

IDEAS

THE NEWSLETTER OF *Partnerships for Parks*

fall2008

COMMUNITY VISIONING: A TOOL FOR PARK GROUPS

Park groups often form to fix a problem in their park, but once it is resolved, what comes next? Some groups make use of community visioning, a process that engages the community in imagining a better future for their park. Community visioning provides long-term goals towards which the group can work.

Community visioning can focus on a specific project such as a scheduled capital improvement, or it can be all-encompassing with the goal of creating an integrated plan for the park. It can address a number of park issues including design, programming, maintenance, and community involvement. Outreach is essential to visioning, because it is important to hear from as many different voices as possible when creating a shared community vision.



Waterfront Celebration in Rainey Park, It's My Park! Day, Spring

Partnerships for Parks, a joint program of City Parks Foundation and the NYC Department of Parks & Recreation, has recently supported two visioning processes that highlight how groups can use visioning toward different goals.

WATERFRONT CELEBRATION Green Shores NYC is a coalition that works to enliven the Astoria/Long Island City (LIC) waterfront by caring and advocating for safe public parks, green spaces, waterways, and a waterfront greenway. On It's My Park! Day on May 17, Green Shores NYC and Partnerships for Parks hosted the Waterfront Celebration in Rainey Park. In addition to fun activities like fishing and live music, Green Shores NYC used a variety of visioning tools to ask more than 300 attendees about their hopes for the future of the waterfront parks. Input was collected about a range of issues, from programming and physical improvements to transportation and community stewardship.

Partnerships for Parks' Astoria/LIC Catalyst Transition Coordinator Karen

DEAR FRIENDS,

New Yorkers provide the vision for our city's parks. The way citizens use and care for their beloved public spaces provides inspiration for the work of the Department of Parks & Recreation and City Parks Foundation (CPF).

This past spring and summer, after years of advocacy by local groups to restore the Marcus Garvey Park bandshell, Parks and CPF worked together to facilitate a community visioning process about the performance space. CPF and Parks hired a theatre designer and an architect to design the bandshell, and hosted two community meetings. At the first meeting the architects listened to input from the community, and at the second they presented preliminary plans and heard feedback about their design. They incorporated the community's suggestions and then handed off their plans to Parks to be turned into blueprints.

We are looking forward to enjoying performances in the renovated bandshell, a structure that we hope will represent the fruitfulness of the collaboration between Parks, CPF, and the community.

Sincerely,
Adrian Benepe, Commissioner,
Parks & Recreation
David Rivel, Executive Director,
City Parks Foundation

Overton noticed that prior to community visioning, “the group was uncomfortable representing their community. Now, they can justify themselves when they say they represent the community’s views.” Green Shores NYC Steering Committee member Clare Doyle said, “It was good to see that a high proportion of respondents placed water issues near the top of their list of concerns, since that validated Green Shores NYC’s mission.” The community’s response legitimized the coalition’s focus on the waterfront and interest in opening up access points to the East River from the parks. Moving forward, Green Shores NYC will use the vision plan that came out of the Waterfront Celebration to advocate and raise money for the community’s desired park improvements.

TAKE BACK YOUR PARK DAY On June 14, the United Neighbors to Revitalize Allen and Pike (UNRAP) Coalition held a visioning event called Take Back Your Park Day to engage community members in a capital project at the Allen and Pike Street Malls, a median park on the Lower East Side. Take Back Your Park

Day focused on gathering ideas about physical improvements scheduled for the malls to ensure that the new mall design reflects local residents’ needs. UNRAP worked closely with the NYC Department of Parks & Recreation to plan the event, both to learn what was feasible and to ensure that the agency was prepared to help realize the community’s vision. According to UNRAP member Anne Frederick, this collaboration “opened up lines of communication and allowed us to get on the same page with Parks about how community needs and aspirations can align with budgetary and other restrictions.” UNRAP Chair Roberto Ragone observed that “there was good teamwork between UNRAP and Parks.”

Anne also remarked that the community visioning on Take Back Your Park Day “gave the coalition a real, tangible future vision to rally around and helped us articulate the role of UNRAP once the malls reopen. We will continue to engage the community to constantly refresh the malls in a way that resonates with community needs.”

PAST AND FUTURE Though both visioning events used a variety of tools, including surveys, interactive games, mapping exercises, walking tours, and arts and crafts, to help community members envision the future of the parks, not all visioning activities are future-oriented. Both Green Shores NYC and UNRAP collaborated with the Oral History Project of the Parks Library to record stories from park users. Ilana Teitel, a Green Shores NYC Steering Committee member, says that sharing “favorite memories got people very excited about the parks and made them more aware of being stakeholders in the visioning process. The stories give you a sense of people’s emotional connections to the parks.” Recording these stories will help the groups ensure that the beloved qualities of the parks are preserved even as the parks grow and change.

At Astoria/LIC waterfront parks and the Allen and Pike Street Malls, community visioning helped park users and neighbors reflect on their parks’ past and imagine their future.

CityParks Seniors Fitness Program

City Parks Foundation welcomes all New Yorkers aged 60 and over to participate in CityParks Seniors Fitness Program. Even in moderate amounts exercise can help us feel better, maintain or lose weight, reduce the risk of heart disease and diabetes, and minimize the symptoms of arthritis. No matter how old we are, our bodies always benefit from physical activity.

For more information about our free Seniors Fitness programs please call (718) 760-6999. All equipment and instruction is provided free of charge.

Our Fall 2008 season of the Seniors Fitness Program will begin on September 22, and will offer free tennis lessons, yoga instruction, and fitness walking in these nine parks across the city:

Queens:

Astoria Park, Roy Wilkins Park, Flushing Meadows-Corona Park

Bronx:

Van Cortlandt Park, Pelham Bay Park

Manhattan:

Inwood Hill Park

Brooklyn:

Marine Park, John J. Carty Park

Staten Island:

Greenbelt Park

Dear Mary,

My group is considering putting on a community visioning forum in our park. Can you explain what this might look like and give examples of different visioning activities?



Although there is not one recipe for how to produce a community visioning forum, it usually features participatory activities that allow park users to express their hopes for the future of their neighborhood park.

Essential components of visioning activities are: they are *participatory* and they are *fun*. It is important that visioning activities are appropriate and relevant to the community where they are being conducted. When an activity resonates with the participants, it will inspire the most enthusiastic participation and yield the most responses. Depending on your audience, it may also be worthwhile to think about how activities can be made accessible to children and non-English speakers.

Possible visioning activities are almost limitless. Activities may ask about the past, present, and future of a park. Here are a few examples of visioning activities used at the Waterfront Celebration in Rainey Park and Take Back Your Park Day at Allen and Pike Street Malls:

- * **PARKS STORIES:** Participants shared their favorite stories about the parks by writing them on a map of the area.
- * **TOURING THE PARKS:** Participants marked aerial photographs of a park with heart stickers indicating their favorite parts of the park and with different colored stickers representing where they want it to be cleaner, safer, and greener.
- * **WISH LANTERNS:** Participants made paper lanterns on which they wrote their wishes for the future of the park.
- * **PARK MODELS:** Participants used art supplies to create models of design ideas for a planned park renovation.



Lantern making at Take Back Your Park Day at Allen and Pike Street Malls.

Freshkills Park

Ever wonder what the view is like atop a 150 foot capped garbage mound? Find out at Freshkills Park, the former landfill on Staten Island. One of the most ambitious public works projects in the world, it combines state-of-the-art ecological restoration techniques with extraordinary settings for recreation, public art, and facilities for sports and programs, all on approximately 2,200 acres of new parkland.

Free public tours led by Urban Park Rangers run until the middle of November. To register, please visit www.nycgovparks.org/sub_your_park/fresh_kills_park/html/pick_date.php

If your organization would like a presentation about the Freshkills Park project, please contact Carrie Grassi at (212) 788-9419. If you would like to be notified about project updates and information, sign up for email updates at www.nycgovparks.org/email_forms/freshkills/mail_form.html

“Take Care of Highbridge” Fair

Saturday, September 20th, 10am–5pm
Highbridge Park, Bronx at W. 170th St. and University Ave.

Come join a cultural celebration of the Highbridge communities at the 4th annual “Take Care of Highbridge” street fair. Music, performances, arts & crafts, and information from health service providers. Hosted by Samaritan Village. For more information, visit www.samaritanvillage.org.

How to reach us

www.partnershipsforparks.org

www.nyc.gov/parks

www.CityParksFoundation.org

To contact Partnerships for Parks or for information on volunteering in parks, call (212) 360-1357 or call the City's non-emergency hotline, 311.

PARTNERSHIPS for PARKS



City of New York
Parks & Recreation

CityParks
Foundation

PARTNERSHIPS FOR PARKS helps New Yorkers work together to make neighborhood parks thrive. We strengthen our diverse, growing network of dedicated park volunteers and groups by creating opportunities for them to celebrate their parks and accomplishments, access resources, become more effective leaders in their communities, and work with government to affect decisions about their parks.

Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor
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LEAFLET

THE NEWSLETTER OF *Partnerships for Parks*, A JOINT PROGRAM OF CITY PARKS FOUNDATION AND THE NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS & RECREATION

fall2008

Partnerships for Parks presents



IT'S MY PARK! DAY on Saturday, October 25, 2008

Join thousands of New Yorkers to care for and celebrate New York City parks on It's My Park! Day. On Saturday, October 25, come outside to enjoy free events, or to get involved in painting, clean up, and planting projects. Each Fall, over 150 It's My Park! Day projects and events are organized by local community groups, with fun, free activities provided by the Department of Parks & Recreation and City Parks Foundation.

For more information, or to learn how your group can organize or join an It's My Park! Day project, please visit www.PartnershipsForParks.org.

Return service requested.
Attention: For address corrections call (212) 360-1357

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