



Greening Western Queens Fund Year Three Grants 2013

Urban Forestry

City Parks Foundation (Two-year grant: \$972,207)

To complete the planting of an 830-tree canopy in Western Queens, install 500 tree guards, and engage its volunteer base towards the creation of a new community stewardship group.

For fifteen years, City Parks Foundation (CPF) has worked to develop thousands of volunteer tree stewards and has fostered tree stewardship groups throughout New York City, including the Bronx River Alliance, the Fort Greene Conservancy, and the Historic Harlem Parks Coalition. Over the past two years with funding from Greening Western Queens Fund, City Parks Foundation led a large investment to create an urban tree canopy covering the affected area. With feedback gathered from a series of community events and block-by-block canvassing activities, the organization developed and carried out a comprehensive forestry plan – recruiting and training hundreds of local volunteers to map, plant, and steward almost 700 trees to date. In the coming year, CPF will activate past volunteers and recruit new ones to help plant another 100 trees, install 500 tree guards, and continue tree care activities. It will also engage its volunteer network in a series of visioning workshops and in-depth training sessions with the goal of creating an independent community stewardship group to preserve the Western Queens tree canopy's long-term health and well-being.

Friends of Sunnyside Gardens Park (One-year grant: \$40,000)

To continue renovation and landscaping work around the Sunnyside Gardens Park perimeter.

Situated within a bustling residential and retail area, Sunnyside Gardens Park offers an important green space and recreational facilities for hundreds of neighborhood children and families. Once home to dead trees, piles of debris, and other environmental hazards, the park's 1,750 square-foot perimeter has undergone a major makeover over the past two years. Through the efforts of Friends of Sunnyside Gardens Park (FSGP), the 48th and 50th Street sides are newly landscaped with tree-lined, pedestrian-friendly sidewalks and stone retaining walls. FSGP will continue this renovation work and begin cleaning and greening the Barnett Avenue side, where tall weeds and brush currently hinder foot traffic between a major residential complex and nearby shopping district. Plans include replacing dead trees with more sustainable vegetation, building a public seating area, and extending the park's community gardening plots.

Sunnyside Community Services (One-year grant: \$115,000)

To carry out a green jobs internship program for 15 in-school youth in Western Queens.

Sunnyside Community Services' (SCS) innovative partnership with Trees NY provides an in-depth and impactful summer internship program introducing Western Queens high school students to the green economy, a sector where they are vastly underrepresented. Now entering its third year, the program has brought together a unique combination of educational enrichment, job skills training, and other supports to prepare low-income and immigrant youth for higher education and environmental careers. In 2013, SCS will recruit 15 new interns, each responsible for completing a 250-hour commitment from July through January. While receiving ongoing college readiness support from SCS staff, participants will meet with environmental professionals, care for up to 200 trees, teach environmental stewardship classes to SCS' child or senior participants, and organize community clean-up days.

Sunnyside Community Services (One-year grant: \$85,000)

To expand its green jobs internship program to include disconnected youth in Western Queens.

Sunnyside Community Services (SCS) will also build upon the success of its green jobs program and expand it to include 15 disconnected youth who have earned a high school diploma or G.E.D., but are not in college or working. Each responsible for a 250-hour commitment between March and August, participants will spend the first three months undergoing a rigorous training program where they will undertake tree care activities and become certified citizen pruners, meet with environmental professionals, and receive job readiness skills support. Over the summer, they will take on paid internships at environmental organizations to gain real-life work experience towards possible green careers. Participants will also receive ongoing counseling to explore career options and prepare for college or other educational programs.

Trees NY (One-year grant: \$75,000)

To train 300 volunteers and steward 700 trees through a series of citizen pruner courses and tree care outings.

Founded in 1976 to plant, preserve, and protect New York City's urban forest, Trees NY has trained more than 17,000 individuals in tree care and stewardship, and planted over 3,800 trees in underserved communities throughout the city. Since tree pruning services have experienced major city budget cuts, Trees NY's services are more vital than ever. It is now the sole provider of stewardship and pruning training to local community members. In 2013, Trees NY will partner with the City Parks Foundation to train 300 volunteers and steward 700 trees through a series of citizen pruner courses and tree care outings. It will also conduct outreach in Spanish, Mandarin, and Bengali-speaking communities to build a volunteer pool that reflects the area's diversity.

Greening Infrastructure

Asian Americans for Equality (One-year grant: \$50,000)

To foster the participation and build the leadership capacity of Asian Americans and other immigrant communities in Western Queens greening efforts.

Asian Americans for Equality (AAFE)'s "Go Green Western Queens" project has successfully reached hundreds of low-income immigrants -- engaging tenants, home and small business owners, and young people who might otherwise be left out of environmental initiatives due to language and cultural barriers. Given its successful track record with diverse populations, AAFE will deepen outreach and coordination with other organizations including the Queens Library Foundation, City Parks Foundation, City Growers, Recycle-a-Bicycle, and the Western Queens Compost Initiative to promote programming that is culturally and linguistically accessible to multicultural audiences, including and especially its own constituency. To sustain the greening of Western Queens, AAFE convene a "Green Club" of residents, community organizations, and local institutions committed to environmental action through grassroots collective efforts.

City Growers (One-year grant: \$90,000)

To educate school children in urban environmental stewardship using the Brooklyn Grange urban rooftop farm.

From a city classroom to a rooftop farm, City Growers has transformed the learning process for thousands of young people since its inception only two years ago. Through its three core programs -- farm tours, gardening workshops, and school partnerships -- participants learn about the environment by "getting their hands dirty" and directly interacting with plants, soil, insects, and other elements of nature. Last year, City Growers partnered with 13 local schools and engaged 1,600 children ages 3 through 23 in its unique environmental education programming. In 2013, it aims to reach another 1,500 young people from the affected area, placing special priority on students with disabilities, from low-income backgrounds, and ethnically diverse communities.

CUNY School of Law Foundation (One-year grant: \$18,000)

To develop and implement environmental justice curricula for high school and middle school students.

The Center for Urban Environmental Reform (CUER) at CUNY Law School works to empower communities so that they are able to participate fully and meaningfully in environmental decisions that affect them. CUER aims to train Queens students as environmental justice ambassadors, and will develop a curriculum based on *Mayah's Lot*, an environmental-justice themed graphic novel previously created with PS 122 students. CUER will continue working with PS 122 along with PS 85, a local elementary school, to pilot the curriculum and ensure its appropriateness for various age levels. *Mayah's Lot* will be used to train 100 high school peer educators, as well as teachers interested in using it to satisfy Common Core Learning Standards. A culminating conference at CUNY Law School will bring together teachers and students to share lessons learned and plan future work.

Green Guerillas (One-year grant: \$63,600)

To support the Western Queens Youth Tillers Program and organize an environmental film festival.

Green Guerillas started in the 1970s when a few concerned citizens began to clean and transform New York's dirty, empty lots into flourishing community gardens. Since then, it has sparked and supported greening efforts throughout the city -- helping neighborhood groups build their own gardens, providing green job training for young people, and hosting community events that join diverse groups in environmental action. The Western Queens Youth Tillers Program will engage 10 youth of color in a nine-week internship program, where they will carry out gardening, farming, community education, tree planting and other greening activities in partnership with local groups in the affected area. In conjunction with the Queens Library, Green Guerillas will also sponsor a fall film festival featuring numerous short films on urban farming, community gardening, and other grassroots environmental efforts.

GrowNYC (One-year grant: \$85,000)

To provide ongoing customized support for ten existing school gardens, and connect schools to additional resources to sustain their gardens.

In 2010, there was only one school garden in the area affected by the 2006 Western Queens blackout. There are ten more today as a result of GrowNYC's commitment to taking classroom learning to the schoolyard. Carefully engaging staff, students, and parents to plan and plant gardens reflecting a host school's preferences and personality, GrowNYC has helped nurture a vibrant and supportive community surrounding each new garden. It also led dozens of teacher and student workshops on soil ecology, herb and vegetable planting, sunlight principles, and other topics important for garden preservation. In 2013, GrowNYC will provide ongoing customized support at the ten sites and invite each of them to participate in its "Grow to Learn" program, offering mini-grants, curriculum ideas, and other strategies to support garden sustainability. GrowNYC will also host community events such as harvest festivals, groundbreaking ceremonies, and on-site demonstrations to engage local residents in garden activities.

Horticultural Society (One-year grant: \$414,000)

To create six (6) new school gardens, provide teacher training and educational workshops for students, and implement a green internship program for 25 high school students.

School gardens are places for learning and growing. They help foster environmental and nutritional literacy, improve air quality, reduce storm water run-off, and produce vegetables and herbs for education and consumption. Over the past two years, the Horticultural Society (The Hort) has helped four (4) schools create such learning gardens, transforming thousands of square feet of underutilized space into places where new possibilities blossom every day. Each garden was built as a result of a comprehensive process involving student, staff, parent and community input, and accompanied by dozens of student workshops and in-depth teacher trainings to help each school community nurture their new garden. In 2013, the Hort will apply its tried-and-true model to build another six (6) learning gardens in the affected area; a new green jobs training program will run concurrently and offer paid internships for 25 youth to gain experience with garden installation, green infrastructure, and horticultural techniques.

Jacob Riis Neighborhood Settlement House (One-year grant: \$20,000)

To expand community garden programming and solidify its working group of senior leaders.

Located within the country's largest public housing development, the Jacob Riis Neighborhood Settlement House (Riis Settlement) has created new options and opportunities for low-income residents in an area where open green space and healthy food are hard to find. Over the past year, its efforts to triple the size of the Queensbridge Community Garden have resulted in daily sustenance and dynamic programming for more than 250 residents annually. From nutrition counseling, to gardening and cooking demonstrations, to a food ethnography project jointly produced by the organization's senior and youth participants, the garden has created enriching educational experiences for Riis Settlement participants young and old, and built strong community ties between African American and Spanish-speaking immigrant seniors. In 2013, Jacob Riis will continue solidifying the working group of older adults formed last year to foster resident-based leadership of the garden, and expand outreach to attract more neighborhood seniors to its programs.

Queens Library Foundation (One-year grant: \$410,000)

*To expand gardens at five current and three new sites, create **Environment in a Box** kits, and facilitate community action groups to sustain "Greening Libraries" into the future.*

Through "Greening Libraries," the Queens Library has transformed into a sustainability center, providing environmental awareness and educational resources to thousands of low-income immigrants, seniors, and young people from multicultural communities across Western Queens. Over the past two years, the Library has expanded its circulation of environmental books and periodicals, offered hundreds of educational workshops, created five urban gardens, and served as a collection site for more than 8,000 pounds of recycling waste. To continue its commitment to "growing green" in the coming year, the Library will enhance its five existing gardens and build three new ones, create and distribute *Environment in a Box* re-usable educational packages for various age and demographic groups, and engage its community-based leadership councils to support and sustain "Greening Libraries" programming for the long run.

Refugee & Immigrant Fund (RIF) (One-year grant: \$31,000)

To provide green jobs training and psychological healing for refugees in the affected area.

The Refugee and Immigrant Fund (RIF) provides critical legal and psychological assistance for survivors of war, violence, and torture, and others seeking asylum in the U.S. In 2011, it launched the Urban Farm Recovery project to help refugees recover from trauma and rebuild their lives through a meaningful and restorative urban farming experience. Housed at the Brooklyn Grange Rooftop Farm in Long Island City, the project has successfully engaged more than a dozen refugees from the blackout-affected area in internships offering hands-on environmental education and job training in urban agriculture, while supporting participants' psychological healing, improving their confidence and communication skills, and helping to facilitate their social integration. As "green ambassadors," interns have conducted outreach in their respective communities and invited peers to workshops at the Farm; one such gathering introduced the Brooklyn Grange to 30 former farmers from Pakistan and Afghanistan. RIF plans to continue this successful program and welcome seven (7) new interns in the coming year.

Rural Route Films (One-year grant: \$5,000)

To sponsor an environmental film festival reaching 2,000 Western Queens residents.

Through educational programming and workshops, Rural Route Films promotes sustainability via agriculture and art. With its first festival opening ten years ago, the organization showcases film and video to highlight contemporary environmental, agriculture and urban greening issues, and to promote healthier lifestyles among diverse audiences. Focusing on Western Queens this year, the 2013 event will feature over 30 films, live music and visual art exhibits at the Museum of the Moving Image, Brooklyn Grange rooftop farm, and other local venues. Outreach will target residents from Astoria Heights, Old Astoria, Ravenswood, and other blackout-affected neighborhoods that have not historically been involved in greening projects. The festival will include workshops on gardening, green roofs, PSA-writing, and other opportunities for attendees of all ages to take action in greening their communities.

Western Queens Compost Initiative (WQCI) (One-year grant: \$415,000)

To dramatically expand community-based composting efforts in Western Queens.

With an expansive network of food scrap collection and processing sites in Western Queens, WQCI has grown from a small volunteer-run operation in 2009 to the largest local organics recovery program in the city. Last year, the organization engaged more than 20,000 residents in composting activities and workshops, collected over 150,000 pounds of organic waste, and established a new 7,000 sq. ft. composting site at Baby Queensbridge Park. In light of its rapid growth, WQCI was recently awarded funding from New York City Department of Sanitation to sustain its Western Queens operations, and its model is currently being considered for adoption citywide. In the coming year, WQCI will grow its Junior Composter program, empowering 15 low-income youth as composting and waste reduction ambassadors. It also plans to acquire a state-of-the-art composting system that will increase its compost processing speed by 700% -- from 1.5 tons a week to 1.5 tons a day. This investment will maximize both its operational efficiency and long-term capacity to provide lasting benefits to New Yorkers.