



# Women of DISTINCTION

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## HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

*Tupper Thomas*

Tupper Thomas has dedicated her career to improving public spaces and fostering community engagement, leaving a lasting impact on New York City's parks. Her leadership in urban planning, advocacy, and park revitalization has transformed Brooklyn and beyond.

Ms. Thomas earned a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Goucher College and worked on John Lindsay's 1965 mayoral campaign. After moving to New York City, she worked on State housing policy before settling in Brooklyn in 1969, where she spent over seven years at the Department of Housing Preservation and Development.

While raising two daughters, Ms. Thomas earned a Master's degree in Planning from Pratt Institute and served on Brooklyn's Community Board 9. In 1980, she became the first Prospect Park Administrator for the New York City Parks Department. She led efforts to restore and revitalize the park, securing funding, increasing public engagement, and launching programming. Her work led to the creation of the Prospect Park Alliance in 1987, doubling park attendance and completing a \$10 million restoration plan. By 1990, the Alliance had completed its first privately funded capital project and expanded its role in managing park concessions. During her tenure, the Lakeside Center was completed, an endowment was established, and annual attendance reached 12 million.

Beyond Prospect Park, Ms. Thomas co-chaired the National Association of Olmsted Parks (now Olmsted Network) and helped establish the City Parks Alliance in 1996, a national leader in park advocacy.

After retiring in 2011, she served as Executive Director of New Yorkers for Parks from 2013 to 2016. She continues her civic engagement as a Board Member and former Chair of the Brooklyn Book Festival.

In 2021, Ms. Thomas and her daughter, Phaedra, welcomed an Afghan refugee family of four into their home, providing them with housing and support as they adjusted to life in the United States. Over 18 months, they helped the family navigate language barriers, schooling, and government services, forming a lasting bond that continues today.

Ms. Thomas's visionary leadership and deep commitment to community have transformed urban parks and enriched countless lives.

***Tupper Thomas was selected as a  
2025 Women of Distinction honoree by Senator Andrew S. Gounardes***

