



FOUNDATIONS SEED COVID-19 RELIEF AND RECOVERY FUND TO SUPPORT NONPROFITS CARING FOR NYC PARKS AND GREEN SPACES

New York City's parks will see an even greater influx of people as public open spaces become increasingly essential for New Yorkers in the warmer months

New York, NY -- A growing coalition of national, family, and community foundations today announced an [“NYC Green Relief & Recovery Fund”](#) to support nonprofit organizations that care for New York City’s parks and open spaces. The Fund will provide relief for nonprofits facing steep losses in both private donations and earned revenue as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and responds to the efforts of a coalition of the largest parks groups to raise awareness of these financial impacts.

From cooling neighborhoods to cleaning the air to protecting from storm surges, the City’s green spaces are critical infrastructure. Yet, even as the COVID-19 pandemic highlights how essential parks and other open spaces are to the physical and mental health of our communities, the nonprofits that help keep parks clean, healthy and safe are struggling. This fund will help nonprofits retain critical staff, preserve essential programming, and meet new challenges presented by the pandemic and its aftermath.

The planned closure of pools and other summer recreational programs is expected to bring record numbers of people to our parks this summer, putting even more stress on already overwhelmed park workers. Nonprofits provide crucial support for 15,000 acres of parkland and green space -- accounting for 50 percent of the city’s total open space -- and employ over 500 full-time staff and hundreds of seasonal workers. They also invest more than \$150 million of private funding in the City’s open spaces every year, and engage more than 100,000 volunteers annually to help care for parks and gardens.

A report released this week indicated that some nonprofit open space groups -- which rely almost entirely on the support of private donations to fund their work -- expect to see a 60 percent reduction in revenue as a result of this crisis. Many park groups have already furloughed key staff and cut dozens of necessary seasonal positions, with more cuts anticipated. In addition to significant staffing cuts, this decline in revenue could result in the loss of nearly 150,000 hours of landscape maintenance and horticultural care, thousands fewer volunteer hours, and 541,000 fewer trees, shrubs and perennials planted. These reductions will have a significant negative impact on City parks, especially as usership increases.

As New York City copes with the pandemic's economic and financial consequences, the City Council and the Mayor must recognize the critical role that parks have played during this crisis and will continue to play in the future recovery. The current proportion of the City budget dedicated to parks is at its lowest point since the 1970s. While this fund will help replace private funding lost because of the pandemic, it cannot substitute for adequate public support for parks.

The NYC Green Relief & Recovery Fund -- to be administered by the City Parks Foundation (CPF) -- is intended to respond to the most urgent needs facing the City's parks and open spaces, while spurring policy-makers to address ongoing systemic challenges, and provide adequate funding to maintain and improve them in the Fiscal Year 2021 budget.

The current donors supporting the establishment of this fund include (list in formation):

Doris Duke Charitable Foundation
The J.M. Kaplan Fund
The JPB Foundation
Leon Levy Foundation
Libra Fund
Lily Auchincloss Foundation
The New York Community Trust

Current contributions to the Fund total \$2.3 million. Since the parks groups estimate a shortfall in private revenue of as much as \$40 million this year, this coalition is committed to growing the Fund significantly over the next several months. Those interested in donating to the NYC Green Relief & Recovery Fund may donate through the CPF website at (cityparksfoundation.org/nyc-green-fund) or email NYCGreenFund@cityparksfoundation.org with any questions.

Funding will be available to nonprofit and volunteer stewardship groups through a competitive application process. Grants of up to \$100,000 will be available to larger nonprofits and multiple nonprofits applying together can access up to \$150,000. Volunteer-led groups can apply for small grants of up to \$1,500. Detailed guidelines and application instructions are available on the CPF website (cityparksfoundation.org/nyc-green-fund).

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For information contact:

Christina Pettit, Marketing Director, City Parks Foundation
cpettit@cityparksfoundation.org
(212) 360-8162

Media contact:

Kate Treen, BerlinRosen
kate.treen@berlinrosen.com
(805) 558-6363