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MAYOR DE BLASIO AND PARKS COMMISSIONER SILVER ANNOUNCE \$15 MILLION IN CONSERVANCY COMMITMENTS TO COMMUNITY PARKS

Eight Major City Conservancies to Contribute Funding, Services and Programming to Historically Underfunded Parks Across NYC

NEW YORK—Mayor Bill de Blasio and NYC Parks Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver, FAICP, today announced a new comprehensive package of conservancy engagements to improve parks and open space in Community Parks Initiative (CPI) neighborhoods. CPI was launched in 2014 to revitalize historically underfunded community parks in neighborhoods with higher-than-average concentrations of poverty and growing populations. Through targeted contributions of funding and in-kind support, eight of the City’s conservancy partners will bring an influx of resources to CPI neighborhoods valued at \$15 million through 2018.

“Every child deserves bright, green space right in their neighborhood – and this essential support from our city’s conservancies will help us make this a reality. I commend Senator Squadron for putting forward a proposal that sparked a critical conversation around how to improve smaller parks in less wealthy neighborhoods and engage the city’s park conservancies in that effort,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “I want to thank all of our conservancy partners and their boards for their long-standing partnership with the city, which not only helps ensure some of our most heavily utilized and well-loved parks remain vibrant, but now also brings their resources and expertise to bear on our city’s neighborhood parks in need.”

The Community Parks Initiative, launched by Mayor de Blasio, is NYC Parks’ first major equity initiative and part of OneNYC, the Mayor’s plan for a strong and just New York City. CPI is a multi-faceted investment in the smaller public parks that are located in New York City’s most densely populated and growing neighborhoods where there are higher-than-average concentrations of poverty. Through this initiative, the City has already invested \$285 million in capital funds, as well as enhanced public programming and community engagement resources in parks across New York City that have received less than \$200,000 in capital funding over the past 20 years. Under the program to date, 67 parks will be completely rebuilt; 60 parks have already received quick, high-impact targeted improvements with another 25 slated for the coming year; more than 500,000 New Yorkers have participated in free public programming and thousands more have participated in the process of reimagining their community parks.

Now the parks in CPI neighborhoods will benefit from additional resources thanks to conservancy contributions ranging from enhanced maintenance to new public programming, landscape and horticulture improvements, gardener training programs, design services and more from eight of the city’s leading park non-profit groups: the Battery Conservancy, Bryant Park Corporation, Central Park Conservancy, Friends of the High Line, Madison Square Park Conservancy, New York Restoration Project, Prospect Park Alliance and Randall’s Island Park Alliance.

Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver, FAICP, said, “We value the City's long-standing partnership with our conservancy partners and look forward to working together to not only promote the long-term vitality of our flagship parks but to develop new ways of bringing their expertise, resources, and passion to community parks where there is great need.”

“Every neighborhood in New York City deserves to have a spectacular park, no matter where you live or what your zip code may be,” said **Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito**. “The New York City Council has invested millions to make our parks more vibrant and sustainable across the five boroughs. Public spaces are a foundation of communities across New York City and by improving access to and quality of our City parks, we’re strengthening neighborhoods across the five boroughs. This City Council will continue to work with the de Blasio Administration and our conservancy partners to fulfill the goals of the Community Parks Initiative to enhance and expand parks throughout New York.”

"Two years ago I proposed a Neighborhood Parks Alliance to address parks inequity in our city," said **State Senator Daniel Squadron**. "My proposal was always about linking the biggest conservancies to the entire system. The fact that they're stepping up voluntarily is great news, and builds off of the Community Parks Initiative. I thank Assembly member Kavanagh, Mayor de Blasio, Commissioner Silver, and the conservancies."

"We want every park in New York City to be as great as those parks that are fortunate enough to have well-funded conservancies. The City Council has also moved to close the Parks equity gap this fiscal year, by allocating funds through the Parks Equity Initiative to parks stewardship groups that don't receive significant private money. I'm thrilled by the partnerships we are announcing today, which will allow neighborhood parks in low-income areas to benefit not just from the staff resources, but also the expertise of conservancies that have cracked the code in running heavily utilized public parks. I commend the leadership of all of the participating parks conservancies for showing their commitment to the well-being of green spaces in every corner of the city," said **Council Member Mark Levine, Chair of the City Council Parks Committee**.

"New York City is making great strides toward a parks system that offers beauty, joy, play, and respite for all New Yorkers, regardless of their income or their neighborhood. Today's announcement of commitments by our parks conservancies – including the Prospect Park Alliance in the heart of my district – shows that public/private partnerships can not only truly serve the public good, but make a difference addressing inequality. Together with the Community Parks Initiative, the City Council's funding for maintenance, stewardship, and programming in smaller parks, and new laws sponsored by Parks Chair Levine and I to increase transparency about spending by both the City and the conservancies, we are moving forward on a genuinely comprehensive approach to parks equity. Congratulations to Mayor de Blasio, Parks Commissioner Silver, Senator Dan Squadron and the parks conservancies on this great agreement," said **Council Member Brad Lander**.

“Central Park Conservancy has a long history of helping our partners at NYC Parks through the Central Park Conservancy Institute for Urban Parks. We are very proud of the work we have done together and are excited to be bringing our expertise and resources to bear in new ways through the Community Parks Initiative (CPI). We look forward to building on our partnership with NYC Parks,” said **Doug Blonsky, President and CEO of the Central Park Conservancy, and Central Park Administrator**.

“We share the Mayor’s goals for creating vibrant public spaces throughout the city and are excited to contribute to the City Parks Initiative by leveraging some of our organizational resources and strengths: the design process, community engagement, public art, education programs, and job training for teens from public housing. We’re thrilled to have the opportunity to extend this work to the South Bronx, and to help our community partners there expand and enhance their vital public spaces,” said **Robert Hammond, Executive Director of Friends of The High Line**.

“As Prospect Park is Brooklyn’s Backyard, giving back to the community has long been part of the DNA of the Prospect Park Alliance,” said **Sue Donoghue, Alliance President and Park Administrator**. “We are committed to sharing our expertise to improve green spaces throughout the city – these cherished open spaces are critical to a vibrant and healthy New York.”

“We are happy to participate in Commissioner Silver’s effort to upgrade parks that don’t have the resources that some of the privately-funded spaces do,” said **Daniel Biederman, President of the Bryant Park Corporation**. “Many of our park patrons have already contributed to the program by buying goods in Bryant Park, and riding on its carousel!”

“We are so pleased to continue to build strong relationships with parks adjacent to Randall’s Island,” said **Aimee Boden, President of the Randall’s Island Park Alliance**. “Our skilled turf, ball field and horticulture crews have already brought new expertise and improvements to Thomas Jefferson Park through the Community Parks Initiative, and we look forward to future cooperative projects and programming just across the river.”

“Madison Square Park Conservancy is very excited by the opportunity to foster a ‘sister park.’ We were mentored long ago, and feel it is so important to share our experiences with other parks. The Von King Park Conservancy is poised to make great things happen in their neighborhood, we are so happy to support their Executive Director by sharing what we have learned in areas such as park stewardship, programming, and organizational development,” said **Keats Meyer, Executive Director of the Madison Square Park Conservancy**.

“Everyone deserves access to nature regardless of where they live. Thanks to Mayor de Blasio’s leadership and to our extraordinary partnership with the Parks Department, we’re getting closer to making that truth a reality in underserved neighborhoods across the city,” said **Deborah Marton, Executive Director of New York Restoration Project**. “Forty-four of NYRP’s community gardens are in CPI zones. We understand the need, and as the city’s largest non-profit land trust, we’re leveraging private resources to improve the public realm across entire neighborhoods, with a real, measurable impact on quality of life and health.”

“We are park innovators, bringing horticulture and agriculture into the dynamic of The Battery. Everything we do in the park is designed to inspire and educate, from the classically-derived music at SeaGlass to our comprehensive horticulture internship program. What began as educating children about where their food comes from in our urban farm, has now reached 31 schools and NYCHA communities in all five boroughs. Now, we are excited to further expand this role with our Community Gardener program, in partnership with the Department of Parks and Recreation. We look forward to including the Lower East Side GreenThumb community in this program next growing season,” said **Warrie Price, President of the Battery Park Conservancy**.

“It is fabulous to have this support from parks conservancies for the City’s Community Parks Initiative. These high-need neighborhoods will benefit from this city and private sector support. The eight park conservancies have worked hard to improve and maintain their parks in New York City. By generously sharing their resources, skills, and expertise, they demonstrate that they care for all parks across the city,” said **Tupper Thomas, Executive Director of New Yorkers for Parks**.

“My executive internship at Madison Square Park has been the most exciting, educational, and enlightening experience I have had since starting this journey of working on Von King Park since 2010. Keats Myer has been an exceptional mentor and advocate that has spent countless hours with me and has also given me time with her entire staff to teach me the proper way to run and manage a park. I am eternally grateful to Keats and the staff of Madison Square Park Conservancy,” said **Wayne Devonish, Chairman of 500 Men Making a Difference and Executive Director of the Von King Park Conservancy**, which is the focus of Madison Square Park Conservancy’s engagement.

"Our community has been in need of a safe functioning park for many years. Therefore, it was an honor to find out that Stroud Playground was selected by the Mayor for this remarkable initiative. Working in partnership with the Prospect Park Alliance and Partnership for Parks, especially Community Coordinator, Emily Sherrod, has been wonderful. We appreciate being included in throughout the process and look forward to the final product. On behalf of the Friends of Stroud Park, the Eijah Stroud School community and the residents of Prospect and Crown Heights, thank you," said **Samantha Bernardine, Founder of Friends of Stroud Park**. Prospect Park Alliance donated design services to Stroud Park, which is receiving a full reconstruction as part of CPI in parks that received less than \$200,000 in capital funding over the past 20 years.

The partnership between the City and these park non-profit organizations has been vital to ensuring that many of New York City's most utilized parks are more vibrant today than ever. Their work over the years has supported enhanced maintenance, thousands of volunteers, dynamic programming and critical capital improvements in these parks through millions of dollars in private funding. Now these organizations will expand on their record of assisting community parks by dedicating resources and expertise to reviving park sites for New Yorkers who need them the most through the Community Parks Initiative.

Conservancy contributions to CPI are:

Bryant Park Corporation (BPC):

- Sponsorships: BPC will secure sponsorship funding and contribute a portion of their profits from the Bryant Park Carousel and merchandise sales to support enhanced programming and community engagement efforts in CPI neighborhoods.

Central Park Conservancy (CPC):

- Beautification: CPC is deploying a maintenance and operations crew dedicated to lawn and other restoration projects in CPI neighborhoods. The crew has already completed 10 projects in FY15 and they will expand their work to complete an additional 25 to 30 projects in FY16 and FY17. The crew will develop long-term management plans for each park as work there is completed and continue to provide on-site and classroom trainings for field staff.
- Waste Management: CPC will help develop and implement comprehensive waste management plans in five CPI parks.
- Gardener Training: Through a new gardener training program, CPC will train and support 50 CPI gardeners, cultivating a group of highly skilled horticulturalists across CPI neighborhoods.
- Design Services: CPC is providing design services for the restoration of the Marcus Garvey Park Fire Watchtower.
- Education: CPC will continue to provide a series of seminars related to maintenance, programming, and not-for-profit development. Working closely with NYC Parks, CPC will target NYC Parks employees and small park non-profit partners in CPI neighborhoods. From FY14 through FY17, CPC will offer 12-15 seminars per year.

Friends of the High Line (FHL):

- Community Gardens: Beginning in FY16 and carrying through FY18, FHL will take on the renovation of two to three community gardens in CPI neighborhoods, and help these gardens thrive with a redesign of the gardens as well as capacity building support for horticulture and programs.

- **Teen Programs:** FHL will extend its successful Green Corps job program in community gardens in the South Bronx. For the next three years, the Green Corps program, which provides full-time seasonal employment each year to fourteen teens who live in public housing in West Chelsea, will deploy those participants into CPI neighborhoods to assist community gardeners and complete horticulture projects.
- **Public Art:** FHL will extend its renowned public art program – comprised of site-specific exhibitions, commissions, and performances – to targeted CPI parks, as well as provide technical assistance to local artists interested in creating public art projects in the CPI zones.

Madison Square Park Conservancy (MSPC):

- **Supporting Stewardship:** MSPC will provide technical assistance and fundraising support to an emerging Von King Park Conservancy (VKPC) in Brooklyn. MSPC will connect VKPC to potential donors, consultants, and other resources to support their growth and foster the sustainable development of the organization.

New York Restoration Project (NYRP):

- **Tree Planting and Stewardship:** NYRP has committed to plant 335 trees in Bronx CPI neighborhoods and provide ongoing tree stewardship as part of the City’s effort to continue planting new trees through OneNYC. NYRP will work with NYC Parks to identify sites throughout CPI neighborhoods to increase greening and restore historic tree canopy.

Prospect Park Alliance (PPA):

- **Design and Public Engagement Services:** PPA is bringing its design expertise to three CPI parks by providing design services toward capital improvements in these parks. The first of these projects is Stroud Playground in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, a just over an acre park that serves both the community and local schools. PPA is also leading the community engagement component of these projects by conducting public scoping sessions and presenting designs to the local community boards and other groups.

Randall’s Island Park Alliance (RIPA):

- **Sister Park Partnership:** RIPA will continue its work with neighborhood parks by fostering significant infrastructure improvements, staff training, enhanced programming and increased stewardship at Thomas Jefferson Park. RIPA’s support includes renovation of turf lawns and ball fields, completion of horticulture projects, staff training and implementation of cooperative sports programming, including the new free Jesse Owens Track & Field youth program in partnership with the City Parks Foundation.

The Battery Conservancy (TBC):

- **Community Gardener Training:** TBC will develop a training curriculum for community gardeners on the Lower East Side to share best practices on garden maintenance and volunteer recruitment.

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