



GET INVOLVED

Projects for Supporting Parks

So, you want to help your local park? You can get involved in a variety of ways from one-off volunteer opportunities to formal commitments of time and resources. In this guide, we'll walk you through the steps for both one-time assistance efforts and more ambitious commitments.

Either way, the first step is to identify a park or landscape that needs nurturing. You might try calling your local Parks Commissioner or Parks Department to ask where and how you can help care for your community's public green space. Once you've found a place you'd like to support, here's a list of ideas for projects you can do.

Short-term Projects

- Start small by volunteering for a project at your park. From cleaning up trash to joining a [Weed Wrangle](#), these types of opportunities can allow you to meet like-minded community members.
- Organize a community park celebration that highlights the vital role parks play in our health and wellbeing. These events can encourage creative use of these green spaces, which creates more public buy-in.
- Write to a local or federal official about Frederick Law Olmsted's work and vision for parks and its enduring importance. Solicit support for your park or speak out if planned actions will harm the park or place's integrity. Is the park you're trying to protect an Olmsted park? Reach out to us at info@olmsted.org for help!
- Convene a park summit or conference to bring together community activists and citizens, health professionals, parks and rec agencies, city planners and others to examine the general state of your city's parks, access to the parks, funding opportunities, etc.
- Urge your city to create a task force to examine parks' general state, access to parks, use of parks by diverse audiences and park funding. In Seattle, an Olmsted Legacy Task Force was established to examine its park system and offer a range of recommendations focused on equity and access, funding and community-based input. The final report, [Olmsted Legacy Task Force: Rebirth of Olmsted's Design for Equity](#), was submitted to the Superintendent, Seattle Parks and Recreation and the Seattle Board of Park Commissioners.

Longer-term Projects

- Researching your park or historic landscape— as well as documenting its current condition— can be an important first step. Understanding the space's original design can inform maintenance and upgrade plans. Documenting the original purpose of certain features and the use of specific materials can help

illuminate what makes a space unique and important and guide any upgrade or expansion plans. Here is a research checklist to help guide you through the process:

- Define the scope of your research: To what end are you studying the history? The grander the project, the more you'll need to know. Basic questions include:
 - Who were the landscape's originally intended users?
 - What did the original design look like, and how has it been changed over the years?
 - When and why was it modified?
 - What remains from the original design and/or construction, and what condition is it in? Who uses the property now, and for what purpose?
- Identify potential research sources:
 - Historical societies
 - State historical preservation agencies
 - Public libraries
 - Garden clubs
 - University libraries and archives
 - Municipal archives
 - State historic preservation offices
 - Old newspapers
 - [OlmstedOnline](#), a digital resource that provides access to project plans
 - Flickr records made available through the Olmsted [Archives](#) at the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site
 - [Library of Congress](#), whose Manuscript Division includes the Frederick Law Olmsted Papers and the Olmsted Associates Papers
 - The Archives [of American Gardens](#), which contains documentation of more than 5,500 gardens and landscapes
- Specific things to look for:
 - Official documents such as annual reports, minutes, journals, construction contracts, maintenance records, census records, municipal ordinances and charters, state laws and constitutions, wills and real estate deeds
 - Histories of the municipality, city, state or region
 - Biographies of park designers
 - Unpublished material such as diaries, letters, catalogs of local plant nurseries, seed catalogs
 - Visual records such as maps, plans, drawings, sketches, photographs or postcards
 - Transcripts or taped materials of interviews and oral histories
 - Nominations to the National Register of Historic Places or similar state registries
- Develop stronger community support for your park or landscape by creating a "Friends of" group. These types of organizations can give you a mechanism for generating investment and ensuring that the space is cared for and maintained through volunteer programs.
- Did you know that anyone can nominate an Olmsted-designed landscape— or any historic park space— to the National Register of Historic Places, the official list of the nation's significant historic properties? These tools and additional resources from your [State Historic Preservation Office](#) can help guide you through the process:
 - National Register Bulletin: [How to Complete the National Register Registration Form](#)
 - National Register Bulletin: [How to Evaluate and Nominate a Designed Historic Landscape](#)

- Read: [How to List a Property](#)
- Before beginning the process and completing [these important forms](#), communicate your intentions with your local SHPO and familiarize yourself with the guidance issued by the National Park Service on nominating cultural landscapes. A property may be eligible for listing because of its association with a significant historical event, person, design and/or its archaeology. A designed historic landscape is often associated with landscape architecture or a style employed by a trained individual.
- Use these [sample nominations](#) and [sample Olmsted nominations](#) to inform your research and writing process.
- Once you've completed the process, use this [template](#) to write a letter supporting nomination.
- Consider creating a master plan for your park. Here is an excellent example from friends group in Newark, NJ: <https://bit.ly/3opqAHT>