
Park Friends Network: Park Improvements Workshop



PHILADELPHIA
PARKS &
RECREATION

FAIRMOUNT PARK

CONSERVANCY

• 10.15.2026

WELCOME

Hosts : Elisa Ruse-Esposito & TJ von Oehsen

Presentors:

**Elisa Ruse - Esposito, Parks Stewardship Administrator, Philadelphia
Parks and Recreation**

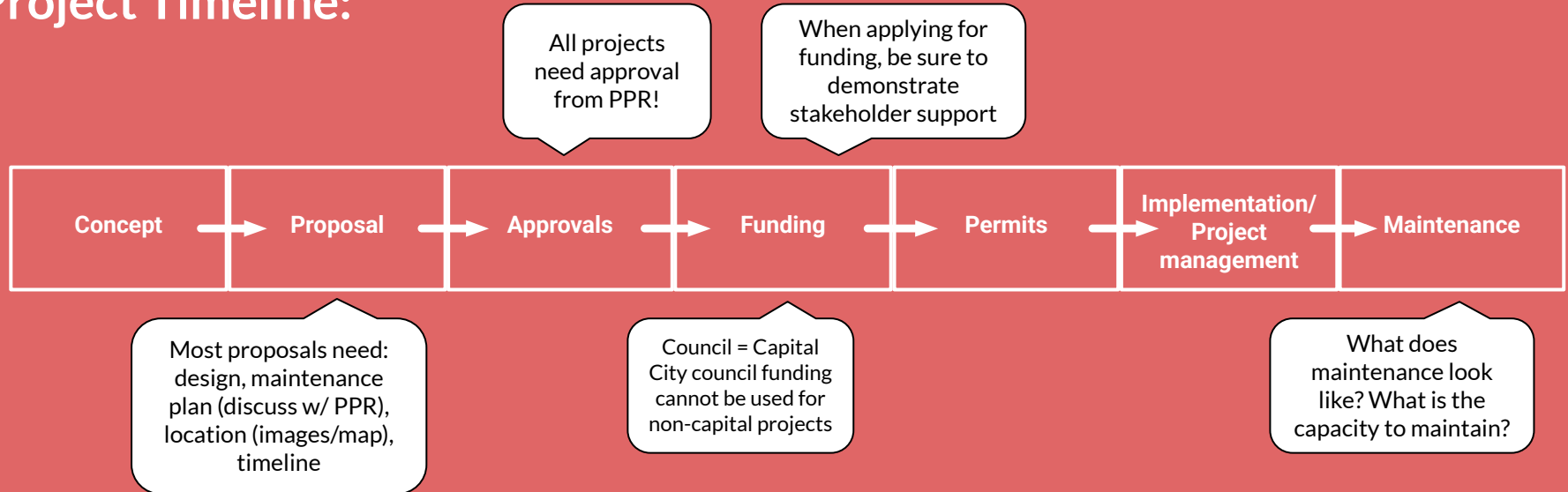
**Liz Svekla , Director of Planning , Preservation & Property Management,
Philadelphia Parks and Recreation**

Mali Skotheim, Grants Manager, Philadelphia Parks and Recreation

So you would like a park improvement!

First, thank you for being our Partner! We can't do this work without the support of our Park Friends.

Project Timeline:



Improvement Buckets

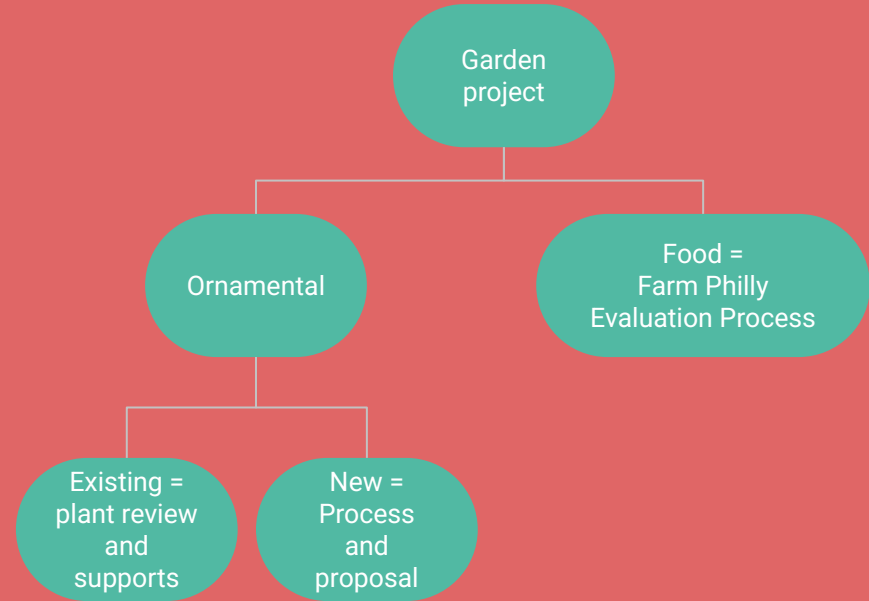
Approval Process depends on Type of Improvement

Buckets of Improvements we will review

- Gardens and Grass
- Trees
- Little Free Libraries
- Small Park Upgrades ie. Benches, trashcans, bulletin board, etc
- Sheds
- Murals & Public Art
- Capital Projects & Design - Over 15K ie. new playgrounds, sidewalks, lighting, waterlines



Gardens and Grass



Gardens and Grass



Before & After photos at
Dickinson Square

Lawn

- Reseeding with Volunteers / Steps and Supports
 - If closing off areas for reseeding / PPR needs to sign off
- Reseeding with Contractors / Steps + Permits

Street trees are a separate process (even if they are in sidewalks of a park)



Trees

Planting Trees

- Reach out to PPR Stewardship Contact to discuss planting goals
- Team will loop in Park Management Trainee - Arboriculture Specialty to assist with review and approvals
- Maintenance plan is needed for planting success!

Trees

Tree Removals and Pruning

- Reporting tree issue to PPR Stewardship Liason- Photos and Location are helpful!
- Will be inputted into PPR Forest Asset Management Work Order system
- PPR Arborists Assess and determine condition and what is needed
 - PPR can only remove or Prune most concerning / long wait list
 - FG can hire approved contractor if PPR Arborists approves scope and need to get necessary permits to conduct work



Little Free Libraries

Process

- Proposal - needs to include location, specifications for Little Free Library and installation technique
- PPR will Review
- FG will need to sign MOU
- PPR cannot maintain Little Free Libraries and will remove them if they fall into disrepair



Smaller Upgrades

Process

- Proposal/ Review/ Approvals/ permits & install / maintenance

PPR will not maintain upgrades if they do not follow [PPR construction standards](#).



Sheds & Storage



Step 1 - Request with Justification

- Why is a shed/ storage is needed
- Include location and model specifications

Step 2 - Funding

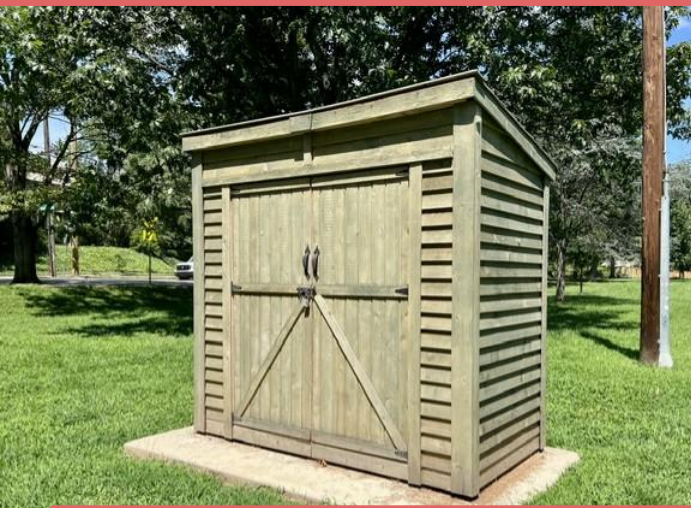
- External Funding - PPR does not have a budget for sheds unless they are incorporated in a larger capital project that has funding allocated for it



Sheds

Install

- After PPR Approval a licensed and insured contractor will need to obtain permit for installation
- Depending on Shed type PPR may or may not be able to maintain



PPR does not allow shipping container aka CBOX containers to be used for storage.



Murals & Public Art

Process

- 3 Types: Murals, Temporary public art, Permanent public art
- All installations require approvals/ permit + insurance
- Maintenance Agreement may be required
- Permanent public art needs an Endowment

Murals are **not** considered capital projects - they cannot be funded through ITEF or PPR capital \$



Capital Projects

What is a capital project?

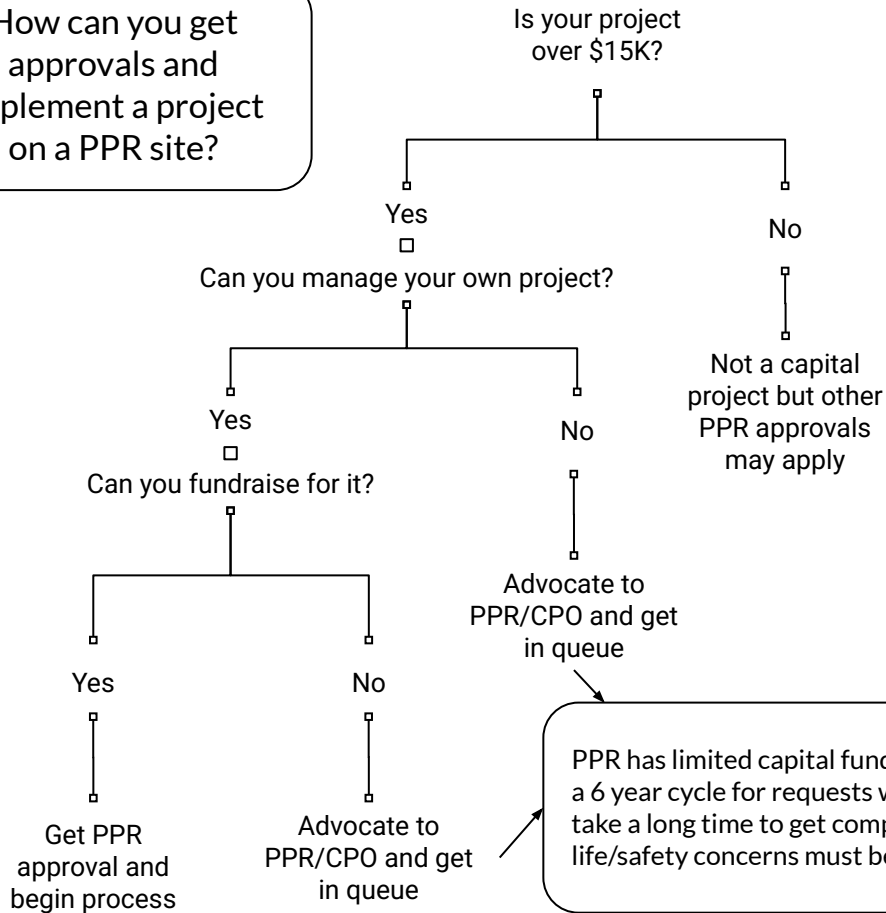
- Improvement over 15K
- Specific capital eligibility criteria
- Long-term asset

Examples:

- Lighting
- Waterline
- Pavement/sidewalk
- Courts
- Playgrounds
- Security cameras
- Fencing



How can you get approvals and implement a project on a PPR site?



Capital Projects

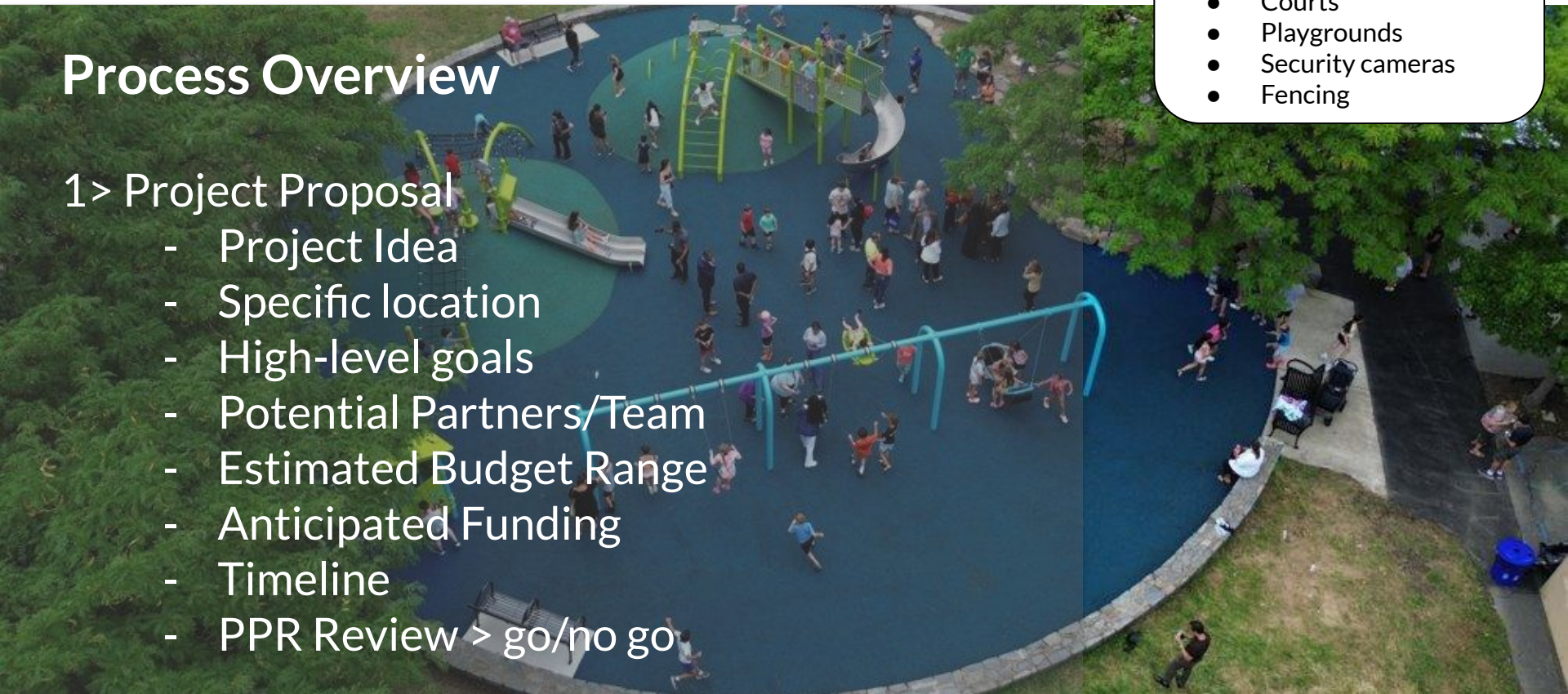
Examples:

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Process Overview

1> Project Proposal

- Project Idea
- Specific location
- High-level goals
- Potential Partners/Team
- Estimated Budget Range
- Anticipated Funding
- Timeline
- PPR Review > go/no go



Capital Projects

Examples:

- Lighting
- Waterline
- Pavement/sidewalk
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- Playgrounds
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Process Overview

- 1> Project Proposal
- 2> Concept Design (Including Community Engagement)
- 3> Schematic Design
- 4> Design Development
- 5> Construction Documentation
- 6> Bidding and Construction Administration
- 7> Post Construction & Potential Maintenance Agreements



Park funding Strategy
workshop coming in
January 2027!

Funding Strategy

- Must have documented PPR Approvals for Park Improvement before fundraising
- Need to plan for project management
- Many potential sources for funding
 - Grants - Foundations, State & Federal
 - Fundraising
 - Council ITEF
- PPR is here to support! Meet with Mali (PPR grants manager) to talk through funding strategy & grant opportunities.

Questions?

Thank you!



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