
Friends of Groups in Dallas

What is a Friends of Group and What Does It Look Like in Dallas?

A Friends of Group

- A Friends of Group is a community-based volunteer group officially partnered with Dallas Park and Recreation. Neighbors come together to care for and improve their local park through activities such as:
 - Hosting cleanups and family events
 - Leading stewardship projects
 - Advocating for community needs
 - Helping secure resources and support

Benefits

- Friends groups amplify the community's voice. They build pride, strengthen neighbor connections, and help ensure the park thrives as a welcoming, safe, and vibrant space for all.

Beautification Agreements

- A Beautification Agreement refers to formal partnership where community groups or organizations collaborate with city departments to improve public spaces. This program allows individuals and community groups who are interested in partnering with Dallas Park and Recreation to beautify their park or trail through the group's proposed activities. Through projects, special events, donations, or volunteer hours, groups can help improve and maintain their local parks or trails

Examples of Agreement Activities

- Host Events – Groups can organize community gatherings like “walk and talk” sessions, coffee with your neighbors or other neighborhood events to engage residents and activate the park. Dallas Parks and Recreation can provide items to help support successful events (e.g., tables, chairs, canopies, etc.).
 - Park Cleanups & Maintenance – Groups can host cleanup days and support general park upkeep to help keep their greenspace clean and well-maintained. Dallas Parks and Recreation can provide tools such as trash grabbers and garbage bags, and assist with trash removal.
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Notes:

Goals	For the Park	For Your Group
Short-Term Goals	• Removing graffiti • Planting flowers • Cleaning up trash • Replacing missing bench slats • Painting fences, benches, playscapes, and recreation centers • Hosting a concert, neighborhood gathering or other performance • Sponsoring a Little League tournament or other sporting event • Volunteering for after-school programs • Cleaning park sculptures	• Meeting your park supervisor and manager • Create an Adopt-a-Park program with your Parks Department • Holding regular, well-attended meetings • Creating a membership mailing list • Creating lists of useful phone numbers • Introducing your group to elected officials, schools and faith communities • Becoming familiar with your local police • Finding a charitable umbrella organization to facilitate future fundraising • Writing your by-laws
Mid-Range Goals	• Hosting regular work days (every week, or month) • Buying tools and supplies (shovels, rakes, paint, etc.) • Buying and planting shrubs and trees • Making small landscape design changes • Creating and maintaining a community garden area • Increasing police presence • Hosting a performance series, large festival, or sports tournament • Repairing or replacing equipment	• Opening a bank account • Winning a small grant • Holding elections • Recruiting a board of directors • Expanding your membership • Charging membership fees • Sending out a mailing • Hosting a small fundraising event • Developing strong working relationships with the police, elected officials, merchants, civic groups, schools, churches, etc. • Soliciting mid-size contributions from landlords and business owners • Getting a local newspaper to write an article about you
Long-Term Goals	• Raising money for a major renovation or redesign • Attracting programs like Arts in the Parks • Hosting a regular summer program for kids (e.g. arts and crafts) • Buying expensive equipment (e.g. a riding lawnmower) • Buying and planting a large number of trees • Creating a citizens safety patrol • Completely taking back the park from crime • Installing public art	• Winning a large grant • Publishing a regular newsletter • Hosting a large fundraising event • Really expanding your membership • Getting 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status • Hiring paid staff • Compiling an archive of your accomplishments (photographs, newspaper articles, flyers, etc.)

Friends of Group: Mission, Vision & Scope Worksheet

This worksheet builds on your earlier ideas (activities, goals, strengths, needs) and helps shape a draft mission, vision, and scope of work for your Friends of Group.

Step 1: Mission Statement

A mission explains why your group exists and what you do.

- Prompt: Why are we coming together as a Friends of Group?
- Write 1–2 sentences about your purpose (e.g., "We bring neighbors together to care for and improve [Park Name] through stewardship, events, and advocacy.")

Step 2: Vision Statement

A vision describes the future you want to see.

- Prompt: What does a thriving, welcoming park look like in 5–10 years?
- Write a short statement that reflects your aspirations (e.g., "A safe, beautiful, and inclusive park where all neighbors feel connected and proud.")

Step 3: Value/Guiding Principles

These are the core ideas or values that guide your work.

- Prompt: What values should guide how we work together and with the community?
- Examples: Inclusivity, Collaboration, Respect for Nature, Equity, Fun, Stewardship
- List 3–5 shared values:

Step 5: Drafting a Beautification Agreement

A Beautification Agreement is a partnership with Dallas Parks & Recreation.

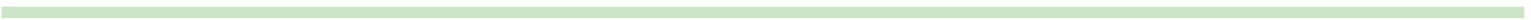
This draft scope can guide your next steps towards that agreement.

- Which activities do we want to include in your scope?
- Who will be the main point of contact(s)?
- What support do you need from Dallas Park and Recreation or what questions do you have?

Notes:

Next Steps

- Finalize mission, vision, and scope with the group.
- Contact your community connector to review and discuss next steps.



Notes:

Community Agreements Tip Sheet & Worksheet

Why Community Agreements Matter

Community agreements are shared understandings about how you want to work together as a group. They help create a respectful, inclusive, and collaborative environment. Clear agreements can make meetings more productive, prevent conflicts, and ensure that all voices are heard.

Sample Agreements (Examples to Adapt)

- Listen with respect – Give full attention, even when you disagree.
- Step up, step back – Share your voice, but also make space for others.
- Assume good intentions – We're here because we care about the park and community.
- Be patient and collaborative – Working together takes time; everyone brings value.
- Speak from your own experience – Use "I" statements.
- Disagree respectfully – Focus on ideas, not individuals.
- Celebrate progress – Small steps lead to big impact.

Sample Worksheet: Drafting Your Group's Agreements (Examples to Adapt)

Step 1: Review the sample agreements together.

Step 2: Brainstorm as a group: What agreements are most important to us?

Step 3: Write down 3–5 agreements you all commit to.

Our Community Agreements

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

Date Adopted: _____

Friends of Group Name: _____

Roles in a Friends of Group

A Friends of Group works best when neighbors take on different roles that match their skills and interests. Here are some common examples:

Organizer / Coordinator

- Schedules meetings and helps keep the group on track.
- Keeps track of next steps and action items.
- Ensures everyone has the information they need.

Outreach & Communications

- Spreads the word about the group's work.
- Invites neighbors, builds partnerships, and manages social media or flyers.
- Keeps the community updated on events and progress.

Events & Activities

- Plans cleanups, family days, or cultural programming.
- Coordinates volunteers for workdays and activities.
- Brings people together to activate the park.

Advocacy & Partnerships

- Represents the group with City departments or partner organizations.
- Helps share the community's voice with decision-makers.
- Connects with schools, nonprofits, and businesses to build support.

Fundraising & Resources

- Organizes donations, sponsorships, or small grants.
- Helps find supplies and materials for projects.
- Keeps track of budget and resources.

Flexible Support (Other Roles)

- Helps where needed: taking notes, photographing events, designing flyers, or leading a special project.
- Provides skills the group may not have thought of yet.

These are examples only — groups can adapt or combine roles depending on their size and needs.

Notes:

Agenda Worksheet: Why & How

Why Use an Agenda?

An agenda helps keep meetings organized, on track, and respectful of everyone's time. It makes sure:

- Everyone knows what will be discussed.
- Time is managed fairly.
- Goals and next steps are clear.
- Notes and follow-ups are easier.

Sample Agenda Template

Meeting Title: _____

Date/Time: _____

Location/Platform: _____

Facilitator: _____

Time	Topic/Activity	Lead	Notes/Outcomes
5 min	Welcome & Check-in	[Name]	_____
10 min	Updates & Announcements	[Name]	_____
15 min	Main Discussion Topic	[Name]	_____
10 min	Small Group Activity / Brainstorm	[Name]	_____
10 min	Large Group Share-Out	[Name]	_____
5 min	Confirm Next Steps & Roles	[Name]	_____
5 min	Closing & Appreciation	[Name]	_____

Tips for Building Your Agenda

- Start and end on time.
- Assign roles (facilitator, note-taker, timekeeper).
- Share the agenda in advance if possible.
- Leave space for group reflection.
- End with clear next steps.

Digital Tools for Friends of Groups

A quick reference of free digital tools to help Friends of Groups stay organized, communicate, plan, and share ideas effectively.

File Storage & Collaboration

- Google Drive, Docs/Sheets & Google Meet
 - Drive: Store and share files in one place.
 - Docs/Sheets: Collaborate in real time on agendas, budgets, and notes.
 - Meet: Host free video calls for members who can't attend in person.

Communications

- WhatsApp / GroupMe – Quick, easy messaging for updates and reminders.
- Email / Google Groups – Send newsletters, announcements, or longer updates.
- Social Media (Facebook, Nextdoor, Instagram) – Reach neighbors and highlight events.

Marketing & Outreach

- Canva – Design flyers, social media posts, or simple graphics.
- Padlet – Interactive board for brainstorming and sharing ideas with the community.

Scheduling & Event Management

- SignUpGenius – Organize volunteer shifts or event sign-ups.
- Doodle Poll – Find the best meeting time by letting everyone vote on availability.

Surveys & Feedback

- Google Forms – Gather feedback, track volunteer sign-ups, or collect RSVPs.
- Responses automatically save to a Google Sheet for easy tracking.

Brainstorming & Collaboration

- Figma – A free, online collaborative design tool where groups can:
 - Create visual boards, diagrams, or simple designs together in real time.
 - Add sticky notes, shapes, text, and images for planning or brainstorming.
 - Useful for visioning exercises, activity planning, or designing event materials.

Other Helpful Free Tools

- Trello – Visual project management for tracking tasks and goals.
- Zoom (free version) – Virtual meetings for those who can't attend in person.

Calendar & Scheduling

- Teamup Calendar – Free, shared online calendar for groups without requiring logins. Great for tracking park activities and volunteer shifts.

Tips for Choosing Tools

- Keep it simple — pick 1–2 tools your group will actually use.
- Be inclusive — choose platforms neighbors are comfortable with.
- Share access — make sure multiple people have login info.
- Use reminders — automated notifications help keep people engaged.
- **Use YouTube for tutorials** — watch or share quick how-to videos for tasks like using Google Forms, Canva, or social media tools.

Evaluation & Tracking Tools Tip Sheet

Keeping track of your group's efforts helps show impact, build support, and strengthen your Friends of Group over time. Here are some easy tools to start with:

Volunteer Tracking

- What to track: Names, hours contributed, type of activity (cleanup, outreach, events).
- Tools:
 - Sign-in sheets (paper or Google Forms).
 - Volunteer log spreadsheet to total hours each month.
- Why it matters: Shows community investment; useful for grants and additional support.

Events & Programs

- What to track: Date, number of participants, activities offered, photos, feedback.
- Tools:
 - Event recap form.
 - Online survey (Google Forms, SurveyMonkey).
- Why it matters: Shows reach and impact of your work; helps improve future events.

Park Improvements & Maintenance

- What to track: Number of cleanups, trash bags collected, trees planted, new features added.
- Tools:
 - Before/after photos.
 - Simple logs or charts.
- Why it matters: Makes your efforts visible and measurable.

Storytelling & Community Feedback

- What to track: Neighbor stories, quotes, or testimonials about why the park matters.
- Tools:
 - Notebooks at events for comments.
 - Voice memos or short interviews.
- Why it matters: Stories bring the numbers to life and inspire new members.

Funds & Donations

- What to track: Source of funds (grants, donations, fundraising), amount, how money is spent.
 - Tools:
 - Simple Excel or Google Sheets.
 - Keep copies of receipts and donation acknowledgments.
 - Why it matters: Builds trust, transparency, and helps plan future projects.
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Tip: Start small! Choose 1–2 tools that feel doable, then grow as your group builds capacity.

Date: _____

[illegible]