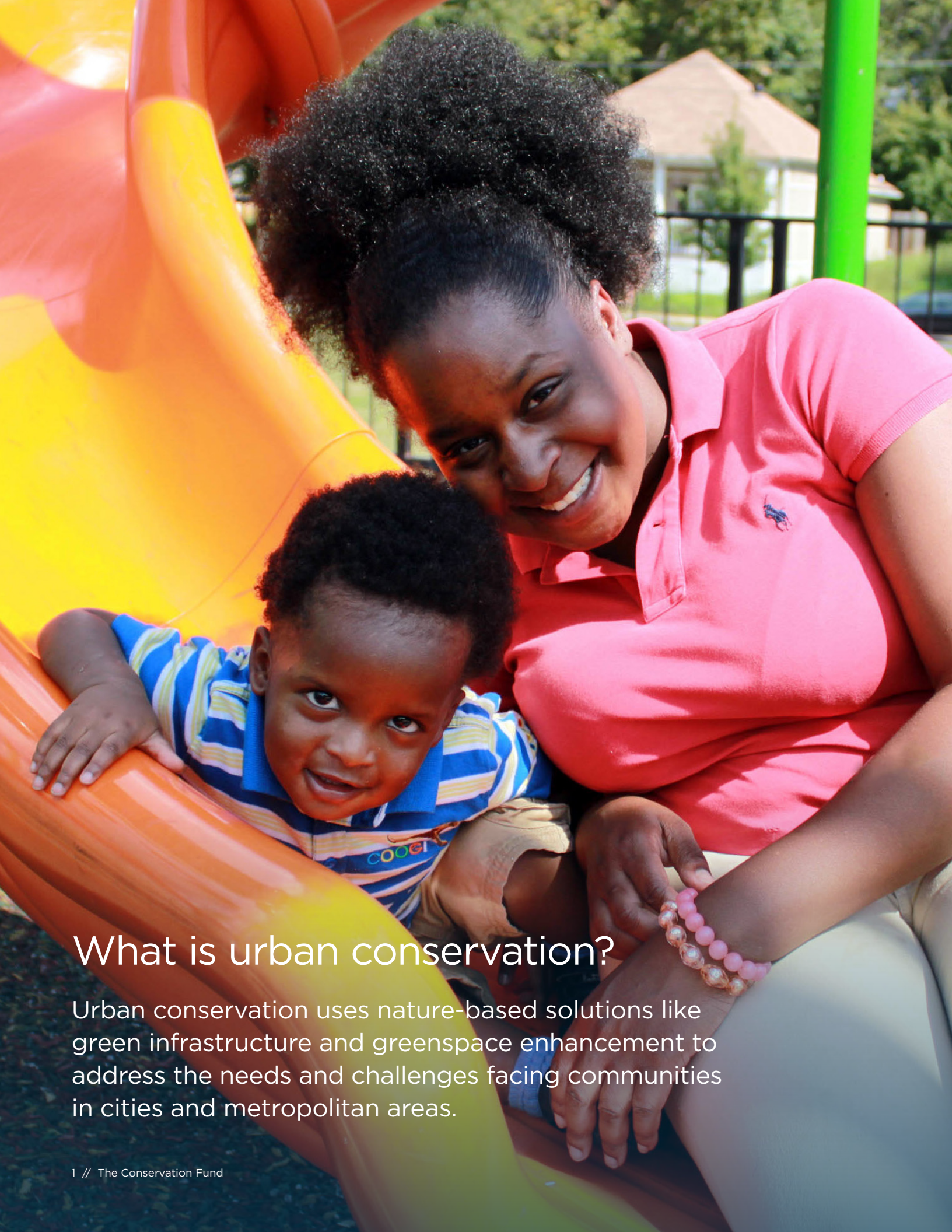


A young boy with dark skin is sitting on a red plastic slide, holding onto the red metal frame above him with both hands. He is wearing an orange t-shirt and blue camouflage-patterned pants. His mouth is open in a joyful expression. The background is a bright, sunny day at a park, with several tall palm trees and a clear blue sky. The overall tone is vibrant and positive.

THE
CONSERVATION FUND

VIBRANT &
EQUITABLE
CITIES



What is urban conservation?

Urban conservation uses nature-based solutions like green infrastructure and greenspace enhancement to address the needs and challenges facing communities in cities and metropolitan areas.





The Conservation Fund’s Approach to Urban Conservation

The Conservation Fund works across America to support healthy, vibrant cities and help create more equitable and livable neighborhoods. We recognize the historical, cultural and community significance of where we work and acknowledge that the understanding of and need for these greenspaces often lies in the hands of the long-time residents of these lands.

Our approach to conservation in urban areas relies on active listening and close collaboration with neighbors, local partners and civic leaders to strategically implement their vision. We bring residents and municipalities to the same decision-making table to build trust and promote collaborative projects in historically underrepresented communities. We demonstrate how nature and the built environment can jointly help revitalize neighborhoods and unite communities, while providing multiple benefits for all.

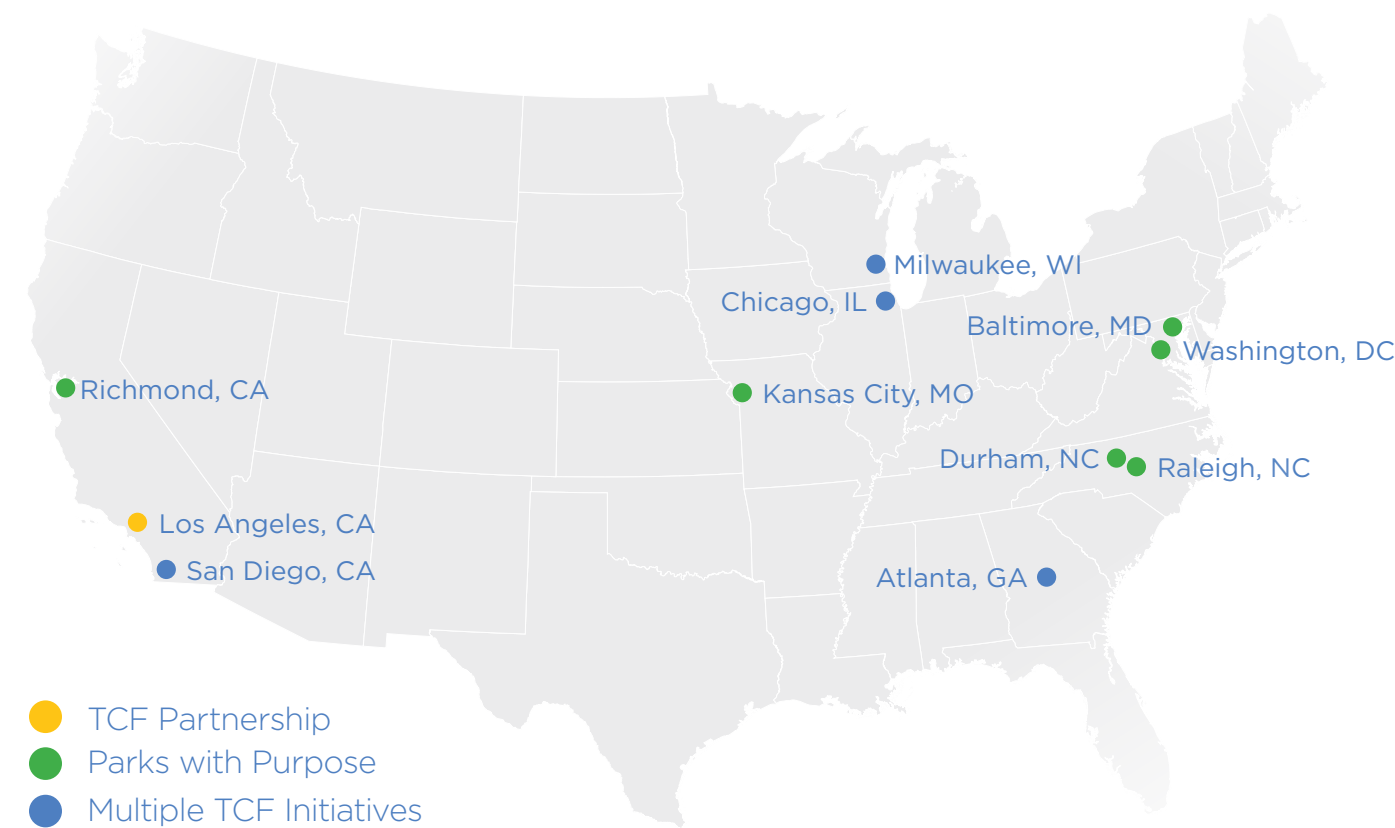
The Conservation Fund works at the local and regional levels to develop greenspaces and parks in urban neighborhoods that support climate resiliency, water management, healthy food access, job opportunities and cleaner air and water.

Our Impact:

-  Over 200 greenspaces protected in 11 metro areas
-  6 trails created or restored
-  20 green infrastructure stormwater projects
-  Over 40% of the populations served are Black, Hispanic or Asian (nonwhite)

Front Cover: ©Patrick Manga; Opposite Page: ©Whitney Flanagan

Where We Work



200+

GREENSPACES
PROTECTED
in 11 Cities/Metro Areas

Program Spotlight: Parks with Purpose



The Conservation Fund believes successful conservation should provide long-term community benefits. Our Parks with Purpose program works alongside residents, local non-profits and municipal and philanthropic partners in some of our most challenged urban neighborhoods to plan and develop new and improved parks and greenspaces.

Since its launch in 2015 with the opening of Lindsay Street Park in Atlanta, the Parks with Purpose footprint has expanded to support the creation of 20 parks across Atlanta and six other cities.



City Spotlight: Baltimore

The Conservation Fund was a founding member of the Greater Baltimore Wilderness Coalition, a partnership of public and private organizations working to connect greenspaces in the Baltimore region. Our Parks with Purpose program supports the creation of new trails and park improvements to existing parks in the South Baltimore neighborhoods of Brooklyn and Curtis Bay and the Northern Anne Arundel County neighborhood of Brooklyn Park.

At Garrett Park, we helped further develop the Garrett Park Revitalization Plan with community-based groups to implement park improvements, including new gathering spaces, walking paths, benches, outdoor exercise equipment, pollinator plants and trees, as well as onsite stormwater capture and filtration. Fronting Brooklyn's commercial corridor, the revitalized Garrett Park leverages investment in neighborhood-serving businesses and crime reduction.

Filbert Street Community Garden was previously an overgrown, waste-filled 1-acre lot until the community transformed it into an urban farm for the surrounding community. Now, Filbert Street Garden supplies fresh produce like eggs and goat milk to residents who need access to food, and the organization plans to provide training for residents, especially recent asylum seekers, who want to learn new trades.



City Spotlight: Atlanta

The city of Atlanta is a "tree haven." Its large forest canopy plays a critical role in reducing extreme heat worsened by climate change. Our many Atlanta projects have ensured it remains a "City in the Forest," while supporting equitable park and greenspace development for nearby residents.

To date, The Conservation Fund has helped protect nearly 800 acres of greenspace in Atlanta, including the Lake Charlotte Nature Preserve, the city's largest nature preserve; Lindsay Street Park, the first park with a playground for the English Avenue community; and the Urban Food Forest at Browns Mill, the nation's largest urban food forest, which was created to alleviate the lack of access to fresh produce in the Browns Mill community.

Our work in metro Atlanta has also created innovative solutions to watershed management practices in partnership with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, City of Atlanta Department of Watershed Management and community-led and nonprofit organizations.

Building Sustainable Local Economies

Project New Village San Diego

Nonprofit Project New Village developed their Mount Hope Community Garden to bring sustainable agriculture to communities in southeastern San Diego that lack reasonable access to healthy foods. The garden is located on what used to be an empty lot that Project New Village was leasing from the city. But when they went to renew their lease, the nonprofit discovered that their beloved community space was going to be sold, where it was going to be sold and face a high risk of being developed. With a short deadline and an urgent need to secure the property, Project New Village reached out to The Conservation Fund, and it was able to purchase the land with a low-interest loan from us in December 2019.

As the owners of Mount Hope Community Garden, Project New Village continues to create healthy, sustainable solutions for their community. The group hopes to develop a Good Food District that will enhance urban agriculture’s connection to economic opportunity by improving the relationship with how people sell and source their food.



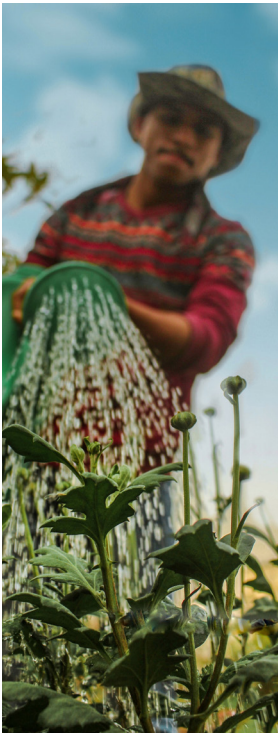
“When we decided that we would bid against traditional developers for this land, we reached out to The Conservation Fund. They helped us out with the loan, and together we did it — we bought our community garden and guaranteed an incredible resource for our neighborhood!”

N. Diane Moss
Managing Director,
Project New Village

Lake Charlotte Nature Preserve Atlanta

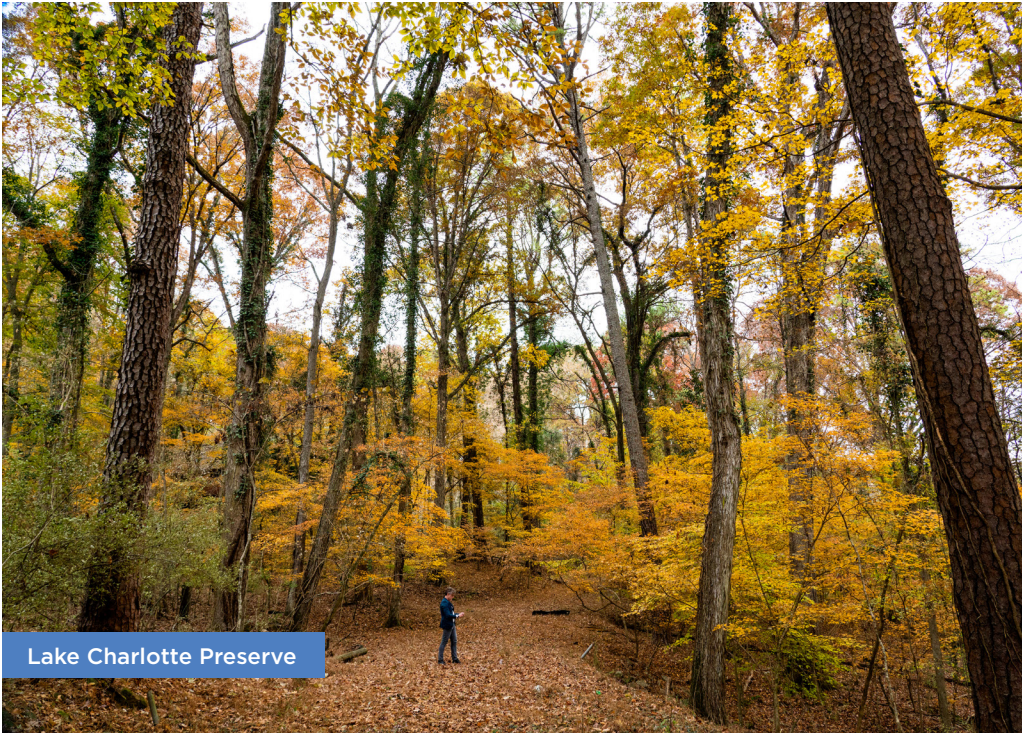
Only a few miles east of the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, the Lake Charlotte Nature Preserve is not what you’d expect from a nature preserve. An oasis of green amongst an industrial corridor, this 216-acre oak-hickory forest is one of the largest inside the city limits and is a rare find in any urban landscape. The nature preserve’s old growth forest ecosystem supports a high quality, diverse tree canopy, provides valuable wildlife habitat and features a unique geological formation that harbors culturally significant archeological sites. It is a popular place for public outdoor recreation, including bird and wildlife viewing.

Before The Conservation Fund purchased Lake Charlotte for conservation in 2019, it was highly threatened by industrial development. Today, it remains protected as one of the city’s largest public greenspaces. Conserving Lake Charlotte’s tree canopy and protecting part of the South River watershed was a key focus of the City’s Urban Ecology Framework.



Project New Village

Photos (L-R): ©Almani Qhizq; ©Eder Escamilla



Lake Charlotte Preserve



Photos: ©Stacy Funderburke

Urban Greenspace



Photos: ©Stacy Funderburke



Photos: ©Stacy Funderburke

Former Chattahoochee Brick Company Site Atlanta

The fate of a historic 77-acre property on the Chattahoochee River in northwest Atlanta was uncertain for years. Various nonprofit and local groups sought to find a conservation outcome for the former Chattahoochee Brick Company site, a brickworks company known for its extensive use of convict lease labor, which forced hundreds of mostly African American men to work in conditions like those experienced during antebellum slavery.

In 2022, The Conservation Fund, working together with the City of Atlanta and the local community, was able to purchase the site and convey it to the City, initiating plans for the land that will both memorialize and honor the workers of Chattahoochee Brick to enhance racial justice for the community and preserve an environmental and recreational asset at the confluence of the Chattahoochee River and Proctor Creek.



“

The history books stop with slavery and pick up with Dr. King. It's ridiculous. Our community's voice will be essential in the planning for this greenspace and keeping its history alive.”

Donna Stephens
Co-founder, Chattahoochee Brick Company Descendants Coalition



Photos (L-R): ©Kelly Jordan; ©Dollar Gill



Pogo Park Richmond, CA

Pogo Park is a nonprofit transforming little-used and abandoned city parks in Richmond, California’s Iron Triangle neighborhood into vibrant public spaces. Pogo Park is doing things differently, relying on its own community members to plan, design, build and manage these park spaces. By empowering the people who know the neighborhood best and are directly impacted by it, Pogo Park is demonstrating successful long-term sustainability.

In 2016, we purchased a small but important lot adjacent to the existing Harbour-8 Park, using a program-related investment loan from the David & Lucile Packard Foundation. Through our partnership with U-Haul, we helped advance Pogo Park’s efforts to transform underutilized spaces for the community and engage Richmond residents in job training and workforce development. The city was awarded a highly competitive \$8.5 million Prop 68 parks grant in 2020, which enabled the transfer of the land to the City of Richmond, expanding the park by 50% and enabling the construction of a community center and imaginative play structures designed and built by members of the Pogo Park Community Development Team.

Above: Harbour-8 Park is part of the City of Richmond’s planned Yellow Brick Road, a network of brightly stenciled, yellow bike and walking routes that connect schools, parks, churches, community centers, hospitals and public transportation hubs, giving 5,000 local children a safe, clean pathway through the Iron Triangle.



“

We are deeply indebted to The Conservation Fund for its entrepreneurial, can-do spirit and forward thinking. They are working with Pogo Park, shoulder to shoulder, to reimagine how a blank piece of industrial land in one of America’s most underserved neighborhoods can be repurposed for the public good.”

Toody Maher
Executive Director, Pogo Park

Anacostia River Southeast Washington, D.C.

Anacostia Park is a unit of the National Park Service and one of the District of Columbia’s largest greenspaces. However, many residents who live near the park lack access due to busy highways and rail lines. To improve park access and quality of life in neighborhoods east of Anacostia, we’ve been working with the Anacostia Park and Community Collaborative (APACC) — a consortium including residents and partners at the National Park Service and National Park Foundation — to better understand the residents’ interests and needs and enact improvements. Together, the Fund and APAAC are amplifying community voices and the neighbors’ key roles in park user programming, like boat trips, nature walks and environmental educational activities, and implementing future park improvements.

The Parks with Purpose program also supports the Friends of Anacostia Park, a cohort of Anacostia residents employed as guides, program leaders and community spokespeople who focus on health, recreation, socializing and learning in Anacostia Park. Residents in Ward 8 and DC Greens, Inc launched The Well at Oxon Run, which serves as a community food hub and greenspace, creating opportunities for learning and placemaking in Southeast Washington.



Bailey Drive Gateway Raleigh, NC

The combination of climate change and continued development in the Walnut Creek watershed in Southeast Raleigh has intensified an already immense flooding problem for surrounding neighborhoods. Working with the City and community residents, the Fund’s Parks with Purpose program in Raleigh is developing a series of gateways to Walnut Creek Wetland Park. The new access points, including one featuring an award-winning pavilion, reflect and incorporate the local history and cultural significance of the Rochester Heights and Biltmore Hills neighborhoods, Raleigh’s first planned Black subdivisions designed and built by families living there.

In addition to providing funding for the Bailey Drive Gateway construction, we also support community engagement through the regionally based Walnut Creek Watershed Partnership and the installation of art that will be incorporated into the new community pavilion to demonstrate the importance of cultural conservation.



Photos (L-R): ©Ivan LaBianca; ©Lindsey Walker

Resilient Water Management

Finding the Flint Atlanta

Most metro-Atlanta residents are surprised to learn that the Flint River, Georgia’s second longest river, begins near the world’s busiest airport, Hartsfield Jackson International. It’s easy to miss it — the headwaters are either completely hidden in culverts or they are unmarked and off-limits in the airport area.

Since 2016, The Conservation Fund has worked in tandem with the Atlanta Regional Commission to launch Finding the Flint, an effort to reveal the Flint River’s hidden headwaters to the public and showcase the river’s potential as a treasured recreation spot in the city. Our efforts include developing and mapping out ideas for how the Upper Flint River can be rediscovered and restored in a way that supports communities, connectivity to nature and economic development around the airport.

Our role in this initiative will include a series of greenspace acquisitions to protect properties along the Flint River headwaters and provide amenities to residents as we uncover this important water source for local ecosystems and Georgia’s large agricultural economy.



Proctor Creek Stream Restoration Atlanta

Proctor Creek was put into a concrete channel in the 1960s, and this project aims to restore it back to a natural floodplain state. The channel’s aging grey infrastructure contributes to flash flooding, erosion and pollution. Removing the concrete and naturalizing the stream will allow wetland areas to hold up to 5 million gallons of stormwater during heavy rain events, reducing localized flooding, improving water quality and providing habitat for local fish, animals and humans alike.

The Conservation Fund protected 10 acres of land for this project, and the Parks with Purpose program is working directly with the Hunter Hills Neighborhood Association to determine amenities that the community can benefit from in this new wetland.



Photos: ©Stacy Funderburke



Photos: ©Shawn Taylor



Photo: ©Ivan LaBianca

Ellerbe Creek Watershed & Durham Beltline Durham, NC

Durham’s rapid growth and redevelopment has raised concerns about gentrification and the displacement of legacy residents. One transformative approach to enhancing greenspace in a more equitable way is the Durham Beltline project, which aims to turn an abandoned downtown rail corridor into a sustainable city greenway. We helped the city purchase an abandoned two-mile, 18-acre historic railway corridor in 2017, and we continue to support the city’s planning efforts, ensuring opportunities for equitable community outreach so that all residents can take advantage of the environmental and economic benefits of the new Beltline.

The Conservation Fund’s Parks with Purpose program is also working with the Durham Community Land Trustees to add green and gray stormwater infrastructure, educational signage, and edible landscaping at a multi-family, trustee-owned, affordable housing property at Ashe Street in the city’s Goose Creek watershed. To date, the Trustees, the Fund and other local partners including Ellerbe Creek Watershed Association (ECWA) and Urban Community AgriNomics have developed a raised bed community garden and offered native pollinator plants and healthy local produce to residents. In addition, we’re working with ECWA to increase engagement and education in East Durham communities historically underserved by public infrastructure to help residents find or advocate for effective solutions to flooding and poor water quality.

We are also supporting the Merrick Moore Community Development Corporation’s efforts to rehabilitate an overgrown 2-acre site into a community food forest that includes a variety of fruit trees, edible shrubs, pollinator plants and community garden beds. This revitalized greenspace will increase access to fresh produce and community gathering space for underserved community members.



“Support from U-Haul and The Conservation Fund has made a huge impact in furthering this project that will not only address the food apartheid that exists within my community but will preserve greenspace and address mental and physical wellness while creating a space for community connectivity.”

Bonita Green
President, Merrick Moore Community Development Corporation

Marlborough Community Kansas City, MO

In the 1930s, the Marlborough community in south-central Kansas City, Missouri, was booming. New housing developments, schools and a downtown streetcar line made it a desirable place to live. But just 20 years later, Marlborough would suffer significant decline spurred by racist laws, lending practices, and zoning policies that segregated the area and restricted access to community resources and economic opportunity, disadvantaging the predominately Black neighborhoods east of Troost Avenue. Marlborough has been slow to recover ever since, and poor rental housing stock, trash dumping, crime and lack of economic opportunities have distressed the community further.

Building on the city’s infrastructure investments and the Marlborough Community Coalition’s Catalyst Plan, The Conservation Fund and U-Haul partnered with Heartland Conservation Alliance, the Marlborough Community Coalition, the City and other local stakeholders to develop a public green space around a wetland basin built by the city — which captures 12 million gallons of stormwater, keeping it off streets and out of basements in Marlborough. The 10-acre Marlborough Terrace includes a community gathering space, creative playground amenities, a walking trail, recreational areas and native gardens, all designed with extensive input from the Marlborough community. Together with our partners, our efforts also provided workforce training opportunities for residents and will generate additional economic investment within walking distance from the green space.



Greenseams® Milwaukee

Back-to-back storms in 1997 and 1998 resulted in millions of dollars in property damage throughout the Milwaukee metropolitan region. To ensure such devastation did not happen again, the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD) launched a pioneering flood management program called Greenseams®, with the help of The Conservation Fund, to protect important greenspaces within key watersheds. As designed and operated by the Fund, Greenseams® purchases land and conservation easements in the Milwaukee, Menomonee, Oak Creek, and Root River watersheds where major suburban growth occurs.

Greenseams® properties provide MMSD’s 28 cities and over 1.5 million residents with improved flood protection, water quality and climate resiliency. To date, we’ve protected 150 Greenseams® properties, including forests, prairies and wetlands that retain and filter millions of gallons of stormwater annually. Collectively, these areas can hold an estimated 1.3 billion gallons of water, the equivalent of 1,970 Olympic-sized swimming pools. And since Greenseams® properties are generally open to the public, Milwaukee metro residents and visitors have more opportunities to enjoy the outdoors as well as the benefits of increased flood and climate resiliency.



For more information about Resilient Water Management contact Erik Meyers: emeyers@conservationfund.org.



Photos (L-R): ©Ivan LaBianca; ©Lindsey Walker

Our Partners

Since our founding, The Conservation Fund has demonstrated how lasting conservation is possible through private and public partnerships across communities and sectors to make this important work a reality. Thank you to all our partners and supporters for standing alongside us as we work to conserve urban spaces across the country.

Atlanta Botanical Gardens	Concerted Care Group	Maree Farring Elementary/ Middle School	San Diego Food Systems Alliance
11th Street Bridge Park	DC Greens	McAdams (Engineering)	San Diego Project New Village
Akiima Price Consulting	Department of Watershed Management	Medstar Harbor Hospital	SEEDS (South Eastern Efforts Developing Sustainable Spaces)
American Conservation Experience	Descendants of the Chattahoochee Brick Coalition	Merrick Moore Community Development Corporation	St. Ambrose Episcopal Church
American Rivers	Design Workshop, Inc.	Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD)	Step Up Ministries
Anacostia Park and Community Collaborative	Duke Energy Foundation	National Aquarium	The Boys and Girls Club (Brooklyn, MD)
Atlanta Regional Commission	Durham Community Land Trustees	National Park Foundation	The Greater Baltimore Wilderness Coalition
Atlanta Watershed Learning Network	Eco-Action	National Park Service, National Capital Area	The JPB Foundation
Baltimore City Youth Fund	Ellerbe Creek Watershed Association	National Recreation and Parks Association	The National Aquarium
Ben Franklin High School	English Avenue Neighborhood Association	Natural Learning Initiative NCSU College of Design	The Watershed Learning Network (Durham)
Blue Water Baltimore	Enoch Pratt Brooklyn Branch Library	NC Central University Foundation	The Well at Oxon Run
Bourne to Film	Finding the Flint	NCSU College of Natural Resources	Tiffany Baker Artistry
Burts Bees Foundation	Friends of Anacostia Park	NCSU School of Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning	Trees Atlanta
Carolina Wetland Association	Friends of Garrett Park	Norman & Betty Camp Center in WCWP	Trees Durham
Center for Human and Earth Restoration	Fuller Elementary	Office of Resilience, City of Atlanta	Triangle Community Foundation
Chattahoochee Riverkeeper	Georgia Build Up	Park Pride	Triangle Greenway Council
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation	Greater Baybrook Alliance	Partners for Environmental Justice	U-Haul
Chesapeake Arts Center	Greening Youth Foundation	Perez Planning + Design, LLC	United Workers
City of Atlanta DWM	Healthy Food Financing Initiative	Pisces Foundation	Urban Community AgriNomics
City of Baltimore Recreation and Parks Department	Historic Westside Gardens	Pogo Park	Urban Waters Partnership Program
City of Durham Stormwater	Heartland Conservation Alliance	Prince Charitable Trusts	U.S. EPA Office of Water
City of Raleigh	Hunter Hills Neighborhood Association	Proctor Creek Stewardship Council	USFWS Chesapeake Bay Field Office
City of Raleigh Parks and Recreation and Cultural Affairs	Institute for Landscape Art and Sustainable Spaces	Resources Legacy Fund	Walnut Creek Wetland Center
City of Refuge	Jackie Tuner Consulting		Walnut Creek Wetland Community Partnership
City of Richmond CA	Kansas City (MO) Water		Water Resources Research Institute
Clean Water Foundation	Kris Bass Engineering		West Atlanta Watershed Alliance
Community Improvement Association	Lifecycle Building		

Support Urban Conservation

Your gift benefits America's lands, waters and communities. No matter what inspires you to give today, you can trust that we will put your donation into action and create lasting results for nature and for people.

— THE —
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conservationfund.org