

To Funders

In this landscape, we know government can't do it alone. Neighborhoods that have been under-resourced for decades need additional resources to be able to address urgent needs while being creative and forward-thinking in the public realm.

We believe that national, family, and community foundations, banks and financial institutions, and private donors all have a role in supporting New York's public spaces. Your partnership and resources are essential in enabling community leaders to realize their visions for thriving public spaces, and we can amplify our impact together.

We invite you to partner with communities to equitably resource community-driven public spaces:

1. Expand funding verticals to support public space

Locally-driven public space projects have myriad benefits—stronger social ties, boosted economic activity, uplifted local cultures, increased climate resilience, and more. As a result, these projects are often difficult to fit neatly into one box. Consider how your program verticals focused on public health, climate action, food security, small business development, and open space can capture the interdisciplinary work that achieves many community benefits.

2. Develop robust programs to support transformative projects

Though micro-grants of \$5-10k can support valuable small-scale programming in neighborhoods, we found that project budgets — ranging from \$125,000-\$175,000 to support a low-bono technical assistance team, neighborhood partner capacity, and a

built installation — allowed our partners to achieve robust short-term wins and set them up to champion longer-term investment. While unrestricted funding is the most flexible, your investment should, at minimum, include grants to community partners, support for technical assistance needs, dollars for implementing projects, as well as dollars to communicate the value of projects through graphic design, photography, videography, public relations and government relations. We believe this level of investment is critical to the type of lasting change our neighborhoods need to thrive.

3. Invest in multi-year projects

Public space transformation is a lengthy endeavor. While one year is enough time to get work like this started, building community buy-in, designing a demonstration, permitting with the city, and developing a vision plan in that time is a multi-year process. A minimum 18-month timeline allowed for robust community engagement, planning, and public space activation. A longer timeline to support advocacy with government agencies for capital investments is needed. With multi-year funding, neighborhoods would not be left with the uncertainty of whether the work they began can continue, and could advance on their visions with confidence.

4. Support intermediaries with flexible resourcing

As connectors, facilitators, and conveners, we heard again and again from our partners how essential our hands-on role was in helping them realize their visions for their neighborhoods. As intermediaries, we not only served as a channel for resources like funding and technical assistance, we wore many other hats: from mediating conflict, to facilitating learning communities, to navigating city agencies, to easing the bureaucratic burdens on small CBOs by subgranting large city grants. Supporting intermediaries like the Local Center with flexible resourcing is essential in building a vibrant public space ecosystem.

5. Join us in advocating for a new model

We believe intermediaries like the Local Center, or a Fund for the Public Realm, can be powerful entities to channel public and private dollars to local organizations in activating and stewarding their public spaces. We seek your partnership to most effectively make the case for this model and achieve its intended impact. If you are interested in helping us shape the Fund, we want to hear from you!