



Dix Park Conservancy

President & CEO Position Announcement August 22, 2024

To apply, please click [HERE](#).

Salary: \$225,000 - \$250,000 plus benefits

**Applications requested by September 20, 2024
and accepted until the position is filled.**



The Opportunity

The Dix Park Conservancy in Raleigh, North Carolina, seeks a vibrant and visionary President & CEO to assume stewardship of this young and dynamic organization. Dix Park Conservancy (the Conservancy) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit established in 2016 that exists to support the City of Raleigh, the owner of Dorothea Dix Park (Dix Park), in its efforts by serving as the city's philanthropic and community engagement partner, and ensuring the creation and long-term success of Dix Park as a place for everyone – a transformative public space for community, health, and celebration that will enrich our quality of life in North Carolina.

Reporting to the Chair of the Conservancy Board of Directors, the President and CEO will initiate and execute community engagement and outreach efforts, as well as support programs designed to generate broad-based civic, community, and philanthropic support for Dix Park.

This opportunity calls on inspiring and collaborative leaders who understand the power of public parks to make life better for community members and visitors alike. Partnering with a dedicated staff, loyal community stakeholders, and an engaged 35-member Board of Directors, the Conservancy's next leader will help transform the land of Dix Hill to be a place that inspires awe through its beauty, invites people of all ages and abilities to play and relax, and informs through stories captured in its incredibly rich history.

The Organization

In 2015, the vision of Dix Park started to take shape when the City of Raleigh purchased the 308-acre property of Dix Hill from the State of North Carolina. This storied land has a rich history to study, share, and celebrate. It initially served as vital land for Indigenous peoples before becoming part of the Spring Hill plantation, where enslaved African Americans toiled for 150 years. Subsequently, the site became North Carolina's first mental health facility, Dorothea Dix Hospital, which operated for over a century and briefly housed the State's Department of Health and Human Services.

After the purchase of the Dix Hospital campus from the State, leaders from three grassroots organizations (Dix Visionaries, Dix 306, and Friends of Dix Park) shared a long-term vision to utilize the beautiful green space of Dix Hill in service to the community. The groups joined forces in 2016 to create the 501(c)(3) nonprofit Dix Park Conservancy. The persistence and patience of these grassroots organizers and visionaries have paid off as the Conservancy now supports the City of Raleigh as its philanthropic, community engagement, and advocacy partner to ensure the creation and long-term success of Dix Park.

Indeed, the City of Raleigh and the Conservancy work together to create a world-class destination park for local citizens and visitors, defined by imaginative play areas, lush landscapes, meandering paths, wide-open green spaces, public art, and more. In 2017, an

ambitious project was launched with the intent to transform Dorothea Dix Park into a leading public park in the United States. This transformation, led by Michael Van Valkenburgh (one of the world’s most preeminent park land designers. Master planner, designer, and oversight of the construction of the Brooklyn Bridge Park). A recent bond with the City of Raleigh has \$40 million allocated to projects at Dix Park, reinforcing that the City of Raleigh is an integral partner.

Associates, along with various consultants, undertook a massive engagement strategy that involved over 65,000 residents. In 2019, after extensive planning and community involvement, the Raleigh City Council officially adopted the Dorothea Dix Park Master Plan. The plan, while focusing on seven major projects—including creating a vibrant plaza and play area that brings families together—involves breathing new life into the park’s historic stone houses, preserving the dignity of these structures, and making them more accessible to the public.

As Dix Park continues its growth trajectory, it is important to note that since the inception of the Conservancy, it’s nearing the threshold of \$75 million raised. This is the largest non-education campaign in Raleigh in recent years. In addition to the fundraising growth, Dix Park is preparing to increase visitors dramatically in the coming years. Currently, the park sees around 600,000 visitors per year, and with the opening of the Gipson Play Plaza in 2025, the projections soar to nearly 1.5 million people visiting Dix Park per year. Adding food and beverage services through concessions offered at the park will make this a destination for Raleigh residents and visitors.

Dix Park offers its visitors an incredible array of features.

Flowers Field

The feel of the cool grass, the friendships cultivated, and the beautiful outdoors bring life to Flowers Field in the heart of Dix Park. Residents and visitors enjoy events for all ages. From movies on the lawn to Yoga in the Park to bird watching at the beautifully restored Flowers Cottage, Dix Park offers something for everyone. Many of the programs are free to the public thanks to the donors of the Conservancy.



Gipson Play Plaza

The Gipson Play Plaza at Dix Park, an 18.5-acre area on which the \$60 million construction began in 2022, has become the welcoming grand entrance for the park and attracts visitors from near and far. It will include a Grand Plaza and Waterfall, the iconic entrance to the Plaza, when opened in 2025. The Plaza will serve as a venue for community gatherings, performances, and

festivals. Adventure play areas will offer visitors of all ages and abilities multi-level play gardens, connected towers, and a variety of slides, climbing structures, and other features. The Picnic Grove and Swing Terrace will afford families and friends a space to share a meal, enjoy one another's company, and have a terrific view of the Raleigh skyline.

Stone Cottages

Three stone cottages, originally built in the 1920s for Dorothea Dix Hospital, are presently being rehabilitated as part of the park's master plan. The intent is to blend historical preservation with modern functionality and reimagine these storied structures for public enjoyment and use. The Superintendent's House, which remains on its original foundation, was once the hospital superintendent's office space and the residence for the superintendent's family.



This building is now designated to become offices for the Conservancy, while an extended porch will offer panoramic views of downtown Raleigh. Originally the residence of the lead physician, the Physician's House is being transformed into a vibrant community space. The house will accommodate various functions, including city staff volunteer services for the park, a conference room, an educational classroom, programs run by the Conservation Corps, and an

innovative artisan residency program the Conservancy hopes to introduce. Lastly, the Gatekeeper's Cottage, once situated at the park's original entrance, is set to become Dix Park's first visitor center. It will provide a welcoming space for guests, complete with essential information such as visitor maps, an overview of ongoing projects in the Park, and an exhibit dedicated to the history and legacy of the property.

The Chapel

A well-known landmark at Dix Park, the Chapel is a meeting place for many of the Conservancy's programs. The Chapel was built in 1955 and underwent a complete renovation in 2020 while providing all the amenities of a community gathering space while retaining its historic charm. In addition to serving as



the welcome and event center of the park, the Chapel is also home to a commissioned artwork mural honoring the history and legacy of Dix Park. This unique venue overlooking downtown Raleigh, commonly known as All Faiths Chapel, sits in the heart of Dix Park.

The Position

Simply put, parks make life better, and Dix Park is just beginning to realize its transformational vision to enhance the quality of life for those who visit its grounds. As the Conservancy prepares to welcome a new President and CEO, it does so, having achieved remarkable results over the last decade and rapid growth under the stewardship of its previous leaders. From this position of strength, Dix Park's constituents are energized for the next phase of the organization's evolution and impact. Leadership and staff eagerly await the arrival of the new President and CEO, who will lead the Conservancy into the next phase of this major public-private partnership.

The President and CEO of the Conservancy will report directly to the Chair of the Dix Park Conservancy Board of Directors. Partnering with the Board, the President and CEO will be responsible for executing all aspects of the Conservancy's mission to ensure the creation and long-term success of Dix Park as a place for everyone. The Conservancy's Master Plan focuses on three principles to: *Open Up and Connect*, *Build from What is There*, and *Offer Something for Everyone*. To advance these principles, the Conservancy has identified three focus areas that are ever-evolving as the Conservancy continues to grow:

FOCUS AREAS

1. Cultivate a Partnership-First Approach
2. Fund Our Future
3. Be a 'Park for Everyone'

Given these principles and focus areas, the ideal candidate for the President and CEO role will have experience developing and implementing a strategic plan that has achieved transformative

results. Further, experience establishing and nurturing public-private partnerships of the type modeled by the Conservancy and City of Raleigh will be valued. With Dix Park's position at the heart of the city, the ideal candidate for this leadership role will understand the importance of and be adept at seeking input from the Park's constituents and communicate its purpose as a place where a diverse community can gather to relax, learn, and commune with nature.

The Conservancy's bold ambitions will require creative and consistent generation of funds. The next President and CEO, therefore, will be challenged to strengthen the visibility of the Conservancy and promote its sustainability through the development of a comprehensive and diverse funding model. Candidates for the position will have demonstrated their capability as a fundraiser and careful steward of an organization's financial well-being. A park of 308 acres and more than 80 structures is the size of some towns, with significant renovations currently underway, demolitions, and other enhancements envisioned for the future. As such, in addition to financial management skills, the incoming President and CEO will have experience overseeing operations of a physical plant comparable to Dix Park's and planning for and shepherding capital projects to their completion.

While aptitudes in strategic thinking, fundraising and financial stewardship, and facility management will be imperative, at the heart of parks like Dix Park are the people who work and recreate there. Given that Dix Park strives to be a park for people of all backgrounds, ages, and abilities, the successful candidate will have a proven commitment to equity and inclusion. Furthermore, the ideal candidate will demonstrate the emotional intelligence and leadership style that fosters a healthy professional culture for the Conservancy's nine staff members. The new Conservancy President and CEO will be expected to connect with his/her staff as both a leader who sets the direction and pace, but also provides the support and mentorship that the staff needs to succeed and grow in their roles.

Leading a dynamic and impactful organization like the Conservancy at this inflection point in its history is an ideal opportunity for a leader intent on impacting the City of Raleigh and beyond. The ideal candidate will have a familiarity with the City of Raleigh and the overall Triangle region.

The Location

The City of Raleigh is the capital of North Carolina, home to several colleges and universities, as well as abundant arts, culture, and recreational opportunities. Fueled by an impressive mix of education, ingenuity, and collaboration, Raleigh and the surrounding "Research Triangle" region routinely rank among the nation's best places to live, work, and play. Home to more than two million people, the Triangle area of Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill combined has attracted hundreds of companies to the region, helping to make it the largest research park in the United States. Perfectly positioned midway between the coast and the Appalachian Mountains, the Triangle offers residents a beautiful place to call home. And while the region continues to grow and offer a superior quality of life, the cost of living remains reasonable.



Core Responsibilities

The next President and CEO of the Conservancy will be a visionary leader with the experience and foresight to help the dedicated Board members, loyal community stakeholders, and talented staff to chart the course of the organization’s future. Proven leadership in a complex corporate, governmental, or nonprofit organization will be a key asset sought in candidates well positioned to help the Conservancy set and meet ambitious goals.

In addition, the President and CEO will be expected to fulfill the following key responsibilities:

- **Leadership, Strategy, and Management:** Serve as the primary advocate, visionary, and spokesperson for the organization. Ensure the progress of long- and short-term strategic plans. Build strong and meaningful alliances with the City of Raleigh, community partners, donor organizations, government officials, and other key partners to realize the Dix Park Master Plan. Build and develop a high-functioning team and Board. Motivate employees, Board members, and other stakeholders to contribute. Provide intellectual leadership and foster an entrepreneurial environment of creativity and innovation. Mentor and build the team, promoting a trustworthy, inclusive, and constructive culture.
- **Fundraising, Resource Development, and Communication:** Work with the Campaign Cabinet, staff, and fundraising counsel to raise money to fulfill the master plan with the mindset of chief philanthropic ambassador. Be creative in the crafting of the next phase of the fundraising campaign—knowledge in pursuing federal, state, and county funding in addition to the City of Raleigh funding. Create an earned income strategy for the Conservancy and park operations through food and beverage and rentals. Execute early impact projects to establish the Dix Park Concessions program. Oversee ongoing food and beverage services and rental facilities at Dix Park that contribute to the overall park visitor experience and generate income for operations.

- **Partnership Management & Development:** Collaborate with the team, educate and lobby elected officials and city staff, and organize grassroots action around Dix Park and public-private partnerships. Manage key partnerships and donor relationships including but not limited to the City of Raleigh Mayor and City Council, City Management, Dix Park Founding Partners and Leadership Circle, NC DHHS, NCSU, State Farmer’s Market, and Raleigh Convention and Visitor’s Bureau.
- **Outreach & Engagement:** Serve as the chief Dix Park community outreach ambassador. Communicate the Conservancy’s mission effectively to a wide range of partners, audiences, and stakeholders, leading to broad community awareness and support of the project. Have an understanding or experience that lends itself to an understanding of the external environment that surrounds and affects the building of the park by building a culture that supports the work.
- **Board Governance:** In collaboration with the Board of Directors, identify, recruit, and retain highly effective Board members. Maintain regular communications with the Board and provide them with the necessary training, support, counsel, and information required for effective governance. Support the Board’s involvement in fundraising, strategic planning, program delivery, and increasing the overall visibility of the organization.
- **Operational, Financial Oversight, and Risk Management:** In collaboration with the CFO, VP of Operations, and outside legal counsel, oversee the financial integrity of the Conservancy, ensuring the strategic creation of and adherence to the budget, diligently following approved financial policies and accounting ethics and best practices. In addition to overseeing financials, also oversee audits and risk management, i.e., ensure adequate insurance coverage for all activities and staff, ensure best practices in employee management and HR administration, and ensure quality data management, process documentation, and division of duties.

Required Attributes, Skills, and Qualifications

Required Skills & Characteristics

The Conservancy’s next President and CEO must share a passion for parks and a commitment to the mission and the diverse constituents the park serves. In addition, a successful candidate should possess a variety of attributes, skills, and characteristics, including:

- Collaborative, innovative, transparent, and effective leadership that can motivate the Board, staff, community, donors, and partners.
- Strategic innovator with a big vision; set strategy and execute for results.

- Strong business acumen with a solid understanding of operations, finance, and budgeting.
- Fundraising and resource development track record that will help craft the *Next Phase of the Fundraising Campaign*.
- Creating and leading a Senior Management Team.
- Collaboration, community relations, and understanding public-private partnerships.
- Working with fundraising leadership committees, staff, fundraising counsel, and other partners.
- Operational and technological innovation.
- Risk management.
- Successful delivery of projects.
- High social-emotional intelligence, integrity, and sound judgment.
- Ability to inspire others through written and verbal communication.

Other specific skills and qualifications include:

- Ten or more years in a leadership position or commensurate experience with demonstrated success in organizational management, including strategic planning, program development, finance, fundraising, and operations.
- A strong familiarity with the Triangle region is a plus.
- A bachelor's degree or higher from an accredited college/university. Master's degree preferred.
- The President and CEO must live in the Triangle region.
- This is a full-time, in-person (not remote) work opportunity.

Salary/Benefits

The Conservancy is committed to attracting extraordinary leaders for this position through a compensation package that includes a competitive salary in the range of \$225,000 - \$250,000 and a generous employee benefits package that includes employee health insurance, dental, vision, paid vacation, and sick time.

To Apply: Please send a cover letter and resume in one attachment by September 20, 2024, by [applying here](#). Applications will be accepted until the position is filled.

Questions: DPCsearch@mossandross.com

Dix Park Conservancy

P.O. Box 28575

Raleigh, NC 27611

<https://www.dixparkconservancy.org/contact>