



PARKS ARE:
beautiful. essential. safe. yours.



**Pittsburgh
Parks
Conservancy**

PittsburghParks.org

2019-20 Annual Report

Parks are our lives. Certainly, our professional lives.



The Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy was established 25 years ago with a single focus: to help restore Pittsburgh’s park system to excellence. Staff and our volunteers spend every day living that mission. So, yes, you can say parks are our lives. We’ve learned in the two years covered in this report that our passion for parks is not ours alone. Parks matter very much to so many.



We witnessed this passion in the successful vote for the Parks Trust Fund. Tens of thousands of Pittsburghers voted in favor of dedicated funding to improve our parks. We see the same passion in the community’s heartfelt response to capital projects such as the Northeast Fountain in Allegheny Commons and in the sharp increase in park attendance during COVID-19. Local park use has been higher than baseline in every month of the pandemic, often substantially higher. Parks are an essential amenity during the current public health crisis.




We hear this passion in the voices of millions worldwide championing racial equality. These voices force us to confront generations of systemic bias that has underfunded parks and green spaces in Black and Brown communities, negatively impacting the health, well-being, and quality of life for residents.

Parks are essential, for everyone. Parks are assets to public health. For us, parks are a mission. And we will embrace this mission every day, until every Pittsburgh park is one we can be proud of.

Catherine Qureshi
Chief Executive Officer

2017-2020 Strategic Plan: Key Tenets

Advocacy 

Create broad, enthusiastic public commitment to bring more resources to parks under unified parks administration and improve the Pittsburgh park system’s ranking among the top 100 cities.

Equity 

Adopt a long-term goal of bringing all parks in all City neighborhoods up to high levels of quality.

Green First 

Build green infrastructure into parks, leveraging recreational improvements.

Sustainability 

Move toward a sustainable organizational revenue model, and maintain and build organizational capacities to support the strategic direction.



PARKS ARE: for everyone

Restoring Pittsburgh Parks

The Parks Plan was developed by the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, in partnership with the city of Pittsburgh and community members, to establish a more equitable park system for all Pittsburghers, while also addressing a \$400 million shortfall of deferred capital repairs and a \$13 million annual maintenance deficit. The plan calls for sufficient annual resources to prevent future backlogs. To that end, a ballot initiative was proposed in 2019 to raise annual funds to address the ongoing need. The ballot initiative aimed to establish a dedicated Parks Trust Fund to invest in high-quality parks for every citizen of Pittsburgh.

This initiative was driven by the community, for the community. The ballot question was approved by the citizens of Pittsburgh on Nov. 5, 2019, who voted 'yes' to increased funding for Pittsburgh's park system. Following its December 2020 passage by Pittsburgh City Council, this initiative will guarantee an additional \$10 million per year to Pittsburgh's parks, in perpetuity, funded by a 0.5 mill property tax levy.

Looking Ahead

The Parks Conservancy believes that the equitable investment strategy, the roadmap included in The Parks Plan to ensure all Pittsburghers benefit from the successful ballot initiative, will be sustainable by: investing in traditionally underserved neighborhoods; increasing property values, particularly properties in proximity to parkland; preserving economic and cultural diversity; creating new jobs; supporting healthier communities; and providing environmentally friendly solutions to real-world problems.

Investing in Our Parks for Future Generations

"We are supporting this initiative because it's a community-driven process that will ensure equitable investment in parks across the City. For too long, our parks have seen a backlog in much-needed maintenance and repairs. The smaller neighborhoods and those with the greatest needs have historically seen the least investment. This initiative will establish a dedicated funding stream that will guarantee fair investments in our parks so that we can enjoy them for generations to come."

- Kim Teplitzky, president, Polish Hill Civic Association

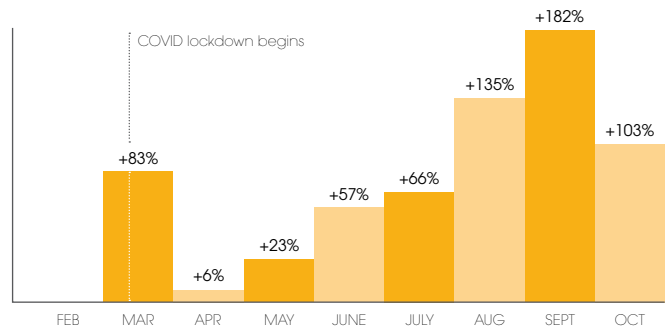
Parks Have Never Mattered More

COVID-19 has disrupted the lives of people around the world. From the moment the pandemic impacted Pittsburgh in March 2020, the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy has placed public health first in its words and actions, working to keep local parks open and safe at a time when they have never mattered more.

What we all learned during this unprecedented time of quarantines, public masking, and months of homeschooling is that public parks and green spaces have never been more vital to our physical, emotional, and mental well-being.

2020 Local Parks Visitation Increase

Google Mobility Report — Increase Over Baseline



PARKS ARE:

“The parks mean everything. They have been a respite, refuge, breath of fresh air, and a place of natural healing, beauty, and peace during these times.” - Ed Barr, Pittsburgh

People around the world are leaning on parks to help them cope and stay safe. Parks have been here for us when little else was available. They are sanctuaries in the center of chaos. They serve as a place of peace and comfort and keep us healthy and active with endless trails and lush open spaces.

Nearly a year later, the world continues to feel the presence of COVID-19 daily. As we move forward together, we’re reimagining life as we know it with parks and green spaces central to our health, happiness, and quality of life.





Parks on the Go

Parks on the Go is a digital education and nature resource package that connects people of all ages and abilities to nature from anywhere. The Parks Conservancy wanted to continue connecting park users and environmental enthusiasts with nature through digital offerings during the COVID-19 pandemic. Parks on the Go is designed to further unite nature with individuals, families, caregivers, and young learners. The digital suite is designed to engage the community in new ways, inspire them by immersing website visitors in memorable environmental experiences including virtual tours, health and wellness exercises, education resources for Pre-K through 12 educators, as well as exciting activities and resources, and much more.

This package is just one of the many digital initiatives the Conservancy launched during the global pandemic. Other highlights include online events, downloadable backgrounds of Pittsburgh’s parks for virtual meetings, and an easy-to-follow safe park usage infographic, which explains proper physical distancing and mask use.

vital

“As a Park Champion and supporter of the Parks Conservancy, my park has helped me the most by offering and maintaining a sense of permanence with constant reminders that there is a tomorrow, and my parks will be there tomorrow.”

- John Wojtyna, Pittsburgh

Picnic in Your Park

On Saturday, Sept. 26, 2020, the Conservancy’s closest friends joined us for the newly imagined PNC Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy Hat Luncheon: Picnic in Your Park event, where attendees celebrated the power of parks in a safe, physically distant fashion and enjoyed a one-of-a-kind, gourmet picnic basket either at home or in a park. Picnic in Your Park was especially important as it enabled many Conservancy supporters to honor their cherished parks and green spaces, which have served as essential amenities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Picnic in Your Park raised \$500,000 in revenue for the Conservancy. Proceeds will support ongoing free educational programs for people of all ages, increased maintenance for various park sites, and general operating costs to continue the mission of restoring Pittsburgh’s park system to excellence.

Not only did this year’s event further support the parks that so many know and love, but it also helped children experiencing food insecurity. For every Picnic in Your Park basket purchased, in addition to supporting the Conservancy’s mission, a meal donation was made to the city of Pittsburgh’s Grab and Go meal distribution program.



\$500,000 Raised

PNC Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy Hat Luncheon: Picnic in Your Park

Advancing Capital Projects

The Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy continues its mission of restoring Pittsburgh's park system to excellence through park improvement projects. From Allegheny Commons' historic North Promenade rehabilitation to the restoration of the Mellon Park Walled Garden Fountain, the Parks Conservancy is proud of its most recent park projects, in partnership with the city of Pittsburgh.

Allegheny Commons Northeast Fountain Restoration: Situated in Allegheny Commons, Pittsburgh's oldest park, the original Northeast Fountain stood for decades as a focal point of the park experience and community pride before its decommissioning after World War II, when it became a planting bed. A \$2.5 million restoration of the fountain was completed in spring 2019. The new Northeast Fountain matches the original in size and scale and has once again become a community focal point.



PARKS ARE:

"A great park system is one of the hallmarks of a great city."

– Meg Cheever, founding president, Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy



Allegheny Commons North Promenade Rehabilitation: The North Promenade rehabilitation project will restore its 1935 path pattern, removing unnecessary paths and excess pavement in Pittsburgh's most historic park. New pedestrian crossings at Federal and Arch Streets will include planted medians to provide safe harbor. The George Washington Monument will be given a new setting in a well-scaled oval plaza. Finishing touches will include historically appropriate benches and energy-efficient lighting. The planting scheme will feature a central allée of canopy trees along the Promenade. The first phase of the project was completed in 2020. The Parks Conservancy will fundraise for the second phase in 2021 with a goal of breaking ground in 2022.

McKinley Park 'Chicken Hill' Park Improvement Project: In 2016, the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and American Planning Association (APA) awarded the Parks Conservancy a \$435,000 Great Urban Parks Campaign grant for this improvement project. While centered around green infrastructure, the project incorporated key community priorities for upper McKinley Park, also known as Chicken Hill. These amenities include restored historical sandstone stairs, a new pavilion, and gathering space with a built-in slide, a universally accessible trail throughout the area, and more. Work is being completed in early fiscal year 2021 by John Zottola Landscaping Inc., Beltzhoover-based contractor Go Supreme, and the Department of Public Works.





evolving

On the Horizon

Flagstaff Hill Woodland Garden: This popular landmark, directly opposite Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens, attracts visitors year-round who enjoy its panoramic views of the Oakland neighborhood and City skyline. The project will reinterpret the historic 1930s azalea garden as a woodland garden using a sustainable native plant palette, including azaleas. This approach will extend throughout the wooded areas and benefit its ecologically unhealthy greenspace, the lack of understory plantings that create stormwater runoff and erosion problems. New shrubs and groundcovers will limit further erosion while taking up water and slowing its flow downslope.

Mellon Park Walled Garden Fountain: The focal point of the Walled Garden is the 14-foot-high stone fountain created by renowned sculptor Edmond R. Amateis. The Parks Conservancy is partnering with the city of Pittsburgh to restore this important historic asset and ensure reliable function. The project will update and modernize the internal and external plumbing and mechanical systems, restoring the fountain to a fully operational state with energy and water-efficient technologies. The fountain will be completely restored, including a new structural foundation, new lighting, and cleaning and restoration of the stonework.



Parks Must:



<- Reflect diversity



<- Honor their neighborhoods



<- Foster opportunity and growth



<- Support safety and well-being



<- Lift up all who visit

Supporting Black Lives Requires More than Words

The Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy supported the 2020 national movement to eliminate racial injustice in all forms, standing in solidarity with Black and Brown communities and uniting with them to pursue permanent, positive, and just results. The killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Manuel Ellis and others last year were a sad reminder of society's struggle to effectively address racism, discrimination, and unconscious bias.

PARKS ARE:

"We are one people, one family, the human family, and what affects one of us affects us all." – John Lewis, former congressman and civil rights leader



Support for the Black Lives Matter movement means actions as well as words. Last year, the Parks Conservancy hosted a Juneteenth Picnic at the Frick Environmental Center to offer community members a safe, accommodating outlet during heavy months of protest. Held against the backdrop of the Environmental Center's From Slavery to Freedom Garden, participants were invited to relax and heal in nature, as well as learn about the history of the holiday and of the Black connection to the land and environment.

Moving forward, the organization will focus its efforts on creating safe and accessible parks and urban green spaces — working tirelessly to improve the quality of life for all people of Pittsburgh by ensuring park equity through restoration of all 165 City sites. Park equity means much more than providing new equipment and increased park maintenance. Park equity means everyone feels welcome and safe in all parks, and that the Conservancy speaks out when instances of racial injustice occur in our local parks.



We mourn the loss of innocent lives and everyday racial injustices perpetrated against black and brown communities. Generations of systemic bias, racial inequality, and brutality must end now. We praise the millions struggling to enact societal change, and promise to do more for this rightful cause than merely pledge support, asking of ourselves what we ask of our country: how can we use all that we have to create a more equitable world?

We believe parks are for all, but painfully acknowledge that this isn't the current reality. Not when members of our community cannot engage in a favorite pastime without fear of confrontation and abuse. We aspire to, and work hard every day at creating, a world where parks are for all. We commit to being a force to make that happen. Building realities from our aspirations.

The Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy stands in solidarity with black and brown communities and with all who regularly face injustice, as well as those uniting with them to demand that we pursue our nation's highest ideals.

We see you. We hear you. We support you.



for all

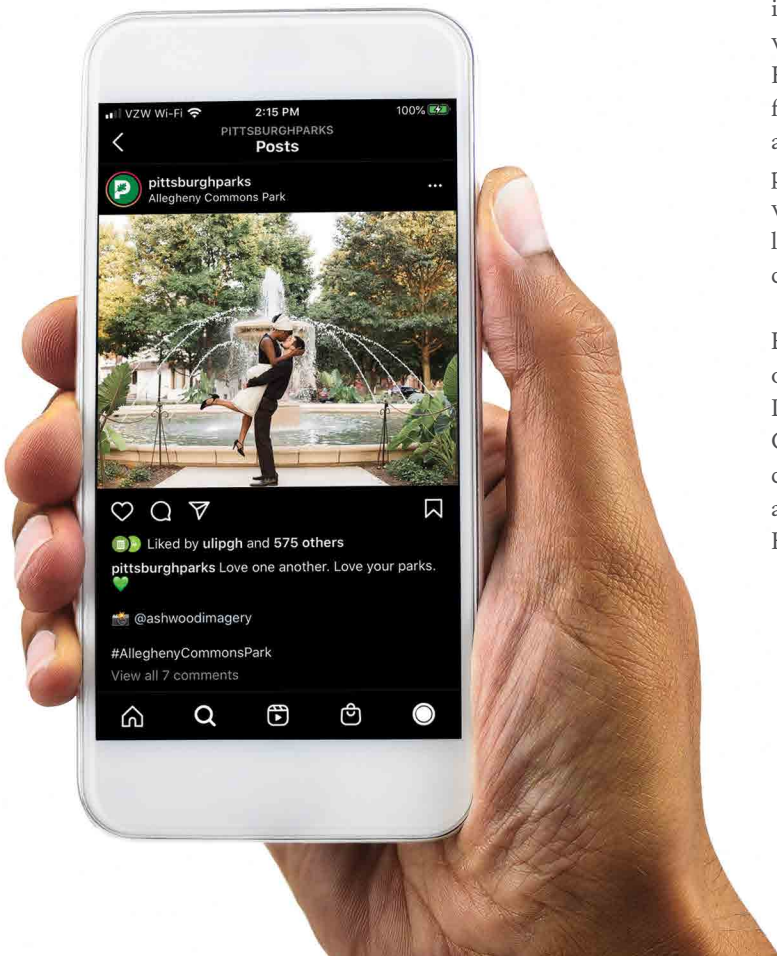
Taking Action on Equity

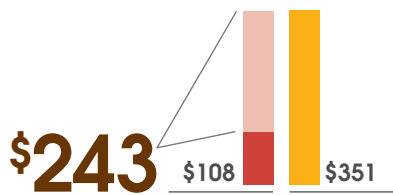
The Parks Conservancy enters its 25th year with a continued focus on equity, one of the organization's foundational tenets.

Equity efforts these past two years were highlighted by the development of an equitable investment strategy for the entire park system. Working closely with the city of Pittsburgh, the equitable investment strategy is a data-driven plan to improve parks that have suffered due to decades of systemic disinvestment.

The Conservancy raised funds and initiated capital projects that improved parks serving diverse communities. The organization was much lauded for the 2019 restoration of the Northeast Fountain in Allegheny Commons, which has become a focal point for the North Side community. Last year, the Conservancy restored a portion of the Allegheny Commons North Promenade, with plans to continue restoration of the Promenade in accordance with the park's Master Plan. In McKinley Park, one of the City's largest community parks, a green infrastructure capital project was completed in 2020.

Equity and engagement with diverse audiences remains a principle of the Conservancy's education and programming outreach. Last year, for the first time, Conservancy staff collaborated with Citiparks and Learn and Earn teams on the Meet Me in the Parks community program. The Conservancy facilitated nature activities at or near city parks that served as summer food distribution sites in Homewood, the Hill District, North Side, and East Liberty.





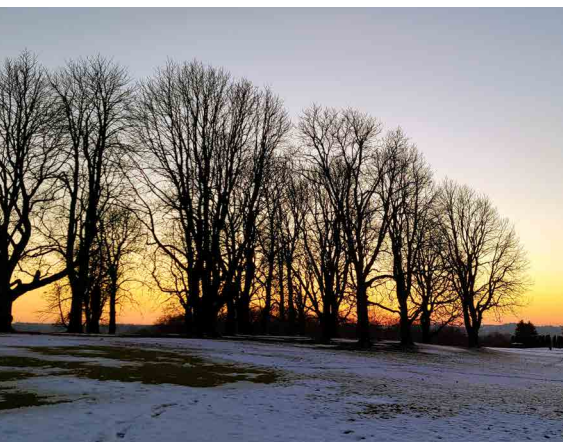
Difference in total parks and recreation spending per resident between Pittsburgh (\$108) and Seattle (\$351).

Source: The Trust for Public Land, "City Park Facts 2020" (FY2019 Spending Data)

Financials

The COVID public health crisis adversely impacted the Pittsburgh Park Conservancy's FY2020 financial performance, preventing the organization from hosting traditional programming, events, and other revenue-generating activities. A highlight of the year was reimagining the Hat Luncheon as a Picnic in Your Park. This success aside, the organization had to initiate cost-cutting measures and tap into revenue resources to stabilize finances. These measures will remain in place for FY2021.

The Restoring Pittsburgh Parks campaign, in partnership with the city of Pittsburgh, drove FY2019 financial performance. After a year of fundraising, the organization helped lead a successful parks' referendum campaign.



In 2020, the City issued a retrospective audit of more than 55 agreements and contracts it has made with the Parks Conservancy since the public interest partnership began in 1998. The report found that the Conservancy has become a trusted and reliable champion of city parks and has contributed immensely to their development and preservation through its own fundraising and responsible management of city-provided funds.

"The Parks Conservancy is a big player in the parks. Let's recognize them for the amazing work that they do. Leveraging private contributions, to great planning, also great projects and programming within our park system. We wouldn't be able to do the things we do in Pittsburgh's parks without the Parks Conservancy," City Controller Michael Lamb stated at the press conference announcing the audit findings.

2020/2019 Revenue by Type

■ 2020 ■ 2019

Permanently Restricted

| \$265
■ \$2,502,471

Temporarily Restricted

■ \$3,237,540
■ \$7,285,070

Unrestricted

■ \$1,587,791
■ \$1,197,169

Total

■ \$4,825,595
■ \$10,984,710

2020/2019 Revenue by Category

■ 2020 ■ 2019

Grants and Donations

■ \$2,805,561
■ \$8,437,094

Rental Income

■ \$205,567
■ \$219,588

Token Sales

| \$4,998
■ \$33,000

Program Fees

| \$18,398
■ \$113,545

Special Events

■ \$488,154
■ \$573,650

Contract Service Revenue

■ \$812,645
■ \$559,200

Total

■ \$4,335,323
■ \$9,936,077



2020/2019 Expenditure by Category

■ 2020 ■ 2019

Personnel

■ \$3,554,418
■ \$2,510,352

Administration

■ \$478,179
■ \$438,134

Special Events

| \$100,509
■ \$168,366

Field Supplies

■ \$141,206
■ \$189,799

Marketing and Communications

■ \$636,400
■ \$290,525

Travel, Training, and Meetings

| \$32,034
■ \$110,099

Contractors and Construction

■ \$1,063,589
■ \$377,909

Professional Fees

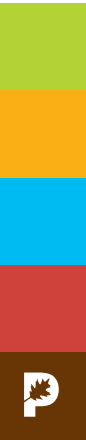
■ \$2,663,259
■ \$1,350,333

Total

■ \$8,669,595
■ \$5,435,516



2020 financials are unaudited. Numbers do not include investment gains and losses, depreciation, or in-kind.





**Pittsburgh
Parks
Conservancy**

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