HELPING SOLVE CHALLENGES IN PARK PLANNING, FINANCE, AND OPERATIONS

The Urban Land Institute Advisory Services program brings real estate and land use expertise to complex planning and policy challenges. Since 1947, the program has offered a unique chance to find practical, unbiased solutions through one-week engagements that rely on the volunteer labor of ULI member experts and industry leaders.

In conjunction with the 10-Minute Walk campaign, which promotes the bold idea that everyone in urban America should live within a ten-minute walk of a high-quality park, ULI is offering specialized Advisory Services panels focused on parks and open space, resilience, park-connecting infrastructure, health, and related issues. Learn more about the 10-Minute Walk campaign at www.10minutewalk.org.

ULI Advisory Services panels can help communities develop solutions to park challenges and identify strategies to maximize the value of parks and promote improved environmental performance, economic development, and quality of life.
Sponsors

A wide variety of public, private, and nonprofit organizations engage ULI’s Advisory Services program.

Potential sponsors should have in mind a specific policy or development challenge that relates to planning, delivery, and operation of parks and open space, park-related infrastructure, resilience, or similar topics. Park-focused panels can identify land use and development strategies for individual sites and park systems, assess policy and programming opportunities, and craft strategies for implementation and funding of parks and related infrastructure such as trails.

Sponsors are involved in all aspects of panel planning—from defining the panel’s scope and its assignment, to developing background materials and resources for panelists and identifying local resources and stakeholders for the panel to interview.

A typical panel costs $135,000. With support from an external funder, ULI can offer panels at a cost to sponsors of $25,000.

To take advantage of this opportunity, the sponsor should be located in a city that has signed on to the 10-Minute Walk campaign. However, if a potential sponsor is a county or other government entity that is not eligible to participate in the campaign (which is limited to cities), the sponsor should contact Advisory Services to explore whether an opportunity exists to conduct a panel. Parks panels can only be conducted in the United States.

Panel scope

El Paso faces challenges with water availability, a fragile natural ecosystem, health concerns, and aging infrastructure. The panel focused on resilience strategies for an active transportation system that promotes environmental quality, community engagement, and economic investment.

Key recommendations

Considering the economic conditions and environmental stressors on El Paso, the panel recommended building on a strong existing foundation of planning and partnerships. It suggested implementation of a new land use strategy for the active transportation system, linking key priority areas for economic development while promoting healthy activity and creating a trail that doubles as stormwater management infrastructure.

POTENTIAL PARK PANEL TOPICS

- Park funding, financing, and partnerships
- Resilience and green infrastructure
- Park connections and infrastructure
- Gentrification and mitigation of resident displacement
- Maximizing opportunities for health
- Park programming
- Short- and long-term opportunities for specific park parcels
How a Panel Works

1 PREPARATION

ULI works with the sponsor to prepare for the panel over the course of several months, including determining an appropriate focus site and key questions. The sponsor is responsible for preparing briefing materials, inviting appropriate stakeholders and community members to participate, and arranging for a tour of the study area. ULI handles logistics related to panelists’ travel, lodging, and workspace.

2 BUILDING THE TEAM

ULI assembles a team of panelists, composed of seven to ten highly qualified professionals who volunteer their time to ULI. A major strength of the program is ULI’s unique ability to draw on the knowledge and expertise of its members, including public officials, land developers and owners, academics, designers, planners, and more. Each team features a range of professionals able to provide a holistic and interdisciplinary look at the panel assignment, with all panelists screened to ensure their objectivity.

3 PANEL VISIT

The panel visits the community over a five-day period. Panel activities include site tours, briefing presentations by the panel sponsors, an intensive day of stakeholder interviews, and team work days.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The week concludes with a public presentation of the panel’s findings and recommendations. All project stakeholders are invited to the presentation. The panel creates a draft of a comprehensive report detailing its findings and recommendations. After sponsor input on the draft, ULI publishes the report.

5 IMPLEMENTATION AND FOLLOW-UP

Panel sponsors have used recommendations from the panel presentation and report to advance the policies, programs, and development projects proposed. The Institute is committed to following up with the host communities and advancing recommendations in partnership with local sponsors and ULI district councils.

Panel scope

The Southwest Detroit Business Association wanted a redevelopment strategy for the 60,000-square-foot West Vernor Highway Department of Public Works site. The panel studied how to take advantage of the area’s existing assets to create an economic development generator, as well as which key partnerships would be needed for implementation.

Key recommendations

The panel envisioned the Vernor site with public open space as a critical element. As the heart of the community, the public space would be surrounded by retail space, dining options and food-related retail space, and incubator space for local artisans. A new “Vernor Square” was seen as a potential center for employment, retail businesses, and community gatherings. Strategic partnerships would be the key to creating a new destination that celebrates the cultures of local residents.
**Panel scope**

McKees Rock, a small borough of Pittsburgh, is home to a new CSX intermodal freight rail facility that will put this small community at the center of shipping in western Pennsylvania. The McKees Rock Community Development Corporation (CDC) asked the panel to develop a forward-looking economic analysis, site analysis, and design for sustainable, resilient, and equitable development in McKees Rock and the neighboring community of Esplen.

**Key recommendations**

The panel recommended strategic priorities for the McKees Rock CDC and its partners, identifying “connections” as a key theme. In addition to restoration of the street grid, creation of new parks and public space was a key recommendation. Parks, plazas, and new recreational amenities throughout the waterfront area were recommended as opportunities to take advantage of existing assets, celebrate the community, and spur economic investment.

**Learn More**

ULI is available to speak to interested parties about the program, potential areas of focus, and how to make the most of an Advisory Services panel.

Visit [www.uli.org/advisoryservices](http://www.uli.org/advisoryservices) to learn more about the program.

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### A Typical Panel Week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>Arrival of panelists, orientation, and sponsor dinner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Briefing on panel assignment, study tour, and public reception</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Stakeholder interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Panel deliberations and work sessions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Preparation of report and presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Presentation of the panel’s findings and recommendations</td>
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**We would love to hear from you.**

Contact health@uli.org with any questions or inquiries.