



Urban Agenda Report
Washington DC
May 2015 – January 2017

PROJECTS

Shepherd Parkway Project 2015 - 2017

The Urban Fellow Program centered on working to transform a small park in the Congress Heights neighborhood for the bulk of the two year fellowship. The physical proximity of this park within the neighborhood offers an opportunity to expand on existing community collaboration among the National Park Service, the District park system and other District initiatives, and community partner organizations. With the vision and momentum offered by the NPS Urban Agenda, as well as targeted planning and funding support for the neighborhood by several District agencies, the NPS developed a collaborative framework to focus on building and strengthening alliances in the community. As part of the approach, NPS proposed a Rapid Ethnographic Assessment Project (REAP), physical improvements to the park and new programming. Greater insight into the community perspective will be discovered through partnerships using a multi-disciplinary approach to public inquiry. To date, the NPS has partnered with Howard University to undertake the REAP and community engagement activities toward assisting the NPS with future planning and management of the park, and some tactical improvements proposed are underway including, wayfinding and interpretive sign development and installation. The NPS will utilize results from the REAP to continue community engagement activities, determine additional park enhancements and to develop new programming.



[Project Brief \(2017\)](#)



Collaboration Clinics

Collaboration Clinics bring together NPS staff, stakeholders and partners to enhance specialized skills needed to work collaboratively and develop common goals for more effective planning, decision-making, and resource management. While many aspects of existing NPS policy and guidance speak to the value of developing integrated, collaborative approaches to accomplishing our mission, Collaboration Clinics provide planners, superintendents, park staff, and other decision-makers practice, practical training, and coaching in using those collaborative approaches and processes. As a team building exercise, the Collaboration Clinic can be a vehicle for developing common goals among NPS staff and partner groups while strengthening



collaborative skills, learning new techniques and testing new approaches to collaborative management. The NPS George Washington Memorial Parkway (GWMP), in collaboration with NPS Rivers Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA), the Office of Collaborative Action and Dispute Resolution (CADR) and the Urban Fellow Program in the National Capital Region (NCR) developed three clinics which are taking place this year in the NCR. One of the clinics will bring together park staff and park partners and the other two will work with park staff as a first step in building and enhancing park/partner collaboration capacity and expertise. Two clinics have taken place in May and July, 2017 and one other clinic is planned for September of 2017.



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Teaching with Historic Places Urban Youth Summit DC Pilot 2016

The NPS Urban Agenda and NPS Cultural Resources, Interpretation and Education programs, in partnership with preservation professionals and DC Public Schools, hosted the first local, Urban centered youth summit October 7-10, 2016. [Teaching with Historic Places](#) is a program of the Cultural Resources Partnerships and Science Directorate, Interpretation and Education division. This summit presented high school students with three and a half days of touring the city, discussions and presentations by local experts and NPS staff on the history, legacy, and preservation of key figures who lived in the city utilizing NPS National Historic assets as a backdrop for these discussions. A unique feature of this youth summit was its focus on *listening* to participants. Students provided instruction to teachers and NPS staff on how to enhance these lessons and increase the relevance of these valuable lessons toward engaging more young city residents. Their innovative solutions will bring much-needed change to the public interpretation at NPS historic properties.



[2016 Youth Summit Website](#)

[2016 Youth Summit Video](#)

Partners: District Historic Preservation Office, Humanities Council, DC, District of Columbia Office of Planning, District Preservation League, DC Public Schools, Anacostia Community Museum Smithsonian Institution, NPS WASO Cultural Resources Interpretation and Education Program, NPS Region Cultural Resources Program, National Capital Parks -East, Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument.



INFORMAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH



PARK(ing) Day: September 16, 2016

Park(ing) Day is an annual open-source global event where citizens, artists and activists collaborate to temporarily transform metered parking spaces into “PARK(ing)” spaces: temporary public places. The NPS participated in multiple cities across the country, including Washington DC. The NPS parklet highlighted recreation opportunities in local DC parks, especially riverfront parks and activities, and gave the NPS a chance to talk with the public about the plethora of NPS and partner programs that benefit cities. As part of the NPS Urban Agenda, staff from multiple parks and programs

with help from park partners participated in engaging pedestrians along busy F Street, NW throughout the day. [Event Flyer](#);
[Inside NPS Article](#)

Partners and Sponsors: DDOT, Safeway SW DC, REI, Urban Waters Federal Partnership Ambassador, Krysta Schlyer, Downtown DC BID, National Mall and Memorial Parks, Rock Creek Park, Potomac Heritage Trail, NPS Rives Trails Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA).

Fiesta DC 2016

Fiesta DC Latino Festival has been held each year in Washington DC for forty-three years. It is an annual celebration of Latino culture that features a Parade of Nations that displays and preserves the Native Latino cultural dance troupes as well as contemporary local groups from civic organizations, schools, and performers. The event sponsors, host a variety of entities that will provide educational and community information to the event attendees. The National park Service participated by staffing a multi-lingual National Park Service booth highlighting the NPS ParkRx Program, Urban Agenda initiative and several District Park Units to engage the Latino Community in #FindYourPark, ParkRx, District National Park units and other centennial events. NPS reached thousands of festival participants.





[Inside NPS Article](#)

HIGHLIGHTING THE WORK ALREADY TAKING PLACE IN THE MODEL CITY

The National Park Units in the Washington D.C have implemented multiple projects that exemplify the urban agenda principles. The Urban Fellow Program conducted interviews with NPS practitioners in an effort to gather information about these projects that could be shared broadly throughout the service. Inside NPS articles were written from, and other stories were shared with the National Urban Lights initiative being developed through RTCA Washington Office. Some examples are:

S.O.L.V.E. Partnership, Rock Creek Park

One of the problems that parks have is engaging its neighbors and increasing involvement. Despite being a frequently visited park, Rock Creek Park is no different. So, staff established a park-wide stewardship program:

The SOLVE (or Sustaining Our Lands with Volunteer Energy) program partners with community organizations and individuals to identify issues and work collaboratively to address the needs of Rock Creek Park.

Potomac Heritage Trail Partnership with Washington Parks and People

NPS and Washington Parks and People staff, with extensive experience connecting people and places, are working toward a partnership to explore the relevance of neighborhoods to trails and parks through a series of hikes and related events in the District along the Potomac Heritage Trail.

[Inside NPS Article](#)

Franklin Park, National Mall and Memorial Parks

An innovative partnership will allow for the rehabilitation and programming in a deteriorated NPS urban park.

[Project Brief](#)

DC Circulator National Mall Route, National Mall and Memorial Parks

A partnership with the City's Department of Transportation and NPS creates enhanced and affordable alternative transportation options for visitors and residents alike, connecting park resources to the city's fabric.

[Project Brief](#)

Multi-Modal Transportation Efforts on the National Mall The National Mall and Memorial Parks

A complex set of transportation improvements and enhancements encourage visitors to come to and move around the park without their car.

[Project Brief](#)

[Programmatic Support for the Urban Agenda](#)

NCR One NPS Workshop: NER One NPS Workshop: November 17, 2015.

Discussion of NPS programs, assets and collaborative opportunities to support the Urban Agenda. Share work and ideas. 30 NPS staff including Superintendents and program leads participated. DC, NYC, Richmond, VA., and Boston Urban Fellows.



Urban Agenda Model City Host Meeting: February 22-23, 2016 in Atlanta, GA
In attendance from Richmond: David Ruth (host)

National Community Assistance Training Conference: May 8-13, 2016 in Jacksonville, FL
Urban Fellow participation

Urban Agenda Presentation, Urban Symposium, National Park Service, University of Pennsylvania, September 2015, Urban Fellow presentation.

[Participation in the Urban Fellows Cohort](#)

Participate in monthly Urban Fellows conference calls, monthly NER Fellow conference calls, webinars, conventions, meetings, etc.

Urban Agenda Urban Fellows Conference: November 9-13, 2015 in New Orleans, LA

Urban Agenda Urban Fellows Conference: June 13-17, 2016 in Washington, DC

Urban Agenda Urban Fellows Conference: February 2-10, 2017 in San Antonio, TX
[What We Have Learned in Washington D.C.](#)

BRIGHT SPOTS

- Fostered greater collaboration with new and existing community partners.
- Hired Conservation Legacy Fellows from D.C. Community and region communities. These diverse candidates who participated in centennial and urban agenda project development and tasks have all been hired into local partner organizations as permanent staff.
- Confirmed, through our participation in local initiatives, that the National Park Service is viewed as a valuable partner, and the community is eager to work with us.
- Saw increased attention and positive reinforcement from the community and the media in the Centennial year.
- Highlighted great work happening in urban parks and regional programs that engage and connect urban communities to NPS parks.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Approaching the Urban Agenda as not just about new projects and implementing the three principles through large-scale, one-time activities, and attempting to embed the three principles into the National Park Service's standards and behaviors moving forward. Urban Agenda is a way of doing business, not just a project or a program.
- NPS staff believe they have very little capacity to effectively collaborate, communicate and facilitate new partnerships and community outreach.
- Staff turnover hurts communities by weakening NPS/Community relationships.



- Underrepresented urban communities need advocates within NPS to ensure our investment of time and resources remains equitable across the entire urban landscape.
- NPS lands are divided among multiple NPS operational boundaries within the District. This impedes collaboration and the spread and implementation of innovative best practices.
- NPS staff need capacity and appropriate “top cover” to test new ways to build meaningful relationships with communities and partners - leadership matters.
- NPS Programs can use the momentum of initiatives like the Urban Agenda to build capacity, highlight and demonstrate valuable NPS resources available to communities and parks; and with greater capacity, this leverage opened up an opportunity to strengthen relationships and connections between NPS programs, parks and communities in the NCR.
- Collaboration = Capacity!
- Listening without an agenda - attending local community meetings, participating in local initiatives as volunteers, setting up listening sessions apart from a NPS project or plan - are valuable components of building stronger relationships with communities.