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:

- Pruning trees
- Mowing lawns
- Cleaning bathrooms
- Installing courts
- Repairing broken benches
- More frequent maintenance
- Person with a wheelchair
- Improving accessibility

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
- Getting a new playground
- Opening courts
- Adding courts
- Building a dog run
- Opening a playground
- Brand opening

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.

$35,000
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**

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

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

**How do we get support from decision-makers?**

- **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.**

**What will our coalition do?**

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

**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 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.

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

**SOME THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN TALKING ABOUT YOUR PROJECT WITH OFFICIALS:**

- Be specific but flexible.
- Use your time effectively.
- Get to know the staff of officials you’re trying to convince.
- Be courteous towards officials and staff.
- Be persistent.
- Be patient.

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

**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.

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

Contact your Outreach Coordinator; they’ll help you get started.

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

Write a letter to your Borough Commissioner’s office explaining your issue. Follow up with a phone call and ask for a meeting.

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

At the meeting, explain your issue.

If you’re having trouble, these groups can help: write a letter of support, contact your Borough Commissioner, and advocate for your issue at its annual meeting with NYC Parks. Call the office and ask to speak with the District Manager. Explain the issue and who’s in your coalition. Ask to present the issue to the Parks Committee or full Community Board.

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

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. Call the office and ask to speak with the District Manager. Explain the issue and who’s in your coalition. 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. Write a letter explaining your problem and who’s in your coalition. Follow up with a phone call to the district office to ask for a meeting. 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. Call 3-1-1. Be clear and specific about the problem.

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

Getting a capital project into the citywide budget usually requires funding from several elected officials. Everyone: capital project proposals work their way through the different levels of city government. Some projects go on to get funded in the citywide budget.

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

**NYC Parks Department of Parks and Recreation**

This city agency develops and oversees some parks, playgrounds, and other public spaces. Your project may work with all NYC Parks boroughs. Municipal Capital Projects Manager will help you prioritize capital project proposals for the Mayor’s Office.

**Community Board**

Your Community Board represents you and the people who live in your community. Marches on city’s annual budget, and events with city’s capital projects. The Community Board sends written resolutions to the Mayor, and the City Council to raise support for your project. Write to your Community Board. They help your project get money from the Mayor’s Office.

**Mayor**

The Mayor is the head of New York City’s government. Works with the City Council to develop an annual budget. The Mayor’s Office has the Adopted Budget. You can help your project get grants. The Mayor’s Office has the Adopted Budget.

**City Council**

The City Council person looks and approves the Mayor’s Capital Projects Budget. They have discretionary funds from the city. In the budget, you’ll see elected officials—members of the City Council. They often choose funds for projects that they know are important. The City Council has the Adopted Budget. They can help your project get grants.

**Borough President**

The Borough President advocates for the interest of the city. Borough Presidents have discretionary funds from the city. They can help your project get grants. The Borough President has the Adopted Budget.

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

**Contact your Borough Commissioner**

Call the Borough Commissioner’s Office for help contacting the Commissioner. They may be able to help when writing a letter to an elected official about your project.

**Meet**

Talk with the Borough Commissioner and/or Borough President about your project and get their support. You may also be able to influence where money is spent in the city.

**Call your Community Board office**

Let the Community Board know about your request. They can help your project get money from the Mayor’s Office.

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

Meet with the Community Board at one of their meetings. You can express your support for your project and work with the Community Board to get your project build.

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

This is the Community Board’s list of the city’s capital projects. The Community Board uses their discretion to fund projects.

**Borough Board creates a Prioritize List**

Your Borough Board is made up of all elected officials that represent your borough and your Borough President. It creates a few capital projects for the city to fund. This list is for the Adopted Budget. The City Council follows the list when deciding on what to fund.

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

The Mayor presents this budget to the City Council. It includes the Adopted Budget and the Preliminary Budget.

**Executive Budget (April)**

The City Council reviews and approves the Executive Budget. They make changes to it in the Adopted Budget. The City Council has the Adopted Budget.

**Adopted Budget (June)**

The Adopted Budget is the final budget. It includes the Adopted Budget. The Adopted Budget is the final budget. The Adopted Budget is the final budget. The Adopted Budget is the final budget.

**Elected officials pick projects**

Council Members and the Borough President select capital projects to put in the Adopted Budget. They can give up to $1.4 million to projects on the Adopted Budget. The Borough President selects projects to put in the Adopted Budget. If they get additional funds from the mayor.

**Your project wasn’t partially funded**

It’s included as part of the Adopted Budget. Your project is in the Adopted Budget. It gets funding for your project.

**Your project was fully funded**

It’s included in the Adopted Budget. It gets funding for your project. It’s included in the Adopted Budget. It gets funding for your project. It’s included in the Adopted Budget. It gets funding for your project.

**Your project was passed**

It’s included in the Adopted Budget. It gets funding for your project. It’s included in the Adopted Budget. It gets funding for your project. It’s included in the Adopted Budget. It gets funding for your project.

**Some projects go on to get funded in the citywide budget.**

We hit a roadblock! Now what?

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

**We need money!**

We need money! We need money! We need money! We need money! We need money! We need money!

**It takes a long time!**

It takes a long time! It takes a long time! It takes a long time! It takes a long time! It takes a long time! It takes a long time!

**Borough President advocates for the interest of the city.**

Borough Presidents have discretionary funds from the city. They can help your project get grants. The Borough President has the Adopted Budget.

**City Council person looks and approves the Mayor’s Capital Projects Budget.**

They have discretionary funds from the city. In the budget, you’ll see elected officials—members of the City Council. They often choose funds for projects that they know are important. The City Council has the Adopted Budget.

**Mayor presents this budget to the City Council.**

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**We hit a roadblock! Now what?**

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How do we find our…

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

City Council Member
City Council Members have offices in Lower Manhattan and in their district. Always contact your district office—they know your local park better. Find your representative by visiting council.nyc.gov

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

Partnerships for Parks Outreach Coordinator
She can put you in touch with the people above, NYC Parks, and parks groups. Find your Outreach Coordinator at 212-360-1310 or partnershipsforparks.org

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: peoplesmakeparks.org

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