



NEW YORK  
RESTORATION  
PROJECT

# NYRP



# ANNUAL REPORT 2018







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# LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In our nearly 25 years of cleaning and greening New York City, we've earned a reputation for the spectacular transformations we've helped bring about in parks and community gardens across New York City. Perusing our website, you can find unbelievable (yet true!) before/after images showing the results after we hauled literally tons of tires, washing machines, and the like out of Highbridge Park, turned unusable and dangerous vacant lots into beloved community gardens, and built urban farms on parking lots, among many other projects. The rebirth of these spaces stands as a testament to the generosity of so many of you reading this today and we are deeply grateful.

There's a part of our work that's less obvious but just as important as any physical transformation. It's the "after after;" there's before, there's after, and then there's the "after after." The "after after" is what happens once a space has been reborn and embraced by its community. It's the tiny miracles of human connection that happen every day in our spaces.

One such tiny miracle happened last October when some members at our Target Community Garden decided to celebrate the 10-year anniversary of the garden's creation. Located in Bedford Stuyvesant, the Target Community Garden neighborhood is predominantly African-American with a sizable Hasidic community living just north in Williamsburg. Historically, the two communities have had tensions, yet in the Target garden, individuals of both groups grow fruits and vegetables for their families and enjoy sharing knowledge on cultivation.

The October celebration included a display of images of the garden prior to renovation, shared dishes like West Indian patties and latkes, crafts for children, and, well, a belly dancer. For reasons not entirely clear to me, collectively the group decided that belly dancing would be the best way to celebrate the garden's anniversary. And you know, who could argue with that?

Current gardeners and members of the block association gathered on a gorgeous fall afternoon, bringing together both Hasidic and African-American neighbors. Attendees included two of the garden's founders (both residents of the block for more than 40 years), a Hasidic mother and her special needs child enjoying the crafts, and new neighbors with young families. Late in the evening when the belly dancer finally performed, residents on either side of the garden leaned from their windows, laughing and applauding her spectacular dance until it became too dark to continue.

*continued on next page...*



Highbridge Park,  
Manhattan,  
Before and After



Essex Street Community  
Garden, Brooklyn,  
Before and After



Kingsbridge Heights  
Community Center,  
Bronx, Before and After

This kind of unostentatious marvel happens every day in NYRP spaces. Our green spaces offer opportunities to bridge boundaries across culture, across race and ethnicity, and across economic class. Simply by keeping our spaces clean, beautiful, and entirely free and available to everyone, we are demonstrating that dignity in the public realm matters, and that each and every individual is important to the broader New York City community. People respond to that message by extending themselves to their neighbors and even sharing joy, as was patent in the harvest celebration I just described. There are few places in our city where individuals of dramatically different life circumstances can come together in the peaceful, productive way that I have seen happen countless times in our spaces. In the end, everyone wants to grow basil. In an era of great divisiveness, is anything more important?

Tiny miracles of connection are not the only remarkable outcome of our work. In early 2018, we received results of a study we commissioned that found that neighborhoods with high NYRP activity and investment had more than 200 fewer felonies per 40,000 residents annually compared to similar neighborhoods where we have no presence. The findings of our study were echoed by another recent study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (July 20, 2018) linking green space with reduced crime and improved public health. That Philadelphia-based experiment cleaned and greened vacant lots while leaving others as they were. Over three years, crime went down where lots had been managed, and people living near those lots reported a huge decrease in feelings of depression and worthlessness (more than 50%).

We see these extraordinary results every day. Our work turns neighbors into neighborhoods, weaving connections among residents from all walks of life. That is the true meaning of our success. Your support helps NYRP achieve these extraordinary outcomes. On behalf of our founder Bette Midler, our Board of Trustees, my colleagues across the city, our wonderful volunteers and supporters, and the millions of residents of New York City who benefit from our work, I thank you from the bottom of my heart and look forward to even greater open space transformations leading to stronger communities in the years ahead.



Target Community Garden, Brooklyn, The “After After”

Deborah Marton



# MISSION AND VISION

**Nature is a fundamental right of every New Yorker.** NYRP partners with local communities, public agencies, and the private sector to acquire, create, maintain, and program public open spaces. Our sustained partnership with communities promotes strong social ties and turns neighbors into neighborhoods.

We aspire to deepen our impact in all five boroughs to make a safer, healthier, and happier city.

## HERE'S HOW WE DO IT

### SAFER COMMUNITIES



Safer because a greener New York is a safer New York. In 2018, Glass Frog Solutions, a research and evaluation team, released a study that revealed there were 213 fewer felonies per 40,000 residents each year in neighborhoods with high NYRP activity compared with similar neighborhoods with no NYRP activity.



Safer because social infrastructure, like NYRP community gardens, creates powerful community bonds, collaboration, and communication between residents. In October 2018, NYRP hosted Eric Klinenberg and Amanda Parsons at our annual thought-leadership event, Gothamitis, to discuss Klinenberg's new book "Palaces for the People," which promotes the idea of greater investment in social infrastructure to make communities more resilient and safe.





Safer because NYRP community gardens can actually save lives. Essex Street Community Garden, which celebrated its grand re-opening in June 2018, has solar power, providing off-the-grid electricity for the thousands of residents that live nearby (this is especially important in an emergency, such as a flood or power outage).



Safer because removing signs of disorder and renovating green, open space demonstrates care, letting residents know their community is valued. In 2018, NYRP fully renovated Fannie's Garden at Paradise on Earth in the Bronx, and celebrated its grand reopening with over 700 neighborhood residents participating in arts and crafts, an exercise class, dancing, and a screening of The Lego Batman Movie on the new open lawn.

## HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES



Healthier because NYRP community gardens help families and neighbors eat healthy meals. In 2018, an estimated 89,000 pounds (44.5 tons) of fruits and vegetables were grown in 40 of NYRP's 52 gardens, supplementing families' summer tables with organic produce.





Healthier because NYRP community gardens create an atmosphere where people can share their knowledge about tree care, urban ecology, composting, and healthy cooking. In 2018, 32 regional garden workshops throughout the five boroughs attracted over 1,100 participants.



Healthier because NYRP community gardens improve the physical and mental health of New Yorkers. Over 1,000 residents came out in 2018 to participate in 100 free health and fitness events, including Zumba, African Dance, and Yoga classes offered in five parks and gardens.



Healthier because NYRP's environmental education programs create awareness and resilience among the city's children. In 2018, NYRP educated nearly 10,000 K–8th grade students from 47 schools about urban ecosystems, nutrition, nature, and the environment.



# HAPPIER COMMUNITIES



Happier because NYRP spaces serve the needs of neighborhood residents. Last year, we hosted 58 free performances, cultural and musical events, and movie nights in 20 community gardens citywide and Sherman Creek Park, reaching over 5,500 New Yorkers.



Happier because increasing the urban tree canopy improves mental health. In 2018, NYRP held 35 tree giveaway events encouraging people to plant over 5,000 trees on privately owned land, and we stewarded 6,300 trees citywide on public land, including street trees, park trees, and trees planted in schoolyards and on New York City Housing Authority property.



Happier because NYRP promotes awareness about neighborhood green open space. In 2018, we encouraged residents in East Harlem and the South Bronx to seek out and use public gardens and parks, including Randall's Island Park, through a bilingual wayfinding campaign that included 14 banners hung on New York City Housing Authority campus perimeters, 3,000 postcards, 300 stickers, and dozens of walking tours.





Happier because our restoration efforts beautify the urban landscape and create welcoming open spaces for all city residents. In 2018, we cleaned up and improved Highbridge Park in Northern Manhattan by planting 2,259 trees, 1,034 shrubs, and 850 native perennials while removing invasive species throughout the Laurel Hill and Fort George sections of the park.



Happier because our investments make communities more environmentally and socially resilient. In 2018, NYRP cleaned and maintained all 52 of our community gardens throughout the five boroughs, and implemented upgrades for 16 of those gardens.



Happier because removing garbage and dangerous debris opens community spaces to serve residents' needs. In 2018, NYRP built, developed, and renovated 26 "Gardens for the City" sites, including seven New York City Department of Education school grounds. Projects included building and installing garden beds, pruning and caring for trees, donating garden materials (woodchips, soil, etc.), cleaning unkempt lots, painting tables and benches, and other related projects.



# HISTORY AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Founded by Bette Midler in 1995, New York Restoration Project has greened, cleaned, and greatly improved New York City.

Some historical highlights follow below:

- **Acquired and run 52 community gardens** in all five boroughs of New York City to save them from commercial development.
- **Revitalized more than 400 acres of public land** throughout New York City.
- **Co-led MillionTreesNYC** with the New York City Parks Department, planting 250,000 of the million trees, and reaching our million tree goal two years ahead of schedule.
- **Planted over 350,000 trees (including the 250,000 from MillionTreesNYC), 19,000 shrubs, 135,000 plants, and 56,000 bulbs** throughout parks, community gardens, NYCHA campuses, schools, and other public spaces citywide.
- **Gave away 65,000 trees** to New York City residents to plant on privately-owned land.
- **Renovated and upgraded over 300 community sites** in the least green and most economically depressed and underserved neighborhoods of New York City.
- **Transformed four city parks** – Fort Tryon, Fort Washington, Highbridge, and Sherman Creek. For example, we transformed Sherman Creek Park, previously a five-acre dumping ground on the Harlem River, which now features an urban forest, a children's garden, a saltwater marsh, and rowing on the river.
- **Educated more than 60,000 K-8th grade school children** about ecology, nutrition, nature, and the environment using our community gardens and parks as outdoor classrooms.
- **Entertained over 22,500 attendees** through our arts, culture, and fitness programs.
- **Removed over 5,075,000 pounds of trash** from highways, abandoned lots, gardens, and parks.
- **Diverted 973,000 pounds of food scraps** from the waste stream through composting.

**What NYRP has done to date is unprecedented.** We have transformed New York City's urban landscape so that it is greener, more accessible and usable, and healthier for the millions of New York City residents. This is especially true for those residents of economically depressed, underserved neighborhoods throughout the five boroughs, where nearly all of our community gardens and parks are located. We turned land liabilities into community assets.

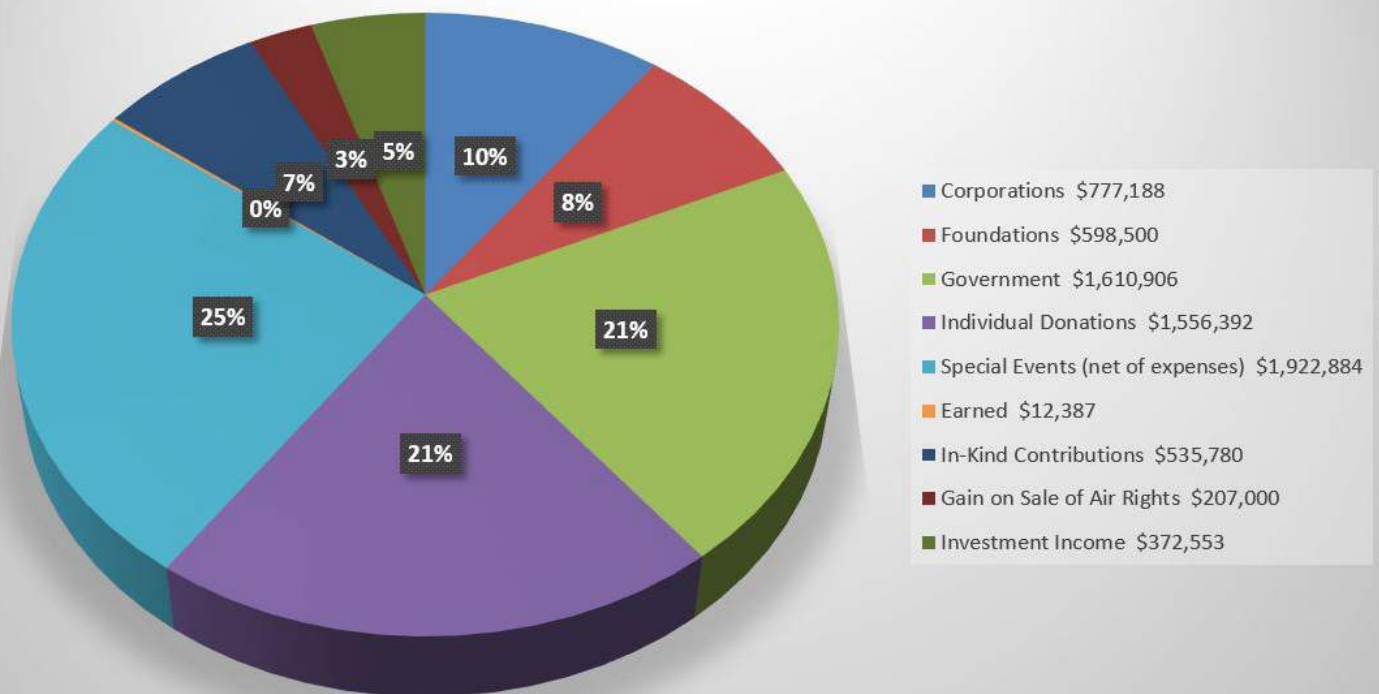


# FINANCIALS

OCTOBER 1, 2017 — SEPTEMBER 30, 2018

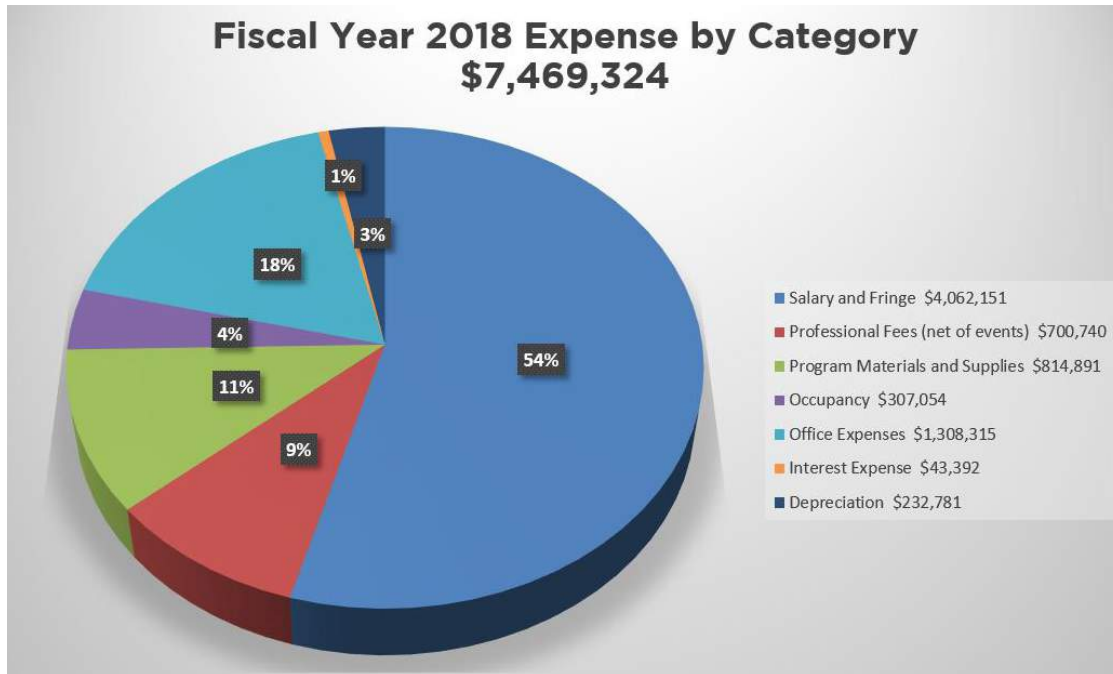
## FY 2018 REVENUE BY SOURCE

Fiscal Year 2018 Revenue - \$7,593,590

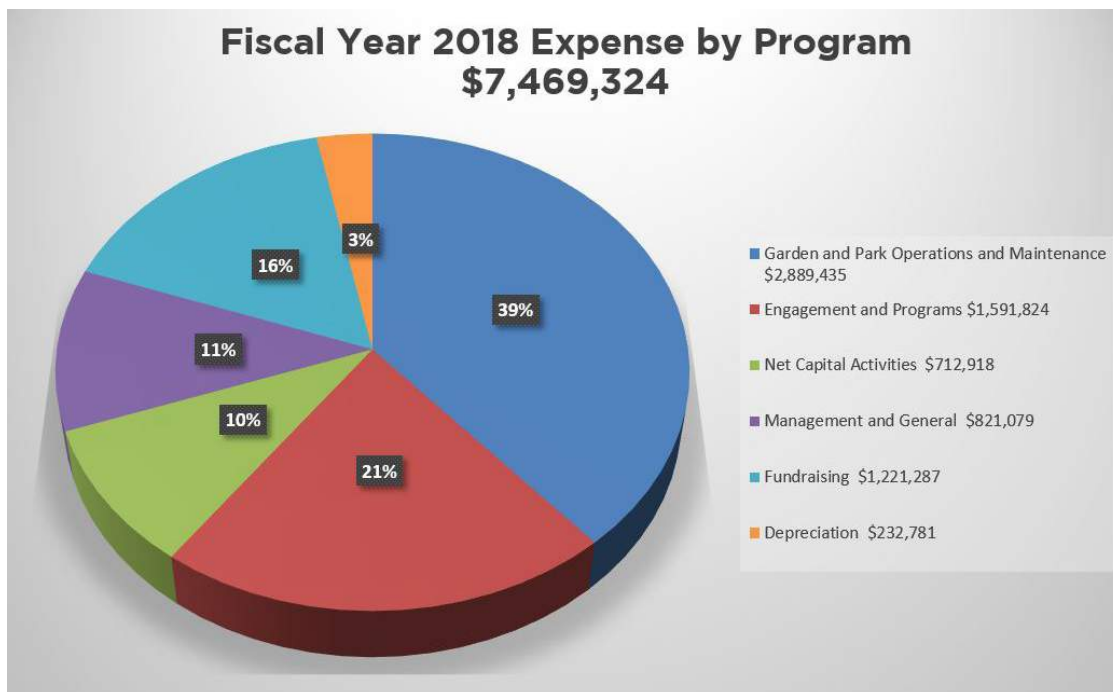




## FY 2018 EXPENSE BY CATEGORY



## FY 2018 EXPENSE BY PROGRAM





# DONORS



NYC Council Member Rafael Espinal, Lance Le Pere, NYRP Board Member Michael Kors, NYRP Founder Bette Midler, Sheila Yappow, and NYRP Executive Director Deborah Marton at the Essex Street Community Garden Opening.



Clyde Brownstone, Bette Midler, Diane Brownstone, and Jennifer Brownstone at Spring Picnic 2018. Photo: Mia McDonald



NYRP Board Members Darcy Stacom and Todd DeGarmo at Spring Picnic 2018. Photo: Mia McDonald



Wynton Marsalis, Honoree Mica Ertegun, and Bette Midler at Hulaween 2018. Photo: Mia McDonald



NYRP Board Member Sophie von Haselberg at Hulaween 2018. Photo: Mia McDonald



Queens Center for Progress staff, Home Depot employees including Rich Gess (retired), and NYRP's Deborah Marton prepare to cut the ribbon to mark the official opening of the Giving Garden in Queens.





NYRP's Director of Northern Manhattan Parks Jason Smith, Bloomberg Philanthropies Global Head of Philanthropy and Engagement Nanette Smith, and Deborah Marton at the Welcome Garden in Highbridge Park during a volunteer event.



Goldman Sachs employees during a volunteer day at Highbridge Park in Northern Manhattan.

# FY 2018 FUNDERS

## OCTOBER 1, 2017 — SEPTEMBER 30, 2018

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 The David Geffen Foundation  
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New York State Department of Environmental  
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New York State Energy, Research, and Development  
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New York State Environmental Protection Fund

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Michael Kors and Lance Le Pere  
Shelly and Tony Malkin  
Bette Midler and Martin von Haselberg  
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