FEDERAL CITY COUNCIL

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DC Neighborhood Parks Task Force Releases *Building Tomorrow's Parks*

Report offers four recommendations for DC's next Mayor to strengthen neighborhood parks as catalysts for community health, neighborhood vitality, and economic development

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The Federal City Council (FC2) today announced the release of *Building Tomorrow's Parks*, the report of the DC Neighborhood Parks Task Force, co-chaired by FC2's Tony Williams and DC Councilmember Matt Frumin.

DC starts from an enviable position. Nearly one-fifth of the District's land is dedicated to parks and recreation, nearly every resident lives within a 10-minute walk of a park, and DC has repeatedly ranked first in the nation for the amount and distribution of its open space. There is tremendous opportunity for these spaces to be even stronger catalysts for community health, neighborhood vitality, and economic development.

FC2 convened the Task Force beginning in fall 2024, bringing together leaders from all eight wards, including ANC commissioners, BIDs, community groups, and parks experts, and drawing on input from District agencies and national experts such as the Trust for Public Land.

Over the course of a year, the Task Force studied what the country's best park systems do well and how those lessons could apply here — from New York's Chief Public Realm Officer, who works across agencies to solve public space problems quickly, to Chicago's NeighborSpace, which helps neighborhood groups design and care for small community spaces. Many of these partnership models are already taking root in DC through BIDs, Friends groups, and organizations like Casey Trees.

The report offers four recommendations for DC's next Mayor:

- **Strengthen how the city manages its parks.** Build the District's parks capacity, consider a Coordinator of the Public Realm modeled on New York City's, and bring park functions now spread across many agencies under fewer roofs.

- **Grow community partnerships.** Let neighbors help care for small neighborhood parks, starting with a pilot in every ward modeled on Chicago's NeighborSpace, with partners like Casey Trees ready to help launch it.
- **Put park financing on a sustainable footing.** DC recovers less than 5 percent of its park costs, compared to a national average of 26 percent. Modest fees for programs and private use, along with sponsorships, concessions, and operational efficiencies, could yield over $15 million a year while keeping everyday access free.
- **Work with the National Park Service on local management of neighborhood parks.** Building on NPS's own 2017 Small Parks Management Strategies, the District and NPS should jointly identify parks that primarily serve local needs and shift them to local management, while protecting historic assets and allowing federal resources to focus on nationally significant sites.

"Every great city has great parks, and great parks are responsive to the neighborhoods around them," the Federal City Council said. "With the first new mayor in over a decade, DC has a real opportunity to build on its strong foundation." FC2 looks forward to working with the next administration, the Council, the National Park Service, and community partners to put these recommendations into action.

Learn more about the DC Neighborhood Parks Task Force and read the full report at dcparks.org.

About the Federal City Council The Federal City Council (FC2) is a nonprofit organization in Washington, D.C. that convenes leaders to advance policy projects that improve the District.

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