How the National Park Service Can Serve Urban America

“The National Park Service’s first century was about bringing people to the parks. Its second century will be about bringing parks to the people.” Jonathan B. Jarvis, Director
“Bringing Parks to the People”

City is the Park and Park is the City – LOWELL
95% of the once vacant historic mills in Lowell have been revitalized. Preservation planning and Historic Preservation tax credits = $1 BILLION in private investment and 500 historic buildings restored.

Urban Design ST. LOUIS
CityArchRiver 2015 is a collaborative redesign of the national park, St. Louis’ urban core, connections to the Mississippi River and improved transportation systems.
It’s All About Relevancy
Changing Population

2000

- Hispanic: 4%
- White, NH: 12%
- Black, NH: 9%
- Asian, NH: 1%

2100

- Hispanic: 12.6%
- White, NH: 40.3%
- Black, NH: 13.0%
- Asian, NH: 12.6%

More than 80% of Americans live in urban areas
Demographic shift to minority majority population

Source: Various Census Bureau documents
Aligning Resources

- Federal Coordination – DOI, EPA, HUD, HHS, CDC, Agriculture, Transportation and efforts like SC2, Sustainable Communities, Urban Waters partnerships

- State and local governments – LWCF, Council of Mayors, League of Cities

- Private and community organizations – TPL, TNC, CF, CPA, MGA, etc.
Three National Park Service Urban Engagement Models for Collaboration

- Parks within urban areas
- Parks adjacent to urban areas
- Urban areas without a physical National Park Service presence
NPS Can Build on Existing Efforts and Support Regional Interests

- National Park Service parks and programs can complement existing efforts like the Metropolitan Greenspaces Alliance
The National Park Service is Already in Urban Communities

- 1/3 of 401 national parks are in major urban areas
- 40 of the 50 largest urban areas have a national park
- National Park Service programs support conservation, recreation, and preservation projects in nearly every city and county in the US
Working With Communities

National Park Service community assistance programs:

- Align local, state and federal resources and talents
- Collaborate with communities
- Ensure close-to-home access to trails, waterways and open space
- Improve public health, increase economic viability, strengthen quality of life, and nurture future conservation stewards
The Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program
Working With Communities

- From remote communities in Alaska to the Bronx River in New York
Nature in the City

- Protecting and enhancing natural resources in urban areas that buffer impacts of urban pollution, flooding, and fires
Youth Engagement

- Play, Learn, Serve, Work
Environmental Justice

- Informed and targeted assistance where most needed
- TPL, CPA, Groundwork USA, Historic Preservation

Tax Incentives
Healthy and Active Recreation

- Healthy Parks Healthy People
Leveraging Support

Aligning resources

- Federal
- State & local
- Private, nonprofit, NGOs
Working with Urban Innovators

- Networking and promoting communities of practice
- Urban Matters
- Human Dimension
- Economic, social, and environmental analytical tools
Working Across Boundaries

- The Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program catalyzes collaborative planning and action for both public and privately owned natural areas in urban communities
Capitalizing on Heritage

- Technical support to community efforts to conserve and revitalize historic and natural heritage resources
Community Resiliency & Vibrancy

- Natural spaces and cultural resources in urban areas are of high value for education, recreation, economic and ecological benefits.
Bob Ratcliffe
Conservation and Outdoor Recreation Division
202-354-6904 bob_ratcliffe@nps.gov

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior