About The Davis Center At The Harlem Meer

Opening on April 26, 2025, the Central Park Conservancy is completing its most significant and complex project to date, the Davis Center at the Harlem Meer. The capstone project of the Conservancy's comprehensive restoration of the Park's north end, the new facility will feature a swimming pool that converts to an ice rink in the winter and a public green in the shoulder season, providing year round community access. Unlike the previous Lasker Pool and Rink which was only open for half the year, the new facility will be open all year and the programming will be community-driven; not profit-driven. The design is a collaboration between the Central Park Conservancy and Susan T Rodriguez | Architecture • Design in collaboration with Mitchell Giurgola Architects.

The design of the Davis Center marries architecture and landscape to create park-based recreational experiences. The project is a capstone effort of a decades-long commitment by the Conservancy to reestablish the northern end of the Park as a vital resource for the surrounding community. Situated at the intersection of History, Landscape, Recreation, and the City, the design reconnects the Park's north end and the Harlem community to the rest of Central Park. The new public facility sits within the curvilinear geometry of the Park Drive, the original framework envisioned by Olmsted and Vaux, at the northern end of the 843-acre park just south of 110th Street. It replaces Lasker Rink and Pool, a systematically flawed and failing facility that was built in the mid-1960s.

The Conservancy has invested over $310 million into the Park north of 97th Street over the past four decades. Since the initial planning stages of the project, the Conservancy has taken a community-first approach, building upon strong existing relationships with local leaders, community groups, and elected officials to ensure that the Davis Center reflects the community's needs and contemporary uses. There's been extensive dialogue with the community at every step of the process. The Conservancy's work in the Park's north end has been ongoing since its founding in the 1980s, with one of the first major restorations of the Meer occurring in 1989.

Underpinning the design is a commitment to a sustainable renewal of the site and the highest standards of environmentally responsible design, construction and operational practices. The fundamental premise of the design derives from the leading objective of repairing the damaged ecology and hydrology of the site, and this approach filters through every aspect of the facility's design. The design incorporates passive climate control; natural and locally sourced materials; energy and water-conserving solutions and bird-safe glass. The project is targeting LEED Gold certification.

On Friday, April 25th, the Central Park Conservancy will celebrate the completion of the project with a ribbon cutting ceremony. On Saturday, April 26th, the Davis Center will officially open to the public with a day-long community celebration on the facility's new Harlem Oval.

The project was announced in 2019 and broke ground in 2021.

Project Ownership

- Betsy Smith, President and CEO, Central Park Conservancy
- Sue Donoghue, New York City Department of Parks & Recreation Commissioner

Design Leadership

- Christopher Nolan, FASLA, Project Executive and Former Chief Landscape Architect
- Design Architect: Susan T. Rodriguez, FAIA; Susan T Rodriguez | Architecture • Design
- Executive Architect: John Doherty, AIA; Mitchell Giurgola Architects

Main Design Components

- Built into the steep topography of the site along its eastern slope, the design seamlessly integrates the building into the Park's natural setting.
- Landscape and pedestrian circulation extend across a green roof that effectively covers the entire building.
- A monumental outdoor room will transform seasonally – from a pool in the summer season to an ice rink in the winter and a public green in the spring and fall.
- Located beneath the building's green roof a light-filled interior gathering space opens to the outdoor room. During warmer weather, center pivot floor-to-ceiling glass doors open along the entire length of the gathering space to create a covered front porch.
- A series of large-scale openings through the wall lead to amenities including locker rooms, skate rentals, and concessions, as well as new public restrooms organized along a sweeping hallway topped by a wood ceiling.
- The project reconnects the watercourse that originally flowed through the Ravine and Huddlestone Arch into the Meer; reestablishes the pedestrian connection between the North Woods and the Meer; and creates a wetland edge and boardwalk along the adjacent shoreline.

Location: Central Park North, New York, NY 10029

At a Glance:

- The site is over 8 acres, with Central Park as a whole totaling 843 acres, and the building itself is 34,000 square feet, with a 29,000 square-foot vegetated roof.
- The pool is an elongated oval, measuring 285 feet by 120 feet. **The new pool will be larger than an Olympic-size pool.** It will be the eighth-largest pool in New York City—making it one of a handful of City pools that can accommodate 50-meter lap swimming. The new facility will also feature **a full-size ice rink.** The facility and outdoor spaces will be open year-round, including during the shoulder seasons.

- **The project cost is $160 million.** The City of New York has allocated $60 million to the project, and the Conservancy has privately raised $100 million, while also overseeing the design and construction. An enthusiastic response by donors is bringing the campaign in the north end close to its goal, with the Conservancy privately raising money to underwrite the year-round, free and low-cost programming that the facility will offer.
- The Central Park Conservancy will manage the programming and ticketing systems, and the majority of the programming will be free or low-cost.
- There are four lead donors who spearheaded the funding for this project, in addition to support from The City of New York:
    - Kathryn and Andrew Davis donated $40 million to the project; the entire facility encompassing all of its features is called The Davis Center at the Harlem Meer.
    - Thomas L. Kempner, Jr. and Katheryn C. Patterson donated $25 million to the project; The Kempner Boardwalk is named after them.
    - David S. Gottesman and Ruth L. Gottesman made a significant contribution to the project; The Gottesman Pool is named after them.
    - The Central Park Conservancy would also like to recognize The Carson Family Charitable Trust for its significant contribution as a lead donor to the project
    - Programming is generously funded by lead donors JPMorganChase, Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF), and Philip & Alicia Hammarskjold.

About The Conservancy:

The Central Park Conservancy is a private, not-for-profit organization that manages Central Park and is responsible for raising the Park's annual operating budget. The Conservancy's staff of more than 400 is responsible for all aspects of the Park's stewardship, from day-to-day maintenance and operations to continued restoration and rebuilding projects. Additionally, the Conservancy operates the Park's visitor centers, provides public programs, and serves as a resource for other NYC parks and for public-private partnerships around the world. For more information, please visit https://www.centralparknyc.org/.

Media Contacts:

harlemmeercenter@berlinrosen.com

press@centralpark.nyc