

# NPS Partnership Guide to City Government

*Get to know your local city and county elected officials.* They were elected by the public and know all the key players and potential partners for the NPS in the community. Meet to find the shared goals and policies that strategically align the park unit and local jurisdiction.

*To find your personal elected officials and the ones closest to the park, enter your zip code [here](#)*

**National Parks as Economic Drivers for Local Communities:** Don't forget to bring your park's [visitor spending data](#) that the NPS produces every year. Every elected official is looking for ways to improve the economy, and NPS has the data.

**Mayor/City Council Members and County Supervisors:** These legislative bodies are responsible for making the laws that help meet the needs of a community.

- **Open Communication-** Every two years new elected officials typically take office and NPS staff should offer to meet and provide basic information on the park units mission statement, staff organization, annual events and the local friends group.
- **Present to City Council/County Supervisor Meetings:** Many City Council/County Board of Supervisor meetings are televised. You may want to request to give a presentation during one of their televised meetings. It's a free opportunity to let the community know what you have to offer.

**Mayor's Councils:** Method of municipal government in which policy-making and administrative powers are organized into a council.

- **Participate to represent the NPS view-** NPS staff should be available and encouraged to participate on Mayor's councils if asked in order to ensure that the park units mission statement and vision is articulated and represented.
- **Learn which councils exist-** Many councils exist that engage target audiences of the NPS and these councils can provide gateways into those communities. For example some cities have councils for Hispanic Americans or for health and well-being.

**Boards/Commissions:** There are usually between 30 and 60 boards, committees and commissions in any city or county, and they are always looking for to appoint members, providing advice, research and residents' perspectives to the mayor and City Council. Often these boards are appointed by the city council person in your district, with additional opportunities for appointment from the Mayor and City Manager.

- **Staff or be a Liaison-** Offer NPS park staff with specific expertise to serve as a board member, commissioner or a liaison to local organizations such as the Design Review Board, Planning Commission, Historic Preservation Commission, Parks and Recreation Commission and others. This also provides an opportunity for NPS staff to gain professional development and training.

**City Manager/County Administrator's Offices:** Cities and counties have many different ways of management, but most often the City Manager/County Administrator works at the direction of the Mayor and Council/County Supervisors. The Manager/Director then directs the City/County Departments and Staff.

**City/County Departments:**

No one City or County is the same. Charters for city and county government are created locally and may have different departments. Departments may include the following:

**Parks and Recreation:** Provides city residents with recreation, education, senior, and conservation activities.

- ***After-school, holiday and summer camp programs-*** Many rec centers offer these programs that Junior Ranger programs can easily fold into. Summer camps often have field trips with provided transportation and serve audiences that typically do not visit units of the NPS
- ***City parks-*** Often located in the Urban Core next to new audiences, these parks make great locations for educational programming such as healthy parks/healthy people, Park Prescription Activities or a bioblitz
- ***Special programming-*** Each city will be different but this category has lots of opportunities for collaboration such as movie nights in parks, holiday events, at-risk teen programming and environmental education.

**Engineering/Public Works/Utilities:** Takes care of city-owned properties and infrastructure through construction, landscape maintenance, signage, transportation and traffic management.

- ***Improving Access to NPS Sites-*** Cities are looking for partners and support in grant applications that could provide improved access via automobile, bicycle and pedestrians to NPS sites and local parks.
- ***Wayfinding Signage-*** Cities often update their wayfinding sign plans and seek partnerships and input on sign designs and locations. NPS assets should be included in signage updates.
- ***Stormwater Management-*** Cities could benefit from NPS involvement in best practices for Stormwater Management and Bioswales Design.

**Public Health:** Tracks human services, public assistance programs, and public health programs including mental health and wellness. This could be a City or County department's jurisdiction.

- ***Health Programming and Statistics-*** This office is the go to for health statistics for city residents, contacts in the health industry, and the potential for collaboration on Healthy Parks Healthy People programming.

**Public Safety:** Includes the Sheriff's Office, Police, Fire and Rescue, Neighborhood Safety (AKA Peacekeepers), Neighborhood Watch and the Medical Examiner's Office who all work together to keep the city safe.

- ***Sheriff's Office-*** Officers can often be hired to provide a presence at events for minimal cost to add capacity if needed. This office often handles road closures that might be necessary for large events.

- **Fire and Rescue-** This group is great to engage in event programming since kids love firetrucks.
- **Police, Neighborhood Safety (AKA Peacekeepers), Neighborhood Watch-** This group is aware of issues related to park safety and could benefit from hearing from NPS staff. Many cities participate in National Night Out and NPS presence as a community partner and improve community relations.

**Human Services:** Provides assistance with substance abuse, mental health, housing, youth and family services, outreach and community services.

- **Park Unit-** A park unit adjacent or embedded in a city could provide a location for wellness, physical activity and mindfulness for individuals involved in human services.

**Public Affairs:** Oversees communication efforts by creating procedures and utilizing platforms that increase public awareness and understanding.

- **Social Media Efforts-** This office often handles social media accounts for the Mayor and sometimes for the whole city government. They add capacity, have lots of contacts and can help promote events to residents.
- **Mayoral Initiatives-** The PAO office knows where the Mayor is at all times and is heavily involved in the administration's initiatives that are often a priority and worth tapping into!
- **Publications-** Calendars, pamphlets, catalogs and many other material is often produced by this G. A good relationship could lead to collaboration and inclusion in these materials.

**Grants (not every City/County has this department)-** Duties include administrative work in researching, identifying, developing and responding to public and private grant opportunities based on the cities, counties or park units needs.

- **Funding Collaborations-** City/County governments can apply for funding that the federal government cannot (and vice-versa) and some cities and counties have staff dedicated to doing it. Seek out eligible funding opportunities and work with staff whose job it is to identify and acquire it. In addition, grantors may look favorably on applications that include partnerships with the NPS.

**Airport Director:** Oversees operations of a City/County airport

- **Airport Exhibits-** Airports are a gateway to a city and many parks were successful at getting exhibits in their local airports during the NPS Centennial. This is a great way to get exposure to a lot of people!

**Planning:** Manages existing and future development within the City/County, through the following issues: zoning, currency, land use, mobility, transportation, and inspections.

- **General Plan/Comprehensive Plan Involvement-** Park units have an opportunity to embed their goals and policies into local jurisdictions' long range planning documents that have to be approved by voters every 10 years. Scan this document before meeting with your elected officials so you know where the park and community have shared values. Find the goals and policies that strategically align the park unit and local jurisdiction.

- **Local Project Involvement-** Projects proposed near a park unit should be reviewed and commented on by local and/or regional NPS staff to ensure consistency with the park units current operations and long range planning goals. Make sure your elected officials and relevant departments know who on your staff should be notified.
- **Environmental Review Involvement-** NPS staff with expertise in specific environmental fields could add value for a local jurisdiction by objectively peer reviewing environmental documents and sharing best practices.

**Public Library:** A system that works to serve the needs of the community with education programs, youth and adult programs, and literacy programs.

- **Public Programming-** Libraries regularly provide free public programming that is conducive to partnering on.
- **Urban Camping-** If large enough, a public library is a great place to host an indoor camping opportunity in the middle of a city...especially during the winter!
- **NPS Planning Documents-** NPS park units should ensure that hard copies of their enabling legislation, foundation documents and other related materials are on file at the Public Library for public access and review.

**Neighborhood Councils:** Monitors neighborhoods and takes responsibility for improvement and receiving feedback from the communities.

- **Community Partner-** NPS staff should regularly participate in neighborhood council meetings that are adjacent to the park unit as a good community partner and to create NPS visibility and accessibility. NPS staff should present and seek feedback from neighborhood councils when special events that could affect nearby residents are proposed such as festivals, bioblitz and earth day.
- CPACs

**Military and Veterans Affairs:** Advocate for the expansion of military jobs within a City. Assists Veterans and families with health care, pensions, and other earned benefits.

**Sports and Entertainment:** Host events that attract and create opportunity for business and raises the level of engagement for residents and visitors.

- **Connect with Community Relations-** Most professional and college sports programs have a community service department that coordinate community events and fundraisers with athletes. Seek partnerships to provide opportunities for collaboration especially with high profile athletes for youth focused events like Every Kid in a Park.

**Workforce Employment Training:** Helps provide and train for jobs through job analysis and assessment tools, training, education, and job fairs.

### **Independent Authorities and Agencies**

**Public School Systems:** Schools that are maintained at public expense for the education of the children of a community or district.

- **Parks as Classrooms-** Create partnerships with school districts to encourage the local park unit to serve as an extended classroom with park rangers as additional education staff and resources for the school district.
- **Transportation:** After meeting with your elected officials, you might want to ask them about improving Bus service, community shuttles for a neighborhood ride, downtown transportation, and transportation for the disabled and elderly to the park. Recognizing that resources are limited, look for ways to partner on grants that may be happening.

**City/County Clerks:** Looking for legislation that passed during one of the city/county meetings? This is the office to call to get more information.

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## Resources

### **Federal-Local Partnerships Playbook**

<https://playbook.21cc.jhu.edu/>

### **City Parks Alliance**

<http://www.cityparksalliance.org/>

### **National Recreation and Park Association**

<http://www.nrpa.org/>

### **US Conference of Mayors**

<http://usmayors.org/>

### **National Parks Conservation Association**

[Leveraging National Park Partnerships in Urban Areas](#)

### **Local Government Commission**

<https://www.lgc.org/>

LGC supports local policymakers through nationally recognized events, low cost technical assistance and policy guidance on climate change, energy, water and community design.