



## **Report on Operations and Accomplishments in 2023-24**

During Fiscal Year 2023-24, the Hudson River Park Trust (“Trust”) again advanced planning, construction, environmental, programming and operational initiatives that are at the heart of its mission. Hudson River Park (the “Park”) continued to provide high-quality public open space and accessible environmental, educational, fitness and recreational programming throughout the Fiscal Year.

### **Construction and New Projects**

#### ***Pier 26 Science Play Area***

Construction of the new Science Playground in Tribeca adjacent to Pier 26 was completed in January 2024 when the first group of school children joined staff and donors for the grand opening. The Science Play Area includes unique play equipment including a 90-foot-long Atlantic sturgeon and 49-foot-long Shortnose sturgeon, along with slides, climbing nets and other features designed as aquatic organisms and has been filled with young children daily since its grand opening. Trust staff have already begun field testing educational programs using this new resource.

#### ***Estuarium***

The Estuarium would be an approximately 10,000-square-foot new environmental education and science building located upland of Pier 26 next to the Science Play Area. In September 2022, the Trust approved a contract with Sage & Coombe as the lead designer to prepare the design for the new Estuarium. Throughout FY 2024, designs for the building, landscape, exhibits, water intake and mechanical systems continued to progress. The Trust continued its public engagement meetings to share information about design development and solicit feedback.

#### ***Pier 40***

Pier 40 is the largest single property in the Park and is home to heavily used athletic fields, administrative and operating facilities of the Trust, a commercial parking garage, and commercial excursion vessels, among other uses. Revenue generated at Pier 40 from parking and maritime uses is a major source of Park operations funding. The contract with Hornblower as the marine operator expired at the end of 2023, and the Trust successfully conducted a Request for Proposals process for a new operator to continue the water-based uses.

When the Park came into existence, Pier 40 was already in poor structural condition, and the Trust has had to implement costly repairs to repair portions of the building’s roof, piles, life safety and other systems over many years, diminishing its intended financial benefit to the overall Park. In FY 23-24, the Trust continued work related to replacing the

sprinkler system and made structural repairs to the parking garage to comply with New York City codes along with other infrastructure projects.

### ***Gansevoort Peninsula***

The Gansevoort Peninsula is an approximately 5.5-acre parcel that was used by the New York City Department of Sanitation until New York City completed the removal of the Sanitation facility, providing a clean slate for a large new park area in 2018.

The new park design by the Trust and the design team lead by James Corner Fields Operation that involved extensive community engagement includes a resilient sand bluff, boardwalk and landing for nonmotorized boats on the south side, a salt marsh on the north side with native grasses and plantings coupled with submerged reef balls and oyster gabions, a large synthetic turf ball field, dog park, adult fitness area, lawn for passive recreation, small park building and a variety of paths and esplanades.

Construction was substantially completed in late September 2023 with the public opening occurring on October 2, 2024 with Governor Hochul, Deputy Mayor Joshi, Manhattan Borough President Levine and other elected officials, Board members and community members coming together to celebrate the fantastic new park space. The dog park opened in December 2023. The new maintenance restroom building should be open in mid-2024 after the Trust obtains a Temporary Certificate of Occupancy. The new park space has received significant press attention, and residents and tourists are enjoying the new public space on a daily basis. The turf field and the resulting increase in permit availability has received very positive reception in the sports community.

### ***Chelsea Waterside Park***

The Trust completed construction on Chelsea Waterside Park Phase II upgrades in June 2023. The upgrades, designed by Abel Bainnson Butz Landscape Architects and CDR Design Studio Architects, include a new restroom facility with solar panels to reduce the Park's energy footprint, an expanded picnic area, expanded and enhanced dog park, and a reconstructed synthetic turf field, among other improvements. The Trust held a ribbon cutting ceremony joined by State Senator Hoylman, Assembly Member Simone, City Council Member Bottcher, Deputy Manhattan Borough President Aya Keefe, former Assembly Member Gottfried, and former State Senator Duane, as well as many members of Community Board 4, the Hudson River Park's Advisory Council, and dozens of members of the Chelsea Waterside Park Association to celebrate this project's completion.

### ***Pier 97***

Work on Pier 97 advanced significantly through FY 24. In late December 2023 the Trust opened a large portion of the pier to the public. The design, led by Imelk, 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.

The Trust also continues to provide the necessary plans and other documents to the New York State Department of Transportation as precursors to receiving federal funding for completing finishes for the permanent esplanade and bikeway that will better connect Hudson River Park to New York City's Riverside Park South along Piers 98 and 99.

### **Other Planning and Construction**

In January 2024, the Trust selected Marvel Architects, Landscape Architects, Urban Designers, PLLC ("Marvel") in response to a Request for Proposals to design the unfinished area of Hudson River Park located between West 29<sup>th</sup> and West 46<sup>th</sup> Streets, which will be a very challenging area to design and construct due to existing land uses and tenant occupancies. A kickoff meeting between Trust staff and Marvel's landscape architects occurred during the last quarter of FY 2024 after execution of the contract with the goal of commencing the preparation of design plans and community engagement in FY 2025.

In July 2023, the Trust commenced construction of four interim pickleball courts adjacent to the Park's storage yard near West 34<sup>th</sup> Street and south of Pier 76. The courts opened to the public on November 14, 2023 and the Trust has seen heavy usage even through the winter months. Resurfacing of the newly surfaced tennis courts south of Pier 40 near Houston Street was completed and the tennis courts have returned to heavy usage. In FY 2023, a new crosswalk was installed by the Trust's partner agencies NYS and NYC Department of Transportation, with encouragement from the Meatpacking District BID, at Gansevoort Street, improving safe connections in this heavily used park area. A second new crosswalk was installed south of Houston Street next to the refurbished tennis courts to facilitate access to the newly opened office building at 550 Washington Street. The Trust's Horticulture team also restored the Habitat Garden located between West 26<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> Streets in the spring of 2023.

### **Public Recreation**

Throughout FY 23-24, the Park was used by millions for walking, exercising and relaxing. The Park continued to be well known for its distinctive and popular playgrounds and maintains its reputation as a key walking and running route in Manhattan. The two skate parks are well-used and maintain robust skating communities. Lawns throughout the Park remain popular destinations for passive recreation and are regularly filled with picnics and sunbathers. The new sports fields at Gansevoort Peninsula and Chelsea Waterside Park provide much needed space for youth and adult leagues alike, with the Trust issuing more than 7,000 permitted field hours to more than 56 groups in the 2024 Spring season alone.

### ***Free Public Events***

During the 2023 season, the Trust hosted over 400 free events throughout the Park, including the Hudson River Dance Festival, sunset salsa lessons, Tide Deck tours and educational science programming, plus a full range of fitness classes. Over 15,000 people attended the annual Blues BBQ festival, and the Trust saw robust attendance at its performances, festivals, educational programming, dance classes and more. Returning

programs like Sunset on the Hudson and Jazz at Pier 84 featured diverse performances and had robust attendance. Over 4,000 persons attended the SUBMERGE Marine Science Festival in September 2023 and the Pumpkin Smash event in November 2023 attracted over 1,000 additional patrons, for a total of over 1,700. Over 50,000 people participated in free and low-cost non-motorized boating in the Park through the Trust's support and partnership with boathouse operators and permittees. Free public events offered by the Trust were also supplemented by offerings from various Park tenants and permittees, including the Intrepid Air and Space museum, Little Island, Manhattan Youth, Lilac and more.

### ***Sports Facilities***

The Trust facilitated recreational play for the hundreds of thousands of park goers who participate in organized sports activities on Park courts and fields, including use by a wide range of soccer, baseball, lacrosse, and football leagues. The addition of Gansevoort Peninsula, along with the completion of renovations at Chelsea Waterside, and Rooftop Field #2 in FY23, have resulted in a significantly increase permit hours and users. Thanks to the high-quality programming provided by the Park's wide range of for-profit and non-profit tenants under the Trust's oversight, tens of thousands more also engaged in swimming, beach volleyball, mini golf and more. The Trust also partnered with Bike New York to host introductory bike riding classes for adults and children at Pier 76. The waterfront esplanade continues to be one of the most popular running paths in the City and is heavily used year round.

### **Environmental Education, Science and Stewardship**

The Trust advanced its mandate to steward and engage the public about its 400 acres of Estuarine Sanctuary. This is achieved through direct engagement, multiple partnerships and science projects including a robust slate of research initiatives, through work on the Estuarine Sanctuary Management Plan, and through direct efforts to enhance the river and Park environment.

### ***Environmental Education***

The Trust's River Project hosted hundreds of in-person educational programs throughout FY 2024, including over 100 enriching STEM programs, camp field trips and public drop-in programs throughout the year. Additionally, for the first time, the Trust was able to offer robust winter programming thanks to the new Discovery Tank classroom at Pier 57. Adjacent to the classroom, the River Project maintains a gallery open to the public in which educational exhibits are rotated throughout the year to teach aspects of the Hudson River ecosystem. Winter events led by the River Project team included new programs like Painting Nature, Ask a Scientist and Guided Gallery sessions at the Discovery Tank. The Trust hosted over 5000 school students for field trips, with over two-thirds of available field trips hailing from Title 1 Schools, and staff conducts significant outreach so that teachers and administrators from across New York City are aware of the Park's affordable or free educational offerings. The River Project also continues to host

programming over the summer at the Pier 40 Wetlab and provides tours of the Pier 26 Tide Deck.

### ***Estuarine Research***

Research on the Park's seven long-running studies on fish abundance and diversity, water quality, plastic pollution, pathogens, environmental DNA, and oyster health all continued throughout the Fiscal Year, contributing to stronger baseline data for understanding river conditions and estuarine community utilization.

Since 2021, the Trust has installed over 35 million oysters into the Park's Sanctuary waters -- a third of New York City's total restored oyster population as of 2024. During Summer 2023, the Trust completed the second phase of the Tribeca Habitat Enhancement Project as well as the second year of a five-year research program designed to assess the health and habitat value of these enhancement structures. The Trust also received a \$750,000 grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration through Congressionally Directed Funding for a multiyear research project on the 300 habitat enhancements that were installed north of the Gansevoort Peninsula's new salt marsh as part of the Gansevoort Peninsula Park construction project, with research beginning in 2024.

In FY 2024, the Trust expanded its research partnership program, hosting 13 visiting scholars from 13 different universities and colleges. The Trust was also able to offer research opportunities to CUNY professors and CUNY students. This partnership aligns the mission of two public entities to provide accessible science education and build career pathways into STEM fields, while advancing Park research goals.

The Hudson River Park Act requires the Trust to prepare and maintain an Estuarine Sanctuary Management Plan ("ESMP") to balance and guide activities and initiatives involving the Sanctuary. In FY21-22, the Trust completed its update to the ESMP and a new Action Agenda for the period 2021-2030. Through multiple partnerships as well as independently, this Fiscal Year, the Trust advanced a robust slate of research initiatives and held meetings with its Technical Advisory Council ("TAC") as provided for in the ESMP. Specifically, the Trust held its third annual ESMP Science Sanctuary meeting in January 2024, inviting members of the TAC along with local university and college faculty members and other environmental partners. During the meeting, the Trust provided updates on the seven research projects conducted by the River Project, including on fish ecology, eDNA, plastic pollution, water quality, pathogens, and studies focused on Park habitat enhancement efforts. Visiting scholars were also invited to share findings related to the Gansevoort Peninsula salt marsh including regarding oyster recruitment and genetics, the effects of Combined Sewer Outfall impact on microbial community assemblages, and images of the aquatic life in the Hudson River. The Trust also held the annual ESMP TAC meeting on February 1, 2024 to provide a comprehensive review of the Sanctuary and plans for upcoming programs and projects.

### ***Sustainability***

In FY 2024, the Trust continued its successful community compost program. The Trust processed over 453,000 pounds of compost, combining collections from the public with brown plant matter that would have become horticulture waste to create healthy, nutrient-rich soil used throughout the Park.

The Trust expanded its effort to reduce its dependence on fossil fuels. Although a significant portion of the Trust's in-park vehicles have long been electric, advances in technology have allowed the Park to begin investigating replacing heavier machinery and vehicles with electrically powered versions. The Trust purchased its first electric forklift and installed additional LED lighting throughout the Park.

### **Operations and Facilities Management**

From plants to pavement, and from buildings to fountains, virtually every object and corner of the Park needs care and maintenance throughout the year. The Park's Operations and Facilities team removed snow, replaced pavement and pavers, maintained marine infrastructure, mowed lawns, and repaired leaks, among countless other long- and short-term projects needed to keep the Park in good and safe condition. Flowers and trees bloom throughout the spring, summer and fall seasons to the delight of visitors to the Park. The Trust also continued to expand its security system by adding new cameras and related infrastructure throughout the Park in FY 2024.

### **Private Sector Partnerships**

Hudson River Park was conceived as a public-private partnership. Since the Trust's inception, the Park has worked with partners ranging from large scale commercial tenants like Chelsea Piers, Pier 57 and Circle Line to non-profit boating and community organizations to help activate and enliven the Park while also generating income in the form of rent to support Park operations. Many Park tenants and shorter-term permittees also conduct important programming serving schools and the public. The Trust's River Project staff partners on some of these programs, including with staff from the Intrepid Museum, Little Island and Hudson River Community Sailing.

In addition, the Park relies on the financial support and community engagement provided through the Trust's partnership with Hudson River Park Friends. The Hudson River Park Friends' in-person gala raised significant private money to support the Park, and it continues to explore and expand new ways to raise funds, including its Playground Committee and affiliation groups. Friends volunteer efforts, through corporate partnerships and community engagement, provide significant support to the Trust's horticultural staff and greatly improve the quality of plantings that the Park is able to present and well as the installation of play equipment and improvements to the multiple dog runs located in the Park.