



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.



Cooper Park, East Williamsburg

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:

Maria Hernandez Park

New Yorkers for Parks' award-winning *Report Card on Parks* project was designed in 2002 and is the only independent, annual survey of the maintenance of parks in all five boroughs. It tells New Yorkers how their parks are doing in key service areas, like bathrooms, playgrounds, and pathways. Every summer New Yorkers for Parks inspects park properties across the city to advocate for improvement. Maria Hernandez Park received a grade of C- on the 2007 *Report Card on Parks*, scoring poorly on drinking fountains and active recreation space. Visit www.ny4p.org for more information on the *Report Card on Parks*.



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

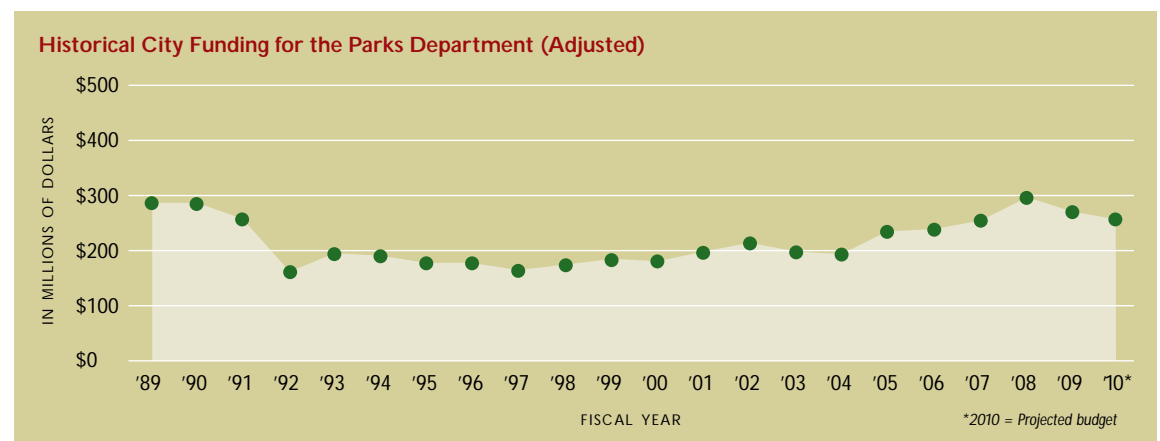
Significant steps have been made toward PlaNYC's parks and open space targets, which include ensuring that every New Yorker lives within a 10-minute walk of a park and planting 1 million trees. Important projects like the development of regional parks and the "schoolyards-to-playgrounds" initiative,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

Waterfront Reclamation

Brooklyn's Prospect Park was Frederick Law Olmsted's self-declared masterpiece. But until recently, Brooklynites have been sorely lacking in recreational opportunities along the waterfront. Thanks to several large waterfront projects new attention has been brought to Brooklyn's coast. The expansive Brooklyn Bridge Park will offer unprecedented access to the water, and the Bloomberg Administration's rezoning of the Greenpoint-Williamsburg waterfront promises new recreational opportunities and greenspace.

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



At left: Herbert Von King Park, Bedford Stuyvesant
Above: Lieutenant Joseph Petrosino Park, New Utrecht

BROOKLYN Parks by the Numbers

973

Acres of natural areas

291

Playgrounds

172

Comfort stations

852

Drinking fountains

246

Athletic fields

343

Basketball courts

480

Greenstreets

16

Pools

Brooklyn Park Staffing

20

Gardeners & Assistant Gardeners

208

City Parks Workers & Associate Park Service Workers

66

Park Supervisors

30

Recreation Directors & Specialists

13

Playground Associates

27

Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP) Officers & Urban Park Rangers

Brooklyn has the lowest percentage of land devoted to parks of the five boroughs.

	Brooklyn	Citywide
Park acreage	4,481	29,000
Percent of borough devoted to parks	10%	14%

Brooklyn has the 2nd highest number of residents per acre of parkland of the five boroughs.

	Brooklyn	Citywide
Total population	2.5 million	8 million
Residents per acre of parkland	550	276

Brooklyn has the 3rd lowest tree canopy coverage of the five boroughs.

	Brooklyn	Citywide
Tree canopy (trees on public and private land)	21%	24%
Number of street trees per mile of sidewalk	45	41

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



**NEW YORKERS
FOR PARKS**

Ensuring greener, safer,
cleaner parks, together.

New Yorkers for Parks
The Arthur Ross Center for Parks and Open Spaces
355 Lexington Avenue, 14th Floor
New York, NY 10017

Tel: 212-838-9410 / Fax: 212-371-6048

www.ny4p.org