



**PHILADELPHIA  
PARKS & RECREATION**

# **Philadelphia Park Friends Group Toolkit**

A Guide for Beginning and Sustaining Park Friends Groups

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**FAIRMOUNT PARK**

**CONSERVANCY**

January 2020

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## PREFACE

Philadelphia Parks & Recreation, in partnership with the Fairmount Park Conservancy, work collaboratively with more than 120 Park Friends groups to steward parks across the city. This collaborative partnership is called the Park Friends Network.

This document is the third edition of the Friends Group Toolkit originally created by Philadelphia Parks & Recreation in 2013. It aims to provide current and potential park stewards with important information on how to begin and grow their Park Friends group. It is a living document that will continually evolve to meet the needs of our park volunteers. It is with extreme gratitude that we acknowledge Philadelphia’s Park Friends Network, whose invaluable work has helped inform this document.

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## Section 1: Beginning Your Friends Group



### What is a Friends Group?

Park Friends groups are community-based volunteer groups, made up of at least three people that are officially affiliated with Philadelphia Parks & Recreation. These recognized City volunteer groups are established to support and advocate for a specific park area in the Philadelphia Parks & Recreation system. They are public community groups, where membership is open and accessible to all park users. Friends groups work in close partnership with staff at Philadelphia Parks & Recreation (PPR) and the Fairmount Park Conservancy (FPC) to create welcoming community green spaces and positive experiences with nature at the neighborhood level and in watershed parks. Successful Friends groups also engage with residents, community organizations, and external partners to achieve these goals and serve as the “community voice” for the park.

Typical Friends group activities include:

- Park cleanup and beautification days
- Fundraising events
- Organizing recreational and educational programming
- Advocating for park improvements
- Publicizing important park issues

Philadelphia Parks & Recreation has a rich tradition of engaged citizens and active park groups. There are more than 120 active Friends groups of varying capacity, ranging from large 501(c)(3) organizations with several hundred members to grassroots community entities consisting of a smaller number of committed neighbors. PPR promotes all civic engagement and actively works with our partners at the Fairmount Park Conservancy to provide service, resources, and training.

Philadelphia Parks & Recreation is committed to preserving and enhancing public green space throughout Philadelphia, which we believe can only be achieved through sustained civic engagement and park stewardship.

## The Value of Stewardship - Why Friends Groups Exist

Parks provide significant aesthetic, economic, environmental, and social benefits to the City of Philadelphia, and committed citizens are increasingly becoming involved in park stewardship. Philadelphia's beautiful public spaces are accessible to everyone and are enjoyed on a daily basis by thousands of city residents and visitors alike. This level of usage coupled with the large number of parks presents a challenge to keeping our City's parks safe, clean and ready to use. Park Stewards, more commonly known as Park Friends groups, are essential to the health, cleanliness and vitality of the City's parks. Park Friends groups invest time and resources to create healthy and welcoming green spaces that connect neighbors, build community identity, and provide enriching experiences. Through service projects, fun events, and commitment, Park Friends groups enhance their community's quality of life through their neighborhood park.

## My Park Doesn't Have a Friends Group - How Can I Start One?

The first step in forming new Friends groups or re-activating a dormant group is to contact the Stewardship Office of Philadelphia Parks & Recreation. We will readily assist you in forming a Park Friends group as well as discuss your ideas for the park.

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There are a few questions to keep in mind when considering if and how you'd like to form a Park Friends group:

- Is your group forming in response to a specific problem within the park or around a specific goal?
- Are you going to address a wide range of issues, and if so, which ones take priority?
- How are you going to involve the community and work together to care for your park?

PPR and FPC staff will guide you through the formation process, beginning with a meeting to discuss your goals for the park. Together we will plan your next steps, including a meeting to engage the broader community.

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## Gathering Community Input

Understanding the needs of the park in combination with the needs of your community is an essential element in creating a Park Friends group. Community members who already frequent the park are a good place to start building your initial “core” membership (i.e., the people who attend group meetings, and are responsible for planning and implementing projects).

It is also important to reach out to the broader community in order to have an inclusive perspective and ensure your group’s goals are in line with other community development efforts. You can do this either through a community meeting, a neighborhood survey, or both. Once you’ve reached out to your community, be sure to share the feedback with the PPR Stewardship Office so that together, we can assess the information and establish next steps.



Quick tips for holding community meetings:

- Choose a **central space** within the community, such as a rec center, civic association, or church, and make sure the meeting is timed to fit people’s work schedules.
- Use a **variety of methods** to spread the word about your meeting—post flyers in your neighborhood rec center, coffee shops, grocery stores, and of course, in the park! If possible, have it announced in the local newspaper. Online social media (such as Facebook, Nextdoor and Twitter) are also effective. Always remember to include your contact information!
- **Reach out** to other community groups, such as Civic Associations, and CDCs, to let them know about your meeting and ask them to spread the word to their members.
- Invite a representative from Parks and Recreation’s Office of Stewardship to help facilitate discussions and answer community questions.
- Create a clear list of the park issues or goals your group wants to address.

- Have a **“solutions” brainstorming session** for the group with guidelines to ensure that everyone is respectful, and encourage everyone to practice active listening when others are speaking.
- **Take notes!** It’s the best way to remember all the great ideas that will come out of the meeting.
- Have a **sign-up sheet** with contact information so the meeting notes/minutes can be shared with all in attendance. This can also serve as a recruitment list for future members of the Friends group.
- **Announce the date** for the next Friends group meeting – letting people know future dates (for meetings, events, service days) allows them to fit it into their own schedule and let other folks know when they can be involved.

Quick tips for a neighborhood survey:

- Make your questions **concise** to avoid a lengthy survey that might deter people, and make your questions **fair** so people feel comfortable answering honestly.
- Devise a **clear system** to collect and analyze the responses. Having a simple report format is an easy way to see the overall survey trends.
- **Encourage** respondents to attend future Park Friends group meetings so they can voice their opinions in person. Include the scheduled date for your next meeting, or pick a standing date (e.g., 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month at 7 pm).
- **Provide survey results** to all persons/households that were requested to complete the survey.

## Writing Your Mission Statement

Every Park Friends group should have a mission statement. It is an easy and effective way to communicate the purpose of your Friends group, both to the community you serve and to the city, at large. The mission statement is a group effort and an assurance that all your “Friends” are in agreement when it comes to the purpose and goals of the group.

Here are a few examples of Philadelphia Friends groups’ mission statements:

**Friends of Mifflin Square:** To promote a healthy, safe, clean space for the diverse communities in South Philly, and to preserve access to peaceful space for physical fitness.

**Friends of Vernon Park:** Keeping Vernon Park, ‘The Emerald of Germantown’, healthy, green, and engaged in the community.

**Friends of Campbell Square:** The Friends of Campbell Square are dedicated to the revitalization and preservation of the oldest public square in Port Richmond for the benefit of the entire community and future generations.

Each of these statements is concise, expresses the purpose of the Park Friends group, and helps keep its work in line with its defined goals. Answer the following questions as a group to help simplify your mission statement construction process:

1. **Purpose.** What are the opportunities or needs you want to address?
2. **Business.** How will you address those opportunities or needs?
3. **Values.** What principles or beliefs guide your work?
4. **Goals.** Does the mission statement incorporate both short- and long-term goals?
5. **Actions.** Will the future actions of the group reflect the words of the mission statement?

## Group Structure

Established leadership roles can benefit your Park Friends group and help you stay organized; however it does not have to be your first priority. We recommend that newly organized volunteers work together first before they consider having elections or creating a formal structure. Keep your group focused on establishing a common vision, setting goals that are attainable, and working together to implement small projects during your first year. This will allow you to get to know each other better and to determine the skills, contacts and resources that each volunteer brings to the table. Once you have achieved small successes and have a steady and committed group of volunteers, working together toward a common vision, you'll be in a better position to formalize the group structure and fill important leadership roles for continued success.

Once your group is ready for a formalized structure, PPR does not require a “set format,” but we find that many of our Friends groups successfully use a basic leadership format such as:

- President or Chair
- Vice President or Co-Chair
- Treasurer
- Secretary

You may also want to consider organizing by committees, based on the interests or expertise of your volunteers. Some common examples include: gardening and cleanup committee, programming and events, fundraising, outreach and social media, and other permanent or ad hoc committees as needs arise.

As more residents and partners get involved, some Park Friends groups establish a “board of directors” that serves as the main decision-making group. This elected board reports to and regularly communicates with the larger membership group.

The leadership structure is up to you, whatever will work best for your park and community. Once you establish a structure, it should be clearly defined in writing and all members should be made aware. You should also determine how often you will vote on leadership roles, what that process entails, and consider setting term limits.

## How Do We Plan Our First Project?

Although the work you do is informed by the community, project planning will fall to the Park Friends group working in coordination with the Stewardship Team. Your first project could be a service day, a community event, or a park improvement project. A successful project takes time and substantial planning, so the sooner you begin the better!

**Start small and do it well** – having one small successful project is better than multiple half-completed projects. Most importantly, make sure everyone in the community knows about the project! Even if only a third of the people you tell actually come to the event, you are still getting word out about your Park Friends group and the goals you are working to accomplish.



## Service Days

Service days are the ‘bread and butter’ of stewardship. They are fairly easy to organize, and offer a great opportunity to connect with neighbors and engage them in your park. Everyone benefits from a clean, sustainable park, and everyone’s help is needed to keep Philadelphia’s park in that condition! The more frequent your group hosts service days, the more obvious your group’s impact will be to the community. Stewardship staff can work with you to help plan your first service day. Basic tools and supplies are available for to Park Friends groups to borrow from the Office of Stewardship.

Prior to the Service day:

- Conduct a walkthrough to identify needs and determine high priority projects. Make a list of all the necessary tools and materials you will need, and decide how you will secure the supplies.



- Notify PPR about the date, time and scope of your service day so that we can support your efforts as resources allow (e.g., schedule a trash pick-up for your park).
- Draw on community connections for in-kind donations, such as snacks and water for volunteers, tools, and any other items your group needs for the service day.
- Compile a list of potential volunteers (from the contact information you've collected) and notify them about the upcoming service day two or three weeks ahead of time.
- Get the word out to the rest of the community using social media (e.g. Facebook, NextDoor, Instagram) and by putting up flyers in the park, nearby rec centers, local businesses, community centers, schools and religious institutions. Also send out a calendar listing for the event to your local newspaper.
- Send an email blast to potential volunteers the day before to remind them about the service day and to wear appropriate attire (clothes they don't mind getting dirty, closed-toe shoes, etc.).
- Plan to have a "Welcome Station" to greet folks as they arrive, register them with the sign-in sheet (Section 4) and distribute membership materials for your group.

#### Day of the Event Reminders:

- Arrive with enough time to prepare the site for the day's events – nothing worse than volunteers arriving with no one to greet them!
- Set up your "Welcome Station" with sign-in sheet and Friends Group information. Be sure to use the sign-in sheet attached in Section 4, which includes a liability waiver and space to record contact information of all volunteers.
- Once everyone has arrived, explain the details of your project and delegate tasks. Let volunteers know your approximate finish time and where to meet once they're done working.
- Inform volunteers of the location for restroom facilities and hydrations stations.
- Explain safety protocols and then direct volunteers toward the designated tool area.
- Take lots of pictures!! Post them on social media and send them to us at [volunteer@loveyourpark.org](mailto:volunteer@loveyourpark.org)!
- Once the work is completed or it is time to stop for the day, round up all trash and equipment, and return all tools to the tool area.
- At the end of the day, remember to thank all your volunteers for their hard work. Let them know when your next service day or meeting will be, and encourage them to stay connected to the park.
- Congratulate yourselves on a successful workday!

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## Community Programs and Events

Community programs and events are a proven way to attract neighbors to your park and members to your group. While not everyone in the neighborhood may volunteer to pull weeds or rake leaves, few can say no to a festival, farmers market or concert. At every event, be sure to have a Welcome Table with information on your group, when you meet and your goals for the park. Certain events take more planning, and if this is your first time organizing a park event, it is a good idea to start small. A neighborhood potluck or picnic is a great way to get people into the park and collect their information with minimal planning on your part. Once introduced to your group, these community members will be connected to future park events.



Important Considerations for Events:

- **Demographics:** what type of event would be most appropriate for your community?
- **Timing:** is your event scheduled when the most people can attend?
- **Permits:** which group member will fill out and submit the Special Events Permit Application?
- **Frequency:** is it a one-time event, or do you want to have an ongoing series of events (e.g., monthly concerts in the park, farmer’s markets, etc.)?
- **Budget:** what is needed and how will you secure the funding?

Your events are also fundraising opportunities. The Health Department allows folks to sell bottled drinks and packaged snacks without a vending license. Raffles and 50-50 drawings are also easy fundraising tools. If you have a budget to work with, consider purchasing small giveaways (magnets, pens, etc.) that list your contact information to make it easy for people to stay in touch. Raising money enables you to fund more events in the future, recruit more volunteers, and help your group reach its goals. Be sure to always carefully record any and all funds raised and spent, especially as your group treasury begins to grow. For more fundraising ideas and grant opportunities for programming, read on to Section 2.

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## Physical Improvement Projects

While regular service days and community events are essential and easy-to-organize projects, nothing captures the attention of the community more than a positive physical change in your park. It doesn't have to be a huge change- small but well thought out improvements can really help to spark community interest and attract new support for your group.

Some examples of physical improvement projects include:

- Gardens or improved landscape
- Signage
- Community bulletin board
- Installation of water sources
- Site furnishings



### Our First Project Was Such a Success! What Now?

Successful service days and events are fantastic, and it is important to do everything possible to keep up the progress. Make your community aware of your success; advertise your accomplishments in the neighborhood newspaper, put it on your Facebook page and share the good news through an email to other organizations in your community. Don't forget to share with your Stewardship Coordinator!

To have a lasting impact on your park, you must think in the long-term. New projects will regularly arise, and you want to make sure you have a reliable base of volunteers. Schedule regular meetings for your Park Friends group. Most importantly, as you grow and expand your goals, the Stewardship Team will continue to be a resource for your group.

## Section 2: Growing Your Friends Group



### Becoming Part of the Parks Friends Network (PFN)

Philadelphia Parks & Recreation in partnership with the Fairmount Park Conservancy work collaboratively with more than 100 Park Friends groups to steward parks across the city. This collaborative partnership is called the Park Friends Network.

Effective partnerships require regular communication and a strong working relationship. There are several ways for Friends groups to stay in touch with the Stewardship Team

- Participate in annual *LOVE Your Park (LYP)* activities, biannual city-wide service days. Refer to Section 3 for further details on *LYP*.
- Join fellow Friends group representatives at *Park Friends Network Meetings* held four times a year: February, May, August, and November. In addition to receiving updates from PPR and FPC, this is an opportunity to network with other Park Friends groups to discuss issues and share information. Registered Friends groups receive notice of upcoming meetings.
- Join the *Friends of Philly Parks* Facebook Group. It's a place where Park Friends groups can continue to network and share resources, tips, questions, and more! Join us at [www.facebook.com/groups/FriendsofPhillyParks](http://www.facebook.com/groups/FriendsofPhillyParks).
- Post entries on social media year-round to share your community work with fellow Friends groups and all Philadelphians.
- Submit and track your volunteer hours us the Monthly Activities Tally Sheet (Section 4).
- Invite your program partners to park events you are hosting so they can see first-hand the work your community is doing.

## Promoting Your Park

The more familiar people are with your park, the more attention and involvement you will garner for your Park Friends group. Hosting community events and regular service days are a great way to heighten awareness of your park and Friends group.

### Back to Basics

While technology and social media help immensely in reaching large audiences, and we strongly recommend those avenues, there is still nothing better than good old-fashioned canvassing. Canvassing is going door-to-door, engaging directly with your neighbors. It puts a friendly face to your Park Friends group and helps neighbors understand what your Friends group is all about.

To assist in your canvassing efforts, the PPR Stewardship Team can provide your group with a large quantity of pre-printed color “door hangers”; these can be used to get the word out to nearby residents and organizations. The pre-printed message on the door hanger provides general information and answers the question “What is a Friends Group?” There is also a blank space on the hanger for your group to “personalize” your message; for example, you can include the date, time and location of your next event or meeting. Similar to the door hanger, we can also provide your group with large quantities of pre-printed “rack cards” that can be distributed at park events or service days. These are similar to the door hanger, but with no hole to hang.

If you are interested in obtaining door hangers or rack cards for your group, please contact the Stewardship Office at 215-683-3679 and we will make arrangements to get them to you.

Helpful canvassing tips:

- Be safe! Always take a partner with you and try not to canvass at night
- Bring paper and pens in case you meet someone in your neighborhood who is interested in joining your Park Friends group
- Do not tape anything to your neighbor’s door
- Don’t put your flyers in any mailboxes
- Have fun meeting all your neighbors and getting them interested in your park!

## Social Media

Social media is an extremely effective way to reach a large audience with relative ease. The internet offers many tools to communicate and stay connected with your community. Every Park Friends group is strongly encouraged- at the very least- to maintain a public group email account. A public Park Friends group email address is important for maintaining contact with your local community and partners.

Some key forms of forms of internet communication include:

**Email:** Creating a public `friendsofXXXXpark@gmail.com` address is an efficient way to manage communication with your members and make your group contact information available to potential volunteers. It also protects your personal contact information, and allows more than one group member to monitor and manage emails.

**Facebook:** Creating a Facebook page for your group takes minimal effort and allows you to post about upcoming events and group successes, and have other “Friends” share their thoughts on your page. A Facebook page will also show up if anyone does an internet search for your park, so it’s a good first step if you’re considering your own website. Remember to maintain frequent activity on your FB page, so that folks can see your an active group!

**Twitter:** Twitter is an online social networking service that enables users to send and read short 140-character messages called “tweets.” This is a great way to promote events in your park! Follow us at @loveyourpark, @PhilaParkandRec and @myphillypark.

**Instagram:** Instagram is a free photo and video sharing platform available on all smartphones. A picture is worth a thousand words! Follow us @philaparkandrec and @myphillypark

**Building a Website or Blog:** If you have the time and resources, you can create your *own* website with your park name as the address (i.e., *Yourparkgroup.org*). A website can be as simple or complex as you’d like it to be, and there are a variety of self-built (and often free) sites. Your own park blog is a great way to let people know about events and post pictures along with stories for people to read.

Any Friends group that has a Facebook page or website can be listed on the PPR website. This City webpage will provide a direct link to your website or Facebook page, helping your Park Friends group gain more exposure. Visit [www.phila.gov/parksandrecreation](http://www.phila.gov/parksandrecreation) and click on the *Get Involved* tab to find how and where your group could be listed.

Finally, if you do not have access to a computer or the internet, Parks & Recreation can help. We operate many public computer labs in our recreation centers called KEYSPOts. To learn of a KEYSPOt location near you, please call the Stewardship Office at 215-683-3679.

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## Sustaining Community Involvement

People want to be involved in projects that are interesting and meaningful. Finding the right balance of fun and productivity is critical if you want to keep your community involved. Organizing service days and community events in your park on a regular basis will go a long way in keeping your group active and volunteers coming back.

### Service Days

Service Days should be planned well in advance to provide volunteers plenty of notice and to allow your group organizers time to secure tools and materials. Refer back to Section 1 for a guide to organizing a successful Service Day.

Use the Volunteer Service Day Sign-In form (Section 4) to gather your volunteers' contact information. Add all new contacts to your general membership email list so they can receive notice about future service days, events and Friends group meetings. Volunteers can fill many roles for the group. Identifying a range of activities will allow volunteers more opportunities to get involved. Some examples include picking up tools, tending a garden, staffing the welcome table, supplying refreshments or updating your Facebook page.

It is important to document the impact of your work and your volunteer hours. Keep track of your volunteer efforts with the "Monthly Volunteer & Friends Group Activities Tally Sheet" (attached Section 4-Forms). This tool will assist you to record your history and help document the impact of your work for grants and other funding sources.

Volunteers will be more willing to come back if the impact of their work is tangible – *We picked up how many bags of trash? We planted how many flowers?* – and appreciated. Use your email list to inform volunteers what was accomplished during the service day. Never underestimate the value of a heartfelt "thank you" at the end of the day. Be sure to acknowledge everyone's hard work and let them know how much they have done to help the park. Taking it a step further, some Friends groups plan an annual "thank you" event for their members as an opportunity to get together without working. You could have a pizza party in the park or host an outing at a local restaurant! Keep in mind that, like you, volunteers willingly contribute their free time to the park. The more thanks and information they receive from your group, the more likely they are to stay involved.





## Events and Programs

Successful community events and programs require substantial planning. However, the rewards for the park are equally substantial. Events are typically a one-day activity, whereas programs are usually more consistent activities that occur regularly on a weekly, bi-monthly or monthly basis. Many programs are also organized seasonally; for example, a summer concert series. Many Friends groups start planning their spring and summer events and programs as early as January. Some groups even plan their entire year in January and publish an annual calendar so the community knows well in advance. However your group decides to plan events and programs, the key is to allow ample time to promote and advertise your activities in order to capture the largest audience.

**Please note: All park events and programs require a Special Events permit from Parks & Recreation** (see attached Section 4-Forms). The *Friends and Community Groups Special Events Permit* application can be downloaded from the Philadelphia Parks & Recreation website or emailed by contacting the Stewardship Office at 215-683-3679. Your Stewardship Coordinator can also provide access to the permit application.

Events and programs create the opportunity to draw NEW neighbors and partners to the park. Be sure to take advantage of these opportunities to recruit more members from the audiences you draw. During the event: set up a Friends group table, display visuals and make announcements to draw attention to your group. Work the crowd: introduce yourself, talk to folks and make more “Friends”!

Notify the local newspaper about your event and invite them to come and do a story. Always invite your local elected officials. Even if they don’t come, you should always send the invitation to their office so they are aware of your activities. Be sure to take photos and share them: post them on your Facebook or Instagram page, send them to your Stewardship Coordinator, put them on your website, etc. Also keep in mind that you get to have fun as well. The more fun you and your fellow Friends have at the event, the more fun others will have too.



## Creating successful partnerships

Outside of your partnership with PPR and FPC, there are a numerous opportunities for your Park Friends group to collaborate with other organizations. Start with local businesses, schools, religious institutions, civic associations and community development corporations who are already part of your community. Whether the local grocery store donates candy for your Halloween bash or the dog-walking group brings folks out to the next service day, every potential partner has something to contribute.

Learning about your partner's interests, concerns and limitations is a first step towards understanding how you can work together. A successful partnership requires a large upfront investment of both time and effort. Each group or organization has its own perspectives, interests, and methods of accomplishing its goals, and it is important to keep them all in mind. Beneficial collaboration creates its own energy and produces its own rewards.

Quick tips for effective partnerships:

- Remain committed, patient, and flexible
- Focus on shared goals and how to best accomplish them
- Keep communication channels open and dialogue honest
- Never underestimate the value of "Thank you!"
- Hard work deserves celebration – always make time to publicly acknowledge all your partners

## Building relationships with City Council

### Who Is My City Councilperson?

There are two easy ways to find this information!

**Online:** visit [www.phlcouncil.com](http://www.phlcouncil.com) Click on “Find my Council Member” near the bottom of the Homepage

**Phone:** Call the Voter Registration Office at (215) 686-1590

### Why Should My Friends Group Be Involved with Our District Councilperson?

Developing a relationship with your District Councilperson can be very beneficial to a Friends Group with advantages such as:

**Resources:** Your Councilperson determines how Philadelphia Activity Fund grants are allocated in their district. Your park group is eligible for this grant! Additionally, your Councilperson can connect you to other community groups active in your district to expand your group’s local network.

**City Support Services:** Your Councilperson can assist with park issues and provide support for special projects.

**Capital Funding:** Your Councilperson can help with funding for park improvements and building enhancements.

### How Should My Friends Group Be Involved With Our District Councilperson?

**Friendly Introduction:** Contact your Councilperson and introduce your Park Friends group. Inform them of your group’s hard work along with the positive benefits that your group provides to both their District and their constituents. Ask your District Councilperson about their goals for your park and identify ways in which you can work together. Also, be sure to introduce yourself to the Councilperson’s constituent service representative; it’s always wise to have more than one way to get information to your Councilperson.

**Friendly Relationship:** Build your relationship with your Councilperson by keeping them informed about your park. Invite them to your meetings, involve them in your special events and acknowledge their support in your newsletter or on your Facebook page. In general, show them what an asset your Friends Group is to them, the park and the community as a whole.

**Friendly Reminders:** Consistent communications is very important! Stay in touch with your Councilperson so they are both aware of and fully understand your needs. This will prove invaluable should any park issue arise.

**Note:** Please keep your Parks and Recreation Stewardship Coordinator in the loop. Copy us on all correspondence that you have with the Councilperson's office so they can appropriately respond to any related inquiries from the Councilperson.

## Fundraising – finding the financial means to support your work!

Fundraising is an integral part of an effective Friends group. Group funds allow you to purchase necessary items for park beautification, physical improvement projects, and special events. Fundraising often begins in the community you serve. The most important part is to have confidence in the value of your work so that others will see it as well.

When you approach a potential funder, you should have a specific project or program in mind, know what you would like them to donate and tell them what they will get in return. Have a plan in writing, including a detailed budget. Consider preparing a Sponsorship Package for businesses with various levels of donations to raise funds for a specific event or series of events. For example, ten local businesses could help fund a summer concert series and have their names displayed on an event banner as well as other promotional materials.

### Where and how do we begin fundraising?

**Individuals:** Don't be afraid to ask family, friends and neighbors for contributions; the worst they can do is say no. Consider a "membership mailing" to the community asking them for a small donation (\$5 - \$25) to become members of the Park Friends group. If people can't donate money, perhaps they can volunteer their time.

**Community Institutions:** Begin with neighborhood organizations such as religious institutions, banks, colleges and hospitals. Also take note of which groups frequent the park most often since they are already invested in the life of the park.

**Local Businesses:** Approach local businesses for cash donations or in-kind services. Sometimes receiving snacks or tools for a workday can be as beneficial as a cash contribution. A clean, safe and vibrant local park provides a positive benefit to their business.

**Fundraising Events:** Special events are a great way to raise money, to generate publicity, and to have fun in the park. These events can be as varied as the diversity and interests of the community. Fundraising events are also good opportunities for recruiting new volunteers.

**Government Officials:** Government officials, such as city councilpersons, state representatives, and even members of Congress, have access to funds that may be available for neighborhood projects. They can also help facilitate relationships between your group and grant-making organizations.

## What about grants?

Grant funding may be available from foundations, non-profit organizations, city, state and national agencies. Before approaching an organization for a grant, you must do some research.

**Align your project with an appropriate grant:** Grant-making organizations usually have specific areas of focus and you may have to do some searching before finding grants applicable to your park. Make sure that your project fits the grant's mission!

**Be aware of deadlines:** Grant organizations may accept proposals only at certain times of the year, and you must follow their guidelines and meet all deadlines.

**Keep PPR and your community partners in the loop:** Communicate intentions of applying for grants with your community and program partners, they may prove to be a resource in the proposal process! As the landowner, PPR must also approve all grant project proposals. In addition, PPR and your other partners can provide a letter of support to strengthen the application.

## Annual grants available to Park Friends groups

The following grants are available to all registered Park Friends groups on an annual basis. We strongly recommend you take advantage of these opportunities.

### Growing the Neighborhood Parks Grant Program

The Fairmount Park Conservancy's *Growing the Neighborhood* grant program offers funding for park programs and events.

- The program is dedicated to enhancing neighborhood parks by supporting Park Friends groups to host community-based programming and events.
- This grant is available for Park Friends groups that:
- Are registered with Philadelphia Parks & Recreation (see Section 4)
- Consist of three or more people and have neighborhood-based leadership
- Events must be free, open to the public, and promoted through-out the community.

There is an annual application process for FPC's *Growing the Neighborhood* grant. All registered Friends groups will be notified via email when the grant application is available. At your Friends groups meetings, discuss what project ideas and programs you would like to offer so that you are ready when the application becomes available.

### Philadelphia Activities Fund

The Philadelphia Activities Fund, Inc. is a nonprofit corporation established by the mayor and City Council and managed by Philadelphia Parks & Recreation to communities through projects that promote sportsmanship, the arts, and health. The Fund's awards grants to projects and organizations that service diverse audiences, and offer learning or motivational experiences. Park Friends groups are prime candidates for this fund.

Applications for the Philadelphia Activities Fund Grant are available annually on PPR's website, as well as recreation centers, playgrounds, Police Athletic League centers, libraries, City Council offices located in City Hall and the Parks & Recreation Central Office at 1515 Arch Street, 10th Floor.

**Timeline:** Applications are typically available March 1<sup>st</sup> and are due May 1<sup>st</sup>.

The average grant award is between \$500 and \$1,000. Organizations that have received the Philadelphia Cultural Fund Grant and the Anti-Drug Initiative Grant are disqualified from the Philadelphia Activities Grant.

### Additional Grant Resources:

**Look to Businesses:** Learn about corporations, banks, utility companies, fuel companies and Philadelphia industries that could have charitable foundations. Their websites give their areas of interest and explain guidelines for the grant-application process. Philadelphia local business directory website: <http://businessdirectory.bizjournals.com/philadelphia>

**Visit Your Local Library:** The Free Library main branch offers access to the Regional Foundation Center, (<http://libwww.freelibrary.org/rfc/>) an extensive grant-finding database. This database can connect you to a wide range of potential funding opportunities.

### Grant Writing: Basic Tips

When writing a grant proposal, follow instructions precisely and adhere to deadlines. Funders may eliminate proposals that do not contain the necessary information or meet their guidelines.

Supplemental materials can add credibility to your application. These include project costs, letters of recommendation in support of the project, any publicity that your group has received. Please note that every foundation may have different conditions regarding supporting materials.

Gather information before beginning. Here are some general questions often asked on grant applications:

- Who is applying for the grant? What is the group's mission?
- What is your group asking for? (Try to be as specific as possible.)
- How will your group accomplish the task? (Be as detailed as possible.)

- Who are the group's partners?
- What is the impact of this project on the community?
- How does your organization evaluate its projects?

### How do we leverage our resources?

“Leveraging” is the process of using current resources to gain more resources. In other words, money raised can be used to raise even more money. If your group secures a grant from a foundation or corporation, it serves as an important “stamp of approval” that will help you make your case as you solicit funds from others.

Two examples of leveraging tools are “challenge grants” and “matching funds.” With a challenge grant, one grantor pledges money to your organization with the stipulation that the money will be granted only if your organization can raise a specified amount from other sources. A matching grant awards a specified amount for each dollar raised elsewhere.

Community support is another resource to leverage, and documentation of this support is crucial when making your case to funders. Use statistics from park events and celebrations to make your case. If *you* don't count, you *don't count* in the eyes of potential funders! Keep track of the number of people who use the park daily, who volunteer at workdays or any other figures that can illustrate how much your community values the park. Use the *Monthly Volunteer & Friends Group Activities Tally Sheet* to document your impact.

## Section 3: Love Your Park

### What is Love Your Park?

Love Your Park is a biannual event that helps clean, green, and celebrates Philly's parks. A collaborative partnership among Philadelphia Parks & Recreation, Fairmount Park Conservancy, and the Park Friends Network, Love Your Park engages citizens and volunteers to revitalize Philadelphia's public green spaces and create safe, welcoming, and fun recreation opportunities in parks across the city. Nearly 100 park friends groups participate each season, engaging 5,000 volunteers annually.



### Spring Love Your Park Week

A nine day, city-wide celebration of parks featuring service projects, fun events, educational programs, family activities and more. With the leadership of volunteer Park Friends groups across the city, we kick off the week with cleanups at 100+ parks and more than 2,000 volunteers!

**Save the date! May 9-17th, 2020**

### Fall Love Your Park Day

In early-November, 100+ Park Friends groups host volunteers in raking leaves, planting trees and putting their parks to bed for the winter. With the support of Philadelphia Parks & Recreation, all leaves are taken to the Recycling Center to be composted. Together we keep *tons* of leaves out of our landfills each fall!

**Save the date! November 14th, 2020**

## Section 4: Standard Forms & Supplemental Information

The standardized forms in this section are valuable tools needed to support your Friends group.

- The Meeting Sign-In Form is a form your group should utilize for every meeting to track attendance and collect any new contact information. It also documents your meeting history.
- The Volunteer Service Day Sign-In is a form your group should utilize for every service day you organize. It helps document your service as well as helps to build your Friends group volunteer contact database.
- The Monthly Volunteer & Friends Group Activities Tally Sheet is a form your group should utilize to track the number of hours of service your group donates to the park each month. This is an important tool that can be used for your fundraising efforts because it allows you to put a monetary value to your time. Make sure to share this information with your stewardship coordinator on a monthly basis.

We have also included Police Districts contact information, to help facilitate communication between Park Friends groups and the police district's Community Relations Officer.







# PARK FRIENDS

## ACTIVITY REPORT

Park Friends Groups are encouraged to use this form to track the amazing work done for your park and community. Report on service days, community events, public meetings, etc. Please submit one report per event.

PARK NAME:

DATE OF ACTIVITY:

YOUR NAME:

EMAIL OR PHONE:

**ACTIVITY TYPE**

CHECK ONE

 SERVICE DAY/CLEAN UP COMMUNITY EVENT PUBLIC MEETING OTHER: \_\_\_\_\_**BRIEF DESCRIPTION**

Include projects completed, topics discussed, groups engaged, etc- remember to include numbers!

**# OF ATTENDEES****HOURS OF EVENT****ADDITIONAL INFO**

Take this opportunity to brag about the group's accomplishments, new goals, and any other activity info.

For event planning purposes, we recommend contacting your local police headquarters and informing the Community Relations Office (CRO) of your plans. All information available at [www.phillypolice.com/districts](http://www.phillypolice.com/districts)



**1st District**

24th St. and Wolf St.  
police.co\_01@phila.gov  
215-686-3010

**2nd District**

Harbison Ave. and Levick St.  
police.co\_02@phila.gov  
215-686-3020

**3rd District**

11th St and Wharton St.  
police.co\_03@phila.gov  
215-686-3030

**5th District**

Ridge Ave and Cinnaminson St.  
police.co\_05@phila.gov  
215-686-3050

**6th District**

235 N 11th St.  
police.co\_06@phila.gov  
215-686-3060

**7th District**

Bustleton Ave. and Bowler St.  
police.co\_07@phila.gov

215-686-3070

**8th District**

Academy Rd. and Red Lion Rd.  
police.co\_08@phila.gov  
215-686-3080

**9th District**

401 N. 21st St.  
police.co\_09@phila.gov  
215-686-3090

**12th District**

65th St. and Woodland Ave.  
police.co\_12@phila.gov  
215-686-3120

**14th District**

Haines St & Germantown Ave.  
police.co\_14@phila.gov  
215-686-3140

**15th District**

Harbison Ave and Levick St.  
police.co\_15@phila.gov  
215-686-3150

**16th District**

39th St and Lancaster Ave.  
police.co\_16@phila.gov  
215-686-3160

**17th District**

20th St and Federal St.  
police.co\_17@phila.gov  
215-686-3170

**18th District**

55th St and Pine St.  
police.co\_18@phila.gov  
215-686-3180

**19th District**

61st St and Thompson St.  
police.co\_19@phila.gov  
215-686-3190

**22nd District**

17th St and Montgomery Ave.  
police.co\_22@phila.gov  
215-686-3220

**24th District**

3901 Whitaker Ave.  
police.co\_24@phila.gov  
215-686-3240

**25th District**

3901 Whitaker Ave.  
police.co\_25@phila.gov  
215-686-3250

**26th District**

Girard Ave & Montgomery Ave  
police.co\_26@phila.gov  
215-686-3260

**35th District**

N Broad St and Champlost St.  
police.co\_35@phila.gov  
215-686-3350

**39th District**

2201 W. Hunting Park Ave.  
police.co\_39@phila.gov  
215-686-3390

For event planning purposes, we recommend contacting your local police headquarters and informing the Community Relations Office (CRO) of your plans. All information available at [www.phillypolice.com/districts](http://www.phillypolice.com/districts)

We hope that you have found this information helpful. As the Parks Stewardship Program continues to develop, we will update and revise this toolkit. Please feel free to reach out to Philadelphia Parks and Recreation's Office of Stewardship with any questions.

Philadelphia Parks & Recreation

Office of Stewardship

Elisa Ruse-Esposito

(215) 683-3679

[Elisa.Ruse-Esposito@phila.gov](mailto:Elisa.Ruse-Esposito@phila.gov)

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