



## GREAT URBAN PARKS CAMPAIGN CASE STUDIES:

# PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships allow the benefits of green infrastructure to extend beyond the project site and into the surrounding community, with potential for workforce development, staff training, and community engagement.

### Boone Park West – Atlanta

Due in part to its successful development and redevelopment of numerous projects in Atlanta, Park Pride was able to build on its existing partnerships to create a robust network of people and organizations involved with and interested in the future of Boone Park West and the Proctor Creek watershed that it occupies. Park Pride, a nonprofit that works with communities in Atlanta and DeKalb County to improve parks, and its partners are committed to using parks to encourage economic growth and opportunity within their neighborhoods.

The construction of Boone Park West is one element in the larger Proctor Creek North Avenue Green Infrastructure Vision that is using natural green spaces to reduce the polluted stormwater flooding that greatly impacts the community. When completed, the new \$3.6 million park will include rain gardens, constructed wetlands, and other green infrastructure features that will restore ecological functions within the area and reduce the negative impacts of flooding while improving water quality.

Executive director Michael Halicki says that Park Pride's approach is to build a sea of support for each project, welcoming all comers who want to be a part of the development whether they represent corporate, neighborhood, or workforce development interests. From the very beginning, the project was guided by a technical advisory committee which met monthly and included numerous partners from community, nonprofit, and governmental partners including: the Conservation Fund, the Greening Youth Founda-

**Our goal isn't a single park, it's about building a connected network of parks and open space that meets community needs beyond parks and recreation.**

—Michael Halicki, *Park & Pride*

tion, University Community Development Corporation, Proctor Creek Stewardship Council, Chattahoochee Riverkeeper, ECO-Action, Community Improvement Foundation, West Atlanta Watershed Alliance, and the City of Atlanta Departments of Parks & Recreation and Watershed Management. Through an ongoing partnership with The Conservation Fund in the Proctor Creek watershed, Park Pride was successful in acquiring critical parcels for inclusions in the park footprint.

The general public in and around Atlanta was made aware of the work at Boone Park West when WABE, Atlanta's NPR station, produced a three-part series on the current efforts to address stormwater and sewer capacity within the Proctor Creek watershed. Several state senators and representatives toured Boone Park West and learned about the potential for parks and green infrastructure as a path to community revitalization, sparking interest in green infrastructure projects as a tool for use in other parts of Georgia.

"The neighborhood we are working in for this green infrastructure project is in the English Avenue neighborhood, one of the poorest and highest crime areas in the city," ac-

cording to Halicki. In previous successful green infrastructure parks projects, Park Pride has focused on hiring youth from the community to work on the projects.

"We have been successful in workforce development by hiring youth from the community," Halicki says, and Park Pride is partnering with several community service organizations including the Greening Youth Foundation. They have several ideas going forward, according to Halicki, including one inspired by Tony Torrence of the Community Improvement Center to create a training center similar to Milwaukee's Urban Ecology Center. The Urban Ecology Center offers a variety of school programs and teacher training as part of the environmental education offerings. Park Pride is also working with Atlanta's Community Improvement Foundation to explore the feasibility of utilizing the training center as a way for young adults to continue training and education in green infrastructure, leading to potential future employment.

### **Montbello Open Space Park – Denver**

Environmental Learning for Kids (ELK) is constructing a brand-new, 4.5-acre park in the Montbello neighborhood that will convert a vacant lot into a natural open space and outdoor learning laboratory. This \$6 million dollar project, which includes an education center that will be ELK's new home, will provide essential assets for STEM education, environmental health and stewardship, public health, workforce readiness and career opportunities, and community engagement.

ELK's reputation as an inclusive, innovative nonprofit has allowed them to develop strong partnerships that lead to more successful projects. They were featured as the *Denver Post's* March 2017 nonprofit of the month and received a 2017 SHIFT Award from The Center for Jackson Hole for their Urban Ranger program, which provides educational experiences for more than 4,000 community youth and summer employment opportunities to eleven underserved and underrepresented youth from the Denver metropolitan area.

ELK's close relationship with the Denver Museum of Nature and Science includes the Museum hosting an annual fundraiser for ELK as well as a dedicated fundraiser for Montbello Open Space Park. This relationship developed out of the organizations' shared passion for community engagement, nature, science, and education. Since 2010, the Museum has

**Great partners can help a small nonprofit put together a high-quality project that gets noticed, which attracts additional partners (and funding).**

—Loretta Pineda, *Environmental Learning for Kids*

hosted the annual "ELK 'n Eggs Breakfast," which is ELK's largest fundraiser and offers a free breakfast for those who attend to learn about and support the organization.

Loretta Pineda, executive director of ELK, says that their partnership with The Trust for Public Land (TPL) was instrumental in accomplishing the early planning and design portions of the project. In addition to financial support, TPL was able to provide valuable technical assistance to help elicit community input and incorporate it into the project design. NRPA is a new partner that has given ELK an enormous boost to the next phase of the project.

Partnerships have also played into the design of the park. In the visioning statement ELK developed with the community, they emphasized the health of the park and the health of the community. This led them to consider how they could incorporate access to and from the directly adjacent Denver Health Medical Center in Montbello. There is hope that with specially designed access from the Center to the park, people and patients from the medical center will come to visit the park on a daily basis.

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This case study was written by Jennifer Henaghan, AICP, Deputy Research Director and Green Communities Center Manager at the American Planning Association.

Cover Image: Project partners take part in the October 2017 groundbreaking at Ambrose Kennedy Park. Credit: Parks & People Foundation

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