Eighty-two percent of Americans now live in urban areas, making the need for equitable access to open space in cities vital.

The Parks with Purpose program focuses on urban communities that have historically had limited access to well-maintained public park space. We work to restore blighted properties into vibrant new parks in low-income neighborhoods and communities of color. Our innovative approach to urban conservation addresses environmental and economic challenges with a community-centered focus on achieving equitable outcomes. These new greenspaces provide safe places for kids to play and neighbors to gather, while building civic capacity, train and employ local residents, reduce stormwater flooding impacts, provide access to fresh, healthy foods, and create natural habitat in highly urbanized neighborhoods.

Our Approach

The Conservation Fund believes successful conservation should provide long-term community benefits. That’s why we work side-by-side with community residents in some of our most challenged urban neighborhoods to plan and develop new and improved parks and greenspaces. By empowering residents and focusing on environmental, economic and social equity outcomes, we ensure that new parks create a variety of positive, sustainable benefits for those who live, work and play in these urban neighborhoods.
Where We Work

In partnership with local non-profits, municipal and philanthropic partners and community residents, we’ve provided a range of conservation services depending on need—community and economic development, green infrastructure planning, integrated water management implementation, land loans, real estate expertise, business lending and job creation—to create Parks with Purpose across the country in cities like Atlanta, Kansas City, Richmond, CA, and more. Integrated water management projects are urban stormwater management projects using green natural infrastructure.

Our Projects

Atlanta, Georgia

The Conservation Fund has been working in Atlanta for nearly two decades, employing our full suite of services. To date, we’ve completed more than 45 projects and protected nearly 3,000 acres across the metro area. Atlanta has also been the pilot location for the Parks with Purpose initiative and is home to five of these community-driven projects, including:

Hunter Hills Refuge. A portion of Proctor Creek will be restored to reintroduce native landscapes, the natural flow of the creek and provide flood-friendly community amenities in the first greenspace in the Hunter Hills neighborhood.

Kathryn Johnston Memorial Park. Blighted land that was fenced off from the community for nearly 20 years has been transformed into new park that was developed and built by residents. This new park also holds 3.5 million gallons of stormwater through a series of features that slow down the rainwaters during heavy flash flooding events.

Lindsay Street Park. We helped build the first park in the English Avenue neighborhood of downtown Atlanta. Neighbors have been engaged in planning, development, and construction of this park, and now support maintenance and activation programs in the park.

Visit our website for more information: conservationfund.org/pwp
Mattie Freeland Park. Originally started as a small community garden in memory of a neighborhood matriarch, residents cleared blighted properties, planted trees, installed a playground and grills, and began hosting block parties, movies nights and more. The Conservation Fund acquired these lots on behalf of the city in order to permanently protect the park.

Urban Food Forest at Browns Mill. We helped steward the creation of the largest publicly owned food forest in the country, providing seven acres of urban greenspace where fresh fruits, nuts and vegetables are being cultivated to provide access to affordable, healthy food in a community that lacks grocery stores and transportation options.

Vine City Park. Working with partners, The Conservation Fund secured land to expand this existing neighborhood park to more than double its size and helped to support the incorporation of a workforce training program for residents as part of the park construction.

Baltimore, Maryland

The Conservation Fund worked with several local partners to restore Garrett Park as a center for civic life and enhance its vital ecosystem services, including filtering stormwater and cooling the city air. At Farring-Baybrook Park, the largest Baltimore City park on the peninsula, a trail restoration project will improve and connect students to a nearby school.

Durham, North Carolina

We are helping to develop community and organization connections to support outreach and educational programs, greenspace and food access in East Durham. The model project is making affordable housing safer, greener, and more sustainable for residents in the Ellerbe Creek watershed.

Kansas City, Missouri

Together with our partners, we developed community-serving amenities within an existing 10 acre greenspace that captures 12 million gallons of stormwater. Amenities include a community gathering space, playground, walking trail, recreational areas and native gardens, all designed with extensive input from the Marlborough Community Coalition.

Raleigh, North Carolina

We’re working alongside residents and a variety of local partners to connect Walnut Creek Wetland Park with historically African-American neighborhoods in southeast Raleigh. The new community entrance will include workforce training and environmental education opportunities and will improve connections to public amenities at Walnut Creek Wetland Park.

Richmond, California

Pogo Park is transforming broken and abandoned city parks in one of America’s toughest inner-city neighborhoods into safer greener public spaces for children to play. We purchased a 17,500 square foot property to help the local founder replicate his success with a second location known as Harbour-8 Park.
**About The Conservation Fund**

The Conservation Fund makes conservation work for America by creating solutions benefiting the environment, all communities, and climate. Top-ranked for efficiency and effectiveness, we have worked in all 50 states since 1985 to protect more than 8.5 million acres of land.

**Carmera Thomas**  
Director, Urban Conservation Initiatives  
cthomas@conservationfund.org  
703-908-5823

**Kelsi Eccles**  
Communications Manager, Urban Conservation  
keccles@conservationfund.org  
404-221-0405

**Shannon Lee**  
Senior Major Gifts Officer, Southeast  
slee@conservationfund.org  
404-221-0405

**Erik J. Meyers**  
Vice President, Climate and Water Sustainability  
emeyers@conservationfund.org  
703-908-5801

---

**Washington, D.C.**

We are helping to connect green corridors in the Anacostia with the National Park Service’s Anacostia Park and surrounding communities. The Friends of Anacostia Park and Friends of Oxon Run are leading greenspace, social and economic development.