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**Community Power**  
***Session 4: Park Stewardship***  
**May 9, 2024**

# Park Stewardship

## *How can we strengthen the capacity of friends of groups and their communities?*

### Agenda:

- Recap of Session 3
- Presentation from
  - Tim Almaguer, Chief of Community Engagement & Strategic Partnerships, Baltimore City Department of Recreation & Parks
  - Carlos Camacho, Community Engagement Liaison Manager, Baltimore City Recreation and Parks
  - Misty Fae, Executive Director, Friends of Herring Run Parks
- Q&A
- Breakout Groups (20 min)
- Closing



# Recap from last session

## Why Community Compensation?

Community compensation is an important way to show communities you appreciate their time and expertise. This is especially important for low-income communities. Yet, only a fraction of parks organizations have practices and policies for compensating community members (see slides snapshot below).

**Three speakers** from parks organizations across the country presented their own unique methods and shared how this work can earn trust and build community power. Speakers included:

- Deborah Huston, Raleigh Department of Parks, Recreation, and Culture
- Andrea Roberts, East Baton Rouge Parish Recreation Commission (BREC)
- Rebecca Bear, Seattle Parks Foundation

Percent, by org, that compensate community by **direct payment**

	Practices	Policies
Agencies	12%	2%
Conservancies	28%	3%



ParkScore 2023 Findings  
Full report May 22!

Trust for Public Land — On Common Ground

Percent, by org, that compensate community by **pass-through to partners**

	Practices	Policies
Agencies	20%	1%
Conservancies	19%	1%



ParkScore 2023 Findings  
Full report May 22!

Trust for Public Land — On Common Ground

# Lessons for Success

- ❑ Working around the red tape to provide compensation starts with internal buy-in, especially from HR and legal teams.
- ❑ Communicate and set expectations for compensation with community members to ensure an equitable and transparent process.
  - Offer a spectrum of compensation based on the role and amount of work they're doing.
  - Provide clear economic pathways, according to prevailing wages, for people who want to get involved in their parks.
- ❑ Think beyond payment and consider what other support services might achieve similar goals: transportation reimbursement, childcare, food, varied program times, translation, etc.
- ❑ Don't just ask for input and expertise – offer professional development, trainings, and learning opportunities for engaged community members.
- ❑ Backing your process with policy ensures consistency and accountability.



# G.R.O.W. Program

Baltimore, MD

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# Baltimore City Recreation and Parks

## Community Engagement and Strategic Partnerships (CESP)

Presented by:

Tim Almaguer, Chief of CESP

Carlos Camacho, Community Engagement Liaison Manager

Misty Fae, Executive Director of Friends of Herring Run Parks

# Background

- BCRP Partnerships Office
- Friends of Patterson Park and other early Friends Groups
- Creation of Community Engagement and Strategic Partnerships Office in 2019
  - Bridge between the agency and community
  - Developing resources
  - Building a Friends Group network and capacity



# CESP, “Participatory Urbanism” & Values

## Community Engagement & Strategic Partnerships(CESP):

- Offers opportunities for Baltimore City residents and stakeholders to express their views and have a meaningful role in decisions effecting their park spaces and recreational activities, in a two-way exchange of information, ideas, and resources.

- This form of engagement as civic life allows residents not only to be the recipients of city services, but also active participants in the process and stewards of the outcomes.

- “Participatory Urbanism” provides the venue for the community to assist in the creation of their own environment by respecting constituents to be able to co-design, co-produce and co-deliver ideas and results.

## Values

### Inform & Update

Provide the public with up-to-date information about their community spaces, programs and future improvements



### Social Capital

Build community capacity to steward their spaces, and connect with one another to improve and enjoy their environment



### Collaborate & Listen

Partnering with the public to involve them in the decision-making process and allow for new input and ideas



### Trust & Quality of Life

Involving the community in the process builds trust and credibility in the outcome while nurturing future participation and ongoing stewardship



# Enabling Conditions

- Willingness and support from leadership
- Recognizing Friends as an asset rather than a liability
- A professional and talented Team to execute the idea (and the budget to support them) - capacity
- A positive relationship with Friends groups and their willingness to join
- Understanding the “ceiling” and the “floor”
- Measurable outcomes and accountability from both parties – volunteer hours; number of events; funds raised; projects; engagements; resources, etc. Show benefits of this program.

# **CESP's Impact in 2023**

- Engaged in more than 270 community outreach events, meetings, and efforts reaching more than 7,000 community members.
- 36 of these community events were neighborhood-based input sessions, where more than 935 city residents actively participated in the designing and visioning of their future community space.
- Has expanded its digital reach through distribution of a monthly newsletter to approximately 23,000 subscribers.
- Supports more than 25 volunteer park-steward groups or Friends of the Parks Groups by coordinating agency responses to maintenance concerns, coordinating workshops, providing grant funds for park improvements/programs, and holding appreciation events.
- Helps interested communities start Friends Groups by providing guidance and resources to start their organization.

# The Impact of Parks' Friends & Stewards

- Raise awareness of their park
- Advocacy
- Volunteerism for those proximate needs – force multiplier
- Marketing (connection to local community, stakeholders, website)
- Events and activation – modelling proper park usage
- SR's (eyes on the ground)
- Social capital and community building
- Funding raising – arts grant for small concert or large capital improvement
- Pilot projects and initiatives – incubation
- Workforce development
- Park security

# Volunteerism & Stewardship

- Number of Volunteers = 3,140 volunteers
- Number of Volunteer Hours = 32,807 hours
- Valuation of volunteerism based of Independent Sector's annual rate at \$34.12

# \$1,119,374.84

In Sweat Equity

***Groups include:*** Domino Sugar, T. Rowe Price, Morgan Stanley, Ravens & Coke, Friends groups, CIAA and AFRAM individual volunteers.



# Moving Forward

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- Capacity Building
  - Engaging subject-matter experts and facilitating workshops of value to Friends
  - Providing tailored-support based on the specific vision of a Friends Group
- Recruitment, Expansion & Equity – focus on neighborhood parks
- Advocacy – improving and adequately funding recreation and parks in Baltimore City
- Symposium – larger gathering of “Friends”

# Friends of Herring Run Parks

- We are "feet on the ground" in our neighborhoods - Friends Groups are particularly successful in engaging our residents.
- Use social networks to disseminate information, engage volunteers, and listen to specific concerns.
- Advocate for both the residents and city agencies, in that we are a primary point of contact for all, and can provide important information in both directions.
- Effective in engaging historically under-represented groups of constituents, who often feel "outside of" or "powerless" in their connection to city agencies.
- Over the last 28 months, FHRP has leveraged over 3700 volunteer hours in clean up, tree planting and environmental care tasks for Herring Run Park.



# Benefits of Partnership with BCRP

- Formal partnership with BCRP simplifies red-tape
- Offers some financial support for programming and clean up projects.
- The formal partnership of a "Friends of" model can be especially helpful for groups who have little formal experience with building and sustaining not-for-profit organizations
- Well-suited to ensuring that projects, programs and other park events are indicative of what the surrounding community wants and needs.



# Grow Workshop Experience

- The Grow Workshop offers opportunities for Friends groups to collaborate and share strategies.
- Effective way for BCRP to share information consistently across a large group of organizations.
- Provides a larger "whole" picture of the landscape in Baltimore City.





# Recommendations for “Friends” Programs

- Begin program building with the understanding that there will be “Tiers” of such groups, and a partnership between a city agency and these groups should be responsive to this.
- Allow for growth in a progressive system of achievement.
- Friends Groups should not take the place of the City Agency, but instead operate in partnership to augment the work that the city does and provide hyper-local services to the specific community.
- The approach of the city agency should be as a partner, and supporter, as opposed to gatekeeper, or “parental figure”.
- Should keep the processes simple, relatively easy, and least restrictive



# Breakout rooms

20 minutes

## Questions for peer discussion & exchange

1. What's your vision for park stewardship groups in your city? What are some strategies or programs you've used or seen that works towards this goal?
2. What are enabling conditions your city has for friends of groups to improve community power?
3. How does a power imbalance among friends of groups show up in your city? What are strategies to minimize the squeaky wheel effect and better support underrepresented voices who may not have as many resources or social capital?



# Welcome back!

Fill out the exit ticket before you leave.



# Thank you!

## Final session

July 11– Social resilience: How can parks serve communities in times of crisis?

## Questions? Comments?

Reach out to Christina Jang

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