

Get Involved.

Community input makes the best parks.

8 WAYS TO PARTICIPATE IN PARK DESIGN

1. Advocate for Funding

2. Gather Input

3. Make a Mark on Your Park

4. Promote and Attend the Scope Meeting

5. Weigh In on Design Approval

6. Stay Involved During Construction

7. Celebrate the Opening

8. Care For the Park

PARKS TIMELINE

Parks and community members ask elected officials to fund capital projects.

After the NYC fiscal year begins on July 1, Parks waits to receive funding for the project and assigns a designer to the job. 2-6 months

The scope meeting takes place in the park.

Parks works on the design, which is then submitted for approvals. approximately 1 year

Parks hires a contractor. approximately 6 months

The park goes under construction. between 9 months and 2 years (depending on the scale of the project)

The park opens.

Maintaining and programming the park. ongoing

1. Advocate for Funding

WHY? Capital projects are largely paid for by budget allocations from elected officials, who are responsive to requests from their constituents.

WHEN? Late fall/early winter, to coordinate your request with the wish list Parks will present to elected officials between January and March for the next fiscal year, which begins July 1.

HOW? Before asking for funding from your elected officials, discuss your goals with PFP, your Parks borough office, and your Community Board. PFP can help you develop relationships to effectively raise funds for your park. You should agree with your borough office on the budget request before approaching officials. In some cases, you can gather input before advocating for funding to demonstrate community support for the project.

You can request funding from:

Your City Councilmember
Your Borough President
The Mayor
State and Federal Officials

2. Gather Input

WHY? The community knows the park and its users best, and gathering input has a powerful impact on how well the park design responds to users' needs.

WHEN? The best time to investigate your community's needs and desires for the park is before the scope meeting, which is held soon after the project is funded.

HOW? Ask PFP about the schedule, budget, and other restrictions to ensure that your input gathering process fits into the capital timeline. Share this information – input is most effective when people understand what's possible.

Spend time in your neighborhood and ask people what they want for the park, how they use it, and what their concerns are. Document their ideas and report back to Parks. Reach out to as many different people as possible, and ask them for contact information so you can inform them about plans for the park and how to stay involved. Make sure you capture the whole range of users, not just one group's preferences. Be prepared to compromise because every park has to accommodate many diverse interests.

Ways to gather input include:

Circulate surveys to capture the ideas and concerns of everyday park users.

Hold a special event like a community design meeting or festival.

Engage youth in creative activities that allow them to communicate their vision of their dream park.

Whatever activity you choose, make sure you're collecting input that will be useful to the designer. Don't attempt to design the park yourself. Respect the designer's expertise and use your process to share your community's local knowledge about the park.

Compile the results and deliver them to the designer as soon as possible, preferably at the scope meeting, because after the scope meeting the designer immediately gets to work on producing a conceptual design.

3. Make a Mark on Your Park

WHY? Involving people in creating a hands-on project in their park can lead to a profound sense of community ownership. Hands-on projects, which can be anything from gardens to art installations, require close coordination with Parks.

WHEN? Before design begins, a temporary hands-on project (like the lanterns described below) can complement an input-gathering process and inform the designer about what is meaningful to the community. In order for a community-created element to become a permanent part of the new park, it must be included in the designer's plans and approved as an integral component of the design. After the new park opens, temporary projects can help connect people to the new space.

HOW? Hester Street Collaborative engaged local students in creating permanent and temporary elements for Sara D. Roosevelt Park: mosaics made by students were embedded in a brick wall when a playground was renovated, and every year handmade lanterns are hung in the park during Chinese New Year.

Hands-on projects are not always feasible. Discuss your ideas with Parks and seek approval before moving forward.

"Over 1,000 residents attended our 'It's Your Park Design Carnival' to voice their dreams for a new playground through fun activities like wish lanterns, playground models, and scavenger hunts."

SARA D. ROOSEVELT PARK COALITION, MANHATTAN

4. Promote and Attend the Scope Meeting

WHY? The scope meeting is the official opportunity for the community to share ideas about how the park should be improved.

WHEN? The scope meeting is usually held soon after the capital project is funded. Find out about the scope meeting date from PFP and your Community Board.

HOW? The scope meeting is organized by your borough's capital liaison and held on-site in the park. Tell park users, volunteers, residents, business owners, community organizations, and schools about the scope meeting and encourage them to attend.

5. Weigh In on Design Approval

WHY? The Community Board meeting is your best opportunity to examine and comment on plans for the park.

WHEN? Once the preliminary design is complete, the designer presents it to the Community Board for approval. Park plans also go through approvals by the Parks Commissioner and the Public Design Commission or the Landmarks Preservation Commission. The design and review process can take a year or more.

HOW? Community Board meetings are public, and interested citizens are encouraged to attend and give input.

By the time the approvals process begins, basic design decisions have been made already, consistent with the funding available for the project. These meetings are the time to critique existing plans, not suggest entirely new ideas.

6. Stay Involved During Construction

WHY? People become disconnected when the park is closed. Help inform your neighbors about plans for the new park.

WHEN? Construction can take anywhere from 9 months to 2 years depending on the scale of the project.

HOW? Rally excitement for the new park by sharing how community input influenced the design and what the park will be like. Talk to park users, distribute fliers, or hang signs or artwork (with approval from Parks).

Expand your park use and stewardship to other parks, or other parts of your park if only a section is closed:

Make and distribute a map of neighborhood park resources.

If a playground is closed, identify other nearby playgrounds for families to visit.

Attend meetings and events held by active groups in other parks. Build relationships that can lead to collaboration once your park reopens.



7. Celebrate the Opening

WHY? A fun event attracts community members to come back and enjoy the park after it's been closed for construction.

WHEN? A capital project can take anywhere from 1 to 4 years. Staying involved until the new park opens takes commitment and hard work; now it's time to celebrate!

HOW? Work with Parks to schedule an official ribbon cutting and help bring people out! Help Parks throw a great, well-attended celebration and use the opening festivities to reflect on community involvement in the capital project.

Thank the elected official(s) who funded the capital project.

Invite the people whose input you gathered and share with them how they helped inform the design.

Honor a designer who made a special effort to collaborate with the community.

Most important, inspire attendees to stay involved.



"As mothers who visited the playground with our children, we heard that a capital renovation was scheduled and shared our ideas with our borough Parks staff and the designer. After the new playground opened, we formed the Friends of Greenwood Playground to ensure that the new equipment was cared for and to invite other neighbors to join our stewardship efforts."

FRIENDS OF GREENWOOD PLAYGROUND, BROOKLYN

8. Care For the Park

WHY? Community involvement makes parks thrive. You worked to ensure that your voice and the voices of your neighbors and fellow park users were heard during the design process, now plan how you will stay actively involved.

WHEN? Caring for the park is ongoing. Parks relies on community stewards to help take care of and program the parks it builds, and the most important time to offer community-led programming is after the park opens. Programming the new space will bring it to life and fill it with positive activity.

HOW? If you're already part of a "friends" group devoted to caring for your park, use this opportunity to grow your membership. If there's not a group in your park, think about forming a "friends" organization. Ask PFP for help doing outreach, planning meetings and events, and attracting new members.

If several existing park and community organizations came together around the capital project, think about solidifying this collaboration into an alliance or coalition to continue to advocate for your park.

Caring for your park can take many forms. You can: Clean, Plant, Water, Weed, Rake, Paint, Perform, Plan, Program, Organize, Play, Make, Teach, Observe...

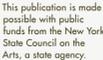
What is People Make Parks?

People Make Parks is a project to help communities participate in the design of their parks. When citizens engage with government and weigh in on design, government builds better parks, and the public continues to care for places that they have helped to make. Based on this idea, People Make Parks facilitates collaboration in park design between invested communities and the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation.

People Make Parks encourages a diversity of participants to lead in the creation of meaningful places. The initiative will engage people from a variety of backgrounds, including youth and non-English speakers.

The People Make Parks Toolkit will inform citizens about the process of making physical improvement to parks (known as "capital projects"), help them collect information that is relevant to design, communicate it to park decision-makers in a timely way, and transition into long-term park stewardship.

This overview of how to get involved is the first published component of People Make Parks. People Make Parks is a project of Hester Street Collaborative and Partnerships for Parks. Learn more at www.hesterstreet.org and www.partnershipsforparks.org.

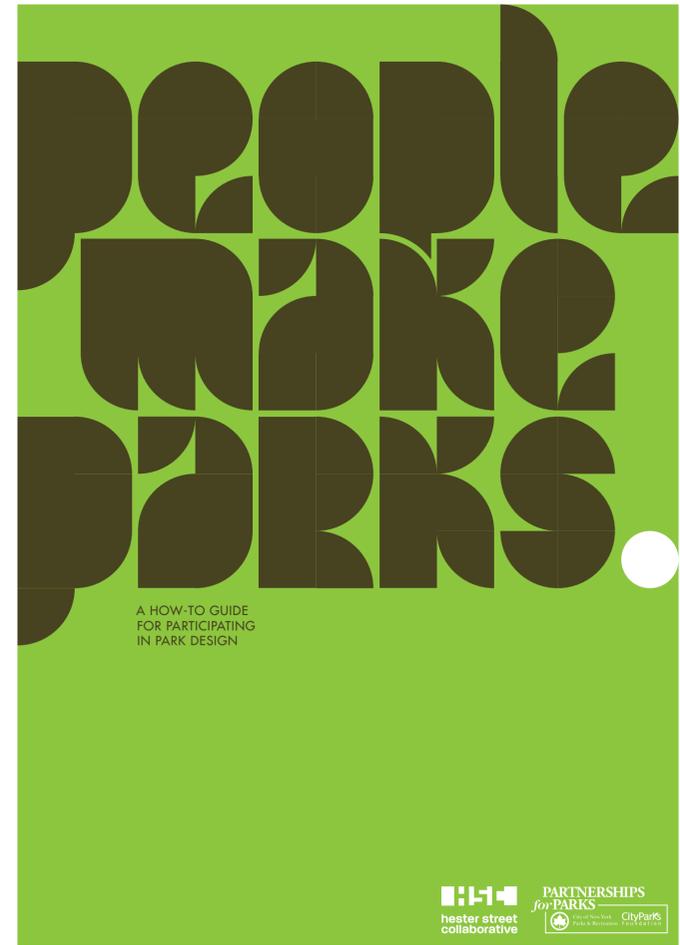


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A capital project is a physical improvement in a park that costs more than \$35,000. It's expected to have a useful life of at least five years. Every park must be designed to accommodate multiple, often simultaneous users and diverse user groups. Park design addresses many issues: safety, public health, recreation and play, aesthetics, sustainability, and ecology.

Getting involved in a capital project requires working closely with the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation (Parks), which maintains parks, runs recreational programs, and carries out design and construction.

Choose which opportunities for involvement make sense for you – you do not need to do all of them, or start at the beginning of the project. Whether you advocate for funds for a physical improvement simply attend a scope meeting or ribbon-cutting, your involvement makes the park better. Keep in mind the ongoing need for care of the park, and stay involved once the park reopens.

Welcome to an introductory guide to participating in park design. There are many ways to get involved in your park, and Partnerships for Parks (PFP) can help you with all of them. This document is an overview of 8 ways you can get involved in park design and construction, officially called "capital projects."

Get Informed.



"We asked our City Councilmember for money to renovate our space. Our capital project received \$500,000, and we are now working with the designer to turn the Bird Sanctuary into an environmental education center."

DRED SCOTT BIRD SANCTUARY, GRANT PARK, BRONX

Sample Questions

Whether you collect input from your community or share your own ideas, these questions will help you provide insight that is helpful to the designer.

Hopes for the New Park

What do you want to do in the park?

How do you want to feel in the park?

Are there groups in the community the new park should be sure to attract?

Create a wish list: what are your goals for the new park? Try to prioritize your goals.

Are there other parks or places you like that could serve as inspiration?

Existing Conditions

How do people use the park now?

Who uses the park and when – can you identify different user groups?

What is your favorite part of the park? Your least favorite?

Are there issues with the site, like areas where it gets muddy after a rain or other seasonal conditions, that wouldn't be apparent to the designer on a site visit?

Are there special places or qualities that should be preserved or reproduced in the new design?

Neighborhood Context

Are there resources your neighborhood lacks that the park could provide?

Are there resources available in neighboring parks that should be avoided to prevent redundancy and make sure your community has a variety of recreational resources?

What role can the park play in addressing larger neighborhood concerns like health, safety, and education?

Informed input is effective.

Get Started.

Informed input is effective.