



Minto-Brown Island Park Citizen Communications Strategy Winter 2011 • Journalism and Communication

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About SCI

The Sustainable Cities Initiative (SCI) is a cross-disciplinary organization at the University of Oregon that seeks to promote education, service, public outreach, and research on the design and development of sustainable cities. We are redefining higher education for the public good and catalyzing community change toward sustainability. Our work addresses sustainability at multiple scales and emerges from the conviction that creating the sustainable city cannot happen within any single discipline. SCI is grounded in cross-disciplinary engagement as the key strategy for solving community sustainability issues. We serve as a catalyst for expanded research and teaching, and market this expertise to scholars, policymakers, community leaders, and project partners. Our work connects student energy, faculty experience, and community needs to produce innovative, tangible solutions for the creation of a sustainable society.

About SCY

The Sustainable City Year (SCY) program is a year-long partnership between SCI and one city in Oregon, in which students and faculty in courses from across the university collaborate with the partner city on sustainability and livability projects. SCY faculty and students work in collaboration with staff from the partner city through a variety of studio projects and service-learning courses to provide students with real-world projects to investigate. Students bring energy, enthusiasm, and innovative approaches to difficult, persistent problems. SCY's primary value derives from collaborations resulting in on-the-ground impact and forward movement for a community ready to transition to a more sustainable and livable future. SCY 2010-11 includes courses in Architecture; Arts and Administration; Business Management; Interior Architecture; Journalism; Landscape Architecture; Law; Planning, Public Policy, and Management; Product Design; and Civil Engineering (at Portland State University).

About Salem, Oregon

Salem, the capital city of Oregon and its third largest city (population 157,000, with 383,000 residents in the metropolitan area), lies in the center of the lush Willamette River valley, 47 miles from Portland. Salem is located an hour from the Cascade mountains to the east and ocean beaches to the west. Thriving businesses abound in Salem and benefit from economic diversity. The downtown has been recognized as one of the region's most vital retail centers for a community of its size. Salem has retained its vital core and continues to be supported by strong and vibrant historic neighborhoods, the campus-like Capitol Mall, Salem Regional Hospital, and Willamette University. Salem offers a wide array of restaurants, hotels, and tourist attractions, ranging from historic sites and museums to events that appeal to a wide variety of interests. 1,869 acres of park land invite residents and visitors alike to enjoy the outdoors.



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Executive Summary

Minto-Brown Island Park is a sprawling expanse of almost 900 acres in southwest Salem that is a big draw for a variety of people. The park features miles of trails for bicyclists, walkers, and runners, picnic areas, natural preserves, and 90 acres of open space where dogs can run off leash. As part of the Sustainable City Year program, students from the University of Oregon's Landscape Architecture department created a plan to improve the physical, natural, and human amenities at the park. Students from the School of Journalism and Communication's Strategic Communication program tackled a parallel project designed to improve the park experience for visitors.

The primary problem is conflict within the park among a small percentage of visitors. The communication plan created with the collaborative effort of city leaders identified four key issues, along with strategies and tactics for resolving that conflict. The end result will hopefully be an increased awareness of the park's value to the community and a shared commitment to protecting the park.

The four issues are:

- Dogs (and their Owners).
- Bicyclists and Pedestrians.
- Littering.
- Volunteer Recruitment and Retention.

The park's off-leash area is a large draw for dog owners, some of whom fail to follow the leash rules in other parts of the park and fail to pick up after their dogs. This creates a safety issue for both pets and owners, as well as a health problem for park visitors. The proposed solution is to improve signage that reminds dog owners of the park rules, highlights the hefty fines they could be given, and indicates where they can get bags to collect feces left behind. The city is also encouraged to work with dog-related businesses to help in the awareness campaign, and as a resource for classes, events, and related activities to improve compliance with leash laws and proper dog behavior enforcement.

The park's trail system needs improved signage to guide bicyclists through the area and to remind them that pedestrians have the right-of-way. The signs, along with a coordinated campaign to "share the path," will help raise awareness of the issue and change behavior. Bicycle shops and other related businesses could also be recruited to help in the awareness campaign.

We propose that signs also be used in the effort to reduce littering. Those signs would be complemented by brightly colored garbage cans and partnerships with schools, churches, and other community groups to raise awareness and to create designated "clean-up" days.

Efforts in all three of the above areas can help in the final issue addressed in this communication plan: increasing the number of park volunteers and

solidifying the efforts of existing volunteers. A lack of funding has forced the City of Salem to rely heavily on park volunteers to address issues with dog owners, bicyclists, and littering. By raising awareness within these specific user groups, the city is likely to gain new volunteers.

By reducing the conflicts at Minto-Brown Island Park and encouraging park visitors to feel ownership of the park's appearance and operation, everyone can have an enriched experience at the park.

Introduction

Minto-Brown Island Park encompasses almost 900 acres of open and wooded areas in southwest Salem. A trail system, an area for dogs to run off leash, and picnic areas are just a few of the attractions at this popular destination for Salem residents. While city leaders are delighted with the popularity of the park, they want to remind people that the park is a community treasure that needs to be treated with care.

The city collaborated with students from the University of Oregon's Strategic Communication program to develop a communication plan to address a variety of concerns. The city specifically wanted students to create a plan to help citizens acknowledge the value of Minto-Brown Island Park, and by extension other city-operated parks; to promote personal responsibility by park visitors; to reduce litter in the park; and to discourage dog owners from allowing their pets to run off leash in on-leash areas. Students were asked to produce a multiplatform media plan with suggested messaging.

The communication plan was designed to augment a plan developed by students from the University of Oregon's Landscape Architecture department to improve the physical, natural, and human amenities at the park.

Minto-Brown Island Park originally began as a livestock and tobacco farm in 1857. The city acquired the original 308 acres of the park in 1970 and a year later added another 525 acres. Local farmers rent portions of the park to plant crops, some of which are sold and some of which are left behind to provide food for wildlife. The public space is taken up by four parking lots, a shelter for private events, a 12-mile long multiuse trail system, a playground, and a 90-acre off-leash dog play area. One city official estimated that 400,000 people visit the park each year.

In 1993, the Minto-Brown Island Volunteer Park Patrol was formed to preserve the park and provide safety for visitors. The volunteer group and the Salem Parks Foundation, a private, non-profit organization, lead the stewardship efforts for the park.

Park volunteers and city park officials identified a number of concerns for students to address. That information was distilled to four issues:

- Dogs (and their Owners).
- Bicyclists and Pedestrians.
- Littering.
- Volunteer Recruitment and Retention.

Although these are four distinct problems that will take unique strategies to encourage change, there will often be shared tactics that will help achieve multiple goals. After all, these issues arise from a common goal: visitors' enjoyment of Minto-Brown Island Park, and preservation of the park's resources for future generations.

Research and Methodology

Communication students interviewed park officials and volunteers. Extensive research was also conducted to determine how other parks and government entities have dealt with similar problems.

Primary Target Audience

The research indicates that communication needs to occur with people already connected to the park in some way. The target audience is all park visitors. Though targeting the entire City of Salem would be ideal, budget limitations may prohibit use of mainstream media (e.g. newspapers, radio, television) to communicate with the public.

Primary Strategy

- Communicate with park visitors in the park and in other places where they are likely to visit.
- Partner with local businesses to disseminate information to park visitors (e.g. bicycle shops, pet stores, running groups).

Primary Messaging and Themes

To create cohesive messaging that addresses all park visitors, volunteers, and residents of Salem, we suggest the following themes that can be incorporated into materials addressing each issue category. We explore these themes in more detail in the sections below.

- A take-off on the popular sticker showing an outline of Oregon with a green heart inside: park outline in background, “Minto-Brown Island” title and a large green heart at the center.
- “Keep Minto-Brown Green.”
- “Park Pride” title over a map of Minto-Brown Island Park.
- “It is your backyard.”
- “Heart” your park.

Issue #1: Dogs (and their Owners) in Minto-Brown Island Park

Overview and Background

Salem is seeking solutions for an ongoing problem in Minto-Brown Island Park: disregard of leash laws. Although the park has a large unfenced off-leash area, dog owners push the legal limits of the area, allowing their dogs to remain off-leash in other areas, negatively affecting other park visitors, such as bike riders, walkers, families, and joggers.

In addition, park volunteers have faced harassment and disrespect from off-leash violators when confronting them about park rules.

SWOT Analysis

<p>Strengths</p> <p>Minto-Brown’s off-leash park is a great community resource.</p> <p>Most people appreciate and take care of their park.</p> <p>Well-established volunteer patrols.</p>	<p>Weaknesses</p> <p>Poor signage.</p> <p>Emphasis on violations instead of park pride.</p> <p>Volunteers and city employees need additional training.</p>
<p>Opportunities</p> <p>Public education.</p> <p>Volunteer education.</p> <p>Sponsor community events.</p> <p>Emphasize community pride.</p> <p>Gather citizen input.</p> <p>Improve park signage.</p> <p>Create a Dog Advisory Group.</p> <p>Implement citizen communications that thank people for taking care of their park and obeying leash laws.</p> <p>Improve city website.</p>	<p>Threats</p> <p>The concern about public disregard of leash laws and disrespect of volunteers could be overstated. Is the problem truly as big as it seems?</p> <p>Research shows that this is a very typical problem for many communities and that mandatory leash laws are largely ignored (American Park and Recreation Society, 1995).</p>

Importance

Facing budget constraints and additional demand by urban residents for spaces in which to exercise their dogs on- and off-leash, the City of Salem is likely to benefit from a solid plan for managing dog issues in Minto-Brown Island Park.

The park's size makes it difficult to patrol, and volunteer park rangers make enforcement of leash laws difficult without visitor compliance and respect.

Target Audiences

Dog Owners: Salem-area dog owners may not always feel a sense of pride toward their park or an obligation to do their part in regards to leash laws and cleaning up after their pets. There may also be some misunderstanding as to park rules and off-leash area boundaries. New residents might need help understanding that only two Salem parks – Minto-Brown Island and Orchard Heights – provide off-leash areas.

The off-leash problem may also not be as bad as is perceived by park volunteers. Research shows that leash laws tend to be ignored on a national level unless a compromise can be reached “that fulfills the needs of both parks and dog owners” (American Park and Recreation Society, 1995). Studies also show that safety concerns about off-leash dogs may be overstated. “Municipalities did not report a greater incidence among unleashed compared to leashed dogs, and did not raise liability as a concern” (Blackshaw, 1995).

Volunteers and City Employees: Volunteers and city employees are an important target audience as they interact directly with park visitors. There is some concern that neither group is receiving adequate training to handle the task of dealing with the public in the most effective manner, and that neither group is receiving the recognition for the work they perform. The present working conditions and volunteer atmosphere prevent the people who frequently interact with park visitors from performing the best job possible.

Project/Campaign Objective

Establish communications guidelines and an educational campaign for reaching out to Minto-Brown Island Park dog owners that will create a sense of pride about their park and encourage respect of leash laws, city regulations, and city volunteers and park employees.

Strategy

Reach out to people on both sides of the issue with a communications campaign designed to increase pride in the park and encourage citizens to take responsibility for their own open spaces, parks, and dog areas.

An excellent blueprint for creating the type of policy and awareness that Salem is seeking is available from the City of Chicago. The Dog Advisory Work Group (DAWG), Safe Humane Chicago, and Chicago city officials work with communities to create protocol and solve dog problems. The website address for DAWG is: <http://www.dawgsite.org/>

Tactics

- Create messages that can be presented to dog owners and the public that recognize a sense of park pride. Use the messaging in signage, flyers, and at community events.
- Examples of this would be: “Thank you for taking care of your park.” “Thank you for keeping your park safe!”
- Provide park volunteers with consistent messaging and create a handout explaining park rules that they can give to violators to avoid a confrontational situation. In addition, volunteers could possibly hand out “rewards” – dog treats and donated gift certificates to those who are obeying the rules.
- Work with local dog groups to offer off-leash training to dog owners.
- Implement a similar program to Chicago’s DAWG and Safe Humane Chicago model. The model was created to develop “community involvement, ultimately people overseeing responsibility for their dog areas.” The program includes an intensive education component for “both sides of the dog fence,” dog owner and dog obedience education, a park pride campaign, a dog awareness committee, and a citywide Scoop the Poop campaign. Dog problems are no longer at the top of the list of public complaints to the Chicago Park District, according to officials. The program was so successful that DAWG supporters now help other communities establish similar protocol.
- Create a graphic dog “mascot” that can be utilized in collateral materials.
- Purchase a dog mascot costume for use at public events to reinforce the pride aspect of the campaign.
- Create professional, creative signage for the park and the off-leash area.
- Sponsor community events.
- Create a special page on the City of Salem Parks website specifically for information about dog regulation and off-leash areas. The current information is difficult to find and does not include maps or directions. Include education and positive messaging.

Potential messages

The following are messages that could be used on signs and other communication materials directed toward park visitors with dogs.

Welcome to Salem’s parks.

- Salem parks have something for everyone ... for both two-legged and four-legged friends!
- Listed below is more information on pooches in parks. Remember, visitors

and their dogs enter off-leash areas at their own risk.

- Dogs on leashes are welcome in all Salem parks. Most parks have Mutt Mitt dispensers so owners can pick up after their pets, which helps keep parks cleaner and safer for visitors. Mutt Mitt refills come in packs of 800 and can be purchased for \$65. People interested in donating should contact salemparks@cityofsalem.net.

Please respect the rules in off-leash areas. All dogs must:

- Be properly licensed and vaccinated.
- Be leashed prior to entering, and upon leaving, the off-leash area.
- Stay within the off-leash boundaries.
- Stay away from wildlife, natural areas, pathways, and playgrounds.
- Not display aggressive or threatening behavior to other park visitors or their dogs.
- Not bark excessively.

In off-leash areas, owners must:

- Clean up and dispose of dog waste.
- Be with their pets, and in verbal control of their dogs, at all times.
- Be liable for damage or injury inflicted by their dogs.
- Comply with all other park rules and regulations.

Turning dogs loose outside of off-leash areas can be costly:

- It is against the law (the fine is \$87).
- It makes the dog owner legally liable for injuries to others.
- It endangers your dog.

Loose dogs on paths and roadways:

- Endanger bicyclists, pedestrians, and children.
- Invite confrontations with other dogs.
- Frighten or chase wildlife.

Responsible dog owners:

- Leash their dogs (six-foot leash).
- Scoop the poop (Mutt Mitts are free from dispensers).
- Use the exercise area at Orchard Heights or Minto-Brown Island Parks when dogs are off-leash.

Irresponsible dog owners:

- Turn dogs loose on paths and roadways.
- Look the other way when their dog defecates.
- Resent having to obey the law.

Note: Aggressive dogs are prohibited from the parks.

Signage

Figures 1 and 2 are examples of the types of signs that could be used to execute the plan as it relates to dog owners. Web sites with more examples of signs are provided in the Resources section at the end of this report.



Figures 1 and 2: Examples of friendly dog signage from Phoenix, AZ, and North Vancouver, BC. (Source: Flickr users Daniel Greene and Kimli).

Issue #2: Bicyclists and Pedestrians

Overview and Background

According to volunteers and park officials, there is concern about potential accidents between bicyclists and pedestrians on the park trails. Instances of collisions and near misses are increasing. Education and increased signage at the park are needed, both to assist with wayfinding and to help reduce possible accidents. There are no signs currently directing bicyclists to marked bike trails, nor are there signs along trails cautioning of pedestrians, steep trails, curves, or any other hazards. There are also reports of incidents between bicyclists and off-leash dogs.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths Minto-Brown's twelve miles of bike trails are a valuable community amenity. Most people bike responsibly. Well-established volunteer patrols.	Weaknesses Poor signage. Visitors need reminders on right-of-way laws. Trail deterioration.
Opportunities Public education. Volunteer education. Sponsorship of trail upkeep by local businesses. Gather citizen input. Improve park signage. Improve city website.	Threats Possible collisions between bicyclists and pedestrians. Possible dog harm or bites to people when bikes surprise pedestrians and their dogs. Research shows that this is a typical problem in many parks.

Importance

The City of Salem exposes itself to liability by not having proper signage. Adding and upgrading signage also presents an opportunity to introduce bike enthusiasts to trails previously undiscovered and to get bicyclists involved directly with the upkeep of those trails.

Target Audiences

Bicyclists, local bicycle businesses, and park volunteers are the target audiences for this campaign. By targeting local businesses with a vested

interest in bicycling, the hope is to have representatives within the biking community share the messaging that will help create a positive, shared experience by park visitors. Volunteers will need to know what the signs mean in order to help educate visitors.

Project/Campaign Objective

The objective is to educate and offer constant visual reminders. Some bicyclists, park visitors, and volunteers may not be aware of proper trail sharing etiquette and laws. By providing clear signage throughout the bike trails, as well as maps at park kiosks with clearly marked bike trails, visitors will know what is expected of them and where they can best enjoy the park activity of their choice.

Strategy

A community park is as successful as the community members who support it, whether through time or other means. Involving local businesses who benefit from bicyclists as well as bicyclists themselves in the campaign to “share the paths” that they enjoy at Minto-Brown Island Park is integral to the success of the objectives for this particular issue. Through strong and recognizable partnerships, the signs will be of high and lasting quality, emphasizing their importance, and the trails will receive regular upkeep and care.

Tactics

- Install large maps of the entire park at kiosks with bike trails and examples of signs to be found on the trail system.
- Place signs at vulnerable trail areas.
- Include on all signs the reminder that pedestrians always have the right of way.
- Target local bike companies to adopt a path to sponsor trail upkeep and pay for “Share the Wear” signage.
- Ads and flyers to “introduce” bike trails to the public – placed at local bike shops or other popular bicycle trails.

Messaging

“Share the path” messaging combined with “share the wear” on signs.

The main message is “Share the Wear” targeted at all park visitors (much like the littering campaign described below) to evoke a feeling of responsibility to take care of the natural beauty that each visitor is fortunate enough to enjoy. The goal is to create a partnership with each visitor and the park itself,

communicating that the park cannot exist without the help and care of each visitor, regardless of their activity of choice at the park.

“Share the Path” will offer an extension of that message targeted to the bike and walking trails specifically. This will help to remind both types of visitors that they need to be mindful of other activities on the trails, and enforce the sense of responsibility to take care of the path they travel.

South Dakota has created an online brochure that provides maps for bicyclists that outline where they are allowed to ride, the length of various rides, and suggested fitness level for riders.

The Borough of Kirklees, England, has also created a brochure that explains the meanings of various signs pertaining to bicyclists.

The Portland Parks and Recreation website includes an area for current projects taking place in different parks. Something similar on the City of Salem’s website for “What’s Happening” at your park, or specifically Minto-Brown Island Park, would be informative and help keep citizens aware of new campaigns being implemented. Visitors can initiate projects that may be needed by visiting the department’s web site. The online map for Forest Park trails includes a wonderful sign; however the map could be clearer and easier to read.

The Resources section at the end of this report contains web addresses for these pages.

Signage

The following figures are examples of the types of signs that could be used to execute the plan as it relates to bicyclists.



Figure 3: Signs in Riverside Park, New York City, attempt to reduce cyclist-pedestrian conflicts (although these signs were installed without consultation with cyclists and led to limited compliance). (Source: dnainfo.com).



Figures 4 - 7: The first three signs indicate trails that are hazardous, closed, or off-limits to biking. The "More Trails" sign indicates the directions that cyclists can continue. (Source: ridehunter.com)

Issue #3: Littering

Overview and Background

Park visitors are not always packing out their trash. Cigarette butts and dog-feces bags are two of the most commonly left behind items, according to park volunteers. Additional litter sources come from summer visitors who leave behind beer bottles and drug paraphernalia, and from abandoned homeless camps.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths Garbage cans are strategically placed. Most people dispose of garbage appropriately. Well-established volunteer litter patrols.	Weaknesses Poor signage. Visitors need to be reminded of litter laws. Only so many volunteer hours to devote.
Opportunities Public education. Strong messaging campaign. Gather citizen input. Improve park signage. Improve city website.	Threats Possible safety issues. Litter spreading beyond park boundaries (into the Willamette River). Research shows that this is a very typical problem for many parks.

Importance

Many sections of Minto-Brown Island Park are wetlands, and garbage threatens the wildlife of not only the park, but also the community at large. Storm drains located throughout the park are often conductors of cigarette butts, which eventually end up in the Willamette River. Reminders of methamphetamine labs, homeless encampments, and dog feces are also potential physical threats to park visitors. Besides the unsightly nature of litter, its various forms represent safety concerns for all who visit Minto-Brown Island Park.

Target Audience

All park visitors are the target audience for a litter messaging campaign. Park visitors need to be made aware of the seriousness of the offense and the consequences to other park visitors, to the volunteers who pick up the trash they leave behind, to the wildlife in the park, and to the Willamette River.

Project/Campaign Objective

The main objective is to remind park visitors that it is their responsibility to pack out garbage they bring with them or create while visiting the park. The secondary objectives are to educate visitors on the consequences of not properly cleaning up after themselves, and to create a sense of pride in taking care of their park.

Strategy

Use visual images to drive home the amount of trash that is picked up by volunteers every year (see Figure 8). This will help visitors visualize the large amount of trash that is collected and will discourage them from littering. Colorful garbage cans will act as visual reminder of where trash should be dumped.

Tactics

- “Share the Wear” program to target high schools to help clean up park.
- Brightly colored garbage cans to help “target” where the garbage belongs.
- Signs asking park visitors to report drug/alcohol use.
- Use Iowa City’s example of “adopt a park” program to help with litter clean-up and awareness (see Resources section for web addresses).
- Signage throughout park with “Share the Wear” messaging.
- Statistics of “who litters” on park kiosks (see Resources section).



Figure 8: Visual representation of one cubic yard of garbage.

Issue #4: Volunteer Recruitment and Retention

Overview and Background

A group of concerned citizens in 1993 created the Minto-Brown Island Volunteer Park Patrol. Prior to that time, the park was becoming a breeding ground for crime. During the last 18 years, individual patrol volunteers have been spending a minimum of eight hours per month, and often more, providing information to park visitors and patrolling park grounds. The patrol volunteers have had a positive impact on the park, helping to reduce crime, vandalism, and other illegal activities.

According to Tibby Larson, the volunteer coordinator for Salem Parks and Recreation, patrol volunteers are difficult to recruit and retain. The minimum commitment of eight hours per month could be an issue with new recruitment. Park visitors have been abusive and rude to several patrol volunteers. On a more positive note, the opportunities to be outside, engage with others, and exercise have been noted as positive aspects of being a patrol volunteer.

In addition to patrol volunteers, occasional volunteers are needed on a regular basis. These volunteers commit to one project, like planting trees. Once a project is completed, their commitment is fulfilled.

SWOT Analysis

<p>Strengths</p> <p>Strong, core group of patrol volunteers.</p> <p>Good recruitment and participation of occasional volunteers.</p> <p>Beautiful park and outdoor setting make Minto-Brown Island Park an attractive place to volunteer.</p> <p>Off-leash dog park an attraction for pet lovers.</p>	<p>Weaknesses</p> <p>Eight hour per month minimum time commitment for patrol volunteers can make it more difficult to recruit.</p>
<p>Opportunities</p> <p>Opportunity to take recruit patrol volunteers from existing pool of occasional volunteers.</p> <p>Previously untapped social media opportunities could be a good resource to expand volunteer base.</p> <p>Partnering with local businesses to organize events could increase volunteer turnout.</p>	<p>Threats</p> <p>Inclement weather during fall and winter months can discourage people from volunteering.</p> <p>Abusive and/or confrontational park-goers can discourage people from volunteering.</p> <p>Civic-minded people who are likely to volunteer may already be committed to another organization.</p>

Importance

Both types of volunteers are important, but patrol volunteers are more vital to the health and safety of Minto-Brown Island Park. Without their vigilance, the park could be misused much more often, by people who have been caught camping and using drugs, and by inconsiderate park visitors who do not pick up after themselves or who let their dogs run off-leash. Park misuse often leads to safety issues, which deter people from using the park. In addition, there is no funding in the budget to employ people to patrol the park. Patrol volunteers are usually the first people to alert Salem Police of issues that require their attention.

Target Audiences

Potential volunteers: Community-minded individuals and organizations that use Minto-Brown Island Park.

Current Occasional Volunteers: These volunteers are needed on a project basis. Coordinating large groups of volunteers for one-day commitments has typically not been an issue. Volunteer coordinators have been able to fulfill needs by working with churches, schools, businesses, and community groups.

Current Patrol Volunteers: The greatest need for volunteers at this time is for patrol volunteers. These volunteers commit to a minimum of eight hours per month. Currently, there is a core group of patrol volunteers who usually work beyond the eight hours required.

Objective

Persuade visitors to Minto-Brown Island Park to volunteer their time to maintain the park and make it safe and usable for all Salem residents.

Strategy

Appeal to existing visitors to the park, as well as to existing occasional volunteers, and use their self-interest to convince them to give of their time to continue improvement of the park.

Messaging

Potential Volunteers

The messaging we recommend to encourage people to volunteer who have not done so in the past would emphasize two important points: benefit to the individual volunteering, and benefit to the organization, in this case Minto-Brown Island Park. The volunteers who will be the most active and return the most will need to believe that what they are doing is helping a cause important to them. From a 2006 survey on volunteers: "Volunteers offer their assistance because

they want to help a cause they believe in (94 percent), want to develop skills and acquire experiences in order to contribute to the organization's cause (87 percent), and because someone they are affiliated with (significant others, children, etc.) is affected by the organization and its programs (76 percent)." (Strigas, 2006)

With this knowledge, we can appeal to several groups in Salem: dog owners who use the park's off-leash dog area, nature enthusiasts, bicyclists, runners, and families. All of these groups have a vested interest in the park and, with the right messaging and opportunities, could be persuaded to volunteer.

Current Volunteers

Messages should encourage existing volunteers to continue giving their time and even to increase their time spent volunteering. Highlighting the benefits of volunteering could be helpful – especially for the older population. "For individuals associated with voluntary organizations, offering time, services and expertise helps increase self-esteem, facilitates new relationships, develops skills and abilities, reduces depression levels and builds healthier attitudes about aging." (Strigas, 2006)

Tactics

Potential Volunteers

- Social Media outreach: "We love Minto-Brown Island Park" Group.
- Partnership with local businesses to promote organized activities in the park: Bicycle shops/groups, running shops/groups, dog training/obedience schools/groups.
- Signage at entrance/throughout park to drive home importance of volunteering: "Please help us keep the park this beautiful – Volunteer Now!"
Trash/ugly picture: "Don't want the park to look like this? Volunteer Now!"

Existing Volunteers

- Converting occasional volunteers into patrol volunteers.
- Appreciation party and other recognition gestures, ensuring good volunteer experience for those already involved.

Conclusion

Minto-Brown Island Park is likely to remain a popular destination for Salem residents. Some park visitors, however, seem to be taking this community asset for granted, ruining the experience for others. This communication plan is designed to raise awareness of park rules and to change attitudes so that more people consider it their responsibility to protect the Minto-Brown Island Park experience.

The primary tools in creating awareness and creating the desired shift in attitudes are a) the education of park visitors through a series of signs, and b) partnering with specific user groups. Dog owners need to be reminded that their pets are allowed to be off leash only in the designated area. Failing to do so creates a danger to the dogs as well as to other park visitors, and could potentially result in a hefty fine. Bicyclists need to be reminded that they are sharing the park trail with other visitors and to be considerate of others. This is also a safety issue for both cyclists and pedestrians. All visitors need to be reminded to be responsible for their own trash.

Finally, park volunteers need to be given the tools to help make the park experience more positive by putting them in a positive reinforcement role rather than one of “park rules enforcer.” A greater effort needs to be made to recognize the contribution of park volunteers as a way to increase participation and to make others aware that it is people just like them trying to make the park a better place.

Given the budgetary constraints facing the City of Salem, it is recommended that officials consider tackling the “necessary” tactics first and the others as funds permit.

“Necessary” Tactics

Signage: Improved signage throughout the park is essential. The two topics that would have the greatest impact on visitor safety would be:

- Dog park rules.
- Bicycle path rules.

Gesture of Appreciation for Volunteers: To retain current volunteers and encourage occasional volunteers to become patrol volunteers, an appropriate level of appreciation should be expressed.

- Hold quarterly coffee/breakfast gathering where volunteers can voice concerns and share ideas with park officials.
- Add signage in the park to publicly recognize volunteers’ efforts.

Implementation of Annual “Volunteer Park Clean-up Day”: Designate one weekend day a year in the early summer to have a Minto-Brown Island Park

clean-up day (similar to SOLV's Beach Clean-up). Sprucing up the park for the summer months will be an excellent public relations opportunity for the park.

- Create a press release about the event and disseminate it to local media, churches, and civic organizations.
- Use Facebook ads to target Salem residents to encourage them to join in the clean-up.
- Recruit occasional volunteers from this event to create a larger pool of potential patrol volunteers.

Partnerships With Local Businesses: Park and city officials could create beneficial partnerships with local Salem businesses. The partnerships can be used to disseminate information to park visitors, and to appeal to a business owner's sense of civic responsibility to help the park.

- Ask businesses to offer discounts to park volunteers.
- Allow businesses to use the park to stage public events (e.g. dog behavior clinic, bicycle and running groups).

“Would Be Nice to Have” Tactics

Brochures or Rack Cards: Create brochures or rack cards with information about Minto-Brown Island Park and distribute them to relevant local businesses. Information to be included on cards would be a map, park history, volunteer opportunities, contact information, specific bike/hike map, and “dogs in the park” information.

Signage: In this second tier, the focus is on issues that may have less of an impact on park visitor safety, but are important for the beauty and maintenance of the park.

- Post general park rules at the entrance, creating a welcome center.
- Post reminders to pack out all litter and dog waste.
- Make maps and other wayfinding aids available at entrances and trailheads.
- Remember to include a “Thank you to volunteers who make it all possible.”

“We Won the Lottery!” (or Received a Healthy Grant) Tactics

- Rent billboards near Minto-Brown Island Park reminding people to visit and help maintain beauty.
- Buy newspaper ads for special events.
- Overhaul the Salem Parks and Recreation website.

References

American Park and Recreation Society (1995). Planning Parks for Pets.

Blackshaw, J., et al. (1995). Public Open Space and Dogs: a Design and Management Guide for Open Space Professionals and Local Government.

Strigas, A. (2006). Research update: Making the most of volunteers. Parks & Recreation, 41(4), 26-29.

Resources

Dog park signage: <http://www.mysecuritysign.com/PGS/Dog-Park-Rules.aspx>

Portland Parks and Recreation: <http://www.portlandonline.com/parks/?c=43290>

Portland Forest Park mountain biking map: <http://www.portlandonline.com/parks/finder/index.cfm?action=ViewFile&PoIPdfsID=81&/Forest Park Mountain Biking Map.pdf>

South Dakota bicycle touring map: <http://gfp.sd.gov/to-do/docs/state-park-bicycle-tour.pdf>

Borough of Kirklees, England, brochure that explains the meanings of various signs pertaining to bicyclists: <http://www.kirklees.gov.uk/transport/cyclesigns.pdf>

Littering statistics: <http://www.greenecoservices.com/littering-facts-and-statistics>

SOLV litter statistics from Oregon beach clean-up: http://www.oceanconservancy.org/our-work/marine-debris/icc_report.html

Iowa City's adopt-a-park program: <http://www.icgov.org/default/?id=1056>