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**MAYOR BLOOMBERG AND LEON LEVY FOUNDATION ANNOUNCE
\$25 MILLION LEON LEVY FOUNDATION GRANTS
FOR PROSPECT PARK AND NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN**

*Donations of \$15 Million for The New York Botanical Garden, \$10 Million for Prospect Park
are Largest Private "Greening" Gifts in New York City History*

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and philanthropist Shelby White today announced that Ms. White's Leon Levy Foundation is awarding \$15 million to The New York Botanical Garden and \$10 million to Prospect Park, the largest private donation in City history for the "greening" of New York. The \$15 million grant to The New York Botanical Garden will create a new Native Plant Garden for the study and display of indigenous species. The \$10 million grant to Prospect Park will fund the Park's Lakeside Center, a 26-acre area that will be restored to the original design of Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux. The Mayor and Ms. White were joined at the announcement by Council Speaker Christine C. Quinn, Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz, Parks & Recreation Commissioner Adrian Benepe, Cultural Affairs Commissioner Kate Levin, Prospect Park Alliance Chair Albert H. Garner and New York Botanical Garden president and CEO Gregory Long.

"These generous gifts are going to two signature New York institutions and they are an impressive addition to the legacy of the Leon Levy foundation," said Mayor Bloomberg. "Shelby White is a great philanthropist and New Yorker, and I thank her for all she has done for our City, the impact of these gifts will be felt for decades."

"The New York Botanical Garden in the Bronx and Prospect Park in Brooklyn are two of our City's greatest green treasures," said Ms. White, founding trustee of the Leon Levy Foundation. "Both are particularly meaningful to me: I played in Prospect Park as a child growing up in Brooklyn, and I have served as a board member of the New York Botanical Garden for many years. The Botanical Garden's new Native Plant Garden and Prospect Park's restoration project will only strengthen these two extraordinary institutions."

"This is a critical investment, not only for the people of Brooklyn and the Bronx but for all New Yorkers," said Speaker Christine C. Quinn. "This donation will plant the seed for new educational and recreational facilities while preserving those that have been enjoyed by many for decades. Great parks are essential to a great city, and I thank Shelby for her generous gift that will benefit many generations to come."

(more)

“We are deeply grateful to our Board member Shelby White and Leon Levy, her late husband and friend of the Garden, as well as Leon Levy Foundation trustee Liz Moynihan, for their stewardship of this historic landscape,” said Gregory Long, president and CEO of the Botanical Garden. “With this gift, they are helping us create an inviting new garden, address pressing conservation issues, and educate our visitors and the public about the significance and beauty of native plants.”

“This transformative contribution will allow Prospect Park to continue to expand upon the restoration and improvements made over the last several decades,” said Albert H. Garner, Prospect Park Alliance chairman. “This vote of confidence from the Leon Levy Foundation will be a gift to Brooklynites for generations.”

The New York Botanical Garden Native Plant Garden

The \$15 million Leon Levy Foundation grant to The New York Botanical Garden will go toward the creation of a new Native Plant Garden on 3.5 acres in the Botanical Garden, adjacent to the native Forest and the Rock Garden. It will serve as a center for the study and display of plants native to the northeastern United States. This garden will be one of the first projects in the Botanical Garden’s Master Plan, being developed by the Philadelphia-based landscape architecture firm Olin Partnership, to restore the “Heart of the Garden” and address other broad challenges and opportunities throughout the historic landscape. Through the Department of Cultural Affairs, the City has already committed more than \$35 million towards the Master Plan, and over the next several years, the Botanical Garden will invest more than \$100 million in private funding for restoration and preservation projects that will save the Garden’s landscapes, redesign gardens, and restore collections. This gift for the Native Plant Garden is a major part of that effort.

The New York Botanical Garden embodies the definition of a botanical garden—a place containing documented, arranged collections of living plants for the purposes of scientific research, conservation, education, display, and enjoyment. The new Native Plant Garden will allow the Botanical Garden to better serve the growing interest in native flora inspired by concerns about invasive species and climate change and provide the opportunity to educate visitors about the role that native plants and ecosystems play in supporting birds and other wildlife through interpretive signage and teaching areas.

Taking advantage of the site’s diverse growing conditions, which range from sunny, wet meadow to dry, deep shade, the Native Plant Garden will display a variety of native plants combined beautifully in an integrated and holistic design. It will accommodate groups of visitors while preserving a sense of intimacy for individuals.

Prospect Park Lakeside Center Restoration

The \$10 million Leon Levy Foundation grant, the largest ever received by Prospect Park, will go toward the planned 26-acre Lakeside Center restoration project. It will help enable the Prospect Park Alliance to restore the Park’s historic Music Island, Lakeside Promenade and views from the Concert Grove Terrace to their original design as envisioned by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux.

The \$75 million Lakeside Center project has received commitments from the City totaling \$25 million. The Independence Community Foundation has donated an additional \$1.5 million to the Project, which will build a new facility for skating and other year round activities on a site better suited to the original plan. The landscape for the new facility will be designed by landscape architect Christian Zimmerman of the Prospect Park Alliance. The architectural firm of Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects LLP has been selected to design the new building and ice rinks.

The grant will fund the demolition of Wollman Rink, which is the first step toward bringing back the area's native trees, shrubs and scenic aquatics. New rinks will be built nearby. In addition, Music Island, once at the site of Wollman Rink, will be rebuilt as a natural habitat sanctuary, pedestrian viewing paths will be restored along the Lake edge, and invasive aquatic reeds will be removed. For the first time since the 1960s, visitors will be able to enjoy breathtaking views.

The Leon Levy Foundation, founded in 2004, is a private, not-for-profit foundation created from the estate of Leon Levy, a legendary investor with a longstanding commitment to philanthropy. The Foundation's overarching goal is to continue the tradition of humanism characteristic of Mr. Levy by supporting scholarship at the highest level, ultimately advancing knowledge and improving the lives of individuals and society at large. The Foundation supports the protection of natural landscapes and wildlife habitats, as well as maintenance of botanical gardens and parks in the New York City area. Foundation grants aid a variety of initiatives at The New York Botanical Garden and throughout its National Historic Landmark site, including the Leon Levy Visitor Center established in 2004 as the main entrance to the Garden. For more information on The New York Botanical Garden and Prospect Park, dial 311.

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Contact:	Stu Loeser / Jason Post	(212) 788-2958
	Fraser Seitel (Ms. White)	(201) 784-8880
	Jama Adams (Parks)	(212) 360-1311
	Kate deRosset (Cultural Affairs)	(212) 513-9323
	Eugene Patron (Prospect Park)	(718) 965-8954
	Karl Lauby (NYBG)	(718) 817-8637