



TAKING BACK YOUR PARK

Never doubt that a small, group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

- Margaret Mead



233 Peachtree St. ♦ Suite 1600 ♦ Atlanta, Georgia 30303
Phone: (404) 546 7970 ♦ Fax: (404) 546 9419 ♦ www.parkpride.org

Taking Back Your Park

There are many diverse challenges to turning your park into a greenspace worthy of being the center of your community. Years of budget cuts at the Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs have taken their toll on park infrastructure and staff morale. People who use your park too often abuse your park, leaving trash and graffiti that spoil the enjoyment of others. The lack of a police presence or regular park users can create a void filled by vandalism and other criminal activity that poses a serious threat to public safety. Combined, these factors may create a downward spiral that turns what should be an asset to your community into a public eyesore – or worse.

There is one sure-fire way to end the downward spiral, and that is for people like you to get involved, get organized and take back your park. When people like you call the Mayor and the City Council to demand more attention for your park, your park will get more attention. When people like you return to the park in numbers, you create an atmosphere where vandalism, littering and petty criminal activity are not welcome. When people like you get involved and start organizing picnics, softball games and days in the park, you create the positive energy that inspires others to return to the park, get involved and make their community a better place.

In short, people like you can turn the downward spiral into an upward spiral – and Park Pride wants to help.

We understand that you have the energy and the desire to make things happen. We know that there are people in every community who love their park – no matter the condition – and are willing to fight for it. We see the tremendous untapped resource that you present in the struggle to make your park – and all our city’s parks – the emerald jewels that they should be. And we want to help you make your park vision a reality.

To this end, Park Pride has developed a number of fact sheets to provide you the guidance you need to organize, get involved and make a difference. These fact sheets provide information about how to organize and structure a park group, build support for your group, plan park events, fundraise, publicize your efforts and much more. We offer these fact sheets, our programs, and the staff of Park Pride as resources to help you take back your park. Working together, we will ensure that all of Atlanta’s parks reach their full potential – beautiful oases where families picnic, children play and communities gather.



Taking Back Your Park – Step by Step

- FACT SHEETS -

1. Overview – Transforming Your Park.....	1
2. Getting Started	
a. Guiding Principles.....	2
b. First Steps.....	3
c. Setting Goals.....	4
3. Getting Organized	
a. Structure.....	6
b. Delegating Responsibility.....	7
c. Expanding Your Circle of Friends	
i. Resources in your Community.....	8
ii. Potential Allies.....	9
iii. Benefit of Allies.....	10
4. Getting Active	
a. Small Actions that Make a Big Impact.....	11
b. Building Relationships.....	12
c. Events	
i. Planning an Event.....	14
ii. Cosponsorships.....	16
iii. Fundraising.....	17
d. Planning a Project	
i. Step by Step.....	19
ii. Groups that can help.....	23
e. Approaching Businesses.....	24
- Sample letters	
i. Introductory.....	26
ii. Proposal.....	27
iii. Follow-Up.....	28



Resources In Your Community

Your Organization's Members
Event organizers, special skills,
general support, leadership and ideas

Merchants/Businesses
Donate food and beverages,
giveaways for raffles, prizes,
etc., possible grant
opportunities from large
corporations

Other Community Organizations
Provide meeting space, use of
computers, copy machines,
and other supplies and
storage; source of new
members and volunteers

YOU/YOUR ORGANIZATION

Neighborhood Residents
Organize and volunteer,
participate in clean ups and
spruce ups, advertise your
programs, contribute special
skills, home tours

Local Police Precinct
Provide sound permits,
security during park activities,
general safety advice; can
close streets, participate in
events, limit crime and other
negative activity

Parks & Recreation
Special event and volunteer
project permits, clean up
support, greening advice,
recreational materials

Adapted from materials provided by Partnership for Parks, www.itsmypark.org.



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Potential Allies and Friends

PARKS EMPLOYEES: MANAGERS, SUPERVISORS & STAFF

Park Users

- Individual park users
- Schools/day care centers
- Sports leagues
- Bocce and chess clubs
- Martial arts schools
- Hikers and birders
- Walkers and joggers
- Gardeners
- Property owners
- Business owners

Civic Associations

- Neighborhood Planning Units; tenant and neighborhood associations
- Other park groups in your area
- Merchants association or business improvement district
- Community gardens
- PTA
- Community development corporations
- Boy and girl scouts
- Boys & Girls club
- Cultural organizations
- Churches, synagogues, mosques
- Senior citizens' groups
- Rotary, Lions and Kiwanis clubs

Elected Officials

- City Councilmember
- Mayor
- State Senators and Representatives
- U.S. Senators and Representatives

Police

- Precinct Community Affairs Officers
- Precinct Commander
- Beat officers

Local Media

- Neighborhood newspapers & newsletters
- Citywide newspapers
- Local radio and TV stations

Citywide Non-Profits

- Park Pride
- Botanical gardens
- Environmental groups
- Cultural groups
- Other Park Groups and Conservancies

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What Can Friends and Allies Offer?

1. RESOURCES—FOR YOUR PARK AND FOR YOUR GROUP:

- **Presence:** allies will come to the park and fill it with the life and activity that is essential for a healthy park.
- **People power:** allies can become members, can help organize projects or events, or can volunteer in the park.
- **Partners:** Other organizations can bring their members to the park and to events and meetings your group sponsors. They can also let you send notices to the people on their mailing lists.
- **Funds:** Individuals can write checks, make in-kind donations, and get their friends and employers to do the same. Elected officials can fund programming in the park or a park renovation.

2. A COMMUNITY WHO “OWNS” THE PARK AND CARES ABOUT IT

- When you reach out to people, you help them feel that the park is theirs, not somebody else's. When people feel a sense of ownership towards and responsibility for the park, they are more likely to treat it with respect—and speak up to those who don't.

3. Credibility

- With the support of individuals and institutions around the park, you have more authority to speak on issues relating to the park than if you only represent tiny fraction of park users.

4. Power

- Elected officials will want your support and recognition, and city agencies will be more responsive to you, if your group represents lots of people.

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SMALL ACTIONS THAT MAKE A BIG IMPACT

Negative users move into parks that nobody else cares about. Therefore, the most important thing you can do is send a message that you do care. Small actions can turn your park into a place that is no longer inviting to negative elements.

1. CLEAN UP

- Though Parks workers should and will clean your park regularly, they can't be there all the time—Parks staff hours are usually Monday–Friday, 7am to 3pm, with a greatly-reduced staff on duty during summer weekends and evenings. Any help you can give can make a tremendous difference.
- Broken glass, litter, weeds—all these things are signs that your park has been abandoned. Make it clear to everybody that the community has come back to the park by cleaning it up.

2. PAINT OVER GRAFFITI

- The best way to discourage graffiti artists is by removing graffiti as fast as it goes up.
- The Parks Department has a zero-tolerance policy for graffiti: generally, it must be cleaned off or painted over within 24 hours. Whenever you see graffiti, report it to the Park Work Order Office at (404) 817-6813 or contact your Supervisor or Manager.
- Your group can apply for a Park Pride Community Micro Grant for painting supplies to use to cover up graffiti.

3. ADDRESS VANDALIZED EQUIPMENT

- Just like litter and graffiti, broken equipment sends a negative message about your park.
- If you know who the vandals are and when they normally act, report all the information to your local police precinct.
- Talk to your Supervisor and Manager to get vandalized equipment repaired.

4. INCREASE LIGHTING

- Your park will feel safer after dark and be less inviting to negative users if it is well lit.
- If you have lights that aren't working, report the problem to the Park Work Order Office at (404) 817-6813.
- If you would like more lighting in your park, discuss it with the Parks Design and Construction Manager at (404) 817-6740, and send a written request to your City Council Representative.

5. REMOVE UNDERGROWTH

- Crimes, especially drinking, drug dealing, and prostitution, most often happen out of public view, sometimes under cover of overgrown plants.
- If the undergrowth in your park is out of control, ask your District Maintenance Supervisor to remove it. Park Pride can also help organize a large-scale cleanup to remove persistent undergrowth; your group can then help maintain the cleared area.

6. POST PARK RULES

- If the rules of the park are clearly marked, most people will follow them. It's a lot easier to ask someone to stop doing something if you can point to an official sign that prohibits their action.
- Discuss the quality-of-life issues of greatest concern with your District Maintenance Supervisor (dogs off-leash, barbecuing, littering, etc.) to identify the most appropriate signage.
- If you are concerned by threatening individuals in the playground, you can have a sign posted that prohibits any adult from being in the playground area unless accompanied by a child under 12.

7. TELL PEOPLE WHOM TO CALL ABOUT A PROBLEM

- Create a leaflet listing the action numbers that people should call when they notice a problem: your District Maintenance Supervisor, Director of Parks, Parks Commissioner, Park Work Order Office, the precinct community council, city council member and other elected officials.
- Distribute the leaflet far and wide. One New York City group created a civilian observation patrol and gave leaflets to everyone their patrol met in the park—over 1,000 in total.

Adapted from "Small Actions that Make a Big Impact," Partnership for Parks Technical Assistance Program • www.itsmypark.org



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Building Relationships

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

These apply when dealing with any potential ally—civic organizations, your Community Board, elected officials, Parks & Recreation, the Police Department, and anyone else who could help you or your park.

1. **Make yourself visible**—both you and your group should be known in the community.
To raise your group's profile, hold public events and publicize them well. To raise your own profile, get involved with all kinds of groups and issues. The more you and your group do, the more contacts you'll have.
2. **Keep people informed.**
People get very upset when they feel they've been left out of the loop. Call, write, send out notices—whatever it takes to avoid surprising people. An added benefit is that when you let people get involved in something from the beginning, they are more likely to become personally invested in it and want it to succeed.
3. **Build personal relationships.**
Remember that you are dealing with people, not just agencies or organizations. People will be stronger allies if they know and like you as a person. And keep in mind that building a strong relationship takes time and energy; it won't happen overnight.
4. **Be a good listener.**
Focus first on understanding *other people's* needs and priorities. Listen carefully so that you can understand what drives the person or organization you want to enlist. Start with the individual—what personally motivates him or her? Likewise, what is the organization's focus?
5. **Look for win-win opportunities.**
Think of ways your needs mesh with others' needs. How can supporting the park help both you and your allies? For example, having a local bodega owner provide refreshments at your Summer Festival is good for both you and for her, if you publicize her support—through your newsletter and on a sign at the event itself.
6. **Build a “bank account” of trust and goodwill—and don't make too many withdrawals!**
Keep your word, and do favors for people when asked, if it's not too burdensome. People notice if you stick to your commitments. If you help someone out in some small way, especially if that person is in a pinch, they'll be likely to return the favor. But if you're unreliable or self-centered, you'll burn bridges quickly. Keep in mind how often you're asking for favors, as opposed to giving them. Finally, ask for little things before you ask for big things.
7. **Thank anyone and everyone.**
Send thank you letters, make phone calls, recognize contributors at public events, note supporter on your flyers and newsletters, give certificates of appreciation, and hold thank you parties. If someone helped you in an official capacity, send a letter of commendation to his or her boss. When in doubt, give people *more* credit than they deserve.

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THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN DEALING WITH GOVERNMENT AGENCIES:

1. **Be polite, patient, and persistent.**
"You can catch a lot more flies with honey than with vinegar." Civility counts, and is essential for a good relationship. Screaming, insulting, and demanding may work once, but it rarely solves the problem in the long term. Sure, sometimes you've got a right to get angry. But it's risky, and should be a last resort.
2. **Know who has the power to solve the problem.**
When people seem to be unresponsive, it's often simply because they really can't do anything about the issue you are raising. Unfortunately, people don't always explain that. Know the chain of command in the agency you call, and move up the chain of command as appropriate. If you're uncertain who's in charge, be specific in your request, so you can find the person most able to deal with your problem.
3. **Get to know different people at the agency, and distinguish among them.**
Some people at public agencies can be unresponsive or indifferent, but many others aren't. Just because the agency makes a decision you don't like, don't let that destroy good relationships you have built. View someone's actions in the context of your history with him or her. And keep in mind that many times people would genuinely like to help but can't because of limited resources.

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN APPROACHING ELECTED OFFICIALS:

1. **Look Professional.**
Give your organization a name, print official letterhead, type your letters, and keep a membership roster. Make sure the official knows that you represent a larger constituency. But don't bring your whole group to the meeting; you don't want to make the official feel he or she is being attacked.
2. **Be prepared.**
Research the official's voting record on the issues you are concerned with. Bring materials from your group to show that you are serious and committed.
3. **Know the Details.**
Know specifically what you want and specifically why you think it's worth doing. If you are asked a question you don't know the answer to, say you will get the information after the meeting.
4. **If the official is unavailable, meet with a senior staff member.**
Elected officials' staff can often have a great deal of influence.

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PLANNING EVENTS

EVENTS ARE GOOD FOR THE PARK

“If you don’t use it, you lose it.”

- A buzz of sustained, positive activity is key to a safe and vibrant park. Especially if you’re trying to “take back” a park, there’s no substitute for a steady stream of events that brings in the good and drives out the bad.
- Events in a natural area, such as birdwatching or a hike, can help introduce people to the park as a community resource
- Don’t forget to host events in the early evening (stargazing, music, sports), when the park is most often underused (or abused).

Good times in the park mean good feelings towards it. When people have a good time in the park because you’ve drawn them in with a good event, they’ll feel better about the park and be more likely to respect it and support it in the future.

EVENTS ARE GOOD FOR YOUR GROUP

- **They can help increase your membership.** Events bring new people into the park. Take advantage of this by having a table at *every* event where people can sign up for your mailing list and find out how to get involved or become a member.
- **They can be used to leverage resources.** A successful track record putting on events can demonstrate to potential supporters that your group can make a difference in the park. This helps when seeking funds from everyone from elected officials to churches to businesses.
- **They raise your group’s profile.** A successful, well-run event adds to your reputation, which will help you get more support and attendance at future events.

KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL, EASIER EVENT

Plan ahead. Allow two weeks of planning for regular clean-ups, at least a month for small events, and several months for large events.

Tap into other groups.

- Encourage everyone—Scout troops, schools, athletic leagues, day camps, neighborhood and tenant associations—to participate in relevant events.
- Better yet, get them to co-sponsor the event.
- Your group will benefit from another set of connections, multiply your resources, and (ideally) lighten your workload.

Don’t bite off more than you can chew.

- The number of people willing to help organize an event should determine its size and scale.
- Do something simple first, then build from there.
- Don’t be afraid to scale back if you find you’ve been too ambitious; better to have a few strong successes.

Publicize, publicize, publicize.

- Notify your mailing list.
- Put fliers up everywhere: shop windows, bulletin boards, in churches, schools, apartment buildings.
- List your events in the community calendars of local papers, local access cable, and radio stations.
- Most important, get your friends to tell three friends who tell three friends (and so on). Nothing works like word of mouth and networking.



Expect the unexpected. A first-time event will take twice as much effort to plan as you think it's going to, and will go over budget by about 20%. There will be bureaucratic hurdles you never expected, egos that need to be soothed, last-minute emergencies, and unseasonable blizzards. Don't worry. Be happy.

Delegate responsibilities and develop expertise.

- Have one person in your group deal with Parks, another with publicity, a third with fundraising or membership.
- Having one person consistently responsible for something lets him or her build specific skills and useful relationships.

Say thank you. People will be happy to help you next time if you sincerely, publicly, and frequently thank them this time. When in doubt give people *more* credit than they deserve.

Build on your successes.

- Repeat annual events. It's easier the next time; people know to expect it; and you begin to build traditions that lead to larger participation each year.
- Try to do at least one event each season to maintain your profile and presence in the park.

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Ideas for Co-Sponsorship

KEEP IN MIND THAT ANY (OR ALL) OF THE EVENTS LISTED HERE CAN ALSO BE CO-SPONSORED BY SCHOOLS AND/OR BLOCK, TENANT, NEIGHBORHOOD, AND MERCHANTS ASSOCIATIONS.

EVENT:

POTENTIAL CO-SPONSOR:

Artistic performances	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Arts Council✓ Amateur, college, or high school theater/dance/musical group
Poetry readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Bookstore✓ Local library
Veterans/Memorial Day or the Fourth of July	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Veterans' Groups✓ High school marching band
Children's activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ PTA✓ Boy and Girl Scouts✓ Boys and Girls Club
Athletic Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Athletic leagues (business, adult, youth, Little League)✓ Police athletics league
Community Celebrations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Block, tenants' and neighborhood associations✓ Community Board
Green-Ups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Botanical gardens✓ Amateur gardeners associations✓ Community gardens
Multicultural Festivals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Cultural groups✓ Interfaith centers
Holiday events	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Religious institutions✓ Local businesses
Environmental Education & Eco-Fairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Urban Park Rangers✓ Urban Forest and Education Program✓ Environmental groups✓ Botanical Groups

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PUTTING TOGETHER A FUNDRAISING PLAN

Get HELP

You'll need a committee to develop your plan. More people involved in planning means more connections to resources, more help getting things done, and more a people who feel responsible for the park.

Determine your GOALS

- What **specifically** do you want to raise money for? Kids' programs? Plants? A concert? Write down one or two clear, concise sentences that answer this question. When you're raising money, people will want to know why. This exercise will help you develop a clear answer to their question.
- For example, "We seek to increase the liveliness of our park with a series of concerts for families."

List your NEEDS

- Think about all the things (goods and services) you're going to need to achieve your goal, and write them down. Then think about what each thing will cost if you can't get it donated.
- For example, if you are putting on a concert, you'll need **publicity, materials** (chairs, a stage, sound equipment, etc.), and **labor** (musicians' fees).

Determine your RESOURCES

- What do you already have? Is someone in your group a graphic designer who can design your program? Will musicians donate their time to play in your concert? What you don't have is what you need donated.
- Make a list of all the people, businesses, and organizations in your community that can help you. Cover all the bases. Look to local businesses, banks, newspapers, utilities, places your members work, all of your neighbors, important people in the community, landlords, schools, churches, other community groups, local government, the police athletic league, and foundations.

Create a PLAN

- Whom are you going to ask for what? How are you going to ask them? Who's going to do the asking? When? The answers to these questions constitute your fundraising plan.
- For example, you might decide that you'll seek money for postage from the local bank branch where your group has an account, and ask the local copy shop to donate the copies of the program. The leader of your group might ask the bank for help, while the graphic designer, who gives the copy shop a lot of business, should approach them.

Adapted from "Putting Together a Fundraising Plan," Partnership for Parks, www.itsmypark.org.



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Sample Fundraising Plan

GOALS: Put on three concerts in the park.

NEEDS:	EXISTING RESOURCES:	POSSIBLE RESOURCES:
✓ Bands/performers x3	✓ photocopier at group president's office	✓ Local art school for performers
✓ Posters/flyers x500 x3	✓ chairs & rain location through local church	✓ Local bank branch for funds
✓ Stage	✓ stage, sound & power through Parks	✓ Borough Arts Council for funds
✓ Sound system & electrical hookup		
✓ Chairs for performers		
✓ Rain location		

Fundraising Plan:

1. Treasurer to approach local bank branch
2. President to approach local art school
3. Secretary to obtain application for funds from Borough Arts Council

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GETTING YOUR PROJECT OFF THE GROUND



Throughout the City of Atlanta, residents, businesses, churches and many others are giving their time, their effort and their money to make improvements in Atlanta's parks. From benches to murals to flower gardens, you are making our city a more beautiful place.

If your organization is preparing to make an investment in a park, here are some simple steps that you can take to ensure the smoothest journey from idea to implementation.

- **Develop a scope of work for your project.** Do you want to create a picnic area? Repair your park's gazebos? Landscape a corner of your park? Create a community garden? Whatever your goals, write them down – and be as specific as possible. This will help you focus on what your project will entail and highlight any issues that you may need to address. Should your project involve the creation of anything new, draw a rough map of what your project will look like. [See our sample *Scope of Work*]

NOTE: you will have to provide specifications for benches, picnic tables, trashcans and other structural improvements.

- **Get Community Support for your Project.** Contact NPU, neighborhood associations, local PTA, businesses and other community groups to gain support for your park project.
- **Meet with representatives of the Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs at your park to discuss your project.** Show them what you want to do and where you want to do it. The Bureau of Parks will work with you to ensure a successful project that is consistent with the needs of Atlanta's Park System. They may be able to provide materials, and will arrange to pick up any waste/trash. As your park is a public space, you will need their approval before moving forward.
- **Ensure maintenance for any artwork.** Because of limited resources, the City can maintain very few works of art in its park system. Should the City be unable to maintain the work, you, your organization or a third party will need to commit to the permanent upkeep of the artwork.
- **Draw up a list of tools and materials.** This list will act as a check list as you proceed – and can help in any effort to obtain funding and other support. The Bureau of Parks can provide mulch and materials for projects. Businesses may donate materials. For a modest sum, Park Pride and the Atlanta Tool Bank can provide equipment.
- **Donate any materials to Park Pride.** Park projects often include the donation of benches, plants and other material to the City. While Atlanta requires that the City Council approve all donations, Park Pride is under contract to accept donations in public parks. Just write Park Pride a letter (such as the attached sample letter) donating the materials to us on behalf of the City.
- **Get Started!** Beautiful parks require a little dirty work – so get started, get dirty and make sure that your project and your park are a success.



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-- SAMPLE --

Candler Park Beautification Project Scope of Work

1. Pool House landscaping
 - Remove existing grass
 - Plant two rows of crepe myrtles along paths leading from parking lot to the pool house.
 - Plant azaleas under existing birch tree
 - Plant butterfly bushes along walkway in front of parking lot side of pool house.
 - Plant bulbs in interior
 - Build short wooden fence on three sides of trashcans
 - Mulch entire area

2. Entrance from McLendon
 - Remove and replace dead shrubs and plantings
 - Repair any damage to flower beds
 - Trim low-lying branches
 - Plant border of lirioppe
 - Mulch flower beds and bushes

3. Slope between playground and tennis courts
 - Work with Trees Atlanta to spray and remove kudzu and privet
 - Plant azalea bushes and hydrangea throughout the slope, especially behind retaining walls in the woods.
 - Plant clumps of daffodils, irises and lilies on the slope
 - Mulch around existing trees

MATERIALS:

- 6 crepe myrtles
- 20 azaleas
- 4 butterfly bushes
- 40 daffodils
- 30 day lilies
- 20 irises
- 10 hydrangea
- 20 4" containers of lirioppe
- 3 60 lb. bags of cement
- 6 6' 4"x4"
- 4 8' 2"x4"
- Slats for fencing
- 2 truck loads of mulch
- Shovels, pitch forks, clippers, loppers, spades, rakes, trowels



DATE

George Dusenbury
Executive Director
Park Pride
675 Ponce de Leon Avenue, 8th Floor
Atlanta, Georgia 30308

Dear Mr. Dusenbury:

The Friends of Neighborhood Park are please to make the following donation to Park Pride on behalf of the City of Atlanta.

- 1) Six park benches
- 2) Four picnic tables
- 3) \$20 worth of shingles
- 4) \$10 worth of nails
- 5) 10 gallons of paint

We estimate that these materials have a value of approximately \$1450.00. Please do not hesitate to contact me/us should you have any questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

Joan Q. Public
President

-- SAMPLE --





Park Project Scope

Date: _____ Project Date: _____

Organization Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Contact Person: _____ Title: _____

Office Phone: _____ Email: _____

NPU: _____ Parks/Greenspace Chair: _____ Tel: _____

Council District: _____ Council District Rep: _____

Park: _____

Location within the park (please sketch map): _____

Number of Volunteers Anticipated: _____

Other Volunteer Groups Participating: _____

Begin-ending time of project: _____ to _____

Initial Needs Assessment of Scope of Service Project

Please check-off all that apply

- Mulching
- Trail Maintenance
- Tree Planting
- Flower Planting
- Removal of overgrowth/debris
- Painting
- Tools
- Traffic island/median beautification
- Other _____



APPROACHING BUSINESSES

One of the most important allies for your park are the businesses and other organizations in your community. Businesses are particularly important allies, as they can provide you financial resources to help you accomplish your goals. In turn, you can provide them the visibility and good will that comes with supporting an important community event or the park itself.

As with any ally, approaching businesses is all about building relationships. The easiest businesses to approach are those where you or somebody knows the owner or manager. However, there are many businesses that depend on community support, which makes it very likely that they will want to support the park and your organization. After all, being a business that is active in the community is good for business.

The first step in approaching a business is to set up a meeting with the manager or owner to discuss your organization, your goals, and how the business can support you. To aid in this process, Park Pride provides you some sample letters that should prove useful as you develop important business allies. Remember that you are not simply asking for help, you are forming a relationship that can benefit both your organization and that business. Make sure that your relationship does not end once you have gained the business's support – your organization will be all the stronger for your efforts.

TAILOR YOUR APPROACH

- Your approach to businesspeople should depend on how you know them and who they are.
- You may already know your prospective partners socially, you may be their customer, you may just walk in and introduce yourself, or another business partner might refer you.
- There is no single way to get the relationship started – the question is how you carry it forward.

Let's assume you're starting from scratch.

1. INTRODUCE YOURSELF PERSONALLY

- Walk into stores and offices around the park(s)
- Ask to speak to the owner
- Let them know you are part of a parks volunteer group, and that you just want to introduce yourself and tell them more about what your group is doing

In the course of this introductory conversation, try to learn something new about the owner's business. Try to:

- shake hands and look him/her in the eyes
- be relaxed, calm and confident
- tell him/her that you're part of a group that works in the park and that you'd like to offer her advertising and product sampling opportunities at future events
- get his/her contact information (mailing address, phone, email)
- tell him/her you will let them know when things come up
- thank him/her for their time, and
- give him/her a business card or a way to be in touch with you

2. SEND A FOLLOW-UP NOTE

Follow up your first conversation with a short note or email, just to tell them that you enjoyed making their acquaintance and that you look forward to letting them know about future opportunities to get their business involved in the park.

3. DROP IN PERIODICALLY

Drop in periodically to say hello. Reiterate a friendly curiosity in their business.



4. SEEK SUPPORT FOR SPECIFIC EVENTS

Once you have a specific project or event to discuss, approach your business acquaintances with a specific proposal. Give your contact a call early in the day, and be sure to have the following information on hand:

- day, date, time, and duration of the project
- the contact people from the neighborhood
- how many people you expect to be involved
- how you imagine the event will look
- how you'd like him/her to help
- what he/she gets out of the deal

Finally, tell him/her you'd like to send her a proposal.

5. Send a Written Proposal

- Follow this phone conversation with a proposal letter **within a day of your conversation**, reiterating the points you made in the phone conversation and describing the ways the business can support the effort (see attached samples).
- Emphasize any relevant information about the people who are involved, how many people will see the event, and any other information you think might be of interest.
- Close by saying you look forward to answering any questions, and send it off.

6. CLOSE THE DEAL

- One of the most difficult aspects of getting businesses involved is "closing the deal," when the businessperson finally gives a commitment to support your project.
- Sometimes this happens right away, but more likely it will come about as the result of good-natured approach, and good old-fashioned persistence.
- Try to keep after your contacts, but do it in a light-hearted way. If they aren't ready when you talk to them, don't take it personally!
- Calmly ask your contact when might be a better time to get back to her, and thank her for their time.
- Keep the conversation light, and always try to find the appropriate follow up step for each conversation. Then take it!

7. SAY THANKS

- One of the most important elements of a cordial relationship is the thank-you note.
- Send a thank-you note (see attached sample) within a few days of the event.
- If you can, include pictures and/or other souvenirs, such as a program.

8. KEEP THE FIRES BURNING

- Keep this cycle going; meet-and-greet, touch base periodically, introduce specific projects, send specific proposals, follow up with phone calls, gain commitment, and send thank-you notes.
- Drop New Year's cards in the mail.
- Be social.
- Consistency will yield results.

Adapted from materials provided by Partnership for Parks, www.itsmypark.org.



675 Ponce De Leon Ave. ♦ 8th Floor ♦ Atlanta, Georgia 30308
Phone: (404) 817 6761 ♦ Fax: (404) 817 6745 ♦ www.parkpride.org

SAMPLE INTRODUCTORY LETTER

(On your group's letterhead)

March 15, 2003

Ms. Jane Pauley
Jane's Pizza
123 Main Street
Bronx, NY 10055

Dear Ms. Pauley,

It was good meeting you yesterday. At last I can put a face to the **Jane's Pizza** name!

I appreciate having an opportunity to tell you about what is happening in St. James Park. As promised, I will be in touch about events and projects that may be of interest to you and your business. We would enjoy helping you develop your word-of-mouth in the neighborhood and having your support in the park.

Thank you again for your time.

Sincerely,

Matt Lauer
Friends of St. James Park
718-555-1212

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SAMPLE PROPOSAL LETTER

(On your group's letterhead)

March 30, 2003

Ms. Jane Pauley
Jane's Pizza
123 Main Street
Bronx, NY 10055

Dear Ms. Pauley,

I am pleased to invite Jane's Pizza's to become the exclusive food provider for the **St. James Family Day Clean-Up**, scheduled for Saturday, June 17 in St. James Park.

The event will run from 10:00am to 2:00pm, and we expect over 200 families from all over our neighborhood to be there to clean up the park, plant bulbs, and paint benches, basketball and handball court lines. The event will also include a neighborhood barbeque, face painting, puppet shows, and a presentation by Bronx Councilmember Anthony Martinez. We expect the event to draw over 500 people in all, not to mention passersby on Jerome Avenue.

We will recognize your support on our promotional flyers, our event program, and signs we will have up on the day of the event. Councilmember Martinez and John Smith will also recognize you in their remarks to the assembled neighbors. I think it will be a good way to raise your name recognition in the neighborhood.

I hope you will be able to be a part of this effort to improve one of our neighborhood's most valuable assets. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

In the meantime, best of luck with your business. I look forward to speaking with you in the coming days.

Sincerely,

Matt Lauer
Friends of St. James Park
718-555-1212

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Sample Follow-Up Letter

(On your group's letterhead)

June 18, 2003

Ms. Jane Pauley
Jane's Pizza
123 Main Street
Bronx, NY 10055

Dear Jane:

The St. James Family Day Clean-Up was a wonderful success – thanks to you and your business' support. It was a tremendous display of teamwork. The event attracted over 200 people and was a very positive experience for the whole neighborhood.

As I'm sure you saw, everyone really enjoyed the pizza. It was delicious, and exactly what the occasion called for. I hope that this "taste-testing," combined with the coupons we distributed to the families participating, should generate some additional business for you in the weeks and months ahead. It was certainly meaningful to me that you chose to support this kind of event. It says something about your business.

I will be sure to let you know about future promotional opportunities for your business in St. James. It would be fun supporting your business while you support the park! If you have any questions or suggestions, please don't hesitate to call.

Again, thank you very much for your interest in and support of the park.

Sincerely,

Matt Lauer
Friends of St. James Park
718-555-1212

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