Thirty Years of Passion for Parks

For 30 years, Park Pride has engaged communities to activate the power of parks. Thirty years. A lot has changed over the course of three decades, and we remain committed to advocating for and improving local parks. Why?

The simple answer is three-fold:

1. Parks are good for **people**.
2. Parks are good for **communities**.
3. Parks are good for the **environment**.

**Parks are Good for People.**

In an urban environment, parks often provide our only connection to nature, and research suggesting that time spent in nature improves health and well-being continues to grow. Lowered blood pressure, decreased levels of stress, improved mood and focus, better sleep, boosted immune system, and increased energy levels are just some of the beneficial outcomes of time spent in greenspace.

Additionally, whether you walk the trails, play basketball, or romp around the playground, having adequate access to a park encourages active lifestyles for everyone from 8 to 80-years old.


**Parks are Good for Communities.**

Parks have the power to be the heart of communities.

A great neighborhood park is a safe space for neighbors to gather, connect, and nurture a common identity. Parks invite engagement, making communities stronger.

“We have met so many different people in the neighborhood that we hadn't met before,” says Jennifer West with the Friends of Armand Park in Northeast Atlanta. “This park has really brought our neighborhood together.”


continued on page 2.
Thirty Years of Passion for Parks from page 1.

**Parks are Good for the Environment.**

Parks are good for our urban environment in so many ways. Lush vegetation and trees help reduce the temperature of our city and keep us cool. Trees in parks and along trails clean the air we breathe. Trails connecting the places where people live, work, and play make it possible to choose cleaner transit options (such as walking or biking) that reduce air pollution.

Additionally, the natural systems that exist in parks, as well as the green infrastructure amenities that are added, filter and return clean water to creeks and rivers: a function of great importance to people and wildlife that depend on those water sources for drinking and recreation!

Parks are also vital for habitat preservation, serving as a space for urban wildlife to make their homes.


Since Park Pride’s founding, we’ve come to understand that parks are not just a “nice to have” amenity; they are central to the quality of our lives. The benefits we enjoy from parks—for people, for communities, and for the environment—represent the “greener good” for which Park Pride has advocated for three decades and that we will continue to advocate for in the future.

We invite you to share our passion for parks and hope to see you at a volunteer event, in city council chambers, or simply enjoying a park soon!

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**message from michael: Nature for All**

Michael Halicki
Park Pride’s Executive Director

In the same way that Park Pride believes that people need access to quality parks, we also know that people need access to nature. A growing body of research suggests that people are “hard wired” for nature and suffer social, psychological, and physical impacts when they don’t get it.

The innate need for a “daily dose of nature” was highlighted by Dr. Nooshin Razani at our 2019 Parks and Greenspace Conference. Park Pride has embraced this concept whole-heartedly through a new, emerging campaign called *Nature for All – Atlanta*.

The campaign will focus on the importance of equitable access to nature and the need to engage a more diverse, citywide constituency in planning efforts, such as the City of Atlanta’s Urban Ecology Framework, the update of the Tree Protection Ordinance (p. 4), and the Parks & Recreation Comprehensive Plan.

Funded by the Turner Foundation, Park Pride has hired a Nature Accessibility Advocate, Adriana Garcia (p. 7), who will support the campaign in partnership with Trees Atlanta and the West Atlanta Watershed Alliance.

In the coming year, there will be many opportunities to join in Park Pride’s advocacy efforts to make parks and nature accessible to all. Everyone needs and deserves access to nature!

To receive Park Pride’s advocacy updates, email rachel@parkpride.org.
celebrating the greener good

Park Pride's Green Tie Gala

Over 400 guests donned their “picnic chic” for Park Pride’s 30th anniversary celebration, the Green Tie Gala.

The Green Tie Gala was an opportunity to celebrate and thank you, our donors, Friends of the Park group members, volunteers, corporate and foundation supporters, board alumni, and government and nonprofit partners. Our work simply would not be possible if it weren’t for your support.

Gala attendees enjoyed wine and a specially brewed beer from Orpheus Brewing called “Branching Out.”

Friends of the Park group members are the core of Park Pride’s accomplishments. Thank you for all you do for parks!

Nothing like fresh cider from Fruit Forward Orchards! Guests also enjoyed delicious appetizers from Georgia Grown vendors.

Trivia, anyone? Gala attendees had a blast on The Southern Pedaler’s party bike while testing their knowledge of Atlanta-area parks.

As with so many great parties, attendees closed out the Gala with dancing, led by Rob Harper and the Peachtree Serenaders.

Park Pride couldn’t fulfill its mission without the support of our corporate and foundation supporters and Board members.

The Green Tie Gala’s Honorary Co-Chairs, Sally and Jim Morgens, reflected on Park Pride’s early days during dinner.

Park Pride extends our deepest appreciation to the Green Tie Gala sponsors, hosts, and patrons. View a full list at parkpride.org/gala. More photos are available at facebook.com/parkpride.
For decades, Atlanta has been known nationally as the “City in the Forest.” In 2019, the City of Atlanta began the process of rewriting its Tree Protection Ordinance—the set of rules that protect trees on public and private land throughout the city. The task isn’t quick or easy, but it’s a necessity as the city grows in population and tensions increase between new development and the need to preserve trees and urban greenspaces.

One of the goals of the Atlanta Canopy Alliance* (of which Park Pride is a member) is to educate the public about the tree ordinance revision and to make it easier to engage in this process.

The Alliance focuses on a three-point platform to meet the City of Atlanta’s stated goal of 50% tree canopy coverage:
- **Buy** forested land,
- **Plant** more trees, and
- **Protect** the existing tree canopy.

Of these goals, protecting the existing tree canopy is of special importance. Why? Besides being beautiful, mature trees contribute to our overall quality of life: they provide cool shade, lower utility bills, increase property values, and help absorb stormwater runoff.

If no action is taken to protect existing trees, Atlanta runs the risk of becoming the “City in the Saplings.”

If you’d rather continue to live in the “City in the Forest,” it’s up to you to get involved in the tree ordinance revision process and make your voice heard by your local City Council representatives.

For details on the Tree Protection Ordinance revision process, information on upcoming meetings, and next steps you can take, visit the City of Atlanta’s website: [bit.ly/urbanecologyatl](https://bit.ly/urbanecologyatl).

Then, contact your council representative. Let them know that you support a tree ordinance rewrite that adheres to the Atlanta Canopy Alliance’s three-prong approach, ensuring that Atlanta can maintain its lush and diverse canopy of trees for generations to come!

*The Atlanta Canopy Alliance is composed of Trees Atlanta, The Conservation Fund, the Georgia Conservancy, The Nature Conservancy, Park Pride, The Trust for Public Land, West Atlanta Watershed Alliance, and the Atlanta Audubon Society.*

**Teri Nye** is Park Pride’s Park Designer, resident botanist, and person who draws.

Enjoy a short, fun, and informative video by Teri Nye about the benefits of trees, the background of the Tree Protection Ordinance revision, and next steps at [bit.ly/parkpride4trees](https://bit.ly/parkpride4trees).
tips for your park: time to take back parks from invasive plant species!

Kayla Altland
Program Manager, Friends of the Park

Invasive plant species, a big problem in parks and greenspaces, are at top of mind for Park Pride, our government partners, and Friends of the Park groups.

Invasive plant species are not native to the local ecosystem and harm the environment. These plants—including English ivy, privet, and kudzu—take over parkland otherwise available for recreation, reduce biodiversity, contribute to loss of habitat for native wildlife, kill trees and reduce canopy coverage, and contribute to soil erosion.

Not only are these species detrimental to the environment, but in some cases, they can even make life uncomfortable for humans. English ivy, for example, provides a perfect breeding ground for mosquitoes!

Invasive species management is difficult, but not impossible. The U.S. Forest Service has published a number of free resources on controlling invasive species that can be adapted for use in parks and neighborhoods: fs.fed.us/invasivespecies.

Park Pride’s staff is also ready to share what we’ve learned over the years and are available to help your group create an action plan for invasive species removal and management, and habitat restoration.

To schedule a consultation in your park, reach out to friends@parkpride.org.

great parks for all

Park Updates from Around Town

Mozley Park

In August, members of the Mozley Park community on Atlanta’s Westside celebrated the installation of a beautiful new playground, funded in part by two Park Pride Legacy Grants.

Additionally, the Friends of Mozley Park have been selected to participate in Park Pride’s Park Visioning Program and are working with landscape architect and Director of Park Visioning, Andrew White, to reimagine a conceptual plan for the park that will meet their needs as a community. All neighbors and park users are invited to participate in this planning effort. Visit parkpride.org/events for public meeting dates and locations.

Kathryn Johnston Memorial Park

In November, Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms, Park Pride, The Conservation Fund, the Chattahoochee Riverkeeper, the City of Atlanta Department of Parks & Recreation, English Avenue residents, and many other nonprofit partners and funders will gather to celebrate the long-awaited completion of Kathryn Johnston Memorial Park!

Incorporating several green infrastructure amenities, this park will manage up to 3.5 million gallons of rainwater per year, mitigating the impact of flooding from stormwater runoff in the neighborhood. The park also includes a playground, fitness station, and an open field for soccer games, flying kites, or hosting community events (such as English Avenue’s Festival of Lights).

Kathryn Johnston Memorial Park represents a new safe place for community members to relax, exercise, play, and connect with their neighbors!

There are many more great park developments taking place in communities across Atlanta, DeKalb, Brookhaven, and Tucker! Visit parkpride.org/news to read their stories.
Whether you live in the city center, the suburbs, or in the countryside, your ability to access and enjoy nature is a vital component for living a happy, healthy life.

For those who live in cities, parks can be one of the few, if not only, places to experience nature daily. Parks offer relief from the concrete, noise, and hurried pace that surrounds us. The slices of nature that exist in parks also serve as important infrastructure for our cities and support habitats for the other living things with which we share this planet.

Additionally, well-loved parks reflect the unique character— or ‘nature’— of the surrounding communities.

The 2020 Parks & Greenspace Conference will examine the theme, The Nature of Our City, through many lenses on Monday, March 23rd at the Atlanta Botanical Garden. 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.

Save the date, and we hope to see you there!

Jeff Ellman
Chair, Parks & Greenspace Conference Planning Committee

Michael Halicki,
Executive Director,
Park Pride
meet the team: staff + board updates

Park Pride welcomes one new board member:

**Joni Winston** of Center of Joy will serve on the Board’s Grants Committee.

Park Pride is also pleased to share several staff updates:

**Kayla Altland** has been promoted to Community Building Program Manager.

**Ellen Bruenderman** has been promoted to Director of Community Building.

**Victoria Burgos** has been hired as our Volunteer Program Associate.

**Adriana Garcia** has been hired in the new role of Nature Accessibility Advocate.

**Faria Khan** will support Park Pride as the Community Building Intern.

**Chris Lemons** has joined the Park Pride team as the Volunteer Program Manager.

**Mariaelena Navarro** will provide support as the Communications + Development Intern.

**Ruth Pimentel** will continue to support Park Pride as the Park Visioning Fellow.

Visit [parkpride.org/team](http://parkpride.org/team) for staff contact information.

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Corporate Champions

Thank you to the following organizations for their extraordinary generosity in support of Park Pride’s mission!

**visionary**

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**Become a Champion for Parks!**

Please reach out to Chad Nash, Corporate and Individual Giving Associate, to learn more. chad@parkpride.org or 404-546-7984.
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Parks are the heart of community, and you are the heart of Park Pride. Thank you for supporting the greener good in Park Pride’s thirtieth year.

Make your gift today: parkpride.org/donate

Mission
To engage communities to activate the power of parks.

Park Views Online
bit.ly/parkpridenews

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