2012 Impact Report

Volunteers remove invasive plants at SFPA's Strawberry Hill Butterfly Habitat Restoration Project
San Francisco Parks Alliance's mission is to inspire and promote civic engagement and philanthropy to protect, sustain, and enrich San Francisco parks, recreation, and green open spaces. SFPA is dedicated to fulfill a vision of parks that acknowledges and supports their critical environmental functions while striving to ensure that they are accessible, beautiful, safe, clean, and fun and managed in a manner that makes them accountable, open, and welcoming to all.

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La Grande Community Garden
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Linden Living Alley
Lower 24th Street Community Action Plan
March Gladness/MONS
Marina Earthquake Monument Group
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McCoppin Square
Mission Bay Families
Mission Community Market
Mission Greenbelt
Mission Verde
Neighbors Improving Bernal
Northridge Co-op Homes
Community Garden
Pavement to Parks
Pennsylvania Gardens
Pioneer Park Committee
Plant*SF
Potrero Sustainable Living Group
Precita Valley Neighbors
Produce to the People
Progress Park
Residents for Noe Valley Town Square
Russian Hill Improvement Association
SF Bee-Cause
SF Disc Golf
SF Lawn Bowling Club
SF Schoolyards Community Hubs
SF Tennis Coalition
SF Urban Riders
SFGRO
Starrrie Ord Neighborhood Group
South End Rowing Club
South Park Improvement Association
Sunnyside Park Families and Neighbors
Sutro Stewards
Union Square Live (formerly
Jewels in the Square)
Urban Sprouts
Victoria Manalo Draves Community Garden
Visitation Valley Greenway
Dear Park Lover,

In October 2011, Neighborhood Parks Council and San Francisco Parks Trust came together to form the new San Francisco Parks Alliance (SFPA). Our first year has been marked by much of what you might expect—the kind of building, evaluation, and adaptation that is allowing us to deliver on the promise of the new organization—a stronger more effective voice for parks, healthy recreation, and open space in San Francisco. But, something else also happened that we had hoped for, and counted on—a confirmation of all the reasons why the two organizations came together. The deliberations, principles and philosophies spawned during envisioning a single, united voice for parks have been validated by you—our members, volunteers, partners and supporters, who have stayed with us. Thank you.

You have stayed with us because if there is anything in our diverse, only-in-San Francisco city that brings us together, it is clean, safe, green places for all of us to play. In 2012, those places—San Francisco’s city parks—were named the best in the nation. This award highlighted a single moment in a trajectory for our parks that was put into motion in part by previous generations. Today, we are the beneficiaries of their vision and consistent support. But, today we also inherit the responsibility of preserving for the next generation the amazing beauty and sense of community we have built into our parks.

The San Francisco Parks Alliance has a vision for San Francisco parks and open space, drawing upon a combined 55 years of experience in advocacy and philanthropy, to ensure that a successful park trajectory continues. We’ve built a new, better organization with your help, and our many achievements are outlined here in this impact report.

We thank you for your continued support of the parks and open spaces that contribute so much to our quality of life.

It’s our city, and our parks. Let’s keep building it green.

Rosemary Cameron
Board President

Matthew O’Grady
Executive Director
January
SFPA funds poll on SF residents’ attitudes toward parks. 65% polled use their parks one or more times a week, 91% say parks are very important to their quality of life, and 89% say parks are a significant contributor to the City’s beauty and why they live in San Francisco.

Park Partners

Philanthropy meets community organizing in SFPA’s core Park Partners program, which fiscally sponsors 107 community groups beautifying their parks, providing programming, or enriching our green open spaces in myriad ways. SFPA provides administrative and accounting support, as well as fundraising training, community mobilizing, and technical expertise that helps groups achieve their goals—from complete restoration of a playground to turning an overgrown street median into a green oasis. SFPA acts as a convener, bringing community groups and City agencies to the same table, and leverages partnerships to multiply the impact of public support and volunteerism.

SFPA Park Partner Spotlights

Park Partner Friends of West Sunset Playground was able to orchestrate a complete replacement of their run-down neighborhood playground in conjunction with the renovation of the Ortega Branch Library and plaza. Championed by Supervisor Carmen Chu, the Park Partner group secured major funding for the playground construction and raised an additional $50,000 from the neighborhood to provide custom elements and a fund for playground maintenance.

Park Partner Friends of Progress Park created a park where there was none, transforming a blighted lot into a new green space with features such as meandering pathways, benches, a fenced off-leash dog run, exercise equipment, and a bocce ball court. A tremendous example of how neighbors can come together, the project was made possible by a cadre of dedicated volunteers and a partnership between the Department of Public Works and Caltrans.

Please see the front inside cover for a complete list of Park Partners.

SFPA honors the legacy of Warren Hellman for his consistent dedication to parks in San Francisco. Through civic support of our open spaces, and with the gift of music in the Hardly Strictly Bluegrass Festival, Mr. Hellman helped us realize parks’ importance in our lives. He also showed us that a banjo can bring even the most diverse city together in the best concert hall in the world—Golden Gate Park.

photo by Jay Blakesberg
Planning & Structure

In planning for SFPA, we knew that we had an opportunity to build something new: a unique combination of advocacy and philanthropy that could serve as a national model. We also knew that SFPA, created amid the economic downturn and recovery, would need to evolve into a more nimble and efficient organization able to deliver resources to parks and advocate for their users like never before. The new SFPA Board was built with leaders from both organizations’ previous boards, as well as five new members and a new Board President. The Board and staff participated in several strategic planning retreats to conceive the organization’s core mission and how to best deliver it, and to develop a strategic plan to focus goals.

A cornerstone for the new organization was the absolute need to create the best possible governance structure to represent park users across the city, in every supervisorial district, and to ensure their voices were not only heard, but were empowered by a transparent process by which their park issues could be raised, discussed, and acted upon. SFPA held an open application process to create a new Parks Policy Council (PPC). The PPC has at least two representatives from each District, eight issue-focused working groups, and a detailed framework for policy deliberation and action. The 23-member PPC will develop advocacy and policy directions on issues presented to them by its members, SFPA staff, the public, and City agencies, and act as the link to a broader audience of grass-roots park advocates, park groups, and the general public.

Please see the front inside cover for a complete list of Parks Policy Council members.

Park Stewardship Programs

Working together to support our parks strengthens communities and helps the City maximize limited resources. By leveraging city-wide stewardship efforts and partnerships with government agencies, SFPA gives residents a greater voice with City leaders and sustains a coalition of park advocates. These partnerships lead to cross-community mentorship and a greater sense of ownership of our parks and recreation system in San Francisco. SFPA believes that active community participation in our parks fosters public investment in our City’s open spaces.

Street Parks Program

The Street Parks program is SFPA’s ongoing collaboration with the Department of Public Works to mobilize communities to beautify and activate derelict City-owned parcels such as street medians, abandoned lots, and hillsides. Street Parks signed on 15 new neighborhood groups in 2012, presented two day-long free training workshops, and provided expertise and technical assistance to many new and ongoing projects. To date, there are 145 Street Park sites complete or in various stages of development.
Strawberry Hill Butterfly Habitat Restoration Project

In 2012, SFPA continued its restoration at Golden Gate Park’s Strawberry Hill in collaboration with the San Francisco Recreation & Parks Department (RPD). Strawberry Hill, the highest peak in Golden Gate Park, is prime habitat for butterflies that naturally seek out high points for mating in a behavior called “hill topping.” The Project engaged 219 volunteers in 12 monthly workdays for 876 volunteer hours, pulling invasive weeds, improving trails, and installing 648 native plants that butterflies need for food and reproduction.

Legacy Giving

San Francisco Parks Alliance is particularly indebted to the estate of Frederic Pickrell, for his bequest to benefit Golden Gate Park. Mr. Pickrell’s bequest enabled SFPA to coordinate the Strawberry Hill Habitat Restoration Project, whereby community volunteers have planted 1,569 bird and butterfly host plants to date and, through efforts of our Park Partner, SF City Guides, conducted history tours of the site. For close to 40 years, Mr. Pickrell and his partner, Frederick Stroh, owned a home accessory fine arts shop, Fredricks, on Sutter Street near Polk Gulch, and were wonderful supporters of the arts and civic institutions.

If you would like more information on how to support SFPA or plan a gift to San Francisco parks, please contact Director of Development, Janice Vela, at 415.621.3260 x 108 or janice@sfparksalliance.org.

Philanthropy

From 2006 to 2011, the City’s General Fund allocation to the RPD operating budget has decreased 25%, while over the same period the size of the City budget and General Fund have increased 23% and 21%, respectively. SFPA’s role in providing resources to help ameliorate these budget cuts has never been more important. Further, the civic engagement of park volunteers and donors remind our elected officials that parks matter to every San Franciscan. Together with its Park Partners, donors, and members, SFPA raised $13,236,621 for parks and open space this fiscal year.

GearUp Fund

SFPA’s GearUp Fund outfits recreation centers across the City with essential furnishings, equipment, and supplies needed to keep their programs running. In particular, this past year, the GearUp Fund raised $105,000 to provide the newly renovated Betty Ann Ong Chinese Recreation Center with desks, tables, chairs, fitness equipment, tiny tot supplies, and other items needed for its programs in early-childhood development, after-school enrichment, senior social club, and sports, fitness, music, dance, and art. To date, the GearUp Fund has raised more than $400,000 to outfit recreation centers with the equipment and supplies needed to fully serve their communities.
To celebrate the new organization, SFPA held its first city-wide Love Your Parks Day in May 2012. With thirteen events, at least one in each supervisorial district, SFPA demonstrated how its modest contribution of $20,000 was leveraged by its network of volunteers and partners. In a single day, joined by Mayor Ed Lee and Supervisors, and with the help of RPD and Park Partners, SFPA repainted playgrounds, installed new play sand and hundreds of new native plants, improved trails, provided educational programming on gardening and permaculture, and gave more than a thousand attendees across the city opportunities for healthy recreation, from a climbing wall to kayaking along the Blue Greenway.
Policy

Park policy provides a roadmap for balancing multiple stakeholder interests, urban density, funding constraints, and the long-term health of the park system. SFPA’s policy work is data-driven, stakeholder-informed, and over time will focus on proactive ways to improve our parks and recreation system now and for generations to come. SFPA policy and research identifies best practices, advocates for the community voice to City government, and aids agencies in setting park and open space priorities to meet user needs. SFPA policy, research, and advocacy overlays and connects organizational programs, and guides everything from Park Partner project goals and park stewardship targets, to public positions and philanthropic focus. A key strength of SFPA is our ability to harness independent, informed policy frameworks to make every dollar and volunteer hour as impactful as possible. In addition to inaugurating the 23-member Parks Policy Council to represent each district in park and open space issues, in 2012 SFPA presented at state and national conferences, coordinated ten meetings with RPD on the 2012 Parks Bond, hosted its own Park Bond Town Hall meeting, and attended or hosted more than 50 additional park and open space community meetings as an expert voice and bridge to City agencies.

Blue Greenway Program

SFPA’s Blue Greenway initiative is the single largest re-envisioning of urban space in San Francisco, with a goal to transform the City’s industrial eastern waterfront from ballpark to ballpark with a network of connected parks, trails, natural open spaces, water access points, and recreation features. SFPA is a lead organizer of the project, which is a collaboration between multiple city agencies, community partners and private institutions such as the Port of SF, RPD, Departments of the Environment, Public Health, and Planning, and many others.

In 2012, SFPA secured funding from UCSF, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Mary A. Crocker Trust, and PG&E, as well as supported the Dept. of Environment in a $400,000 EPA grant award to conduct brownfield assessments along the Blue Greenway, continuing the work of SFPA’s Brownfields Area Wide Plan. SFPA also continued community engagement with tours, educational events, and by collaborating on the SF Planning Department’s Green Connections program—a two year project to increase connectivity to parks, open space and the waterfront. Recognized as a national model, SFPA presented the Blue Greenway in local and state conferences.
Playground Initiative & ParkScan

SFPA believes that every child deserves a safe playground within walking distance of their home. SFPA and the RPD survey public playgrounds every two years for safety and maintenance issues, and SFPA compiles and publishes results in its Playground Report Card. In 2012, SFPA trained 110 RPD staff and 60 public volunteers on survey techniques, and coordinated surveys at 123 sites. The Report Card helps determine which playgrounds are in the worst condition and in need of the most attention.

Through advocacy and community volunteerism, SFPA’s Playground Initiative then works to upgrade or replace these needy playgrounds. The Playground Report Card informs many of SFPA’s advocacy and stewardship activities, and also has played a major role in capital renovations and planning for both the 2008 and 2012 Park Bonds. The 2012 Playground Report Card results reflect a consistent upward trend, (16 failing playgrounds in 2012, as compared to 30 failing playgrounds in 2006) and almost all of the remaining failing playgrounds in the Report will be addressed through the 2012 Parks Bond.

ParkScan Report

Empowering user’s voices is paramount for public support of our parks and open spaces. SFPA’s award-winning ParkScan.org system allows users to report and track maintenance and safety issues in our park system online. SFPA compiles an annual ParkScan Report, tracking maintenance issues and trends, this year from more than 3,000 ParkScan issue reports. ParkScan is a partnership with RPD, and with San Francisco’s 311 customer service center. ParkScan and the Playground Report Card represent SFPA’s continuing goal of objective, data-driven advocacy and informed philanthropy.

Conservatory of Flowers

The oldest building of its kind in the nation, the Conservatory continues to be a gem in Golden Gate Park. This past year, the Conservatory featured two exhibits—Wicked Plants: Botanical Rogues & Assassins and Playland at the Conservatory: A Garden Railway, while attracting 151,889 visitors. Its educational programs remain a focus of its mission, and it delivered more than 600 tours, leveraging 100 Conservatory devotees for 4,688 volunteer hours. SFPA helps run operations at the Conservatory under an agreement with RPD.
We may have the best-rated urban park system in the country, but that’s due in part to the investments, leadership and hard work of previous generations. We also have many shortcomings and challenges, as well as opportunities to improve our park system. We’ve got our work cut out for us.

Over the coming year, we’ll continue to expand our Park Partners program with new organizations devoted to park improvements. Our Parks Policy Council will give us the “voice of reason” regarding public policy. Through civic engagement, we’ll be the primary conduit between residents and city leaders about how best to invest our tax dollars in our parks. We’ll continue to lead the multi-agency collaboration making the Blue Greenway a reality.

We’ll also explore the many opportunities that abound to expand our park-improving work. Here are just a few examples of opportunities we’re considering:

• We already have thousands of volunteers donating time and labor to improve our parks. But, we have the potential to grow this impact many-fold.

• San Franciscans own hundreds of parcels of land that are the left-overs of our street grid - the source of our Street Parks collaboration with DPW. There’s enormous potential to convert these little wastelands into active open spaces.

• There’s great potential for us to help city agencies and other organizations who are promoting and providing resources for urban agriculture.

• Our Park Partners are having an enormous, positive impact. But there’s much more we could do to support them in their many park improvement projects – fundraising, friend-raising, coordination with city agencies, technical assistance, and much more.

• Persistent cuts over many years to the Recreation and Parks Department’s operating budget has compromised its ability to maintain our park system, and driven it to pursue controversial strategies to generate earned revenue. San Franciscans need to come up with a sustainable means of financing the operations of our parks, and SFPA can take a leading role in determining how best to fix this problem, and in advocating for that fix.

• The City needs to repair every one of its remaining failing playgrounds, and begin filling the many playground gaps that exist in the neighborhoods that don’t have any playground at all, failing or not.

In the coming months, we’ll evaluate these and other opportunities for greater impact, and make some tough choices. We can’t do it all, not all at once. But our commitment is strong, and with the support of our thousands of partners, volunteers, and donors, we know we’ll achieve great things.
San Francisco Parks Alliance would like to thank its generous supporters for their contributions between July 1, 2011 and June 30, 2012. While we strive to be as accurate as possible, please contact feedback@sfparksalliance.org with any corrections or omissions. Contributions of $125 and above are listed below.

$2,500 to $4,999
Michael Agoglia
Peter Asher and Kate Rowe
Philipa and Jim Caldwell
Calby and Chris Clark
Seth and Courtney Dallaire
Lisa and Douglas Goldman
Margaret and John Ware

$500 to $999
Anonymous (2)

$250 to $499
Anonymous
Lana and John Adair
Sasan Fahimi
Doris Fisher
Dick Goldman
Michaële and Dick Goss
Lucy McIntyre Jewett
Amy McGahee
Maureen Holt and Kelly Nice
Toni and Arthur Rembe Rock
Margaret and John Warren

$1,000 to $2,499
Anonymous (2)
Paige and Tony Arata
Phil and Monaire Arnold
Susan and Robert Barrett
Jeffrey Barthel and Daniel Young
Dana and Robert Emery

$500 to $999
Anonymous
Lana and John Adair
Sasan Fahimi
Doris Fisher
Dick Goldman
Michaële and Dick Goss
Lucy McIntyre Jewett
Amy McGahee
Maureen Holt and Kelly Nice
Toni and Arthur Rembe Rock
Margaret and John Warren

$200 and above
Dana and Robert Emery

$100 to $199
Anonymous
Marie and Gilbert Cleasby
Nancy and Ed Conner
Christine and Curtis Gardner
Constance Goodyear Baron and Barry Baron
Susan Karp and Paul Haahr
Barbro and Bernard Osher

$50 to $99
Anonymous

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<td>T.B. Walker Foundation, San Francisco Giants Baseball Club, Plant Construction Co., Capital Group Companies</td>
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<td>$2,500 to $4,999</td>
<td>Bachelors of San Francisco, Lesbians for Good of Horizons Foundation, The Walter S. Johnson Foundation</td>
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<td>$20,000 and above</td>
<td>Park Partner Individual Donors</td>
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**SFPA Institutional Donors**

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<td>$4,000</td>
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## Operating Support and Revenue

**Contributions** $1,155,402  
**Conservatory of Flowers** $1,170,382  
**Admissions and Sales** $30,590  
**Memberships** $314,513  
**In-Kind Services** $252,445  
**Special events** $525,887  
**Administrative/Program fees** $541,654  
**Interest & investment income** $102,913  
**Realized and unrealized gain from investments** $4,181  
**Other income** $7,677  
**Transfers** ($6,000)  
**Total Core Support + Revenue** $4,099,644

## Operating Expenses

**RPD Programs** $311,698  
**Conservatory of Flowers** $1,194,394  
**SFPA Programs & Services** $1,492,384  
**SFPA General and Administrative** $362,515  
**SFPA Development** $747,397  
**Total Operating Expenses** $4,108,388

## Park Partners

**Support and Revenue** $9,136,977  
**Expenses** $7,673,126

Every year, Park Partner groups leverage SFPA's fundraising, community mobilizing, and technical assistance expertise to raise millions of dollars and to renovate or beautify their parks, or enhance them with programming. Projects fundraise all year long, and often take in support or revenue that is not expensed (spent) in the same fiscal year.