



# Strengthening Community Power through the parks process

10-Minute Walk Community of Practice

June 8, 2023

- Donna Kirkland – Trust for Public Land, New Jersey
- Carla Robinson – United Parks as One
- Richard Young – CivicLex
- Megan Gulla – CivicLex

**1) What does community power mean to you?**

**2) What measures can we use to demonstrate community power and impact?**

<https://pollev.com/christinajan159>



# Agenda

*What is community power? Why is it important to park professionals?*

## Plenary:

### **CivicLex**

- *Richard Young*
- *Megan Gulla*

### **United Parks as One**

- *Donna Kirkland*
- *Carla Robinson*

### **Q&A with panelists**

## Breakout groups

Close session from breakouts





## Community power is...

a community's ability to use democratic processes to develop, sustain, and perpetuate an organized base to achieve their self-determined vision, regardless of identity or status.



The story of

# Methow Park

Year  
2021

Location  
Wenatchee,  
Washington

Population  
30,000

Project Type  
Neighborhood park



# A model for social change in our parks

Community **relationships** facilitate the development of community **identity**, which is a foundation for building community **power**.

Community  
Power

Community  
Identity

Community  
Relationships







Introducing:

**Richard Young &  
Megan Gulla**





# CivicLex





# What is CivicLex?

**We're a nonprofit working to improve the civic health of Lexington-Fayette County, Kentucky.**

**We help residents understand local government, help local government connect with residents, and are building a community in which everyone can meaningfully participate in the decisions that shape where they live.**

# History of CivicLex

- **Started in 2017 with a focus on civic education.**
- **Information alone was not leading to positive outcomes.**
- **Incorporated civic transformation projects starting in 2019**





# We're a little bit of each...

- Relationship Building / Bridging
- Civic Media & Journalism
- Community Events & Civic Learning
- K-12 Education
- Civic Technology, Data Collection, & Design
- Collaborative Governance
- Public Space Activation



# Three Quick Case Studies

1. **On the Table & Lexington's Comprehensive Plan**
2. **Imagine New Circle Road**
3. **Park Equity Accelerator**



# On the Table

- **Citywide community engagement into Comp Plan**
- **Process was designed over a year by 34-person team inclusive of city employees, residents, & community orgs**
- **Key strategies:**
  - **Inclusive resident/government process design**
  - **Meeting people where they are**
  - **Data collection paired with community building**
- **Outcomes:**
  - **Major policy change**
  - **New community projects**





# Imagine New Circle Road

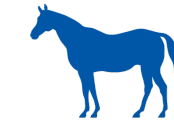
- Long-range plan for major highway redevelopment
- Highly bound by state & federal regs with specific geography, timeline, and scope, so the project had a small design team.
- Key strategies:
  - Canvassing & community events
  - Multiple rounds of increasingly specific surveys
  - Balancing language expertise & simplification
- Outcomes:
  - Going before planning commission today 🙌







## Lexington Park Equity Accelerator



LEXINGTON



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- Lexington signed on to be a TPL 10-minute walk city
- Built using the recommendations from On the Table, Mayor's Commission on Racial Justice & Equality, Parks Master Plan Update
- Partnership between CivicLex, LFUCG Parks, Planning, & Seedleaf to include more residents — especially from historically marginalized communities — in decision-making and policy related to greenspace, park development, public land-use planning

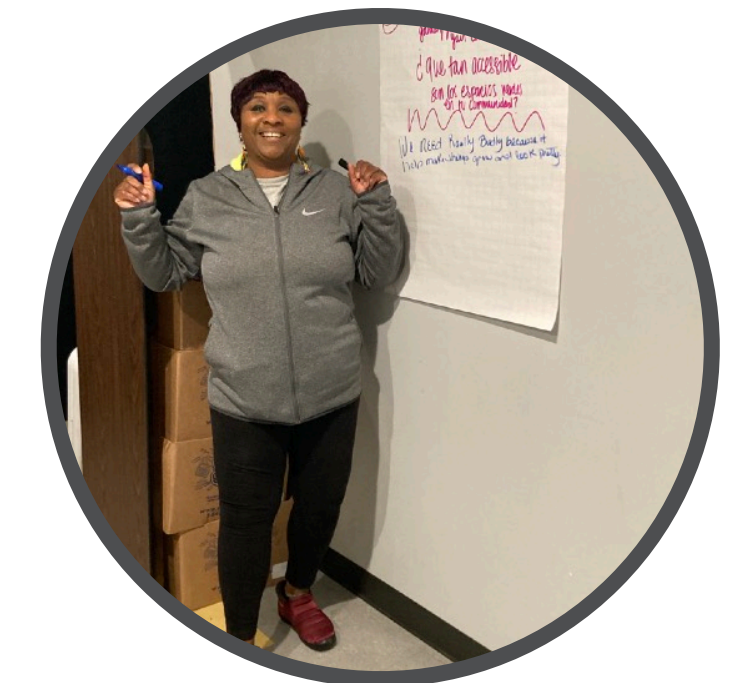


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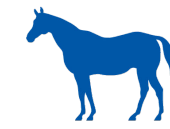


# LPEA Overview

- Host listening sessions with historically underrepresented community orgs
- Provide educational resources on past, present, and future of public policy
- Support and attend community events
- Invest in historically underrepresented organizations through general support, mini-grants, and an accessible toolkit and ongoing opportunities that encourage continued resident engagement in public policy







LEXINGTON



CivicLex



# LPEA lessons so far

- Approach engagement sessions with patience. There will be anger from past decisions and harm.
- Always front load more time for relationship building and scope setting with partners.
- Be transparent, and repeat/emphasize expectations & commitments throughout the program.
- Hosting community-focused meetings with city employees present is extremely helpful.
- If people engage in a negative way, keep showing up.



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# Some of our strategies

- **Inclusive survey design**
- **Meeting people where they are**
- **Collaborative governance**
- **Simplifying language & translation**
- **Accessible design**
- **Multi-modal communication**
- **Creative data collection**
- **Building relationships**

# A couple notes

- Building relationships is the core.
- We sometimes don't know what strategies will work until we're in a project. We have to be flexible and adapt.
- Community feedback comes in various forms and emotions. We see ALL of it as containing an element of meaning.
- Collaborative governance is a very long game. It takes many touchpoints over time in different formats, so don't get down about no one showing up for an event.



# We can give you resources on

- Inclusive survey design
- Meeting people where they are
- Collaborative governance
- Simplifying language
- Accessible design
- Multi-modal communication
- Building deep relationships
- Creative data collection



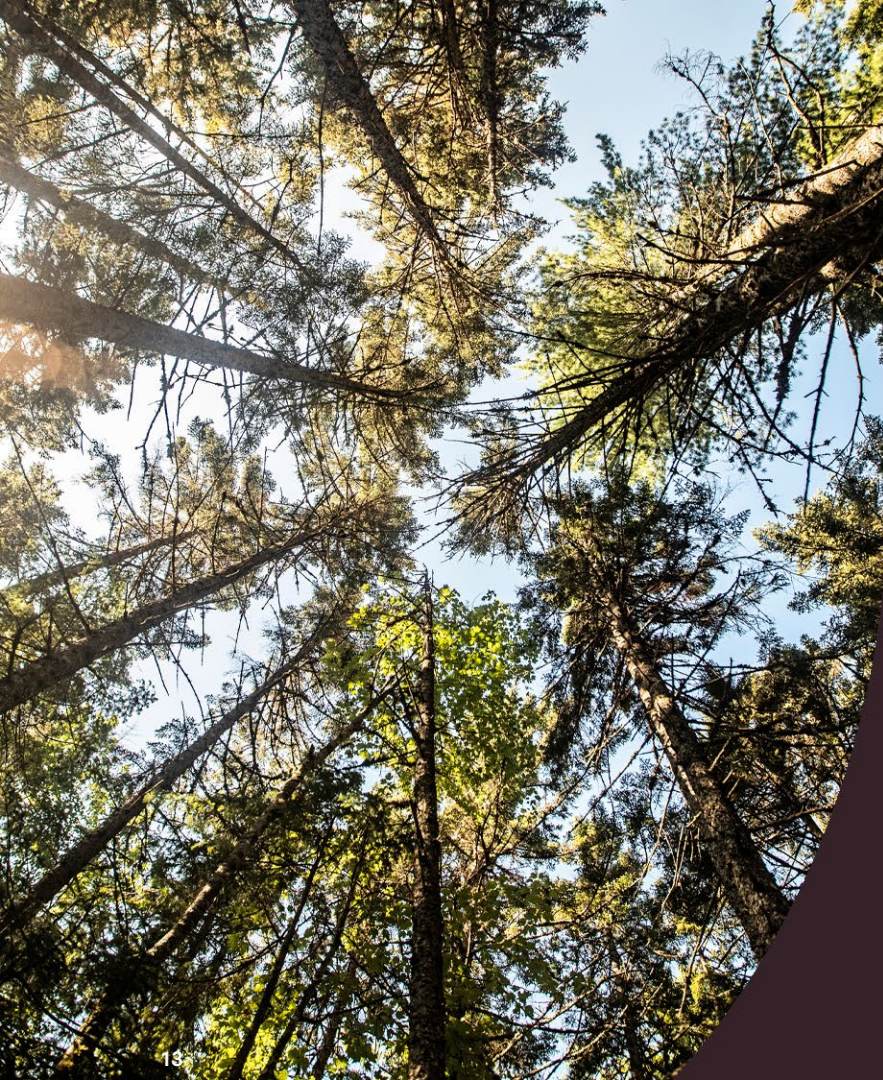
# But it's best to us as a resource!

- Talk to Megan ([megan@CivicLex.org](mailto:megan@CivicLex.org)) about meeting people where they are, building deep relationships, & finding meaning in community feedback.
- Talk to Kit ([kit@CivicLex.org](mailto:kit@CivicLex.org)) about inclusive survey design, multi-modal communication, creative data collection, & adapting strategies.
- Talk to Richard ([richard@CivicLex.org](mailto:richard@CivicLex.org)) about collaborative governance, accessible design, simplifying language, & relationships as a core strategy



**CivicLex**

**For more information, go to [civiclex.org](https://civiclex.org)**



Introducing:

**Donna Kirkland &  
Carla Robinson**

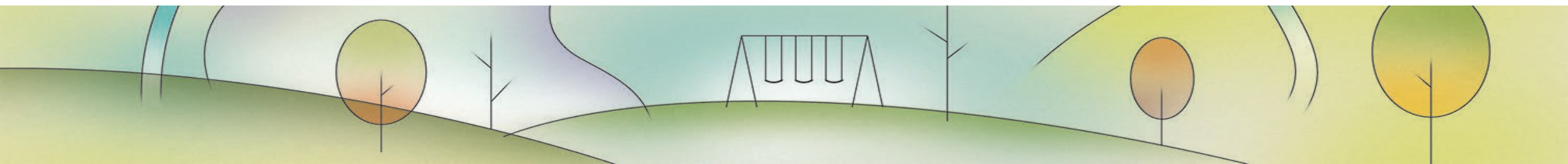






# How Trust for Public Land and United Parks As One Build Community Power

THE  
TRUST  
*for*  
PUBLIC  
LAND



# Formation of Friends Groups



- Participatory design
- Community-led programming and stewardship
- Responding to community interests and needs

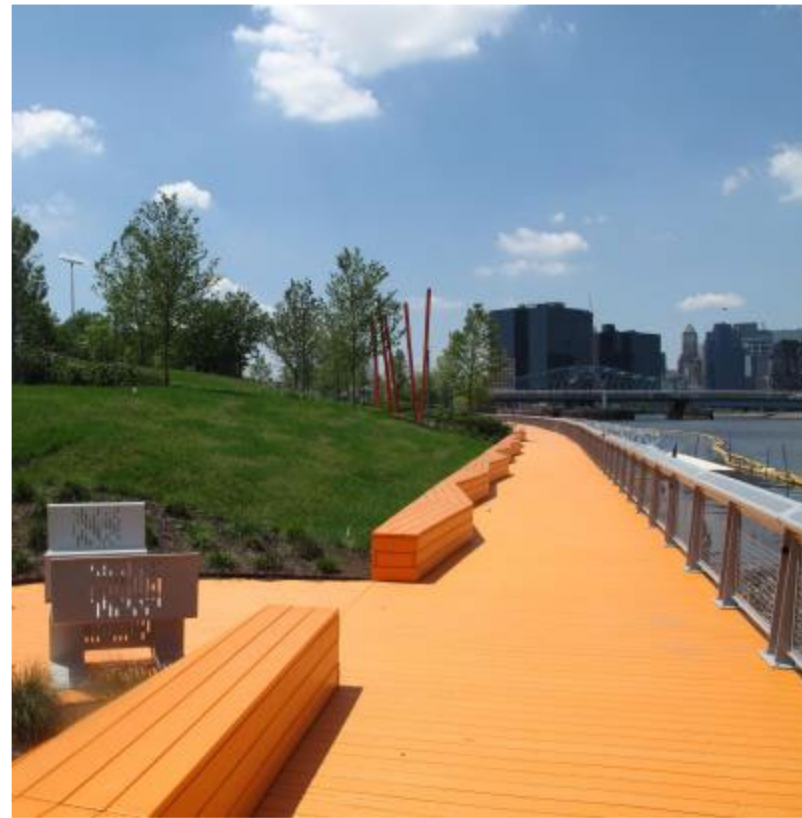
# Support for the Formation of United Parks As One



- Staff support
- Funding
- Connections to partners and resources



# The 2014 Newark Open Space Referendum: Feasibility Research



Newark had the ability to generate substantial revenue at a modest per household cost.

An open space levy of 1-cent per \$100 of assessed value would generate roughly \$1.1 million per year, at a cost of about \$20 a year for the owner of home assessed at \$200,000.

# Public Opinion Research



A June 2013 survey of 400 registered Newark voters found 63% support for establishing a Newark Municipal Open Space Trust Fund at 1-cent per \$100 of assessed value.

Support increased to 76% when voters receive additional information.



## Ballot Language

Shall the City of Newark establish an Open Space Trust Fund to be funded through an annual levy of one cent per \$100 of assessed valuation of real property for the purposes of **acquiring, developing and maintaining** lands for recreation and conservation, including **providing safe, clean and accessible parks, neighborhood playgrounds and playfields for youth sports**; and the payment of debt service incurred by the City for these purposes, with full public disclosure and review of all expenditures?



# Campaign



- Measure referred unanimously by City Council in early August
- Campaign kick-off meeting with local partners in Sept.
- The Conservation Campaign committee registered, with Donna Kirkland as Treasurer and Joana Clark as Deputy Treasurer

# Campaign

**Municipal Question No. 1**  
**Mi Familia apoya  
parques limpios y  
seguro!**

**VOTAR  SÍ**

**El Martes, día 5 de Noviembre**  
**Ciudad de Newark Open Space and Recreation Trust Fund**

Para más información:  
Visite: [newarkopenspace.weebly.com](http://newarkopenspace.weebly.com)  
o email a [newark4openspace@gmail.com](mailto:newark4openspace@gmail.com)

Paid for by Newark Citizens for Open Space, a project of The Conservation Campaign, 1 Washington Street, Suite 1401H, Newark, New Jersey 07102

- Collaborative fundraising with NJFO: Philanthropy raised \$36,000 and TPL provided \$10,000
- 3 educational mailers to 20,000 households, 2 recorded calls in English and Spanish
- Educational forum
- Volunteer canvassing in each of the 5 wards

## Results & Lessons



- Measure approved with 84% support!
- Important to engage partners early in order to avoid TPL being at the center of the effort
- Must continue work to ensure effective implementation



# The United Parks As One Mission



United Parks As One is a citywide alliance of neighborhood-based park, playground, and garden advocates dedicated to the creation, stewardship, and activation of open spaces for the benefit of Newark residents and communities.

# The United Parks As One Vision



The vision of United Parks As One is empowered and sustainable park, playground, and garden communities that offer safe spaces for artistic expression, economic advancement, educational programs, environmental appreciation and stewardship, healthy living, and spiritual renewal for all age groups.

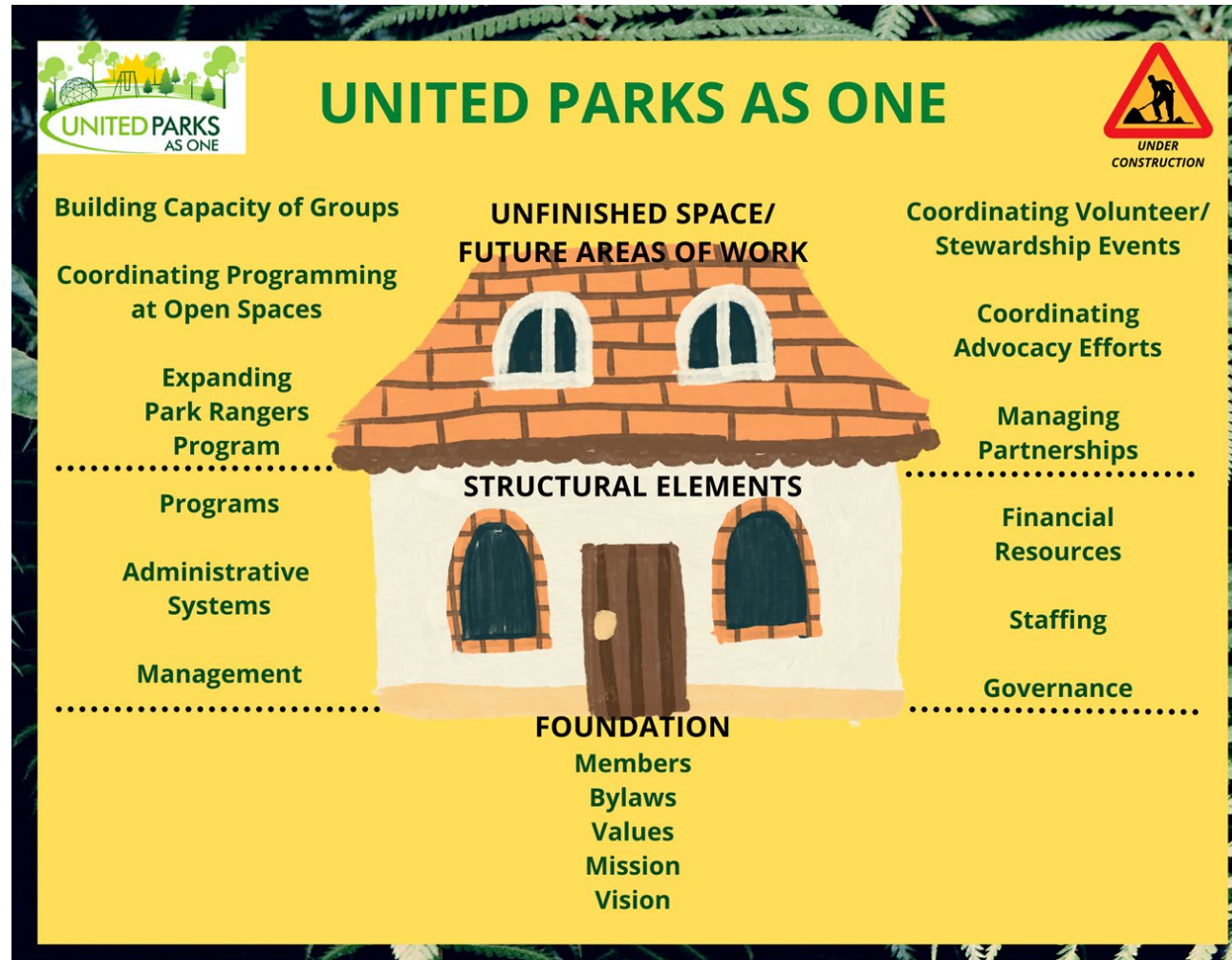


# United Parks As One Values



- Integrity
- Inclusiveness
- Loyalty
- Effectiveness
- Sustainability

# Our Approach to Organization Building



# Q & A





# Introducing... The Common Ground Framework

Help us spread the word on July 9th!





# Coming up

- July 9<sup>th</sup>: Common Ground Framework Press Release
- July 13<sup>th</sup>: CoP Closing session
- CoP Community Engagement track report released



# Discussion Questions

1. What power-related outcomes are most important to you and your department? Why?
2. What, if anything, does your department do to support the build-out of community power? Can you share a story of when this happened?
3. What are policies and strategies that support community power?
4. What does your department need in order to prioritize community engagement that builds community power?





# Stay in touch!

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Trust for Public Land

Senior Program Manager of Technical Assistance

10-Minute Walk

