



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.



Haffen Park, Baychester

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:

Haffen Park

The 2008 *Spotlight on Recreation* is a new project of New Yorkers for Parks' award-winning *Report Card on Parks*. This report examines the conditions of athletic fields, courts, and playgrounds in a random selection of neighborhood parks. Each outdoor recreation feature was inspected on three separate site visits, once each in June, July, and August to show the performance of these specific features over the course of the summer. The courts and playground in Haffen Park were surveyed for this project. The courts performed higher than the citywide average, and the playground's score reflected the citywide average. Visit www.ny4p.org for more information on the *Spotlight on Recreation* Project.



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

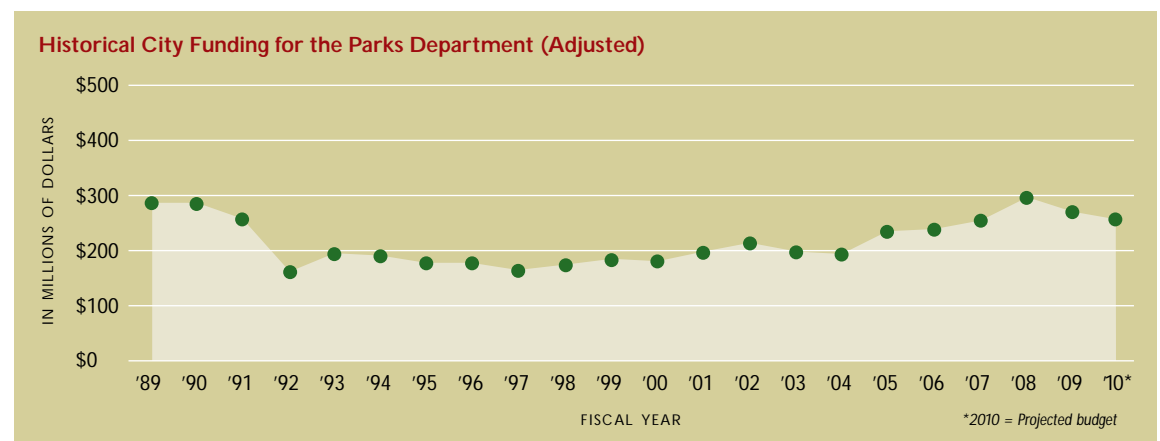
Significant steps have been made toward PlaNYC's parks and open space targets, which include ensuring that every New Yorker lives within a 10-minute walk of a park and planting 1 million trees. Important projects like the development of regional parks and the "schoolyards-to-playgrounds" initiative, 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



By the Borough: Bronx

Parkland Alienation

Although the Bronx has the most parkland of the five boroughs, much of that acreage is contained in Pelham Bay Park, at 2,766 acres the largest in the city. Bronx parks have been subject to two significant cases of “alienation”: the taking of parkland for a non-park use. In 2003, the City and State approved construction of a water filtration plant in Van Cortlandt Park, and in 2006, 22 acres of well-loved parkland were alienated for a new Yankee Stadium. The Van Cortlandt Park case was high-profile and resulted in mitigation funds for Bronx parks, but the alienation at Yankee Stadium took place in only eight days with residents left in the dark. Both cases resulted in soured relations between the City and the affected communities. Unfortunately, parkland can be legally taken without public notification. The alienation process must be strengthened so that parkland in every borough can be preserved for New Yorkers.

Three non-profit partner groups fundraise for Bronx parks, in addition to 10 groups that raise money to support parks citywide.



At left: Van Cortlandt Park, Van Cortlandt Village
Above: Poe Park, Fordham

The Bronx has the highest percentage of land devoted to parks of the five boroughs.

	Bronx	Citywide
Park acreage	7,002	29,000
Percent of borough devoted to parks	26%	14%

The Bronx has the 2nd lowest number of residents per acre of parkland of the five boroughs.

	Bronx	Citywide
Total population	1.3 million	8 million
Residents per acre of parkland	190	276

The Bronx has the 2nd greatest tree canopy coverage of the five boroughs.

	Bronx	Citywide
Tree canopy (trees on public and private land)	24%	24%
Number of street trees per mile of sidewalk	37	41

BRONX Parks by the Numbers

2,596

Acres of natural areas

191

Playgrounds

117

Comfort stations

374

Drinking fountains

144

Athletic fields

201

Basketball courts

436

Greenstreets

10

Pools

Bronx Park Staffing

27

Gardeners & Assistant Gardeners

216

City Parks Workers & Associate Park Service Workers

52

Park Supervisors

12

Recreation Directors & Specialists

5

Playground Associates

23

Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP) Officers & Urban Park Rangers

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.



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Ensuring greener, safer,
cleaner parks, together.

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