REPORT ON PROGRESS
2014-2016
NYC Parks
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Dear Friends,

To create a fairer, stronger city, we need a resilient and world-class parks system that all New Yorkers can enjoy. Parks are everything to so many New Yorkers who can’t afford a vacation. Parks are where they see nature, relax, and spend time with family. Yet for too long, less-advantaged neighborhoods received the least in parks investment.

In 2014, we released our Framework for an Equitable Future, a roadmap to creating and restoring public spaces in all five boroughs and reversing decades of inequity. We have committed more than $1.6 billion to improve historically underfunded green spaces citywide through Community Parks, Anchor Parks, and other initiatives.

Neighborhoods across town are already seeing major changes. We’ve revamped playgrounds, basketball courts, ball fields, and community gardens in dozens of parks. We’ve made free fitness programs like Shape Up NYC and Kids in Motion available to more than a million kids and adults. We are constantly working to use technology to connect New Yorkers with their public spaces through interactive maps, construction updates for all major park improvements, and opportunities to comment on our efforts.

This report details our accomplishments and the many ways our administration, NYC Parks, and Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver are working to build a brighter, greener future for every New Yorker in every zip code.

Thanks,

Bill de Blasio
Mayor
City of New York
New York City’s parks are the physical, cultural, and ecological hearts of neighborhoods. They provide space for residents to relax, play, and connect with one another. And with 29,000 acres citywide, nearly every neighborhood has a park, playground, garden, or plaza to call its own.

Our parks are an essential part of New York’s social and physical infrastructure. Active, inclusive, and lively public spaces can transform neighborhoods, serving as catalysts for community engagement, development, and resiliency. Diverse ecological systems support both recreational activities and protection from the elements.

Since 2014, NYC Parks has made significant investments to transform high-need parks citywide. We are also enhancing our planning and community engagement efforts, expanding free programming, planting new trees and gardens, and improving the resiliency of our coastlines. We continue to collect new data and use new technologies to help direct resources and deploy staff where they are needed most. And thanks to knowledgeable and dedicated employees, partners, and volunteers, we are bringing the benefits of parks and public spaces to more New Yorkers than ever before.

**Vision and Mission**

In 2015, we revised our vision and mission statements to reflect NYC Parks’ innovative and inclusive approach to ensuring that our parks serve all New Yorkers.

At NYC Parks, we seek to create and sustain thriving parks and public spaces. To achieve this, we work to:

- Plan resilient and sustainable parks, public spaces, and recreational amenities.
- Build a park system for present and future generations.
- Care for parks and public spaces.

**Our park system spans 29,000 Acres**

Macombs Dam Park, Bronx.

“An outstanding city starts with outstanding parks and public spaces.”

-Mitchell J. Silver, FAICP

Commissioner, NYC Parks
NYC Parks is dedicated to creating and maintaining thriving parks and public spaces. Parks sustain healthy communities, connect neighborhoods, and improve quality of life for all New Yorkers. To realize a bright, green future for our parks, we are working to be more innovative, inclusive, and resilient.

NYC Parks has identified four interconnected priorities that reflect our commitment to vibrant communities, a healthy environment, innovation, and equity.

Our Strategy

NYC Parks Priorities

- **Equity**: Prioritizing an equitable distribution of resources and programming, and enhancing our outreach efforts to increase community participation and feedback.

- **Planning and Placemaking**: Developing new experiences and ways to engage with New Yorkers in building and enriching our parks.

- **Innovation and Technology**: Applying technology and data-driven approaches to improve our efficiency and decision-making processes.

- **Caring for Parks**: Making an important transition from maintaining to caring for our parks by engaging broader and more diverse stakeholders.

A Bright, Green Future

NYC Parks’ Framework for an Equitable Future, released by Mayor Bill de Blasio and Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver, FAICP, in October 2014, details our commitment to creating thriving public spaces for all New Yorkers.

The Framework presents a series of initiatives to support sustainable and equitable park development. It also launched the Community Parks Initiative, the cornerstone of our equity agenda, which brings new capital investment, maintenance, programming, and partnership development to high-need neighborhood parks in dense and growing communities.

The Framework was designed to help us deliver meaningful improvements to our parks and public spaces. Using the Framework, we are improving the connection between NYC Parks and communities, applying more transparent processes, and using innovative and data-driven approaches to planning and caring for our parks. As a result, New Yorkers will have greater access to clean, beautiful, and well-designed parks.
Community Parks Initiative
The Community Parks Initiative (CPI) is strengthening parks and public spaces in under-resourced and high-poverty neighborhoods through a five-year, $285 million capital program. The program is transforming more than 67 sites citywide. As part of CPI, we are renovating small parks and playgrounds, making targeted improvements, and installing green infrastructure. We are also expanding programming, enhancing outreach and engagement, and building new community partnerships.

NYC Parks is working with communities to reimagine and rebuild neighborhood parks. Through outreach, scoping sessions, and other meetings, we are consulting with local residents to understand their vision and to identify key features, needs, and programming interests. NYC Parks is also supporting the growth of local parks groups to sustain community involvement.

We used a data-driven approach to select the CPI sites. Starting with the parks that received less than $250,000 of capital investment over the past two decades, we analyzed demographic data and trends to identify neighborhoods with greatest need. We then reviewed inspection data and conducted on-the-ground surveys to select parks that could provide a range of recreational opportunities and are integral to neighborhoods.

NYC Parks’ Framework for an Equitable Future identifies nine initiatives that support a more inclusive and forward-looking park system:

1. Community Parks Initiative
   Ongoing
   Designing or contracting for renovations at 56 parks. Completed 85 improvement projects and served 1 million children through expanded summer programs.

2. Programming for Neighborhoods in Need
   Ongoing
   Launched interagency partnerships to expand recreational programming.

3. Standardized Maintenance
   Ongoing
   Improving crew training, assignments, and routing. Created expert playground maintenance team.

4. Streamlined Capital Process and Online Tracker
   Complete
   Completed analysis to increase efficiency and developed an online tracker. Increased vendor outreach and established engineer training.

5. Parks Needs Assessment
   Launched
   Developing a new program to collect data on the state of park assets. Began inspections for select assets.

6. Parks Usership Program
   Launched
   Developing a new program to collect data on park use and attendance.

7. Parkland Expansion
   Ongoing
   Opened 12 Schoolyards to Playgrounds sites. Continuing to acquire and develop private land.

8. Recreation Center Renovations
   Ongoing
   Designs underway for infrastructure improvements, architectural enhancements, and other upgrades at 11 buildings.

9. Regional Parks Strategy
   Ongoing
   Announced $150 million investment to transform five large anchor parks serving more than 750,000 New Yorkers.

Over 1 Million Children
Participated in Kids in Motion sites in CPI neighborhoods and Summer Sports Experience programs in 2015 and 2016

2,400 Community Stakeholders
Have participated in public input meetings across the city

$50 Million
In green infrastructure funding allocated by the NYC Department of Environmental Protection

NYC Parks: Framework for an Equitable Future
Identifies nine initiatives that support a more inclusive and forward-looking park system.

In August 2016, NYC Parks broke ground on Thomas Boyland Park in Brooklyn, the first Community Parks Initiative renovation, two months ahead of schedule. Foiling page: NYC Parks released its Framework for an Equitable Future in 2014.

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Vibrant Public Spaces
NYC Parks relies on expert staff and creative programming to bring our parks and public spaces to life. Shape Up NYC classes turn parks into fitness studios. Park events like Winter Jam transform Central Park into an urban ski resort. Alley Pond Park provides a beautiful backdrop for both team building and individual growth with its supervised adventure course. Thousands of playgrounds and dozens of recreation and nature centers expose people to parks resources and help visitors make the most of their parks.

Our Urban Park Rangers lead hiking, canoeing, and birding outings year-round. Recreation staff offer sports activities and Learn to Swim classes, while staff at Computer Resource Centers provide programs to improve technical skillsets. Our 36 recreation centers have more than 162,000 members who visited more than 4.2 million times in fiscal year 2015. We host more than 15,000 special events annually, from our Street Games event and SummerStage concerts to races and food festivals.

Participation in our programming increases each year. With the support of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and private donors, we now offer on average 275 free fitness classes each week through the Shape Up NYC program, including 20 bilingual classes. In partnership with the Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice and the New York City Housing Authority, NYC Parks expanded the Kids in Motion program, which had more than 660,000 visits across 102 sites citywide in 2016. And in collaboration with the Mayor’s Office of Media and Entertainment, we screened 461 movies at free events in neighborhoods across the city.

Art and Antiquities
Our city’s parks are the greatest outdoor public art museum in the United States. Since 1967, we have brought thousands of temporary public pieces to the parks, featuring renowned and emerging artists. Our Citywide Monuments Conservation Program, a public-private partnership now in its 20th year, cares for more than 845 monument sites, from the Chief Nemhi Memorial in Van Cortlandt Park to the Washington Square Arch. Since 2014, we installed seven new permanent works of art; published the Artist’s Guide to NYC Parks Public Art Sites, produced an online map of public art and monuments, curated 12 new gallery exhibitions, and brought on our first-ever historian-in-residence.

Clockwise from top left: Claremont Pool, Bronx; Raptor Fest at Prospect Park, Brooklyn; the Summer Sports Experience Jamboree at Williamsbridge Oval Recreation Center, Bronx; a Junior Knicks basketball tournament at Brooklyn Recreation Center; SkyCycles by Paul Wilinski at Ocean Breeze Track and Field Athletic Complex, Staten Island; Fall Field Day at Highbridge Park, Manhattan.
Community Engagement

Parks staff engage with the community on many levels: Our Recreation staff play basketball with teens and kids, while our Urban Park Service and Parks Enforcement Patrol officers keep our patrons and our parks safe. Dedicated volunteer coordinators lead fun and educational park activities, like TreesCount!, a citizen science project that worked with over 2,000 volunteers to map and collect data from more than 666,000 street trees across New York City.

The input and support of our users is essential to making sure that our parks meet the needs of all New Yorkers. The park design process begins with the community input meeting. In these meetings we talk to the children, adults, and families who know their parks the best—and know what can make them better. This valuable feedback helps guide the future design of parks. We have increased our outreach efforts, changed the time and format of our community input sessions, and created new online tools, making it easier to share ideas. The more feedback the better!

NYC PARKS PARTNERS

Thriving parks and public spaces require dedicated staff, strong nonprofit partners, and enthusiastic volunteers to make our parks beautiful and active centers of community life. Key partners in this effort include:

Partnerships for Parks, a public-private partnership with the City Parks Foundation that supports a growing network of leaders who care and advocate for neighborhood parks and green spaces. Partnerships for Parks engages over 1,000 groups year-round.

GreenThumb, the nation’s largest urban gardening program, assists over 600 gardens and nearly 20,000 garden members across New York City through education workshops and events. Thousands of members and volunteers donate nearly 1 million hours each year to community gardens that provide New Yorkers with access to safe, open spaces and fresh, healthy food.

Nonprofit partners, such as conservancies, cultural organizations, zoos, environmental centers, historic houses, and community-based organizations, bring a diversity of activity and support. Twenty of these partners, including Prospect Park Alliance and the Bronx River Alliance, have management or maintenance and operations agreements with us.
By the Numbers

- 55 Bocce Courts
- 6 Ice Skating Rinks
- 23 Historic Houses
- 850 Monuments
- 600 Community Gardens
- 6 Carousels
- 692 Tennis Courts
- 2,735 Species Of Native Wildlife, Plants, and Trees
- 23 Skate Parks
- 14 Golf Courses
- 2,214 Greenstreets
- 1,777 Basketball Courts
- 36 Recreation Centers
- 29,000 Acres of Land
- 148 Miles Of Waterfront Parkland
- 23 Skate Parks
- 2.6 Million Trees
- 70 Dog Runs
- 67 Swimming Pools
- 292 Food Concessions
- 912 Athletic Fields
- 14 Miles of Beaches
- 14 Oyster Cages
- 148 Miles
- Historic and Educational Tall Ships
- 7
- 50 Boat Launches
- 14 Miles
- 14 Golf Courses
- 2.6 Million Trees
- 912 Athletic Fields
- 6 Carousels
With increasing frequency, parks and open spaces are playing a more central role in the development and evolution of cities. NYC Parks is enthusiastically embracing this responsibility: Over the past two years we have secured extraordinary new investments for our parks and public spaces, and have improved our agency’s processes. Through smart staffing practices, and with the support of new technologies and data collection efforts, we are increasing effectiveness, transparency, and accountability. The benefit of these changes? A cleaner, safer, and more enjoyable park experience for you and your community!

Report on Progress

11% Increase in NYC Parks' Staff
Over the past two years

16.4% Increase in NYC Parks' Budget
Over the past two years

“Parks are not optional. They are an essential part of our city’s infrastructure.”
-Signe Nielsen
Mathews Nielsen Landscape Architects, P.C.
Caring for Parks
Expert staff and volunteers dedicate their time and passion to caring for parks, working together to improve, clean, and beautify our public spaces. By better understanding how our parks are used, implementing new ways to track our spending, and providing our staff with necessary resources, we are repositioning ourselves to better care for parks.

EFFICIENCY
NYC Parks manages upward of 500 major construction and design projects at a time, ranging from full-scale reconstructions to resiliency upgrades and green infrastructure installations. The techniques and methods we use to plan, build, and care for our system must be carefully coordinated and highly efficient.

In June 2014, NYC Parks started looking closely at our site assessment, design, procurement, and construction processes. We improved coordination and management procedures and brought transparency and accountability to the process by launching an online tracker that shows the status of each capital project. We streamlined the design process, increased outreach and engagement efforts with our vendors, and reduced the number of change orders. These changes have already reduced the overall completion time of projects by an average of five months.

EFFECTIVENESS
From 2013 to 2015, NYC Parks expanded its Operations for the 21st Century pilot to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of our mobile cleaning crews citywide.

With new performance guidelines, our mobile crews have been able to clean parks more efficiently through smarter resource management and optimized routes. This has yielded 500 extra hours of cleaning time each day—the equivalent of an additional 63 full-time staff! Complementing these performance guidelines, we launched a new playground repair and inspection program and deployed additional cleaning and horticulture staff. These efforts are paying off with cleaner, better maintained parks and playgrounds.

Employee Profile:
Karen Pedrosa
Karen is the Deputy Chief of Recreation in the Bronx. She has been working for NYC Parks for 12 years and has dedicated her life to giving back to the Bronx community. Nicknamed “Mom” by the kids she works with, Karen has been a mentor to many children. One of them, Tina Charles, started on Karen’s basketball team in Roberto Clemente Park and went on to play center for The New York Liberty and earn two Olympic gold medals.
SMARTER PARKS
Through our tech and data initiatives, we are using technology to collect previously unavailable information to improve our ability to care for our parks. One pilot has placed Soofa Benches—solar-powered smart benches—throughout Highbridge Park in the Bronx and Manhattan. Working in partnership with the Mayor’s Office of Technology and Innovation, we are using the Soofa benches to count park visits by tallying Wi-Fi-enabled mobile devices. We can use this data to create better park designs, maintenance schedules, and programming opportunities.

Number of NYC Parks’ social media followers:

- 50,900 on Instagram
- 87,000 on Facebook
- 151,000 on Twitter
- 21,100 on Periscope

Employee Profile: Gar Mint Huang
Gar Mint has been a day camp director and water aerobics instructor at Tony Dapolito Recreation Center in Manhattan for four years. Last summer, he led a class for adults aged 65 to 90, using techniques he learned from the American Red Cross and through his own research. His classes offer adapted exercises for seniors with differing physical needs. Gar’s students found his enthusiasm infectious and thanked him by declaring Aug. 26, 2016, Gar Mint Huang Day!
Strengthening Natural Resources

In addition to caring for thousands of parks, playgrounds, ballfields, and more, NYC Parks is the steward of a thriving urban forest and diverse ecosystem. Our trees create a tree canopy that reduces both air pollution and the heat island effect. Over 10,000 acres of natural areas, including forests, wetlands, and dunes provide both protection from the elements and an opportunity to connect to our natural environment.

TREESCOUNT!

In 2015, NYC Parks launched TreesCount! to survey and catalog street trees in all five boroughs. Over 2,000 trained volunteers participated in the survey, which was completed in 2016. Using the TreeKIT application, tree counters collected information on their mobile devices, mapping 130,000 city blocks containing 666,134 street trees of 132 different species. As with the two previous street tree censuses, this most recent TreesCount! collects data that will help to create a spatially accurate digital map of trees and help us direct new trees to areas where they are needed most. We have also launched an online Street Tree Map that tells the story behind every street tree in New York City, encouraging more educational and stewardship opportunities.

NATURAL AREAS ASSESSMENT

In partnership with the Natural Areas Conservancy, NYC Parks completed an ecological assessment of natural areas in 2015. This assessment provides a clearer understanding of the structure, composition, and condition of our forests, salt marshes, and freshwater streams. Partnerships with organizations like the Natural Areas Conservancy help us to identify areas that need attention and allow us to pursue a more proactive and equitable approach to supporting our natural resources.

MILLIONTREESNYC

In November 2015, the MillionTreesNYC initiative met its goal of planting 1 million trees in New York City two years ahead of schedule, expanding our urban forest by nearly 20 percent. The City of New York planted 700,000 trees in parks and other spaces, while private entities, homeowners, and community organizations planted an additional 300,000 trees. Since its launch in October 2007, public, private, and nonprofit organizations have rallied nearly 50,000 volunteers to help plant trees. Our trees provide economic, environmental, and health benefits to all New Yorkers while also creating a more sustainable urban environment. Our urban forest is a valuable asset we must protect and preserve.

Clockwise from top left: Volunteers map street trees in the Bronx; the one millionth tree is planted in Joyce Kilmer Park, Bronx; the NYC Parks online Street Tree Map in action; a restored marsh in Marine Park, Brooklyn.
Upcoming Projects
From caring for our urban forests to understanding the needs of our visitors, NYC Parks is always improving. Several projects underway are dedicated to collecting new data to inform park planning, educating the public on emergent urban wildlife issues, and better supporting our employees.

Needs Assessment is an ongoing effort to collect data on the state of our parks and park assets. This information will help identify capital needs and determine funding priorities for our parks and recreational facilities. This assessment is complemented by other surveys and data-collection efforts, including TreesCount! and a LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) survey, which will produce elevation and land cover maps that inform coastal restoration efforts, green infrastructure planning, emergency preparedness, and land-use planning.

The Wildlife Unit is a newly created office that supports the recently launched WildlifeNYC campaign. In partnership with the Mayor’s Office and other agencies, this unprecedented citywide effort teaches New Yorkers how to coexist with urban wildlife through education, public policies, and management plans. The Wildlife Unit will address emergent wildlife issues such as increasing populations of white-tailed deer and eastern coyotes, as well as protect endangered and threatened species like the piping plover. It will also promote educational, recreational, and research opportunities that celebrate the diversity of our urban wildlife.

Employee Engagement and trainings are key to ensuring that our staff are able to plan, build, and care for our parks. In December 2014, we conducted the first-ever NYC Parks Employee Survey to identify ways to support our staff and improve internal communication. Since then, we have developed a new Intranet site, which is available to employees on mobile devices and home computers, revived the annual award ceremony, and introduced recognition coins to promote camaraderie and provide on-the-spot recognition.

Park Usership Program measures how our parks are used and how often they are visited. This data will inform the design of our capital projects, guide our allocation of staff and resources to improve park operations, and direct long-range park planning.

Elementary school students at Ocean Breeze Track and Field Athletic Complex, Staten Island.

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**Capital Design Projects Completed**
- 127 in Fiscal Year 2015
- 133 in Fiscal Year 2016

**Capital Construction Projects Completed**
- 84 in Fiscal Year 2015
- 97 in Fiscal Year 2016

**Total Number of Active Capital Projects**
- 398 in Fiscal Year 2015
- 463 in Fiscal Year 2016

**NYC Parks Capital Construction**

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<td><strong>ON TIME</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ON BUDGET</strong></td>
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Resiliency and Sustainability
The devastating impact of Hurricane Sandy illustrated the importance of our city’s coastlines, including the 156 miles managed by NYC Parks. Parks and green space absorb stormwater. Dunes and wetlands protect our coastlines. Together they create critical infrastructure to keep our neighborhoods strong and resilient.

Since 2012, we have established new dunes, rebuilt the Rockaway boardwalk, and continued to restore our wetlands, all of which help to protect our communities. In collaboration with city, state, and federal partners, we replenished beaches and renovated facilities to better withstand flood hazards. We are also collaborating on the design and implementation of an integrated flood protection system along a 2.4-mile stretch of Manhattan’s East River Waterfront.

NYC Parks is protecting inland communities with new green infrastructure, the natural elements and engineered systems that manage stormwater. Through a network of forests, wetlands, street trees, and greenstreets, we are designing a stormwater management system that relies on plants and trees, rather than sewers and rivers. In partnership with the NYC Department of Environmental Protection and the Department of Transportation, NYC Parks is expanding bioswales and permeable paving in neighborhoods that experience flooding during rainstorms. NYC Parks is also experimenting with green roofs, including our own 29,000-square-foot green roof on Randall’s Island, which serves as a working laboratory for green roof design and construction.

To ensure a safe and resilient city, we are working with the Mayor’s Office of Recovery and Resiliency and other partners to plan for New York’s future. Through innovative, informed, and thoughtful collaborations, NYC Parks is designing solutions to safeguard New Yorkers and the parks they love.
Coastal Protection and Recreation in Rockaway

In 2012, sections of Rockaway’s 5.5-mile boardwalk, spanning from Beach 19th Street to Beach 126th Street in Queens, were severely damaged by Hurricane Sandy. Following the storm, the Army Corps of Engineers returned 3.5 million cubic yards of sand to the beaches. NYC Parks and partner agencies then constructed 6 miles of dunes and planted them with grasses for protection from future storms. To date, 80 percent—4.2 miles—of newly constructed boardwalk is open to the public. The remainder of the boardwalk is anticipated to be completed by Memorial Day 2017.

The new Rockaway boardwalk sets a global standard for resilient shoreline design, while providing the community with a beautiful, functional beachfront. As part of the City’s $20 billion comprehensive climate change resiliency plan, the boardwalk was integrated into a multilayered system of coastal protection. In addition to planted dunes along the beach, the boardwalk was constructed with a steel-reinforced concrete deck affixed to steel supports, elevating it above the 100-year flood plain. A concrete retaining wall under the boardwalk helps to further fortify the beach and protect the community.

NYC Parks also worked with residents to develop a conceptual plan for recreational amenities throughout the Rockaway peninsula. Much of the new boardwalk’s appearance, including its sand-colored decking, brightly colored ramps, and designated bike lane, was determined through a series of collaborative design sessions with Rockaway residents. As sections of the boardwalk have opened, New Yorkers have jumped at the opportunity to enjoy Queens’ newest beach. Thriving concessions up and down the boardwalk offer beachgoers food and entertainment options as diverse as the borough itself. In September 2016, residents celebrated their refurbished boardwalk with the second annual Poseidon Parade.

Clockwise from top: Volunteers help to clean the beach after Hurricane Sandy; boardwalk repair; the renovated Beach 30th Street Playground; a Rockaway community visioning session; the new boardwalk.
Our parks are an essential part of our urban fabric, anchoring neighborhoods, enriching lives, and supporting communities. Together, parks, streets, sidewalks, and natural habitats make up more than 40 percent of New York City. Our newest initiatives focus on designing and building holistically, with the entire public realm in mind.

In 2015, Mayor de Blasio released OneNYC: The Plan for a Strong and Just City, which provides a blueprint for preserving and enhancing New York City’s global role. OneNYC contains more than 200 initiatives that take an integrated approach to promoting the city’s growth, equity, sustainability, and resiliency. As part of OneNYC, NYC Parks pledged to plan for the city’s open spaces as a unified system, launching new programs to study and invest in aging infrastructure.

A Look Ahead

New Yorkers believe in parks without borders because we believe in a city without borders.”

-Paul Goldberger, The New School

Parks Without Borders Summit

In May 2016, we held a summit on the future of parks and public spaces attended by more than 400 public, private, and nonprofit leaders. Organized in collaboration with The New School, the Parks Without Borders Summit offered a vision for parks that are welcoming and accessible. Participants reflected on park equity and community engagement, considered the potential of data and technology, and identified opportunities for parks to improve public health and resiliency through innovative design and placemaking. The summit offered inspiration about the power and potential of parks and public spaces to support vibrant, dynamic, and resilient communities. The Parks Without Borders discussion series continues these conversations with events throughout 2017.

Clockwise from top: Charles Ginnever’s Medusa and High Rise exhibit in Riverside Park, Manhattan; visitors in Freshkills Park, Staten Island; winter in Fort Tryon Park, Manhattan.
Parks Without Borders

Parks Without Borders is a new vision for better connecting parks and public spaces to their communities. This approach redesigns the areas where parks meet streets and sidewalks.

As part of OneNYC, Mayor de Blasio dedicated $50 million to the program to:

- Make parks more accessible and welcoming to everyone
- Improve neighborhoods by extending the beauty of parks out into communities
- Create vibrant public spaces by transforming underused areas

Parks Without Borders will create more welcoming entrances, make park boundaries greener and more comfortable, and enhance sight lines to improve safety and accessibility. Rethinking and redesigning these spaces will create new centers of community activity out of the underused areas next to parks.

With input from thousands of New Yorkers, NYC Parks selected eight showcase projects. In May 2016, we announced that these eight sites will share $40 million in capital funds to realize the Parks Without Borders vision. An additional $10 million will be used to incorporate these design concepts into ongoing projects, including renovations at 32 Community Parks Initiative sites and 19 other projects. In the years ahead, we will continue to incorporate the Parks Without Borders approach into our design process.

A rendering of the new design of Travers Park in Queens incorporates Parks Without Borders concepts. Eliminating high fences and adding amenities along the edges will allow the park to become a more engaging space.
Anchor Parks and Parkland Expansion
To meet the needs of a growing city, we will continue to improve parks and playgrounds in all neighborhoods by updating aging infrastructure and adding green space. We will also look for opportunities to expand our parks by adding new parkland and developing creative partnerships that increase access to open spaces.

In August 2016, Mayor de Blasio, Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, and Commissioner Silver announced an investment of $150 million in major improvements at five large parks under the new Anchor Parks Initiative. These parks act as anchors to their surrounding communities by providing large, diverse recreational resources. Through Anchor Parks, we will invest in new resources like soccer fields, comfort stations, running tracks, and walking and jogging paths, transforming these parks for the 750,000 New Yorkers who live in the surrounding communities.

Today, 81 percent of New Yorkers live within a half-mile walk to a park. To further increase access, we will continue to rely on data-driven strategies and community engagement initiatives to identify and invest in underserved neighborhoods. To ensure that new and growing communities have access to parks, we are expanding the successful Schoolyards to Playgrounds program and recently opened 12 new sites for community use during non-school hours. In the years ahead, we will work to acquire and develop private land and grow our efforts to collaborate with public agencies to identify opportunities to improve, formalize, or create new open spaces.

Parks Without Borders Nominations
Parks Without Borders launched in November 2015 with a call for community input. Over three months, we held 37 public meetings, briefed community boards and elected officials, and launched an interactive website.

Our in-person meetings and online survey asked residents to focus on park entrances, edges, and park-adjacent spaces. New Yorkers offered more than 6,100 suggestions for improving 682 parks in all 59 Community Districts, more than a third of our parks and playgrounds citywide. This feedback helped us select eight Parks Without Borders showcase projects.

6,176 Community Suggestions Submitted for Parks Without Borders projects
New York City is a beacon of opportunity, tolerance, and liberty—a place where you can be yourself, even with millions of people around you. Our parks are where our city’s ideals meet the streets, where people of different backgrounds and with different beliefs come together and learn from one another. If New York is where living means striving, our parks are where living means thriving.

In nearly every measurable way, 2015 and 2016 were thriving years for NYC Parks. The Parks Without Borders initiative and summit set forth a new vision for parks across our city and around the world; the Community Parks Initiative brought $285 million to renew precious neighborhood assets; our coastal resiliency work brought beachgoers back to the Rockaways in record numbers; and the scores of targeted initiatives and improvements across our system brought immediate impact to everyday park users.

These actions provide a deep and solid foundation upon which to grow. We are now able to bring greater equity and innovation, more advanced planning and placemaking, and a higher standard of care to every single one of our sites. We are strong, and growing stronger.

Like the city itself, the progress we have made comes thanks to many diverse people and groups. Mayor de Blasio’s vision for equity and growth, more than 8,000 parks employees, and thousands more volunteers, partners, and park users have all played major roles in making NYC Parks—and our city—strong, healthy, and beautiful. As we move forward, we will continue to look to our communities to help lead the way to a bright, green future.

See you in the parks,

Mitchell J. Silver, FAICP
COMMISSIONER
NYC Parks

Washington Square Park, Manhattan. All photos by NYC Parks.