



Park Equity Communities of Practice

Maintenance Policies and Funding Track

Overview of Session 3 – Non-Traditional Funding Models

February 7, 2024

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Session Overview: Non-Traditional Funding Models

The **Maintenance Policies and Funding** track of the **Park Equity Communities of Practice** elevates maintenance as an essential driver of building an equitable park system.

During the February 2024 session, heard from parks leaders across Atlanta about the innovative partnerships and funding models they're employing to bolster investment in park maintenance and stewardship. In breakout rooms, participants had the opportunity to engage directly with field-wide leaders and local collaborators:

- Justin Cutler, Commissioner, Atlanta Parks and Recreation
- Sabina Kasumova, Performance and Operations Consultant, Atlanta Parks and Recreation
- Jennifer Ball, COO, Central Atlanta Progress + Atlanta Downtown Improvement District
- Mashal Eagle, COO, Piedmont Park Conservancy

Key Themes: Leveraging Partnerships to Fund Parks Operations and Maintenance

Through presentations, audience Q&A, and breakout discussions, the following themes emerged:

- ❑ Strong, **reciprocal partnerships** are critical to high-quality stewardship.
- ❑ **MOUs and operating agreements** are essential tools for codifying partnerships and ensuring efficient – and where necessary, specialized – division of labor and resources.
- ❑ Leaders should see city-building as a **“team effort”** and embrace partnerships and coalitions that leverage each party’s strengths to address persistent challenges.
- ❑ **Ongoing dialogue** and communication are required to ensure partnerships – and maintenance – are effective. Agreements should be reviewed and updated, and new partners may be brought in over time.
- ❑ Public-private partnerships and “friends of” groups are not always equitably distributed across a city. Agencies should use a **data- and context-driven approach to investment** that ensures communities with all levels of capacity have access to the park support they need.
- ❑ Parks provide **multiple benefits** to communities, and therefore intersect with the goals of many agencies. Leverage this fact to build mutually beneficial partnerships and co-funding opportunities.
- ❑ **Master Plans** are useful for cultivating a shared vision with partners and the community, guiding future collaborations, and making the case for funding.

Common Challenges & Questions to Explore

- ❑ How can parks departments ensure or encourage an equitable distribution of maintenance resources and partnerships, particularly “friends of” groups and nonprofits?
- ❑ How should parks departments approach allocating preventative maintenance dollars?
- ❑ What tools can parks departments use to keep revenue in parks, rather than general funds?
- ❑ How should parks departments navigate the tendency to prioritize capital dollars over maintenance dollars?
- ❑ How can parks departments and their partners encourage or leverage partnerships to support public safety through social worker engagement?

Resources

[10-Minute Walk Communities of Practice](#)

Find session recordings, presentations, and resources for each track.

[Fundamentals of Funding for Local Parks and Greenspace](#)

City leaders and parks practitioners are being asked to do more for parks with less. But, they may not always know where to go for funding. Trust for Public Land's 10-Minute Walk® Program has compiled this report to share common funding mechanisms available for city parks. This report is not intended to be encyclopedic, but rather to outline a wide range of frequently-used funding tools.

[Investing in Equitable Urban Park Systems](#)

This Urban Institute report seeks to understand the multiple ways that communities are funding their park systems, paying special attention to parks serving low-income neighborhoods. Emphasis is placed on (1) understanding how equity is approached in raising and distributing funds and (2) elevating innovative, emerging models or approaches to funding parks, particularly those that capitalize on parks' many benefits.

[Investing in Equitable Urban Park Systems: Case Studies & Recommendations](#)

Accompanying the Urban Institute report, the City Parks Alliance developed seven case studies that identify cities who are leading the way in using data-driven approaches to ensure more equitable distribution of funding.