



Reimagine Prospect Park



Prospect
Park
Alliance

A Community-Driven Vision for the
Rose Garden

MAY
2018

Project Team

Prospect Park Alliance is the non-profit organization that sustains “Brooklyn’s Backyard,” working in partnership with the City of New York. The Alliance was founded in 1987 to help restore the Park after a long period of deterioration and decline. Today, the Alliance provides critical staff and resources that keep the Park green and vibrant for the diverse communities that call Brooklyn home. The Alliance cares for the woodlands and natural areas, restores the Park’s buildings and landscapes, creates innovative Park destinations, and provides free or low-cost volunteer, education and recreation programs.

Hester Street is an urban planning, design and development nonprofit that works to ensure neighborhoods are shaped by the people who live in them. We offer planning, design and community development technical assistance to community-based organizations, government and other agencies. Our goal is equitable, sustainable and resilient neighborhoods and cities.

Grain Collective is a landscape architecture and urban design practice dedicated to a rich design and planning process that incorporates research and collaboration from varied professionals and stakeholders to create successful, aesthetically pleasing and experientially diverse environments.



GRAIN COLLECTIVE

Landscape Architecture | Urban Design | Community Planning

Reimagine Prospect Park is made possible through the generous support of the Altman Foundation.

Sources

Parks for All New Yorkers: Immigrants, Culture and NYC Parks; New Yorkers for Parks, 2008.
Rethinking Urban Parks: Public Space and Culture; by Setha Low, Dana Taplin, 2005.
Urban Parks as Community Places; by Mark Francis, University of California, Davis, 2006.

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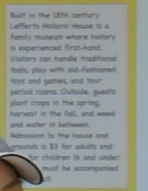
Welcome to the Children's Center



Auburn Center of the Bathhouse
Prospect Park Auburn Center of the Bathhouse, an historic New York City landmark, is a state-of-the-art facility dedicated to nature education and wildlife preservation. Surrounded by trails in areas of carefully restored natural habitat, the Auburn Center also houses the Park's Visitor Center, with an information desk, a cafe, and interpretive exhibits. Join us on our weekly Discovery Tour, bringing the museum's exhibits on wheels. Admission is Free.



Carousell
The Carousell is a great spot for kids—and adults! Take a ride back in time, to the golden age of carousel excitement, right in Brooklyn's landmark Prospect Park. The Carousell features 55 magnificently carved horses, lions, a griffin, a deer, and two dragon-headed chariots. This Carousell is one of the oldest in the world. Still accessible, it's a must-see! Admission is Free.



Historic House
Built in the 18th century, Lefferts Historic House is a family museum where history is experienced first-hand. Visitors can handle traditional tools, play with old-fashioned toys and games, and tour period rooms. Outside, guests' plant crops in the spring, harvest in the fall, and weed and water in between. Admission to the House and grounds is \$3 for adults and children 16 and under must be accompanied.



Prospect Park Zoo
At the Prospect Park Zoo, you can roam the lush garden meadows, and stroll through Discovery Trail, which dips across the farm, or inside to meet rhesus monkeys and our troop of Hamarayas baboons. The features more than 125 animals from around the world, including a Red Panda, and Gray Kangaroo. Discovery Trail, which dips across the farm, is a must-see! Admission is Free.

Where in Prospect Park is the Rose Garden?

The Rose Garden is located near the Lefferts Center of the Bathhouse. This garden is a beautiful area that can be used for programs, events, and more.

A small map showing the location of the Rose Garden within Prospect Park, near the Lefferts Center of the Bathhouse.

What do you want to do at Prospect Park?

Using sticky notes, tell us what types of activities, programs, and amenities are missing or that you want more of at Prospect Park.

| | | | | | |
|----------------------|-------|-------------------------|-------|----------------------------|-------|
| Amateur + Activities | 1 1 1 | Fitness + Recreation | 2 2 2 | Family Friendly Activities | 3 3 3 |
| Prospect Park Zoo | 1 1 1 | Lefferts Historic House | 1 1 1 | Carousell | 1 1 1 |
| Prospect Park Zoo | 1 1 1 | Lefferts Historic House | 1 1 1 | Carousell | 1 1 1 |

...figures out which ideas are most popular. You'll have an opportunity to sign up for updates on...



Letter from the President

Prospect Park is a cherished community destination. It is an oasis in the heart of a bustling city. Whether it is nature walks, ballgames, birdwatching, picnicking and barbecuing, running, or enjoying open-air concerts, there is something for everyone in the Park.

Importantly, Prospect Park is also one of the increasingly rare, truly democratic spaces where a wide variety of people of different nationalities, cultures, ethnicities, races and socio-economic backgrounds intermingle. As the Park advances and evolves to meet the community's needs, we are committed to nurturing a diverse audience and to supporting and encouraging its use by all.

Beginning in April 2017, Prospect Park Alliance, in collaboration with Hester Street and Grain Collective, gathered ideas and inspiration from thousands of community members and park users to create a collective vision for the area formerly known as the Rose Garden in the northeast corner of the Park.

We asked Brooklynites how this area could become a more vibrant place for all of Brooklyn's diverse communities at meetings and events in over 30 locations in the Park and adjacent neighborhoods.

Our efforts were targeted to include the many communities that use and border the Park—particularly communities of color, young people, low-income families and new immigrants. Reaching out in multiple languages, in varied formats and at local venues ensured that people whose voices are often missing from local decision-making helped shape the future of the Park.

What follows is a summary of the multi-phase process and the principles that will guide future development. It is the result of a community-driven vision for enhancing this area of the Park into a place that embraces nature and provides the surrounding communities an opportunity to gather, learn, play and discover.

We thank Hester Street, Grain Collective and the Altman Foundation—which provided the critical funding for this project—for their hard work and for being important collaborators in this process.



Sue Donoghue, President





I. Introduction

From April to December 2017, Prospect Park Alliance, in collaboration with Hester Street and Grain Collective engaged thousands of Brooklyn residents and Park users to collectively reimagine an area in the northeast section of the Park named the Rose Garden. The engagement approach aimed to be inclusive, community-driven and interactive to provide all of Brooklyn's diverse communities with the opportunity to give meaningful input. This report summarizes the two-phase process and guiding principles that will help cultivate a place that embraces nature and connects community members.

Context

The Rose Garden, pictured above, was envisioned as a children's playground in the Park's original design. In the 1920s, it was transformed into a popular tropical garden with fountains. Currently, the area has no roses or fountains, but maintains a quiet and bucolic ambiance compared to many busier places in the Park.

Reimagine Prospect Park is part of a targeted effort by the Alliance to improve access and infrastructure in the northeast section of the Park.

Related Alliance projects include: the Vale of Cashmere woodlands restoration, pathway repairs and new entrances and streetscape improvements along Flatbush Avenue. Any new programs, activities and improvements will complement these projects.

It is important to remember that the northeast section of the Park is home to some of Brooklyn's oldest native trees. It is also a stop for hundreds of migratory bird species. The Alliance will consider these two key features, the ecology of the Park and a balance of uses across the Park as a whole.

The Alliance is already planning basic improvements to the northeast section of the Park such as increased lighting, pathway improvements and signage. Implementation of the vision will go beyond these improvements to create a truly unique and special place in the Park.

Outreach Goals

- Create a community-driven vision for the Rose Garden site
- Be inclusive and expansive - engage hard to reach Park users and neighbors
- Build awareness, excitement and support for the project



Grand Army Plaza

Brooklyn Public Library

Rose Garden Site

Brooklyn Museum

Vale of Cashmere / Woodlands

New Entrance

Zucker Natural Exploration Area

Prospect Park Zoo

PROSPECT PARK

7TH AVENUE

PROSPECT PARK WEST

EASTERN PARKWAY

WASHINGTON AVENUE

FLATBUSH AVENUE

EMPIRE BOULEVARD

OCEAN AVENUE

FLATBUSH AVENUE

PROSPECT PARK SOUTHWEST

PARKSIDE AVENUE

CATON AVENUE



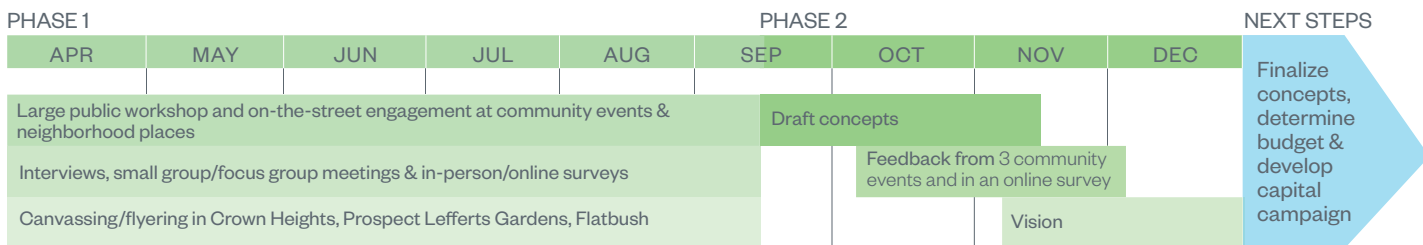


II. Process

The Reimagine Prospect Park team deployed a variety of interactive, qualitative and quantitative engagement tools designed to provide users with the inspiration and information needed to give meaningful input about the future of the site. The project was carried out in two phases:



Timeline





Guiding Principles

The community-driven vision for the Rose Garden site is informed by Guiding Principles.

The Guiding Principles were developed by community members and the Alliance to ensure that future development and improvement efforts are founded in key community priorities, as well as site and feasibility factors.

The Alliance is committed to using these principles to guide the project through design, construction and implementation to ensure that the reimagined place captures and reflects community needs and desires.

Preserve & Enhance

The renovation will preserve the character of the area, while seeking authentic and innovative ways to interpret and represent the Park's natural design.

Inclusive, Equitable & Inviting

Features and programs will be designed to be reflective of, welcoming to and accessible for a broad array of Brooklyn's diverse communities.

Feasible & Maintainable

Features and programs must be designed to be viable in terms of construction costs, maintenance and upkeep, as well as existing site conditions and constraints.

Community Input & Need

Programs and spaces will prioritize ongoing community input and identified needs.

Reflective & Specific

Features and programs will consider the specificity of the Rose Garden's location on the east side of the Park, and recognize the history and character of adjacent communities including Flatbush, Prospect Lefferts Gardens and Crown Heights.

Balance

New features and programs must balance the Park's ecology and landscape and breadth of existing activities.

Engagement Approach

The Reimagine Prospect Park engagement approach was:

Inclusive and Equitable

Targeted outreach efforts reached communities adjacent to the Rose Garden. Through events and canvassing in and around the Park, voices of low-income communities of color, young people, non-English speakers, new immigrants and working families were included in the process. All materials were translated into Spanish and Haitian Creole. Events included childcare and children’s activities. Input was gathered both in and out of the Park, at varying times of the day on both weekends and weekdays to capture the broadest possible audience.



Community-Driven

The project team partnered with community-based organizations, faith-based institutions, educational institutions, small businesses, social service providers and arts and cultural institutions on outreach and engagement to reach a diverse group. The project team convened workshops and focus groups, and attended dozens of community events.



Interactive & Innovative

Community input, coupled with existing site conditions and constraints, feasibility and funding opportunities, helped shape the vision for the area. The team created a fun, adaptable and accessible toolkit to gather feedback from users regardless of age or background. A mobile site model, survey, mobile display, video and walking tour were some of the components of an expansive outreach process.



Engagement at a Glance



The following institutions and partners helped inform engagement strategy, assisted with outreach and/or hosted the project team at workshops, focus groups and informal events:

Assembly Member Mosley, Blue Mango LLC, Brooklyn Academy of Science and the Environment, Brooklyn Borough President Adams, Brooklyn Community Foundation, Brooklyn Public Library (Flatbush, Central, Crown Heights), CAMBA, CaribBEING, Community Boards 8 & 9, Council Member Cumbo, Council Member Lander, Crown Heights Jewish Community Council, Fifth Avenue Committee, Medgar Evers College, Prospect Heights Neighborhood Development Council, Prospect Park Community Committee, St Paul’s Church and Sullivan-Ludlam-Stoddard Neighborhood Association



8%
of responses were from zip 11238

14%
of responses were from zip 11215

3%
of responses were from zip 11216

21%
of responses were from zip 11225

7%
of responses were from zip 11218

12%
of responses were from zip 11226

Rose Garden Site

1.3 miles south on Nostrand

1 mile east on Union

Legend

- Public Workshop
- Targeted Focus Groups
- Tabling & On-the-Street Events
- Selected Stakeholder Meetings
- Open Houses
- ▬ Canvassing & Flyering

Note: remaining 35% of responses came from other zip codes in NYC.



● Left: Public Workshop at Prospect Park Boathouse where small groups created vision collages for the site; Assembly Member Jo Anne Simon addressing one of the small groups



● Above: Tabling at LeFrak Center at Lakeside; participants gave ideas using programming stickers



● Right: Small group session with CAMBA staff at P.S. 92 using the mobile site model

● Right: Tabling at the Empire Parkside Street Festival

● Below: Open House at the Crown Heights Library



● Left: Focus group with local members of Caribbean communities at Brooklyn Public Library - Central Branch



III. What We Heard

Phase 1: Broad Input

In this phase the project team heard from 1,750 people through dozens of in-person events and online surveys. Broad input on likes, dislikes and priorities for the Rose Garden site were gathered. Users were also asked what their vision was for a reimagined place.

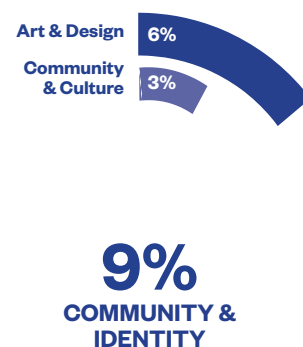
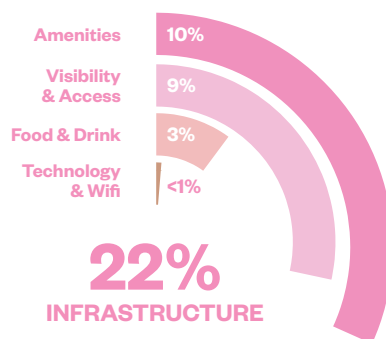
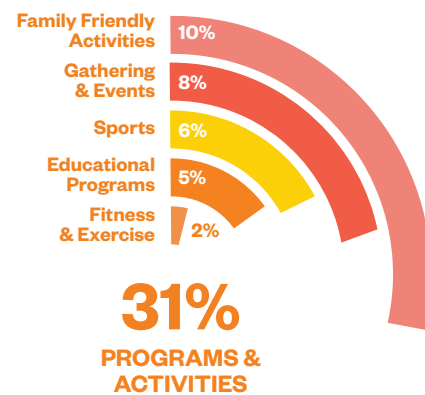
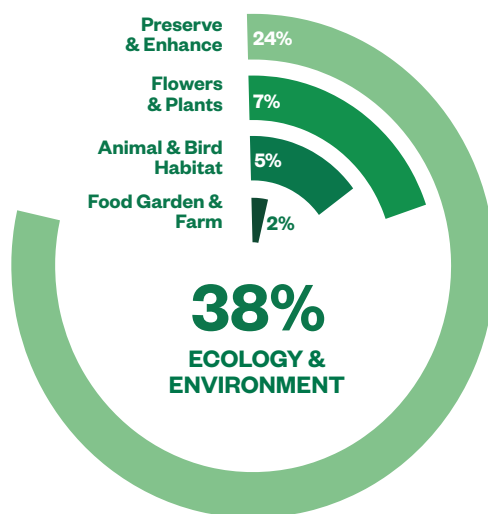
All ideas and comments collected were placed into four broad categories.

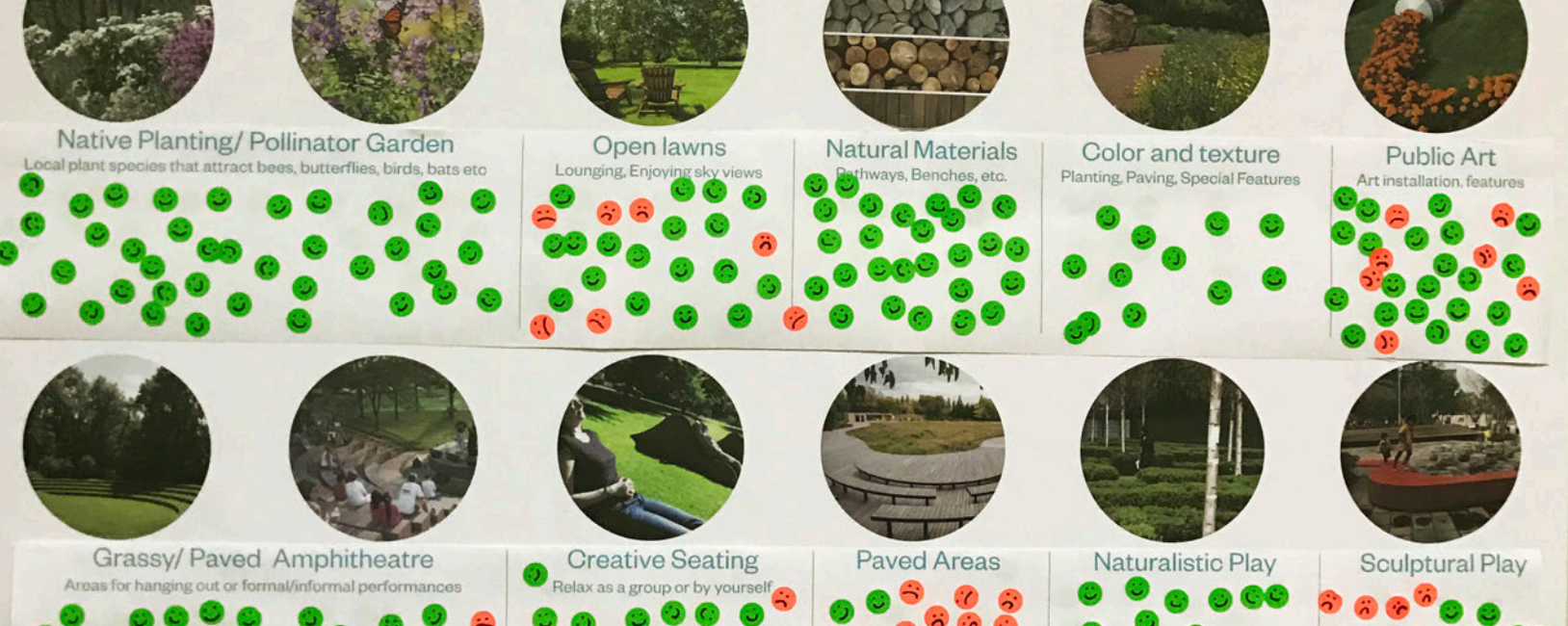
- Ecology and Environment
- Program and Activities
- Infrastructure
- Community and Identity

Each category was further broken down, helping to synthesize thousands of data points and uncover patterns on communities' priorities.

Priority Issues

1. **Preserve and enhance the place**
2. **Introduce programs and activities**
3. **Improve infrastructure with amenities, visibility and access**





Phase 2: Narrow Options

Phase 2 focused on using community input to narrow down potential concepts and elements for the reimagined place. The project team presented:

- Phase 1 findings
- Draft Guiding Principles
- Options for programs, look & feel, character and structures

Feedback was received from 250 park users at 3 community events and through an online survey.

An analysis of phase 2 community input served as the foundation of key conceptual elements for the vision.

LOOK & FEEL

Participants liked:



More green space & natural landscaping

Top 3 Likes



1. Native Planting & Pollinator Garden



2. Grassy Amphitheater



3. Natural Materials

Participants disliked:



Hardscape, paved areas & structural shapes

Top 3 Less Liked



1. Structural Play (does not include natural play features)



2. Paved Amphitheater



3. Paved Area

PROGRAMS

% breakdown per type

40%

Nature & Ecology

35%

Recreation

25%

Arts & Culture

Top 3 Choices



1. Nature Education



2. Performances & Screenings



3. History & Nature Walks

STRUCTURE

Participants were equally in favor of either a **small building, pavilion or comfort station** on the site.

Top 3 Examples Liked



1. Trellis



2. Buried Building



3. Cafe & Restaurant

USAGE

Almost half of participants are most likely to visit the reimagined place on the **weekend**

53% of participants are most likely to visit the redesigned space with **family**



Major Themes

Overall, engagement findings revealed a strong desire to preserve & enhance the site, as well as increase family-friendly activities, amenities, visibility & access. Major themes from community input are summarized below.



Current Conditions

Users identified the need for physical improvements and maintenance



Character

Users deeply appreciate the hidden location and existing character of the space



Preserve & Enhance

Strengthen and elevate the site as a restorative and natural place



Family-Friendly Activities & Gatherings

Provide programs and features to bring people together through play, recreation, celebration and appreciation of nature



Amenities, Visibility & Access

Introduce elements that will make the place more functional, comfortable and welcoming

IV. Vision

The vision embodies and amplifies community-identified priorities. It reimagines each of the Rose Garden's three existing empty concrete fountains and surrounding areas as a unique and distinct place informed by a concept. Collectively, these concepts can transform the entire place into an inviting and dynamic part of the Park where all of Brooklyn's diverse communities can connect, learn, play, contemplate and discover in a natural setting.



Contemplate & Discover

The reimagined place can preserve and enhance a sense of discovery, contemplation and wilderness. Nature can take center stage allowing for quiet enjoyment and repose.



Learn & Play

The redesigned site can be an inviting intergenerational space. A small building with comfort station, programs and amenities can provide a home base for the Park's northeast corner, complemented by active play features tucked into the wilderness that celebrate recreation in a natural setting.



Gather & Connect

The re-envisioned area can be a welcoming place for small community gatherings, intimate performances, picnics and casual gatherings with friends and family. Enhanced landscapes and flexible seating can create a comfortable place to gather and connect with nature and community.



Contemplate & Discover

“The beauty of the Rose Garden space is in its meditative and hidden nature. Keep its tender and restorative natural properties.”

“Ecologically minded plantings here will contribute to the rustic nature of Prospect Park.”

“This is where it is calm, where you can relax and its a great thinking spot.”

The re-envisioned area can include a meadow of wild and native plantings making it an idyllic place to discover the myriad birds, butterflies, insects, vegetation and other wildlife that inhabit the park. Interpretive panels may educate and inform visitors about local flora and fauna. Native plantings and flowers at the periphery can attract pollinators, bird species and add a band of natural color. Visitors can enjoy the restorative and meditative characteristics of nature.



Native Flowers & Plantings



Bird Watching



Local Plants that Attract Bees, Insects, Butterflies & Birds



Learn & Play

“ This area is a great space for programs on the planting and birds of Prospect Park. ”

“ We need more spaces in the Park for teens and young adults to play and chill out. ”

“ It would be great to have a small structure or gazebo where musicians like a string quartet might play to fit the serenity of the area. ”

A small structure may offer additional flexible space for nature education programs, refreshments, restrooms and meeting spaces. A potential multi-purpose space within the building can be used for a small cafe, community events, education. A natural play feature tucked within the trees can invite people of all ages to climb, play and explore the dense greenery from different heights. Outdoor areas can maintain the wild, organic feel of the place and encourage picnicking and nature exploration.



Climbing Feature Made Out of Natural Materials



Nature/Ecology Education



Small Building with Cafe/ Refreshments



Gather & Connect

A new entrance to Prospect Park along Flatbush Avenue will improve access and visibility to the site. Flexible seating options can provide opportunities for park visitors and neighbors to come together in a green open space to socialize in small groups, relax or enjoy an intimate performance in a natural setting.

“It’s a lovely area that lends itself to smaller gatherings but nothing too large.”

“I love the idea of adding community events that make all residents, particularly from the east side, welcome in the renovated area.”

“Improve access for diverse communities and reflect those communities’ histories in the space.”



Performances like Dance, Music, Poetry, Storytelling and Theater



Hanging Out on the Grass with Friends



Grassy Amphitheater



V. Conclusion

Next Steps

Prospect Park, Brooklyn's Backyard, is a natural oasis and a place for rest, recreation and connecting with family and friends. A rare and invaluable resource in our busy, crowded city, it is crucial that the Park welcomes and serves all populations.

Studies from around the country demonstrate that when renovating or constructing parks, public input from all communities is essential in ensuring an open process that considers and responds to the needs of all groups. This kind of process results in parks that better serve their users, as well as informed and engaged park users that feel better connected to their parks and larger communities.

Using interactive and varied engagement methods, holding events where communities gather (libraries, street fairs, block association meetings, community centers) and providing materials in multiple languages, Reimagine Prospect Park actively and intentionally incorporated the diverse voices of park goers, neighbors and community groups in order to develop an inclusive vision for the area formerly known as the Rose Garden.

Prospect Park Alliance is fostering a vision that reflects the needs and desires of community members on all sides of the Park. The Alliance will deploy this community-driven vision to gather the resources necessary to move the project forward. Next steps will include further refining concepts, determining a budget and developing a broader campaign for the Park.

This is a pivotal moment for the future of the Park. This much-loved, though less-used corner of the Park has the potential to be a vibrant gathering place that celebrates the best the Park has to offer. Community-driven guiding principles will ensure that the place continues to provide a sense of community and belonging to all that visit it, while celebrating the restorative and joyous qualities of nature.



Prospect Park Alliance is the non-profit organization that sustains, restores and advances Prospect Park, Brooklyn's Backyard, in partnership with the City. The Alliance was founded in 1987 to help restore the Park after a long period of deterioration and decline. Today, the Alliance provides critical staff and resources that keep the Park green and vibrant for the diverse communities that call Brooklyn home. The Alliance cares for the woodlands and natural areas, restores the Park's buildings and landscapes, creates innovative Park destinations, and provides volunteer, education and recreation programs. Prospect Park is one of Brooklyn's most treasured destinations with more than 10 million visits each year. Learn more at www.prospectpark.org.

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