



Prospect
Park
Alliance

2024 Strategic Plan Executive Summary

A Thriving Park for a Thriving Brooklyn



Letter from



Prospect Park is the landscape of our shared humanity and the great equalizer of Brooklyn. Set in the heart of Brooklyn, our 585 acres welcome people from all backgrounds to come as they are and find a sense of peace and belonging.

Coming out of the global pandemic and other social upheavals of the past decade, Prospect Park has never been more essential to our Brooklyn community. The park is where family, friends and neighbors come to connect, exercise, and enjoy arts and culture; a democratic space for freedom of expression and political protest; and a refuge from the stressors of daily life. This strategic plan celebrates the park's crucial role in the lives of our community, and envisions a stronger, more sustainable future for the park and the Alliance.

The pandemic shed light on how crucial parks are to our health, but also the serious inequities of the American healthcare system. Health and wellness is a natural extension of our mission to help our community thrive. This strategic plan highlights ways in which we can bring more of these resources to our visitors.

As one of our city's great cultural treasures, Prospect Park is also a space where we can ensure our community feels represented, celebrated, empowered and welcomed. Through this plan, the Alliance will lean more into the critical role we can play as a cultural producer, venue and partner.

We firmly believe that being in community with people of all backgrounds builds greater acceptance, empathy and understanding among us all. It is truly an honor as the Alliance's first Black President to steward this beloved green space and guide our next phase of sustaining Prospect Park, and I welcome our entire community of park lovers to join us in this work.

Morgan Monaco

President + Park Administrator



Prospect Park Alliance



Since our founding, Prospect Park Alliance has served as a nimble and adaptable nonprofit that provides critical staff and resources to sustain Brooklyn's Backyard.

This strategic plan recognizes these strengths, and also the areas where we need to grow, in order to ensure the future sustainability of the park.

As our community has grown and evolved, and we face the increasing impacts of climate change, the need for a vibrant, welcoming and resilient park has never been more important. With the decline of stable funding from the City, Prospect Park Alliance's role as park stewards is critical.

This is the backdrop for our 2024 strategic plan, which provides a road map for the Alliance and the park for the next five years. This plan embodies the Alliance's visionary role in a post-pandemic world, amplifying our capacity to enrich neighboring communities, unlocking new avenues to ensure the financial future of the park, and strategically prioritizing resources to meet ever-evolving needs.

These initiatives will ensure a future where the park can thrive and the Alliance's impact will endure for years to come.

Iris Weinshall

Chair, Board of Directors

Current State

Since its founding in 1987, Prospect Park Alliance has played a leading role in sustaining, restoring and advancing Prospect Park, Brooklyn's Backyard. In partnership with the City of New York, the Alliance provides critical staff and resources that keep Prospect Park green and vibrant for the diverse communities that call Brooklyn home. Today, it is estimated that Prospect Park welcomes more than 10 million visits annually.

This strategic plan sets the course for the organization for the next five years, and responds to dramatic changes the park has faced as a result of the COVID pandemic, climate change and social inequities in the communities who depend upon the park for their quality of life.

Strategic Direction for the Future of the Park

The pandemic changed the way our community values and uses the park. The park became an essential refuge during the months of the shut down and beyond, leading to a significant increase in the overall volume of park users. The park also saw changes in use patterns, with more people taking advantage of its trails and natural areas, and visiting at all hours of the day, where previously the heaviest use was focused in the early morning and evening hours.

The Alliance has assumed responsibilities beyond its original mandate in response to increased use of the park and resulting maintenance needs, as well as ongoing City budget constraints.

- **Supplementary Maintenance Support:** while the City is responsible for basic park maintenance, the Alliance has changed its operating model to invest private resources to meet these needs, including staff and resources for trash management and facilities maintenance.
- **\$1 million investment in small-scale infrastructure improvements:** through its ReNew Prospect Park initiative, the Alliance has leveraged private funding to address wear and tear caused by high use, from new benches and seating areas to renovated restrooms and barbecue areas, and repairs to the park's antiquated drainage system.
- **Budget growth:** to help fill the gap left by a shrinking City budget and increased maintenance needs, the Alliance has bolstered its fundraising efforts and increased its annual operating budget from \$12 million in 2019 to \$17 million in 2024.

The pandemic as a global health crisis allowed us to think about the ways in which the park can play an important role in addressing health disparities. The park has always been a destination for physical and mental health, but can play an even larger role in connecting our community to services by partnering with social service providers to bridge the gap with those who have "dropped out of care" or experienced greater health concerns as a result of the pandemic.

82% of park visitors state that Prospect Park is a key reason they live in their neighborhood, and contributes greatly to their quality of life.

PPA 2023 Community Survey



Who does what?

The Alliance has a license agreement with the City defining operating and management roles and responsibilities. The Alliance cares for the 350 acres of natural areas, restores the park's buildings and landscapes, operates key visitor facilities, and provides the community with free or low-cost volunteer, education and recreation programs. NYC Parks oversees basic park maintenance and operations, including trash management and park enforcement; and provides equipment, vehicles and specialized trades including plumbing, electrical, carpentry, forestry and vehicle maintenance.



Delivering Results for the Park and the Community

Prospect Park is Brooklyn's crown jewel, and for nearly 40 years the Alliance has been its primary steward, delivering important benefits to the park and the communities who depend upon it. Its core programs include:

- **Capital Restoration:** The Alliance has an award-winning design and construction team that has leveraged its expertise to complete bold capital projects, including the restoration of the park's core woodlands and waterways; Lakeside, its 26-acre transformation of the southeast corner of the park; and the upcoming restoration of the Vale in the park's northeast corner.
- **Landscape Management:** The Alliance's team of Eco Zone gardeners, arborists and forest ecologists are responsible for sustaining Brooklyn's last remaining upland forest and only Lake, removing invasive species, planting native trees and shrubs, maintaining trails and waterways, and caring for the park's more than 30,000 trees, the "lungs" of Brooklyn.
- **Public Programs:** The Alliance offers a year-round volunteer program as well as free programs at Lefferts Historic House and the Audubon Center, where visitors participate in environmental, history and cultural programming; contribute to the care of the park; and form bonds with fellow park visitors.
- **Visitor Amenities:** The Alliance offers recreational programs at the Tennis Center and LeFrak Center at Lakeside, a variety of food options throughout the park, rides on a historic carousel, event spaces, and special events such as summer movies and New Year's Eve fireworks.
- **Community Engagement:** The Alliance ensures that park visitors and the communities surrounding the park have a strong voice in shaping its initiatives and capital projects through sustaining a Community Committee and Partner Network composed of civic leaders; as well as by conducting design workshops, surveys and other feedback activities.

New Leadership

In October 2022, the Alliance began a new chapter in its evolution with the appointment of Morgan Monaco as its President and the first Black head of a major NYC parks non-profit. With new leadership in place, the Alliance is crafting a strong vision for the park focused on keeping the park clean and accessible; exploring ways for the park to serve as a venue for health, wellness and other community services; and building a robust arts and cultural program.

Future State

The pandemic allowed the Alliance to think about the ways in which the park can play an important role in addressing inequities in our community, from health disparities to social inequality and the impacts of climate change.

Planning in Partnership with the Community

The strategic plan focuses not only on internal operations, but also the surrounding landscape of Brooklyn. The park is the ultimate equalizer, bringing people of different backgrounds together in a shared community space. To create the strategic plan, the Alliance engaged HR&A Advisors, Inc., and undertook a year-long planning process. This included conducting an existing-conditions analysis and facilitating extensive stakeholder engagement to solicit input and inform the plan's focus. The Alliance engaged its staff, senior leadership, Board of Directors, the community, and current and potential partners.

Strategic Plan Objectives + Initiatives

Coming out of the research and outreach phases of our planning process, we have identified four key objectives and eight initiatives that we will undertake in the next five years to address the challenges we've experienced as a park and a community, and build our capacity as one of the core civic institutions in Brooklyn.



|  Fulfill the Park's Potential as a World-Class Public Space | |
|---|---|
| Park Operations | We will strengthen our care of the park by maintaining capital investments, investing in smaller-scale yet impactful capital improvements, and developing a long-term landscape management plan. |
| Stewardship | We will invest in innovative design, communications, and impactful programming to foster stewardship and community goodwill in nurturing the park. |
|  Boost NYC's Resilience with a Thriving Landscape | |
| Climate Action | We will study the ways in which the park's forest helps mitigate climate change, and implement a climate action plan to reduce the organization's carbon footprint and improve the natural area's environmental benefits. |
|  Optimize Programs to Champion Community Needs | |
| Community-Responsive Programs | We will focus Alliance-produced programs and events on arts and culture, environment, health + wellness, and Brooklyn history to diversify our audience and increase civic engagement. |
| Health + Wellness | We will partner with local providers to offer health and wellness services, connecting park users with direct support and serving as a bridge for much-needed care in the community. |
| Youth Development | We will elevate youth development programs to grow the next stewards of our city's green spaces and provide wraparound services to help participants achieve their potential. |
|  Secure the Financial Future of the Park | |
| Enhanced Visitor Amenities | We will transform underutilized spaces to enrich the visitor experience in the park. |
| Organizational Growth | We will evolve our approach to fundraising to ensure sustainable and predictable income for the organization. |

Implementation

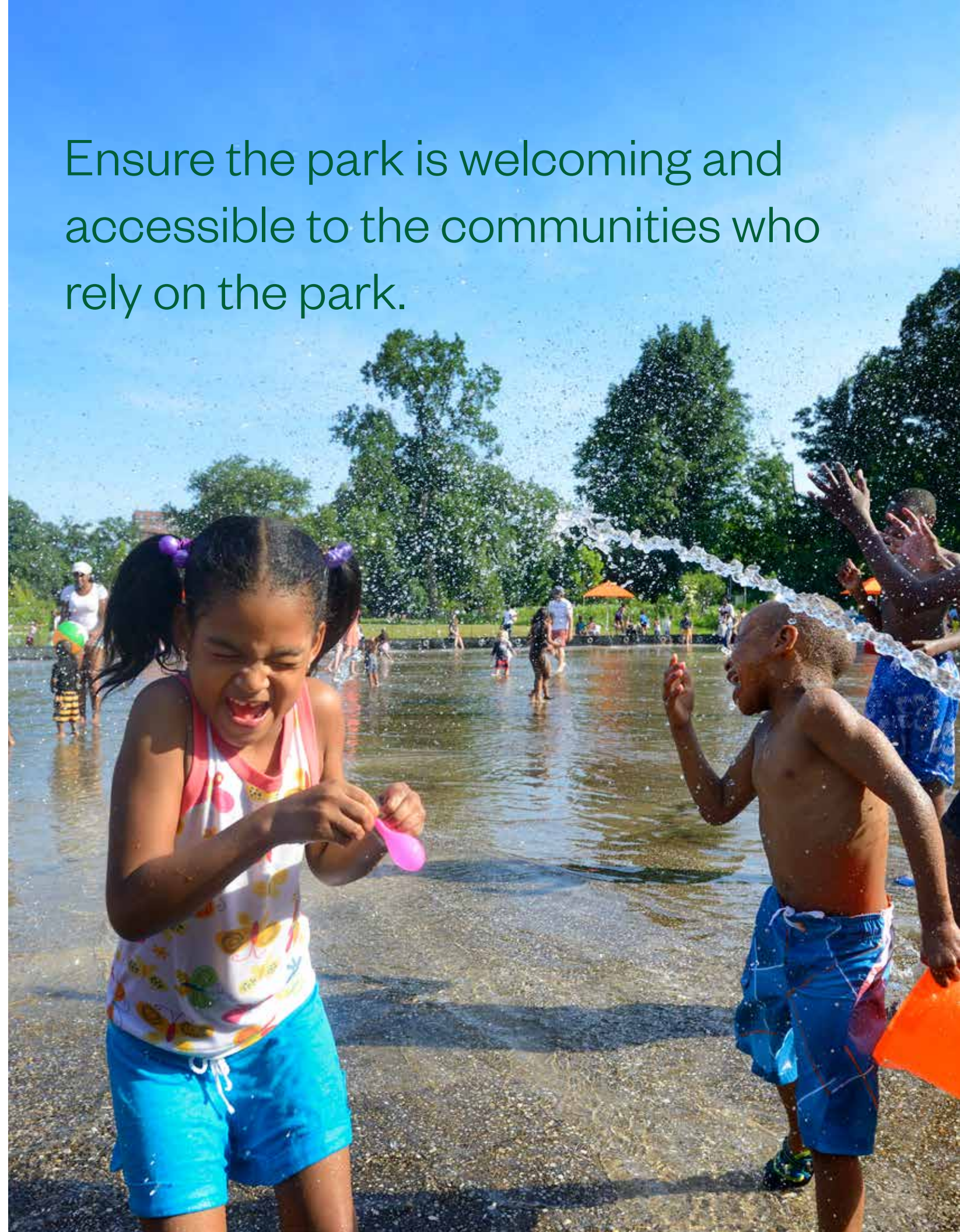
In order to implement these eight initiatives, the Alliance's annual budget will need to grow by approximately \$2.5 million. To fund this growth, the Alliance will increase its focus on securing individual and institutional support, as well as new sources of income. We expect to launch the initiatives in phases, with all eight having launched by 2027.

| | FY 2025 | FY 2026 | FY 2027 | FY 2028 | FY 2029 |
|--------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Park Operations | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow |
| Stewardship | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow |
| Climate Action | | | Green | Green | Green |
| Community-Responsive Programs | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue |
| Health + Wellness | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue |
| Youth Development | | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue |
| Enhanced Visitor Amenities | | Orange | Orange | Orange | Orange |
| Organizational Growth | | Orange | Orange | Orange | Orange |

[Visit our website to read the full strategic plan.](#)



Ensure the park is welcoming and accessible to the communities who rely on the park.



Our Impact

The Alliance provides:



Critical staff and resources to care for our park and its **10,000,000+** visits each year . . . and counting!



Horticulturalists and turf crew to plant **15,000+** trees, flowers and shrubs and maintain **150** acres of lawns, fields and gardens.



Forestry technicians and ecologists that care for the park's **30,000** trees, woodlands and **60**-acre lake.



Landscape architects and designers, resident engineers, and an archivist to restore historic buildings and landscapes over **585** acres.



Environmental education, Brooklyn history, and sports and recreation programs engaging **100,000+** community members.



2,000+ volunteers, providing **14,000+** hours of service each year.



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Photography: Elizabeth Keegin Colley cover, Amanda Gentile 10, Paul Martinka 2, Prospect Park Alliance 3, Rathkopf Photography 10, Martin Seck 2, 5, 6, 8, 11.