

Working
side by
Riverside

Riverside Park Conservancy



Annual Report
2021

From the President & CEO

Dear Friends,

Riverside Park Conservancy continued to make significant improvements in 2021. On this, our organization's 35th Anniversary, we had more individual donors to Riverside Park Conservancy than at any point in our history. Because of the generosity of our neighbors, we were able to keep the Park in good shape -- and to build on prior successes.



Our horticultural care this year included the fourth year of our greenway slope restoration, an initiative to rejuvenate certain lawns in the Park, and the installation of both Bee Houses and Pollinator Gardens. We also delivered much-needed repairs to the 107th Street Staircase, the Firemen's Monument, the Warsaw Ghetto Memorial Plaza, and the 72nd Street ballfields. Perhaps just as significantly, as a result of our continued advocacy, the City in 2021 allocated \$348 million to repair the "overbuild," more commonly known as the roof of the Amtrak Tunnel, between 110th and 120th Streets. When coupled with the funds for flooding, the Boat Basin, and the Rotunda, the City is now investing over a half billion dollars in Riverside Park. It is much needed, and long overdue.

In the summer of 2021, we featured a Park-wide art exhibition called Re:Growth A Celebration of Art, Riverside Park, and the New York Spirit. It featured more than twenty artists, with thirteen site-specific installations throughout the Park, and celebrated the resiliency and resolve of all New Yorkers. Of course, we also welcomed the famous Riverside Park goats, who ran triumphantly into the Park, then helped us restore our natural woodland area by noshing all summer long on porcelain berry, multiflora rose, and poison ivy.

Year-round we work side by side with the New York City Parks Department provide you with a better, safer, more enjoyable park experience. Thanks to the generosity of neighbors and Park lovers like you, we remain true to our mission.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Daniel R. Garodnick

2021 Year In Review



Riverside Park Conservancy continued to make huge significant improvements in 2021. On this, our organization's 35th Anniversary, we had more individual donors to Riverside Park Conservancy than at any point in our history. Because of the generosity of our neighbors, we were able to keep the Park in good shape -- and to build on prior successes.

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Park Projects



Ballfields Crew



72nd baseball field

Active recreation groups like little leagues and soccer leagues, not to mention the thousands more adults and children who visit Riverside Park daily, all rely on the benefits of active play in the Park. In the summer of 2021, we launched a ballfields crew, to help us care for the Park's various courts, fields and running track. Their responsibilities include the general repairs and upkeep, removing debris, restoring fields after a heavy rain, installing signage and maintaining the trees and shrubs in the ballfields. Our hope is that this expert team will allow us to respond most expeditiously as needs arise, throughout all six miles of Parkland under our care.

Lawn Care Initiative

We see it too – Riverside Park's lawns need some love. In 2021, we embarked on a new initiative this year to start reclaiming some areas that have turned from green grass to dirt patches over the past 20 years. We launched a pilot program in an area between 108th and 112th Streets, with an eye toward taking our best practices and applying them elsewhere in the Park.

The biggest challenge was that there is no irrigation system, or any nearby water source for most of Riverside Park's lawns. That means that we needed to dedicate staff to move water to these sites using watering trucks.

Despite those challenges, the pilot was a success, and the lawn panels are green and beautiful. We look forward to expanding this program to other areas next year.



Before Lawn Care repair



After Lawn Care repair

Compost Initiative



In partnership with our neighbors at the Lower East Side Ecology Center, and thanks to the organizing efforts of our own Gardeners, Riverside Park Conservancy this year implemented a compost program in the Park at 96th Street.

The site will be utilized by park staff and volunteers to allow all plant material we remove from the Park (like invasive species and weeds) to decompose in a natural way – and to transform into nourishing, healthy compost. The compost will in turn be used on garden beds throughout the Park.

Composting is the natural process of decomposition, in which organisms break down organic material until a nutrient-rich soil remains. Not only is it an important way to improve the health of our city's parks and soil – but it also significantly reduces organic waste.



While Riverside Park will not be composting food scraps for the time being, this is a significant step toward becoming a "closed-loop" operation, and eliminating the fossil fuel emissions caused by carting away discarded plant material to other locations in the City.

The compost from this site will eventually be available for distribution to the public.

Pollinator Meadow

After removing a significant amount of invasive plants, we started a massive planting project in the Pollinator Meadow behind the 119th Street Tennis Courts.. This included: Butterfly weed, Wreath goldenrod, Canada goldenrod, Common Milkweed, Wild bergamot, and Agastache. Conservancy staff planted 4,000+ plants in the Meadow alone last fall. We also added a wood chip route for easier access, and to encourage the public to avoid trampling the new plants.



Pollinator Garden

In 2021, Riverside Park Conservancy became one of the first NYC Parks partner organizations to launch an initiative to repurpose pieces of parkland throughout the city into "Pollinator Place" gardens.

These gardens are designed to plant underutilized -- or ecologically compromised -- spaces with native species that provide ecosystem benefits for a variety of birds and insects, and, of course, a beautiful garden for people to appreciate!

We recently planted our first official Pollinator Place garden at the Little Red Lighthouse, at 181st Street, and thanks to a donation from a neighbor, we are planting a second Pollinator Place garden at 83rd Street.

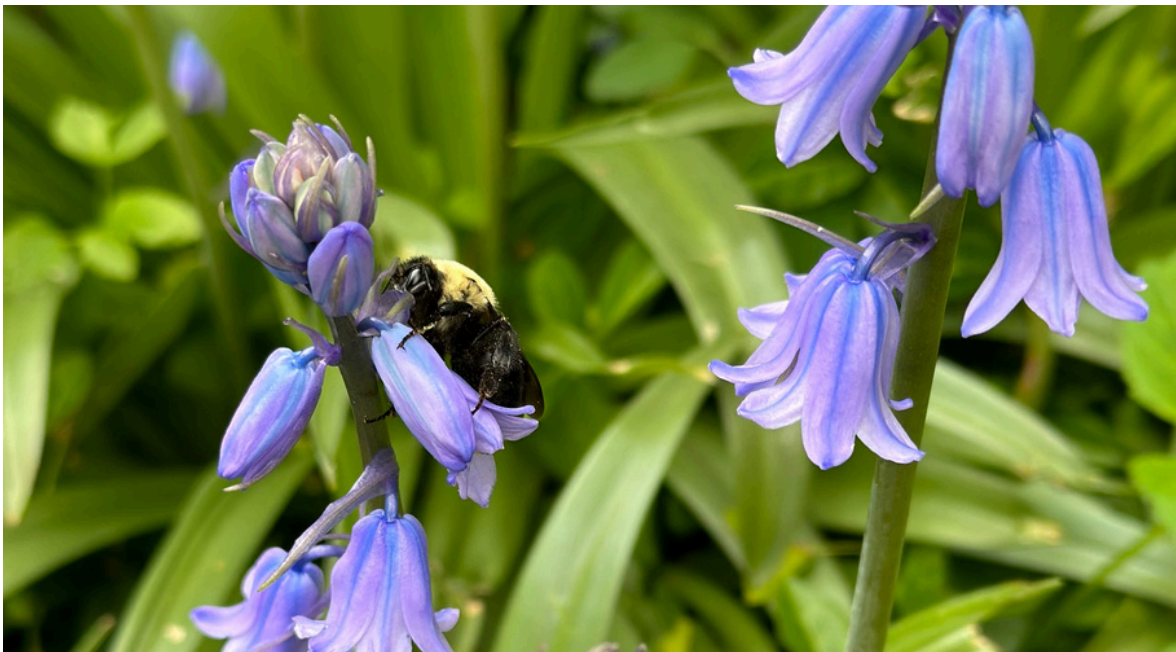


Native Bee Project



We worked with the Bee Conservancy to install bee houses in Riverside Park, and in the pollinator meadow at 119th Streets. Honey bees (*Apis mellifera*) tend to get a lot more attention than native bees do, and while all bees are vital to the health of ecosystems -- and the agriculture that sustains us -- the relationship between the species is complex. Honey bees, if raised in abundance, can end up out-competing native bees. Regardless of the species, bees are vitally important to biodiversity on the planet - and thus, to the survival of humans.

Around 75% of crop plants around the planet require pollination by animals and insects – a large portion of which are bees. It is estimated that 1 in every 3 bites of food you eat was pollinated by bees.



Unfortunately, bee populations are struggling due to habitat loss caused by the expansion of suburbs and urban environments, as well as the agricultural practice of pesticide use. If bees were to go extinct, our food system would be drastically altered – and the delicate balance of biodiversity in ecosystems around the world would take a major hit. Parks and green spaces can be invaluable in helping to support local bee populations.

Native bees do not create the iconic honey-producing hives that many of us are used to seeing, so these bee houses mimic plant reeds and cavities in trees that they would naturally shelter in. Native bees are solitary, and each female bee is a queen who will lay about 10 larvae in the fall that will hatch next year. The bee houses can support several bees through the hibernation season, and will hopefully help to increase the populations in coming years.

Riverside Park is one piece of a larger puzzle of green space in NYC, and we extend a warm welcome to any native bees that want to make a home in the new houses!



Greenway Slope Restoration

In the sloped area between 72nd and 84th Streets, we are dampening the noise and vehicle splash-back of water during storms from the Henry Hudson Parkway; supporting the wildlife that migrate, forage, and inhabit the area; and preventing erosion and controlling runoff.

On all three measures, we have made significant progress. This is a five-year plan, and 2021 was the third year of our efforts.

Our goal in 2021 was to protect the health of our initial plantings; to continue to remove invasive plants; and to address the area with the most significant erosion problem. We sought to expand our footprint of care by addressing the slope behind Classic Playground (which we refer to as the "bowl") and the area north of the 79th Street Boat Basin.





Our progress: In 2021, we installed branches as live stakes and new soil lifts in the areas that had been most damaged by soil erosion.

We also began an initial cutback of the existing shrubs in the slope behind Classic Playground this summer in preparation of fall planting. These older shrubs are unkempt forsythia which are not native to this area, and are no longer blooming. We have decided to replace this former plant material with all-native plants. We anticipate the cutback to be completed this winter.

And, in the fall, we began the restoration process of the north side of the Boat Basin in the fall of 2021. We removed invasive shrubs and hosted two large volunteer projects to help with the work.

In addition to his hard work to maintain the horticulture in this area, our dedicated Zone Gardner has been happy to answer park-goers' questions about the project and the importance of integrating native plants into our urban green spaces.

Infrastructure Improvements: 107th Street Staircase



In 2021, we completed a total restoration of the 107th Street Staircase and reopened it to the public. This staircase had deteriorated so badly that the Parks Department had closed it to the public for about a year.

With the support of a private donor, we retained a contractor, put them to work, and had the project completed in only six months.

This critical access point is now open to the public, again. This project was a great example of what we can do – both quickly and effectively – with the generous support of our neighbors.





Infrastructure Improvements: Repairs to Firemen's Memorial



In honor of the 20th Anniversary of September 11, 2001, Riverside Park Conservancy secured private funds to repair The Firemen's Memorial at 100th Street. With support from an individual donor, funding from the Conservancy provided the equipment and supplies needed for NYC Parks' monuments crew to clean, repoint, and repair the monument. Work was completed within a few weeks.

Each September, The Firemen's Memorial, built in 1913, is the site of the NYC Fire Department's annual 9/11 commemoration ceremony, and in October, it is the site of the annual memorial event honoring those firefighters who have died in the line of duty.

The memorial has undergone extensive repairs twice since it was built: once in the 1930s and again in the 1990s. The 108-year-old structure was again in need of restoration work to preserve it for future generations, and we were honored to bring renewed care to this important and beloved monument

Infrastructure Improvements: Warsaw Ghetto Memorial Plaza

In 2021, we worked with a contractor to repair broken bluestone in the area surrounding the Warsaw Ghetto Memorial. The pathways had deteriorated, and we were happy to be able to jump into action to get this area fixed quickly and effectively. In 2022, we expect to repair the staircase on the west side of the Memorial.



Park Initiatives



Zone Gardener Program



The Zone Gardener Program, launched in 2010, serves to expand our horticulture maintenance and care of Riverside Park. While our professional gardeners create and maintain beautiful gardens to enhance the overall park experience, this is far from their only focus.

Zone Gardeners keep ballfields playable, inspect the park for hazards, respond to storm and snow emergencies, steward healthy habitats, and support tens of thousands of volunteer hours. In doing so, our team brings a unique expertise to care for the Park's health and safety.

Park Clean Ups Initiative



You have most likely noticed that Riverside Park – and other NYC Parks around the City – are burdened with a constant accumulation of litter. Parks and Conservancy employees, with the help of volunteers and neighbors, spend an extraordinary amount of time cleaning up trash every day, all year round.

In order to combat this chronic issue, the Conservancy last year hired an extra crew of workers – in partnership with Goddard Riverside's Green Keepers – to provide supplemental clean up in the Park. Thanks to an outpouring of support from neighbors, we were able to hire the Green Keepers for a second year. We also hosted several volunteer events to help keep the Park free of trash.

North Park Initiative

2021 was another big year for our North Park Initiative. Through the efforts of our North Park Outreach Coordinator, we launched partnerships with groups for hands on-projects, including:

- Repair the World
- Riverkeeper
- Harlem Boys & Girls Club
- Community Health Academy of the Heights
- Exodus Transitional Community



We partnered with the Dog Run 142 User Group to plan for much-needed improvements to that new dog run, established a homeless outreach plan with Center for Community Services, and recruited and worked with 15 new ParkTender volunteers.



We held a Bike Helmet Giveaway and Learn-to-Ride Classes at the John-Carlo Monti Community Bike Education Center at 158th Street.

Opened in fall 2020, in partnership with Bike New York, this new Education Center serves as a free resource for people of all ages to learn how to ride and improve their cycling skills.

Park Advocacy



City Budget Wins

This year, the City allocated \$348 million to address the deterioration of the "overbuild" -- more commonly known as the roof of the Amtrak Tunnel between 72nd and 123rd Streets -- in Riverside Park.

Failures in the overbuild have damaged pathways, limited access for vehicles, and created a condition of disrepair in the Park -- and the problems have gotten much worse in recent years. The City is presently advancing this project.

This \$348 million, in addition to the already allocated \$200 million for the Rotunda project, \$90 million for the Boat Basin, \$10 million for pathways and staircases, and \$11.5 million for drainage, totals well over a half of a billion dollars in investment in Riverside Park. That is the largest investment in Riverside Park since the 1930s, and we are grateful to the Mayor, to NYC Parks Department Commissioner Silver, and to NYC Department of Transportation for prioritizing this critical work.

Other allocations in the City budget passed in June:

- \$2.5 million for the repair of the two staircases at 105th Street;
- \$3.5 million for a comfort station at Discovery Playground;
- \$750,000 for the repair of the stairs at 78th Street;
- and \$1 million toward future improvements at Dinosaur Playground.

While the Park still has enormous needs to be met -- many bathrooms, pathways, walls, stairs and playgrounds -- these are important and necessary investments that will ensure the Park is in top condition and accessible for generations to come.

As the last two years have shown us, our parks are truly essential for the health of our communities -- and we are so glad to see the City take this major step for Riverside Park.

Staff Success!

We are happy to report that in 2021, we added new members to our full-time gardening staff and have thus expanded our capacity to improve upkeep and appearance in all areas. In just one year, we:

- **Installed large quantities of new plants** throughout the Park – we installed more than 4,000 new plants in fall 2021 alone
- **Improved the survival rate of plants by approximately 25%** compared to previous years, through the selection of adaptable plant species and through using more mature plant material, which is easier to monitor, water, and maintain
- **Restored and fenced four deteriorated lawn panels** between 106th and 112th Streets, and one at 145th Street. More upkeep is required in spring 2022 and into the future for all lawns
- **Added three native pollinator houses** – two at Riverside Park South, and one at 119th Street
- **Hosted our second successful year of the popular Gotham program at 120th Street.** All goats departed the Park at season’s end with full bellies and in good health
- **Completed numerous targeted projects** – pruning along the upper path to create more visibility, opening up views of the Hudson River north of 120th Street, cleaning up slopes and expanding slope plantings, and other projects
- **Assisted the NYC Parks Department with trash cleanup, leaf maintenance and snow clearing as needed.**



Special Events & Public Programs



GO(a)THAM



On Wednesday, July 14, we welcomed Riverside Park's goats with a live band that included saxophone duo Peter and Will Anderson, speeches from elected officials, and the singing of "Lonely Goatherd," performed by New York's Own Women's Choir, SoHarmoniums.

24 goats ran into the Park, and 5 of whom will remain for the entire summer. These "Fabulous Five" campaigned to be the G.O.A.T., and for the first time ever, the public was able to vote-the-GOAT using our new and heretofore untested ranked choice voting system.

As if they weren't famous enough already, they appeared in the national edition of the New York Times, as well as The NY Post, NY Daily News, Reuters, AMNY, Patch, West Side Rag, Yahoo News, NY1 Noticias, and more. They were even featured on the local TV news in Los Angeles and in newspapers as far away as Indonesia.



Top: photo before the goats were released; bottom: photo of the space after they cleared it

As a substantive matter, the goats chowed down on everything in their path, and helped us clear out this area of invasive plants. We expect that the goats will return again in 2022, ravenously hungry. And once the site is fully cleared, we will begin restoring the area with native plantings.



Grassroots Volunteer Program

Our Volunteer Program, which is at the heart of the Conservancy's work, continued to make huge strides in improving Riverside Park in 2021. Our 250+ ParkTenders – volunteers who care for specific areas of the Park – worked throughout the year to clear invasive plants, to plant, and to make the Park simply spectacular. And despite group-size limitations caused by COVID-19, we were still able to deliver 28,000 hours of volunteer time last year.

On one special weekend in 2021, as part of a “Ghost Forest” initiative, our volunteers planted 200 native, climate-adapted trees in a section of Riverside Park that is particularly close to the Hudson River. We selected these native trees because they are adaptable to changing climate conditions projected for the Park's native maritime forest.





This planting event – which took place near the 79th Street Boat Basin – is one of five events taking place throughout New York City. These events, held in partnership between the Natural Areas Conservancy, Madison Square Park Conservancy, and additional park conservancies, were inspired by artist Maya Lin’s Ghost Forest installation in Madison Square Park.

Other 2021 special events included International Coastal Cleanup, where we removed litter from the Park and the Hudson River shoreline; National Public Lands Day, where we did major planting projects; and the Annual Leaf Lift, where we raked leaves throughout the Park.

Riverside Clay Tennis Association



The Riverside Clay Tennis Association (RCTA) is a community based organization that works with Riverside Park Conservancy to care for the clay tennis courts at 96th Street. The RCTA offers adult and youth lessons, ladders, tournaments and walk-on play from April through November.

Additionally, a core group of committed volunteers provided the RCTA staff with essential maintenance, gardening and gate attendant support. In 2021, Mark McIntyre, the long-serving director of the RCTA stepped down, and the board appointed Tim Heath as his replacement. Heath, formerly Associate Director, oversaw some new initiatives including the Bloomingdale Aging in Place Free Tennis Program for Seniors and the Yonex US Open promotional event, where 100 people had their racquets restrung for no cost. In addition to providing care for the courts and overseeing lessons and tournaments, the RCTA, offered seven free summer concerts in 2021.

Multi-Sport Summer Camp



In 2021, we again offered our popular Multi-Sport Summer Camp, and 1,036 families signed up for 3107 slots. This was an increase of 184 more families than the prior year. The Conservancy provided scholarships for families that need financial assistance to ensure that the Camp is fully inclusive for all who sought to participate.

Fully 20 percent of our campers received full or partial need-based scholarships provided by the Conservancy in the amount of \$163,000.

Riverside Park Conservancy partners with three providers to operate the Camp: Kids of Summer, Carlos Oliveira Soccer Academy, and Riverside Clay Tennis Association. Sports offerings include baseball, basketball, flag football, soccer and tennis.

We also launched a nature-based camp called Trail Blazers. This experiential learning program nurtured campers' appreciation for the environment with hands-on science experiments, group play and group challenges, team building, nature exploration, art, and lots of singing.



Summer on the Hudson



Summer on the Hudson is an annual 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 New York City Parks Department and Riverside Park Conservancy. This public programming series offers a wide range of concerts, movies, health and wellness classes, educational workshops, family programs, and other events.

In 2021, Summer on the Hudson resumed a full season of outdoor programs. We presented 212 events during our season, which featured the anticipated return of socially-distanced Amplified Sundays concerts and the Pier I Picture Show. 15,278 people attended these free public programs, from the beginning of May through the end of October.





RE:Growth

A Celebration of Art, Riverside Park, & the New York Spirit



As a gift to our neighbors during the pandemic, and in celebration of Riverside Park Conservancy's 35th Anniversary, in 2021 we hosted a free summer-long art exhibition throughout the Park. Reviewed positively by The New York Times, the exhibition was one of New York City's best, and most socially-distanced, cultural events of summer.

This exhibition, which opened on June 5, was called RE:GROWTH, A Celebration of Art, Riverside Park, and the New York Spirit, featured more than twenty artists, with thirteen site-specific installations throughout the Park, and celebrated the resiliency and resolve of all New Yorkers. Curated by Karin Bravin of BravinLee programs, this outdoor interactive event included both physical installations and augmented reality displays.



The exhibit included works by Vanessa Albury, Blanka Amezkua, Lee Boroson, Dahlia Elsayed, Mark Joshua Epstein, Rico Gatson, DeWitt Godfrey, Joshua Goode, Valerie Hegarty, Wennie Huang, Beth Krebs, Sadie Laska, Niki Lederer, Wendy Letven, LoVid, Mary Mattingly, Joiri Minaya, Sui Park, Shuli Sadé, Jean Shin, Glen Wilson, Letha Wilson and Woolpunk.

Financials



RIVERSIDE PARK CONSERVANCY, INC. AND AFFILIATE

Consolidated Statement of Financial Position

Assets

	December 31	
	2021	2020
Current assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 7,950,540	\$ 6,658,444
Contributions receivable – current	732,121	360,513
Prepaid expenses and other assets	<u>15,745</u>	<u>11,357</u>
Total current assets	<u>8,698,406</u>	<u>7,030,314</u>
Contributions receivable – net	<u>238,901</u>	<u>47,733</u>
Investments, at fair value	<u>2,433,793</u>	<u>1,643,542</u>
Property and equipment, at cost		
Furniture and equipment	49,730	49,730
Leasehold improvements	<u>20,350</u>	<u>20,350</u>
Sub-total	70,080	70,080
Less: accumulated depreciation and amortization	<u>67,597</u>	<u>64,778</u>
Net property and equipment	<u>2,483</u>	<u>5,302</u>
Total assets	<u>\$ 11,373,583</u>	<u>\$ 8,726,891</u>

Liabilities and Net Assets

Current liabilities		
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$ 977,571	\$ 848,544
Deferred RPC – South maintenance fees and other	<u>1,112,221</u>	<u>625,322</u>
Total current liabilities	<u>2,089,792</u>	<u>1,473,866</u>
Net assets		
Without donor restrictions	3,093,491	2,209,007
With donor restrictions	<u>6,190,300</u>	<u>5,044,018</u>
Total net assets	<u>9,283,791</u>	<u>7,253,025</u>
Total liabilities and net assets	<u>\$ 11,373,583</u>	<u>\$ 8,726,891</u>

Financials

Consolidated Statement of Activities

	Year Ended December 31					
	2021			2020		
	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	Total	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	Total
Public support and revenue						
Contributions	\$ 2,621,323	\$ 2,513,459	\$ 5,134,782	\$ 2,045,424	\$ 3,182,030	\$ 5,227,454
RPC-South maintenance fees	1,599,916	-	1,599,916	1,555,123	-	1,555,123
Special events proceeds (net of direct expenses of \$103,205 for 2021 and \$6,100 for 2020)	538,607	-	538,607	422,270	-	422,270
Interest and dividends	1,121	32,158	33,279	1,301	37,017	38,318
RCTA fees	660,691	-	660,691	346,218	-	346,218
Sports camp fees	1,246,187	-	1,246,187	50	-	50
Other	74,552	-	74,552	656,231	-	656,231
Net assets released from restrictions	1,685,030	(1,685,030)	-	2,234,607	(2,234,607)	-
Total public support and revenue	8,427,427	860,587	9,288,014	7,261,224	984,440	8,245,664
Expenses						
Program services						
Field operations and volunteers	3,271,909	-	3,271,909	2,827,451	-	2,827,451
Public programs and events	1,885,401	-	1,885,401	466,896	-	466,896
Design and construction	957,468	-	957,468	1,356,874	-	1,356,874
Total program services	6,114,778	-	6,114,778	4,651,221	-	4,651,221
Supporting activities						
Management and general	904,469	-	904,469	855,506	-	855,506
Fundraising	523,877	-	523,877	496,817	-	496,817
Total supporting activities	1,428,346	-	1,428,346	1,352,323	-	1,352,323
Total expenses	7,543,124	-	7,543,124	6,003,544	-	6,003,544
Increase in net assets from operating activities	884,303	860,587	1,744,890	1,257,680	984,440	2,242,120
Non-operating activities						
Realized and unrealized gain on investments	181	285,695	285,876	298	188,492	188,790
Increase in net assets	884,484	1,146,282	2,030,766	1,257,978	1,172,932	2,430,910
Net assets, beginning of year	2,209,007	5,044,018	7,253,025	951,029	3,871,086	4,822,115
Net assets, end of year	\$ 3,093,491	\$ 6,190,300	\$ 9,283,791	\$ 2,209,007	\$ 5,044,018	\$ 7,253,025

Donors

\$100,000+

Anonymous
Lawrence and Dana Linden
Mark and Lisa Schwartz

\$25,000–\$99,999

John Stossel and Ellen Abrams
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\$10,000–\$24,999

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The Ted Snowdon Foundation
Jacqueline Ullendorff
Victoria's Giving
West Harlem Development Corp.

Donors *continued*

\$5,000–\$9,999

110–118 Riverside Tenants Corporation
222 Riverside Drive Condominium
Mark and Leslie Aaron
Robin Aronow and Dennis M. Adler
Amanda Ambrose
Edward and Alberta Arthurs
James Benson
Fran Bermanzohn
Kelly Blankenship
David Pozen and Jessica Bulman–Pozen
Katherine Bussman
Rebecca Chace
Patricia Dann
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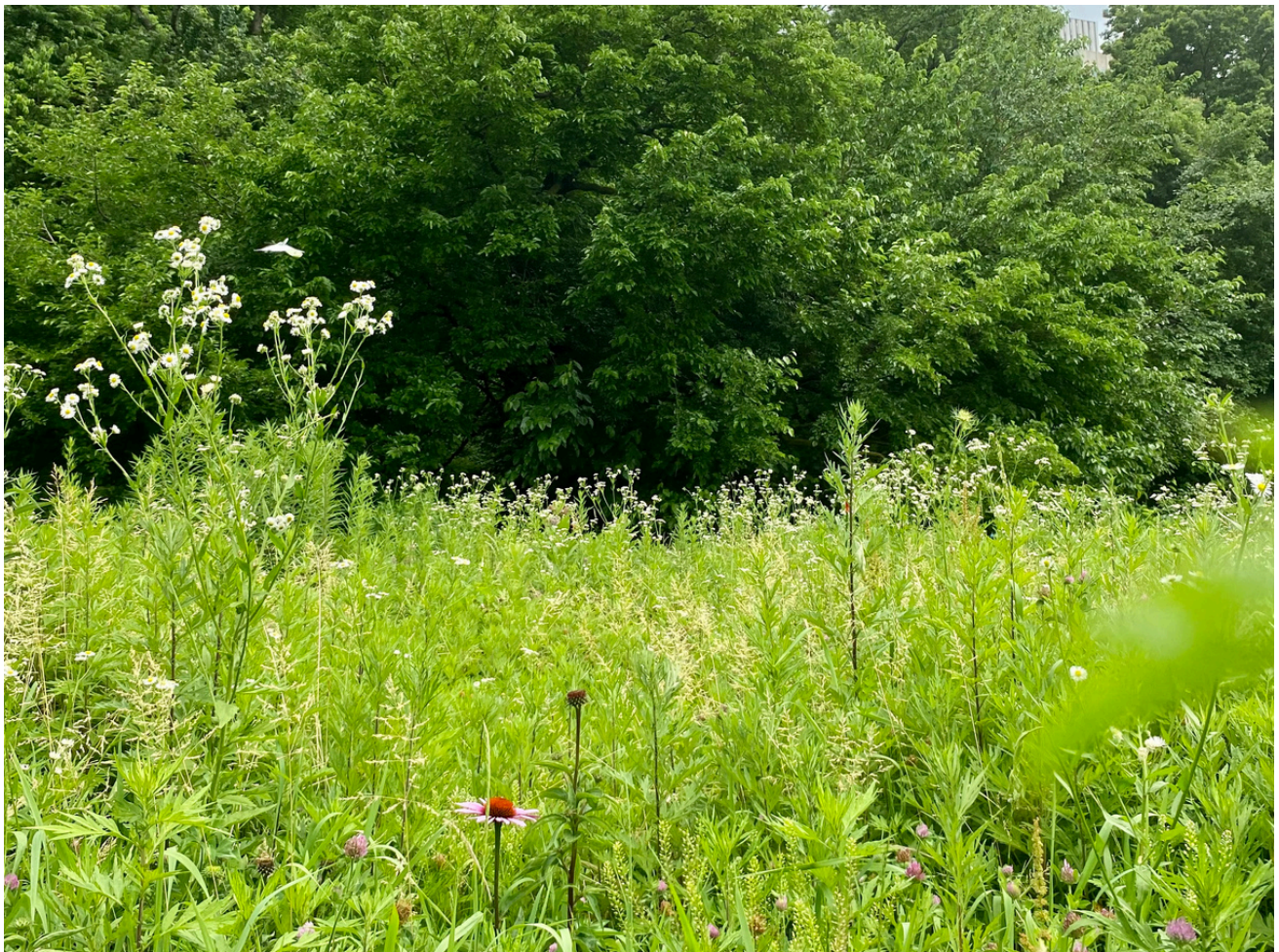
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The mission of Riverside Park Conservancy is to restore, maintain, and improve Riverside Park in partnership with the City of New York for the enjoyment and benefit of all New Yorkers.

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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