><u>2017</u></b>	<b><u>2016</u></b>
<b>Current assets</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$2,875,491	\$3,585,481
Contributions receivable	21,600	128,550
Prepaid expenses	<u>7,212</u>	<u>-</u>
Total current assets	<u>2,904,303</u>	<u>3,714,031</u>
<b>Investments, at fair value</b>	<u>1,280,766</u>	<u>1,122,012</u>
<b>Property and equipment, at cost</b>		
Furniture and equipment	96,743	37,652
Leasehold improvements	<u>20,350</u>	<u>8,365</u>
Sub-total	117,093	46,017
Less: accumulated depreciation and amortization	<u>53,636</u>	<u>46,017</u>
Net property and equipment	<u>63,457</u>	<u>-</u>
<b>Total assets</b>	<b><u>\$4,248,526</u></b>	<b><u>\$4,836,043</u></b>

**Liabilities and Net Assets**

<b>Current liabilities</b>		
Accounts payable	\$ 587,291	\$ 547,441
Deferred RPC - South maintenance fees	<u>254,684</u>	<u>492,307</u>
Total current liabilities	<u>841,975</u>	<u>1,039,748</u>
<b>Net assets</b>		
Unrestricted	1,364,300	1,541,236
Temporarily restricted	1,505,251	1,667,539
Permanently restricted	<u>537,000</u>	<u>587,520</u>
Total net assets	<u>3,406,551</u>	<u>3,796,295</u>
<b>Total liabilities and net assets</b>	<b><u>\$4,248,526</u></b>	<b><u>\$4,836,043</u></b>

See notes to consolidated financial statements.



**RIVERSIDE PARK CONSERVANCY, INC. AND AFFILIATE**

**Consolidated Statement of Activities**  
**Year Ended December 31, 2017**  
**(with summarized comparative information for 2016)**

	2017			2016	
	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Permanently Restricted	Total	Total
<b>Public support and revenue</b>					
Contributions	\$ 953,606	\$ 447,297	\$ -	\$ 1,400,903	\$ 2,023,644
Special events proceeds (net of direct expenses of \$266,856 for 2017 and \$263,439 for 2016)	391,581	-	-	391,581	650,791
Interest and dividends	3,652	21,644	-	25,296	23,268
RCTA fees	385,882	-	-	385,882	341,339
Sports camp fees	793,345	-	-	793,345	782,157
RPC-South maintenance fees	1,570,796	-	-	1,570,796	1,209,247
Other	255,164	-	-	255,164	240,798
Net assets released from restrictions	<u>792,575</u>	<u>(792,575)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Total public support and revenue	<u>5,146,601</u>	<u>(323,634)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>4,822,967</u>	<u>5,271,244</u>
<b>Expenses</b>					
Program services					
Field operations and volunteers	2,499,321	-	-	2,499,321	1,989,207
Public programs and events	1,498,312	-	-	1,498,312	1,495,873
Design and construction	<u>213,865</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>213,865</u>	<u>330,593</u>
Total program services	<u>4,211,498</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>4,211,498</u>	<u>3,815,673</u>
Supporting activities					
Management and general	570,508	-	-	570,508	499,474
Fundraising	<u>541,531</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>541,531</u>	<u>411,556</u>
Total supporting activities	<u>1,112,039</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,112,039</u>	<u>911,030</u>
Total expenses	<u>5,323,537</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>5,323,537</u>	<u>4,726,703</u>
Increase (decrease) in net assets from operating activities	(176,936)	(323,634)	-	(500,570)	544,541
Non-operating activities					
Unrealized gain on investments	-	110,826	-	110,826	46,098
Release from permanent restriction	<u>-</u>	<u>50,520</u>	<u>(50,520)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
<b>Increase (decrease) in net assets</b>	<b>(176,936)</b>	<b>(162,288)</b>	<b>(50,520)</b>	<b>(389,744)</b>	<b>590,639</b>
<b>Net assets, beginning of year</b>	<b><u>1,541,236</u></b>	<b><u>1,667,539</u></b>	<b><u>587,520</u></b>	<b><u>3,796,295</u></b>	<b><u>3,205,656</u></b>
<b>Net assets, end of year</b>	<b><u>\$ 1,364,300</u></b>	<b><u>\$ 1,505,251</u></b>	<b><u>\$ 537,000</u></b>	<b><u>\$ 3,406,551</u></b>	<b><u>\$ 3,796,295</u></b>

See notes to consolidated financial statements.



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# Mission Statement

The mission of the Riverside Park Conservancy is to restore, maintain, and improve Riverside Park in partnership with the City of New York for the enjoyment and benefit of all New Yorkers. We support the preservation of the Park's historic landscape, structures, and monuments, engage the community in active stewardship of the Park, and provide a wide range of public programs.

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## Contact Us



[riversideparknyc.org](http://riversideparknyc.org)



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