

# New Yorkers for Parks Fiscal Year 2016 Annual Report



# Letter from the Executive Director

In fiscal year 2016 we were front and center where parks intersect with other social and environmental issues. We helped neighborhoods that are facing rezoning and increased density, we identified ways parks can improve health in struggling communities, and we trained young people how to become data-rich experts on their own neighborhoods. The Daffodil Project is stronger than ever – we've planted over six million bulbs since the project's inception in 2001, and it's used across the city as a tool for community engagement and empowerment.

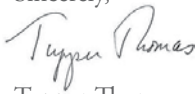
We've also begun an initiative to create a citywide network of parks stewards and advocates, so far bringing together over 150 groups and individuals who can support each other in their efforts to improve and sustain their open spaces. As the convener of these meetings and conversations, New Yorkers for Parks shares our research and data with communities and helps them see where parks fit into the welfare of their neighborhoods. In turn, we cultivate an even deeper understanding of the many essential roles parks play in our city, and learn where our help is needed most.

We've continued to enjoy a wonderful partnership with the NYC Parks Department, and our parks benefitted from the continued leadership of the City Council Parks and Recreation Committee under Chairperson Mark Levine. As we look to the future, New Yorkers for Parks will be able to continue this important work under incoming Executive Director Lynn Kelly, a leader with a long track record of accomplishment and a dedication to New York's open spaces. The staff at NY4P are dedicated and forward-thinking, working together to improve our city.

It has been a privilege to spend almost three years with this totally essential organization. This city is blessed with an amazing and hopefully ever-increasing park system. More parks are necessary for our growing city, and to make up for the lack of parks that already exists in many of our communities. The city must commit more operating and capital funds to insure a strong and equitable parks system.

Thank you to all of our supporters, and to everyone who's committed to our parks.

Sincerely,

  
Tupper Thomas





# Fiscal Year 2016 Highlights

## HOW'S YOUR PARK, NYC

### NY4P Convenes and Connects Park Advocates from Across the City

In the fall of 2015 New Yorkers for Parks launched a new initiative to create a citywide network of parks advocates. Our “How’s Your Park, NYC?” meetings, with one in each borough, one city-wide meeting, and an online webinar, equipped attendees with NY4P advocacy tools, including our recently released 2015 City Council District Profiles, enabling them to make a data-driven case for improving open space in their communities.

At the borough meetings we invited advocates and stewards to inform us about the on-the-ground conditions in their open spaces, rounding out our own research and giving us the information we need to focus our work where it is needed most.

At our citywide meeting, held in early spring, we discussed the city’s proposed fiscal year 2017 parks budget with attendees, providing a detailed explanation of the budgeting process so that advocates are better able to understand and



A park advocate holds an NY4P City Council District Profile at our “How’s Your Park, NYC?” meeting in the Bronx

influence city parks funding. Participants then voted on their priorities for the city budget, information we used when crafting the budget recommendations we presented to the mayor and City Council.

Another round of meetings will commence in fiscal year 2017, as we continue to convene and support networks of engaged and informed advocates who can work with NY4P, and each other, to improve open spaces in their local communities and across the city. With mayoral and City Council elections in the fall of 2017, and the annual push for a better budget for parks, these meetings will help NY4P understand the needs and priorities of the community stewards who make their parks great, while also building up the capacity of our constituents as an effective advocacy network for NYC’s parks and open spaces.

## NY4P'S PARKS BUDGET ADVOCACY

### Big Wins in the City Budget, Better Parks for NYC

The fiscal year 2017 city budget saw some big wins for parks, addressing many issues we pushed for in our budget advocacy. NY4P engaged New Yorkers through an online petition to the mayor and City Council, and at our Rally 4 Parks on the steps of City Hall. The rally, co-hosted by City Council Parks and Recreation Committee Chair Mark Levine, drew council members and advocacy groups representing New York state, city, and local park groups.

Based on our research, and with the input of park advocates, we called for the preservation of jobs, restoration of neighborhood parks, and citywide tree stump removal. In the FY 2017 budget, our call was answered: Mayor de Blasio added \$12 million for

peak seasonal staffing – three times the usual amount – and the city council provided \$96 million to preserve 150 maintenance and gardener positions for another year. The mayor included over \$400 million for the next round of the Community Parks Initiative, and for improvements to “Anchor Parks” in every borough. Another \$1 million from the mayor addresses long-overdue tree stump removal.

One of the most common problems we hear from parks users is a lack of adequate maintenance, leading us to focus a large part of our advocacy on the creation and preservation of maintenance positions. We interviewed parks staff from across the city, all of whom started in entry-level, part-time positions. We learned that these are good, stable jobs that provide a path to the middle class, available to people without a college degree. In a time of growing income inequality, creating good jobs that lead to improved parks is a win-win for the city.



At our Rally 4 Parks with Council Member Mark Levine on the steps of City Hall we were joined by Council Members Costa Constantinides and Barry Grodenchik, and parks and gardens advocates from across the city.

## SUPPORTING THE GROWING CITY

# Advocating for Healthy and Vibrant Communities

New York City is facing unprecedented growth. In 2015 the population reached a record high of 8.5 million, and neighborhoods are being rezoned to allow for greater density and affordable housing. Without addressing the impact this growth will have on essential infrastructure, quality of life will suffer. That's why we're providing technical assistance to growing neighborhoods.

East Harlem is one of the 15 slated for rezoning. We served as an open space adviser to the East Harlem Community Plan, using data from our East Harlem Open Space Index and our City Council District Profiles. The Plan, spearheaded by City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito and community groups, engaged people from across East Harlem in envisioning what the rezoning needs to do for their community. Working with New York Restoration Project, we brought our research to community members and equipped them with the information they need to make a data-driven case for quality open space.

Another area facing rapid change is Brownsville, Brooklyn, currently undergoing a neighborhood planning process



East Harlem residents relied on our research and data when choosing their priorities for rezoning

by New York Housing Preservation and Development. As we worked on our Brownsville Open Space Index, to be released in early 2017, we gained an understanding of why residents do or do not use their open spaces. We participated in neighborhood discussions about their open spaces, and provided technical assistance. Most recently, NY4P helped support the formation of the Friends of Brownsville Parks, a nascent stewardship group that can advocate for their open spaces.

We provided funding to and supported the “Best of Brownsville,” a local, youth-led public art project of the Brownsville Community Justice Center. The project, which also received funding from the NYC Department of Transportation, allows young people to showcase the places in their community that are most successful, including their parks and open spaces. Photos and maps of neighborhood highlights are displayed on three kiosks along Livonia Avenue, a major local thoroughfare.

## CONNECTING PARKS AND HEALTH

# NY4P Pilots New Tool for Understanding Parks Usage

Parks advocates have long known that the health of their open spaces directly affects personal well-being. A Bronx health care provider – the Bronx Community Health Network – was tasked by the Centers for Disease Control with improving health outcomes for minority populations. They approached NY4P seeking greater understanding of how parks could support this goal. As we worked with them, it became clear that we needed to determine how (and what) programming, features and furniture could activate local park spaces and the people using them. In response, NY4P used a tool that measures who is in the park and what they're doing, customizing it to work for NYC in particular. NY4P summer surveyors visited Bronx parks

36 times over the course of the summer, capturing a picture of what is and is not effective, who is and is not present, and identified room for improvement. NY4P then created guides for a group of Bronx parks that provide clear information on parks programming, permits, and possibilities for Bronx residents looking to learn more and engage more with their open spaces.

NY4P was brought into a separate discussion about health equity by the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and asked to make a tool that uses our data on open space along with their Community Health Profiles. We subsequently shared this tool at a Bronx Parks Speak Up workshop and an event at El Museo del Barrio in Harlem. Participants gained a clearer understanding of how open space and health connect on a local level, and they also learned how to speak with local funders and decision makers about how to affect change.



NY4P summer surveyor tracks parks usership at St. James Park in the Bronx



NY4P staff and interns train El Puente's Summer Youth Employment Program participants how to collect data on their open spaces

## CITIZEN DATA SCIENCE

# NY4P Trains the Next Generation of Open Space Advocates

New Yorkers for Parks is working to bring our research and data collection methodology to local communities, empowering New Yorkers to be data-rich experts on their neighborhoods. Throughout the summer we worked with participants in the City's Summer Youth Employment Program at El Puente in South Williamsburg, Brooklyn. We taught them about parks conditions, usage, and about the distribution of open space more broadly. We then educated participants on how to gather, analyze, and use data to advocate for and improve their open spaces.

El Puente is a decades-old community-based social

justice organization working to improve Williamsburg's South Side, with a focus on open space as a way of addressing environmental injustice. With guidance from NY4P, participants measured park conditions and developed an understanding about why the conditions they observed exist. Using our "How Can I Improve My Park" guide and discussion, along with El Puente's and NY4P's robust experience with coalition building, the participants learned how to work with local elected officials to improve parks conditions. They will then combine the cumulative open space data with air quality information to make a data-based argument for improved green space and for BQ Green, an innovative project that proposes to cover a section of the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway with new parkland. The project aims reduce the many negative environmental, economic, and social impacts of the Expressway, while also addressing the area's dearth of parkland.

## THE DAFFODIL PROJECT

# Cultivating Hope, Building Communities

Since 2001 the Daffodil Project has planted over 6 million daffodil bulbs in one of the largest volunteer efforts in the city's history. While it continues to commemorate the lives lost on 9/11, it has become a

powerful tool for community engagement. In 2015 we distributed 450,000 free bulbs to over 800 community groups citywide, engaging over 23,000 volunteers.

The success of the Daffodil Project is largely due to how communities adapt it to serve their needs. In 2015, bulb recipients used the Daffodil Project to engage young people who have had contact with the criminal justice system; to offer seniors a way to stay active and healthy; to make their parks and playgrounds more inviting; to bring together diverse groups from within their neighborhoods; to educate children about local ecology; to encourage environmental preservation and advocacy; and as a tool for healing from tragedy and natural disasters. The possibilities are truly endless.

We continued to place empha-

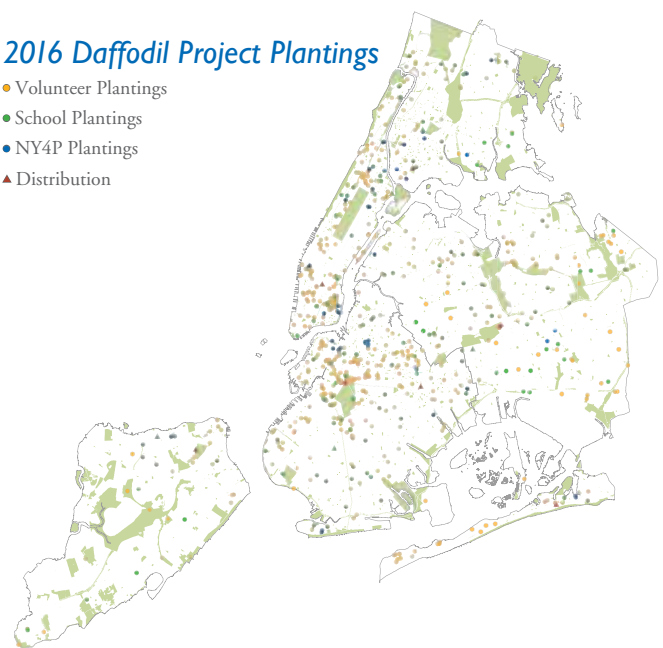
sis on low-income communities that lack the resources to care for their open spaces without support. We know that healthy, beautiful open space is a necessary component of a vibrant neighborhood, something all New Yorkers should enjoy.

New Yorkers for Parks staff held plantings at five schools in low-income neighborhoods, and worked directly with 531 young students. We also engaged 107 gardeners from the New York City Housing Authority's Garden and Greening program. We worked with community partners including the New York Restoration Project, the Trust for Public Land, the Horticultural Society of New York, the Neighborhood Plaza Partnership, Trees NY, and Grow to Learn.

In 2015 we were pleased to count Con Edison, Epsilon,

## 2016 Daffodil Project Plantings

- Volunteer Plantings
- School Plantings
- NY4P Plantings
- ▲ Distribution





# Donors

Gifts made July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016

## The Daffodil Breakfast

In 2015 we were surprised to discover that over half of all Daffodil Project bulb recipients planned to plant them in tree pits across the city. 2015 also saw the planting of the millionth tree through New York City's Million Trees initiative. To celebrate this milestone and the work of our city's tree stewards, we honored groups and individuals from across the city that care for their street trees and tree pits at the 2016 Daffodil Breakfast. We highlighted how even these "small" spaces can have a big impact on the beauty and health of our communities, and that the work of our honorees is critical to their success.

### 2016 DAFFODIL BREAKFAST HONOREES

*Lynden B. Miller Citywide Daffodil Award Recipient:*  
Trees New York

*Borough Daffodil Award Recipients*

**BRONX:**  
Boller Avenue Resident Tree Lovers

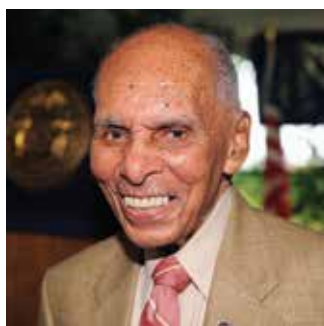
**BROOKLYN:**  
The Prospect Heights Street Tree Task Force

**MANHATTAN:**  
The Chelsea Garden Club

**QUEENS:**  
The Jackson Heights Beautification Group

**STATEN ISLAND:**  
H.E.A.L.T.H. for Youths

## Remembering Dr. Roscoe C. Brown Jr.



We were saddened by the July 2016 passing of Dr. Roscoe Brown Jr., who served on the board of New Yorkers for Parks for many years. A tireless advocate for racial justice, he was deeply committed to improving and protecting parks and open space in New York City. Dr. Brown's work for racial equality most notably began with his time in the Tuskegee Airmen in World War II, where he flew 68 combat missions. He went on to direct the Institute of Afro-American Affairs at New York University, was the president of Bronx Community College from 1977 to 1993, and then directed the Center for Education Policy at CUNY. In 2007, he and other surviving Tuskegee Airmen were awarded the Congressional Gold Medal. In addition to sitting on the board of NY4P, he was also on the boards of City Parks Foundation, New York Botanical Garden, Boys and Girls Clubs of America, Friends of Van Cortlandt Park and others.

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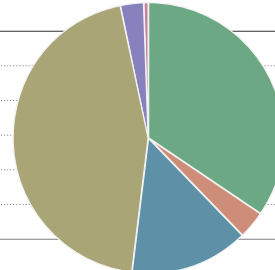
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# New Yorkers for Parks, Inc. Statement of Financial Activities

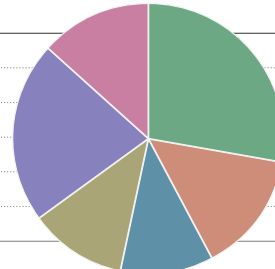
## FY 2016 OPERATING REVENUE

Category	Percentage	Amount
Foundations	34%	\$339,769
Corporations	3%	\$32,903
Individuals/Family Foundations	14%	\$140,048
Special Events (net)	45%	\$442,287
Organizations	3%	\$25,128
Other	1%	\$5,104



## FY 2016 OPERATING EXPENSES

Category	Percentage	Amount
Research and Planning	28%	\$307,164
Community Outreach and Advocacy	14%	\$160,384
Daffodil Project	11%	\$122,634
Public Information and Communications	12%	\$127,203
Management and General	22%	\$240,073
Fundraising	13%	\$145,629



**\$250-\$499**  
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*New Yorkers for Parks is the  
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championing quality parks and  
open spaces for all New Yorkers  
in all neighborhoods.*

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*As of November 30, 2016*