

# **Hudson River Park Mission Statement and Performance Measurement Report for FY 2020-21**

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

As set forth in the Hudson River Park Trust’s enabling legislation, the Hudson River Park Act (Act), Chapter 592 of the 1998 Laws of New York, the mission of the Hudson River Park Trust is to encourage, promote and expand public access to the Hudson River, to promote water-based recreation, and enhance the natural, cultural, and historic aspects of the river from north of Chambers Street to West 59th Street in New York City for residents and visitors to the area. The Trust has authority over the planning, construction, operation and maintenance of Hudson River Park.

## **PUBLIC BENEFIT**

While residents and workers in and around the west side of lower Manhattan may be the primary benefactors, the benefits of Hudson River Park (the “Park”) extend to all stakeholders including the people of the City of New York, the State of New York, local employees, and tourists and visitors from across the region, the country and the world. During the pandemic, New Yorkers sought open space in record numbers. The Park's four miles of lawns, esplanades and public piers along Manhattan's west side played a pivotal role in New York's response to the demand.

## **PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT REPORT**

### **1. Plan and Design the Park**

Hudson River Park is being designed within an environmental and regulatory framework to provide for a wide variety of active and passive recreational opportunities, including children’s playgrounds, recreational fields and courts, comfort stations, small food concessions, boathouses, lawns, gardens, public art, cultural events and education spaces, and more. For new public park areas, Trust staff, architects, engineers and landscape architects have historically worked with local community members to identify specific programs and elements for the piers and upland areas in each community. As park development advances, areas to be designed continue to undergo collaborative planning and collaboration with local groups consistent with Hudson River Park practices since inception.

During FY 2020-21, design continued on three important Park areas: Gansevoort Peninsula, Pier 97 and Chelsea Waterside Park. Community responses have been overwhelmingly positive for each area.

The design for Gansevoort Peninsula includes the construction of a resilient beach, boardwalk and kayak launch on the south side, a salt marsh on the north side, a large synthetic turf ball field, dog run, adult fitness area, lawn for passive recreation, small park building and a variety of paths and

esplanades. Procurement for the first major phases of construction was completed during the fourth quarter of FY 20-21 and construction commenced in late Spring 2021.

Design of Pier 97 was completed at the end of 2020, and the Trust's Board of Directors approved the first of several procurements, fabrication of unique shade structures, in March 2021. Subsequent procurements for construction at the site will enable construction to commence in early Summer 2021. Pier 97's design includes a distinctive new playground, multipurpose activity field, sun lawn, belvedere and sunset deck in addition to pathways, lush plantings and other park amenities, including a new restroom and small concession.

In addition, the Trust's landscape architecture team continued its design of the Chelsea Waterside Park Phase II upgrades. The design includes a comfort station with solar panels to reduce the Park's energy footprint, an expanded dog run and picnic area, and a reconstructed synthetic turf field, among other improvements. Construction at the site is scheduled to begin in late Summer 2021.

## **2. Construct the Park**

Despite the pandemic, construction activity at the Park continued in earnest during FY 20-21, with the Trust and its partners making significant progress on construction of new public park areas. Notable developments include: completion of Pier 26, continued construction of *Day's End* at the Gansevoort Peninsula and Pier 55 (both scheduled for completion in Spring 2021), and fabrication of required elements for the upcoming oyster and habitat enhancements at the Tribeca area of the Estuarine Sanctuary. Additionally, the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) commenced conversion of the former tow pound at Pier 76 into an interim public park space.

### **A. Pier 26**

After several years of design and construction, the Trust successfully opened Pier 26 in September 2020. Pier 26's design celebrates the Hudson River estuary and uniquely includes a "Tide Deck" – an engineered salt marsh with tidal pools at its western tip, and a small, active field area that supports the recreational needs of the expanding community of children in Lower Manhattan. The local community, represented by Community Board 1, provided strong support for the design vision. Since its opening, the sunning lawn, deck seating, shade pavilions and sports play area have proven to be immensely popular features, and the Trust's River Project staff has been monitoring habitat and offering educational tours of the Tide Deck.

### **B. Day's End and Gansevoort Peninsula**

Throughout FY20-21, the Whitney Museum of American Art continued fabrication of a new, permanent public art installation located on the south side of the Gansevoort Peninsula, entitled *Day's End* by artist David Hammons. *Day's End* derives its inspiration and name from Gordon Matta-Clark's 1975 artwork once located in the same location, and is being donated to Hudson River Park by the Whitney Museum of American Art.

Construction on the remainder of Gansevoort Peninsula to convert it into a public park use began in Spring 2021. The first phase of construction involved the delivery of 30,000 cubic yards of certified virgin fill material to compress existing soils at the site; the new fill material will then be reused on site including to raise the elevation of the future ballfield. The Trust also prepared procurement documents and awarded contracts for the marine construction and general construction contracts needed to begin the transform the Peninsula into parkland inclusive of a resilient beach, boardwalk, kayak launch, salt marsh, synthetic turf field and other amenities.

C. Pier 55 aka “Little Island”

Construction of Little Island, a new 2.7-acre public pier planned as public open space enhanced by performing arts programming, continued throughout FY 20-21, and remained on track to open to the public in May 2021. The cost of Pier 55 is estimated at approximately \$250 million, with most of the funding coming from the private donor, Barry Diller and the Diller-von Furstenberg Family Foundation. Little Island will host a season of programming in 2021 to foster and support New York City-based artists.

D. Tribeca Habitat Enhancements

In 2019, Governor Cuomo announced his intention to implement an oyster and habitat enhancement project in the Tribeca portion of the Estuarine Sanctuary located between Piers 26 and 34. In conjunction with the State Department of Environmental Conservation, and with input from the science community, the Trust developed a project to enhance habitat in the area, using existing park infrastructure where possible. Specific enhancement features include: placement of biohuts around certain existing piles; installing gabions and reef balls with seeded oyster shells in the interpier areas; installing textured piles; and wrapping select existing piles with mesh fabric containing oyster shells. A marine construction contractor was selected through a competitive procurement process in FY 20-21 and fabrication of the various features began. In-water work is scheduled to begin in Summer 2021.

E. Pier 57

Until 2004, Pier 57 was used for New York City bus parking. Today, it is undergoing a high quality, privately funded, historic restoration, inside and outside, as a mixed use, revenue-generating pier. Construction of 57 experienced some delays in FY20-21 due to COVID. However, one subtenant, City Winery, opened its business on the southeast corner of Pier 57 during the fiscal year and is in full operation as of Spring 2021. Meanwhile, Google, the anchor subtenant, continued fit-out of its premises during FY20-21 and is expected to begin occupying the pier in Spring 2022 along with other planned uses and programmed areas. Planning and construction of these spaces also continued in FY20-21; these include a public food marketplace, additional restaurants, an environmental exhibit space and classroom to be operated by Hudson River Park’s River Project, other cultural and learning centers, and an indoor public seating area. On the roof will be a large landscaped public park with panoramic views of Manhattan and the New York Harbor.

F. Pier 76

In March 2021, Governor Cuomo announced that the public would have access to Pier 76 as an interim public open space in June 2021. OPRHP is leading this effort to transform the pier, including overseeing the demolition of the former NYPD tow pound building. Completion of this work will add much-needed outdoor space in time for the summer season, and the Trust is preparing to operate the pier once construction is complete.

G. Pier 97

The Trust completed design plans for Pier 97 and in March 2021 approved the first of several contracts required to convert the pier structure into a landscaped public park pier. Construction is expected to begin in late Summer 2021. Further, in 2020, the in-water portion of a modest new over-water pedestrian platform was completed between West 58th and 59th Streets; the platform will be landscaped as part of the forthcoming Pier 97 upland park construction to help improve circulation and safety.

H. Pier 40

At Pier 40, divers from marine construction firms installed individual “jackets” and made other repairs as part of the Phases 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the Pier 40 pile repair program. The Trust has sufficient funding from the air rights sale to complete the pile work, with the last Phase 7 commencing in 2021. Collectively, these repairs will ensure that Pier 40 is once again supported by structurally sound piles needed for public recreational and commercial uses that help support the Park’s overall care and operations. In 2020, the Trust also approved contracts for select Pier 40 façade repairs and roof reconstruction work which also began during FY20-21.

### **3. Operate and Maintain the Park**

COVID caused significant operational challenges for Hudson River Park in FY20-21, including loss of income due to its impact on most of the Park’s rent-paying tenants and other occupants. As a result, the Trust was unable to hire the full complement of seasonal horticultural and other staff members we rely on to care for and support programming in the Park. At the same time, as with other parks throughout New York State and City, Hudson River Park was heavily used throughout the pandemic given the public’s need for places for safe outdoor recreation.

The Trust’s Horticulture Team works hard every year to maintain the Park’s beautiful horticultural assets, and relies on volunteers to help with weeding, bulb planting and other plant-related tasks. Hudson River Park Friends supports this work by recruiting volunteers to help with the Park’s gardening efforts. While Friends had to pause volunteer programming due to COVID, Friends secured funding for seasonal gardeners that the Trust would otherwise have been unable to hire given staff reductions due to lost income during COVID. This staffing was essential to helping support the Park’s landscapes during an exceptionally challenging year.

The Park’s staff and key contractual partners like New York City’s Park Enforcement Patrol (PEP) met the challenges brought on by COVID, frequently doing more with less and adding to normal duties. PEP officers distributed hundreds of thousands of masks throughout the year, and educated

Park users about social distancing. Additional cleaning was implemented at playgrounds and public restrooms. Staff members created signage and social distancing messaging, and updated it throughout the year as requirements changed. In all, the Trust continues to operate and maintain the Park at a high level so that it remains a community asset and economic generator while simultaneously serving the millions of New Yorkers and tourists who use it annually.

Beyond day-to-day care, the Trust routinely reviews the maintenance needs of the Park and updates its security and maintenance plans accordingly based on available budgets. For example, in FY 2020-21, the Trust continued to expand its security system by adding new cameras and related infrastructure, and also replaced its access control software and hardware systems. The new software and hardware replace an obsolete system and allow for better video surveillance coordination, communications management, and intrusion alerts, among other features.

Maintaining the Park includes capital maintenance projects for both Park-specific repairs and replacements, like playground safety surfaces and intermittent pile repairs, and repairs associated with maintaining legacy assets like Pier 40 and the historic bulkhead. Repairs to legacy assets are often complicated and costly. For example, aside from the ongoing pile repairs, at Pier 40, there is a continued effort under way to replace the enormous pier's sprinkler system, reconstruct portions of the roof, repair critical areas of the facade and make other life safety improvements.

Beyond Pier 40, in FY 2020-21, contractors retained by the Trust conducted inspections of and completed repairs to certain piles and bulkhead sections, ensuring that they will remain in a state of good repair. Other repairs were implemented for a similar reason, such as the replacement of pavers and installing new asphalt at multiple locations.

Although the Trust adjusted its cleaning protocols and temporarily closed certain fields and courts for public safety during the early days of the COVID pandemic in line with New York State and City Department of Health guidelines, the Trust reopened most such areas very early in the Fiscal Year while adhering to State and City guidance. Such reopenings allowed children and other Park patrons to enjoy the Park safely throughout the pandemic. Many aspects of the Park's operations were modified and adapted to comply with new rules and best practices, and the Trust continues to follow the guidance as New York City and New York State proceed with re-opening plans.

#### **4. Provide Free and/or Low Cost Public Recreational, Educational and Cultural Opportunities**

Throughout FY 20-21, the Park became a refuge during the COVID pandemic with many users recognizing the value of walking, exercising and relaxing in public parks and open spaces throughout New York City. Other than a brief closure in the Spring of 2020, sports fields, tennis and basketball courts, skate parks, and playgrounds remained available for public use throughout the Park in accordance with State and City guidelines while adhering to public safety requirements. Non-motorized boathouses did not offer free kayaking to the public as in past summers given COVID limitations, but were able to offer some access to members and others based on their own operating criteria and standards.

In 2020, the Trust also reimagined and created its free public events series so that it could occur virtually due to COVID. The first virtual *Summer of Fun* included past summer favorites such as jazz performances, Sunset Salsa lessons, STEM expert lectures, field science exposes, virtual summer camps and Healthy on the Hudson fitness classes. Visitors to the Trust’s website and social media platforms came from over the world, demonstrating the value of some continued virtual public programming in the future. For FY 21-22, the Trust is planning a combination of virtual and in-person programs for its *Summer of Fun*.

Last year, Hudson River Park also created and launched the “STEM Activity of the Week” series. These numerous virtual lessons have become some of the most heaviest trafficked pages on the Park’s website, demonstrating their usefulness to parents and caregivers seeking free educational activities for their children. The Trust’s popular SUBMERGE Marine Science Festival was also held virtually in early Fall 2020. While virtual, the event continued to showcase the diversity of research and science taking place in the Park and local waterways. Virtual attendees learned about local wildlife, field science work, and plastic pollution, and over 6,000 people attended, including over 2,000 students and teachers participating in up to four hours of free educational programming.

### **5. Promote Environmental Stewardship and Enhance the Estuarine Sanctuary**

The Trust continues to take seriously its mandate to protect and enhance existing marine habitat and the 400 acres of Estuarine Sanctuary. This is achieved through multiple partnerships and science projects including a robust slate of research initiatives, continuing progress on the Estuarine Sanctuary Management Plan, and through direct efforts to enhance the river and park environment. To this end, the Trust commenced upgrading the River Project’s Wetlab space at Pier 40, inclusive of a new lab for eDNA and water quality processing and a new microscope projection system funded by grants. Additionally, the Trust, in partnership with a science education group named Killer Snails, received a 2.5-year grant from the National Institute of Health focused on engaging students and the public on water quality and the impact of environmental pollutants.

Due to the social distancing guidelines required during the COVID pandemic, the Trust was not able to conduct in-person environmental education. Nevertheless, the Trust maintained its robust science education programming inspired by and focused on the Sanctuary throughout FY 2020-21. The Trust’s education staff developed a series of digital educational resources for teachers, students and families to engage with the Sanctuary from home. The resources, comprised of 25 publicly accessible lessons, including hands-on experiments and activities to teach fish ecology, plankton, pollution, human impacts and more. Beyond these lessons, the Trust also offered a wide range of digital public education programs for New Yorkers to learn about the Sanctuary from anywhere reaching over 21,000 people in 2020.

The Trust continued to operate a composting program, with ten locations throughout the Park for the public to drop off food scrap waste. Trust Staff collects the food waste and then the composted soil is used throughout the Park’s landscape.

### **6. Establish an Estuarine Sanctuary Management Plan**

The Act required the Trust to prepare an Estuarine Sanctuary Management Plan (ESMP) which has provided guidance on balancing the needs of various Park purposes while monitoring and enforcing Park policies, laws and regulations to manage and protect the sanctuary. In FY 2020-21 the Trust continued its effort to update the ESMP, which will include an action plan for the next decade focused on three management areas: (1) Education, (2) Research and Habitat Enhancement, and (3) Public Access and Resource Management. Technical Advisory Committees (TACs) comprised of experts in these areas supported this effort throughout the year. The Trust will conduct a public hearing process in summer 2021 to solicit feedback on the Draft ESMP before finalizing it later in 2021.

### **7. Promote economic development and tourism in the state of New York**

Throughout the fiscal year, the Park continued to be very crowded as parks became a refuge during the COVID pandemic. The Park continued to be visited annually by millions of people – both New Yorkers and visitors to the City. The opening of Pier 26 received considerable news coverage and brought many visitors to the Park to visit the uniquely beautiful pier setting and learn about the Estuarine Sanctuary. Despite the pandemic, non-profit and private businesses located within the Park opened or reopened their doors, providing activities for tourists and other park visitors and also supporting the economy. As the number of Park amenities increases and as the types of tenants and permittees grow more diverse, such as this year's opening of City Winery at Pier 57, the number of visitors and opportunities for economic growth will continue to grow.

However, the COVID pandemic also clearly impacted economic development as many of the Park's tenants and concessionaires had to close or limit their operations during the year, and in-person permitting events were canceled. The Trust worked with such tenants on adjusted rent schedules. While necessary, this resulted in reduced operating income available to the Trust for park operations.

### **8. Operate on a model of economic self-sufficiency**

The Trust seeks to ensure the Park's future financial self-sufficiency by growing its annual revenue, currently generated principally through commercial leases at certain piers as well as parking fees, shorter term occupancy permits, field fees and sponsorships. In addition, the Trust continues to work closely with Hudson River Park Friends, a non-profit dedicated to raising money for the Park, including on its successful initiatives to raise funds for playgrounds, art restoration, composting equipment, volunteering and other important projects. In FY 20-21, the Trust took proactive measures and implemented numerous cost-saving measures in its budget, including some deferrals of capital maintenance, to ensure that the Park's core operational needs could still be met despite the reduced income associated with COVID. While experiencing shortfalls in lease rents and other occupancy permit fees, the Trust was able to cut operating expenses and thereby generate a small surplus even after covering its reduced capital maintenance program.