



**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.



*Saratoga Square Park, Bedford-Stuyvesant*

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:

### *Betsy Head Memorial 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 at Betsy Head Memorial Park were surveyed for this project. The courts scored above the citywide average. Visit [www.ny4p.org](http://www.ny4p.org) for more information on the *Spotlight on Recreation: A Report Card on Parks 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.

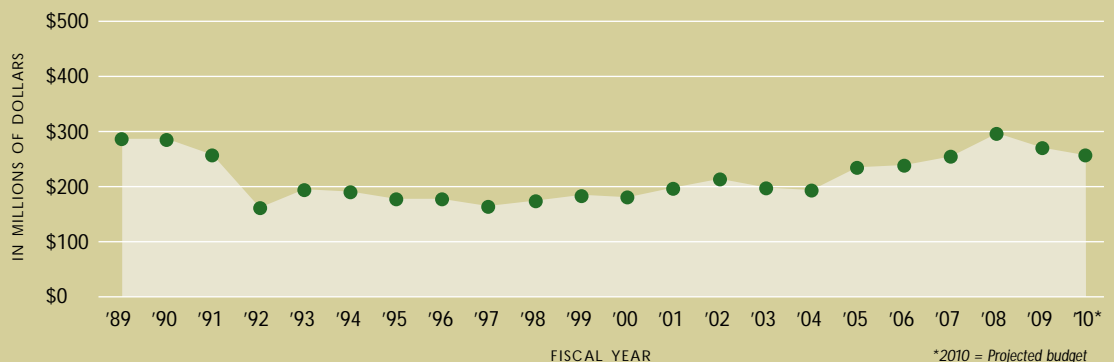
PlaNYC shows the City's commitment to improving open space and recreation opportunities. Now, we must take the next step and create a master plan for New York City's parks, which does not exist today. A master plan would respond to particular neighborhood and regional needs and outline how best to expand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

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



# 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

From Brooklyn Community Board 16:

“ A district-wide pruning of street trees as well as trees in our parks is needed. Tree limbs are blocking street lights and hanging low in the path of pedestrians on many of our streets. Trees are becoming top heavy and limbs are frequently breaking off which present a hazard to pedestrians and motorists. ”

Statement of Needs for Fiscal Year 2008

## Parks, playgrounds and beaches

- |  |                                      |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1 Lafayette Playground                       | 13 Eastern Parkway Malls             |
| 2 Police Officer Reinaldo Salgado Playground | 14 Howard Playground & Pool          |
| 3 Saratoga Square Park                       | 15 Chester Playground                |
| 4 Jackie Robinson Park                       | 16 Carter G. Woodson Children's Park |
| 5 Brevoort Playground                        | 17 Dr. Richard Greene Playground     |
| 6 Carver Playground                          | 18 Betsy Head Memorial Playground    |
| 7 Marion-Hopkinson Playground                | 19 PS 125 Playground                 |
| 8 Fish Playground                            | 20 Van Dyke Playground               |
| 9 Weeksville Playground                      | 21 Lincoln Terrace Park              |
| 10 Pacific Playground                        | 22 East Flatbush Children's Park     |
| 11 Saratoga Ballfields                       | 23 Kennedy King Playground           |
| 12 Ocean Hill Playground                     |                                      |

**LEGEND**

- 1/4 Mile
- Council District Border
- New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) parks, playgrounds and greenstreets
- DPR natural areas
- DPR community gardens
- Other community gardens
- DPR beaches
- 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.)*



Marion-Hopkinson Playground, Ocean Hill

### 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.

# 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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