

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

1. DON'T DO IT ALONE

Involve as many people in your group as possible in order to...

- ✓ **Prevent Burnout:** The old saying holds true; many hands make light work.
- ✓ **Achieve Critical Mass:** If you're taking back your park from negative elements, you have to change its "feel." You can do that by bringing a lot of people into the park.
- ✓ **Have Political Clout:** The more people you have, the more attention you'll get from everyone—other groups in the neighborhood, government agencies, and elected officials.

2. DO SOMETHING DO-ABLE

Your long term goal may be to completely renovate your park or hire a full-time maintenance worker, but you should begin with more manageable projects. Small projects let you acquire the things you need to complete large projects, including:

- ✓ **Skills.** No one knows innately how to write a press release, or run a meeting, or lobby a City Councilmember. As with most skills, practice makes perfect. Use small projects to learn and you'll be a master by the time you tackle the big ones.
- ✓ **Relationships.** Every time you plan and run a small event, you make new connections and strengthen old ones. For instance, if you get to know your City Councilmember and his or her staff by hosting small clean-ups and fairs, they're more likely to be there for you when you tackle the big stuff. Remember, it takes years to build a network.
- ✓ **Members.** Every event you host, every meeting you hold, is a chance to recruit new members. If you keep active, your group will grow over the years. New core group members will allow you to do more effective organizing, and new general members will give you more people power. It's easier to accomplish the big things if you officially speak for a large number of people.
- ✓ **Legitimacy.** When you ask somebody for something big, they shouldn't have to ask "Who are you?" They should know. You've got it made if they already know you as "the group that's done a great job cleaning up the park and hosting the annual Halloween party." Also, in order to get a large grant from a foundation you must have a successful track record of smaller things.

3. DO IT AND DO IT AND DO IT

The biggest mistake groups make is organizing one big event and then waiting until next year to do it again. Regular projects will...

- ✓ **Add Up:** Your park won't be changed by a single project; it only changes when people see things happening over and over again.
- ✓ **Prove that You Mean Business:** Consistent action shows people that you're not going away.