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UWS neighborhood EDUCATION and PERSONAL ACTION



**Dan Garodnick answers audience questions.**

## Riverside Park, Climate and Us

On November 7, we hosted our first speaker event in the neighborhood. Fifty neighbors came out, despite the rain, to hear Dan Garodnick, the President and CEO of The Riverside Park Conservancy talk about how New York City’s parks combat threats from climate change.

Garodnick first spoke about the neglect from 1960s to the 1980s when Riverside Park became a repository for abandoned cars, graffiti and crime. The Riverside Park Conservancy was born through the scrappy efforts of neighbors who volunteered to clean up the park. Now, 33 years later, the conservancy has 34 full-time staff, a budget of \$8 million, 5,000 volunteers and Scenic Landmark designation.

The park is vulnerable to climate change because it borders on the Hudson and extreme storms have become more frequent. Hurricane Sandy damaged the park’s retaining walls and 20 feet of water encroached on the park. The park is also vulnerable to runoff from heavy rain, during which untreated sewage can flow into the river. Changes in the climate have also brought new invasive species and pests that threaten the health of the park ecology.

The park, however, also helps counter the impact of climate change. Garodnick spoke about the cooling effect of the park, and how trees and plants absorb pollutants from the air and reduce erosion. He said, “Riverside Park would wash away without it’s horticulture holding it together.” Garodnick answered audience questions about dog runs (a caretaker is being hired), water fountains (upgrades are happening), and composting (an in-park program is in the works).

Garodnick noted that the Riverside Park Conservancy’s relationship with the New York City Parks Department, from which it receives funding, is subject to the vagaries of the New York City Budget process. Roughly half of the Conservancy’s budget comes from private funding, including individual donors, and he encouraged neighborhood residents to donate. For more information, go to

[The Riverside Park Conservancy.](#)



## Sims Recycling Trip

On Wednesday October 16<sup>th</sup>, a number of intrepid (it was raining) IEBGers trekked to Sunset Park, Brooklyn to Sims. We were treated to a tour of the largest commingled sorting facility in North America. Among many other things, we learned that glass bottles have no aftermarket and that aluminum cans are easiest to recycle. The picture above represents only 1/2 a day’s collection of recyclables.

## Stay Informed:

### Urban Green/Metered New York

- Look up your building's energy efficiency rating here. Using public data, the Urban Green council determines how well New York's buildings are really performing - how much energy they use, how much greenhouse gas they produce, and how they can improve.

### Climate Mobilization Act

-Describes NYC council's laws for building compliance with energy/CO<sub>2</sub> reduction.

NYC Mayor's Office of Sustainability - Explains the Climate Mobilization Law and offers one on one assistance to buildings planning for compliance.

## Donate for a Better Environment

Including the link listed above to Riverside Park Conservancy, here are two more environmental charities with high ratings on charity navigator. Please consider supporting them.

### The Nature Conservancy

**Mission:** to tackle climate change, protect land and water, provide food and water sustainability, build healthy cities.

### Environmental Defense Fund

**Mission:** to solve the most critical environmental problems facing the planet by working in concert with other organizations. They work on [climate](#), [oceans](#), [ecosystems](#) and [health](#).

## Movie Review: *The Story of Plastic*



Recently shown at the DOCNYC film festival, this film is a passionate expose of the system behind the current global plastic pollution crisis. Striking footage shot over three continents documents the ongoing catastrophe: mountains of trash; rivers and seas clogged with waste; and skies blackened with with poisonous chemicals from plastic production and recycling processes.

The film adeptly explains how oil companies such as ExxonMobil, Shell, Chevron are the drivers of this catastrophe. Plastics, made from a byproduct of oil refining, are a huge source of revenue to the fossil fuel industry. Accepting no responsibility, we hear oil company executives transfer blame to consumers and municipalities for not managing their waste. The film's most shocking revelation was that despite the current surplus of oil and the prospect of more reliance on renewable energy sources, fossil fuel companies are increasing oil production just so that they can flood the world with more plastic.

*The Story of Plastic* will eventually stream on Netflix. Highly recommended.

To see clips from the film visit:

<https://www.storyofplastic.org/watch>

To learn more about the push for lasting solutions to the plastic pollution crisis, visit

[breakfreefromplastic.org](http://breakfreefromplastic.org)