



MANHATTAN  
CITY  
COUNCIL  
DISTRICT

# 4

*Upper East Side, Carnegie Hill, Yorkville,  
Lenox Hill, Turtle Bay, East Midtown  
Murray Hill, Kips Bay, Stuyvesant Town,  
Cooper Village*



**Parks are an essential city service.** They are the barometers of our city. From Flatbush to Flushing and Morrisania to Midtown, parks are the front and backyards of all New Yorkers. Well-maintained and designed parks offer recreation and solace, improve property values, reduce crime, and contribute to healthy communities.



*Dag Hammarskjold Plaza, Turtle Bay*

The Bloomberg Administration's PlaNYC is the first-ever effort to sustainably address the many infrastructure needs of New York City, including parks. With targets set for stormwater management, air quality and more, the City is working to update infrastructure for a growing population while addressing environmental concerns. Through ambitious goals to increase access to parks and open spaces, New York's fiscally prudent administration affirms that investing in parks is good business.

Park innovations have flourished in recent years. The creation of Hudson River Park and the revitalization of Bryant Park allow access to areas that were previously off-limits due to

physical barriers or crime. As a result, studies show significant increases in nearby real estate values. Greenways are expanding waterfront access while creating safer routes for cyclists and pedestrians, and the new initiative to reclaim streets for public use brings fresh vibrancy to the city.

New York City's population is projected to increase by one million new residents by 2030, and demand for our 29,000 acres of parkland will only grow. It is imperative that creative efforts to expand our open spaces continue—but perhaps more importantly, existing parks must be protected, maintained and adequately funded to best serve current and future New Yorkers.

#### SHOWCASE:

### *Robert Moses Playground*

"Parkland alienation" is the taking of parkland for a non-park use. Today, parkland can be taken for development too easily, and in a dense city where parks are our front and back yards, this can have a devastating effect. New Yorkers for Parks has worked with the legal community to strengthen the alienation process and protect parks that are in danger of being alienated. The fate of Robert Moses Playground has been an issue for several years, since the United Nations proposed taking over this playground to expand its offices. Local elected officials oppose the plan, and the proposal has still not come to a vote. To download New Yorkers for Parks' educational brochure on alienation, please visit [www.ny4p.org](http://www.ny4p.org)



# Citywide

## CITYWIDE Parks by the Numbers

**29,000**  
Acres of parkland

**1,700**  
Parks

**1,000**  
Playgrounds

**2,300**  
Greenstreets

**12,000**  
Acres of natural areas

**600,000**  
Park trees

**2 million**  
Street trees

**14**  
Miles of beaches

**800**  
Athletic fields

**50**  
Recreation centers

**66**  
Pools

**6**  
Ice rinks

**22**  
Historic house museums

**1,000**  
Monuments, sculptures and  
historical markers

## A New Master Plan for Parks

Significant steps have been made toward PlaNYC's parks and open space targets, which include ensuring that every New Yorker lives within a 10-minute walk of a park and planting 1 million trees. Important projects like the development of regional parks and the "schoolyards-to-playgrounds" initiative, which opens schoolyards after hours to the public, increase recreation space, thus resulting in an even greater need for maintenance funds.

PlaNYC shows the City's commitment to improving open space and recreation opportunities. Now, we must take the next step and create a master plan for New York City's parks, which does not exist today. A master plan would respond to particular neighborhood and regional needs and outline how best to expand the park system to serve current and future residents.

Any expansion to the parks system requires maintenance funding. Most city parks rely on public funding, but this is not a predictable source as evidenced by the current economic recession. While spending on park maintenance increased by 50 percent under Mayor Bloomberg between 2003 and 2008, a gloomy economic forecast can be expected to result in cuts to the Parks budget in 2009 and beyond. Public-private partnerships will be affected by the recession as well. Innovative funding streams—as well as improved management strategies—can help ensure that the parks system will weather these storms.



Top: Breininger Playground, Queens  
Above: Central Park, Manhattan

### Historical City Funding for the Parks Department (Adjusted)



# By the Borough: Manhattan

## Public-Private Partnerships

Manhattan's parks are well-loved and well-used. When New York City's fiscal crisis of the 1970s resulted in a decline in park conditions, a new movement of private support through public-private partnerships was born. Manhattan's parks have benefited significantly from groups like the Central Park Conservancy and Madison Square Park Conservancy, which have brought innovative management and additional funding to the parks. Every park along Fifth Avenue from Central Park to the Battery benefits from private support and funding.

Twenty-three non-profit partner groups fundraise for Manhattan parks, in addition to 10 groups that raise money to support parks citywide.



At left: Bennett Park, Washington Heights  
Above: Bryant Park, Midtown

### Manhattan has the 3rd lowest percentage of land devoted to parks of the five boroughs.

	Manhattan	Citywide
Park acreage	2,711	29,000
Percent of borough devoted to parks	19%	14%

### Manhattan has the highest number of residents per acre of parkland of the five boroughs.

	Manhattan	Citywide
Total population	1.5 million	8 million
Residents per acre of parkland	567	276

### Manhattan has the lowest tree canopy coverage of the five boroughs.

	Manhattan	Citywide
Tree canopy (trees on public and private land)	13%	24%
Number of street trees per mile of sidewalk	49	41

## MANHATTAN Parks by the Numbers

671

Acres of natural areas

209

Playgrounds

130

Comfort stations

576

Drinking fountains

160

Athletic fields

215

Basketball courts

317

Greenstreets

22

Pools

### Manhattan Park Staffing

33

Gardeners & Assistant Gardeners

237

City Parks Workers & Associate Park Service Workers

57

Park Supervisors

34

Recreation Directors & Specialists

28

Playground Associates

54

Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP) Officers & Urban Park Rangers

From Manhattan Community Board 6:

“  
 ‘Quality of Life’ in the Board area is of major concern; open, public passive and active recreation space has had a substantial impact on that quality of life. This district has less park space per capita than almost any other district in the city. We continue to emphasize the need for adequate maintenance, operation and protection of our rehabilitated parks.  
 ”

Statement of Needs for Fiscal Year 2008

## Parks, playgrounds and beaches

- |                             |                                 |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 Samuel Seabury Playground | 7 Robert Moses Playground       |
| 2 Stanley Isaacs Courts     | 8 Saint Vartan Park             |
| 3 Dag Hammarskjold Plaza    | 9 East River Esplanade          |
| 4 MacArthur Park            | 10 Asser Levy Recreation Center |
| 5 Mary O'Connor Playground  | 11 Murphy Park                  |
| 6 Tudor Grove Playground    |                                 |

**LEGEND**

— 1/4 Mile	■ DPR community gardens
— Council District Border	■ Other community gardens
■ New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) parks, playgrounds and greenstreets	■ DPR beaches
■ DPR natural areas	■ State and federal parkland
	■ City-owned vacant land
	* DPR schoolyards-to-playgrounds sites

*(Schoolyards-to-playgrounds is a citywide PlaNYC initiative to open schoolyards to the public during afterschool hours.)*



Saint Vartan Park, Murray Hill



Robert Moses Playground, Turtle Bay

### DATA SOURCES

All data is from 2008 unless noted. **Citywide:** Parks by the Numbers - NYC Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR); Budget chart - Adopted Budgets, NYC Office of Management and Budget (OMB), FY 1989-2009; Preliminary Budget, OMB, FY 2010. **By the borough:** PIP Ratings, By the numbers & Staffing - DPR; Trees - "Trees Count!" Street Tree Census report, 2005-2006; DPR; **This page:** Population - Census2000; Language access - Infoshare.org; Civic engagement - NYC Board of Elections and NYC Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications (DOITT), FY 2008; Park resources and PIP ratings - DPR; Community Gardens - Council on the Environment of NYC; Vacant land - MapPLUTO copyrighted by the New York City Department of Planning; BYTES of the Big Apple; Health - NYS Department of Health, 2006 via Infoshare.org; Education - NYC and NYS Departments of Education, 2007-2008, analysis by the Annenberg Foundation.

### MAP DATA

NYC Parks properties - DPR; State parks - NYS Department of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation; National parks - National Park Service, 2006; Council District boundaries - BYTES of the Big Apple, DCP, 2005; Schoolyards-to-Playgrounds - DPR.

B.

# The Future of New York City Parks

With the promise of Fresh Kills Park in Staten Island and the completion of regional parks citywide, New York City's park system will expand over the coming decades in a manner not seen since the 1930s. With sound planning and sufficient funding, our park system will flourish.

Although the City has an obligation to fund parks, we have seen that in times of fiscal crisis, parks suffer. We must ensure that all parks—particularly those that cannot rely on private funding—receive adequate public support.

While “friends of” groups and the robust volunteer program administered through Partnerships for Parks have a positive impact on park maintenance, more dollars are needed. Park advocates have long debated how to ensure funding streams outside of the city budget to maintain our parks in all fiscal climates. The funding mechanisms below have been successful in New York City and elsewhere. Now is the time to carefully examine these strategies to plan for the future.

**Concessions:** More than \$50 million is earned annually from concessions such as food stands and ice skating rinks operated on City parkland. Some public-private partnerships are allowed to keep a portion of concession revenues earned in particular parks through unique agreements with the City. But in the vast majority of

parks, the money is directed to the City's General Fund. New Yorkers for Parks has long advocated for City Hall to allow the Parks Department to retain a portion of this revenue to offset maintenance costs throughout the system, as is done in other cities such as Chicago.

**Property Taxes:** Business Improvement Districts have a long history of funding park maintenance through tax revenues, with Bryant Park as the lead example. Friends of Hudson River Park is pursuing this structure. Such arrangements place some of the costs of park maintenance on businesses or residents whose property values benefit from a well-maintained park.

**Public-Private Partnerships:** More than 30 park-specific non-profits around the city fundraise for specific parks—such as the Battery Conservancy and the Riverside Park Fund. Groups typically raise money for capital projects or ongoing park maintenance; however, this strategy has worked only in high-income areas.

**Zoning Bonuses:** Developer incentives to improve open space can produce successful results. In West Chelsea, the City passed a special zoning amendment that allowed developers to build higher in exchange for contributing to an ongoing maintenance fund to benefit the new public High Line Park. This structure should be explored citywide.



Top: Madison Square Park, Manhattan  
Middle: Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, Queens  
Above: Vidalia Park, Bronx



Ensuring greener, safer,  
cleaner parks, together.

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