

Hello everyone, and welcome. My name is Vanessa Miot, and I'm the Senior Program Manager for Friends of the Park groups at Park Pride. We're so glad you could join us today for our Virtual Park Meeting on Grant Programming.

Park Pride works to engage communities to activate the power of parks, and often, bringing those ideas to life requires funding. Today's session focuses on just that. We want to make sure you have the most accurate and up-to-date information about the upcoming Park Pride grant cycle.

Joining us from Park Pride's Grantmaking and Implementation team are Andrew, Stephen, and Emily, who will provide an overview of the grant program and walk through the types of funding available, eligibility requirements, and what makes a strong proposal.

I also invite you to join us for our Second Friday Walk in the Park series and connect with other Friends of the Park groups, community partners, park enthusiasts, and Park Pride staff. These monthly walks are a great opportunity to build your park IQ—learning about a park's history, seeing firsthand how funding has helped turn neighbors' ideas and visions for their park into reality, and discovering ways to get involved in caring for the parks we all enjoy.

Our next walk will take place this Friday, March 13 at 9 AM at Ira B. Melton Park in DeKalb, part of the Mason Mill Park network. You can register using the link in the chat and we hope to see you there!

We kindly ask that you mute yourself during the presentation. If you have any questions during the presentation, please drop them into the Q&A box and they will be answered at the end, and feel free to share any additional comments and engage with other participants in the chat.

With that, I'll turn it over to Andrew, Stephen, and Emily to get us started.

Slide 1

Thank you, Vanessa. Welcome everyone, and thank you for joining today's information session about Park Pride's 2026/2027 grant cycle.

My name is Andrew White, I'm a licensed landscape architect and serve as Director of Grantmaking and Implementation at Park Pride. I'm joined today by my colleagues, Stephen Causby, Associate Director of Grantmaking & Implementation, and Emily Cruse, Grantmaking Program Specialist.

We are very excited to share information with you about Park Pride's grantmaking program, its goals, the types of grants available, eligibility requirements, and how our grants work.

We hope this presentation will help you understand whether a grant from Park Pride might be something you want to pursue this year.

We are recording tonight's presentation and will be posting it on our website afterward along with the slide show. To keep a clean recording, we're asking you to please hold all questions until the end or put them into the chat so we can address them at the end.

Slide 2

Before we talk specifically about the grant program, it's helpful to understand the broader framework that guides all of Park Pride's work.

Our 2030 Strategic Framework was adopted by our Board of Directors last October and outlines five priorities that shape how we support parks and communities across Atlanta.

These include strengthening community leadership and stewardship, catalyzing park improvements, influencing public policy and investment, leveraging data and stories, and enhancing organizational resilience.

While all five priorities guide our work as an organization, two of them are especially central to the grantmaking program: strengthening community leadership and catalyzing park improvements.

Those priorities show up very directly in how our grants are structured and how we partner with communities.

Slide 3

When people think about Park Pride's grant program, the most visible outcome is usually the physical improvements in parks—things like new playgrounds, trails, signage, or other park features.

Those improvements are important, but they're not the only outcome of the program.

Just as important is the way these projects support and uplift community leaders and stewards—the people who advocate for and care for these parks over time.

That connects directly to these two strategic priorities we mentioned earlier.

And each project reflects the priorities of a specific community.

This year, for example, we announced 19 projects in our 2026 grant cycle—which really means 19 communities identified something they wanted to improve in their park.

Our role is simply to help make those priorities possible.

Slide 4

The goals of our grantmaking program build directly on those strategic priorities.

First, we aim to support community-driven efforts and priorities. It's part of Park Pride's DNA to come alongside communities rather than approaching park improvements with predetermined solutions.

We also work to strengthen relationships between communities and local governments. Because most parks are publicly owned, it's important for Friends groups to understand how to work with parks departments and other agencies responsible for managing these spaces.

Another goal is to increase park use and strengthen park systems. Park improvements help create welcoming spaces where more residents feel connected and engaged.

We also focus on empowering communities and building capacity. These projects are envisioned by communities, for communities, and the process helps strengthen local leadership and stewardship.

Finally, we work to leverage community, public, and philanthropic investment. Park Pride is just one of many partners supporting these projects, alongside community members, local government, and other organizations. Together, those contributions—financial and otherwise—demonstrate the broad support that exists for parks and greenspaces.

Before moving on, I also want to acknowledge the funders who help make our grantmaking program possible, including the Robert W. Woodruff Foundation, The Home Depot Foundation, The Coca-Cola Foundation, and the City of Atlanta, among others.

Slide 5

Park Pride currently offers two primary grant programs.

The first is Small Change Grants, which support smaller-scale park improvements.

The second is Parks for All Grants, which typically support larger or more complex projects.

Both programs support community-led improvements, but they differ in scale, funding amounts, and usually project complexity.

If you're not sure which one is best for you, Park Pride can help you determine which program may be the best fit for your project.

We'll talk more in depth about each one later in this presentation.

Slide 6

Before applying for a grant, there are several eligibility requirements that communities need to meet.

First, the park must have a registered Friends of the Park group, and that registration must be kept up to date. Registration is free and needs to be done annually. If you don't have a registered group, you can use the link in the chat to register your group.

LINK IN CHAT: <https://parkpride.org/we-can-help/annual-registration-form/>

Second, the park must be located within Park Pride's service area. Parks for All grants are only available to parks within the City of Atlanta, while Small Change Grants may also include parks in unincorporated DeKalb County and the City of Brookhaven.

Our grant funding comes from a variety of sources, and some of those funds include geographic restrictions on where they can be used. Because of those restrictions, we are currently only able to offer the larger Parks for All Grants within the City of Atlanta.

However, parks in Brookhaven and unincorporated DeKalb County remain eligible for Small Change Grants, and we're glad to continue supporting community-led improvements in those parks through that program.

Another key requirement is community engagement. The project being proposed should reflect a priority that the community has collectively identified. Part of the application

process will be to show evidence that the larger community is supportive of the proposed improvement.

We also require that groups do not have another open Park Pride grant by the time applications are due. If you have an open grant, all funds from that previous grants must be spent, and the final report must be submitted by the next phase in our upcoming application process. These grant closeout deadlines depend on which grant you are applying for.

Finally, projects must have landowner approval, which typically means approval from the Parks Department or other relevant public agency.

These two requirements are outlined in dashed lines, because they can technically occur later in the application process, but are important to understand before submitting an Interest Form.

Slide 7

Most Park Pride grants are matching grants.

This means that Park Pride contributes funding toward a project, but the community also brings resources to the table.

It's important to know that the match doesn't have to be entirely cash—volunteer time, donated materials, and contributions from partners can often count toward the match as well, as long as it's budget relieving.

Those matches can include donated funds, pro bono professional services, volunteer hours, or contributions from local businesses, vendors, or community partners. Park Pride staff can work with applicants to help think through what resources might count toward the match.

Park Pride also offers a Fiscal Sponsorship program that allows Friends groups to use our 501(c)(3) nonprofit status to raise tax-deductible funds for their park.

The idea behind matching grants is to leverage community investment. When residents and partners contribute resources, it strengthens the project and allows Park Pride's funding to go further.

Matching funds also demonstrate strong community support for a project, which can help make park improvements more sustainable over time.

Slide 8

In many cases, Park Pride grants require a one-to-one match, meaning the community contributes resources equal to the grant award.

For example, if a project receives a \$50,000 grant, the community would contribute \$50,000 in matching resources for a \$100,000 total investment.

However, not all parks are required to provide a match.

Parks located in historically disinvested communities may be eligible for grants that cover up to 100% of the project cost, meaning a match is not required.

Eligibility for non-matching grants is determined using data from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Even when a match is not required, community contributions—financial or in-kind—are welcome and can still strengthen a project and demonstrate strong local support.

Award amounts and match expectations are determined case by case, depending on the project scope, location, and community capacity

Slide 9

One important aspect of Park Pride's grant program is how grant funds are distributed.

Park Pride does not send grant money directly to Friends of the Park groups. Instead, funds are distributed in one of two ways.

The first is reimbursement. In this case, a Friends group pays for an approved expense and then submits documentation for reimbursement.

The second is direct payment, where Park Pride pays approved vendor invoices directly.

This approach helps protect Friends groups from financial risk, creates clear financial documentation for our funders, and ensures a fair and consistent process across all grant recipients.

It also provides an additional layer of oversight to ensure that grant funds are used appropriately.

Finally, it's important to note that grant funds cannot be used to pay members of the Friends group or their relatives for work on the project.

Now I'll hand it off to Emily to share more about the Small Change Grant program.

Slide 10

Thanks Andrew. As he mentioned, Park Pride offers two grant pathways to help Friends of the Park groups bring community-driven park improvements to life, and Small Change Grants have been awarded since 2004.

While the types of projects that fall under our scope of eligibility have remained largely the same, this year the application cycle is getting a big refresh.

Small Change Grants help jumpstart community-led park projects that create visible, immediate impacts that often build momentum for bigger projects, and this program funds a broad array of park improvement projects.

Here is an overview of the Small Change Program:

Funds must support a community-led park improvement project that features a physical element to enhance the public park and is designed as a one-time improvement rather than projects that need to be done on an annual or seasonal basis.

Small Change Grants are available to registered Friends of the Park groups in the City of Atlanta, Brookhaven, and unincorporated DeKalb County.

Projects must be completed within 12 months, which will mean by September 2027 for this cycle.

Awards are for matching grants up to \$2,500. Non-matching grants are available to eligible communities. Priority is given to groups who have not recently received a grant.

Slide 11

Projects can look very different from park to park. This program is intentionally flexible to support the specific priorities identified by each community. You'll see a few common categories outlined here to help inspire you.

Some examples shown here include invasive species removal, pollinator, native-plant, or community gardens, Little Free Library kiosks, tree identification tags, trail maintenance, bird or bat habitats, educational signage, small seating areas, bike racks, and more.

Hopefully these visuals and corresponding text on slide 12 give you a sense of the project variety, but what all Small Change improvements have in common is that they are led by the community, and improve the park in a meaningful, visible, and achievable way.

Slide 11

We encourage your proposed physical beautification project to include a community engagement component to promote a sense of stewardship and community participation. For instance, applying for grant funds to secure new raised garden beds could prove even more impactful when coordinated alongside an educational community planting day.

Slide 13

Now let's talk about how the application process for Small Change Grants has changed for the upcoming cycle.

This year brings one of the most important updates to the Small Change program. Previously, Small Change Grants were offered on a rolling cycle, meaning groups could apply at any time during the year, and applications were reviewed and approved until funds ran out.

Starting with the 2026 cycle, Small Change Grants now follow a structured annual timeline, just like our larger Parks for All Grants.

We transitioned from a rolling, first-come-first-served model to a cohort-based application process this year to create a more equitable, predictable, and transparent process.

A cohort cycle helps ensure funding isn't determined by who can apply fastest. Instead, all applicants move through the process together, with improved access to information, staff support, and clear timeline.

Let's go over the new cycle shown here:

As we head into spring, groups will begin to align on a project that is a community priority. An identified project leader will fill out the Interest Form which will capture basic information to determine if your park and potential project are eligible.

Starting today, the Interest Form will be available on our website and open until May 15th. Once submitted, our team will review eligibility and proposed project feasibility. We will be reaching out to the groups who submitted to discuss the next steps.

Throughout June and July, eligible groups who are guided to move forward must obtain Parks Department approval before submitting a more detailed application.

July 17th is our new application deadline. To reiterate, applications are no longer accepted on a rolling basis. Once groups receive initial approval and the necessary Parks Department sign-off, they'll need to submit their Small Change application by the July 17th deadline. Groups will need to include a project budget and more information about how they plan to implement the project, including a timeline and how it will impact the community.

Awards will be announced from late August to early September. This program is competitive, and awards are not guaranteed.

Awardees will need to sign a Grant Agreement and meet with the Grants Team for an orientation before officially kicking off the 12-month project timeline.

Projects must be fully implemented and completed within 12 months, which will mean all aspects need to be finished by September 2027.

A 6-month or midpoint progress report is required as well as a final report that will be due upon completion. We've prepared the forms for you—you just need to fill them in, so no need to create something from scratch.

Our goal is for this new structure to help ensure clarity, predictability, and equity for all groups. It also aligns with our support such as site visits, review meetings, and technical assistance in a more focused, coordinated way as our team also manages ongoing grant projects as well as the Parks for All larger grant cycle.

And now I'll pass it over to Stephen to talk about those larger grants.

Slide 14

Thanks, Emily. Now, we want to share important information with you about what are now called the Parks For All grants.

This program has been called a few things in the past. You may know it by the Legacy Grant program, or more recently as the Park Pride grants.

This new name is intended to align with our strategic framework and efforts to expand parks and park usage throughout our service area.

So, similar to the Small Change grants, funds must support a community-led park improvement project that features physical built or installed elements to enhance the public park – funds are only for capital improvements. The difference between this program

and the Small Change grants is that the improvements are larger, more complex and more capital-intensive.

With this program, only registered Friends of the Park groups in the City of Atlanta are eligible to apply.

Projects must be completed within 18 months (by September 2028). We give a longer time horizon than the Small Change grants because of the complex nature of these projects, as well as the need for various permits and reviews at the start of each project.

Awards range in size depending on match eligibility, public investment, previous award history, park location, and project scope. We support projects of various sizes and scopes, but these factors have an impact on what we're able to award.

Slide 15-16

Here is a visual to illustrate some of the different types of projects we are able to fund through the Parks For All grant program.

They include Playscapes – playground replacement, additions to playgrounds, and ball courts

Gathering Spaces – newly-designed spaces, site furnishings, and shade canopies

Accessibility improvements – accessible trails, pathways, signage, and lighting

And Construction – fountains, pavilions, walls, and art projects

This next slide simply gives words to the images on the previous slide so others can have a clear picture if they view these slides apart from this presentation.

Slide 17

So how does the grant process unfold? This slide walks us through the Parks for All Grant Cycle. If you plan on applying for this grant, I encourage you to take a look at this and review it in depth after this webinar. These slides will be available after this presentation.

Goal setting is a crucial step of this process, and if it's not done properly it can weaken the project and your application. The grant idea must be community-generated and align with your park master plan or vision documents.

The next step is the submittal by the Friends group of an interest form, which lives on the Park Pride website. This form asks for basic information on your project and how it's connected to the life of your park. This form is due on May 15.

For applicants who make it through this step, they will be invited to submit a pre-application by September 4. This step asks for more information that communicates project readiness – details regarding construction documents, proposed budget, and coordination with the appropriate agencies or departments.

After the submittal of this document, our team will work diligently to set up site visits, see each project, and deliberate with our Grant Committee (a committee of the Park Pride board) about each project. Every project in this phase will be asked to present to the City of Atlanta Dept of Parks and Recreation for project approval.

If your project makes it through this phase, you'll be invited to submit a final grant application by November 15.

From there, our Grant Committee will vote on the projects, then our Board will vote. We will publicly announce the grantees in February of 2027. We'll then hold a grant orientation in March of that year, then projects are given an 18-month window for implementation.

We do ask for a progress report at the 6- and 12-month marks, then a final report at completion. That puts us in September 2028 for the project wrap up and potential ribbon cutting!

Slide 18

Let's talk about the components of Parks For All Grant application

Basic park and applicant information. You'll want to give thought to who is the best person from your Friends group to be the point of contact for the project – responsible for engaging with the community, vendors and Park Pride throughout the life of the project.

The detailed project description is very important – you'll want to give us a clear idea of what you're trying to build. How does it connect to previously adopted plans or vision documents? How does it align with and support community goals?

The next part is related to project value and impact. We want to know how you identified this project as a priority for the community – what did that process look like? And what value will this bring to the community when it's completed?

Community investment is a crucial part of any successful project. You'll want to explain how the community is invested in this project and its successful completion. Also, how are you engaging beyond the Friends of the Park group to build ongoing support, especially if a match is required?

And lastly, please attach any supporting documents – plans, vision documents, construction drawings, cost estimates – these are all documents that are helpful to us as

we review each project. They help us gain a better sense of the work you've already done and project readiness.

Slide 19

So, what's next?

If you're feeling ready to throw your hat into the ring for this grant cycle, the first step for both programs is to fill out an Interest Form. This form is live as of right now, and is due by Friday, May 15. The link is on our website, which we'll put in the chat right now.

LINK IN CHAT: <https://parkpride.org/we-can-help/grant-programs/>

Once that deadline passes, our Grantmaking and Implementation team will review all of the Interest Forms we receive. At this stage, we're looking at basic eligibility and overall project feasibility. We'll confirm which grant program is the best fit for your project, determine eligibility for no-match grants, and share your Interest Form with the relevant parks department to check for any landowner considerations or concerns.

For those groups whose projects are eligible to move forward, we will then reach out to schedule a conversation. Those meetings give us a chance to learn more about your proposal, answer questions, and walk through the next steps in the application process.

Slide 20

Before we open it up for questions, I'd like to invite Winfrey Young to share a few words about her experience as a Park Pride grantee for Pittman Park.

As you've heard tonight, applying for and completing a grant involves forms, estimates, and plenty of paperwork—but it's also much more than that. It takes leadership, coordination, persistence, and a real emotional investment in your park and community.

Winfrey has been through this process and has successfully brought several projects to life at Pittman Park. She's been gracious enough to accept our invitation to share some of her experience with you this evening.

So Winfrey, I'll turn it over to you to share a little about your experience and any wisdom you'd like to pass along to the group.

[WINFREY YOUNG SPEAKS]

Slide 21

Thank you, Winfrey. We really appreciate you sharing your experience with us.

Now we'll open the floor for questions about our grant programs. Since there are quite a few people on the call today, we ask that questions focus on the grant programs or process in general—things that might apply to multiple parks or groups.

If you have questions about your specific project, please feel free to reach out to us afterward and we'll follow up with you individually.

To get us started, we did receive a few questions ahead of time that we will address first.

Q1: What's one common grant myth you wish would finally retire to the great park in the sky?

A1: "Park Pride grants are only for groups that already have everything figured out."

This myth shows up in lots of ways. People often think you need a fully developed plan, a professional grant writer, or a perfect track record before you're "ready" to apply. In reality: grants **aren't just** for established, polished groups with neighbors who have permitting or other related experience, they're for communities with a vision. And we want people to ask questions, learn, and grow through the process.

Q2: How much of matching grant dollars does Park Pride want the Friends group to have raised before submitting the application?

A2: The more matching funds you already have raised, the stronger your application is likely to be. These grants are competitive, and every year we have to say no to good projects.

At a minimum, applicants should have a clear, realistic, and time-bound strategy for raising the match so the project can still be completed within the 18-month implementation window.

Eighteen months may sound like a long time, but in reality it goes by quickly. Approvals, permitting, and scheduling can take significant time, so projects typically need to begin implementation soon after a grant is awarded. Having your funding strategy well in place is an important part of making sure the project can move forward successfully.

[ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS ASKED LIVE VIA THE CHAT]