

# New York City, U.S.



*New York's 28,000 acres of green spaces both support and provide an escape from one of the world's most dynamic urban centers.*

**With** almost 27% of its acreage set aside as parks, open spaces or greenways, New York City qualifies as the greenest big city in the country (Harnik, 2000). The complex system of city, state, national and private lands is woven together to form an interconnected and interdependent web that supports a population of 7.5 million permanent residents and even more visitors. The success of the system is dependent on a combination of public and private funding sources and the dedicated efforts of community volunteers and local open spaces stewards. Riding on the motto "It's My Park", the Partnerships for Parks Program, a joint program of the City Parks Foundation and the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, speaks to the city's awareness of the important role that individuals and their connections to small green spaces play in weaving a functional green infrastructure in dense, diverse, dynamic urban environments.

In addition to supporting a large and demanding human population, New York City's landscape lies at a critical confluence of multiple larger environmental systems. The 500+ miles of waterfront that border New York's terrestrial landscape connect the city and its processes to one of the country's largest estuarine systems, as well as those marine and terrestrial landscapes lying both upstream and downstream of the city. The Waterfront Park Coalition has tackled the important role of New York's waterfront with the creation of the Waterfront Blueprint Plan. This comprehensive approach to re-envisioning New York's waterfront addresses the ecological, cultural and economic importance of reclaiming New York's industrial waterfronts to form a functional, healthy bridge between New York's vibrant public open spaces and the larger landscape within which the city resides.

## *Building an Open Space System:*

### *The People*



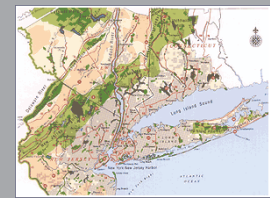
(Partnerships for Parks)

### *The Partnerships*



(Central Park Conservancy)

### *The Foundations*



(Regional Plan Association)





**Context**

New York city's park and open space system must address not only the needs of its 7.5 million permanent residents and millions of visitors but also the diverse natural systems that converge at the mouth of the Hudson River. With 500+ miles of waterfront, the landscapes of New York City's five boroughs must play an active role in maintaining the health of the New York-New Jersey estuarine system while also contributing to the livability of one of the planet's densest urban centers.



**NYC Open Space**

(Harnik, 2000)

**City Population: 7,381,000**

**City Area: 197,696**

**Density Level: 37.3**

**Park Acreage: 52,938**  
(26.6% city area)

**Park acreage per 1000 residents: 7.17**

**Governing bodies:**  
City of New York  
New York State  
National Park Service

**Expenditure per person:**  
\$41

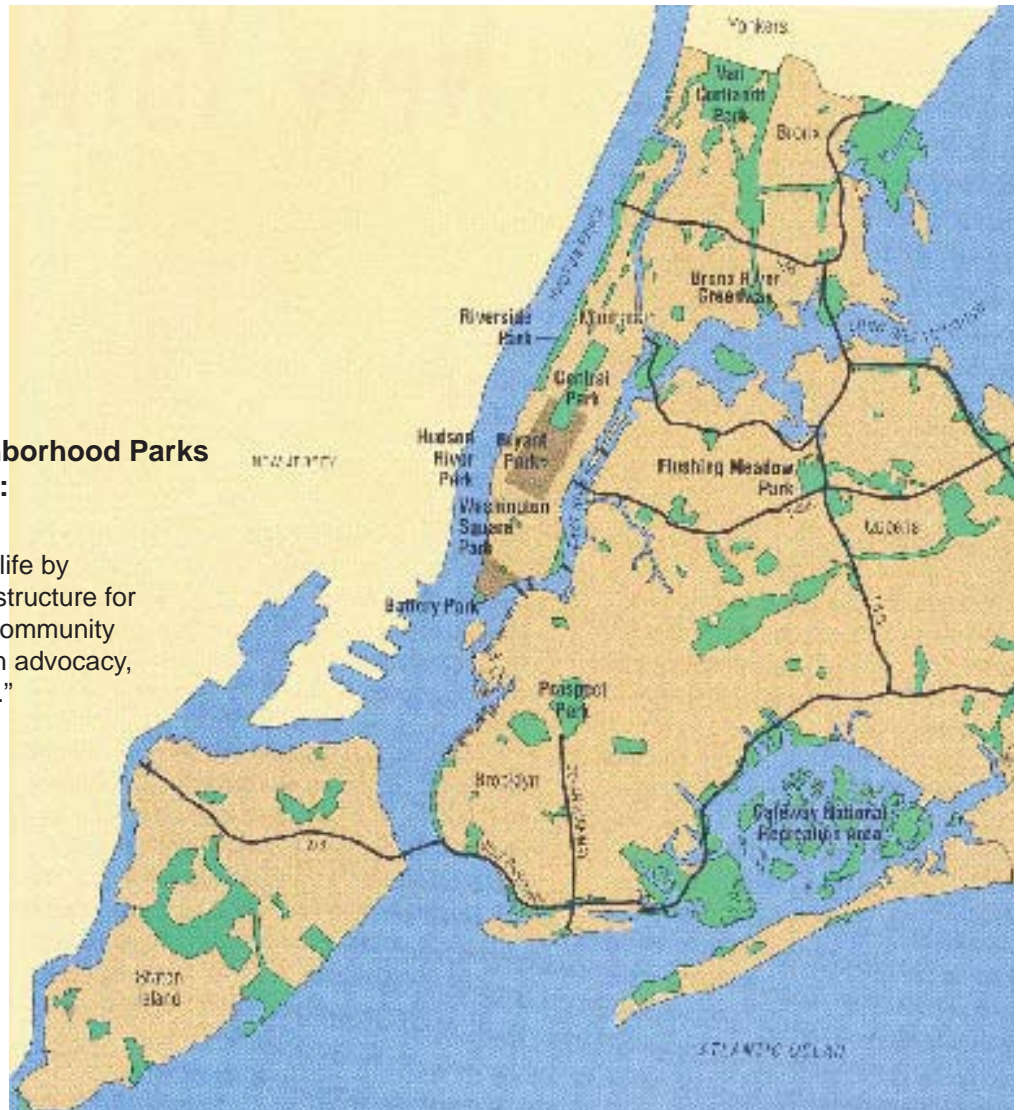
**Committed to Greenways:**

"New York City is committed to making cycling part of the City's transportation system and encourages individuals and communities to participate in the implementation of this Plan."

(NYC Department of Planning  
[www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/bike/mp.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/bike/mp.shtml))

**Built on a Foundation of Neighborhood Parks and Active Community groups:**

Active community members are "dedicated to improving New York life by expanding and enhancing its infrastructure for public health: parks, waterfronts, community gardens and open spaces, through advocacy, research, education, and planning."









### Funding Mechanisms:

### Maintaining and Enhancing New York's Open Space System Requires a Combination of Public and Private Dollars

At \$41 per person, the City of New York has a very low per capita expenditure on its green infrastructure. In addition to the public funds from the Parks and the Transportation Departments, New York's green system depends on support from the National Park Service, New York State Parks as well as significant support from its private citizens and non-profit organizations.

**City Parks Foundation** was formed in 1989 by the Parks Commission to facilitate the contribution of private dollars to support recreation, education, and arts in parks.

**Central Park Conservancy** is a non-profit organization that uses a combination of public money (from NYC Parks), private donations and grants to manage and maintain Central Park. Begun in 1980, by 1999 it had a staff of 250, 1,200 volunteers and \$65 million endowment. Similarly, the **Bryant Park Restoration Alliance**, **Prospect Park Alliance** and the **Bronx River Alliance** use private dollars to support the maintenance, improvement and programming of two of New York's most popular parks.

The **Adopt-A-Park** program is an avenue through which individuals and organizations can contribute directly to the park of their choice

### New York City has 581 miles of waterfront!



(images: Waterfront Park Coalition)

### Developing a Citywide Waterfront Open Space Plan

New York City is tackling the challenge of living with almost 600 miles of waterfront by developing an open space plan that addresses the ecological, economic and cultural advantages and requirements of a dynamic living waterfront.

### Waterfront Park Coalition (from New York League of Conservation Voters website)

"The Waterfront Park Coalition is an alliance of environmental, civic and community groups that support revitalization of the New York City waterfront with public open space and restored ecological habitat. These groups have come together as a coalition to promote: (1) public access to the city's waterfront and waterways in each of the five boroughs; (2) adequate and equitable financing for waterfront public space and access; and (3) protection and improvement of waterfront habitat.

### Creating a Waterfront Blueprint for New York City

"WPC has published a comprehensive inventory of opportunities for waterfront open space and habitat protection in each borough. This inventory outlines nearly 150 opportunities for open space and habitat conservation on the City waterfront, and is backed up by a database of factual information about each project. It includes plans for greenways, public piers, open meadows, boat launches, waterfront promenades, and green open spaces, and would offer waterfront access and open space to city residents. The Blueprint provides a practical guide for the future of the City waterfront, with the information required to guide decision-making and investment."



## Lessons Learned

### Community Involvement is Key-

Personal ownership of parks in New York City depends on its community members to maintain and enhance its expansive system of neighborhood parks.

**Partnerships for Parks** is a joint program between the New York City Parks Department and City Parks Foundation that assists and builds connections between over 250 “Friends of” groups throughout the five boroughs.

The **Neighborhood Open Space Coalition** is a community-led, city-wide organization committed to improving the livability of New York City. Through advocacy, education, research and planning, the Coalition works to preserve, enhance and increase the city’s “infrastructure for public health”, its parks, open spaces, greenways and community gardens ([www.treebranch.com](http://www.treebranch.com)).

### Public-Private Partnerships Expand Opportunities for Park Support

Private resources contribute significantly to the support, maintenance and programming of New York’s open spaces.

City Parks Foundation  
Partnerships for Parks  
Bryant Park Restoration Corporation  
Adopt-the-River Program

Greenbelt Conservancy  
Central Park Conservancy  
Prospect Park Alliance  
Bronx River Alliance . . .



(image: Partnerships for Parks)

## The Metropolitan Greensward: Planning within a Larger Open Space System

Regional Plan Association

*from RPA web:*

“The Metropolitan Greensward is RPA’s vision of a system of protected landscape and water bodies that distinguish the cities and suburbs of the New York/New Jersey/Connecticut metropolitan region. These region shaping open spaces harbor the Region’s most critical natural resource systems, its recreational opportunities and its working landscapes of farms and forests. Together, these protected open lands will help shape future patterns of growth in the Tri-State Region by limiting development at its periphery and enhancing the quality of life in its cities and suburbs.

To realize the Greensward vision, Regional Plan Association is now working with a variety of public and private partners to conserve three critical region-shaping landscapes: New York - New Jersey Harbor, Long Island Sound, and the Appalachian Highlands in New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut. ”

mixed-use



Brooklyn Waterfront Greenway

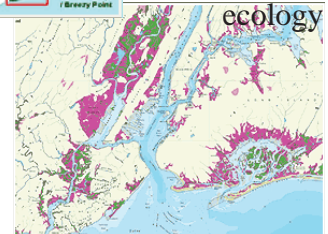
**Governor’s Island** - historic preservation and public access  
**Riis Park (Queens)** – historic preservation and waterfront access  
**New York-New Jersey Harbor Estuary** – wildlands preservation  
**Brooklyn Waterfront Greenway**- reclaiming industrial landscapes for diverse uses & needs



history



ecology



(images: Regional Plan Association)



## Issues and Initiatives

New York City programs its parks, open spaces and greenways to accommodate the needs of diverse user groups.

### Balancing User Groups with Flexible Access Hours:

#### Vehicles:

no vehicular access:

Forest Park Drive, Queens (isolated segments)  
Rockaway Beach, Queens

vehicular access during rush hour only:

Prospect Park, Brooklyn  
Central Park, Manhattan

vehicular access on weekends only:

Silver Lake, Staten Island

#### Bicycles:

bicycle access limited to rush hour and recreational hours:

Coney Island Boardwalk, Brooklyn

#### Dogs:

In many city parks, dog owners are given priority and allowed to walk their dogs off-leash during hours when green spaces traditionally see a reduced volume of visitors - early in the morning and late in the evening.



## Resources

**Inside City Parks.** Peter Harnik (2000). The Urban Land Institute and Trust for Public Land, Washington, D.C.

Central Park Conservancy  
<http://www.centralparknyc.org/>

**City Parks Alliance**  
<http://www.cityparksalliance.org/>

**Neighborhood Open Space Coalition**  
[www.treebranch.com](http://www.treebranch.com)

**Partnerships for Parks**  
<http://itsmypark.org/>

**Project for Public Spaces – Urban Parks**  
[http://www.pps.org/upo/?referrer=pps\\_navba](http://www.pps.org/upo/?referrer=pps_navba)

**Prospect Park Alliance**  
<http://www.prospectpark.org/>

**Regional Plan Association**  
<http://www.rpa.org/aboutrpa/welcome.html>

**Waterfront Park Coalition**  
[http://www.nylcv.org/Programs/WPC/Waterfront\\_Park\\_Coalition.htm](http://www.nylcv.org/Programs/WPC/Waterfront_Park_Coalition.htm)