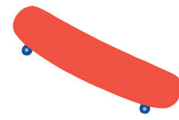


How  
can  
I improve  
my  
park?



**MAKING  
POLICY  
PUBLIC**

There are two kinds of park improvements. Each has its own set of steps to follow. How you start depends on what you're trying to improve...

Is it a...  
**MAINTENANCE  
& STAFF ISSUE?**

These are small repairs or improvements in how your park is cared for. Here are some examples:

Is it a...  
**CAPITAL PROJECT?**

These are projects where something is built or major improvements to infrastructure are made, such as:

\$35,000

CAPITAL PROJECTS MUST COST AT LEAST \$35,000. IF YOUR PROJECT COSTS LESS, IT'S A MAINTENANCE AND STAFF ISSUE.



For maintenance and staff issues, you'll need to work with NYC Parks (Parks Department).

For capital projects, you'll need to work with your local officials and NYC Parks to get funding.



You'll find more support for your improvements if you can bring together other people who want to make changes in your park.

This is called...  
**COALITION BUILDING**

How do we get support from decision-makers?

HERE ARE SOME THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN TALKING ABOUT YOUR PROJECT WITH OFFICIALS

Some things to bring to meetings with public officials:



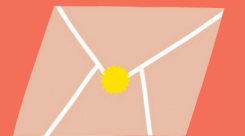
IDEAS about what you want improved.



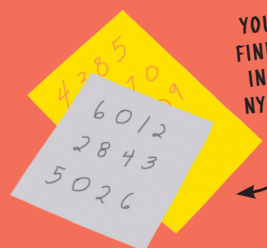
PHOTOS of the problem in your park.



A LIST of your coalition members.



LETTERS OF SUPPORT from other public officials, and information about what your coalition has done.



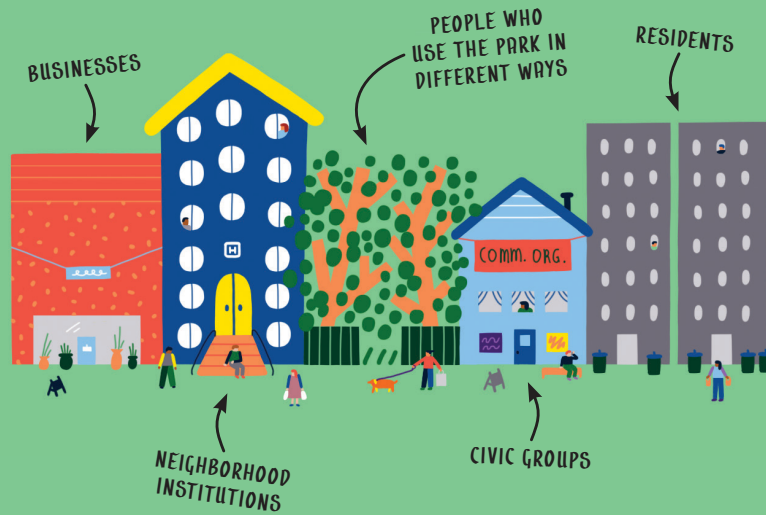
SOME FACTS, like the number of people in your community and the amount of park space they have access to.

YOU CAN FIND THIS INFO AT NY4P.ORG

**MORE PEOPLE IN YOUR COALITION = BETTER!**

**YOUR COALITION WILL BE STRONGER IF IT'S DIVERSE, SO REACH OUT TO PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT AGES, RACES, AND ETHNIC BACKGROUNDS.**

You should also reach out to the different people and organizations that make up your neighborhood...



**Be specific but flexible.** Ask for a concrete improvement, but be willing to compromise. Discuss how you can solve the issue together.



**Use your time effectively.** Keep the conversation focused on the issue you're trying to address.



**Be courteous towards officials and staff.** Approach them with respect and professionalism; don't be accusatory.



**Get to know the staff of officials you're trying to convince.** They can advocate for you in their office.



**Be persistent.** Call several weeks after you send a letter or email to follow up.



**Be patient.** You'll probably need to approach people many times, maybe even over multiple years. Don't give up!

What will our coalition do?



**LISTEN** to others to get ideas about how to improve your park.



**PLAN** together what your park needs and how to get it.



**REACH OUT** with letters, petitions, and phone calls.



**ADVOCATE** at hearings, meetings, and rallies.



We have a maintenance & staff issue. What can we do?

You'll need to work with NYC Parks. They might be able to move more staff to your park to help you fix your problem. The Borough Commissioner's office makes these decisions, but many people can play a role in this process...

THE PARKS COMMISSIONER OVERSEES NYC PARKS

IT'S ALSO HELPFUL TO REACH OUT TO THE BOROUGH COMMISSIONER'S CHIEF OF STAFF

**Borough Commissioners** manage all parks in the borough and make decisions about how to use staff and maintain parks.

**Parks Managers** oversee maintenance and staff in your park and may be able to resolve your issue.

**Outreach Coordinators** facilitate community involvement in parks. They are organized through Partnership for Parks.

Contact your Outreach Coordinator, they'll help you get started.

Explain your issue to your Parks Manager. If he can't resolve your issue, contact the Borough Commissioner.

Write a letter to your Borough Commissioner's office explaining your issue.

Follow up with a phone call and ask for a meeting.

At the meeting, explain your issue.

LOCAL PARKS GROUPS ARE MADE UP OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS WHO VOLUNTEER TO IMPROVE THEIR PARKS. THEY HOST CLEAN-UP DAYS TO SUPPORT THE WORK OF NYC PARKS STAFF. CONTACT PARTNERSHIPS FOR PARKS TO FIND OUT IF YOUR PARK HAS A GROUP OR TO GET HELP STARTING ONE.

THEY MAY HAVE AN OFFICE THAT YOU CAN VISIT IN YOUR PARK

IF YOU'RE HAVING TROUBLE, THESE GROUPS CAN HELP YOU CALL ATTENTION TO YOUR ISSUE...

How can I help all parks?

Every year, NYC Parks receives money from the city budget to keep parks open, safe, and clean. Encourage your City Council Member to increase the overall budget for NYC Parks—a steady funding stream helps keep all of the city's parks in good condition.

Your **COMMUNITY BOARD** can write a letter of support, contact your Borough Commissioner, and advocate for your issue at its annual meeting with NYC Parks.

- 1 Call the office and ask to speak with the District Manager.
- 2 Explain the issue and who's in your coalition.
- 3 Ask to present the issue to the Parks Committee or full Community Board.

Your **CITY COUNCIL MEMBER** can write a letter of support to the Borough Commissioner or attend a meeting to support your request.

- 1 Write a letter explaining your problem and who's in your coalition.
- 2 Follow up with a phone call to the district office to ask for a meeting.
- 3 Ask your Council Member to write a letter of support. If he doesn't respond, keep calling (but be polite).

3-1-1 is the citywide hotline for questions and concerns about city services. The more people who call about an issue, the more likely it will be taken seriously. Calls to 3-1-1 on park issues are shared with NYC Parks and your Community Board.

- 1 Call 3-1-1. Be clear and specific about the problem.



We want a capital project in our park. What do we do?

Getting a capital project (a physical improvement to your park) usually requires funding from several elected officials. Every year, capital project proposals work their way through the different levels of city government. Some projects go on to get funded in the citywide budget.

**BUILD YOUR COALITION**

START HERE!

USE THIS POSTER TO LEARN HOW TO GET SUPPORT FOR YOUR PROJECT

You'll need to find lots of people to support your project—the more the better. They will plan and advocate with you. Keep building your coalition as you move through this process.

**REACH OUT FOR SUPPORT**

The officials below can't give you money, but you need their support to get your project built. Work with these groups to get funding and support from elected officials.

YOU SHOULD REACH OUT FOR SUPPORT AND FUNDING AT THE SAME TIME. THE MORE DECISION-MAKERS WHO KNOW ABOUT YOUR PROJECT, THE MORE THEY WILL SEE IT AS A PRIORITY FOR THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

**REACH OUT FOR FUNDING**

The officials below can fund your project. They have access to discretionary funds—money that elected officials can give out each year to projects or organizations in their community. They can also help your project by encouraging other decision-makers to support it.

**NYC Parks**  
Department of Parks and Recreation

This city agency develops and maintains parks, playgrounds, beaches, and other public spaces. The people you'll work with include:

- Borough Commissioner:** Manages parks and prioritizes capital project proposals for her borough.
- Borough Commissioner's Chief of Staff:** Often takes the lead in working with advocates who have capital project proposals.
- Partnerships for Parks Outreach Coordinator:** Facilitates community involvement in parks and helps connect advocates with the right people at NYC Parks.
- Parks Manager:** Oversees park operations and staff.

**Your goal:** To get a meeting with the Borough Commissioner's office to request support and an estimate of your project's cost. NYC Parks can also advise you on where to find other funds from sources like the state or local businesses.

**Community Board**

Your Community Board represents you and your neighbors. It holds monthly public meetings, identifies community needs, and meets with city agencies to make recommendations on the city's annual budget. The Community Board doesn't have money for projects, but its Budget Priorities List influences the Borough President and the City Council. To raise support for your project, you'll work with:

- District Manager:** Oversees the activities of the Community Board and can help you to get your issue in front of its members.
- Parks Committee:** Focuses on park issues and holds hearings to listen to concerns and proposals from residents. Its members meet with NYC Parks once a year to recommend projects the Community Board wants funded.

**Your goal:** To get your project on your Community Board's Budget Priorities List.

**Mayor**

The Mayor is the head of New York City's government. He oversees city agencies and works with the City Council to develop an annual budget. He has discretionary funds to give to projects.

**Your goal:** You will not be able to contact the Mayor directly, but support from NYC Parks helps your project get money from the Mayor.

**City Council**

The City Council passes laws and approves the city budget. Council Members have discretionary funds from the city to give to projects.

- Council Speaker:** Has funds for capital projects across the city. She is elected by Council Members to be their leader.
- Participatory Budgeting:** A process some Council Members use to allocate a portion of their funds directly to capital projects proposed by and voted on by the community.

**Your goal:** To get a meeting with your City Council Member to request discretionary funds for your project.

**Borough President**

The Borough President advocates for the needs of her borough and chairs the Borough Board. She has discretionary funds from the city to give to projects.

**Your goal:** To get a meeting with your Borough President to request discretionary funds for your project.

**Contact your Borough Commissioner**

- Check with your Outreach Coordinator for help contacting the Commissioner's office.
- Call or email the Commissioner's office and ask for a meeting. Follow up if you don't hear back.

**Call your Community Board office**

- Ask to speak to the District Manager.
- Introduce your coalition, explain your problem and your request. Ask to present your issue to the Parks Committee or the full Community Board.

**Meet**

- Talk with the Borough Commissioner and her staff to explain your project. You'll need their support to get it built. They may also be able to influence the Mayor's proposed budget.
- Ask for an estimate of what your project will cost. This information will be helpful when you approach other public officials about your project.

**Advocate for your project at a Community Board meeting**

- Present at a Parks Committee meeting or at a full Community Board meeting. You will have 2-3 minutes to explain your issue and request a follow-up meeting.
- The Community Board can give you a letter of support that you can take to other elected officials to make a case for your project.

**Attend public hearings for the District Budget Priorities List**

- This is the Community Board's list of the 40 capital projects it thinks are most important for its district. It's submitted to the citywide annual budget process.
- This list influences the Council Members' and Borough Presidents' funding decisions.

**Borough Board creates Priorities List**

Your Borough Board is made up of all Council Members and Community Board chairs in your borough and your Borough President. It creates a list of capital projects for the Borough Statement of Budget Priorities. This list is a resource for the Mayor's Office as it develops the budget.

**How long can it take to get our project funded and built?**

ALONG THE WAY, YOU MAY HAVE TROUBLE GETTING IN TOUCH WITH DECISION-MAKERS OR CONVINCING THEM THAT YOUR PROJECT IS A PRIORITY...

...IF THIS HAPPENS, FOCUS ON THE ONES WHO ARE RESPONSIVE. GETTING THEIR SUPPORT WILL HELP INFLUENCE THE PERSON YOU CAN'T REACH NOW.

THE WORK YOU DO WITH NYC PARKS MAY HELP YOU GET THE MAYOR'S SUPPORT LATER ON.

THE CITY'S BUDGET YEAR GOES FROM JULY 1ST TO JUNE 30TH

TYPICAL PROJECT TIMELINE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 YEAR to build your coalition	█						
1 YEAR of going to public events and meeting with public officials to explain your project		█					
1-2 YEARS (or more) to fund your project. It's unlikely you'll get all the funding you need in a single budget year			█	█	█		
Once your project is fully funded, it can take 3 YEARS (or more) until it's fully constructed						█	█

**Mayor's Preliminary Budget (Jan-Feb)**

**Executive Budget (April)**

**Adopted Budget (June)**

**Your project wasn't funded this time...**

You'll have to keep talking to public officials and try to get your project into the next year's budget. You've already been through this process, so you've laid groundwork and built relationships that will make your next try easier.

**Your project was partially funded...**

You'll need to go through this process again to try to get more funding in next year's budget. The good news is that with some money already allocated, it's much easier to get the rest of the funding for your project.

**Your project was fully funded!**

NYC Parks will begin designing and building your project.

SOME COMMUNITY BOARDS MIGHT RESPOND RIGHT AWAY, OTHERS MAY TAKE MORE TIME

REMEMBER: YOUR COMMUNITY BOARD BALANCES YOUR PARKS NEEDS WITH PROJECTS ACROSS ALL CITY SERVICES, FROM SCHOOLS TO STREETS

YOU'LL HAVE MORE LUCK WITH YOUR CITY COUNCIL MEMBER IF YOU HAVE YOUR COMMUNITY BOARD'S SUPPORT

THE AMOUNT EACH CITY COUNCIL MEMBER HAS TO GIVE OUT WILL VARY

**Write to your City Council Member**

- In a formal letter, introduce your coalition, explain your problem, your request, and any other support you have from the Community Board and public officials.

**Follow up**

- Contact your Council Member's district office by phone or email to ask for a meeting.

**Meet**

- Make the case for your project.
- Ask if the Council Member can put discretionary funds towards your project.
- Ask for help getting your project on the Borough Statement of Budget Priorities.
- Ask your Council Member if you should apply to the City Council Speaker's fund for additional money.

**Write to your Borough President**

- In a formal letter, introduce your coalition, explain your problem, your request, and any other support you have from the Community Board and public officials.

**Follow up**

- Contact your Borough President's office by phone or email to ask for a meeting.

**Meet**

- Make the case for your project.
- Ask if the Borough President can put discretionary funds towards your project.
- Ask for help getting your project on the Borough Statement of Budget Priorities.

**Elected officials pick projects**

Council Members and Borough Presidents select capital projects to fund. These choices become part of the citywide budget at different times—Borough Presidents add their picks to the Executive Budget, and Council Members add their picks to the Adopted Budget. Borough Presidents add more picks to the Adopted Budget if they get additional funds to give out.

AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CALENDAR YEAR, CONTACT THE OFFICIALS YOU'VE BEEN TALKING TO AND REMIND THEM ABOUT YOUR PROJECT.

AFTER THE ADOPTED BUDGET IS ANNOUNCED, CHECK IN WITH YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS TO SEE IF YOUR PROJECT WAS FUNDED



# How do we find our...

## Community Board

Visit [nycgovparks.org](http://nycgovparks.org). Search for your park's name to find out which Community Board it's in (under "More About"). To find its contact info, go to [nyc.gov/html/cau/html/cb/cb.shtml](http://nyc.gov/html/cau/html/cb/cb.shtml)

My Community Board is:

Its phone number is:

## City Council Member

City Council Members have offices in Lower Manhattan and in their district. Always contact your district office—they know your local park better. Find your representative by visiting [council.nyc.gov](http://council.nyc.gov)

My City Council Member is:

Her district office number is:

## Borough President

Each of the five boroughs has a president. To find their info, visit: [bronxboropres.nyc.gov](http://bronxboropres.nyc.gov) (Bronx), [brooklyn-usa.org](http://brooklyn-usa.org) (Brooklyn), [manhattanbp.nyc.gov](http://manhattanbp.nyc.gov) (Manhattan), [queensbp.org](http://queensbp.org) (Queens), [statenilandusa.com](http://statenilandusa.com) (Staten Island)

My Borough President is:

His phone number is:

## Partnerships for Parks Outreach Coordinator

She can put you in touch with the people above, NYC Parks, and parks groups. Find your Outreach Coordinator at 212-360-1310 or [partnershipsforparks.org](http://partnershipsforparks.org)

My Outreach Coordinator is:

Her phone number is:

## More resources:

**PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING** is a process where community members can make decisions about how public money is spent. Participating City Council Members use a part of their annual discretionary money to fund projects with the most community support. To find out if there is Participatory Budgeting going on in your City Council district, visit [PBNYC.org](http://PBNYC.org)

**PEOPLE MAKE PARKS** is a set of tools and resources to help communities participate in the design of their parks, developed by Hester Street Collaborative and Partnerships for Parks. Get the online toolkit at: [peoplemakeparks.org](http://peoplemakeparks.org)

**MAKING POLICY PUBLIC** is a program of the Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP). CUP partners with policy advocates and graphic designers to produce foldout posters that explain complicated policy issues, like this one. [makingpolicypublic.net](http://makingpolicypublic.net)

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**THE CENTER FOR URBAN PEDAGOGY (CUP)** is a nonprofit organization that uses the power of design and art to increase meaningful civic engagement. [welcometoCUP.org](http://welcometoCUP.org)

**NEW YORKERS FOR PARKS (NY4P)** is the citywide independent organization championing quality parks and open spaces for all New Yorkers in all neighborhoods. [ny4p.org](http://ny4p.org)

**PARTNERSHIPS FOR PARKS (PFP)** is a joint program of NYC Parks and the City Parks Foundation that helps New Yorkers work together to make neighborhood parks thrive. [partnershipsforparks.org](http://partnershipsforparks.org)

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