



CENTRAL PARK CONSERVANCY ANNOUNCES THE CAMPAIGN FOR CENTRAL PARK

The Central Park Conservancy announced that *The Campaign for Central Park*, a fundraising campaign urging New Yorkers to help secure the future of Central Park, is well on its way to reaching its goal of \$100 million. Having already established more than \$90 million in commitments, the Campaign is officially 10% away from achieving this goal. Funds raised for the campaign will ensure the continued restoration of the Park, including premier areas such as the Lake and the east side landscapes from the Metropolitan Museum of Art to the Harlem Meer. The funds will also provide long-term operating support to guarantee that the Conservancy's investment in the Park is preserved. Prior to the current campaign, the Conservancy has raised and invested \$325 million in private funds to restore and preserve Central Park. An additional \$70 million in City capital funds were invested in the Park's restoration during that time.

The Conservancy, a private, not-for-profit organization that manages Central Park under a contract with the City of New York, was founded in 1980 in the hope that dedicated citizens working in partnership with supportive City officials could reverse the alarming decline of Central Park and restore the Park to its former splendor. Since its founding, the Conservancy has prescribed a management and restoration plan for the Park; funded major capital improvements; created programs for volunteers and visitors; and set new standards of excellence in park care. Thanks to the generosity of many individuals, corporations, and foundations, along with public funds, the Conservancy has transformed Central Park from its deteriorated state in the late 1970s to the beautifully restored and expertly managed park it is today, and serves as a model for urban parks nationwide.

The Conservancy has restored most of the major Park landscapes, including The Mall, the Great Lawn, and the Harlem Meer. "This campaign will allow the Conservancy to complete the Park's major restorations and continue securing the Park's future," says Douglas Blonsky, president of the Conservancy. "With that said, Central Park is a living and breathing American landmark enjoyed by millions of visitors a year and, as such, it's always a work in progress."

Capital Projects

Over the course of the next seven years, the Conservancy will be breaking ground on multiple projects in two key areas of the Park. One focus will be on the landscapes, bridges, structures, and shoreline of the Lake. The remaining projects will include the landscapes and playgrounds on the stretch of parkland that extends along the east side from the Metropolitan Museum to the Harlem Meer. Many of the restorations will re-establish lost "Olmstedian" views and re-create rustic structures and bridges not seen since the Park's early years. Whenever possible the Conservancy's landscape architecture team has stayed true to or evoked the spirit of the 1858 Greensward Plan of Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux for Central Park. The restoration of the 22-acre Lake, located in the heart of the lower Park (West 72nd-78th Streets), will be completed in two-and-a-half years. The restoration of the Lake encompasses several adjacent landscapes and distinctive architectural features. Projects will be done in phases to limit the effect on public use of these areas.

The first project, Bank Rock Bay, a cove on the Lake's northern tip, will break ground this summer. The project will include the rebuilding of one of the Park's original bridges, Bank Rock Bridge. This replica of the original bridge will be constructed of carved white oak with panels of decorative cast iron and a floor of yellow pine. Other projects will include the widening of the Gill and the re-creation of a cascade near where it empties into the Lake. Two rustic bridges that once crossed the Gill will be reconstructed. The Lake's island will also be rebuilt with rugged

boulders, wetland, moisture-loving trees and aquatic plantings. The Park's famous Bow Bridge will be outfitted with re-creations of its missing urns. Additionally, the Lake restoration will focus on increasing plant-life diversity along the shoreline to attract even more wildlife to this area, and will deepen coves and remove sediment to improve the Lake's overall health and clarity.

The Conservancy's planned restoration of the landscapes on the east side of the Park from the Metropolitan Museum to the Harlem Meer (East 84th – East 108th Streets) will more fully integrate these areas with the rest of the Park.

A highlight of these projects will be the creation of an arboretum walk beginning at the Conservatory Garden, looping around East Meadow and continuing up to the Mount (East 97th - 105th Streets). In the Greensward Plan, Olmsted and Vaux proposed an Arboretum of American specimen trees for the northeastern corner of the Park. This proposal never came to fruition. The East Meadow offers an impressive variety of trees and the Conservancy will build on these to create an arboretum walk. A full restoration of East Meadow, which has eroded in recent years, is planned as well.

"Rhododendron Mile," as the landscape east of the Reservoir between East 85th and East 97th Streets has become known, will become a horticultural showpiece and a Park destination in its own right. The country road character that the large shade trees have historically evoked will be complemented with newly planted flowering trees, blooming plants, and evergreen texture.

Sustaining the Future

It currently costs \$25 million a year to maintain Central Park. With every new landscape, building, water body, or playground that is restored, additional funds are required to maintain it. Campaign funds will significantly enhance the Conservancy's ability to keep pace with the ever-rising annual costs associated with the Park's care and help permanently break the cycle of decline-and-restore that had characterized the Park's long history prior to 1980.

The City of New York has committed \$25 million in capital funds over seven years. This commitment restores a level of annual capital funding that had been promised through the 1980s and 1990s. It is part of a three-year \$1.3 billion City capital program to rebuild parks and playgrounds across the City- the largest program in park building and expansion since the 1930s.

"Central Park is a destination for New Yorkers and visitors from the region and around the world...25-million strong a year," said New York City Parks & Recreation Commissioner Adrian Benepe. "We are proud to support its ongoing restoration and to help leverage major private donations."

The Public/Membership

Central Park is a park for the people and, as such, the Conservancy hopes that New Yorkers will support *The Campaign for Central Park*. The Conservancy expects to reach its \$100 million goal before the close of 2007. "I have been fortunate to witness the transformation of Central Park first hand over the past 25 years. I urge New Yorkers to get involved in *The Campaign for Central Park* and be a part of the next era of revitalization of New York's top treasure," says Ira M. Millstein, a Conservancy trustee who is co-chairing the Campaign with fellow trustee Elizabeth R. Varet.

Completing the major restorations of Central Park will lead to an overall better quality of life for New York, its residents, business owners, and visitors. The public can find out more about donating to the campaign or becoming a member of the Conservancy by visiting www.centralparknyc.org.