

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

New Yorkers for Parks (NY4P) is a citywide, independent organization dedicated to ensuring that all New Yorkers enjoy a world class parks system. New Yorkers for Parks achieves its purpose through an integrated framework of advocacy, research, planning and a coalition of parks, open space, recreation, advocacy and civic organizations.

New York City is a place of constant change. During times of economic growth the number of real estate developments and re-zoning projects can seem dizzying, and in an economic downturn land use decisions are of critical importance to such a dense environment. However, unlike cities such as Chicago and London, New York does not have a comprehensive plan for city development and, accordingly, no plan that ensures adequate open space in all neighborhoods. Without sound planning and smart policies guiding development, the City risks the continuing loss of open space and missed opportunities for new open spaces. In a 2007 report, “Making the Most of our Parks,” the Citizens Budget Commission observed that New York City parks “must accommodate an unparalleled volume of people ... [and that] ... New Yorkers must be especially innovative in order to make the most of their parks.” The report suggested that one of the greatest challenges to our park system was the lack of a comprehensive, strategic plan guiding its expansion.

In order to encourage comprehensive open space planning, NY4P has developed the “Open Space Index,” a set of targets for open space access and environmental sustainability in New York City neighborhoods. The targets are informed by existing New York City open space conditions, current New York City park and sustainability policies, measures in other cities and recommendations from professionals in the fields of real estate, open space planning, environmental justice, community-based planning and environmental science. The Open Space Index will serve as a tool to evaluate neighborhood open space and help communities identify and advocate for their open space priorities. It is NY4P’s hope that these neighborhood-level assessments will contribute to thoughtful, community-driven plans for parks and open space in New York City.

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