



NEWBURGH WANTS A PARK CAMPAIGN

A community-led effort to designate Crystal Lake as a public park. Crystal Lake is a 109-acre greenspace currently owned by the City of Newburgh. Designating these precious lands as a park and nature preserve would more than double Newburgh's parkland and achieve equity for the surrounding neighborhood, which is 71% Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). It is the only ward in the city without a real park and recreational opportunities afforded by protected lands.

- www.newburghwantsapark.org

December 22nd, 2023 | Newburgh, NY

Prepared for: Newburgh Wants a Park Campaign

Prepared by: thread collective

cover photo credit: Betty Bastidas

1 / EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Crystal Lake is located in the City of Newburgh, tucked away along the northern slopes of the wooded landscape at Snake Hill, and is part of the Quassaick Creek Watershed. It is one of a series of small water bodies connected by creeks and flowing water that run through several adjacent municipalities, including the Town of New Windsor and the Town of Newburgh. This is a regional asset that can be enjoyed by all.

In the 1950s, Crystal Lake was a beloved community hub for swimming, sunbathing, sailing, ice fishing, hiking, and lake-side gatherings. However, due to decades of illegal dumping and neglect, it was abandoned and forgotten. Over the last six years, local volunteers and organizations have revitalized the area by removing garbage, restoring trails, protecting land, planting gardens and creating community programs. These community activities have reignited interest in conservation and stewardship of Crystal Lake and brought awareness to local residents of its importance as a natural ecosystem in the region.

The Newburgh Wants a Park Campaign (NWA PC) is a community-led initiative supported by 29 Community Partners that aims to officially designate the 109-acre greenspace as a public park and preserve. This is currently zoned as a Conservation Development District and is not protected from development, sales, or changes in land use. Successful park designation would achieve several community benefits:

- **Double the city's parkland** to better align with American Planning Association recommendations of 12.5% urban parkland coverage, currently at only 2.8%. With designation of the 109-acres, parkland would reach close to 6.5%;
- **Enhance residents' quality of life and health** by providing more access to quality nature experiences, with documented benefits such as immune system support, stress reduction, and improved mood;
- **Promote environmental equity for Ward 3**, a predominantly Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) neighborhood with limited access to walkable city parks;
- **Facilitate greater access to funding** for infrastructure and maintenance;
- **Protect an essential ecosystem** that sequesters carbon, supports wildlife, and combats extreme heat; and
- **Increase property values**, as studies have shown the positive impact of parks on property values.

Over the past year, NWA PC has engaged the community to gather input on park designation and how the community envisions using a park and preserve. To date, 1,000 community members have signed a petition in support of designa-

CAMPAIGN GOALS

Designate municipal land as parkland.

Protect 109-acres of Crystal Lake and Snake Hill corridor as the City of Newburgh's newest park and nature preserve.

WHY IT MATTERS?

- More equitable access to nature
- Human health benefits
- Ecological benefits
- Increased wellbeing
- Increased public safety

tion and 283 residents have provided feedback through a community survey and interactive meetings. The outcome shows overwhelming community desire for:

- **Designation and protection**, with 98.3% of survey respondents approving city action;
- 44% want all and 25% want most of the park to be protected with limited public uses;
- **Protection of biodiversity & wildlife**, 80.9% prioritize this; and
- **Focused attention on increasing park accessibility** and promoting uses that enhance hiking and walking opportunities, children's play and youth programs, biking, and kayaking.

We are grateful to be working with the City of Newburgh City Council and staff as they continue to express support for and explore ways to designate Crystal Lake as a public park. The City Council has the opportunity to dedicate the site as a city park and nature preserve by passing a local law, by Resolution, in early 2024 (per Article IX, § C9.05 of the city of Newburgh's constitution). **It is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to preserve an invaluable natural ecosystem and greenspace for future generations, achieve greater environmental justice, and improve our collective quality of life.**

CRYSTAL LAKE PARK AND PRESERVE REGIONAL CONTEXT

PARK DESIGNATION
WOULD MORE THAN DOUBLE NEWBURGH'S PARK ACREAGE

TOWN OF NEWBURGH

CITY OF NEWBURGH

Crystal Lake

1

4

3

6

Snake Hill

2

5

TOWN OF NEW WINDSOR

7

8

HUDSON RIVER

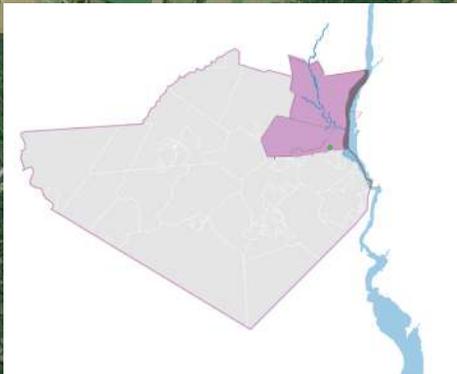
LEGEND

- 1 Crystal Lake
- 2 Snake Hill
- 3 Delano-Hitch Park
- 4 Muchattoes Lake
- 5 Quassaick Creek
- 6 Washington Lake
- 7 Browns Pond
- 8 Little Falls Pond

Crystal Lake and Snake Hill are the lungs of Newburgh.

Imagine with us for a moment: What if only a few blocks from bustling Broadway there existed Newburgh's largest public park and nature preserve? It would be a place for you and your loved ones to picnic; swim, boat or fish; visit a public vegetable garden; hear children's laughter at play or just take a quiet moment of rest for yourself. It would be a place that protected Newburgh's largest greenspace and intact ecosystem for all future generations to come.

With your support, this vision can become a reality. We hope you'll join us and learn more about our community campaign.



*Inset Map of Orange County
Background Map: Aerial of regional context,
Source: google map*

2 / VISION

We believe all people deserve access to safe, recreational greenspace, biodiverse landscapes, clean air and drinking water, and fresh, healthy food—but currently not all City of Newburgh residents do. We ask city officials to take immediate action to protect Crystal Lake and the Snake Hill Corridor in perpetuity by designating the largest greenspace in the City of Newburgh as the newest public park and preserve in the City’s most nature-deprived ward.

Parks are critical social infrastructure, the connective tissue in cities that cultivate and strengthen community relationships. A park that mirrors community values can inspire the community to take greater pride and care for the space and each other.

Together, as a community, we are changing the narrative of Crystal Lake to be a place of **play**, where children and families can enjoy outdoor activities and recreation. We are fostering a sense of **stewardship**, instilling in residents a commitment to protect and preserve this vital natural resource. Through **engagement**, we are connecting people with their environment and encouraging active participation in its care. Crystal Lake serves as a place to **cool down** under the shade canopy on hot summer days, offering a respite from the heat. It is also a hub for **movement**, providing space for exercise, walking, gardening and biking. Ultimately, Crystal Lake is evolving into a place for **gathering**, where the diverse residents of Newburgh can come together, fostering a sense of unity and belonging.

This campaign aligns with the creation and protection of regional and local ecological corridors and greenways, such as the Quassaick Creek Greenway (QCG). The 2023 QCG Feasibility Study was commissioned by Scenic Hudson, a regional environmental and conservation non-profit and NWA PC partner, and the QCG steering committee. QCG aims to preserve the Creek’s unique ecosystem, and improve neighborhood access to nature while creating a safe path of movement for pedestrians and bicycles. Crystal Lake serves as a key QCG trailhead and serves as its western entrance. An important recommendation of the study is designation of Crystal Lake as parkland, envisioning the new park as an essential link between the Hudson River, urban neighborhoods, and the 95-acre Snake Hill Preserve.



PLAY



STEWARDSHIP



ENGAGE



COOL DOWN



MOVE



GATHER





Establishing Crystal Lake as a nature preserve would help protect the local ecosystem and biodiversity. Preserving this natural area can safeguard native plants and wildlife species, creating a habitat for various organisms. It would contribute to ecological balance, promote conservation, and support the overall health of the environment.

- Michael Thron,
survey participant



All photos on this page credited to: Betty Bastidas, Ronald Zorrilla, Anusha Mehar, Carlos Alicea

SITE AND ECOLOGY

The majority of the Crystal Lake and Snake Hill corridor consist of invaluable ecological resources like wetlands, critical wildlife and native plant habitats, forests that sequester carbon and help cool our area, and steep slopes that pose grave challenges to develop cost effectively. Successfully protecting the 109-acres of Crystal Lake as a public park and nature preserve—along with Scenic Hudson’s adjacent 95-acres of preserved open space in the Town of New Windsor—will safeguard the entirety of the top of Newburgh’s iconic Snake Hill and significantly improve connectivity within this natural sanctuary. Understanding and respecting the delicate balance of Crystal Lake and the Snake Hill Corridor’s ecology will contribute to informed decisions and sustainable management practices that uphold the environmental integrity of this vital natural resource for all.

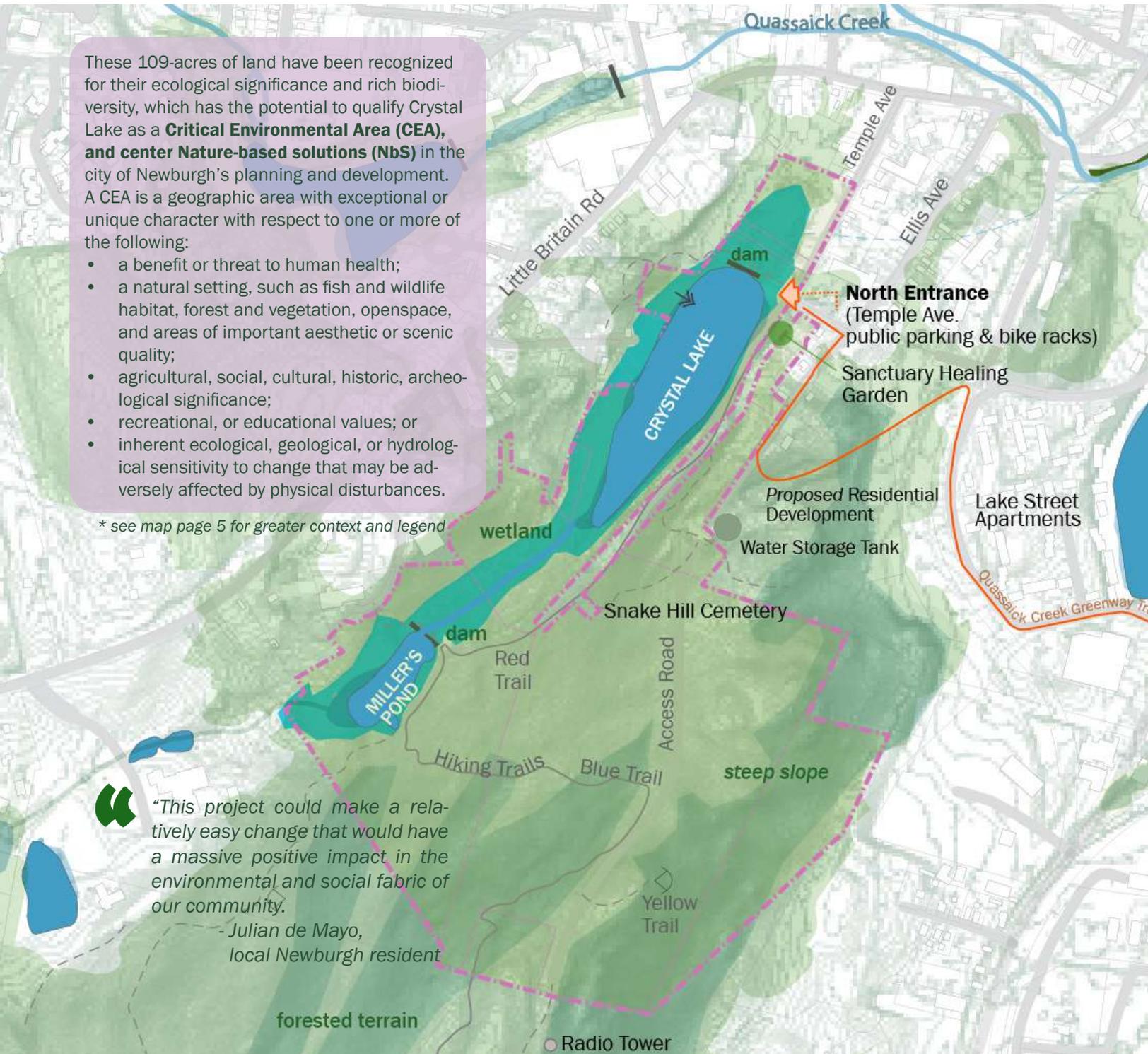
These 109-acres of land have been recognized for their ecological significance and rich biodiversity, which has the potential to qualify Crystal Lake as a **Critical Environmental Area (CEA)**, and center **Nature-based solutions (NbS)** in the city of Newburgh’s planning and development. A CEA is a geographic area with exceptional or unique character with respect to one or more of the following:

- a benefit or threat to human health;
- a natural setting, such as fish and wildlife habitat, forest and vegetation, openspace, and areas of important aesthetic or scenic quality;
- agricultural, social, cultural, historic, archeological significance;
- recreational, or educational values; or
- inherent ecological, geological, or hydrological sensitivity to change that may be adversely affected by physical disturbances.

* see map page 5 for greater context and legend

“This project could make a relatively easy change that would have a massive positive impact in the environmental and social fabric of our community.”

- Julian de Mayo,
local Newburgh resident



Understanding and respecting the delicate balance of Crystal Lake and the Snake Hill Corridor’s ecology will contribute to informed decisions and sustainable management practices that uphold the environmental integrity of this vital natural resource for all.

Wetlands & Water Health

The 109-acre landscape is home to both Crystal Lake, an 8-acre pond and former centerpiece of the historic recreation area, and the smaller Millers Pond, creating a connected aquatic ecosystem that serves as a natural water filtration system, stores significant carbon, promotes biodiversity, supports climate cooling, buffers flooding, and houses a vibrant fishery. Improving the water quality will contribute to the broader vitality and sustainability of the immediate environment and downstream ecosystems throughout the Quassaick Creek Watershed in the face of urbanization pressure and support future revenue-generating recreational activities, such as canoeing or swimming.

Wildlife & Native Ecological Habitats

Crystal Lake is home to native wetlands, woodlands, and shoreline areas that contribute to the overall resilience of the Quassaick Creek Watershed. Its ecosystem creates an unparalleled sanctuary for urban wildlife, including numerous species of fish, amphibians, waterfowl and other birds, making it ideal to serve as an outdoor classroom for students of all ages.

Steep Slopes

Snake Hill straddles the City of Newburgh/Town of New Windsor border and is well-known as a local landmark that offers expansive views of the Hudson River Valley from its summit. Crystal Lake features forested steep slopes that pose significant challenges to develop. These slopes currently prevent soil erosion, regulate water flow, and offer habitat niches for specialized plant and animal species that make the city of Newburgh a more climate resilient community.

Community Garden

Crystal Lake is home to The Sanctuary, one of the city of Newburgh’s most vibrant community gardens, that offers BIPOC-centered programming, free produce and a healing space for all. Community gardens are known to improve urban air and soil quality, increase plant biodiversity, improve water filtration, attract pollinators, and reduce neighborhood waste through community composting initiatives.



Photo credit top to bottom: Betty Bastidas, Gita Nandan, Ronald Zorilla & Anusha Mehar

3 / COMMUNITY CONTEXT

Low-income neighborhoods, families with children, and BIPOC residents are three times more likely than white residents to live in nature-deprived areas. To underscore the importance of protecting public land as parkland in Newburgh, it's vital to consider the city's socio-economic and racial landscape. In this city of nearly 29,000 residents, approximately 78% identify as BIPOC, 43% of the city's youth are overweight or obese, and 21.4% live below the poverty line—nearly double the national average. The city of Newburgh is designated an "Environmental Justice Community" by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, meaning it suffers a disproportionate share of negative environmental, climate and socio-economic burdens. Considering recent real-estate development pressures on lands adjacent to Crystal Lake, park designation would prevent further forestland loss to future development in the city's largest unprotected greenspace in Newburgh's neighborhood that already faces the greatest inequities in access to nature and outdoor recreational opportunities.

CITY OF NEWBURGH PARKS BY WARD*

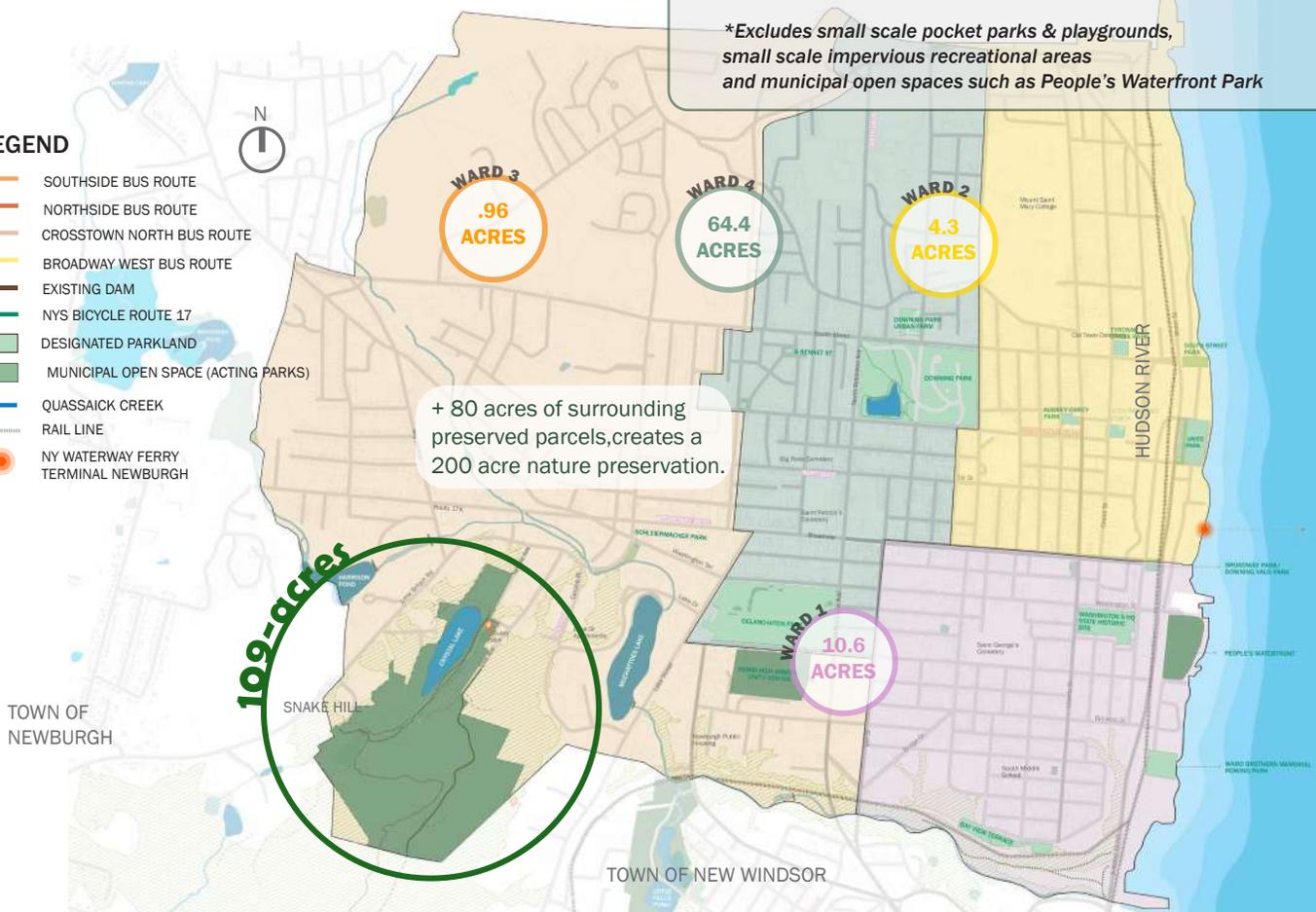
WARD 4 64.4 ACRES	Downing Park Urban Farm	2.4
	Downing Park	35
	Delano-Hitch Park	27
WARD 3 .96 ACRES	Schleiermacher Park	0.96
WARD 2 4.3 ACRES	Tyrone Crabb Memorial Park	0.7
	Audrey Carey Park	0.7
	South St Park	0.9
	Unico Park	2
WARD 1 10.6 ACRES	Washington HQ State Historic Park	6.2
	Ward Brother's Memorial Rowing Park	0.8
	Broadway Park/Downing	
	Vaux Park	0.5
	Bay View Terrace	3.1

TOTAL ACRES 80.26

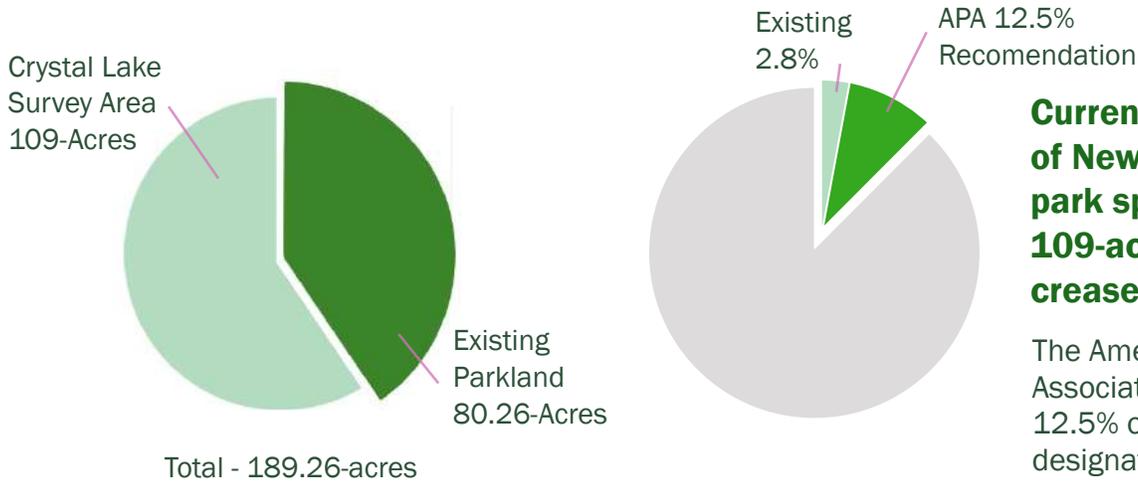
*Excludes small scale pocket parks & playgrounds, small scale impervious recreational areas and municipal open spaces such as People's Waterfront Park

LEGEND

- SOUTHSIDE BUS ROUTE
- NORTHSIDE BUS ROUTE
- CROSSTOWN NORTH BUS ROUTE
- BROADWAY WEST BUS ROUTE
- EXISTING DAM
- NYS BICYCLE ROUTE 17
- DESIGNATED PARKLAND
- MUNICIPAL OPEN SPACE (ACTING PARKS)
- QUASSAICK CREEK
- RAIL LINE
- NY WATERWAY FERRY TERMINAL NEWBURGH



HOW MUCH OPEN SPACE IS AVAILABLE IN NEWBURGH?



Currently only 2.8% of Newburgh is park space. Adding 109-acres would increase to 6.5%.

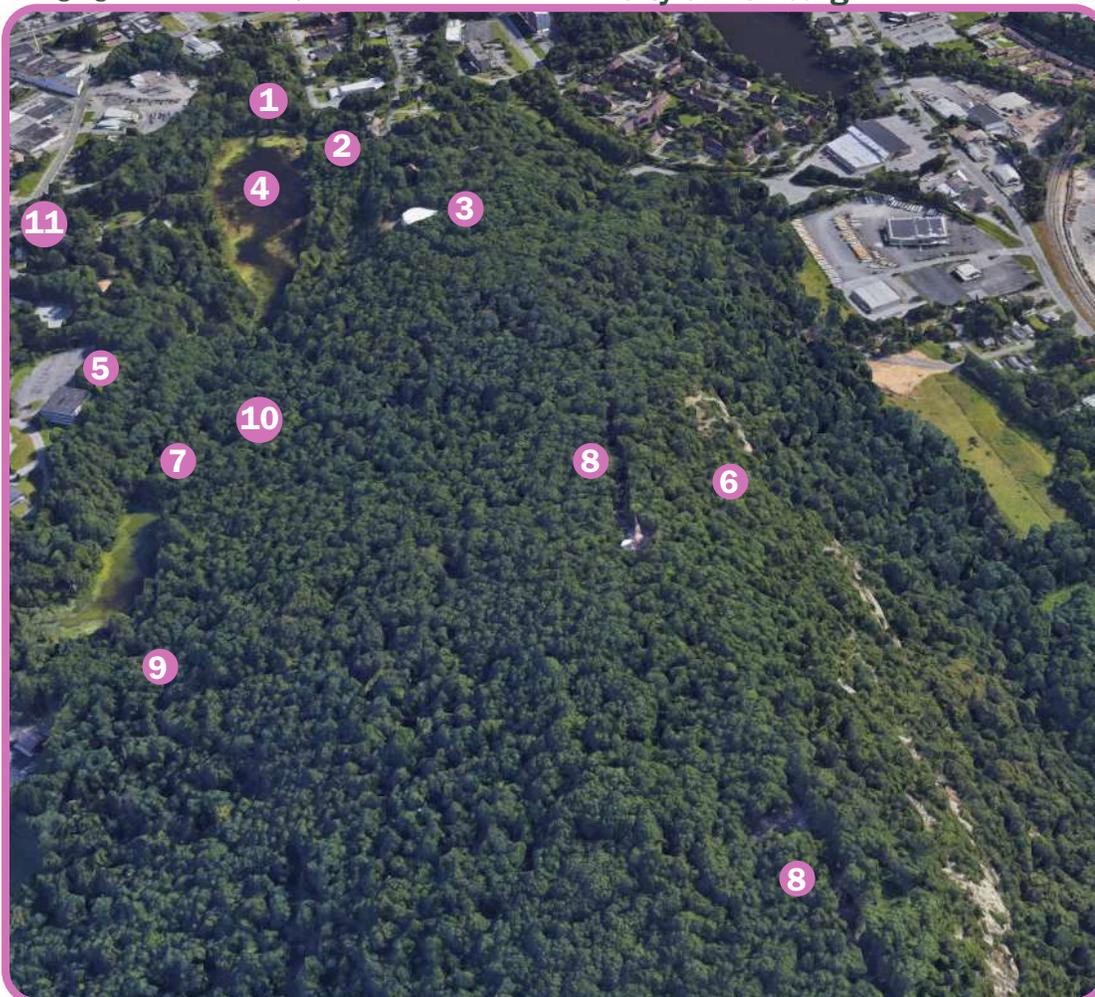
The American Planning Association recommends 12.5% of city-land be designated parkland.

UN, Federal and State gov 30x30 Pledge advocates for protecting at least 30% of all land and waters by 2030.

Protecting 109-acres of Crystal lake would more than double Newburgh's existing parkland of 80.26 acres, creating a total of 189.18-acres of protected land city-wide.

google earth aerial view, north

City of Newburgh



- 1 Outflow to Quassaick Creek/Dam
- 2 Sanctuary Garden+ Parking Lot, Entrance
- 3 City Watertank
- 4 Crystal Lake
- 5 Private Commercial Land-use
- 6 Steep Slopes + Views
- 7 Millers Pond + Wetlands
- 8 Maintenance Road
- 9 Lower Trail
- 10 Historic Jewish Cemetery
- 11 Little Britain Road

Town of Newburgh

HISTORY OF REVITALIZATION

In the early 2010s, the Quassaick Creek Watershed Alliance (QCWA) spearheaded three weekends of cleanups at Crystal Lake, removing 9-tons of garbage and over 100 discarded tires. The QCWA has since remained a critical partner in the reclamation of Crystal Lake, removing invasive species and planting over 150 native trees and shrubs.

In 2017, Scenic Hudson spearheaded volunteer initiatives that built Crystal Lake into the park-like property it is today. From 2017–2020, Scenic Hudson co-managed farming operations with the Merakey Center for Hope; ceremoniously ‘reopened’ the property; held three WinterFest events; hosted field trips for the P-Tech Academy, Boys and Girls Club and Mount Saint Mary’s College; partnered on youth employment opportunities with the City of Newburgh and created parking infrastructure. In 2020, Outdoor Promise (OP) partnered with the Mayor’s Summer Youth Employment Program to enhance park infrastructure and provide more equitable access to nature for youth traditionally underrepresented in outdoor spaces. OP has since led many clean-ups at Crystal Lake and hikes up Snake Hill for Newburgh youth and families.

Also in 2020, management of the farm was transferred to the Ecological Citizen’s Project (ECP) via a lease agreement with the City of Newburgh. Through the ECP’s Regenerative Communities (RC) program, two local BIPOC Farmers founded The Sanctuary Healing Gardens as a new community asset to promote healthy eating, wellbeing, mindfulness and nature access. The Sanctuary has grown to include an Urban Youth Apprentice Program, hosted over 50 community workshops and volunteer workdays, and bolstered engagement with Crystal Lake. In 2023, the Greater Newburgh Parks Conservancy planted a flower ‘bloom’ garden and a 10-tree food forest at The Sanctuary to provide visitors with generations of free fruit.

The City of Newburgh has been instrumental in preserving these lands and working in partnership with community-based organizations to bring new life to Crystal Lake. Council members and the Mayor have focused public attention on the potential of Crystal Lake, supported the City of Newburgh Water Department’s installation of a yard hydrant for public use, and recently conducted a survey of the 109-acre property to take forward steps towards park designation.



1600’s



Waroneck band of Lenape local indigenous tribe fished, hunted and swam in the area

1700’s



Europeans colonize and settle in the Hudson Valley

1940’s



Crystal Lake is a swimmable popular recreation area

1970’s



Area becomes abandoned and City assumes ownership

2004



Scenic Hudson purchases adjacent Snake Hill parcels

2018



Trails and community garden open to the public

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND INPUT

The initial campaign to protect Crystal Lake was led by The Sanctuary Healing Gardens leadership, Anusha Mehar, Katie Collins, and Betty Bastidas; and Jason Angell, Co-Director of the Ecological Citizen’s Project, the non-profit that currently holds the municipal license agreement on land where The Sanctuary was established. After a successful season in 2021, reimagining the gardens, activating community stewardship, and growing community-distributed produce, the group began to inquire about and work towards the longer term vision of Crystal Lake. Encroaching development citywide increased the urgency to permanently protect Crystal Lake for future generations. In 2022, NWaPC and Scenic Hudson opened formal discussions with the City of Newburgh Council and government leadership to address the possibility of protecting Crystal Lake as a public park and nature preserve. At the time, City Council members expressed unanimous support publicly and City Executive Leadership requested further site analysis and community input. In 2023, a land survey of the 109-acres was executed while NWaPC kicked off a community engagement action plan to organize community support for the project and engage local residents in the process of protecting this greenspace and envisioning how it could best serve as a community asset.

**3 COMMUNITY EVENTS /
111 PARTICIPANTS
TO ENGAGE THE PUBLIC**

**1,000 PEOPLE
SIGNED THE PETITION IN
SUPPORT OF DESIGNATION**

**283 SURVEYED
PROVIDING IMPORTANT INPUT**

**29 COMMUNITY PARTNERS
ENGAGED IN THE PROCESS**

**2,305 MAILERS
REACHED WARD 3 RESIDENTS**



THE CAMPAIGN

Through NWaPC's community organizing initiatives, we tabled at city-wide cultural and environmental events, placed flyers in local businesses, sponsored paid ads across social media platforms, engaged partners to amplify within their networks, designed and circulated direct mailers to 2,305 households in Ward 3 and collectively knocked on 500 doors within a 15-minute walking distance of Crystal Lake to bolster survey participation.

To activate local residents as individual stewards of this campaign, we mobilized the public on five important occasions, including two community calls to action to share testimony in support of park designation at City Council meetings in February and September, 2023.

The Campaign Website Launch in April, 2023 brought together more than 40 local residents for the inauguration of the campaign.

In July, 2023, we organized a Tapas & Tour at Crystal Lake for all 29 Community Partners to deepen their connection to the site and outreach efforts.

In August, 2023, we hosted a Public Feast and Forum at the Newburgh Armory Unity Center, where community members gathered to share their ideas, dreams, and goals for revitalizing and protecting one of our most precious greenspaces. During the forum, participants enjoyed a warm meal catered by a local small business while exploring 3D models of Crystal Lake's terrain, the overall vision and timeline for this campaign, thirty six large-scale foam boards to illustrate potential land uses and conservation, and children's creative ideas for the park.

Since the survey's launch in July 2023, one thousand people have signed the petition to protect Crystal Lake.w people have submitted their responses, and that number is growing every day.

The survey will remain open in perpetuity to engage as many city residents as possible and gather critical community feedback to achieve a generational victory that our entire community will benefit from.

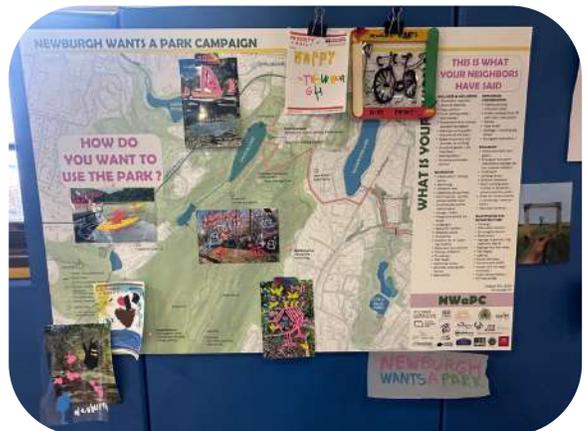
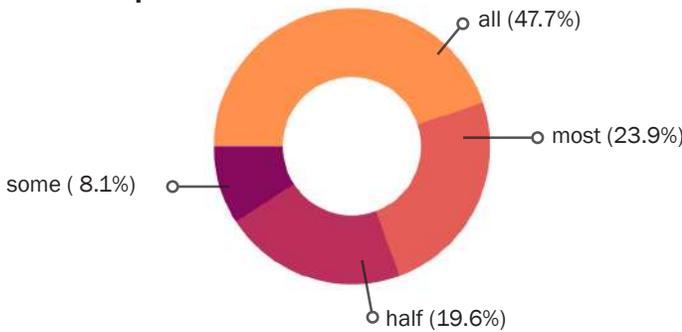


Photo credit: Betty Bastidas, Anusha Mehar

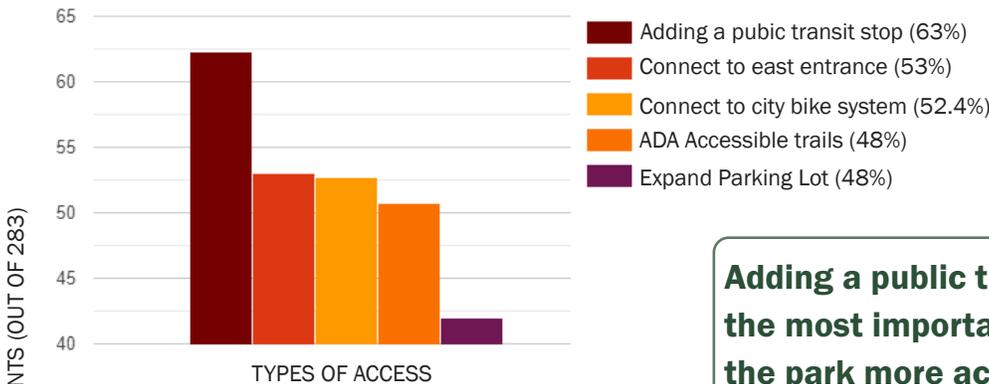
SURVEY RESULTS

We prioritized community input in our process to reimagine Crystal Lake and the Snake Hill Corridor to ensure the park and preserve reflects our community’s vision, and to inspire ambassadors for change from within our own community. This fortified partnerships and emboldened young stewards to elevate their voices in service and protection of our shared ecosystem. Together, we crafted a public survey in both English and Spanish that addressed key themes in our campaign, including conservation & preservation, programs & public uses and mobility & access to all 109-acres of land, and launched a targeted, bilingual door-knocking campaign to connect with city of Newburgh residents within a fifteen minute walking distance of Crystal Lake, primarily in Ward 3.

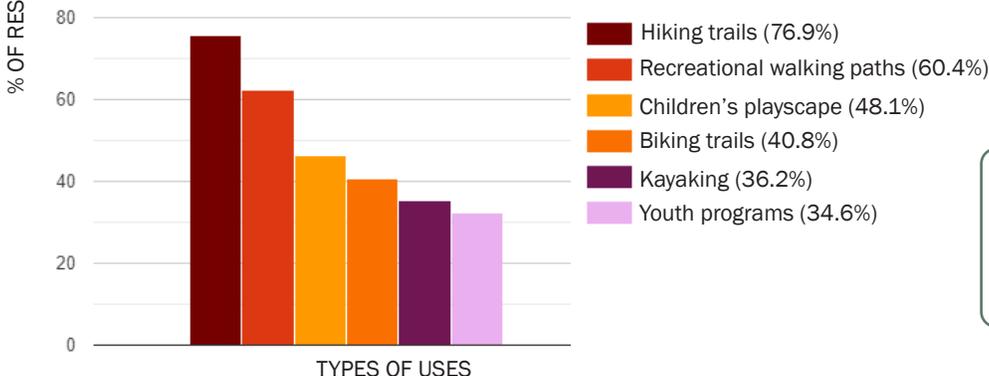
How much of the 109-acre property do you think should be protected?



How should Crystal Lake be made more accessible?



Top six desired activities are:



“ Conservation, agriculture, and access to free enjoyment of the land is the right of every citizen. Protecting this environment is not only the duty of the city and the governing powers, it is the proper and moral thing to do.

- Daniel Reynolds,
Newburgh local resident

98.3% of survey respondents support protecting Crystal Lake as a public park.

77.9% of survey respondents live in City and Town of Newburgh.

71.6% agree that ALL or MOST of the 109-acres should be protected.

Adding a public transit stop was the most important way to make the park more accessible

75% want hiking and walking trails to be available.

4/ IMPACTS

The protection of Crystal Lake as a public park in the city of Newburgh offers a multitude of significant impacts and benefits that span ecological preservation, community well-being, environmental justice, and economic prosperity:



ECOLOGICAL

- Park preservation safeguards habitats and sustains the ecosystem, promoting biodiversity.
- Crystal Lake's forest sequesters approximately 310 MTCO₂e per year aiding in climate change mitigation.
- Dense tree coverage helps to mitigate Newburgh's "heat island" effect, reducing elevated temperatures caused by urban development.



HEALTH & WELLBEING

- Creating a park and nature preserve promotes physical activity, mental well-being, and social connections.
- Parks are vital for Newburgh due to high rates of health hazards like asthma, childhood obesity, and other poverty-related illnesses.
- Urban forests enhance air quality, reduce respiratory issues, and lower stress.



PUBLIC SAFETY

- Parks reduce aggression and build social bonds, enhancing public safety and community strength.
- Greenspaces integrated into community design are less crime-prone than barren areas.
- Sustainable land-use planning and natural resource management boost disaster resilience and create safer transportation options for pedestrians and cyclists.



ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

What is Environmental Justice? *Environmental justice is defined by the EPA as, "the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies."*

Parks are a Critical Resource

As the climate crisis intensifies and marginalized communities like Newburgh continue to be most affected by these changes, parks can offer a sanctuary in cities that are often sites of environmental injustice. The Trust for Public Land recently came out with a special report titled, "The Power of Parks to Address Climate Change". The report explores how parks and the implementation of greenspaces are integral to the mitigation of climate change, especially in cities.

- Greenspaces promote equity by offering local residents access to recreation, clean air and water, cooler temperatures, shade, and space for nutritious food.
- Parks reduce pollution disparities and associated physical & mental health effects.
- Environmental justice movements empower marginalized communities to participate in decision-making and create future advocates for a healthier environment.

In the city of Newburgh, parks and open space are currently not equitably distributed, with many residents not able to safely walk to a local park.



Portions of the town and city have endured decades of pollution and ecological damage, in addition to a low quality of life for much of the city's population. This proposal could potentially engage and inspire the local youth and improve the community's mental and physical health, while benefiting the natural environment.

- Daniela Parrino, Newburgh Resident

FUNDING, MAINTENANCE + OPERATIONS

Millions of people across the nation lack access to quality parks, particularly in minority communities. New York State recently passed the ‘Green Amendment’ in article 1, section 19 of the NYS constitution, which codifies that “each person shall have clean air and water, and a healthful environment.” The NWA PC mission is about bridging the nature gap, connecting resources, and creating an oasis of rejuvenation for everyone, irrespective of their background or zip code. Our coalition is leading the charge to turn this park-dream into a reality, one acre at a time.

While the Mayor, Council members and city staff have expressed support for protecting the 109-acres as a park and nature preserve, they have also expressed reasonable concerns over how to pay for the establishment and maintenance costs of a park given other city needs. As other municipalities around the country face similar challenges, we would like to provide an overview of potential approaches to funding the campaign’s park recommendations.

It is important to note that the NWA P campaign recommends that the majority if not all of the 109-acre Crystal Lake property be protected as a “passive recreation area”, which is generally an undeveloped space or environmentally sensitive area that requires minimal development and places an emphasis on preservation of the environment. Passive recreation activities might include nature walks and wildlife viewing, leaving much of the land as it is today – except permanently protected. The costs of establishing and maintaining passive recreation areas are significantly less than “active recreation areas” which require more expensive infrastructure and ongoing maintenance costs.

While the costs of maintaining passive recreation areas are significantly lower than active recreation areas, the city will still have to plan for passive recreation area maintenance costs. They could look to develop “Parknerships”, a model Scenic Hudson has used successfully, with community-based organizations and volunteers to maintain hiking and nature walk trails. In addition, they might follow approaches like the City of Kingston, which recently received a \$500,000 from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Forest Service to hire an Urban Forester to oversee long-term maintenance of community forests.

Other Funding Options Include:

General Fund. Newburgh’s general fund pays for most city capital and operating expenses through revenue that comes primarily from property taxes. The city’s elected officials can allocate some funds through the annual budget process to establish the new park and pay for park maintenance activities to city functions

General Obligation Bonds. Like many cities, the City of Newburgh could issue a general obligation bond to borrow money to fund costs of establishing the new park, repaid with future tax revenues. The general obligation bonds would be approved by city elected officials through the local legislative process.

Development Impact Fees. Many states allow local municipalities to utilize development impact fees, a one-time charge levied by local governments on new development to help municipalities to fund public infrastructure, including parks. While New York State does not explicitly allow for development impact fees, local municipalities like the Town of Brookhaven, NY and Town of Malta, NY have used them to fund local infrastructure needs.

Concessions and Contractual fees. Many cities allow contracted entities to run restaurants, ice rinks, campsites, or boating rentals and receive concessions revenues through leasing agreements or royalties on sales. In addition, Parks are ideal rental venues for special events, which can open additional revenue opportunities. While this approach should be considered, it is important to ensure fee structures don’t reduce access to public parks or other general-use spaces.

Sales and Use Tax. Some cities allocate a percentage of local sales taxes specifically for parks, like Boulder, CO, St. Louis, MO, St. Paul, MN, and Philadelphia, PA. In 2017, Philadelphia’s City Council passed Rebuilding Community Infrastructure (Rebuild), an initiative to revitalize neighborhood parks, recreation centers, playgrounds, and libraries across the city funded through a tax on sweetened beverages. It is important to note that sales taxes are regressive, however, and have a greater impact on low-earners.

Case Study: Community Partnerships. Recently, Scenic Hudson helped the City of Poughkeepsie revitalize its Pershing Avenue Park. Scenic Hudson matched city funding to upgrade the park, and New City Parks oversaw the design of new improvements. The city funded the park upgrades through a \$325,000 bond and a \$200,000 budget allocation, which was matched with \$280,000 from Scenic Hudson for both park improvements and to establish a community farm on a portion of the park. Scenic Hudson has expressed interest in exploring a similar public-private partnership to help establish the Crystal Lake park and preserve.

As an alternative approach, the City of Newburgh could **explore a partnership with Orange County** to share maintenance costs and responsibilities. Algonquin Park is a good example of this. The Town of Newburgh worked with Orange County to designate Algonquin Park as a county park. While Orange County is responsible for the majority of park maintenance, the town pays for electricity for park lighting and maintains the baseball infields.



The Sanctuar Healing Garden, Photo credit: Jeffrey Mertz

5 / RECOMMENDATIONS



PROTECT

ALL 109-ACRES AS PARKLAND



DESIGNATE

A PORTION AS A NATURE PRESERVE



ENGAGE IN COMMUNITY

BASED PLANNING PROCESS FOR DESIGN AND PROGRAMMING



PRIORITIZE IMPROVEMENT

OF ACCESS INCLUDING TRANSPORTATION, SIDEWALKS, TRAILS, AND SIGNAGE



CONNECT

TO THE QUASSAICK CREEK GREENWAY



SUPPORT PROGRAMMING

FOR DIVERSE AGES, AND RESIDENTS

NEXT STEPS



PRESENT COMMUNITY BRIEF

NWaPC coalition members present the Community Brief City of Newburgh Council & Executive staff at Jan 4th Worksession, and distribute widely to the general public.



COMMUNITY CALL TO ACTION

City of Newburgh residents turn out to Jan 8th Council Meeting to voice public support of park designation.



COUNCILPERSON MOTIONS A RESOLUTION

Supportive Councilmember/s commit to author the resolution that will protect Crystal Lake as a public park.



RESOLUTION GOES IN FRONT OF COUNCIL

A vote is taken, resulting in official park dedication if the resolution passes.



COMMUNITY PROCESS FOR DESIGN

implementation and stewardship of this regional asset.



photo credit: Betty Bastidas



Having a park allows people to have a place to gather, where there isn't an expectation that they will be spending money. In addition, it puts central the need for rest, which often those experiencing poverty and/or working multiple jobs do not take the time for. Rest is important for our health, and having a place within the city would help to allow more people to do that.

*- Alexis McKoy-Yakle,
Newburgh local resident*

6 / ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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The community-led campaign has been staffed by Anusha Mehar, Betty Bastidas, and Jason Angell of the Ecological Citizen’s Project. This community report was prepared for NWaPC in collaboration with thread collective.

This community brief was prepared for NWaPC by thread collective, www.threadcollective.com



photo credit: Betty Bastidas

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Newburgh Wants A Park Campaign



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