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

**Is it a...**

**MAINTENANCE & STAFF ISSUE?**

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

- Painting trees
- Repairing broken benches
- Mowing lawns
- Installing courts
- Setting up a new playground
- Cleaning bathrooms
- Improving accessibility
- Grand opening
- Building a dog run
- More frequent maintenance

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

**Is it a...**

**CAPITAL PROJECT?**

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

- Building a dog run
- Improving accessibility
- Installing courts
- Setting up a new playground
- Grand opening
- Building a dog run
- More frequent maintenance

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

Capital projects must cost at least $35,000. If your project costs less, it's a maintenance and staff issue.

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

$35,000

CAPITAL PROJECTS MUST COST AT LEAST $35,000. IF YOUR PROJECT COSTS LESS, IT’S A MAINTENANCE AND STAFF ISSUE.
You’ll find more support for your improvements if you can bring together other people who want to make changes in your park.

This is called...

**COALITION BUILDING**

How do we get support from decision-makers?

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

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

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

What will our coalition do?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Some things to bring to meetings with public officials:

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

**PHOTOS** of the problem in your park.

**IDEAS** about what you want improved.

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

**A LIST** of your coalition members.

Your coalition will be stronger if it’s diverse, so reach out to people of different ages, races, and ethnic backgrounds.

You’ll find more support for your improvements if you can bring together other people who want to make changes in your park.
You’ll need to work with NYC Parks. They might be able to move more staff to your park to help you fix your problem. The Borough Commissioner’s office makes these decisions, but many people can play a role in this process...

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

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

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

At the meeting, explain your issue.

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

Your COMMUNITY BOARD can write a letter of support, contact your Borough Commissioner, and advocate for your issue at its annual meeting with NYC Parks. 1. Call the office and ask to speak with the District Manager. 2. Explain the issue and who’s in your coalition. 3. Ask to present the issue to the Parks Committee or full Community Board.

Your CITY COUNCIL MEMBER can write a letter of support to the Borough Commissioner or attend a meeting to support your request. 1. Write a letter explaining your problem and who’s in your coalition. 2. Follow up with a phone call to the district office to ask for a meeting. 3. Ask your Council Member to write a letter of support. If he doesn’t respond, keep calling (but be polite).

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

How can I help all parks?

Every year, NYC Parks receives money from the city budget to keep parks open, safe, and clean. Encourage your City Council Member to increase the overall budget for NYC Parks—a steady funding stream helps keep all of the city’s parks in good condition.
Getting a capital project (a physical improvement to your park) usually requires funding from several elected officials. Every year, capital project proposals work their way through the different levels of city government. Some projects go on to get funded in the citywide budget.

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

### REACH OUT FOR SUPPORT

The officials below can give you money, but you need their support to get your project built. Work with these groups to get funding and support from elected officials.

#### NYC Parks Department of Parks and Recreation

This city agency develops and maintains parks and playgrounds across the city. They have a full-time staff to answer questions and provide guidance.

#### Community Board

Your Community Board represents you and your neighbors and makes decisions on how the city allocates its capital projects or improvements budget. The Community Board hosts Board meetings every other month and invites you to attend.

#### Mayor

The Mayor is the head of New York City’s government. He works with the Community Board to determine an overall budget. The Community Board sends a list of priorities to the Mayor.

#### City Council

The City Council is made up of 51 members, one from each city council district. They are elected to three-year terms and create laws, pass budgets, and oversee city services, police, and budget. They are the only elected officials who can instruct the Mayor to fund your project.

#### Borough President

The Borough Presidents’ office allocates funds on a borough level. They usually look at fewer projects than the City Council and City Council Speaker, which means that elected officials can give out each project in your borough, or organizationals in your community. They can also help your project by encouraging other decision-makers to support it.

#### Council Members

Your council member can allocate funds for capital projects in their district through Participatory Budgeting. They also have the power to give your project discretionary funds.

#### Elected officials pick projects

Council Members and Borough Presidents select capital projects out of their District Budget Priorities List or the Participatory Budgeting process. These decisions are based on the Executive Budget and adopted budget priorities, and usually can’t be added to at the last minute. Your project must be included in the project list in order for the project to be funded.

#### Executive Budget

The Executive Budget is created by the Mayor and the City Council Speaker. The City Council Speaker and Council Members use this list to allocate a portion of funding for their respective boroughs. The Executive Budget is the official starting point for the annual budget process. If your project isn’t included on this list, you won’t be able to get that funding.

#### Adopted Budget

The Adopted Budget is the official budget plan that will guide city spending for the upcoming fiscal year. If your project isn’t included in this list, you won’t be able to get that funding.

#### Mayor’s Preliminary Budget

The Mayor’s Preliminary Budget is released in January or February. The Mayor’s Preliminary Budget is the official starting point for the annual budget process. It is the first step in determining how much money will be spent on each program or project. If your project isn’t included in this list, you won’t be able to get that funding.

#### Written Preliminary Budget

The Written Preliminary Budget is released in March or April. The Written Preliminary Budget is the official written document that outlines the official budget for the upcoming fiscal year. If your project isn’t included in this list, you won’t be able to get that funding.

#### Adopted Budget

The Adopted Budget is released in May or June. The Adopted Budget is the official budget plan that will guide city spending for the upcoming fiscal year. If your project isn’t included in this list, you won’t be able to get that funding.

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

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THE CENTER FOR URBAN PEDAGOGY (CUP) is a nonprofit organization that uses the power of design and art to increase meaningful civic engagement. welcomeCUP.org

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

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

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More resources:

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

PEOPLE MAKE PARKS is a set of tools and resources to help communities participate in the design of their parks, developed by Hester Street Collaborative and Partnerships for Parks. Get the online toolkit at: peoplesmakemyparks.org

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