

APPROACHING LOCAL BUSINESSES

Note: See the Partnerships' tip sheets on "Building Business Partnerships" for more specific information about creating alliances with local businesses.

1. Develop strong RELATIONSHIPS with local businesses

- ✓ Before you ask for donations, **cultivate your relationships**. Go door to door introducing yourself. Make sure businesses near your park get your group's flyers and newsletters. Attend meetings of any local merchants' associations or business improvement districts and invite their representatives to your meetings.
- ✓ **Ask local merchants for their input**, especially those who work near the park and have a vested interest in its condition. Invite a representative of the local business community to join your group or your board. Involved businesses are much more likely to support you financially.

2. Approach businesses that are LIKELY TO GIVE. Especially...

- ✓ Businesses near the park. This includes stores, but also the landlords and co-ops that own buildings bordering the park.
- ✓ Businesses where your **members and friends work**. Large corporations often donate where their employees volunteer.
- ✓ Businesses with a logical link to an event—e.g., a music store for a concert, a kids clothing store for an after-school program, a hardware store for a spruce-up.
- ✓ Branches of local banks and your local utility. Banks usually give small grants to community groups at the beginning of the year. A bank branch manager is a great person to have on your board.

3. GIVE something in return

- ✓ **Publicity:** publicly acknowledge helpful businesses at an event, in your newsletter, or on flyers.
- ✓ **Promotional Opportunities:** allow businesses to give out coupons and free samples at an event—**make sure to ask Parks first**—or let them use your mailing list. You can also sell ads in a newsletter.
- ✓ **Community Goodwill:** spread the word to members and neighbors about the business's generosity and be sure to patronize it yourself. An article in the local paper does this very well.
- ✓ **Your Thanks:** Always send a thank you letter and/or gift.