

# 2025 YEAR IN REVIEW

In 2025, Fairmount Park Conservancy ushered in a new era for our parks with the announcement of Fair Play – the first-ever comprehensive campaign to invest in healthy infrastructure, public programs, and lasting resources for Philadelphia parks.

These same priorities shaped our activities throughout the entire year. Together we completed multiple capital projects, set new records in volunteerism, and welcomed new leadership to guide the Conservancy's ongoing innovation and investment in public parks.

As we embark on a new chapter, we remain committed to the programs, projects, and commitments at the heart of our mission to steward our parks and nurture our shared environment, cultural resources, and public health.



*Gateway to Play event at FDR Park*

## FDR PARK PLAN

The Conservancy and partners continued to make progress with the historic FDR Park Plan, a generational investment to protect and revitalize South Philadelphia's largest park.

In June, Fairmount Park Conservancy and partners cut the ribbon to officially open the Gateway Plaza in South Philadelphia's FDR Park. The new plaza features custom benches, bike racks, water misters, rain gardens, and a colorful six-foot-tall sign that makes the park more visible at the busy intersection of Broad St. and Pattison Ave. The space also includes new trees and thousands of new perennials, grasses, and ferns selected for their climate resiliency and collective biodiversity. Gateway Plaza is now the perfect place for pedestrians, transit users, and cyclists to begin their FDR Park adventure.

The Conservancy also completed the construction of the FDR Park Welcome Center, an adaptive reuse of the park's historic guardhouse and stables. The park's first-ever Welcome Center is LEED Gold certified and features public restrooms, an open-air courtyard designed for food and beverage concessions and events, community meeting spaces, park offices, and an information center.



*FDR Park Welcome Center*

### JOHNNY SAMPLE RECREATION CENTER

In the fall, the Conservancy completed the renovation of the Johnny Sample Recreation Center, a Rebuild-funded project to bring new life and function to the Cobbs Creek Park facility in West Philadelphia. The upgrades achieved LEED Gold certification and included a new two-story construction, a renovated basketball gymnasium, new multipurpose and fitness rooms, ADA accessibility upgrades, and new lighting.

The project also included landscape upgrades based on community feedback. In September, the Conservancy and Rebuild led a community-supported effort to plant 2,000 native grasses and flowers throughout the recreation center grounds. This project drew on the expertise and efforts of our Capital Projects, Land Care, and Volunteer Program teams, who worked together to mobilize volunteers, enhance green spaces, and create a welcoming place for neighbors of all ages to gather, play, and connect.



*Community planting at Johnny Sample Recreation Center*



*Community planting at Johnny Sample Recreation Center*

### WEST FAIRMOUNT PARK

In West Fairmount Park, the Conservancy released new designs for the historic John Welsh Memorial Fountain and surrounding landscapes. This project envisions a restored fountain surrounded by welcoming spaces for play, learning, art, and relaxation. Informed by extensive community input, the plans for the Welsh Fountain Garden also improve pedestrian access, highlight the adjoining Parkside neighborhood's cultural history, and strengthen the landscape with resilient native plantings.

Also in West Fairmount Park, the Conservancy worked with Philadelphia Parks & Recreation and the Belmont Plateau Trails Alliance to perform critical maintenance on the Trolley Trail. This work included removing invasive plants from the path, re-positioning and adding trail blazes, and repairing several wooden bridges.



*John Welsh Memorial Fountain rendering*



*Trolley Trail bridge repair*

## CONSERVATION

The Conservancy's historic preservation team continued to bring their award-winning expertise to maintaining and restoring the historic character of Philadelphia's landmark park structures. At Lemon Hill Mansion, the team completed the meticulous restoration of 23 of the house's original windows. Each window was carefully removed and taken to the workshop for deglazing, repair, reglazing, and repainting before being reinstalled with new weather stripping to ensure proper operation. This conservation work will help protect the 225-year-old mansion's history for generations to come.

The Conservation team also shared their expertise with the public in multiple forums over the last year, leading workshops for homeowners in Strawberry Mansion and Parkside and hosting a tour of Ohio House's award-winning restoration for members of the Preservation Alliance of Greater Philadelphia.



*Lemon Hill Mansion window restoration*



*Love Your Park Fall at Gorgas Park*

## LOVE YOUR PARK

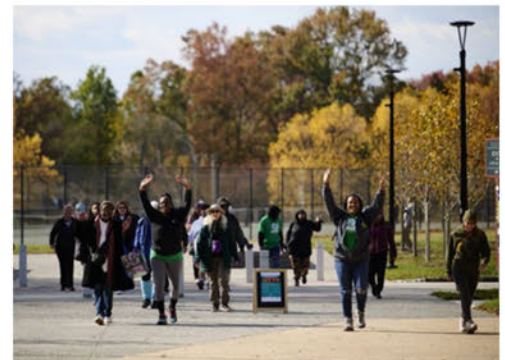
Every spring and fall, the Conservancy partners with Philadelphia Parks & Recreation and Park Friends Groups to organize a city-wide park cleanup called Love Your Park. Over 100 parks participate, and each season's mobilization has a "signature site." This year partners and volunteers teamed up with the Friends of Carroll Park in West Philadelphia to host a spring Love Your Park celebration and take on simultaneous park maintenance projects – and worked with the Friends of Gorgas Park in Roxborough for a special fall Love Your Park event with tree plantings, garden care, and more.

In 2025, a record-setting 4,040 Love Your Park volunteers planted 344 trees and 10,260 flower bulbs, removed 1,307 bags of trash, and collected 3,981 bags of leaves and organic debris for composting.

## WE WALK PHL

After expanding by 50% in 2024, the popular citywide We Walk PHL program kept up the pace throughout 2025, offering 28 locations for free weekly group walks in the spring and fall. To complement the walk seasons, partners hosted pop-up walks and wellness events in the winter and summer seasons as well. In November, We Walk PHL wrapped up the year with an end-of-season "We Walk, We Dance, We Bike, We Boat" celebration with several recreational activities in FDR Park.

We Walk PHL is a partnership with Philadelphia Parks & Recreation and the Philadelphia Department of Public Health. Since launching in 2017, We Walk PHL has logged over 3,000 walks!



*We Walk, We Dance, We Bike, We Boat celebration*



## URBAN CANOPY CARE

Our Land Care team continued to work closely with partners to implement and advance tree planting projects in alignment with the goals of the Philly Tree Plan. Collectively, through the work of our Land Care team and volunteers, the Conservancy planted 1,409 trees and 498 shrubs in East and West Fairmount Park, FDR Park, Cobbs Creek Park, and in the neighborhood parks that participated in Love Your Park.

## PROGRAMS AND ACTIVATIONS

Throughout 2025, the Conservancy offered free and low-cost programs designed to bring people together and encourage Philadelphians to enjoy their parks in new ways.

New this year, many Conservancy programs followed a regular monthly schedule, making these opportunities easier for participants to plan for and remember. From Second Saturday hikes to Wellness Wednesday meditations, the Conservancy and partners had something for everyone!

In total, over 8,700 people attended the 81 program events that the Conservancy organized. Sixty percent of programs were completely free, and 70% of our program partners were minority and women-owned businesses.



West Park Family Field Day



Gran Fiesta de los Muertos

## “PLAYING IT FORWARD” FOR PHILLY PARKS

A major highlight this year was the public launch of the Fair Play Campaign – a transformative fundraising campaign to strengthen Philadelphia’s greatest asset: our city’s parks and the communities they serve. Through this campaign the Conservancy will raise over \$100 million dollars to serve as a financial catalyst for our long-term vision of creating healthy park infrastructure, expanding our public programs, and preparing our organization for the future.

The campaign kicked off at our Gateway to Play Celebration in FDR Park in June, where hundreds of people joined us for fun activities including youth-focused pop-up sport stations, paddle boating, food trucks, music, group walks and project tours, and the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Gateway Plaza.



## A NEW LEADER FOR OUR NEXT CHAPTER

In October, we welcomed Anthony “Tony” Sorrentino as the new Chief Executive Officer of the Conservancy. Tony is a respected leader with deep roots in civic engagement, urban planning, and strategic communications, bringing more than 25 years of experience advancing transformative initiatives across Philadelphia’s cultural, academic, and nonprofit sectors.

Tony’s proven ability to build partnerships, drive innovation, and embrace diverse stakeholders will be instrumental in advancing our mission to make Philadelphia’s parks accessible and relevant for all. These strengths position him well to guide the organization as it continues to grow into a model for inclusive, resilient, and vibrant public spaces.