

Park Advisory Councils

How to Form a PAC

PARK ADVISORY COUNCIL DESCRIPTION

Park Advisory Councils (PACs) are the communities' voice for their neighborhood park, children's playgrounds, beaches or natural areas. PACs serving parks within the Chicago Park District (CPD) system began to form in the 1980s. PACs are comprised of local community members who volunteer their time to improving their parks. PACs are organized groups, which have their own bylaws and elected leaders, and are acknowledged by the Chicago Park District. They fundraise for park improvements, often contribute to park programming, and many times serve as a tool to linking community residents together. Many acquire "fiscal sponsorship" from an existing 501(c)(3), such as Friends of the Parks, which allows them to use the 501c3 tax-exempt status and EIN number of the fiscal sponsor.

HOW TO FORM A PAC IN CPD PARK:

1. The community should notify the Alderman and the park supervisor who oversees the playlot/park to discuss forming a Park Advisory Council;
2. Set up a community meeting that encompasses the areas around the park or playlot;
3. Put up flyers in the playlot and surrounding community areas, local businesses, libraries, etc.;
4. Make sure to invite the Chicago Park District to talk about advisory councils;
5. All interested members must fill out the PAC Application (can be found on the CPD website);
6. The group must submit a letter of intent to the park supervisor;
7. An election should be held no sooner than 21 days after the 1st meeting;
8. After your election the Board should fill out the PAC Application which can be found on the Chicago Park District website.

HOW TO FORM A PAC IN A NON-CPD SITE:

Since there is no formalized system for non-CPD affiliated green and open spaces, we suggest that you follow similar guidelines set by the CPD.

1. The community should notify the Alderman, state representative, supervisor who oversees the open space to discuss forming a Park Advisory Council;
2. Set up a community meeting that encompasses the areas around the open space;
3. Put up fliers in the immediate and surrounding community areas, businesses, libraries, etc.;
4. Make sure to invite the managers of the green/open space;
5. During the first meeting decide on name, [] Advisory Council or Friends of [] are suggested;
6. An election should be held 21 days after the 1st meeting;
7. Keep your alderman, the site's manager, and Friends of the Parks apprised of progress.

RESOURCES & SUPPORT

Although the PAC terminology is common within the CPD, others – such as banks, politicians, site managers – will mostly likely be unfamiliar with this language. Friends of the Parks' Director of Neighborhood Parks can provide assistance to those interested in PACs in both CPD and non-CPD parks. The CPD has designated staffers to support PACs within their Department of Legislative and Community Affairs: (312) 744-6177 or www.chicagoparkdistrict.com.