

MAYORAL CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE 2009

Michael R. Bloomberg's Response

What do you believe are the top priority park issues that need to be addressed in your district and citywide?

For the past eight years, our Administration has made it a priority to make parks more accessible to New Yorkers by opening up the waterfront, building parks into major economic development strategies, putting a park or open space within a ten-minute walk for all New Yorkers, and transforming formerly industrial sites into vibrant green spaces. If chosen to serve for four more years, we will continue this effort through the efforts of PlaNYC and other initiatives.

Going forward, in terms of specific parks initiatives, our efforts will focus on three key goals: making existing sites available to more New Yorkers, expanding useable hours at existing sites, and greening our cityscape through creative new strategies.

We are getting the most out of existing sites through our schoolyards to playgrounds initiative, opening underused spaces across the city as public playgrounds - and through our plan to re-envision eight underutilized parks as new, 21st-century park destinations that will give New Yorkers in all five boroughs extensive recreational opportunities for healthy living and significant new green space. We are working hard to expand hours of existing sites by transforming multi-purpose asphalt fields into synthetic turf, which can accommodate more recreational options and usage, as well as installing new field lights in parks and fields across the city to make the evening just as viable an option for healthy activity. Finally, our comprehensive plan to green our cityscape includes the urban beautification Greenstreets program, and our groundbreaking MillionTreesNYC initiative that will plant and tend to one million new trees in New York City.

These top priorities are all highly important for the Parks Department, and will guide much of our efforts going forward. Yet they are also crucial steps in making our entire city more sustainable and more livable. Improving access and extending hours of existing facilities will encourage more New Yorkers to partake in healthy activity - a significant public health goal in itself. Likewise, while plans to green our cityscape will undoubtedly make our parks more beautiful, these are also necessary steps to clean the city's air and develop a more sustainable environment for future New Yorkers.

Maintaining a first-rate parks system is a worthy goal in and of itself, but our vision for parks truly fits in with the Administration's larger vision to make New York City the greenest, most sustainable, and most livable city in the entire nation.

Securing Adequate Funding / Maintenance for Parks

a. Will you work towards securing long term funding for Parks?

Yes

i. If so, would you consider exploring creative financial models such as Parks Improvement Districts (based on the BID model), tax increment funding (TIF), zoning benefits and public private partnerships to supplement maintenance and operating costs?

Public-private partnerships enhance parks in many different ways. They contribute to park maintenance, encourage local volunteerism and stewardship, and provide free and dynamic programming.

Over the past eight years, our Administration has developed creative models to finance new parks. For example, we have assisted in the creation of the Van Cortlandt Park Conservancy in the Bronx, the Fort Tryon Park Trust in Washington Heights, and the citywide MillionTreesNYC campaign, our effort to plant one million trees throughout the five boroughs done in partnership with our non-profit partner, the New York Restoration Project. We will continue to explore new methods to finance park creation, programming and maintenance if given the honor to serve four more years.

b. Would you support dedicating revenue earned through park concessions to parks maintenance and operations

No. Parks concessions continue to be an important revenue generator and are instrumental in some circumstances in covering operational needs. But the City baselines Parks funding rather than tie it to concessions, which provides the agency with greater fiscal stability.

i. If so, would you also support revising the Major Concessions Rules to include all significant private uses on public property (including parks) to community/borough review?

N/A

c. Will you support establishing the tracking of spending and staffing on a park by park basis?

There are over 5,000 separate pieces of property overseen by the Parks Department, and such a tracking system would represent too onerous a burden on the department given available resources. It also would not be particularly effective in tracking our operations. The Parks Department uses a variety of staffing patterns such as mobile crews that go from park to park to do routine cleaning and maintenance, and so a park-by-park tracking system would simply not give a representative picture of what maintenance activity looks like. Furthermore, as Parks is a highly seasonal agency with facilities that only require staff for a portion of the year, and a large, transitional workforce of temporary job training participants, these staffing patterns are constantly changing to address operational needs.

d. When a capital project is not fully funded will you support diversifying funding sources to ensure their completion? What would those sources be?

Yes. The Parks Department works with other elected officials at the city, state, and federal levels to obtain capital funding for projects. We also pursue state, federal and foundation grants to complete projects. And finally, we often collaborate with our non-profit partners to raise philanthropic funds to enhance parks and fund capital projects with matching dollars. Capital partnerships can range from small projects like the reconstruction of a baseball field in Riverside Park funded by the Heckscher Foundation for Children, in partnership with the Riverside Park Fund, to unprecedented gifts like a \$10 million donation from philanthropist Carl Icahn to build a premier public track and field complex on Randall's Island, which now provides a home for citywide regional and international meets and competition.

e. What specific actions would you take to ensure that every park in every neighborhood has properly working facilities such as ball-fields, educational facilities, restrooms, etc.

The Parks Department monitors City parks in two different ways to ensure that the facilities meet acceptable standards. The first, the Parks Inspection Program (PIP), is a comprehensive, outcome-based performance measurement system that generates frequent, random, and detailed inspections of our parks and playgrounds. The program, which has been designed to reflect conditions encountered by the public when using Parks facilities, features a team of trained inspectors who use hand-held computers and digital cameras to conduct nearly 5,000 inspections per year. Each site receives a rating of "acceptable" or "unacceptable" based upon the condition of specific park features. Whenever the Parks Department learns of an unacceptable rating, it works quickly to remedy the issue. In fact, the Parks Department's maintenance program is often readjusted based on the results of these inspections.

The second way is via the 300 Park Supervisors deployed across the 69 park maintenance districts (most of these are co-terminus with the 59 community boards), who perform daily inspections of the parks. Funding for these inspections and staff is included in the adopted budget.

In addition to these existing programs, we are implementing an "Asset Management System," AMPS, which will allow the Parks Department to better track and organize work orders, staffing, equipment, and important issues. Finally, it should also be noted that the 311 system - now equipped to receive uploaded video and pictures from public cell phones - provides real time feedback on conditions in parks, which we track and address. Using technology as a management tool has been a major priority of our Administration, and we will continue to provide Parks with the support necessary to ensure a positive experience for park patrons.

i. Will you support a "fix it first" policy for funding capital projects, so that resources are allocated to existing projects in need of repair?

When deciding on capital funding, we prioritize the concerns of the local community. The Parks Department examines its inventory and works with the local community boards and elected officials to identify which facilities and parks are a priority for capital improvement. With the changing demographics of neighborhoods, we need to be sensitive to the recreational and open space needs of New Yorkers. For example, in Greenpoint-Williamsburg, Brooklyn we are working to transform former commercial and industrial

lots into parkland in order to expand waterfront access and provide other recreational amenities to the growing local community.

f. Will you support adequate staffing and funding to ensure that new and existing parks stay in a "state of good repair"

Yes. Since 2002, the Parks Department's expense budget has increased and we have invested over \$3 billion on capital improvements.

i. What funding/programs would you use to increase the full-time parks maintenance staff?

During our Administration, the full time headcount for the Parks Department has increased and the Department employs over 6,000 individuals every year through its transitional work program, which provides substantial additional maintenance support.

ii. What can be done to improve the baseline services, or maintenance of effort, in our parks to ensure that partnerships don't need to replace poor, existing services or neglected services such as bench and fountain repairs?

Partnerships enhance, but do not replace, City involvement in parks. Non-profit partners provide resources around the city that allow the Parks Department to direct its own resources to the vast majority of parks that do not receive private philanthropic support. Additionally, non-profit partners are able to provide additional services for maintenance needs such as tree pruning, care for water bodies, and maintenance of special features such as fountains. They also provide support for basic features. However, the City itself does a good job maintaining benches and water fountains specifically. For FY09, the Parks Inspection Program rated drinking fountains 94% acceptable and benches 90% acceptable.

iii. How would you fund the unique maintenance costs of waterfront parks (e.g. access, bulkheads, and piers)?

The Parks Department uses capital requirement contracts to restore heavy infrastructure, such as paving, plumbing and buildings. We will build upon best practices already identified by our agency partners, including the Economic Development Corporation.

g. Will you support park ratings by borough and community board in addition to the citywide level in the Mayor's Management Report?

Community Board park ratings are already available through the "My Neighborhood" feature of the Mayor's Office website, which can be accessed at www.nyc.gov/nycstat. Borough ratings are available through the Parks Department website at http://www.nycgovparks.org/sub_about/parks_numbers/pip.html

h. Will you support making the official Parks Department "property list" - that specifically delineates all 1,700 properties - available online?

We have placed information about all 1,700 of the Parks' named properties on the Department's website, searchable by zip code, borough, and name. Please visit www.nyc.gov/parks for more information.

Protecting Parkland

a. Will you support more laws that require public notification and input when a park will be used for non-park purposes, to afford parks the protection they need from development or use by other agencies?

The current alienation process requires, by law, a home rule message from the City Council and approval of both houses of the State Legislature and the Governor's signature for both the new land use plan and the parkland mitigation plan. In many instances, park alienation projects must also go through the City's comprehensive Uniformed Land Use Review Procedure, a process which includes public hearings at the Community Board level. I believe this process, which requires the approval of local elected officials at two levels of government, ensures that the public has a voice in the future of its parks and that our parks are protected from outside encroachments.

i. How would you require that professional sports organizations assist in maintaining and operating public parks near their facilities?

We cannot require any private organization to assist in maintaining and operating public parks. However, the Parks Department has forged strong ties with New York City's professional sports team community to support our city's parks in all five boroughs. From bricks and mortar support to free sports clinics, our home team and sports associations have been great partners. Some examples include Derek Jeter's Turn 2 Foundation, which supports free sports programs through the Summer Sports Experience, and free basketball clinics for local children offered by the Knicks. The New York Giants and New York Jets in partnership with the NFL contributed to the creation of sports fields in Lower Manhattan, and the United States Tennis Association offers free tennis programs.

b. Will you work to strengthen parkland alienation regulation by requiring Environmental Impact Statements before parkland alienation bill is filed by municipality?

The City's Law Department disagrees with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Advisory Opinion suggesting that the City Council's Home Rule Message should be subject to SEQR review. Such projects are often already subject to full public and SEQR review under the City's Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP). It is only after the State Legislature clarifies the terms under which it will allow the proposed alienation of parkland

that is becomes possible to plan and develop a project to the level of detail necessary to undertake a full SEQR review.

i. *How will you do this?* N/A

c. *Will you support mitigation for taking of parkland and ensure replacement of lost parkland for the community?*

City and State policy requires that de-mapped parkland be replaced with an equal or greater amount of parkland or monetary compensation of the same value. For example, on the 96th Street subway rehabilitation project in Manhattan, the public will receive an ADA accessible subway station, new planted medians, and a public plaza and sitting area in exchange for alienating a small portion of the Broadway malls median. We have vigorously enforced this policy and will continue to do so.

i. *How will you do so?* See above.

d. *How would you prevent "pay to play" situations from arising at public and amateur sports facilities?*

Like most towns, counties and cities across the country, the use of some public park facilities requires some form of permit fee. In New York, we generally limit such fees to adults. For example, adults have to pay for permits to use fields, tennis courts and recreation centers. However, for all of these facilities, youth leagues and schools do not pay for field time, while children under the age of 18 receive free recreation center memberships. And outdoor pools and beaches are open free of charge to all visitors.

e. *Will you support legislation that requires regular NYPD reports to the City Council on crime in parks (i.e. Intro 470)?*

I signed Intro 470 into law as Local Law 114 in December 2005. The NYPD's crime status report includes the total number of crime complaints, arrests, summonses, domestic violence radio runs, average response times to critical and serious crimes, overtime stats, and major felony crime complaints for the 20 largest parks in New York City. This data is available to the public online at www.nyc.gov/cpr.

f. *Will you work towards making parkland part of the city's CompStat system?*

Yes. Crimes committed in parks are included in Compstat reports, based on their location within different police precincts.

Expanding Park Use

a. Will you work toward creating, with significant community involvement, a comprehensive citywide master plan for parks and open spaces that will guide the overall acquisition, restoration, improvement, and maintenance of parks, natural areas, playgrounds and athletic facilities in the five boroughs?

On Earth Day of 2007, we unveiled PlaNYC, an ambitious and practical plan to make New York America's first sustainable city. As part of the plan, we pledged to create more open spaces and ensure that all New Yorkers live within a 10-minute walk of a park or open space.

With the vision and resources provided by PlaNYC, the Parks Department launched the most ambitious parks program in half a century, creating new open spaces and expanding the city's urban forest. Today, we are engaging in some of the following efforts:

1. Transforming 266 existing Schoolyards into Playgrounds by opening schoolyards across the city as public playgrounds;
2. Redeveloping 8 underutilized parks into destination regional parks;
3. Expanding usable hours at existing sites by converting 21 asphalt fields into multipurpose synthetic turf fields and maximizing time at 25 existing turf fields by installing field lights;
4. Planting 400 new Greenstreets to create roadside gardens that capture storm water, increase green space and beautify neighborhoods; and,
5. Planting and protecting one million new trees over ten years, over 240,000 of which are already planted.

The Parks Department will continue to work with the local community, elected officials, and civic organizations to develop comprehensive plans for adding necessary parks and facilities.

i. What is your vision for new parks?

Greening the City's future has been a top priority for our Administration, and since 2002, we have invested more than \$3 billion in building and renovating our parks.

Our vision for new parks has been guided by four prime tenets as outlined in our Five Borough Economic Development Plan and PlaNYC;

- 1) Parks or open space for every New Yorker within 10 minutes of where they live;
- 2) Open the waterfront and provide public accessibility;
- 3) Incorporate parks as part of and to sustain our long-term economic investment strategy; and,
- 4) Create public/private partnerships for long-term stewardship and programming.

As we advance PlaNYC, Parks is working on engaging local community members, user groups, and advocacy organizations, including New Yorkers for Parks, to solicit feedback about recreation and usage needs through the PlaNYC 8 regional parks project. One of our main objectives in designing these parks is to provide more recreational opportunities to keep New Yorkers healthy and active. Many of our preliminary designs include sports

facilities, such as for soccer, cricket, and baseball fields, which reflect the shifting recreational interests of today's New Yorkers. In addition, as part of this process, Parks is developing a framework for future policies and decisions to grow, restore, program, maintain and sustain the park system that reflect the goals and priorities of the agency and City. New Yorkers for Parks is a partner in this process and we look forward to continuing our work with them.

ii. How would you develop it?

We are working to realize these projects through regular meetings and frequent discussions with our non-profit partners, including New Yorkers for Parks, regarding ways in which we can work in partnership.

More than 90 percent of the 127 PlaNYC initiatives are already underway. We have completed the design for 5 of the regional parks, breaking ground on one park already, with two more expected in early fall. We have constructed nearly 200 Greenstreets – our urban beautification initiative – transformed 85 schoolyards into playgrounds, and planted over 240,000 trees citywide.

b. Will you support extending Resolution No. 1033 which calls for the continued protection of community gardens and the rights of the community and gardeners?

The GreenThumb division of our Parks Department has been a strong and consistent supporter of community gardens. There are about 700 community gardens located throughout the city, which serve nearly 50,000 New York City residents. After three decades, GreenThumb remains the nation's largest urban gardening program. Under the provisions of the 2002 agreement, we register and license gardeners every two years. Groups send a representative to a GreenThumb registration session where they are given an orientation to the program's requirements, provided with information, and given assistance with filling out paperwork. Through registration and licensing, the City provides support to help strengthen gardens, gardener skills and communities. GreenThumb's services take the form of materials and technical assistance, including educational workshops.

Moving forward, our plan is to extend the 2-year licenses which we have been executing this spring for another 2 years, meaning that they would all expire in the spring of 2013.

c. What specific actions would you take to revitalize the recreational and amateur sports programs that have been decreased by this year's budget cuts?

The Parks Department will continue to support recreation programs to ensure that core services like afterschool and summer camp are available. In fact, Parks has continued to build its recreational offerings with the help of its non-profit partners and has added new recreation staff to program new pools and recreation centers over the past eight years.

d. What specific actions would you take to enable a much higher level of collaboration among the Parks Dept. and other city agencies on issues such as stormwater management, greenways, and economic development projects?

Parks works with its sister agencies, such as the Department of Transportation, the Department of Cultural Affairs, the Department of Education, the Department of Environmental Protection, and the NYC Economic Development Corporation, to address transportation, water management, economic development issues and programming. Parks is also exploring pilot projects to test new green technologies, such as storm water holding tanks and filtering systems underneath athletic fields, rain gardens, and permeable asphalt to address environmental and sustainability issues.

e. How will you ensure that public spaces created as amenities/mitigation for large scale economic development projects such as Atlantic Yards, Hudson Yards, and Manhattanville are truly open to the public?

The creation of new public open spaces is an integral part of the overall site redevelopment strategy for our large-scale development plans and rezoning projects. In many cases, these new open spaces are mapped and transferred to Parks as part of the project, or new lands are designated to be acquired by the City in order to develop new public open spaces. These public open spaces are either privately owned, or publicly owned and managed by the Parks Department.

Our Administration has gone to great lengths to spur the development of new public open spaces, and to ensure that they remain open and protected in perpetuity, often through zoning requirements, deed restrictions such as restrictive declarations, or other legally binding agreements. I'm proud that we've pursued the creation of new public open space through our Five Borough Economic Opportunity Plan, so that the need for parks, housing, education and transportation are all advanced on equal footing. For example, our recently announced Sunset Park Waterfront Vision plan is transforming this waterfront area in Brooklyn and adding 22 acres of open space.

We are committed to our PlaNYC goal of ensuring every New Yorker lives within a 10-minute walk of a park or open space. This goal requires our development projects to include major improvements and expansions to public open space. This is a commitment we will continue to actively pursue if given the honor of serving four more years.

i. Do you support mapping such public spaces as parkland?

Yes, I am proud of the creative approaches our Administration has taken to leverage the establishment of more public open space on both public and private lands.

For example, the City's Waterfront Zoning Regulations have been an excellent tool for spurring the creation of new housing, while also requiring developers to open up stretches of formerly private, inaccessible shoreline for public use. In Greenpoint, we rezoned over a mile of private waterfront and are making each land owner create a public esplanade, which they must design, build and maintain. We couldn't use zoning to require each

owner to create a mapped City park, but we created some incentives – and the Parks Department and Department of City Planning have successfully persuaded each developer thus far to transfer their esplanade to the Parks Department and to pay the agency an annual maintenance fee, so that the waterfront will truly become a public park that can be mapped once all of the properties are lined up.

National and Regional Parks

a. How will you support the creation of planned new regional waterfront parks like Fresh Kills, Hudson River Park, Governors Island and Brooklyn Bridge Park?

I am proud of the work of our Administration in spearheading the creation of all of these parks, which will transform neighborhoods across the city and provide new recreational opportunities for New Yorkers.

We support these parks financially and are deeply involved in the governance at a variety of levels. In partnership with the Governor’s office, the Mayor’s Office has appointees serving on the Board of Directors for the Hudson River Park Trust, Governors Island Preservation and Education Corporation, and Brooklyn Bridge Park Development Corporation, thus playing an integral role in decision making for each of these parcels and ensuring that high caliber public open spaces are created.

In addition, we are working to transform Fresh Kills Park, once the largest active landfill in the city, into the City’s second largest park. Construction has begun for Owl Hollow Park and is imminent for Schmul Park, adjacent sites that will provide access to the greater Fresh Kills Park site and provide recreational amenities for local communities.

b. What are your plans to ensure that all citizens have equal access to these regional facilities?

Among other things, PlaNYC calls for promoting alternate modes of transportation, enhancing bus service, building greenways and bike lanes, and expanding capacity on congested routes. All of these initiatives will improve access to our regional facilities. Since April 2007, our Administration has been successful in installing 200 miles of bike lanes with more on the way. Parks also works with the MTA to ensure that there is public transportation available to bring New Yorkers to these great new parks, as they did for the past two summers to extend the bus route to the Floating Pool at Barretto Point Park in the Bronx.

Specifically for the parks listed above, Governor’s Island can be reached via free public ferry, Brooklyn Bridge park will welcome its first visitors this winter with the opening of Pier 1, which is steps from downtown Brooklyn’s bus and subway lines, and as stated above, the opening of Owl Hollow Park and Schmul Park will provide greater access to local residents for Fresh Kills Park. Hudson River Park is already very accessible.

c. What steps would you take to promote the use of and access to our city's national parks at Gateway National Recreation Area and the other National Parks of NY Harbor?

Our Administration has made it a priority to bring New Yorkers closer to their waterfront by creating new waterfront parks and encouraging waterfront events and recreational opportunities like the Science Barge, Floating Pool at Barretto Point Park, the NYC Water Trail, and opening up Governor's Island. The creation of the Harbor District Taskforce has brought together all the different entities that provide public space and cultural activities in and along the harbor. The Taskforce meets on a quarterly basis and coordinates with NYC & Co. to promote the various opportunities available to New Yorkers. In particular, the group is working in conjunction with the NYC 400 to celebrate the City's waterfront with Harbor Day, and to commemorate our historic relationship with the Dutch. Additionally, the improvements planned for the Rockaways through PlaNYC and opening up the waterfront for recreational use will help to draw more focus on nearby natural resources, including the Gateway National Recreation Area.