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**Part IV Narrative Description of Your Activities**

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**The Friends of Riverside Park Conservancy ("FORPC")** is an incorporated nonstock, nonprofit membership organization founded in December 2011 for the purpose of restoring and enhancing Riverside Park for the enjoyment of present and future generations, and improving the quality of open space in New London, Connecticut. **FORPC** is organized, and shall be operated, exclusively for educational, scientific and charitable purposes as may qualify it for tax exempt status under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

**History**

Riverside Park was acquired in 1893 and expanded to nearly 33 acres. Over the last 50 years, parcels have been transferred to the adjacent US Coast Guard Academy through gift, purchase and eminent domain, and the park now covers about 18 acres. Once a popular recreation spot - for games, picnicking, swimming and viewing the annual Yale-Harvard Regatta - Riverside Park became isolated due to the construction of I-95 and urban renewal, and it gradually fell into disrepair and disuse. All the while, some New Londoners continued to visit the park and value it as a hidden gem whose unique landscape and sweeping views offered peaceful respite from the stresses of their everyday lives.

The City of New London has from time to time attempted to sell the remainder of the park. In fall 2010, City Manager Martin Berliner signed a contract with the USCGA to sell 9 central acres for \$2.9 million. Contingent upon approval by the voters, the question was included on the ballot in November 2011: "Shall the City of New London sell a portion of Riverside Park to the Federal Government?" The measure failed, and the park today remains under city ownership and available for public use.

Long before the vote, advocates for the park had begun to come together to reverse the effects wrought by years of neglect by the city. A diverse group of individuals and organizations (representing neighborhoods, historic preservationists, taxpayers, environmentalists, etc.) began holding monthly clean-ups to pick up litter and clear away weeds and underbrush. An informal group, dubbed Friends of Riverside, gained over 500 members and sponsored additional events in the park, which were offered free and open to the public. Funded almost entirely by in-kind donations, these events furthered the charitable purpose of restoring and enhancing Riverside Park, educating the public about its history and natural assets, and improving New Londoners' access to quality open space.

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|--------------------|--|
| May 1, 2011:       | <b>MAYDAY! MAYDAY!</b> Park clean-up and picnic, with nearly 100 volunteers participating.   |
| May 28, 2011:      | <b>Yale-Harvard Regatta Day</b> - Old-time family games; live local music; educational displays; community cook-out; ending with Yale Harvard races on the Thames River.   |
| Sept. 17-18, 2011: | <b>Down By the Riverside Festival</b> -Weekend of music, children's activities, park tours, historic house tours, nature walk, en plein air art, community bike ride, educational displays. Over 400 people visited the park over the course of the 2 day event. |

Sharing the concerns of many citizens that New London, a distressed city, lacks the resources to maintain Riverside Park, and fearing that the park might return to its former state of neglect, Friends of Riverside resolved to form a conservancy to restore, enhance and manage the park, so that the entire burden of its upkeep would not fall on the city and its taxpayers, and on December 23, 2011, The Friends of Riverside Park Conservancy, Inc. was formed.

**Current activities**

The Friends of Riverside Park Conservancy is currently concentrating its efforts on activities in three areas that further our mission: (1) improving park facilities; (2) planning a schedule of events to be held in the park in 2012; and (3) creating educational materials about the park's history, natural resources and recreational opportunities.

- (1) In January 2012 FORPC submitted an application for Community Development Block Grant funding to rebuild a deteriorated stairway that connects Riverside Park with the newly-opened Winthrop Elementary STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) Magnet School that is adjacent to the park and utilizes its resources for field study and fitness activities. The stairway also serves as a pedestrian entrance for neighborhood residents to access the park. Riverside Park is the only public natural open space located in East New London. Fixing the stairway will allow residents - a group comprising tenants in low-income housing as well as students at nearby Connecticut College and US Coast Guard Academy - to enjoy the benefits of our lovely open space, even though many lack transportation to access parks in other neighborhoods of the city.

FORPC has also applied for a grant from The New London Water Authority Community Fund to repair and upgrade bathroom facilities in the park, which are located near the stairway and have been closed for several years. In recent years the city has opted to lease portable toilets when special events are held in the park; however, the lack of running water has proved to be a significant deterrent to park utilization, especially for families with young children.

## **Part IV**      **Narrative Description of Your Activities, *continued***

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Additionally, FORPC has formally requested that the City of New London construct a playscape and pavilion at the park, in order to replace the old, unsafe installations that were removed last year, and that undesignated funds from the Bond Authorization Note (BAN) authorized in 2011 be used for the reconstruction.

(2) In 2012 FORPC has scheduled special events at Riverside Park on May 5 (Community Service Day), May 26 (Yale-Harvard Regatta Day), June 16 (Juneteenth) and September 15 (2nd Annual Down By the Riverside Festival). We will also begin to host monthly clean-ups starting in March, to ensure that the park is clean, safe and attractive for our events, as well as activities sponsored by other organizations and the everyday visits by individuals and families. These events will be funded by membership fees and individual donations to FORPC, and will be offered free of charge in order to provide all New London and regional residents the opportunity to participate regardless of income level.

(3) FORPC is in the process of creating a brochure about Riverside Park, to be used for educational and outreach purposes, and is also enhancing its website with content about the park's history and culture, natural features and habitats, facilities and equipment, activities and events, and future opportunities and plans, as well as information about membership and volunteer opportunities.

### **Future activities**

The Friends of Riverside Park Conservancy will continue to seek grant funding for improvements to the park, with an emphasis on projects that will (1) strengthen the connection between the Winthrop STEM School and the park; (2) restore access from Riverside's upland area to its waterfront and beach; (3) provide facilities and equipment to enhance use of the park for exercise and recreation, and; (4) improve the accessibility of the park to all New Londoners and to the city's downtown, less than 1 mile away.

FORPC will also continue to host events at the park and to encourage other organizations to utilize the park for their activities. Potential new uses include community gardens, concerts, dramatic productions, harbor lights tours, youth summer camps and a dog park.

Working in cooperation with the City of New London and UConn's Community Research and Design Collaborative, FORPC plans to facilitate the creation of a master plan for Riverside Park, holding a series of charrettes in spring-summer 2012 to encourage ideas and input from the public, as well as from local organizations that promote historic preservation, wellness, education, environmentalism, and beautification.

FORPC will continue to conduct research and disseminate information, through print and electronic media, about Riverside Park's history, cultural significance, ecology and recreational resources.

### **Summary**

Since its inception, FORPC has served the public by providing educational services and resources, and by helping to preserve the publicly-owned historic, cultural and environmental assets of Riverside Park.

The Friends of Riverside Park Conservancy is an all-volunteer organization, having no paid staff. Funding is provided by member contributions, donations from the general public, and grants from government and other nonprofit organizations.

Revenue from memberships and donations is anticipated to be approximately \$8,000 annually, which will be allocated to operations, education and events.

Revenue from grants is anticipated to vary between \$5,000 and \$50,000 annually, depending on the scope of each project. All improvements will be made to Riverside Park facilities, which are owned by the City of New London. FORPC has no investments or hard assets. FORPC's anticipated activities are summarized below, with estimated percentages of resource (cost and volunteers' time) allocation.

- 15% - Volunteer services (general maintenance and landscaping)
- 10% - Publication and distribution of newsletter and other educational materials to members and the public
- 5% - Research of historical, cultural and environmental information
- 5% - Administration (meetings, correspondence, accounting, records keeping)
- 5% - friendsofriversideconservancy.org web site (webmaster functions, content, email)
- 5% - Advocacy on behalf of preserving and maintaining open space in New London and statewide
- 5% - Annual meeting and special events
- 50% - Improvements to park facilities (grant writing, consultants, materials and labor)



## Formation of group keeps Riverside promise

Published 01/12/2012 12:00 AM

Updated 01/11/2012 11:53 PM

Those predictions that concern about Riverside Park would not outlive the Nov. 8 vote to save it appear unfounded. Organizers of Friends of Riverside Park, which campaigned against the proposal to sell half the park, on Tuesday announced the formation of the Riverside Park Conservancy. The conservancy plans to continue sponsoring cleanups and events at the park, push for continued improvements and seek grants and donations to help pay for them.

It is a welcomed development.

While this newspaper editorially advocated in favor of selling 9 acres of the park to the federal government to allow expansion of the Coast Guard Academy campus, the voters have spoken. While the sale was rejected by only 19 votes, voters also elected by a wide margin a mayor who made his opposition to selling part of the park a centerpiece of his campaign. Mayor Daryl Justin Finizio has said he is ready to work with the academy to meet its space needs, but not by expanding into the park.

The worst outcome would have been rejection of the sale, followed by a return to the lack of attention and inadequate maintenance Riverside was subjected to in the past. The formation of the conservancy reduces the chances of that happening. It is appropriate that activist Kathleen Mitchell, who led the drive to block the sale, will serve as chairwoman.

As Ms. Mitchell noted, Friends of Riverside said they would never let the park again fall into disrepair and disuse. It's good to see they meant it.



# Friends of Riverside Park Conservancy

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## Our Mission Statement



The mission of the Friends of Riverside Park Conservancy is to provide a permanent body that enables Riverside Park to respond and adapt to the changing needs of its users, as the park passes from generation to generation. Some of these needs relate to landscaping, infrastructure, design, cultural activities, and environmental issues. As park needs materialize into specific projects, the Conservancy will work closely with the New London Parks and Recreation Department and other organizations, helping to raise private sector dollars to match with public funding, so that the completion of each project can become a timely reality. Leveraging this funding and integrating ideas from both the public and private sectors for the future improvement and development of

Riverside Park, as well as the promotion of the park, will make it a truly irreplaceable community asset.

## Friends of Riverside Keep Promises



Those predictions that concern about Riverside Park would not outlive the Nov. 8 vote to save it appear unfounded. Organizers of Friends of Riverside Park, which campaigned against the proposal to sell half the park, [click here](#)

## 2012 Event Schedule

May 5, 2012 MAYDAY! MAYDAY!

May 26, 2012 Yale Harvard Regatta Day

June 16, 2012 Juneteenth Celebration

Sept 15, 2012 2nd Annual Down by the Riverside Festival

For more information on upcoming events and volunteering, email us at [info@friendsofriversideconservancy.org](mailto:info@friendsofriversideconservancy.org)

**FROM THE DAY 50 AND MORE YEARS AGO**



# JOIN FORPC TODAY!

Senior (65+)/Student	\$10
Individual	\$20
Family	\$30
Supporter	\$75
Patron	\$250
Sponsor	\$2,500
Other amount	_____
(circle suggested donation level)	

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please make checks payable to:*

**Friends of Riverside Park Conservancy**

*and send to:*

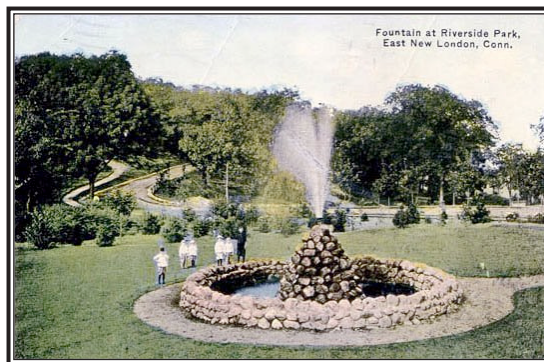
**Friends of Riverside Park Conservancy**

P.O. Box 1082

New London, CT 06320

## History

Riverside Park was created by the City of New London in 1893 with land acquired from the Post Hill Improvement Company, and by 1910 it had expanded to nearly 33 acres thanks to gifts from S.D. Lawrence and F.B. Brandegee and from the Palmer Brothers. Over the last 50 years, parcels have been transferred to the adjacent US Coast Guard Academy, and the park now covers about 18 acres. Once a popular recreation spot - for games, picnicking, swimming and viewing the annual Yale-Harvard Regatta - Riverside Park became isolated due to the construction of I-95 and urban renewal, and it gradually fell into disrepair and disuse. All the while, some New Londoners continued to visit the park and value it as a hidden gem whose unique landscape and sweeping views offered peaceful respite from the stresses of their everyday lives.



The City of New London has from time to time attempted to sell the remainder of the park. In fall 2010, City Manager Martin Berliner signed a contract with the USCGA to sell 9 central acres for \$2.9 million. Contingent upon approval by the voters, the question was included on the ballot in November 2011: "Shall the City of New London sell a portion of Riverside Park to the Federal Government?" The measure failed, and the park today remains under city ownership and available for public use.

Long before the vote, advocates for the park had begun to come together to reverse the effects of years of neglect by the city. A diverse coalition of individuals and organizations began holding monthly clean-ups to pick up litter and clear away weeds and underbrush. An informal group, dubbed Friends of Riverside, gained over 500 members and sponsored community events in Riverside Park which drew hundreds of people, many of whom had not visited the park in decades, or known about it at all.

Determined that Riverside Park would never return to its former state of neglect, Friends of Riverside resolved to form a conservancy to restore, enhance and manage the park, so that the entire burden of its upkeep would not fall on the city and its taxpayers, and on December 23, 2011, The Friends of Riverside Park Conservancy, Inc. was formed.



The purpose of The Friends of Riverside Park Conservancy, Inc. is to restore, manage and enhance Riverside Park, in partnership with the public and local government, for the enjoyment of present and future generations, and to improve the quality of open space for all New Londoners.

<http://friendsofriversideconservancy.org/>



## 2012 Events

Saturday, May 5  
**MAYDAY! MAYDAY!**  
**Community Service Day**

Saturday, May 26  
**YALE-HARVARD REGATTA**  
**Family Fest in the Park**

Saturday, June 16  
**JUNETEENTH**  
**Celebration**

Saturday, September 15  
**2nd Annual**  
**"DOWN BY THE RIVERSIDE"**  
**Festival**

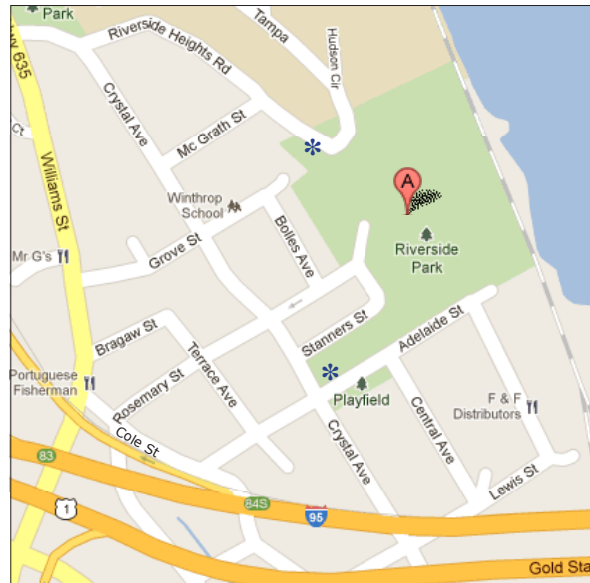
**More to come...**

Check out our website for updates:

**[friendsofriversideconservancy.org](http://friendsofriversideconservancy.org)**

The Friends of Riverside Park Conservancy is a community-based nonprofit organization and is not part of city government. Any questions on park management or usage should be directed to Tommie Major at <[tmajor@ci.new-london.ct.us](mailto:tmajor@ci.new-london.ct.us)>.

## Visiting the park



Riverside Park is located at the corner of Adelaide Street and Crystal Ave. The park can be entered from Adelaide at the south end, and from Riverside Heights at the north. Free parking is available.

**From downtown New London:** Take Water St to Crystal Ave, and turn right. Continue about .5 miles, then turn right onto Adelaide. The entrance to the park is on your left.

**From I-95S:** Take exit 84S-N-E and follow both forks to the right. Merge onto Williams St, follow for .2 miles and turn left onto Cole St. Turn left onto Adelaide. Riverside Park will be on your left.

**From I-95N:** Take exit 83. Turn left onto Williams St, then take a right onto Cole Street. Turn left onto Adelaide. Riverside Park will be on your left.

- Monthly clean-ups
- Gardening
- Website and/or clerical
- Fundraising and/or grant writing
- Join our Board
- Public Relations
- Special events

## Volunteer opportunities

I would like to volunteer in the following area(s):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send to:

**Friends of Riverside Park Conservancy**  
P.O. Box 1082  
New London, CT 06320

Or email us at:

**[info@friendsofriversideconservancy.org](mailto:info@friendsofriversideconservancy.org)**