Imagine living in a neighborhood without a park. Your kids and grandkids don’t have a safe place to play. There is no beautiful greenspace to host outdoor community gatherings or family picnics. On top of that, imagine your neighborhood experiences devastating floods regularly.

The neighborhood described above was, unfortunately, Atlanta’s own English Avenue just a few years ago. However, due to the persistence of English Avenue residents combined with the support of Park Pride and dozens of partners, this neighborhood is experiencing a renewal, starting with greenspace.

English Avenue, situated within the Proctor Creek Watershed on Atlanta’s Westside, has long suffered from damaging combined-sewer overflows related to stormwater runoff, economic disinvestment, social and educational challenges, and a lack of greenspace.

However, on August 23rd, the community and partners (including Park Pride, The Conservation Fund, Chattahoochee Riverkeeper, and the City of Atlanta) gathered to break ground on a long-anticipated greenspace that will both mitigate flooding in the neighborhood and address the lack of access to parks. City of Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms presided over the dedication ceremony where she, along with Atlanta City Councilmember Ivory Lee Young, Jr. and Department of Parks and Recreation Commissioner Amy Phuong, revealed the official new name of the greenspace formerly known as Boone Park West—the Kathryn Johnston Memorial Park.

Kathryn Johnston Memorial Park is the third in a series of parks proposed in the Proctor Creek North Avenue Green Infrastructure Vision (Park Pride, 2010) to address stormwater runoff and create park space. The park is expected to manage up to 3.5 million gallons of stormwater per year, capturing runoff from adjacent streets and routing the water into a series of rain gardens, stormwater swales, and underground chambers. These features will clean and detain the stormwater, reducing flooding and sewer overflow events.

“While Kathryn Johnston Memorial Park will alleviate flooding,” explained Park Pride’s Director of Park Visioning, Andrew White, “it more importantly has...
the potential to become the heart of the English Avenue community.” In 2016, White and English Avenue leaders formed a steering committee of neighborhood residents to direct the creation of a park master plan through Park Pride’s Park Visioning Program. As the plan developed, hundreds of community members gave input. “This plan reflects what a community wants to see in their park, increasing the likelihood that the park will become a beloved greenspace.”

Tony Torrence, an English Avenue resident and Co-Chair of the Proctor Creek Stewardship Council, agrees. “For a project to truly be community-supported, residents must be at the table...” stated Torrence. “Community residents have been engaged every step of the way in developing the plans for this park.”

Additionally, area residents will participate in workforce training through a partnership with the Greening Youth Foundation and play a hands-on role in building the park.

The Kathryn Johnston Memorial Park also preserves a powerful legacy in Atlanta’s history of civil rights. In 2006, Kathryn Johnston, a 92-year-old grandmother, was tragically killed by members of the Atlanta Police Department in her English Avenue home. This park will preserve her memory and sacrifice, serving as a reminder to prevent future tragedies.

Once completed, the Kathryn Johnston Memorial Park will provide English Avenue residents a safe place to relax, exercise, play with their families, and meet their neighbors. In addition to the water retention amenities, the park will include a playground, fitness station, and open greenspace for pickup games of soccer or flying kites.

We look forward to sharing progress as the park moves toward completion and a ribbon-cutting celebration. Follow along on the Park Pride blog for updates: parkpride.org/news.

Community members and partners join Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms to break ground at Kathryn Johnston Memorial Park.

Spread the word: vote yes on 1!

This November, Georgians have the opportunity to create a dedicated source of funding to support clean water and state and local parks by voting YES on Amendment 1, the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Amendment.

By dedicating a portion of the existing sales and use tax on outdoor sporting goods, the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Amendment, or GOSA, is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to commit more than $200 million to land and water conservation over the next 10 years!

While 8-out-of-10 voters expressed support of GOSA in a recent poll, the fact remains that many voters are unaware that this ballot measure is awaiting their decision as they head to the polls to cast their ballot.

Do your part to support clean water and state and local parks this November.

Spread the word to vote YES on Amendment 1, the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Amendment!

Learn more at georgiaoutdoorstewardship.org.

1 Additional partners and funders that have played a key role in bringing Kathryn Johnston Memorial Park to fruition include: the City of Atlanta’s Departments of Parks and Recreation and Watershed Management, the City of Atlanta’s Office of Resilience, Invest Atlanta, the Proctor Creek Stewardship Council, English Avenue Neighborhood Association, the Coca-Cola Foundation, and the National Recreation & Parks Association (visit the Park Pride website for a full list of our valued partners and funders: bit.ly/kjmp2018).
Ten years ago, if you had asked me about the importance of the “built environment” on lifespan, I would have returned a blank stare. I didn't have any exposure to the kind of blight that, over time, weathers neighborhoods and can take years off your life.

Studies show that a person's lifespan is influenced more by their ZIP code than their genetic code. This is linked to the impact of several factors, including: lack of access to healthcare, community violence, presence of toxins and predatory businesses, and lack of educational and career opportunities. Any of these determinants in isolation would be stressful, but the combined impact on the body has been likened to a steady trickle of water hitting a sidewalk. A day’s worth of drops hardly hurts anything. A month’s worth of drops might discolor the concrete. But years of drops erodes the pavement. In the body, the steady drip of environmental blight at every turn can cause chronic illness, mental health issues, and disease.

This information begs the question: when the streets are lined with vacant houses, lots are overgrown by kudzu, trash is scattered everywhere, and the corner store is the only place to buy groceries—do parks even make a difference?

**They do.**

Parks can catalyze improvements in health and strengthen communities. When the Rev. James Orange Park received Park Pride's Legacy Grant in 2012, it spurred additional city investment that resulted in a new pool, splash pad, and playground. The residents coalesced around a shared vision of safety, family-friendly amenities, and preservation of nature that resulted in both improved health outcomes and a stronger community.

I offer this personal example as a call-to-action: get involved and activate your park—your health, and the health and happiness of your community, depend on it!

**Tips to Activate Your Park:**

- **Organize a volunteer day.** Volunteering keeps the environment clean and helps neighbors form relationships. If you’re pulling weeds, spreading mulch, or picking up trash, you’re getting a workout, too!

- **Walk with a doc.** Get your steps in by walking your park with a doctor. Forming a walking group strengthens the bonds between members and improves neighborhood safety with increased eyes on the park. You can also organize other community events that promote health, such as festivals, pick-up sports games, and more!

- **Plant a garden.** Community gardens provide nutritious vegetables and fruits to communities (especially significant to those in food deserts). They also connect neighbors over a shared interest and reduce social isolation.

- **Form a Friends of the Park group** with Park Pride and work towards installing park amenities through the Grant Programs that encourage healthy behaviors, such as fitness stations, basketball courts, or a walking track.
Friends of the Park Spotlight

Celebrating Community, Family, & Diversity at Sara J. González Park

"Parks live and breathe, and communities thrive where there are greenspaces and safe spaces for children to play and for communities to come together."

~ Isabel González Whitaker, Friends of Sara J. González Park

Ten years ago, Isabel González Whitaker was looking for a way to honor her mother, Sara J. González, a Cuban immigrant and leader for Georgia’s Hispanic community who had recently passed. Isabel discovered that Coronet Way Park—a park in Northwest Atlanta within walking distance of her mother’s neighborhood—was available for renaming.

The park, shaded by 100-year-old oak trees, was home only to a small, tired playground not fit for use by neighborhood children. Yet, Isabel saw potential; she imagined a new all-abilities playground, a soccer field, and an education nook. She dreamed of a space that would champion inclusivity of cultures, ages, and abilities.

Isabel worked to have the park renamed to Sara J. González Park, the first and only park in Georgia named in honor of a Latino. She formed the Friends of Sara J. González Park and, because she had ambitious plans, joined the Fiscal Partners Program to raise the funds needed to develop the park under Park Pride’s nonprofit status.

In 2017, Park Pride awarded the Friends of the Park group a Legacy Grant, which supported a comprehensive park redesign and several of the amenities of which Isabel dreamt. In total, Isabel and the Friends group have raised over $250,000 to bring their vision to life.

“It was so helpful to have a partner to walk through the forest with me,” Isabel stated. “Park Pride not only gave me the resources, but it also gave me guidance for something I knew nothing about.”

Thank you, Isabel and the Friends of Sara J. González Park, for being champions of inclusive parks and communities!

Your gift to Park Pride helps Friends of the Park groups, like the Friends of Sara J. González Park, activate the power of parks to strengthen communities. Please consider making a gift today to support Park Pride and the greener good of our city: parkpride.org/donate.
saying farewell:
ayanna williams
departs park pride
after 11 years

This fall, Ayanna Williams, Park Pride’s Director of Community Building, announced her departure from the organization after 11 years! It would be impossible to overstate Ayanna’s accomplishments with Park Pride. With a degree in social work and considerable community organizing experience, Ayanna made an impact from her first day.

She expanded Park Pride’s “Friend Raising” efforts and created our signature Friends of the Park Program, which has grown to over 100 groups engaged in improving parks and strengthening communities across Atlanta and DeKalb.

Ayanna has a gift for working with people. She is an active listener with a great talent for resolving conflict and an uncanny ability to transform naysayers and skeptics into advocates for neighborhood parks.

Although she will no longer be with Park Pride, Ayanna will continue to be an advocate for the greenspace movement as the Healthy Cities Director at The Nature Conservancy in Georgia.

We are so proud of the work that she’s accomplished over her years at Park Pride, and we are grateful for the legacy she will leave. Join us in thanking Ayanna for her contribution to parks and communities and wish her well on her new adventure!

Learn more about the Friends of the Park Program: parkpride.org/friends.

Empowering Volunteer Leaders
How to Build Sustainable Trails

As a resident of the Atlanta area, you don’t have to go far to feel miles away from urban life. Many parks, such as Cascade Springs Nature Preserve in Southwest Atlanta, Southside Park in South Atlanta, or Murphey Candler Park in Brookhaven, include natural walking trails that invite you to stroll at your leisure—or to grab your mountain bike for a ride!

A natural surface trail is a fantastic addition to any park, especially those with forests. Natural trails are affordable, protect the ecosystem from destruction caused by the heavy machinery required to lay pavement, and are gentle on your knees!

On September 22nd, Park Pride, in partnership with MTB Atlanta, offered a workshop to park enthusiasts on how to build sustainable trails. Veteran trail builder and educator, Walt Bready of MTB Atlanta, shared his expertise on the best practices of trail design before empowering the workshop attendees with some real trail building experience at the Outdoor Activity Center.

“Through workshops, Park Pride strives to equip Friends of the Park volunteers with the skills needed to take on a variety of park projects,” explained John Ahern, Park Pride’s Volunteer Manager. “When they have the confidence in their own abilities, they’ll lead their own projects and teach other volunteers. Then, there’s no limit to how much can be accomplished!”

If you’re interested in creating sustainable trails at your park, consider the steps below, adapted from IMBA’s Trail Solutions (bit.ly/imbatrails):

1. **Build support from within your community** for the trail project and talk to your city or county officials for initial permissions.
2. **Identify the park’s boundaries.** This is especially critical if working within a forested area where boundaries of the park are unclear.
3. **Identify points of interest** within the park that you’ll want to include along the trail, as well as areas to avoid.
4. **Create a “rough draft”** of the trail by walking and marking the route using accepted trail design standards (see IMBA Trail Solutions or SCA Lightly on the Land).
5. **Consult with Park Pride** to develop a construction plan and to fully understand your project requirements, and reconfirm all permissions with city or county officials.
6. **Rally volunteers** and begin construction!

Contact John Ahern, Volunteer Manager, with your park project questions (john@parkpride.org), and visit the Park Pride Calendar for information about upcoming workshops: parkpride.org/events.
According to the great urban activist and influencer, Jane Jacobs, for a park to be successful, it must “be where life swirls”—it must be the conduit for cultural and artistic expression for individuals and communities, a catalyst for healthy living, accessible to all, and designed for all. A well-activated and well-loved park enhances quality of life for individuals, families, and communities. A great park is a vibrant intersection, or the heart, of a community.

Next spring, as Park Pride celebrates its 30th anniversary, the Parks & Greenspace Conference will explore the power of parks to reflect culture, artistic expression, and the unique personality of a community, while equitably providing places to pursue healthy lives.

We invite you to save the conference date—March 25, 2019—and join the parks and greenspace community as we discuss these topics at length. As the largest event of its kind in the Southeast, this conference offers educational and inspirational opportunities for everyone, whether you’re a community member, a park designer, a government official, or an urban planning student.

We hope to see you there,

Jeff Ellman
Co-Chair, Parks & Greenspace Conference Planning Committee

Carlos Perez,
Co-Chair, Parks & Greenspace Conference Planning Committee

The Parks & Greenspace Conference and tours draw over 500 passionate park enthusiasts and professionals from the Southeast and across the country annually.

Sponsorship opportunities are available. Contact Jane Zoellick, Development Manager: jane@parkpride.org, 404-546-6855.

Park Pride is accepting presentation proposals for Parks are the Heart of Community. Deadline to submit: October 29th at parkpride.org/conference. Topics of interest include:

**Parks and the Arts**
How can we prioritize and encourage sustained investment in the arts within public parks? How can art initiatives remain community-driven and reflect each neighborhood’s creative imagination?

**Parks and Culture**
How can parks support cultural expression? How can parks increase neighborhood cohesion?

**Parks and Health**
What are the characteristics of parks and natural spaces that increase our well-being? How can programming encourage the use of parks to achieve healthier, safer communities?

**Parks and Equity**
What needs to happen to achieve equity in the design, creation, maintenance, and programming of our public parks? What strategies will ensure that parks support existing neighborhoods and their aspirations?
2018 Corporate Champions

Thank you to the following organizations for their extraordinary generosity in support of Park Pride's annual operating needs and programs!

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Become a Champion for Parks!

Please reach out to Jane Zoellick, Development Manager, to learn more. jane@parkpride.org or 404-546-6855.
A small but mighty group of volunteers—including Park Pride board member, Gwen Smith (left)—joined Park Pride for a Greener Good Volunteer Day at Constitution Lakes Park, powered by Invesco. Volunteers worked tirelessly to clear the park’s boardwalk of “alligator weed”—an invasive plant that had overtaken the walkway. They hacked, sawed, pulled, and hauled the weed, which had grown in some places to be 12 inches thick!

You’re invited to join Park Pride at two Greener Good Volunteer Days this fall. See the calendar below and sign up online!