

URBAN PARKS: NEW YORK CITY

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ABSTRACT

New York City's success in providing high-quality, sustainable, ecologically productive and equity-promoting parks in recent years presents a number of important lessons for cities in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). This publication is a review of four innovative strategies that have emerged in New York City to add to and maintain the city's park portfolio and how can New York City serve as a useful case with lessons to consider for providing parks in LAC. Cities across LAC face mounting challenges in the provision of public green space. Currently, a majority of LAC cities fall short of providing the World Health Organization's recommended minimum of 9m² of green space per resident. Residents in cities across the region also face barriers to accessing parks and many are of poor or declining quality. The underlining social economic inequality and spatial segregation in many LAC cities is also reflected in the uneven distribution of parks and other green spaces. For cities in the region, the challenge is one of quantity, quality, and spatial distribution. The political dynamics, institutional arrangements, financial mechanisms, design strategies, and maintenance programs that have proven critical to enabling NYC's recent innovations, therefore, bear a number of lessons for cities across LAC.

URBAN PARKS: NEW YORK CITY

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URBAN EXPERIENCES IN THE US

PROLOGUE

DISTINCTIVE
CASES –
PRACTICAL
EXPERIENCES –
ADDRESS
CITY
CHALLENGES –

The Urban Parks: New York City publication belongs to a series of papers that seek to examine different urban projects in cities across the United States from a variety of perspectives: Heritage, Urban People, Governance, Housing, Economics and Finance, Smart Cities and Urban Data, and Resilience. The objective is to learn from these experiences and how they have contributed to the development of US cities by enhancing property values, incentivizing communities, stimulating the economy, and revitalizing infrastructure, among others.

The uniqueness of each individual city described in these papers, and the variety of strategies present an opportunity for cities in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) to develop tailor-made projects and examine alternative methods to procure their own urban renewal.

Cities in the United States provide valuable lessons for the urban process taking place in Latin America and the Caribbean. The US experience coping with new technologies, urban sprawl, and their role as economic development engines, among many others, are key for LAC region. From innovative public spaces such as the High Line in New York City to the complex reinterpretation of planning for city resilience in New Orleans, United States cities provide a rich and vast array of examples from which LAC cities can learn.

Learning from the US experience requires reframing these examples in the diverse

THE UNIQUENESS OF EACH INDIVIDUAL CITY DESCRIBED IN THESE JOURNALS, AND THE VARIETY OF STRATEGIES PRESENT AN OPPORTUNITY FOR CITIES IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (LAC) TO DEVELOP TAILOR-MADE PROJECTS AND EXAMINE ALTERNATIVE METHODS TO PROCURE THEIR OWN URBAN RENEWAL.

scenarios of LAC cities. Therefore, instead of just reviewing the outcomes, the aim of these papers is to present and assess the processes and methodologies used to produce such improvements. Through this collection of experiences, we expect to highlight how each case translated challenges into strategies, plans or projects. In these trajectories, we seek to illustrate how several actors interact and get involved, moving from claims and struggles towards building a consensus for re-shaping the city.

The case of New York City focuses on the important role of public spaces in revitalizing urban areas and highlights how these interventions promote community organization and participation. The social development and community belonging derived from the revitalization of multiple public areas, involving the government, private-partnerships and citizen participation strengthens the social fabric and jump-starts the economic

development of the city as a whole. This case provides an insight into how integral urban projects can benefit the city not only from an environmental point of view, but also as a cultural engine for social cohesion.

INTRODUCTION



SOURCE: HIGH PARK, NYC 2019. IDB

FOUR INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES

1.1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

New York City’s success in providing high-quality, sustainable, ecologically productive and equity-promoting parks in recent years presents a number of important lessons for cities in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). Recently, four innovative strategies have emerged in New York City to add to and maintain the city’s park portfolio: public-private partnerships (PPPs), equity-based and data-driven governmental initiatives, privately owned public spaces, and coastal resiliency projects.

PPPs are agreements between civil society entities and government. Both in the terms of the agreement and in the composition of the civil society entities, PPPs offer a wide variety of arrangements. PPPs are useful mechanisms to facilitate complex jurisdictional demands and act as go-betweens among various funding sources. Their ability to exist independent of the dynamics of electoral politics can also be advantageous in long-term advocacy and in supporting parks (both prior to construction and for ongoing maintenance and programming), as well as in preparing designs and studies in anticipation of politically opportune timing. The terms along which PPPs ultimately balance private benefits and public capital expenditures, as well as the mechanisms through which profits are captured for public purposes, are essential to their long-term self-sufficiency.

Equity-based and data-driven approaches have enabled New York’s Parks Department to target capital investment around metric-driven needs. These programs have aimed to address capital needs for parks, particularly in neighborhoods that lack the potential to

generate sufficient funding from civil society. The city’s programs developed within this model have also aimed to un-silo various efforts across departments for better synergy in governmental investments on parks, while at the same time coupling these efforts with initiatives to stimulate local stewardship of public spaces and develop new partnerships with civil society organizations.

Privately owned public spaces have also been a useful tool for providing park land by tying density bonuses to private construction and management of plazas and other publicly accessible spaces. This approach is feasible in New York due to citizens’ acceptance of highly dense patterns of urban development. Their concentration in commercial office districts speaks to the limitations of the appeal of this approach across more mixed-use and residential neighborhoods.

Finally, coastal resilience efforts to mitigate the vulnerability of low-lying neighborhoods offer a new model to approach providing public green space. A number of the projects being developed and implemented within this paradigm reconsider the singular-function of large infrastructure, instead proposing spaces that are both functionally necessary for flood protection and offer an opportunity to create new interconnected open space networks.

Together, the approaches outlined below present a range of entities, partnerships, and mechanisms to build, repair, and maintain parks. What they share is a sense that parks should serve multiple functions to diverse

sets of stakeholders across heterogeneous communities. The process of developing new parks in New York today represents various trade-offs among often competing urban interests. But, the most successful examples have managed to make public green space integral to the functioning of broader urban systems and needs, whether affordable housing, flood protection, industrial re-development, or addressing historical underinvestment.

**PUBLIC
PRIVATE
PARTNERSHIPS**

**DATA-DRIVEN,
EQUITY-BASED
EFFORTS**

**PRIVATELY
OWNED
PUBLIC
SPACES**

**PARKS
AND COASTAL
RESILIENCY**

Cities across LAC face mounting challenges in the provision of public green space. Currently, a majority of LAC cities fall short of providing the World Health Organization’s recommended minimum of 9 square meters of green space per resident. Residents in cities across the region also face barriers to accessing parks and many are of poor or declining quality. The underlining social economic inequality and spatial segregation in many LAC cities is also reflected in the uneven distribution of parks and other green spaces. For cities in the region, the challenge is one of quantity, quality, and spatial distribution.

New York City serves as a useful case with lessons to consider for providing parks in LAC for two principal reasons: (i) it is a highly dense, large-scale, formerly industrial metropolis with high levels of socioeconomic inequality and (ii) it has successfully renewed its parks portfolio in recent years with high-quality design and sustainable techniques through a number of novel partnerships with civil society and targeted governmental programs. The political dynamics, institutional arrangements, financial mechanisms, design strategies, and maintenance programs that have proven critical to enabling the city’s recent innovations, therefore, bear a number of lessons for cities across LAC.

A summary understanding of New York’s historical economic and governmental structure is helpful to understand the broader context of recent innovations. Once a powerful economic center of industrial production, over the past four decades, New York has been transformed into a hub for the finance, insurance, and real estate; media; and technology sectors. This transformation has been extensively documented (Sassen, 1991; Fainstein and Fainstein, 1989) and these changes to New York’s economy have created the conditions within which many new parks have been built. For example, industrial decline has made publicly owned land along the city’s formerly commercially significant waterways available for non-industrial uses and development.

A brief description of New York City’s governmental structure (NYC, n.d.a) provides context within which recent innovations have

risen to address existing challenges. New York City has a heavily centralized governance structure. The city’s executive branch is led by a mayor and its administration is responsible for the city’s various agencies and departments. Each borough also elects a single borough president. The city council, New York City’s legislative branch, has 51 members, each elected from city districts, and is headed by a speaker. Each year the mayor proposes a budget, which is then passed into law by the city council. Other offices, such as borough presidents and individual city council members, also have access to limited discretionary funding. A number of semi-independent entities also play important roles in the city. These include multi-state entities such as the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey and the Metropolitan Transit Authority, which are both highly dependent on state funding.

The New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (the Parks Department or Parks) is responsible for the city’s diverse range of parks, protected natural lands, ecological reserves, wetlands, open spaces, plazas, and other public green spaces (PGS). The Parks Department is steward of over 30,000 acres of land — 14 percent of the city’s land — spread over 5,000 properties (NYC, n.d.b). The Parks Department is responsible for maintaining the parks, adding to the existing parks portfolio, and programming. These various tasks are carried out with funding allocated through the city’s annual budget, with major projects going through a capital allocation process.

New York land use is governed by the city’s planning ordinance, which lays out a number of regulations around uses, height limits, and other related criteria. The city code also has a number of special zoning districts that target specific areas for variations within the larger ordinance. If a development plan complies with current zoning, the project can

be approved administratively, without extensive public input (known as by-right development). The majority of new construction in New York is carried out under this rubric. The city also has a standardized process through which exceptions to zoning can be granted. The Universal Land Use Review Process (ULURP) includes mechanisms for

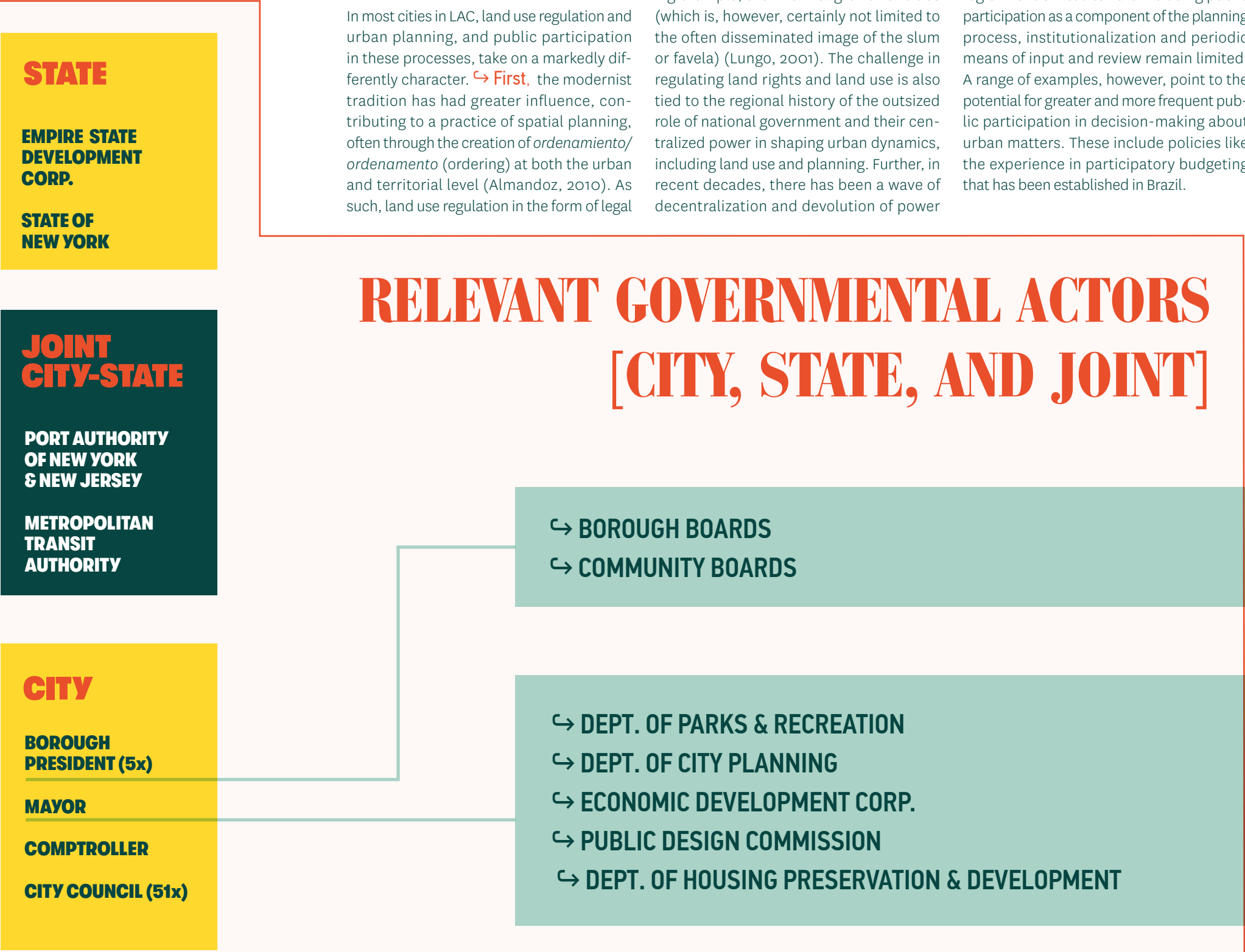
public input. Public input on zoning and other planning issues is also carried out through each neighborhood’s community board. Until 1963, these community boards held greater power in making changes to local level zoning, but today their role is restricted to consulting city agencies and their recommendations are non-binding.

In most cities in LAC, land use regulation and urban planning, and public participation in these processes, take on a markedly differently character. ↪ **First**, the modernist tradition has had greater influence, contributing to a practice of spatial planning, often through the creation of *ordenamiento/ordenamento* (ordering) at both the urban and territorial level (Almandoz, 2010). As such, land use regulation in the form of legal

ordinances has not been the primary means of shaping cities as it has been in many North American and European contexts. ↪ **Second**, many cities across the region face challenges in land use regulation. This is manifested in ambiguous property rights, the inability to enforce existing regulations, and, in perhaps the most visually striking example, the informal growth of cities (which is, however, certainly not limited to the often disseminated image of the slum or favela) (Lungo, 2001). The challenge in regulating land rights and land use is also tied to the regional history of the outsized role of national government and their centralized power in shaping urban dynamics, including land use and planning. Further, in recent decades, there has been a wave of decentralization and devolution of power

over urban matters to local governments. The challenges of land regulation is further compounded by metropolitan fragmentation, common across a range of cities in LAC. ↪ **Finally**, means of public participation in land use and other planning tools have historically been limited or restricted in their scope. Although today practices in the region have shifted toward including public participation as a component of the planning process, institutionalization and periodic means of input and review remain limited. A range of examples, however, point to the potential for greater and more frequent public participation in decision-making about urban matters. These include policies like the experience in participatory budgeting that has been established in Brazil.

RELEVANT GOVERNMENTAL ACTORS [CITY, STATE, AND JOINT]



SOURCE : AUTHOR

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

Urban parks provide various public benefits across a range of public health, environmental, social, and economic indicators. An extensive body of literature has explored the impact of PGS through the lens of population health, environmental services, and social cohesion/cultural values. These studies have, by-and-large, found a range of benefits to parks and other open spaces, although a number of questions regarding the pathways of these impacts and their scale remains. In the section that follows, we outline some pertinent findings of these studies, unresolved questions and debates, and their implications for providing parks in LAC cities.



SOURCE: HIGHLINE, NYC 2019. IDB

Research in the field of public health has focused on two primary benefits of PGS: their role in promoting physical activity (and attendant benefits to cardiovascular health) and their role in promoting mental health.

Increased physical activity has been shown to positively impact a number of indicators of cardiovascular health. Although empirical evidence remains weak in determining the mechanisms, a number of studies have shown that the availability of PGS was correlated to greater levels of physical activity (Morris, 2003; Bedimo-Rung, Mowen, and Cohen, 2005; Lee and Maheswaran, 2011). However, a number of important factors affect the relationship between PGS and cardiovascular health, including access, perceptions of safety, the type of space provided, and programming to encourage physical activity (Lachowycz and Jones, 2013). Demographics also affect the relative impact of this benefit, with youth (Limstrand, 2008), adults (Kaczynski, Potwarka, and Saelens, 2008), and the elderly (Eronen, von Bonsdorff, Törmäkangas, et al., 2014) all showing varying effects. Further, a

number of studies have shown negative correlations, which reinforces the importance of particular types of green spaces (Potwarka, Kaczynski, and Flack, 2008; Witten, Hiscock, Pearce, and Blakely, 2008) in producing positive health benefits.

Studies have also shown that PGS, which provide physical and visual access to nature, contribute to improved mental well-being (Sturm and Cohen, 2014; Wood, Hooper, Foster, and Bull, 2017) by reducing stress (Ward Thompson, Roe, Aspinall, et al., 2012; Hazer, Formica, Dieterlen, and Morley, 2018; Honold, Lakes, Beyer, and van der Meer, 2016) and increasing sociability (Kweon, Sullivan, and Wiley, 1998; Maas, van Dillen, Verheij, and Groenewegen, 2009). Although the precise degree of these effects and their pathways remain a matter of ongoing work, there is substantial evidence for the link between the two. As with the benefits of PGS for cardiovascular health, the impact of PGS on mental health is affected by a number of factors, including the type of green space, accessibility, and the demographics of users (Lee and Maheswaran, 2011).

↔ PHYSICAL
ACTIVITY

↔ MENTAL
HEALTH

↔ ENVIRONMENTAL
BENEFITS

↔ ECONOMIC
BENEFITS

↔ SOCIAL
FUNCTIONS

THIS BODY OF LITERATURE, INCLUDING THE ISSUES THAT REMAIN OPEN TO ACADEMIC DEBATE, LAYS OUT THE IMPORTANT PUBLIC HEALTH BENEFITS OF PGS AND REINFORCES THE NEED FOR CAREFUL ATTENTION IN PARK DESIGN AND PROGRAMMING TO THE CONTEXTS AND COMMUNITIES THEY ARE INTENDED TO SERVE.



SOURCE: MITCHELL CHRIS J. PEOPLE SITTING ON GREEN GRASS FIELD. JULY, 2016. PEXELS, CONSULTED 2019. WWW.PEXELS.COM

Public green spaces also contribute a number of environmental benefits. An open space network can be integral to the health of the urban ecosystem (Elmqvist, Setälä, Handel, et al., 2015; Lee and Maheswaran, 2011). The urban tree canopy and vegetation in PGS provide carbon sequestration (Nowak and Crane, 2002) and help reduce the urban heat island effect (Gunawardena, Wells, and Kershaw, 2017) and air pollution (Selmi, Weber, Rivière, et al., 2016). Urban green spaces have also been shown to perform important storm water management functions and to reduce runoff. A number of planning and design decisions can also be instrumental in increasing the efficiency with which parks and other green spaces contribute environmental benefits. Standards around green infrastructure can improve storm water detention, and landscapes that provide flora for specific ecosystems can maintain the vitality of crucial wildlife.

Research has also shown that urban green spaces generate a number of economic benefits for cities. Evidence has shown that public parks increase adjacent real estate values. Parks and other green spaces also promote economic activity for retail establishments in their proximity (Crompton, 2010).

Finally, urban parks also perform a number of important social functions. Research has shown that open spaces allow for the expression of cultural diversity (Low, Taplin, and Scheld, 2005). Parks have been demonstrated to increase sociability, which, in addition to having mental health benefits, also bolsters social cohesion. There is also anecdotal evidence that shared public spaces, including parks and other green spaces, can facilitate conviviality — the ability to live together — especially in contexts where diverse populations inhabit the same spaces.

In summary, parks offer a wide range of benefits to cities on various scales and to differing degrees based on contexts and varying pathways. Especially important to our discussion here is the conclusion, drawn by a number of studies, that physical and demographic context are integral to the mediation of the benefits of PGS. In light of these findings, investment, planning, and design decisions should consider how parks can adequately respond to the particularities of place in order to ensure that they produce the benefits their champions intended.

TOPIC

... how to maintain and add to the city's park portfolio in the face of limited and unpredictable year-to-year city budget allocations.

INNOVATIONS IN PARK DELIVERY AND MAINTENANCE

RECENT INNOVATIONS IN DELIVERY AND MAINTENANCE OF PARKS IN NEW YORK CITY CAN BE GROUPED INTO FOUR BROAD CATEGORIES

PPPS, EQUITY-BASED INITIATIVES, PRIVATELY OWNED PUBLIC SPACES, AND COASTAL RESILIENCY EFFORTS.

These innovations reflect a range of approaches to park construction and management that respond to particular historical eras and political contexts. Within each of these broader strategies, the diverse array of approaches to the particular challenges presented (whether through different funding mechanisms, legal arrangements, design strategies, or public participation/engagement) suggest the range of possibilities within these models to address a similar challenge across a range of contexts.

Nonetheless, the four general approaches (which we elaborate below) share a number of commonalities that are important to understanding their successes, shortcomings, and replicability.

↪ **First**, many of the approaches outlined in this paper emerged from responses to the fiscal realities faced by New York City in the years leading up to and following the city's near bankruptcy in 1975. During that time, funding for the Parks Department was inconsistent at best and non-existent at worst (Osman, 2017). The reality of limited

municipal funding for parks (more broadly) extends beyond the fiscal crisis of the 1970s, however. The continued budgetary reduction in park spending reflects a broader change in the perceived value of park land and open space and the role government should play in providing it. This is evident in the degree to which, even in the context of New York's economically prosperous recent past, city budgets have tended to prioritize issues such as the mounting housing crises, education, and policing initiatives over parks.

Regardless of the political dynamics at play, the outcome has been a decade-long disinvestment in the city's Parks Department. This has generated the challenge that underlies the majority of the novel approaches outlined in this paper, namely how to maintain and add to the city's park portfolio in the face of limited and unpredictable year-to-year city budget allocations. Despite sharing this common context, the cases detailed below offer a range of approaches that reflect varying degrees of this challenge: different levels of available capital allocation and annual funding from federal, state, city, and private sources.

CITY'S ABILITY TO PROVIDE MAINTENANCE AND CAPITAL REPAIRS.

↪ **Second**, and directly related to the decline in public resources discussed above, each of the innovations should be understood within a larger looming challenge of park maintenance and capital repair for New York's existing open space infrastructure. The parks and public spaces we discuss make up only a portion of the city's open space network and represent contextual responses that largely shift toward models of operation that operate outside annual city funding allocations and their attendant political and fiscal uncertainty. **Although these examples may address issues in particular parks, they should be understood within an overall systemic crisis in the city's ability to provide maintenance and capital repairs. A recent report estimated current needs at nearly \$6 billion (Surico, 2018).**

↪ **Third**, since 2001, New York City has experienced historically strong economic conditions, especially with the strong recovery following the 2008 financial crisis (DiNapoli and Bleiwas, 2018). This period has been characterized by an expansion of the city's high-value industries (e.g., banking, entertainment, and media) as the city has continued to deindustrialize. Over this same time period, the city has also seen tremendous, nearly uninterrupted, growth in real estate values. **However, these gains have not been evenly distributed. Today, the city is, by some measures, highly racially segregated and has a high degree of socioeconomic inequality. This context also provides an important backdrop to a number of the initiatives detailed below.**

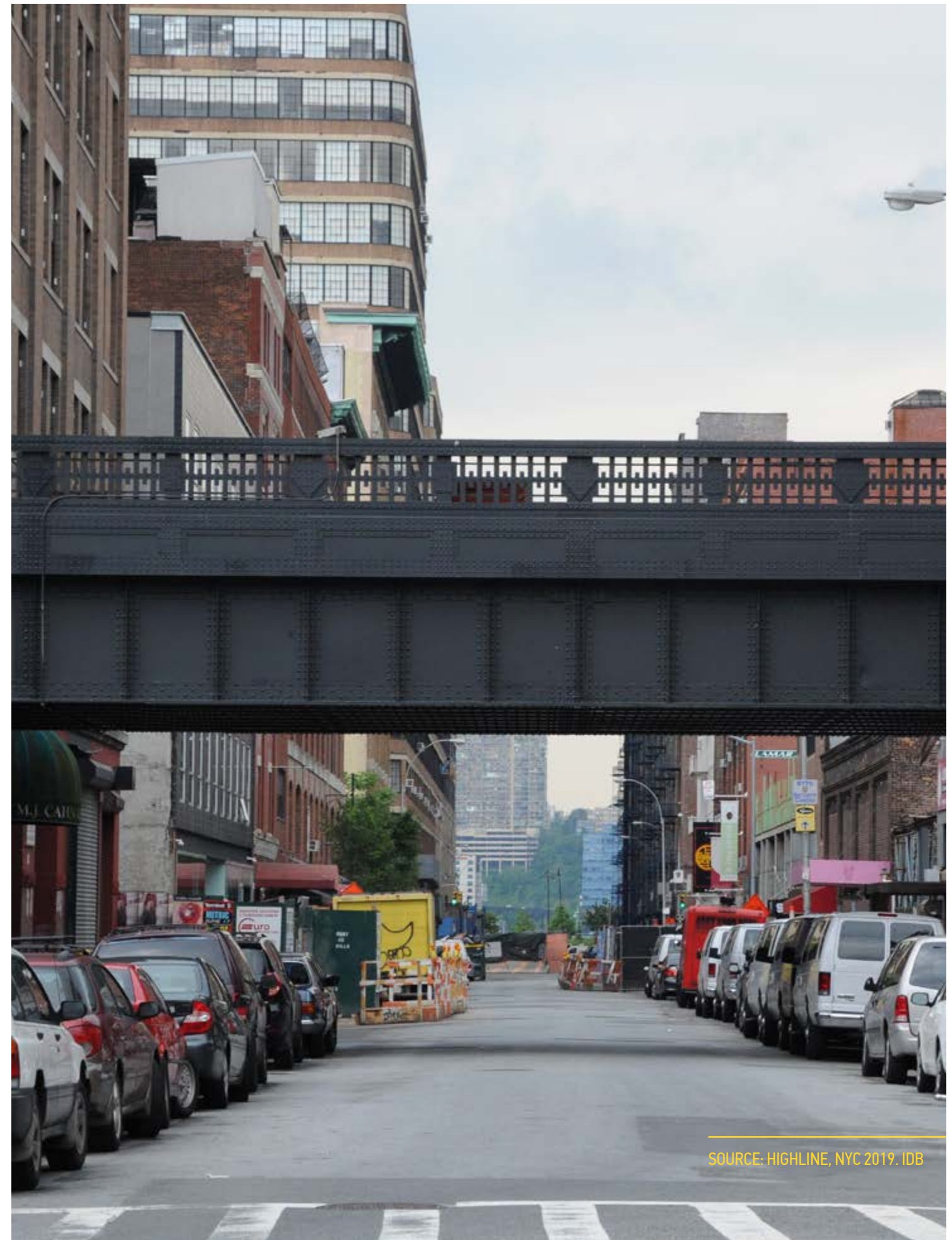
↪ **Fourth**, public participation in planning and designing park space has become not only common practice but essential to the political viability of many projects and their long-term well-being, use, and stewardship by local communities. Perhaps most interestingly, the centrality of public input to park development has occurred without significant

policy changes to zoning or planning laws. **Rather, public input has come to occupy a prominent role in planning and designing successful public spaces through long-term political controversy and public activism. While this development is encouraging, its normative position (rather than inscription into law) means it remains vulnerable to political and social changes. Moreover, while public input has become central to park planning, design, and delivery, the institutionalization of various publics (small groups of people engaged in specific issues) in the long-term governance of these spaces is often neglected.**

↪ **Finally**, and perhaps most importantly, the most successful approaches outlined below convincingly tie park delivery and capital improvements to other urban strategies such as urban redevelopment efforts, densification, affordable housing, socioeconomic equity, or coastal resilience. Somewhat ironically,

in an era when funding for the Parks Department has been reduced, the value of parks and open spaces to provide a range of benefits to various stakeholders in New York has become clearer. One of the most important takeaways, therefore, is how cities across LAC might learn to consider how providing parks can be beneficial to a range of other urban stakeholders and interests, and how to balance those shared interests with an equitable distribution of their benefits.

In the sections that follow we discuss each of the four broad strategies more in depth. With each we present a case (or series of cases) that illustrate the particularities of implementation. We begin with PPPs and three cases of their use: the High Line, Brooklyn Bridge Park, and Hunter's Point. **The following section** introduces equity- and data-based approaches, highlighting the Parks Department's Community Parks Initiative and the Anchor Parks Initiative. Next, we discuss privately owned public spaces (POPS). **Finally**, we look at recent and ongoing efforts to use coastal resilience initiatives to provide parks and other open spaces.



SOURCE: HIGHLINE, NYC 2019. IDB

OVERVIEW

SOURCE: HIGHLINE, NYC 2019. IDB



CASES

5.1 PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

← CHALLENGES AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

PPPs emerged as a response to the challenge of coordinating private sector and civil society participation in park maintenance and improvement. This became especially important as a means of insulating individual parks from the underfunding of the Parks Department and the resulting decay. New York City's fiscal crisis in the 1970s led to a chronic underfunding of the Parks Department's budget. The result was a lack of resources dedicated to upkeep, with parks falling into physical disrepair and an increase in the perception of parks as unsafe places.

PPPs ARE FORMAL AGREEMENTS BETWEEN NON-PROFIT ENTITIES, MANY OF WHICH WERE FORMED BY CONCERNED LOCAL RESIDENTS (OR LOCAL BUSINESSES), AND CITY AGENCIES, MOST OFTEN THE PARKS DEPARTMENT.

The Central Park Conservancy, founded in 1980, was the first PPP to become formally involved in New York City parks. The PPPs that soon followed targeted other flagship parks (e.g., the Prospect Park Alliance was founded in 1987 to improve Prospect Park). In the intervening years, a range of parks and other open spaces have either come under the control of or benefited from PPPs. As New York's economy deindustrialized, PPPs emerged as a key tool in creating parks (and, in one form or another, spurring urban redevelopment efforts).

The conversion of marginal land — particularly around the formerly active waterfront and adjacent warehouses — has relied heavily on the use of PPPs of various types for their realization and ongoing maintenance.

The legal constitution often determines the terms on which the entity interacts with governmental bodies.

PPPs represent formal agreements between the public sector and the private sector and/or civil society. Other than that shared definition, the PPPs that have been used for New York City parks span a range of characteristics both in the terms of the agreement and the types of organizations representing the private sector or civil society.

← COMMON CHARACTERISTICS

The entity representing the private sector or civil society in PPPs plays an important role in determining which publics are most directly engaged in (and often in control of) decisions about park maintenance and development. These organizations vary in two important ways: in their legal constitution (e.g., philanthropic non-profits, business improvement districts, and local development corporations) and the composition of their boards or representation. The legal constitution often determines the terms on which the entity interacts with governmental bodies. For example, legal entities can determine the ability to accept funding from certain sources. The composition of boards, on the other hand, sets the terms of the power dynamics between various stakeholders and interest groups. These often reflect other political dynamics between elected officials, and the interactions and relations between these are important features of these legal entities.



The institutional designs of PPPs, more broadly, reflect the convergence of governmental and non-governmental objectives, with varied stakeholders and interests at play in specific efforts. Although, at least ostensibly, these various stakeholders share an interest in park improvement, the rationales underlying this desire can vary both within and across PPPs. The Central Park Conservancy, for example, was founded to protect existing adjacent real estate values. The Bryant Park Conservancy, on the other hand, was developed to rehabilitate the Midtown Manhattan office district. This range of interests is also present in more recent park developments carried out through PPPs. Brooklyn Bridge Park relied on the interests of adjacent developers (particularly in the Dumbo Historic District) and activist neighbors in Brooklyn Heights. The range of parties involved in individual PPPs and their variety across contexts is a testament to the importance of these vehicles in bringing actors to the table toward a set of common interests.

Finally, the formal agreement between the public sector and the private sector/civil society can vary across PPPs. These arrangements often reflect the bargaining position of the city and its current fiscal health at the time of its agreement. Terms range in length, in the breakdown of funding responsibilities between city government and the corresponding entity, and in what revenue streams and sources can contribute to the PPPs. These factors, in turn, are key to the fiscal sustainability of the PPPs and the avenues of public input into decision-making around future park maintenance and programming.⁽¹⁾

Ultimately, as detailed in the selected cases below, the various conditions of PPPs create the context within which decisions about park expenditures and maintenance are made, the role and involvement of various publics in planning and designing parks, governance and rules regulating park use, and the ongoing financial stability of parks falling under these agreements. It should also be explicitly stated that the recent history of PPPs for the construction of new parks in New York City has involved close coordination between private development, often enabled by zoning changes, and public expenditures on capital expenses. This is not necessarily a reflection of the possibilities offered by PPPs as a tool, but rather reflect broader trends in New York City's economic and social context.

In the pages that follow we outline three cases of PPPs that testify to the range of contexts and arrangements that comprise the use of this tool in New York City to address park delivery and maintenance in an era of constrained governmental funding sources.

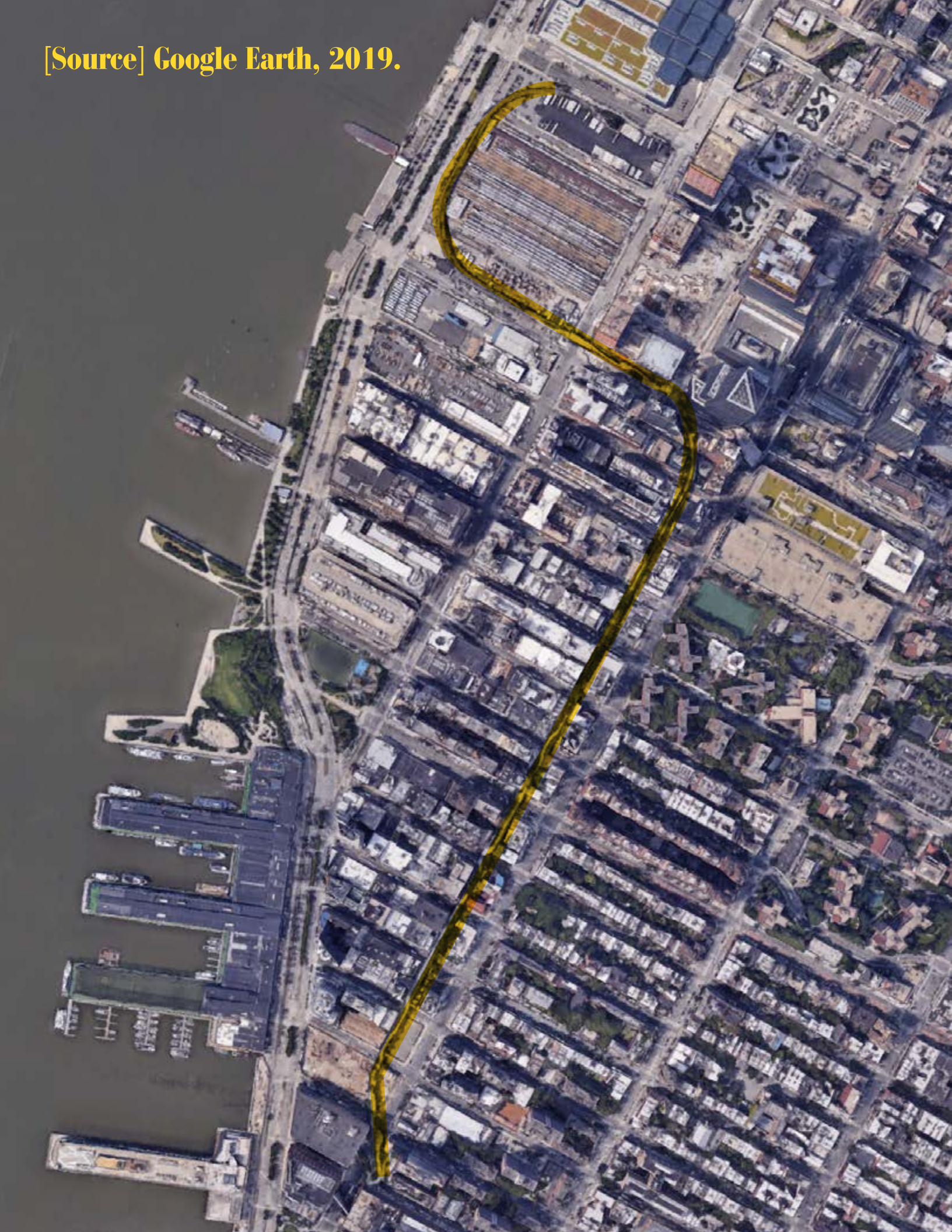
⁽¹⁾ It is worth noting that we are discussing two mechanisms for public input. PPPs (e.g., The Central Park Conservancy) often offer a means of public input around planning or programming. Elected officials, on the other hand, offer a means for the public to put in place representatives that will pursue a particular agenda in relation to decisions that often affect parks.

4.1.1.



THE HIGH LINE

[Source] Google Earth, 2019.



Inaugurated in 1934, the aerial railroad viaduct that would eventually become the High Line was part of Robert Moses' West Side Improvement project. Its primary purpose was to service the cluster of slaughterhouses and food production warehouses and factories along Manhattan's Westside below 34th Street. Unlike most of the other elevated rail lines in New York, the viaduct along 10th Avenue was built in the middle of the block, a feature that would prove integral to the future park's unique experiential quality. The 1950s and 1960s saw a shift in New York, propelled by construction of the national highway system, to vehicular freight for food distribution purposes. This transformation contributed to the steady decline in rail traffic along the 10th Avenue elevated rail line and, by 1980, service along the viaduct was terminated. The rail, which had been owned by Conrail (a federal rail entity), was inherited by CSX Corporation in 1999.

In the late 1980s, numerous efforts from civil society, private developers, and the city endeavored to either reuse the viaduct (including for mass transit) or demolish it to allow for development. The Chelsea Property Owners, an organization comprising local land owners and developers, through both public campaigns and legal challenges, attempted to demolish the elevated rail line, but disputes regarding how to distribute the costs of the work derailed the effort. For its part, the Giuliani administration supported dismantling the viaduct to make way for new housing development. The Friends of the High Line (FHL), a non-profit organization,

emerged within this political context. The organization, founded in 1999 by two neighbors (Joshua David and Robert Hammond) who met following a public hearing, was dedicated to preserving the viaduct. It would eventually become the leading civil society advocate for the development of a park on the existing structure.

The urban context of the neighborhoods surrounding the High Line (Chelsea and the Meatpacking) is essential to understanding its history and development. The elevated park cuts through Chelsea, a neighborhood with a long history as a center of New York's arts and LGBTQ life. By the 1980s, Chelsea was becoming the country's preeminent contemporary art district. Today, it remains the largest concentration of galleries in the United States. As New York's Westside continued to deindustrialize throughout the late 1980s and 1990s, the Meatpacking district also began to transform into a center of culture and nightlife.

In the years before its construction, the infrastructure that would eventually become the High Line was caught in a gridlock between competing interests. Those who owned property under the viaduct and interested developers wanted to tear it down to make way for new construction, but they were stymied by various funding and legal challenges. Local activists who had begun to see the potential of the space as, alternatively, a refuge from the city or a piece of wilderness, wanted to preserve this character in the face of the deindustrialization of Manhattan's Westside.

The Friends of the High Line (FHL), a non-profit organization, emerged within this political context. The organization, founded in 1999 by two neighbors (Joshua David and Robert Hammond) who met following a public hearing, was dedicated to preserving the viaduct. It would eventually become the leading civil society advocate for the development of a park on the existing structure.

CHALLENGE AND INNOVATION

The primary challenge in planning, funding, and constructing the High Line was how to transform an impediment to development (the viaduct), in a neighborhood that developers viewed as prime for densification, into an asset. From the city's perspective, developing the park was tied to an understanding that providing a public amenity would need to be rationalized as paying for itself through the private development it spurred and the resulting impact on the city's tax base.

The eventual compromise reached to transform the viaduct into a park was rooted in an understanding that preserving the structure (and development of the park) would be contingent on creating a mechanism that allowed for increased density in certain parts of the neighborhood. This would take the form of rezoning Manhattan's Westside, but more than a simple trade-off between density and parkland, the High Line illustrates how park development became inextricably tied to developing an entire identity for a series of new developments and neighborhoods. The park, for example, would eventually be marketed to both developers and the general public as an asset that served both the interests of increasing real estate values and recreational uses (although precisely which publics would become the subject of much debate and criticism).

In the case of the High Line, novel zoning mechanisms proved integral to delivering the park. Novel zoning took two forms. ➔ **First**, transferring air rights above the High Line compensated land owners

impeded by the structure by allowing them to sell their rights for additional density elsewhere in the neighborhood. ➔ **Second**, West Chelsea saw a broader neighborhood rezoning. The zoning response should be understood within its historical context: namely, the existing desire, on the part of New York City's Planning Department and a range of private developers, to rezone the area from manufacturing and industrial uses to commercial and residential ones. Although the city argued that this rezoning was required to justify the rate of return (in the form of an expanded tax base) on the public investment in the park, critics have claimed the investment could have been justified with the naturally occurring rate of return (Lindner, Rosa, Baker, et al., 2017). The creation of the Special West Chelsea District was key, however, to gaining the political support of local property owners. The rezoning allowed interested local owners and developers to benefit from redevelopment. The inclusion of development transfer rights, which allowed properties under the High Line to sell their air rights within a designated corridor, allowed a greater number of owners to benefit from unused property rights. The Special West Chelsea District zoning also specified that the sites receiving additional density would be primarily located adjacent to the park or along 10th Avenue or 11th Avenue.

The rezoning allowed interested local owners and developers to benefit from redevelopment.

SOURCE: HIGHLINE, NYC 2019. IDB



THE HIGH LINE
ILLUSTRATES HOW PARK
DEVELOPMENT BECAME
INEXTRICABLY TIED TO
DEVELOPING AN ENTIRE
IDENTITY FOR A SERIES OF
NEW DEVELOPMENTS AND
NEIGHBORHOODS.

FINANCIAL MODEL

The High Line’s financial model contains two important lessons. ➔ **First**, it tied public investment in a major park to the rezoning efforts that would allow for a wave of private investment with an impact on city tax revenues. ➔ **Second**, the public funding failed to ensure that future private development contributed to the financial security to maintain the park itself. The development of the High Line was carried out with funding from both public and private sources. **Sections 1 and 2** of the park cost \$152.3 million. **Section 3**, as currently open to the public, has cost an additional \$35 million. New York City was the largest contributor to the construction with \$123.2 million (NYCEDC, 2013). This total included funding from both major allocations and the city council. The FHL contributed just over \$29 million from private donors and other philanthropic foundations. The federal government added just over \$20 million, with the remaining sum provided by the developers involved in the adjacent Hudson Yards project.

From the city’s perspective, the expected increase in tax revenues generated from new developments was expected to cover capital costs. The role of the park in creating additional value for land owners and tax revenues for the city, however, needed to disentangle the impact of the West Chelsea rezoning, which was expected to happen with or without the High Line (David and Hammond, 2011, p.64). Thus, a study to assess the impact of other parks in New York on nearby property values was conducted for the High Line, which projected that the park would create value through proximity

⁽²⁾ Railbanking refers to the federal program that allows local jurisdictions to apply for ownership of the land underneath railways to be transferred for alternative public reuse.



SOURCE: HIGHLINE, NYC 2019. IDB

to the park, extra window walls on adjacent developments, and the park’s ability to create a district identity (David and Hammond, 2011, p.46). The success of the High Line, and the West Chelsea rezoning more broadly, in spurring private development exceeded projections. The federal funding, for its part, was proportioned through transportation legislatively and largely depended on the park’s former status as an active railroad.

Although the city contributed the bulk of capital funding to the High Line’s construction, the FHL’s status as a non-governmental actor was integral in moving the project along and acting as a go-between among various governmental agencies and funding sources. The FHL began as an organization whose aim was to oppose the demolition of the viaduct that would eventually become the High Line and continued through their efforts to solicit support from various political allies within the Bloomberg administration. The complexity of the jurisdictional overlaps at play in the High Line also meant that careful coordination with the Bloomberg administration around shared goals was integral. Even when funding had been committed for construction, the FHL and city needed to work in concert to:

- ➔ **REZONE WEST CHELSEA, AN IMPORTANT STEP TO GETTING BUY-IN FROM THE PROPERTY OWNERS OF LAND UNDERNEATH THE HIGH LINE;**
- ➔ **APPLY TO THE FEDERAL SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD FOR RAILBANKING,² WHICH WOULD ALLOW THE RAILWAY TO BE CONVERTED; AND**
- ➔ **ARRANGE FOR THE DONATION OF THE STRUCTURE ITSELF FROM THE RAIL COMPANY (CBX) TO THE CITY**

This all needed to be done before the city could spend money on the project. In this phase of the project, the FHL could conduct studies, secure additional funding, and further designs while other politically sensitive pieces fell into place.

The city’s ability to contribute resources to the High Line did not extend to operating or managing the park. With the Parks Department’s annual funding for maintenance already stretched thin, the city was unprepared to add to the already overburdened department. Instead, as outlined in the FHL’s license agreement with the city, operations and maintenance would have to be paid for primarily with funds raised by private charitable contributions to the non-profit and concessions within the park. Placing the responsibilities of maintenance and operations on the FHL has had a number of effects on the park. The High Line, for example, has its own dedicated staff, including twelve specialized horticulturalists. The availability of private funding has allowed this unique park to receive tailored maintenance. The resources dedicated to the park’s upkeep relative to the lack of funding for other city parks, however, has also been a source of criticism that is discussed below. Furthermore, the FHL’s reliance on private fundraising has left a number of its staff and supporters concerned about the park’s long-term sustainability, largely because funding is thus contingent on the annual ability to fundraise, which is susceptible to swings in the market and philanthropic preferences.

ROLE OF DESIGN

The High Line was novel for the direct link, both in appeal to politicians and developers, between providing a top-quality public space and its ability to generate additional value in a broader urban redevelopment strategy.



SOURCE: HIGHLINE, NYC 2019, IDB

As an example of reusing infrastructure for parkland, the High Line is the heir to a primarily European tradition. The *Promenade Plantée* in Paris, for instance, was a frequent point of reference for the High Line's proponents in their efforts to advocate for reusing the elevated railway. The High Line, however, is the first of its kind in North America and as such demonstrated the ability to adapt this strategy to an American context. Moreover, the High Line was novel for the direct link, both in appeal to politicians and developers, between providing a top-quality public space and its ability to generate additional value in a broader urban redevelopment strategy.

Designing and visualizing what the High Line was and what it could become were integral to a broad public strategy by the FHL and other proponents. Publication of Joel Sternfeld's book *Walking the High Line*, for example, helped create an image in the public eye of the wild and spontaneous beauty that had taken root on the abandoned railway. An ideas competition, sponsored by both the FHL and the Trust for Public Space, began to open the possibilities of what the space could become for the city. Even if some of these ideas were outlandish and

unfeasible (turning the entire structure into a swimming pool), they nonetheless began to speak of the exciting potential for creating a unique public space in the city. Finally, the process of selecting the design team, from the Request for Qualifications to hiring Field Operations/DillerScofidio-Renfro/Piet Ouldof, reflected a proactive push by the park's proponents to prepare a design (even prior to full funding) and the integral role high-end design would play in creating the park's identity. As mentioned above, the need to create a landmark park to attract investment to the neighborhood meant the additional costs, such as high-quality materials and horticultural expertise, proved worthwhile, at least to the interests that coalesced around the park's construction (even if not its long-term maintenance). Ultimately, some have questioned whether the costly nature of certain materials might be detrimental to the long-term ability of the FHL to adequately maintain the park given its reliance on private funding.

The Special West Chelsea District also used zoning as a mechanism to control certain design characteristics that would impact the High Line's public space. The air-rights transfer mechanism, for example, laid out a number of specifications around granting sites (those within the transfer corridor) and receiving corridors. Among their stipulations, these rules regulated the bulk of buildings adjacent to the High Line in order to retain light and air along the elevated park. For the planners, advocates, and designers involved in the High Line, design was integral to both creating and retaining the park's unique characteristics and identity.

CRITICISM AND CONTINUED PARTICIPATION

The High Line has been the subject of numerous critiques. Much of this criticism has targeted the High Line as a symbol of a broader, city-wide, transformation of New York into a playground for the rich (with growing inequality) that many have used to characterize the Bloomberg era. The tremendous success and popularity of the park, beyond the expectations of even its most enthusiastic proponents, has also played a role in opening the project to a number of more specific criticisms about its accessibility to and functionality for residents.

Chelsea, particularly west of 10th Avenue, has seen massive amounts of new development since the area’s rezoning in 2005, including over 1,300 new housing units and just under 500,000 square feet of commercial office space, totaling 33 new construction projects (NYCEDC, 2016). This construction boom has been by design, with the city’s Department of City Planning using the rezoning of West Chelsea and the massive Hudson Yards (at the terminus of the 3rd section of the High Line) to transform several formerly industrial

neighborhoods into high-end office and residential districts. Many critics have decried this transformation as hyper-speed gentrification. To a certain degree, the redevelopment of these neighborhoods reflects larger dynamics in the shifting economic and social character of Manhattan away from its industrial past. For their part, the rezonings that have been implemented have been subject to an intense public process and approval through the traditional levers of power in New York City government.

The rezoning of West Chelsea should be understood as a balance between a number of competing demands and interests. Appeasing developers and property owners, for example, was accomplished by transferring air rights in the High Line special corridor. Zoning also made a number of accommodations to maintain the viability of the art district by retaining certain land use distinctions. Those advocating for the development of more affordable housing in the neighborhood, however, were less successful in achieving their goals in the rezoning. The High Line transfer corridor, for example, did not require new buildings to include affordable housing (at least for phases one and two). Many have criticized this decision, especially considering the profits earned by developers in the booming luxury residential constructions, and the knock-on effects of putting pressure on the neighborhood’s overall housing market.

Although the dynamics that incentivized city government to overhaul the west side of Manhattan extend beyond any single project, the High Line was seen (both explicitly and symbolically) as integral to the transformation. If, as Alexandros Washburn (former chief urban designer for the New York City Department of City Planning) was quoted as saying, “the High Line and its rezoning are one,” in what ways was the park’s creation important in making the rezoning more palatable politically and to which publics? The High Line represents a bargain between providing a public amenity that provides significant financial benefit to developers and

property owners. This sort of private benefit from public expenditure on parks or infrastructure is not rare or novel in New York, and the boost to the city’s tax base has been considerable. What numerous critics have pointed to, however, has been the degree to which private benefits from the park have not been proportionately captured by the city. In particular, given the resources needed for the park’s upkeep, the failure to create mechanisms to capture some of the value created by the park for its own long-term success was a marked shortcoming, which has even been acknowledged by individuals within the FHL.³

Finally, the High Line has been criticized regarding accessibility and who the park serves. This is partially a product of the park’s success and its status as a tourist destination. Given its small scale and the high volume of users, the High Line has come to be seen largely as a park for tourists. The High Line is also a heavily controlled space, with limited access points, which has led some to question what sorts of users might feel unintentionally excluded or unwelcome in the space. That the park is surrounded by a number of large public housing developments only increases the sense of disconnection between the users of the park and the surrounding community. The FHL has taken a number of steps, primarily around programming, to address this issue. These questions about the park’s users and intended audience raise a number of broader issues about capital funding for New York parks and the trade-offs that accompanied the decision to invest in the High Line.

⁽³⁾[Adam Ganser, Vice President of Planning and Design, FHL. Interview August 2, 2018.](#)

The High Line

	↪	↪ PRELIMINARY STUDIES, OUTREACH, FEASIBILITY, ETC.	↪ PROJECT DESIGN	↪ FUNDING	↪ CONSTRUC- TION	↪ OPERATIONS, PROGRAM- MING	↪ MAINTENANCE, CAPITAL REPAIRS	
	↪ NON- GOVERNMENTAL ENTITY							
	↪ CITY GOVERNMENT							
	↪ STATE GOVERNMENT							
	↪ FEDERAL GOVERNMENT							
	↪ PRIVATE SECTOR							
NOTE: PRIVATE FUNDING DONATED THROUGH THE FHL – SOURCE : AUTHOR								

4.1.2.

BROOKLYN BRIDGE PARK

SOURCE: BROOKLYN BRIDGE, NYC 2019. IDB
PHOTO BY: ALESSANDRA RICHTER

An aerial photograph of the Brooklyn Bridge Park site in Brooklyn, New York. The image shows the East River to the left, with several piers and warehouses outlined in yellow. A yellow line traces the path of the Brooklyn Queens Expressway (BQE) running diagonally across the middle of the image. To the right of the BQE is a dense residential neighborhood. The yellow outlines highlight the areas that were part of the former piers and the park site.

[Source] Google Earth, 2019

By the 1980s, the piers and warehouses that lined the Brooklyn side of the East River had begun to fall into decay as the city deindustrialized and maritime commerce moved elsewhere. What was once a bustling waterfront, mostly stood abandoned and prevented direct access to the water for the nearby residential neighborhoods. Brooklyn Heights, Cobble Hill, and Carroll Gardens were physically separated from the future park site by the Brooklyn Queens Expressway.

The majority of the piers and adjacent waterfront land were owned by the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey (herein referred to as the Port Authority), an interstate agency, with the remaining properties owned by a number of city and state agencies. The Port Authority wanted to redevelop these properties to what they considered their “highest and best use” at the time: namely, putting them up for sale to private developers for commercial or residential development. Neighborhood associations, particularly the Brooklyn Heights Association, opposed these ambitions, and their mobilization helped defeat development plans in the 1980s. Instead, a number of stakeholders (including neighborhood organizations, local politicians, and developers) proposed the idea of a park occupying a significant portion of the site of the former piers. ↪ **The challenge:** how a group of community stakeholders could garner political support, conduct feasibility studies, and initiate a participatory planning process for a park that lacked the official support of a government agency on a site owned by various public landholders in the midst of a fiscal and political climate that required financial self-sustainability.

The innovative ways in which the various stakeholders managed to overcome these challenges throughout the planning, designing, building, and management stages of Brooklyn Bridge Park are explored below.

A number of stakeholders (including neighborhood organizations, local politicians, and developers) proposed the idea of a park occupying a significant portion of the site of the former piers.

CHALLENGE AND INNOVATION

THE PRINCIPAL INNOVATION IN DELIVERING BROOKLYN BRIDGE PARK WAS CREATING A LOCAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (LDC), A LEGAL ENTITY.

AN LDC PROVIDED A SELF-GOVERNING BODY TO SERVE A PUBLIC PURPOSE (IN THIS CASE DEVELOPING A PARK) WITHOUT THE NEED FOR LEGISLATION FOR THE ENTITY'S CREATION.

SOURCE: BROOKLYN BRIDGE, NYC 2019. IDB



The principal innovation in delivering Brooklyn Bridge Park was creating a Local Development Corporation (LDC), a legal entity. An LDC (in this case the Downtown Brooklyn Waterfront Local Development Corporation, allowable under Section 402 of New York State Not-for-Profit Law) provided a self-governing body to serve a public purpose (in this case developing a park) without the need for legislation for the entity's creation. The LDC could act on the consensus of its constituent stakeholders' interests, with a degree of autonomy from elected officials and government agencies, while still being able to accept public funding for studies and planning efforts.

Creating the LDC was also integral to two other innovations in delivering and eventually maintaining Brooklyn Bridge Park. ↪ The first, was the entity's ability to bring to the table various stakeholders across a range of constituencies interested in the park's development. This decision, outlined further below, proved especially important in the planning process that ultimately set out the principles that guided the park's form, guaranteeing that, although unanimous approval from all stakeholders was never reached,

consensus through negotiation and public processes were central to the park's creation. ↪ Second, the LDC provided a body that was able to negotiate with various government agencies and political interests at the state and city levels. This ultimately proved vital to the park's unified design, as well as to the stipulation that its long-term maintenance be financially self-sufficient. If the LDC were to benefit from being somewhat of a political free agent, the fact that it was not the child of any single administration or government agency also meant it would have to fend for itself for its long-term fiscal sustainability (Witty and Krogus, 2016).

As alluded to above, the structure and composition of the LDC was key to the park's creation. For this purpose, the Downtown Brooklyn Waterfront LDC was established in 1998. Its board had fifteen members. Members were appointed by each elected city council representative for the adjacent neighborhoods, local community groups (including the Brooklyn Heights Association), the Brooklyn chamber of commerce, and the borough president. The board's composition reflected a conscious decision to broaden the perception of the park as one whose intended public extended beyond the adjoining neighborhoods. This principle would remain throughout the public planning and engagement process and prove key to the project's eventual political feasibility.

The LDC was also responsible for leading the extensive public planning process that proved essential to guiding the park's development. Together the design team conducted extensive public meetings and outreach activities, which informed the Illustrative Master Plan for Brooklyn Bridge Park, which was completed in September 2000. Although allowing the public a major role in determining site priorities was initially controversial, the LDC board members believed an extensive planning process would ultimately help garner the broadest public appeal and political momentum. The outcome of this process was a set of core design principles that would serve as a guide for the design team. Led by Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, the design team was hired in 2004 to produce the Master Plan and the General Project Plan.

FINANCIAL MODEL

Brooklyn Bridge Park presents a case of successful local resistance to private development pressures and typifies the sort of trade-off that ultimately often proves politically necessary to get a project built. If, on one hand, the park is a victory of parkland over development, that prioritization was also conditional on the fiscal self-sufficiency of the park's long-term maintenance. In 2002, Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Governor George Pataki signed a Memorandum of Understanding that dedicated resources to the capital cost of park construction. The memo, however,

also formally mandated that the newly created Brooklyn Bridge Park Development Corporation (BBPDC) include sufficient development revenue to fund maintenance and operations.

Backers of the park also faced another challenge: where to house the entity that would become responsible for the long-term operations and maintenance of the park, the BBPDC. Because fiscal self-sufficiency was a contingent necessity of the park's capital funding, the Empire State Development Corporation (ESDC) — a semi-independent state-level entity — provided a series of advantages that made it the eventual choice. ↪ **First**, the ESDC had the power to override local zoning ordinances (in this case facilitating the approval of land uses outside those included in the commercially zoned piers). ↪ **Second**, and most importantly, the ESDC was legally capable of capturing revenue generated on site. Although controversial, the mechanism of identifying development sites within the land to be acquired was key to ensuring that revenues would go directly to funding the park rather than tying funding to the city's annual budgeting process and its attendant politicization.

Brooklyn Bridge Park presents a case of successful local resistance to private development pressures and typifies the sort of trade-off that ultimately often proves politically necessary to get a project built.



ROLE OF DESIGN

The question of just what kind of development and how much of it became an important point of debate and dispute both within the LDC and with various local activists. Many local voices in the LDC opposed residential development on the grounds that it could privatize the park (this fear played a role in the logic of early plans that called for a convention center or hotel on the site). Eventually two arguments guided the decision to propose primarily residential development on the site. ↪ **First**, residential development minimized the development footprint and maximized parkland. ↪ **Second**, it performed an important urban design function by activating the edges and providing “eyes on the park.” As landscape architect Michael Van Valkenburgh explained, “It wasn’t just a financial question, it was obviously a public safety question...what we needed were ‘urban junctions’ to connect the park to the city” (Witty and Krogius, 2016, p.114).

The park's design also featured a number of intriguing elements, including efforts to increase ecological diversity, distribution of programs across the park's zones, and the mitigation of ambient noise from an adjoining highway. The creation of varied edge conditions along the park's East River border aimed to create a variety of habitats within the ecosystem of New York's harbor. Retaining the structures of a number of the existing piers was also an effective way to provide for the wide range of programmatic zones (active and passive recreation) desired by the community and the borough at large. ↪ **Finally**, a large berm placed between the park and the highway was designed to minimize the noise pollution of the Brooklyn Queens Expressway that passed just to the east. Taken together these decisions reflect a design that managed to negotiate a number of conflicting, or at least competing, programmatic demands and varied user groups while responding to the advantages and connections presented by the site's context.

CRITICISM AND CONTINUED PARTICIPATION

SOURCE: BROOKLYN BRIDGE, NYC 2019. IDB



[REFLECTION OF GOVERNANCE]

The decision to propose primarily private residential uses within the site’s development was highly controversial among community members, especially in the low-density and well-connected neighborhood of Brooklyn Heights. A number of challenges, both legal and political, attempted to block the residential development on site. The proposed height of the residential buildings also sparked significant push-back. Politically, the extensive public process and bargain reached with state and local officials requiring financial self-sufficiency proved enough to insulate the plan, and the legal challenges were eventually defeated. These challenges, however, revealed a broader concern with the mechanism for continued public input into decision-making around the park’s operations and management. Housing the BBPDC within the ESDC was necessary to insulate the park funding from the political whims of the city and state government. On the other hand, that same decision reduced the ability to more directly influence decisions about the park’s operation and plans.

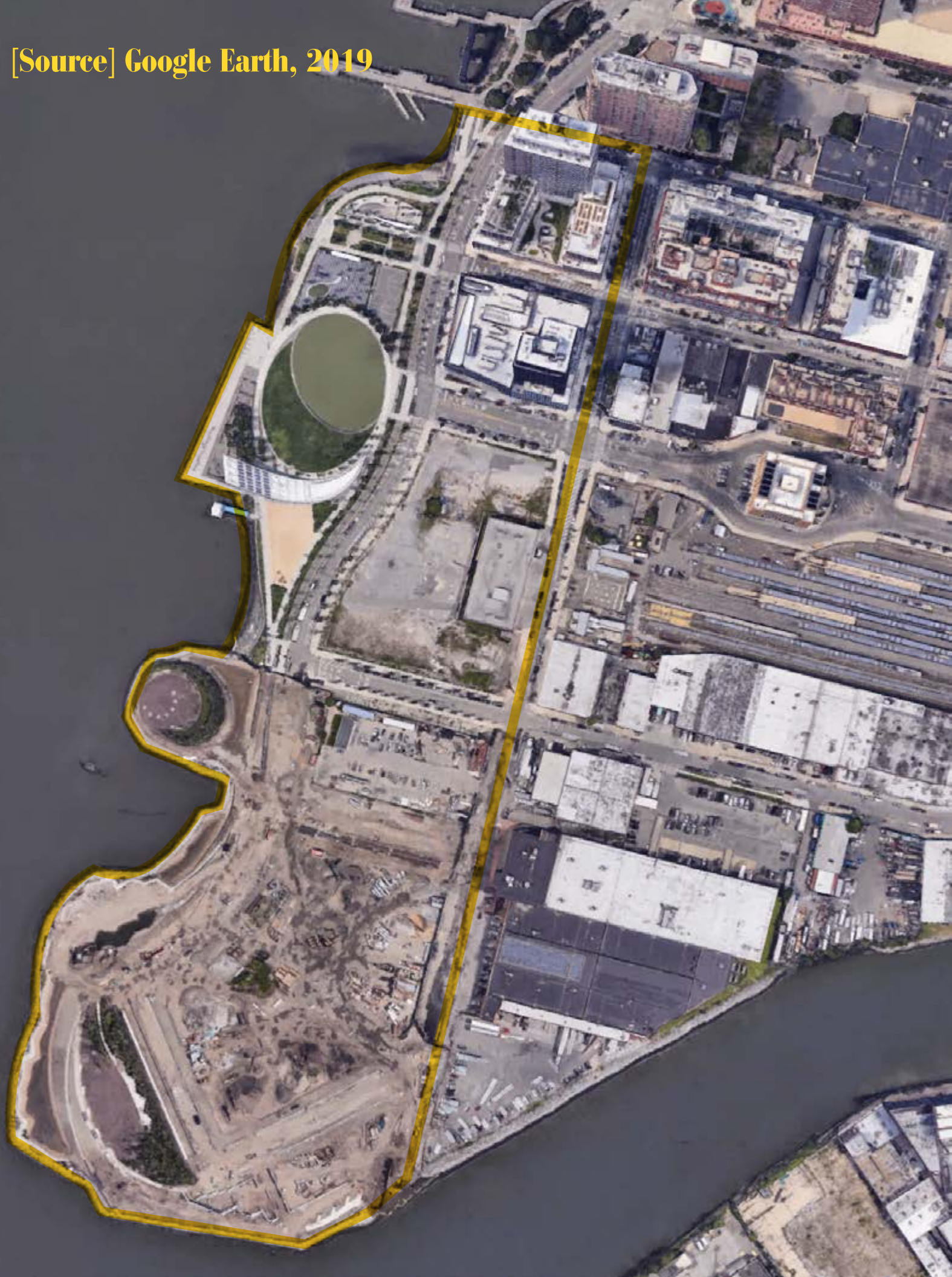
Brooklyn Bridge Park

	↪	↪ PRELIMINARY STUDIES, OUTREACH, FEASIBILITY, ETC.	↪ PROJECT DESIGN	↪ FUNDING	↪ CONSTRUC- TION	↪ OPERATIONS, PROGRAM- MING	↪ MAINTEN- ANCE, CAPI- TAL REPAIRS	
	↪ NON-GOV- ERNMENTAL ENTITY							
	↪ CITY GOVERNMENT							
	↪ STATE GOVERNMENT							
	↪ FEDERAL GOVERNMENT							
	↪ PRIVATE SECTOR							
NOTE: THE LDC WAS EVENTUALLY HOUSED WITHIN THE ESDC, WHICH WAS THEN RESPONSIBLE FOR CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATIONS. – SOURCE: AUTHOR.								

4.1.3.

**HUNTER'S
POINT
SOUTH PARK**

SOURCE: HUNTER'S POINT, SOUTH PARK, LONG ISLAND CITY, QUEENS, NY 2019. IDB
PHOTO BY: ALESSANDRA RICHTER



Hunter's Point South Park is located in the Queens neighborhood of Long Island City. **Bordering the East River and Newtown Creek**, the area is typified by its mix of residential and industrial uses. As many of Manhattan's traditional industrial neighborhoods began to transform in the 1980s and 1990s, Long Island City became a relocation destination for a number of manufacturers and grew to become a significant industrial cluster. The area has also been the target of a number of efforts by city government to create an alternative central business district. These efforts have focused primarily on office and commercial development with, until recently, limited efforts to provide housing. The neighborhood of Hunter's Point South, located along the East River, was the site of a number of industrial uses throughout the 20th Century. The area also has a significant easement for the rail lines (serving Amtrak, LIRR, and NJ Transit) that run underground, including an air vent that comes to the surface east of the river. Most recently, Hunter's Point South was included in New York's proposal for the 2012 Olympics as the site of the Olympic Village. The failure of the city to secure the games would provide the opportunity to reconsider the possible uses that would eventually lead to the redevelopment of the site as a mixed-use neighborhood that, through inclusionary housing requirements, will eventually represents New York's "largest new affordable housing complex in more than three decades" (NYC, 2011).



SOURCE: HUNTER'S POINT, SOUTH PARK, LONG ISLAND CITY, QUEENS, NY 2019. IDB
PHOTO BY: ALESSANDRA RICHTER

THE AREA IS TYPIFIED
BY ITS MIX OF
RESIDENTIAL AND
INDUSTRIAL USES.

CHALLENGE AND INNOVATION

Revitalizing the former industrial waterfront into a new park [HUNTER'S POINT SOUTH PARK]; Providing key infrastructural requirements for mixed-use development; using the private sector to construct new buildings.

New York City faces a mounting affordable housing crisis. Over the past two decades, the city has prospered economically and grown in population, but the distribution of the benefits of the city's transformation have only compounded socioeconomic inequality. Housing prices have seen a sharp rise since the recession of 2008, meanwhile the percentage of residents burdened by their housing costs (people paying over 30% of their income on housing in 2016 was nearly 50% and a majority of low-income New Yorkers were either extremely (over 50% of their income on housing) or moderately (30%–50%) housing burdened (Austensen, Been, Vera, et al., 2016). Within this context, Hunter's Point South represents an effort to tie the provision of a park with private development that includes significant affordable housing allocations.⁴ Within this strategy, Hunter's Point South Park was seen as a key asset for the broader urban redevelopment strategy. When completed, the district will represent up to 5,000 new housing units, of which 60% will be targeted as affordable for low/moderate income families (NYCEDC, 2017). The novel approach represented by this case is not simply linking the development of new parkland to a broader urban redevelopment strategy, but rather how that development can also serve to address issues like affordable housing. Furthermore, Hunter's Point South demonstrates the benefits of a governmentally initiated development strategy in securing particular long-term public benefits (affordable) from public capital expenditures (on infrastructure and parkland), even while relying on private sector participation to construct and finance the broader development.

The development of Hunter's Point South was an inter-agency initiative, led by New York City's Economic Development Corporation

(NYCEDC) and the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD). The development of Hunter's Point South can be broadly broken down into four constituent parts: rezoning Long Island City, which was undertaken under the Bloomberg administration; revitalizing the former industrial waterfront into a new park (Hunter's Point South Park); providing key infrastructural requirements for mixed-use development; and, finally, using the private sector to construct new buildings.

City government had targeted Long Island City as a site for rezoning since the late 1980s because of its proximity to Manhattan and transit connections. The early 2000s saw central Long Island City rezoned as part of a strategy to create a new office node in the outer boroughs (Wolf-Powers, 2005). Rezoning the Special Southern Hunter's Point District in 2008 was part of Bloomberg's program to address issues of affordable housing. This rezoning targeted seven blocks along the East River for transformation from low-density industrial and commercial to mixed-use, primarily residential buildings with ground-floor retail. The special district would also allow for increased floor area ratios in the building, which would also benefit from affordable housing density bonuses.⁵ The new zoning also stipulated that a number of community facilities be provided, including a new school, new streets, and a large public park along the East River and Newtown Creek.

The city acquiring land was integral to executing the Hunter's Point South development. Led by the NYCEDC, this process included purchasing land from the Port Authority, New York State, and a previously existing development corporation (Queens West Development Corporation) from a previously stalled 1990s effort. This acquisition allowed

the NYCEDC and HPD to generate interest on the part of private developers in building the housing on site.

The timeline of Hunter's Point South Park and its relation to neighborhood development also demonstrate a novel approach to how public and private initiatives can be mutually reinforcing. The city, led by the NYCEDC, positioned infrastructure as the necessary precursor to development. Not only were roadways, storm sewers, sanitary sewers, water mains, and utilities seen as integral to private development (to be carried out on formerly public land and with stringent affordable housing requirements), but parks and public open space were also positioned as a part of the vital infrastructure necessary for a successful neighborhood.

The timeline of Hunter's Point South Park and its relation to neighborhood development also demonstrate a novel approach to how public and private initiatives can be mutually reinforcing.

⁽⁴⁾ Permanent affordable housing in this development will primarily target families with household incomes between \$32,000 and \$130,000 per year for a family of four.

⁽⁵⁾ New York City's current ordinance incorporates inclusionary zoning laws that allow residential developments to benefit from increased density when they meet certain affordable housing requirements.



SOURCE: HUNTER'S POINT, SOUTH PARK, LONG ISLAND CITY, QUEENS, NY 2019. IDB
PHOTO BY: ALESSANDRA RICHTER

FINANCIAL MODEL

EXPLICITLY DRAWING THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN NEW PARKLAND, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND SUCCESSFUL HOLISTIC AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLANNING FACILITATED THE POLITICAL EXPEDIENCE OF CAPITAL SPENDING.



The majority of the funding for Hunter’s Point South Park was provided by New York City. This was justified politically and fiscally along two fronts. ↪ **First**, providing parkland was tied to other essential infrastructure necessary to build a new neighborhood on formerly industrial lands. ↪ **Second**, this new neighborhood fulfilled a role for the Bloomberg and de Blasio administrations’ multi-billion dollar city-wide efforts to meet affordable housing promises. **Explicitly drawing the connections between new parkland, infrastructure, and successful holistic affordable housing planning facilitated the political expedience of capital spending.**

The development of Hunter’s Point South was facilitated by the fact that a majority of the targeted former industrial properties were owned by governmental agencies. Although ownership ranged across a number of state and city agencies (primarily the Port Authority and the ESDC), the NYCEDC was able to acquire the roughly 30-acres in 2009 for \$100 million (NYCEDC, 2009). **Once the city owned the land, the master planning and public engagement process began in earnest.**

Capital costs for both the waterfront park and major infrastructure were also provided primarily from city council allocations. For the first phase of Hunter’s Point South, the roughly \$66 million in park and infrastructure costs were mostly provided by the city’s HPD. **This reflects the degree to which this investment was seen as a necessary condition to incentivize private development of the neighborhood (albeit with stringent affordable housing allocations).**

Unlike some of the other examples of PPPs, Hunter’s Point South Park is maintained and operated by the city’s Parks Department. **Funding for upkeep is allocated through the city-wide budget and contingent on yearly budgeting for the Parks Department provided by the city council. There is an active non-profit entity (Hunter’s Point Park Conservancy), but its functions supplement the city’s efforts rather than supplanting them.**

The nature of the PPP to develop Hunter’s Point South differs from a number of the examples discussed above. **Rather than a legal agreement between a non-profit entity and the city, the Hunter’s Point South redevelopment was an initiative led by the city government. This meant the city led the planning, rezoning, and infrastructure provisioning required for a set of individual parcels to then be put up for disposition to private developers. A series of Requests for Qualifications led to selecting private developers (in the project’s first phase, this included a partnership with a non-profit organization) that would build the housing, including affordable housing. In this case, the trade-off between private profits and public benefits focused on the link between parks and constructing affordable housing rather than the resources for ongoing park maintenance. As with other cases described in this section, the public investment in Hunter’s Point South catalyzed private development: in this case to an expected total of over \$2 billion.**

Rather than a legal agreement between a non-profit entity and the city, the Hunter’s Point South redevelopment was an initiative led by the city government.

ROLE OF DESIGN

The park’s primary concept was to propose that the landscape could serve as both a berm that would be a barrier against storm surge and provide varied spaces for passive and active recreation.

The neighborhood scale of the development of Hunter’s Point South meant that the city was able to stipulate a number of environmentally sustainable measures. A considerate and innovative design approach was integral to constructing an ecologically productive and resilient park along the East River. However, in this case, the role of design extended beyond the park and included storm water requirements and streetscapes that were both functionally productive and aesthetically pleasing. Hunter’s Point South Park along the East River was designed by Weiss/Manfredi and SWA/Balsely with Arup serving as lead consultant. The park’s primary concept was to propose that the landscape could serve as both a berm that would be a barrier against storm surge and provide varied spaces for passive and active recreation. Today, particularly following Superstorm Sandy, this double function of landscape has become commonplace, but Hunter’s Point South Park was among the first projects to implement this approach along New York’s waterfront. **The design of the park also serves to create a series of ecologically sensitive habitats in the wetlands and marshes that extend along the waterfront. The city’s ability to provide neighborhood-wide bioswales and separate storm water and sewer systems also enabled a number of cutting-edge environmentally sustainable practices to be written into the Request for Qualifications for the various parcels, with an eye toward improving the East River’s water quality. In developing Hunter’s Point South, both the scale at which the city was involved, the neighborhood, and its role in preparing the area for redevelopment allowed for greater control in system-wide sustainable practices.**

CRITICISM AND ONGOING GOVERNANCE



Despite its successes, Hunter’s Point South has been subject of criticism along three fronts. ➔ **First**, residents in some adjoining neighborhoods have resisted the densification of the waterfront as a departure from the prevailing character of Hunter’s Point South. ➔ **Second**, the development has increased rent pressures on the industrial cluster within Long Island City more broadly, with a number of local manufacturers either relocating or facing the possibility in the near future. ➔ **Finally**, access to the affordable housing in Hunter’s Point South has been a source of considerable frustration. Over 92,000 applications were received for the 924 units available through the city’s housing lottery system (Navarro, 2015). Rather than a re-crimination of the redevelopment of Hunter’s Point South, these figures testify to the depth of the city’s broader housing crisis and if anything should reinforce the efficacy of the project and the need for its reproduction.

Hunter’s Point South Park

	➔	➔ PRELIMINARY STUDIES, OUTREACH, FEASIBILITY, ETC.	➔ PROJECT DESIGN	➔ FUNDING	➔ CONSTRUCTION	➔ OPERATIONS, PROGRAMMING	➔ MAINTENANCE, CAPITAL REPAIRS	
	➔ NON-GOV-ERNMENTAL ENTITY							
	➔ CITY GOVERNMENT							
	➔ STATE GOVERNMENT							
	➔ FEDERAL GOVERNMENT							
	➔ PRIVATE SECTOR							

CASES

4.2 DATA-DRIVEN, EQUITY-BASED EFFORTS

SOURCE: HUNTER'S POINT,
SOUTH PARK, LONG ISLAND CITY,
QUEENS, NY 2019. IDB
PHOTO BY: ALESSANDRA RICHTER



OVERVIEW

CASES | DATA-DRIVEN, EQUITY-BASED EFFORTS

PLB

THE TWO PROGRAMS, WHICH AIM TO FUNNEL PARK CAPITAL FUNDING TOWARD AREAS OF PARTICULAR SOCIOECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC NEED, ARE THE COMMUNITY PARKS INITIATIVE (CPI) AND THE ANCHOR PARKS INITIATIVE (API).

Over the past four decades, funding (as a share of the overall budget) for New York City's Parks Department has steadily declined (Surico, 2018). In a climate of competing priorities and the broader reduction in federal support for a range of urban issues, parks have often been on the losing end of budgetary cuts. **When resources are limited, funding parks over other essential services like policing, education, housing, or health becomes a serious political challenge.** As alluded to above, one-time capital funding is easier to mobilize politically than the yearly budgetary allocations provided for the Parks Department through the city council. At least, many politicians perceive it to be more politically advantageous to build a new park through one-time line items than to provide additional funding to maintain existing parks (Surico, 2018). Within this context, critics have pointed out the irony that, while New York has added to its portfolio of parks in recent years, it has simultaneously reduced funding to maintain and repair those already in its portfolio. This dynamic was underscored in the Center for an Urban Future's report (Surico, 2018) on the state of the city's existing park infrastructure and the current state of repair needs. The report describes nearly \$6 billion worth of capital repairs required to bring current parks up to date.

Addressing socioeconomic inequality was central to Bill de Blasio's mayoral campaign. His platform, and eventual electoral success, was read by many as a referendum on the Bloomberg administration and the transformations that the city had undergone in the previous decade. With regards to parks and open space, critics believed that Bloomberg's administration had prioritized building new parks over addressing systemic needs. Underlying this criticism was the

development-driven logic at the core of many of the parks built during the Bloomberg years, which looked favorably on the trade-off of private profits resulting from public capital expenditures, as long as they boosted the municipal tax base and provided sufficient public amenities. Predominantly this meant that the new jewels in the city's park system were located either in Manhattan or geographically adjacent neighborhoods across the East River. Furthermore, the city's budgeting process has long meant that resources tend to follow places with greater socioeconomic and political power. The geographic concentration of capital investments in parks was seen as compounding a historic pattern of underinvestment in certain communities, namely those in the outer boroughs and those that tended toward newer immigrants and communities of color.

Since taking power, the de Blasio administration has both increased the overall budget of the Parks Department and announced two major initiatives, with mayoral funding attached, aimed at addressing systemic disinvestment in parks. **The two programs, which aim to funnel park capital funding toward areas of particular socioeconomic and demographic need, are the Community Parks Initiative (CPI) and the Anchor Parks Initiative (API).** Together the two programs account for \$468 million (\$318 million for CPI and \$150 million for API) in investment. They also embody an approach that aims to address historical patterns of neglect and long-needed repairs. Given the ambitions of these programs, the methodologies used for project selection aim to set criteria that respond to data (e.g., demographic and economic) rather than the pre-existing political system that typically determines funding.

← CHALLENGES AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

4.2.1.

COMMUNITY PARKS INITIATIVE

SOURCE: HUNTER'S POINT, SOUTH PARK, LONG ISLAND CITY, QUEENS, NY 2019. IDB



THE INITIATIVE FOCUSES ON THREE KEY CHARACTERISTICS IN TARGETING INVESTMENTS: THE GEOGRAPHY OF DISINVESTMENT, EMERGING DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS, AND THE ROLE PLAYED BY SMALL- AND MEDIUM-SIZED PARKS IN THE SOCIAL LIFE OF NEW YORKERS.

The CPI aims to directly address a historical pattern of disinvestment using a data-driven approach. The initiative focuses on three key characteristics in targeting investments: the geography of disinvestment, emerging demographic trends, and the role played by small- and medium-sized parks in the social life of New Yorkers. The selection process began with a number of mapping exercises. ↪ **First**, the Parks Department looked at all parks between 0.15 and five acres in size that had received less than \$250,000 in capital investment over the previous 25 years. This was followed by analyzing data that identified neighborhoods experiencing demographic growth, high levels of population density, and concentrations of poverty. From these criteria, a set of targeted neighborhoods (or priority zones) emerged as possible candidates for additional resources and 215 parks were identified. ↪ **Second**, Further study of individual parks from this initial list was then conducted and 67 parks have since been selected by the Parks Department for participation in the CPI.

Once this selection process was completed, work began on fostering community involvement and input. Since many of these parks

had not seen renovations in a generation, gathering input on the specific desires of the surrounding neighborhood was seen as particularly important. Investments in each park varied based on their relative size and need, but averaged under \$5 million. Capital funding was provided primarily through the mayoral budgeting allocation, with limited funds provided by state and private grants. Since the city's capital projects process is often slow and bureaucratic, interim easy-to-approve, shovel-ready projects were often carried out (referred to as targeted improvements). The Parks Department is simultaneously working to streamline its capital projects process to improve implementation speed.

Fostering a culture of park stewardship was also an important goal of the CPI. In addition to garnering community input in the design process, the Parks Department conducted additional outreach, such as supporting the establishment of 'Friends of' organizations, non-profits responsible for providing additional maintenance and park programming, in many of the sites receiving investment. Involving neighbors in the active upkeep of renovated parks was seen as particularly important given that the CPI did not specifi-

cally target additional maintenance funding. The Parks Department also used the CPI as an opportunity to partner with a number of sister city agencies around shared goals. For a number of the parks receiving funding from the CPI, the Parks Department partnered with the Department of Environmental Planning to implement green infrastructure initiatives, particularly around storm water management. Other projects benefit from partnerships with other agencies, such as the New York City Housing Authority.

↪ **Finally**, the CPI has also successfully engaged with a number of civil society organizations to achieve its goals, including an agreement with eight of the city's major parks conservancies to provide CPI parks with funding and in-kind support to the value of \$15 million (NYC, 2015a). The partnership between civil society organizations and the Parks Department's CPI aims especially to take advantage of the horticultural expertise and programming capacity of some of the city's largest conservancies.

MAINTENANCE

SOURCE: HUNTER'S POINT,
SOUTH PARK, LONG ISLAND CITY,
QUEENS, NY 2019. IDB
PHOTO BY: ALESSANDRA RICHTER



ROLE OF DESIGN

The majority of the parks renovated through the CPI were designed by landscape architects from within the Parks Department. This meant that standardized materials were often used, with an eye toward the feasibility of long-term maintenance. A department-wide initiative, entitled Parks Without Borders, was also incorporated into the design of a number of the parks funded by the CPI. Parks Without Borders is a program that aims to better integrate parkland into the urban fabric of their neighborhoods. This meant specifically targeting the entrances and borders of parks for improvements to make them more welcoming, easier to identify, and safer. In 2015, Mayor de Blasio dedicated \$50 million to the program. A number of the projects targeted by the CPI also received funding through the Parks Without Borders program.

Finally, New York City, in partnership with the Design Trust for Public Space, has produced a document outlining High Performance Landscape Standards. These standards have been adopted by the Parks Department as a set of measures to improve the design and maintenance of parks.

CRITICISM

Despite the CPI's successes, there are a number of shortcomings to the city's approach that deserve mentioning here. The first is how the investments ushered in by the program relate to long-term maintenance needs. Parks Department staff have taken measures to mobilize community resources and volunteer time to help with upkeep, but repairing decaying infrastructure and other skilled tasks (such as horticultural assistance) require the expertise and resources of specialists. Most of the 'Friends of' groups the city is incentivizing for the CPI targeted parks will be too small and limited in their resources to carry out the sorts of conservancy work larger parks are able to conduct through similar non-profit organizations. This means that the city must align these strategic reinvestments with considerations for funding of long-term maintenance. Ideally this should be a systemic approach and would require city-wide funding for the Parks Department.

Although the de Blasio administration has taken steps to improve capital investments through the CPI and Parks Without Borders, the proposed 10-year capital plan targets \$2.5 billion for parks, which would represent a significant drop in funding (Foderaro, 2015). The programs are an important step but, according to some, the administration needs to go even further to address long-delayed repairs. Like many other initiatives, both advocates and critics point to the one-time nature of the CPI investment as an issue in continuing to systematically address inequality in parks investment. The practices embodied in the CPI should be institutionalized, otherwise, with shifting political winds, they may be too easily discarded if contingent on mayoral funding alone.

Finally, while the CPI addresses long-term underinvestment in existing parks, it does not address the overall inequality of access to parks across the system. Many of the same neighborhoods targeted by the CPI also fall short in meeting their demand for parks. While no single initiative can address all of these issues, the need for new parkland in the priority zones targeted by the CPI suggests a need for investment not only in repairing the limited supply of existing parks, but also investments that would add to the parkland in these same neighborhoods.

The practices embodied in the CPI should be institutionalized, otherwise, with shifting political winds, they may be too easily discarded if contingent on mayoral funding alone.

SOURCE: SAYLES BRETT.BROWN WOODEN BENCH. MARCH, 2018. PEXELS,
CONSULTED 2019. WWW.PEXELS.COM

4.2.2.

ANCHOR PARKS INITIATIVE



[Source] Google Earth, 2019

HIGHBRIDGE PARK^{MANHATTAN}

BETSY HEAD PARK^{BROOKLYN}

ST. MARY'S PARK^{THE BRONX}

ASTORIA PARK^{QUEENS}

FRESHKILLS PARK^{STATEN ISLAND}

CASES | DATA-DRIVEN, EQUITY-BASED EFFORTS

P73

The API is another program launched by the de Blasio administration to address the historic patterns of underinvestment. The API aims to counter the prevailing decade of limited funding for large older parks in each of the five boroughs. In targeting larger parks, including in the outer boroughs, the Parks Department was identifying their regional importance in providing recreational opportunities that small- and medium-sized parks were unable to provide. Due to the scale of these parks, however, the size of the investment for each is \$30 million. The parks included in the API were: Highbridge Park in Manhattan, Betsy Head Park in Brooklyn, St. Mary's Park in the Bronx, Astoria Park in Queens, and Freshkills Park on Staten Island.

The API also acknowledges and attempts to take steps to compensate for the needs of large parks that do not receive substantial financial support from conservancies and other PPPs. The logic of PPPs mean that parks located in the outer boroughs and lacking significant real estate development prospects, commercial offices, or affluent residents often lack the sorts of resources of the large "jewel" parks in Manhattan. Confronting the inequality of the private sector and civil society's capacity to provide non-governmental resources underlies the API's strategic approach.

As with the CPI, capital funding for the API was provided primarily through the mayoral budgeting allocation, with a similar range of limited resources from state and private sources. The one-time appropriation of funds for the API also suffers from similar limitations as the CPI in the disjoint between resources for much needed capital improvements and those intended for long-term maintenance. Like the CPI, the limitations of the API stem from the limited scope of its ambitions and its future reproducibility being contingent on political calculations rather than identifying a new means of ensuring the long-term fiscal sustainability of parks.

APPs strategic approach.



SOURCE: PROSPECT PARK, NYC 2019. IDB
PHOTO BY: ALESSANDRA RICHTER

SOURCE: PROSPECT PARK, NYC 2019. IDB
PHOTO BY: ALESSANDRA RICHTER

CPI & API							
	↳	↳ PRELIMINARY STUDIES, OUTREACH, FEASIBILITY, ETC.	↳ PROJECT DESIGN	↳ FUNDING	↳ CONSTRUCTION	↳ OPERATIONS, PROGRAMMING	↳ MAINTENANCE, CAPITAL REPAIRS
	↳ NON-GOV-ERNMENTAL ENTITY						
	↳ CITY GOVERNMENT						
	↳ STATE GOVERNMENT						
	↳ FEDERAL GOVERNMENT						
	↳ PRIVATE SECTOR						
SOURCE: AUTHOR							

OVERVIEW

Privately owned public spaces (POPS) are sites open to public access but built and maintained by private interests on private land. POPS are provided by private developers in exchange for additional density beyond by-right zoning allowances. Since 1961, there have been provisions to include POPS in new developments in New York's zoning ordinance. These laws were amended in 1975 to introduce new categories of open spaces. The 1975 changes also introduced oversight by the Department of City Planning (although in a rather limited capacity) to ensure that new spaces met design standards that included the basic amenities found in public parks. In 1977, certain classes of POPS were extended to include high-density residential districts by-right. Finally, in 2007 and 2009, the city adopted a new set of design principles to guide the design of POPS built under the provisions.

← CHALLENGES AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

POPS EMERGED AS A MECHANISM TO PROVIDE OPEN SPACES, PARTICULARLY IN HIGHLY DENSE OFFICE DISTRICTS IN MANHATTAN.

In the 1970s and 1980s, as New York City faced a fiscal crisis and tightening budgets, POPS were seen as a means of providing open spaces in an era when capital expenditures on parks were minimal. The series of updates to the law reflect the failures of early public spaces provided through the program and an ongoing learning process on the part of the Department of City Planning and its partners. To date, there are over 550 POPS, which together provide nearly 3.8 million square feet of public space (NYC, n.d.c).

Underlying the use of POPS in New York is a level of political acceptability of density, especially in Manhattan and particularly in neighborhoods dominated by office uses. The majority of New York's POPS have been built in the city's two major central business districts: Downtown and Midtown Manhattan.

POPS are built and operated by private developers. The capital expenses of construction fall on the developer. Since maintenance and programming are also provided by the land owner, these are subject to contracts with the city that lay out the terms of this agreement.

← FINANCING

CASES

4.3 PRIVATELY OWNED PUBLIC SPACES



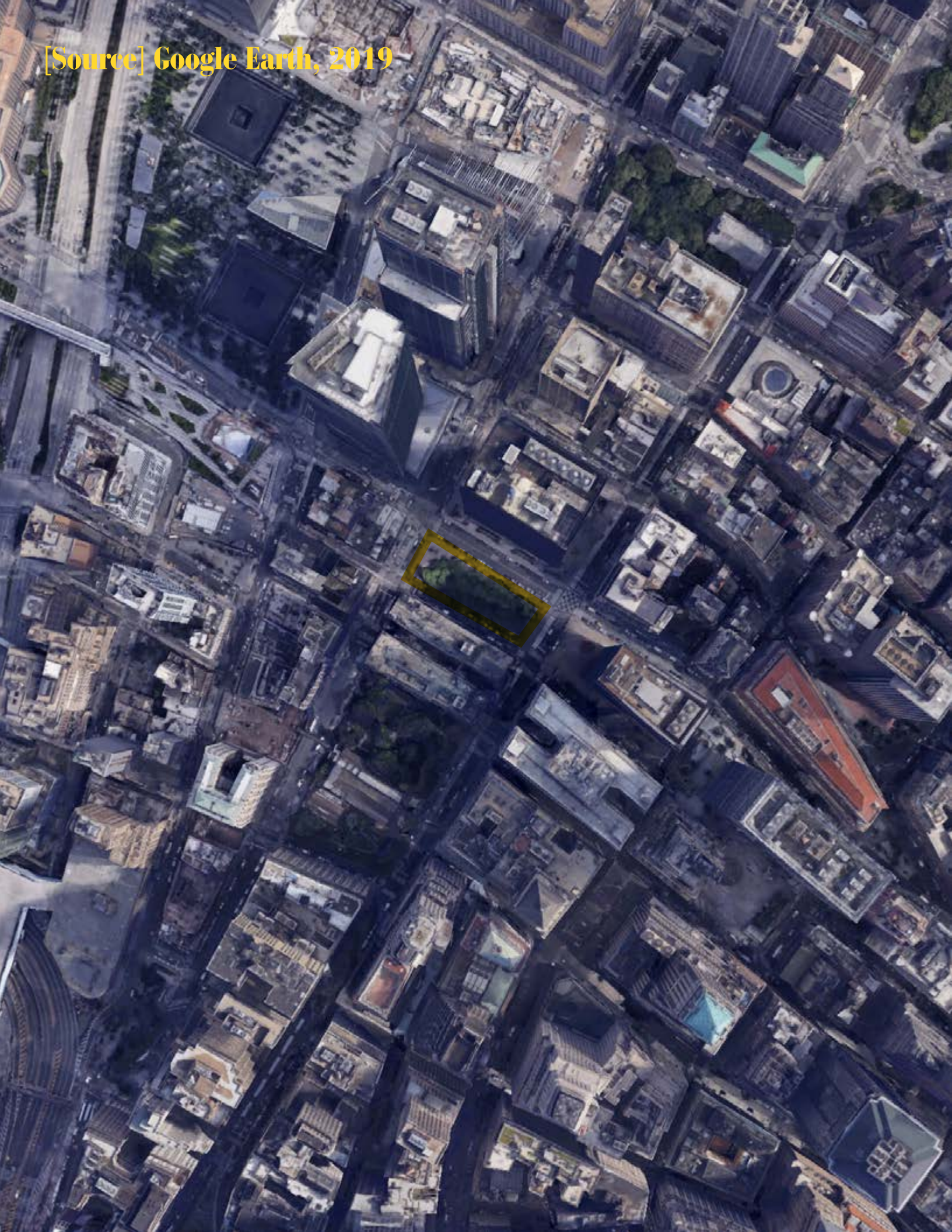
SOURCE: ZUCCOTTI PARK, NYC 2019, JDB
PHOTO BY: ALESSANDRA RICHTER

A nighttime photograph of Zuccotti Park in New York City. The park is illuminated by numerous small, rectangular, white light fixtures embedded in the pavement, creating a grid-like pattern. Bare trees are scattered throughout the park, and a large, modern building with many lit windows stands in the background. The scene is captured from a low angle, looking down the length of the park.

4.3.1.

**ZUCCOTTI
PARK**

SOURCE: ZUCCOTTI PARK, NYC 2019. IDB

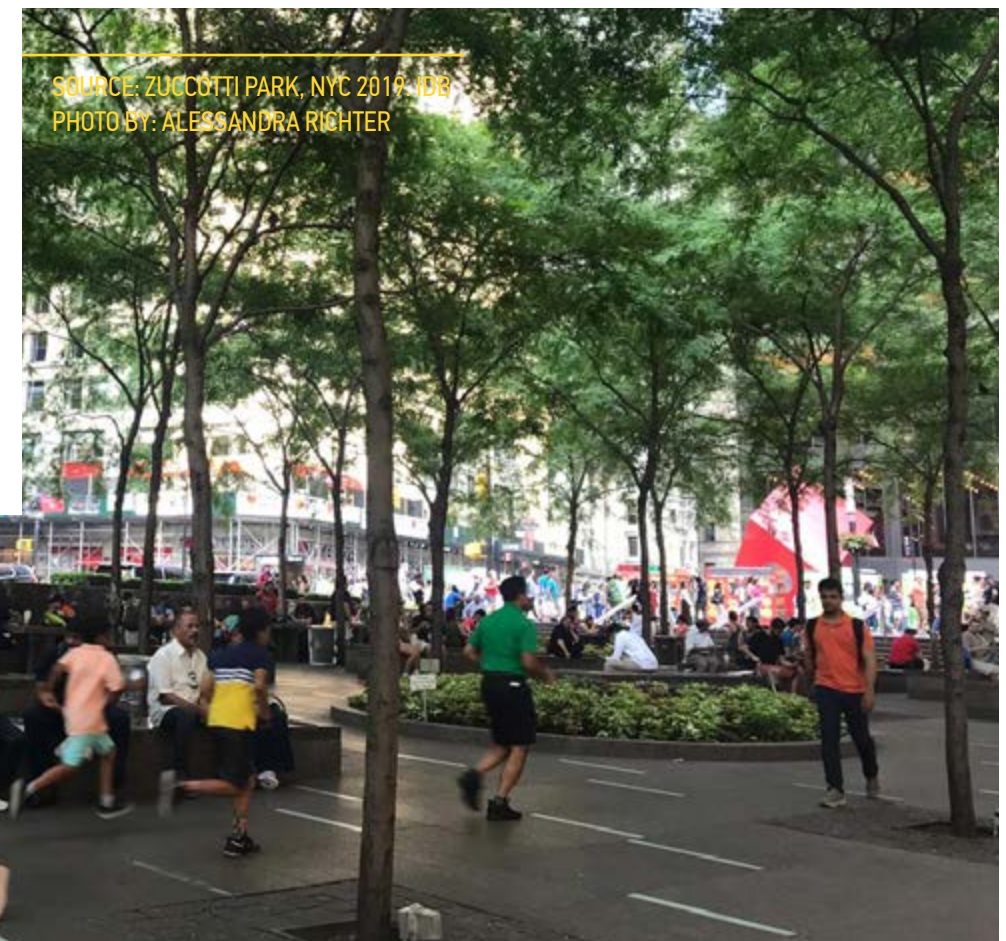


Zuccotti Park, located in Manhattan's Financial District, is an example of a plaza built through the POPS program included in New York's 1961 Zoning Resolution. POPS developed during this period were held to only minimal standards in terms of the quality of the public spaces provided, and as a result many did not provide adequate shade, seating, or other amenities. The zoning laws of 1961 capped the density bonus developers could use at 20% of the allowable floor area. This bonus, however, was by-right, meaning that additional density was not subject to review by the Department of City Planning or the Parks Department.

Built in 1968, Zuccotti Park was originally named One Liberty Plaza and stands on the site of the former Singer Building, once the tallest building in the world. The plaza was the result of a negotiation between the developer (United States Steel) and the Department of City Planning. In exchange for additional density, the developers funded the construction of the new plaza as well as its maintenance and operations (including a stipulation that the space remain open 24 hours a day).

Because it is adjacent to the World Trade Center Tower, in the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the plaza was used for a range of emergency response and recovery purposes. Due to damage caused following the 9/11 attacks, the plaza required extensive renovation. The 33,000-square-foot park was re-inaugurated in 2006 and re-named after the chairman of a prominent real estate company (Brookfield Properties). The renovation also aimed to make the space more accommodating to the thousands of downtown workers who use the space, especially during weekdays.

Zuccotti Park was also the epicenter of the Occupy Wall Street movement, which began in the fall of 2011. The protest movement, which aimed to draw attention to rising socioeconomic inequalities (along with a broad range of other ambitions), chose the plaza not only for its proximity to Wall Street, but also for its status as a POPS and its legal and jurisdictional anomalies. In particular, the legal requirement that Zuccotti Park had to be open to the public 24 hours a day, rather than closing each night like the Parks Department sites, was seen as a strategic advantage by the protest's organizers. The eventual eviction of the Occupy Wall Street camp is perhaps the most high-profile example of the sorts of contestations over the definitions and practical legal implications of POPS in New York. Although the experience of Zuccotti is in many ways an extreme example, it serves to demonstrate both some of the shortcomings of the lack of design and amenities requirements in early POPS zoning in New York, as well as some of the ambiguities and blurred jurisdictions that can arise when the private sector provides public space.



SOURCE: ZUCCOTTI PARK, NYC 2018; IDB
PHOTO BY: ALESSANDRA RICHTER



SOURCE: AZIZ YOAV. PEOPLE WALKING NEAR TREE. DATE UNKNOWN.
UNSPLASH, CONSULTED 2019. WWW.UNSPLASH.COM

4.3.2.

COMMUNITY PARKS INITIATIVE



[Source] Google Earth, 2019



Inaugurated in 2018, Domino Park, located in the Brooklyn neighborhood of Williamsburg, is one of the most recent additions to New York's POPS. The park occupies 6 acres of waterfront space along the East River and is part of an 11-acre redevelopment of Domino Sugar's massive former processing factory. A master plan for the new development was carried out in the wake of a 2010 rezoning that made residential and office uses possible in the neighborhood. Domino Park was also incentivized by a density bonus being granted by the city in exchange for providing a privately funded and managed public space. The design of the park, however, was governed by the 2009 update to New York's POPS ordinance and the set of principles that accompanied these reforms, which we touch on in greater detail below.

Two Trees Management, the owner of the Domino Sugar site, has been approved to build four residential towers as part of the \$2 billion development, including some of the tallest towers in Brooklyn (REW, 2018). The master plan, approved by the city following a process that included local community groups, calls for office and retail uses, in addition to the residential buildings. Negotiations with the city have also led to the inclusion of

700 units of affordable housing in the development. Domino Park, which opened prior to the three largest proposed residential towers breaking ground (in an effort to appeal to local politicians and neighbors) had a construction budget of \$50 million. The park, which will be open daily to the public from 6am to 1am, will be operated by Two Trees and will count on a full-time horticulturalist, public space manager, and a staff of roughly 12 ("Domino Park Designed," 2018).

The design, carried out by James Corner Field Operations, has also made an effort to pay homage to the site's prior history and its relationship with the surrounding community. This sort of sensitivity to site and a range of other design decisions reflect the sort of measures taken by New York's Department of City Planning, rooted in past experience, intended to improve the quality of the public spaces being provided through the POPS program.

As outlined in the 2007 and 2009 updates to the POPS zoning laws, the design principles for new (and remodeled) public spaces emphasize the importance of ensuring the plaza feels open to the public, is safe and accessible, and provides the sorts of amenities that will draw the public to the space.

An effort to pay homage to the site's prior history and its relationship with the surrounding community.

CRITICISM
IN NARROWLY DEFINING
THE PROVISION OF PUBLIC
SPACE, THE PRIVATE
INTERESTS THAT PROVIDE
POPS ACT LARGELY IN
THEIR OWN INTERESTS

The majority of POPS are built by-right, meaning that they are legally allowed with-in current zoning. This means that they are not subject to the city’s ULURP and as such there are limited opportunities for public feedback and review. Thus, the degree to which the design and particular decisions about the terms of the space’s operations are determined largely outside any public process. Particularly when it comes to the rules and regulations that govern the uses of POPS, there are limited mechanisms for public input.

The use of what is known as “exclusionary design” in providing POPS is of particular concern. A number of POPS use various means to deter specific kinds of users from the space (principally, but not exclusively, the homeless), including designs such as spikes on benches to prohibit sleeping. Policing, particularly by private security, has been another tool to exclude “unwanted” users from POPS. In a number of cases, the rules and regulations drawn up in the contract between the city and the owner provide a legal rationale for excluding particular uses and users.

Finally, although POPS provide a “public” amenity both in their geographic concentra-tion and through their design and regulations, they are targeted to primarily benefit office workers and property owners in business dis-tricts, although this is beginning to change in response to real estate dynamics and changes in the law. However, in narrowly defining the provision of public space, the private interests that provide POPS act largely in their own in-terests. As such, POPS are largely a self-serving tool that lack the capacity to address a large range of issues facing parks in New York. Therefore, just what publics are able to use these spaces and what the effects of these choices are on the ability of these spaces to function politically and socially have been the subject of criticism (Németh, 2009).

Privately Owned Public Spaces

	↪	↪ PRELIMINARY STUDIES, OUTREACH, FEASIBILITY, ETC.	↪ PROJECT DESIGN	↪ FUNDING	↪ CONSTRUC- TION	↪ OPERATIONS, PROGRAM- MING	↪ MAINTEN- ANCE, CAPI- TAL REPAIRS	
	↪ NON-GOV- ERNMENTAL ENTITY							
	↪ CITY GOVERNMENT							
	↪ STATE GOVERNMENT							
	↪ FEDERAL GOVERNMENT							
	↪ PRIVATE SECTOR							

SOURCE: AUTHOR

CASES

4.4 PARKS AND COASTAL RESILIENCY



SOURCE: NYC 2019. IDE

OVERVIEW

In October 2012, Superstorm Sandy battered New York City. The city suffered extensive physical damage from high winds, and many neighborhoods experienced extensive flooding. The storm also affected a number of the city's critical infrastructural systems. The explosion of a sub-generator in Manhattan cut off power for the majority of neighborhoods below 14th Street. The subway system was severely damaged and service interrupted.

Together, the storm and its aftermath revealed the range of systemic vulnerabilities the city faced, and the close relationship between these threats and underlying socioeconomic vulnerabilities.

The storm also highlighted a clear geography of vulnerability, especially coastal flooding due to storm surge. Coupled with the growing threat of rising sea levels, the political necessity of taking preventative action to bolster the resilience of certain strategic areas became clear. In the immediate aftermath of the storm, a range of state and federal disaster bills aided recovery, but the city government was also strategic in institutionalizing the efforts to enable considerations for longer term resilience strategies in advance of the next disaster. In 2015, New York City created the Office for Recovery and Resiliency. This new department was intended to lead long-term efforts to prepare New York for a number of future threats. A number of parks and open spaces would have an important role.

← CHALLENGES AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

This new department was intended to lead long-term efforts to prepare New York for a number of future threats.

DESIGN COULD HELP INFRASTRUCTURE BECOME INTEGRAL TO URBAN LIVING IN THE CASE OF NATURAL DISASTER AND EVERYDAY LIFE.

The pressing challenge for the city was how to protect New York from sea level rise and storm surge through hard infrastructure while considering the capacity of protective structures to also serve as integral components of the city's open space network. A number of imperatives and innovations stemmed from these considerations. Perhaps most importantly, the projects that emerged would have to consider the city's coastline on a large scale as well as the combined dynamics of various interconnected public green spaces. Building a piecemeal dike system would not fulfil the primary function of protecting inland property from inundation. This meant that projects required holistic approaches to entire subsections of the city. Further, it became clear that design could help infrastructure become integral to urban living in the case of natural disaster and everyday life. Finally, certain kinds of infrastructure projects require a level of funding beyond the scale typically feasible at the city level and thus would require state and federal funding to be implemented.

In June 2013, the city published "A Stronger, More Resilient New York" (NYCEDC, 2013), which included a range of actions intended to make the city better prepared for future events like Superstorm Sandy. Among these was Coastal Protection Initiative 21, which aimed to build an integrated flood-protection system in Lower Manhattan. In August 2013, the federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) department launched the Rebuild by Design competition, from which a number of proposals would eventually be funded and carried out.



SOURCE: VIEW FROM HUNTER'S POINT, SOUTH PARK, LONG ISLAND CITY, QUEENS, NY 2019. IDB PHOTO BY: ALESSANDRA RICHTER

ROLE OF DESIGN

SOURCE: VIEW FROM HUNTER'S POINT, SOUTH PARK, LONG ISLAND CITY, QUEENS, NY 2019. IDB PHOTO BY: ALESSANDRA RICHTER



The Rebuild by Design competition, launched by President Obama's Hurricane Sandy Task Force, was a partnership between HUD and a number of civil society groups. The competition was a multi-stage process that teamed designers across professions, selected a series of sites, and involved extensive engagement with local communities and government. The intention was to produce proposals that would combine international expertise and local input into implementable projects. Eight teams were created, with individual sites across the region affected by Sandy. Of these, five were located in New York City.

The competition did not remain purely propositional. In 2014, HUD launched the National Disaster Resilience Competition through the Community Development Block Grant program. This initiative eventually awarded over \$1 billion in funding to thirteen cities and states across the United States. Of this amount, \$176 million was allocated to New York City to implement what was then known as the Lower Manhattan Project and the Connect Project.⁶ The New York Metropolitan region also received funding for a number of other resilience-related open space and infrastructure projects.

⁽⁶⁾ See <http://www.rebuildbydesign.org/news-and-events/updates/over-11-billion-in-federal-dollars-pledged-to-rbd-projects-since-competition>.

4.4.1.

THE BIG U



[Source] Google Earth, 2019.

Here we focus on one particular project currently underway in Manhattan that emerged from the Rebuild by Design competition. The Big U (Rebuild by Design, n.d.) was proposed by a team led by Danish architects BIG in collaboration with One Architecture, Starr Whitehouse, James Lime Planning + Development, Green Shield Ecology, AEA Consulting, Level Agency, ARCADIS, and Buro Happol. The project aimed to create hard infrastructure for flood protection for a 10-mile stretch that would simultaneously provide a series of neighborhood-specific public spaces and park amenities. The concept also proposed splitting Manhattan's southern waterfront into a series of flood zones, each a physically separated flood-protection area. This would bring the added benefit of enabling a series of contextually specific community outreach and design proposals to meet the needs of each neighborhood.

HUD awarded \$335 million for The Big U to be implemented by the City of New York. With this funding, the scope of the initial flood protection was revised and broken into a number of component projects. The East Side Coastal Resilience (ESCR) project (NYC, 2015b; NYC, n.d.d), for example, aims to create a flood-protection berm system that runs along the East River between 23rd Street and Montgomery Street. A separate project, the Lower Manhattan Comprehensive Protection Plan, targets the shoreline south of Montgomery, and another project will eventually address flooding risk in Battery Park City.

This would bring the added benefit of enabling a series of contextually specific community outreach and design proposals to meet the needs of each neighborhood.

DESIGN AND COMMUNITY INPUT

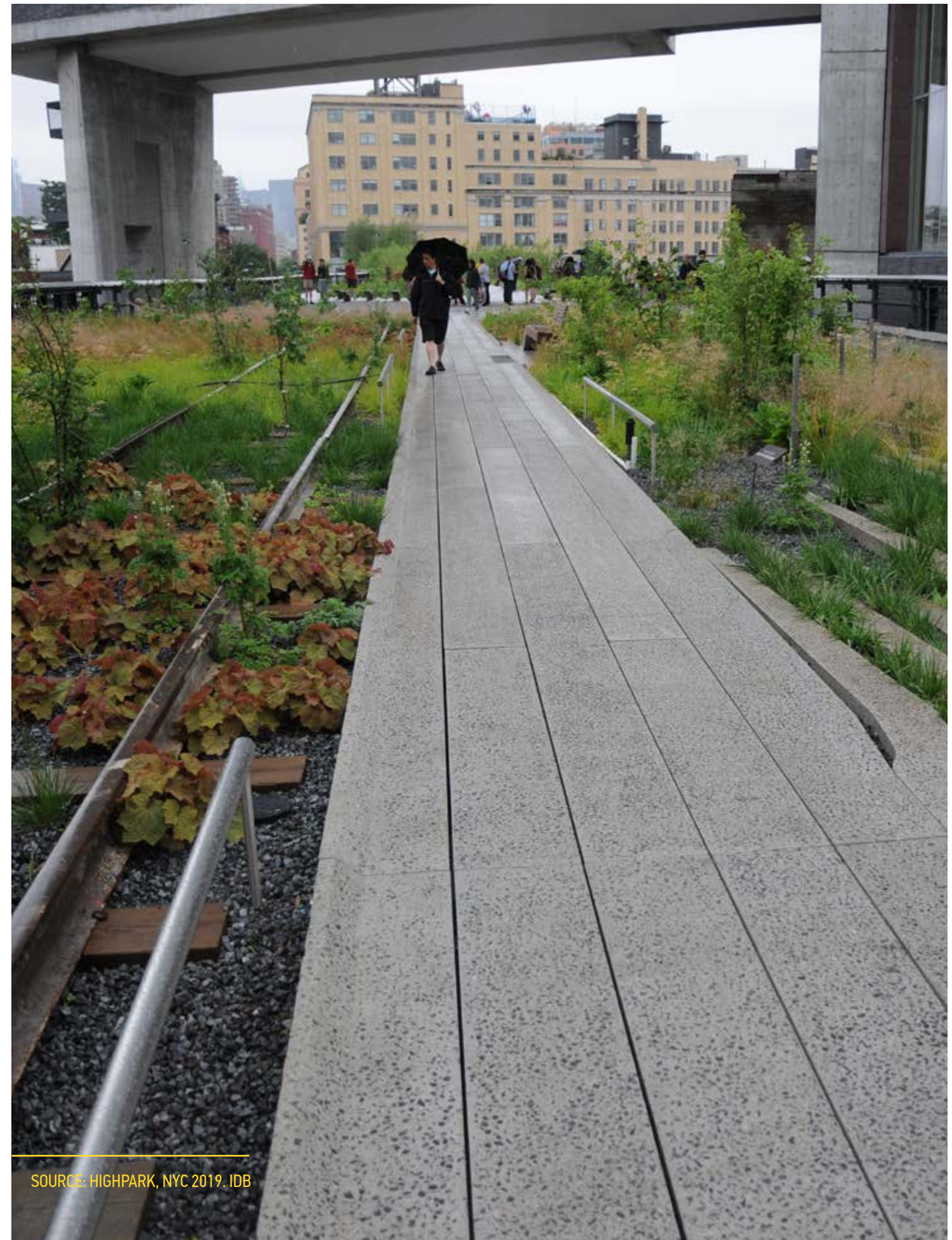
A number of different parks and open spaces make up the ESCR project, including East River Park and Stuyvesant Cove Park. These park spaces will be incorporated into the city's park system and fall under the jurisdiction of the Parks Department. A range of recreational opportunities will be included in these spaces and the city is exploring alternative means of safely accessing the park, which is separated from the adjacent neighborhood by a highway. The cross-disciplinary perspectives of the design team combined with close collaboration with a number of city agencies has allowed the ESCR project to take into account a number of social, physical, and economic concerns.

Using flood-protection infrastructure to simultaneously provide new open spaces creates another set of challenges, including how the geography of flood vulnerability relates to the needs and demographics of adjacent neighborhoods. Because of the high capital costs of protecting vulnerable land with hard infrastructure, funding has tended to prioritize areas of high land values and high population density. Lower Manhattan fits both of these conditions as it is home to approximately 220,000 residents and is one of New York's two core business districts. As a result, prioritizing projects can become grounds for political debate and contestation.

SOURCE: AUTHOR

The experience of New York City in recent years presents a number of generalizable lessons for cities across LAC. Although a number of New York's defining characteristics (e.g., its governance structure, political dynamics, demographics, geography, economy, ecology, and history) are unique, not only in the United States but around the world, the strategies through which both civil society and local government have endeavored to address the provision of public open spaces can provide insight and inspiration across varied contexts. That does not mean that any one of the solutions discussed above will resolve the issues that prevent more, better, or more equitably distributed parkland in cities in LAC. Rather, the lessons from New York City should point to the possibility of tailoring various strategies to respond to local contexts in planning, designing, funding, and governing parks.

Perhaps the most striking take away from New York's recent experience is the variety of strategies enlisted toward similar goals. The four broad categories presented in this paper, and their illustrations, describe varied balances of governmental and private funding, local and centralized decision-making, and responses to numerous historical and political contexts. For a culturally and socially diverse city like New York, responses to park provisioning require similar flexibility and variety. The challenge, embodied in a number of the examples above, is how to balance responses to local challenges, needs, and opportunities while simultaneously ensuring a more equitable provision of public green spaces than one that responds purely to private interests and market logics. In New York, this challenge is still the subject of much debate and various initiatives have attempted to achieve this balance.



SOURCE: HIGH PARK, NYC 2019. IDB

A number of the parks described in this paper also speak to a shift in the way the utility of parks is considered: namely, that parks are often expected to perform multiple functions aside from being spaces for recreation. This can most clearly be seen in the resiliency projects the city undertook after Superstorm Sandy, but a number of other projects also attest to the multiple functions now expected to be fulfilled by parks, which can range from limiting flooding from storm surges across entire neighborhoods to simply retaining storm water runoff.

Another generalizable lesson is the need for new parks to appeal to and engage with a range of different interest groups and stakeholders. Many of the most successful projects in New York in recent years reflect a convergence of interests across city and state government, the private sector, and civil society. The political viability of most of these relies, either implicitly or explicitly, on a set of trade-offs and concessions by each of the interested parties.

The strategies discussed in this paper also share a growing awareness of the importance of scale in planning and designing parks. The Community Parks Initiative, for example, targeted small parks for their important social roles in neighborhoods. The design of the initiative was tailored to the challenges faced by this type of park and its opportunities. On the other hand, the coastal resiliency projects represent a more systemic approach demanded by their functional necessities as flood-protection infrastructure.

In many of the cases detailed above, providing parks has been closely tied to broader urban development efforts. This is not a new phenomenon, with the construction of Central Park being perhaps the most prominent example in the city's history. The close link between redevelopment and park provisioning, however, demands a number of questions be asked to consider the applicability of similar models to cities in LAC. First, who benefits from the broader land use changes often linked to new or redeveloped parks and who stands to lose? Second, what is the scale of the zoning changes (ranging from an entire neighborhood to a limited portion of the waterfront) and the impact of the broader strategies? Finally, to what degree will city government include measures to capture some of the private benefits generated by public expenditures, either to maintain and repair parks or to provide other public goods, such as affordable housing? The most successful examples in this paper have provided the city with new parkland while also contributing to the functioning of other strategic urban needs, including housing, non-motorized transit systems, flood protection, and the redevelopment of formerly abandoned industrial sites. They have done so either by using novel institutional arrangements to leverage public funds to catalyze private investments, while ensuring mechanisms exist to capture some of those benefits, or directly targeting existing inequalities by publicly funding parkland while creating novel partnerships with civil society actors and across governmental agencies.



SOURCE: BERPOORTEN FANYA. ADULT COUPLE DREAM. SEPTEMBER, 2018. 361 WORKS, CONSULTED 2019. WWW.361.WORKS

Funding Mechanisms

	↳	↳ THE HIGH LINE	↳ BROOKLYN BRIDGE PARK	↳ HUNTER'S POINT SOUTH	↳ POPS	↳ REBUILD BY DESIGN	↳ CPI AND API	
	↳ CITY FUNDING							
	↳ STATE FUNDING							
	↳ FEDERAL FUNDING							
	↳ PRIVATE FUNDING							
	↳ VALUE CAPTURE MECHANISM	GENERAL CITY TAX BASE	TAX REVENUE FROM DEVELOPMENT PARCELS	AFFORDABLE HOUSING STIPULATIONS ON DEVELOPMENT PARCELS	N/A	N/A	N/A	

[illegible]

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