



# Long Island City, Queens



OPEN SPACE INDEX



## LONG ISLAND CITY

- Long Island City Study Area
- East River and Newtown Creek
- MTA 7 Subway
- MTA N, Q, R, W Subways
- MTA B, D, F, M Subways
- MTA A, C, E Subways
- MTA G Subway

### NEW YORK CITY HOUSING AUTHORITY DEVELOPMENTS

#### LARGE PARKS

(More than 20 acres)

- 1 Hunter's Point South Park
- 2 Queensbridge Park & Queensbridge Baby Park

#### NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

(1 to 20 acres in size)

- 3 Dutch Kills Green
- 4 Dutch Kills Playground
- 5 Gantry Plaza State Park
- 6 Murray Playground
- 7 Rainey Park
- 8 Ravenswood Playground
- 9 Socrates Sculpture Park
- 10 Torsney Playground (Lou Lodati Park)

#### POCKET PARKS

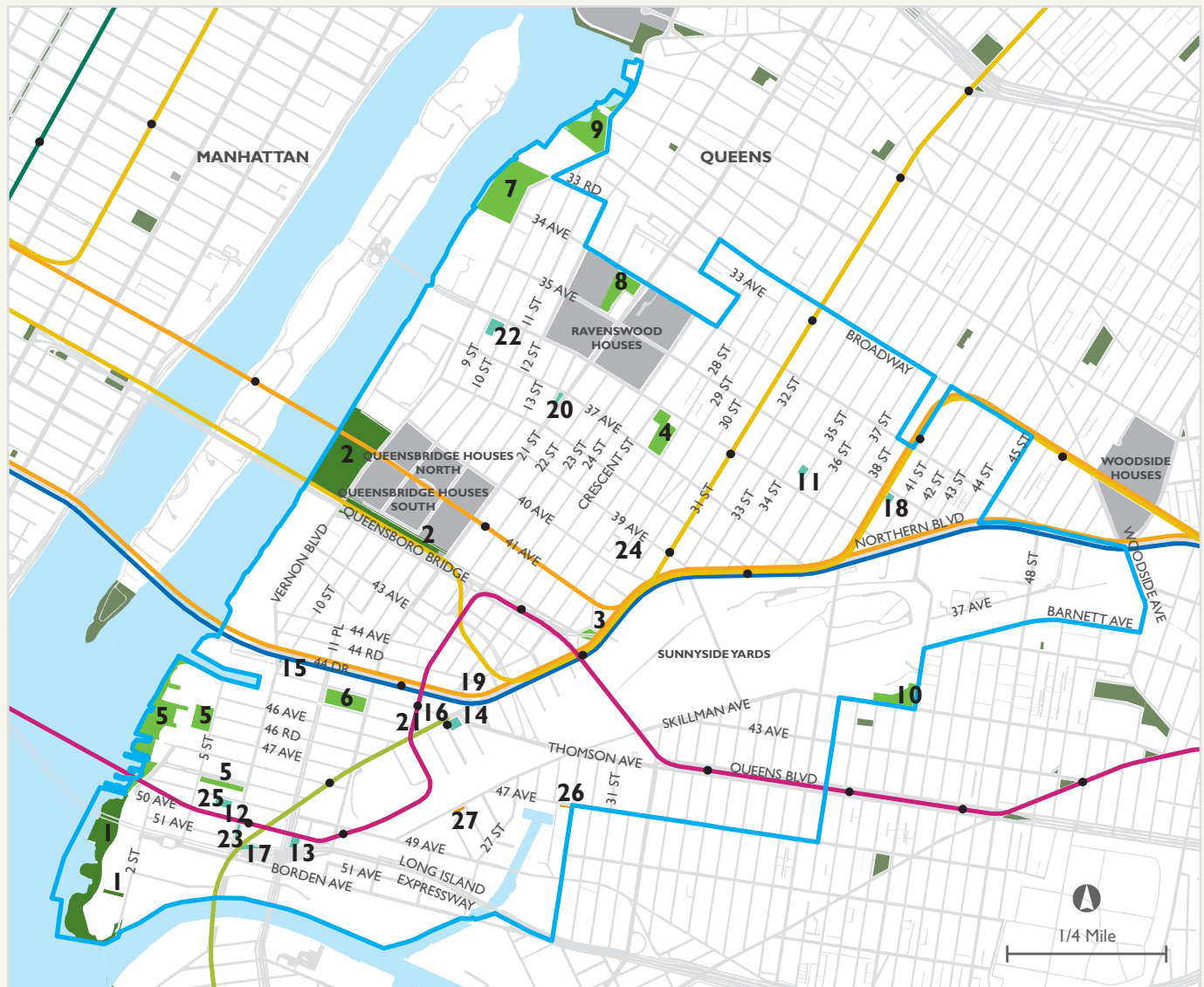
(Less than 1 acre)

- 11 A.R.R.O.W. Field House
- 12 Andrews Grove
- 13 Bridge and Tunnel Park
- 14 Court Square Park
- 15 Gordon Triangle

- 16 McKenna Triangle
- 17 Old Hickory Playground
- 18 Playground Thirty Five XXXV
- 19 Rafferty Triangle
- 20 Sixteen Oaks Grove
- 21 Short Triangle
- 22 Spirit Playground
- 23 Vernon Mall

#### COMMUNITY GARDENS

- 24 Windmill Community Garden
- 25 Long Island City Community Garden
- 26 Long Island City Roots Community Garden
- 27 Smiling Hogshead Ranch



# Long Island City

*Long Island City (LIC) is a Queens waterfront neighborhood that evolved from an industrial hub to a booming business and residential center. Home to almost 60,000 New Yorkers and numerous businesses, LIC is a rapidly developing mixed-use neighborhood. The pace of public investment in neighborhood amenities has not kept up with LIC's breakneck growth, and local residents clamor for open space creation and investments in maintenance.*

In the 1990s, City and State agencies sought to catalyze mixed-use development in LIC due to the neighborhood's proximity to Midtown Manhattan. New York State developed a formerly industrial waterfront space into the first new Queens waterfront park, Gantry Plaza State Park.

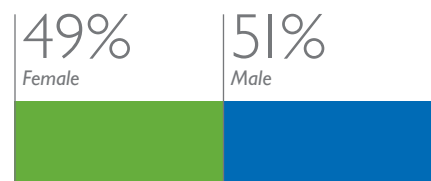
Twenty-first century investment in LIC has been concentrated to the neighborhood's south: the City's 2001 rezoning spurred housing construction in Hunters Point, and in Court Square, office towers sprouted up. Hunters Point South Park is complete, but it has taken decades of local advocacy to lead to transformative public investment in parks to the north, like Queensbridge

Park. The pressures of residential and commercial development continue, placing increased demand on neighborhood parks and open spaces.

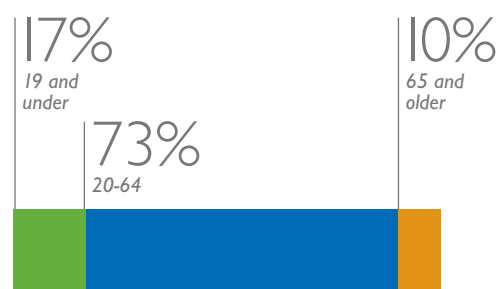
In fall 2018, responding to the neighborhood's growth, the City announced LIC.NYC, a major investment commitment. It promised \$180 million to Long Island City, \$15 million of which would support local parks and open spaces. Shortly thereafter, Amazon announced a multi-billion dollar campus in LIC, but withdrew its project plans in Winter 2019. Residents know that LIC's growth is not complete, and they clamor for continued investment in local parks and open spaces.

## LONG ISLAND CITY DEMOGRAPHICS

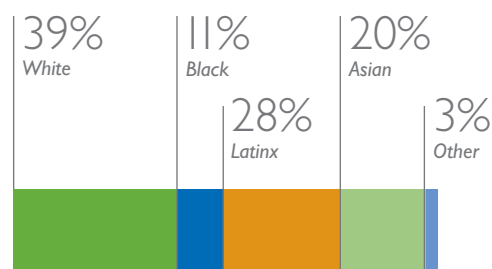
### SEX



### AGE



### RACE AND ETHNICITY



Rainey Park

# Open Space Goals and Local Results

For each Open Space Goal in the Index, NY4P staff gathered data from publicly available sources to answer the question, “Does Long Island City meet this goal?” Information on population comes from the US Census’ American Community Survey, and most open space amenity and acreage information comes from the New York City open data platform. Visit [www.ny4p.org/data-and-research](http://www.ny4p.org/data-and-research) for methodology.

## AMOUNT OF OPEN SPACE

### Total Open Space



All acres of open space in the neighborhood that provide space for play, relaxation, and contact with nature



### Active Open Space



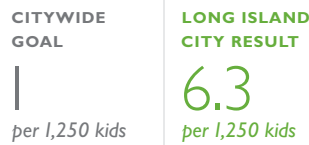
All acres of playgrounds, fields, courts, rec centers, and other active open spaces



### Playgrounds



Places for play with things like swings, climbing frames, water features, sand boxes, or other play areas



### Athletic Fields



Fields for sports like soccer, football, cricket, baseball, rugby, and field hockey, as well as outdoor ice rinks



### Courts



Courts for playing sports like basketball, handball, volleyball, tennis, and bocce



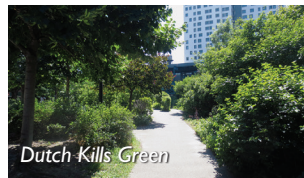
### Recreation Centers



Indoor recreation centers operated by NYC Parks, and other indoor facilities with similar fees and public access



### Passive Open Space



All acres of lawns, esplanades, plazas, beaches, natural areas, planted areas, and community gardens



### Community Gardens



All GreenThumb gardens and other community gardens with public access





NY4P studied the area of Queens that the NYC Department of City Planning used for its *Long Island City Core* study.

■ Meets goal ■ Approaches goal ■ Does not meet goal

## ACCESS TO OPEN SPACES

### Pocket Parks

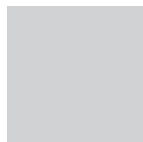


Parks smaller than 1 acre in size

CITYWIDE GOAL

100%

of people live within a five-minute walk



LONG ISLAND CITY RESULT

34%

of people live within a five-minute walk



### Neighborhood Parks



Parks larger than 1 acre but smaller than 20 acres in size

CITYWIDE GOAL

100%

of people live within a five-minute walk



LONG ISLAND CITY RESULT

29%

of people live within a five-minute walk



### Large Parks

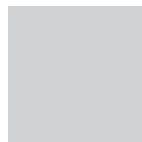


Parks larger than 20 acres in size

CITYWIDE GOAL

100%

of people live within a ten-minute walk



LONG ISLAND CITY RESULT

34%

of people live within a ten-minute walk



## ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

### Urban Tree Canopy



The layer of tree leaves, branches, trunks, and stems, that cover the ground when viewed from above

CITYWIDE GOAL

40%

potential tree canopy



LONG ISLAND CITY RESULT

7%

actual tree canopy



## PARK MAINTENANCE

### Cleanliness

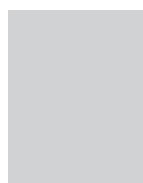


NYC Parks' Park Inspection Program rating based on the presence of litter, glass, graffiti, weeds, and ice

CITYWIDE GOAL

90%

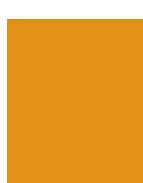
of inspections rated "acceptable"



LONG ISLAND CITY RESULT

86%

of inspections rated "acceptable"



### Overall Condition

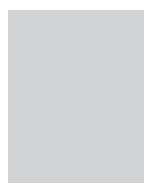


NYC Parks' Park Inspection Program rating for overall park maintenance conditions

CITYWIDE GOAL

85%

of inspections rated "acceptable"



LONG ISLAND CITY RESULT

79%

of inspections rated "acceptable"



# Findings and Recommendations

## ACCESS

## INFRASTRUCTURE

### Findings

There is a distinct lack of park space in LIC. This rapidly densifying neighborhood is gaining residents south of the Queensboro Bridge, where new open spaces have been developed, but the continued population boom is still putting stress on an inadequate park system. Only a third of local LIC residents are within walking distance to pocket parks or large parks, and less than a third are within walking distance to a neighborhood park. Those who more likely have access live closer to the East River and Newtown Creek waterfronts whereas Court Square and Blissville are particularly park-poor. Residents of upland communities report physical and psychological barriers to reaching the neighborhood's parks, from a lack of wayfinding and signage to feeling that some spaces just "aren't for them."

From a maintenance standpoint, LIC parks and open spaces are treated well, approaching the goal for maintenance standards. Yet with more residents expected, investment in maintenance at today's levels will be inadequate. Local advocates are calling for unusual solutions to LIC's park scarcity and people density mismatch, focusing on opportunities where other city infrastructure can be repurposed or reinvented for open space goals. LIC parks range from brand-new to old, broken, and beloved: there are serious capital needs in this neighborhood's parks and open spaces.

### Recommendations

1. Invest in connectivity from waterfront parks to upland communities: local civic organizations like the Long Island City Partnership (LICP) and the NYC Department of Transportation (DOT) can provide clear wayfinding, signage, and lighting.
2. Queensbridge Baby Park can be enhanced as part of the park connectivity and transportation network, which will require coordination between NYC Parks, New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), and NYC DOT.
3. Developers, where possible, should include publicly or privately accessible open spaces in new construction, balancing added open space demand.
4. Open space must be a critical component for the Sunnyside Yard development and its drivers, the NYC Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC), Amtrak, and CSX. This is the last opportunity to create a large park in Western Queens.
1. Make the sidewalks and plazas of the neighborhood do double duty—as transportation infrastructure for pedestrians, and as green corridor continuations of LIC's open spaces. This will require attention and resources from LICP, real estate owners, and DOT.
2. Create new open space infrastructure by reinventing the publicly-owned parcels under the Queensboro Bridge as open spaces, building on the LIC Ramplands, El-Space, and other plans, requiring DOT and NYC Parks actions.
3. Invest in street-ends abutting Sunnyside Yard, creating additional publicly accessible open spaces, a potential project for NYC Parks and DOT.
4. The City must honor the funding commitments to LIC made in the 2018 *LIC.NYC* investment strategy, which matches rampant neighborhood growth with City funding for infrastructure. NYCEDC committed to funding \$15M in LIC parks and open spaces.



## HEALTH

LIC lacks enough active open space for current residents, and does not have enough recreation centers, although a forthcoming fieldhouse at Queensbridge Park will draw the neighborhood closer to the goal for recreation centers. In addition, a lack of freely programmable active recreation spaces in parks and open spaces—no swimming pools, and a widely held understanding of a need for more playgrounds and athletic fields—leaves few free public recreation options for LIC residents. Additionally, residents speak about air quality concerns resulting from the major highway infrastructure—ramps, bridges, and roads—that surround and cut through the neighborhood. In addition, LIC is in need of more street and park trees, which work to improve air quality, regulate temperature, reduce ambient noise, and mitigate stormwater runoff effects.

1. To enable year-round recreation for LIC residents, NYC Parks should create an additional recreation center, or enter into an agreement with a developer to co-locate a NYC Parks recreation center as a community amenity.
2. More active programming is needed from entities like NYC Parks, the City Parks Foundation, and local Friends of the Parks groups
3. LIC needs more trees to help keep the neighborhood's air healthy; NYC Parks and LICP should plant and steward additional trees.

## ENVIRONMENT

LIC is a waterfront neighborhood, sensitive to the effects of rising sea levels, combined sewer outfalls, and stormwater runoff. It is home to one of the most environmentally sensitive parks in New York City, Hunters Point South Park, but many of its smaller green spaces are paved and impermeable. Like the rest of New York City, in LIC, parks and open spaces are where many New Yorkers experience nature. These spaces also provide strong opportunities to marry investments and improvements with environmentally beneficial practices, including those that will make the neighborhood more resilient to and able to mitigate the effects of climate change. A major opportunity is in trees and tree health: only 6.5% of the neighborhood is covered with tree canopy. And LIC lacks community gardens and other communal spaces to grow food and plants.

1. Invest in the urban forest to mitigate the urban heat island effect; NYC Parks and LICP should plant and steward additional trees, as called for in the LIC. NYC Investment strategy by NYCEDC.
2. The Riverkeeper and Newtown Creek Alliance present compelling and practical options for revitalizing and conserving the Newtown Creek in their vision plan; their recommendations for the Mouth of Creek, Whale Creek, and Dutch Kills should be invested in.
3. To build community and allow opportunities for children and families to learn about the natural world together, developers should provide publicly accessible space for community gardens.

## FUNDING

Although one neighborhood, LIC is in many ways divided by the Queensboro Bridge: south of the bridge are new parks, rapid construction, a host of volunteer and fundraising groups, and the Business Improvement District. North of the bridge are legacy parks, significant public housing density, and dedicated volunteers. Although the planned Amazon deal is no longer active, the City has made a strong funding commitment to LIC because of its robust growth, matching an increase in residential density with investments in the neighborhood's various infrastructures, including parks. But there are opportunities, and needs, to ask for more investment: in parks and playgrounds where maintenance needs snowballed into capital projects; to ensure the environmental sustainability of the neighborhood, and to support local volunteers.

1. The City must honor the investment commitments made in LIC.NYC, including its pledge to create new open spaces on public land.
2. LICP should explore the potential of starting a Green Benefit District, a specific assessment district similar to a Business Improvement District, to fund a larger public realm maintenance and programming strategy.
3. Local volunteers, Friends of the parks groups, and civic associations should amplify demands common to the neighborhood and the borough, spearheading the creation of a Queens coalition of park advocates.
4. Partnerships for Parks must sustain Friends groups especially north of the Bridge, and catalyze them where they do not exist, for example, at Rainey Park.



#### NEW YORKERS FOR PARKS

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New Yorkers for Parks is the citywide independent organization championing quality parks and open spaces for all New Yorkers in all neighborhoods. Parks are essential to the health of residents, the livability of neighborhoods, and the economic development of the city. Through an integrated approach of research, advocacy, and strategic partnerships, we drive immediate actions and long-term policies that protect and enhance the city's vast network of parks, ensure equitable access to quality open spaces for all neighborhoods, and inform and empower communities throughout New York City.

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