

CITY PARK CONSERVANCY FAQs

WHY IS NEW ORLEANS CITY PARK TRANSITIONING TO A NONPROFIT OPERATOR MODEL?

City Park is one of the most notable parks in the nation. Yet unlike other parks of similar stature, it receives only a small portion of its operating budget from the city and state, and the rest is self-generated. With the current infrastructure, it is limited in its ability to fundraise or to qualify for certain government grant programs, such as the recent Covid-related Payroll Protection Plan (PPP), that benefitted nonprofits. Additionally, under the current arrangement, the Park depends on other organizations, such as the Botanical Garden Foundation and Friends of City Park, to fundraise on its behalf. This causes confusion for donors and sponsors. With a nonprofit conservancy operator, City Park can raise additional funds to staff, maintain and create programming in the Park that benefits our increasing number of visitors in a more efficient manner.

WHEN WILL THE TRANSITION TAKE PLACE?

We expect to fully transition all operations to City Park Conservancy in Fall 2022.

WHY NOW?

In 1989, the state legislature approved the use of a 501c3 conservancy model for the management and operations of New Orleans City Park. The Park initiated a nonprofit called PEPCO but did not complete fully moving operations to the entity. The City Park Improvement Association (CPIA) has consistently revisited the importance of this issue. The recent impacts of the pandemic and Hurricane Ida highlighted the need for diversified funding sources.

WHAT IS A PARK CONSERVANCY?

Conservancies are private, nonprofit park-benefit organizations that raise money independent of the government agency that owns the land and spend it under a plan of action mutually agreed upon with the government agency. The government agency retains ultimate authority over everything that happens there. ¹Signature parks throughout the nation are managed through a conservancy model, including Central Park, Piedmont Park, Golden Gate Park, Millennium Park, and Boston Commons.

HOW WILL IT WORK?

The City Park Improvement Association (CPIA), a state agency, remains the ultimate operator of the Park. The newly formed City Park Conservancy will have a long-term contract with CPIA to operate the Park, which will include a master plan, and guarantees of transparency. Each organization will have a unique board of directors to ensure the highest standards of care and accountability.

WHAT HAPPENS TO CITY PARK EMPLOYEES?

New Orleans City Park employees will become employees of the new City Park Conservancy (CPC) organization. CPC employees will continue to receive benefits such as retirement benefit matching program; health, vision and dental insurance; discounts to park attractions and events; and a generous paid time off (PTO) package.

WHAT ABOUT FRIENDS OF CITY PARK?

Friends of City Park (FOCP) is a 501c3 nonprofit that is a separate entity from City Park. Historically, it has served to support and recruit the City Park membership base. It had no operational or management purview of City Park. FOCP has approved an agreement to merge with City Park Conservancy (CPC)..

WHAT ABOUT THE BOTANICAL GARDEN FOUNDATION?

The Botanical Garden Foundation is a 501c3 nonprofit that is a separate entity from City Park. It is a fundraising organization that raises funds through events strictly for the care of New Orleans City Park Botanical Garden. It has no operational or management purview of the Botanical Garden.

ARE YOU PRIVITIZING THE PARK?

No. The City Park Improvement Association (CPIA) still oversees City Park on behalf of the State of Louisiana. It is simply reorganizing its assets and staff to the new 501c3 affiliate to best serve the Park, particularly as it relates to fundraising. CPIA meetings remain open to the public, and plans for the Park, such as the master plan, will continue to be informed by public opinion.

WILL THIS AFFECT THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE, ANNUAL EVENTS OR PARK AMENITIES, SUCH AS STORYLAND AND BAYOU OAKS GOLF?

On the contrary, City Park Conservancy (CPC) will be able to directly raise funds to physically maintain and staff the Park along with creating programming so that visitors will feel welcome, relaxed, and safe in the green space that is our collective backyard. In its new role as a nonprofit, CPC will be better positioned to improve the visitor experience and day-to-day care of the Park in partnership with CPIA. Park events and amenities that people have come to know and love will continue as they always have.

HOW WILL THIS AFFECT MILLAGE AND STATE REVENUES EARMARKED FOR CITY PARK?

Funding from state and city sources will still flow to the Park through the City Park Improvement Association (CPIA), which will disperse the money to City Park Conservancy (CPC) for the Park's operation, staffing, maintenance and programming consistent with the intent of the millage and other revenue sources.

