



FORM A FRIENDS GROUP

Building Community for Supporting Parks

So, you want to help your local park? In this guide, we'll walk you through the steps for one of the most ambitious— but beneficial— commitments: Forming a Friends Group dedicated to developing stronger community support for your park or landscape.

Creating your own “Friends” group can give you a mechanism for generating investment and ensuring that the space is cared for and maintained through volunteer programs. The Olmsted Network works with dozens of friends groups, such as [Friends of Fairsted](#) and The Friends of Buttonwood Park. These offer excellent examples of how friends groups can be powerful advocates for preserving the integrity of a historic landscape.

If you've decided to undertake this meaningful task, consider these helpful questions and steps:

- Discuss what needs to be done in the park, why it is not being done and who in government has the authority to fix it.
- Decide what the group's goals are. Do you want to help with master planning? Facility rehabilitation? Trash removal? Gardening? Events? Education? Advocacy? Fundraising? Research? Publicity? Set priorities and rank them.
- Assess the advocacy landscape.
- Do any other groups operate in this space, and what work have they done? How do you plan to interact with them?
- Is it an Olmsted landscape? Reach out to us— the Olmsted Network— at info@olmsted.org to join our network of friends groups and conservancies, which convenes once per month to share experiences and ask questions.
- Are there other civic groups that may not be explicitly park or conservation-focused but might be open to helping, such as a Rotary Club or a school?
- Identify high-ranking officials who are likely to be sympathetic to your cause and help. Meet with them to discuss your goals — and get their thoughts on what needs to be done.
- Organize, including answering questions such as:
 - Who will lead it, and how will they be chosen?
 - Who should be on the board, and how will they be selected?
 - Will the group have full-time staff, and if so, how will it be selected?
 - Who can sign contracts?
 - Who can approve materials?
 - How will the group coordinate with the park administrator or other key officials?
 - Will the group have an office? If so, where?
 - How will the projects the group undertakes be chosen?

- Will volunteers be trained? How and by whom?
 - What is the budget and fund-raising plan?
- Find a name for your new organization.
- Create a charter and by-laws. The former — which will be filed with the state if you legally incorporate — may require a lawyer, hopefully working pro bono. While we do not provide legal advice, we welcome your inquiries during this process and can supply you with sample templates. Contact info@olmsted.org.
- Create an accounting system so that you can keep track of your finances.
- Apply for 501(c)3 tax-exempt status with the [Internal Revenue Service](#).
- Create a logo. Make your own using a free online design platform, such as Canva, or commission a low-cost custom design from a web-based marketplace for graphic designers such as Etsy or Fiverr.
- Start fundraising and recruiting volunteers for your project.
- Work with state and local governments to form public-private partnerships.