



van cortlandt park alliance

2019

a public-private partnership
Bronx, NY



Our mission

The Van Cortlandt Park Alliance preserves, supports, and promotes the recreational, ecological and historical value of Van Cortlandt Park.



About Van Cortlandt Park

Third largest park in NYC

Located in northwest corner of the Bronx, the fastest growing borough

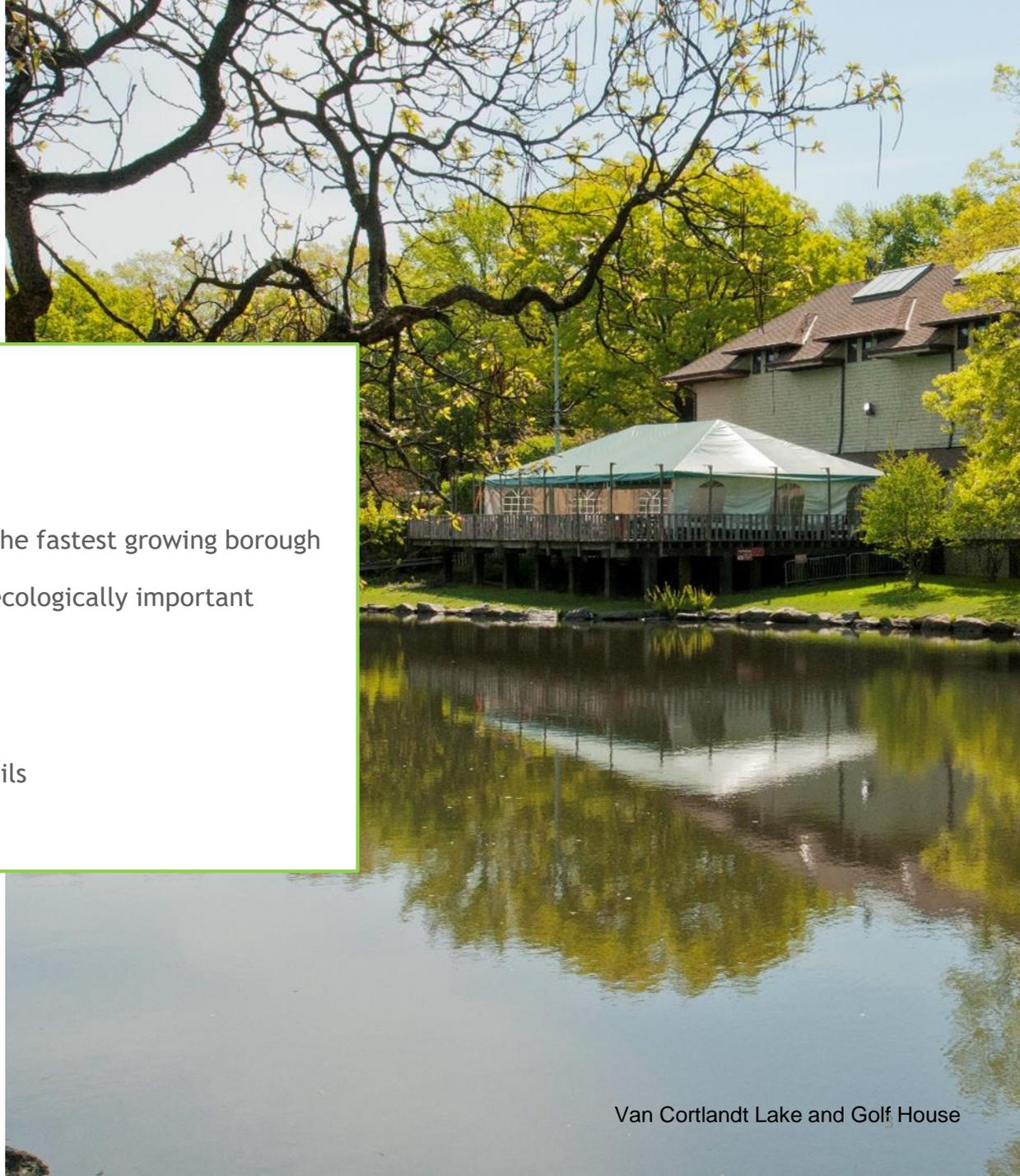
1,146 acres of recreational, historical and ecologically important resources

Used by over 2.5 million visitors each year

600 acres of forested land

25+ miles of hiking, walking and running trails

Largest freshwater lake in the Bronx





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was formed in 2019 as a merger of the Friends of Van Cortlandt Park and the Van Cortlandt Park Conservancy. As one organization, VCPA seeks to:

- Combine the strengths of the predecessor nonprofits to create a superior stewardship organization for Van Cortlandt Park
- Build a sustainable public/private partnership to preserve and enhance the park
- Offer effective educational programs
- Raise funds to implement the “2034 Van Cortlandt Park Master Plan”



New Beginnings



Bringing together our strengths

Strengths of the Friends

- Ties with the community; grassroots membership organization
- Over 25 years of advocacy on behalf of the park
- Successful educational and stewardship programs

Strengths of the Conservancy

- Well-developed relationship with NYC Parks
- Record of cultural programming
- Successful Urban Eco-Teens Youth Internship Program



Initial Goals of the Alliance

- i. Expand the Board of Directors
- ii. Secure additional general operating support to support merger and start-up
- iii. Identify capital priorities and raise significant funds for priority projects in the park
- iv. Launch VCPA membership program
- v. Establish unified headquarters office near or in the park
- vi. Continue and grow our educational, research, stewardship, and cultural programs
- vii. Take steps to secure a licensing agreement with the NYC Department of Parks & Recreation, joining numerous other parks groups in New York City



Central Park Conservancy Institute Partnerships Lab

In September 2019, the Alliance was awarded a year-long partnership with the Central Park Conservancy Institute for Urban Parks through its Partnerships Lab. The primary goals of the Partnerships Lab are to identify the long-term visions of partner organizations, define their distinct structural challenges, and develop strategies to overcome those challenges. To accomplish this, the Institute provides resources including staff time, technical expertise, external advising, and access to a broad network of urban park professionals.

As a “new” organization, the Alliance aims to use this timely partnership to focus on organizational fundamentals by strengthening its board. Through the CPC partnership, the Alliance will produce a board development plan to enlarge the board, expand its diversity, broaden members’ skills and prepare board members for fundraising.



Fiscal Year 2019 Program Snapshots

The Alliance and its predecessor organizations served more than 7,300 children and adults in 2019.



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vancortlandt.org

Urban Eco-Teens

Urban Eco-Teens is a year-round paid internship for high school students that prepares a new generation of students for college, stewardship, and natural resource management professions.

All interns work in the park alongside horticulturists and natural areas restoration staff from Van Cortlandt Park. They also complete labs, go on nature-focused field trips, and explore green career opportunities with natural resource professionals.

Eligible summer participants attend a tuition free, accredited, rigorous college course in Environmental Science at Lehman College; returning interns develop and present a special project; and, each year, two college-aged students develop leadership skills by training as program supervisors (Crew Leaders).

In the fall motivated interns become part of the Leadership Training series where they develop their own leadership skills through hands-on activities, and co-lead volunteer groups in the park.



Right top, Interns remove invasives from Van Cortlandt Lake

Right bottom, Eco-Teens welcome guest speaker Bronx Parks Commissioner Iris Rodriguez-Rosa, 2019





School Programs

Every year, the Van Cortlandt Park Alliance helps ecology and biology come alive for more than 2,000 local school children as they use the park as a science lab. They learn first-hand about forest ecology, habitats and the web of life; they plant trees and shrubs, hike through the woods on guided walks, and become aquatic biologists for the day to test water, collect insects and fish, and examine their findings under microscopes. They see how the data they collected compares to other student findings to understand the lake's health over time.

Left, students learning from their findings in Van Cortlandt Lake





Community Programs

Every year, the Alliance brings almost 2,000 volunteers into the park to garden, manage the forests and wetlands, and restore the more than 25-miles of hiking, walking, running and biking trails found throughout Van Cortlandt Park.

At left, volunteers help plant trees in the Northwest Woods of Van Cortlandt Park.



In 2019, more than 3,400 children and adults participated in community programs, including Barefoot Dancing, Youth Run Farm Stand, Enslaved Peoples Program and Hikes.

At left, VCPA Garden 2 Market interns run a weekly Youth Run Farm Stand providing locally grown produce at affordable prices to the community.





Barefoot Dancing features performers who play live instrumental music and present dance forms of their native ethnic tradition. The artists, skilled educators adept in engaging diverse audiences of adults and children, introduce the historical and cultural roots of each dance form, then draw the audience members in to join them.

At left, dancers enjoy the Van Cortlandt House grounds.

VCPA staff provide regular group hikes and tours of the park to engage visitors in the natural environment. In fall 2019, more than 100 supporters joined the Alliance for Hiketoberfest, a festive hike and Octoberfest in the park.



At right, Alliance staff guide hikers down the John Muir trail, Hiketoberfest 2019.





Environmental Preservation

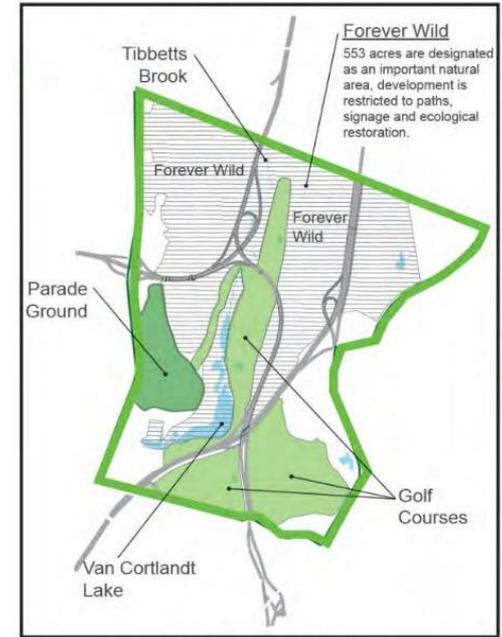
Natural Areas Management

Natural areas make up half of Van Cortlandt Park's 1,146 acres, and the Alliance is committed to managing these natural areas and improving the environment of the park.

The Alliance works throughout the year with volunteers from groups such as New York Roadrunners, local schools and corporations to improve the 25+ miles of trails that are central to the uniqueness of Van Cortlandt Park.

Alliance staff and volunteers are restoring the Tibbetts Brook Riparian Zone by removing non-native invasive plants and planting native trees, shrubs and groundcover to improve the overall health of this vital ecosystem.

And to better understand and protect Van Cortlandt Lake and Tibbetts Brook, Alliance staff and volunteers are monitor water quality and aquatic life.



Feature Project: Daylighting Tibbetts Brook

Tibbetts Brook ran from Van Cortlandt Lake to the Harlem River, but decades ago the brook was forced underground to accommodate urban development. Today, this means water from the lake enters the Broadway sewer at a rate of 4 to 5 million gallons of water per day — and that's on a dry day. Often when it rains, the combination of sewage, street runoff and the brook enters the combined sewer, bypasses the sewage treatment plant and flows directly into the Harlem River, degrading the health of the river. Bringing Tibbetts Brook back above ground ("daylighting") would remove this clean water from the sewer, reduce Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) occurrences on the Harlem River, and help with flooding issues along Broadway and other areas of the Tibbetts Brook Watershed.

Daylighting Tibbetts Brook is a key project in the Van Cortlandt Park 2034 Master Plan. In 2016, the Alliance (Friends) helped spearhead efforts to create the Coalition for Daylighting Tibbetts Brook. Now with more than twenty members, the Coalition supports the efforts of the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation to daylight Tibbetts Brook and create a greenway south of Van Cortlandt Park down to the Harlem River. The project requires acquisition of an abandoned rail line still owned by CSX Railroad. The project would have tremendous economic, environmental, recreational and aesthetic benefits for the Bronx. Moreover, it would help connect neighborhoods that have been cut off from each other and from Van Cortlandt Park.

Van Cortlandt Park Master Plan

The Master Plan reflects community priorities, develops solutions to Van Cortlandt Park's environmental and social challenges, and enhances the park's natural assets. The Plan calls for the following in Van Cortlandt Park:

New York City's healthiest forest and brook ecosystem with scenic trails and paths

A healthy and attractive Tibbetts brook that flows to the Harlem river

Enhanced landscape beauty and historic countryside appearance

Safe bicycle routes that connect the Putnam and East coast greenways

A scenic path around the entire park for strolling or jogging

Paths that make it easy and fun to cross the park

Pedestrian bridges that knit the park together

A shady and attractive park perimeter that encourages walking.

A premiere cross country trail system

Playgrounds, ball fields and courts

Covered active recreation areas for afterschool activities

Skating rink and cafe

Skate park

A small amphitheater

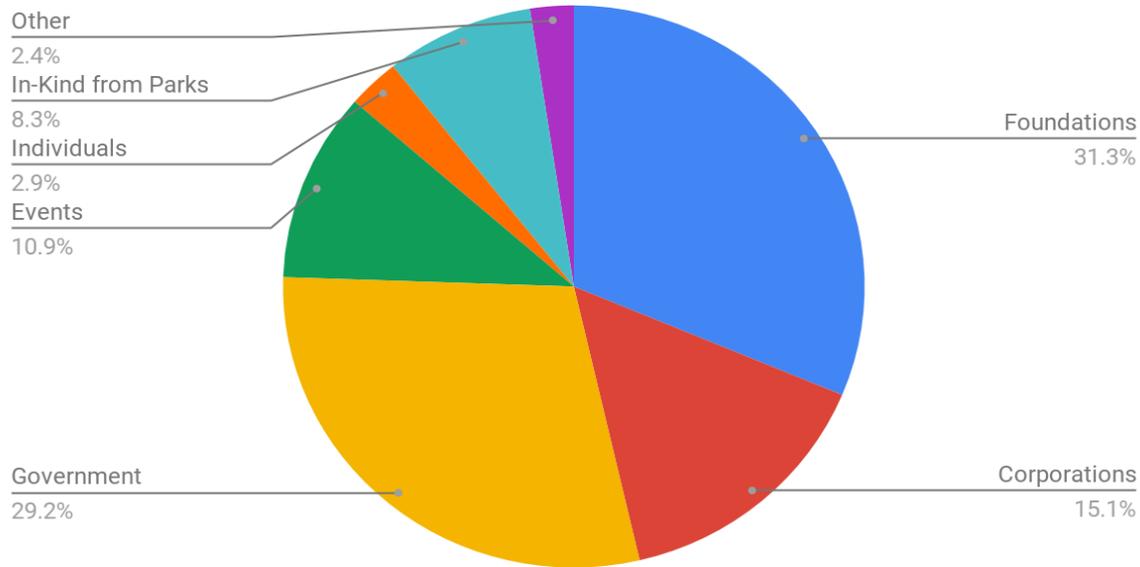
A comfort station and cafe for the Parade Ground

NYC Parks finalized a twenty-year Van Cortlandt Park [Master Plan](#) that will guide the restoration of Van Cortlandt Park's natural beauty and provide solutions for the needs of all neighboring communities. The Master Plan charts a clear course of action to restore and improve this unique property. The Master Plan is intended to coordinate efforts between agencies, nonprofit partners, elected officials and community groups to complete capital projects in Van Cortlandt Park.



Sources of Revenue

VCPA Projected Revenue for FY 2020 Totals \$862,000



The Van Cortlandt Park Alliance is a 501c3 nonprofit organization.
EIN 13-3843182

VCPA Staff: left to right: John Butler, Leslie Lannon, Christina Taylor,
Julie Micou Cerf, Janice DeLuise, Paulina Mohamed, Alex Byrne,
Sara Kempton and Erica Lewis.



Board of Directors



Co-Chair: Carol Samol, Urban Planner, Government

Co-Chair: Nina Habib Spencer, Vice President for Talent, Civic Entertainment Group

Secretary: Teresa Grant Stoeth, Attorney

Treasurer: Stacey Wieder, Executive Director, J.P. Morgan Chase & Co

Gary Axelbank, Producer, Bronx Talk and ThisIsTheBronx

Robert Baron, Community Development Consultant

Claudia Bonn, Arts Administration Consultant

Linda Cox, Urban Parks and Planning Practitioner (retired)

Rabbi Binyamin Krauss, Principal, SAR Academy

Thomas Kelly, PhD, Head of School, Horace Mann Academy

Holly Leicht, Executive VP, Empire State Development

Brennan O'Donnell, PhD, President, Manhattan College

Amit Stern, Managing Partner, RBK Capital

Olga Luz Tirado, Executive Director, Bronx Tourism Council

Iris Rodriguez-Rosa, Bronx Parks Commissioners, *Ex-Officio*

Andrew Cohen, Council Member, District 11, *Ex-Officio*

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March 2020



At VCPA launch picnic - June 11, 2019 – NYC Parks Commissioner Mitchell Silver, VCPA Co-Chair Nina Habib Spencer, Councilmember Andy Cohen, Bronx Parks Commissioner Iris Rodriguez-Rosa, and VCPA Co-Chair Carol Samol



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