



## **Leon Levy Foundation awarding \$25 million in grants for park funding**

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Mayor Michael Bloomberg and philanthropist Shelby White recently revealed that White's Leon Levy Foundation is awarding \$15 million to The New York Botanical Garden and \$10 million to Prospect Park, one of the largest private donations in city history for the "greening" of New York. The \$15 million grant to The New York Botanical Garden will create a new Native Plant Garden for the study and display of indigenous species. The \$10 million grant to Prospect Park will fund the Park's Lakeside Center, a 26-acre area that will be restored to the original design of Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux. The mayor and White were joined by council speaker Christine Quinn, Brooklyn borough president Marty Markowitz, parks and recreation commissioner Adrian Benepe, cultural affairs commissioner Kate Levin, Prospect Park Alliance chair Albert Garner and New York Botanical Garden president and CEO Gregory Long.

"These generous gifts are going to two signature New York institutions and they are an impressive addition to the legacy of the Leon Levy Foundation," said mayor Bloomberg. "Shelby White is a great philanthropist and New Yorker, and I thank her for all she has done for our city, the impact of these gifts will be felt for decades."

The New York Botanical Garden will be one of the first projects in the garden's master plan, being developed by the Philadelphia-based landscape architecture firm Olin Partnership, to restore the "Heart of the Garden" and address other broad challenges and opportunities throughout the historic landscape. Through the Dept. of Cultural Affairs, the city has already committed more than \$35 million towards the master plan, and over the next several years, the garden will invest more than \$100 million in private funding for restoration and preservation projects that will save the garden's landscapes, redesign gardens, and restore collections.

The \$10 million Leon Levy Foundation grant will help enable the Prospect Park Alliance to restore the park's historic Music Island, Lakeside Promenade and views from the Concert Grove Terrace to their original design as envisioned by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux.

The \$75 million Lakeside Center project has received commitments from the city totaling \$25 million. The Independence Community Foundation has donated an additional \$1.5 million to the project, which will build a new facility for skating and other year round activities on a site better suited to the original plan. The landscape for the new facility will be designed by landscape architect Christian Zimmerman of the Prospect Park Alliance. The architectural firm of Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects LLP has been selected to design the new building and ice rinks.

The grant will fund the demolition of Wollman Rink. New rinks will be built nearby. In addition, Music Island, once at the site of Wollman Rink, will be rebuilt as a natural habitat sanctuary, pedestrian viewing paths will be restored along the lake edge, and invasive aquatic reeds will be removed.

The Leon Levy Foundation, founded in 2004, is a private, not-for-profit foundation created from the

estate of Leon Levy, a legendary investor with a longstanding commitment to philanthropy. The foundation's overarching goal is to continue the tradition of humanism characteristic of Levy by supporting scholarship at the highest level, ultimately advancing knowledge and improving the lives of individuals and society at large. The foundation supports the protection of natural landscapes and wildlife habitats, as well as maintenance of botanical gardens and parks in the area. Foundation grants aid a variety of initiatives at The New York Botanical Garden and throughout its National Historic Landmark site, including the Leon Levy Visitor Center established in 2004 as the main entrance to the garden.

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