

# THE JOURNEY BOOK

How to make your city a National Park City

VERSION 1.2 – OCTOBER 2023

**NATIONAL  
PARK CITY  
FOUNDATION\***





# CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	3
<b>WELCOME</b>	4
<b>WHAT IS A NATIONAL PARK CITY?</b>	5
<b>OUR SHARED PURPOSE</b>	6
<b>WHY JOIN?</b>	7
<b>GETTING SUPPORT</b>	8

<b>10 STEPS TO JOIN THE FAMILY</b>	
1/ Do some research	12
2/ Register your campaign	14
3/ Explore the potential	16
4/ Start to create your story	18
5/ Draft proposals, including your Charter	16
6/ Make your case, grow your community and secure support	20
7/ Develop your capacity	23
8/ Submit your portfolio application	25
9/ Agree to the National Park City Family's commitments	27
10/ Confirm, celebrate and launch	31

<b>TERMINOLOGY</b>	35
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<b>OUR PARTNERS</b>	36
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<b>THANK YOU</b>	37
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# INTRODUCTION

Over the past 10 years we have come together as communities in London, Adelaide and across the world to activate our quest to become National Park Cities – sharing curiosity, building relationships, exploring ideas and taking action together.

Asking the simple question, “*What if our city was a National Park City?*” encouraged us to imagine alternative futures for our city and beyond. It also invited us to ask, and keep asking, other “*What if?*” questions, including:

- *What if we all had a better relationship with nature?*
- *What if we all had access to high quality green space?*
- *What if our streets were 10 times greener?*
- *What if there was more outdoor learning in schools?*
- *What if we walked more?*
- *What if there was less pollution?*
- *What if there were more birds in our cities?*

We continue to ask “*What if?*” today as part of our mantra and culture. At a time of health, climate, ecological and social crises, the National Park City vision provides hope, a way to act together and a positive story we can create for ourselves.

We are excited for this journey book to be shared and are delighted you are joining our National Park City journey. Just like the London and Adelaide National Park Cities, and emerging National Park Cities around the world, this journey book is a work in progress.

At its heart is an important question and ambition: what if we had a strong, large, collaborative and supportive family of National

Park Cities around the world?

To create this journey book, we have drawn from the rich and diverse experience of colleagues from over 50 countries. These people helped shape the Universal Charter for National Park Cities which aims to provide a common purpose and was launched in July 2019. In 2020, we tested the National Park Cities proposition, the foundation from which this map of the common journey has evolved. In this time, we have had confirmation from across the globe, through the international networks of our partners in World Urban Parks and Salzburg Global Seminar, that the National Park City is an idea whose time has come.

Never has the National Park City Family been more important. The pandemic has shown us the resonance of the National Park City vision with the basic needs of communities at a time of crisis. It has highlighted the innate need to connect with, and restore, the natural world for our health, and the demand for healthy cities. Communities have come together to build campaigns. There is a real eagerness, from across continents, to get moving on the collective National Park City journey. This is a journey of hope for the health of climate, nature and ourselves in the places where we live and work. This world family is in the making, evolving idea by idea, community

by community, relationship by relationship.

This journey book illustrates what makes building a National Park City unique and different in how it is conceived, explored and co-created. It’s a journey that invites us to join together to explore, eager to hear ideas and harness the diverse talents and abilities of everyone to respond to challenges. The journey to becoming a National Park City encourages us to embrace opportunities to create better cities for people and nature today and for the future. It’s a journey of hope grounded in collective action.

There is not one way to be a National Park City, but the steps outlined in this journey book provide a common path to our collective hopes for future cities.

By creating an international family of families, we can remain energised, learn, grow and support each other through our diversity. We will bring a kindred spirit of curiosity, exploration and action to our shared purpose of greener, healthier, wilder, fairer and more resilient cities. Our family of National Park Cities has the potential to transform. Its impact is in all our hands.

*Dan Raven-Ellison, Founder  
London National Park City &  
Alison Barnes, Founding Trustee,  
National Park City Foundation*



# WELCOME

Welcome to our guide to joining the National Park City Family – a growing network of people striving to make our cities greener, healthier and fairer, all across the world.

Becoming a National Park City is a journey and this “journey book” will tell you much of what you need to know.

There are 10 steps that we recommend you take. Each recommendation is based on our experience of making London the world’s first National Park City, as well as collaborating with National Park City thinkers, influencers and leaders from around the world.

Following these steps and adapting them to your local situation, hopes and needs will help you get ready to submit an application to officially join the National Park City Family, and for your city to become an established National Park City.

This journey book is a living document. As we learn, we’ll update it with examples, stories and evidence from friends and colleagues in emerging and established National Park Cities.



**SHOULD YOUR CITY BE ON OUR MAP?**  
Email us to let us know:  
[hello@nationalparkcity.org](mailto:hello@nationalparkcity.org)

KEY	
	ESTABLISHED NATIONAL PARK CITIES
	NOMINATED NATIONAL PARK CITIES
	NATIONAL PARK CITY ACTIVITY
	WHAT IF?

What if Tokyo was a  
National Park City?

Photo  
Yuhei Nakajima,  
Tokyo

# WHAT IS A NATIONAL PARK CITY?

National Parks are defined differently around the world. They are special places where we have a better relationship with nature, culture and heritage and can enjoy and develop ourselves. Combining the long-term and large-scale vision of National Parks with cities has the potential to shift our collective understanding of what and who a city is for. National Park Cities are not National Parks. But they are inspired by them.

## ABOUT THE NATIONAL PARK CITY FOUNDATION

The National Park City Foundation is the charity behind National Park Cities. London became the first of these in summer 2019, with Adelaide becoming the second in 2021. Having successfully campaigned to secure London and Adelaide's National Park City status, the Foundation wants to bring the idea of National Park Cities to life all around the world.

## WHY WE ARE HERE

With the majority of the world's population now living in urban areas, the eyes of the world are on cities. National Park Cities are a way to rethink cities, their futures and how we inhabit them. They will improve the health of their citizens and play their part in stabilising our common climate, and restoring the natural world. Our aim is for there to be at least 25 Nominated and Established National Park Cities by 2025. We are pleased to work towards this aim with World Urban Parks and Salzburg Global Seminar, as well as other international partners.

To find out more, please visit  
[www.nationalparkcity.org](http://www.nationalparkcity.org)

A National Park City is a place, a vision and a city-wide community that is acting together to make life better for people, places and nature. A defining feature is the widespread commitment to act so people, culture and nature work together to provide a better foundation for life and so we can enjoy ourselves too. It is long-term, large-scale, hyper-local, personal and intergenerational. Everyone in a National Park City has the potential to contribute and benefit every day.

Any urban area or region can apply to join the National Park City Family. But only cities can achieve National Park City status.



# OUR SHARED PURPOSE

Our Universal Charter for National Park Cities sets out the purpose, vision, spirit and goals of the National Park City movement. It was co-created by people from 50 countries around the world.

# THE UNIVERSAL CHARTER FOR NATIONAL PARK CITIES

Our vision is to make cities where people, places and nature are better connected.

Let's make National Park Cities that are rich with nature and where everyone benefits from exploring, playing and learning outdoors. Cities where we all enjoy high quality public and green spaces, where the air is clean to breathe and it's a pleasure to swim in their waters. Together we can make cities greener, healthier, fairer and more harmonious places to live. Why not?

A National Park City is a shared vision and journey for a better life. Everyone in a National Park City is able to benefit and contribute everyday.

It is a large-scale and long-term vision that is achievable through many actions. Much is already happening but by working, learning, sharing and acting together, across communities and governments, we can achieve even more.

*We're working together for better:*

- ★ LIVES, HEALTH AND WELLBEING
- ★ RELATIONSHIPS WITH NATURE & WITH EACH OTHER
- ★ WILDLIFE, TREES AND FLOWERS
- ★ PLACES, HABITATS, AIR, WATER, SEA AND LAND
- ★ LOCALLY GROWN FOOD AND RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION
- ★ DECISIONS, SHARING, LEARNING AND WORKING TOGETHER
- ★ TIME OUTDOORS, CULTURE, ART, PLAYING, WALKING, CYCLING & EATING

This charter confirms that we collectively share the ambition, responsibility and power to deliver these things and more.

## WHAT IS A NATIONAL PARK CITY?

It's a place, a vision and a city-wide community that is acting together to make life better for people, wildlife and nature. A defining feature is the widespread commitment to act so people, culture and nature work together to provide a better foundation for life.

It is a timely cultural choice, a commitment to a sense of place and way of life that sustains people and nature in cities and beyond.

People and cities around the world can draw from the goals, principles and aspirations of this Universal Charter for National Park Cities.

We hope that there will be a strong National Park City Family that works together to fulfil the aspirations of this Universal Charter.

The National Park City Foundation will work with others to publish a regular State of the National Park Cities report to highlight actions and progress being made to support the National Park City vision internationally.

By signing this document I/we show our support for the vision of National Park Cities and pledge to help make them a success.

[charter.nationalparkcity.org](http://charter.nationalparkcity.org)



# WHY JOIN THE NATIONAL PARK CITY FAMILY?

## BENEFITS

Benefits to being part of the National Park City Family.

These include:

- *Sharing learning, practices, ideas and resources with people in other urban areas*
- *Joining collaborative campaigns and projects*
- *Growing your personal and professional network of friends and colleagues*
- *Influencing the National Park City movement.*

## YOUR CITY

Becoming an internationally recognised National Park City will help your city to:

- *Create a shared identity, purpose and way of organising*
- *Inspire people with a vision influenced by our National Park City aims and values*
- *Add a new layer of possibility, ambition and ideas*
- *Disrupt harmful structures, systems and activities*
- *Nurture a way of thinking that is local, large scale, long term and holistic*
- *Use shared National Park City vocabulary that helps to create common understanding between people with different interests and backgrounds.*

## THE ASSESSMENT

Your application and portfolio will need to be of the same high quality whether you want your city to be part of the Family, or achieve full internationally recognised National Park City status.

We'll need to see that your urban landscape:

- *Meets each of the National Park City criteria (see page 30)*
- *Has completed all 10 steps (see page 10).*

Any urban area or region can apply to join the National Park City Family. But only cities can achieve National Park City status. Either way, you will follow the same process.



# GETTING SUPPORT

We hope you find your National Park City journey rewarding, enjoyable and challenging. Your commitment, determination, creativity and openness to learn and collaborate will be key to your success. Please let us know you are interested in your urban area joining the National Park City Family by signing up at [nationalparkcity.org/apply](https://nationalparkcity.org/apply). That way we can keep you in the loop with future opportunities.

*Our team and growing National Park City Family want to help you as much as possible. We've set up a peer network that is rapidly becoming a powerful way for us to work together.*

## MONTHLY MEETINGS

We hold meetings via Zoom on the first Thursday of every month for people on their National Park City journey. The aim is to share ideas, network and collaborate. For now, these are only held in English. Visit [www.nationalparkcity.org/contact](https://www.nationalparkcity.org/contact) to sign up.

## WORKSHOPS

We will run collaborative workshops that focus on the different steps and things you need to do to become a National Park City or become part of the National Park City Family. Visit [www.nationalparkcity.org/contact](https://www.nationalparkcity.org/contact) to sign up.

## CLUSTERS

Emerging National Park Cities with shared interests are forming clusters. These clusters will increasingly provide important peer support. You will be invited to join clusters at our monthly meetings.

## BESPOKE SEMINARS AND WORKSHOPS

Would you like a bespoke seminar or workshop on a specific aspect of the application process? Email us on [hello@nationalparkcity.org](mailto:hello@nationalparkcity.org) and we'll do what we can to help.

## NEED SUPPORT?

Please remember, we only have a small staff and volunteer team working on this project. In the meantime our growing community of volunteers and campaigners will help wherever they can. Many are highly experienced professionals working to launch their own National Park City.

If you have questions or are looking for other advice on becoming a National Park City or joining the National Park City Family, please use our resources at [www.nationalparkcity.org/journey](https://www.nationalparkcity.org/journey) and peer network, wherever possible.

If you have any questions, try our:

- *Frequently asked questions page on our website*
- *Forum to search for answers to questions and connect with others*
- *Monthly Zoom meetings*
- *Group email to connect with people from other cities and campaigns, after you've registered*

For more information, please visit: [www.nationalparkcity.org/journey](https://www.nationalparkcity.org/journey)

What if Johannesburg was a National Park City?

Photo  
City of Johannesburg  
Metropolitan Municipality





START  
HERE

# 10 STEPS TO JOIN THE NATIONAL PARK CITY FAMILY





There are 10 steps you'll need to  
take for your urban area to join  
the National Park City Family,  
or for your city to become an  
official National Park City





**TAKING THESE STEPS  
WILL HELP YOU TO:**

- *Grow a community that will deliver on your hopes and objectives*
- *Make your urban area greener, healthier wilder and fairer*
- *Raise awareness of your vision*
- *Gain consent from people in your city and build a mandate for your ambitions*
- *Prepare and strengthen your efforts*
- *Collect the evidence you need to create your portfolio and support your application.*

At the heart of this work you will need to create a portfolio of evidence. Developing this portfolio should be a creative and collaborative process that will help to structure your efforts.

We currently charge a fee for the application process to cover our costs. This includes the desk and peer review and the peer visit, as well as administration costs. Travel expenses make up a big part of this, so the final fee will depend on where your city is.

If necessary, the National Park City Foundation will work with you to secure funding to cover costs.

There’s more information about costs at [www.nationalparkcity.org/journey](http://www.nationalparkcity.org/journey).

What if Adelaide was a National Park City?

Photo  
*Green Adelaide*







^ Artwork  
Patricia Reyes,  
Manila

1

# DO SOME RESEARCH

Take some time to find out more about the National Park City movement. It's important that you have a good understanding of our shared aims and values.

Start by reading our Universal Charter for National Park Cities. The Universal Charter for National Park Cities sets out a unifying ambition and shared set of goals for the National Park Cities movement. The document was co-created by people from over 50 countries during a year-long process and will continue to evolve in the future. It's at the heart of our movement.

We also recommend looking at the background material we've listed at [www.nationalparkcity.org/journey](http://www.nationalparkcity.org/journey).

Once you have some understanding of the National Park City idea, it's time to ask people in your city for their opinions.



# FIND OUT WHAT PEOPLE THINK OF THE IDEA

*Before going any further, ask some people what they think about the National Park City idea. Start simply asking some friends, family and colleagues. Can they imagine your urban area joining the National Park City Family or becoming an official National Park City? What do they think the benefits will be?*

Come along to one of our regular National Park City online meetings to find out more about the movement, meet people from other cities and ask questions. All future events are listed at [www.nationalparkcity.org/contact](http://www.nationalparkcity.org/contact).

When you're feeling comfortable and confident, we strongly recommend you hold a public workshop, forum or other sessions to explore the idea with more people in your urban area.

It's important to have people from a range of places, backgrounds and interest groups attend your first meeting. The more diverse the gathering, the more you'll learn. You may need to organise more than one meeting in different areas and settings to achieve this.

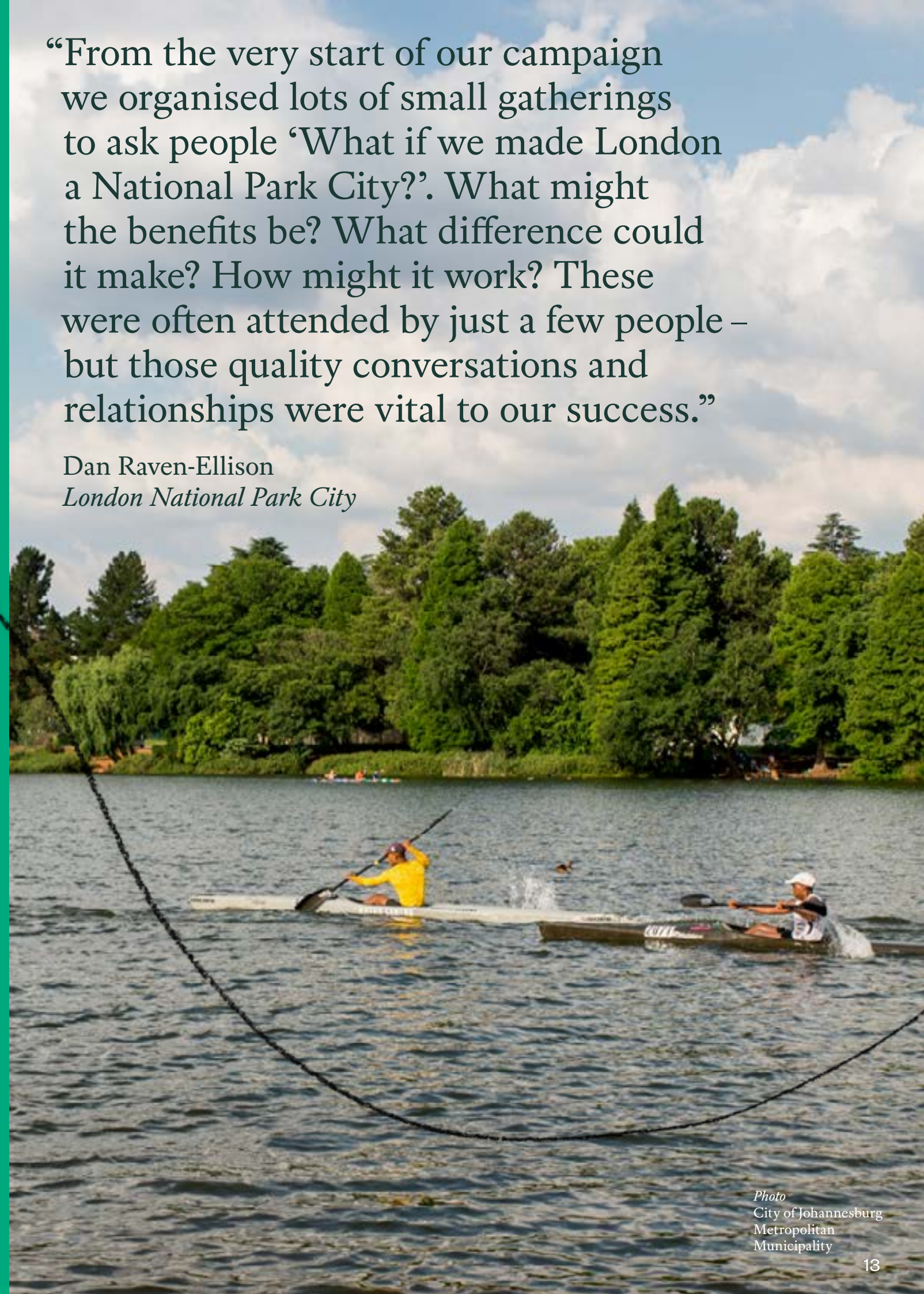
When it comes to taking the next step and registering your campaign, you'll need to have the support of 200 people from across your urban area. Each of these people will need to have signed up to your initiative. Gatherings can be a useful way to meet new people, build relationships and recruit those supporters.

Only register and move your campaign forward if people you speak to are generally supportive about exploring and developing the idea further. They don't have to be completely convinced at this stage, and may have lots of questions, but you should feel there is a positive feeling and enthusiasm towards the idea.

Do not be put off by individuals or groups that raise legitimate concerns or questions, but make sure you both take note of doubts and reflect on them.

“From the very start of our campaign we organised lots of small gatherings to ask people ‘What if we made London a National Park City?’. What might the benefits be? What difference could it make? How might it work? These were often attended by just a few people – but those quality conversations and relationships were vital to our success.”

Dan Raven-Ellison  
*London National Park City*



*Photo*  
City of Johannesburg  
Metropolitan  
Municipality





2

# REGISTER YOUR CAMPAIGN

So, you've decided you want to join the National Park City Family. You won't be alone. We're here to support you and there's a community of people working together with the same ambition in other urban areas who want to collaborate with you too.

First, you'll need to register your campaign.

^ Artwork  
Yuhei Nakajima  
Tokyo





Photo  
Clive Furler,  
Adelaide

*Anyone can register and lead a campaign for their urban area to join the National Park City Family or become a recognised National Park City. You could be an individual or group. You don't need to have any special experience or expertise and can come from any background.*

To formally register you'll need to find at least 200 people in your urban area that agree it has the potential to become a successful member of the National Park City Family. These people should have a wide range of backgrounds and interests, and come from many different places in your urban area. This will demonstrate your commitment to the process, help you explore if the idea will be well received in your area and tell us something about the nature of your urban area.

### **TO REGISTER YOUR CAMPAIGN:**

1. Collect the names of 200 people who support your National Park City initiative
2. Ask the 200 people to sign the Universal Charter for National Park Cities
3. Complete the short registration form at [nationalparkcity.org/apply](https://nationalparkcity.org/apply)

Once you've registered your campaign, you will initially be recognised as an Emerging National Park City.

When you have demonstrated that you have an active campaign and we all feel confident that you are working towards submitting a full application you may be recognised as a Nominated National Park City.

Once you have submitted your portfolio of evidence and have successfully been through the full application process, and your application has been approved – congratulations, you will be fully recognised as an Established National Park City!





^ Artwork  
Sylvia Gomez,  
Bogota

3

# EXPLORE THE POTENTIAL

Next, it's time to start work on recruiting support to grow your community, taking action and collecting the evidence you'll need for your portfolio and application.

This is the beginning of a rewarding and ongoing journey that will become part of your urban area's future. Even when your National Park City is established, your exploration and understanding will evolve, develop and deepen.



In your application portfolio, we'll want to see that you've explored these questions, within your campaign group and with people across your urban area. Doing this will help improve your understanding, involve more people and as a result, strengthen your National Park City thinking, arguments and activities.

### KEEP QUESTIONING

- *What is a National Park City?*
- *What if my urban area was a National Park City or a member of the Family?*
- *What difference would it make?*
- *What would the benefits be?*
- *What would the costs be?*
- *Who would it be good for?*
- *Who would support the idea?*
- *What has my urban area already done that could help in our application?*
- *Who would not like the idea?*
- *How could it be made effective?*
- *How would it work in practice?*
- *What could it achieve?*

### RECOMMENDED LEGWORK

These are some other things you can do as part of your exploration:

- *Physically explore your city taking photos of challenges, opportunities, projects and anything you think is relevant to your mission.*
- *Research what's already been done, and is being done, to make your city greener, healthier and better for nature.*
- *Remember that landscapes, including cities, are places that are made-up of the action and interaction of natural, cultural, social, built and perceptual elements.*
- *Meet people from different places and communities to ask them what they think of the idea.*

- *Conduct a survey, consultation or other research on people's opinions.*
- *Hold a gathering for people to come together to discuss and develop thinking, ideas and projects.*
- *Organise an exhibition.*
- *Create films, podcasts or written stories about people, projects and places in your urban area or your National Park City's journey.*
- *Make a map of your urban area to help people see opportunities to enjoy it or make it better.*

### INVOLVE PEOPLE FROM ACROSS YOUR COMMUNITY

If you want your National Park City to flourish, you'll need regular input from a wide range of people and groups.

One of the beautiful things about the National Park City idea is that everyone who lives in your urban area is included in some way. Everyone will have the potential to benefit and contribute to it every day, even if they are not aware of it. This could be as simple as taking someone on a walk or allowing plants to flourish in a garden. Your challenge is to make them aware of this, and inspire and support them to be positive beneficiaries – and hopefully contributors.

It's really important that you involve a diverse range of people as early as possible in your campaign – ideally from your first meeting. This will make your National Park City more resilient, effective and equitable, and will help you bring on board more people and places.

Try to proactively include and create opportunities for people from different geographies,

ethnicities, ages, genders, sexual orientations and religions. Make sure your team, speakers, champions, survey respondents and contributors represent the diversity of people in your city and actively challenge structural norms that lead to the exclusion of individuals and groups.

It is likely that many groups of people will not hear about your events, think they are for them or even feel welcome. It's important to proactively work to overcome those barriers. This is something we'll be actively looking for in your portfolio application.

A great thing about the National Park City approach is that it attracts people with different interests. This is true for personal interests (for example, gardening, running and art), societal benefits (such as health, education, productivity and the economy) and economic sectors (including travel, health, tourism and corporate responsibility).

### DIVERSITY

Make sure diversity is central to your work:

- *Value and celebrate your urban area's diverse people, places, ecologies and cultures.*
- *Organise meetings in different parts of your urban area.*
- *Make sure minority voices are represented and heard.*
- *Check that any panels or events you organise are gender neutral and diverse.*
- *Monitor consultations or surveys to make sure you're hearing from people with different interests and priorities.*
- *Make sure your teams include people from different backgrounds.*

“Diversity and inclusion must be at the very heart of a National Park City, as it needs to create a culture of belonging for all its citizens, ensuring that the movement is representative of all demographics of any given city. Belonging happens when we can all recognise, celebrate, and value our differences as a group, so that the collective ‘we’ expands to include peoples of all identities. When people are able to feel like they belong somewhere, they want to stay there, grow there, and find more people like them to work with. This circle of belonging is essential to expanding the reach and impact of all our work going forward, and it is key to making cities across the world greener, healthier and wilder.”

Floree Zama-Neagra

*Volunteer Ranger Coordinator for the London National Park City*





^ Artwork  
Beth Driscoll,  
Newcatlse

4

# START TO CREATE YOUR CITY'S STORY

Creating and sharing stories is an important part of any successful National Park City.

Stories have the power to shape how we think and feel. They influence our identities and the decisions we make. We write, tell and pass on stories and can create them through the things that we do.

In your application, we'll want to see that you've created a story that describes the history of your urban area, the challenges it faces and your ambitions for the future. You might want to use this story across your campaign communications.





“In London our presence online has always been critical to our success. We’ve always had a website that communicates our ideas and inspires people to get involved. This has been supported by a positive social media presence, without which I’ve no doubt we would not have gained enough traction. The London National Park City is also growing a wiki as a collaborative space where anyone can contribute to the National Park City’s story.”

Paul de Zylva, Former Chair of the  
*National Park City Foundation*

### STORYTELLING

When creating your story you’ll need to:

- *Research the projects, policies and plans that will influence and shape your National Park City*
- *Build a website for your campaign and have plans to update it*
- *Start telling your story and making your case on social media*
- *Start telling your story and making your case in the media*
- *Train volunteers to help tell your National Park City story*
- *Make films, podcasts and art to share stories or have other creative ways to do so*
- *Gather stories from different perspectives that are written or spoken by others*
- *Inspire stories about what your National Park City might be like in the future.*

### IT’S ALL IN THE DETAILS

When thinking about creating and sharing your National Park City’s stories it’s worth reflecting on a number of things:

- *Take time to understand relevant aspects of your urban area’s past, present and future*
- *Actively do things that create stories that either you or others can tell. As an example, the Galway National Park City initiative has launched a National Park City Champions project. Not only does the existence of this effort create a story that can be told, but the things it does and the people involved all create stories too*
- *Think carefully about the stories you can share that will support your National Park City*
- *Consider who would be best to tell a story to which audience*
- *Accept that you won’t be able to tell all aspects of your urban area’s story – pick the most compelling ones*
- *Visit national parks, cities and other potential National Park Cities for ideas.*

Photo  
Green Adelaide,  
Adelaide





<sup>^</sup> Artwork  
Diana Weisner,  
Bogota

5

# DRAFT PROPOSALS & YOUR NATIONAL PARK CITY CHARTER

To gain support for your National Park City, from the public, organisations, politicians and any relevant authorities, you'll need to put together some proposals. Writing proposals is a good way to help you formulate your ideas and collaborate with others. They're an opportunity to share, consult on, test and improve your thinking.



# 3 TYPES OF PROPOSALS

## EXPERIMENTAL PROPOSALS

You're likely to start by making informal and experimental proposals about your National Park City. Many of these will simply be conversations with others, asking them what they think of the idea. These will become more formal as you move on to holding meetings, forums or gatherings to ask people for their opinions. This thinking and learning will contribute towards your initial written proposal.

## INITIAL WRITTEN PROPOSAL

Your initial proposal should be a short document that sets out your ambition for your city to become a National Park City. Use this to capture people's imaginations and encourage them to respond to a public consultation. This consultation should be carried out both online and in person. You can then use the findings to develop your thinking, build support and create a full proposal.

A public consultation does not have to be complicated. It can be as simple as asking people to read your proposal and then filling in an online questionnaire to provide feedback on it.

You might ask people:

- If they support your aims
- Things they would like the National Park City to achieve
- If they think becoming a National Park City would improve your city and if so, how
- For suggestions on how the proposal can be improved
- If they think your local or national government should support your proposal
- If they support your proposal.

## FULL PUBLIC PROPOSAL

This proposal needs to inspire people and include enough detail to persuade them to support your idea. Write in plain English and make sure it's easy for anyone to understand. Include your draft National Park City's Charter for people to sign up to. You'll need to keep listening to the people you engage with, so consult on this proposal too. However, this document should be your main statement of intent which you'll use to secure your National Park City's mandate - the consent, agreement and authority you need in order to turn your Emerging National Park City into an Established National Park City that is officially recognised in your locality.

Your full public proposal will form part of your application to become a National Park City or a member of the National Park City Family.

It should:

- Be inspiring, convincing and easy to read
- Include ambitions and goals that have been agreed by consensus from your community
- Demonstrate how your urban area includes all of the National Park City elements
- Champions individuals and organisations that are already doing things that will make your National Park City successful
- Show that your urban area has projects that, if replicated, could make your city greener, healthier and a better place for nature to thrive and people to live
- Demonstrate that your urban area has places and projects that you would be proud to show visitors and residents, such as nature reserves, outdoor learning initiatives or green housing.

- Demonstrate that your urban area has policies in place that are in line with the National Park City vision, and that any that are counter to it are being challenged
- Explain how your National Park City will be governed and resourced.

## WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A VISION, PROPOSAL AND CHARTER?

Your vision is what you want to achieve. It is what you want the world to look like in the future. Inspired by the University Charter for National Park Cities, your Charter includes your vision but also sets out your goals. People should be able to sign-up to support your Charter. Your full public proposal tells people what you plan to do and why. Your vision and Charter will be important parts of this document.



Photo  
Presidio Trust,  
San Francisco



# WRITE, SIGN AND CELEBRATE YOUR NATIONAL PARK CITY CHARTER

*Every National Park City must have its own National Park City Charter, inspired by the Universal Charter for National Park Cities.*

Your Charter will be an important guiding document that people in your urban area will be able to use to inspire, influence and guide action.

Your Charter must be:

- *co-created with people from your urban area*
- *inspired by and in line with the Universal Charter for National Park Cities*
- *distinctive to your urban area*
- *updated every few years*
- *published online so that anyone can read and sign up to it.*

Have a look at the London National Park City Charter ([charter.nationalparkcity.london](http://charter.nationalparkcity.london)) and see how closely the wording aligns with the Universal Charter for National Park Cities. Future versions of the London Charter are likely to become more distinctive to London's character, ambitions and needs, but the structure will stay closely aligned.

When you've published your Charter, ask the public, as well as key decision makers and influencers, to sign it to show their support. That process will help you to build momentum, community and mandate.

Your mandate is your power and authority to become a National Park City. What's needed to achieve this will be different depending on where you are in the world. In England the National Park City model exists outside of legislation. Its authority came by securing support from the Mayor of London, the London Assembly (which holds the Mayor to account), the majority of over 2000 local politicians and public support as indicated by public polling. In addition, the chair of Natural England, the agency that designates National Parks in England, signed the London National Park City Charter.

The ingredients of your mandate may look very different, especially if your future National Park City can technically fit inside the legal definitions for a National Park in your country.



Photo  
Seoul Green Trust,  
Seoul



# MAKE YOUR CASE, GROW YOUR COMMUNITY AND SECURE SUPPORT

To secure all the support you need to become a National Park City, you'll need to have a clear and compelling case — and be ready to communicate it. Your case will be closely linked to the things you've considered in points one to five, including your story, proposal and Charter.

Other things you need to think about include your insights, vision, purpose, audiences and key messages. Then you'll need to consider what communication channels you use to get your messages across.

Some of these you will control, or own, and others you might be able to buy, but ideally your ideas and messaging will be strong enough that you'll earn people's interest and their investment in spreading good communications for you.

If your vision is compelling enough, lots of people will want to talk about it and that will help you to raise awareness without having to spend any money.

^ Artwork  
Steve Schweigerdt,  
Sacramento



# RAISING AWARENESS...

## IN YOUR APPLICATION, WE'D LIKE TO SEE HOW YOU'VE RAISED AWARENESS AND PROMOTED YOUR MESSAGE

To make your case you'll need to:

- *Campaign to raise awareness of your vision and proposal*
- *Gain positive media coverage*
- *Encourage groups and organisations in your urban area to include your campaign in their communications*
- *Have a mechanism for the public, decision makers and influencers to show they support your ambition and plans – for example, by signing your draft Charter.*

Regularly raising awareness and promoting your campaign will help you to grow the size, diversity and strength of your community. It will also help you to secure the support you need to become a National Park City.

You'll need to demonstrate that:

- *At least 1 in 10 people in your urban area are aware of the National Park City proposal*
- *At least 7 in 10 people in your urban area support the proposal when it's explained to them*
- *Consultations you have held broadly agree with your proposal*
- *You have an appropriate level of political support from relevant politicians*
- *You have an appropriate level of consent from relevant authorities and agencies*
- *You've built a large and cross-sector network of supporting groups and organisations.*

One way to demonstrate this awareness and support is through independent public polling. This should be done by an independent organisation that is used to running professional surveys and questionnaires.

# AND INCREASING SUPPORT

## HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR GROWING YOUR COMMUNITY AND SECURING SUPPORT

Grow your community:

- *Organise regular campaign meetings*
- *Organise public gatherings where people can meet and build relationships*
- *Set up social media channels. Regularly update them with new content and respond to likes and comments*
- *Send out a regular email newsletter.*
- *Champion and celebrate the good things people are doing in your area, such as initiatives to grow trees or enable children to play in nature*
- *Inspire people to set up National Park City campaign or action groups. Schools and businesses often have "green teams" to promote recycling and clean energy, what if they became National Park City groups?*

- *Invite people to become advisors, champions or ambassadors. They can do this as part of their everyday lives and jobs, while benefitting from being part of a wider movement*
- *Connect people, ideas and places through your events and communications.*

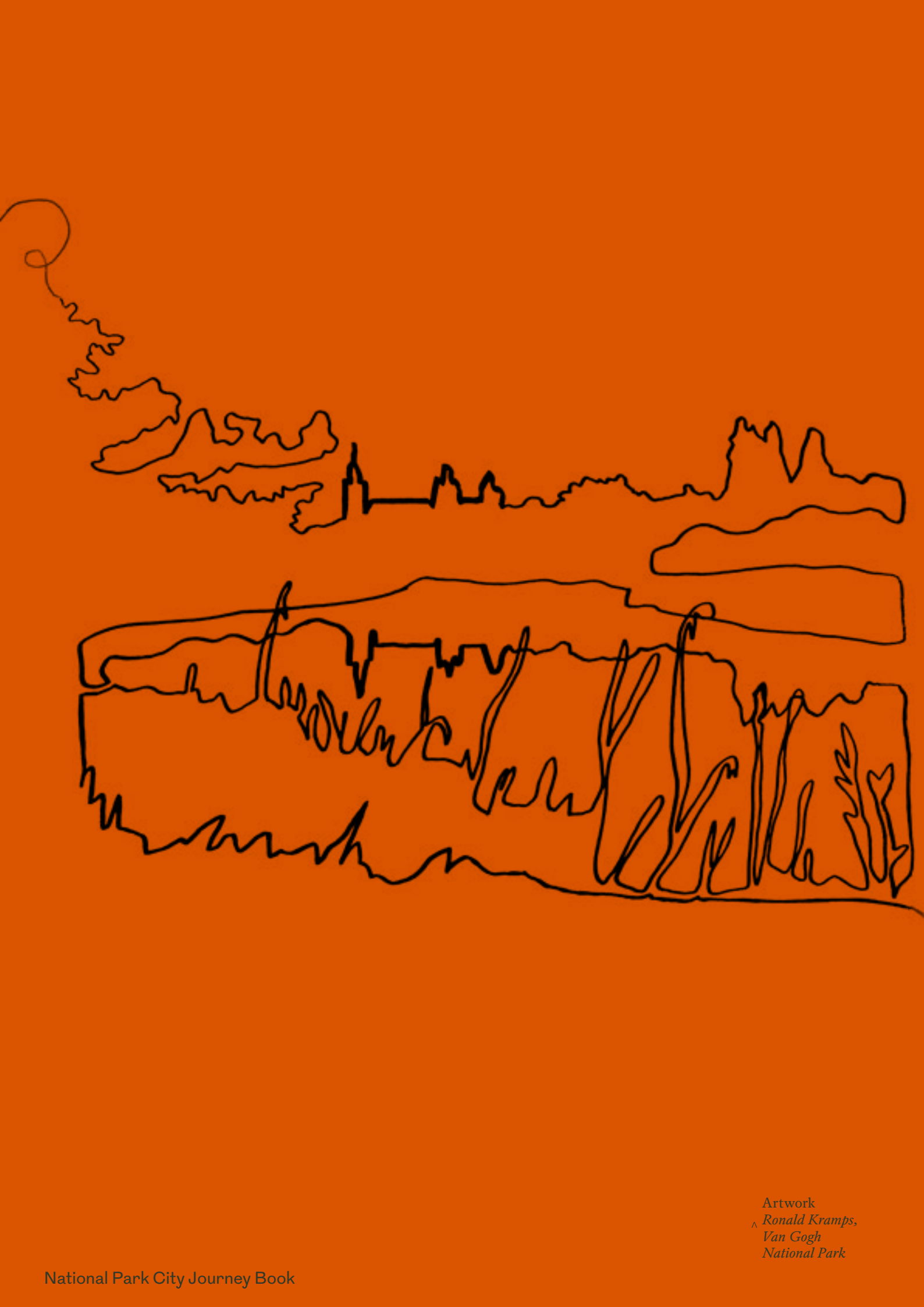
Create a network of organisations:

- *Invite groups and organisations to become a "friend" of your campaign*
- *Create a network or partner organisations to deliver on aspects of your campaign.*

Recruit the support of politicians:

- *Write to politicians asking them to confirm their support for your proposal*
- *Ask for commitments that will help your campaign or National Park City's success*
- *Offer to give talks or presentations to politicians and their constituents.*
- *Publicly show which politicians or political areas support your proposal.*





Artwork  
^ Ronald Kramps,  
Van Gogh  
National Park

# 7

## DEVELOP YOUR CAPACITY

You'll need to decide how you want to lead your National Park City. This might be by setting up an organisation, committee or network, or using another approach. Whatever you choose, you'll need to have the right mix of potential, energy, capacity, capability and resources to deliver on your proposal and carry out your plans.

Long-term commitment is essential.

What this looks like will differ depending on the culture, politics, needs, geography and history of your urban area. You won't need to decide how your National Park City will be led, governed and resourced at the start of your campaign. In fact, we'd encourage you to not become preoccupied with internal organisation too early on.

However, when you submit your portfolio application you must be able to demonstrate a number of key things about your approach.





What if Glasgow  
was a National  
Park City?

Photo  
Becky Duncan,  
Glasgow

We want to see that you  
have created a structure that:

- *Is able to lead and care for your  
National Park City*
- *Is underpinned by the Universal  
Charter for National Park Cities*
- *Is inclusive and reflects the values  
of the National Park City movement*
- *Is resilient to political  
and other changes*
- *Recognises that a National  
Park City is a place, vision and  
community, not just an organisation.*

We also want to see that you have:

- *An agreed action plan, set of goals  
and key performance indicators  
that you can use to measure success*
- *Necessary financial or other  
resources to deliver on your proposal*
- *People who are keen and able  
to deliver on your proposal*
- *Policy changes that may be necessary  
to give your National Park  
City credibility.*

You'll also need to demonstrate  
that you've planned a:

- *Ceremony to launch  
your National Park City*
- *Media launch*
- *Big public celebration,  
such as a festival.*

After you have fully completed  
the first seven steps you should  
be ready to submit your portfolio  
application.





8

# SUBMIT YOUR PORTFOLIO APPLICATION

For your urban area to become a member of the National Park City Family or an internationally recognised National Park City, you'll need to submit a portfolio application.

This will be assessed by our assessors and peer reviewers. These will be a mixture of experts from other National Park Cities, the National Park City Foundation, World Urban Parks and Salzburg Global Seminar.

Our peer assessors want to see that your urban area is ready and that your initiative is a suitable place and is visionary, inclusive, supported and capable.

<sup>^</sup> Artwork  
Sander de Kragt,  
Breda



Your application needs to be in a digital format, but can be a mixture of words, reports, photographs, video and other media. We recommend this is submitted as a publicly available website or publication. You could also submit it through a well-organised digital folder like a Dropbox which you share with us.

#### PREPARING TO SUBMIT

Before submitting your portfolio application, you will need to have:

- Registered your campaign at [www.nationalparkcity.org/apply](http://www.nationalparkcity.org/apply)
- Created and secured support for your proposal
- Completed steps one to seven
- Collected a wide range of evidence to demonstrate your initiative and urban area are ready to join the National Park City Family and added this to your portfolio
- When everything is ready, you can submit your application and portfolio at [www.nationalparkcity.org/apply](http://www.nationalparkcity.org/apply)

#### FINAL CHECKLIST

Your application portfolio must answer these five questions.

- Is your urban area a suitable place?
- Is your initiative visionary?
- Is your initiative and vision inclusive?
- Is your initiative supported?
- Is your initiative capable?

#### COSTS

We currently charge a fee for the application process to cover our costs. This includes the desk and peer review and the peer visit, as well as administration costs. Travel expenses make up a big part of this, so the final fee will depend on where your city is.

If necessary, the National Park City Foundation will work with you to secure funding to cover costs. There's more information about costs at [www.nationalparkcity.org/journey](http://www.nationalparkcity.org/journey).





# 5 STAGES TO THE APPLICATION PROCESS

## STAGE 1 : PORTFOLIO SUBMISSION

Submit your application portfolio at [www.nationalparkcity.org/apply](http://www.nationalparkcity.org/apply) ahead of the next published deadline.

## STAGE 2 : DESK REVIEW

We'll complete a desk review of your application to make sure we have everything we need.

## STAGE 3 : PEER REVIEW

Peers from established and emerging National Park Cities, as well as experts from the National Park City Foundation, World Urban Parks and Salzburg Global Seminar will review your application. If it's approved, we'll move you to the next step. If not, we might ask you for more evidence or activity.

## STAGE 4 : PEER VISIT

Peers from established and emerging National Park Cities will visit and explore your urban area. They will verify your evidence, collect their own, and make sure your potential National Park City shares the values, goals and spirit of the wider movement. Our aim is for peers to make a recommendation by the end of this visit.

## STAGE 5 : INVITATION

If successful, your campaign will be formally invited to join the National Park City Family and, if appropriate, become a recognised National Park City.

## APPLICATION FEEDBACK

When we feedback, each section of your application will be marked either:

- *Green (Recommended)*
- *Orange (More activity or evidence required)*
- *Red (Concerns)*

Our team of National Park City peer reviewers will score your submission using the assessment table on the following page. They will be looking for evidence that your initiative is suitable and ready. The examples of evidence in the table are not exhaustive. In the future, we'll provide more examples of good practice. We welcome using a creative approach when you present

your portfolio. This will largely be written, but could include photography, film, audio, virtual reality and art.

We're not looking for perfect scores across your application or fixed criteria of greens. We want to hear about your ambitions, plans and progress. Our assessors will look at the overall picture of what you are doing and make a professional judgement on whether your urban area is ready to join the National Park City Family.

*If we need any more evidence or information at any stage, we'll be in touch.*

Photo  
Luke Massey,  
London



# THE ASSESSMENT

Each piece of criteria will be graded one of three ways:  
*Present and Satisfactory, More Evidence Required or Not Present.*

IS THE AREA A SUITABLE PLACE?	EXAMPLE EVIDENCE	STATUS
1 The urban area’s entire footprint, its hinterlands and beyond must be included	A map	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
2 There must be significant projects, places and achievements that you would be proud to show people, including visitors to your city.  <i>In addition, to become a recognised National Park City your urban area will need to:</i>	A visual description of projects	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
3 Be a city according to the OECD definition of a city (including being inhabited by at least 50,000 people) or officially recognised as a city in your country and by our international assessors.	A statement on how your city meets this definition	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

IS THE NATIONAL PARK CITY INITIATIVE VISIONARY ENOUGH?	EXAMPLE EVIDENCE	STATUS
<i>The initiative must:</i> 4 Be a place, vision and community that aims to be greener, healthier and wilder.	A statement in your National Park City proposals	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
5 Have large-scale and long-term ambitions that can be achieved through many actions.	Statements in your proposals	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
6 Co-create and champion an urban area-specific National Park City Charter.	The published Charter	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
7 Develop your own National Park City goals and action plan, informed by the National Park City Charter.	An action plan	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

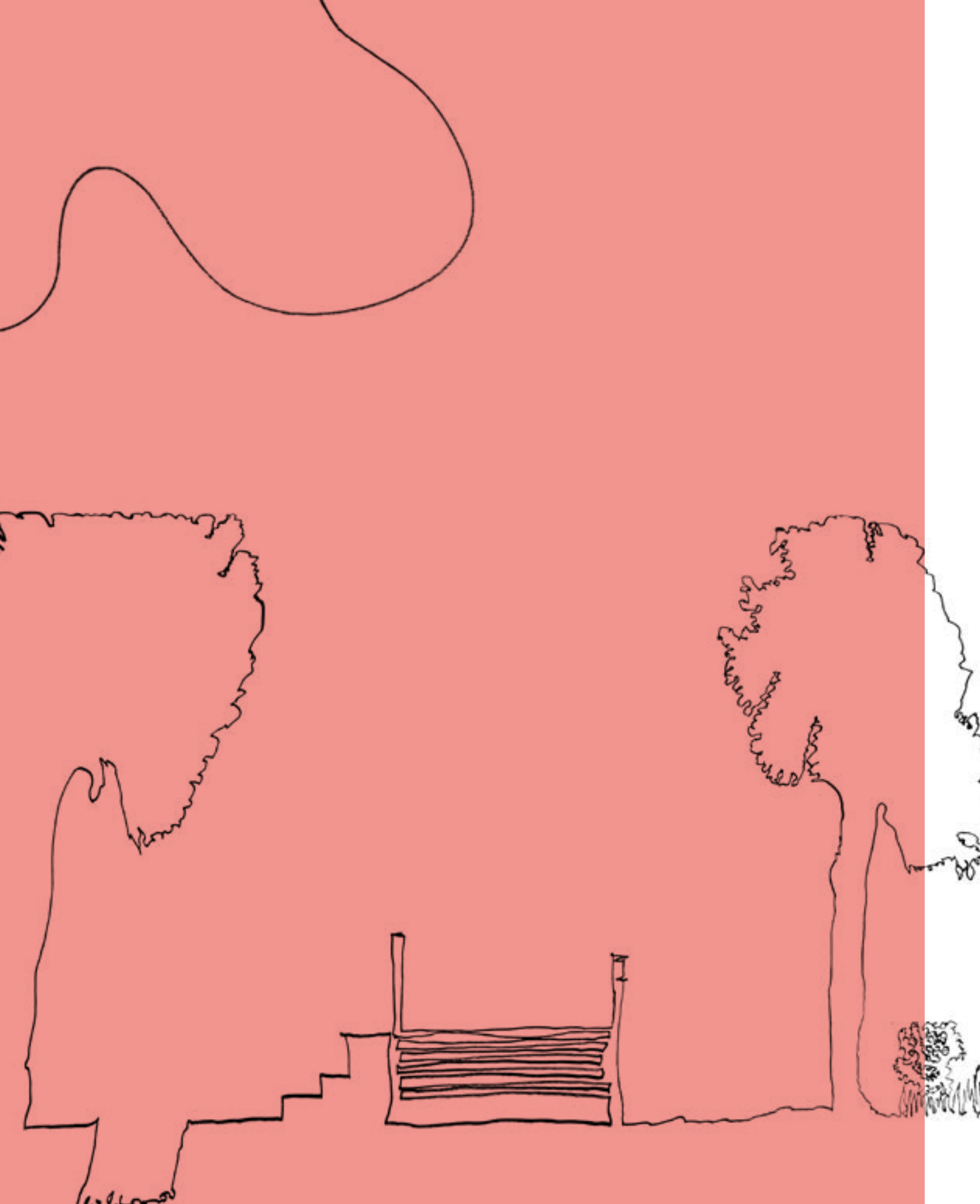
IS THE NATIONAL PARK CITY INITIATIVE INCLUSIVE ENOUGH?	EXAMPLE EVIDENCE	STATUS
<i>The initiative and vision must be developed so that:</i> 8 Everyone can benefit and contribute every day.	A description of your ambitions in your proposals and action plans	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
9 People from across your urban area who come from a diverse range of backgrounds, and have a wide range of personal and professional interests and skills, are aware, supportive and actively involved.	Examples of what you’ve done to engage people from across your city. This could include research you’ve conducted, results from workshops or media stories.	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

	EXAMPLE EVIDENCE	STATUS
10 Your initiative has an increasingly positive and harmonious relationship with the places it influences and is interdependent with.	Science or social science reports.	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
11 you have grown a robust, collaborative and healthy network of cross-sector organisations to put actions in place to make the National Park City a success	A list of your members and how they’ve been involved.	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

IS THE NATIONAL PARK CITY INITIATIVE SUPPORTED ENOUGH?	EXAMPLE EVIDENCE	STATUS
<i>The initiative must be supported by:</i> 12 The majority of people in your urban area agree with the key aims of your Charter.	Independent polling.	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
13 Appropriate government authorities through consent, investment and/or partnership.	Official communications of support.	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
14 Established and emerging cultures and behaviours of people, including an appetite, energy and mood in the city to deliver key aspects of your Charter	Example academic research.	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
15 Meaningful policies to protect, increase and enhance nature, culture, heritage, the environment and public space in your urban area.	An annotated list of relevant policies.	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
16 Policies in your urban area that further the spirit and values of the National Park City movement	Analysis of current and future policies.	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

IS THE NATIONAL PARK CITY INITIATIVE CAPABLE ENOUGH?	EXAMPLE EVIDENCE	STATUS
<i>The initiative must:</i> 17 Have a good understanding of the biological, cultural and social landscapes that makes the city unique.	A story or report. This could be part of your proposals.	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
18 Continuously engage in exploration, discovery and understanding of itself.	Examples of interventions or projects that have engaged people.	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
19 Create an approach, organisation, network or other way to lead your National Park City	This should be in your proposals.	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
20 Develop the potential, energy, capacity, capability and resources to carry out your plans.	This should be in your proposals.	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
21 Commit to publish an annual State of the National Park City report on your progress.	A page or short document that communicates the make-up of your extended team and financial, and other resources, available to you.	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
22 Agree to the five National Park City Family commitments.	This could be referred to in your proposals.	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
23 Successfully complete all of the steps in this document.	A story or report describing how you’ve completed all of the steps.	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>





9

# AGREE TO THE NATIONAL PARK CITY COMMITMENTS

All emerging, nominated and established members of the National Park City Family must agree to five commitments. These reflect our common mission and join us together as a family and a movement.

You and the leaders of your initiative will need to commit to each of these actions before your National Park City or membership of the National Park City Family are confirmed.

^ Artwork *Liteboho Makhele*, South Africa





Photo  
*Green Adelaide,  
Adelaide*

# THE NATIONAL PARK CITY COMMITMENTS

**1**

To be inspired and guided by the Universal Charter of National Park Cities, to contribute to its future development and uphold the spirit and values of the movement.

**2**

To act as a member of the National Park City Family, sharing learning, practices, ideas and resources with people in other National Park Cities.

**3**

To join in with joint National Park City campaigns and projects, where appropriate.

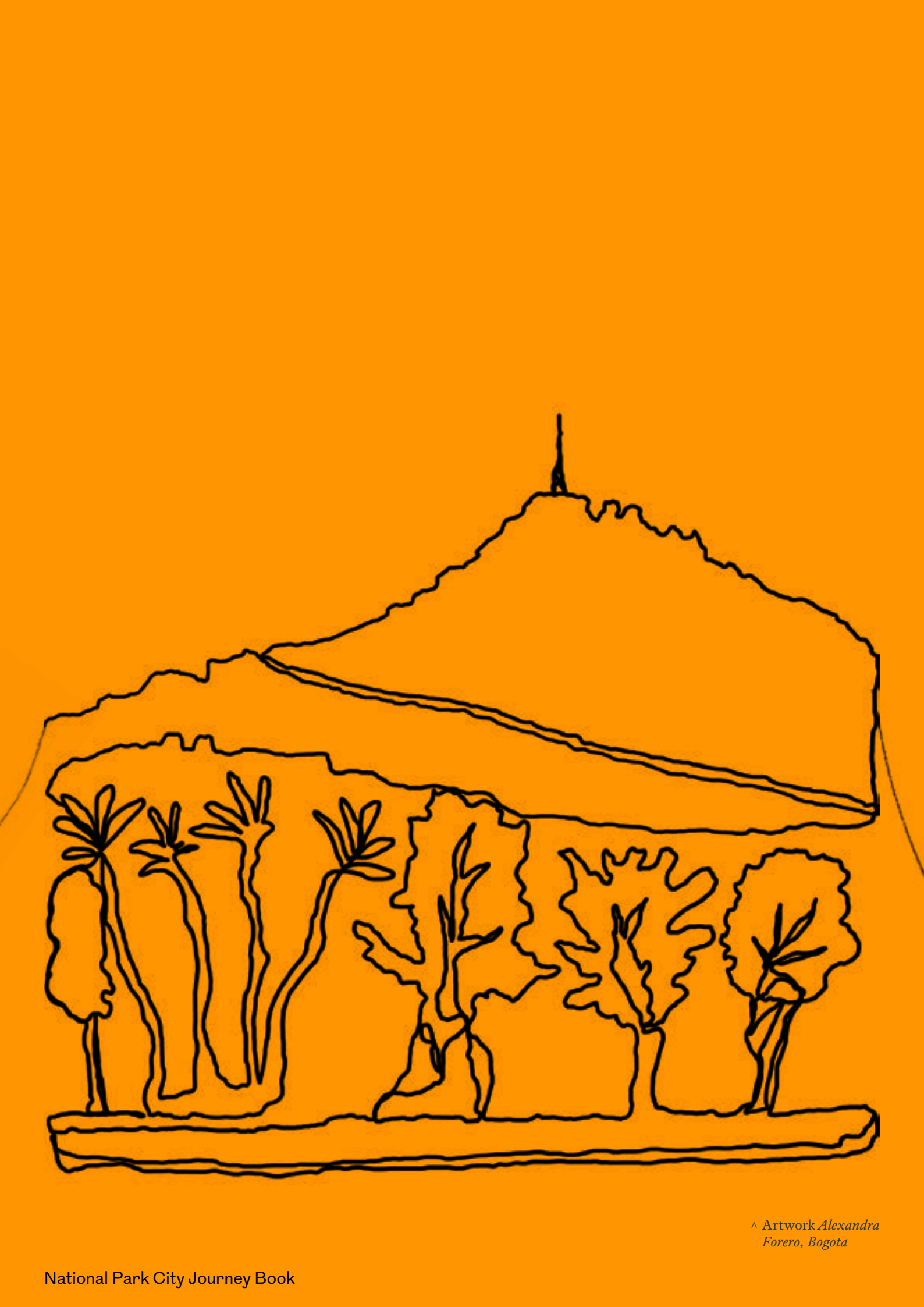
**4**

To support emerging, nominated and established National Park Cities in their journeys.

**5**

To share annual updates and experiences on your progress with the public and members of the National Park City Family.





^ Artwork *Alexandra Forero, Bogota*

10

# CONFIRM, CELEBRATE & LAUNCH

Once your application has been approved and you've signed the above commitments, you can make plans to confirm and celebrate your status and launch as a National Park City or National Park City Family member. As well as marking your launch, you might decide to celebrate a "National Park City" day, month or season every year.

We will agree a date for a senior National Park City Family representative to sign your National Park City Charter to signal your confirmation as a National Park City or member of the National Park City Family.  
Your confirmation date can be before your launch date.



We suggest allowing plenty of time to build anticipation and fundraise, and for you and your partners to plan and organise a ceremony and festival to mark your historic achievement.







# TERMINOLOGY

## URBAN AREA

A built-up landscape with a shared identity.

## INITIATIVE

Your power to act.

## NATIONAL PARK CITY FAMILY

People, organisations and cities that are proactively involved in leading and shaping the movement.

## NATIONAL PARK CITY MOVEMENT

People and organisations that are contributing to the National Park City vision.

## NATIONAL PARK CITY CAMPAIGN

Efforts to transform cities into effective National Park Cities and also National Park Cities campaigning to become greener, healthier, wilder and fairer.

## EMERGING NATIONAL PARK CITY

A city or urban area that has begun to work towards becoming a National Park City.

## NOMINATED NATIONAL PARK CITY

A city or urban area that has demonstrated sufficient support and actively intends to become a National Park City.

## ESTABLISHED NATIONAL PARK CITY

A city or urban area that has successfully completed the process of becoming a National Park City.



# OUR PARTNERS

## WORLD URBAN PARKS

World Urban Parks is an international organisation providing advice, support and a forum for the exchange of ideas on common environmental, social and economic challenges where urban parks are part of the solution. The aim is for more people to have easy access to quality urban parks, open space and recreation. Neil McCarthy, Chief Executive Officer at World Urban Parks, says he is delighted that you will be part of the National Park City journey and making cities and lives better.

World Urban Parks recognised that the world was facing an enormous challenge prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. This is because the world urban population will likely double from 3.5 billion to over 7 billion in the next 40 years. This means that half of the communities that will exist within the lifetime of our children have not been built yet. This, coupled with rising global concerns regarding health crises of physical inactivity, obesity, and mental illness that have been exacerbated due to Covid-19, means that we need to have a new vision.

The pandemic has brought consequences and insights. Now, the challenge to improve our communities needs to become a major global imperative.

Since taking on the National Park City as our first global campaign, we have developed two others that support and reinforce the importance of parks and nature in cities, and the need to adopt the National Park City vision. These are: The Emerging Leaders Cohort Program which provides thought leadership in a safe space for emerging leaders to work collectively on urban parks. The National Park City is one of the key concepts for re-imagining our cities in this forum.

The 10-20-30 Parks for All campaign. It is calling for all people to have a park within a 10-minute safe and accessible walk. The campaign also calls for all parks to support unstructured play, access to nature, and multi-generation well-being. It is calling for people to be able to access these basic needs within a 20-minute walk of where they live. The aim is for this to be incorporated into existing cities and planning and creating new communities globally by 2030.

World Urban Parks has always recognised that innovation, insights and new approaches will be needed to make future great cities. Great cities have come about due to insightful visions that incorporate green infrastructure, be it the Emerald Necklace of Boston of the 1800s. Or the modern Gardens by the Bay in Singapore over a 100 years later.

The journey to change the world starts with one step and a vision. In the late 1800s, mountaineer John Muir had a vision regarding the landscapes of the Yosemite Valley that culminated in creating the concept of National Parks.

The National Park City is a vision that started with a simple insight regarding the global protected area conservation network. The places we live in weren't considered to be a part of nature. The vision also recognised the most important tenet regarding human beings – that they need to be connected to nature.

Today, the National Park City is the vision of our time, for where we live and how we live. It is an idea whose time has come and that we all have to lead to leave a legacy.

## SALZBURG GLOBAL SEMINAR

Salzburg Global Seminar is an independent non-profit organisation which supports current and future leaders to solve issues of global concern, from social justice to healthcare. Dominic Register, Programme Director at the Salzburg Global Seminar, says the National Park City movement is helping to equip our cities for the future.

The 19th and 20th century ideas of the purpose, function and design of cities need to evolve. Then cities can better meet the 21st century needs of people and planet. The National Park City movement is at the vanguard of a new wave of radical rethinking about how cities can change. Salzburg Global Seminar is very proud to have worked with the National Park Cities movement since 2015 through a partnership developed during our annual Parks for the Planet Forum.

Our core mission is to challenge current and future leaders to shape a better world. National Park City, as a movement and idea, resonates very strongly with this. We support movements for change through action-oriented strategic convening, network support and incubation. We have used these approaches in our work with the National Park City Foundation. All of our work is interdisciplinary, international and intergenerational, so there is a very close alignment with the idea of a National Park City.

The Universal Charter for National Park Cities defines a National Park City as a place, vision and city-wide community that is acting together to make life better for people, wildlife and nature. It explains that a defining feature is the widespread commitment to act, so people, culture and nature work together to provide a better foundation for life. All cities have the potential to become National Park Cities. We are excited to work with those joining the movement.

Photo  
Seoul Green Trust,  
Seoul



**THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING FRIENDS,  
ORGANISATIONS AND CAMPAIGNS FOR  
HELPING TO DEVELOP THE FIRST VERSION OF  
OUR NATIONAL PARK CITY JOURNEY BOOK.**

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SALZBURG  
GLOBAL  
SEMINAR



**VAN  
GOGH  
NATIONAAL  
PARK  
BRABANT**



**Waiariki  
Park  
Region**



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Written by *Dan Raven-Ellison* in collaboration with *Alison Barnes* at the *National Park City Foundation*, *Neil McCarthy* and *Mark Camley* from *World Urban Parks* and *Dominic Regester* at *Salzburg Global Seminar*. Edited by *Trina Wallace*.

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**FEEDBACK**

We would love to know how you think it can be improved. Please let us know by visiting [www.nationalparkcity.org/journey](http://www.nationalparkcity.org/journey) to share your thoughts and to influence the next iteration.



# WHAT IF?