

SMALL ACTIONS THAT MAKE A BIG IMPACT

Negative users move into parks that nobody else cares about. Therefore, the most important thing you can do is send a message that you do care. Small actions can turn your park into a place that is no longer inviting to negative elements.

1. CLEAN UP

- ✓ Though Parks workers should and will clean your park regularly, they can't be there all the time—Parks staff hours are usually Monday–Friday, 7am to 3pm, with a greatly-reduced staff on duty during summer weekends and evenings. Any help you can give can make a tremendous difference.
- ✓ Broken glass, litter, weeds—all these things are signs that your park has been abandoned. Make it clear to everybody that the community has come back to the park by cleaning it up.

2. PAINT OVER GRAFFITI

- ✓ The best way to discourage graffiti artists is by removing graffiti as fast as it goes up.
- ✓ The Parks Department has a zero-tolerance policy for graffiti: it must be cleaned off or painted over within 24 hours. Whenever you see graffiti, report it to **311** or contact your Supervisor or Manager.
- ✓ Your group can also apply to the **Mayor's Anti-Graffiti Task Force** for painting supplies to use to cover up graffiti you see on weekends or evenings. Call **311** for more information.

3. ADDRESS VANDALIZED EQUIPMENT

- ✓ Just like litter and graffiti, broken equipment sends a negative message about your park.
- ✓ If you know who the vandals are and when they normally act, report all the information to your local police precinct.
- ✓ Talk to your Supervisor and Manager to get vandalized equipment repaired,.
- ✓ Note that if swings in your park have been vandalized by pit bulls, it's more effective to address the pit bull problem before spending resources to repair the swings.

4. INCREASE LIGHTING

- ✓ Your park will feel safer after dark and be less inviting to negative users if it is well lit. Lights are installed and maintained by the Department of Transportation (DOT), with the support and interaction of Parks.
- ✓ If you have lights that aren't working, report the problem, the light number (found on the pole), and the length of time the light has been out to your borough's office of operations. You can get this number by calling **311**, the City's information line.
- ✓ If you would like more lighting in your park, discuss it with your Park Supervisor and Manager and your Outreach Coordinator, and send a written request to your Borough Commissioner.

5. REMOVE UNDERGROWTH

- ✓ Crimes, especially drinking, drug dealing, and prostitution, most often happen out of public view, sometimes under cover of overgrown plants.
- ✓ If the undergrowth in your park is out of control, ask your park's Supervisor to remove it.
- ✓ Partnerships staff can also help organize a large-scale cleanup to remove persistent undergrowth; your group can then help maintain the cleared area.

6. POST PARK RULES

- ✓ If the rules of the park are clearly marked, most people will follow them. It's a lot easier to ask someone to stop doing something if you can point to an official sign that prohibits their action.
- ✓ Discuss the quality-of-life issues of greatest concern with your Manager (dogs off-leash, barbecuing, littering, etc.) to identify the most appropriate signage.
- ✓ If you are concerned by threatening individuals in the playground, you can have a sign posted that prohibits any adult from being in the playground area unless accompanied by a child under 12.

7. TELL PEOPLE WHOM TO CALL ABOUT A PROBLEM

- ✓ Create a leaflet listing the action numbers that people should call when they notice a problem: your precinct's community affairs office, Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP) office, the precinct community council, park supervisor, city council member and other elected officials.
- ✓ Distribute the leaflet far and wide. One group created a civilian observation patrol and gave leaflets to everyone their patrol met in the park—over 1,000 in total.