A Letter from Catherine Qureshi

In 2021, we celebrated 25 years of the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy – an accomplishment we were delighted to honor with our friends near and far. Through long-standing partnerships, dedicated park patrons, and Pittsburgh’s philanthropic community, we’ve accomplished so much together, not only in 2021 but throughout the past 25 years. From completing the restoration of the Frick Park Gatehouse, our very first capital improvement project – to welcoming the millionth visitor to Schenley Plaza – to restoring the Patricia Regan Rooney Fountain in Pittsburgh’s oldest public park – we’ve certainly made a lasting impact on Pittsburgh’s beloved public parks and green spaces.

As we reflect on our many milestones, we continue to remember that there’s much work to be done to improve Pittsburgh’s park system to excellence. Since 1998, we’ve proudly worked with our partners at the City of Pittsburgh to enhance Pittsburgh’s landscape. Through our partnership, we’ve completed more than 23 capital improvement projects, planted thousands of new trees and fresh flowers to strengthen our urban forest and brighten Pittsburgh’s gardens, and provided educational programs to thousands of young learners year after year.

I’m proud to inform you that we will continue working alongside our partners at the City for years to come, as we’ve recently renewed our partnership, which will allow the Conservancy to work in more parks than ever before in our 25-year history. The dedication from our supporters, volunteers, foundations, and community members makes our mission possible. We are immensely grateful for their belief in our vision for creating a better, more equitable parks system for all Pittsburghers.

While we look back at the successes from this past year, it’s more important than ever to focus on a path forward. Over the next decade, the Conservancy looks forward to making progress in meeting park needs, realizing park equity, and addressing Pittsburghers’ priorities.

Pittsburgh’s Future: Goals For A Greener Pittsburgh

As the Conservancy embarks on the next 25 years, it’s setting new goals by renewing its commitment to the community. Within the next decade, the Conservancy hopes to:

- Protect and nurture Pittsburgh’s urban forest by performing year-round maintenance of the City’s green spaces while embarking on new horticultural and forestry initiatives.
- Engage every community, forging new partnerships and strengthening existing ones to deliver even more programming and cultivate a new cohort of park lovers.
- Restore every Pittsburgh park to excellence, reducing capital project and maintenance backlogs.
- Become a global model for park equity by working to ensure all Pittsburghers have access to safe, beautiful, quality parks that other cities aspire to replicate.

With gratitude,

Catherine Qureshi
President & CEO, Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy

Our Mission & Vision

Since its founding in December 1996, the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy has believed in improving the quality of life for the people of Pittsburgh by restoring the park system to excellence in partnership with the government and the community. All projects and programs are conducted with respect for the environment, historic design, and the needs of our diverse region. The Conservancy has a wide appreciation and enjoyment of a sustainable park system whose landscapes, facilities and programming set world standards of excellence.

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- Become a global model for park equity by working to ensure all Pittsburghers have access to safe, beautiful, quality parks that other cities aspire to replicate.
Years of Parks for All

“The North Promenade—Mariana Whitmer, chairperson, Allegheny Commons Initiative

“The North Promenade revitalization has expanded the beauty and serenity of the Patricia Regan Rooney Memorial Fountain, demonstrating the possibility of a completely restored park.”—Mariana Whitmer, chairperson, Allegheny Commons Initiative

“2021 By the Numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
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<td>432</td>
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<td>22</td>
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2021 Completed Projects

Allegheny Commons North Promenade

The $1.1 million North Promenade rehabilitation project restored the Promenade to its historic 1935 path pattern, including the 15-foot-wide central Promenade along North Avenue while removing unnecessary paths and excess pavement. The first construction phase encompassed the area between the Patricia Regan Rooney Memorial Fountain, formerly known as the Northeast Fountain, and Federal Street. New tree plantings feature a central aisle of canopy trees with various understory trees flanking the lawn. In addition, energy-efficient lighting was added as part of the project. Historically appropriate benches have also been installed along the Promenade between the restored Patricia Regan Rooney Memorial Fountain and Federal Street. The second construction phase will cover the area between Federal Street and the George Washington Memorial between North Avenue and Arch Street.

Mellon Park Walled Garden Fountain

The Conservancy partnered with the City of Pittsburgh and the Friends of Mellon Park to restore the Mellon Park Walled Garden Fountain, an important historic asset to the East-End community. The $438,240 project updated and modernized the internal and external plumbing and mechanical systems, restoring the fountain to a fully operational state with energy and water-efficient technologies. The sculptural fountain was completely restored, including a new structural foundation, new fountain lighting, and the cleaning and restoration of the stonework.

Forbes Avenue Gatehouse

Sitting next to the Fern Hollow Bridge and signifying the trailhead for the North and South Clayton trails, the Forbes Avenue Gatehouse is one of the four historic entrances to the Park. The project also includes the installation of new park benches along the connecting pathways, so visitors can enjoy a moment of relaxation as they enjoy the stunning views from Flagstaff Hill. Additionally, the restored overlook terrace will be repaved with permeable pavers to improve its use as a space for individuals and small groups.

Mellon Park Action Plan

Mellon Park is a centrally located, signature community park, situated at the intersection of six Pittsburgh neighborhoods and directly accessible from two of the City’s major transportation corridors: Penn Avenue and Fifth Avenue. The 33-acre park offers many historical, cultural, and recreational opportunities and serves a culturally and generationally diverse population. The park is also designated as a historical landscape and archetypal.

Ongoing Projects

Flagstaff Hill Woodland Garden

Flagstaff Hill is not only an iconic Pittsburgh destination that people of all ages enjoy year-round, but it’s also the site of the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy’s most recent capital improvement project. This popular landmark, directly opposite Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens, attracts thousands of visitors annually who enjoy its panoramic views of the Oakland neighborhood and city skyline.

The first step of the project is restoring the historic hand-hewn stone entry steps, retaining walls, and the overlooking terrace. Following the restoration of the historic mosaic walls and stairs, the project will also address pedestrian barriers by reconstructing the dilapidated main path connecting the east and west entrances, where the Conservancy will soon create new gardens.

The new entry gardens will frame the east and west park entrances using a sustainable native plant palette. In addition, bioswales and green infrastructure, and a reduction in impervious paving will help handle stormwater runoff and mitigate erosion issues that have plagued the site.

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Year-after-year, the Parks Conservancy’s Visitor Experience team works hard to create a robust schedule of free programs for people of all ages to enjoy while caring for Schenley Plaza, Allegheny Commons, Frick Environmental Center, Mellon Square, and more year-round! In addition, the team works endlessly to ensure that all park visitors enjoy a memorable and fun trip to their favorite park.

In the Community with Parks Rx

In 2015, the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy launched Pittsburgh Parks Prescription (Parks Rx), partnering with UPMC Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh (CHP) and other community partners. Park prescription programs typically are evidence-based models developed by health care providers to promote health and wellness across all age groups. Health care professionals counsel patients about healthy lifestyle habits and give them a park prescription for increasing their activity level that includes information on their local parks and recreation resources. Pittsburgh Parks Rx goes beyond a traditional park prescription program because it also partners directly with local schools, parent wellness committees, and family-serving community organizations through CHP’s Healthy Schools, Healthy Out-of-School-Time, and Healthy Eating, Active Living networks.

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McKinley Park Chicken Hill

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The Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy believes in the power of connecting children to nature at a young age. Year after year, the Parks Conservancy’s team of passionate educators, based out of the Frick Environmental Center, engage with thousands of Pittsburghers of all ages and backgrounds about the value of healthy habitats, urban ecosystems, and the relationship between humans and nature. Parks provide unique and unlimited opportunities for scientific inquiry, observation, wonder, creativity, exploration, and learning. The Conservancy’s vast array of educational programs encourage learners to participate in stewardship activities that improve their parks and communities.

As the education team navigated another year of the COVID-19 pandemic, they created unique opportunities to connect students safely with nature through in-person and virtual learning experiences. The Conservancy continued to meet learners online, in the classroom, and in the parks throughout the calendar year through various partner programs at 20 local schools, including several new partners such as the Rochelle Street Head Start and Hazelwood Head Start program at the Council of Three Rivers American Indian Center (COTRAIC).

With a steady annual enrollment of 1,200 students ranging from pre-kindergarten through high school, the team’s multi-visit programs provided rich STEM-related content to further the connection between humans and nature.

Digital learning continued with the development of materials that allowed teachers and students to work with real-world sustainability data from the Frick Environmental Center Dashboard. The resource suite includes short videos, how-to guides, and teacher-created lessons. Additionally, the team continued content development resources for teachers, non-formal educators, and others, highlighting the “From Slavery to Freedom Garden” located at the Environmental Center, focusing on racial equity in discussions of nature, history, and place. The team also helped create the Outdoor Inclusion Coalition to further the Pittsburgh-area discussion on equity in green spaces and create a network of organizations dedicated to change.

By The Numbers:

- **Students Engaged:** 4,014
  More than double the number of students engaged in 2020, the team learned how to navigate pandemic-related restrictions while providing safe and fun programming for all ages.
- **Summer Camp Attendees:** 190
  Campers ages 4-13 participated in 1-week camps throughout the summer.
- **Young Naturalist Participants:** 10
  Students from seven different Pittsburgh-area public schools spent five weeks working and learning in Pittsburgh’s parks and volunteering with the education team on various events such as Run Around the Square and Bump in the Night.
- **Community Education Engagements:** 696
  Programs were offered in and around August Wilson Park, including yoga in the park, summer camp enrichment activities, and The Black Market, a celebration of Black owned businesses.
- **Interns:** 21
  College interns provided more than 1,600 hours of service, including developing a library of short nature videos for the Parks on the Go webpage, teaching summer campers, staffing stations at Bump in the Night, and assisting with school partner programs.

**Total contact hours:** 4,300

“My job as a naturalist is to help people from all over Pittsburgh connect with the fauna, flora, and fungi whom we share our city with. To me, the biggest impact of my work is connecting with people and being a part of perspective-changing or eye-opening moments. Whether that happens with middle-school students who trust me to take them on their first exploration of a stream or forest, or with adults on hikes, I live for the ‘wow’ moments that happen while teaching and learning outside. My hope is that by sharing my compassion and curiosity, I can inspire others to view even the parts of nature we’ve been raised to fear in a different light.”

- Stephen Bucklin, Naturalist Educator
Picnic in Your Park

On Sunday, June 6, many of our closest friends joined us for our second annual Picnic in Your Park event, presented by PNC, where we celebrated the power of parks in Schenley Park. Picnic in Your Park once again provided park enthusiasts the opportunity to support their cherished green spaces by enjoying a delicious charcuterie board! This year’s event raised $487,000 in revenue and sold 275 baskets. These vital funds 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.

Years of Stewardship

continue the mission of restoring Pittsburgh’s park system to excellence.

Making Your Parks Shine

Throughout the calendar year, the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy celebrated 25 years of improving, maintaining, and caring for the parks Pittsburghers know and love. On Thursday, September 30, the Parks Conservancy kicked off a weekend-long celebration to honor the milestone anniversary in Schenley Plaza. The evening event welcomed the dedicated group of park patrons who received the Mary Schenley Medal for Park Stewardship, awarded every five years to honorees who have made substantial contributions to the restoration of Pittsburgh’s parks, past and present Conservancy employees, board members, local officials, and friends from across the city. The five honorees of the Mary Schenley Medal for Parks Stewardship included:

- Vivian & Bill Benter
- Debbi & Dan Booker
- The Ryan Memorial Foundation
- Silvia & Alexander Speyer, III

Their support has helped to create and sustain the Conservancy’s public interest partnership with the City of Pittsburgh, which has become a national model for parks.

Following the Thursday celebration, on the evenings of October 1 and 2, 2021, the Conservancy continued the 25th anniversary celebration with our largest ever public event. Throughout the weekend, thousands of Pittsburghers gathered at six park locations, including Allegheny Commons Park, Mellon Park, McKinley Park, and Schenley Plaza to honor this spectacular milestone. To mark the occasion, the Parks Conservancy, in partnership with LUXE Creative, installed immersive and inclusive lighting installations at each of these spaces, and hosted an array block parties for park neighbors and visitors to enjoy! Making Your Parks Shine was made possible, thanks to the generous support of PNC and UPMC Health Plan.
For the past 25 years, the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy’s Horticulture and Forestry team has worked to beautify Pittsburgh’s parks by maintaining the bountiful garden beds, restoring the urban forest, and creating a more resilient tree canopy. In 2021, this dedicated team cared for 2,392,000 square feet of parkland, which equates to nearly 56 acres!

From planting new flower beds and tree seedlings to researching tree cultivars that will flourish in Pittsburgh’s climate, the Parks Conservancy’s team emphasizes the importance of a robust urban forest at the forefront of its work.

A Living Laboratory Thrives in Schenley Park

In 2021, the Conservancy’s Horticulture and Forestry team focused its efforts on the continuation of the Schenley Park Tree Research Grove, otherwise known as ‘Feinzwig Grove.’ A living tree laboratory in Schenley Park, this research project will soon house nearly 600 trees cared for by the Conservancy. Thanks to a generous donation from Conservancy supporters, Dr. Tor Richter and Karen Each, this project is possible.

In mid-November of 2019, the Parks Conservancy’s Horticulture and Forestry team planted 100 yellowwood trees in the research grove. Since then, the team had recorded when the trees began to break bud and then formed. This year, the team identified the species that can better adapt to a changing climate and thrive in Pittsburgh. In addition, this single study will help inform and identify other genetically diverse tree genotypes that have prospered, which will be a better species for growth in the region.

The Park Tree Fund

The summer of 2021 marked one of the most challenging for the beloved trees in Pittsburgh’s parks. Seasonal storms, surging invasive pests, and contagious ecological diseases pose a severe threat to the health of Pittsburgh’s trees, which is why the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy decided to take action and call upon their most dedicated park supporters. The Parks Conservancy established the Park Tree Fund to plant new trees and care for the older, more mature trees in the parks.

Gifts that are given to the Park Tree Fund go directly towards:

- Treating and inoculating at-risk species against existing pests and disease.
- Caring for existing mature trees with seasonal pruning, watering, and mulching.
- Researching tree species that will thrive in our changing environment.
- Planting new trees in areas of need.

Ecological Restoration in Pittsburgh’s Parks

Founded in 2005 and named a regional park in 2007, Emerald View Park has undergone a remarkable transformation over the years. The park was once plagued with illegal dumping, cars, tires, and even parts of demolished buildings were discarded on the steeply sloping hills. Today, Emerald View Park visitors find winding trails, wooded hillsides, and surprise vistas cared for and maintained by the City of Pittsburgh and the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy.

In 2021, the Parks Conservancy’s Horticulture and Forestry team broke ground on a new view-shed restoration site in the park that includes four separate ‘exclosures’ and 152 new restoration trees and shrubs.

Nearby, and with the help of corporate volunteers, the team completed a challenging hillside restoration project in McKinely Park. Throughout five volunteer events and several staff workdays, the team cleared the hillside of invasive and woody species, removed old landscape fabric, and filled the area with natural bermos to slow erosion. Additionally, volunteers and team members planted 320 native perennials and 94 deer-resistant shrubs. The team also spread more than 20 yards of woodchip mulch to restore the aesthetics and ecological condition of the park’s perimeter.

Finally, and arguably one of the most well-known restoration projects of the year, took place in Frick Park’s Clayton Hill! Excitement could be felt, and “herd,” far and wide as a group of goats from Allegheny Goatscape returned to this heavily wooded area of the park to continue their assignment of removing invasive species.

Additionally, the team restored the herbaceous underbush within areas protected from deer browsing by transplanting 141 native perennial species from other garden sources throughout the park system. More than 260 native trees and shrubs were added to these protected sites. The team constructed the third addition of deer fencing to the Clayton Hill project to complete the year, adding nearly one acre to the restoration area!
Digital Engagement

At the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, we believe in the power of connecting Pittsburghers to parks. Whether park patrons are exploring their parks in person or through their smartphones, Pittsburgh’s parks are the heart and soul of our communities.

The advancement of digital media allowed the Parks Conservancy to connect with more park lovers than ever before. Even when we stayed apart to keep one another safe throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, we remained connected and social through digital media.

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The Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy invests in thousands of free, accessible, and inclusive programs annually. From #HillYoga in August Wilson Park to Kids Days in Schenley Plaza, the Parks Conservancy continuously creates programs and events for all to enjoy. Not only did the Conservancy host thousands of Pittsburghers at various events and programs throughout the calendar year, but they also worked with hundreds of dedicated volunteers who contributed countless hours of valuable work to the betterment of Pittsburgh’s park system.

# Free Recreational Programs:
247 programs / 13,224 attendees

# Volunteers and Total Volunteer Hours:
487 / 3,297 volunteer hours

Special Events:
- Picnic in Your Park: 275 baskets sold / $487,000 raised
- Making Your Parks Shine: 5,000+ attendees / 30+ local businesses supported
- Juneteenth Concert: 140 attendees
- Individual Donors: 2,086

The Goldencents is not one of the most memorable open spaces in Pittsburgh. (Photo by Kiley O’Donnell)

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Financial Overview
Throughout the past 25 years, the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy has raised more than $130 million for Pittsburgh’s park system. Fiscal year 2021 consisted of the continuation of cost-cutting measures initiated in FY2020 by COVID-19 to ensure financial stability as the organization continued navigating the trials and turbulences of the pandemic. At the end of FY2021, the Parks Conservancy signed a 10-year partnership agreement with the City of Pittsburgh, which will allow the Conservancy to expand its work into more parks than ever before. Furthermore, to date, the Conservancy has not received any public tax dollars generated by the Parks Trust Fund.

2021 Revenue by Type
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2021 Revenue by Category
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*Investment earnings and additional financial items may not be reflected in the revenue category field.