



**Media Contact:**

Keith Claverie

[kclaverie@nocp.org](mailto:kclaverie@nocp.org)

(504) 483-1700

**NEW ORLEANS CITY PARK ANNOUNCES TRANSITION TO A NONPROFIT OPERATOR MODEL**

*The conservancy model will support City Park's services and future plans*

NEW ORLEANS (August 26, 2022) – The City Park Improvement Association voted this week to approve a long-term agreement with the newly formed 501(c)3 nonprofit, City Park Conservancy, that will follow a governance model used nationwide to streamline management, operations, programming, membership, and fundraising for the betterment of City Park. The creation of City Park Conservancy elevates City Park with other signature parks throughout the nation, including Central Park in New York City, Millennium Park in Chicago, and Boston Commons.

“This is an exciting next step in the Park’s journey and critical to improving the Park and its forthcoming new master plan, which will be grounded in public input and focused on serving the greater good,” said City Park CEO Cara Lambright. “We are thrilled to put the Park on par with the best parks in the world with this streamlined structure and proven model for resourcing greenspaces, programming and the community.”

City Park Conservancy will operate according to a cooperative endeavor agreement with the Improvement Association to operate and manage the Park. The agreement ensures transparency and accountability through multiple measures including an approved, publicly informed master plan, a strategic plan, and an annual operating budget.

“The City Park Improvement Association and its Commissioners have made huge strides over the years in creating a world-class Park, and this transition has been a long-contemplated improvement to better serve Park users and the community,” said David Waller, CPIA chairman. “We are delighted that the Conservancy will help us improve our care for this Park and the people it serves.”

In addition to the City Park Improvement Association and City Park Conservancy boards, the process of formulating the cooperative endeavor agreement involved the participation of four different law firms and an auditing firm. The governance and oversight role of City Park Improvement Association does not change with this agreement, and it continues to ensure that the public is served, and management is consistently guided by what is best for City Park.

State lawmakers approved City Park contracting management and operations of the Park to a nonprofit in 1989, and City Park Improvement Association has consistently revisited the importance of this opportunity. The recent impacts of the pandemic and Hurricane Ida highlighted the pressures on the Park’s financial resources and the need for diversified funding sources. This, combined with CEO Lambright’s vision for improving the Park and extensive experience in fundraising and the conservancy model, clarified that it was time to move to this nationally recognized best practice model of park management.

“It is an honor to launch the Conservancy,” said Liz Sloss, inaugural chair of the City Park Conservancy Board of Directors. “As a steward of this magnificent Park, providing for its continued operation and sustainability is our highest and most important role. The conservancy model does just that.” Friends of City Park, a nonprofit organization that has supported the Park since 1979, has approved an agreement to merge with City Park Conservancy, bringing fundraising, membership, and programming under City Park Conservancy management. This merger will combine resources under one strategic plan, maximize dollars for the Park by reducing overlap in operations and align initiatives to better deliver services and Park user experience. The Friends of City Park Membership program, along with other programs that Park users have come to know and love, will continue.

Premier urban parks throughout the country rely on the conservancy model, which is a public-private partnership, to create vibrant and thriving public spaces. The public-private partnerships between the City Park Improvement Association and City Park Conservancy will ensure best practice management of City Park and support the Park’s vital connection to the community. The Improvement Association retains ultimate authority over the Park. Both City Park Improvement Association and City Park Conservancy will maintain unique boards of directors to ensure the highest standards of transparency and accountability.

As Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer for Memorial Park Conservancy in Houston, Lambright overhauled the operations of one of the nation’s largest urban parks, as part of the development and execution of a nationally recognized master plan, quadrupling the park’s annual operating budget, and raising over \$200 million for capital improvements. The upcoming master plan for City Park will be rooted in addressing community needs, deepening its historical and cultural context, improving environmental resiliency and infrastructure, and creating a dynamic and enduring sense of place for the region.

The master planning process is anticipated to launch in 2023 and will support a robust and inclusive public engagement process, rigorous scientific and usage studies, and procuring the services of a landscape architecture firm that will listen to the public to improve the unique urban ecology and create a visionary plan for the next 100 years at New Orleans City Park.

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**About New Orleans City Park:**

For over 170 years, New Orleans City Park has provided access to abundant natural and cultural resources to residents of the region and visitors from around the world. The Park’s 1,400 acres make it one of the largest urban parks in the United States. City Park is a popular place to fish on the bayou, picnic, experience safe outdoor play, or engage in athletic pursuits—as evidenced by more than 3.2 million unique visits each year. City Park’s annual operating budget is largely derived from self-generated activities. The COVID-19 pandemic and Hurricane Ida, which significantly affected revenue-generating facilities due to restriction closures, highlighted the vital importance of diversifying revenue streams. Through these challenges, the Park’s walking trails, urban forest, and open spaces continue to be a respite to the public. To learn more about the Park and to contribute to Park operations, visit [NewOrleansCityPark.com](https://www.neworleanscitypark.com).